

Factual summary report on the public consultation on uniform rounding rules for cash payments – May 2021

Disclaimer: the views presented in this factual summary report are not the views of the European Commission but of the stakeholders that participated in this public consultation. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services.

1. Introduction

Today around 342 million citizens in 19 EU Member States use the euro as their currency.

The Commission's mandate is to examine periodically and carefully the use of different denominations of euro coins and euro banknotes against the criteria of cost and public acceptability. In particular, the Commission should conduct an impact assessment on the continued issuance of 1- and 2-euro cent coins¹.

In line with this mandate, the Commission published two contributions on the issuance and circulation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins in 2013 and 2018. In these two reports, the Commission highlighted possible scenarios in relation to the 1- and 2-euro cent coins, ranging from no change to withdrawing these coins from circulation and introducing rounding rules, and identified the need for further analysis of the possible options.

Five Member States (Finland, Netherlands, Ireland, Italy and Belgium), equivalent to almost 100 million EU citizens, are already applying rounding rules on the final sum of purchase for payments in cash.

Against this background, the Commission will update its analysis of the use of 1- and 2-euro cent coins and assess the impact of introducing uniform rounding rules for cash payments in the euro area. Depending on the outcome of the impact assessment, the Commission will assess the possibility of proposing a legislative initiative on uniform rounding rules, possibly accompanied by a proposal for the discontinuation (stop issuance and withdraw the legal tender status) of 1- and 2-euro cent coins.

In this context and in line with Better Regulation principles, through this public consultation the Commission was looking to gather stakeholders' inputs on this matter.

2. Objectives of the consultation

The objective of this public consultation was to gather information for the impact assessment on uniform rounding rules for cash payments in euro. The public consultation was targeting

¹ Regulation (EU) No 651/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the issuance of euro coins; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012R0651&from=EN>

all stakeholders, namely citizens, public institutions in the EU, businesses (including retailers and service providers), trade associations, consumers associations, non-governmental organisations (environmental, social inclusion, charities), think tanks, research and academic institutions. It was addressed to all sectors, most notably to the cash intensive and related economic activities.

The open public consultation forms one of several strands of consultation activities feeding this impact assessment. The respondents' profiles reflect the self-selecting nature of a public consultation and impose a certain caution when interpreting the results, since the responses cannot be considered as a representative random sample of all European stakeholders. For instance, this public consultation does not represent the views of relevant national institutions, which were subject to targeted consultations and did not participate widely in the public consultation.

3. Approach to the public consultation

The public consultation took place during 15 weeks, between 28 September 2020 and 11 January 2021.

The public consultation was divided into 3 sections:

- 1- *Introduction* – General information on the purpose of the consultation.
- 2- *About you* – Questions allowing the identification of the respondents' profiles.
- 3- *Questionnaire* – A single questionnaire was developed. While most of the questions are similar for all respondents, the questionnaire included a series of conditional questions. Depending on the information provided in the *About you* section, respondents would receive specific conditional questions targeting:
 - a. General public and stakeholders in euro area Member States which already have rounding rules for cash payments in euro.
 - b. General public and stakeholders in euro area Member States which do not have rounding rules for cash payments in euro.
 - c. Retailers and service providers in euro area Member States which already have rounding rules for cash payments in euro.
 - d. Retailers and service providers in euro area Member States which do not have rounding rules for cash payments in euro.

There were two reasons for this more granular approach in the questionnaire. One was to gather as much information as possible from stakeholders living and/or carrying out their activities in the Member States which already have rounding rules, thus making the best use of their experience. Another reason was to give emphasis to the cash intensive economic sectors, namely the retailers and service providers.

The questionnaire was made available in all EU languages and uploaded to the Have Your Say platform of the European Commission. The visibility of the open public consultation was enhanced through the social media channels of the European Commission and through the EU Representations in the Member States.

Technical issues raised by respondents during this period were tackled either directly or together with colleagues from the Directorate- General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT). Close to the end of the consultation, on 10 January 2021, 7 citizens contacted the Commission mentioning technical difficulties in replying to the online questionnaire. Given the very short time before the consultation would end, and the fact that they raised these issues in advance, the Commission decided to allow them to fill the questionnaire in MS Word format. The questionnaires were sent to them by email, and one was received back with the filled answers.

4. Responses to the public consultation²

4.1 Respondent profile

17.033 filled in questionnaires were received: 17.032 replies were provided through the online questionnaire, and one provided by email in MS Word format as mentioned above. In addition, nine short and generic comments on the topic of the consultation were received by email. Most of the contributions were received either at the beginning or towards the end of the consultation period. Within the full set of replies, no campaigns have been identified that would qualify as such according to the Better Regulation guidelines³.

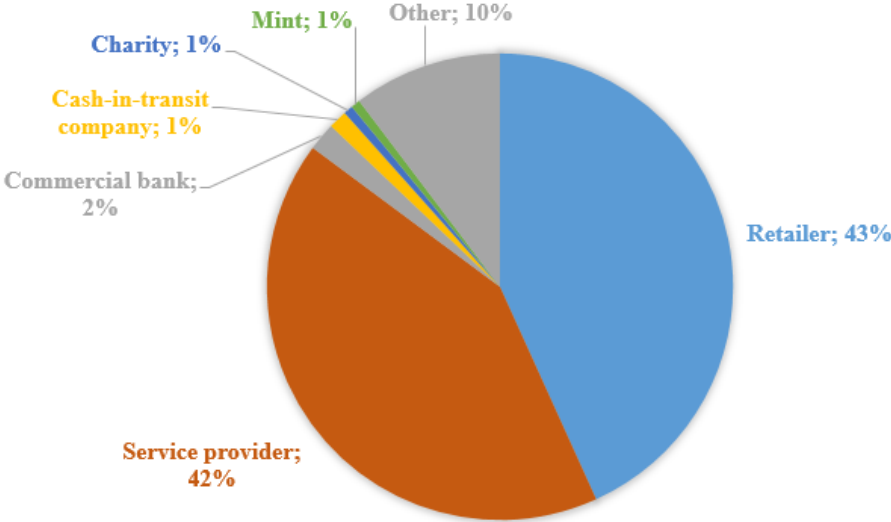
The table below shows in percentages the categories of stakeholders that contributed to the consultation, depending on their choice when answering to “*I am giving my contribution as*”. A very large number of contributions comes from EU citizens, which demonstrates the importance and relevance of the topic for the EU public.

I am giving my contribution as:	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
EU citizen	16.666	97,85%
Company/business organisation	145	0,85%
Other	116	0,68%
Non-EU citizen	65	0,38%
Public authority	10	0,06%
Academic/research institution	10	0,06%
Business association	10	0,06%
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	6	0,04%
Trade union	3	0,02%
Consumer organisation	2	0,01%
Total	17.033	100,00%

² Throughout the report, percentages are rounded for an easier understanding of the charts. Because of this, the sum of reported values for each chart may not always be exactly 100%.

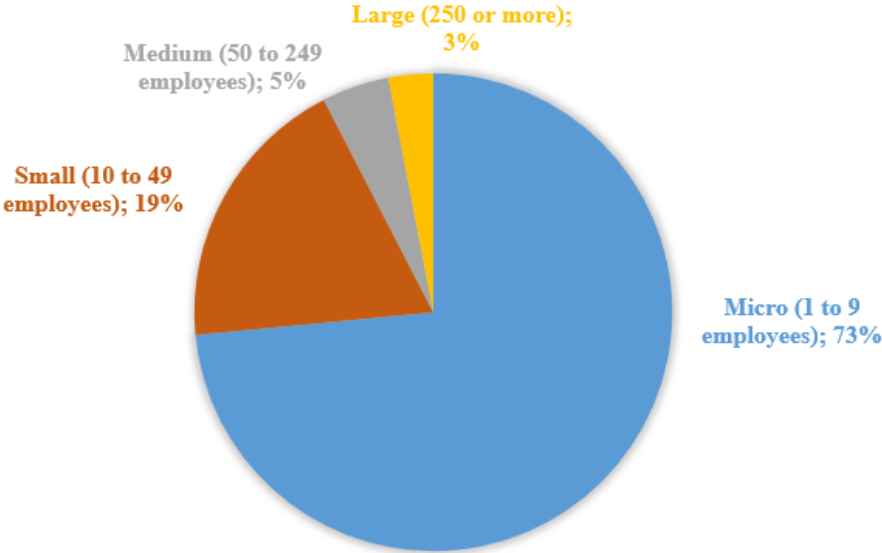
³ See Tool #54 of the Better Regulation Toolbox, https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/better-regulation-toolbox-54_en

The two groups of “company/business organisation” (145 replies) and “business association” (10 replies) are broken down further. Out of the 155 companies, business organisations and business associations that replied, 43% (67 contributions) of the respondents represented retailers and 42% (65 contributions) represented service providers.



“Company/business organisation” and “business association” respondents, by type
 $N^4 = 155$

When it comes to the size of the retailers and service providers that answered, 73% (97 contributions) are micro entities (1 to 9 employees), 19% (25 contributions) are small (10 to 49 employees), 5% (6 contributions) are medium sized (50 to 250 employees) and 3% (4 contributions) are large (250 employees or more).



Retailers and service providers respondents, by size

⁴ N is the number of responses on which the figure is based.

N = 132

In terms of country of origin, all EU Member States are represented. However, more than 95% of the respondents come from 3 Member States: Germany, with 78.9% of the replies, followed by Austria with 9.4% and France with 6.8%. This is the reason why granular analyses of responses coming from these Member States are included in the annexes to this report.

Country of origin	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Germany	13.442	78,92%
Austria	1.601	9,40%
France	1.158	6,80%
Italy	184	1,08%
Spain	159	0,93%
Belgium	55	0,32%
Lithuania	48	0,28%
Netherlands	48	0,28%
Portugal	44	0,26%
Greece	17	0,10%
Luxembourg	16	0,09%
Poland	16	0,09%
Romania	14	0,08%
Estonia	13	0,08%
Hungary	13	0,08%
Czechia	9	0,05%
Slovakia	7	0,04%
Ireland	6	0,04%
Croatia	5	0,03%
Denmark	5	0,03%
Bulgaria	4	0,02%
Finland	4	0,02%
Sweden	3	0,02%
Cyprus	2	0,01%
Latvia	2	0,01%
Slovenia	2	0,01%
Malta	1	0,01%
Non-EU	155	0,91%
Total	17.033	100,00%

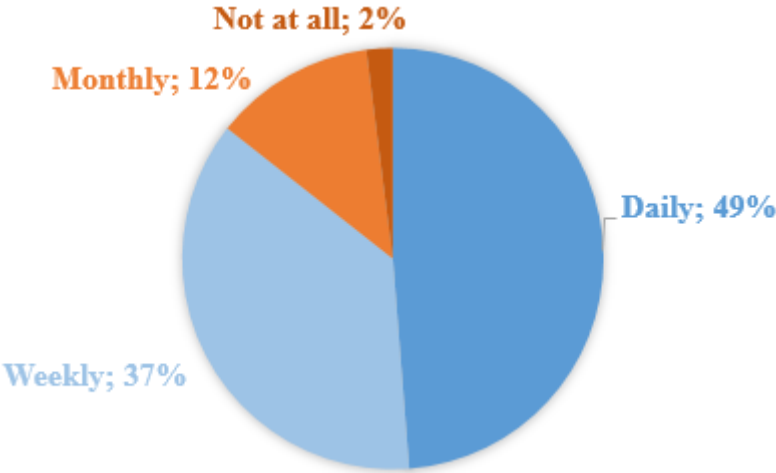
For an easier reading of this factual summary report, the five Member States which already have rounding rules for cash payments in euro will be referred to as “rounding Member States” (N = 297), and Member States which do not have rounding rules for cash payments in euro will be referred to as “non-rounding Member States” (N = 16.581).

When it comes to the respondents' preference to have their personal details published in relation with their contributions to the consultation, 85% chose to remain anonymous and 15% chose to have their details published.

