

# The Impact of COVID-19 on Polish Society

Poland



# About More in Common



More in Common is an international initiative set up in 2017 to build societies that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarization and social division.

We work with a wide range of groups in civil society, business, faith, education, philanthropy, media and government to connect people across lines of division.

More in Common's teams in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States work together and share a commitment to advancing our mission.

For more information please visit [www.moreincommon.com](http://www.moreincommon.com) or contact us at [contact@moreincommon.com](mailto:contact@moreincommon.com)

# About This Study



COVID-19 has up-ended the lives of people across the world, causing untold suffering and dislocation, with a death toll expected to exceed one million within days. The impact of the coronavirus on our health, economy and society will re-shape the world of the 2020s. It could result in societies becoming more deeply divided along existing fault-lines, but that is not inevitable. This study shows that COVID-19 has unleashed hopes for change in many societies, especially those who have struggled most with the virus. It has also made us more aware of our shared humanity, the value of strong local communities and the importance of our connection to nature.

Many choices lie ahead as we grapple with the fallout of the pandemic. The decisions being made in the months ahead – in families, communities and nations – will have consequences for a generation. This is why More in Common has compiled this snapshot of public opinion in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, with key findings on:

- The impact of the pandemic on personal health, family life, employment and finances
- How COVID-19 has impacted our societies – and people's feelings of togetherness, solidarity, empathy, trust and loneliness
- Whether people want a return to normal or wish to see significant change in the aftermath of the pandemic
- Whether countries need more European and international co-operation, or whether they should go it alone
- Views on political priorities and support for policies on issues such as the economy, jobs, the environment and taxation
- Hopes and fears for the future

Our snapshot combines a mix of country-specific and cross-country questions. We hope that the findings presented here, as well as the detailed national studies that form part of this project, will provide valuable insights into this once-in-a-generation moment. Most of all, we hope they will strengthen efforts to build more united and resilient societies.

# Scope and Methodology



## Geographical Scope

France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, U.K., U.S.

## Subject Matter

- Personal life under COVID-19
- COVID-19 as a collective challenge
- Aftermath & Outlook

## Methodology

- N=2,000 per country; Margin of error +/- 2%
- Online poll
- Research partners: Kantar (Europe); YouGov (UK & US)
- Fieldwork dates for continental Europe: 1-8 July, 2020
- Fieldwork dates for UK: 19-28 June, 2020

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# COVID-19 in Poland



## Situation (As of September 2)



**While the Polish health system was severely underprepared**, early border closures and little testing may have contributed to low infection numbers.

**68,517** Cases

**2,078** Deaths



**The Polish economy is more resistant than expected:**

The economic contraction in Poland is less severe than expected, and while inflation is on the rise it is thought to be under control. Nonetheless, decreased demand from trade partners and the general impact on a largely precarious labor market are difficult to gauge at the moment.

**-4.6%** Expected drop in GDP for 2020

**9.9%** Expected unemployment rate



**Poland was one of the first European countries to close its borders in response to COVID-19**, and returnees were placed under quarantine with strict monitoring.

Public life and demonstrations were restricted to a similar extent as elsewhere, but made campaigning difficult for challenger parties.

## National Context

Poland was an early mover in Europe in terms of closing borders and placing returnees under strict quarantine, a move which may have contributed to low infection numbers in spite of an underprepared health system. In the national discourse, the COVID-19 crisis was immediately linked to (and overshadowed by) a political crisis and moves to further undermine minority rights: After the political crisis surrounding election postponement in May, the following weeks were dominated by a severely polarizing election campaign running up to a run-off election in which incumbent President Duda won by a margin of 2 p.p. ahead of main opposition leader Trzaskowski – leaving the country deeply divided. During the past months, Poland has seen citizens' initiatives that aimed to further restrict abortion rights and demonize LGBTQ groups – anti-LGBTQ rhetoric also formed the center of Duda's re-election campaign.

## What sets Poland apart?

- Poland was one of the few countries in which COVID did not dominate the national discourse – rather, the election postponement and a deeply polarizing election campaign dominated public attention.
- Poland is set to be one of the main beneficiaries of the European Reconstruction Fund – albeit, the EU-27 have agreed on attaching rule of law conditionality to this money, which is likely to sow further conflict with the Polish government.

## Key Infos

- **Head of State:** Andrzej Duda (Independent)
- **Ruling Coalition:** United Right
- **Next Election:** Parliamentary election in November 2023

# Key Findings

- The Polish electorate is highly polarised with little overlap between supporters and opponents of the government.
- Approval of the government (or lack thereof) largely determines perceptions of the crisis, its effects, and evaluations of the government's response. The split extends even to personal experiences.
- Trust in others and institutions has worsened from an already low pre-crisis baseline. However, reported feelings of empathy, care and support paint a much more nuanced picture.
- Green New Deal and climate action are met with widespread approval
- The 25-39 age group is more likely than others to worry about the economic effects of the crisis and to prioritise economy over green transformation.



# **Personal Experience under COVID-19**



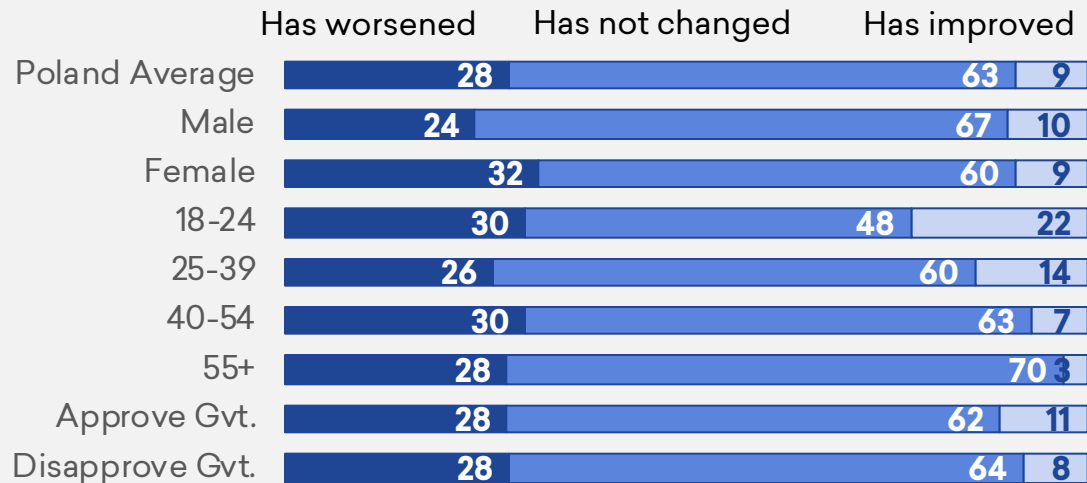


# Impact of COVID-19 on personal lives

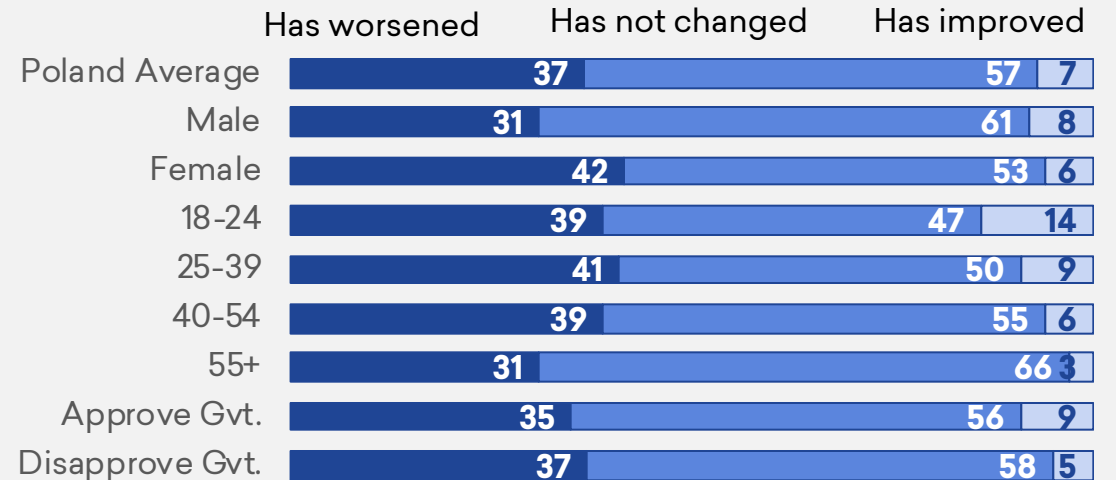


The pandemic has had a worse impact on mental health than physical health.

## Physical Health



## Mental Health



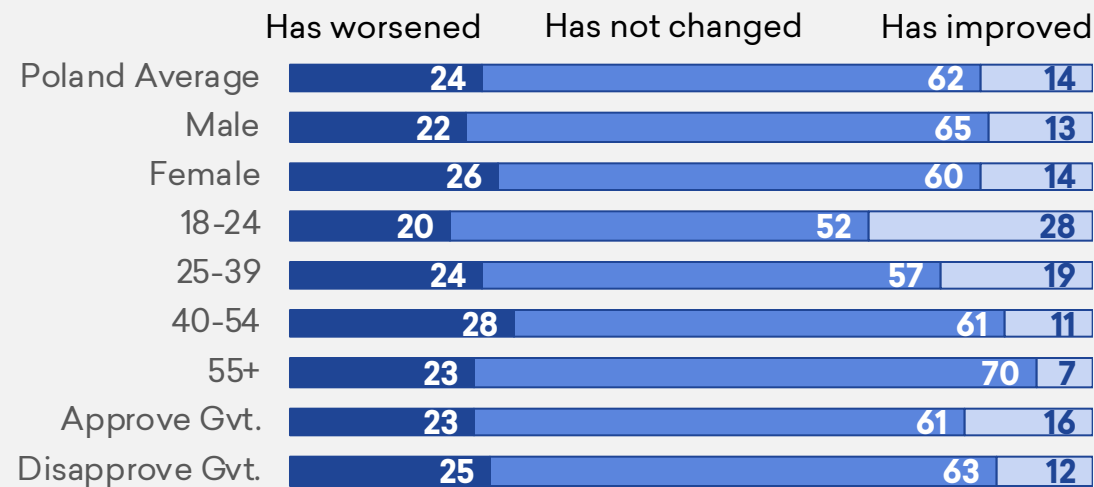
Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

# Impact of COVID-19 on personal lives

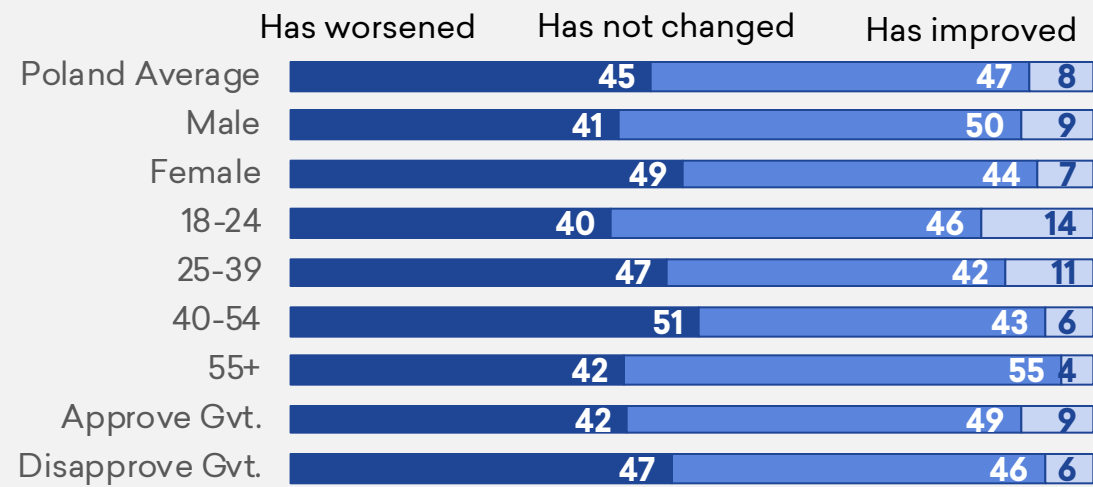


Youngest respondents report net improvements in family life, but overall the impact on families has been negative. Almost half of respondents report deterioration of their financial situation with little variation across groups. However, respondents who approve of the government rate their change in financial situation better.

## Family Life



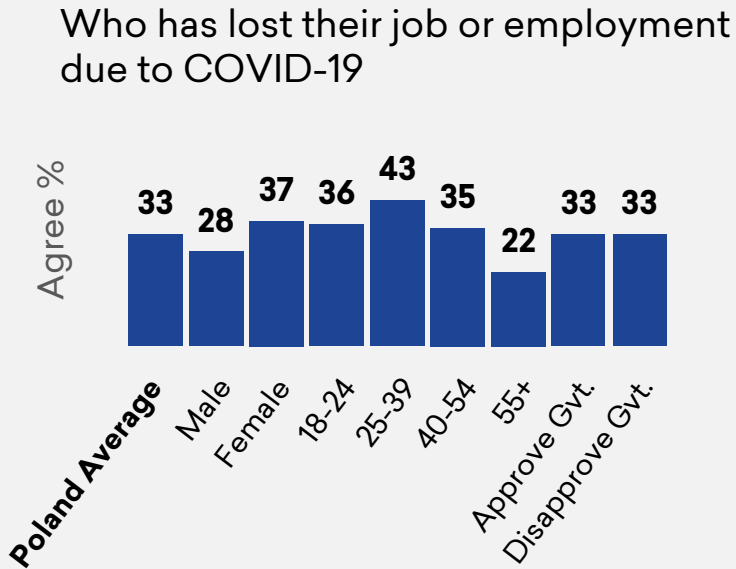
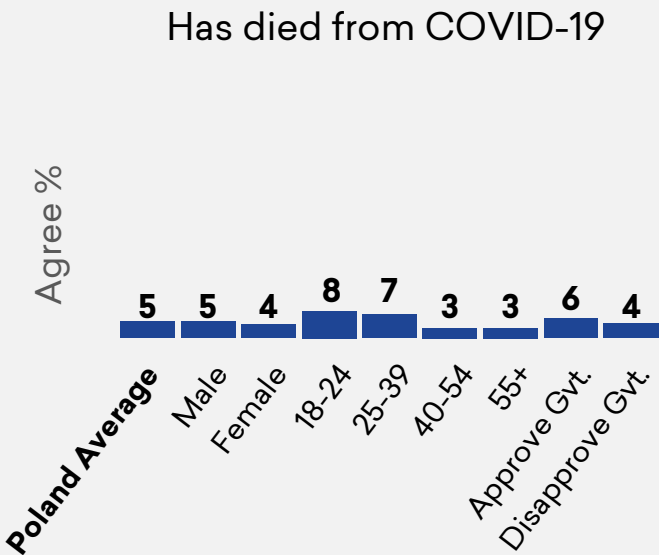
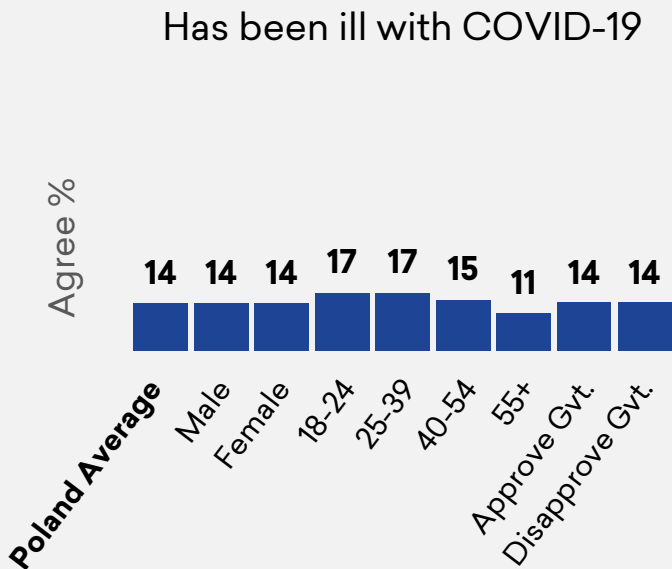
## Financial situation



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

# Impact of COVID-19 on Personal Networks

„Do you personally know someone who...?“



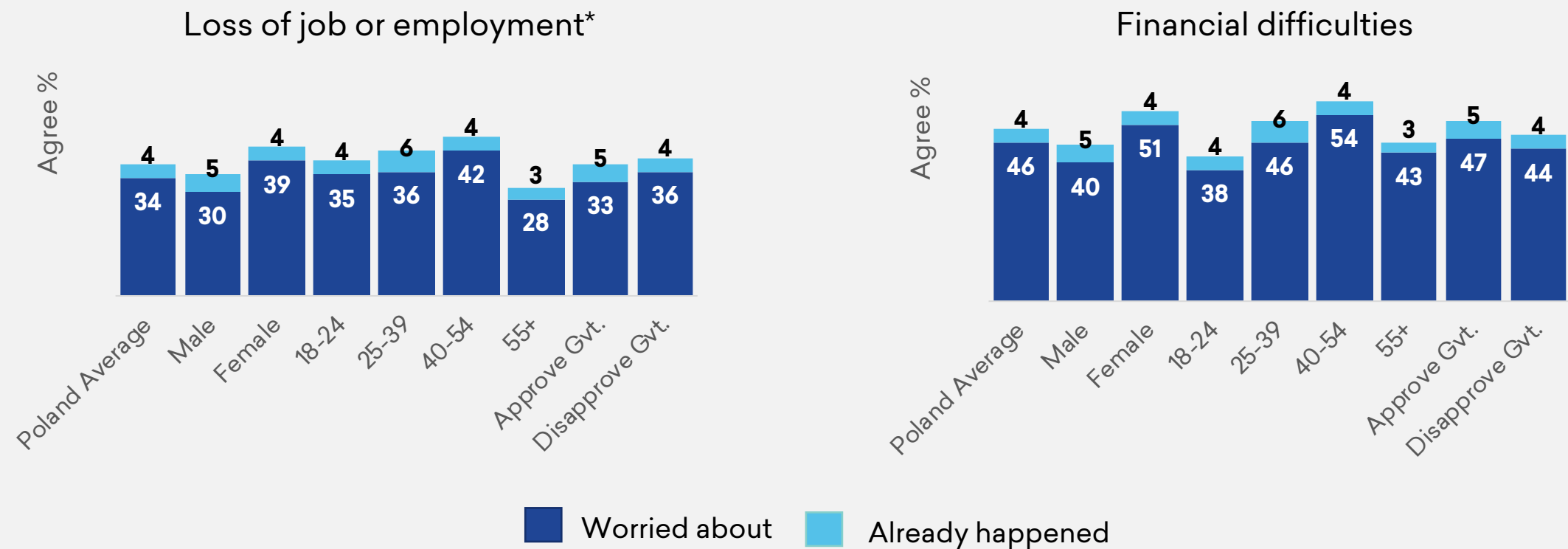
Question: Do you personally know someone who...?

# Economic worries and impacts



It is the 40-54 age group that is most worried about loss of job or financial difficulties. Few people report that they have already been impacted by loss of job or financial difficulties.

## Worried about...



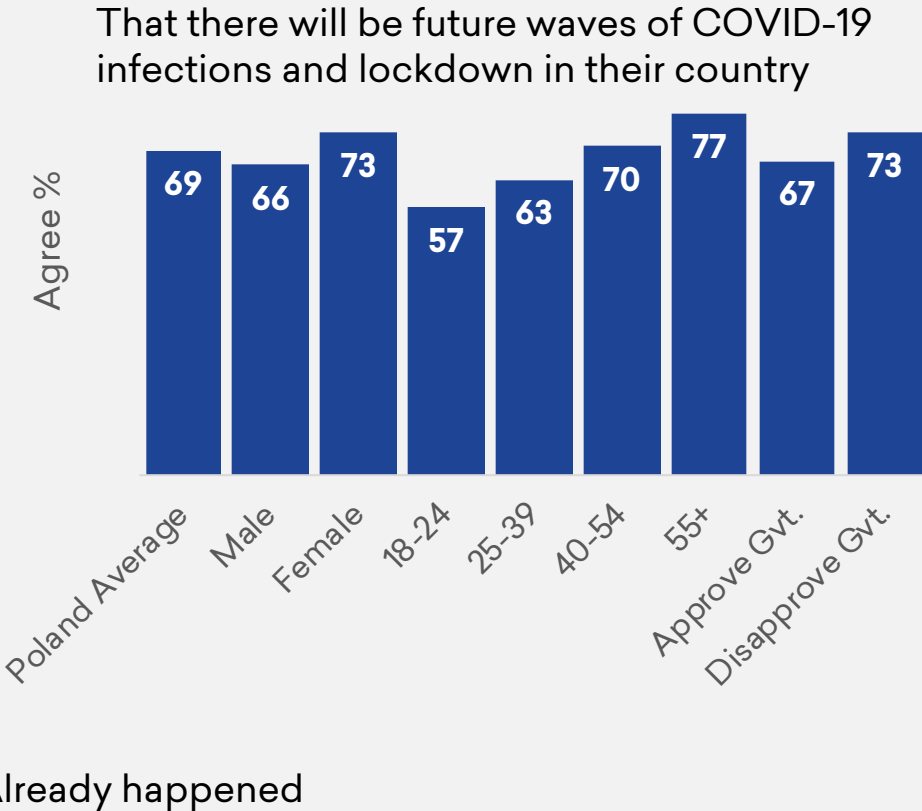
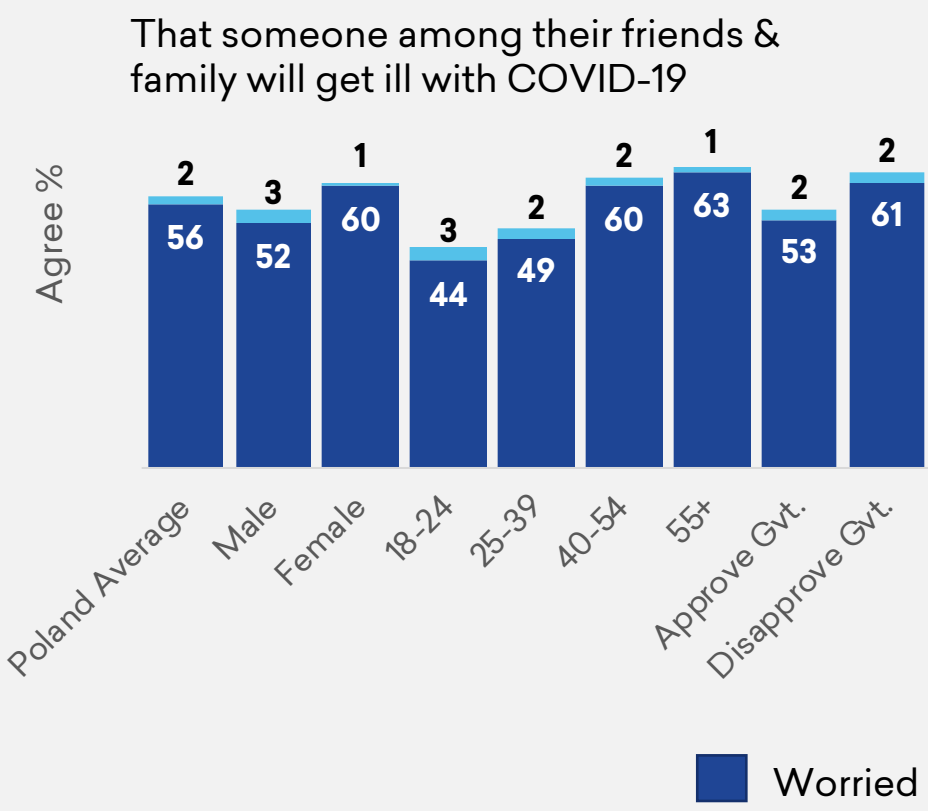
Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....? \*Note that these percentages exclude respondents who responded “Does not apply to me”.

# Health worries and impacts



General concerns about a future wave of Covid are higher than concerns about people’s direct networks of friends and family, but both types of fear resonate with a majority of Poles.

## Worried...



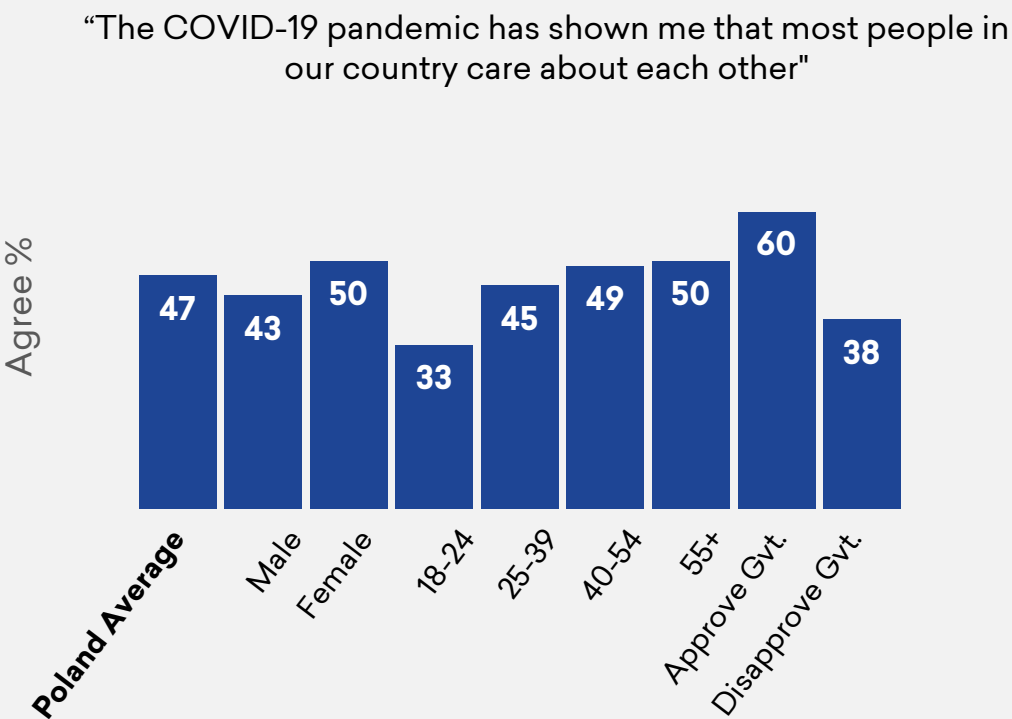
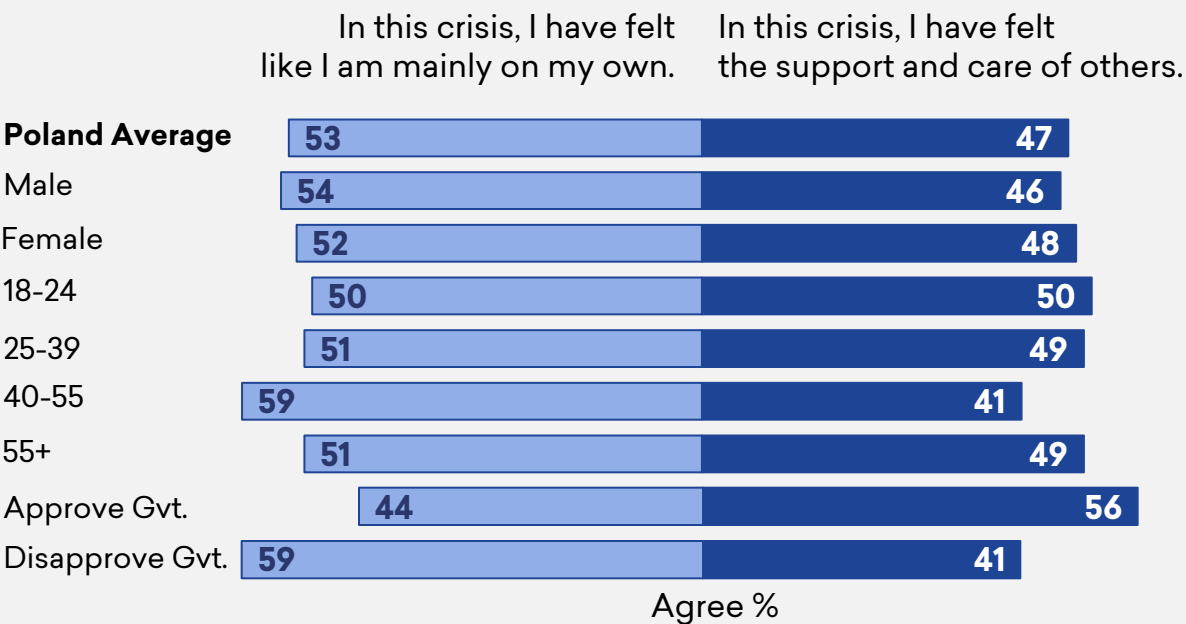
Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....? \*Note that these percentages exclude respondents who responded “Does not apply to me”.

