

# The Impact of COVID-19 on French Society

France



# About More in Common and Destin Commun



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 polarisation 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 (through our French organization **Destin Commun**), 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) and [www.destincommun.fr](http://www.destincommun.fr) 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



## Scope

France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States

## Methodology

- N=2,000 per country; margin of error +/- 2%
- Research partners
  - France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: Kantar
  - UK and US: YouGov
- Fieldwork dates
  - France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: 1-8 July, 2020
  - UK: 19-28 June, 2020
  - US: 19-22 June, 2020
- Online survey using representative demographic quotas
- Due to space constraints, not all questions were asked in every country.

# COVID-19 in France



## Situation (As of September 7)



France is among the most impacted countries of the EU in terms of casualties.

**344,101** Infections

**30,764** Deaths



**Strong economic impact of the crisis:** drop in GDP growth expected to be larger than in 2008

**10.6 %** Expected drop in GDP (for 2020)

**11,5 %** Expected unemployment rate

At the beginning of September, the government announced a recovery plan of 100 billion € of which 30% will be redirected towards green recovery.



France has enacted **some of the toughest lockdown measures in Europe**, supported by narratives of 'being at war'.

France appeared to be experiencing a second wave of infections in late August 2020.

## National Context

France is one of the most affected countries in the EU in terms of mortality, as its healthcare system was sometimes overwhelmed, and patients had to be transferred to neighbouring countries for treatment.

In France, the public's disappointment with the government and the management of the health crisis is palpable. President Macron's popularity was also marked by a sharp drop over the summer of 2020. After an overwhelming victory of the Green parties in the municipal elections at the end of June, the government reshuffled and new Prime Minister, Jean Castex, was appointed.

A few months after the end of lockdown, the economic and health balance sheets are already worrying. The economy has shrunk by 13.8% in four months, the biggest fall since the Second World War. To counter this situation, the new Prime Minister, Jean Castex, has announced the implementation of a massive €100 billion recovery plan, 30% of which has been earmarked for an ecological recovery package.

The health situation, however, remains unstable. The number of red zones where the coronavirus is active has increased. In early September 2020, wearing masks in public has become compulsory throughout Paris and in several large cities, due to the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in France.



## Key Infos

- **Head of State:** Emmanuel Macron
- **Ruling Coalition:** La République en Marche, MoDem, Agir
- **Next Election:** April 2022

# Key Findings

- France has some of the highest levels of disappointment with the government's handling of the COVID-19 crisis, which is seen as unfair, incompetent and undemocratic by large swathes of the population, particularly among what we have called 'Forgotten France'.
- French people, more so than others in our studies see the pandemic as a reminder of the need for deep system change but a broad consensus has formed that this change will not come.
- All segments in the French population want this deep change to be around the environment. We see broad support for measures around a green recovery and worry that this will move down the list of priorities as France continues to face the many consequences of the pandemic.
- What we have called Forgotten France, which makes up more than a third of the total French population, places justice and equity at the top of their priorities amid the pandemic. They have felt lower levels of solidarity and empathy under and after lockdown and their views often converge with those of the more extreme group we have called 'Identitarians'.
- Overall, French people see a need for further European and international cooperation to face the effects of the pandemic.



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# Our French Segmentation



This study revisits a segmentation tool developed in our previous studies including *Finding France: A people in Search of their Country*, published in February 2020 and described in detail in French and in English on [www.lafranceenquete.fr](http://www.lafranceenquete.fr).

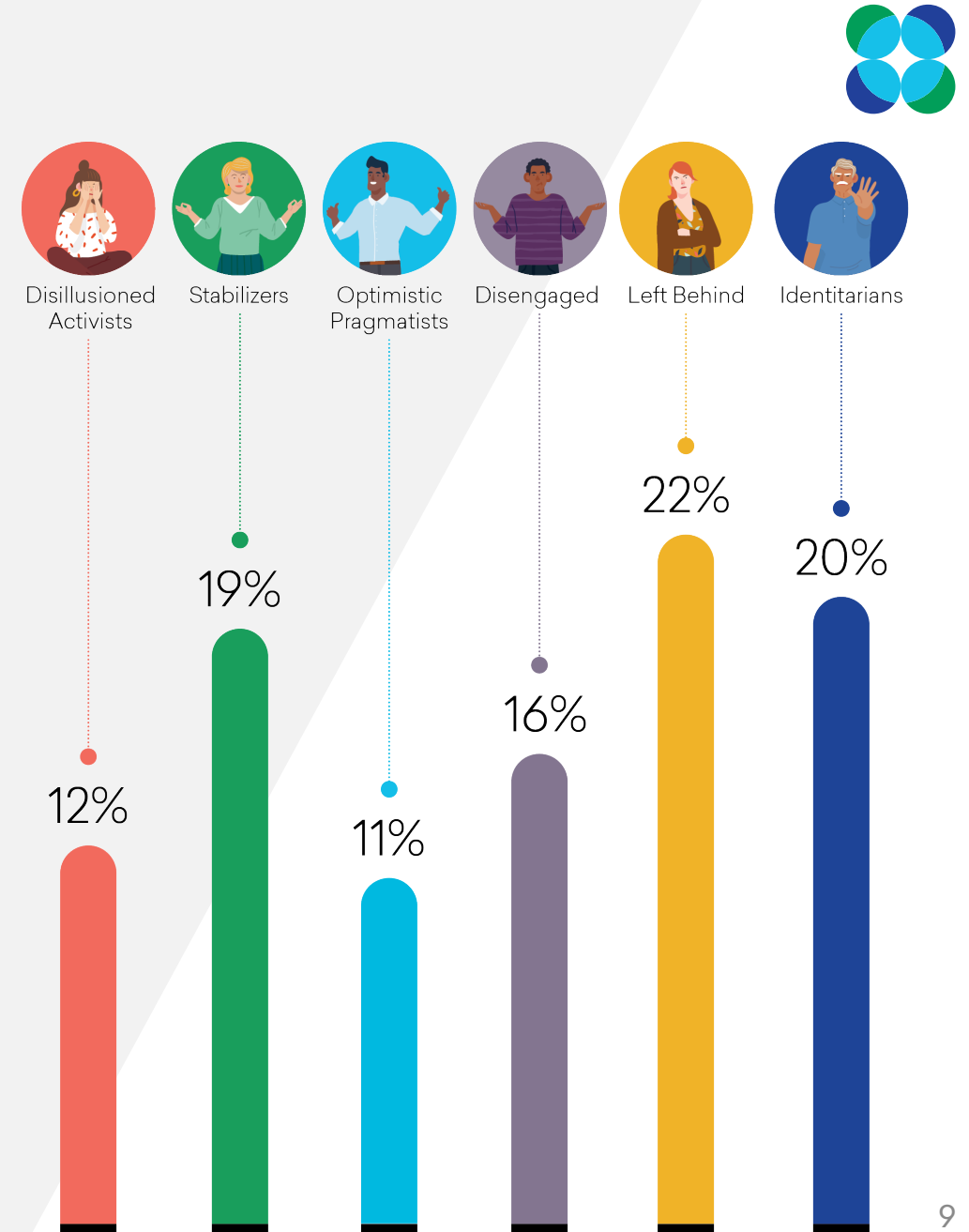
This segmentation was derived by using tools from social psychology and political science to group people into six population segments, who each have a characteristic view of society based on their core beliefs and values.

For a more specific explanation of the segmentation methodology please see [www.lafranceenquete.fr](http://www.lafranceenquete.fr)



# Six French Families

- **Disillusioned Activists (12%)** : educated, cosmopolitan, progressive, not religious, pessimistic.
- **Stabilizers (19%)** : moderate, engaged and established, participating in civic life, rational, compassionate, ambivalent opinions.
- **Optimistic Pragmatists (11%)** : young, individualistic, pragmatic, confident, entrepreneurial.
- **Disengaged (16%)** : young, detached, lacking confidence, individualistic, adopt a « wait and see » attitude.
- **Left Behind (22%)** : angry, defiant, feeling abandoned, disengaged.
- **Identitarians (20%)** : older, conservative, nativist, uncompromising, feeling of national decline.



# Three Frances



Our segmentation reveals three Frances who appear to be living side by side, mapped along a two-dimensional axis of open versus closed worldviews and low or high social integration (see next slide).

**Settled France (30%):** made up of the Stabilizers and Optimistic Pragmatists

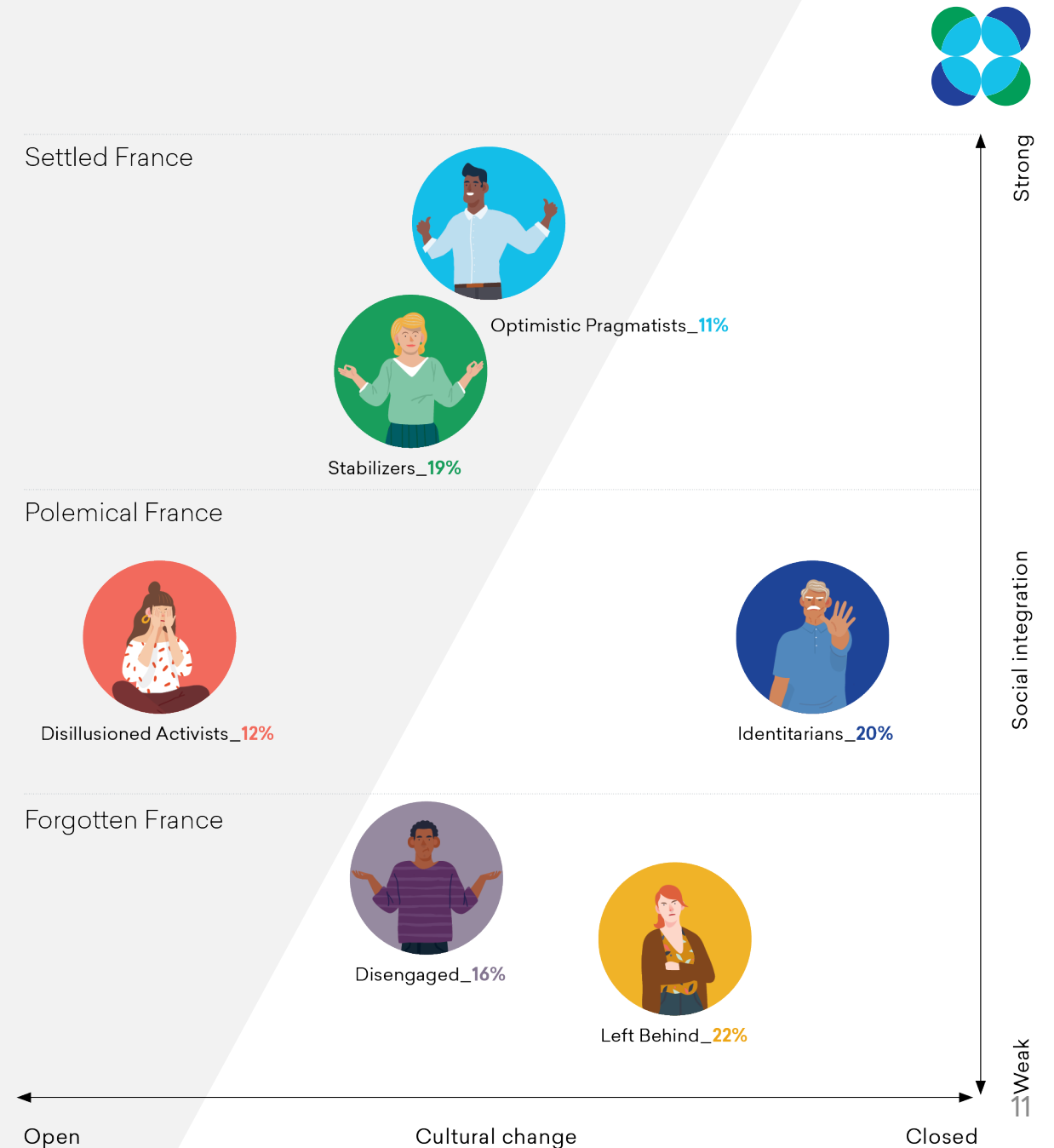
**Polemic France (32%):** bringing together Disillusioned Activists and Identitarians

**Forgotten France (38%):** composed of the Left Behind and the Disengaged

- **Settled France** is broadly satisfied with the system, has open worldviews and is highly socially integrated. Its members are broadly committed to the French social model and are ideologically flexible. But their attachment to the existing model can make them tone deaf to the aspirations and discontent of the two other Frances, which they don't understand or engage with. This Settled France lives in a comfortable bubble.
- Although they hold opposing worldviews and core beliefs, we have chosen to group Disillusioned Activists and Identitarians within a loud and polarized **Polemic France**. They have coherent value systems and clear worldviews that are largely defined along a traditional left-right axis. They dominate the public conversation but their firmly held opinions drown out the more measured and often mixed opinions of the other two Frances.
- **Forgotten France** is much harder to understand even though it is the largest group, with 38% of the total population. This group stands out because it is disengaged from local, civic and political life. Even though a visible minority of this group refused to be forgotten by donning a bright Yellow Vest in recent months, the majority of this group has largely withdrawn from the national conversation.

# Three Frances

- **Settled France (30%)**  
Stabilizers and Optimistic Pragmatists
- **Polemic France (32%)**  
Disillusioned Activists and Identitarians
- **Forgotten France (38%)**  
Disengaged and Left Behind

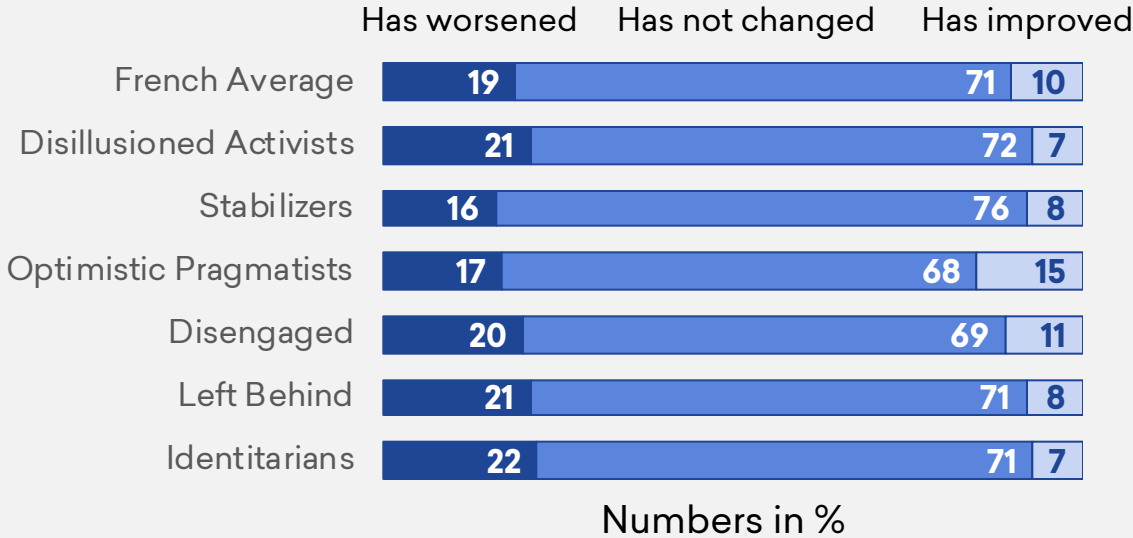


# **I. The Impact of COVID-19 on People's Personal Lives**

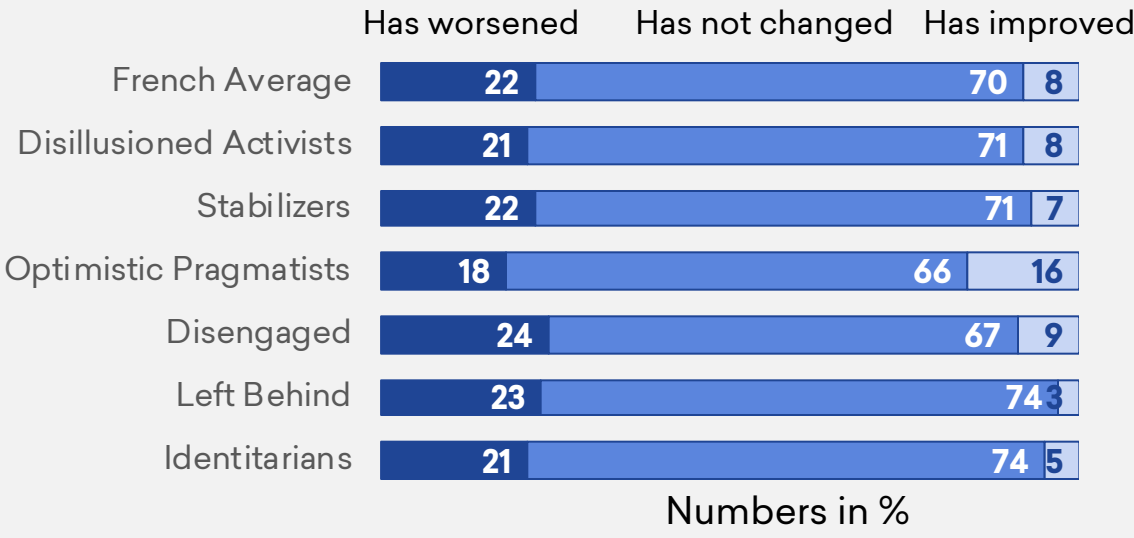
# Impacts on physical and mental health



## Physical Health



## Mental Health

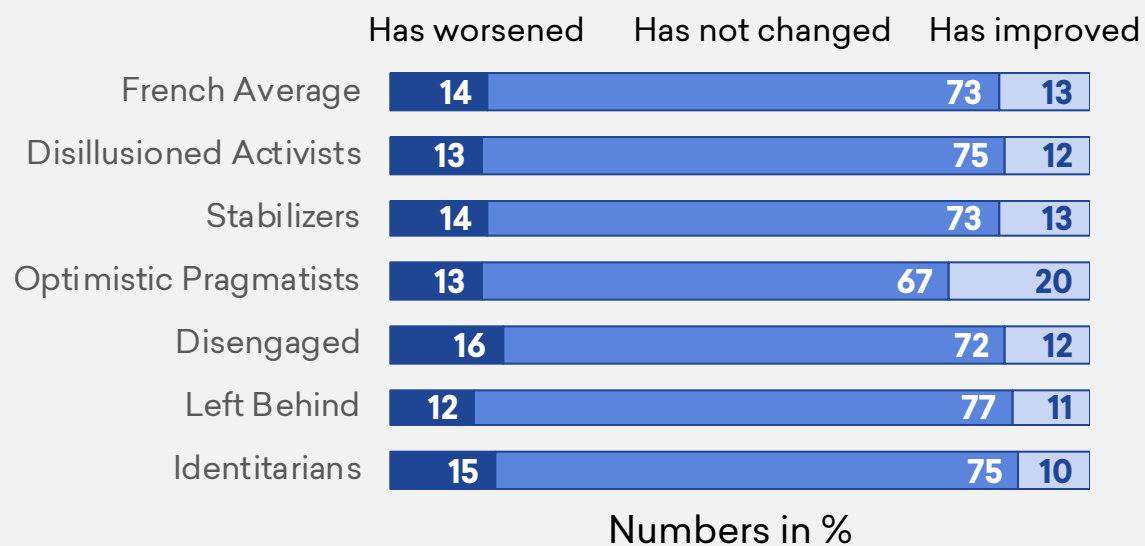


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

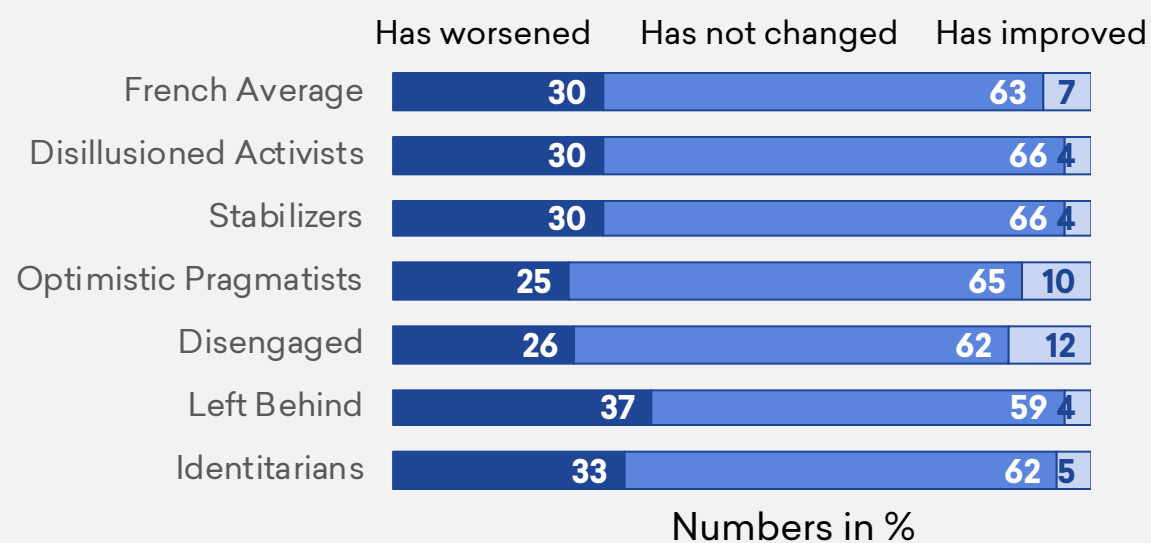
# Impacts on family life and financial situation



