



This publication was commissioned by Collegium Civitas as part of the PASSION project, an international academic partnership for sustainable development and social innovation.

# *Each of us takes small steps\**

About pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour

\* This and all other quotes in the publication come from the Kantar Public report for Collegium Civitas, entitled 'PEB Qualitative Research' (November 2021) and developed as part of the PASSION project.



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# Introduction

**We try to care for the natural environment.** We segregate rubbish, cycle rather than using the car, limit meat consumption and buy organic food. How common are these behaviours? What prompts us to do these things? When and why do we find it difficult? What role do our values and environmental knowledge play?

**We know more and more about the state of the environment.** From where do we get this knowledge? What are our sources of information? About what problems are we best informed?

**We want to improve the condition of the environment.** To what extent do we feel a personal responsibility here? What actions do we take? How do we evaluate the involvement of authorities, organisations and institutions? Do we try to influence them?

We asked these questions when conducting the research in the summer of 2020 in five countries: Greece, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In each of them, we examined a group of 500 people aged 18–45 using the computer-assisted web interview (CAWI) method.

Additionally, in the autumn of 2021, we conducted qualitative research in Poland (focus group interviews in eight groups) to better understand what influences pro-environmental behaviour and its perception.

All quotes in our publication come from the report entitled 'PEB Qualitative Research' prepared by Kantar Public.





## 2 Our relationship with the environment

*Humanity has made itself at home as if it were the master of the whole world.*





## The environment is...



When I go in the morning to the lake at Kashubia, I see the house, birds, nature and fewer cars. Fauna and flora – man has not had time to stick his hands in yet.



For me, there is such beauty in this world, what I have outside my window, where I trample, the world around me. My surroundings, neighbours, friends, where I was born and raised, where I know the forests and the river.



We are part of and an element in everything that surrounds us. Forest, water, soil, air, flora and fauna, whatever is not man-made. Everything that was created by nature, not by man.

### The qualitative research in Poland identified three different definitions of the natural environment:

- an attractive holiday postcard,
- the immediate world in which interpersonal relations develop,
- life-support systems.

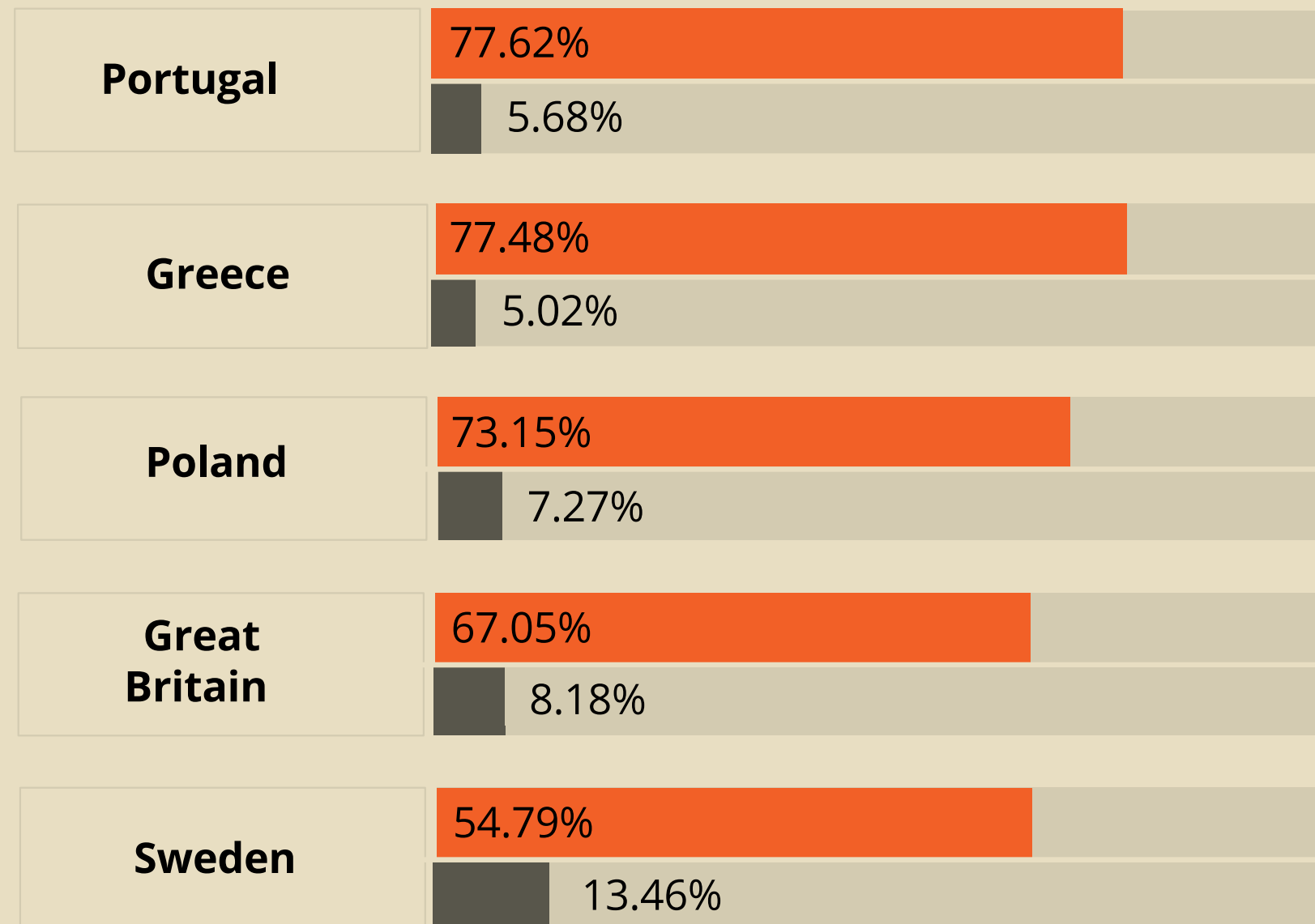
The 'postcard' definition is dominant. The natural environment is perceived as a world of intact nature, untouched by human activity, ideal and detached from everyday life. We are not an integral part of nature, but 'tourists' who appreciate nature occasionally ('on holidays').



