

EMPOWERING MOLDOVANS:

Using the SCORE to understand the path to Constructive Citizenship in Moldova



About SeeD and SCORE

About SCORE Moldova 2022

The 2022 iteration of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index¹ in Moldova² was implemented in 2022 – 2023 by the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD)³ in partnership with USAID. The SCORE in Moldova was first implemented in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with SeeD. In 2022, the SCORE in Moldova is accompanied by a parallel study on the left bank of the Nistru/Dniester river, implemented by the United Nations in Moldova.

The aim of SCORE Moldova 2022 was to support fostering cohesion among different segments of Moldovan society, promoting unity, understanding perceptions and attitudes from across the country, particularly given Moldova's trajectory for European integration, and providing meaningful alternatives to divisive disinformation narratives.

Data for SCORE Moldova 2022 was collected by Magenta Consulting⁴ between 11 August and 29 November 2022, with a total representative national sample of 1,991 adult respondents in the Republic of Moldova⁵. Additional representative booster samples were collected in Balti municipality (N=110), UTA Gagauzia (N=116) and respondents aged 18 to 35 (N=119), bringing the total sample to 2,336. Data was weighted to ensure representativeness, where necessary.

The SCORE Index uses a mixed-methods participatory research approach, including multi-level stakeholder and expert consultations to design and calibrate context-specific indicators and develop pertinent conceptual models to answer the research objectives. Following data collection and analysis, results are shared and reviewed with key stakeholders, ensuring local ownership of results and the relevance of findings and recommendations.

Additional reports in this series⁶ include: Moldova at a Crossroads – a Report on the Geopolitical Orientations of the Citizens of Moldova; Narratives with Power – the Effect of Polarising Narratives on Moldova's Social Fabric; Building Peace Across the Nistru – Using the SCORE to Identify Entry Points for Reintegration of the Left Bank.

About SeeD

SeeD works with international development organisations, governments and civil society to design and implement people-centred evidence-based strategies for promoting peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies.

The SCORE Index was developed in Cyprus through the joint efforts of SeeD and UNDP's Action for Cooperation and Trust programme (UNDP-ACT), with USAID funding. SCORE examines and quantifies two main components of resilient peace: reconciliation and social cohesion.

This report was prepared by Marian Machlouzarides and Christoforos Pissarides at SeeD.

¹ For more information about the SCORE methodology, visit app.scoreforpeace.org

² For more on SCORE Moldova and to see more of the results, visit app.scoreforpeace.org/en/moldova/datasets

³ For more about SeeD, see seedsofpeace.eu

⁴ See consulting.md

⁵ ±2.2% error margin at a 95% confidence interval. Multistage randomisation was applied, taking into account groups of districts, households and respondents.

⁶ Available at app.scoreforpeace.org/en/publications

Executive Summary

Civic activism and its role in cultivating social capital and, subsequently, sustainable economic development, and its correlation with multiple indices such as the human development index and social cohesion index, is well established in the literature globally⁷. The right to be an active citizen is seen as essential to shape society, for good governance and accountability of institutions and for cohesive and democratic societies⁸, and an active citizenry is a prerequisite for constructive and inclusive dialogue about the future of a country.

The present brief investigates Moldovan citizens' civic tendencies through the lens of their reported engagement in a range of civic and political activities. The brief then outlines the characteristics of people based on their level of engagement, informing on both the positive and negative qualities that highly Engaged, Unenthusiastic, and completely Disengaged people display. The brief also looks at the extent to which people are willing to use more violent means of civic change, as opposed to completely avoiding any type of violence. It also addresses systemic aspects, such as the representation and agency that people feel, and civic attitudes which enable an understanding of what activities people are likely to become involved in and where their priorities lie.

These findings can inform the work of international and local actors seeking to increase Moldovan citizens' participation and constructive civic engagement. It can help to identify bridging factors which motivate diverse segments of the citizenry to come together and reach their common goals, and provide practical and relevant entry points for designing civic initiatives.

Key Findings

Between 60-80% of those surveyed never take part in civic initiatives, with 54% never taking part in any activities. Nevertheless, a slight majority of people (54%) say that they are willing to employ peaceful means of civic change in order to improve their society or community, indicating a modest level of motivation for positive social change.

Civic Engagement remained steady and low in 2022 compared to 2017.

People who are politically engaged have both strengths and weaknesses. Those with very high levels of engagement do not currently believe in a unified process for the future of Transnistria region and feel lukewarm about Gagauzia as part of Moldova.

If not properly harnessed, high political engagement can lead to or exclusion of other groups.

Certain civic activities have the potential to motivate people to become more engaged, namely, helping vulnerable people or taking care of the environment. People have high levels of *Prosocial Civic Values*, indicating their readiness to help those in need and bring about positive social change.

Willingness to take part in civic activities is important both for increasing *Civic Engagement* and for driving *Openness* between groups, as shown in other reports in this series.

⁷ World Bank. "Citizen engagement". 2014. Available at: www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/citizen-engagement; Hoskins, B., Jesinghaus, J., Mascherini, M., Munda, G., Nardo, M., Saisana, M., van Nijlen, D., Vidoni, D. and Villalba, E. "Measuring active citizenship in Europe". 2006. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-008-9271-2>; Tolbert, C.M., Lyson, T.A. and Irwin, M.D. "Local capitalism, civic engagement, and socioeconomic Well-Being". 1998. *Social Forces*, Vol. 77 No. 2, pp. 401-427, doi: 10.1093/sf/77.2.401; Malik, K. and Wagle, S. "Civic engagement and development: introducing the issues". 2002. In Fukunda-Parr, S., Lopes, C. and Malik, K. (Eds), *Capacity for Development: New Solutions to Old Problems*, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London and Sterling, Virginia, pp. 85-101.

⁸ Guest, A., Dagli, I. and Machlouzarides, M. "Did we get civic activism wrong? Understanding the waltz between constructive and aggressive civic tendencies in Bosnia-Herzegovina". 2022. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 378-393. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-01-2022-0674>

Citizens' *Sense of Representation* has increased since 2017, for all ages, women and men, in the Capital, Central and Southern regions.

There has been an overall decrease in people's *Readiness for Political Violence* since 2017.

Certain groups perceive low levels of representation by authorities, and this serves to reduce their engagement in civic life, as well as their openness towards other groups.

Recommendations

Civic initiatives should include education and awareness-building components, that aim to strengthen positive civic culture and promote inclusive and non-violent methods of civic participation. These should focus on illustrating the importance and potential impact of civic engagement, providing viable platforms for peaceful social change.

All programmes working to strengthen civic participation should include elements which strengthen coexistence between different groups in Moldovan society, and programmes should be seen as platforms for bringing diverse groups together, and for fostering dialogue between them.

Civic participation initiatives designed around helping vulnerable groups or environmental conservation are expected to gain widespread traction across society, and should be considered important entry points for building social cohesion on a wider scale.

Interventions which incorporate cultural heritage are also likely to motivate people to participate in civic life, as are interventions which focus on promoting human rights. Such initiatives could be implemented on a smaller scale, alongside specific organisations or groups working on these topics.

Local and central authorities should invest in outreach towards citizens, with the aim of improving the representation that people feel, ultimately serving to drive both civic engagement and openness between different groups in society. Authorities should address the concerns of groups who perceive low levels of representation, and engage them in dialogue and decision-making processes, to increase their commitment to civic life in Moldova.

Civic participation interventions should also aim to bridge between government, civil society and even educational or academic institutions, encouraging inclusive, multi-stakeholder and participatory decision-making processes. A successful example of such an intervention is Cyprus Pusula, a digital civic engagement platform that connects people with each other, across communities, and with public decision makers, aiming to increase transparency and trust⁹.

⁹ See www.cypruspusula.org. The Pusula/Ππούσουλας Platform was developed through funding from the European Union and a technical collaboration between CONSUL; the Mind, Behavior, and Development Unit (eMBeD) of the World Bank; and the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD).

Identifying Patterns of Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement was measured in the SCORE Moldova by asking respondents how frequently they participate in a range of activities in their everyday life. The activities are largely relevant to political forms of engagement, as can be seen by the question items in Figure 1. The present report also addresses other informal forms of community cohesion and activism within communities and within social networks, measured through indicators such as *Prosocial Civic Values*, as seen in subsequent sections.

The majority of respondents in the nationally representative survey do not participate in any civic activities in their everyday life. Of the activities respondents were asked about, the most popular is attending meetings or events organised by local or rayon authorities, in which 13% of respondents participate less than once a year, and 25% participate at least once or twice a year (Figure 1).

Levels of *Civic Engagement* did not change significantly between 2017 and 2022 in the nationally representative sample (Figure 2), or in any demographic groups (disaggregation not shown). In terms of demographic differences in 2022, *Civic Engagement* is slightly higher in employed citizens than unemployed citizens¹⁰, in persons without disabilities compared to persons with disabilities¹¹.

