

POLES' OPINIONS ON THE POLISH ARMY

CATI SURVEY 2025



Laboratory of Media Studies

Poles' Opinions on the Polish Army

CATI Survey 2025

Laboratory of Media Studies
University of Warsaw



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Key Findings

- 1) **The vast majority of Poles (65%) oppose** sending Polish troops to the Ukrainian-Russian border as part of a stabilisation mission. **Only 24% of respondents support** this solution.
- 2) Most respondents are convinced that there is broad public support for their position on sending Polish troops to Ukraine. **A total of 59.4% of respondents believe that the majority of Poles agree with their opinion on sending Polish troops to Ukraine.**
- 3) **60.3% of respondents predict that in the future**, the majority of Poles will share their views on possible military involvement. **As many as 25.6% expect strong support**, and 34.7% expect a relatively positive attitude.
- 4) **Only slightly more than a half of the population is willing to publicly express their views on this controversial topic**, which may indicate a moderate level of confidence in their own beliefs or a moderate willingness to be judged in a public situation. What is Important, both groups (strong supporters and opponents of sending troops) do not differ significantly in their willingness to share their opinions.
- 5) Despite the existence of a particular group that avoids controversial topics, **almost a half of Poles declare their willingness to openly express their opinions**, even on complex and divisive issues.
- 6) Almost all respondents declared their willingness to participate in the upcoming (at that time) presidential elections (94 %), with a minority indicating a different position.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Between 12 and 16 May 2025, a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) survey was conducted at the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw. During five days, the team of interviewers managed to conduct interviews with 1,100 respondents. The total working time of the interviewers amounted to 172 hours, 55 minutes and 29 seconds. The average duration of a conversation (a successful interview) was 3 minutes and 28 seconds.

The aim of the study was to examine whether the phenomenon of the so-called spiral of silence exists in Poland. The spiral of silence is a mechanism described by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, according to which people, fearing social rejection, refrain from expressing views that they consider to be different from the dominant opinion of the majority. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann first presented the theory of the spiral of silence in two scientific articles in 1974. In 1980, the first book on the spiral of silence was published in German, and in 1984, the first edition in English was published (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; 1980; 1984). In total, the book has been translated into 11 languages. The spiral of silence theory can be summarised by means of the following assumptions (Roessing, 2013; Noelle-Neumann & Petersen, 2004):

- Most people fear social isolation.
- Therefore, people constantly observe the behaviour of others to find out which opinions and attitudes are approved of and which are rejected in the public sphere.
- People exert “isolation pressure” on others, for example by frowning or turning away when someone says or does something that is rejected by public opinion.
- People tend to hide their opinions when they believe that revealing them would expose them to “isolation pressure”.
- On the contrary, people who feel support of public opinion tend to express their opinions loudly and clearly.
- Loud expression of opinion on the one hand and silence on the other set the spiral of silence in motion.
- This process is usually triggered by emotionally and morally marked issues.
- In case of a consensus within a community on a given issue, it is unlikely that the spiral of silence will be set in motion. It usually happens in connection with controversial topics.

- The actual number of supporters of a given opinion does not necessarily determine its importance in the spiral of silence. A minority opinion may be perceived as a majority opinion in the public sphere if its supporters are sufficiently assertive and publicly defend their views with emphasis.
- The mass media can have a decisive influence on shaping public opinion. If the media repeatedly (in a “cumulative” manner) and consistently (in a “consensual” manner) support one side of a public dispute, that side has a much better chance to end the spiral of silence process as the winner.
- The fear of social isolation and the threat of experiencing it have impact on subconscious level: most people do not consciously consider the extent to which their behaviour is influenced by public opinion.
- Public opinion is limited in time and space. Wherever people live in societies, public opinion functions as a mechanism of social control. However, things that are specifically accepted or rejected by public opinion change over time and vary from one place to another.
- Public opinion stabilises and integrates the society because conflicts are resolved through a spiral of silence in favour of a single opinion. This is what is referred to as the integrative function of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, n.d.).

All interviews conducted were complete, and respondents met the criteria set out in the survey (they were above 18 and resided in Poland). Therefore, no records were excluded from the database at the calculation stage – 1,100 forms the basis for the percentages throughout the report.

The survey consisted of a form concerning the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as the main part, divided into six short cafeteria questions. The questions were as follows:

- **QUESTION 1:** Do you think that the Polish army should participate in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border?
 - I strongly agree
 - I rather agree
 - I neither agree, nor disagree
 - I rather disagree
 - I strongly disagree

- **QUESTION 2:** In your opinion, do most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue?
 - They strongly agree
 - They rather agree
 - They neither agree, not disagree
 - They rather disagree
 - They strongly disagree

- **QUESTION 3:** In your opinion, will most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue in the future?
 - They will strongly agree
 - They will rather agree
 - They will neither agree, not disagree
 - They will rather disagree
 - They will strongly disagree

- **QUESTION 4:** Would you be willing to express your opinion on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train?
 - Definitely yes
 - Yes
 - Rather yes
 - Difficult to say
 - Rather no
 - No
 - Definitely no



- **QUESTION 5:** Please rate on a scale how willing you are to discuss controversial topics in public.
 - Definitely yes
 - Yes
 - Rather yes
 - Difficult to say
 - Rather no
 - No
 - Definitely no

- **QUESTION 6:** Will you participate in the elections next Sunday?
 - Definitely yes
 - Yes
 - Rather yes
 - Difficult to say
 - Rather no
 - No
 - Definitely no

The set of questions designed was as a result of a combination of several research assumptions that determined the logic of the entire survey, including those consistent with the layout of questions used in studies referring to Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's classic spiral of silence theory. In the first question, respondents presented their position on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border. This question served as an introduction and provided a point of reference for the subsequent analysis of the respondents' statements.

The aim of the second question was to check whether respondents perceived their views as consistent with the opinion of the majority of Poles. In the third question, which was a continuation, respondents were asked to assess whether, in their opinion, most people would present a similar or different position in the future.

The fourth and fifth questions concerned the willingness to express one's own opinion in public. First, we referred to a specific situation, namely a conversation with other passengers on a train. Then we asked respondents about their willingness to discuss controversial topics in public.

The sixth question aimed to define the level of civic engagement of respondents by referring to their statements regarding participation in the upcoming presidential election. Combining this

data with previous responses allowed us to check whether participation in elections is associated with willingness to speak out on the matters of politics and national security.

The demographic data used at a later stage to weight the sample and to assess the impact of individual socio-demographic factors on the distribution of responses to individual questions included the following categories:

- Age
- Gender
- Postcode
- Education.

Postcodes were also used as the basis for calculation of the dependent variables describing the geographical distribution of the population of the study. Postcodes were used to determine the type of place of residence (town/village).

The results obtained in the survey were weighted using demographic data on the Polish population collected by the Central Statistical Office. Weighting involves comparing the structure of the research sample of people with whom the computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) was conducted, when we found out their gender, age, education and place of residence, to the demographic structure of adult Poles. Based on this comparison, we adjusted the results to ensure representativeness by assigning weights to the responses, taking demographic data into account.

The weighting was based on data on gender and age (obtained from the Local Data Bank, current as of 2025) and education (from the 2021 census). Due to the specific nature of the research sample (survey of adults (18+), and therefore a low response rate in the group with primary education included in the Central Statistical Office data (13+)) and the specific nature of data reporting on the education of Poles, for the purpose of for aggregate statistics weighted data without education is presented. In addition, the sample included 2 responses (1.8 per mille) from people declaring their gender as “other”, for whom it was impossible to correctly estimate the weight based on Central Statistical Office (GUS) data.

The following pages present the structure of the survey sample and the analysis of the responses to all questions included in the questionnaire.

Research sample

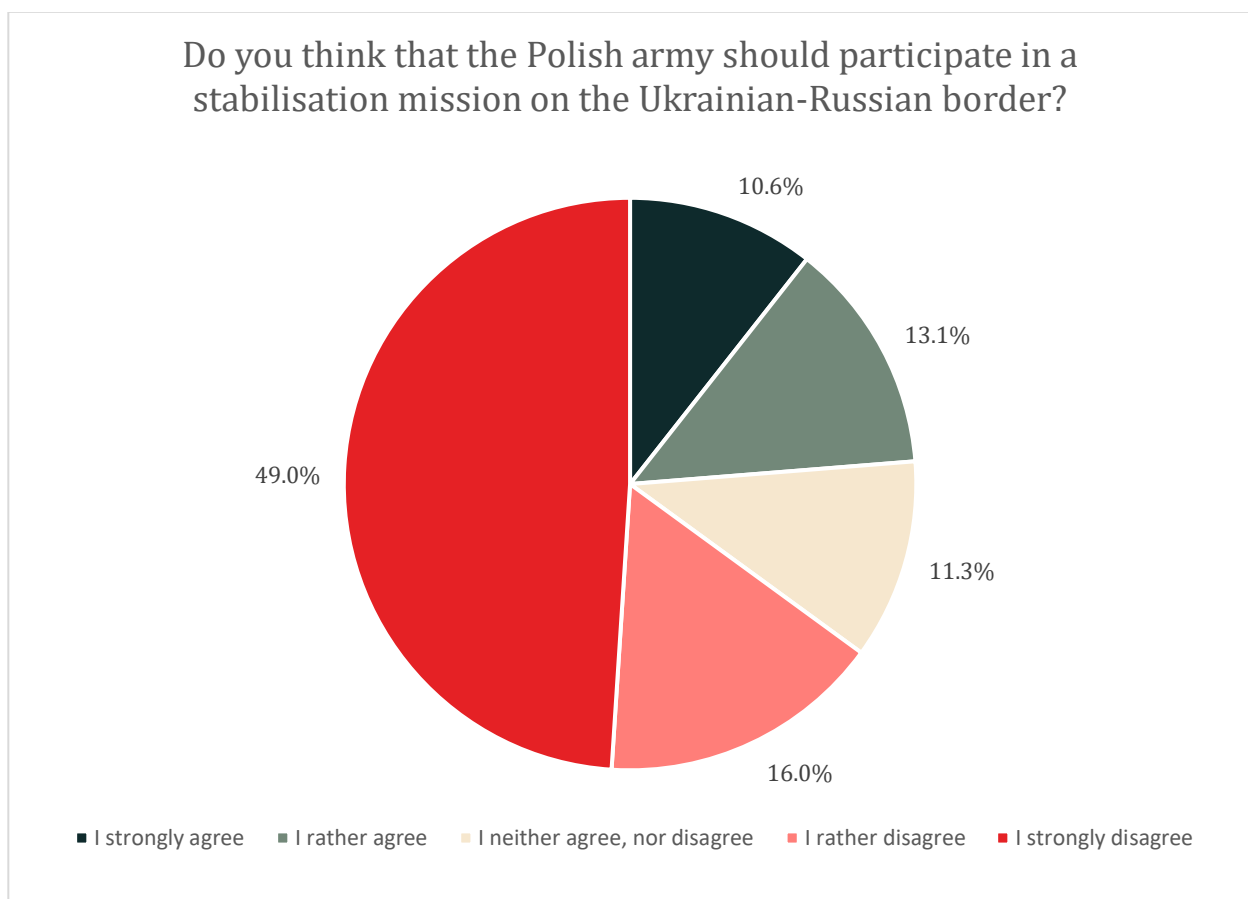
The following table presents the base structure of the research sample for n=1100.

