

A Report on Public Attitudes and Awareness of Ireland's European Union Structural Funds Programmes 2007-2013

Prepared for the Northern & Western Regional Assembly and Southern Regional Assembly by Amárach Research





**Northern & Western
Regional Assembly**



**Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt
Southern Regional Assembly**

***Report on Public Attitudes and Awareness of Ireland's
European Union Structural Funds Programmes 2007-2013***

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amárach
research



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Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020**

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Executive Summary

The allocation of €901 million in EU Structural Funds to Ireland from 2007-2013 was substantial and the Operational Programmes have to ensure that the role of EU Structural Funds is recognised and maximise public awareness of the availability and achievements of these funds. Therefore, assessing trends in public awareness and attitudes towards the received EU Structural Funds is essential for the design and implementation of effective communications strategies. A nationally representative face-to-face public awareness and attitudes survey of over 18s was carried out by Amárach Research in June/July 2016.

Findings from the survey suggested that there is a good base level awareness of EU funding programmes in Ireland. In fact, when asked about their awareness of programmes, strategies and acts, 24% spontaneously mentioned EU Funded Programmes; the highest rate of all the local and national economic and social development plans. Further, this represents an increase of 8% from 2009 figures and represents a positive measure of the relevance of EU Programmes to the Irish public. Other programmes, acts and strategies which scored highly for unprompted awareness include the Freedom of Information Act (17%), and County Development Plans (16%), and National Broadband Plan (14%). In addition, when prompted, awareness of the ERDF remains at 43% consistent with 2009 findings, despite dropping levels of funding. Where there is a lack of awareness is in people's knowledge of specific structural funds or their main objectives.

The majority of participants, across all areas and demographics, stated they were familiar with the EU logo with 78% stating that they had seen and/or heard of it in the preceding 12 months. While there may be a lack of in-depth knowledge of the specific programmes 77% agreed that a regional approach to funding is a good idea.

Overall, the majority of respondents were aware of EU funding and its role in Ireland, and felt that EU Funded Programmes were of benefit to themselves as individuals, their local town/area, as well as the people of Ireland in general.



1. Section One: Introduction

1.1. Overview

Since joining the European Union (EU) in 1973, Ireland has received approximately €18 billion in Structural Funds. Member States are required to prepare Operational Programmes for the use of EU Structural Funds; for the 2007-2013 funding, these were guided by the strategic priorities as set out in National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs). Public awareness of the role of these funds is an important issue and the NSRF, and the European Regional Development Fund's (ERDF) Communications Plan, set out the information strategy for the two Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) 2007-2013.

1.2. Funding

EU Funding in Ireland

Since 2000, there have been three ROPs for the BMW Region and S&E Region, supported under EU Cohesion Policy. The Cohesion Policy budget allocation was made to Ireland under National Development Plan/Community Support Framework (NDP/CSF) 2000-2006; the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013; and the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 Investment (see Figure 1).

- The NDP/CSF (2000-2006) involved an investment of €57 billion of Public, Private and EU funds in numerous projects and initiatives throughout the country including education, roads, public transport, health services, social housing, rural development, industry, water and waste services, childcare and local development. The CSF provision for this period across all the relevant funds was €3.7 billion.
- The NSRF 2007-2013¹ comprises the ERDF and the ESF and had an indicative budget of €2.296 billion (EU allocation of €751m with a matching public provision of €1.545 billion). The EU provision is divided equally between the two regions. In addition, Ireland received the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 2007-

¹ Note the NSRF delivered two funds namely the ERDF and the ESF whereas the NDP/CSF and the PA included a broader range of EU funds.

2013 which had a provision of €7.055 billion of which €2.34 billion was the EU allocation. The European Fisheries Fund allocated a budget of €42.26m with a total investment of €65.681m.

- The Partnership Agreement (PA) sets out the policy context within which European Structural and Investment Funds allocated to Ireland for the period 2014-2020 will be applied. The five funds described in the *Current Fund Programme Section* are funded under the PA including the YEI. It has an indicative EU budget allocation of €3.358 billion with a projected total envelope of investment of €6.13 billion over the lifetime of the programmes.

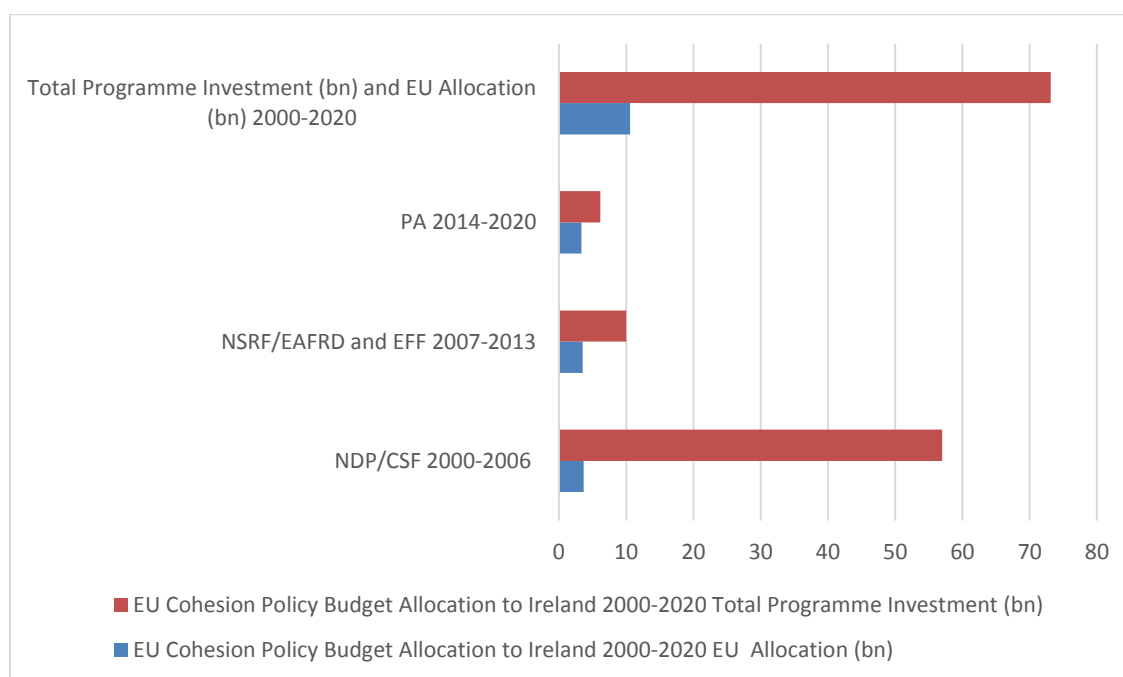


Figure 1: Total Programme Investment including EU Cohesion Policy Budget Allocation to Ireland 2000-2020

Funding of Interest: 2007-2013 Funding

During this period, Ireland was allocated €901m in EU Structural Funds, €751m of which was earmarked for two Regional Programmes and the national Social Fund Programme. The regional breakdown of this sum was €458m for the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Region and €292m for the Southern and Eastern (S&E) Region, co-funded by the European

Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Funding of €375m was allocated to labour market activity by the ESF and €375m to the ERDF. The balance of €151m is for smaller Territorial Co-operation programmes, including PEACE and European Territorial Co-operation programmes. This represented an approximate 80% decrease in the level of EU Funds since the 2000-2006 Programme.

Current Funding Programme 2014-2020

A new round of funding, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs), was underway at the time of the survey. ESIFs is the European Union's main investment policy tool for the period 2014-2020. The objectives of each of the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020² (ESIF) are as follows:

- The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. The ERDF also gives particular attention to specific territorial characteristics. ERDF action is designed to reduce economic, environmental and social problems, with a special focus on sustainable urban development.
- The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is Europe's main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job. ESF financing aims to improve job prospects for millions of Europeans, in particular those who find it difficult to get work. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) was launched to provide extra support to young people aged below 25 and living in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012. It will particularly support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), including long-term unemployed youngsters or those not registered as job-seekers.

² The ESIF comprises 5 funds, 4 of which are described in brief above. Ireland does not qualify for the 5th, the Cohesion Fund. The Cohesion Fund is aimed at Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90 % of the EU average. It aims to reduce economic and social disparities and to promote sustainable development.

- The EU's rural development policy funded through the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** helps the rural areas of the EU to meet the wide range of economic, environmental and social challenges of the 21st century. Frequently called "the second pillar" of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), it complements the system of direct payments to farmers and measures to manage agricultural markets (the so-called "first pillar").
- The **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)** complements the other ESIFs and seeks to promote a growth and job based recovery in Europe. The fund helps fishermen in the transition to sustainable fishing and supports coastal communities in diversifying their economies. It finances projects that create new jobs with an aim to improve the quality of life along European coasts.

This is the third ROP for the BMW Region and S&E Region, supported under EU Cohesion Policy. The two regions are classified as 'more developed region' for the 2014-2020 programme period, having a GDP per capita which was above 90% of the average GDP of the EU 27 over the 2007-2009 reference period.

1.3. Regional Assemblies

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly³ (NWRA) and the Southern Regional Assembly⁴ (SRA) were established on 1st January 2015. They are two of three Assemblies in the Republic of Ireland following on from the dissolution of the BMW and S&E Regional Assemblies. Under the Government's regional reform process, part of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the former eight Regional Authorities and two Regional Assemblies were consolidated to form the Southern Region, the Northern and Western Region, and the Eastern and Midland Region.

The NWRA and the SRA are the designated Managing Authorities (MA) for the ERDF co-funded BMW and S&E ROPs for the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 periods. The role of Regional Assemblies as MAs includes the management and monitoring of EU programmes under their

³ Formerly the Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly

⁴ Formerly the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly



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remit. The MAs are charged with communicating the achievements and highlighting the impact of the programmes in their respective regions. The EU Structural Funds are specifically designed to aid those regions which are lagging behind, to aid regions with structural difficulties, and to facilitate increased employment through training and human resource development. The aim is to create a better economic and social balance within, and between, Member States. BMW priorities for 2007-2013 funding included: innovation, ICT and the knowledge economy; environment and risk prevention; and urban development and secondary transport networks. The 2007-2013 priorities for the S&E Region included: innovation and the knowledge economy; environment and accessibility; and sustainable urban development.

The overall aims of the Communications Action Plan with regard to EU Structural funding are:

- To provide information on the availability of the EU Structural Funds for applicants, beneficiaries and the general public;
- To recognise the role and support provided by the EU Structural Funds and the appropriate funds; and
- To promote an understanding of the objectives and achievements of funds/themes supported by the EU Structural Funds.

1.4. Objectives

In order to provide additional information to assist the communications strategy, the Programme Managing Authorities sought to undertake research with the general public on their awareness and understanding of Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programmes 2007-2013, with a particular focus on the ERDF. The findings of the quantitative survey build upon previous surveys conducted for the NDP in 2001, 2002, and 2004 and for the NSRF programmes in 2009. Where relevant, trends are identified across surveys. The main objectives of the project were to:

- Ascertain the level of knowledge/awareness of Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programmes;
- Assess the level of knowledge/awareness of projects delivered;



- Determine the level of knowledge/awareness of different EU Funds and their contribution to economic and social development;
- Measure the level of knowledge/awareness of the Operational Programmes; and
- Ascertain the level of knowledge/awareness of different EU Funds

2. Section Two: Methodology

2.1. Project design and outputs

A nationally representative survey was carried out face-to-face across the two programme regions, using the following research protocol:

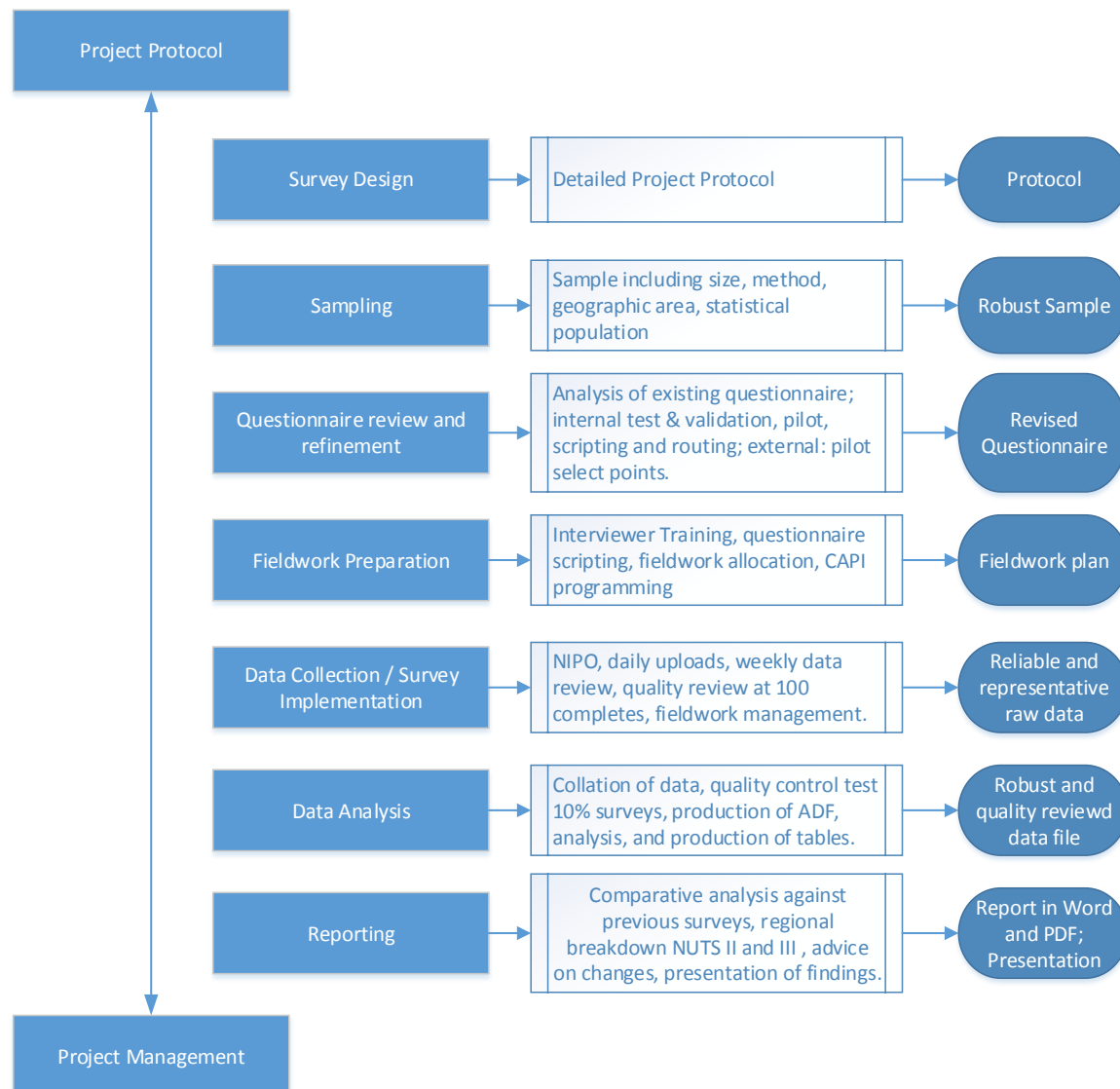


Figure 2: Project Protocol

2.2. Sampling and demographics

A total sample of 1,200 completed interviews from a nationally and regionally representative sample of Irish adults 18 years and older was achieved. This allows comparison with the 2009 iteration of the public attitudes and awareness survey. The sample points were distributed at the regional NUTS II and NUTS III level, and nationally, maintaining diversity in terms of the geographic distribution. Quota controls were employed to ensure that the sample was representative in terms of gender, age and socioeconomic group with results being weighted to be proportionately representative at the NUTS II and NUTS III regional, and the national levels (see Figure 3).

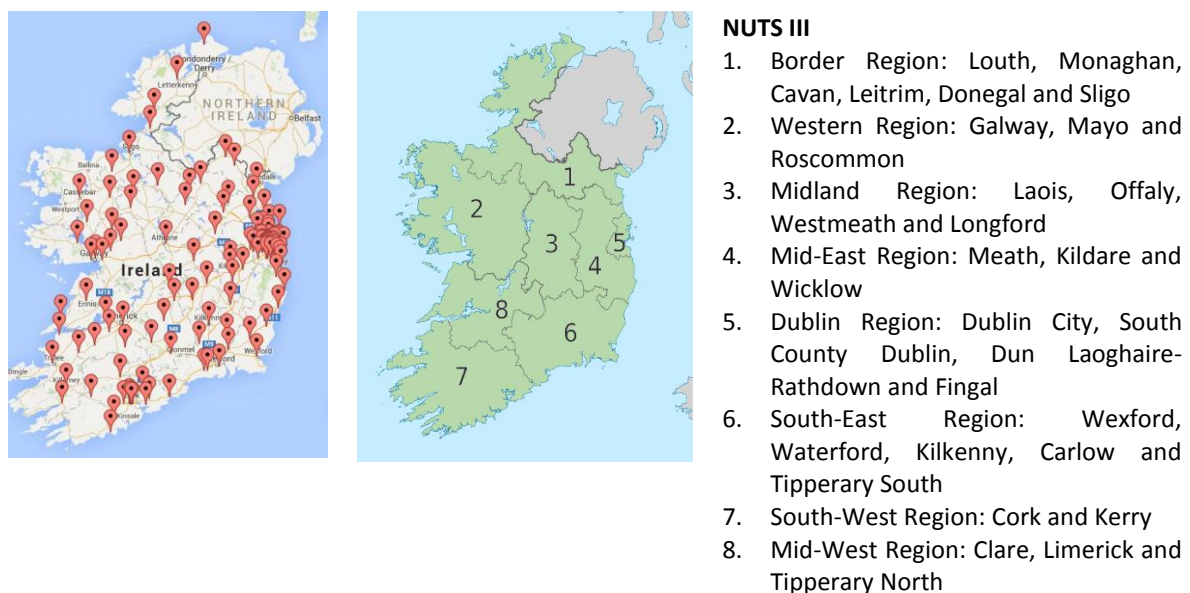


Figure 3: Sample map illustrating the actual geographical distribution of the sample points

The sample of 1,200 adults aged 18 years and over obtained was representative of the Irish population across a number of key demographics (see Figure 4 below).

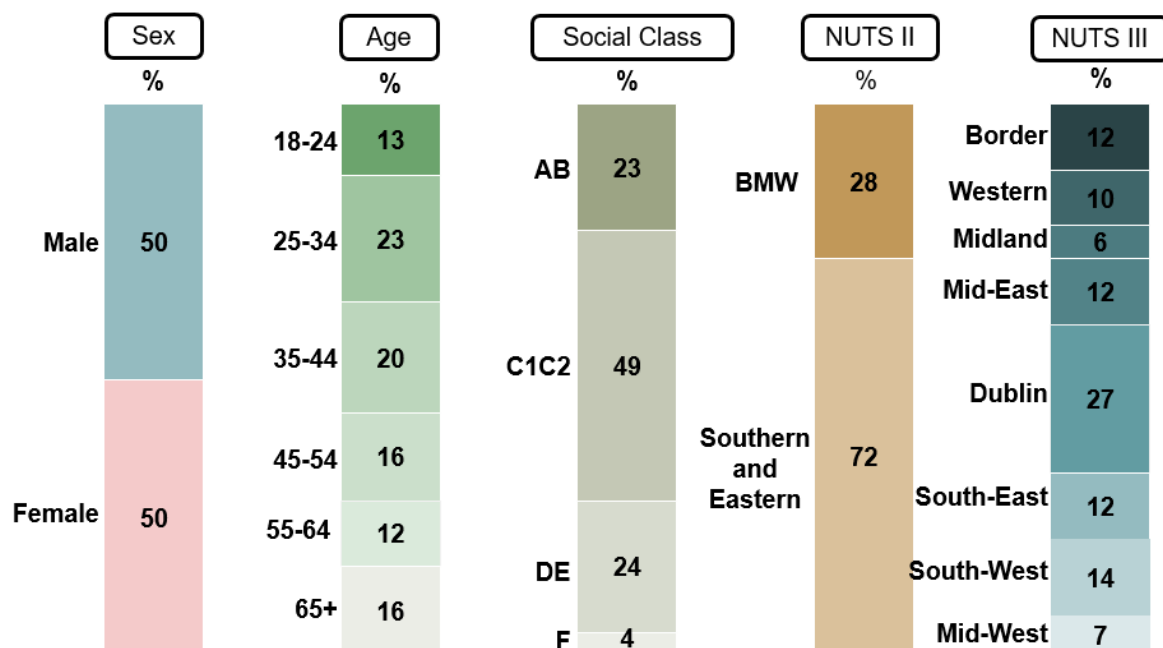


Figure 4: Demographic breakdown of participants⁵

⁵ Please note that the sample base for all Figures is 1,200 unless otherwise stated.

3. Section Three: Research Findings

3.1. Awareness and Understanding of EU Funded Programmes

3.1.1. Issues of National Concern

The members of the public were first asked their level of concern about a number of key issues, ranging from drugs to traffic congestion, similar to previous iterations of the survey. Respondents could answer on a scale of one to five, where one represented “not at all concerned” and five represented “very concerned”.

