

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY

A close-up photograph of a hand placing a white ballot into a slot of a wooden ballot box. The background is a gradient of blue and teal with diagonal stripes.

Ipsos KnowledgePanel

Dec 2023.

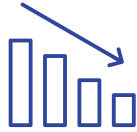
GAME CHANGERS



KEY TAKEAWAYS



This document is interactive,
please click the [links](#) to jump to the findings



Dissatisfaction

Low levels of satisfaction with how democracy is working

The public are generally dissatisfied with how democracy works in their country and more people think the way democracy works has worsened than think it has improved.

Sweden is the only country where a majority (58%) is [happy with democracy in their country](#). At the other end of the spectrum, only 19% say the same in Croatia. Few across all countries think democracy has got [better over the last five years](#), while seven in ten in France and the US say it has gotten worse.



Local vs national

Democracy seen as working better locally

People tend to be more satisfied with how democracy works and more likely to feel they have influence on decision making at the local level than more remote levels of governance, such as national or supranational level.

In all countries except Sweden and Croatia, are people happier with their [local government than their national one](#). Forty-two per cent of Americans say they are satisfied with their local government, while only 20% are satisfied with the US government.



Change needed

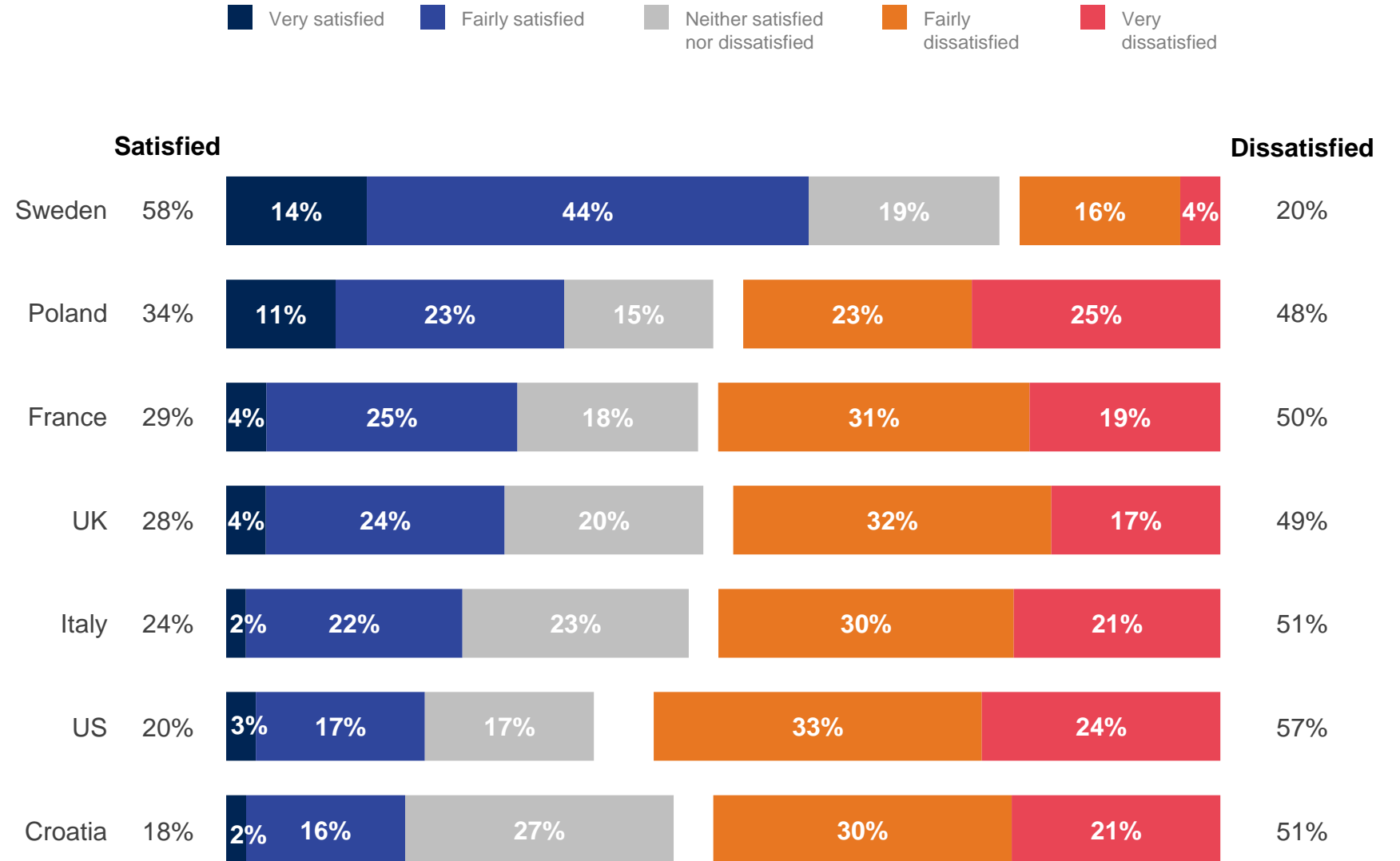
Strong support for democratic principles despite desire for radical change

In all seven countries surveyed, large numbers want radical change to the political system, perceiving the system is rigged in favour of the rich and powerful. Yet we also find support for democratic principles, such as power diffusion and political participation.