4.2 Preliminary findings

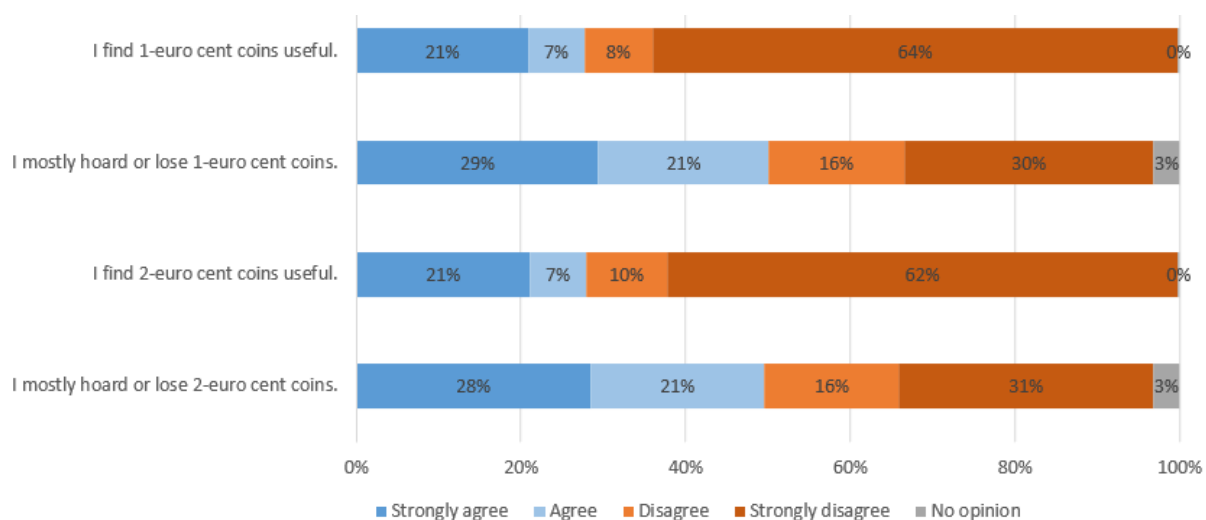
This summary report provides a breakdown of the responses to some of the key questions in the open public consultation, focusing on the quantitative aspects of the consultation responses from respondents which chose one of the Member States as country of origin. A more comprehensive description of the results will be included in the consultation synopsis report accompanying the Commission's impact assessment.

When asked about how frequently they use cash, 49% of the respondents said they use cash daily, 37% use it weekly, 12% use cash monthly, and 2% do not use cash at all.



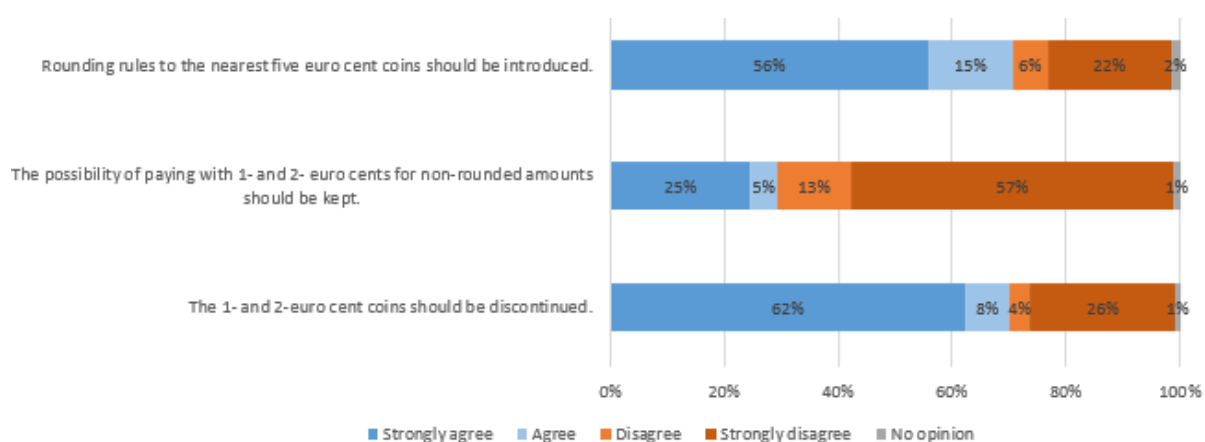
Contributions to the statement "I use cash"
N = 17.033

A large majority of respondents (72%) disagree (8%) or strongly disagree (64%) when asked if they find 1- and 2-euro cent coins useful. 28% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this fact and consider the coins useful. The views are almost equally split when it comes to respondents saying if they mostly hoard or lose these coins. The breakdown of responses for Germany, Austria and France (the three Member States with the largest number of contributors) is similar to the breakdown of responses for all other countries excluding these Member States. Respondents from Germany, Austria and France disagree with the statements that 1- and 2-euro cent coins are useful by large majorities (depending on Member State, between 64% and 78% - see annex 1).



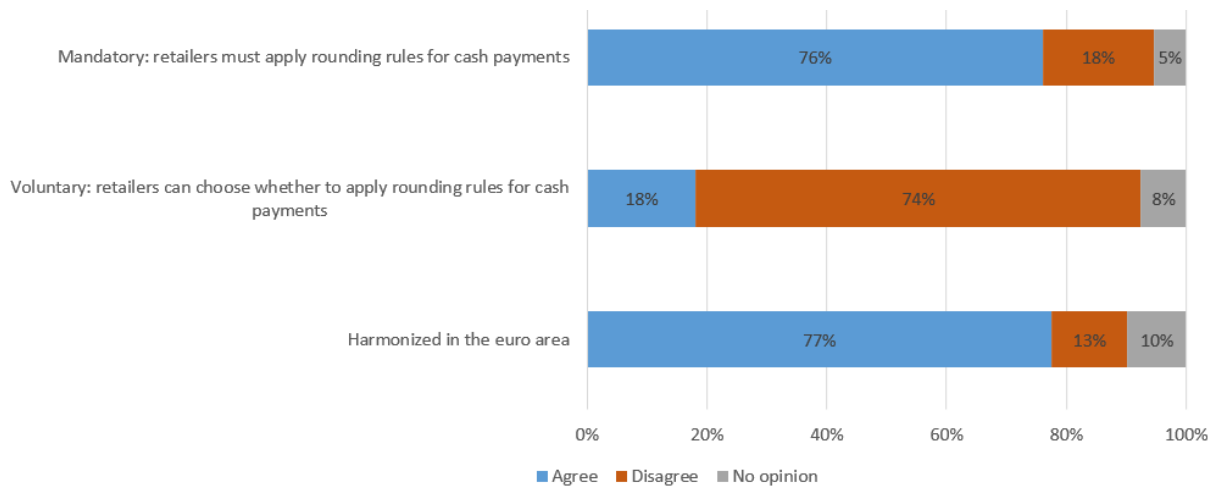
N = 17.033

Most respondents consider that rounding rules to the nearest five euro cents should be introduced (71%), the possibility of paying with 1- and 2-euro cent coins for non-rounded amounts should not be kept (70%), and the 1- and 2-euro cent coins should be discontinued (70%). By large majorities, respondents from Germany, Austria and France favour the introduction of rounding rules, ending the possibility of paying with 1- and 2-euro cent coins and the discontinuation of these denominations (see annex 2).



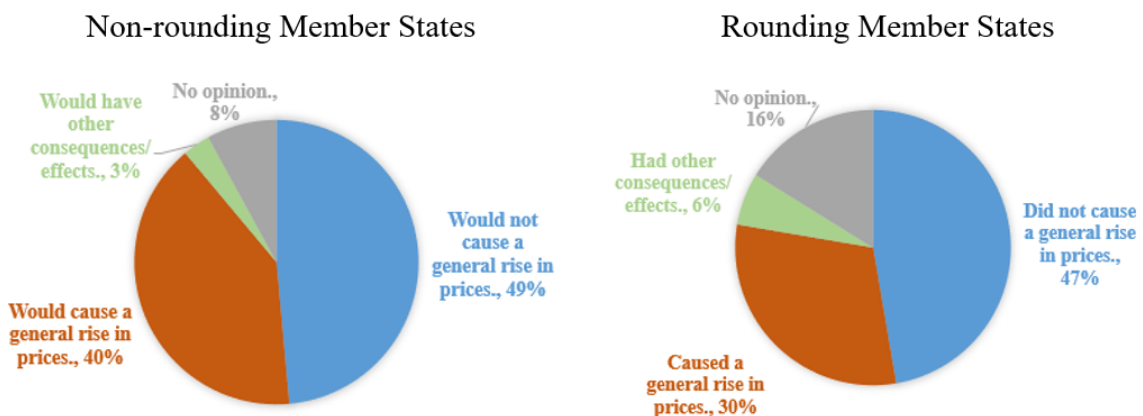
N = 17.033

Contributors largely consider that **rounding rules should be mandatory (76%)** and not voluntary (74%), and they should be **harmonised in the euro area (77%)**. A part of the contributors are of the opinion that rounding rules should be voluntary (18%), and they should not be mandatory (18%) or harmonised (13%). Between 5% and 10% of the respondents do not have an opinion on these topics. Similar trends of answers are seen also for contributions from German, Austrian and French respondents (see annex 3).



N = 17.033

When asked on the impact of rounding rules on prices, 49% of the respondents from non-rounding Member States do not expect a general increase in prices for this reason. This percentage is close to the 47% of the respondents in the rounding Member States which, based on their experience, consider that the existing rounding rules in their Member State did not cause a general increase in prices. On the contrary, 40% of the non-rounding Member States contributions and 30% of the rounding Member States contributions consider that rounding rules would cause / caused a general increase in prices. The remaining contributors either considered that rounding rules would have / had other consequences (3% / 6%), or they do not have an opinion on this (8% / 16%). As annex 4 shows, the majority of German and Austrian respondents consider that rounding rules would not cause a general increase in prices, while the majority of French and other countries respondents think that rounding rules would cause a general increase in prices.



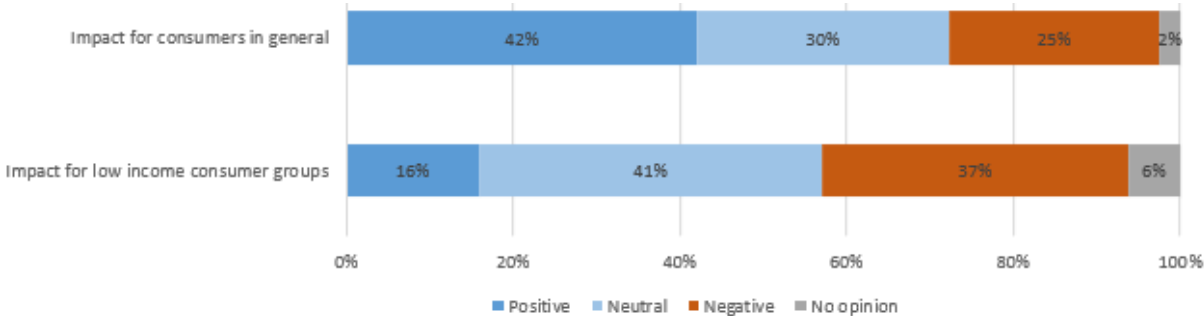
Impact of rounding rules on prices

N = 16.581

N = 297

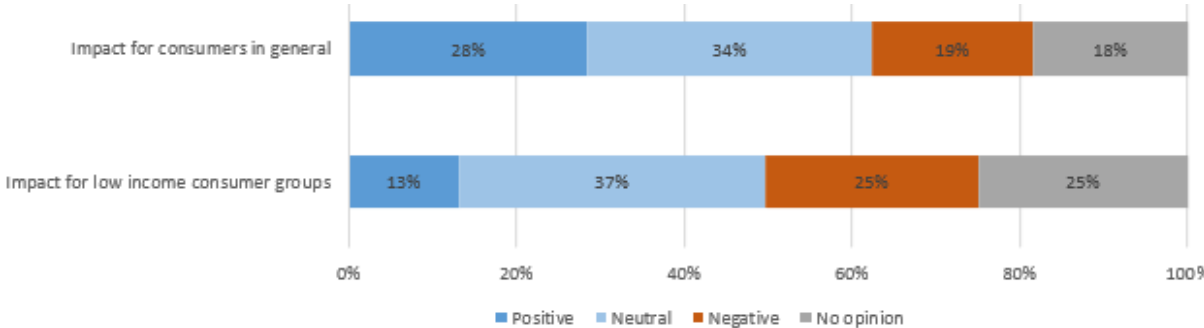
Respondents from non-rounding Member States are of the opinion that the impact of the possible introduction of **rounding rules would be mostly positive or neutral on consumers in general (72%)** and on low income consumer groups (57%). Contributors think that low

income consumer groups would be negatively impacted (37%) more than consumers in general (25%). Between 2% and 6% of respondents do not have an opinion on this. Compared with respondents from France and other countries, respondents from Germany and Austria are more optimistic (meaning a higher number of contributors choosing the “positive” and “neutral” response options) about the possible impact of rounding rules on consumers in general and on low income consumers in particular (see annex 5).



