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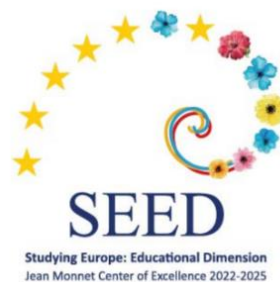


**PERCEPTION AND FORMATION
OF EUROPEAN VALUES
AMONG THE POPULATION
OF CHERNIHIV REGION OF UKRAINE**

ANALYTICAL REPORT



Co-funded by the
European Union



НАПОНЕНКО Dmytro, KEDA Marina

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Chernihiv, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the level of Europeanness of the Ukrainian society is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and harmony of Ukraine's progress towards European integration. It is particularly important to monitor the level of Europeanness in the regions of Ukraine that share borders with the Russian Federation. The Chernihiv region borders Russia and Belarus, it is the third largest region in Ukraine and geographically larger than some European states, for example such as Belgium or Slovenia.

On 24 February 2022 the Russian Federation has launched a large-scale offensive on the territory of Ukraine. From the very first days, nearly two-thirds of the Chernihiv region was under occupation, becoming a theater of military operations and fierce resistance from the population. As a result, civilian infrastructure suffered significant damage, enterprises were suspended, and a portion of the population relocated to other regions or abroad. After the de-occupation in April 2022, people began to gradually return and reestablish their lives under new realities while regular shelling of border communities was ongoing.

Military operations and population migration significantly impacted not only the economy and socio-demographic structure of the region's population. The unity against the enemy, the rise of patriotic sentiments, and the unprecedented support from the European Union and NATO countries have altered people's attitudes toward traditional European values, which necessitated the conduct of the study¹.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the level of Europeanness among the population of the Chernihiv region, to identify their degree of commitment to basic European values, and to establish how they perceive and evaluate Ukraine's progress towards European integration. Understanding which values are sufficiently formed and which are insufficiently developed will enable us to devise an appropriate strategy for the region's further development.

¹ The study on measuring the level of European values formation in the border Chernihiv region was developed in the autumn of 2021. After the outbreak of the war, appropriate adjustments were made to the methodology accordingly.

1. General characteristics and methodology of the study

Chronologically, the study was conducted from May to June 2023. Using methods of personal and telephone interviews, as well as questionnaires distributed via the Google Forms platform, 800 respondents from the population of the Chernihiv region of Ukraine were surveyed. The sample population is representative in terms of age, gender, and settlement type. The sampling error, with a confidence level of 0.95, does not exceed 3.5%.

The discursive construction of Europeanness can be traced through political, social, and economic aspects, but this research focuses on its cultural dimension. Methodologically, the survey questionnaire was designed according to the analysis of the latest relevant research, EU cultural policy documents, and the approaches used by Eurobarometer and Eurostat for surveys concerning the levels of identity in Europe. Therefore, the survey questions were constructed in a manner that allows us to compare the results obtained from the Chernihiv region with those of European countries.

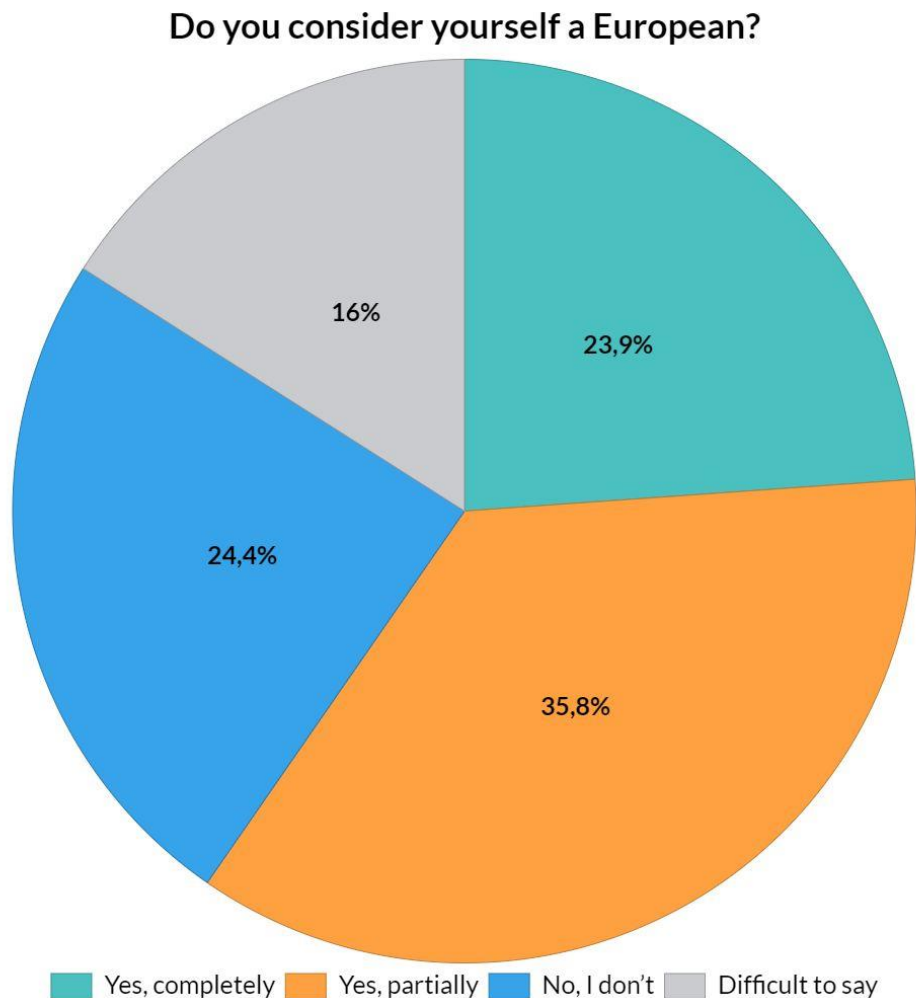
Accordingly, the questionnaire comprised 16 questions organized into four thematic blocks:

- 1) general profile of respondents;
- 2) self-identification of the population and the level of commitment to European values;
- 3) perception of democracy as one of the fundamental values; and
- 4) vision of the prospects for Ukraine's European progress.

The migration factor was also taken into account during the study. It is worth noting that 13% of the study participants relocated to EU countries due to military operations. The majority of respondents were from Chernihiv (20.8%), with significantly fewer coming from villages (11.3%) and other cities in the region (8.5%). In terms of age, the largest proportion of internally displaced persons in Europe comprised young people aged 18 to 24 years (19.6%).

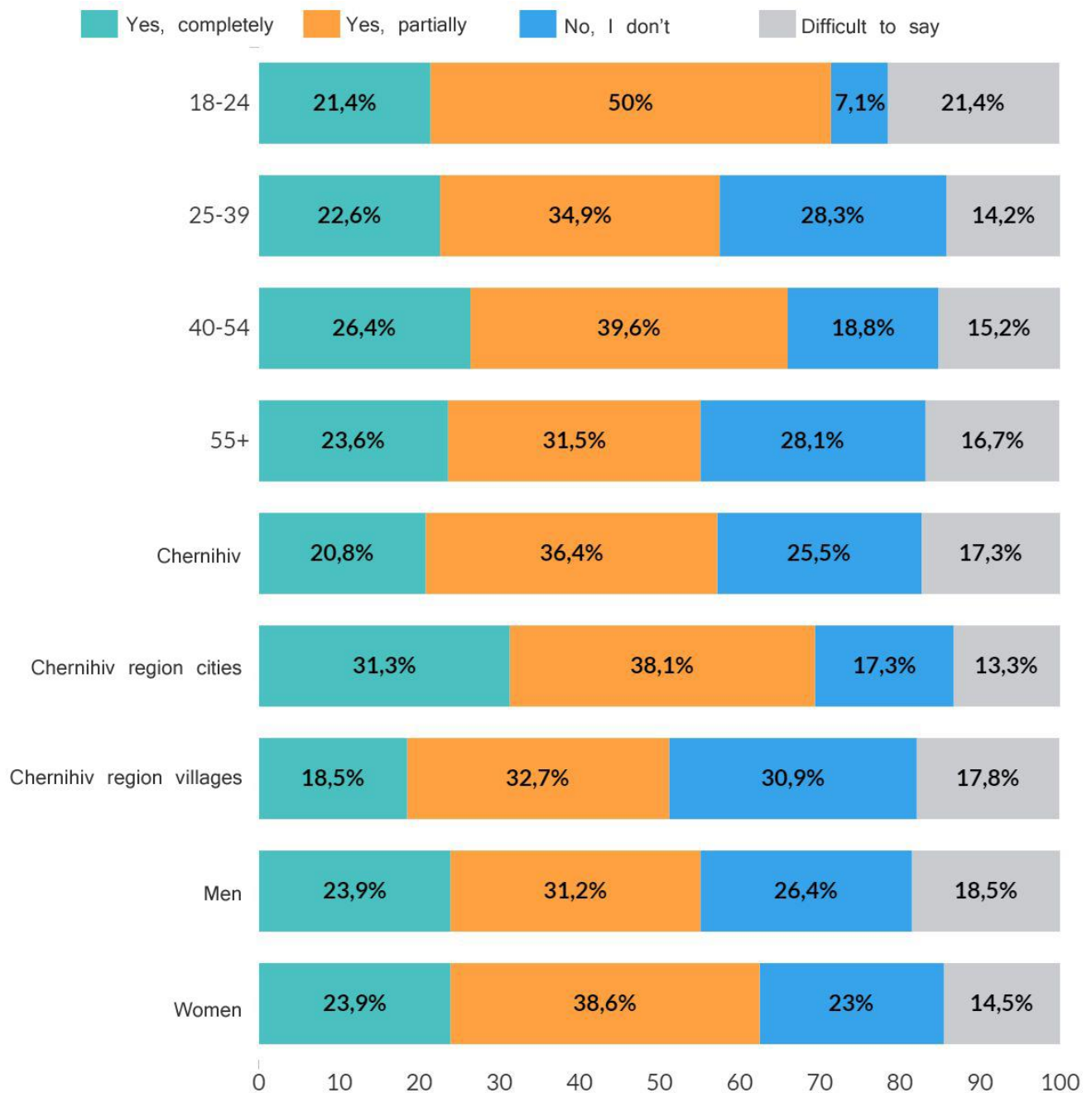
2. Self-identification of the population

To study the self-identification of the population in the Chernihiv region, we first asked participants to answer the question: 'Do you consider yourself a European?'. As it turned out, almost two-thirds of the region's population (59.7%) feel European (23.9% 'Yes, completely' and 35.8% 'Yes, partially'). Meanwhile, 24.4% do not consider themselves European, and 16% are undecided.

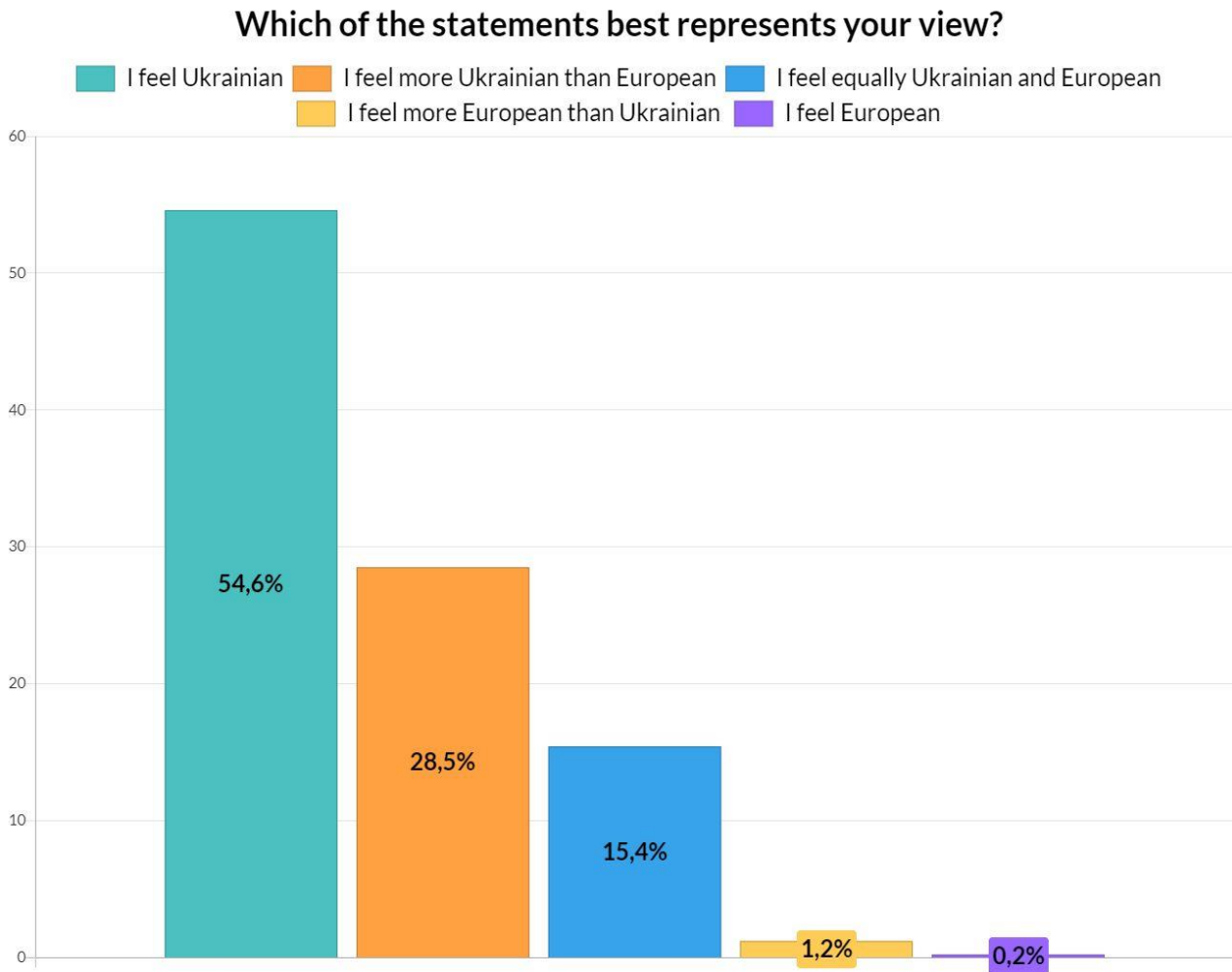


Among various socio-demographic groups, young people (71.4%) and residents of regional cities (69.4%) are the most likely to feel European. The former group finds it easier to perceive and assimilate new norms and specifics of social structures introduced to Ukraine from developed countries, they also have fewer established stereotypes. In the second case, again, we observe the positive outcomes of the reforms within the framework of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.

Do you consider yourself a European?

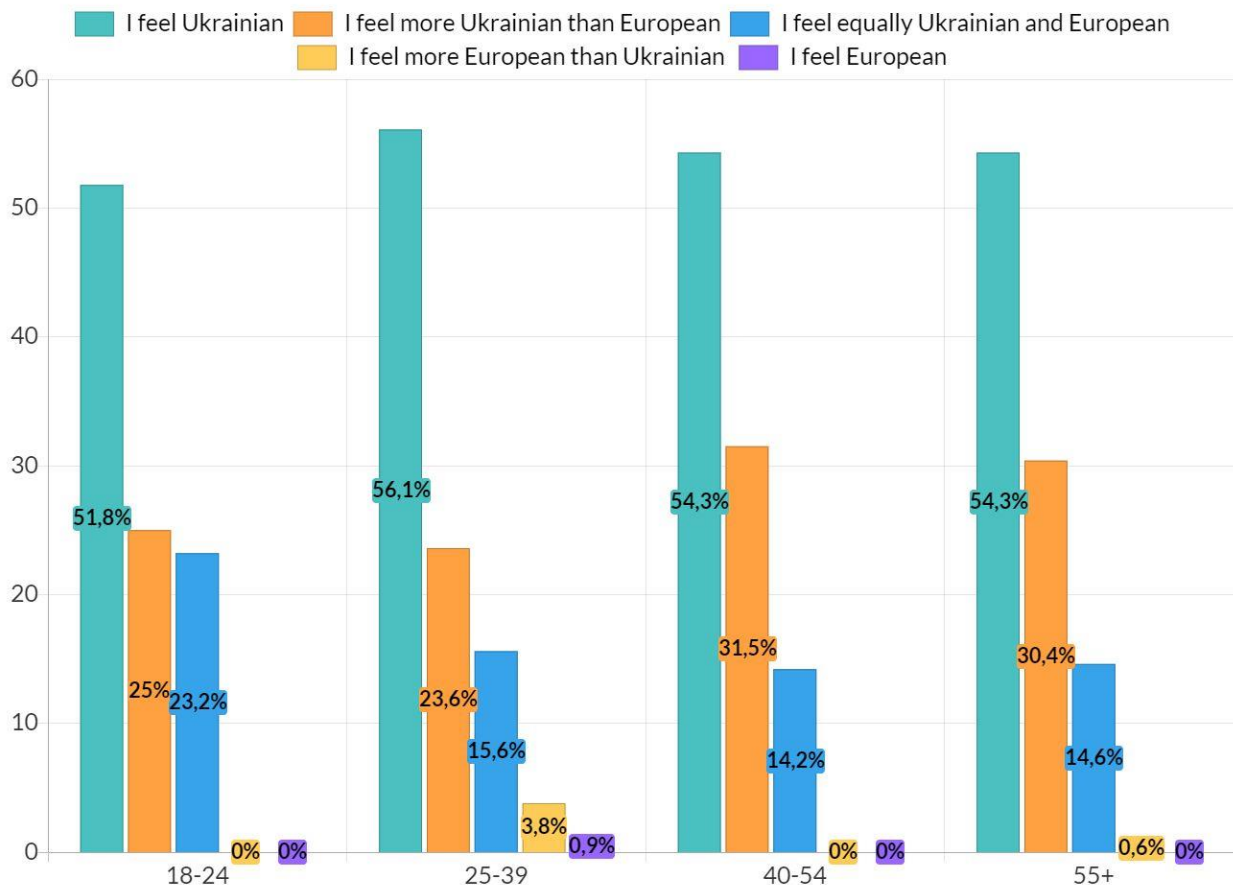


Respondents were then asked to choose a statement that compared their self-identification as Ukrainian and European in different proportions. The results showed that 54.6% felt exclusively Ukrainian, 28.5% felt more Ukrainian than European, 15.4% felt equally Ukrainian and European, 1.2% felt more European than Ukrainian, and only 0.2% felt exclusively European.

