



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory

Disinformation Narratives in Slovakia

CEDMO Special Brief

September 2023



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Trends in Disinformation Narratives

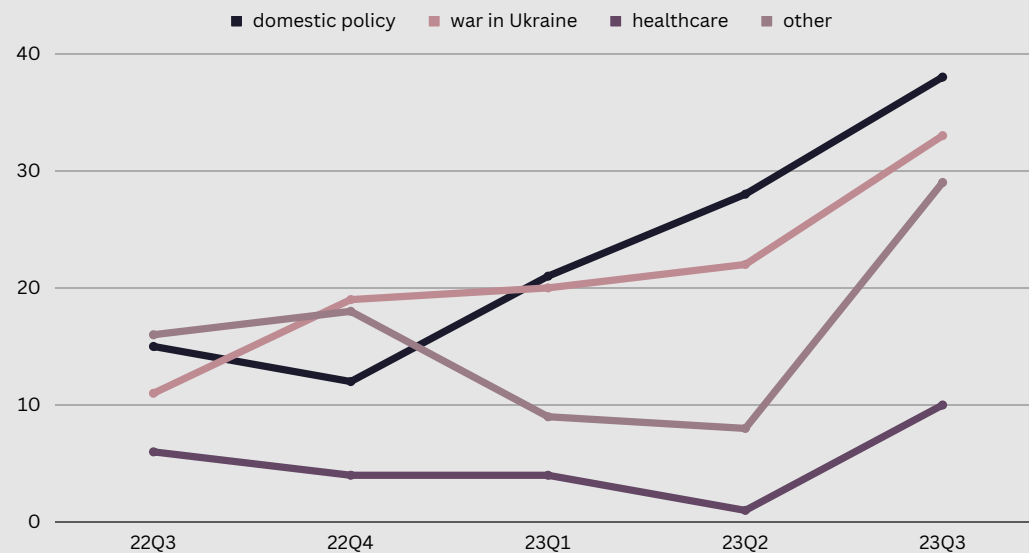
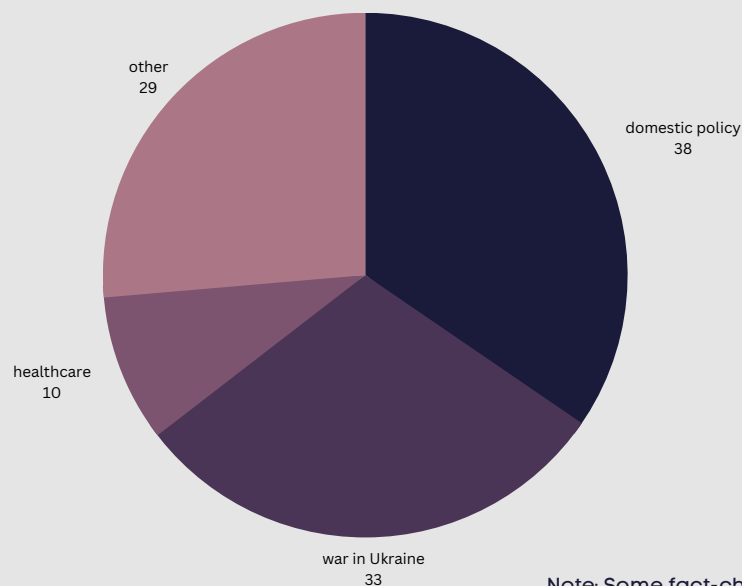
Main trends and disinformation narratives in Q3 2023

In August, but mainly in September 2023, Slovak online spaces were dominated by the topic of the upcoming parliamentary elections. However, the long-term topic of the war in Ukraine was still present, especially in connection to the election campaign.

In Q3 2023, CEDMO fact-checking organizations published 110 Slovak fact-checks, out of which 33 concerned either the situation in Ukraine or domestic events related to Ukraine. As many as 38 texts pertained to the domestic policy of Slovakia. In 10 articles, fact-checkers focused on healthcare.

Fact-check topics frequency

Q3 2023



Note: Some fact-checks concerned multiple topics.

Main Narratives in Slovakia

Attacks on Zelenskyy

CEDMO fact-checkers also dealt with posts regarding Ukraine, specifically President Zelenskyy. The Slovak website Zem a Vek (Earth and Age) falsely claimed that Zelenskyy had cancelled the elections in Ukraine by extending the state of emergency. However, [Infosecurity.sk](#) explains that the Ukrainian constitution does not allow elections to take place during martial law. President Zelenskyy therefore cannot choose to cancel them. Another post also attacked President Zelenskyy. A poster criticising the president allegedly appeared in New York, having been commissioned by the Republican Party. However, the party has denied requesting such a poster and an [AFP](#) analysis has proven it to be fabricated.



Hawaii fires

Due to widespread fires in Hawaii, many unsubstantiated claims and conspiracy theories about their cause circulated on social media. Fact-checking organizations [Infosecurity.sk](#) and [AFP](#) examined theories that the fires were caused by laser weapons, the HAARP project, or that they were caused by the rich and the elites. For example, these conspiracy theories claimed that the fires were set to make space for rebuilding the island as a so-called smart 15-minute city.

However, experts have pointed out that the fires were more likely caused by a combination of drought, strong winds, fallen electrical lines and other natural and human factors.

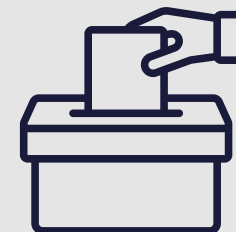
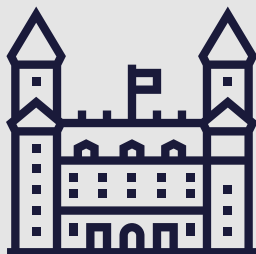
Main Narratives in Slovakia

Politics

Unsubstantiated warnings of election rigging

CEDMO fact-checking organizations have also examined the doubts cast over the conduct of the Slovak elections.

