

**PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA AND SOCIETY: ATTITUDES,
VIEWS, AND EXPECTATIONS**

**STUDY INTO AUDIENCE OF THE LATVIAN TELEVISION
AND LATVIAN RADIO**

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13 December 2019

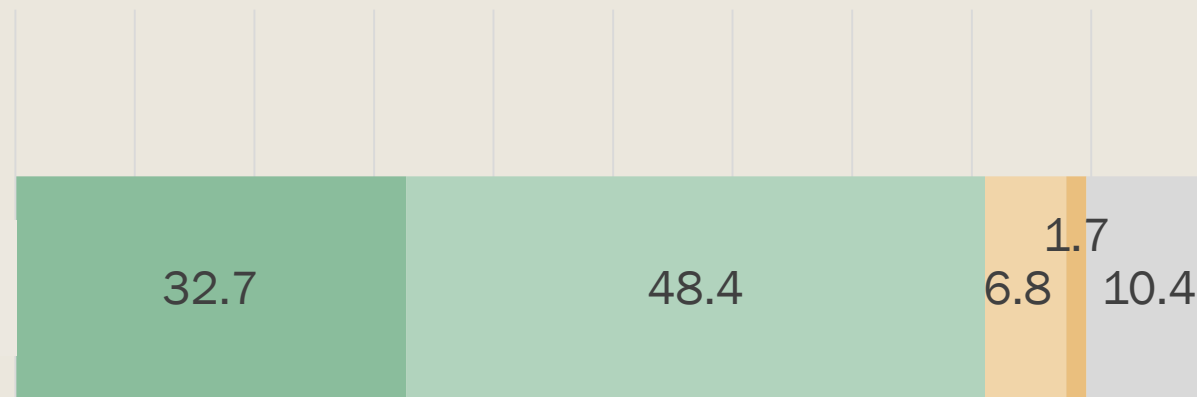
Methodology

- Nationally representative sample survey
- Stratified random sampling (n = 1016, 18-75 y/o)
- Field work: SKDS, 2-12 November 2019
- Method: direct respondent interviews at their home
- Changes in public sentiment: diachronic data
- Presentation is based on data about the whole population of Latvia, including public service media clients who are not regular users
- Many findings and opinions go beyond Latvian public service media and contain broader reflections on media and journalism altogether

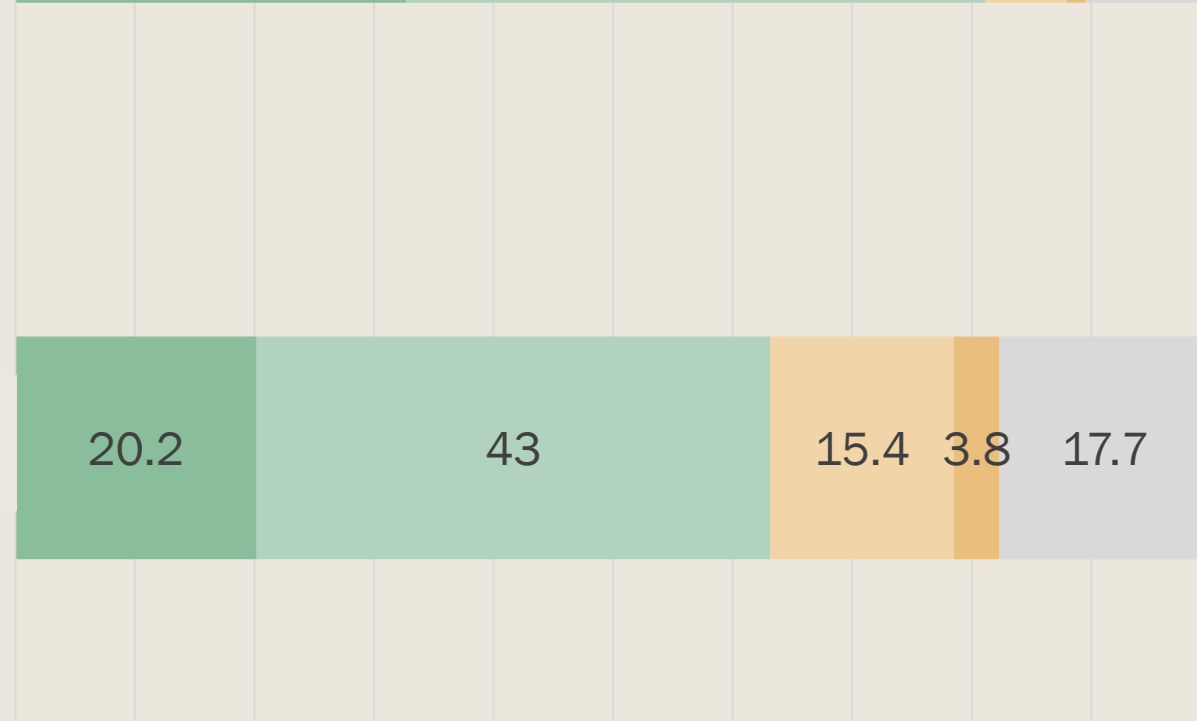


IMPORTANCE:
MACRO/MICRO LEVEL

Public service media (Latvian Television and Radio) preserve and promote national culture

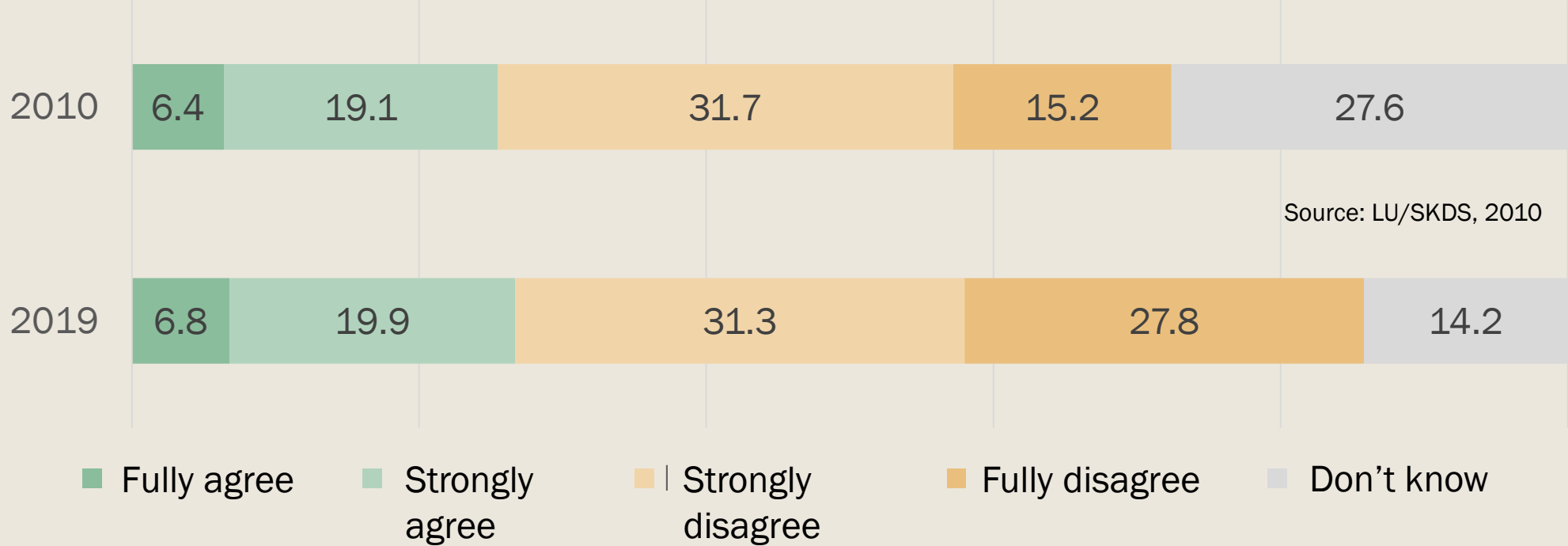


Public service media (Latvian Television and Radio) strengthen national democracy

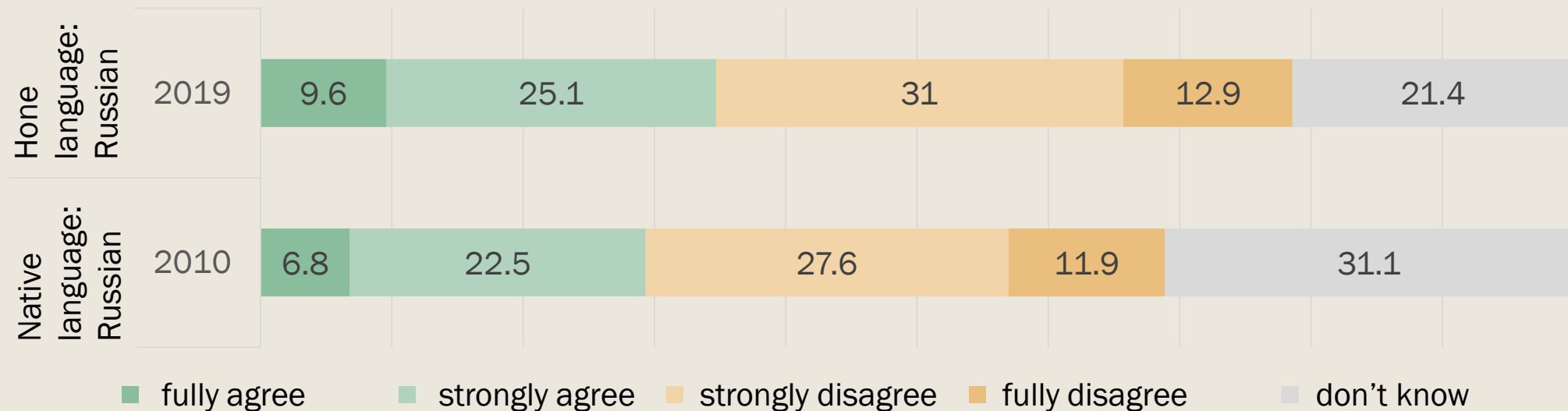
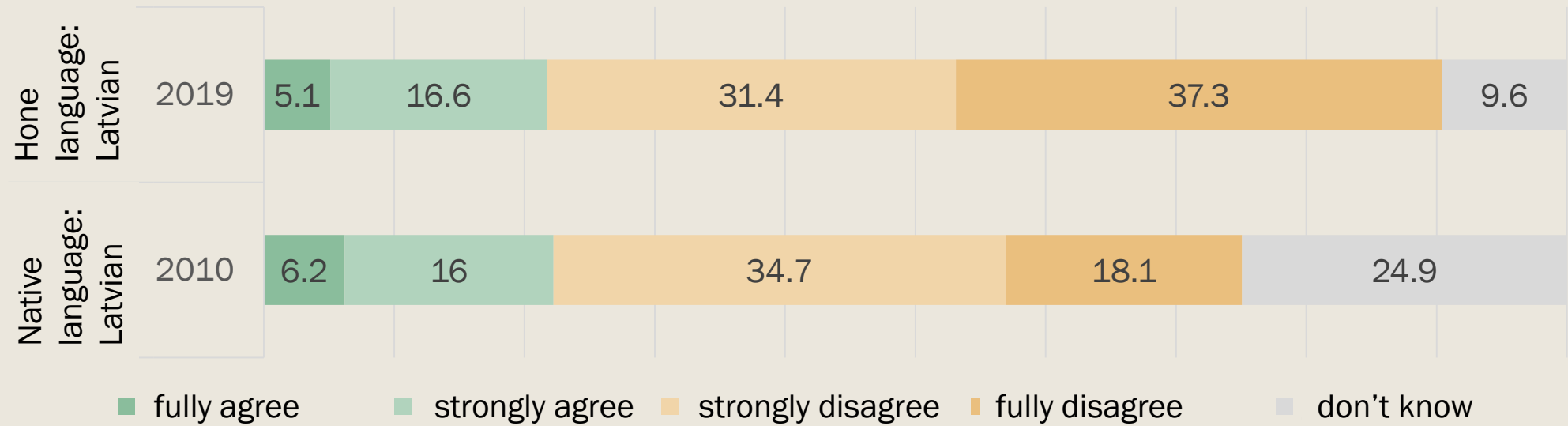


Fully agree Strongly agree Strongly disagree Fully disagree Don't know

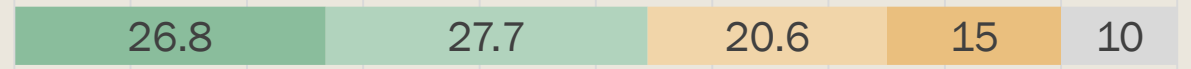
There is no need for special public service media (Latvian Television and Radio): other privately-owned television/radio broadcasters can provide the same services



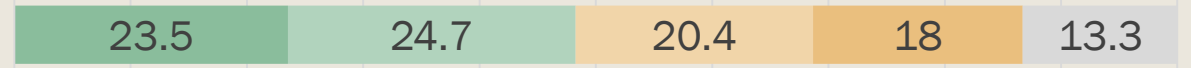
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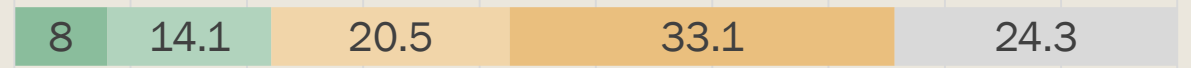
I would miss Latvian Television when discontinued



I would miss Latvian Radio when discontinued

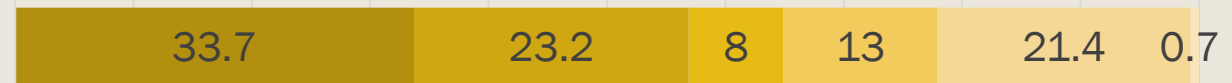


I would miss LSM.lv when discontinued

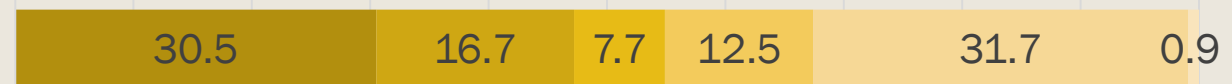


■ Fully agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Fully disagree ■ Don't know

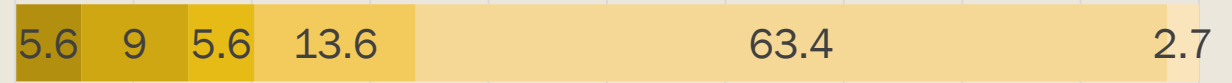
How often have you watched any of Latvian Television channels in the past 6 months?