People in Italy and GB are the most likely to think [the economy is rigged for the rich and powerful](#) (72% and 71% respectively), while in Poland more people think the economy works for everyone.

Across most countries surveyed, approx. one in two are dissatisfied with the way democracy works. Sweden is the only country where more people are satisfied than dissatisfied with how democracy is working, though one in five are dissatisfied.

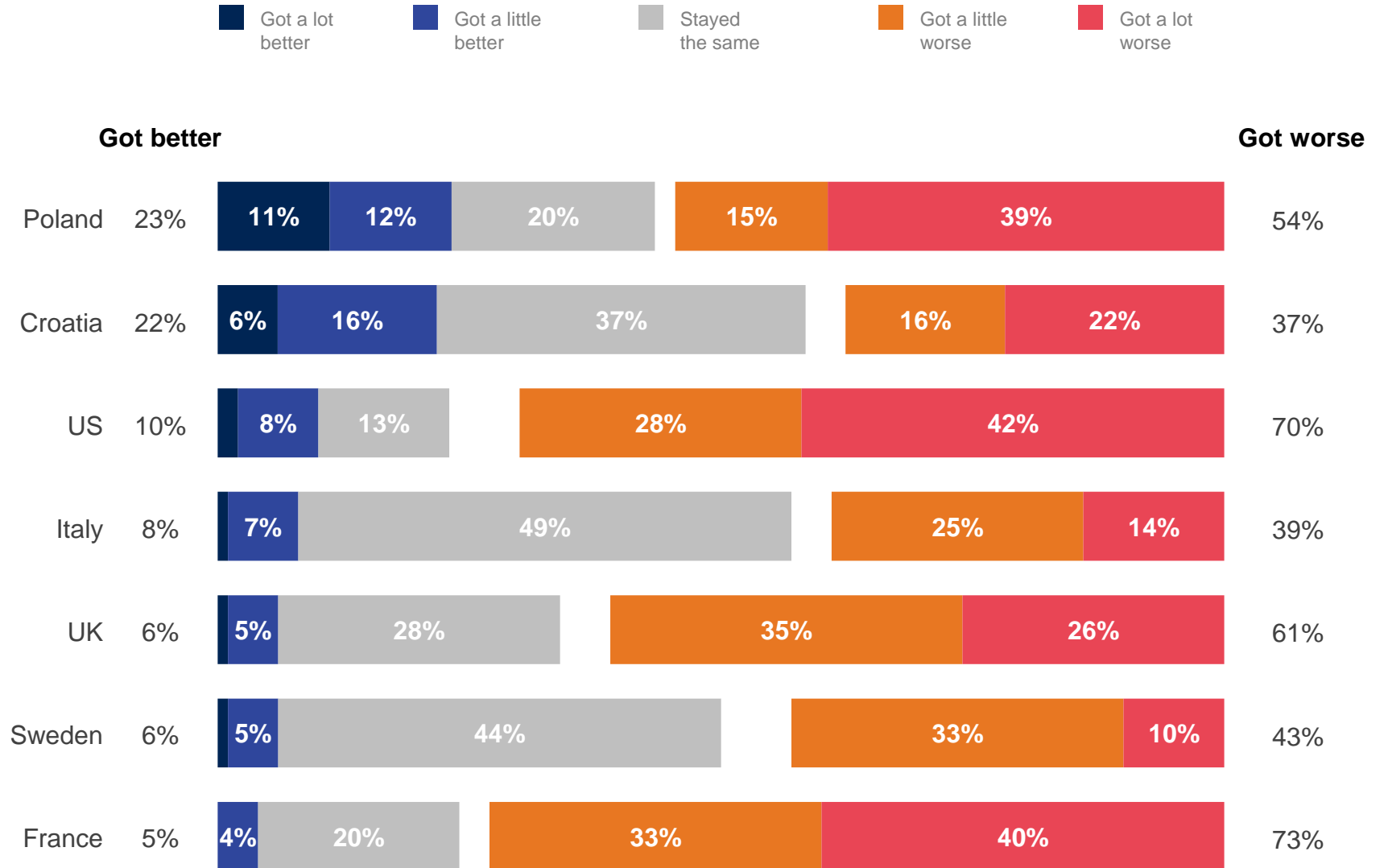
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy is working in [COUNTRY]?



Base: Adults aged 16+, Sweden = 1,424, France = 1,324, Poland = 1,153, UK = 5,266, US = 1,053, Italy = 1,229, Croatia = 1,017 Interviewed via Ipsos KnowledgePanel, 21-30 September 2023

People are more likely to think democracy in their country has gotten worse in the last five years. In the US and France seven in ten say democracy has declined over recent years.

Compared to five years ago, would you say that the way democracy is working in [COUNTRY] today has got better, got worse or stayed the same?



