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# Social acceptance of bioenergy: lessons learned from Austria, Bulgaria, Italy & Sweden

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## Why to engage citizens in R&I policy design?

- ✓ Citizens: non-experts in the thematic focus of the discussions, BUT experts in their own daily life, i.e. carriers of societal concerns and expectations for the future
- ✓ In order to align scientific research with societal values, needs and concerns, and move closer to solving the grand societal challenges, citizens should be involved in the development of R&I programmes and research agenda setting
- ✓ Confirm existing policy R&I agendas
- ✓ Identify new issues of relevance to R&I policy (under the radar)
- ✓ Focus on the societal relevance and social acceptance of new technologies (pre-caution)

### Citizen Panel I

- Visions

### Expert Workshop

- Policy recommendations

### Citizen Panel II

- Validation and prioritization by citizens

## CIVISTI

The Citizen Visions on Science, Technology and Innovation (CIVISTI) is a participatory method for identifying new and emerging issues for European Science & Technology.

# CIVISTI for Bioenergy

The CIVISTI method was adapted to the bioenergy topic and implemented in:

- Austria
- Bulgaria
- Italy
- Sweden (upcoming)

The focus: Sustainability and Social innovation

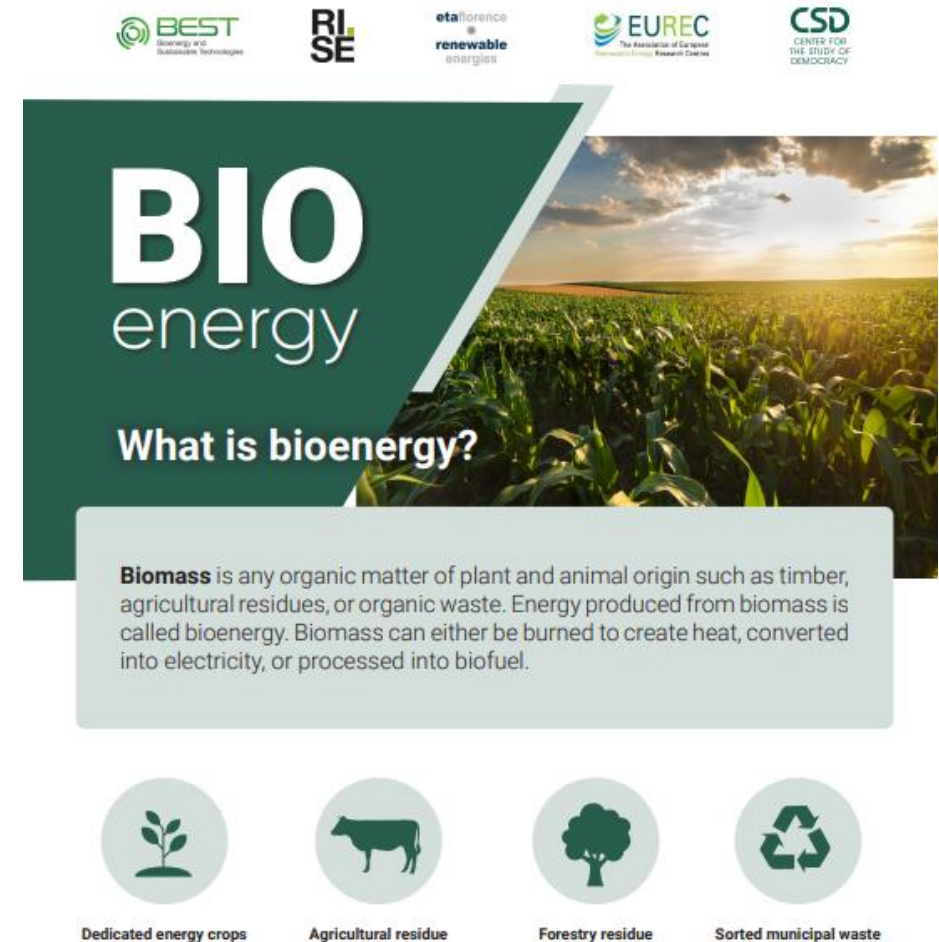
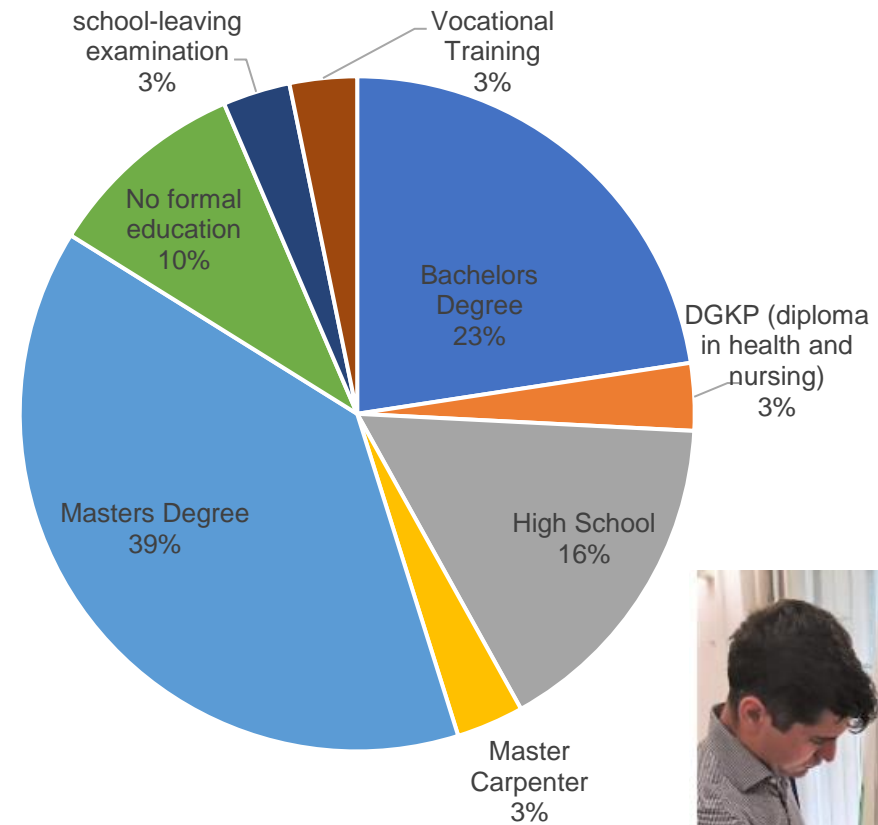