# **Collective Experience under COVID-19**

# Support and Care



Supporters of the government are much more likely to report feeling support and care of others and to perceive Poles as caring for each other, while the 40-55 age group is significantly more likely to feel on their own. Youngest respondents are the least confident that people in Poland care about each other.

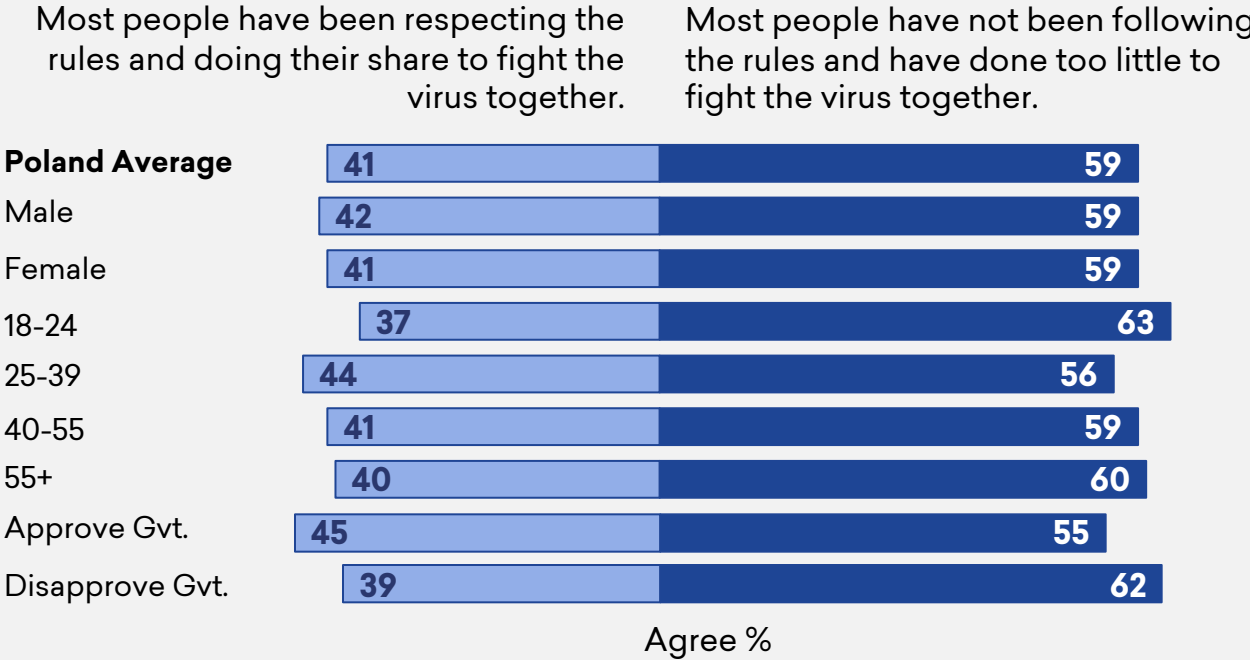
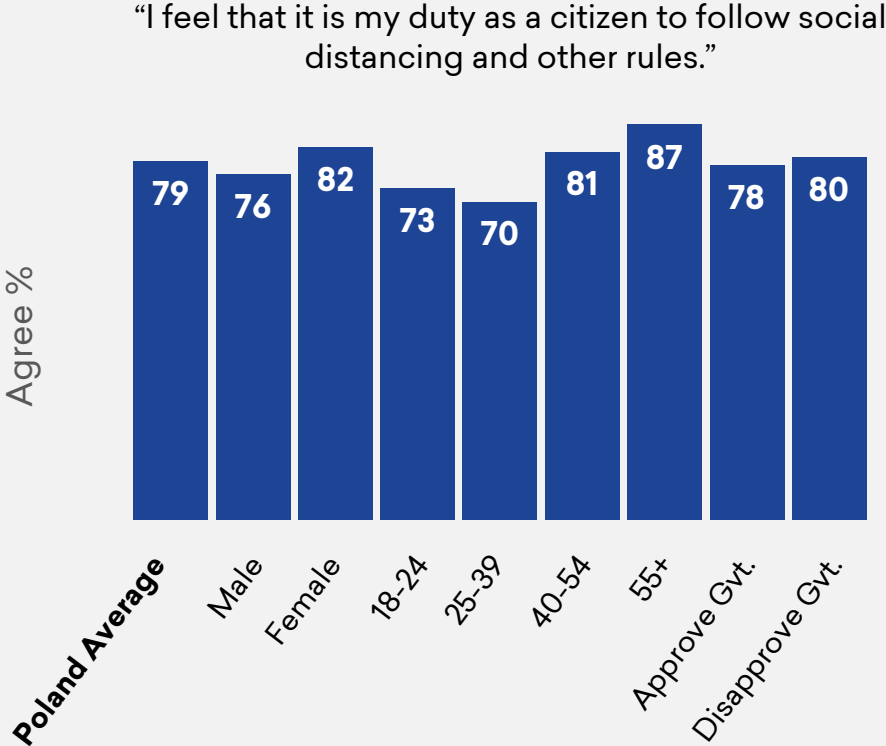


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# Lockdown and Restrictions



The older respondents are, the more emphasis they put on following social distancing and other rules. The youngest see less compliance, while supporters of the government see more.



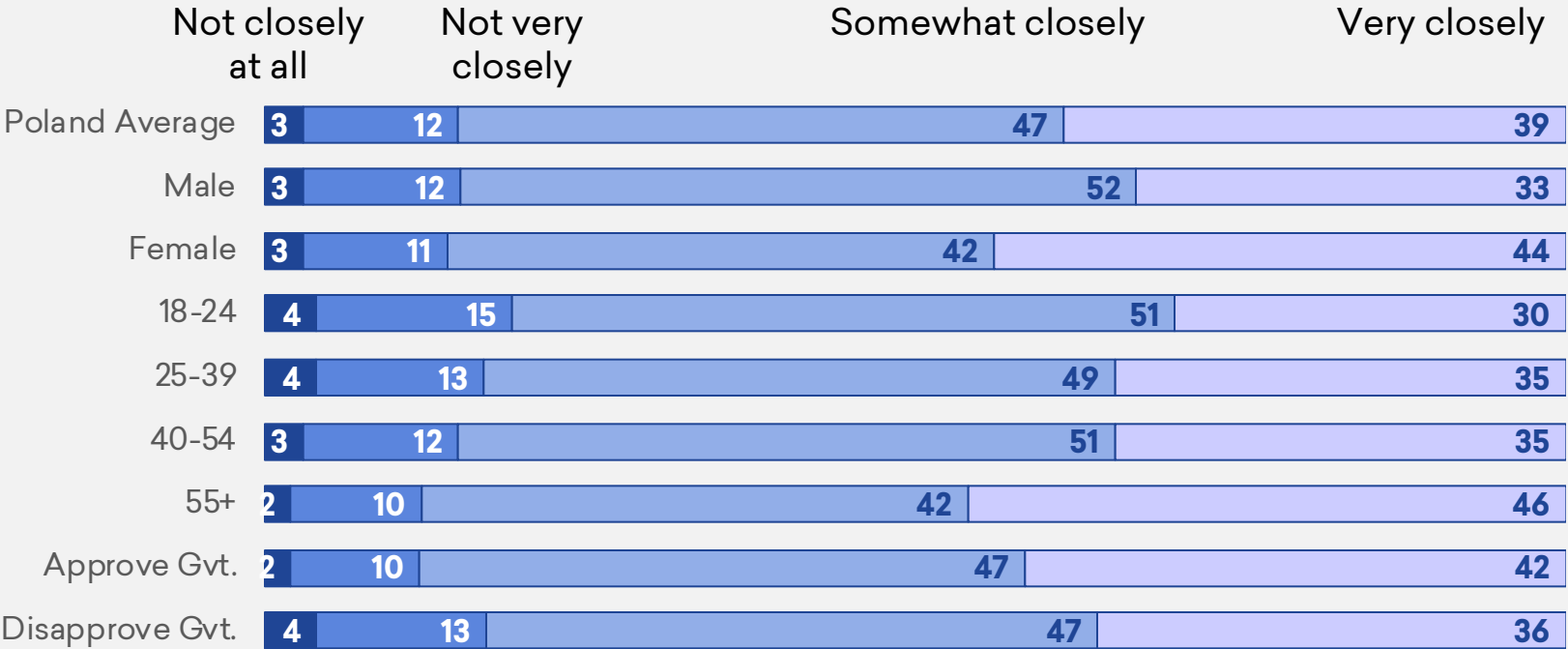
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?



# Lockdown and Restrictions



Older respondents report more compliance with social distancing rules, as do supporters of the government.



Question: When it comes to the COVID-19 social distancing rules that have been put in place in your area (wearing a mask, staying home, etc.), would you say that you have followed the rules...?

# Engagement & Contribution



Participation in COVID-19 relief activities has been rather modest

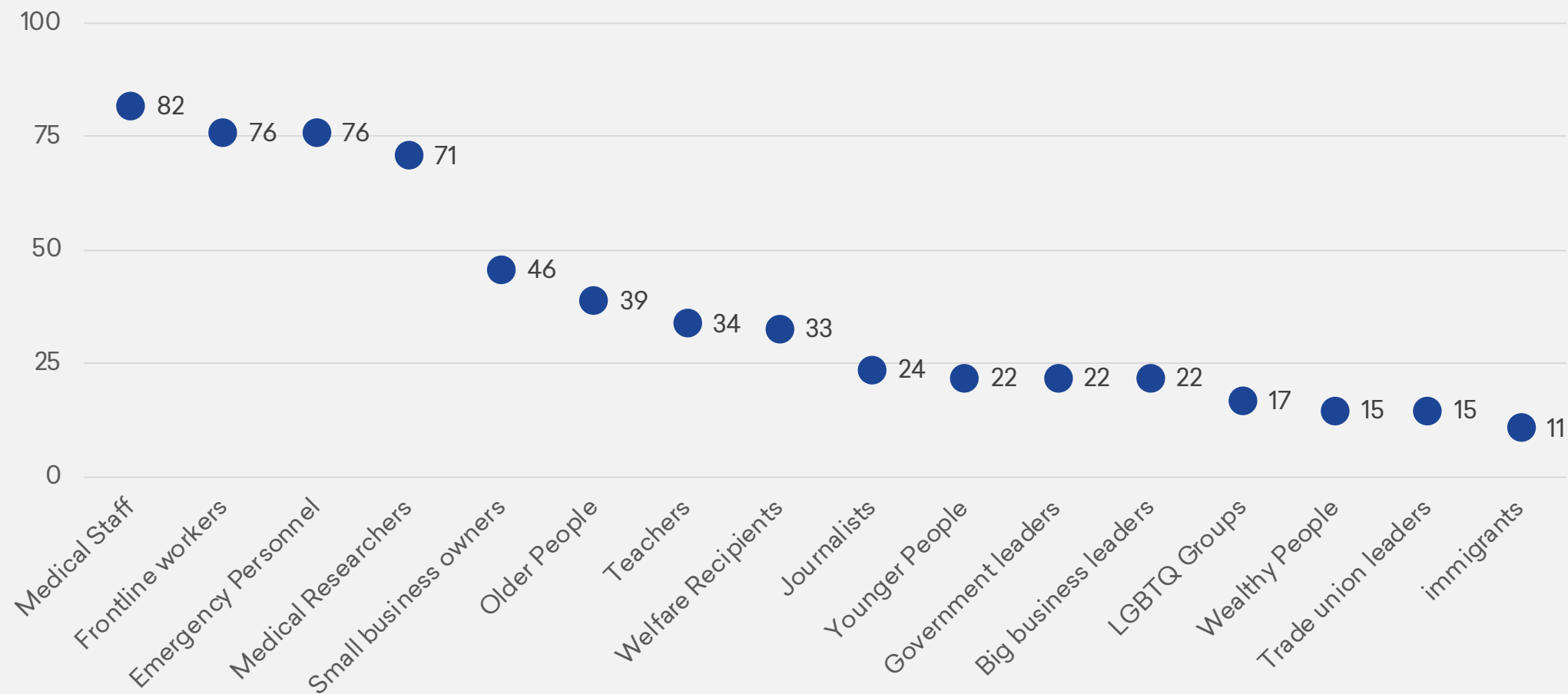


Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?

# Groups in Society: Who deserves praise?



Overwhelming majority agrees that those directly involved in the medical response to Covid-19 deserve praise.

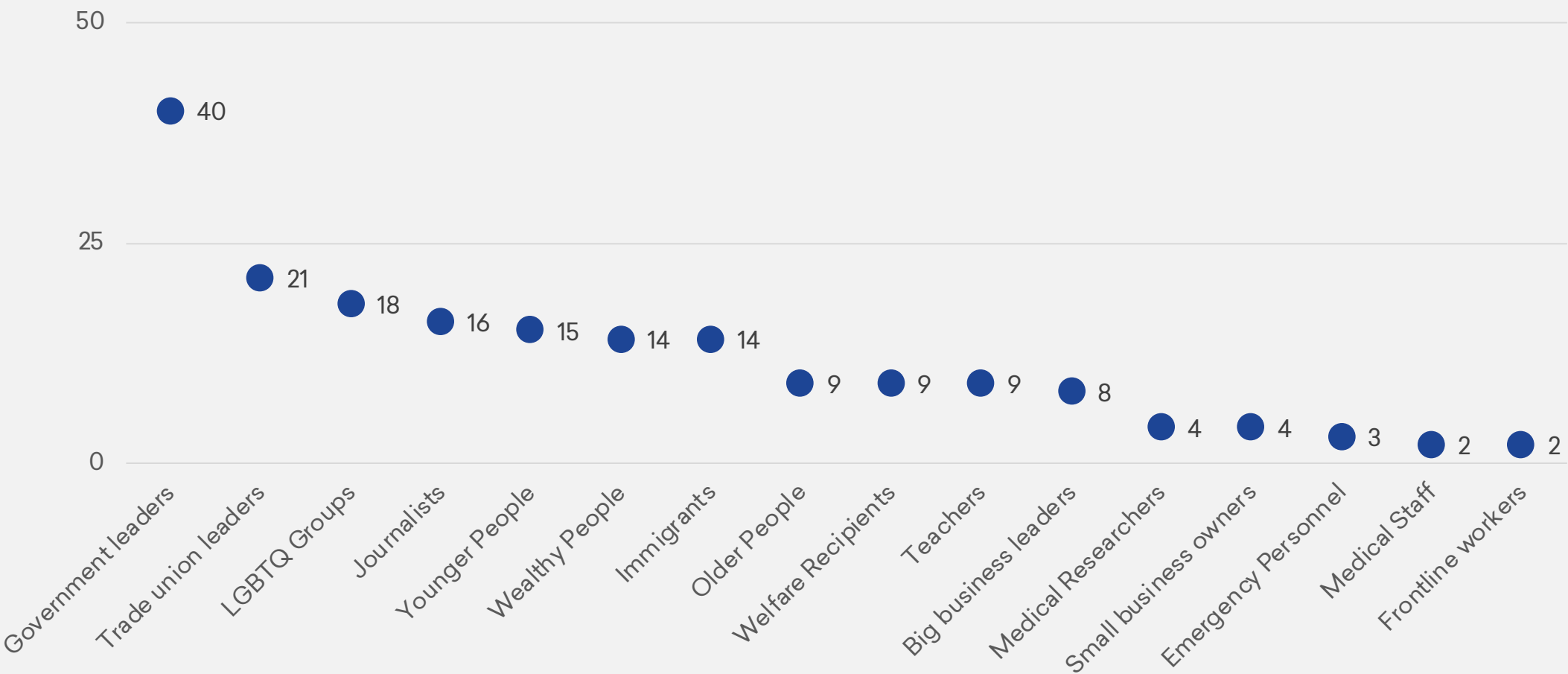


Question: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular blame for their actions.

# Groups in Society: Who deserves blame?



The government stands uniquely in a position of blame, nearly twice as much as any other group.

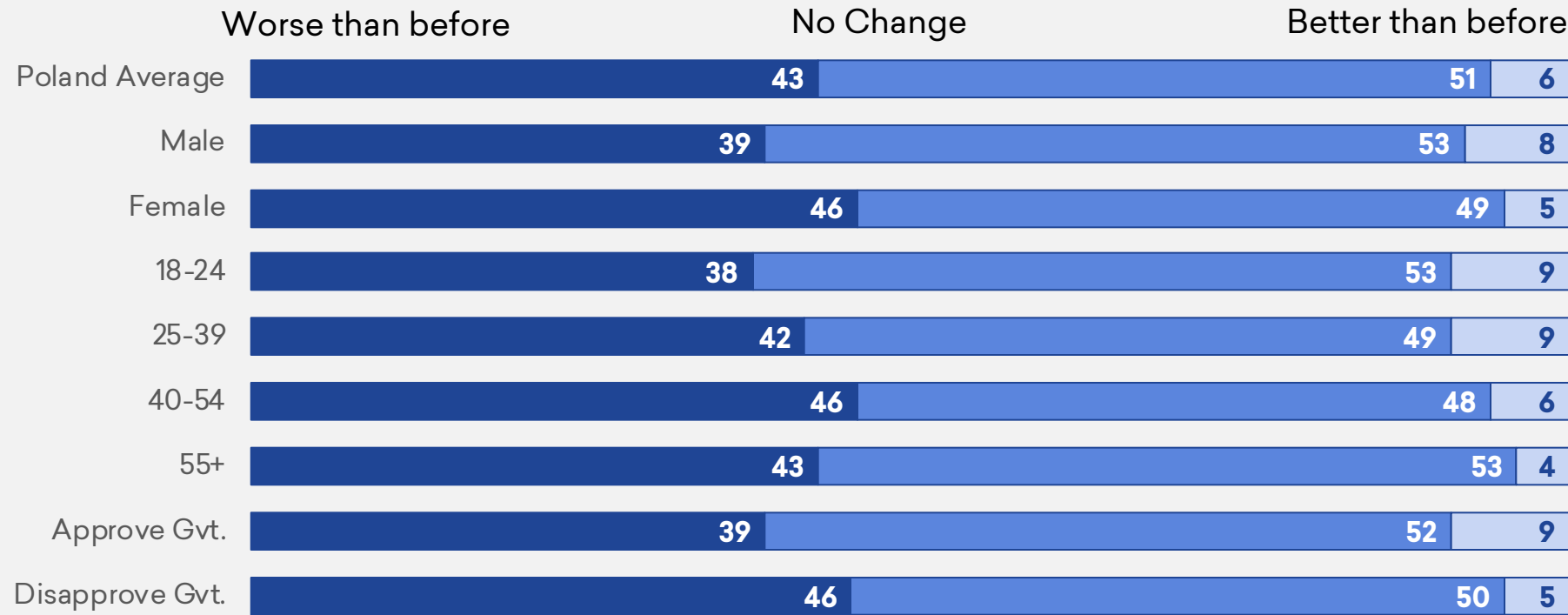


Question: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular blame for their actions.

# Trust in Others



The crisis has not generated a sense of social solidarity: Poles are 7 times more likely to say that the pandemic has worsened their trust in others than to say it has made it better.



Numbers in %

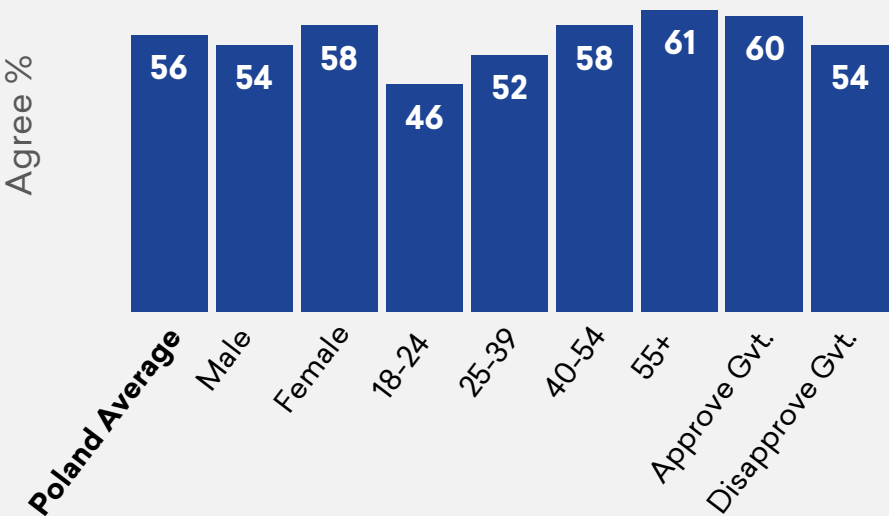
Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

# Empathy and Shared Humanity

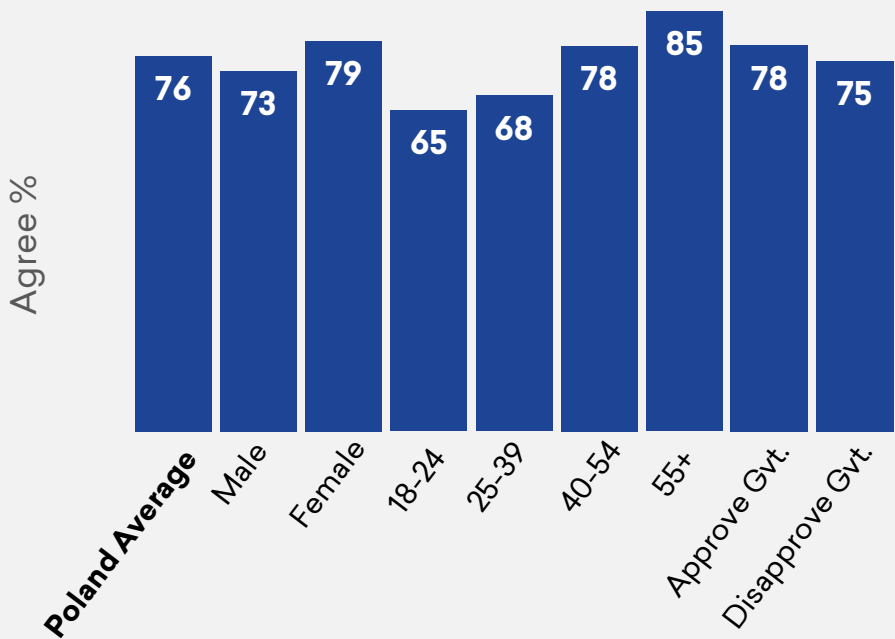


Older Poles are more likely to feel that the pandemic has served as a reminder that humans are fundamentally the same.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made me more aware of the living conditions of other people in this country.”



“The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us that no matter where we are from, as humans we are fundamentally the same.”



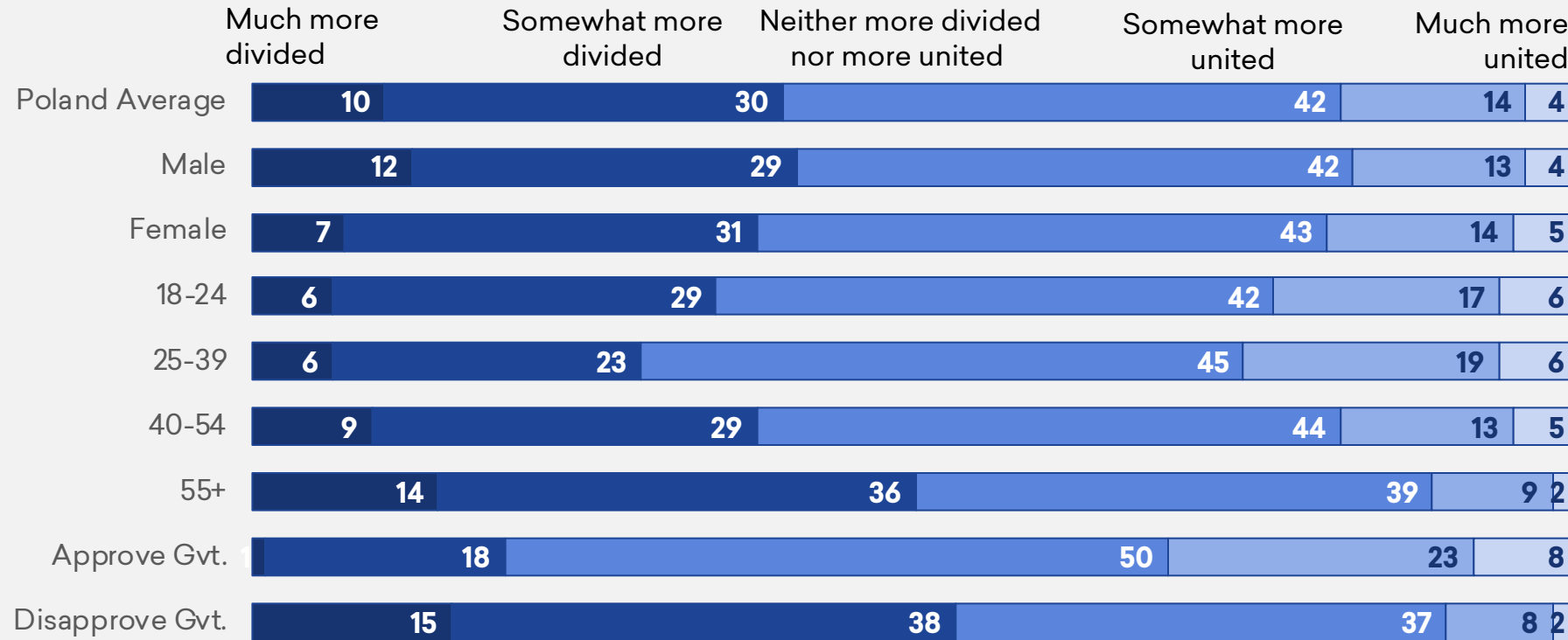
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# Impact on Cohesion



A perception of an increase in division is widely shared, especially among older and middle-aged Poles. Only supporters of the government report otherwise. This is likely a result of a failed attempt to hold elections in May, in the middle of the first wave of infections.

