

NEW EUROPEANS



5/15/2014

Identifying the Barriers New
Europeans Face when Registering
to Vote

PAIR2004: Research Skills in Politics and International
Relations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RATIONALE

The brief handed to us by the New Europeans centred on exploring the extent to which EU citizens, moving to the UK were aware of their rights in this country. The focus was pinned specifically on voting rights and the process of registering to vote. We carried out primary research not only to help the New Europeans with their endeavours before the election in May, but also to develop a more robust understanding of the barriers they are facing and to propose improvements. We wanted to find out how conscious EU citizens, especially Polish non-nationals, were about the need to not only register to be able to vote, but how one goes about doing this, when and where. We wanted to acquire a picture of how aware EU citizens were about the registration process, their experiences with it and if they knew about it at all.

PROFILES

- New Europeans - a non-profit organisation aimed at raising the awareness of EU citizens about their voting rights in this country.
- EU societies on campus at the University of Southampton. Our target group for our online survey.
- Polish shops in and around Southampton. Our target group for our face-to-face interviews

METHODOLOGY

- Two primary research methods will be used; an online survey amongst EU societies within the University of Southampton, and face-to-face interviews within the Polish community.
- Triangulation of data from our two surveys will ensure validity in our results.
- 15 Polish shops will be targeting in Southampton.
- Face-to-face interviews will include questions regarding time in the UK, knowledge of registration and seek opinions for improvements to the registration process.
- There were several difficulties with the collection of data. There were also flaws in the sampling frame and target populations.

FINDINGS/IMPLICATIONS

The main barriers restricting EU citizens registering to vote are:

- Language Barrier - there was a non-response rate of 40% for the interviews.

- Information Deficit – 60% of respondents would have liked more readily available information.
- Complicated process of registration – 67% of respondents would prefer online registration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Information packs given to university students
- Posters and leaflets given out around towns
- Translation of forms into various EU languages
- Simplification of the registering process, reformation into one form
- Online registrations with online tutorials on how to register (in various languages)

RATIONALE

With our research we aimed at retrieving a varied set of results from different age groups and occupations to identify the key issues Europeans face when registering to vote. Although our initial plan was to carry out secondary research through journal articles, newspapers and books on our topic, it became clear that data was scarce mostly because the organisation we are carrying out research for was new and the data required to achieve our aims needed to be primarily collected by our group. Our research was carried out to locate any pitfalls within the registration process, expose them and recommend improvements to develop EU citizen's daily lives, to increase comfort and ease with participation.

This research developed our understanding of New European voting patterns and how to raise awareness among their target group. Our results should enlighten the organisation about voting tendencies and identify effective improvements such as detailed leaflets in other languages. The research was used as a basis for corporation with EU groups such as SOS Polonia to inform them about organisations such as the New Europeans to raise awareness and participation.

Furthermore, our research held an incredibly important purpose. From our findings we were able to expose the democratic implications that EU citizens face. There are common issues that boil down to the lack of active participation within society. Of the EU citizens we surveyed and interviewed it was clear that differing language was the main restriction for integration which is an expansive issue in society today. The significance of our research was reflected when questions were asked and exact responses were given by different people. Once the barriers were identified we were able to propose improvements that we

hope will make EU citizens feel more inclined to contribute to the democracy they live in. The registration process needs to be easier and more European friendly in order for EU citizens to feel more comfortable in the democratic society which they live.

Policy makers can use data that we have collected to improve the system for future migrants so that they feel more secure in this country and thus more likely to contribute. Active participation from this group is low and it became clear from our research that citizens will benefit from an improved system that is friendlier and in their language. Of course, our research will benefit the New Europeans. The data collected is tailored to their needs and will hopefully reflect their theories and may contribute to their overall aims. We have found that Europeans do not know their voting rights in this country and the issues EU citizens face when registering to vote that need to be enhanced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

STEADILY DECLINING VOTER TURNOUT AT EP ELECTIONS

Voter turnout at European Parliamentary Elections has been steadily declining since 1979, where levels were at 61.99% and fell to 56.67% in 1994. In 2004 turnout levels were 45.47% and at the latest election, only 43% of citizens turned out to vote (European Parliament).

EUROBAROMETER SURVEY

A survey conducted by Eurobarometer (2010) on the subject of European Union citizenship (commissioned by the European Union) was interested in establishing how aware EU citizens were in regards to their voting rights, and also their opinion on which measures, if any, may help increase voting-turnout in European Parliamentary Elections.

MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

An earlier study by Eurobarometer in 2007 found that in the population of non-national EU citizens, only 37% of respondents were aware they were able to vote at local elections, whilst 54% knew they could vote for European Parliamentary elections as well. However in their 2010 study they found that those figures had taken a more positive turn, with respondents showing a significant increase in their level of awareness in terms of their voting rights, both at municipal and at European level (69% and 67% respectively). On the other hand, the proportion of the same citizens who believed they had a right to vote at national elections has also gone up in the same period, suggesting that political awareness, and particularly voting rights, remains a subject likely to be misinterpreted and

perhaps more investment is needed in raising citizens' awareness (Eurobarometer 2010: 5-7).

