

# EUROPE AND REFUGEE MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE

# MIDEM

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# EUROPE AND REFUGEE MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE

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# KEY RESULTS

■ Russia's attack on Ukraine has brought the European Union closer together. European civil society is also largely united in its condemnation of Russia and in its support for Ukraine. Opinions on issues of military or political support for Ukraine do not diverge to the point of causing fears of societal division. Indeed, it appears that European people see themselves as fundamentally in line on these issues and thus do not expect any substantial division within society. It is only in the Czech Republic that the war in Ukraine is seen to have a high potential for conflict.

■ The social and economic consequences of the war will constitute a major stress test for solidarity with

Ukraine, especially over the winter months. While solidarity with Ukraine has been strong from the start, the consequences of the energy crisis, which are already apparent, may cause public opinion to shift. According to our survey, only a slim relative majority (40 percent) is in favor of maintaining support for Ukraine if faced with negative economic and social consequences. The opposite view is held by 39 percent of respondents, namely that support for Ukraine should be curtailed because of such consequences. The least willingness to continue supporting Ukraine despite negative consequences can be found in the Czech Republic and Hungary, but also in Eastern Germany.

■ In the area of refugee policy, closer cooperation has taken place at the European level. An important breakthrough in European refugee policy was achieved with the first-ever agreement on the application of the Temporary Protection Directive. This has given refugees from Ukraine faster access to housing, labor markets and education. Germany has gone even further in implementing the directive, putting refugees from Ukraine on equivalent legal ground with natives in many policy areas. For example, since the beginning of June, people from Ukraine have been entitled to benefits provided by the basic income support scheme for jobseekers (SGB II – Social Code Book II).

■ Compared to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Germany had a clear advantage in coping with the influx of refugees. The state, administration and civil society were able to draw on experiences and routines from previous years. Many volunteers reactivated contacts and networks during the spring. The state and the responsible authorities have also coped much better than in the past with the administrative tasks in connection with this large influx of refugees. Nevertheless, many municipalities are increasingly reaching the limits of their capacity.

■ In most East-Central European countries, the task of hosting and providing initial care for refugees was carried out by volunteers and private initiatives - not by the state. Since these states have little experience with refugee migration, it is primarily thanks to civil society that initial care and reception structures were quickly put in place. The willingness to take in refugees from Ukraine and provide them with protection and access to work and education was particularly strong at the beginning. Nevertheless, concerns that the influx may be unmanageable are starting to spread, likely resulting from increased competition for work, housing or other services. Yet targeted false reports and disinformation campaigns spreading on (social) media can reinforce these concerns.

■ As far as public attitudes toward migration are concerned, there is reason to believe that the general trend on greater openness to migration is weakening. In fact, a clear majority in almost all European countries is in favor of restricting immigration. This majority is particularly strong in countries such as Sweden, where the issue of migration has traditionally been viewed rather positively. In Poland, on the other hand, which has far less experience with accepting refugees, the opposite trend can be observed; there is increasing openness to immigration.

■ The consequences of the pandemic, the fear of an expansion of the war and the difficult economic situation are a dangerous combination which could be instrumentalized by right-wing populists and far right parties in order to draw attention to and promote their political agenda. The campaigns of right-wing populist

parties have thus far been directed more at political decision-makers than against the refugees from Ukraine. An exception here are minorities among the refugees such as third-country nationals and Roma, who in many places have been the targets of right-wing populist campaigns.

■ In a context of multiple crises, the influx of Ukrainian refugees has not led to a strong increase in the subjective importance of migration among public concerns. However, there seem to be few issues that are as divisive to the public as migration. According to a large majority in Europe, migration is the most politically contentious issue - far ahead of economic and climate issues. However, in countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, which have taken in particularly large numbers of refugees from Ukraine in recent months, the issue is seen as far less divisive.

■ The treatment of refugees from Ukraine does not represent a paradigm shift in European refugee policy. Rather, the political and social differences in dealing with refugees have further deepened: While the acceptance of Ukrainian refugees finds almost undivided approval, the rejection of refugees of other origins remains strong. Accordingly, the often-assumed shift in East-Central European refugee policy is probably more a reflection of the cultural and historical similarities with Ukrainian refugees. It is therefore not surprising that, in contrast to the rather positive assessment of Ukrainian refugees, there is a strong rejection of Muslim immigration - with the Czech Republic (74 percent) and Hungary (60 percent) standing out in particular.

■ Regarding German public attitudes towards the war in Ukraine and migration, significant differences become apparent between Eastern Germany and Western Germany. For example, the survey shows that while 42 percent of respondents in the west advocate continued support for Ukraine, even at the cost of negative economic and social consequences, the figure in the east stands at only 28 percent. This means that the mood in eastern Germany differs significantly from the EU average and is closer to that in the Czech Republic or Hungary. The same applies to the question of the causes of the war: in the east, more than a third of those surveyed see NATO as partly to blame for the war - similar to the Czech Republic and Hungary. Finally, it is hardly surprising that, according to our survey, there is far stronger agreement with statements critical of migration in eastern Germany than in the west - especially with regard to the immigration of Muslims.

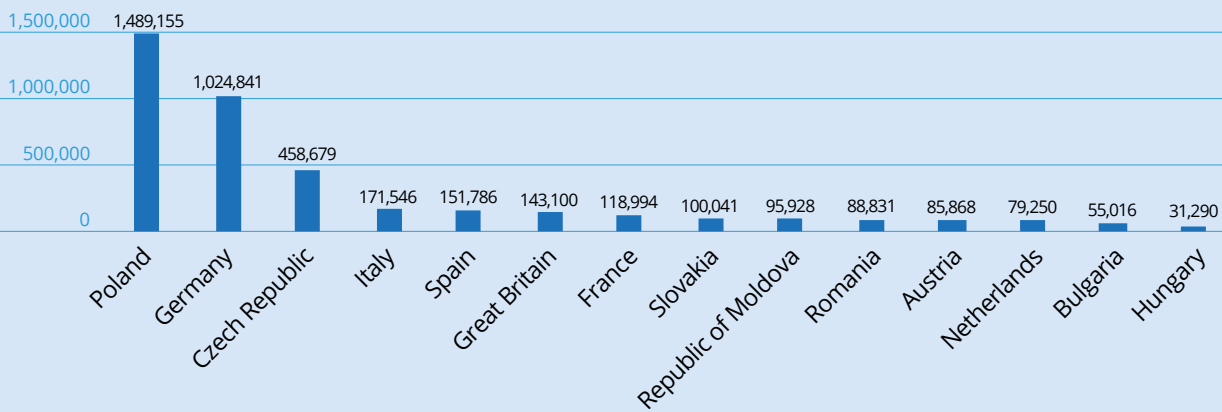


INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 has caused an exodus of millions of people, the likes of which Europe has not seen since the Second World War. With more than 7.8 million people, the flow of Ukrainian refugees far exceeds the number of refugees that entered the EU from the Middle East and other crisis regions in 2015 and 2016. Approximately 4.4 million Ukrainians were granted temporary protection status in the European Union (UNHCR 2022).<sup>1</sup> Most of these – above all women, children and the elderly – went to Poland, but also to other neighboring countries like Slovakia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova. Many moved on further, especially to Germany and the Czech Republic. If it is true that a significant number returned to their home country just weeks after start of the war, it is still the case that there is currently no end in sight for such refugee migration. On the contrary, in light of a war situation that remains uncertain – and with Russian strikes on civilian infrastructure and energy supply chains in particular –, there are grounds to fear that even more people will seek refuge abroad.

People who have fled Ukraine in search of protection are unevenly distributed in Europe. In particular in the first months, neighboring Poland shouldered the main burden. In absolute numbers Poland is still by far the most important country of refuge for those fleeing Ukraine. It is followed by Germany and the Czech Republic (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> On a per capita basis, however, smaller countries like Estonia and Montenegro recorded the highest numbers in the initial reception stages (Figure 2). Ukrainian refugees have mainly settled in larger cities. In Poland, for example, two thirds of all refugees from Ukraine live in the twelve largest metropolitan areas. In Germany the concentration of refugees in the largest cities is a little less pronounced. There, a few weeks after the start of the war, less than half lived in larger cities (European Parliament 2022).<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1: Refugees from Ukraine in Europe, in absolute numbers according to destination country (as of November 8, 2022)

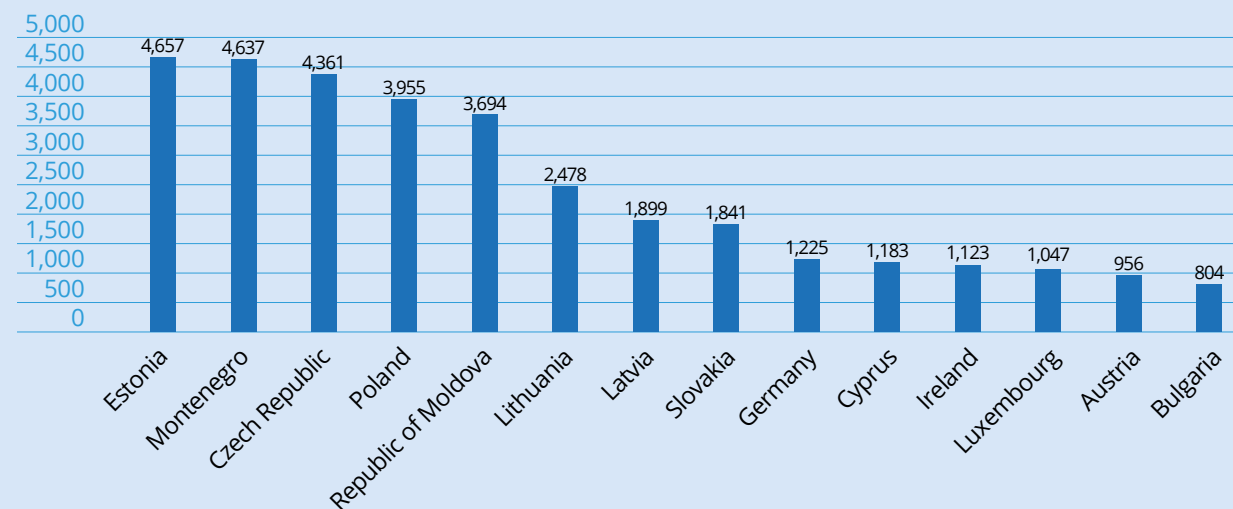


Note: It is estimated that approximately 2.5 million people who left the areas in Ukraine that are controlled by Russia went to Russia or Belarus. It is not clear whether these movements of people were expulsions, and if so to what extent, therefore Russia and Belarus are excluded from this chart.

Source: UNHCR 2022 / Own representation

1 The number of internally displaced people also amounts to several million people according to estimates made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (DTM 2022).  
2 The data on refugees from Ukraine are only reliable to a certain extent as, unlike other refugees, Ukrainian citizens have visa-free access to the EU. Therefore, when Ukrainian refugees arrive in the EU, they do not necessarily have to register with the authorities. Even if they do, they can still travel further to another Member State.  
3 In Warsaw, for example, at the end of April / beginning of May, refugees from Ukraine made up 9.2 percent of the population in the city. In Berlin the proportion was 2.7 percent (European Parliament 2022).

Figure 2: Refugees from Ukraine per 100,000 inhabitants in Europe, according to destination country (as of November 8, 2022)



Note: It is estimated that approximately 2.5 million people who left the areas in Ukraine that are controlled by Russia went to Russia or Belarus. It is not clear whether these movements of people were expulsions, and if so to what extent, therefore Russia and Belarus are excluded from this chart.