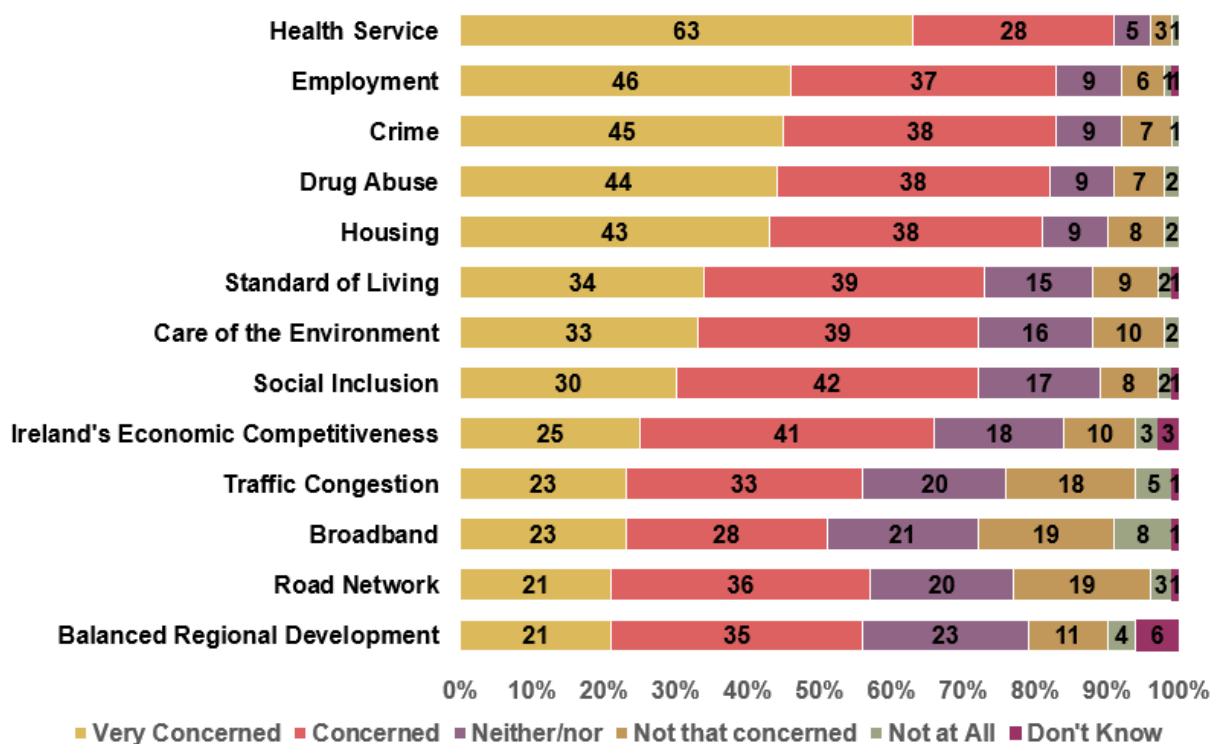


Figure 5: Can you tell me to what degree you are concerned or not concerned about each of the following:

As shown in Figure 5, similar to the 2009 study, the health service (91%) and employment (83%) were the issues of most concern. However, a smaller proportion said they were “very concerned” or “concerned” about employment when compared to 2009 (83% vs 94% respectively). This may reflect a drop in levels of unemployment since the beginning of economic recovery; yet levels of concern remain higher than in 2004 (75%). Housing was added to this iteration of the questionnaire and 81% of respondents said that they were

concerned about housing as an issue, unsurprising in the current context of housing shortages.

Some interesting regional differences emerged in the level of concern of respondents for certain issues. Although the majority of people in all areas indicated concern about the health service, 99% of people asked in the Mid-West Region said that they were concerned (see Figure 6).

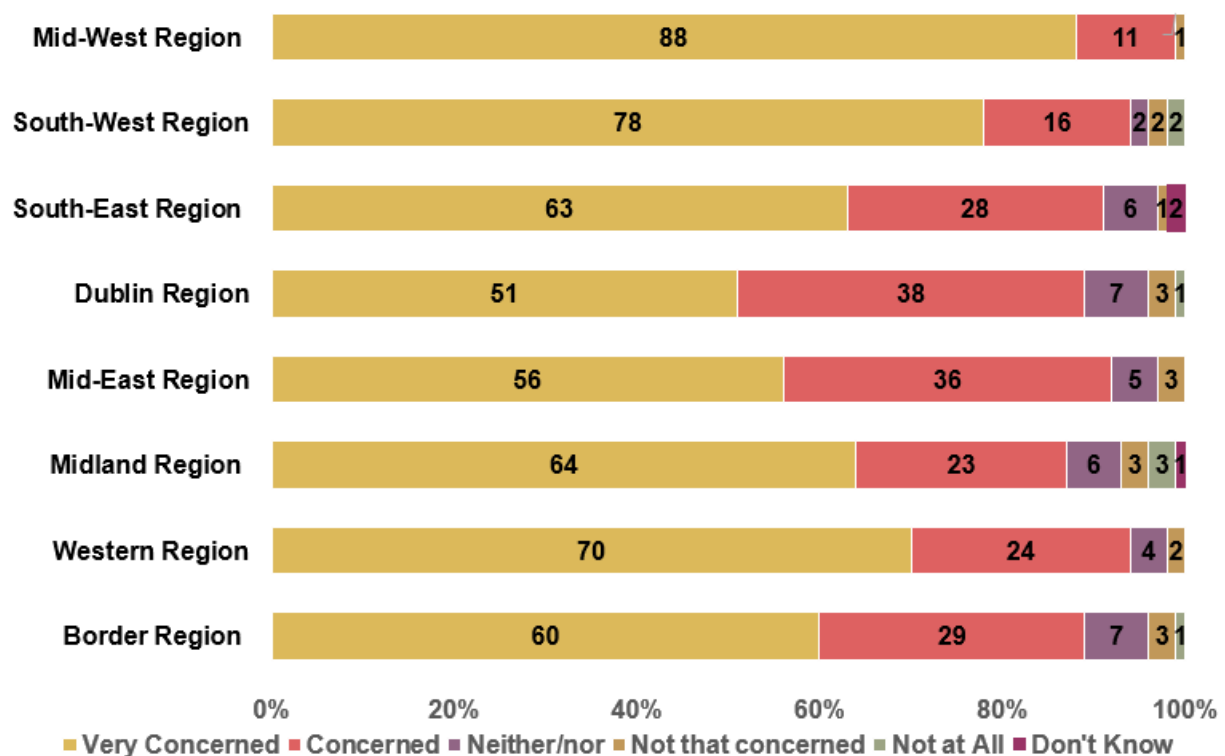


Figure 6: Concerns about health at the regional level

Those in the Midland Region (94%) were most likely to indicate concerns about employment, with those in the Dublin Region (76%) least likely to have indicated their concern (see Figure 7).

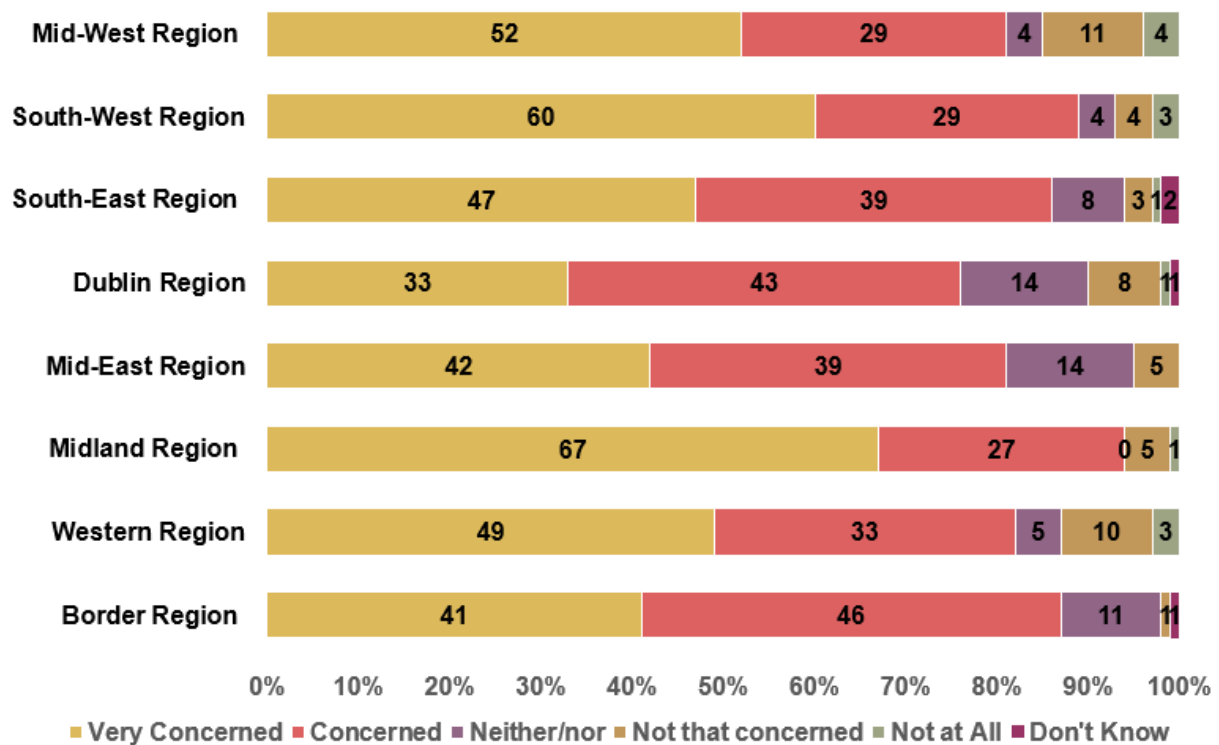


Figure 7: Concerns about employment at the regional level

Similarly, those in the Midland Region (88%) were most likely to indicate concerns about standard of living, with those in the Mid-East Region (55%) least likely to have indicated their concern (see Figure 8).

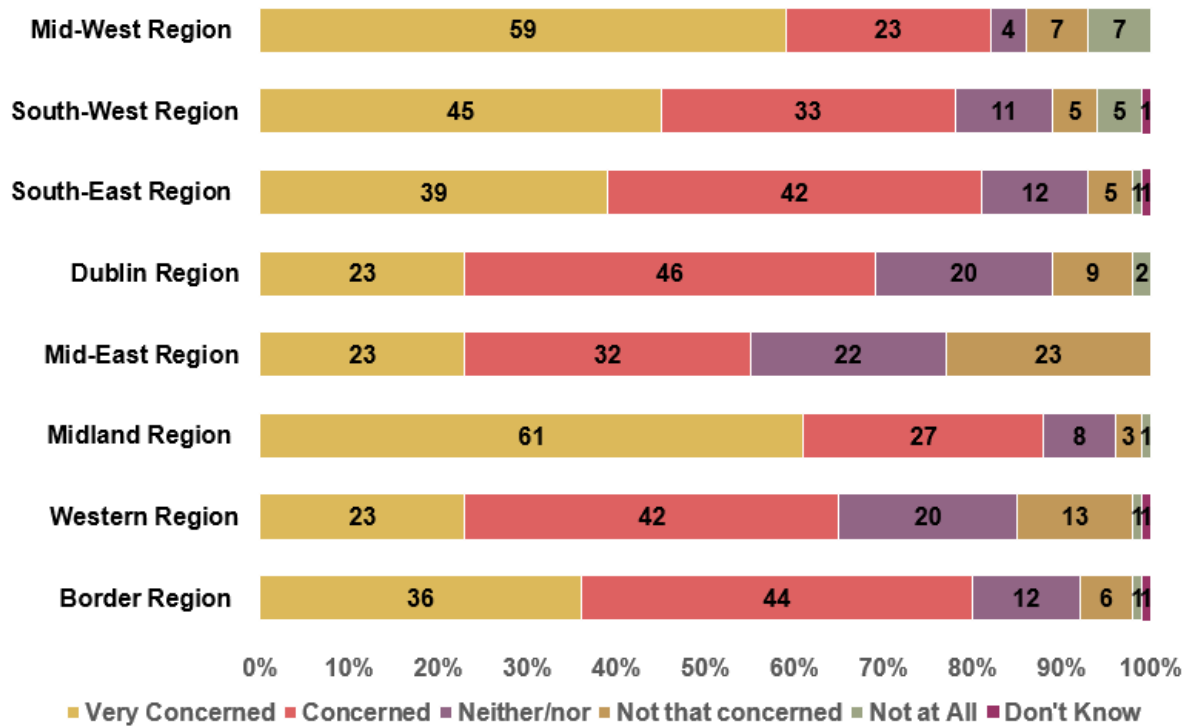


Figure 8: Concern about living standards by region

Those in the Midland Region were most likely to be very concerned about broadband (43%) with an additional 22% concerned. This is in comparison to the Mid-East Region where only 39% of people had any concern about broadband.

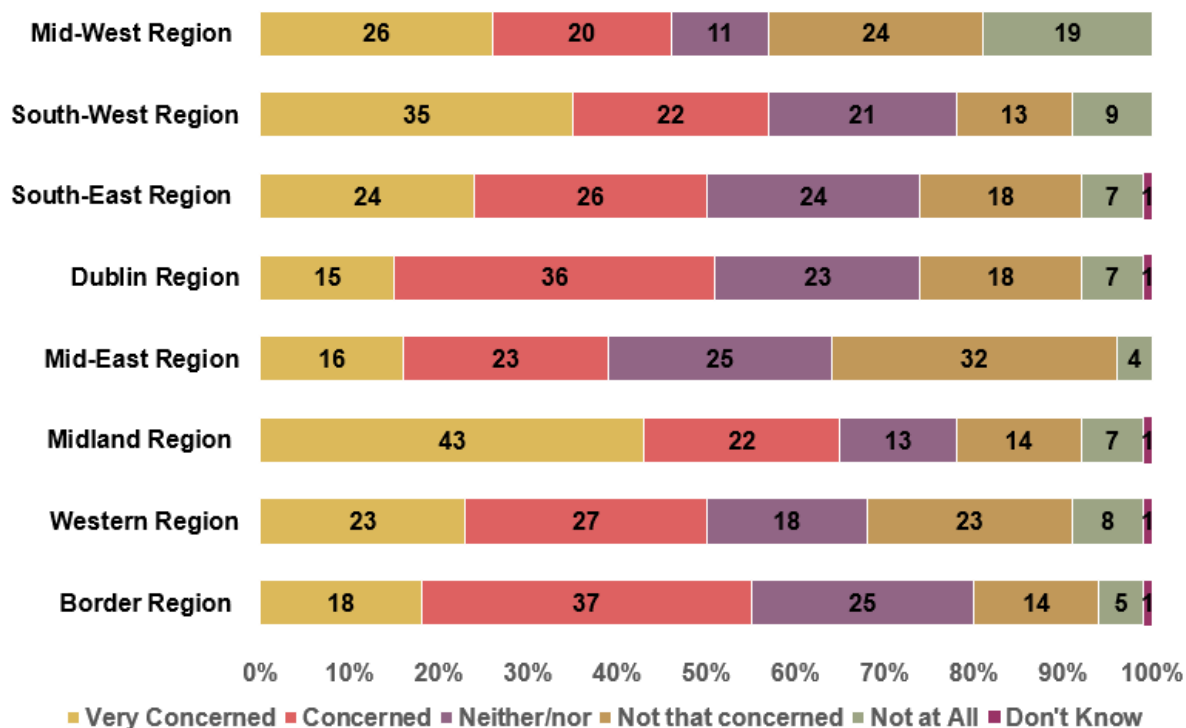


Figure 9: Concern about broadband by region

3.1.2. Awareness of EU programmes

Awareness of EU funded programmes was elicited both spontaneously and also when prompted. This was asked in the context of numerous other development plans and strategies to gauge general participant awareness of national and local development plans.

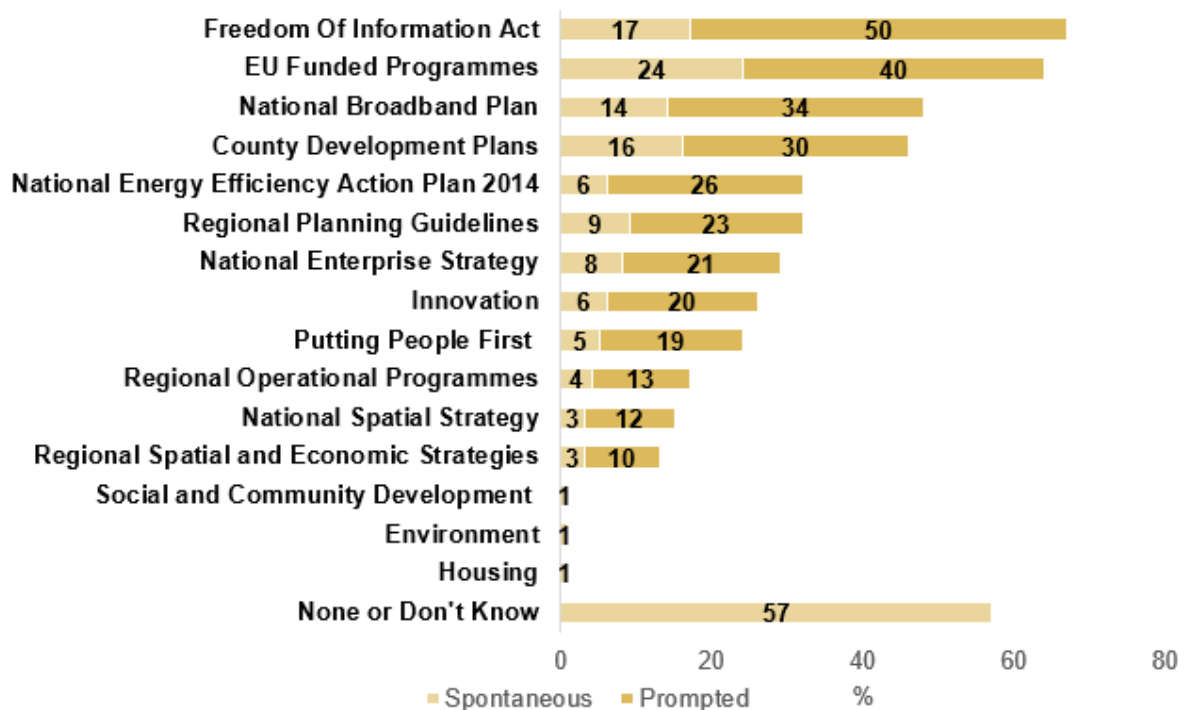


Figure 10: The Government has numerous local and national economic and social development plans or strategies. What, if any, are you currently aware of? (spontaneous) Which, if any, of the following Government Plans, Strategies or Acts have you heard of? (prompted)

As shown in Figure 10, when asked, over half of participants (57%) were unable to spontaneously name a plan or strategy. Of all the local and national economic and social development plans or strategies, EU Funded Programmes had the highest rate of spontaneous awareness (24%). Including prompted awareness, 64% of the public had some awareness of EU Funded Programmes; both spontaneous and overall awareness has increased in comparison to the 2009 survey. Only the Freedom of Information Act (2014) has a higher awareness among respondents (67%). People also mentioned strategies pertaining to Health, Roads, Irish Language Strategy, and Suicide Prevention but these were mentioned by less than 1% of respondents. Therefore, awareness levels of the EU programmes are

comparably strong in the context of other national and local development plans. This is particularly notable since many of the others would receive wider media coverage.

Table 1 highlights variations in the awareness of EU Funded Programmes across ages and regions. The highest levels of spontaneous awareness were amongst the 35-44 years (29%) and 45-54 years (28%). Interestingly, a higher proportion of younger participants were spontaneously aware of EU Funded Programmes than some of the older cohorts: 26% of 18-24 year olds compared to 21% of participants aged 55-64 years and 19% of 65+ (see Appendix 2 for further demographic breakdown). However, when prompted awareness was taken into account, the youngest age group (18-24 years) were least likely to have heard of the programme, with those age 35 to 44 most likely (70%).

There were no differences in awareness at NUTS II level: 65% of BMW Region as compared to 64% of S&E Region. However, at a NUTS III level, a much lower proportion of respondents in the Mid-East Region had spontaneous or prompted awareness of EU Funded Programmes than in the other NUTS III Regions (53%). Those in the Border region had the highest levels of awareness of the Programmes (70%).

Table 1: Demographic differences in awareness of EU Funded Programmes

	Age							NUTS II		NUTS III							
%	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	BMW	S&E	Border	Midland	Western	Dublin	Mid-East	Mid-West	South-East	South-West
Spontaneous	24	26	22	29	28	21	19	27	23	35	29	16	32	11	13	24	24
Prompted	40	31	39	41	39	50	43	38	41	35	33	44	37	42	56	37	45
Overall	64	57	61	70	67	71	62	65	64	70	62	60	69	53	69	61	69

 = under index = over index⁶

⁶ Over or Under Index refers to any score 5 or more above or below the total, and hence can be considered significant.

3.1.3. Sources of Awareness of EU Funded Programmes

Participants with either spontaneous or prompted awareness of the EU Funded Programmes (n=775) were asked where they had seen/heard of the programmes. Options were provided including both the source (advertisement, news, Government, local public representative, word of mouth and other) and medium (e.g. television, newspaper, radio, social media, family) through which they may have gained awareness.

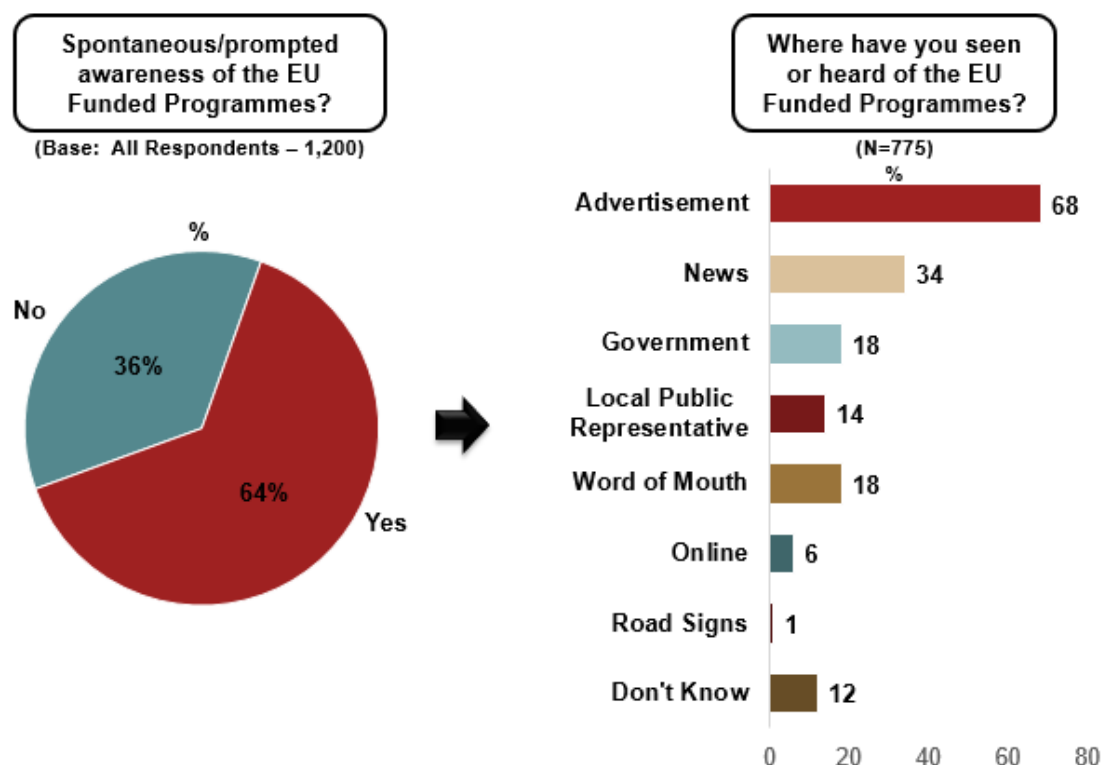


Figure 11: Where have you seen or heard of the EU Funded Programmes?

