



Public attitudes towards corruption in Bulgaria and the anti-corruption actions of the Bulgarian Government

Results of a public perceptions survey 2024

Global Metrics | September 2024

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About this report

This report presents the results of a nationwide survey of 1,215 individuals in Bulgaria, conducted from February to early March 2024. The survey examined how corruption is perceived in Bulgaria by different types of respondent, and what kind of behaviour is considered acceptable. It also looked at respondents' perceptions of anti-corruption efforts and under which circumstances they would be more likely to report corruption to the authorities. The survey is a follow-up to a survey and Working Paper published in 2023, available at: <https://baselgovernance.org/publications/wp-44>.

The questionnaire was programmed in Qualtrics and designed and programmed by Dr. Maria Thürk and Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bailer at the University of Basel with the support of Global Metrics in Bulgaria. The survey was fielded in the period 22 February – 5 March 2024 among 1,215 people and analysed by the analytics of Global Metrics (Dr. Radostina Angelova, Pavel Perpeliev and Katerina Georgieva) in partnership and collaboration with Dr. Maria Thürk.

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The report is intended for general informational purposes and does not constitute and/or substitute legal or other professional advice. We have made reasonable efforts to ensure its accuracy and completeness but cannot guarantee these. For questions, please email info@baselgovernance.org.

1 Introduction

This survey aims to highlight the main attitudes of Bulgarian citizens towards corruption in Bulgaria and the anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian government. In this regard, various questions were asked related to the ranking of corruption among the main problems of the country, the readiness to report corruption and the factors that influence this readiness.

With regards to the attitudes of Bulgarian citizens towards the anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian government, the survey tested the respondents' awareness of specific actions the executive branch of the government has taken against corruption in Bulgaria. Different anti-corruption messages of the government were also tested and how they impacted the opinion of Bulgarian citizens about the effects of the actions taken by the executive branch.

The political positions and attitudes of Bulgarian citizens are also a key part of the study. These are highlighted through a survey of attitudes towards various parties, institutions, structures and groups of public importance.

The survey is national, representative of the adult population of the country and was conducted with the help of in-person interviews by Global Metrics. Due to the sensitivity of the questions and to avoid interviewer effects, respondents received a tablet with a pre-loaded digital questionnaire from a fieldworker and then answered all sensitive questions themselves.

Additionally, the survey incorporates smaller survey experiments designed to provide a more nuanced understanding of attitudes and behaviours regarding corruption. Utilising survey experiments allows for the isolation of effects specific to variations in question wording or context, thereby yielding more precise insights into how different factors influence respondents' answers and perceptions.

The survey is part of a larger project of the Basel Institute on Governance on countering corruption in Bulgaria. It represents the second iteration in an ongoing series, with a previous survey conducted in 2023. Since the sample of respondents is different, no individual comparisons can be drawn between the two surveys. Larger trends should be interpreted carefully.

2 Most important problems in Bulgaria

The survey highlights the main problems that the Bulgarian citizens see as facing the country. To achieve this objective, respondents were given the opportunity in an open-ended question to write down what they consider to be the most important problems.