Source: UNHCR 2022 / Own representation

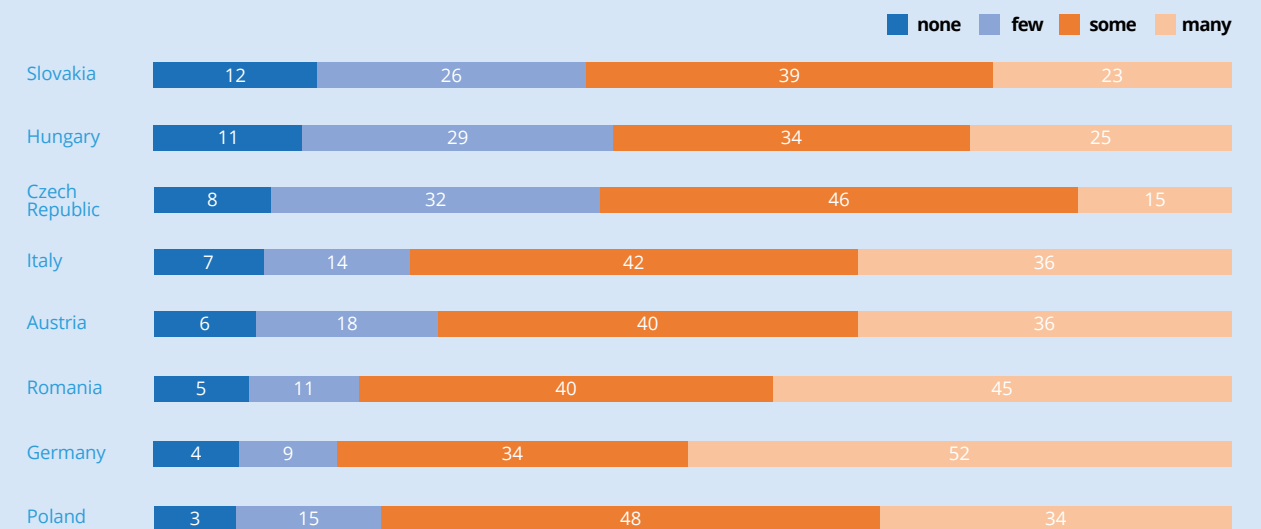
#### FIRST EVER ACTIVATION OF THE EU'S TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE

With the reception of millions of Ukrainians, one could expect a paradigm shift in European refugee policy: For the first time since its adoption in 2001, the EU directive for dealing with a mass influx of displaced people, known as the "Temporary Protection Directive", was invoked on March 3, 2022. This decision is an important milestone in European refugee policy. For 2022 succeeded what was still impossible in 2015: there was agreement among the EU states on the need to take in refugees from Ukraine. In past years, suggestions to activate this directive had never achieved the required majority – probably also due to disagreement about how refugees should be distributed within the EU. The directive is an important legal instrument for the reception of those seeking protection, the origin of which can be traced back to the experiences from earlier European wars (in particular the wars in Yugoslavia). Due to its activation, refugees from Ukraine can live in the EU without having to apply for asylum. This means that they have faster access to the labor market, but also to social benefits, health care and other public services. Germany, in particular, has distinguished itself in implementing this directive, as refugees from Ukraine have been placed on an equal footing with the native population in many areas. Since the beginning of June, they have been entitled to basic income support under the Social Code Book instead of being covered by the Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act, which was previously the case. In addition to these support services, they have access to all the support and qualification options offered like language courses, integration courses, as well as other opportunities for further education.

#### DIFFERENCES TO 2015

A closer look at the overall political climate reveals another important difference to 2015/16: Unlike in the "refugee crisis", not only did the reception of refugees from Ukraine not divide Europe – it has not yet sparked any new major conflicts within European societies. In fact, a study in June 2022 revealed that in the main destination countries the majority of the population is clearly in favor of receiving Ukrainian refugees (Figure 3). Even in countries which traditionally have negative attitudes towards refugees (such as the Czech Republic or Hungary), the proportion of respondents who would not take in any Ukrainian refugees at all was only about 10

Figure 3: How many Ukrainian refugees should be taken in? (percentage of all respondents)



Source: Dražanová/Geddes 2022 / Own representation

percent. Germany was among the countries most willing to receive them: more than half of those surveyed were in favor of taking in many.

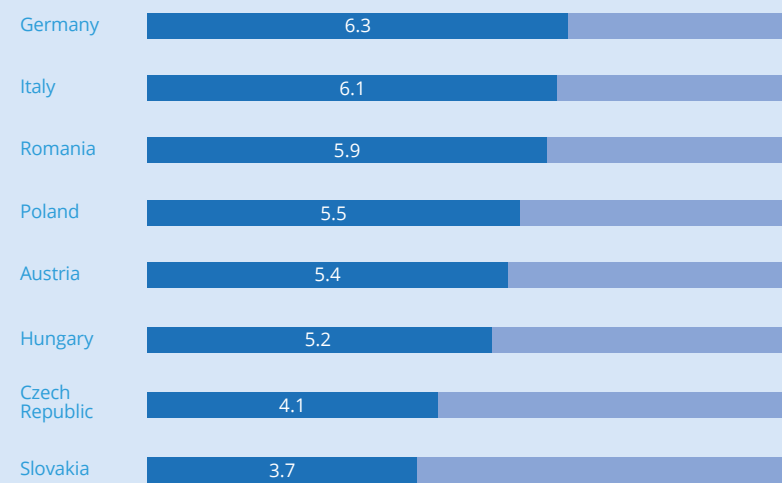
As was the case with the war in Syria in 2015, there was initially enormous solidarity with and sympathy for the refugees – however this time also in countries which in recent years have not exactly been welcoming of refugees, such as Poland. In Germany most volunteer initiatives could build on networks which had emerged in 2015 and the experiences gained at this time. In the receiving countries in East-Central Europe, on the other hand, these structures had to be established very quickly starting from scratch, mostly spontaneously emerging within civil society. In Germany there is another noticeable difference with regard to the role of public administration. Public authorities, many of which were overwhelmed in 2015, are now coping much better with the administrative tasks involved in the reception of refugees. Eastern Central European countries are also at a disadvantage in this respect: As they have little experience with refugee migration, the reception and integration structures are poorly developed. For this reason, it is unsurprising that, according to a survey conducted in April 2022, there are clear differences between the receiving countries with regard to official registration: Almost 70 percent of respondents in Germany were at least registered as refugees, whereas this was only the case for 16 percent of respondents in Poland (Pötzschke et al. 2022).

However, the predominant willingness to help Ukrainian refugees cannot hide the fact that, after almost a year of war, the solidarity of many volunteers is gradually giving way to fatigue and exhaustion. In many countries there are growing concerns that the host societies are reaching the limits of what they can cope with. In fact, in most Eastern Central European countries the reception and hosting of refugees was largely left up to the voluntary involvement of private citizens in the first weeks – due to the lack of reception and initial care structures – and this level of civil society commitment has not yet been transferred to government structures. In addition, some countries are now cutting back their programs providing financial support for people who have taken in refugees into their homes.

#### GERMAN VOLUNTEERS COULD BUILD ON NETWORKS AND EXPERIENCES

#### SOLIDARITY REACHING ITS LIMITS

Figure 4: Satisfaction with the reaction of the government to the Ukrainian refugee migration (averages)



Note: Scale from 0= "not satisfied at all" to 10= "completely satisfied"

Source: Dražanová/Geddes 2022 / Own representation

#### ECONOMIC CONCERNS CAN LEAD TO A SHIFT IN SENTIMENT

This reduction in government support could hardly come at a worse time: Many households in Europe are struggling with financial difficulties because of rising inflation and energy costs. It remains to be seen to what extent the solidarity of the population towards refugees continues if the crisis worsens due to the rising energy costs. However, thus far people's dissatisfaction has been directed more at political decision-makers than refugees. National governments are accused of being unable to deal with the energy crisis and effectively tackling the problems associated with caring for refugees and integrating them into society (Figure 4). This is particularly the case in East-Central European countries, which traditionally have a low level of trust in state actors, and which might be least willing to continue supporting Ukraine in the face of growing economic costs. However, in Germany too, it is noticeable that some are starting to feel overwhelmed. There is increasing criticism of the government's refugee reception policy, which has led to a growing burden, especially for local authorities. The criticism falls on fertile ground in Eastern Germany in particular: The MIDE survey shows that in Western Germany 42 percent of respondents advocate maintained support for Ukraine, even at the cost of negative economic and social impacts, yet in the east only 28 percent feel this way.

#### POPULISTS LURKING

The combination of exhaustion and concern leads to a potentially dangerous situation, which is further aggravated by the consequences of the pandemic, the fear that the war may spread, and the difficult economic situation. Those who benefit most from this development may well be right-wing populist and far right parties, which in recent years have succeeded in mobilizing their voters using the topic of migration and making their political agenda heard. However, the current situation is different from 2015. In fact, the "refugee crisis" only had a limited effect on fundamental attitudes towards refugees (MIDEM 2018; 2019). These remained relatively stable, whereby a general trend towards more positive attitudes continued, with the exception of the Eastern European countries. Instead, the "refugee crisis" had a sizeable influence on the salience of migration as a political topic: Migration became the most important topic in many European countries in the following years. This is different from 2022, when due to the current coexistence of multiple crises, Ukrainian refugee

migration did not lead to a comparable increase in the significance of the topic in public perception, even though it remains an important issue.

As the results of the MIDEM survey show, migration is today perceived throughout Europe as the topic with by far the greatest potential to divide society (Figure 5). It is also evident that the positive dominant attitude towards migration is crumbling first and foremost in those countries which had shown a trend towards a greater openness to migration in recent years.

**MIGRATION: TOPIC WITH THE GREATEST POTENTIAL TO CAUSE DIVISION**

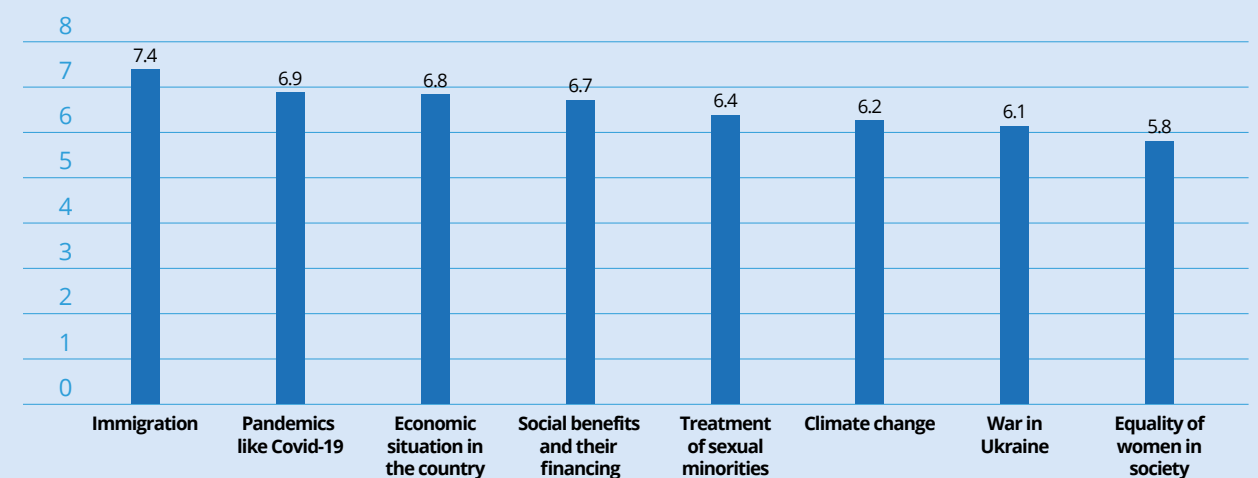
In almost all European countries a clear majority of respondents advocate restricting immigration, whereby this majority is particularly pronounced in, of all places, countries like Sweden, where the issue has traditionally been viewed rather positively. In Poland, on the other hand, a country considered to have limited experience with taking in refugees in the past, the opposite trend is evident. The proportion of those who demand immigration restrictions, is 42 percent, which is lower than anywhere else in Europe.

**RESTRICTIVE STANCE WITH REGARD TO MIGRATION POLICY**

This could indicate that attitudes towards refugees are closely associated with the perception and expectation of successful integration. The results of the survey also suggest that this is the case. A dominant opinion is evident: Across Europe 75 percent of the respondents agree with the statement that immigrants should adapt to the "culture and values" of the respective country, "for a harmonious coexistence". This demand meets with most approval in countries which are traditionally skeptical of migration like the Czech Republic and Hungary, but also in some "classical" Western European immigration countries (the Netherlands and Sweden).

