



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory

Disinformation Narratives in Slovakia

CEDMO Special Brief

August 2023



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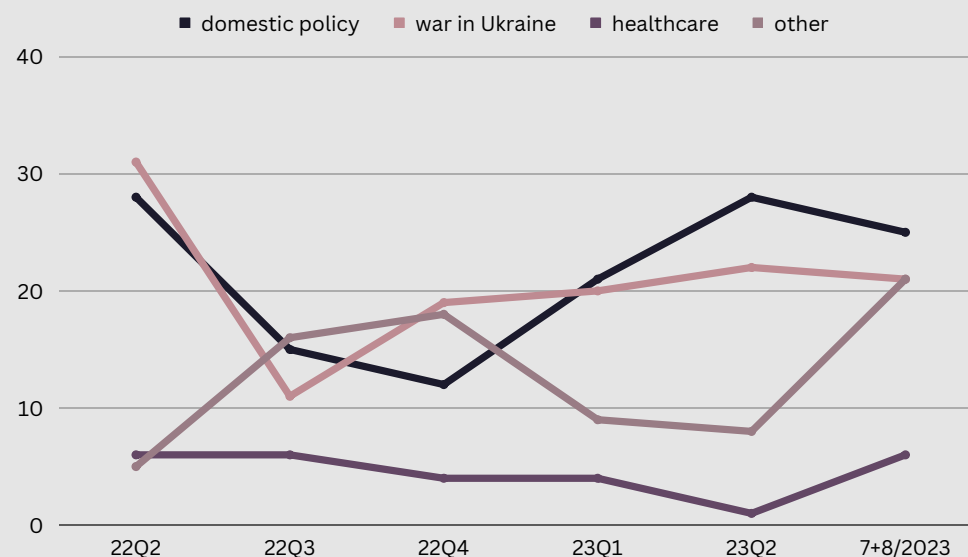
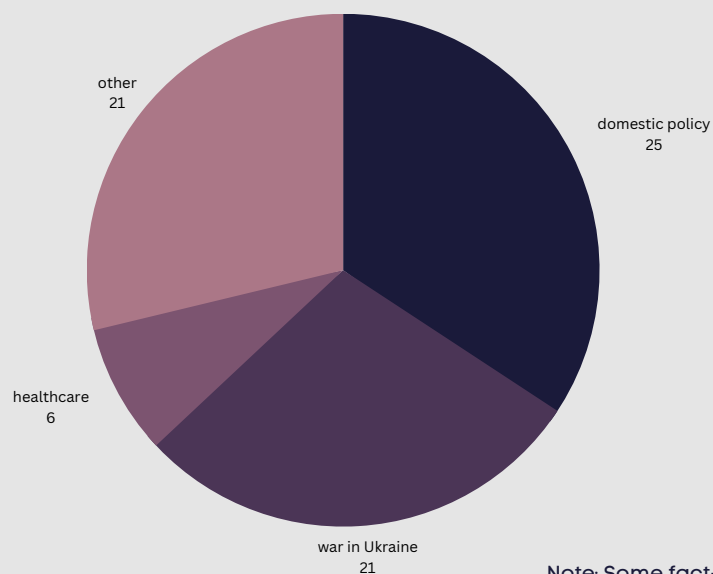
Trends in Disinformation Narratives

Main trends and disinformation narratives in July and August 2023

In July and August 2023, the topic of the war in Ukraine was still prominent in Slovak online spaces, but the topic of domestic policy came to the fore, especially in connection with the upcoming parliamentary elections. During this quarter, CEDMO fact-checking organizations published 73 Slovak fact-checks, out of which 21 concerned either the situation in Ukraine or domestic events related to Ukraine. As many as 25 texts pertained to the domestic policy of Slovakia. In 6 articles, fact-checkers focused on healthcare.

Fact-check topics frequency

July–August 2023

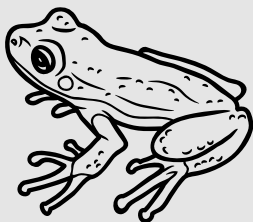


Note: Some fact-checks concerned multiple topics.

Main Narratives in Slovakia

Videos from Ukraine

CEDMO fact-checking organizations have covered, among others, posts that misrepresented videos from Ukraine as evidence that many Ukrainian soldiers are surrendering and that combat videos are staged. The first video shows a May exchange of prisoners. However, Facebook posts presented it as footage of surrendering Ukrainian units. The second video fact-checked by CEDMO analysts shows combat, but there is a photographer in a reflective vest visible in the background. This video, taken at a training facility, was misrepresented by pro-Russia Telegram channels as evidence that the Ukrainian side was faking combat videos.