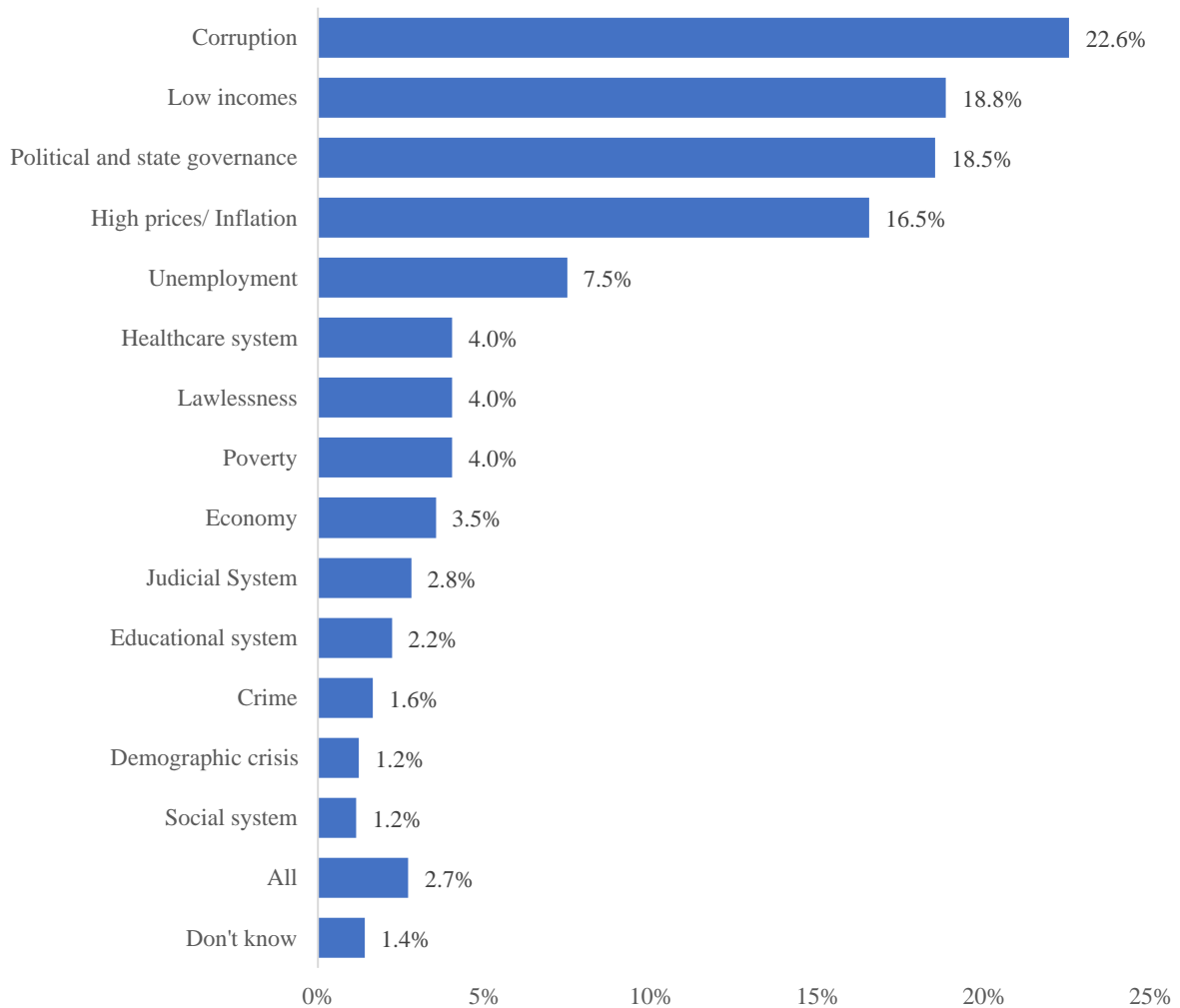
Corruption appears to be the main problem facing the country – it is mentioned by 22.6% of Bulgarian citizens. Combined with low incomes (18.8%) and political and state governance (18.5%), these are the three main problems facing Bulgaria. Importantly, respondents were not told before that the main objective of this survey is to investigate corruption attitudes. This finding supports the relevance of this research with corruption being constantly reported as major problem for the Bulgarian society by Bulgarian citizens. High prices and inflation are cited by 16.5% of respondents, while unemployment is a key problem for the country according to 7.5% of respondents.

With lower shares, but still prominent as problems, are healthcare (4%), lawlessness (4%) and poverty (4%). The economy as a whole is reported as a problematic area by 3.5% of the Bulgarian citizens, while 2.8% and 2.2% of the respondents have a similar opinion about the judiciary and the educational system, respectively.

Below 2% are the shares of those who answered that the main problems the country is facing are crime (1.6%), demographic crisis (1.2%) and social system (1.2%). 2.7% of Bulgarian citizens share an extremely negative opinion about the state of the country and point out everything as a problem.

The results are overall similar to last year's survey results with the exception of the drop of perceived importance of inflation as a problem which corresponds to the decrease of inflation in Bulgaria since the last survey.

