

The New Normal?

A 7-country comparative study on the impacts of COVID-19 on trust, social cohesion, democracy and expectations for an uncertain future.



FR



GER



IT



NL



PL



UK



US

About More in Common



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

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

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

For more information please visit www.moreincommon.com or contact us at contact@moreincommon.com

About this Study



COVID-19 has upended the lives of people across the world, causing untold suffering and dislocation, with a death toll expected to soon exceed one million. The impact of the pandemic on our health, economy and society will reshape 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, especially in countries that have struggled most with the virus. It has also made us more aware of our shared humanity, of the value of strong local communities, and of 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
- 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%; some figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Research partners

- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: Kantar
- UK and US: YouGov

Fieldwork dates

- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: July 1-8, 2020
- UK: June 19-28, 2020
- US: June 19-22, 2020

Method: Online survey using representative demographic quotas

Note: Due to space constraints, not all questions were asked in every country

Findings at a Glance (1)



The pandemic has generated a mix of compassion, isolation and anxiety.

- Majorities in all countries feel reminded of our shared humanity; significant numbers also sense that people's level of concern for each other has improved.
- Perceived commitment to social distancing measures varies widely between countries and trust in each other has fallen, in some cases by a daunting margin.
- About half report feeling alone in this crisis, and many perceive growing levels of division.
- In every country, majorities fear a second wave of COVID-19 infections and lockdowns, greater division and political instability, and severe economic depressions.
- The United States is markedly worse off: Americans are profoundly concerned about the division in their country, report worsening trust in their government, and are most likely of all nationalities to want the country to become more united.
- In all 7 countries, medical staff, frontline workers, emergency personnel and medical researchers are seen as deserving the most praise for how they performed during the first phase of the pandemic

Findings at a Glance (2)



Germany and The Netherlands do well where others struggle, but all governments face skepticism of their handling of information.

- In the UK, US, France, and Poland, people tend to feel deeply disappointed by their government's handling of the crisis so far, while Germans and the Dutch feel greater levels of pride.
- Correspondingly, confidence in the government's ability to tackle future crises is low everywhere except for Germany and the Netherlands.
- Across countries, people are split on whether the government is hiding information from the public, while significant minorities report believing that the crisis is being exaggerated to pursue an agenda.
- Everywhere studied, trust in government is higher at the local level.

Findings at a Glance (3)



Big appetites for change, but modest expectations it will happen.

- In countries hardest hit by the pandemic—Italy, UK, US, France—most have hopes for profound change. However, only Americans anticipate “significant changes will happen” after the pandemic.
- Far from dampening commitment to a greener future, majorities in 6 of 7 countries say the government is not doing enough on climate, and show broad support for policies such as a Green New Deal.
- Most countries want their government to focus on healthcare, employment and the environment in the aftermath of this crisis.
- In the US, between 17% and 37% say they would not get vaccinated against COVID-19.
- While there are mixed views on the EU’s handling of COVID-19 (and negative views in Italy), there is broad support for stronger European and multilateral cooperation to weather this and future storms – including taking on common debt.
- Many see rescue funds as an opportunity to shift norms on corporate accountability, better wages, and environmental protection.

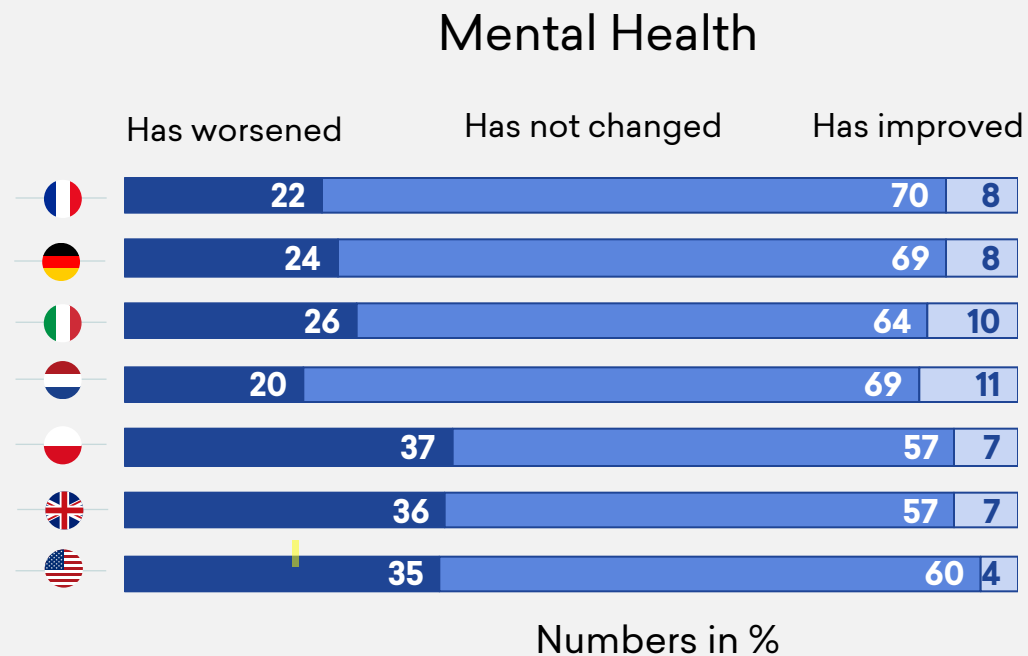
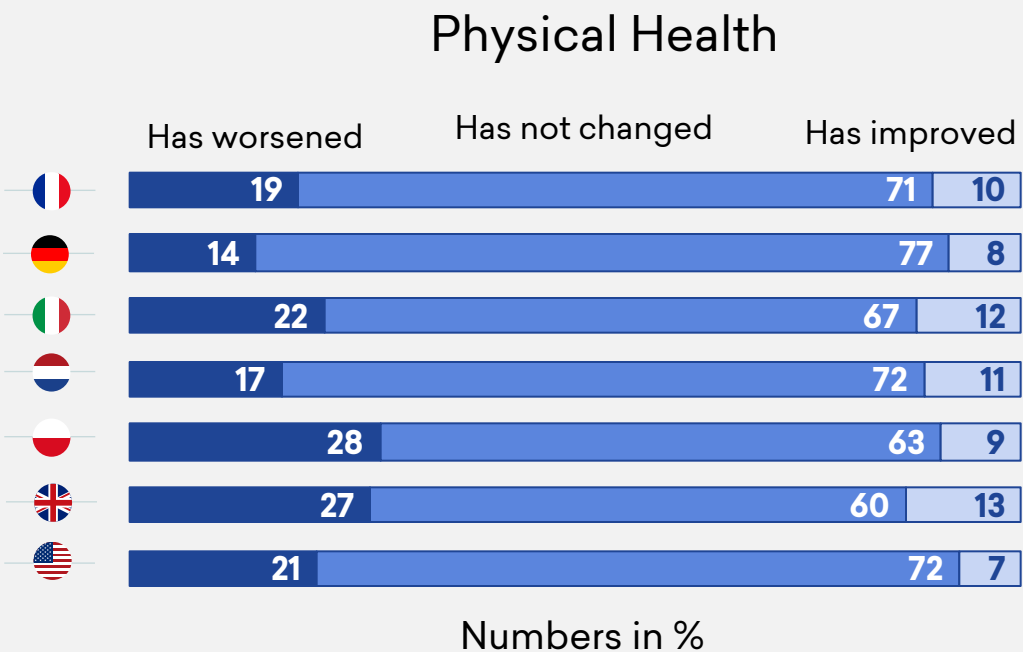
Table of Contents



I. <u>The Impact of COVID-19 on People's Personal Lives</u>	9
II. <u>Collective Experience under COVID-19</u>	15
III. <u>Power, Institutions and the Media</u>	25
IV. <u>After COVID-19</u>	42
V. <u>Views on the European Union, European Policies and Social Cohesion in Europe</u>	55
VI. <u>Message Testing</u>	62

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

People in all countries feel their mental health has worsened more than their physical health.

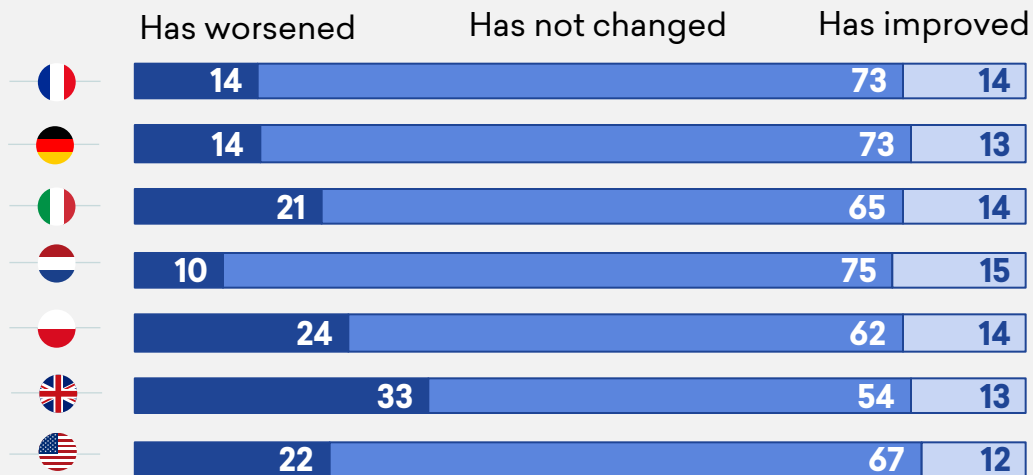


Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Everywhere, people's financial situations have worsened significantly, while impacts on family life are mixed.

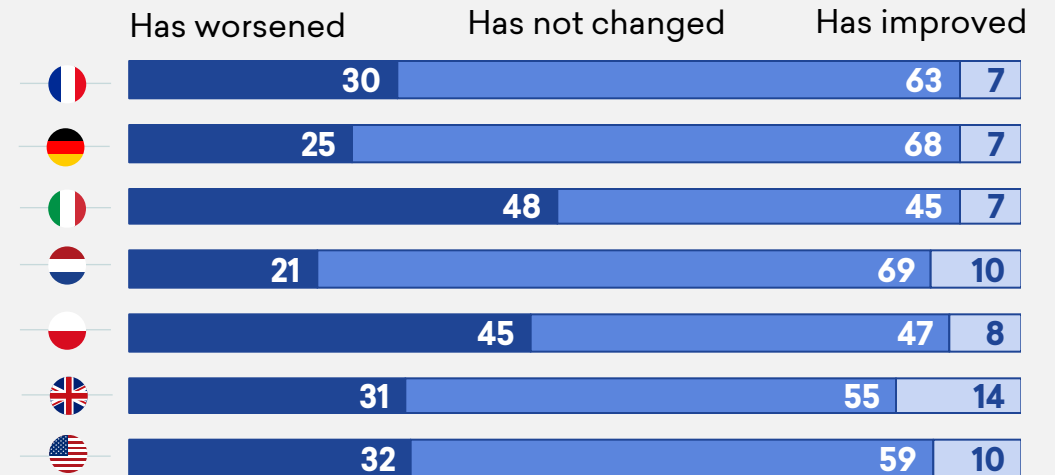


Family Life



Numbers in %

Financial Situation



Numbers in %

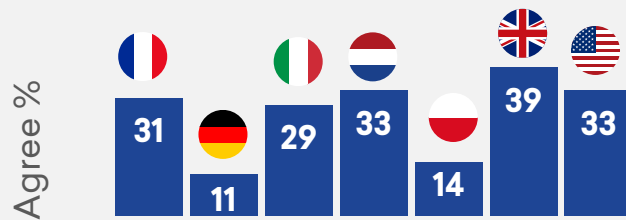
Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The personal impacts of COVID-19 vary greatly between countries.



"Do you personally know someone who...?"

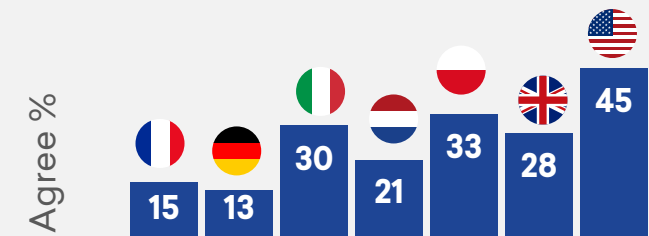
Has been ill with COVID-19



Has died from COVID-19



Who has lost their job or employment due to COVID-19



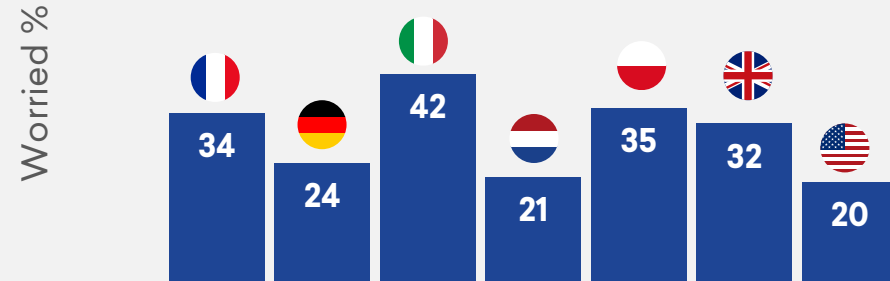
Question: Do you personally know someone who...?

Financial difficulties are a greater concern than job security.

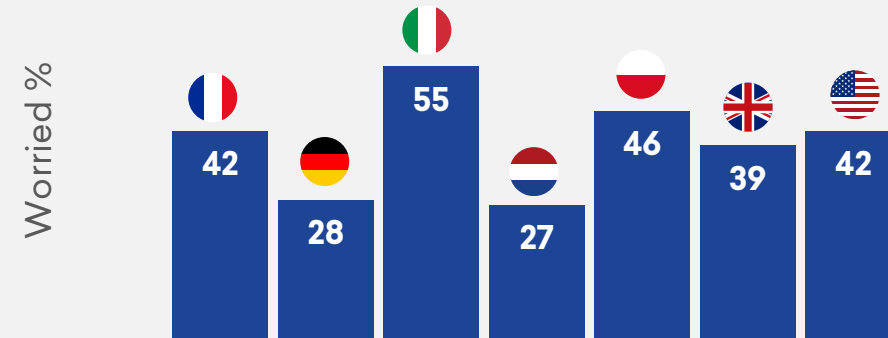


Worried about...

Loss of job or employment*



Financial difficulties



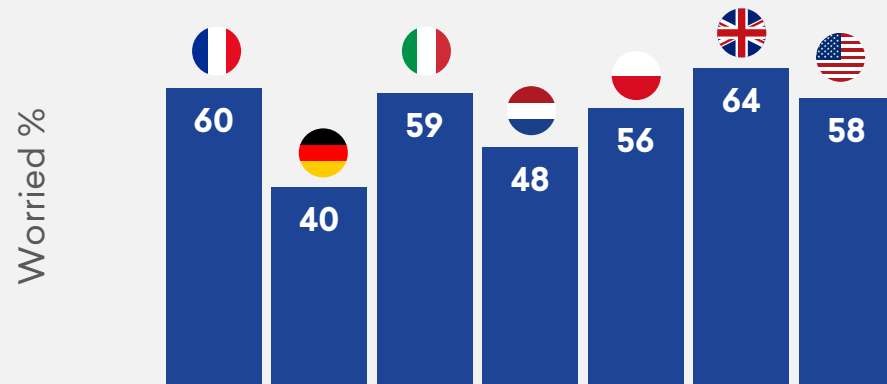
Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....? *Note that these percentages exclude respondents who responded "Does not apply to me".

There are high levels of concern about a second wave.

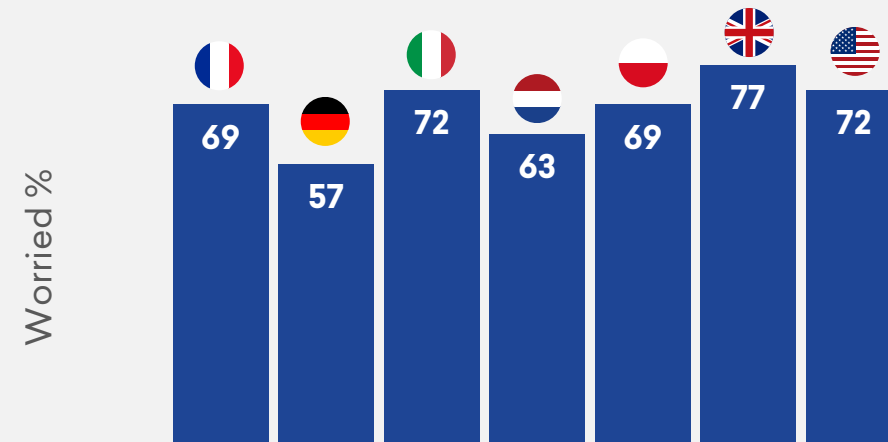


Worried...

