

AUDIT OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT - SERBIA 2017

The Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) in partnership with the agency Ipsos Strategic Marketing has conducted the fifth consecutive “Audit of political engagement”. This Audit was backed by the British Embassy in Belgrade.

The aim of this audit was to determine the level of the Serbian citizens’ readiness to participate in democratic processes, that imply a series of different forms of citizen participation – from voting at the elections to initiating concrete campaigns; and to monitor the changes in the degree of participation in time.

This audit represents a specific overview of the democratic situation in the society. The extent to which the citizens are ready to engage in social processes, to exercise their civil rights and to influence the decision makers is an indicator of “the state of health” of a society.

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METHODOLOGY

The citizen participation in democratic processes was examined with three groups of indicators:

- Knowledge of and interest in politics, political system and work of democratic institutions in Serbia
- Engagement and participation in democratic processes
- Satisfaction with the work of the Parliament and confidence in the efficiency of the civic engagement

Data collection method: face-to-face interviews conducted in respondents' households by using a structured questionnaire

Fieldwork dates:

from September 15th to September 25th 2013;

from August 21st to August 25th 2014;

from July 18th to July 23rd 2015;

from September 22nd to September 28th 2016;

from October 21st to October 26th 2017

Sample size:

2013. n=1060

2014. n=1040

2015. n=1014

2016. n=1060

2017. n=1078

Sample universe: Citizens of Serbia aged 18+

Sample design: Three-stage random stratified representative sample

Strata: Regions (Belgrade, Vojvodina, western Serbia, eastern Serbia, central Serbia, southern Serbia)

Stages (sample type and selection method):

- First stage sample unit: Territories of polling stations (probability proportional to size -PPS, Cumulative method - Lachirie)
- Second stage sample unit: Households (randomly selected first sample unit which shall not be replaced in the population pool)
- Third stage unit: Respondents within a household

Post-stratification: by gender, age and region

Sampling error: $\pm 3.31\%$ (margin of error)

NOTE: Parliamentary elections were held in March 2014 between the first two audits; extraordinary parliamentary elections were held in April 2016 between the fourth and the fifth audit, presidential elections were held in April 2017, whereas the new Government of Serbia was formed in June 2017.

MAIN FINDINGS SUMMARY

The results of the audit conducted in 2017 show that the general trend of positive changes noted in the previous year had ceased. In relation to 2016, changes in the extent of engagement and participation of citizens in democratic processes vary through different indicators in a non-systematic manner.

The most noticeable negative trend was observed in the confidence of citizens that their own engagement can change things, whereas the most striking positive trend was reported in terms of supporting democracy as the best political system for Serbia.

Despite the decrease in confidence that at this moment civil engagement can affect changes (or perhaps precisely because of that), a positive trend of increasing the percentage of citizens supporting democracy as the best political system for Serbia continued. On the other hand, the percentage of citizens who believe that only a “firm hand” policy can get us out of the crisis decreased. For the first time this year, a larger percentage of citizens support democracy (51%) compared to the “firm hand” policy (44%).

Positive developments were recorded in terms of knowledge that citizens have about topics related to politics, political system and public authorities in Serbia, as well as in terms of interest in such topics.

On the other hand, however, the percentage of citizens who declared that they had participated in at least one action related to politics, problem-solving and decision-making process has decreased, as well as the percentage of those who expressed the desire to influence the decisions of the authorities at the local and national level.

The percentage of citizens who believe that they can change something in this country by their engagement decreased strikingly. In comparison to all actions we follow-up in this audit, the confidence in citizen engagement efficiency has been reduced this year and is at the lowest level in the last five years (which is the period included in our audits).

KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST

As in previous years, the majority of citizens assess that they have no or very little knowledge about topics related to politics, political system and public authorities. However, the number of citizens who believe that they have moderate knowledge has kept mildly rising for the fourth year in a row.

Citizens assess that they are best-informed about the politics in Serbia and about the local self-government in their community (48% and 46% believe to be at least fairly well-informed).

Between 60% and 70% of citizens assess that they have very little knowledge (or no knowledge at all) about the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, about the budget inflow at the national and local level, about the EU accession negotiations, about the role of MPs and political parties programmes.

Proportionally to somewhat better assessments of personal knowledge, the actual knowledge that was measured through two “knowledge quizzes” increased, too, so that a mild upward trend in general knowledge systematically continues. In the first quiz, 40% of respondents answered correctly to at least 4 (or more) questions out of 8. In the second quiz, 39% of citizens gave correct answers to 3 (or more) questions out of 5.

This year, we wanted to evaluate the citizens’ knowledge about the contents of the EU accession negotiations. It turned out that less than one third of respondents (31%) knew that in the accession process Serbia negotiated uniquely about the time frame in which it could adopt the EU standards and regulations.

As in previous years, citizens expressed little interest in topics related to politics and the work of democratic institutions in Serbia, but a mild upward trend has been observed in relation to 2016 and now there is clearly noticeable trend of a mild but systematic increase in interest in the last five years.

Citizens are most interested in topics concerning the municipality they live in: the budget inflow in their respective local communities (40%), the elections for the assembly of municipality they live in (39%), while they are less interested in the work the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection (21%), in political parties programmes (22%) in the work and organisation of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia (20%).

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

When it comes to citizen participation in democratic processes, the elections remain the only activity that includes the majority of respondents.

The percentage of citizens who participate in other actions related to problem solving and decision-making is considerably smaller, even smaller compared to last year. Yet again the number of citizens who expressed the desire to influence the decisions of the authorities at the local and national level slightly dropped.

A small number of citizens (13%) participate in initiatives regarding the problem solving in their respective local community. On the other hand, as in previous years, a considerably larger number of citizens (48%) declared that they had participated in at least one concrete action if it included broader initiatives and actions in relation to politics and decision-making in addition to initiatives and actions concerning concrete problem solving in their respective local community. **However, if discussing politics with other interlocutors is excluded, only 28% of citizens participated in at least one action.**

As in last two years, the action in which the citizens were most involved were discussions about politics with others (37%), which is slightly less than in previous years. Besides discussing politics, the only action which involved the citizens to a fairly noticeable extent is petition signing (17%).

In relation to last year, there is a slight downward trend in the percentage of citizens who wish to influence the decision-making at the national level (28% vs. 23%), as well as in the percentage of citizens who wish to influence the decision-making at the local level (34% vs. 32%).

SATISFACTION WITH THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN THE EFFICIENCY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Dissatisfaction with the work of the Parliament and of the Government has increased in relation to last year. As in previous years, respondents are somewhat more satisfied with the work of the Government than with the work of the Parliament, but in both cases, there are more citizens who are dissatisfied than those who are satisfied, with the number of those who are dissatisfied constantly growing. 41% of respondents express their dissatisfaction with the work of the Parliament, while 19% are satisfied; 39% of citizens are dissatisfied with the work of the Government, whereas 28% are satisfied.

General trust in politicians and the confidence that MPs represent the interests of citizens in the Parliament is still very low. There are some variations in comparison to last year, but they are mostly negative.

- The majority of citizens (64%) think that politicians do not tell them the truth (not at all or not entirely), and a mere 8% think that they (mostly) do.
- Only 14% of respondents think that MPs represent the interests of common people in the Parliament of Serbia (vs. last year's 18%)
- One in five (21%) think that the Parliament efficiently oversees the work of the Government ensuring that the Government pursues its policies in order to realise benefits for all citizens (vs. last year's 24%)

Citizens' confidence that by engaging in certain actions can bring about changes decreased systematically in all audited actions and has reached the lowest level in the last five years.

In comparison to last year, the biggest drop in confidence was noted in citizens' belief that they can influence changes through three types of actions:

- by diverting media attention to citizens' problems - this year 28% of citizens believe in the efficiency of such actions, whereas last year 39% believed;
- by participating in organised pressures that citizens can coerce to the Parliament or by participation in public hearings – this year 15% of citizens believe in such actions compared to the last year's 27%;
- by contacting MPs in the Parliament – this year 8% of citizens believe in this type of actions, whereby last year that percentage amounted to 19%.

Similarly to previous years, respondents believe that that can initiate changes in the state by voting at the local elections (38%) and at the national elections (37%), however these percentages are smaller than last year (respectively 41% and 40%)

As in previous years, citizens rather verbally expressed their readiness to participate in actions aiming to change things in the country and in their local community than engaged in concrete actions, or expressed belief that such actions could actually bring about changes.

Nonetheless, the only action in which the majority of citizens expressed readiness to participate is petition signing (58%). On the other hand, the citizens' readiness to support an action initiated by an independent institution decreased (34% vs. 29%), to address an MP or local councillor (33% vs. 22%) to come forward to a non-governmental organisation (21% vs. 15%). Only one in four expressed readiness to exercise their right to control the budget at the state level, while 29% of respondents were ready to control the budget of their respective local community.

MAIN FINDINGS

KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN POLITICAL TOPICS

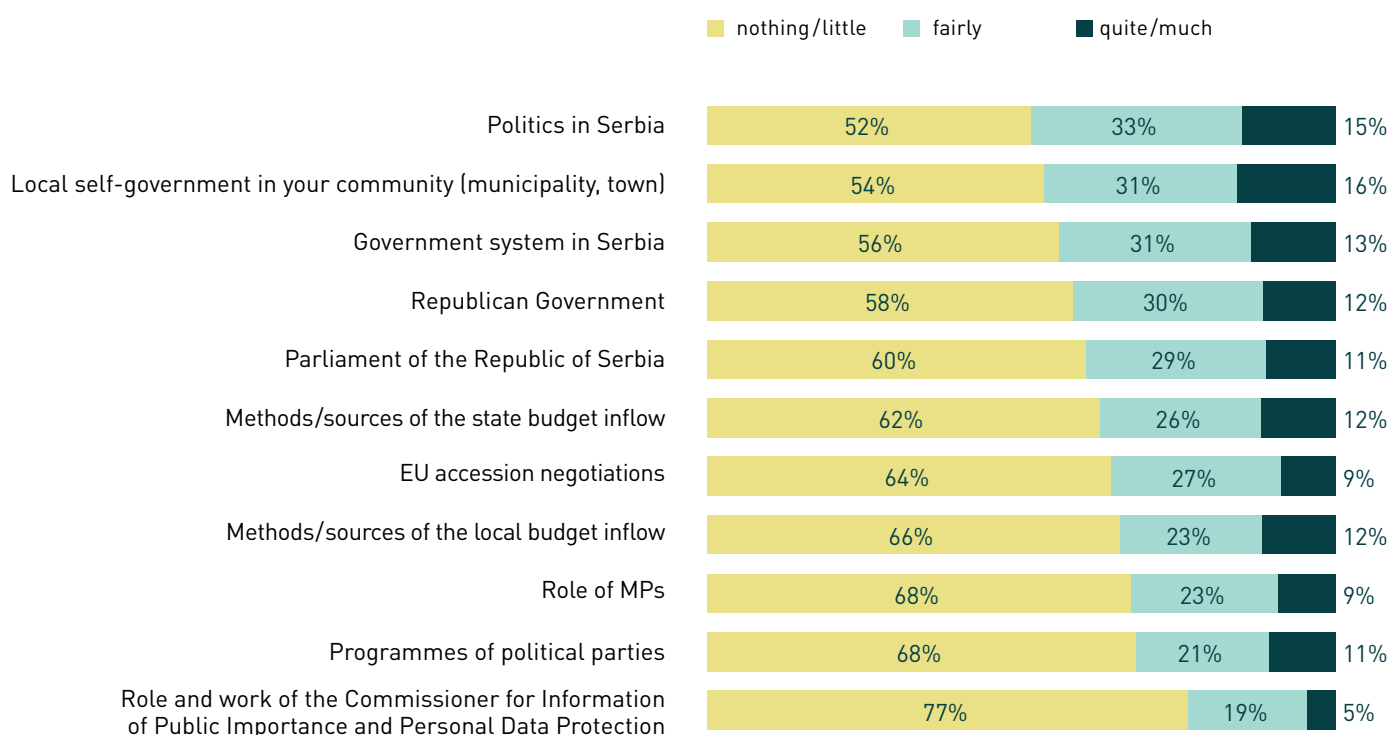
Self-assessment of knowledge

As in previous years, the majority of citizens believe that they have no or little knowledge about topics related to politics, political systems, public authorities in Serbia and the work of independent institutions, but the percentage of respondents who consider themselves at least fairly informed has slightly risen for the third time in a row.

The citizens assess that they are best-informed about the politics in Serbia and about their respective local community (48% and 46% thinks that they are at least fairly well-informed).