As shown in Figure 11, the majority of responses indicated that participants were aware of EU Funded Programmes through advertising (68%; n=529), with the most common medium for advertisements being television advertisements (69%), followed by print newspapers (41%) and then radio (22%). Just over one third (34%; n= 265) of respondents identified news as being a source of information, again with the most common medium being television (89%), followed by print newspapers (23%) and radio (22%). Only 6% (n=44) of those who had seen and/or heard of the EU Funded Programmes had become aware through online

mediums, the most common of which was Facebook (48%) followed by websites (site unspecified; 41%⁷). The only source named which was not given as an option was road signs (1%).

⁷ Caution small base (n=44)

3.1.4. Awareness of Sectors/Initiatives supported by EU Funded Programmes

Participants were asked what they thought EU Funded Programmes support. Roads were most commonly cited as schemes funded under European Programmes, both as a first mention (18%) and overall (36%). One quarter of participants (25%) identified that education receives EU funding, with less than one in five mentioning employment (19%), health⁸ (18%), the environment (17%) or fisheries (15%). One third of people (33%) could not provide even one example of what the EU funded programmes support in Ireland, with this rising to 51% of adults in the Mid-East Region and 42% of the youngest cohort (18-24 years).

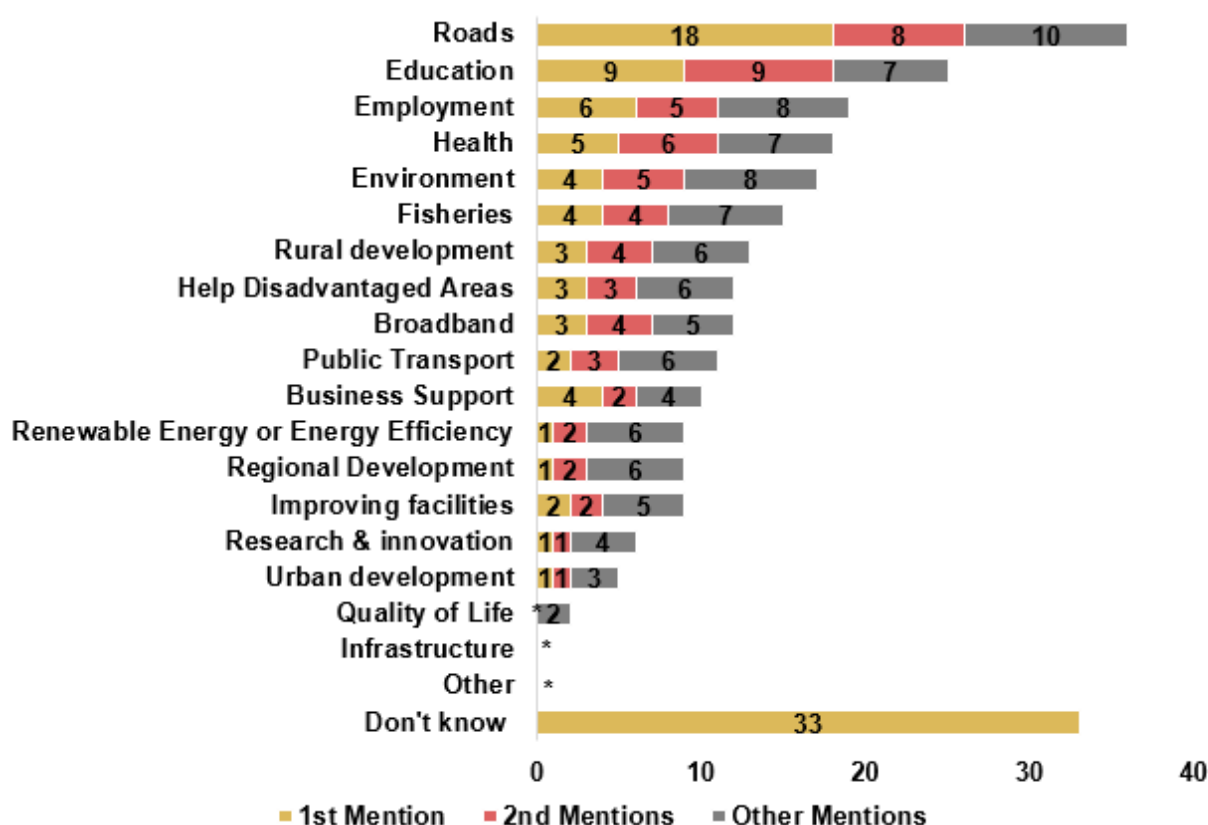


Figure 12: Can you name anything the EU Funded Programmes support?

The priorities for the Operational Programmes for 2007-2013 (innovation, ICT and the knowledge economy; environment and risk prevention; urban development; and secondary transport networks) were rarely mentioned. However, this is understandable since the investment programmes are assigned scheme names not given a priority label when

⁸ Which is not funded through EU Funded Programmes

implemented. Research and innovation was mentioned by 6% of respondents, 9% mentioned renewable energy, 17% mentioned the environment, and 5% of people mentioned urban development. When split by region, individuals from the Mid-East Region were less likely to have named something for nearly every category (see Table 2 below). The youngest two age groups (18-24 years and 25-34 years) were most likely to be aware that EU Funded Programmes contributed to education.

Table 2: Demographic differences in perception of respondents

Numbers expressed as %	Total	Age						NUTS III							
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Border	Western	Midland	Mid-East	Dublin	South-East	South-West	Mid-West
Broadband	11	13	11	13	11	10	7	6	9	6	2	13	10	17	22
Education	24	28	31	25	22	19	18	23	9	26	17	31	21	34	23
Employment	19	16	18	23	22	20	12	30	13	19	10	20	19	19	17
Environment	18	16	18	15	19	24	16	26	18	16	5	22	14	16	20
Fisheries	14	13	16	13	17	11	15	13	6	24	4	20	16	17	8
Disadvantaged areas	12	13	10	11	14	16	10	11	8	33	2	10	12	16	13
Improving facilities	8	9	8	10	8	7	6	10	4	20	1	8	14	8	4
Roads	36	30	32	35	41	42	38	36	43	26	30	36	31	41	44
Rural Development	13	12	8	11	14	19	16	21	17	10	5	13	14	11	13
Don't know	33	42	35	31	28	25	34	30	33	16	51	33	44	22	17

 = under index

 = over index



Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

3.1.5. Awareness of European Funds

Less than half of respondents were aware of, or familiar with, any of the specific programmes of EU funding: just under half of people were aware of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); approximately two in five people were aware of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); while slightly fewer people (approximately one third) were aware of European Structural Funds.

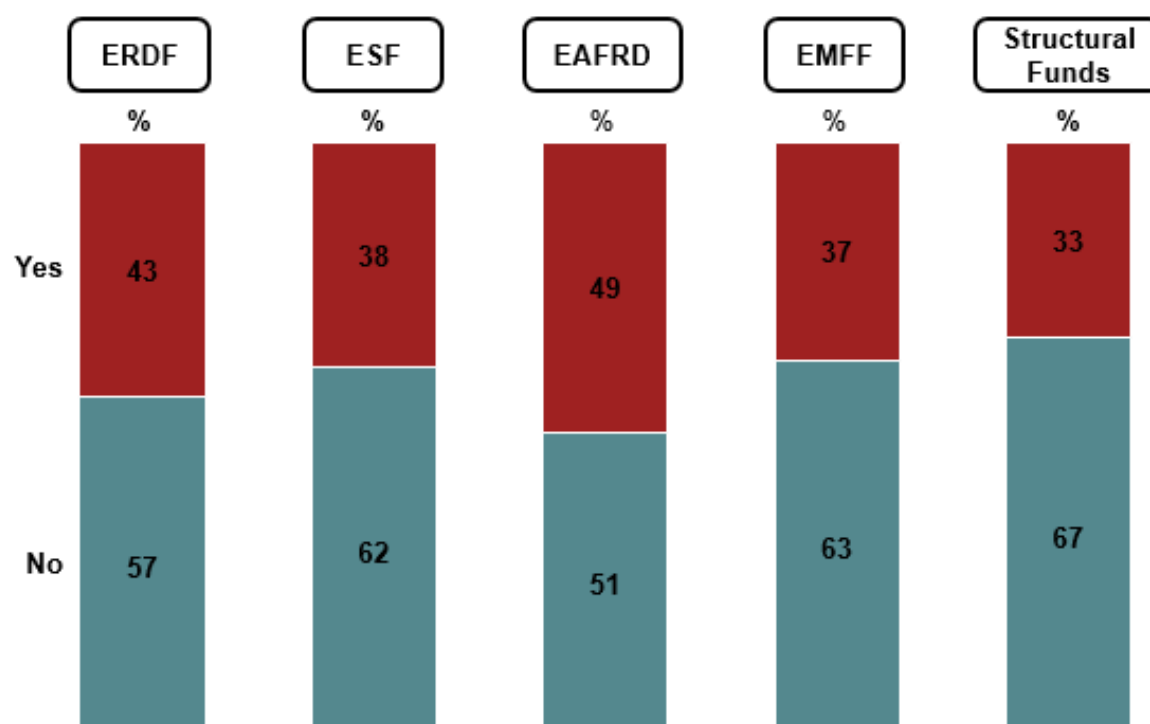


Figure 13: Ireland receives funding from a number of European Funds. Can I ask if you are aware of any of the following European Funds?

Across the different European funding programmes, a number of demographic similarities emerged: levels of awareness were higher in the 45-54 (40-55%) and 55-64 (44-62%) age brackets, with those aged 18-24 years having the lowest level of awareness (18-36%). Similarly, levels of awareness of the funds were consistently higher in the AB (42-56%) and farming (F; 47-78%) groups, than those in the C1C2 (31%-49%) or DE (27-40%) groups (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Demographic differences in awareness of funds

% Total Aware	Age							Social Class			
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+		AB	C1C2	DE	F
EAFRD	49	36	42	47	55	62	57	54	49	40	78
ERDF	43	28	36	43	52	55	45	56	40	34	53
ESF	38	30	31	43	46	46	34	48	36	31	49
EMFF	37	25	34	37	43	44	41	45	37	28	47
EU Structural Funds	33	18	29	34	40	48	32	42	31	27	47

 = under index

 = over index

Awareness of the European Regional Development Fund

As shown in Figure 14, approximately two in five (43%) people said that they were aware of the European Regional Development Fund, as in 2009. More males than females were aware of the fund (49% vs 37% respectively), while those in the 45-54 (52%) and 55-64 (55%) age brackets were far more likely to have heard of the fund, particularly when compared to the youngest cohort (28%). A slightly higher proportion of people in the S&E Region (44%) were aware of the ERDF than those in the BMW Region (39%). At a NUTS III level, a higher proportion of respondents in the South-West Region (54%) were aware of the fund, whereas less than a third (29%) of those in the Midland Region said that they were aware of the fund.

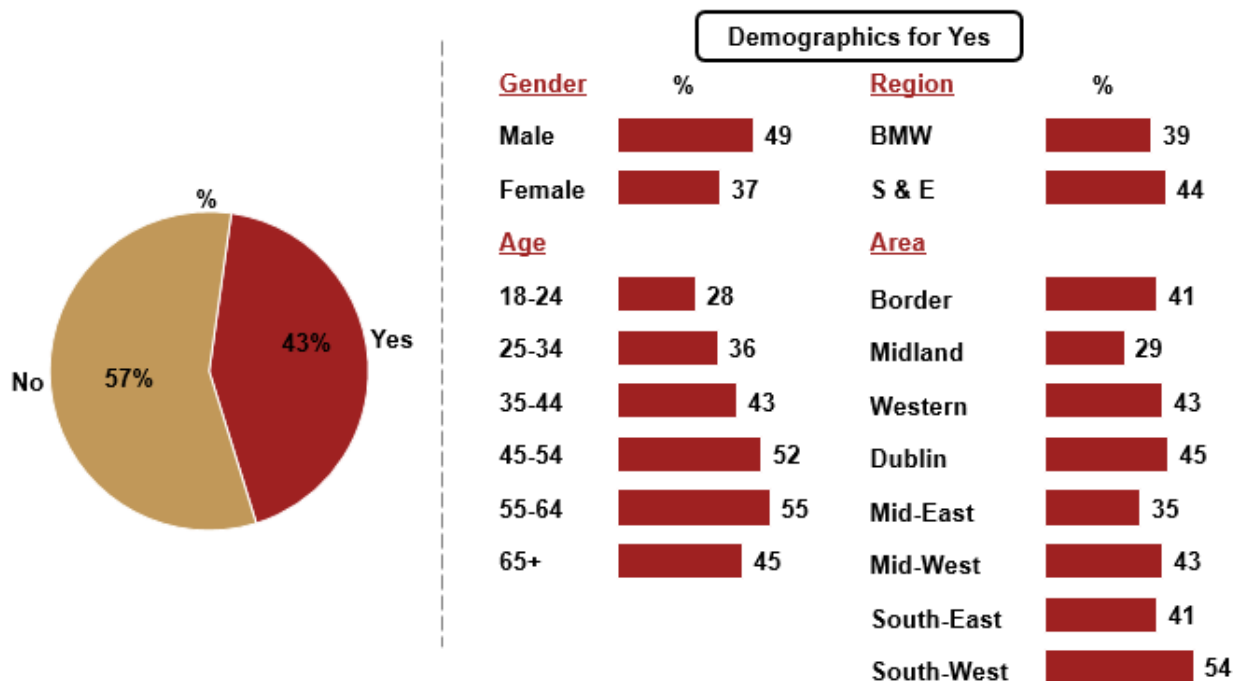


Figure 14: Awareness of ERDF⁹

⁹ Base of Yes is 43% of the total 1,200 (n=513).

When asked, rural development (36%) was the most commonly stated usage of ERDF funding, followed by economic development (23%; see Figure 15). A considerable number of people incorrectly stated that ERDF funds were used for agriculture (20%). Education and training initiatives was mentioned by over one in ten (14%), possibly reflecting awareness of training initiatives co-funded by the ERDF and delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in each county.

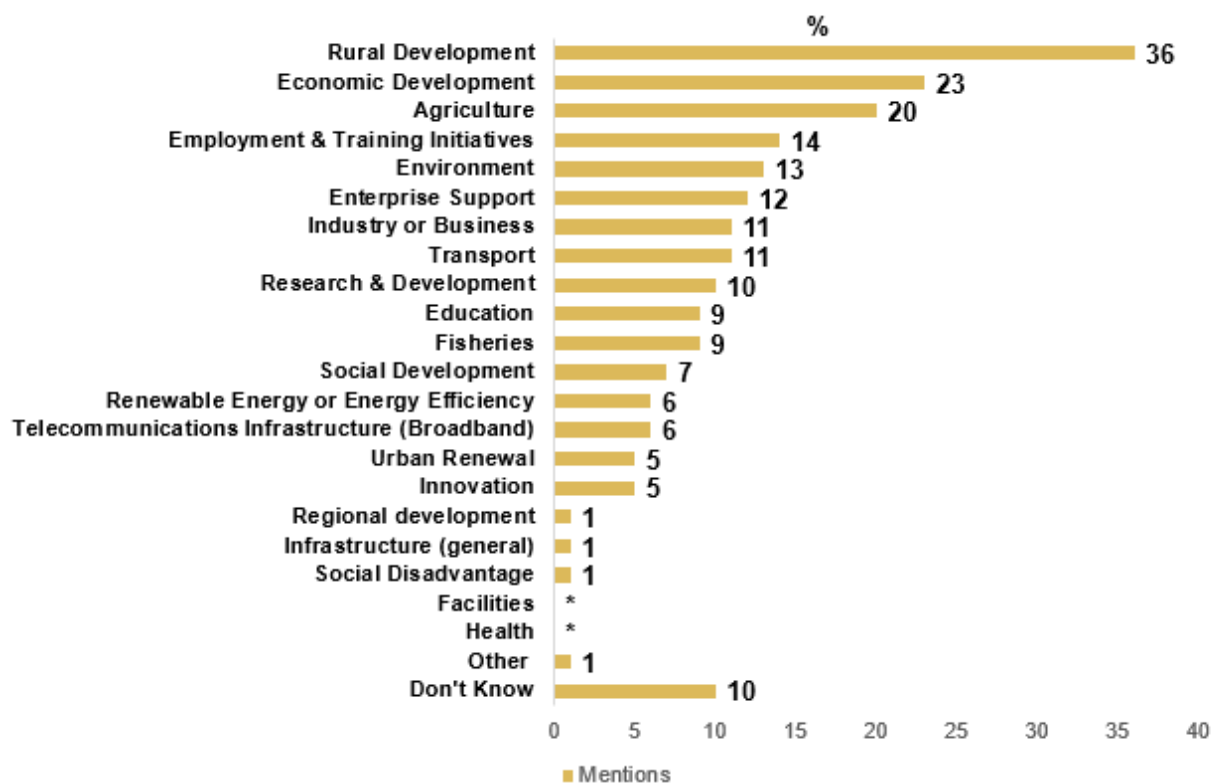


Figure 15: What do you believe the European Regional Development Fund is used for? (multi-code, unprompted)

Awareness of the European Social Fund

Nearly two in five people (38%) said that they were aware of the European Social Fund, similar to 2009 (35%), with males and females having very similar levels of awareness (39% and 37% respectively, see Figure 16). Slightly more people were aware of the ESF in the S&E Region than the BMW Region (39% vs 35%). People in the Midland Region (24%) and Mid-East Region (28%) were least likely to be aware of the ESF while those in the Mid-West Region (52%) had greatest awareness of the fund.

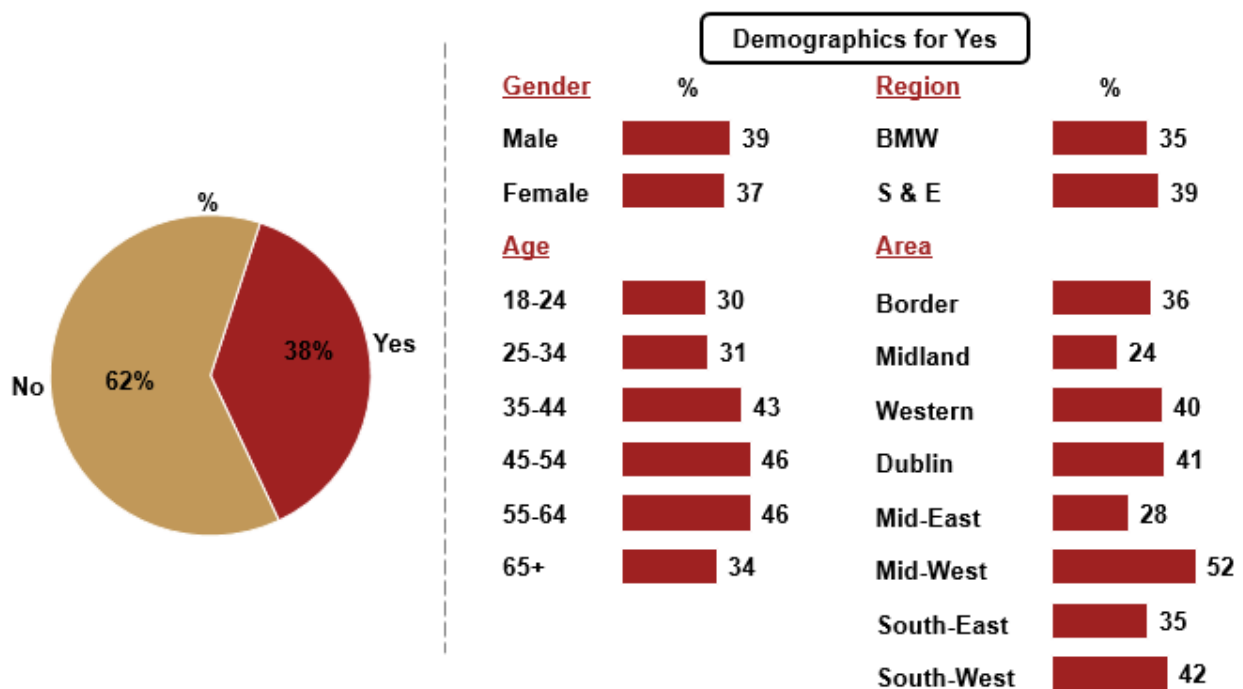


Figure 16: Awareness of the ESF¹⁰

¹⁰ Base of Yes is 38% of the total 1,200 (n=456).

Similar to the 2009 iteration of the study, social development (34%) was the most common stated usage of funds (see Figure 17). However, much fewer people aware of the ESF named social development than in 2009 (51%). Employment and training initiatives (21%) and education (21%) were the next most frequently mentioned uses of ESF funds.