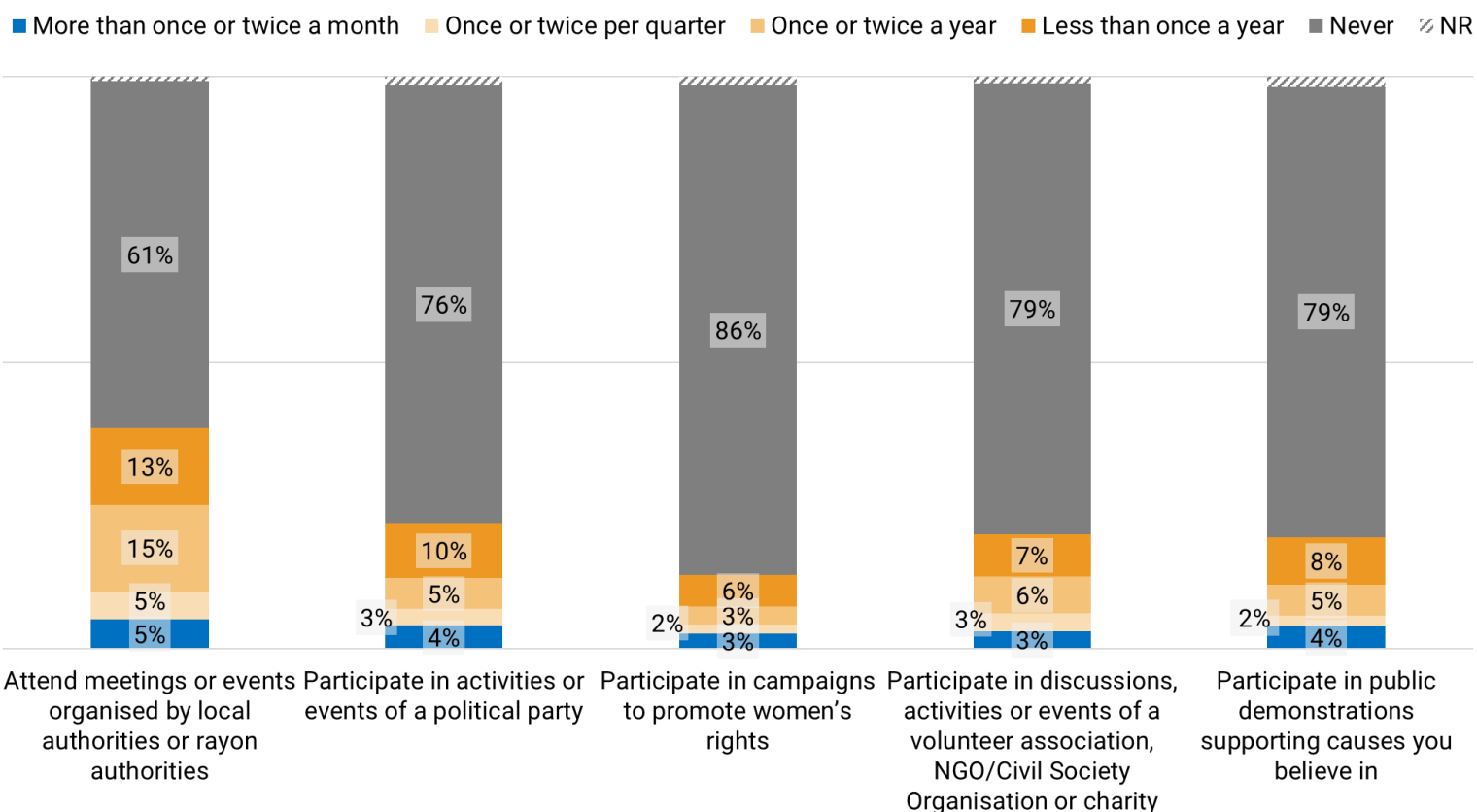


Figure 1: Frequencies of Civic Engagement in the nationally representative sample (N=1991)

¹⁰ ANOVA, $F = 22$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen's D Effect Size 0.2. Mean score from 0 to 10 for employed 1.0, for unemployed 0.7.

¹¹ ANOVA, $F = 5$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's D Effect Size 0.2. Mean score for persons without disabilities 0.8, persons with disabilities 1.1.

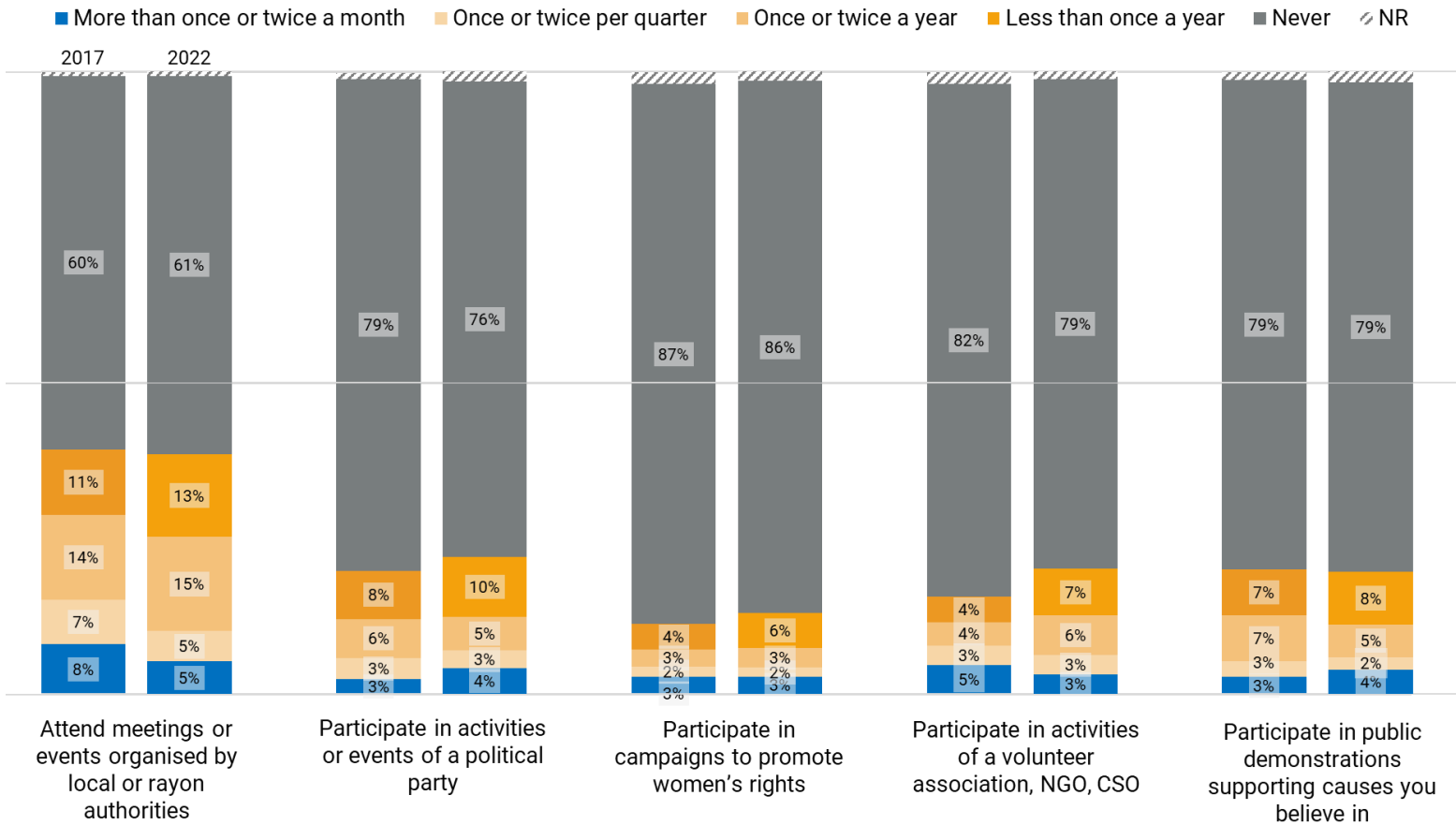


Figure 2: Frequencies of Civic Engagement. National representative sample, N=1991 in 2022, N=1209 in 2017.

The level of *Civic Engagement* of Moldovan citizens is not unexpectedly low, compared to other countries in the region. Respondents in Moldova in 2022 were more likely to participate in the events of local authorities than respondents in Ukraine in 2021 (39% participate at least once, compared to 15%, respectively) as seen in Figure 3. Respondents in Moldova in 2022 (20%) were less likely to participate in the events of non-governmental organisations (NGO) or civil society organisations (CSO) than those in Ukraine in 2021 (27%) and in Bosnia Herzegovina in 2019 (25%, Figure 3). They were also less likely to participate in public demonstrations supporting causes they believe in, compared to those in Bosnia Herzegovina (20% in Moldova, 29% in Bosnia Herzegovina participate at least once). Respondents in Moldova 2022 were less likely to participate in a range of activities compared to those in Cyprus in 2017 (Figure 3).