Some posts claimed that the 2003 referendum on joining the EU or the recent communal elections were also rigged. Miroslav Heredoš, but previously also Robert Kaliňák, repeated the 20-year-old speculations of Ivan Gašparovič concerning the alleged rigging of the referendum voter turnout. Some Facebook posts also pointed out the alleged participation of ESET, a Slovak cybersecurity company, in election fraud. As Demagog.sk pointed out in its analyses, these speculations are unproven and the claims of ESET participating in election fraud have been refuted in court.



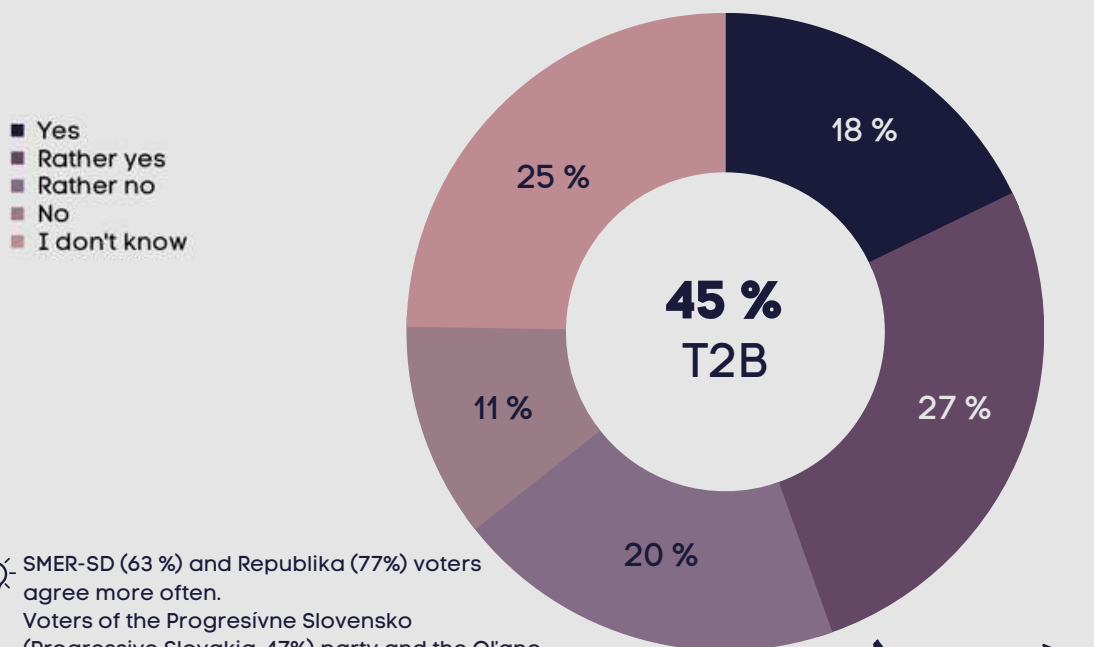
On the streets of Bratislava

As part of the election campaign in Slovakia, multiple viral social media posts described what can be seen on the streets of Bratislava. In its fact-check, the AFP discusses an election poster that allegedly appeared in the capital. The poster shows SMER-SD chairman Robert Fico and the demand to stop arming the Kyiv regime. It is, however, not real—the photo of the billboard was taken in Kyiv and the picture of Robert Fico is from his recent interview. Emotions were also stirred by a viral video showing alleged American soldiers in Bratislava. However, Demagog.sk explains the footage shows Italian soldiers stationed at an air base near Bratislava who have been staying in the city.

Possible Election Meddling in Slovakia: Slovak point of view

45 % of all Slovaks believe the upcoming elections will be influenced by a foreign power. 6 out of 10 people believing that statement think the foreign power will be either the USA or the EU.

Question: Do you believe the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament) will be influenced by a foreign power? Which of the following powers do you believe might meddle in the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament)?



SMER-SD (63 %) and Republika (77%) voters agree more often. Voters of the Progresívne Slovensko (Progressive Slovakia; 47%) party and the OĽaNO a priatel'ia + Kresťanská únia + Za ľudí coalition (OĽaNO and friends, Christian union, For the people; 49 %) disagree more often.

1	USA	63 %
2	EU	62 %
3	Germany	32 %
4	Russia	32 %
5	China	20 %

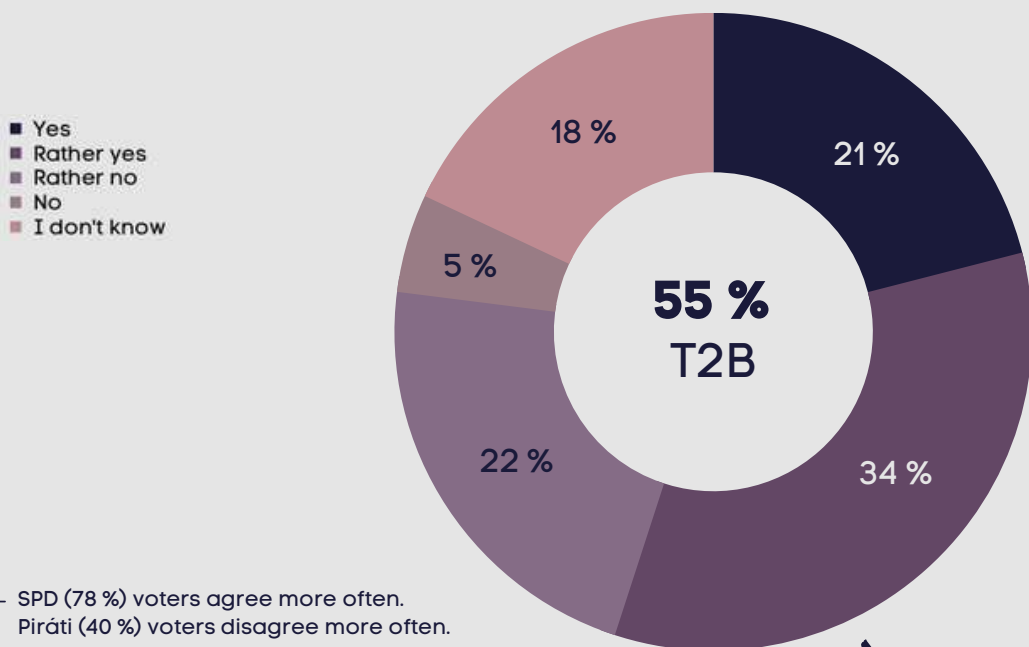
n = 481 (people who believe the election will have foreign influence)

