CEDMO
Central European Digital
Media Observatory

CEDMO Special Brief

**Poland's 2025 presidential election:
electoral interference and political
orientation in Central Europe**

Main Disinformation Narratives Connected to the Polish Presidential Election

Anti-Migration Narratives in the Election Campaign

One of the central topics of the political discourse was migration. Representatives of the Law and Justice party (PiS), criticized the concept of Foreigners' Integration Centers while omitting the fact that the idea for their creation originated during their time in government. Karol Nawrocki, the PiS-backed election winner, referred to them during the main debate before the first round of voting as "apartments for illegal immigrants," although in reality, these are information and service points that do not provide accommodation or lodging.

According to another narrative, the government had already admitted a large number if immigrants. This claim was often based on statistics about individuals turned back at the Polish-German border—figures that should not be confused with the number of migrants being returned from Germany to Poland.

Some candidates, such as Sławomir Mentzen, Karol Nawrocki, and Rafał Trzaskowski, argued that migrants and refugees from Ukraine currently residing in Poland could be a burden on the state budget or healthcare system. However, Demagog.pl´s calculations show that their presence brings more benefits than costs to the national budget.

Grzegorz Braun, the conservative-traditionalist candidate from the Confederation of the Polish Crown, shared a document on social media outlining the requirements imposed on soldiers sent to serve in Ukraine. According to the politician, this was evidence that Poland was preparing for military intervention—a claim denied by the Operational Command of the Armed Forces.

On the topic of security, a false narrative resurfaced during this campaign that had already appeared in 2023, claiming that Donald Tusk planned to cede half of Poland without a fight in the event of a war with Russia. This was mentioned, among others, by Karol Nawrocki and PiS MP Jan Kanthak.

One of the fake news stories involved a man with a machete in Legnica—false reports assumed he was a migrant, although in reality, he was a Polish citizen who posed no threat. The resulting moral panic was directly reflected in the campaign, where some politicians or activists referred to the threat posed by migrants.

There were also instances of questioning the fairness of the elections using narratives related to Ukrainian migrants. According to some internet users, migrants could cast votes —an allegation that had already appeared in 2023 and 2024 (1, 2).

Main Disinformation Narratives Connected to the Polish Presidential Election

Disinformation Targeting the Integrity of Elections

One of the most widespread narratives focused on the voting process itself—for example, false claims circulated on social media (1, 2) suggesting that electoral commissions were planning to erase voters' choices from the ballots. According to this underlined narrative, such manipulation would be possible through the use of erasable pens in polling stations. These kinds of claims could have far-reaching implications, including undermining trust in democratic principles and questioning the legitimacy of the election results.

False narratives that claimed a single voter could cast multiple votes by deceiving the electoral commission also spread. Other narratives directly rejected the outcome of the election, suggesting that one of the candidates received too few votes compared to what polls had indicated.

Climate Disinformation

Another false information concerned the European Union's efforts to combat climate change. Sławomir Mentzen claimed that the cost of the Green Deal would amount to 250,000 PLN per person. He omitted the fact that, according to the authors of the report he cited, the costs of adapting to climate change are lower than the potential costs resulting from failing to address it. Meanwhile, the ruling party's candidate, Rafał Trzaskowski, stated that the Green Deal no longer exists, which is also untrue.

In the context of climate change, independent candidate Artur Bartoszewicz also spoke out. He argued that the goal of achieving net zero CO_2 emissions would lead to a situation where it would be completely impossible to emit carbon dioxide—even to breathe. He also claimed that evidence against global warming is the supposed fact that Antarctic glaciers are not melting.

Main Disinformation Narratives Connected to the Polish Presidential Election

Fraud and AI-Generated Content

A significant example of viral disinformation narratives involves online scams using the image of presidential candidates or individuals associated with them. Such cases included, among others, Rafał Trzaskowski and Karol Nawrocki. The consequences of these actions are twofold: first, they involve the theft of users' personal data or money; second, they create negative associations between the candidates' image and online fraud, which could potentially undermine voter trust. Some of these scams were produced using deepfake technology (1, 2), and some of the available evidence suggests that these materials were part of Russian disinformation efforts.

There were also photoshopped (1, 2), out-of-context, or AI-generated images circulating online that were intended to depict candidates in controversial situations. The main goal of such content was usually to ridicule the politicians or undermine their credibility.

