

Youth Attitudes on Politics and Democracy in Central Europe

November 2024



About the report

In 2024, NDI conducted public opinion research in **Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia on young people's policy preferences and priorities.**

The research questionnaires explored young people's attitudes toward political systems, political participation, and the current political situation of each country. This report presents current regional trends and differences between countries. Where applicable, the report also draws comparisons with NDI's 2018 and 2020 youth research, which examined similar topics through polling and focus group research, highlighting shifts in young people's policy priorities, voting and media preferences, and overall levels of engagement and satisfaction with the political situation in their countries.

Methodology

Organizations responsible for polling

Poland

Institute of Public Affairs, authored by Filip Pazderski and Sonia Horonziak

Slovakia

FOCUS – Center for Social and Marketing Analysis, authored by Martin Slosiarik

Hungary

Political Capital, authored by Csaba Molnár and Kata Bálint

Samples and polling

Statistically representative samples (gender, age, education level, settlement size, and region) of respondents aged 16–29 in Poland and Slovakia and 18–29 in Hungary participated in online polling (Computer Assisted Web Interview – CAWI) in August/September 2024.

Poland – 750 respondents; Slovakia – 756 respondents; Hungary – 750 respondents

A small number of questions fielded in Poland and Slovakia were not included in the Hungarian questionnaire. Data from Hungary is therefore absent from some slides.

Reports from the public opinion polling conducted by the National Democratic Institute in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia in 2018 and 2020 are accessible here: [2018 Report](#), [2020 Report](#).

Contents

To go to the chapter click on the title.

Attitudes
on Politics
and Public
Engagement

04

Democratic
Values and
Identity

17

Sources of
Information
and Political
Priorities

31

Country
Issues

39

Attitudes on Politics and Public Engagement

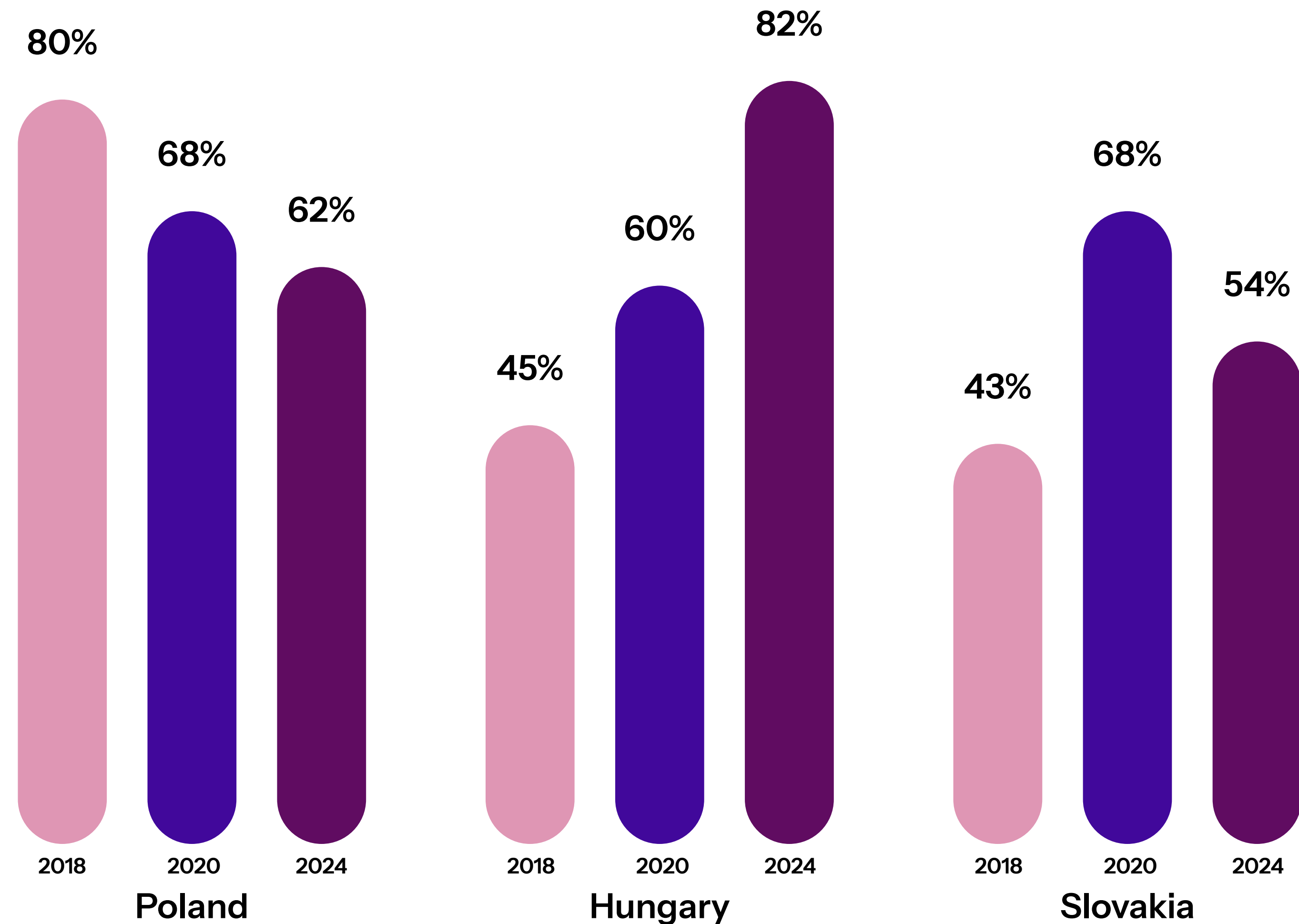


[Back to Contents](#)

1.1 How interested would you say you are in politics and public affairs?

Interested 2018 2020 2024

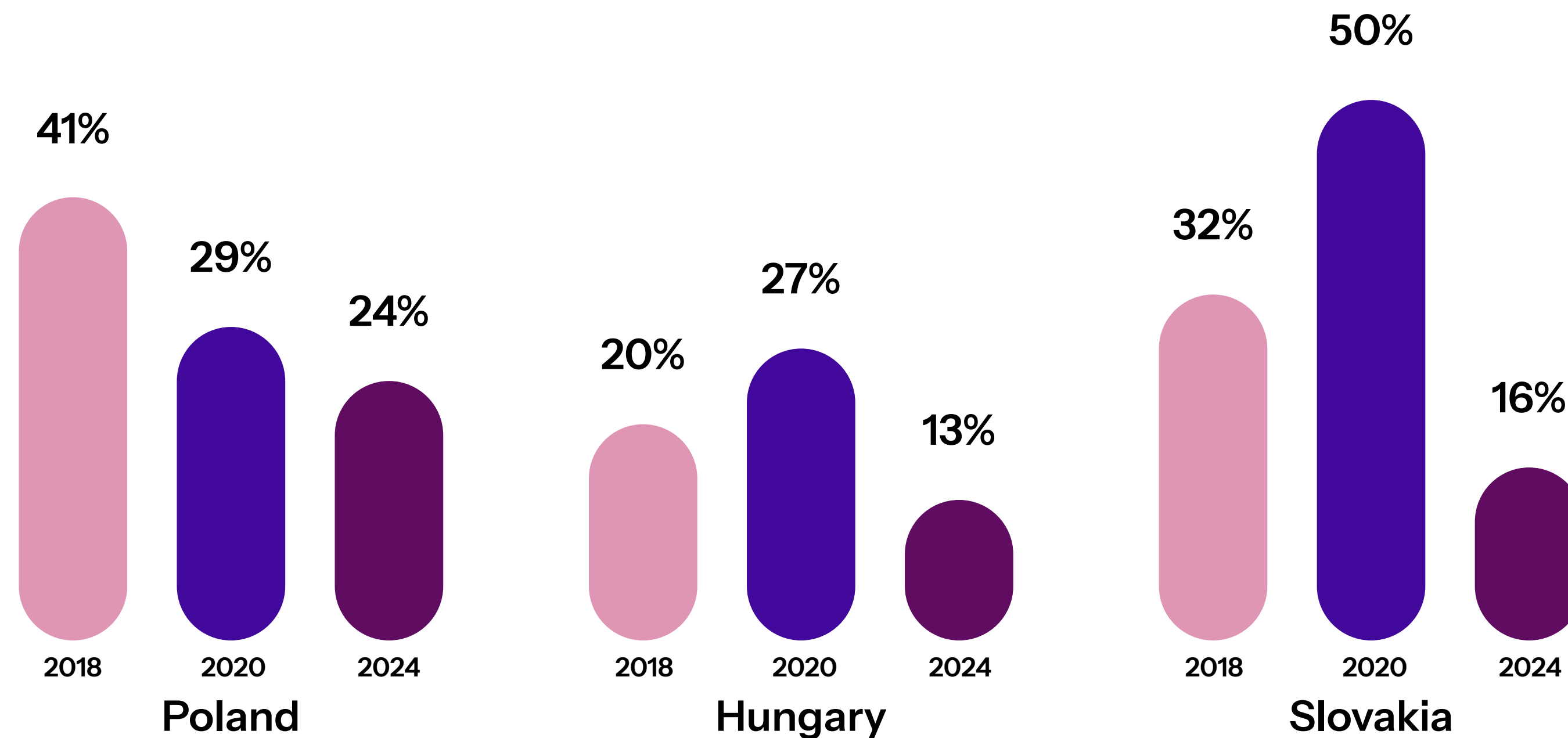
A majority of **youth in the Visegrad countries are interested in politics and public affairs**. However, there are **notable differences between the countries**. For example, in **Poland, interest has decreased significantly** over time, from 80% in 2018 to 62% in 2024; in **Hungary, interest has increased** (from 45% in 2018 to 82% in 2024). Slovakia is the country with the lowest youth interest in politics (approximately half of respondents are interested in politics in 2024), although interest was relatively stronger in 2020 (68%).



1.2 Are you personally satisfied with the current political situation?

Satisfied 2024 2020 2018

The vast majority of **youth in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia** are not satisfied with the current political situation in their countries. The level of satisfaction has declined across all countries; it is lowest in Hungary, at 13%. The only exception to this trend is Slovakia in 2020, when 50% of youth were satisfied with the political situation, which reflected perceived optimism after the change in government after elections. However, after four years of perceived turbulence, the level of youth political satisfaction in Slovakia has now dropped to 16%.

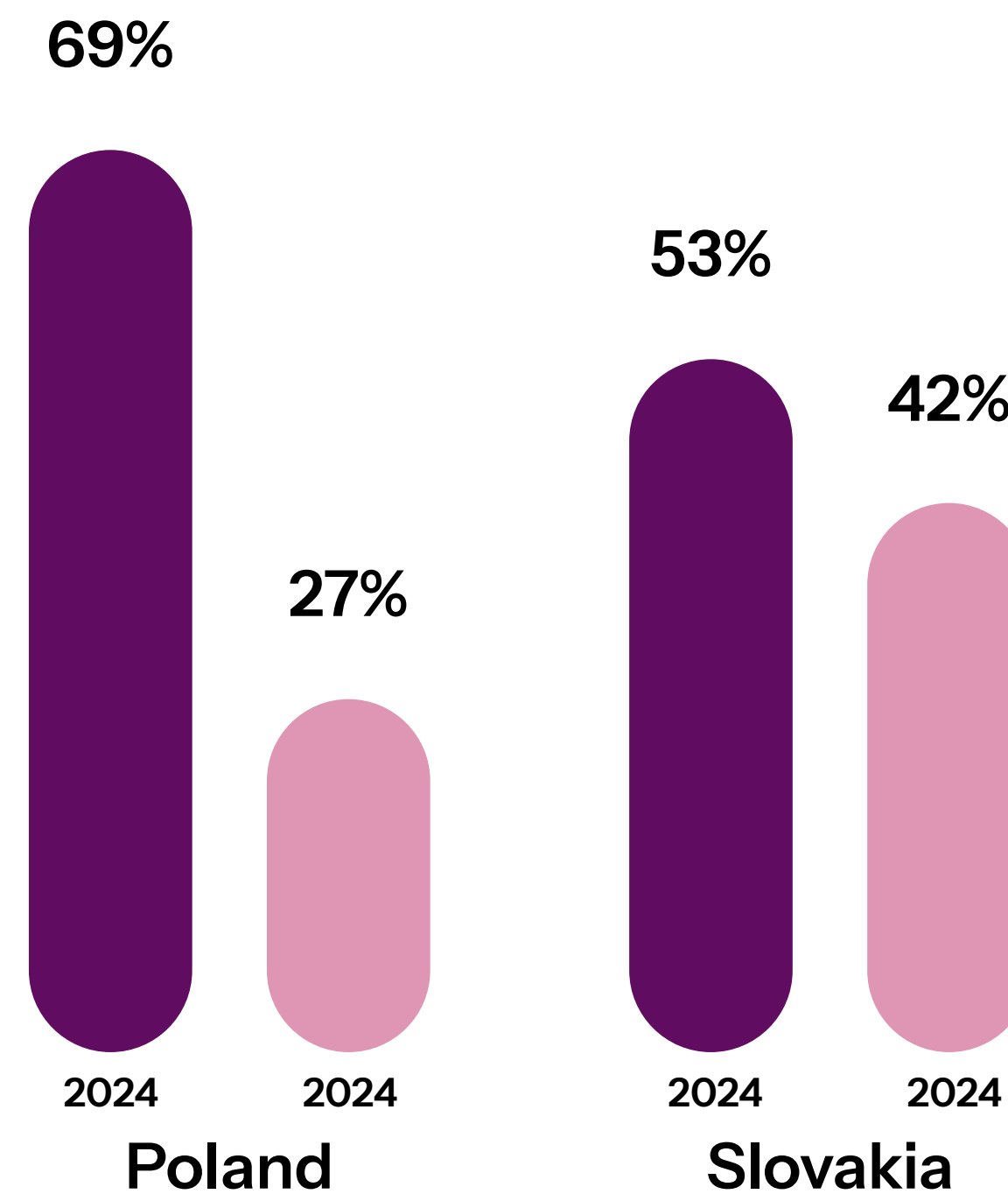
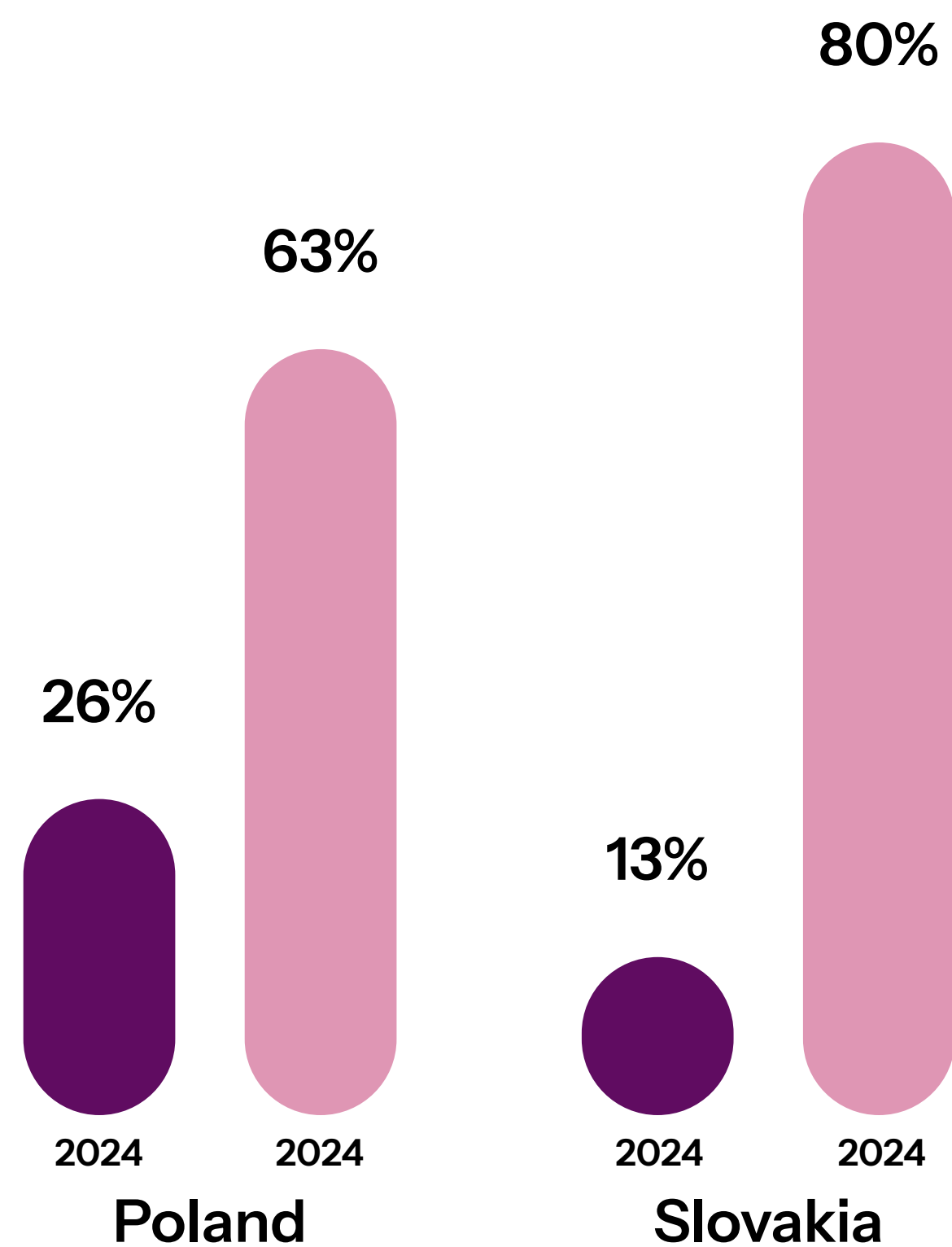


To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with

1.3 the current economic situation?