However, even an initially positive basic attitude towards Ukrainians seeking protection can turn into rejection if there is a growing perception that refugees increase the competition for jobs, housing and social resources. In the future, the competition for affordable housing in the large European metropolises where Ukrainians have found refuge is likely to intensify. In Poland, for example, where a large proportion of refugees is accommodated in big cities, there has already been a sharp increase in rental

Figure 5: Perception of division caused by different topics in Europe (averages)



Note: Values presented are averages. Question: "In connection with which of the addressed political topics do you see a division in society in [country]? Please give your response on a scale from 0 (no division at all) to 10 (very clear division)." The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (n = at least 18,279 per item).

Source: Own survey / YouGov

MIGRATION PERCEIVED AS A BURDEN FOR SOCIAL SYSTEMS

prices (Trojanek/Gluszak 2022). In some countries, including Germany, the question of accommodation and the huge strain on some municipalities has triggered a debate about how the refugees could be distributed better within the country.<sup>4</sup> Alongside access to the labor and housing market, other aspects of integration, in particular the availability of language courses and childcare places must also be taken into account. This is due to the fact that there is a relatively high number of children among the Ukrainian refugees, which leads to high demand for childcare and places in schools.

In the context of right-wing populist mobilization, the discussion about the costs of Ukrainian refugee migration is likely to become increasingly important. The MIDEM survey shows that in East-Central European countries there is an entrenched impression that migration constitutes a burden on social systems. In Germany, too, the predominantly positive attitude towards Ukrainian refugees could be harmed by the insinuation that they receive preferential treatment. In the political discourse there is already talk of the “pull effect” of the German social system on Ukrainian refugees. Deliberate misreporting and disinformation campaigns which spread through (social) media play an important role here. These include false or misleading claims about the financial support for refugees. These campaigns are not successful<sup>5</sup> everywhere in Europe, but where they make their way into the public discourse, as was recently the case in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, they can also lead to a shift in sentiment in the population. Allegations of social benefits’ abuse are directed in particular at the ethnic minorities among the refugees, who, like the Roma in particular, are already often discriminated against.

DOUBLE STANDARDS IN THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION

If the media deliberately spread negative stereotypes about certain groups of refugees, this can have an effect on public attitudes. In Hungary, for example, the media reproduces and strengthens social concerns and existing stereotypes about refugees from other crisis regions in the world. This reveals the other side of the comparatively friendly stance towards Ukrainian refugees: the continued negative view of arrivals who, in the eyes of most Hungarians, do not seem as disadvantaged as Ukrainian women and children. This is particularly the case for attitudes towards young men who came to Hungary via the Balkan route after 2015 and who are mostly portrayed as a danger. Yet the results of the MIDEM survey show that double standards when dealing with refugees is not something peculiar only to the Hungarian population. When asked whether refugees from Ukraine can be much better integrated into society than those from the Middle East or Africa, in Sweden (66.2 percent) and the Czech Republic (64.6 percent) a clear majority agreed with this claim – even more than in Hungary (55 percent).

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIMILARITIES WITH THE REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Evidently, it still makes a difference in large parts of Europe whether those fleeing are Ukrainian mothers, children and the elderly or young men from the Middle East and Africa. When comparing the attitudes towards refugees today and in 2015 there are however other factors which come into play: For example, there are considerably more cultural and historical similarities between the people in Ukraine and the East-Central European countries than is the case with refugees from the Middle East or Africa. Poland borders on Ukraine in the east, and Ukrainians (alongside the Germans) are the largest foreign minority in the country. The memory

of the cruel Soviet occupation also connects the two peoples in a special way. Furthermore, the proximity to the war in Ukraine, which has been extensively documented in European media, also plays an important role.

The paradigm shift in European refugee policy has ultimately failed to materialize. The résumé after almost ten months of Ukrainian refugee migration is actually very mixed. On the one hand, the generally positive public climate towards refugees in parts of East-Central Europe encourages a gradual change in thinking with regard to refugee and migration policy – which in some countries could lead to a greater willingness to cooperate at the European level. It is also positive that lessons can be learnt for the future from these experiences when it comes to a quicker and unbureaucratic reception of people. On the other hand, the political and societal contradictions when dealing with refugees have not been resolved. Instead, at best, they have briefly disappeared from the radar due to the concerted effort involved in taking in the Ukrainian refugees. The fact is, however, that there is practically undivided support for the reception of Ukrainian refugees, whereas the rejection of refugees of other origins remains strong in most of the countries. The shift in sentiment in refugee policy observed in East-Central Europe does not apply to all refugees equally, but is instead based on cultural and historical similarities that exist between East-Central Europe and Ukraine.

PARADIGM SHIFT HAS NOT OCCURRED

<sup>4</sup> It is conceivable that the reception of refugees could be organized in a more needs-based way and more in accordance with the available resources with the help of customized algorithms or matching procedures between local authorities and those seeking protection.  
<sup>5</sup> In Poland, the extreme right-wing party Konfederacja has to date gained little public support with its claim that refugees receive preferential treatment compared to the locals.



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## ATTITUDES TOWARDS WAR AND MIGRATION IN EUROPE

### RESULTS OF A SURVEY IN 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

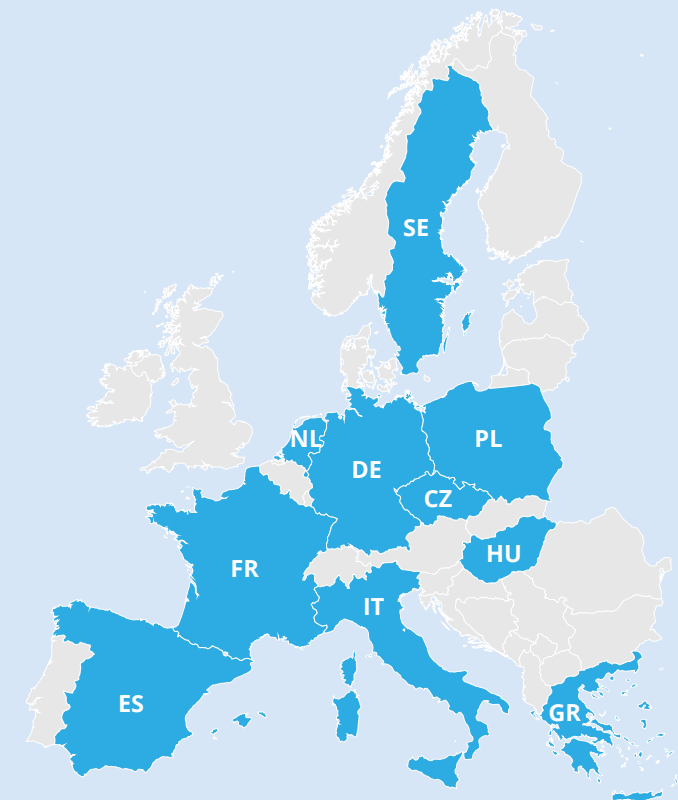
The war in Ukraine has changed the political situation in Europe. Not only was the security architecture of the continent shaken by the Russian attack, but its economic and social consequences have also shaped the public debate in the fall of 2022. In addition, given that there are currently more than 7.7 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe, the circumstances governing European asylum, immigration and integration policy have lastingly changed.

Throughout Europe, governments have for the most part displayed unity in their reaction to these upheavals. At the same time, efforts have been made in the European capitals to always be mindful of the sentiments and attitudes in the population. For example, what are seen to be the causes of the Ukraine conflict? Are the people prepared to provide continued support for Ukraine even amidst negative economic repercussions? Have their attitudes towards flight, immigration and asylum changed due to the war? Are refugees from Ukraine evaluated differently than those from the Middle East or Africa?

These questions were part of a survey conducted by the Mercator Forum Migration and Democracy in cooperation with YouGov between September 16 and October 12, 2022. In ten European Union countries – Germany, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Spain, the Czech Republic and Hungary (Figure 1) – a total of 20,403 people were surveyed with the help of regional online access panels. The results are weighted and representative for the population aged 18 and over (cf. Info box - Data basis). They are presented here in the form of eight key points.

### METHODOLOGY

Figure 1: Countries surveyed in Europe



INFO BOX – Data basis

The results presented here are based on the empirical data from a survey conducted by MIDEM in cooperation with YouGov Germany in ten European Union countries. From September 16 to October 12, 2022 a total of 20,403 people aged 18 and over participated in the survey. The data were collected in Germany (n = 2,091), France (n = 2,071), Greece (n = 1,587), Italy (n = 2,123), the Netherlands (n = 2,095), Poland (n = 2,055), Sweden (n = 2,106), Spain (n = 2,105), the Czech Republic (n = 2,101) and Hungary (n = 2,069). The aim when selecting the countries was to achieve a parent population which reflects the socio-spatial and politico-cultural diversity of the EU as well as to cover a large part – they ultimately represent almost 80 percent – of its population.

The basis for the sampling was (regional) online access panels. In order to take into account the distribution of characteristics of the population in each country, quotas were used based on age, sex, region and education. A subsequent weighting offset additional differences in distribution between the sample and the populations in the respective countries. The results are representative for the population aged 18 and over.

The survey participants received a standardized questionnaire which employed established items from previous surveys, adapted individual questions to country-specific contexts, but also integrated newly developed items.

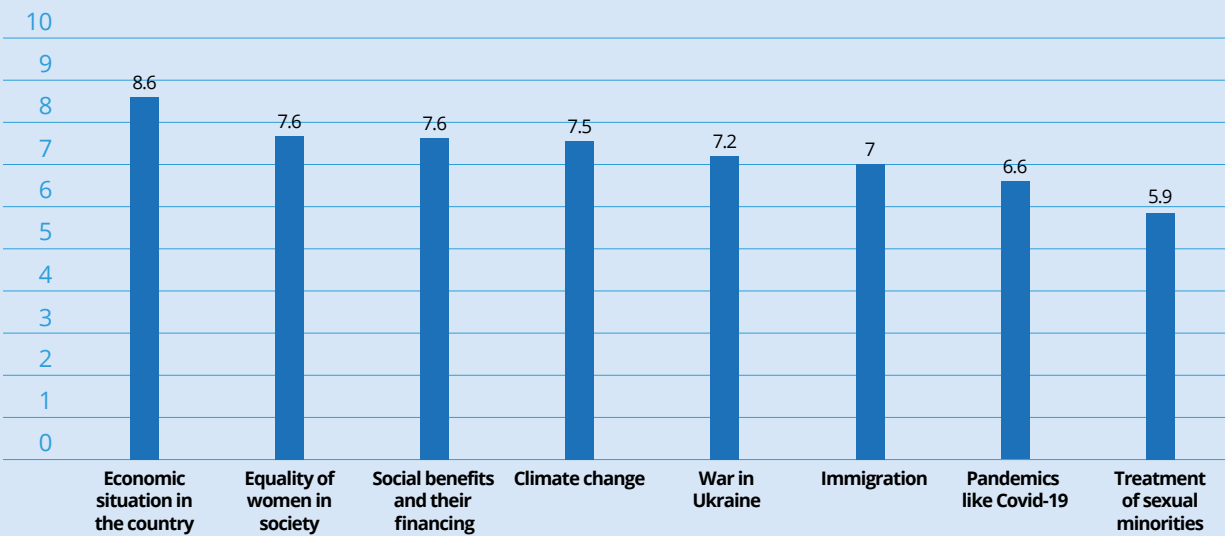
1. Salience: Focus is on the economic and social consequences of the war

In order to achieve a reliable picture of European opinions about the inter-related problems in the context of the war in Ukraine and the resulting migration, one must first consider the salience, i.e., the subjectively ascribed importance of a topic in comparison with other topics. What general relevance is ascribed to the war in Ukraine, the economic situation and the topic of immigration? A total of eight problem areas were presented to the respondents one after the other. On a scale from “0 – not important at all” to “10 – very important” the respondents were asked to indicate how important each topic was for them.

First of all, the results show that the area of economy and society is highly relevant. The economic situation in one’s own country was ascribed the greatest significance in all the studied European countries. The topic of social benefits and their financing was also high on the list. Topics like the war in Ukraine or immigration are to be found more in the middle of the field. This indicates that, by now, the public focus has increasingly shifted from the actual hostilities to the economic and social consequences of the war for one’s own country, one’s own region and one’s own standard of living. Recession, inflation and growing social tensions, which can in part be regarded as direct results of the war as well as the subsequent sanctions policy, have very much come to the fore in the eyes of the Europeans in the fall of 2022 and are regarded as important. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, the topic that dominated politics, media and public debate in the past two years, receives relatively little attention in comparison (Figure 2).

This overall picture can be identified in all of the countries surveyed. One only observes a few individual deviations, such as in Sweden, where immigration is described as the third most important topic, or in Poland, where the war in Ukraine has a comparatively high salience.

Figure 2: Salience of different topics in Europe (averages)



Note: Values presented are averages. Question: “How important are the following topics for you personally?” The respondents were asked to position themselves between “0 – not important at all” and “10 – very important”. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (n = 20,403).  
Source: Own survey / YouGov

2. Conflict potential: The war in Ukraine is not seen as a cause of social division, unlike migration and Covid-19

However, not only the perceived importance of the topic was of interest in our survey, but also the subjectively attributed potential of topics to cause conflicts or division in society. Here we determined – also by means of a scale from “0 – no division at all” to “10 – very clear division” – in which of the addressed problem areas the respondents believed that they observed “division in society” in the respective country.

The results are clear: Despite its comparatively low salience, throughout Europe the topic of immigration is ascribed by far the greatest potential to cause division. Evidently a large majority in Europe perceives the topic as being capable of provoking conflicts in society. It is only in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary that the topic of migration ranked more in the middle of the field for this question – in other words in countries, which in the past months were most acutely confronted with refugee migration from Ukraine. This indicates that the reception of Ukrainians in Europe has different connotations and is evaluated differently than the issue of immigration in general. The latter topic more likely led the respondents to think about immigration of people from the Middle East or Africa.

A similar interplay between the established salience and the societal division attributed to a topic is evident for Covid-19. In the countries we studied Covid-19 was also credited with having a high potential to cause conflicts in society, although the pandemic barely played a role when respondents were asked to indicate the “personal importance” of the topic. An exception here is Spain, where Covid-19 placed rather low in the ranking of different topics.

IMMIGRATION AND COVID-19 ARE CAUSE OF MUCH DIVISION

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES ARE MOST IMPORTANT

THE TOPIC OF THE WAR IN  
UKRAINE HAS LITTLE CONFLICT  
POTENTIAL

When it comes to the war in Ukraine, the people in Europe also seem to be in agreement: In almost all the countries studied, the diagnosis was that there were no divisions in society. Evidently, one's own population is seen to be broadly united in its condemnation of Russia and its support for Ukraine, and existing differences of opinion are not seen as serious. Even the dispute between those who are only prepared to support Ukraine within certain limits and those for whom the assistance provided so far (more specifically arms shipments) does not go far enough, appears not to be perceived as a fundamental conflict. A striking anomaly in Europe is the Czech Republic, where the opinions expressed were the complete opposite. Here the war in Ukraine was in fact deemed to cause more division in society than any of the other topics.

The economic situation and social benefits are only to be found in the upper middle range, however, in light of their high salience, one can expect a further intensification in the medium term. A possible worsening of economic problems and social conflict situations, as well as protests associated with them, is also likely to further increase the divisive potential attributed to these (Figure 3).

3. Attitudes in Europe towards the war

As the evaluation of the ascribed importance (salience) of individual topics shows, economic and social issues are currently at the center of the debate in all the countries studied – such as ensuring energy supply, prevention of insolvencies or necessary relief for the citizens. It thus seems all the more important when examining the willingness to support Ukraine to refer to both the dimension of individual and societal costs. That is the only way to get a realistic picture of the position of Europeans towards the conflict – a picture of opinions which goes beyond the, in most cases quickly and “cheaply” articulated, profession of support for the Ukrainian defense efforts against the foreign aggressor and instead endeavors to gauge the willingness and necessary staying power to provide “lasting”, longer-term support.

To this end, our survey included a corresponding question directly linking the assistance for Ukraine with the possible associated costs. The respondents could precisely mark their own position on a graduated continuum between two statements which were opposite in content. At one end, the statement reaffirmed the willingness to support Ukraine, “even if it means negative consequences for one's own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)”, at the other end of the continuum was the demand to “curtail the support for Ukraine in order to avoid negative consequences for one's own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)” (cf. Info box – Categorization of the scales).

INFO BOX – Categorization of the scales

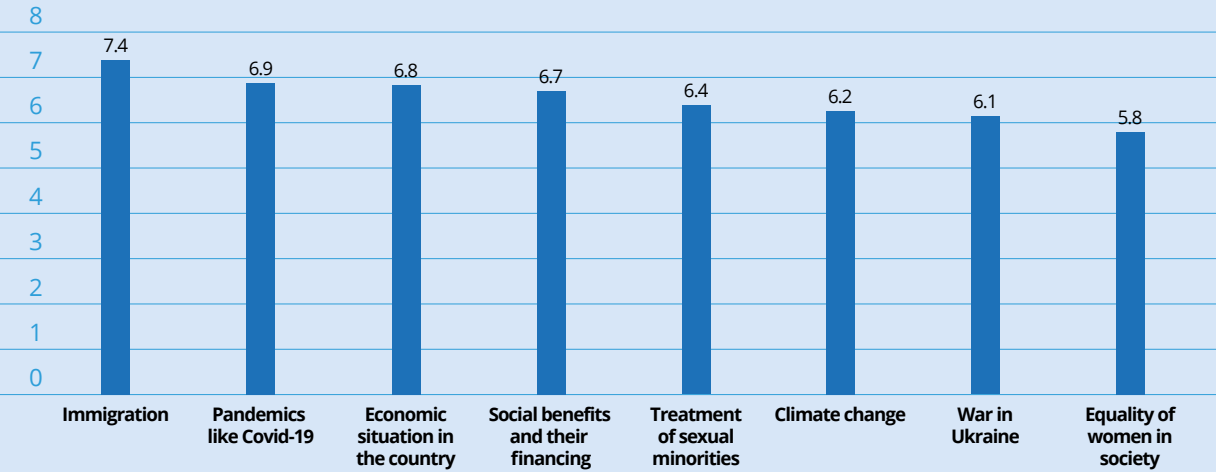
For most of the items in the survey the respondents were asked to position themselves on an eleven-point scale between two poles. For better presentation these items were divided into three categories, whereby respondents were placed in a group based on whether their response was a value between 0 and 4, between 6 and 10, or a 5. For example, some questions established the degree of agreement with statements, whereby respondents were to position themselves between the poles “0 – do not agree at all” and “10 – completely agree”. The three resulting categories were: rejection, agreement and a middle category. Thus, respondents who did not agree with the respective statement and gave a response between 0 and 4 ended up in the rejection category, those who placed themselves in the middle and gave a 5, were in the middle category, and those who positioned themselves between 6 and 10 were therefore in the agreement group.

As figure 4 shows, a narrow relative majority of 40 percent of the around 20,000 surveyed Europeans more or less clearly advocated maintaining support for Ukraine even at the cost of negative economic and social consequences for one's own country. 39 percent tended more towards the opposing statement, according to which it would be better to curtail the support for Ukraine in view of such negative consequences. A significant proportion of respondents (21 percent) were undecided and positioned themselves exactly in the middle.

The least willingness to keep supporting Ukraine to the same extent even when faced with growing economic costs as a result was evident in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Greece. Here a clear majority of 54 percent (Czech Republic), 51 percent (Hungary) and 49 percent (Greece) were in favor of curtailing support in order to avoid negative consequences for one's own country if possible. The opposite view dominated in Spain, Poland and the Netherlands. In these three countries, those who advocated continued support for Ukraine were about 10 to 20 percent more numerous than adherents of the opposite position.

In Sweden a particularly large 61 percent majority advocated sustained support for Ukraine. The country's geopolitical situation, the regular provocations by Moscow, as well as the reorientation of the country's security policy as a future NATO member seem – as is presumably also the case in Finland, and in the Baltic states – to have contributed to a particularly high willingness to support Ukraine's battle to defend itself against the Russian aggressor. In the middle: Germany, Italy and France. Here the two groups were roughly equal (Figure 4).

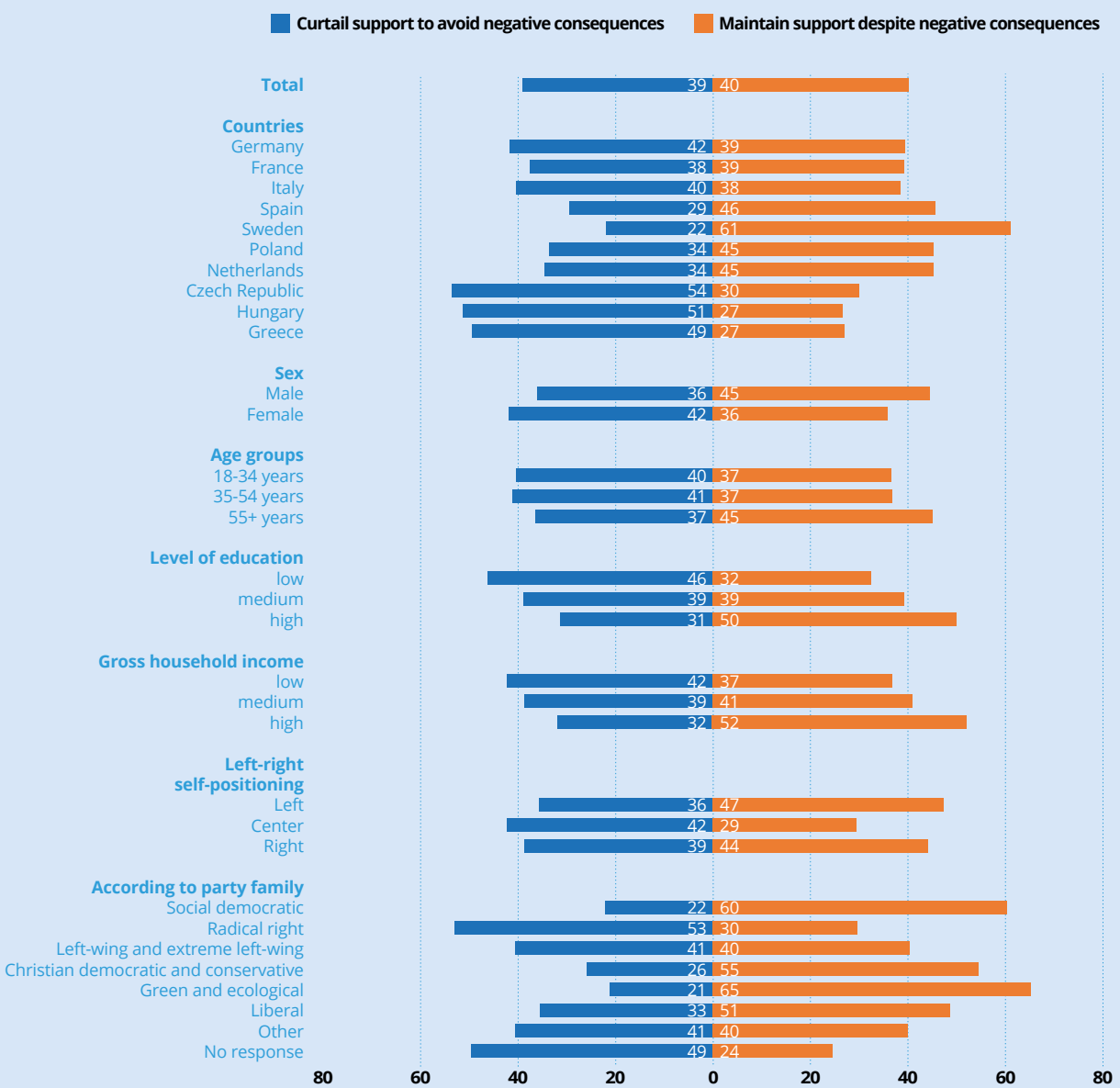
Figure 3: Perception of division caused by different topics in Europe (averages)



Note: Values presented are averages. Question: “In connection with which of the addressed political topics do you see divisions in society? Please give your response on a scale from 0 (no division at all) to 10 (very clear division).” The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (n = at least 18,279 per item). Source: Own survey / YouGov



Figure 4. Attitude towards Ukraine policy according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics (in percent)



Note: The bars show the proportions of people who would like to “continue support” for Ukraine and those who would “curtail the support”, grouped according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics. The respondents were asked to position themselves between “0 – [Country] should curtail the support for Ukraine, in order to avoid negative consequences for one’s own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)” and “10 – [Country] should support Ukraine, even if it means negative consequences for one’s own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)”. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, n = 20,403).