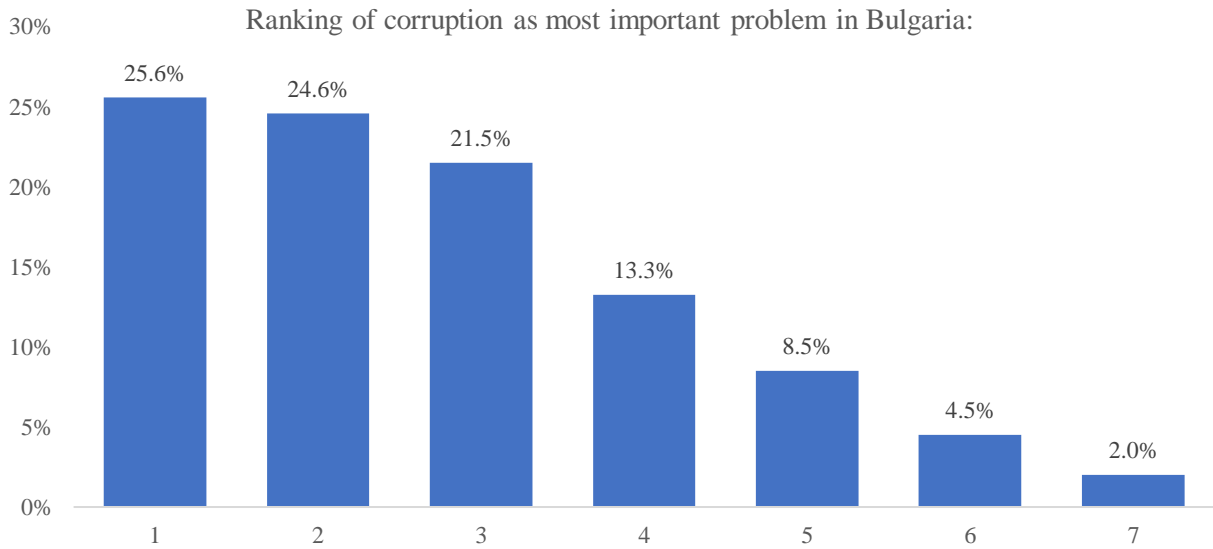
What do you think is the most important problem in Bulgaria today?
(Responses received more than 1%)