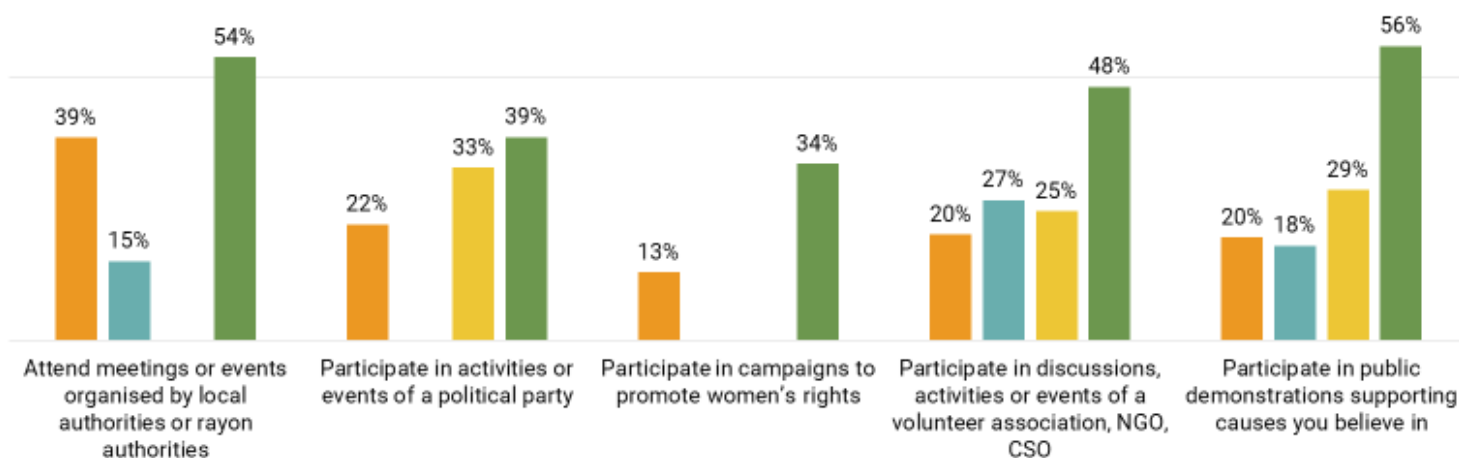


Figure 3: Frequencies of participating at least once in Civic Engagement items across countries previously surveyed. For Moldova 2022, percentages of responses shown are the total of the options “Nearly every day”, “Once or twice a week”, “Once or twice a month”, “Once or twice per quarter”, “Once or twice per year”, “Less than once a year”. For Ukraine and Bosnia Herzegovina, percentages shown are the total of response options “Sometimes”, “Often”, “Very often”. For Cyprus, percentages shown are the total of response options “Rarely”, “Sometimes”, “Frequently”, “Always”.

Profiles of Civic Engagement – What Characterises Constructive Citizens?

Respondents in the nationally representative sample were grouped based on their self-reported level of *Civic Engagement*. Respondents who reported that they never participate in any activities were assigned to the “Disengaged” group, equivalent to 54% of the sample. Respondents who take part in at least one activity every three months were assigned to the “Unenthusiastic” group, equivalent to 35% of the sample. Finally, respondents who take part in at least one activity per month were assigned to the “Engaged” group, representing 11% of the sample. The proportion of these three groups largely follows the situation in most societies, where a small minority is heavily active, a wider plurality participates and follows, but a large block of the population is not involved in the civic or political working of society¹².

The profiles of these groups, shown in Figure 4, indicate that all groups have a combination of characteristics, some of which are positive and some negative. People who are strongly civically engaged have certain characteristics which should be focussed on to change for the better, while those who are apathetic and disengaged also tend to have some positive characteristics which can be built on.

The minority of highly Engaged people tend to be more educated, and are more likely to have frequent interactions with people from different groups in Moldova (e.g., people speaking different languages, different political orientations). These people are trusting of the central government, and feel represented by authorities. They are eager about using all types of media to follow news and current events, and they are willing to participate in a range of civic initiatives across topics (see also Figure 10). Unfortunately, highly Engaged people also display some negative tendencies, such as their lower levels of support for human rights compared to people who are less engaged, and their higher readiness to condone political violence. They feel more threat from the Transnistrian region, and are less supportive of increased dialogue and of a

¹² Guest, A., Dagli, I. and Machlouzarides, M. "Did we get civic activism wrong? Understanding the waltz between constructive and aggressive civic tendencies in Bosnia–Herzegovina". 2022. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 378-393. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-01-2022-0674>

peace process. They are also more likely to believe that Moldova and Gagauzia are better off separate compared to other people. Highly Engaged people are more common in the South.

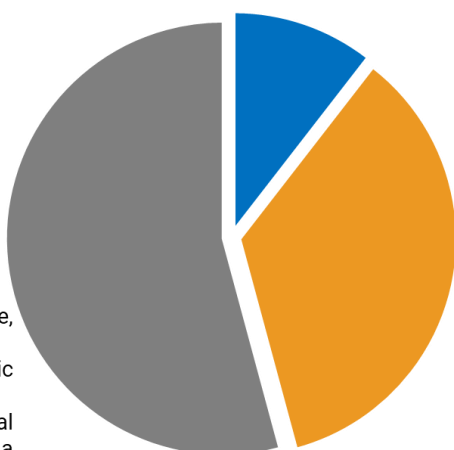
Unenthusiastic people are also trusting of the central government and feel represented by authorities. This group is specifically more interested in taking part in activities about local products, compared to others. Unenthusiastic citizens are less tolerant of marginalised groups, and they have higher levels of *Collective Narcissism*, which describes the extent to which people feel that their group is more important than others. A large proportion of people in the North are in the Unenthusiastic group.

Disengaged people appear to be more closely aligned with Russia, supporting linguistic diversity (the extent to which one believes that linguistic differences enrich Moldovan national identity) and cultural unity (believing that despite linguistic differences, Moldova's people share a common culture). Unfortunately, this group has experienced the most negative impact due to the war in Ukraine, and has grievances about service disruption and the influx of refugees. Many respondents in Chisinau and the Centre are Disengaged.

What Characterises Constructive Citizens? Group Profiles of Civic Engagement

**54%
Disengaged** 
Never take part in any civic activities

- More common for pro-Russia people, those in the capital and centre
- More environmental and economic security
- Support linguistic diversity and cultural unity, prefer that Moldova becomes a bridge between the EU and Russia
- **Most negative impact due to war in Ukraine on financial and emotional wellbeing, more likely to report disruption of services and influx of refugees**



**35%
Unenthusiastic** 
Take part in at least one activity once per quarter

- More common in the North and for pro-EU people.
 - Trust in central government, feel represented
 - Willing to participate in civic initiatives
 - **Intolerant of marginalised groups**
 - **Slightly higher collective narcissism**
 - **Fewer economic opportunities**
- Increase their civic engagement through activities about local products*

**11%
Engaged** 

Take part in at least one activity once a month

- More educated
- Consume more media
- More likely to feel Romanian and have Romanian citizenship.
- More common in the South.
- More contact with all groups
- Trust in central government, feel represented
- Willing to participate in civic initiatives
- **Lower support for human rights**
- **Feel threatened by Transnistria region, less supportive of increased dialogue and peace process, more likely to believe that Moldova and Gagauzia are better off separate**
- **More tolerant of corruption, higher readiness for political violence**
- **Higher levels of substance abuse, more likely to have experienced domestic violence and physical assault**

Figure 4: Profiles of respondents based on their level of Civic Engagement. Characteristics of each group were determined using ANOVA, where $F > 20$ or Cohen's D effect size > 0.2 , $p < 0.05$, national representative sample ($N=1991$).