## The natural environment is degraded

Respondents participating in the quantitative research in five countries were asked how far they agreed with the following statements:

If nothing changes, we will soon experience a major ecological disaster.



■ I agree and strongly agree  
■ I disagree and strongly disagree

The vast majority of respondents are strongly convinced of the very bad condition of the natural environment ('it is degraded') and the destructive impact of human activity on the environment ('too much exploitation').

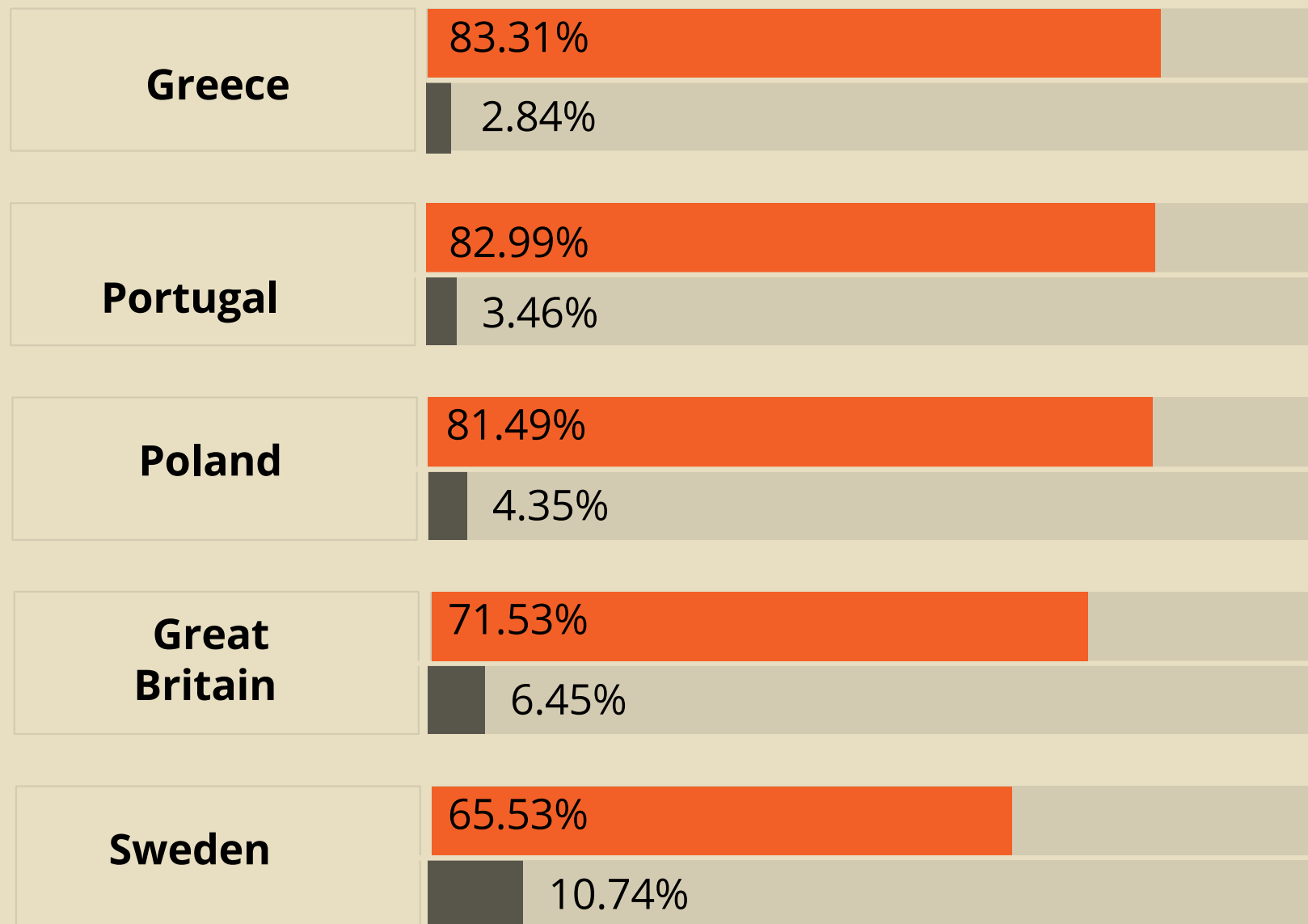
These opinions are very similar in all five countries - interestingly, in the surveyed sample, respondents from Poland are highly aware of the problems related to climate change.





## The natural environment is degraded

People exploit the environment too much.



