



GLOBSEC

IDEAS SHAPING THE WORLD

GLOBSEC Trends 2022

Poland

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Focus on Poland

Over the years, GLOBSEC Trends has consistently found that Poland is home to the most resounding pro-Western sentiment in the region and lowest sympathies towards Russia or its president. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has intensified these feelings - around 90% of Poles now support their country's membership in Western institutions and consider Russia to be a threat to their security. Russia's actions have, moreover, influenced public attitudes towards another major autocracy - China. The perception of China as a threat to national security has soared from 34% to 43% between 2020 and 2022 and more people now view Xi Jinping unfavourably compared to last year. - Poland is also characterised by

pervasive polarisation on cultural and ideological issues, which many could perceive along the lines of the struggle between conservative and liberal values, most Poles believe that the EU, Western values and/or liberalism pose no threat to their identity. This finding suggests that the values divide has not spilled over into foreign policy and geopolitical views. Some variance, nonetheless, is still apparent across socio-demographic groups. This report scrutinises key trends shaping Polish society this year. It examines generational divides and other socio-demographic differences within society regarding public support for Western institutions, attitudes towards autocratic regimes and trust of government and institutions.



Geopolitical powerplay

Poles have long been unified in expressing resolute support for Western structures and institutions.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Washington's heightened strategic leadership role in both providing support for Ukraine and a security guarantee to the region, more Poles now view the US as their key strategic partner than last year, this figure has surged from 54% to 73%. Germany, by contrast, has witnessed a considerable decline on the same metric dropping from 48% to 27%. While previously about on par with the US, Berlin now stands in third place behind the US and the UK, with the latter enjoying a two-fold increase over the past year in perception as a strategic partner.

These shifts indicate that the conflict has shifted perceptions concerning strategic partnerships. While economic ties and cooperation, embodied in Poland's relationship with Germany, may have played a more significant role pre-war, the conflict has elevated the importance of security to the forefront. Also, Germany has featured extensively in the government's and ruling party's political discourse in the domestic scene. Germany was often presented as an imperialist, revisionist and hostile country.

Who do you perceive as the most important strategic partner for Poland? Change by year

2022 2021

USA



Germany

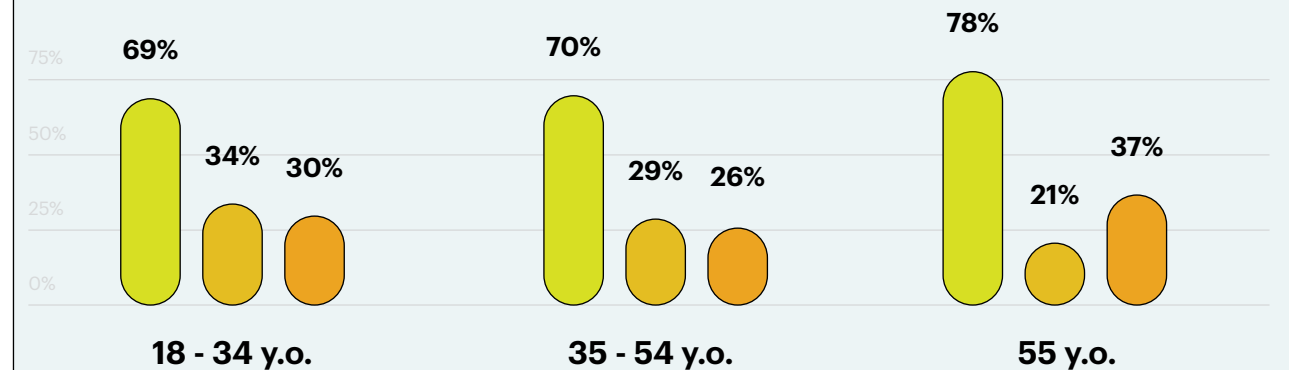


UK



Who do you perceive as the most important strategic partner for Poland? Differences based on age