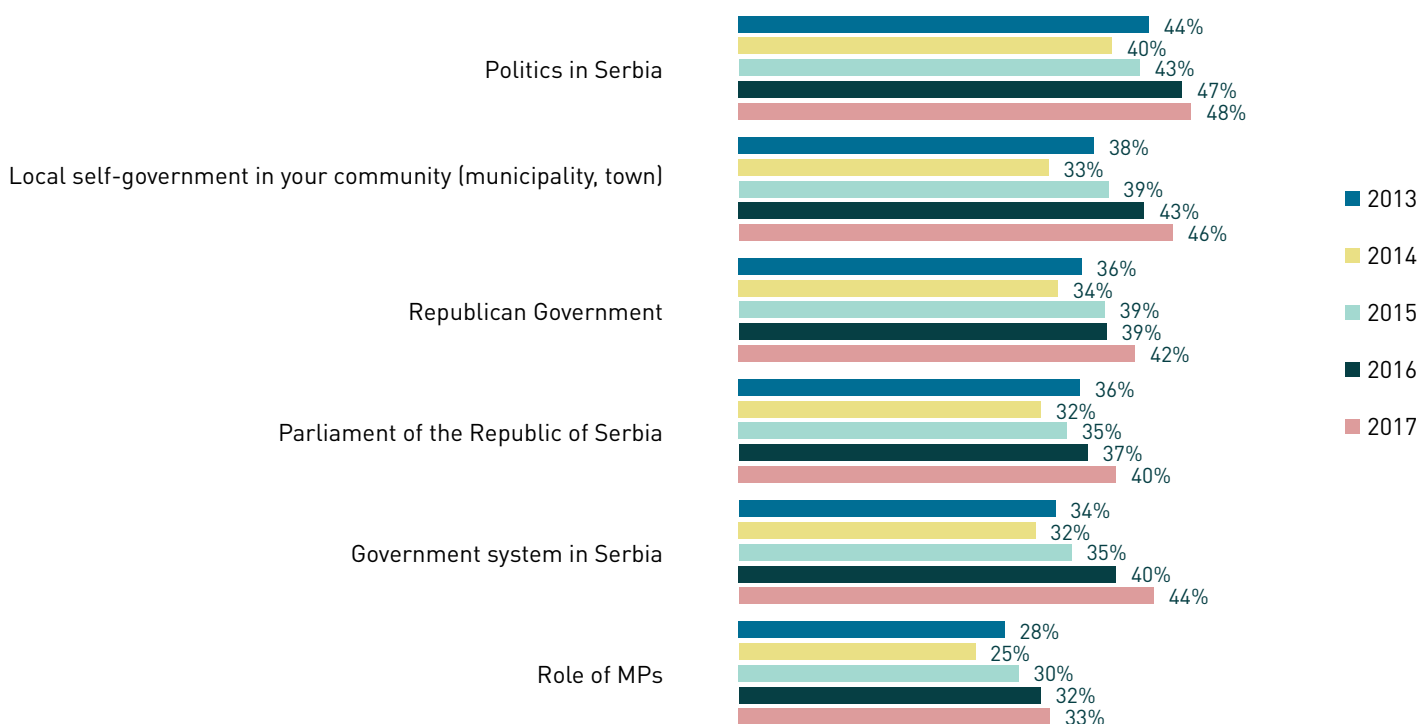
Between 60% and 70% of citizens assess that they have no or little knowledge about the Parliament of Serbia, about the budget inflow at the state and local level, about the EU accession negotiations, about the role of the very MPs and the political parties programmes (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Generally, in your opinion, how much do you really know about...



The percentage of citizens who feel that they are at least fairly well informed about six listed topics that are being systematically followed-up continues to rise slowly but systematically, so that positive advancements in knowledge can be perceived in comparison to 2013, from 4 to 10 per cents. The biggest step forward was noted in knowledge about the government system in Serbia. In relation to 2013 when 34% declared to be at least fairly well-informed, this year 44% said so, which represents an increase of 10 per cents. (Figure: 2)

Figure 2: Generally, in your opinion, how much do you really know about...
 % ANSWERS "I KNOW FAIRLY + QUITE + MUCH"

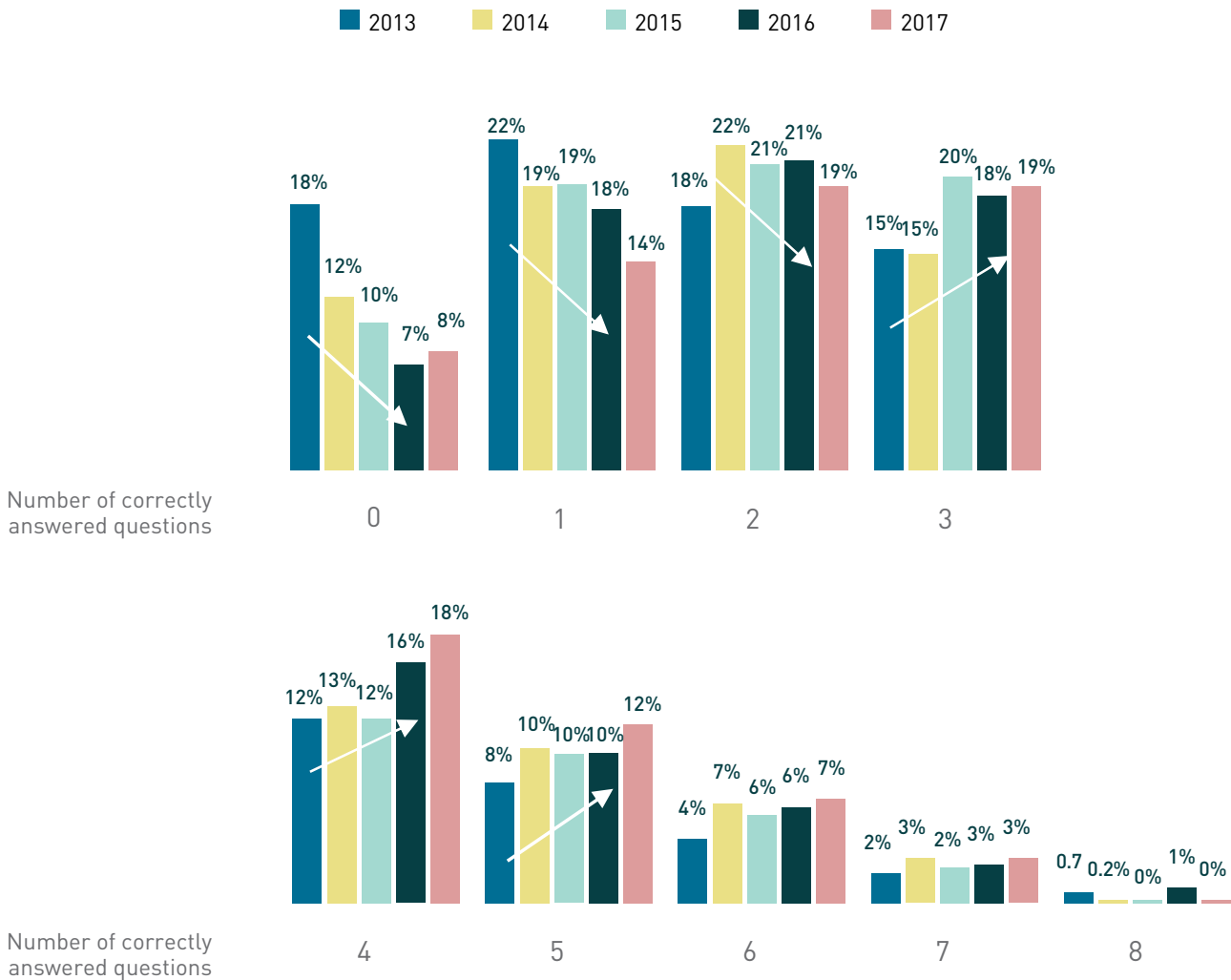


Knowledge – Knowledge quiz

Proportionally to somewhat better assessments of personal knowledge, the actual knowledge that was measured through two “knowledge quizzes” increased, too, so that a mild upward trend in general knowledge systematically continues.

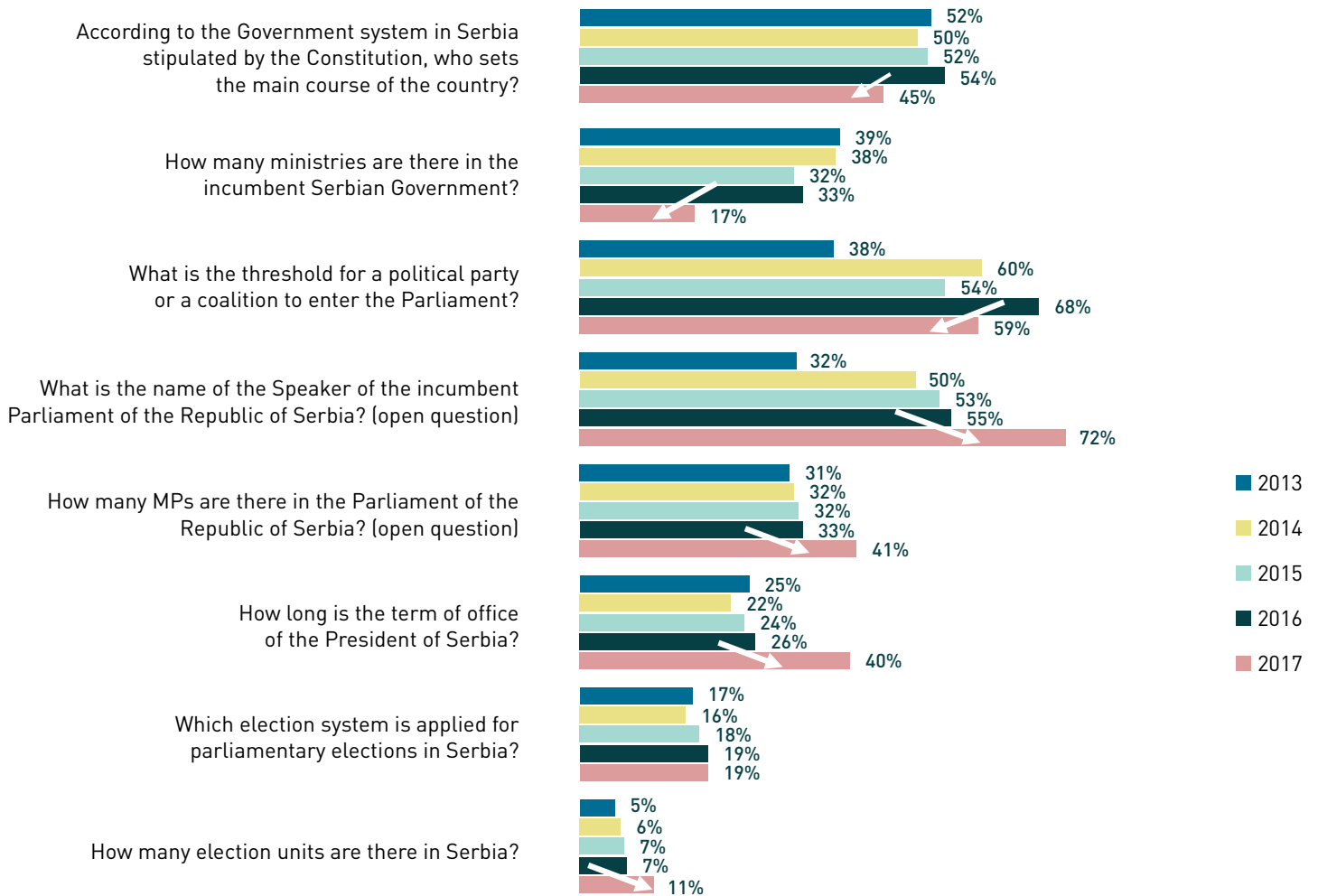
The number of citizens who gave correct answers to a maximum of two questions further decreased, 41% (58% in 2013, 53% in 2014, 50% in 2015, 46% in 2016); and the number of those who knew correct answers to 4 or more questions increased and amounts to 40% (27% in 2013, 33% in 2014, 31% in 2015, 36% in 2016); 20% gave correct answers to 5 or more questions (15% in 2013, 33% in 2014, 31% in 2015, 36% in 2016) (Figure 3)

Figure 3: (Quiz 1)
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO GAVE THE CORRECT ANSWER TO A STATED NUMBER OF QUESTIONS



As in previous years, the majority of citizens (more than a half) provided correct answers to three questions: *What is the threshold for entering the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia?* (59%); *According to the Constitution, who defines the main political course of the country?* (45%); *What is the name of the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia?* (72%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage of citizens who gave correct answers



Obviously, the percentage of respondents who know the threshold for entering the Parliament obviously increases in the election period, and was therefore bigger in the election years: 2014 and 2016, as opposed to 2013, 2015 and 2017.