Note: T2B = sum of the "yes" and "rather yes" answers
The chart shows the sum of the answers "1 - Will definitely attempt to influence the upcoming election" and "2",
Base: SK n=1005

Possible Election Meddling in Czechia: Czech point of view

Over half of the Czech population believes the upcoming elections will be influenced by foreign powers. These people frequently think it will be influenced by the EU or USA, China is a less frequent answer.

Question: Do you believe the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament) will be influenced by a foreign power? Which of the following powers do you believe might meddle in the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament)?



💡 SPD (78 %) voters agree more often.
Piráti (40 %) voters disagree more often.

Foreign powers which will attempt election meddling
according to the people who believe the election will have foreign influence

1	EU	64 %
2	USA	57 %
3	Russia	47 %
4	Germany	40 %
5	China	37 %

n = 590 (people who believe the election will have foreign influence)

Note: T2B = sum of the "yes" and "rather yes" answers

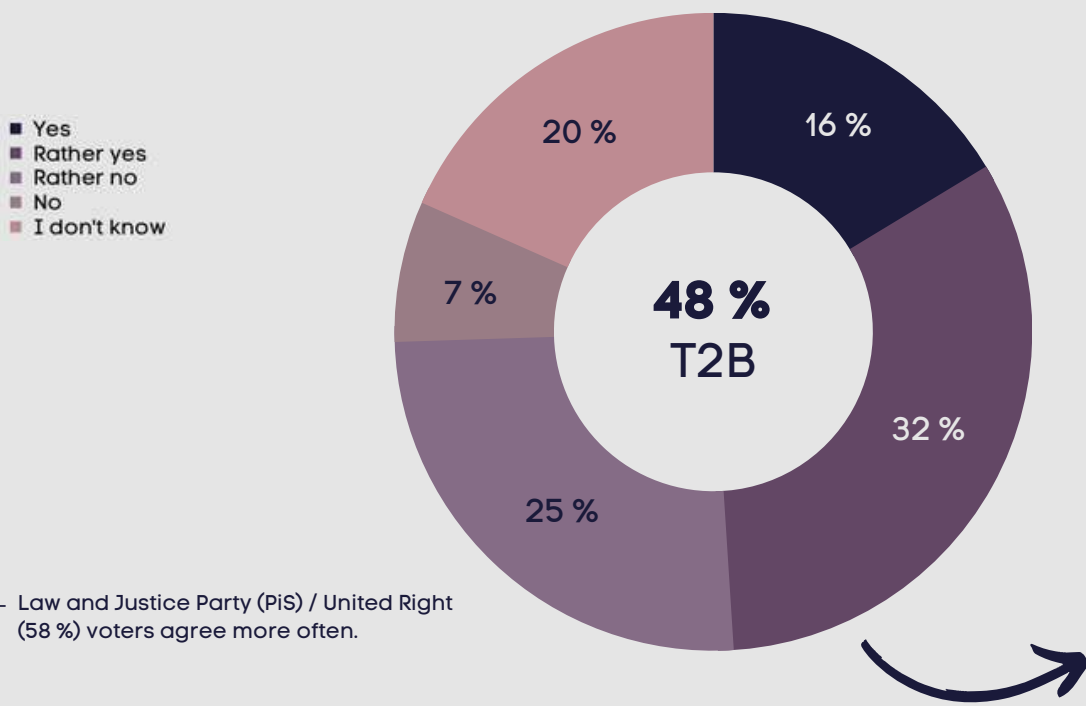
The chart shows the sum of the answers "1 - Will definitely attempt to influence the upcoming election" and "2",

Base: CZ n=1061

Possible Election Meddling in Poland: Polish point of view

Just under 50 % of all Polish people believe the upcoming elections will be meddled with by a foreign power. Specifically, they most frequently believe the power in question will be Russia. 6 out of 10 people who believe the election will be rigged think it will be done by the EU.

Question: Do you believe the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament) will be influenced by a foreign power? Which of the following powers do you believe might meddle in the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament)?



Foreign powers which will attempt election meddling
according to the people who believe the election will have foreign influence

1	Russia	65 %
2	EU	60 %
3	Germany	52 %
4	USA	42 %
5	China	32 %

n = 482 (people who believe the election will have foreign influence)