When asked whether permanent resident non-national EU citizens should be allowed to vote and stand as candidates in elections at the national and regional level, 50% were in favour at the national level, whilst 54% believed the same citizens should be allowed to run for and vote in regional elections. In order to increase voting turnout at European elections, this survey tried to identify which measures respondents believed to be the most effective, 80% said better and richer information regarding the elections, 83% suggested more information about the candidates and 84% argued if they knew more about the European Union as a whole, citizens would be more likely to vote (Eurobarometer 2010: 5-10).

THREE KEY FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ELECTIONS

G. Bingham Powell (1982) conducted a study of 29 democracies and identified three key factors that influence elections:

- Compulsory Voting
- Automatic Registration
- Party Competition

In his study, Powell found that making voting compulsory raises the average voter turnout by approximately 10%. Belgium, for instance had a turnout level of 90.39% at the latest European Elections. Moreover, Powell makes the distinction between countries that have 'de jure' and 'de facto' compulsory voting systems. Those countries that opted for 'de facto' compulsory voting would see much more significant, positive effects. Furthermore, the author argues that those countries in which voters were expected to self-register in order to vote tend to show lower levels of turnout.

BARRIERS

Lack of a standard procedure for voting across the European Union

Many EU policies reach all levels of the political sphere, from the local to the national and even supranational. Voting at the European Parliamentary Elections unfortunately is not one of them. The procedure differs considerably from one Member State to the other. For instance not all countries allow voters to vote from abroad, some require pre-registration with their national electoral authorities by post, and others through their embassy. In Denmark voting from abroad takes place at their embassies prior to election day, whilst Estonia is the only country to allow e-voting.

New Europeans

The minimum age to be eligible to vote (and stand as a candidate) in the European Parliamentary elections is 18 in all EU countries, apart from Austria where the minimum age is 16. Moreover compulsory voting is enforced (to different extents) in 4 EU Member States: Belgium, Luxemburg, Cyprus and Greece. This lack of standardization in policies regarding voting at EP elections is likely to cause confusion and negatively affect the voting patterns of permanent resident non-national EU citizens, therefore a much more streamlined procedure that is standard across the European Union may help increase voter turnout and participation more broadly (The Electoral Commission).

E-REGISTRATION

E-registration may increase voting voter turnout. In the UK there is a separate registration procedure for Local and European elections. This could be streamlined and updated to make the process simpler and up to date with current technology. Nowadays people pay their bills, apply for loans, shop for clothes and much more online, e-registration should also be an option.

The need to register can be seen as a barrier in itself. Jenifer et al. (2006: 746) suggest that registration can be seen as a 'preliminary hurdle' to electoral participation.

E-VOTING

Online voting has proven successful in Estonia, although Alters and Kooreman (2009) highlight the fact that this step would reduce the number of polling stations and that may negatively impact voter turnout. The authors also recognize that e-voting could lead to a reduction in residual votes (Alters and Kooreman 2009: 169).

PROFILES

NEW EUROPEANS

New Europeans is a newly opened, non-profit organisation aiming to promote the rights of EU citizens around Europe. Their main goal is to increase the awareness of the right to freedom of movement and the right to vote in local and European Parliamentary elections. With over 2.2 million non-British EU citizens now living in the UK, it has become essential to ensure that awareness of rights in this country is as high as it can be (citizensforeurope.eu). Born from a referendum



taking place later this year, the New Europeans are the premiere organisation linking various political institutions in Europe, including local councils and national governments. Networking with EU citizens who know little about their right of residence and rights to vote in the UK is paramount to our brief and so we focused on researching how aware EU citizens were about these rights.

SOCIETIES

The societies on campus at the University of Southampton we directed our research onto were European based. We approached the presidents of these societies to post a web-based survey on their societies' Facebook groups as we believed that would be the most direct way of gaining responses. The societies which we included in our sample were the following: Bulgarian, Erasmus, French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Greek and Cypriot, Spanish, Latin American and Portuguese, Nordic and Russian Speaking Society. The aim of most of these societies is to bring together the speakers of the language of the country they present as well as those who are interested in the culture, customs and activities of the country/language they are promoting. Some societies do not consist of only European Union students, so we have stated in the Participants Information sheet that only students from EU countries should complete our survey.