N = 16.581

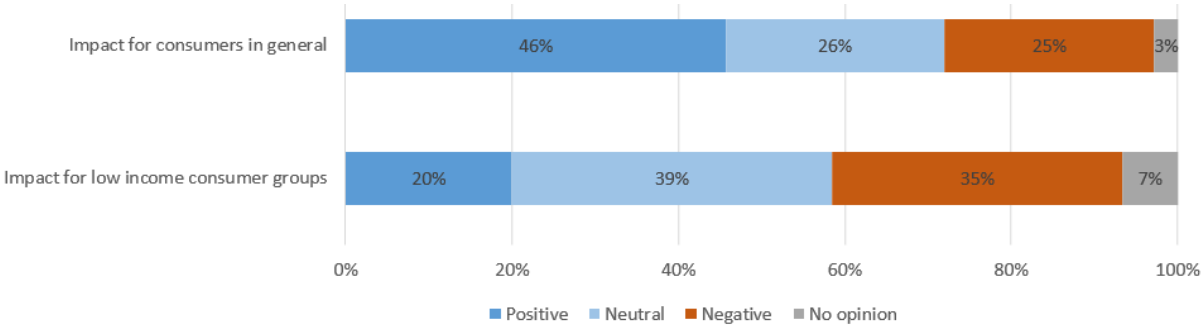
A majority of responses received on the same topic from contributors from rounding Member States show that the impact of rounding rules is positive or neutral on consumers in general (62%) and on low income consumer groups (50%). Less respondents consider that the impact of rounding rules is negative on consumers in general (19%) and on low income consumer groups (25%). A significant number of respondents from rounding Member States (18% and 25%) do not express an opinion on these matters.



N = 297

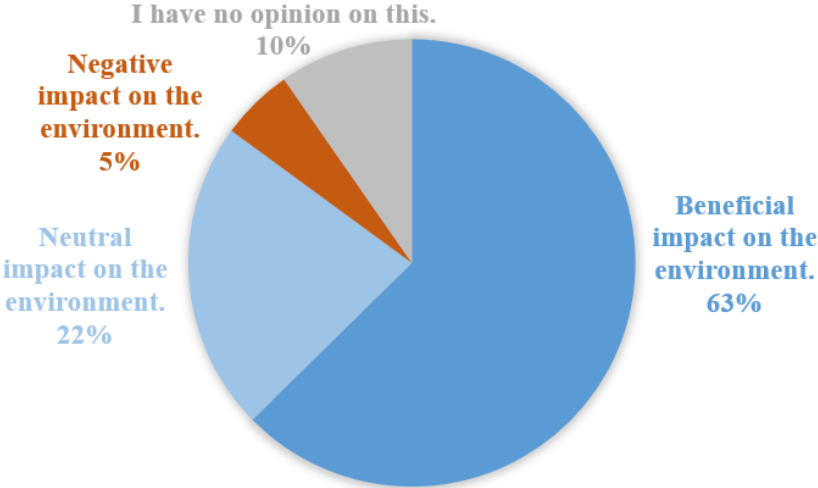
Respondents were questioned on the expected impact of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins. 72% of respondents are of the opinion that this impact would be positive (46%) or neutral (26%) on consumers in general, and 25% think the impact would be negative. For the low income consumer groups, 59% of respondents say the impact would be neutral (39%) or positive (20%), and 35% say the impact would be negative. Contributors think that low income consumer groups would be negatively impacted (35%) more than consumers in general (25%). Between 3% and 7% of respondents do not have an opinion on these questions. Compared with respondents from France and other countries, respondents from Germany and Austria are more optimistic (meaning a higher number of contributors choosing the “positive” and “neutral” response

options) about the possible impact of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins on consumers in general and on low income consumers in particular (see annex 6).



N = 17.033

Environmental aspects are also important in the life cycle of the 1- and 2-euro cent coins. Stakeholders were asked their opinion on the environmental impact of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins. 85% consider that the potential environmental impact would be beneficial (63%) or neutral (22%), and 5% believe this impact would be negative. 10% do not have an opinion on this topic. The breakdown of responses for Germany, Austria and France is similar to the breakdown of responses for all other countries excluding these Member States. The largest part of respondents from these Member States consider that the introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins would have a beneficial impact on the environment (see annex 7).

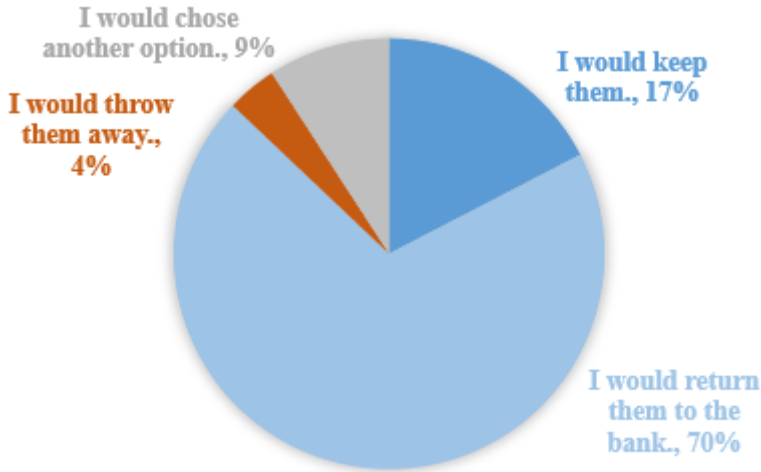


Impact of rounding rules and discontinuation of the 1- and 2-euro cent coins on the environment

N = 17.033

In case of discontinuation, including withdrawal of legal tender status, 70% of the respondents said they would return to the bank the 1- and 2-euro cent coins they would still have in possession after the date from which they could not be used anymore for cash payments. 17%

said they would keep the coins, 4% would throw them away, and 9% would choose another option. A similar breakdown of responses is observed for contributions from Germany, Austria, France and all other countries except these Member States, with a majority of respondents saying they would return the coins to the banks in case of discontinuation (including withdrawal of legal tender).

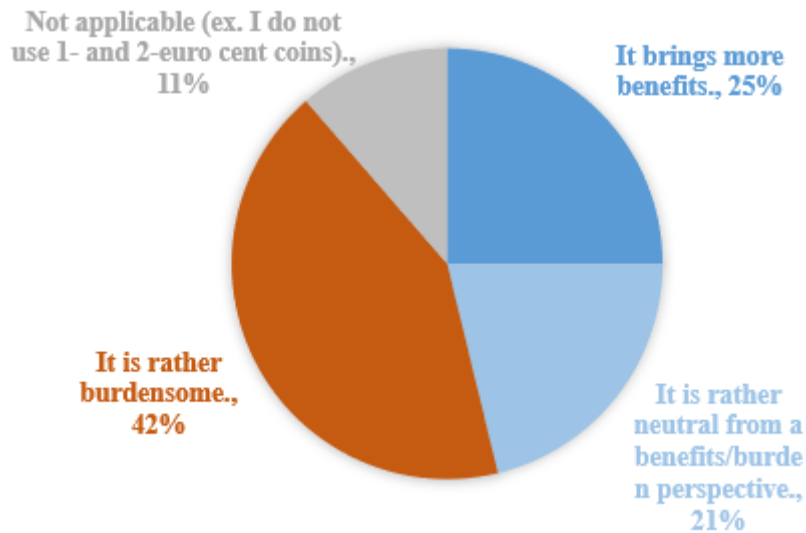


“In case of discontinuation, including withdrawal of legal tender status, what would you do with the 1- and 2-euro cent coins you still have in possession after the date from which they cannot be used anymore for cash payments”

N = 17.033

Retailers and service providers are seen as cash intensive economic sectors. Therefore, part of the questions in the questionnaire were specifically designed to gather their views. In the public consultation, contributions were received from retailers and services providers located in non-rounding Member States: Germany (103 respondents), Austria (22), France (3), Lithuania (3), and Spain (1). No contributions were received from retailers or service providers located in rounding Member States.

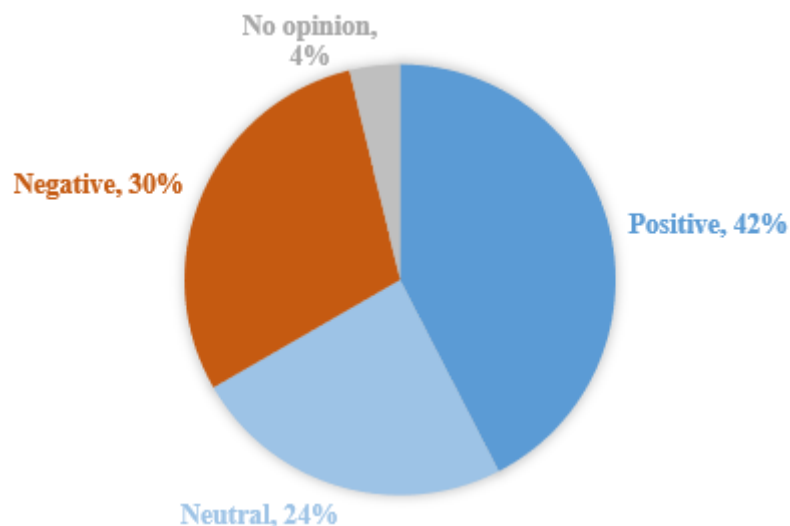
42% of retailers and service providers in the non-rounding Member States consider that the usage of 1- and 2-euro cent coins is rather burdensome for their businesses, while 25% say that it brings more benefits for them. 21% think their usage is rather neutral from a benefits/burden perspective, and 11% responded that this question is not applicable to them.



“Do you consider that the usage of 1- and 2-euro cent coins brings more benefits or is rather burdensome for your business?”

Retailers and service providers respondents from non-rounding Member States
N = 132

More retailers and service providers in non-rounding Member States consider that the expected impact on their businesses of the possible introduction of rounding rules would be positive (42%) compared to negative (30%). 24% think this impact would be neutral, and 4% do not have an opinion on this aspect.

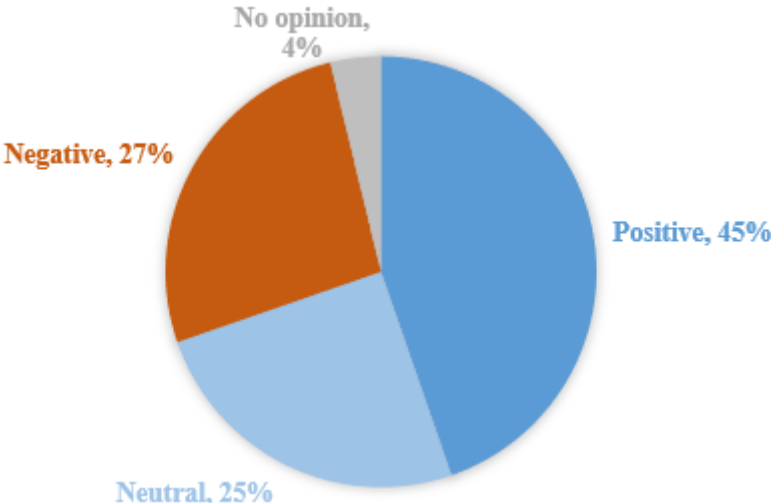


“What is your opinion on the expected impact on your business of the possible introduction of rounding rules in your country?”

Retailers and service providers respondents from non-rounding Member States
N = 132

When asked about the expected impact on their businesses of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins, more retailers

and service providers in non-rounding Member States consider it positive (45%) compared to negative (27%). 25% think this impact would be neutral, and 4% do not have an opinion on this aspect. Looking at this question and the previous one, the replies of the respondents seem to favour a combination of rounding rules and discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins, rather than rounding rules alone.



What is your opinion on the expected impact on your business of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins in your country?