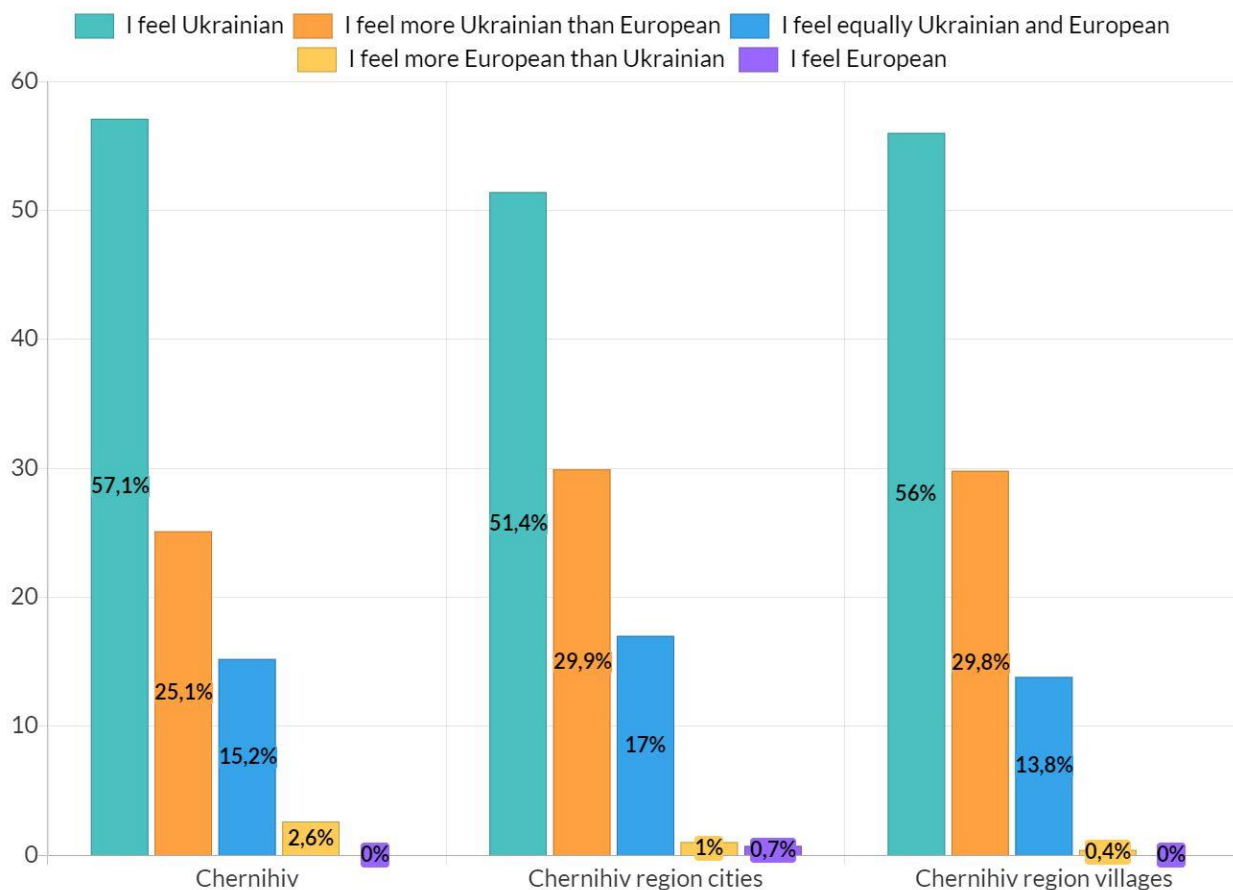


Moreover, the data obtained did not show significant differences across any of the socio-demographic cross-sections which we conducted while analyzing the results obtained.

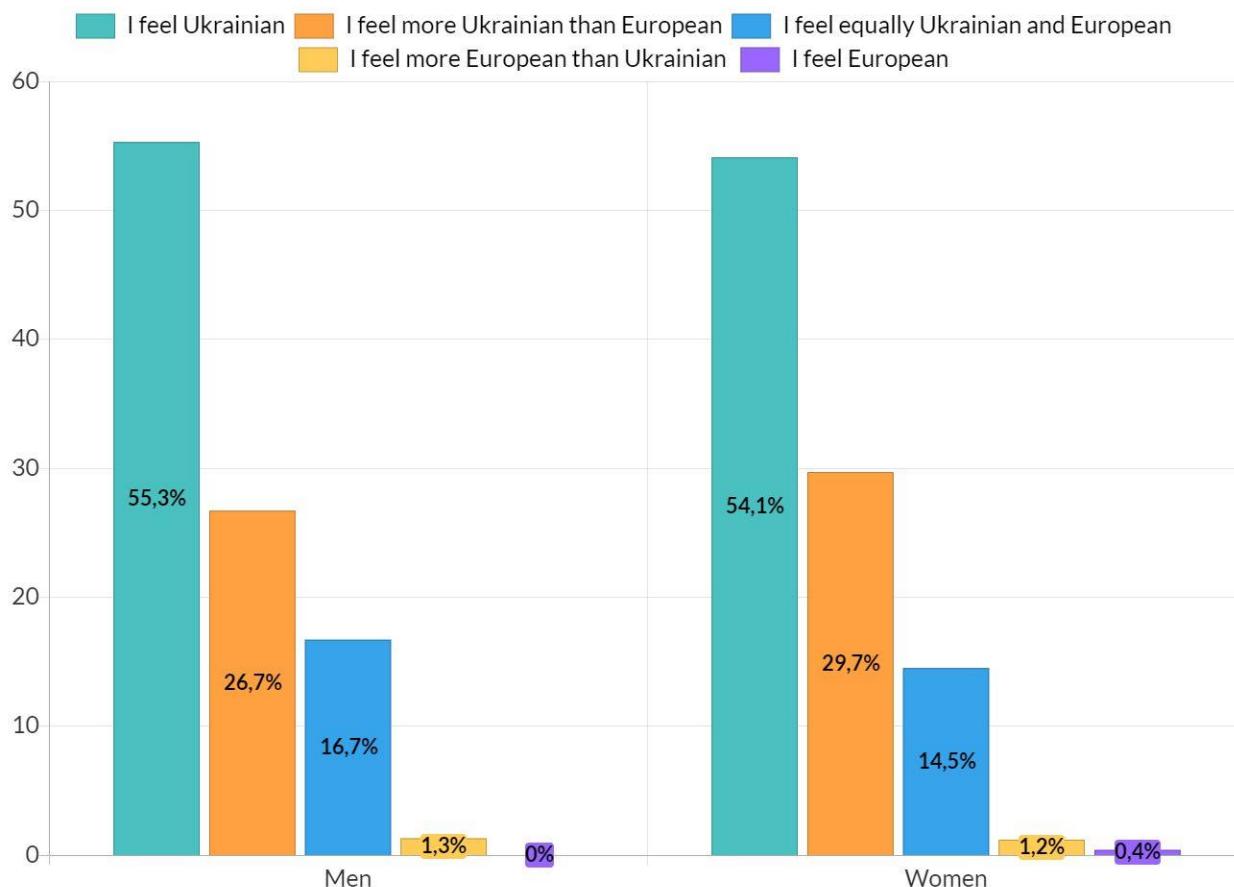
Which of the statements best represents your view?



Which of the statements best represents your view?



Which of the statements best represents your view?



This state of self-identification of the population is best explained by the thesis of O. Antypovych, the head of the Sociological Group Rating: 'Putin says a lot of nonsense. However, I observe one trend: he has likely accomplished more for Ukraine and Ukrainians than the entirety of the 30 years of independence or any of our presidents. Why do I think so? Because a year ago, only 8 out of 10 Ukrainians primarily identified themselves as citizens of Ukraine; today, that figure stands at 10 out of 10. If previously approximately 3 out of 10 Ukrainians identified themselves as Europeans, the current estimate has increased to nearly 7 out of 10. This is just one of the comments which illustrate how Ukrainians have become extremely united during the war and have developed a strong sense of community with the land on which they live, increasingly referring to it as their own state and actively defending its independence^{1*}.

It is also worth noting that the results of our research completely align with the data provided by the author of the quote. This fact provides strong evidence that, in terms of self-identification, the Chernihiv region does not deviate from the national context.

* https://tvoemisto.tv/exclusive/ukraintsi_vzhe_integrualysya_v_yevropu_rozmova_iz_sotsiologom_134315.html

3. European values

To study the level of formation of European values, we used the list approved in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: “The Union is founded on the values of:

- Respect for human dignity;
- Freedom;
- Democracy;
- Equality;
- Rule of law;
- Respect for human rights, including the rights of persons, belonging to minorities.

Those values are common to the member states in a society in which prevail: Pluralism; Non-discrimination; Tolerance; Justice; Solidarity; Equality between men and women”².

To measure commitment to European values, we used a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates 'not important at all' and 5 indicates 'very important', and the results are presented using appropriate coefficients.

The survey results indicated that nearly all the proposed options received a relatively high level of approval among respondents. The top five values were 'Respect for human dignity' (4.7), 'Freedom' (4.6), 'Justice' (4.6), 'Equality' (4.4), and 'Respect for the rights of minorities' (4.4). Respondents expressed the least affection for values such as 'Non-discrimination' and 'Equality between men and women' (3.9 each). As for the answer option 'Pluralism', it was perceived as difficult and not unambiguous. Respondents frequently required additional clarification from interviewers, leading us to conclude that this alternative is not representative.

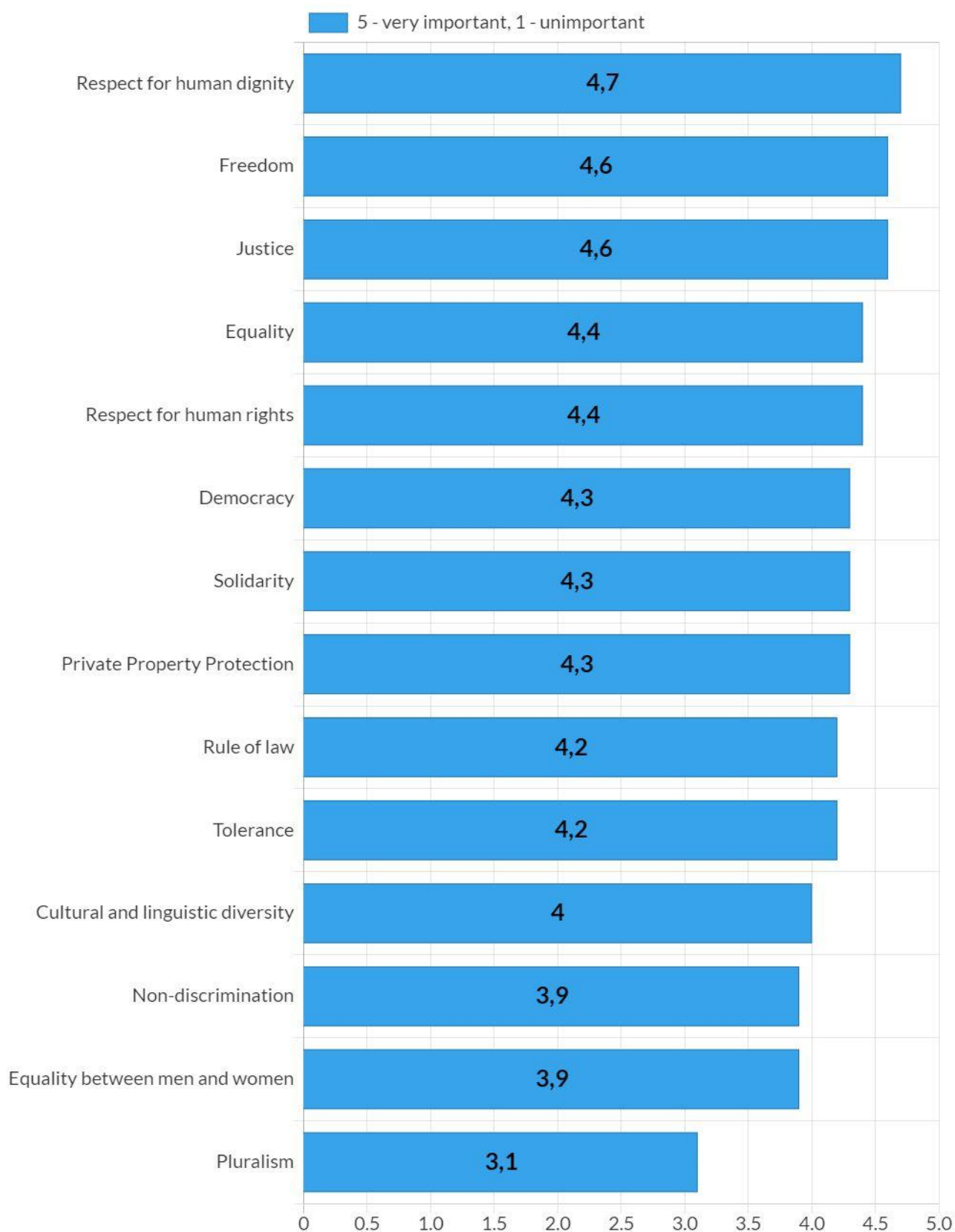
² Scharfbillig, M., Smillie, L., Mair, D., Sienkiewicz, M., Keimer, J., Pinho Dos Santos, R., Vinagreiro Alves, H., Vecchione, E. and Scheunemann, L., Values and Identities – a policymaker’s guide, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, doi:10.2760/022780, JRC126150.

In terms of age, particular attention should be given to the category of respondents aged 18-24 years. Young people prioritized 'Freedom' (4.6), while 'Democracy' (3.9), 'Solidarity' (3.9), 'Rule of law' (3.4), and 'Cultural and linguistic diversity' (3.2) were deemed less important by them compared to other survey participants. In general, with a few exceptions, the importance of democratic values increases with the age of respondents.