Harmful substances in food

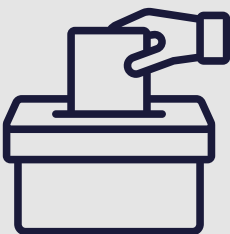
During the summer months, posts pointing out alleged harmful substances in some food started appearing online in large numbers. The main target of conspiracy theories was the Rainforest Alliance logo, which is used on sustainably-produced food. Demagog.cz and AFP fact-checkers debunked viral posts claiming the products marked with a green frog (the Rainforest Alliance logo) contained insects, GMOs, vaccines, hormones, or other chemicals. Some conspiracy theories also mentioned alleged influence of the EU or Bill Gates. The latter also became the target of another theory concerning the alleged harmfulness of products using Apeel. As CEDMO fact-checkers described, all these claims are unsubstantiated.

Main Narratives in Slovakia

Politics

Fabricated election poll

In June, a fabricated election poll circulated on Facebook, exaggerating support for the opposition parties. It claimed a poll by Austrian television showed over 32% support for Smer-SSD and higher numbers for other opposition parties, such as Hlas and Republika. Demagog.sk stated that no Austrian TV or media company had published such a poll. Furthermore, the numbers presented significantly differ from the polls conducted by Slovak agencies. The Facebook post with the fabricated poll also doubts the objectivity of real public opinion polls reported by media outlets such as Denník N.



Questioning the elections

In July, some Slovak politicians mentioned possible election meddling by non-governmental organisations and ESET. As Infosecurity.sk described, the IT company debunked these claims since the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic uses no ESET software. The campaign to increase young voter turnout has also been described as a plot to improve the results of the “pro-American” and “pro-war” parties, although it does not support any particular party.

Disinformation about transgender people

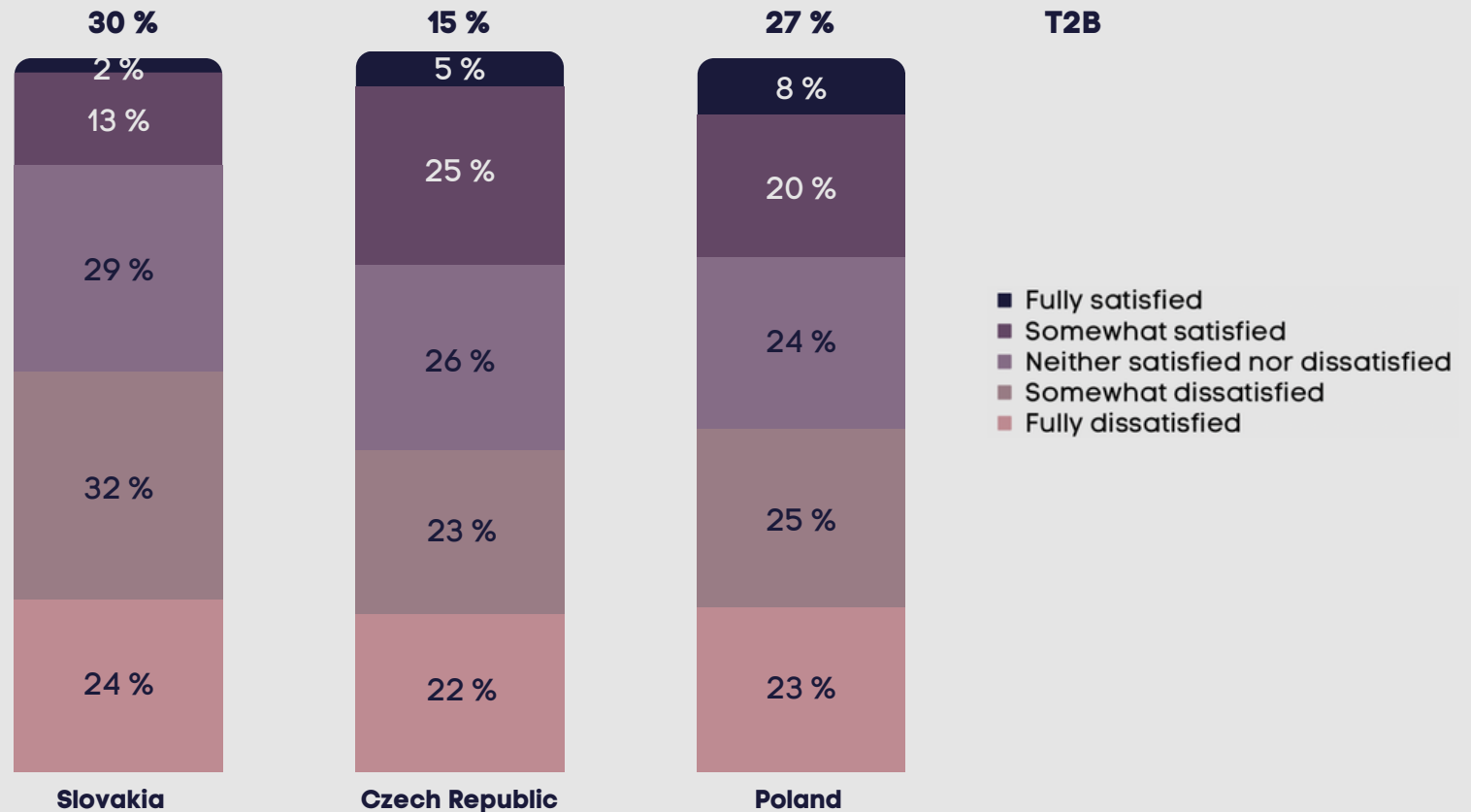
Just like in other countries, Slovak politicians also paid more attention to LGBTI+ topics during the season of pride parades. Demagog.sk pointed out misleading information presenting transgender people as a threat to society. The information about schoolchildren identifying as animals was not confirmed abroad. Politicians also made false claims about hormone-replacement therapy (HRT), which does not cause depression. Quite the opposite, studies show HRT improves transgender people’s mental health.



