

# Youth Attitudes on Politics and Democracy

## Poland

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NDI Survey of Young People in Central Europe  
July 2020

INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS



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**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



## SAMPLE DESIGN

The sample is statistically representative of the Polish population aged 16-29 in terms of gender, education level and place of residence.



## FIELDWORK PERIOD

2-7 July, 2020



## SAMPLE SIZE

- 750 respondents
- Age: 16-29
- Margin of error:  $\pm 3,58\%$

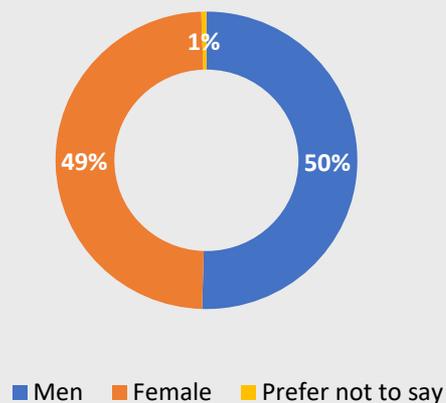


## TYPE OF SURVEY

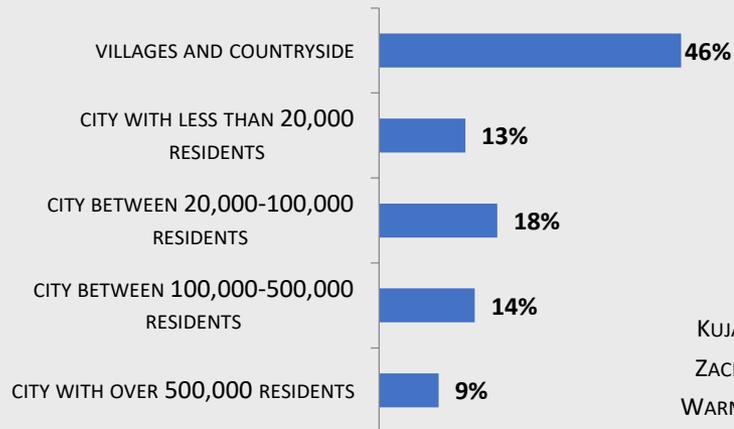
Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI)

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

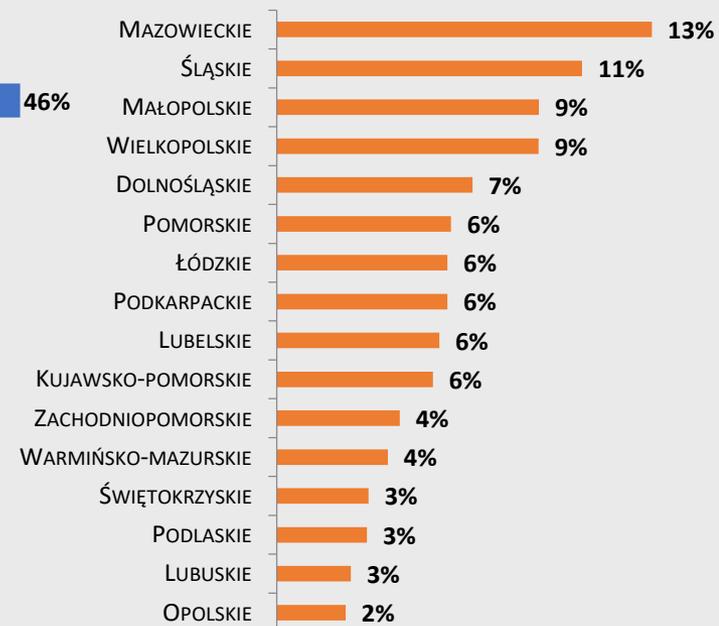
## GENDER



## SETTLEMENT SIZE



## REGION



## EDUCATION

- primary
- vocational or secondary without school leaving "matura"
- full secondary with "matura" and I don't continue learning
- full secondary, with "matura" and I continue learning
- university degree (incl. BA level, + PhD)



## AGE

- 16-19 y.o.
- 20-24 y.o.
- 25-29 y.o.



# CONTENT

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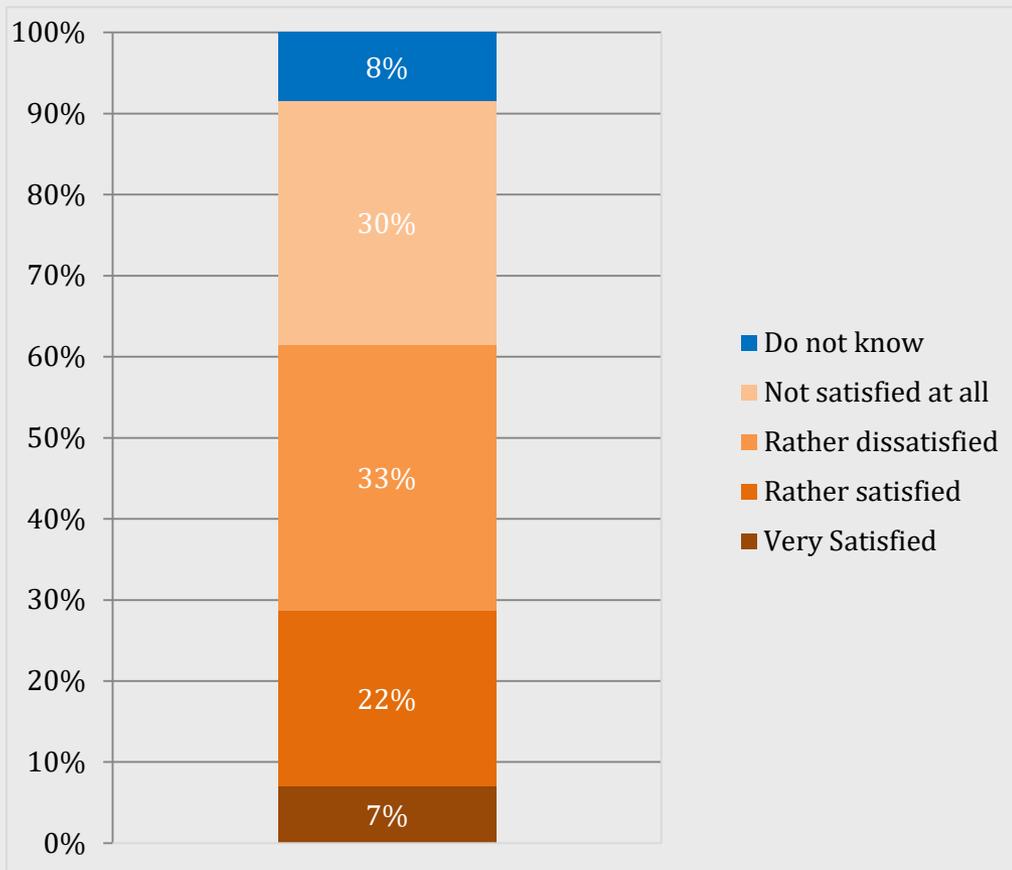
1. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
2. DEMOCRATIC VALUES
3. COVID-19 PANDEMIC ANALYSIS
4. IDENTITY
5. POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION
6. CONCLUSIONS