Note: T2B = sum of the "yes" and "rather yes" answers

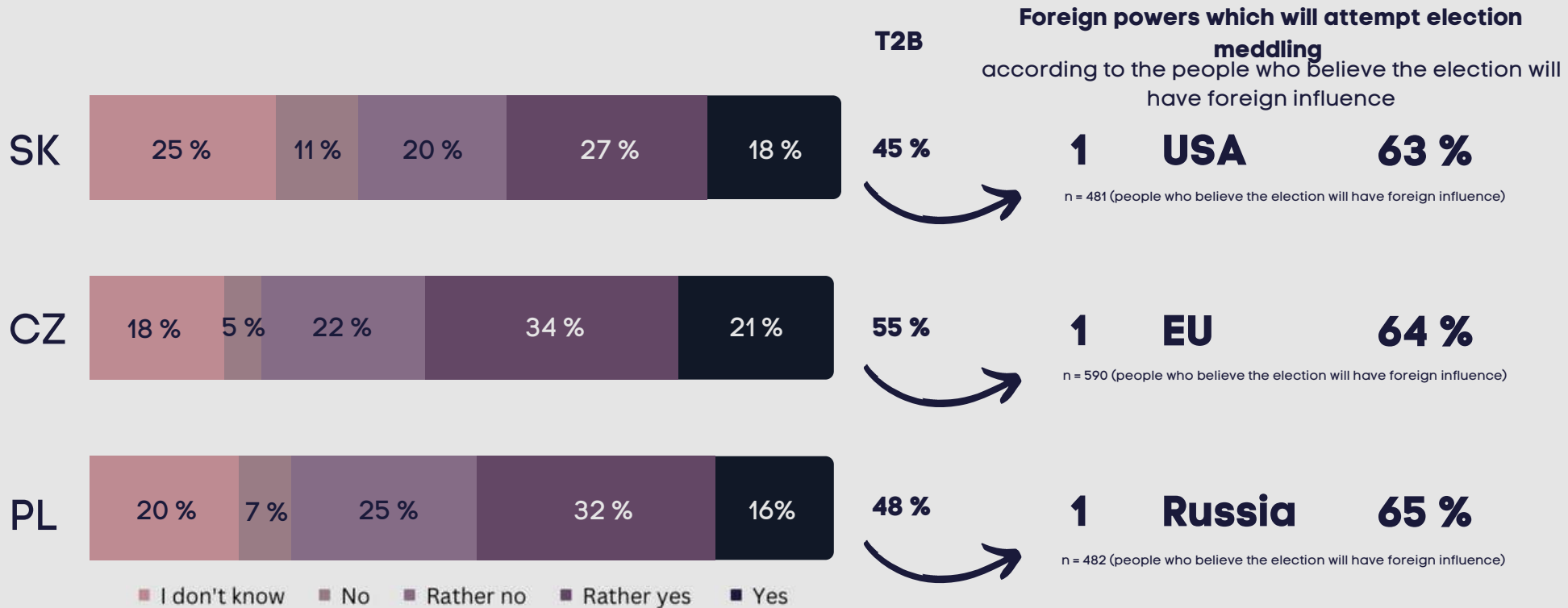
The chart shows the sum of the answers "1 - Will definitely attempt to influence the upcoming election" and "2",

Base: SK n=1001

Election Meddling: A Central-European comparison

It is most frequently believed by Czechs that the election will be meddled with, with the most frequent foreign power mentioned being the EU. About half of the population believes the same in Poland and Slovakia.

Question: Do you believe the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament) will be influenced by a foreign power? Which of the following powers do you believe might meddle in the upcoming election (e.g., for the national or European parliament)?



Note: T2B = sum of the "definitely yes" and "rather yes" answers

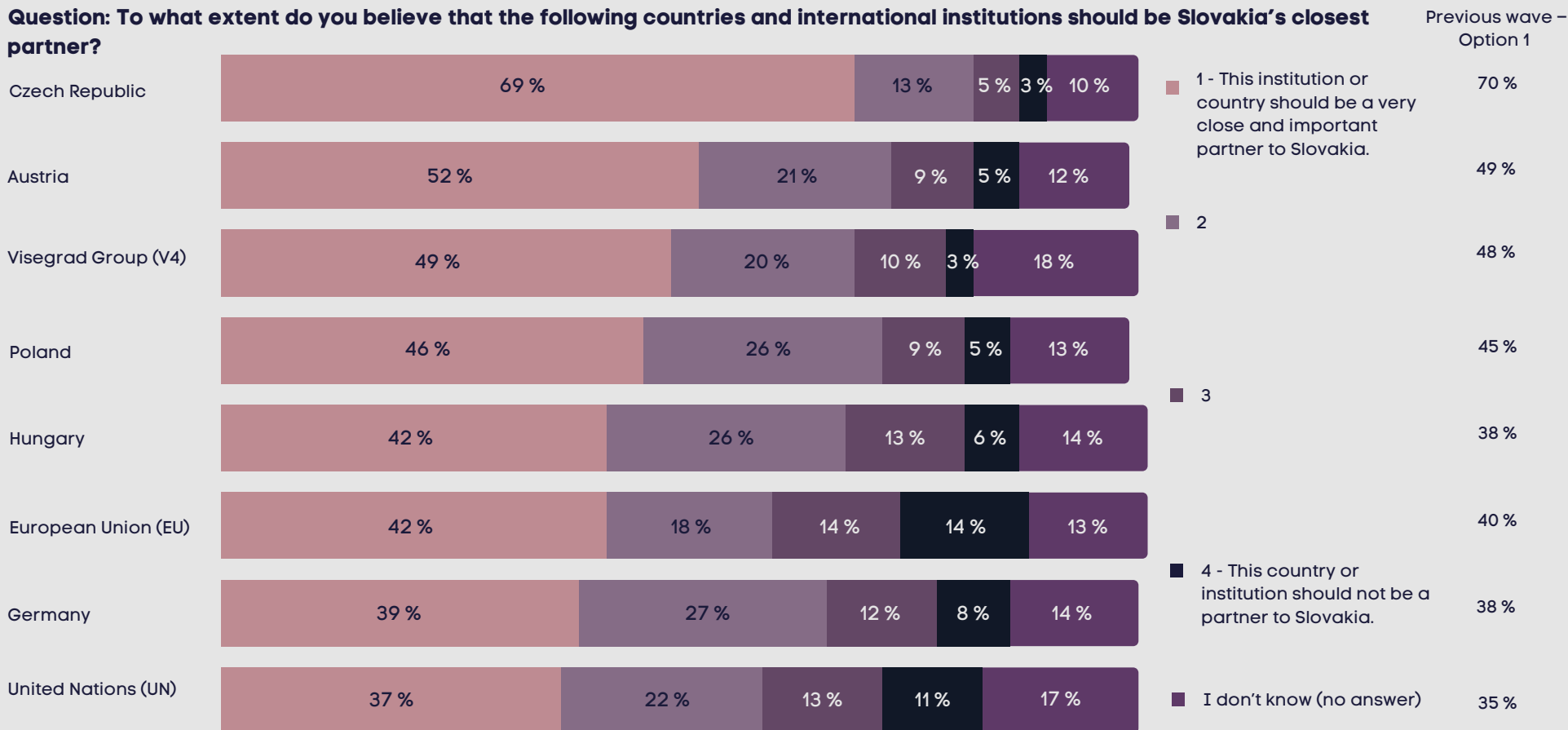
The chart shows the sum of the answers "1 - Will definitely attempt to influence the upcoming election" and "2",

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

Closest Partners: Slovakia I.