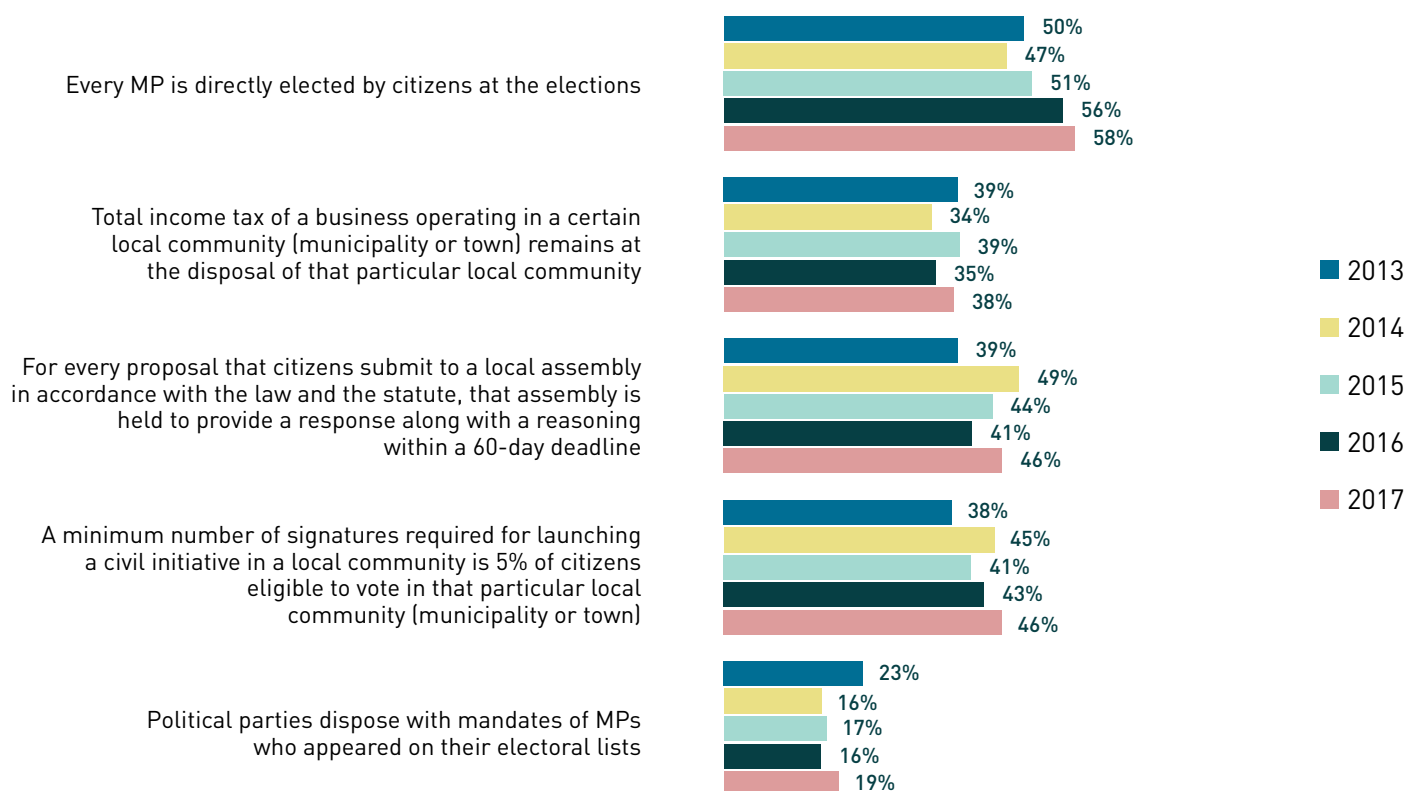
In relation to last year, the number of citizens who knew the name of the Speaker of the Parliament increased drastically (55% vs. 72%). Apart from the three-year presence at this function, this can also be interpreted by a number of “tumultuous” events in the Parliament that the media covered.

The number of citizens who knew the number of MPs in the Parliament increased (33% vs. 41%), while the number of persons who knew the Serbian President’s term of office grew strikingly (26% vs. 40%). On the other hand, the number of respondents who knew the number of ministries in the incumbent Government of the Republic of Serbia in comparison to the last Government decreased significantly (33% vs. 17%), as well as the number of those who knew who, in accordance with the Constitution, defined the main political course of the country (54% vs. 42%) (Figure 4).

As last year, there is the least knowledge in the area of the Serbian electoral system: similarly to last year, 19% knew that parliamentary elections were held by a proportional representation system, and 11% (slightly more than last year) knew that there was a single election unit in Serbia (Figure 4). Manifestly, citizens are not informed and they do not understand the relation between the election system and the respect of voters’ will and its importance for the overall functioning of the political system.

Similarly to previous years, in the second knowledge “quiz” comprising true or false questions, citizens demonstrated somewhat broader knowledge, whereas the percentage of correct answers has for the first time significantly grown in relation to previous years. This year, 39% chose correct answers to three or more out of five questions, whereas in previous years, about one third had chosen correct answers (in 2013 and 2014: 34%, in 2015: 32%, in 2016: 33%). In relation to 2013, the percentage of respondents who knew that every single MP had not been individually elected during the elections noticeably increased (50% vs. 58%) (Figure 5).

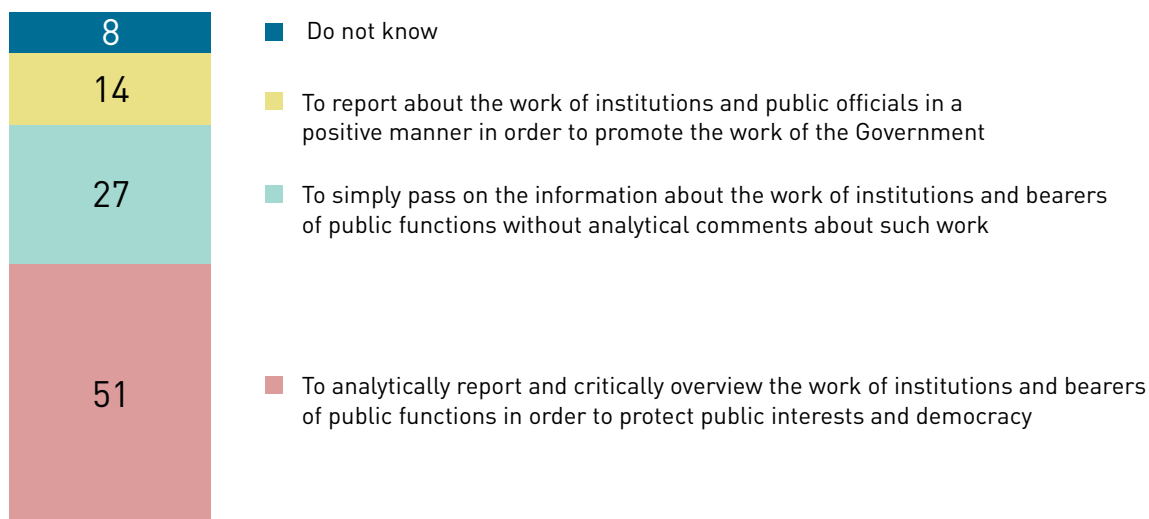
Figure 5: (Quizz 2) Are the following statements true or false?
 % OF CITIZENS WHO CHOSE THE CORRECT ANSWER



Knowledge of the role of media

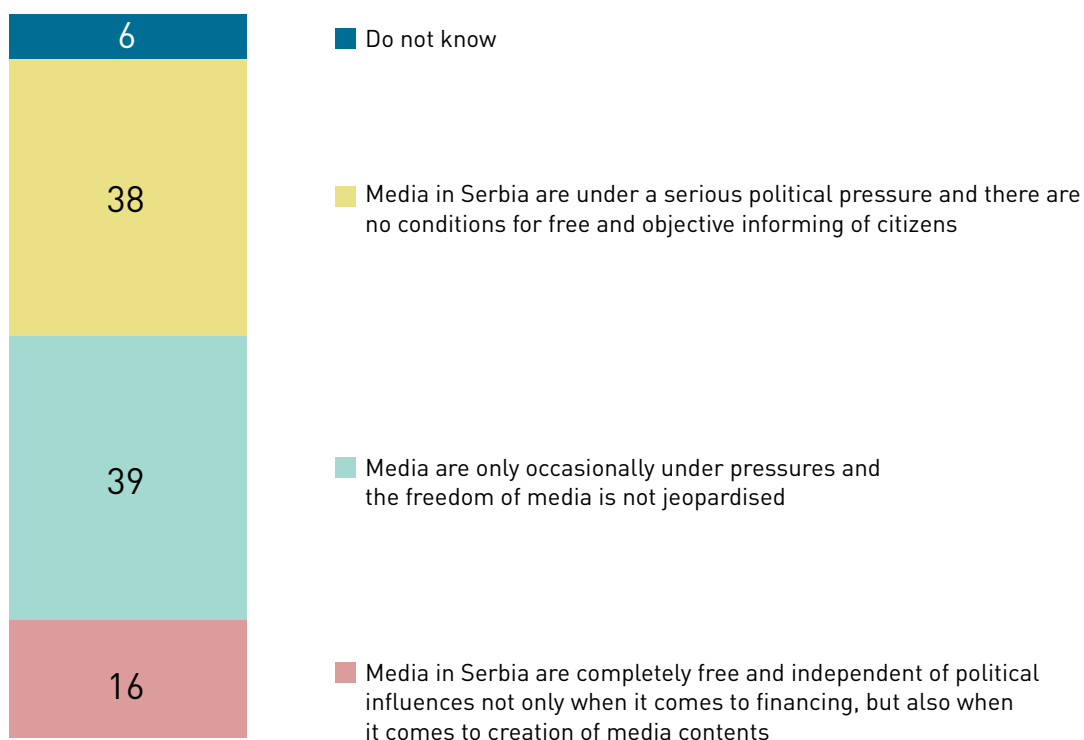
A mere half of the citizens think that the role of media should be analytical reporting and critical overviewing of the work of institutions and public functions bearers, whereby a large percentage of respondents (27%) think that media should only broadcast information without analytical comments and as much as 14% think that the role of media should be to promote the work of the Government (Figure 6).

Figure 6: What should be the role of media in a society when it comes to informing the citizens about the issues of public interest - the work of the state, institutions, public officials...



As far as freedom of media and public informing quality are concerned, opinions are divided: 38% think that media in Serbia are under a serious political pressure and that there are no conditions for free and objective informing of citizens, 39% think that media are only occasionally under pressures and that the freedom of media is not jeopardised, and 16% think that media in Serbia are completely free and independent (Figure 7).

Figure 7: How do you evaluate the freedom of media and the quality of public information?

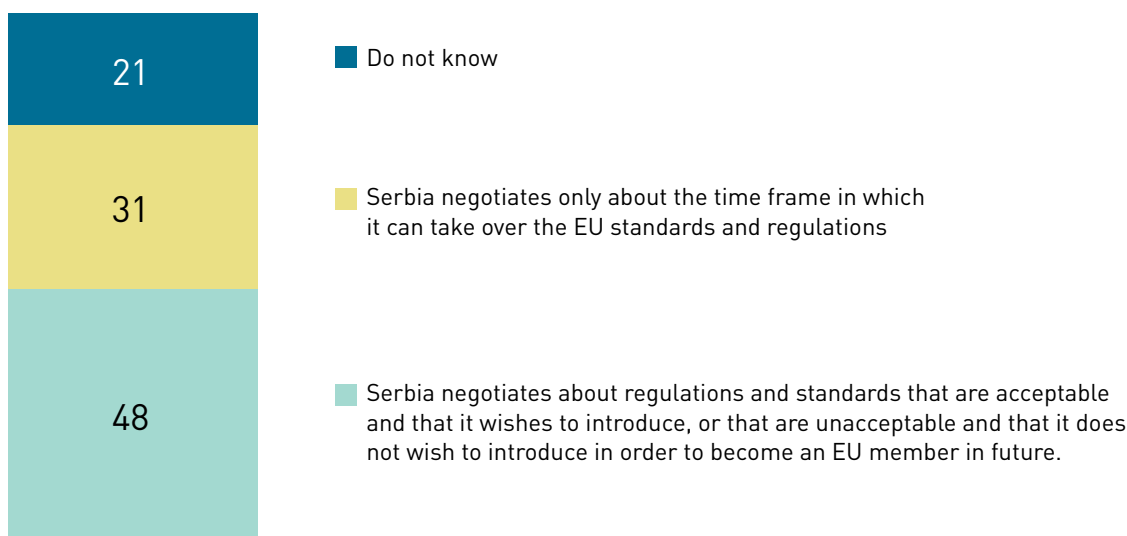


What does Serbia negotiate about in the EU accession process?

Less than one third of respondents (31%) know that in the accession process Serbia negotiates uniquely about the time frame in which it could adopt the EU standards and regulations. When it comes to interests of Serbia, slightly over a third of citizens think that by taking over the EU standards and regulations, Serbia shall reinforce institutions and enhance the standard of living.

Nearly one half of citizens, 48% believe that Serbia negotiates about regulations and standards that are acceptable, i.e. that it wish and does not wish to introduce, and one in five citizens does not have the slightest idea what Serbia is negotiating about (Figure 8).

Figure 8: What does Serbia negotiate about in the EU accession process?



The majority of citizens, 54%, believe that the European Union wishes to impose its regulations and standards even when it is not within the best interest of Serbia. (Figure 9)

Strikingly, 21% of citizens said that they did not know at all what Serbia negotiated about in the EU accession process, but only 11% declared that they did not know what the EU integrations supposed when it comes to the best interest of Serbia.

Figure 9: What does the EU accession suppose when it comes to the best interest of Serbia?

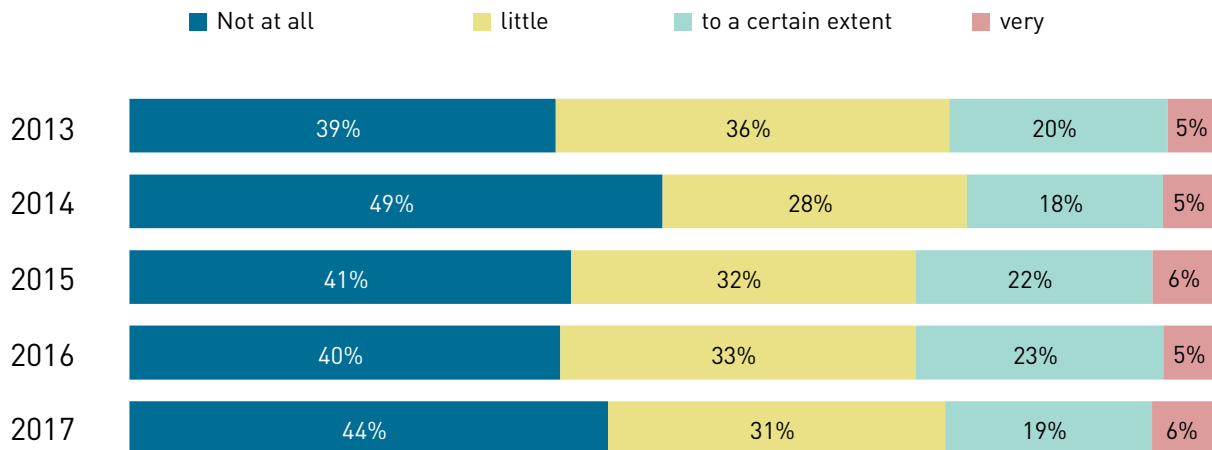


INTEREST

As in previous years, citizens expressed a low interest in topics related to politics and the work of democratic institutions in Serbia.