It is also worth noting that during this election campaign, politicians themselves used photoshopped and AI-generated images for propaganda and disinformation purposes. For example, PiS MP Agnieszka Soin shared a generated image showing a group of young women holding a banner in support of Karol Nawrocki. AI-generated graphics featuring young people accompanied by the slogan "Youth for Nawrocki" were particularly popular.

Artificial intelligence was also used to violate election silence regulations. On election day, images associated with specific candidates gained significant reach on social media. For instance, people on roller skates were interpreted as showing support for Karol Nawrocki, while graphics featuring Prince Polo wafers, Raffaello chocolates, and the word "bonjour" were linked to Rafał Trzaskowski. Some of these images were also AI-generated.

Probability of Election Interference
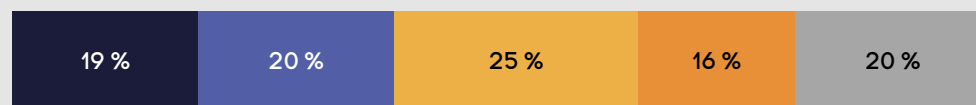## in the Recent Presidential Election in Poland

Question: In your opinion, what is the likelihood that the following countries and international institutions tried to interfere in the recent presidential election in Poland?

Legend:
- Very likely
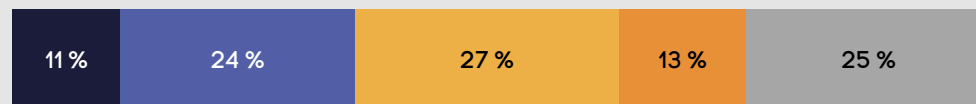- Rather likely
- Rather unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Don't know / can't answer

	Very likely	Rather likely	Rather unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know / can't answer
Election interference **by Russia**	22 %	25 %	19 %	12 %	22 %
Election interference **by the European Union**	19 %	20 %	25 %	16 %	20 %
Election interference **by the USA**	11 %	24 %	27 %	13 %	25 %
Election interference **by Hungary**	8 %	15 %	28 %	21 %	28 %
Election interference **by the North Atlantic Alliance**	7 %	10 %	29 %	27 %	27 %
Election interference **by China**		11 %	33 %	22 %	30 %
Election interference **by the Czech Republic**	6 %		31 %	33 %	27 %

Probability of Election Interference
in the Autumn Parliamentary Elections in Czechia

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Question: How likely or unlikely is it that some foreign governments or international institutions will try to influence the autumn elections in the Czech Republic?

■ Very likely   ■ Rather likely   ■ Don't know / can't answer
■ Rather unlikely   ■ Very unlikely

	Very likely	Rather likely	Rather unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know / can't answer
Election interference **by Russia**	20 %	22 %	22 %	16 %	19 %
Election interference **by the European Union**	17 %	24 %	23 %	18 %	18 %
Election interference **by the USA**	9 %	20 %	31 %	20 %	20 %
Election interference **by China**	8 %	18 %	30 %	23 %	21 %
Election interference **by the North Atlantic Alliance**	7 %	15 %	29 %	26 %	23 %
Election interference **by Hungary**		11 %	35 %	29 %	22 %
Election interference **by Poland**	7 %	34 %		36 %	21 %

N = 2856

Probability of Election Interference
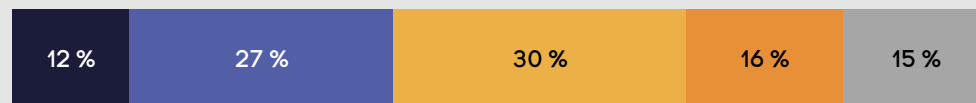## in the Next Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia

Question: In your opinion, what is the likelihood that some foreign governments or international institutions will try to influence the next parliamentary elections in Slovakia?

Legend:
- Very likely
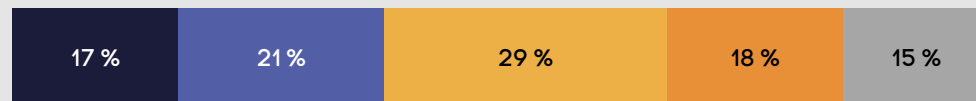- Rather likely
- Rather unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Don't know / can't answer

	Very likely	Rather likely	Rather unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know / can't answer
Election interference **by the European Union**	22 %	24 %	23 %	17 %	13 %
Election interference **by the USA**	12 %	27 %	30 %	16 %	15 %
Election interference **by Russia**	17 %	21 %	29 %	18 %	15 %
Election interference **by the North Atlantic Alliance**	12 %	21 %	28 %	23 %	16 %
Election interference **by Hungary**	9 %	21 %	35 %	21 %	14 %
Election interference **by the Czech Republic**	7 %	20 %	32 %	26 %	15 %
Election interference **by China**		18 %	38 %	23 %	16 %

