

CRTA:

Democracy on the Margin of the War

Opinion poll, May 2022



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May 2022

Belgrade

The goal of the survey was to determine the attitudes of Serbian citizens about the status of democracy in the country, in particular regarding the elections held on 3 April 2022, as well as foreign policy views. Specifically, it deals with the means of news information about social and political topics, opinions on the situation in the country and status of democracy, irregularities of the election process and the electoral roll, opinions on the EU integration, Serbian relations with the EU and Russia, as well as the war in Ukraine and the position that Serbia should take.

This report presents comparisons of the results of the current poll, implemented in May 2022, with the results of the pre-election poll [implemented in February 2022](#), the survey on the participation of citizens in the democratic processes [implemented in November 2021](#), a public opinion poll on democracy and corruption [implemented in April 2021](#), and the survey on the democratic participation of citizens [implemented in October 2020](#).

Survey team

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Contents

Summary.....	5
Methodology and Sample Description.....	7
I Media Habits and Political Orientation.....	12
II Democracy and Authoritarianism	17
III Elections and the Electoral Roll	24
IV European Union.....	28
V Russia and European Union	33
VI The War in Ukraine	36
List of Figures.....	40

Summary

This public opinion poll was implemented a month after the April 3 Election Day and a little less than three months after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this context, there has been a need to examine opinions on recently held elections and democracy, as well as foreign policy views, in particular the perspective of the European integration and Serbia's relation with Russia and the position regarding the war in Ukraine.

Serbian citizens mostly get their **news information** on TV, but since the war in Ukraine broke out, obtaining news and information via internet portals had increased, as most respondents mentioned they prioritized portals when they wanted to obtain reliable information. The trust in media did not change, somewhat more than a half of the citizens only believe the pro-government media. In the last year and a half, the share of respondents who gravitate towards the parties in power and opposition parties has increased, while the share of respondents who are not close to any of the parties has declined. Almost a half of the respondents believe that Serbia is moving in the right direction, while a little less than a third believe the opposite.

Somewhat more than half of the respondents agree that **democracy** is the best political system for Serbia. In comparison to February, when the positive dispositions towards democracy had peaked, now they declined, but remained higher compared to 2020 and the beginning of 2021. At the same time, the rise in the authoritarian attitudes became noticeable in this period, and for the first time, a higher percentage of respondents believed that it would be better for Serbia to have a strong leader that everyone would listen to, compared to those who thought that a democratic system was the best. When faced with choosing between the two systems, almost half would prefer the system with a strong leader and somewhat less the democratic system.

Almost a half of the respondents are satisfied with the results of the recent **elections**, and somewhat more than a quarter is not satisfied. The respondents were divided about the possibility of the electoral fraud during the Election Day in April, two-fifths believed that it had happened, and the same percentage believed that it had not, while in February, about a half of the citizens believed that the electoral fraud had happened in the previous elections. Most respondents — four-fifths, said that neither they nor anyone around them had experienced any pressure during the elections. At the same time, an identical percentage of the respondents answered that they had experienced that compared to the previous survey in February. One tenth of the citizens of Serbia stated that ruling party activists were the ones putting pressure on them.

Almost half of the respondents believe that the **electoral roll** does not contain correct information; most said that was because it was being manipulated for elections, while the minority thought that it was because of administrative reasons. On the other hand,

about two-fifths of the respondents shared the belief that the data from the electoral roll were updated and correct. Half of the respondents mentioned that if the electoral roll was to be inspected, it should be done by the state and independent organisations. In contrast, the smallest share of the respondents would assign the inspection of the electoral roll to the political parties.

Unlike the rise in positive attitudes toward the **EU accession** by the end of 2021, the largest share of the negative attitudes towards the EU has been recorded now, including the smallest number of the indifferent respondents since 2020. In this poll, over a third of respondents would be concerned if Serbia would join the EU, while somewhat less than a third would be indifferent, and the fewest respondents would be happy. The majority of citizens of Serbia believe that the EU integration largely depends on the European Union rather than Serbia, while a smaller group believes that it is more up to Serbia. Somewhat less than a half of the respondents believe that Serbia economically relies the most on cooperation with the European Union, followed by Russia and China. The vast majority, over three-quarters of the population of Serbia, have travelled to the EU countries. However, more than half of the respondents mentioned that it would not bother them if visas to travel to the EU were reintroduced.

Somewhat less than three months from the beginning of the invasion of **Russia** into Ukraine, in parallel with the decline in positive views of the EU accession, the majority of respondents, two-fifths, would be happy if the EU accession would be dropped, and alliance with Russia would be formed, while about a quarter of the respondents would be concerned, and the same number of respondents would be indifferent. Ever since 2020, this is the largest percentage of respondents with a positive attitude towards the alliance with Russia, but also the biggest share of negative, with a minimal number of indifferent ones, indicating strong polarisation. The vast majority of respondents, three-quarters, do not think that the EU treats Serbia as an equal partner, and every tenth respondent agrees with that. On the other hand, a much higher percentage of citizens of Serbia, two-fifths, believe that Russia treats Serbia as an equal partner. The same number of respondents say that they would expect to have the health security and freedoms guaranteed in Russia, just like in the EU, while more respondents believe that they would feel more welcome in Russia, and equal with other citizens, than in the EU.

The vast majority of the respondents, over four-fifths, follow the events in **Ukraine**. If they had to choose, two-thirds of respondents said they felt closer to the Russian side in the conflict, while only about one-tenth said they felt closer to Ukrainians. Most respondents believe that Russian justifications of the war are valid – almost three quarters believe that Russia was challenged to conflict due to the NATO intentions to expand to the east, only one-tenth does not think so, and more than a half believe that it was due to prevention of genocide in Donbass, while one-fifth of the citizens disagrees with that. The respondents are divided regarding the statement that Russia intends to denazify Ukraine. At the same time, about a half do not agree that Putin equated the

Donbass case with Kosovo, thus jeopardizing Serbian interests in Kosovo. Two-fifths of respondents think that potential Finnish membership in NATO would jeopardize Russian security and that Russia is entitled to stop that, while one-third believe that Finland has a right to apply for membership in NATO to protect from Russian invasion.

Regarding the position of **Serbia** towards the war in Ukraine, half of the respondents believe that Serbia should remain neutral. Somewhat less than one-third of citizens think that Serbia should not impose sanctions on Russia, even at the cost of abandoning the EU. In contrast, every tenth respondent believes Serbia should align its foreign policy with the EU and impose sanctions against Russia. Over two-thirds of the respondents think that if Russia stopped gas supply to Serbia, it would create huge problems, rather than if the EU would do that. A similar percentage of citizens believe it would be much more complicated if the EU introduced visas to Serbia than if Russia did the same. Over half of the respondents think the situation would be more adverse if the EU companies left Serbia than Russian companies.

Methodology and Sample Description

Data collection method: Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) through mobile phone Random Digit Dialling

Target population: adult citizens of the Republic of Serbia (without Kosovo)

Type of sample: random sample, representative of the Republic of Serbia (without Kosovo)

Size of sample: 1000 respondents

Margin of error: $\pm 3.16\%$

Strata: in total 48, per gender (male, female), age (18-34, 35-64, 65+), region (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Central and Western Serbia, South and Eastern Serbia) and type of settlement (urban, rural)

Post-stratification: per gender, age, region and type of settlement

Response rate: 26%

The average duration of interviews: 16 minutes

Polling period: 14–23 May 2022

CRTA has independently implemented the survey by using the system of the computer-assisted telephone interviewing – CATI. For the polling we have used mobile phone services since they have greater coverage than the landlines, through the method of the random digit dialling - RDD.

Creating samples of dialling numbers

Serbia has three mobile operators with eight extensions in total (060, 061, 062, 063, 064, 065, 066 and 069). Some extensions have six-digit and seven-digit numbers (062, 063, 066 and 069), while others only have seven-digit numbers (060, 061, 064 and 065). It means that in 12 different combinations, there are 84 million number permutations (80 million for eight seven-digit numbers and four million for four six-digit extensions). After eliminating four combinations that make up the less than 9% of the total number of users, the remaining number of permutations is 62 million (60 million for six seven-digit numbers and two million for two six-digit numbers).

The sample of numbers out of 62 million was randomly generated, and by using the system of sending SMS messages, it was established which numbers were functional. The existing numbers were then added to the dialling base. Thus, the non-functional, non-existing numbers were eliminated, simultaneously ensuring the random selection of numbers, i.e. citizens who will have an opportunity to participate in the poll. The operators only dialled the existing numbers that were randomly selected from the base of all potential combinations of numbers.

Data collection procedure

Before dialling, the randomly selected numbers would receive the following SMS: *“Dear, the computer has randomly selected your number to participate in the anonymous and voluntary scientific research. Next week, a CRTA interviewer will contact you”*. The owners who have expressed disagreement to communicate further have been removed from the database.

The dialling was carried out from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. (10 a.m. until 8 p.m. on weekends). There were 20 operators who made the calls, and three-quarters of them are experienced in telephone interviewing, for several years, while all operators have been trained in call operating and interviewing. They have used the dialling software and platform for recording responses. Dialling was done by clicking on the randomly selected number, and the survey was filled in through interviews with the citizens.

Sampling and weighting

In order to ensure that the sample of respondents would correspond to the structure of the Republic of Serbia population (without Kosovo and Metohija), in total, 48 strata have been determined to respond to the estimated structure based on the gender (male, female), age (18-34, 35-64, 65+), region (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Central and Western Serbia, South and Eastern Serbia) and type of the settlement (urban, rural). The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORP) data for 2020 have been used.

The software has used the principle of randomness to choose whom to dial. Everyone who agreed to participate in the survey would go through the interview with the operator, who, at the very beginning, would ask the questions in order to determine belonging to particular strata. The software automatically placed every respondent in one of 48 strata. Only by the end of the survey we would have some of the strata

completed (e.g. men with the university degrees from Central Serbia and urban areas older than 65), so the operators had to refuse some of the interested respondents if they belonged to the stratum that was completed. In the end, 576 respondents were not able to participate in the survey since they belonged to the previously completed stratum.

As seen from Table 1, the final sample included more urban population than the population of Serbia, i.e. it has somewhat less of the citizens older than 65, which deviates from the population characteristics of the Republic of Serbia. After collecting data, we weighted the data to align the relevant demographic sample characteristics with the population. More precisely, we used iterative proportional fitting (raking). The results were weighted per already mentioned strata to correspond to the numbers of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for 2020. The minimal weight was 0.7, while the maximum was 2.02 (8 female respondents, older than 65, from rural settlements in the South and East of Serbia). The results were not significantly different after weighting. The changes in the percentage of the responses to different questions due to the weighting usually ranged from 1-2%. Based on the above, the results represent the Republic of Serbia's population (without Kosovo and Metohija).

Statistics of the data collection process

Exactly 1,000 questionnaires have been completed, 576 respondents expressed their wish to participate, but they belonged to the filled quota, and 4,419 citizens refused to participate in the survey. In answering the text message, 467 of the citizens already emphasised that they do not want to participate in the survey. The *response rate* was therefore 26%, based on the calculation $1576 / (1576 + 4419)$. In other words, every fourth citizen we have contacted agreed to participate in the survey.

Survey

Questions and survey answer choices were created to fit the conversation over the phones. After testing the length of the survey and clarity among a smaller number of respondents, it was determined that interview should not be longer than 15 minutes and based on that, the final number of questions was set.

The survey included 45 closed-ended questions. Among the answers there were options for the respondents who do not know how to answer the question or do not want to answer – do not know/no answer (DK/NA). The order of answer options in questions was random, except when the answer options were from the Likert scales (e.g. from the range I absolutely do not agree – I absolutely agree). The survey had seven socio-demographic questions: gender, age, education, region, type of settlement, and financial and working status. The topics covered by the survey, in addition to the socio-demographic characteristics, are as follows:

- Media habits and political orientation (5 questions)
- Democracy and authoritarianism (3 questions)
- Elections and the electoral roll (6 questions)
- European Union (5 questions)
- Russia and European Union (8 questions)

- The war in Ukraine (11 questions)

Note. When reading reports and figures, it should be taken into consideration that the percentage will not always add up to 100 due to the rounding of numbers. The report includes the descriptive statistics, and for testing differences between the groups, we used the Cramer's V instead of the Chi-square test, since the latter is biased with large samples. This measurement is used for establishing a link between two categorical variables, and its value ranges from zero to one (maximum possible correlation).

Table 1. *Sample description per strata (%)*

		SORS 2020	Unweighted	Weighted
Gender	Male	48	52	49
	Female	52	48	51
Age	18-34	24	25	24
	35-64	50	54	51
	65+	26	21	25
Region	Beograd	24	25	22
	Vojvodina	27	28	27
	Central and Western Serbia	27	27	29
	South and Eastern Serbia	22	20	22
Type of settlement	Urban	61	72	61
	Rural	39	28	39

Table 2. *Sample description per socio-demographic variables (%)*

		2020 NOV	2021 APR	2021 OCT	2022 FEB	2022 MAY
Education	Completed or not elementary school (ES)	12	12	12	13	13
	High School (HS)	50	54	53	52	52
	Higher degree or faculty (HD)	38	34	35	34	34
Financial status	Do not have enough money, often even for food	6	6	7	6	6
	Have enough for food but can hardly buy clothes	15	14	17	13	15
	Have enough for food and clothes, but not for larger purchases, such as a TV set or fridge	41	36	32	36	37
	Have money for large purchases, such as a TV set or fridge	28	35	36	33	31
	Can buy almost anything they want	8	8	6	9	8
Employment status	Employed permanently; work in their own company or self-employed	34	35	35	-	40
	Employed for fixed-term, agency employment	11	8	8	-	10
	Working without an employment contract or any written contract	3	2	2	-	2
	Work in their land property	3	3	4	-	4
	Homemakers	5	3	4	-	3
	Retired persons	25	26	27	-	24
	Pupils or students	5	5	4	-	5
	Unemployed	12	15	14	-	12

I Media Habits and Political Orientation

In this part of the report, we compare the survey from May 2022 and surveys from February 2022, October 2021 and November 2020. The first figure shows that citizens mostly get information on political and social topics through television and internet portals. The survey respondents could select multiple answers, and somewhat less than two-thirds get their information through television, while over a half mention they read the internet portals. Compared to previous surveys, finding information in the internet portals has noticeably increased.

