



PUBLIC ATTITUDES **IN BULGARIA**

A severe lack of trust

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About

This publication was funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed herein are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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Methodology

The study is based on GLOBSEC Trends polling between 2020 and 2024, all conducted on a representative sample of 1,000 people. The latest, 2024 poll was conducted in 9 Central and Eastern European countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The polls were conducted by Alpha Research Ltd. in Bulgaria in February 2024. All numbers are rounded and in %. Due to rounding, numbers depicted might not add up to 100%. To improve the readers' experience, the responses in closed questions with a scale were generalised. For example, a question with the options definitely agree / rather agree / rather disagree / definitely disagree were merged to agree / disagree. The data on social groups presented herein are all based on the most recent Trends poll from 2024.

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Executive Summary

- **Warming up to the West.** Support for Bulgaria's membership in the EU and NATO has increased substantially since 2020, although backing for these alliances remains fairly low in a regional comparison. Bulgarian society is also highly susceptible to disinformation narratives about the EU, and a relatively low proportion of them believe that the Union or NATO bring them tangible benefits, such as a larger say in world affairs or a lower chance for Bulgaria to be attacked by a foreign nation.
- **The perception of Russia's role in Bulgaria is diminishing.** In 2020, 50% of Bulgarians said Germany was one of the country's top 2 strategic partners, while 45% picked Russia. In 2024, Germany was picked by 49% of respondents, while Russia fell to 23%. University-educated Bulgarians are more likely to pick Western strategic partners than those who have a high school-leaving exam.
- **Still unclear about threats.** In 2020, more Bulgarians viewed the US as a threat than Russia, but the gap disappeared completely by 2022. Since then, a third of Bulgarian society views Russia as a threat – the same proportion that considers the US to be one. University-educated Bulgarians are more likely to see Russia as a threat, while those with a high-school leaving exam tend to select the US more.
- **Not fully committed to Ukraine.** Only a minority of Bulgarians, 44% believe that Russia is primarily to blame for the war in Ukraine, and 61% are concerned that arming Ukraine could provoke war with Russia. However, there are positive signs as well: over half of Bulgarians agree that arming Ukraine helps the country defend itself against Russia, and more respondents said they would like to see Ukraine in the EU, NATO or both than those who preferred it to stay a neutral country.
- **Very disappointed in democracy.** Bulgarians approve of democracy based on the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and equality as a system of governance. However, after substantial political turmoil and multiple elections over the past years, Bulgarians are extremely dissatisfied with how democracy works in the country.
- **Trust is crucial, but missing.** Those who trust institutions such as the government, Parliament, the armed forces or mainstream media are more likely to take pro-West positions in Bulgaria. Trust in the president, however, has the opposite effect. The most glaring issue is that this much-needed trust is almost completely missing from Bulgarian society.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations can be made to improve Bulgaria's resilience to anti-West and anti-Ukraine narratives:

- 1. Public education on the EU, NATO is needed.** Consistent, well-constructed public campaigns are needed to provide the Bulgarian public with information on how the EU and NATO work, and how Bulgaria itself can shape the policies of the Western alliance.
- 2. Focus on civic education in high schools.** Since those with a high school-leaving exam often exhibit the most pro-Russian views, it is key to implement more robust civic education programs in Bulgarian high schools, which could counter this trend in the long-term.
- 3. Restore trust in democracy.** Bulgaria needs a stable government that delivers to the people while maintaining democratic norms. While the Bulgarian public has not yet turned to extremists en masse despite their dissatisfaction with how democracy works in the country, such a response could be a possibility after more political turmoil.
- 4. Communicate clearly on Ukraine.** It is key for both political and media actors to communicate clearly about the root causes of the conflict for Ukraine and pay special attention to explaining and debunking Russia's threats of nuclear war against NATO.
- 5. NGOs need to improve their image.** The proportion of Bulgarians who believe NGOs are key for the functioning of democratic societies is relatively low, while that of those who say they are foreign agents is fairly high. Therefore, NGOs in the country have to do more to introduce their work and achievements to broader layers of society.

Concerns about traditional values

Bulgaria is a key member of the Western institutional system, situated on the southeastern flank of the EU and NATO with access to the Black Sea, potentially facing Russia's – currently weakened – Black Sea Fleet. [1] This makes Bulgaria a crucially important part of the EU and NATO, but they can only benefit from this as long as Bulgarians consider belonging to the West to be beneficial to them and see the benefits of a Western-style liberal democracy based on the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

However, currently, multiple signs point to the Bulgarian population being frustrated with their current situation. The results of the GLOBSEC Trends 2024 poll indicate a clear dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the country, which is unsurprising after having had six elections over three years between 2021 and 2024. [2] However, the negative feelings about democracy have other reasons as well, such as a flawed democratic transition process in 1989-1990 and the institutionalisation of corruption over the years. [3] Another reason can be a preference for a strong leader among Bulgarians. [4]

The results also showcase some level of frustration with the European Union and NATO as well. One aspect of this is the prevalence of Kremlin-backed and domestic nationalist narratives alleging that these institutions seek to replace the traditional understanding of social and cultural issues in the country. There is also an issue similar to Romania, namely that Bulgarians might feel they are treated as second-class EU citizens due to – among others – substantial delays in granting the country a membership in the Schengen zone. [5]

In Bulgaria, these frustrations have led to the emergence of an openly pro-Kremlin political party Vazrazhdane (Revival), whose delegation was present at Vladimir Putin's most recent inauguration at the invitation of the United Russia party. [6] Moreover, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev has a long-established track record of taking pro-Kremlin positions, most recently shown by participating in the Russia-initiated "Immortal Regiment" march banned by Sofia municipality partly based on information from the State Agency for National Security. [7]

The following publication will reveal how Bulgarians think about geopolitics and their susceptibility to certain narratives concerning the EU, NATO, Ukraine, democracy or democratic values, and how their beliefs evolved over the past few years. Which societal groups within Bulgaria are the most susceptible to these narratives will be revealed as well.

[1] Jean-Philippe Lefief. (2024). *Why is Russia's Black Sea fleet so vulnerable?* Le Monde. Last accessed on 28 May 2024 at https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/16/why-is-russia-s-black-sea-fleet-so-vulnerable_6668549_4.html

[2] Bulgaria heading for sixth election in three years. RFE/RL's Bulgarian Service. Last accessed on 18 July 2024 at <https://www.rferl.org/a/bulgaria-sixth-election-radev-elections/32881136.html>

[3] The State of Capture: The Elusive Quest for Anti-Corruption Results. (2024). CSD. Last accessed on 18 July 2024 at https://seldi.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/R2G4P_Brief_2_ENG_WEB.pdf

[4] Laurenz Gehrke. (2020). Weak support for liberal democracy in EU's east, poll says. Politico. Last accessed on 18 July 2024 at <https://www.politico.eu/article/weak-support-for-liberal-democracy-in-eu-east-lithuania-slovakia-bulgaria-latvia-poll/>

[5] Romania and Bulgaria partly join Schengen area after thirteen-year-long wait. (2024). Euronews. Last accessed on 19 July 2024 at <https://www.euronews.com/2024/03/31/romania-and-bulgaria-partly-join-schengen-area-after-thirteen-year-long-wait>

[6] Krassen Nikolov. (2024). Bulgarian far-right visit Moscow at invitation of Putin's party. Euractiv. Last accessed on 28 May 2024 at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/bulgarian-far-right-visit-moscow-at-invitation-of-putins-party/>