## Family Life



## Financial situation

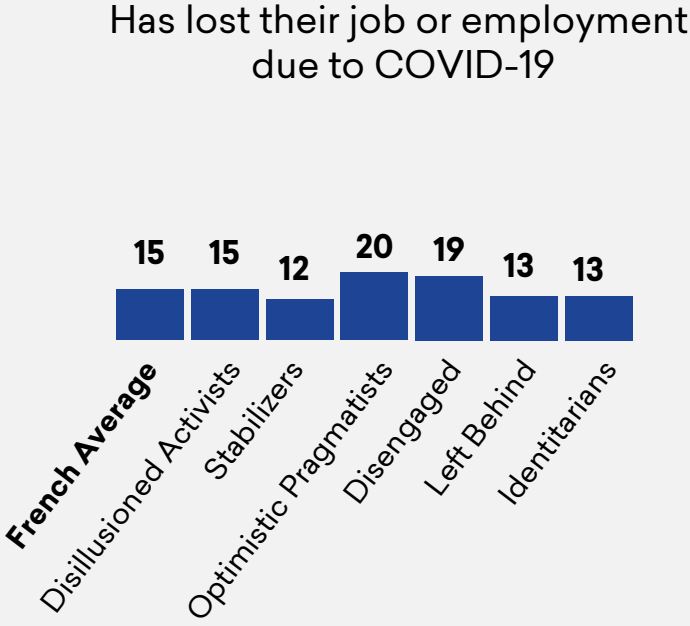
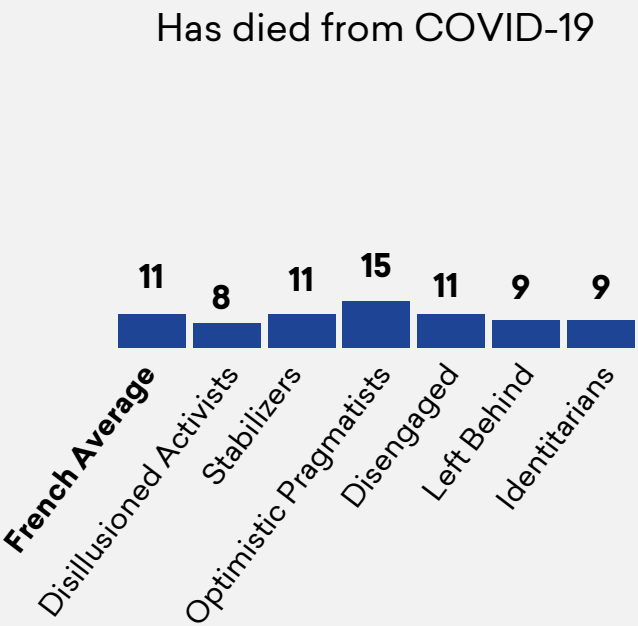
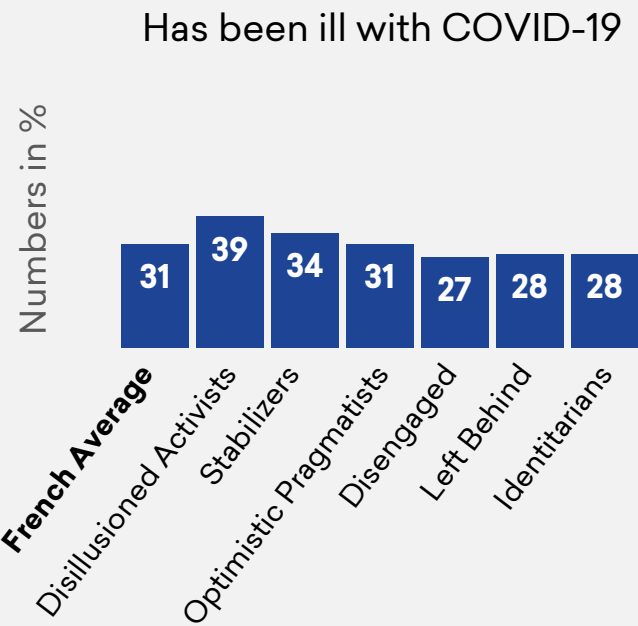


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Impact of COVID-19 on personal networks



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



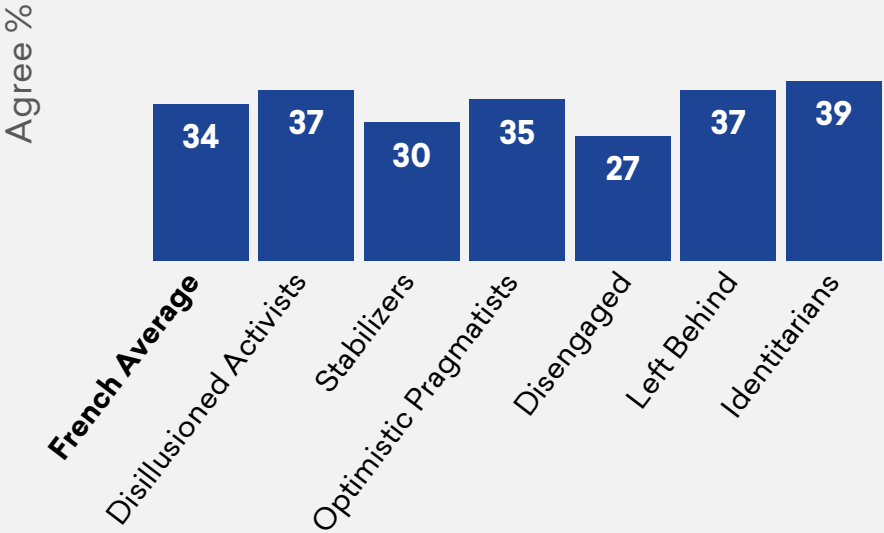
Question: Do you personally know someone who...?

# Fears for the future (1)

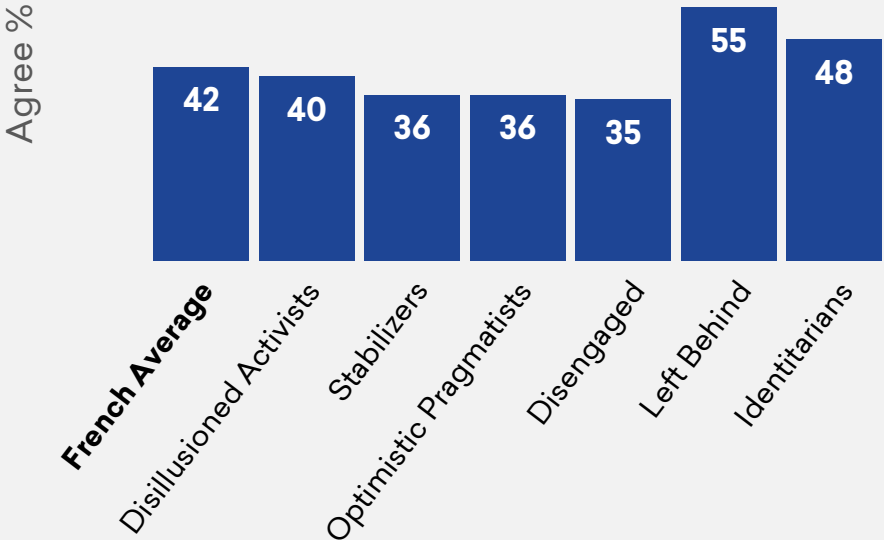


## Worried about...

Loss of job or employment\*



Financial difficulties



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”.

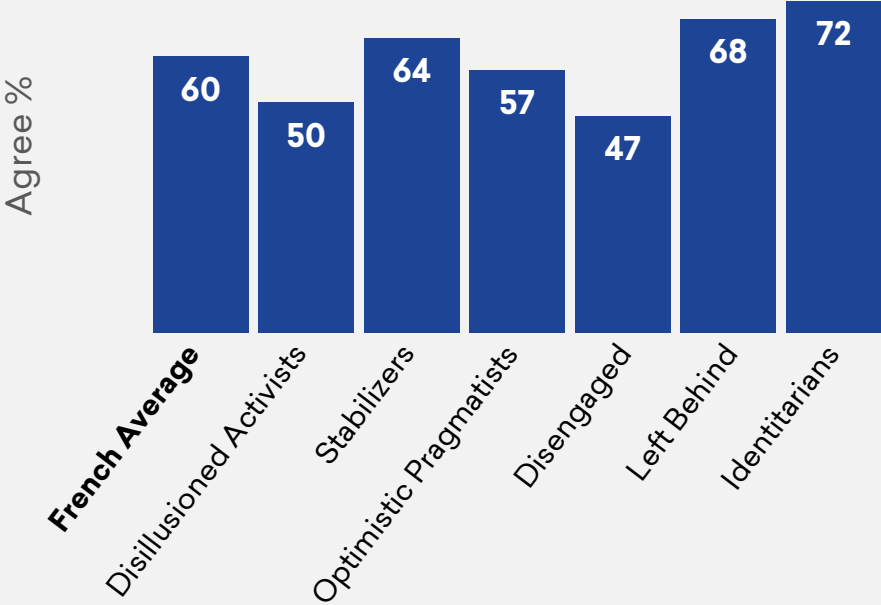


# Fears for the future (2)

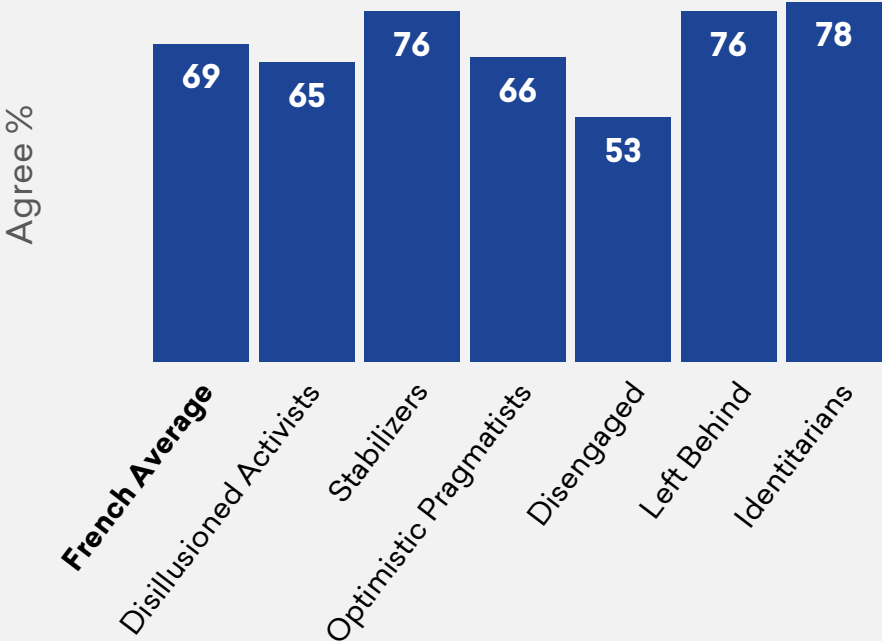


## Worried...

That someone among their friends & family will get ill with COVID-19



That there will be future waves of COVID-19 infections and lockdown in their country



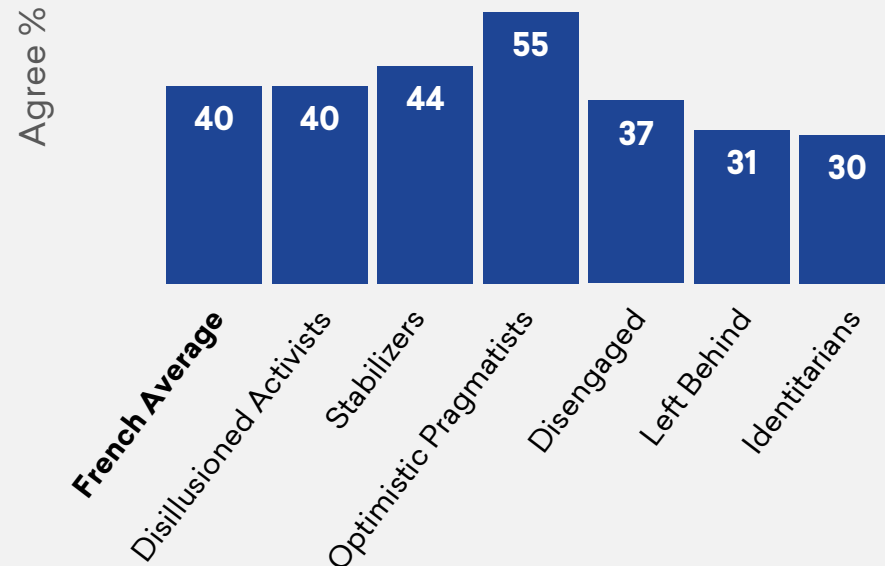
Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

# **II. Collective Experience under COVID-19**

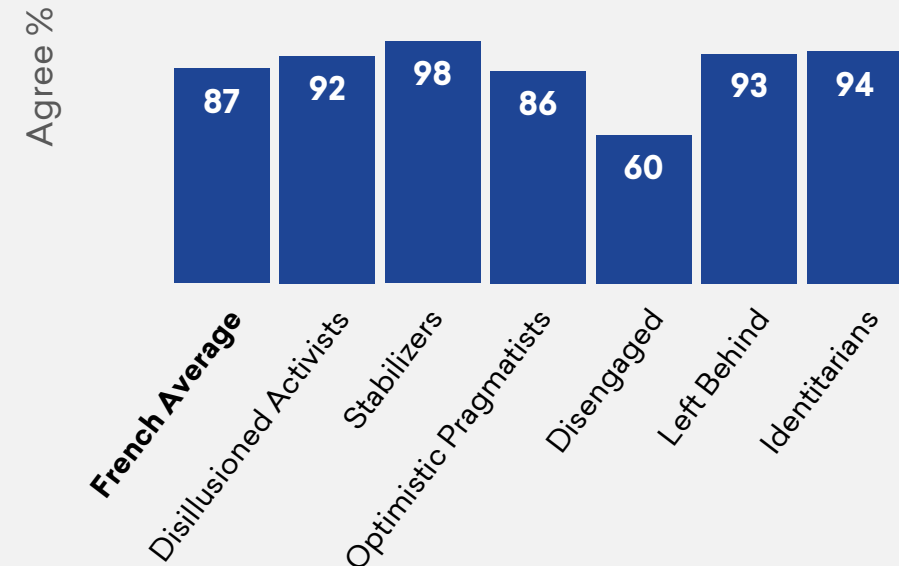
# Feelings of care, support and obligations to follow the rules



“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown me that most people in our country care about each other.”

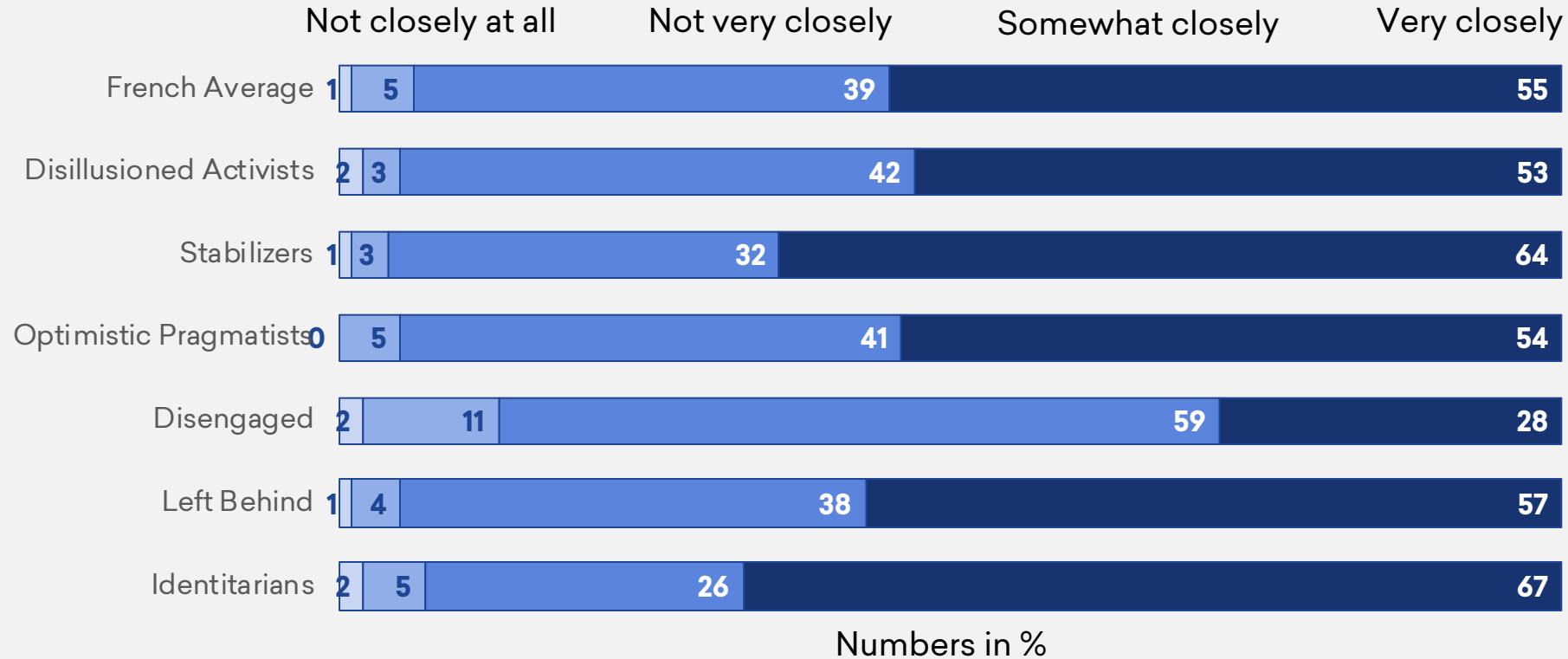


“I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules.”



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

# A majority followed the lockdown rules

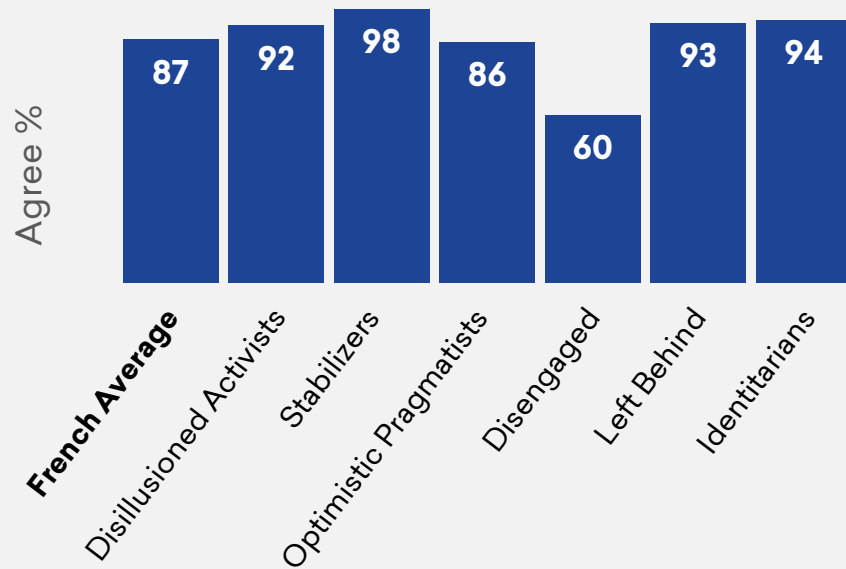


Question: When it comes to the COVID-19 social distancing rules that have been put in place in your area (wearing a mask, staying home, etc.), would you say that you have followed the rules...?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# French people overwhelmingly saw it as their duty to follow the rules, but think others have done too little to fight the virus.



"I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules."



Most people have been respecting the rules and doing their share to fight the virus together

Most people have not been following the rules and have done too little to fight the virus together

**French Average**

Disillusioned Activists

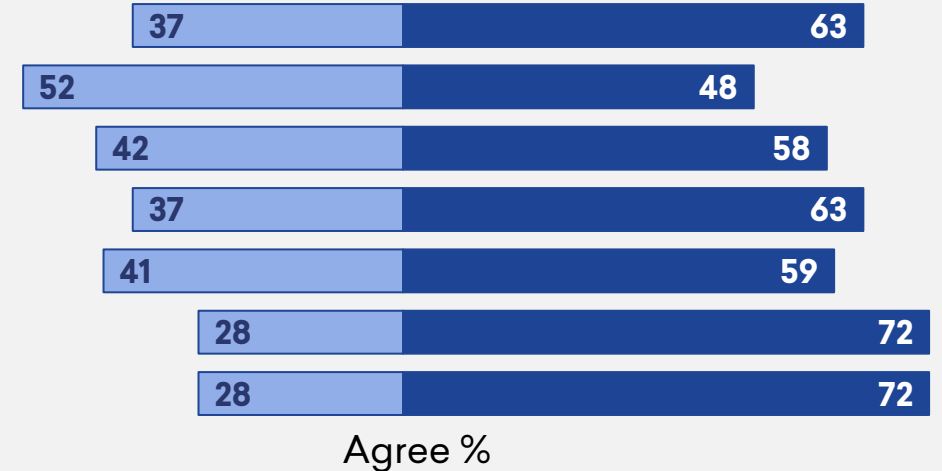
Stabilizers

Optimistic Pragmatists

Disengaged

Left Behind

Identitarians



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

# Engagement and Contribution



## Participation in COVID-19 relief activities

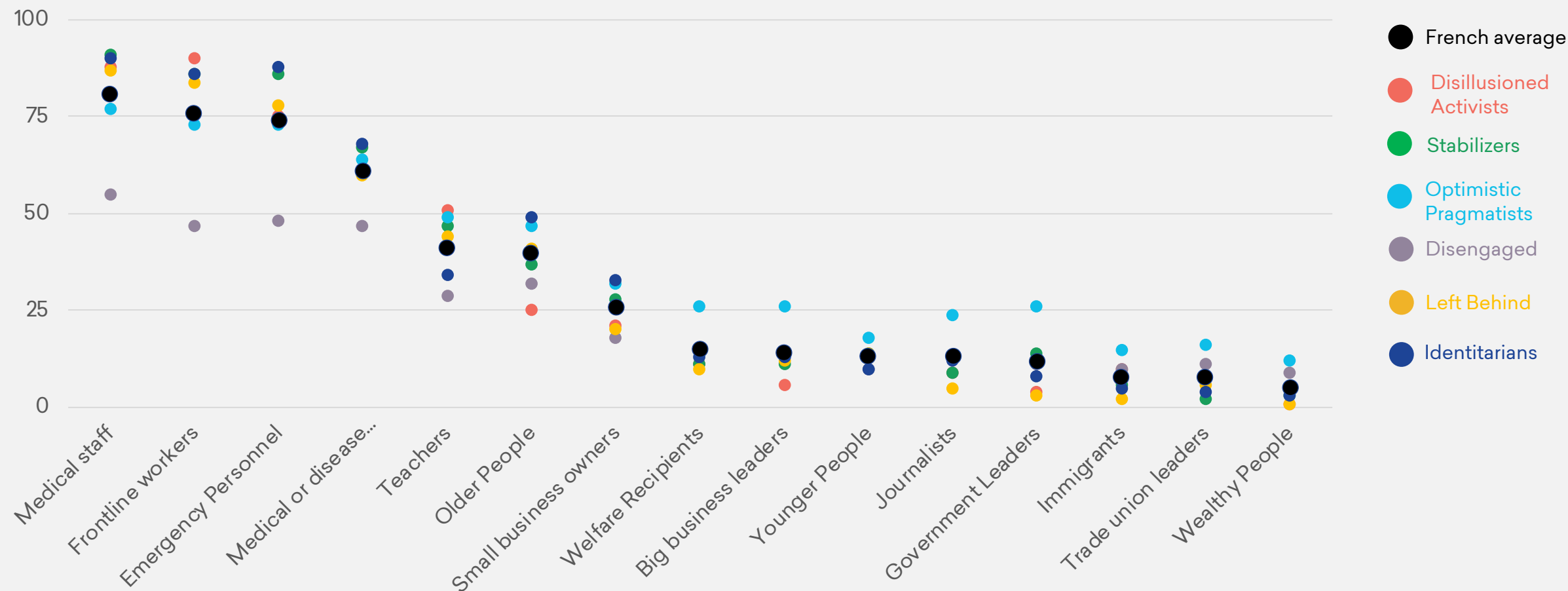


Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Groups in Society: Who Deserves Praise?



## Groups that deserve particular praise for their actions

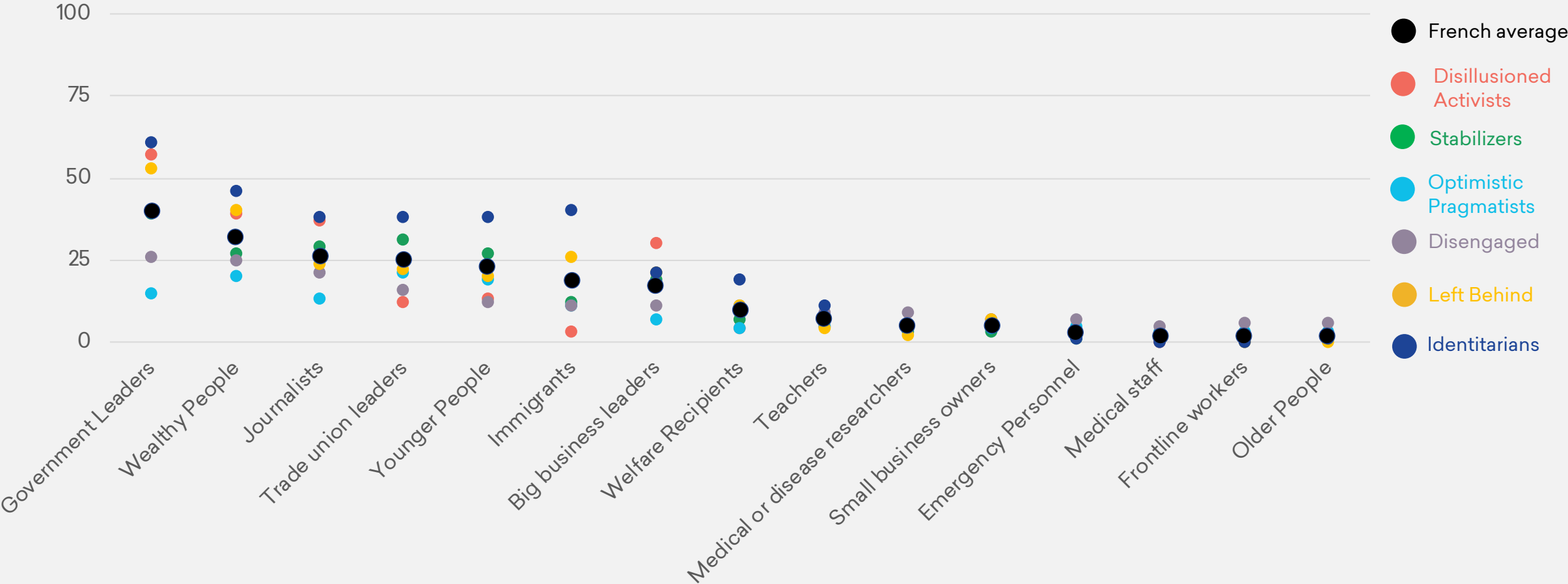


Question: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular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

# Groups in Society: Who Deserves Blame?



## Groups that deserve particular blame for their actions



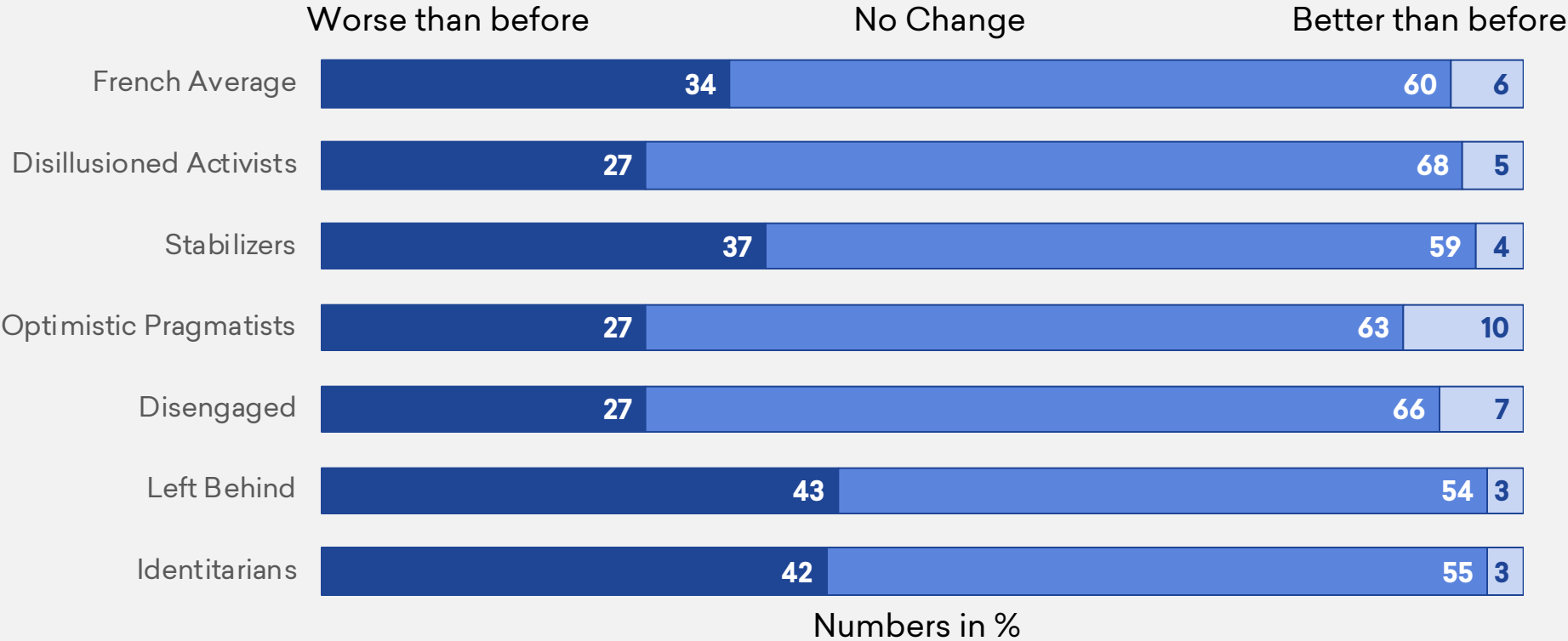
Question: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular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



# For about a third of people, trust in others has worsened.



How has people’s trust in others changed during the crisis?

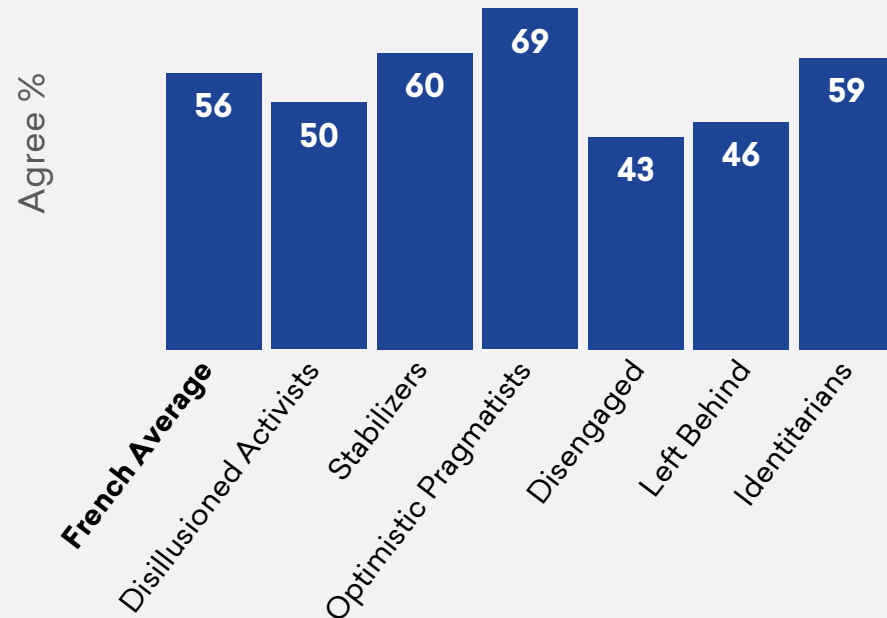


Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

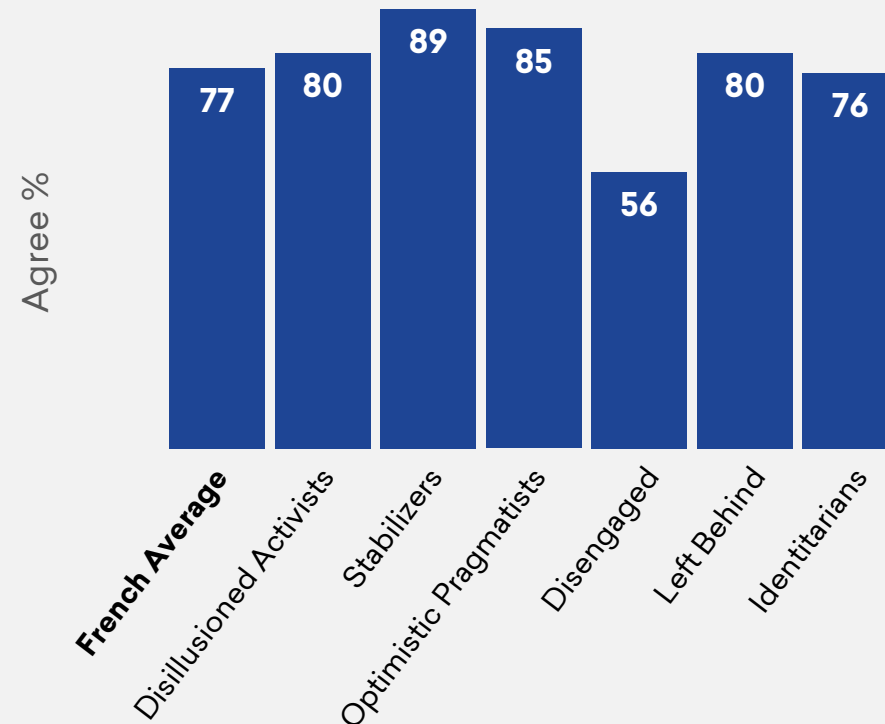
# The pandemic brought empathy and feelings of shared humanity.



“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.”

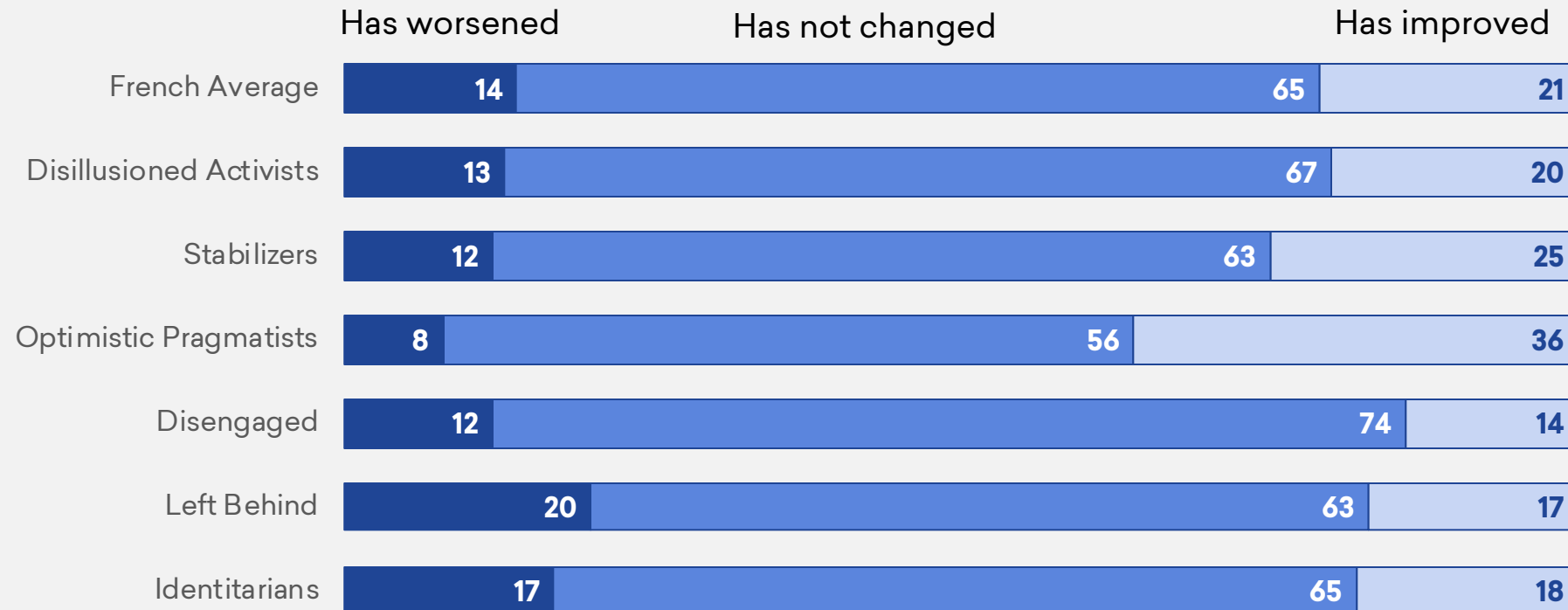


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

# Feelings of concern for one another have improved more than they have worsened.

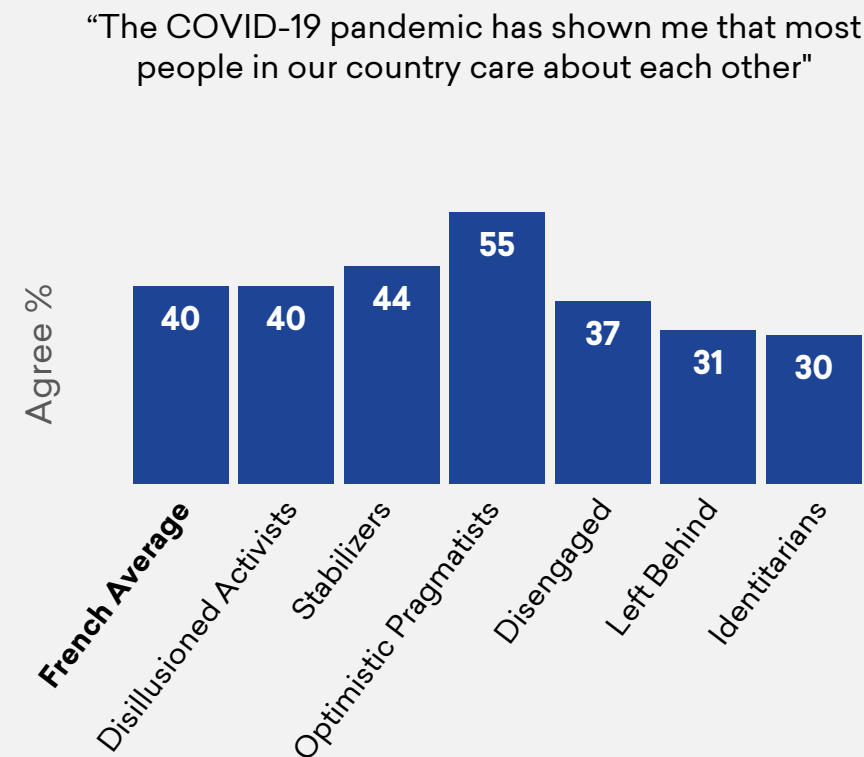
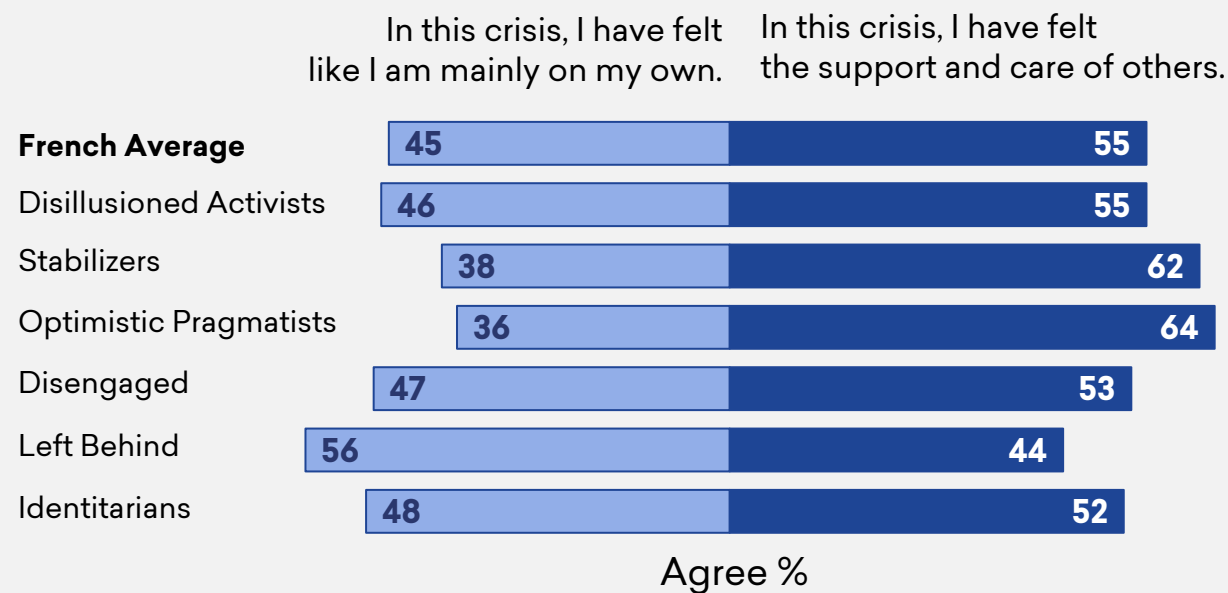


## People's concern for one another...



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in France, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Most people have felt the support of others, but not the Left Behind.



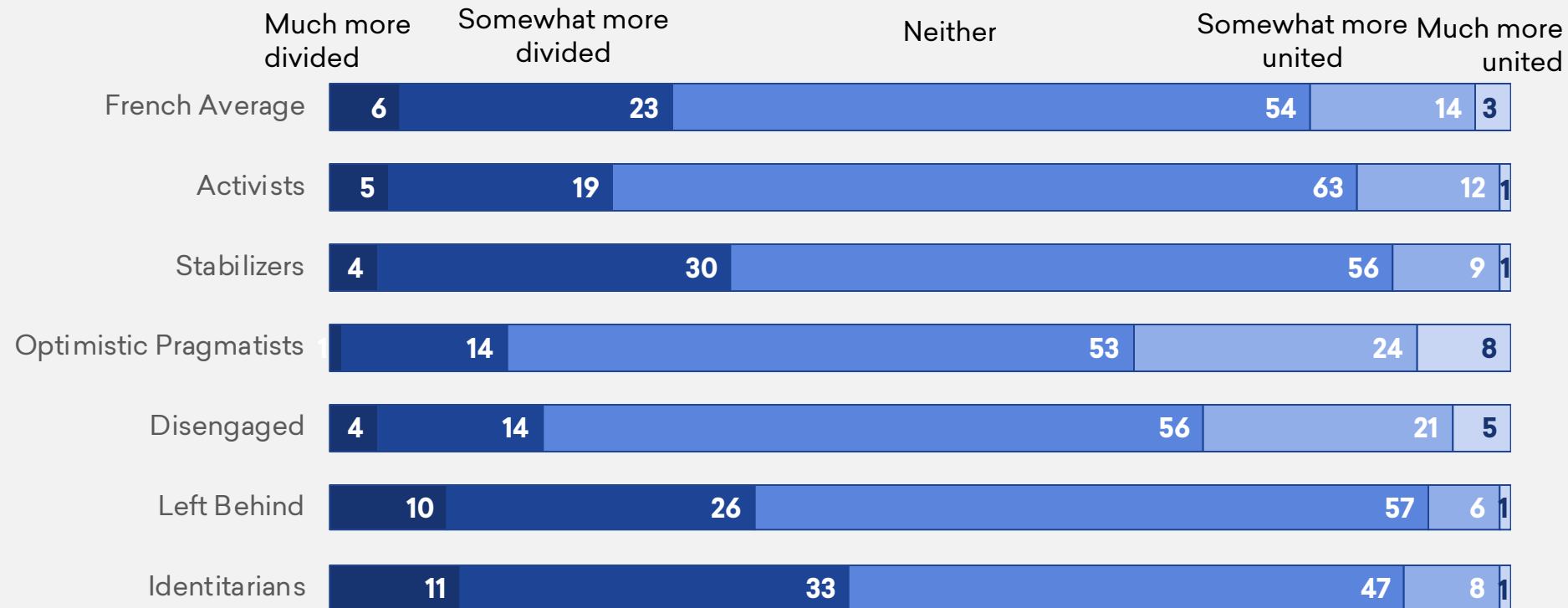
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# **III. Power, Institutions and the Media**

# About a third feel the country is more divided since the pandemic began.



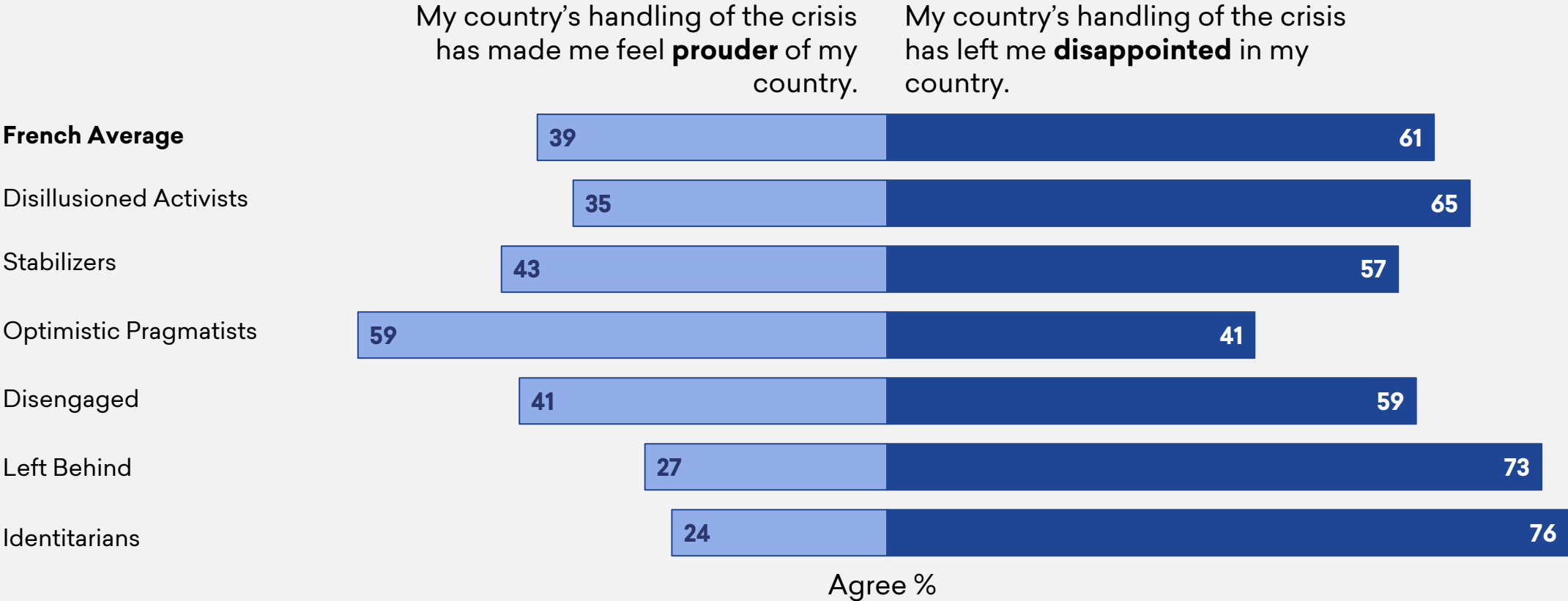
## More united or divided since COVID-19?



Numbers in %

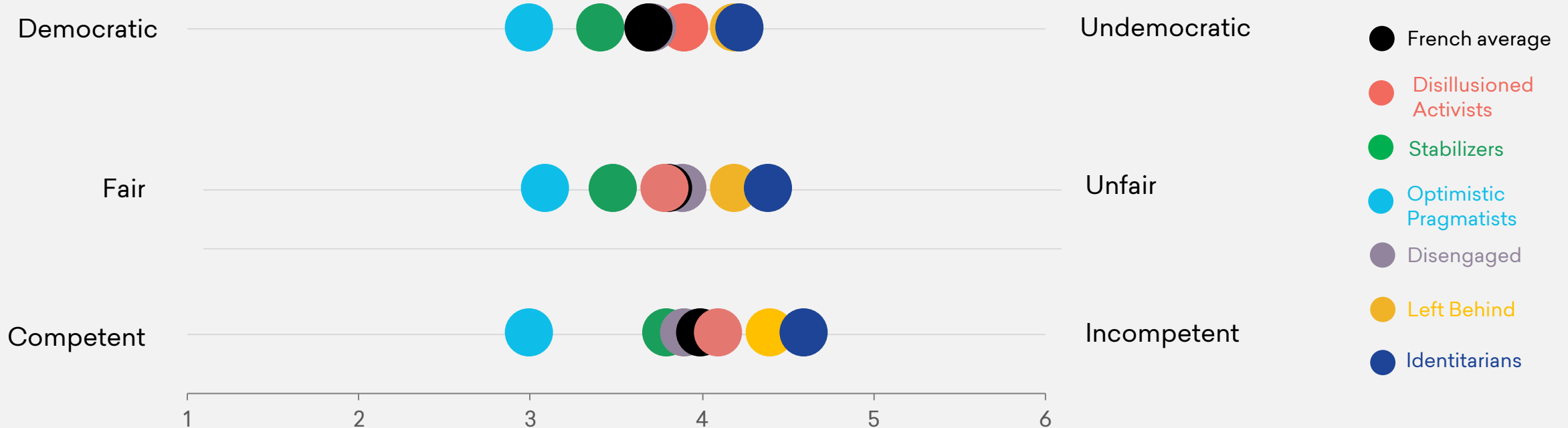
Question: Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, how have your perceptions of [COUNTRY] changed, if at all? Is it...?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Feelings of shame about France are dominant.



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

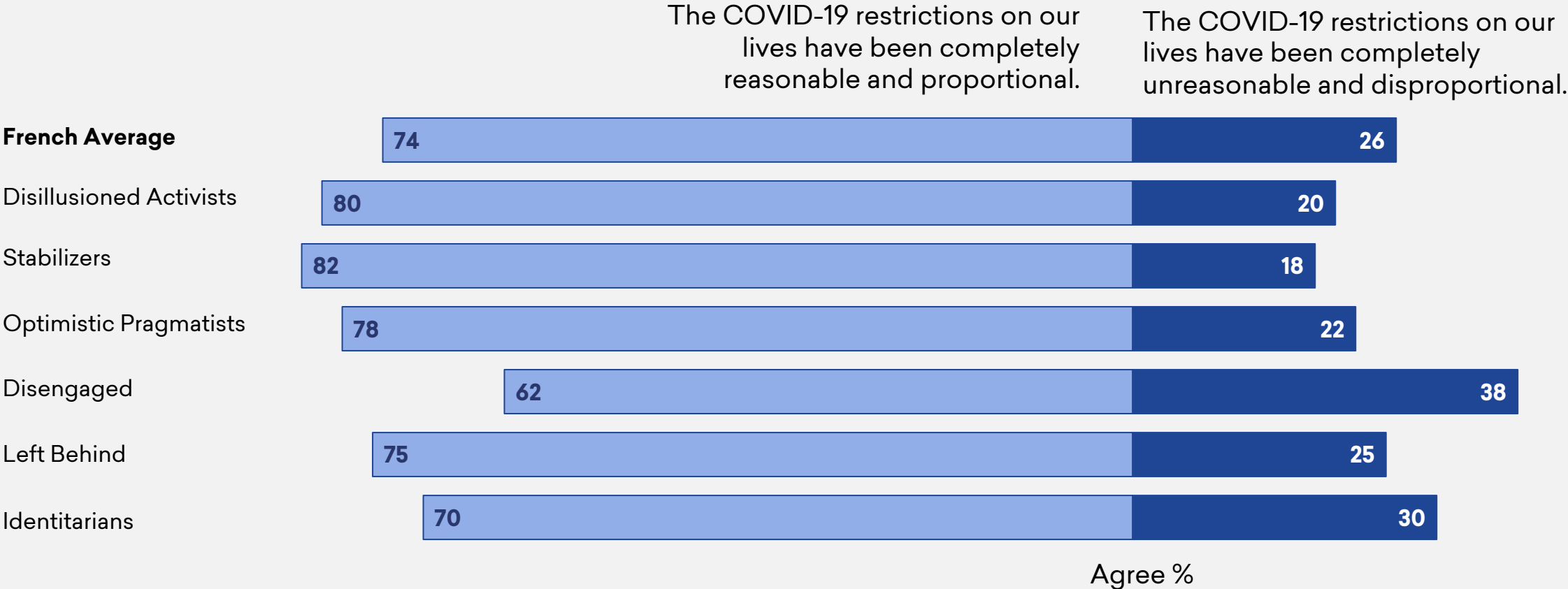
# The government's handling of the crisis is viewed poorly by most groups.



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



# Government measures are widely seen as reasonable and proportional.

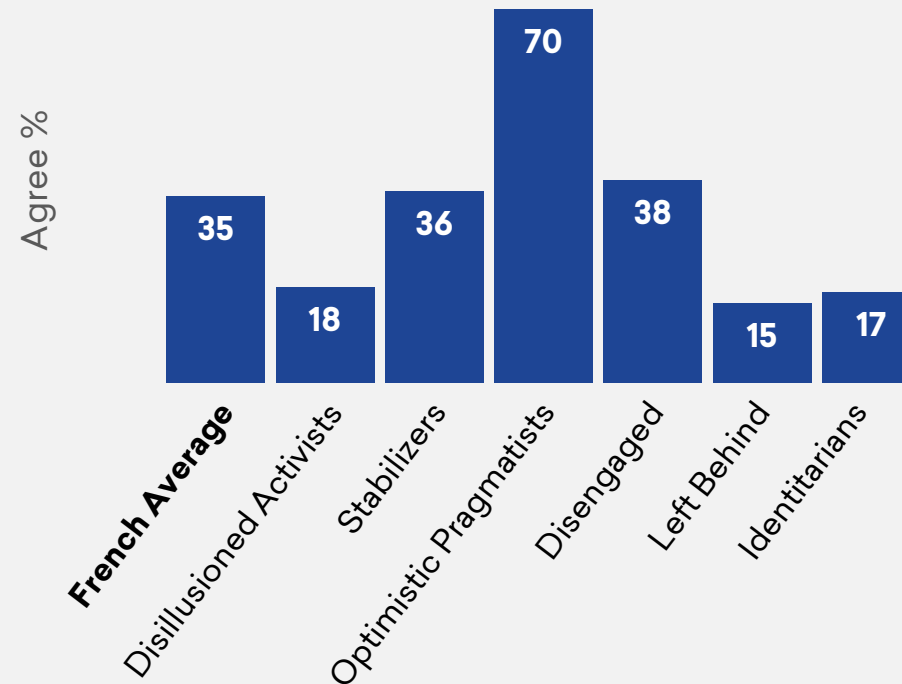


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Limited confidence in the government's ability to face future challenges



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

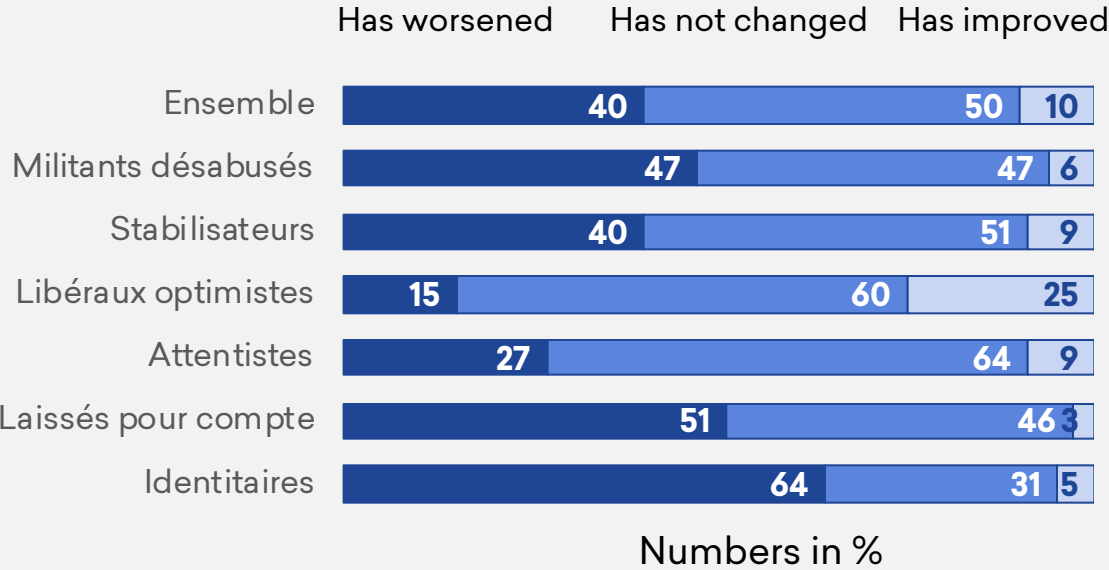


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

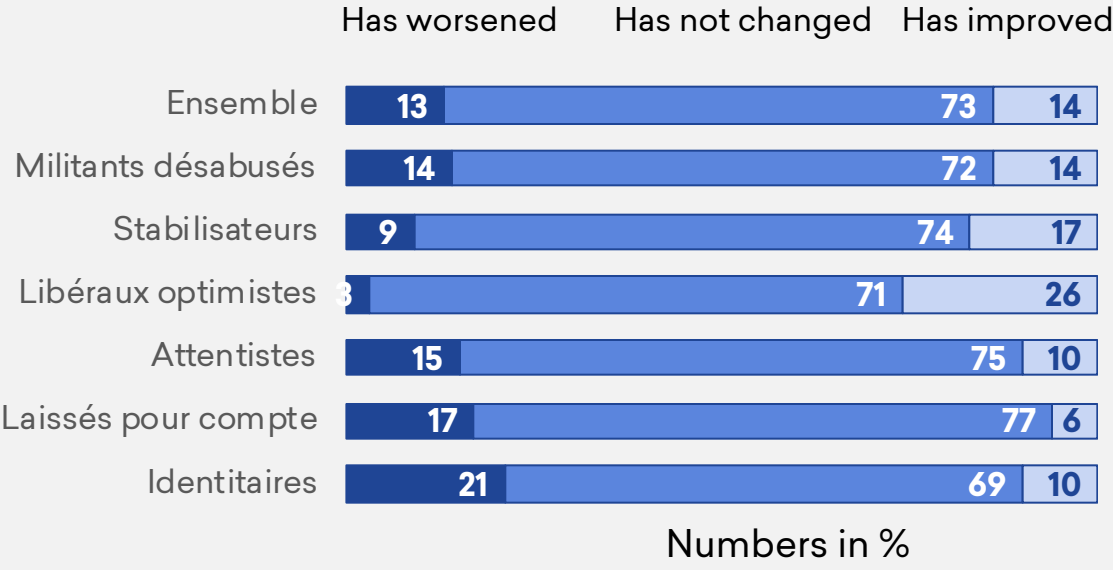
# More trust in local than in national government



## Trust in national Government



## Trust in the local Government

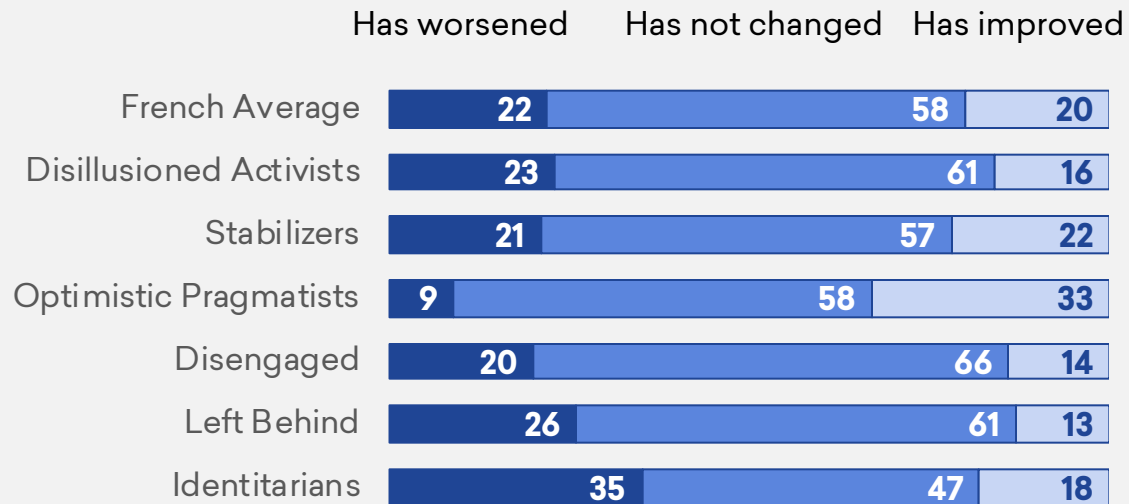


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Trust in the health and welfare system has grown and decreased in equal parts.

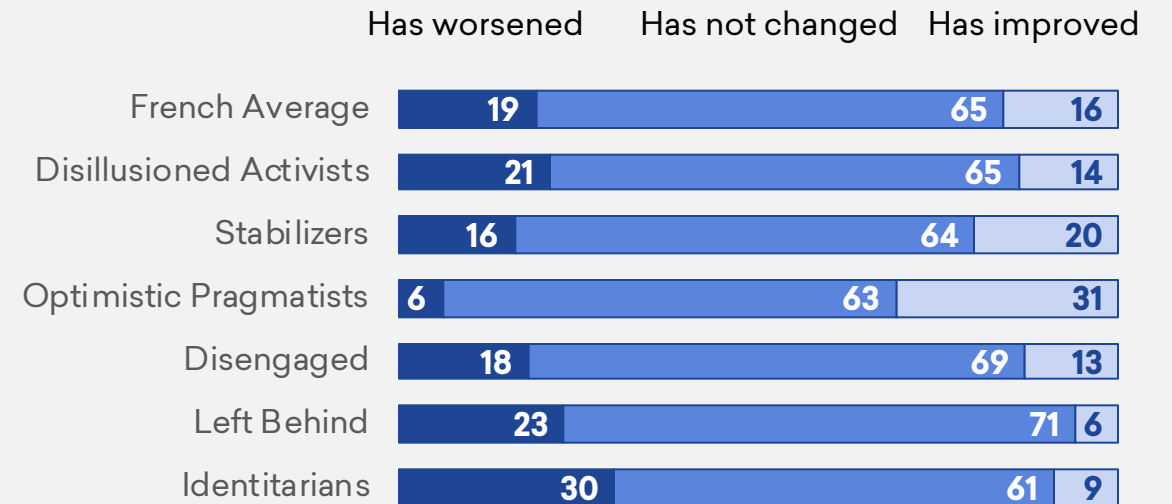


## Health System



Numbers in %

## Welfare System



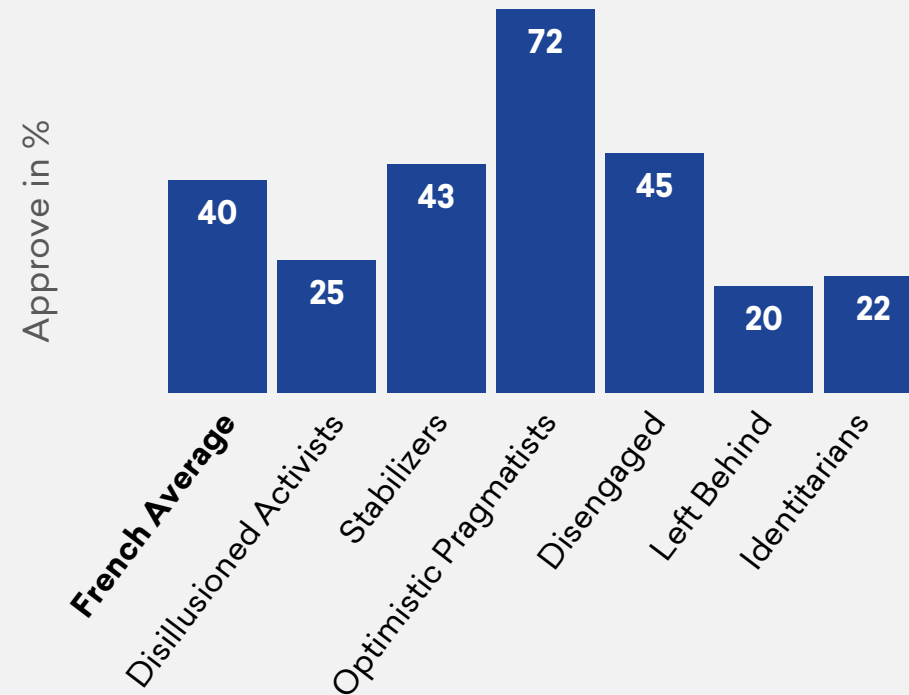
Numbers in %

Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# We see fairly low approval of President Macron



## Approval of Head of State

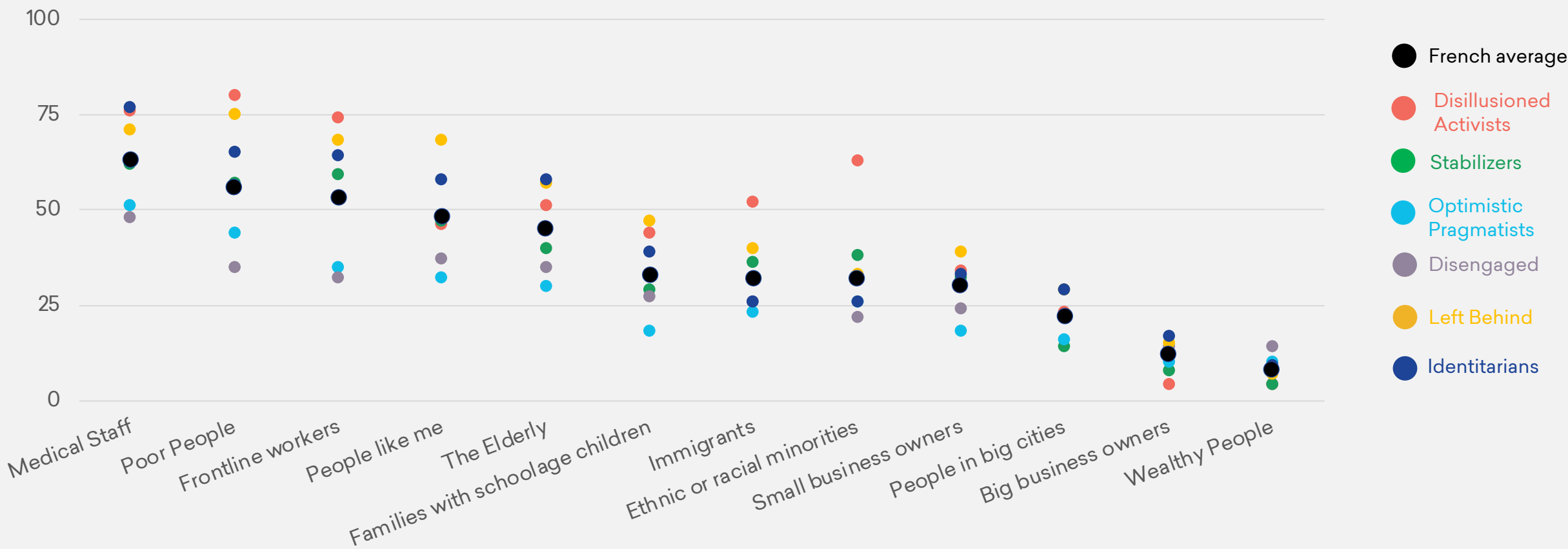


Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Emmanuel Macron is doing his job?

# Government is seen as caring too little about frontline workers...



## Groups that government cares too little about...

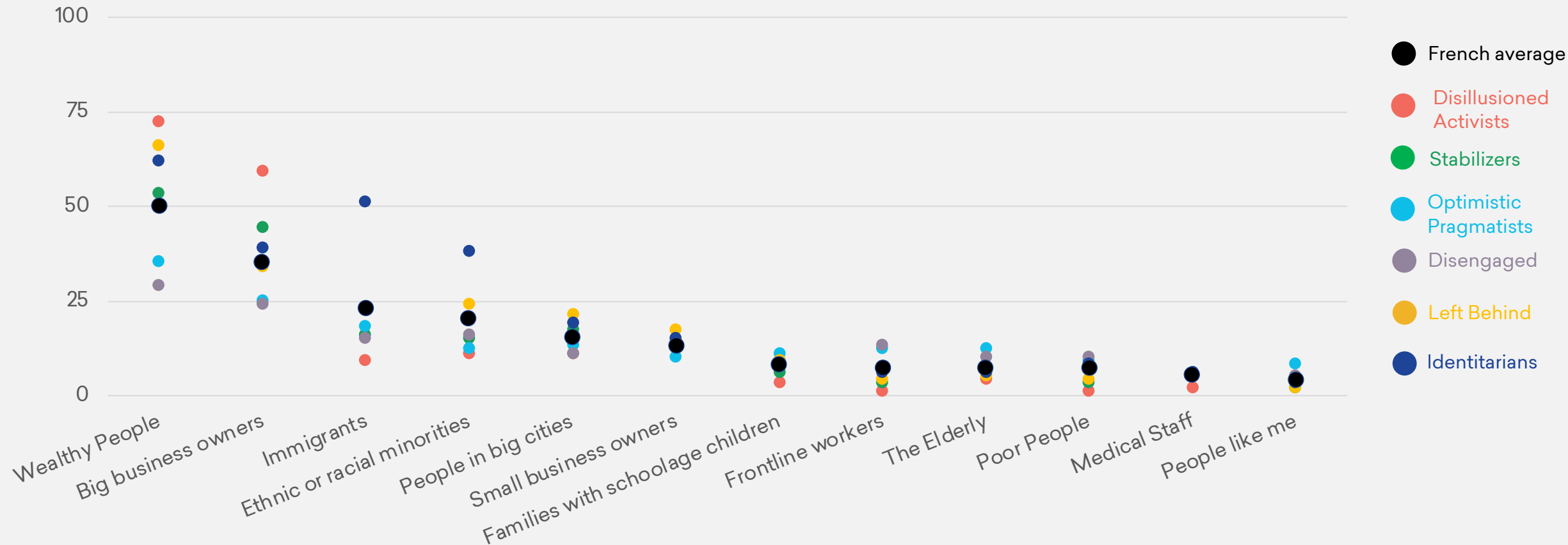


Question: Please indicate how much the French government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the COVID-19 situation...

# And caring too much about the elites...



Groups that government cares too much about...

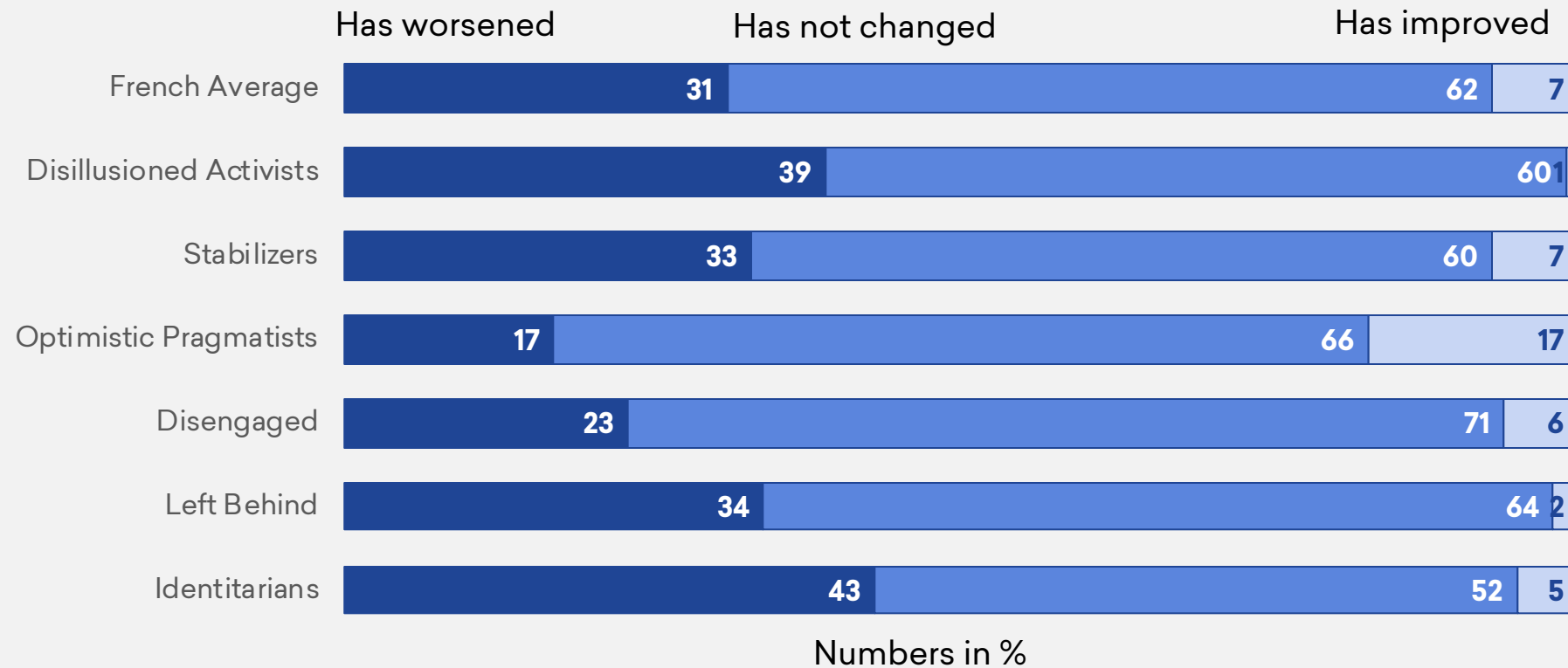


Question: Please indicate how much the French government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the COVID-19 situation...

# A third say the tone of public debate has worsened.



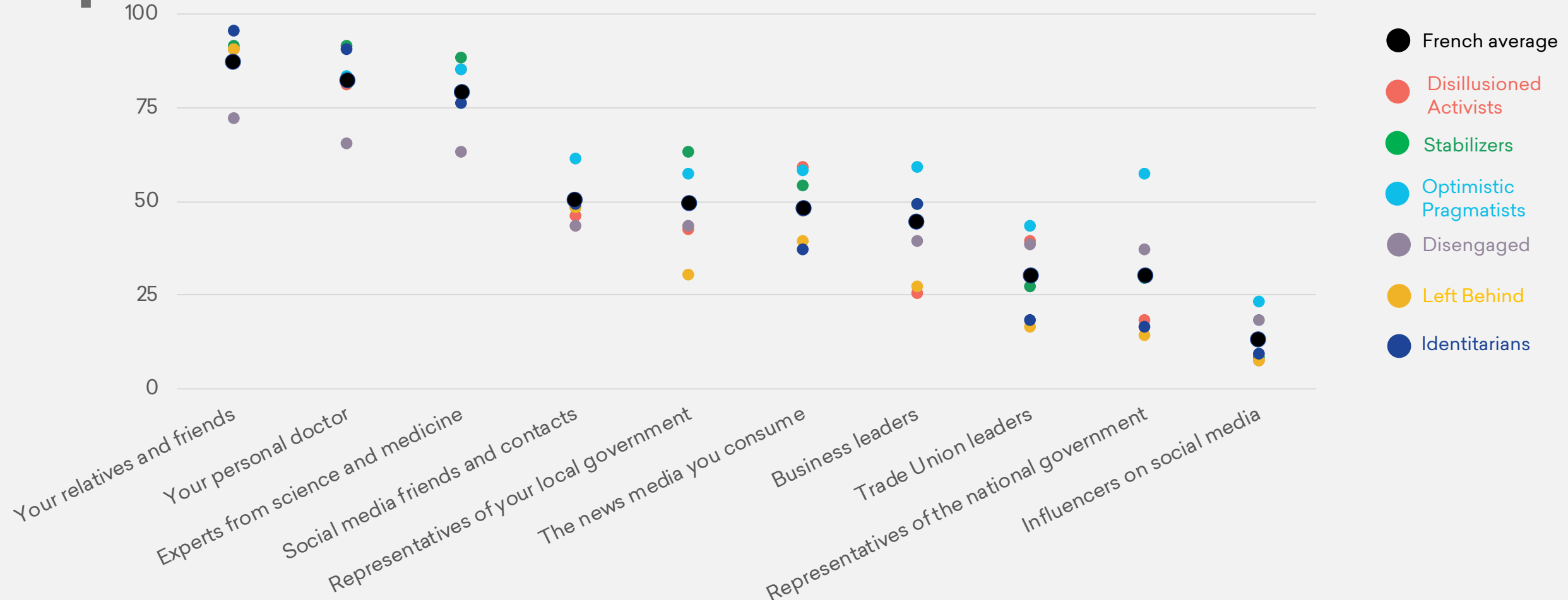
## During the crisis, the tone of public debate...



Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in France, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



# When looking for information on COVID-19, people trust relatives, their doctor and experts.

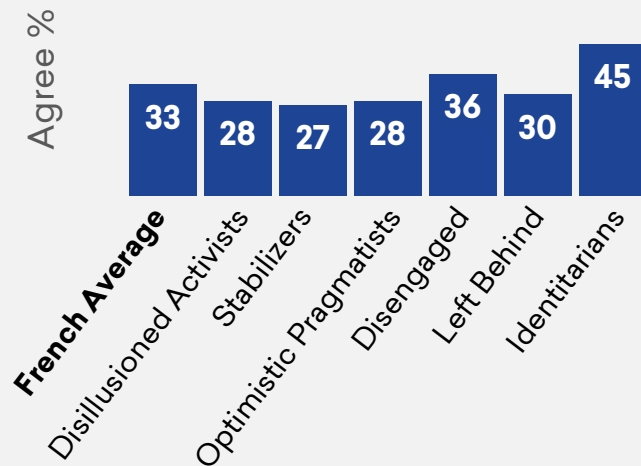


Question: Please indicate to what extent, if at all, you trust these groups of people or institutions when it comes to accurate and reliable information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

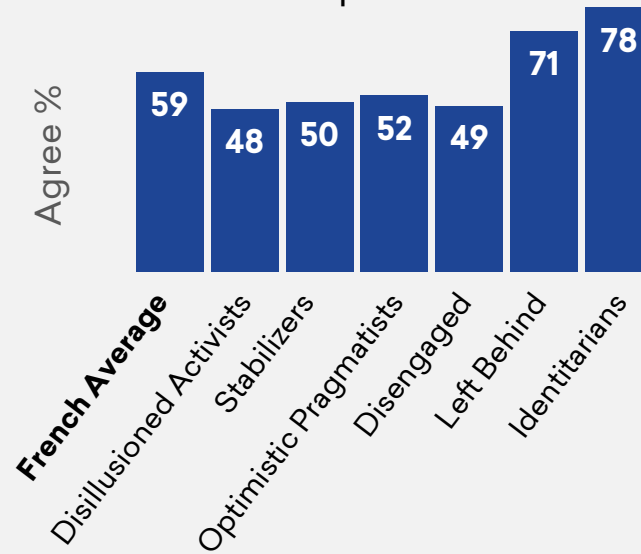
# Large parts of the population suspect the government and the media.



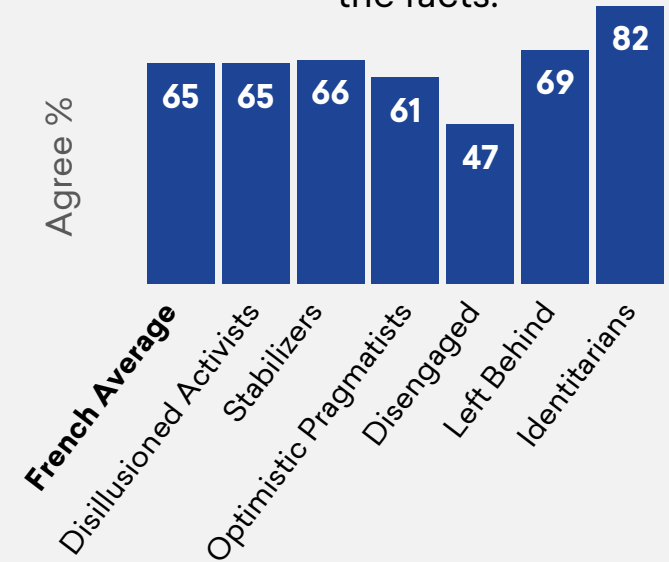
“The government is making this crisis seem bigger than it is to push through their own agenda.”



“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.”