1.4 the standard of living of your household?

● Satisfied ● Dissatisfied



In Slovakia, 13% of young people say they are satisfied with the economic situation of their country, while 53% are satisfied with their current standard of living. The large disparity in levels of satisfaction across these two variables was similar in Poland, where 26% are satisfied with the country's economic situation, compared to the 69% satisfied with their standard of living.

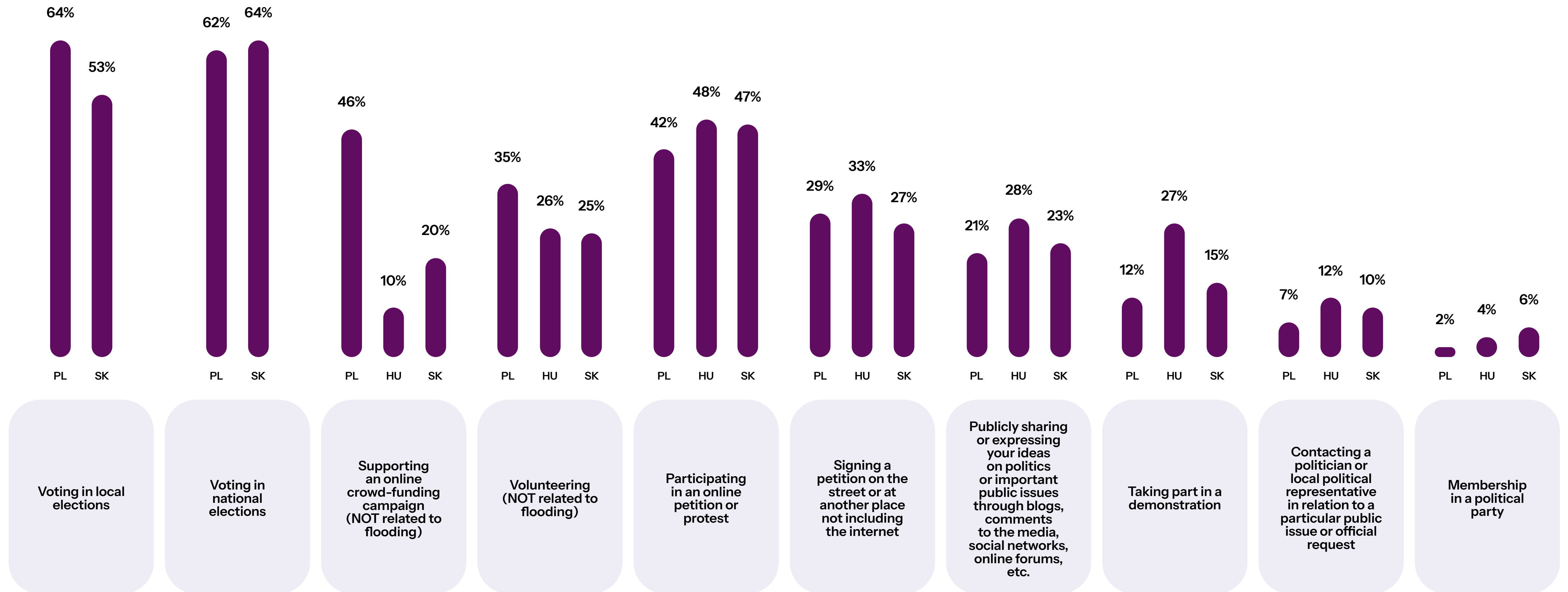
1.5 Engagement in politics and public activities

Youth in all three countries show similar attitudes and patterns toward engagement in politics. Most of the youth - more than 50% - vote in local and national elections.

Around the time of polling, Central Europe experienced devastating floods. To avoid biasing the sample with activism related to this unique mobilizing event, respondents were asked to consider their political activities outside flood response

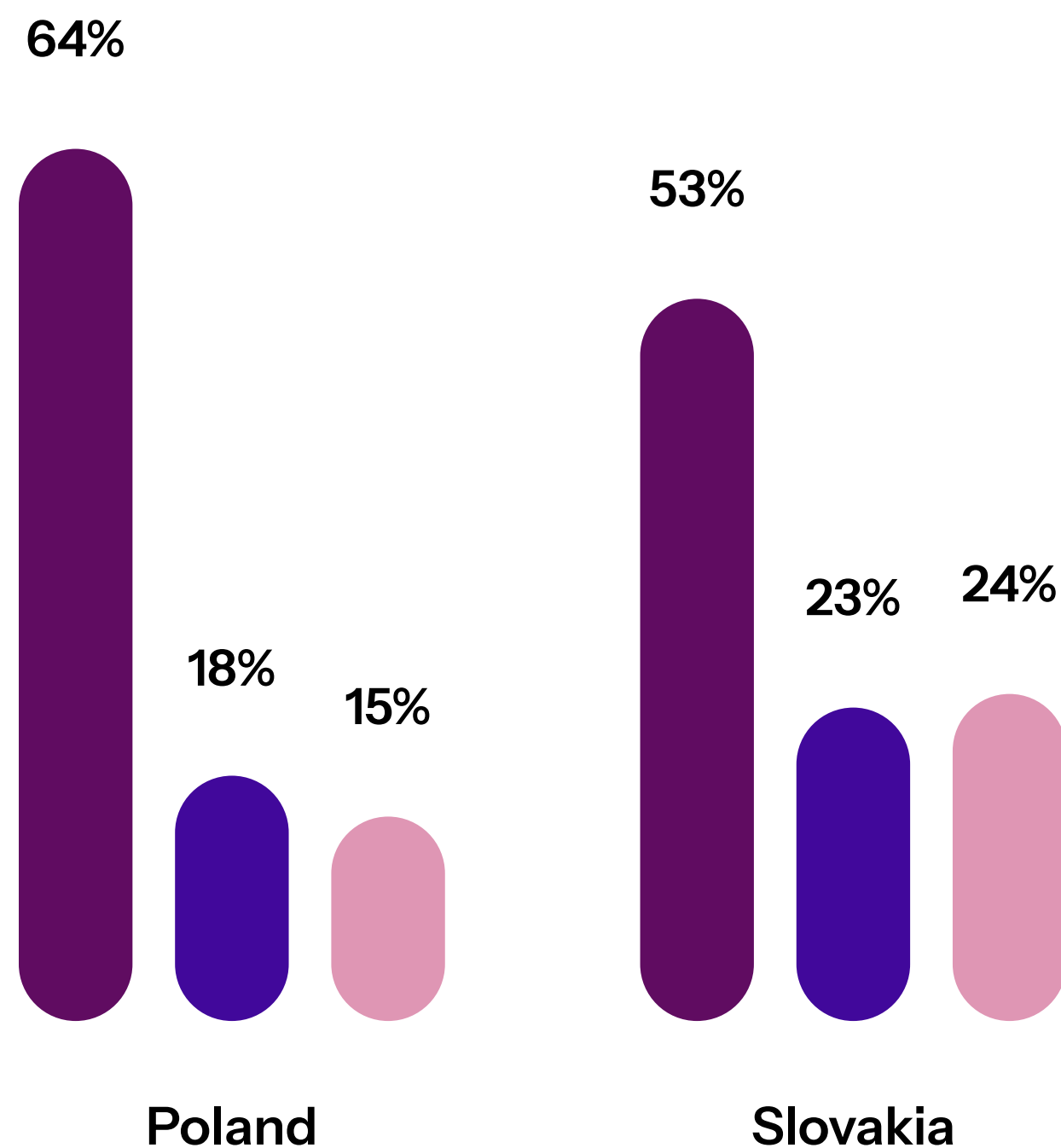
1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved

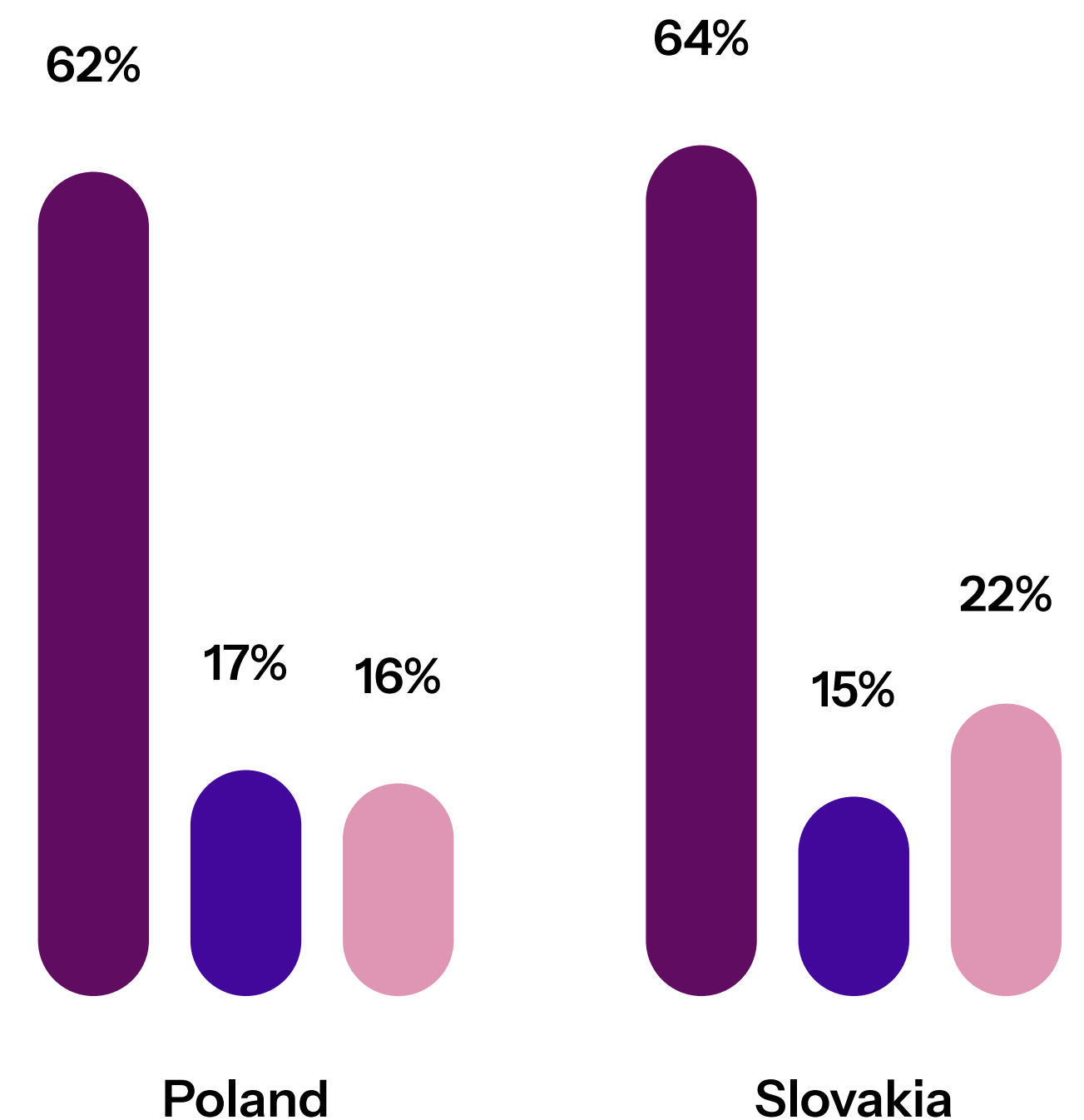


1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved



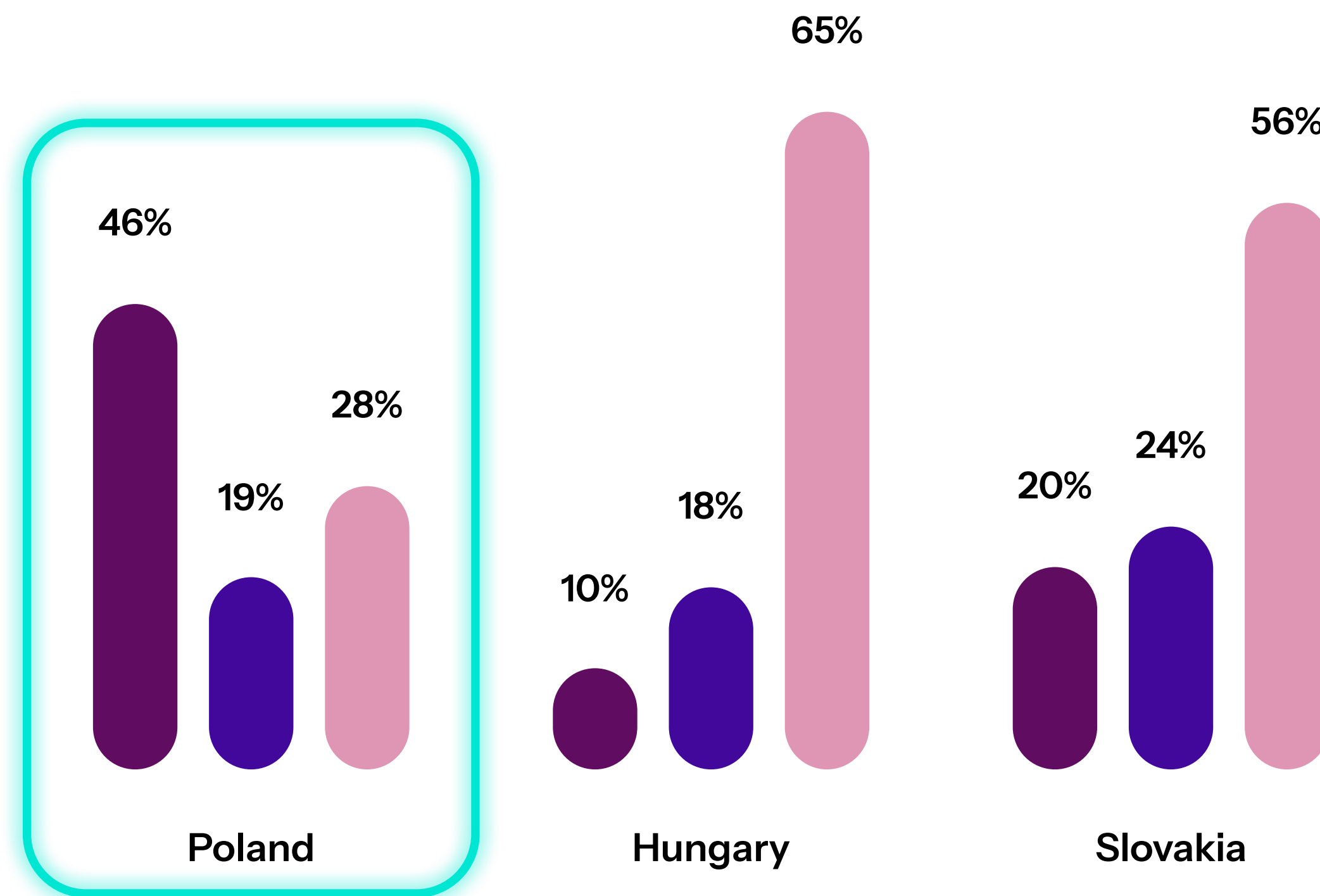
Voting in local elections



Voting in national elections

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved

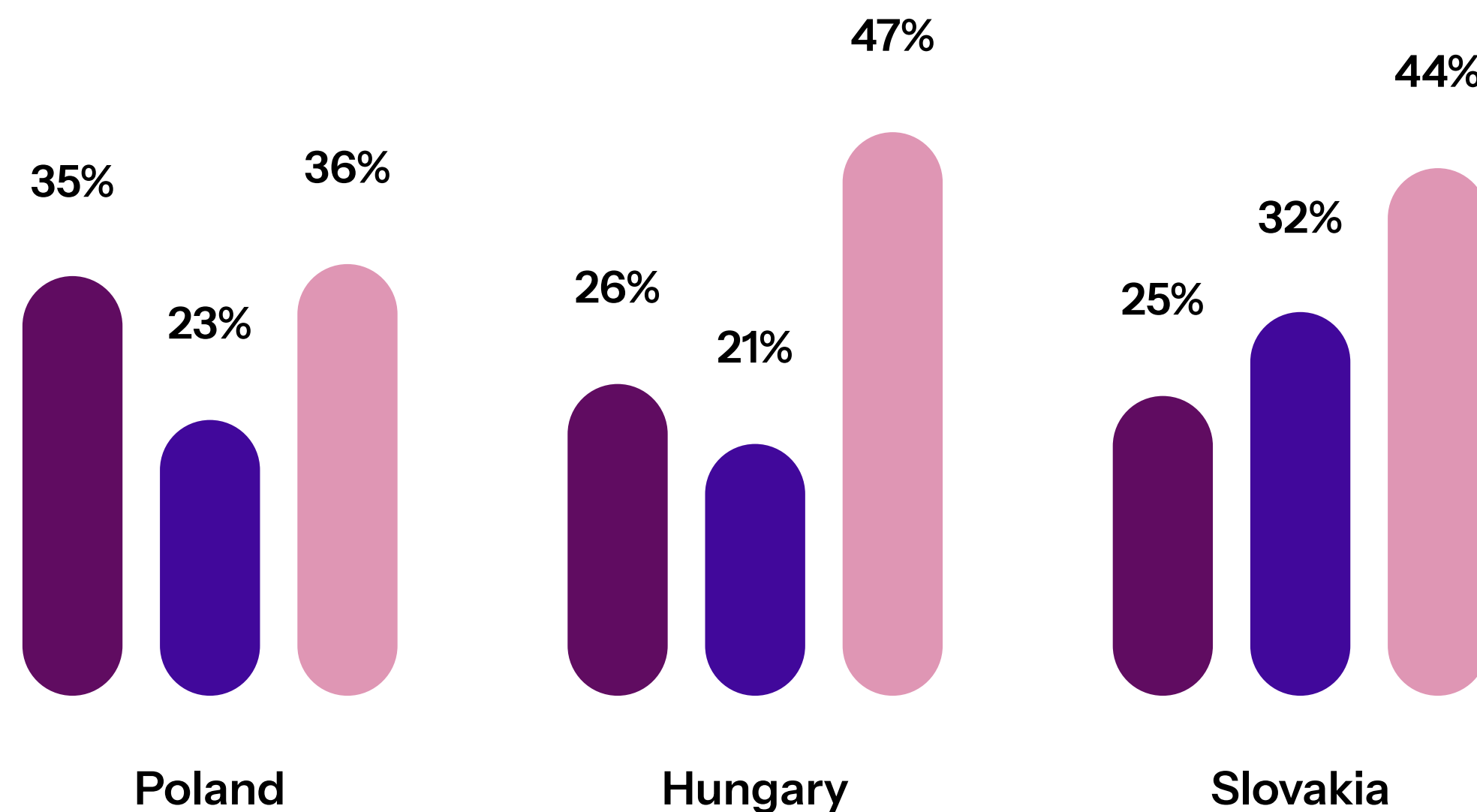


Supporting an online crowd-funding campaign
(NOT related to flooding)

In Poland it is more popular among young people to support an online crowdfunding campaign (46%, compared to 10% and 20% in Hungary and Slovakia respectively).

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved



Volunteering (NOT related to flooding)

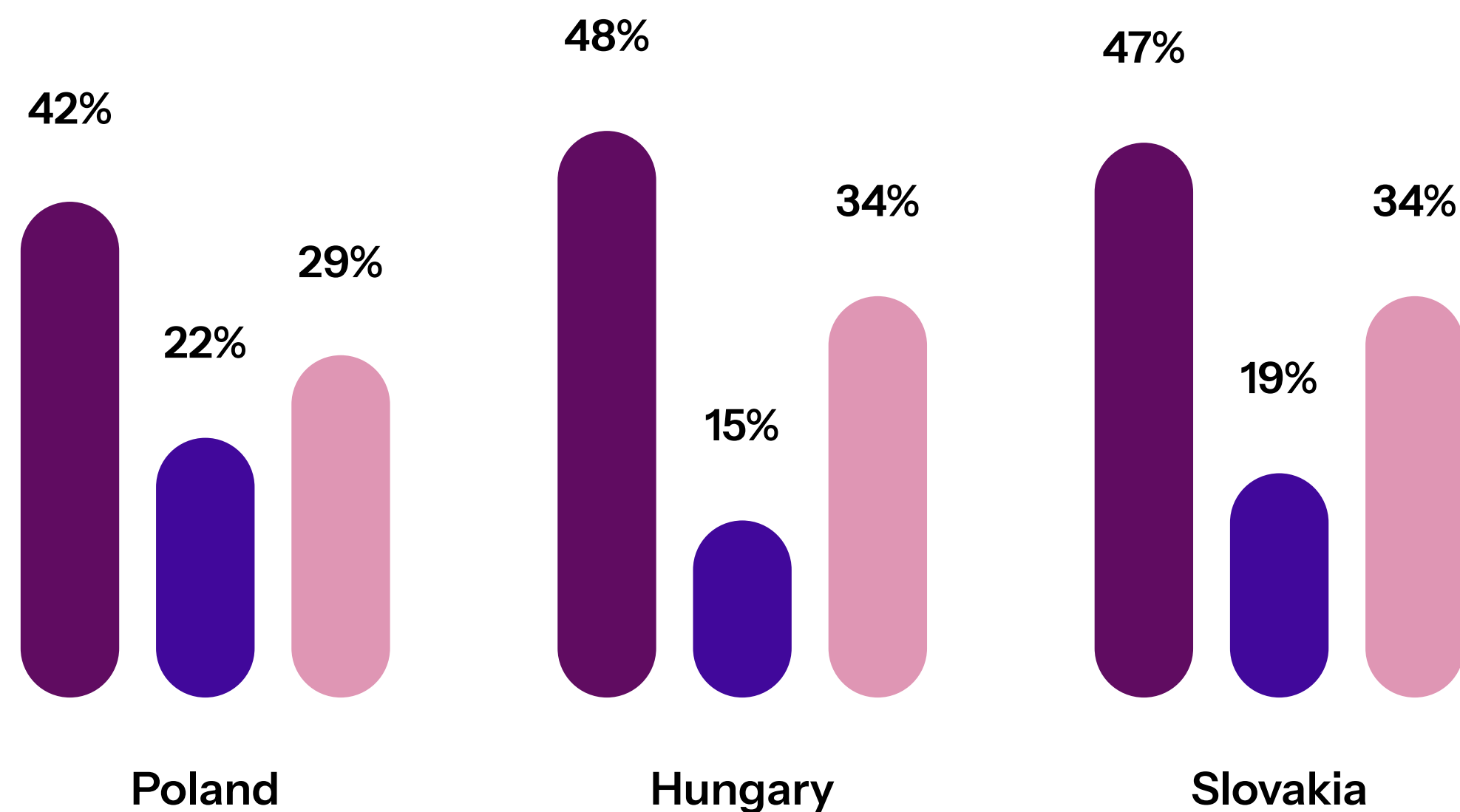
Approximately one-third of respondents across the three countries have volunteered in the last two years.

1.5 Engagement in politics and public activities

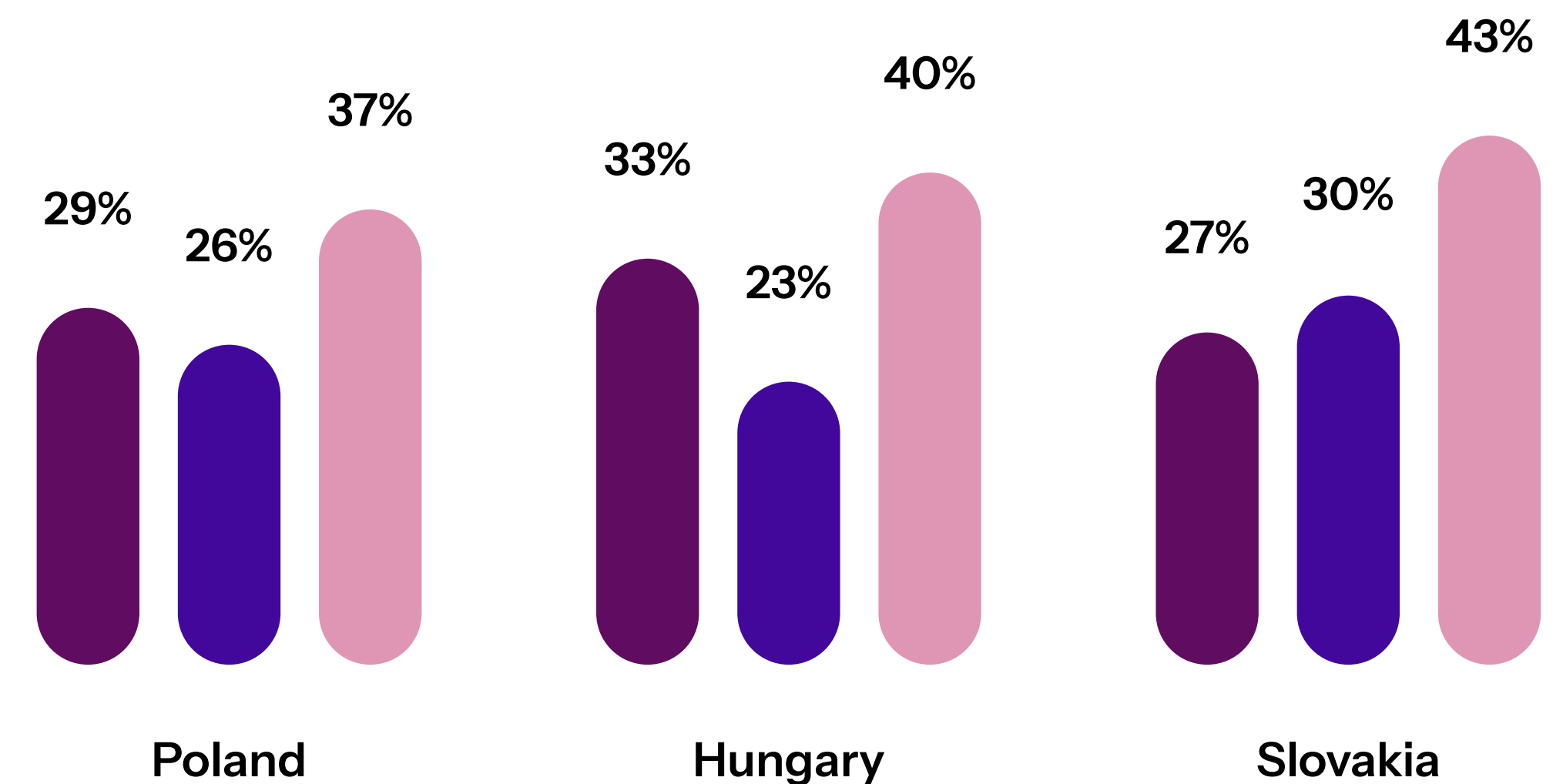
Besides voting, participation in online petitions or protests is the most common method of political engagement. More than 40% of youth had signed an online petition in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia in the last two years, and approximately one-third of youth in all three countries had signed a petition on the street (or other physical place).

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

Yes, I have been involved No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved



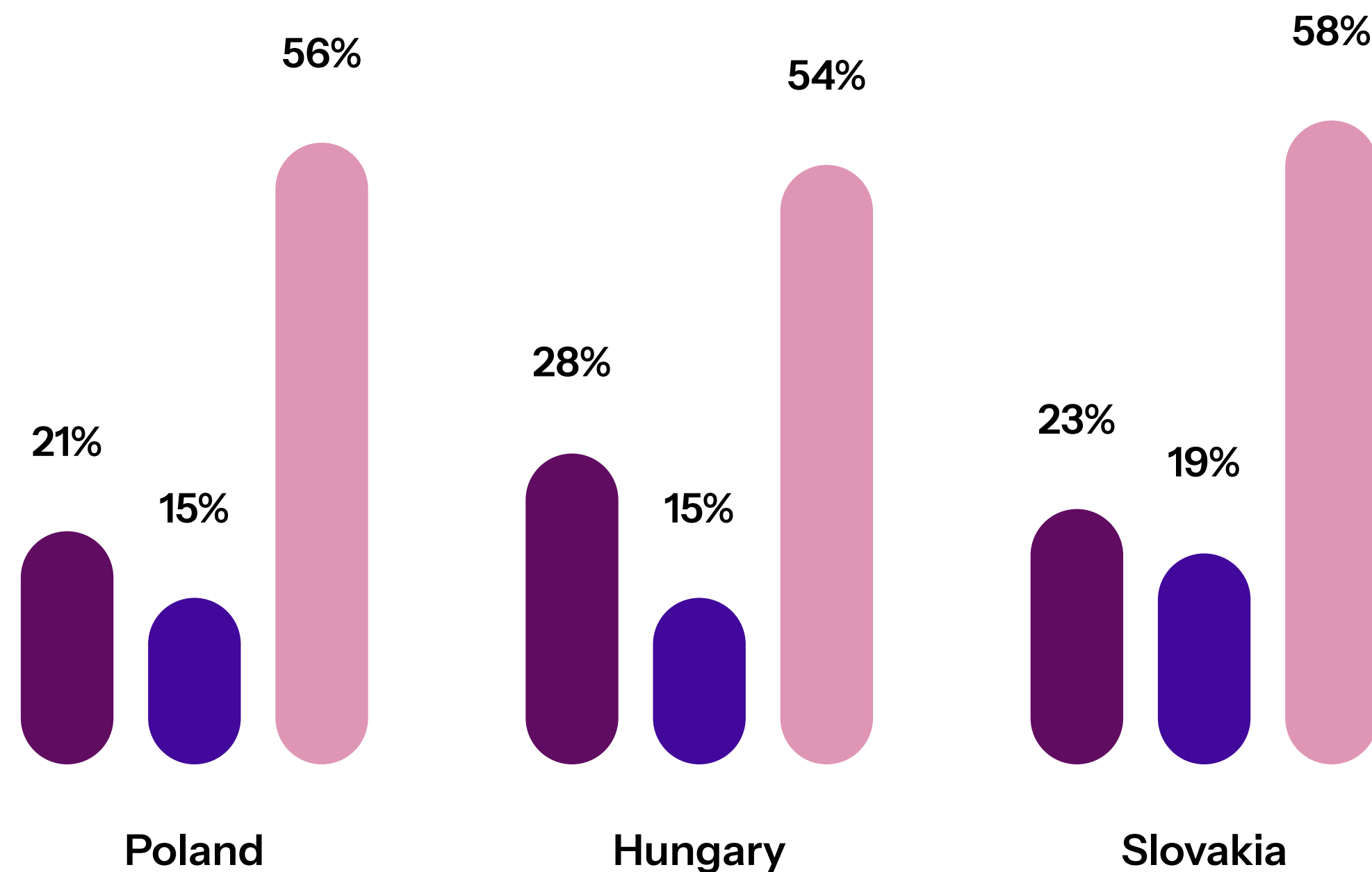
Participating in an online petition or protest