METHODOLOGY

In addressing the research questions outlined in the rationale, two methods of primary research will be used. Our initial survey will concentrate on students of EU nationality at the University of Southampton. Due to the requirements of the University for proficient English language skills (southampton.ac.uk, no date), we reasoned that this would isolate the language barrier from the results. We considered this necessary as the language barrier could pose an overwhelming problem for those lacking English language proficiency in the wider community. Another consideration was that the majority of students take a 3-4 year course and it is likely they have not been in the UK for previous elections. Consequently, the upcoming European and local elections means non-national students in the UK will have registered recently and therefore have a fresh recollection of any barriers they had faced. There was also the additional factor that non-national students appeared fairly well organised with a student's union society and Facebook page for

each country. This we hoped would allow us to get greater access and exposure to a larger number of people.

Before mentioning the method of distribution, it should be noted that there are some flaws associated with this choice of target population which imposes several limitations to our findings. As it is a narrow section of society, findings are not generalisable to the wider population and potential barriers we identify may lack validity. For example, the mean age of students will be relatively low. The fact that EU elections are held every five years means most of the respondents will not have had the opportunity to vote before due to their age. Lack of knowledge over the issue of registering to vote may be higher than the wider population because of this. Conversely, average IT competency may be slightly higher than the wider population which may mean above average advocacy of online registering. However, on balance, the online survey will form a strong basis for further primary research.

We used an online survey tool, Survey Monkey, to create and collate the survey and emailed the presidents of the individual societies asking if they would post the survey on their Facebook pages and kindly ask their members to fill it out. We were concerned that this would leave the survey vulnerable to the will of the presidents but the extent of access we could achieve made the process worthwhile. Furthermore, we wanted to keep the survey short so as to encourage as many people as possible to complete it. The structure therefore consisted of ten closed multiple choice questions which would appeal to the time conscious student.

The second survey intends to capture a sample of non-nationals from one EU population in Southampton. The target population will be the Polish community because they make up the largest Eastern European group in Southampton by a significant amount. Data provided by Southampton City Council reports 80% of registered workers in Southampton to be Polish, with the second largest group being Slovaks (6%) (london.adagio4.eu, 2007). It should be noted that the data is ten years old and does not accurately reflect Southampton's current demographic. However, the disparity between the two percentages suggests that Poles still make up the majority of Eastern Europeans in Southampton today.

There is difficulty in ascertaining the exact number of Poles residing in Southampton for various reasons. The primary reason is that there is no registration requirement upon entry to the UK. Those that work as an employee must notify the Home Office under the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). However, the WRS is flawed because:

- Individuals leaving the country do not have to de-register. Consequently, outflow is not monitored.
- Those who are self-employed do not have to register.

- There is evidence to suggest not all immigrants required to notify the Home Office fulfil this obligation (london.adagio4.eu, 2007).

The fact that not all Poles of the population are known and accounted for means findings cannot be generalised to all Polish people in Southampton, or indeed the UK. However, triangulation of the data between the two survey methods and existing literature will strengthen the validity of the findings.

A convenience sample will be used to gather responses. Again, the non-random nature of convenience sampling somewhat affects the validity of the results. However, it is more appropriate to select respondents in this way since it is quick and easy. A probability sample would not be feasible due to time constraints and the difficulty of ensuring random selection of Poles.

The study design will be face-to-face interviews with Polish shop managers, assistants and customers. In terms of question structure, nine questions will be asked, eight of which will be closed (a mixture of nominal and ordinal) and one open question. This will allow for both quantitative and qualitative data, which is advantageous for several reasons. Namely, quantifiable data is easily analysable whilst the open ended question will provide rich, in-depth data that may give indications of barriers not identifiable with quantitative data alone. Question order will also be considered, starting with simple questions regarding personal attributes (age/time in UK), followed by my complex questions of knowledge (E.g "Do you need to register to vote?"). Questions regarding attitudes and opinions will come last. Finally, jargon and technical words will be omitted to make the interview as simple as possible to understand.

Several methods will be employed to ensure standardisation of results. Polish shop managers will be greeted with the same address, and interviewer behaviour will be controlled to ensure there is no interviewer interpretation or deviation from the questionnaire. Care will be taken to ensure the interviewer probes in a non-directive way and remains neutral in body language and tone to avoid social desirability bias. To facilitate this, the research group will conduct interviews in pairs, with an alternating role as interviewer and observer.

The choice of sample size is largely based on the sampling frame used. A website was found which listed Polish shops in Southampton, comprising grocery stores and supermarkets (informacjelokalne.co.uk, no date). Fifteen addresses were deemed feasible in regard to their accessibility. The postcodes will be plotted using the online mapping tool Google Maps. The area will then be divided into sub-regions and pairs within the research group were allocated different locations.

Two drawbacks to the sampling frame can be identified. The opening hours of the shops means that Poles working during the day will not be represented. Furthermore, Polish shops tend to attract predominantly Polish customers. Consequently, a competent

understanding of English is not required and a high non-response rate is expected due to the language barrier. Despite this, there is a high degree of certainty that Polish shops will provide eligible, Polish respondents which means many responses can be generated in a timely manner. It should be noted that before interviewing Polish customers, permission from the shop owner will be ascertained.

