



YURIY FEDKOVYCH
CHERNIVTSI
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

DECOLONIZING UKRAINE'S PAST:

Rethinking World War II
Memorials during the War

Nazarii KHRYSTAN

As part of our project we are exploring the following:

01

What monuments from this period exist?

02

How they can be transformed to truly honor the participants and victims of the war without imperial narratives?

03

What legal framework exists to support this process?

04

Successful examples of working with such objects in Ukraine and other European countries.

The rethinking of Ukrainian monuments from the Second World War has long been an overdue issue for the Ukrainian nation. We are beginning to understand why these monuments do not always reflect the values of Ukrainian society. Instead, they often carry meanings imposed by Russians and were created to propagate the interests of the empire.





What is wrong with Soviet monuments?

The complexity of rethinking World War II monuments, it is important to consider the role that Soviet-era monuments, particularly those dedicated to the "**Great Patriotic War**" played among other memorials in Ukraine before independence.



Purely ideological purpose

During the 1950s and 1960s, 47,200 objects were added to the register of immovable historical and cultural heritage protected by the state. Among them, 80% were graves of Soviet soldiers, partisans, and victims of Nazism.



The myth of victory

The memorial complexes adorned with inscriptions about the mythical Soviet homeland and anti-bourgeois nationalism. Many also use inaccurate terminology – referring to the war as the "Great Patriotic War" instead of World War II, dating it from 1941 instead of 1939, and downplaying the number of victims.

How are Ukrainians laws regarding Soviet heritage changing?

- **The Revolution of Dignity** gave momentum to the removal of Soviet markers from our public spaces. In 2015, the Law of Ukraine on the Condemnation of Communist and National-Socialist Regimes was adopted.
- In March 2023, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law "On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and the Decolonization of Toponymy."



As part of our project, the following question and response options were prepared in **Chernivtsi region**:

How should Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II be treated, in your opinion?

Survey Participants:

The survey included **2,114** residents of the Chernivtsi region categorized by age:

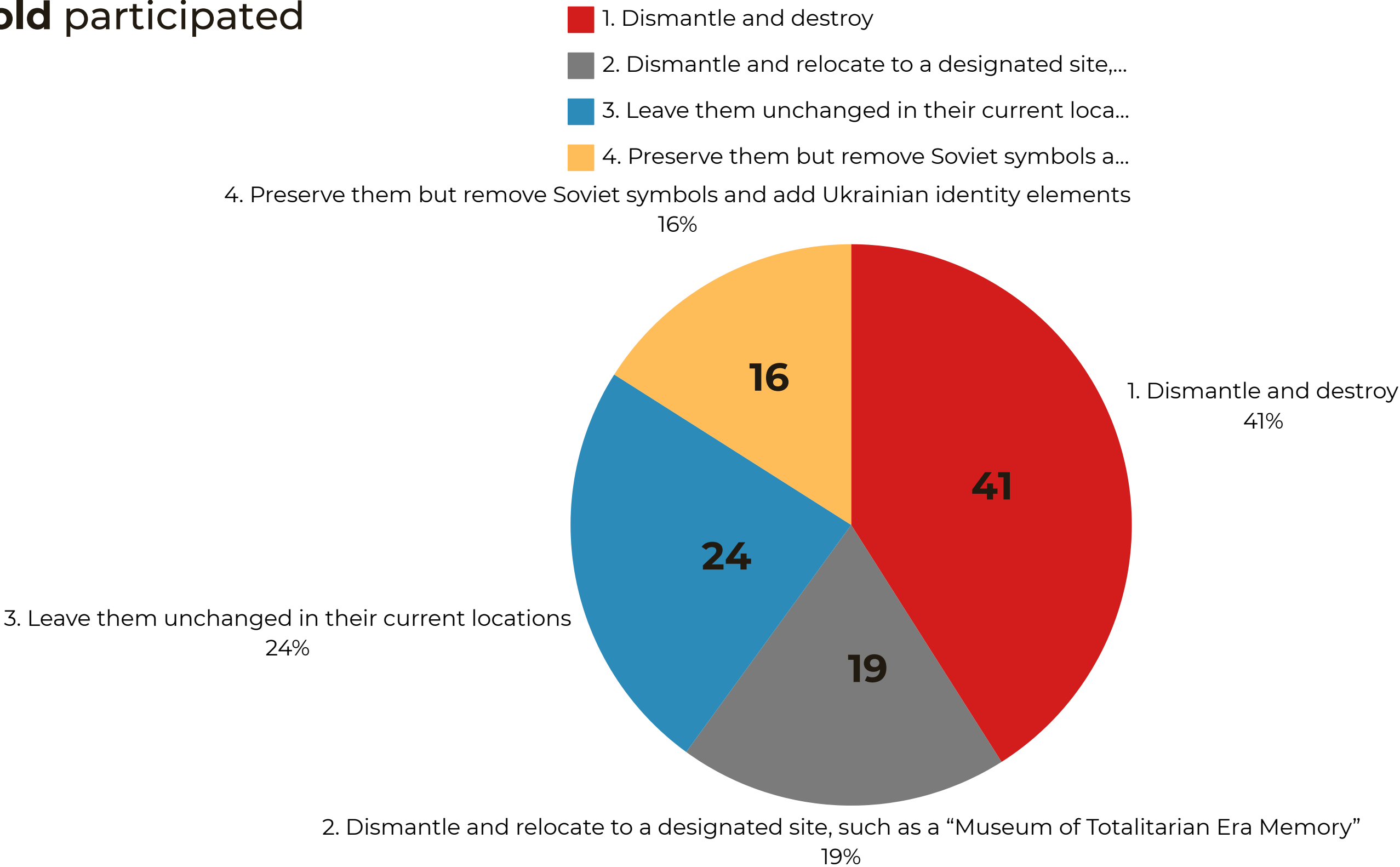
- 60+ years: 562 respondents.
- 40–60 years: 431 respondents.
- 20–40 years: 523 respondents.
- Under 20 years: 598 respondents.