Place of residence	Number of respondents	Percentage
Town	892	81.1%
Village	154	14%
No data	54	4.9%
Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
19-24	26	2.3%
25-34	104	9.4%
35-44	296	26.9%
45-54	234	21.3%
55-64	171	15.6%
65 and more	269	24.5%
Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Female	470	42.7%
Male	628	57.1%
Other	2	0.2%
Education	Number of respondents	Percentage
Primary	14	1.3%
Vocational	83	7.5%
Secondary	343	31.2%
Tertiary	660	60%

Question 1: Do you think that the Polish army should participate in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border?

The first question concerned the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border. This question was deliberately placed at the beginning of the questionnaire in order to introduce respondents to the subject of security and international politics. Furthermore, the answers to this question serve as a point of reference for later analyses, allowing a comparison of the respondents' declarations with their social attitudes.

Chart 1. Participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border.



Source: own analysis.

The majority of Poles do not support the involvement of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border – 49% of respondents strongly oppose this, and another 16% rather disagree. There are significantly fewer supporters of this solution – a total of only 23.7% of respondents expressed strong or moderate support for this idea. One in ten (11.3%) declared an undecided attitude, described as “neither agree nor disagree”.



These results clearly indicate that the respondents predominantly oppose the involvement of Polish troops in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border, which may reflect public concerns about Poland's direct military involvement in the armed conflict taking place beyond its eastern border. It is clear that this topic evokes strong emotions and seems to be an issue on which the vast majority of respondents already have a clear opinion, while undecided attitudes are rare. The high level of opposition may also reflect concerns about the country's security and reluctance to take actions that could increase the risk of escalating threats to Poland.

The survey results show that Poles are not indifferent to the issue of military involvement and have clearly formed opinions on the matter. This is not surprising, as the topic of the war in Ukraine is widely present both in the media and in the public sphere. This is confirmed by data from the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) report “What are people talking about?”, in which respondents indicate whether and how often selected topics appeared in conversations with their relatives and friends in the two weeks preceding the survey. In many editions of the survey, including the one from February 2025, the war in Ukraine ranks first, with a score of 47% (Feliksiak, 2025).

Another important factor influencing the opinions of Poles may be the growing sense of danger associated with the war in Ukraine. An increasing number of people openly declare that this conflict poses a serious threat to Poland's security. In December 2024, as many as 82% of respondents expressed this opinion, compared to 78% six months earlier (Scovil, 2024). This is one of the highest results recorded since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The survey results indicate that although Poles are clearly sceptical about the idea of involving the Polish army in operations abroad, their overall assessment of the armed forces remains positive. In September 2024, a record level of appreciation for the army's activities was recorded, with over 80% of respondents expressing positive opinions about it. Although there was a slight decline in the following months – in March 2025, 77% of respondents had a positive opinion of the army – it still enjoys a very high level of public trust (Gwiazda & Kawalec, 2025).

Similar trends to those observed in our study are also confirmed by other public opinion polls. According to a study performed by the Pollster Research Institute, commissioned by “Super Express” newspaper, as many as 62% of respondents oppose the idea of Polish soldiers going to Ukraine as part of a peacekeeping mission. The results of our study are consistent with this, since a total of 65% of respondents (including 49% strongly opposed and 16% somewhat opposed) expressed their opposition to such a solution (Kędzior, 2025).



Similarly, according to the survey conducted by Opinia24 for Radio Zet, 56% of respondents do not support the participation of Polish soldiers in a potential peacekeeping mission in Ukraine after the end of hostilities. The involvement of Polish forces was supported by 32% of respondents, while 13% had no opinion on the matter (Interia Biznes, 2025). These data confirm that Poles are predominantly sceptical about Poland's military involvement in Ukraine, even in the context of a stabilisation mission.

The reluctance to send troops may also be influenced by a growing uncertainty about the commitment of NATO allies in the event of a military threat. As CBOS data show, only 11% of Poles strongly believe that Poland can count on military assistance from the Alliance in the event of an attack, and the share of those expressing doubts about this has increased significantly as compared to last year (Badora, 2025).

In summary, scepticism towards Poland's military involvement in Ukraine is clearly visible and concerns not only the current war situation, but also possible actions in the post-war period. As shown in the CBOS report "Poles on the Potential End of the War in Ukraine", the vast majority of Poles do not support the idea of Polish soldiers going to Ukraine as part of a possible peacekeeping mission aimed at guaranteeing the sustainability of the peace agreement. As many as 68% of respondents oppose this solution, while only 22% express support (Scovil, 2025). These data confirm that fears of Poland's potential involvement in a direct conflict with Russia prevail in the society, outweighing the conviction that active participation in the reconstruction and stabilisation of the region after the end of the war is necessary. In light of these sentiments, it is difficult to expect that support for this type of involvement will increase significantly in the near future, regardless of the direction in which the international situation develops and the decisions taken by other members of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Chart 2. Participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border (by age group).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 56.226, df = 20, p-value = 2.688e-05.

The survey showed that the age of respondents influences their level of support for the involvement of the Polish army on the Ukrainian-Russian border. Although the share of people strongly opposing the intervention remains stable and high in all age groups (approx. 50%), there are notable differences among those who support it. The strongest support was recorded in the 45–54 age group (17%), and a higher level of approval is also visible among people aged 55–64 and 65+. This may indicate that older generations are more inclined to support military action in the name of regional stability and security.



Chart 3. Participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border (by gender of the respondents).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 25.995, df = 4, p-value = 3.172e-05.

Gender also proves to be an important factor differentiating attitudes towards the involvement of Polish armed forces on the Ukrainian-Russian border. Men are more likely than women to strongly oppose the intervention (57% vs. 42%), which may suggest more clear-cut views and stronger emotions in this group. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to express moderate opposition to such policy (19% compared to 13% of men), which may indicate greater caution or uncertainty in assessing potential military involvement. Education has no significant impact on the distribution of opinions. Regardless of their level of education, the attitudes of respondents remain relatively uniform.

Public opinion polls from other European countries shed light on Poles' attitudes towards the potential military involvement in Ukraine. In France, for example, opposition to sending soldiers into a direct military operation prevails, when as many as 68% of French people do not support such intervention. At the same time, if the conflict were to end and a peace agreement were reached, as many as 65-67% of respondents declare their support for the presence of French troops in Ukraine for stabilisation purposes (ELABE, 2025). Despite growing public concern – as many as 83% of French people express fears related to the war, the society stands in solidarity with Ukraine (IFOP-Fiducial, 2025). This is confirmed by Eurobarometer data, according to which 72% of French people support humanitarian and financial aid for Ukraine, although this is slightly lower than the EU average (78%) and significantly lower than in Poland (86%). (European

Commission, 2025). A comparison of French sentiments with the results of Polish surveys shows an interesting convergence of attitudes: in both countries, there is a clear reluctance to engage directly in the conflict with Russia, accompanied by broad support for humanitarian and political assistance to Ukraine. Both Poles and French seem to be choosing between solidarity and caution, meaning that on the one hand they want to help, but on the other they do not want to take risk of involving their own armed forces in an open conflict. This approach shows how strongly public emotions and security concerns influence perceptions of the role of states in the conflict taking place beyond Europe's eastern border (IPSOS, 2025).

A similar picture emerges from the international Ipsos Global Advisor survey: The World's Response to the War in Ukraine (November–December 2022). The results show that despite their high interest in the conflict (75% follow reports on the war) and strong support for a firm policy towards Russia (78% are in favour of supporting sovereign states in the event of an attack), Poles remain very cautious about direct military involvement. 61% of respondents oppose sending troops to Ukraine, while only 22% declare their support for such action (IPSOS, 2023). These figures are consistent with a broader trend: although European societies show solidarity with Ukraine, they increasingly are in favour of political and economic measures rather than of military action.

Expert commentary

Dr habil. Anna Mierzecka, Professor at the University of Warsaw, the Laboratory of Media Studies

The results of our research study confirm that the potential involvement of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border is an issue on which Poles' opinions are relatively stable and resistant to changing political contexts. Previous surveys conducted in recent years have already shown a predominance of scepticism towards Poland's military presence in Ukraine, and our data show that even during a very intense election campaign, when the issue of international security was heavily exploited for political purposes, the distribution of opinions remained unchanged. It demonstrates that public concerns about Poland's direct involvement in the armed conflict are well-founded.

