

Words of Europe Report: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Citizens' Participation in Democratic Life



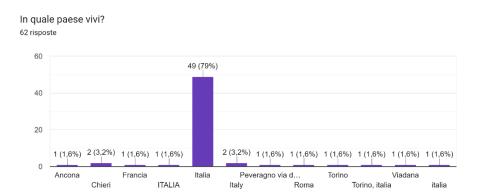


Introduction

Words of Europe (WE) explores the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on citizens' democratic participation. This questionnaire, conducted by Arci Solidarietà with contributions from all Words of Europe partners, gathered data to analyze how the pandemic impacted active citizenship and democratic engagement. The aim is to understand how the health crisis transformed participation and whether these changes have been replaced by alternative forms of civic and democratic involvement.

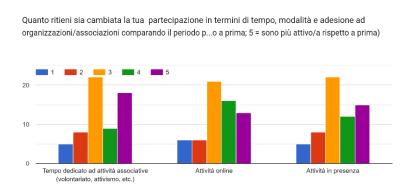
ITALIAN SURVEY

What country do you live in?



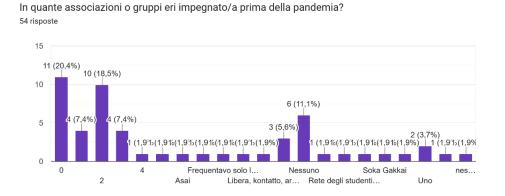
The vast majority of participants come from Italy (96.8%), with representation from various Italian cities. The most represented cities are Torino with 4.8%, Chieri with 3.2%, and other cities such as Roma, Ancona, Viadana, and Peveragno with a single occurrence each.

How much do you think your participation has changed in terms of time, mode, and membership in organizations/associations comparing the pre-pandemic period and the present time?



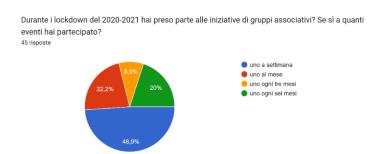
The data shows a shift in how people engage in associative, online, and in-person activities compared to the pre-pandemic period. For associative activities (such as volunteering or activism), 22% of participants reported increased involvement. This suggests some have found new ways to stay active, while others have faced challenges. In terms of online activities, 21% of participants dedicated more time to digital platforms, likely due to pandemic restrictions. Regarding in-person activities, 22% continued participating in person, while smaller percentages (5%, 8%, 12%) indicate reduced involvement, likely due to ongoing restrictions. Overall, while online activities saw a notable increase, many participants have also maintained or adjusted their involvement in in-person activities. The data reflects resilience and adaptability, with some increasing their participation while others faced challenges in staying engaged.

How many associations or groups were you involved in before the pandemic?



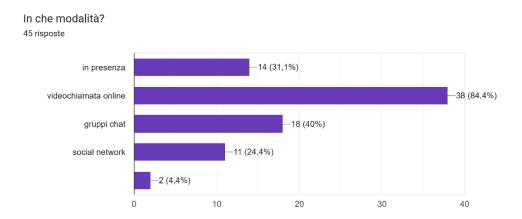
Based on the responses, most participants (50-60%) were not involved in any associations or groups before the pandemic, indicating that formal or informal group participation was uncommon for many. Around 15-20% were involved in 1-2 associations, showing that a smaller but notable portion were engaged in at least one group. A smaller percentage (10%) participated in more than two groups, including specific organizations like "Fridays For Future," "Libera," and "Collettivi transfemministi," reflecting a higher level of involvement in activism. A few responses also mentioned specific groups like Soka Gakkai and social organizations such as Rete degli studenti medi or ANPI.

During the 2020-2021 lockdowns did you participate in association group initiatives? If yes, how many events did you participate in?



