

# European Support for NATO: Strong But Not Unshakable

*Traditionally supportive of NATO, European publics rallied behind the campaign against terrorism immediately after September 11th and are still supportive of both today. However, while strong and deep, European commitment to NATO is not unconditional. Europeans largely want a future NATO that has more members and close ties to Russia, and in which the EU has a greater role. The U.S. has asked the Europeans to take on a greater role, but now needs to nurture this commitment - or at least not undermine it through 'unilateralist' measures (Kyoto, ICC, Middle-East) that may fritter away European support.*

- Europeans are also largely confident of NATO's ability to deal effectively with European problems.
- Nearly half (46-53%) of key European publics support increased spending on defense in order to pay for a common European defense force developed within NATO. Some (41-55%) even support funding for the development of a force independent of NATO.

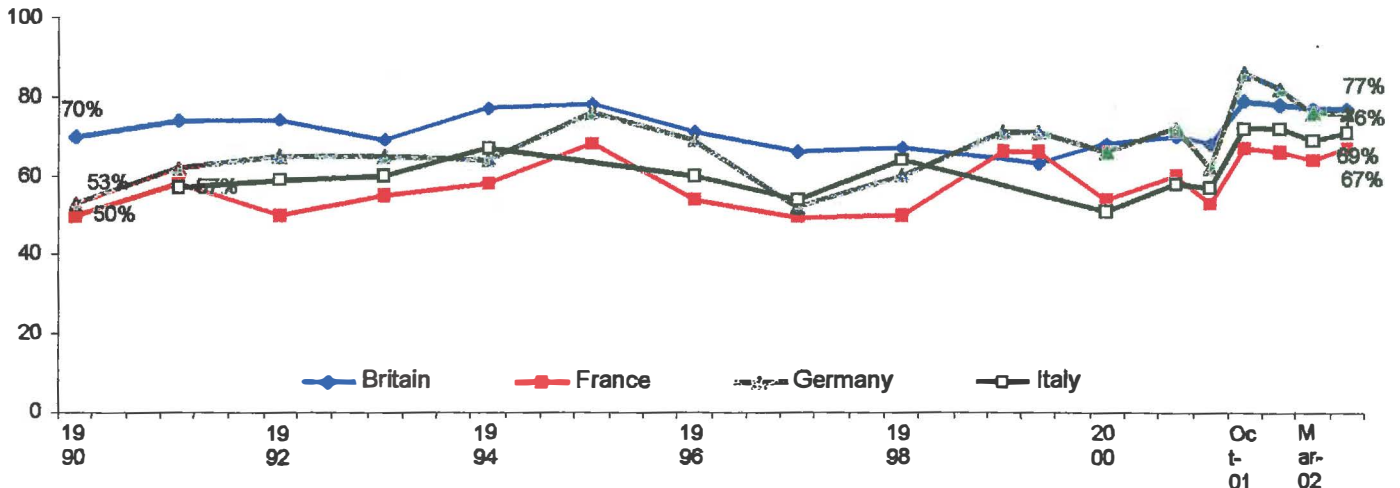
## KEY FINDINGS

- Two-thirds or more among key European publics consider NATO essential to their nation's security.

### Europeans Consider NATO Essential

While support for NATO has usually been strong in Western Europe, relatively speaking, since 9/11 more among these publics than ever before consider NATO essential. Two-thirds or more in Britain (77%), France (67%), Germany (76%) and Italy (71%) say NATO is essential to their own country's security (Figure 1).

Figure 1. NATO Essential 1990-2002



This report is based on data from interviews with nationally representative samples of adults age 18 and older in Britain (1,003), France (1,003), Germany (1,005), and Italy (1,000) in July 2002.