# 1. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the current political situation in Poland?



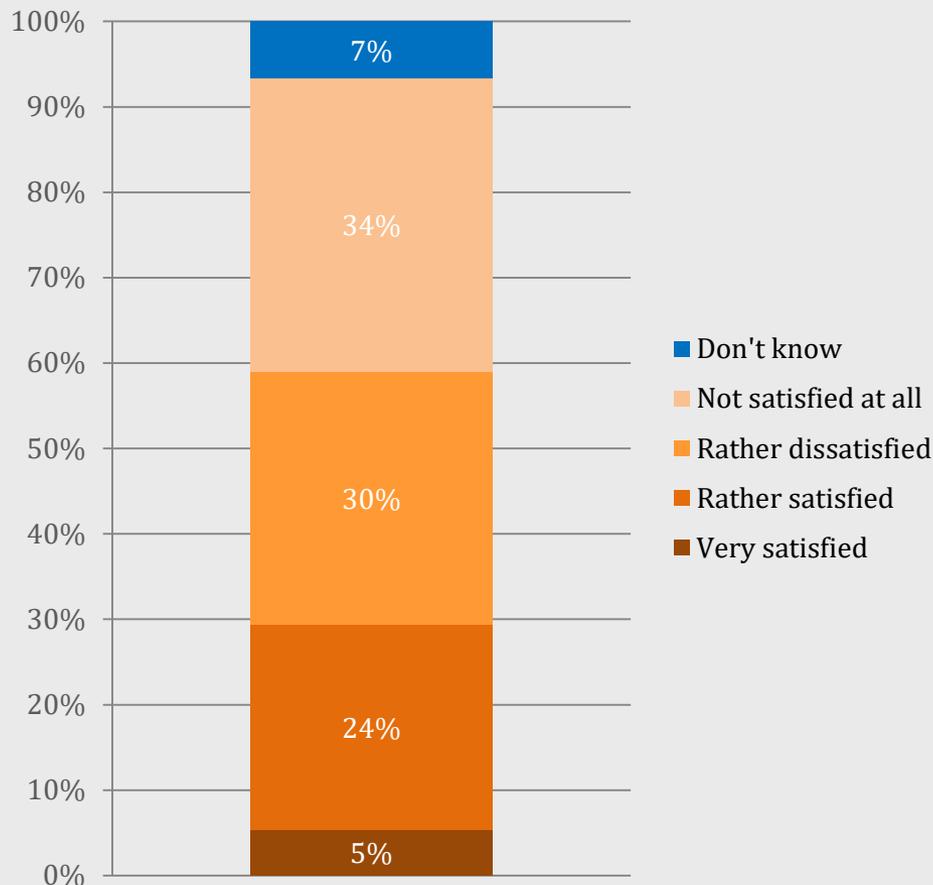
Dissatisfaction with political life in the country has significantly increased since 2018

## NOTE

- ✓ Two thirds of respondents express their dissatisfaction with Polish political situation
- ✓ Slightly above a quarter of population tends to be satisfied

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government?



Satisfaction with Polish government has decreased since 2018 by 10 p.p.

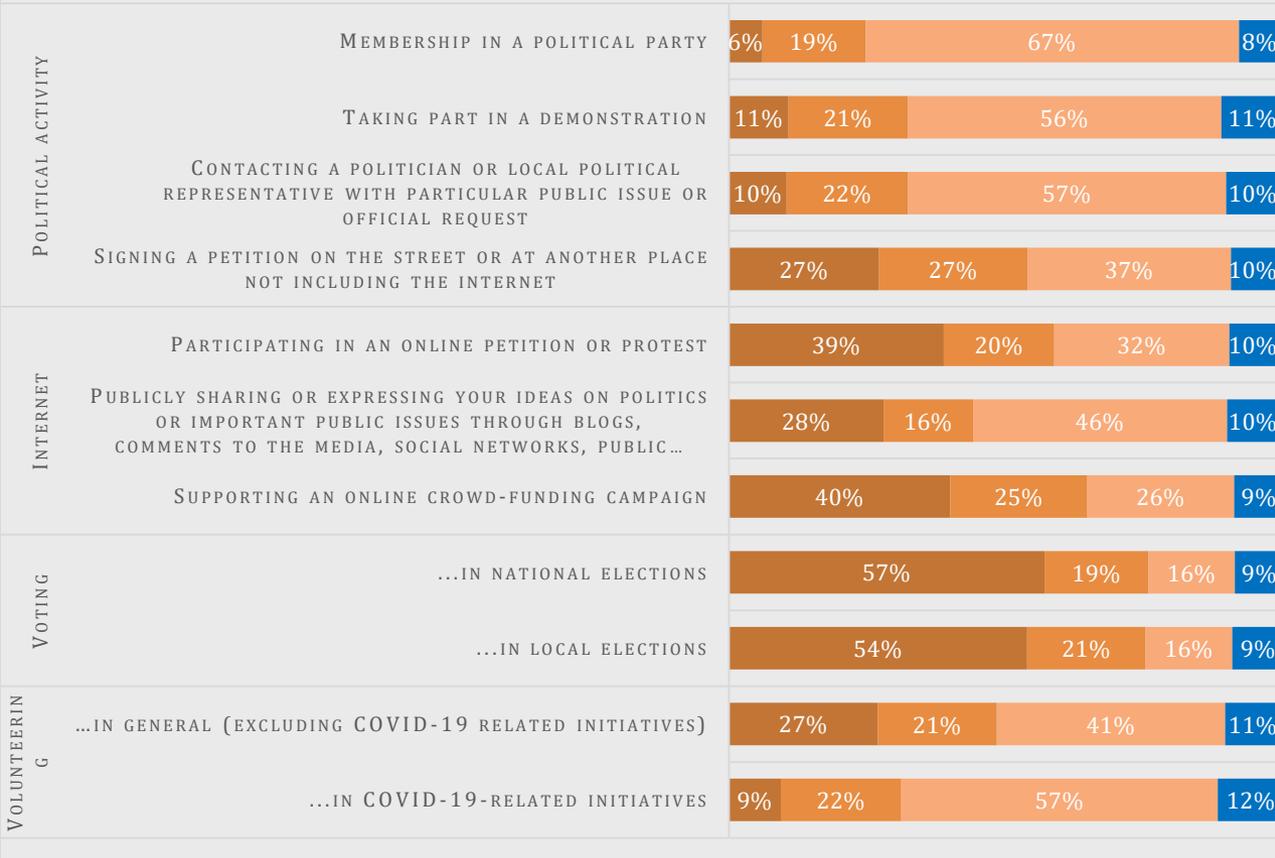
## NOTE

- ✓ Less than one third of respondents express their satisfaction with the government in Poland
- ✓ Dissatisfaction has increased to 64% in 2020
- ✓ The number of dissatisfied people is much smaller among the inhabitants of rural areas (29% compared to 41-42% people of cities with 20-100,000 inhabitants, 33% of residents in the municipalities with 100-500,000 inhabitants and 39% of the towns with over 500,000 inhabitants)

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Describe your involvement in the following political 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
 ■ I do not know



The most frequent political participation is voting, followed by less demanding online activities

## NOTE

- ✓ Electoral participation is the most obvious political participation among the youth
- ✓ 39% has already signed an online petition and a further 20% plan to do so
- ✓ More than one-quarter has signed a petition or motion in the street and the same number is up for that in the future
- ✓ Even larger group (40%) has already took part in crowd-funding
- ✓ But other activities of political character are less popular (incl. demonstration)
- ✓ Volunteering is more popular outside Covid-19 related matters

## 2. DEMOCRATIC VALUES

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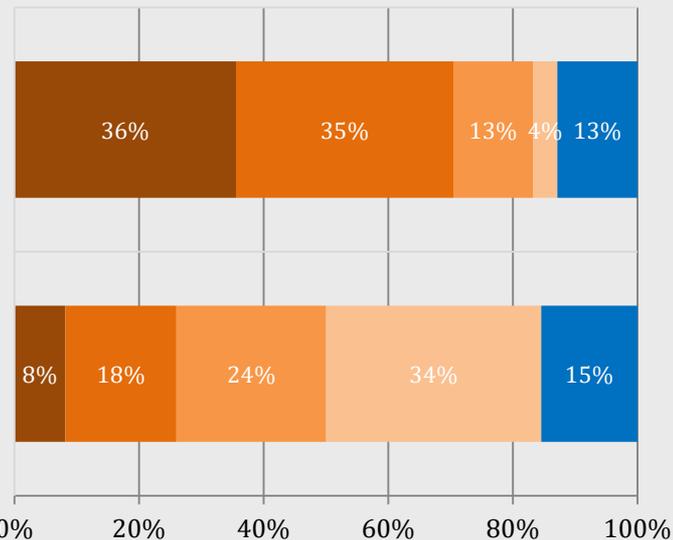
# DEMOCRATIC VALUES

How would you describe each of the following governing systems:

**Commitment for democratic political system remains distinct, but it has fallen since 2018 by 18%**

Very good Fairly good Fairly bad Very bad Do not know

HAVING A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE MADE THROUGH LEGISLATIVE DELIBERATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION.



