

# Demostat, Research and Publishing Center: Public opinion of the citizens of Serbia - Omnibus May 2023.

## Basic data about the research and the sample

**Questionnaire: 60 questions (five open-ended questions, others with suggested answers).**

**Duration of the interview: about 25 minutes**

**Sample type: random, three-stage sample. The first stage – is a proportional random selection of polling stations (80); in the second stage, a random selection of households within the previously selected polling stations (80 x 20); in the third stage, a random selection of respondents (first birthday procedure).**

**Sample size: 1600 respondents; realized 1601.**

**Implementation: immediate personal interview - "face to face"; interviews were conducted by Demostat's interview network of trained interviewers; written survey instructions.**

**Response rate: a total of 3 702 households were contacted (100%); 1601 (43% of all contacted) interviews were conducted after the first or second contact; there were 1438 rejections (39%), and in the case of 663 addresses (18%) no one was found even after the second attempt.**

**Margin of error: for 50% is 2.68.**

**Duration of the field work: April 24 - May 4, 2023.**

**Encoding and entry into the SPSS database: 5-10 May 2023**

**Statistical processing: 11-16 May 2023**

**Head of the research team: Srećko Mihailović, sociologist**

## The social context in which the research was conducted

Only some social times are suitable for serious research. The famous Croatian sociologist Josip Zupanov once noted that **research should begin when turbulent events have somewhat calmed down, transitional conditions have been cleared, and long-term trends have been confirmed**. Of course, the exception to this "rule" is research that deals with the participants of a given ongoing social and political event and not with general public opinion. Because of the rule above, which draws attention to inopportune times for general public opinion surveys, Demostat somewhat delayed the start of this survey.

However, it seems we live in a society and country without peaceful times, and history constantly happens to us. However, we started the research in a more or less peaceful time (end of April) and ended when the stormy political and social time started (beginning of May).

Let me mention just five events before the beginning of the field phase of our research: **(a)** The leaders of Serbia and Kosovo, Aleksandar Vucic and Albin Kurti, accepted the European proposal for the normalization of relations at the end of February in Brussels. **(b)** At the end of the second decade of March in Ohrid, the same leaders reached an agreement on implementing the Agreement on the Normalization of Relations with the mediation of the European Union and the support of the United States. **(c)** The campaign for the formation of the People's Movement for the State was launched in March by the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic; the establishment was announced for the end of May or the beginning of June. The idea of movement is somewhat vague and unclear to many; this can be seen in the respondents' responses in this research. **(d)** Local elections in Serbian municipalities in the north of Kosovo (April 23rd) were boycotted by the Serbian List. **(e)** The circus in the Parliament of Serbia was established already at the first regular spring session.

## Between utopia and dystopia

A nation that does not advocate and does not fight for the realization of the ideal of a good life of good people in a good society and that has come to terms with living in a bad society where bad people have a good life and is not for a better life than the one who lives - bad good people live in bad society. The ideal-typical positive role of political parties is in the interpretation of a bad life as a truly bad life, in the interpretation of bad people as truly bad people, and in the interpretation of a bad society as a truly bad society.

The role of those political parties that sell "a horn for a candle" is negative, so they proclaim a bad life as a good life, bad people as good people, and a bad society as a good society. After all, it is enough for the parties to keep silent about the real quality of life, people, and society.

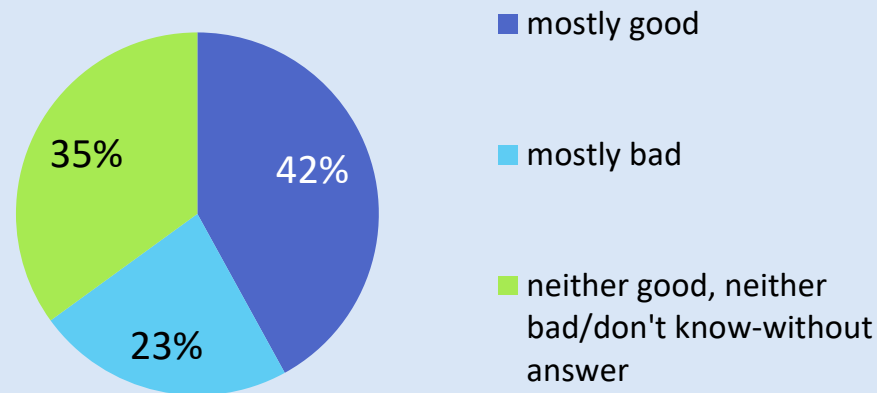
In the context of this approach, in our research, we devoted 12 out of 60 questions to the topic: of how people live in Serbia or the topic "Faces of Life." On the other hand, we devoted 14 out of 60 questions to the topic "The other side of life." In other words, the topic of what citizens think about the society they live in - how they evaluate the existing government in this society and how satisfied and dissatisfied they are with what society gives them in the context of how much they give to their society.

## 1.1. Folks, how are you? How do you live?

Positive moods at 55%; 38% negative moods	7% cannot rate, without an answer
Satisfied with life in general 44%; 16% unsatisfied with life	40% mixed review, without an answer
Live well 43%; 19% live badly	38% mixed review, without an answer
They achieved what wanted in life 36%; 18% did not achieve what wanted in life	46% mixed review, without an answer
They live better than 10 years ago 24%; 29% live worse than 10 years ago	47% live the same, without an answer

More than half of respondents (55%) are marked by positive moods (hope that it will get better 37% and satisfaction 18%). In comparison, negative moods are marked by less than two-fifths of respondents, or 38% (worry and fear, 20%, feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, 18%).

