



Central European  
Digital Media  
Observatory

# Disinformation Narratives in Slovakia

## CEDMO Special Brief

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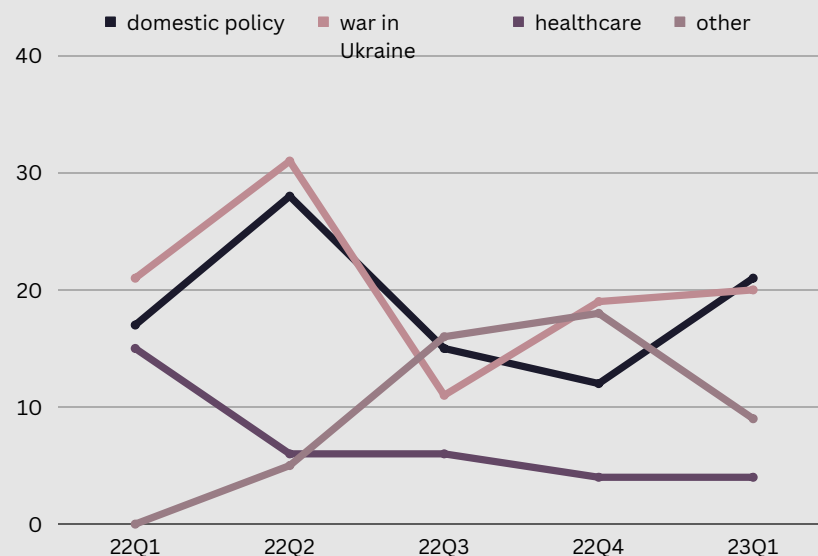
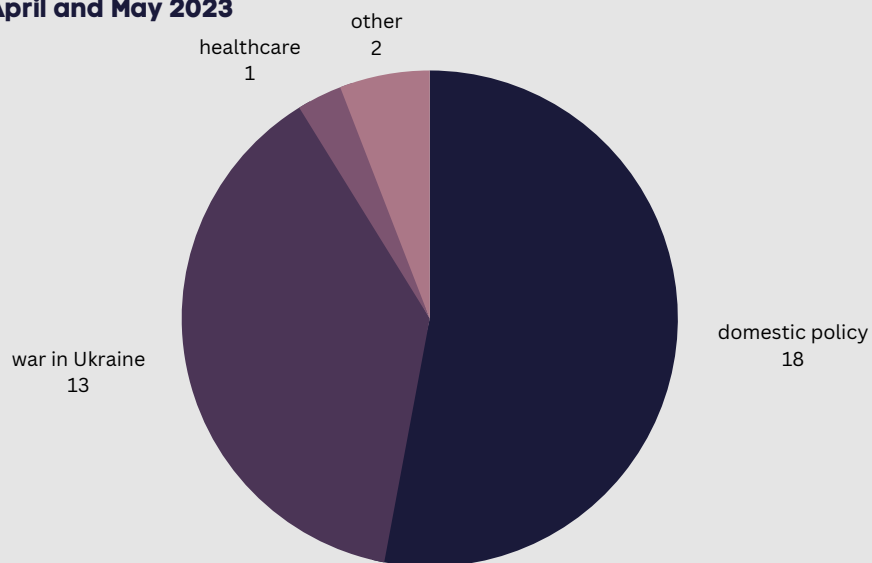
# Trends in Disinformation Narratives

## Main trends and disinformation narratives in spring 2023

In April and May 2023, the trend of the previous quarters continued and the war in Ukraine was still a frequent topic in Slovak online spaces. However, domestic policy came to the forefront as a general topic. In April and May, CEDMO fact-checking organizations published 34 Slovak fact-checks, out of which 13 concerned either with the situation in Ukraine or with domestic events related to Ukraine. 18 texts pertained to the domestic policy of Slovakia. In one article, fact-checkers focused on healthcare-related topics.

## Fact-check topics frequency

### April and May 2023



Note: Some fact-checks concerned with multiple topics.