Signing a petition on the street or at another place not including the internet

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved

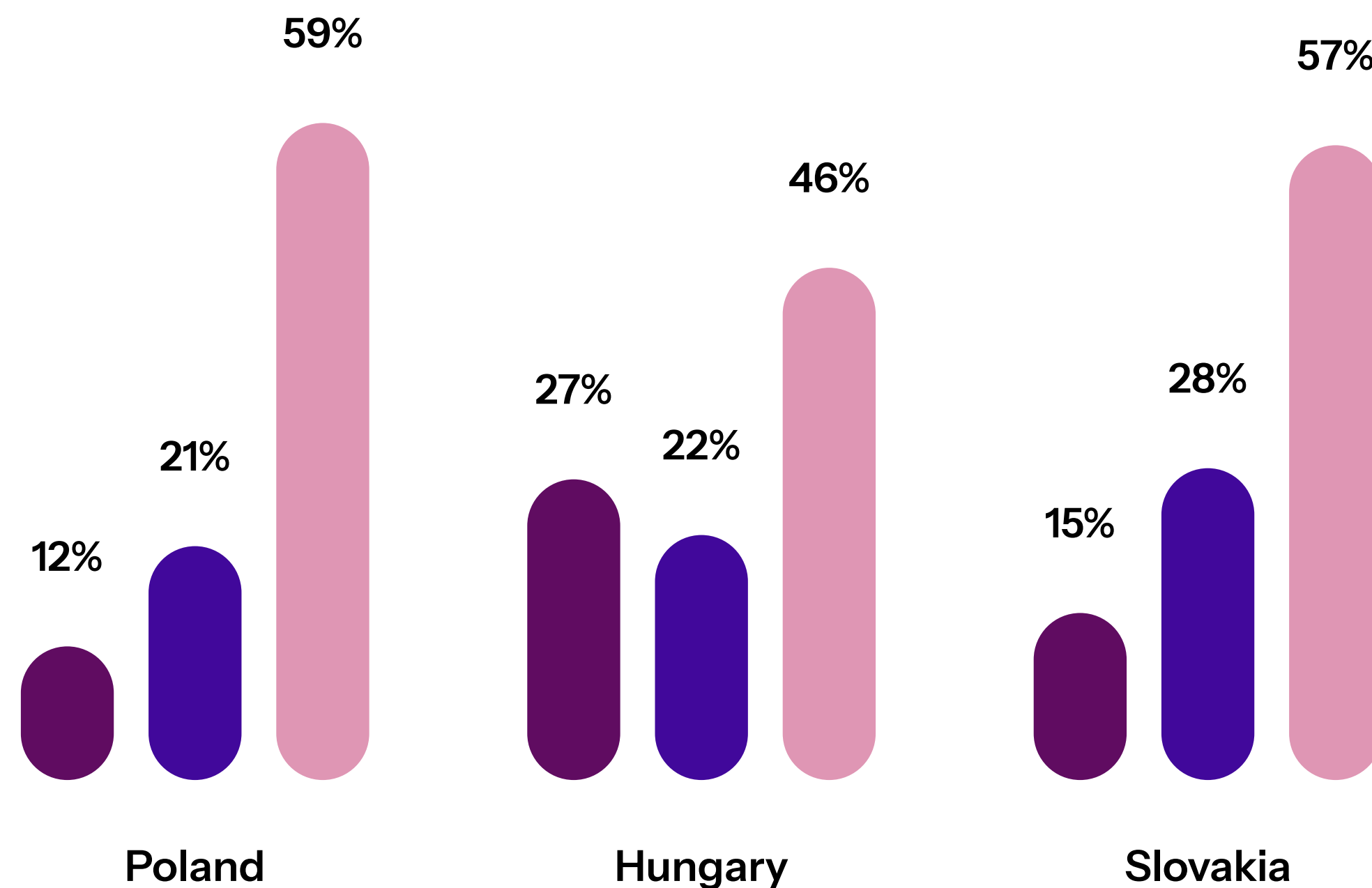


A relatively low percentage of young people (between 21 and 28%) had publicly shared or expressed their ideas on politics or important public issues through blogs, comments to the media, social networks, or online forums.

Publicly sharing or expressing your ideas on politics or important public issues through blogs, comments to the media, social networks, online forums, etc.

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved

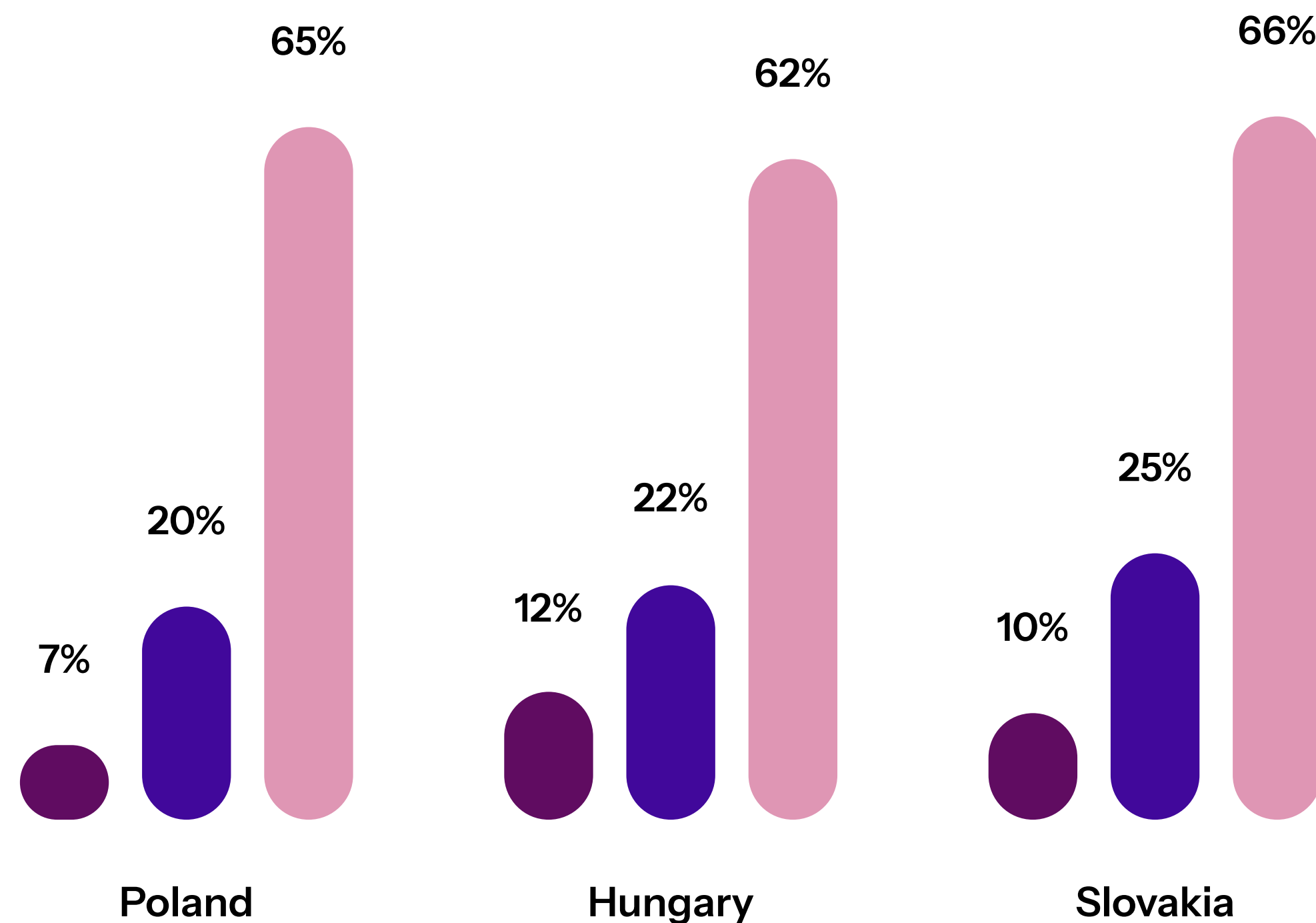


Taking part in a demonstration

Participation in demonstrations was more popular in Slovakia and Hungary than in Poland (28% and 27% versus 12%).

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved

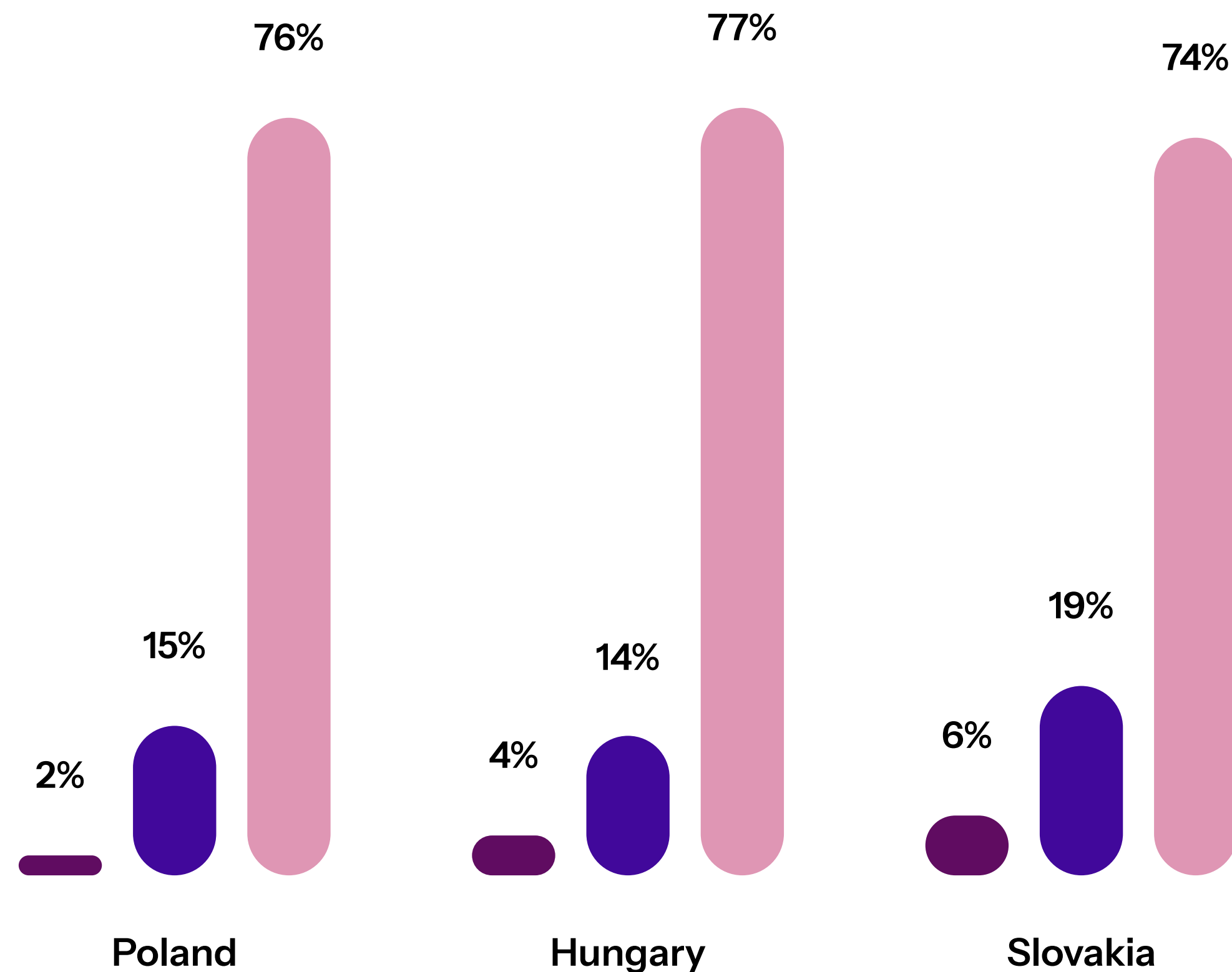


Contacting a politician or local political representative in relation to a particular public issue or official request

Relatively few young people engage in more active participation methods, such as taking part in local public consultation processes, speaking publicly in an official discussion or contacting a political representative directly.

1.5 In the last two years, have you been involved in any of the following political and public activities?

● Yes, I have been involved ● No, I have not been involved but I plan to get involved ● No, I have not been involved and I do not plan to get involved



Membership in a political party

Relatively few young people are members of a political party, which may be related to low levels of trust in political parties (see 2.3).

Democratic Values & Identity

2

[Back to Contents](#)

2.1 Attitudes towards two types of political systems

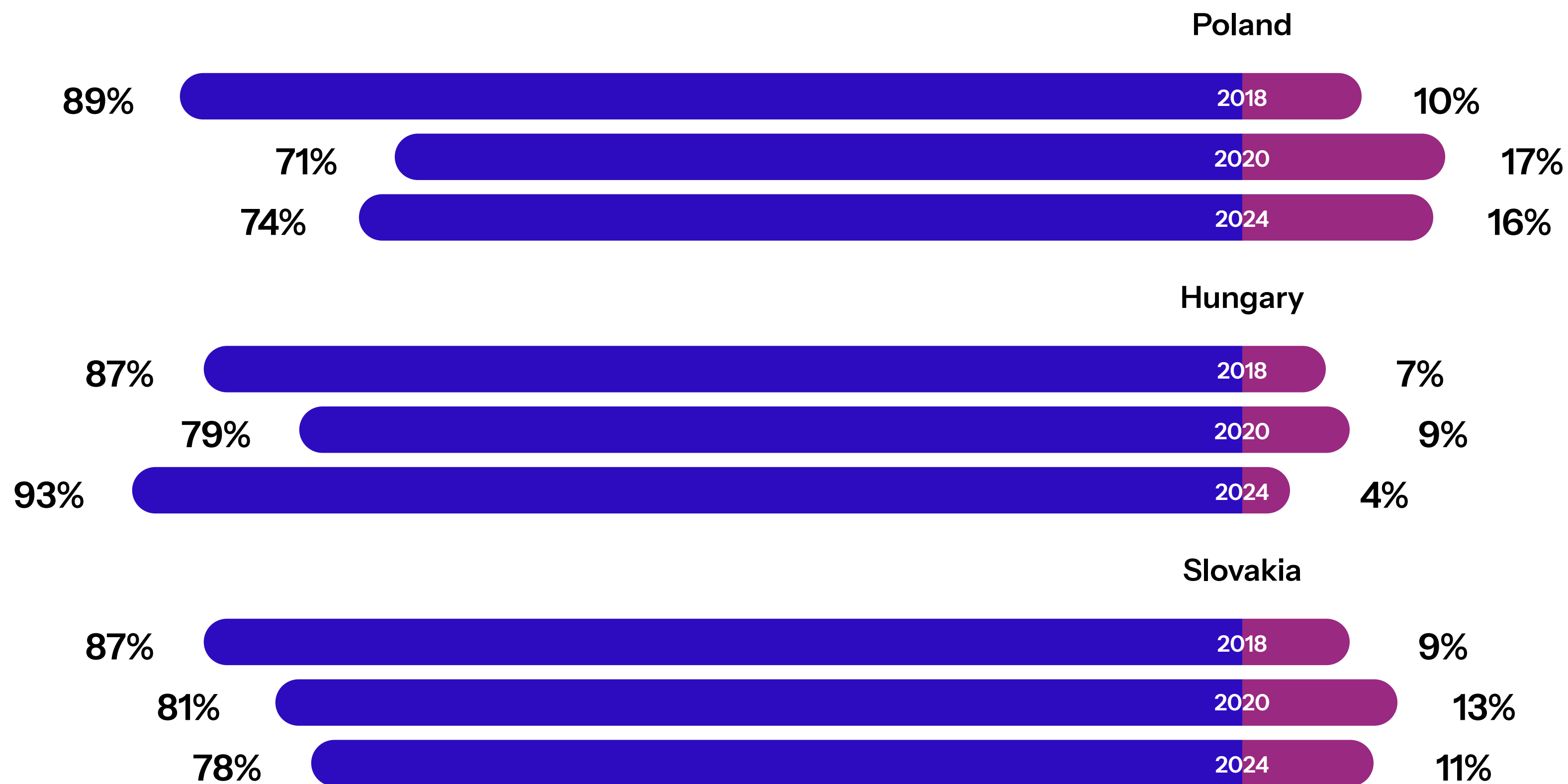
Preference for a democratic political system remains strong across the region, with the strongest demand in Hungary (93%). Support for democratic political systems has decreased among youth by 15% in Poland and 9% in Slovakia since 2018.

Support for a strong leader without checks on power is higher in Slovakia than in the other two countries; more than one-quarter of Slovak respondents think this is a good political system. In Hungary and Poland, support for a strong leader is lower, at 13%. These trends have shifted somewhat over time; support for a strong leader without checks on power has decreased in Poland and Hungary (down from high points of 29% in Hungary in 2018 and 26% in Poland in 2020).