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



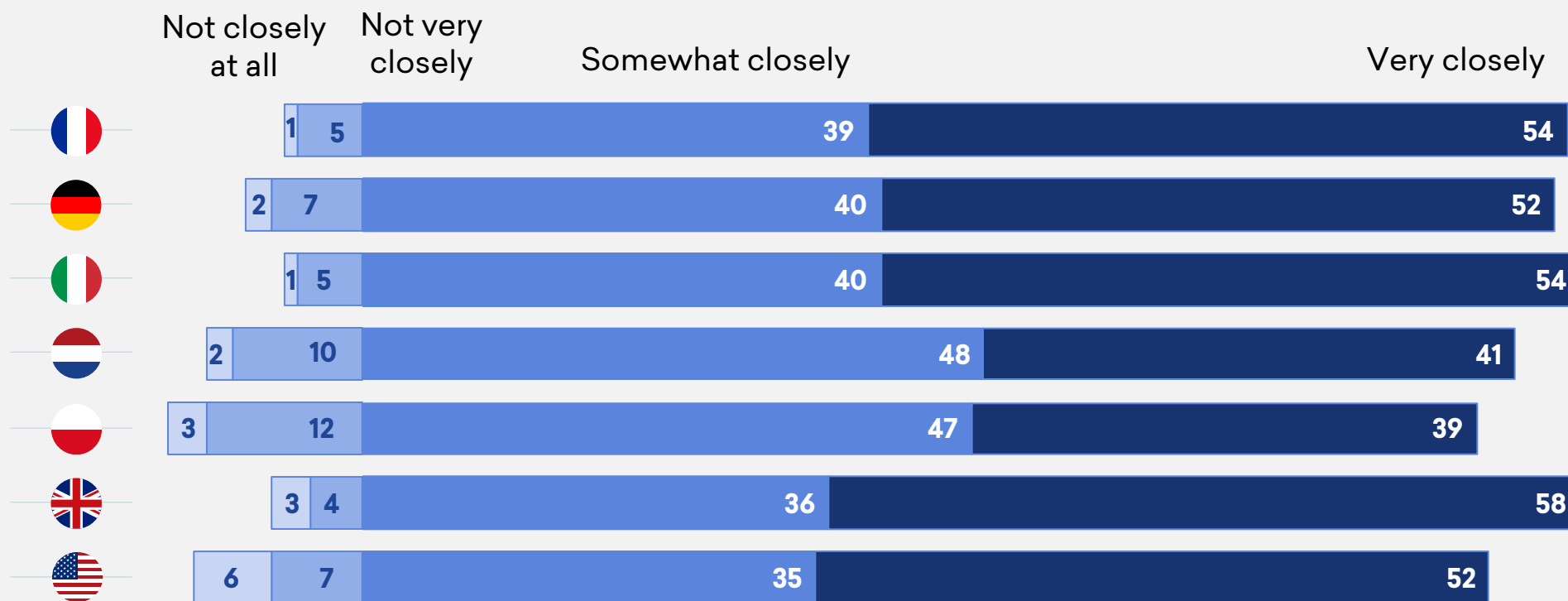
Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

II. Collective Experience under COVID-19

People say they have followed social distancing rules.



How closely did people abide by COVID-19 rules?

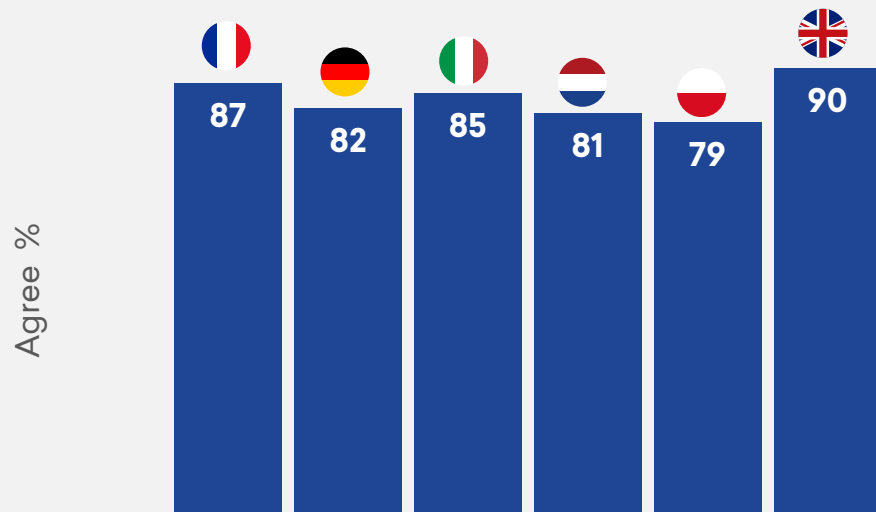


Question: When it comes to the COVID-19 social distancing rules that have been put in place in your area (wearing a mask, staying home, etc.), would you say that you have followed the rules...?

Most people feel duty-bound to follow the rules but differ on whether others adhere to them.

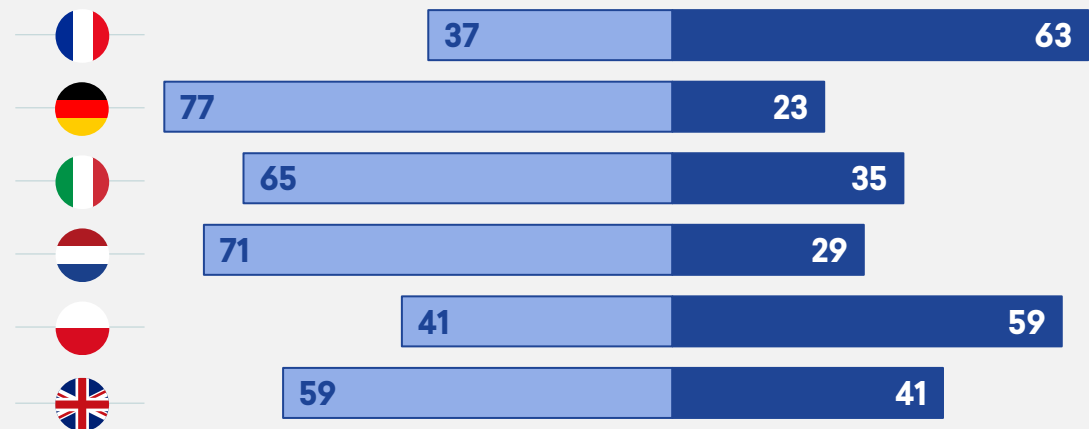


"I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules."



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.



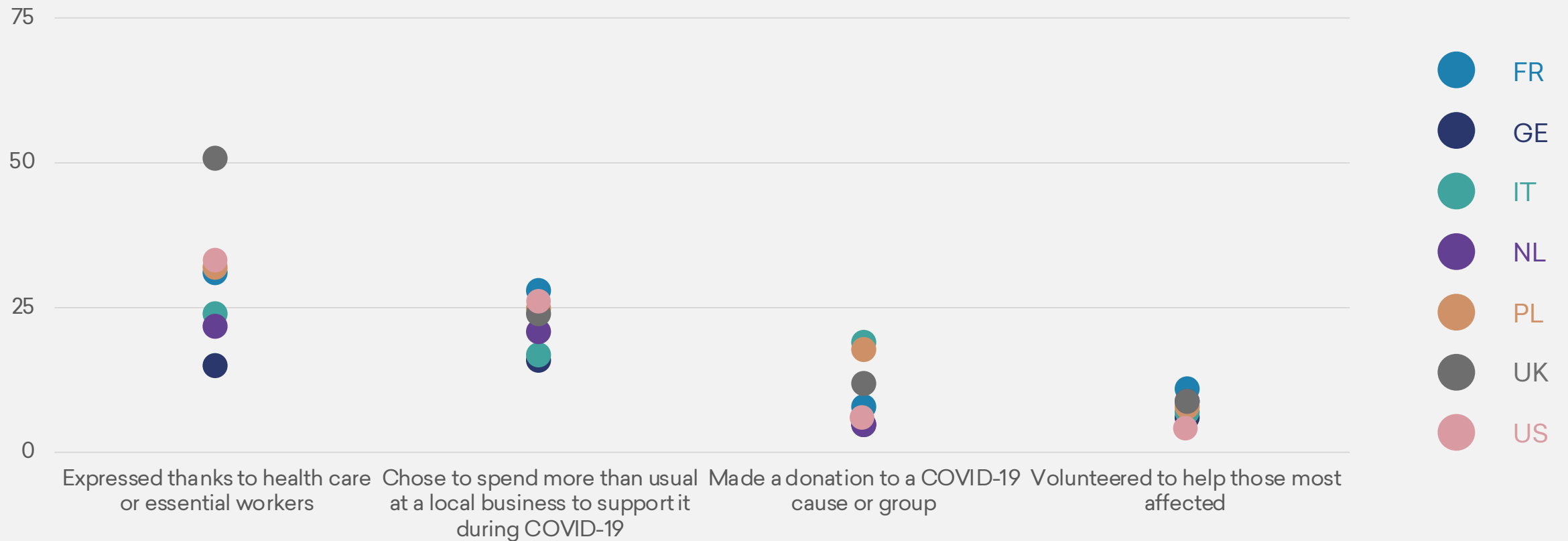
Agree %

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

People are most likely to have expressed thanks to essential workers in recent months.



Participation in COVID-19 relief activities

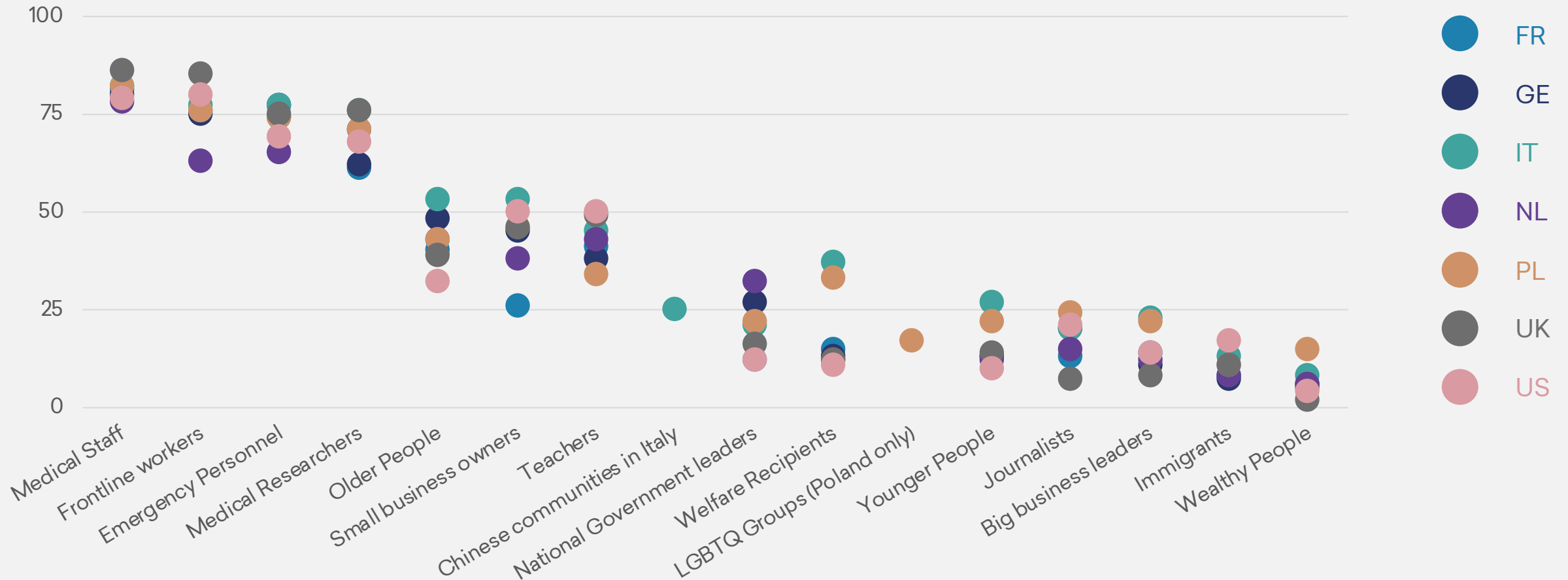


Question: In which of the following activities have you participated since the COVID-19 pandemic began, if any?

People appreciate those who are on the frontlines of combatting COVID-19.



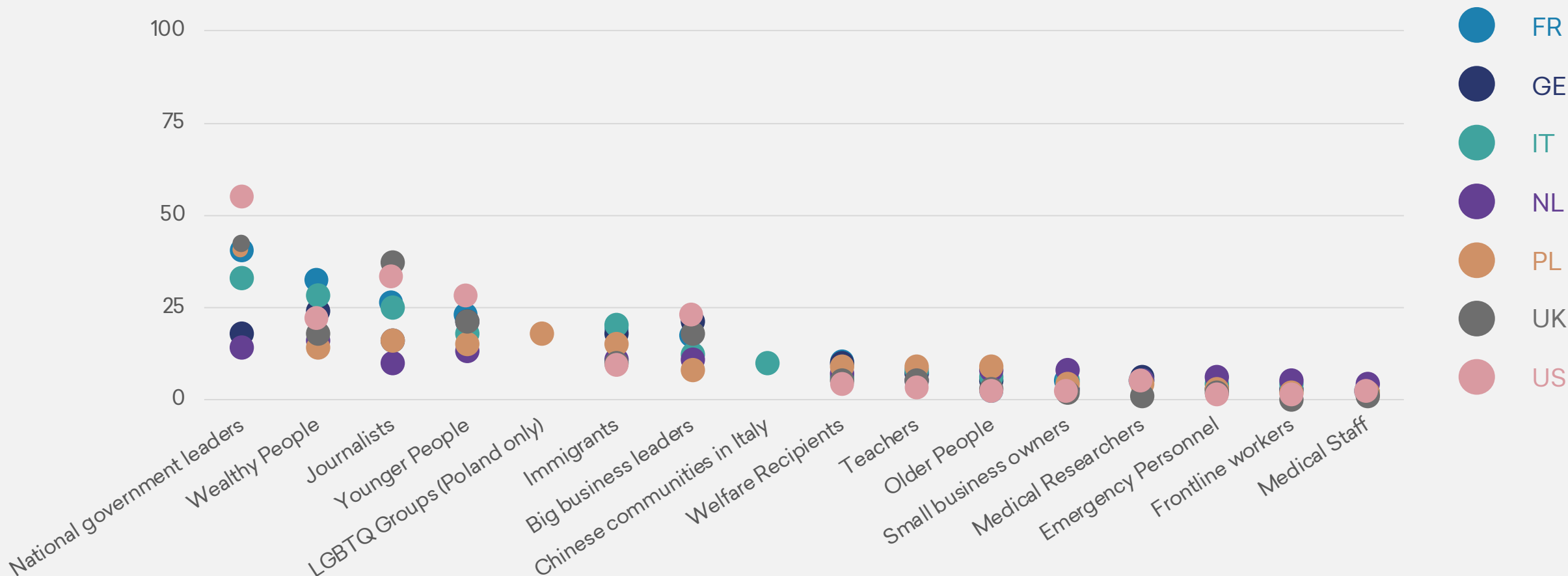
Groups that deserve particular praise for their actions



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.

Blame is directed at the powerful.