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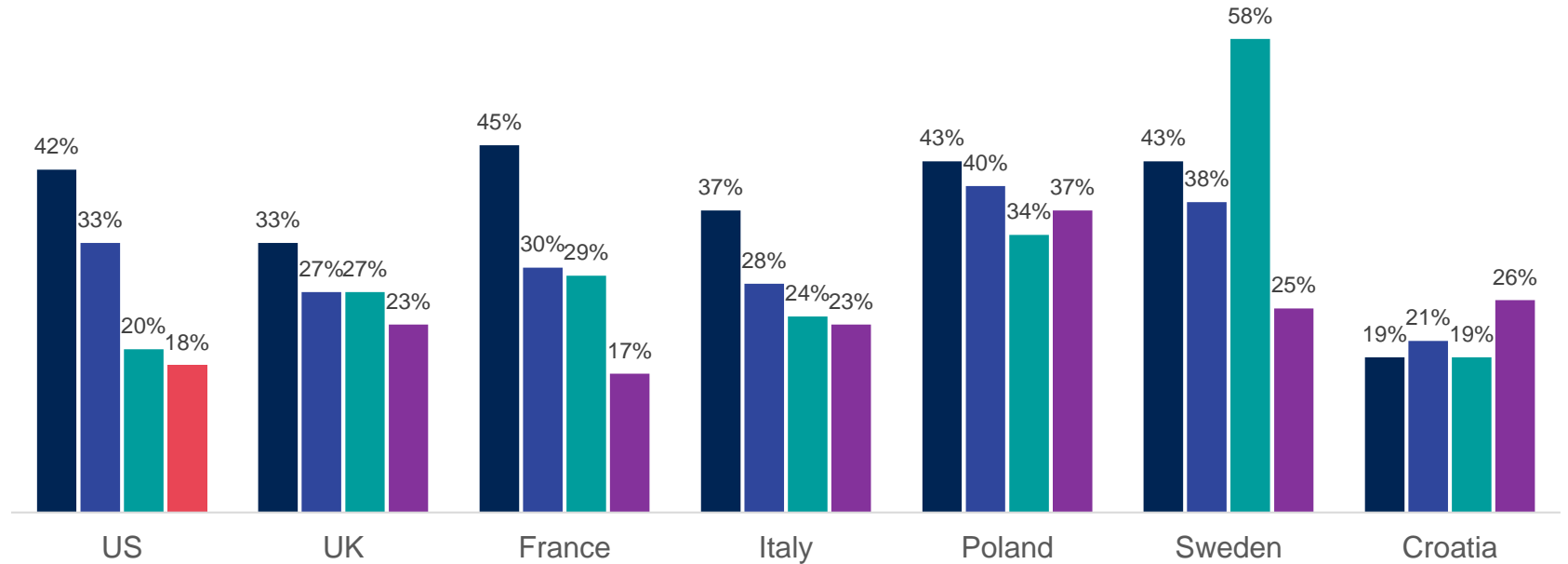
Satisfaction with how democracy works tends to be highest at the local level, decreasing as the level of governance is further removed.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy is working in [COUNTRY]?

And how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how democracy works in ...?

Community /City Region/State Country Supranational: UN Supranational: EU

Satisfaction with how democracy works: % very/fairly satisfied



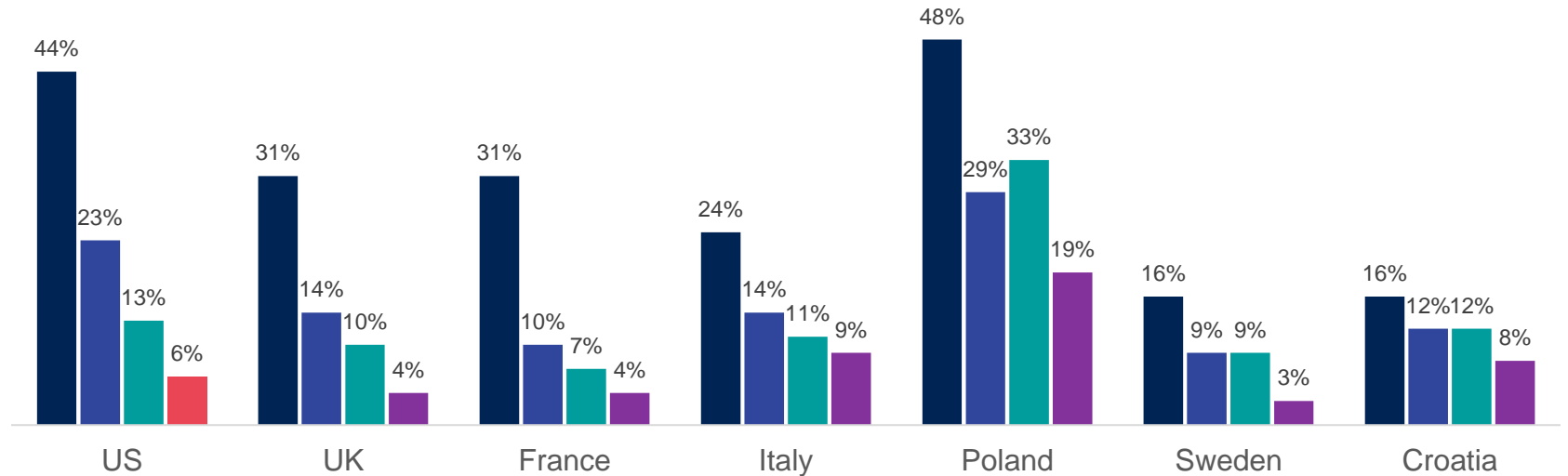
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The public perceive having more influence on decision making at lower levels of governance than higher.