Retailers and service providers respondents from non-rounding Member States
N = 132

5. Next steps

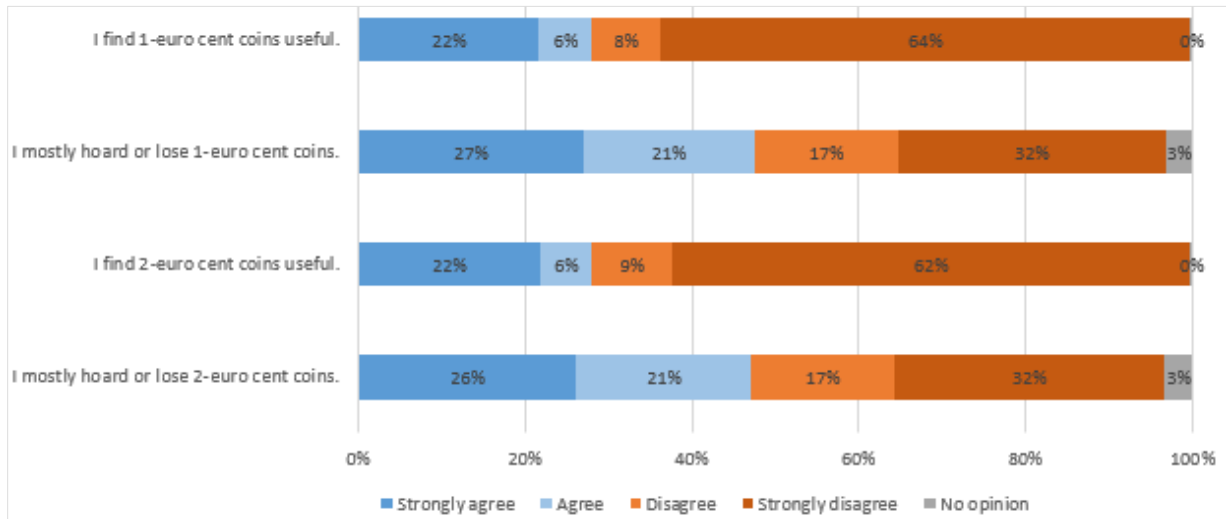
The European Commission is thoroughly analysing all replies received. The results, which are non-binding for the Commission, will feed into the impact assessment on uniform rounding rules for cash payments.

Annex 1

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation questions on the usefulness of the 1- and 2-euro coins, and if respondents mostly hoard or lose these coins.

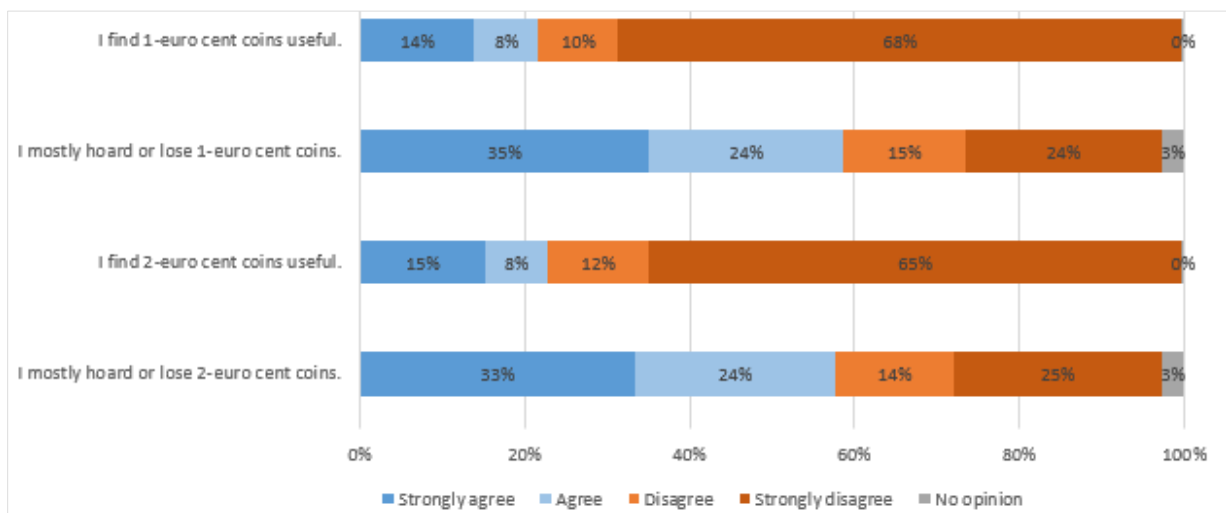
Respondents from Germany

N = 13.442



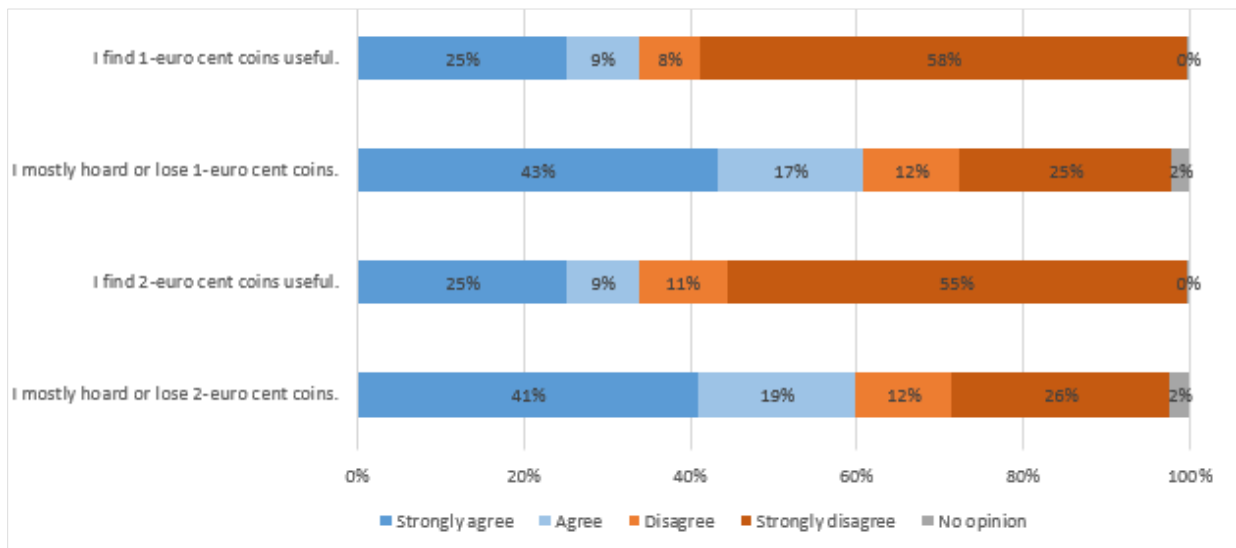
Respondents from Austria

N = 1.601



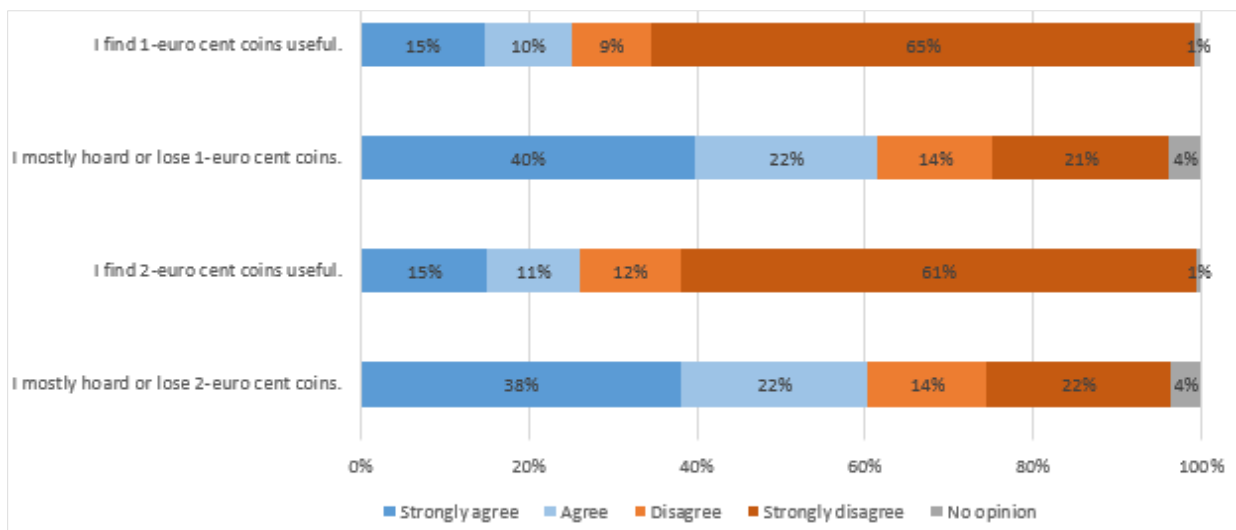
Respondents from France

N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries

N = 832

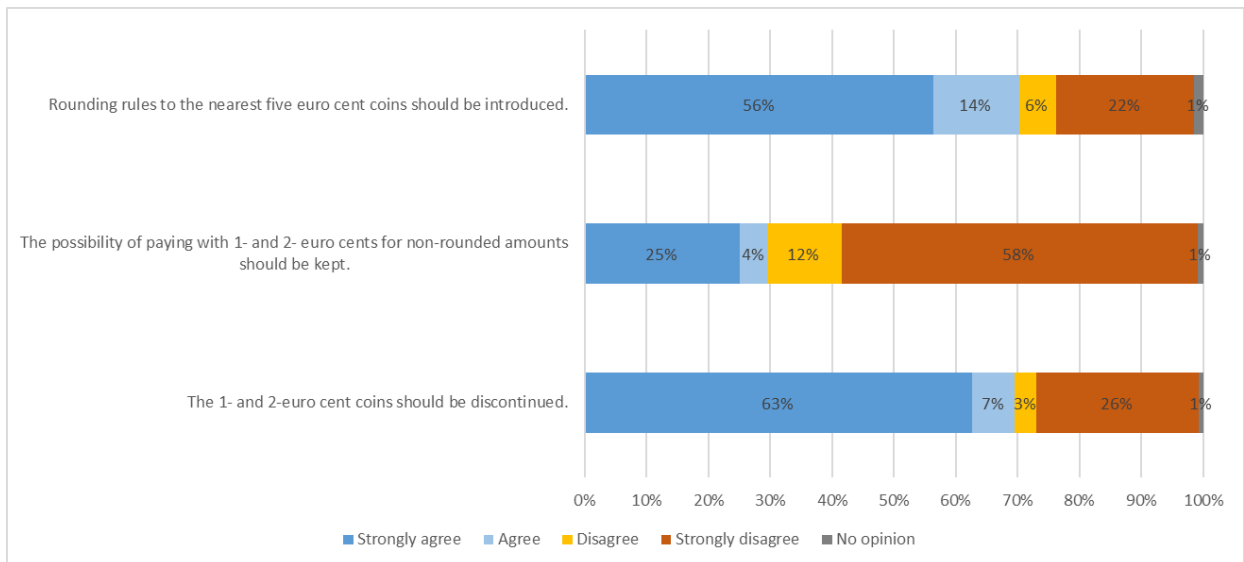


Annex 2

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation questions on the introduction of rounding rules, the continued possibility of paying with 1- and 2-euro cent coins, and the discontinuation of these denominations.

