



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory

Disinformation Narratives in Poland

CEDMO Special Brief

July 2023



Published August 18, 2023

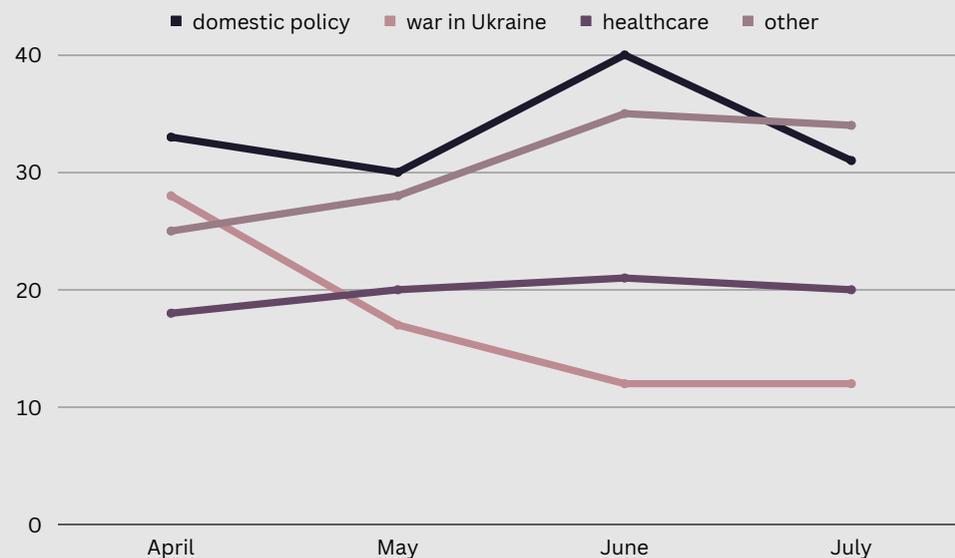
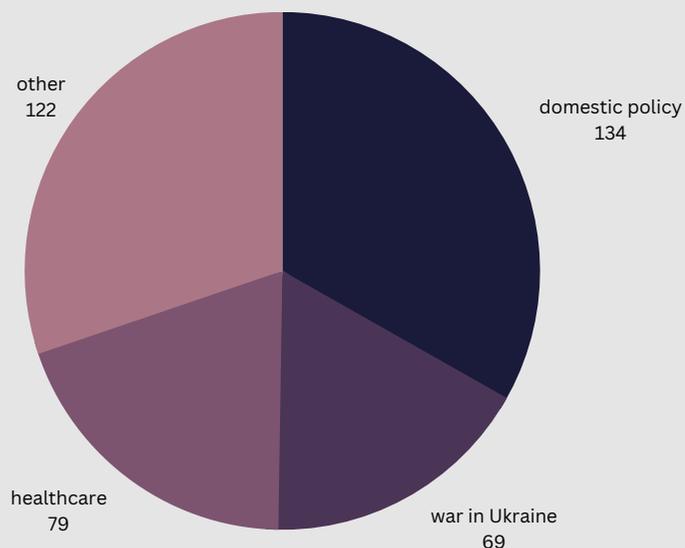
Trends in Disinformation Narratives

Main trends and disinformation narratives in April–July 2023

In the second quarter of 2023 and continuing into July, misinformation content related to the war in Ukraine, which had previously dominated social media in Poland, decreased in frequency. Domestic political topics came to the forefront before the fall elections. During this time period, CEDMO fact-checking organizations published 404 Polish fact-checks, out of which 69 concerned either the situation in Ukraine or domestic events related to Ukraine. 134 pertained to the domestic policy of Poland. In 79 articles, fact-checkers focused on healthcare-related topics.

Fact-check topics frequency

April–July 2023



Note: Some fact-checks concerned multiple topics.

Main Narratives in Poland in July

Politics

European Union wants to force the Polish government to accept migrants

Politicians from the ruling party are presenting the position of the Council of the European Union on the migrant relocation mechanism as an attempt to force Poland to accept newcomers from Africa and the Middle East. In doing so, they accuse EU institutions of taking deliberate steps to prevent Poland from vetoing the proposed mechanism. The narrative targets not only the EU, but also the migrants themselves. The politicians cite information on the number of people of foreign origin in countries open to foreigners, the low level of employment among these people, and crime rates in these countries.