Source: Own survey / YouGov

4. Is NATO to blame for the war in Ukraine? A common view in Greece and Hungary, but not in Poland or Sweden

There is much discussion and speculation in Europe, not only about the role of one’s own country but also about the background and root causes of the war between Ukraine and Russia. Although, by and large, most European observers unanimously place the blame on Russia, there are nevertheless numerous arguments, some of which enter the realm of conspiracy theories, that also attribute joint responsibility for the escalation of the conflict to NATO and the USA. Against this backdrop, in our survey we also included a statement, which – contrary to the majority opinion of the general public

in Europe – sees the actions of NATO as being more to blame for the war. The respondents were also able to indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 the extent to which they agreed with or rejected the statement “NATO provoked Russia for so long that Russia had to go to war”.

Although the results showed that a clear 56 percent majority rejected this statement, at the same time, 26 percent, thus over a quarter of respondents, agreed. This is remarkable as it shows that the view of the war in Ukraine spread by the Kremlin, classifying it as a “justified reaction” to a supposed constant eastward “advance” by NATO, is shared by a significant proportion of European citizens. This was particularly striking in Greece, Hungary, Italy and the Czech Republic. In these countries, more than a third of the population sees NATO as being more to blame for the war in Ukraine – in Greece this is even the case for a relative majority (42 percent) of the population. Conversely, there was a particularly low level of agreement with this statement in Sweden, Poland and the Netherlands; it was under 20 percent in all three countries. In Sweden and Poland almost three quarters of the respondents even explicitly reject the theory of a “NATO provocation” (Figure 5).

A breakdown by sociodemographic characteristics and political preferences shows that there are certain correlations. Low education, low income, a political self-positioning right of center as well as closeness to radical right or extreme left-wing parties: throughout Europe all these characteristics increase the likelihood that NATO is seen as being most to blame for the war in Ukraine (Figure 5).

5. Great openness to refugee migration due to war: Widespread sentiment in Europe is that Ukrainians are comparatively easier to integrate into society

Alongside the assumptions about the causes of the war, the direct consequences in Europe also produced different interpretations and impacts. For example, Poland, traditionally rather critical of migration, took in around 1.5 million Ukrainians just in 2022 (status as of Nov. 9, 2022). Against this background, there is often speculation that flight from Ukraine is evaluated differently than the migration which shaped the debates in Europe in the past decade. Does the origin of the people make a difference here? Our survey also took these considerations into account by asking the around 20,000 survey participants to indicate to what extent they agreed with the statement “Refugees from Ukraine can be integrated into society much better than those from the Middle East or Africa” – between “0 – do not agree at all” and “10 – completely agree”.

The response behavior here also showed a clear tendency: In total, 56 percent of the respondents more or less strongly agreed with this statement, only 26 percent rejected it. Especially in Sweden (66 percent) and the Czech Republic (65 percent) an even larger proportion of respondents were of the opinion that Ukrainian refugees could be integrated “much better” into the Swedish or Czech society respectively than “those from the Middle East or Africa”.

Poland followed in third place with 64 percent, which indicates that the described shift in sentiment in the country towards the reception and integration of refugees is probably in fact linked to their specific origin. It is well known that very close relations have existed between Poland and Ukraine for decades in terms of economic exchange and labor migration, but also family ties. Against this background, faced with the large number of war refugees from the neighboring country, the Poles do in fact seem more open-minded about immigration and receiving refugees at present – quite

A QUARTER OF EUROPEANS BLAME NATO

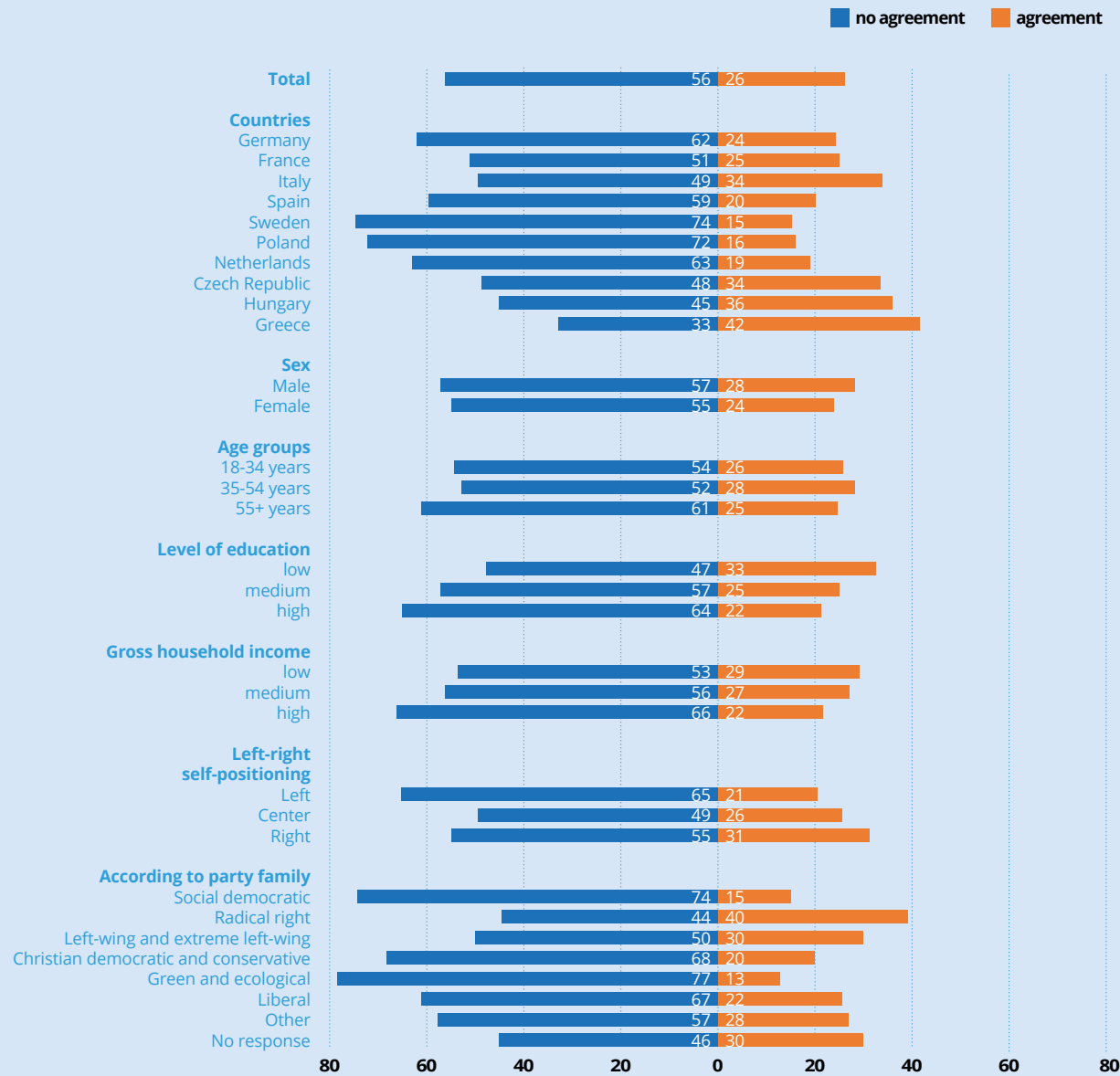
MAJORITY BELIEVES UKRAINIAN REFUGEES CAN BE INTEGRATED BETTER INTO SOCIETY

SAME VIEW IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

unlike what was observed several years ago with regard to the refugees from the Middle East and Africa.

The lowest level of agreement with the statement about the differing ability to integrate of different groups of refugees, on the other hand, was recorded in the Mediterranean countries France, Spain and Italy– in other words, in countries with a certain geographical distance to Ukraine and which had been more affected in the past years by the refugee migration from Northern Africa. Only between 46 and 49 percent here agreed with the statement that Ukrainians can be better integrated into society

Figure 5: NATO's responsibility for the war in Ukraine according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics (in percent)



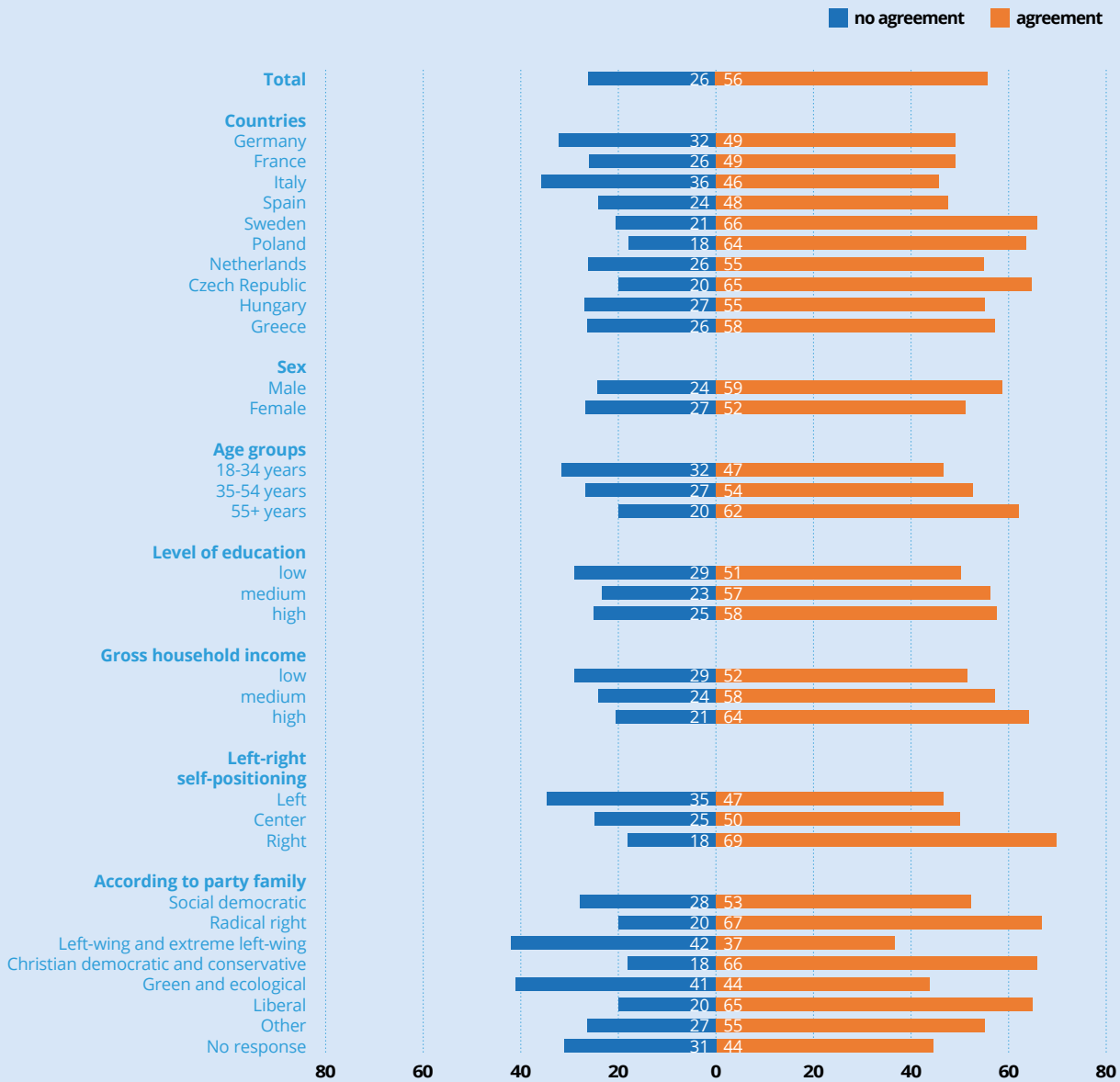
Note: The bars show the respective proportions of people who agree or disagree with the statement "NATO provoked Russia for so long that Russia had to go to war", grouped according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, n = 20,403).