How much, influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision making in... ?

Community /City Region/State Country Supranational: UN Supranational: EU

Influence over decision making: % a great deal of / some influence



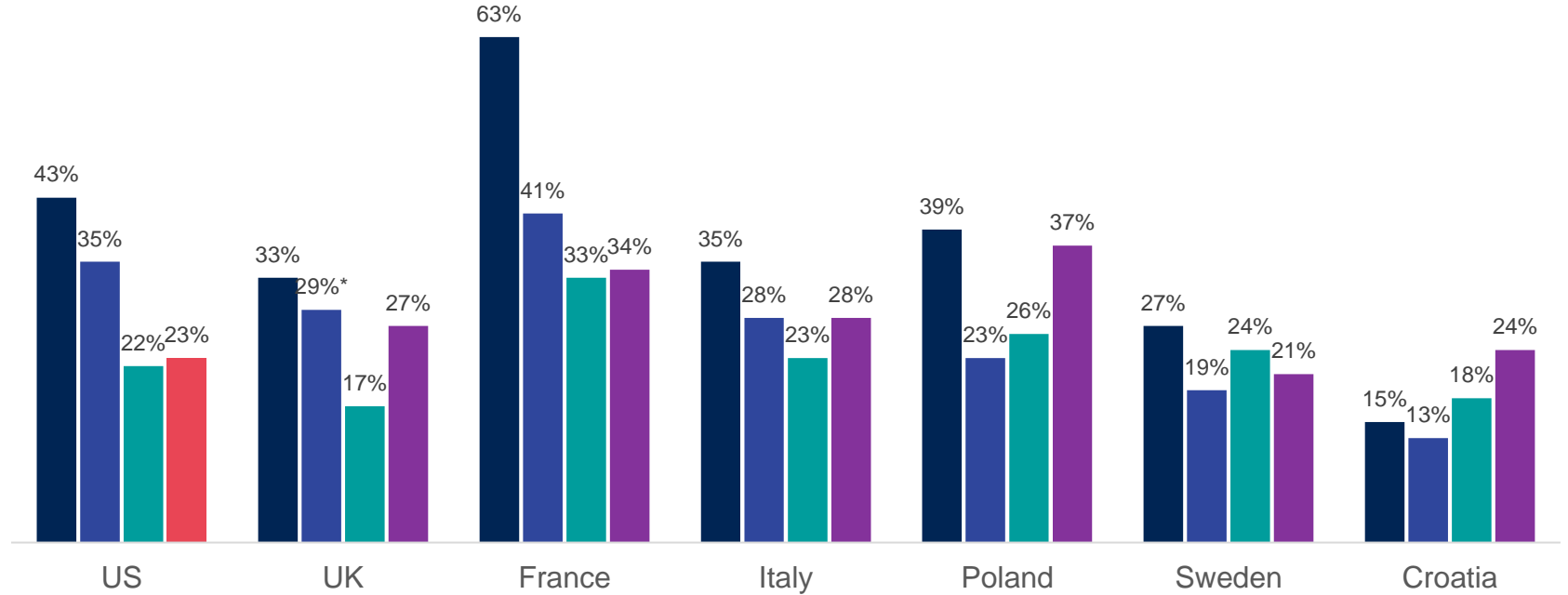
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In most countries, people feel better represented at the local level than regional/state, national or supranational.

To what extent, if at all, do you feel like the following institutions represent your views and priorities?