N = 1527
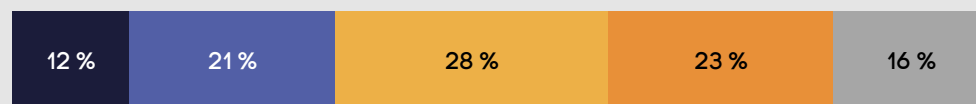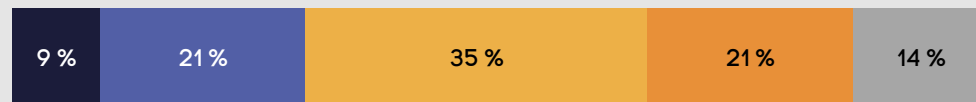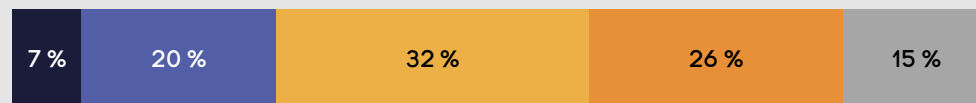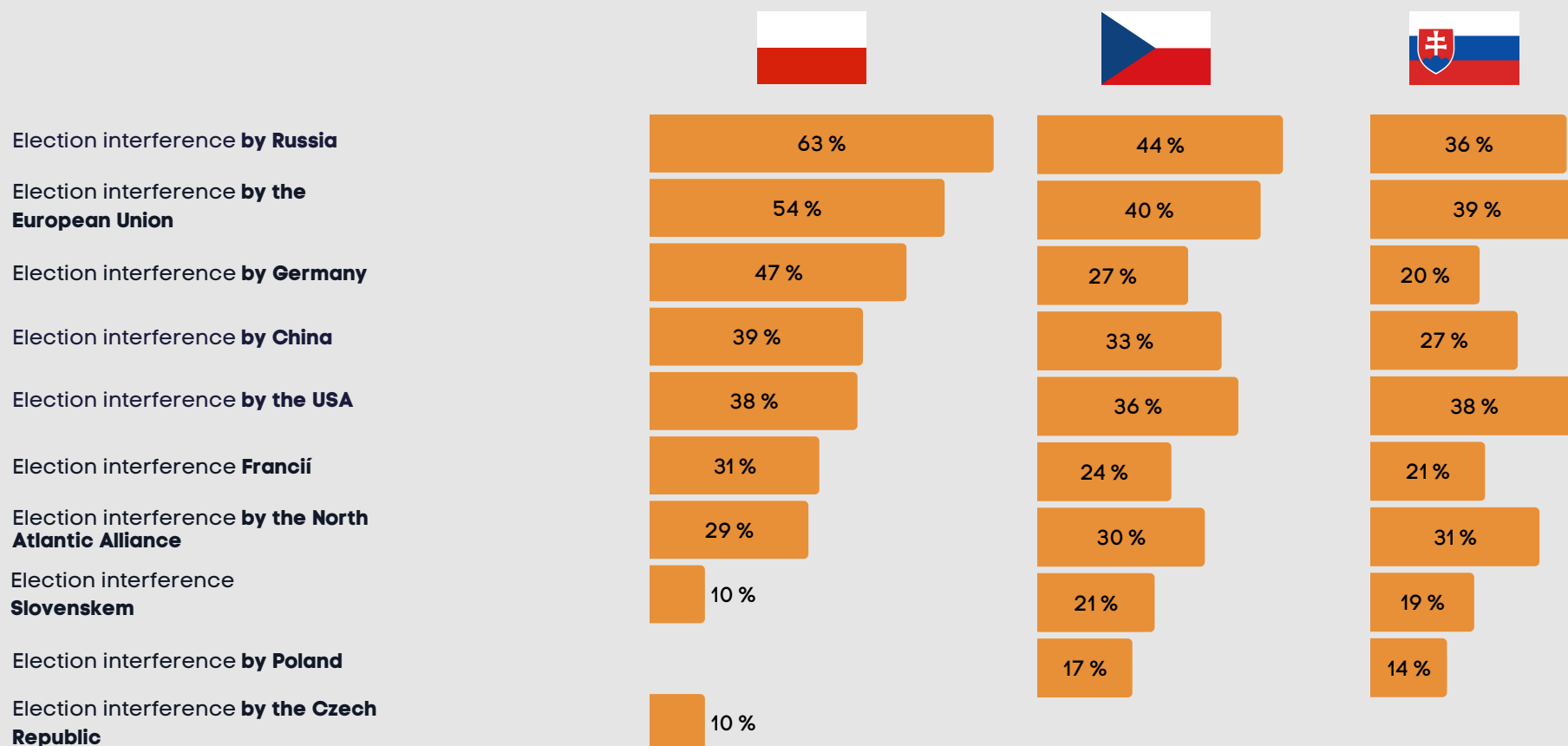
Probability of Election Interference
in the European Parliament elections: March/April 2024

