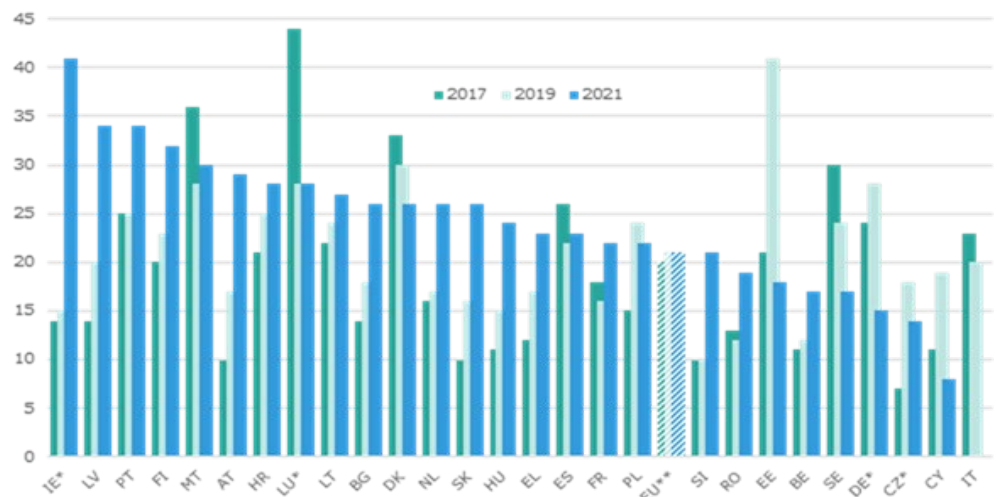


## Chart of the month (January 2022)

### Young people using internet for civic or political participation

The [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) aims at fostering a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people. Our first Chart of the Month for 2022, the European Year of Youth, looks at young people's use of the internet for civic or political participation in the EU over the past five years. In this short time span, rallying causes have ranged from populism to police brutality and from sexual assault to climate change. A global health crisis has given further impetus to the online space as the backdrop for civic participation and activism.

#### Young people (16-29) using internet for civic or political participation (%)



Source: Eurostat (2022), online data code: [ISOC\\_CI\\_AC\\_I](#).

Note : Percentage of individuals aged 16-29. 'Using internet for civic or political participation' is an aggregated variable derived from individuals who have used the internet in the last three months for taking part in on-line consultations or voting to define civic or political issues (e.g. urban planning, signing a petition), or for expressing opinions on civic or political issues on websites or in social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube). Sorted in descending order according to 2021 values. \* Special values: break in time series for DE (2021), CZ (2019), IE (2021) and LU (2019); low reliability for IE (2021); data unavailable for IT (2021). Note that respective country results/trends are consequently not included in the assessment below. \*\* Estimated value for EU (2021).

The chart shows that in 2017, the EU-wide rate of young people (16-29) using the internet for civic or political participation stood at 20%, slightly higher than adult population (16-74) – for whom the average stood at 15% (not shown). Although the EU-wide average for young people only increased marginally from 2017 to 2021 (20% to 21%), most Member States did see an increase in young people's use of the internet for civic or political participation during this period. Latvia recorded the highest increase (20 percentage points) from 14% to 34%. An additional eight countries recorded increases of 10 percentage points or more. The highest relative change was present in Austria, where the share almost tripled (10% to 29%).

Conversely, some countries saw a decrease in young people's use of the internet for civic or political participation between 2017 and 2021. In Sweden, there was a decrease in the share of more than ten percentage points. There were also notable decreases in Denmark and Malta. In terms of percentage change, Sweden, Cyprus, and Denmark experienced decreases of more than 20%. The decreases observed among the young population are mirrored in the adult population of these countries (16-74), though except for Sweden, the decreases were smaller (not shown).

In countries experiencing an increase in the share of young people using internet for civic or political participation between 2017 and 2021, we see that the main part of the increase took place between 2019 and 2021. This coincides with the onset of COVID-19 and the shift of many daily activities online. However, while it is likely that access to other social arenas was limited in 2020 and 2021, these data do not cover the more traditional means or platforms of civic participation or activism. Further analysis is needed to understand trends in total engagement, and how the relative share of digital engagement may have evolved.

## Background

Digital technologies and new media have enormous transformative potential for supporting human rights, building trust in democracy and facilitating collective action. They offer young people more opportunities to access the information for democratic engagement, interact with others across Europe, express their opinions, exercise their rights, and participate in active citizenship. This will allow them to develop and strengthen personal, social and civic competencies, develop critical thinking and creativity, enhance employability and become active European citizens in line with the aims of the [EU Youth Strategy](#).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a rapid move to digital technologies, while also limiting the access to more traditional platforms for civic engagement. Ensuring that *all* young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, have the opportunity and means to obtain relevant skills and access is a precondition to capitalise on innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation.

*Disclaimer: The Chart of the Month does not constitute a policy position of the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for any use made of the Chart of the Month.*