Polish government fails to control migration from Muslim countries

On July 4, the chairman of the largest opposition party Donald Tusk posted a video on Twitter in which he presents data on work permits granted to foreigners. The data suggests that the scale of migration to Poland, particularly of people from Muslim countries, has increased significantly under the United Right government. While the number of work permits alone does not reflect the scale of migration well, the narrative of the loss of control over migration has been picked up by other opposition politicians. In doing so, they have repeatedly used false information (1, 2, 3, 4). This narrative is the opposition parties' response to the ruling party's narrative described above.



Ruling party uses power to influence election results

In early August, President Andrzej Duda set October 15 as the date of the parliamentary elections, marking the beginning of the election campaign period. Even long before this event, Polish politicians began to express their concerns about the campaign and voting. Opposition politicians have claimed that the ruling party is using state budget funds to gain votes and has introduced changes to the law that make the electoral process more partisan. Among the numerous statements, there were claims that there is no institution in Poland to control campaign spending and that the rules for nominating candidates to election commissions have been changed, which turned out to be untrue.



Main Narratives in Poland in July

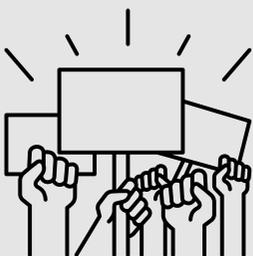
HPV vaccination program

After the announcement of a free and universal human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination program targeting teenagers aged 12 and 13, a large amount of false information about the vaccination appeared online. Various individuals and organizations have published false information on social media. The Organization of Independent Doctors and Scientists (PSNLI), which had already published false information on COVID-19, published a "recommendation" stating that the information provided by the Polish Ministry of Health is against scientific knowledge. This turned out to be a false statement. Private users also published posts about the vaccine's ineffectiveness, about mandatory vaccination, or about lack of proof of the vaccine's effectiveness. One of the claims stated that the vaccination is supposed to be mandatory, which is not true—participation in the program is voluntary.



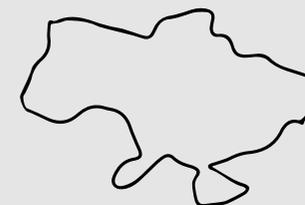
France protests

The topic of French protests following the death of 17-year-old Nahel, who was shot by a police officer during an intervention in Nanterre, was also present in the Polish infosphere. Messages about the release of animals from the Paris Zoo were leaked on social media. These messages were false, and the videos and photos posted as proof were misused (they came from earlier years and from different countries around the world). As in many other countries, a video of a burning building was shown in the media and presented as a library fire in Marseille. However, it was revealed that the video originated in the Philippines in May 2023, when a historical post office burned down. Footage of cars falling from a multi-story parking lot also appeared online. Internet users linked it to the protests, seeking to illustrate the critical situation in France. As it turned out, it was a scene from the movie "Fast and Furious" and had nothing to do with the protests in France.