Question: How likely or unlikely is it that some foreign governments or international institutions will try to influence the European Parliament elections in June?

	🇵🇱 Poland	🇨🇿 Czech	🇸🇰 Slovakia
Election interference **by Russia**	63 %	44 %	36 %
Election interference **by the European Union**	54 %	40 %	39 %
Election interference **by Germany**	47 %	27 %	20 %
Election interference **by China**	39 %	33 %	27 %
Election interference **by the USA**	38 %	36 %	38 %
Election interference **Francií**	31 %	24 %	21 %
Election interference **by the North Atlantic Alliance**	29 %	30 %	31 %
Election interference **Slovenskem**	10 %	21 %	19 %
Election interference **by Poland**		17 %	14 %
Election interference **by the Czech Republic**	10 %		

N = 1086   N = 1006   N = 1006

Polling period: 28 March - 3 April 2024

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Ipsos   pollster

Election Interference Probability: Summary

The recent presidential elections in Poland have attracted the attention of the media and fact-checkers not only from Poland, among others because of the potential influence of foreign countries on the electoral process. Therefore, we took this opportunity to investigate the level of concern about election influence in Poland, as well as in the Czech Republic and Slovakia for comparison.

In Poland and the Czech Republic, people's attitudes are broadly similar. They consider it most likely that Russia will influence the elections (47% in Poland, 42% in the Czech Republic). Only 9% of Polish respondents consider influence from the Czech Republic to be likely and the same proportion of Czech respondents expect influence from Poland. Poles, however, are more likely to consider electoral interference from Hungary (23%), while Czechs are more likely to consider interference from China (26%).

The attitudes of Slovak respondents differ quite significantly from those of the first two countries in their assessment of the likelihood of electoral interference. According to them, interference from the EU is most likely (46%). Russia is only in third place (38%). Influence from the Czech Republic is in penultimate place, but more than a quarter of respondents (27%) say it is likely. This is a relatively high proportion compared to the attitudes of Czech respondents towards influence from Poland and Polish respondents towards influence from the Czech Republic. Slovak respondents are the least likely to be influenced by China (23%).

Compared to an earlier survey conducted before the 2024 European Parliament elections, the current results are similar, especially in the case of Czech respondents. Most noticeable is the decrease in fear of Russian influence on the elections in Poland. In Slovakia, the share of respondents considering EU influence on the elections as likely has slightly increased. The methodology of the surveys differed slightly.
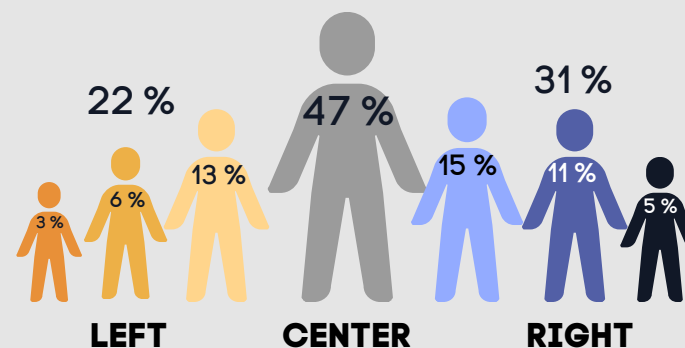
N = 1003   N = 2856   N = 1527

Political Views

Question: How would you describe your political views on a scale where one end represents left-wing views and the other represents right-wing views?
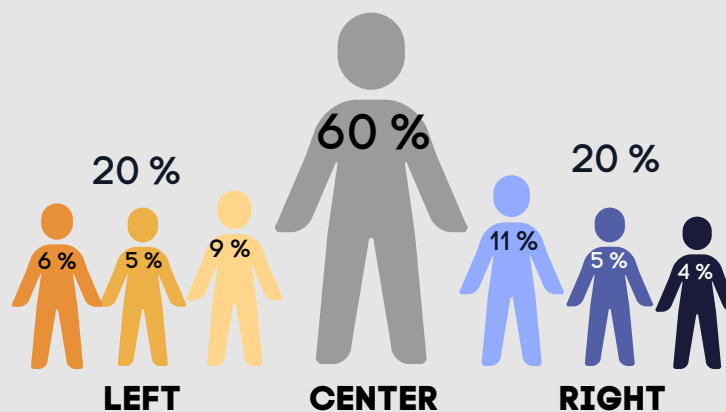
Poland