## More or less divided since COVID-19?



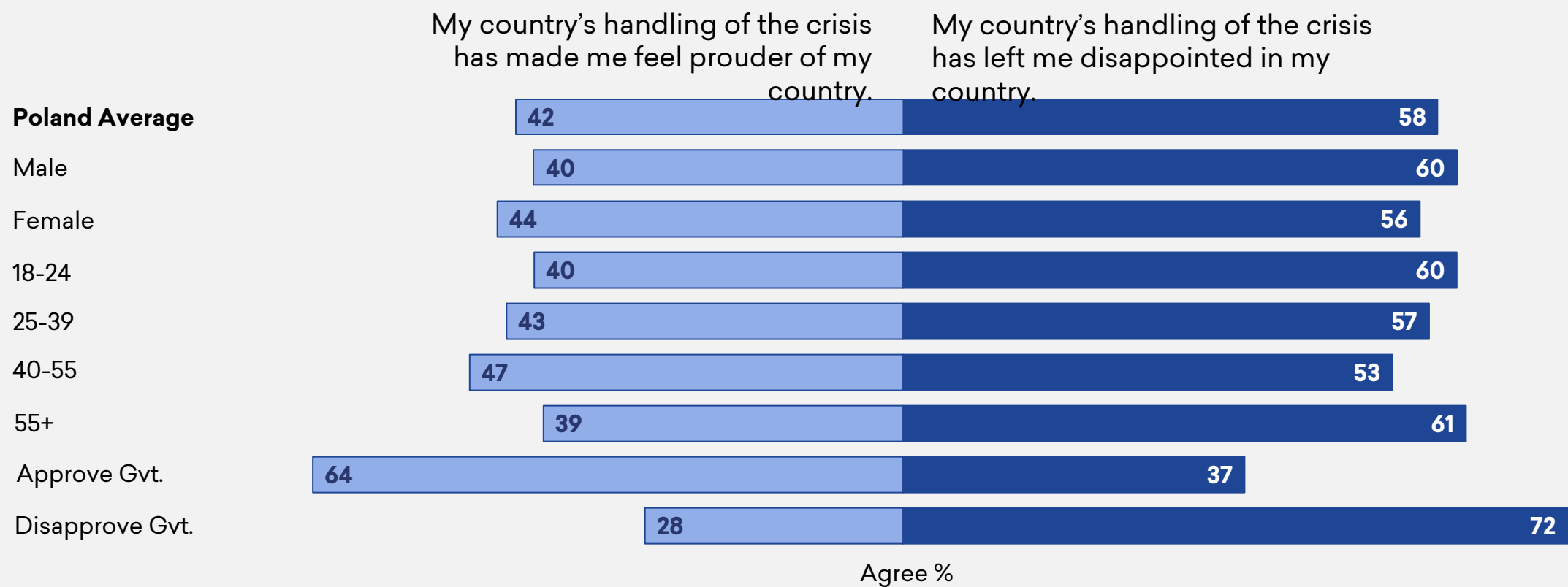
Numbers in %

Question: Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, how have your perceptions of [COUNTRY] changed, if at all? Is it...?

# Feelings towards country



Supporters of the government have become prouder of Poland, while the rest have been left disappointed by the handling of the crisis.



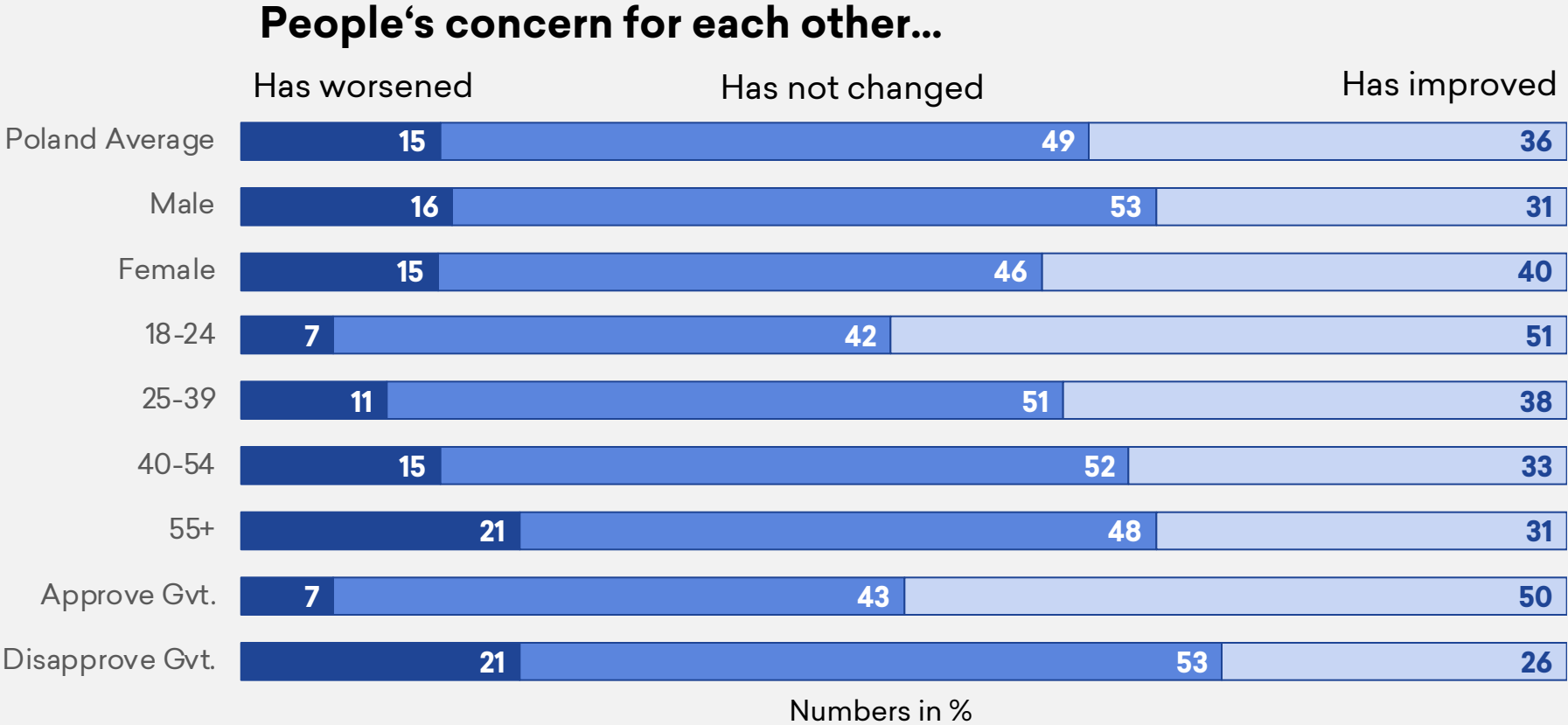
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?



# Change in Concern for Others



Young Poles and supporters of the government report that people have become more supportive of each other.

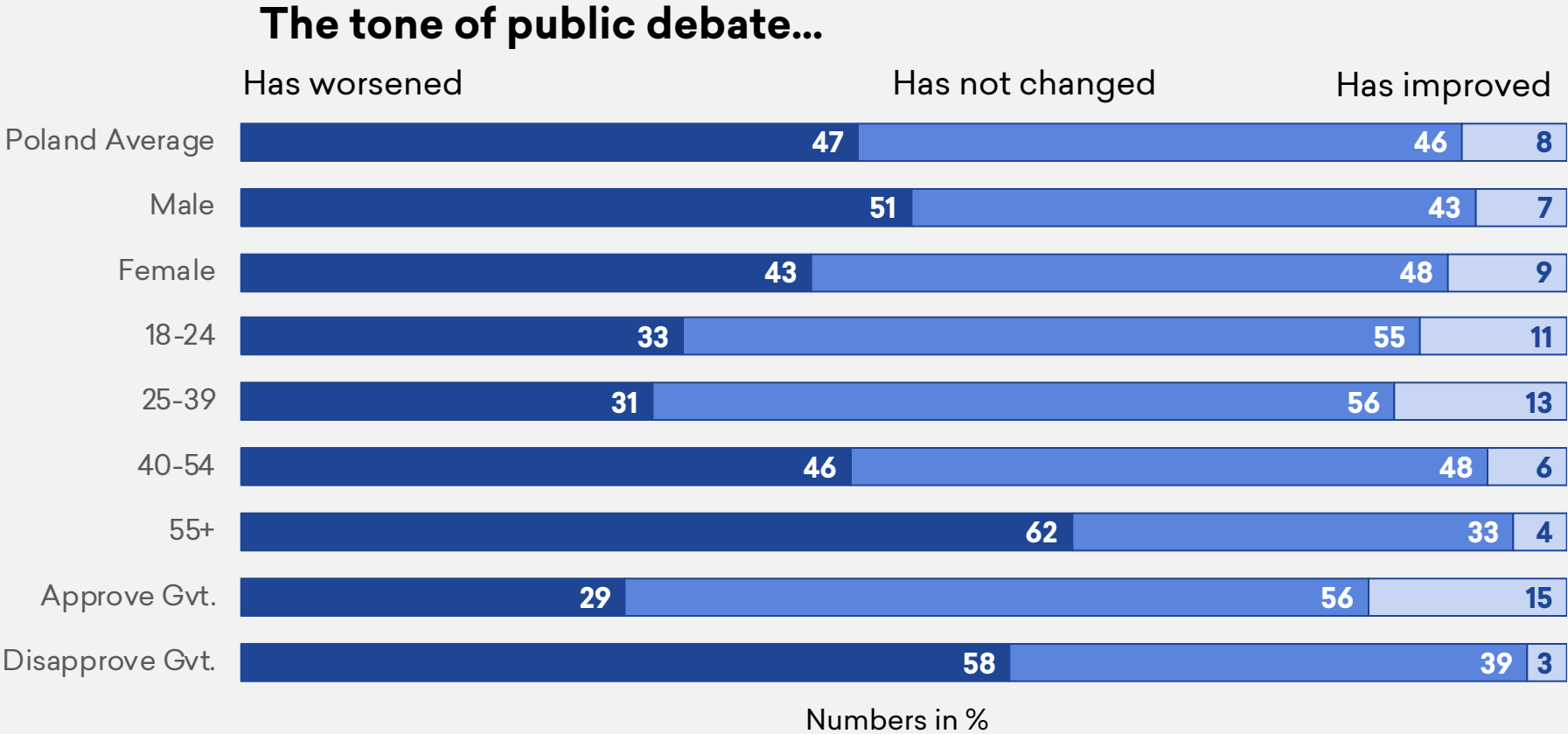


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in [COUNTRY], if at all?

# Change in Public Debate



All groups are more likely to report a deterioration rather than an improvement in the tone of the public debate in Poland, with those over 55 and government opponents being exceptionally critical.



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in [COUNTRY], if at all?

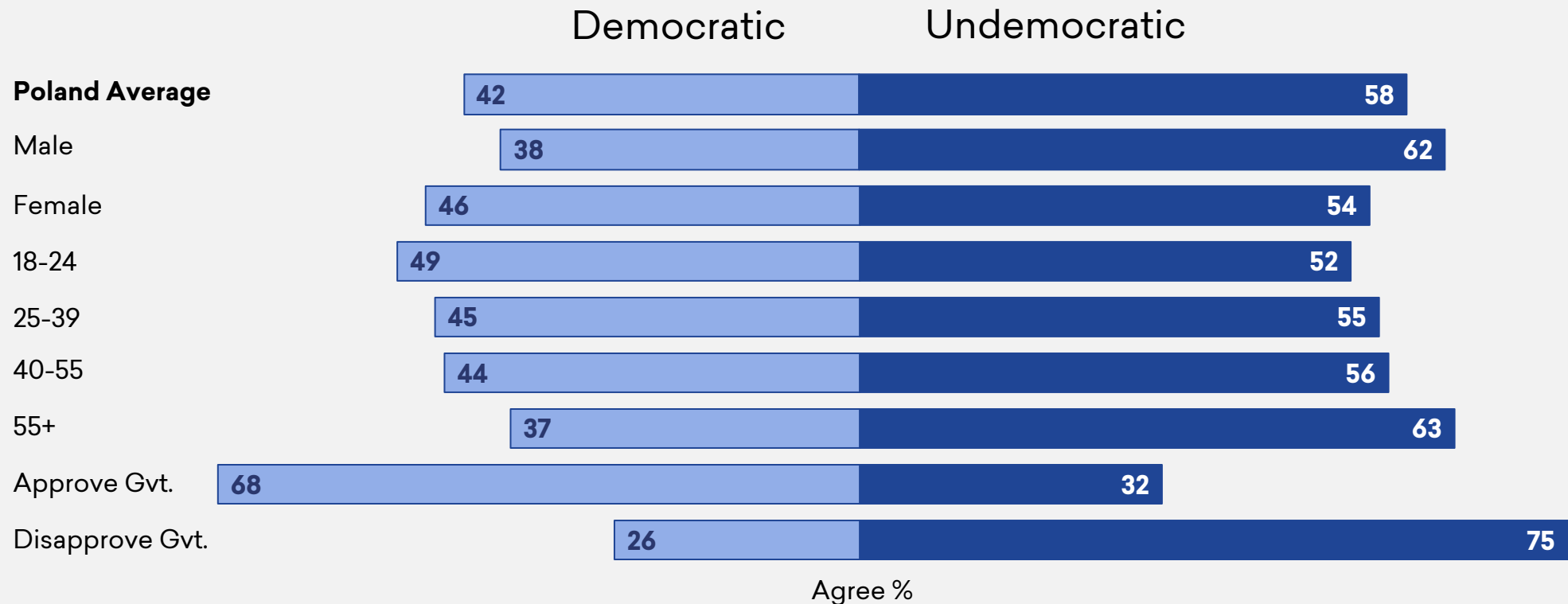
# **Power, Institutions and Media**





# Government handling of crisis

Poles' assessment of the government's handling of the crisis is split between supporters and opponents of the government – reflecting pre-existing partisan stances, regardless of what specific evaluation is posed.

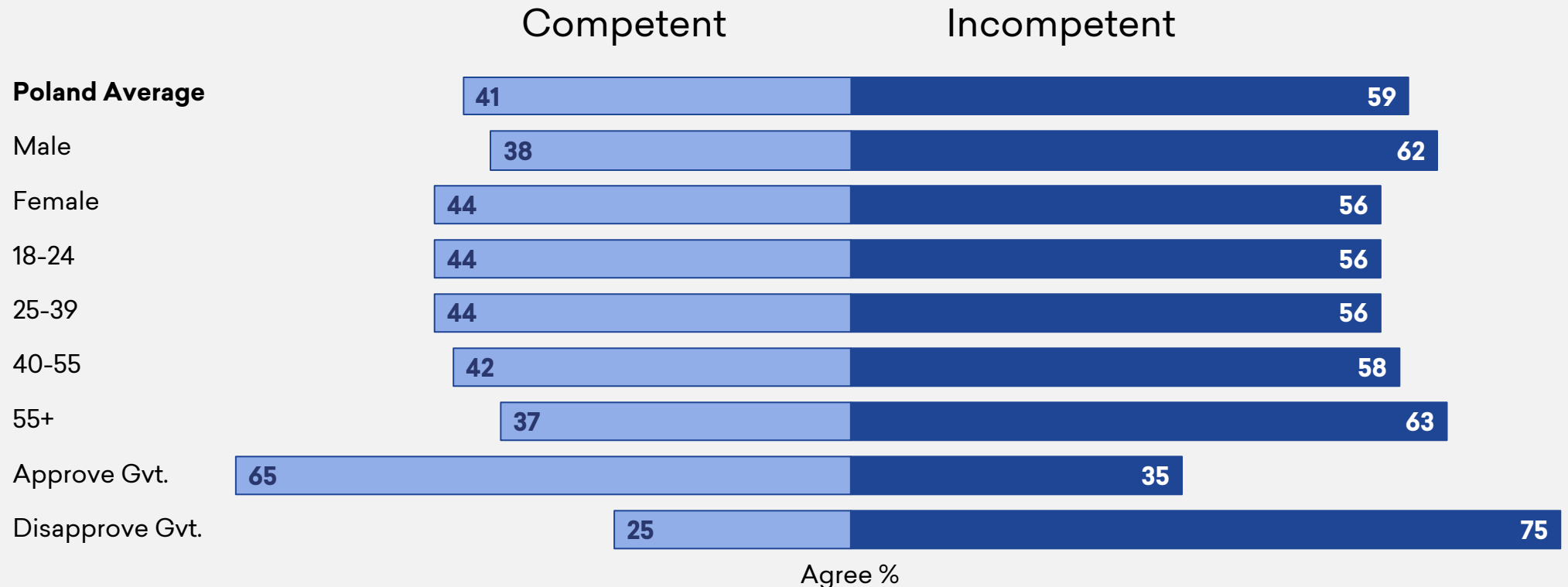


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?



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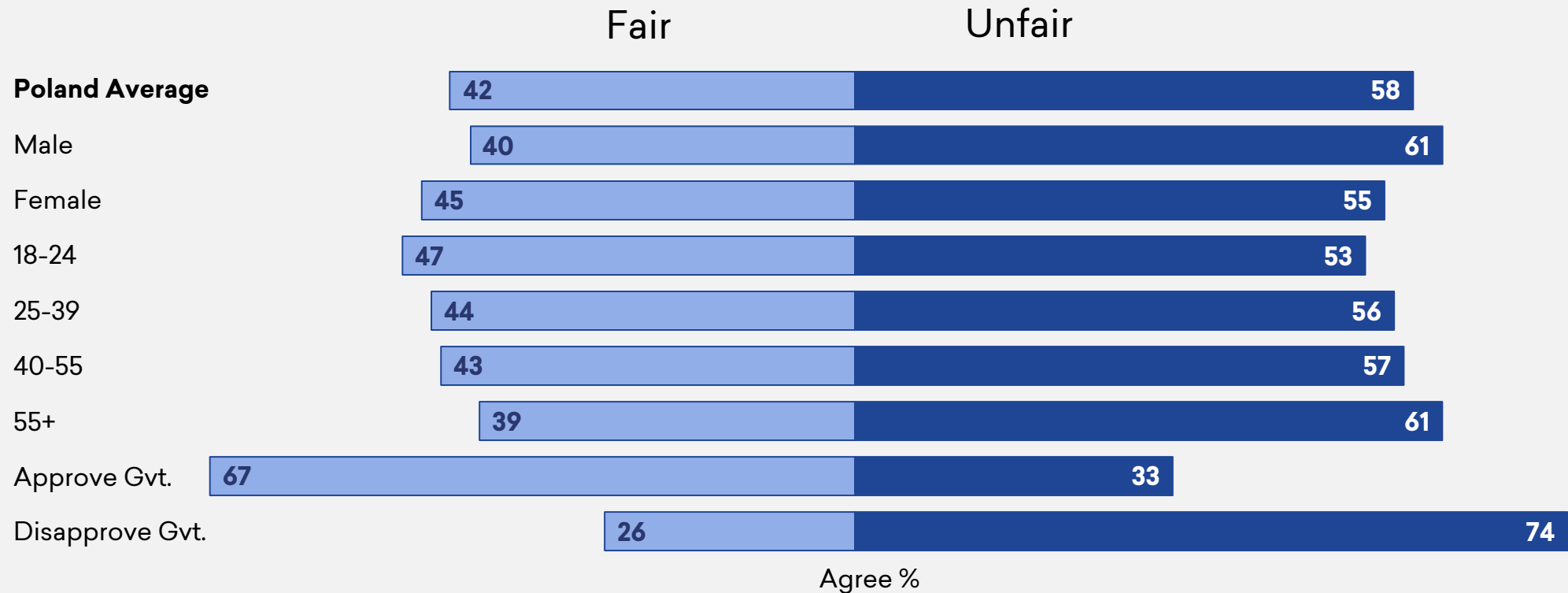


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?



# Government handling of crisis

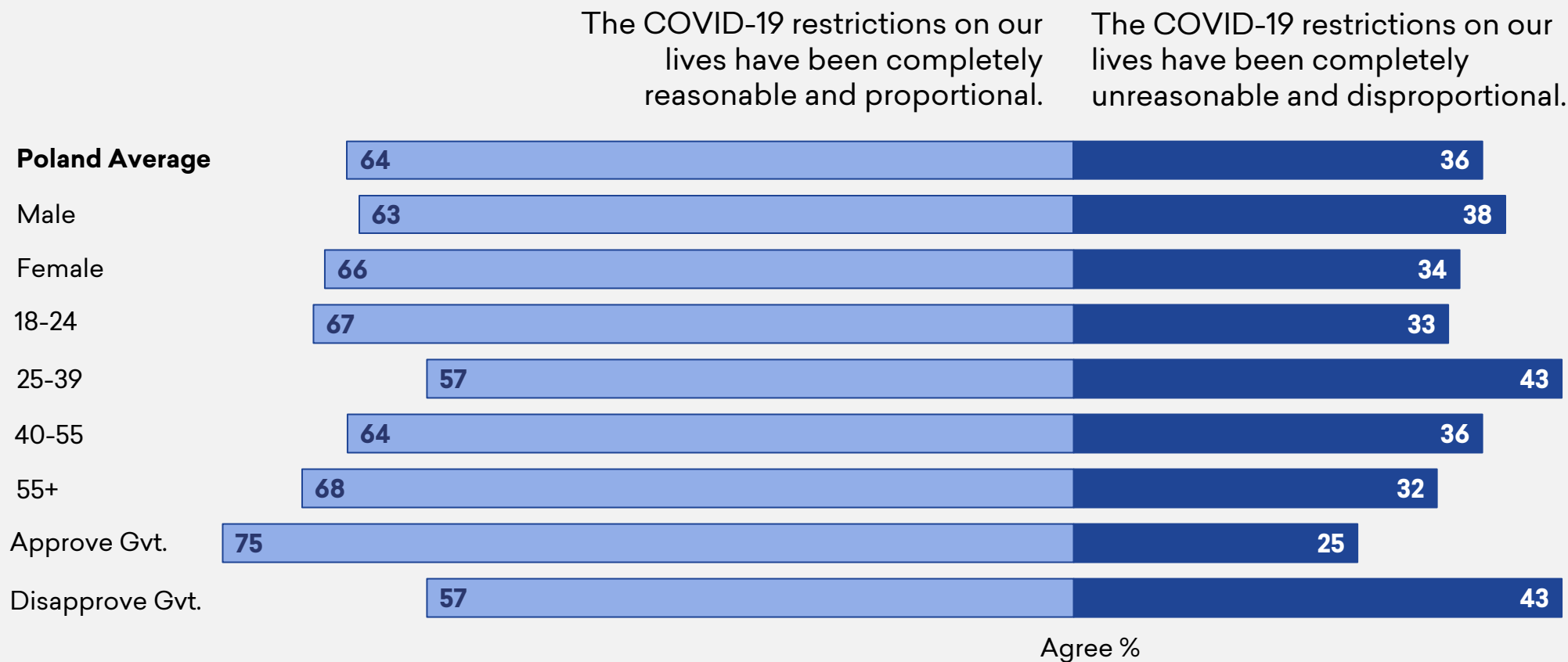
Poles' assessment of the government's handling of the crisis is split between supporters and opponents of the government – reflecting preexisting partisan stances, regardless of what specific evaluation is posed.



Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

# Perception of COVID-19 rules: Reasonable?

The partisan division is less prominent when the government is not directly referenced.



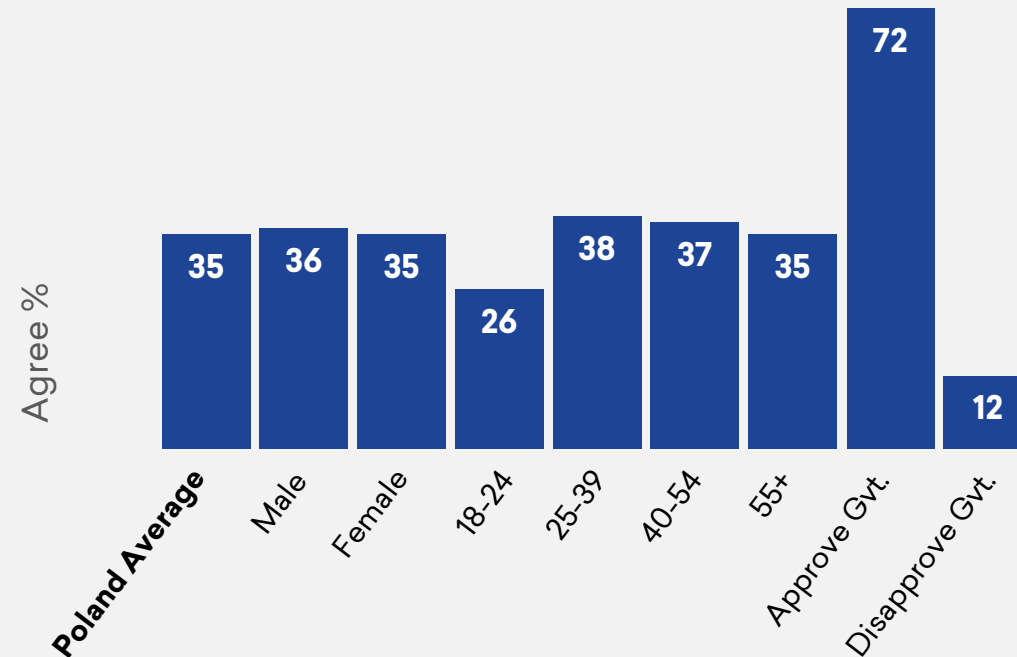
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

# Confidence in Government Ability



Low levels of confidence in the government's ability to tackle challenges, especially among the young.

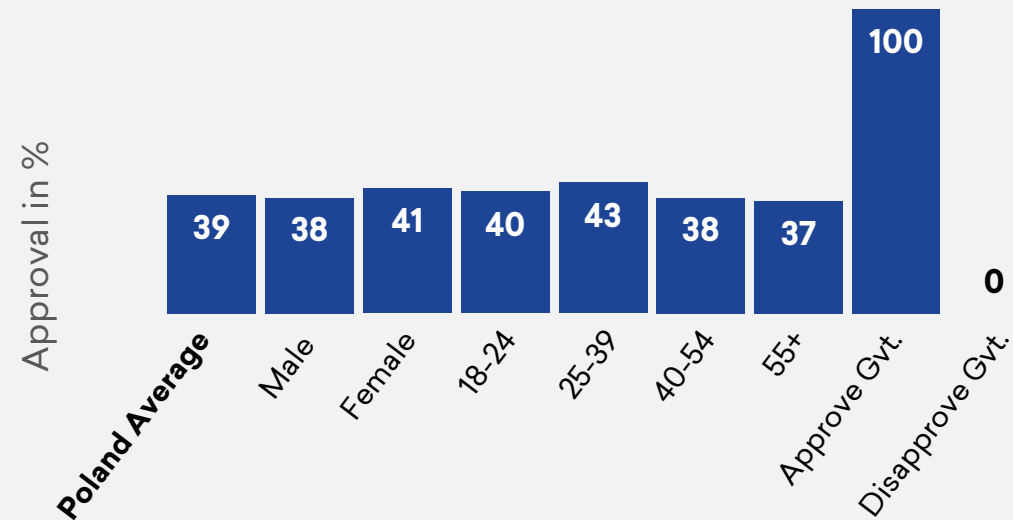
“I am confident in our current government's ability to tackle the challenges ahead of us.”