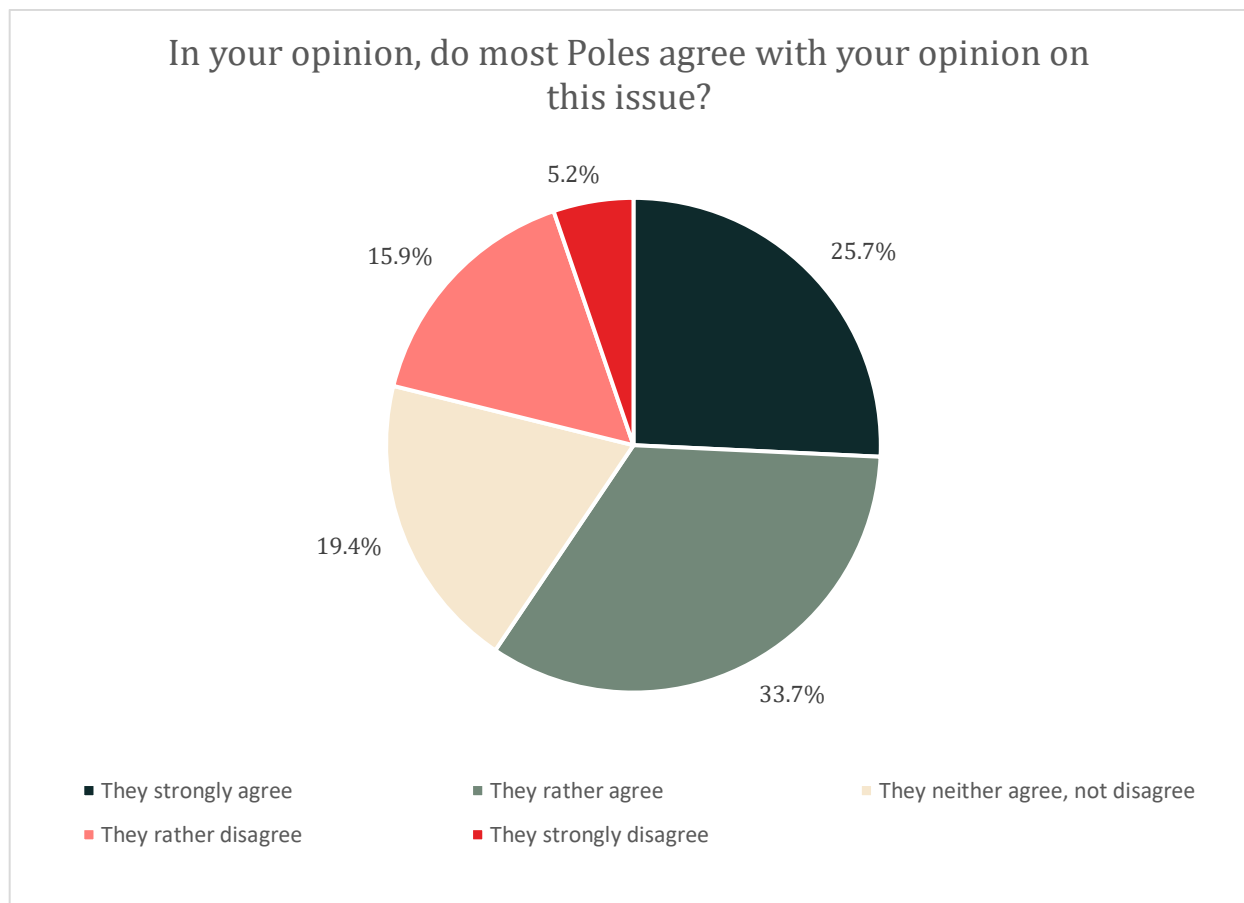
The differences in attitudes based on gender should be also emphasised. Men are more likely to express strong opinions, both in opposition and in support, while women are more likely to choose moderate responses. This pattern has also been observed in other research studies and indicates that women are more cautious in making categorical judgements in the areas of politics and security.

The higher percentage of neutral responses among people aged 25–34 is another interesting aspect. This can be interpreted in many ways. On the one hand, it may result from this group's focus on life challenges related to professional and personal stability, and consequently from a lower sense of agency in political matters, especially in respect to foreign policy, which seems to be a rather distant and abstract issue to most ordinary citizens. On the other hand, the reluctance to take clear positions may be the result of low trust in political parties and the belief that their narratives are not very credible. Finally, this attitude may also be the result of an internal tension between the instinctive solidarity with Ukraine and an awareness of the real consequences of sending troops, including human casualties. As a result, some of the respondents choose the answer “I don't know” as a safe way out of this ambivalence.

Question 2: In your opinion, do most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue?

In the second question of the survey, respondents were asked to assess whether the majority of society shares their position on Poland's military involvement in Ukraine. The aim was to determine how respondents perceive their views in relation to public opinion and whether they consider them to be occasional or more in line with the prevailing mood in the country.

Chart 4. In your opinion, do most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue?



Source: own analysis.

The survey results indicate that most respondents are convinced that there is broad public support for their position on sending Polish troops to Ukraine. A total of 59.4% of respondents believe that most Poles agree with their opinion, including 25.7% who responded “strongly agree” and 33.7% who responded “rather agree”. An undecided attitude – “neither agree nor disagree” – was adopted by 19.4% of respondents. In turn, 21.1% of respondents expressed the belief that



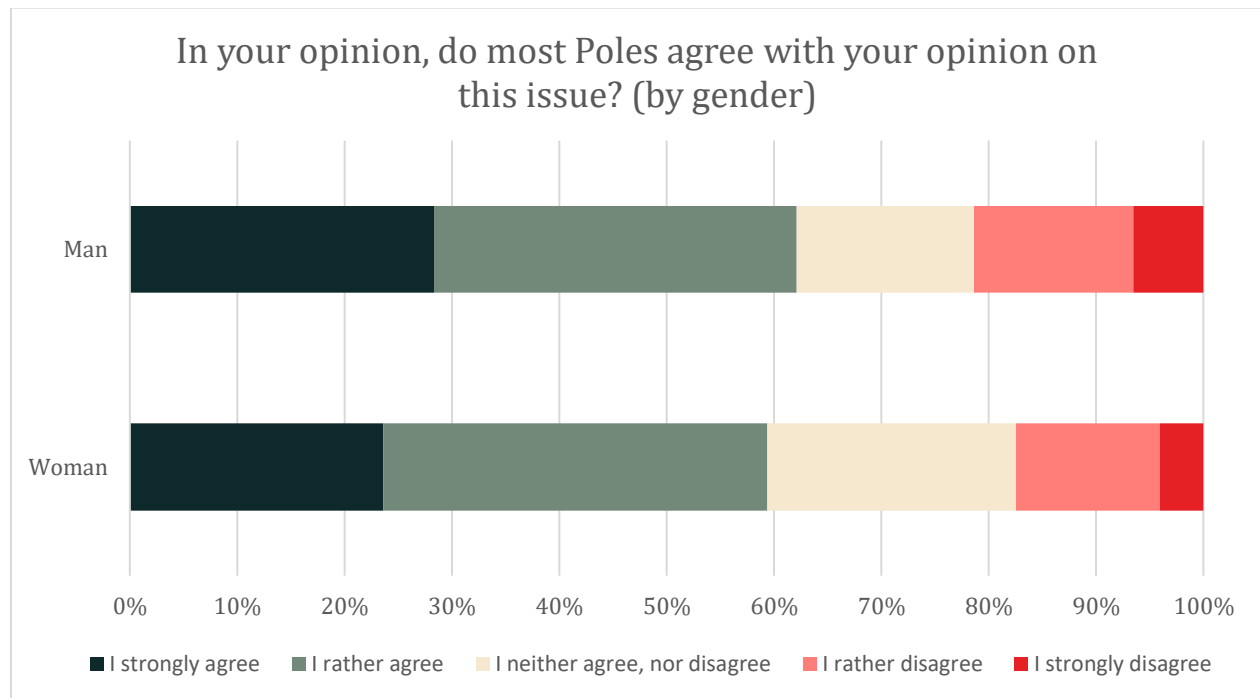
the majority of society has a different opinion, including 15.9% who “rather disagree” and 5.2% who “strongly disagree”.

The structure of the responses obtained suggests that there is a social consensus among the majority of respondents. The vast majority of respondents believe that their position on Poland's military involvement in Ukraine reflects the views of the entire society. At the same time, however, almost one in five respondents indicates that their opinion differs from the mainstream. This type of distribution of results can be interpreted through the prism of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory, which posits that individuals first attempt to assess whether their views align with prevailing opinions. When they perceive themselves as a minority, they may refrain from openly expressing their opinions because they fear social isolation or condemnation. As a result, this leads to the reinforcement of the dominant narrative and further silencing of alternative positions.

Empirical research on the spiral of silence mechanism remains relatively scarce, particularly in the context of the war in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the available data indicate that avoiding discussions about politics is strongly present in Polish society (CBOS, 2023). The CBOS report, entitled “Conversations about Politics and Political Divisions,” shows that as many as 68% of Poles avoid political conversations in public places, and 48% try not to discuss it with their loved ones. Additionally, 23% of respondents reported that they rarely discuss political issues. In turn, the results of the Ariadna Panel from October 2023 indicate that 35% of Poles at least sometimes conceal their political views due to fear of misunderstanding or aggression from those around them. Importantly, 39% of respondents have experienced direct attacks for expressing their opinions, and 29% admitted to having lost friends because of this.

Similar trends are visible in the results of the Eurobarometer survey entitled “Democracy 2023”, which indicates that only 62% of Poles believe that political views can be freely expressed in Poland without fear of negative consequences, while 30% have doubts in this regard. Although these data do not directly relate to the war in Ukraine, they highlight the factors that may limit open debate on controversial issues such as foreign policy, security, and military involvement. In the context of the spiral of silence theory and the aforementioned CBOS data, it can be assumed that some citizens refrain from publicly expressing their opinions if they deviate from the perceived social consensus. Such mechanisms may therefore affect not only the quality of public debate, but also the formation of collective opinion.

Chart 5. In your opinion, do most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue? (by gender of the respondents).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 12.095, df = 4, p-value = 0.01666.

Based on the analysis of the above chart, it can be concluded that gender was the variable that revealed some differences. Men were more likely than women to express the belief that their position was supported by the general public (28.3% of men as compared to 23.6% of women). Women, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to remain undecided and chose the answer “difficult to say” (23.2% of women as compared to 16.6% of men). This suggests that men are more likely to attribute their opinions to the general public, whereas women exhibit a higher level of caution and uncertainty in assessing the extent to which the majority of society shares their views. Education and age were not variables that differentiated the answers of respondents.

Expert commentary

Dr habil. Tomasz Gackowski, Professor at the University of Warsaw, Head of the Laboratory of Media Studies

The results of our study prompt reflection. Nearly three fourths of respondents distance themselves from active participation in public debate, especially when the topic may go beyond the dominant media narratives. This phenomenon perfectly illustrates how strongly the “spiral of silence” mechanism operates in Polish society, as the concept assumes that people avoid expressing unpopular views (or those perceived as such, especially in the mainstream media) due to fear of social exclusion. What is important, this mechanism does not need to apply only to “minority” views, but it also works when someone believes that the mainstream media, elites or experts present a different position than that of “the majority of ordinary people”.