Democracy Satisfaction: An International Comparison

Slovaks are the least satisfied with the functioning of their democracy, only 15% trust it. In Czechia and Poland, the satisfaction is almost twice as high as in Slovakia.

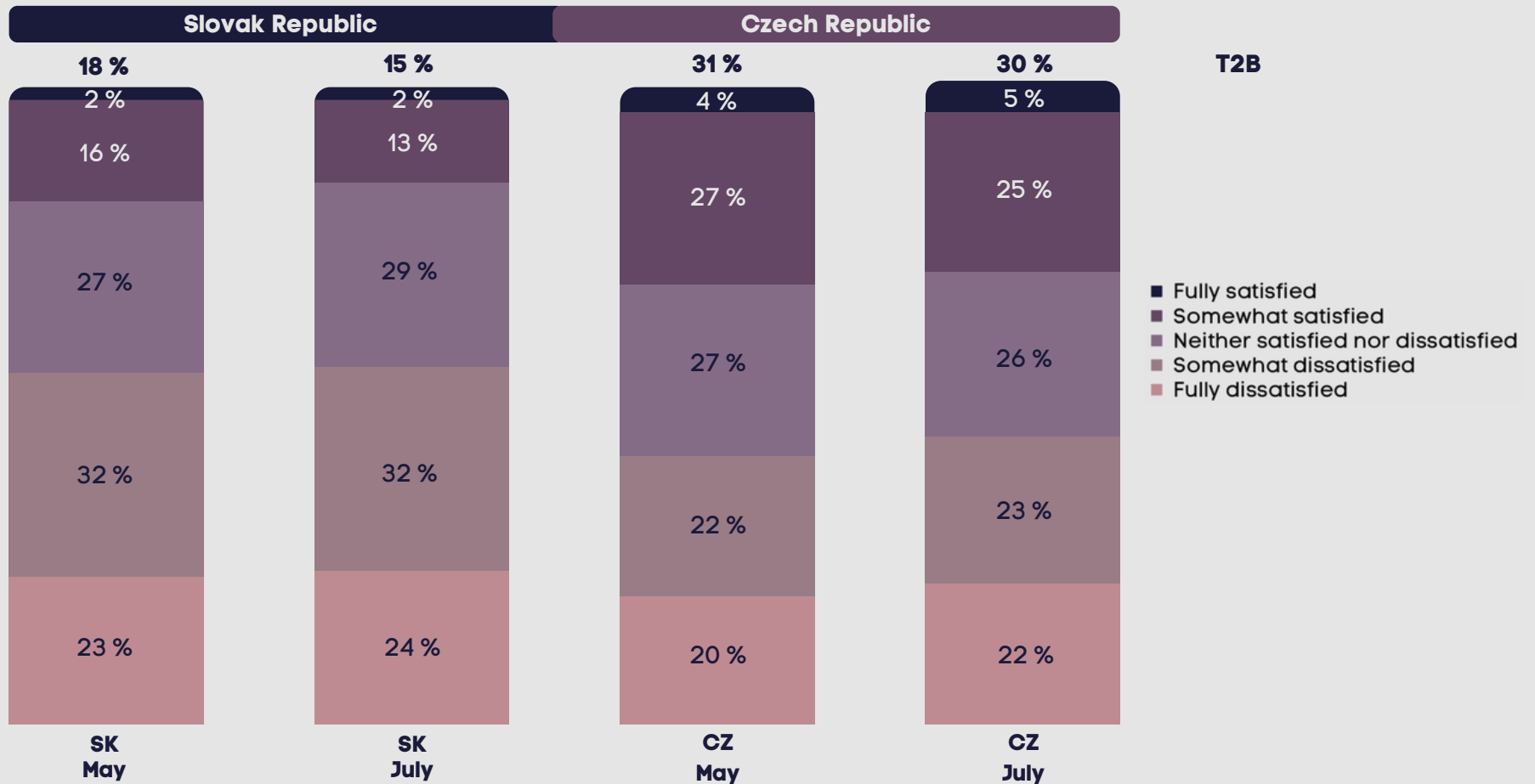
Question: How satisfied are you with the functioning of the democracy in the Czech Republic / Slovakia / Poland?