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



# Head of Government Approval

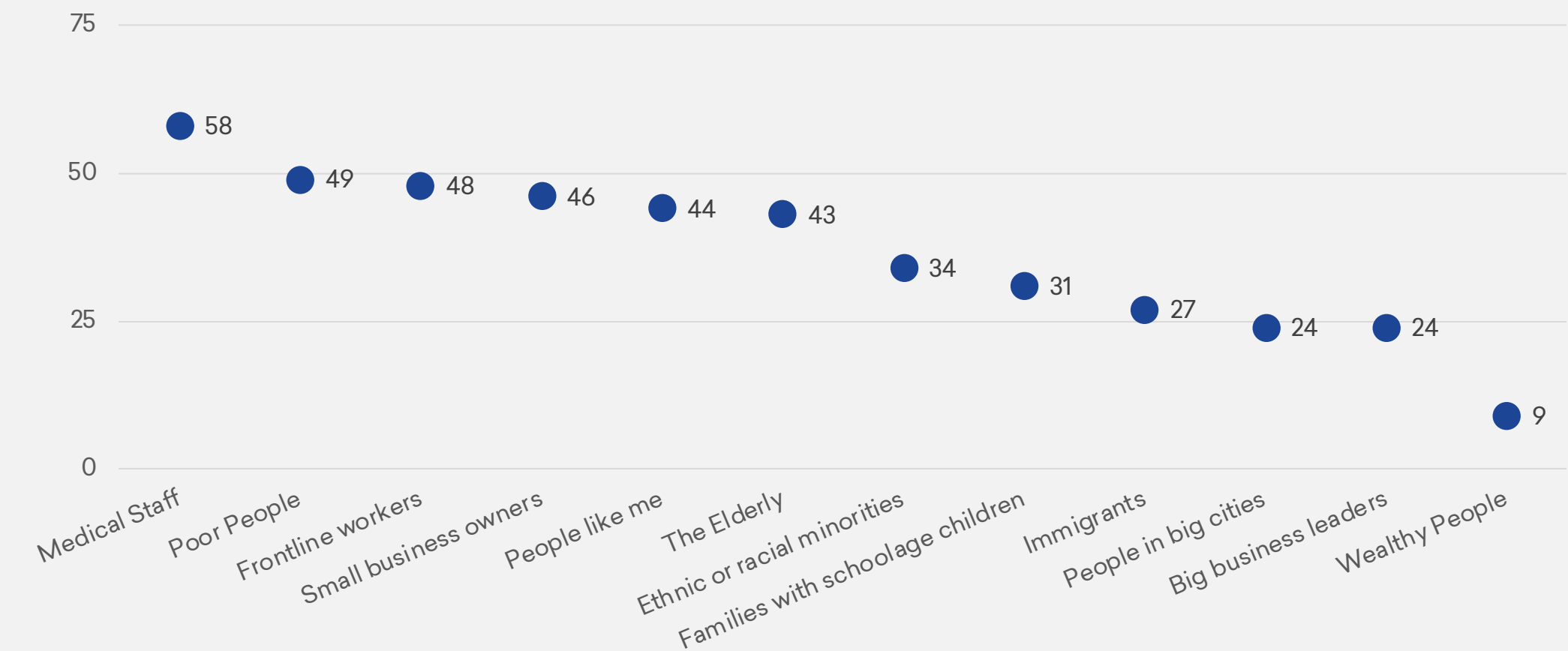


Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mateusz Morawiecki is doing his/her job?

# Government cares too little about...



Most people, except supporters of the government, consider medical staff to be neglected by the government\*

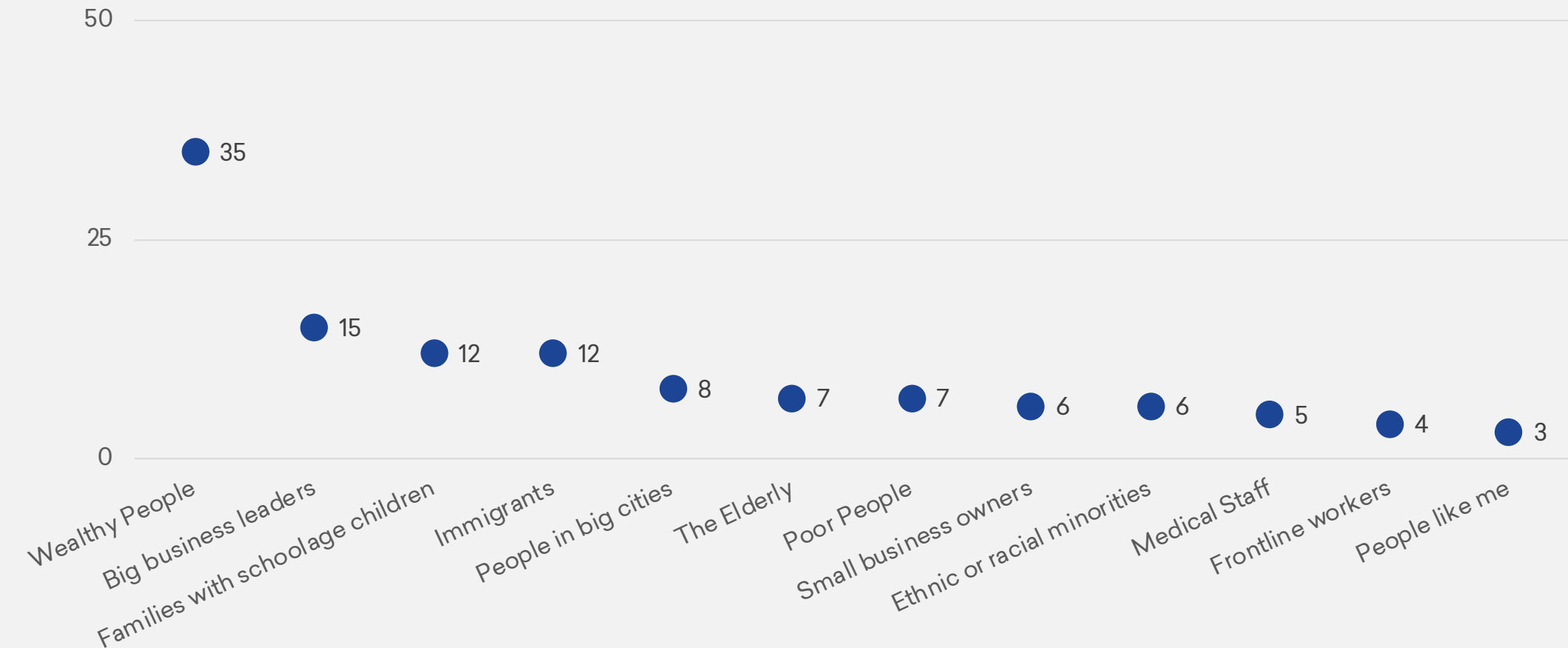


\*Only 22% of those who intended to vote for PiS and 32% of those who approve of Morawiecki think that medical staff are being neglected compared to 58% average.

# Government cares too much about...



Few groups are seen as being overly favored by the government, with the single exception of the wealthy.



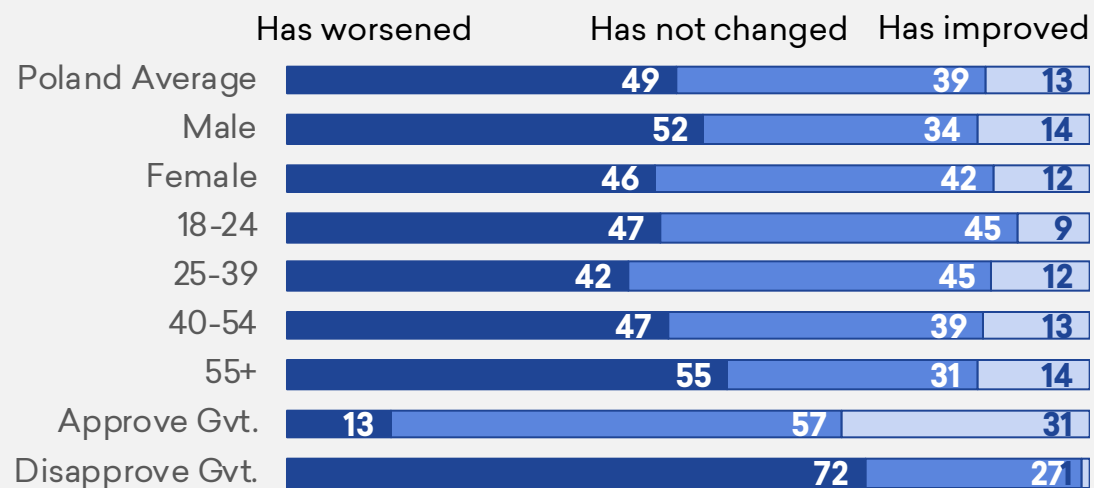
Question: Please indicate how much the [NATIONALITY] government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the COVID-19 situation...

# Trust in Institutions



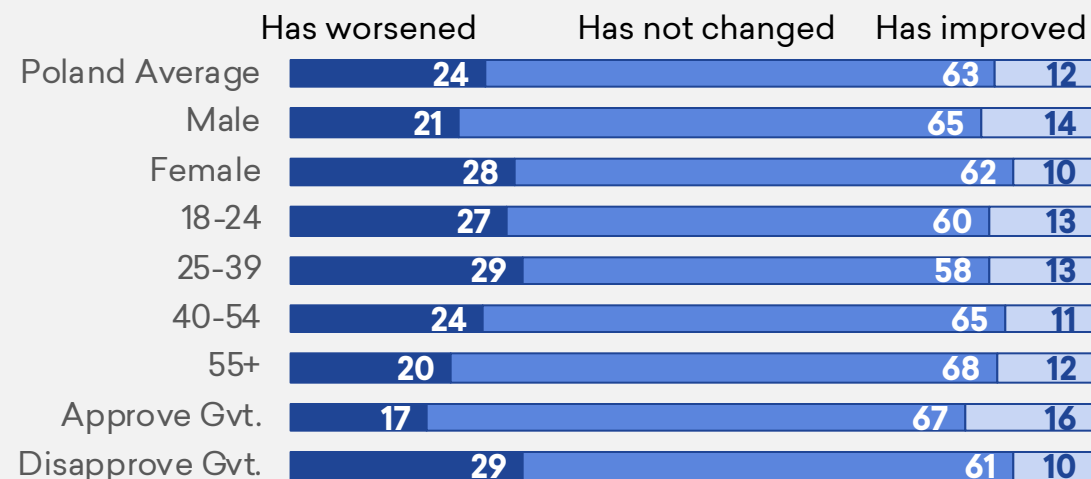
Trust in the national government has mostly deteriorated outside those who already supported it.

## Trust in National Government



Numbers in %

## Trust in Local Government



Numbers in %

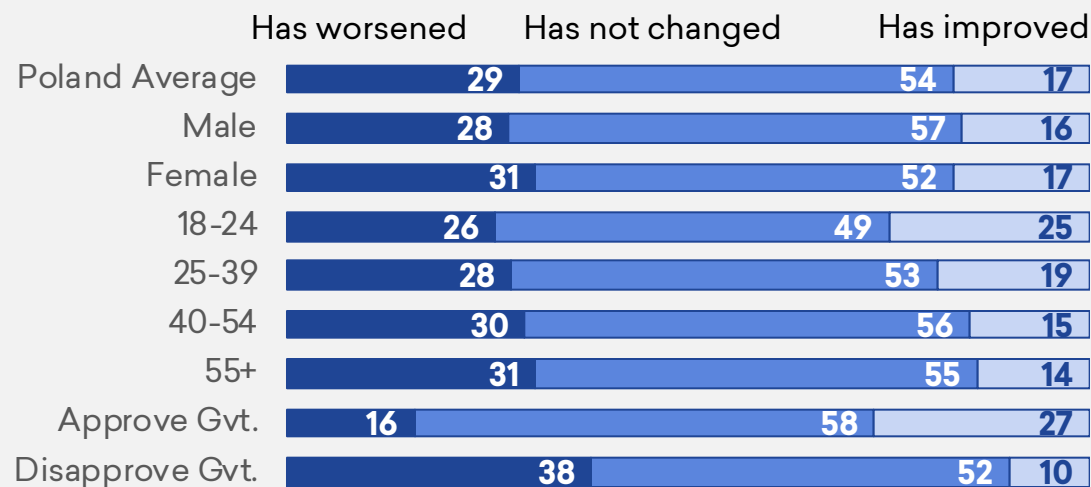
Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

# Trust in Institutions



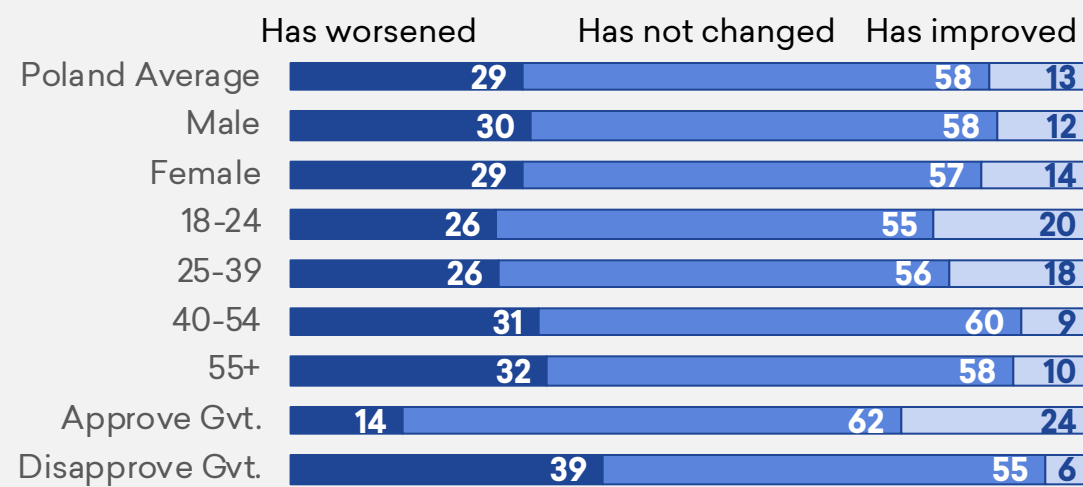
Change in trust in health and welfare system is closely tied to approval of the government.

## Health System



Numbers in %

## Welfare System



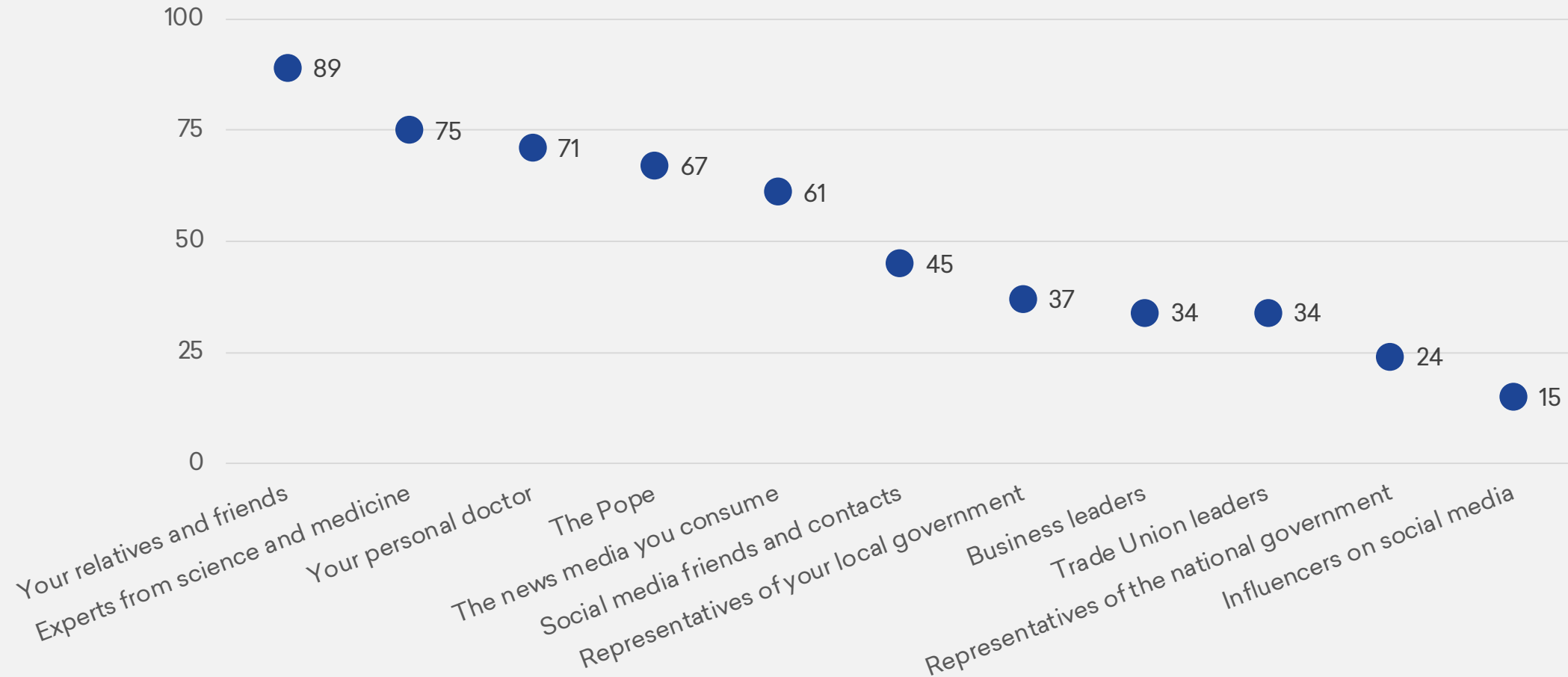
Numbers in %

Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

# Trust in information sources on COVID-19



The national government is largely distrusted as a source of accurate and reliable information. Friends, relatives, doctors and experts on the other hand, are trusted.



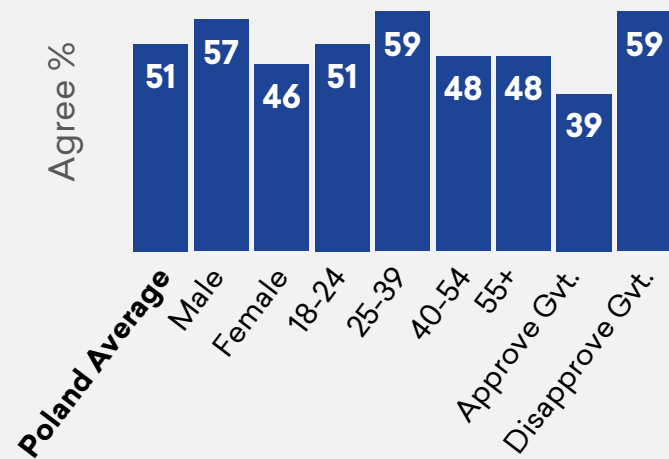
Question: Please indicate to what extent, if at all, you trust these groups of people or institutions when it comes to accurate and reliable information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Suspicion & Conspiracy

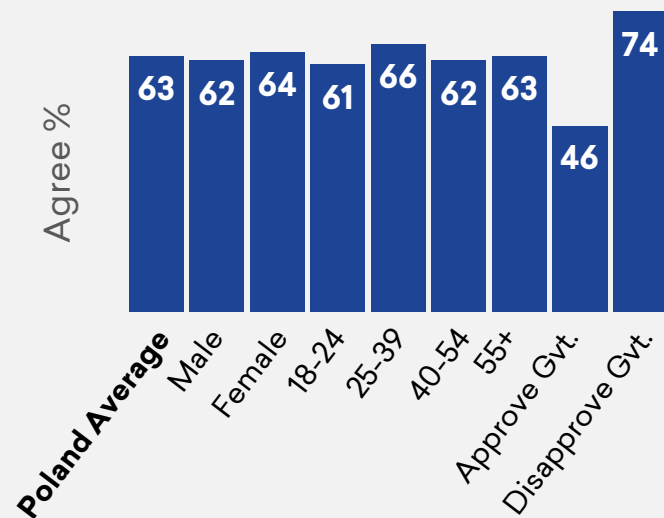


Both the government's and the media's intentions are treated with mistrust. The government is mistrusted by a significant minority of its own supporters.

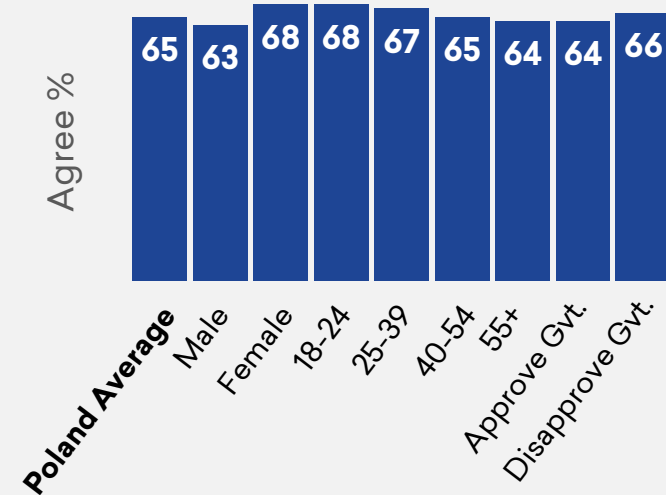
“The government is making this crisis seem bigger than it is to push through their own agenda.”



“The government knows things about COVID-19 that it is hiding from the public.”



“The media seem to be pursuing their own agenda rather than simply reporting the facts.”



Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

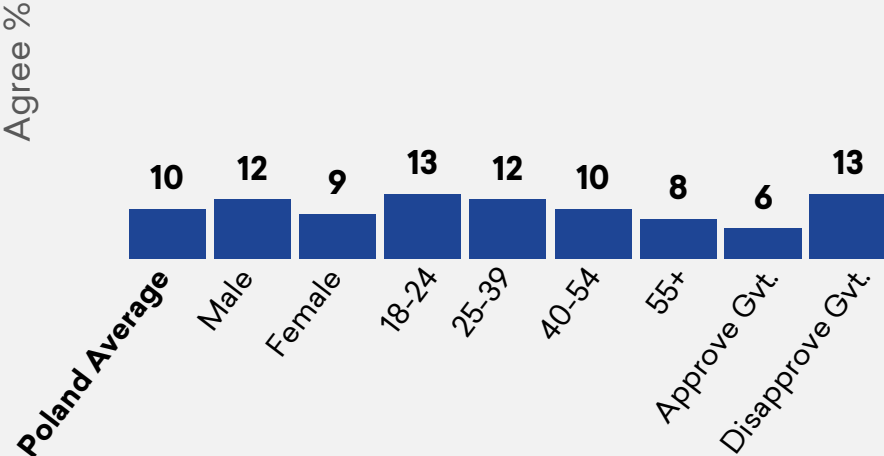
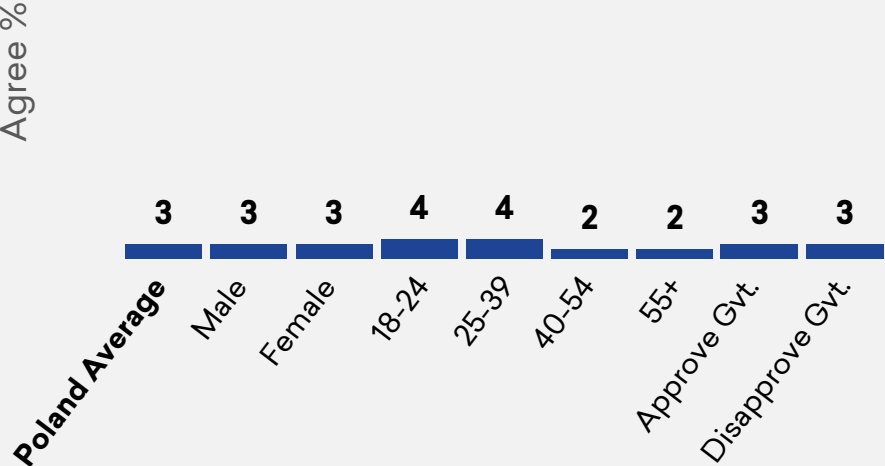
# Participation in Anti-Government Protest



Few people actively oppose Covid-19 policies.

Attended a protest against COVID-related government policies.

Posted on social media against COVID-19 government policies.



Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?

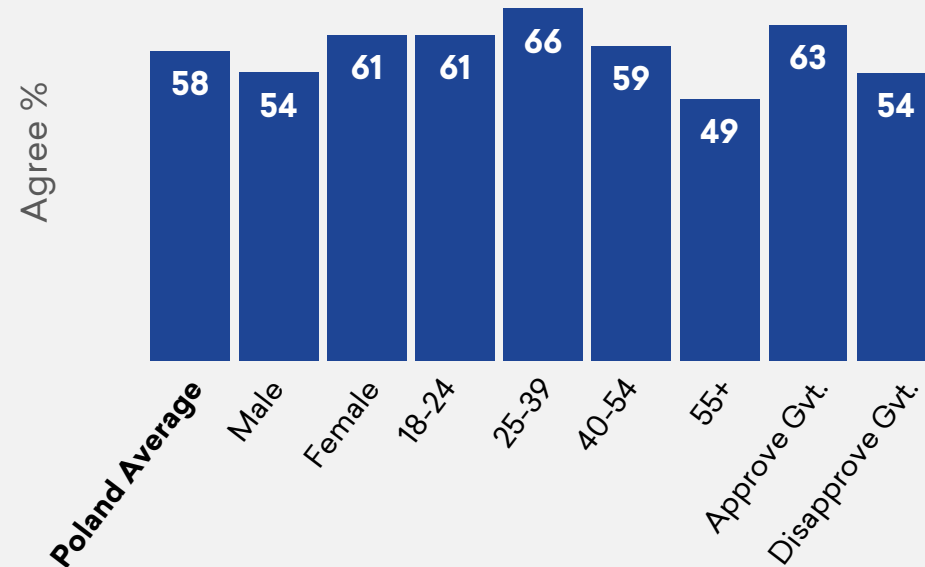


# Authoritarianism



Majorities express desire for strong leader leadership, especially among supporters of the government and the 25-39 age group.

“To put our country in order, we need a strong leader who is willing to break the rules”

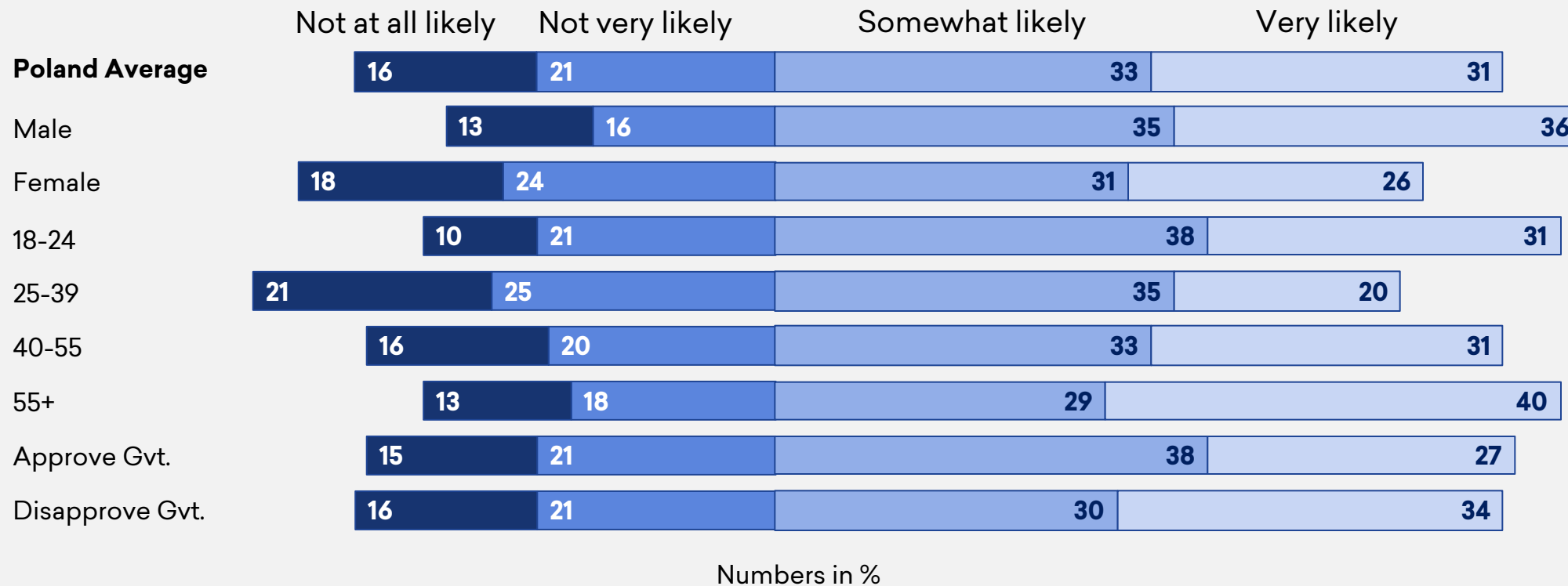


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

# Acceptance of Measures



A significant minority would reject a Covid-19 vaccine. Poland has experienced a rise in anti-vaccine sentiments and the government has sought to avoid taking a stance on the issue publicly.