Main sources of information on political and social topics

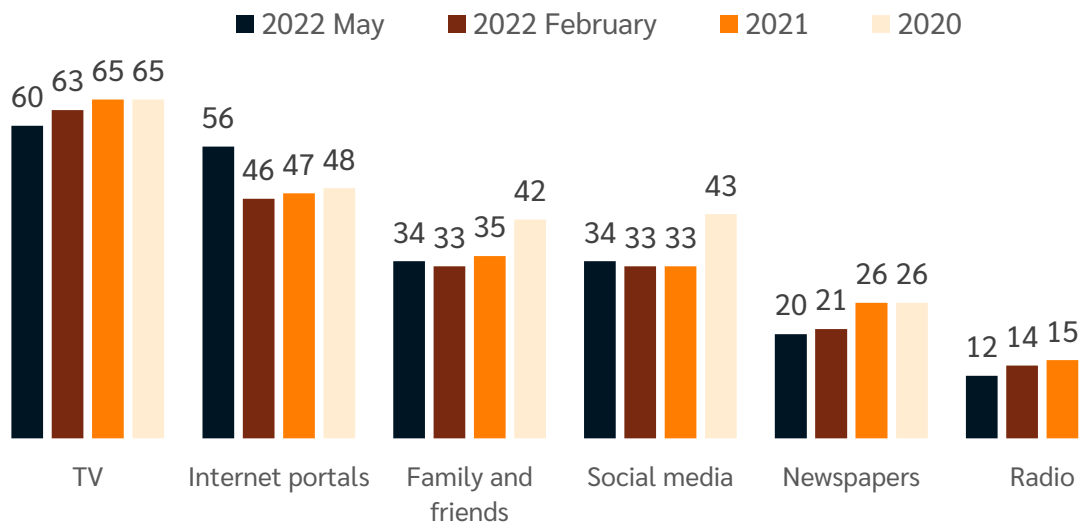


Figure 1. Main sources of information

In addition to getting news from the internet portals, the respondents have mostly mentioned the internet portals, as the type of media they refer to as primary when something important is happening and when they want to obtain reliable information. It is followed by television, while the respondents less rely on other types of media, social media, newspapers and others when they want reliable information (Figure 2).

When something important happens and you want to get reliable information, what type of media has priority?

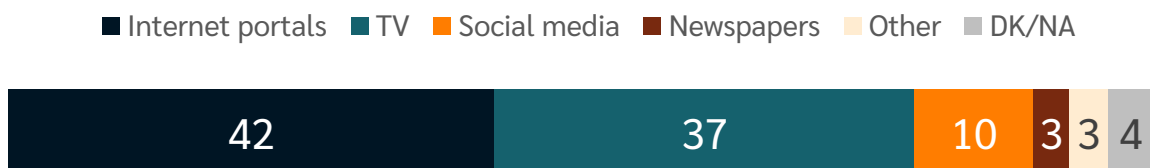


Figure 2. Reliable information and the type of media

In addition to confirming which sources of news information they use and depending on the circumstances, the citizens answered the question of which televisions, as the primary source of daily news information, they trusted the most. The answers included seven options, five televisions with national frequency, which were pro-government, i.e. the media outlets with an editorial policy that is not critical of the government (RTS, Prva, Pink, Happy, B92), along with two televisions that might be considered as critically oriented media outlets (Nova S, N1). Most citizens, almost 40 per cent, trust RTS, while about a quarter emphasise that they trust Prva, Pink and N1 televisions. The citizens have the least trust in Happy and B92 television. Compared to previous surveys, the trust regarding televisions has not significantly changed.¹

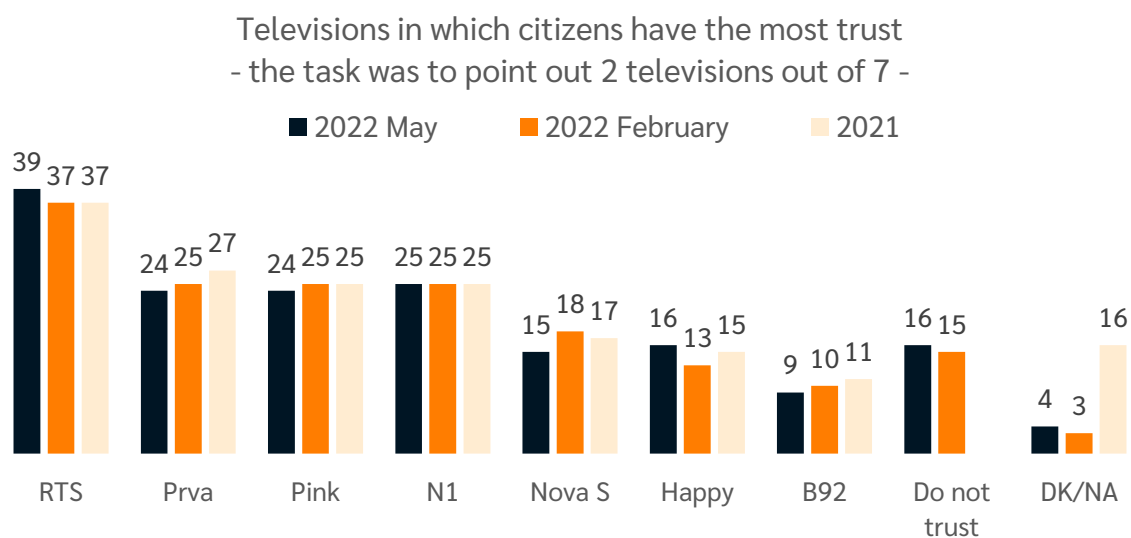


Figure 3. Trust in the media

Based on answers to the questions from Figure 3, showing the respondents' trust in any of seven televisions, the citizens were divided into four groups: those in favour of pro-government media exclusively, those pointing out only critically oriented media, and those who said that they trusted a pro-government media outlet (e.g. RTS) and other critically oriented media outlet (e.g. Nova S). The fourth group included those who did not trust any television (Figure 4).

The results show that somewhat more than half of the citizens trust only the pro-government media, while slightly less than a third trust the critical media too. In contrast, only 15% trust only critical media, and 13% believe both. In the last year, there were no changes in the trust toward pro-government and critically oriented media.

¹ The 2021 survey did not include an option of choosing “Do not trust any of televisions”, so almost 16% of the citizens did not respond to this question. Therefore, in subsequent surveys, we provided an option to choose “Do not trust any of the televisions”, but the respondents were not offered this option, and the operators would select it only if citizens themselves would say that they do not trust any of the televisions.

Trust in the media

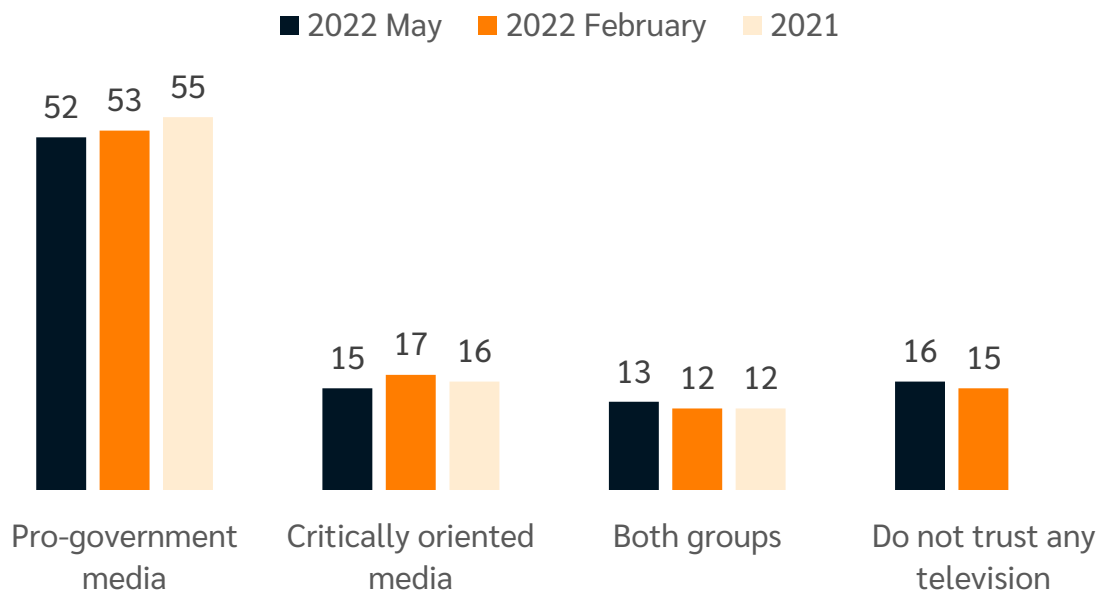


Figure 4. Trust in the media – per groups

As regards political orientation, 41% of the respondents said that they were closer to the political parties in power in Serbia now, 14% said they felt closer to the opposition parties, while 42% did not feel close to either. Compared to surveys from the previous two years, marked by the parliamentary and elections boycotts, the share of respondents who inclined toward the parties in power and opposition parties was increasing, while the number of citizens close to neither of the groups of the parties was decreasing (Figure 5).

Are you closer to the political parties that are now in power in Serbia or those that are in opposition or neither of them?

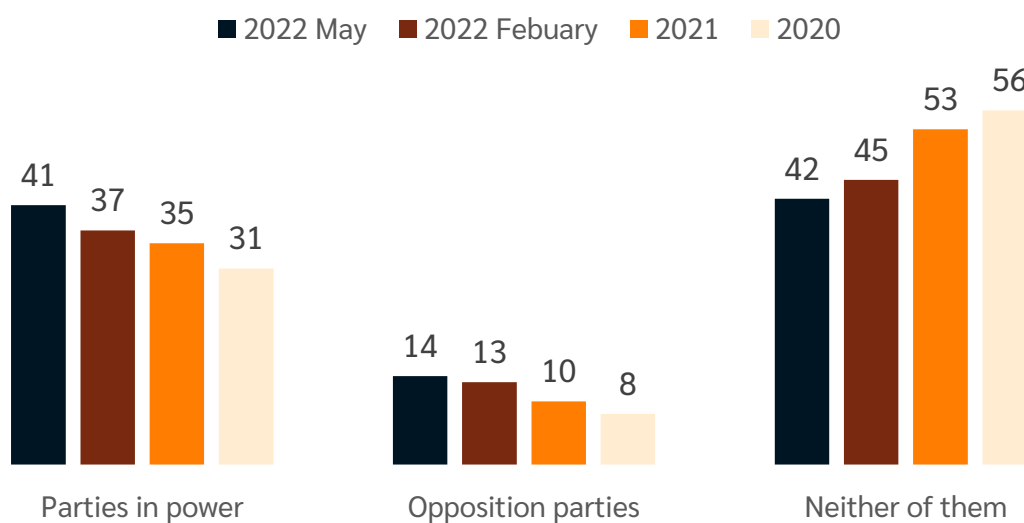


Figure 5. Political inclinations

Somewhat less than a half of the respondents (48%) believe that Serbia is moving in the right or mostly right direction. Contrary to them, somewhat less than a third (31%) of the citizens of Serbia believe that the state is moving in the wrong or mostly wrong direction. Between these two groups, about one-fifth of the respondents (19%) believes that Serbia is not moving in either a good or bad direction.

Is Serbia moving in the right or wrong direction?