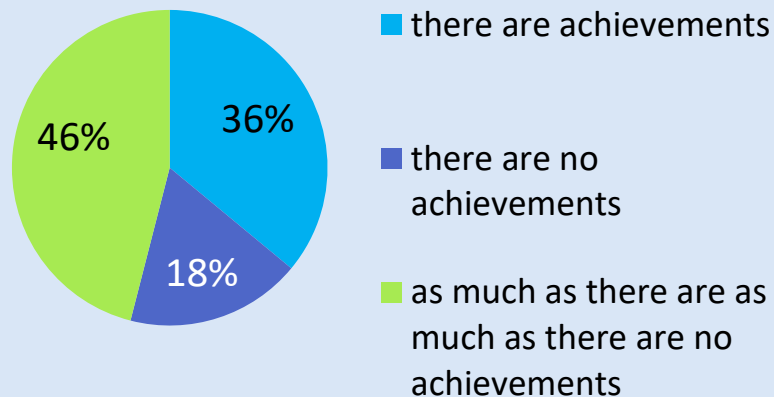
The combination of the answers to the question How are you, how do you live and the answer to the question How satisfied and how dissatisfied are you with your life in general, shows that 42% of respondents think that they are mainly doing well and that they mostly live well; 23% declare that they are generally doing poorly and are mostly dissatisfied with life, while 35% have mixed ratings or did not answer these two questions.



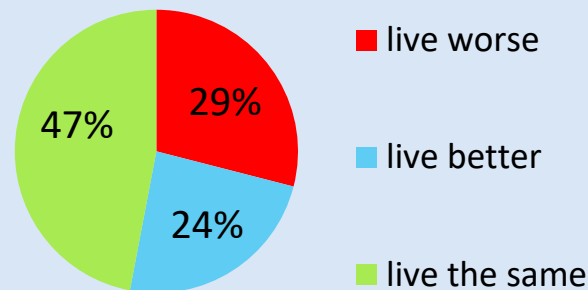
## 1.2. Alignment with what was wanted from life and with the previous life

To the question, **Have you and if so, how much have you achieved what you wanted and planned in your life?** - 36% of respondents answered that they achieved the planned achievements and 18% that they did not achieve what they had planned, while 46% said that they partly achieved and partly did not.

**Have you and if so how much have you achieved in your life what you wanted and planned?**



**Are you living better, the same or worse today than you did 10 years ago?**



To the question, **Do you live better, the same, or worse today than 10 years ago?** - 29% answered that they live worse, 24% claim that they live better, and 47% live the same (among them are 5% who did not answer this question).

### 1.3 Actual income (salary, pension, etc.) and income needed for normal life

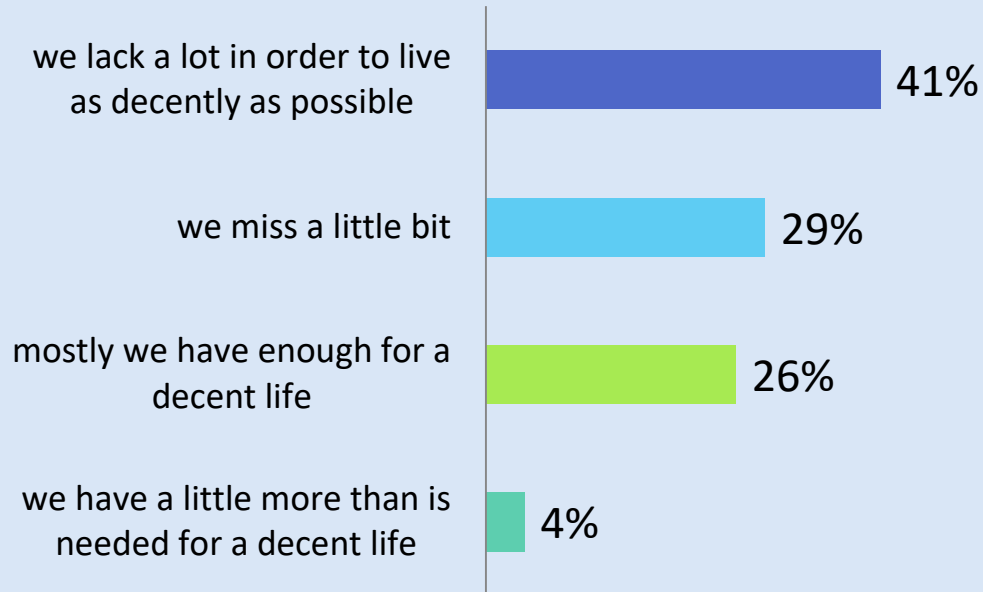
Three-fifths of respondents (60%) have incomes of less than 60,000 dinars, less than a quarter (23%) have incomes between 60,000 and 80,000 dinars, and 17% of respondents have incomes of 80,000 dinars and more (see data below).

	The amount of the respondent's current income	The amount of income from which the respondent and his family could live decently
Less than 40.000 RSD	30%	1%
40.000-59.999 RSD	30%	5%
60.000-79.999	23%	15%
80.000-99.999	10%	16%
100.000-149.999	5%	39%
150.000 RSD and more	2%	24%

Only 6% of respondents state that an income less than 60,000 dinars is desirable - 10 times more respondents with incomes less than 60,000 dinars compared to the number of respondents considering that amount desirable. 15% consider it desirable to receive an income between 60,000 and 80,000 dinars, and even 79% of respondents consider it desirable to receive an income of 80,000 dinars and more (); among them are 24% of respondents who would like an income of 150,000 dinars and more.