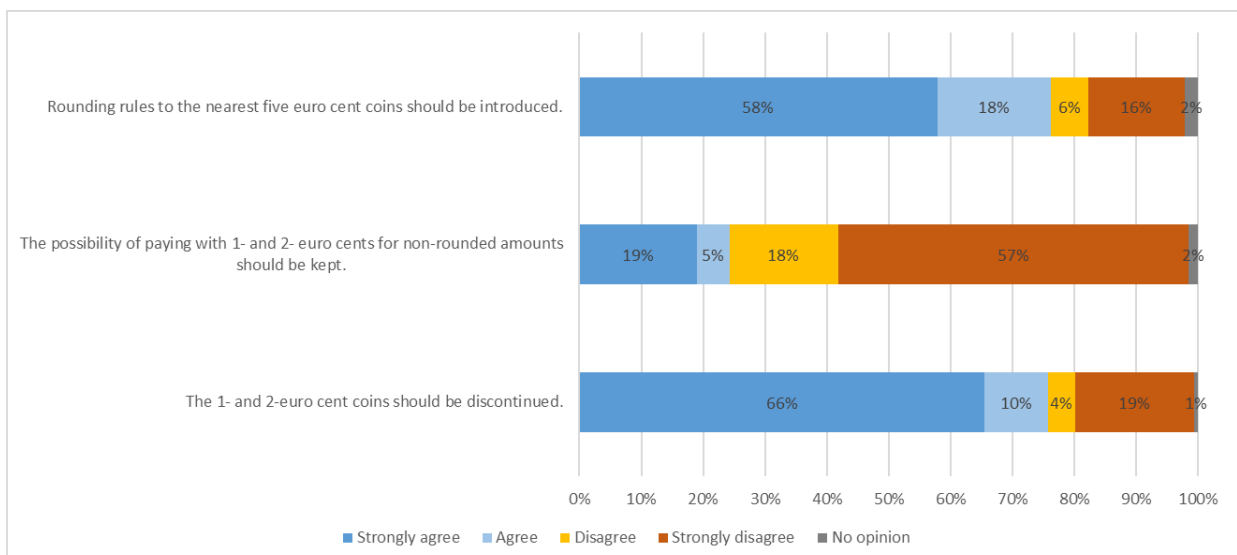
Respondents from Germany

N = 13.442



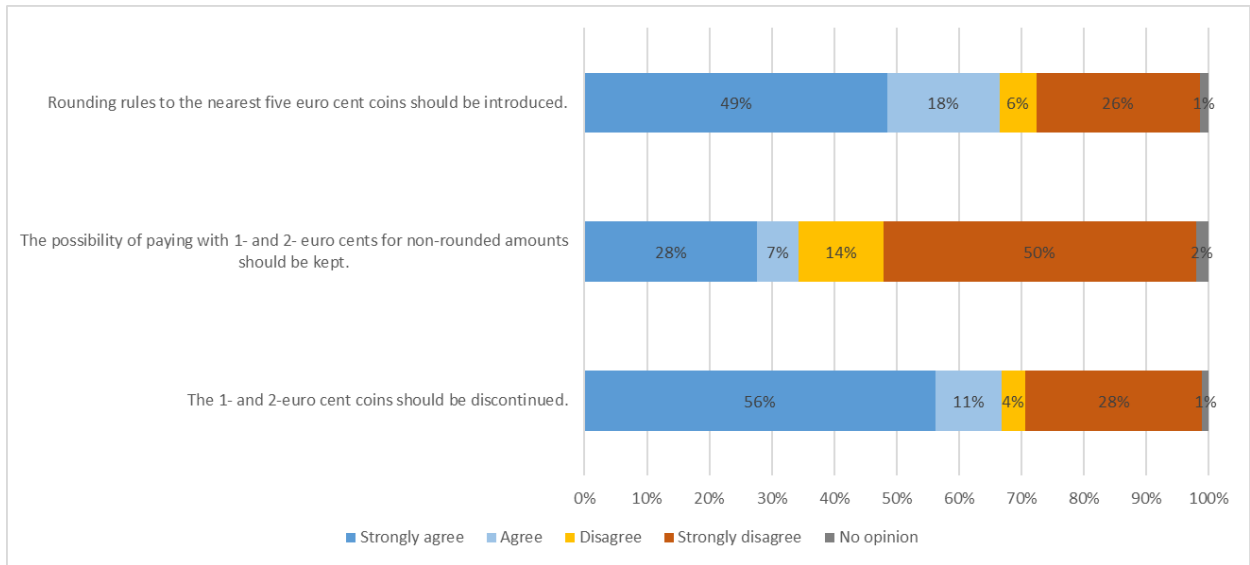
Respondents from Austria

N = 1.601



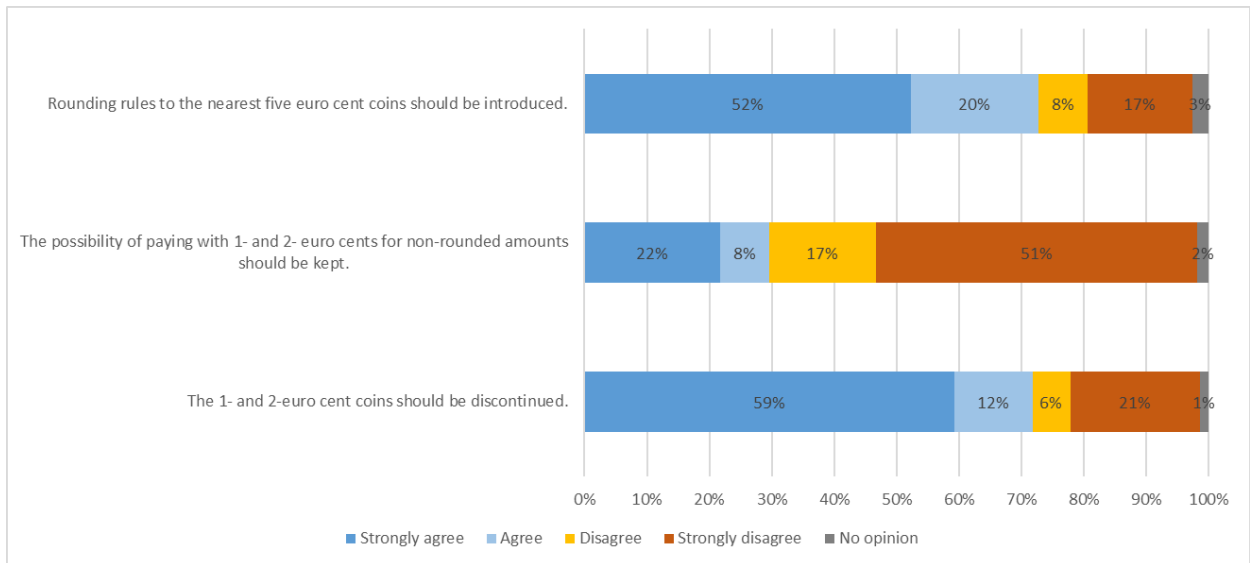
Respondents from France

N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries

N = 832

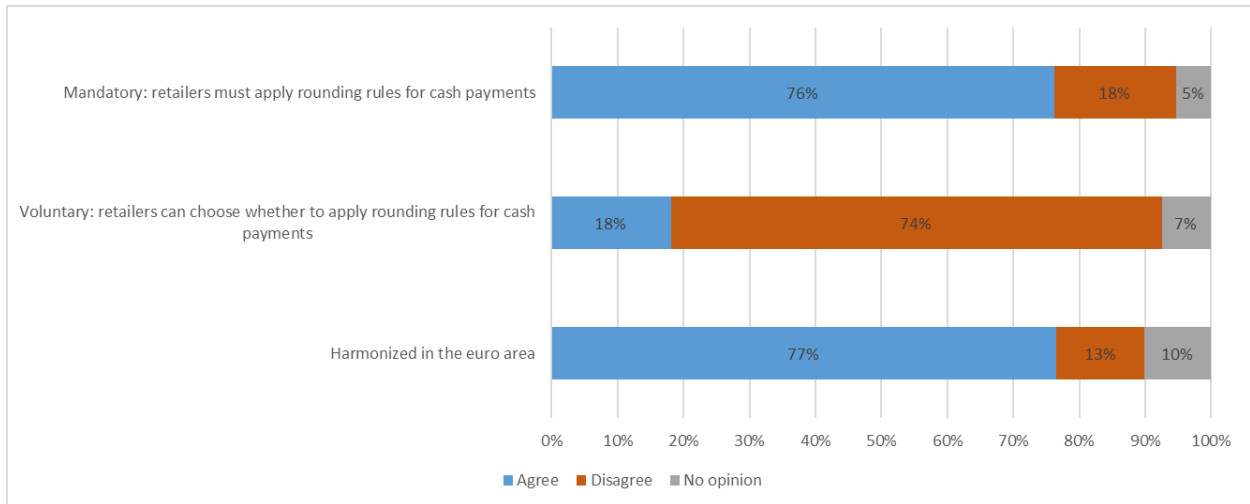


Annex 3

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on the characteristics of the possible rounding rules.

