



# “Take a stance”:

Survey conducted  
by ENA about politics



ENA  
Institute  
for Alternative  
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Politics, as a phenomenon, occupies a central position in the way the public sphere is organized, at the same time influencing both our collective and individual life.

Although it seems to be “omnipresent”, the answer to the question “what is politics” is often more complex than originally imagined. Particularly during the crisis years when politics, both as a concept and as a process, appeared, in various versions dynamically in the foreground, the answer became much less obvious. Ideological narratives were refocused, political identities and choices were redefined, party bonds interrupted, and new forms of mobilization emerged in a process that is still in progress, until a point of equilibrium is found.

In this context, the Institute for Alternative Policies, ENA, attempts to capture citizen perceptions about the political phenomenon: politicians, parties, values and concepts, trends and attitudes around which today’s policy is developing.

The survey, conducted by the Prorata Joint Research Center on behalf of ENA, is in six sections:

1. Impression about politics
2. Stance on political views on politics
3. Stance on views of citizen participation in politics
4. Impressions of Greek and European politics
5. Position on the left-right axis
6. Stance on proposals concerning participation in politics

On the basis of the answers to the questions of these sections, we could briefly say that although there are signs of a crisis in confidence - but especially a crisis of trust towards the institutions, low appreciation towards the politicians and distrust of the current policy, citizens have increased their interest for politics as a phenomenon, express a willingness to participate in its processes and maintain a sense of the fact that they can, with their participation, influence things.



At the same time, however, respondents who appear to be self-empowered in the left-wing direction - with a powerful self-placement at the Center - seem to seek renewed ways of participation and mobilization without them yet being formalized.

The basis of the societal values which, according to the survey, shows a progressive character, adopting principles that refer to Freedom, Equality and Solidarity, could potentially be a guide to finding the right political participation patterns.

But let's take look at some of the first findings of the research:

## 1. Interest in politics and willingness to participate

Citizens seem to be very much aware of politics as a process that concerns them, since the majority (66% “I totally disagree” and 15% “I rather disagree”) disagree with the proposal that “politics is a process that I do not care for.” At the same time, not only do they not seem to be excluded from the political process - as most of them (38% “I fully agree” and 24% “I rather agree”) perceive politics as a “process in which I can participate equally as a citizen” but they think that as citizens they are able to play a role in changing things in politics.

They appear to strongly oppose the phrase “people like me do not have the power to change things in politics” (35% “I totally disagree” and 23% “I rather disagree”).

However, while most citizens understand politics as something of interest in which they can participate, there is a difference in what is perceived as the content of politics.

On the one hand, politics seems to be mainly understood (59%) as a process of “managing the everyday problems of society”, in a rather obvious correlation with the emphasis on public debate, what is commonly called “everyday life” while on the other hand for a significant proportion of citizens (38%), politics is perceived primarily (38%) as a “process of claiming major social changes”.

## 2. Low appreciation for current policy and politicians

Although citizens seem to be interested in politics and feel they are able to participate in it the way they understand each other, they also appear to be negative towards politicians. Upon hearing the word politician they spontaneously recall words like "corruption /meddling", "hypocrites / promises / liars" and various other "negative characteristics".

The negative attitude towards politicians could be read together with the understanding of politics by the majority (30% "I agree" and 30% "I rather agree") as a "dirty game".

## 3. The Central role of the political parties for democracy, but also a request for renewal – A Search for forms of participation and mobilization.

At the same time, however, when politicians seem to gather negative assessments of the citizens, the latter, with a high percentage (49% "I totally disagree" and 16% "I rather disagree") opposes the statement that "parties are not necessary for democracy", considering political parties a constituent element of the democratic system.

By recognizing the importance of the political parties for democracy, but also by identifying (current) politics and politicians with negative connotations, citizens seem to seek some kind of renewal. Thus, they appear majority-positive (34% "I totally agree" and 25% "I rather agree") to the fact that "we need new political parties".

In fact, this assessment is accompanied by the finding (40% "I totally agree" and "I rather agree") that "what is missing from politics today are great leaders," an estimate which demonstrates the role of (leading) individuals to how the citizens understand the politician.

As far as the intention of involving citizens in politics goes one can see the low popularity of trade unions as 72% declare that they do not intend to join in the next year, while the percentage of intent to join a political party (28%) is also low.



On the other hand, 42% say they intend to take part in a demonstration next year, while 35% are willing to join a social organization / club (NGO, Citizens Group, etc.).

#### 4. Where are the decisions made? –Institution Crisis

A critical area in which a value for further research is emerging is the level of decision-making. Even though (54%) consider that “critical decisions are taken at the European level by the EU institutions and leaders” at the same time they believe by a majority (49%) that “critical decisions should be taken at national level, by the central political bodies of the country.

Perhaps because of this antithesis, among what respondents perceive as real and what they would find desirable, the low level of confidence to the institutions also arises, a finding that can be seen as indicative of a global crisis of confidence that the economic crisis has inflicted on Greek society.

Indeed, trust is even lower for institutions that, in theory, play a role in decision-making. Thus, when citizens are called upon to declare their confidence (scale 0-10) in institutions, trade unions (1,74), government (2,08), parties (2,43), and parliament (3, 13) appear as tails.

Increased trust, albeit at a lower level than the symbolic “5”, is reported for the institutions of the “hard” state core, such as the Police (4.20), the Army (4.69) and Justice 4.62).

Interestingly, there is a comparatively high public confidence in business (4.95), but perhaps the most remarkable finding is that the only institutions that exceed “5” are those related to Education and Learning, and in particular Schools ( 5,63) and the Universities (5,92).

## 5. Progressive Positioning - "Neglected" Neoliberalism

When respondents are asked to identify themselves, they overwhelmingly state they are progressive with a 2.50 on the axis "0 (progress) - 10 (maintenance)".

In particular, the "specialization" of the concepts of progress and maintenance is of particular interest, through the classification of concepts on the scale ("0" Progress & "10" Maintenance). (So called on to answer, citizens declare that they recognise Freedom [2.26), Equality (2.28), Democracy (2.36), and Solidarity (2.46), as being progressive while Neo-liberalism (6,52) and Individuality (5,64) to be more conservative.

Interesting is also the extent to which citizens feel "too close" or "far off" in relation to the above concepts / values. It is characteristic that Freedom (8,97), Democracy (8,72), Equality (8,60) and Justice (8,42) are also depicted as the "closest" to citizens concepts on the scale (" 0 "Too Far -" 10 "Very close), while Individuality (4,71) and Neo-liberalism are ranked as the most" distant ".

## 6. Left- majority - Enhanced Center

At the same time, the majority of citizens places itself on the left, with 42% being self-assigned on the "0-4" scale (where "0" is Left and "10" Right), with only 17% choosing between «6-10».

However, as far as the significance of Left and Right is concerned, 49% think that it does not make sense, while 35% think it still makes sense.

It is important, however, to note that the sense of increased or reduced significance of discrimination seems to be related to self-alignment on the left-right axis. On the basis of this self-assertion, we note that the concept of discrimination makes sense to those closest to the Left (3,40 on the scale) and makes no sense for those who are inclined towards the Center ( 4, 79 on the scale).



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