Figure 6. Situation in the country

Is Serbia moving in the right or wrong direction? - crossing with political variables-

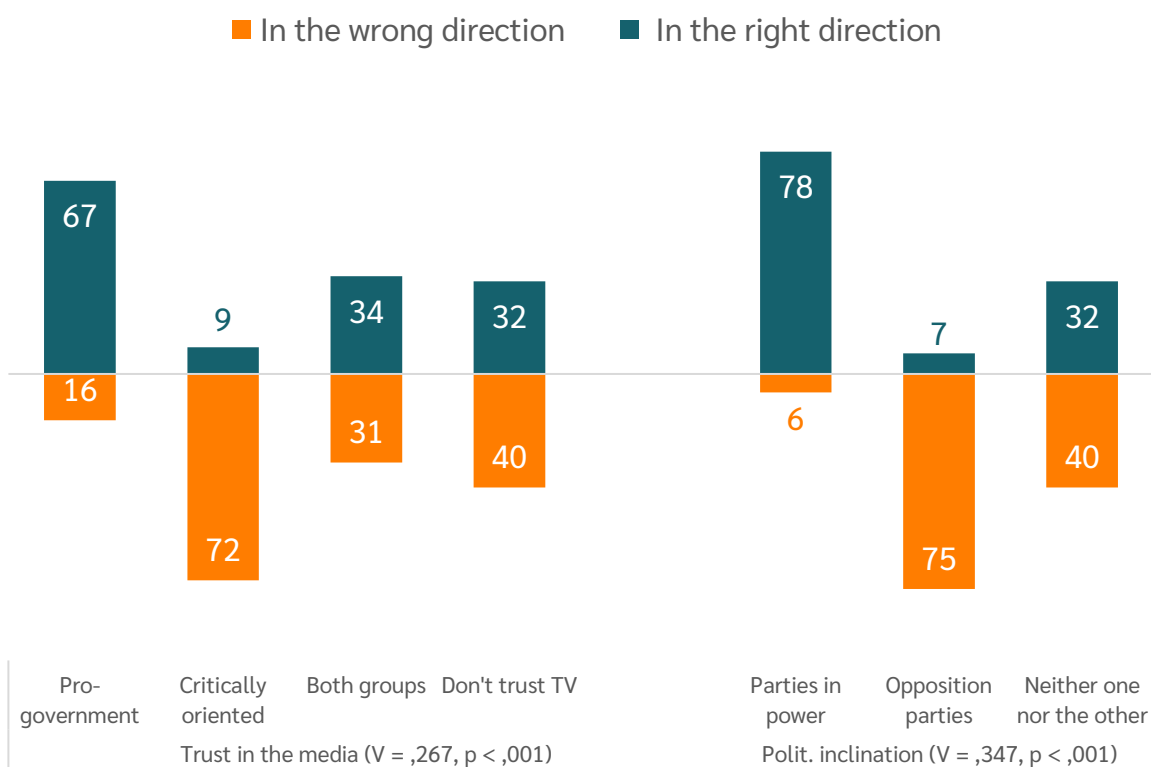


Figure 7. The situation in the country in relation to political variables

When crossing the answers on the direction Serbia is moving with the media and party variables, presented in Figure 7, we notice strong and statistically significant differences between the segments of respondents. The citizens who trust only the pro-government media and have political inclinations toward parties in power believe Serbia is moving in

the right direction to a much higher degree, while the respondents who only trust critically oriented media and have political inclinations toward the opposition parties predominantly believe that the country is moving in the bad direction. The situation is different among other segments. Of the respondents who trust both pro-government and critically oriented media, a smaller percentage believe that Serbia is moving in the right direction (34%) compared to those who think that it is moving in the bad direction (31%), while the respondents who do not trust any of the televisions have somewhat more negative views of the country's direction, as well as those who do not feel close to the parties.

Opinions on the direction Serbia is moving are not significantly statistically different when it comes to gender, as well as urban and rural populations. More than the others, the respondents older than 65 believe that Serbia is moving in the right direction. The respondents with a higher degree of education and Belgrade-based largely believe Serbia is moving in the wrong direction.

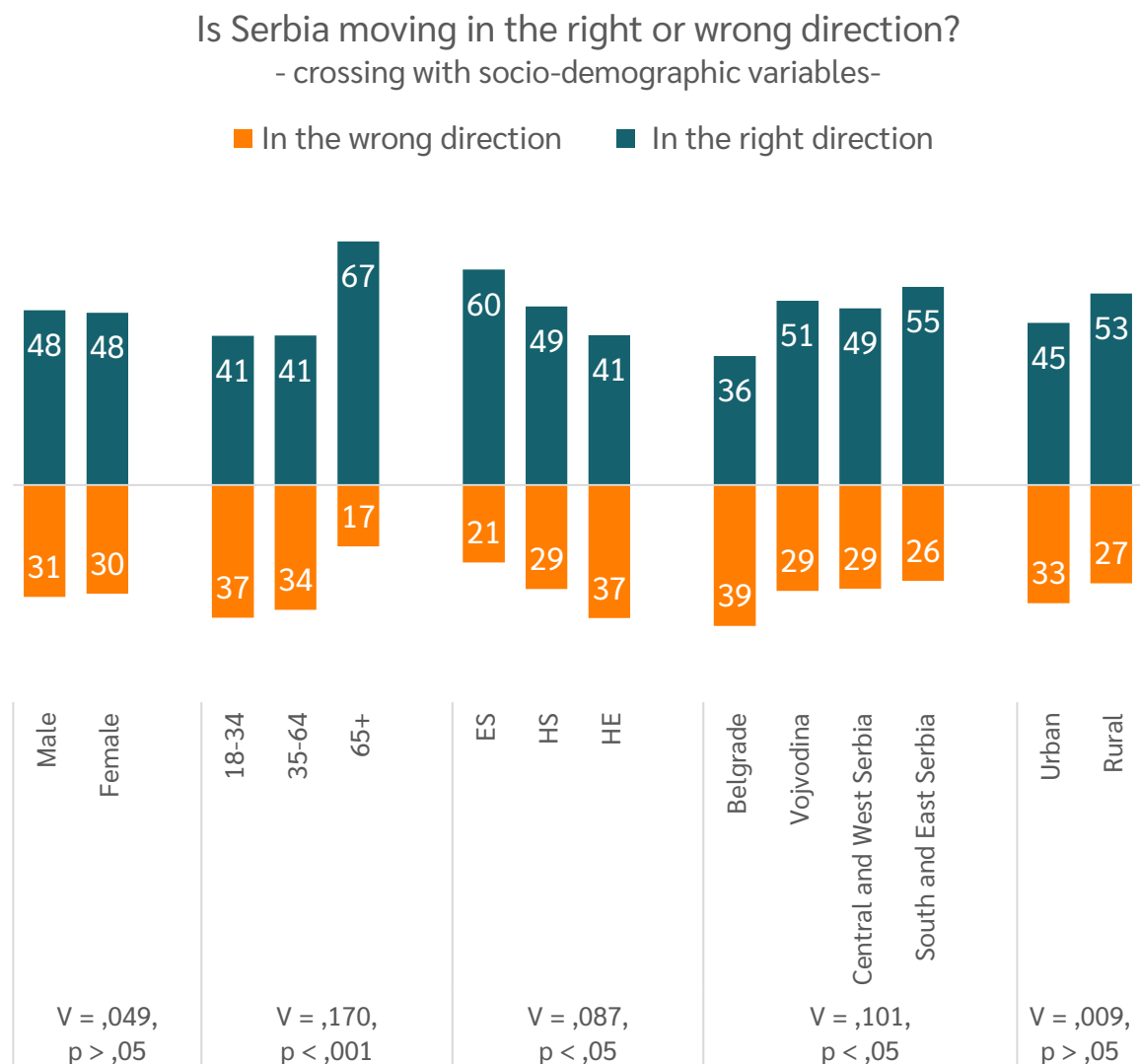


Figure 8. The situation in the country in relation to the socio-demographic variables

II Democracy and Authoritarianism

The Serbian citizens' attitude toward democracy was examined in a similar manner within five surveys over the period of one year and a half. The positive attitude of the citizens of Serbia toward this system increased in the period before the elections, between October 2021 and February 2022. However, from February until May, when this survey was completed, the share of positive opinions dropped. Somewhat more than a half (56%) mostly or entirely agree that democracy was the best political system for the country. Besides that, 11% of citizens did not agree, 6% mostly did not agree, and 19% were undecided in the last survey. Although the positive attitudes toward the democracy decreased compared to the pre-election peak, Figure 8 shows that the support for the democratic system was higher, including a smaller share of the negative opinions, compared to the 2020-2021 period.

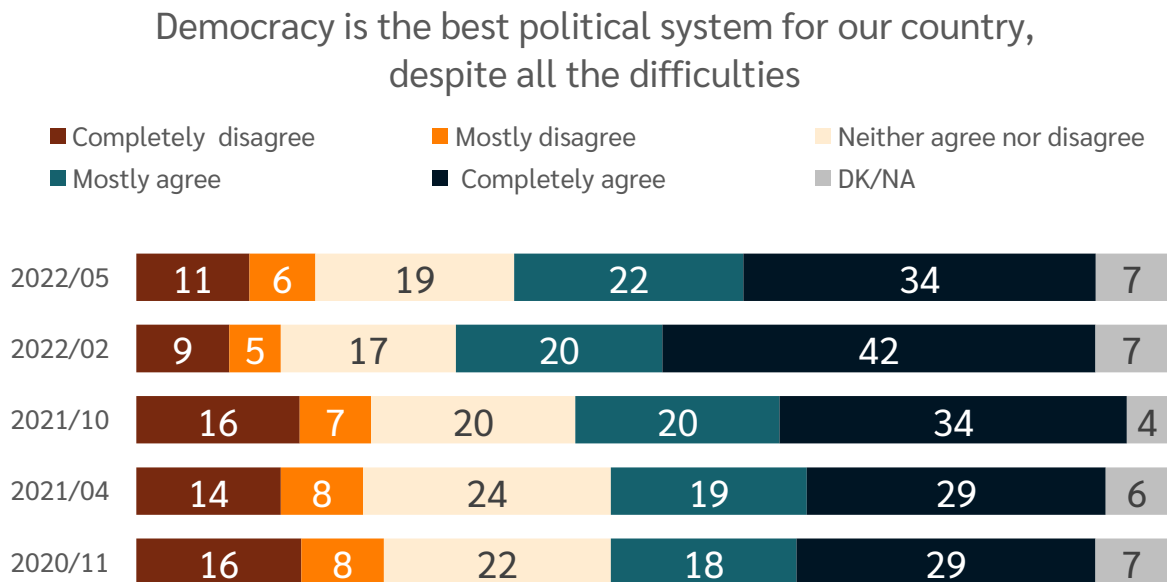


Figure 9. The view of democracy

Although it is not a big difference (Figure 10), the citizens who trust critically oriented media and are inclined toward opposition parties show greater support for the democracy than those who trust pro-government media and position themselves closer to the parties in power. The least support for democracy is exhibited among those who do not express their political inclinations and trust both media groups. Besides, older than 34 are somewhat more positive about this system, as well as the urban population and citizens with more education (Figure 11). The biggest differences are visible in education, where almost two-thirds of those who graduated from faculty support democracy, compared to somewhat less than a half of the least educated citizens.

Despite all the difficulties, democracy is the best political system for our country
- crossing with political variables -

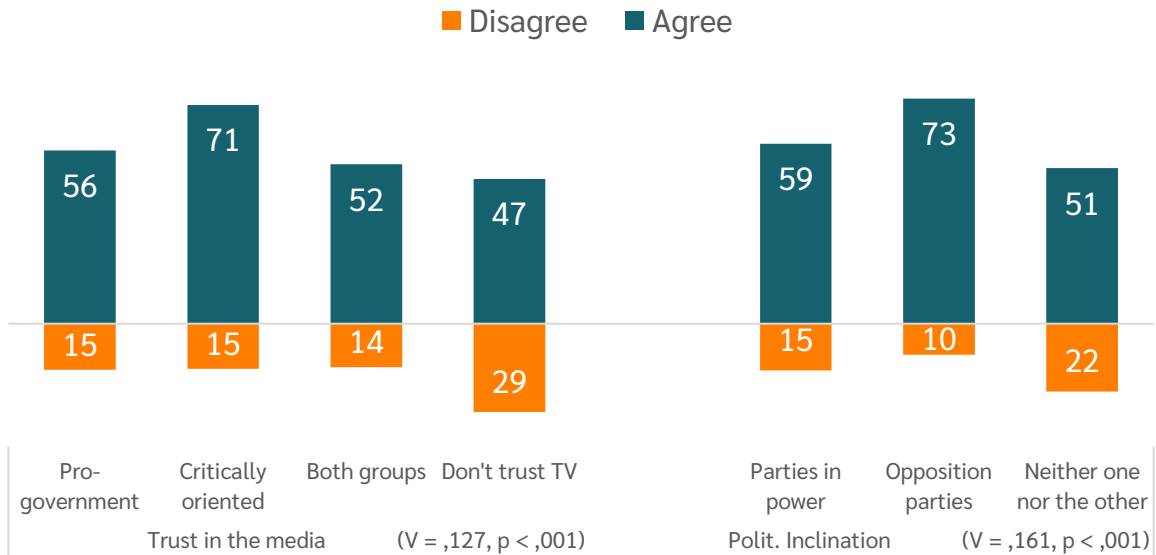


Figure 10. The view of democracy in relation to the political variables

Despite all the difficulties, democracy is the best political system for our country
- crossing with socio-demographic variables-

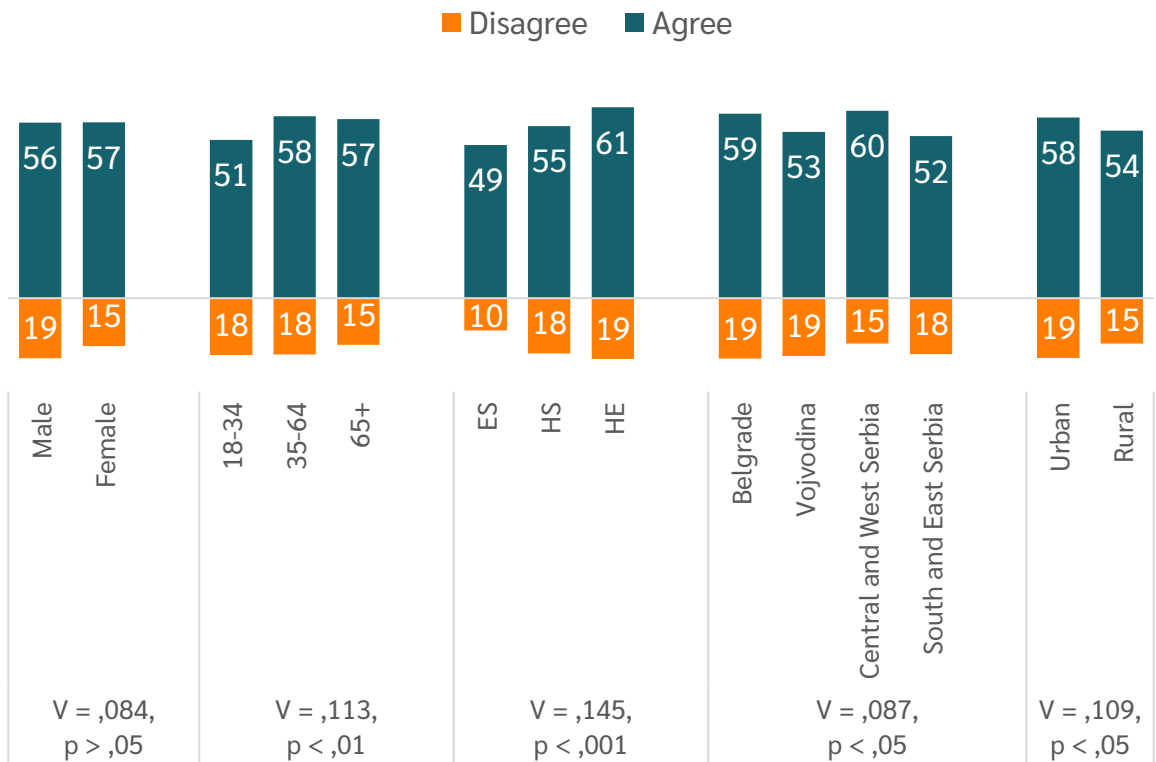


Figure 11. The view of democracy in relation to the socio-demographic variables

Unlike the view of democracy, which had experienced a rise before and a drop after the elections, and also since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, over the last year and a half there was a prominent rise of support for the strong leader. Compared to October 2020, when 51% of the respondents agreed, entirely or mainly, with the attitude that it would be better for our country to have one strong leader that everyone would listen to, the positive opinion of the politics of the strong hand has reached its peak in this survey, with 62% of the citizens who entirely or mainly agree.