Figure 1. Most common biomass sources.

Biomass feedstock used for bioenergy production can be broadly classified into agricultural crops (e.g., sugar beet, corn, rapeseed), agricultural crop residues (e.g. wheat straw, corn cobs), forestry residues (e.g. tops, branches, bark, sawdust) and sorted municipal waste (organic fraction of municipal waste), see Figure 1. Many different processes can be used to convert these feedstocks into bioenergy in different forms.

## Citizen Panel I

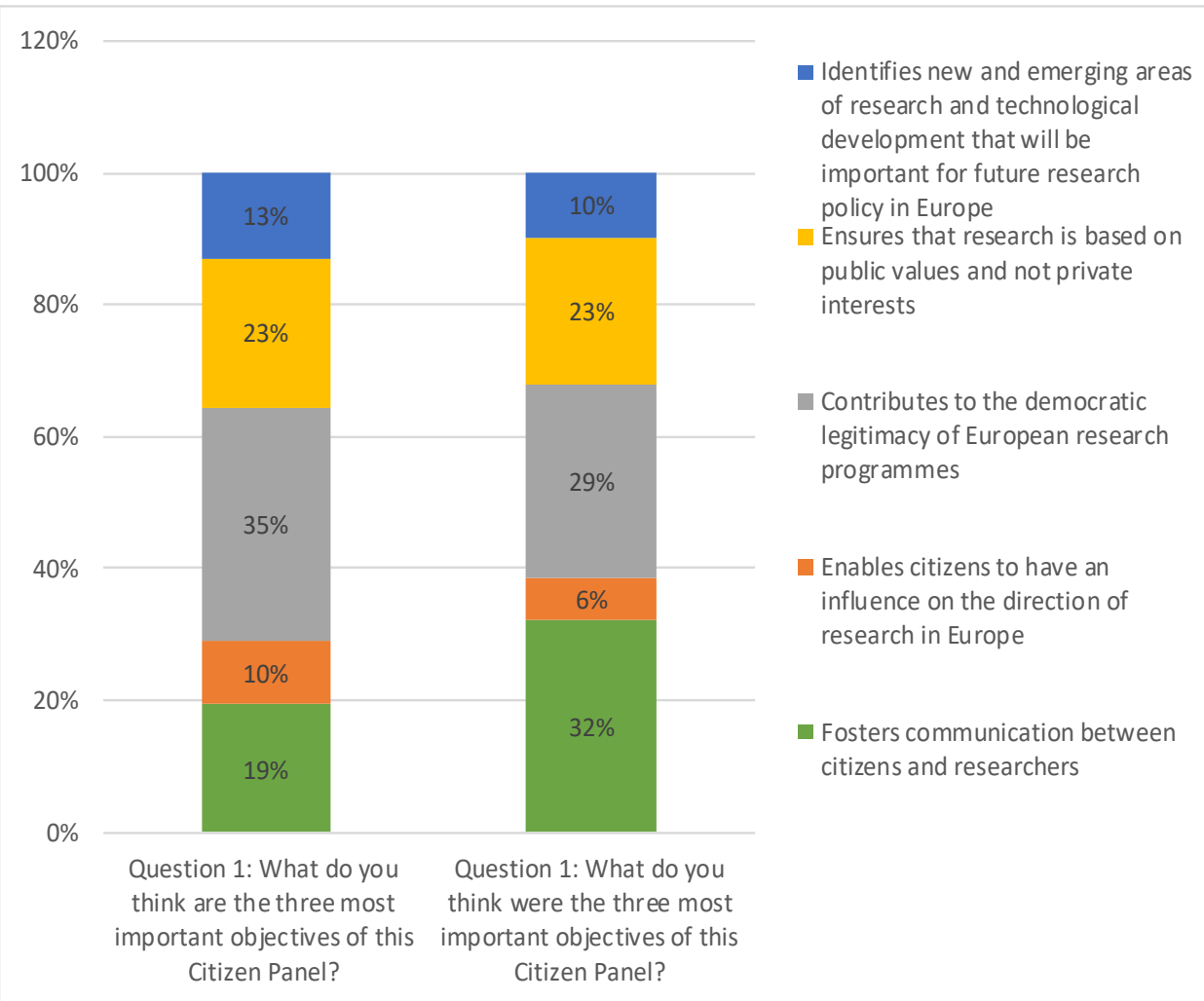
- ✓ Participants were recruited from diverse age, gender and educational backgrounds.
- ✓ In each country, citizens met for a full day workshop where they:
  - Learned about bioenergy
  - Discussed how it was used in the past and today
  - How it can be used in 2050, their hopes and concerns related to the future.
- ✓ Produced *visions*



## What is a Vision?

- ✓ An imagination of a desirable future
- ✓ It is feasible – possible to imagine and to realise
- ✓ Articulated in present time
- ✓ Simple, short, positive statements