NATO responsible for the war in Ukraine

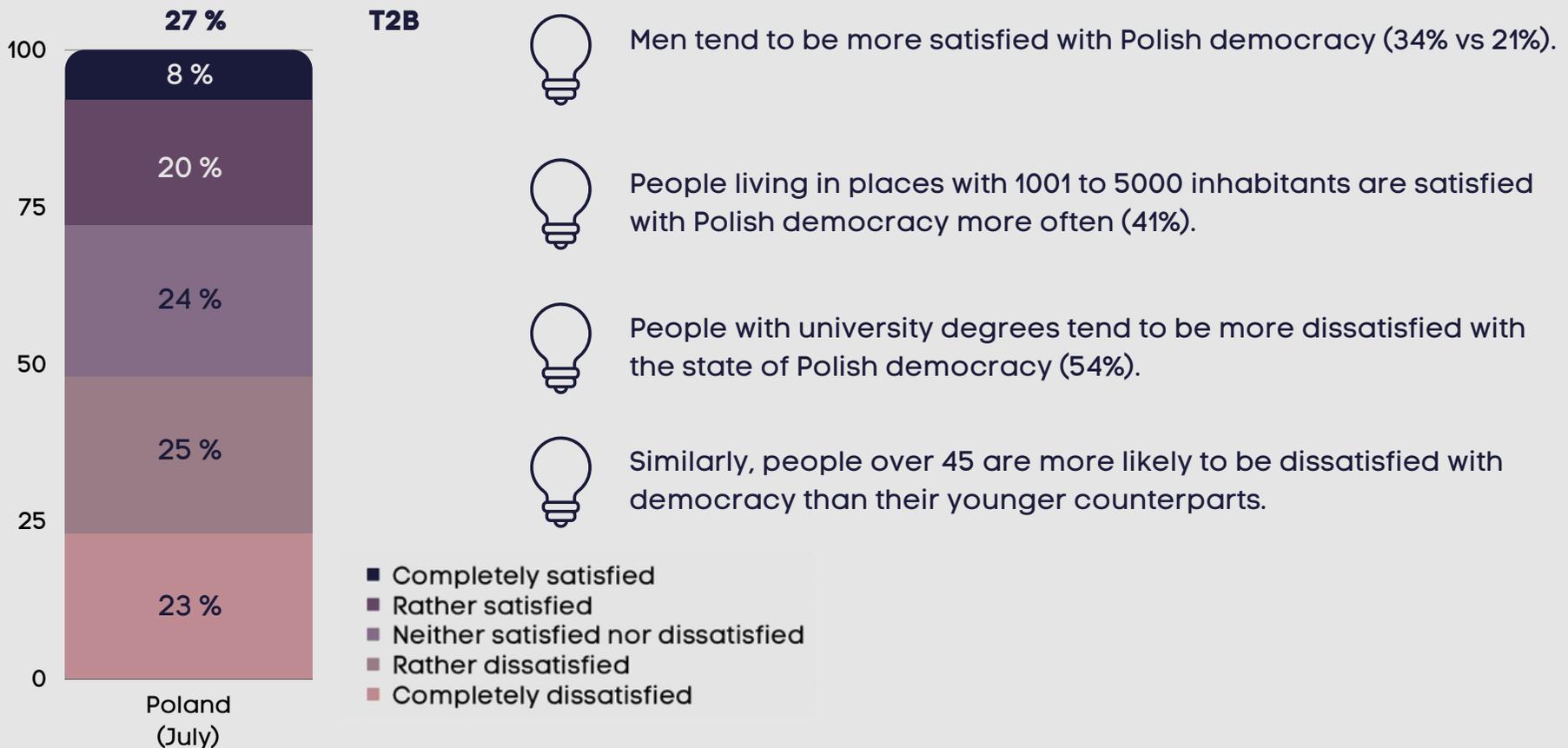
The topic of the war in Ukraine is still present and a lot of false information is spread about it. One frequent narrative is about NATO and its influence on or triggering of the war in Ukraine. Some users online believe NATO intended to provoke the war, as it is supposedly an "offensive" alliance and was supposed to attack Russia by starting a war in Ukraine. Other social media posts included a video of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. reproducing false narratives about the war in Ukraine (e.g. NATO is provoking Russia because it made a promise not to expand its borders eastward). One of the claims appearing in the recording also blames the war in Ukraine on hidden motives of the USA, which is allegedly responsible for the war.



Satisfaction with Democracy

Only a quarter of Poles are satisfied with the functioning of democracy in Poland. The average person satisfied with the state of democracy is a middle-aged man without a university degree, living in a less populated area.

Question: How satisfied are you with the functioning of democracy in Poland?



Note: T2B = sum of the responses 'Completely satisfied' and 'Rather satisfied'.