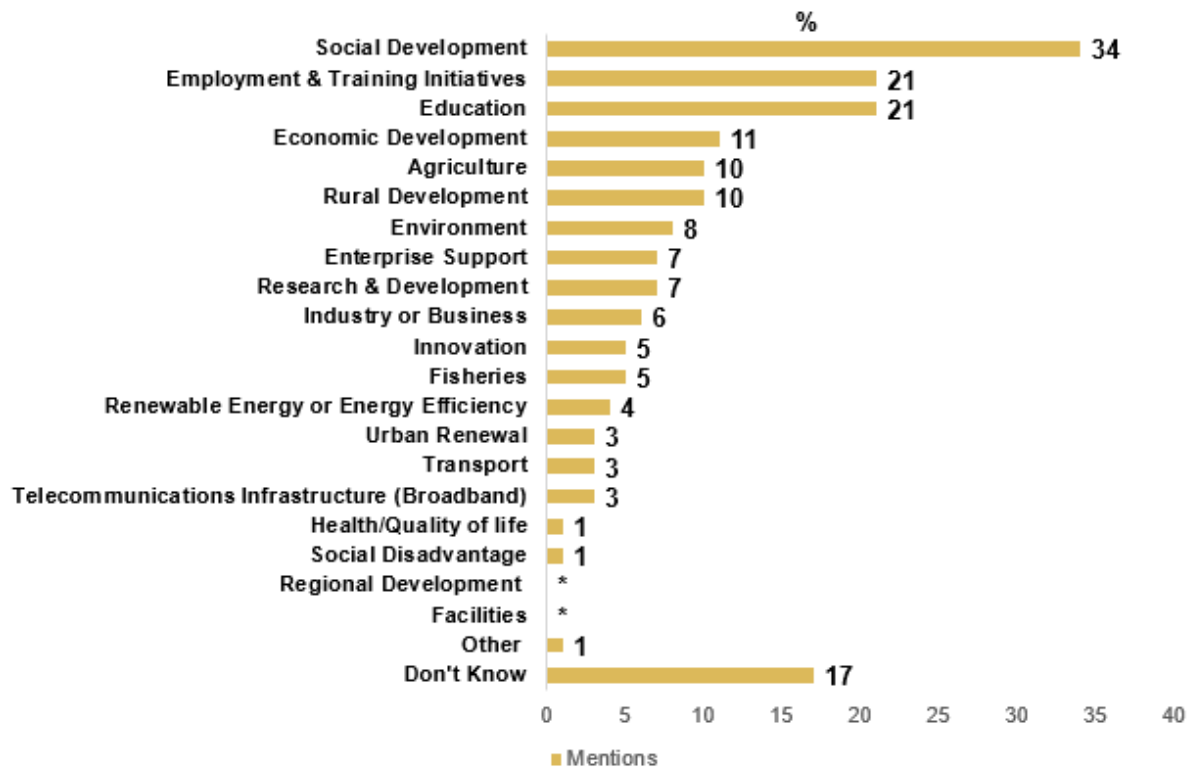


Figure 17: What do you believe the European Social Fund is used for?

Awareness of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development had the highest level of general awareness (49%; see Figure 18) and of these people the majority (84%) could name agriculture as a beneficiary of funding, followed by rural development (17%; see Figure 19). This is unsurprising since both are included in the name of the fund. Again, a similar proportion of adults stated that they were aware of the EAFRD as 2009 (49% and 48% respectively), although slightly fewer adults could name the beneficiaries of the fund in 2016. A very small NUTS II regional difference was observed with those in the BMW Region slightly more likely to be aware of the EAFRD than people in the S&E Region (52% vs 48%). Awareness of the EAFRD had the greatest gender difference in the awareness of specific EU funds, with 55% of males aware of the EAFRD as compared to 44% of females aware of the fund.

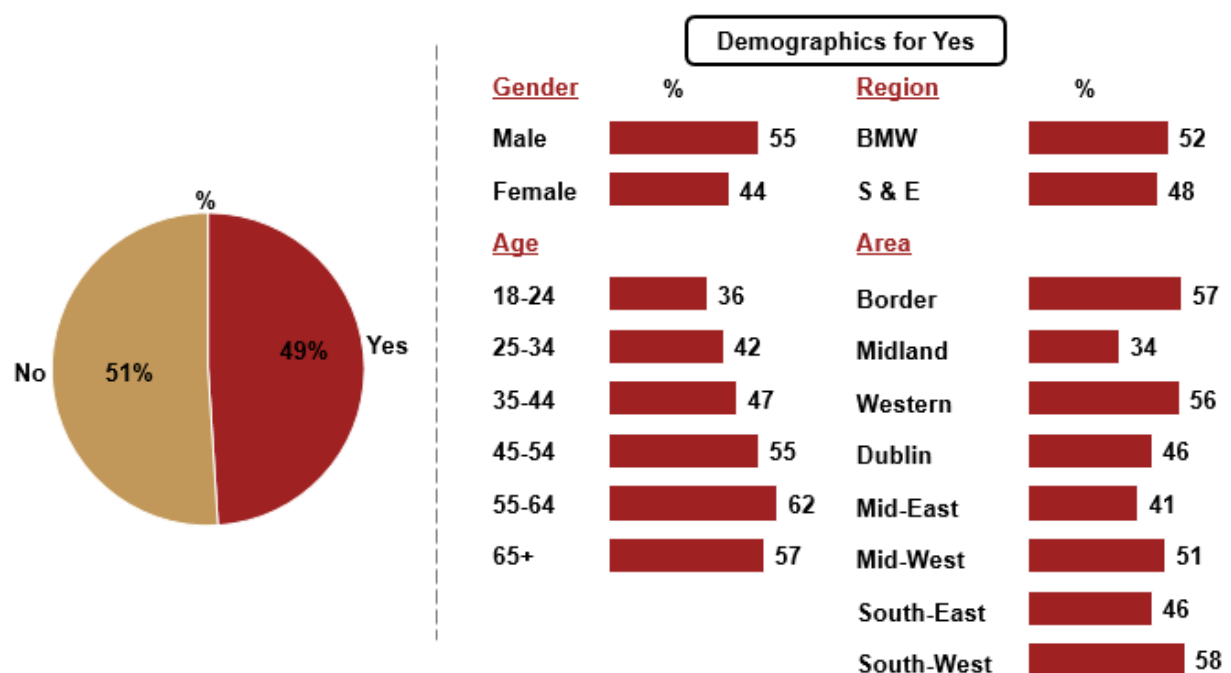


Figure 18: Awareness of the EAFRD¹¹

¹¹ Base of Yes is 49% of the total 1,200 (n=589).

Agriculture was unsurprisingly the most commonly mentioned beneficiary of the fund (82%; see Figure 19). This is slightly lower than the 94% of respondents who mentioned agriculture in the 2009 iteration of the survey.

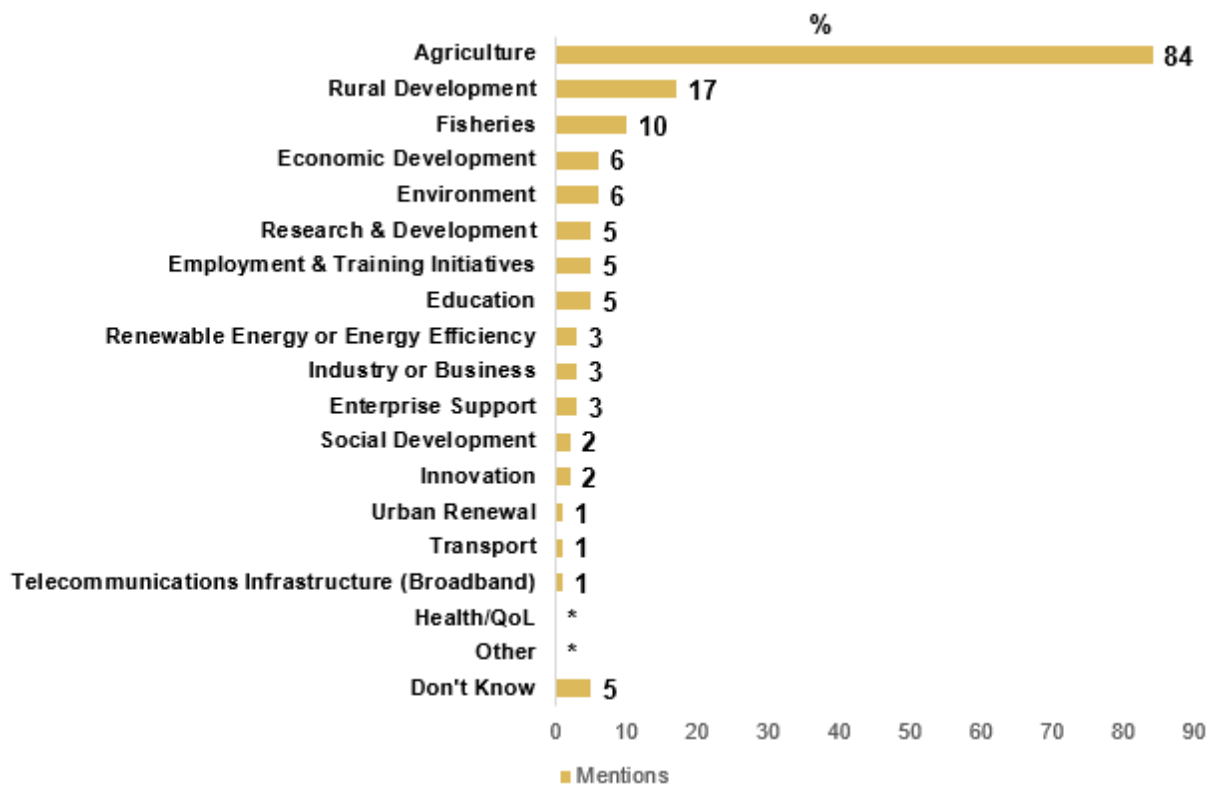


Figure 19: What do you believe the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is used for? (multi-code, unprompted)

Awareness of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

Just over one third of people (37%) were aware of the EMFF; which may be partially explained by its change in name from European Fisheries Fund in 2014 (which was preceded by Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance Fund). A higher proportion of people were aware of the EFF in 2009 (42%) than the EMFF in this iteration of the survey.

There was no difference in awareness of the EMFF at the NUTS II regional level; 37% of both the BMW and S&E Region stated that they were aware of the fund. However, examining this more closely, there were substantial NUTS III regional differences in awareness of the EMFF: just over half of those in the South-West region were aware of the funding while less than one in five people (18%) in the Mid-East Region stated that they were aware of the fund. Those in coastal areas were more likely to say that they were aware of the fund.

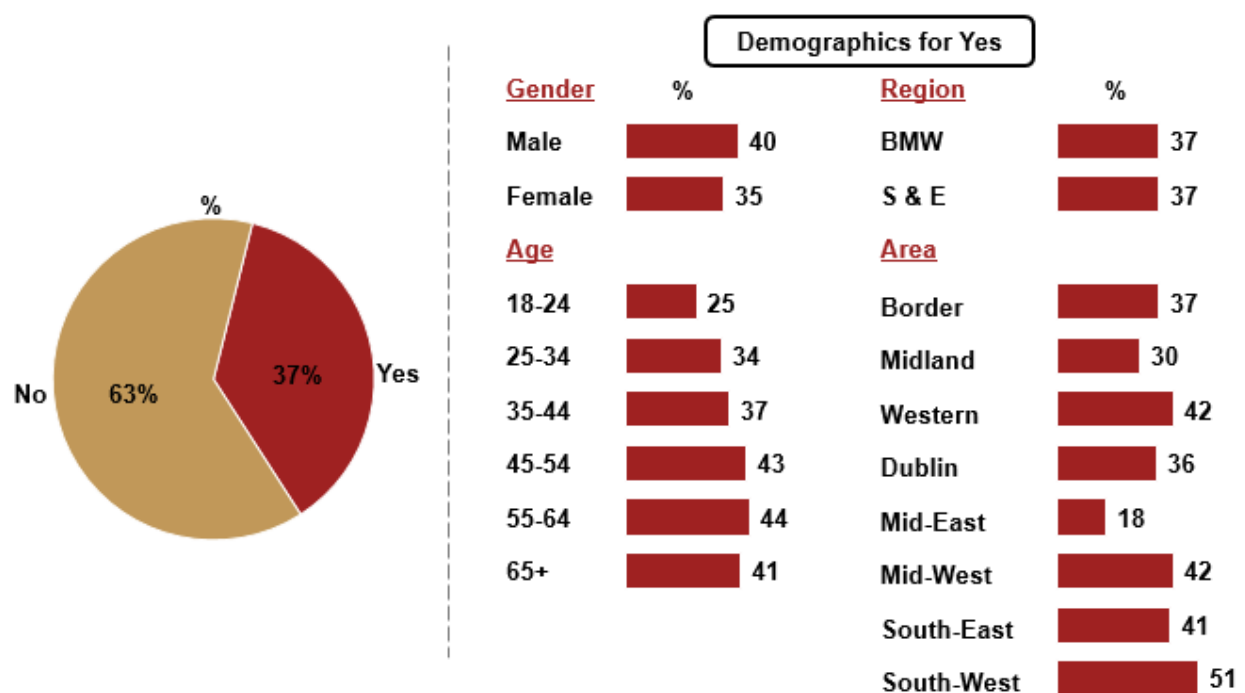


Figure 20: Awareness of the EMFF¹²

¹² Base of Yes is 37% of the total 1,200 (n=447).

Of those who said that they were aware of the fund, 86% were able to correctly name fisheries as a beneficiary of the funding. However, as evident in Figure 21, numerous incorrect beneficiaries were also mentioned.

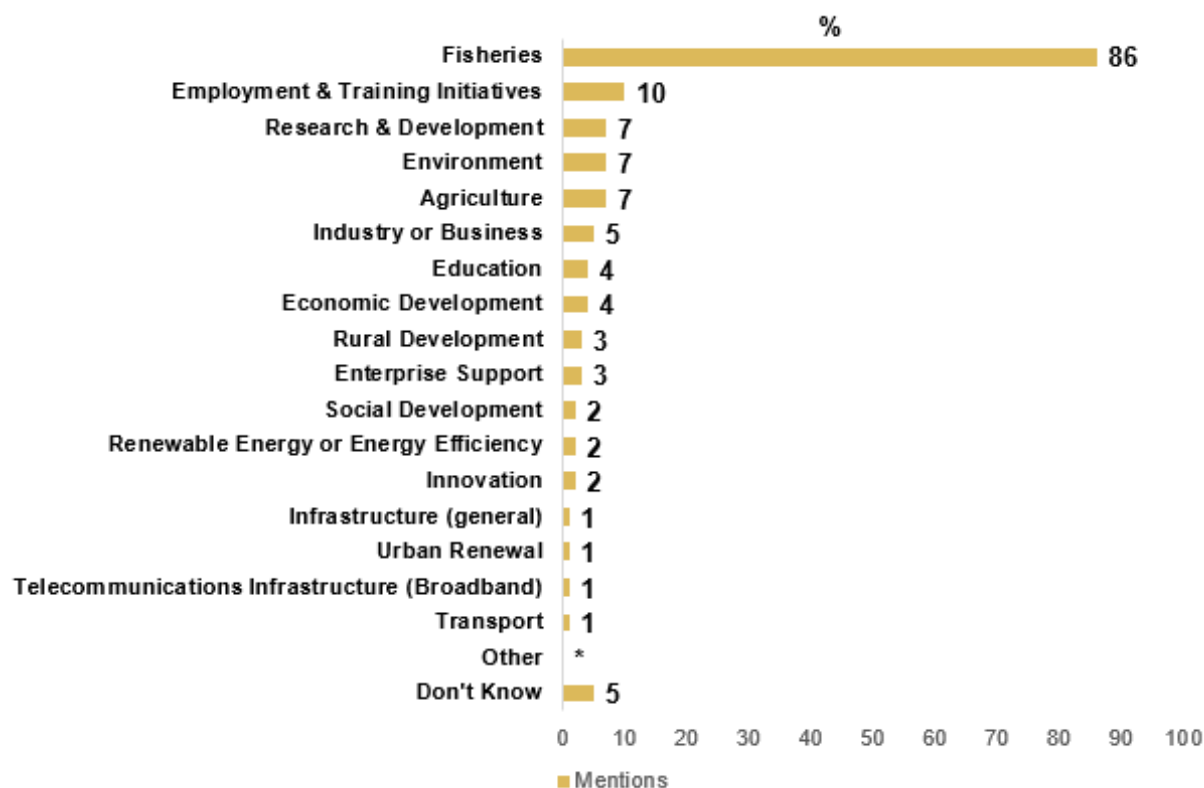


Figure 21: What do you believe the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund is used for?

Awareness of the European Structural Fund

One third of respondents (33%) stated that they were aware of European Structural Funds in general, slightly higher than in 2009 (29%). Males were more likely to be aware than females (37% and 30% respectively), while those aged 55-64 years were much more likely to be aware of the funds than those aged 18-24 years (48% and 18% respectively). Again there were negligible NUTS II regional difference in awareness of the European Structural Funds; yet there were substantial NUTS III regional differences in awareness, with those in the Mid-East Region much less likely to state that they are aware of the Structural Funds than respondents in any other region (see Figure 22).

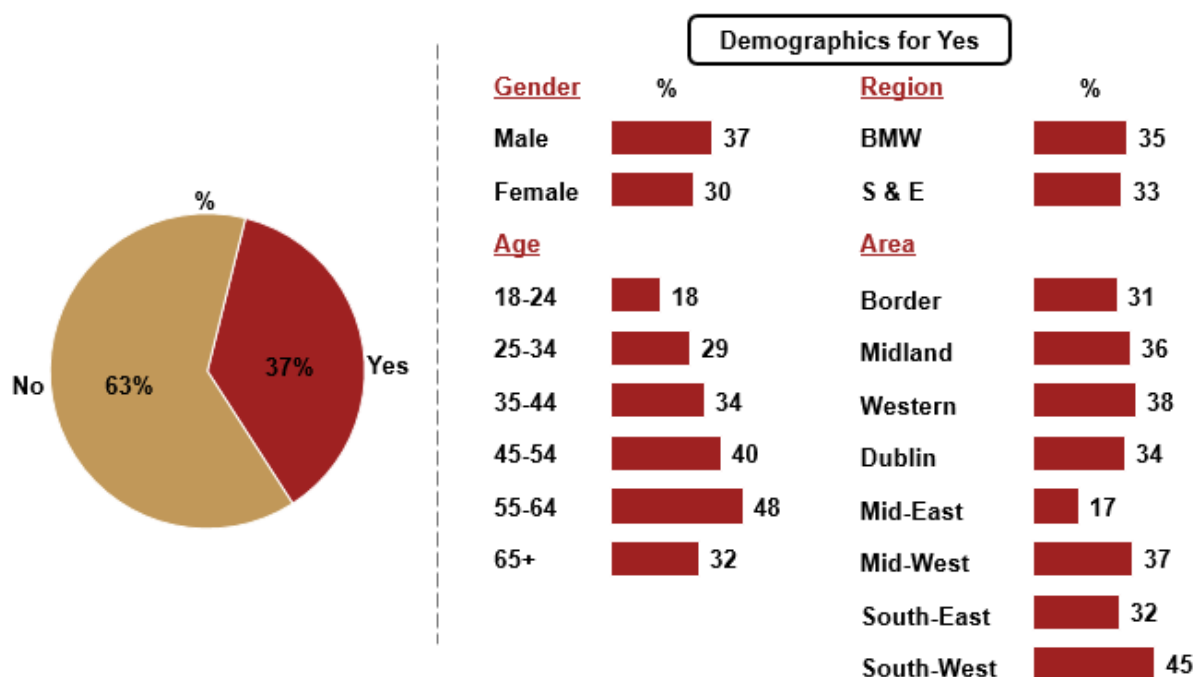


Figure 22: Awareness of European Structural Funds¹³

¹³ Base of Yes is 33% of the total 1,200 (n=401).

3.1.6. EU logo

Respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the EU logo and whether they had seen it or heard about it in the preceding 12 months. The majority of participants, across all areas and demographics, stated they were familiar with the EU logo (88% overall; see Figure 23) with 78% stating that they had seen and/or heard of it in the preceding 12 months (see Figure 24).

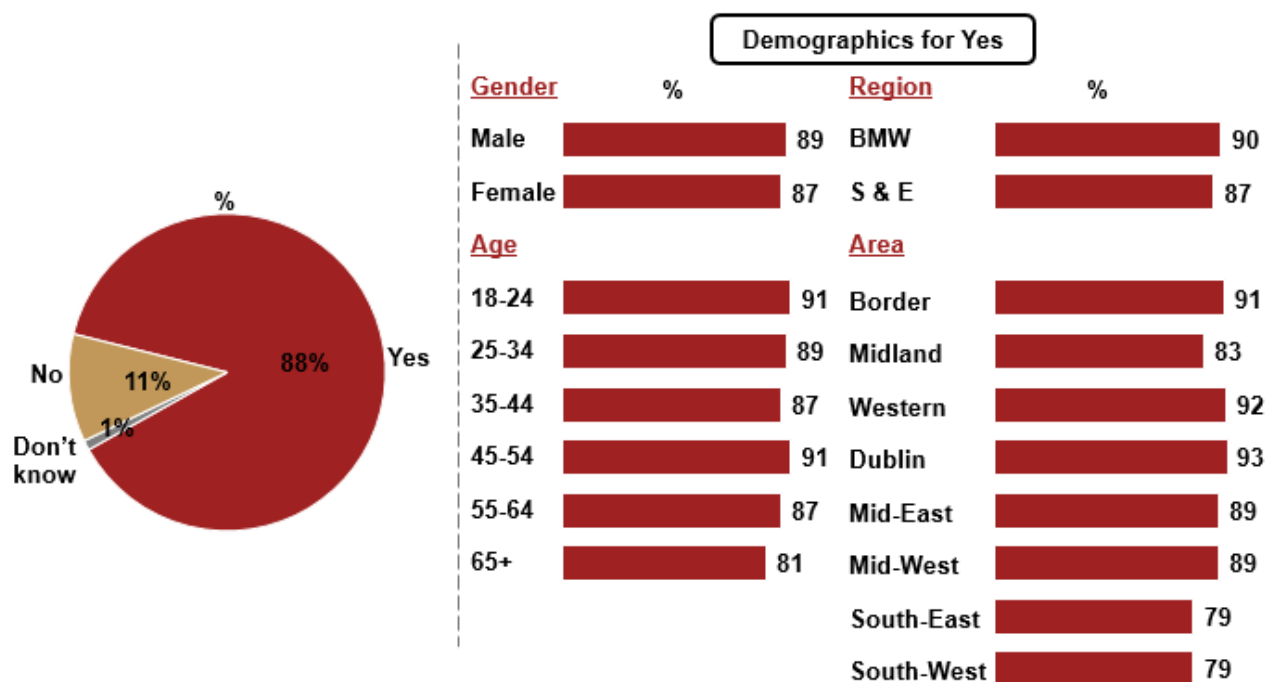


Figure 23: Are you familiar with the EU logo?¹⁴

¹⁴ Base of Yes is 88% of the total 1,200 (n=1053).