## NOTE

- ✓ The large majority of Poles (71%) see democratic political system as good or very good (BUT it was 89% in 2018)
- ✓ However, 26% think that a strong leader would be good for Poland (20% in 2018)
- ✓ Therefore, support to democracy has decreased, while recognition of a system based on a strong leader has increased during last 2 years
- ✓ Much larger group of Poles don't have an opinion, whether a system based on strong leader is good or bad for their country (15% compared to 1% in 2018!)

# DEMOCRATIC VALUES

## To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

■ I fully agree  
 ■ I somewhat agree  
 ■ I somewhat disagree  
 ■ I fully disagree  
 ■ I do not know

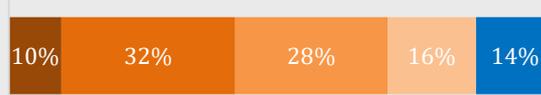
DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST POSSIBLE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT



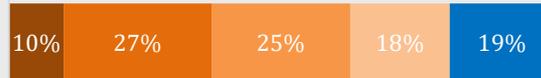
IT DOES NOT MATTER IF THE GOVERNMENT IS DEMOCRATIC OR UNDEMOCRATIC



SOMETIMES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES SHOULD BE RESTRICTED IN ORDER TO BETTER PROTECT PEOPLE FROM TERRORISM AND OTHER THREATS



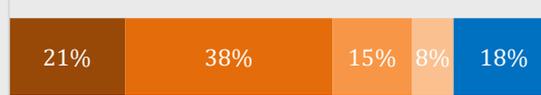
I WOULD BE READY TO SACRIFICE SOME CIVIL LIBERTIES TO SECURE HIGHER STANDARDS OF LIVING



I WOULD BE READY TO SACRIFICE SOME FREEDOMS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY DURING THE PANDEMIC



DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST POSSIBLE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT ONLY WHEN IT CAN DELIVER ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR PEOPLE



Two-thirds of respondents see democracy as the best possible political system

### NOTE

- ✓ Young respondents show high commitment for democracy
- ✓ For overwhelming majority (72%) it does matter whether the government is democratic or not
- ✓ However, there is a large group of respondents that are open to restricting human rights and civil liberties on certain conditions – from two-fifths that would agree for such restriction in exchange for higher standards of living and safety from threats, up to over 50% that would agree for the same in exchange for health security during the pandemic
- ✓ According to 60% democracy is good only until it delivers economic growth

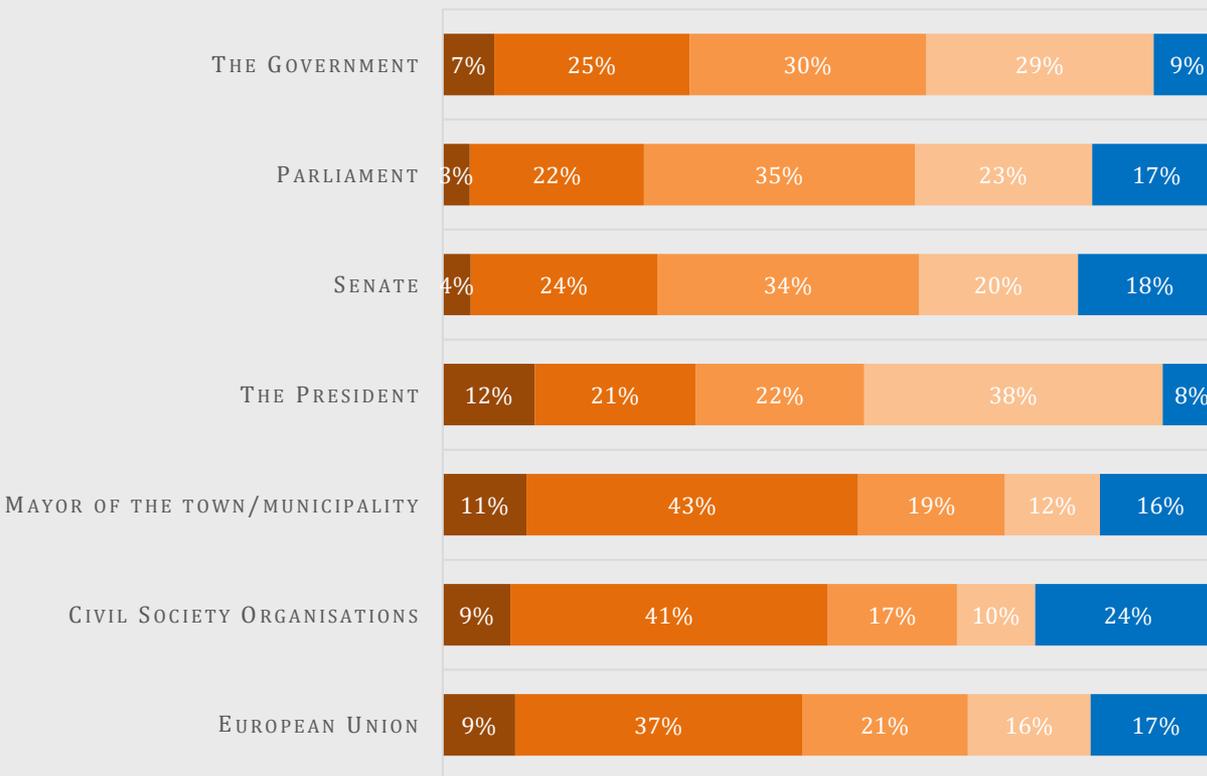
# 3. COVID-19 RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

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# COVID-19 RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

To what extent are you satisfied with the work of the following institutions during the COVID-19 crisis?

Very satisfied Rather satisfied Rather dissatisfied Not satisfied at all Do not know



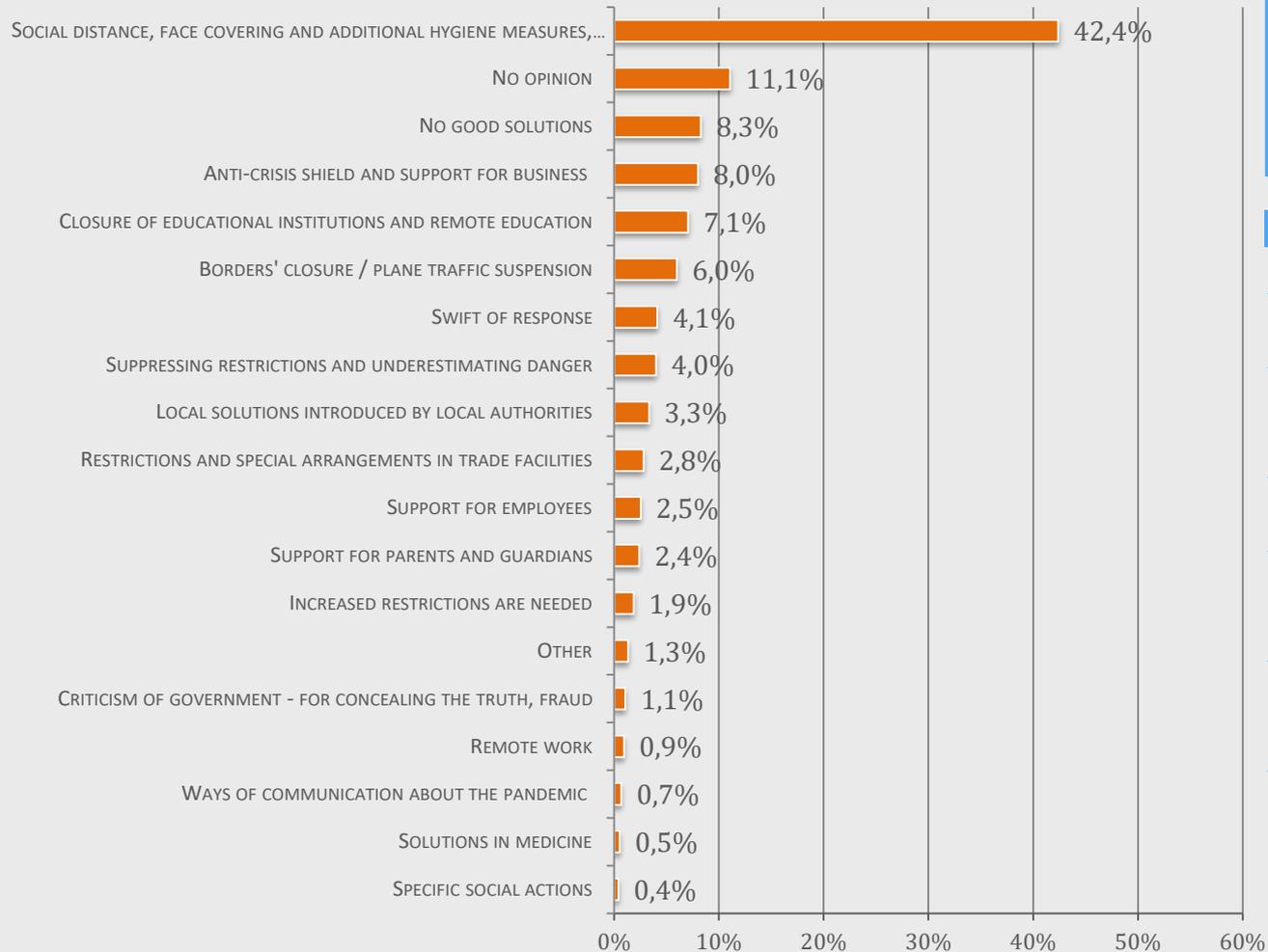
Local authorities, CSOs and the EU are the most positively evaluated in their fight against Covid-19 outbreak