2.1 Do you consider the following political system to be good or bad for your country?

Having a democratic political system in which decisions are made through legislative deliberation and public consultation

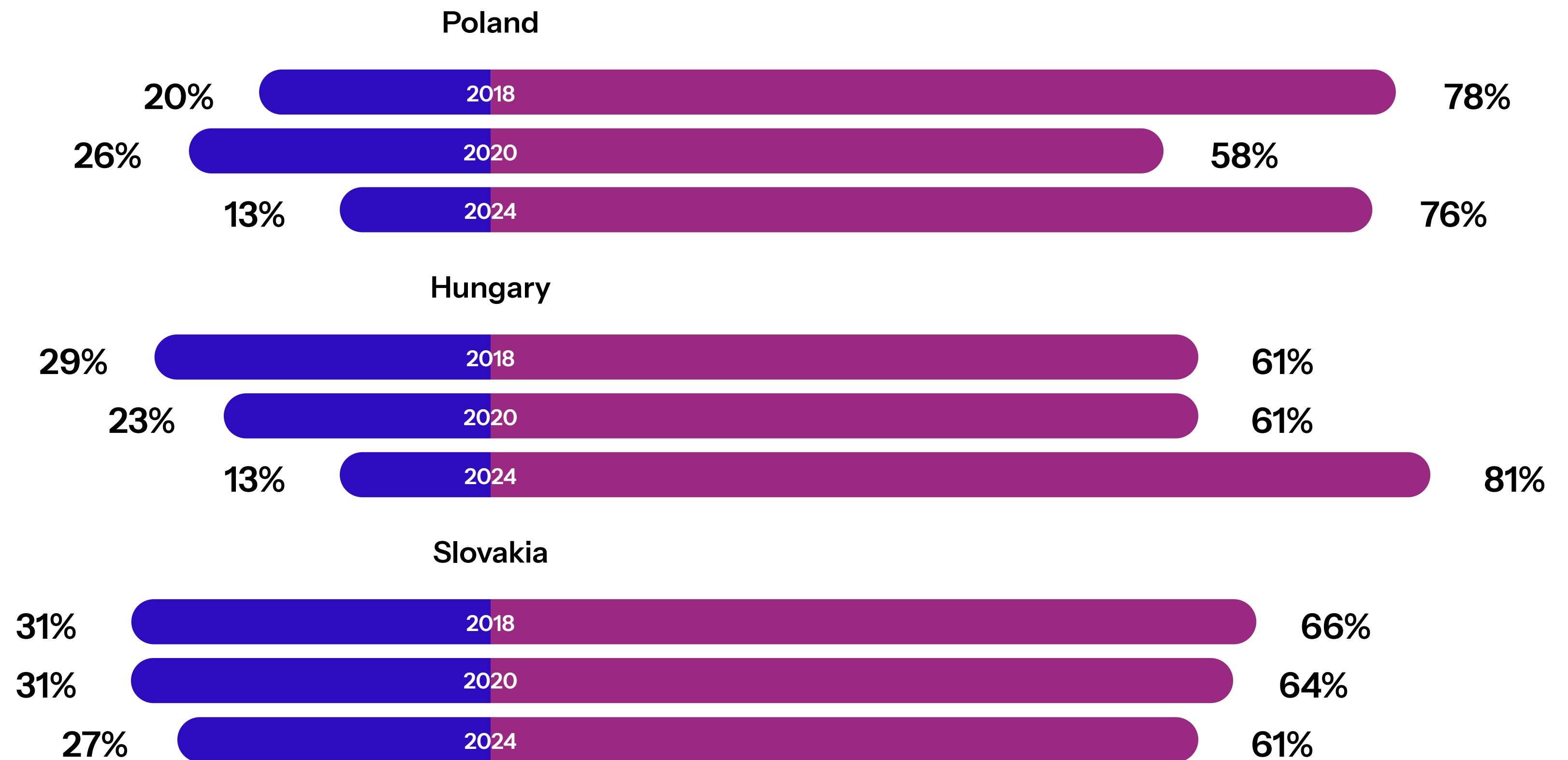
● Good ● Bad



2.1 Do you consider the following political system to be good or bad for your country?

Having a strong leader who does not need to consult with parliament and civil society

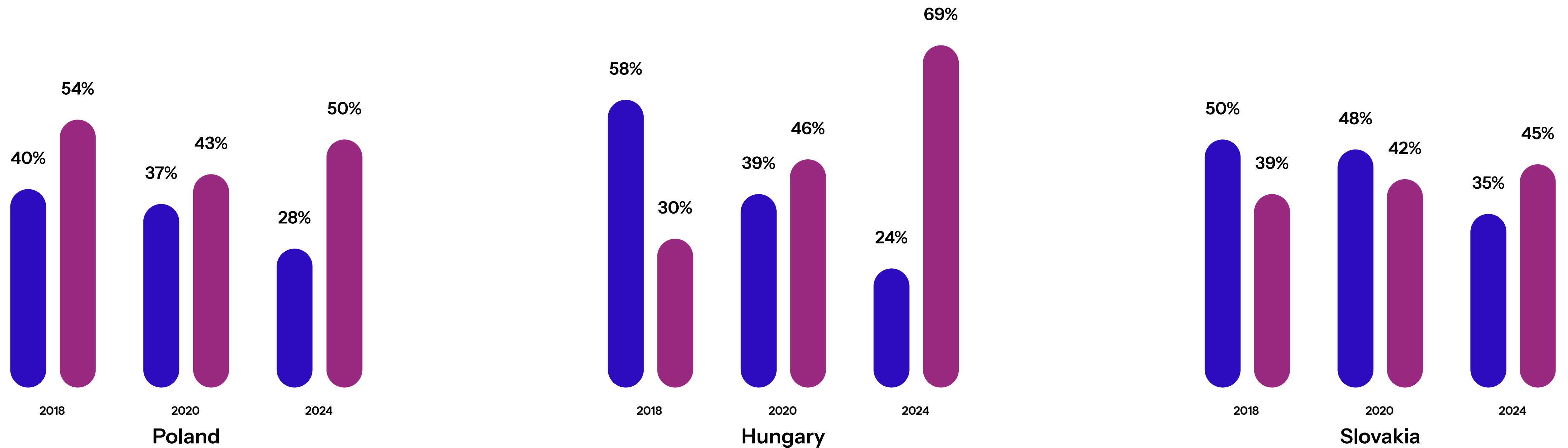
● Good ● Bad



2.2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I would be ready to sacrifice some civil liberties to secure higher standards of living

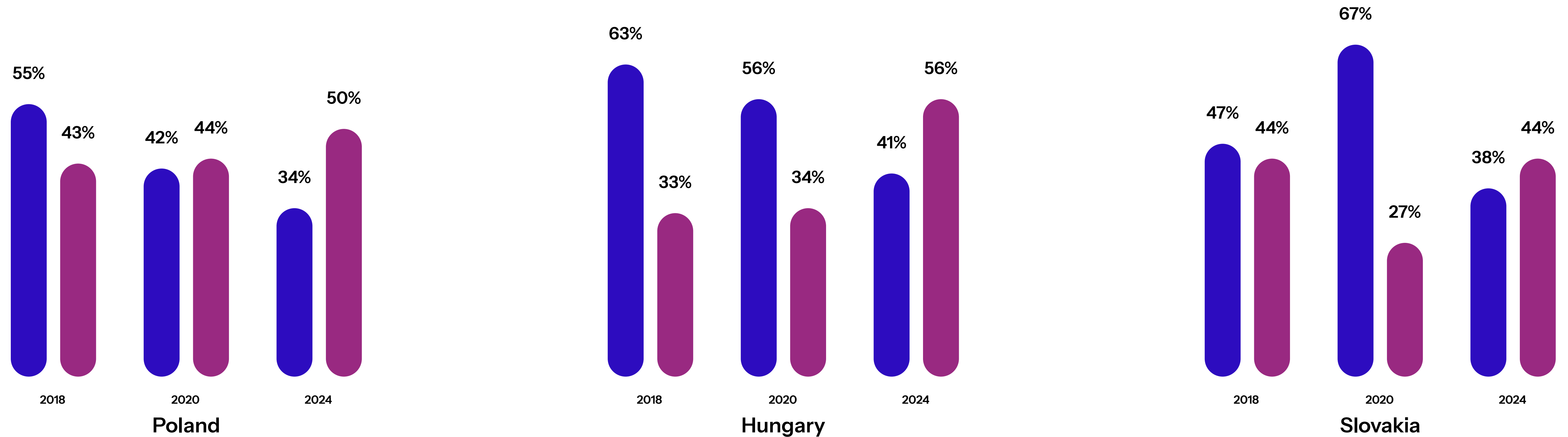
Agree Disagree



2.2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Sometimes, human rights and civil liberties should be restricted in order to better protect people from terrorism and other threats