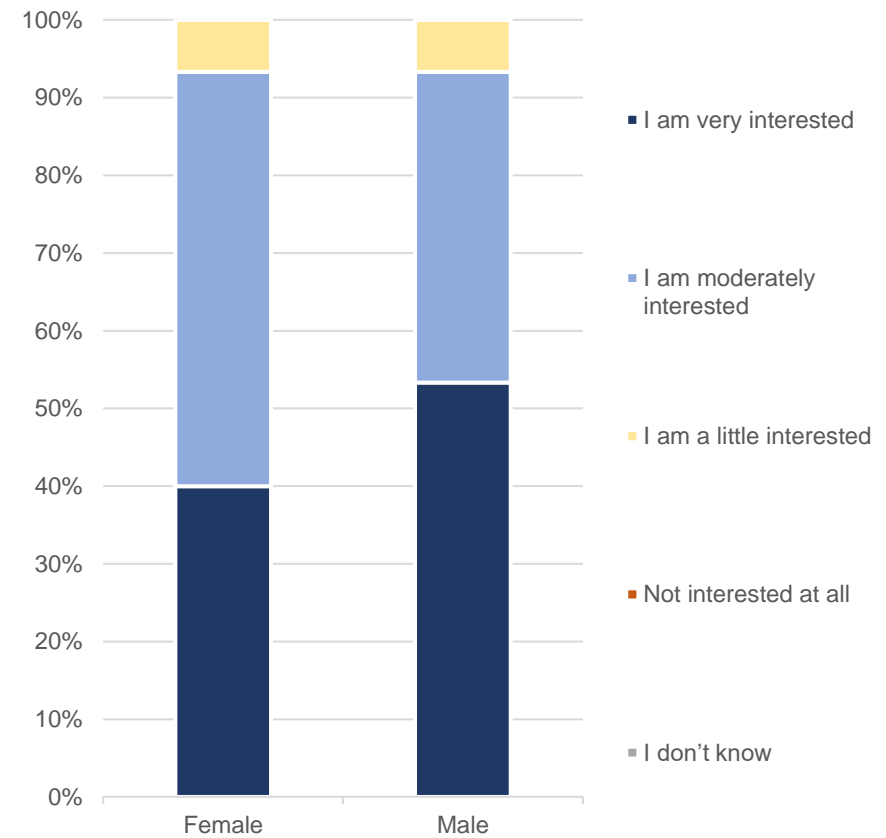
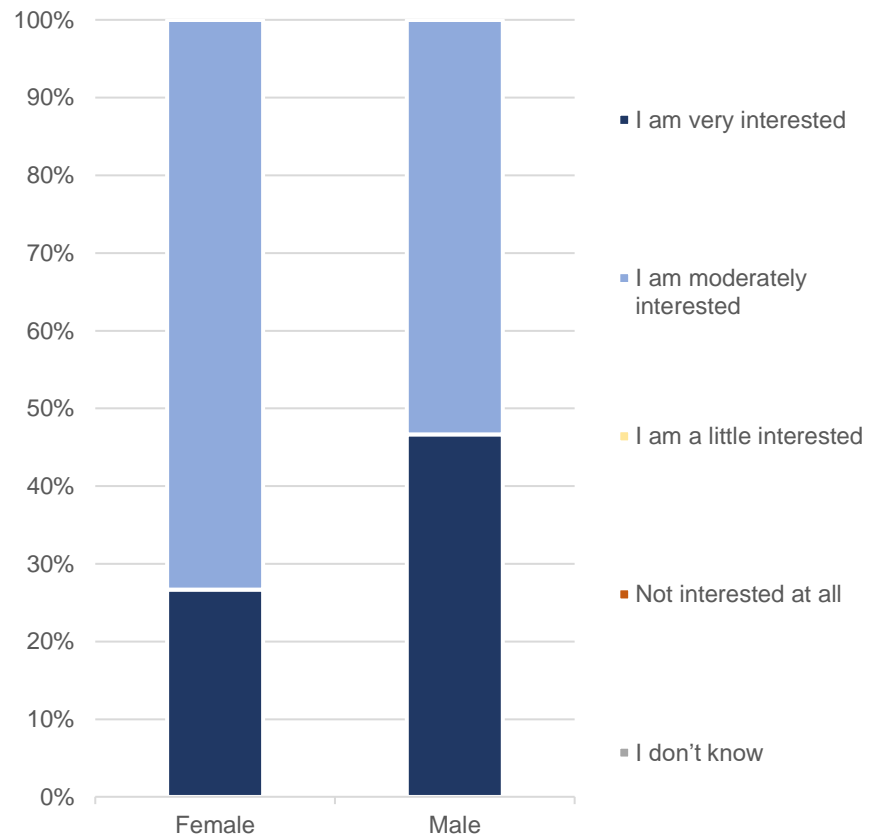


## Results

- Improvement to the democratic legitimacy of EU research programs is the most popular initial answer.
- Fostering communication between citizens and researchers gained top popularity at the end of the panel, with most switching in answers coming from male participants.