Groups that deserve particular blame for their actions

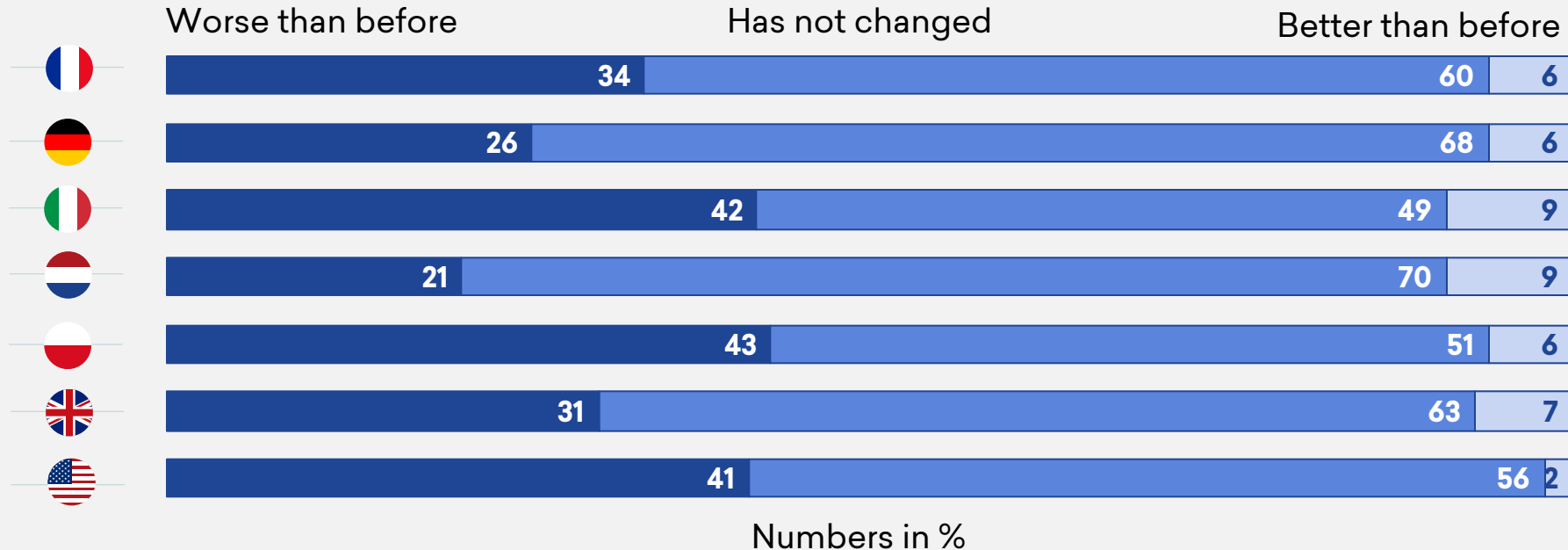


Question: When you think of how different people have acted in the COVID-19 pandemic so far: Please indicate whether the following groups of people deserve particular praise for their actions, deserve particular blame for their actions, or whether they deserve neither particular praise nor particular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

In all countries, trust in others has worsened more than it has improved.



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

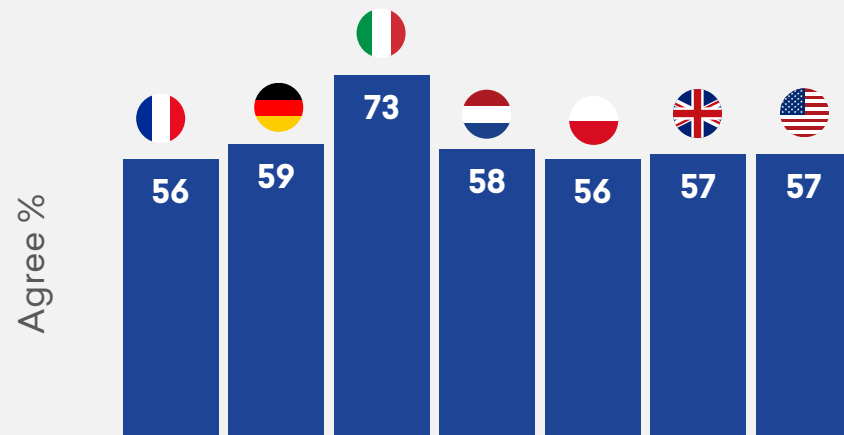


Question: To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

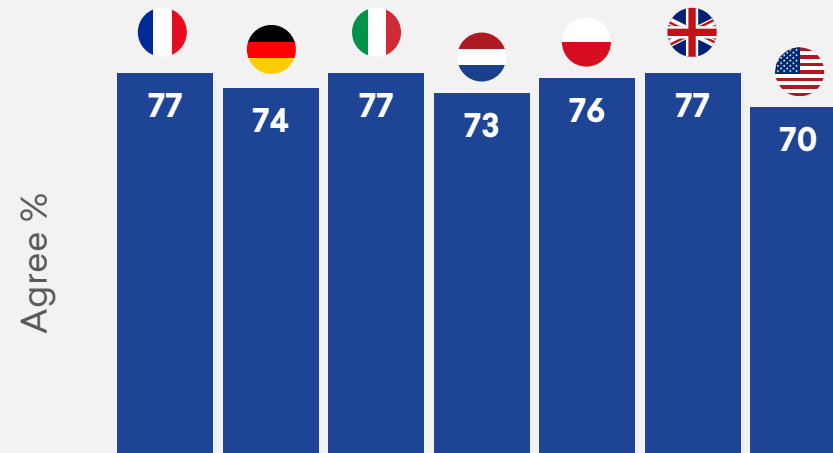
The crisis has reminded us of our shared humanity.



“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.”

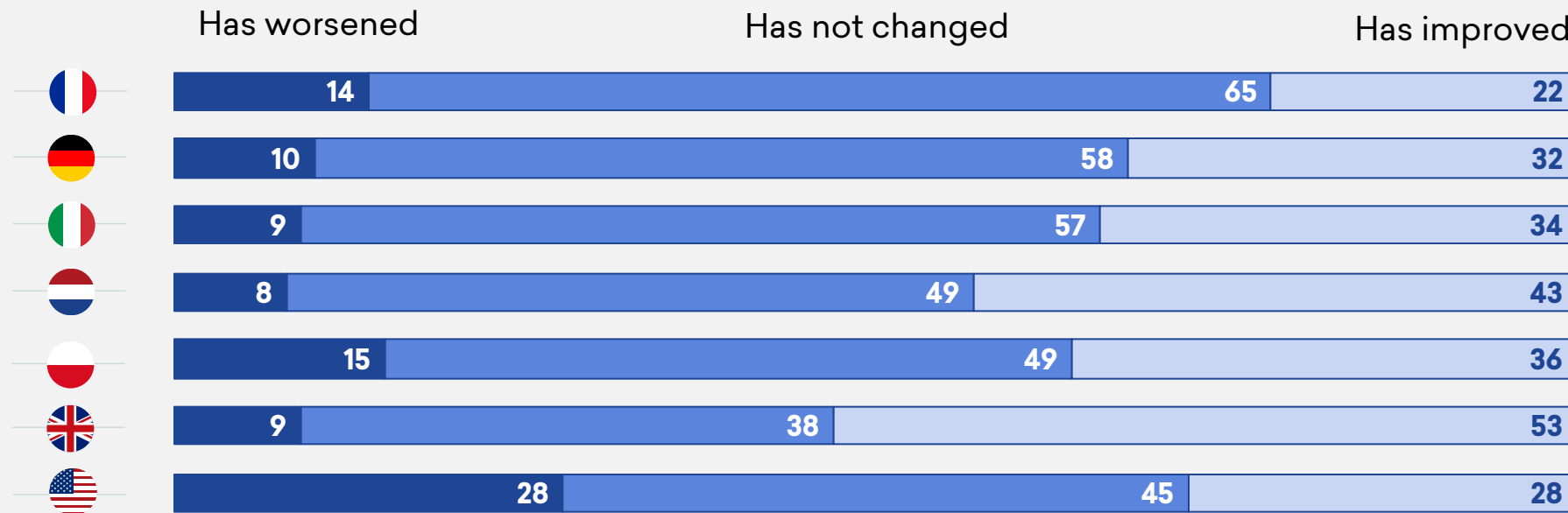


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Many feel that people's concern for one another has improved.



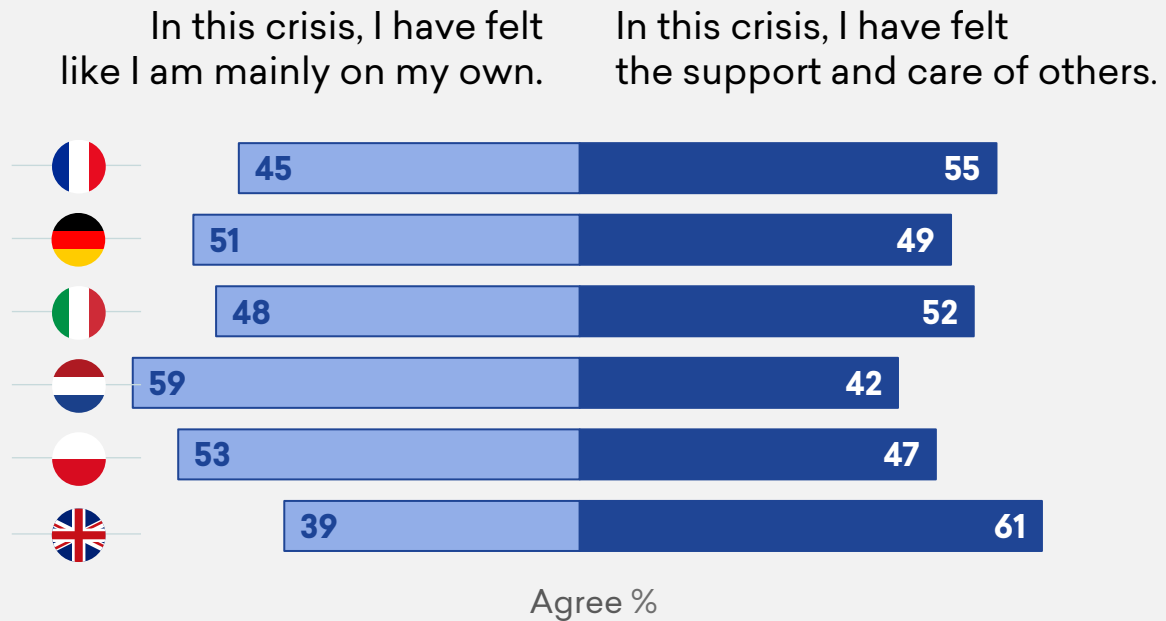
People's concern for others...



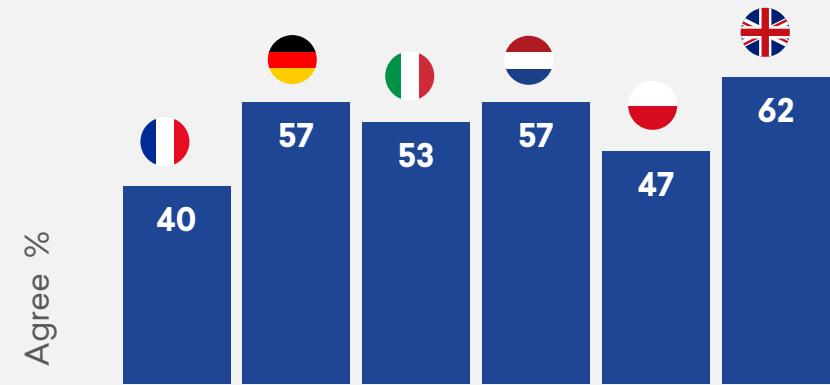
Numbers in %

Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in [COUNTRY], if at all? People's concern for each other

About as many Europeans feel supported in this crisis as feel alone.



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



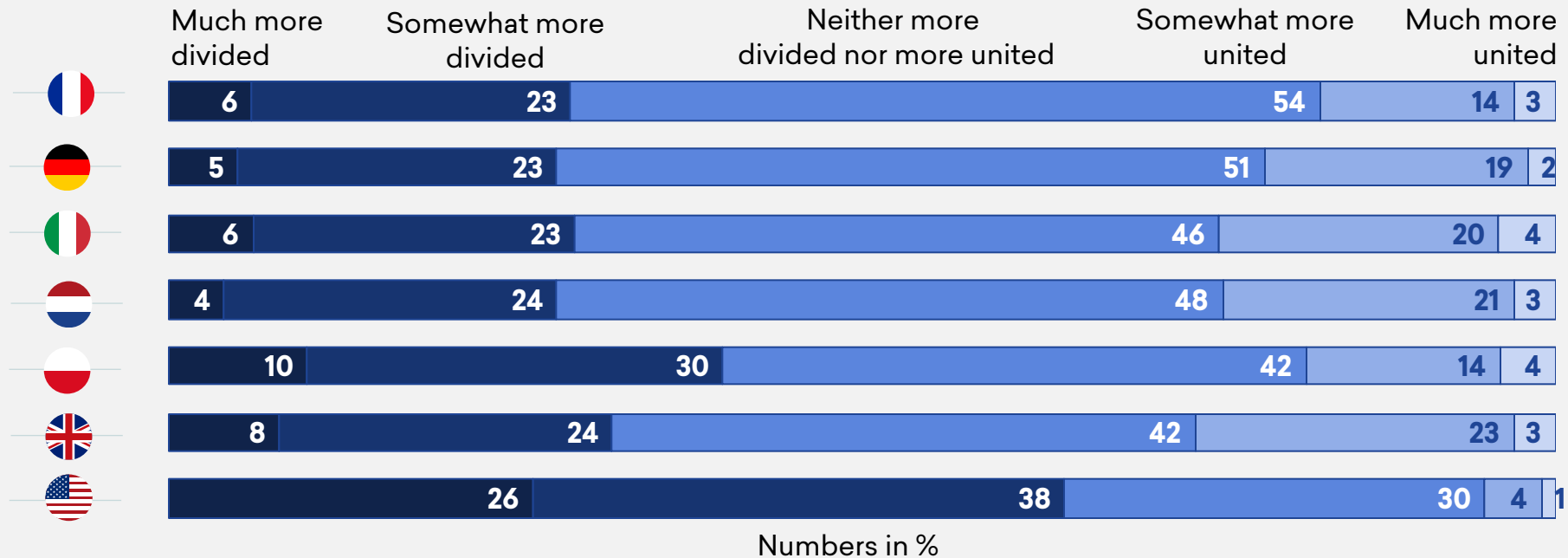
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?; To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

III. Power, Institutions and the Media

In all countries, people perceive a stronger sense of division than unity, especially in the US.

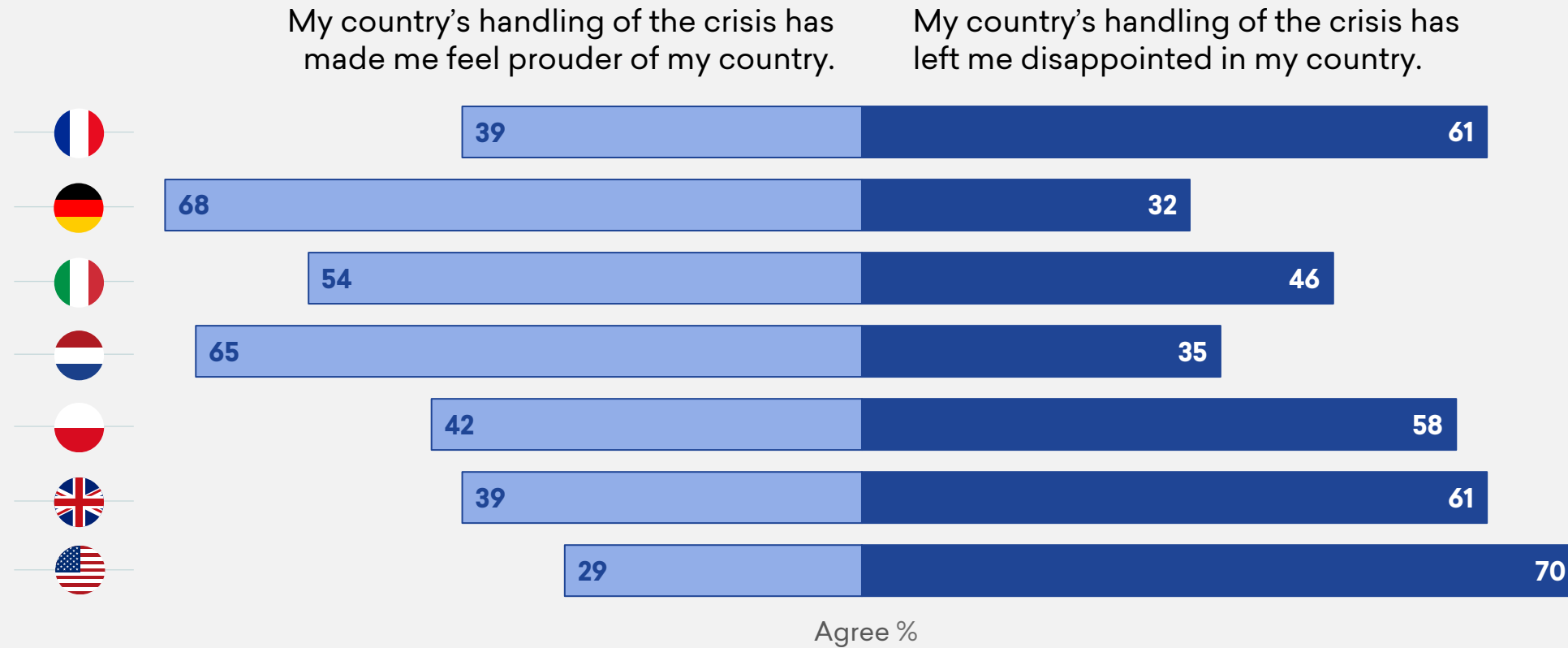


More divided or united since COVID-19?