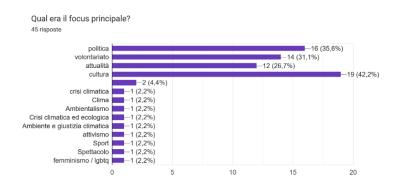
During the 2020–2021 lockdowns, most participants continued to take part in initiatives from associative groups, with a high level of engagement. About 48,9% of respondents participated in one event per week, indicating strong weekly involvement, likely through online or virtual formats. Another significant group, around 22,2%, participated in one event per month, showing regular but less frequent engagement. A smaller percentage participated in events every three (8,9%) or six months (20%), suggesting occasional or more sporadic involvement. Overall, the data indicates that most individuals maintained a good level of participation during the lockdowns, adapting to new methods of meeting and engaging in activities.

In what mode?



Based on the responses, the most common modes of participation during the lockdowns were online video calls, group chats, and social networks, with in-person events being less frequent. The majority of participants (84,4%) engaged in activities through video calls, highlighting the central role of virtual platforms in maintaining connections during the lockdown. Around 30-35% of participants used group chats for communication and organizing, underlining the importance of text-based platforms for staying in touch. About 15-20% of participants reported using social media platforms for engagement, either for communication, organizing, or attending events. A smaller portion, about 10-15%, attended events in person, often combined with online activities, showing that, despite restrictions, some individuals still managed to meet face-to-face when possible.

What was the main focus?



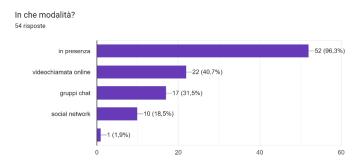
The main focus of activities during the lockdowns varied, with participants indicating a wide range of topics. Politics was the most prevalent theme, with about 35,6% of respondents mentioning political activism, current affairs, and general political involvement. Following closely were climate crisis and environmentalism, mentioned by 20–25% of participants, reflecting a strong concern for ecological issues. Culture was also a significant focus, with 42,2% of responses highlighting cultural activities and discussions. Additionally, around 31,1% of participants focused on volunteering, and a smaller proportion, approximately 5–10%, highlighted topics related to feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, and social justice. Overall, politics and activism were the central themes, but there was also considerable interest in climate justice, cultural initiatives, and volunteer work. This diverse range of interests shows a broad concern for both social and environmental change.

In the past six months, have you taken part in membership group initiatives? If yes, how many events have you participated in?



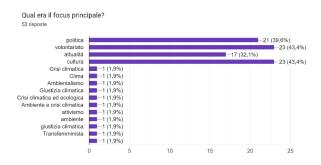
Based on the responses, the frequency of participation in association-related events over the past six months varied among the participants. A significant portion of participants (around 66%) attended events once a week, showing a high level of regular engagement in group activities. A smaller group (about 17%) participated once a month, suggesting a more moderate level of involvement. A few participants (approximately 5-10%) attended events once every three months or every six months, indicating sporadic participation.

In what mode?



Based on the responses, the modes of participation in association-related events over the past six months can be broken down as follows: the majority of participants (about 96,3%) took part in events in person. This indicates that physical meetings were the most common mode of participation; a medium group (around 40,7%) engaged through video calls alongside in-person events, highlighting a mixed approach to participation; around 31,5% of participants mentioned group chats as part of their involvement, often in combination with in-person or online meetings; Finally, a smaller portion of participants (about 18,5%) used social media platforms to engage in activities, again often in combination with other modes.

What was the main focus?

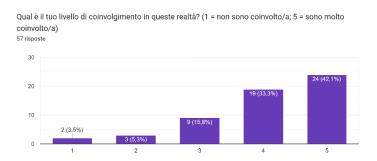


The main focus of participation in association-related activities can be categorized as follows:

- Politics and Current Affairs: A significant portion of participants (around 39,6%) focused on political issues, current affairs, and activism. This indicates a strong engagement with social and political topics.
- Volunteering: Approximately 43,4% of respondents mentioned volunteering as a key activity, often combined with other interests like culture or politics.

- Culture: 43,4% of participants focused on cultural activities, reflecting a diverse range of engagement that includes arts, cultural promotion, and social movements related to cultural change.
- Climate Crisis and Environmentalism: Around 20-25% of participants highlighted the climate crisis, environmentalism, and climate justice as their primary focus. This shows that environmental concerns remain central to many individuals' activism.
- Other Areas: There were also smaller mentions (around 5-10%) of more specific areas, such as transfeminism, activism, and social justice.