USA Germany UK

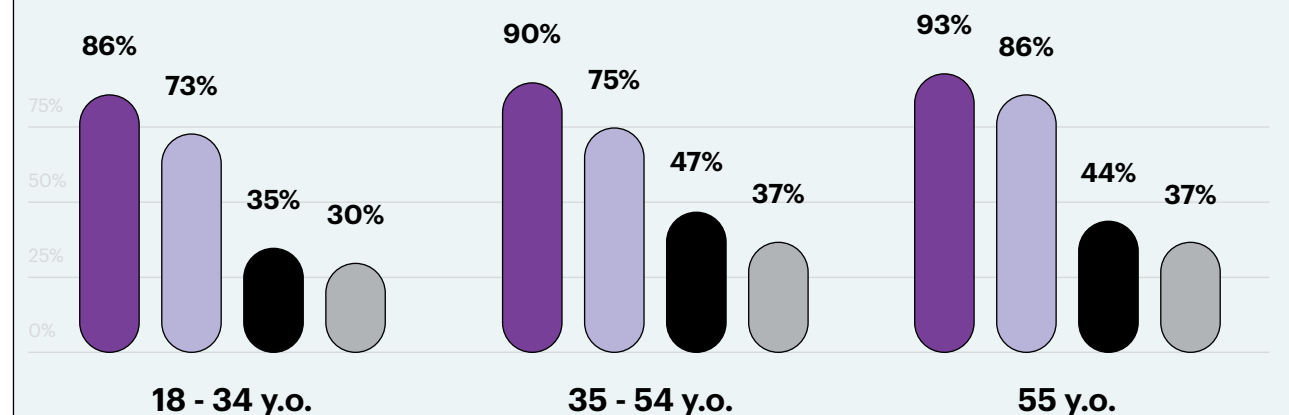


The swings in attitudes were measured across all segments of the population. Older generations are more inclined than others to identify the US and the UK as strategic partners.

Young people, meanwhile, even as they too overall favour the US are slightly more likely to select Germany than their middle-aged and older peers.

Perception of threat based on age

Russia as a security threat Russia as a threat to values
China as a security threat China as a threat to values



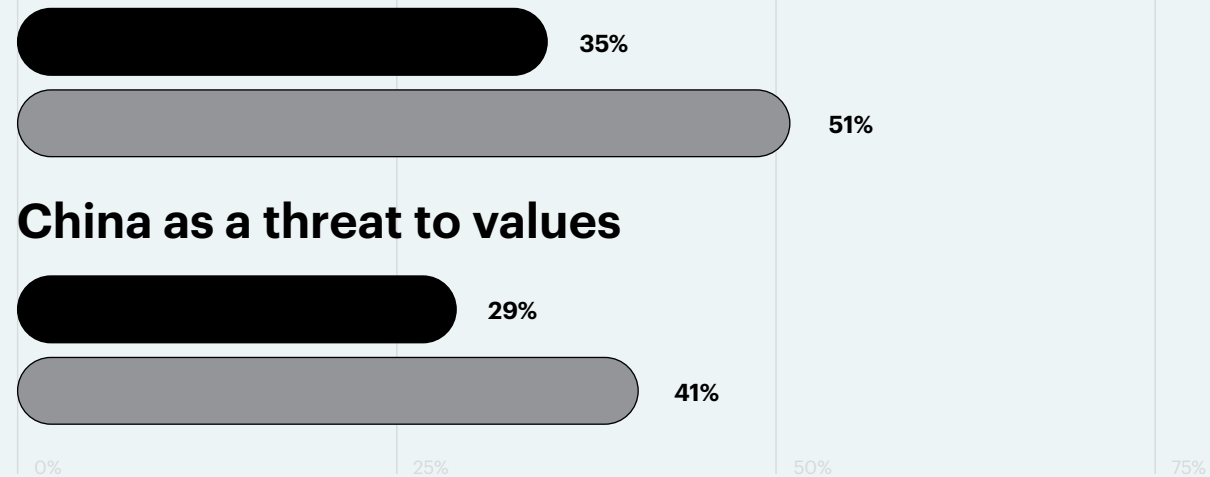
Minor generational differences are also apparent in threat perceptions. Older Poles are slightly more wary about Russia, but also respectively, China. Slightly higher perceptions of China and Russia

as a threat among the same groups might be attributed to an increasingly overall cautious approach towards autocratic regimes adopted by Poles across a variety of topics, as evidenced in the survey.