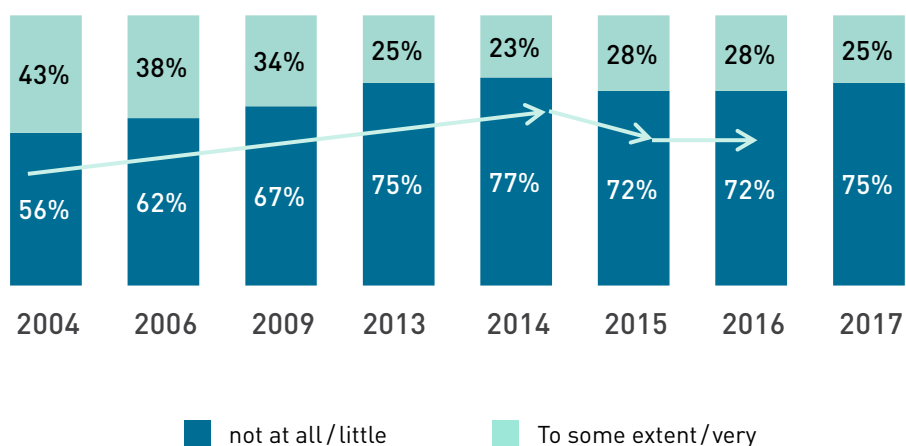
The interest in politics reported yet again a mild decrease in comparison to two previous years and it got back to the 2013 level: 25% of citizens are somewhat interested in politics, if not very much (in 2013: 25%, in 2014: 23%, in 2015: 28%, in 2016: 28%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: To what extent are you personally interested in politics?



As a constant rise in the number of citizens not interested in politics had somewhat been stopped in 2015 and 2016, the percentage of those not interested reported a slight increase this year. (Figure 11)¹

Figure 11: To what extent are you personally interested in politics?



¹ Source 2004, 2006, 2009: Ipsos public opinion polls for the International Republican Institute (IRI)

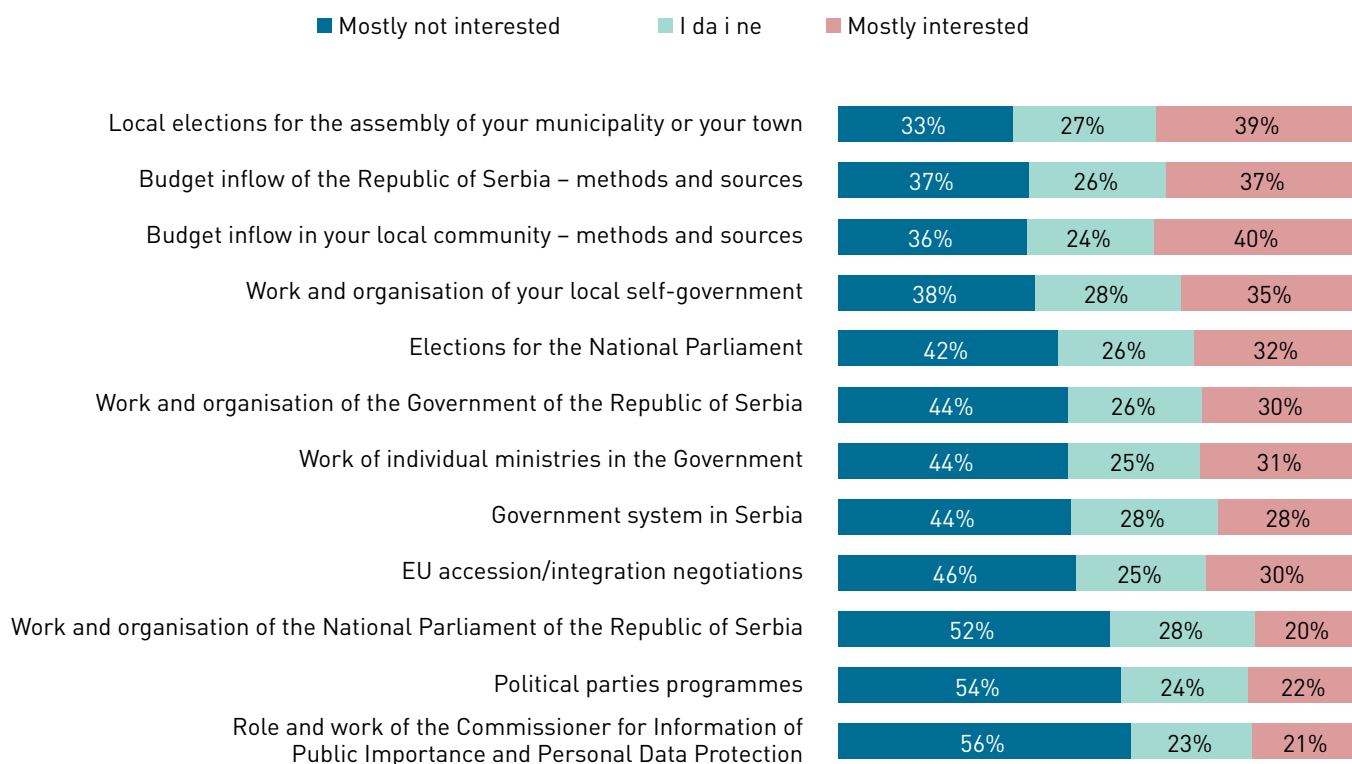
As in previous years, a relatively small percentage of citizens (significantly less than a half) is at least fairly interested in any of topics related to politics, political systems, public function bearers and independent institutions that they were asked about.

The citizens expressed the highest interest in topics related to their local community: the budget inflow in their community (40%) and the elections for local assembly in their local community (39%).

Above one third of citizens are at least fairly interested in the state budget inflow (37%), in the work and the organisation of their local self-government (35%) (Figure 12).

The citizens expressed the least interest in topics relating to political parties programmes (22%) and to the work and the organisation of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia (20%) (Figure 12).

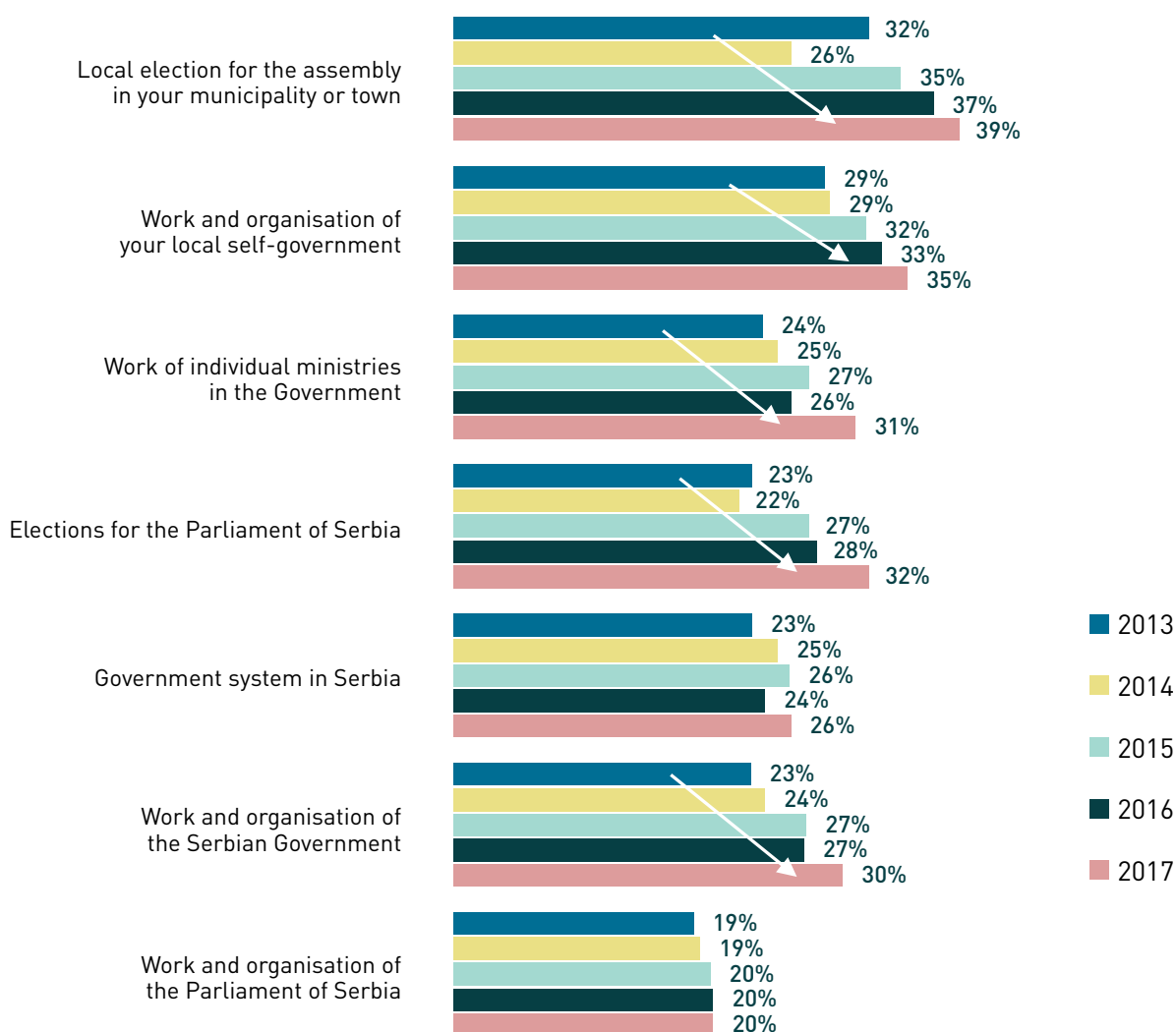
Figure 12: How interested are you in the following topics...



However, the stated interest in most of the topics increased in comparison to last year and now there is clearly noticeable trend of a mild but systematic increase in interest in the last five years. (Figure 13)

Noticeably, only the interest in the work and the organisation of the National Parliament remains at a stable low level.

Figure 13: To what extent are you personally interested in the following topics?
% TO A CERTAIN EXTENT+ VERY INTERESTED



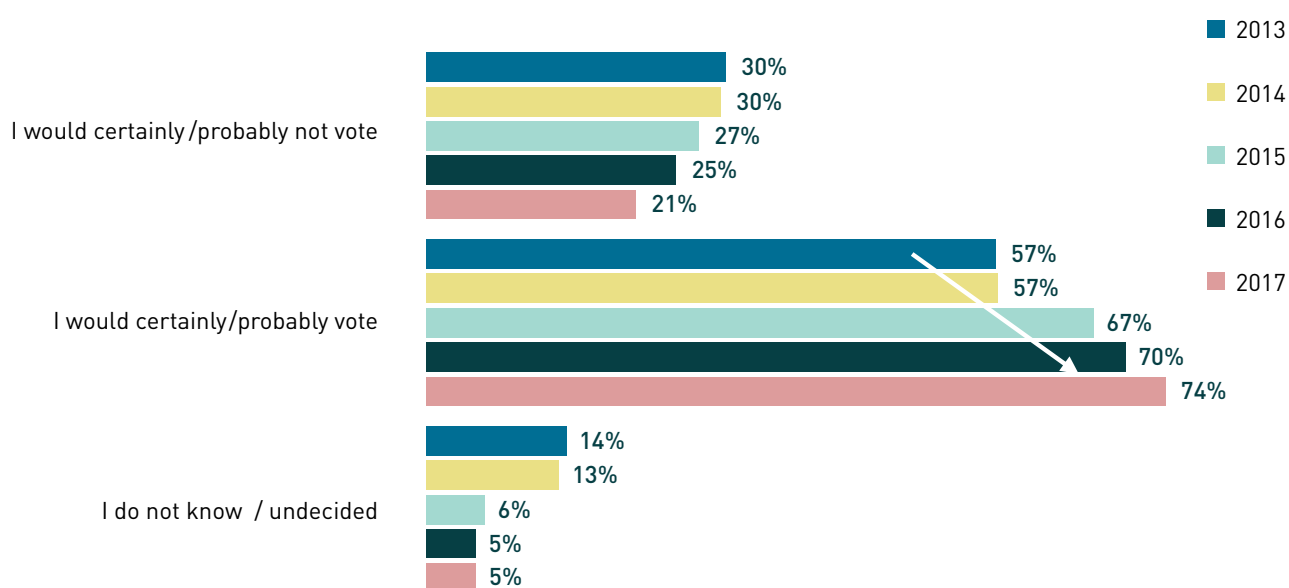
ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

As far as citizen participation in democratic processes is concerned, the elections remain the only action involving the majority of citizens.