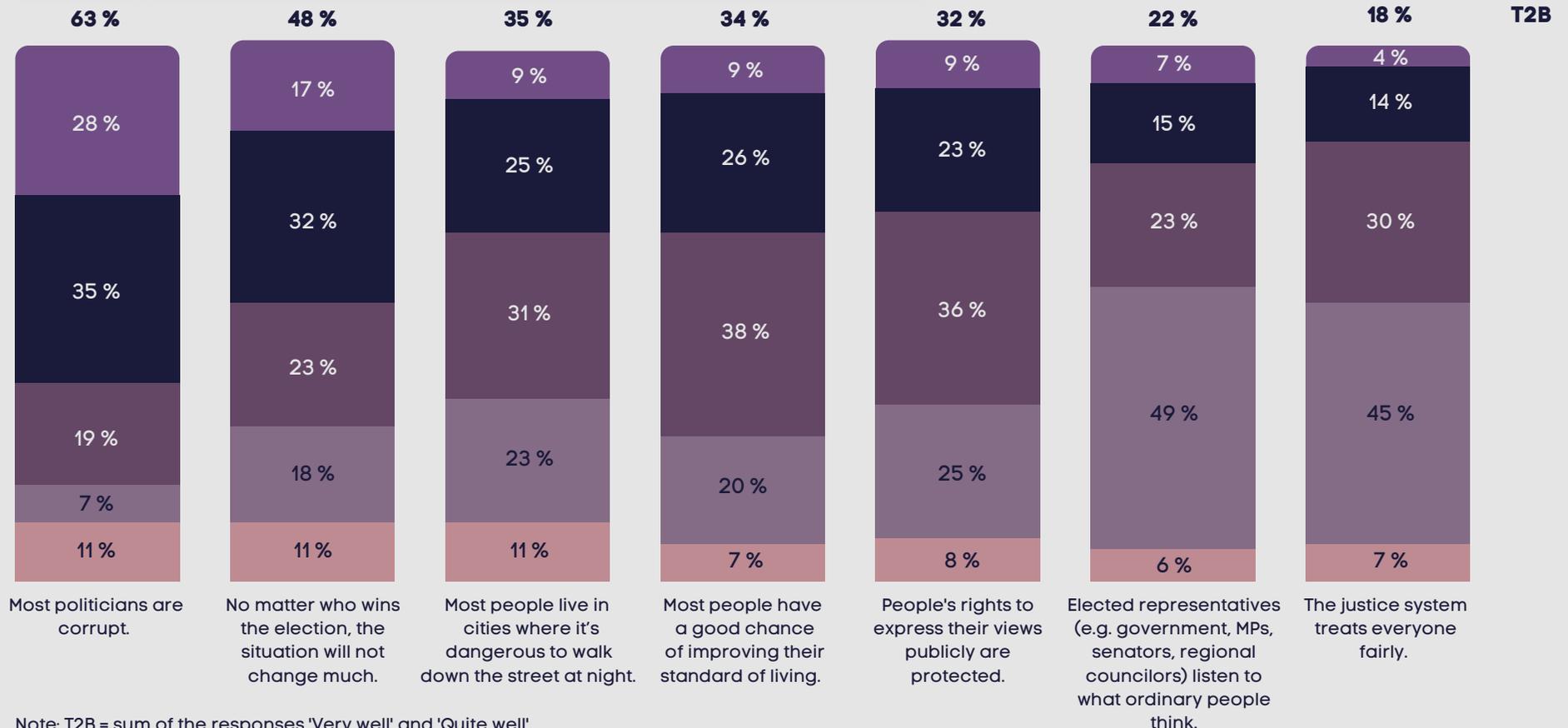
Base: PL n = 1001

Description of Poland by its own inhabitants

Polish people are most often inclined to say that most politicians are corrupt. About half of the Polish population thinks that no matter who wins the elections, the situation will not change much.

Question: To what extent do you think the following statements describe the situation in Poland?