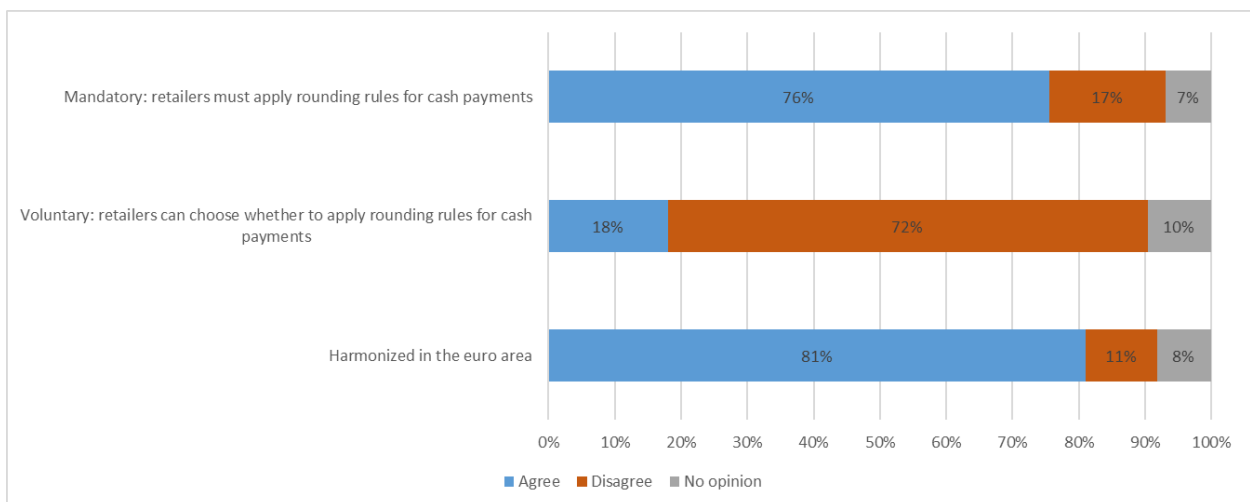
Respondents from Germany

N = 13.442



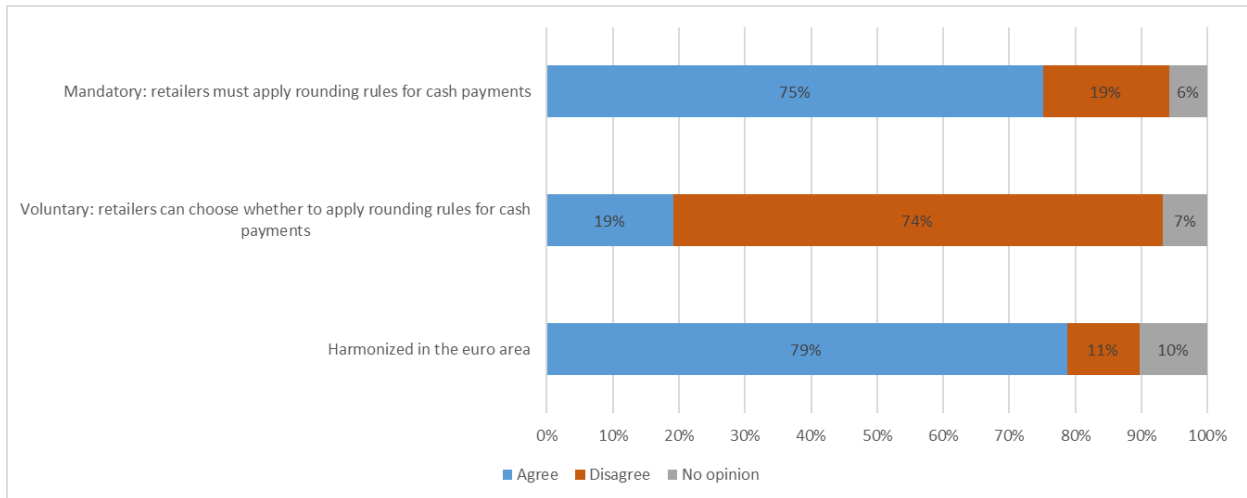
Respondents from Austria

N = 1.601



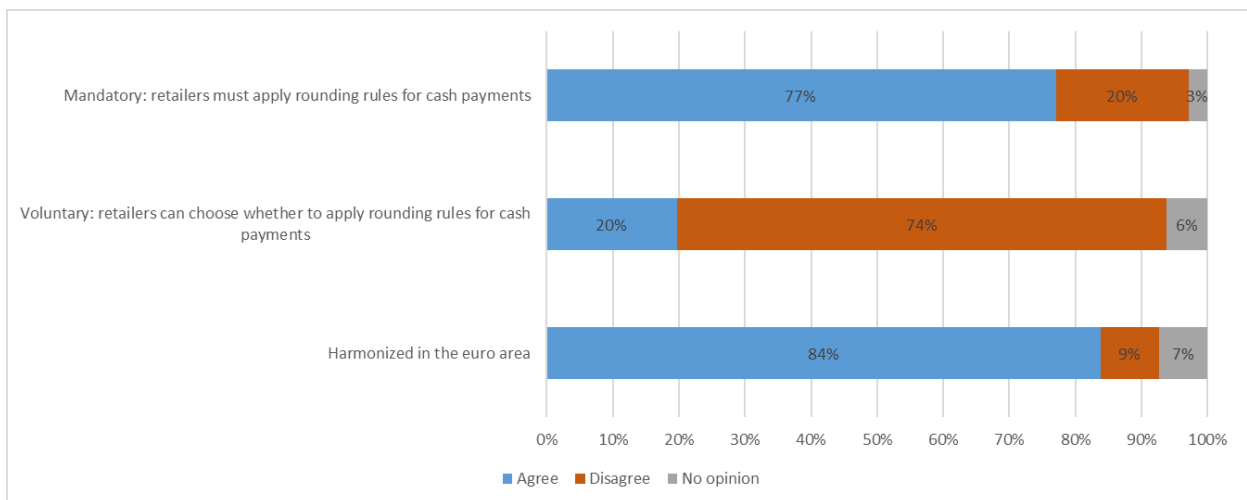
Respondents from France

N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries

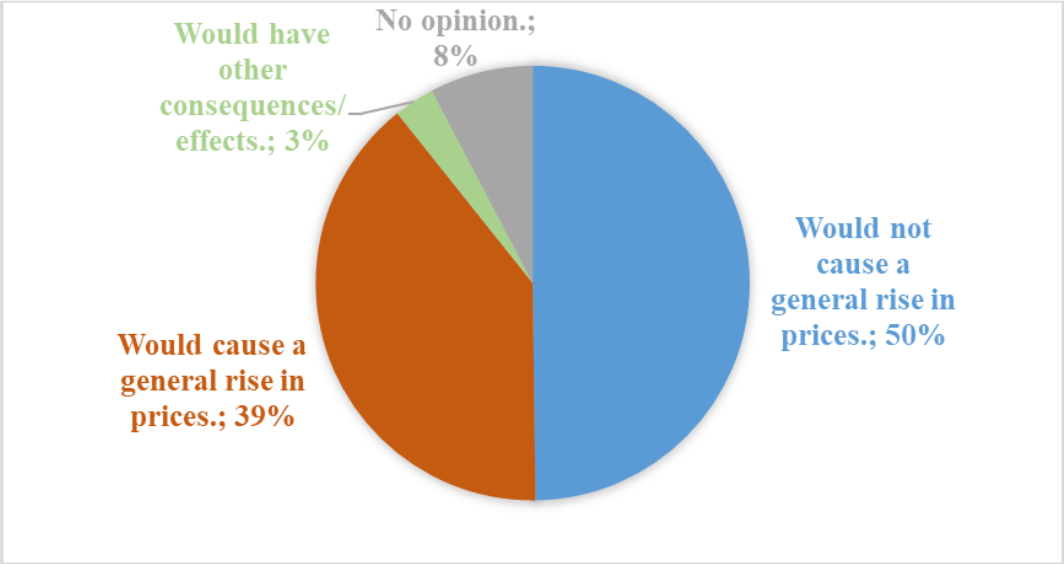
N = 832



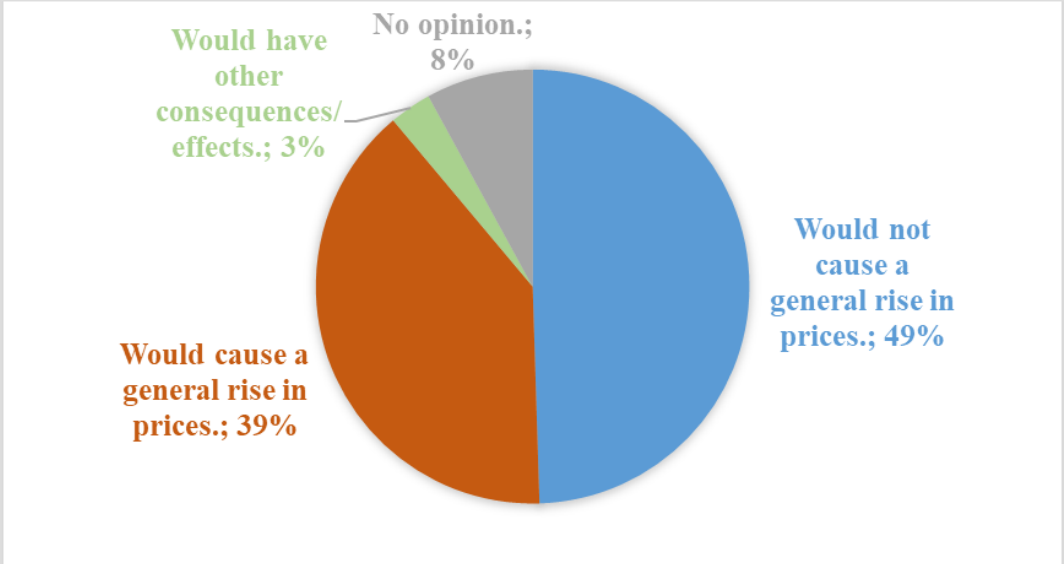
Annex 4

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on the expected impact of rounding rules on prices.

Respondents from Germany
N = 13.442

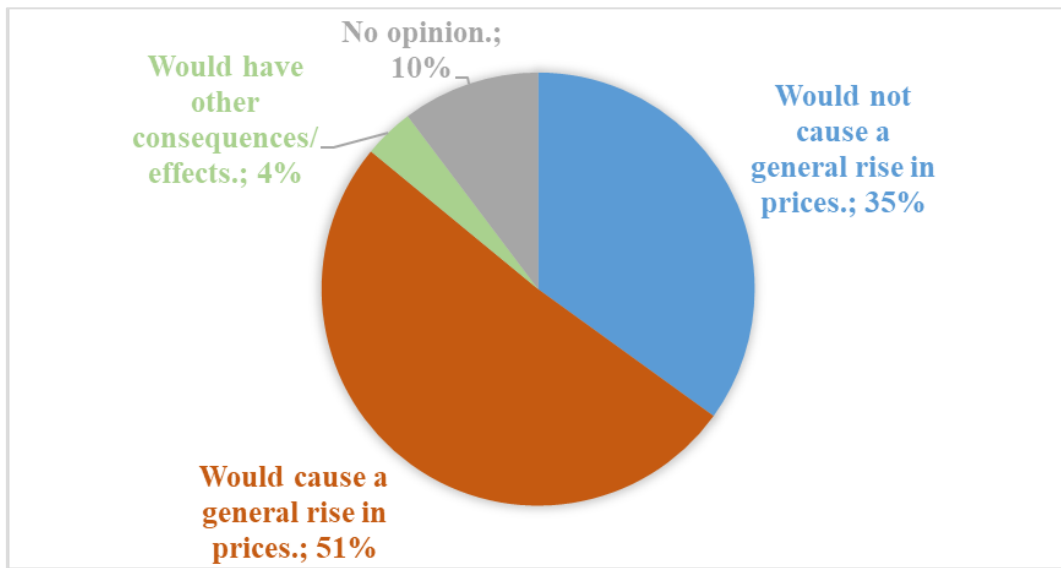


Respondents from Austria
N = 1.601



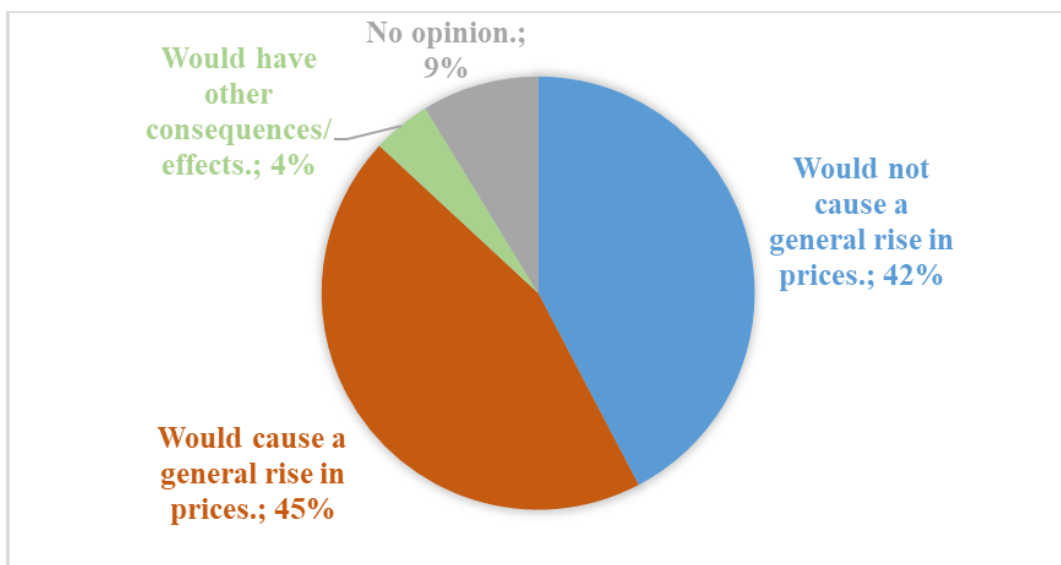
Respondents from France

N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries

N = 832

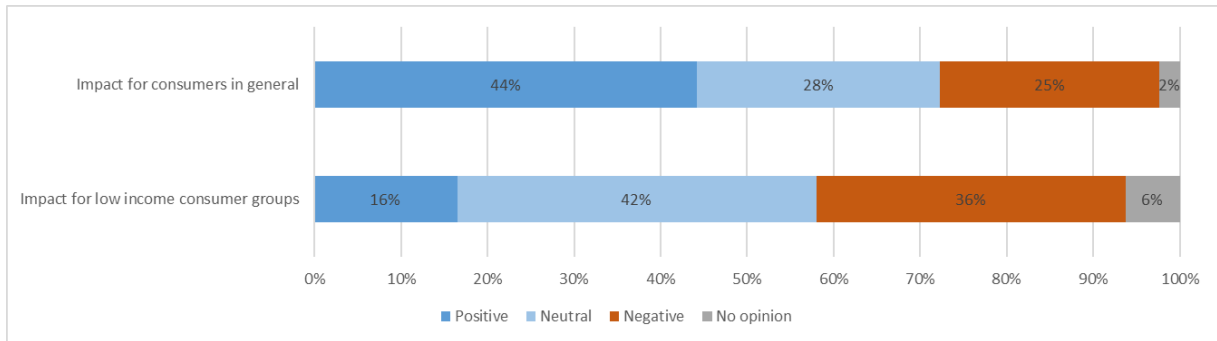


Annex 5

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on the expected impact of rounding rules on consumers in general, and on low income consumer groups in particular.