Other actions related to problem solving and decision-making involve a considerably smaller percentage of citizens, which is even smaller compared to last year. The number of citizens who express their wish to influence decision-making at the local and at the national level once again slightly decreased.

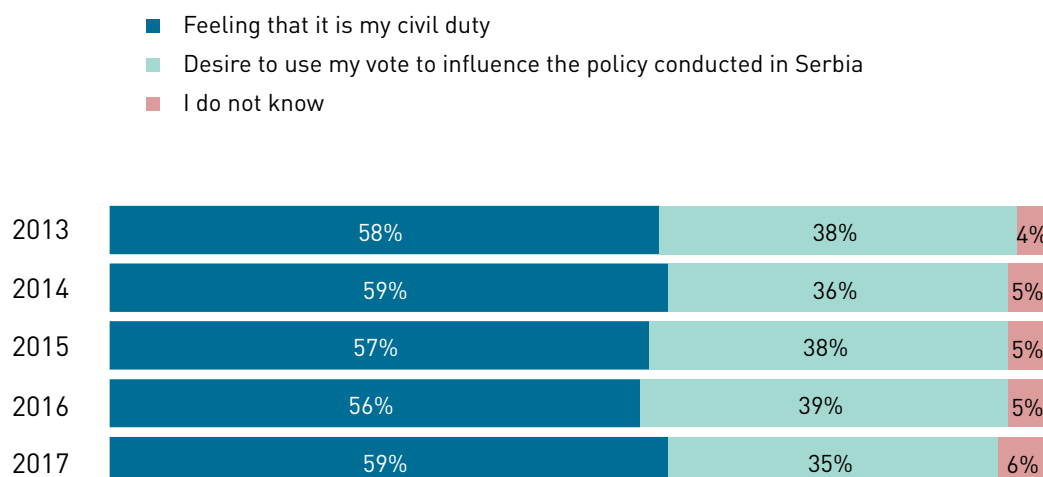
The majority of respondents, 74%, said they would probably, if not certainly, vote at the elections if they were held during this audit, and the percentage is even somewhat higher than last year, when it amounted to 70% (Figure 14).

Figure 14: If parliamentary elections were held this week, would you vote?



Similarly to previous years, a considerably higher percentage of citizens cast their ballots at the elections because they believe that it is their civil duty (59%), than because they wish (expect) to influence the policy conducted in Serbia (35%) (Figure 15)²

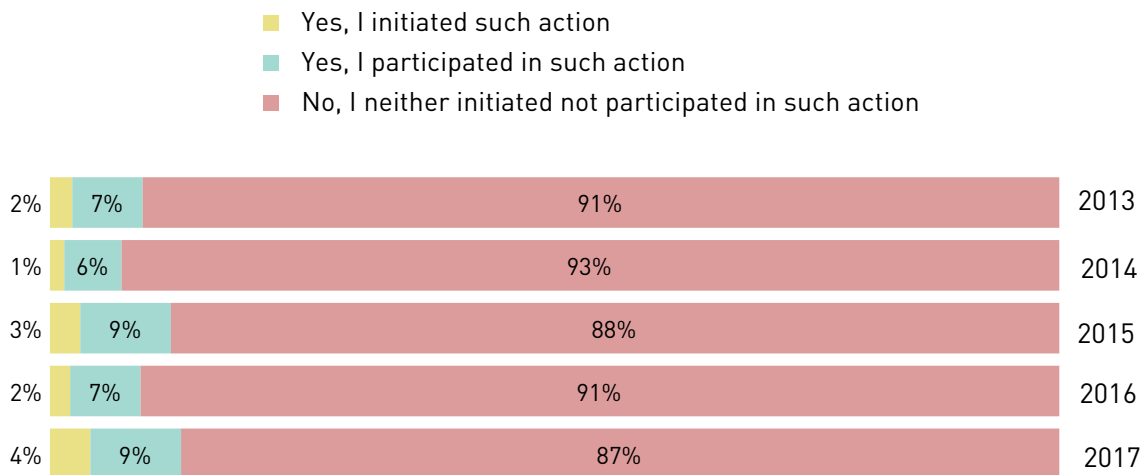
Figure 15: What has been your prevailing reason or motive to vote at the parliamentary elections?



² Basis: a part of the population that gave an answer to this question. The respondents had the possibility to state that they had never voted at the parliamentary elections. Between 6% and 9% gave that answer from 2013 to 2017.

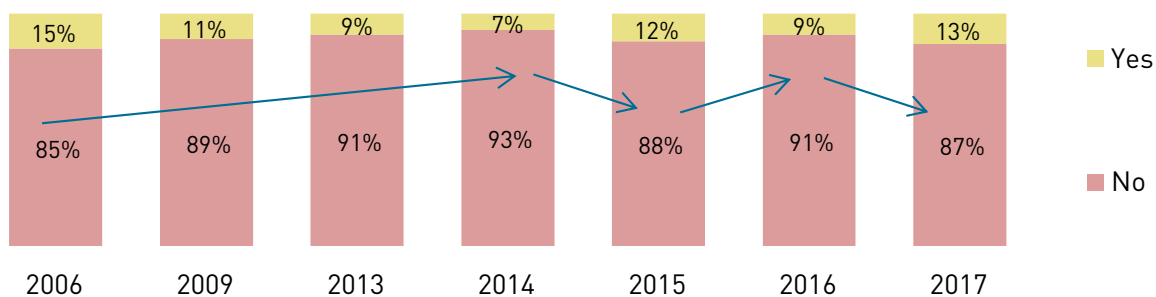
A small percentage of citizens (13%) participate in initiatives aiming to solve a problem in their community, and the figures are similar to those in 2015, but are somewhat higher than in 2016 (Figure 16)

Figure 16: Did you in the past year take your own initiative or actively participate in any action or initiative aiming to solve a problem in your local community?



According to the available data, the citizen participation in problem solving in their local community has slightly varied in the last eleven years, without systematic positive advancements (Figure 17)³

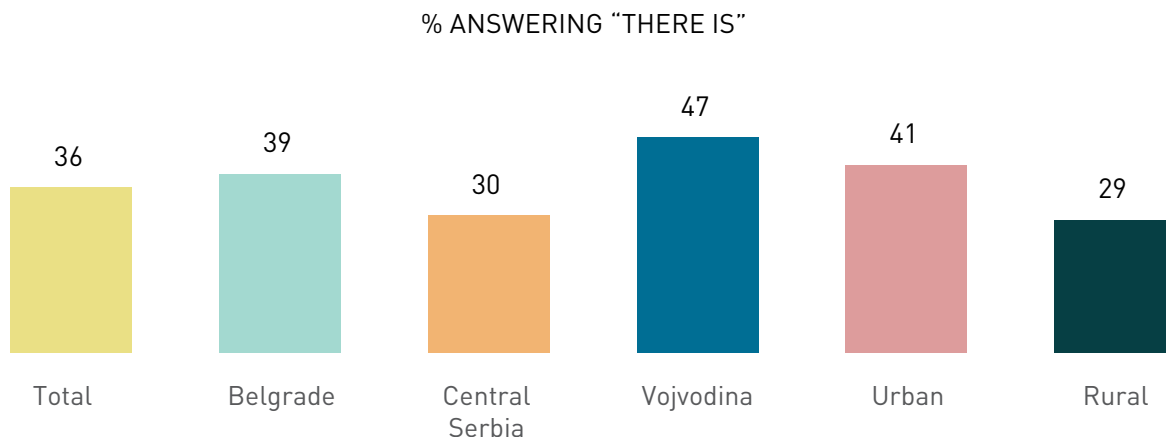
Figure 17: Did you in the last year take your own initiative or actively participate in any action or initiative aiming to solve a problem in your local community?



³ Source: Public opinion poll 2006 and 2009, Ipsos Strategic Marketing for the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and USAID

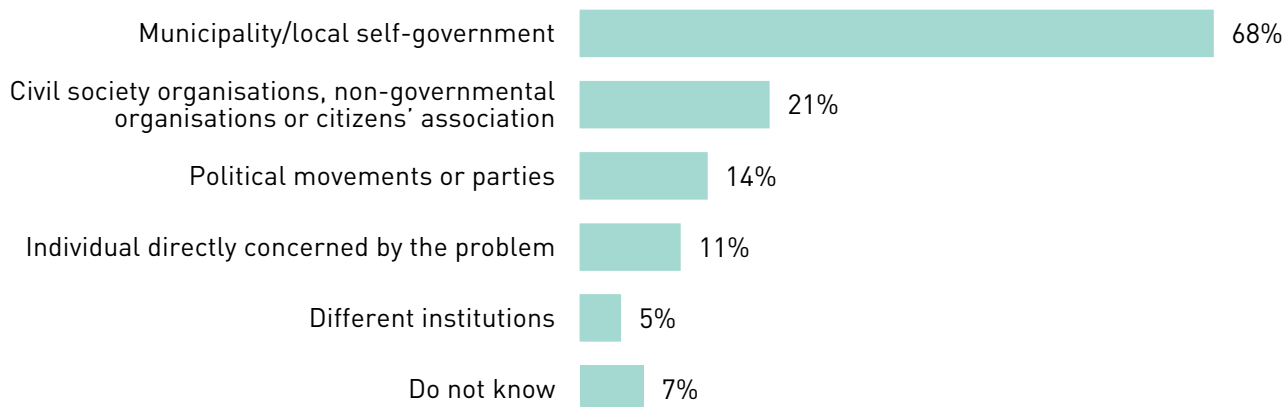
A little over one third of citizens stated that in their community there was someone in charge of problem solving. Most often the citizens of Vojvodina said so, 47%, and most rarely the citizens of Central Serbia, 30% (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Is there someone in your community who works on solving of citizens' problems?



The majority of citizens who declared that in their community somebody worked on problem solving, said that it was the municipality, i.e. their local self-government, 68%. One if five reported also civil society organisations. Rarely, citizens mentioned also political parties and individuals directly concerned by the said problem (Figure 19).

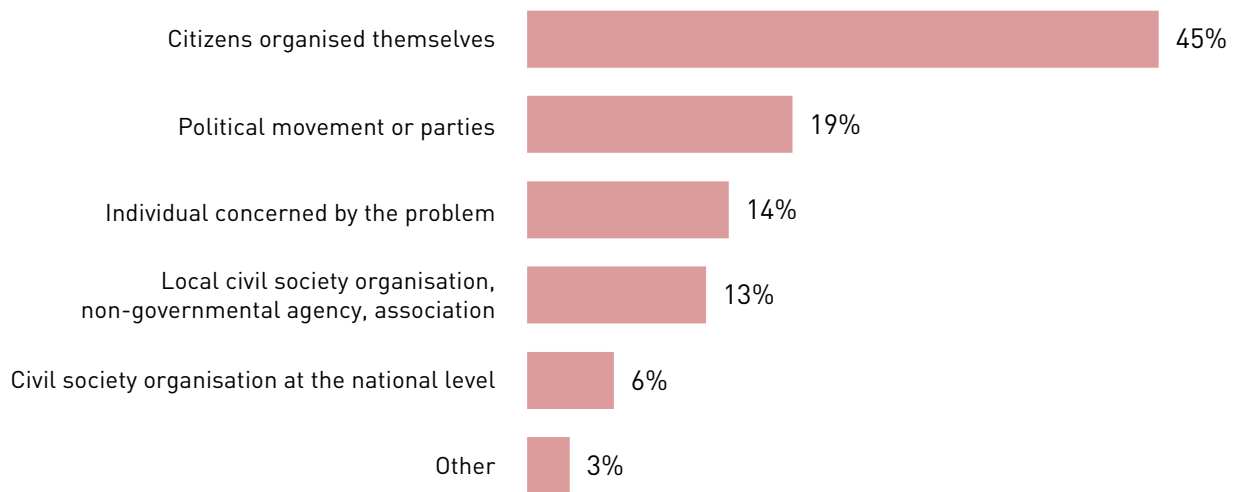
Figure 19: Who in your community works on problem solving?
 (Basis: 36% of those who said that there was someone in their community who worked on solving of citizens' problems)



Citizens who participated in actions aiming to solve local problems said, however, that such actions were most often conducted by the very citizens (45%), or by political movements/parties, or civil society organisations working at a local or national level, both 19% (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Who conducted the action that you participated in?

(Basis: 13% of those who stated that they had participated in some actions in previous years)

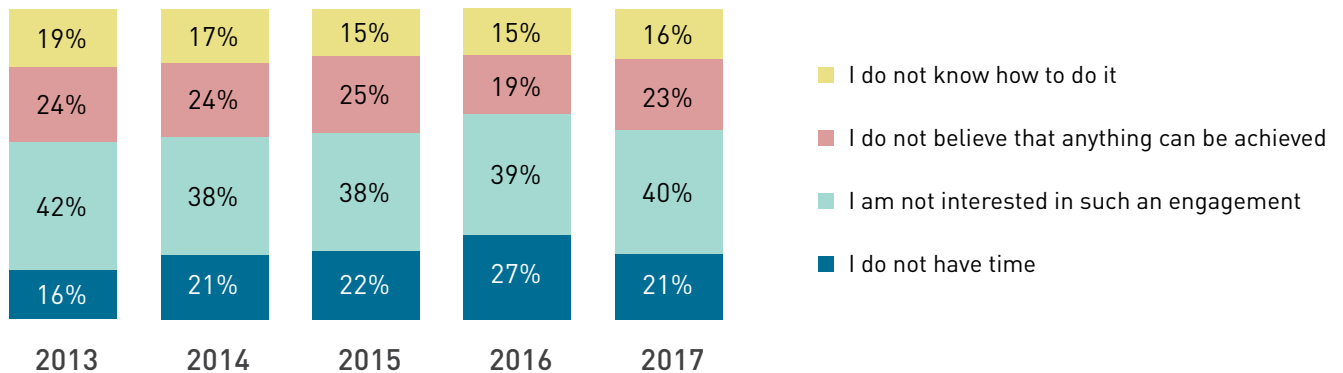


As in previous years, the most frequent reason for non-participation the citizens cited the lack of interest in such an engagement, 40%, and almost one in four reported the lack of confidence that such an engagement could achieve something.