**The most important objectives of this Citizen Panel**

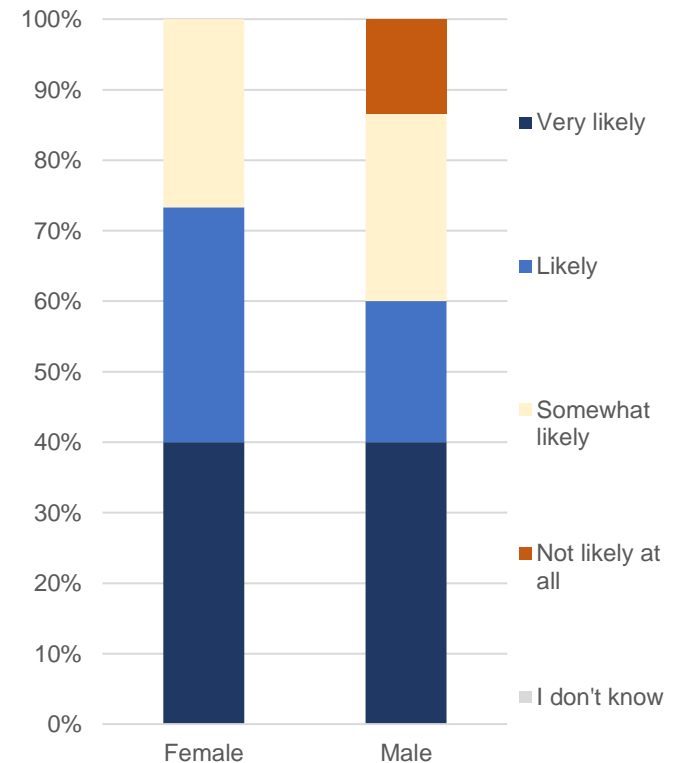
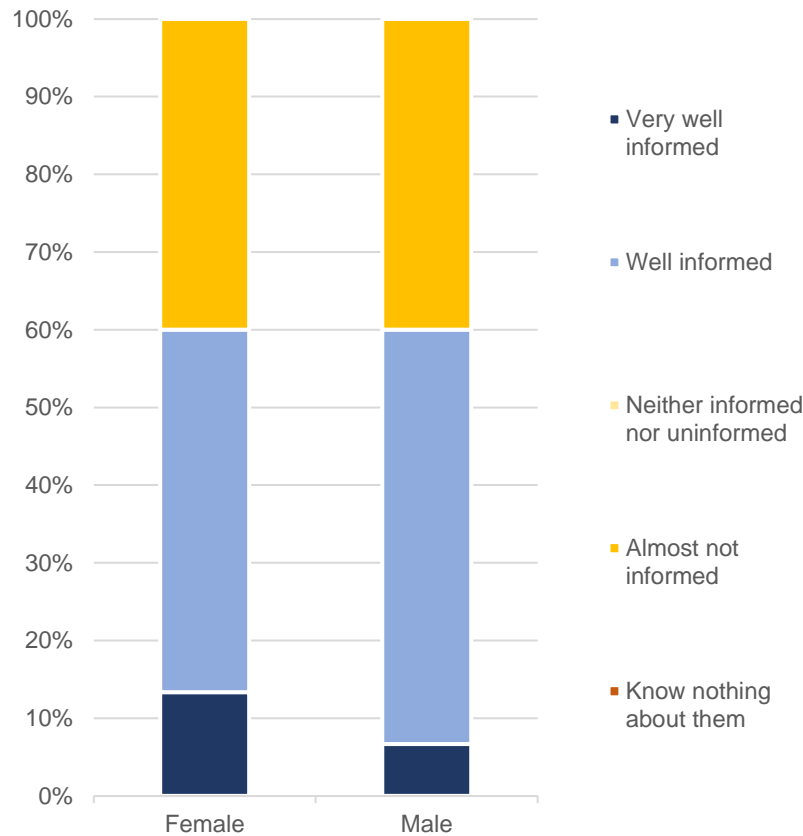
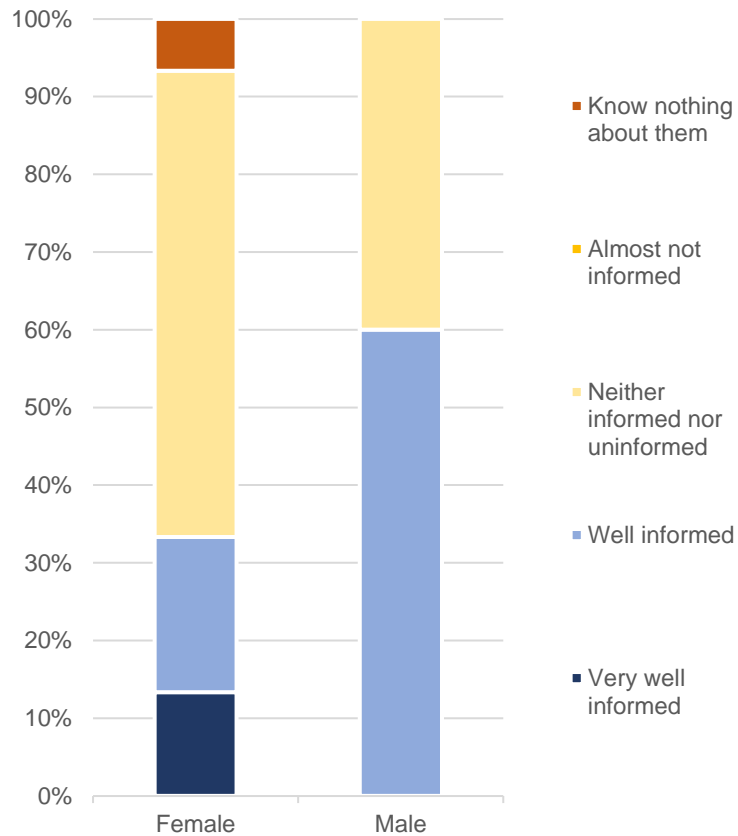
The share of citizens that report being very interested increased after the end of the panel