How often have you listened to any of Latvian Radio channels in the past 6 months?



How often have you used LSM.lv in the past 6 months?



■ (Almost) every day ■ Several times a week ■ Several times a month ■ Less ■ Never ■ Don't know

Importance/use: sociodemographic groups

Contribution to national culture and democracy

Support of public service media :
“No need for special public service media...”

Emotional attachment to public service media:
“I would miss...”

Use: regular users of public media

GAPS:

- generational
- ethnolinguistic
- socioeconomic

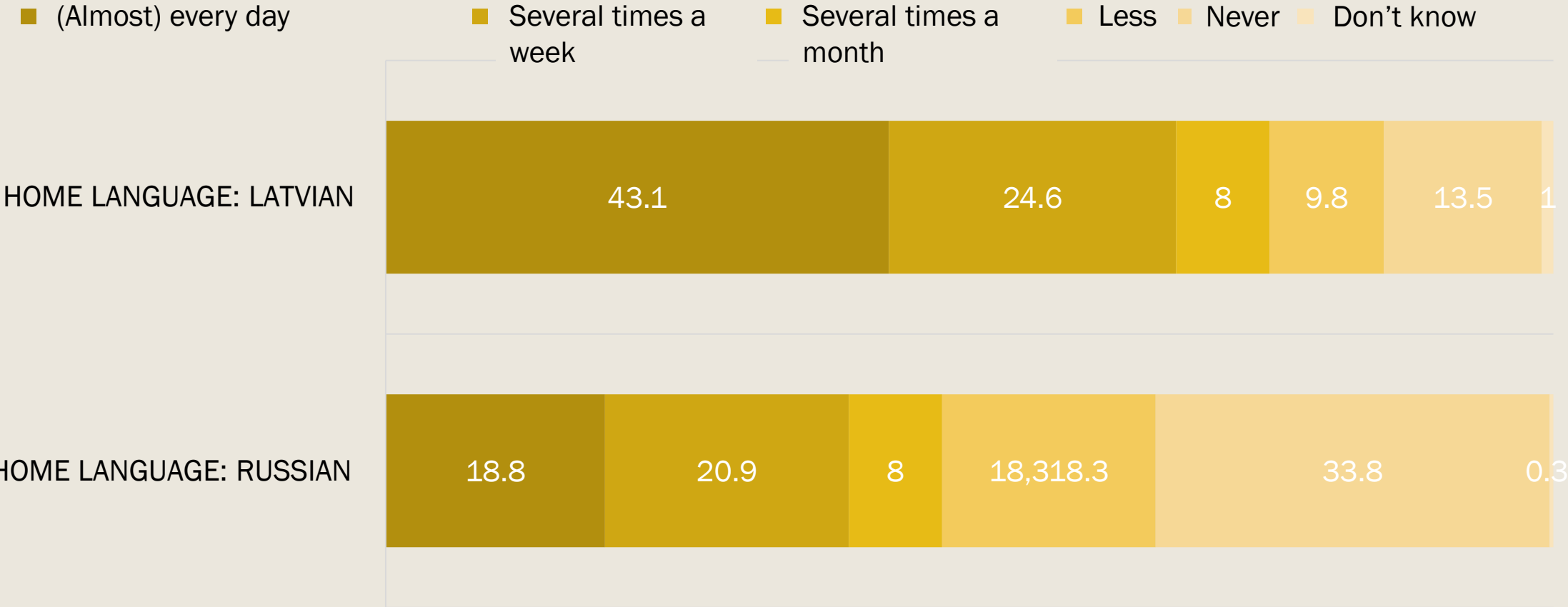
LOYAL AUDIENCE OF
PUBLIC MEDIA:

- older generation
(use: except LSM.lv)
- home language:
Latvian
- socioeconomic
status: high
(use: education important, income less
important)



HOME LANGUAGE: CASE OF LSM.LV

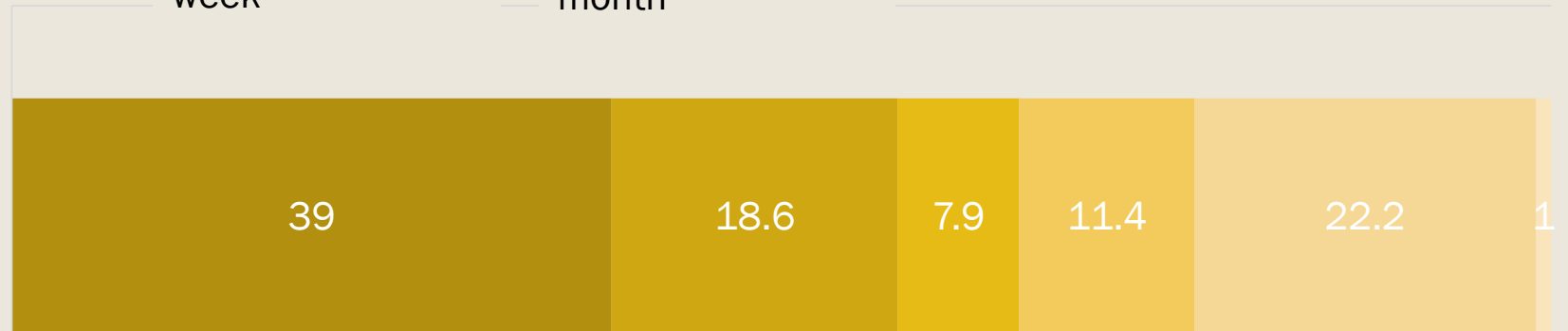
How often have you watched any of Latvian Television channels in the past 6 months?



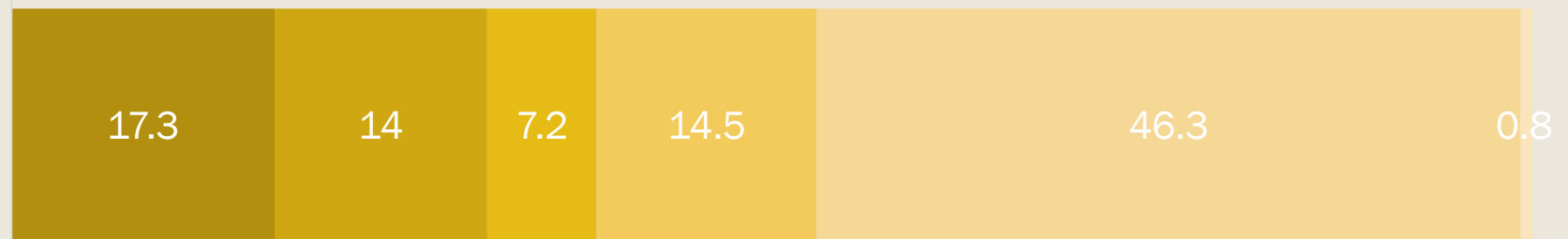
How often have you listened to any of Latvian Radio channels in the past 6 months?

■ (Almost) every day
 ■ Several times a week
 ■ Several times a month
 ■ Less
 ■ Never
 ■ Don't know

HOME LANGUAGE: LATVIAN



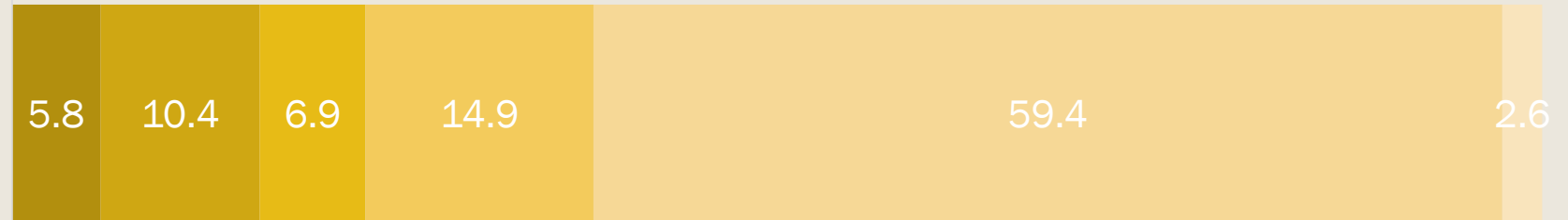
HOME LANGUAGE: RUSSIAN



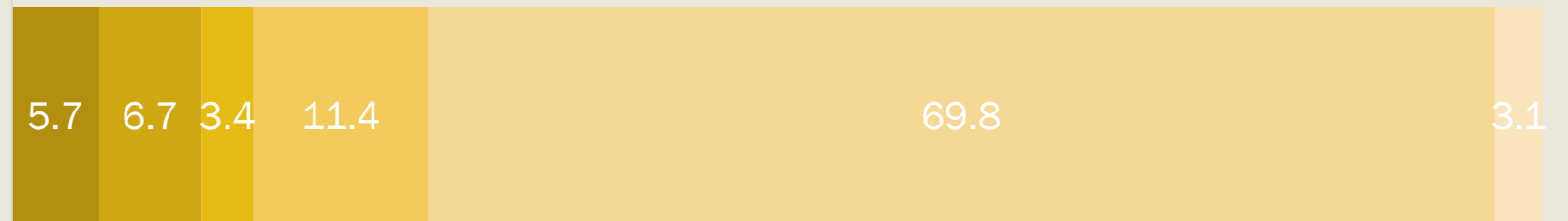
How often have you used LSM.lv in the past 6 months?

■ (Almost) every day ■ Several times a week ■ Several times a month ■ Less ■ Never ■ Don't know