Although for years the share of quoted reasons has varied to a certain extent, the picture is fairly stable and the disinterest for participation has been most often given as a reason. The percentage of citizens who do not know how to do it remains fairly stable (Figure 21).

Figure 21: What is the main reason you did not participate or initiate an action?

Answers given by respondents who did not participate in any actions



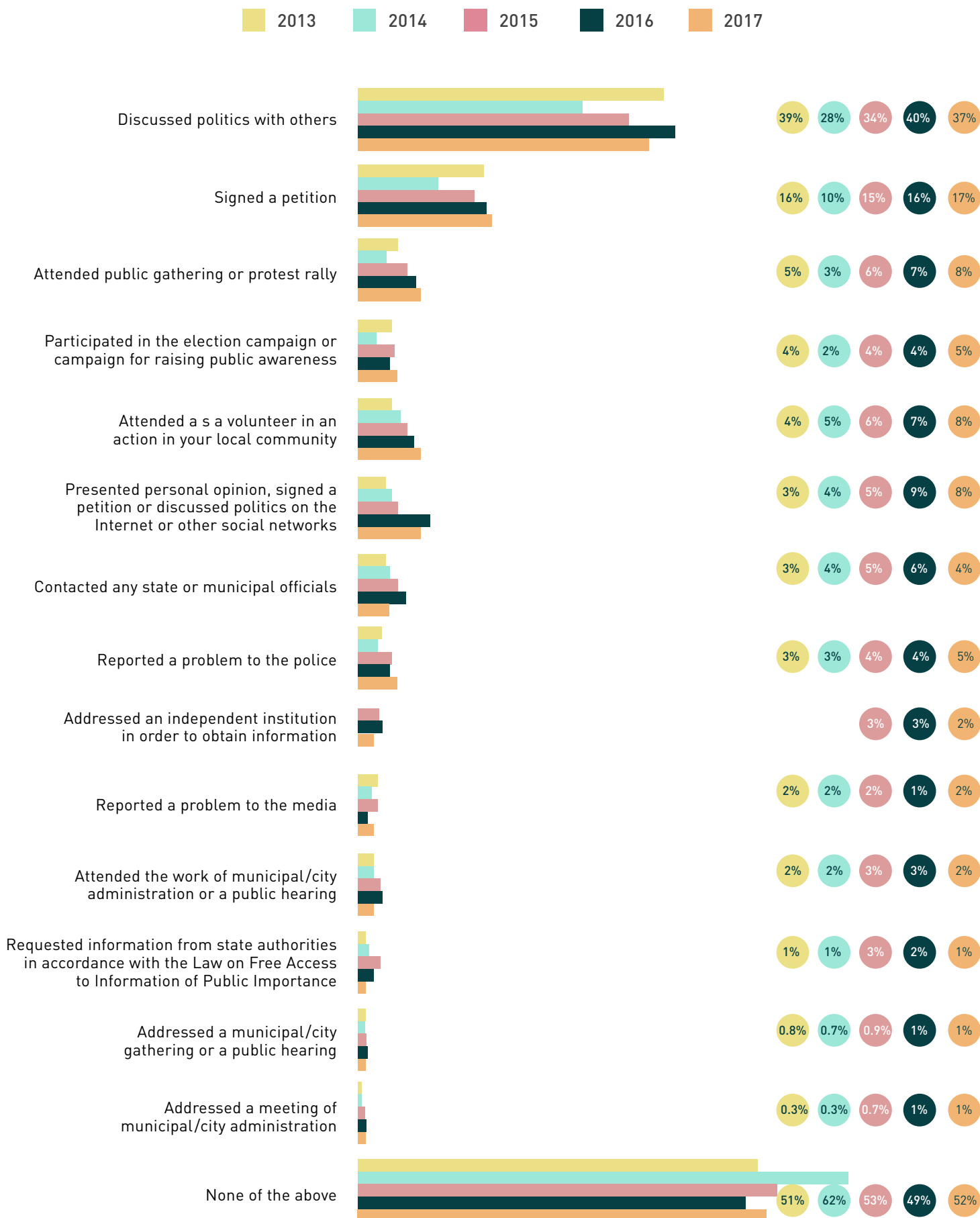
On the other hand, as in previous years, a considerably higher percentage of citizens (48%) declared that they had participated in at least one concrete action if it had included broader initiatives and actions related to politics and decision-making in their local community. However, if discussing politics is excluded, only 28% of citizens participated in at least one action.

The percentage of citizen participation varies through years, and although a mild upward trend was recorded in the period from 2014 to 2016, this year the percentage of participation declined again and is reduced to the 2013 level (Figure 22).

As in last two years, the action that most engaged the respondents was a discussion about politics with others. In comparison to last year, the percentage of citizens who declared that they had engaged in discussions about politics mildly decreased once again (40% vs. 37%), so that the mild upward trend in the period from 2014 to 2016 was stopped (Figure 22).

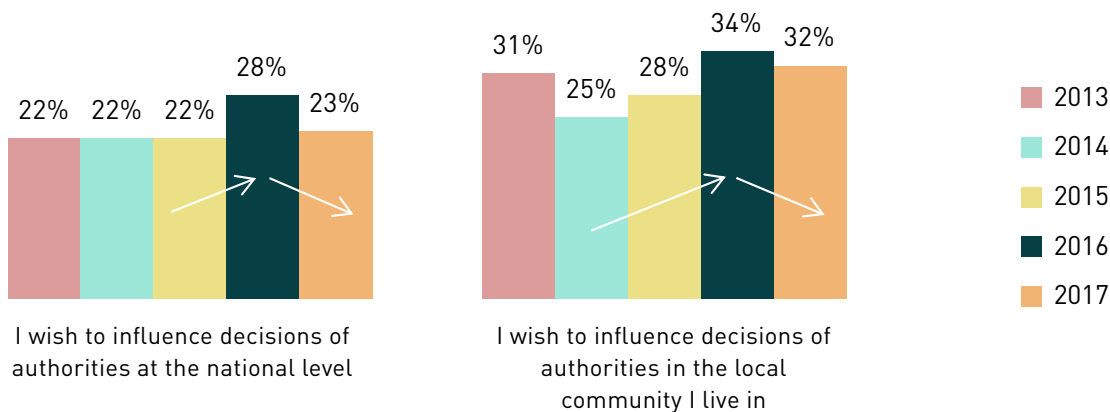
Apart from discussing politics, the only action that attracts a somewhat more noticeable percentage of citizens is petition signing, like last year (17%) (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Did you in the last 2 - 3 years engage in any of the following actions?



In comparison to last year, the percentage of those who wish to influence decisions of authorities at the national level slightly decreased (28% vs. 23%), and got to the previous years' level. The percentage of citizens who declared that they wished to influence decisions of authorities at the local level also mildly decreased in comparison to last year (34% vs. 32%), but is still somewhat higher than previous years (Figure 23).

Figure 23: % AGREE (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



SATISFACTION WITH THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN THE EFFICIENCY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Satisfaction with the work of the Parliament and the Government

As in previous years, citizens are more satisfied with the work of the Government than with the work of the Parliament, but in both cases there are more people who are dissatisfied than those who are satisfied.⁴

In comparison to last year, when it comes to the work of the Parliament the number of dissatisfied respondents slightly rose and the number of those who were satisfied mildly decreased, whereas the number of citizens satisfied with the work of the Government slightly decreased and the number of dissatisfied remained at the same level.

This year, 41% of citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the work of the Parliament (39% last year), while there were 19% of satisfied respondents (22% last year); 39% of citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the work of the Government (40% last year), while there were 28% of satisfied respondents (31% last year) (Figures 24 and 25).

⁴ The National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia was formed in June 2016, the Government of the Republic of Serbia in June 2017.

Figure 24: In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the current composition of the National Parliament of Serbia?

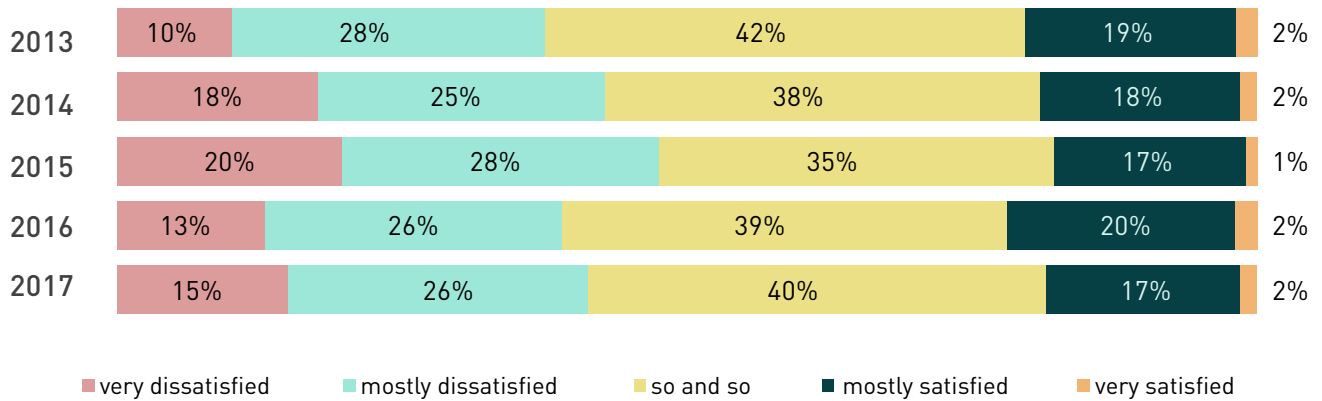
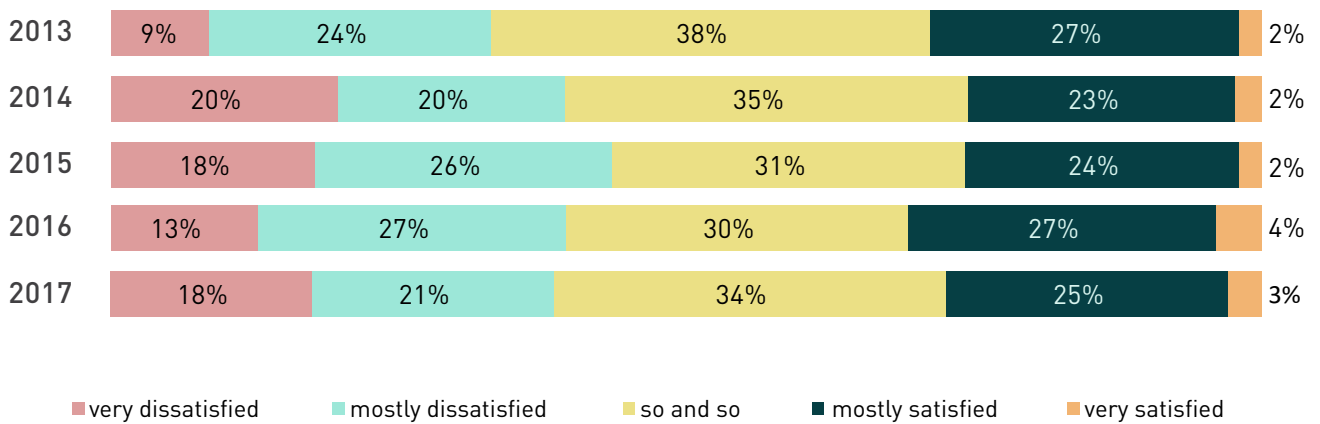


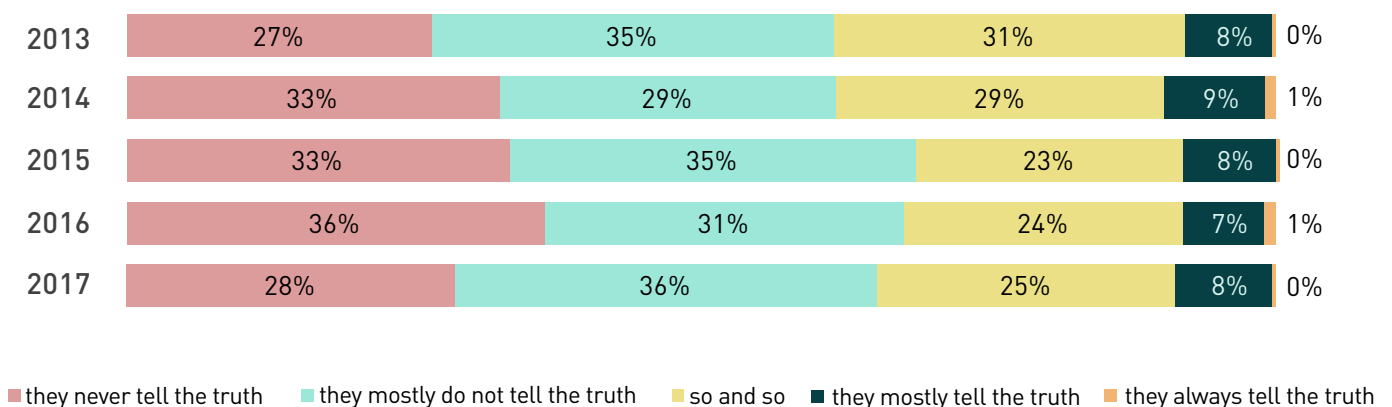
Figure 25: In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the current composition of the Government of Serbia?