Community /City Region/State Country Supranational: UN Supranational: EU

Represents views and priorities: % a great deal/a fair amount



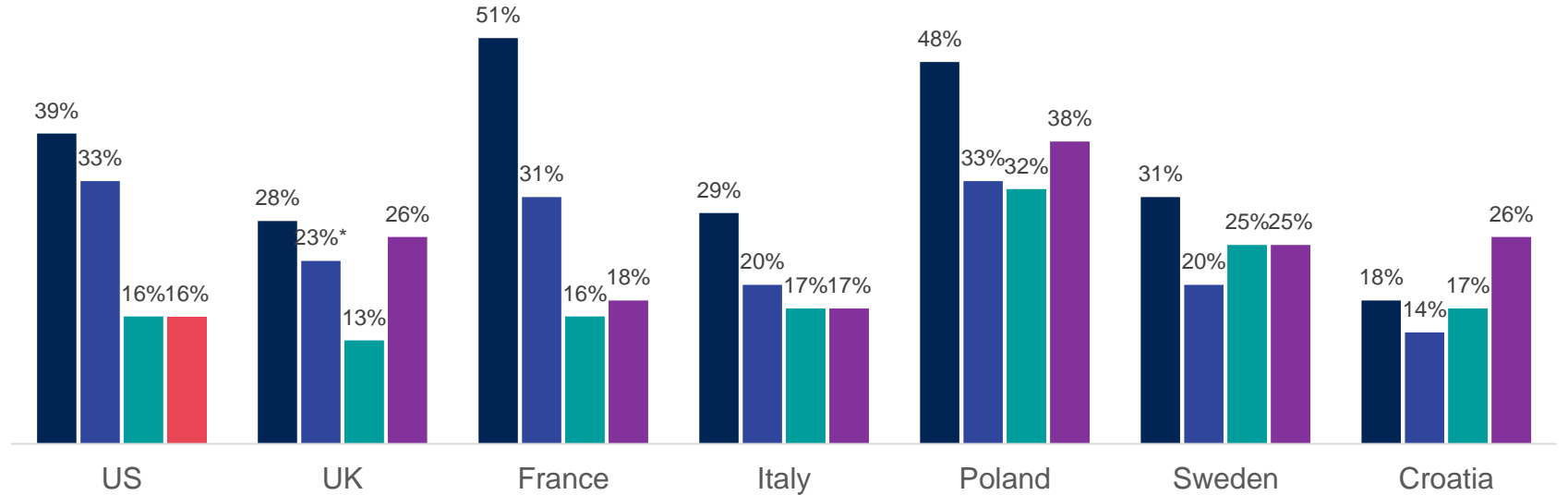
Base: Adults aged 16+, Sweden = 1,424, France = 1,324, Poland = 1,153, Northern Ireland: 272, Scotland: 421, Wales: 299, US = 1,053, Italy = 1,229, Croatia = 1,017; Interviewed via Ipsos KnowledgePanel, 21-30 September 2023
 *Only asked in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Local councils are seen as doing a better job delivering outcomes for their citizens than higher levels of governance.

To what extent do you think the following institutions are doing a good or bad job delivering outcomes for their citizens ?



Delivering outcomes for citizens: % a very good/fairly good job



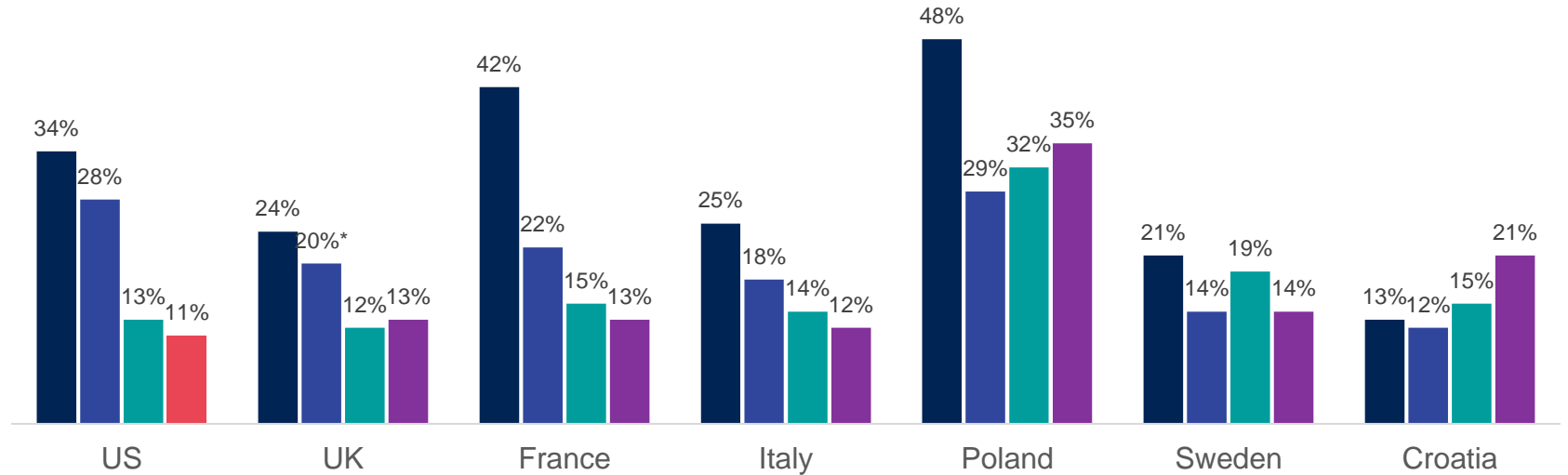
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Local councils are seen as doing a better job delivering outcomes for people than higher levels of governance.

To what extent do you think the following institutions are doing a good or bad job delivering outcomes for you personally ?