## 1.4 How the respondent sees the financial situation of his household

Seven out of 10 respondents claim that their household lacks a lot to live decently (41%) or they only lack a little (29%), while three respondents say that they mostly have enough for a decent life (26%) or that they have slightly more than necessary for a decent life (4%) - see the data in the following chart.

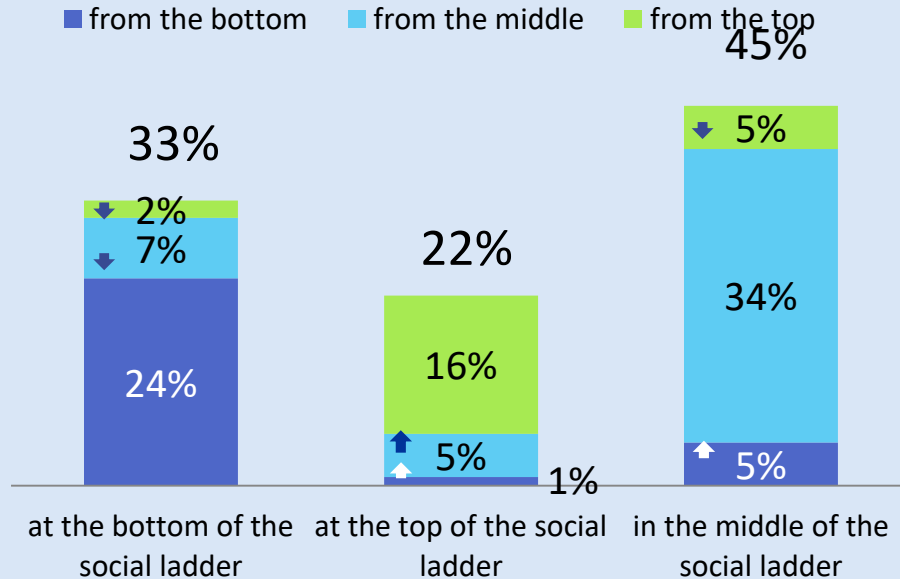


Perhaps these findings seem exaggerated to the user of these research results, and the respondents are asking a lot. However, it should be kept in mind that consistency is evident in several answers to questions related to quality of life and standard of living.

I would only mention the answer to the question about the most significant problem faced by the respondent and his/her family - as many as 46% of the respondents stated: standard of living, low salary, low pension, expensiveness... and to the question what is the biggest problem facing our society even 29% stated: poverty, low standards, high prices...

## 1.5 Socioclass mobility in the last 10 years

According to the respondents' self-assessment, we now have the following picture of social mobility compared to 10 years ago.



Now 33% of respondents are at the bottom of the social ladder; among them are 24% who were at the bottom before, 7% fell from the middle, and 2% fell from the top.

Now 22% of respondents are at the top of the social ladder: 16% were there before, 5% came from the middle, and 1% from the bottom.

Now, 45% of respondents are in the middle of the social ladder: 34% were there before, 5% climbed from the bottom, and 6% fell from the top of the social ladder.

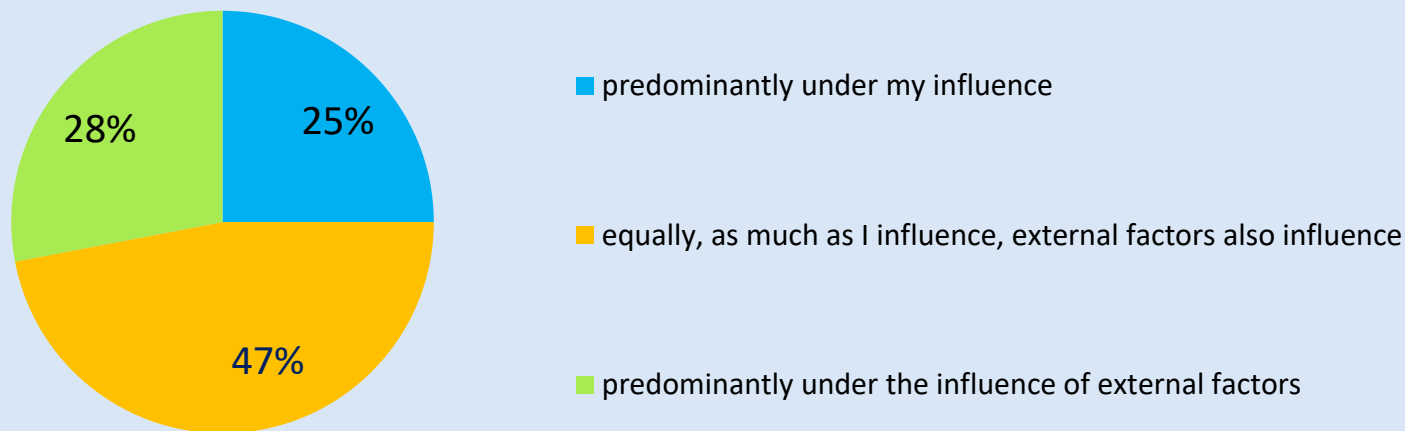
In total, 74% of respondents are in the same place on the social ladder as they were ten years ago - they were and remain in the exact location: 24% at the bottom of the social ladder, 34% in the middle, and 16% at the top of the social ladder. 15% of respondents experienced a socio-class decline over 10 years, and 11% of respondents experienced a socio-class rise.