Of those who could recall seeing or hearing of the EU logo, the majority said that this was through advertisements (77%) followed by news (23%) and the government (11%; see Figure 24). The majority who recollected seeing the logo in advertisements said that they had seen it on the television (69%), followed by road signs (28%), print newspapers (19%) and billboards (17%). As the number of those who have reported seeing this on television is very high, it may be the case that they are reporting seeing the flag on the news and news stories. People living in the BMW Region were far more likely to have seen the logo on a road sign (47%) as compared to the S&E Region (21%), while those in the S&E Region were more likely to have seen it on the television (74%) as compared to the BMW Region (58%). Only 5% of people stated that they had seen the logo online (excluding online newspapers), with half of these people naming Facebook as the medium¹⁵.

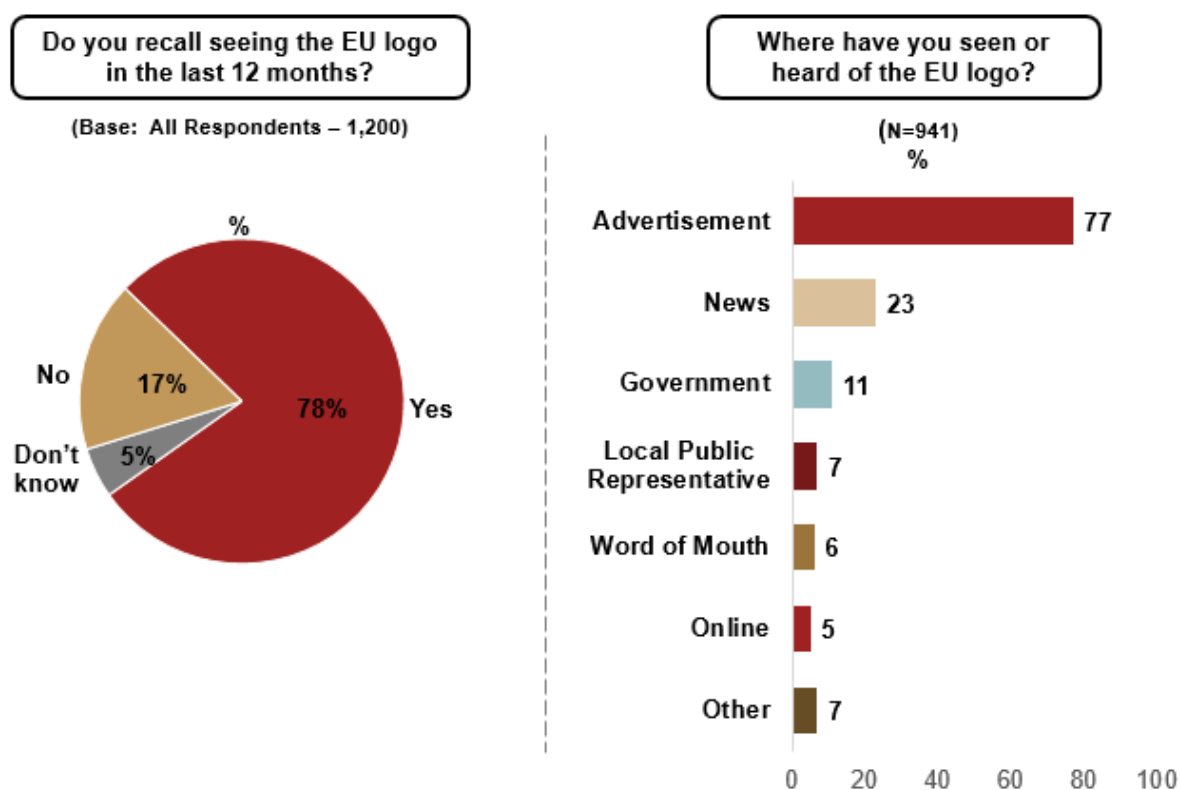


Figure 24: Do you recall seeing the EU logo anywhere in the last 12 months?

¹⁵ Caution small base (n=48)

3.2. EU Funded Programmes: Funding

3.2.1. Responsibility for Fund

As evident in the graph below (see Figure 25), responses pertaining to ascribed responsibility for the spending of EU funding were very similar in 2016 to 2009. While only 6% of respondents were able to identify Regional Assemblies as responsible for the appropriate spending of EU Funding, they work in tandem with the Government Departments, State Agencies and Local Authorities in the administration of funds.

Those age 45-54 years were most likely to identify Regional Assemblies (10%) as responsible, with those under 24 and over 65 least likely (both 3%). Those in the Midland Region were most likely to correctly identify the Regional Assemblies (16%).

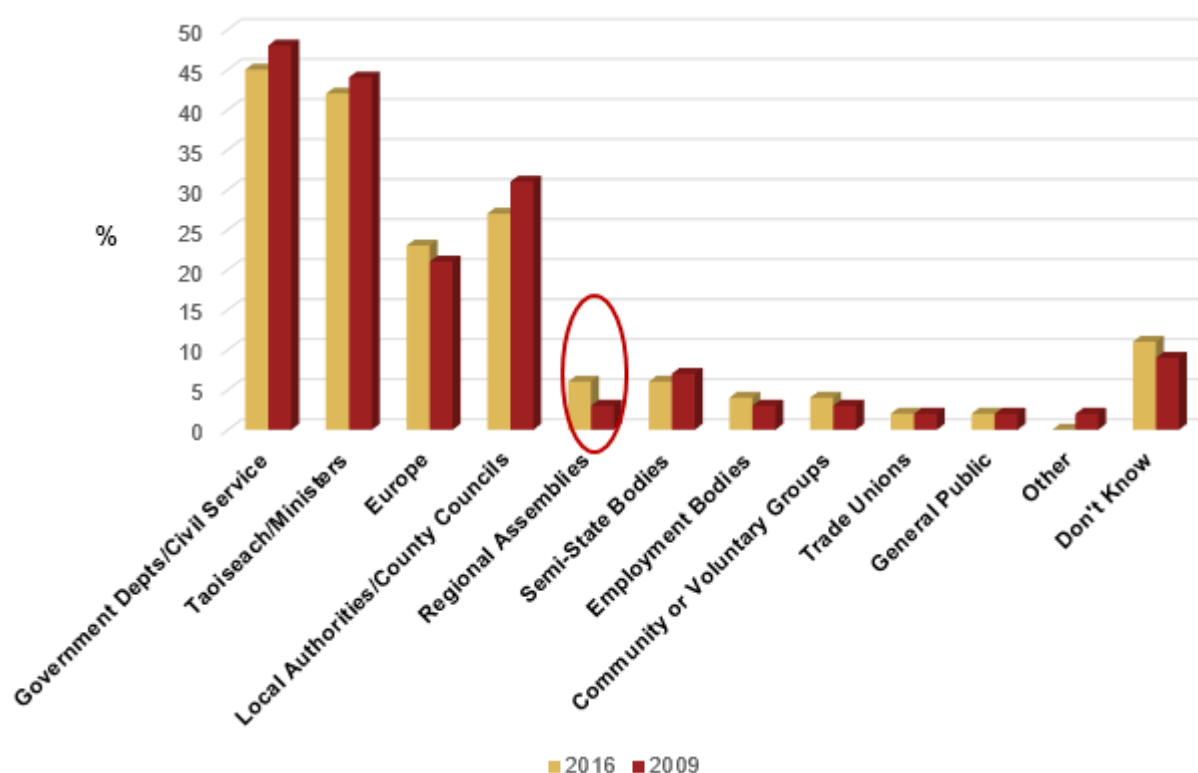


Figure 25: Who do you think is responsible for ensuring that the EU Structural Funds [European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF)] budget for Ireland is spent appropriately?

3.2.2. Awareness of Geographic Regions

The former eight Regional Authorities and two Regional Assemblies were consolidated in early 2015 to form three Regional Assemblies. However, the Regional Programmes still rely on the former areas so members of the public were asked about both the Regional Programme and Regional Assembly serving their area; the vast majority were unaware of either the Regional Programme or Assembly.

Former

Only one in five people (21%) stated that they were aware of which Regional Programme served their area (see Figure 26). In addition, not all individuals who said that they were aware of the Regional Programme could correctly identify the programme which served the area within which they resided. 95% of those in the BMW region stated the correct region, while only 70% of those in the S&E region named the correct region.

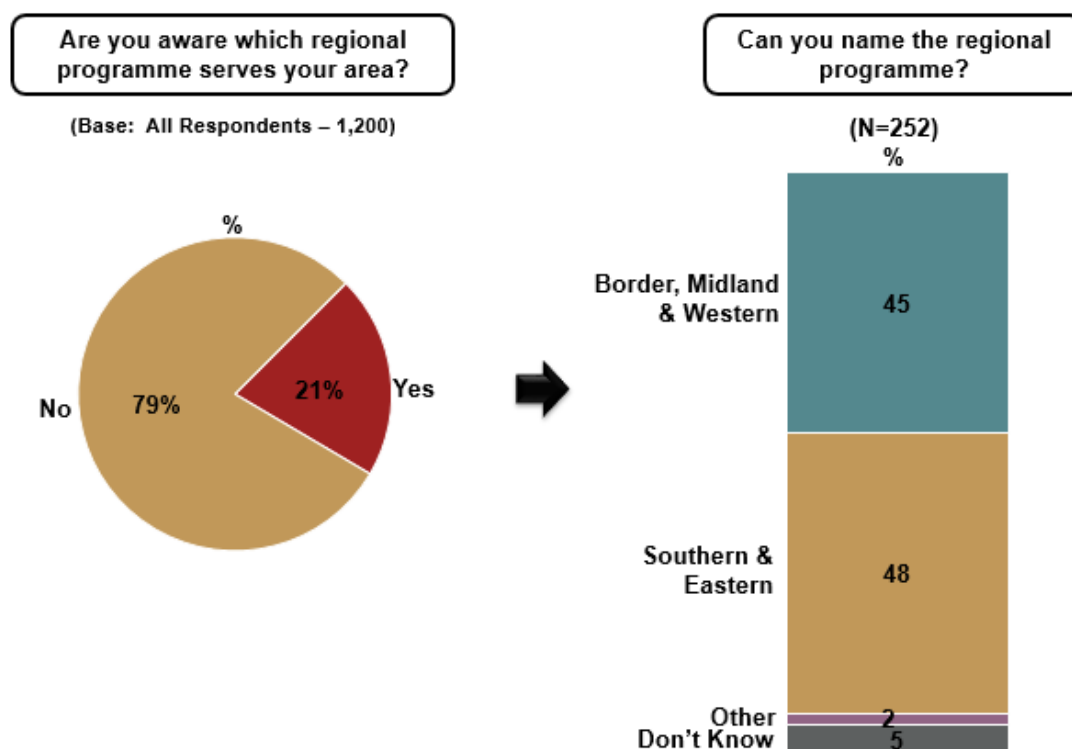


Figure 26: EU Funded Regional Programmes are delivered in two geographic regions in Ireland. Are you aware which programmes serve the region you are in? (Y/N) If yes, can you now name the programme which serves your Region? (unprompted)

Participants in the Border Region were most likely to say that they were aware of the region they were in (34%), of whom 98% could correctly name the region. Participants in the Mid-East region were least likely to say that they were aware (8%) of the Regional Programme which served their area.

Current

Similar to the question about Regional Programmes, the majority of people (80%) stated that they were unaware of which Regional Assembly served their area (see Figure 27).

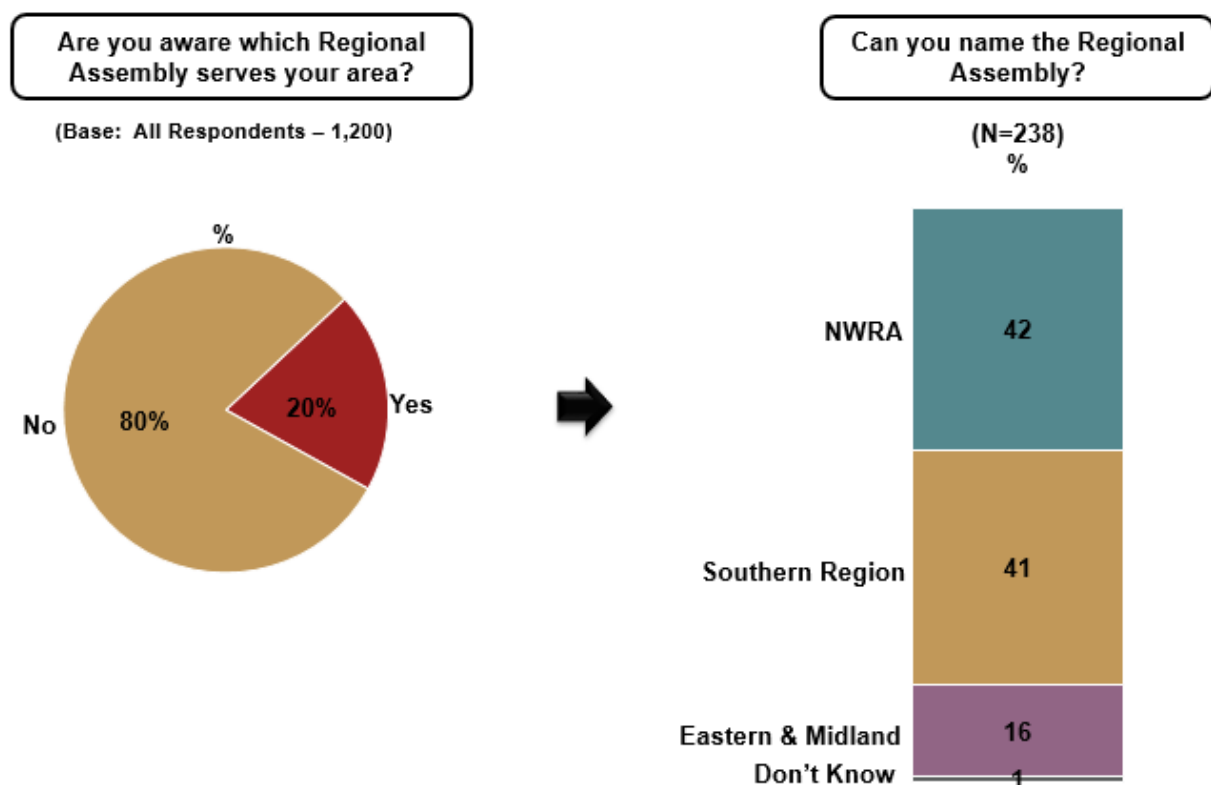


Figure 27: Three regions were established in Ireland with 3 new Regional Assemblies replacing the 8 former Regional Authorities and 2 Regional Assemblies. Are you aware which region you are in? (Y/N) If yes, can you now name the region you are in? (unprompted)

Of the respondents who indicated that they were aware of the region in which they resided, many people then incorrectly named the region: over half (62%) of those in Dublin; one in five (20%) in the Mid-East; just over one in ten (14%) in the Mid-West; one in ten (9%) in the Midland; and one in twenty (6%) in the South East (caution all small bases). When asked to

name the region, all those who had indicated they knew the region in the Border and Western Regions correctly identified themselves as in the Northern and Western Region (caution small bases).

3.2.3. Proportion of funding provided by EU

Not unsurprisingly, similar to 2009, nearly three quarters of Irish adults said that they do not know what proportion of the EU Funded Programmes' budget is provided by Europe. In addition, of the 30% which provided an answer to the question, a further 21% provided an incorrect answer, leaving only 9% of respondents who correctly stated that 40-60% was provided (see Figure 28).

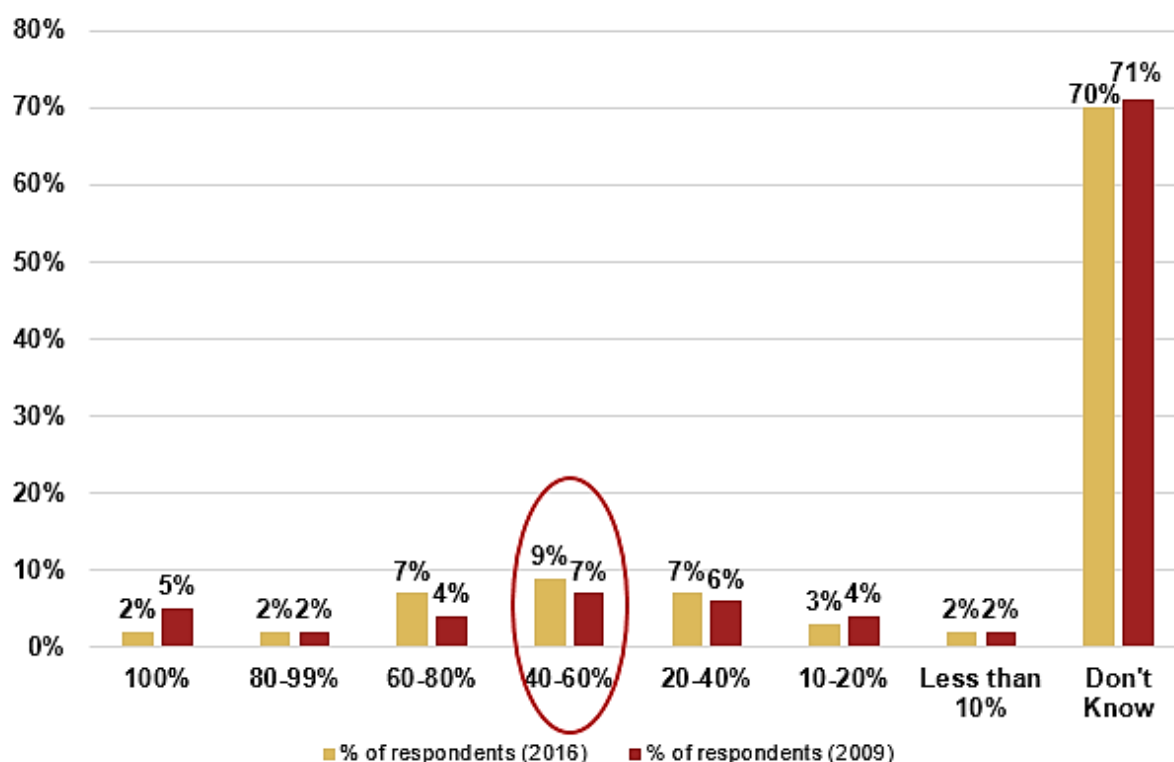


Figure 28: Thinking now specifically about the entire EU Funded Programmes budget for Ireland for 2007 to 2013. From your understanding, what proportion of this budget was provided by Europe?

3.3. EU Funded Programmes: Beneficiaries and Activities

3.3.1. Awareness of Specific Beneficiaries of EU Funding

All participants were then asked whether they were aware of any particular beneficiaries of EU Funding. Respondents were also given an opportunity to specify. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the respondents were not able to mention any EU funded programmes. Roads-related projects were the most common responses, both for first mentions (10%) and overall mentions (16%) but this was a much lower proportion of adults than in 2009 (see Table 4). Overall there were fewer mentions of projects in most categories in 2016 as compared to 2009, which may reflect the reduction of investment funding available.

Table 4: Awareness of specific EU Funded projects

	2016		2009
	First Mention	All Mentions	All Mentions
Roads	10	16	34
Agricultural	9	12	26
Education	3	6	8
Broadband	2	4	4
Employment/Training	3	4	13
Environmental	1	3	8
Health	1	3	6
Tourism	1	3	-
Childcare	1	2	4
Public Transport	*	2	6
Business Support	1	2	5
Technology/Innovation	1	1	-
Urban Renewal	1	1	5
Renewable Energy/ Energy Efficiency	*	*	6
Research and Development	*	*	3
Don't Know	64	64	41

* Less than 1%

 = more than 5% below 2009

 = above 2009

Few respondents provided specific examples for the categories, but those which were mentioned were as follows:

- For roads related projects, M50/ M6 were the only projects specified (1%);
- Specific agricultural projects mentioned included: Single Farm Payment (1%); GLAS (1%); REPS (1%); CAP (2%); and Teagasc (<1%);
- Rural broadband (1%) was mentioned as a specific broadband project;
- Start-up funding (1%) was mentioned as a specific business support or development project;
- Crèche/Preschool/ECCE (2%) were mentioned as specific childcare projects;
- For education projects, Comenius Project/Erasmus (1%), funding for third level (1%) and adult education (1%) and special needs (<1%) were specifically mentioned;
- Numerous initiatives were mentioned for employment or training projects, specifically ETB, CE, Turas Nua, Tús, JobBridge, FÁS (1% combined);
- Renewable energy or energy efficiency projects mentioned included: home improvement grant (1%); and sustainable energy (1%);
- Environmental projects included water (<1%) and council housing (<1%);
- Luas (1%), rail (2%) and bus (<1%) were mentioned as public transport projects
- Walking trails/Wild Atlantic Way (<1%) were mentioned as tourism projects

No specific health projects, technology and innovation projects, or urban renewal projects were mentioned. Since healthcare is not a beneficiary, the mention of no specific projects is of no concern. However, technology and innovation and urban renewal were priorities for both Regional Operational Programmes, yet less than 2% of respondents mentioned either category and no respondents mentioned any specific projects. This may be due to the fact that technology and innovation were primarily delivered in Higher Education Institutes.

3.3.2. Funds should support

After assessing participants' unprompted awareness EU programmes, each participant was provided with a brief outline of the EU Funded Programme objectives, and then asked what types of projects they felt the programmes should support. The top five issues which respondents felt should be supported included: healthcare (54%); employment (43%); education (40%); roads (25%); and the economy (25%; see Figure 29). Although healthcare and employment have consistently been in the top 5 most mentioned issues which Irish adults feel should receive EU funding, the 2016 results are somewhat different to both the 2009 and 2004 results (see Table 5).

