

## Discrimination in Europe *Highlights*

*This study, made within the framework of Eurobarometer 57.0 between 23rd February and 4th April 2002, presents an analysis of discrimination in the European Union. People were asked about any discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, age, disability and sexual orientation they may have experienced or seen at work, in education, in seeking housing or as a customer of retail or other services, and about their attitudes towards discrimination. All the people who participated in this study are European Union nationals, aged 15 years or over, and reside in a European Union member country.*

**Summary:** *Most Europeans believe that a person's ethnic origin, religion, disability or age can be an obstacle in finding a job, even where qualifications are equal. Most were opposed to discrimination under all circumstances, though they had less faith in the opposition of others. Relatively few European citizens considered that they themselves had been victims of discrimination, though more had witnessed discrimination. Only a third thought they would know their rights if faced with discrimination in applying for a job, accessing public services etc... Although a majority would complain in some form or another, relatively few citizens would take the case to court.*

**The great majority thought that people with disabilities and older applicants were at a disadvantage in the labour market, even when they had the same qualifications as other applicants.** More than half thought that ethnic minorities were also disadvantaged in this way, ranging from 43 per cent in the UK to 89 per cent in Denmark.

**The majority of people throughout Europe were opposed to discrimination** on each of these grounds, with the highest scores in Spain (89%); Luxembourg (88%) and the United Kingdom (87%). These majorities were a little smaller in the case of discrimination against mentally disabled people, but were still clear majorities.

**Respondents were more pessimistic about the views of their fellow European citizens,** whom they felt would be more likely than they were to approve of discrimination. This was particularly true as regards discrimination against ethnic minorities. The gap between people's view on discrimination and their more cautious evaluation of the views of other people is the widest in Italy and Spain (more than 20 points) and the narrowest (less than 10 points) in Germany.

**Few said they had experienced discrimination.** The largest group, just five per cent, had experienced discrimination because of their age. The samples, however, will have contained relatively few ethnic minority members as only EU nationals were being interviewed. In addition, no exact figures as the precise share of groups exposed to discrimination in the samples are available.

**Far more said they had witnessed discrimination.** The largest group, more than a fifth, had witnessed discrimination on ethnic grounds, ranging between 15 per cent in Ireland to 35 per cent in the Netherlands. This is especially true in the Netherlands (35%), Finland,

Sweden (31% each) and France (28%). Discrimination on the grounds of age or sexual orientation is more rarely witnessed (6%). However, in the Netherlands followed by Sweden discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, is most likely to have been witnessed (11% and 10% of respondents respectively).

**Only one in three Europeans would know their rights, were they to experience discrimination.** Belgians (26%), Austrians (29%), East Germans (29%) and the Danes (29%) are the least likely to know their rights if discriminated against. Those most informed include Finns (70%) Greeks (53%), Italians (43%) and Irish (40%).

**Seven out of ten said they would complain** if they were discriminated against in restaurants, shops and similar services. This varied between 60 per cent in Austria and 81 per cent in Sweden. About 80 per cent of those who said they would complain said they would complain verbally, 37 per cent said they would complain in writing and 22 per cent said they would take it to court.