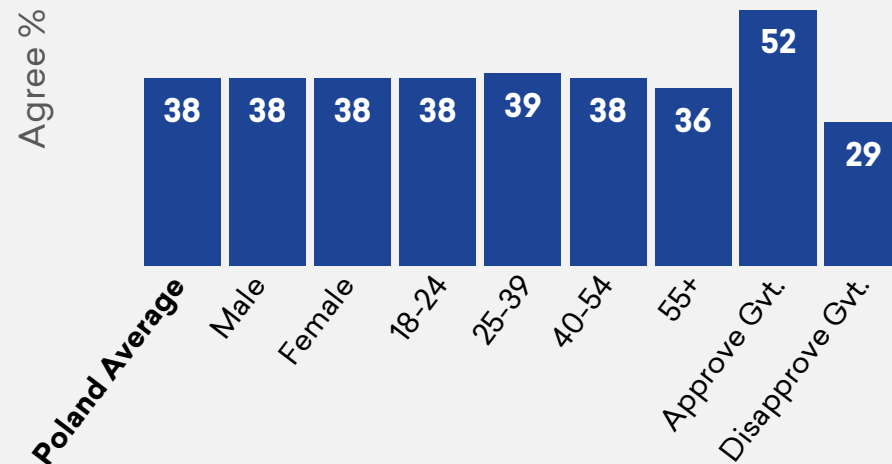
Question: If a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 is developed, how likely would you be to get vaccinated?

# Acceptance of Measures: Tracing App

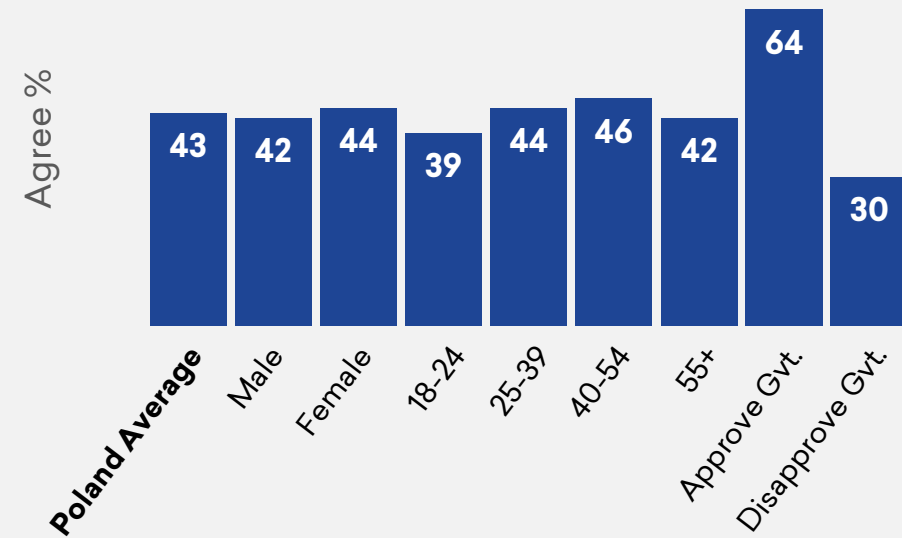


Supporters of the government are more likely to trust a tracing app and argue for its necessity. The app rollout has been slow and the issue has not featured significantly in the public debate.

“Introducing a tracing app is a necessary step.”



“I trust that my privacy will be protected.”

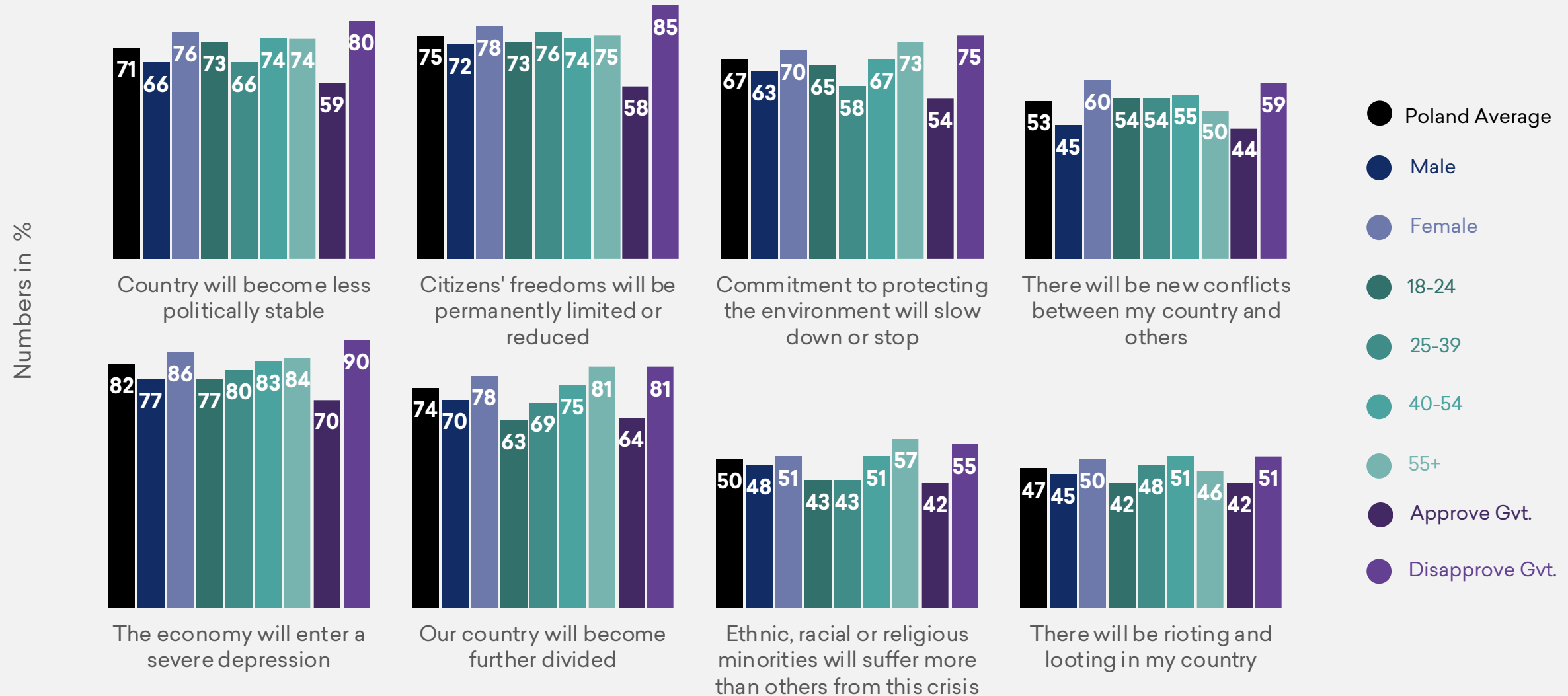


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# **After COVID-19: Policy Outlook**



# Worries - General Situation



Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

# Political Priorities

Health system improvements dominate priorities.



	Poland Average	Male	Female	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	Approve Gvt.	Disapprove Gvt.
Improving the health system	56	55	56	41	47	55	67	53	59
Reducing unemployment	35	29	40	34	41	34	30	35	35
Protecting climate and environment	25	24	26	28	20	23	30	24	27
Supporting individuals and families in need	24	21	27	18	25	24	26	28	18
Supporting small businesses	23	22	23	25	28	24	17	21	26
Protecting democratic rights and freedoms	18	21	15	17	12	18	22	16	21
Reducing political division	16	20	12	9	11	18	20	16	16
Reducing economic inequality	15	16	14	8	11	18	18	14	17
Improving the education system	14	12	16	18	15	16	10	12	17
Reducing immigration and refugee intake	12	12	11	8	14	12	11	13	10
Fighting crime and violence	11	10	12	12	12	12	9	14	6
Improving cooperation between countries	8	8	8	9	10	8	6	8	8
Strengthening European integration	8	12	5	5	6	6	12	6	11
Addressing racism in our society	7	7	7	17	5	5	7	7	7
Improving gender equality	5	4	6	10	5	4	4	5	4
Protecting ethnic and religious minorities	4	5	3	8	4	4	3	4	4
Reducing terrorism	4	4	6	10	5	4	4	5	3

Question: Besides containing the COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following issues should the government prioritize addressing in the months ahead? Please select the top 3.

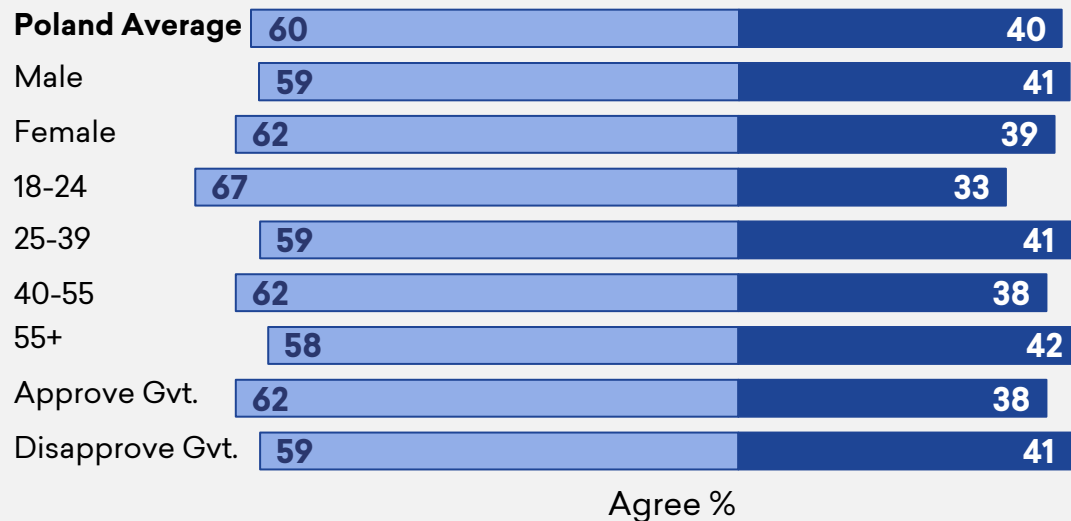
# Turning Point vs. Return to Normal



Only a minority wants and expects a change. The youngest are most insistent on a return to the status quo. Opponents of the government are most skeptical about the prospects of significant changes.

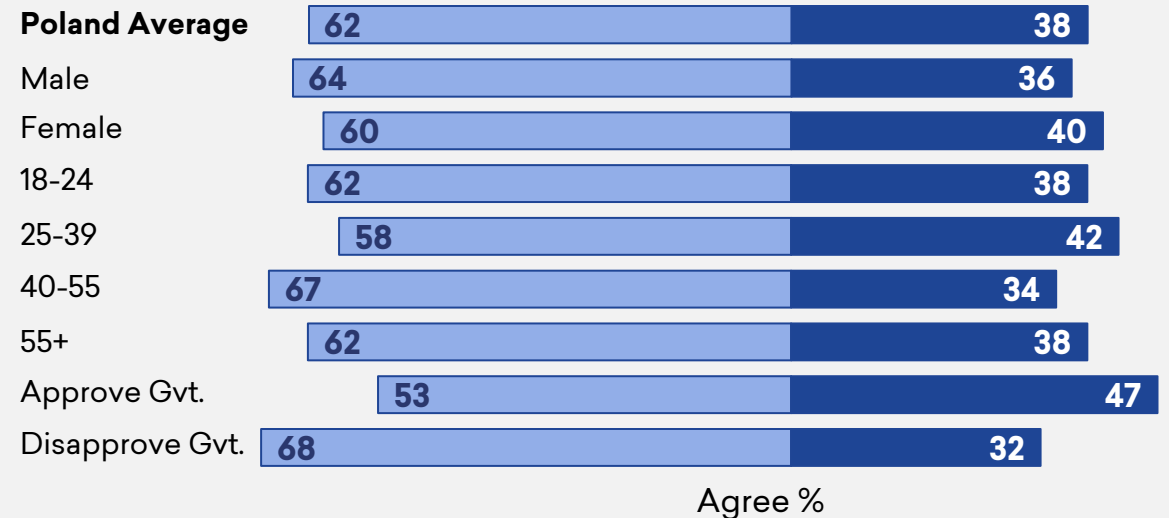
I mostly just want things to return to normal, to how they were before the pandemic.

We should seize the opportunity of COVID-19 to make important changes to our country.



I doubt that much will change in our country after the pandemic is over.

I think that significant changes will happen in our country after the pandemic is over.



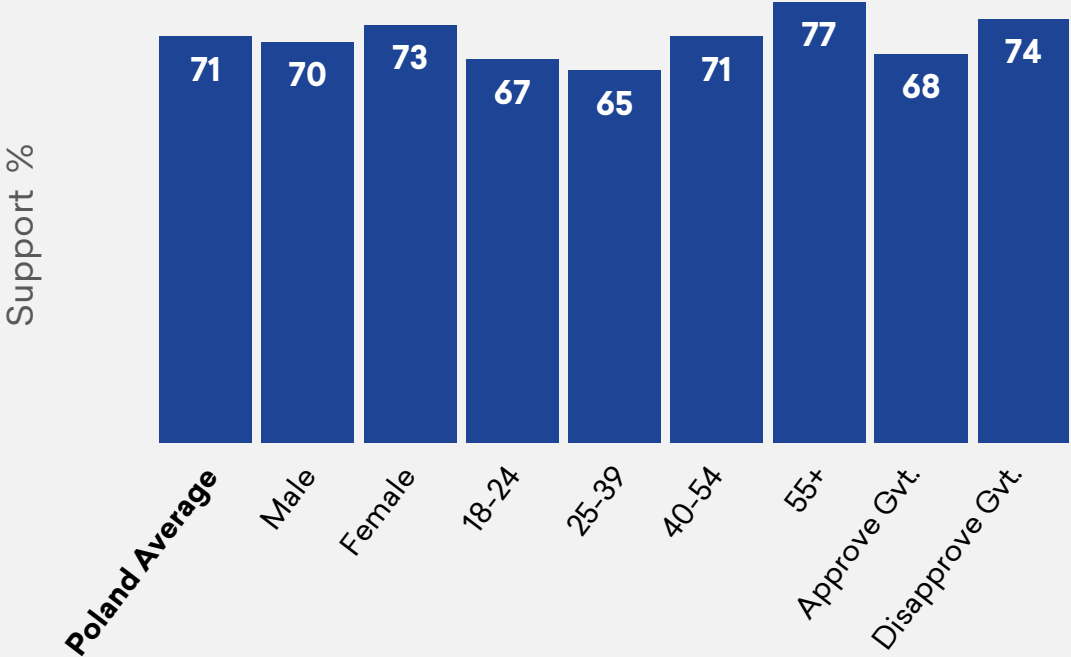
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

# Green New Deal



Suport for a Green New Deal is widespread, even if it is more tepid among government supporters.

A “Green New Deal” that makes large-scale government investments to make our economy more environmentally friendly.



Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

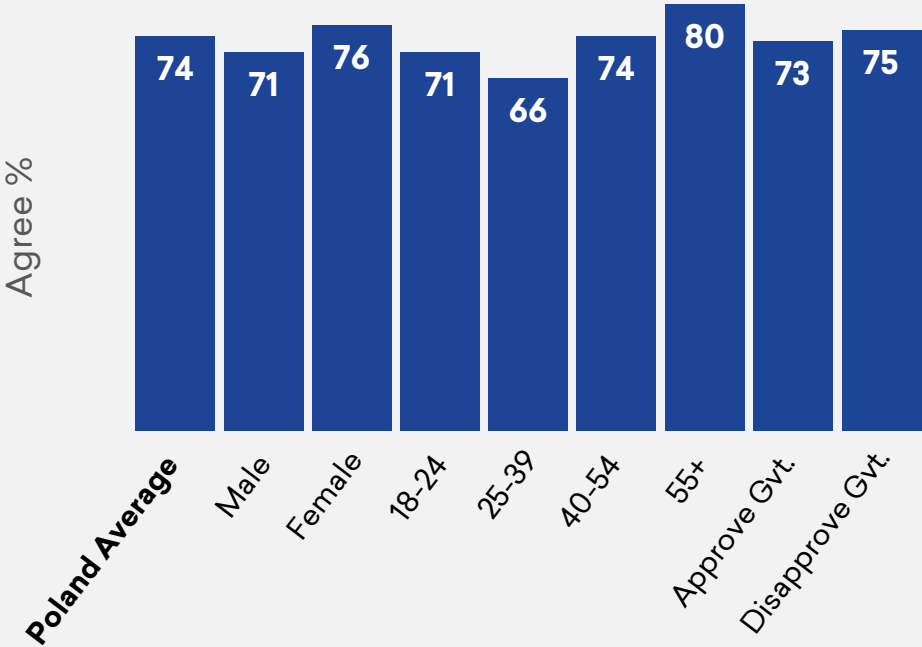


# Climate



However, when asked about the Covid-19 lockdown and climate policy, respondents widely see the potential for reducing the environmental footprint.

“The drop in carbon emissions that was seen during the COVID-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to.”

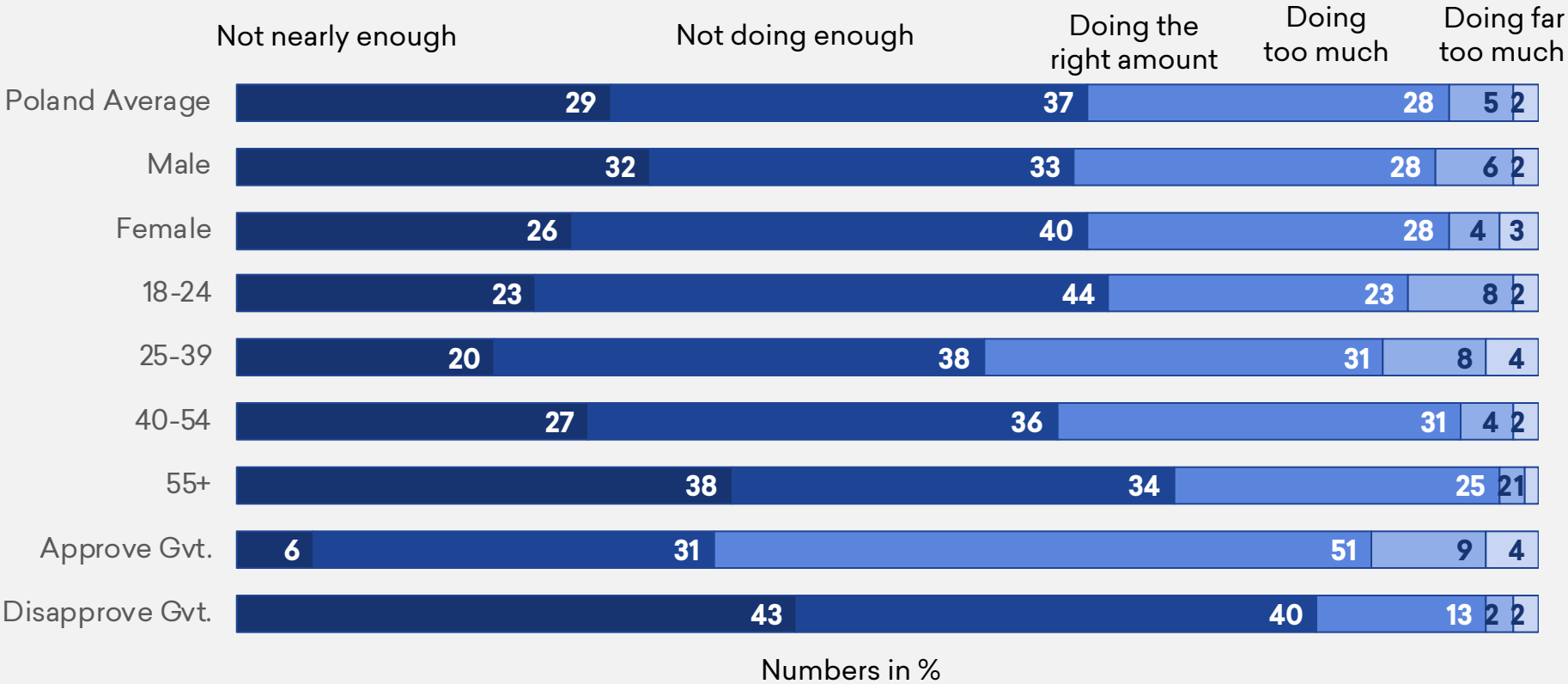


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# Climate



Views on climate are largely split along party lines. Climate policy is not yet a salient issue in Polish public debate and Poles are, to a large degree, taking cues from their political leaders.

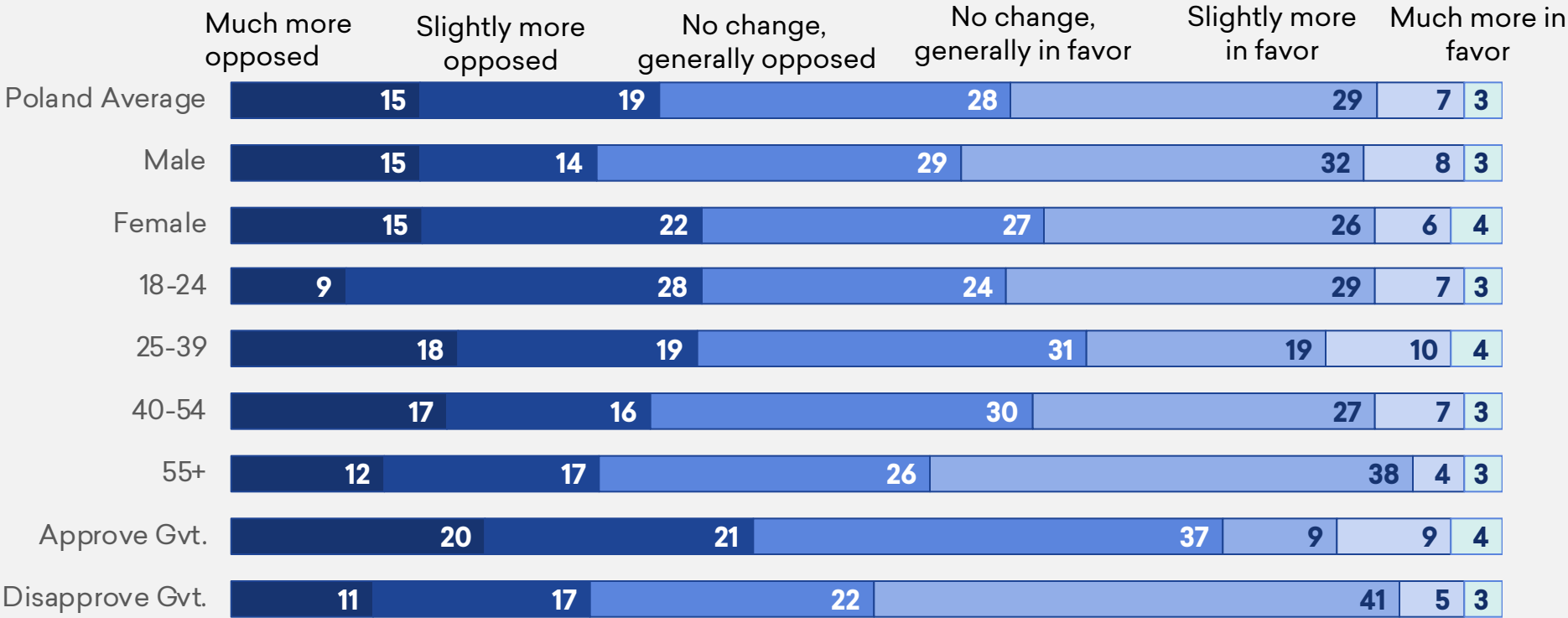


Question: Thinking about the current situation, which of the following statements do you agree with most? On the environment, the government is...

# Migration



As a result of the crisis, Poles have, on balance, become more opposed to accepting migrants, with about 15% net shift against. Opposition to migration is most prominent among the government’s supporters.



Numbers in %

Question: Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, how have your views changed about accepting migrants into [COUNTRY], if at all?

# International Cooperation



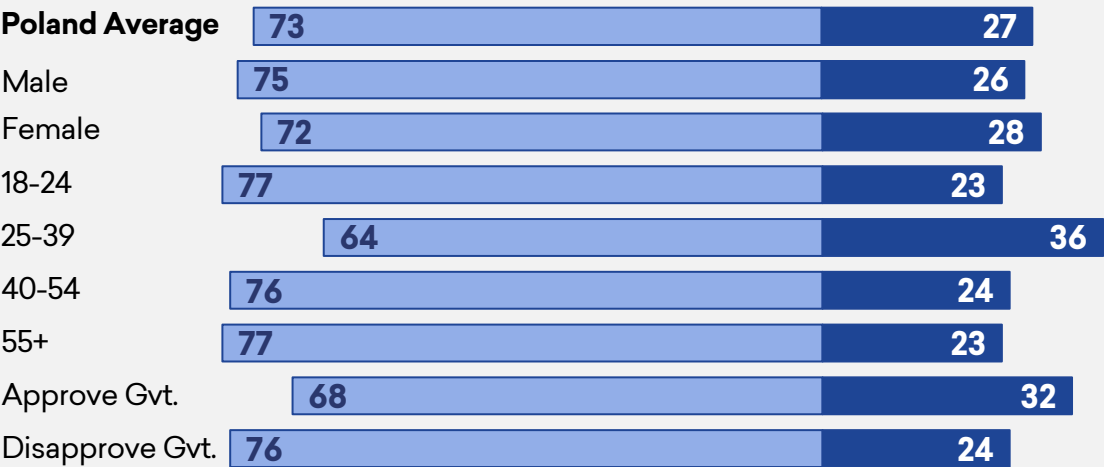
While Poles extoll the virtues of international cooperation, they are split on the issue of borders. Government supporters are particularly in favour of closed borders.

This crisis shows we need to work more closely with other countries and international institutions to address major challenges like pandemics and climate change.

