

**CONSPIRACY BELIEFS,
DISINFORMATION, AND
FACTUAL RELATIVISM IN EAST-
CENTRAL EUROPE:
INSIGHTS FROM A
COMPARATIVE SURVEY IN
2024**



Introduction

- **Starting point:** Modern disinformation operates not by convincing people of a single truth but by overwhelming them with conflicting narratives, fostering confusion and doubt and about objective facts and reality. [Factual relativism](#) is a hotbed of belief in conspiracy theories and fake news and can have an impact on elections.
- **The poll:** regional hubs against disinformation under the European Digital Media Observatory ([HDMO](#) and [CEDMO](#)) joint forces to measure the susceptibility of the Hungarian, Czech and Slovak society to disinformation, conspiracy theories and factual relativism. The survey also explored respondents' views on geopolitical issues, their perceptions of the challenges facing the EU, and their attitudes toward Russian aggression against Ukraine. The survey was implemented by [BROD](#) in Bulgaria, allowing for comparative analysis across four countries.



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This project has received funding
from the European Union



Key Findings

- Czech and Slovak respondents are more resistant to disinformation and conspiracy theories, while the Hungarian society is chronically susceptible. Bulgaria occupies a "middle ground," though closer to Hungary.
- False beliefs go hand in hand: those who believe in disinformation are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories, and vice versa.
- Skepticism toward facts and objective reality has reached alarming levels across all four countries. Higher levels of factual relativism led to higher levels of acceptance of conspiracy and disinformation narratives.
- Widespread concerns about election interference from external powers, particularly in Hungary and Bulgaria.
- "Ukraine fatigue" is real.



Methodology

Country	Type of survey	Size of the representative sample	Fieldwork
Bulgaria	CAWI (online)	1,071	25 May – 2 June, 2024
Czechia	CAWI (online)	2,794	17 May – 31 May, 2024
Hungary	CAPI (personal)	1,000	24 May – 2 June, 2024
Slovakia	CAWI (online)	1,834	17 May – 31 May, 2024