The general trust in politicians and the confidence that MPs in the Parliament represent citizens' interests remain very low. There are slight variations in comparison to last year, but they are mostly negative.

The majority of citizens (64%) think that politicians do not tell the truth to citizens (not at all or not entirely), and a mere 8% of citizens think that they (mostly) do. In relation to last year, citizens expressed a mild increase in trust as back then 67% citizens thought that politicians did not tell the truth. This is the only positive step forward when it comes to trust in politicians and MPs (Figure 26).

Figure 26: How much do you believe that politicians in Serbia tell the truth to citizens?



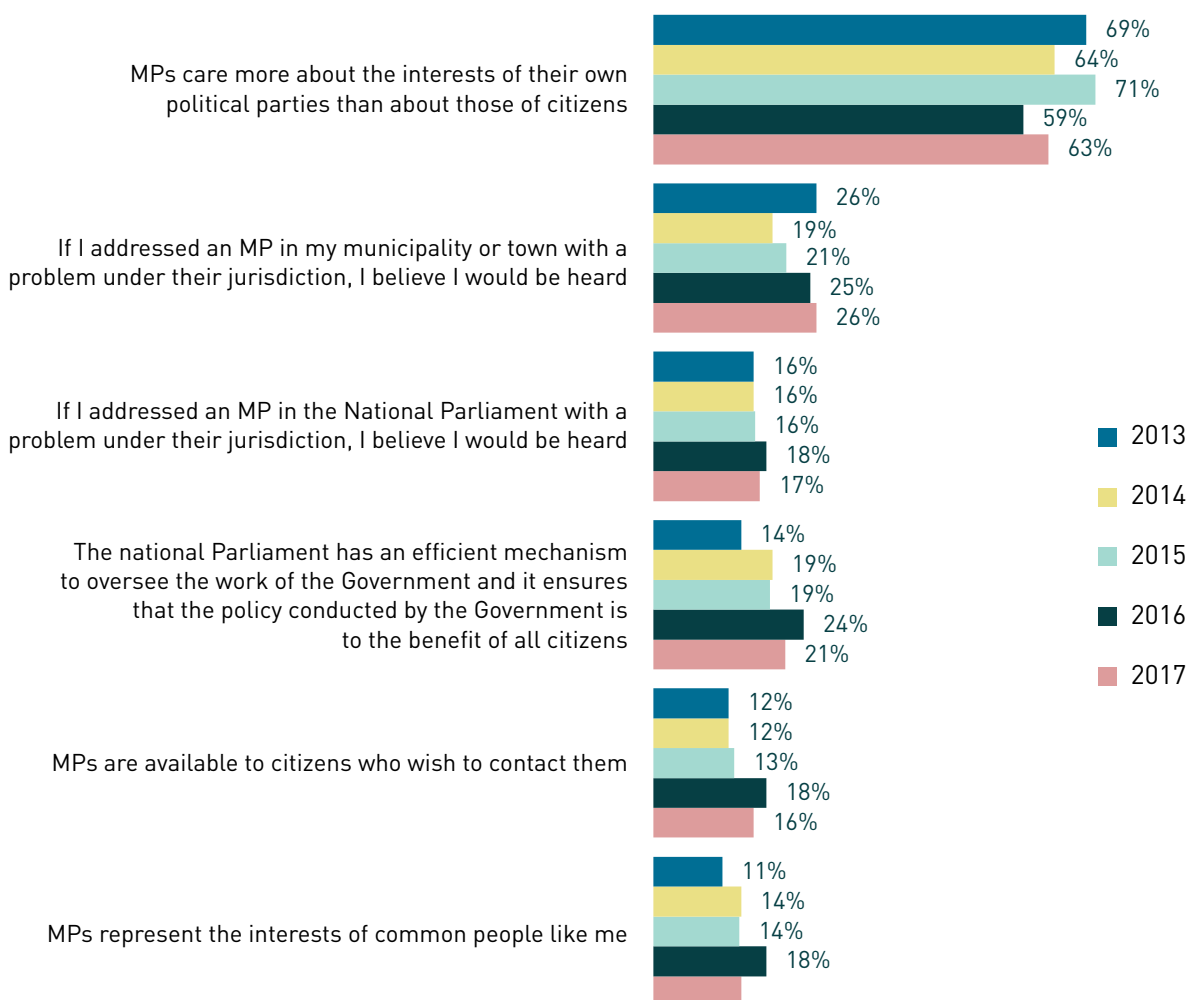
The majority of citizens, 63%, think that MPs are more concerned with their own political parties' interests than with citizens' interests, even more than last year when 59% thought so.

On the other hand, only 14% of respondents think that MPs represent the interests of common people in the Parliament of Serbia (vs. last year's 18%).

Only one in five (21%) think that the Parliament efficiently oversees the work of the Government ensuring that the Government pursue its policies in order to realise benefits for all citizens (vs. last year's 24%).

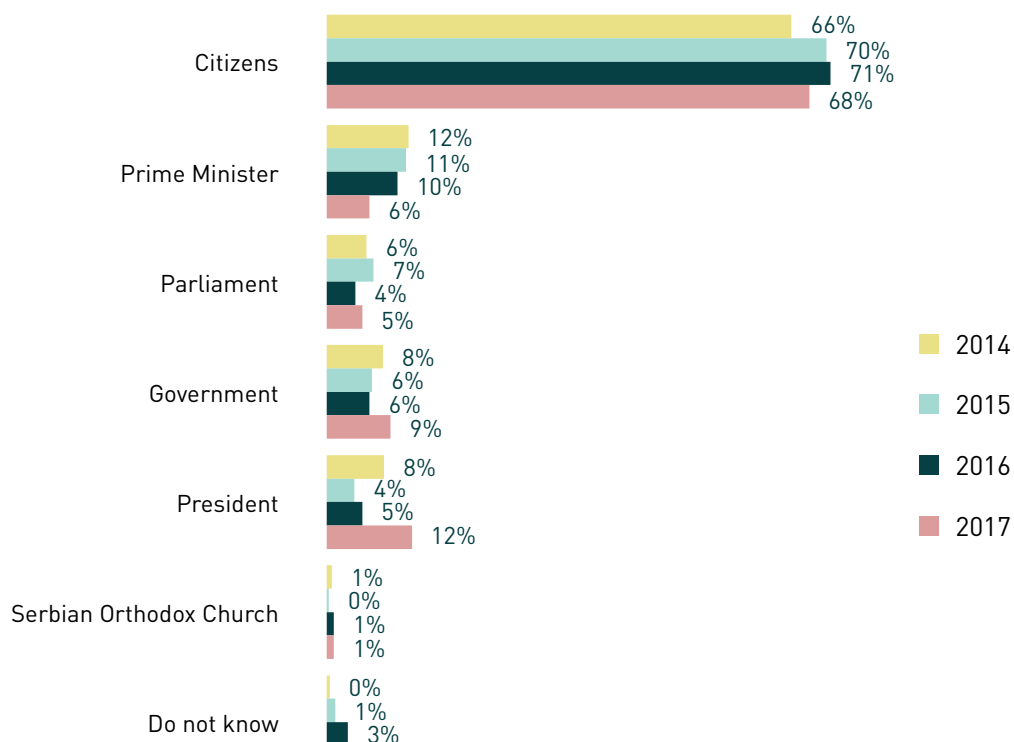
Only one in four respondents believe that the local councillor at their assembly would listen to them if addressed, and only 16% believe that an MP of the National Parliament would listen to them (Figure 27).

Figure 27: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the incumbent National Parliament and local self-governments?
% AGREE (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



As in previous years, the majority of citizens, 68%, think that politicians should be mainly accountable to citizens for the ways they exercise their duties and for what they say. Nevertheless, it is noticeable, that this percentage mildly decreased in comparison to last year (when it was 71%), as well as the percentage of citizens who think that politicians should be accountable to the Prime Minister (10% vs. 6%). The percentage of those who think that they should be accountable to the President of the Republic increased (5% vs. 12%) (Figure 28).

Figure 28: In your opinion, to whom should the politicians be accountable for their performance and statements?

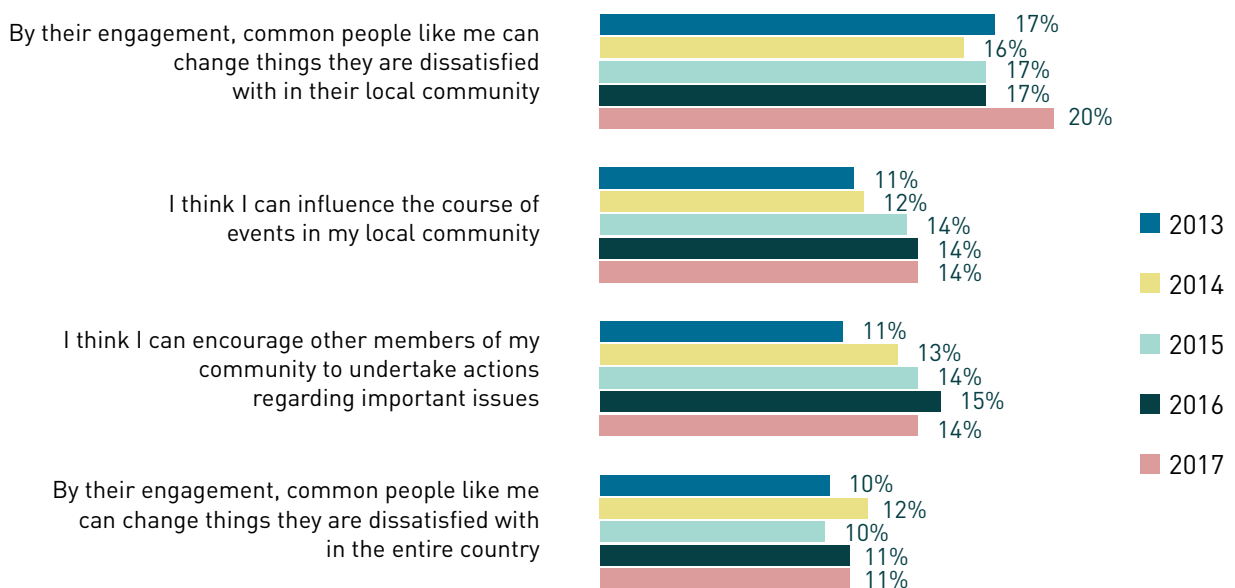


CONFIDENCE IN THE EFFICIENCY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND READINESS TO PARTICIPATE

The overall confidence of citizens who believe that they can change something in this country by their engagement remained at the last year’s level, while in comparison to all actions we follow-up in this audit, the confidence in citizen engagement efficiency has been reduced this year and is at the lowest level in the last five years (which is the period included in our audits).

When it comes to the general confidence, a small number of citizens think that ordinary people can influence the authorities’ decision and change things they are dissatisfied with by their engagement. The only positive step forward has been noticed when it comes to ordinary citizens who think that they can change things in their local community by their engagement – this year in in five respondents believes so, whereas in previous years the percentage ranged between 16% and 17% (Figure 29).

Figure 29: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 % AGREE (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



The confidence in the efficiency of certain actions has mainly unsystematically varied through years, but this year, there is a noticeable systematic drop in the percentage of citizens who believe that actions can influence the change in things.