It should be noted that the opinion on the strong leader is significantly more polarised among the citizen than their attitude towards the democratic system. Namely, although somewhat more citizens support a strong leader (62%) than democracy (56%), significantly more citizens emphasise that they do not *at all* support a strong leader (21%), compared to those who do not at all support a democratic system (11%). The percentage of those who neither agree nor disagree with the statement that the best for our country at this moment would be to have a strong leader that everyone would listen to is also smaller.

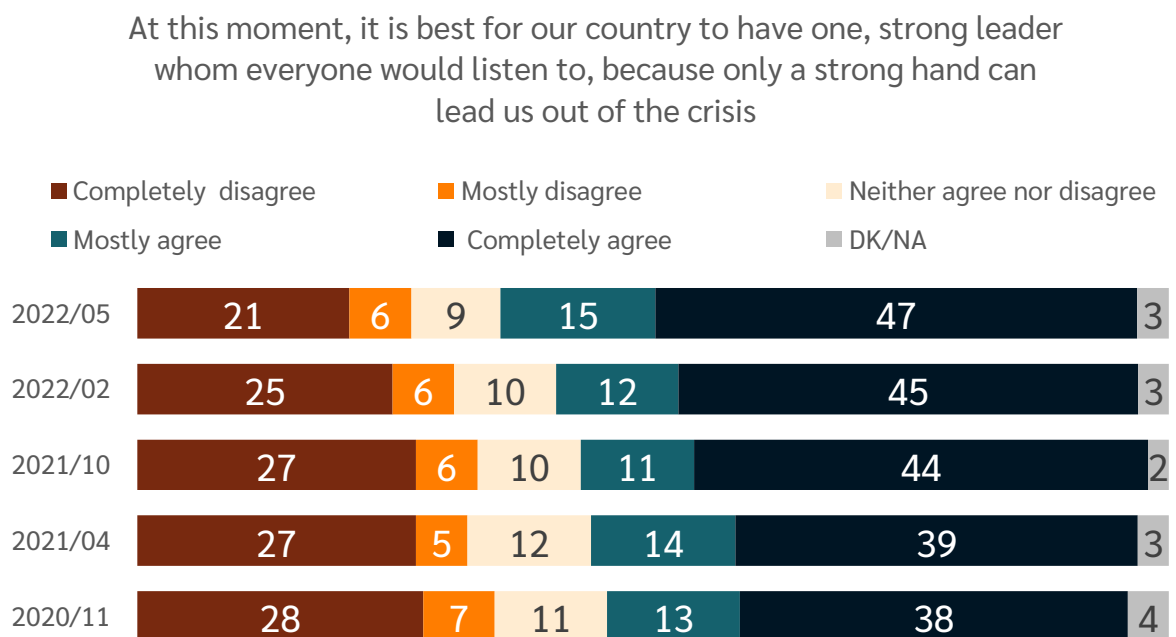


Figure 12. The view of a strong leader

Compared to the views of democracy, where differences between main political segments of the respondents were not high, regarding the perspective on the strong leader, the differences are large among the citizens who, on the one hand, trust pro-government media and are inclined to the parties in power, and, on the other hand, those who trust the critically oriented media and are inclined towards the opposition parties (Figure 13). The first group mainly supports a strong leader, while the second group primarily does not support that. Those citizens who trust both media groups, as well as those who do not trust any of the televisions and do not have inclinations

towards any party – are positioned between these two groups regarding the position on the strong leader. In addition, most citizens with the elementary school education level give the biggest support to a strong leader, also those older than 65, citizens living outside of Belgrade, in rural environments, and women (Figure 14). The most negligible support for a strong leader is among the citizens living in Belgrade, highly educated citizens, aged 35–64, and the urban population.

At this moment, it is best for our country to have one, strong leader whom everyone would listen to, because only a strong hand can lead us out of the crisis
 - crossing with political variables -

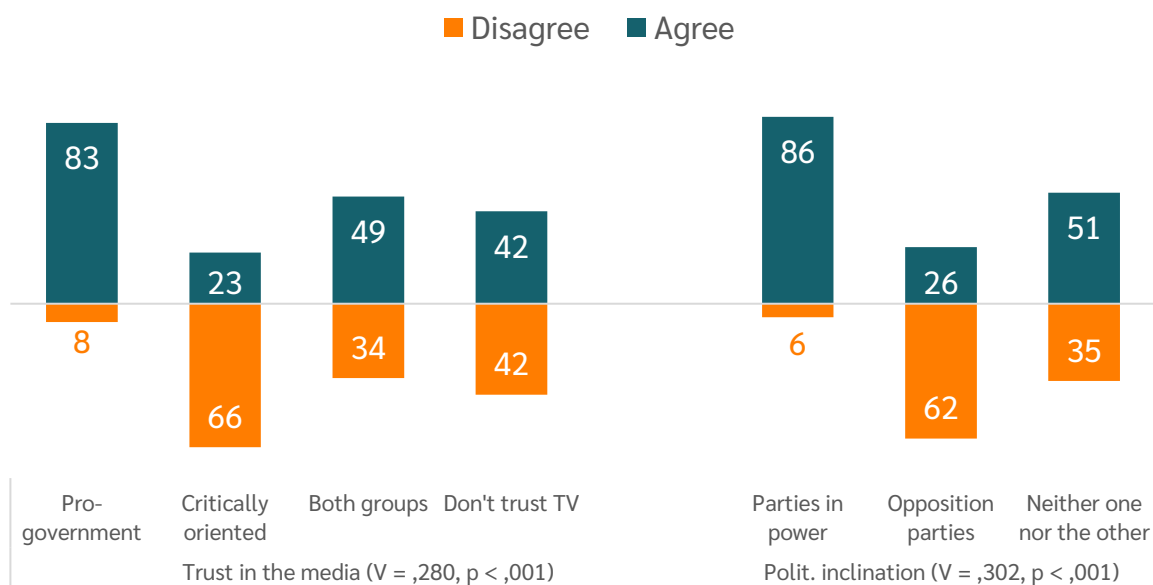


Figure 13. The view of a strong leader in relation to the political variables

At this moment, it is best for our country to have one, strong leader whom everyone would listen to, because only a strong hand can lead us out of the crisis
 - crossing with socio-demographic variables-

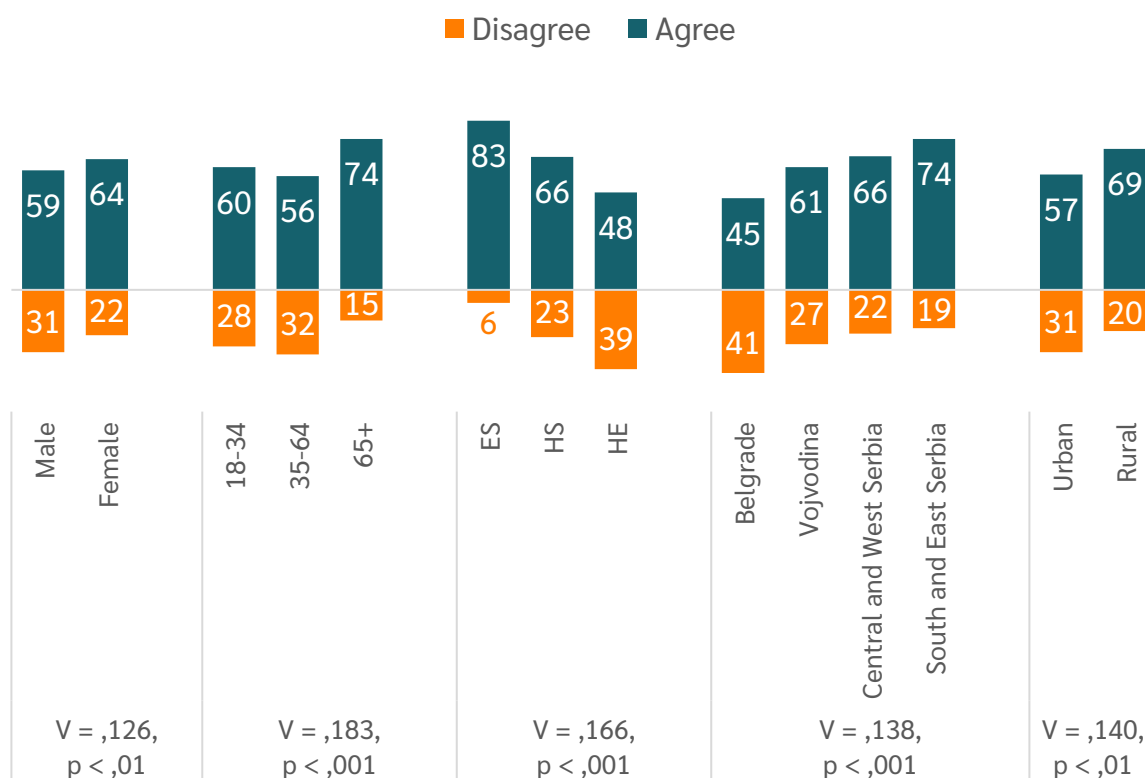


Figure 14. The view of a strong leader in relation to the socio-demographic variables

By additionally crossing the positions on democracy and the strong leader, it is visible that the largest segment of the population in Serbia, one-third, supports, mainly or entirely, both the democratic system and the authoritarian rule. The next segment in size belongs to those respondents who support the democracy and oppose the authoritarian system (18%), while the third belongs to those who opt for the authoritarian system and do not support the democracy (12%).

If they had to choose between these two systems, almost half of the respondents would prefer the system with a strong leader, while somewhat less (41%) would choose the democratic system. Crossing of these opinions with the political variables indicates high and statistically significant differences (Figure 16). The respondents who are inclined toward the parties in power and only trust the pro-government media would mostly choose a strong leader. Those respondents who only trust the critical media and feel closer to the opposition parties would mainly choose the democratic system. The opinions of the respondents who trust both media or do not trust the media at all, as well as those who are not close to either the parties in power or parties in the opposition,

are found between these two groups, but in these groups, the slight majority would still opt for the democratic system.

The more educated respondents, aged between 18 and 64, from Belgrade, and men would rather choose the democratic system (Figure 17). Mostly the respondents older than 65, with only elementary school education and to a smaller extent, the population of South and East Serbia, as well as women, would rather choose a strong leader. There is no statistically significant difference between the urban and rural populations when choosing one of the two answer options.

If you had to choose, what would you say, which political system is the best for our country at the moment?

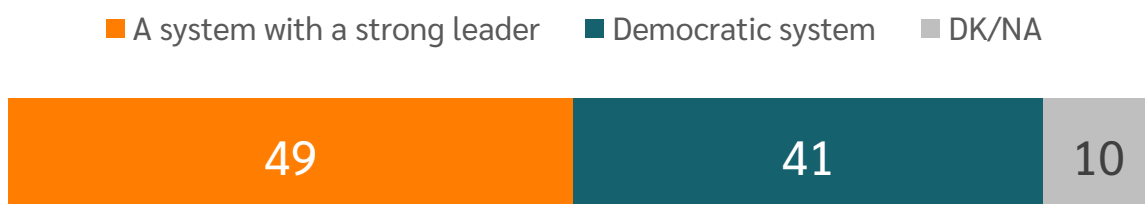


Figure 15. The opinion on the political system

If you had to choose, what would you say, which political system is the best for our country at the moment?