The order of the countries and institutions mentioned remains relatively stable. Slovaks still most frequently mention Czechia as the country that should be a very close and important partner to Slovakia. Over half of the population believes Austria should be Slovakia's closest partner. The amount of people who think Hungary should be Slovakia's partner grew by 4%.

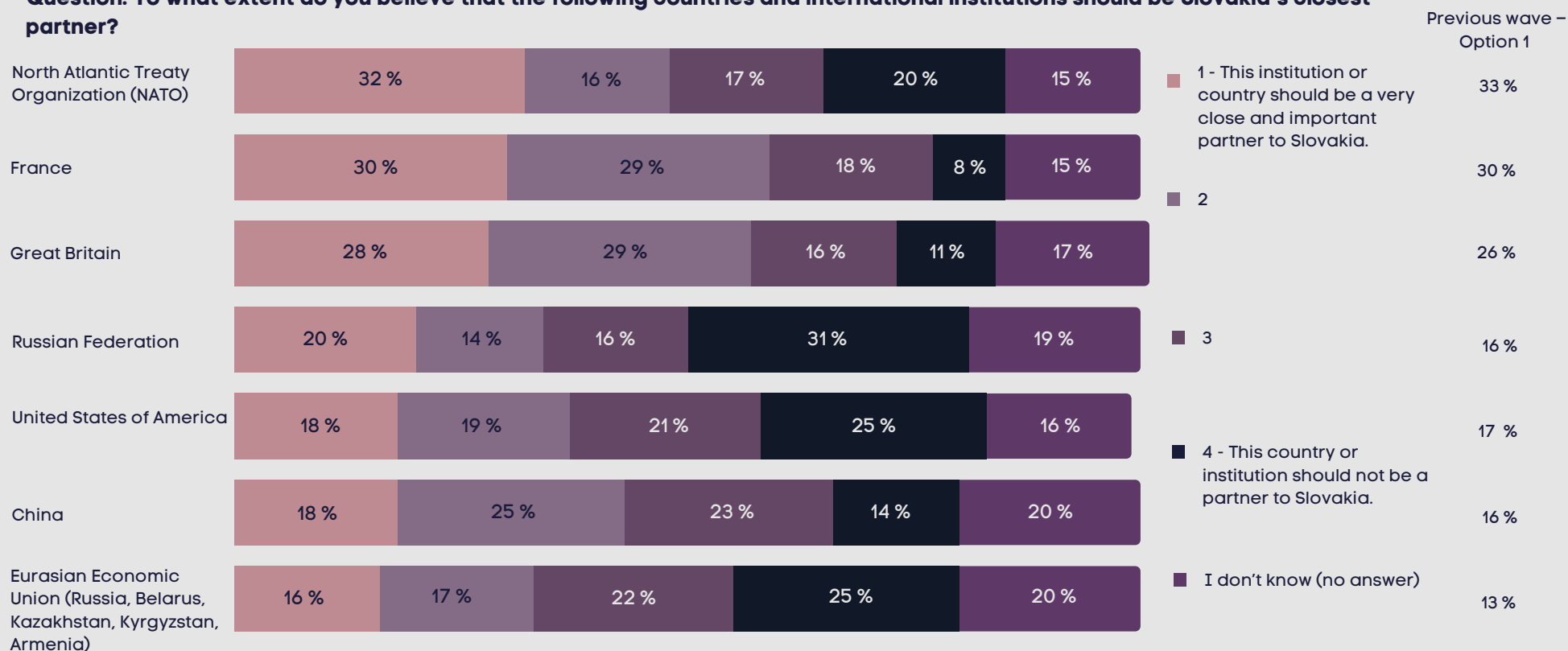
Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Slovakia's closest partner?



Closest Partners: Slovakia II.

The Eurasian Economic Union, China and the United States of America are the least mentioned potential partners of Slovakia. Under half the population believes that the Russian Federation should not be Slovakia's partner. However, the number of people who believe it should grew by 4 % since the last wave.