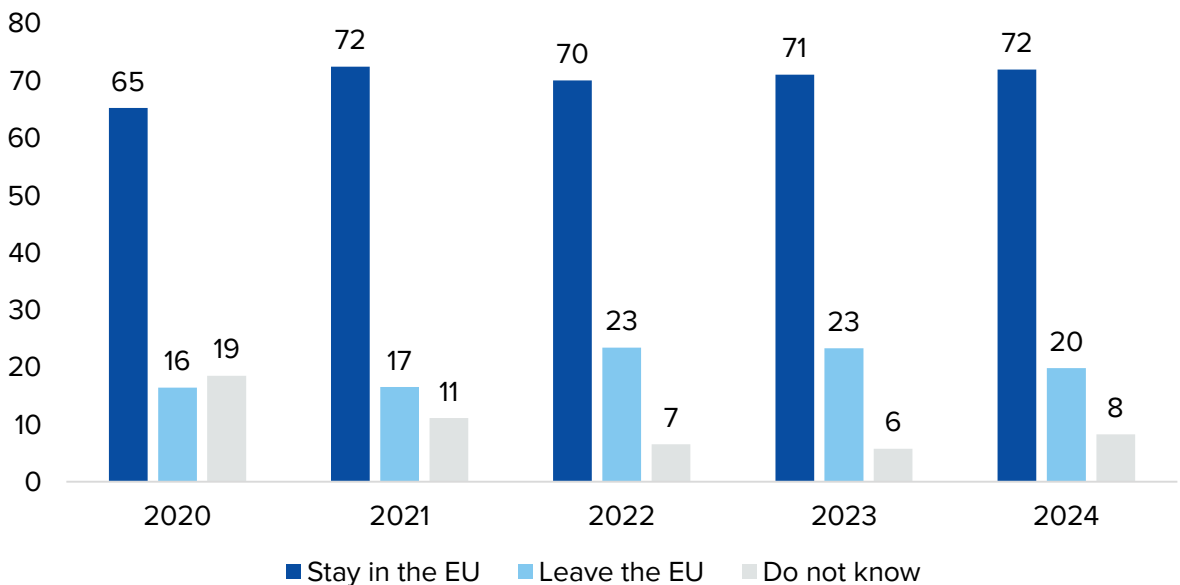
[7] Krassen Nikolov. (2024). Bulgarian president greets participants in banned pro-Russia march. Euractiv. Last accessed on 28 May 2024 at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/bulgarian-president-greets-participants-in-banned-pro-russian-march/>

Geopolitics

Throughout GLOBSEC Trends polls in past years, Bulgaria was among the countries exhibiting the most critical views of the western institutional system and those most favourable towards Russia, while illiberal tendencies have also been clear. This was evident in 2024 as well, but it does not mean that Bulgarian respondents reject their country’s place in the West altogether or that there are no promising signs in the results at all. In fact, some of the results show that Bulgarian respondents are warming up to their country’s place in the West.

Questions on the EU

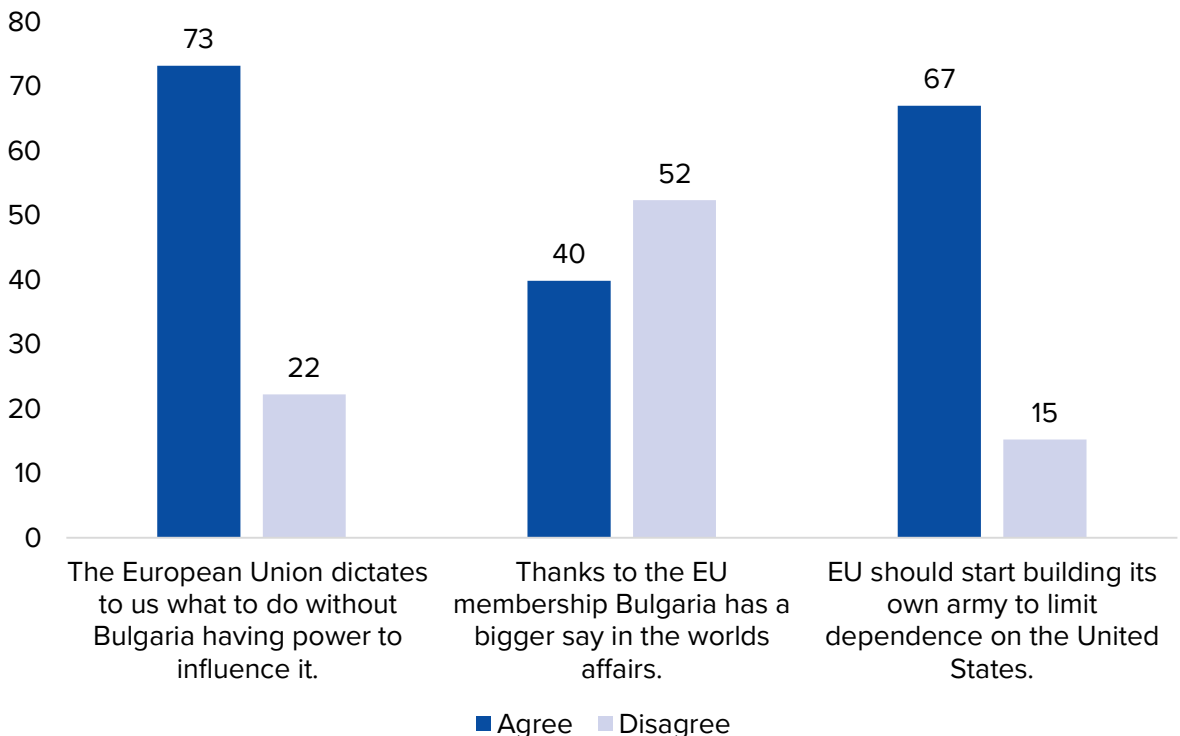
Bulgarians' views on EU membership



The proportion of Bulgarians who would vote to stay a member of the EU increased substantially between 2020 and 2021, and support for the EU remained steady since then, although backing for leaving the EU also increased slightly. What happened around those years is that Bulgarian respondents became more decisive on the EU, committing to voting for or against membership, while the proportion of those who could not answer the question fell from 19% in 2020 to 7% in 2022.

Looking closer at the results, support for the EU is fairly evenly distributed across societal groups. However, there is a factor that seems to affect backing for Bulgaria’s EU membership fairly strongly: trust in various institutions, such as the government, Parliament, the armed forces, and standard mainstream media. For instance, 86% of those trusting mainstream media would vote for Bulgaria to stay in the EU, while only 65% of those who distrust it would choose the same. There is one exception to the trend: Respondents who trust the president, who – as noted above – tends to take pro-Russian stances, are less likely to want Bulgaria to remain in the Union. The importance of trust in the democratic institutional system is a recurring factor in almost all questions.

Agreement on various EU-related narratives



When it comes to narratives about the EU, Bulgarians are sending mixed signals. 73% of respondents in the country sign up to the EU-critical narrative that the Union dictates to its member states what to do. As Rumena Filipova, the co-founder of the Institute for Global Analytics, highlighted to GLOBSEC, this is how lingering Western-sceptic attitudes about the West “imposing policies” on Bulgaria are mirrored in society. [8] It must be noted that agreement with this statement was over 50% in 8 of the 9 polled countries, which suggests the ‘EU dictate’ narrative is firmly anchored in most Central and Eastern European societies, partly owing to a lack of knowledge about the Union and how it works. [9]

The proportion of Bulgarian respondents who agree that Bulgaria’s influence globally is higher because of the EU is by far the lowest among the 9 countries with only 40% agreeing to the statement. Rumena Filipova explained that this is a reflection on Bulgaria’s traditionally passive foreign policy.