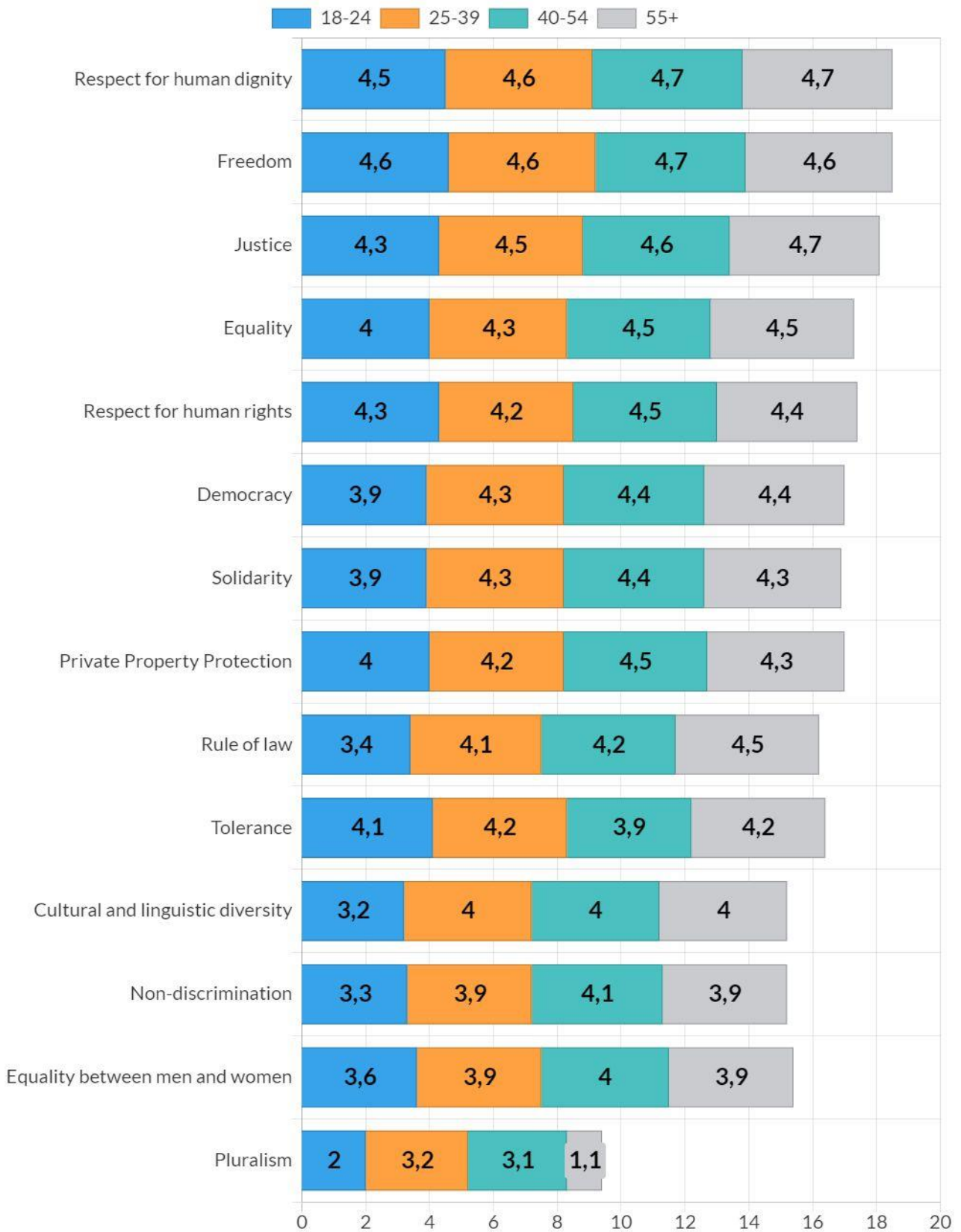
In terms of gender and place of residence, no significant differences were observed between the responses, except for the fact that Chernihiv residents consider the 'rule of law' less important (3.9). In our view, this could be attributed to the higher quality of the law enforcement system's performance in the regional center.

In general, the answers showed a high level of importance of democratic values, which should become a significant basis for the further formation and development of democracy in the region.

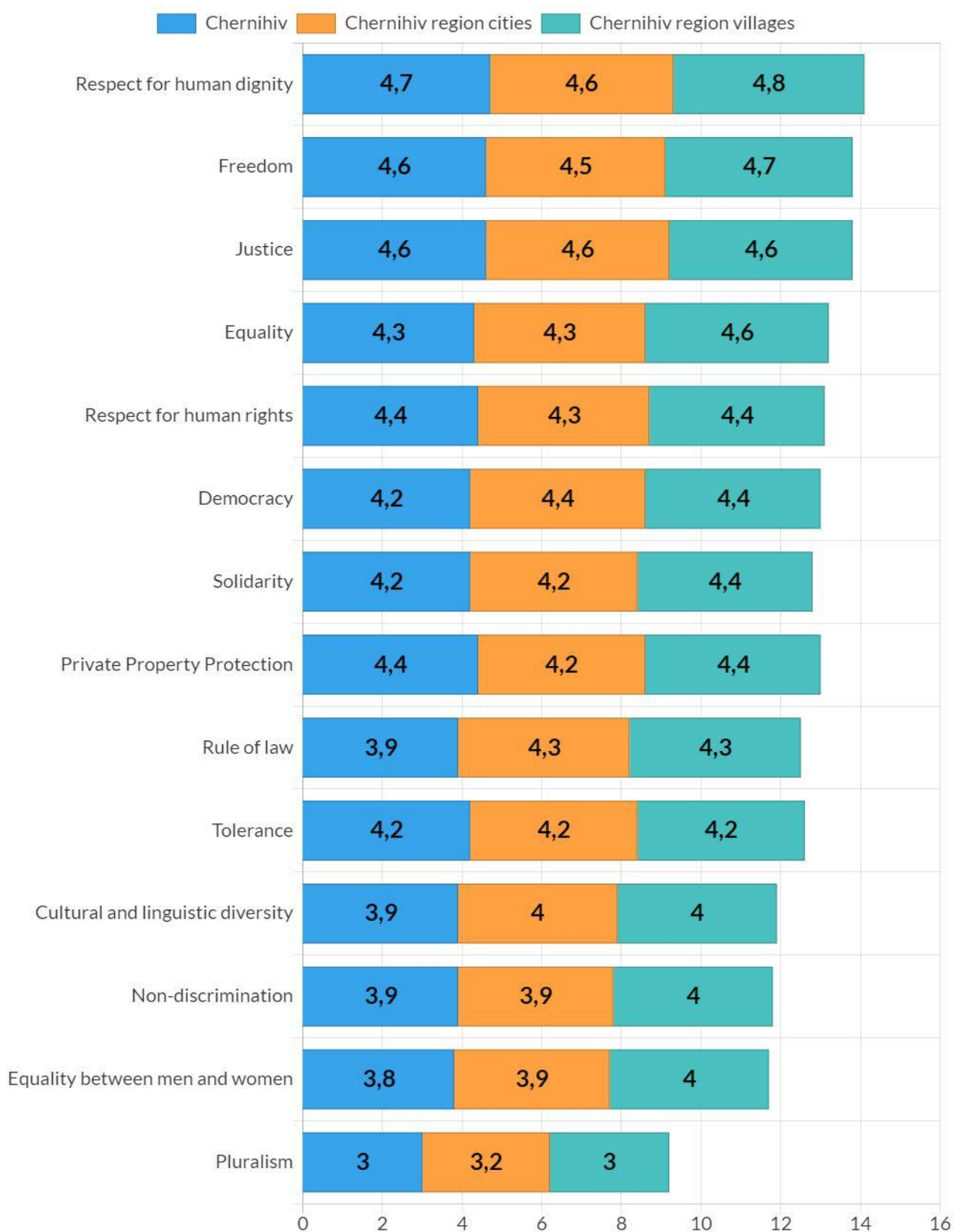
The level of importance of European values



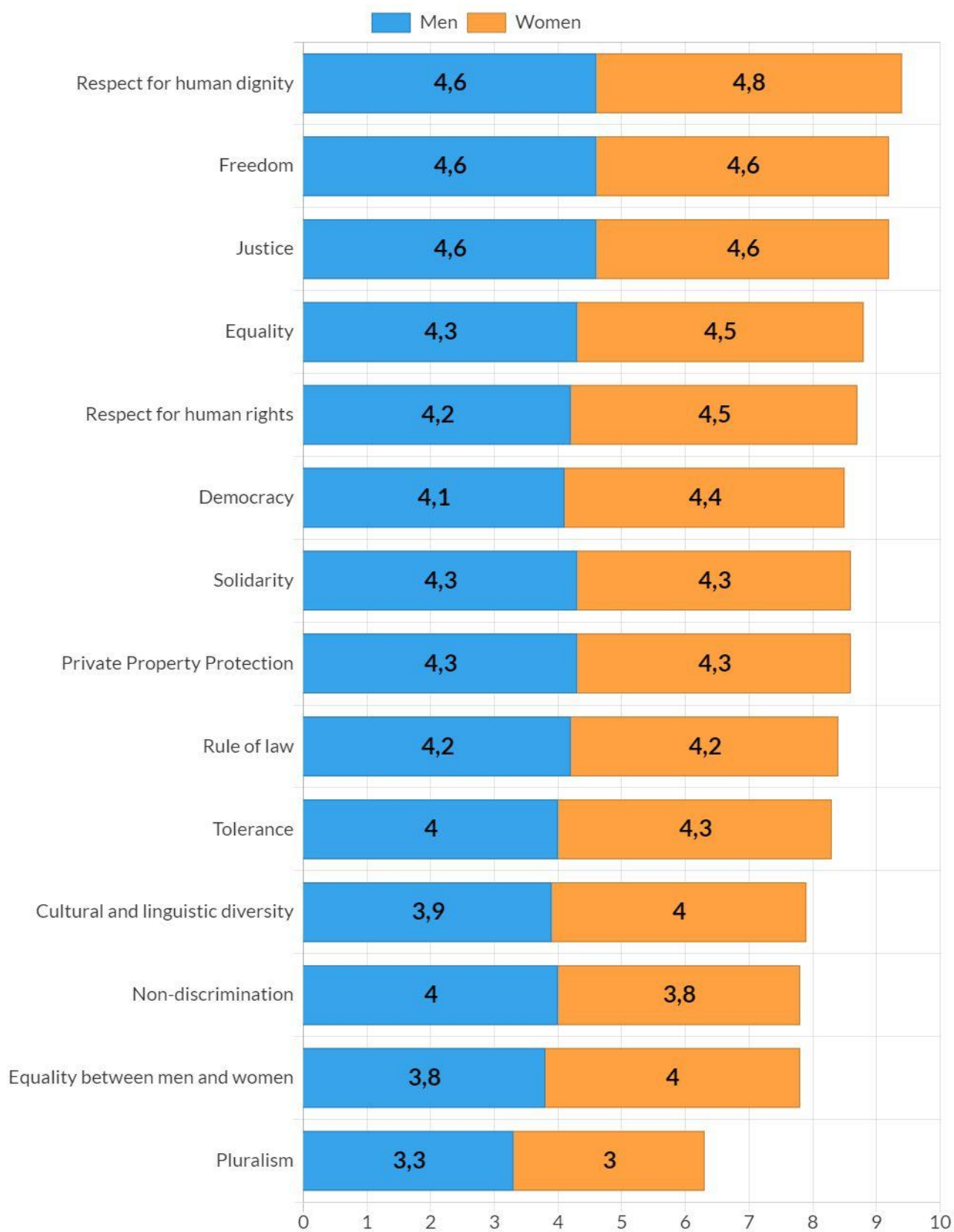
The level of importance of European values (age)



The level of importance of European values (place of residence)



The level of importance of European values (gender)

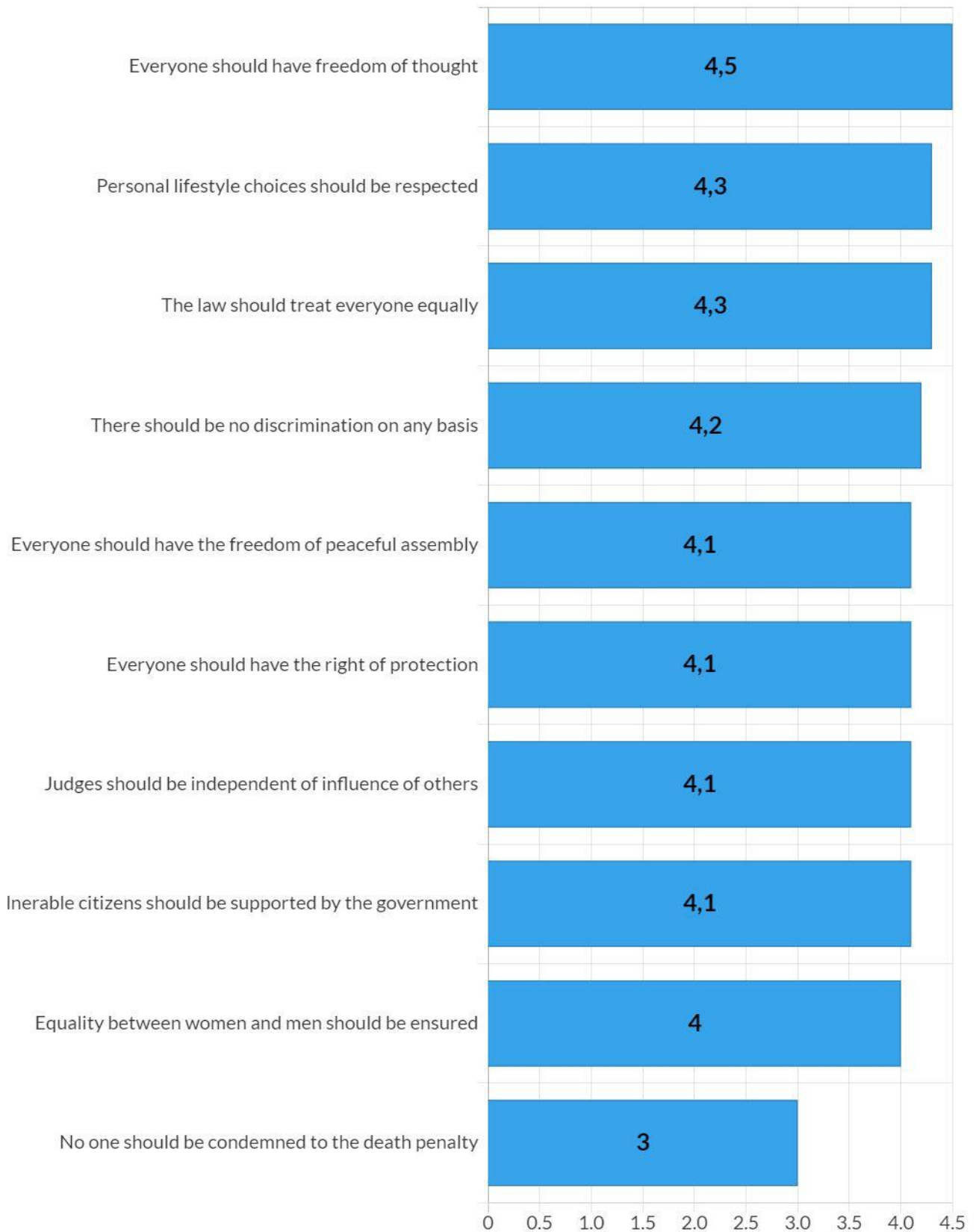


Further, the participants were presented with a set of principles that, while not explicitly naming individual values, reflect the extent to which the aforementioned values are respected. EU values are directly implemented in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, so questions were designed according to the charter. The respondents were asked how much they agree with certain principles, without referring to them as EU values to avoid prompting the image of the EU.

The following principles received the greatest approval among the survey participants: 'Everyone should have freedom of thought' (4,5); 'Personal lifestyle choices should be respected' (4,3); 'The law should treat everyone equally' (4,3); 'There should be no discrimination on any basis' (4,2).