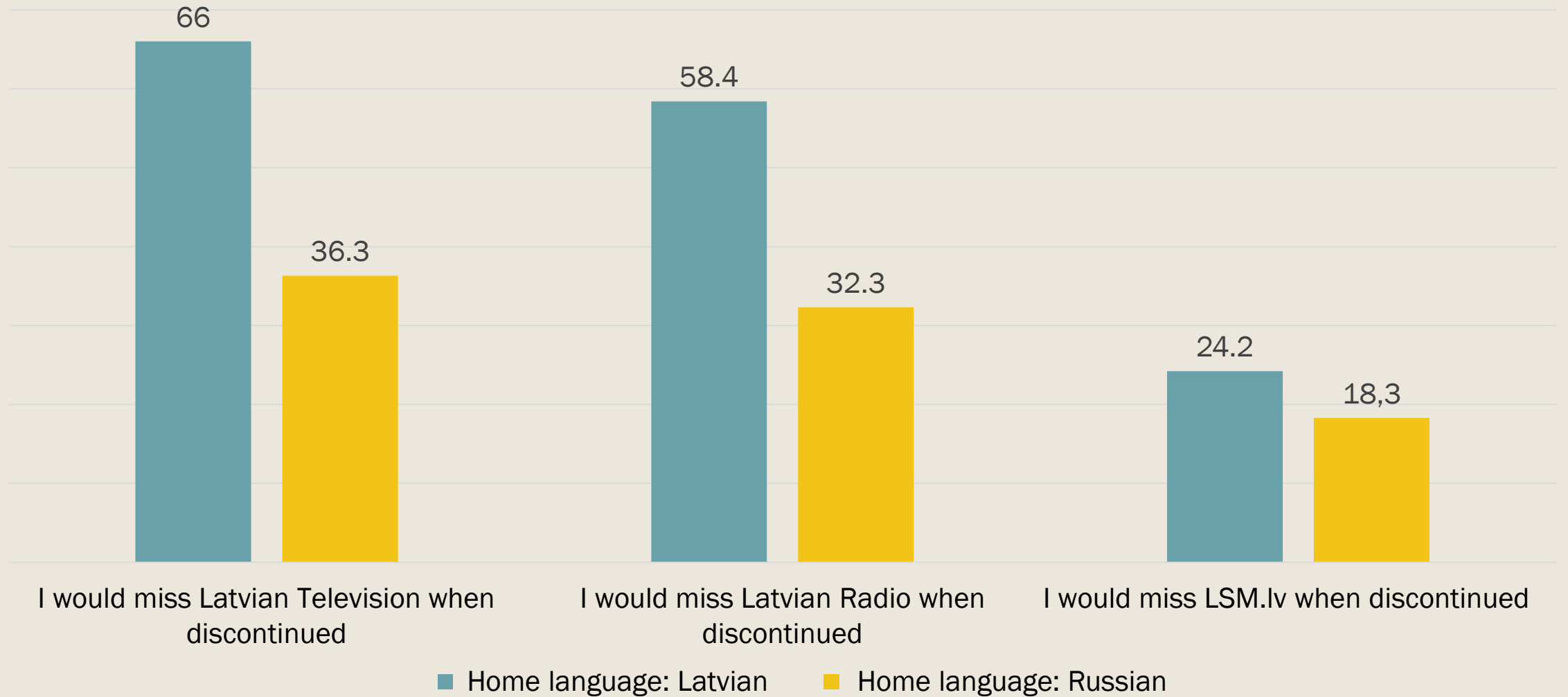
HOME LANGUAGE: LATVIAN



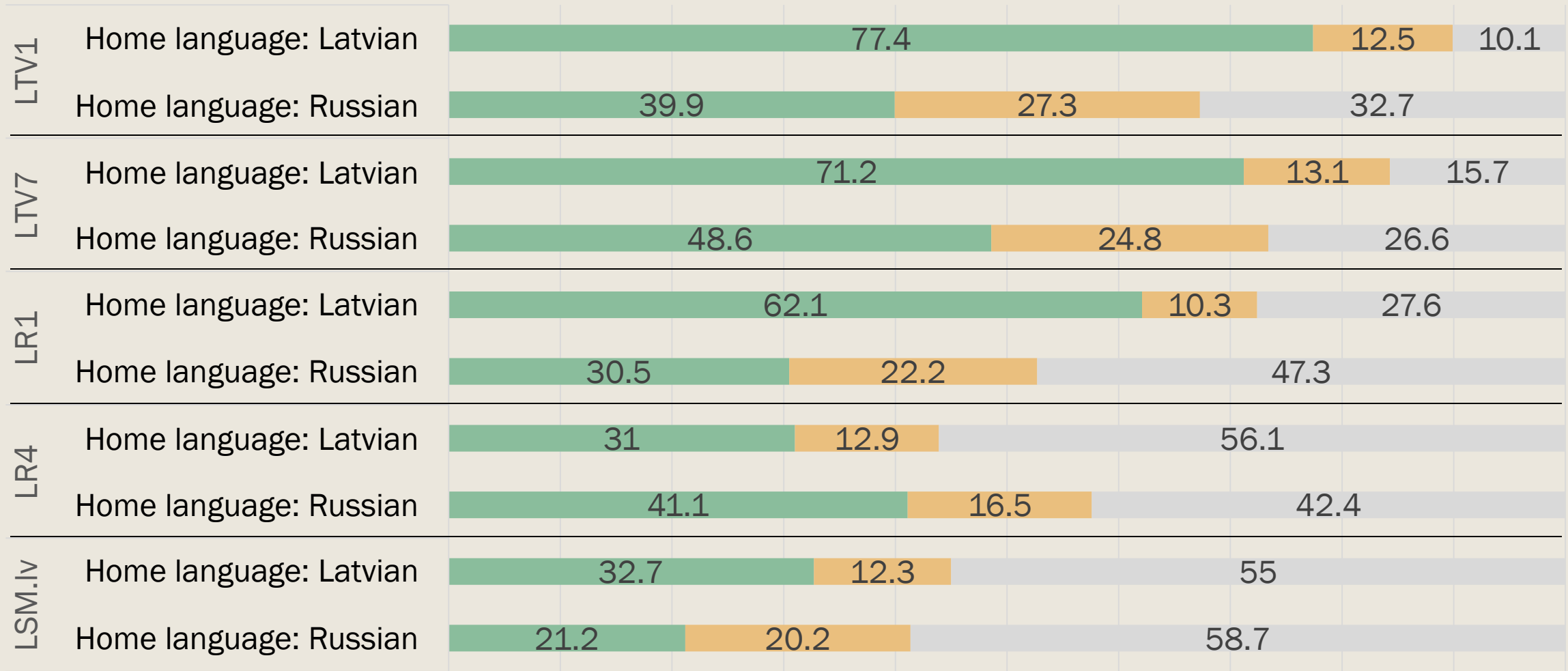
HOME LANGUAGE: RUSSIAN



I would miss public media ...



How much do you trust information available in/from:



■ trust ■ distrust ■ don't know



CHARACTERISTICS: THE IDEAL PUBLIC MEDIA

Excellent – highly professional, provides high quality, meets high standards

Original – different from other radio/TV channels in terms of content

Competent – informed, experienced; analytical as opposed to superficial

Reliable – the one whose opinion I respect and find reliable

Useful – offers information that is useful in everyday life and practical activities

Self-critical – accountable for own performance, responds to complaints, open for criticism, admits mistakes

Creative – always fresh, innovative, tries to impress, not afraid to experiment

Modern – up-to-date, progressive

Appealing – exciting, charismatic, brilliant (magnificent), dynamic

‘Relatable’ – for people like me

Diverse, varied – for people with different tastes, interests and views

Uniting – capable of bringing people with different views and values together (consolidating); uniting instead of divisive

Engaging – promotes people’s active involvement in domestic sociopolitical and cultural processes, enhances sense of belonging to Latvian society

Inspiring – encourages people to do something (act) to make their own life and society better

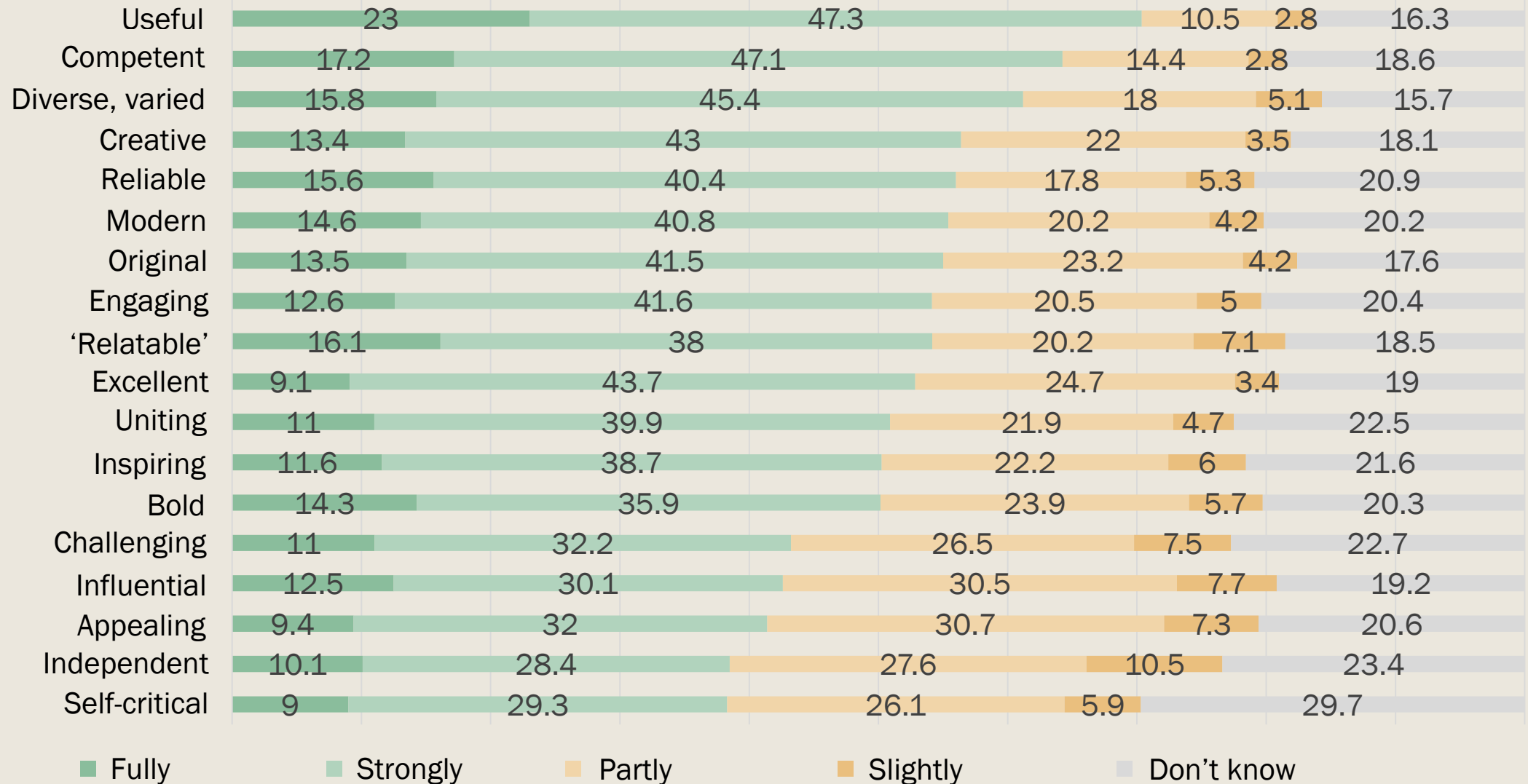
Influential – capable of influencing processes in Latvia

Bold – not afraid to face ‘influential people’, expose illegal acts, protest absurdity

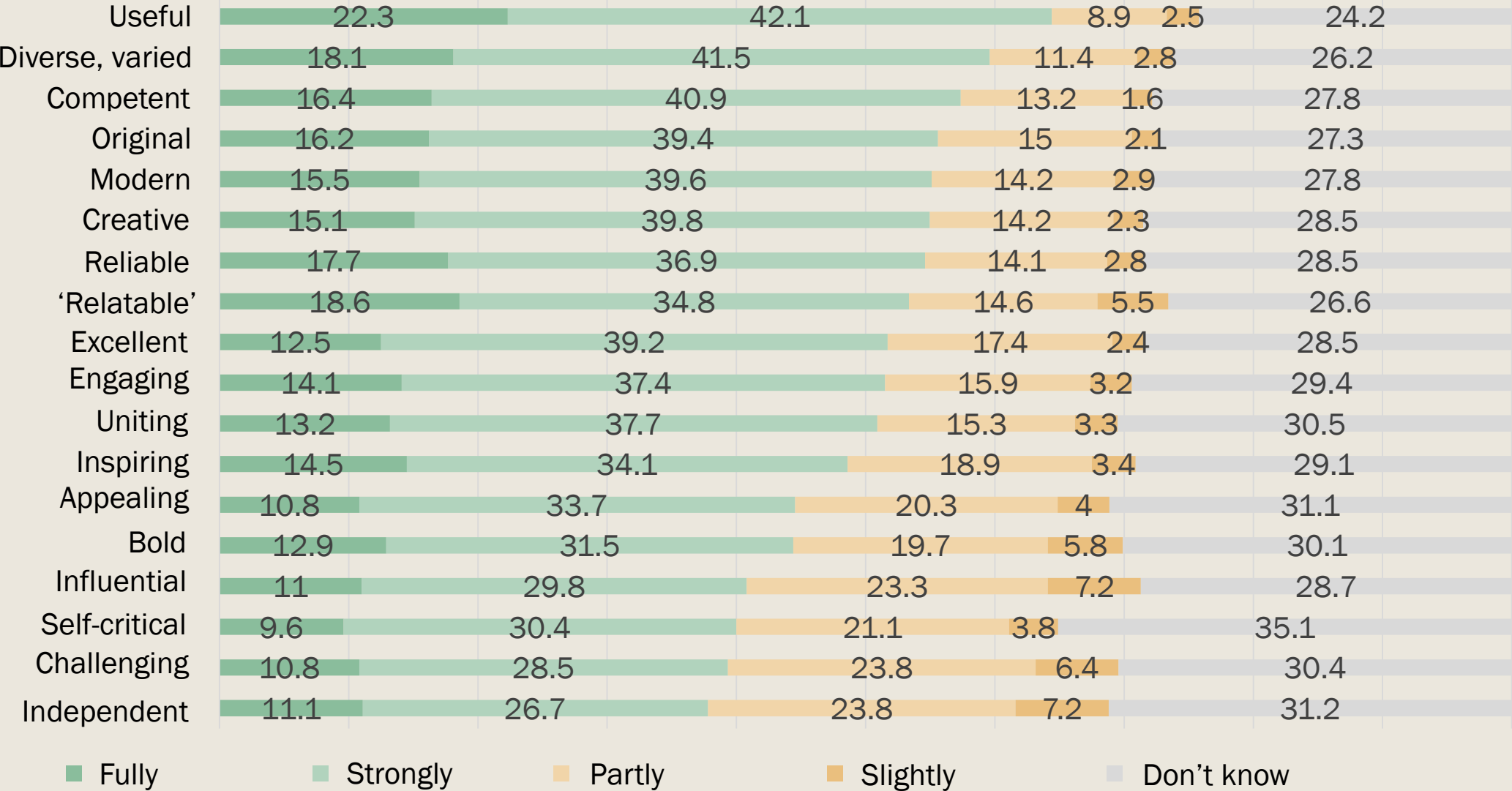
Challenging – capable of being provocative, not afraid to express unpopular views, not shy of subjects that many avoid

Independent – with strong backbone; resilient to pressure, meddling from higher-ups

To what extent do these characteristics apply to Latvian Television?



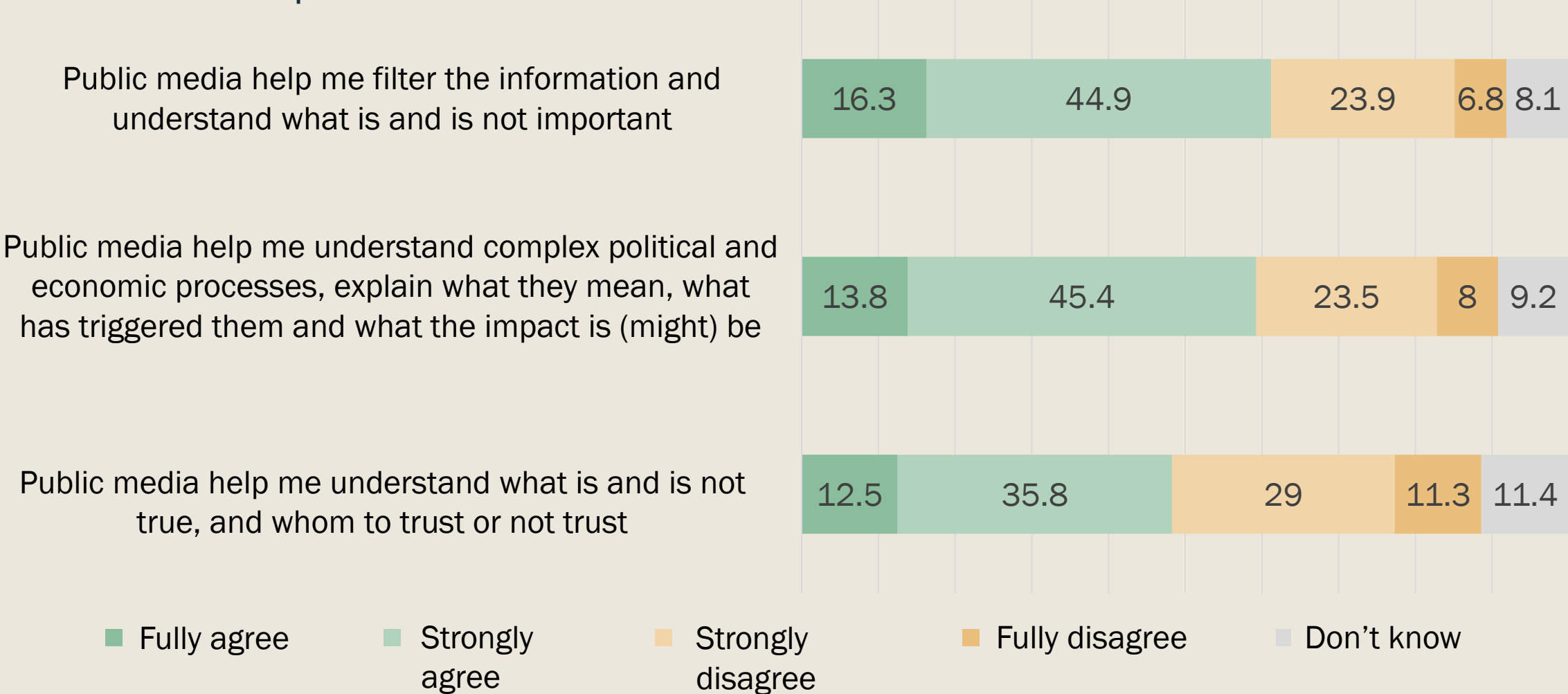
To what extent do these characteristics apply to Latvian Radio?