[8] The quotes in this paper are taken from the original GLOBSEC Trends 2024 study available here: <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/globsec-trends-2024-cee-brave-new-region>

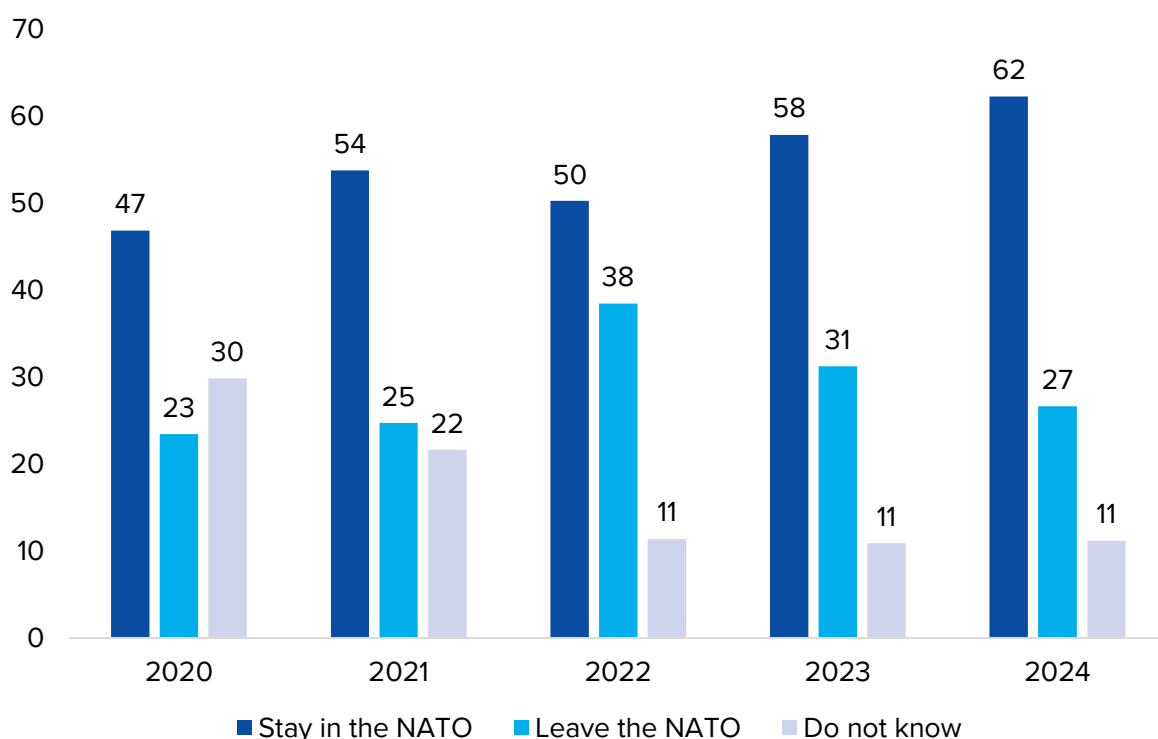
[9] For the regional comparison, please see the full, English-language Trends report here: <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/globsec-trends-2024-cee-brave-new-region>

In contrast, Bulgarian respondents are rather positive about the prospect of the EU building its own army, indicating that despite concerns about the benefits of the EU, they are willing to deepen integration on some points, and put their trust in the EU in those cases.

Trust was once again a key factor in determining whether a respondent believed in EU-critical narratives or not. However, in this case, education plays a role as well: While 82% of those who finished secondary school agreed with the EU dictate narrative, only 65% of those with tertiary education did so.

Encouraging signs for NATO

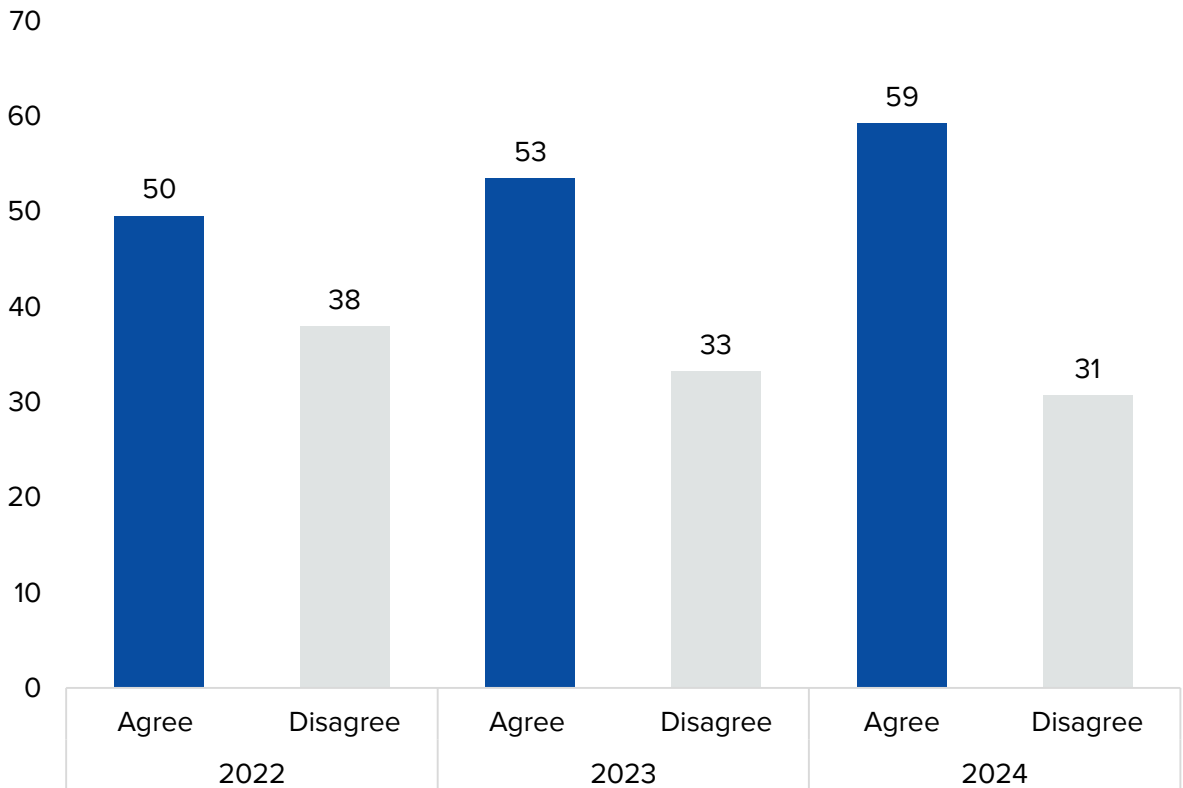
Bulgarians' views on NATO membership



The popularity of NATO membership also grew significantly in Bulgaria over the past 4 years, although it remains among the lowest in the 9 polled countries. In 2020, less than one in two Bulgarians would have voted to stay in the military alliance, which increased to nearly two in three by 2024, and – parallely – fewer want to leave the organisation. Rumena Filipova highlighted to GLOBSEC that this improvement was spurred on by the realisation that the country cannot defend itself alone, but this perception is only part of the story, as many NATO initiatives – especially those involving the presence of NATO troops on Bulgarian soil – have been met with significant resistance.

Education is an important factor in determining backing for NATO. Only 56% of those with secondary education with a school-leaving exam back Bulgaria's NATO membership, while those who attained a lower or higher level of education are above the average of 62%.