## 1.6. Subjects' achievements and self-assessment of locus of control

We have already emphasized that a strong third of respondents (36%) claim that they achieved what they planned in life, almost half (46%) say that they partly achieved and partly did not achieve what they wanted, while less than a fifth (18%) declare that she did not achieve what she wanted in her life. See the chart below. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents (47%) declare that they partly have and partly have no influence on what happens in their lives, a quarter say that it is mainly influenced, and a little more than a quarter (28%) claim that they are influenced mainly by external factors factor (see chart below).

**Locus of control** - *Evaluate how much you personally can influence what happens in your life, and how much what happens in your life is influenced by external factors that you cannot influence?*



## 1.7. Life achievements and locus of control

We were interested in some indications, no matter how superficial they may be, about what kind of people have an idea about whose influence is decisive on a person's achievements in a given society. Therefore, we combined the answers to two questions, the question about achievements and the question about the locus of control simply understood as prioritizing the influence of a given individual against the influence of external factors and, ultimately, a given society.

### The relationship between life achievements and locus of control\* (in %)

Life achievements/locus of control	predominantly under my influence	external factors affect as much as I do	predominantly under the influence of external factors	Total
Mainly no achievements	7	33	60	100
As much as there is as much as there isn't	20	55	25	100
Mainly there are achievements	42	44	14	100

Cramer's V = 0,266;

Contingency Coefficient 0,47

\* **Life achievements:** question - *Have you, and if so, how much have you achieved what you wanted and planned in your life?*

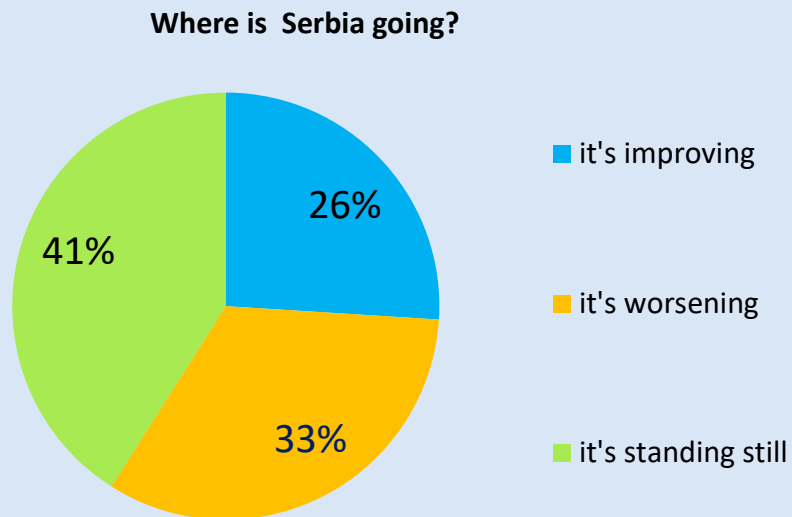
\* **Locus of control:** question - *Evaluate how much you personally can influence what happens in your life and how much what happens in your life is influenced by external factors that you cannot influence?*

We found that with increasing life achievement, one's own influence on life increases, and the influence of external factors decreases. The contingency coefficient is quite significant - 0.47. (See table above.)

## 2.1. General overview of the situation in Serbia

In the previous section, of the five indicators of the quality of life (we are talking about self-assessments), when they are reduced to binary relations - positive versus negative - only in one case is the negative perception of one's own life greater. In contrast, in the other four cases, the dominance of positive self-perception is visible (in one case even half-hearted). Let's see now how the respondents perceive the society they live in that is, the state and the government.

The general insight is given by the answers to the question *How are things going in Serbia?* A quarter of the respondents (26%) think things are improving in Serbia, and a third think things are worsening (33%). In comparison, two-fifths of the respondents (41%) think that Serbia is standing still (this calculation excludes 118 respondents who did not answer this question) – See the chart below.



These answers are supported by the answers to the question, *What is the biggest problem facing our society?*

Respondents most often answered that it was low standards, high prices, and poverty (29%); in second place is healthcare (20%), and in third - the state of the Serbian economy, the economic situation (18%). Two-thirds of the respondents gave these three answers. This is followed by the judiciary and the rule of law (8%), corruption and crime (4%), nature conservation and the protection of the human environment (4%), and other less frequently mentioned problems.

## 2.2. Low public awareness of important political issues

A good level of being informed implies the existence of a relevant source of information that provides reliable and complete information, the media that conveys that information available to all interested persons, and interest in information on the part of the people themselves.

**Aleksandar Vucic announced the establishment of the People's Movement for the State. What do you think about that?**



**Recently, in Ohrid, A. Vucic and A. Kurti, with the mediation of the EU and the support of the USA, reached an agreement on the implementation of the Agreement on Normalization of Relations. Is it good or bad for Serbia?**



The responses to the second question shown in the graph above confirm the same. Almost two-fifths of respondents (39%) do not have an answer to such an important question as the agreement in Ohrid, again through no fault of their own.

## 2.3. Assessment of the results of the work of Aleksandar Vucic and his government

If the people voted in the elections based on their perception of the work of the government and the work of the President of the Republic, it would be difficult for the current rulers to win those elections. This is so except in one case where people think the opposition would have worse work effects than the current government. In any case, we are witnessing disappointing evaluations of the current government's work (see the data in the table on the right).

The average ratings for these five areas of work of those who govern Serbia look like this: A fifth of the respondents (19%) think that the government works well, and a third (33%) think that the work is average. Two-fifths of the respondents (39%) think the work is wrong (9% of respondents did not answer these questions) – See the graph on the right.