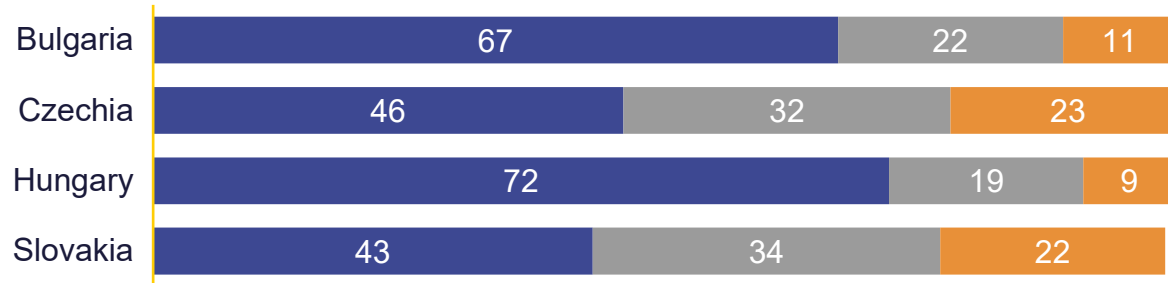


CONSPIRACY MENTALITY AND DISINFORMATION BELIEFS

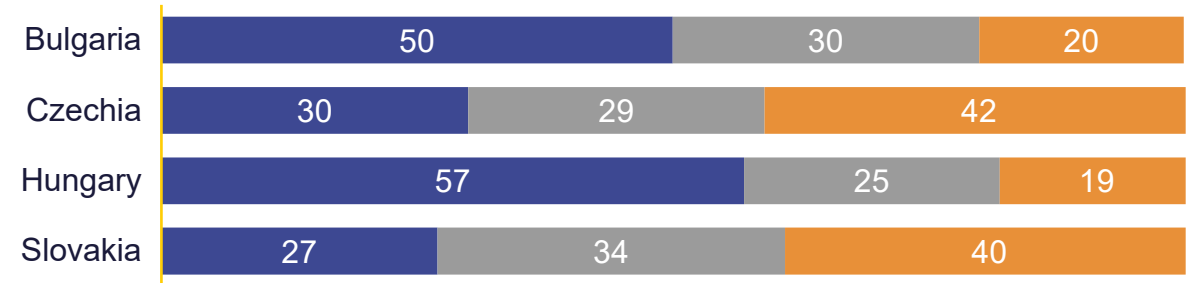


- A large segment of Hungarian society is chronically susceptible to conspiracy thinking and theories.
- Czech and Slovak societies are more resilient, with similar attitudes observed in both countries.
- Bulgaria occupies a "middle ground," though it leans closer to Hungary.
- Conspiracy beliefs strongly correlate with acceptance of disinformation, reflecting a "monological thinking."

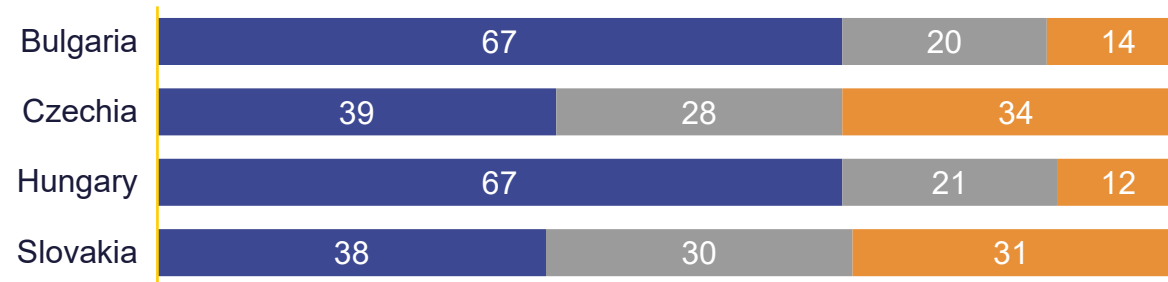
There are secret organizations that greatly influence political decisions



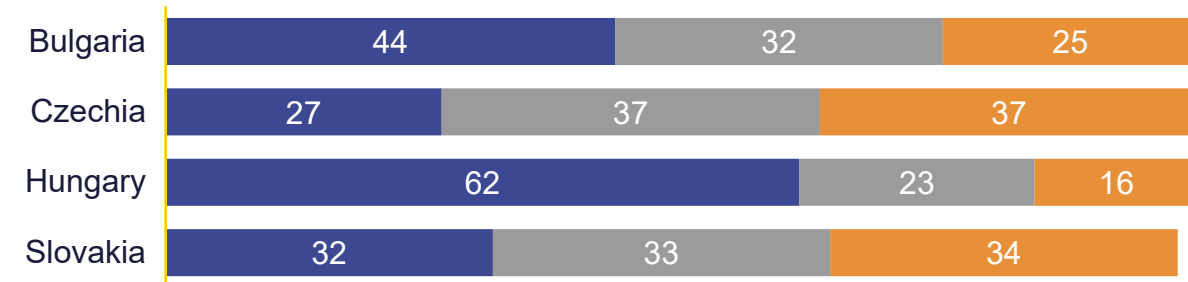
The native population in Europe is being replaced by immigrant population following a grand strategy



The pharmaceutical companies are hiding the cure for diseases from us for commercial interests



Ukraine has previously committed genocide against the Russian minority living on its territory



LEGEND: ■ Agree (strongly or rather) – ■ Neither agree nor disagree – ■ Disagree (strongly or rather)

