

A close-up photograph of a cow's head, showing its brown and white fur, a wooden horn, and its eyes. The cow is looking down and to the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green field under a blue sky.

## UNDERSTANDING RURAL PERSPECTIVES

Opinion poll on the review of the animal welfare legislation in rural communities

Savanta:

This survey was commissioned by Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International/Europe, Fondation Brigitte Bardot, Dierenbescherming, Djurskyddet Sverige, Deutscher Tierschutzbund, World Animal Protection Denmark, World Animal Protection Netherlands, World Animal Protection Sweden and LAV and conducted by Savanta in November 2023.

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## Background

This survey aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions of residents in rural communities towards the animal welfare legislation in the EU.

## Objectives

- Assess the attitudes of rural communities towards the revision of the animal welfare legislation
- Assess the alignment of rural communities' attitudes towards hunting and farming interest groups

## Methodology

The survey was conducted by [Savanta](#) in November 2023 among a sample of 10,000 inhabitants of rural areas in the following Member States: Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Romania (1000 per Member State).

When entering the survey and prior to accessing the content and aims of the survey, participants were asked if they live in a rural area. If the answer was negative, they could not conduct the survey. This question allowed us to filter rural residents according to their perceptions, a crucial factor when assessing whether their viewpoints are accurately reflected in policy-making decisions.

The survey consisted in a structured questionnaire with a majority of closed-ended questions where respondents were invited to assess their attitudes towards a statement. For each of these questions, respondents could provide a “neutral” response.

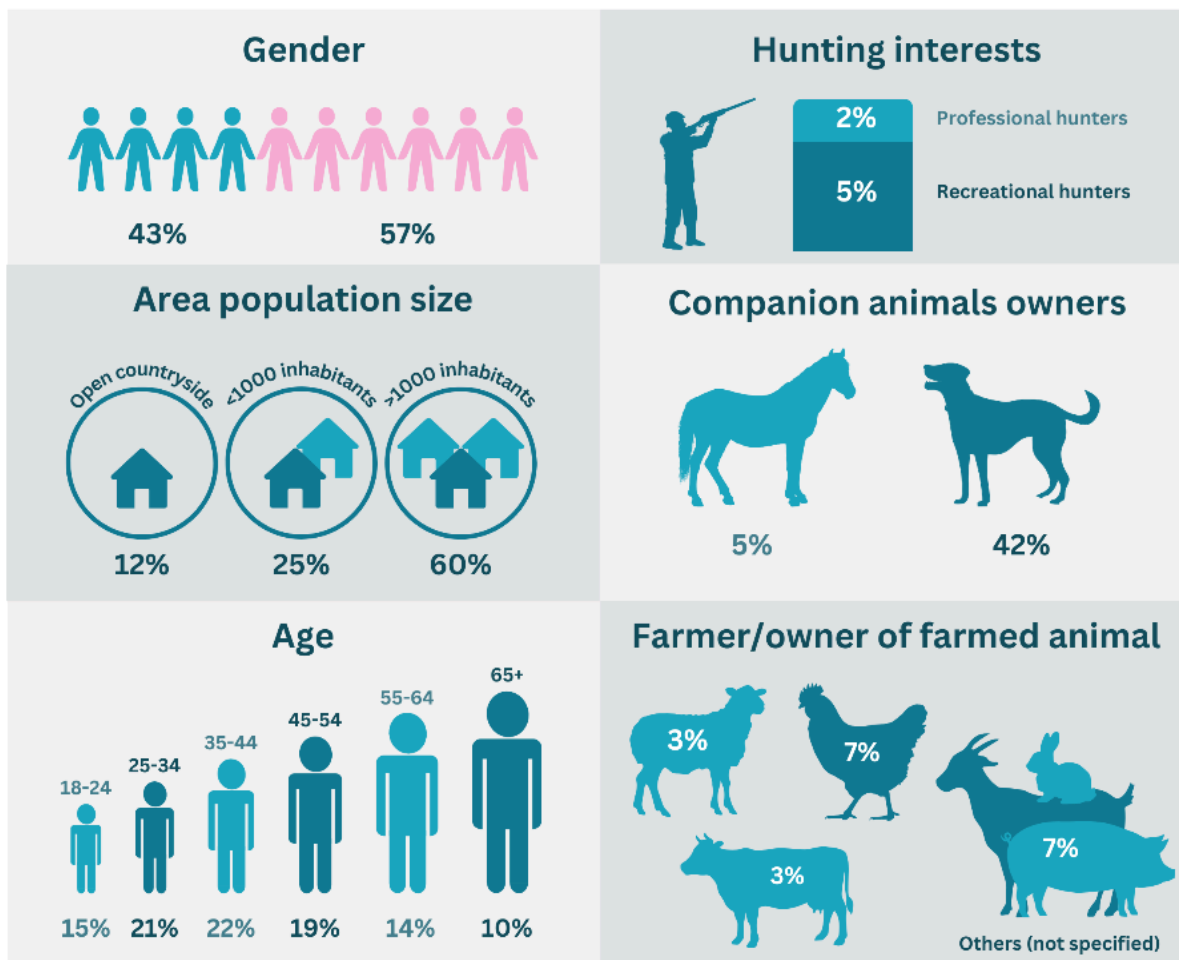
The survey was administered through online platforms<sup>1</sup>.

The following demographic data was collected:

- Age range
- Gender
- Area population size
- Annual income
- Farming occupation (Farmer/owner of cattle, sheep, chicken, other farmed animal)
- Hunting occupation (recreational or professional hunter)
- Companion animal ownership (dog or equine owner)

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<sup>1</sup> In 2022, 90% of rural households in the European Union had an internet access. As a consequence, this data collection method did not significantly impact the results. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1236336/share-of-households-rural-internet-access-eu27/>



### Overall results

Nearly 2 in 3 support the EU's plans to improve animal welfare during live transport, slaughter and the keeping of animals for economic purposes.



The level of support is highest in Italy (72%), while opposition is highest in Romania, Spain and Poland (11%).

While 63% of farmers support this plan, cattle farmers are most likely to oppose at 18%.

20% of professional hunters oppose this plan (versus only 12% recreational hunters).

### **General lack of representation by farming interest groups**

Interest groups have been defined for participants to the survey as “*a group of people that seeks to influence public policy and legislation on a particular issue, interest or concern*”. When seeking to assess the representation of rural communities by farming interest groups, the survey results reveal that rural communities generally do not feel represented by such interest groups. Only 18% of respondents feel appropriately represented by farming interest groups. Interestingly, only 1 in 3 farmers (33%) feel well-represented by farming interest groups.

These results indicate that farmers also find themselves inadequately represented by interest groups claiming to represent the voice of rural communities. Representation by farming interest groups is highest in the Netherlands and Germany but the majority of respondents remains not sufficiently represented in these Member States. It is important to note that results for both statements were consistent across respondents from the different population area sizes indicating that, contrary to some perceptions, support is not higher in the open countryside.



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Savanta: