

# **National Democratic Institute for International Affairs**

## **Montenegro**



## **Key Findings Track One**

**April 11, 2001**

## INTRODUCTION

The following report is a presentation and analysis of key findings from the NDI's first tracking survey. It follows the baseline survey conducted in March and represents the second in a series of NDI political research in Montenegro in 2001. The project will continue with the conduct of additional tracking polls throughout the year.

This research project is the property of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC with offices throughout the world working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. The project is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Its primary purpose is to assist NDI's partners – the political parties in Montenegro – to improve their ability to represent the interests of and communicate with the people of Montenegro. The research project is part of a political party assistance program conducted by NDI whose goal is to support the development of a democratic multi-party political system.

Between 01 and 04 April, 1,281 residents of Montenegro participated in face-to-face interviews designed to measure their attitudes about, inter alia, the political parties, the upcoming 22 April elections, and the issue of Montenegrin state status. The interviews were conducted in each of Montenegro's 21 municipalities. Prism Research, a polling firm established in Australia with offices throughout the region, conducted the fieldwork.

The margin of error on a sample of 1,200 is +/- 3 percent.

In the United States, Canada and Western Europe, political parties conduct public opinion surveys in order to test the public attitudes regarding topical issues of the day. Results are then used to develop plans to communicate with the public. If the planning is done effectively and implemented, a political party can successfully compete in elections. In this context, public opinion surveys are not used as a means of predicting the outcome of any upcoming elections. **This report should equally be viewed as an assessment of public attitudes in Montenegro at the moment and not as a predictor of the outcome of the April elections.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The tracking poll indicates that support for pro-independence forces has slipped slightly since mid-March, economic issues continue to top voters' interests, a large majority wants a referendum on state status, and a slightly narrower majority favors independence.

### ***Voter Intentions***

Ninety-three (93) percent of respondents said they plan to vote on 22 April.

If the elections had been held in early April, 43.6 percent would have voted for "Victory is Montenegro's, Democratic Coalition Milo Djukanovic," comprised of the governing Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). Twenty-six (26.4) percent would have voted for the "Together for Yugoslavia" coalition, comprised of the Socialist People's Party (SNP), the People's Party (NS), and the Serb People's Party (SNS).

These numbers represent a slight drop for the "Victory" coalition and a slight rise for the "Together" coalition from mid-March. The pro-independence Liberal Alliance is favored by 12.6 percent of respondents. The pro-federation People's Socialist Party, standing at 3.6 percent, may be the remaining party to clear the electoral threshold to enter parliament.

### ***The Economy Continues to be the Most Important Issue***

The most important issues for voters continue to be economic (48 percent) and the question of Montenegrin independence or continued federation with Serbia (29 percent). The importance of both issues among respondents has risen slightly and other issues, such as inter-ethnic relations, have fallen slightly.

Supporters of all parties shared the view that economic issues are most important. Among economic issues, respondents identified unemployment (30 percent) as the most important.

Among economic reforms, respondents said anti-corruption laws (29 percent), privatization (23 percent) and foreign investment (19 percent) are top priorities.

### ***State Status***

A substantial majority (72 percent) favors a referendum on independence. There is a wide ethnic discrepancy, however, between those favoring a referendum and those who do not.

Given four choices – independence, the status quo, a union of two states, or a unitary state – exactly half of the respondents favor independence.

When asked the question – “Are you for Montenegro as an independent country/state?” – 58 percent say they are in favor and 31 percent against, a slight drop in support of independence (4 percentage points) since mid-March. Eleven (11) percent are undecided or are not prepared to vote on this question.

When asked the question – “Are you for the union of two internationally recognized states – Serbia and Montenegro – established on the basis of negotiations between Montenegrin and Serbian governments?” – 40 percent say yes and 37 percent say no, a gap of three points and therefore within the margin of error. On this question, 24 percent are undecided or not prepared to vote.

When asked which of these questions they would like to see on a referendum, 57 percent prefer the former and 25 percent the latter.

### ***Ethnicity: The Defining Division***

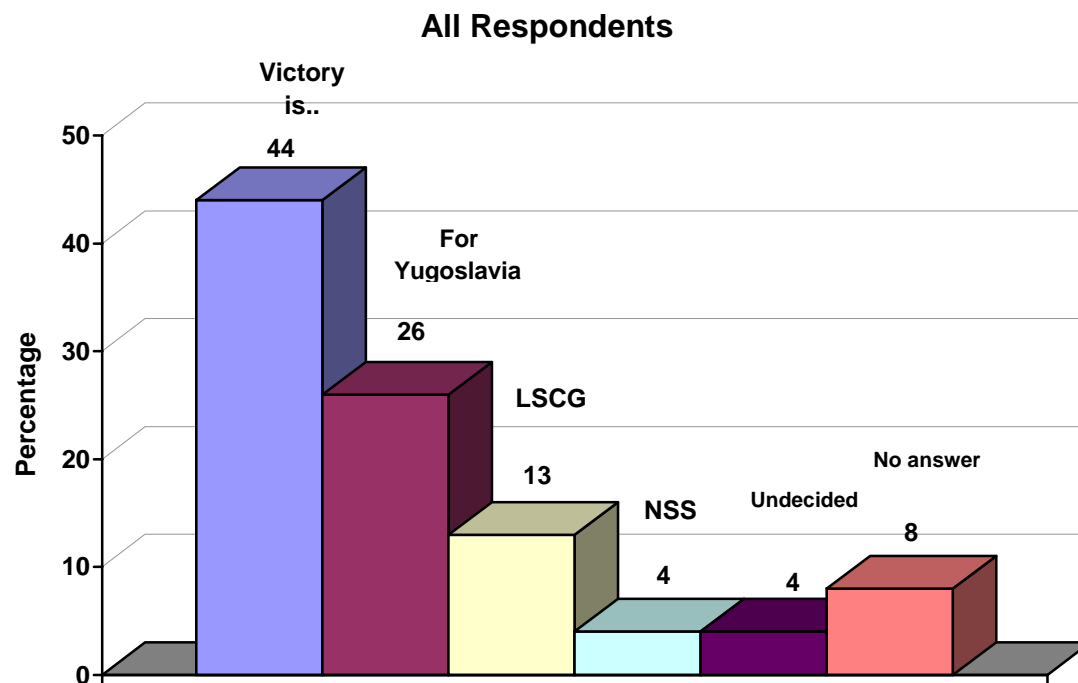
Ethnicity is the major factor defining differences of opinion in Montenegro. Ethnic Montenegrins are positive or neutral, and ethnic Muslims are overwhelmingly positive, about such issues as Montenegro’s economic situation and political development in the last three years, while ethnic Serbs and ethnic Yugoslavs are more negative. Ethnic Montenegrins, Muslims, Croats and Albanians fully support the independence of Montenegro, while ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs favor the status quo or a unitary state.