■ I agree and strongly agree  
■ I disagree and strongly disagree



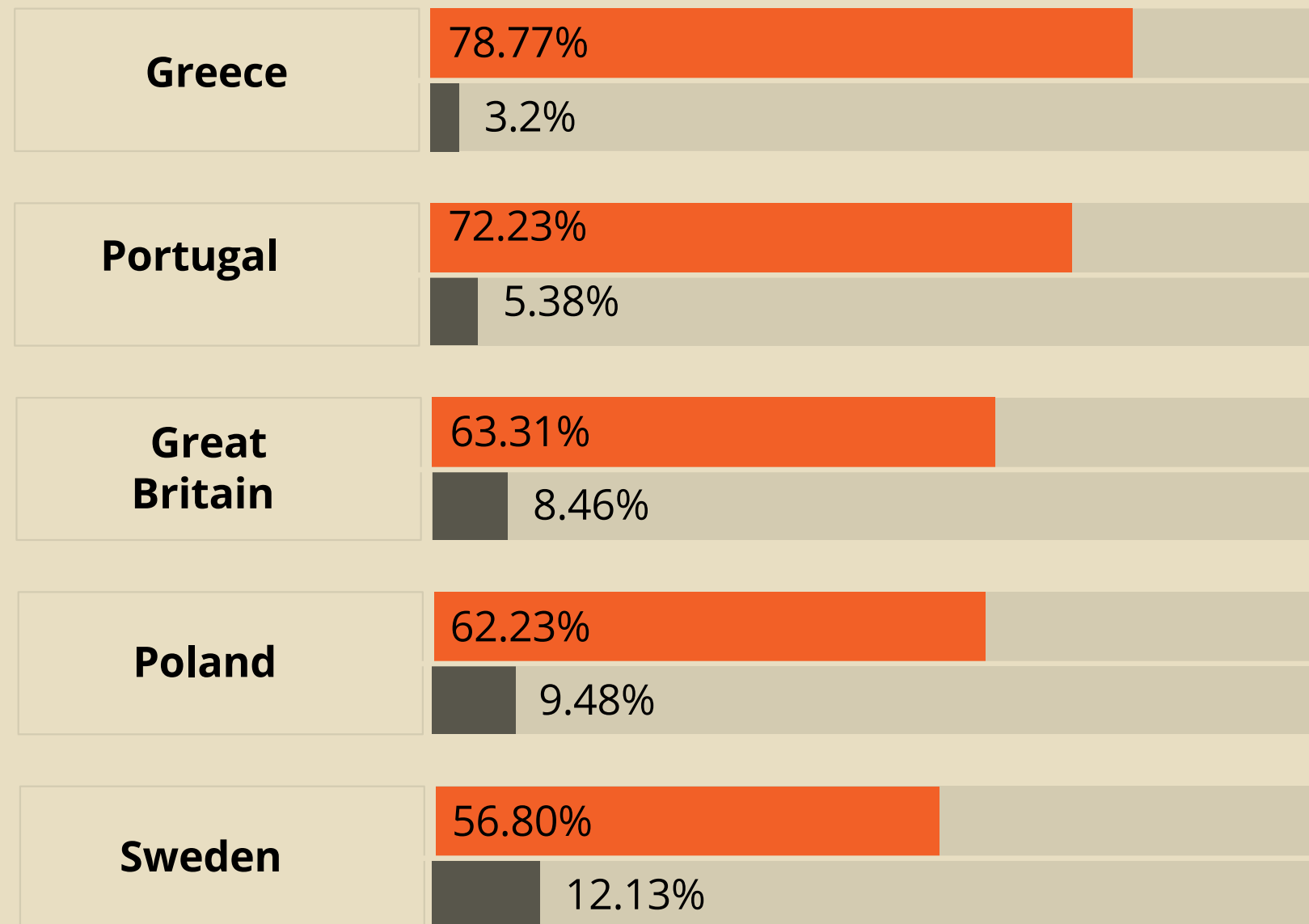
Too much exhaust gas and emissions, we burn garbage; there are many factories emitting too much CO2, no waste segregation, too much consumerism; we buy too much (...).



## My relationship with the environment

Respondents taking part in the quantitative research were asked how they treat the natural environment and their place in it.

I think of the natural world as a community to which I belong.