Source: Own survey / YouGov

- whereby in Germany too, approximately a third of the respondents explicitly rejected this statement (Figure 6).

In Figure 6 this result is broken down for Europe according to sociodemographic characteristics and political preferences. Here it becomes apparent that on average more men than women and people with higher income assume that Ukrainians are better able to integrate into society. The likelihood of thinking this way also increases with age. In addition, people who hold this view tend to position themselves more to the right of the center and more often tend to be close to radical right, conservative or liberal parties.

Figure 6: Assessment that Ukrainian refugees can be better integrated into society, according to countries as well as sociodemographic and political characteristics (in percent)



Note: The bars show the proportion of people who agree or disagree with the statement "Refugees from Ukraine can be integrated into society much better than those from the Middle East or Africa", grouped according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, n = 20,403).

Source: Own survey / YouGov

6. General view on immigration: Majority for restricting immigration

In the context of the Russian attack on Ukraine there has been a lasting change to the overall conditions for the European policy on asylum, immigration and integration. Until the start of this year, it was above all the countries of Southern Europe, in particular Italy and Greece, that were the regions that were on the “external border” of the EU and those that were most directly confronted with the arrival of refugees. Now, however, it is the societies of Central and Eastern Europe traditionally considered to be critical of migration– first and foremost Poland but also the Czech Republic and Hungary – that are at the center of events as initial reception and transit countries.

FACILITATE OR RESTRICT IMMIGRATION?

Against this background, we examine the topic of migration in more detail in our survey with the help of additional questions. First, the respondents could mark their own position in the field of tension between two general statements which were opposites in terms of content: “immigration of foreigners should be facilitated” on the one hand and “immigration of foreigners should be restricted” on the other. Depending on which of the two statements the respondents tended to agree with, they were able to precisely express their opinion with a graded response. For analysis purposes the responses were then grouped (Info box 2).

RESTRICTIVE POSITION CLEARLY DOMINANT

The results are displayed in Figure 7 and show an overall picture of political preferences clearly oriented towards a restriction of immigration. In total, throughout Europe, 55 percent of the respondents were more or less vehemently in favor of restricting “the immigration of foreigners”. Only 25 percent held the opposite view. Around one fifth of the respondents had no apparent preference and positioned themselves exactly in the middle. Among those who advocated limiting immigration, the position of every second respondent was particularly vehemently stated by

the choice of a 9 or 10 on the scale. The group of those who emphatically endorsed the facilitation of immigration (response categories 0 and 1), was rather small at nine percent (Figure 7).

This sentiment is also reproduced in the individual analyses of the studied countries. However, a comparison reveals some noteworthy results (Figure 8). To start with, it can be established that in all European countries – with the exception of Spain – a clear majority of the respondents advocated the restriction of immigration. This majority is particularly large in the Czech Republic, Sweden and the Netherlands, where about two thirds of the population hold such views. But, also in Hungary, France and – with a slight gap – Germany well over half of the respondents advocate a restriction of immigration. Moreover, in all these countries it is noticeable that a strikingly large group positioned themselves particularly clearly by agreeing with the statement with a 9 or 10. This “core of immigration skeptics” is highest in Sweden (38 percent), the Czech Republic (37 percent) and Hungary (35 percent).

These results are particularly remarkable in Sweden’s case, because at the time of the “refugee crisis” in 2015 the country was considered by some observers to be particularly liberal with regard to taking in refugees. However, the rise and success of the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) in the past years had already indicated a shift in opinion in parts of the population. In the fall of 2022, the respondents in Sweden expressed strong reservations and a particularly large majority of 64 percent advocated a restriction of the “immigration of foreigners”. Similar high values were only recorded for states in Central Europe which are traditionally critical of immigration like the Czech Republic and Hungary, and, in addition to those countries, the Netherlands. The latter is also regarded as a liberal immigration country, however, one in which the topic of migration has already been the cause of considerable political and societal conflicts for many years.

At the other end of the country comparison are Poland, Italy and Spain. Here the proportion of those who supported a restriction of “immigration of foreigners” was by far the smallest. In Italy a third of respondents voted for facilitation of immigration and liberalization of the rules. In Spain it was even 39 percent. The results for Spain are in contrast to the dominant opinion in Europe, in that here the two opposing groups – those who advocate facilitating immigration and those who favor restricting them – are broadly balanced. The results for Italy are also remarkable, as in the past radical right parties have regularly achieved considerable mobilization and election successes in the past with positions and campaigns firmly critical of migration.

In Poland, however, the sentiment expressed is noteworthy for other reasons. With the exception of Spain, the proportion of those who demand a restriction of the immigration of “foreigners”, was lower than anywhere else in Europe at 42 percent. Particularly in comparison with other countries in the so-called Visegrád Group, like the Czech Republic or Hungary, these results are striking, especially given that during the “refugee crisis” in 2015 the Polish population took a particularly critical stance towards the reception of refugees and also in view of how in the past decade the Polish government has particularly vehemently advocated a closed restrictive policy towards refugees in Europe. However, in our survey from the fall of 2022, the response distributions for Poland differ markedly from those from the Czech Republic or Hungary (Figure 8).

CLEAR MAJORITY FOR RESTRICTION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, SWEDEN AND THE NETHERLANDS

SHIFT IN SENTIMENT IN SWEDEN?

POLAND, ITALY AND SPAIN MORE OPEN

POLAND DIFFERS FROM THE REST OF THE VISEGRÁD GROUP

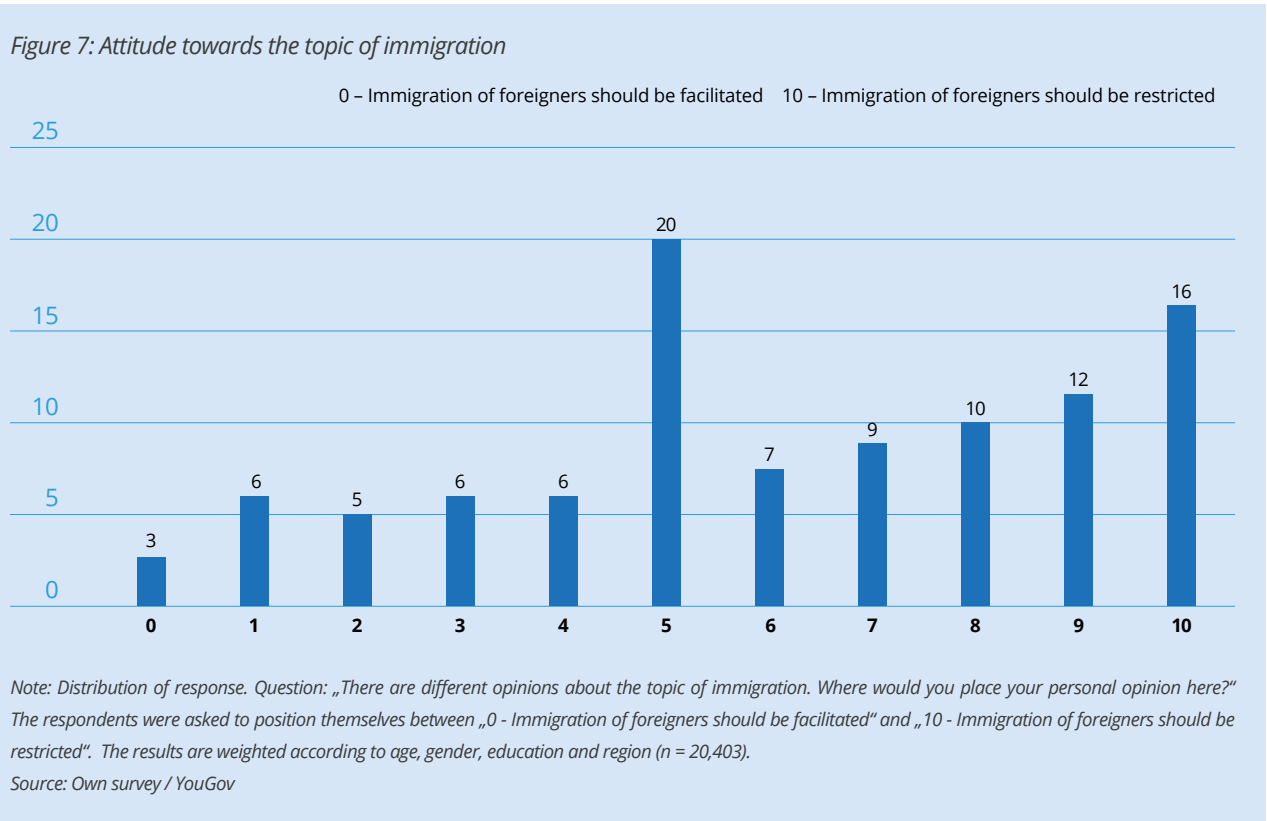
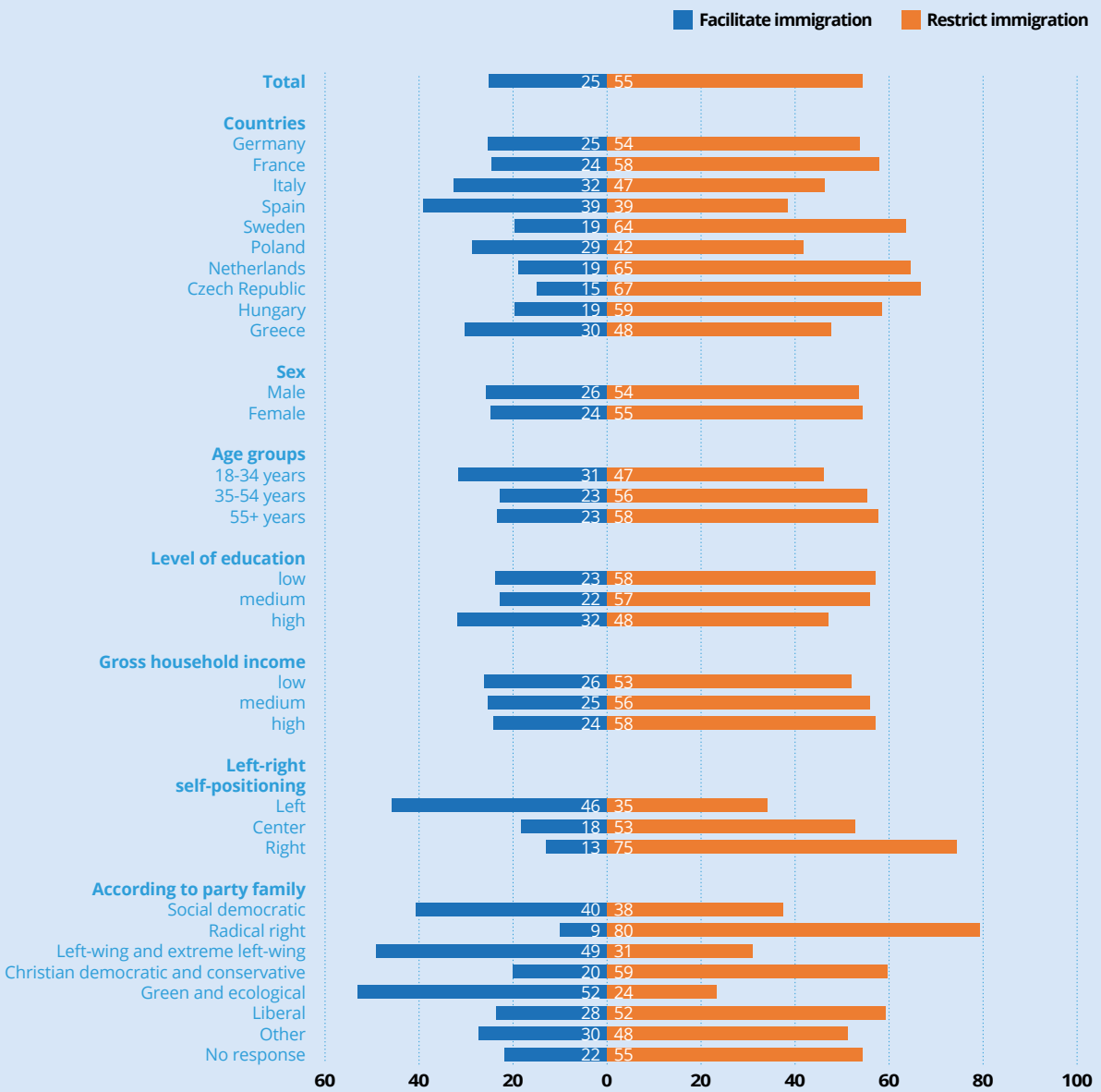




Figure 8: Attitude towards the topic of immigration according to countries and sociodemographic and political characteristics (in percent)



Note: The bars show the proportion of people who would like immigration to be made easier and those who would like it to be restricted, grouped according to countries, sociodemographic and political characteristics. The respondents were asked to position themselves between “0 – Immigration of foreigners should be facilitated” and “10 – Immigration of foreigners should be restricted”. The results are weighted according to age, gender, education and region. (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, n = 20,403).