In general, the vast majority of respondents expressed their own agreement with almost all the proposed statements, except for one - 'No one should be condemned to the death penalty' (3). In the entire history of Modern Ukraine, citizens have not shown 'bloodthirstiness' to any nationalities, communities, minorities or subcultures. The concept of the death penalty was removed from the Criminal Code of Ukraine in 2000, and there were no manifestations of discontent among the population. Even after the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas, the society remained tolerant. However, as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, the population has witnessed numerous instances of violence against civilians by the occupying forces, significant military casualties, and the destruction of peaceful settlements due to the actions of collaborators. Therefore, in our opinion, the high demand for capital punishment for war criminals is not coincidental. It is worth noting that it tends to increase from younger to older people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

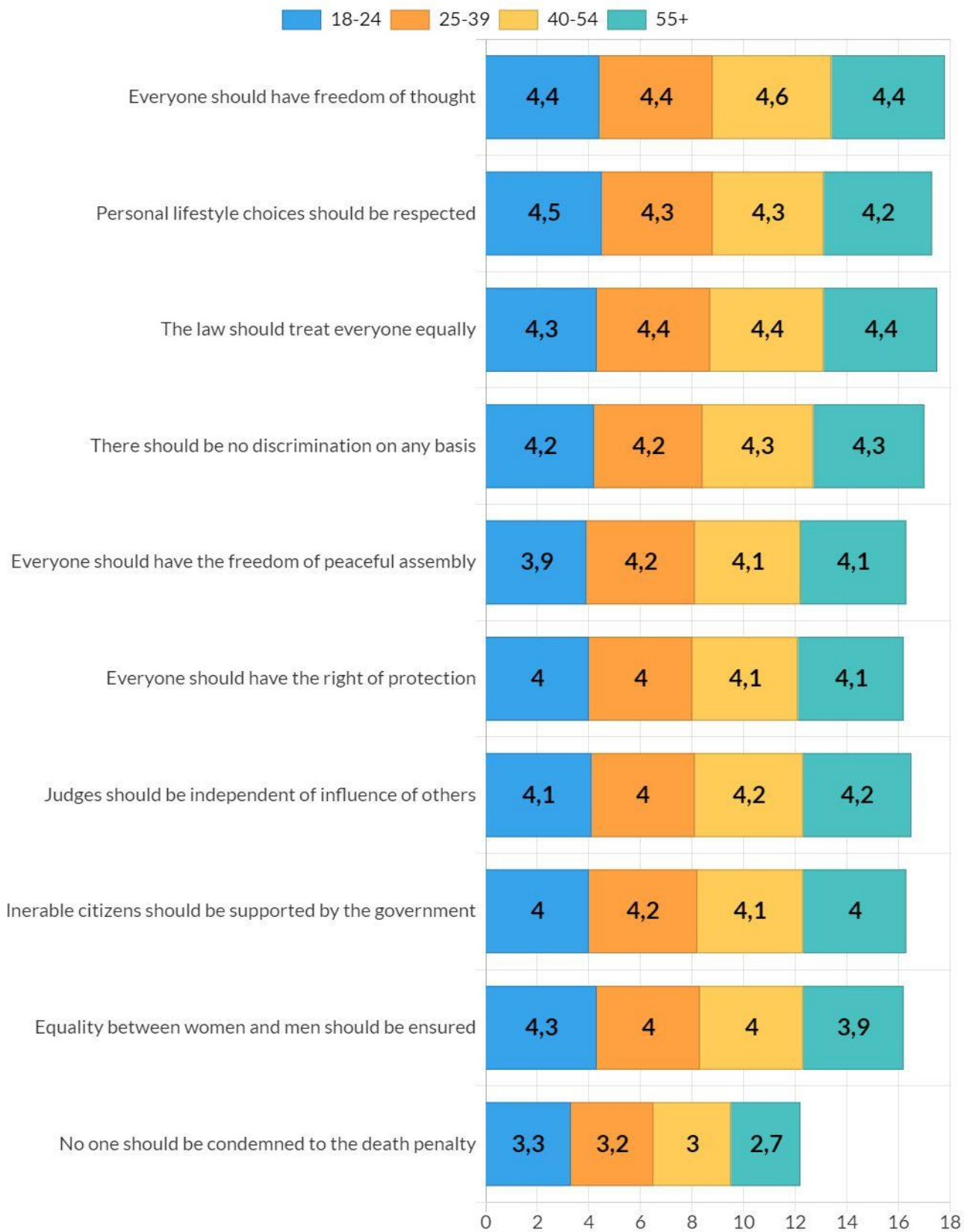


* When preparing the graphs, an abbreviated version of the principles was used. Their full contents can be found in Appendix 1.

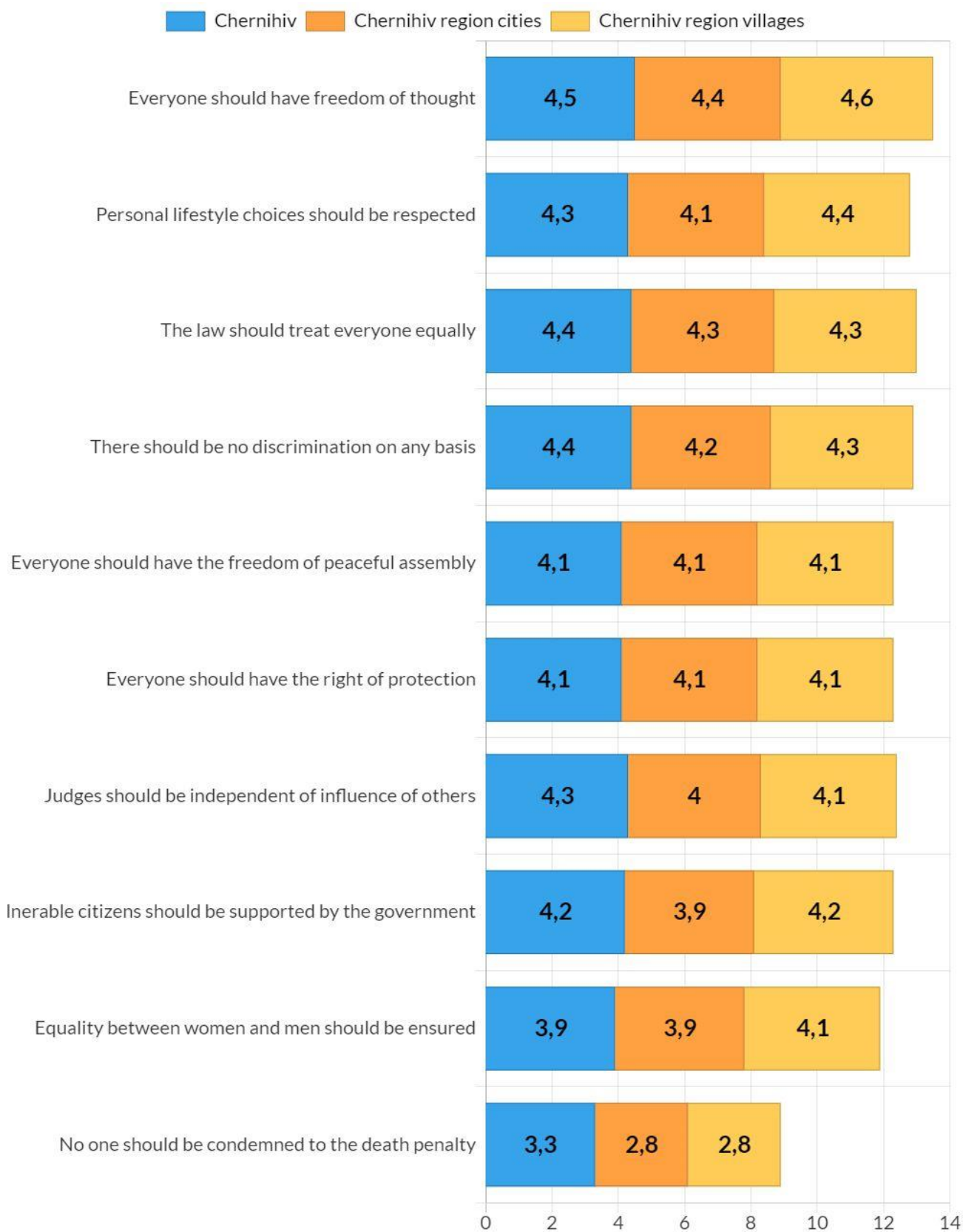
If we examine the responses of representatives from different age groups, it is evident that young people who prioritize the principle that 'Personal lifestyle choices should be respected' (4.5) and do not show significant agreement with the statement 'Everyone should have the freedom of peaceful assembly' (3.9) traditionally stand out. In terms of the latter case, responses are traditionally significantly affected by a lack of political experience and the consequences of quarantine restrictions.

Among other things, men pay less attention to the equality of rights between the sexes (3.9 vs. 4.1). No significant differences were found in the remaining sections.

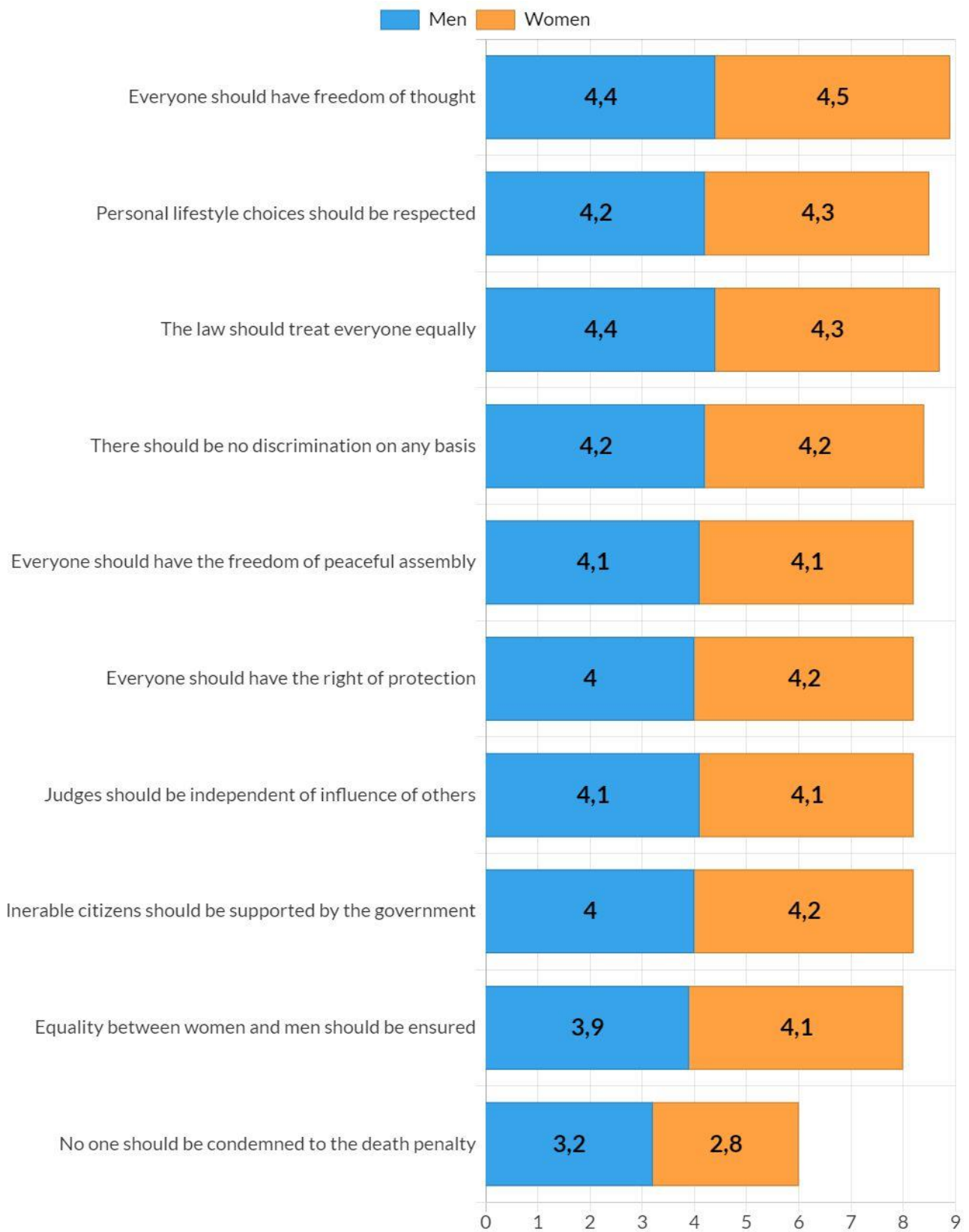
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (age)



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (place of residence)



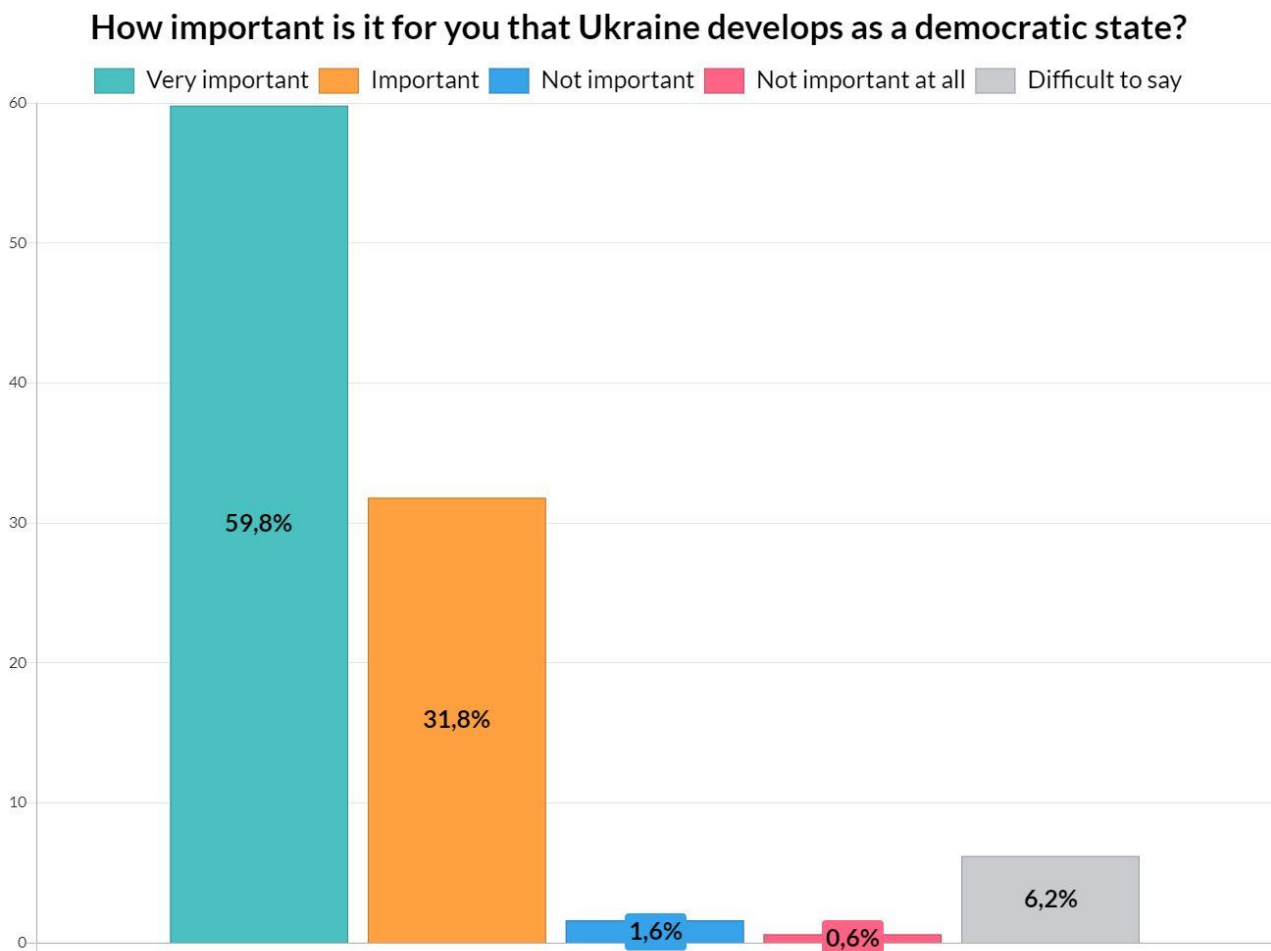
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (gender)



4. Democratic values and participation in political life

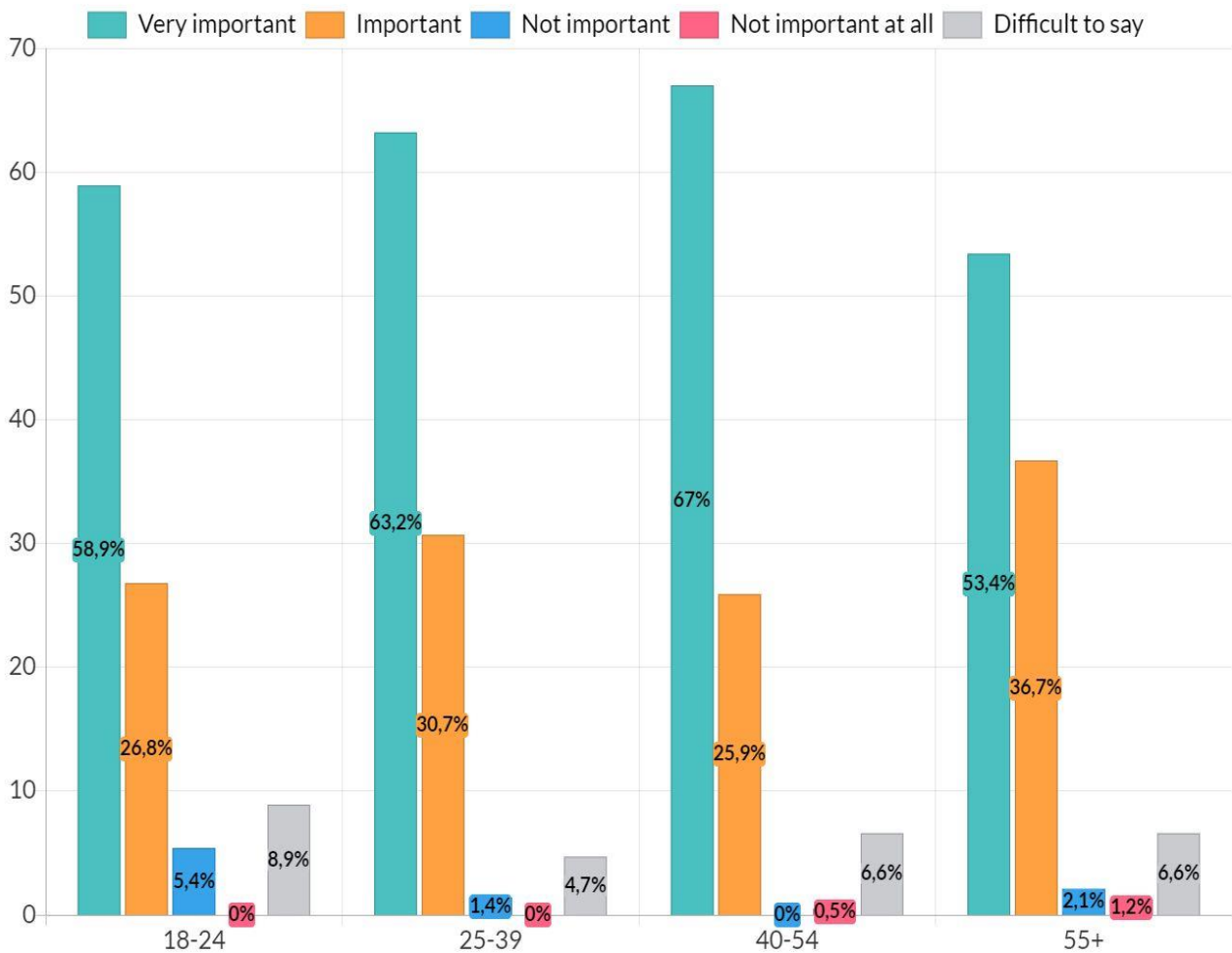
Democracy is one of the fundamental values of the European Union. Consequently, one of the objectives of the study was to assess the level of perception of democratic values among the population of the Chernihiv region.