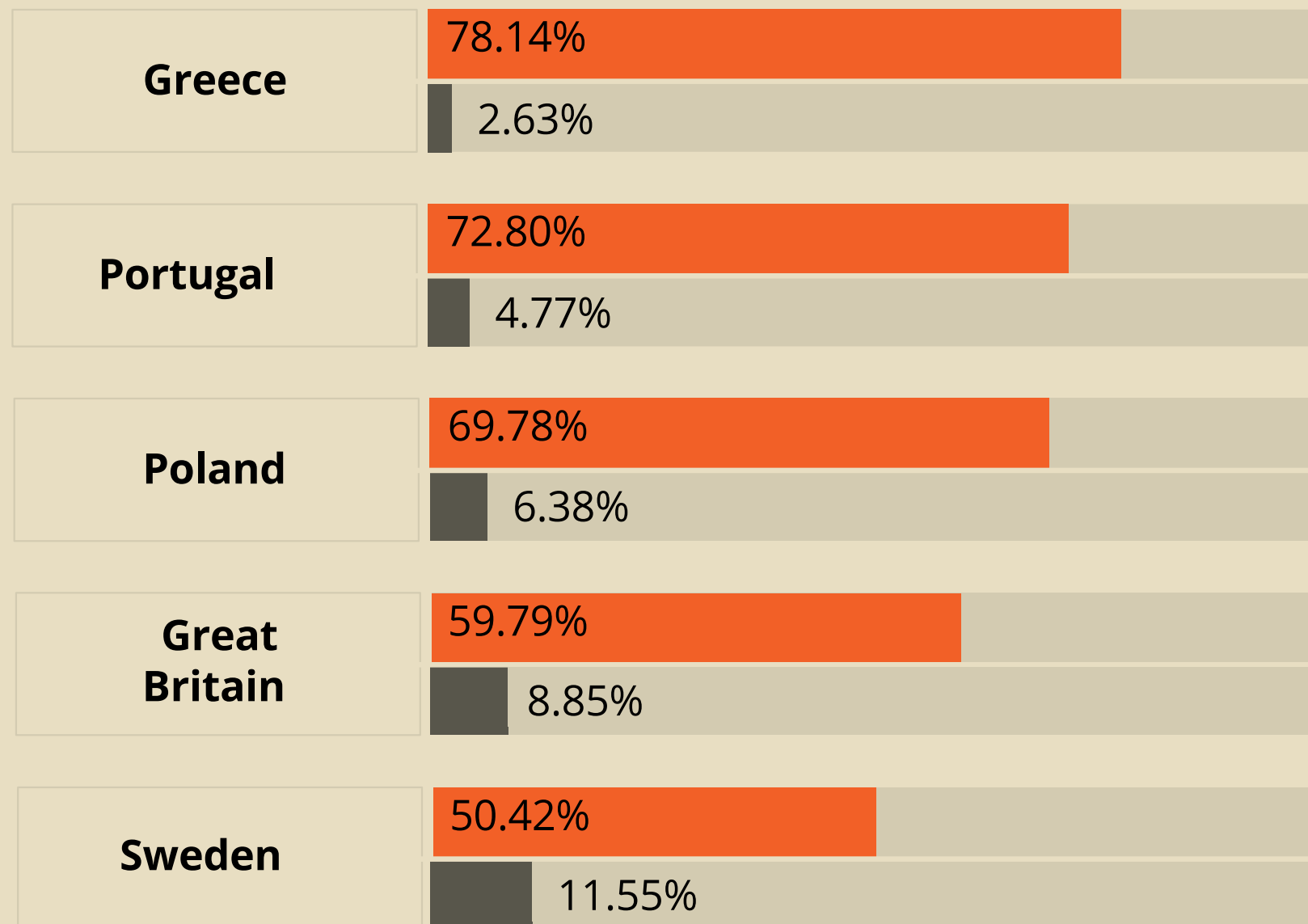
■ I agree and strongly agree  
■ I disagree and strongly disagree





## My relationship with the environment

I have a deep understanding of how my actions affect the natural world.



■ I agree and strongly agree  
■ I disagree and strongly disagree

The results show that respondents from Greece and Portugal express their relationship with nature and their understanding of their impact on it to the greatest extent – this is consistent with what they have said about their awareness of the human impact on the environment. These two countries have seen human civilisation’s impact on the environment for the longest period of time, and the greatest transformation of the natural environment.

On the other hand, people from Sweden and Great Britain feel less an integral part of the natural environment. These differences in results may also reflect differences in the educational level of respondents in different countries. In Greece, Poland and Portugal, 50–60% of respondents had received higher education, while in the United Kingdom and Sweden, 44% and 32% respectively.



### 3 What (and how) do we know about the natural environment?

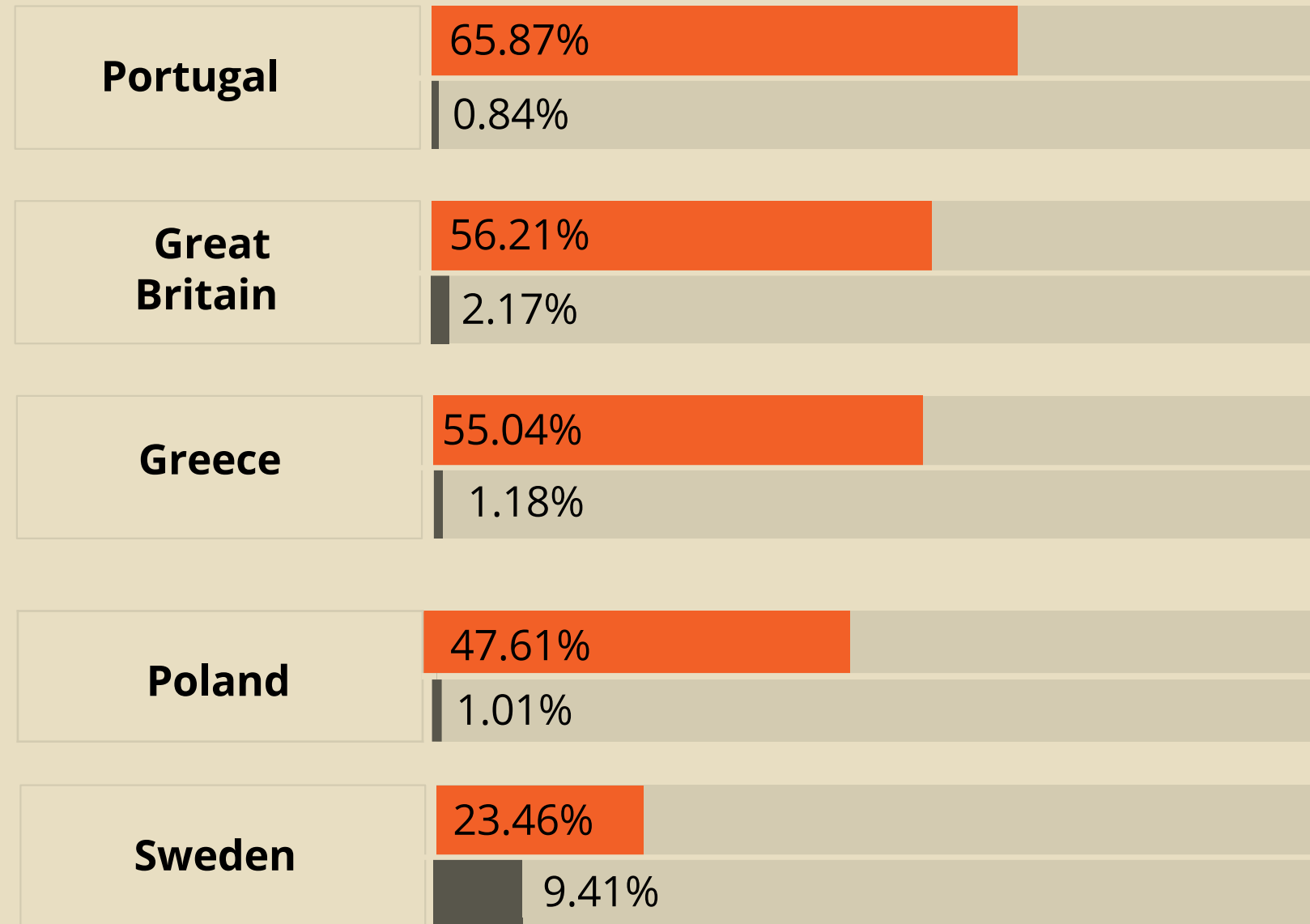
*We are informed in the media and on the internet. They define what is organic.*