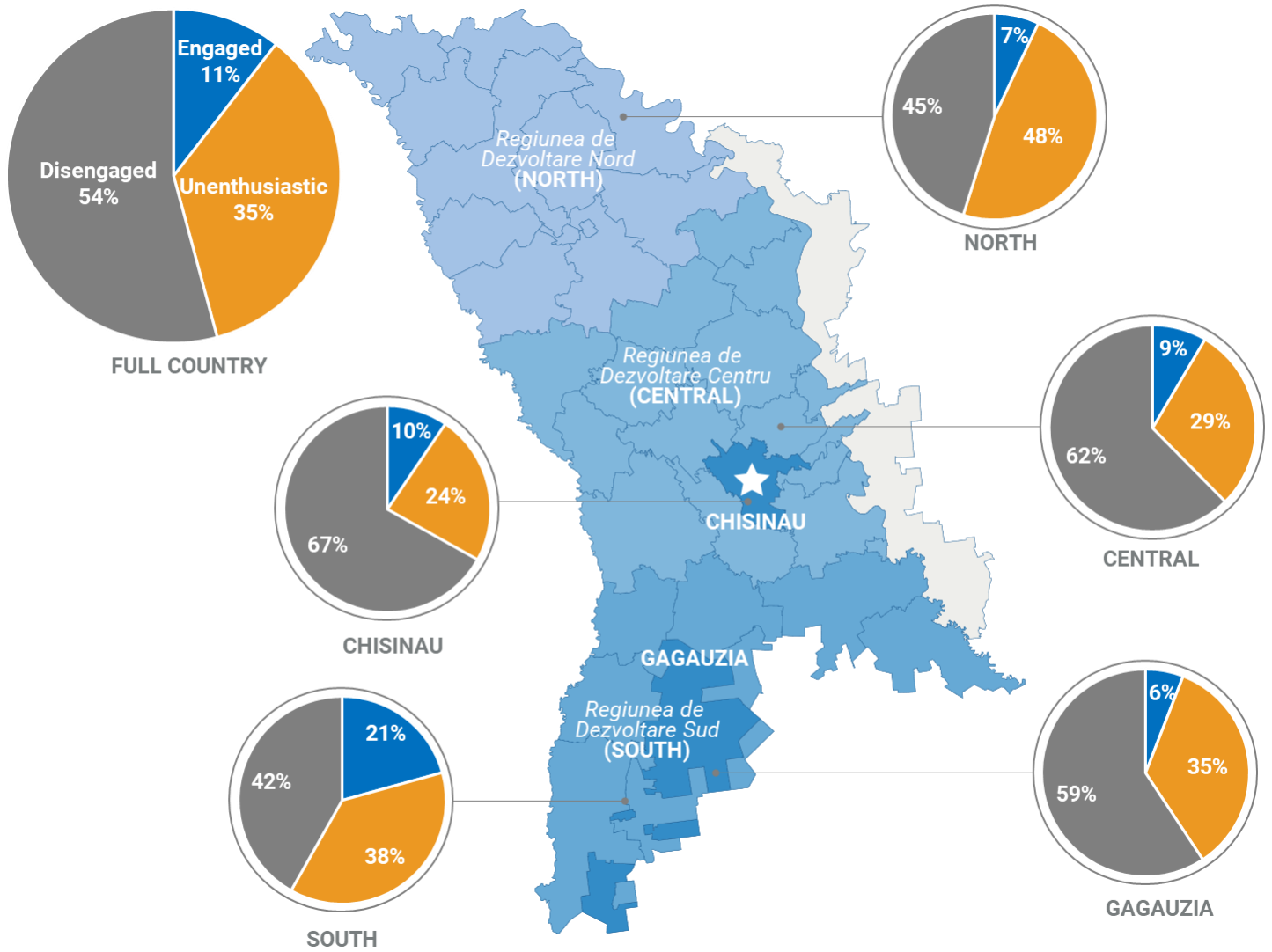


Figure 5: Regional disaggregation of Civic Engagement groups, comparison to full sample. Nationally representative sample (N=1991) for all regions, Gagauzia representative sample used for Gagauzia (N=191).

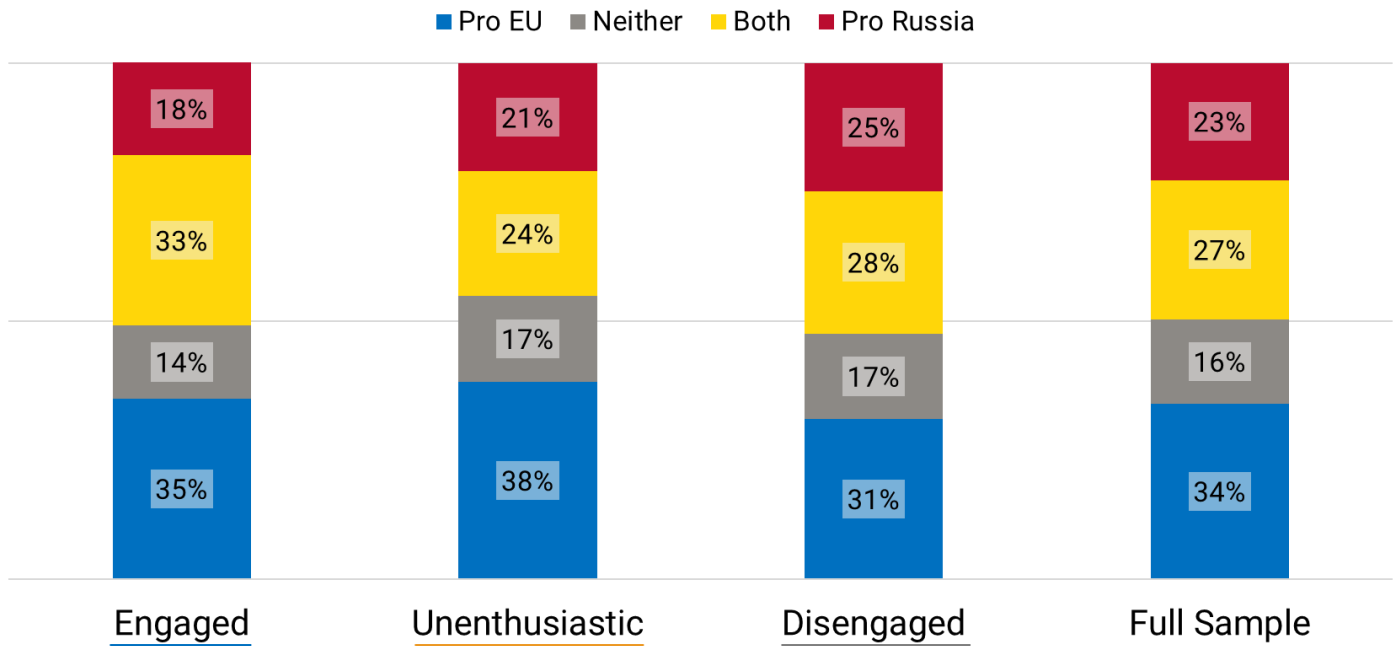


Figure 6: Percentage of each Civic Engagement group that falls into one of the four categories of geopolitical alignment. National representative sample, N=1991.

Readiness for Political Violence

A key difference between the Civic Engagement groups was the higher level of *Readiness for Political Violence* reported by people who are highly Engaged¹³. Levels of *Readiness for Political Violence* are low across the country, and have been decreasing compared to 2017 (Figure 7, Figure 8). Nevertheless, that the levels of *Readiness for Political Violence* are so high in people who are Engaged merits caution, in order to avoid outbursts of hostility among a small percentage of the citizenry.

¹³ Mean score of 2.9 out of 10 for Engaged people, 2.0 for the Unenthusiastic group and 1.4 for Disengaged people. Significant difference based on ANOVA, $F = 25$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen's D Effect Sizes 0.3 to 0.5. Remains significant when controlled for age.