## Main Narratives in Slovakia

### Ukrainian wheat

During April, the topic of Ukrainian grain strongly resonated in Slovak online spaces. Wheat imported from Ukraine was suspected to contain an excessive amount of pesticides, which immediately showed in a number of viral false and manipulative posts doubting the economic and military support to Ukraine. The topic of Ukrainian wheat was also used by many Slovak politicians, especially of the Republika movement.



### Putin arrest warrant

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for the arrest of Vladimir Putin due to the unauthorized abductions of Ukrainian children into Russia. According to a viral video, this warrant is invalid since neither Russia nor Ukraine are members of the ICC. However, this statement is inaccurate and misleading. While Ukraine is not a member state, it has accepted the ICC's jurisdiction for cases of major crimes.

### Hungary lawsuit

The European Commission suing Hungary due to its law targeting the LGBTI+ population has caused a reaction not only amongst politicians, but also on the Badatel conspiracy website. As [Infosecurity.sk](#) explains in its article, Badatel has criticized the EU while misinterpreting the contents of the lawsuit filed against Hungary and repeating manipulative language to link homosexuality to paedophilia.



# Main Narratives in Slovakia

## Politics

### **NAKA recordings manipulation**

SMER-SD chair Robert Fico repeatedly spoke of the alleged prejudice of the police officers investigating corruption cases. He justifies this with recordings meant to prove the NAKA had manipulated the investigation. However, as [Demagog.sk](#) and [Infosecurity.sk](#) articles show, the recordings released by Fico had been cut and taken out of context.

### **Government Criticism by the Opposition**

Opposition politicians attacked the government using baseless and manipulative claims. Members of both Eduard Heger's cabinet and the new caretaker government have been repeatedly called slaves to Western countries who undermine Slovakian autonomy. As [Infosecurity.sk](#) describes, similar attacks from the ĽSNS, Igor Matovič, and Robert Fico also targeted President Čaputová.

### **Criticising the government for aid to Ukraine**

In the context of the war in Ukraine, Slovak military equipment became a key topic of political discussions. However, some politicians do not stick to the facts in their statements. For example, Robert Fico described the American Viper helicopters, intended for Slovakia, as "finished" machines and implied that Slovakia donated the S-300 system and the MIG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine despite being able to use them effectively. Neither of Fico's statements matches the facts, as [Demagog.sk](#) explains in its analyses (1, 2).