Democracy Satisfaction in Slovakia and Czechia Over Time

In Czechia and Slovakia, the democracy satisfaction remains quite stable. Since May, it dropped by 1% in the Czech Republic and by 3% in Slovakia.

Question: How satisfied are you with the functioning of the democracy in the Czech Republic / Slovakia?



Inhabitants' Description of Their Country: An International Comparison

Slovaks are the most pessimistic about their country. Over half of every population believes most politicians are corrupt.

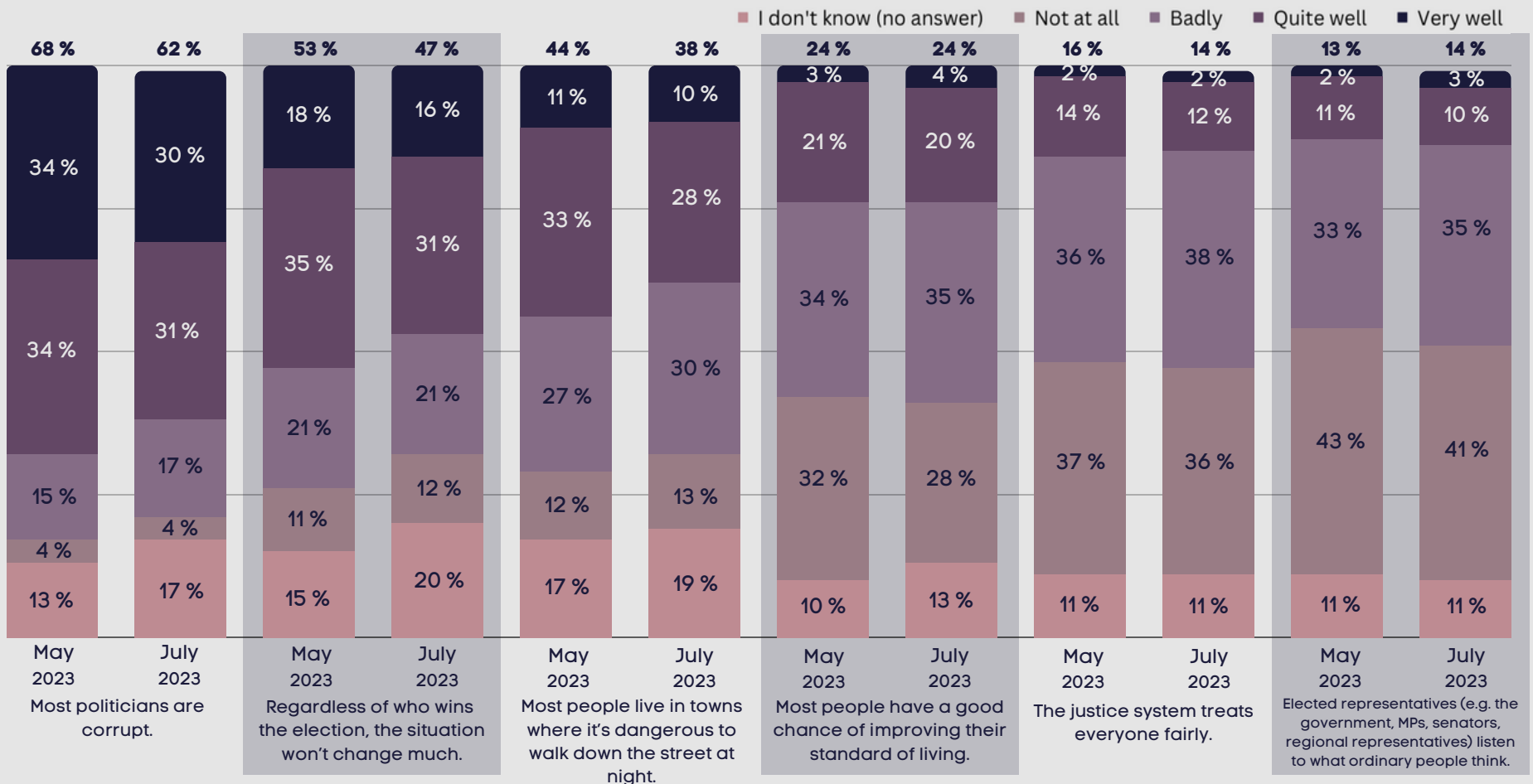
Question: To what extent do you believe the following statements describe the current situation in the Czech Republic / Slovakia / Poland?