**European Publics Largely Confident in NATO's Ability to Handle European Problems**

Two-thirds among the British (67%), French (63%) and Italian (66%) publics have confidence in NATO to deal effectively with European problems. A majority of the German public (55%) has confidence in NATO's ability, although it is a bit more evenly divided and unstable than other publics (Figure 2). Confidence fluctuated over time, but most publics appear nearly as confident in 2002 as they did ten years before (Appendix Figure 1). These drops in support seem to coincide with the fall of the Berlin wall and reunification of Germany, probably a signal that some doubted that NATO was necessary after the end of the Cold War.

**Moderate Confidence in EU's Ability**

In a typical pattern, the French and Italians are decidedly confident in the EU's ability to manage European problems; the Germans are as confident as not, and the British are less confident (Figure 3). Confidence in the EU dropped in 1999 at a time when NATO took action in the FRY and the EU failed to do so (Appendix Figure 2).

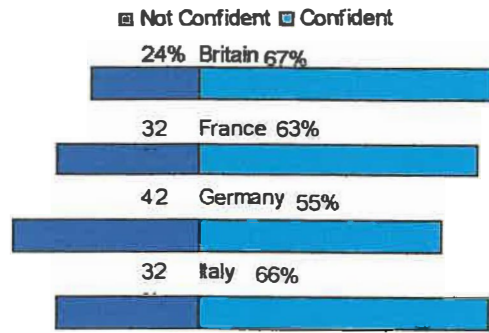
**Most Think EU Should Make Most Important Security Decisions**

When push comes to shove, more choose the European Union, rather than NATO, to make the most important decisions about the security of Europe (Figure 4). This preference has grown more pronounced over the last ten years (Appendix Figure 3).

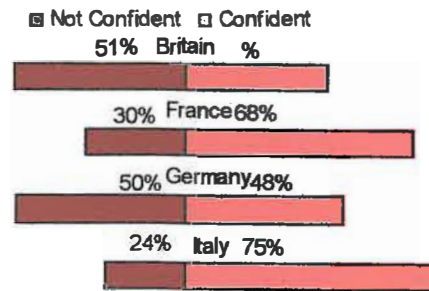
**Greater European Security Role**

A majority of the French and Italian publics also want the role of Europe strengthened in NATO (Figure 5). The Germans are somewhat evenly split, while the British clearly disagree and prefer that the U.S. and Europe keep the same roles in NATO.