## Over half of Slovaks accept the possibility of election fraud

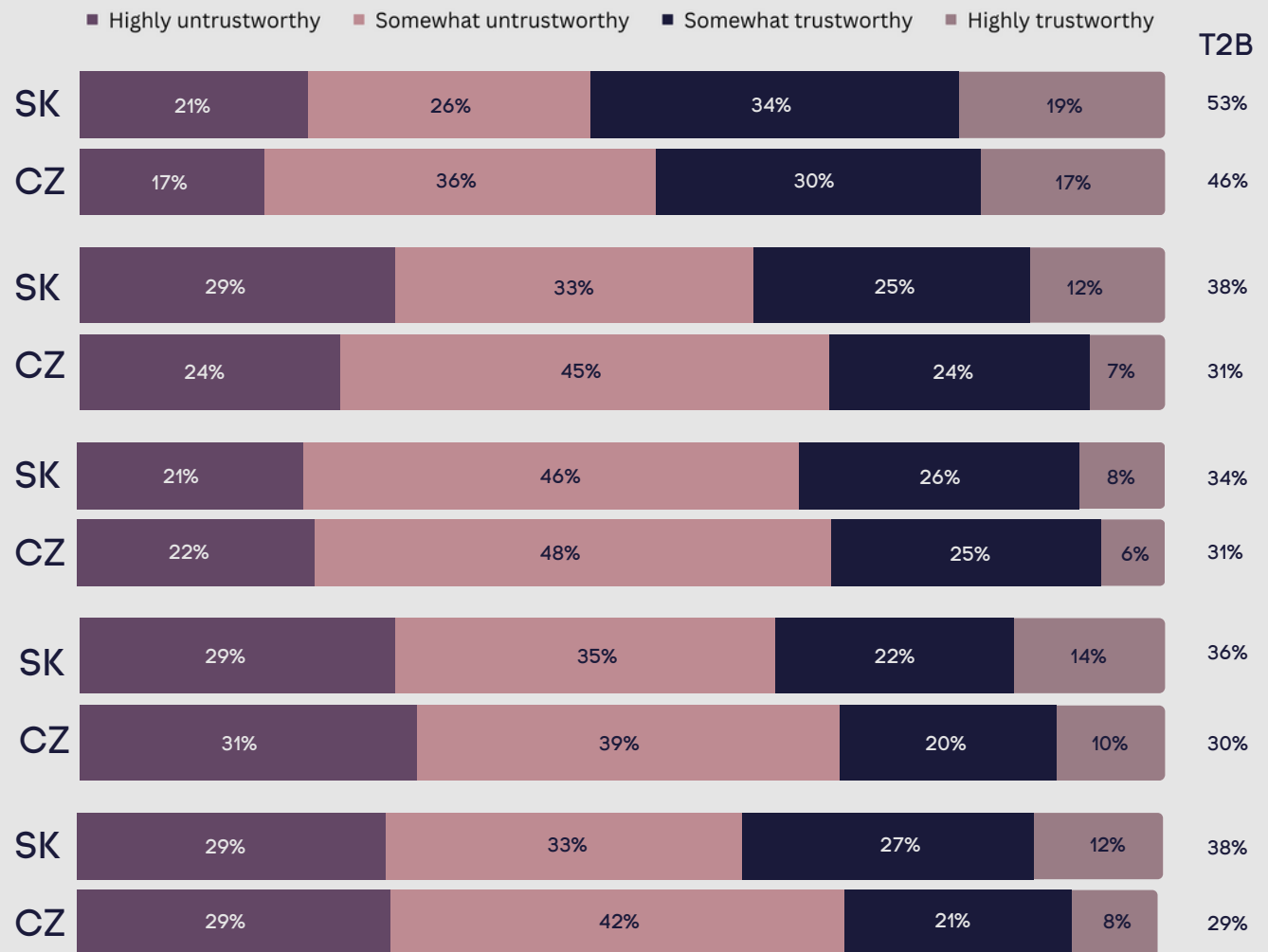
There is high possibility of presidential election fraud in the Czech Republic/Slovakia, which is why a law on the publication of precinct commission protocols by municipalities should be adopted.

Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová consulted the US Embassy in Bratislava about the composition of the new caretaker government of the Slovak Republic.

Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a video and called on him to lay down arms. Declining the Chinese President's request may carry military consequences for Ukraine.