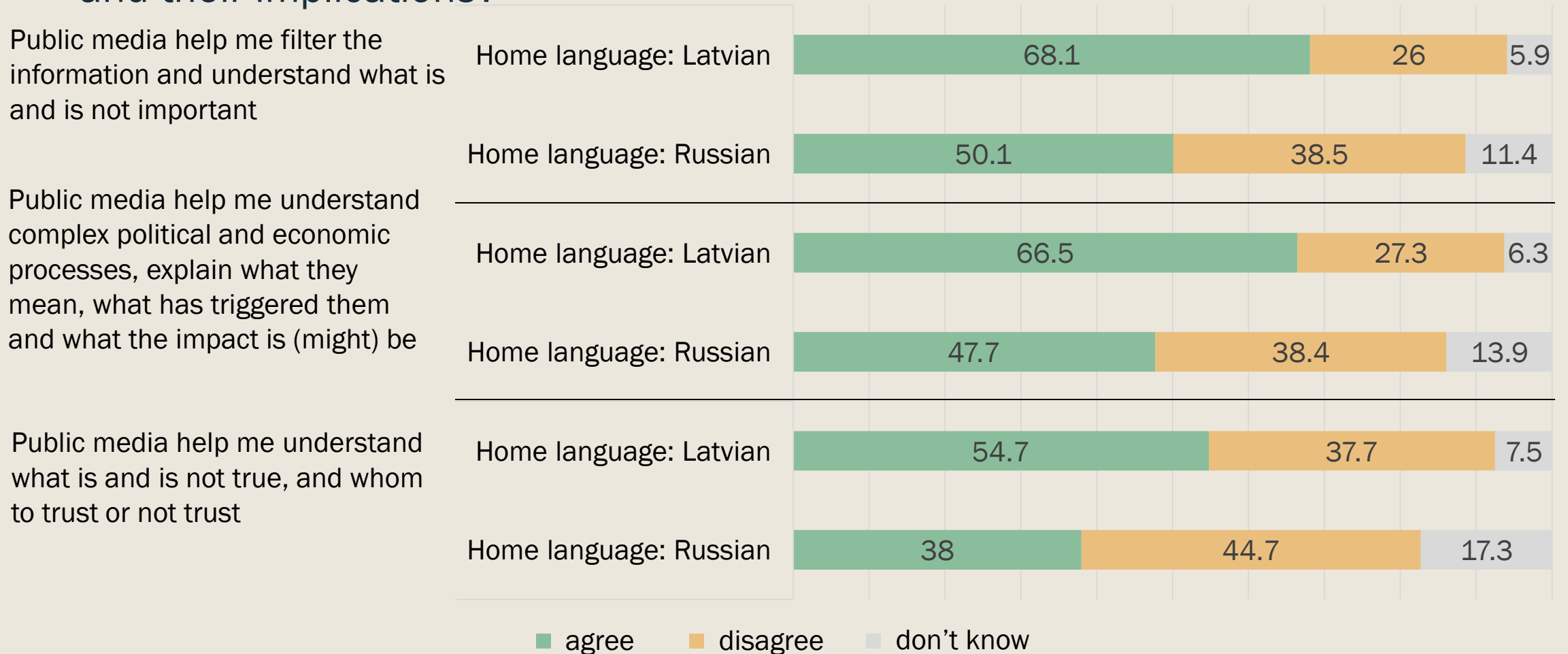


MODERN
INFORMATION SPACE

We live at a time when we are constantly exposed to large amounts of information. On top of being massive, these flows tend to contain complex, contradicting and even distorted information. To what extent do public media help you to generally understand local and global events and their implications?



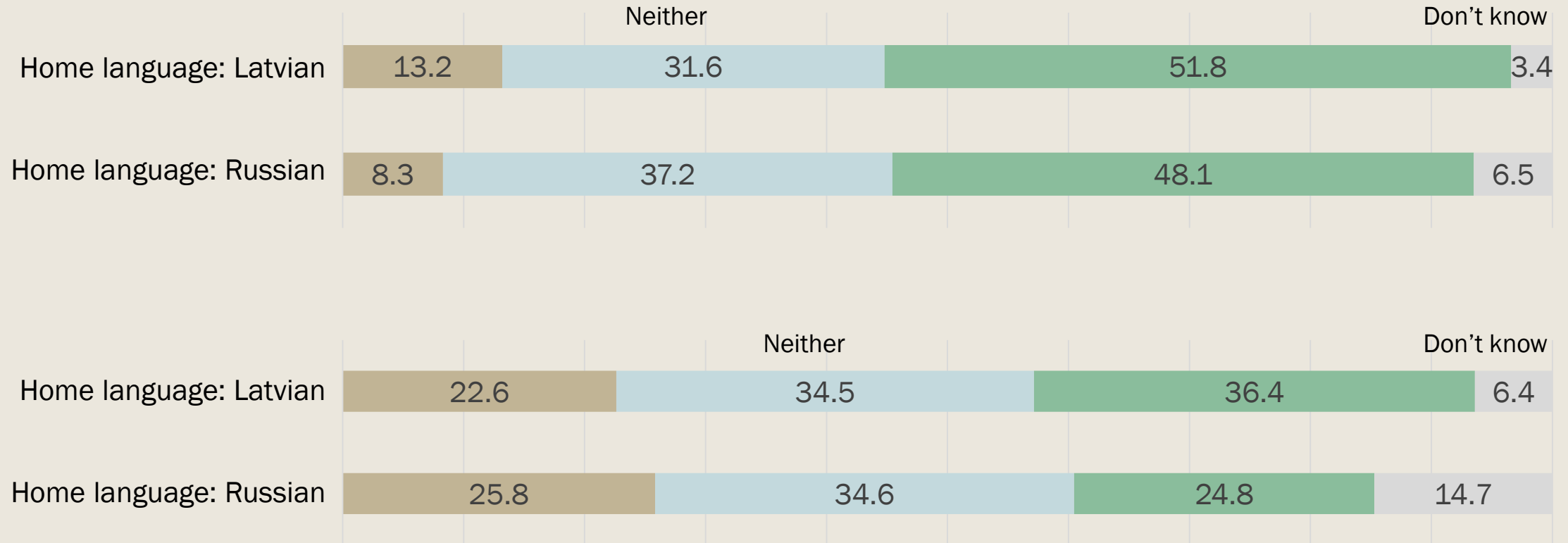
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PARTISAN MEDIA

Public media should promote specific values and ideas, for example, support conservative or liberal values, left-wing or right-wing ideas

Public media should represent various values and ideas, for example, conservative and liberal values, left-wing and right-wing ideas



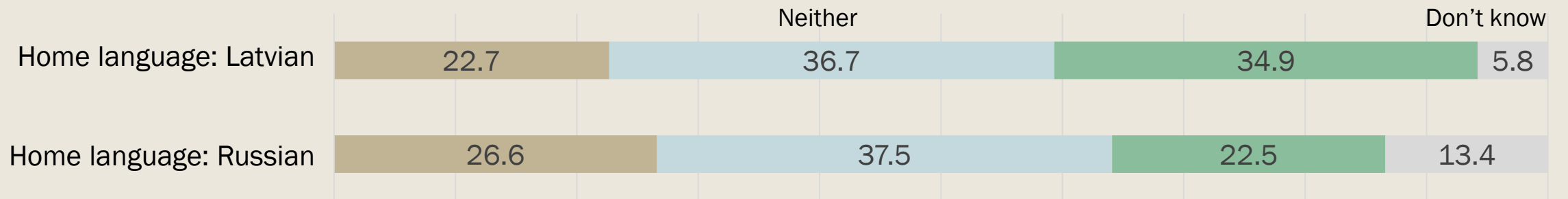
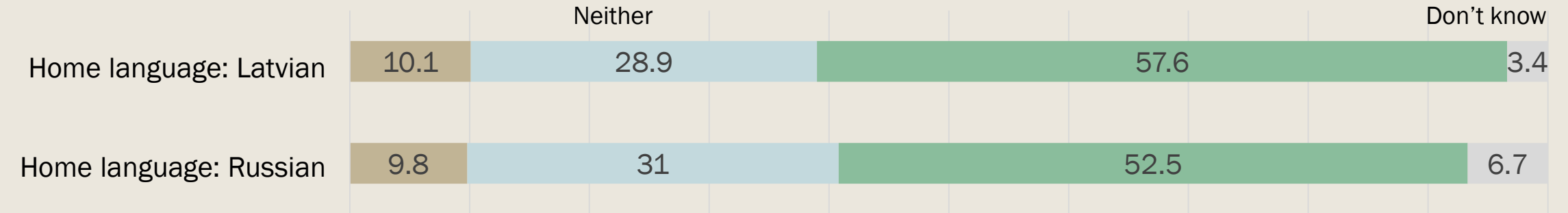
Public media support specific values and ideas

Public media represent various values and ideas

MINORITY VIEWS

Public media should only reflect views and values of majority

Public media should also be platform for those who support alternative views and advocate minority values



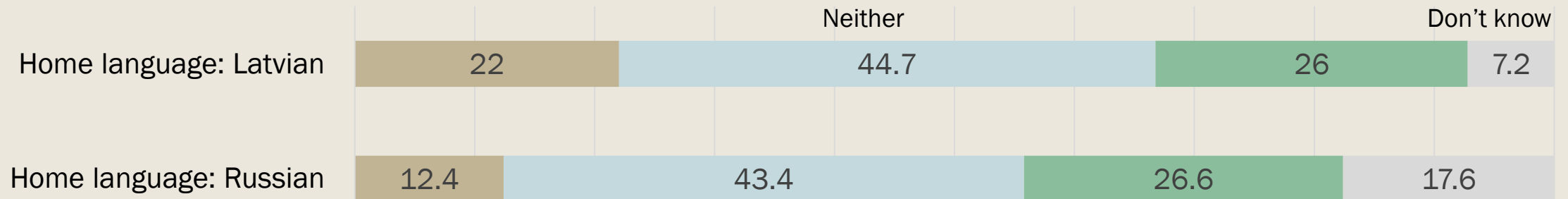
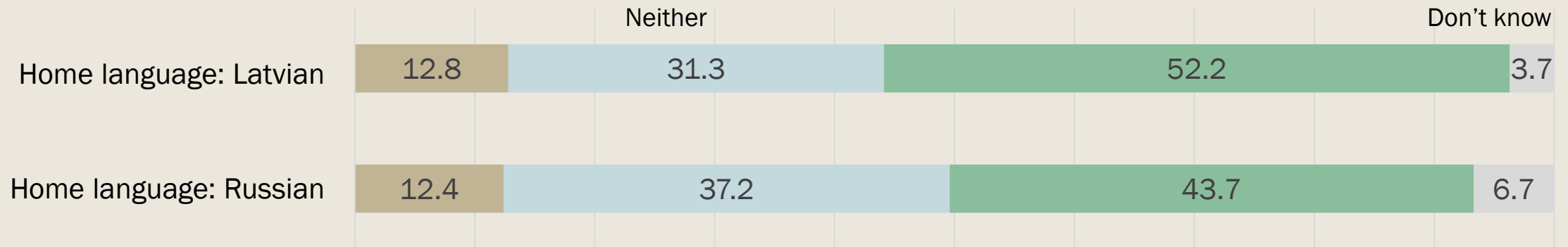
Public media should focus on views and values supported by the majority

Public media are a platform where alternative and minority views are represented

'FILTER BUBBLES'

I would rather prefer public media focused only on views and values shared by me

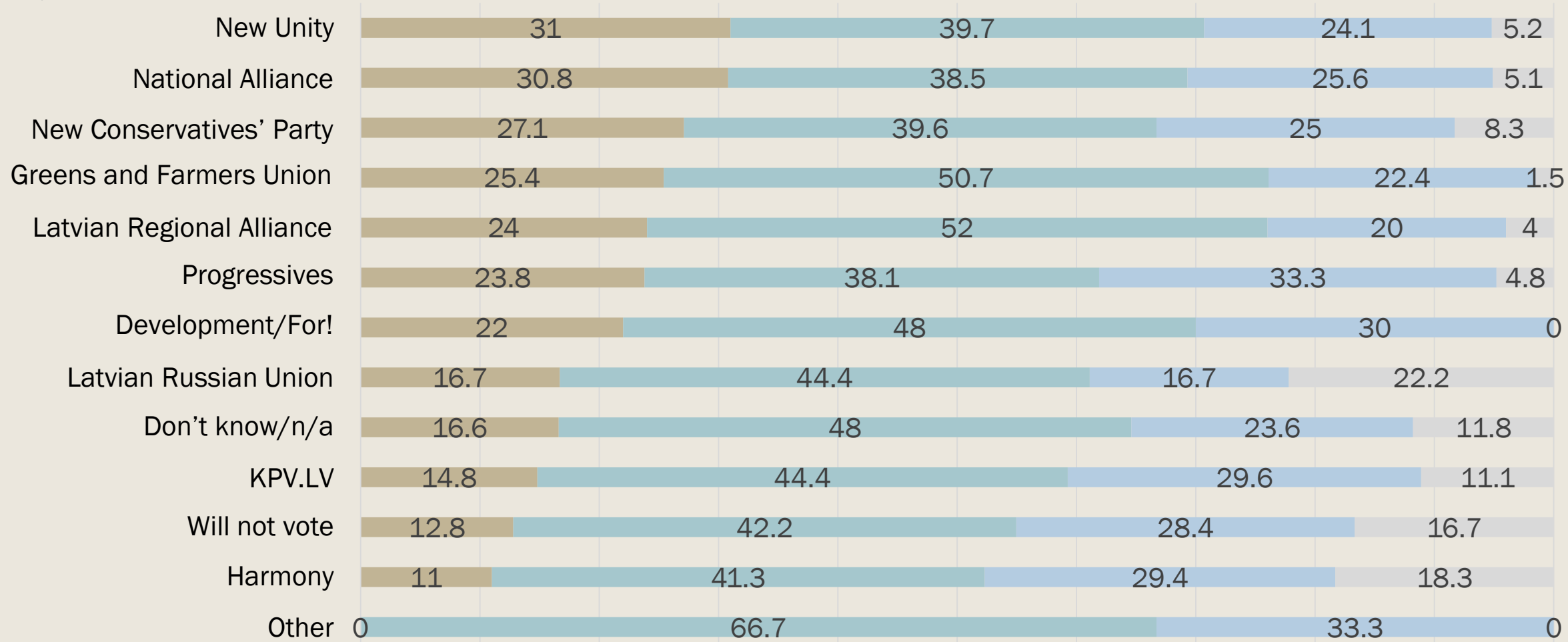
I would rather prefer if public media encouraged diversity of views even when I do not completely share those views or find them unacceptable