- crossing with political variables -

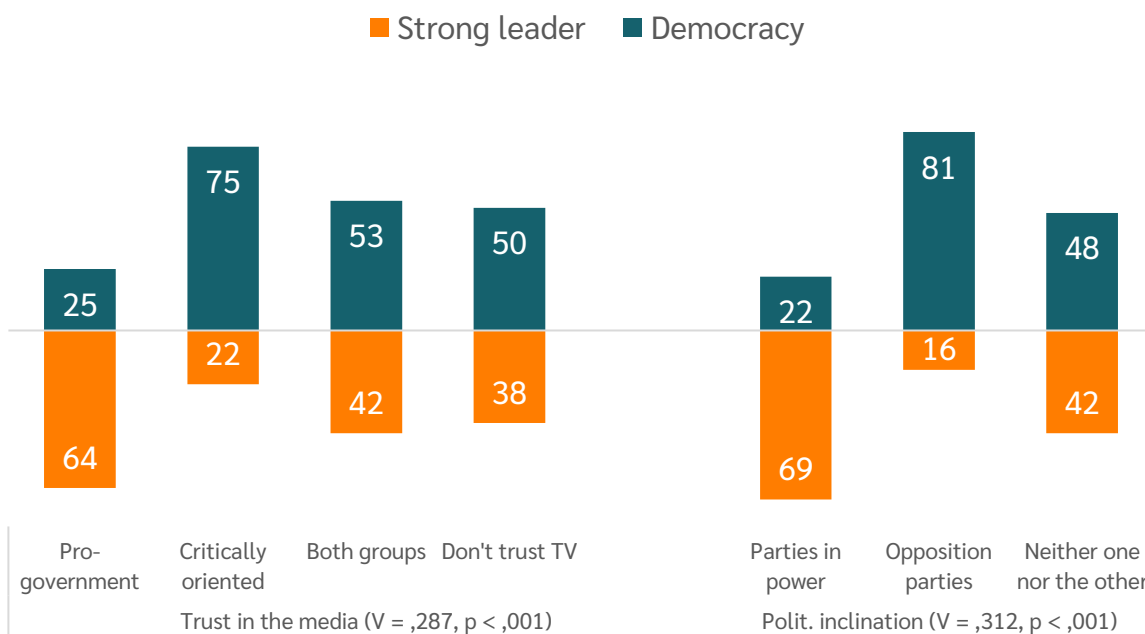


Figure 16. The opinion on the political system in relation to the political variables

If you had to choose, what would you say, which political system is the best for our country at the moment?

- crossing with socio-demographic variables-

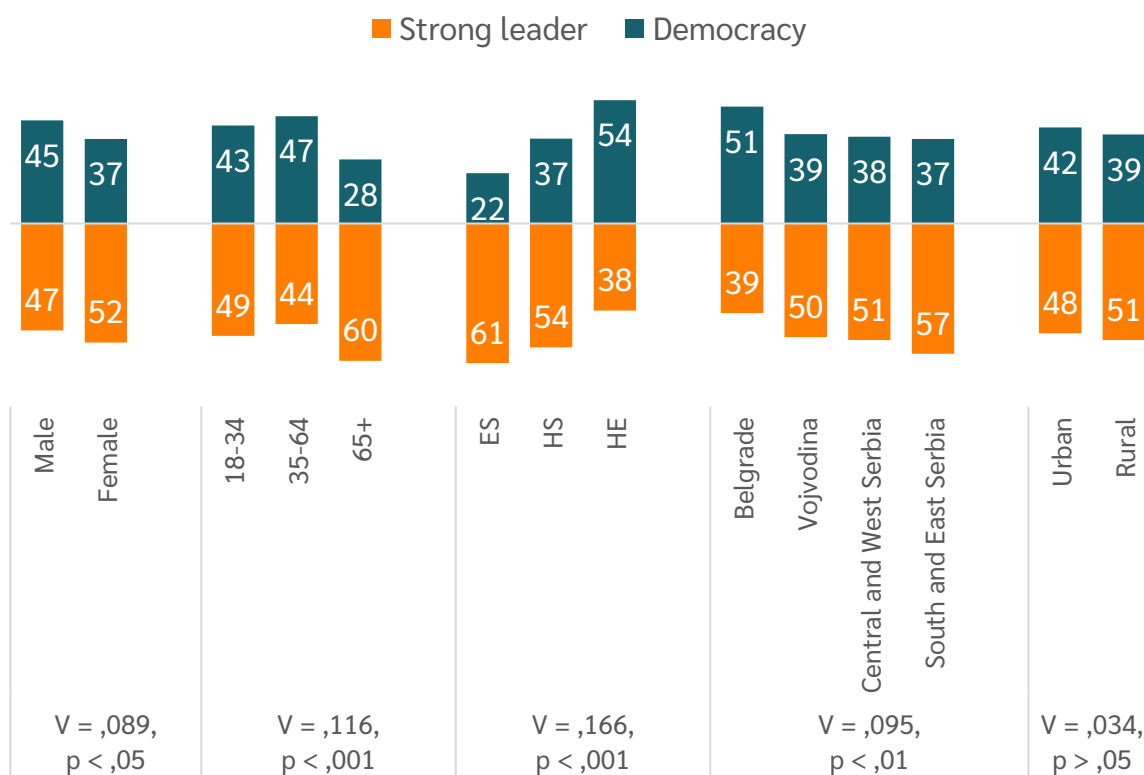


Figure 17. The opinion on the political system in relation to the socio-demographic variables

III Elections and the Electoral Roll

In this survey segment, the respondents have answered the questions about the elections held on April 3. When asked if they were satisfied with the results of the parliamentary elections held in April, the majority of respondents (48%) answered that they had been, mostly or completely. Somewhat more than a quarter of the respondents (28%) answered that they were not satisfied, mostly or at all, while 17% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied (Figure 18).

These attitudes statistically significantly vary compared to the perspectives on media trust ($V=,311$, $p<,001$) and political inclination ($V=,411$, $p<,001$). The respondents who only trust the pro-government media are mostly satisfied (71%), in fact, 83% of those who are closer to the parties in power, while 75% of the respondents who trust the critically oriented media, and those who feel closer to the opposition parties, are unsatisfied. Among the respondents who trust both media, 34% are satisfied with the results while the same number is unsatisfied, and among those who do not trust television, more of them are unsatisfied (38%), than satisfied (22%). The ratio is similar among the respondents who are not close to either of the parties, as 36% are unsatisfied with the results of the parliamentary elections, while 28% are satisfied.

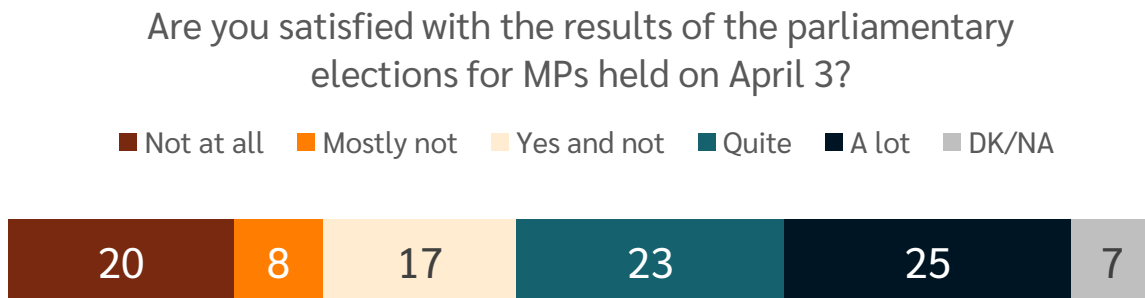


Figure 18. Satisfaction with the election results

The respondents were divided regarding the electoral fraud during the Election Day in the April elections. While 42% of the respondents thought the electoral fraud occurred to a bigger or smaller degree, the same percentage believed that the fraud did not occur. In the February survey, before the elections, about a half of the citizens felt that in the previous elections cycles, the electoral fraud happened to a larger or smaller extent, while one-third believed that the fraud did not occur. Unlike the period before the elections, the citizens' opinions changed in the direction of a somewhat milder perception of electoral fraud.

Do you believe there has been electoral fraud in the recent elections?

■ No ■ Yes, in small amount ■ Yes, in big amount ■ DK/NA



Figure 19. Electoral fraud on the Election Day

The majority of respondents, 83%, answered that no pressure was exercised on them or anyone around them to go out and vote for a particular option. In comparison, 16% of the respondents answered that it had happened (Figure 20). The percentage was almost the same in February, meaning that four-fifths of the citizens mentioned that they were not pressured to go out and vote, while 17% of the citizens said they had experienced pressure to vote for a particular party or go out to vote.

Similar to February, after the elections too, among those who identified the existence of pressure, one tenth of citizens of Serbia emphasised that ruling parties' activists put pressure on them or someone around them to go out and vote for some of the parties. In addition, 3% of the citizens emphasised that the representatives of the authorities exercised pressure, while 2% each claimed that pressure was exercised by either opposition party activists, close friends, managers or other superiors (Figure 21).

Has anyone pressured you or someone around you to go to the elections and vote for a particular option?

■ No ■ Yes ■ DK/NA



Figure 20. Pressure during the elections

Who was putting pressure? - in relation to the population-



Figure 21. Who was putting pressure?

Similar to the previous election cycles, the issue of the accuracy of the electoral roll and keeping it up to date has been raised again. Almost a half of the respondents think that the electoral roll does not contain accurate data, while 28% believe it is so because the electoral roll is manipulated for the electoral purposes, and 20% think that it is because of the administration. On the other hand, 37% of the respondents believe that the electoral roll contains updated and accurate data (Figure 22). These findings could be compared with the 2018 answers when the same percentage of the respondents (28%) answered that the electoral roll was not accurate since it was being manipulated, but more respondents (31%) said that the data were not correct due to administrative reasons, while 25% of the respondents answered that it contained accurate and updated data.²

Most of the respondents think that if the inspection of the electoral roll was necessary, it should be done by the state (30%) and independent organisations (28%), and a smaller share of respondents think that it should be done by the universities (12%), international organisations (8%) and only 7% would delegate the inspection of the electoral roll to the political parties (Figure 23).

² Ipsos Strategic Marketing implemented this [field survey](#) for CRTA on a sample of 1022 respondents in October 2018.

Which of the following three statements mostly corresponds to what you think about the electoral roll?

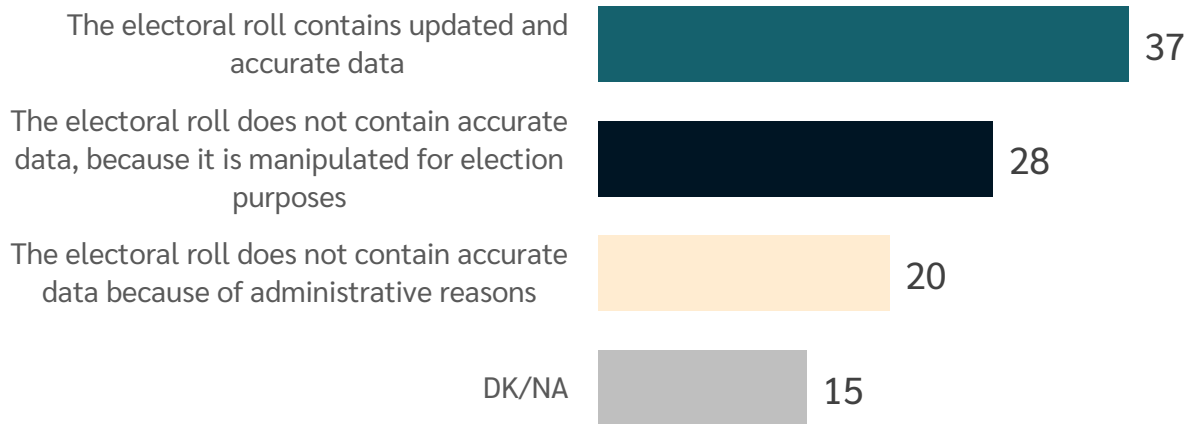


Figure 22. The opinions on the electoral roll

The public occasionally talks about the possibility of further inspecting and updating the electoral roll. Who do you think should carry out that inspection if that were to happen?

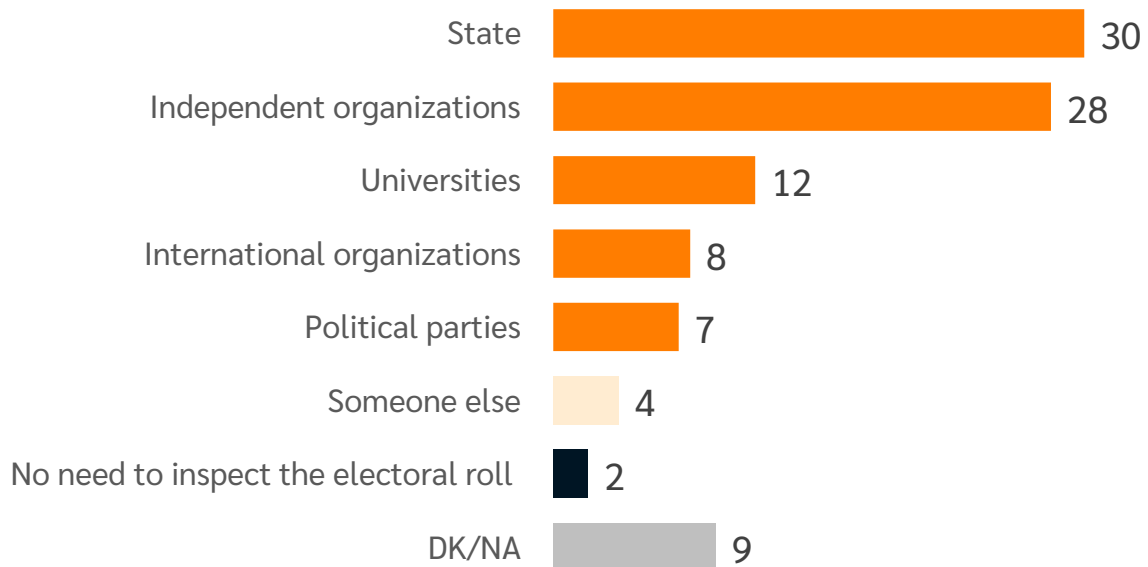


Figure 23. Who should inspect the electoral roll?