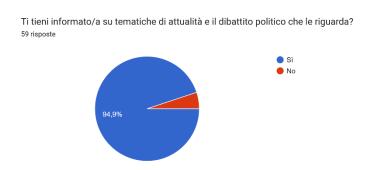
What is your level of involvement in these realities?



Based on the responses regarding the level of involvement in these activities (with 1 being "not involved" and 5 being "very involved"), the analysis is as follows:

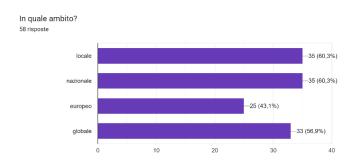
- Level 5 (very involved): A significant portion of participants (around 42,1%) indicated that they are very involved in these activities, suggesting a strong commitment and active participation in the causes they are engaged with.
- Level 4: Approximately 33,3% of participants reported a moderate level of involvement (level 4), indicating that while they are actively engaged, there may be room for more involvement or engagement in other areas.
- Level 3: About 15,8% of respondents marked their involvement at level 3, suggesting a balanced or average level of participation.
- Level 2: Around 5,3% reported a lower level of involvement (level 2), reflecting some engagement, but less frequent or intense participation.
- Level 1 (not involved): A small percentage of participants (3,5%) reported being not involved at all, indicating some individuals are disengaged or not actively participating in these activities.

Do you keep yourself informed about current issues and the political debate surrounding them?



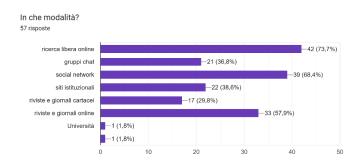
The overwhelming majority of participants (approximately 94,9%) stay informed about current events and the political debates surrounding them, indicating a strong engagement with ongoing issues in society. A small minority (about 2-5%) reported not keeping up with such topics, suggesting that they may be less engaged with the political and social discourse of the moment. This indicates a high level of awareness and participation among the majority of the participants regarding current affairs.

In what area?



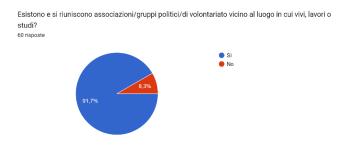
Participants are engaged in a wide range of levels, with a notable focus on local issues, followed by national, global, and European concerns. Particularly, many participants focus primarily on local issues (approximately 60,3%), suggesting a strong community-based engagement; the same portion (about 60,3%) is also engaged at the national level, indicating that domestic issues are of key interest to many; 56,9% of participants are engaged in global issues, showing that there is still significant awareness of international concerns; finally, 43,1% of participants are focused on European issues, reflecting a slightly smaller but still notable level of involvement with regional matters.

In what mode?



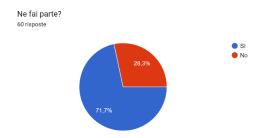
Based on the responses, participants use a variety of methods to stay informed on current events and topics. Online Search is the most commonly used method, with nearly 73,7% of participants indicating that they rely on free online searches for information. This shows a strong preference for digital platforms to access news and updates; around 68,4% of respondents use social media platforms for staying informed, highlighting the importance of social media in modern information consumption; 36,8% of participants engage in group chats to share and discuss information, indicating the role of peer-topeer communication; a significant portion of respondents, about 57.9%, uses online newspapers and magazines as their primary sources of information, highlighting the growing dominance of digital media. In contrast, 29.8% of participants continue to use both printed and online newspapers and magazines, showing that traditional media still holds relevance, though it is often consumed alongside digital formats. Around 38,6% of participants refer to institutional websites, underlining the importance of official sources in their information-gathering practices.

Do associations/political/volunteer groups exist and meet near where you live, work, or study?



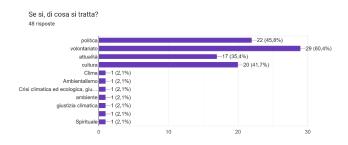
A majority of participants, approximately 91,7%, confirmed that political or volunteer groups exist and meet in the area where they live, work, or study. A smaller portion, around 8,3%, indicated that they do not have any such associations or groups near their location.