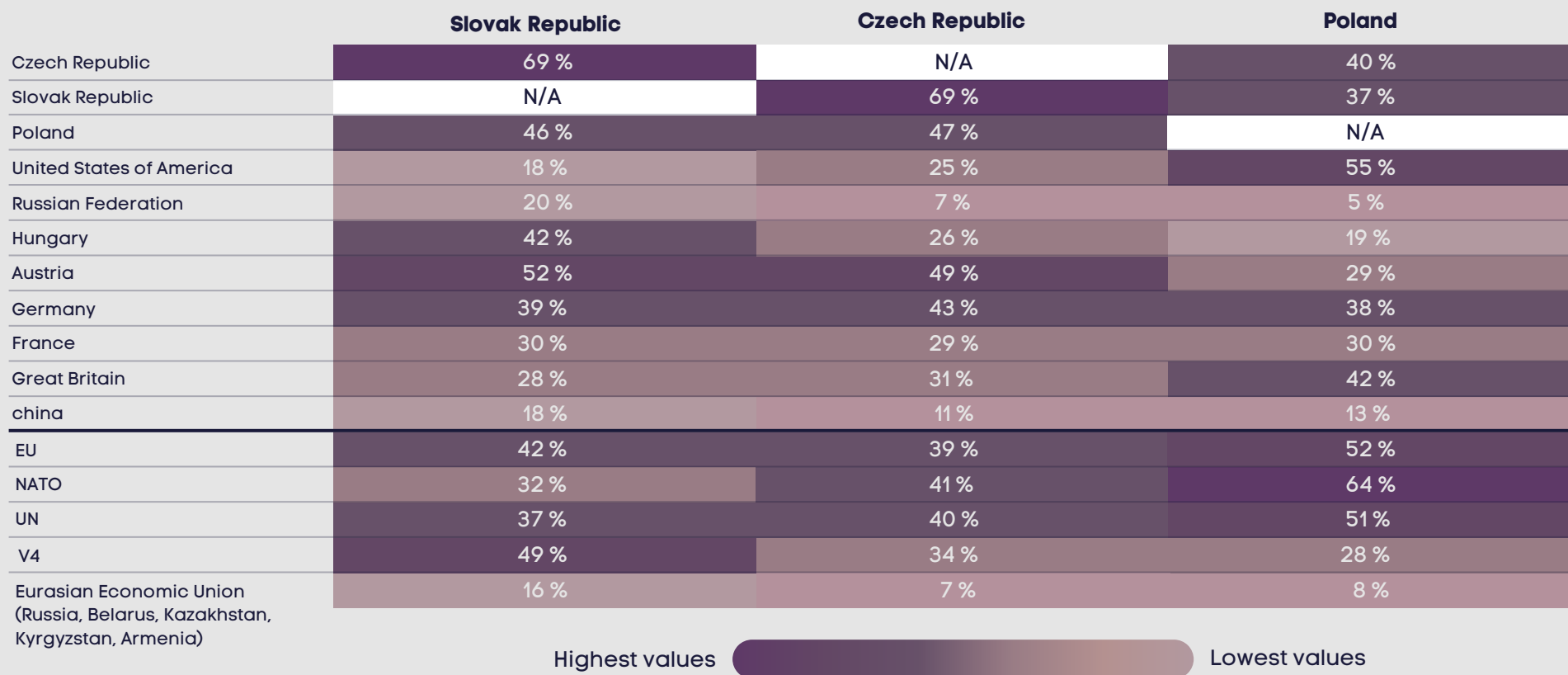
Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Slovakia's closest partner?



Closest Partners: An International Comparison

Throughout all three states, the least preferred countries or institutions are the Russian Federation, the Eurasian Economic Union, and China. Czechs and Slovaks see the most suitable ally in each other, while most Poles would prefer NATO.

Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be the closest partner to the Czech Republic / Slovakia / Poland?



Note: Showing values for the answer "1 - This country or institution should be a very close and important partner to Czechia / Slovakia / Poland"

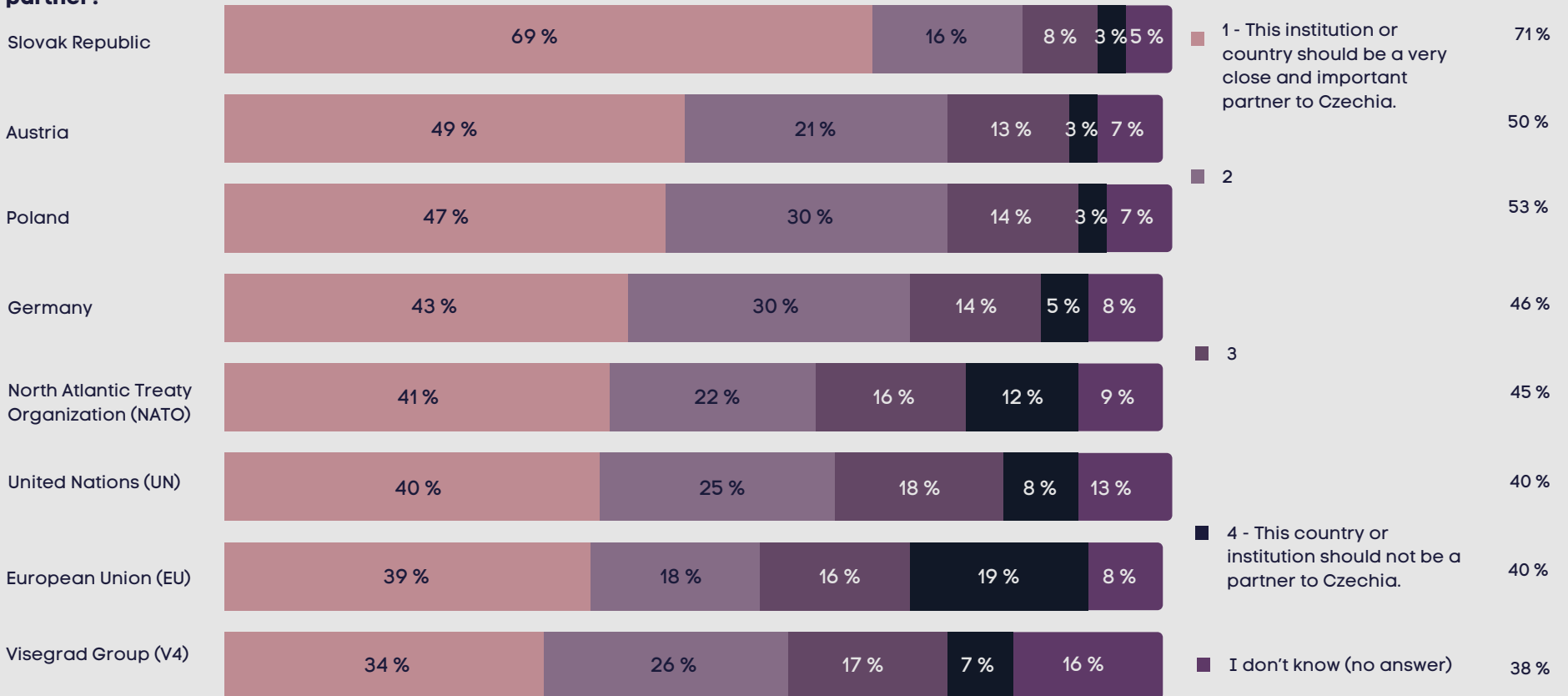
Base: CZ n=1061; SK n=1005; PL n=1001

Closest Partners: Czechia I.