**Assessment of the results of the work of Aleksandar Vucic and his government (in %)**

	The question of Kosovo	Economy of Serbia	Accession to the EU	The fight against corruption and crime	Standard of the citizens
good	23	22	20	18	14
average	32	36	36	28	32
bad	33	35	32	46	48
no answer	12	7	12	8	6
total	100	100	100	100	100

**Average ratings of the work results of Aleksandar Vučić and his government (in %)**



There are twice as many respondents who rate the work of the government as bad then there are respondents who rate the work as good. However, it should be borne in mind that the above ratings can be interpreted differently. For example, to declare a good result as the sum of the grades "good work" and "average work". Then, of the five indicators of the results of the government's work, in two cases, there would be almost equal evaluations of the work as bad on one side and good and average work on the other side; while in three cases, the sum of the grades "good work" and "average work" would be slightly more than half.

## 2.4 . Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with key aspects of life in society and the state

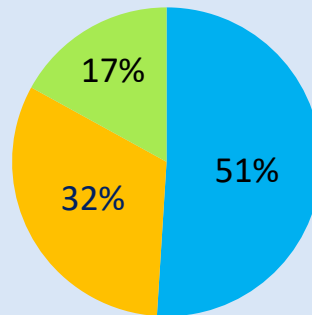
We have chosen five indicators of satisfaction, that is, dissatisfaction with social activities and other relevant aspects of life in a country: economy, education, healthcare, judiciary, and environment. The average grade is two (2.44). Dissatisfaction is overwhelming in two out of five cases; in two cases, every second respondent is dissatisfied, and in the case of education, 44% of respondents are dissatisfied - see graph below.

Dissatisfaction is shown between 44% and 56% of respondents, and satisfaction is between 15% and 17%, except schooling, which 22% of respondents were satisfied with.

On average, half of the respondents (51%) are dissatisfied, and three times less (17%) are satisfied; while a third is in the middle - they are partly satisfied and partly dissatisfied (and those who did not answer this question are also connected to them) - See the graph on the right.

### The people are generally dissatisfied with many aspects of the economy and social life

	Health care	Justice	Environment	Economy	Education
mainly unsatisfied	56	54	49	49	44
neither satisfied neither unsatisfied doesn't know – no answer	29	30	34	36	34
mainly satisfied	15	16	17	15	22

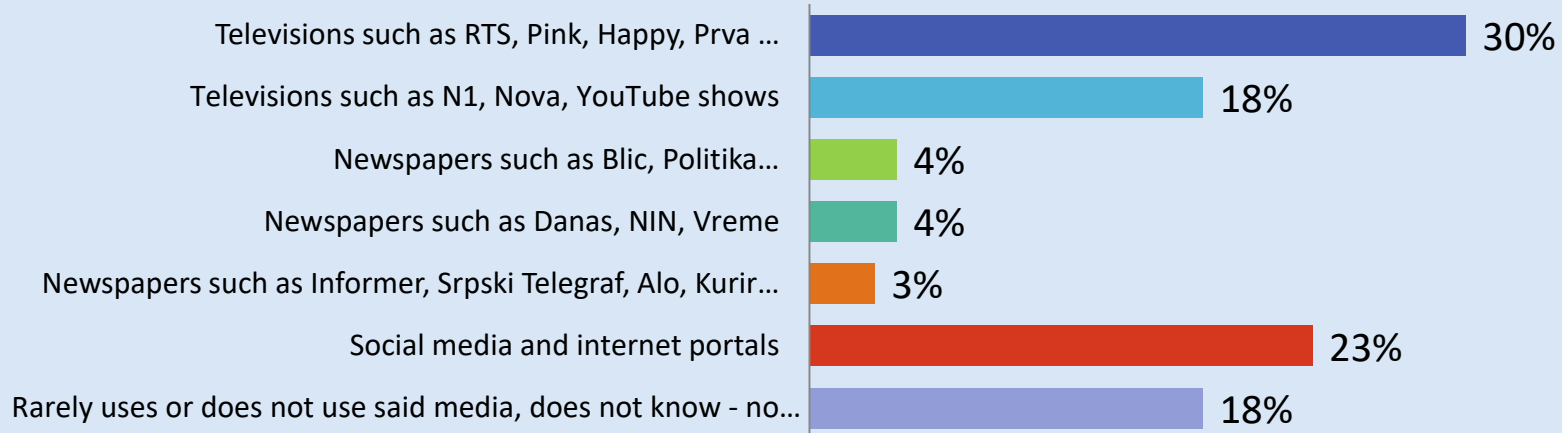


- unsatisfied
- neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, doesn't know - no answer
- satisfied

### 3.1. Media that the people trust

About four-fifths of respondents (82%) use various media, while less than a fifth (18%) either do not use media at all or do so extremely rarely. (see chart below)