### ***Other Demographic and Geographic Factors***

All other demographic divisions (gender, age, education level, income level, employment status or region) show limited deviation from the opinions of “all respondents.” One exception is a noticeable trend among the lower income and those with fewer years of education who tend to have more skepticism about the current situation in Montenegro, its state institutions and the current leadership. Another exception is that those in the northern part of Montenegro demonstrate the least trust in Montenegrin state institutions, the

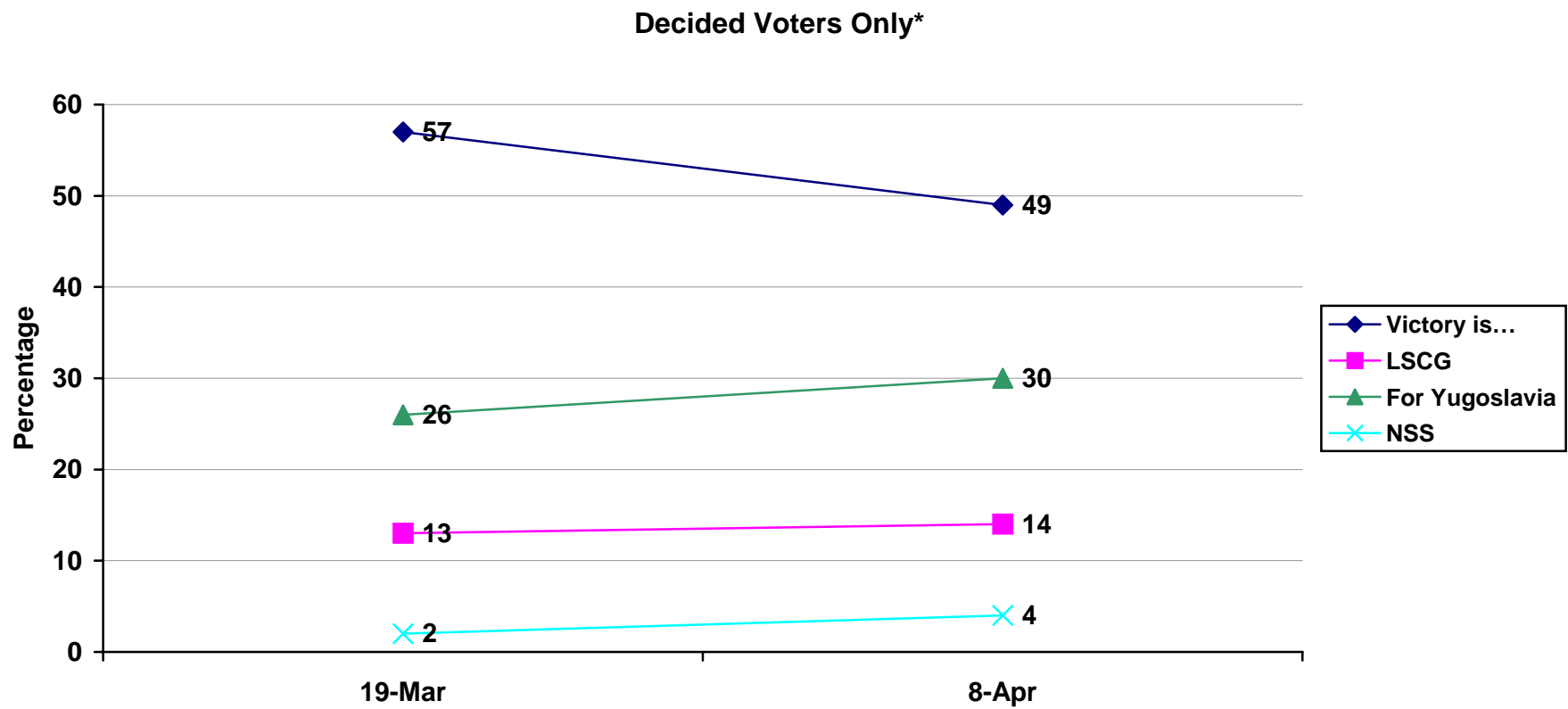
current political leadership and the current economic situation, while those in the eastern part of Montenegro are overwhelmingly positive on these same issues.

# VOTER INTENTION



\* All other parties received less than 2 percent of support among respondents sampled.

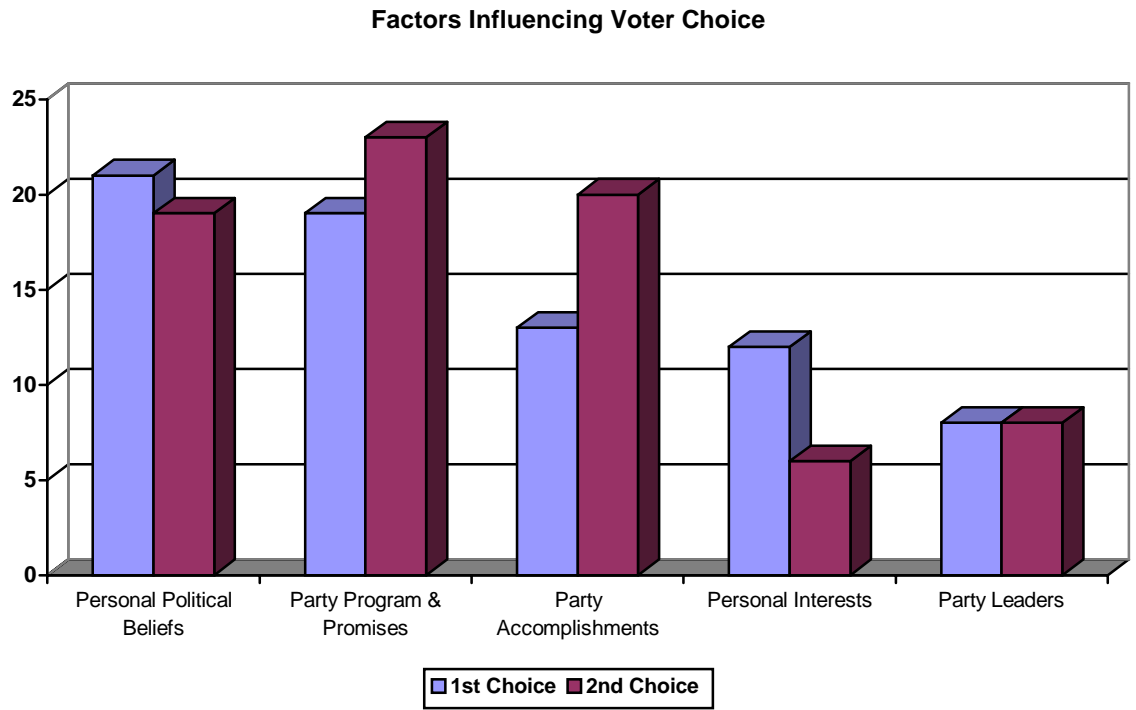
\* No answer includes responses: no answer, not for any and do not intend to vote.



\*Undecided respondents and respondents that did not answer are distributed among the parties in the same proportion as decided voters. For example if a party has 20 percent of the decided voters, they receive 20 percent of the undecided voters and non-respondents.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION FOR WHOM TO VOTE

Respondents were asked to identify which factors (from the list below) have the biggest influence in deciding for whom to vote. Personal political beliefs and the party program and party promises were judged to be the most important factors.



**Offered Choices:**

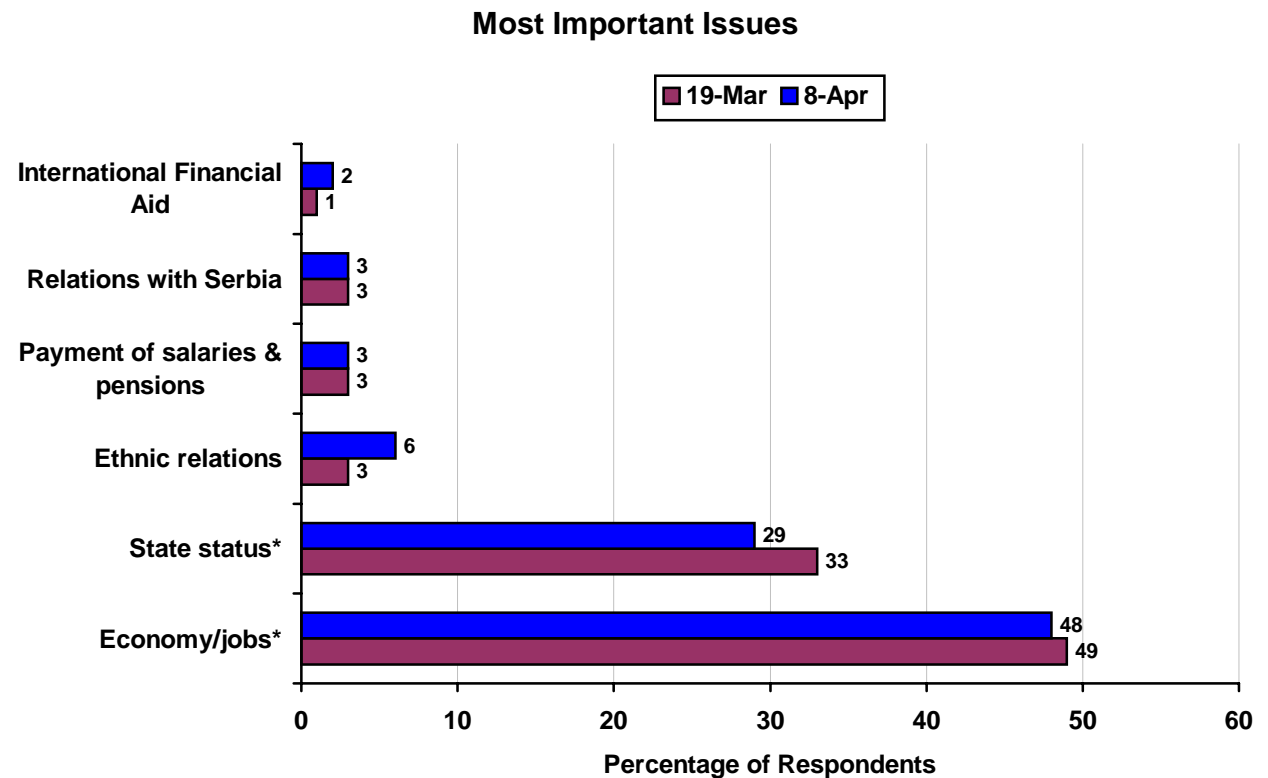
- Family members/friends
- Party membership
- Party campaign
- Personal interests
- Party leaders
- Media
- Habit
- Expectation that others will vote for it
- Party accomplishments
- Party program & promises
- Fear of loss of job
- Personal political beliefs



## Most Important Issues

Respondents were asked to name the most important issue in determining for whom they will vote. The options were:

- economic situation,
- international financial assistance,
- corruption,
- ethnic relations,
- payment of salaries/pensions, unemployment,
- independence,
- relations with Serbia,
- remaining part of FRY,
- start up of industry,
- agriculture,
- rights of peoples to which I belong,
- Orthodox church,
- privatization,
- social security/health care,
- tourism,
- something else.