IV European Union

The Serbian citizens' attitude toward the European Union accession has been examined in five surveys over one year and a half. In the latest poll, the majority of respondents (36%) answered they would be worried if Serbia joined the European Union, 29% were indifferent, while the least respondents (28%) would be happy. This is the highest score of the negative attitudes towards the EU since 2020, and the least number of indifferent respondents. The drop in the number of respondents who would be happy for the EU accession dropped since November 2020, when it had been 41%, while only 22% were negative about the accession.

How would you feel if Serbia joined the European Union?

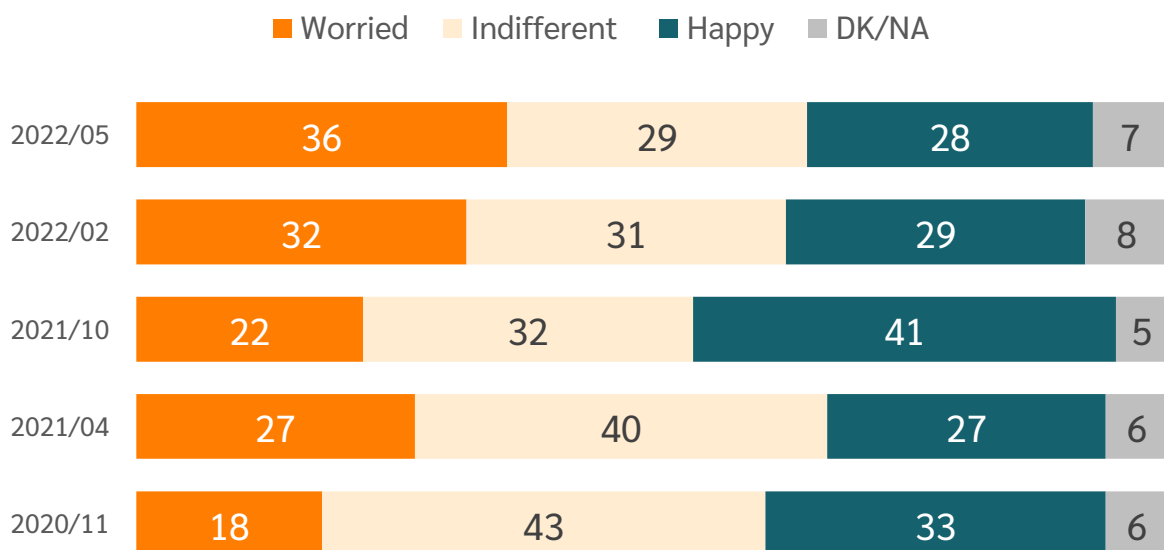


Figure 24. The European Union accession

The citizens who believe the critically oriented media would be particularly happier to hear about the European Union accession (49%) than those who trust the pro-government media, both or none (Figure 25). Additionally, about a half of the citizens who are inclined toward the opposition parties (51%) have a positive view of the EU accession, twice as more as those who are inclined toward the parties in power (24%) and those who are not close to none (23%).

In relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, there are no huge differences in opinions on the EU accession. There are minor but statistically significant differences only with younger respondents who would be happier than worried compared to others, while those aged 35-64 would be the most worried. Moreover, it is interesting that the least educated would be happiest and the least worried compared to those from other educational categories (Figure 26).

How would you feel if Serbia joined the European Union?

- crossing with political variables -

Worried Happy

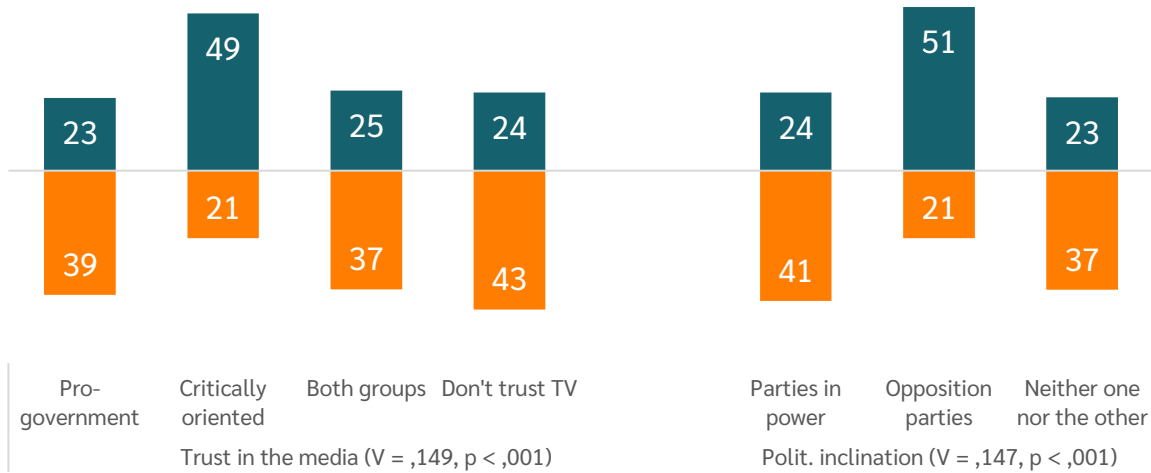


Figure 25. The EU accession in relation to the political variables

How would you feel if Serbia joined the European Union?

- crossing with socio-demographic variables-

Worried Happy

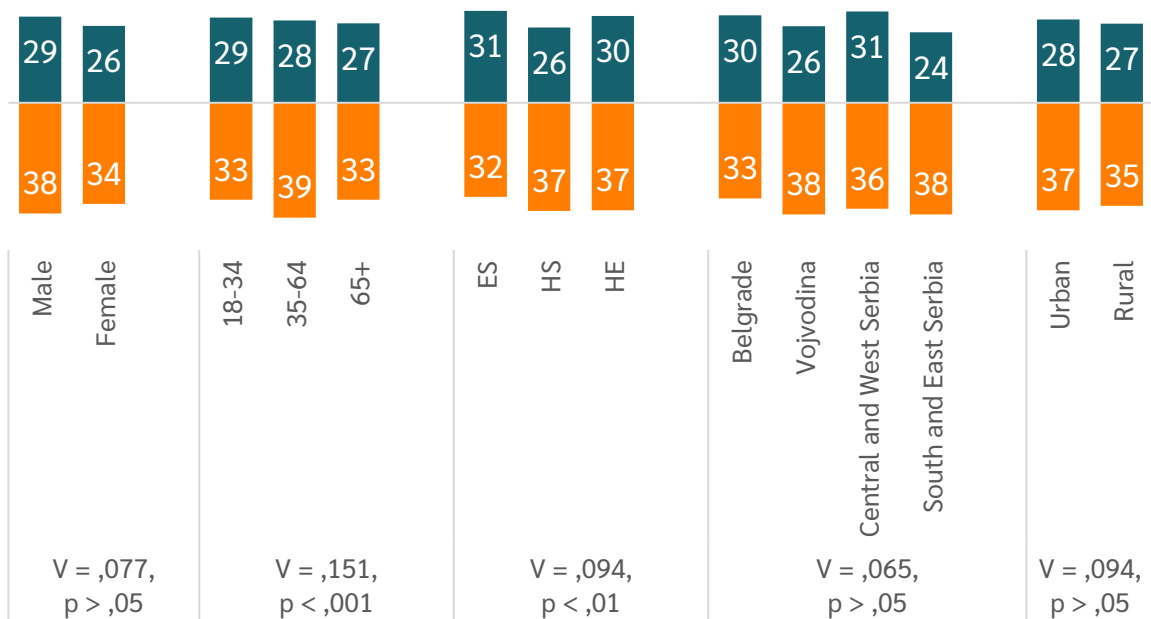


Figure 26. The EU accession in relation to the socio-demographic variables

Almost twenty years after the Thessaloniki Summit, when the European perspective of the Western Balkans countries was confirmed, the majority of Serbian citizens (62%) think that the European integration depends more on the European Union than Serbia, while a smaller share feels that it is more up to Serbia whether it will join the EU (26%). Only four per cent mentioned that it depends on both.

There are no considerable differences in opinions in relation to the political and socio-demographic variables. Somewhat more respondents who trust critically oriented media (28%) think that the EU accession rather depends on Serbia, while those who do not trust televisions, 21% ($V = ,089, p < ,05$) are the least of that attitude. The same attitude is shared by 31% of respondents who feel closer to the opposition parties, unlike 25% who are not close to any of the parties ($V = ,078, p < ,05$).

On whom it mainly depends whether Serbia will join the EU - on Serbia or on the European Union?

■ On European Union ■ On Serbia ■ From both ■ DK/NA



Figure 27. On whom depends the EU accession?

The respondents have also estimated the level of existing links with the European Union. The highest percentage of the respondents (43%) mention that Serbia is economically primarily dependent on the cooperation with the European Union, while 40% believe that it is the most dependent on Russia and China, and 3% on the United States (Figure 28).

Serbia is most economically dependent on cooperation with...

■ European Union ■ Russia ■ China ■ United States ■ DK/NA



Figure 28. The view of the economic dependency

The vast majority, over three-quarters of the Serbian population, travelled to the EU countries. A smaller share travelled to Russia (12%) and the United States (6%), while 20% did not travel to these countries (Figure 29). Based on these answers, the

respondents are still divided into groups depending on whether they travelled only to the first group of countries, the second or both. Exactly two-thirds of the respondents travelled only to the West (EU or USA), 2% of the respondents only travelled to Russia, while 11% travelled to both the West and Russia (Figure 30).

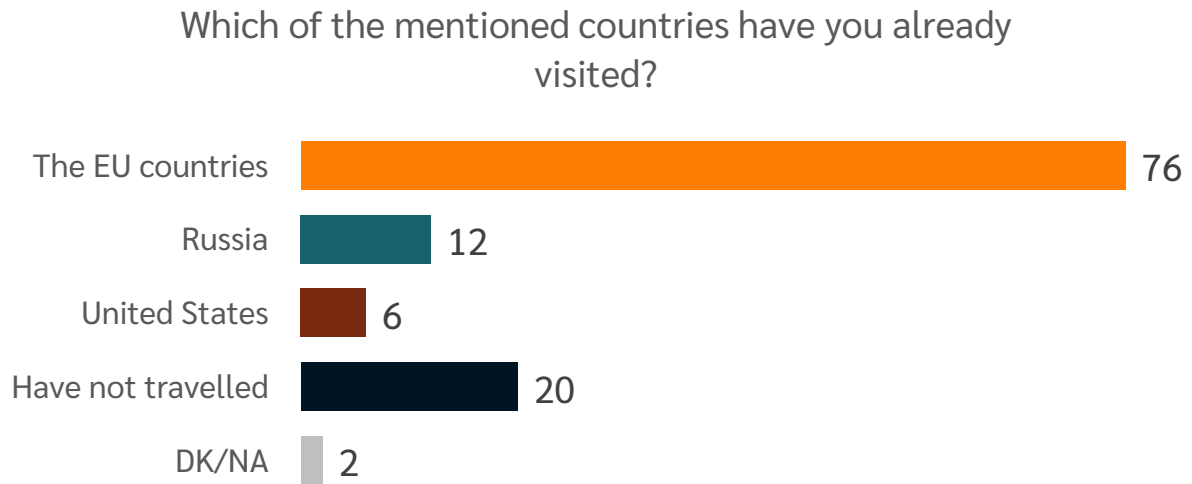


Figure 29. Travelling abroad



Figure 30. Travelling abroad – the West and Russia

These questions were followed by the respondents answering whether it would be a big problem for them if the countries of the European Union would reintroduce travel visas. More than half, 52%, said that it would not be a problem for them. In comparison, 46% said it would be a problem for them – somewhat more (24%) that it would be a minor problem, and 22% of the respondents said that reintroducing travel visas for the EU countries would make them a huge problem.

To what degree would you be personally affected if visas for travelling to the EU countries were reintroduced - Greece, Germany, Austria, etc.

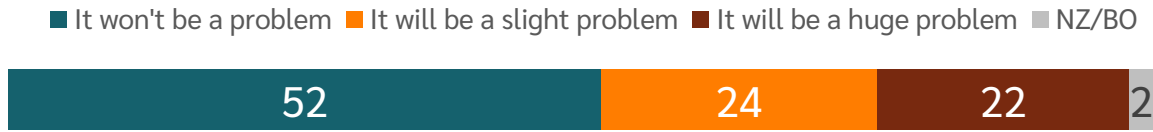


Figure 31. Reintroducing visas to travel to the EU

The respondents differ on whether it would personally affect them if the visas for travelling to the European Union countries were reintroduced in relation to the main political and socio-demographic variables. For both 69% of the respondents who trust critically oriented media and those who feel closer to the opposition parties introducing visas would be a problem. In comparison, this would not be a problem for somewhat fewer of the respondents who trust only the pro-government media (58%) and feel closer to the parties in power (60%). The respondents who trust both groups of media, in fact, do not trust televisions, and those who do not feel close to any of the parties are between these two groups. The additional crossing with the experience of travelling demonstrates that for the majority of the respondents (71%) who travelled only to Russia or did not travel to these countries, the introduction of visas, perhaps as expected, would not be a problem. However, it is interesting that the respondents who travelled only to the West or travelled to both the West and Russia were divided on whether the introduction of visas for the EU would pose a problem (Figure 32).