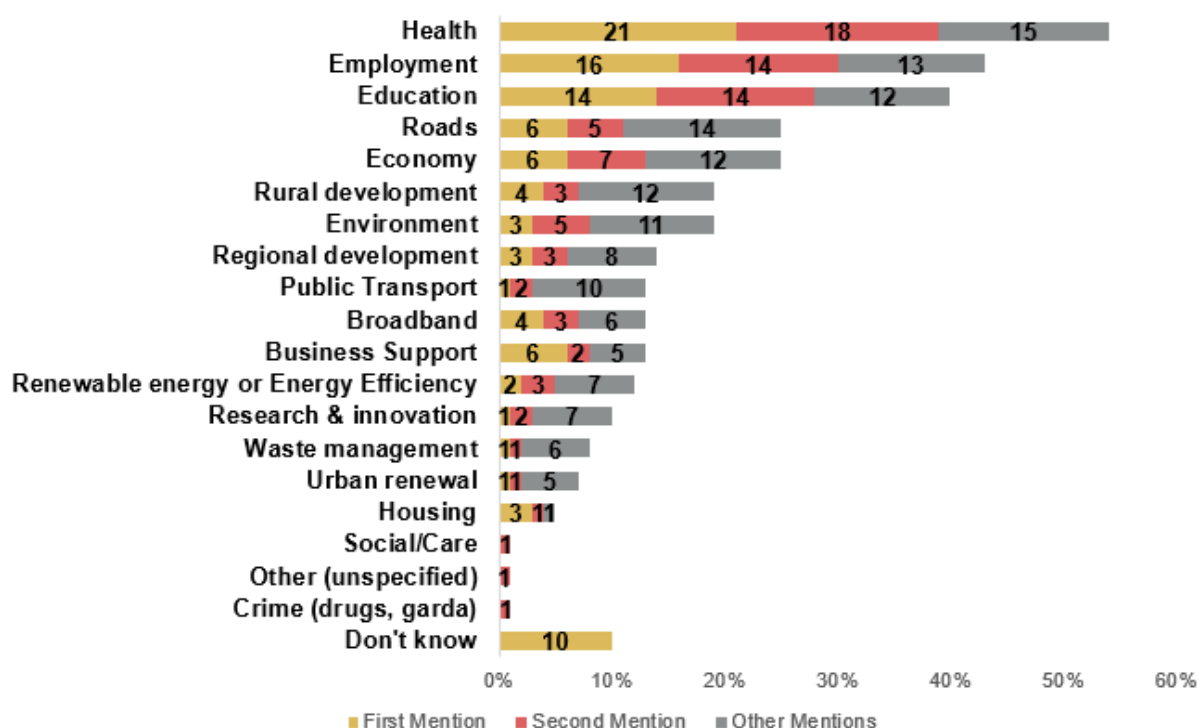


Figure 29: Based now on your understanding of EU Funded Programmes, what general issues or sectors do you think the EU Funded Programmes in Ireland should support? (multi-codes, unprompted)

Table 5: Comparison of Issues Participants View Should be Funded (2004-2016)

	2016	2009	2004
1	Healthcare (54%)	Employment (61%)	Healthcare (42%)
2	Employment (43%)	Health (51%)	Roads (33%)
3	Education (40%)	Education (36%)	Employment (20%)
4	Roads (25%)	Economy (35%)	Crime (18%)
5	Economy (25%)	Rural/Regional Development (34%)	Housing (18%)

3.3.3. Importance of Investment

The number of respondents who expressed the importance of investment in key areas partially mirrored concern with key issues (Section 3.1.1), specifically the importance placed on investing in healthcare (93%) and employment (92%). A very high proportion of respondents (87%) also felt that investment in water quality was important. Particularly interesting is that there was very little regional difference in the importance placed on investment in water quality (which might have been expected in areas with Boil Water notices).

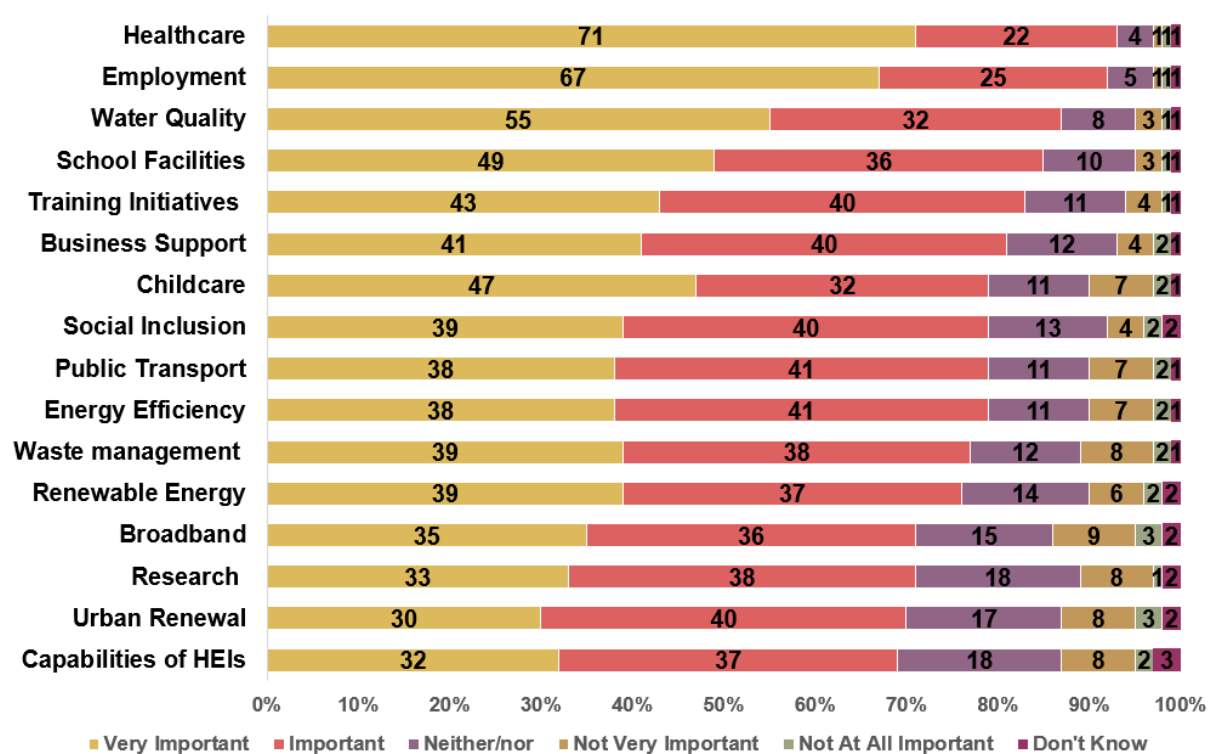


Figure 30: How important or unimportant to you is investment in each of the following areas/aspects of the EU Funded Programmes where 1 means not at all important and 5 means very important?

The importance placed on each area was compared to previous iterations of the survey (see Table 6). A similar proportion of respondents to 2009 felt the funds should support most of the specified areas; a slightly higher proportion than 2009 felt that childcare and public transport should be supported, while a slightly lower proportion felt than energy efficiency,

waste management and urban renewal should be funded. However, the majority of respondents felt that funding for each area was important.

Table 6: Comparison of Importance of Funding Issues (2004-2016)

	2016	2009	2004
Healthcare	93	95	97
Employment	92	95	93
Water Quality	87	90	-
School Facilities	85	83	86
Training Initiatives	83	84	87
Business Support	81	80	78
Social Inclusion	79	78	-
Childcare	79	74	79
Public Transport	79	72	82
Energy Efficiency	79	86	85
Renewable Energy	77	80	-
Waste Management	77	82	87
Broadband	71	71	
Research	71		
Urban Renewal	70	78	-
Capabilities of universities/IOTs	69		

79 = under index (2009) 79 = over index (2009)

3.4. Reflections on EU Funded Programmes and Future Developments

3.4.1. Key Statements

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of key statements, gauging their general responses to the EU Funded Programmes. The majority of participants agreed with each statement to some extent (agree strongly or agree slightly; see Figure 31). Three quarters (77%) of individuals agreed with the statement that “A regional approach to funding is a good idea”. 68% of individuals agreed that “EU Funded Programmes will benefit my local town or area”. Over half (56%) agreed that “EU Funded Programmes are likely to benefit all people of Ireland” and 52% agreed that “EU Funded Programmes will benefit me as an individual”. Just over half of respondents (52%) were interested in finding out more about the programmes.

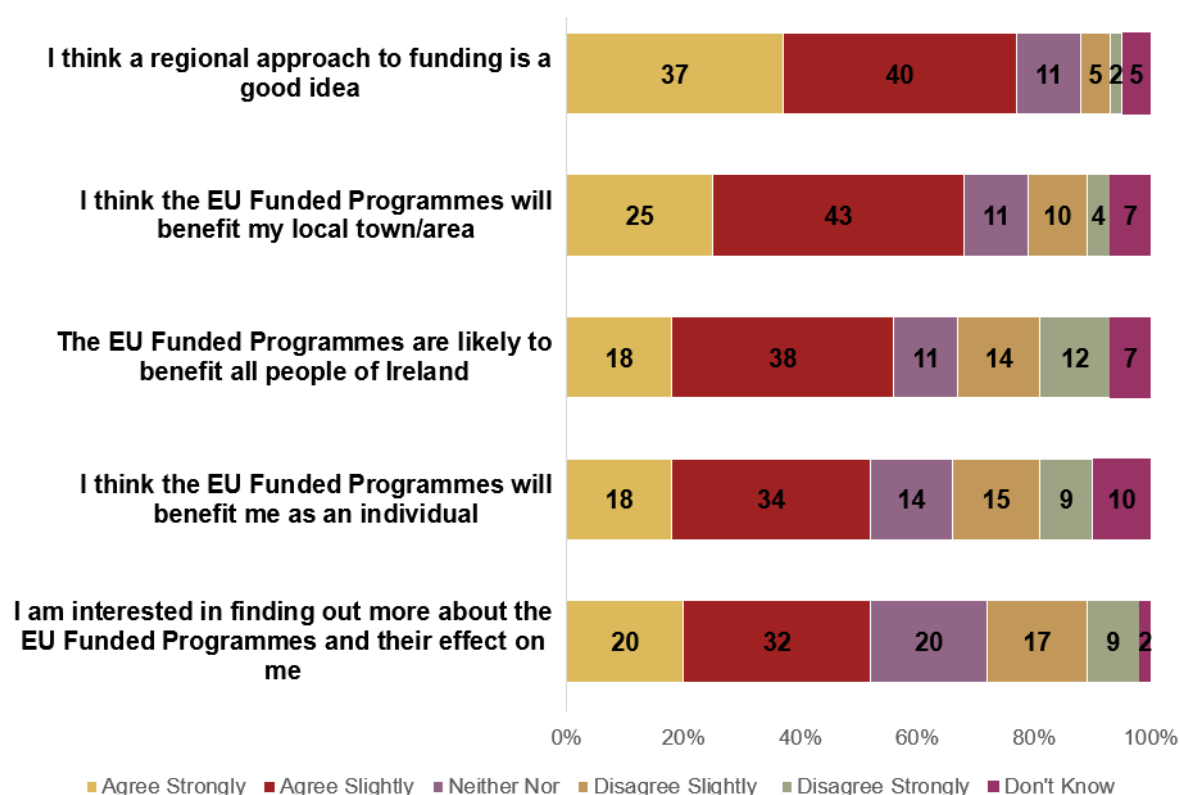


Figure 31: Here are some statements about the EU Funded Programmes, can you tell me to which extent you agree or disagree with the following where 1 is disagree strongly and 5 is agree strongly?

Regional Approach to Funding

Nearly 8 in 10 people (77%) agreed that a regional approach to funding is a good idea (Figure 32), similar to 2009 (78%). A similar proportion of those in the two NUTS II regions (BMW Region and S&E Region) agreed that regional funding was a good idea (79% and 76% respectively). Again, there were greater regional differences within the NUTS II regions when the NUTS III responses were examined. The BMW Region varied from 69%-84% agreement, with 81% agreement in the Border Region, 84% in the Western Region and only 69% in the Midland Region. Similarly, agreement within the S&E Region ranged from 69%-88% with 69% agreement in the Dublin Region as compared with 88% in the Mid-West Region.

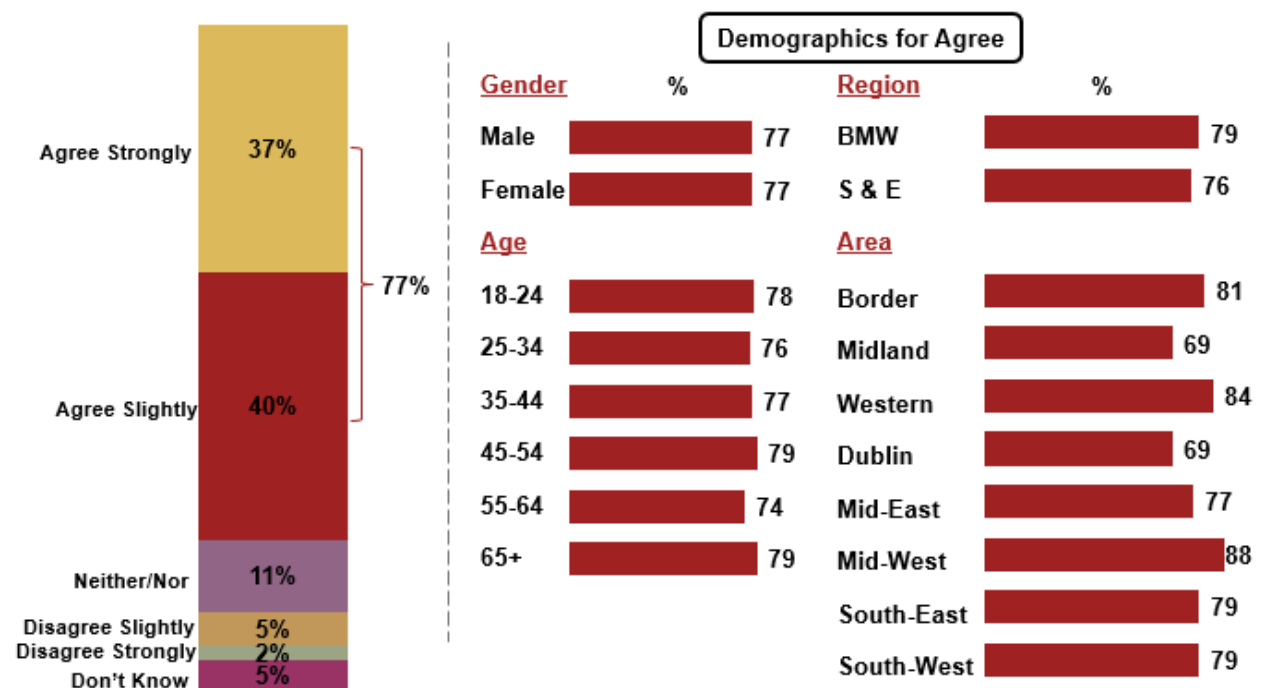


Figure 32: I think a regional approach to funding is a good idea¹⁶

¹⁶ Base of Agree is 77% of the total 1,200 (n=923)

Programmes Benefit Local Area

A significant majority (68%) felt that EU programmes benefit their local area and home town (Figure 33), an increase from 2009 (61%). 73% of respondents in the BMW Region agreed with this statement, while 66% of those in the S&E Region agreed. Over three-quarters of respondents in the Mid-West Region (78%) and Western Region (76%) agreed with this statement.

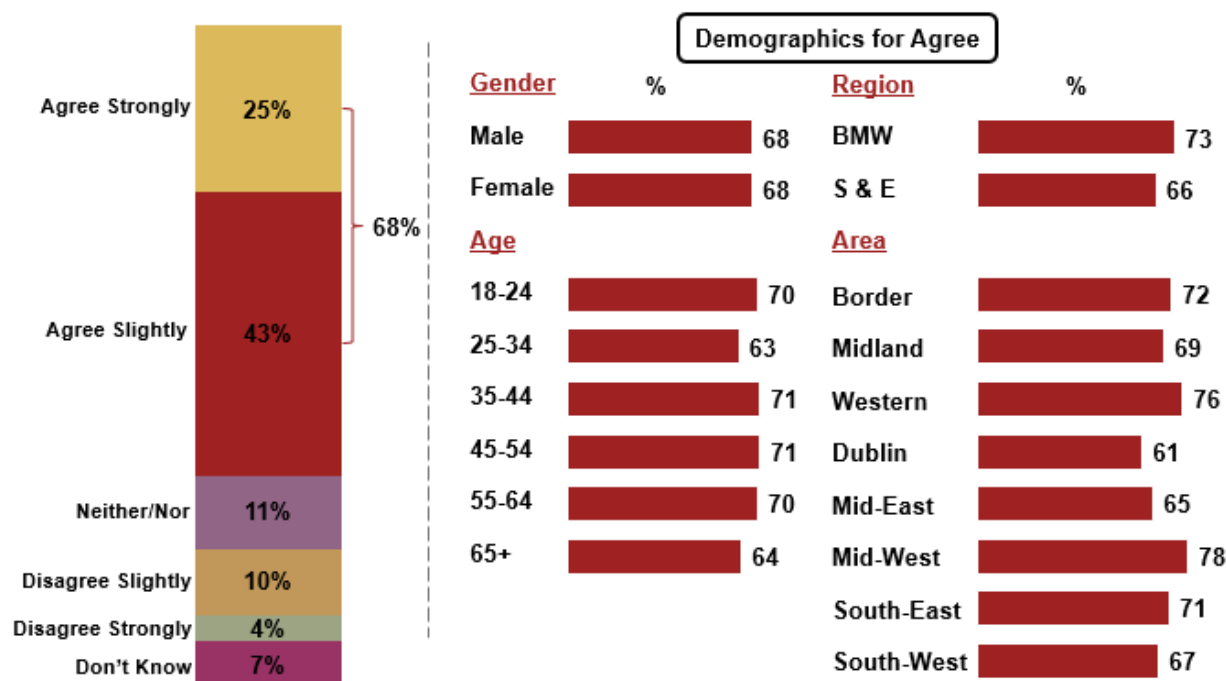


Figure 33: I think the EU Funded Programmes will benefit my local area/town¹⁷

¹⁷ Base of Agree is 68% of the total 1,200 (n=816)

Programmes Benefit Ireland

Over half of participants (57%) agreed that the EU Funded Programmes were likely to benefit all people of Ireland (Figure 34). Those in the BMW Region were slightly more likely to agree that the EU Funded Programmes would benefit all people than those in the S&E Region (59% and 55% respectively). At a NUTS III level, slightly fewer people in the Mid-West Region agreed with this statement (49%) while nearly two-thirds of people in the Midland Region and Border Region agreed with the statement (64% and 63% respectively).

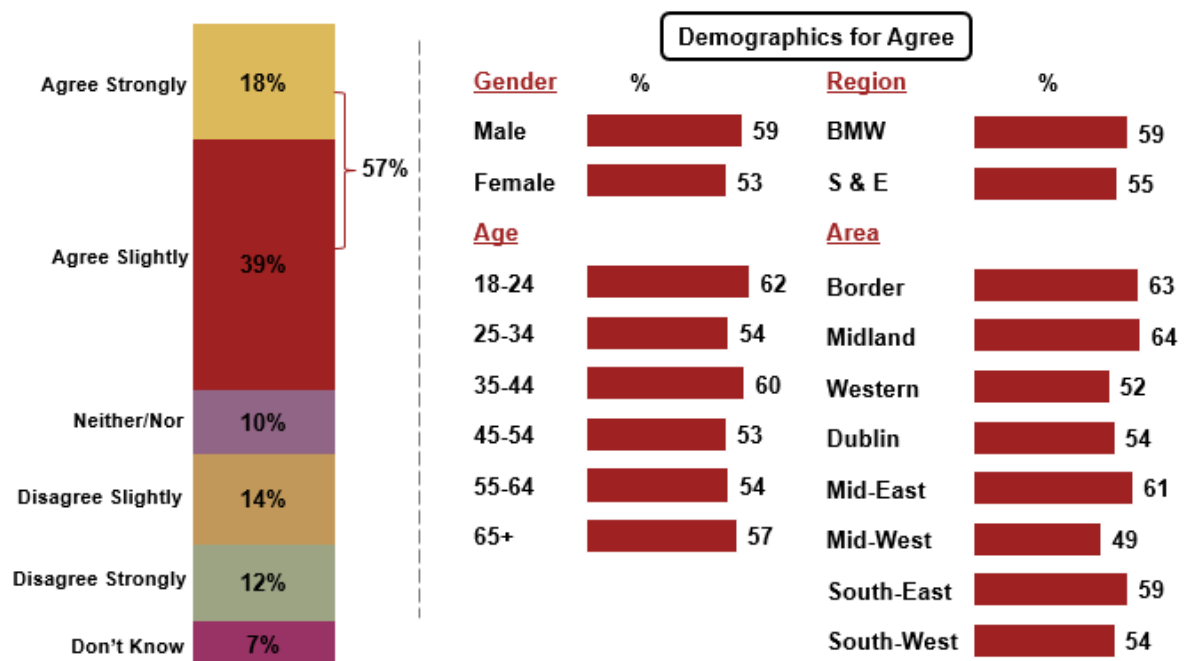


Figure 34: The EU Funded Programmes are likely to benefit all people of Ireland¹⁸

¹⁸ Base of Agree is 57% of the total 1,200 (n=676)

Programmes Benefit Individuals

Just over half of participants (53%) believed that the EU Funded Programmes benefitted them as individuals (see Figure 35), similar to 2009 (52%). Again, more people in the BMW Region believed that the EU Funded Programmes benefitted them as individuals when compared to the S&E Region (59% and 51% respectively). The NUTS III regions demonstrated further differences in perceptions since agreement rose to 69% of respondents in the Border Region, while only 38% of respondents agreed with the statement in the South-West Region.