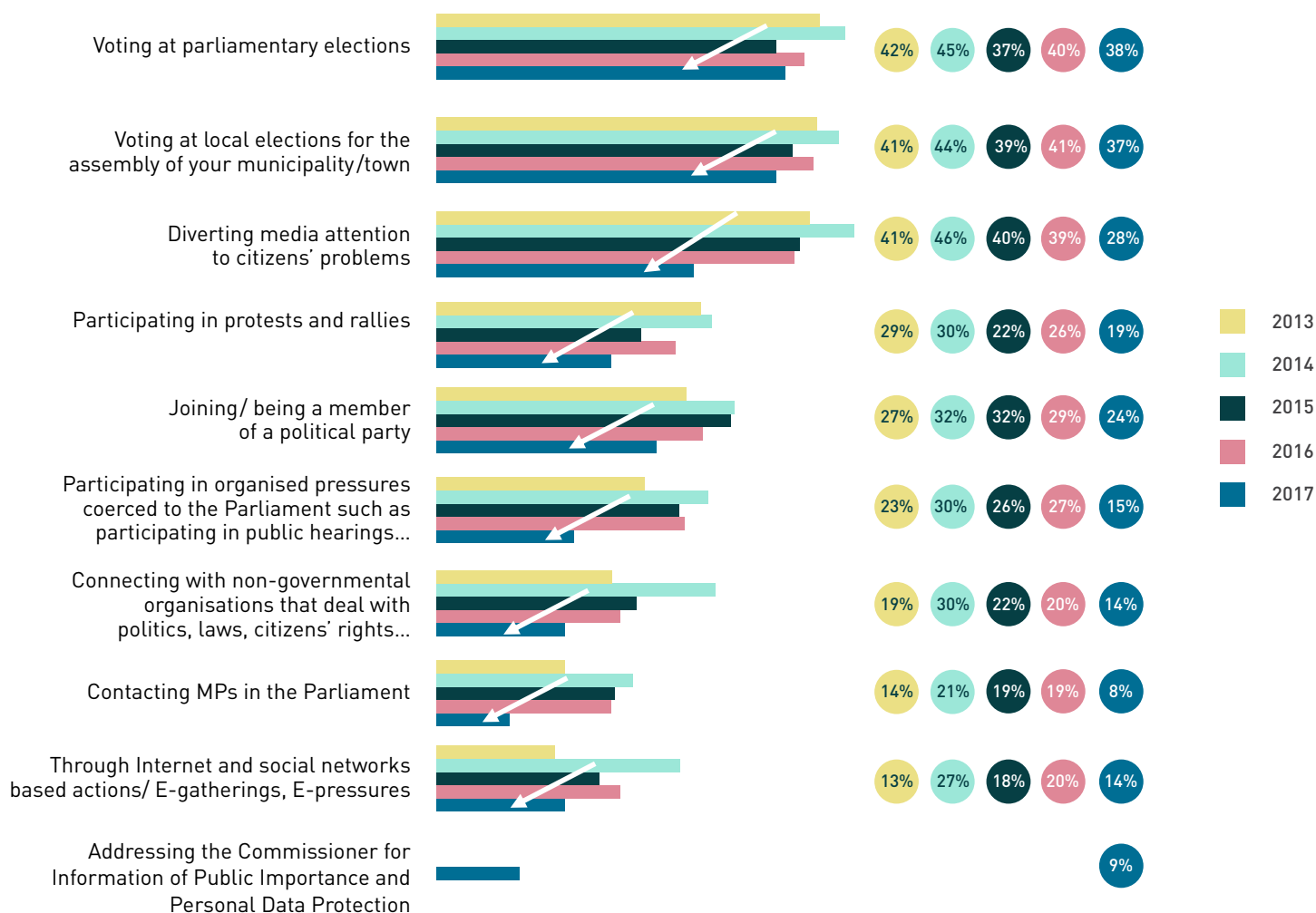
In comparison to the previous year, the biggest drop in confidence was noted in citizens' belief that they can influence changes through three types of actions:

- by diverting media attention to citizens' problems - this year 28% of citizens believe in the efficiency of such actions, whereas last year 39% believed;
- by participating in organised pressures that citizens can coerce to the Parliament or by participating in public hearings) – this year 15% of citizens believe in such actions compared to the last year's 27%;
- by contacting MPs in the Parliament – this year 8% of citizens believe in this type of actions, whereby last year that percentage amounted to 19%. (Figure 30)

Similarly to previous years, the citizens believe that they can change things by voting at the local elections (38%) and in the parliamentary elections (37%), but the percentages are lower than last year (when they were 41% and 40%)

Figure 30: To what extent can you, with each of the following actions, contribute to changes of things that in your opinion should be changed in this country?

% CAN INFLUENCE THE CHANGE (VERY MUCH + A LOT)

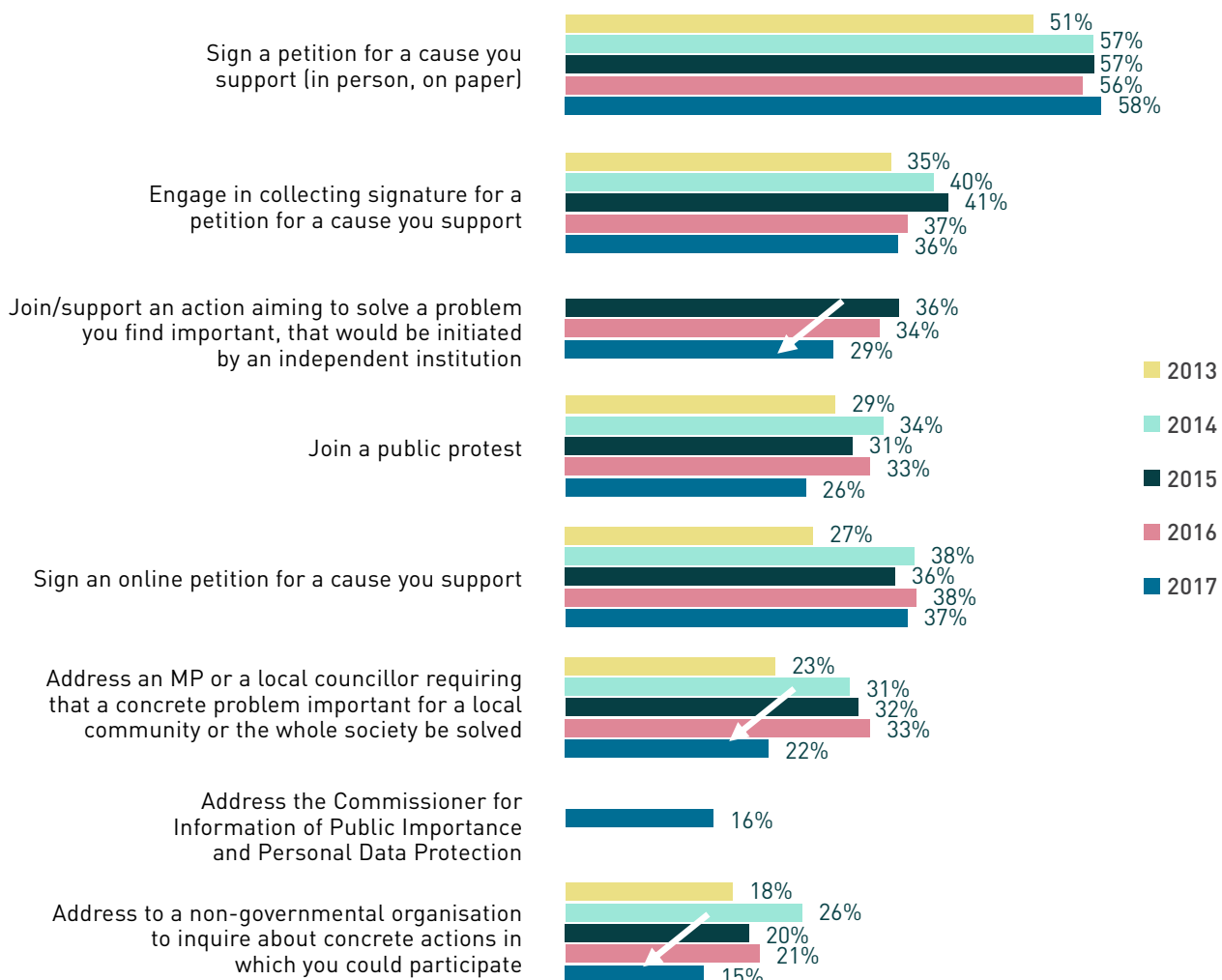


As in previous years, citizens rather verbally expressed their readiness to participate in actions aiming to change things in the country and in their local community than engaged in concrete actions, or expressed belief that such actions could actually bring about changes.

In relation to last year, the expressed readiness for participation in actions concerning petition signing remained at the same level. Petition signing in person (on paper) still remains the only action that the majority of citizens are ready to undertake, 58% (last year 56%). Over one third of respondents, 36%, expressed readiness to engage in signature collection for a petition they support (last year 37%), and 37% expressed readiness to sign an online petition (last year 38%). (Figure 31)

On the other hand, the number of citizens who expressed readiness to support an action initiated by an independent institution decreased (34% vs. 29%), as well as of those who wished to address an MP or a local councillor (33% vs. 22%), or to address a non-governmental organisation (21% vs. 15%) (Figure 31).

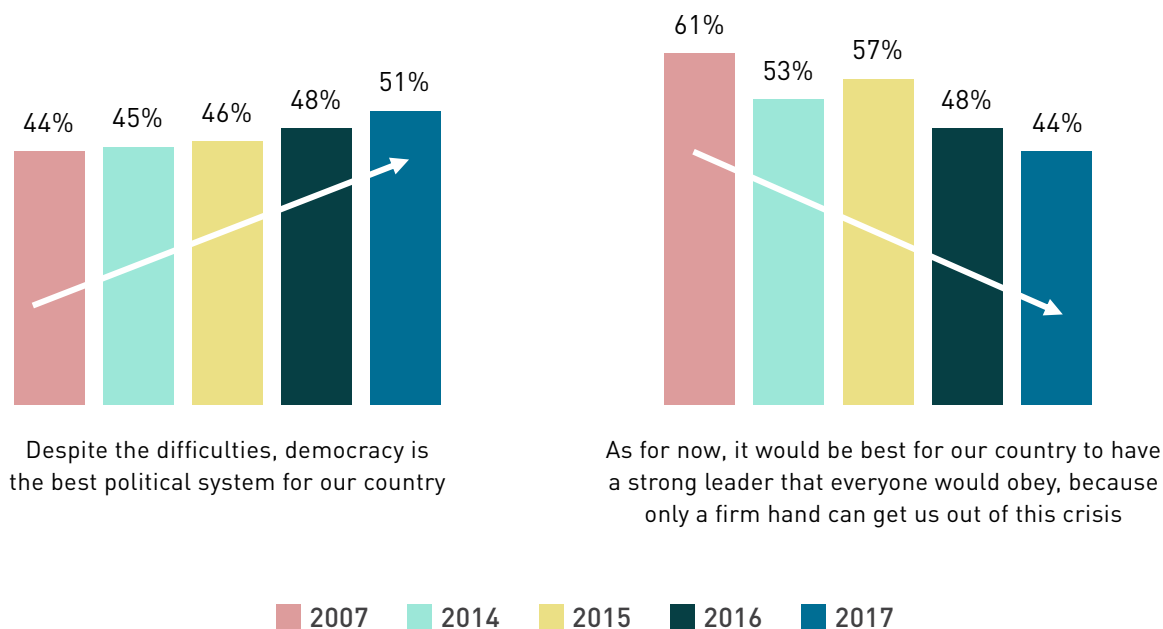
Figure 31: How ready are you personally to ...?
% READY (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



On the other hand, general trust in democracy as a political system has increased, so that this year, more than one half of citizens, 51%, think that democracy is the best political system for our country (Figure 32)

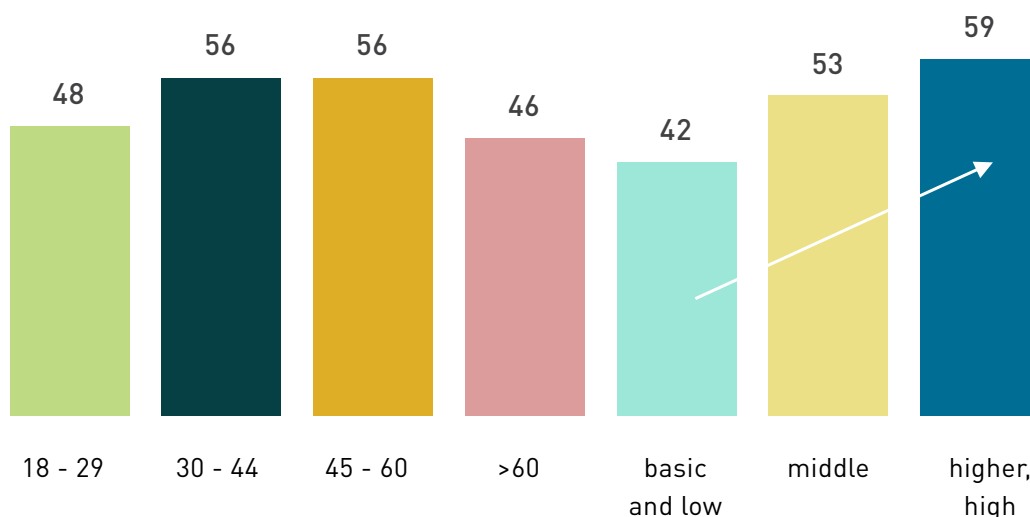
At the same time, there is a smaller percentage of those who think that it would be best for our country to have a strong leader that everyone would obey, because only a “firm” hand can get us out of this crisis. 44% of citizens are of that particular opinion now ⁵ (Figure 32).

Figure 32: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? AGREE (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



As the best political system, democracy is more supported by middle generation citizens, aged from 30 to 60 (56%) than by the youngest and the oldest (48% and 46%). The support of democracy is considerably higher with people having a higher education: 42% of citizens with the lowest education, and 59% of citizens with the higher or highest education (Figure 33). In comparison to last year, the support of democracy has risen in all age and educational groups.

Figure 33: Despite all difficulties, democracy is the best political system for our country
% AGREE (MOSTLY + COMPLETELY)



⁵ Source 2007: Public poll “Potential for Democracy”, 2007. Ipsos Strategic Marketing for Heinrich Bell and LDP

When it comes to support of the “firm hand” reign, it systematically increases with the age: solely 36% of citizens aged 18 to 39 agree that only a “firm hand” can get us out of the crisis, but 53% of the oldest citizens think so. The “firm hand” reign is mostly supported by least educated citizens (54%), and much less by citizens with a middle or high level of education (44% and 27%) (Figure 34). In comparison to last year, the support of the “firm hand” reign decreased in all age and educational groups.

Figure 34: At the moment, it would be the best for our country to have a strong leader that everyone would obey, because only a firm hand can get us out of the crisis