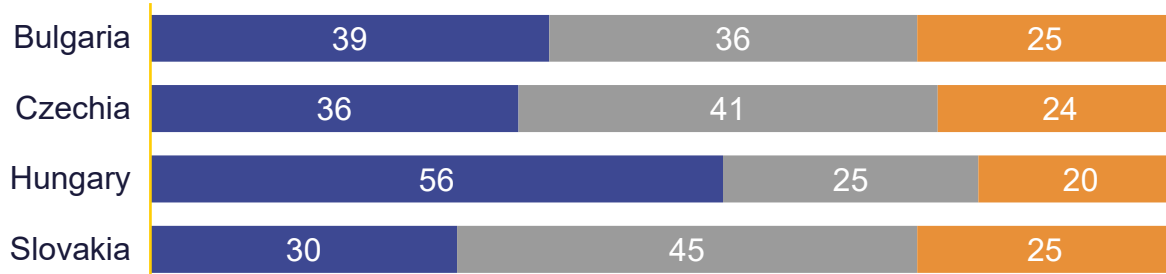
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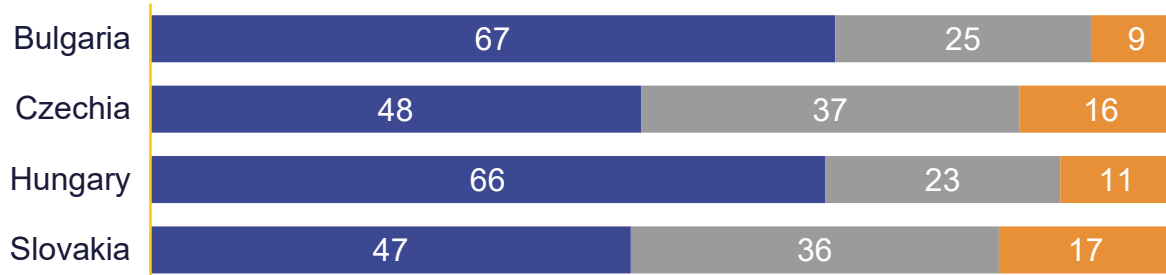
FACTUAL RELATIVISM: WHEN NOTHING IS TRUE BUT EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE



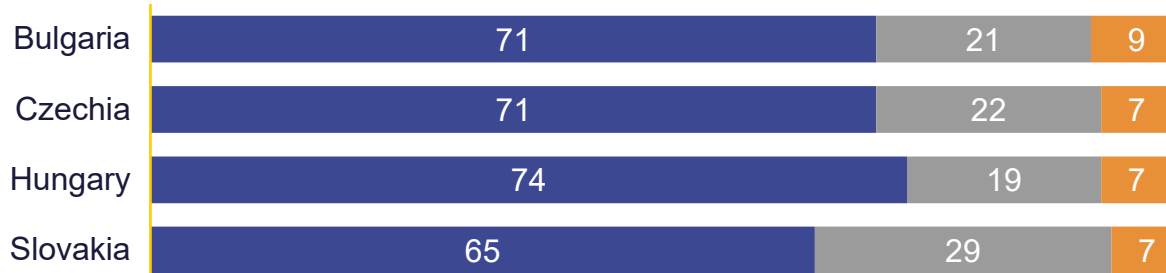
Objective reality does not really exist, there are just different opinions



Many things quoted as fact in the press are really just opinions



We cannot be sure that what is communicated as fact is true



- Skepticism toward facts and objective reality has reached alarming levels across all four countries.
- Hungary is the champion of factual relativism – deeply rooted in the mistrust of media.
- More than two-thirds of citizens in the four countries question the credibility of information presented as fact ("We cannot be sure that what is communicated as fact is true")
- This pervasive skepticism and pessimism create an ideal environment for disinformation and conspiracy theories to flourish and spread.

LEGEND: ■ Agree (strongly or rather) – ■ Neither agree nor disagree – ■ Disagree (strongly or rather)

ELECTION INTERFERENCE: ENEMIES EVERYWHERE



How likely or unlikely do you think it is that China, Russia, or the United States will try to influence this year's European Parliament elections in your country?