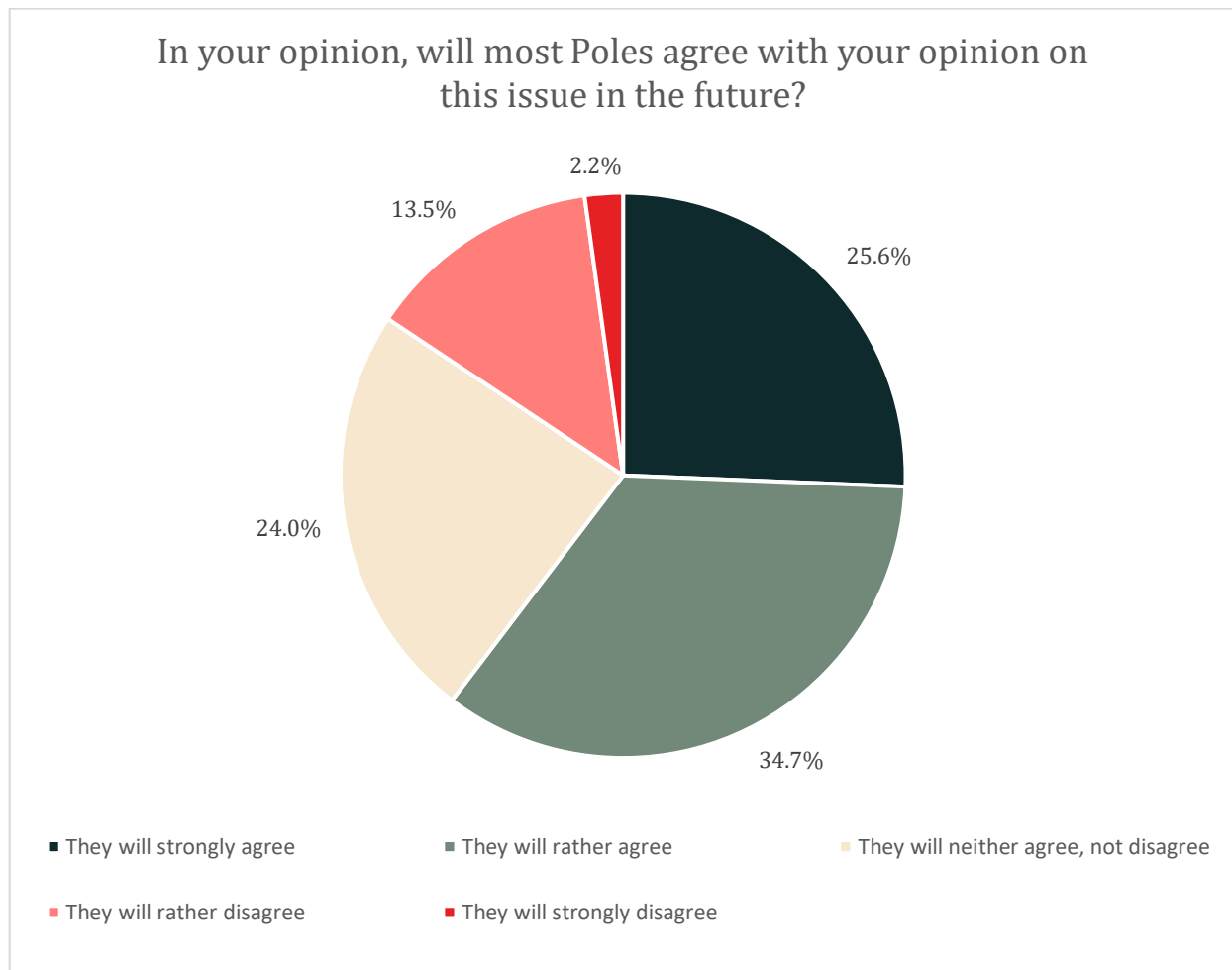
This phenomenon resembles the meaningful moment of reflection in the American media after Donald Trump's election, when CNN and other mainstream players had to admit that they did not understand American society, which they had observed for so long solely through the filter of their own editorial beliefs. A similar mechanism may also be functioning in Poland today – on the one hand, we have dominant media and expert narratives, and on the other, a growing number of people who feel that their views are not reflected in these narratives.

Furthermore, the topic of Poland's military involvement acts as a particularly strong trigger, evoking a reaction of withdrawal and self-censorship. However, it may also be a sign of a deeper process: a decline in trust in the large, uniform mainstream narratives and a gradual withdrawal of people from open dialogue. If so, we are dealing with a worrying symptom: not so much a lack of opinion, but a lack of space to express it safely and freely. In this context, for example, Grzegorz Braun's election result (6.34%, 1,242,917 votes) in the first round of the presidential election came as a complete surprise to the media, polling companies and commentators on social and political life. Grzegorz Braun's media exposure was marginal (except for popular debates), yet he managed to achieve a better result than all the leaders of the coalition government, save for Rafał Trzaskowski. If we were to try to predict the results of the presidential election (first round in 2025) based on the media exposure of individual candidates, in the case of the mainstream media, we would be dealing with one of the biggest cumulative errors in the history of the Third Polish Republic (the correlation of media exposure in the mass media (television) vs. election results). It is clear that the influence of mainstream media on audiences, including voters, is significantly declining, and “media ostracism” no longer works as it did years ago. The candidates can reach their voters alongside and above the mainstream media.

Question 3: In your opinion, will most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue in the future?

In the third question, we asked respondents whether, in their opinion, most Poles will share their opinion on the involvement of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission in Ukraine in the future. The distribution of responses is presented in the chart below.

Chart 6. In your opinion, will most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue in the future?



Source: own analysis.

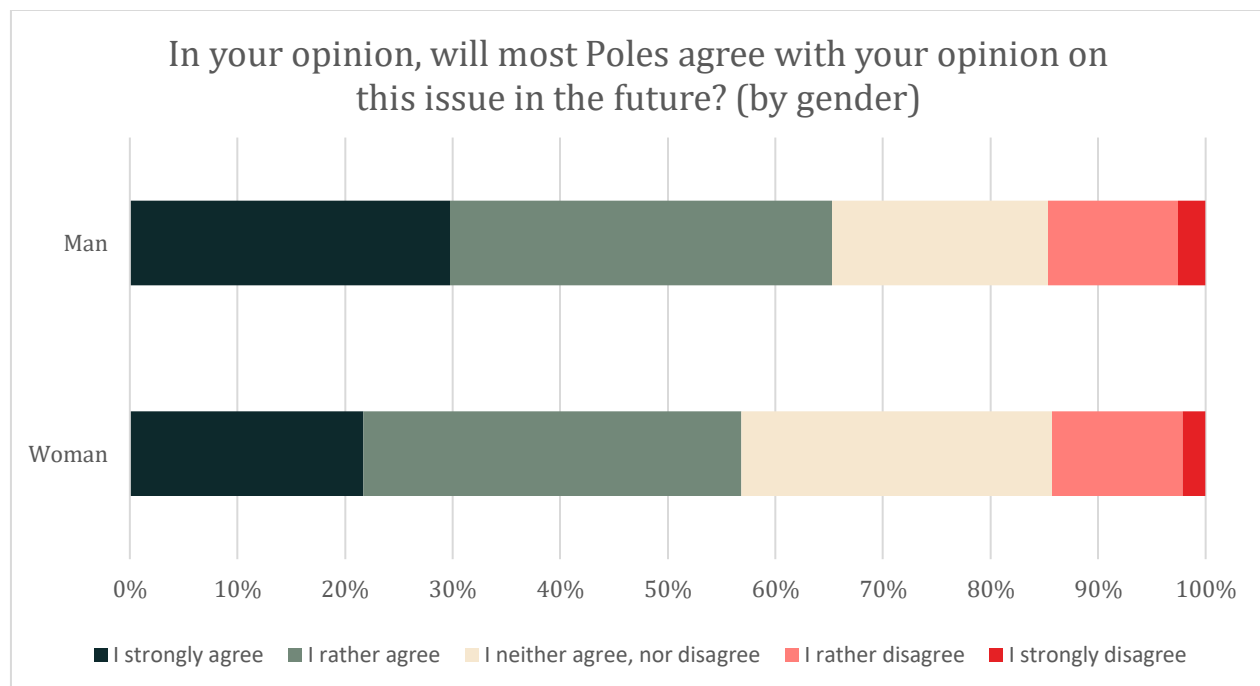
Most respondents predict that their opinion on the involvement of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border will be supported by the society in the future. A total of 60.3% of respondents anticipate this scenario, with 25.6% expecting strong support and 34.7% expecting a rather positive attitude from the majority of Poles. A neutral approach, consisting of no predictions as to the public opinion, is taken by slightly less than one



in four respondents (24%). A total of 15.7% of respondents have a different opinion: 13.5% predict a lack of support, and 2.2% expect strong opposition from the majority of the society.

The results indicate clear optimism among the respondents regarding the future acceptance of their views by the majority of society. Over 60% of respondents expect that their position on the involvement of Polish troops on the Ukrainian-Russian border will be understood and supported in the future. This may indicate a strong conviction that their opinions are correct and a sense that they represent broader, though perhaps not yet fully revealed, public sentiment.

Chart 7. In your opinion, will most Poles agree with your opinion on this issue in the future? (by gender of the respondents).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 15.741, df = 4, p-value = 0.003388.

As in the previous question, the age and education of respondents do not translate into significant differences in their declarations. However, differences do appear depending on the gender: men are more likely than women to express a strong belief that their view will be widely accepted in the future (29.8% of men vs. 21.7% of women). In this case, too, women are clearly more often undecided – 28.9% of women gave an ambiguous answer, as compared to 20.1% of men. The level of education and age do not have a significant impact on answers of the respondents.

Expert commentary

Marcin Łączyński, MA, the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw

The answers to the question about prediction reveal an interesting psychological mechanism: most respondents not only have a strong opinion on the possible involvement of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission in Ukraine, but also believe that their opinion will become dominant in the society in the future. 60% of respondents assume that the majority of Poles will share their position; it is a clear sign of cognitive optimism and conviction about the correctness of their own views. This can be interpreted as an example of the so-called false consensus effect, that is the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others think the same way we do. In recent years, this cognitive error has been reinforced by the fact that we operate in echo chambers, which give us a sense of being right.

Differences in responses based on gender once again show a recurring pattern: men are more likely to believe in the universality and future recognition of their own opinions (almost 30% of them are “strongly” convinced of this), while women remain more cautious and undecided. Nearly one-third of women choose a neutral response, suggesting a greater tendency to avoid categorical predictions and less certainty about their own position in the public debate – a pattern also observed in responses to other questions in our survey.