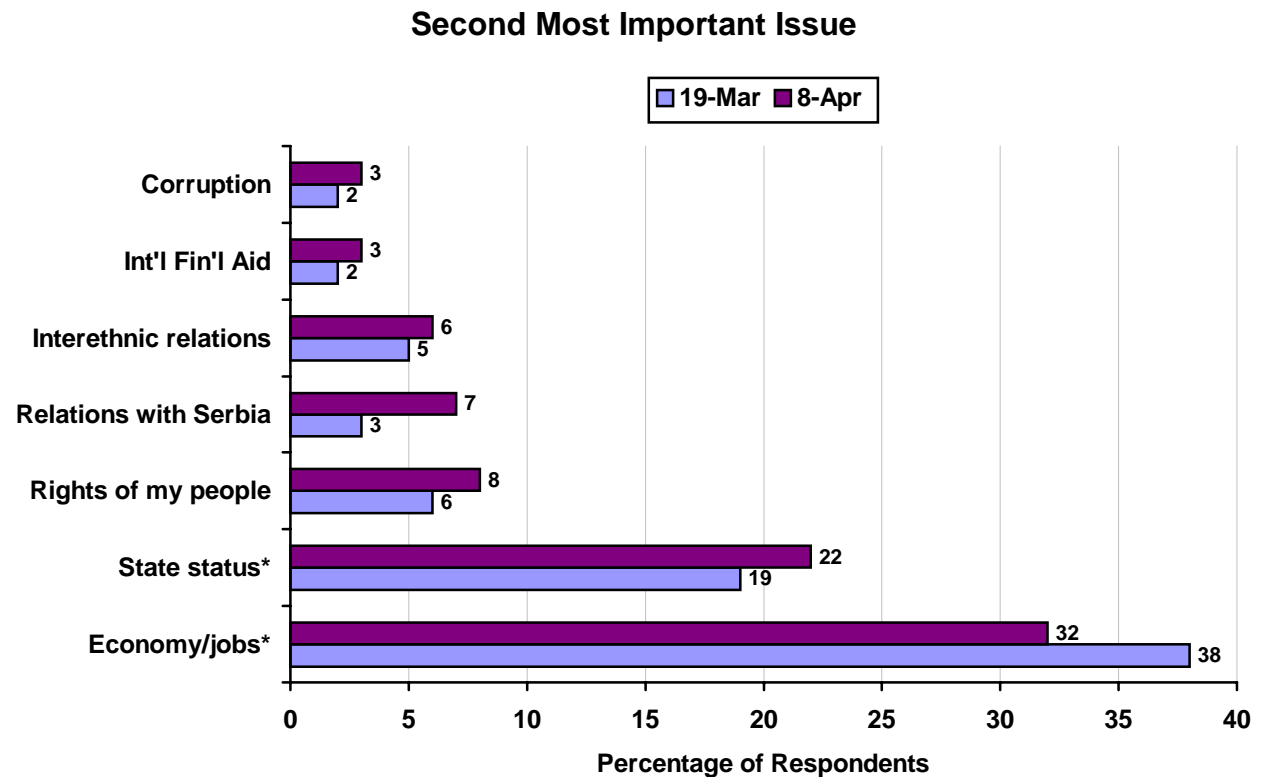
\* Economy/jobs combines issues of economy, start up of industry and unemployment.

\* State status combines issues of independence and sovereignty of Montenegro, and Montenegro remaining as part of FRY.

## Second Most Important Issue

Then, respondents were asked to name the second most important issue in making their election choice. The options remained the same and were:

- economic situation,
- international financial assistance,
- corruption,
- ethnic relations,
- payment of salaries/pensions, unemployment,
- independence,
- relations with Serbia,
- remaining part of FRY,
- start up of industry,
- agriculture,
- rights of peoples to which I belong,
- Orthodox church,
- privatization,
- social security/health care,
- tourism,
- something else.