Just like in the previous wave, four most preferred countries are Czechia's neighbours.

Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Czechia's closest partner?

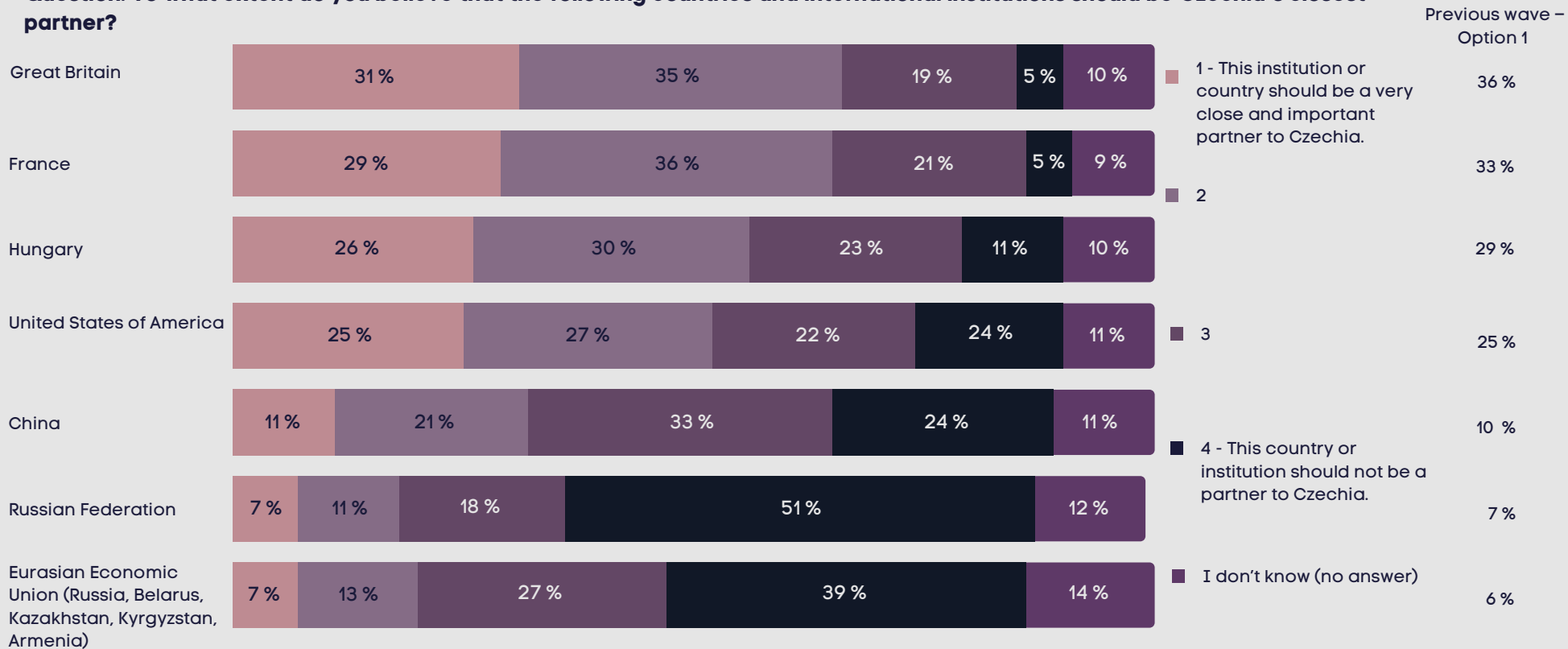
Previous wave –
Option 1



Closest Partners: Czechia II.

Just like in the previous wave, Czechs most frequently state the Russian Federation, the Eurasian Economic Union and China as countries that should not be Czechia's partners. On the other hand, the number of people who believe it should be the UK, France, or Hungary rose.

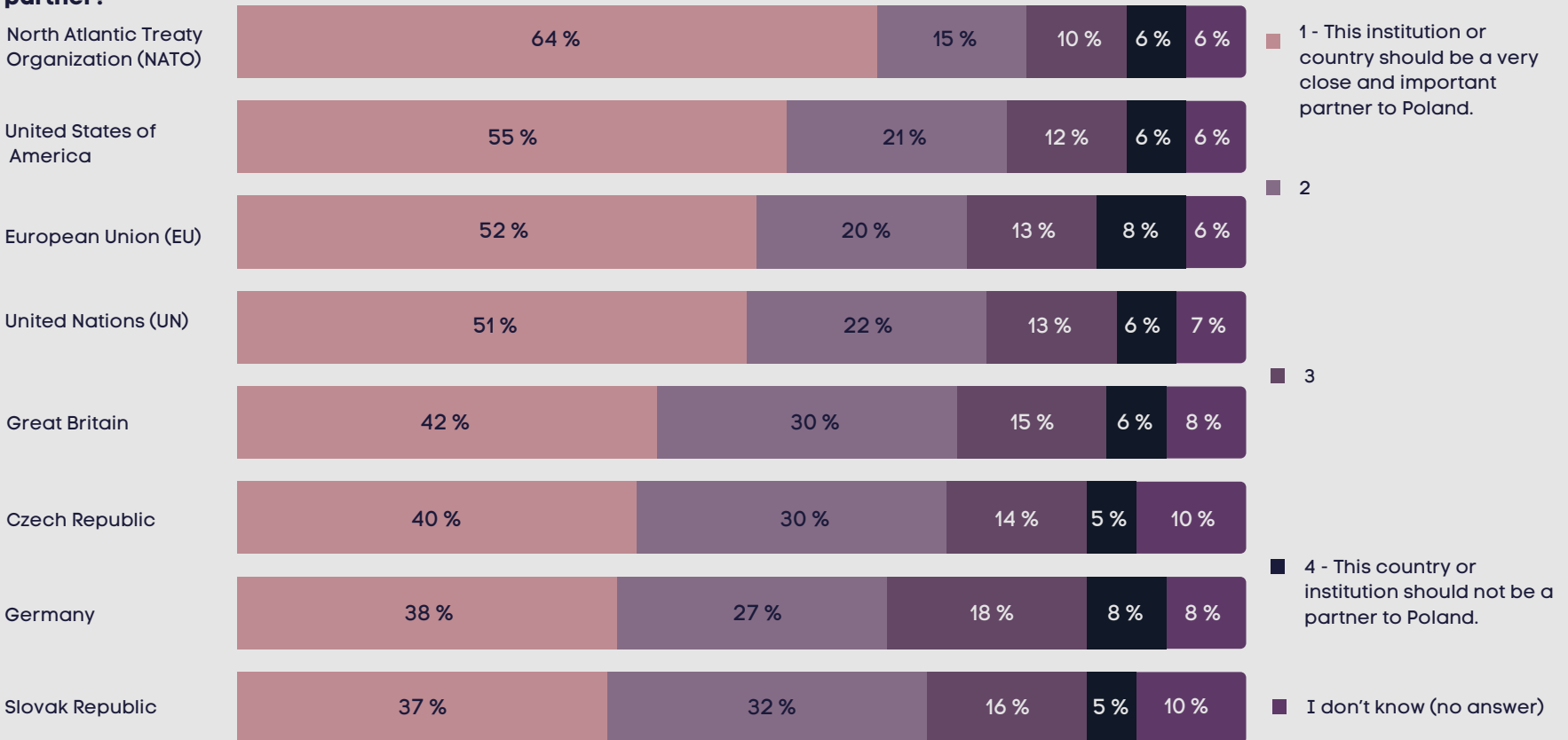
Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Czechia's closest partner?