	Average	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Poland
Most politicians are corrupt.	64 %	62 %	68 %	63 %
Regardless of who wins the election, the situation won't change much.	50 %	47 %	56 %	48 %
Most people live in towns where it's dangerous to walk down the street at night.	38 %	38 %	41 %	35 %
Most people have a good chance of improving their standard of living.	32 %	24 %	39 %	34 %
The justice system treats everyone fairly.	23 %	14 %	37 %	18 %
Elected representatives (e.g. the government, MPs, senators, regional representatives) listen to what ordinary people think.	19 %	14 %	20 %	22 %

Inhabitants' Description of Slovakia Over Time

Compared to the previous research, fewer Slovaks agree that most politicians are corrupt, that the situation won't change much, regardless of who wins the elections, and that most people live in towns where it's dangerous to walk down the street at night. The difference is 6 percentage points.

Question: To what extent do you believe the following statements describe the current situation in Slovakia?



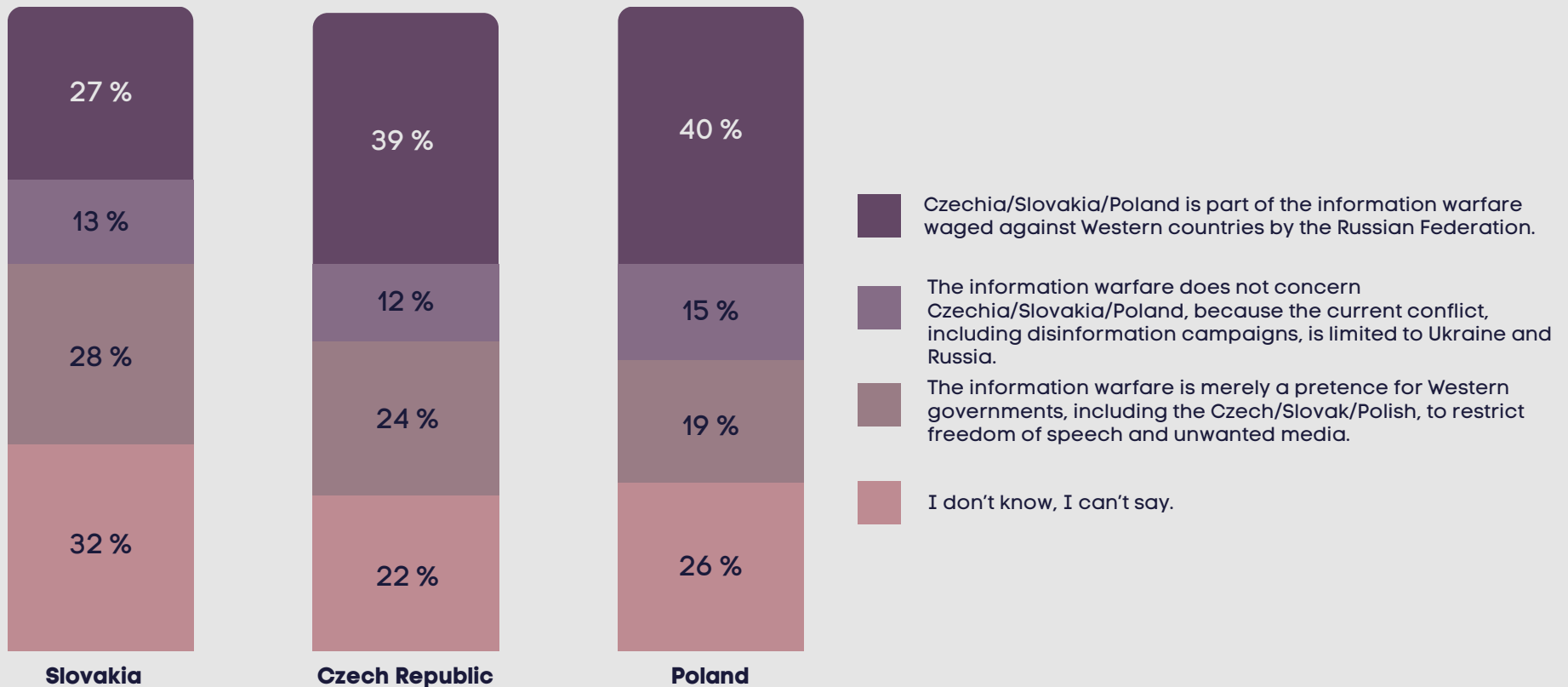
Note: T2B = the sum of the "quite well" and "very well" responses