Options:

- **DISMANTLE AND DESTROY.**
- **DISMANTLE AND MOVE TO A SPECIALLY DESIGNATED "MUSEUM OF TOTALITARIAN EPOCH MEMORY."**
- **LEAVE UNCHANGED WHERE THE MONUMENTS ARE CURRENTLY LOCATED.**
- **LEAVE BUT REMOVE SOVIET SYMBOLS AND ADD UKRAINIAN IDENTITY ELEMENTS.**

How should Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II be treated, in your opinion?

562 respondents **over 60 years old** participated in the survey



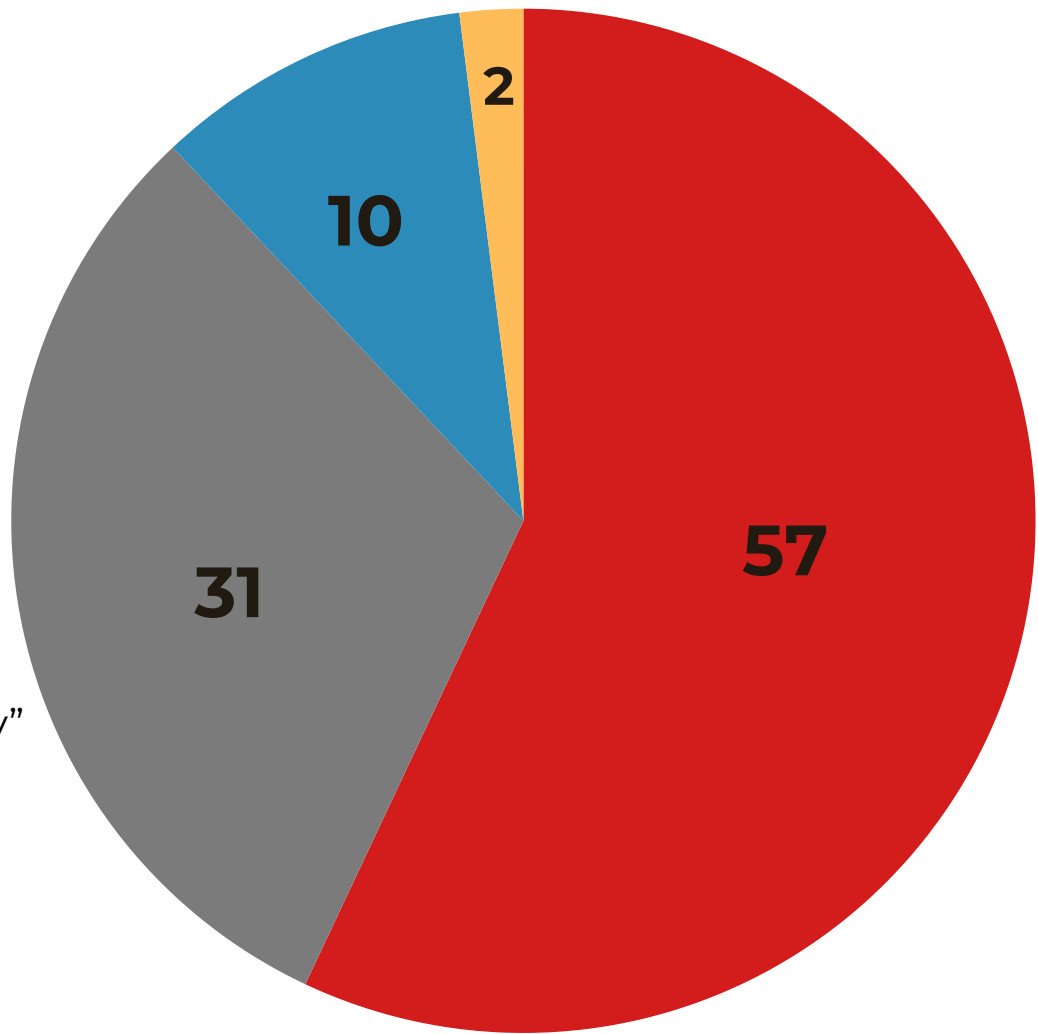
How should Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II be treated, in your opinion?