There are also several ethical considerations for both the online survey and face-to-face interviews. In both surveys, written consent will be required before commencing. The consent form will outline the purpose of the survey, the respondent's right to withdraw data, and the assurance of anonymity throughout the process. For the online survey, a digital consent form will redirect the respondent to the survey once they have ticked a box confirming their understanding. Data gathered online will be stored on a password protected account.

It should be noted that prior to the decision of visiting Polish shops, our research group attempted to establish contact with the local Polish organisation SOS Polonia. Based in the heart of Southampton, "SOS Polonia is the first port of call for migrant workers seeking guidance and support" (www.sospolonia.net). The organisation provides popular workshops such as weekly English classes and helps Poles seeking employment. Unfortunately, our original intention of attending one of these workshops to conduct our interviews was unsuccessful due to repeated failure in establishing contact via email and phone calls. This led to the decision of utilising the Polish website we found which lists the addresses of shops in Southampton.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our rationale stated that the data for our research was scarcely available due to how contemporary the issues are. This made it imperative for us to carry out our own primary research within Southampton to gain as much information as possible on why Europeans find it difficult to register to vote. We recorded non responses showing that 40% of the people we approached could not answer the questions due to a lack of understanding, on the part of differing languages.

STUDENT SURVEY

50% of the 34 students surveyed had not been in the UK for longer than two years. The last local election was in 2009, meaning we can expect that many of the respondents did not have full comprehension of the electoral procedures in the UK. However, the fact that 80% of students surveyed had voted in an election and 16% had voted in the UK showed that they were politically active. 42% of respondents did not know that they were able to vote in local and European elections.

75% of those interviewed were unsure if they were registered to vote, in either the UK or European Parliamentary elections. Furthermore, 62.5% of respondents did not know that they had to register to vote. When questioned if they had received any information of any type regarding how and where to register, 78% said no. The survey made it clear that the low rate of registration is attributed partly, to a lack of information for students at the university. 83% of the respondents had not received any information from the university specifically. We cannot infer that they were expecting information upon arrival to the university, but it is the first point of contact with the institution so an information pack on their voting rights in this country seems like an appropriate solution.

Having said this, we can see that regardless of the country the respondent originates from, 80% had voted in an election showing that the respondents are keen to participate. Thus there must be barriers beyond a mere lack of motivation that restricts non-nationals from being able to register to vote.

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

With our interviews we wanted to target a subset of the European community which was more representative of the wider population in Southampton. Unlike the student population, the diversity in age added validity to our findings. Weaknesses of the interviews anticipated in the methodology (language and time of day) were met with an additional problem with the sampling frame. Unfortunately, the list used to identify Polish shops was unknowingly out of date and many of the shops and supermarkets had either closed down or changed location. Five of the fifteen shops listed were non-existent, which meant efforts were increased to interview as many customers as possible.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted with 100% of the respondents originating from Poland. Of the 30 respondents, the most common age group was 30-40 years, which made up 40% of the interviewed group. A combined 46% of the respondents were under the age of 30 (Fig 1). The largest percentage of respondents had been in the UK between 5 and 10 years (Fig 2), which we feel was useful for our findings, as it showed that the Polish citizens we interviewed were settled Europeans in the UK and yet still had not registered to vote. Furthermore an important part of our interviews showed that 41% of the 30 we interviewed had not voted (Fig 3).

New Europeans

In response to the question “Do you need to register to vote?”, the findings were conclusive. A direct divide was found between the respondents, with 50% knowing they had to register to vote, with the other 50% not knowing they had to register to vote, this clearly implies and suggest an area that needs to be improved, with greater access to information.