Base: SK – May n=1004, July n=1005

Information Warfare Perception: An International Comparison

Compared to Czechs and Slovaks, people in Poland are less likely to say that the information warfare is merely a pretence for Western governments to restrict freedom of speech. On the other hand, compared to Czechs and Poles, people in Slovakia are less likely to believe their country is part of the information warfare.

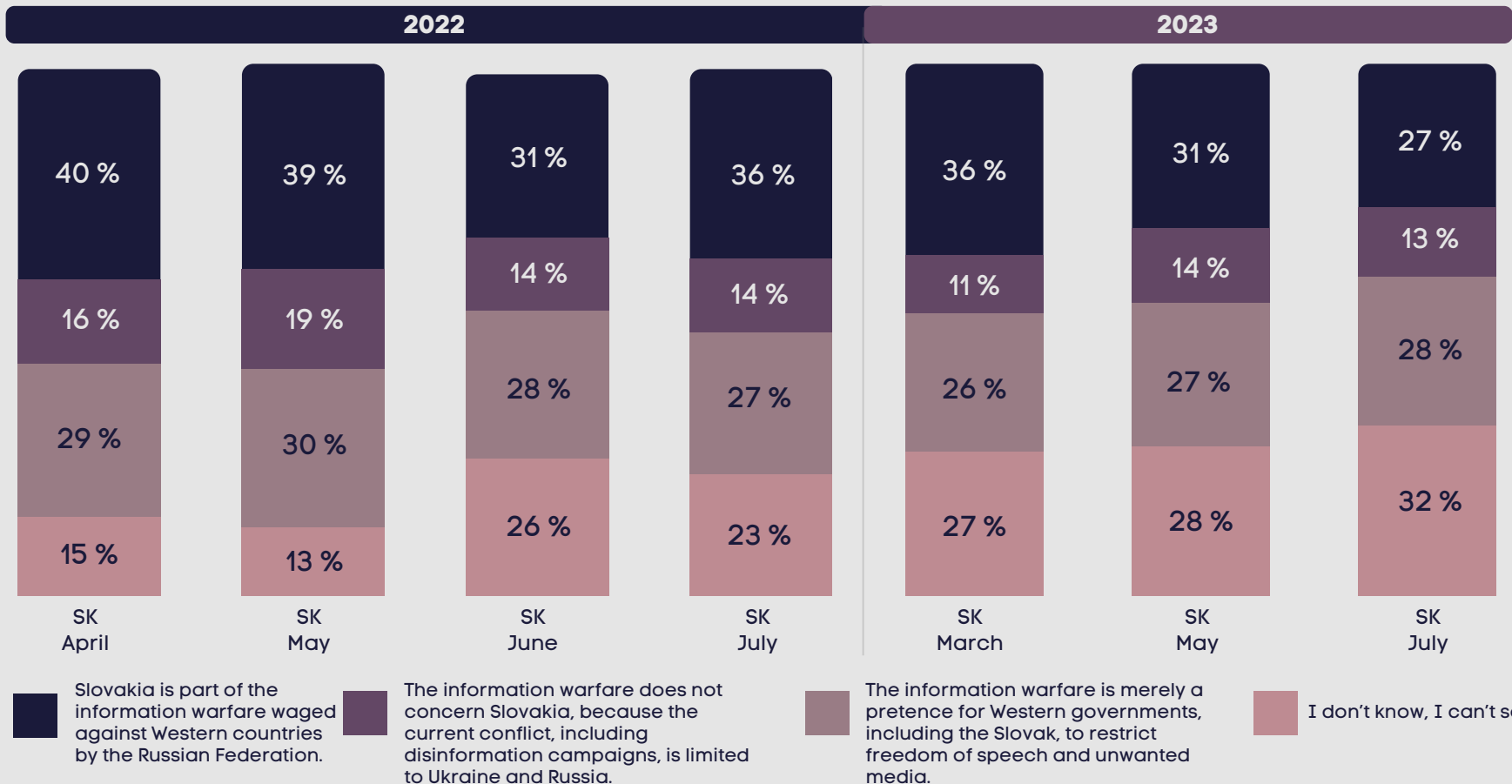
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your view of the military conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the Czech Republic / Slovakia / Poland?