The responses to the question, 'How important is it for you that Ukraine develops as a democratic state?' indicate the significant importance of democracy with 59.8% of respondents selecting 'very important', 31.8% choosing 'important', 1.6% indicating 'not important', 0.6% responding 'not important at all', and 6.2% remaining undecided.



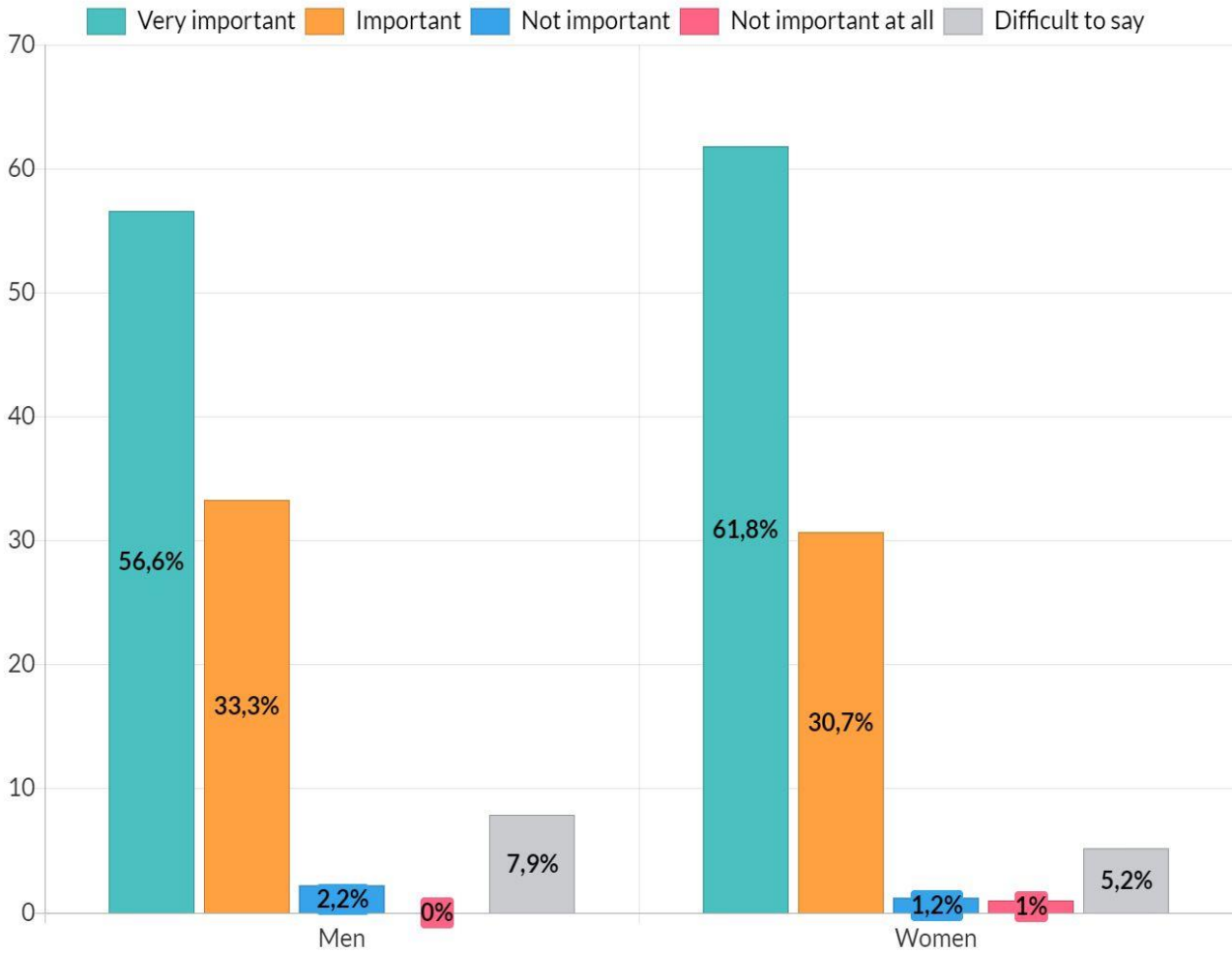
In alignment with values, the democratic development of the state is more supported by older people – more than 90%. However, the response rate of young people is also significant, at 85.7%. Additionally, within the same age category there is the largest number of undecided, comprising 8.9%.

How important is it for you that Ukraine develops as a democratic state?

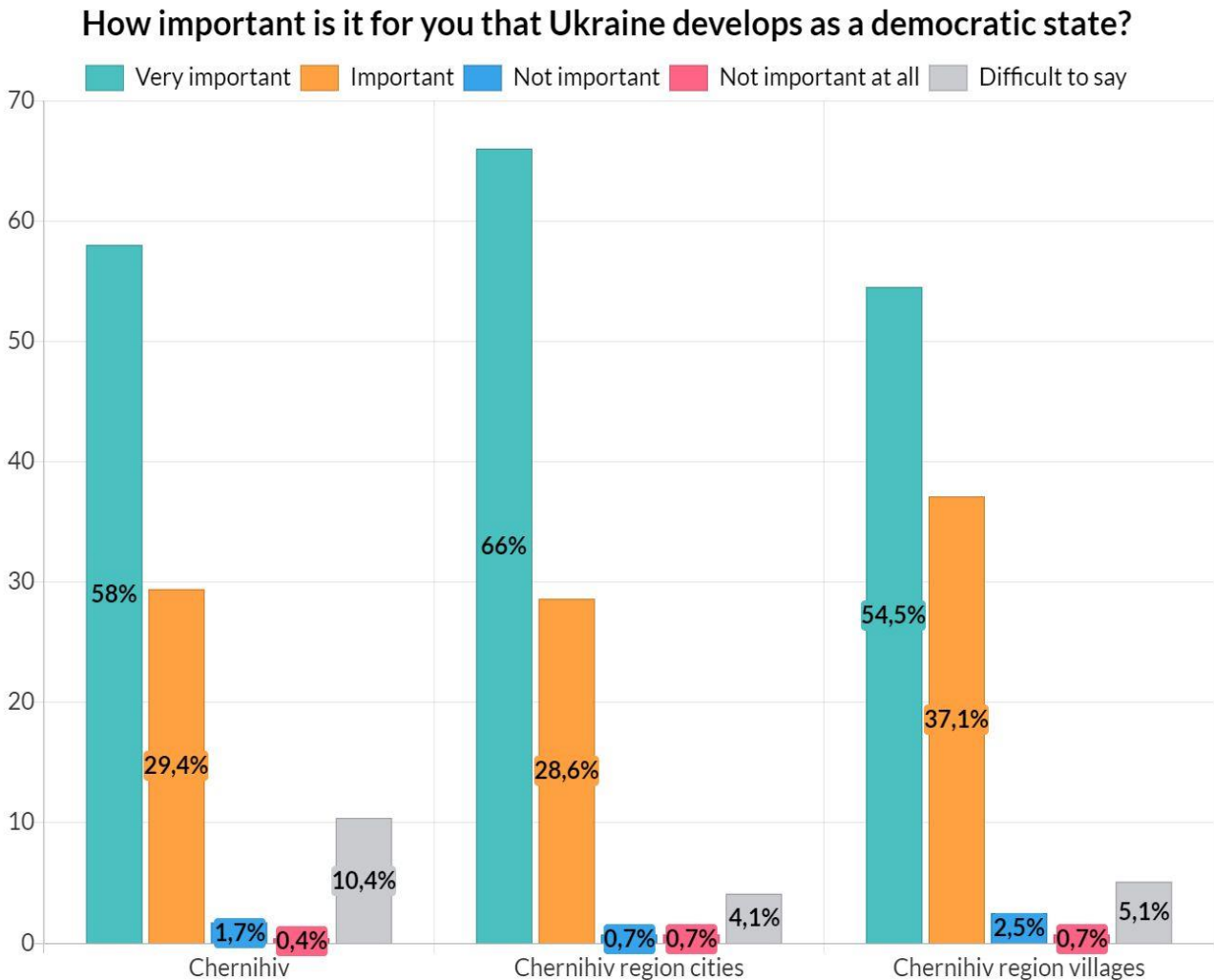


Support for democracy is slightly higher among women, at 92.5%, compared to 89.9% among men.

How important is it for you that Ukraine develops as a democratic state?



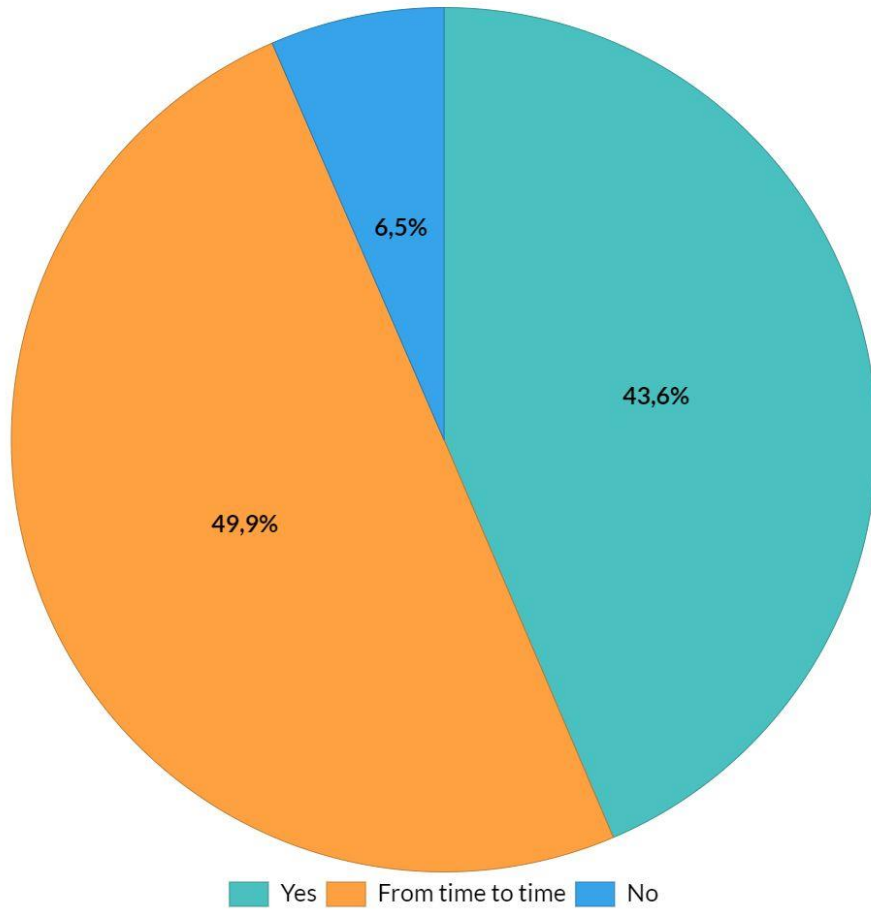
The distribution of respondents by place of residence also varies. The highest support for democratic development is among residents of the cities of the region, particularly former district centers (94.6%), while the lowest support is found in Chernihiv (87.4%).



At the present stage of democratic development, the political concept of participatory democracy has become widespread, which provides for the broadest possible involvement of residents in a given territorial community in making managerial decisions and monitoring their implementation. However, prior to implementing the ideas of this theory into practice, citizens should be aware of political processes occurring within the state and abroad.

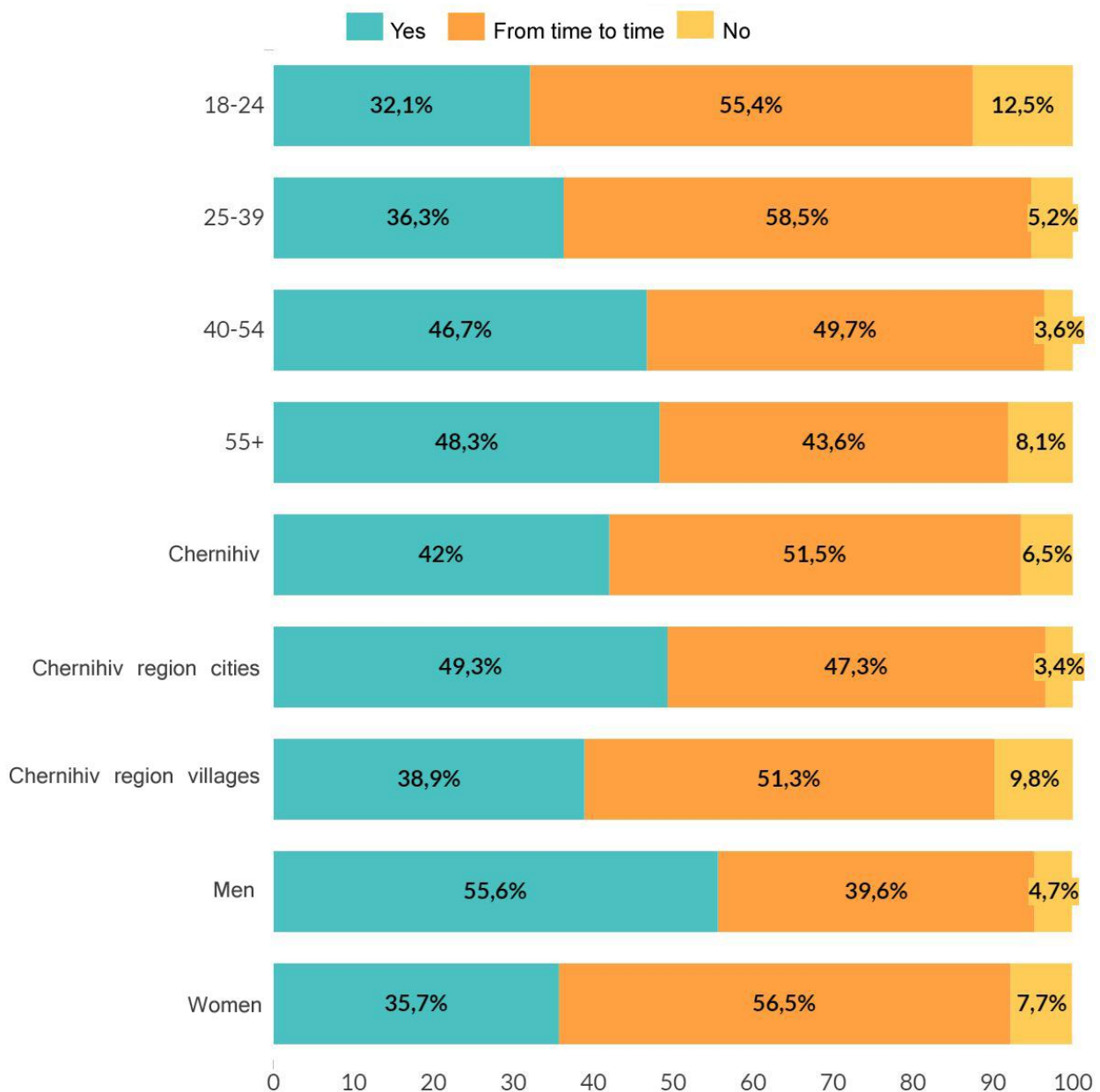
In this regard, we inquired of people: ‘Are you interested in politics?’ The findings revealed that 43.6% of respondents consistently pay attention to this issue. Nearly half of the respondents (49.9%) are interested periodically, only 6.5% remain indifferent to political events and processes. Overall, the indicators are satisfactory, but if we consider the majority principle to be one of the fundamental principles of democracy, this factor should be taken into account in the further process of developing democracy.