Are you part of it?



71,7% of participants confirmed that they are part of a political or volunteer group, while 28,3% of participants stated that they do not belong to any such group.

If so, what is it about?



A significant portion of respondents (60.4%) are involved in volunteer work. This high percentage indicates a strong commitment to social causes and suggests that many people are actively engaged in their communities, contributing to various forms of support and assistance. Almost half of the respondents (45.8%) are involved in political activities. This indicates a strong interest in current political affairs and activism. People seem to be engaged in shaping societal changes, whether through direct participation in political groups or involvement in campaigns related to societal issues. This high percentage points to a heightened political awareness, particularly in times of social and political change. A notable portion of respondents (41.7%) are involved in cultural activities or cultural groups. Around 35.4% of respondents stay engaged with current affairs, which shows that there is a solid awareness of ongoing events and news. This aligns with the political engagement, indicating that many people are not only following the political sphere but also broader developments across various sectors like economics, international relations, and social trends.

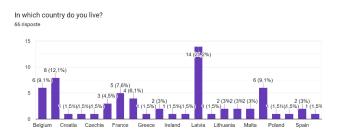


Quanto ti senti rappresentato/a dalle istituzioni? (1 = non rappresentato/a; 5 = pienamente

The data highlights a general dissatisfaction with institutions at all levels, with national institutions receiving the most criticism and local institutions faring slightly better but still lacking strong representation. For local institutions, 34% of respondents (17% each for 1 and 2) feel minimally represented, showing a notable disconnection even at the governance level closest to citizens. Only 9% (6% for 4 and 3% for 5) feel well-represented, while 19% rate their representation at a moderate level (3). National institutions evoke the lowest levels of trust, with a striking 50% of respondents (32% for 1 and 18% for 2) feeling poorly represented. A mere 4% (3% for 4 and 1% for 5) feel well-represented, underscoring significant dissatisfaction at this level. European institutions show a slightly better distribution, with 36% rating low representation (15% for 1 and 21% for 2) and 25% giving moderate scores (16% for 3 and 9% for 4). However, only 1% feel fully represented (5), indicating limited trust in European governance. International institutions also reflect a mixed sentiment. While 39% rate low representation (21% for 1 and 18% for 2), 21% feel moderately represented (16% for 3 and 5% for 4). A mere 2% feel fully represented (5).

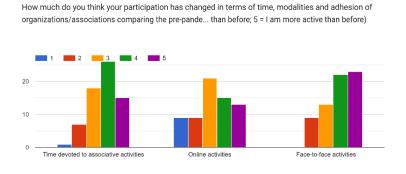
ENGLISH SURVEY

In which country do you live?



The survey reveals a diverse representation of participants from various European countries. Latvia stands out with the highest proportion of respondents, accounting for 21.2% of the total. Bulgaria follows with 12.1%, Netherlands and Belgium come in third with 13.2%. France and Germany stand at 7.6% and 6.1%, respectively.

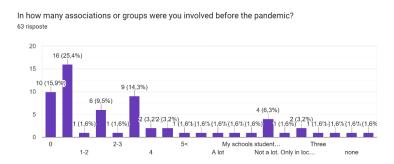
How much do you think your participation has changed in terms of time, modalities and adhesion of organizations/associations comparing the prepandemic period and the present time?



The data provides valuable insights into how respondents perceive changes in their participation in associative activities—considering time commitment, online modalities, and face-to-face interactions—when comparing the pre-pandemic period to the present. Regarding time devoted to associative activities, ratings of 4 (moderate increase) and 5 (significant increase) are prevalent, suggesting that many respondents

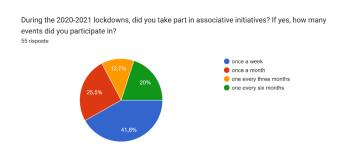
have become more active in associative activities. However, a notable share rated their involvement as 3 (no significant change), highlighting stability in their participation for some individuals. Lower scores, such as 1 (less active) and 2 (slightly less active), are present but less frequent, indicating a minority who feel less engaged than before. A strong trend toward increased online engagement is evident. High ratings, particularly 4 and 5, dominate, reflecting a widespread shift to virtual platforms for participation since the pandemic. Face-to-face engagement shows a mixed pattern. While many respondents still rate their participation as 4 or 5, indicating they have resumed or increased in-person interactions, others report lower scores such as 2 or 3, reflecting a decline or no significant change in their face-to-face involvement.