431 respondents **40-60 years old** participated in the survey

- 1. Dismantle and destroy
- 2. Dismantle and relocate to a designated site,...
- 3. Leave them unchanged in their current loca...
- 4. Preserve them but remove Soviet symbols a...

3. Leave them unchanged in their current locations
10%

2. Dismantle and relocate to a designated site, such as a “Museum of Totalitarian Era Memory”
31%

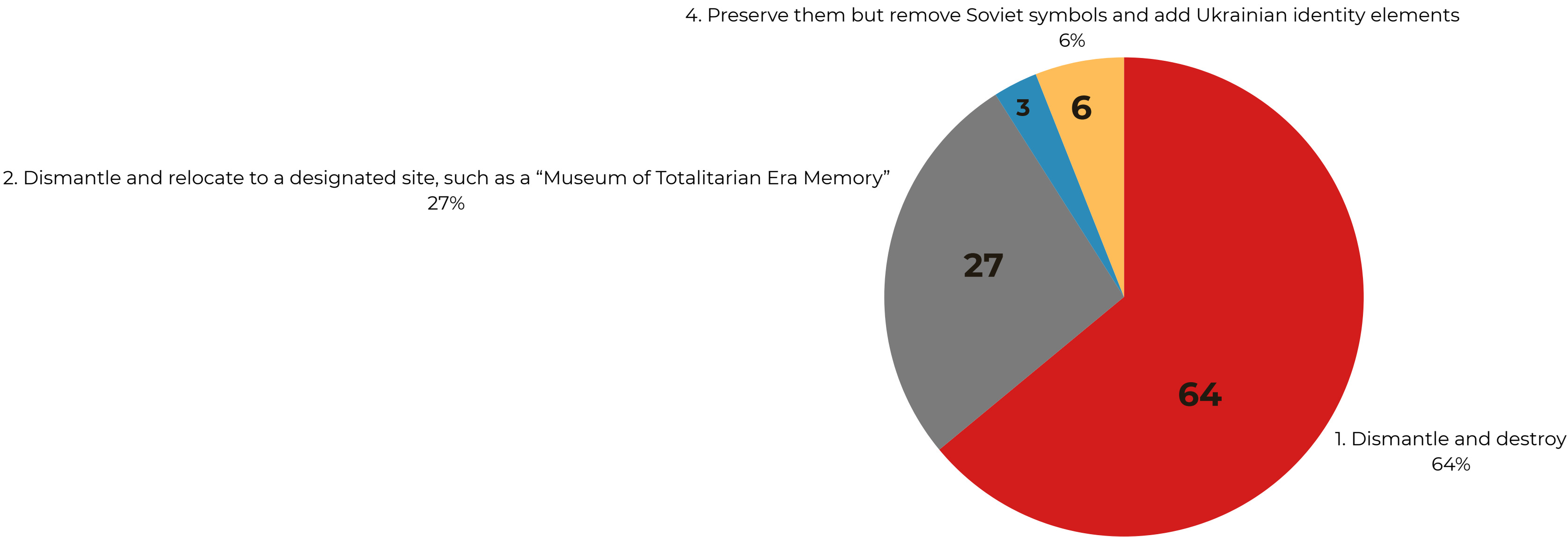


1. Dismantle and destroy
57%

How should Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II be treated, in your opinion?