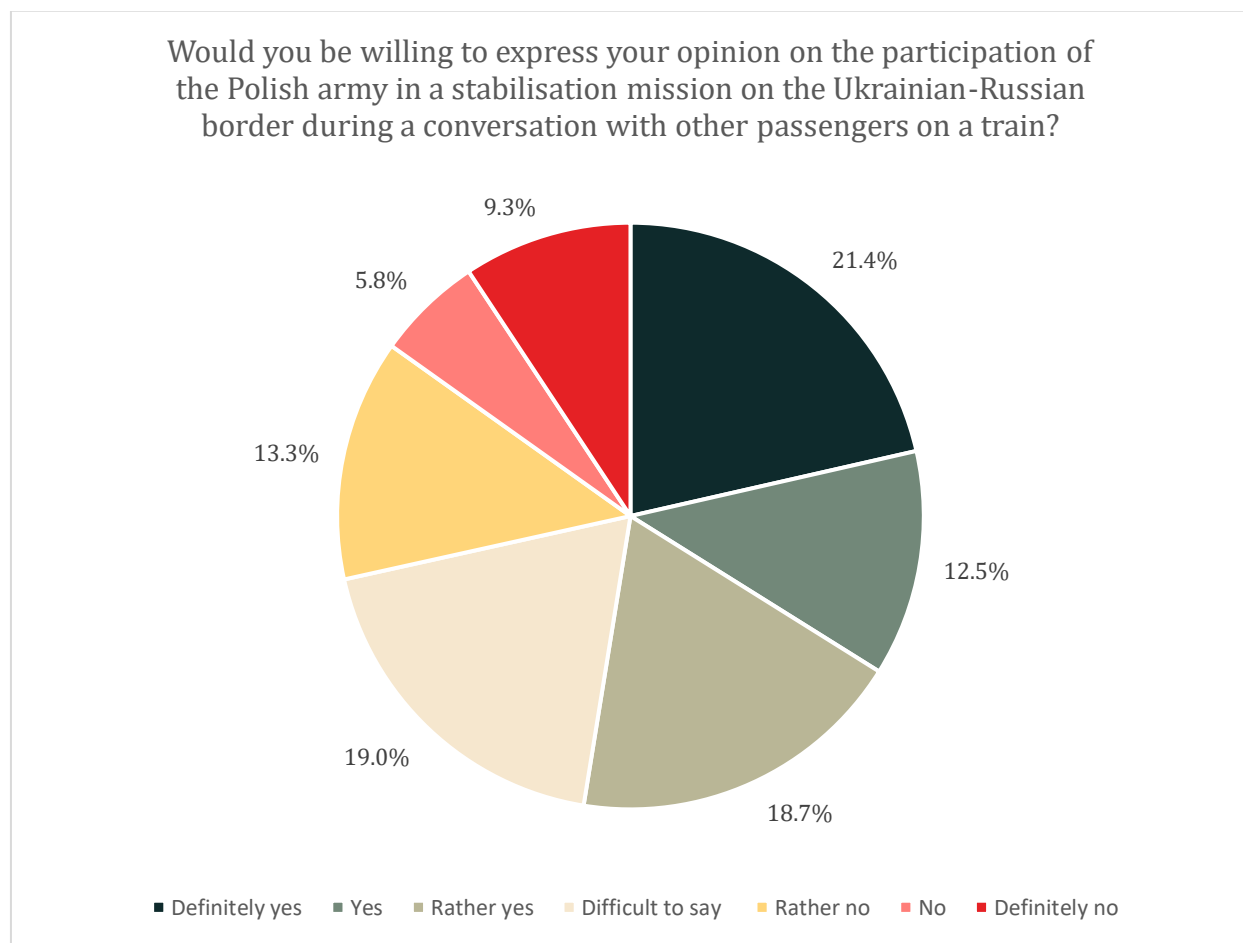
It is worth noting that neither age nor education significantly differentiates the attitudes of the respondents. This means that the feeling of “I am right” and the expectation that the majority of the society will agree with us in the future is a common experience for various social groups. In the context of a highly polarised public debate in Poland, these results suggest that both sides of the political dispute may be convinced that the “history” will ultimately confirm their position.

On the other hand, let us also note the significant percentage of neutral responses: nearly one in four respondents does not attempt to assess the future mood and opinions of their fellow citizens. This may be due to uncertainty about the dynamics of the geopolitical situation or a lack of confidence in the predictability of the public opinion among this group of respondents.

Question 4: Would you be willing to express your opinion on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train?

In the fourth question, we asked respondents about their willingness to express their opinion in a social situation requiring openness towards strangers, which was one of the most important components of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's research on the spiral of silence. Specifically, it referred to a declaration whether the respondents would be willing to raise the issue of the Polish army's involvement on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train.

Chart 8. Would you be willing to express your opinion on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train?



Source: own analysis.



More than a half of respondents (52.6%) declared their willingness to express their opinion on the participation of Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border in conversation with random fellow passengers on a train. Among them, 21.4% firmly confirmed their willingness, while another 31.2% (12.5% “Yes” and 18.7% “Rather yes”) expressed it in a moderate way, indicating that they would be rather willing to take part in such a conversation. In turn, almost 30% of the survey participants showed reluctance to discuss this topic in a public setting: 13.3% would rather avoid such a conversation, 5.8% declared a lack of willingness, and 9.3% completely rejected this possibility. 19% of respondents declared they were undecided, unable to assess their attitude in this context clearly.

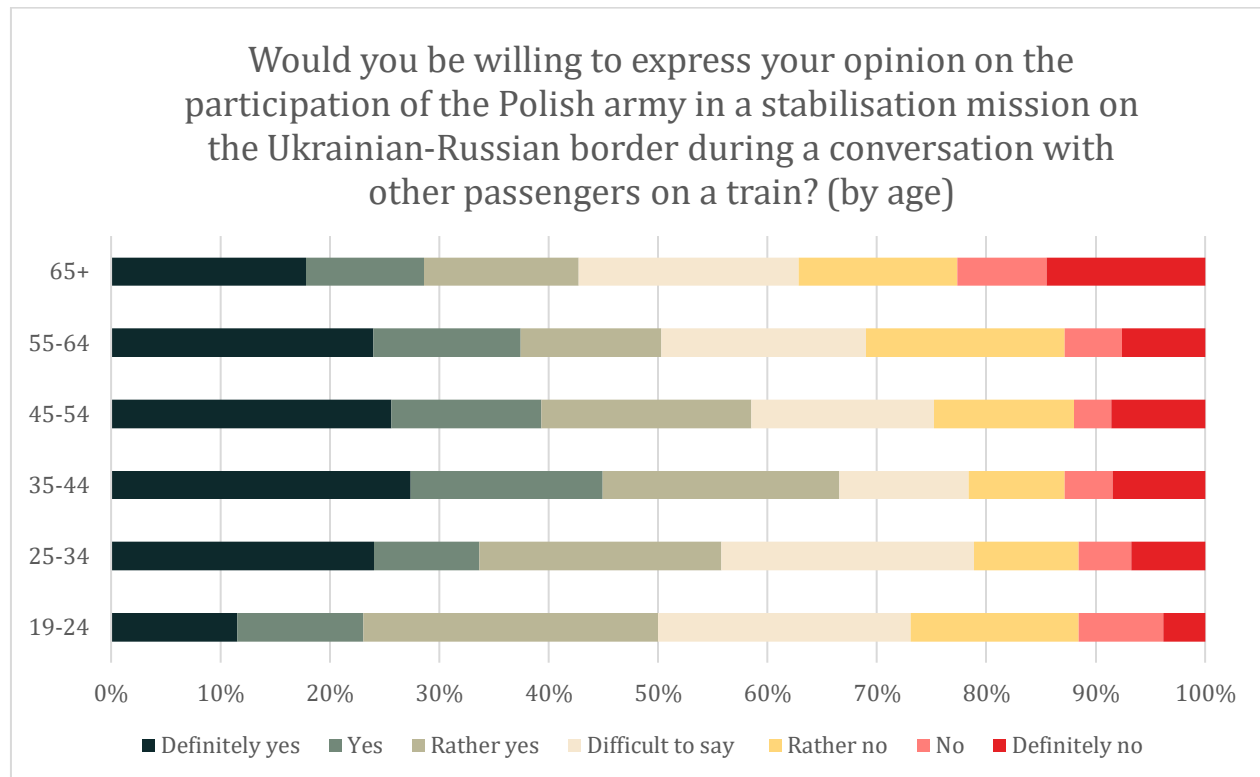
The results of the fourth question in our survey illustrate the willingness of the respondents to express their opinions on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border, in the context of conversations with random fellow passengers on a train. This question is a classic projection situation, referring to Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's research and her concept of the spiral of silence, which assumes that people are less likely to share their opinions in public if they fear they will not be accepted.

According to the results, only slightly more than half of the respondents (52.6%) declare their willingness to speak up in such a situation, which may point out to a moderate level of confidence in their own beliefs or caution resulting from a desire to avoid social judgement.

At the same time, almost one in five persons (19 %) are unable to clearly define their position, which confirms that this topic is perceived as potentially controversial and causing internal hesitation. Importantly, the survey did not reveal any significant differences in the willingness to publicly express opinions between supporters and opponents of sending the troops, which may suggest that, regardless of their position, the respondents feel the social burden of the discussion on this topic to a similar extent. This may be a reflection of the general tension related to Poland's military involvement and uncertainty about prevailing societal moods.