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

Pride or Shame: Perceptions differ about each country's handling of the crisis.

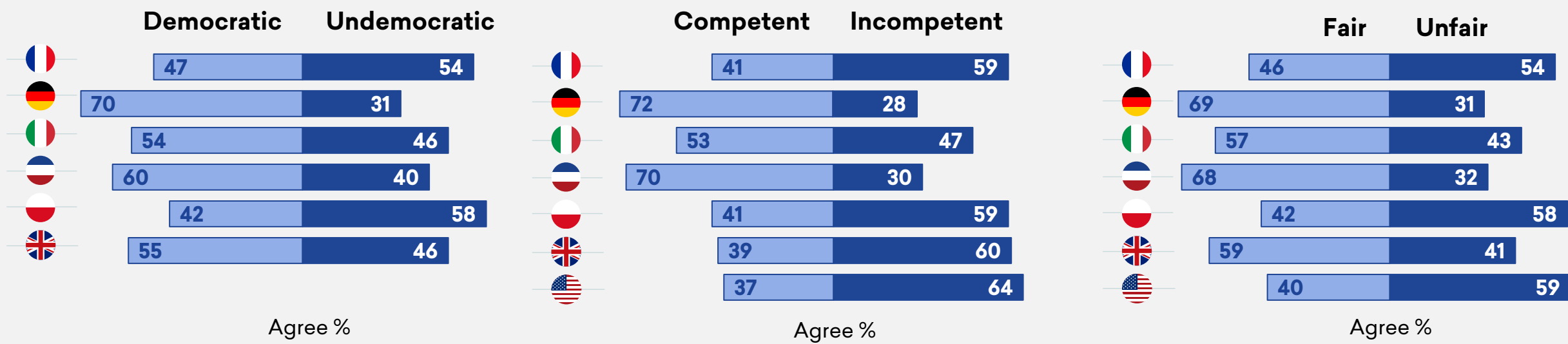


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

On their handling of the crisis, only Germany and the Netherlands do well.

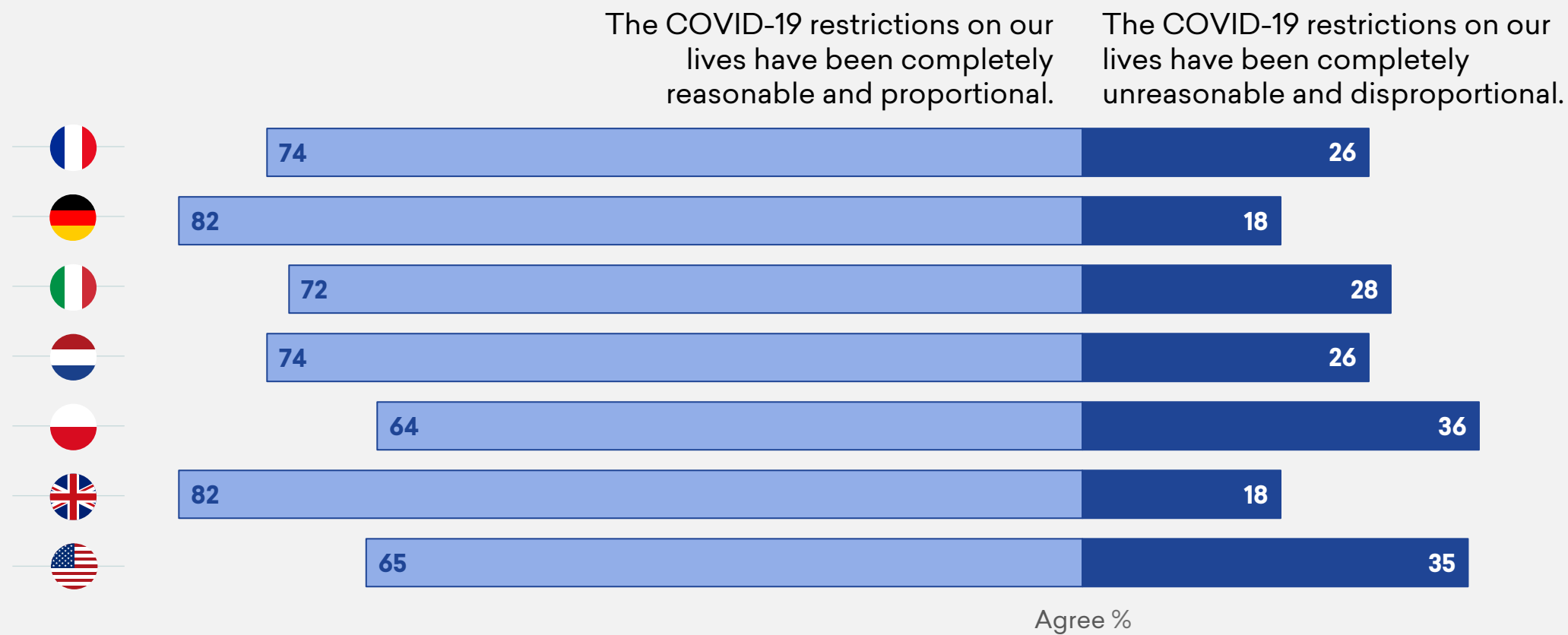


Perception of governments' handling of the crisis.



Question: When you think of how the [NATIONALITY] government has managed the COVID-19 situation so far, which of the following opposing terms describes government action better?
Please note: first question was not asked in the United States.

Most people feel that COVID-19 restrictions have been reasonable.

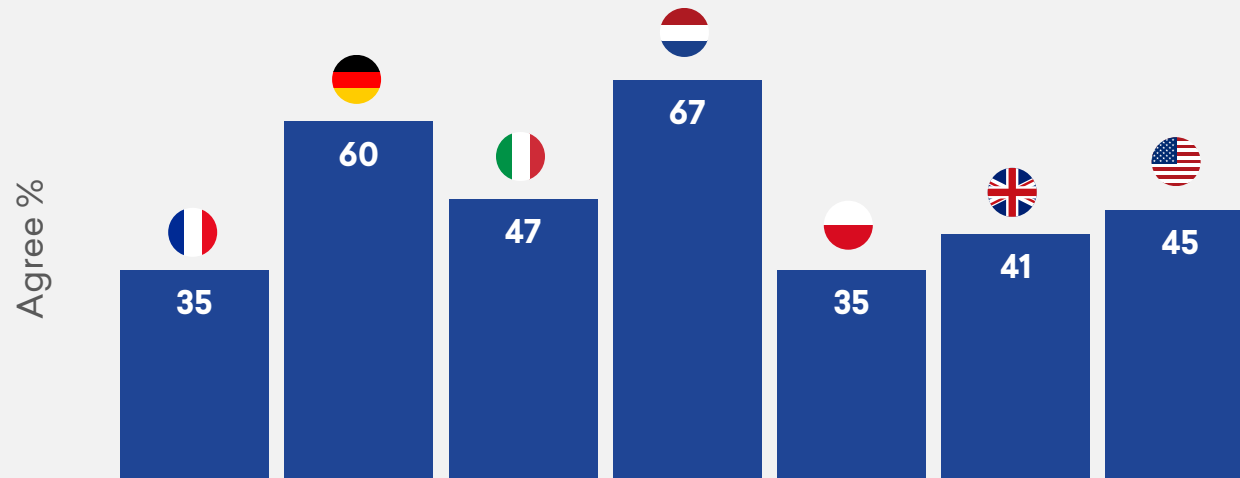


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

Only a minority of people are confident their government is able to deal with future crises.



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

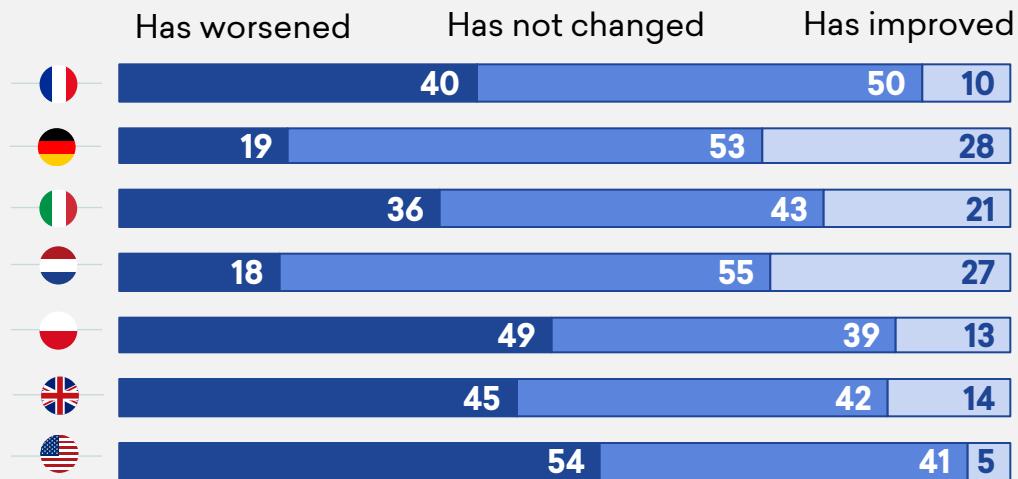


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Everywhere, trust in local government has suffered much less than trust in national government.

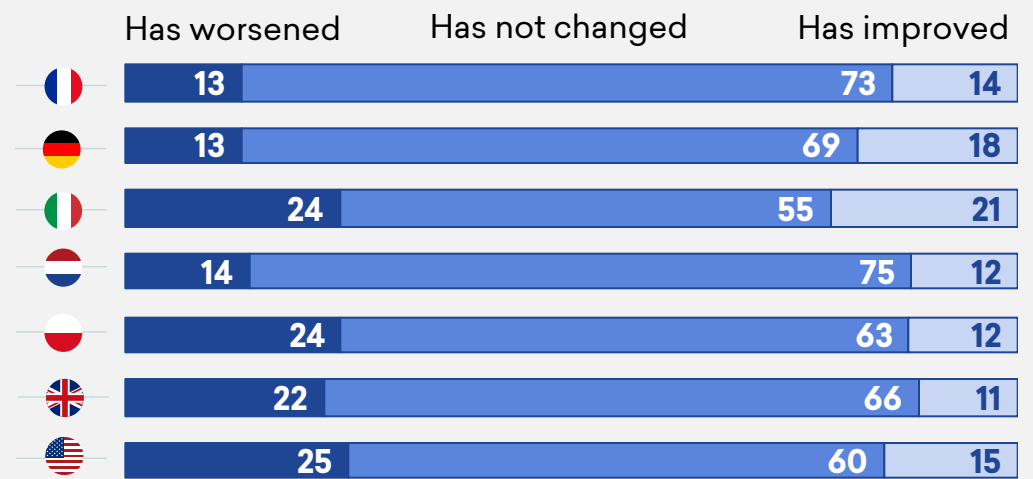


Trust in National Government



Numbers in %

Trust in Local Government



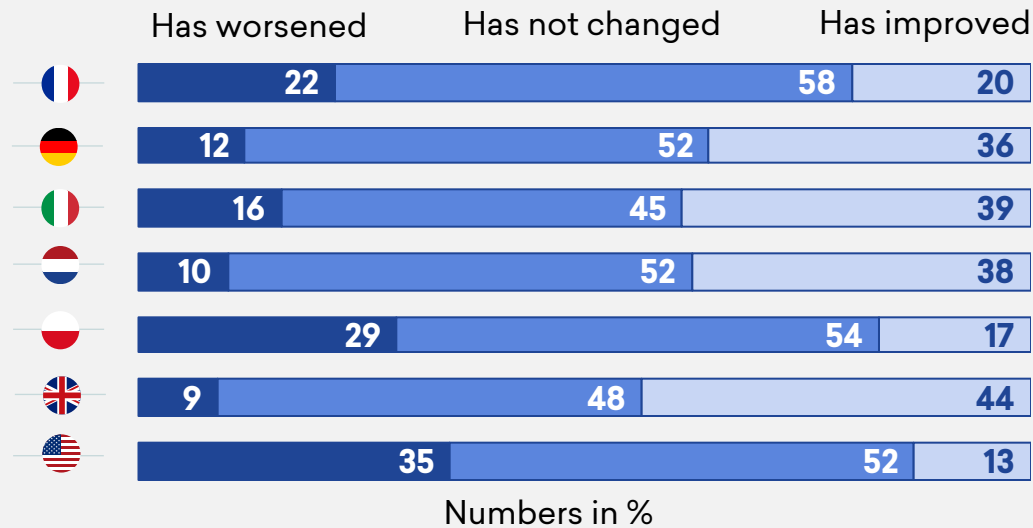
Numbers in %

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

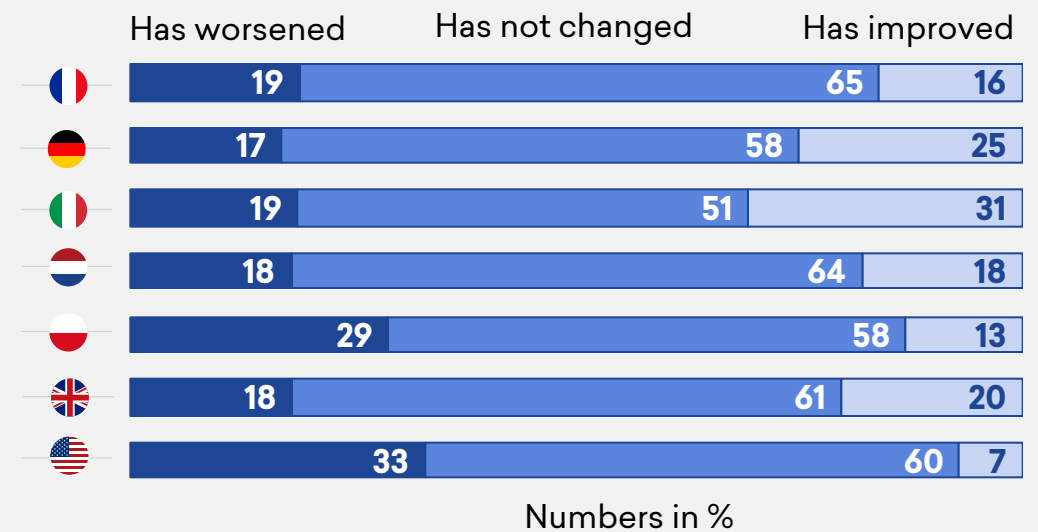
Trust in the health system has increased more than trust in the welfare system, with some outliers.



Trust in the Health System



Trust in the Welfare System

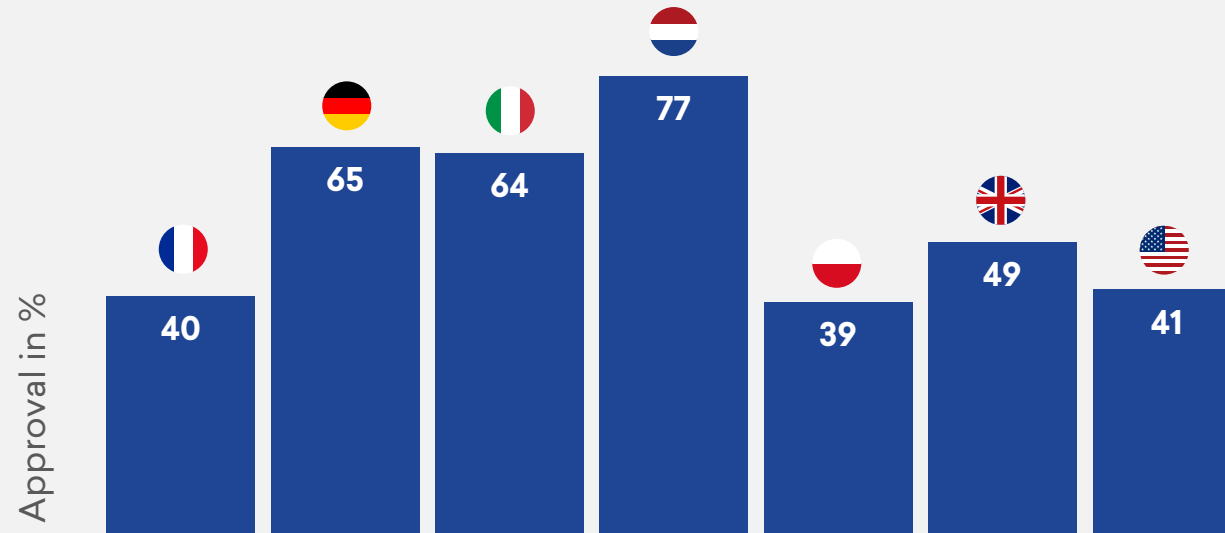


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

Heads of State: Germany, Italy and the Netherlands stand out in their approvals.