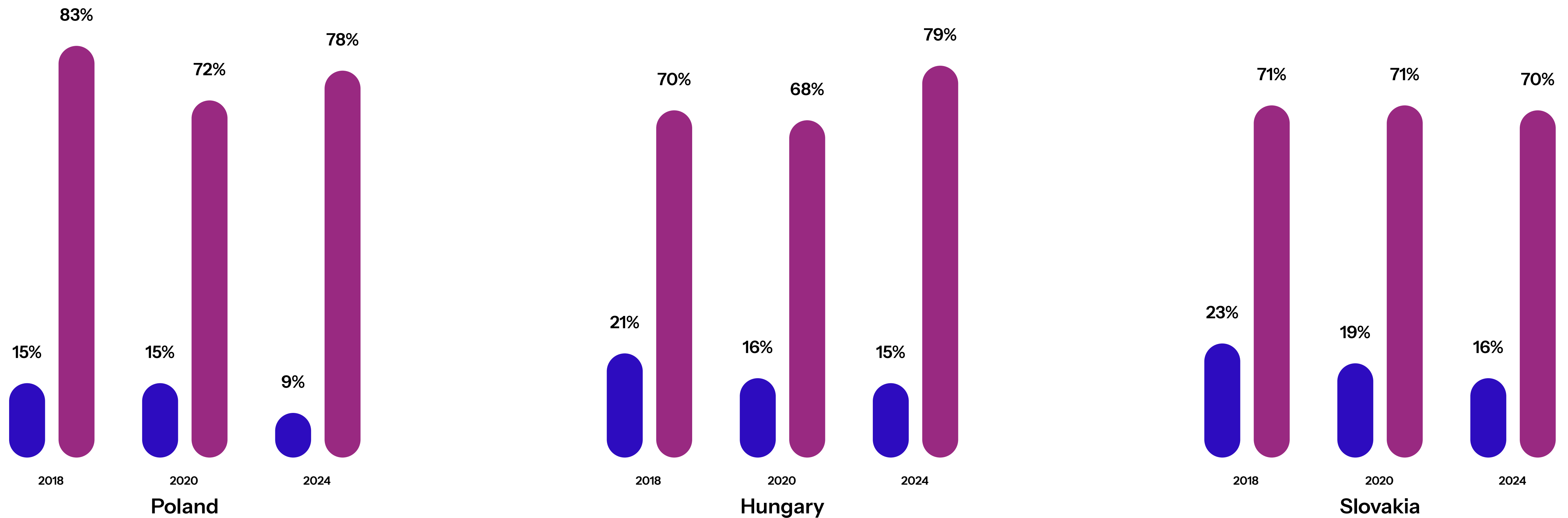
● Agree ● Disagree



2.2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

It does not matter if the government is democratic or undemocratic

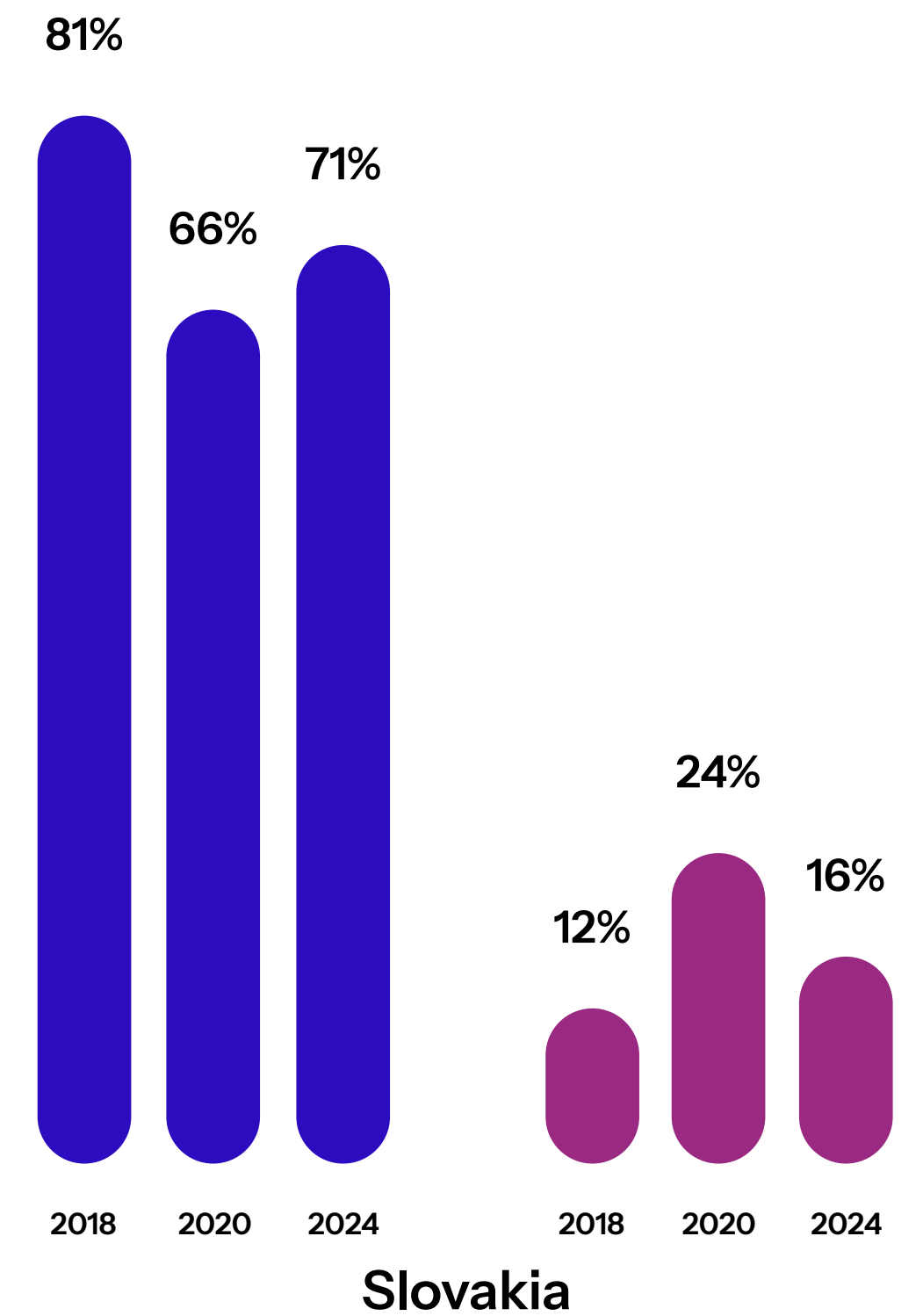
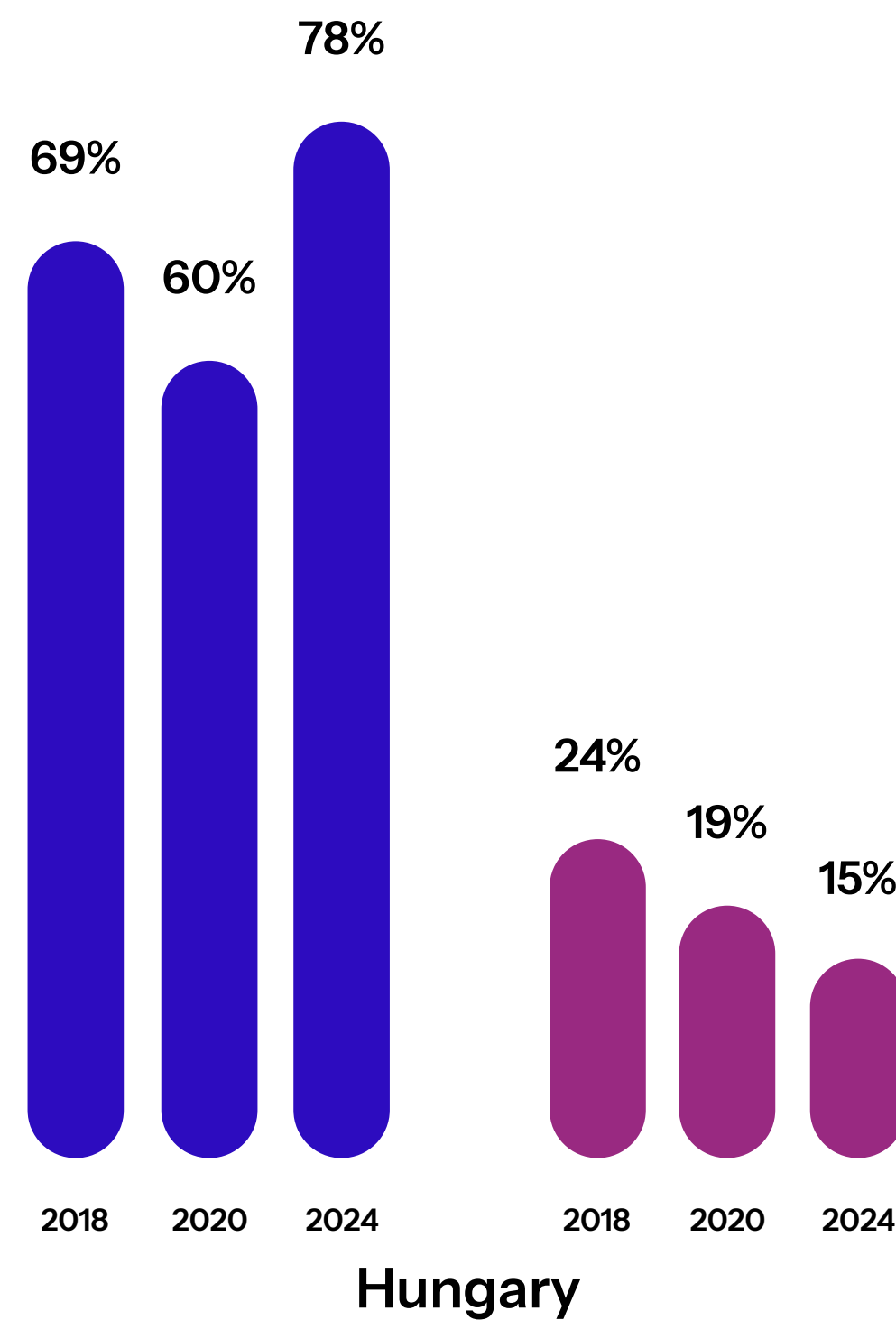
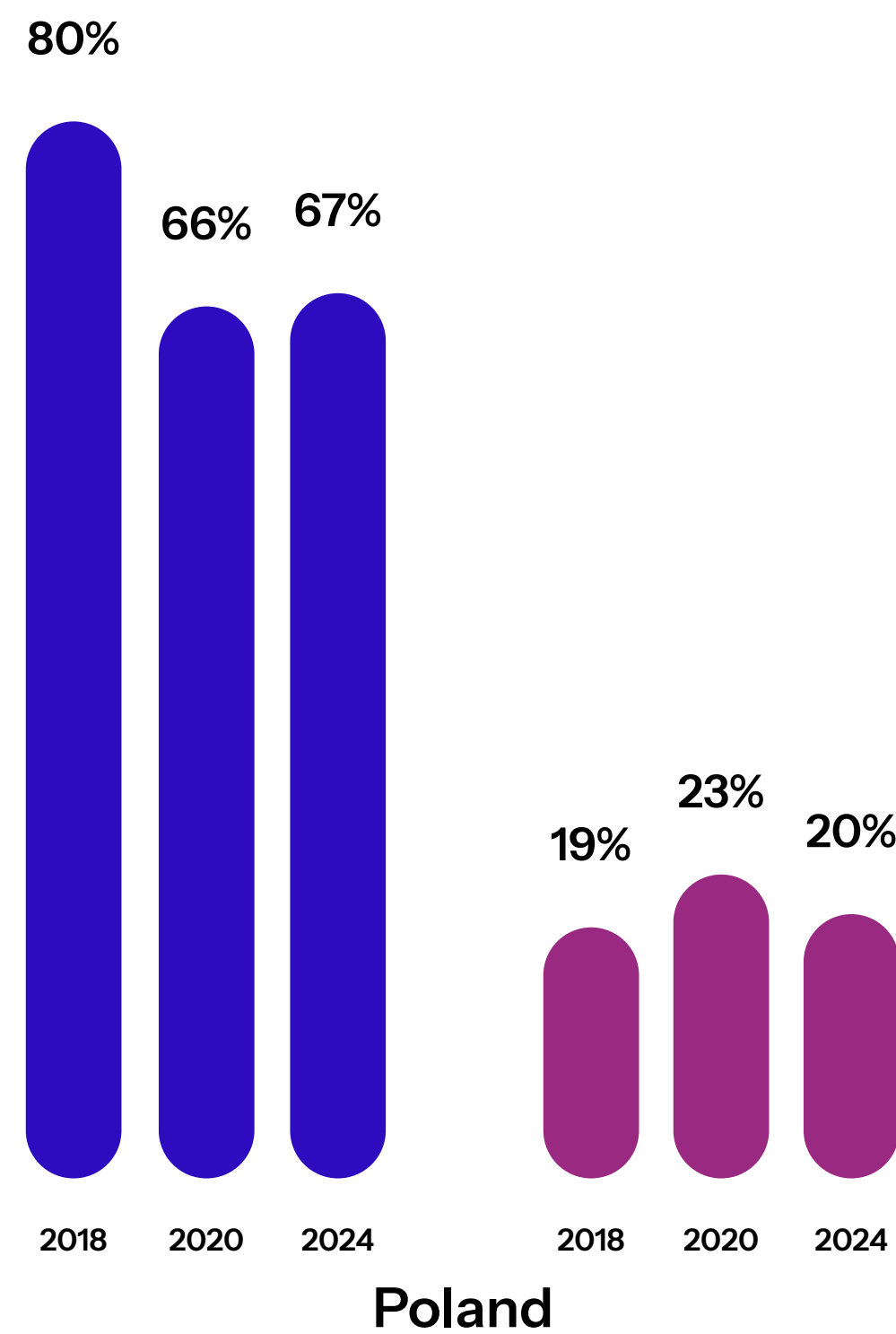
Agree Disagree



2.2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Democracy is the best possible system of government

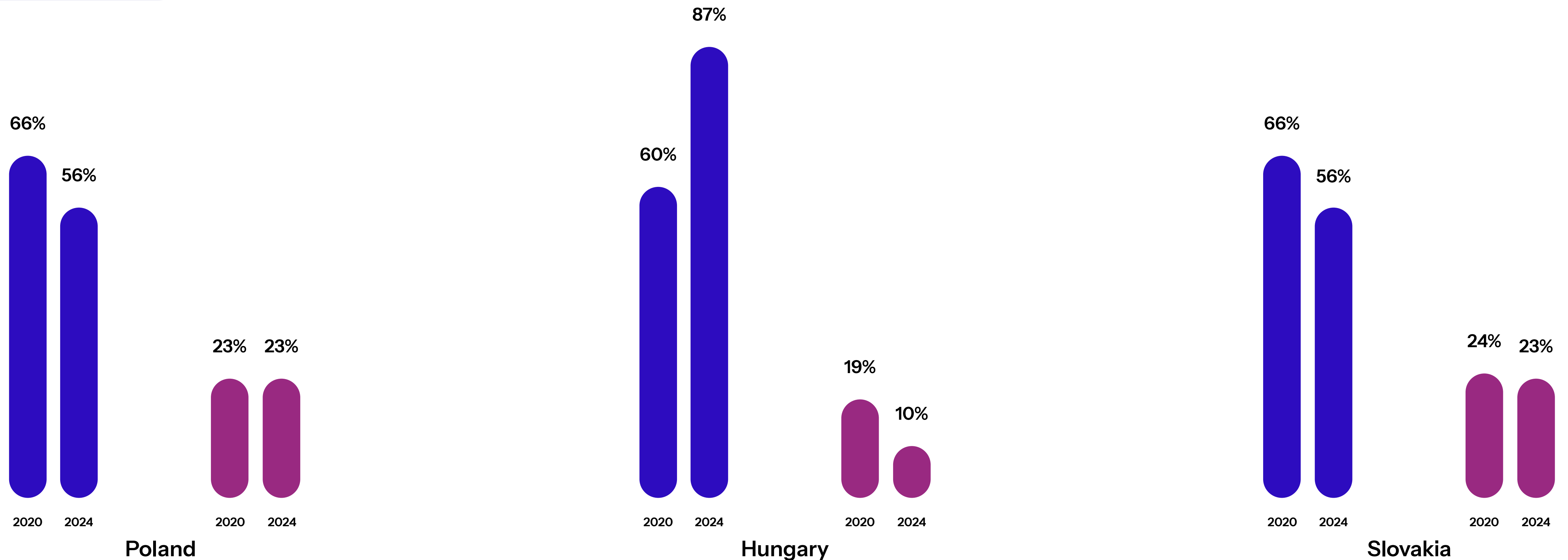
● Agree ● Disagree



2.2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Democracy is the best possible system of government only when it can deliver economic security for people

● Agree ● Disagree

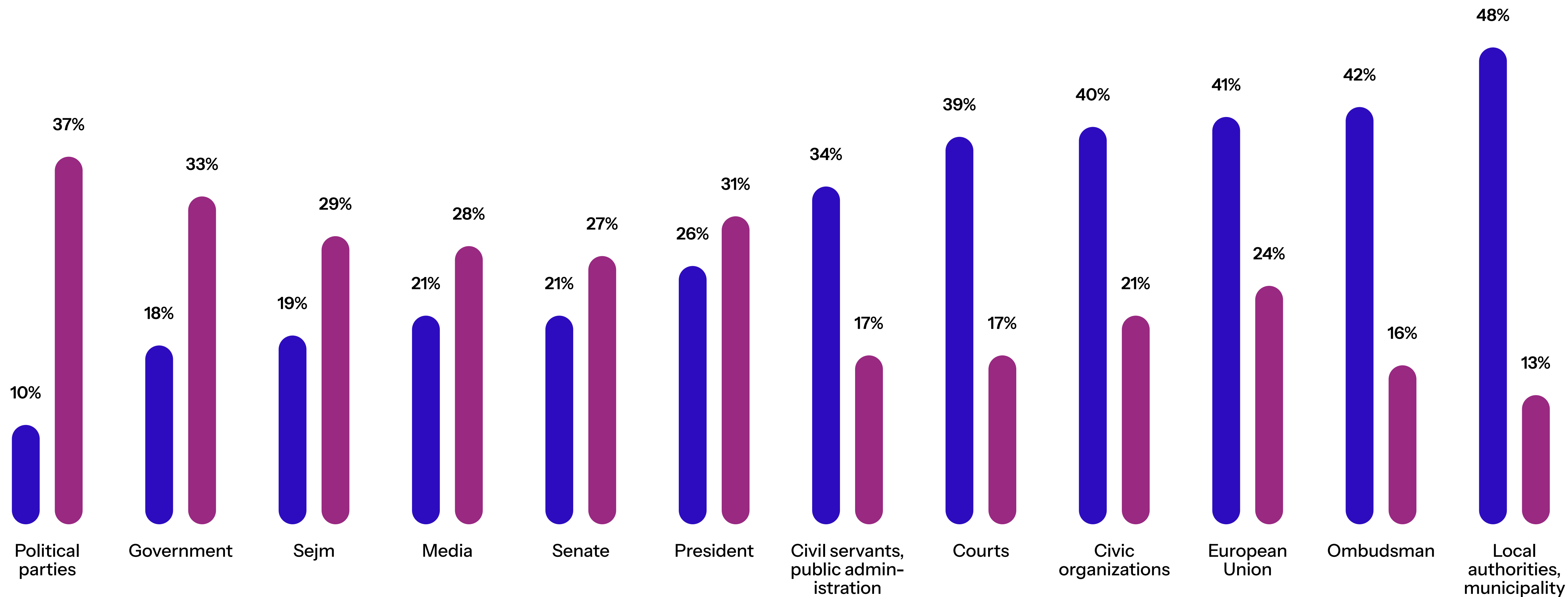


2.3 Trust in Institutions

Young people in both Poland and Slovakia have relatively high levels of trust in European and international institutions, as well as in their local authorities. Young people in Slovakia also show a high level of trust in NATO, while young Poles trust the Ombudsman and civil society organizations (CSOs). Young Poles trust judiciary institutions more than their Slovak counterparts. Political parties, government, and parliamentary bodies do not have high levels of trust among respondents.

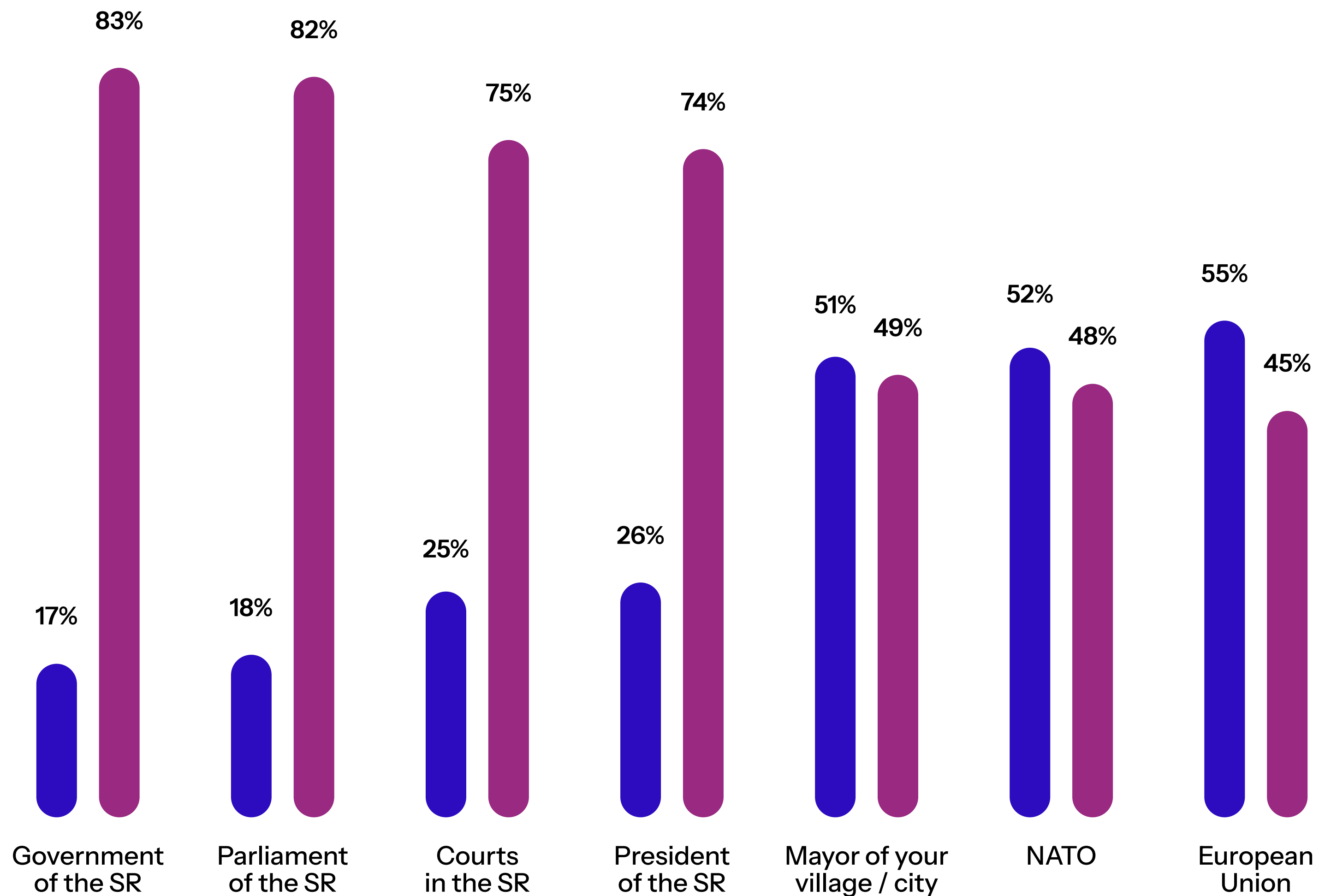
2.3 To what extent do you trust or distrust the following institutions? Poland

Trust Distrust



2.3 To what extent do you trust or distrust the following institutions? Slovakia

Trust Distrust



2.4 Identity

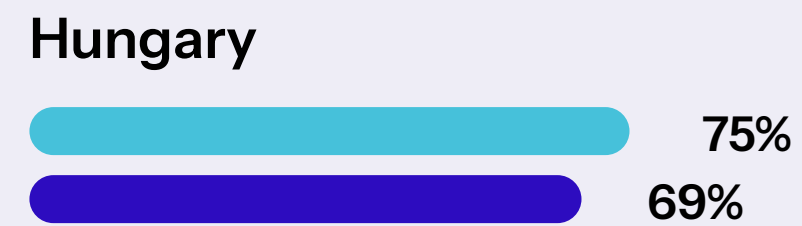
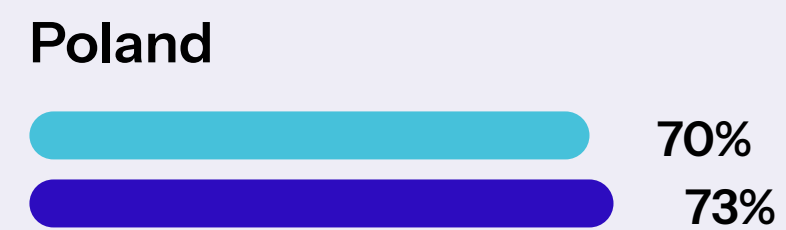
Youth across the three countries identify most strongly with their nation and with Europe - with the latter increasing since 2020. In some countries, youth identify more strongly with a European identity than with a national identity. Further, while a very low percentage of youth say they are members of a political party (see *1.6 Engagement in Politics and Public Activities*), about half of the respondents say they identify with the political party for which they vote.