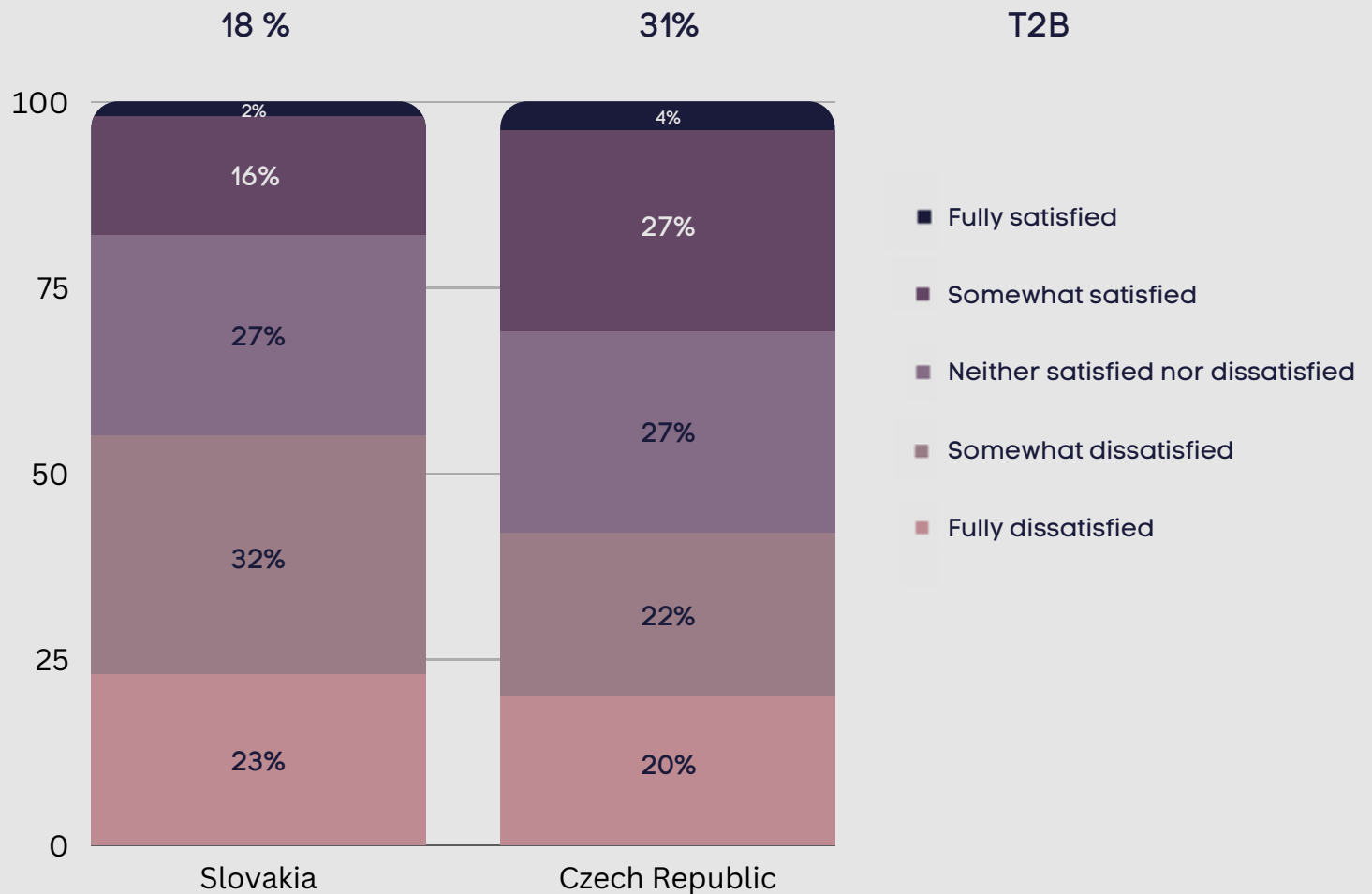
The EU mandates adding insect protein to food, putting human health at risk. Due to chitin, insects are indigestible to humans, causing cancer and other illnesses.

According to a report by a Russian parliamentary commission investigating the activities of alleged US biological laboratories in Ukraine, the US aims to develop a universal bioweapon capable of attacking not only humans, but also animals and agricultural crops.



Note: T2B is the sum of the "Highly trustworthy" and "Somewhat trustworthy" responses

## In Slovakia, the satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is significantly lower than in the Czech Republic.