523 respondents **20-40 years old** participated in the survey

- 1. Dismantle and destroy
- 2. Dismantle and relocate to a designated site,...
- 3. Leave them unchanged in their current loca...
- 4. Preserve them but remove Soviet symbols a...

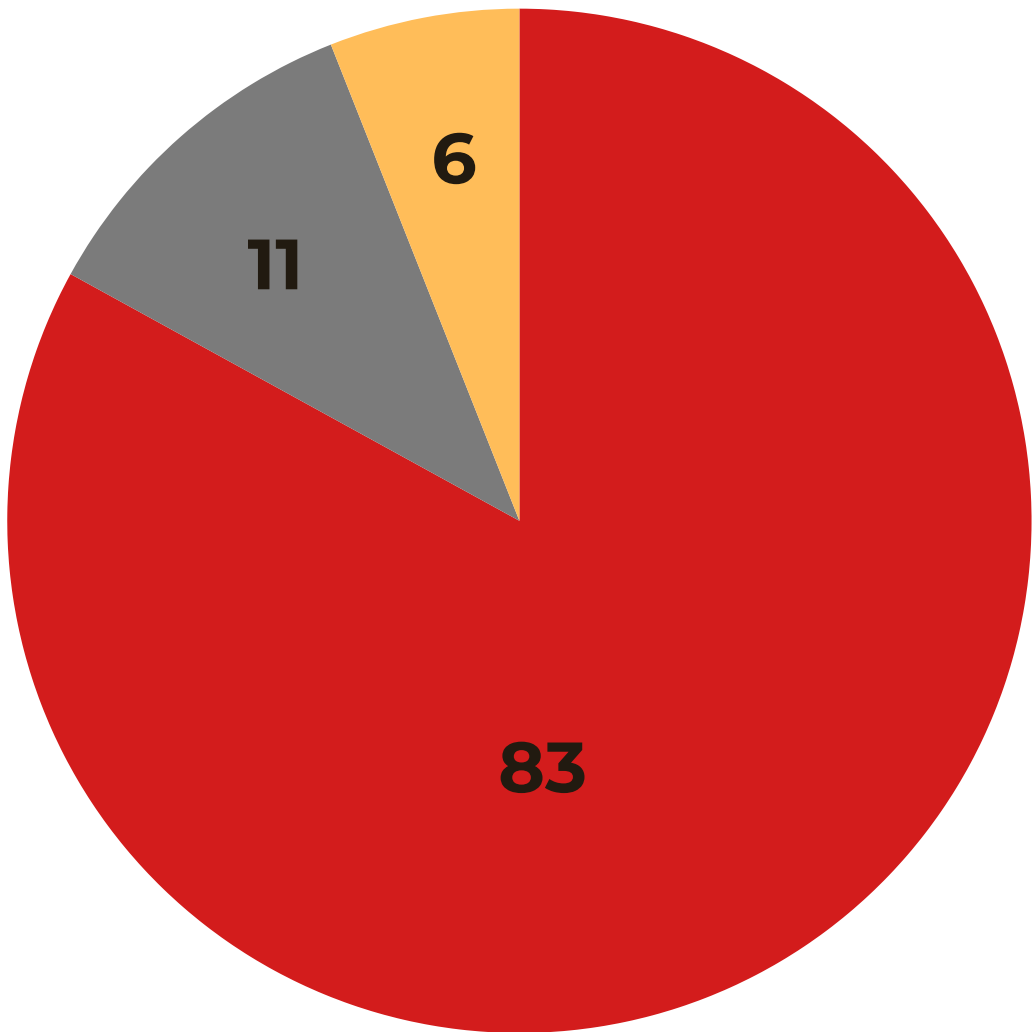


How should Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II be treated, in your opinion?

598 respondents under 20 years old participated in the survey

- 1. Dismantle and destroy
- 2. Dismantle and relocate to a designated site,...
- 4. Preserve them but remove Soviet symbols a...