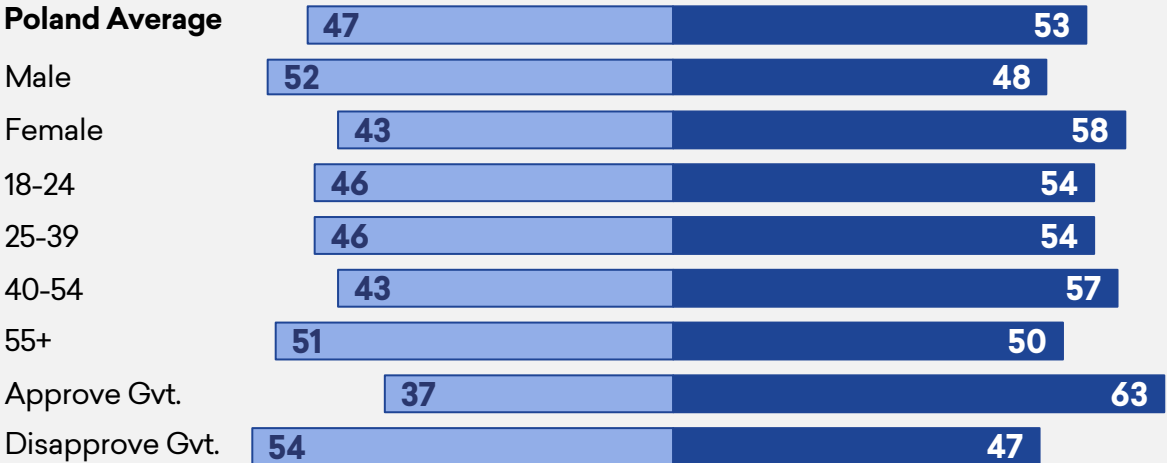
This crisis shows we can't rely on other countries and international institutions for support when we face major challenges like pandemics and climate change.

I hope borders will soon be as open as they were before the crisis.

I feel more reassured when borders are closed.



Agree %



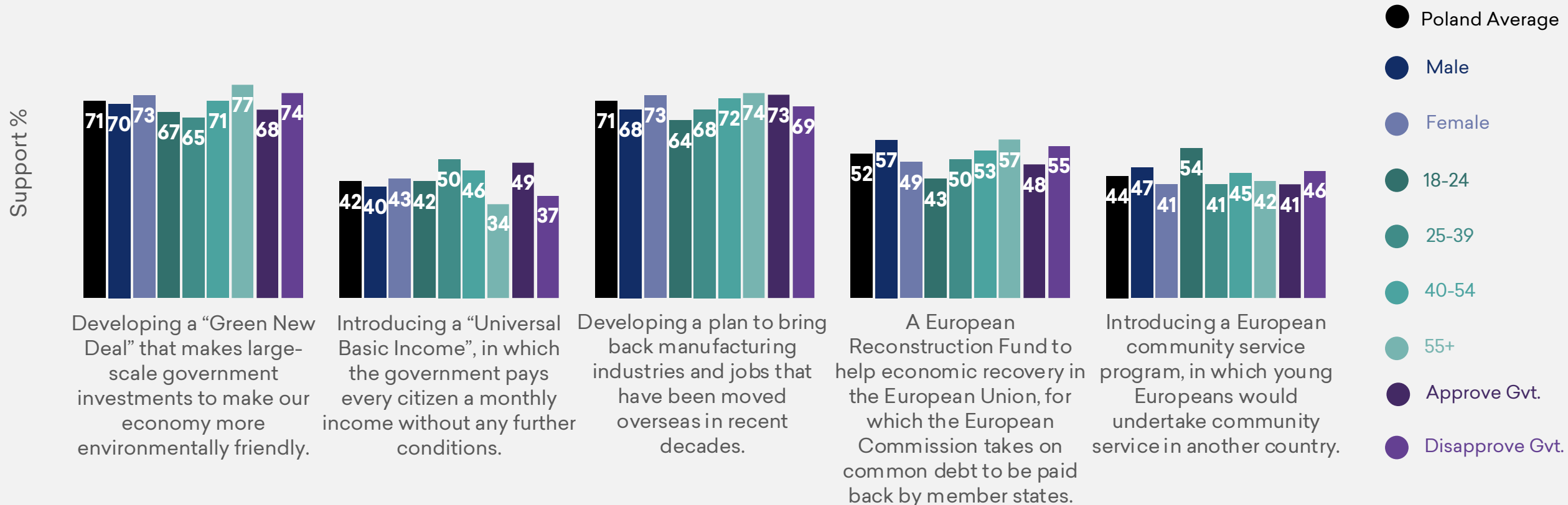
Agree %

Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

# Aspirational Policies



Green New Deal garners wide support that stems for either a desire for a greener economy or from the promise that Poland will become a major beneficiary of European funds. Supporters of the government are noticeably more reserved about the Green New Deal or the Reconstruction Fund.

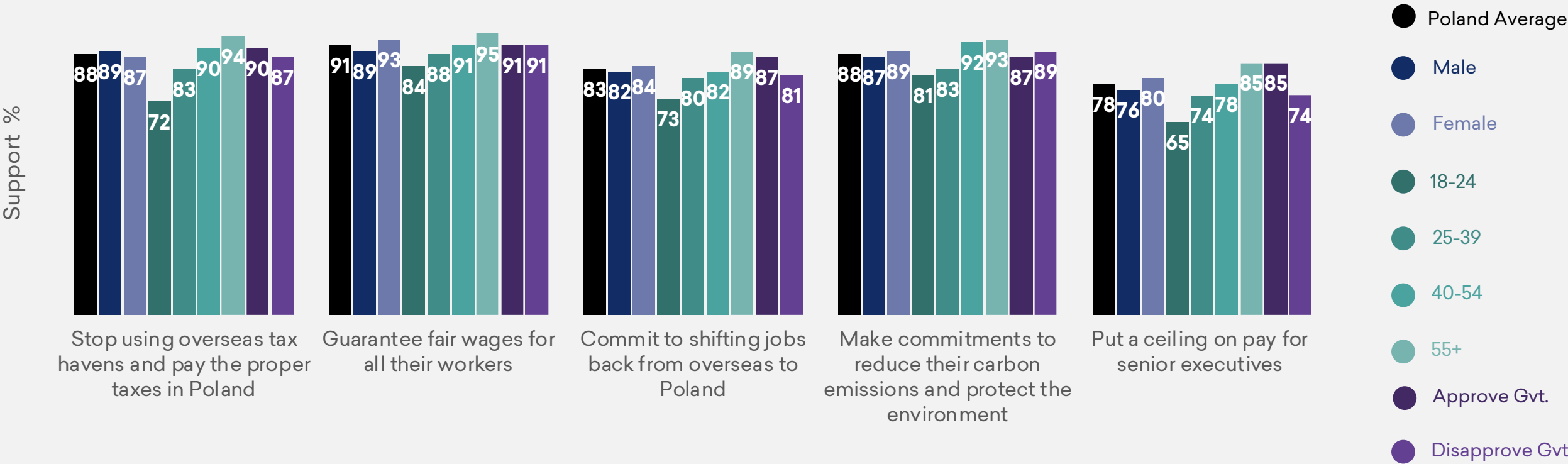


Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

# Conditionality for Companies



The youngest Poles are more likely to hold libertarian views and oppose imposing requirements on big business. Still, all measures proposed enjoy majority support in all groups.



Question: The government is currently working on measures to help the economy and support businesses. What do you think: To what extent would you support or oppose requiring companies to fulfil the following criteria if they are to receive government aid?

# Personal Willingness for Sacrifice



Poles show strong opposition to tax increases, especially amongst the youth - this is a permanent feature of Polish public opinion. Willingness to accept restrictions on freedom of movement is quite high, considering how highly it is usually valued (e.g. in polls on the benefits of EU membership).



Question: When it comes to your actions during and after the crisis, would you personally be willing or not to do the following...

# **Aspirations & Ideals Post-COVID-19**



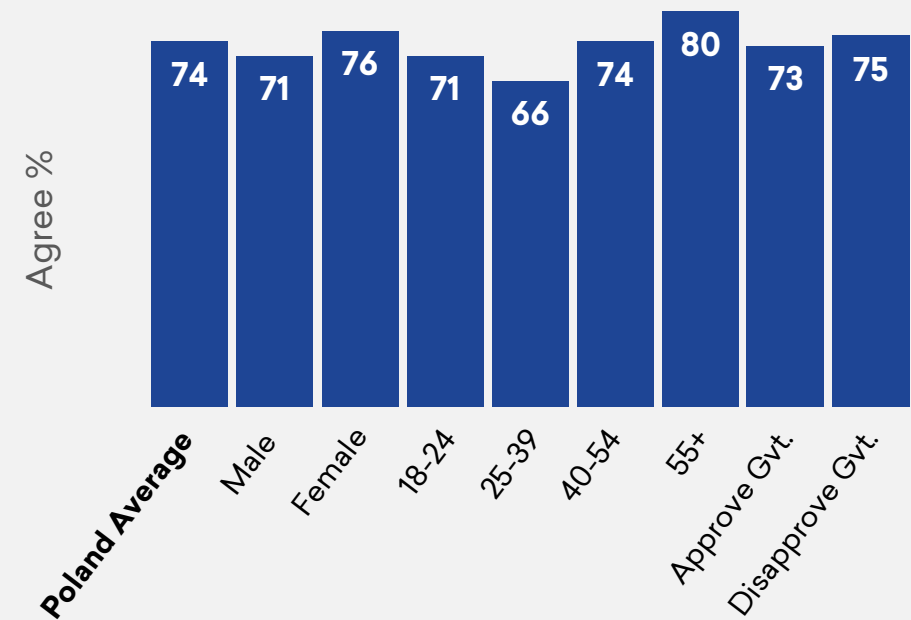


# Views on climate action

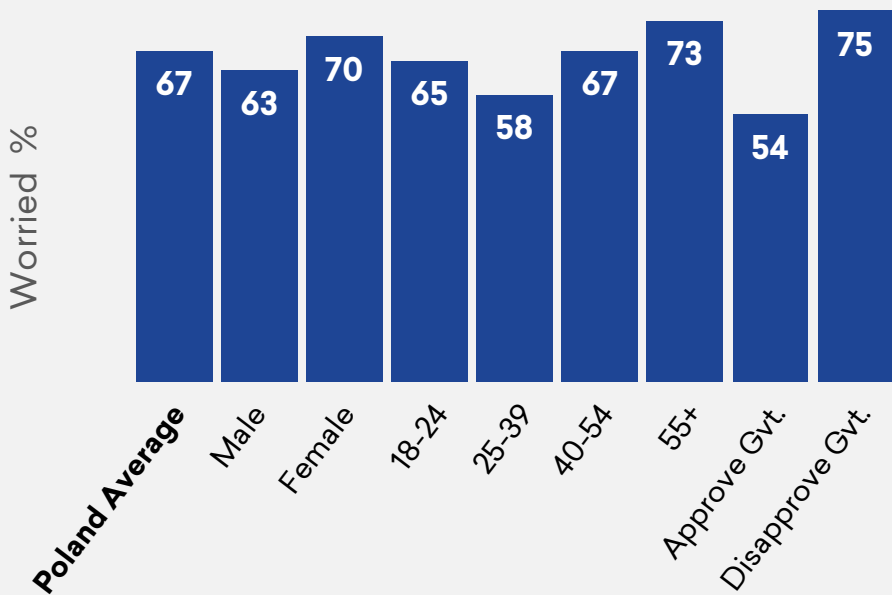


Poles see the potential for limiting the environmental footprint, but are worried the opportunity to do so will not be used.

“The drop in carbon emissions that was seen during the COVID-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to.”



“To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that commitment to protecting the environment will slow down or stop.”



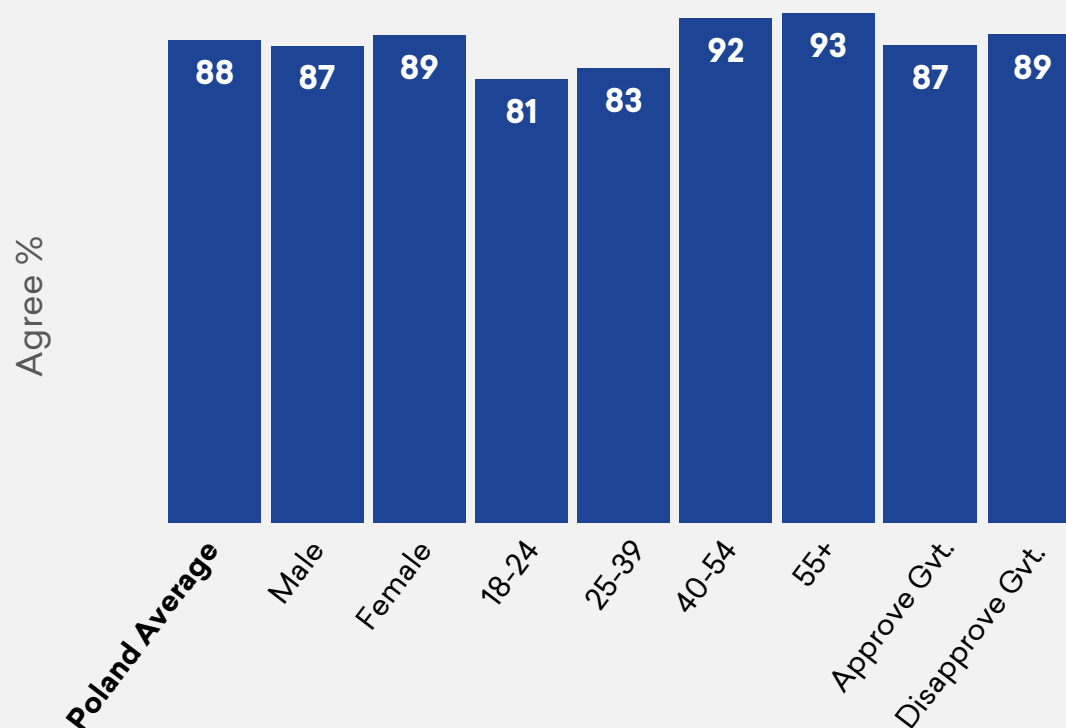
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?; To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that...?

# Climate conditionality for companies



Support for climate conditionality for government aid is even higher.

Companies should make commitments to reduce their carbon emissions and protect the environment.



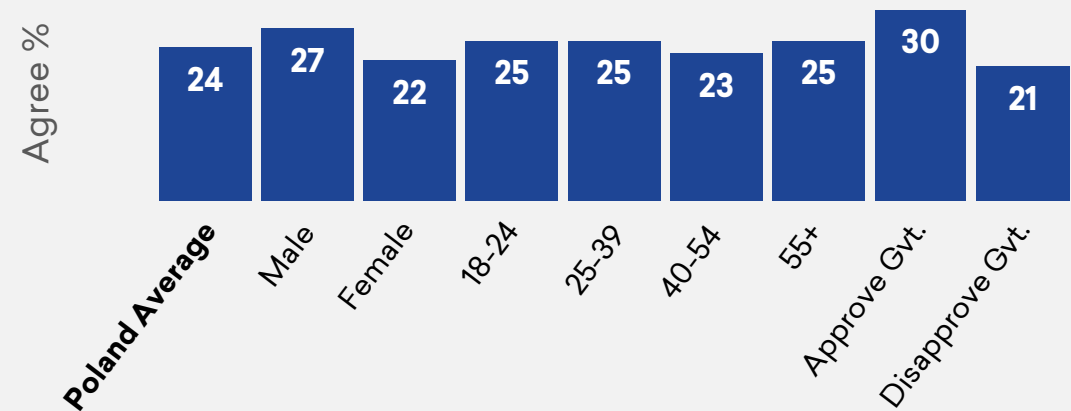
Question: The government is currently working on measures to help the economy and support businesses. What do you think: To what extent would you support or oppose requiring companies to fulfill the following criteria if they are to receive government aid?

# Personal Sacrifice for Environment



However, people are not willing to pay higher taxes on gasoline or car ownership.

Willing to pay higher taxes on gasoline or car ownership to help protect the environment.



Question: When it comes to your actions during and after the crisis, would you personally be willing or not to do the following...

# Aspirations for the country



Fairness and democratic qualities stand out as leading aspirations, while the young want tolerance.

	Poland Average	Male	Female	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	Approve Gvt.	Disapprove Gvt.
Fair	36	33	38	30	34	35	39	34	37
Democratic	31	36	27	23	21	34	39	18	40
United	26	25	27	21	24	25	28	25	26
Safe	25	22	29	26	23	23	28	29	23
Tolerant	25	25	25	35	22	25	25	13	33
Environmentally-friendly	24	24	24	26	18	23	29	16	29
Healthy	23	21	24	13	23	21	26	27	20
Educated	13	14	13	20	13	16	11	11	15
Equal	12	11	13	21	16	10	9	11	13
Hard-Working	11	12	10	16	12	11	9	11	11
Family-oriented	10	10	11	6	14	11	8	16	7
Prosperous	10	11	9	5	10	10	12	12	9
Patriotic	9	10	8	8	9	8	10	14	6
Self-confident	8	8	8	11	10	10	5	12	6
Christian	7	9	5	7	7	8	7	14	3
Traditional	6	7	5	5	6	5	5	11	3
Compassionate	3	3	4	5	5	3	2	4	3

Question: Which of the following qualities do you think [COUNTRY] should focus on the most? [COUNTRY] should become more...(max. 3)

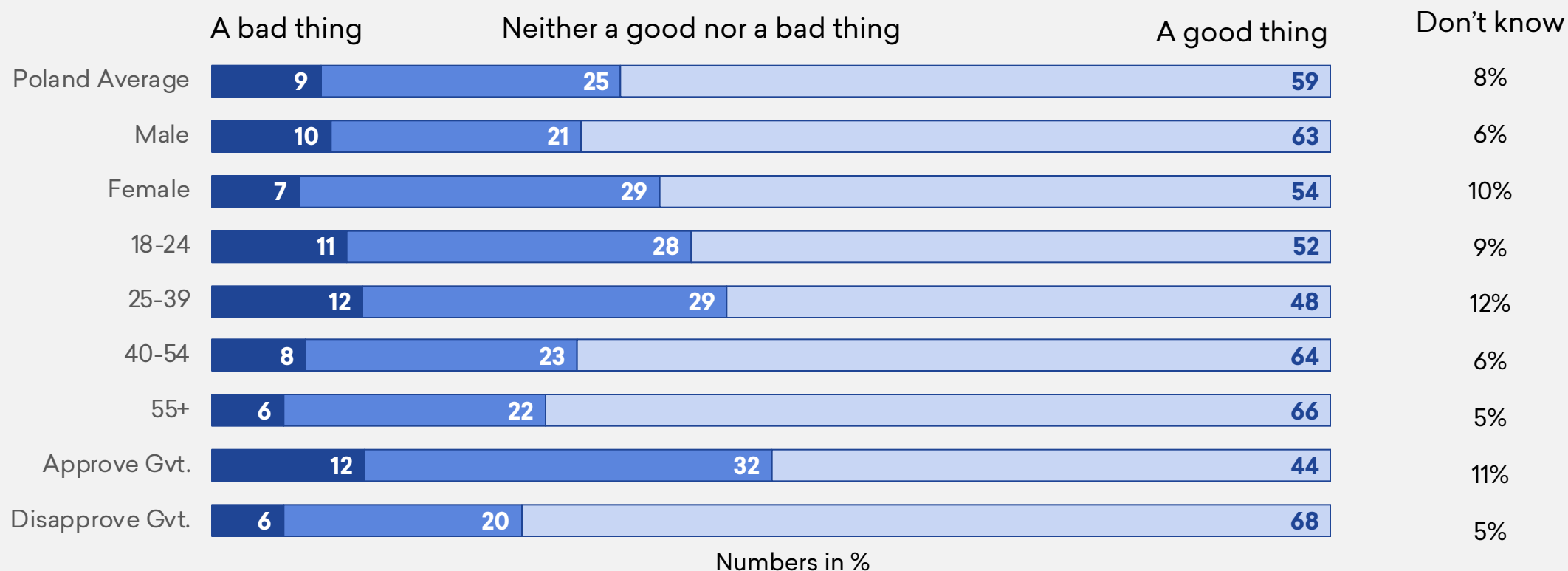
# Views on the European Union



# Views on EU Membership



## EU membership is...

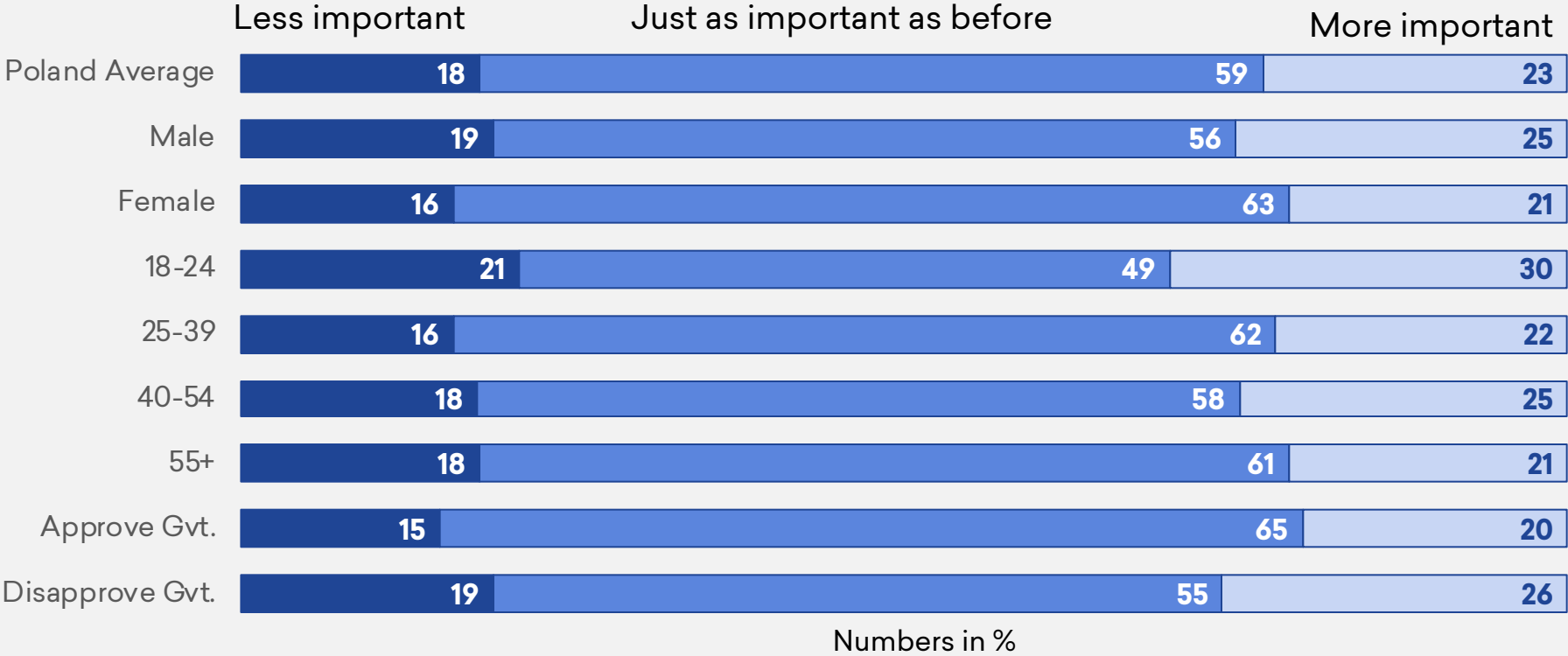


Question: Generally speaking, would you say that [COUNTRY's] membership of the EU is...?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# EU Membership: Looking Ahead



## EU Membership will be...

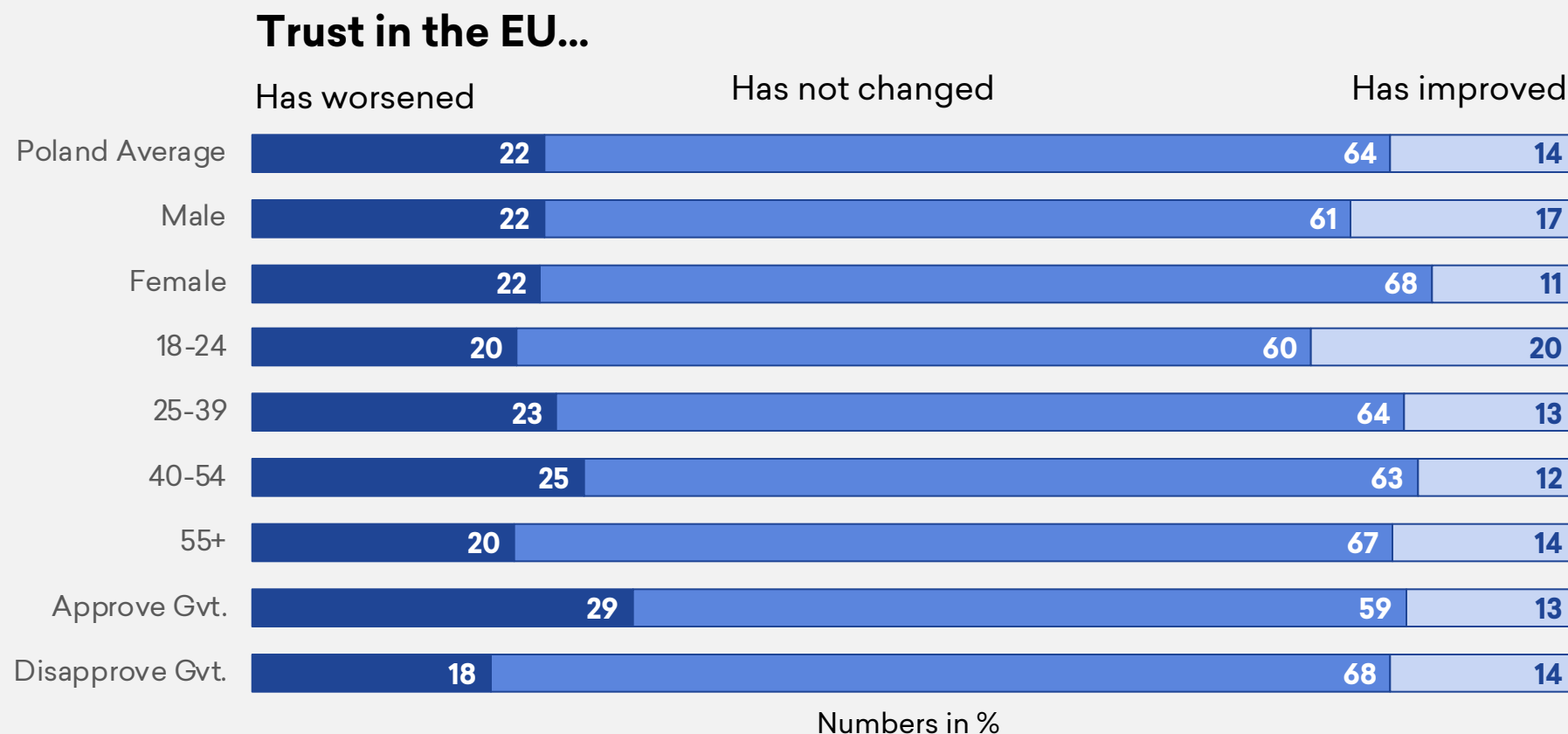


Question: In the coming years, [COUNTRY]’s membership in the EU will be...  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Trust in the EU



Supporters of the government are more likely to report loss of trust in the EU, but majorities in all groups reports no change.



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?