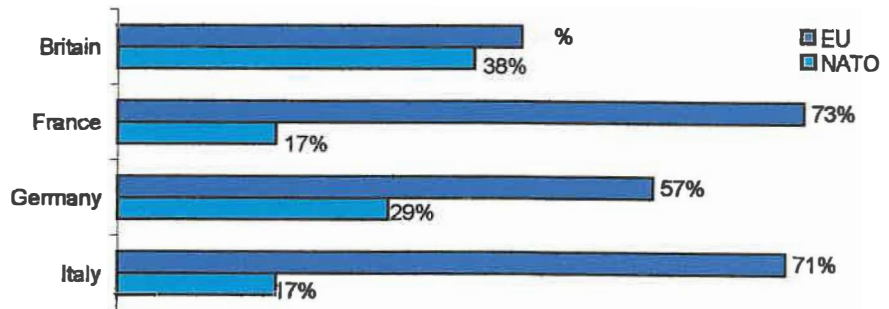
**Figure 2: Confidence in NATO**



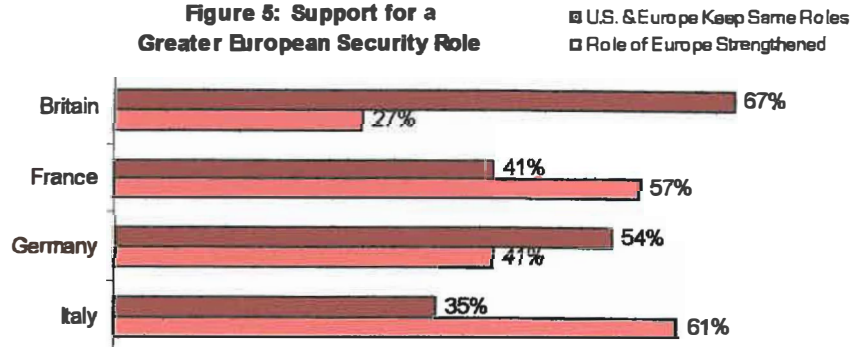
**Figure 3: Confidence in EU**



**Figure 4: Lead Security Decision-Maker**



**Figure 5: Support for a Greater European Security Role**



A preference for EU leadership in the security arena and widespread interest in a stronger European role in NATO may reflect European concerns over U.S. security priorities (Iraq) and the US's approach to NATO since 9/11. For instance, the fact that the U.S. has acted alone and not called on NATO members to organize and implement the response to the terrorist attacks despite their willingness to engage Article 5 may deflate confidence among European publics who want to be more and not less involved in security issues.

**Publics Generally Support Development of Common European Defense Force**

Key European publics generally support the creation of a common European defense force under the direction of the EU (Appendix Figure 4). *Of those who support a European defense force*, two-thirds or more of the British, French, German and Italian publics envision a force working in conjunction with NATO rather than one that is separate from or replaces NATO. European interest in its own military force - albeit within NATO - has already been realized to some extent with the development of the so-called Rapid Reaction Force. This force, which it is hoped will be operational by 2003, is designed to complement rather than compete with NATO, and will only act when NATO has decided not to get involved.

**European Publics Supportive of Expansion of NATO**

High and rising majorities among key European publics support the expansion of NATO (Table 1, Appendix Table 1). Overall, French, German and Italian publics are generally more supportive of expansion than are the British. Similarly, European publics overwhelmingly support strengthening ties between NATO and Russia (Britain 78%, France 78%, Germany 83%, Italy 85%). Apparently, publics do not share the doubts expressed in the European press about the ability of candidate countries to contribute much to the military operations of the Alliance.

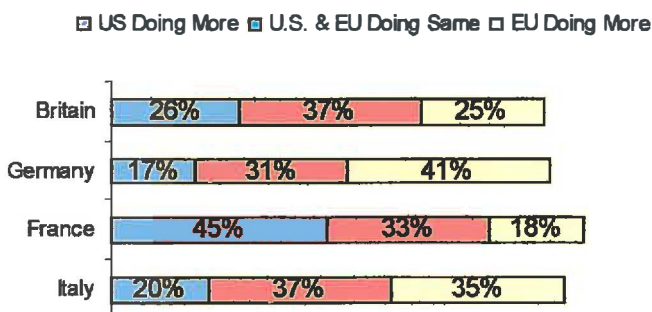
**Table 1: Expansion of NATO**  
**% of West European Publics Who Would Vote 'For'**

	Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Ranking by Average
<b>Bulgaria</b>	56	62	53	65	<b>Malta</b> 71
<b>Croatia</b>	49	58	50	64	<b>Russia</b> 63
<b>Estonia</b>	54	61	63	64	<b>Estonia</b> 61
<b>Latvia</b>	52	60	64	64	<b>Lithuania</b> 60
<b>Lithuania</b>	50	62	65	64	<b>Latvia</b> 60
<b>Malta</b>	77	65	67	76	<b>Slovakia</b> 60
<b>Romania</b>	54	59	43	65	<b>Bulgaria</b> 59
<b>Russia</b>	58	60	61	73	<b>Slovenia</b> 57
<b>Slovakia</b>	52	63	57	66	<b>Romania</b> 55
<b>Slovenia</b>	50	60	55	63	<b>Croatia</b> 55

**EU Bearing Much Responsibility**

Europeans' desire for a greater role in their own security affairs and a willingness to participate more fully through the creation of a European Defence Force seems to be driven by a sense that they deserve greater influence. A majority across all four countries feel that the EU is doing about the same or more than the U.S. to maintain peace in Europe, and this has remained unchanged since 1998 (Figure 6). Feelings that they are doing as much or more to maintain peace may well be related to

**Figure 6: Who Doing Fair Share to Maintain Peace in Europe?**



European peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo – an area in which much European money and effort is concentrated.