In how many associations or groups were you involved before the pandemic?



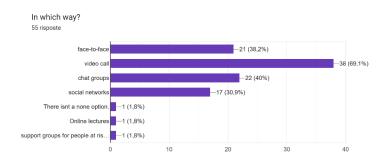
Before the pandemic, participation in associations varied widely among respondents. A significant portion was highly engaged, with many involved in three or more groups, and some in as many as five or more. Others showed moderate involvement in one to two groups, often tied to schools or local initiatives.

During the 2020-2021 lockdowns, did you take part in associative initiatives? If yes, how many events did you participate in?



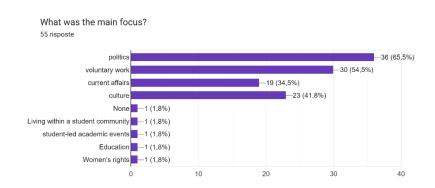
During the 2020–2021 lockdowns, respondents participated in associative initiatives at varying frequencies. The most common response was once a week (41,8%), with many engaging in activities on a weekly basis. Once a month (25,5%) was also a frequent answer, indicating regular but less frequent participation. Some individuals took part in activities every three months (12,7%) or every six months (20%), suggesting more sporadic involvement. Overall, there was a consistent level of engagement, with weekly or monthly participation being the norm for many, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

In which way?



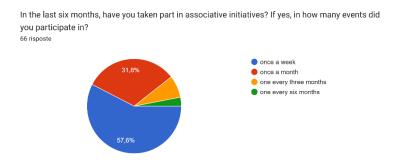
The majority of respondents reported participating in associative activities through video calls (69,1%), followed by chat groups (40%) and face-to-face (38,2%). A consistent number of participants also mentioned social networks (30,9%). This indicates a blend of virtual and in-person engagement, with digital platforms playing a significant role during the pandemic, but face-to-face interactions still being present for some, particularly when safe or possible.

What was the main focus?



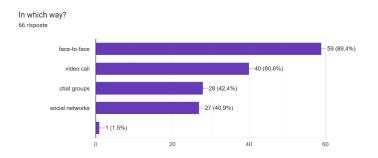
The main focus of participants in associative activities during the pandemic was primarily on politics (65,5%) and voluntary work (54,5%), with many also engaging in current affairs (34,5%) and culture (41,85). Therefore, politics and voluntary work stood out as the most common themes, indicating that people were likely involved in activities related to social issues, community support, and advocacy. Some participants also mentioned specific areas such as women's rights and student-led academic events, highlighting a focus on both advocacy and educational engagement.

In the last six months, have you taken part in associative initiatives?



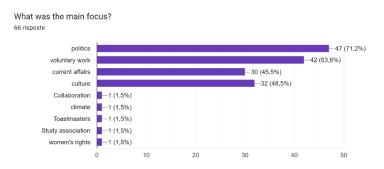
The data indicates that a majority of participants have been actively involved in associative initiatives in the last six months. The most common frequency of participation is once a week (57,6%), with many respondents engaging in events on a weekly basis, reflecting a high level of involvement. There are also significant numbers of participants who attend once a month (31,8%). Fewer participants attend events once every three months (7,6%) or once every six months (3%), suggesting that while most individuals are highly involved, there is a smaller portion with less frequent participation.

In which way?



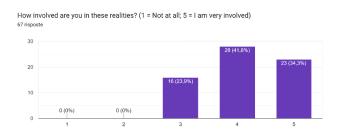
The face-to-face mode is the most preferred by the majority of participants, with a substantial percentage of 89.4%. This is followed by video calls at 60.6%, chat groups at 42.4%, and social networks at 40.9%, highlighting the significant adoption of digital tools as a complement to direct interactions.

What was the main focus?