Approval of Head of State

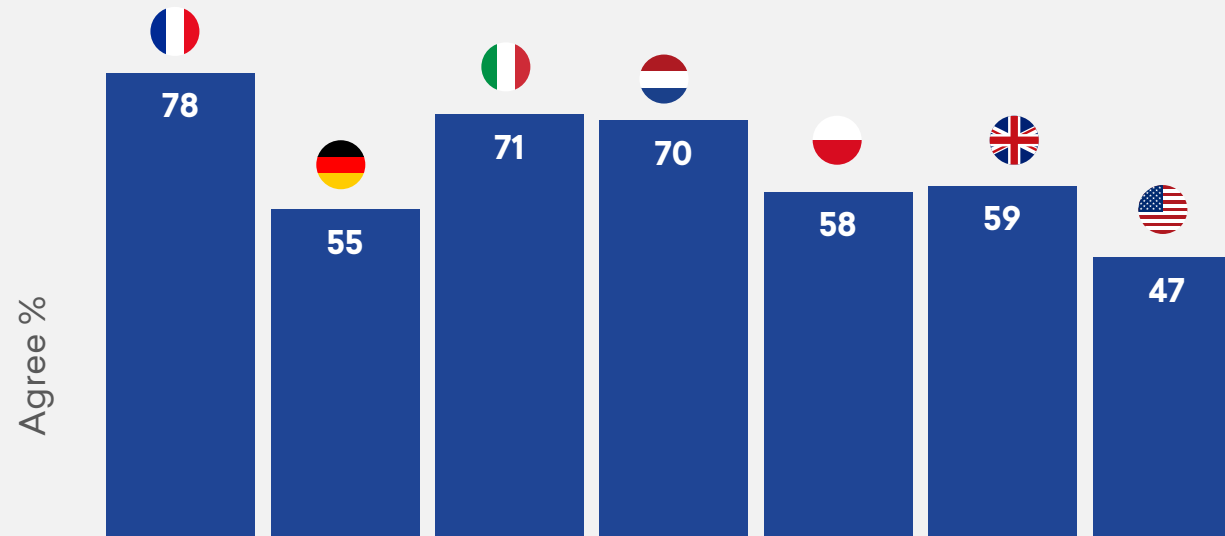


Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way [HEAD OF GOVERNMENT / STATE] is doing his/her job?

In several countries, we see a desire for a strong leader, willing to break rules.



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

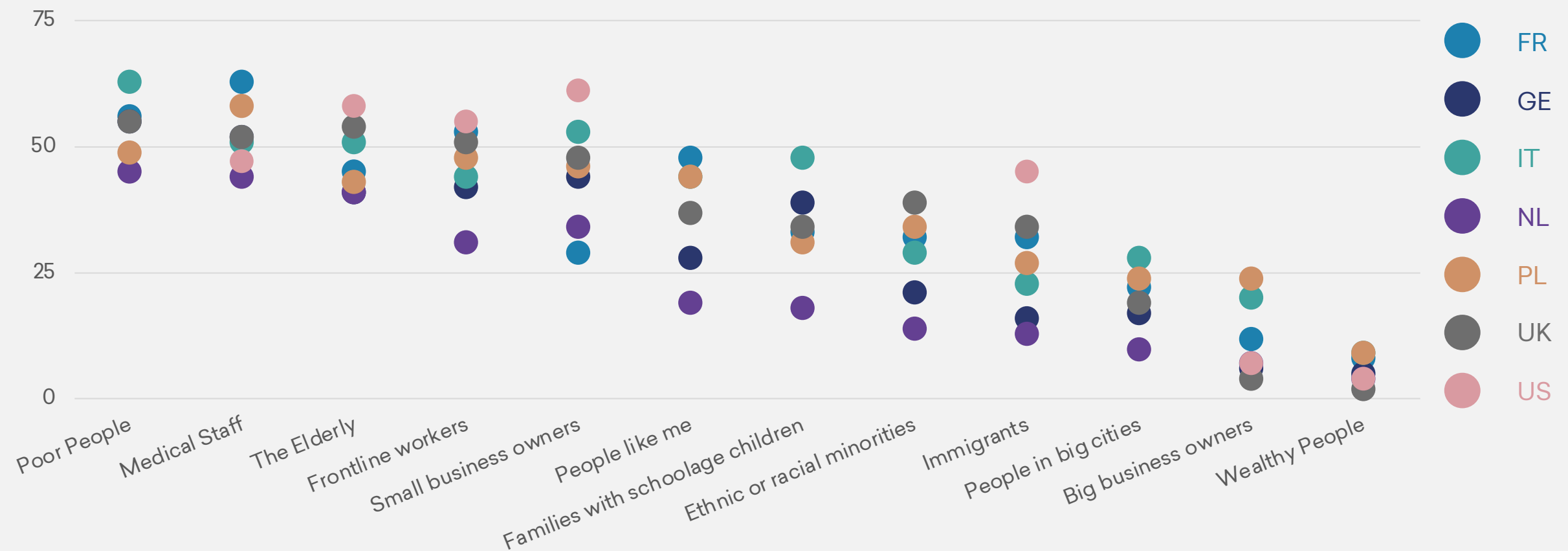


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Most believe government cares too little about essential workers and the vulnerable.



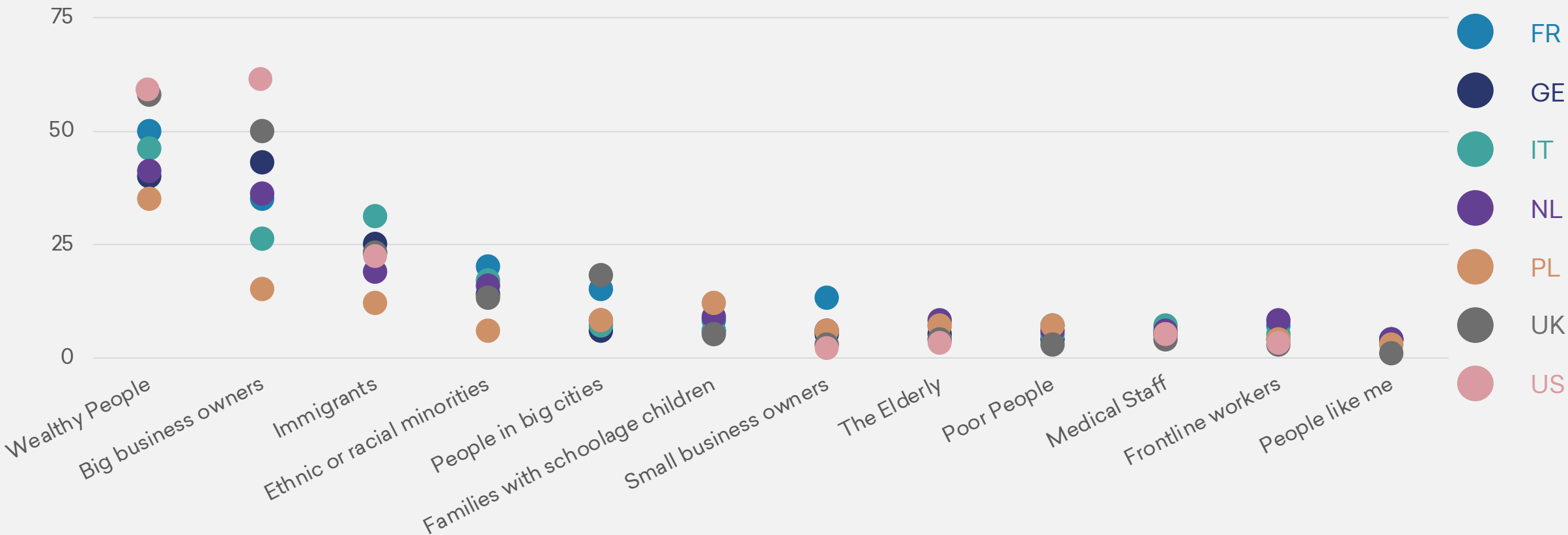
Groups that government cares too little about...



People believe their government cares too much about big business and the rich.



Groups that government cares too much about...



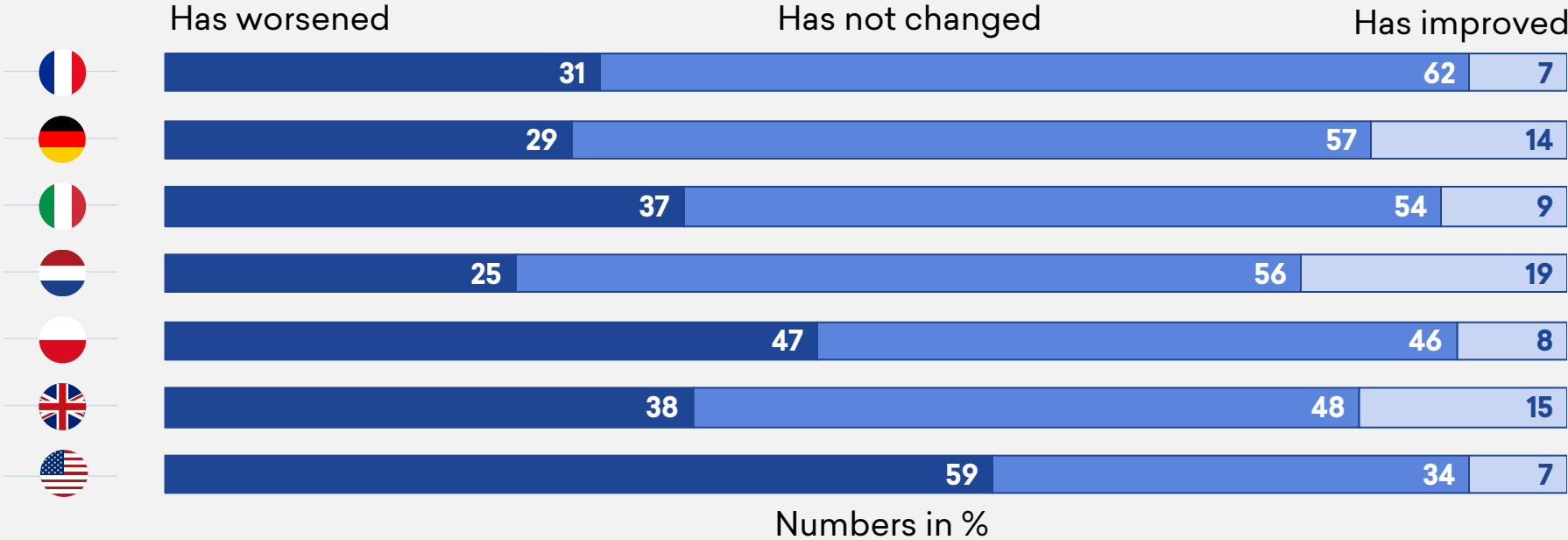
Question: Please indicate how much the [NATIONALITY] government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the COVID-19 situation...

Not shown for the US: the unemployed, younger people, state government leaders, town government leaders, journalists, teachers, religious leaders, long-haul truck drivers, farmers, postal workers.

More people believe the tone of public debate has worsened rather than improved.



How has the tone of public debate changed during the crisis?



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

People trust their relatives, experts and their doctor for information on COVID-19.



Who do people trust for reliable information on COVID-19?

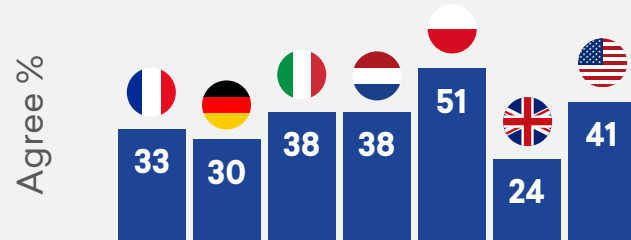


Question: Please indicate to what extent, if at all, you trust these groups of people or institutions when it comes to accurate and reliable information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

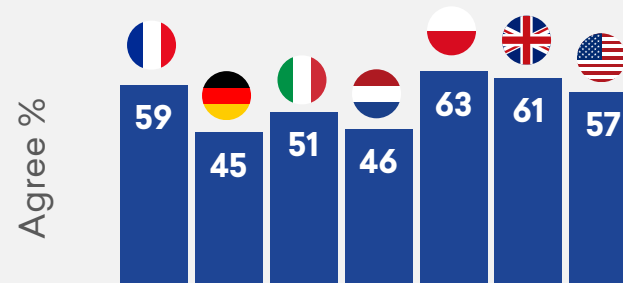
Citizens suspect their government of hiding things about COVID-19 and distrust the media's motives.



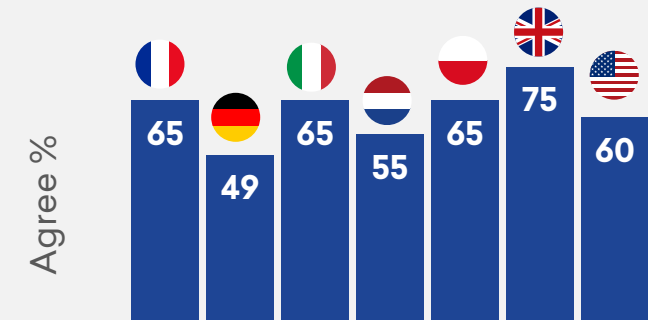
“The government is making this crisis seem bigger than it is to push through their own agenda.”



“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.”



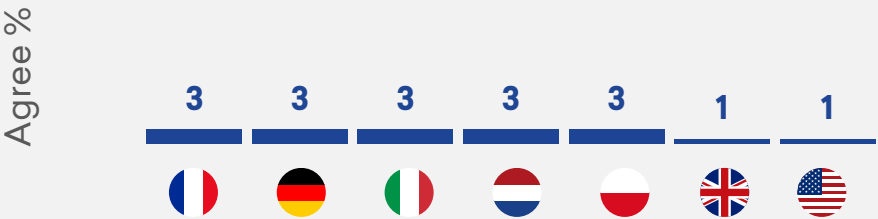
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Few people publicly protested their government's COVID-19 policies.

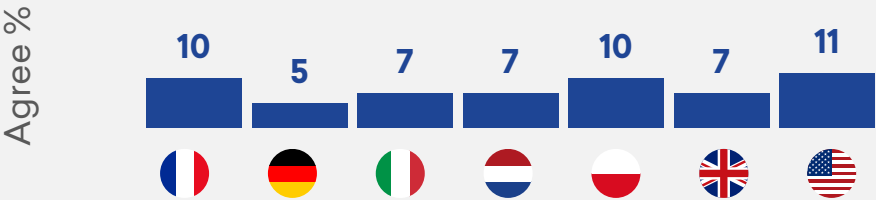


Participation in Anti-Government Protest

Attended a protest against COVID-related government policies.