LEGEND: ■ Likely (very or rather)



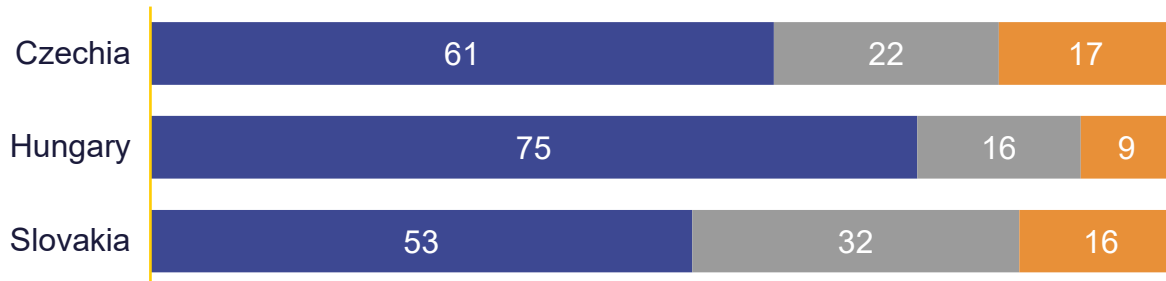
- Widespread concerns about election interference from external powers, particularly in Hungary and Bulgaria.
- Czech Republic: Russia is perceived as the primary threat to the EU elections.
- Bulgaria: The United States is viewed as the most likely source of interference
- Slovakia and Hungary: Citizens expect potential interference from both Russia and the United States.
- Across the region, China is viewed as a more distant threat compared to other external powers.
- In CZ, HU and SK, party preference significantly influences these opinions.
 - Fidesz voters see a much higher chance of US intervention than opposition voters.
 - In Czechia, SPOLU supporters consider Russia as a greater threat than opposition voters.
 - In Slovakia, Fico supporters remain more concerned about US interference, while opposition voters see Russia as the real threat.



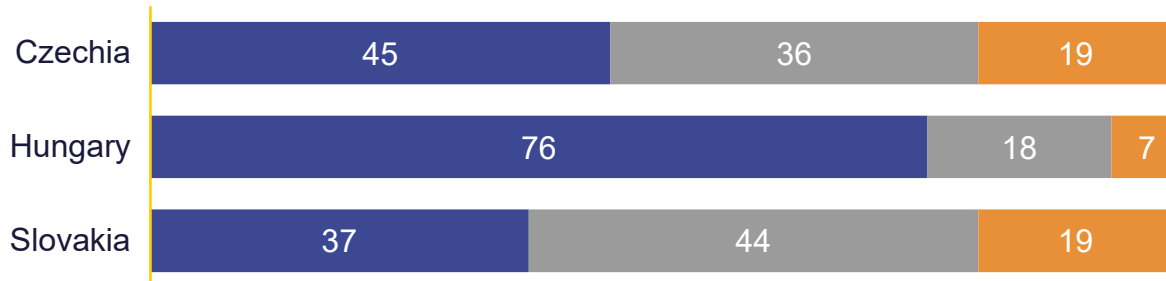
CHALLENGES FOR THE EU



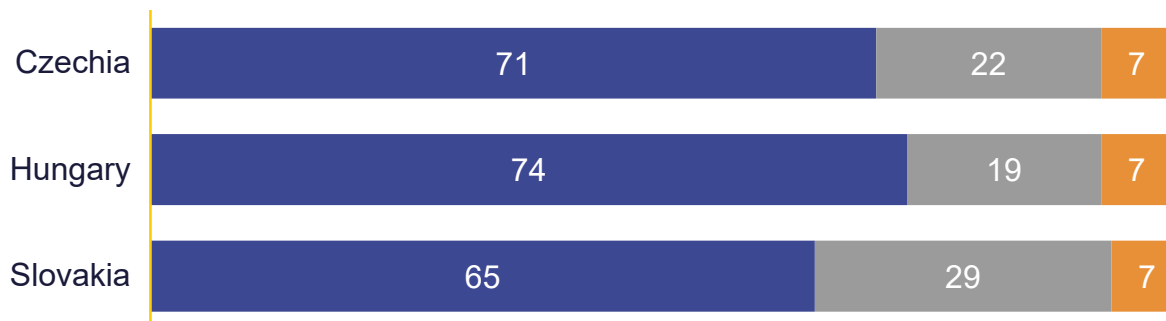
Russian aggression and power interests in Europe



Spreading Chinese influence in the EU



Migration flows to the EU



- External security threats to the EU are perceived as serious and severe
- Hungarians see Russian and Chinese influence as equally important.
- Czechs and Slovaks see the Russian aggression as a bigger challenge than the spread of Chinese influence.
- Migration flows are considered to be a serious important challenge in all three countries.