## Information about the environment

How well are we informed?



Very well Not at all well

What are the sources of information?



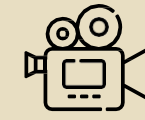
social media



radio and television



conversations with family and friends



documentaries and educational programmes on radio and television

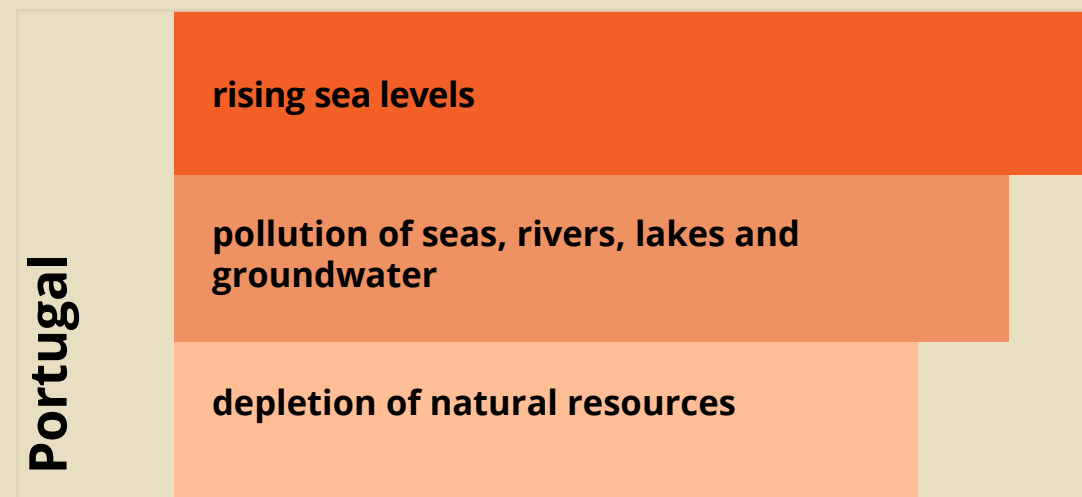
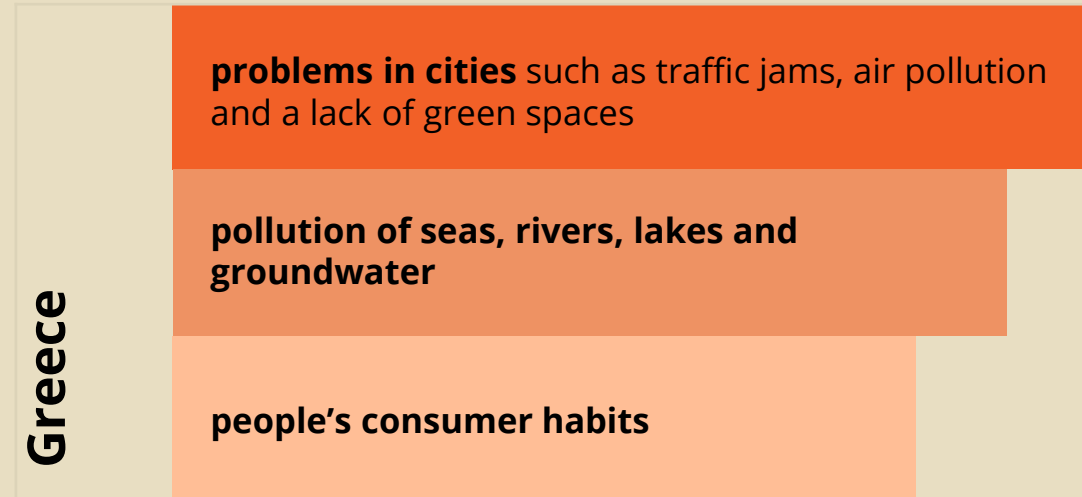
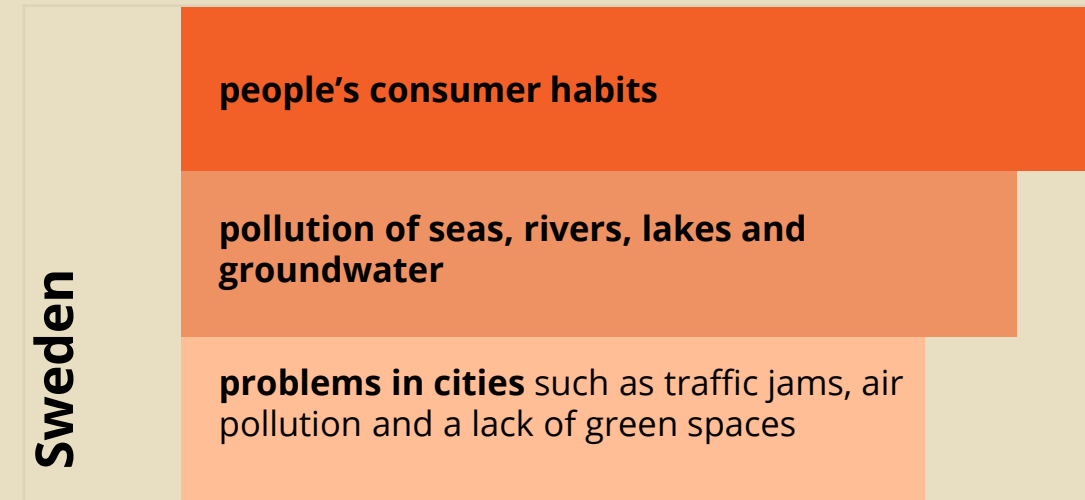
The fact of being informed is not synonymous with knowledge about the environment – it is a subjective feeling, which is often a function of education and professed values, as well as external conditions (the role assigned by the media). Acknowledging the need for information is the first step in increasing knowledge of a topic.