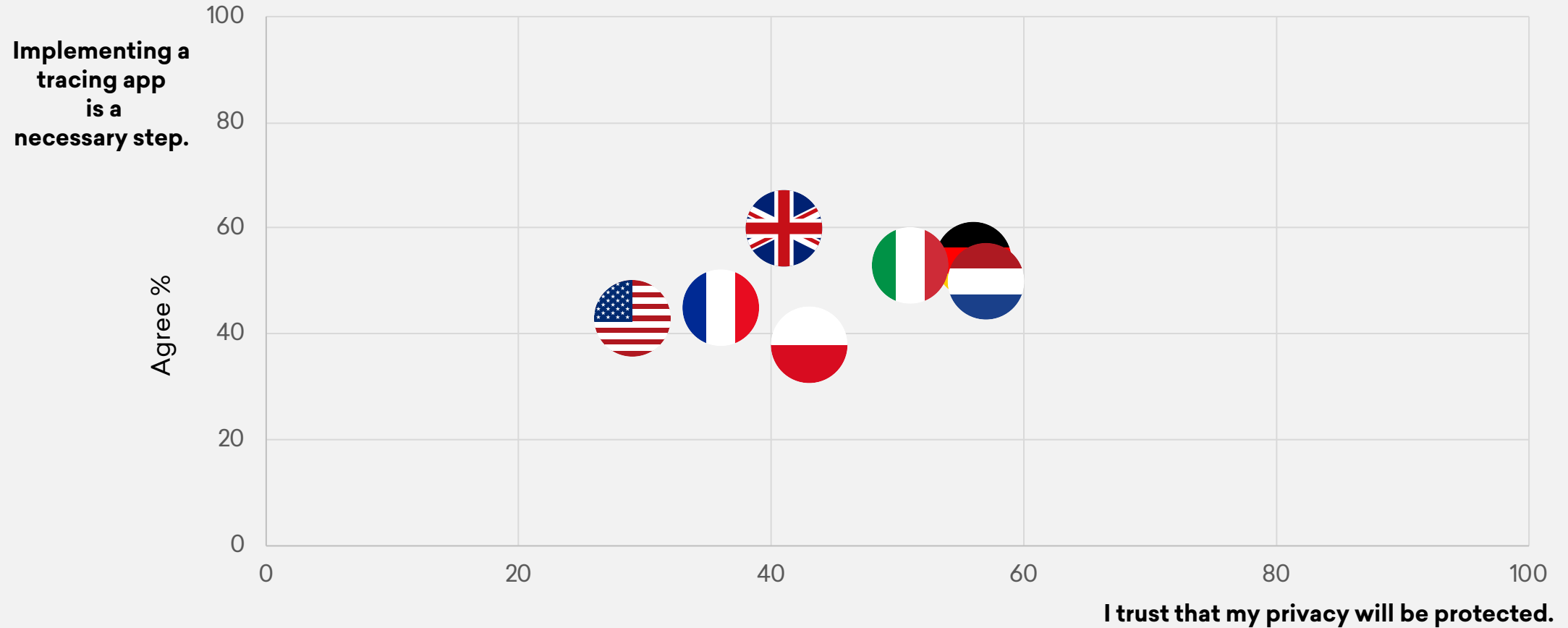


Posted on social media against COVID-19 government policies.



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

On mobile tracing apps, opinions vary on privacy more than on necessity.

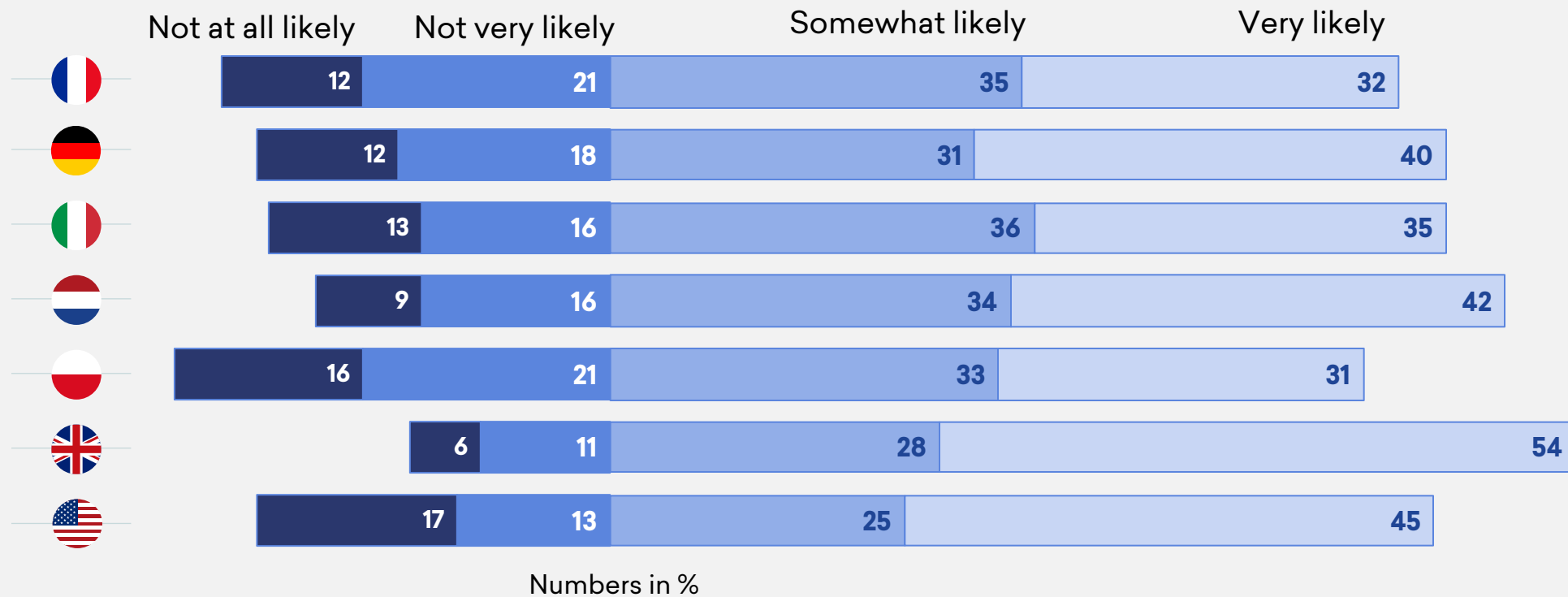


Question: Many governments are debating or rolling out mobile tracing apps to manage and reduce the spread of COVID-19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Around 30% of people in most countries would not take a COVID-19 vaccine.



Willingness to get vaccinated



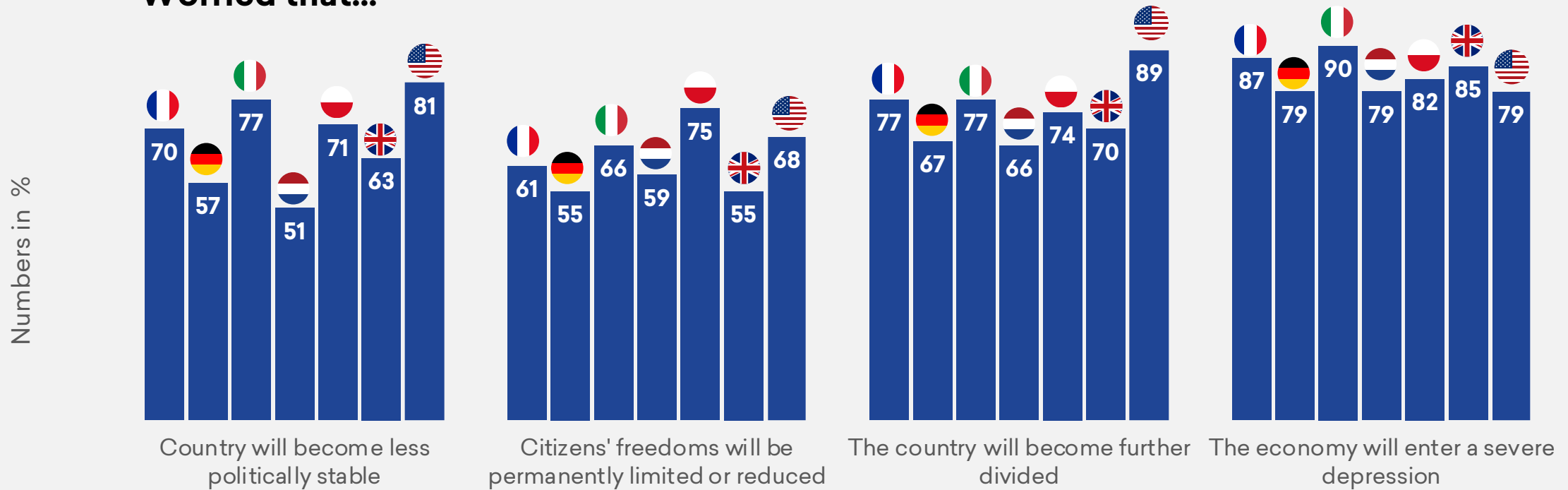
Question: If a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 is developed, how likely would you be to get vaccinated?

IV. After COVID-19



Coming out of the crisis, most people fear greater division and an economic downturn.

Worried that...

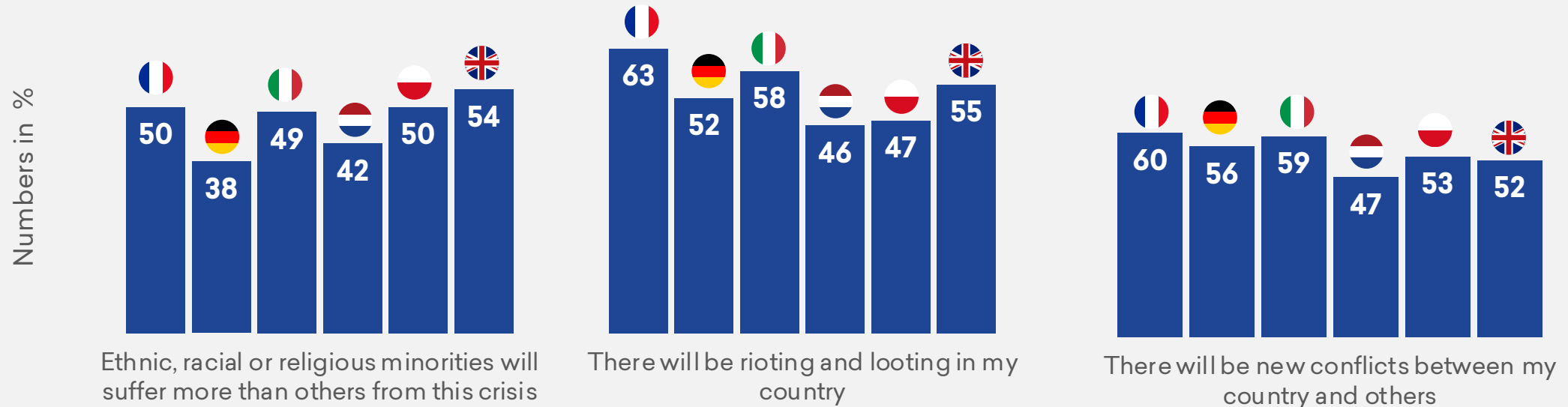


Question: To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that....?

People are concerned about the stability of their nation as well as the welfare of minorities.










Worried that...



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

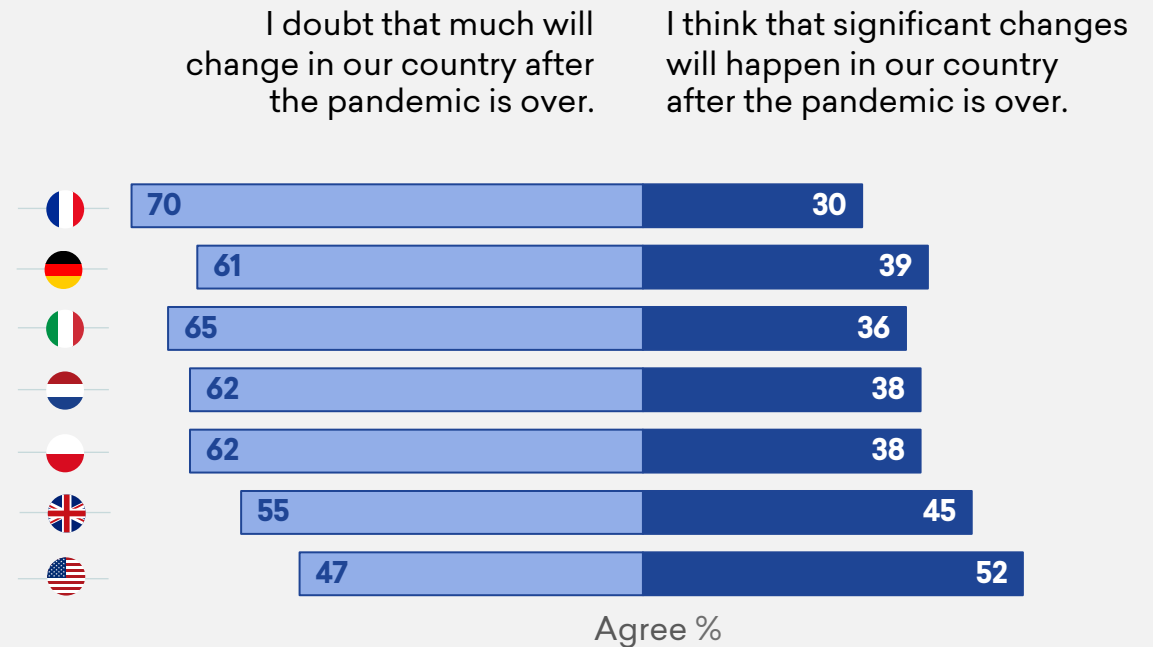
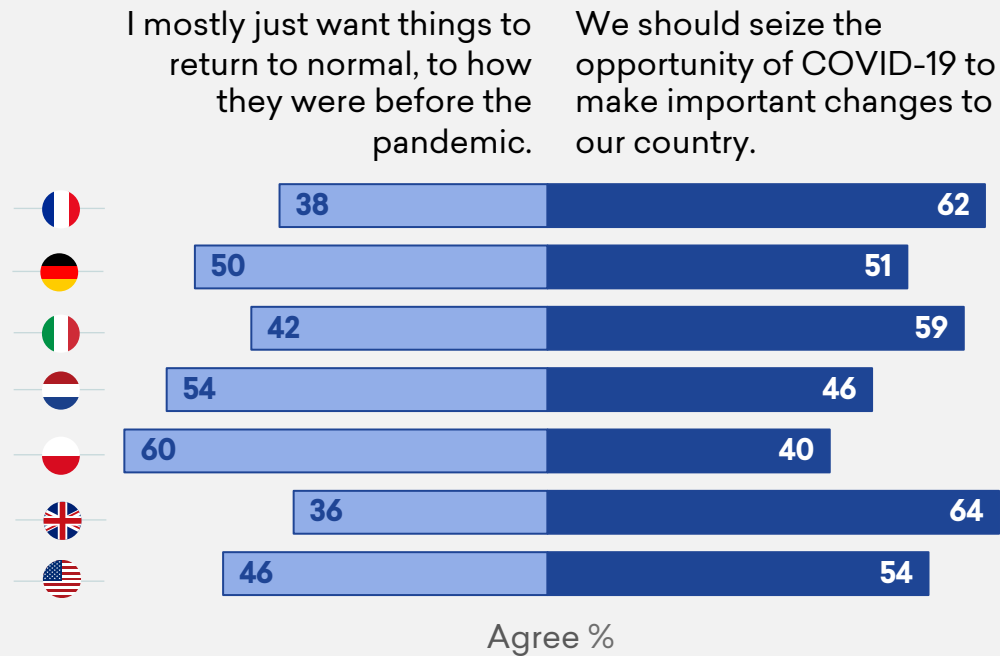
Policy priorities: healthcare, employment and environment.



							
Improving our health system	38	24	36	46	56	41	33
Reducing unemployment	34	19	48	30	35	30	26
Protecting climate and environment	33	31	20	24	25	28	15
Supporting individuals and families in greatest need	18	28	28	28	24	25	21
Supporting small business	28	21	29	20	23	20	19
Reducing immigration and refugee intake	26	23	21	20	12	21	17
Reducing economic inequality	22	19	23	16	15	18	15
Fighting crime and violence	20	23	13	20	11	25	27
Improving our education system	11	22	17	10	14	14	11
Protecting democratic rights and freedoms	9	14	8	12	18	10	19
Addressing racism in our society	8	17	5	13	7	19	25
Reducing terrorism	12	11	5	12	4	13	9
Improving cooperation between countries	6	10	5	9	8	8	
Reducing political division	3	8	6	6	16	5	12
Strengthening European integration	4	7	7	5	8		
Working towards gender equality	7	4	7	3	5	2	3
Protecting ethnic, racial and religious minorities	3	3	3	4	4	6	8

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

Populations in the hardest hit countries want change, but majorities do not expect that change to materialize.