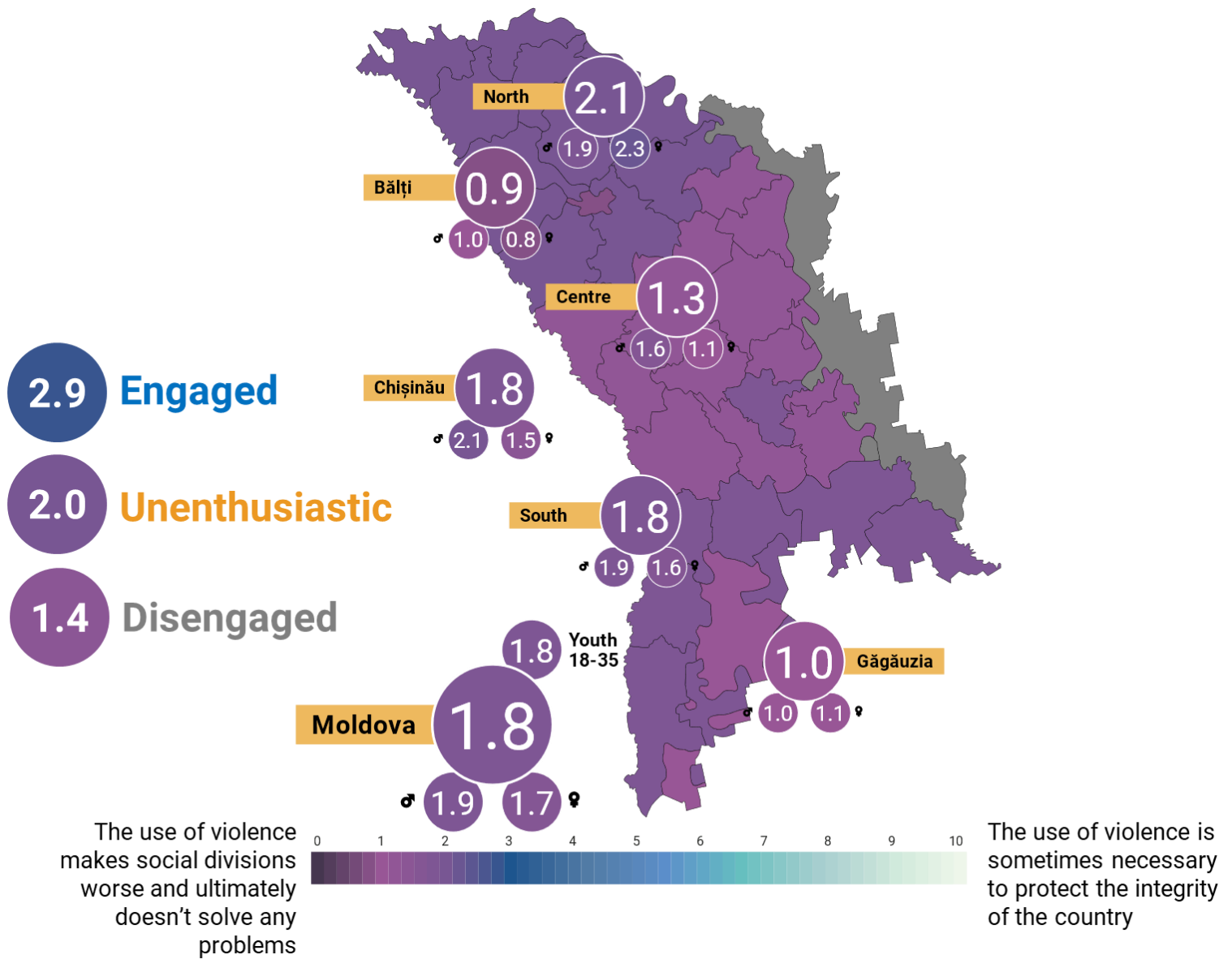


Figure 7: Mean scores of Readiness for Political Violence on a scale from 0 to 10.

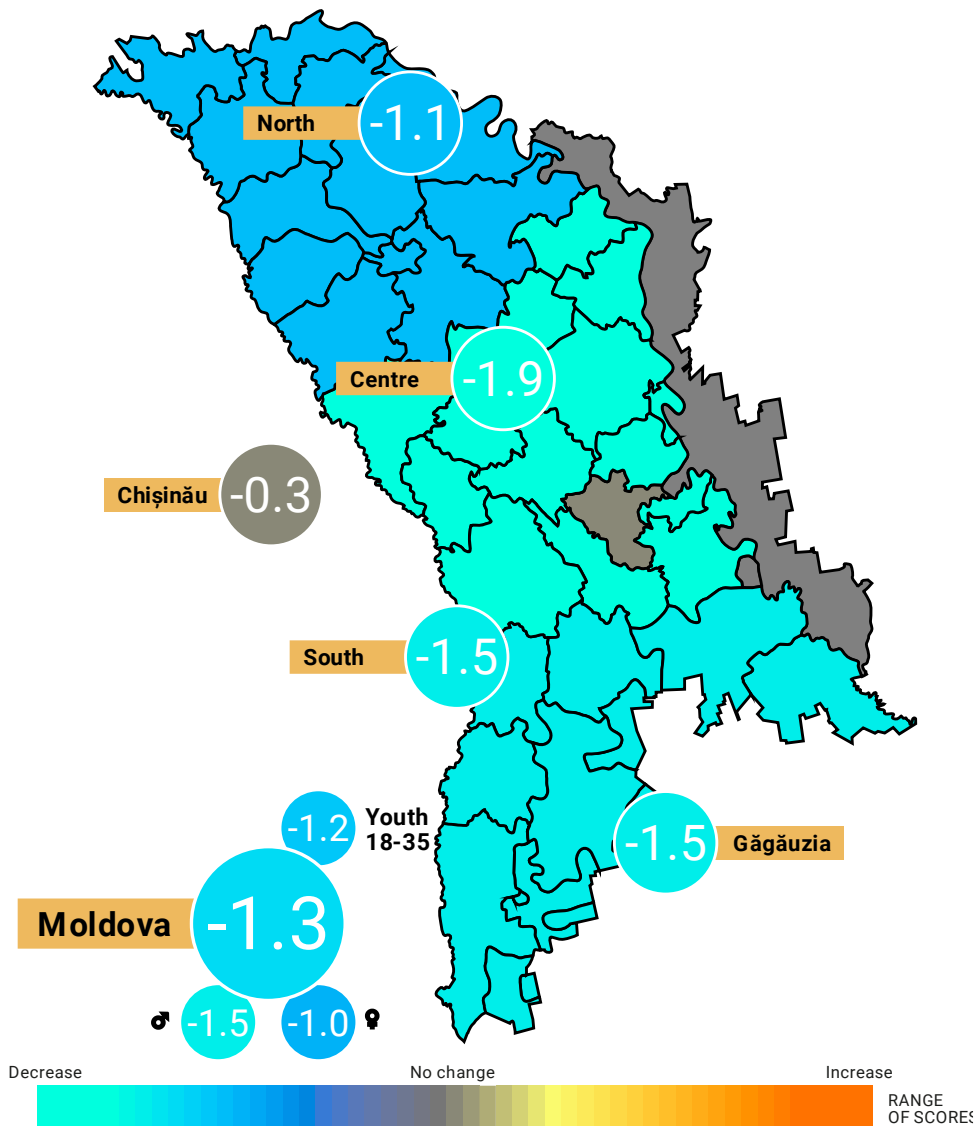


Figure 8: Change in mean score of Readiness for Political Violence from 2017 to 2022. Negative sign indicates that the score in 2022 is lower than 2017. Changes are significantly different in the full sample and all demographic subsamples except in Chisinau. $F > 40$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's D Effect Size > 0.3 .

In further understanding the factors which could trigger political violence, see the report, "Narratives with Power", to understand more about the relationship between media consumption, polarising narratives, and Readiness for Political Violence, available on app.scoreforpeace.org.

Citizenship Orientation

Respondents were also asked what they would be willing to do in order to change their community or society for the better. A small minority (6%) would use all means of change, including violence if necessary (Figure 9). The majority of respondents (54%) would use political and social means of action but definitely avoid any kind of violence, and a significant proportion (40%) say that they are not willing to do anything, they would rather remain focused on their own personal affairs.

Which of the following are you willing to do in order to change your community or society for better?

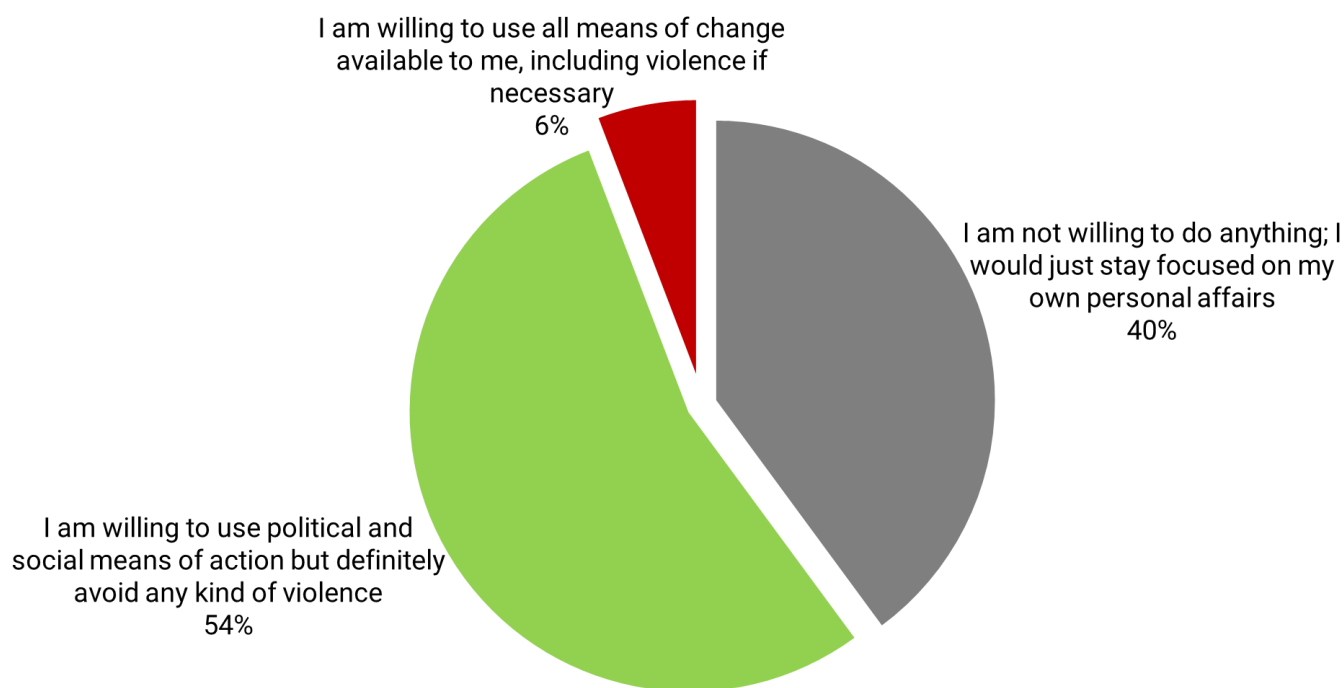


Figure 9: Frequency of responses to Citizenship Orientation. National representative sample (N=1991).