■ I don't know (No answer) ■ Not at all ■ Poorly ■ Quite well ■ Very well

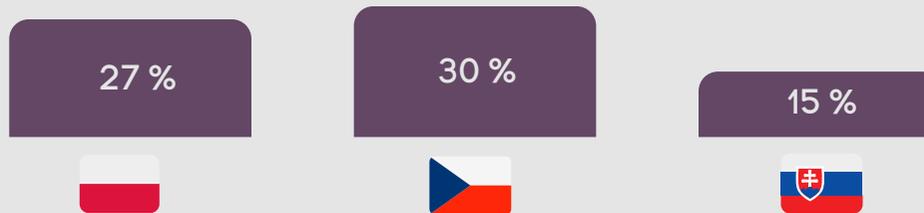


Note: T2B = sum of the responses 'Very well' and 'Quite well'.

Base: PL n = 1001

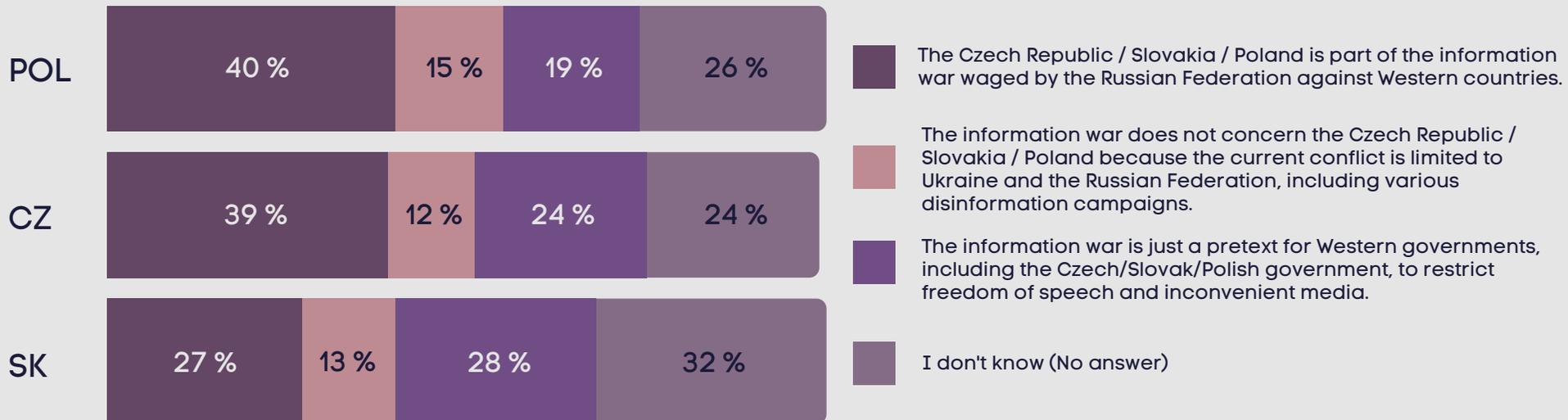
Poland, Czechia and Slovakia in Comparison I