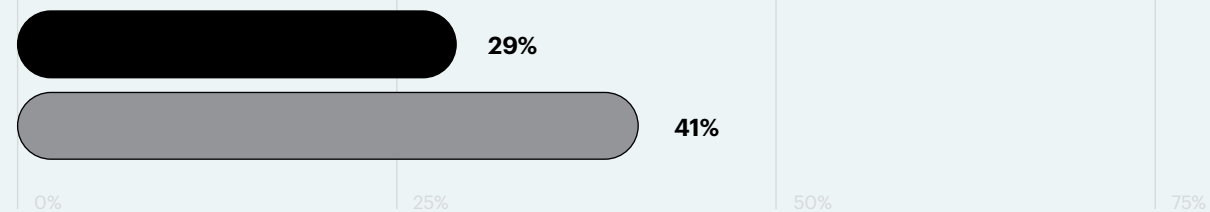
Perception of China based on gender

● Men ● Women

China as a security threat



China as a threat to values



Threat perceptions also differ based on gender, especially concerning China. Whereas women are slightly more likely than men to perceive Russia as a threat, they are far more inclined to say the same about China - the gulf between women and men stands at 16 percentage points here.

In conclusion, women and respondents aged 35+ end, have stood out as the key drivers of increasingly cautious attitudes towards China in Poland. The same socio-demographic groups have also demonstrated greater awareness concerning Chinese President Xi Jinping, with negative views of the leader rising, on average, by 14 percentage points.

Internal polarisation

While satisfaction with how democracy works in the country has increased by 8 percentage points to 55%, other domestic governance indicators signal no change whatsoever or even a small decrease in satisfaction.

While the trust in the president increased over the past year to 52%, the trust in the government, armed forces and media remains constant when compared to 2021 at 41%, 75% and 33% respectively. The belief that “the needs of people like me are well taken into account by the political system in Poland” has even slightly declined from 42% to 37%.

These findings may indicate that the overall satisfaction of democracy has been influenced by the presence of war in the neighbourhood. The sight of a free and democratic neighbour invaded and compelled to defend itself in a brutal war may contribute to a sense of gratitude among Poles for their peaceful, safe and relatively well functioning democracy. Poland’s resolute and swift response to the invasion through aid and assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees could also be contributing to increased national pride- there might have been a rally-around-the flag phenomenon at play with people trying to support the Polish state in the face of external threat.

Sharp differences, however, are apparent in society. Support for institutions, democracy and the governance system, notably, rises with age. It also varies based on education - the highly educated are more likely to support democracy - and place of residence - urban residents tend to back democracy more.

While greater variance in views across socio-demographic groups was observed in questions regarding geopolitical issues, when related to support for the governance system, internal polarisation is apparent between younger, more educated and urban segments of society on the one hand and older, less educated and rural residents on the other. The latter group largely comprises the electorate of the governing party, PiS.

Satisfaction with how democracy works in Poland rises with age and declines with levels of education.

Cultural wars remain an internal matter

Poland has experienced polarisation and significant turmoil on cultural and ideological issues, including abortion and the establishment of “LGBTI-free zones”.² Yet these divisions do not seem to have translated into different views towards the West, which tends to be identified by far-right or strongly conservative populist actors as the “bearer of a decadent liberal ideology”.³ Due to the strong identification of Poles with the West and support for Western structures, these narratives find little resonance in the country, compared to, for example, Hungary and Slovakia. Overwhelming majorities reject the idea that their values or identity are threatened either by the West, the EU or liberalism. This sentiment is most prevalent among university-educated respondents and women.

However, as the society enters its long pre-election period, and as several political parties run on anti-EU and anti-German ticket, it is possible that the attitudes will be changing and the internal divisions will begin to spill over into foreign policy choices of Poles.