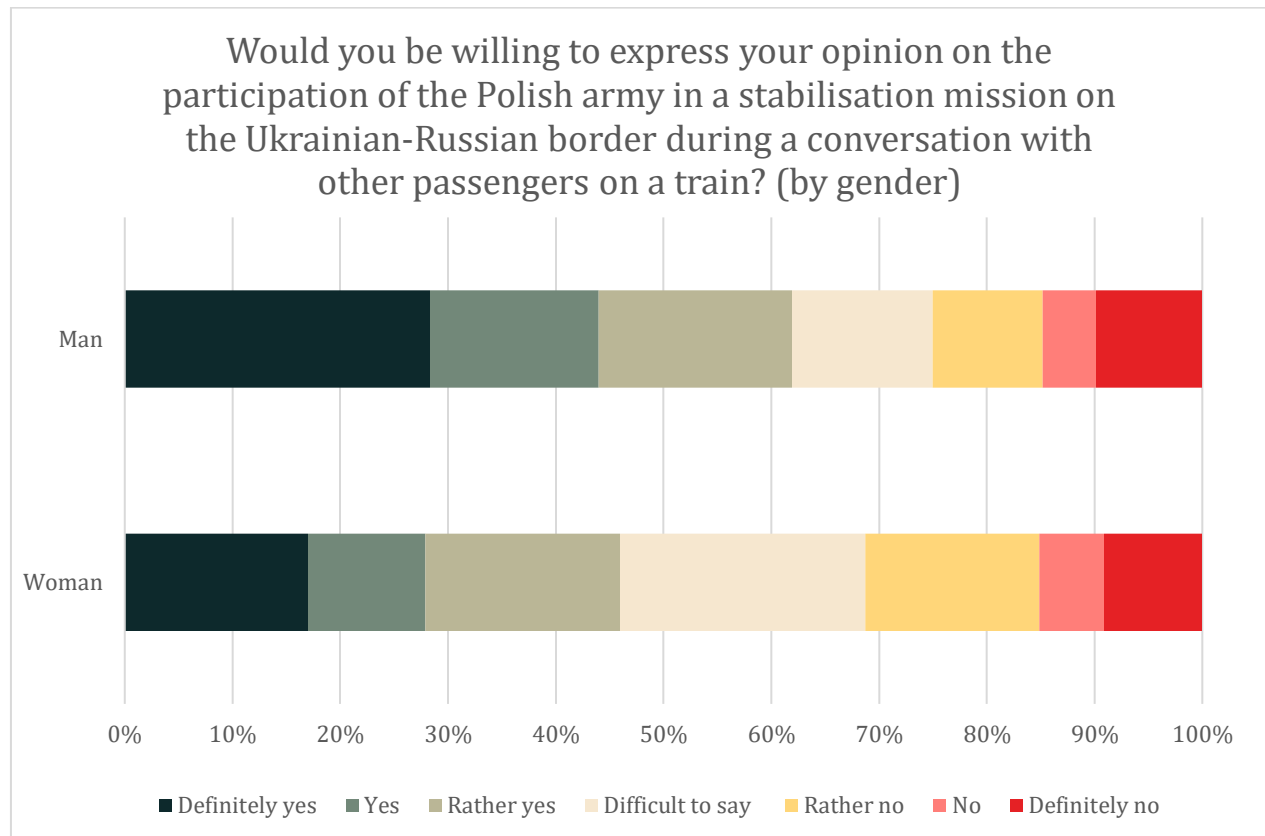


Chart 9. Would you be willing to express your opinion on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train? (by age group).



The willingness to publicly express one's opinion on this issue clearly depends on age, as illustrated by the chart above. The lowest level of openness is observed among the youngest adults (ages 19–24) and seniors (65+). In contrast, among the 25–64 age group, the willingness to share opinions remains relatively stable, ranging from 24% to 27.4%. With age, the reluctance to speak up also increases: this is particularly evident in the 55–64 age group, and the highest percentage of strong opponents of expressing opinions is found among individuals 65 years of age and older. The differences observed may result from both the level of self-confidence in the public sphere and fears of potential conflict or judgement by others.

Chart 10. Would you be willing to express your opinion on the participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border during a conversation with other passengers on a train? (by gender of the respondents).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 42.071, df = 6, p-value = 1.78e-07.

In terms of gender, the differences are equally clear: men are much more likely to declare their willingness to openly express their opinions (28.3% of men vs. 17.0 % of women). Women, on the other hand, are more likely to adopt a distanced attitude – there are more women than men who are moderately opposed to expressing their opinions (16.2% of women vs. 10.2% of men). Education does not have a significant impact on these declarations.

Expert commentary

Marlena Sztzyber-Popko, MA, the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw

The answers to this question suggest that the willingness of Poles to discuss security policy issues in public is limited, and that strong political polarisation further reinforces the fear of judgement and conflict. In my opinion, this is a sign that the public debate in Poland still often takes place within closed social and media “bubbles,” and discussing controversial topics with strangers remains too challenging for almost half of Poles. Furthermore, it is clear that the issue of sending Polish troops to the Ukrainian-Russian border is perceived as controversial and potentially risky, both emotionally and socially.

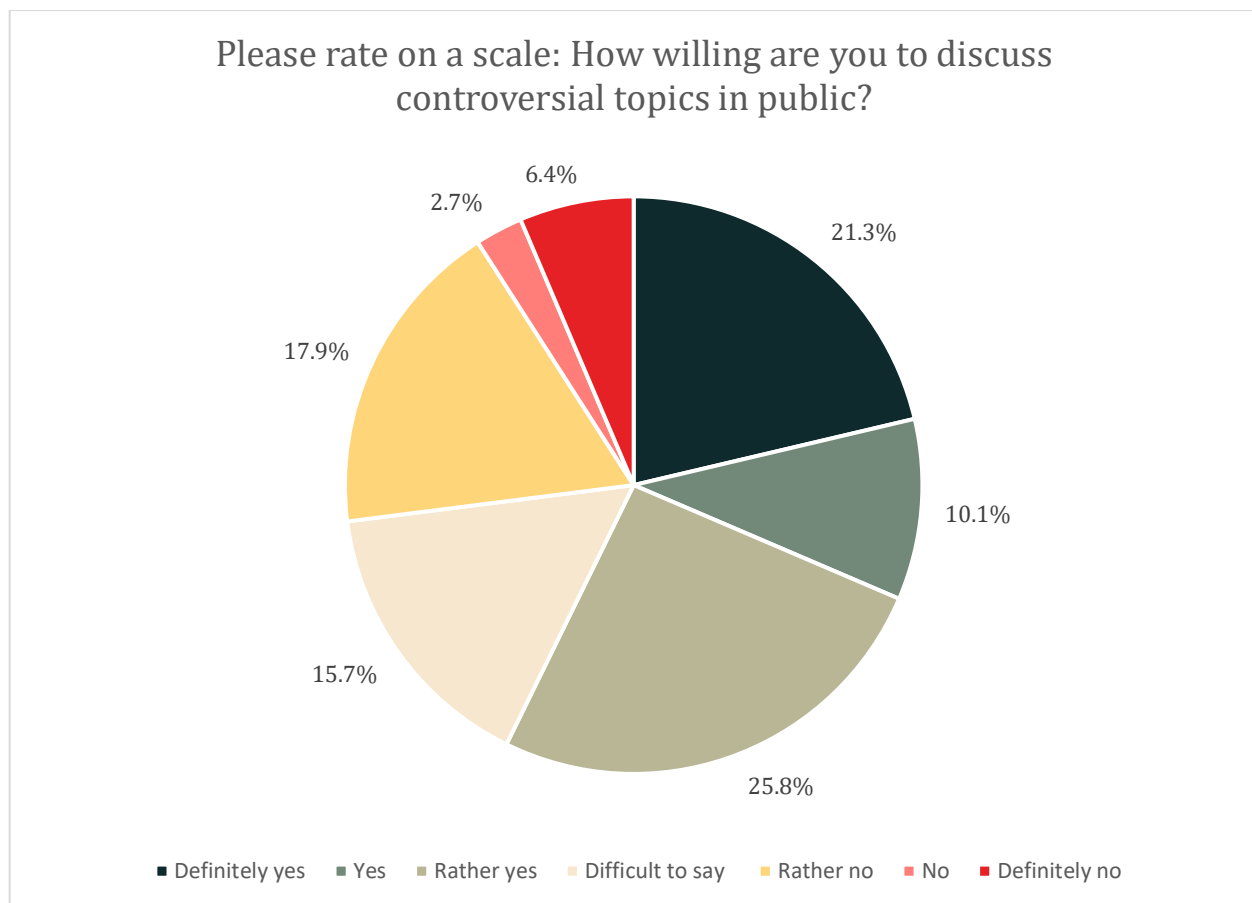
What is interesting, the willingness to speak up does not differ significantly between supporters and opponents of the military involvement, suggesting that regardless of their opinions, the respondents feel the burden of social judgement and uncertainty about prevailing sentiments to a similar degree. This shows that in Poland, topics related to security and war are perceived in the public sphere as difficult to discuss openly.

The analysis of responses in individual age groups gives particularly interesting conclusions. The youngest adults (19–24 years old) and seniors (65 years and older) are the least likely to publicly express their opinions. In the first case, this can be interpreted as a lack of confidence and perhaps limited experience in discussing politics, as well as a lesser sense of influence on public debate, although this is surprising given the high participation in recent years among this group in Poland's elections. In the case of older people, greater caution and reserve may result from both life experience (the awareness that political disputes can easily escalate) and a lower comfort level in situations of potential conflict. On the other hand, working-age groups (25–64 years of age) exhibit a balanced and moderate level of readiness, likely due to a combination of greater confidence in the public sphere and a sense of duty to speak out.

Question 5: Please rate on a scale how willing you are to discuss controversial topics in public.

The fifth question was aimed to determine the general willingness of the respondents to participate in public discussions on topics considered controversial.

Chart 11. Willingness to discuss controversial topics in public.



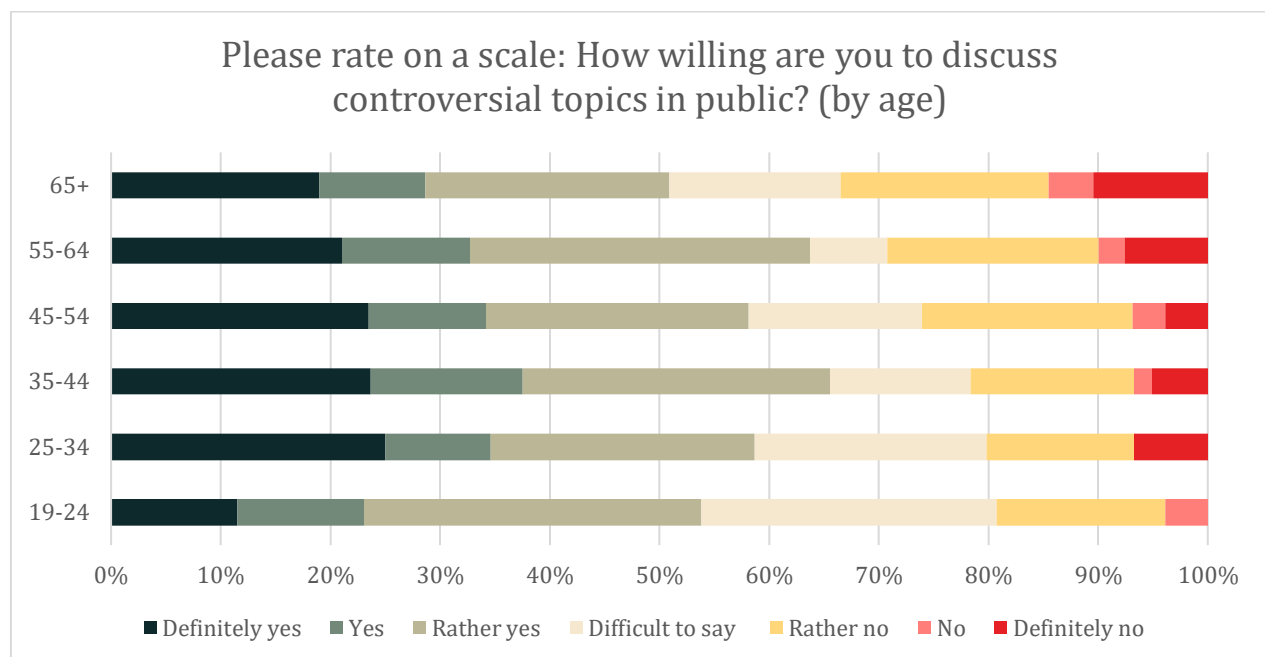
Source: own analysis.