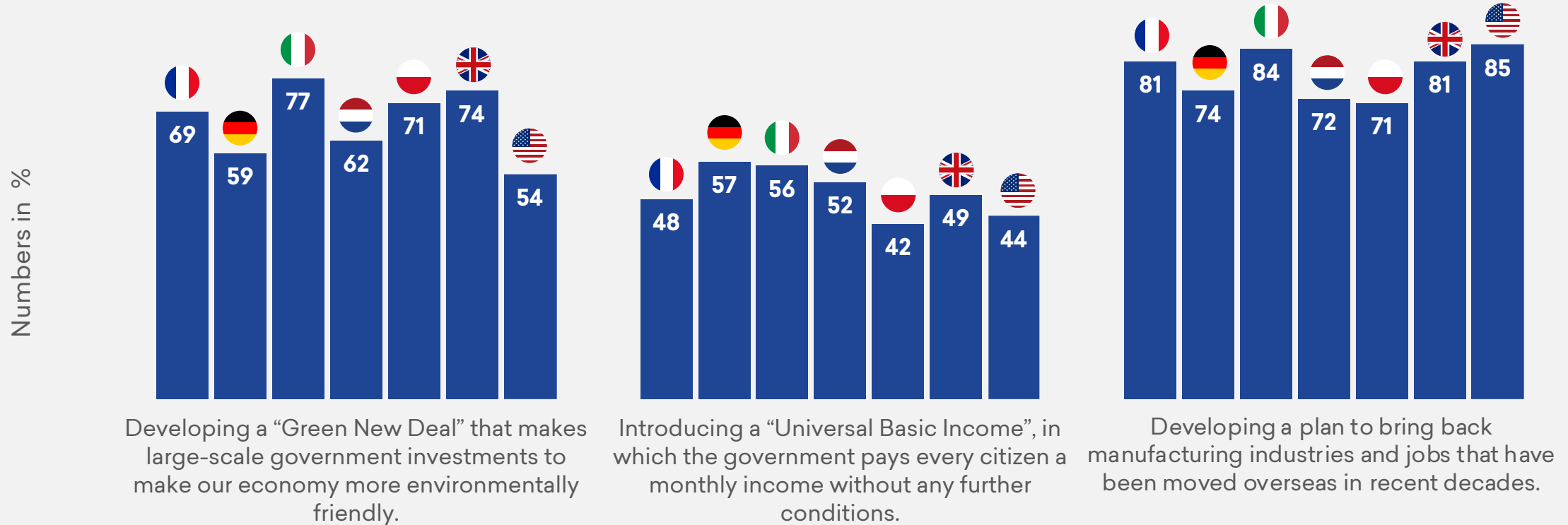


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

There is strong support for policies to bring jobs back from overseas and for a Green New Deal.

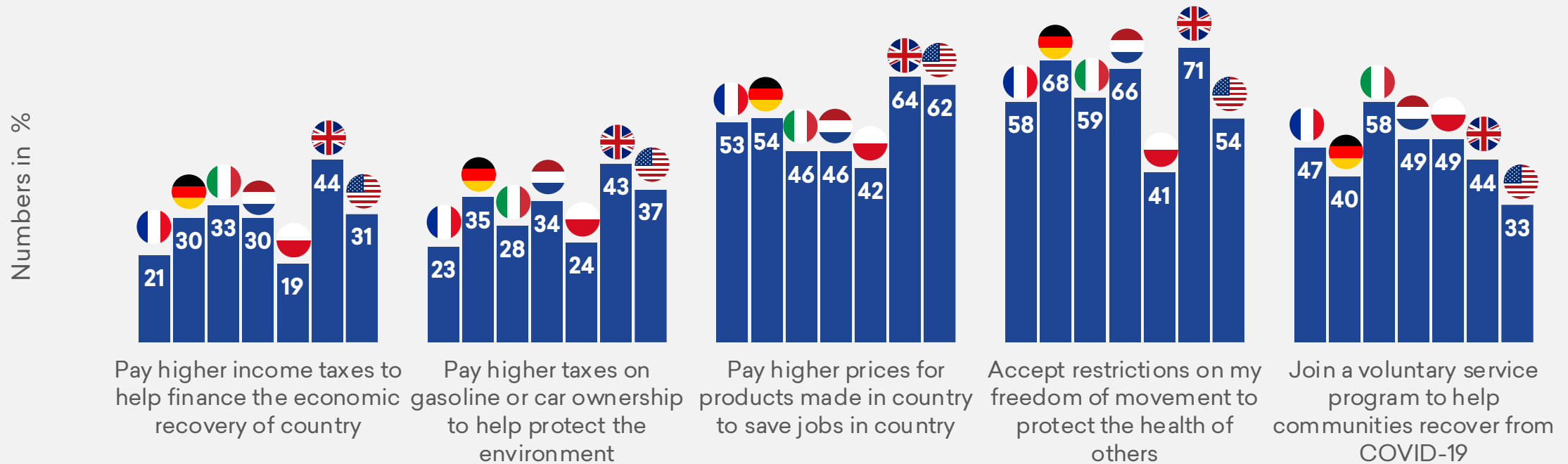


Support for Visionary Policies



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

People are willing to make personal sacrifices for the recovery, to varying extents.

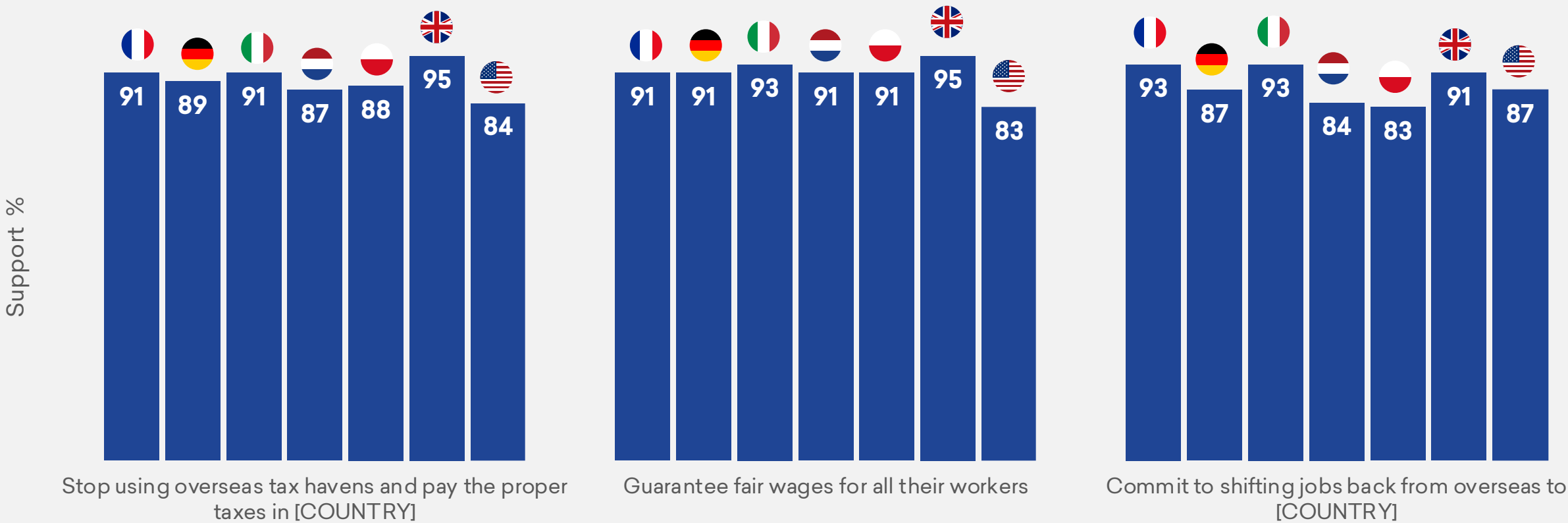


Question: When it comes to your actions during and after the crisis, would you personally be willing or not to do the following...

Nearly all believe that packages to rescue the private sector should be conditional.



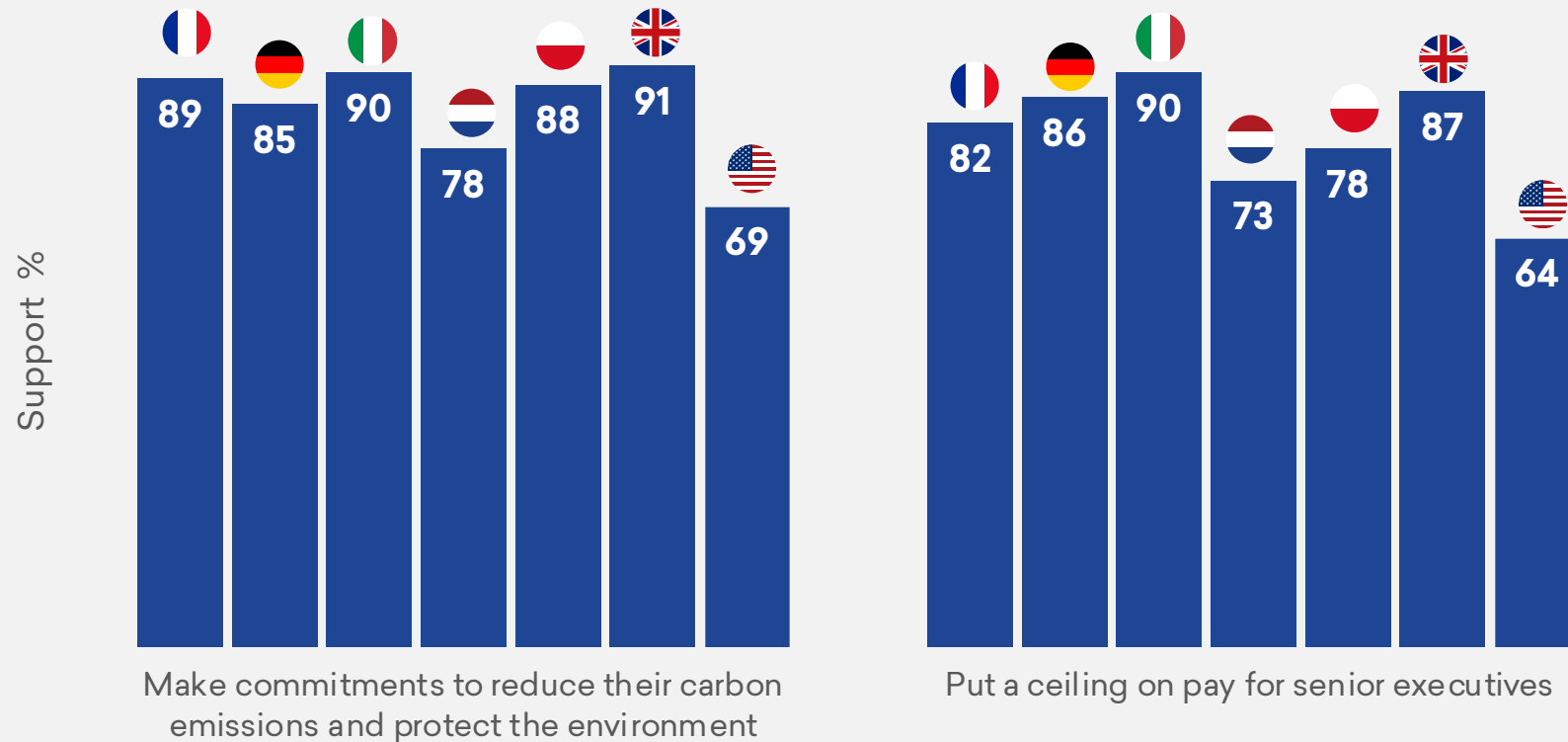
Conditions on Rescue Packages for the Private Sector



Conditions on packages include environmental responsibility, tax havens and fair wages.



Conditions on Rescue Packages for the Private Sector



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?

People aspire to have their country be safer, fairer and more environmentally-friendly.



The country should become more...



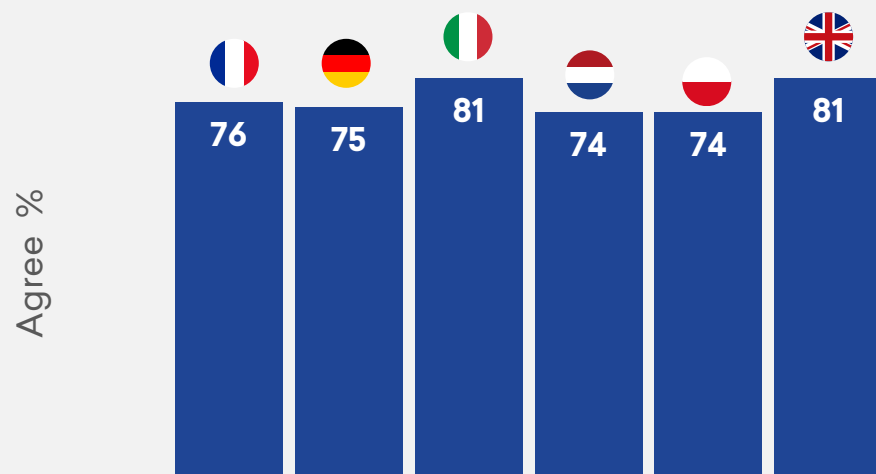
The country should become more...						
Environmentally-friendly	38	31	26	24	31	22
Fair	33	21	28	36	19	18
Safe	25	22	32	25	21	18
Healthy	14	13	32	23	27	20
Democratic	17	20	22	31	12	10
United	14	23	11	26	18	29
Tolerant	19	10	18	25	19	14
Equal	8	15	21	12	20	25
Educated	13	22	6	13	21	21
Family-oriented	26	16	8	10	12	16
Hard-working	4	26	9	11	19	19
Patriotic	7	11	12	9	12	18
Traditional	11	7	14	6	8	10
Compassionate	10	3	10	3	17	22
Prosperous	3	12	9	10	9	9
Self-confident	13	10	6	8	5	3
Christian	5	7	6	7	5	13

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

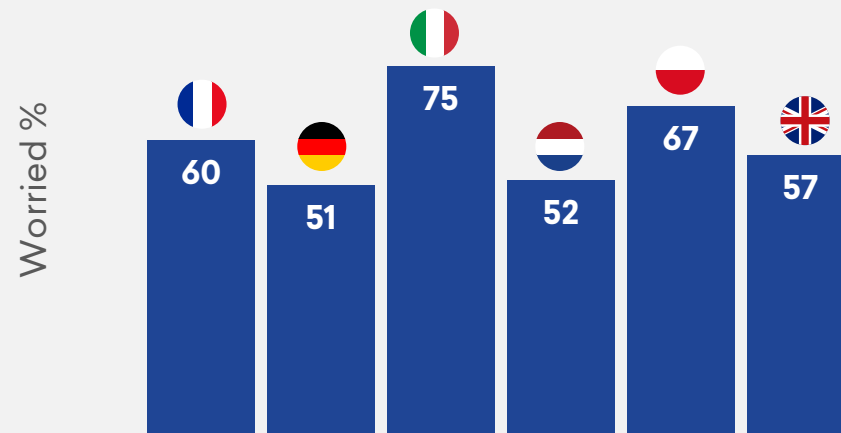


Drops in emissions show the potential of climate policy, but most worry momentum will falter.

“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.”



“Commitment to protecting the environment will slow down or stop.”

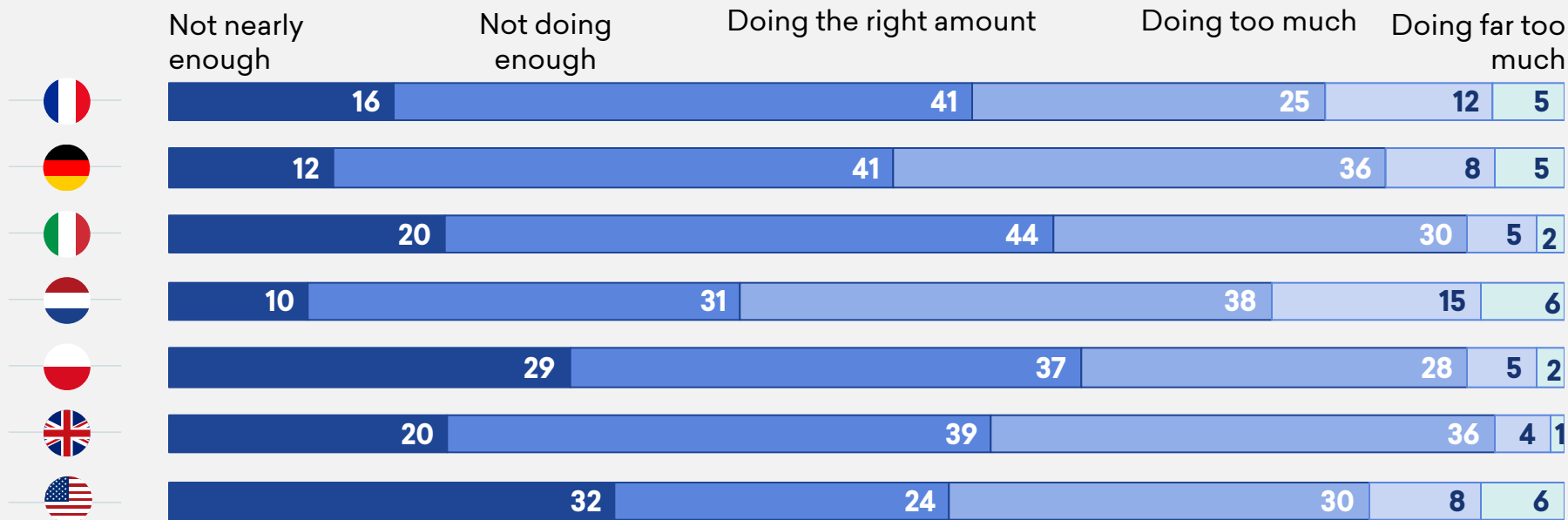


Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?; To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that...?