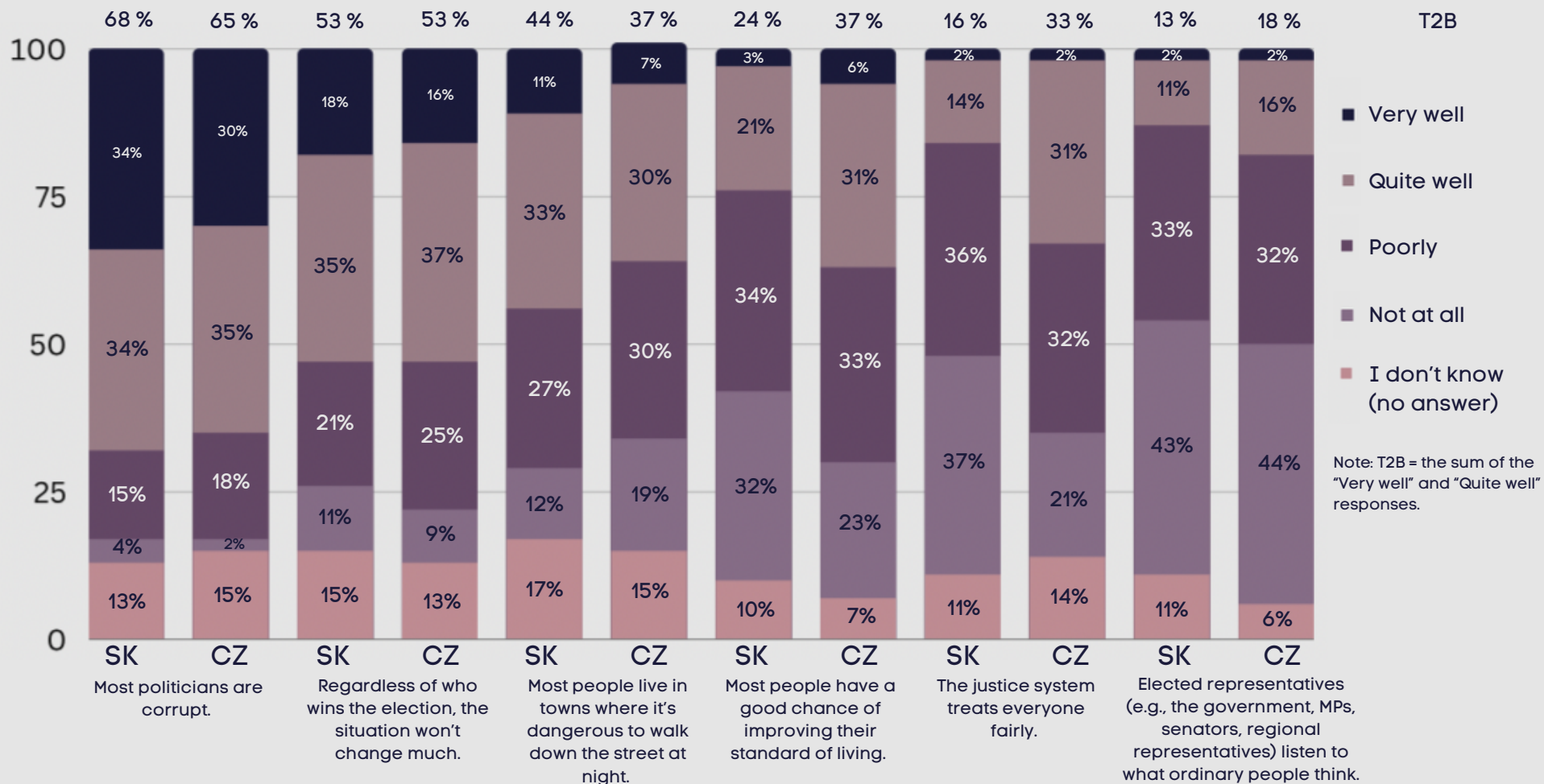


Note: T2B is the sum of the "Wholly satisfied" and "Somewhat satisfied" responses

# Neglecting ordinary people and feeling that elections can't change much

The poll included a set of questions about the functioning of the democratic system and the role of society. In Slovakia, most statements regarding the state of democracy as viewed by the population have a worse rating than in the Czech Republic.

**Question: To what extent do you believe the following statements describe the current situation in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic?**