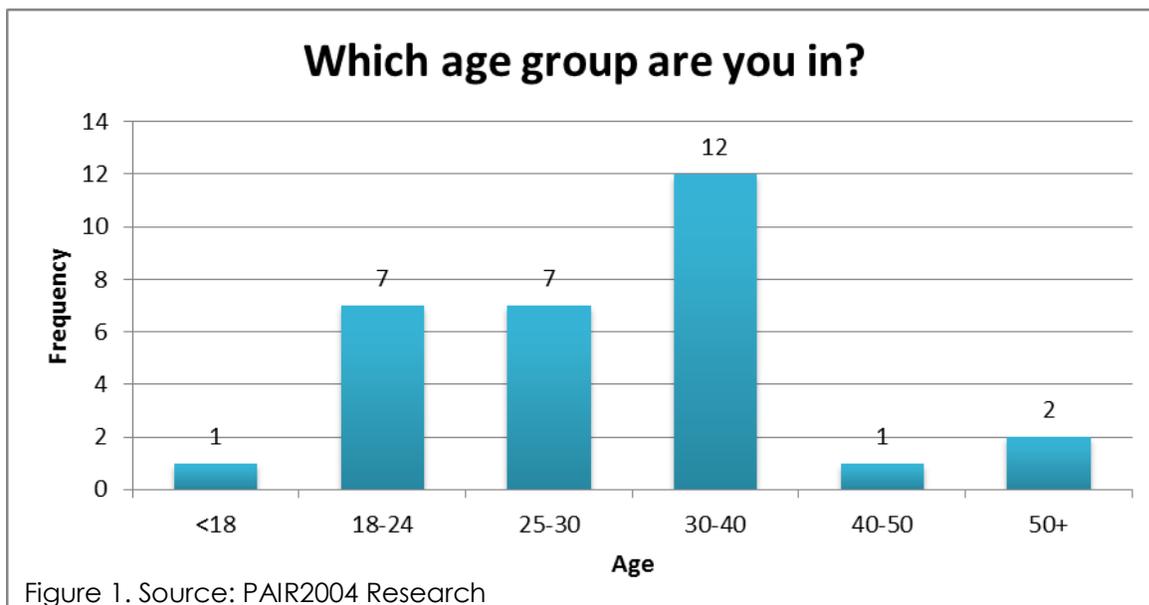
We then asked the respondents (Fig 4) if they had encountered any problems when registering to vote. The question did not apply to 50% of the respondents, as they hadn't registered, though 23% did have issues when registering to vote. When we asked what these problems were we noticed some common problems, which led us onto the next question from the interview below:

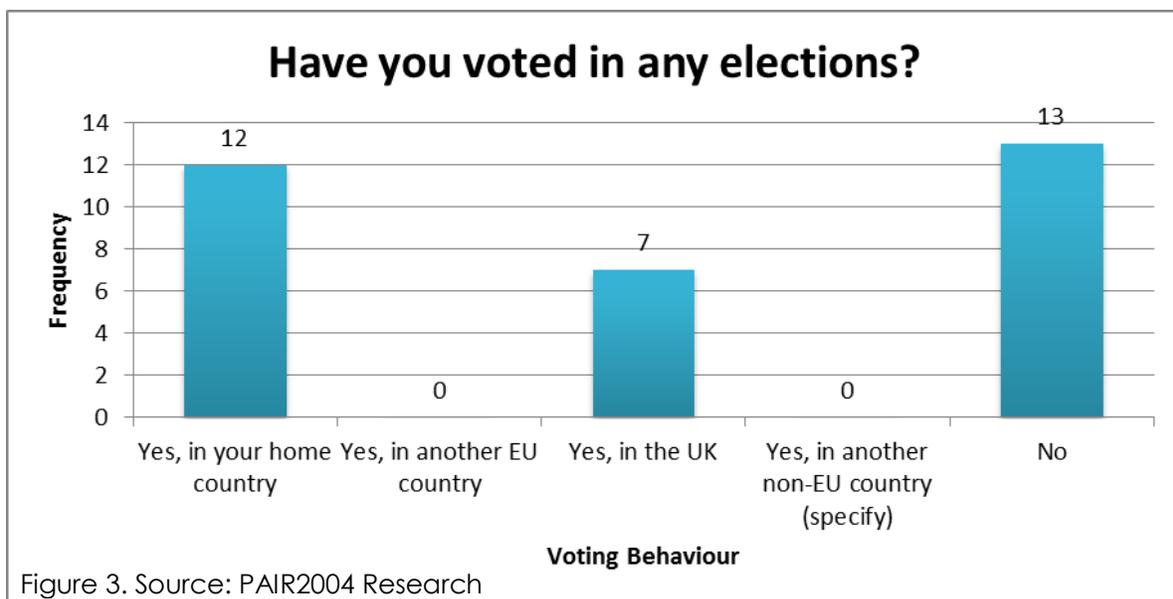
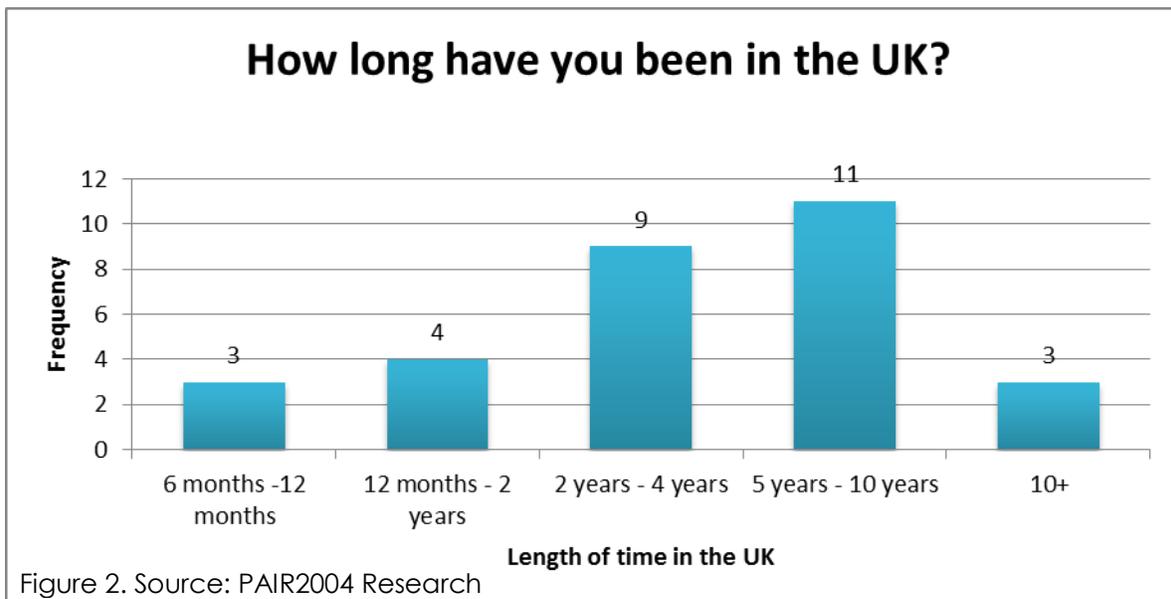
Question 9: What improvements could be made?