Willingness to Participate in Civic Activities

Across the board, independent of current patterns of engagement, the most popular activities are helping vulnerable people and protecting the environment. Young people slightly more interested in civic activities than those over the age of 35¹⁴. Activities which may urge currently unenthusiastic or disengaged people, in addition to the above, could centre around the promotion of human rights (Figure 10). Willingness to participate was a key driver of openness between groups, detailed further in the report "Strengthening the Bonds: Fostering Social Harmony in Moldova", available on app.scoreforpeace.org.

¹⁴ ANOVA F = 25, p<0.05, Cohen's D Effect Size between the groups 0.3. Mean for under 35 years old is 6.4, for those aged 36 and above is 5.6.

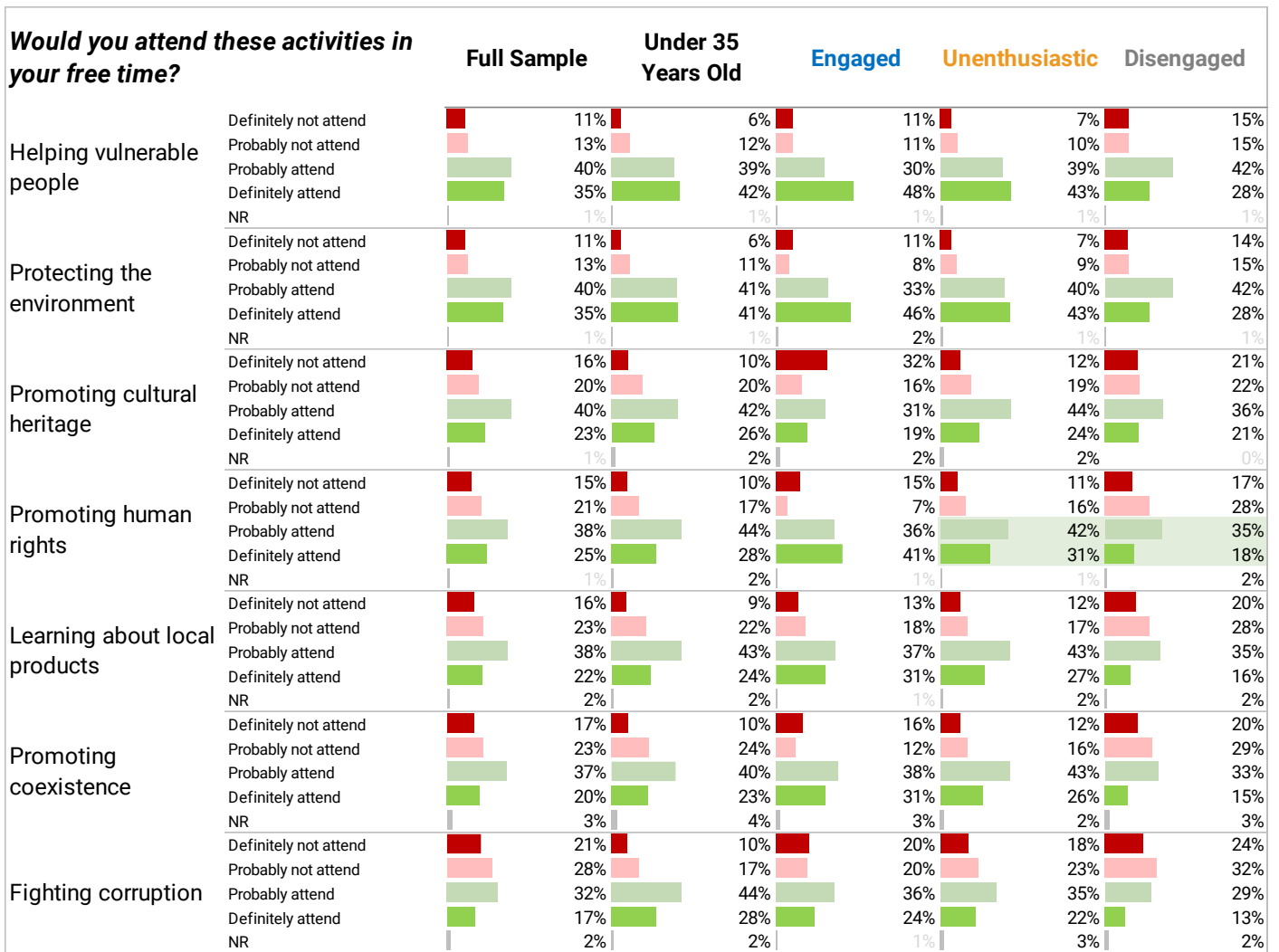


Figure 10: Frequency of responses to Willingness to Participate in Civic Initiatives. Nationally representative sample (N=1991).

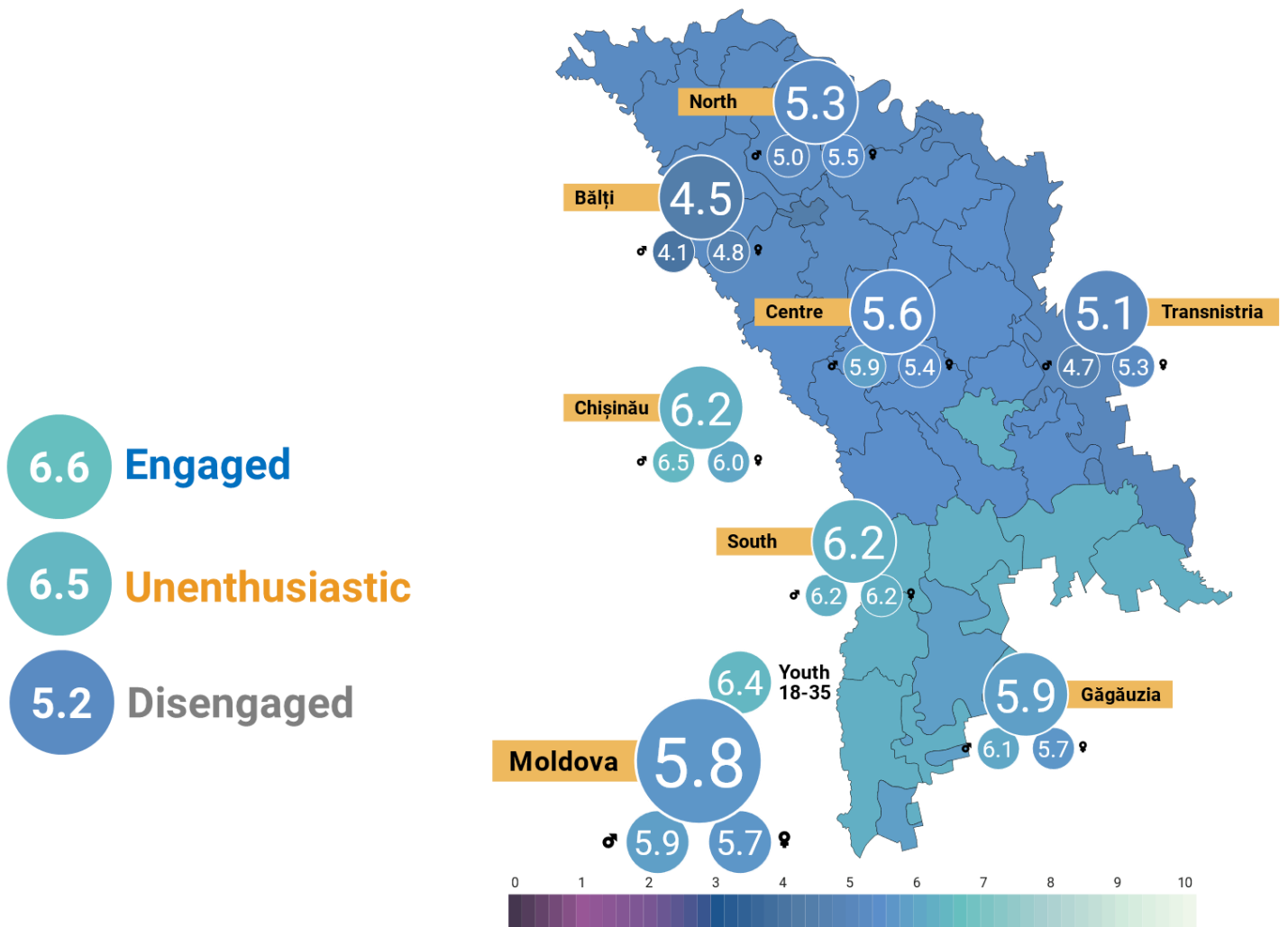


Figure 11: Heatmap of mean scores of Willingness to Participate in Civic Initiatives