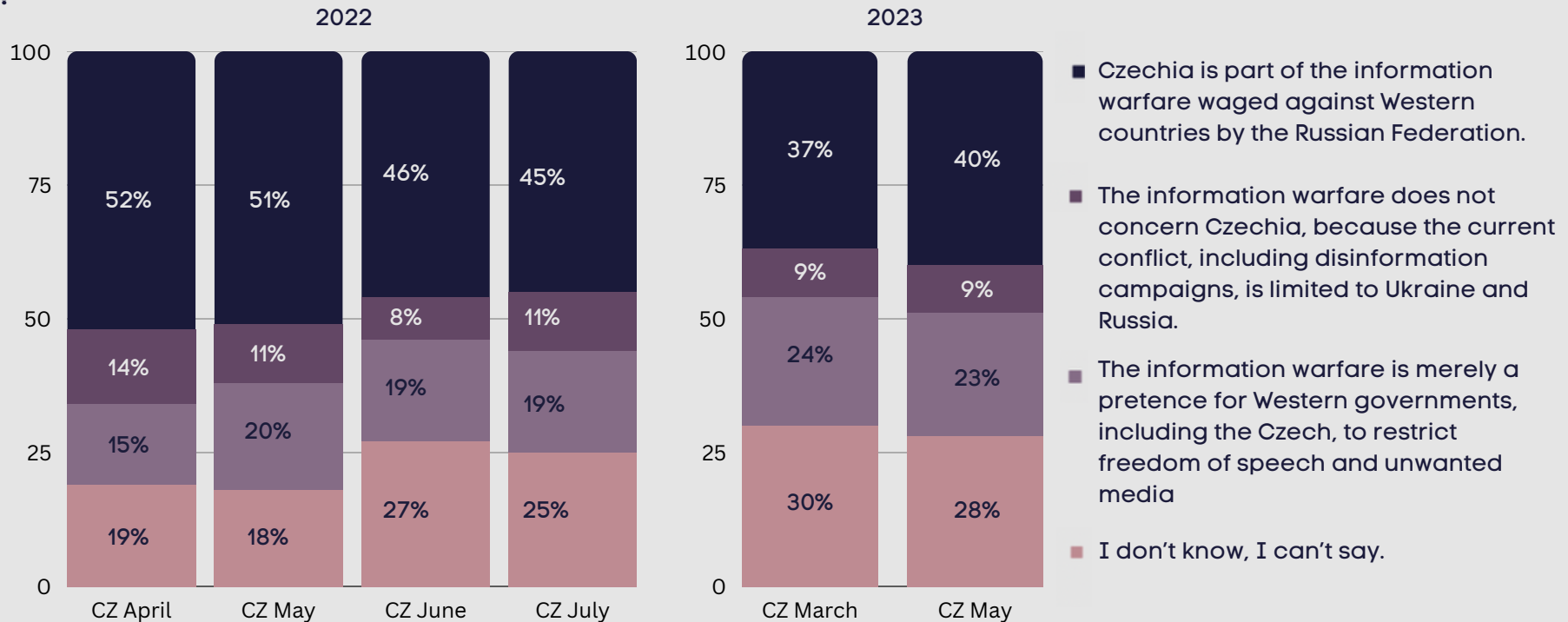


## 4 out of 10 Czechs believe we are part of information warfare

In the Czech Republic, 40% of the population agree with the statement that Czechia is part of the information warfare waged against Western countries by the Russian Federation. This result is similar to a previous poll conducted this March. However, it is still lower than in the spring of last year. 23% of the population believe that the information warfare is merely a pretence for Western governments to restrict freedom of speech and unwanted media.

Voters of the current coalition and of the ČSSD believe more frequently that CZ is part of an information warfare led by Russia. 6 out of 10 SPD voters only view the information warfare as a pretence for Western governments. KSCĀM voters and voters with a lower education also tend to agree more frequently with that statement.