Views and values reflected in public media largely coincide with my opinion and convictions

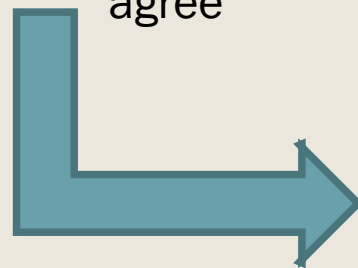
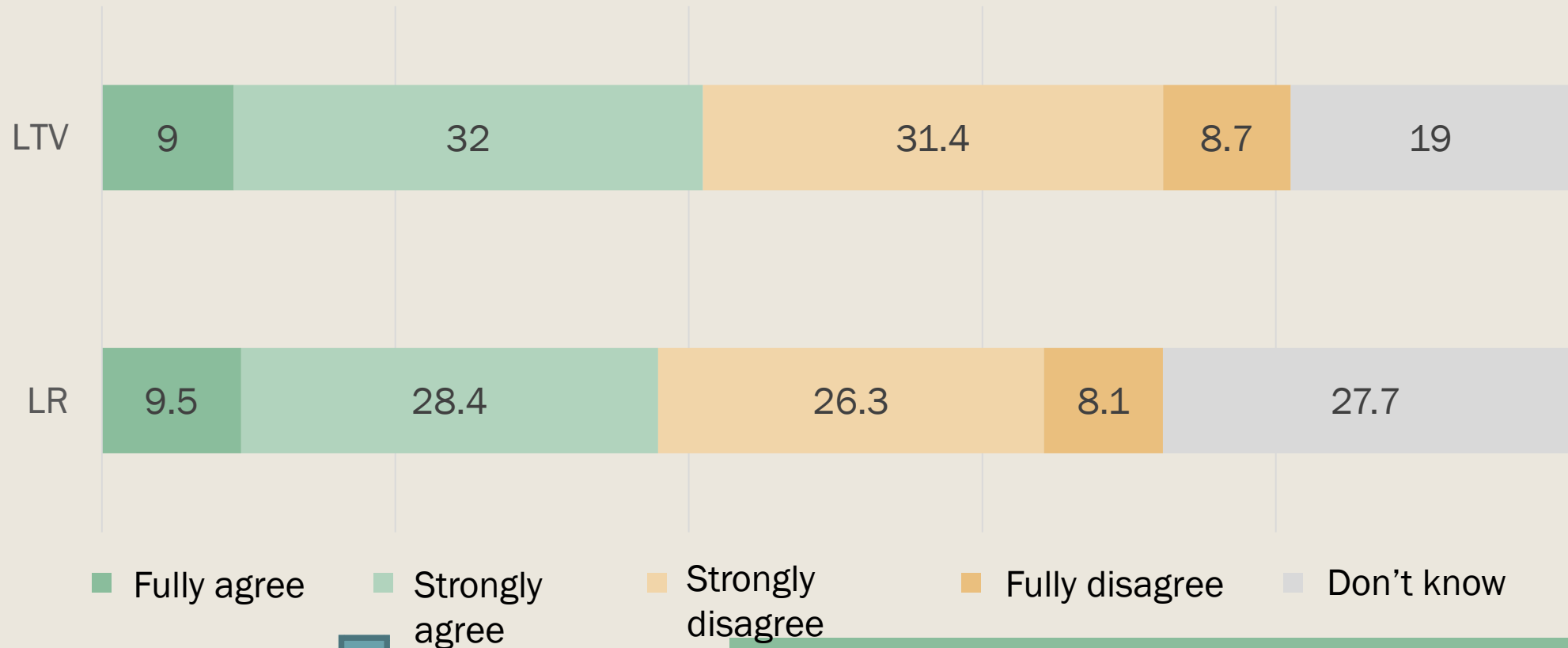
Views and values reflected in public media mostly do not coincide with my opinion and convictions

If general elections were tomorrow, which political party or group would you vote for?



- Views and values represented in public media largely coincide with my views and convictions
- Neither
- Views and values represented in public media largely contradict my views and convictions
- Don't know

Latvian Television/Radio have enough focus on how people like me live and think



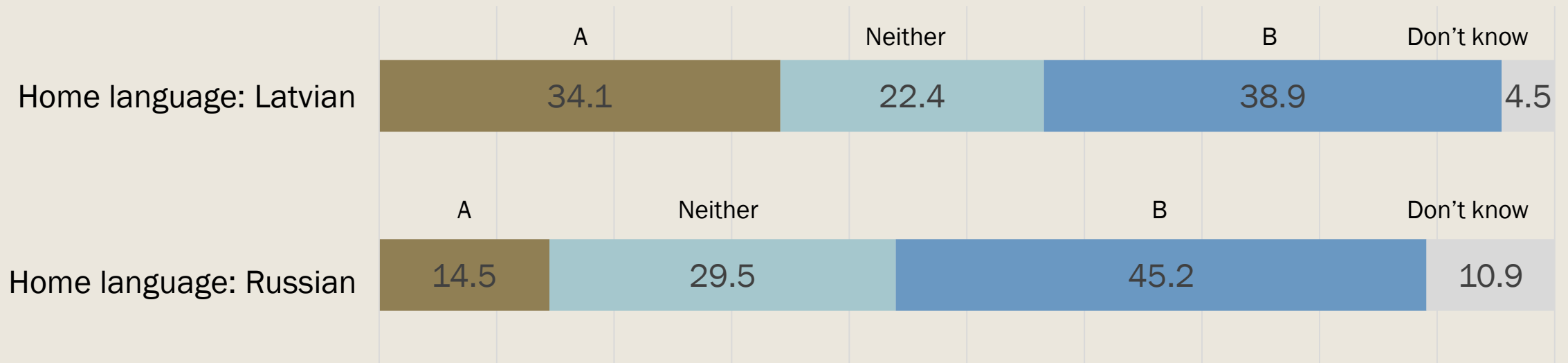
- 45-54 y/o (LTV), 55-63 y/o (LR)
- Home language: Latvian
- Upper-middle socioeconomic status (especially for LTV)
- Public sector employees
- Rural inhabitants
- No children



INFORMATION WARFARE: ROLE OF PUBLIC MEDIA

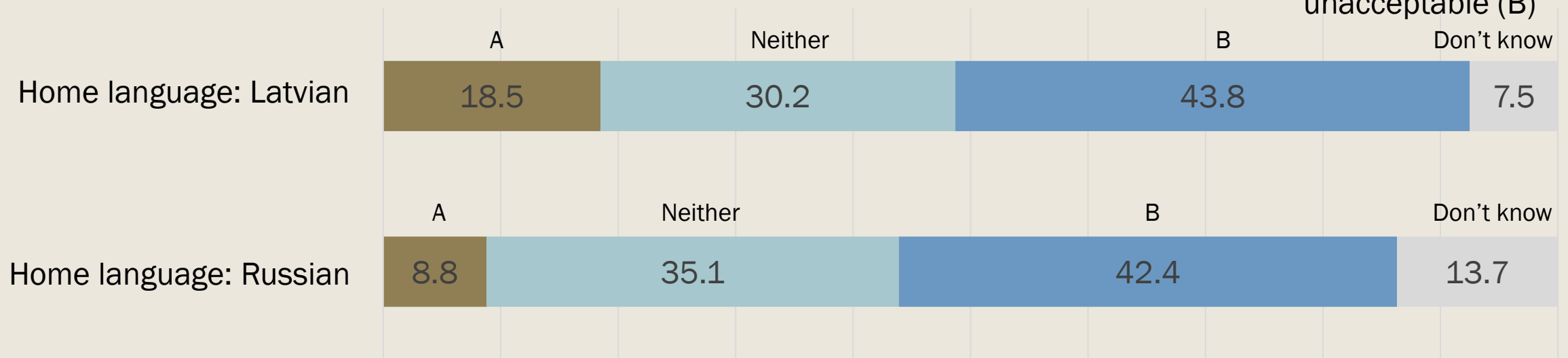
In case of information warfare, public media should support Latvia and its allies (A)

Public media should remain neutral, impartial and should take no sides even when there is information warfare (B)

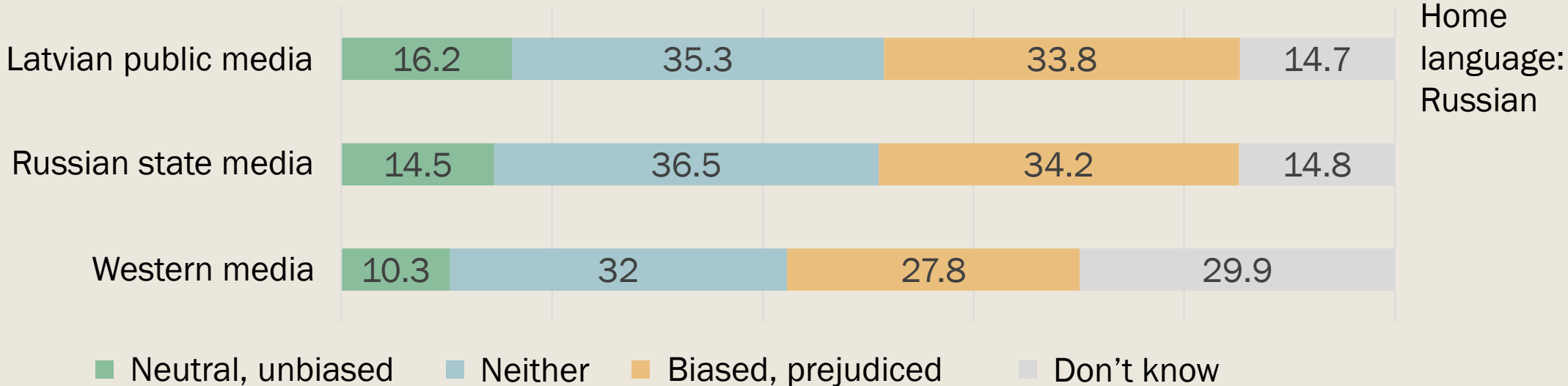
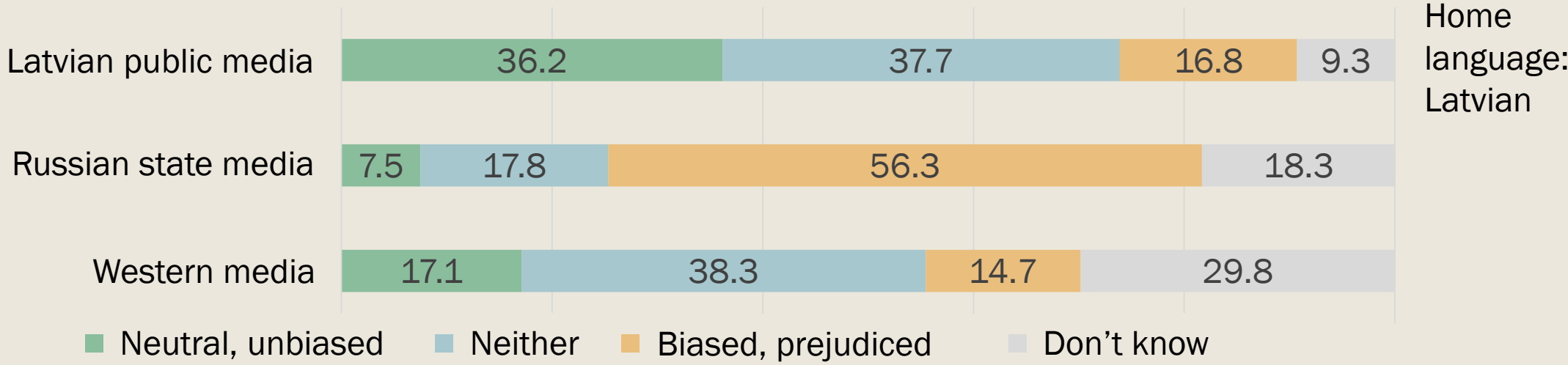


In case of information warfare, government should be allowed to control (determine) the content of public media to protect national interests (A)