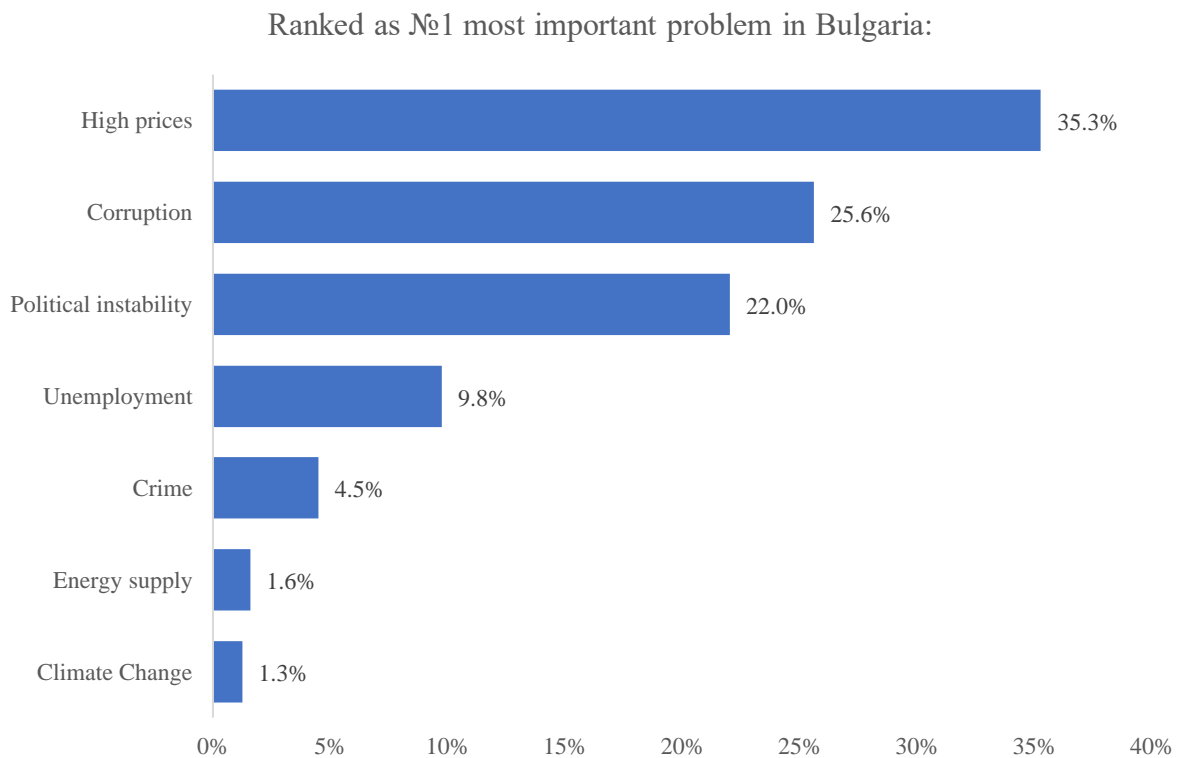
**More than one answer allowed*

In addition to the open-ended question, respondents were given the opportunity to rank in order of importance among several issues listed, namely:

- Corruption
- High prices
- Political instability
- Unemployment
- Crime
- Energy supply
- Climate change



Corruption is among the top three most important problems facing the country for over 70% of Bulgarian citizens – ranked first by 25.6%, second by 24.6% and third by 21.5%. 13.3% is the share of respondents who put corruption in the fourth place among the most major problems. It was less common to rank corruption fifth (8.5%), sixth (4.5%) and seventh (2%).

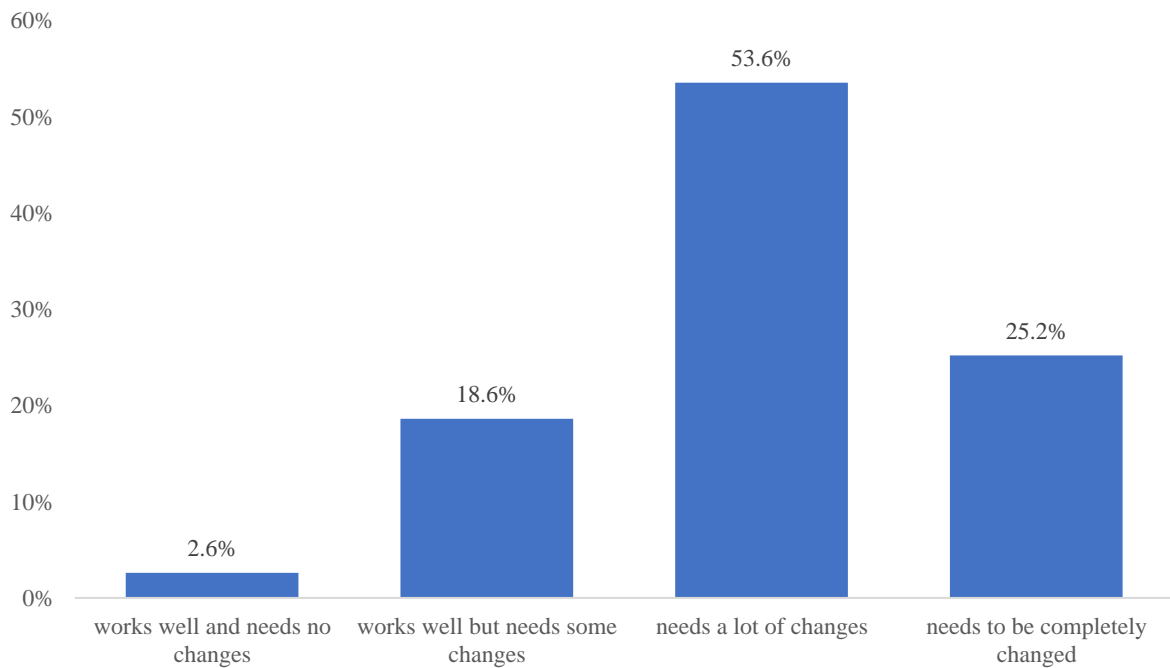


In terms of the issues ranked first in importance by respondents, the highest proportion ranked high prices at the top – 35.3%. Just over a quarter ranked corruption in a similar position. 22% considered political instability the most important problem facing the country, and just under 10% – unemployment. With significantly lower shares are those who put crime (4.5%), energy supply (1.6%) and climate change (1.3%) in the first place.