2.4 With which of the following entities do you identify?

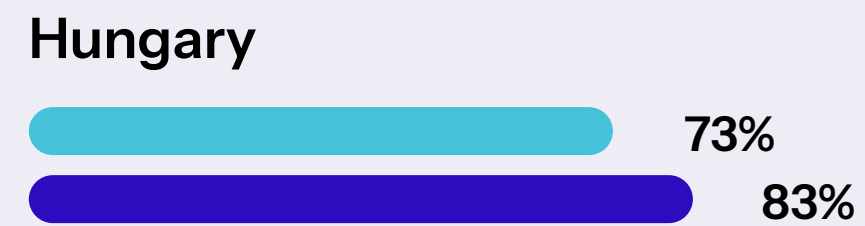
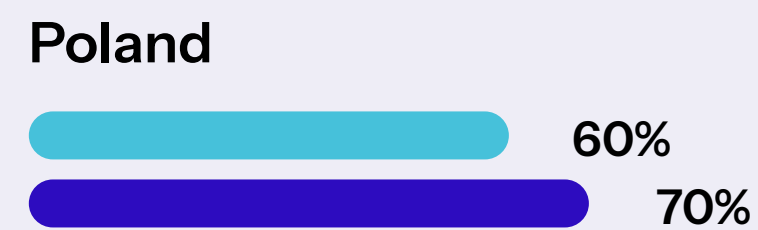
2020 2024



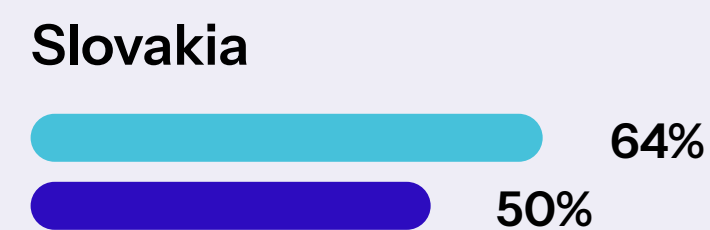
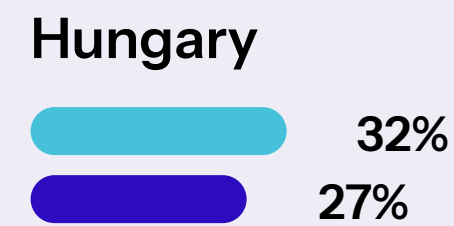
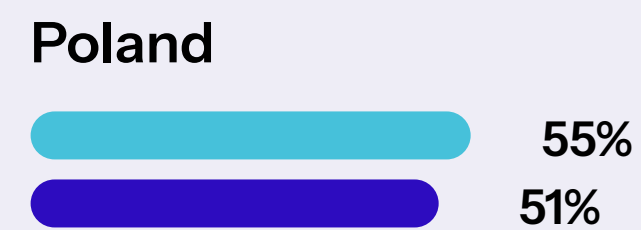
My nation



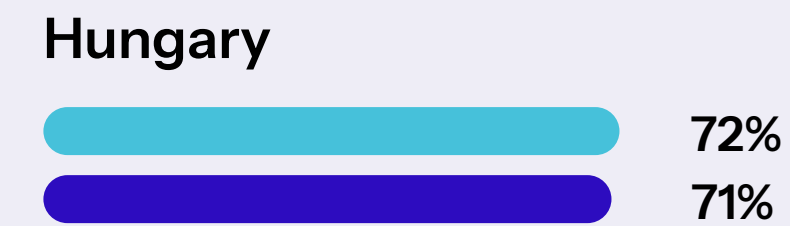
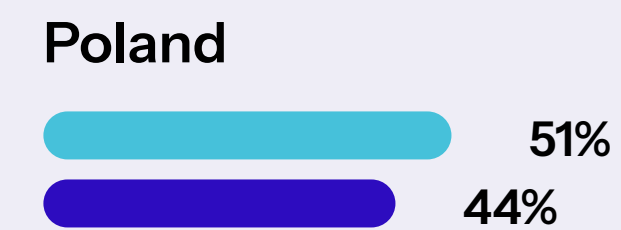
Europe



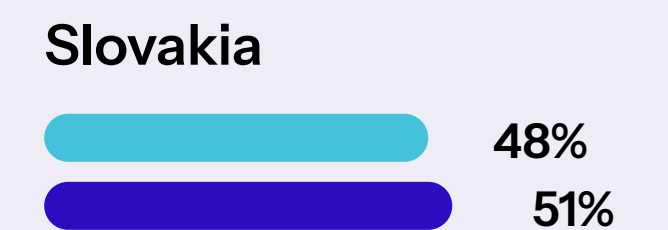
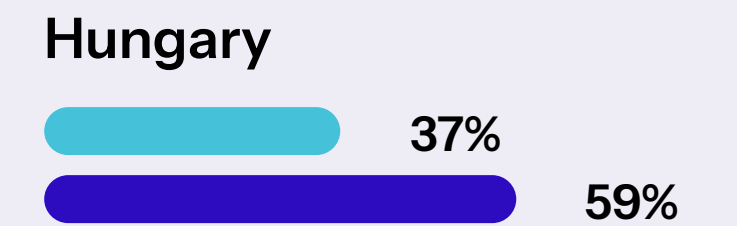
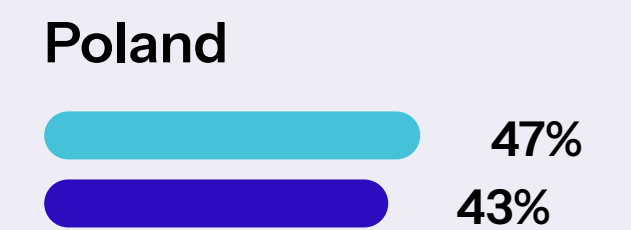
My religion



My local community



Political party I have voted or would vote for



Sources of Information and Political Priorities

3

[Back to Contents](#)

3.1 Sources of Information about Society and Politics

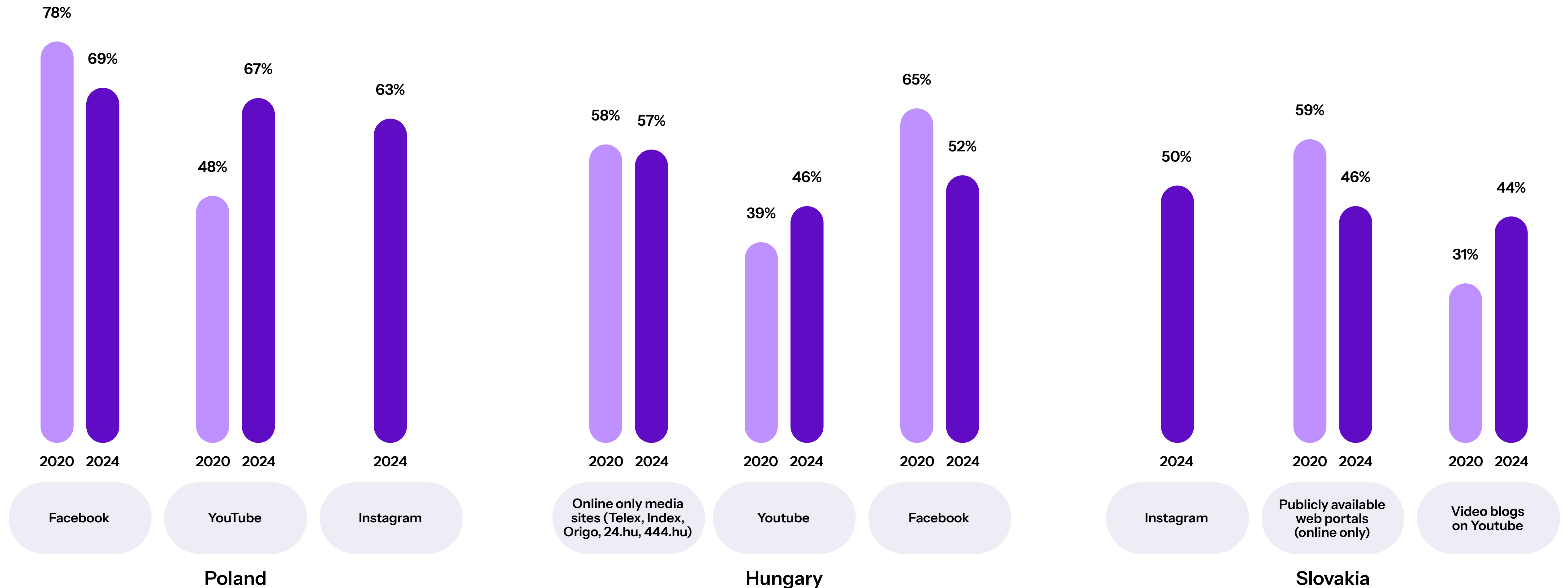
Media

Most young people in Central Europe get their information on society and politics via online media sites, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, while traditional forms of media are less popular. YouTube, as a source of political information, has become more popular since 2020.

3.1 How often do you access the following sources for information about society and politics?

Regularly 2020 Regularly 2024

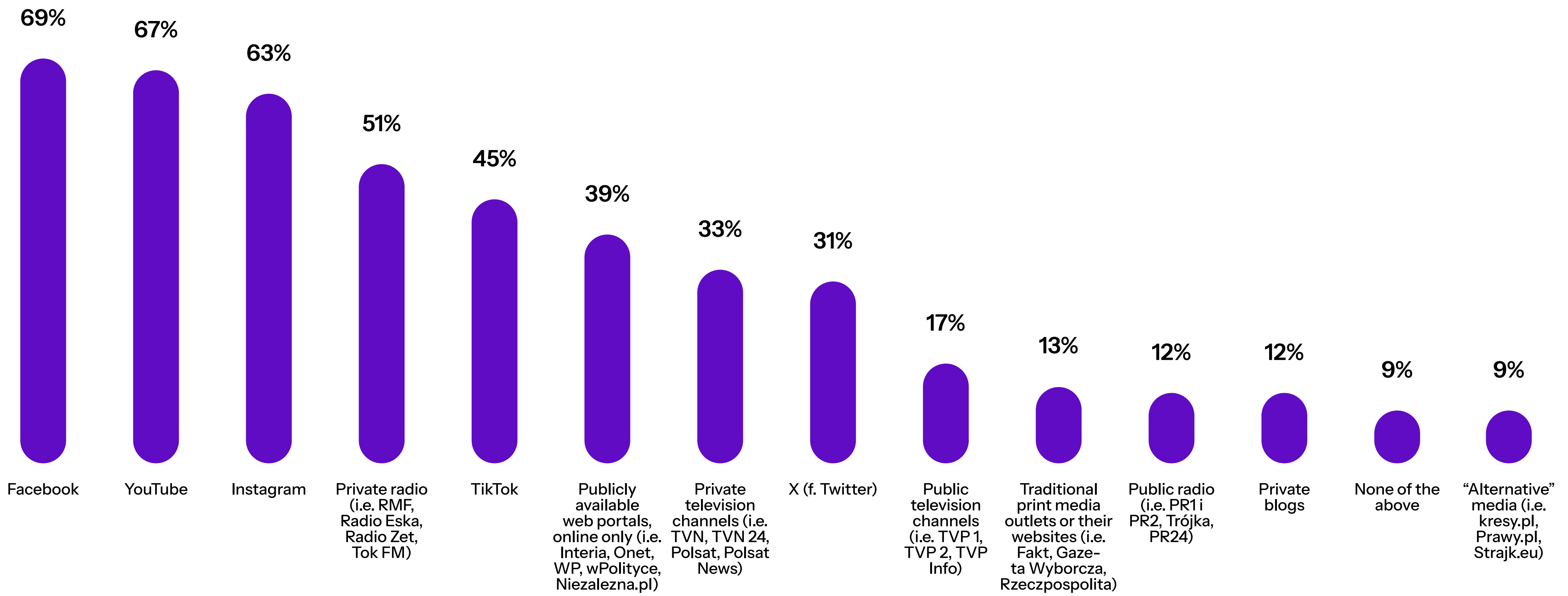
The top three sources of information for each country are shown.