**Declining Resistance to Increase in Defense Spending**

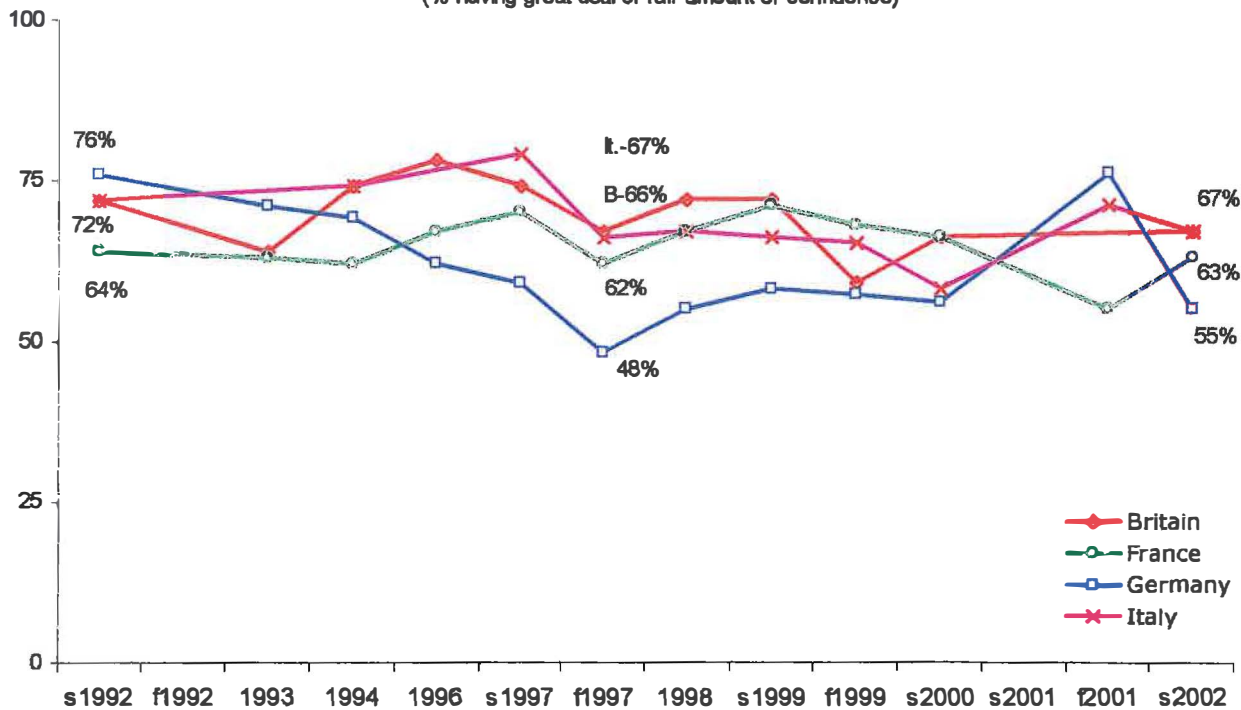
While Europeans want and believe they deserve more control over their security, they are not completely ready to pay for it. Only a third or fewer support a greater role in NATO for the EU, if it involves additional costs. When asked separately about a spending increase to pay for a common European defense force developed *within NATO* or *independently of NATO*, no more than half say they are willing to pay. The British and French publics are more supportive than the Germans or Italians. However, all key European publics are more supportive of the creation of a European defense force now than they were in 2001.