3 Attitudes towards the state of democracy in Bulgaria

In general, Bulgarian citizens do not share particularly optimistic attitudes regarding the state of democracy in Bulgaria. Most of the respondents (53.6%) are of the opinion that Bulgarian democracy needs a lot of changes, while a quarter reports that a complete change is needed (25.2%). 18.6% said that democracy in Bulgaria works well but needs some changes, while the position that democracy in Bulgaria works well and does not need any changes is shared by 2.6% of respondents.

All in all, how well or badly do you think the system of democracy works these days in Bulgaria?



The supporters of “Citizen for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces (GERB-UDF)” and “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB)” more often pointed out that democracy in the country works well, but needs some changes. Among

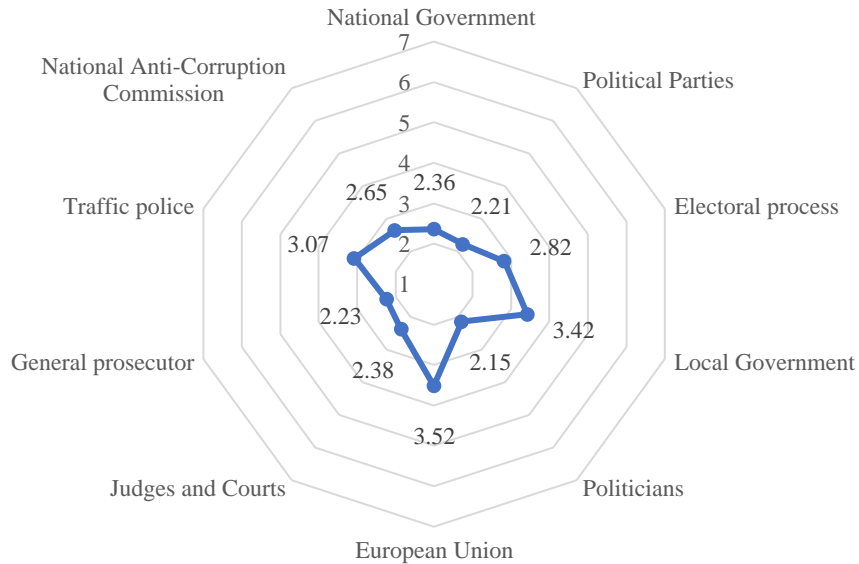
the supporters of "Revival" the attitude for complete changes in the system of democracy in Bulgaria is more strongly expressed. The general trend is similar to the previous year with about one of five respondents being more positive towards Bulgarian democracy and four in five respondents being rather or very critical.

4 Trust in Bulgarian institutions

The trust of Bulgarian citizens in various institutions, structures and social groups of public importance is relatively low. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is "Very Low" and 7 is "Very High", the European Union has the highest average score of 3.52. 3.42 is the average score for local government and 3.07 for the traffic police, and combined with the EU these are the only three entities whose average score exceeds 3.

The next most trusted are the electoral process (2.82), the anti-corruption commission (2.65), judges and courts (2.38) and the national government (2.36). With the lowest trust among Bulgarian citizens are the general prosecutor (2.23), political parties (2.21) and politicians (2.15). It is worthy to mention that all evaluated institutions and groups receive average score below 4, which is the middle of the scale (where 1 is "Very Low" and 7 is "Very High"). That shows the very low level of trust that Bulgarian society is characterised with.