## NOTE

- ✓ Around half of population positively evaluate activities taken to counteract Covid-19 pandemic by local authorities and CSOs, only a bit less is satisfied with the EU
- ✓ On the other hand, majority groups negatively assess work of all central authorities with the largest shares dissatisfied with activities of the president (60%) and the government (59%)
- ✓ Satisfaction with work of the parliament (excluding its upper chamber), government and president is higher in rural areas

# COVID-19 RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

Name one good measure introduced by the national or local government in response to the pandemic.



Most frequently mentioned measures are related to social distancing, face covering, hand disinfection, lockdown in economy and quarantine (social and personal)

## NOTE

- ✓ 2/5 of answers is related to the most basic measures taken
- ✓ 8% of opinions mention support to economy, 7% closing educational institutions and 6% closing borders
- ✓ Ca. 2,5% mention various support to employees (incl. unemployed) & parents
- ✓ Slightly above 3% point out various solutions adopted by local authorities (mostly protective materials distribution)
- ✓ 4% don't believe that Covid-19 poses a serious threat or even swears the conspiracy
- ✓ „Other” include, i.e. elections, public administration digitalisation of the services (3 mentions), ban on refugees, quarantine application or asking for greater financial support (2 mentions)

# COVID-19 RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

## To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

■ I fully agree ■ I somewhat agree ■ I somewhat disagree ■ I fully disagree ■ I do not know

POLISH GOVERNMENT RESPONDED EFFECTIVELY TO THE PANDEMIC



THE GOVERNMENT HAS FAVORED THE OLDER GENERATION AT THE EXPENSE OF YOUTH IN ITS RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC



THE WAY POLISH GOVERNMENT HANDLED THE PANDEMIC CRISIS AND THE MEASURES LIMITING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS OF THE CITIZENS WERE REASONABLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE TO THE SITUATION



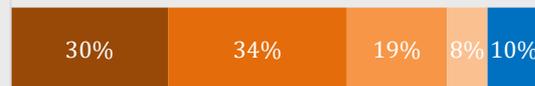
THE MEASURES POLISH GOVERNMENT PROPOSED TO STOP THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPIDEMIC WERE TOO EXTENSIVE, UNDULY THREATENING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ECONOMY



THE GOVERNMENT USED THE PANDEMIC CRISIS AND EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES TO MISAPPROPRIATE PUBLIC MONEY



DUE TO THE PANDEMIC CRISIS I AM CONCERNED ABOUT MY FUTURE PROFESSIONAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION MORE THAN BEFORE



Majority supports the way Polish government handled the crisis, but larger group accuse it for fraud and is concerned about own future economic situation

### NOTE

- ✓ Majority of Poles (57%) evaluates a way in which government responded to the pandemic as effective
- ✓ But more people (47%) think the way Polish government handled the crisis and the measures limiting citizens' individual rights were not reasonable than hold the opposite opinion (43%)
- ✓ Half of Poles is also concerned that measures proposed by the government are a burden to the economy and majority (56%) think their purpose was rather to misuse public funds
- ✓ The largest majority (64%) is concerned about own professional and economic situation in the future

# COVID-19 RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

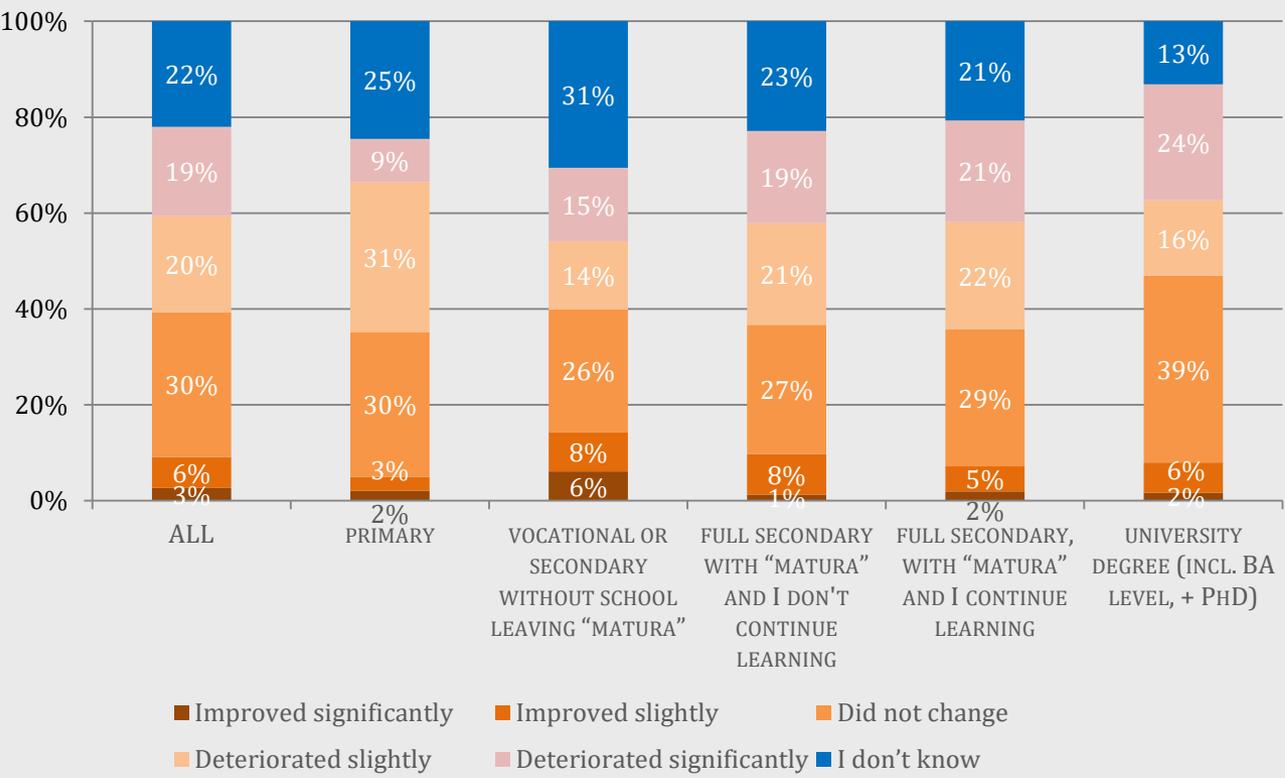
In what way has COVID-19 impacted relations between the government parties and the opposition?