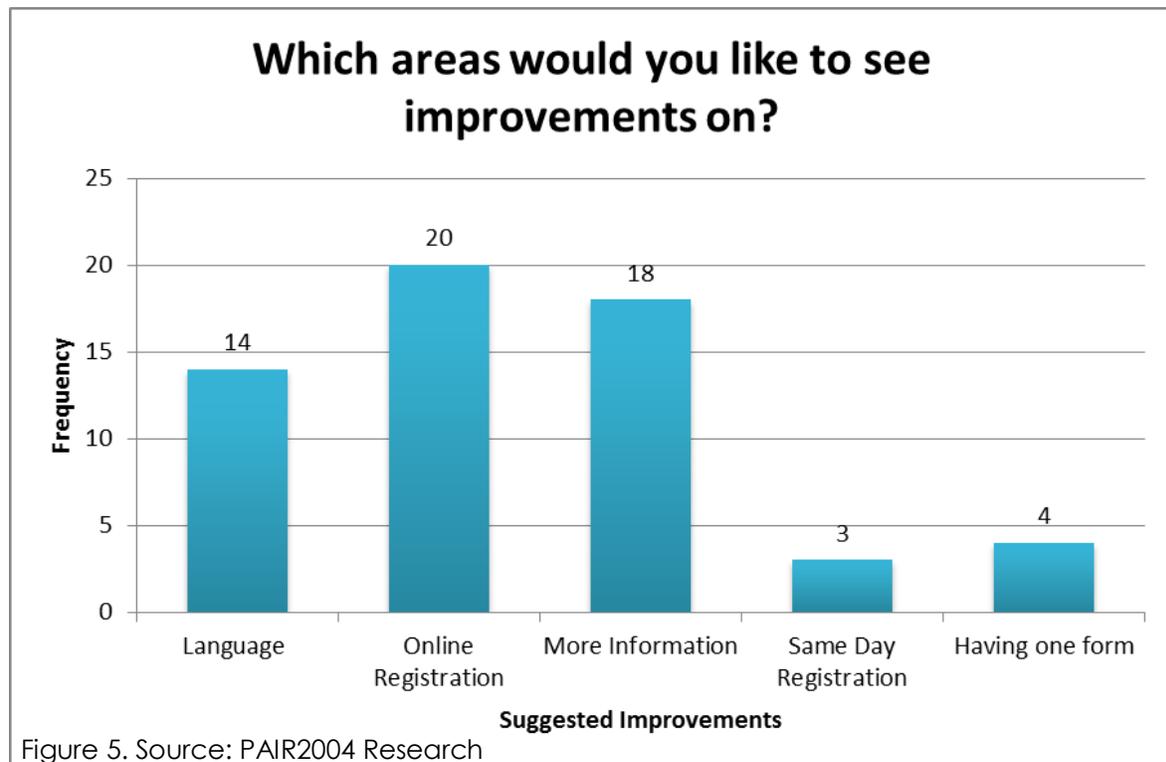
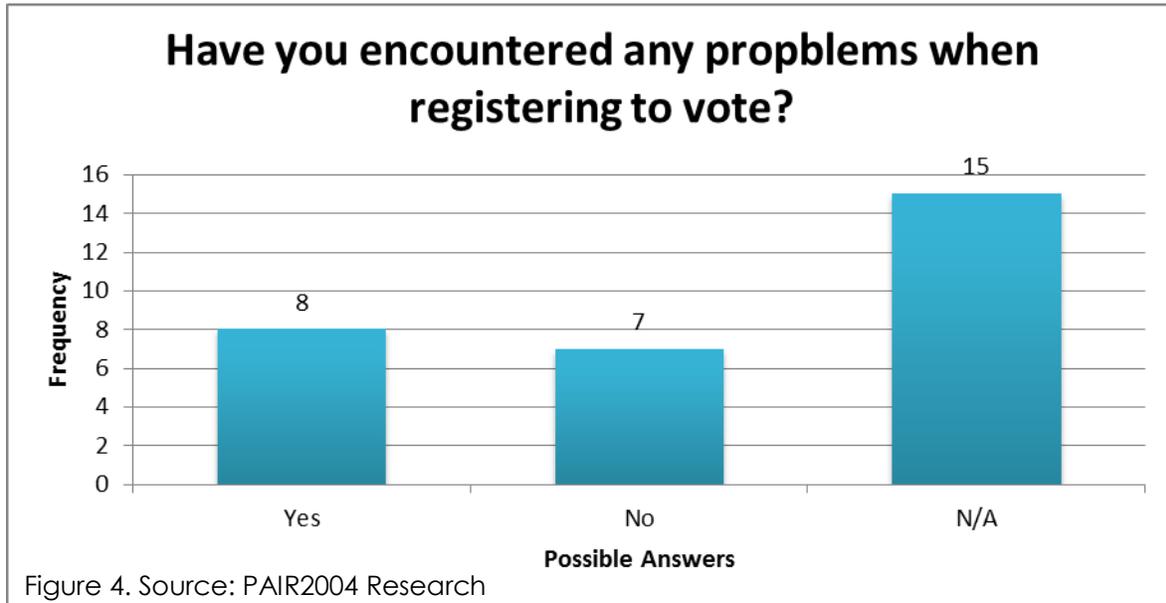
We asked the respondents if they had any specific improvements which could be achieved (Fig 5). Most respondents offered insights into what would eradicate some issues when registering to vote. Problems raised included language barriers and difficulties understanding the documents. Specifically, more information was wanted by 60% of our respondents making information deficits one of the main restrictions when trying to register to vote.