Community /City Region/State Country Supranational: UN Supranational: EU

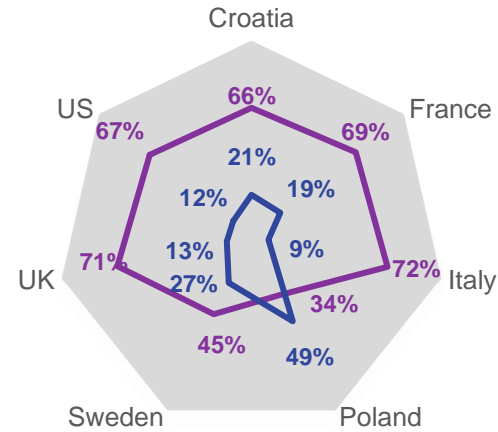
Delivering outcomes for you personally: % a very good/fairly good job



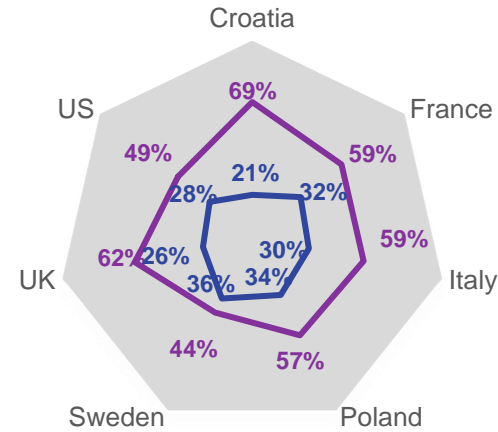
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There is a sense that the system is rigged against ordinary people across most countries, and there is a desire for radical change.

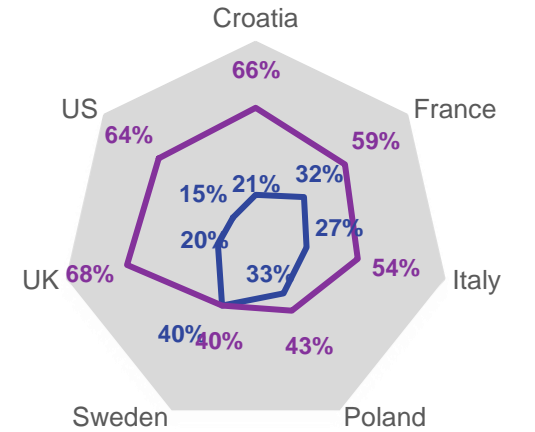
From the pair of statements below, please select the one that best represents your views, even if neither is exactly right.



- The **economy is rigged** to advantage the rich and powerful
- The economy works for the **benefit of everyone** in the country



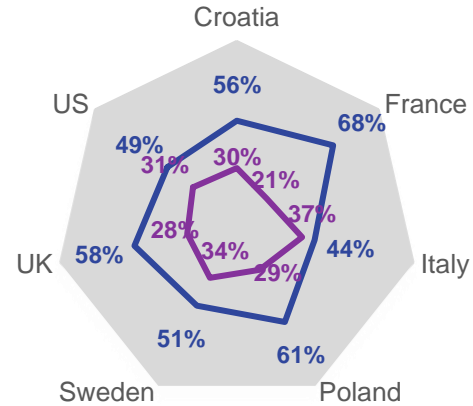
- **Radical change is needed** to improve the current political system in [COUNTRY]
- **It's too risky to make radical changes** – we can still improve things through more measured reform



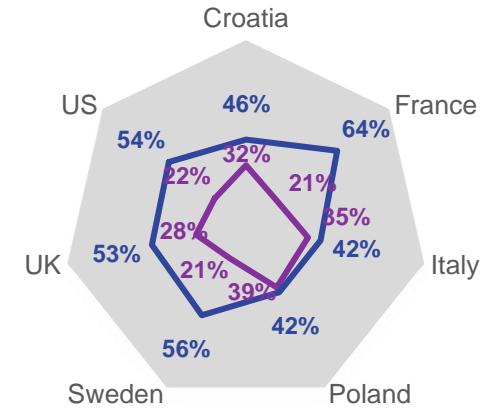
- The people who run the country put the **needs of the rich and powerful first**, they don't care much about everyone else
- The people who run the country are doing their best to **make life better for everybody**, even if they don't always get it

There is generally support for institutions and approaches that support democratic values.

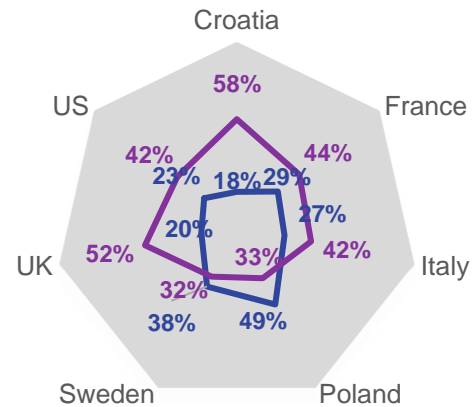
From the pair of statements below, please select the one that best represents your views, even if neither is exactly right.