RESPONSES ACROSS THE POPULATION AND BY THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The largest group of the population recognizes that the pandemic has worsened ruling party relations with opposition

NOTE

- ✓ Two-fifths (39%) of respondents say Covid-19 has deteriorated relations between the government and opposition and only 9% has an opposite opinion
- ✓ Recognition of significant deterioration increases with the level of education achieved - 1/4 of people with higher education are of this opinion
- ✓ But people with primary education are less firm in their opinions - their largest group (31%) perceives slight deterioration in these relations



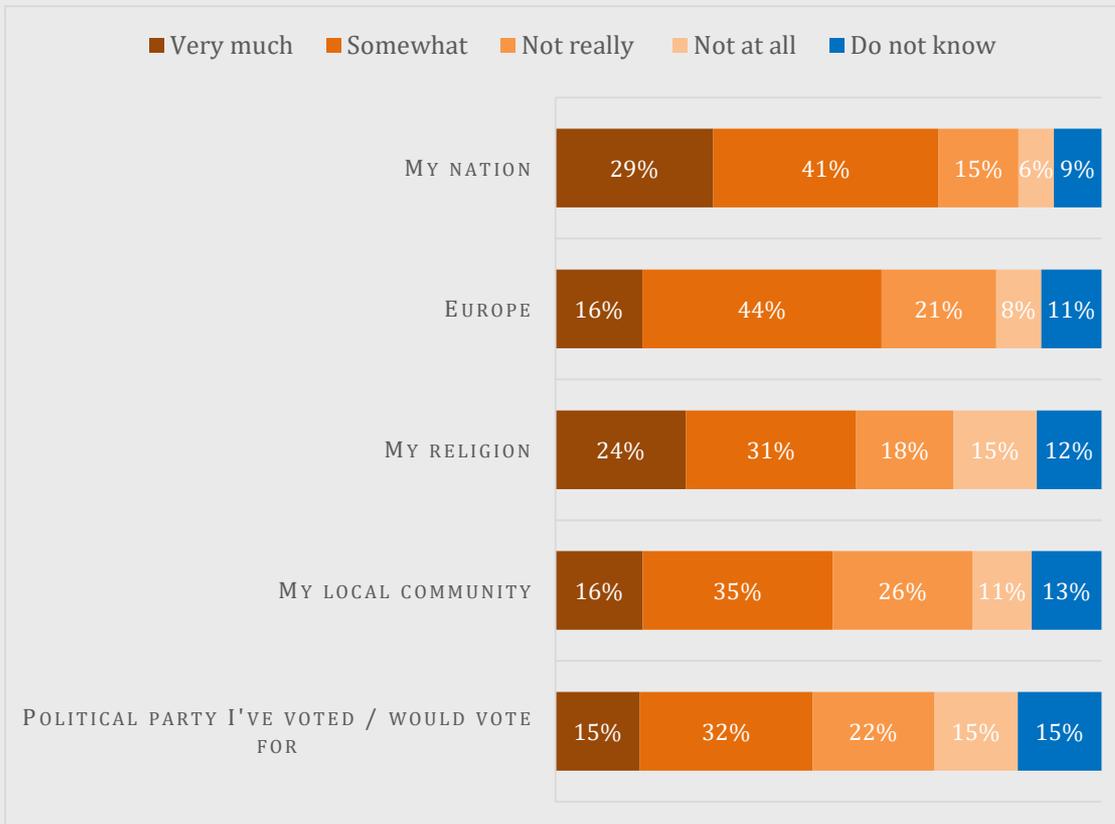
## 4. IDENTITY

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# IDENTITY

## To what extent do you identify with the following entities?

The strongest declared identification is with Poland and Europe



### NOTE

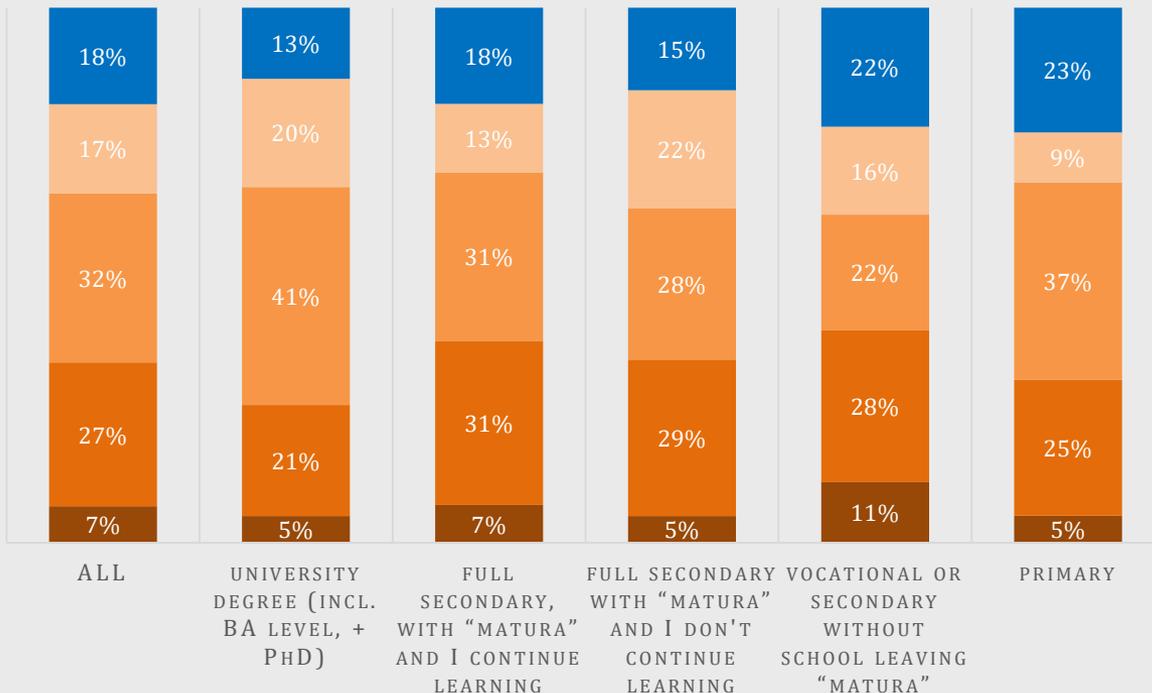
- ✓ 70% identifies themselves with Poland and only one-fifth do not
- ✓ Identification with Europe is by 10 p.p. weaker than with Poland
- ✓ The order of preferences in identification is the same as in 2018, but the level of each positive declaration has decreased (by 20 p.p. in case of four most popular features)
- ✓ More men are strongly identified with nation than women (34 to 23%), while more residents of the largest cities (24%) strongly identify with Europe than people from all other areas (13-17%)

# IDENTITY

The Covid-19 crisis has increased trust and cooperation between European Union and member states.

RESPONSES BY THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION

■ Fully agree 
 ■ Somewhat agree 
 ■ Somewhat disagree 
 ■ Fully disagree 
 ■ Do not know



In opinion of the majority of people Covid-19 outbreak has not increased cooperation within the EU

## NOTE

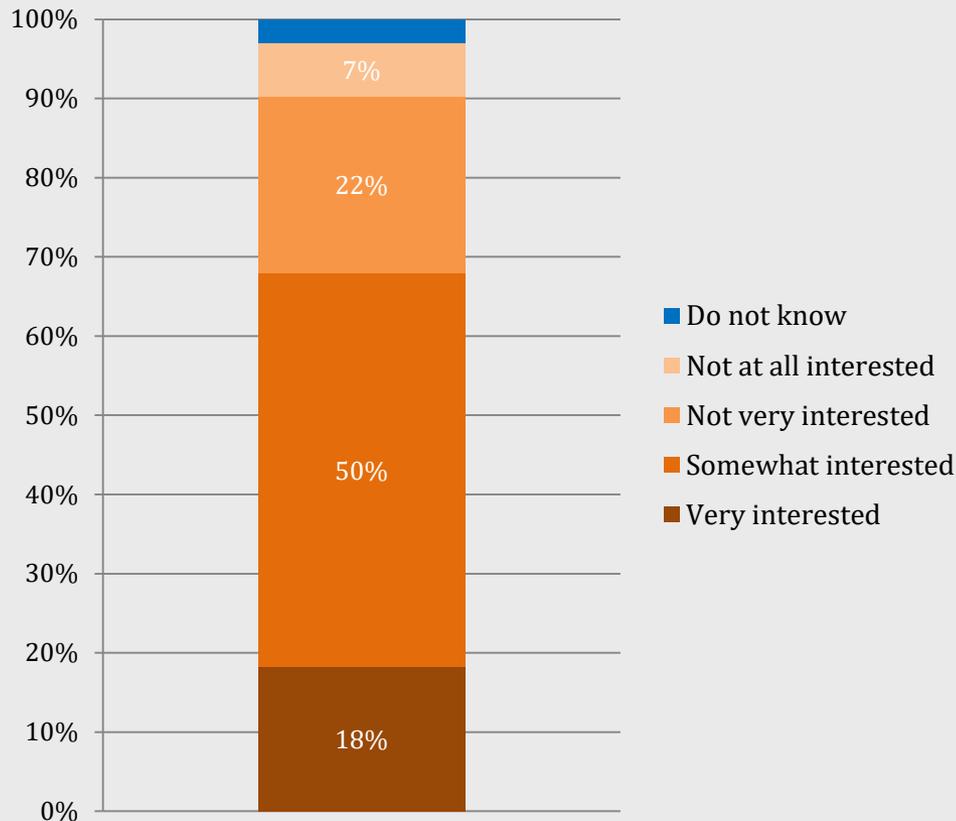
- ✓ Half of the respondents don't agree that Covid-19 pandemic has increased trust and cooperation in the EU, while 3 in 10 people hold an opposite opinion
- ✓ Disagreement with this statement increases among people with higher education and is the smallest in a group with vocational or secondary education