My country's membership in NATO makes it less likely that a foreign nation will attack us

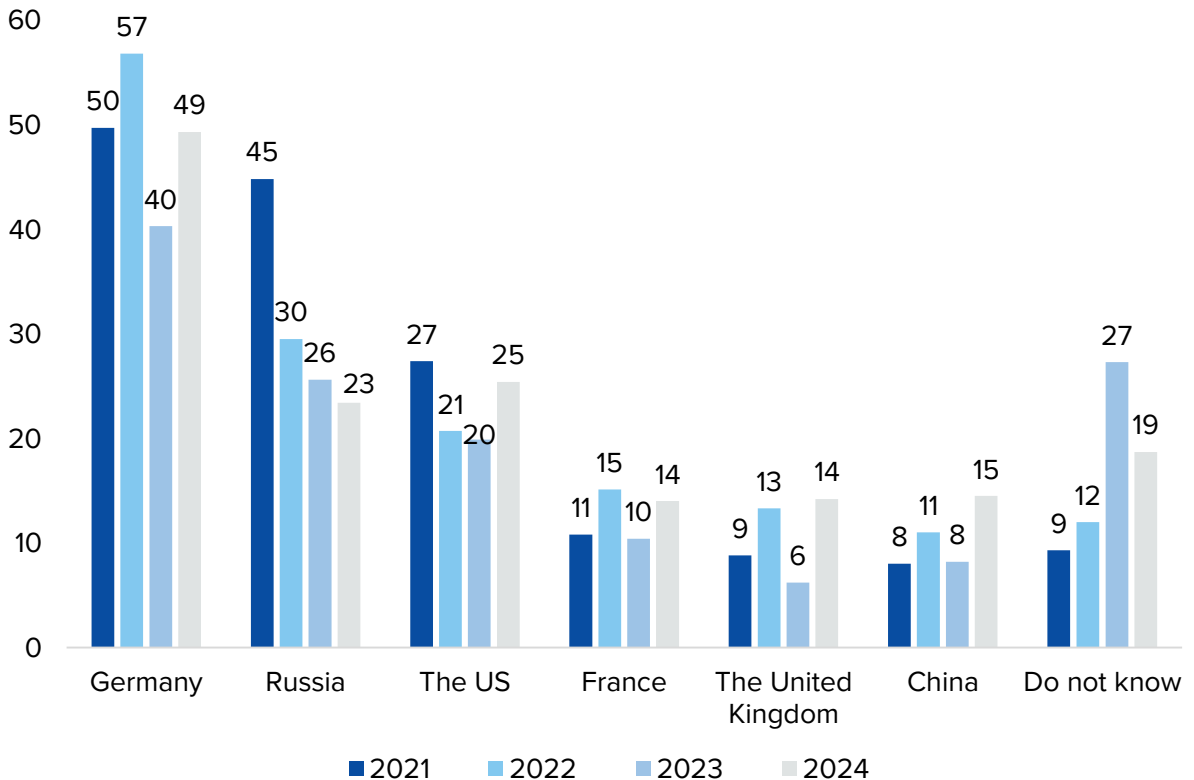


In parallel, more Bulgarians have become convinced that being a NATO member improves their security. This is still the lowest result among the 9 polled countries, but a definite improvement likely spurred on by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

On this question, age and education are key factors. 65% of the middle age group (35-54) believed being a NATO member improved Bulgarian security, but only 56% of the lower and higher age categories thought so. Additionally, 68% of those with tertiary education agree with the statement, which is only 55% among the most sceptical group of respondents who have a school-leaving exam.

German connections

Which of the following global actors do you consider to be most important strategic partners for Bulgaria? Pick max. 2.



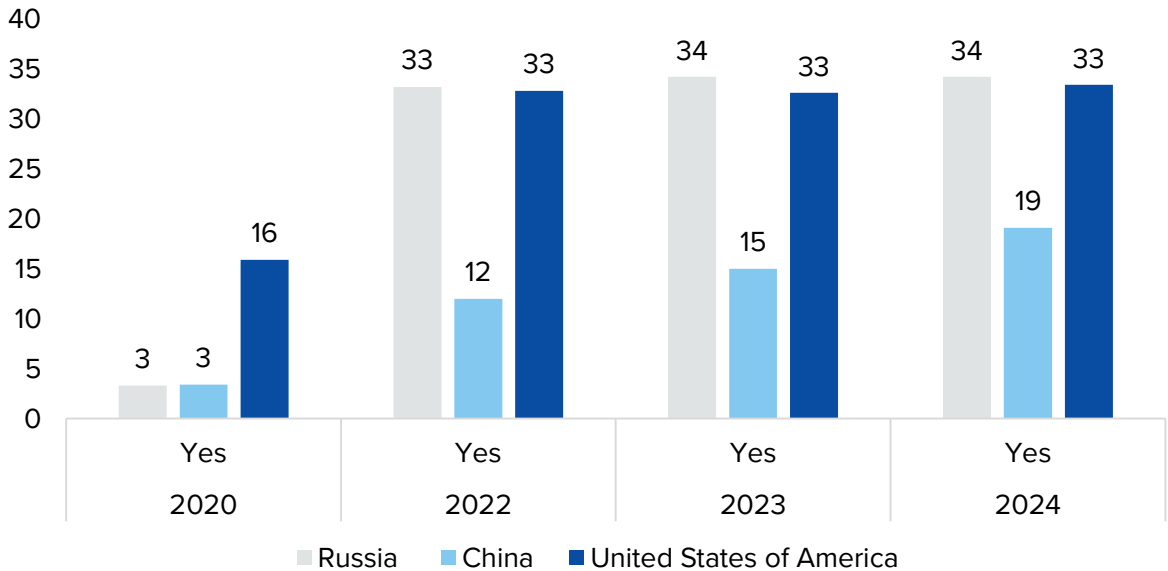
When Bulgarian respondents were offered the choice to pick two of their country’s main strategic partners, Germany has been the top selection for each of the past four years. The importance of Germany fell from 57 to 40% between 2022 and 2023, while – parallely – many respondents became unable to answer this question. A year later, Germany gained back some support in Bulgarians’ eyes, but almost a fifth of the population remains undecided on the question of the country’s strategic partners. Still, many of those who favoured Germany in 2022 seem to have become undecided in 2023 rather than picking another power.

Unlike Germany, the popularity of Russia collapsed in 2022, and it has been gradually losing backing since then, even if in a regional comparison, the 23% who mentioned Russia can still be considered rather high.

Bulgarians think rather differently about strategic partners based on educational attainment and type of settlement. Those with tertiary education tend to be more likely to select the US or Germany as key strategic partners than other groups. For instance, 32 and 58% of university-educated respondents picked the United States or Germany, respectively, while only 22 and 45% of those with a high school-leaving exam did so. Similar differences are visible between rural and urban voters. In that case, urban voters are more likely to be oriented towards Western powers.

A Western threat?

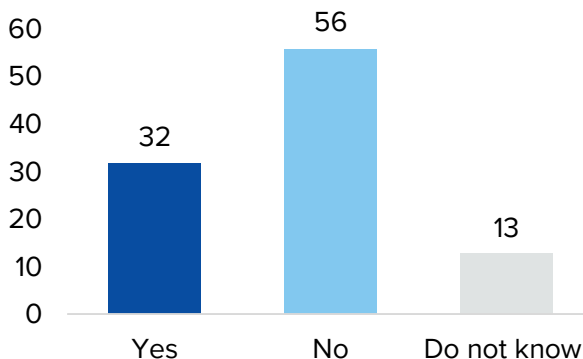
Do you think the following countries present a security threat to Bulgaria?



In 2020, more Bulgarians considered the United States to be a threat than they did Russia by a wide margin – 13 percentage points. This situation changed after Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2022, when about a third of Bulgarians saw Russia as a threat, while another third picked the US, and this situation has remained constant since. Naturally, those who primarily blame Russia for the war in Ukraine are more likely to consider Russia to be a threat, while those who blame Ukraine or the West are more likely to see the US as one.

Once again, education becomes a key factor in deciding who Bulgarians view as a threat. University-educated respondents are more likely to see Russia as one (38%), while those with a school-leaving exam are more likely to see the US as one (37%).

Are ‘Western societies and their way of living’ a threat to Bulgarians’ identity and values?