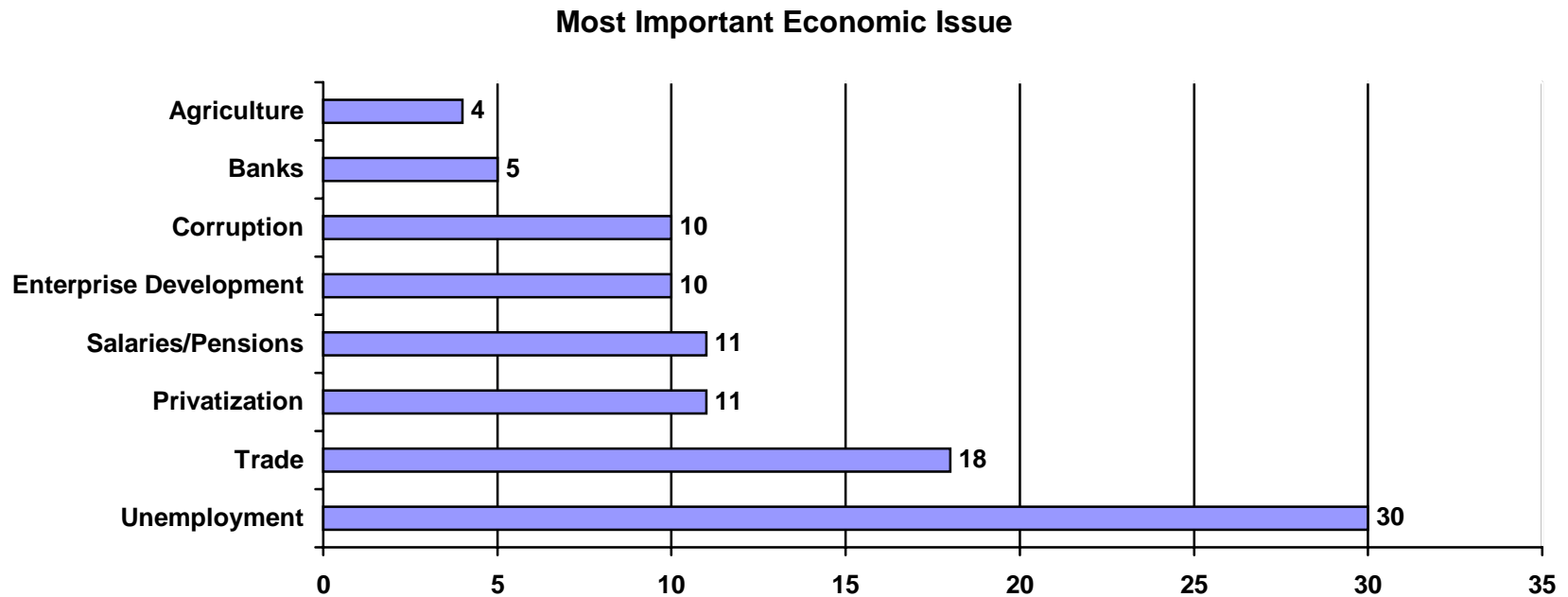
\* Economy/jobs combines issues of economy, start up of industry and unemployment.

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## MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ISSUE

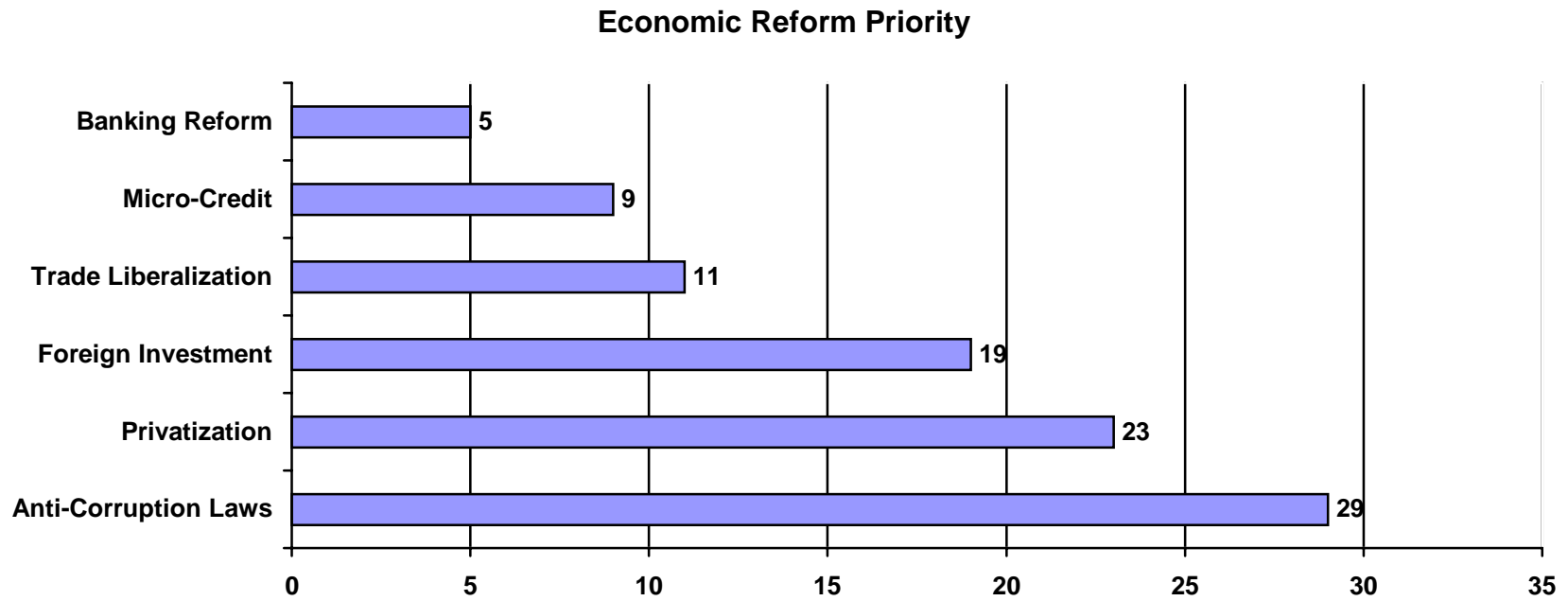
In last month's survey (as is the case in this month's survey), voters identified the economy and Montenegro's state status as the most important issues in the election. In the April survey, we sought to understand more clearly the voters' priorities in terms of the economy and in terms of the reform process in general.

Respondents were given eight economic issues and asked to identify, which was the most important one.