Are you interested in politics?



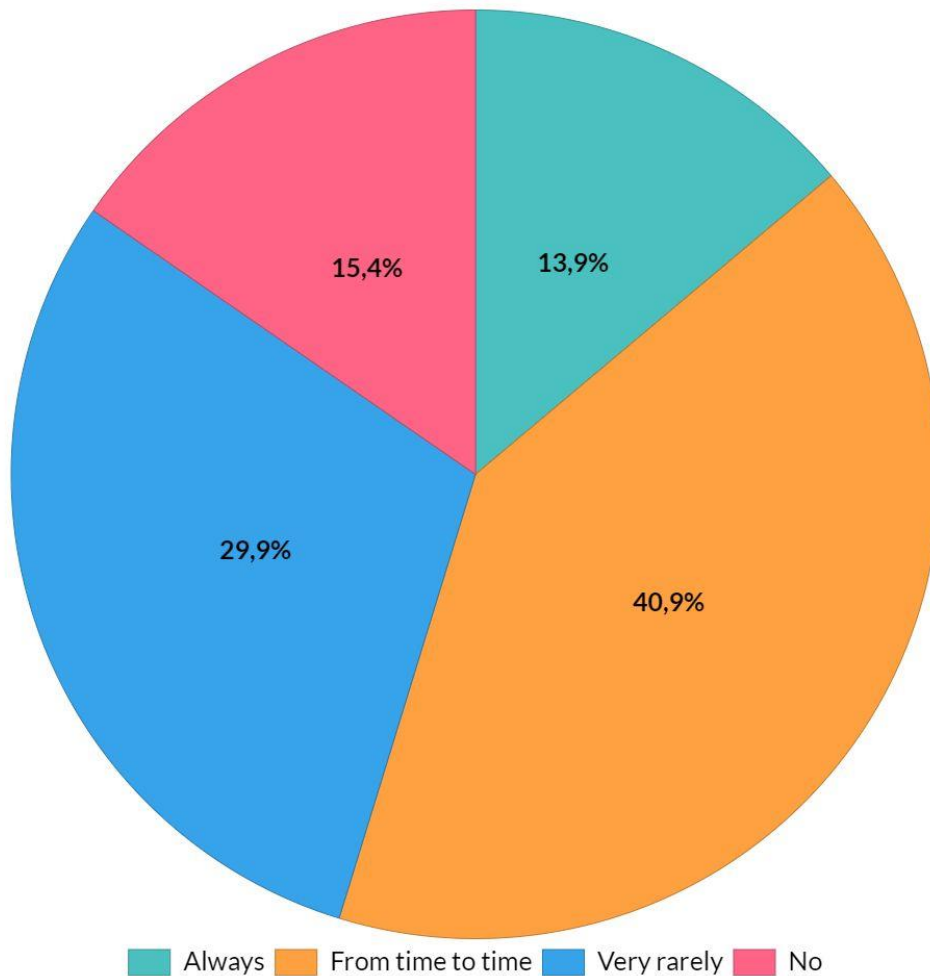
When examining cross-sections by age and place of residence, it becomes evident that the aforementioned trends remain largely unchanged. However, it is worth noting a significant difference between the responses of men and women. Hence, 55.6% of men are regularly interested in politics, a figure nearly 20% higher than the corresponding indicator among women. It is noteworthy that this is the sole socio-demographic group wherein the result exceeds 50%.

Are you interested in politics?



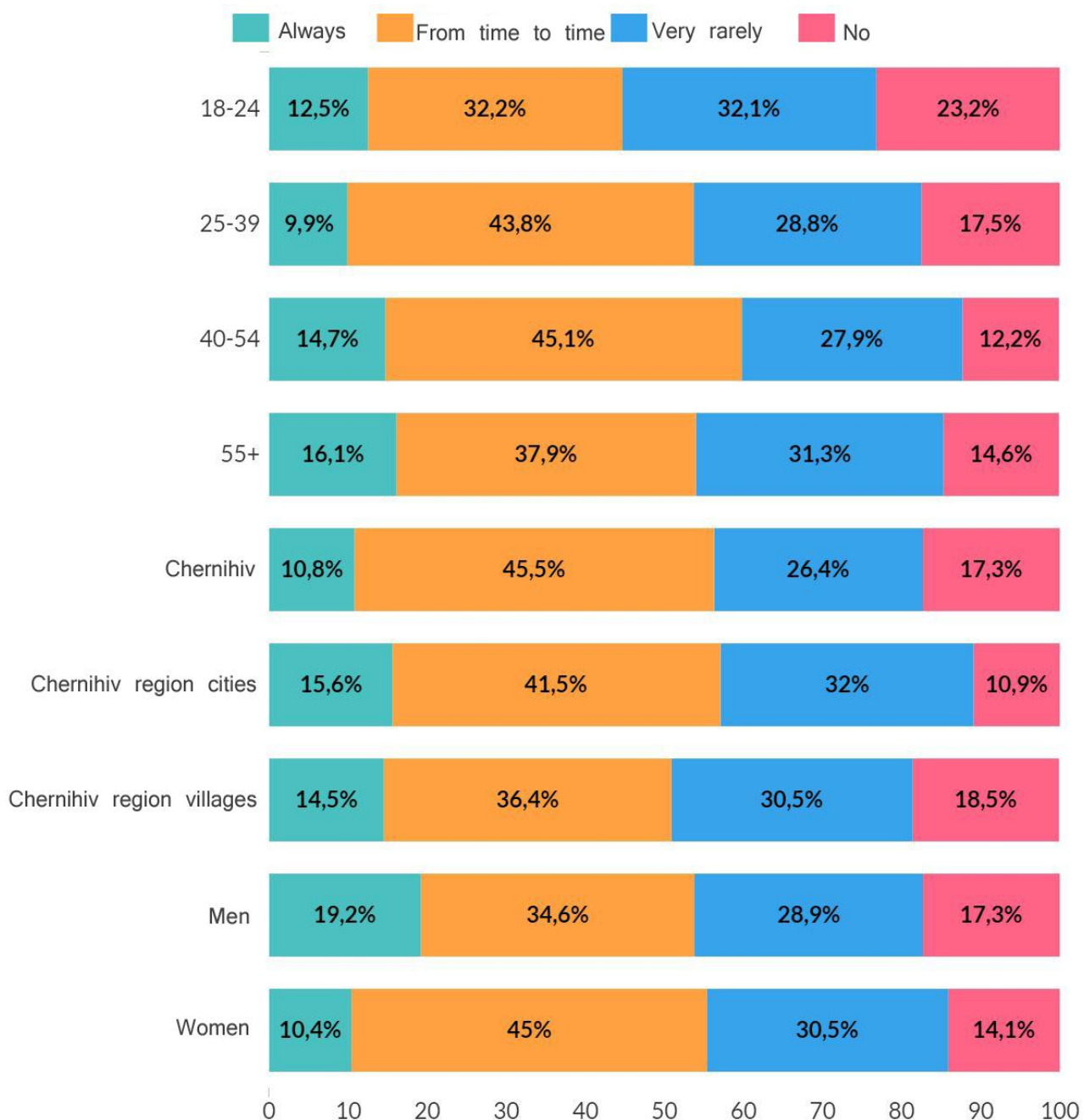
The situation concerning the direct participation of the population in political processes is notably unfavorable. In response to the question, 'Do you take part in the socio-political life of your locality?' only 13.9% answered 'always', while 40.9% participate 'from time to time'. Another 29.9% indicated participation 'very rarely', and 15.4% of respondents consider absenteeism to be the norm in their own lives.

Do you take part in the socio-political life of your locality?



Consistently, older individuals, residents of urban areas within the Chernihiv region, and men remain the most politically active strata.

Do you take part in the socio-political life of your locality?



In our assessment, a multitude of factors influence respondents' attitudes toward democratic values and their engagement in political life. Foremost among these factors is the war in general, specifically the consequences of military operations in the Chernihiv region. Realizing the devastating consequences for the individual, society and the state that the spread of authoritarianism carries, using the example of its northern neighbors, the demand for a democratic path of development in Ukraine has significantly increased.

This is especially evident in the responses of people living in the cities of the region (with the exception of Chernihiv). As a result of the Decentralization Reform, all former district centers created united territorial communities (hromadas) around them, gained financial independence and the possibility of forming their own self-government. Consequently, it was in these cities that the population began to show more activity, feeling their own political ability to influence the processes in society. In terms of Chernihiv, on the one hand, the larger the locality, the greater the level of competition, and on the other – since the end of 2015, the power vertical of the city has remained unchanged, which negatively affects the political activity of its residents.

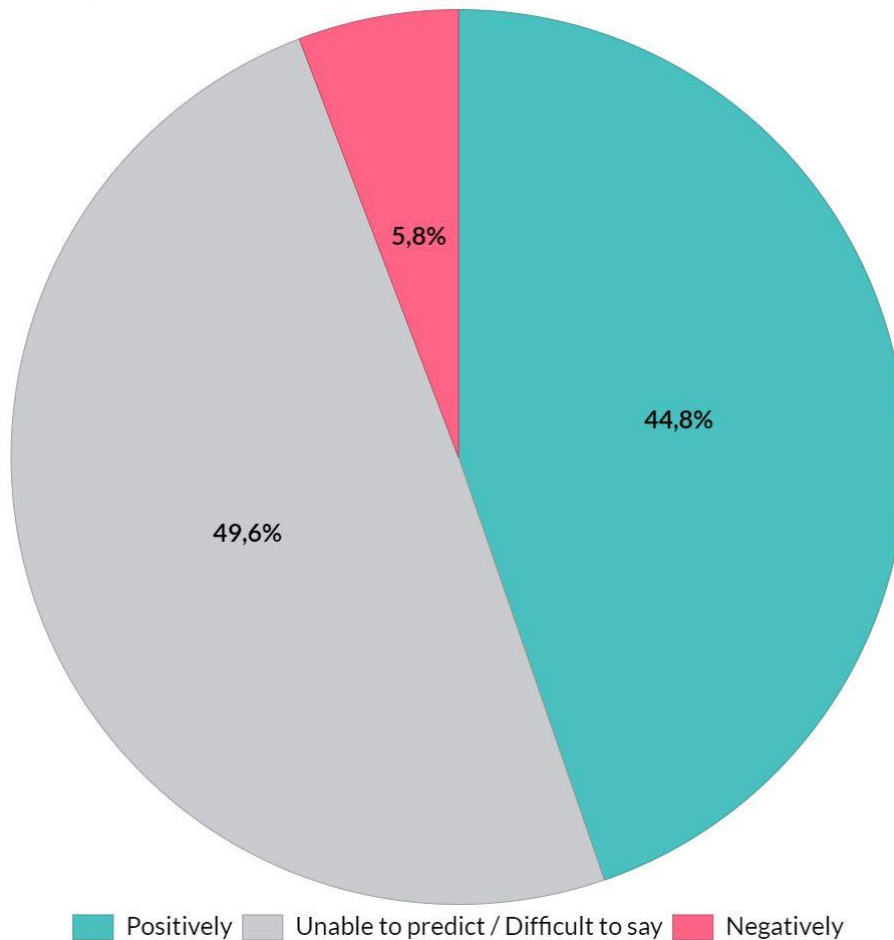
The relative passivity of young people can be explained by the fact that the overwhelming majority of survey participants have never taken part in elections and do not yet have the relevant experience. It is also worth pointing out the negative consequences of quarantine restrictions in connection with the COVID-19 coronavirus epidemic, which reduced the number of socially important events to a minimum.

As for greater political activity among men, the Soviet stereotype that governance, especially at the highest levels, is a purely male matter remains in part.

5. Outlook and directions of development of Ukraine

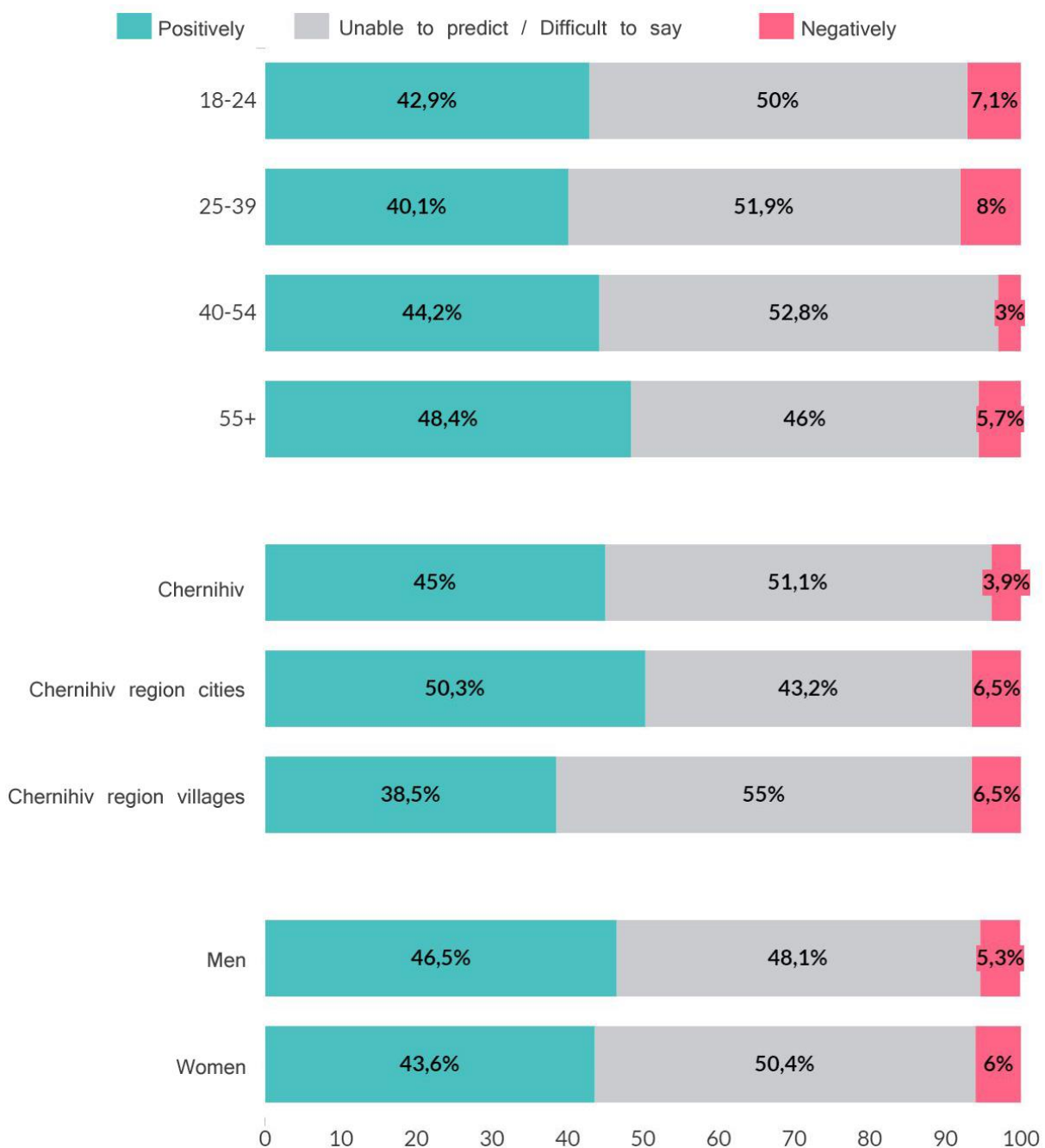
Overall, 44.8% of respondents have a positive outlook on the near future of Ukraine, 5.8% hold a negative view, and nearly half (49.6%) stated that they are unable to make a prediction. The high level of uncertainty is understandable, as it is evident that forecasts during wartime are unreliable. At the same time, it is noteworthy that despite the challenging conditions, negative and panic sentiments did not gain wide support among the population of the region.

How do you evaluate the prospects for Ukraine in the near future?