The most popular recommendation was for online registration (67%). Technology seems to be the principal enabler in getting the respondents to register to vote. It allows the respondents to register and deliver information in a much more comprehensible way.

Finally, after finding out about our respondent's voting behaviour and specific improvements they had in mind, we asked the respondents about any more general areas which they would like to see progress and thereby removing some of the barriers to voting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 5% of the respondents said they wanted same day registration and 7% of respondents said that they wanted only one form.







SPSS

Using the statistical software SPSS, we were able to generate a crosstabulation to show whether there is a relationship between the following variables:

- Time in the UK and knowledge of needing to register

Time in UK * Do you need to register to vote in local and EU elections in the UK? Crosstabulation

			Do you need to register to vote in local and EU elections in the UK?		Total
			Yes	No	
Time in UK	6 months - 12 months	Count	2	1	3
		% within Time in UK	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Do you need to register?	13.3%	6.7%	10.0%
	12 months - 2 years	Count	3	1	4
		% within Time in UK	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within Do you need to register?	20.0%	6.7%	13.3%
	2 years - 4 years	Count	3	6	9
		% within Time in UK	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within Do you need to register?	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%
	5 years - 10 years	Count	4	7	11
		% within Time in UK	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
		% within Do you need to register?	26.7%	46.7%	36.7%
	10+	Count	3	0	3
		% within Time in UK	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
% within Do you need to register?		20.0%	0.0%	10.0%	
Total	Count	15	15	30	

The two boxes show where the majority of respondents are under the wrong impression that a citizen is not required to register to vote in local and EU elections. Surprisingly, these responses belong to those that have lived in the UK for either '2-4 years' or '5-10 years'. This is contrary to the assumption that the longer a non-national lives in the UK, the more they are aware of their voting rights. Consequently, it does not matter how long an EU citizen has been in the UK for. The fact that basic information on registering has not filtered through to non-nationals that have lived in the UK for up to 10 years suggests a serious deficit of information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although we are well aware that our survey and face-to-face interviews do not statistically represent European nationals living in the UK as a whole nor the Polish society living in Southampton, we still believe that our results provide valuable information and opinions of Polish nationals and EU students within Southampton on what the main barriers for registering to vote in local and European parliamentary elections are. This subsequently enables us to take the suggestions from both our survey and interviews to offer recommendations that may be useful for policy makers, civil society groups and the organisation, New Europeans.

INFORMATION DEFICIT

According to our interviews, the lack of necessary information is one of the biggest barriers potentially affecting European citizen turnout in the UK local and European parliamentary elections as 60% of interviewed Poles stated that the information deficit poses an area that could definitely be improved. Therefore both city councils and societies of EU citizens should improve their process of distributing information to inform EU citizens of their political rights and thoroughly explain how to realise them. City councils should send official letters containing as much information as possible and offering personal help in council and civic centres.

Organisations representing EU communities should not only stimulate active members of their population, but may also try to involve other EU nationals into participating in democracy by providing them with necessary information in common public locations, where there is a high possibility of their presence (such as Polish shops for Poles) and again offering their personal help in society centres.