## ECONOMIC REFORM PRIORITIES

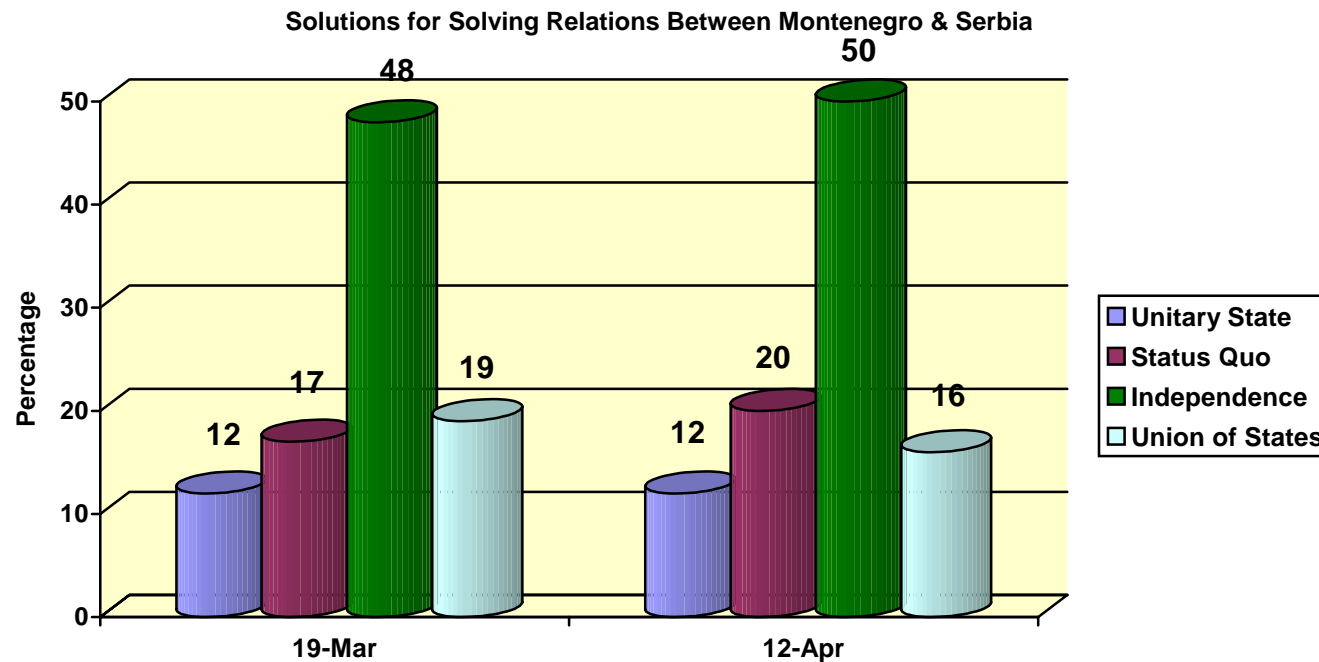
In terms of the process of the establishment of a market economic system in Montenegro, respondents identified the following as the most important priorities for economic reform.



## STATE STATUS

### Best Solution for Resolving Relations between Montenegro and Serbia

In this poll, voters were again asked what they thought was the best solution for resolving relations between Montenegro and Serbia. Four options were offered: (1) ending the federation and establishing a unitary state; (2) the status quo; (3) an independent state; (4) a union of two independent, internationally recognized states.



There were no discernible differences among demographic categories (gender, age, education, income or employment status) with the exception of ethnicity and region.

Montenegrins (62 percent) and Muslims (91 percent) favor independence more than the average respondent, while Serbs/Yugoslavs favor either a unitary state (34 percent) or status quo (49 percent).

The eastern part of Montenegro (Andrijevisa, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Plav and Rozaje) favors independence (61 percent) while only 34 percent of the north (Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak) prefers this option. Twenty-five (25) percent of respondents in the north opted for the status quo, 21 percent for a union of independent states, and 18 percent for a unitary state.

## **Support for an Independence Referendum**

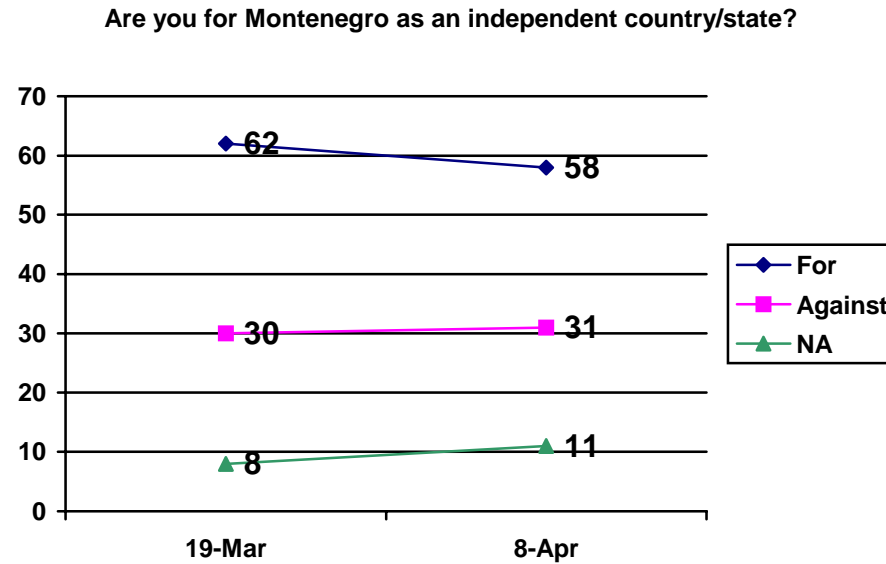
As in the March survey, a large percentage of respondents (72 percent in April vs. 75 percent in March) support a referendum, including 90 percent of Montenegrins, 98 percent of Muslims and 93 percent of “other” ethnicities (Albanian, Croat and mixed). Seventy-eight (78) percent of Serbs and Yugoslavs oppose a referendum.