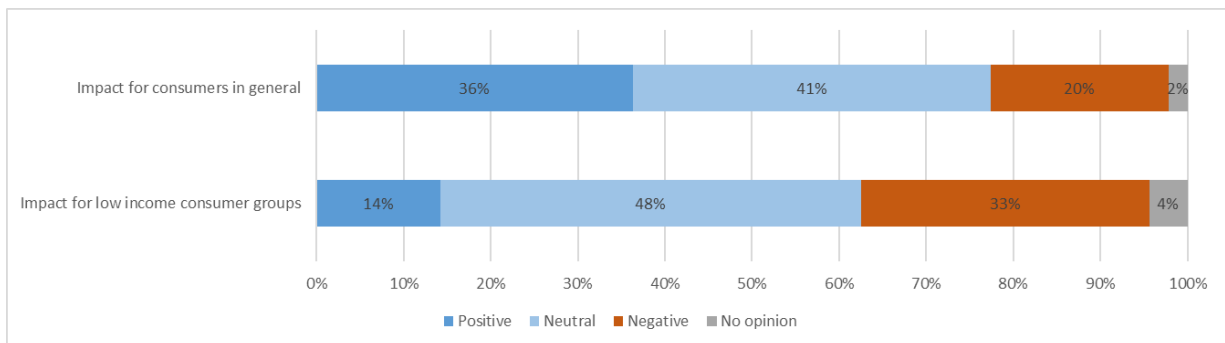
Respondents from Germany

N = 13.442



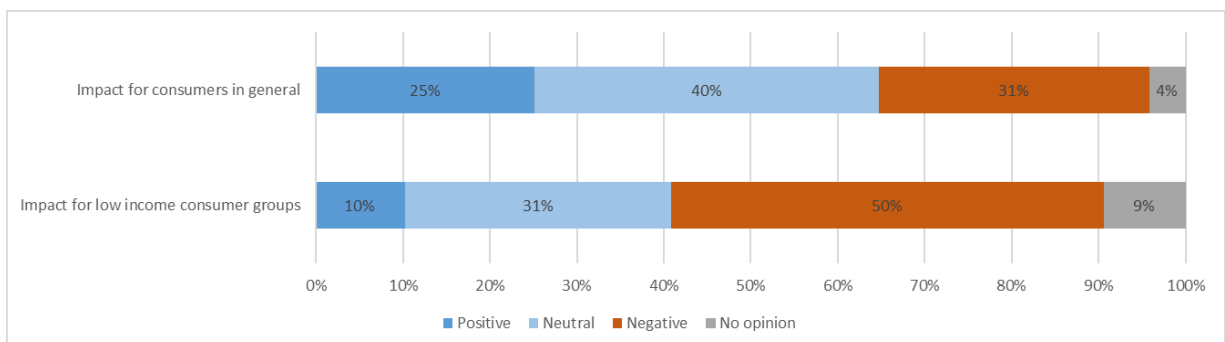
Respondents from Austria

N = 1.601

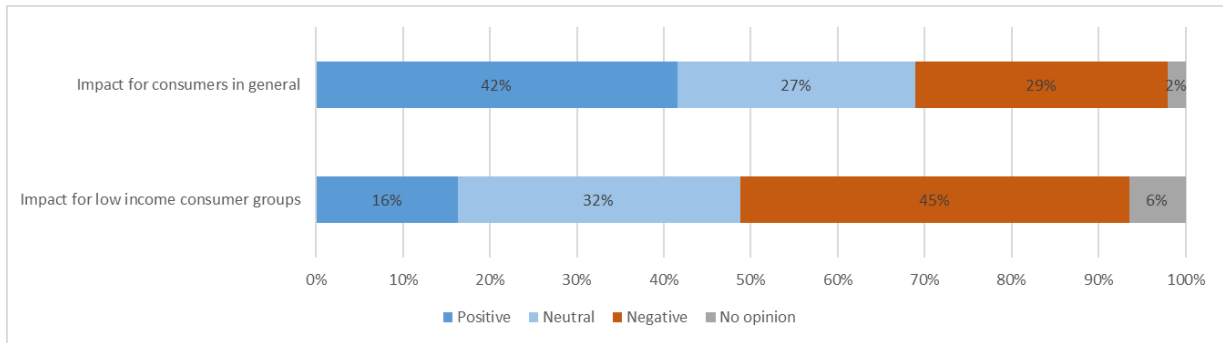


Respondents from France

N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries
N = 832

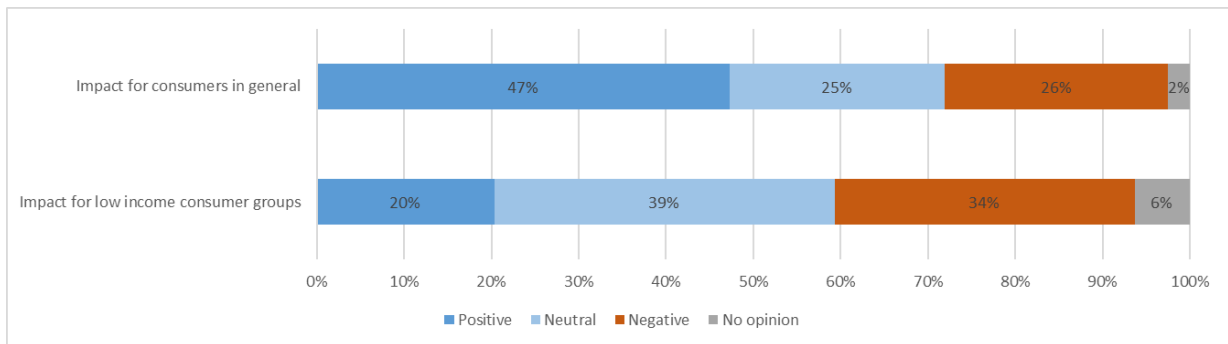


Annex 6

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on the expected impact of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins on consumers in general, and on low income consumer groups in particular.

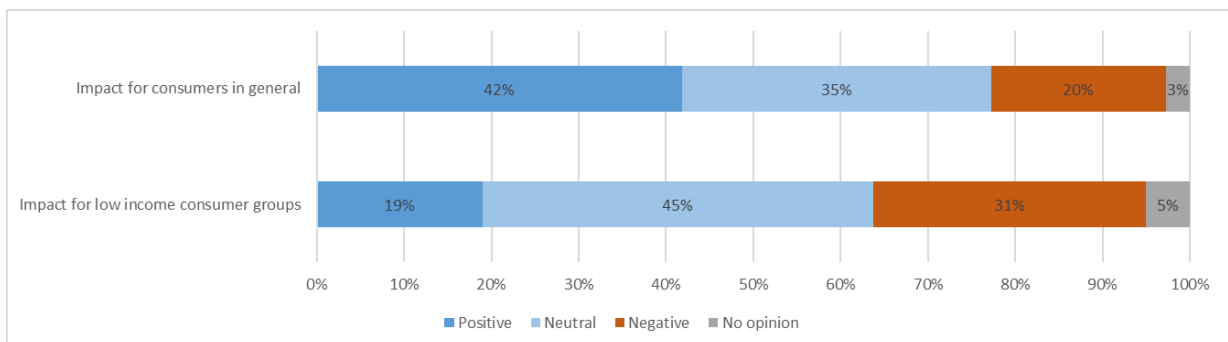
Respondents from Germany

N = 13.442



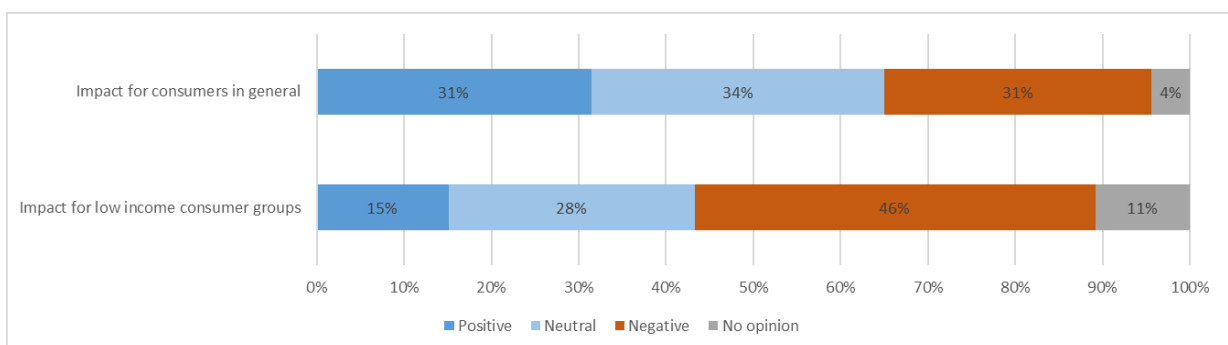
Respondents from Austria

N = 1.601

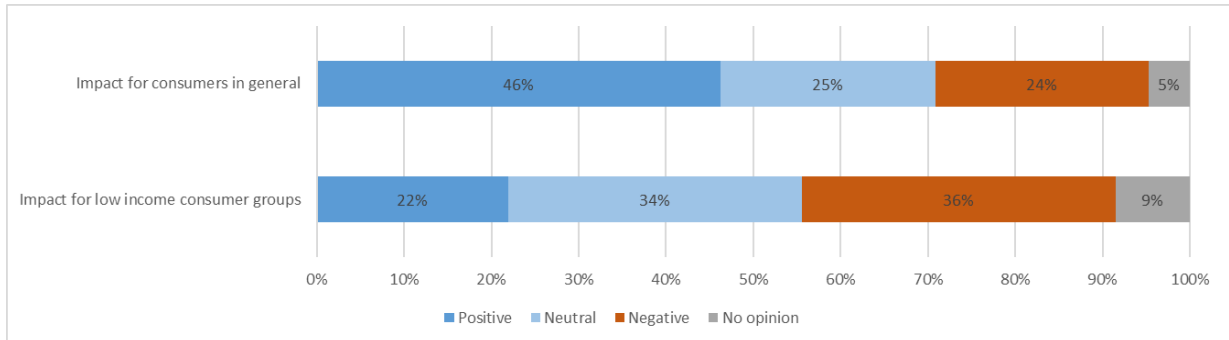


Respondents from France

N = 1.158



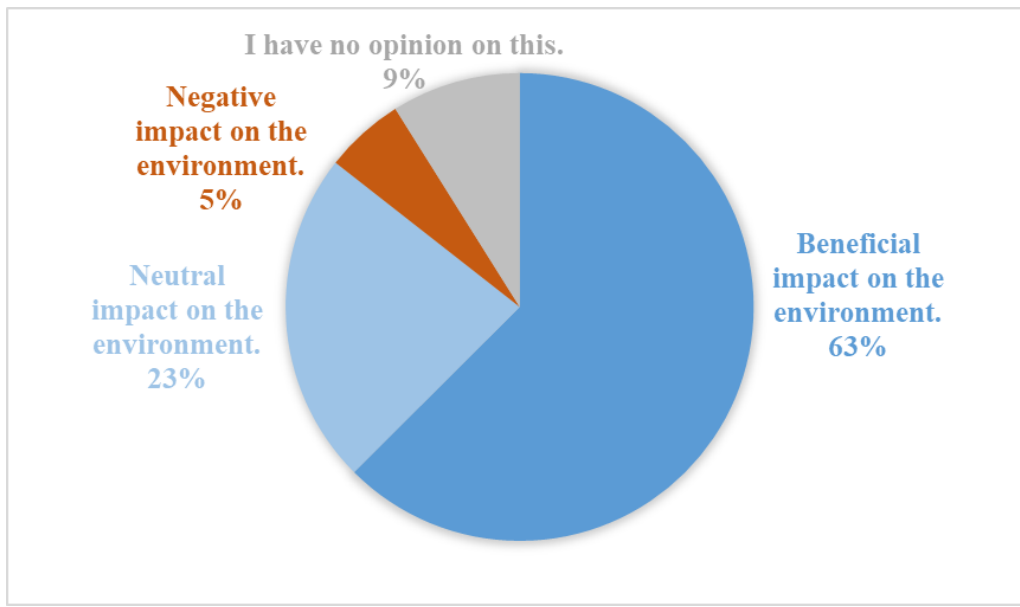
Respondents from other countries
N = 832



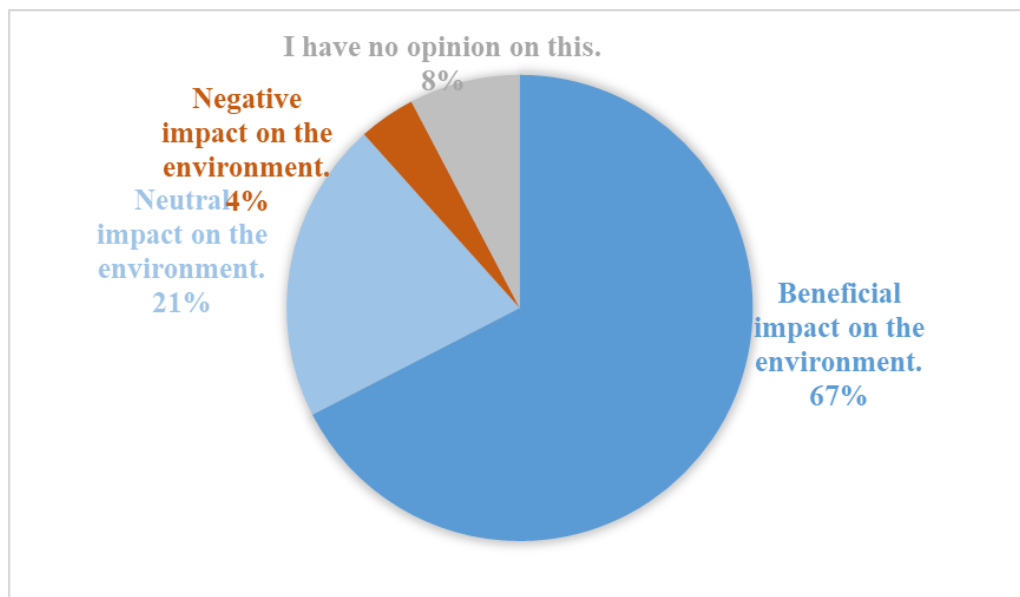
Annex 7

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on the environmental impact of the possible introduction of rounding rules accompanied by the discontinuation of 1- and 2-euro cent coins.