LEGEND: ■ *Important (very or rather)* – ■ *Neither important nor unimportant* – ■ *Unimportant (very or rather)*

THE EU AND THE WAR

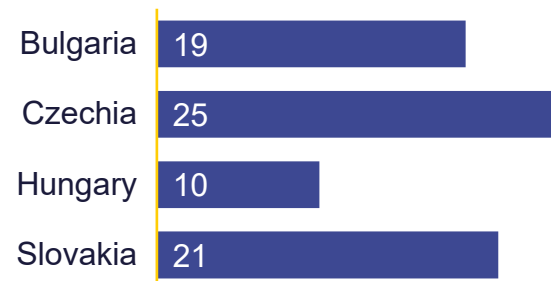


What position do you think the European Union should take on the conflict? You can indicate several options.

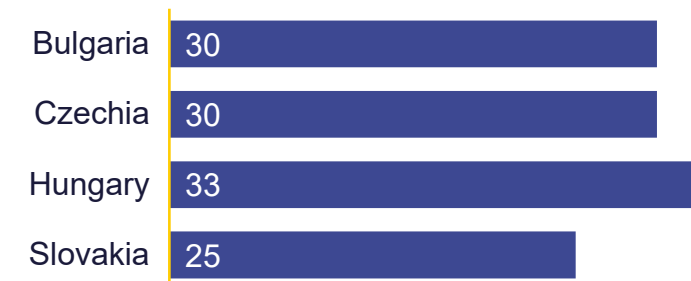
LEGEND: ■ % of mentions

- Less than 25% in all four countries back military support for Ukraine, with Hungarians least supportive (10%) and Czechs most supportive (25%).
- Non-military support has higher approval- but still in minority.
- Support for extending sanctions against Russia is highest among Czechs and lowest among Hungarians and Bulgarians.
- Signs of "Ukraine fatigue" are visible

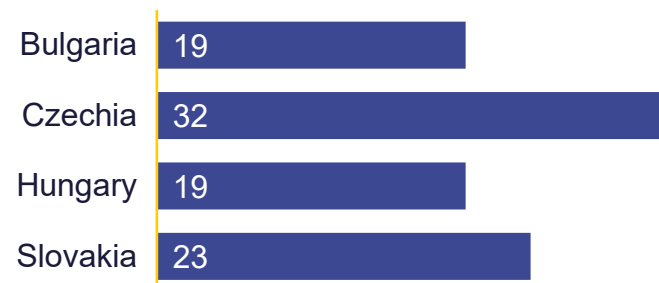
The European Union should support Ukraine militarily



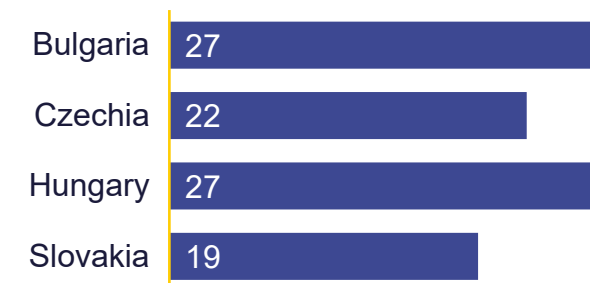
The European Union should support Ukraine non-militarily