## **Preferred Question**

In terms of the question respondents prefer, a majority (57 percent) would like the referendum question to be: “Are you for Montenegro as an independent country/state?” This question is favored widely by people between the ages of 18-30, students and those identifying themselves as ethnically Montenegrin, Muslim, Albanian or Croat. It receives the least support from those over the age of 51, those with 0-8 years of education and pensioners.

Twenty-five (25) percent favor the question: “Are you for the union of two internationally recognized states – Serbia and Montenegro – established on the basis of negotiations between the Montenegrin and Serbian governments?” This referendum question is preferred by ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs (36 percent), although 40 percent of ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs also say that they do not like either question.

## Are you for Montenegro as an Independent Country/State?



In response to the first question, “are you for Montenegro as an independent country/state?”

- 58 percent said that they would vote “for,” and
- 31 percent said they would vote “against.”

Ethnic Montenegrins, Muslims, Albanians and Croats are more likely to vote “for.” Additionally, those with more than 13 years of education and earning more than 500 DM/month disproportionately will vote “for.” In contrast, ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs (76 percent) make up the majority of those who will vote “against.” And, there is a noticeable negative opinion on this question from those over 51 years of age, those with 0-8 years education and those living in the northern part of Montenegro.

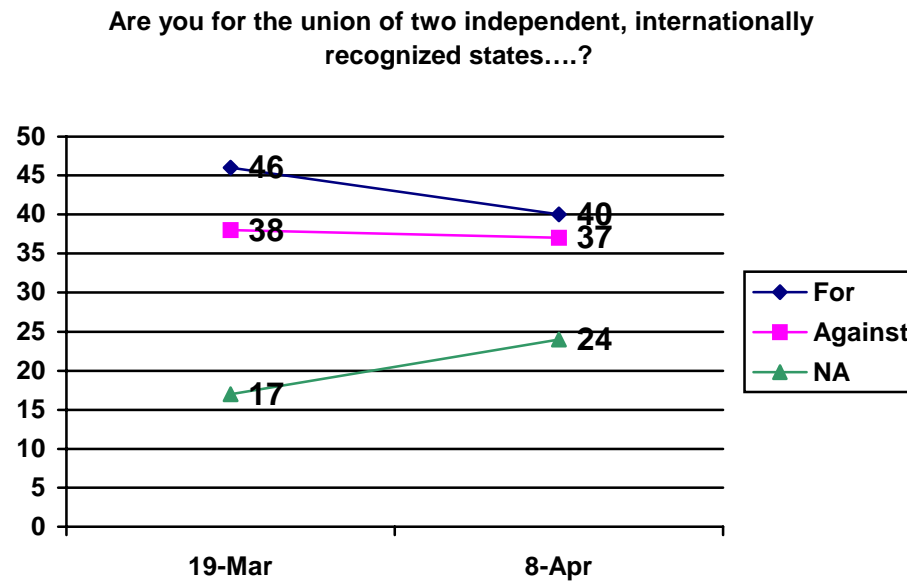
### Are you for the Union of Two Independent, Internationally Recognized States?

In response to the second potential referendum question, “are you for the union of two independent, internationally recognized states – Serbia and Montenegro – established on the basis of negotiations between the Montenegrin and Serbian governments?”

- 40 percent said that they would vote “for,”
- 37 percent said that they would vote “against,”
- 9 percent would not vote, and
- 15 percent did not know or would not answer.

In comparison with the March survey, respondent uncertainty or unwillingness to vote has increased, while support for this option has decreased slightly.

As was seen in the March poll, the result is consistent across all demographic categories and, even, ethnic groups with the exception of Muslims living in the eastern part of Montenegro who would disproportionately (58 percent) vote “against” this option.