**Table 2. “Would you support or oppose increasing the amount of money our country spends on defense in order to pay for a common European defense force developed within NATO/Independently of NATO?”**

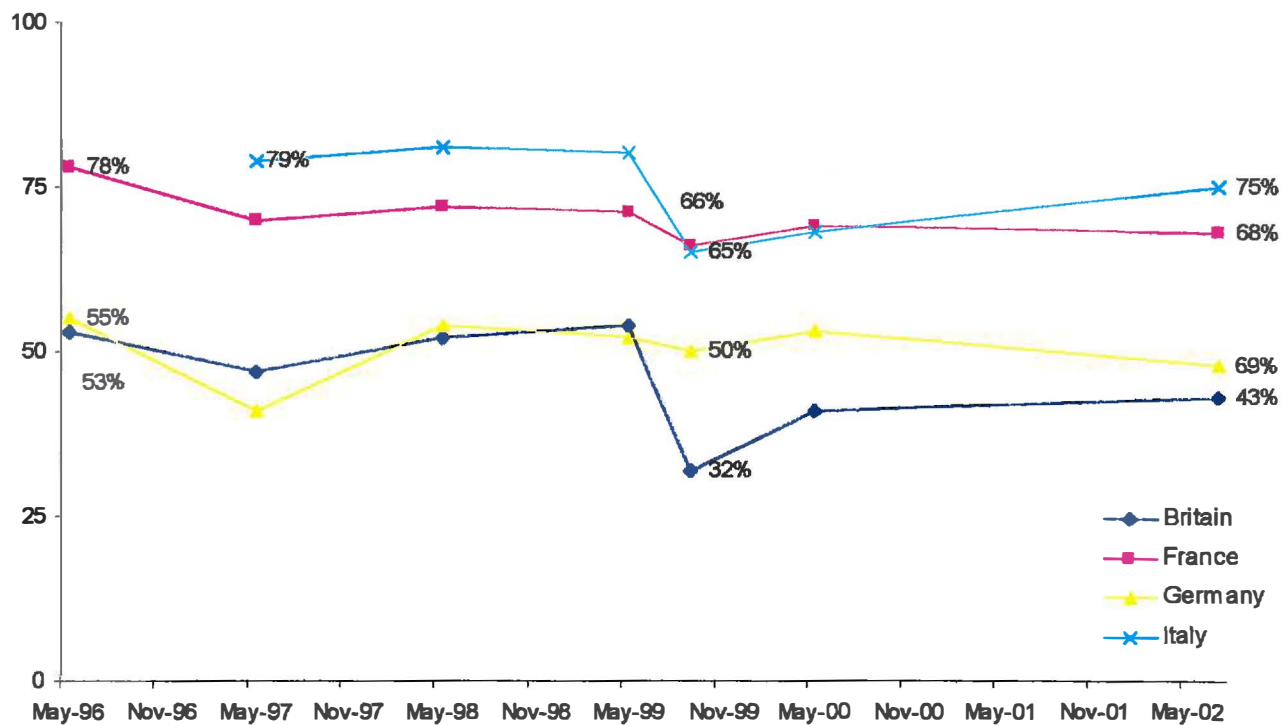
% 2002	Britain		France		Germany		Italy	
	within	Independent	within	Independent	within	Independent	within	Independent
Support	53	41	54	55	46	41	49	44
Oppose	37	49	41	38	48	53	43	46
% 2001	within	Independent	within	Independent	within	Independent	within	Independent
Support	39	24	34	37	27	24	34	32
Oppose	42	56	52	49	56	57	49	51