The survey results show that Poles are moderately willing to participate in public discussions on controversial topics. The largest group of respondents (25.8%) chose the answer “rather yes”, indicating a cautious but positive attitude towards engaging in potentially disputable conversations. The strong willingness to participate in such conversations was also expressed by 21.3% of respondents who selected the answer “definitely yes” and 10.1% who selected “yes”. This means that a total of 57.2% of respondents show at least a moderate willingness to discuss topics that cause social tension openly.

On the other hand, 27% of respondents declared their reluctance to participate in such conversations (17.9% – “rather no”, 2.7% – “no”, 6.4% – “definitely no”). In addition, 15.7% of respondents were unable to clearly define their attitude, selecting the answer “difficult to say”.

Although the results indicate that the majority of respondents are willing to participate in discussions on controversial topics, it is important to note the significant level of caution with which this willingness is expressed. The answers “rather yes” and “difficult to say” together account for over 40% of the responses, suggesting that for many people, the decision to speak up is not clear-cut and may depend on the social context.

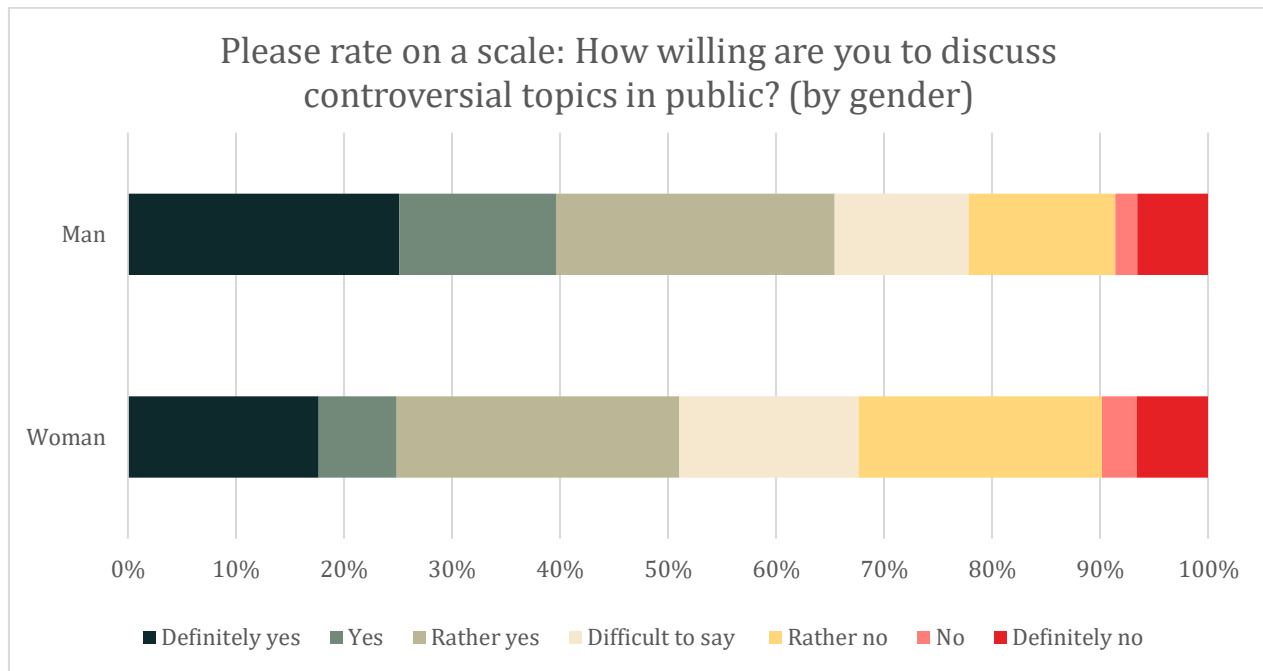
Chart 12. Willingness to discuss controversial topics in public (by age group).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 44.791, df = 30, p-value = 0.04036.

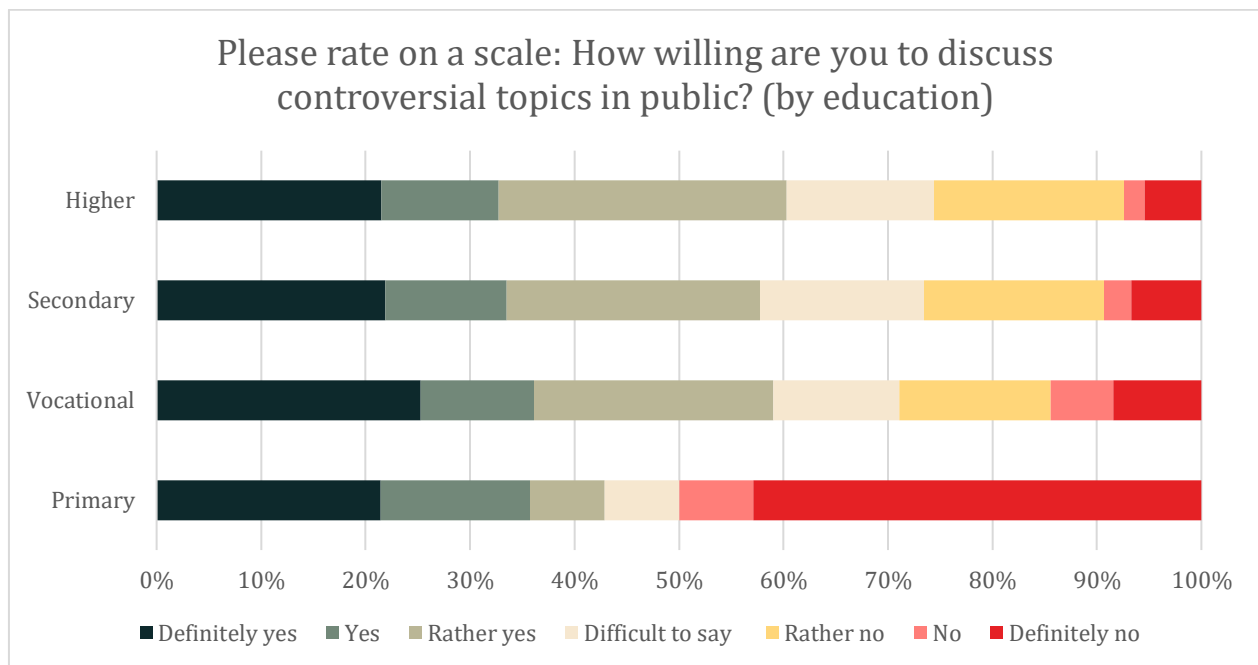
The willingness to engage in public debates on controversial topics depends on several socio-demographic factors. Age clearly differentiates the attitudes: persons aged 25-54 show the greatest willingness to participate in such conversations, especially at the level of responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes”. The smallest desire to participate in the debate is declared by the oldest people – in the age group 65+, as many as 10.4% of respondents answer “definitely no”.

Chart 13. Willingness to discuss controversial topics in public (by gender of the respondents).



Gender also plays an important role here: men are significantly more likely than women to declare their willingness to engage in controversial conversations (25.2% of men vs. 17.7% of women), while women are significantly more likely to feel uncomfortable in such situations (“rather no” – 22.6% of women vs. 13.5% of men).

Chart 14. Willingness to discuss controversial topics in public (by education level).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 43.977, df = 18, p-value = 0.0005814.

The level of education also proves to be statistically significant. Persons with higher and secondary education are most likely to declare their willingness to speak up during discussions on topics considered controversial. In contrast, persons with primary education are much more reserved – as many as 42.9% of this group answered, “definitely not”.

Expert commentary

Dr Karolina Brylska, the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw

Although the vast majority of respondents have a clear position on the issue we are examining (the participation of Polish troops in a stabilisation mission on the Russian-Ukrainian border), only half of them would be willing to express it publicly, e.g. in conversation with strangers. This reveals a significant gap between having an opinion and being willing to reveal it, which is a classic mechanism of the spiral of silence.