Source: Own survey / YouGov

INFO BOX – Party families

In order to enable a comparison between the political parties of the different countries studied, they were categorized in their respective party families (annex). A distinction is made between six categories: left-wing and extreme left-wing, green and ecological, social democratic, liberal, Christian democratic and conservative, as well as right-wing and extreme right-wing parties. This classification is largely based on the data of the Manifesto Project. It classifies parties in all OECD countries according to their position on an economic (state/market) and a cultural (freedom/authority) left/right dimension. On the basis of these coordinates, the parties are added to the respective family. In the Manifesto Project a distinction is made between Christian democratic and conservative parties. Here, however, they are combined for a better overview.<sup>1</sup>

7. General view on immigration: Negative attitudes in Europe

In order to be able to better understand and categorize these results, our study also incorporated further questions which have already been tested in other surveys and are established in empirical research in the area of migration. On the one hand, these questions are suited to provide information about the general attitude towards immigration. On the other hand, they also address specific aspects of the evaluation at the same time. For instance, – once again using a scale from 0 to 10 – the extent of the agreement with or rejection of the statement “Foreigners are a burden on the social system of a country” it was possible to better gauge the dimension of migration-related socioeconomic evaluations and prejudices. The results are presented in Figure 9 and once again they are evidence of a rather negative view of migration. Across Europe 56 percent of all respondents more or less clearly agreed with this statement, only 29 percent rejected it. Here, too, the agreement rates in the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands were particularly high, which indicates that there are particularly large segments of the population with a rather critical assessment of the socioeconomic impact of immigration. In Italy and Spain, however, the assessments were more balanced, in Spain the statement about the “burdens on the social system” related to migration was even rejected by a relative majority of respondents. The results for Poland place it more in the middle of the field, very close to the European average. Sweden also remains one of the countries in which the social consequences of migration are judged in a comparatively differentiated way, even though here a 50 percent majority also expressed critical views (Figure 9).

In addition to the specific assessment of Ukrainian refugees in comparison with those from the Middle East and Africa, a question about Muslim immigration was also part of the research. Here the respondents were confronted with the demand that the “immigration of Muslims” should be restricted. Across Europe the agreement with this statement was at 57 percent, whereby more than half of those who agreed even did so as emphatically as possible by selecting “9” or “10”. Only 27 percent more or less clearly expressed their rejection and were thus not of the opinion that the “immigration of Muslims” should be restricted.

In contrast to the rather positive evaluation of Ukrainian refugees, it is clear that there is a strong rejection of Muslim immigration throughout Europe. It

IMMIGRATION ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL BURDENS

<sup>1</sup> cf. Lehmann, Pola / Burst, Tobias / Matthieß, Theres / Regel, Sven / Volkens, Andrea / Weßels, Bernhard / Zehnter, Lisa (2022): The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2022a. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB). <https://doi.org/10.25522/manifesto.mpd.2022a>

is especially prevalent in the Czech Republic (74 percent), Greece (63 percent) and Hungary (60 percent). The assessments in Germany, Italy and Spain seem to be least critical, although in these countries too, a relative majority of 53 percent (Germany), 46 percent (Italy) and 43 percent (Spain) tends to think that the “immigration of Muslims” should be restricted. Poland and Sweden are once again to be found in the middle of the field here, whereby in particular in Sweden, still almost a third of the respondents does not agree with the statement (Figure 9).

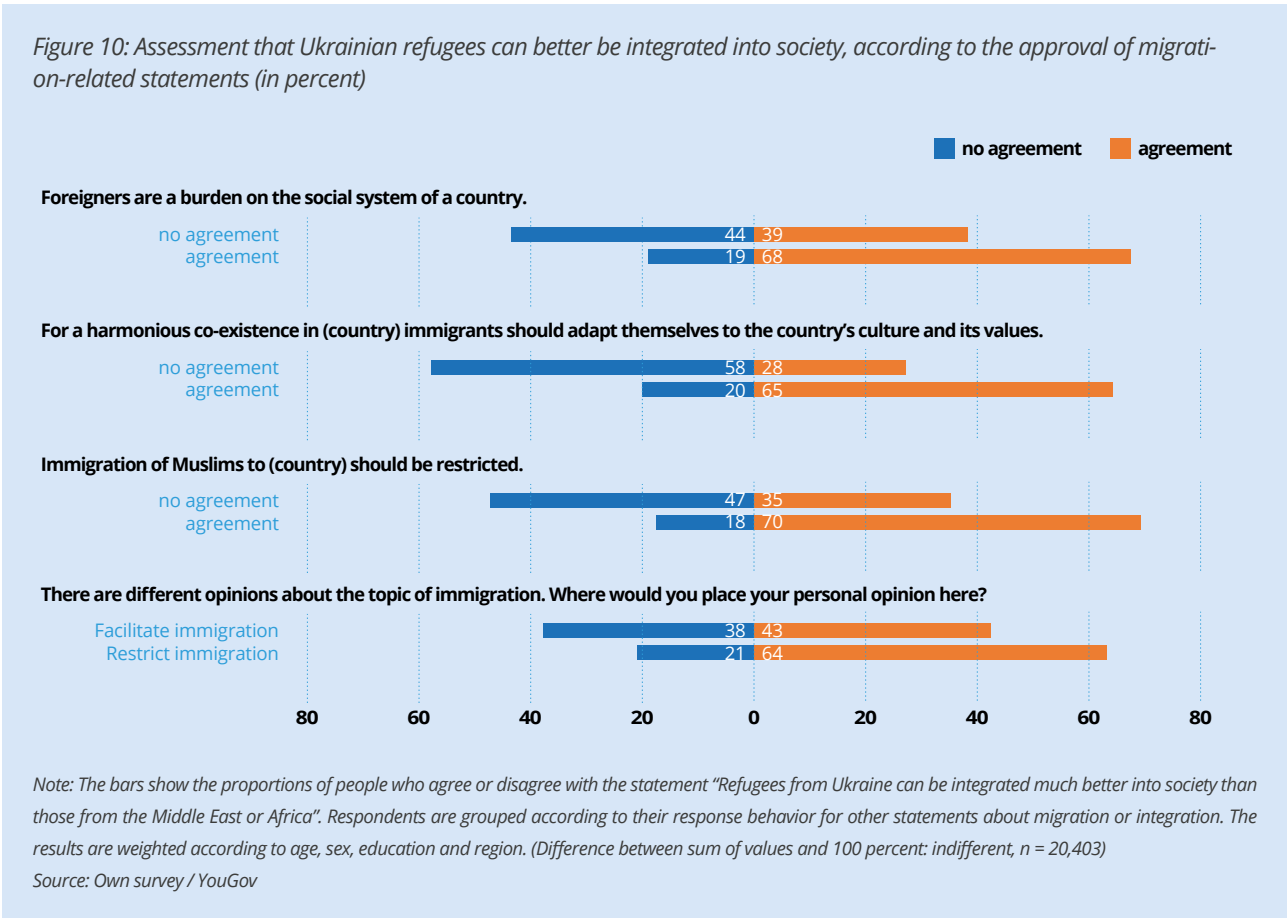
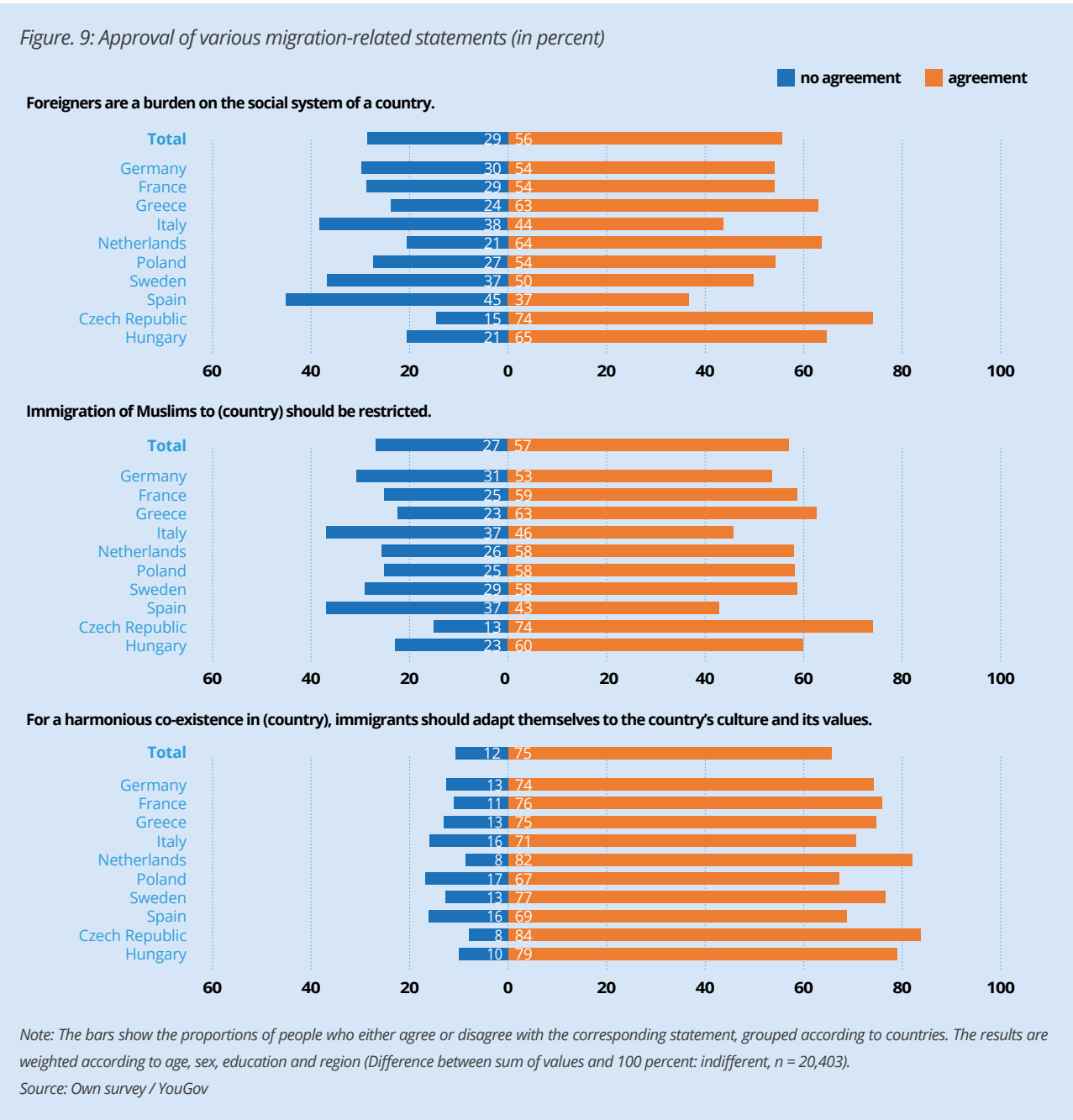
SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION SEEN AS CULTURAL ADAPTATION

In connection with the perception that Ukrainian refugees can supposedly be better integrated into society than those who come from the Middle East, it is ultimately also interesting to look at the issue of what is understood by “successful integration”. In the political and societal debate there has for a long time been a struggle between sides with completely different ideals about the interpretation of this term. On the one side of the debate, integration is defined more unilaterally in the sense of adaptation or even assimilation,

whereby new arrivals are considered to have a certain obligation to adjust to existing social norms, manners or even the dominant culture of the receiving society. Conversely, on the other side, one finds conceptions which associate the ideal of successful integration more with the equitable co-existence of different cultures. Against this background, in our survey we also asked to what extent immigrants should adapt themselves to the “culture and its values” of the respective country “for a harmonious co-existence”.