**Appendix:**

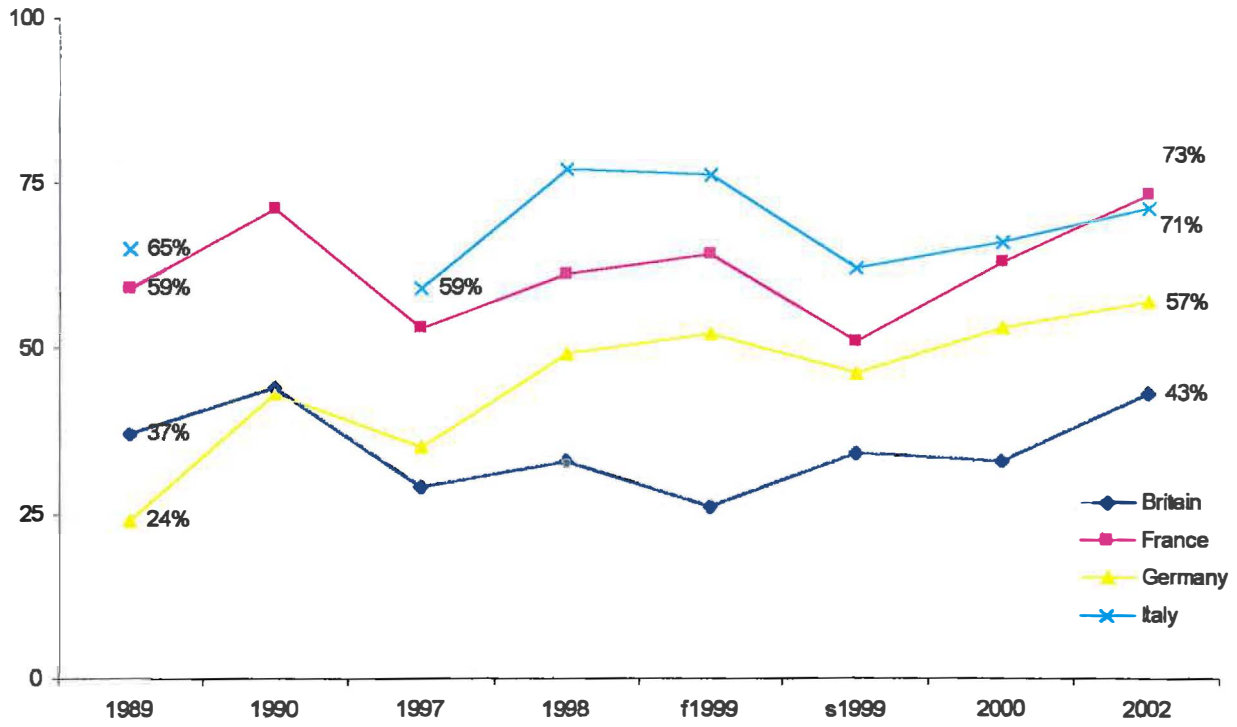
**Figure 1. Confidence in NATO**  
(% having great deal or fair amount of confidence)



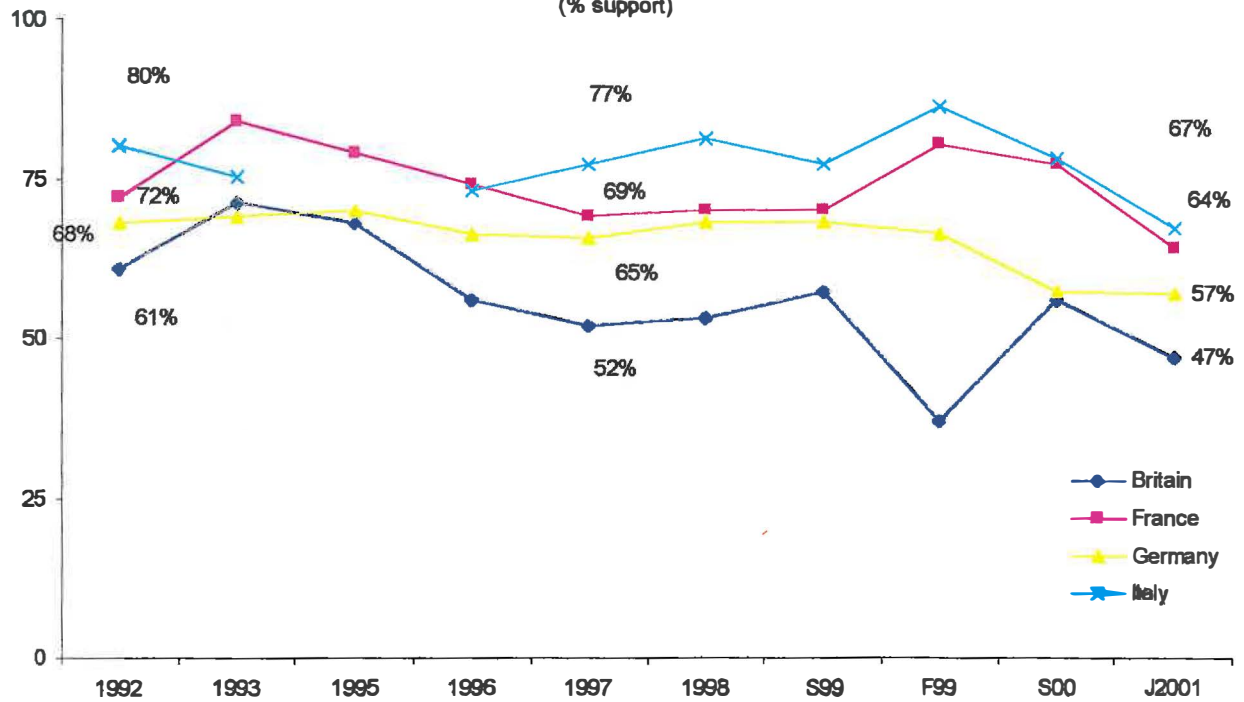
**Figure 3: Confidence in EU**  
(% having great deal or fair amount of confidence)