#### Which media do you trust the most when it comes to politics, political and social issues?

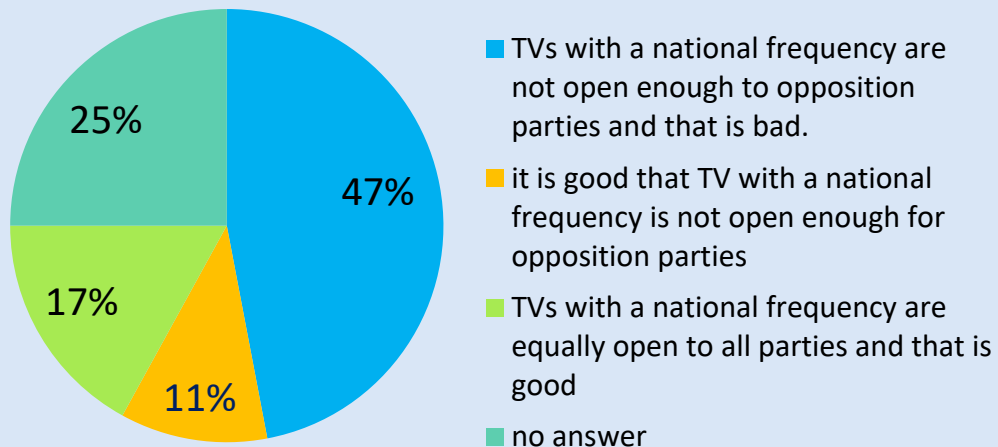


Televisions such as RTS, Pink, Happy, and Prva... dominate with 30% trust, followed by social networks and internet portals with 23%, and televisions such as N1, Nova, You Tube shows with 18%. 11% of respondents trust other media.

### 3.2. Openness of the media towards parties in power and parties in opposition

Three-fifths of our respondents (58%) note that television stations with a national frequency are not equally open to parties in power and parties in opposition. But this finding needs an additional explanation. Namely, out of approximately six respondents who noticed the unequal ratio of the mentioned televisions, five do not approve of such behavior. At the same time, one believes that the unequal ratio is good for Serbia.

**Are TV channels with a national frequency (RTS, Pink, Happy...) equally open to parties in power and to parties in opposition? If they are not, is it good for Serbia or is it bad?**



A significant finding is that a quarter of the respondents could not answer the question about the selective or equal treatment of parties in power and parties of the opposition.

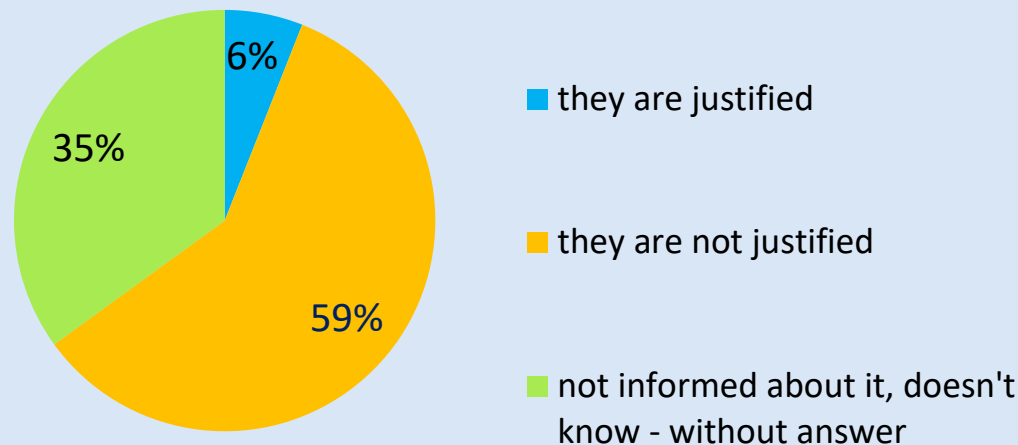
Some people may find it strange that **26% of respondents who said they voted for SNS in the last elections believe that TV with a national frequency is not equally open to parties in power and parties of the opposition and that this is bad for Serbia**, while 23% do the same he talks about the unequal relationship but adds that it is good for Serbia; 37% think that TV treats everyone fairly, and 14% have no answer.



### 3.3. Attitude towards attacks on journalists and media freedom

Public opinion is dominated by the view that brutal attacks on journalists, threats, and attacks on media freedom are unjustified. Three-fifths of respondents (59) think so, and only 6% of respondents justify such behavior. See the chart below.

**The number of brutal attacks on journalists is increasing; threats are also made by the first people of this country. What do you think about that, are these attacks on media freedom justified or not?**



Among SNS voters in the last elections, we find 9% of those who justify attacks on journalists and 55% of those who believe that these attacks are unjustified, while 36% of respondents do not have an answer to this question.

## 4.1. Apoliticism

In the political practice of the ruling parties, the motto "Everything is politics" is strictly applied, which in another way leads the leading parties of the multi-party system to join the practice of political parties in the one-party system. At the same time, the parties in power try to disgust the people with politics in all possible ways. That's how politics becomes dirty for everyone except those who make it dirty. The point is to make politics abhorrent to the people and leave it to those who find politics useful, regardless of whether it is nasty or how nasty it is. We are witnessing how the participants of political protests par excellence distance themselves from politics and politicians. Hence, the participants of some public discussions boast that they are not in any party or claim that they have never been in any party... All of this is evidenced by the direct or indirect refusal of citizens to be respondents in polls in which they are asked about political matters; that's how non-answers like "I don't know", "I wasn't informed", "I didn't think about it" and the like accumulate in surveys. Here are some examples from this research.