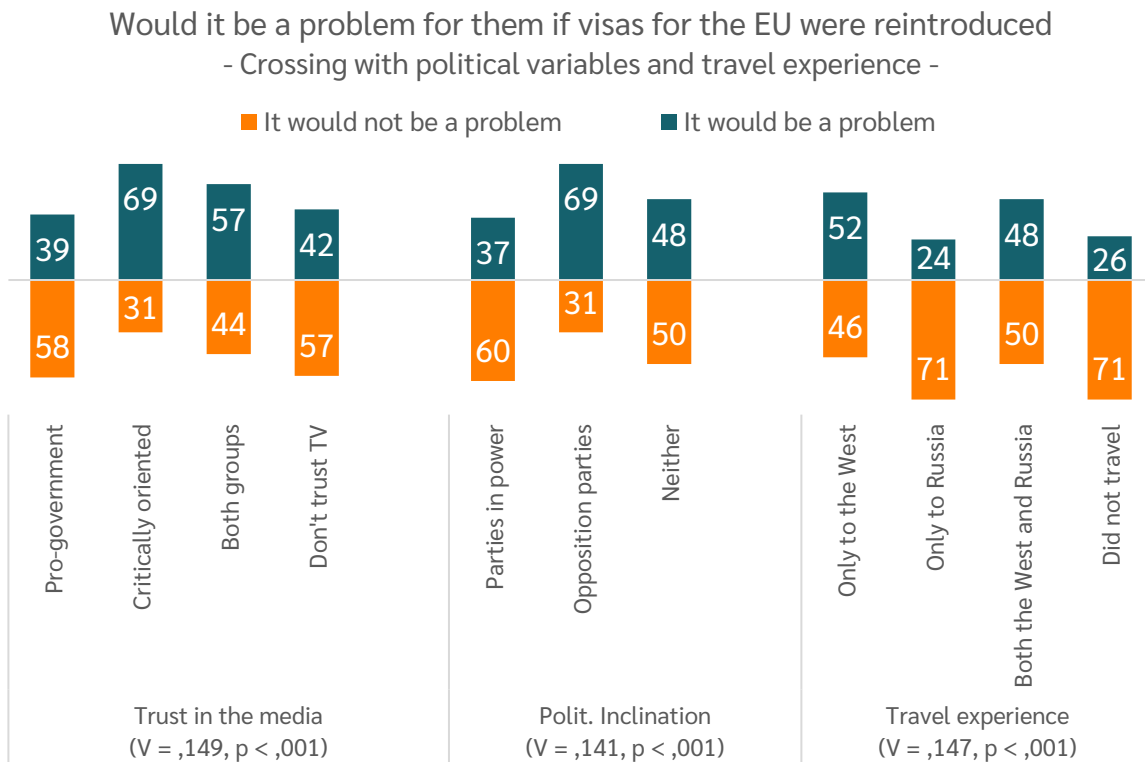


Figure 32. Reintroducing visas to travel to the EU

V Russia and European Union

In this survey, implemented slightly later than three months after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the majority of respondents (40%) would be happy if Serbia would give up the idea of the EU accession and form an alliance with Russia; about a quarter of the respondents would be worried (26%), and the same share would be indifferent (24%).

Compared to answers to the questions about the alliance with Russia or China in the previous year and a half, the highest percentage of the negative responses, with the least of the indifferent citizens, is noticeable, indicating the continuous polarisation of the opinions on this foreign policy matter.³

How would you feel if Serbia gave up the idea of joining the EU and formed an alliance with Russia?

(compared to Russia and China in previous surveys)

Worried Indifferent Happy DK/NA

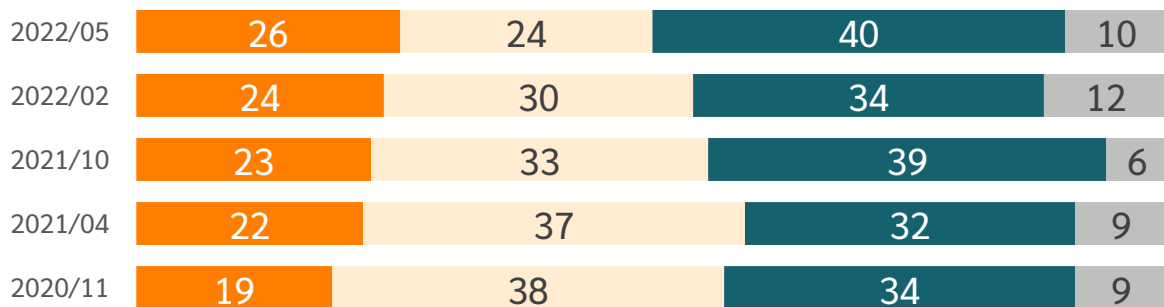


Figure 33. Giving up the idea of joining the EU and forming the alliance with Russia

Almost a half of the citizens who only trust the pro-government media would be happy if Serbia would give up the idea of joining the EU and form an alliance with Russia (47%), and 55% of the citizens who trust the critically oriented media would be worried (Figure 34). Those who trust both media groups are between these groups, 37% would be happy. As regards to the political inclinations, the percentage is very similar. The difference in opinions of the respondents in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics is smaller than in relation to the main political variables (Figure 35).

³ When asked how they would feel if Serbia gave up the idea on joining the EU but also formed the alliance with China, the respondents gave similar answers, the majority of them would be happy (34%), while an equal share would be worried and indifferent (27%). Although the structure of the answers, as well as the crossing with the usual variables has been similar, it is noticeable that the respondents' opinions are slightly more positive about the alliance with Russia compared to giving up the idea of the EU accession and forming the alliance with China.

How would you feel if Serbia gave up the idea of joining the EU and formed an alliance with Russia?
- crossing with political variables -

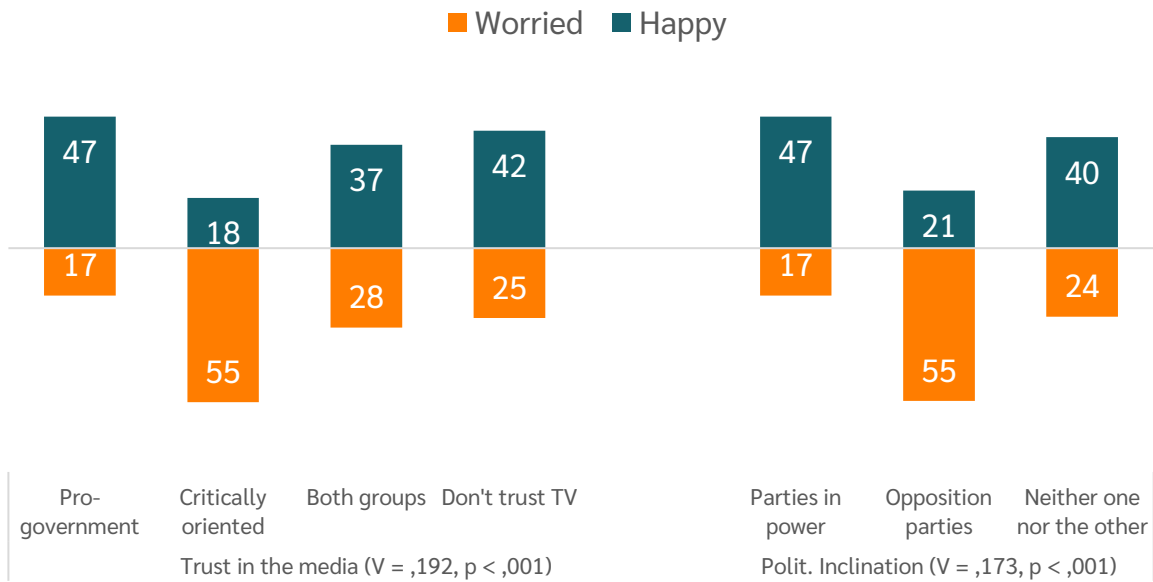


Figure 34. Forming the alliance with Russia in relation to political variables

How would you feel if Serbia gave up the idea of joining the EU and formed an alliance with Russia?
- crossing with socio-demographic variables -

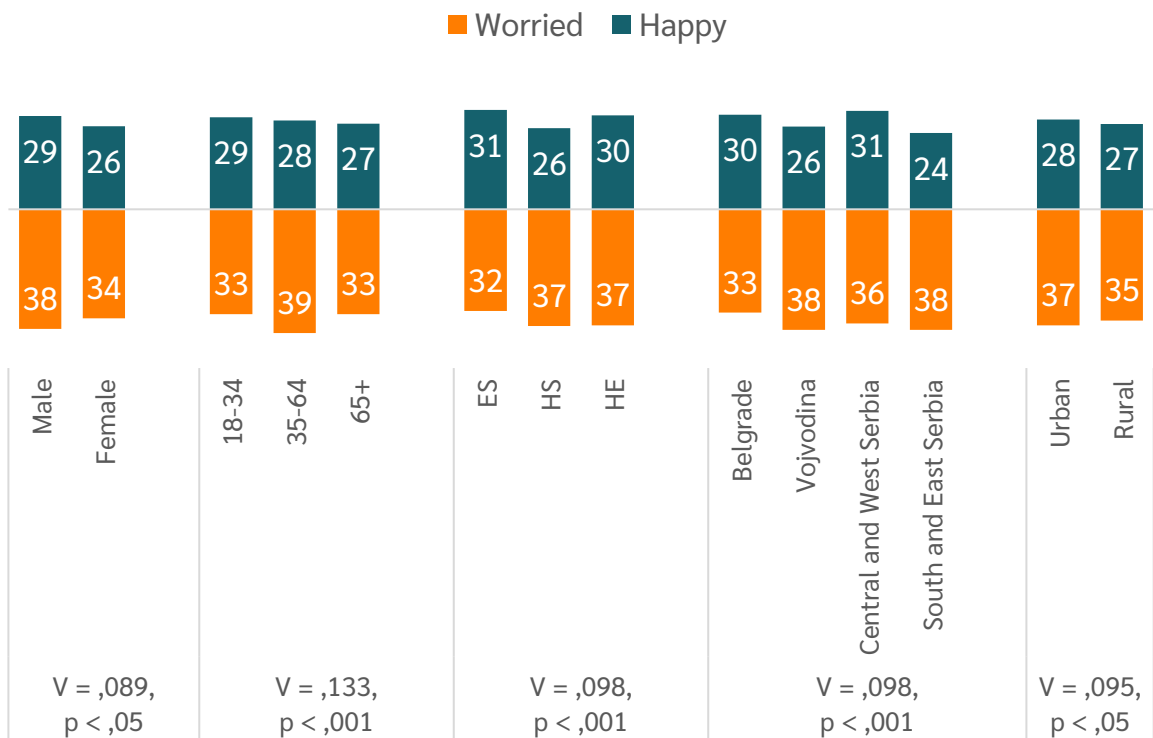


Figure 35. Forming the alliance with Russia in relation to the socio-demographic variables

The vast majority of the respondents (74%) do not at all or mostly do not agree with the position that the EU treats Serbia as an equal partner. Only every tenth respondent agrees with that. On the other hand, a much higher percentage of the citizens of Serbia (43%) believe that Russia treats Serbia as an equal partner, while 36% of the respondents do not agree with that opinion.

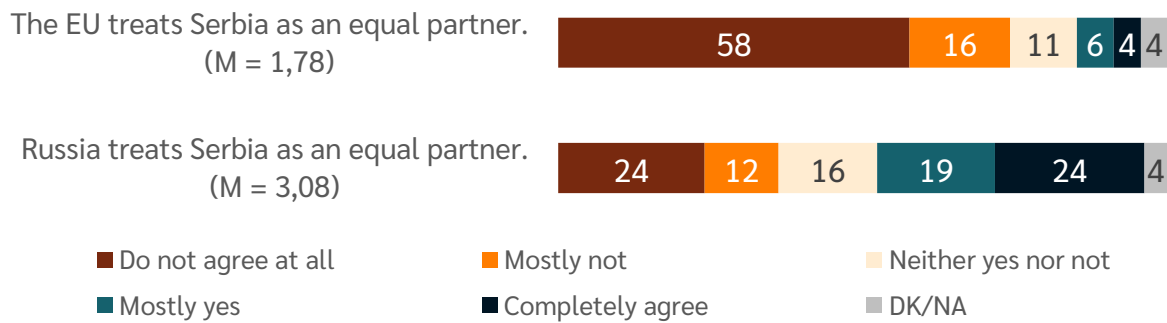


Figure 36. Treating Serbia as an equal partner

In the rest of the survey, the respondents were asked to imagine the situation of them relocating to some of the EU countries, or Russia, and to say where they would expect better conditions. The same percentage of citizens (37%) would expect to have health security in both the EU and Russia. Somewhat more citizens (38%) expected their freedom to be better safeguarded in Russia than in the EU (37%).

Regarding the remaining two expectations, most respondents would opt for Russia: 48% would expect to feel equal with other citizens in Russia, unlike 29% who would expect that in the EU. Finally, 53% of citizens of Serbia would expect to feel more welcome in Russia, while twice less, 26%, would expect that in the European Union.