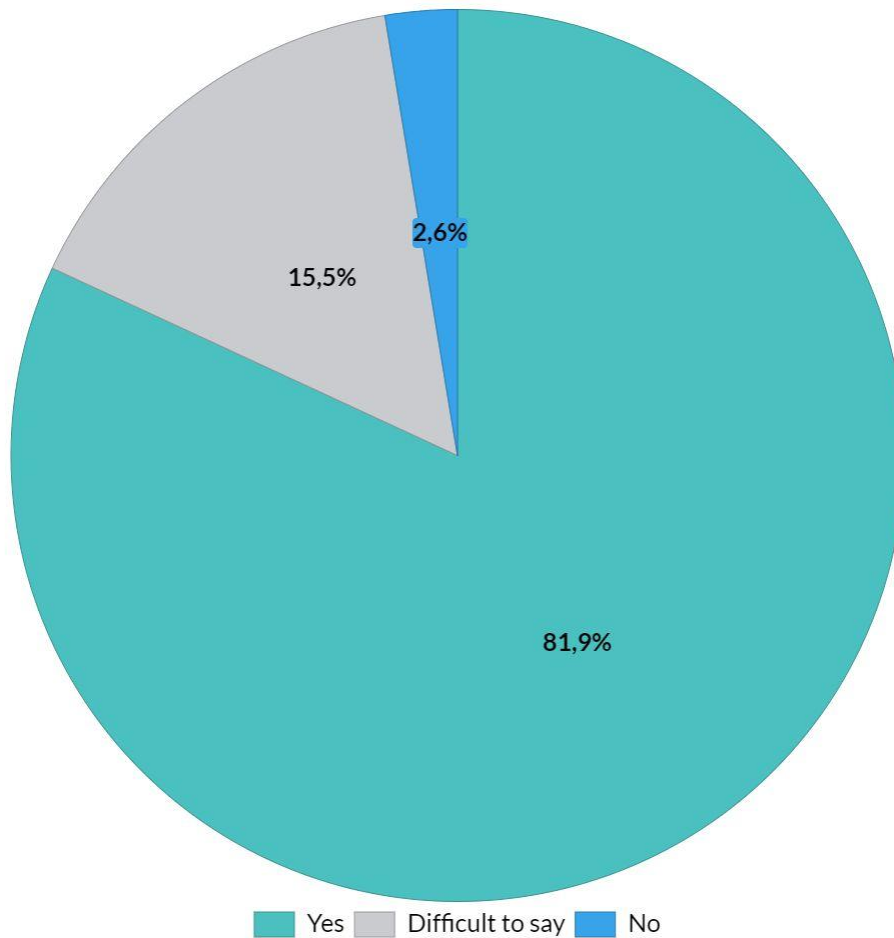
Concerning the responses of different socio-demographic groups, it is important to note the significant differences between residents of cities and villages in the Chernihiv region. While cities have the highest proportion of people with a positive outlook (50.3%), in rural areas this indicator is the lowest (38.5%). However, despite these differences, the proportion of pessimistic sentiments remains insignificant (6.5% each).

How do you evaluate the prospects for Ukraine in the near future?



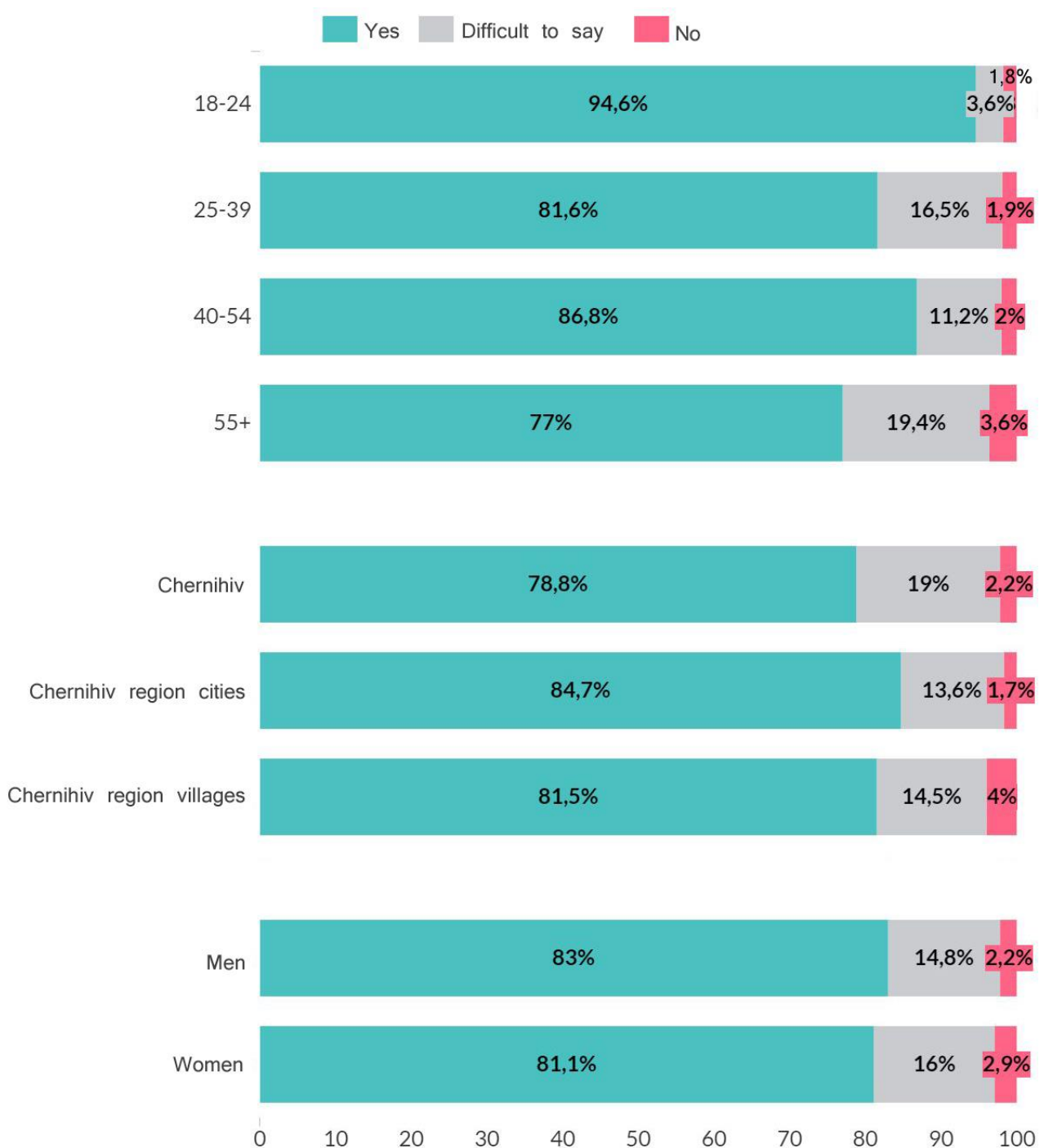
In conjunction with the generally high level of approval for both democratic and European values, residents of the Chernihiv region have expressed significant support for the pro-European development of Ukraine. An overwhelming majority of the population supports joining the European Union (81.9%), while 2.6% are opposed and 15.5% remain undecided.

Do you support Ukraine's accession to the European Union?



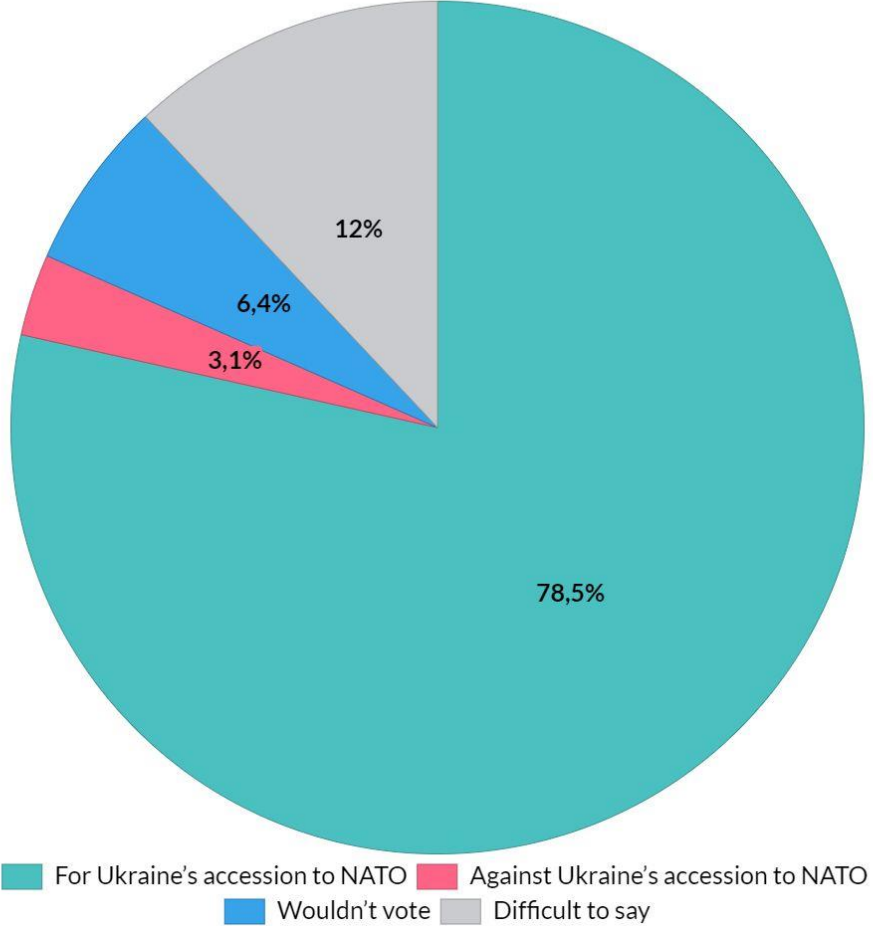
Nearly absolute approval of European integration was observed among young people aged 18 to 24 (94.6%). However, one of the lowest results was shown by Chernihiv residents (78.8%). It can be hypothesized that this phenomenon is caused by the fact that residents of the regional center visited EU countries more often prior to the onset of the war and made up the largest group of internally displaced persons after it began. At the time of the survey, the majority of them returned home, often due to challenges in adapting to life in new conditions.

Do you support Ukraine's accession to the European Union?



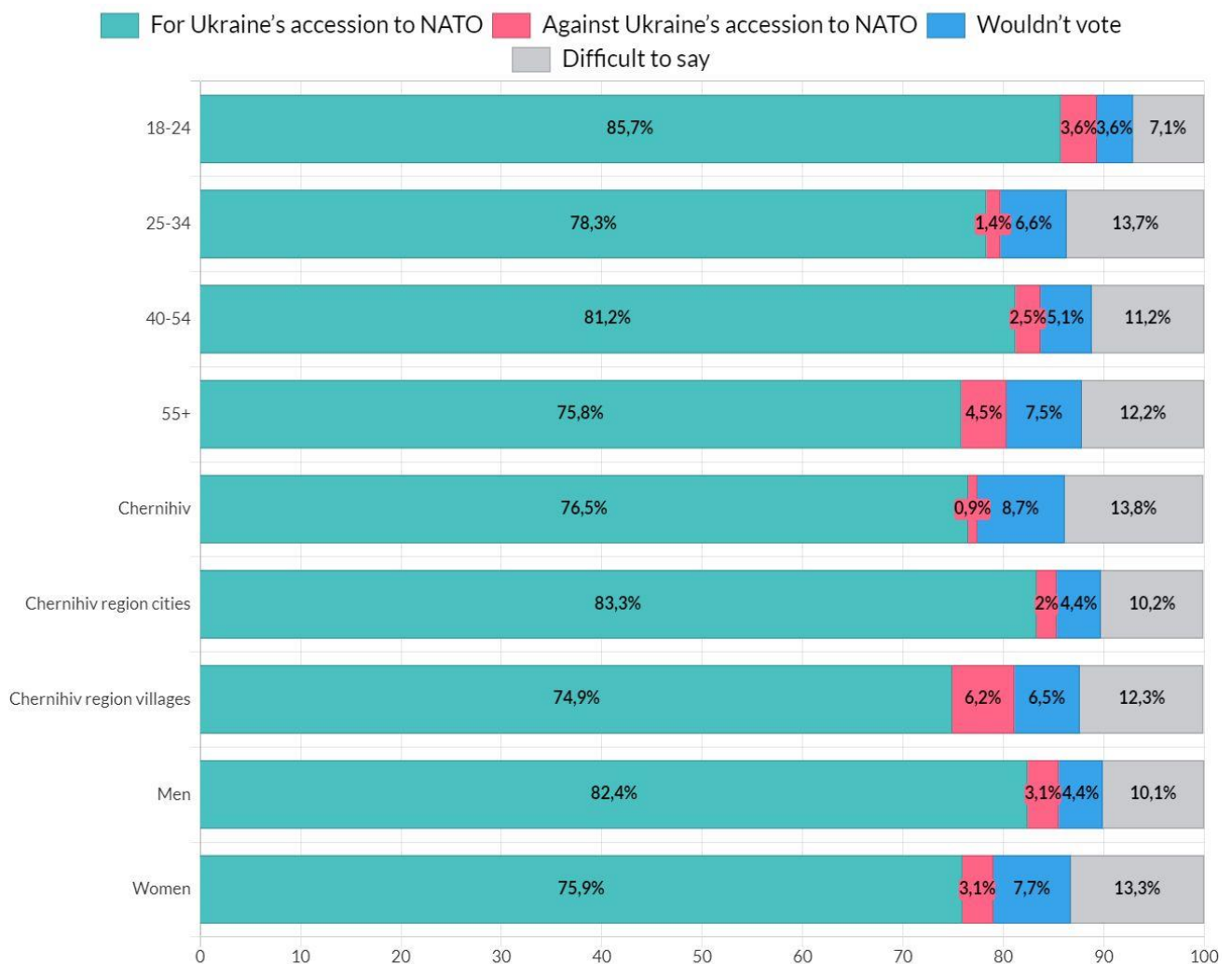
In terms of Ukraine's accession to the North Atlantic alliance, while its support is slightly lower than that for joining the EU, the absolute majority of the population unequivocally approves of such a strategy.

If the Referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO were held next Sunday, how would you vote?



The security preference for the country, similar to previous instances, is most supported by young people (85.7%), urban residents of the Chernihiv region (83.3%), and men (82.4%).

If the Referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO were held next Sunday, how would you vote?



To measure respondents' preferences regarding the priority development goals of Ukraine, we used the directions approved by Presidential Decree No. 722/2019 dated 30 September 2019, and supplemented them to account for the conditions of martial law.

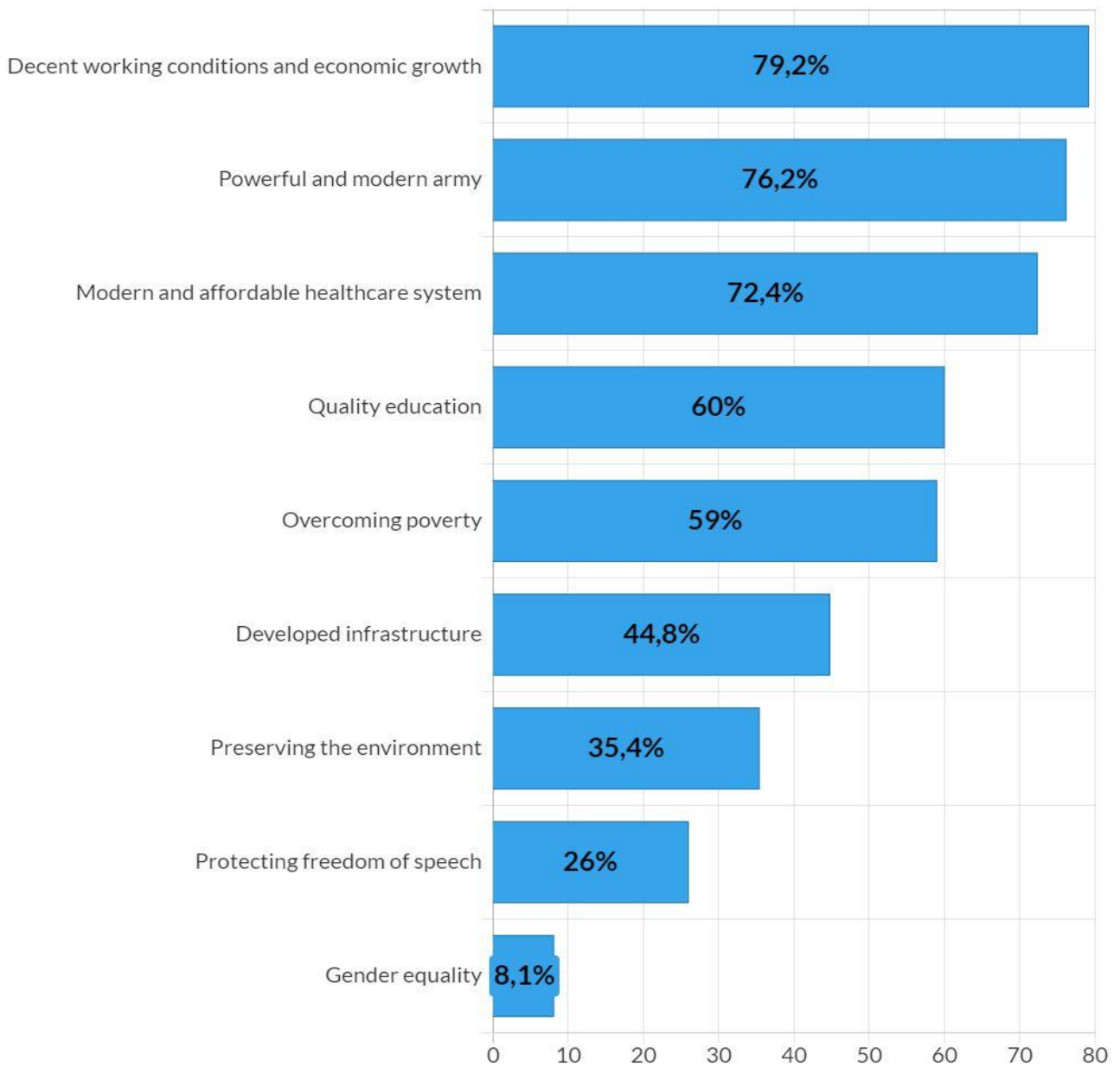
As a result, the majority of study participants supported the following aspects: 'decent working conditions and economic growth' (79.2%), 'a powerful modern army' (76.2%), 'a modern and affordable healthcare system' (72.4%), 'quality education' (60%), and 'overcoming poverty' (59%). Significantly fewer respondents are interested in 'infrastructure development'

(44.8%), 'environmental protection' (35.4%), 'freedom of speech' (26%), and 'gender equality' (8.1%).