The European Union should further strengthen its sanctions policy



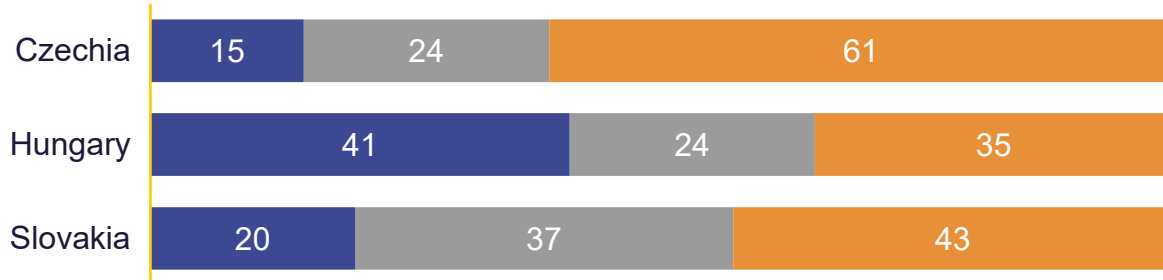
The European Union should put pressure on Ukraine to negotiate



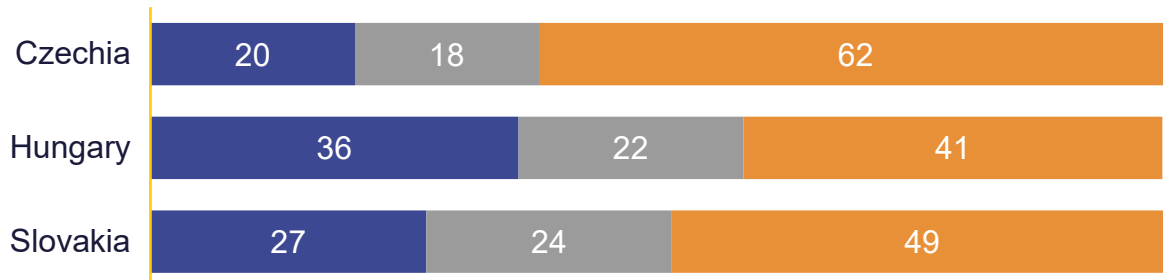
POLITICAL POLARIZATION: A BREEDING GROUND FOR DISINFORMATION AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES



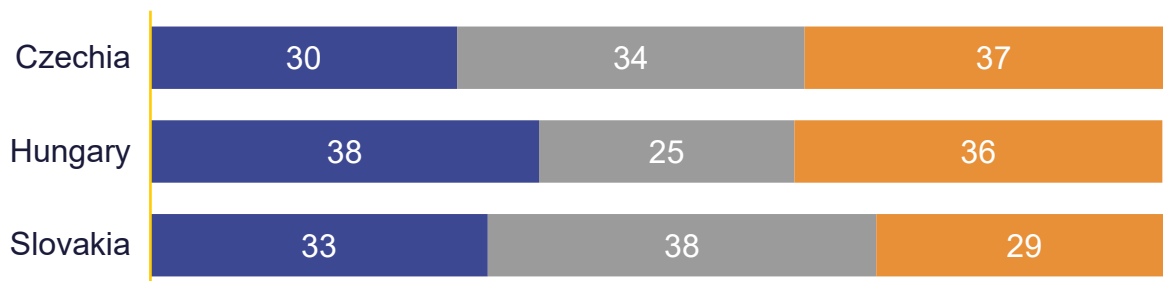
It is important for me that my social environment shares my political views



Differences in political views have already caused tensions between my family members



Politics is ultimately a struggle between good and evil



- The Hungarian electorate is more politically polarized than the Czech or Slovak.
- However, Manichean thinking—dividing the World into "us vs. them", "good" vs. "evil"—characterizes all three societies to a similar degree.
- In Hungary, both government and opposition voters value being surrounded by an opinion bubble that aligns with their political views.


LEGEND: ■ Agree (strongly or rather) – ■ Neither agree nor disagree – ■ Disagree (strongly or rather)

IS THE GRASS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE? PEER COMPARISONS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE



Compared to the situation in your country, how do you perceive the general social, political, and economic situation in the CZ, HU, and SK?