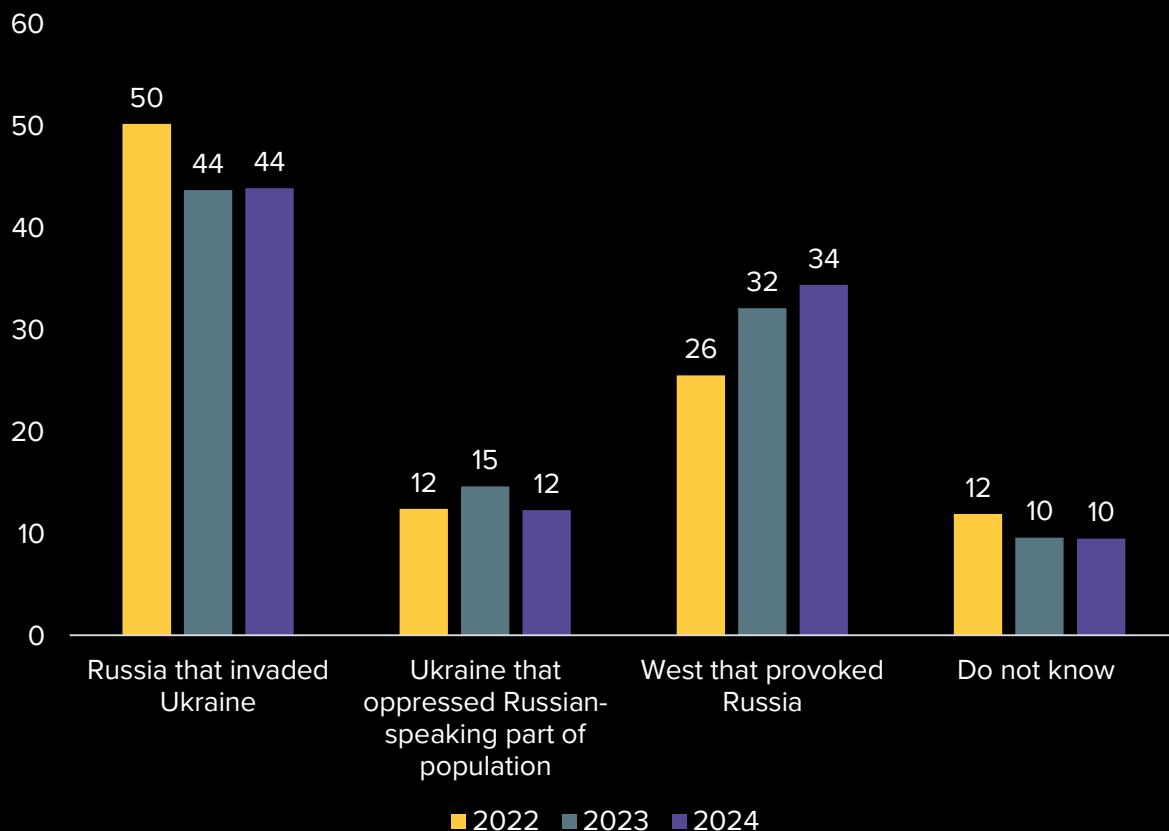


About a third of Bulgarian respondents also believed in 2024 that western societies and their way of living threatens their identity and values, which might be a reflection on the Kremlin’s known panels about the LGBTI+ community and migration, contrasting the “traditional” Russia and the so-called “decadent West.”

The proportion who agrees with this sentence – perhaps unsurprisingly – grows to 54% among respondents who see the US as a threat, 58% among those who want to leave NATO and 65% among Bulgarians who wish to leave the European Union.

War in Ukraine

Which of these statements do you relate with the most? **For the conflict in Ukraine is primarily responsible:**



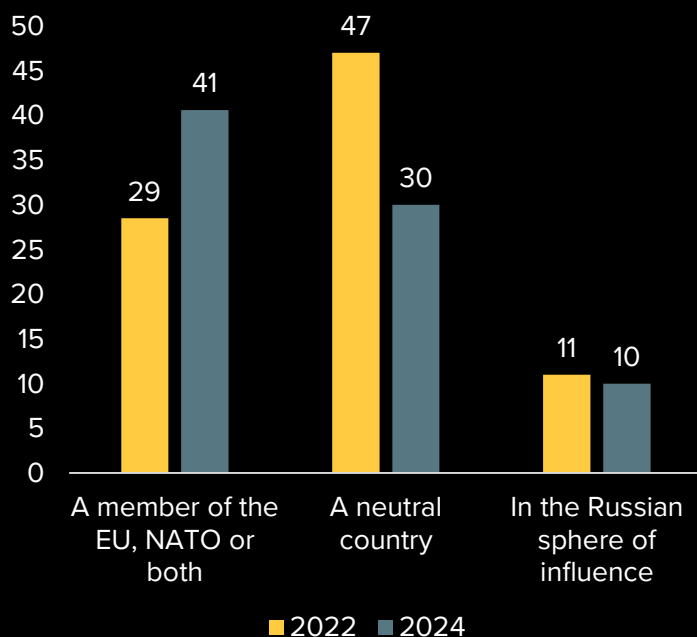
When it comes to the war in Ukraine, Bulgarian society is highly divided. In 2022, at the start of the war in Ukraine, 50% of Bulgarians pinned blame for the conflict mainly on Russia. Since then, this proportion fell by 6 percentage points, while the proportion of those saying the West is the primary culprit increased by the same amount. In a regional comparison, Bulgarian respondents are the most likely to blame the West for the Ukrainian war.

When it comes to Ukraine’s future, however, Bulgarians exhibited more pro-Ukraine views in 2024 than in 2022. In 2022, more Bulgarian respondents wanted to see Ukraine as a neutral country than a member of the transatlantic institutional system, which turned around completely by 2024. Thus, Bulgarians are much more supportive of a western future for Ukraine – which is what Ukrainian leadership advocates for [10] – than respondents in Hungary and Slovakia, where the view that Ukraine should be neutral – that is officially supported by the Kremlin – prevails. [11]

[10] Angela Charlton. (2023). Ukraine’s a step closer to joining the EU. Here’s what it means and why it matters. AP News. Last accessed on 30 May 2024 at <https://apnews.com/article/european-union-ukraine-membership-questions-45b7f723761f5e5fa7a49d7302033469>

[11] How to end Russia’s war on Ukraine. (2023). Chatham House. Last accessed on 30 May 2024 at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/06/how-end-russias-war-ukraine/fallacy-3-ukraine-should-adopt-neutrality>

Should Ukraine be/become...



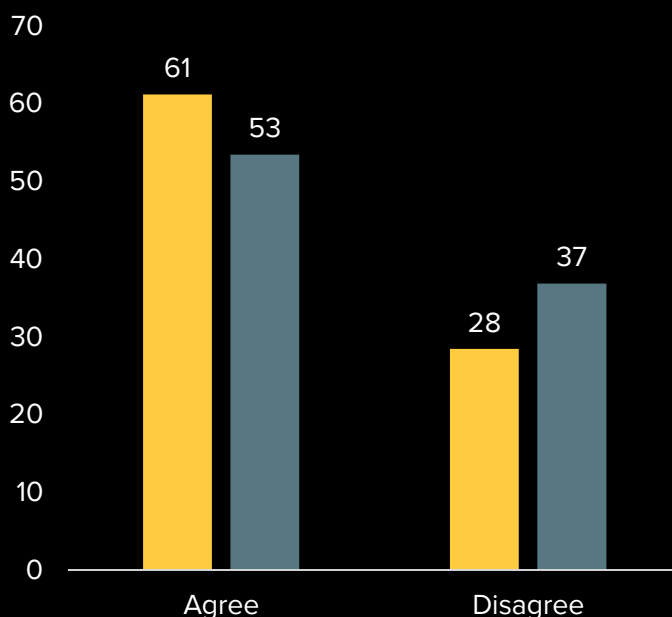
On the first Ukraine question, both education and age are important factors in determining backing for Kyiv. 49% of university-educated Bulgarians saw Russia as the primary culprit, but only 42% of those with a school-leaving exam or lower did so. Moreover, 48% of those between the age of 35 and 54 pinned the blame on Russia, but only 41% of those who are older did so. Concerning Ukraine’s future, the main deciding factor was education: 46% of those with tertiary education wanted Kyiv to join transatlantic structures, but only 37% of Bulgarians with a high school-leaving exam opted for this answer.