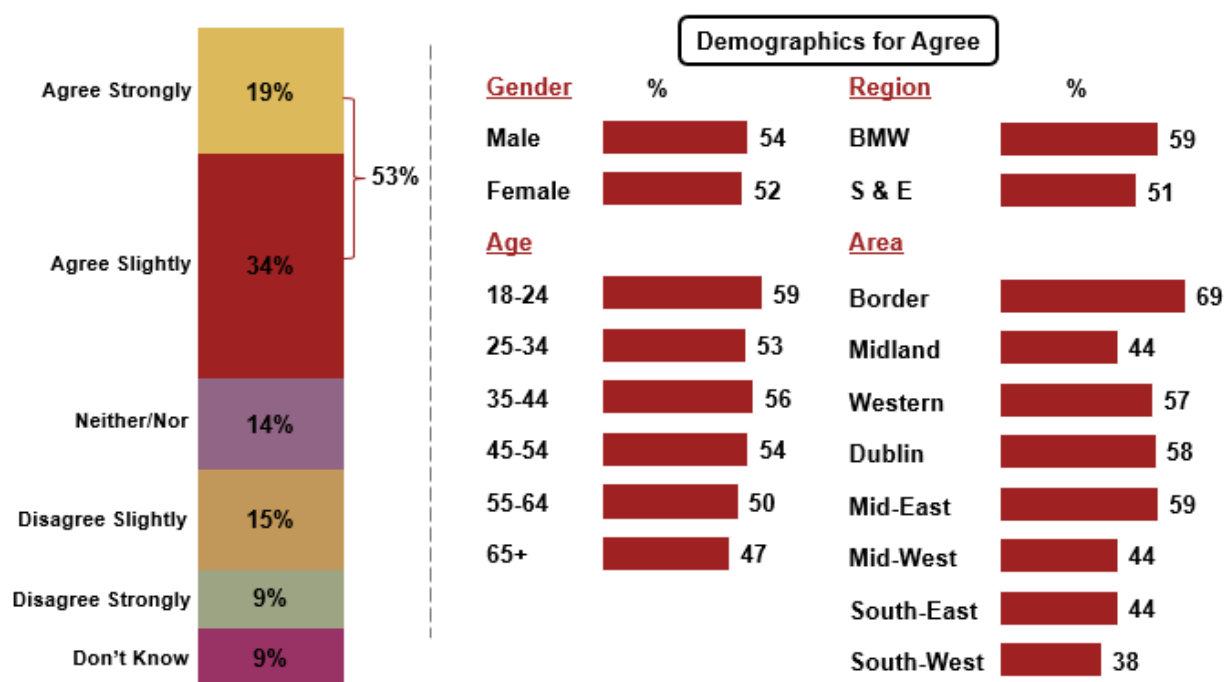


Figure 35: I think the EU Funded Programmes will benefit me as an individual¹⁹

¹⁹ Base of Agree is 53% of the total 1,200 (n=637)

Interest in More Information

Just over half of participants (52%) were interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes (Figure 36), slightly fewer than 2009 (66%). At a regional level, a higher proportion of respondents in the BMW Region were interested in finding out more than the S&E Region (58% and 49% respectively). At a NUTS III level, those in the Mid-East Region were least likely to agree that they were interested in hearing about the programmes (38%), interesting since levels of awareness were lowest in the region. Those in the Mid-West Region and Western Region (both 60%) were most likely to indicate that they were interested in hearing more about the EU Funded Programmes. Interest in the Border Region and Midland Region (both 57%) was also high; while interest was slightly lower in the South-West Region (53%), South-East Region (51%) and Dublin Region (48%). The types of projects these respondents would be interested in finding out more about are explored further in Section 3.4.2.

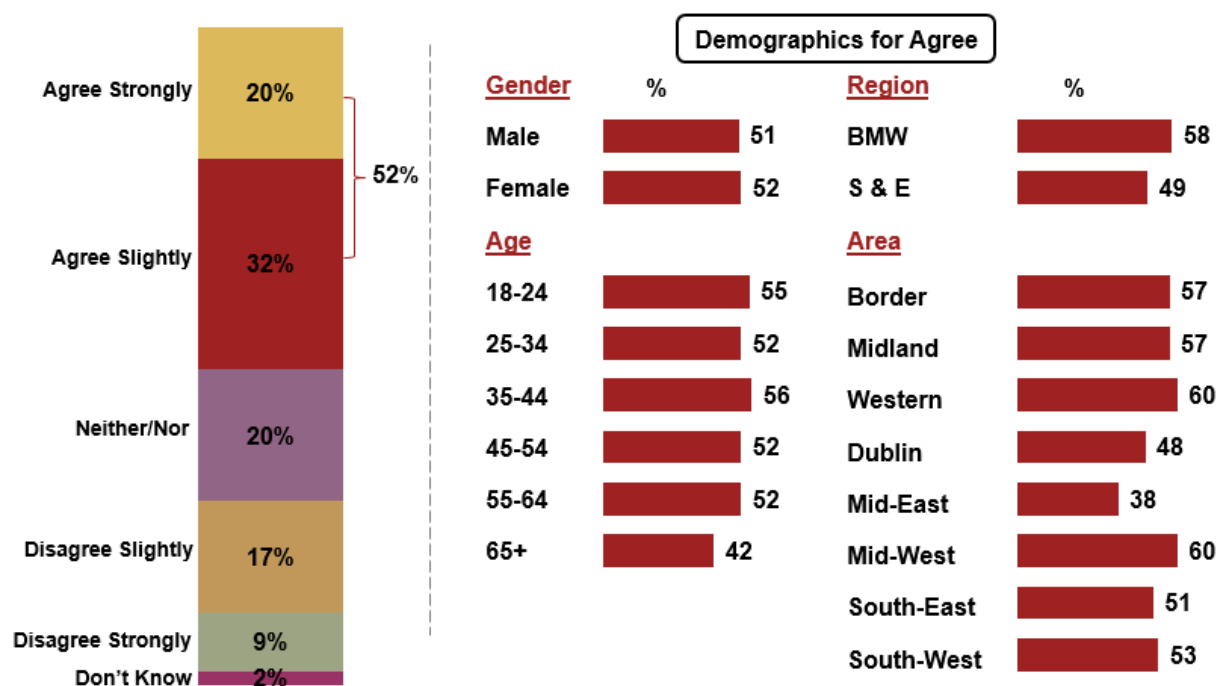


Figure 36: I am interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes and its effect on me²⁰

²⁰ Base of Agree is 52% of the total 1,200 (n=617)

3.4.2. Interest in EU projects

Just over half of participants (52%; n=617) were interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes. For this iteration of the survey, participants who were interested in the EU Funded Programmes were asked to what extent they would be interested in hearing about a number of topics (for preferred methods of communication see Section 3.4.3). The majority of these respondents would be interested in finding out more about all of the options given, with people reacting most positively to EU-funded projects pertaining to employment/job creation (89%²¹; see Figure 37). Energy efficiency (78%), renewable energy (76%), broadband (75%), business support (75%), and public transport (68%) also scored highly. Respondents were least enthusiastic about receiving information about the capabilities of universities/Institutes of Technology (IoTs) (63%).

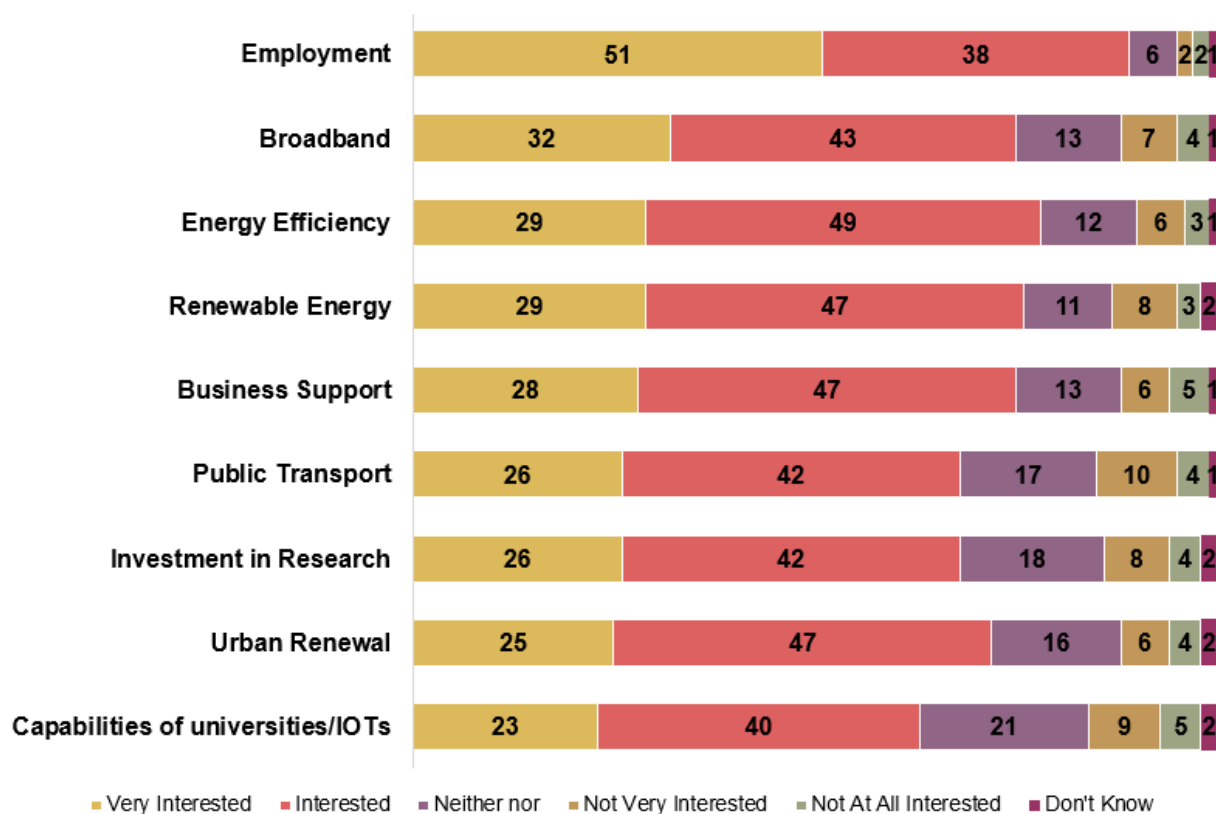


Figure 37: Types of projects people would like to hear about²²

²¹ Scores are a composite of those who responded "Very interested" and "Interested"

²² Base is 617 (all who responded "Agree strongly or "Agree slightly" when asked "I am interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes and its effect on me");

While interest in employment remained high across all regions, nearly every respondent in the South-West Region was interested in hearing more (98%) and the Dublin Region and South-East Region had the lowest proportion of interested respondents at 85% and 84% respectively. Interest in broadband infrastructure varied more widely with 90% of those in the Midland Region indicating their interest, which dropped to 70% in the Western, South-East and Mid-West Regions.

A higher proportion of respondents in the BMW Region (84%) were interested in energy efficiency than in the S&E Region (75%). This was reflected across regions at the NUTS III level, with participants in the Western Region and Border Region were most likely to be interested in energy efficiency (88% and 87% respectively) while fewer respondents in the South-West and Mid-West were interested (71% and 72%). In contrast, the BMW Region and S&E Region had similar levels of interest in renewable energy (78% and 76%); although participants in the Border Region and the Mid-East Region (88% and 83%) had greater interest in renewable energy particularly when compared to those in the Midland Region (66%) and Mid-West Region (65%). Those in the Dublin and Western Regions (73% and 70%) had the highest proportion of people interested in public transport while those in the Mid-West were least interested (61%).

Interestingly, although interest in finding out more about investment in research appears to be relatively low, 85% of respondents in the Mid-East Region were interested in finding out information about this topic. However, only 39% of respondents in the Mid-West Region had any interest in hearing about research funding.

3.4.3. Manner through which would like/expect to hear information

Participants were asked, both prompted and unprompted, where they would expect and like to hear information about EU Funded Programmes. Television, national radio and national newspapers came out on top for both the expected and preferred sources of information (see Figures 38 and 39). Radio emerged as both more preferred and expected than in 2009 (see Table 7).

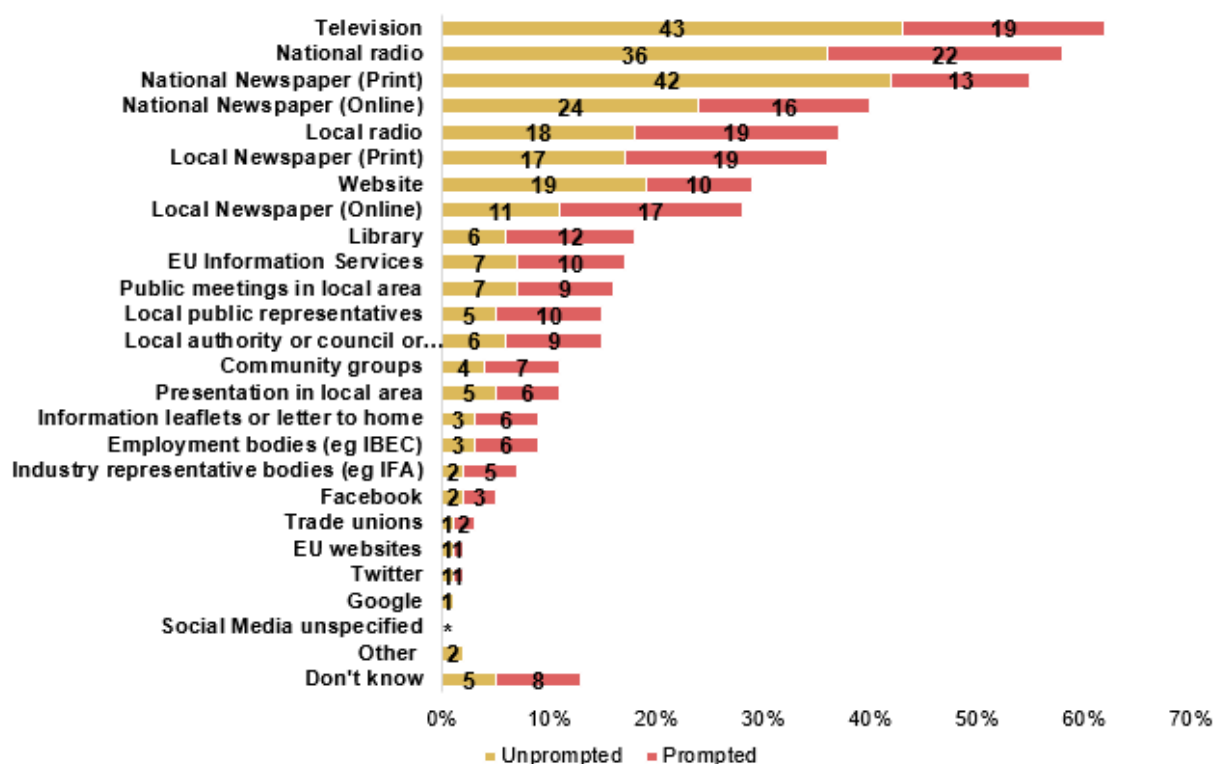


Figure 38: Where would you expect to hear about or get information on the EU Funded Programmes? (multi-codes, unprompted then prompted)

Television and national newspapers were the most commonly spontaneously-mentioned medium through which people expected to hear about EU Funded Programmes. When prompted, national radio became one of the top expected mediums. Interestingly, even when prompted, a very small proportion of respondents expected to receive information on the EU Funded Programmes through EU Information Services.

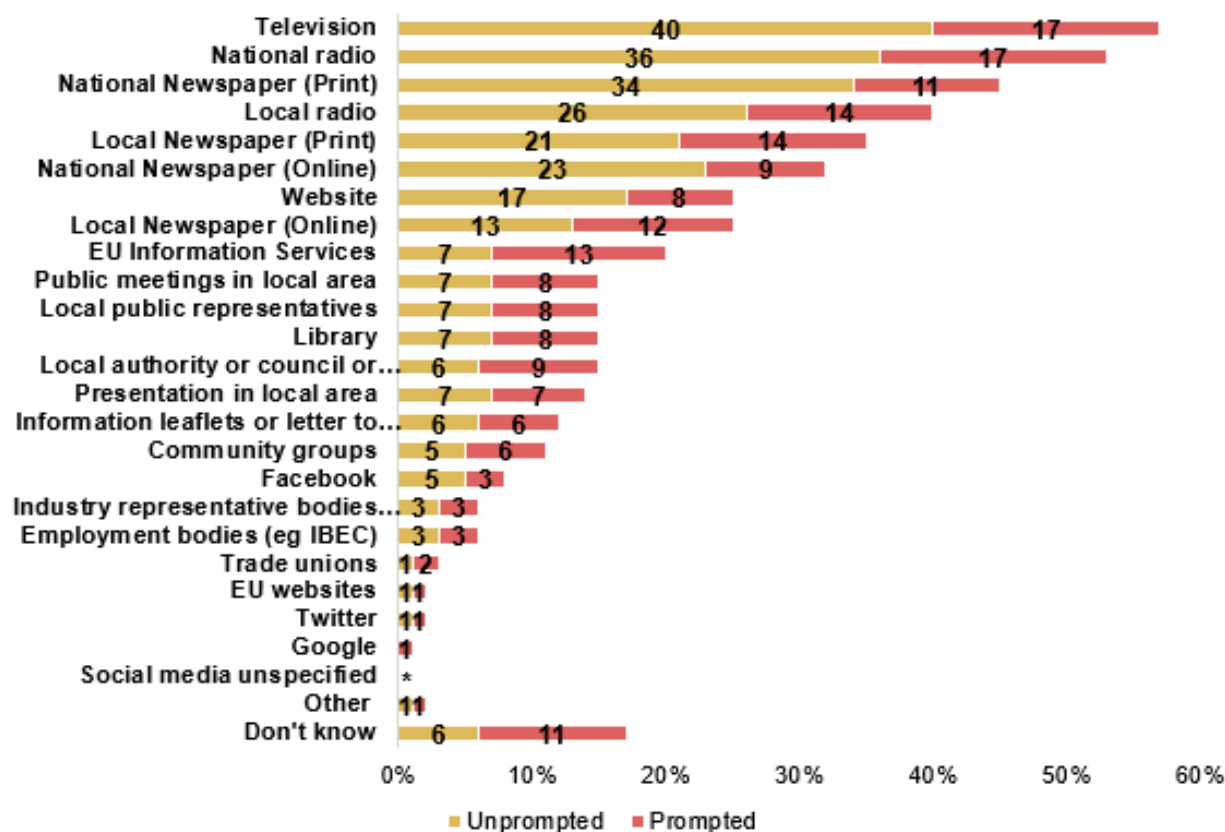


Figure 39: Where would you like to hear about or get information on the EU Funded Programmes? (multicodes, unprompted then prompted)

Respondents had similar responses to where they would like to hear about the EU Funded Programmes and where they expect to hear about the programmes: television; national radio; and national newspapers (print) remained the most common mentions for preferred mediums (see Table 7). A higher proportion of respondents said don't know than 2009, while fewer people's preferred medium was information leaflets compared to 2009 (12% and 23% respectively; see Table 7). This iteration of the survey differentiated between print and online newspapers and it appeared that fewer people engaged with national or local newspapers online than in print.

Table 7: Comparison of Highest Expected and Preferred Mediums in 2016 with 2009

	Expected (2016) %	Expected (2009) %	Preferred (2016) %	Preferred (2009) %
Television	62	66	57	49
National Radio	58	35	53	26
National Newspaper (print)	55	61	45	41
National Newspaper (online)	40	n/a	32	n/a
Local Radio	37	21	40	20
Local Newspaper (print)	36	21	35	21
Local Newspaper (online)	28	n/a	25	n/a
Information Leaflets	9	12	12	23
Website (unspecified)	29	n/a	25	n/a
Don't Know	13	6	17	4

 = under index (2009)
 = over index (2009)

By exploring the data, the following mediums (see Figure 40) were preferred by those interested in hearing more about EU Funded Programmes (as explored in Section 3.4.1, Figure 33). National radio was the most highly preferred medium for this group, followed by television and national newspapers (print).

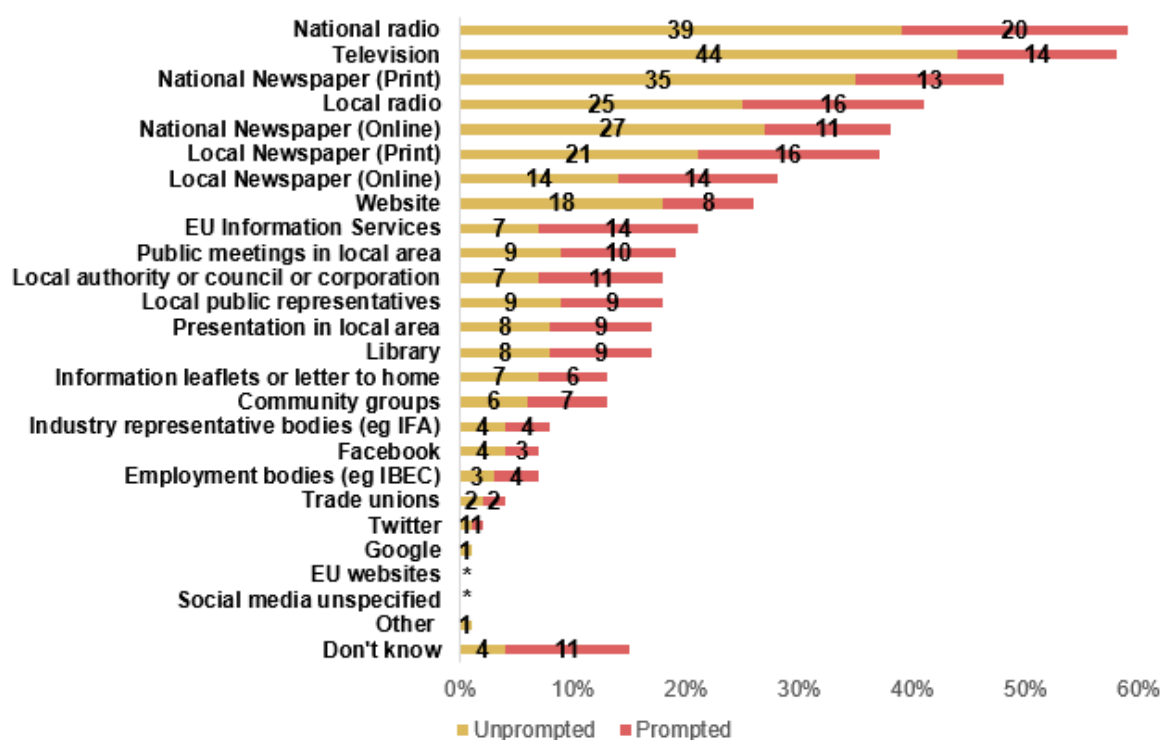


Figure 40: Preferred Method of Communication for those Interested in Hearing More²³

²³ Base is 617 (all who responded "Agree strongly or "Agree slightly" when asked "I am interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes and its effect on me")

3.4.4. Local Structural and/or Social Issues you would like to see addressed

A new question was added to this iteration of the questionnaire regarding local issues that respondents would like to see addressed. Huge diversity in mentions occurred with people outlining issues which ranged from healthcare (13%) to worker's rights (e.g. wages/cost of living) (1%) to flood management (1%).