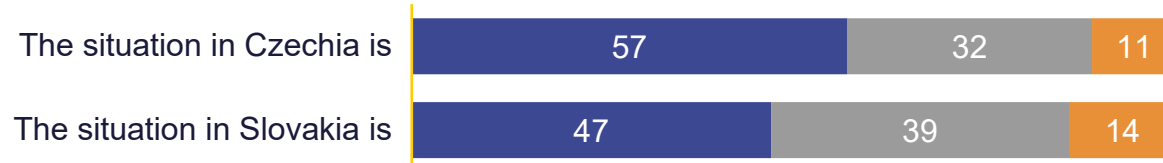

LEGEND: ■ Better (clearly or rather) – ■ About the same – ■ Worse (clearly or rather)



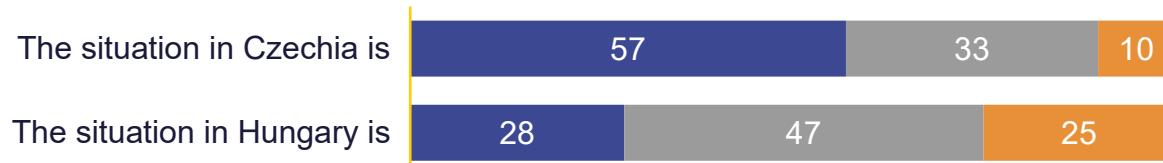
Perceptions of Czechs




Perceptions of Hungarians

Perceptions of Slovaks

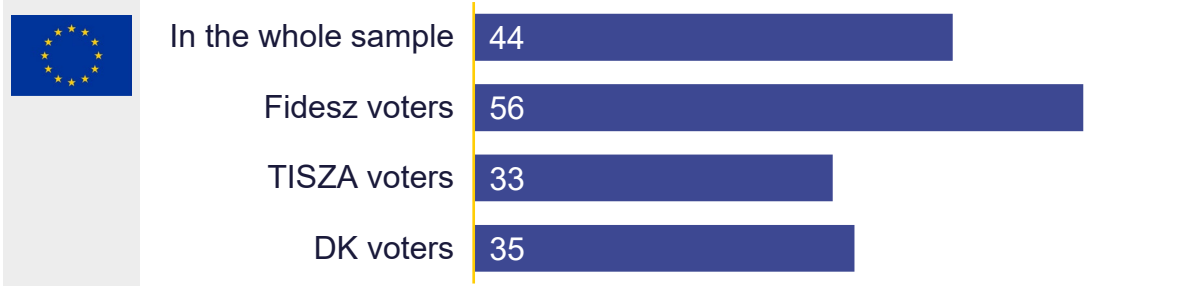
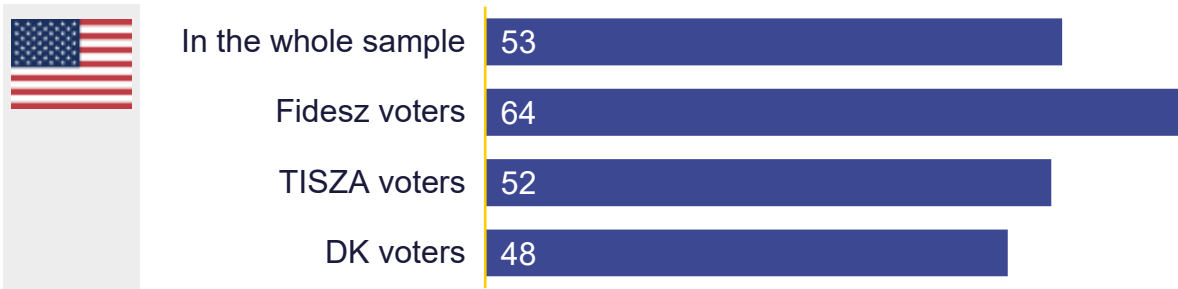
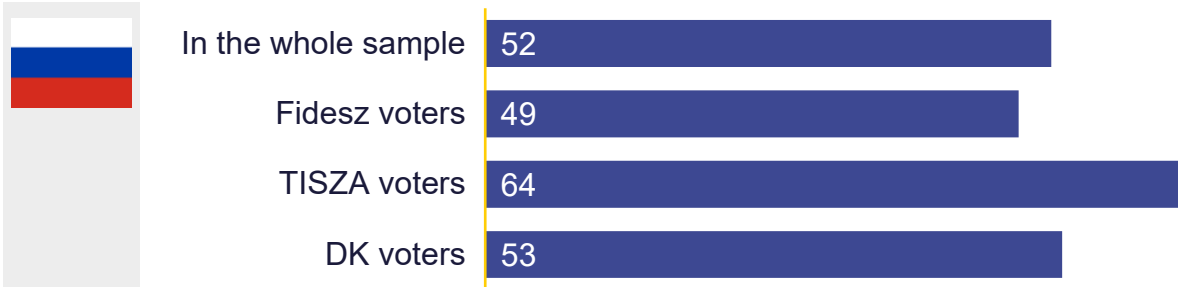