Do you personally think any of the following groups or countries threaten your identity and values or not?

● Yes ● No

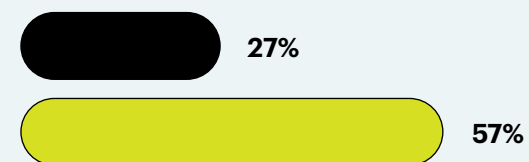
Western societies and their way of living



European Union

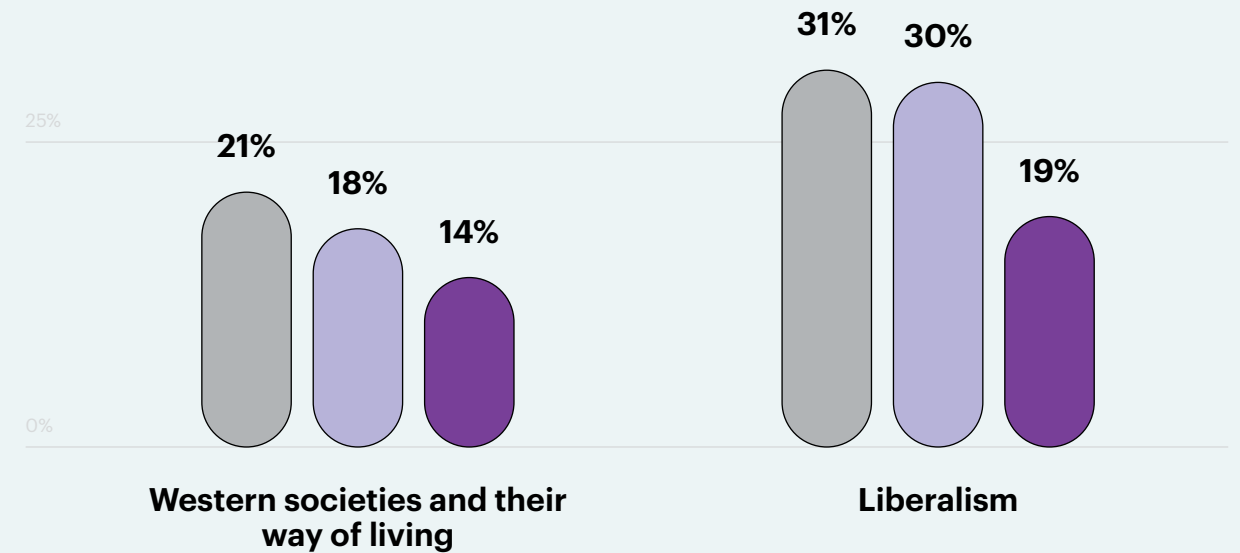


Liberalism



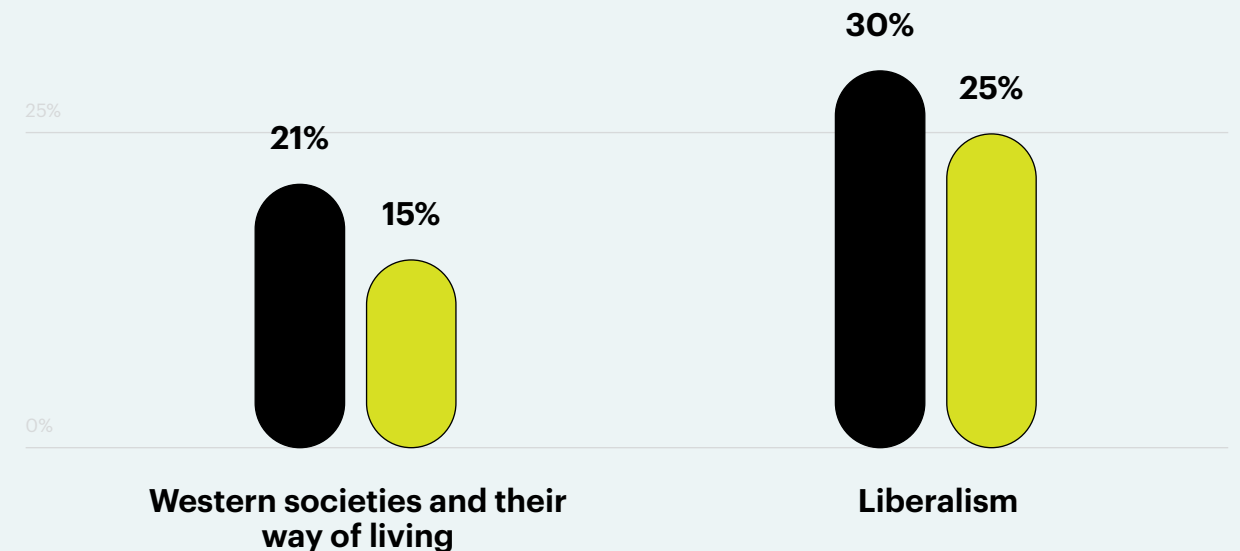
Those who believe the following threatens their identity and values based on education

