



Technology, innovation and digitalization  
EU opinion poll

## Opinion in France

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Within the framework of the “Fostering Innovation. Unlocking Potential.” project, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has conducted an online survey in all EU countries with the eupinions<sup>1</sup> survey tool. This survey elicits information regarding citizens’ attitudes – across the EU and within individual countries – toward technological innovation. The results for France are representative.

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### How the French view their country

Overall, French respondents are quite critical of their country’s capacity to innovate and the conditions needed to facilitate it. Although many people expect innovations to have positive effects on their own lives in the next 15 years, a relevant proportion of the French population fears negative effects as well.

- A total 55% of French respondents feel that their **country’s innovative capacity** is good by international comparison, which is on par with the EU average of 54%.
- But slightly more than one-third of French respondents (36%) think that their country’s **economic and policy framework** effectively fosters innovation in their country.
- Slightly more than half of French respondents (56%) expect **innovation to have positive effects** on their own lives in the next 15 years. Across the EU, however, 69% of respondents expect a positive impact. At the same time, a good quarter of French respondents surveyed (26%) fear negative consequences are on the horizon (EU: 18%).

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<sup>1</sup> eupinions is an independent platform for European public opinion. They collect, analyse and comment on what the European public thinks about current political issues and megatrends. eupinions employs cutting-edge data collection techniques. Every quarter, they collect samples from each EU member state in 22 languages. The data meets the highest scientific standards and is representative with regard to age, gender, education and country/region. eupinions is a project of Bertelsmann Stiftung. The data is collected by Dalia Research.

- No other country in the EU features such a large share of respondents who anticipate positive effects on the health sector as does France (44%). The French are particularly concerned about the future of their **jobs**: Some 39% expect negative effects to take hold in this regard.
- **Compared with the pre-coronavirus crisis era**, the desire for more intensive support for innovation in some areas has increased significantly. French respondents want to see innovation particularly in the healthcare sector (57%, +15%), in the creation of new jobs (53%, +15%) and in environmental protection efforts (47%, +10%).

### France and the European Union

There is greater skepticism in France with regard to the EU's innovativeness and competitiveness. French respondents see the economic competition coming from China and the United States as a major challenge. Although many French respondents believe it is a good idea to deepen EU cooperation efforts, the number of those in France who advocate more in the way of national solutions is also particularly high.

- A total of 56% of French respondents rate the **EU's innovative capacity** as "good." EU respondents as a whole are more upbeat on this matter, with 66% stating that the EU's innovative capacity is "good."
- A large share of French respondents identify China and the United States as being strong competitors in innovation. For example, 58% of French respondents consider the United States to be more innovative than the EU. In addition, 60% of the French surveyed believe that the Chinese are better at innovation.
- Of all EU countries included in the representative survey, France has the largest share of respondents (17%) who consider it a good idea to focus on national solutions in order to facilitate innovativeness and competitiveness. Only 12% agree with this statement on average across the EU. However, 55% of French respondents also consider more intensive cooperation between EU states worth pursuing. The share of those expressing this desire increased by 3% during the coronavirus epidemic.

### Differences according to specific respondent characteristics

Gender plays an important role in the opinions expressed by French respondents. The place of residence (urban vs. rural ) and age also make a difference. Women, rural populations and the elderly generally express greater skepticism vis á vis the future with regard to new technological innovations and digital transformation.

- **Men** are more likely (60%) than **women** (45%) to consider as advisable closer cooperation between EU countries as a means of fostering innovative capacities.
- In France, **more men than women** believe in the EU's international competitiveness in terms of its innovative capacity. For example, 62% of French men consider the EU's innovative capacity to be good, while only 51% of women agree with this statement.
- Whereas **nearly two-thirds of French men** (63%) think that technological innovations will have a positive impact on their lives over the next 15 years, **less than half of French women** (48%) expect this to be the case.
- Slightly less than half (47%) of the **rural population** expects technological innovations to have positive effects on their own lives in the next 15 years. By contrast, more than half of the **urban population** expects such a positive impact (60%).
- **The younger the respondent**, the more likely they are to anticipate positive effects on their lives in the next 15 years that derive from innovation. This correlation also applies in its reverse: **The older the respondent**, the more likely they are to expect negative effects of innovations on their lives in the next 15 years.