The most common sources of information on environmental issues are: social media, documentaries and educational programmes on radio and television. This is a tip for educators who can use appropriate communication channels to better reach their audience.



## What do we know?

About what problems are we best informed?



Respondents in almost all countries are concerned about urban problems. Urbanisation processes are progressing all over the world. It is estimated that by 2050 the number of urban residents will increase by approximately 68% (the highest increase in richer countries). The effects of urban development include reduced green areas and increased air pollution and amounts of waste.



**4** **The environment  
and our attitudes,  
behaviours and dilemmas**

*Individual action translates  
into collective action.*





## Our daily choices

**We selected sixteen pro-environmental behaviours and habits.**

We asked about them in the research. When asked how often they had behaved in a given way in the last month, respondents could answer: never, sometimes, moderately often, often or always.

### Consumption

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Buying locally produced food



Buying organic food



Choosing a vegetarian product instead of a meat product



Saving leftover food for later



Buying food in the right quantities so that nothing is wasted

### Conserving resources

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Turning off the water tap while brushing teeth



Taking a shower instead of a bath



Turning off the heater/air conditioning when leaving the room



Turning off the light when no one is in the room

### Transport

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Going on foot, by bike or public transport instead of driving



Fuel-saving driving styles

### Waste

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Segregating waste and recycling



Recycling electronic devices

### Packaging

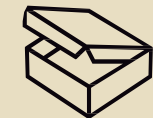
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Reusing empty bottles, jars, plastic bags, cardboard boxes and paper



Taking one's own shopping bag



Buying products with as little packaging as possible



## Our daily choices

### Five most frequently declared pro-environmental behaviours\*

Turning off the water tap while brushing teeth

Taking one's own shopping bag

Turning off the light when no one is in the room

Segregating waste and recycling

Taking a shower instead of a bath

### Five least frequently declared pro-environmental behaviours\*

Choosing a vegetarian product instead of a meat product

Buying organic food

Buying locally produced food

Buying products with as little packaging as possible

Recycling electronic devices

Surprisingly, despite the large differences between countries, the list of the most and least declared behaviours is very similar.

It is known that changing habits is very difficult and so it is particularly interesting what we do not do. It turns out that the most difficult thing for respondents is to change consumption habits in terms of eating (giving up meat), buying organic products (are they too expensive?) and local products (are they unavailable?). This requires further exploration and can certainly give us clues for educational purposes.

\* Cumulative data from all five surveyed countries



**5** **What are we ready  
to do to protect  
the environment?**

*You can be eco but not at your  
own expense.*





## Orientations

**We distinguish between several value-related orientations in the context of the environment, including but not limited to:**

1. Egoistic values, when we analyse pro-environmental behaviour in terms of our own personal costs and benefits.
2. Altruistic values, when we analyse pro-environmental behaviour in relation to the costs and benefits for other people, including future generations.
3. Biospheric values, when we focus on the well-being of all living creatures, and the following issues are important to us (the scale by Stern et al., 1995):
  - environmental protection,
  - respect for nature,
  - a sense of connection with nature.

Our research confirms that people with a biospheric orientation are more prone to pro-environmental behaviour than those for whom their own benefits are more important.





## When do we show pro-environmental attitudes?

”



If someone told me to pay extra for this – this is the limit for me.

”



The problem occurs when caring for the environment requires a lot of our time, if we devote our time and get nothing out of it. If it disturbs our daily routine.

”



I will start by saving water or not leaving the lights on, I will try to go shopping with a shopping list (to avoid buying unnecessary things) – but giving up the car is too much for me.

Respondents participating in focus group interviews indicated that they tried not to harm nature in their surroundings, but they also had habits that were difficult for them to give up. It is positive that participants from Poland have started thinking about dilemmas related to environmental protection, they also talk about ‘good’ habits, such as: waste segregation, world clean-up campaigns, using their own shopping bags and cycling. These behaviours are supposed to compensate for the environmental damage caused by bad habits, which the respondents are unable to eliminate.