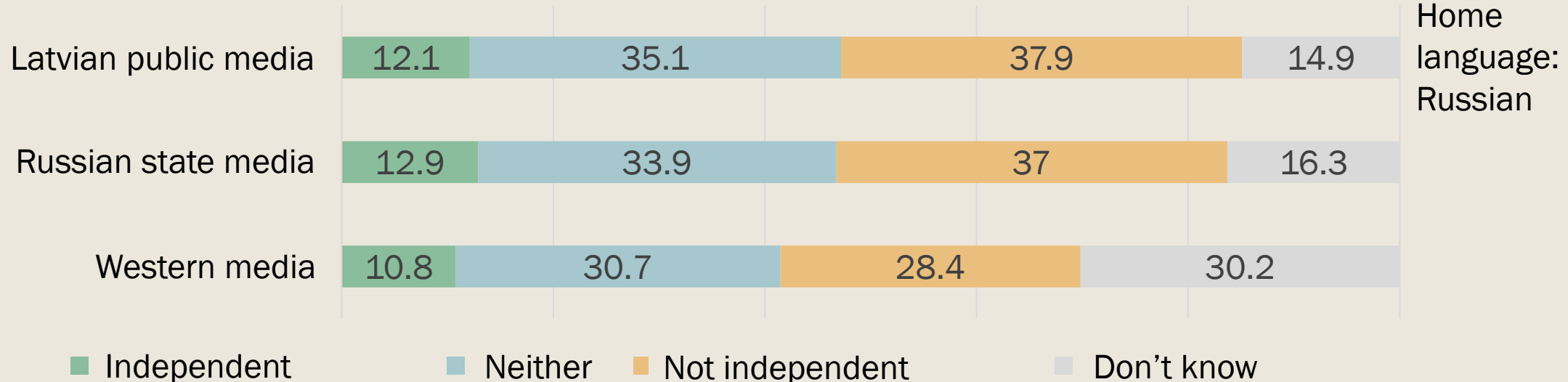
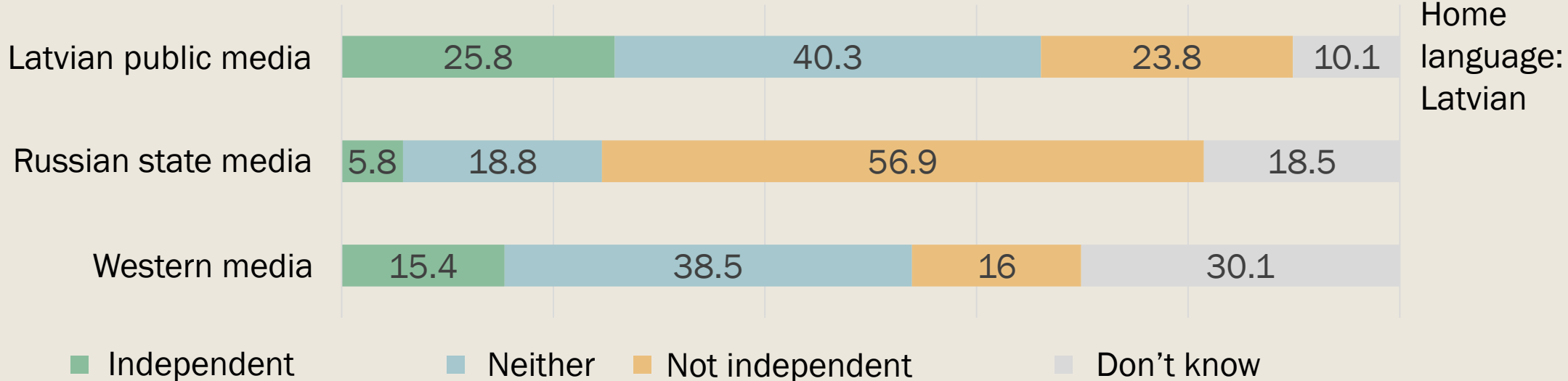
Government should not control (determine) the content of public media even during information warfare, government's interference would be unacceptable (B)



These information sources do/do not provide neutral and impartial views on global politics

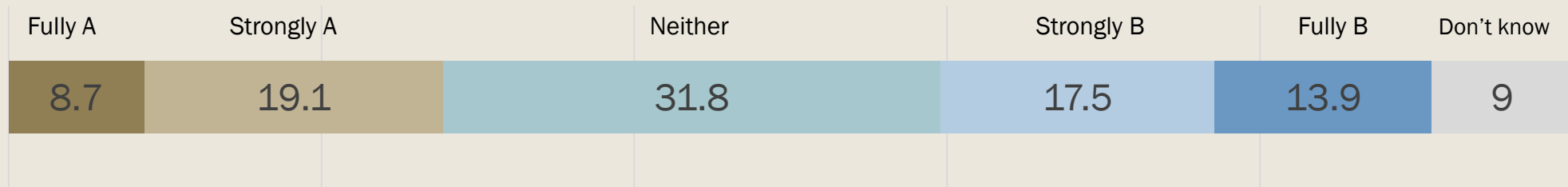


These information sources do/do not provide independent views on global politics



Latvian Television is a state company and represents government's interests and views of the elite (A)

Latvian Television is a public broadcaster and it acts in the interest of the whole society representing the views of the public (B)



Latvian Radio is a state company and represents government's interests and views of the elite (A)

Latvian Radio is a public broadcaster and it acts in the interest of the whole society representing the views of the public (B)



What is your main home language?

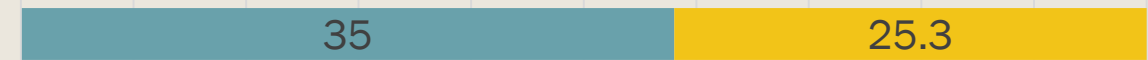
Latvian Television is a state company and represents government's interests and views of the elite



Neither



Latvian Television is a public broadcaster and it acts in the interest of the whole society representing the views of the public



Don't know



■ Home language: Latvian

■ Home language: Russian

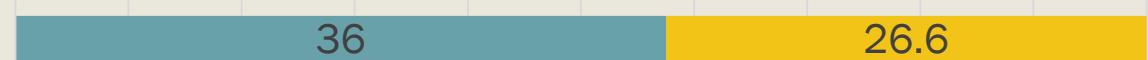
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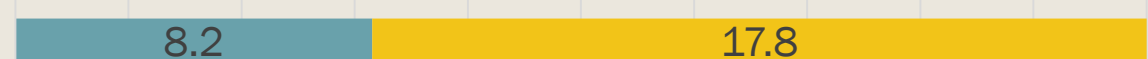
Neither



Latvian Radio is a public broadcaster and it acts in the interest of the whole society representing the views of the public



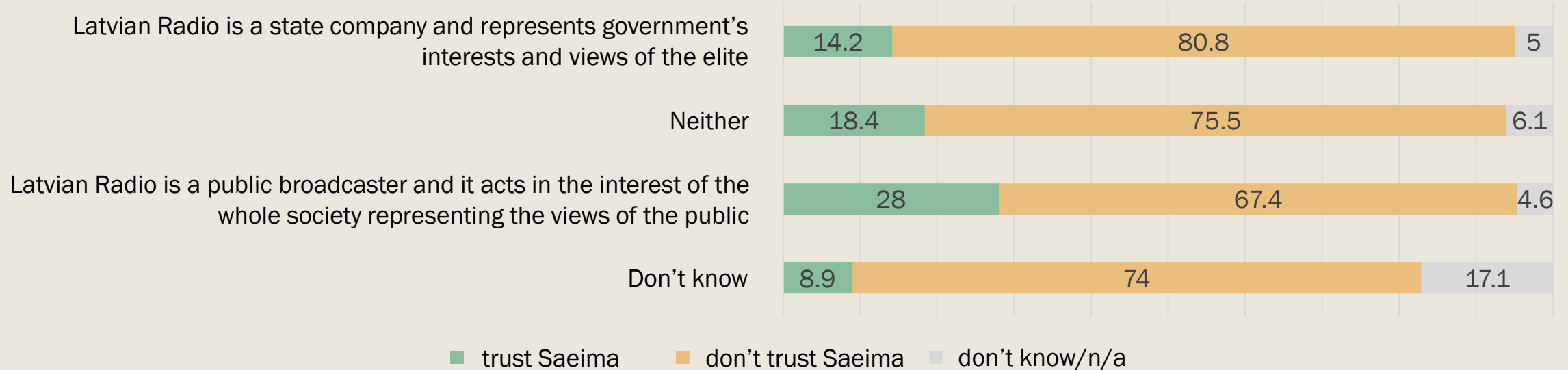
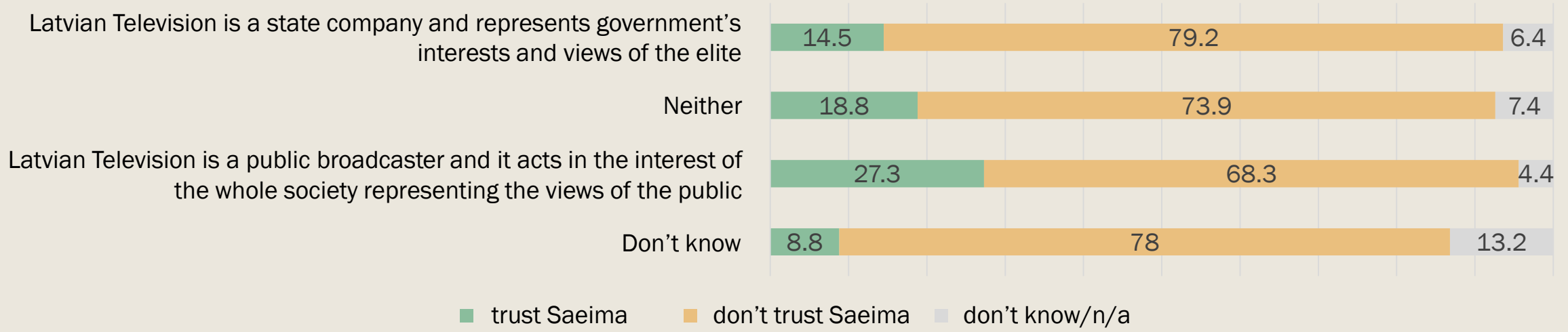
Don't know



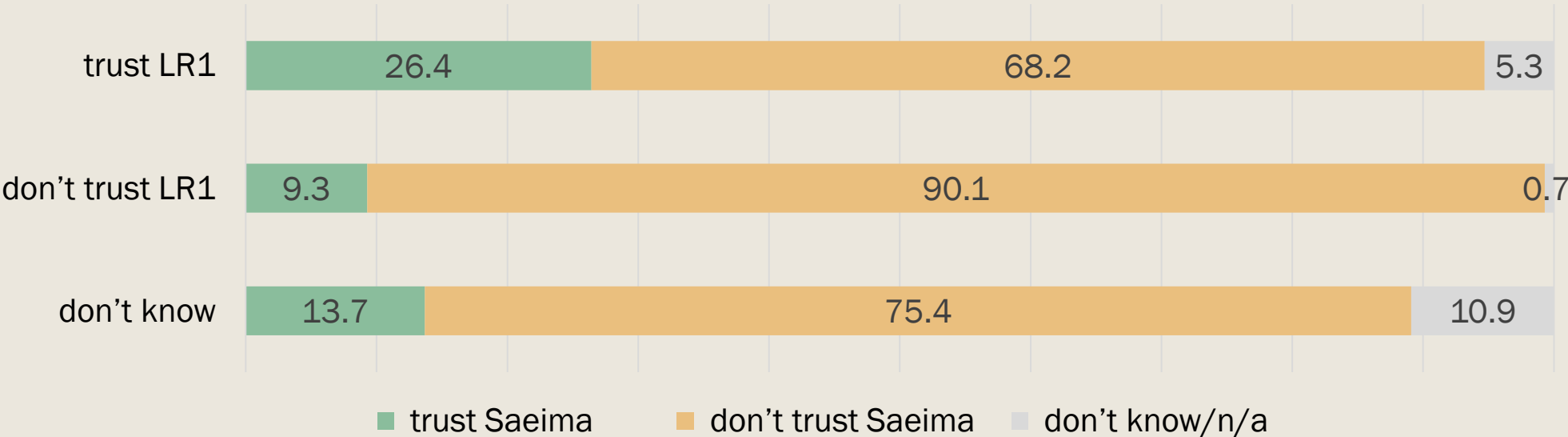
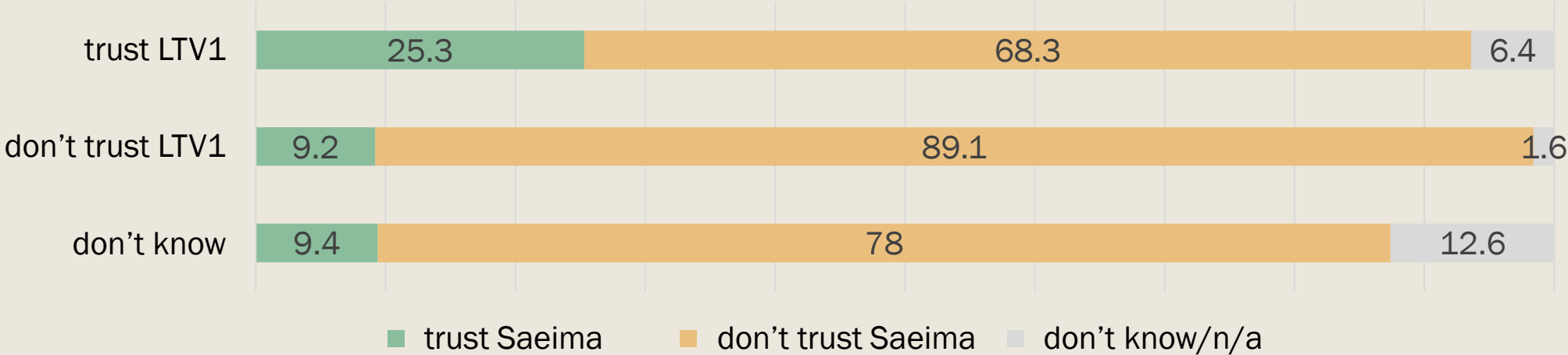
■ Home language: Latvian

■ Home language: Russian

How much do you trust Saeima (Parliament)?



How much do you trust Saeima?

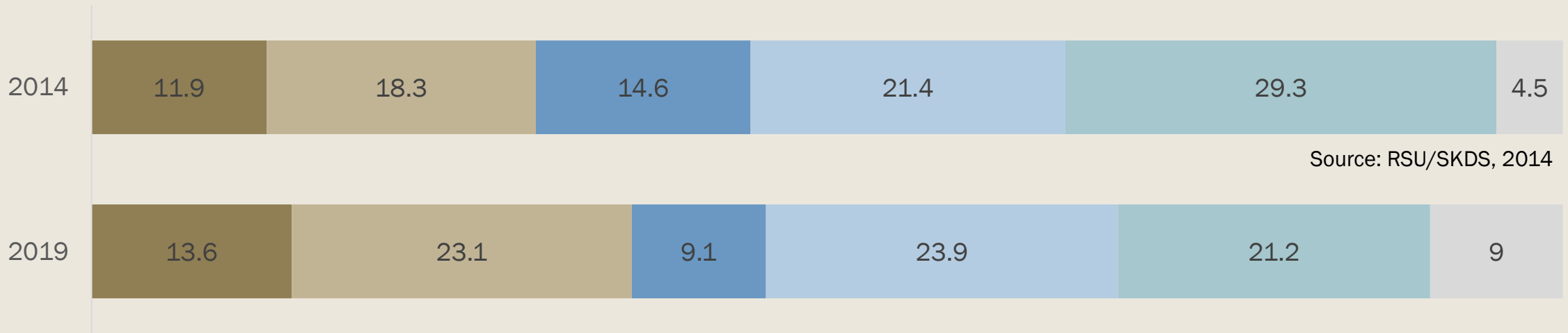




INFORMATION WARFARE: MEDIA POLICY INITIATIVES

Recent events in Ukraine have sparked a discussion about the impact of Russian media on Latvian politics. What should Latvia do first?