Question	Number of non-answers
Are you politically active? If so, how would you rate the activity?	72%
Recently, in Ohrid, A. Vucic and A. Kurti, with the mediation of the EU and the support of the USA, reached an agreement on implementing the Agreement on the Normalization of Relations. Is it good or bad for Serbia?	39%
The number of brutal attacks on journalists is increasing; threats are also made by the leading people of this country. What do you think about whether these attacks on media freedom are justified or not?	35%
Regarding Serbia's attitude toward the war in Ukraine, which opinion is closer to you?	35%
Is there or isn't there a political party that would be more successful in solving the mentioned problems compared to those currently in power?	34%

## 4.2. Antipartism

Political parties and politicians are not the favorites of these people, neither those in power nor those in the opposition. They worked hard for such a status. Today, the most popular politician in Serbia is Aleksandar Vučić. 19% of respondents have full confidence in the President of the Republic, and the same number of respondents have partial confidence. Trust does not have the same number as the sum of those who have complete and partial trust – 39% of respondents, and 23% of those who have little trust. When we ask the respondents to tell us whom they trust the most, they put scientists in the first place (37%), in the second place are people from their environment (33%), in the third place is the Church (20%) and in the fourth last place are politicians (10%). The number of non-answers evidences the people's attitude towards the political parties to the questions asking for a statement about any attitude of the respondents towards the parties. (See below.)

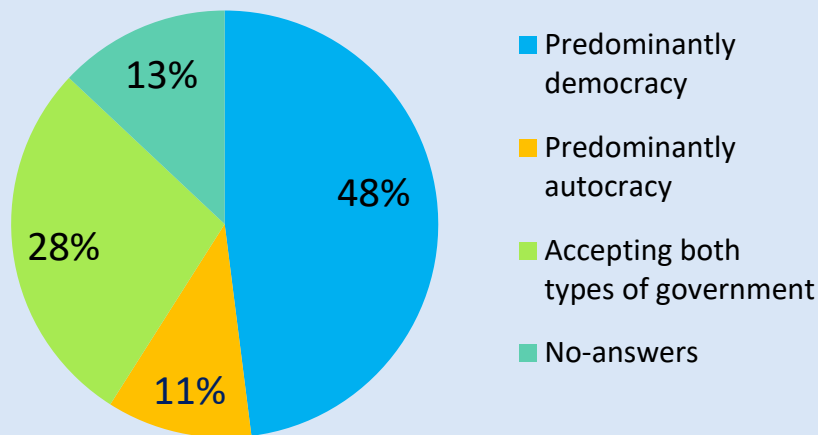
Question	% of non-answers
Which group of political parties would best represent the interests of pensioners?	71% there are no such, without answer
Which political party do you have the best opinion of?	64% there is no such, without answer
Is there or isn't there a political party that would be more successful in solving these problems than those currently in power?	59% there is no such one, without answer
Koja bi grupa političkih partija najbolje zastupala interese radnika?	50% there are no such, without answer
Aleksandar Vucic announced the formation of the People's Movement for the state. What do you think about that?	46% cannot assess, they are not familiar, without answer - doesnt know

What is indisputable is that partial or more complete distancing from politics, politicians, and political parties generates confused political attitudes and a generally confused attitude towards politics and political institutions.

### 4.3. For democracy or for autocracy or for both

A good example of political confusion is research finding according to which a number of respondents express a preference for democracy (48%), others express a preference for autocracy (11%), a third part of respondents show a preference for both democracy and autocracy (28%), and the fourth does not know what is this about (13%). (See below.)

**Between democracy and other forms of government**

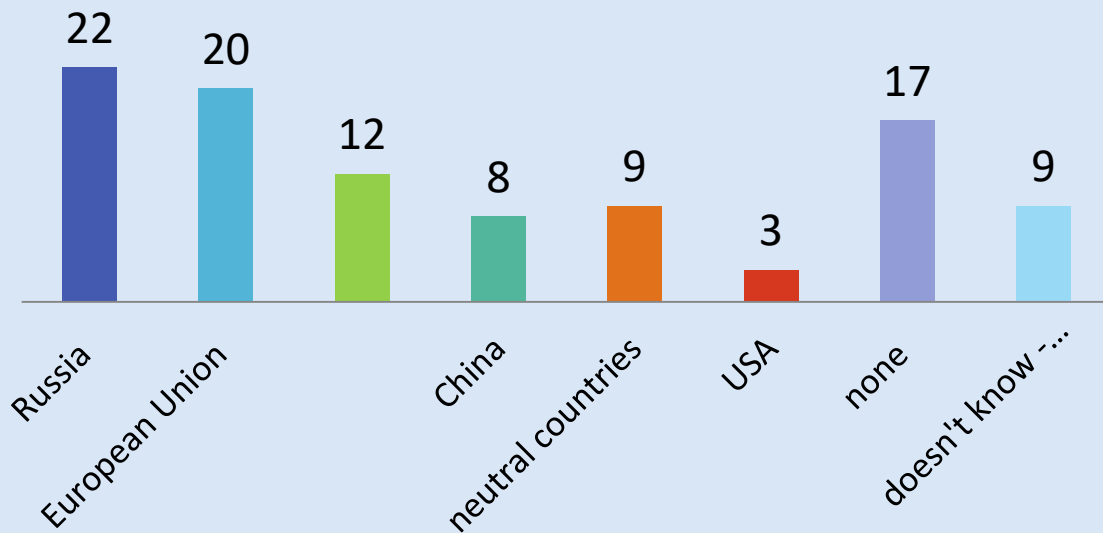


But if we look separately at the attitude towards democracy, then we get this picture: 68% of the respondents think that it is a good type of government and 13% that it is bad (9% do not know) - this means democracy in which there are fair elections and the division of power legislative, executive and judicial. On the other hand, we have autocracy as a type of government in which all power is in the hands of a strong and honest leader who knows how to deal with the people and knows his/her job; then we see that 33% of respondents think that it is good, 51% that it is bad, while 16 % says he doesn't know. Therefore, in the case of a separate observation of democracy and autocracy, we do not see any confusion or contradiction, and only by combining these two answers do we arrive at data on the extent of confusion and ignorance of the topic we tested.