Politics, voluntary work, current affairs, and culture are the main topics addressed in associative initiatives, with percentages of 71.2%, 63.6%, 45.5%, and 48.5%, respectively, highlighting a strong interest in civic and cultural issues.

How involved are you in these realities?



34.3% of respondents gave a score of 5, indicating a high level of involvement in the activities. The score of 4 is the most common, with 41.8%, reflecting a good degree of participation. Finally, 23.9% of participants showed moderate involvement, selecting a score of 3.

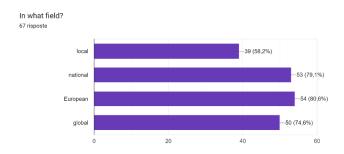
Do you keep yourself informed about current issues and the political debate surrounding them?



The majority of participants, 94%, reported that they keep themselves info

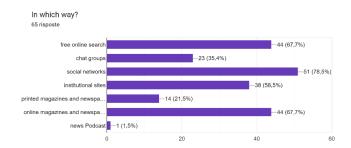
The majority of participants, 94%, reported that they keep themselves informed about current issues and the political debates surrounding them, indicating a strong engagement with these topics. Only a small portion, 6%, stated that they do not stay updated, reflecting a minimal number of individuals who are less involved in following current issues and political discussions.

In what field?



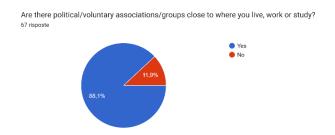
The responses show a broad interest in topics at the global, national, and European levels, with a strong emphasis on these dimensions, accounting for 74.6%, 79.1%, and 80.6%, respectively. Although local issues are less common, the data (58.2%) highlight a significant interest at the territorial level.

In which way?



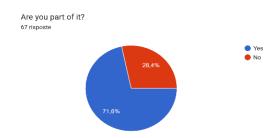
The analysis of the responses shows that participants primarily get their information through social networks (78.4%), followed by free online searches (67.7%). Immediately after, online magazines and newspapers are also frequently used. Lastly, institutional websites are commonly consulted as well, with 58.5% of participants relying on them for information.

Are there political/voluntary associations/groups close to where you live, work or study?



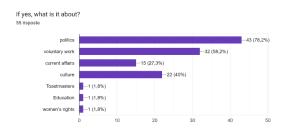
The majority of participants, 88.1%, indicated that there are political or voluntary associations/groups close to where they live, work, or study. This reflects widespread access to such organizations in the respondents' immediate environments. Only a small portion, 11.9%, reported that no such groups are nearby, suggesting limited availability for a minority of individuals.

Are you part of it?



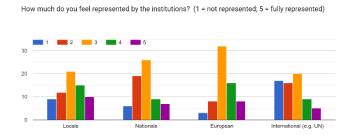
While the majority of participants (71.6%) are members of political or voluntary associations/groups, a significant proportion (28.4%) is not involved. This suggests that while many people are engaged in such organizations, there remains a notable portion who are not actively participating.

If yes, what is it about?



The majority of the associations that respondents are a part of are politically oriented (78.2%), followed by those focused on voluntary work (58.2%), current affairs (27.3%), and culture (40%).

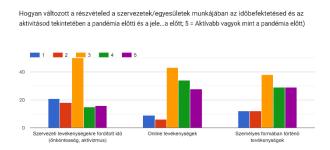
How much do you feel represented by the institutions?



The data suggests that a large portion of the respondents feel underrepresented, particularly at the local (39%) and national (41%) levels, with only a small portion (10% local, 13% national) feeling fully represented. On the other hand, European institutions receive a relatively more positive response, with 38% of respondents feeling well represented (ratings 4 or 5). International institutions like the UN are seen as less representative, with 42% of respondents giving them the lowest ratings (1 or 2).

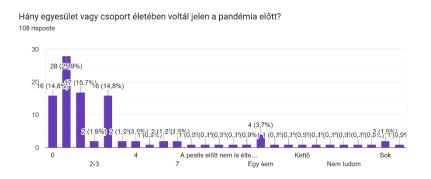
HUNGARIAN SURVEY

How has your involvement in the work of organisations/associations changed in terms of time and activity compared to before the pandemic and now?