The results show a rather one-dimensional view: Throughout Europe 75 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement, whereby 45 percent of all respondents even expressed their agreement as emphatically as possible by selecting 9 or 10. This result seems remarkable particularly with regard to the comparison of individual countries. For example, Poland is ranked at the lower end in terms of agreement, but the generalization about the country to date has been that it has a stance profoundly critical of migration and a national-conservative attitude towards integration. Initially, this does seem to be confirmed given that there was 67 percent agreement with the statement about a necessary “cultural adaptation” of immigrants. However, with this result, Poland – alongside Spain (69 percent) and Italy (71 percent) – still finds itself at the lower end of the scale, and at the same time, in Poland there was the largest proportion of respondents throughout Europe who rejected the demand for adaptation. In contrast, the call for “assimilation” was met with most approval in the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden. It seems here, that not only have stances critical of migration evidently prevailed in the Swedish population, but national-conservative ideas of integration have also gained ground (Figure 9).

The attitudes towards migration and integration asked in our survey can also be directly related to the question about the evaluation of refugees from



Ukraine. The data shows that the view that “Refugees from Ukraine can be integrated much better into society” is more widespread than average in the population groups which tend to be skeptical towards migration, in other words those who also agree with statements like “Foreigners are a burden on the social system of a country”, “the immigration of Muslims should be restricted” or “For a harmonious co-existence, immigrants should adapt themselves to the country’s culture and its values” (Figure 10).

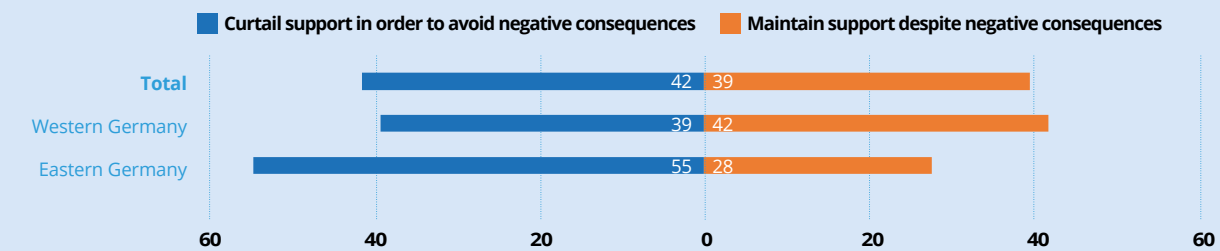
8. Comparison of attitudes towards war and migration within Germany: Eastern Germany close to the Czech Republic and Hungary

As well as capturing the mood in Europe as a whole, our survey also offers insights into the distribution within Germany of corresponding positions on the war and migration. In particular, the assumption here is that there will be significant differences between Eastern and Western Germany. For months, especially in the eastern part of the country, various protest actors, some of whom come from the extreme right-wing, have been attempting to mobilize the population for demonstrations specifically against the Ukraine policy of the Federal Government and the associated economic and social consequences. Their goal is to harness the anger about rising energy prices, concerns about one’s future, and also to address the common feelings that Germany has friendly bonds with Russia and to bring these elements to the streets in the form of protest, indignation and resentment. However, do the opinions about the war in Ukraine, the resulting economic costs and the reception of Ukrainian refugees in fact differ within Germany?

On the basis of our data, this can indeed be confirmed. While in the west of the Federal Republic a narrow relative majority of 42 percent of respondents advocates maintaining the support for Ukraine, “even if it means negative consequences for one’s own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)”, in the east only 28 percent hold this view. 55 percent of the respondents in this part of the country would rather limit this support instead (Figure 11). Thus, in a European comparison, the mood in Eastern Germany is far removed from the EU-average. A similarly low willingness to support Ukraine was identified only in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Greece (Figure 4).

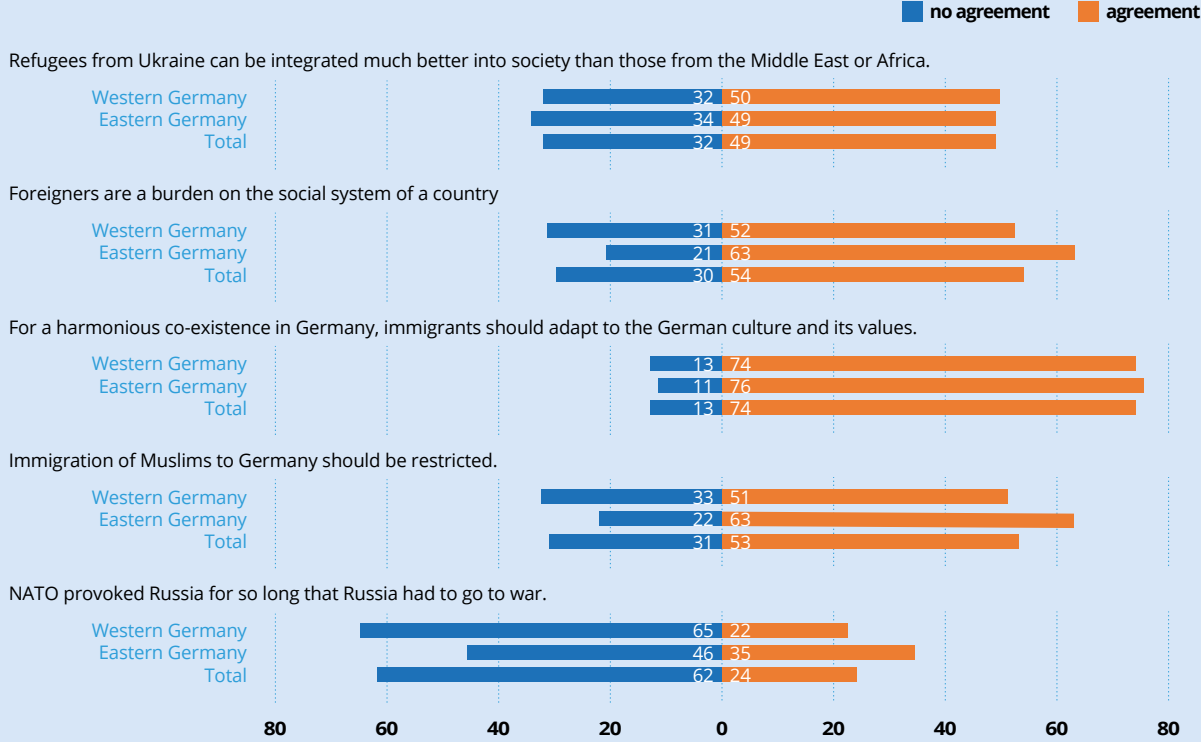
GREATER WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT UKRAINE IN WESTERN GERMANY

Figure 11: Willingness to support Ukraine in Eastern and Western Germany



Note: The bars show the proportions of people in Eastern and Western Germany who would like to “continue to support” Ukraine and those who would rather “curtail the support”. The respondents were asked to position themselves between “0 – Germany should curtail the support for Ukraine, in order to avoid negative consequences for one’s own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)” and “10 - Germany should support Ukraine even if it means negative consequences for one’s own country (like increases in energy prices and the cost of living)”. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region. (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, for Germany as a whole: n = 2,091, for Eastern Germany: n = 337, for Western Germany: n = 1,754). Source: Own survey / YouGov

Figure 12: Agreement with statements about migration and war in Eastern and Western Germany (in percent)



Note: The bars show the proportions of people who agree or disagree with individual statements, grouped according to whether they were from Eastern or Western Germany. The results are weighted according to age, sex, education and region. (Difference between sum of values and 100 percent: indifferent, for Germany as a whole: n = 2,091, for Eastern Germany: n = 337, for Western Germany: n = 1,754). Source: Own survey / YouGov

A similar picture emerges for the question about the causes of the war; there are also clear differences within Germany: In the east, more than a third of the respondents sees NATO as at least partly to blame, as it is seen to have “provoked Russia for so long”, that the country ultimately “had to go to war”. In Western Germany only every fourth respondent agreed with this statement. Here too, the values for Eastern Germany differ considerably from the European average and are instead close to those in the Czech Republic or Hungary (Figure 12).

A THIRD OF EASTERN GERMANS BLAME NATO FOR THE WAR

Finally, among the participants in our survey, there was more agreement with statements that were anti-Muslim and critical of migration in Eastern Germany than there was in the west. These tendencies are known from previous studies. Alongside these differences, however, there are also other positions which are very similar in both Eastern and Western Germany. For the most part, the respondents in both parts of the country are convinced that refugees from Ukraine “can be integrated much better into Germany society than those from the Middle East or Africa”. Furthermore, a majority of respondents in both the east and the west believe that successful integration requires the “adaptation” of immigrants “to the German culture and its values” (Figure 12).

SIMILAR POSITIONS IN WEST AND EAST WITH REGARD TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES



ANNEX

Party Family	Country	Party
left-wing and extreme left-wing	DE	Die Linke
	FR	Mélenchon (FI)
	GR	Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras (SYRIZA)
	GR	Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas (KKE)
	NL	Socialistische Partij (SP)
	SE	Vänsterpartiet (V)
	ES	Unidos Podemos (UP)
	ES	Más País (M)

green and ecological	DE	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen
	IT	Nuove Energie (NE)
	GR	Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (MeRA25)
	NL	GroenLinks (GL)
	SE	Miljöpartiet de Gröna (MP)

social democratic	DE	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)
	GR	Kinima Allagis (KINAL)
	IT	Partito Democratico (PD)
	IT	Liberi e Uguali (LeU)
	NL	Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)
	PL	Lewica
	SE	Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti (S)
	ES	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)

liberal	DE	Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)
	FR	Macron (LREM)
	IT	Italia Viva (IV)
	IT	Più Europa (+EU)
	NL	Democraten 66 (D66)
	NL	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)
	PL	Koalicja Obywatelska (KO)
	SE	Liberalerna (L)
	ES	Ciudadanos (Cs)
	CZ	Politické hnutí ANO 2011

christian democratic and conservative	DE	Union (CDU & CSU)
	FR	Lassalle (RI)
	GR	Nea Dimokratia (ND)
	IT	Forza Italia (FI)
	NL	Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA)
	PL	PSL – Koalicja Polska (KP)
	SE	Kristdemokraterna (KD)
	SE	Centerpartiet (C)
	SE	Moderate samlingspartiet (M)
	ES	Partido Popular (PP)
	CZ	SPOLU
	HU	Mindenki Magyarországa Mozgalom (MMM)

radical right	DE	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)
	FR	Le Pen (RN)
	FR	Zemmour (REC)
	GR	Elliniki Lysi (EL)
	IT	Fratelli d'Italia (FDI)
	IT	Lega
	NL	Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)
	NL	Forum voor Democratie (FvD)
	PL	Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość (KON)
	PL	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS)
	SE	Sverigedemokraterna (SD)
	ES	VOX
	CZ	Svoboda a přímá demokracie (SPD)
	HU	Fidesz
	HU	Mi Hazánk Mozgalom (MHM)

other	IT	Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)
	ES	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)
	CZ	Česká pirátská strana
		Personen, die „Sonstige“ angekreuzt haben