Closest Partners: Poland I.

Just under 2/3 of all Poles believe Poland's closest partner should be NATO. Over half of the respondents is of the opinion that it should be the USA, the EU or the UN. 4/10 people believe the UK or Czechia should be Poland's partners.

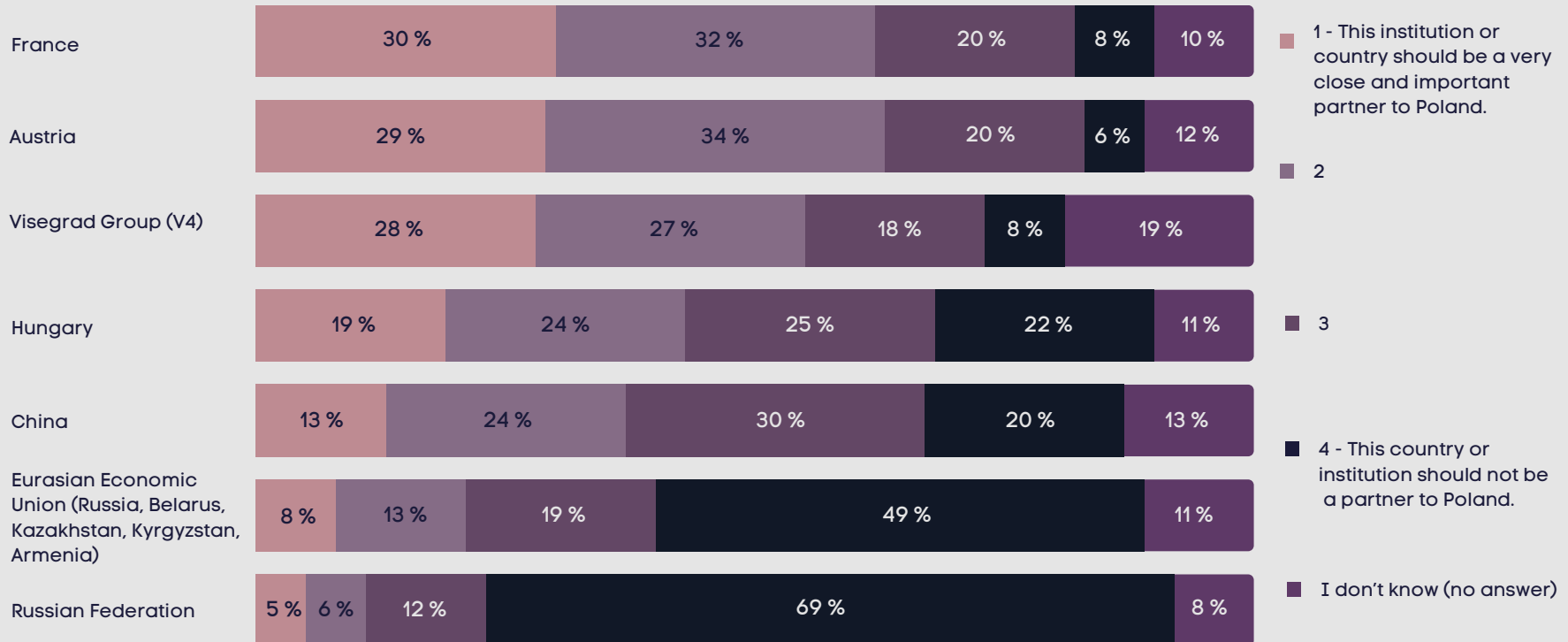
Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Poland's closest partner?



Closest Partners: Poland II.

Most Poles disagree that the Russian Federation should be a partner to their country. Over 2/3 do not agree that the Eurasian Economic Union should be Poland's partner.

Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Poland's closest partner?



Research Method

Sample size	1005 respondents in Slovakia, 1061 in Czechia, 1001 in Poland
Survey date	July 17–25, 2023
Survey method	the CASI method was used, utilizing the Populace.cz, Populacia.sk, and Ipsos Interactive Services Poland online panels
Representativity	a representative sample of Czech, Slovak, and Polish populations aged 18 or older (quota sampling based on gender, age, region, size of town, and education)
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.sk, and Infosecurity.sk) up to September 2023.

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

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