Prosocial Civic Values

Respondents' willingness to help vulnerable people is also reflected in their *Prosocial Civic Values* – an indicator which measures how likely people are to help others if they witness an unjust situation (Figure 12). An overwhelming 71% of respondents said that they would directly intervene if they saw someone violently hitting a child in the park, and almost 6 in 10 (57%) would directly intervene if someone was being treated unfairly due to their race, ethnicity, social status or language.

How would you react if you saw...

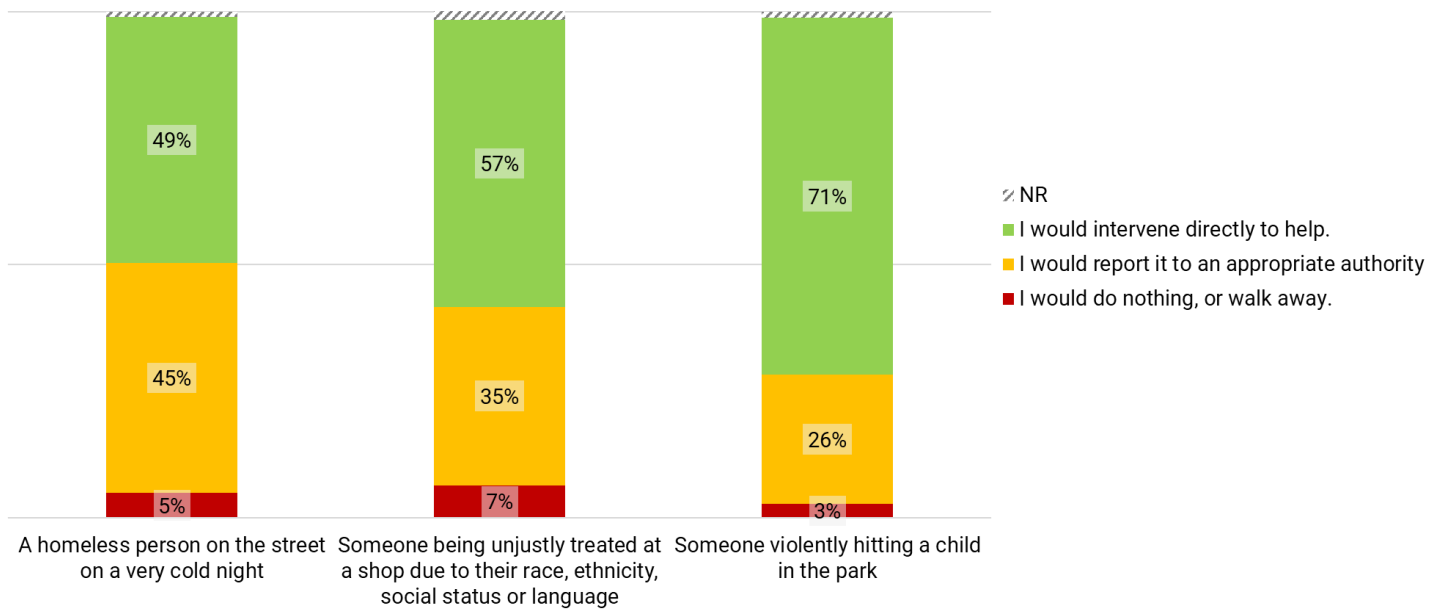


Figure 12: Frequencies of Prosocial Civic Values. National representative sample (N=1991)

Sense of Representation

A key difference between those respondents with any level of *Civic Engagement* compared to those who are entirely Disengaged, was their *Sense of Representation*. It is promising that on all four items measuring *Sense of Representation*, there has been an increase in the nationally representative sample compared to 2017 (Figure 13). We see that this is the case across most regions of the country (except the North and Gagauzia), for young people, and for both women and men (Figure 15). *Sense of Representation* in 2022 was similar across genders and age groups.

In contrast, in addition to being low in those who are Disengaged, we also found that Pro-Russia people, Russian-speakers and people in Gagauzia have lower levels of perceived representation. This merits attention, as feeling underrepresented was a driver of tension towards other groups as is further detailed in the report “Strengthening the Bonds: Fostering Social Harmony in Moldova”, available on app.scoreforpeace.org.

Respondents in Gagauzia, Balti do not feel that central authorities in Chisinau represent their views, with just 10% and 17% agreeing with this statement, respectively (Figure 14). Representation by central authorities is also relatively low in the North (just 34% feel that the central authorities represent their views, Figure 14).

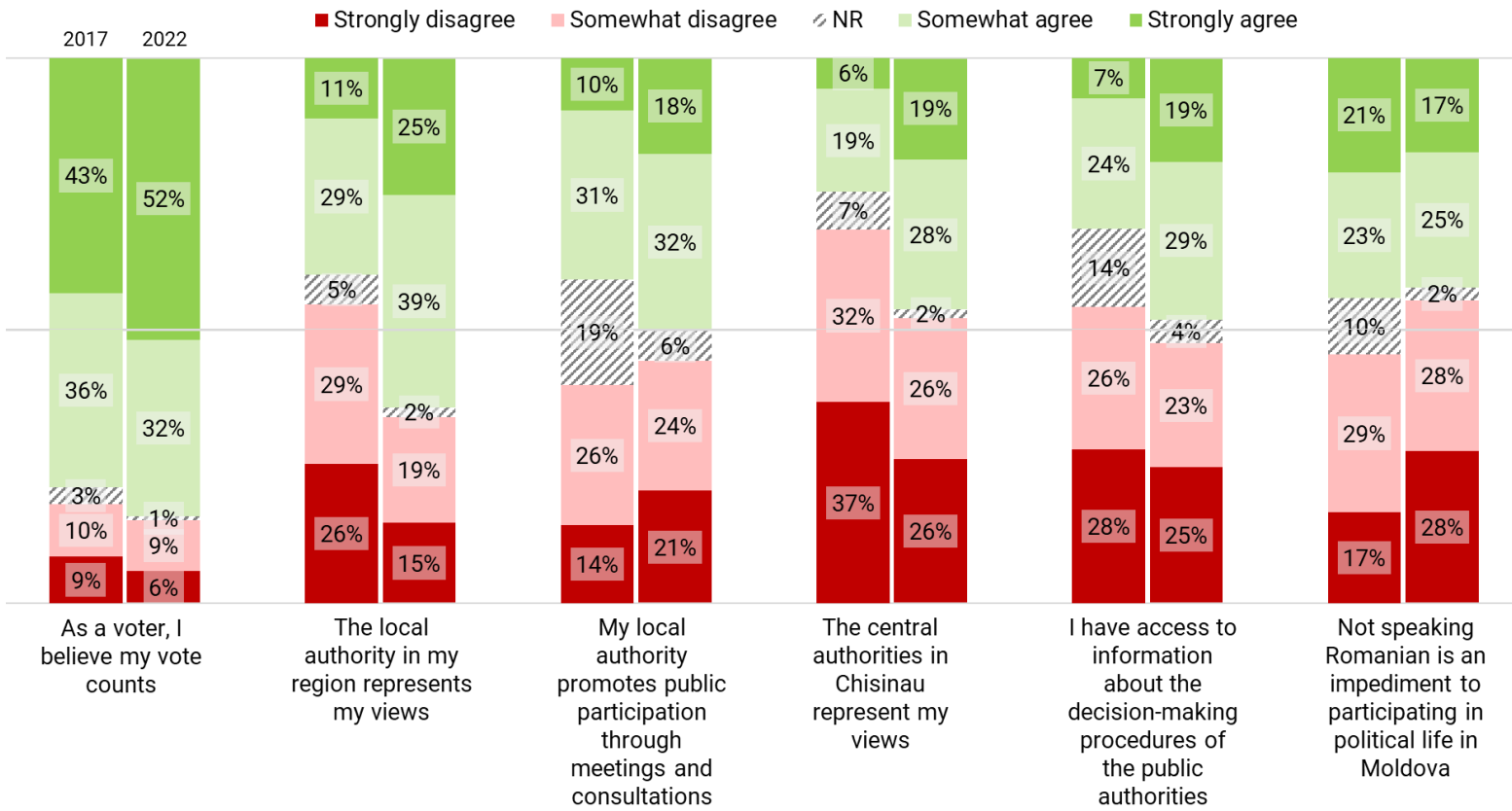


Figure 13: Frequencies of Sense of Agency (first item), Political Exclusion (last item) and Sense of Representation (all other items). National representative sample (2022 N=1991, 2017 N=1209).