3.1 How often do you use these sources of information about society and politics?

 Poland

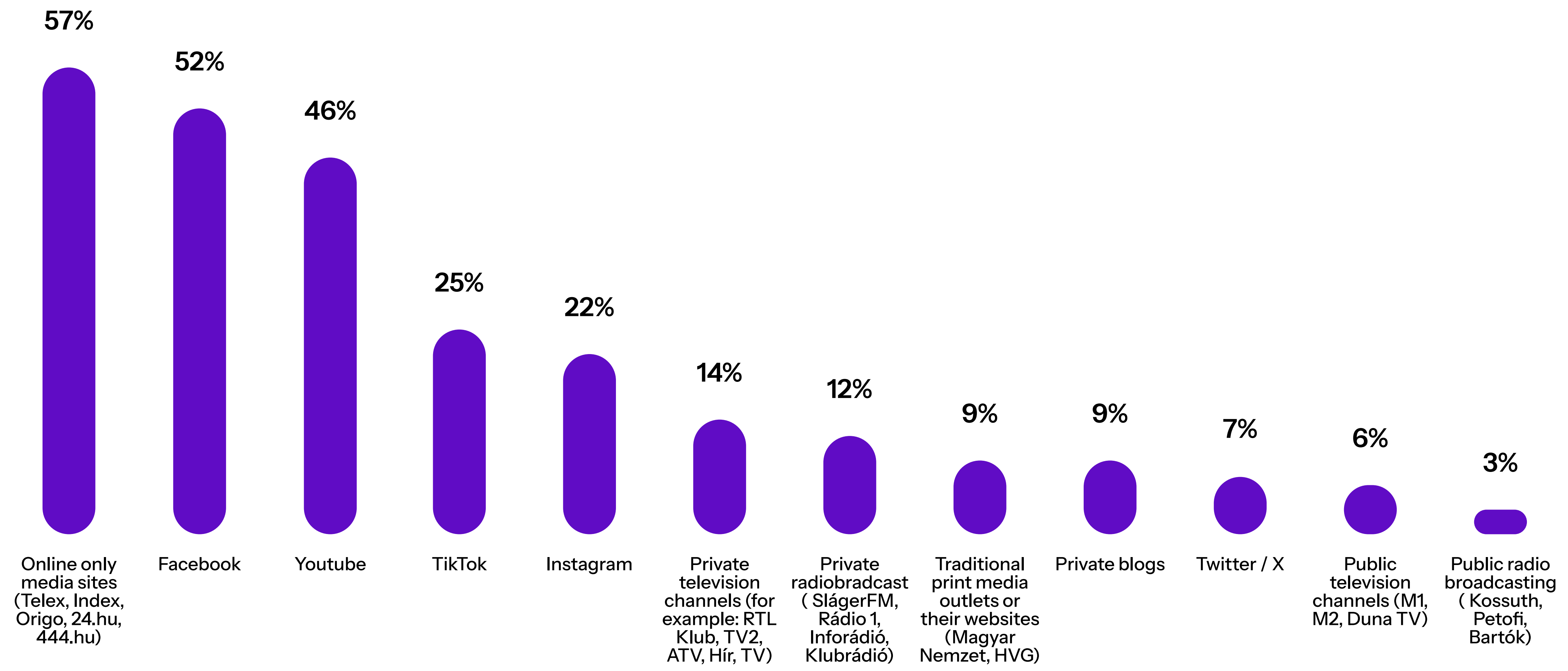
Regularly 2024



3.1 How often do you use these sources of information about society and politics?

 Hungary

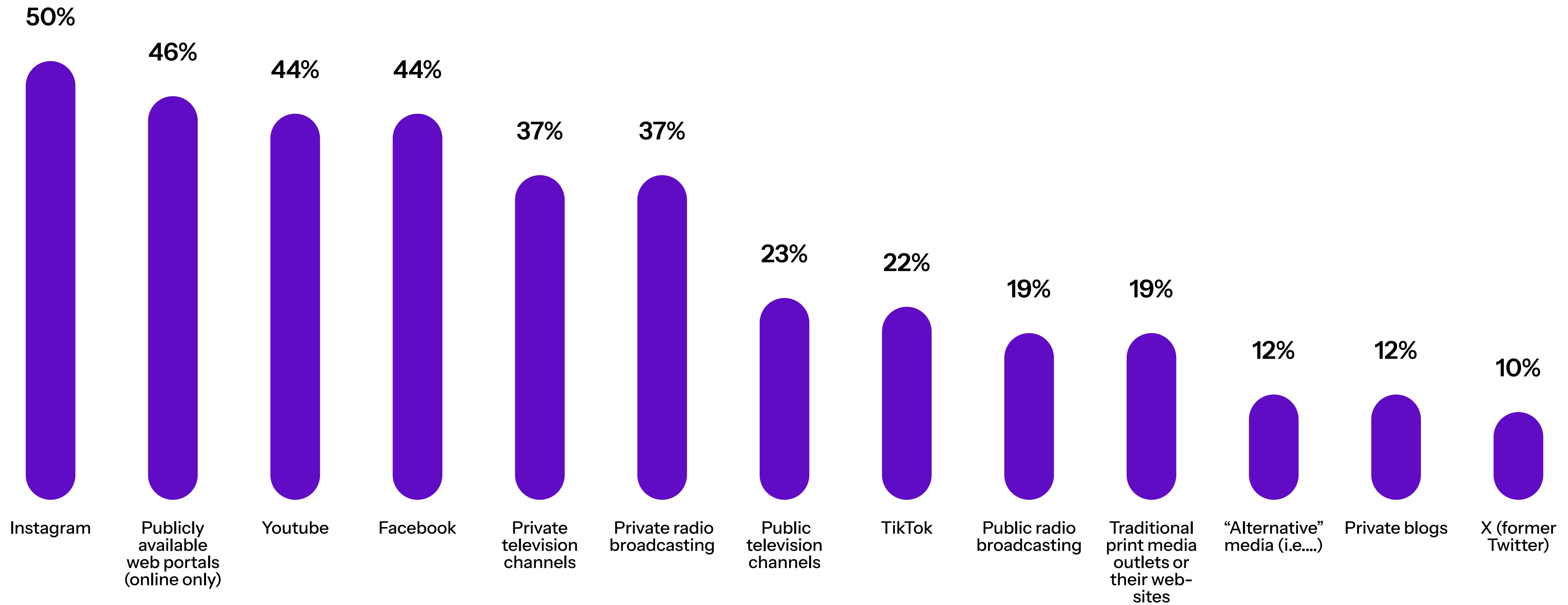
Regularly 2024



3.1 How often do you use these sources of information about society and politics?

 Slovakia

Regularly 2024



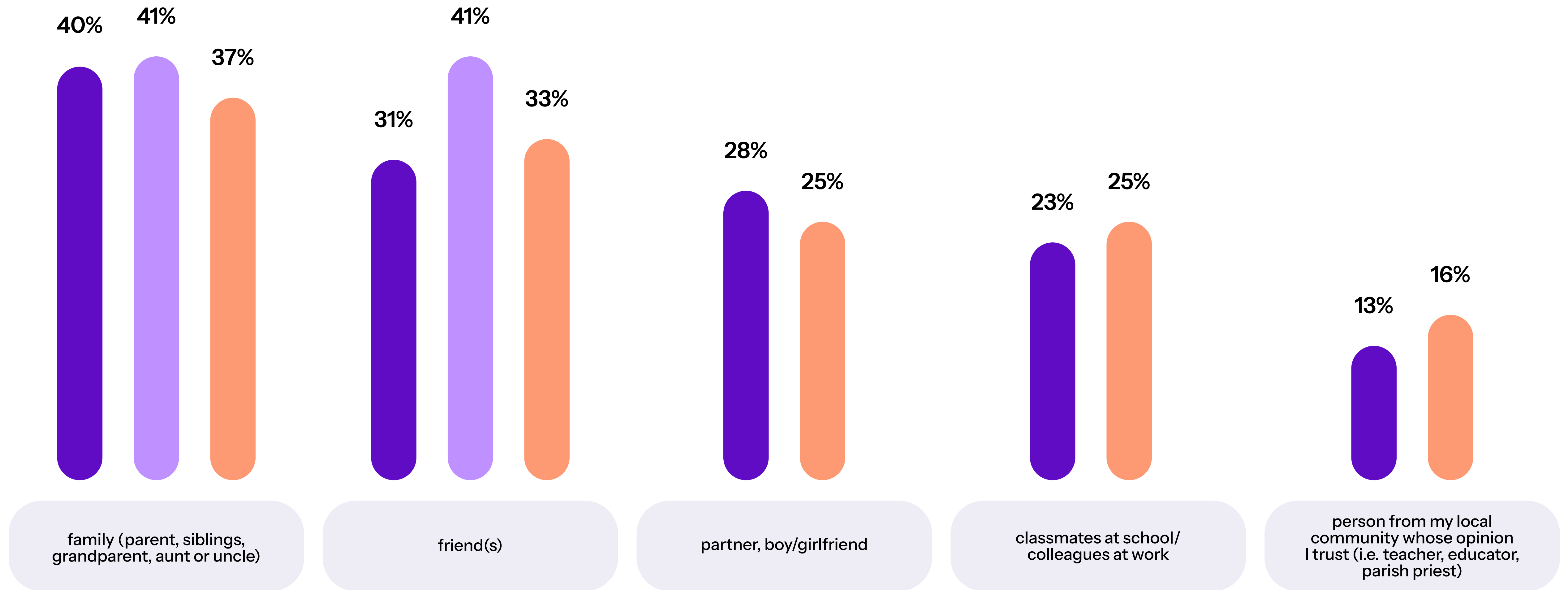
3.2 Sources of Information about Society and Politics

Social contacts

Young people across the three countries primarily turn to their family members (around 40% in each country) and friends (between 31 and 41%) to discuss political and societal issues. Only occasionally do they seek out trusted opinion leaders in their communities (e.g., teacher, religious leader).

3.2 Do you regularly discuss public and political issues with...?

Poland Hungary Slovakia



Country Issues



[Back to Contents](#)

4.1 Hierarchy of problems in the country

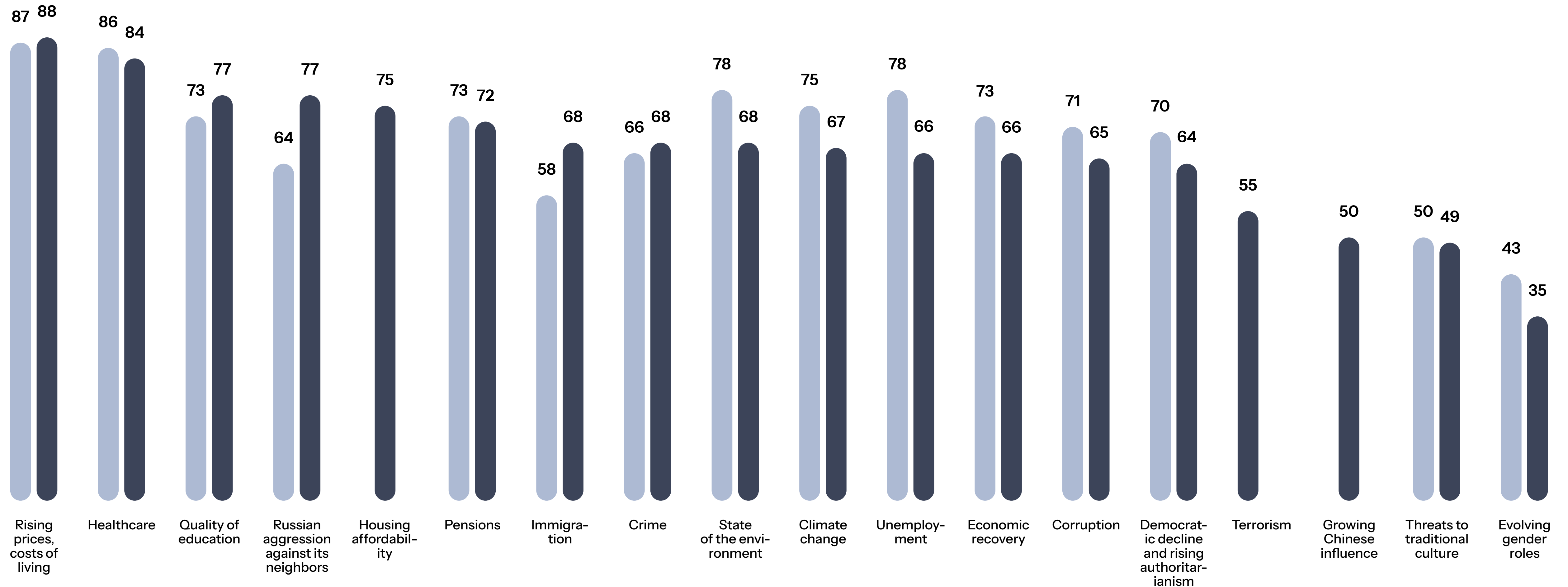
The most serious problems according to youth are rising prices and cost of living and the state of healthcare.

In Hungary and Poland, the other leading problem is quality of education, while in Slovakia secondary issues include housing affordability and corruption.

In contrast to the 2020 research, the environment and climate change issues are not among youth's top five problems in any of the countries.

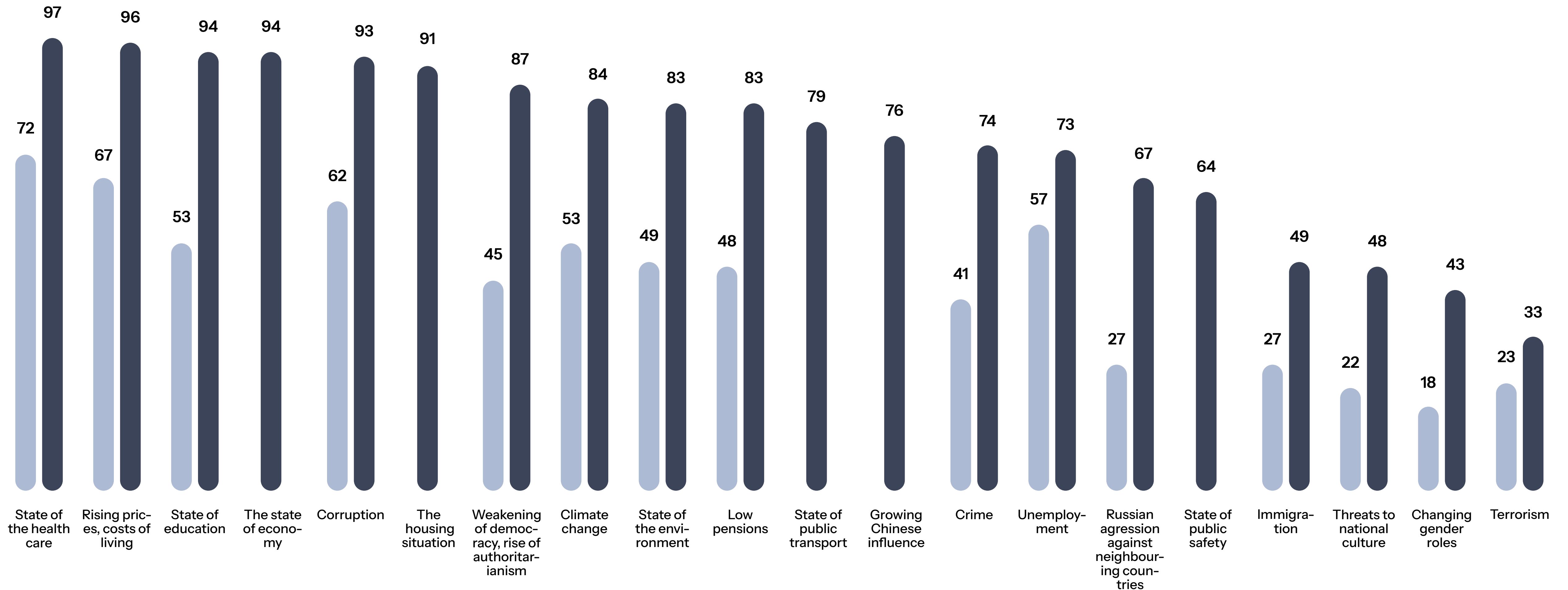
4.1 To what extent is each of the following issues a serious problem in your country? Poland

● Serious problem 2020 ● Serious problem 2024 (%)



4.1 To what extent is each of the following issues a serious problem in your country? Hungary

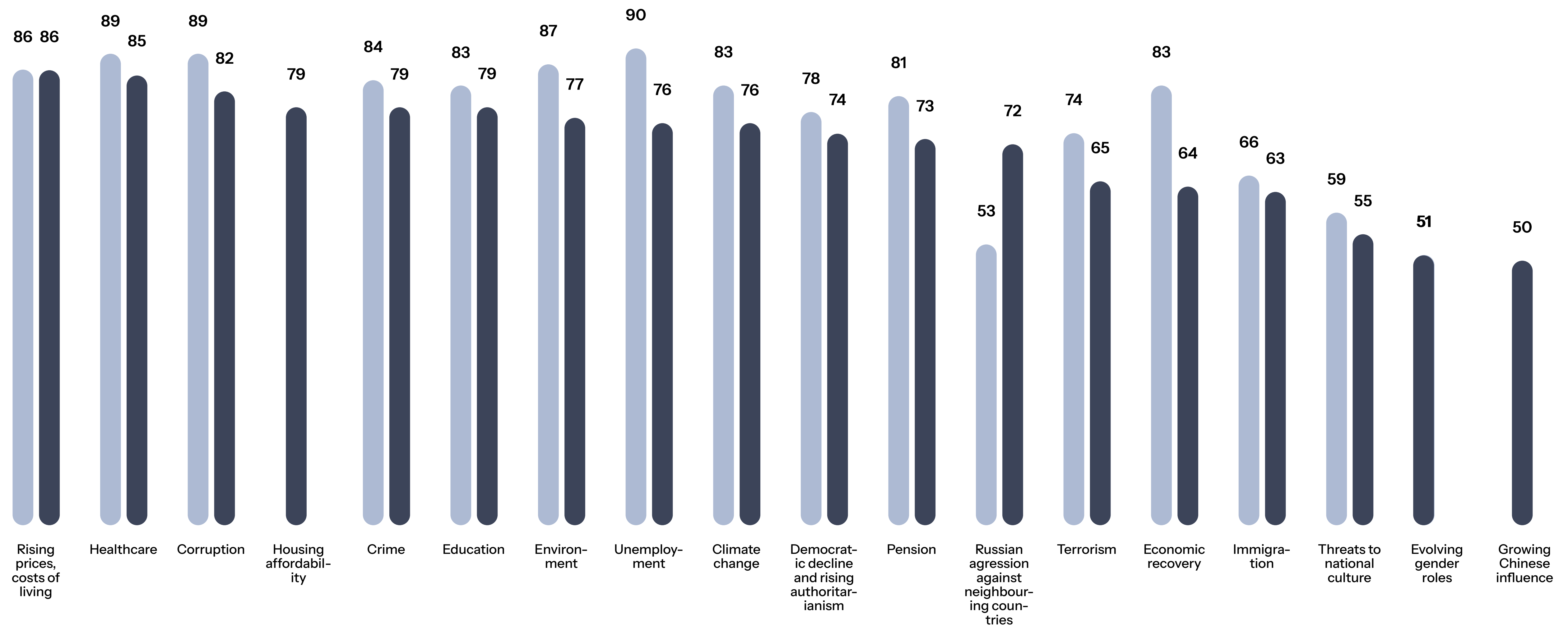
● Serious problem 2020 ● Serious problem 2024 (%)



4.1 To what extent is each of the following issues a serious problem in your country?

 Slovakia

● Serious problem 2020 ● Serious problem 2024 (%)



Youth Attitudes on Politics and Democracy in Central Europe

November 2024