Satisfaction with Democracy



Values in T2B

Information Warfare

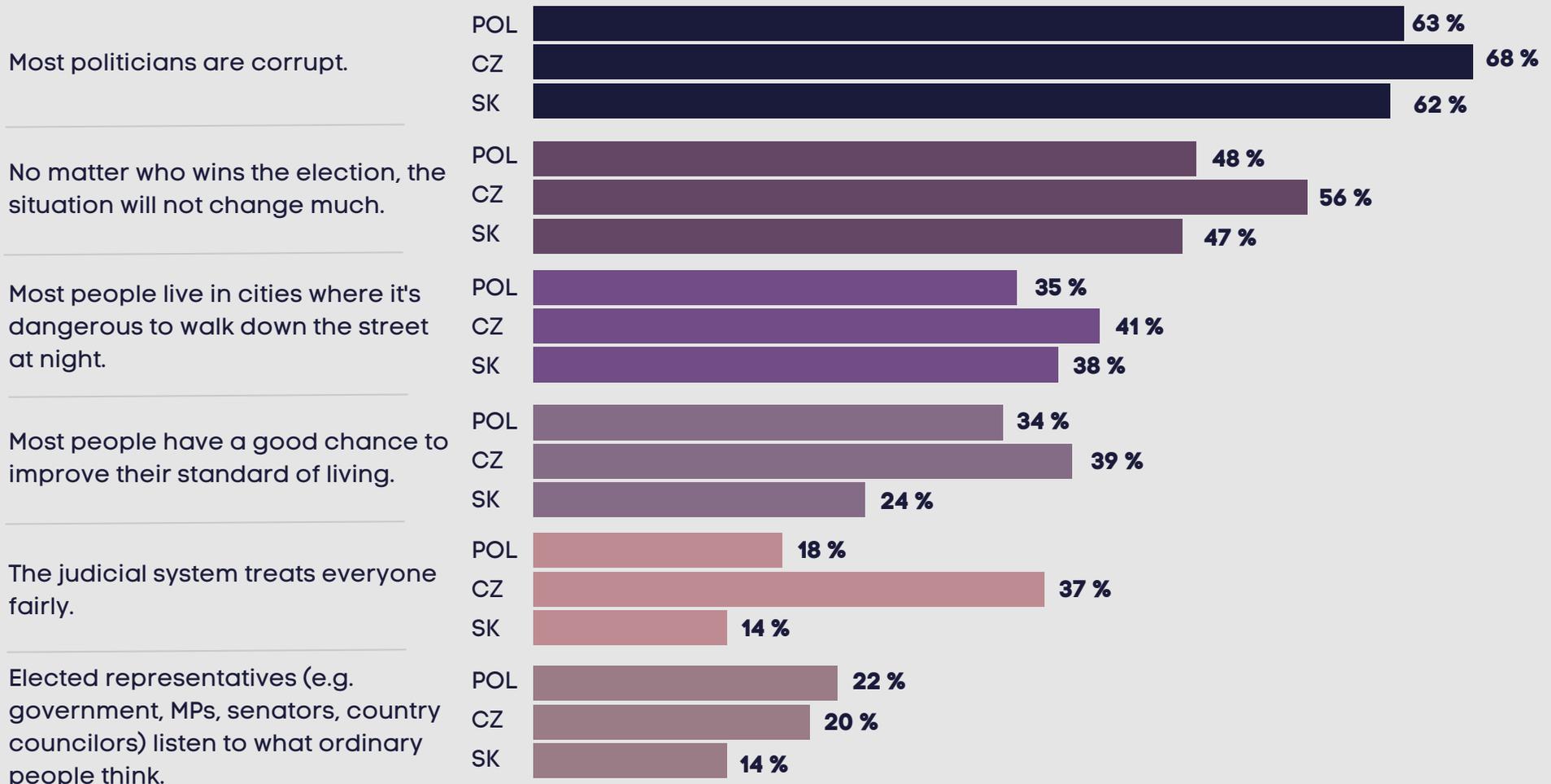


T2B = sum of the two highest/most positive responses (e.g. fully agree + somewhat agree)