In general, how interested are you in bioenergy?



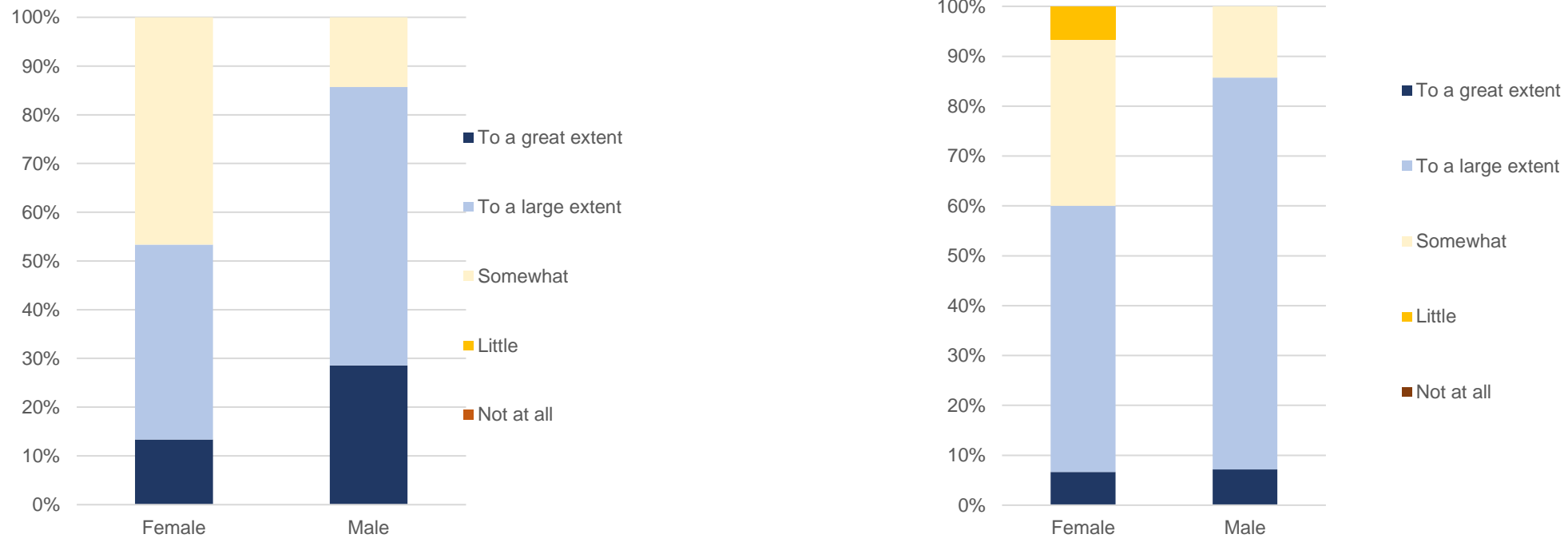
The share of citizens that report being well informed increased drastically after the end of the panel, mostly among female participants



In your opinion, how informed are you about bioenergy and its potential developments that address important societal challenges?

In your opinion, how likely are you stay informed about topics related to bioenergy?

The level of trust in bioenergy as sustainable increased moderately, leading to a smaller share of respondents agreeing “somewhat” with this statement.



To what extent do you think bioenergy as a whole can be considered “sustainable” (ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being)?

## What's Next

- **Expert Panels** – multidisciplinary expert group responsible for translating the citizen visions into policies (today and in November – online)
  - **Policy recommendations**
- **Citizen Panel II** – Q1 2024
  - **Validation and prioritization of the policy recommendations**



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