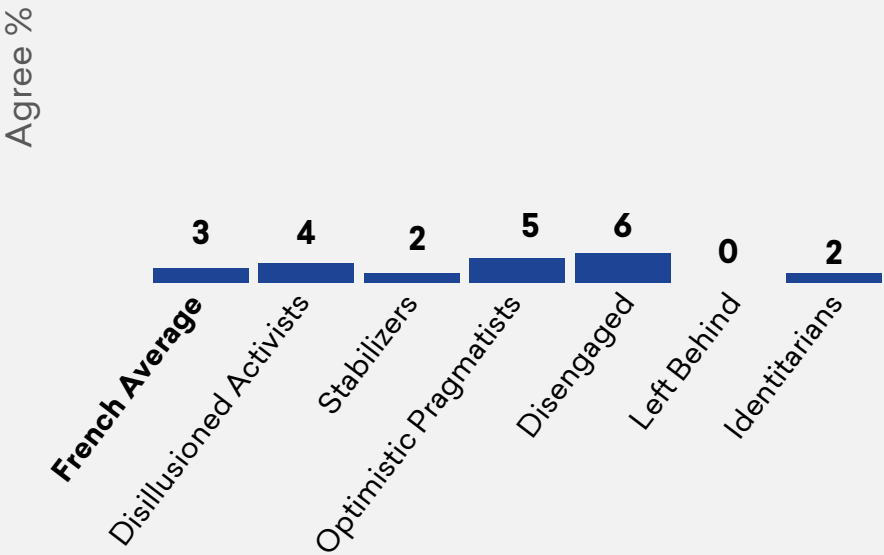
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

# Low participation in anti-government action

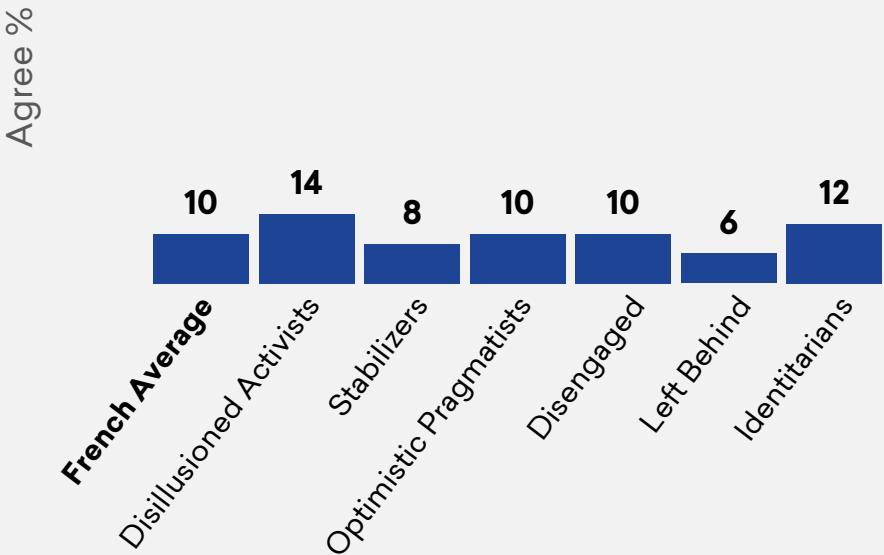
## Opposition to COVID-19 policies



Attended a protest against COVID-related government policies



Posted on social media against COVID-19 government policies

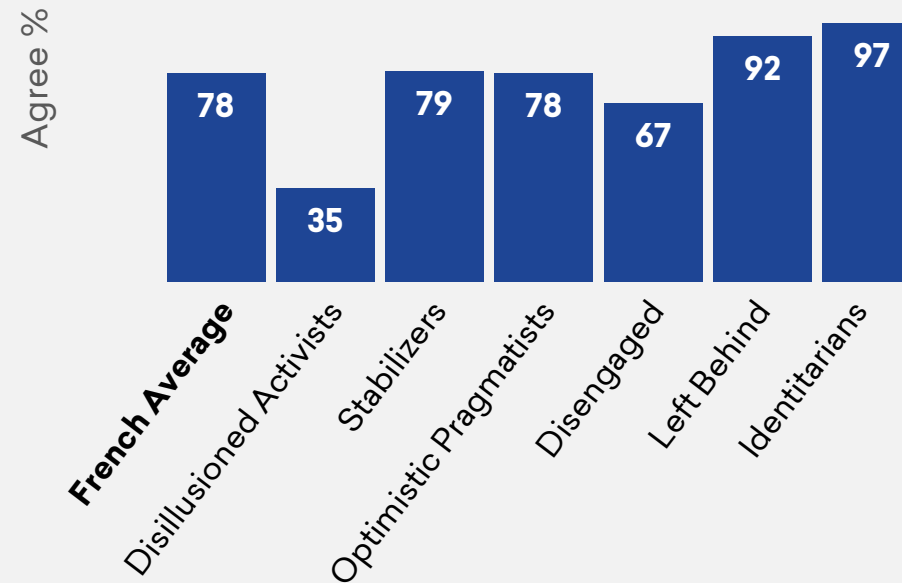


Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?

# French people see a need for a strong leader.



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

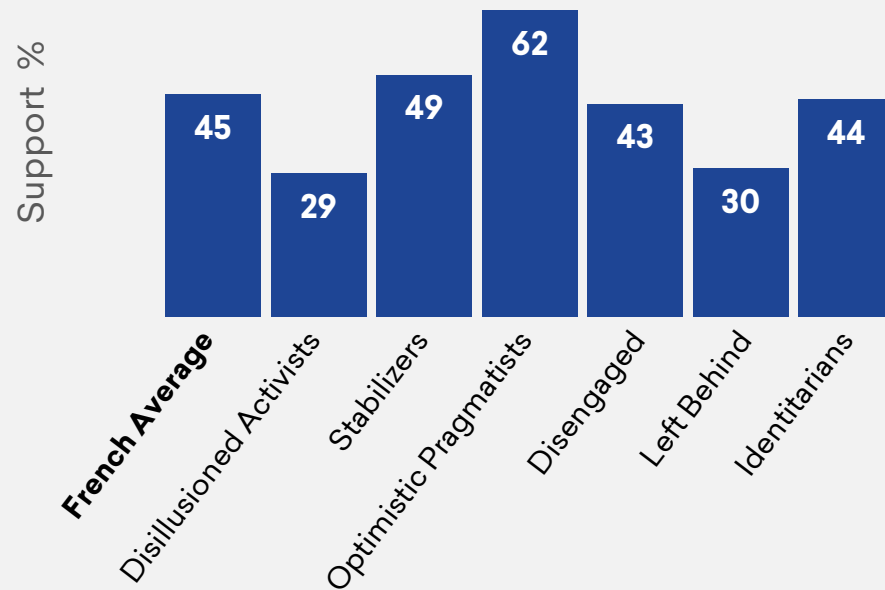


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

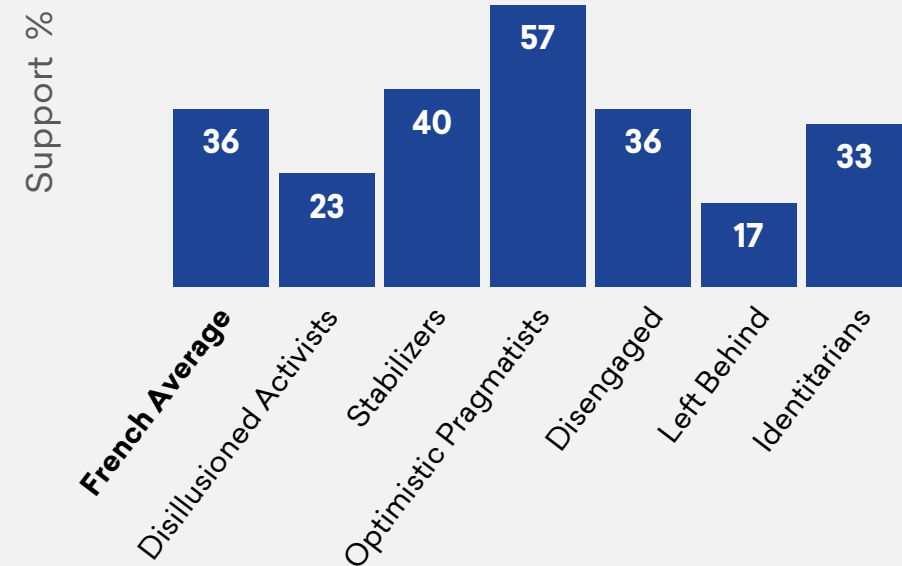
# There is limited enthusiasm for tracing apps.



This is a necessary step.



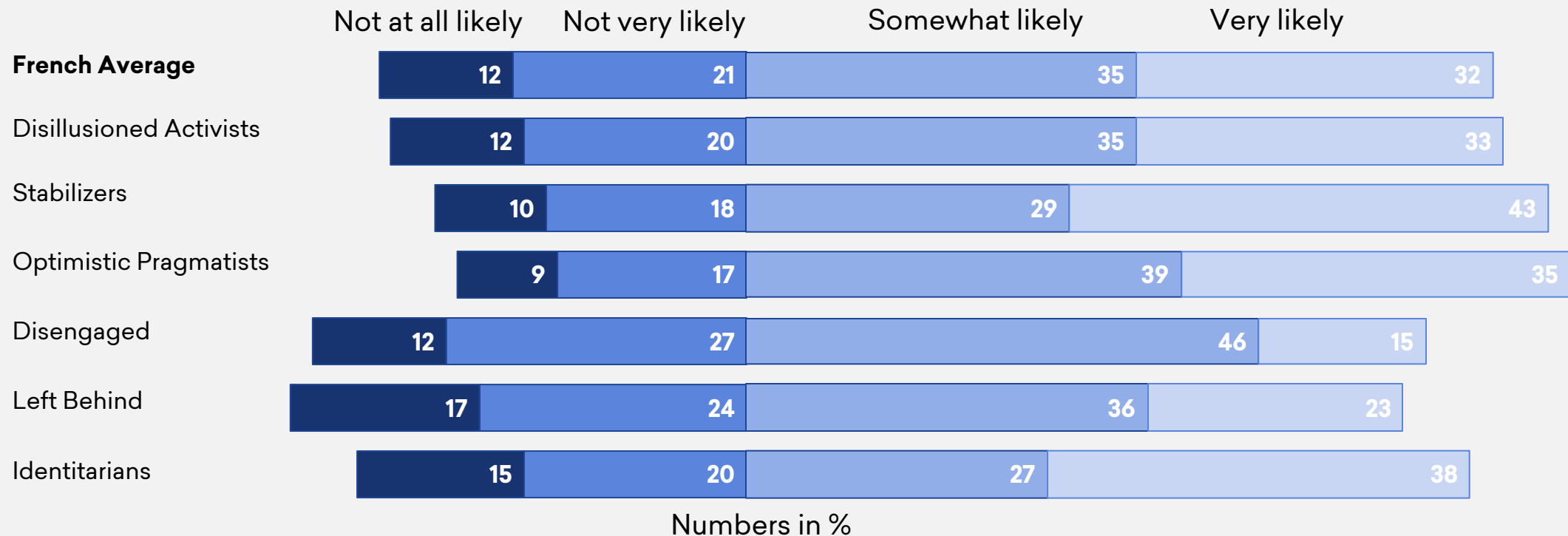
I trust that my privacy will be protected.



Question: Many governments are debating or rolling out mobile tracing apps to manage and reduce the spread of COVID-19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



# About a third would not get vaccinated, even more among the 'Forgotten'.



Question: If a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 is developed, how likely would you be to get vaccinated?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

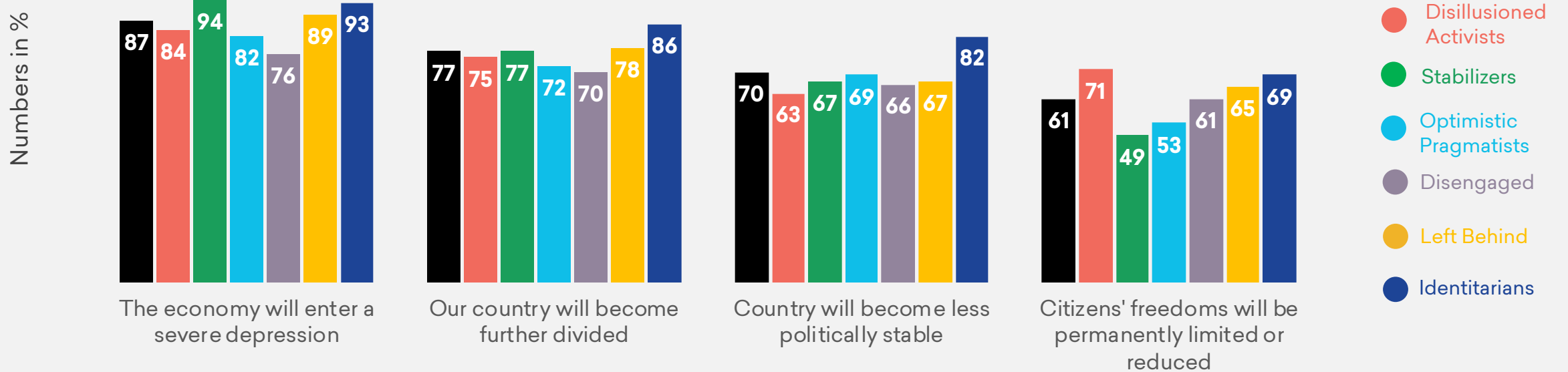
# **IV. After COVID-19**



# French people worry about the economy, stability and the level of division.



## Worried...



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



# Political priorities

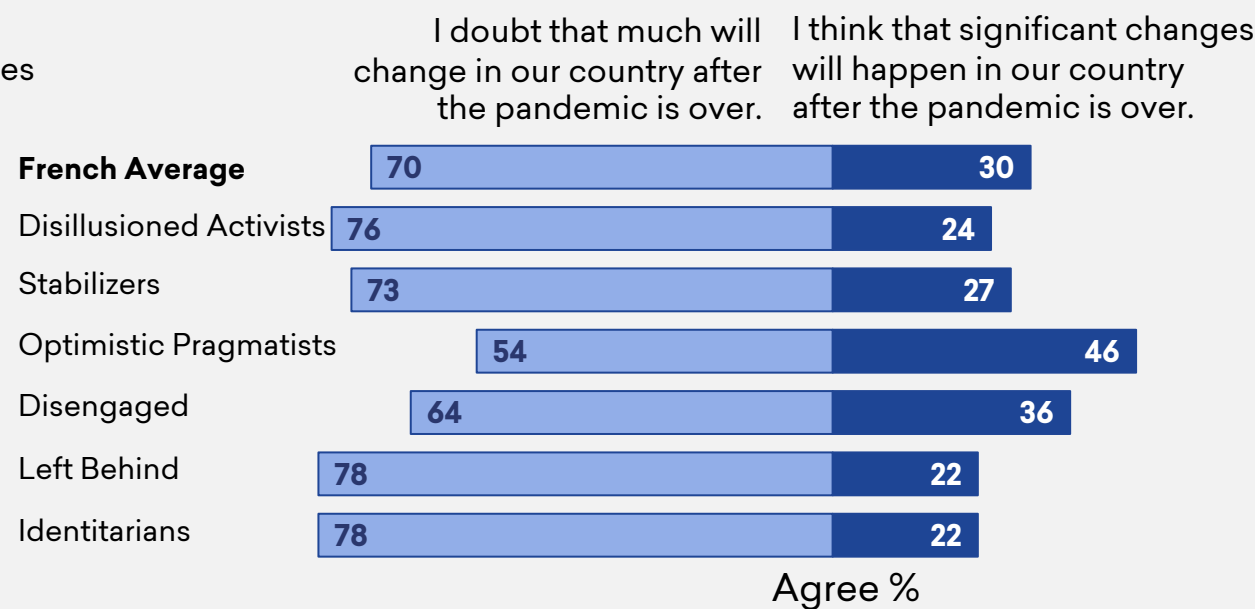
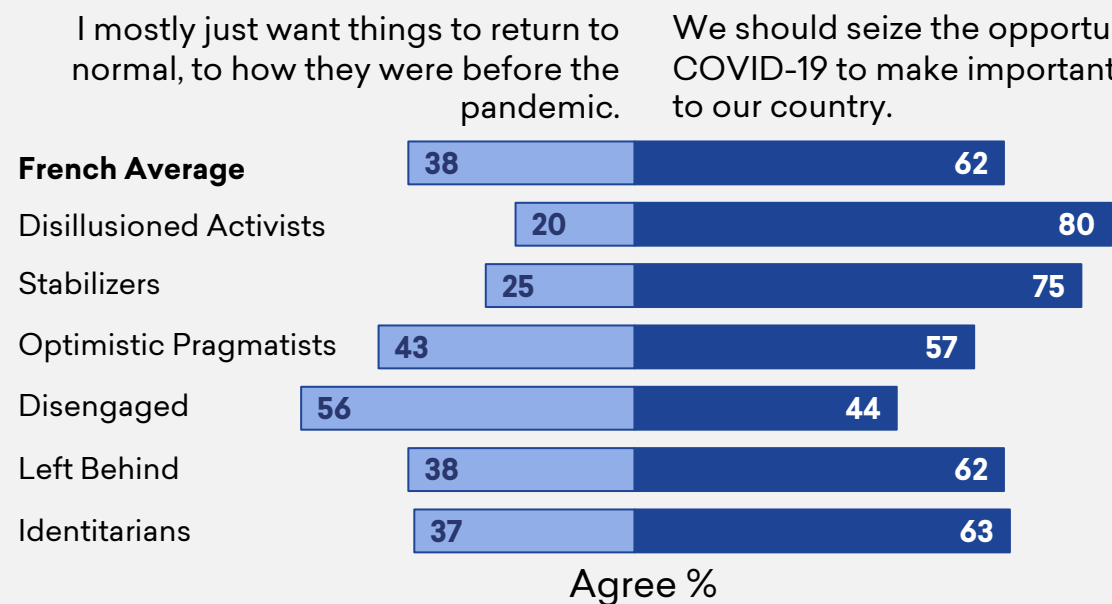


1. Improving our health system
2. Reducing unemployment
3. Protecting climate and environment
4. Supporting small businesses
5. Reducing immigration and refugee intake
6. Reducing economic inequality
7. Fighting crime and violence
8. Supporting individuals and families in greatest need
9. Reducing terrorism
10. Improving our education system
11. Protecting democratic rights and freedoms
12. Addressing racism in our society
13. Working towards gender equality
14. Improving cooperation between countries
15. Strengthening European integration
16. Reducing political division
17. Protecting racial, ethnic and religious minorities

<i>French Average</i>	<i>Disillusioned Activists</i>	<i>Stabilizers</i>	<i>Optimistic Pragmatists</i>	<i>Disengaged</i>	<i>Left Behind</i>	<i>Identitarians</i>
38	38	44	33	27	43	41
34	27	39	35	29	38	31
33	54	39	35	23	31	24
28	19	32	30	23	28	30
26	5	17	16	19	31	54
22	42	28	16	16	26	16
20	5	17	17	15	22	33
18	22	21	17	15	21	13
12	2	5	16	13	12	17
11	16	13	12	14	10	6
9	15	10	7	8	6	10
8	17	6	11	9	5	5
7	12	6	9	7	6	4
6	9	6	9	8	3	3
4	6	7	6	4	1	3
3	2	1	6	7	1	1
3	5	2	3	4	2	1

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

# Most people want system change but few expect it to come.



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

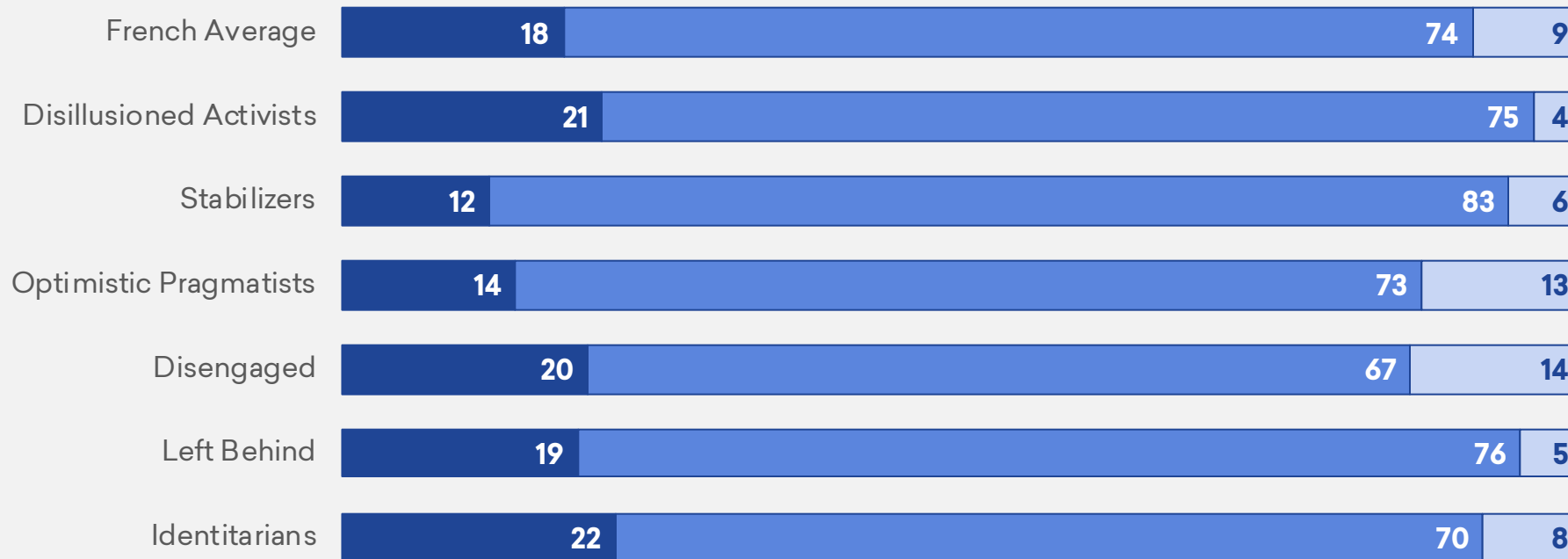


# Just under 20% would support violent action to change the system.

This crisis confirms that we need to change the system, but this will not happen without violent militant action