Base: PL n = 1001, CZ n = 1061, SK n = 1005

Poland, Czechia and Slovakia in Comparison II

Description of Home Country



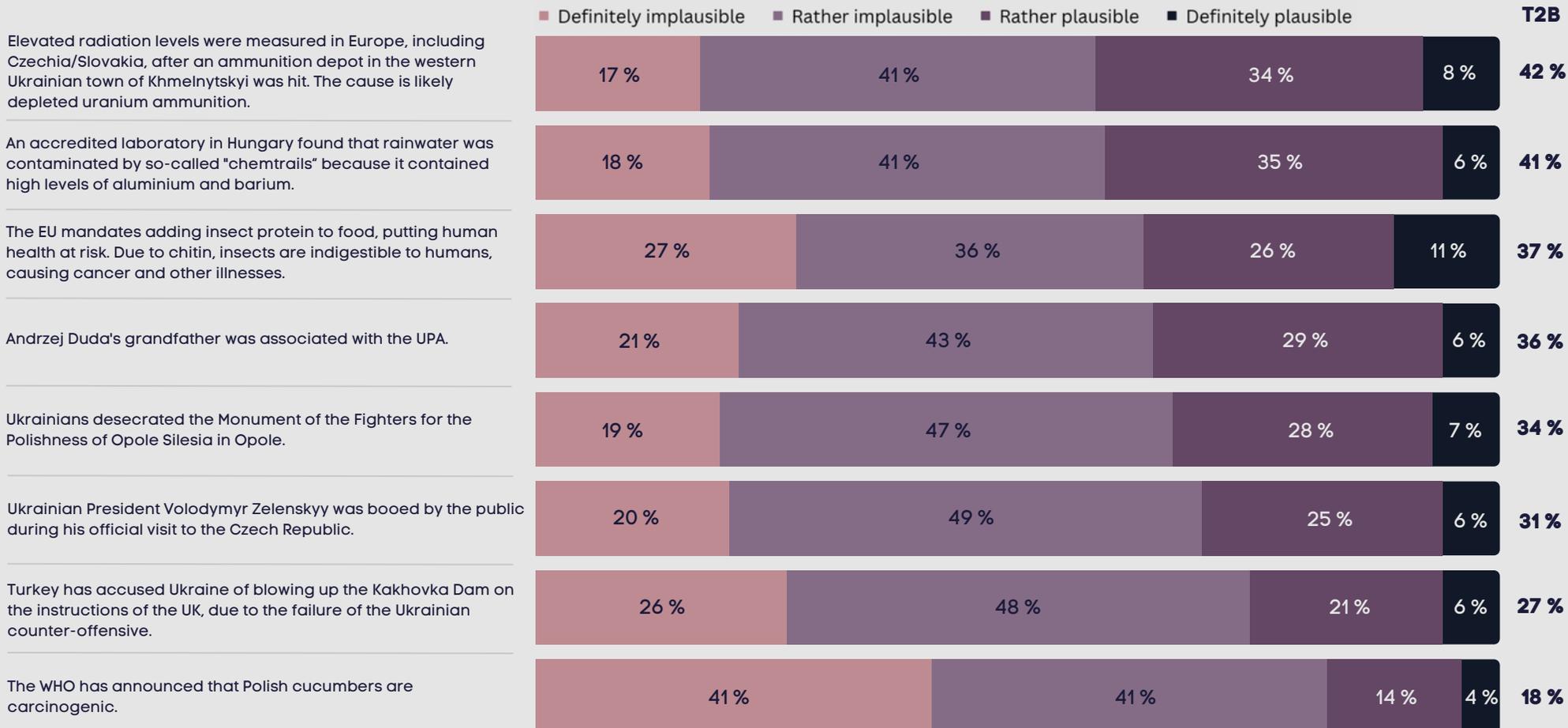
Values in T2B

T2B = sum of the two highest/most positive responses (e.g. fully agree + somewhat agree)

The Plausibility of Disinformation

42% of Poles consider the news about the attack on the ammunition depot in Ukraine and the accredited laboratory in Hungary to be the most plausible. Poles are more inclined to believe news about the war in Ukraine if the informations favours Ukraine.

Question: To what extent do you consider the following reports to be implausible or, on the contrary, plausible?



Note: T2B = a sum of the responses 'Definitely plausible' and 'Rather Plausible'

Base: PL n = 1001

Research Method

Sample size	1001 Polish respondents 1061 Czech respondents 1005 Slovak respondents
Survey date	July 17–25, 2023
Survey method	CASI method using the online panel Ipsos Interactive Services Poland structured questionnaire of up to 10 minutes
Representativity	representative sample of the Polish population over 18 years of age (quota selection by gender, age, region)
Contracted and carried out by	survey conducted by Ipsos (member of SAVA and SIMAR) exclusively for the Charles University – CEDMO

This publication summarizes the work of selected CEDMO fact-checking organizations (AFP, Demagog.org.pl) in April-July 2023.

The URLs of all fact-checks referenced in this publication can be found HERE.

Responsibility for the fact-checking content of this publication lies with Demagog.cz, contact person:

Petr Gongala, e-mail: petr.gongala@demagog.cz.

Responsibility for the research content of this publication lies with Charles University, contact person:

Václav Moravec, e-mail: vaclav.moravec@fsv.cuni.cz

CEDMO contact person: Anja Grabovac, e-mail: anja.grabovac@fsv.cuni.cz



Uniwersytet
SWPS

This publication is supported by 