**Figure 3: Lead Security Decision Maker**  
(% for EU)



**Figure 4: Development of a Common European Defense Force**  
(% support)



**Table 1: Expansion of NATO**  
(% For)

	Britain			France			Germany			Italy		
	'98	'00	'02	'98	'00	'02	'98	'00	'02	'98	'00	'02
<b>Bulgaria</b>	36	54	56	38	65	63	25	51	53	--	58	65
<b>Croatia</b>	--	--	49	--	--	58	--	--	50	--	--	64
<b>Estonia</b>	38	51	54	34	59	62	32	61	63	--	54	64
<b>Latvia</b>	35	50	52	35	58	61	35	56	64	--	54	64
<b>Lithuania</b>	35	51	50	37	58	63	33	50	65	--	54	64
<b>Malta</b>	--	--	77	--	--	66	--	--	67	--	--	76
<b>Romania</b>	41	55	54	40	64	60	24	42	43	--	58	65
<b>Russia</b>	38	--	58	32	--	60	25	--	61	--	--	73
<b>Slovakia</b>	35	49	52	38	59	63	31	58	57	--	57	66
<b>Slovenia</b>	32	46	50	36	58	60	27	47	55	--	56	63

## **Methodology**

This report is based on data from interviews with nationally representative samples of adults age 18 and older in Britain (1,003), France (1,003), Germany (1,005), and Italy (1,000) in July 2002. The research firms ICM in London, Louis Harris in Paris, EMNID in Bielefeld, Pragma in Rome conducted the interviews for the Office of Research.

Survey questions were prepared by the Office of Research. The questionnaires were translated by the contractors and reviewed by Office of Research staff.

While any definition of “elite” is somewhat arbitrary, the construction of the sample used in elite surveys is designed to ensure representation across a broad spectrum of decision makers and opinion leaders in each country as well as comparability across a set of cross-European surveys conducted simultaneously. The composition of elite samples included political elites, private and state sector business leaders, educators, media elite, cultural elites and religious leaders. The gender composition of the samples tended to be 80 to 87 percent men, 13 to 20 percent women.

The samples were compiled by selecting individuals from a variety of sources, using random selection procedures. Political elites and government officials were identified through lists of members of parliament, web sites, and telephone directories. Business leaders were selected from web sites and data bases. Educators were sampled from Ministry of Education lists. Media elites were selected from lists of print and broadcast representatives. Cultural and scientific elites were sampled via listings of cultural institutions.

In theory, 19 times out of 20, results from samples of the size of public surveys used in this report will differ by no more than about 4 percentage points in either direction from what would be found if it were possible to interview every adult in each country. For elite surveys, results differ by no more than 6 percentage points if the same type of survey were to be conducted repeatedly. Sampling error is larger for subgroups within the populations. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting a survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the results.

For further information, please contact the analyst.