For better awareness, local councils could even enhance interest and general political literacy by publishing brief and understandable informative packs about local politics in the UK and the EU, and political analysis of actors or parties. This could be a real challenge for the New Europeans, but it could help to coordinate highly valuable information between societies.

Altogether 62.5% of respondents did not know that they had to register to vote in local and European elections and 78% of the survey respondents had not received any information on voting or elections as a whole. 83% had not received any information in welcome packs from the University. Furthermore, universities have excellent opportunities to improve student's political education. We recommend that an information pack about voting in the UK and European parliamentary elections should be given to university

students when they enter university. It could outline their basic rights in this country and then go on to explain how, when and where you go about registering to vote. Awareness could also be improved by strictly informative lecturers or collective meetings in the years when local or European parliamentary elections will be held. Additionally, posters and leaflets could be placed on campus and into university buildings, especially libraries where there is a constant flow of student activity.

Respective student societies should also provide their members with information about elections (here we emphasise the importance of active usage of social media, such as online tutorials), encourage them to participate and offer help or at least recommend to contact civic centre or citizens societies centre in their town for further queries.

At the national level, government and civil society organizations may improve general awareness by launching a professional campaign in collaboration with marketing specialists, although this might not be viable due to financial limitations. But what government and stake-holders *can* do is to ensure that sufficient amount of space in national radios, broadcast channels and public debate is devoted to improving the information deficit.

LANGUAGE BARRIER

Our interviews have shown that language is a massive drawback from being able to register to vote. 40% of Polish nationals who were asked to participate in the interview were unable to do so, because of their inability to speak English. 47% of the respondents who did participate in the survey noted that language is a considerable barrier for registering.

Language constraint is also related to the information deficit because citizens who do not know English well may find it difficult to register. More importantly, they cannot find sufficient information about the registering process itself. Information should, therefore, come in languages of different European nationalities. Furthermore, registration forms should also be translated into respective languages or there should at least be bilingual versions (for instance Anglo-Polish, Anglo-Italian, Anglo-Spanish).

It is a matter of course that organisations representing EU communities should play an irreplaceable role when it comes to personal contact. They should offer enough help and support, naturally in their own language, and could even organize collective lectures on the whole election process in general and particularly on how to register and vote.

To ensure sufficient support, video tutorials on how to fill in the forms and how to vote should be made and placed on the internet (governmental websites, New Europeans and websites of organisations representing EU communities) in order to help overcoming the language barrier.

New Europeans could help make a broader language-informative campaign which would maintain important contacts with different societies within the UK. Thus, New Europeans can indirectly ensure translations into various languages which may lead to greater comprehension when registering to vote.

COMPLICATED PROCESS OF REGISTRATION

Another barrier is the complicated process of registering to vote, where individuals need to send or hand in two separate forms to register to vote for local and European elections, which is confusing and time-consuming. We believe that just one form for both local and European elections should be introduced making the whole process more simple and quicker to complete. In addition, allowing citizens to register for the elections on the day when elections are held was also suggested by 13% of our respondents. However, these two barriers were not identified as vital, and the latter would probably call for a profound change in electoral process and would be costly.

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Currently, those eligible to vote in local and European parliamentary elections can either register in person or by post. As Jenifer suggests, obligation of preceding registration can be seen as a "preliminary hurdle" itself. (Jennifer et al. 2006: 746).

This could be solved by using automatic registration upon entry to the country which does not require registering in advance. This change is somewhat radical and its potential impacts on British electoral behaviour are not well mapped. A better solution for improving the difficult process of registration seems to be the introduction of online registration as nearly 67% of those asked in our interviews answered, that online registration could be a big improvement in the registering process, making it the most prominent recommendation as a result of our research.

Some of the improvements mentioned in this report seem to be relatively expensive and hard to implement, but they all could be easily solved by introducing online registration. We recommend that an internet based application should be developed in which UK and EU citizens would simply choose their preferable language and register online. The application would also be accompanied by video tutorials about the whole election process and briefly explaining how to register in various European languages. This may lessen the anxiety of some citizens of an unfamiliar and seemingly complicated process and encourage them to register to vote. Online registration also repairs the problem of having two different forms for local and European elections. In an ideal case, the e-registration could be a watershed for future process of computerizing state-state and state-citizen administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As stated at the very beginning of this chapter, we are fully aware of constraints this research faces. For more accurate data and more generalizable findings, implications and suggestions, we recommend using our results as a basis for carrying out further research about voting barriers, their improvements, and impacts of these improvements on the whole election process.

Such research requires a great amount of time, funds and even resources we did not have at our disposal. It is, however, beyond all doubts, according to both our research and former research described in the literature review, that further studies should predominantly focus on these three main areas: Information deficit, language barrier and complicated process of registration.

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