The analysis of the data shows a mixed impact of the pandemic on involvement in organizational activities. Around 30% of participants have become more active, particularly in online activities, with an increased commitment to digital engagement. However, a similar percentage (35%) has reduced their overall activity, indicating that some faced logistical or personal challenges. In-person activities were significantly reduced, with many participants decreasing or discontinuing physical involvement (45%).

How many associations or groups were you involved in before the pandemic?



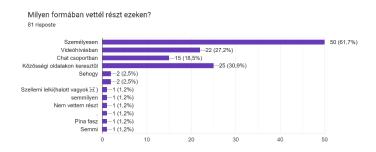
The majority of respondents reported being active in one (25,9%) or two organizations (15,7%), while a significant number (14,8%) stated they were not involved in any association. Additionally, a small group (about 15%) mentioned being involved in three or more groups or organizations.

Were you involved in civic initiatives during the 2020-2021 lockdown? If so, how often were you present at events?



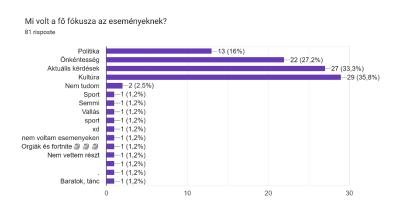
The responses indicate that most participants in Hungary took part in civil initiatives during the 2020–2021 lockdown period, with a noticeable frequency of engagement. The majority of respondents (around 44%) attended events at least once a month, while a significant portion (about 30,7%) participated every week. A smaller group (roughly 14,7%) engaged in events on a quarterly basis, and a few (around 10,7%) attended events every six months.

In what form did you participate?



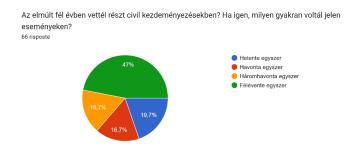
The most commonly used method of participation was in-person involvement, with 61.7% of respondents indicating this as their preferred mode. This was followed by social media platforms, which were used by 30.9% of participants, and video calls, which were utilized by 27.2%.

What was the main focus of the events?



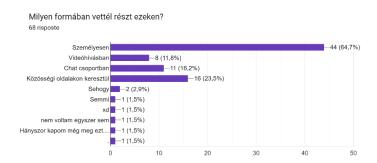
The main focus of the events was primarily on culture, with 35.8% of respondents indicating that cultural topics were the central theme of the events they participated in. Current affairs closely followed, with 33.3% of participants highlighting that the events focused on relevant societal and political issues. Volunteering was another prominent theme, accounting for 27.2% of the responses, reflecting a strong interest in community service and support activities. Finally, politics was the focus for 16% of the respondents, showing that while political discussions were present, they were less dominant compared to other themes like culture, current affairs, and volunteering.

Have you been involved in civic initiatives in the last six months? If yes, how often were you present at events?



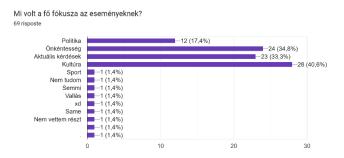
The majority of respondents (47%) have participated once every six months, indicating a relatively high level of involvement in civil initiatives. Additionally, about 19,7% of respondents attended events every week, showcasing consistent engagement at a slightly less frequent pace. Approximately 16,7% of respondents participated once a month, and once every three months.

In what form did you participate?



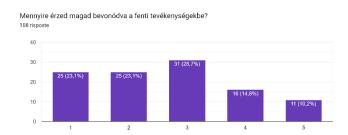
Based on the data, the preferred form of participation in civil initiatives is in-person involvement, which was reported by approximately 64,7% of respondents. This suggests a strong preference for face-to-face interactions in community activities. Participation via social media platforms was the second most common method, with around 23.5% indicating they engaged through these channels. This highlights the growing role of online tools in facilitating civil engagement, particularly for those who might prefer or require remote interaction. Video calls and chat groups were mentioned less frequently, each accounting for approximately 11.8% and 16.2% of responses, respectively.

What was the main focus of the events?