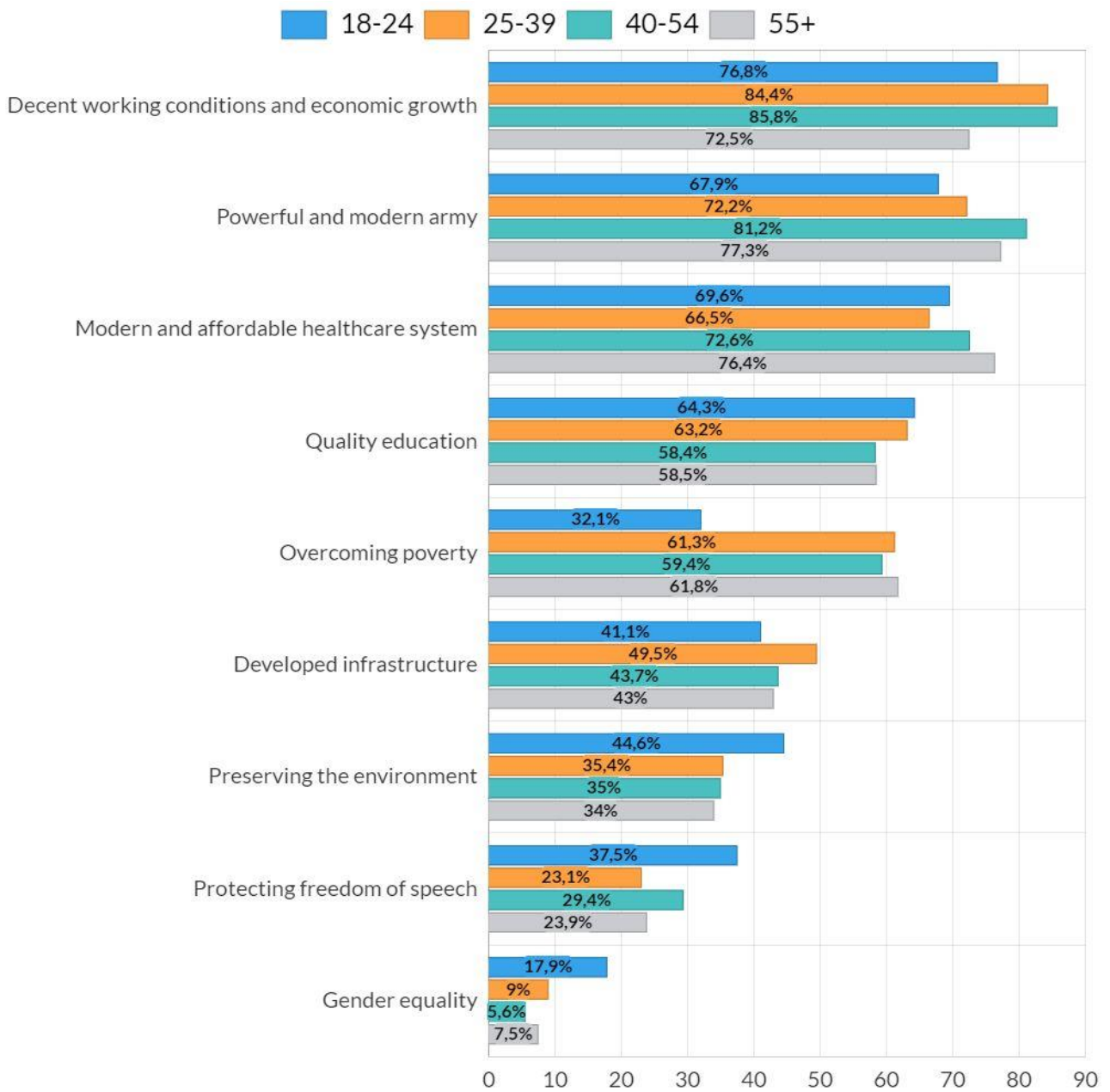
Although we observed relatively similar response trends among different groups of respondents for most questions in the study, in this case, the number of discrepancies was the greatest.

Thus, 'decent working conditions and economic growth' is a priority for the working-age population aged from 25 to 54 years old (approximately 85%) and for women (82.6%). The need for a 'powerful and modern army' is more felt by people aged from 40 to 54 years old (81.2%) and residents of cities in the region (81.3%). The 'modern and affordable healthcare system' is important for people of pre-retirement and retirement age (76.4%). 'Quality education' is essential for the rural population (63.3%) and women (67.4%). The issue of 'overcoming poverty' is less interesting to young people (32.1%). However, the issues of 'preserving the environment' (44.6%), 'protecting freedom of speech' (37.5%), and 'gender equality' (17.9%) are more important to this age group than to the general population. 'Developed infrastructure' is insufficient for rural residents (50.2 %). Women are four times more likely to need 'gender equality' compared to men (11.6% vs. 2.8%).

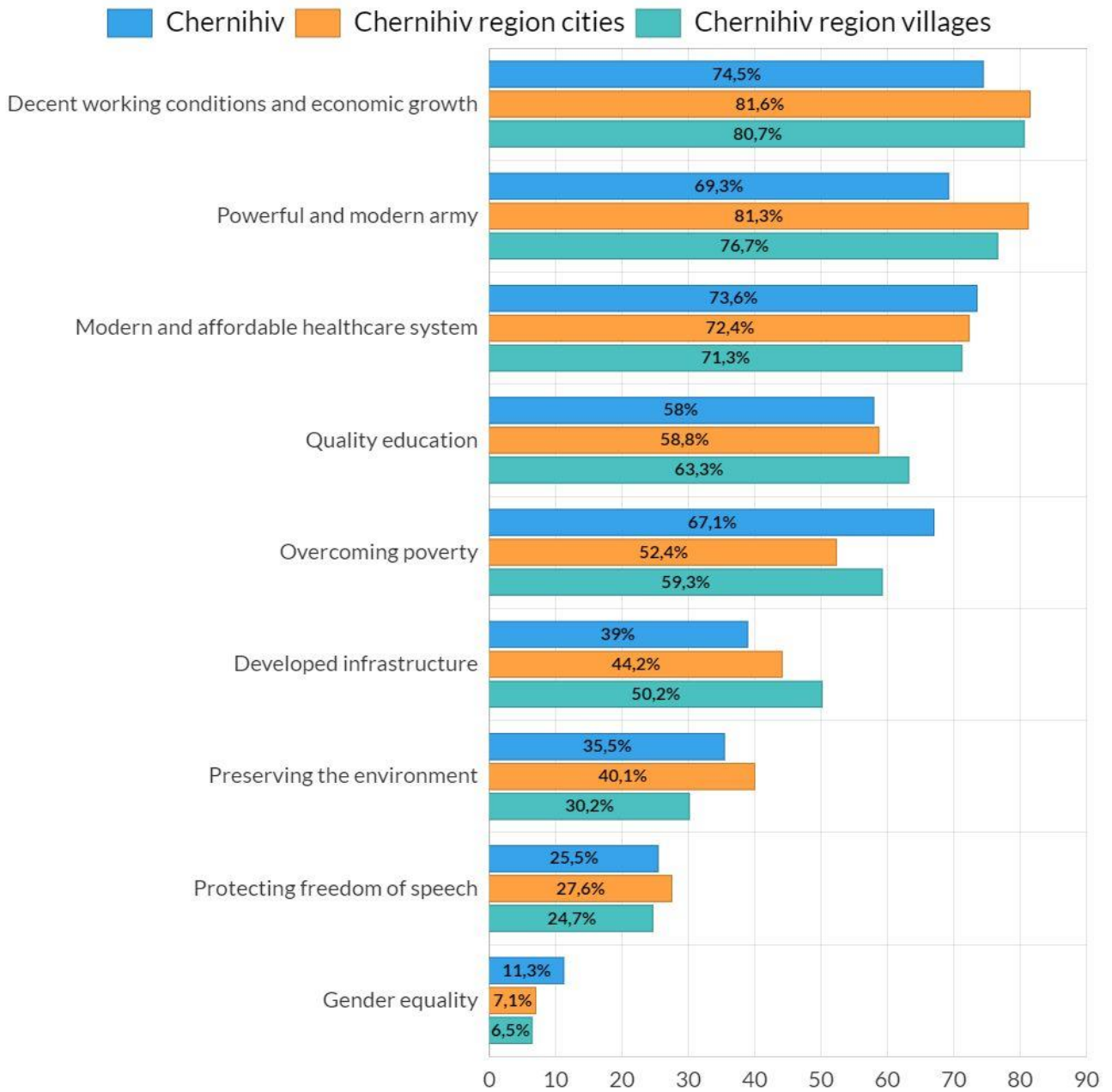
What, in your opinion, should be the priority development goals of Ukraine in the nearest 10 years?



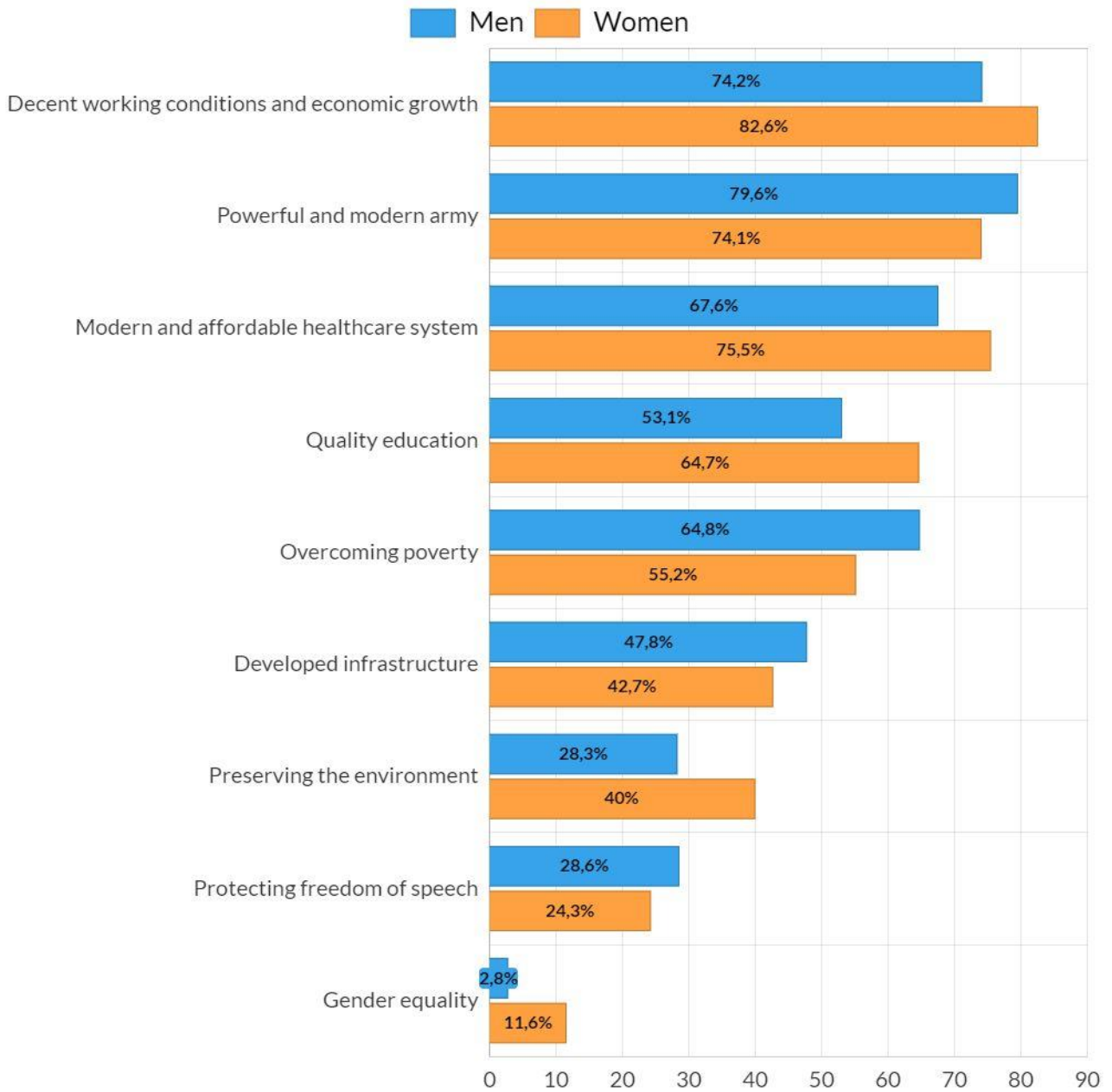
What, in your opinion, should be the priority development goals of Ukraine In the nearest 10 years? (age)



**What, in your opinion,
should be the priority development goals of Ukraine
in the nearest 10 years? (place of residence)**



What, in your opinion, should be the priority development goals of Ukraine in the nearest 10 years? (gender)



CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the study results indicated a significant level of importance attached to European values in general, and democracy in particular, among the population of the Chernihiv region. The respondents clearly recognize the necessity of developing Ukraine as a democratic state, as well as the risks that the spread of authoritarianism poses to civil society. Along this trajectory, an increasing number of people are becoming interested in political processes and endeavoring to influence them. However, the overall level of public subjectivity in the socio-political sphere remains limited, which collectively defines the peculiarities of Ukrainian democracy.

The consequences of Russia's military aggression have unified the population and, in our view, have solidified Ukrainian identity. Despite the fact that nearly two-thirds of the population consider themselves Europeans, they nevertheless distinctly identify themselves as Ukrainians.

The prospects for Ukraine in the near future are ambiguous and challenging to predict. Nevertheless, with strong consolidated support from citizens for joining the EU and NATO, we can cautiously anticipate positive changes.

At the same time, societal issues such as the standard of living, security, and access to quality healthcare and education remain unresolved and constitute priorities. Concurrently, Ukraine and the EU should consider the population's willingness to align with the values upon which the European Union is founded as well as a powerful promising tool for supporting European integration policies.

Appendix 1

List of principles used to study European values³

1. No one should be condemned to the death penalty.
2. Everyone's choice of personal lifestyle and family life should be respected.
3. Everyone should have the freedom of thought, expression and religion.
4. Everyone should have the freedom of peaceful assembly, organization and demonstration.
5. Everyone with a well-founded fear of persecution for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion should have the right to asylum.
6. Judges should be independent and be not under the influence of others.
7. The most vulnerable citizens should be supported by their national government in order to lead a decent life.
8. Equality between women and men should be actively ensured in all areas.
9. There should be no discrimination on any grounds, including sex, age, ethnicity, religion, political or other opinion, membership of a minority, wealth, disability or sexual orientation.
10. The law should treat everyone equally and everyone should have the right to a fair trial in an independent court.

³ Scharfbillig, M., Smillie, L., Mair, D., Sienkiewicz, M., Keimer, J., Pinho Dos Santos, R., Vinagreiro Alves, H., Vecchione, E. and Scheunemann, L., Values and Identities - a policymaker's guide, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, doi:10.2760/022780, JRC126150. P. 53.

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AMONG THE POPULATION OF CHERNIHIV REGION
OF UKRAINE**

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