The 'Member of the EU, NATO or both' category includes answers saying Ukraine should only be an EU or NATO member, and answer saying it should be a member of both.

The responses to the questions on the military equipment indicate that while Bulgarians recognise the importance of their help, the Kremlin’s narratives alleging that the West wants war with Russia are very deeply rooted in society.

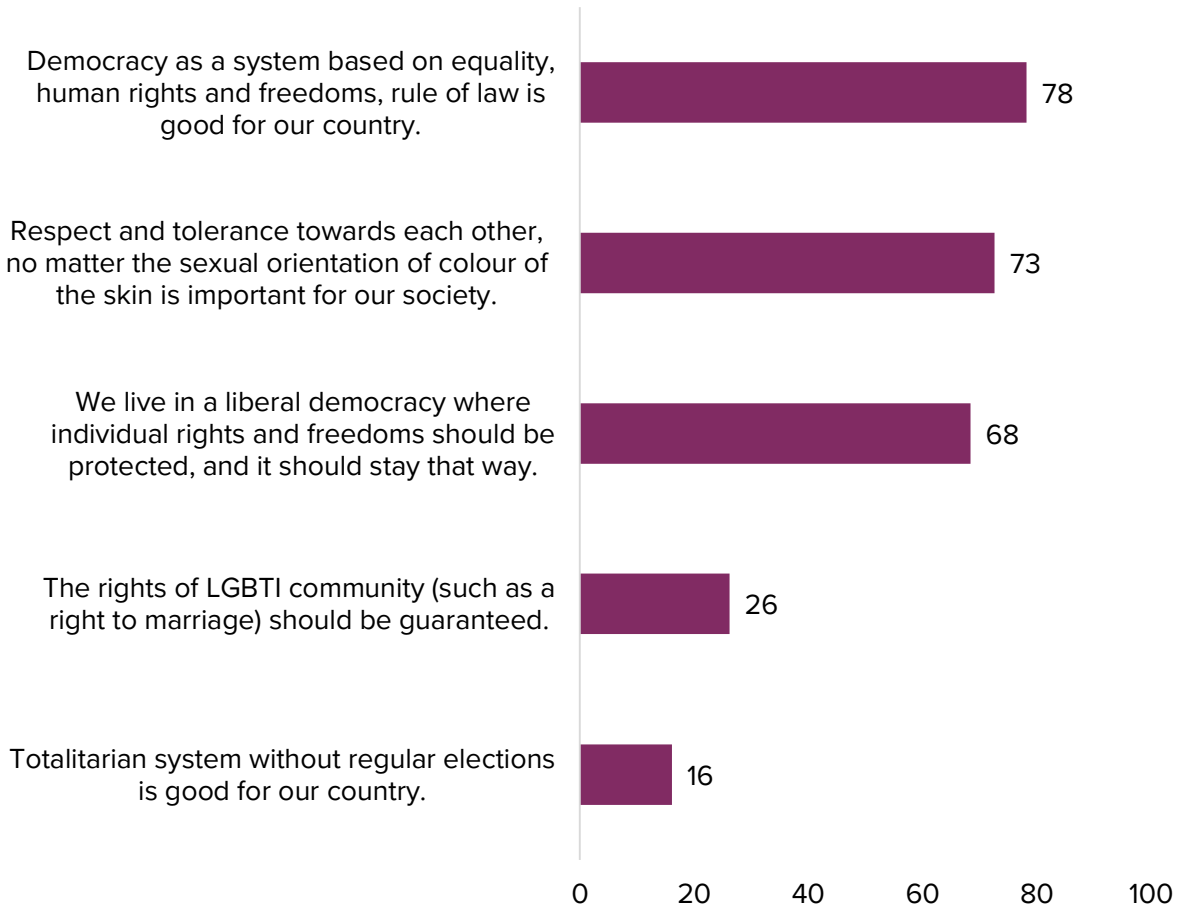
- By providing military equipment and weapons to Ukraine, Bulgaria is provoking Russia and bringing itself closer to the war.
- By providing military equipment and weapons to Ukraine, Bulgaria is helping Ukraine defend itself against Russia.

When it comes to helping Ukraine, male respondents were more likely to agree with the statement (57%) than female Bulgarians (50%). This difference disappeared in the case of the statement on provoking Russia. There, it was those with a tertiary education who were less likely to believe that arming Ukraine brings war closer, with only 56% of them agreeing, but 63% of those with less than a high school-leaving diploma concurred.



Democracy

Agreement on various statements on democracy and values

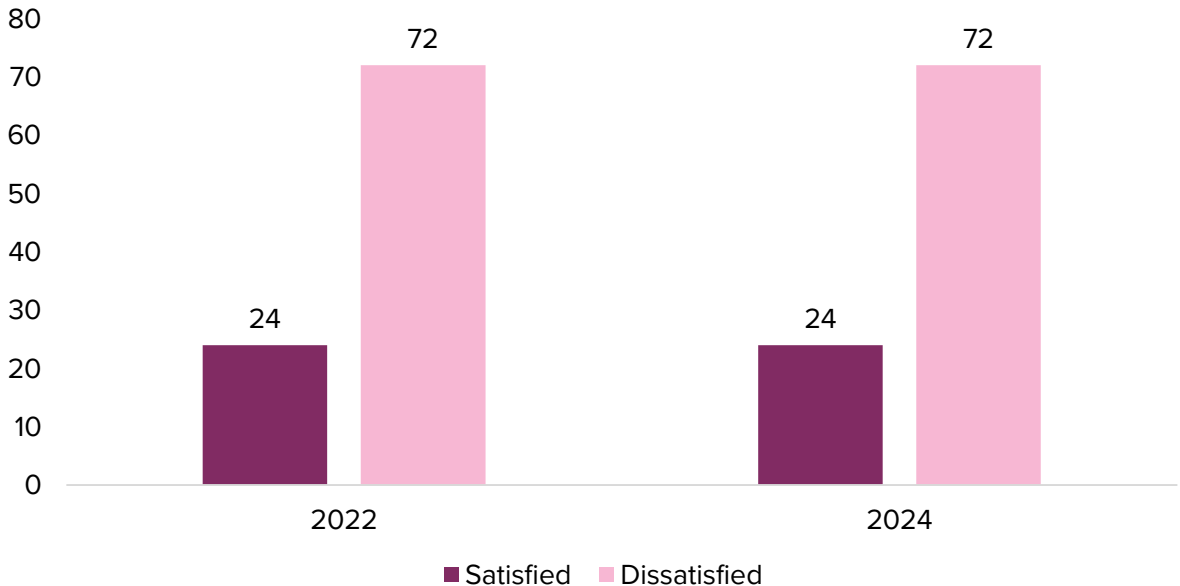


Warm on democracy, less on rights

Bulgarians, in general, support the concept of democracy, and believe their current rights-based liberal democracy should be maintained, while strongly refusing a totalitarian system without elections. They also express a wish for a tolerant society regardless of sexual orientation or the colour of one's skin. However, they very strongly disagree with ensuring the rights of the LGBTI community, such as the right to marriage.

Regionally, Bulgarians' approval of democracy as a concept at 78% is only marginally below the 82% average, while their acceptance of a totalitarian system is lower than the 19% CEE average. In contrast, the fact that only 26% of respondents supported LGBTI rights puts Bulgaria along with Lithuania as the least accepting country among the 9 polled.

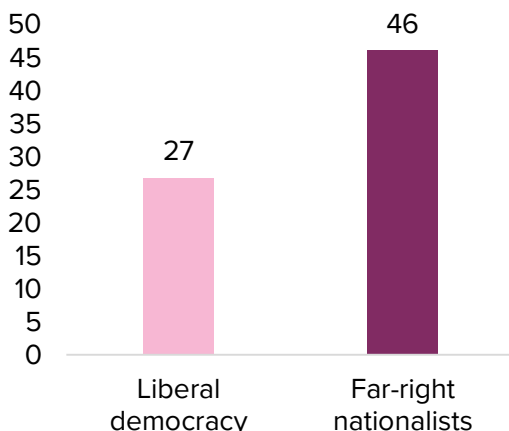
If you take all circumstances into account, to what extent are you overall satisfied with how democracy works in Bulgaria?