2. Dismantle and relocate to a designated site, such as a “Museum of Totalitarian Era Memory”
11%

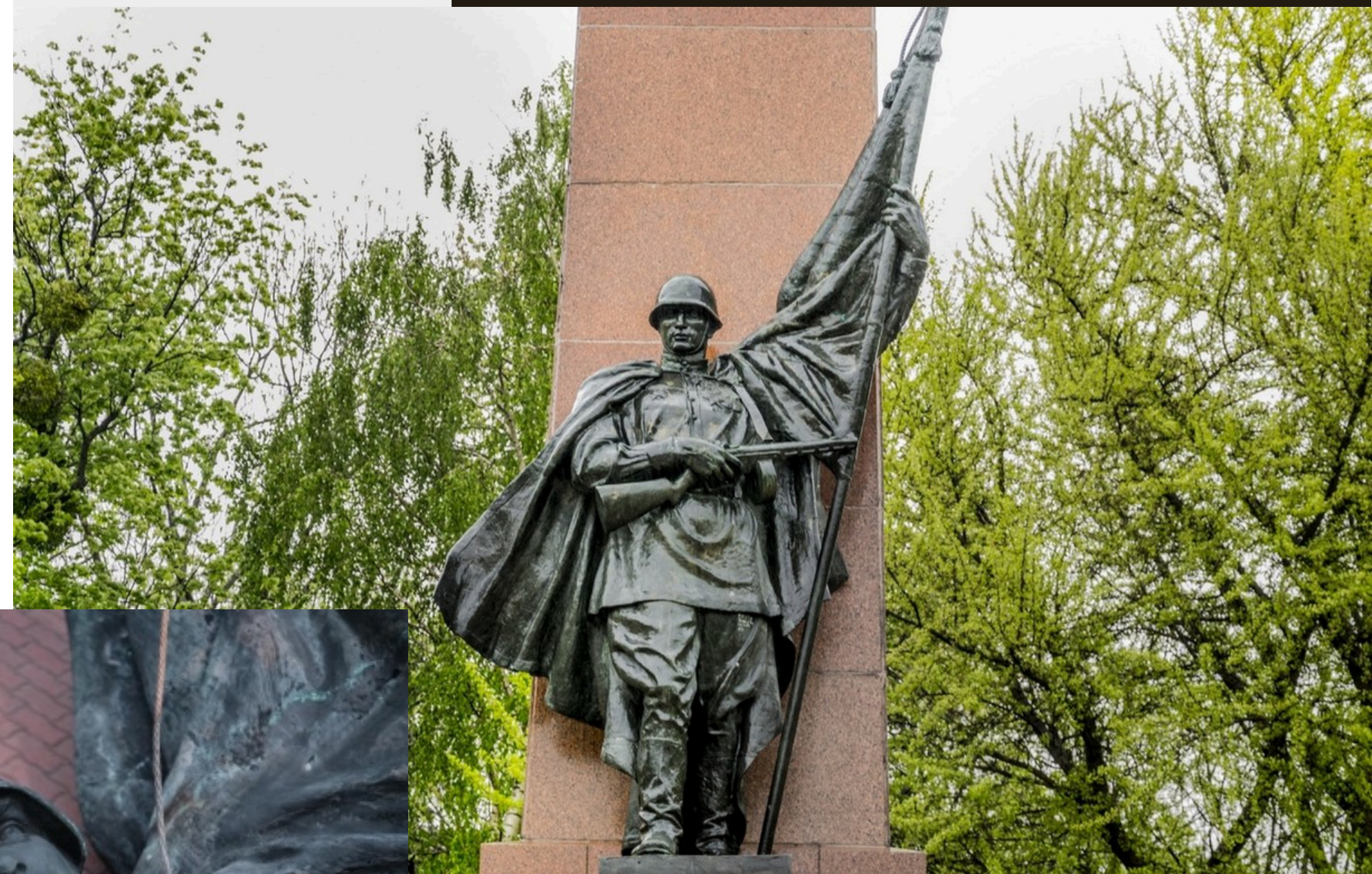


1. Dismantle and destroy
83%

Monument of “VICTORY”