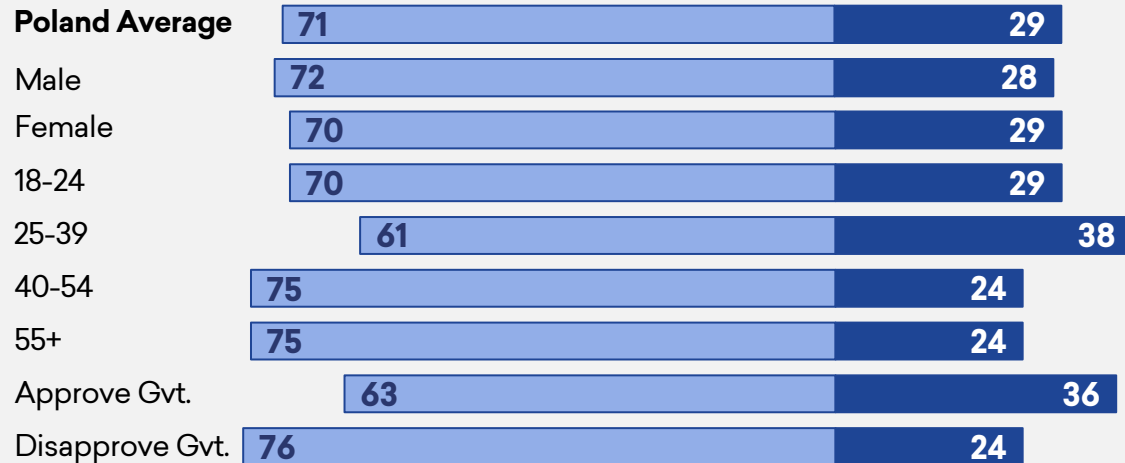
# EU Solidarity



## Solidarity and Cooperation

Within the European Union,  
we now need to do  
everything we can to help  
countries in need.

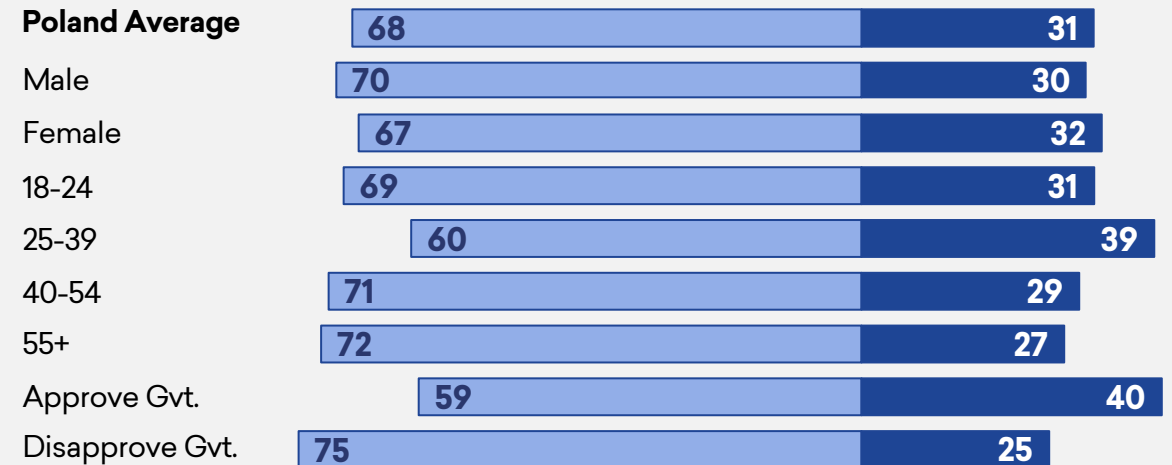
Demands for solidarity  
between European  
countries are currently  
being pushed too far.



Agree %

For our country, more  
European cooperation is the  
best way out  
of this crisis.

For our country, more  
national control over our  
decision-making is the  
best way out of this crisis.



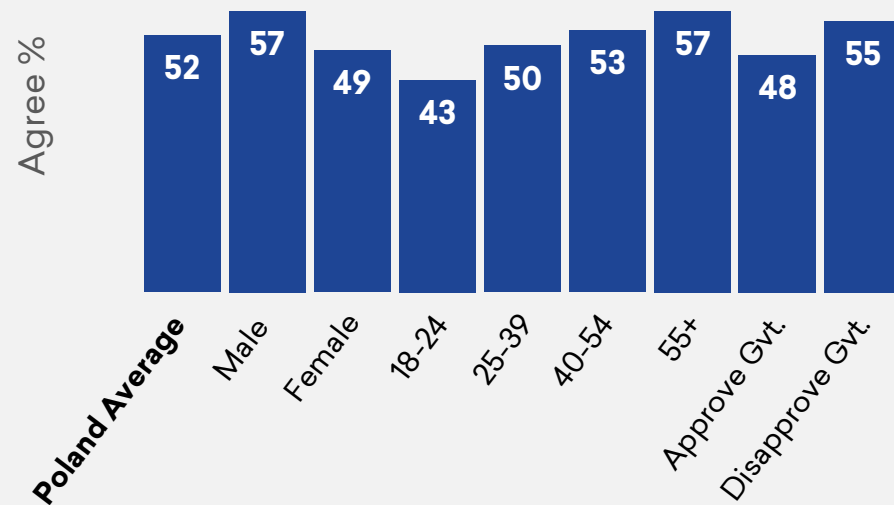
Agree %

Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Support for a European Reconstruction Fund



A **European Reconstruction Fund** to help economic recovery in the European Union, for which the European Commission takes on common debt to be paid back by member states.



Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

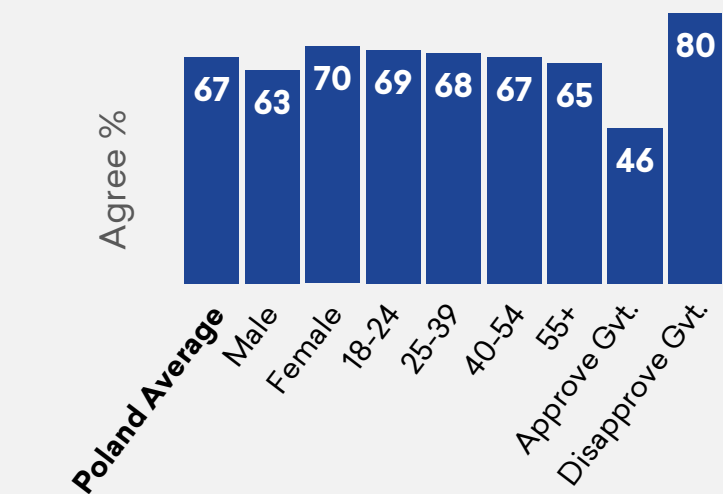
# **Country-specific questions: Poland**

# Encroachment on Civic Rights

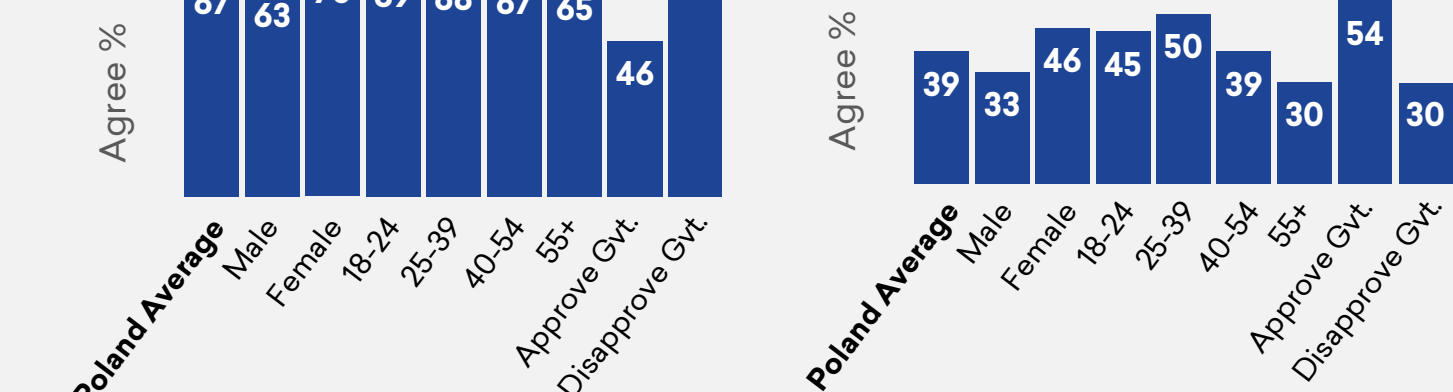


Majorities in all groups are worried about minority rights and government influence over media. Supporters of the government are the exception and lean towards authoritarian measures, such as limiting the voice of opposition parties, which are rejected by others.

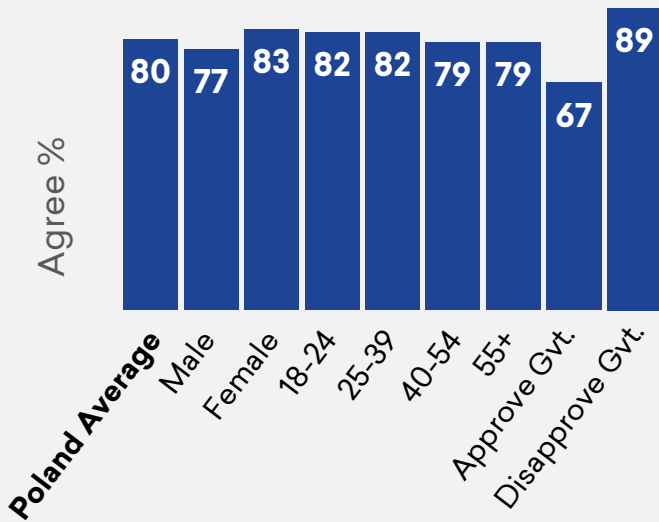
“I am afraid the government will use this crisis to encroach on minority rights.”



“If it is necessary to protect our country, the President should limit the voice and vote of opposition parties.”



“The government has too much influence over the media in Poland.”

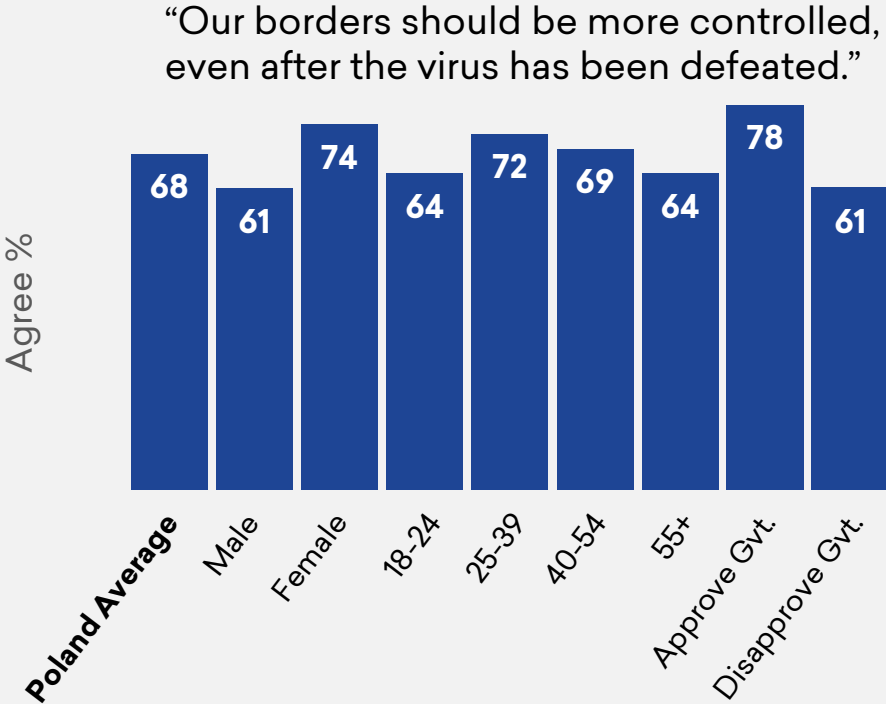
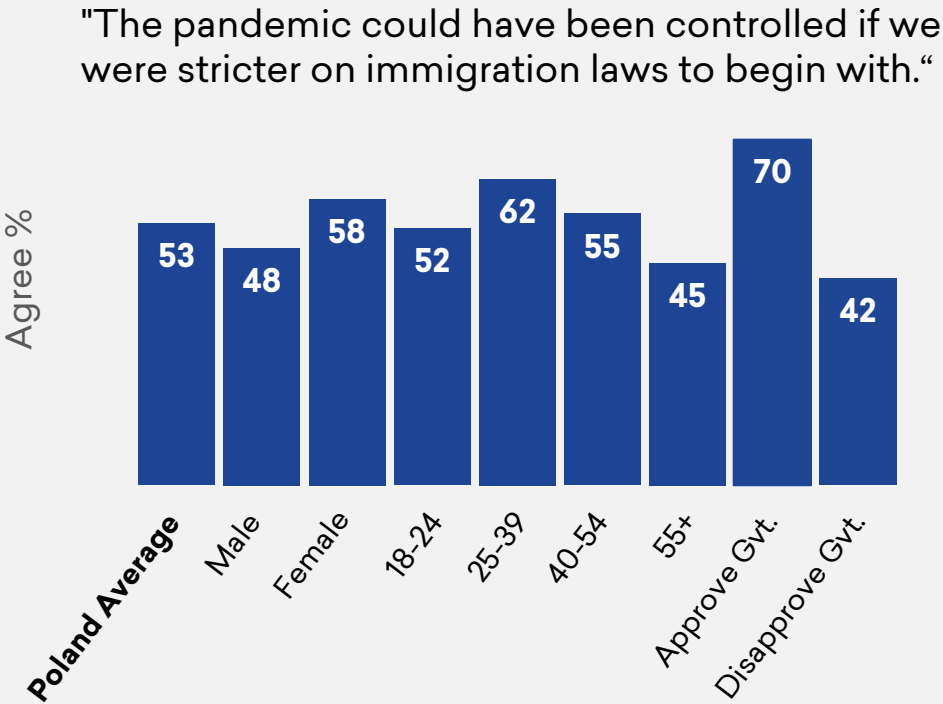


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

# Migration & COVID-19



A majority supports stricter border control, especially among the supporters of the government.



Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?

# The Invisibles in Poland



# Overview: The Importance of The Invisibles

Since 2019, More in Common has explored the attitudes, core beliefs, and behaviors of those less represented and seen in political life, whether it's at the ballot box, in political movements, or on social media. We refer to this population as the "Invisibles".

These populations are not homogenous, nor easily defined. However, More in Common's previous research reveals that they share a feeling of being powerless and disrespected, participate less in society generally, and have the highest levels of loneliness of any population group. Invisibles have the weakest political attachments and are more vulnerable to disinformation, conspiracy theories and the 'othering' of minorities within society.

Just as their embrace of populism has played the key role in up-ending politics in the past decade, the shifts among the Invisibles may prove pivotal in defining the trajectory of the post-lockdown period. It is crucial, for example, to understand the extent to which people in general, and the Invisibles in particular, emerge from the pandemic wanting a 'return to normal' or feeling that 'we can't go back to how it was'. This will be critical in understanding whether the post-COVID-19 frame will be about sweeping change or a return to normal.

In the analysis that follows, we present a new method that standardizes a definition of Invisibles that simplifies their characteristics into a set of behaviors (political disengagement) and attitudes (feeling neglected). We analyse how this key group aligns and departs from the broader Polish population.

# Invisible Segment Construction: (1/3)

## Political Engagement Index



### Political Engagement Index Items

Some people seem to follow what's going on in **government and public affairs** most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested.

Would you say you **follow what's going on** in government and public affairs...

1. Most of the time
2. Some of the time
3. Only now and then
4. Hardly at all

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

1 - I try as hard as I can to **avoid political discussions** with other people.

2

3

4

5

6 - I **take every opportunity to discuss** the right political point of view with other people.

- Aggregate scores were tabulated for each respondent.
- Sums were re-scaled on an index from 0 to 10.
- Each respondent was assigned into either High or Low, splitting at the national median with median scores assigned to High.



# Invisible Segment Construction: (2/3)

## Invisibility Index



### Invisibility Index Items

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- 1 - In my personal environment **I have people who understand me** and help me.
- 2
- 3
- 4 - In my life, **I'm mostly on my own.**

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- 1 - Most **politicians are interested in what people like me think.**
- 2
- 3
- 4 - Most **politicians don't care** what people like me think.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

**I often feel like a second-class citizen.**

- 1 – Strongly agree
- 2 – Somewhat agree
- 3 – Somewhat disagree
- 4 – Strongly disagree

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

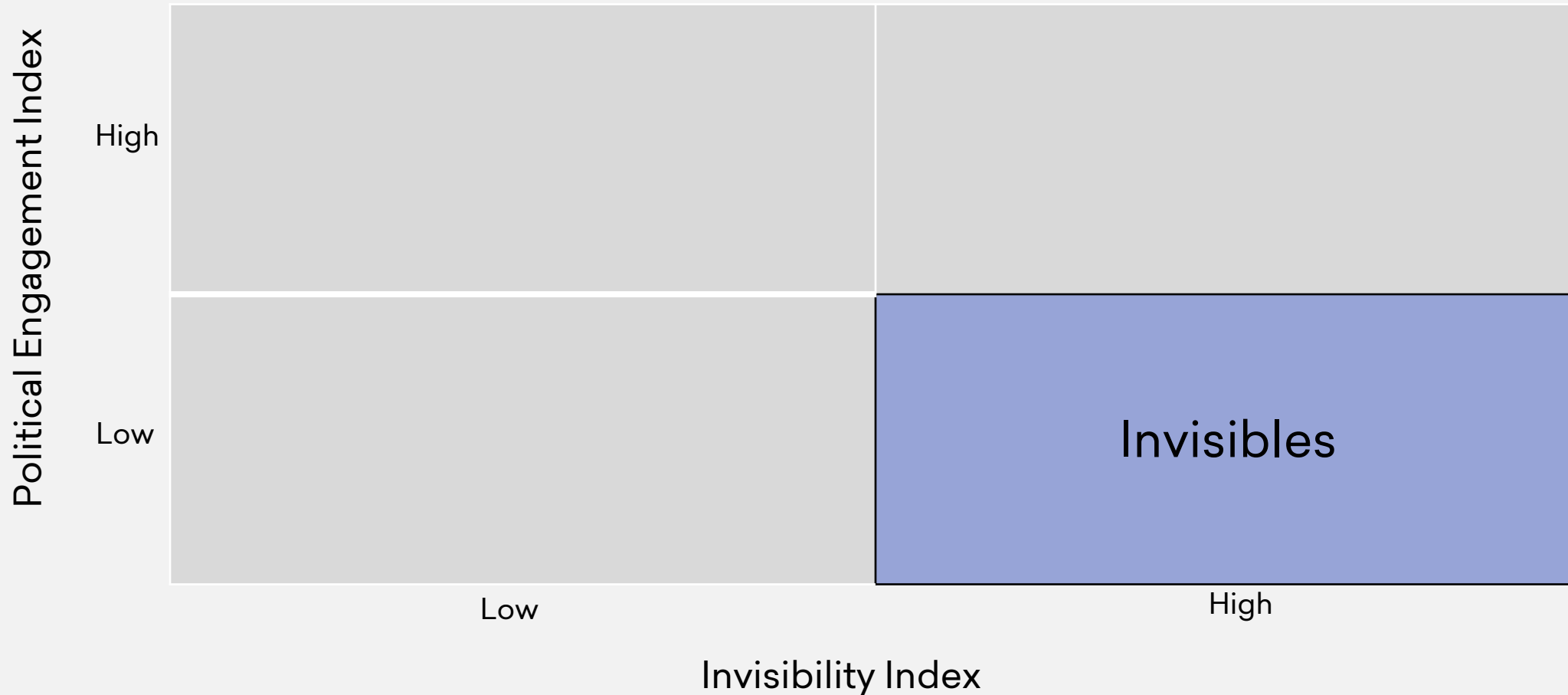
**All in all, I feel adequately respected and valued in my life.**

- 1 – Strongly agree
- 2 – Somewhat agree
- 3 – Somewhat disagree
- 4 – Strongly disagree

- Aggregate scores were tabulated for each respondent.
- Sums were re-scaled on an index from 0 to 10.
- Each respondent was assigned into either High or Low, splitting at the national median with median scores assigned to High.

# Invisible Segment Construction: (3/3)

## Invisibles are low engagement + high invisibility



# Demographic Background of the Invisibles

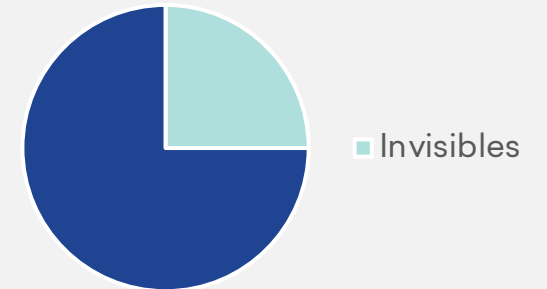


	Population Average (%)	Invisibles (%)
Age	18-24	11
	25-39	28
	40-54	24
	55-64	25
	65+	12
Gender	Male	48
	Female	52
Education	Basic	12
	Intermediate	49
	Advanced	38
Income	< 1000 PLN	4%
	1000 to 2000 PLN	12%
	2000 to 4000 PLN	33%
	> 4000 PLN	51%



# Who are the Invisibles in Poland?

- Invisibles make up **25% of the total national population**.
- They are more likely to **place themselves at the center** on a left-right scale
  - 31% of Invisibles are in the center; vs. 25% on average
  - 23% of Invisibles are on the right; vs. 31% on average
- Invisibles are **significantly more dissatisfied with democracy in their country** than the rest of the population.
  - Invisibles dissatisfied with democracy (79%) vs. Average (69%)
- And **much less likely to say that others can be trusted**: Invisibles (30%) vs. Average (45%)
- Invisibles are **less proud of their nation**: Pride in country: Invisibles (36%) vs. Average (50%)
- And much **more likely to feel like a stranger in their own country**: Invisibles (62%) vs. Average (52%)
- They are **much less likely to trust the national government**: Invisibles (23%) vs. Average (34%)
- **Less likely to approve of President Duda**: Invisibles (31%) vs. Average (39%)



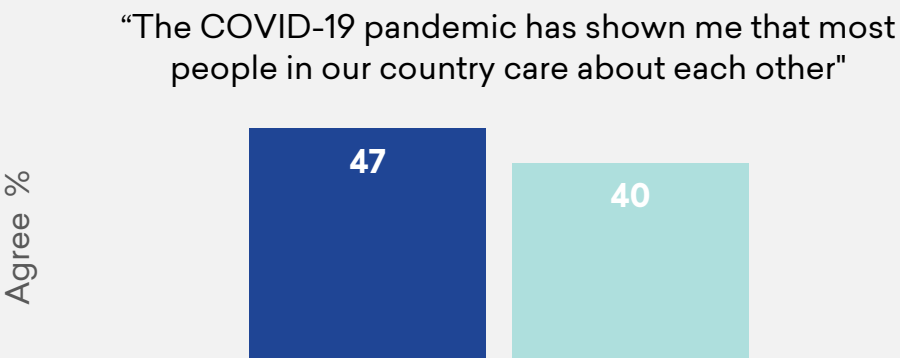
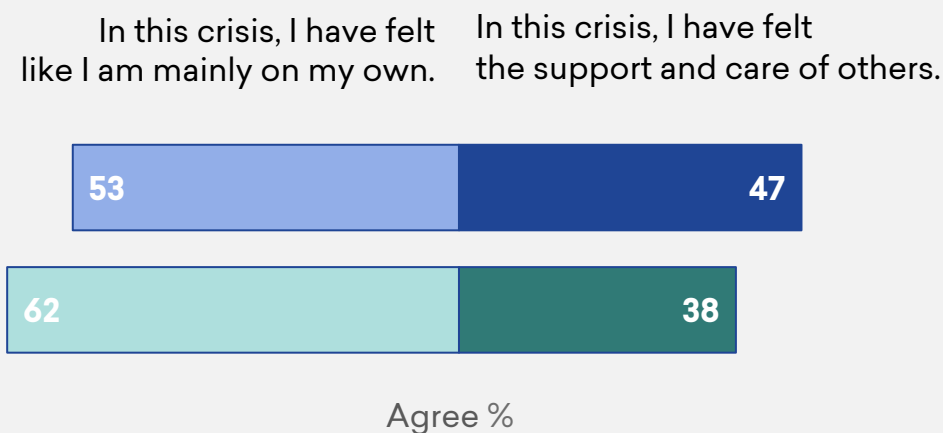
**The Invisibles have had a  
more severe experience  
of the COVID-19 crisis.**



# Support and Care



**Invisibles are much more likely to feel left on their own and to think that Poles do not care for each other.**



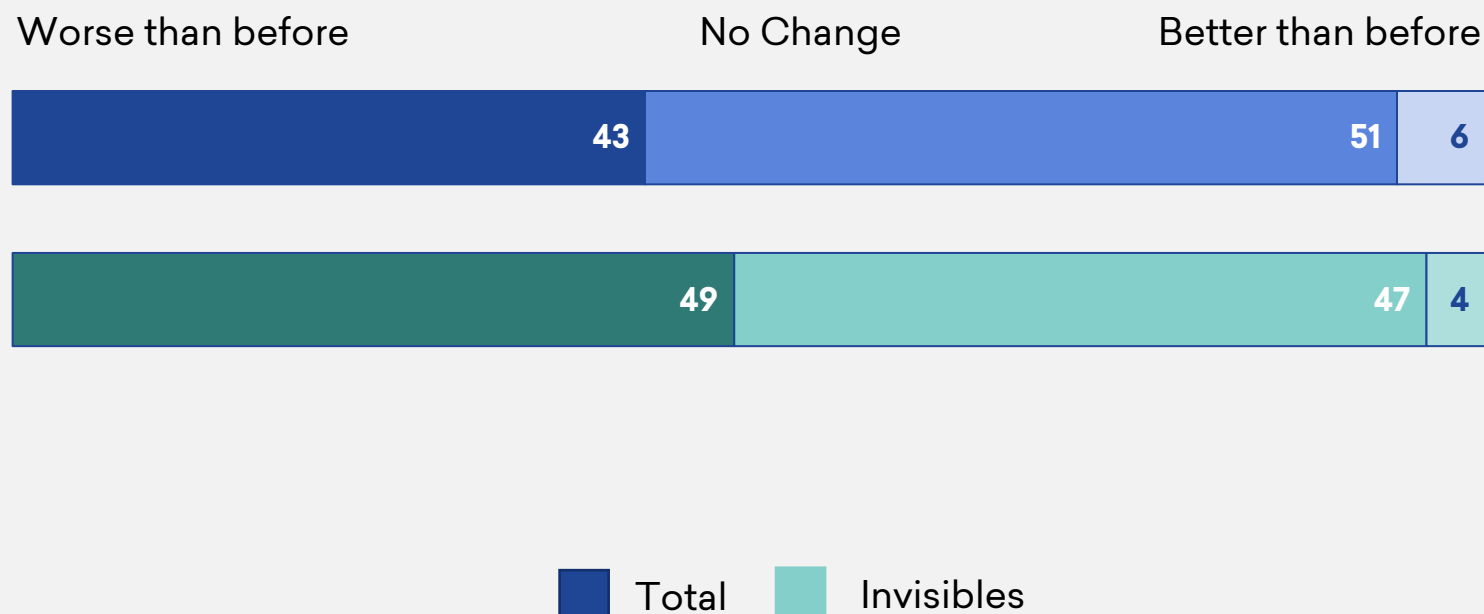
■ Total ■ Invisibles

Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# Trust in Others



**Invisibles are slightly more likely to report increased mistrust in others. This may, however, reflect a higher than average, pre-crisis baseline, rather than actual change for the worse.**