# 5. POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## How interested are you in politics and public affairs?



The majority declares having some interest in politics, but this group has shrunk since 2018

### NOTE

- ✓ One-third of the respondents have no interest in politics and public affairs (or don't have an opinion on that).
- ✓ Declared interest grows alongside achieved level of education.

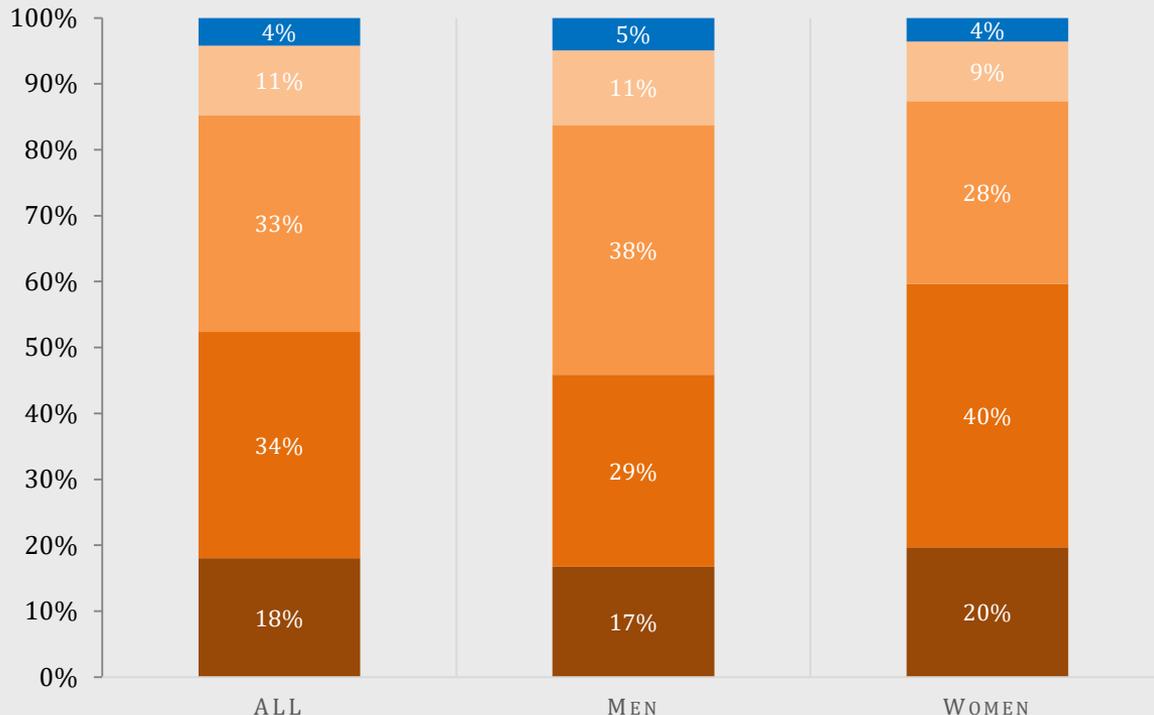
# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## Has the COVID-19 crisis increased your level of interest in politics in public affairs?

More than half got interested more in politics amidst COVID-19 pandemic

RESPONSES ACROSS THE POPULATION AND BY GENDER

Definitely Somewhat Not really Not at all Do not know



### NOTE

- ✓ 52% of the respondents admit their interest in politics has grown due to the COVID-19 crisis
- ✓ It's significantly more women than men (60% to 46%), whose interest in politics has increased

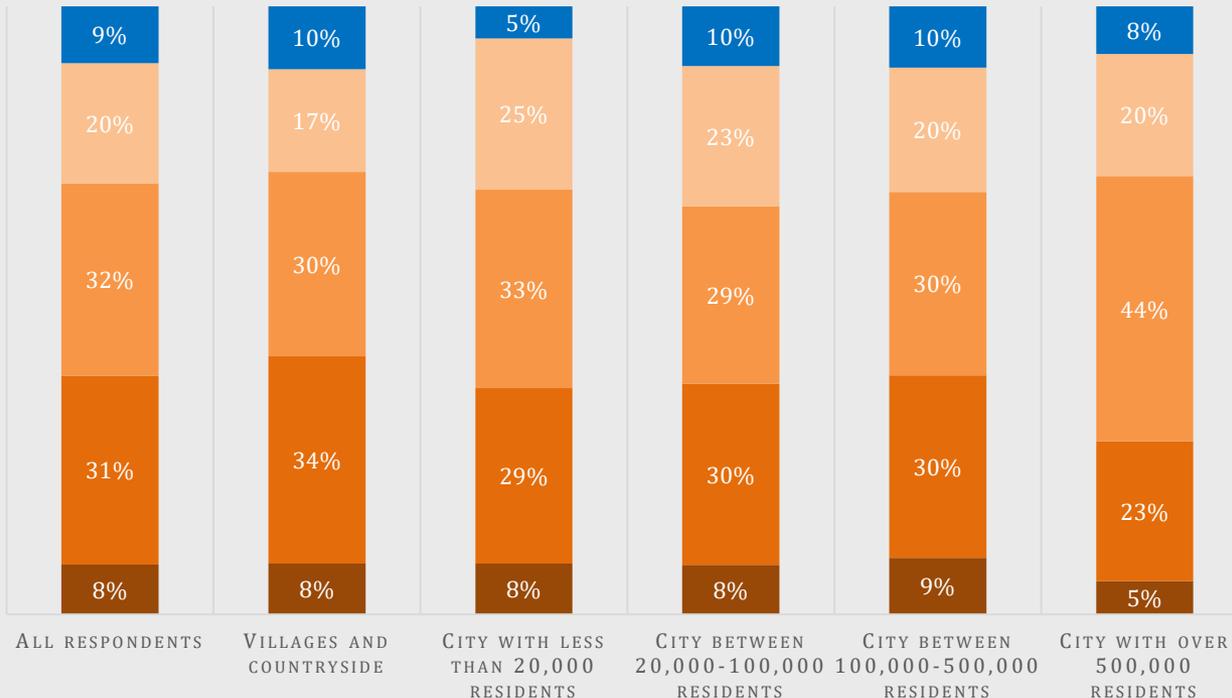
# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## How satisfied are you with the government's communication during the COVID-19 crisis?