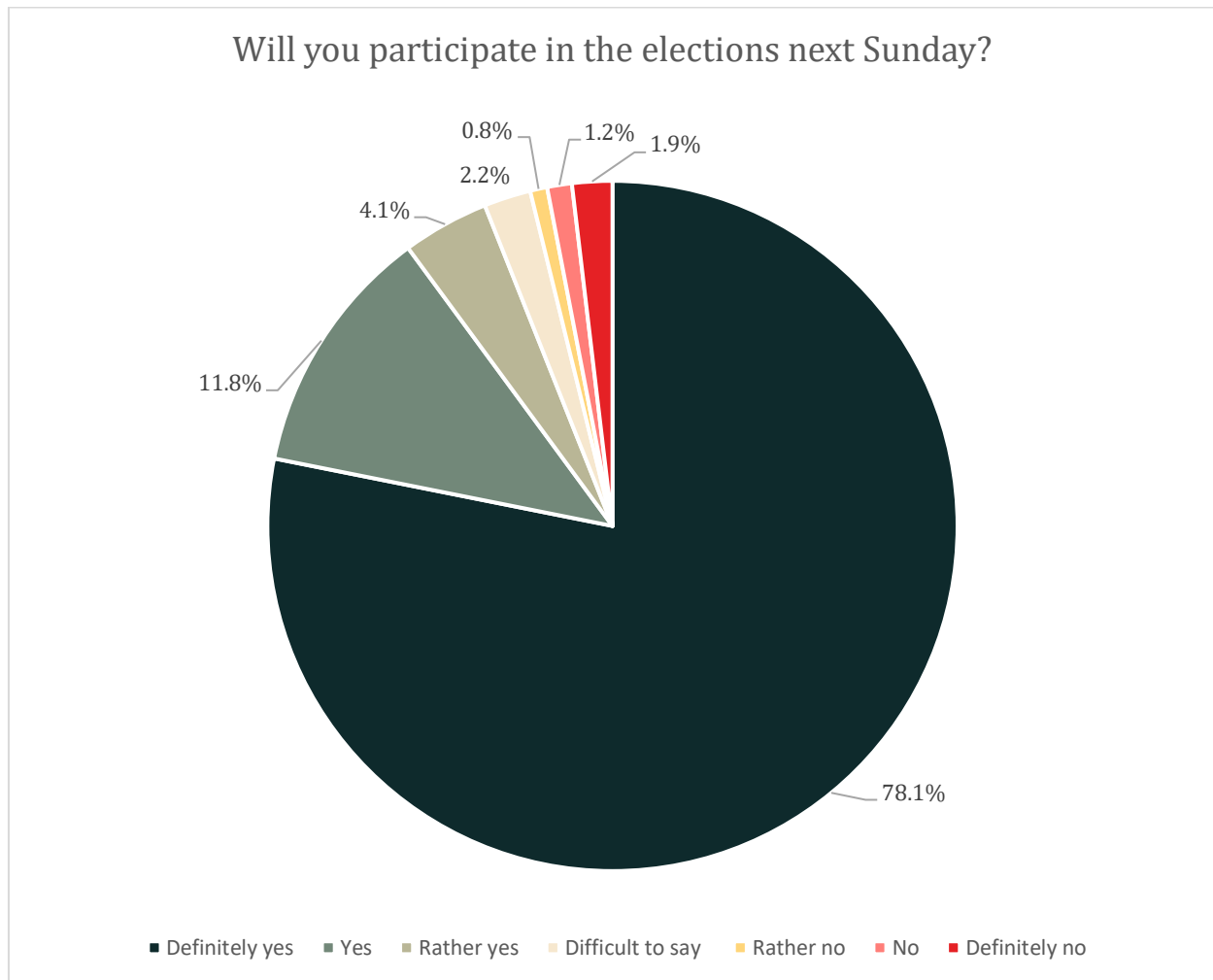
The results confirm that politics remains a polarising, controversial and problematic topic for Poles, especially when it concerns such an emotionally charged issue as the war. Moreover, as in the case of the previous questions, women are less willing to express categorical, unambiguous opinions and are less likely to believe that the majority of society shares their views. This suggests that, in addition to generational and ideological differences, gender remains an important factor in determining the willingness to participate in public debate; women are more likely to adopt a cautious or even reserved attitude, while men are more likely to express firm opinions and are more convinced of their universality.

Although as many as 60% of respondents believe that their position on sending Polish troops to Ukraine is shared by the majority of the society – both today and in the future – only 47% of people declare their willingness to discuss controversial topics. Moreover, one in four respondents (27%) clearly avoid such conversations. This discrepancy between “I know what I think” and “I can say it” probably points to the potential fear of judgement. In a situation where we, as a society, are so polarised in terms of political views, talking about controversial topics in direct contact with other people seems probably too risky, too exploitative or, what is worse, pointless. This conclusion may have substantial negative consequences for the state of civil society in Poland and the quality of public debate.

Question 6: Will you participate in the elections next Sunday?

In the last question, we asked respondents about their declared willingness to participate in the presidential elections held in May 2025.

Chart 15. Will you participate in the elections next Sunday?



Source: own analysis.

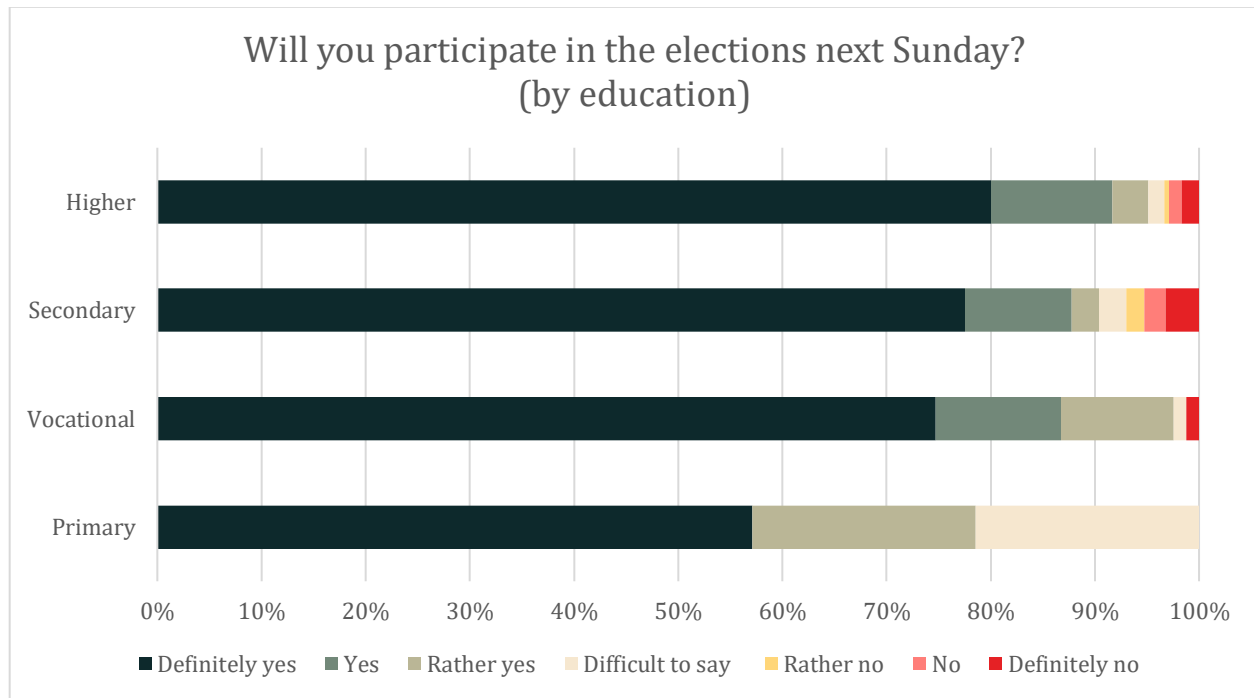
The vast majority of Poles (78.1%) stated that they would definitely participate in the elections. Respondents who said they would participate (11.8%) or were rather to participate (4.1%) accounted for another nearly 16%, meaning that a total of 94% of respondents were ready to participate in the elections.

Those who declared that they would not participate in the vote were in the minority: 1.9% said they would definitely not participate, 1.2% said they would not participate, and 0.8% said they



would rather not participate. This gives a total of 3.9%. The group of undecided respondents who answered “difficult to say” accounted for 2.2% of those surveyed. The data presented shows that the majority of respondents intended to participate in the elections.

Chart 16. Will you participate in the elections next Sunday? (by education level).



Source: own analysis. Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 64.445, df = 18, p-value = 3.839e-07.

In terms of declared voter turnout, the level of education proves to be an essential factor. The higher the level of education, the greater is the willingness to vote. Among people with primary education, 57% definitely declare their participation, while among respondents with higher education, this percentage amounts already to 80%. These data clearly indicate a positive correlation between the level of education and civic attitude, as expressed in participation in elections.

Expert commentary

Adam Balcerzak, MSc, the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw

The final turnout in the second round of the presidential election in May 2025 was 71.63%, and although it was very high, it turned out to be significantly lower than the one declared in our survey, although it should be noted that the actual turnout was close to the percentage of people who declared in our survey that they would vote (74%). In general, however, we are dealing here with an example of a phenomenon that is regularly encountered by public opinion researchers: respondents' tendency to declare a higher level of civic activity than is actually the case.

There are at least two factors that may explain this discrepancy. Firstly, the specific nature of the sample – a relatively high representation of men, people from large cities and educated persons. Interviewers reported that when they attempted to conduct interviews, women rejected and argued that they were not familiar with the subject of the study (“opinions about the army”), even though the interviewers emphasised that it was a matter of expressing opinions, not precise knowledge. Secondly, the so-called social desirability bias cannot be ignored. The fact that researchers from the University of Warsaw conducted the study may have reinforced the impression that it was “appropriate” to give answers in line with the norm of civic engagement.

At the same time, the correlation between education and willingness to participate in elections, observed in the literature, was clearly confirmed. The higher the level of education, the stronger was the declaration of electoral participation. This is likely due to both a greater understanding of democracy's mechanisms and a sense of agency and influence on social reality, which increases with educational capital.

Thus, the answers to the last survey question should be interpreted not so much as a literal reflection of the expected turnout, but as an expression of very high social mobilisation before the elections and proof that education remains one of the key factors supporting the political participation.

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The report prepared by the Laboratory of Media Studies at the University of Warsaw on the possible participation of the Polish army in a stabilisation mission in Ukraine and the tendency to express opinions on this subject is an important and current study. It concerns ongoing issues that are currently most important in the public debate, but also in the political decision-making process. For several years, public opinion polls have shown the great importance that Poles attach to security issues. This is understandable. It is therefore very important that these topics and related issues are studied by professional and reliable research teams such as the Laboratory of Media Studies at the University of Warsaw. The issue of the “spiral of silence” effect, which was also analysed in this study, is also crucial in terms of research and information. Its in-depth analysis allows, among other things, to counteract surprises resulting from the difference between the views declared in opinion polls and the actual actions taken by citizens in a given area, which has recently become a challenge for many researchers and decision-makers. The results of this research will certainly be useful not only to scientists and students, but also to politicians, civil servants and think tanks.

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The Laboratory of Media Studies has prepared an important and necessary report. This peer-reviewed publication is of high methodological and substantive value. The survey results presented are even more relevant in light of recent events in the world and in Poland. They reveal a number of factors that influence Poles' perception of politics, including defence policy, but also highlight the problems of impact of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence, echo chambers and information bubbles, which distort and polarise the socio-political reality in Poland and contribute to the spread of disinformation. The report indicates that the mentioned topic raised strong emotions among respondents, while neutral attitudes were rare. The majority of respondents expressed strong opposition to the possibility of sending Polish troops to the Ukrainian-Russian border as part of a stabilisation mission. What is more, the report indicates that almost 60% of respondents are convinced that the majority of Poles agree with their opinion on this matter, and over 60% predict that in the future the majority of Poles will share the same view on military involvement. The structure of the responses outlined in this way may suggest the existence of a so-called social consensus among the respondents. On the other hand, however, the report showed that almost one in five participants indicated that their opinion differed from the mainstream. This, in turn, can be understood (in the light of the spiral of silence theory) as apparent conformity with the dominant narrative and avoidance of open expression of one's opinion because of fear of condemnation or social isolation. (...) The report, survey data and their interpretation are the original source of knowledge. The conclusions presented should become a source for further in-depth research and analyses of the state of Poles' awareness in the context of escalating armed conflicts.

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