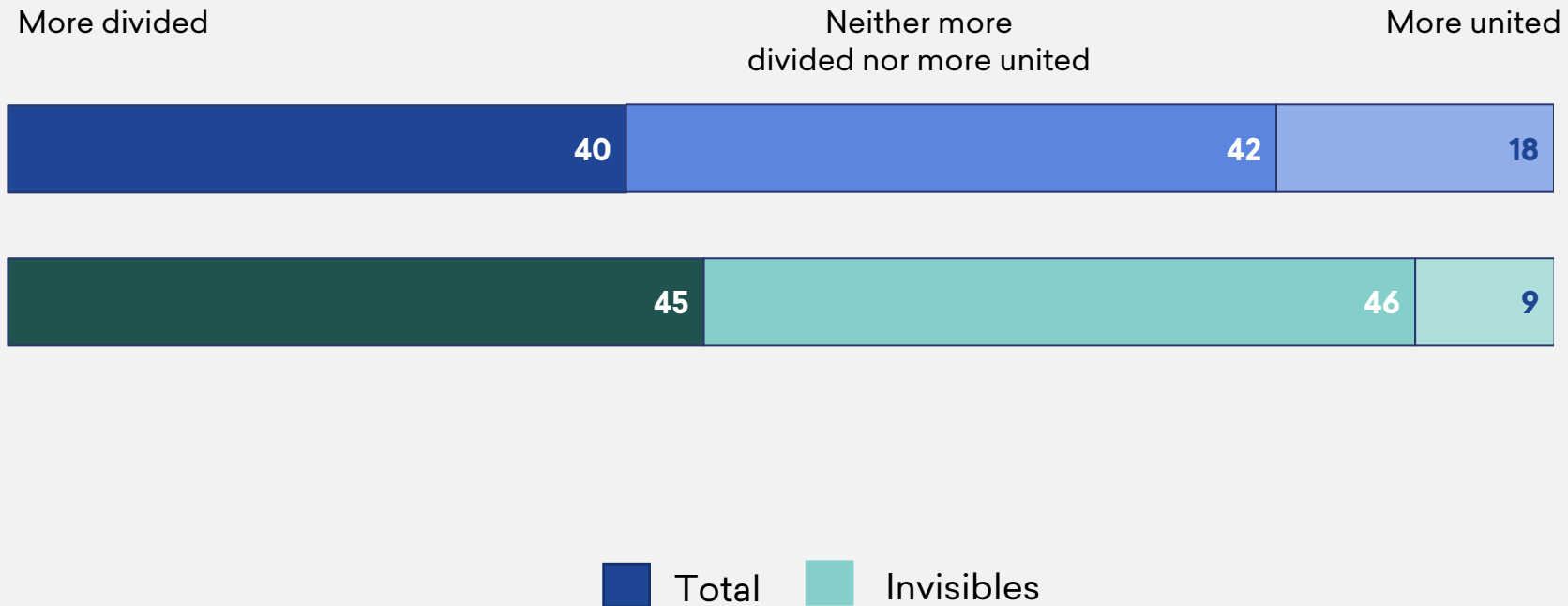


Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

# Impact on Cohesion



**While most see increased division in Poland, the Invisibles are particularly pessimistic in this regard.**



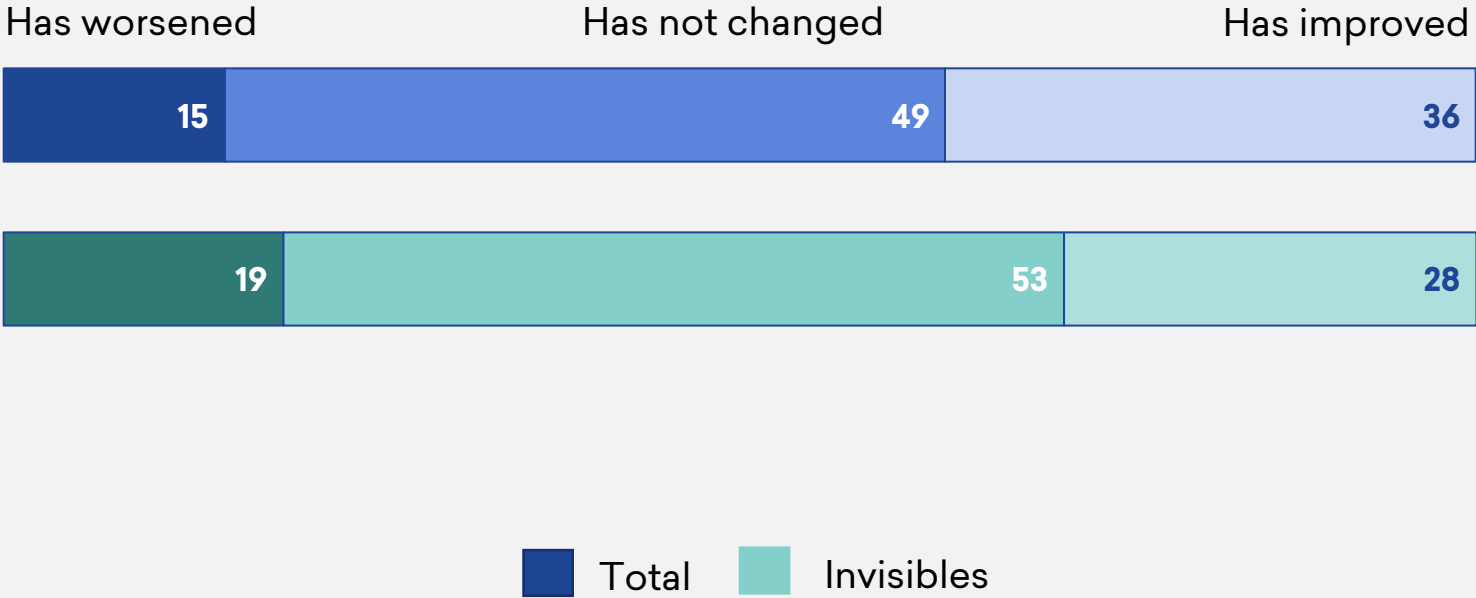
Question: Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, how have your perceptions of [COUNTRY] changed, if at all? Is it...?



# Change in Concern for Others



Invisibles see less concern for others.



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in [COUNTRY], if at all?

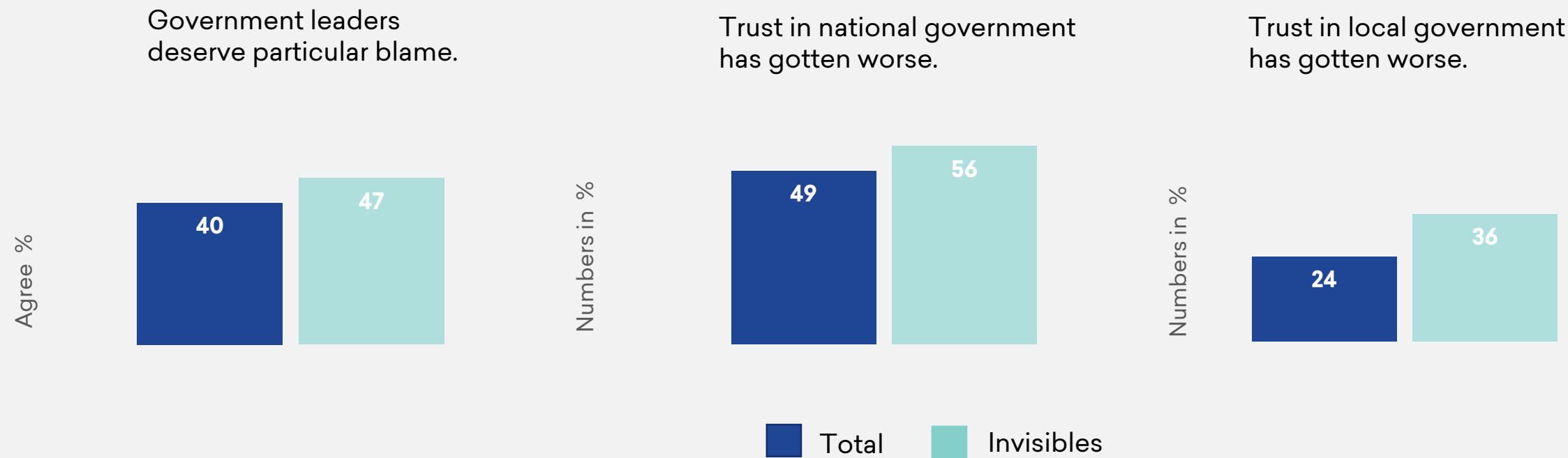
**Invisibles convey  
higher levels of resentment  
towards leaders' handling  
of the crisis.**





# Impact on Trust in Government

**Invisibles are more likely to say that government leaders deserve particular blame. Their mistrust extends to local government, which has fared rather well among Poles.**

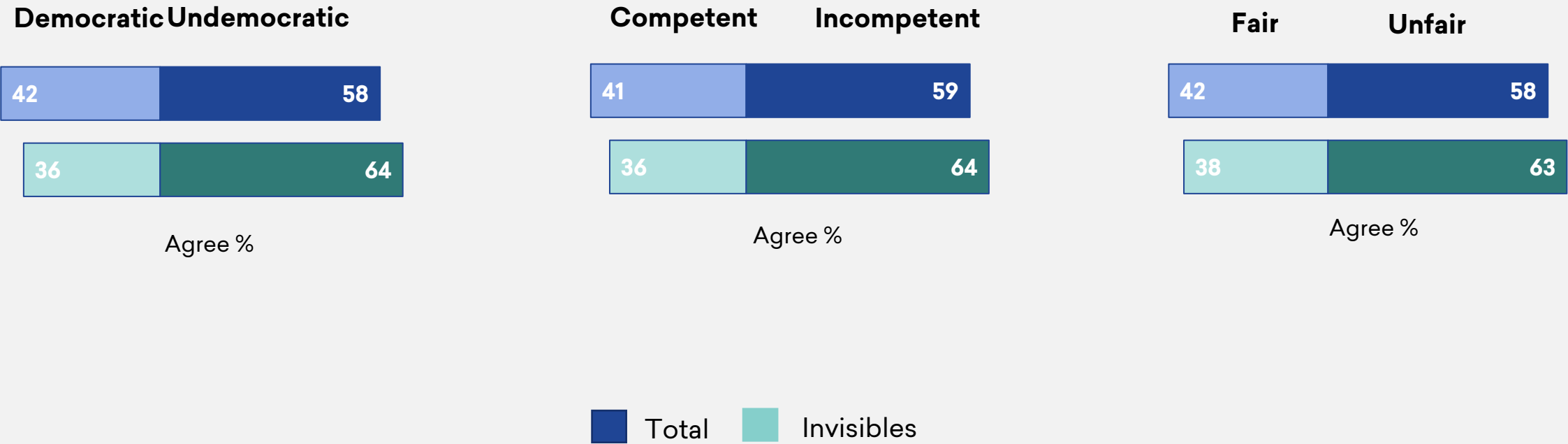


Question 1: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular blame for their actions.; Question 2: How has your trust in the national government changed, if at all?

# Government handling of crisis



Invisibles are slightly more likely to criticise the government’s handling of the crisis as undemocratic, incompetent and unfair.

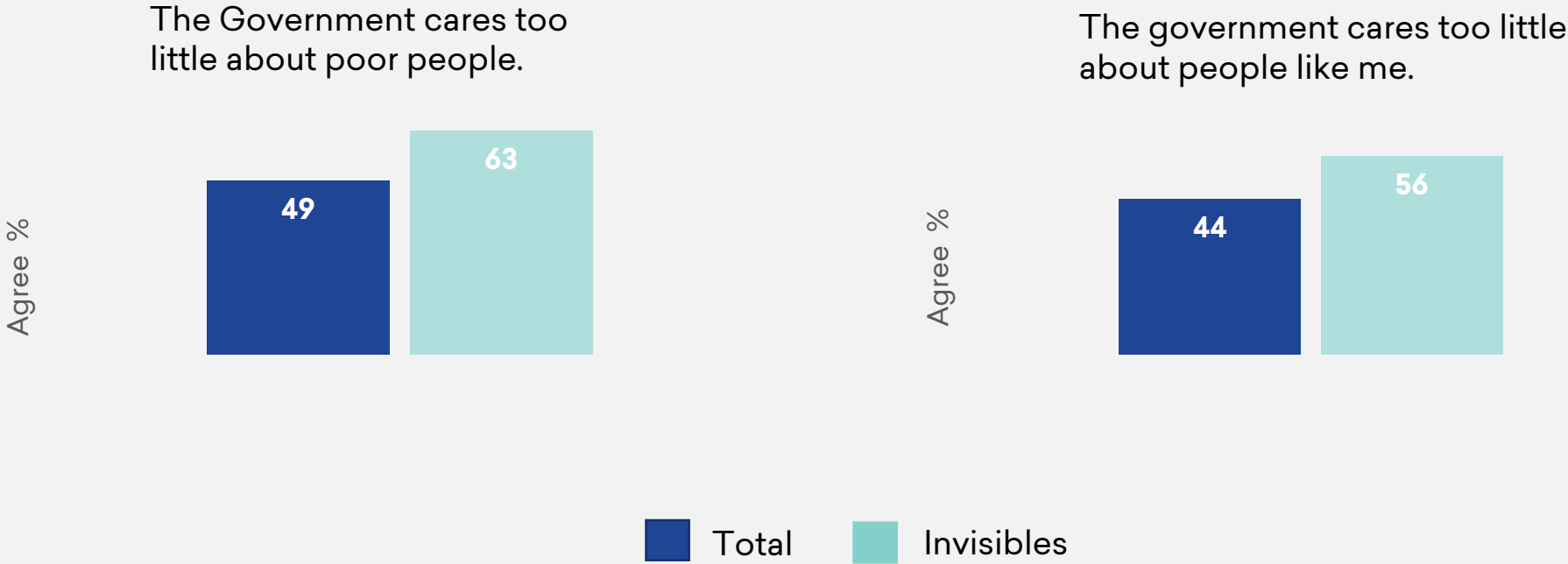


Question: When you think of how the [NATIONALITY] government has managed the COVID-19 situation so far, which of the following opposing terms describes government action better?

# Government favoritism



**Invisibles feel that government cares too little about poor people – and about people like them.**

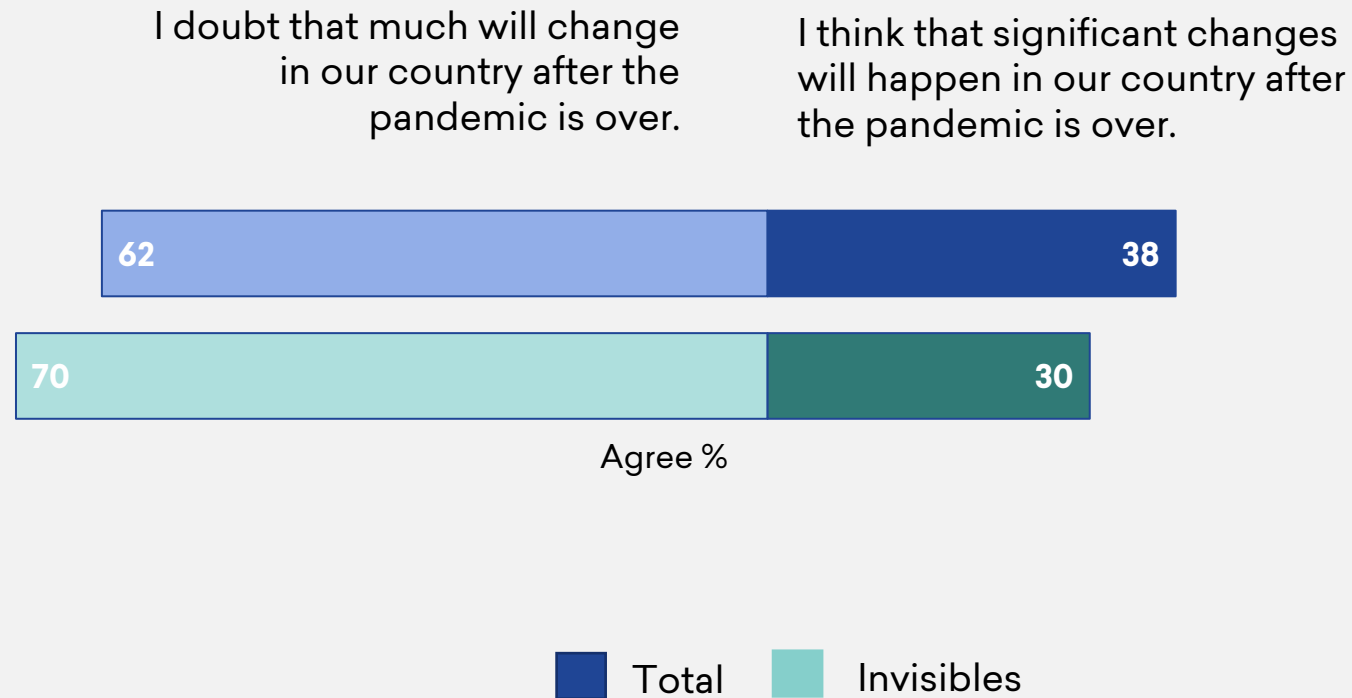


Question: Please indicate how much the [NATIONALITY] government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the COVID-19 situation...



# Expectations for change

**Invisibles are also less prone to believe that change will happen in the country.**

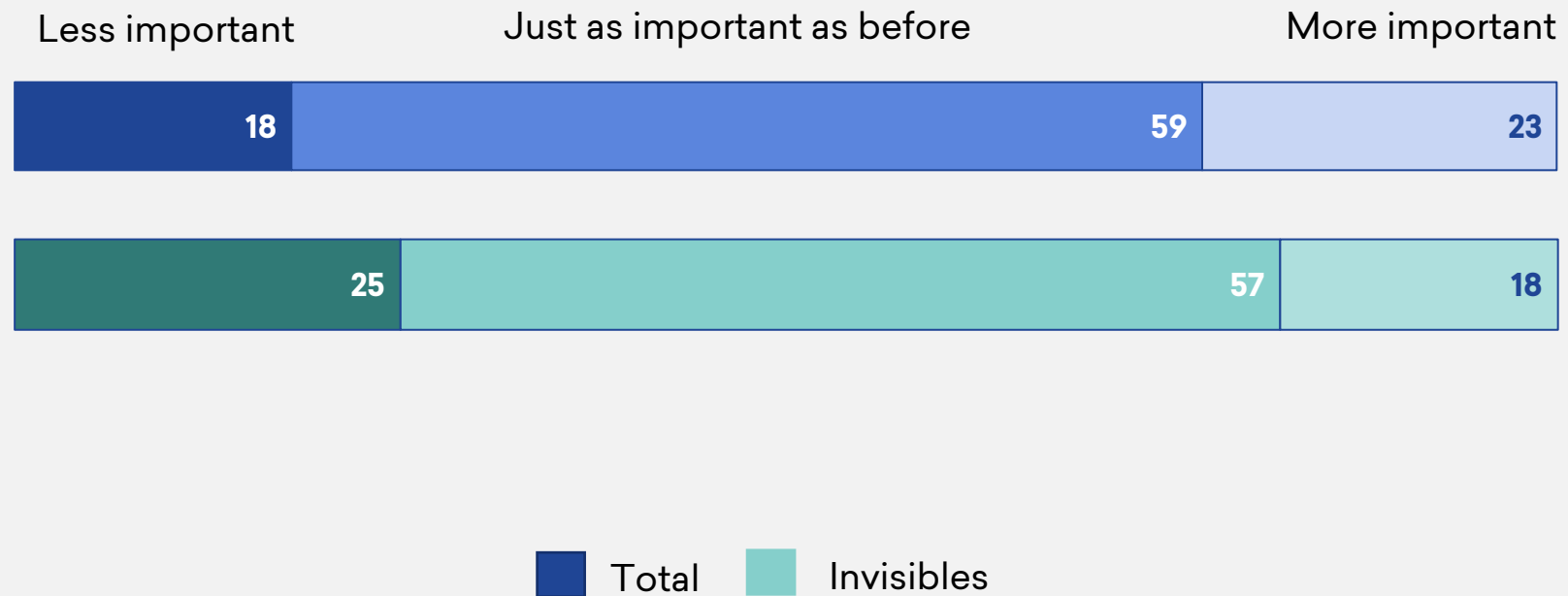


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

# EU Membership



**Invisibles perceive EU membership to be less important in the future.**



Question: In the coming years, [COUNTRY]'s membership in the EU will be...

**Invisibles are particularly worried about the economic consequences of COVID-19, but are less willing to make personal sacrifices towards the recovery.**

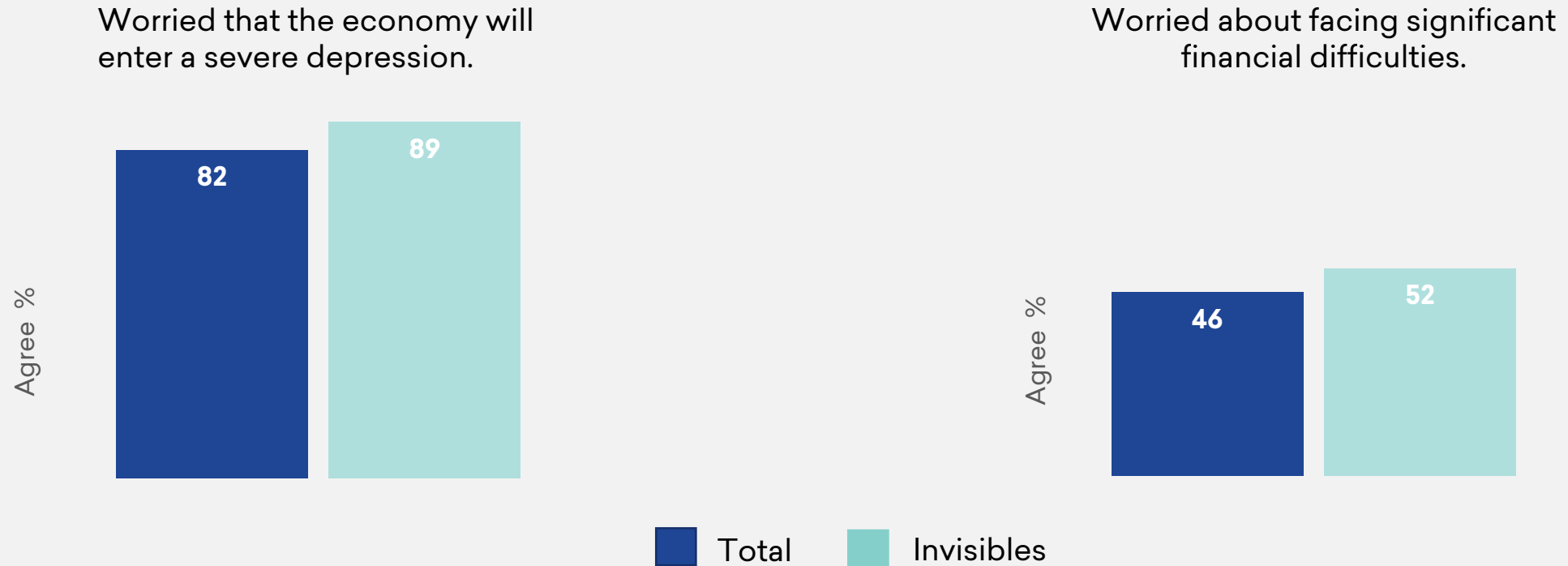




# Economic effects



**Invisibles are especially worried about the economic impact of COVID-19.**

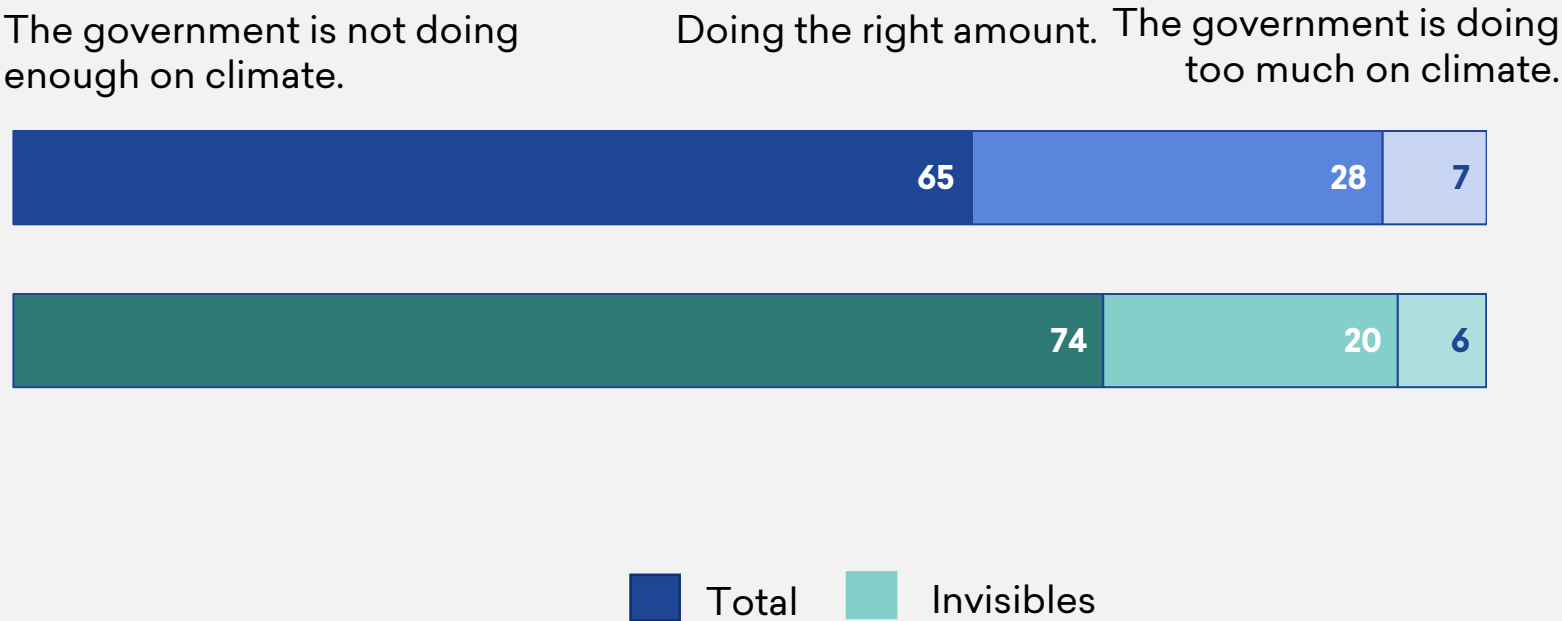


Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that...?



# Government action on climate

**Invisibles are more likely to believe that the government is doing too little for the climate.**



Question: Thinking about the current situation, which of the following statements do you agree with most? On the environment, the government is...



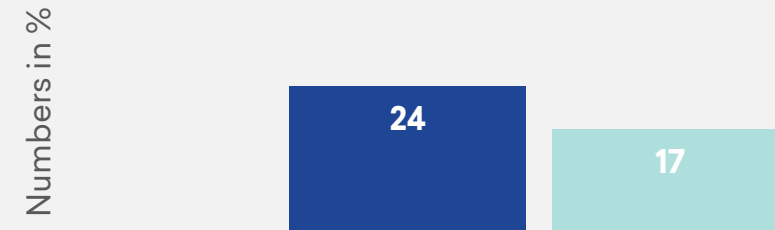
# Personal Sacrifice for Recovery

**However, likely linked to their strong economic concerns and lower levels of trust in the government, the Invisibles are less willing to pay higher personal income or environmental taxes to aid recovery efforts.**

Willing to pay higher income taxes.



Willing to pay higher taxes on gasoline or car ownership to help protect the environment.



■ Total ■ Invisibles

Question: When it comes to your actions during and after the crisis, would you personally be willing or not to do the following...



# Thank you

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