23 %

5 % 7 % 11 %

44 %

10 % 8 % 15 %

33 %

LEFT   **CENTER**   **RIGHT**

Czechia

22 %

3 % 6 % 13 %

47 %

15 % 11 % 5 %

31 %

LEFT   **CENTER**   **RIGHT**

Slovakia

20 %

6 % 5 % 9 %

60 %

11 % 5 % 4 %

20 %

LEFT   **CENTER**   **RIGHT**

N = 1003   N = 2856   N = 1527

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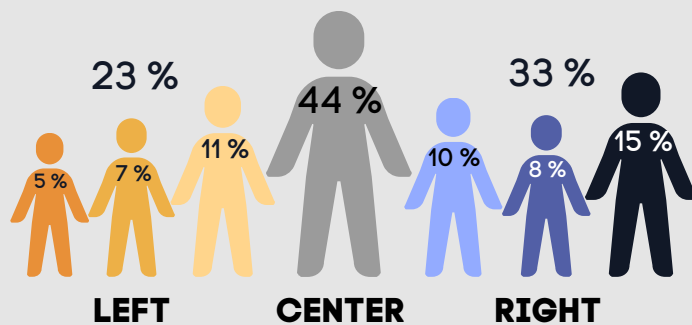
Political Views: Summary

Respondents in all three countries most often describe themselves as centrist voters. In Poland and the Czech Republic, they identify themselves more often as right-oriented than left-oriented. In Slovakia, people declare a right-wing political orientation to the same extent as a left-wing one.

Polish citizens are the most politically oriented to the right or left of the three countries assessed. However, the largest share of respondents in Poland is also politically oriented towards the centre. The political distribution of the elderly (65 years and older) is the most even, with approximately one third of respondents claiming to be on the left, the right and the political centre. In all other age groups, the representation of the right slightly outweighs the left.

In the Czech Republic, the youngest respondents aged 16-24 are the most politically oriented, i.e. there is a smaller share of centre political orientation among them than among other age groups. More than a quarter of them are on the left, more than a third on the right. However, the very next age group (25 to 34) has the highest proportion of centre political orientation, more than half of it. Respondents aged 65 and over have almost the same proportion of left-oriented as right-oriented respondents. In both cases it is less than a third.

Among Slovak respondents, the least centrist voters are among the elderly. More than a quarter of them are left-leaning, less than a fifth are right-leaning. Among the youngest respondents aged 16 to 24, a fifth are also right-leaning, but a higher proportion than among seniors indicated the centre as their political orientation.

N = 1003   N = 2856   N = 1527

Research Methodology: Poland

Sample size 1003 respondents

Polling period 7–12 June 2025

Data collection method Computer Assisted Wireless Interviewing (CAWI)

Representativeness

Quota selection. The survey is representative of the general population of PL aged 18 years and older by basic socio-demographic variables (gender, age, education, region and size of place of residence) and employment status.

Implementer and Contracting Authority

The research is carried out by the PBS agency.

Research Methodology: Czechia

Sample size   2856 respondents

Polling period   13–29 June 2025

Data collection method   Computer Assisted Wireless Interviewing (CAWI)

Representativeness

Quota selection. The research is representative of the general population of the Czech Republic aged 16 years and older by basic socio-demographic variables (gender, age, education, region and size of place of residence), by employment status and past voting behaviour (2021 general election, 2023 presidential election second round).

Implementer and Contracting Authority

The research is carried out by MEDIAN, s.r.o., (member of SIMAR) exclusively for Charles University - CEDMO.

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Research Methodology: Slovakia

Sample size   1527 respondents

Polling period   4–14 June 2025

Data collection method   Computer Assisted Wireless Interviewing (CAWI)

Representativeness

Quota selection. The research is representative of the general population of the Slovak Republic aged 16 years and older according to basic socio-demographic variables (gender, age, education, region and size of place of residence).

Implementer and Contracting Authority

research is carried out by Ipsos (member of SAVA and SIMAR) exclusively for Charles University - CEDMO

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