## When do we act pro-environmentally?



Our qualitative research in Poland shows that we most willingly show pro-environmental attitudes when:

- they are very easy to implement, for example, battery recycling,
- there is an additional benefit behind them, for example, saving money,
- it is possible to compensate for the loss, for example: admittedly, I do not fly abroad, but Poland is also a beautiful country.

**We know what would be right for the environment, but we do not take pro-environmental actions because they require more of our effort, time or money.**





6 **Every day  
pro-environmental  
activism in Poland**

*We have to change a lot as humanity.*





# My impact on the state of the environment 1/2

Men

It is very likely that many people will actually change their environmental behaviour



If I behaved in a more environmentally friendly way, it would be good for the environment



I could be more environmentally friendly than I am now



Women

It is very likely that many people will actually change their environmental behaviour



If I behaved in a more environmentally friendly way, it would be good for the environment



I could be more environmentally friendly than I am now



\* results for Poland





## My impact on the state of the environment 2/2

To what extent do you feel personally responsible for changing your behaviour that negatively affects the environment?

Men

1.9% 4.7%

41.2%

16.3%

Women

0.8% 2.8%

39.2%

27.7%

I don't feel responsible at all

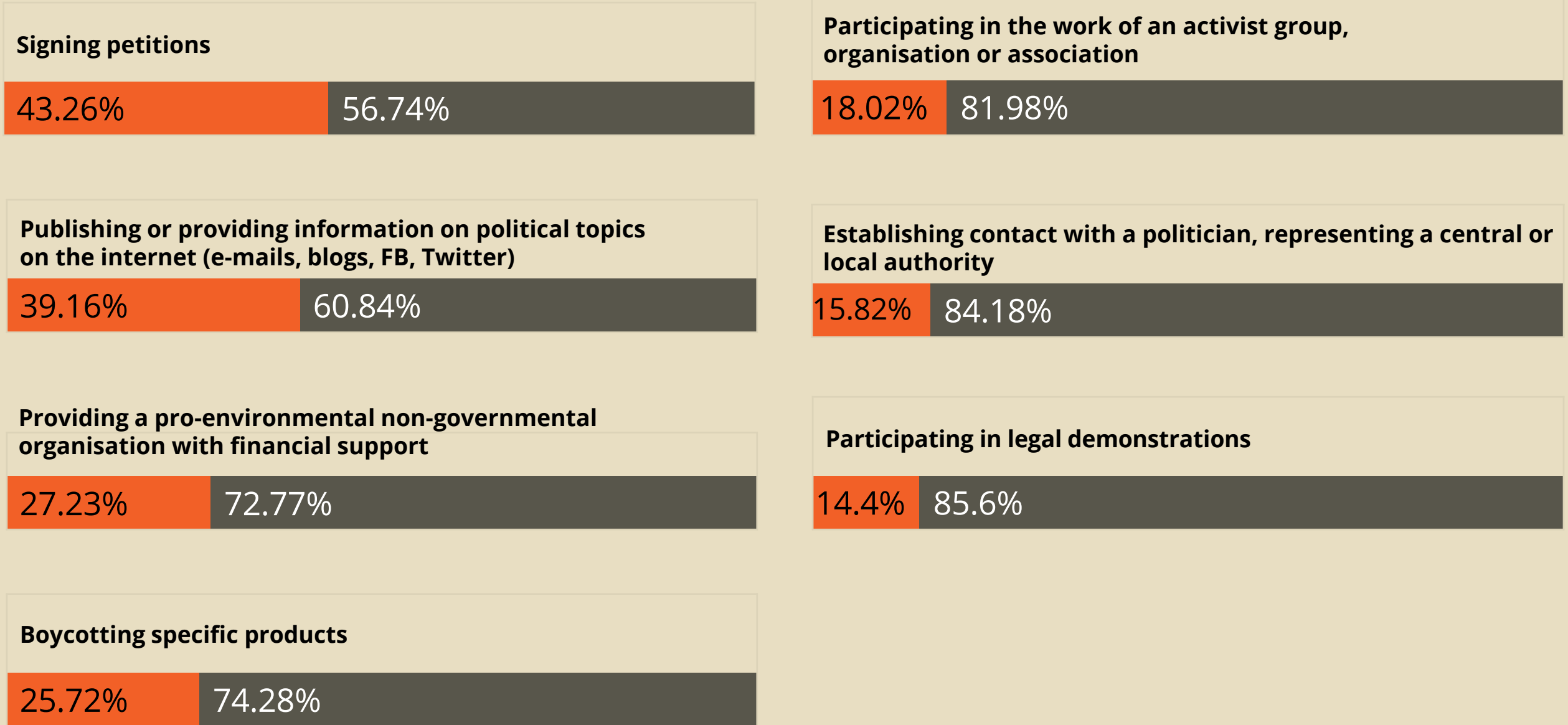
I feel very responsible

\*results for Poland

We are aware that changes in our behaviour and habits are necessary to improve the state of the natural environment. The research confirms that women in particular feel personal responsibility and act in an environmentally friendly way (particularly in the private sphere). At the same time, we realise that each and every one of us should and can do more.



## My recent pro-environmental activities include...



■ yes ■ no \*results for Poland



When it comes to pro-environmental issues, each of us should and can do something more. What can we do? The research results for Poland show that we are passive and not much involved in public and civic matters: we do not act in organisations, associations or informal groups and do not support pro-ecological organisations. We do not put any pressure on politicians. This lack of civic agency in this age group (18–45 years) does not give grounds for optimism.