● Lower education ● Secondary with school leaving exam ● University educated



Those who believe the following threatens their identity and values based on gender

● Male ● Female



Recommendations

① Increase awareness of Russia and China among youth.

The younger generation aged 18-34 is less likely than others to perceive both Russia and China as threats. Although the generational differences are not stark, the issue should be addressed to avoid any further trend from establishing itself. More intensive education and awareness-raising campaigns about autocratic regimes and their impact on democracy, as well as 20th century history in high school, should be implemented.

② Use best practices from Poland to foster pro-Western attitudes in other Central European countries.

Through conducting in-depth audience analysis, stakeholders can better understand the key narratives and issues underpinning the affinity of Poles towards the West and seek to replicate this success in similar political and economic environments in other countries with less pro-Western attitudes. Alternatively, cross-country peer to peer exchanges could be organised between public sector officials and CSOs to promote knowledge-sharing.

③ Use the affinity of Poles to the US

and the advanced relations between the two to bring greater attention and funding to the Central European region. The US presence in the region declined throughout the 2000-2010s. Central European countries enjoying constructive relations with the US, therefore, should continue playing a leading role in preventing any renewed pivot if the war in Ukraine were to end.

④ Support intergenerational exchange.

Awareness raising efforts on issues impacted by generational divides can be supported through direct exchanges between representatives of different societal groups. These dialogues between different generations can foster mutual learning and respect and may provide a path towards decreasing polarisation.



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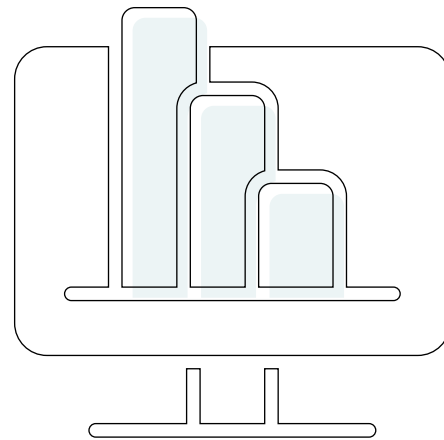
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Methodology

The outcomes and findings of this report are based on public opinion poll surveys carried out in March 2022 on a representative sample of the population in nine countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The surveys were conducted on a sample of 1000 respondents per country (9,000 respondents altogether) using stratified multistage random sampling in the form of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). In all countries, the profiles of the respondents were representative of the country according to gender, age, education, place of residence and size of settlement. For the purposes of graphical data visualisation, the results were rounded to full numbers. To improve the readers' experience, the responses in closed questions with a scale were generalised. For example, a question with options definitely agree/ rather agree/ rather disagree /definitely disagree was merged to agree / disagree. The opinion poll in Poland was conducted by IMAS International and coordinated by FOCUS, s.r.o. agency and the comparative results were published in May 2022 as **GLOBSEC Trends 2022**. The results have been compared to polls conducted with the use of consistent methodology since 2020.

References

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- 3 <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/western-liberal-civilisation-is-decadent-materialistic-hedonist-and-perverse/>




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