Only minority is satisfied with a way how government communicated about pandemic

RESPONSES ACROSS THE POPULATION AND BY THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Very satisfied   Rather satisfied   Rather dissatisfied   Not satisfied at all   Do not know



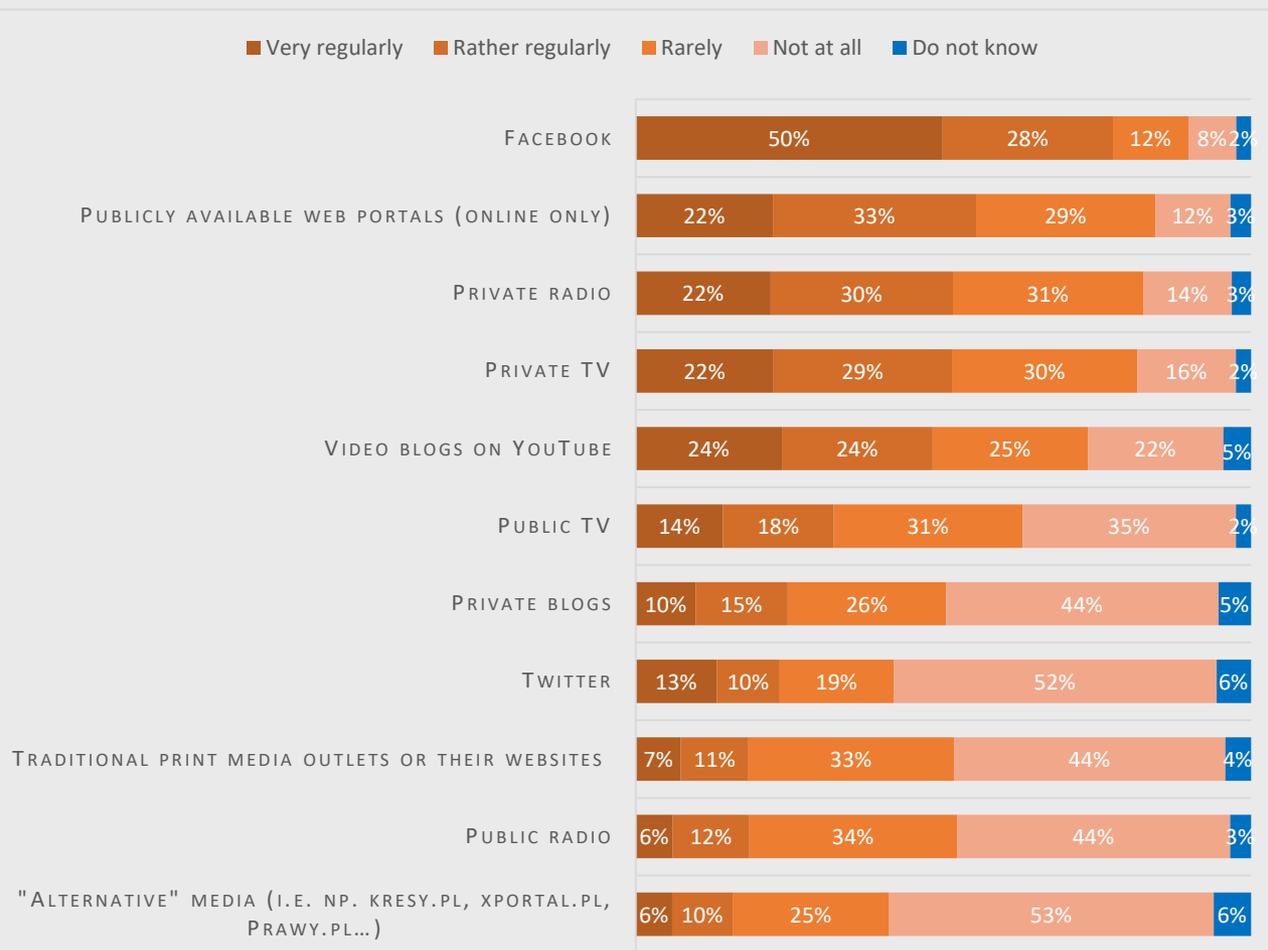
### NOTE

- ✓ 39% of the respondents evaluate positively governmental information policy related to COVID-19 crisis, whereas 52% holds negative opinion
- ✓ Numbers of positive opinions on the government's communication are higher in the rural areas and decreases as the size of the respondents' city of residence increases

# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## How frequently do you use the following sources of information:

**Facebook and online news outlets are the most popular sources of information**



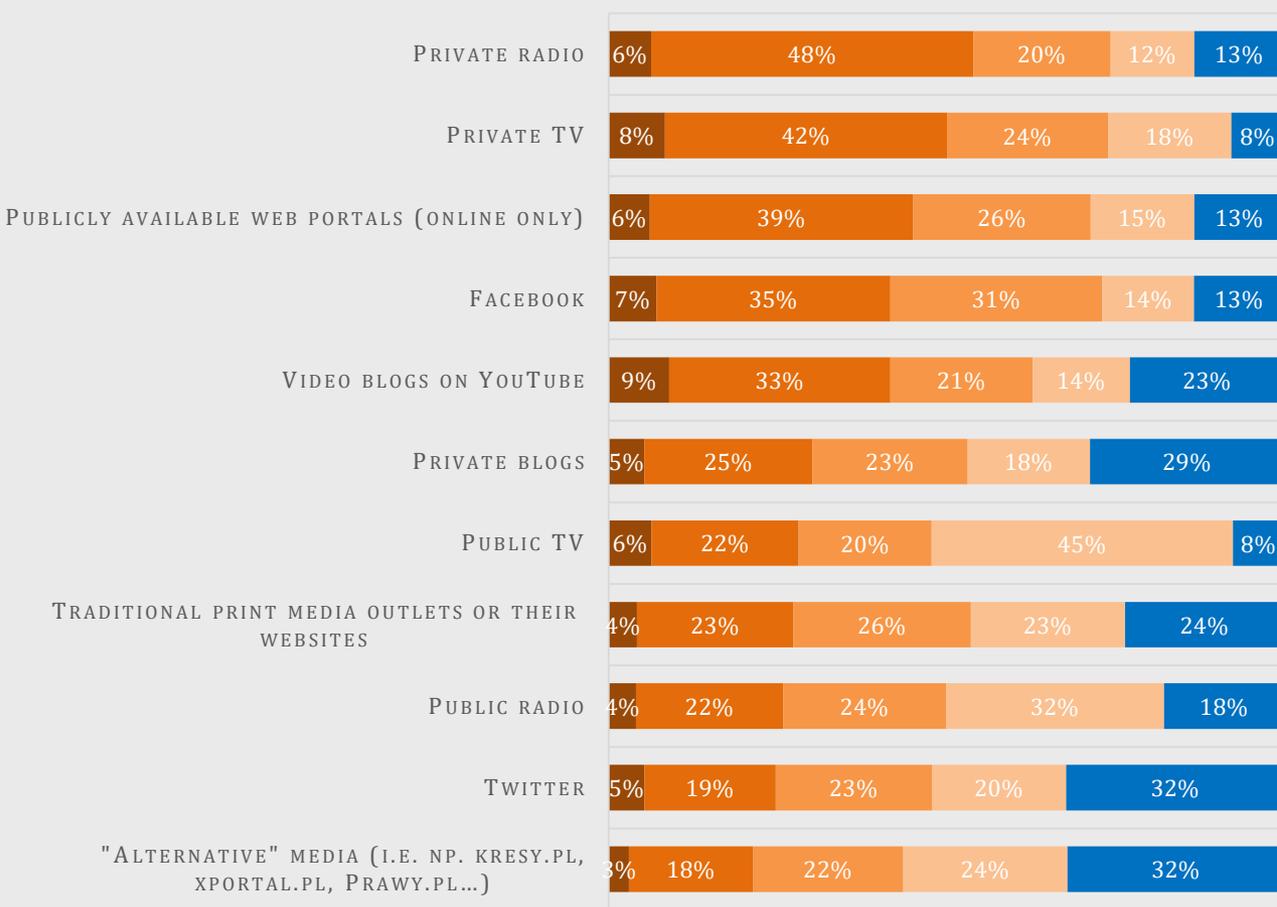
### NOTE

- ✓ 78% of respondents use FB regularly as a source of information on society and politics
- ✓ Online, publicly available news outlets come at second place (55% use it regularly) and is followed by private radio (52%) and private TV (51%).
- ✓ Video blogs on YouTube consist a regular source of information for 48% (it was 30% in 2018)
- ✓ Also regular use of Twitter and private blogs increased from 2018 both by 13%, of private TV by 11%, public TV by 6% and of Facebook by 5%
- ✓ The outreach of the so-called alternative media remains marginal, but also has increased by ca. 15%

# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## To what extent do you trust the following media sources regarding news on COVID-19?