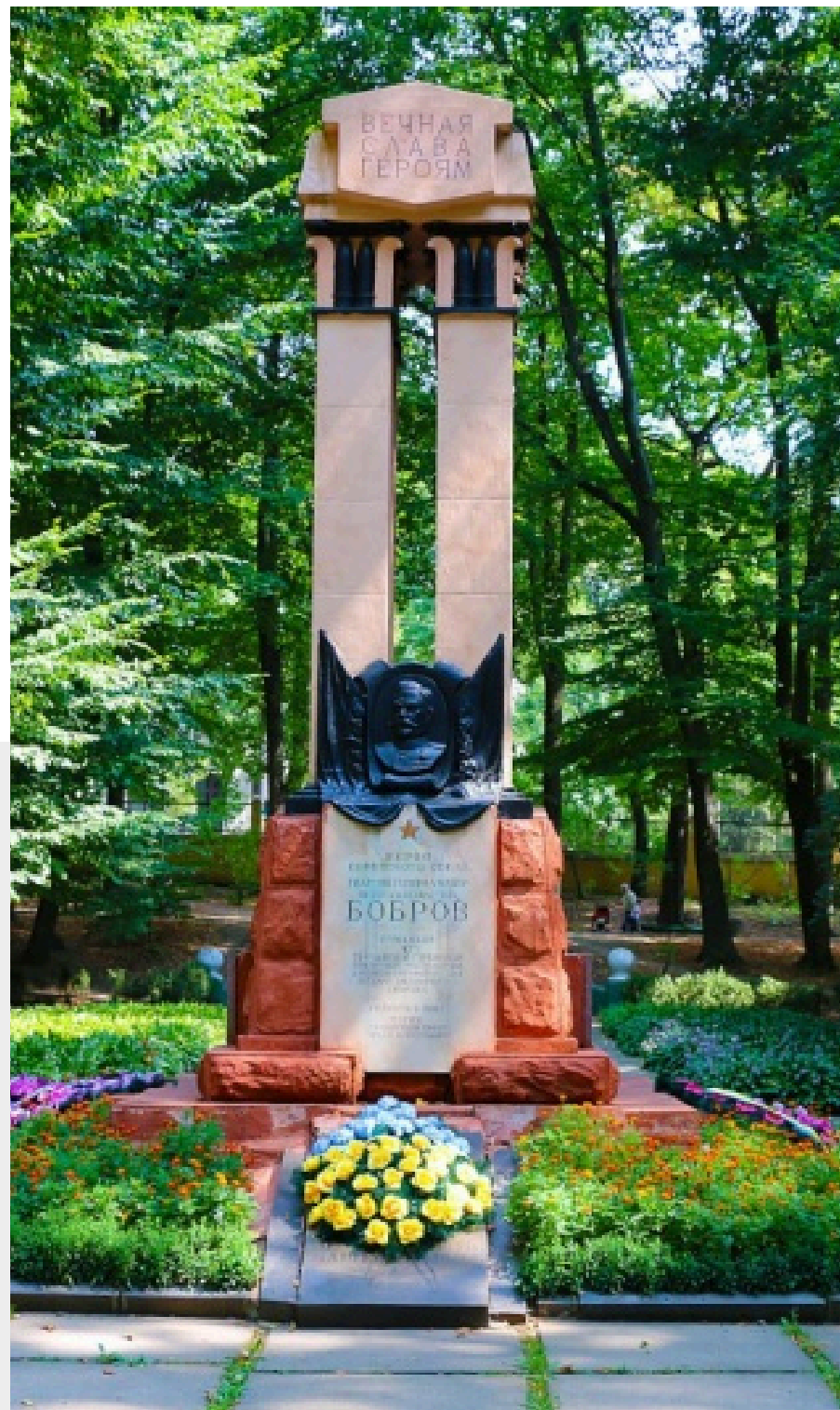
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Dismantling at summer of 2022



Mass grave of Soviet officers (General F. Bbrov and Colonel L. Voloshyn)

After opening the graves
(spring of 2023) **no remains** were found



Conclusion

Across all age groups, attitudes toward Soviet memorial objects vary based on personal experiences, historical perceptions, and the current sociopolitical climate.

However, a clear trend **emerges**:

- **The Older Generation (60+)**: The most conservative and inclined to partial changes. They value the Soviet legacy more due to personal experience and memories:
- **The Middle Generation (40-60)**: A balance between radicalism and preserving history. They support dismantling with relocation to museums.
- **The Youth (20-40)**: Categorically and radically reject Soviet symbolism. They strive for a complete break with the past.
- **The Youngest Generation (under 20)**: The most radical in their views. They perceive Soviet memorials as symbols of a hostile ideology and see no place for them in modern society.