- A majority (57%) of Hungarians and Slovaks view Czechia as the regional leader where things are going significantly better than in their own countries.
- Slovak admiration for Czechia remains mostly platonic—only 18% of Czechs believe Slovakia is doing better.
- Hungary is rarely envied, especially in Czechia, where just 18% think Hungary outperforms their country. Meanwhile, 28% of Slovaks believe Hungary is doing better than Slovakia.
- Hungarians consistently perceive the grass in Czechia and Slovakia as much greener than their own.

DIVERGING OPINIONS ON POLITICIZED TOPICS ACROSS HUNGARIAN PARTY LINES



Election Interference



How likely or unlikely do you think it is that Russia, the United States, or the European Commission will try to influence this year's European Parliament elections in Hungary?

LEGEND: ■ Likely % (very or rather)

- Fidesz voters were more likely to believe that the "West" would interfere in the European Parliament elections, while
- opposition voters—particularly those supporting TISZA—were more concerned about potential Russian interference.

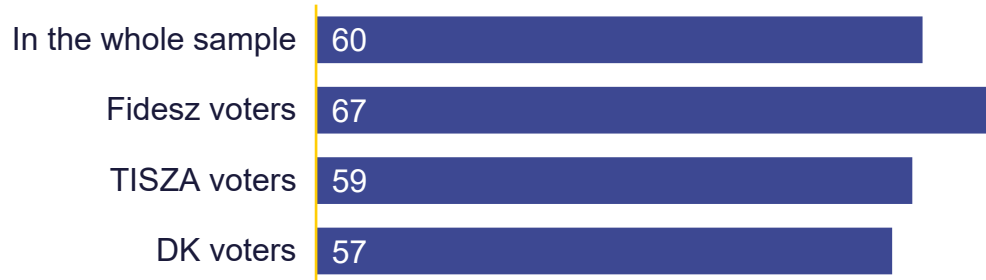


Conspiracy theories about Muslims and immigrants, "great replacement"

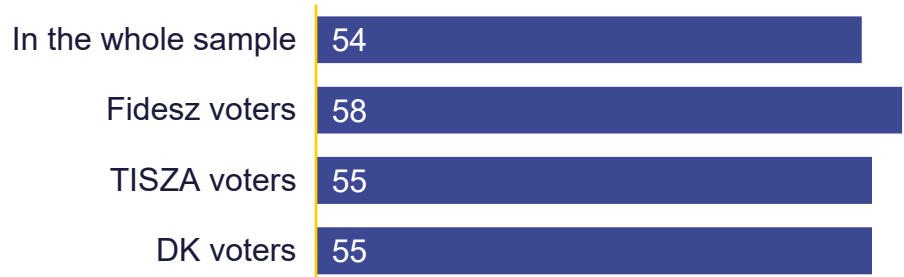
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

LEGEND: ■ Agree % (strongly or tend to)

Muslims want to impose their culture on us by stealth



The native population in Europe is being replaced by immigrant population following a grand strategy



- Fidesz voters tend to agree slightly more with the statement that Muslims want to impose their culture on them than the opposition voters.
- But the differences are small: the fear of immigrants and Muslims permeated the whole society.
- The two beliefs are strongly connected.



Thank you for your attention!

For further information, visit



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