Home language:
Latvian

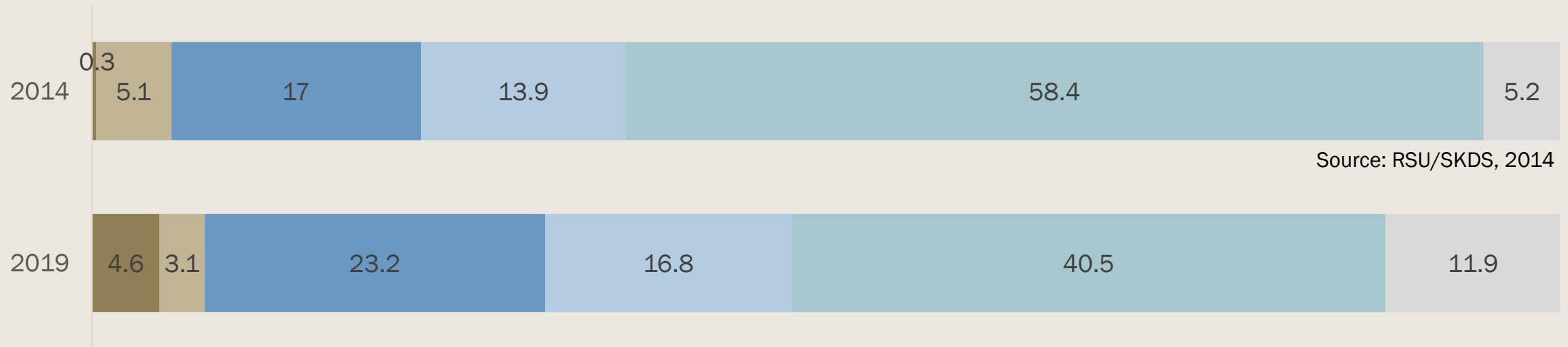


Source: RSU/SKDS, 2014

- Impose restrictions on retransmission of Russian television channels in Latvia
- Impose restrictions on retransmission of Russian television news and current affairs shows in Latvia and allow only entertainment programmes and films
- Create Latvian public service TV channel in Russian
- Find out whether and how Russian television influences views and actions of Latvian population
- Do nothing
- Don't know

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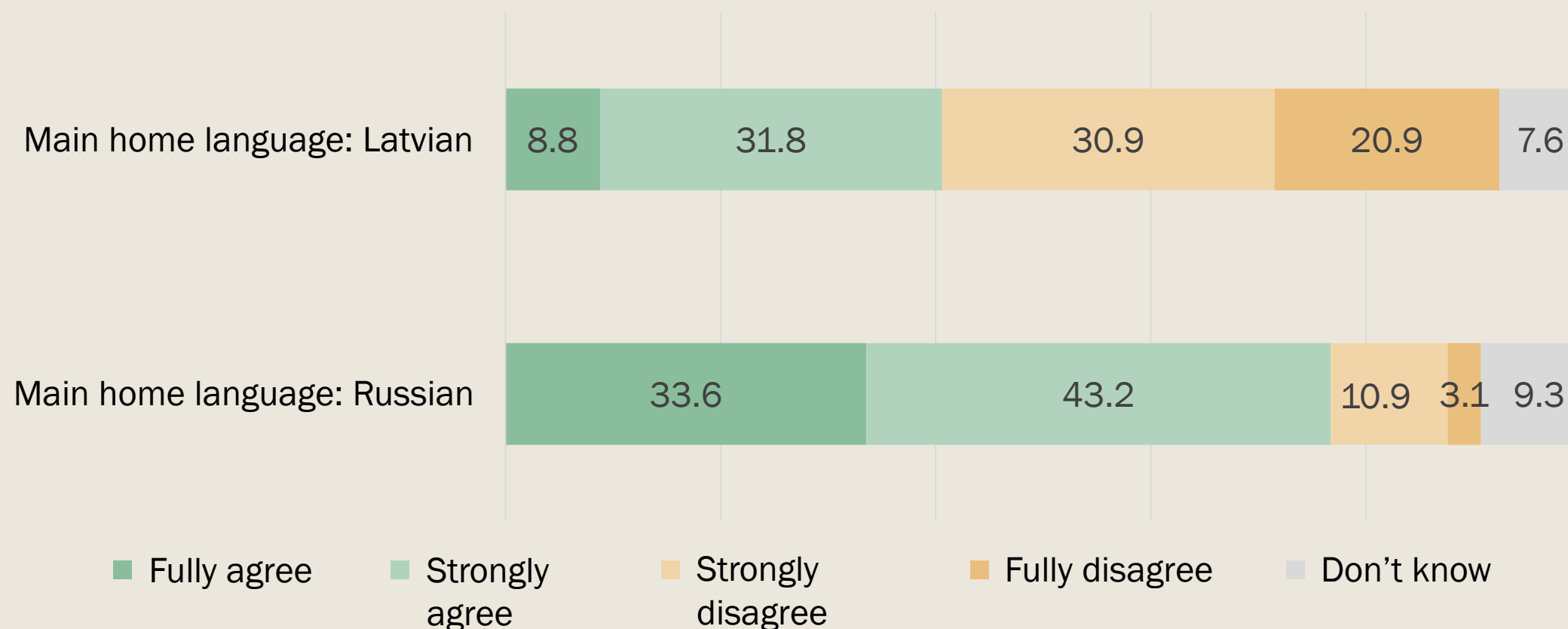
Home language:
Russian



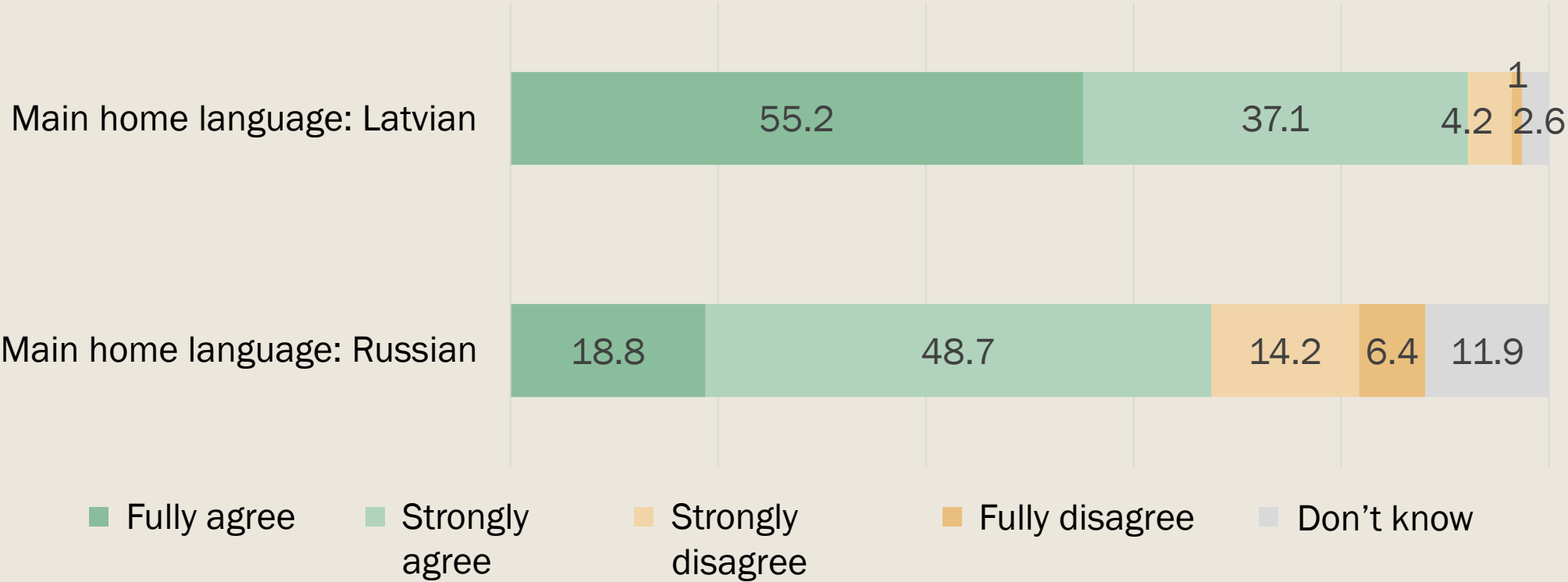
Source: RSU/SKDS, 2014

- Impose restrictions on retransmission of Russian television channels in Latvia
- Impose restrictions on retransmission of Russian television news and current affairs shows in Latvia and allow only entertainment programmes and films
- Create Latvian public TV broadcaster for content in Russian
- Find out whether and how Russian television influences views and actions of Latvian population
- Do nothing
- Don't know

Latvian Television and Latvian Radio should have more programmes in Russian to promote awareness about local processes across all social groups



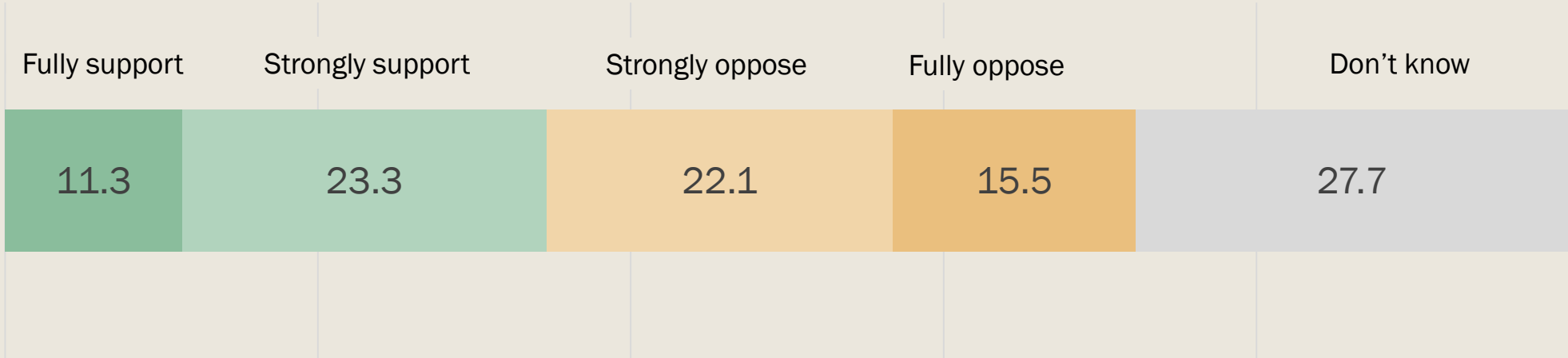
Latvian Television and Latvian Radio should strengthen the Latvian language and culture



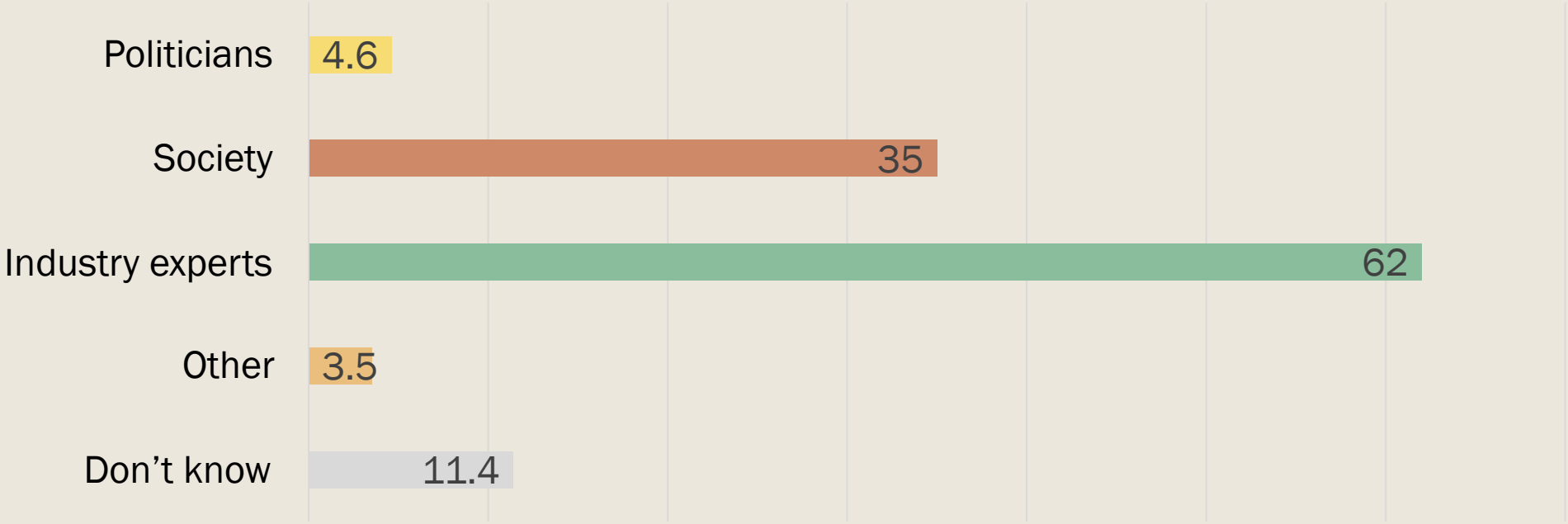


GOVERNANCE/ FUNDING

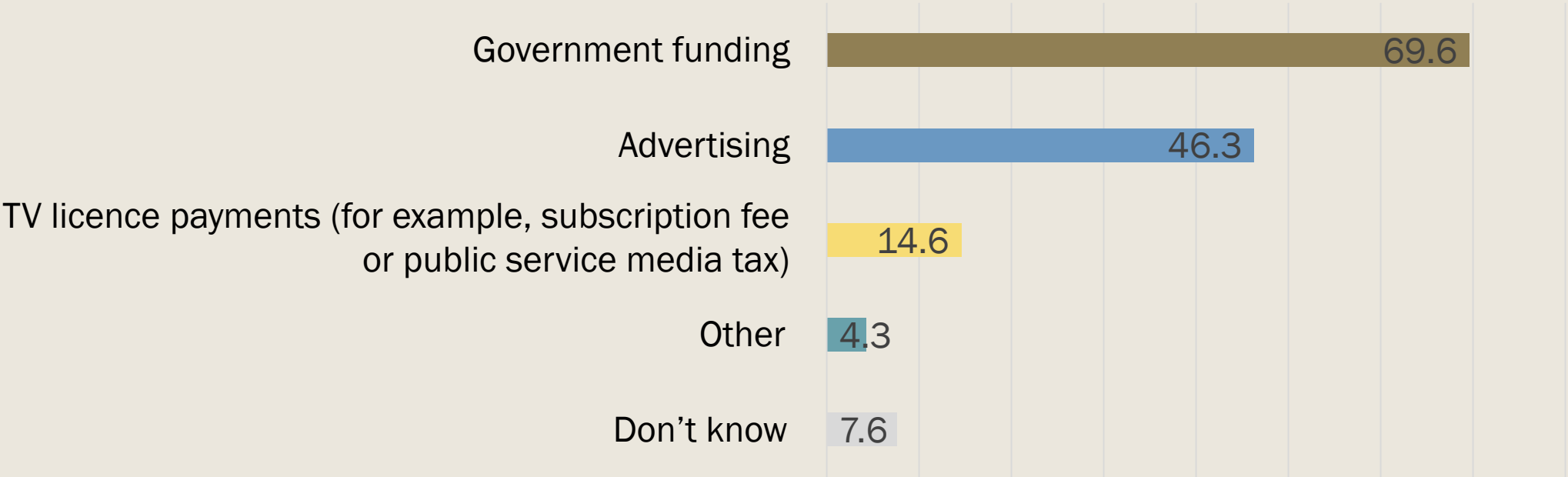
There has been an on-going debate about merging Latvian Television and Latvian Radio for some time. Do you support such proposal?