Bulgarians are highly dissatisfied with how their democracy works in practice, although this is unsurprising concerning the fact that Bulgarians elected a new national Parliament for the sixth time in about three years in summer 2024. GLOBSEC observed the same high level of dissatisfaction in 2022 and 2024, which in 2024 was the lowest level measured in the 9 polled countries. This makes the population extremely vulnerable to anti-democratic narratives, even if this has not yet led to a higher proportion of Bulgarians becoming favourable to government by a totalitarian regime.

Answers on democratic values are fairly evenly distributed across all societal groups in Bulgaria. On the question regarding LGBTI rights, one key social group can be highlighted as more supportive towards this minority: those between the age of 18 and 34 – however, even among them, only 32% agreed to ensuring the rights of the LGBTI community.

Those who consider the following to be a threat to their identity and values:



Concerning threat perception, views on two issues need to be highlighted. The proportion of Bulgarians considering liberal democracy to be a threat to their values is only slightly over the 24% regional average, indicating that anti-liberal narratives do not affect an overly large part of the population in the country. Meanwhile, less Bulgarians consider far-right nationalists to be a threat than the regional average (52%). It is perhaps a worrying sign that the youngest age group (18-34) in Bulgaria was the least likely to say the far right was a threat (40%). The result suggests that the far-right Revival party could have a much larger ceiling than its current popularity, and mainstream forces should act to lower this ceiling.

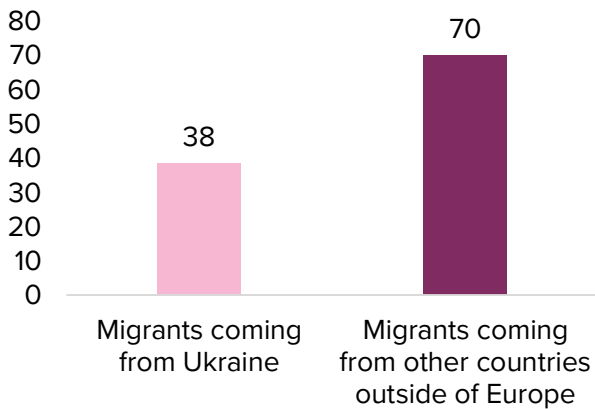


When it comes to one of the key pillars of democracy, NGOs, Bulgarians are among the most sceptical in the CEE region: 54% believe they are important for democratic societies, while 30% of respondents agreed that they are foreign agents – which is a popular narrative disseminated by some populist actors across Europe. [12] Only in Slovakia are people more wary of civil society, where 52% agreed with this statement. On the foreign agent question, there is a high level of uncertainty in Bulgarian society as well, since 30% of respondents did not answer it. This can be exploited by malign actors in the future via smear campaigns targeted against NGOs.

On the foreign agent question, education is a key factor in determining a respondent’s answer. Those who do not have a school-leaving exam are the least likely to say NGOs are foreign agents (27%) but also the most likely to not answer the question (35%). Those who attained a school-leaving exam are the most likely to say NGOs are foreign agents (36%). Meanwhile, respondents with tertiary education were the most likely to give an answer to the question, with only 19% of them not doing so.

[12] Lili Bayer. (2023). Hungarian plan to target foreign influence fuels NGO and media fears. The Guardian. Last accessed on 30 May 2024 at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/13/hungary-plan-target-foreign-influence-ngo-media-fears-sovereignty>

Those who consider the following to be a threat to their identity and values:

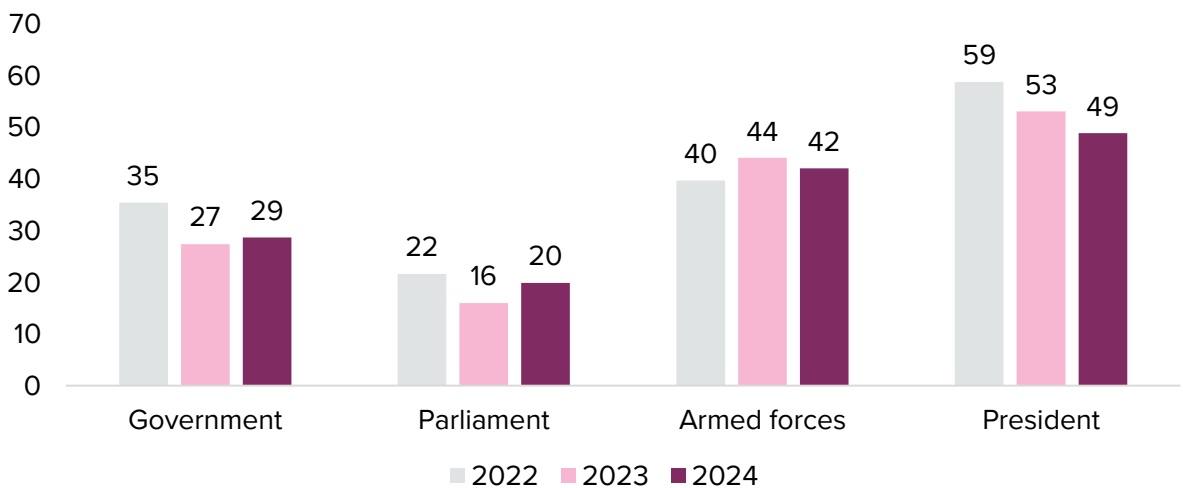


Anti-migration perceptions are deeply engraved in Bulgarian society, with 7 out of 10 agreeing that non-European immigrants threaten their identity and values. However, society is much more accepting of migrants coming from Ukraine.

The older a respondent was, the more likely they were to consider migration to be a threat. The proportion who believed non-European migrants to be a threat was 62% among those aged 18 to 34, rising to 75% among those over 55. Interestingly, only 62% of rural voters believed non-European migrants to be a threat, but 72% of urban voters did so.