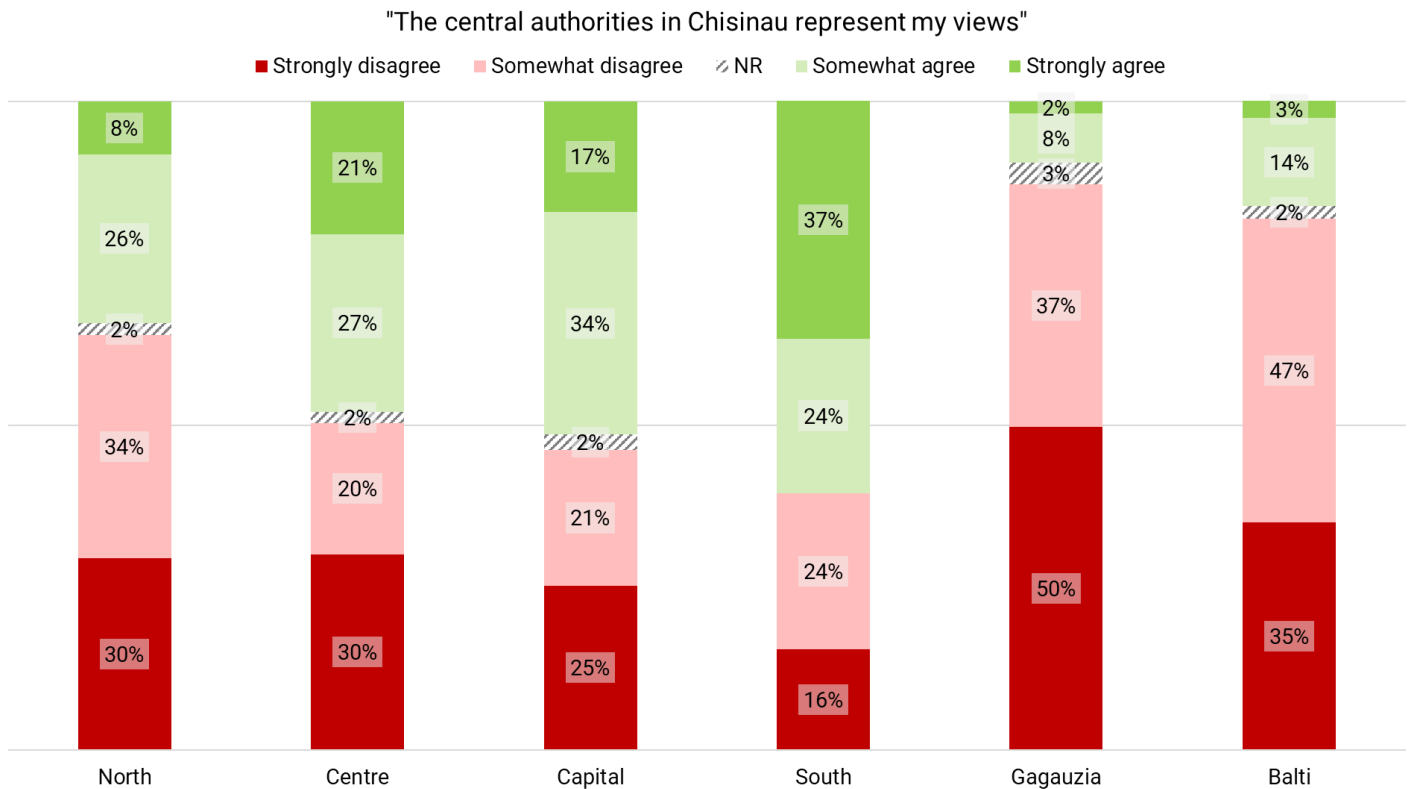


Figure 14: Frequencies of the question "The central authorities in Chisinau represent my views" disaggregated by region. North, Centre, Capital, South are based on the national representative sample (N=1991). Balti and Gagauzia are based on respective representative samples, of N=174 and N=191.

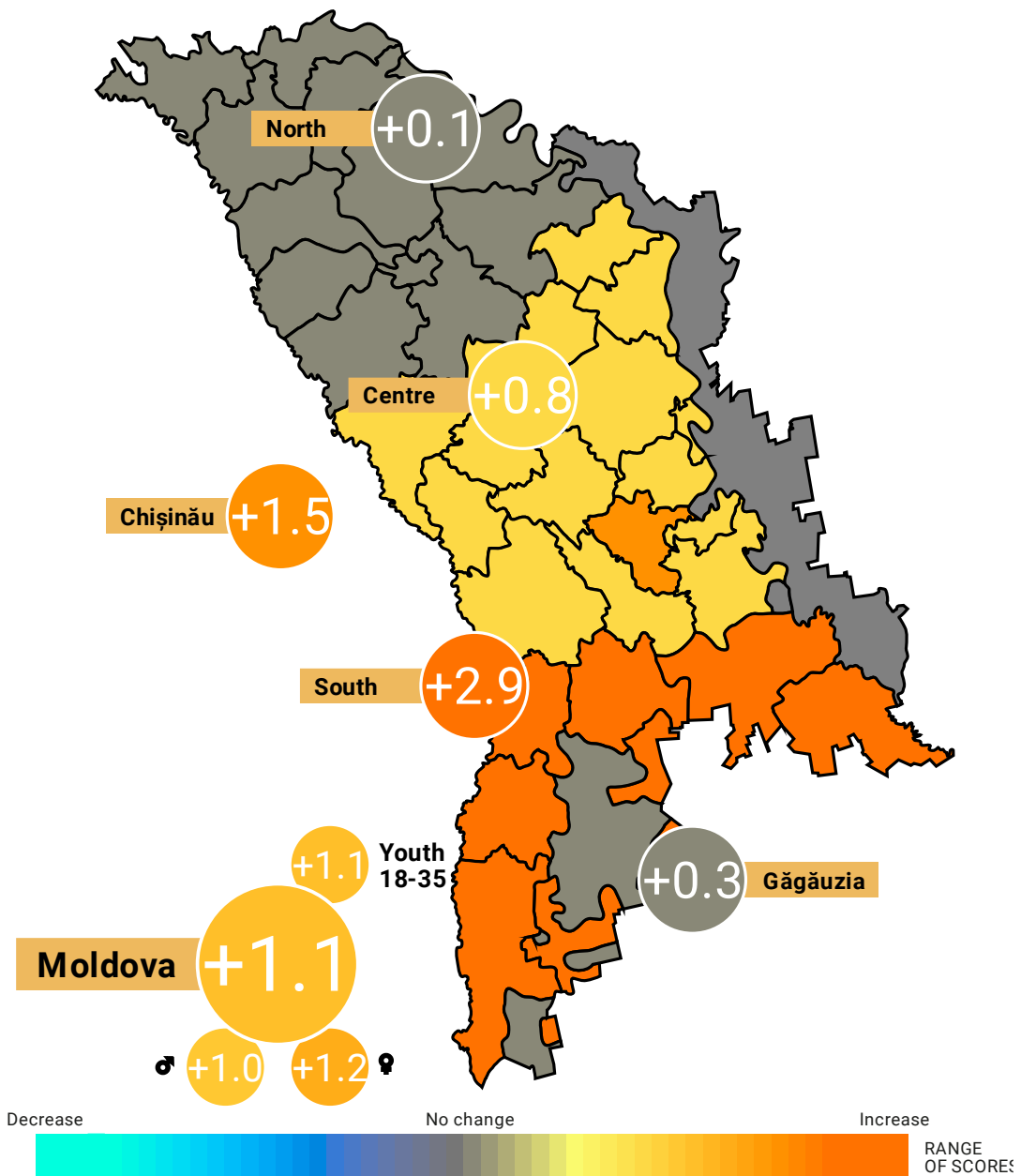


Figure 15: Change in mean score of Sense of Representation from 2017 to 2022. Positive sign indicates that the score in 2022 is higher than 2017. Changes are significantly different in the full sample and all demographic subsamples except in Gagăuzia. $F > 40$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's D Effect Size > 0.3 .