## Who does the most for the environment?

This is how respondents in Poland assessed the level of involvement of authorities, institutions and organisations in environmental protection issues:



We appreciate the activity of non-governmental organisations, EU institutions and local communities the most, and we evaluate the involvement of the authorities and business as low. Over 50% of respondents indicated that business and central authorities were not involved enough in protecting the environment. At the same time, we believe that legal regulations enforcing pro-environmental changes are of great importance – here, the role of those in power is crucial.

We believe that as individuals we influence only our immediate surroundings: by segregating rubbish, reducing water consumption, and reducing plastic use. We save ourselves by believing in the snowball effect: if everyone works, the situation will improve.



## 7 What can we do?





## What can we do?

We know that the natural environment is degraded. We are convinced that we are in danger of a global ecological catastrophe. We are aware that it is our fault. We understand that we are responsible for the future of the planet.



We receive more and more information and have easier access to knowledge about behaviours that are beneficial or unfavourable for the environment. At the same time, we only implement those that do not cost us too much energy, time or money. We are not ready to give up our own comfort. As one of the respondents said: 'you can be eco, but not at your own expense'.



Generally, people are not activists: we do little for the environment. We sign petitions, publish relevant content on the internet and give financial support to non-governmental organisations working to save the natural environment, but we do not put strong pressure on the authorities who could introduce important legal regulations.

### The following questions arise:

1. What influences our attitude towards the environment?  
The place where we live? Fashion? Values professed?
2. What can change our habits to be more pro-environment?
3. How to effectively educate about pro-environment behaviour?  
How to learn about the environment?
4. Is activism effective? Does it make sense?

We are discussing these questions and will work on them in our subsequent research and publications. To be continued.



## Sample of respondents

The research was carried out using the CAWI technique on a sample of people aged 18–45 years (N = 2,502) in Greece, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Great Britain. The sample reflected the population structure by gender, age and place of residence.

### Number of respondents:

- Greece: 500
- Poland: 500
- Portugal: 501
- Sweden: 501
- Great Britain: 500

### Age

	Greece	Poland	Portugal	Sweden	Great Britain
18–25	23%	21%	24%	29%	28%
26–35	37%	37%	37%	34%	34%
36–45	40%	42%	39%	37%	37%

### Gender

	Greece	Poland	Portugal	Sweden	Great Britain
men	51%	51%	49%	51%	50%
women	49%	49%	51%	49%	50%

### Educations

	Greece	Poland	Portugal	Sweden	Great Britain
primary	1%	1.8%	2.5%	7.2%	0.8%
secondary	20.3%	19.9%	25.9%	41.9%	29.3%
technical vocational	17.1%	16.1%	17.4%	15.7%	22.4%
higher <small>(Bachelor's / Master's Degree)</small>	58.5%	60.5%	51.6%	32.7%	44.3%
PhD and higher	3%	1.8%	2.6%	2.6%	3.2%

### Place of residence

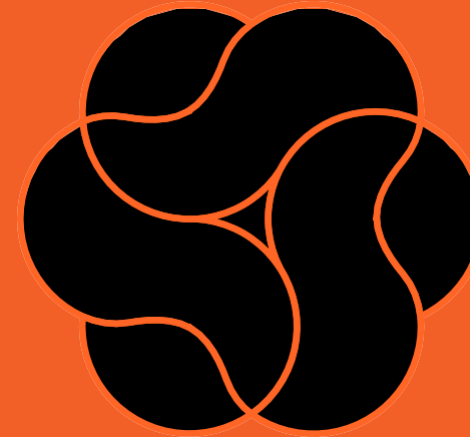
	Greece	Poland	Portugal	Sweden	Great Britain
farm or country house	0.8%	0.2%	3.5%	2.4%	1.6%
village	6.6%	17.0%	6.4%	11.3%	14.5%
small town	17.7%	28.7%	44.4%	28.7%	39.2%
suburb <small>of a large city</small>	12.3%	7.2%	16.8%	19.5%	20.4%
big city	62.7%	46.9%	29.0%	38.1%	24.3%

A summary of the quantitative research can be found on the project website: <https://passion.civitas.edu.pl/> Section 'ACTIVITIES' > 'SOCIAL SURVEY'



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# ABOUT THE PASSION PROJECT



## PASSION

Partnership for sustainable development and social innovation

Projekt finansowany przez Narodową Agencję Wymiany Akademickiej w ramach programu Akademiczne Partnerstwa Międzynarodowe na podstawie decyzji nr PPI/APM/2019/1/00096/DEC/01.





**The PASSION project is an international academic partnership for sustainable development (SD) and social innovation (SI), and its goals are:**

- exchange of knowledge and international academic experience in the field of education for SD and IS,
- international comparative research taking account of the needs of the X-Y-Z generations in the area of SD and IS,
- developing competency profiles of potential change leaders in the area of SD and IS,
- creating new and developing existing teaching methods and tools, taking account of research results.

## **ACTIVITIES**

**The activities of the team of academic teachers involved in the PASSION project cover three areas:**

- 1. Case-based teaching** that focuses on students and strengthens their ability to learn independently by using previously acquired problem-solving skills. Teaching is based on the analysis of real cases or students' daily life experiences.
- 2. Social survey** – an international group of specialists from various fields conducted comparative research on sustainable development and social innovation. The goal of the research carried out in five countries: Greece, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Great Britain, was to assess and compare the pro-ecological behaviour and innovativeness of the X-Y-Z generations in these countries.
- 3. A new specialisation programme, 'Leaders of Change'** – 'Leaders of Change – Sustainable Manager' is a new specialisation intended for first-cycle students in the field of management. Its goal is to educate future leaders in the areas of sustainable development and social innovation.



Katarzyna Iwińska – report editor and project coordinator  
Jacek Bieliński – development of analyses

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