Perception of the Information Warfare in Slovakia

In Slovakia, the number of people who believe their country is part of the information warfare with Russia keeps decreasing. For the first time, it equals the number of people who believe the information warfare to be only a pretence for Western governments. A third of Slovaks is unsure.

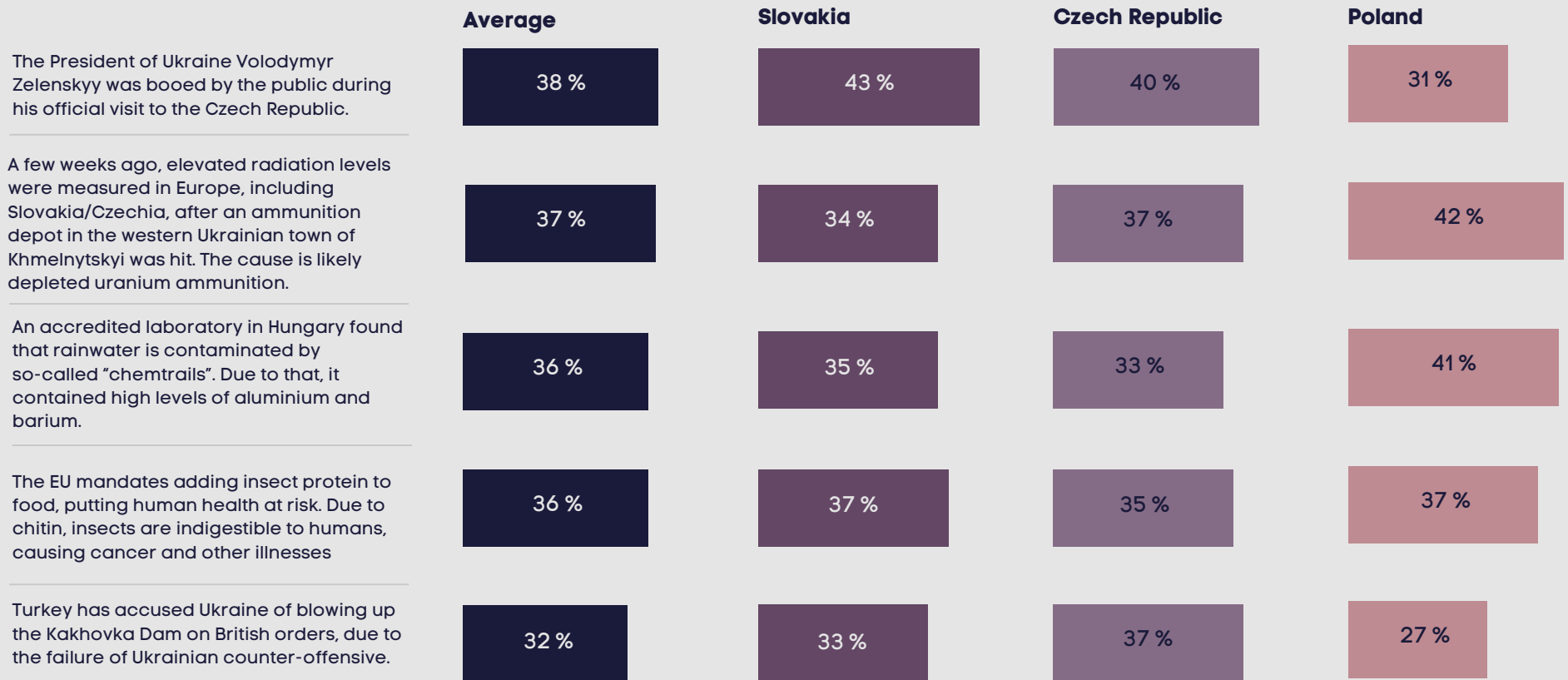
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your view of the military conflict in Ukraine and its impact on Slovakia?