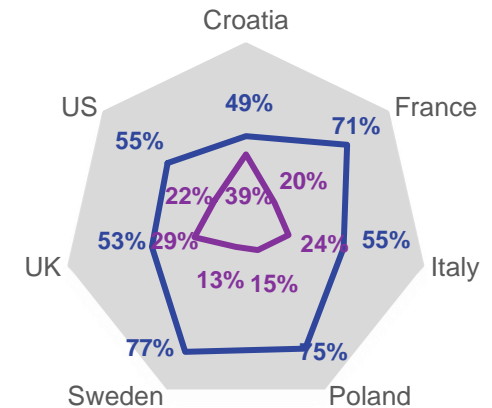
- I prefer a **political leader who sticks to their principles** regardless of what others think
- I prefer a **political leader who is prepared to compromise** to build consensus with others



- Many of the country's problems could be dealt with more effectively if the Prime Minister/ President didn't have to worry so much about votes in Parliament/Congress
- It would be too risky to give the Prime Minister / President more power to deal directly with many of the country's problems



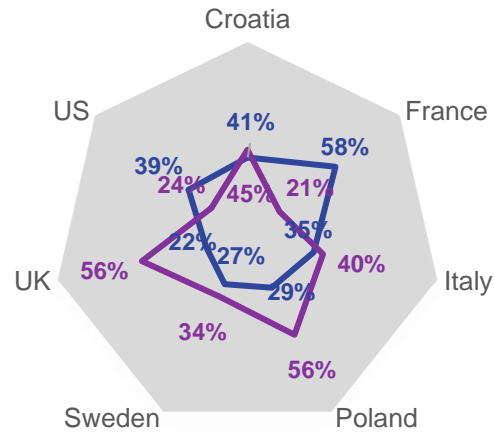
- There is **no point getting involved in politics** because nothing ever changes
- I feel **I can change things** by getting involved in politics



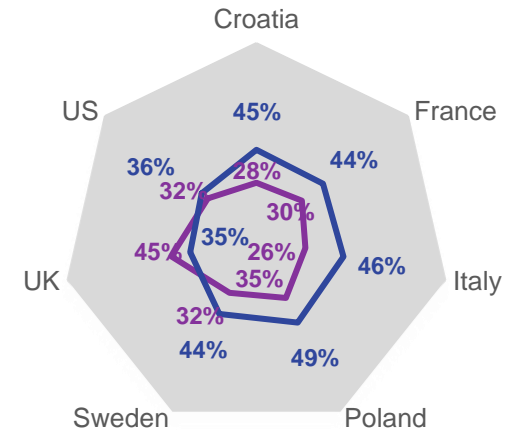
- There is **no point voting** because it doesn't change anything
- **I can influence things** by voting in elections

There is no consensus on whether countries should be more open to the global economy or immigration.

From the pair of statements below, please select the one that best represents your views, even if neither is exactly right.



- [COUNTRY] needs to take more steps to **protect** itself from the global economy
- [COUNTRY] needs to take more steps to **open** itself from the global economy



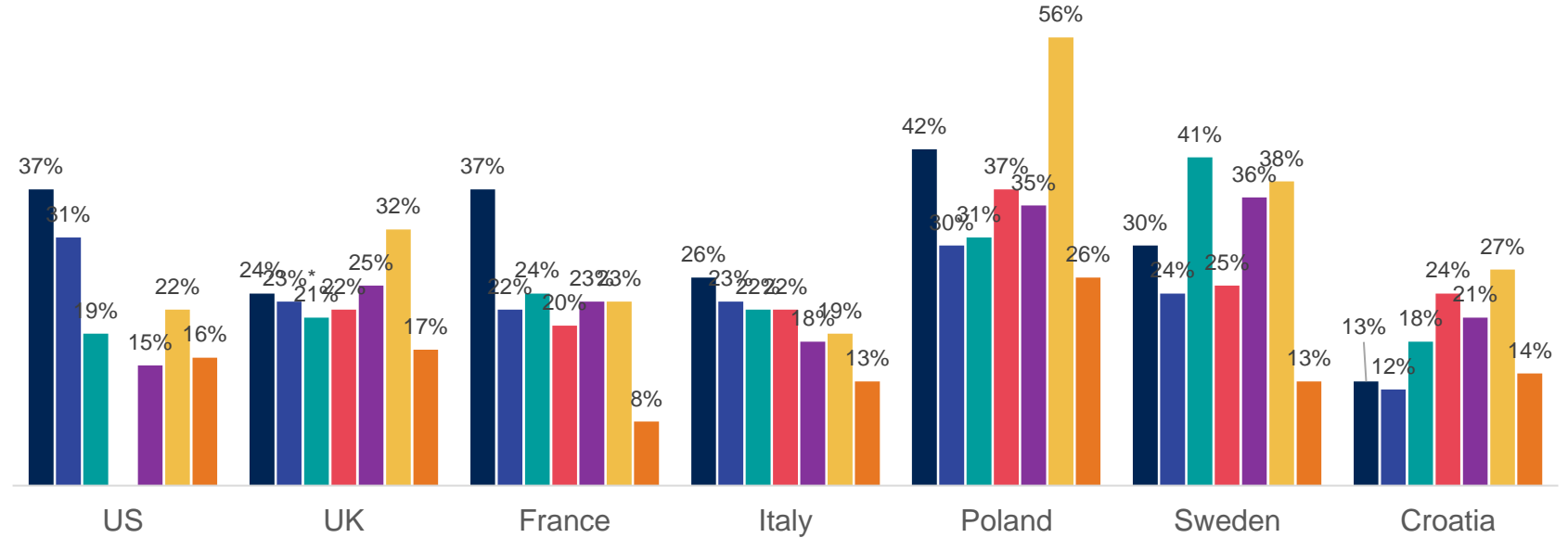
- The **advantages of immigration** into [COUNTRY] outweigh the disadvantages
- The **disadvantages of immigration** into [COUNTRY] outweigh the advantages

There is considerable variation in how well different levels of governance are seen as doing a good job protecting democracy.