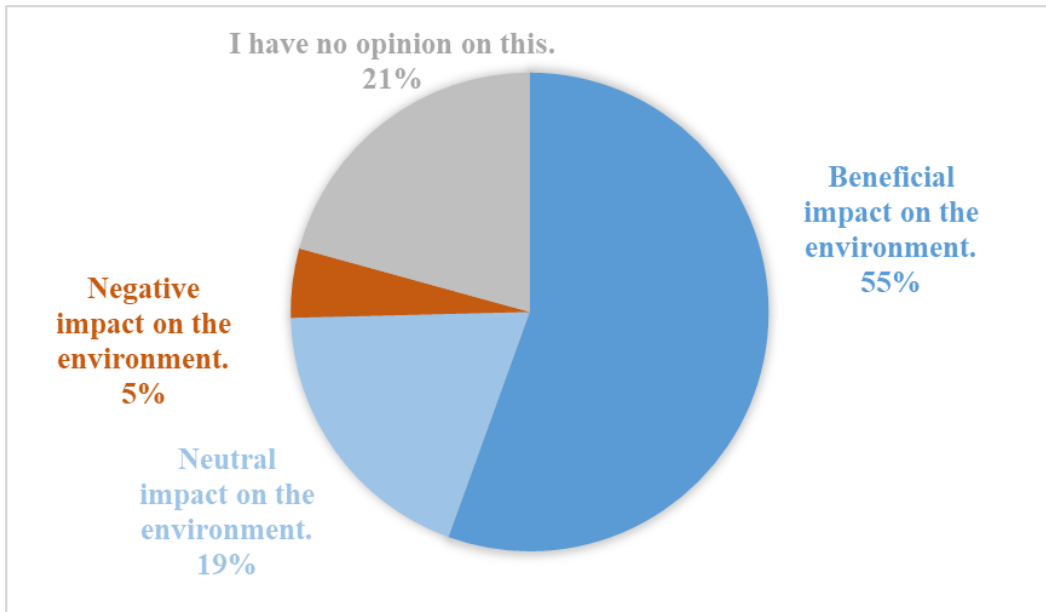
Respondents from Germany
N = 13.442



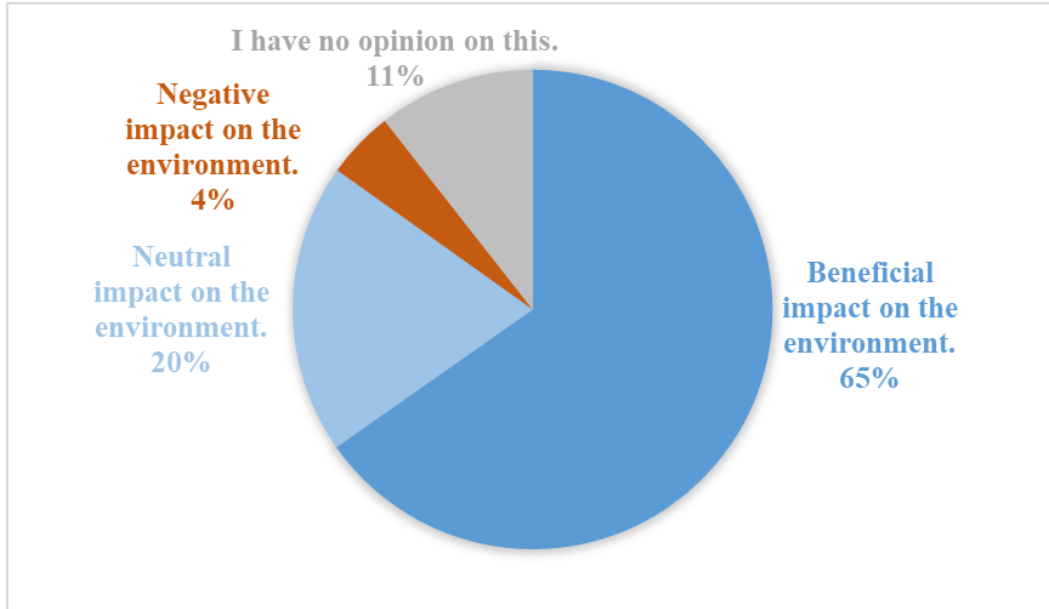
Respondents from Austria
N = 1.601



Respondents from France
N = 1.158



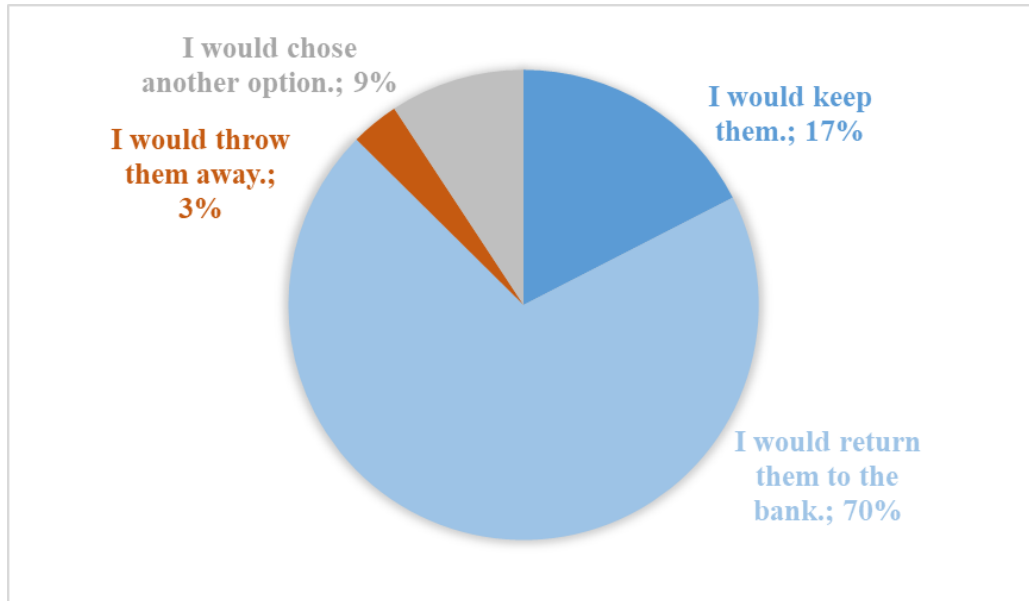
Respondents from other countries
N = 832



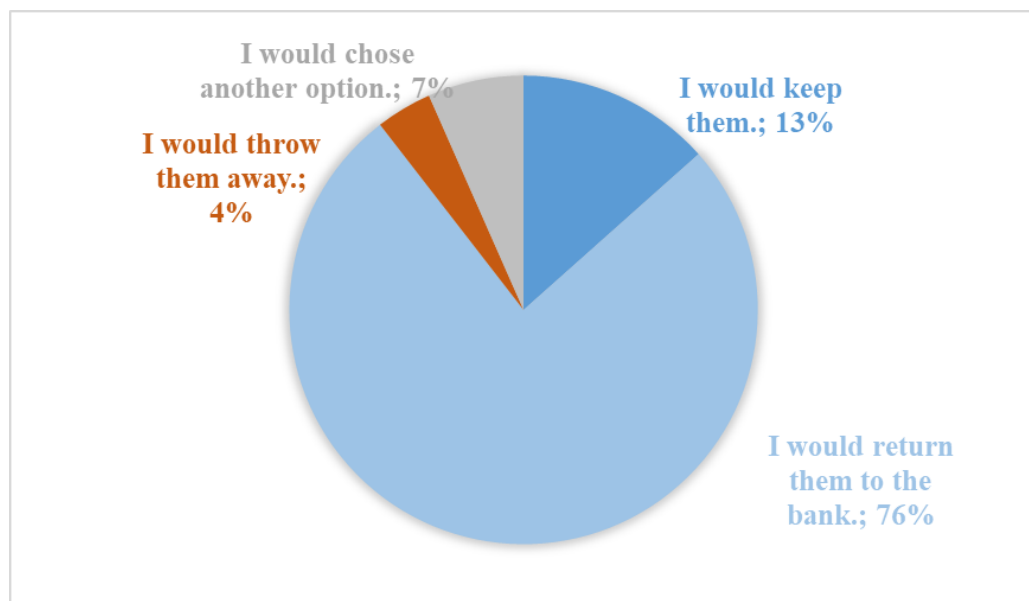
Annex 8

Breakdown of responses to the public consultation question on what would respondents do with the 1- and 2-euro cent coins that they would still have in possession after the date from which they could not be used anymore for cash payments (1- and 2-euro cents discontinued, and legal tender withdrawn).

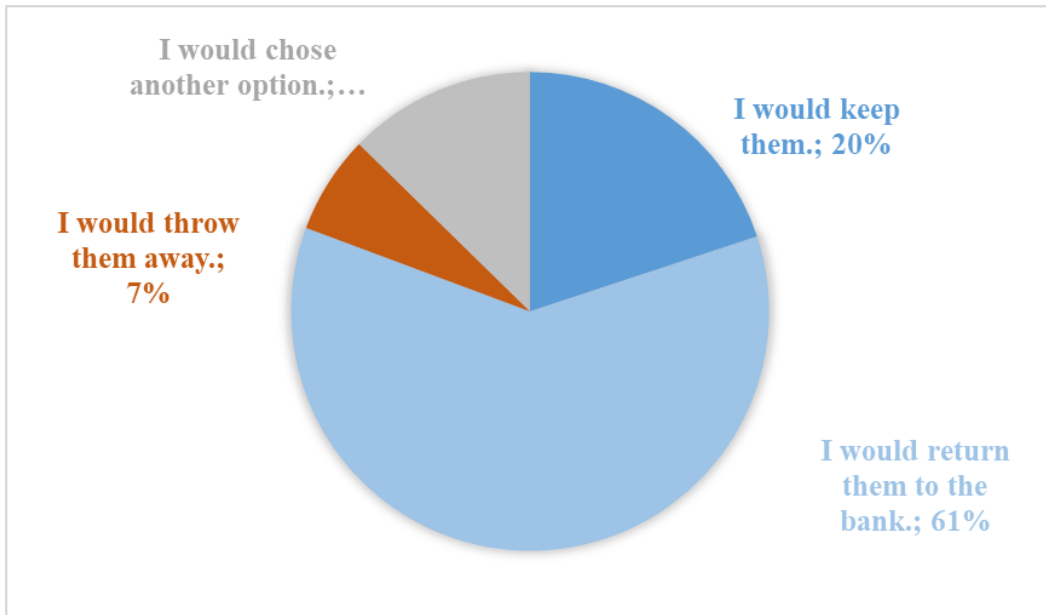
Respondents from Germany
N = 13.442



Respondents from Austria
N = 1.601



Respondents from France
N = 1.158



Respondents from other countries
N = 832