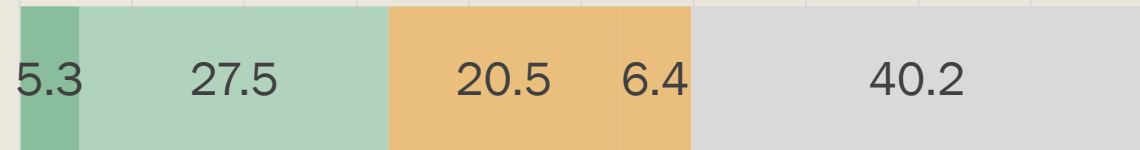
Who do you think should oversee the work of Latvian Television and Latvian Radio?



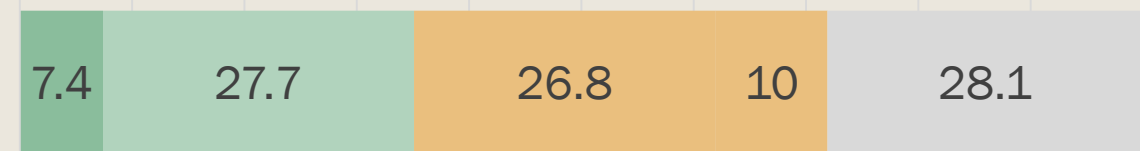
What funding model should Latvian Television and Latvian Radio have?



Public media spend government funding responsibly
- funding is managed appropriately, efficiently and transparently



Public media receive insufficient government funding. Public media should be given more funding even if it would mean less funding for other initiatives



Other private radio and television broadcasters should have the same access to government funding as public media



Fully agree

Strongly agree

Strongly disagree

Fully disagree

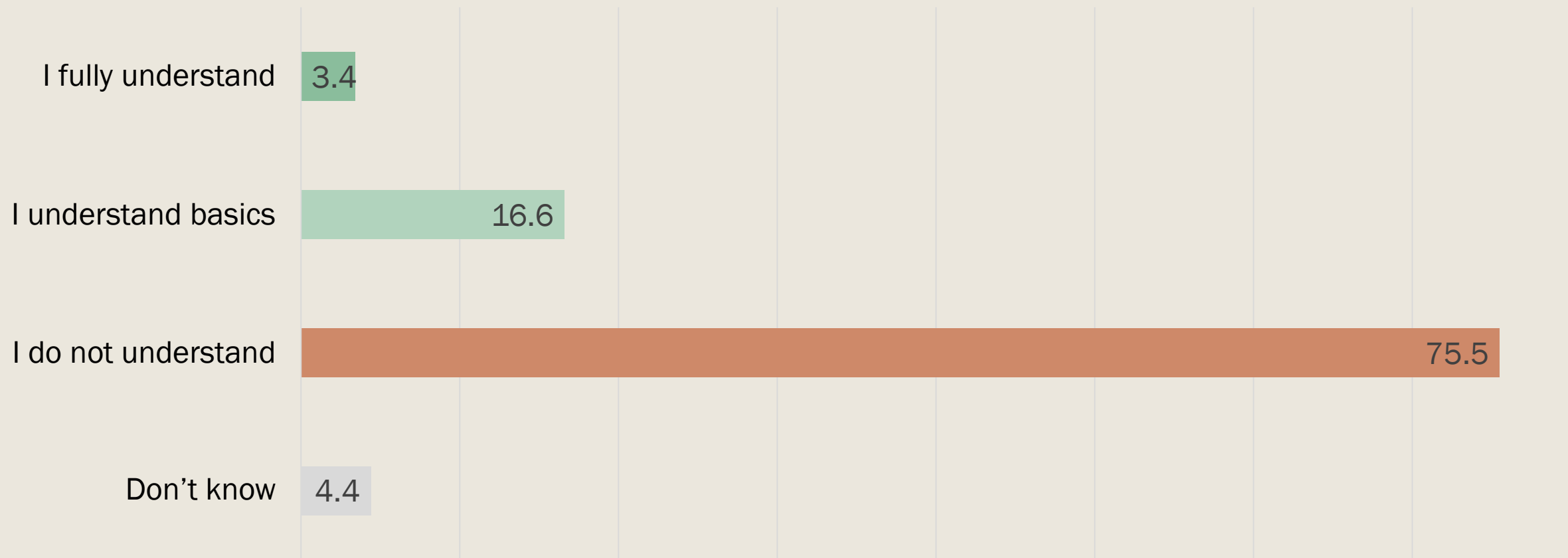
Don't know

35-63 y/o

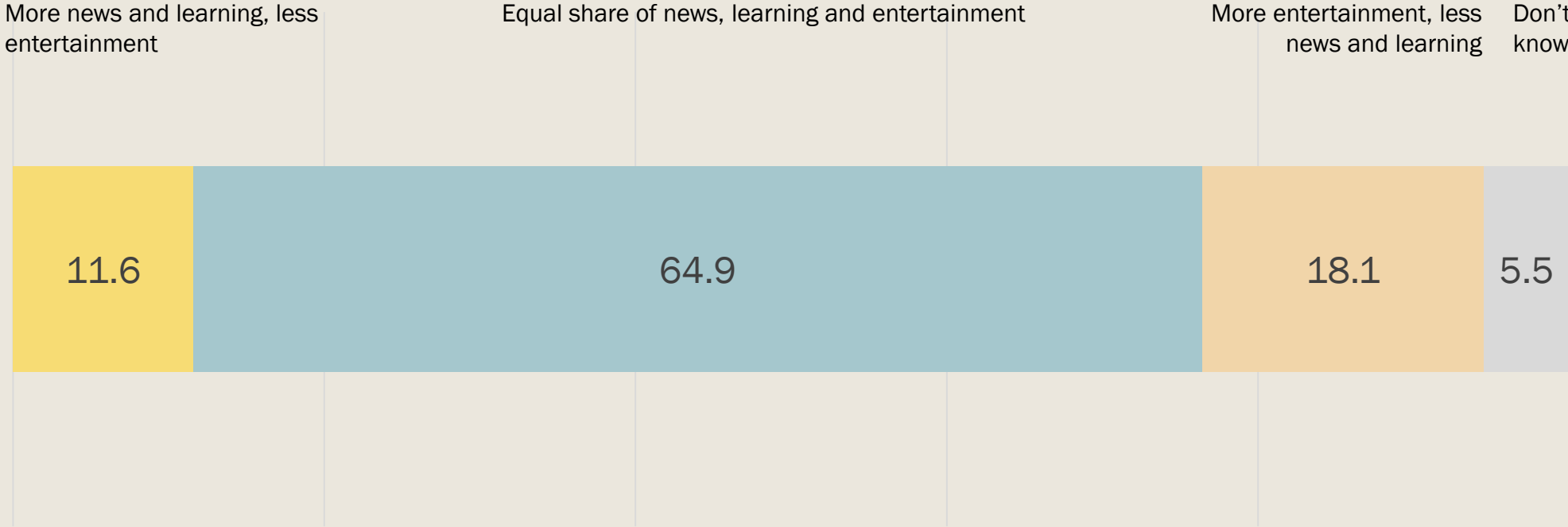
Home language: Latvian

High socioeconomic status

Do you understand how content of Latvian Television and Latvian Radio is approved and by whom (for example, how much news, culture and children's programmes will be included)?



There is a lot of debate around the content of public media: how many news, learning and entertainment programmes Latvian Television and Latvian Radio should offer? What do you think should be the share of each of them?



Conclusions

Survey shows that public service media are considered a cultural institution (culturally significant for Latvia). There are, however, quite mixed sentiments about their political role (contribution of public media to democracy). This has largely been caused by a rather long history of distrust between society and political elite. In other words, sentiments expressed by respondents are indicative not so much of bad image of public media as a force that strengthens democracy but rather a reflection of people being disgruntled about how democracy works in Latvia:

- Likewise, those who tend to trust public media have greater trust in political elite. Those who regard Latvian Television and Latvian Radio as public broadcasters instead of state/government media, i.e. those who think that public media represent the interests of the whole society and not just the government, or communicate only government position, trust political elite more

- this confirms the findings of earlier qualitative researches on viewer attitudes on viewer attitudes (see Juzefovičs, J. (2017) *Broadcasting and National Imagination in Post-Communist Latvia: Defining the Nation, Defining Public Television*. Bristol, Chicago: Intellect). Negativity towards public media is a reflection of anti-establishment sentiment. Respondents who were negative towards public service media also perceive Latvian Television and Latvian Radio as part of the establishment or at least having strong ties with those in power. Critics who have negative perception of public media express their dismay about the work of public media as a form of protest against the current political elite.

- Although the use of and trust in conventional media is shrinking, support for public media has been growing since 2010 when previous survey was completed. The biggest increase in terms of support has been recorded among respondents whose home language is Latvian. Presumably, rising support among loyal audiences of public media can be attributed to geopolitical crisis and information environment turbulences in Latvia and globally in recent years that have reinforced concerns about manipulated information and led to political polarisation of society.
- Support for Latvian Television and Latvian Radio generally correlates with usage: regular users of public media show stronger support for public media, and vice versa. Presumably, support for public media mostly comes from loyal regular users and should not be attributed to growing trust of general public in values promoted by public media. Hence, a part of society fails to recognise the public benefits of public media beyond micro (personal) level.
- Although generally use of public media differs between ethnolinguistic majority and minority (there are fewer regular users of public media in Russian-speaking community), both ethnolinguistic groups show similar attitudes and beliefs about public media:

Conclusions

- society supports ideals of pluralism and other values of journalism like objectivity, impartiality and editorial freedom, while compliance of public media practices with these principles is being criticised
- criticism is accompanied by growing scepticism and even cynicism towards media and journalists, including public media; many think that all media are subjected to political instrumentalization during information warfare
- Both ethnolinguistic groups expect more active response from media policy makers after the Ukraine crisis to counter the Russian propaganda:
 - support for banning of Russian TV channels in Latvia has increased (support for bans in Russian-speaking community still low)
 - while support for new Latvian Television public service channel in Russian has increased among Russian-speaking viewers, support of Latvian-speaking population for such channel has gone down
 - although both communities have different opinion about the role of Russian in public service broadcasting, both groups recognise that public media are responsible for strengthening of Latvian language and culture, which is the cornerstone of the mandate given to Latvian Television and Latvian Radio
- Russian-speaking community is generally unhappy with available services of public media (with exception of Latvian Radio 4 whose work has received rather positive feedback) and would like to see more public media content in Russian
- While traditional ethnolinguistic divide still exists with regard to use of conventional public media, digital offerings, namely news site LSM.lv have equal appeal to both ethnolinguistic groups. Although the total number of users is still low (compared to the size of population regularly using Latvian Television and Latvian Radio), LSM.lv has been able to address both ethnolinguistic groups rather well

Conclusions

- When it comes to use and perception of public service media, there are not only ethnolinguistic and age gaps but also socioeconomic gaps. Regular users of public media who support and view them more positively are mostly respondents who speak Latvian at home, older aged and with higher socioeconomic status. These respondents are also more positive about giving more public funding to public service media
- Survey generally shows that public service media are struggling to cope with increasing diversity of potential audience, especially under increasing personalisation (fragmentation) in media use driven by digital transformation, and that may seriously threaten media legitimacy in the long run.
- This, however, is a challenge faced by Latvian media and also Western European public media who have rich traditions.
- Survey also shows that public media should build closer dialogue with society, public media should focus more on its ties with the society: public media should explain and promote their role more actively, should give more information about their work and improve transparency:
 - many Latvian residents claim they have little information about the work of public media: how public service remit is decided and how public media spend public funding. There are very few people who think public media have self-criticism, i.e. public media actively report on their work, respond to complaints and are open to criticism
 - there is a considerable part of Latvia's population that thinks Latvian Television and Latvian Radio are both public and state broadcasters in terms of how they work. That can only mean that people have rather mixed feelings about how public broadcasters work, and people have little knowledge of main differences between public media from state media
- Latvian residents support the existing public media funding model where broadcasters are given public funding and opportunity to make additional funding from advertising. The idea to introduce license fee or other similar kind of tax to fund public media is generally not supported by the public. Respondents prefer that public service media are monitored by professional industry experts. Population is completely against any kind of political oversight. Support for public oversight over Latvian Television and Latvian Radio is rather weak. This may be attributed to lack of active civic engagement culture in Latvia.