Most people feel their government is not doing enough on the environment.



On the environment, the government is doing...



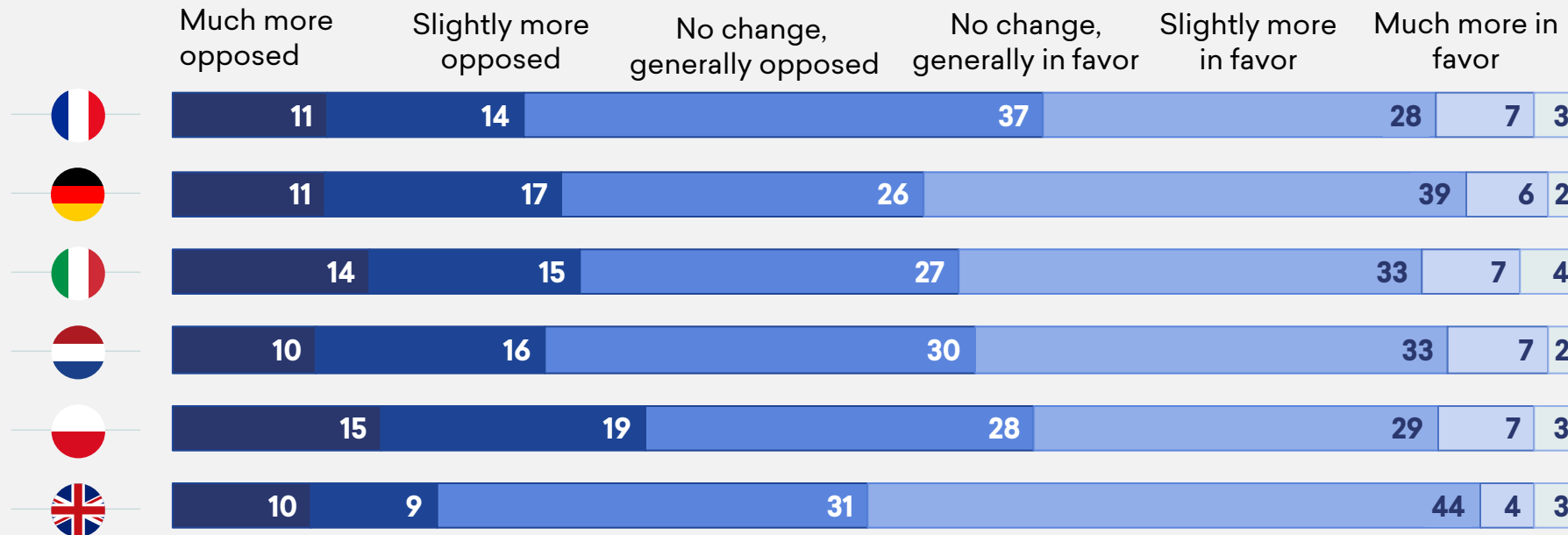
Numbers in %

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

Views on welcoming migrants are mostly unchanged, but some have become more opposed since the pandemic began.



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 [COUNTRY], if at all?

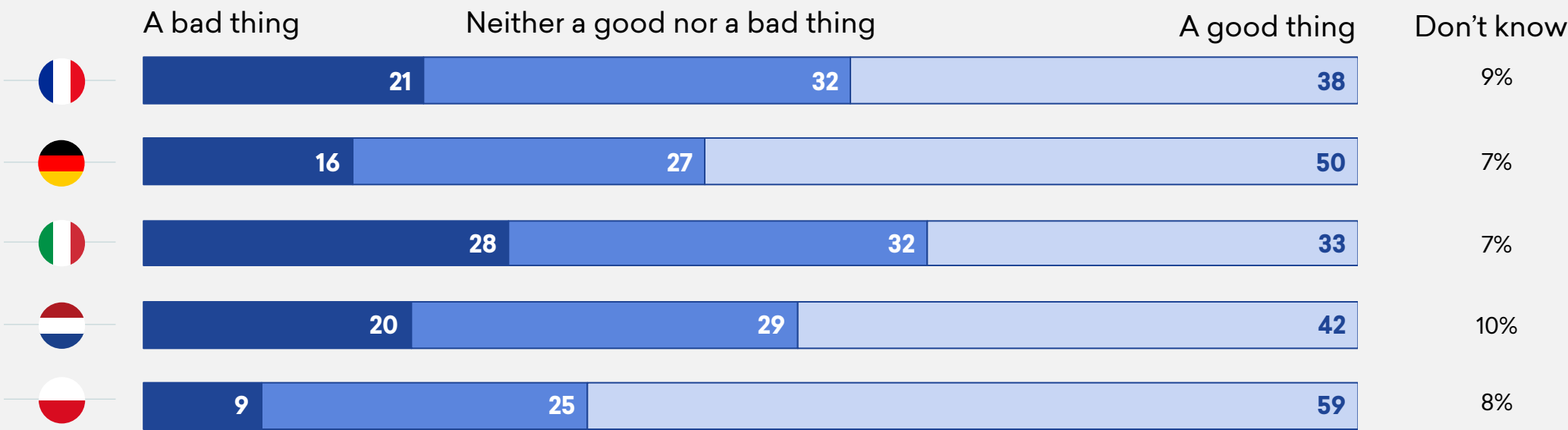
V. Views on the European Union, European Policies and Social Cohesion in Europe

This section includes data from France, Germany, Italy, Poland and The Netherlands and, where relevant, the United Kingdom, but not the United States.

EU membership is viewed in neutral or positive terms by most people.



EU Membership is...



Numbers in %

Question: Generally speaking, would you say that [COUNTRY's] membership of the EU is...?

EU's importance is expected to increase in the future.



EU Membership will be...



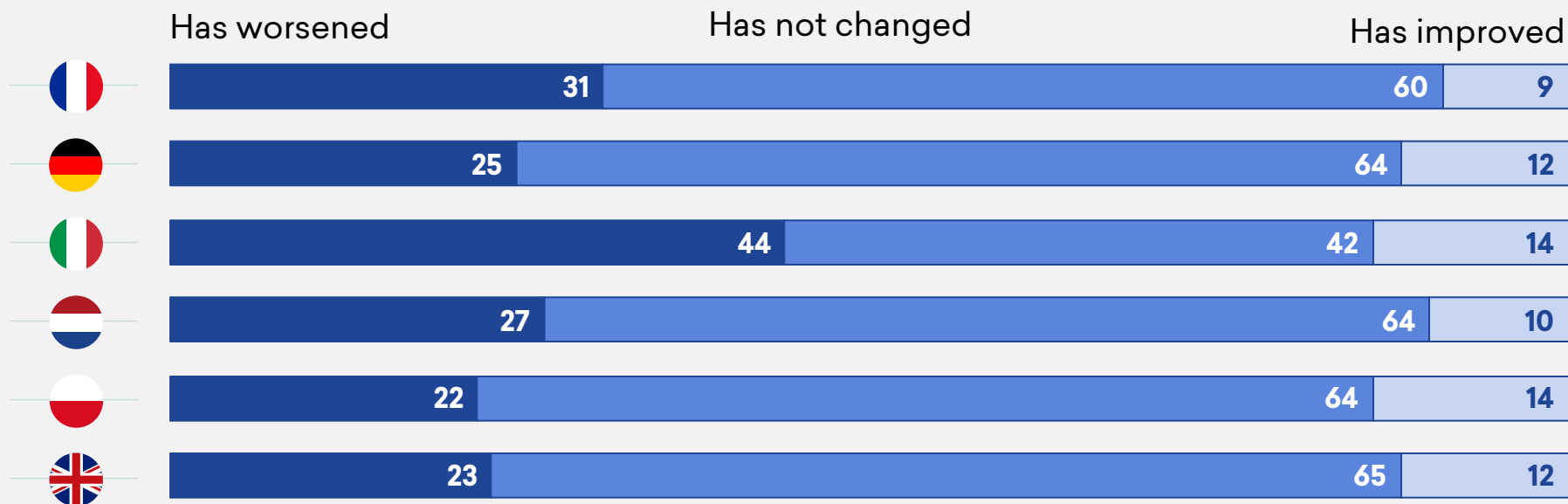
Numbers in %

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

Since the pandemic began, views of the EU have worsened rather than improved, especially amongst Italians.



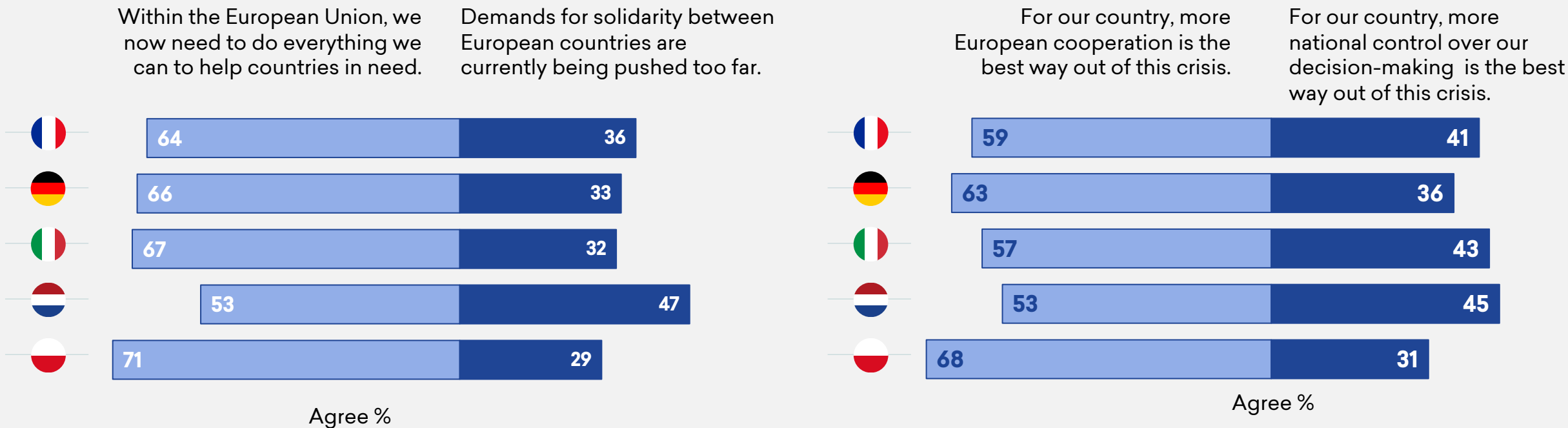
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, trust in the EU...



Numbers in %

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

But most agree that more European cooperation is the best way out of this crisis.

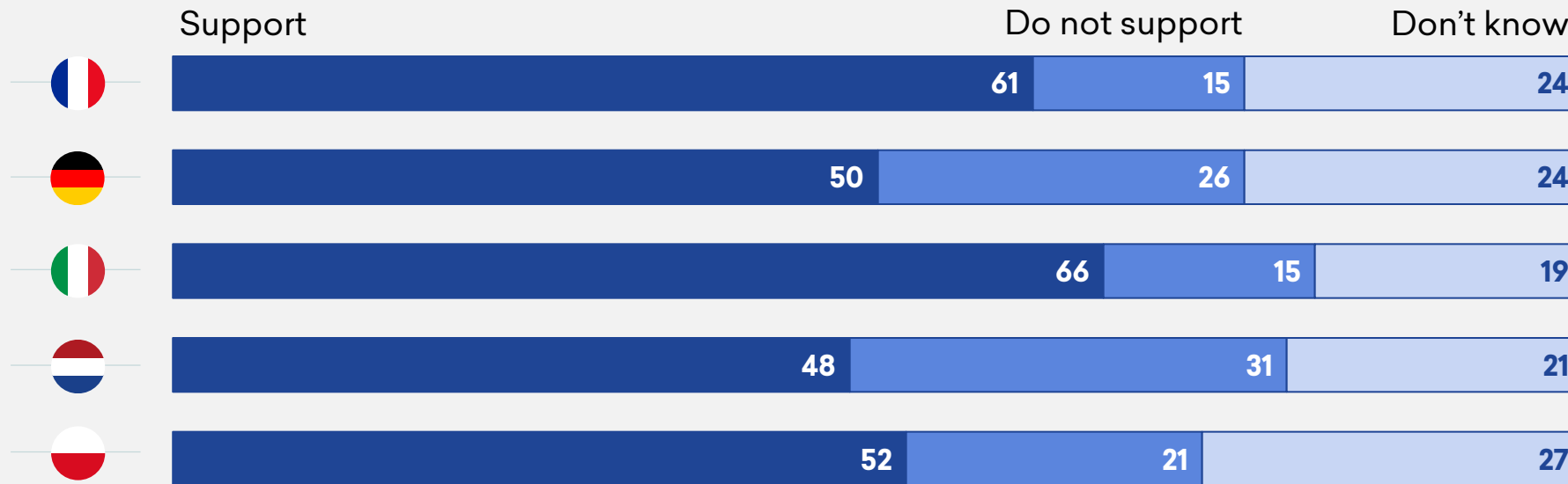


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more? Numbers for “do not know” not indicated

The largest group in every country supports taking on common European debt to fund the recovery.



"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."



Numbers in %

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

Most people see the need for international cooperation to solve this and future crises.



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.



Agree %








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

VI. Message Testing

Different Approaches to Governance



A message of duty and penalties resonates better than appeals to freedom and personal responsibility.







							
This crisis should be fought like we are in a war. Everyone has a duty to follow the rules, and those who do not should be penalized at once.	69	61	72	60	67	70	58
In this crisis, we should have faith in people's sense of responsibility. That means that we should not use coercion to enforce the rules.	60	54	63	56	66	54	58

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)

Health vs. Economy



Prioritizing health and life above all else appeals more than prioritizing the economy to any degree.







						
In this crisis, we cannot put a price tag on human life ; each life deserves every possible protection—whether young or old, healthy or sick, citizen or immigrant.	79	79	81	74	81	83
In this crisis, we cannot bankrupt our entire economy in order to keep a small number of people from getting ill. It's impossible to save everyone.	54	51	48	63	62	59
In this crisis, we have a responsibility to all groups : those at risk of disease as well as those at risk of poverty. We must strike a balance.	71	73	78	71	75	77

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)

Environment vs. Economy



Enacting both environmental and economic reform receives more support than either alone.







						
In an emergency like this, we should take care of our economic interests , instead of burdening ourselves with costly environmental rules and regulations that will destroy jobs.	56	53	57	60	55	51
The future climate crisis will be much worse than this pandemic. We should seize the moment now to speed up our action on climate change , even if there are short-term costs.	66	61	68	59	67	66
As we recover from the economic impact of COVID-19, we should build up a better economy that does less harm to the environment .	74	74	80	69	75	77

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)

Environment: Now vs. Later



Saving businesses from collapse gets support with or without environmental considerations.







						
As the government currently works to help restore the economy, it should most of all make sure that money is spent to make our economy greener in the long run.	64	63	74	62	71	68
As the government currently works to help restore the economy, it should most of all make sure that money is spent to save our current businesses and industries from collapse.	75	69	79	68	75	71
As the government currently works to help restore the economy, it should make sure that money is spent to save our businesses and to make them greener in the long run.	74	66	75	62	71	72

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)

Recovery Funds: Local vs. National



People want economic recovery funds to be shared between local and national governments.






						
Economic recovery funds should be managed by the national government, not local governments , because the national government will be more effective at saving jobs.	53	54	57	63	46	56
Economic recovery funds should be channeled to local governments , who will be more effective than the national government in saving jobs.	65	61	64	58	67	59
Economic recovery funds should be allocated in a shared effort between national and local levels of government.	66	68	71	63	73	69

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)

European Cooperation



There is not a universal view on how EU nations should balance their internal and external needs.

					
In our handling of COVID-19, we should not act alone. We should work with our European neighbors to help the people with the greatest needs, wherever they may be.	65	65	68	61	72
In our handling of COVID-19, we must protect our own people first. Our government should serve us, not other Europeans.	68	60	71	67	67
In our handling of COVID-19, we can look after our own people while also being a responsible member of the European community. We should do both at the same time.	68	67	64	59	73

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (One message tested per respondent.)
Average agreement on a scale from 0 (no agreement) to 100 (full agreement)



Thank you

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