Would you say the following countries and organisations are doing a good or bad job when it comes to helping protect democracy?



Helping protect democracy: % a very good/fairly good job



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APPENDIX

About the Study

This survey was conducted September 21 to 30, 2023 using **KnowledgePanel**, Ipsos' probability-based panels in Croatia, France, Italy, Poland, Sweden, the UK and the US.

The survey was based on nationally representative probability samples of 16+ y.o. in Croatia, France, Italy, Poland, Sweden and the UK, and 18+ y.o. in the US.

The study was conducted in the official language of each European country and in English in the UK and the US. Two reminder emails were sent for this study.

Recruitment to the KnowledgePanel

Our recruitment process employs scientifically developed random probability sampling methodologies.

In Sweden, the UK and the US, panelists are recruited via address-based sampling methods using databases with full coverage of the population:

- SPAR, the Swedish state personal address register in Sweden,
- the Postcode Address file in the UK,
- and the Delivery Sequence File of the USPS in the US.

In these countries, letters are sent to selected individuals or addresses inviting them to become members of the panel. Invited persons can sign up to the panel by completing a short online survey or by returning a paper form.

In Croatia, France, Italy and Poland, panelists are recruited via random probability telephone-based sampling method. Telephone numbers are randomly generated using an algorithm that conforms to the properties of valid phone numbers in a country to obtain a representative sample of the country population. A dual frame design ensures coverage of households with only a landline phone and maximises contact with dual phone owners. People are called for the short recruitment survey.

Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique log-in and are only able to complete it one time. KnowledgePanel members receive a per survey incentive in points, that can be redeemed for cash or prizes.

In the US and the UK, panelists who do not already have internet access are provided a tablet and internet connection at no cost to the panel member. In all other countries, those who are digitally excluded are able to register to the KnowledgePanel by telephone and are then interviewed for surveys via telephone.

For more information on this release, please contact:

Alex Bogdan
Research Director, Ipsos UK
Alex.Bogdan@ipsos.com

Chris Jackson
Senior Vice President, Ipsos US
Chris.Jackson@ipsos.com

Cristina Tudose
Head of Ipsos KnowledgePanel Europe
Cristina.Tudose@ipsos.com

Weighting procedures

For each country, the data were weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection. Additionally, calibration weights were applied as follows:

Croatia

Gender by Age (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Region and urbanicity (based on 2021 Population Census, Croatian Bureau of Statistics)
Education (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Employment status (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Voting intentions (based on Crobarometer, October 2023, Ipsos Croatia)

France

Gender by Age (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Region and urbanicity (based on 2020 Population Census, INSEE)
Education (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Employment and professional status (based on 2019 Population Census, INSEE)

Italy

Gender by Age (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Region (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Education (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Employment status (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Voting intention (based on "Polimetro", Ipsos' Political Weekly Observatory)

Poland

Gender by Age (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Region (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Education (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Employment status (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Voting intentions (based on average results of Ipsos Poland telephone surveys)

Sweden

Gender by Age (based on 2023 population statistics, Eurostat)
Region and urbanicity (based on population statistics, Statistics Sweden)
Education (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Employment status (based on 2022 Labour Force Survey, Eurostat)
Past voting behaviour (based on 2022 Riksdag election outcome)

UK

Gender by Age (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates)
Region (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates)
Education (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates and the ONS Annual Population Survey)
Ethnicity (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates and the ONS Annual Population Survey)
Index of Multiple Deprivation (quintiles) (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates and the ONS Annual Population Survey)
Number of adults in the household (based on ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates and the ONS Annual Population Survey)

US

Gender by Age (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Education (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Census Region (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Metropolitan status (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Household Income (based on 2023 Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau)
Party ID (based on ABC News/Washington Post telephone polls)

ABOUT IPSOS

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Our research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

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GAME CHANGERS

In our world of rapid change, the need of reliable information to make confident decisions has never been greater.

At Ipsos we believe our clients need more than a data supplier, they need a partner who can produce accurate and relevant information and turn it into actionable truth.

This is why our passionately curious experts not only provide the most precise measurement, but shape it to provide True Understanding of Society, Markets and People.

To do this we use the best of science, technology and know-how and apply the principles of security, simplicity, speed and substance to everything we do.

So that our clients can act faster, smarter and bolder. Ultimately, success comes down to a simple truth:
You act better when you are sure.

“Game Changers” – our tagline – summarises our ambition to help our clients to navigate more easily our deeply changing world.

THANK

YOU

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