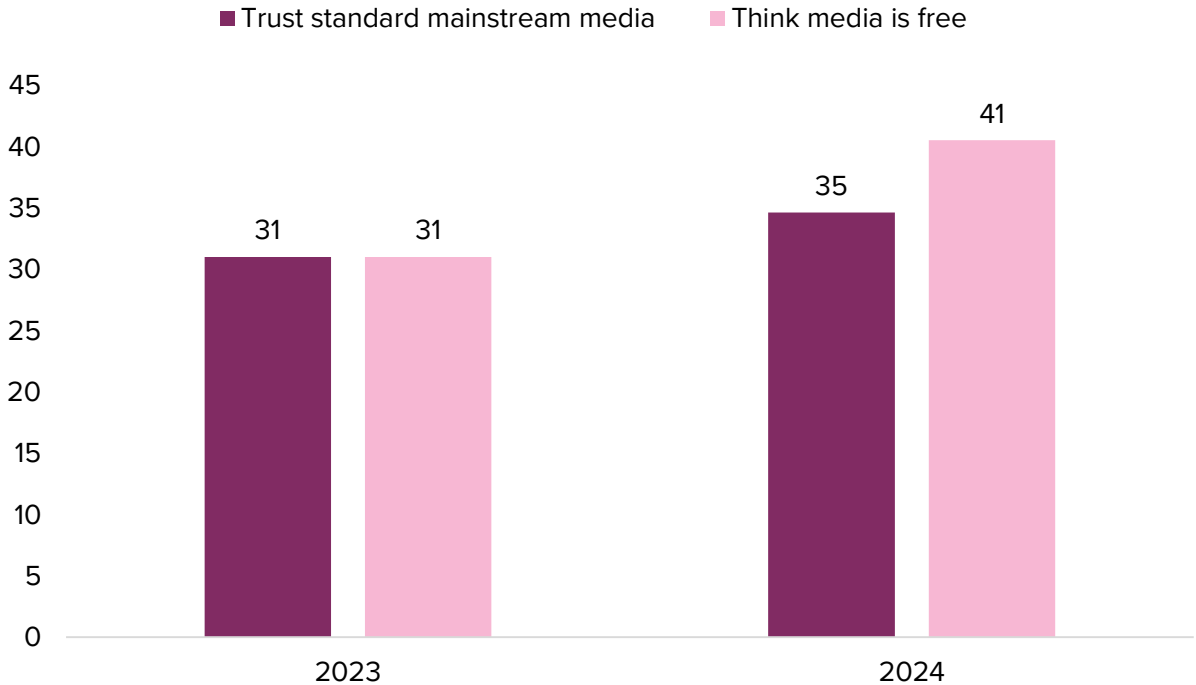
Complete lack of trust

Trust in various institutions in Bulgaria



Bulgarians put very little trust in their democratic institutional system, which is in line with their indicated dissatisfaction with their democracy. Bulgarians’ trust in institutions is among the lowest in the CEE region. The institution with highest level of trust is that of the president, who – as noted above – consistently supports pro-Kremlin views. The instability of Bulgaria’s recent governments has certainly had an effect on trust within Bulgarian society, which is why it would be key for the country’s political leaders to create some level of stability and offer a long-term vision to citizens.

In general, Bulgarians with a school-leaving exam are the least trustful of institutions, while those with tertiary education are the most trusting. This is reversed in the case of trust in the presidency.

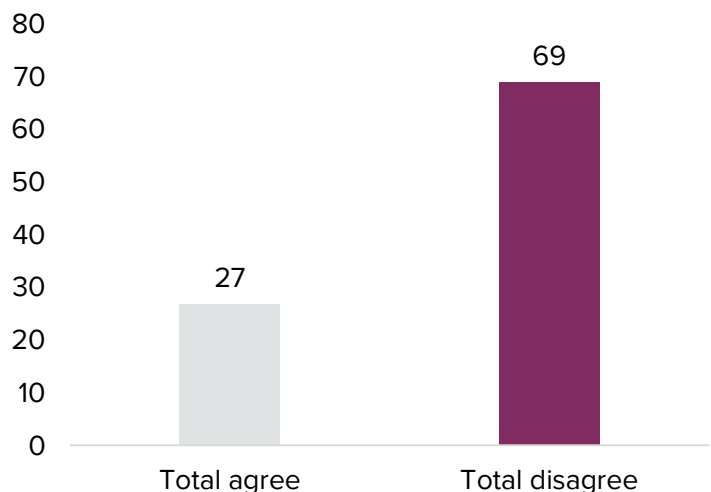


Trust in standard, mainstream media is also rather low in Bulgaria, and less than half of respondents said that media is completely or rather free. Thus, the perception of media in Bulgaria is about the same as it is in Hungary, which is seeing substantial government influence over the sector. It must be highlighted that in 2024, the proportion of Bulgarians who thought media was free was 10 percentage points higher than in 2023, which did not translate to a similar increase in trust in media. Thus, the perception of media freedom does not necessarily lead to trust.

Climate

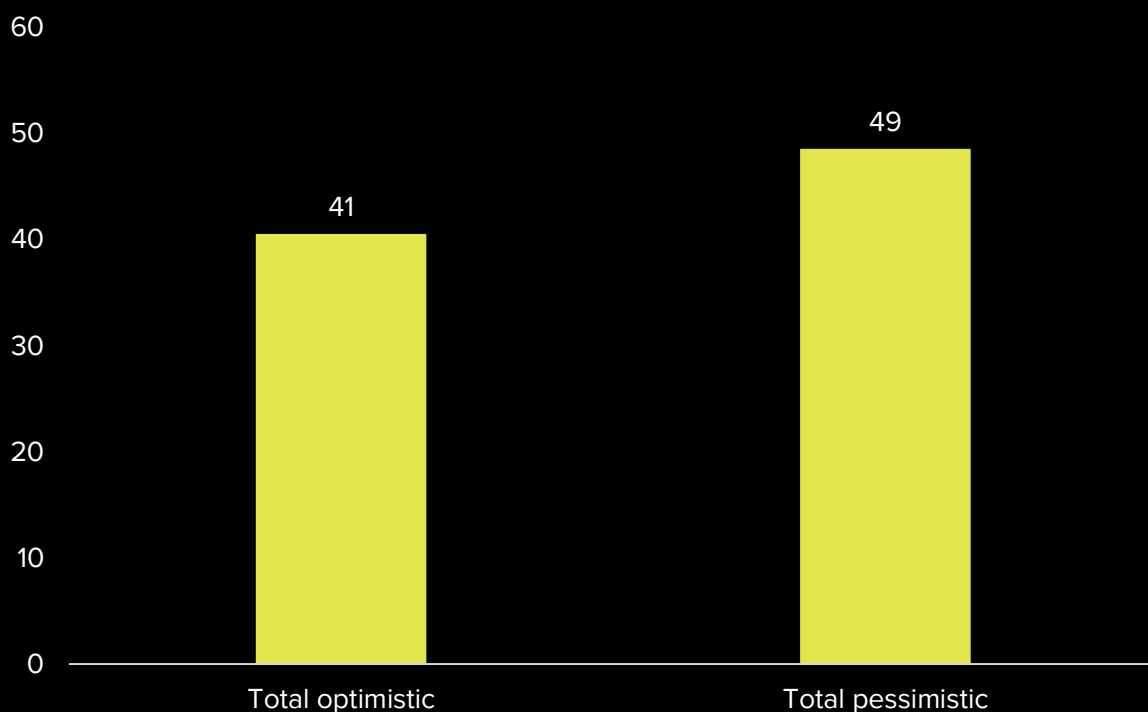
The majority of Bulgarian respondents believe that climate change is a result of human activity, but a third still believe in conspiracy narratives describing it as a natural change. This third could be targeted by political forces using the EU's Green Deal as a key Eurosceptic narrative. Those considering climate change a natural process are fairly evenly distributed across Bulgarian society.

Global warming and climate change are a result of natural changes in environment, not by human activity.



AI

When thinking about the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence on your life or the lives of next generation, to what extent do you feel optimistic or pessimistic?



When it comes to views on AI’s effect on their lives, Bulgarians were highly divided with roughly half of society being optimistic about it and half being pessimistic, which is largely in line with what was shown in the other polled nations.

On AI, it must be noted that the youngest age group is the most optimistic (59%), and optimism fell as the respondents’ age progressed, with only 29% of those over 55 seeing AI in a positive light. Those with tertiary or elementary education were fairly similar in terms of their assessment of AI (44 and 42% viewed it optimistically, respectively), while those with a school-leaving exam were more pessimistic, with only 35% viewing AI in a positive light.

Trust is key

Trust was already highlighted as a major factor influencing society's views above concerning the EU and NATO. The trend is visible across every question in the Bulgarian poll. Those who trust key institutions in Bulgaria are more pro-West and critical of the Kremlin – except for those who trust the Bulgarian presidency. Therefore, improving citizens' trust in the democratic institutional system should be key for Bulgarian leaders in the near-term.

As noted throughout the chapter on Bulgaria, the other main societal factor influencing Bulgarians' perceptions is education. According to results, Bulgarians who finished high school with a school-leaving diploma are the most critical of the West and the friendliest towards eastern authoritarian regimes, while those who finished tertiary education stand on the opposite side of the scale. Education was by far the most commonly occurring factor of influence, others only proved to be of interest in individual cases.

Based on this, it could be advisable for Bulgarian stakeholders to pay more attention to civic education in high schools, so those who finish their studies on that level also have a better understanding of the Western institutional system, Bulgaria's place within it, and democracy.



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