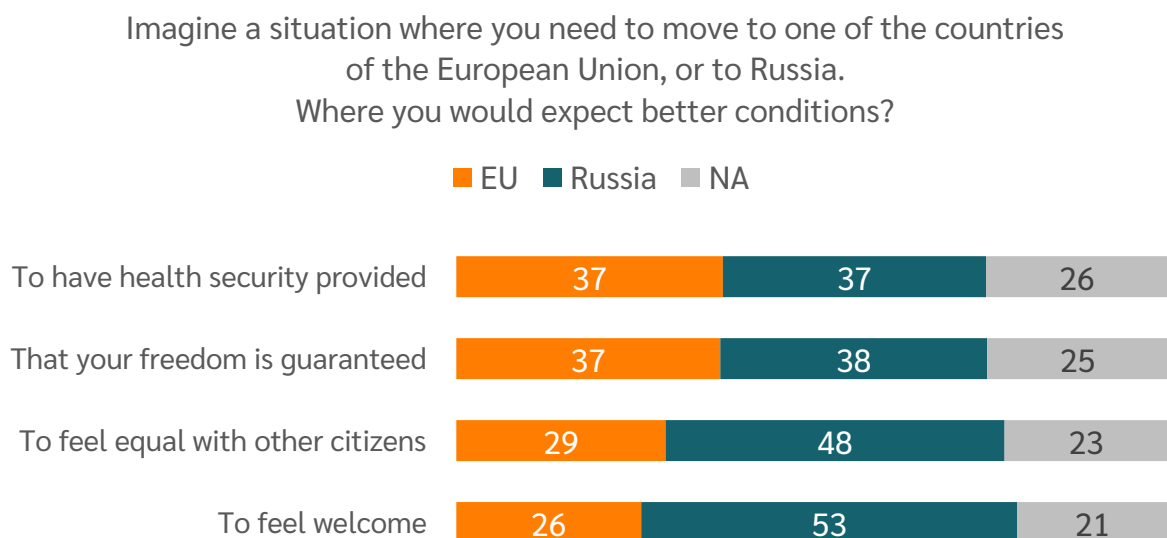


Figure 37. The opinions on the life in the EU and Russia

VI The War in Ukraine

The last part of the survey deals with the topics related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the positions regarding Serbia's reaction to the war. In the beginning, a significant share of the respondents, over four-fifths, said that they were following the events in Ukraine (Figure 38).

If they had to choose, two-thirds of the respondents would say they felt closer to the Russian position in the conflict. If they had to choose, only about one-tenth (12%) of the respondents said they felt closer to the Ukrainian side. One-fifth of the respondents did not know or did not want to answer (Figure 39).

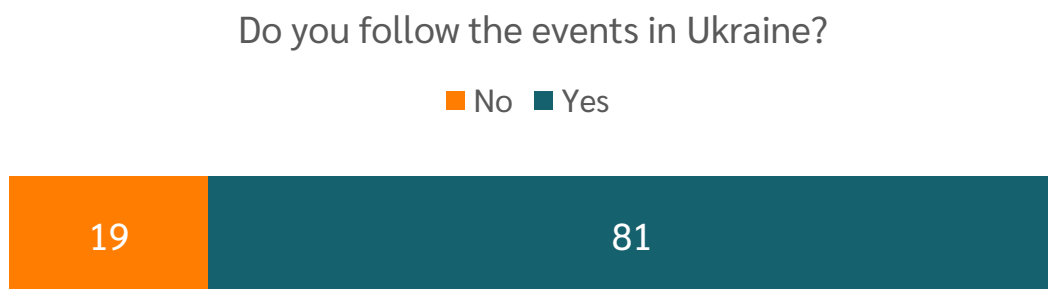


Figure 38. Events in Ukraine

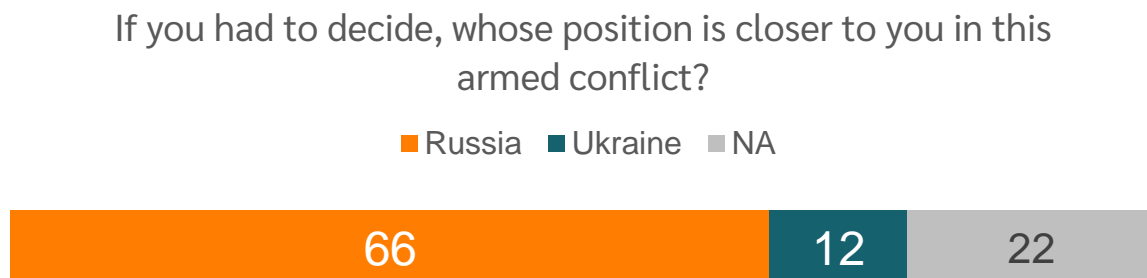


Figure 39. The positions of Russian and Ukrainian side in the conflict

Through the analysis of the media content, several most common Russian justifications of the war were identified, and the respondents were asked if, in their opinion, those views were correct or not (Figure 40). The majority of respondents, almost three-quarters, agree with the statement that Russia was challenged to start a conflict due to the NATO intention to expand in the East, while only 12% did not agree. A somewhat less percentage, but above half, 54% of the citizens, believed that it was true that the Russian intention was to prevent the genocide in Donbas region. A somewhat higher percentage of the respondents did not agree with this opinion (20%), while the number of those who did not know or did not want to answer was also large (26%).

The respondents were divided regarding the statement that Russia had an intention to denazify Ukraine, 39% of the respondents thought that this statement was true, and 37% that it was not. About a half of the respondents did not agree with the statement that Putin equated the Donbass case with Kosovo, thus jeopardizing Serbian interests in Kosovo, while one-quarter of the respondents said it was true.

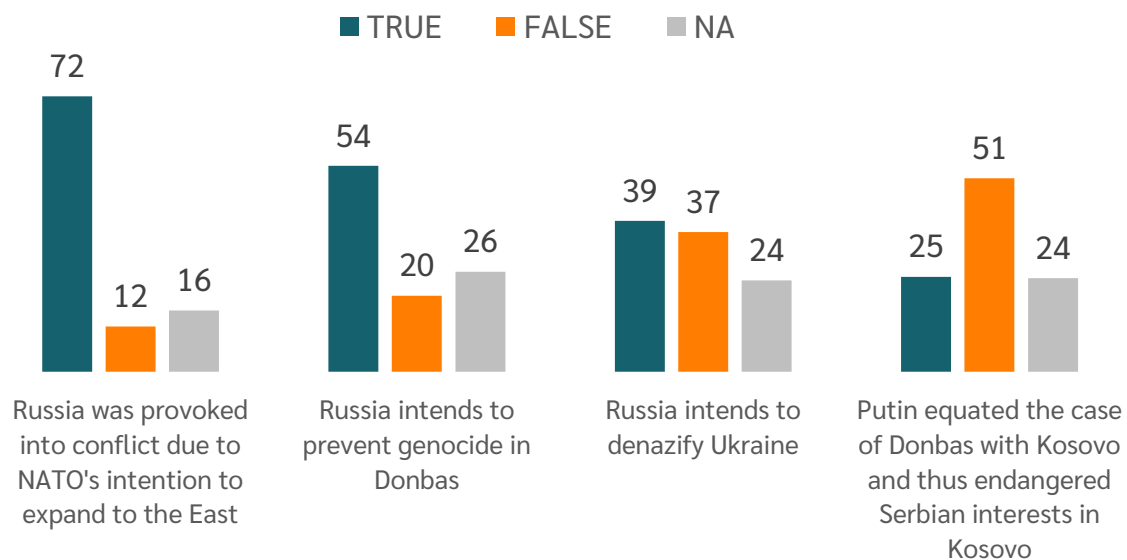


Figure 40. The opinions on the war in Ukraine

Before the beginning of the survey, Sweden and Finland initiated the NATO accession process. Two-fifths of the respondents answered that they felt closer to the position that the Finish accession to NATO was threatening the safety of Russia and that Russia was entitled to prevent that. One-third of the respondents agreed with the opinion that Finland had a right to join NATO to protect itself from the Russian invasion. Although the majority of the respondents believed that such NATO expansion next to its borders was a reason for Russia to react, this percentage was smaller than in the previous questions when over 70 per cent of the respondents agreed with the justification of the war in Ukraine due to the NATO expansion on the east.

Several days ago, Finland publicly announced its intention to join NATO. Which opinion is closer to your thinking?

- It jeopardizes Russia's safety, and Russia has a right to prevent that
- Finland has the right to join NATO to protect itself from the Russian invasion
- DK/NA



Figure 41. Finland's membership in NATO

Regarding the position of Serbia in relation to the war in Ukraine, most respondents answered that they felt closest to Serbia staying neutral (51%). A smaller share (41%) had more determined positions — somewhat below one-third thinks that Serbia should not impose sanctions on Russia, even at the cost of giving up the idea of the EU accession. In contrast, every tenth respondent thinks Serbia should align its foreign policy with the EU and impose sanctions on Russia (Figure 42).

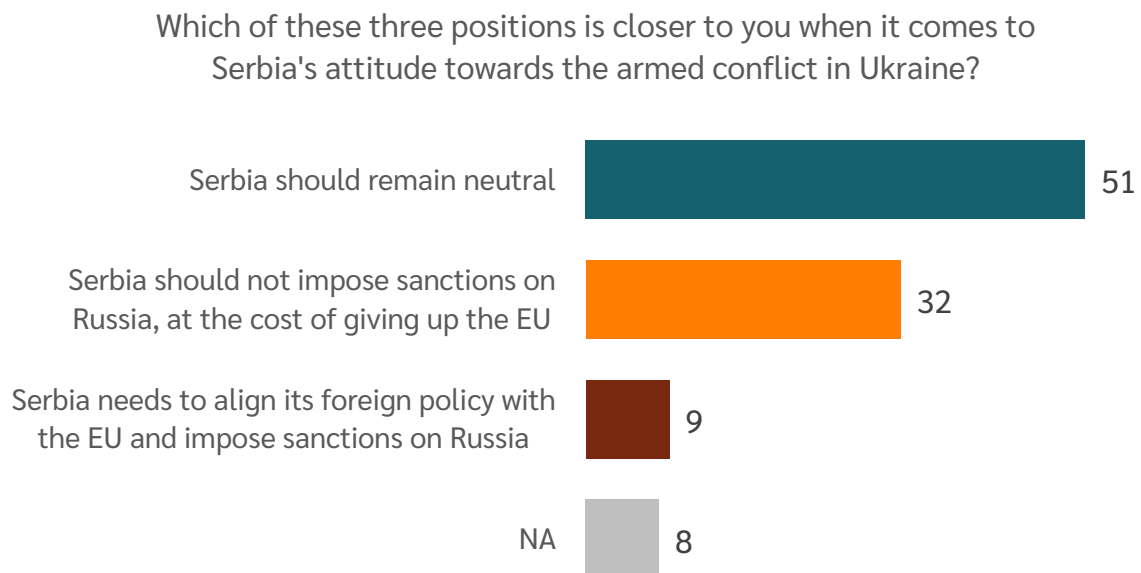


Figure 42. Opinions on the relation of Serbia towards the war in Ukraine

Facing the potential problems that positioning Serbia can bring regarding the war in Ukraine, the majority of respondents, over two-thirds, think that it would be a much bigger problem if Russia would cut the gas supply to Serbia than if the EU would do it, while 17% of the respondents believe the opposite (Figure 43).

A similar percentage of the citizens (69%) think it would be a bigger problem for Serbia if the EU introduced visas for Serbia than if Russia would, while only 12% thought the opposite. Also, over a half of the respondents (59%) felt that it would be a bigger problem for Serbia if the EU companies left Serbia than the Russian companies, while a somewhat higher percentage than for the previous questions held the belief that the opposite was true (Figure 43).

Which of the two options creates the biggest problem for Serbia?

- If the EU prevents the gas supply to Serbia
- If Russia prevents the supply of gas to Serbia
- DK/NA



Which of the two options creates the biggest problem for Serbia?

- If EU companies leave Serbia
- If Russian companies leave Serbia
- DK/NA



Which of the two options creates the biggest problem for Serbia?

- If the EU introduces visas
- If Russia introduces visas
- DK/NA



Figure 43. What would be the biggest problem for Serbia?

List of Figures

Figure 1. Main sources of information	12
Figure 2. Reliable information and the type of media	12
Figure 3. Trust in the media	13
Figure 4. Trust in the media – per groups	14
Figure 5. Political inclinations	14
Figure 6. Situation in the country.....	15
Figure 7. The situation in the country in relation to political variables.....	15
Figure 8. The situation in the country in relation to the socio-demographic variables	16
Figure 9. The view of democracy	17
Figure 10. The view of democracy in relation to the political variables	18
Figure 11. The view of democracy in relation to the socio-demographic variables	18
Figure 12. The view of a strong leader.....	19
Figure 13. The view of a strong leader in relation to the political variables	20
Figure 14. The view of a strong leader in relation to the socio-demographic variables	21
Figure 15. The opinion on the political system	22
Figure 16. The opinion on the political system in relation to the political variables	22
Figure 17. The opinion on the political system in relation to the socio-dem. variables	23
Figure 18. Satisfaction with the election results	24
Figure 19. Electoral fraud on the Election Day.....	25
Figure 20. Pressure during the elections.....	25
Figure 21. Who was putting pressure?.....	26
Figure 22. The opinions on the electoral roll.....	27
Figure 23. Who should inspect the electoral roll?	27
Figure 24. The European Union accession	28
Figure 25. The EU accession in relation to the political variables.....	29
Figure 26. The EU accession in relation to the socio-demographic variables.....	29
Figure 27. On whom depends the EU accession?.....	30
Figure 28. The view of the economic dependency	30
Figure 29. Travelling abroad.....	31
Figure 30. Travelling abroad – the West and Russia	31
Figure 31. Reintroducing visas to travel to the EU.....	32
Figure 32. Reintroducing visas to travel to the EU.....	32
Figure 33. Giving up the idea of joining the EU and forming the alliance with Russia	33
Figure 34. Forming the alliance with Russia in relation to political variables	34
Figure 35. Forming the alliance with Russia in relation to the socio-dem. variables.....	34
Figure 36. Treating Serbia as an equal partner.....	35
Figure 37. The opinions on the life in the EU and Russia.....	35
Figure 38. Events in Ukraine	36
Figure 39. The positions of Russian and Ukrainian side in the conflict	36
Figure 40. The opinions on the war in Ukraine.....	37
Figure 41. Finland’s membership in NATO.....	37
Figure 42. Opinions on the relation of Serbia towards the war in Ukraine	38
Figure 43. What would be the biggest problem for Serbia?	39