■ Full trust
 ■ Rather trust
 ■ Rather do not trust
 ■ Do not trust at all
 ■ Do not know



When reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic is concerned it's more traditional media - especially private radio and TV - that gain in trust

### NOTE

- ✓ Only private traditional media gain trust of at least 50% of respondents in informing on the outbreak
- ✓ Online, publicly available news outlets fall to 3rd place and Facebook is 4th with 42% of people who trust this platform, while 45% have an opposite opinion
- ✓ The greatest lack of trust is in the information provided by public media as 65% of Poles don't believe it (it's more distrustful even then „alternative” media, which are less known)

# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

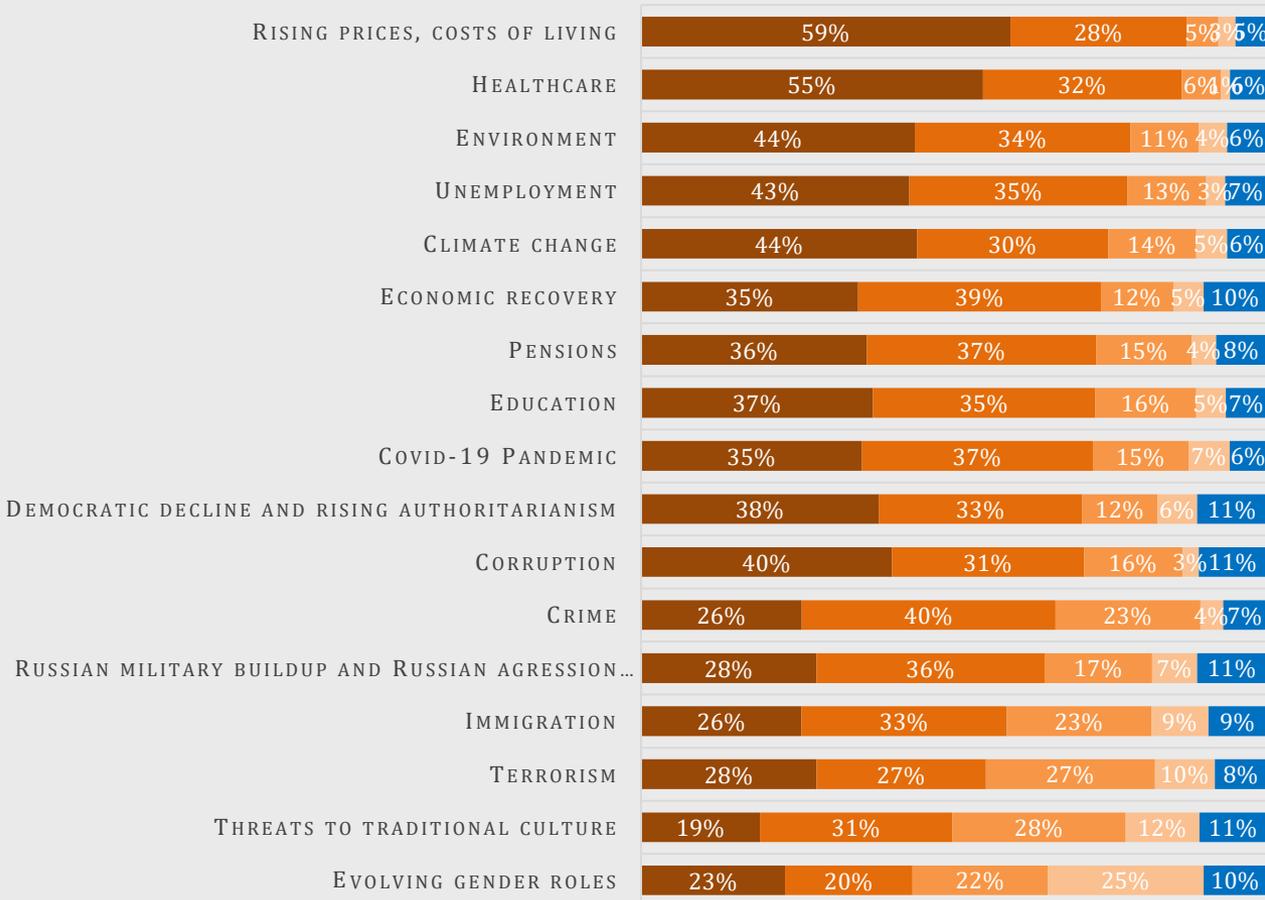
## How serious is each of the following issues in Poland:

**Rising prices and costs of living, healthcare, environment and unemployment are perceived as the most serious problems**

### NOTE

- ✓ Perceived seriousness of particular problems has changed significantly since 2018; these opinions seem to be influenced by current events and the content of the public debate
- ✓ Considering the assessment of the problems as "very" and „somewhat of a serious" rising prices and costs of living are rated highest - It is indicated by almost 9 out of 10 people (78% in 2018), health care is right after (81% in 2018, so the change is small), and the importance of the environment, unemployment and climate change has increased significantly and is in 3rd place (2 years ago it was 52%, 49% and 43%)
- ✓ The perception of the importance of the democratic crisis has also increased (59% in 2018).

■ A very serious problem    
 ■ Somewhat of a serious problem    
 ■ Not a significant problem  
■ Not at all a serious problem    
 ■ Do not know



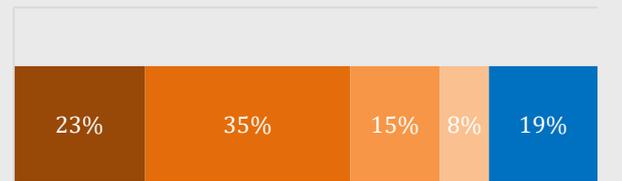
# POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Poles seem to show relative resistance to disinformation on the origins of Covid-19 virus

■ Fully agree ■ Rather agree ■ Rather disagree ■ Fully disagree ■ Do not know

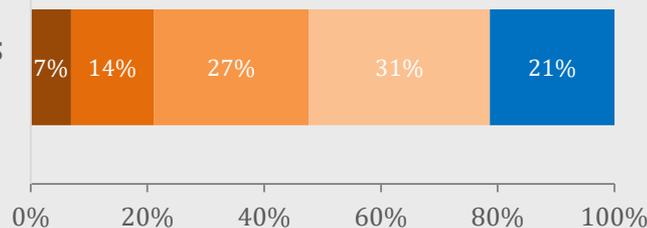
COVID-19 ORIGINATED IN THE WUHAN FOOD MARKET AND SPREAD OUT AROUND THE WORLD BECAUSE THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO ADMIT THE VIRUS WAS BEING TRANSMITTED AMONG PEOPLE ON TIME.



COVID-19 VIRUS WAS RELEASED BY CHINESE SCIENTISTS.



COVID-19 VIRUS WAS RELEASED BY US SCIENTISTS.



## NOTE

- ✓ Majority (58%) holds rather realistic opinion on the reasons of the Covid-19 outbreak
- ✓ However, large group (46%) repeats one of the conspiracy theories directed against the Chinese government
- ✓ One-fifth of Poles shares an opinion disseminated rather by Chinese or Russian propaganda (that it's the U.S. to be blamed for the virus)
- ✓ Significant number of respondents (one-fifth) do not have an opinion on the sources of Covid-19 outbreak

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

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# CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ Dissatisfaction with political life in Poland and the government has increased since 2018; interest in politics remains large but also has deteriorated.
- ❖ Majority support the way Polish government handled the Covid-19 crisis, but more accuse it for fraud and is concerned about own future economic situation and work.
- ❖ Commitment for democratic political system remains strong, but it has fallen since 2018 by 18%; it also remains fragile - the most important reason for which people would trade civic freedoms off (during pandemic crisis) is public health.
- ❖ The most frequent form of political participation is voting, followed by less demanding online activities (especially signing online petitions and crowd-funding).
- ❖ Membership in political parties has slightly increased, but trend is the opposite in all other means of political participation, what may show growing youth disillusionment with the sense of active citizenship.
- ❖ European identity is strong – the 2nd strongest after the national one.
- ❖ Facebook and online news outlets are the most popular sources of information and the role of videoblogs on YT raised; but, it's more traditional media (especially private radio and TV) that are trusted in reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic matters.
- ❖ The most serious problem for youth is rising prices and costs of living, healthcare, environment and unemployment – actions responding to them can be used to engage with this group.