In this case as well, culture stands out as the most prominent focus area, accounting for 40.6% of responses. Current issues follow closely with 33.3%, reflecting strong community interest in addressing contemporary societal matters. Volunteering also plays a significant role, cited by 34.8% of participants. Lastly, politics is mentioned by 17.4%, indicating a smaller but noteworthy engagement in political topics and events.

How involved do you feel in these activities?



The perception of involvement in the activities shows a tendency towards a moderate level, with 3 being the most frequently chosen value (28,7%). However, a polarization emerges between those who feel less involved, represented by scores 1 and 2 (46.2% in total), and those who report a higher level of participation, indicated by scores 4 and 5 (25%).

Do you keep up to date with current issues and the political debates surrounding them?



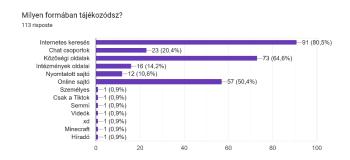
The data indicates that a majority of respondents, 60.2%, actively stay informed about current issues and political debates. However, a significant portion, 39.6%, reported not following these topics. This split reveals a notable polarization within the group, with some individuals showing a strong interest in staying updated on societal and political matters, while others demonstrate limited engagement.

What levels of information do you use?



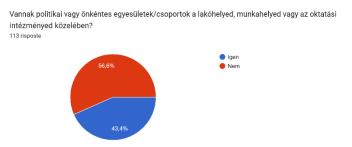
The data reveals that the majority of respondents engage with information on a global level (51.8%), showing a strong interest in worldwide matters. This is followed by those focusing on national issues (20.9%), reflecting a connection to domestic concerns. Engagement at the European level (20.9%) is less common but still significant, indicating interest in continental affairs. A smaller proportion of respondents report being informed at the local level (6.4%), suggesting limited attention to community-specific topics.

How are you informed?



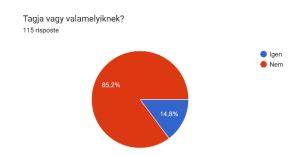
The data reveals a clear preference for digital sources when it comes to staying informed. Internet searches emerge as the most popular method, utilized by 80.5% of respondents, highlighting the reliance on search engines for accessing information. Social media follows closely at 64.6%, emphasizing its role as a significant channel for news consumption and discussions. Online press, used by 50.4%, remains a trusted source for detailed articles and up-to-date reporting. Less commonly used are institutional websites (14.2%) and chat groups (20.4%).

Are there political or voluntary associations/groups near your home, workplace or educational institution?



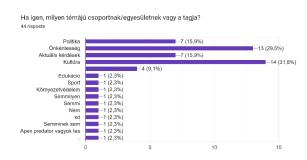
The data analysis shows that approximately 56.6% of respondents confirmed the presence of political or volunteer associations near their place of residence, work, or educational institution, while 43.4% responded negatively. This suggests that, in general, a relative majority of people have access to civic participation opportunities in their communities. However, the disparity between affirmative and negative responses indicates that, in some areas, these opportunities may be less widespread.

Are you a member of one?



The data analysis shows that only a small percentage of respondents are members of political or volunteer associations. Specifically, about 14.8% of respondents answered affirmatively, while the remaining 85.2% indicated that they are not part of such groups.

If yes, what kind of group/association are you a member of?



The data analysis shows that the main topics of the associations or groups the respondents belong to are Volunteering (29.5%) and Culture (31.8%), followed by Politics (15.9%) and Current Issues (7.69%). Some respondents are members of groups that combine multiple topics, such as Volunteering, Current Issues, and Culture (5.13%) or Politics and Volunteering (5.13%). More specific topics like Education, Environment, and Sports were indicated by a smaller percentage (2.3%).

How well do you feel represented by the institutions at the following levels?



The data analysis shows that, in general, respondents feel more represented by local institutions compared to national institutions, European institutions, and global institutions. This indicates a higher perception of representation at the local level, which progressively decreases as the level of representation moves towards national, European, and global levels. This indicates a higher perception of representation at the local level, which progressively decreases as the level of representation moves towards national, European, and global levels.