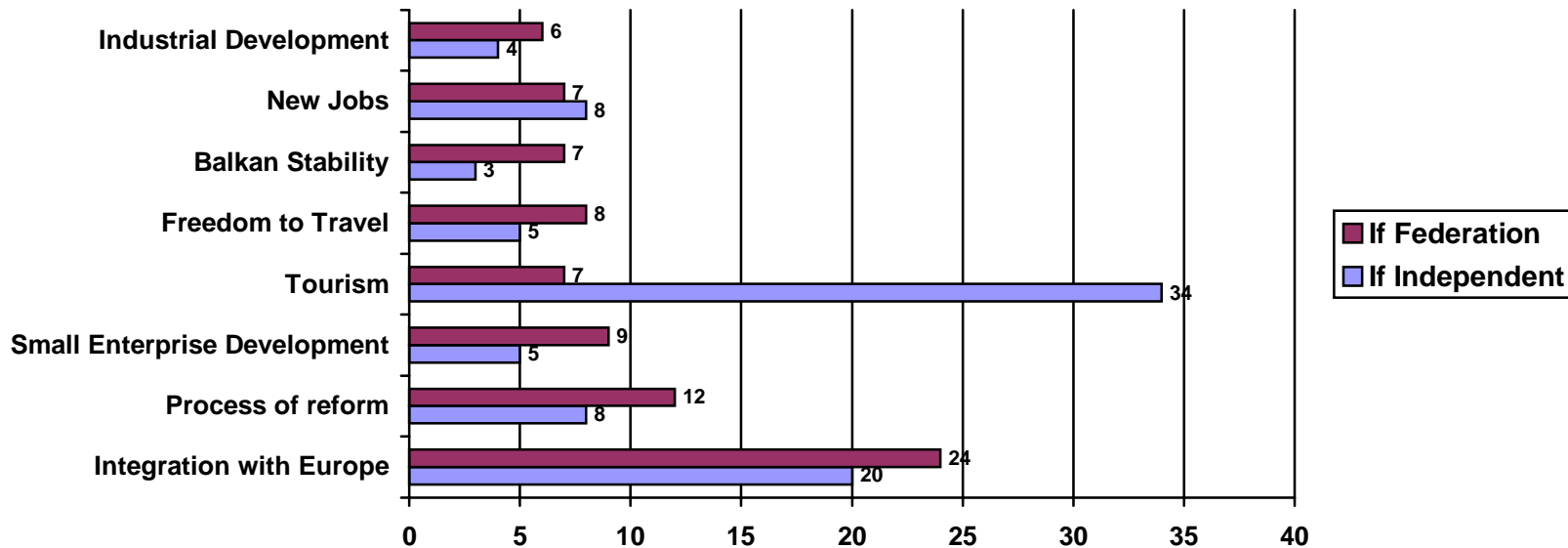


### Improvements Expected from Resolution of the Question of State Status

When respondents were asked what areas would improve the most if Montenegro became an independent state, respondents identified tourism (34 percent) and integration with Europe (20 percent) most often. Eight (8) percent also identified opening of new work places and the process of reform as areas for improvement. All other issues were identified by less than 5 percent of respondents.

When asked what areas would improve the most if Montenegro stayed in a Federation with Serbia, 24 percent identified integration with Europe, 12 percent the process of reform, 9 percent opening of small and medium-size enterprises and tourism, 8 percent freedom to travel, 7 percent opening of new work places and stability in the Balkans, and 6 percent the development of industry. All other areas for improvement, including the economy, tourism, university studies, stability in the Balkans and sport, were identified by less than 10 percent of respondents.

**State Status: Expected Improvements**



### **Negotiations between Montenegro and Serbia**

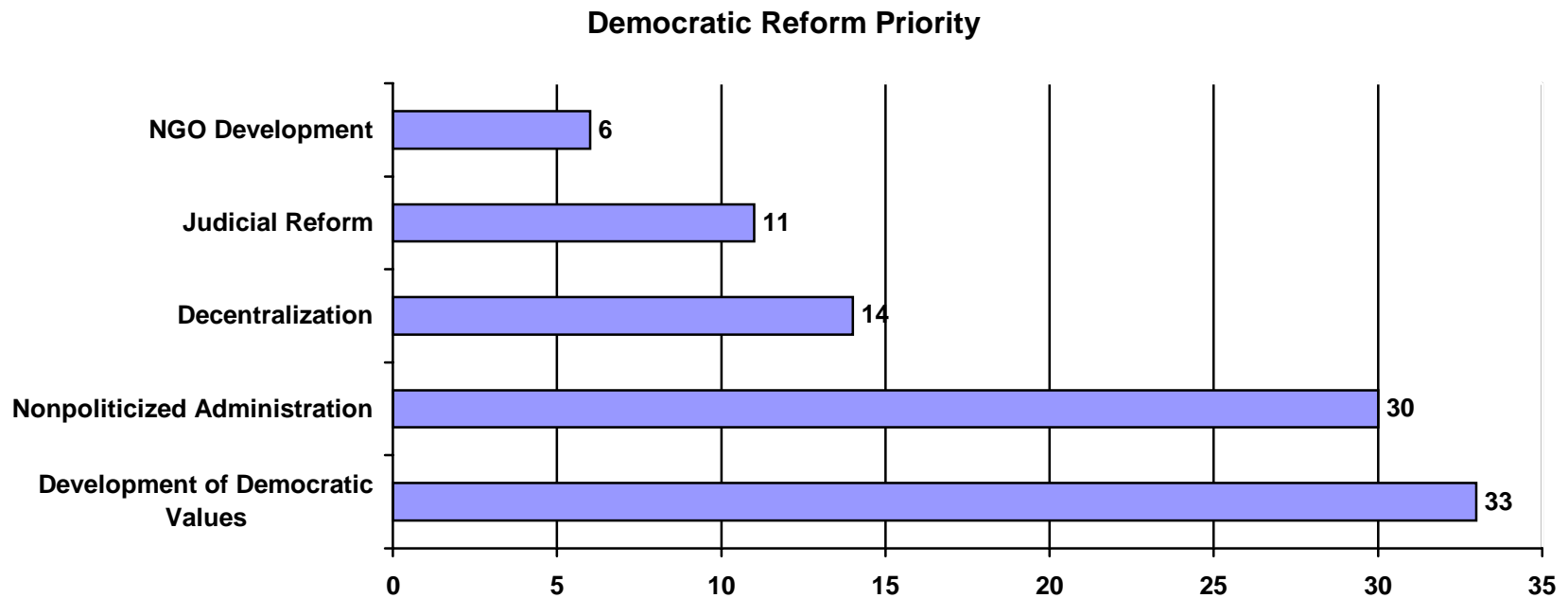
The International Community has made it clear that the best solution for Montenegro and Serbia is the survival of the Federation based on negotiations between the two republics. Forty-three (43) percent of respondents (including 81 percent ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs) thought that the International Community position was an important factor in deciding on independence, while 52 percent (including 63 percent of ethnic Montenegrins and 78 percent of ethnic Muslims) did not think this was an important factor.

And, finally, on the question of whether it was possible to negotiate successfully with the current leadership of Serbia on the future status of Montenegro, 51 percent (including 90 percent of ethnic Serbs and Yugoslavs) thought that it was possible and 40 percent (including 74 percent of ethnic Muslims) thought it would not be possible. There is no statistically significant difference in the response to this question when compared to the March survey.

## OTHER FINDINGS

### DEMOCRATIC REFORM PRIORITIES

In terms of the establishment of a functioning democratic system in Montenegro, respondents identified the following as the most important priority for reform.



## TRUST IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

Respondents were asked how much they trusted the following state institutions. Montenegrin state institutions (presidency, government, assembly, police and court system) are the most trusted institutions, while the banks and federal institutions are the least trusted institutions. Interestingly, the media is trusted and distrusted by an equal percentage of respondents – i.e., 50 percent.

**Trust in Institutions**