Disinformation Trustworthiness: An International Comparison

Czechs and Slovaks most often believe the disinformation that Volodymyr Zelenskyy was booed during his visit to the Czech Republic. Polish people most often believe elevated radiation levels were recorded in Czechia and Slovakia.

Question: To what extent do you consider the following information to be trustworthy?



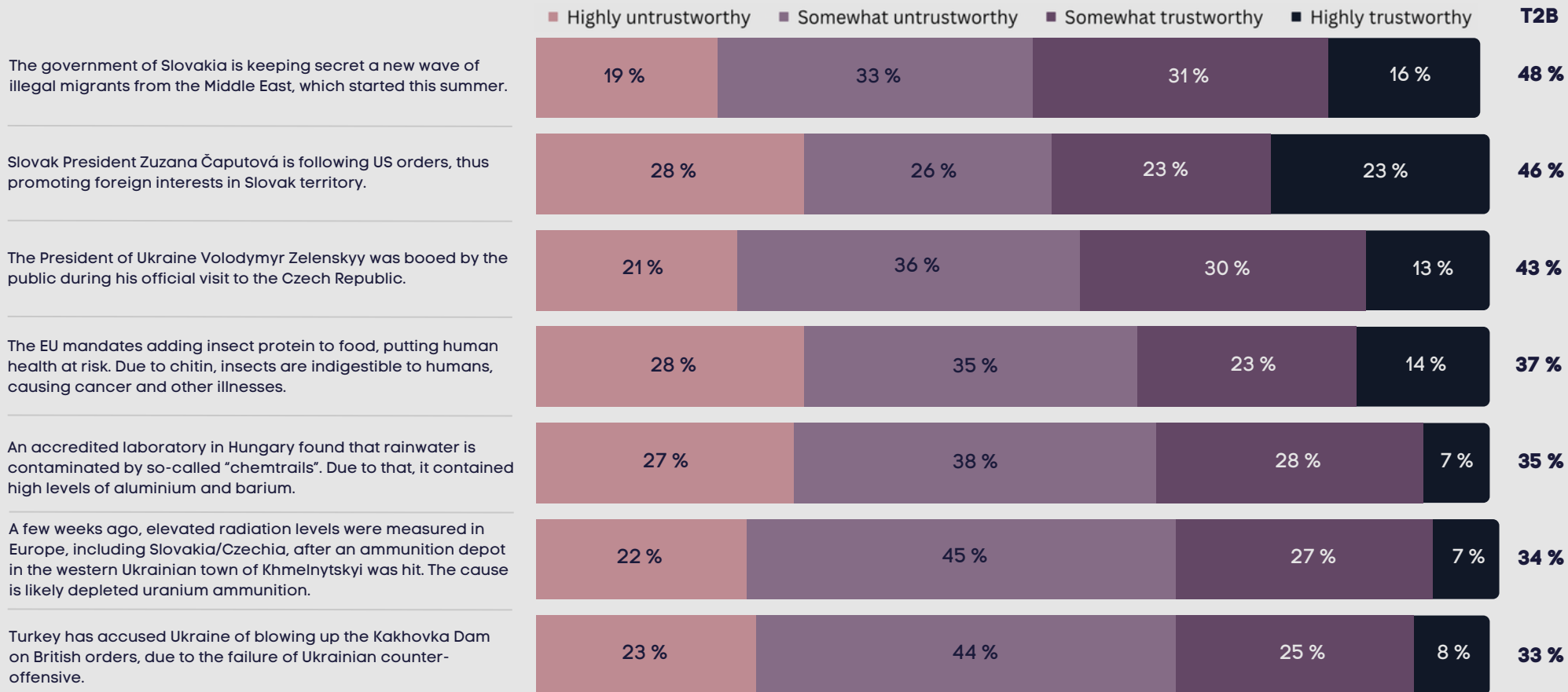
Note: T2B = sum of the "Highly trustworthy" and "Somewhat trustworthy" responses
Only statements common to all three countries are shown.
Base: CZ n=1061; SK n=1005; PL n=1001

Shown as T2B.

Disinformation Trustworthiness in Slovakia

Less than half of Slovaks agree that the report that the Slovak government is keeping a new wave of migrants secret is credible and that the Slovak president is following US orders, thus promoting foreign interests in Slovak territory.

Question: To what extent do you consider the following information to be trustworthy?



Note: T2B = sum of the "Highly trustworthy" and "Somewhat trustworthy" responses

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

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 August 2023.

The URLs of all fact-checks referenced in this publication can be found [HERE](#).

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