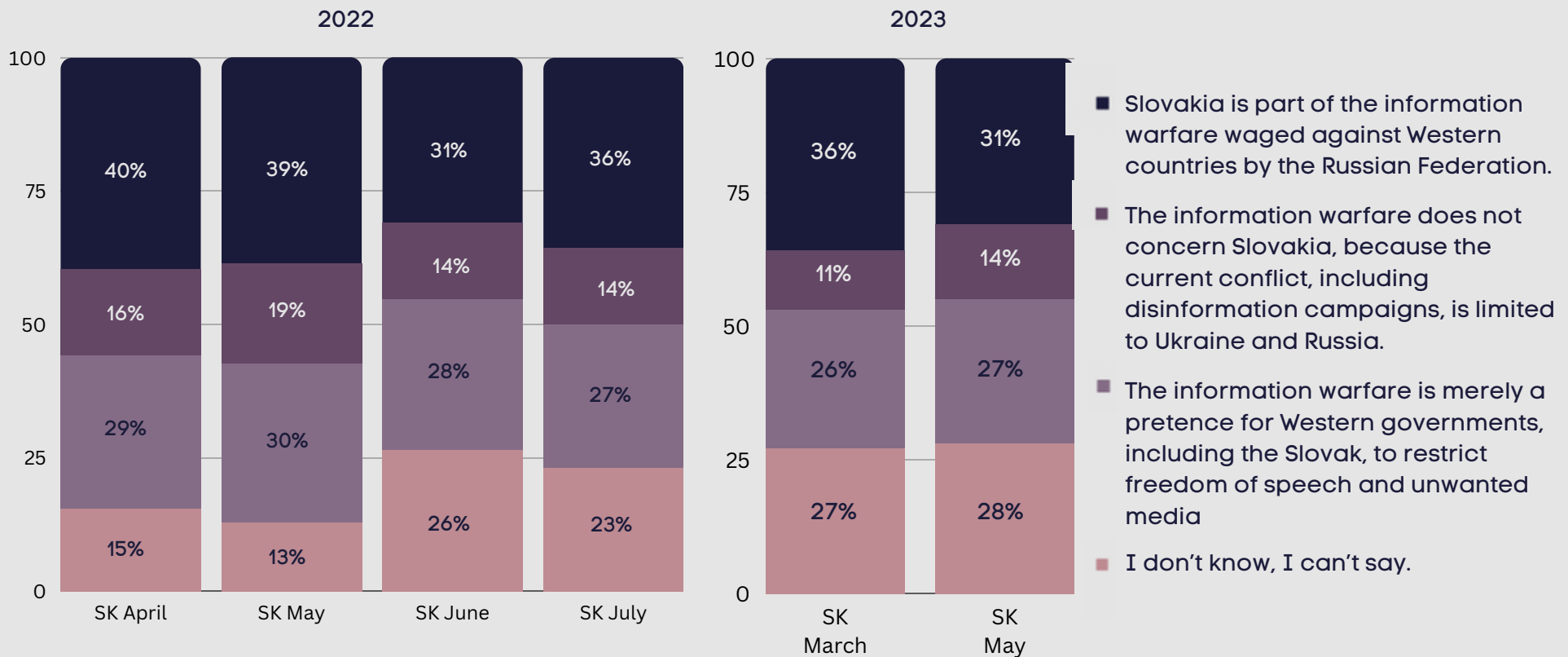
**Question: Which of the following statements best describe your view of the military conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the Czech Republic?**





Slovaks also tended to respond differently to this question. Only 31% of Slovaks agree with the statement that Slovakia is part of the information warfare waged against Western countries by the Russian Federation. 27% also agree with the statement about the pretence for Western governments to restrict freedom of speech and unwanted media. Similarly to the Czech republic, 28% of Slovaks do not have a clear opinion on the subject.

**Question: Which of the following statements best describe your view of the military conflict in Ukraine and its impact on Slovakia?**



## Research Method

<b>Sample size</b>	1004 respondents in Slovakia, 1047 in Czechia
<b>Survey date</b>	May 16–19, 2023, in Slovakia and May 11–16, 2023, in Czechia
<b>Survey method</b>	online poll using Ipsos panels Populacia.sk and Populace.cz
<b>Representativity</b>	quota sampling (quotas for gender, education, region, size of town, age, and economic status) the survey is representative for the general population aged 18 or older
<b>Contracted and carried out by</b>	survey conducted by Ipsos (member of SAVA and SIMAR) Exclusively for the Charles University – CEDMO

This publication summarizes the work of selected CEDMO fact-checking organizations (AFP, Demagog.sk, and Infosecurity.sk) in May 2023.

The URLs of all fact-checks referenced in this publication can be found [HERE](#).

Responsibility for the fact-checking content of this publication lies with Demagog.cz, contact person:

Petr Gongala, e-mail: [petr.gongala@demagog.cz](mailto:petr.gongala@demagog.cz).

Responsibility for the research content of this publication lies with Charles University, contact person:

Václav Moravec, e-mail: [vaclav.moravec@fsv.cuni.cz](mailto:vaclav.moravec@fsv.cuni.cz)

CEDMO contact person: Anja Grabovac, e-mail: [anja.grabovac@fsv.cuni.cz](mailto:anja.grabovac@fsv.cuni.cz)