## 5.1. Foreign policy mainstay of Serbia

Around three political issues, there is a pronounced smaller or larger polarization in public opinion. At the same time, these are issues that divide the Serbian party scene, thus becoming generators of more pronounced inter-party conflicts with possible escalation to broader social conflicts. These are the following three questions: (1) foreign policy orientation - which country should Serbia rely on in foreign policy; (2) Serbia's attitude towards joining the European Union; and (3) Serbia's attitude towards solving the Kosovo problem.

**Which country/countries should Serbia look up to and establish best relations with? (in %)**



If foreign policy support is sought individually, the positive attitude towards Russia (22%) and the European Union (20%) dominates, followed by the Scandinavian countries (12%) and China (8%). It should also be mentioned the vague wording of "neutral country," declared by 9% of respondents, as well as the denial of the need for foreign political support (17%) and 9% of non-answers. (See chart below.)

## 5.2. Foreign policy mainstay of Serbia

It also makes sense to group countries on which to rely. Thus, one group would consist of Russia and China (30%), and the other the EU, Scandinavian countries, and the USA (35%); other answers and non-answers may form a third rather undefined group (35%). In any case, it is evident that none of the options in public opinion has a distinct advantage at this moment - things are different when the relationship towards individual countries is operationalized through mutual confrontation. - We did this by placing Serbia's relationship with the EU and, on the other hand, with Russia, in the context of the war in Ukraine. (See below.)

**When it comes to Serbia's attitude towards the war in Ukraine, which opinion is closer to you? (in %)**

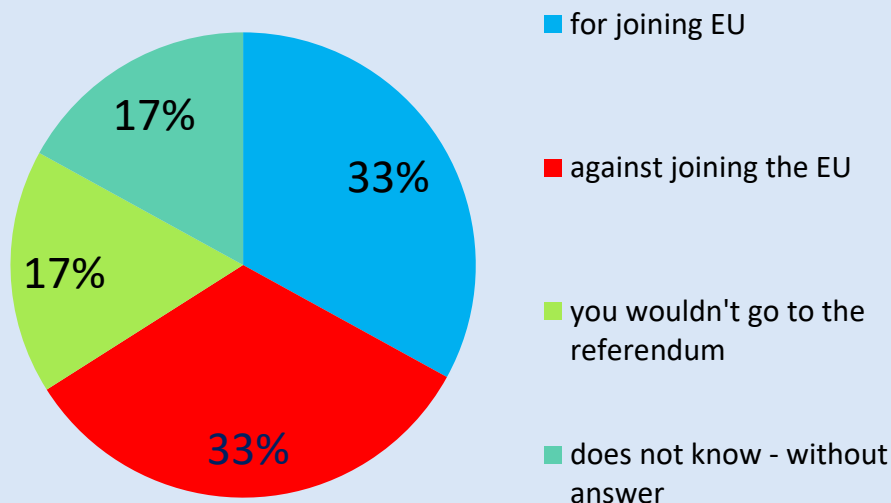


We see that less than a quarter of the respondents (23%) believe that "Serbia should harmonize its foreign policy with the European Union and impose sanctions on Russia," while on the other hand, two-fifths of the respondents (42%) have a completely different opinion, "Serbia should keep good relations with Russia at the price of giving up the European Union." Respondents react differently to questions of the holistic type, i.e. when we ask them to express their general attitude towards a specific content, and when concretizing the content by putting it in the context of a comparison with a directly opposite attitude, there is a change in orientation (which is visible in the above graph).

### 5.3. Relationship with the European Union

The attitude of the local people towards the European Union goes through different stages, from overwhelming acceptance to a more pronounced rejection of joining the EU. Now, apparently, the number of those who are "for" and the number of those who are "against" is equal. But the referendum is far away! (See chart below)

**If a referendum on our country's entry into the European Union were to be held now, how would you vote?**



We have seen, however, that when we mention the attitude of the people towards Russia and the attitude of the people towards the European Union in the same question, then Russia has the advantage. And precisely the answers to such questions raise doubts about the answers to general questions like this: How would you vote in a referendum?

At the same time, with this question, as with the other two determinant questions that define both foreign and domestic policy, one should keep in mind the high correlation of the answers to these questions with the party orientations of the respondents.

## 5.4. Attitude towards the issue of Kosovo

Judging by our research, the proportion is gradually changing between those who see solutions to the Kosovo problem in dialogue with mutual concessions and those who favor aggressive solutions or maintain the conflict with the existing tension. As things stood at the time of the field research (end of April and beginning of May), the two options are relatively equal. (See table below.)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Does NOT agree	Neither agree nor disagree + without answer – doesn't know	Agree
"Kosovo is already independent; we just won't admit it to ourselves"	36%	28%	36%
„To preserve KiM, one should be prepared for long-term material sacrifices and deterioration of living standards"	44%	35%	21%
"The preservation of Kosovo and Metohija as part of Serbia is more important than Serbia's entry into the European Union"	32%	33%	35%
"If that would be the price for the defense of Kosovo and Metohija, we should go to war again with the Albanians and the international community"	65%	24%	11%

Of the four indicators of the attitude towards the problem of Kosovo, in the case of two indicators (the first and third), the number of respondents to pacification and the maintenance of tension are equal. Regarding the other two indicators (the second and the fourth), the peace-making option has priority.

In any case, as long as the Kosovo problem is a space for the manipulation of public opinion by those in power in both Kosovo and Serbia for survival or winning "a little more" power, there is nothing to solve the Kosovo problem.