This crisis confirms that we must change the system, but we will not succeed without listening and dialogue

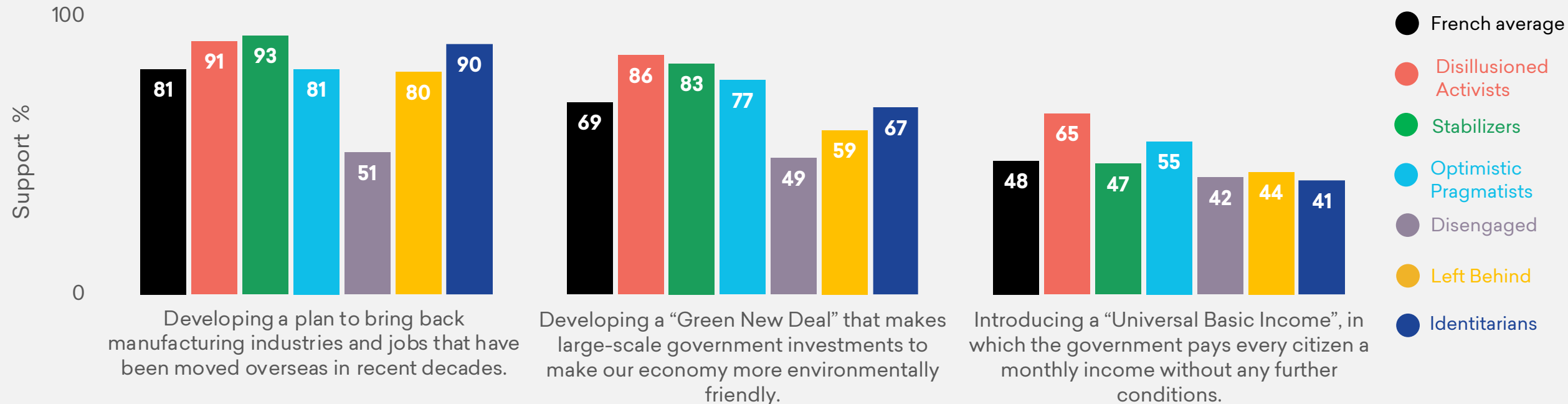
We must not change the system



Numbers in %

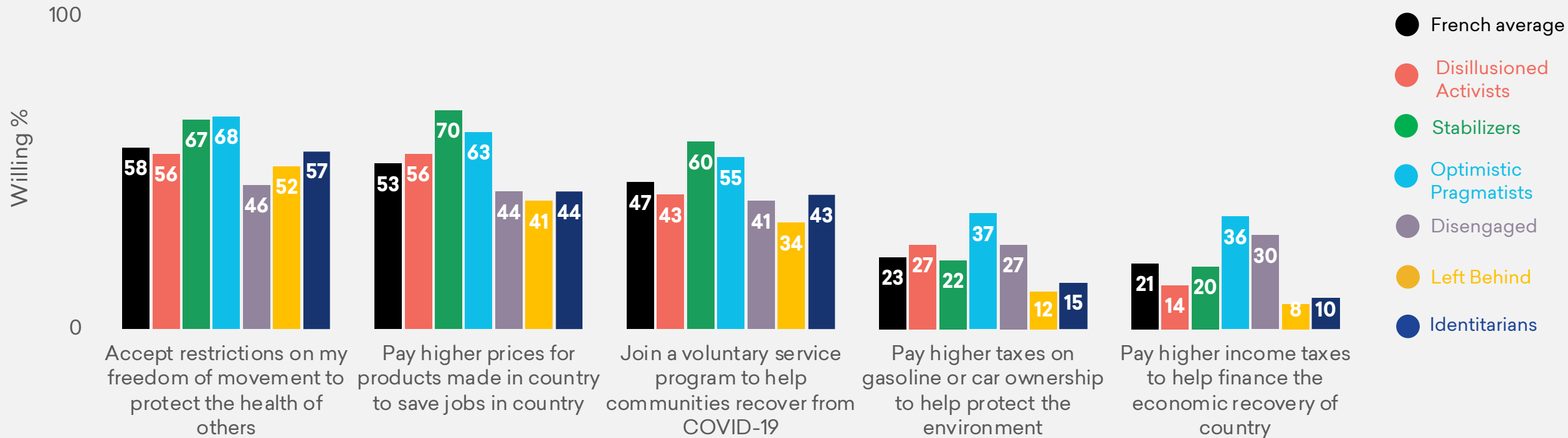
Question : Which of the following statements do you agree with more?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# High support for Green Deal, UBI and relocating jobs



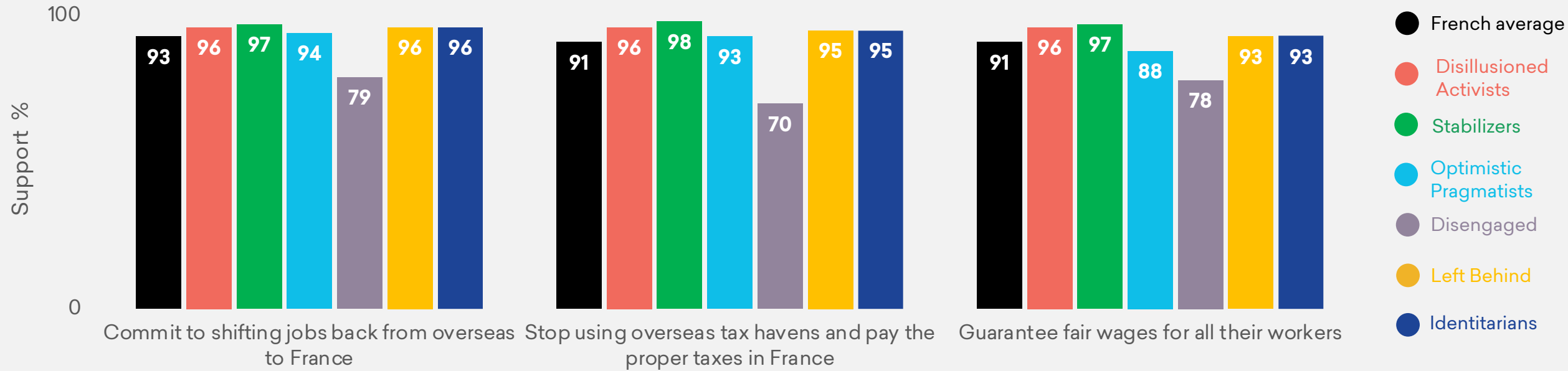
Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

# Personal willingness for sacrifice (but not by paying more taxes)



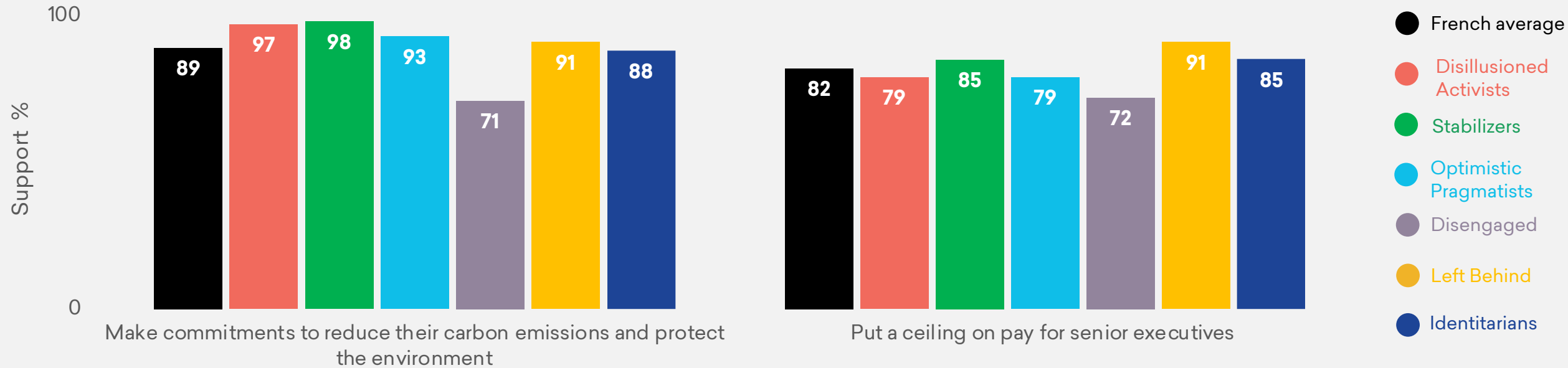
Question: When it comes to your actions during and after the crisis, would you personally be willing or not to do the following...

# High expectations that rescue packages for business will come with conditions (1)



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?

# High expectations that rescue packages for business will come with conditions (2)

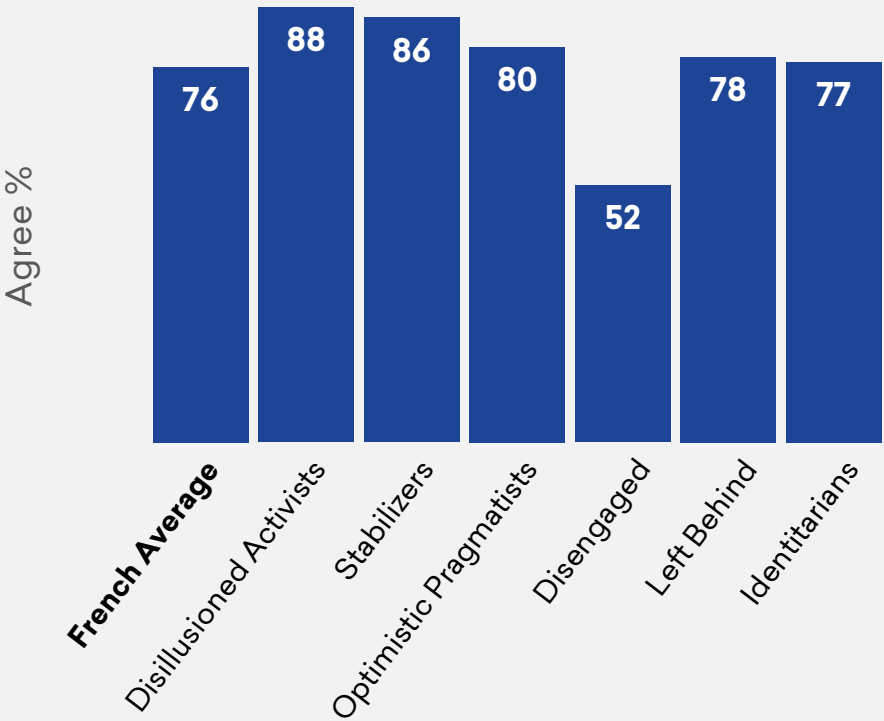


Question: The government is currently working on measures to help the economy and support businesses. What do you think: To what extent would you support or oppose requiring companies to fulfil the following criteria if they are to receive government aid?

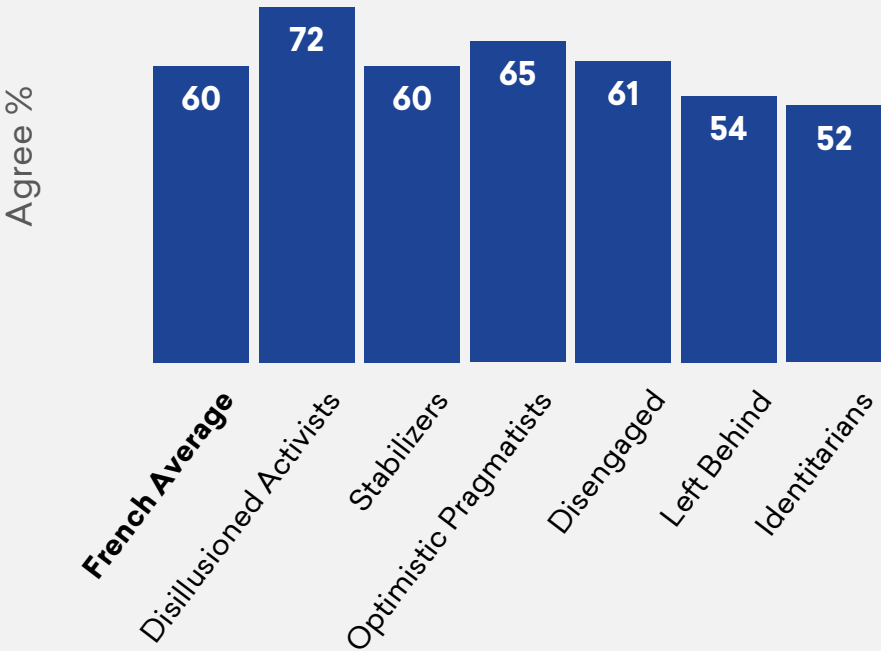
# Is COVID-19 an opportunity for climate ?



“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.”



Worried that commitment to protecting the environmental will slow down or stop



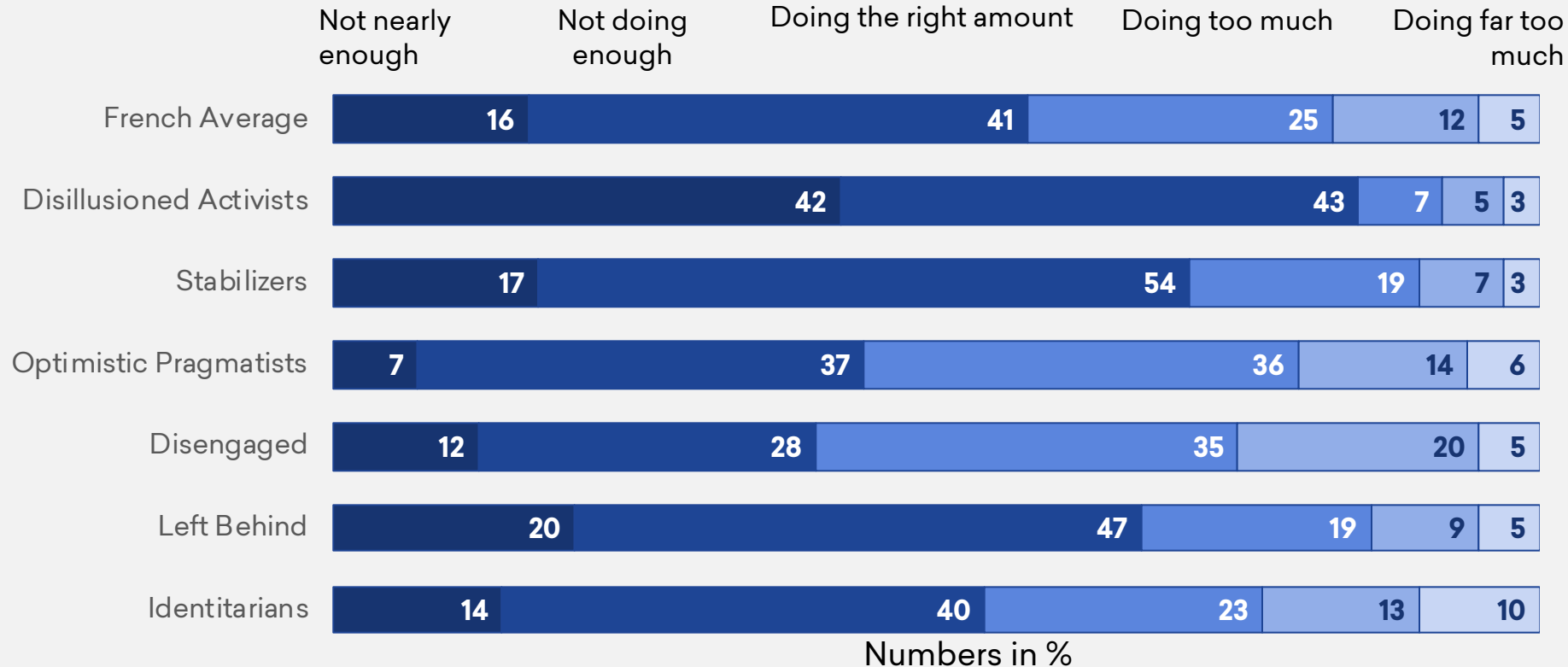
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?; To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that...?



# The government is not doing enough on the environment.



## On the environment, the government is doing...



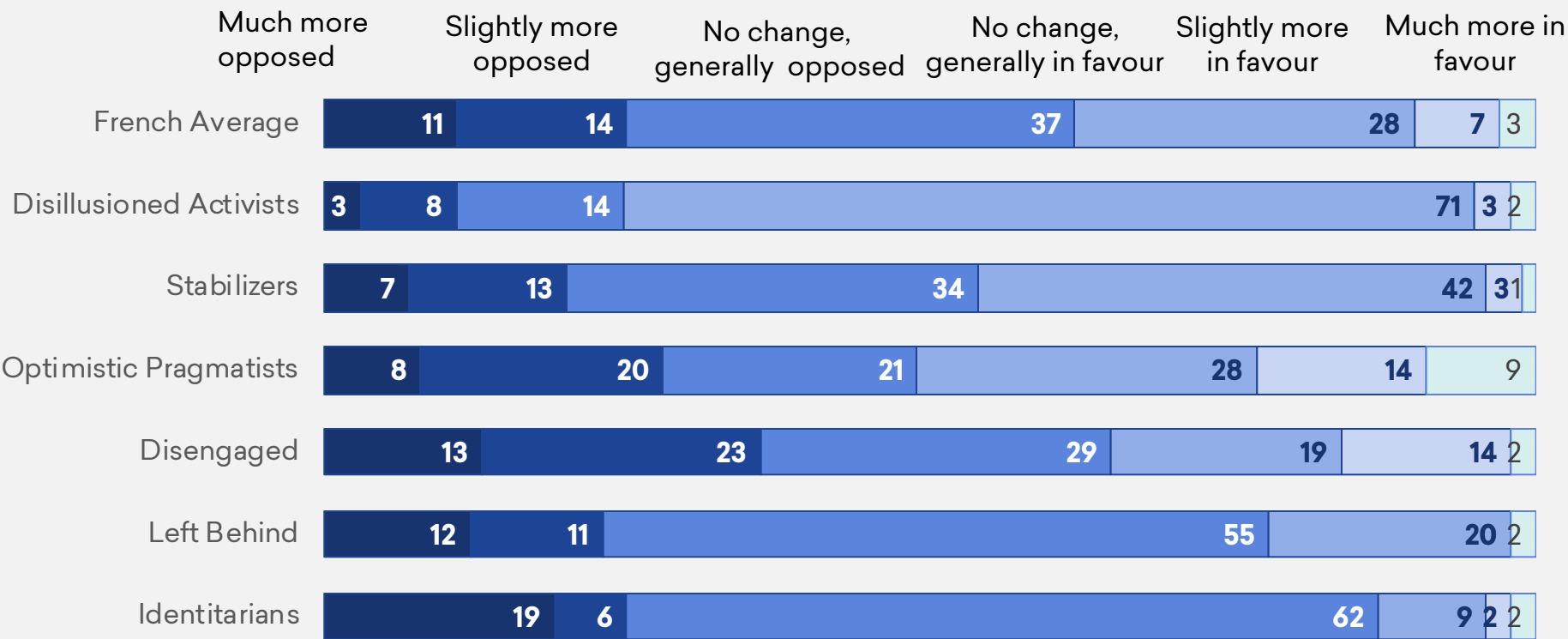
Question: Thinking about the current situation, which of the following statements do you agree with most? On the environment, the government is...

Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# Migration



## Change in views on Migration since COVID-19...

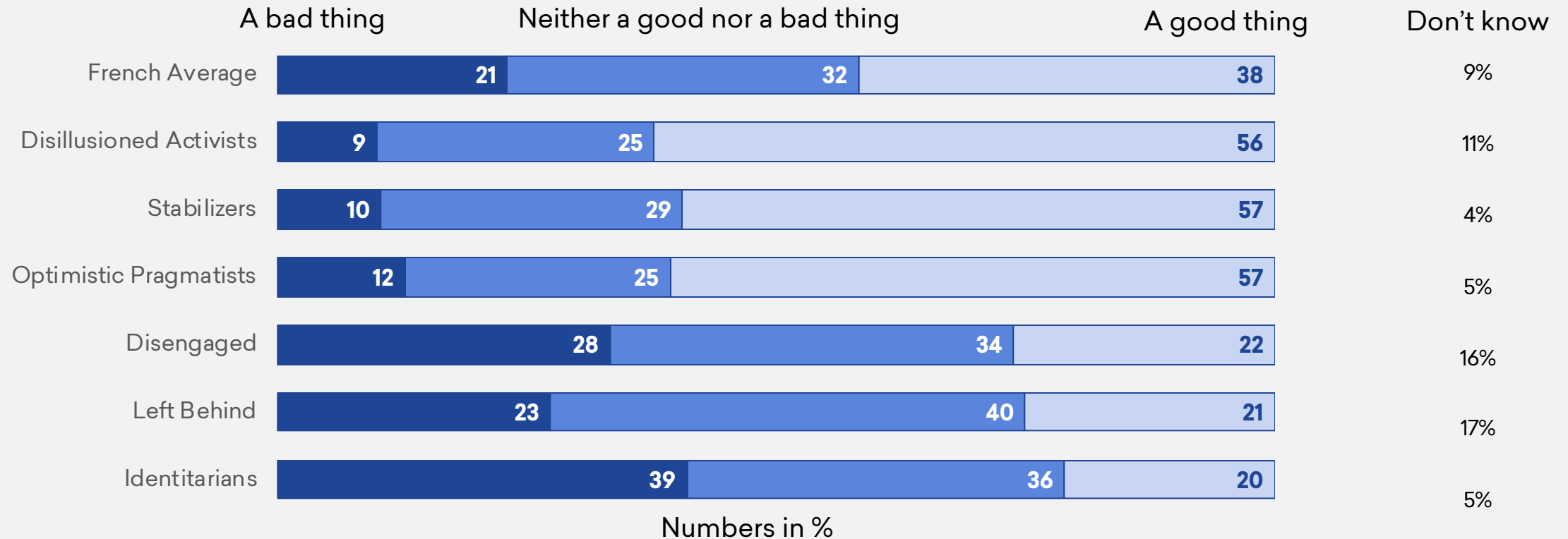


Numbers in %

Question: Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, how have your views changed about accepting migrants into France, if at all?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

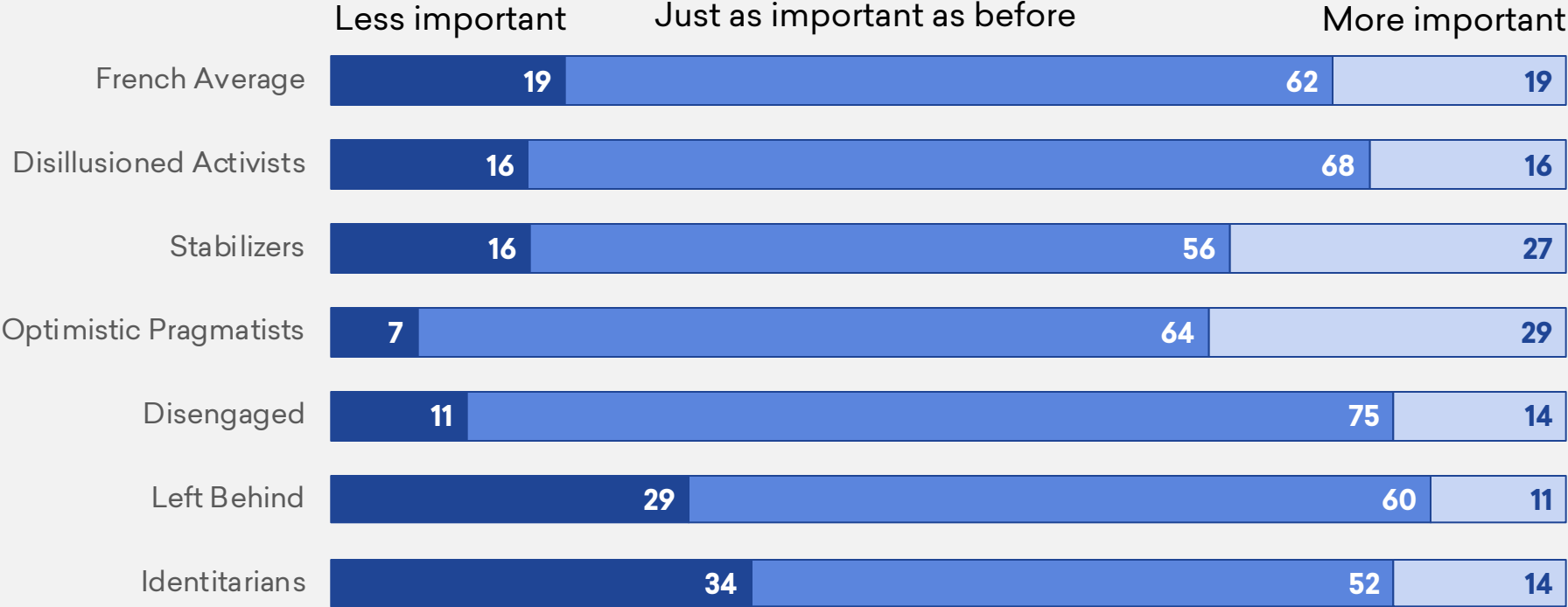
# **V. Views on the European Union, European Policies and Social Cohesion in Europe**

# The European Union is...



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

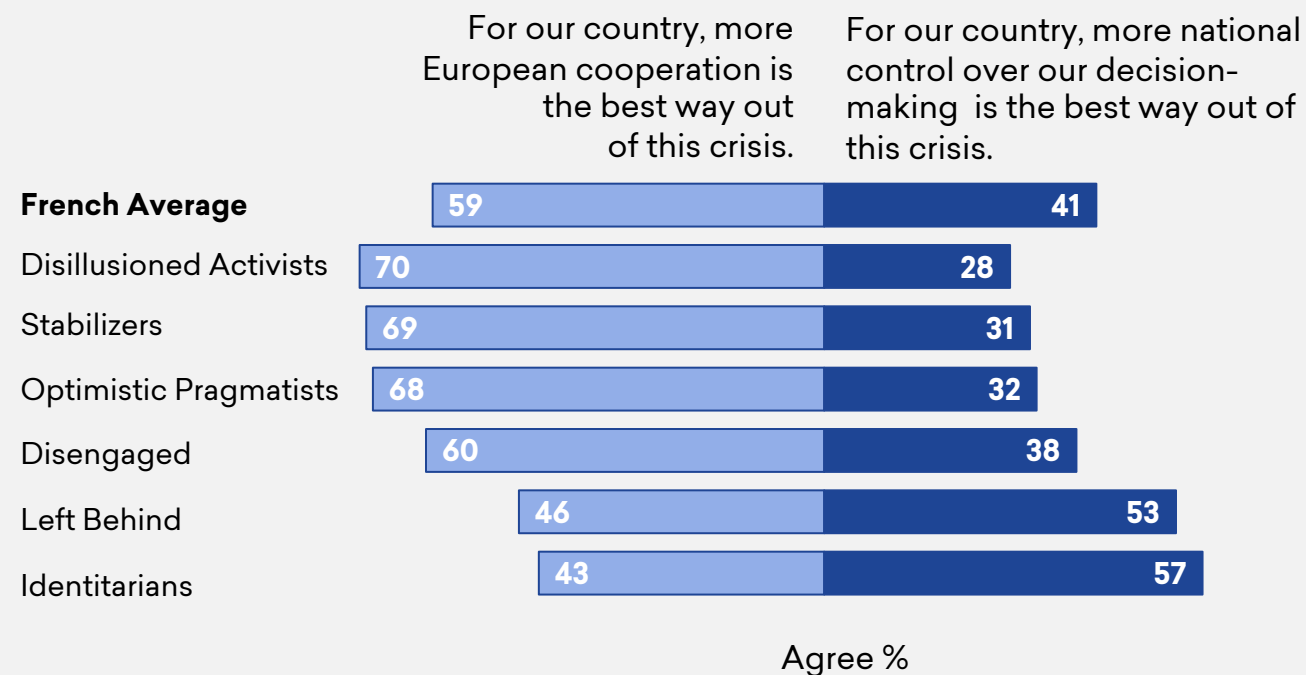
# EU membership: looking ahead



Numbers in %

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

# European solidarity vs. national control

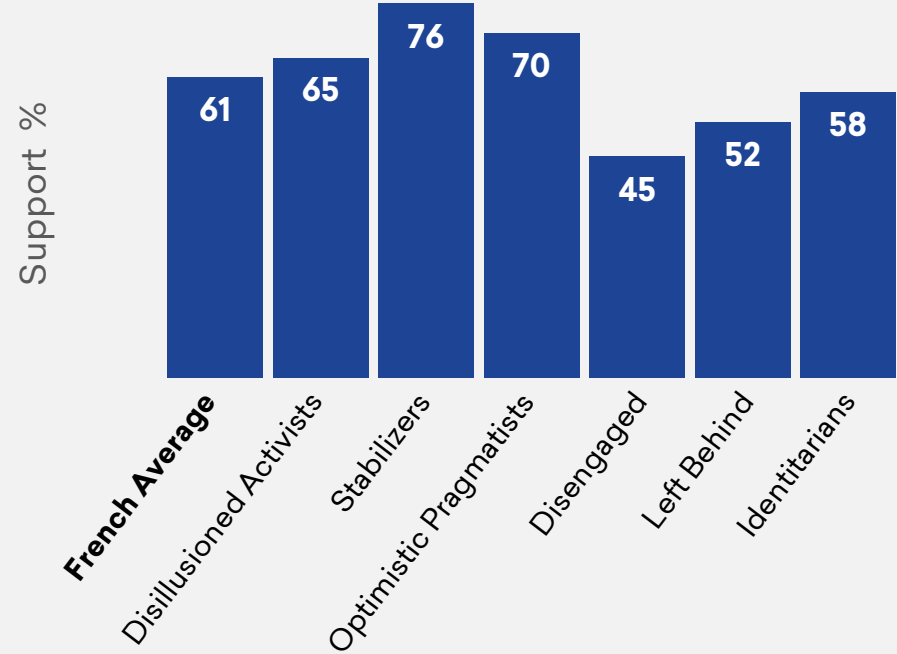


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?  
Numbers for “Do not know” not indicated.  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

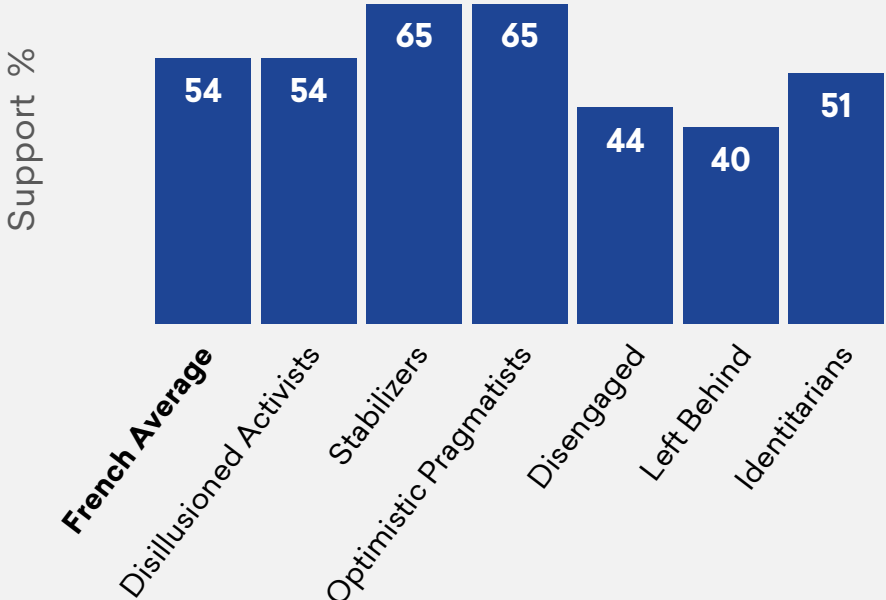
# High support for pan-European policies



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.



A **European community service program**, in which young Europeans would undertake community service in another country.



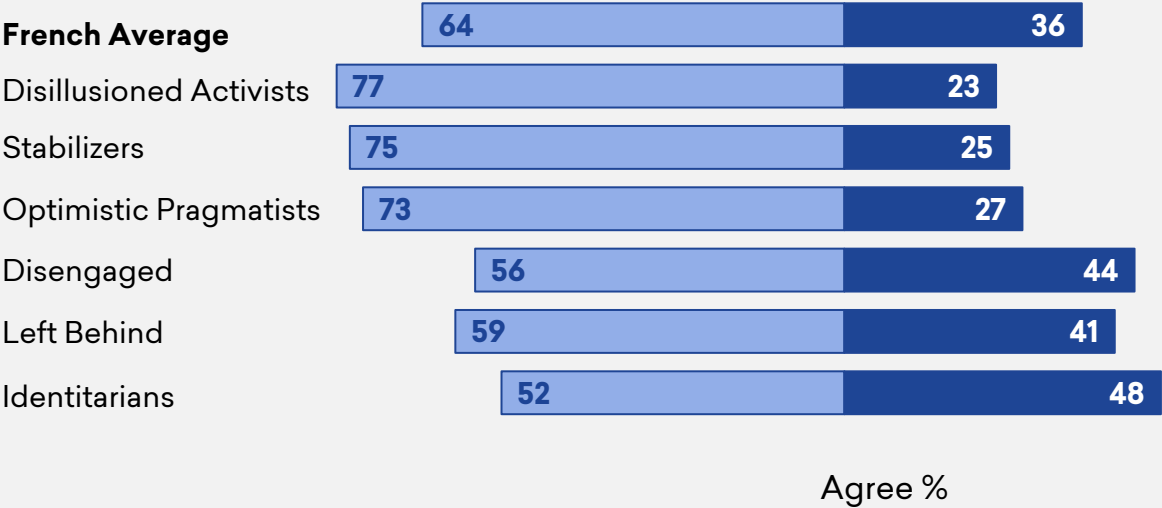
Question: There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposals?

# COVID-19 reminds French people of the need for international cooperation.



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.



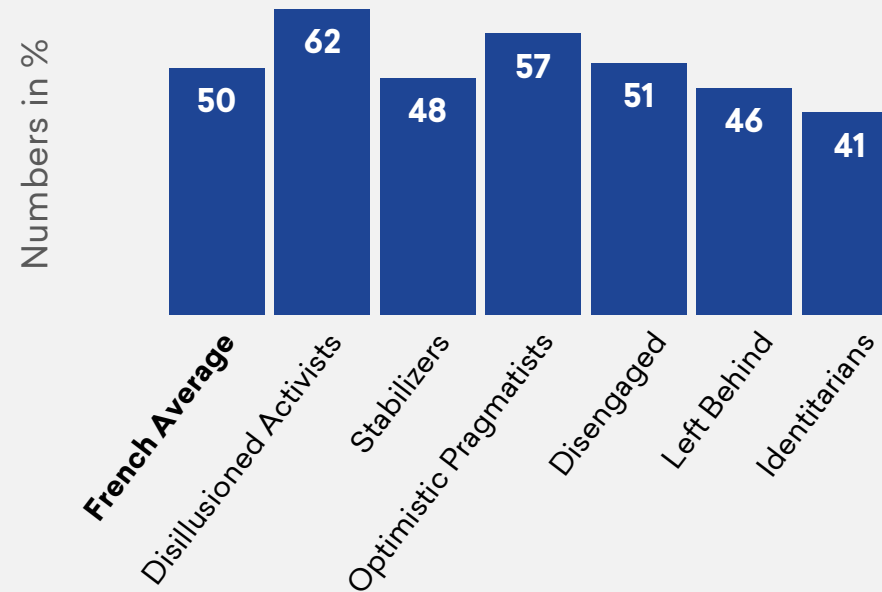
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?  
Please note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



# Half worry that minorities will suffer more than others.



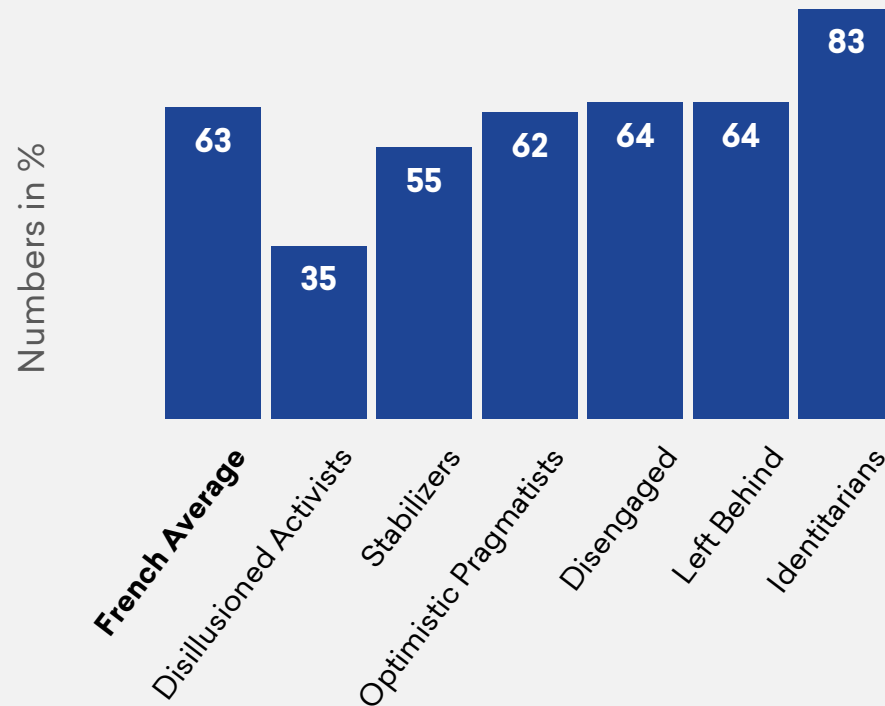
Worried that... Ethnic, racial or religious minorities will suffer more than others from this crisis



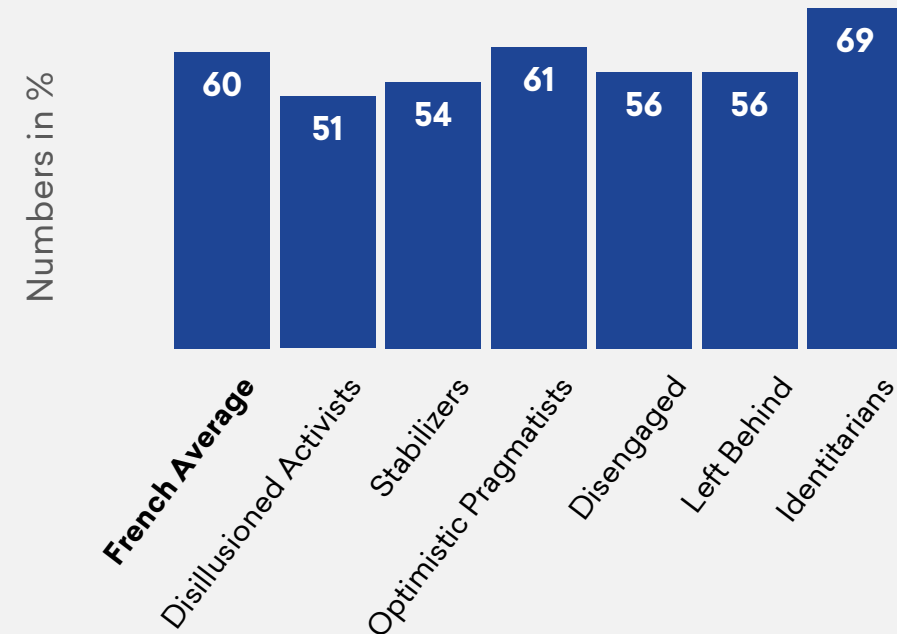
# Worries about instability and conflict



There will be rioting and looting in my country



There will be new conflicts between my country and others

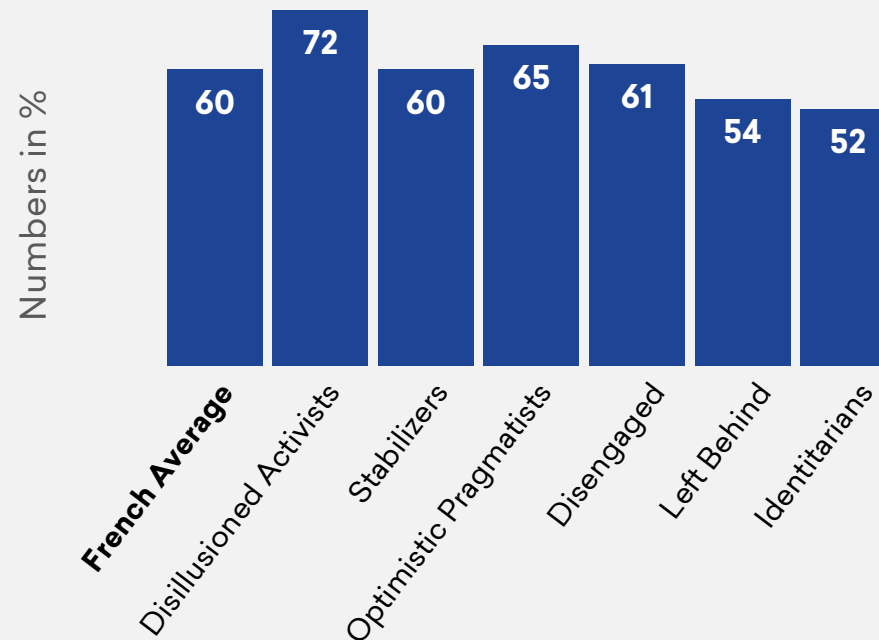


Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

# People worry that the environment will move to a back burner.



Worried that... Commitment to protecting the environment will slow down or stop



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



# Thank you

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