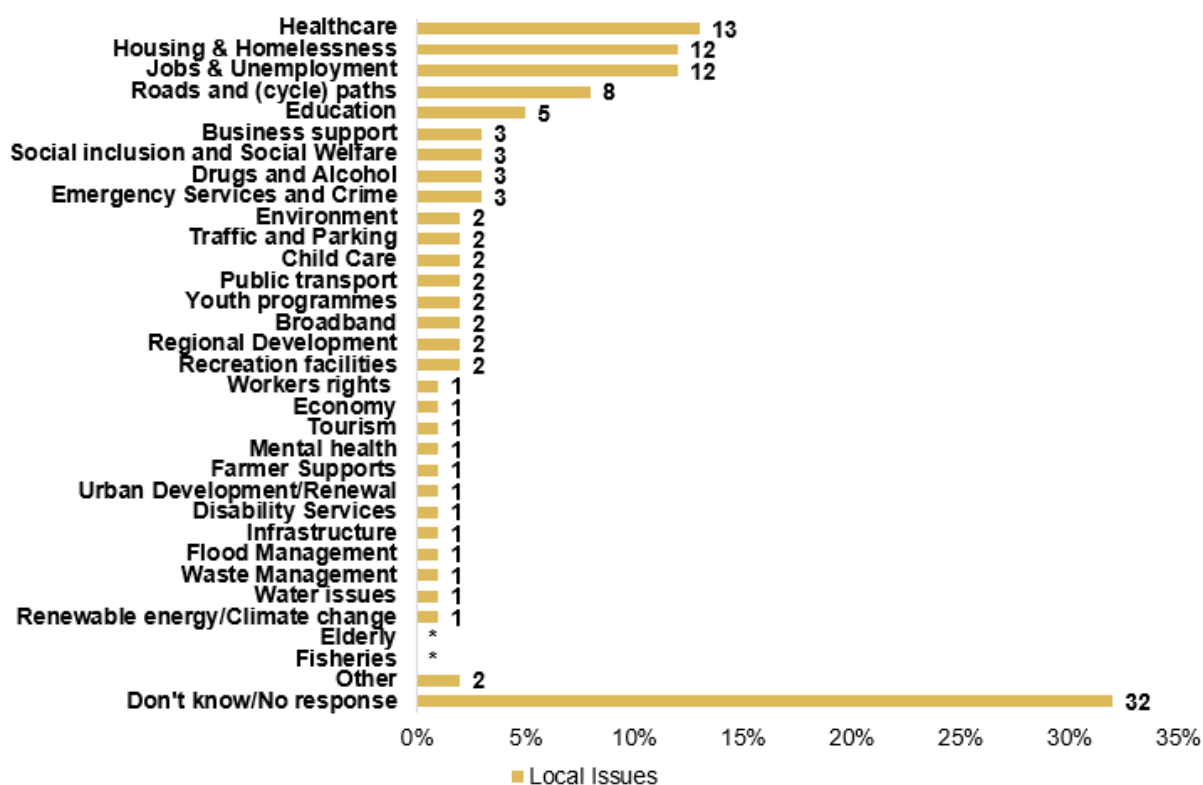


Figure 41: Are there any local structural and/or social issues that you would like to see addressed? (unprompted)

On a NUTS II regional level, over one third of people in the BMW Region (38%) said don't know compared to 30% of respondents from the S&E Region. The most salient issues for each region were as follows:

- For those in the BMW Region, the most important local issues they would like to see addressed were jobs and unemployment (16%), healthcare (12%) and housing and homelessness (8%).
- For those in the S&E Region, the most important local issues they would like to see addressed were healthcare (14%), housing and homelessness (14%), jobs and unemployment (10%), and roads and (cycle) paths (9%).

The following issues were the most frequently mentioned in each NUTS III region (see Table 8):

- Jobs and unemployment was outlined as a particular issue in both the Border Region (17%) and Midland Region (17%);
- Healthcare was the most commonly mentioned issue in the Western Region (18%);
- Housing and homelessness was outlined as a particular issue in the Mid-East Region (24%) followed by healthcare (21%);
- Healthcare (14%) and housing and homelessness (14%) were equally salient for those in the Dublin Region;
- Jobs and unemployment (15%) and roads and (cycle) paths (15%) were the top issues in the South-East Region;
- Healthcare (15%) and roads and (cycle) paths (15%) tied as the top issues in the South-West Region;
- Roads and (cycle) paths were the most frequently stated issue in the Mid-West Region (18%).

Table 8: Demographic differences in mention of local issues

	Gender			NUTS II		NUTS III							
% of respondents	Total	Male	Female	BMW	S&E	Border	Western	Midland	Mid-East	Dublin	South-East	South-West	Mid-West
Healthcare	13	10	16	12	14	9	18	4	21	14	6	15	9
Housing & Homelessness	12	13	12	8	14	4	10	13	24	14	5	14	12
Jobs & Unemployment	12	12	11	16	10	17	15	17	11	6	15	9	14
Roads & Cycle Paths	8	10	7	7	9	7	4	10	7	2	15	15	18
Education	5	4	7	4	6	3	5	3	7	4	6	9	6

○ = most salient issues for demographics

3.4.5. Impression of Programme

As a final question, participants were asked “now that you have heard about the EU Funded Programmes, can you tell me your overall impression of the Programmes?”. Approximately 55% of participants gave positive responses while only 12% of responses could be categorised as negative responses.

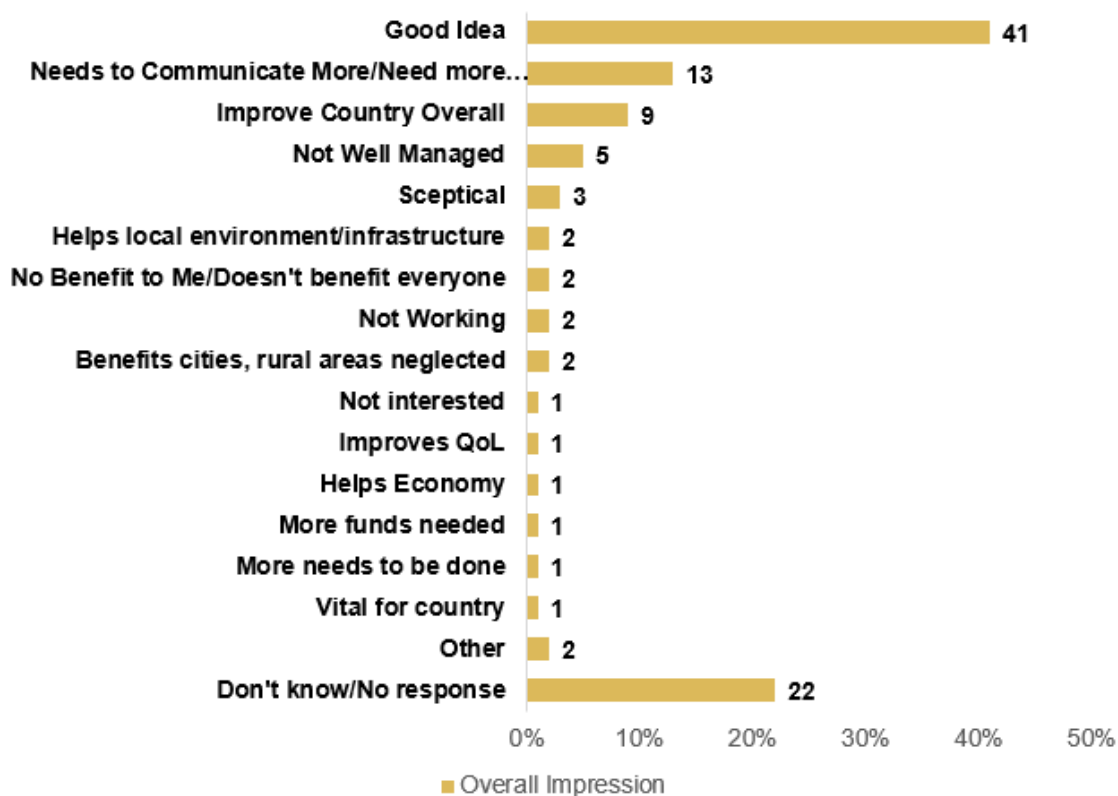


Figure 42: Impression of Programme

Positive responses included those that could be categorised as:

- A good idea (41%);
- Improves the country overall (9%);
- Helps local environment and infrastructure (2%);
- Vital for the country (1%);
- Improves quality of life (1%); and
- Helps economy (1%).

Negative responses included those who felt the programmes were:

- Not well managed (5%);

- Not working (2%);
- No benefit to me (2%); and/or
- Were generally sceptical (3%).

Some respondents had more ambivalent answers, such as:

- Need(ing) more information/programmes need to communicate more (13%);
- Benefits cities but neglects rural/local areas (2%);
- More needs to be done (1%); and
- More funds needed (1%).

A number of participants also stated that they were not interested (1%) or still did not know (22%).

Where possible, responses were compared with those from 2009 (see Figure 43). However, caution must be used when comparing qualitative responses. Slightly more people in 2016 felt that the programme was a “good idea” than in 2009 (41% and 36% respectively) although fewer peoples’ responses could be categorised as feeling that the funding programmes “improve the country overall” (9% vs 30%), “helps economy” (1% vs 21%) or “improves quality of life” (1% vs 14%). However, there were fewer responses which could be categorised as negative (composite score of not well managed, no benefit to me, not working) in 2016 (12%) when compared with 2009 (20%).

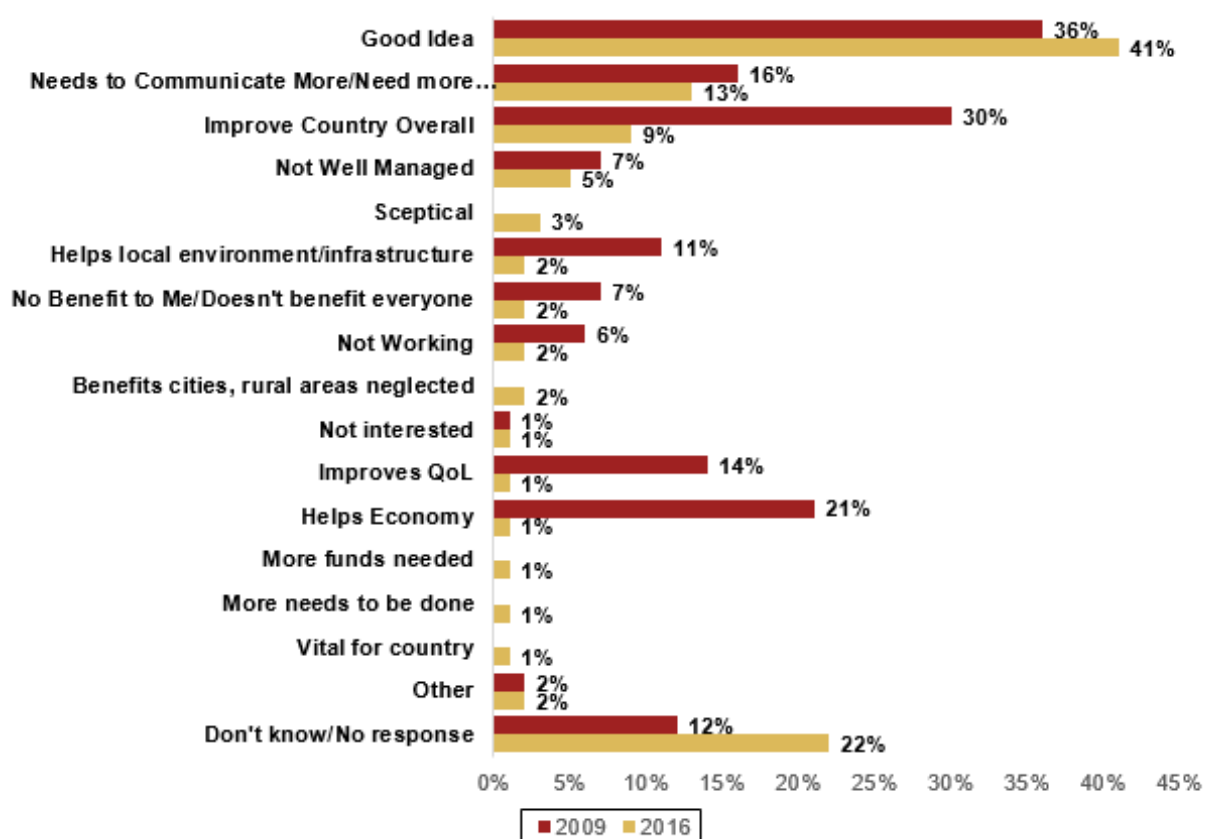


Figure 43: Impressions of the Programme comparison 2009 to 2016

4. Section Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

This Public Attitudes and Awareness survey follows the 2009 iteration, exploring Irish adults' awareness and perceptions of the EU Co-Funded Programmes. Summary findings are outlined below, compared to those of the 2009 survey where relevant.

4.1.1. Issues of National Concern

Findings from the survey indicated that Irish adults are particularly concerned about the health service (91%), employment (83%), and social issues such as crime (83%), drug abuse (82%) and housing (81%). Regional differences were observed for some key issues; respondents in areas where employment was a particular concern were also more concerned, unsurprisingly, with standard of living.

A slightly lower proportion of adults were concerned with employment, compared to 2009, but concern is yet to return to 2004 levels (83%, 94%, and 75% respectively). Concern for the health service remains comparable to 2009, although concern around crime and drug abuse has dropped somewhat.

4.1.2. Awareness of EU Funded Programmes

Although slightly under a quarter of respondents (24%) had spontaneous awareness of EU Funded Programmes, nearly two thirds of people (64%) stated that they had heard of EU Funded Programmes. 68% of these respondents were most likely to indicate that they had heard of EU Funded Programmes through an advertisement. As the Regional Programmes did not engage in television advertising during the periods under review it is likely that the findings point to a general awareness of EU funded programmes, and that television is where people most often receive news about the EU in general. This is commensurate with similar findings from recent media studies including the (Eurobarometer- Media Use in the European Union) where public service broadcasting on radio and television still remain the most popular way to receive news of the receipt of media messaging. It is also supporting of a residual identification of the EU logo and discussion about the EU Programmes on other television programmes. This implies that it is likely that this recognition of the programmes may not stem only from advertising, but may be conflated with news and current affairs coverage of the Commission and the EU co-funded programmes. This is further supported by the fact that while overall awareness of the EU Funded Programmes was high few people had in-depth knowledge about individual programmes themselves.

The highest levels of spontaneous awareness were amongst the 35-44 years (29%) and 45-54 years (28%). Interestingly, younger participants were more likely to be spontaneously aware of EU Funded Programmes than some of the older cohorts: 26% of 18-24 compared to 21% of 55-64 years and 19% of 65+. However, prompted awareness meant that overall awareness levels were higher in older cohorts.

When asked about the specific EU Funded Programmes, fewer participants said that they were aware of them, possibly indicating a general level of awareness that Ireland receives funding as part of the EU as opposed to actual knowledge of specific funds. Levels of awareness of the individual funds remained similar to 2009, with awareness levels of: EAFRD at 49% and 48% respectively; ERDF at 43% and 43%; ESF at 38% and 35% respectively; and EU

Structural Funds at 33% and 29% respectively. Awareness levels dropped from 42% for the EFF in 2009 to 37% for the EMFF, possibly due to the change in name. However, the relatively consistent level of awareness in the public is very positive in the context of reduced funding in this time period.

4.1.3. Awareness of Beneficiaries of EU Funding

The priorities for the Operational Programmes (innovation, ICT and the knowledge economy; environment and risk prevention; urban development; and secondary transport networks) were rarely mentioned. When asked to name anything EU Funded Programmes Support (see Section 3.1.4), research and innovation was mentioned by 6% of respondents, 9% mentioned renewable energy, 17% mentioned the environment, and 5% of people mentioned urban development. Roads were named, unprompted, by the highest number of respondents (36%) as the major initiatives that EU funding supports.

When asked about specific projects/activities, funded by EU Funded Programmes, that respondents were aware of (see Section 3.3.1) road-related projects were again the most frequently mentioned, although few specific projects were named. Agricultural projects were the next most frequently mentioned, with the Single Farm Payment, GLAS, REPS, CAP and Teagasc all included as mentions. Technology and innovation and urban renewal were priorities for both Regional Operational Programmes, yet less than 2% of respondents mentioned either and no-one mentioned any specific projects. This may be due to the manner in which these beneficiaries receive funding.

Despite the provision of a brief explanation of what EU Funded Programmes support, health was the most frequently mentioned issue which people felt should be supported by the programmes (see Section 3.3.2). This reflects participants' concerns and the ongoing coverage of deficits in funding of the healthcare service but does not provide much relevant insight for those administering the Structural Funds. However, when asked about the beneficiaries of each individual fund (see Section 3.1.5), ≤1% of people named health as an EU funded area. In addition, those who stated that they were aware of the individual funds provided

numerous incorrect uses of each fund. This suggests that fund names may be somewhat familiar without any real respondent awareness or knowledge.

Instead, the public's unprompted suggestion that employment (43%), education (40%), roads (25%), the economy (25%), environment (19%) and rural development (19%) should be priorities for funding should reinforce the strategic uses of these funds (Section 3.3.2). When asked about the importance of specific areas for investment (see Section 3.3.3), employment remained a high priority, along with water quality, school facilities, training initiatives, business support, social inclusion, childcare, public transport and energy efficiency.

4.1.4. Impressions of the Programme

When asked to give overall impressions of the programmes (Section 3.17), the majority of people gave positive responses. In addition, the vast majority of people (77%) agreed that a regional approach to funding was a good idea. This is a very positive finding in the context of Regional Operational Programmes. Over half of people (57%) agreed that the EU Funded Programmes are likely to benefit all people of Ireland, with more of those in the AB Social Class or youngest group likely to agree (both 62%). The youngest group were also most likely to agree that the EU Funded Programmes would benefit them as an individual (58%), with the over 65s least likely to agree (46%). Farmers (85%) were most likely to agree that the EU Funded Programmes will benefit their local town/area although general agreement for this statement was high (68%).

A higher proportion of respondents in the BMW Region than the S&E Region agreed that the funds would benefit themselves as individuals, their local area, and all people in Ireland. This may reflect that the BMW Region received a higher proportion of the Structural Funds than the S&E Region (€458m as compared to €292m). However, at a NUTS II level there were no regional differences in awareness of EU Funded Programmes overall (Section 3.1.2) and limited to no regional differences in awareness of the specific EU Funds (Section 3.1.5). Therefore, the higher proportion of respondents in the BMW Region with a positive perception does not appear to be related to explicit awareness of funds.

Despite relatively low levels of knowledge of the workings of the EU Funded Programmes, the generally positive responses, and relatively high levels of awareness, represent a positive finding in the context of the fact that detailed knowledge may not be obtainable given the communications budget available. Respondents have a perception that EU funding has positive impacts in their communities without having ‘top-of-mind’ awareness of the specific projects which have received the funding. This is unsurprising since respondents reflected a sample of the general population as opposed to individuals connected with programme activities.

4.1.5. Recommendations

Findings from the survey indicate very high awareness of the EU logo and relatively high awareness of the EU Funded Programmes. Nearly two-thirds of people have some awareness of the EU Funded Programmes; higher than any other Government Plan, Strategy or Act with the exception of the Freedom of Information Act. Considering the coverage that topics such as suicide prevention and housing receive this is a very positive finding about EU Funding awareness. In addition, people held positive attitudes towards EU Funding and positive perceptions of their impacts; the majority (77%) of respondents perceive that regional funding is a good idea which is very positive for the ROPs. However, there remains low awareness of the Regional Assemblies.

When probed, fewer people are aware of individual EU Funded programmes, the beneficiaries of the programmes and remit of the funds, consistent with findings from the 2009 survey. Improving on this low level of awareness is an area where future strategic planning could focus. However, the lack of awareness is probably partially mediated by the majority perception that EU Funded Programmes benefit themselves as individuals, their local town/area, as well as the people of Ireland in general.

When respondents were asked their impression of the Programmes, 13% of adults said that they needed more information to form an opinion, or that the programme needed to



communicate more. Over half of people were interested in finding out more about the EU Funded Programmes; the majority of whom have a particular interest in information about employment (89%), energy efficiency (78%), renewable energy (76%), business support (75%) and broadband (74%). Those in the Border Region and Midland Region are particularly interested in finding out about broadband (81% and 90% respectively).

Preferred sources of information about EU Funded Programmes are as follows: television (57%); national radio (53%); national newspapers (print; 45%); local radio (40%); local newspapers (print; 35%); and national newspapers (online; 32%). Approximately 15% of people were interested in public meetings in their local area, with 12% happy to receive information leaflets. 17% of the 18-24 year olds would like to hear more through Facebook.

Our findings suggest that Irish people have positive impressions of EU Funded Programmes and very high awareness of the EU logo. Awareness levels of individual funds remains consistent, in the majority, with findings from 2009. Positively, the Irish people would be very interested in both finding out more about these programmes and receiving information. This is, also, complementary to active public participation as a standard measure of good governance evident in European policy.

Appendices:

1. Glossary

BMW	Border, Midland and Western Region
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSF	Community Support Framework
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IoT	Institute of Technology
MA	Managing Authorities
NDP	National Development Plan
NWRA	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
S&E	Southern and Eastern Region
SRA	Southern Regional Assembly

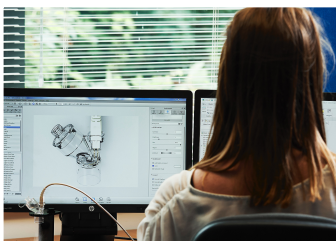
2. NUTS II Age Differences in Awareness of EU Funded Programmes

Appendix 2.1 BMW Regional Age Differences

	Age							
	Total (Overall)	Total (BMW)	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
%								
Spontaneous	24	27	18	23	39	33	21	20
Prompted	40	38	21	38	32	39	46	46
Overall	64	65	39	61	71	72	67	66

Appendix 2.2 S&E Regional Age Differences

	Age							
	Total (Overall)	Total (S&E)	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
%								
Spontaneous	24	23	28	22	25	25	22	18
Prompted	40	41	34	39	45	39	52	42
Overall	64	64	62	61	70	64	74	60



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