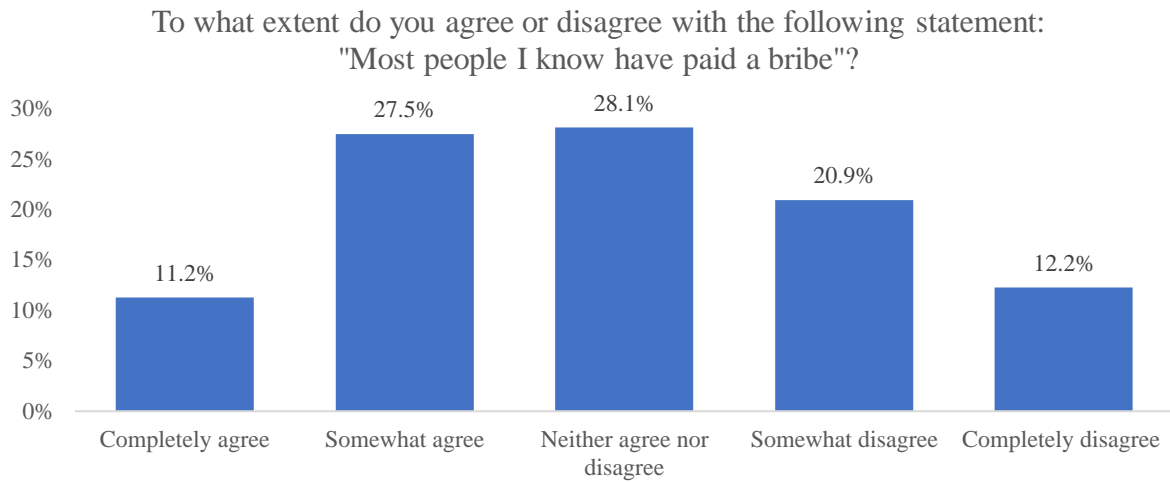
We are interested in the level of trust you have in various institutions and groups. What is your level of trust in:



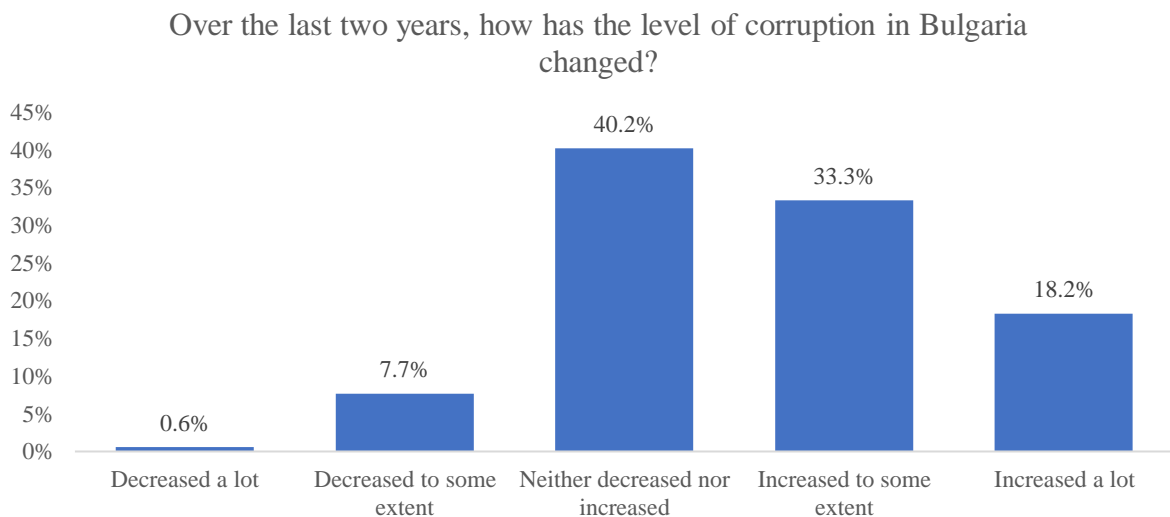
The voters of PP-DB have higher trust in the government. This electorate also has a higher trust in the European Union, and a similar conclusion can be drawn for the GERB-UDF supporters. On the contrary, those who voted for "Revival" have lower trust in the EU.

5 Perceptions of corruption in Bulgaria

Respondents' answers are ambiguous regarding the statement "Most people I know have paid bribes". However, those agreeing with such a statement (38.7%) outnumbered those disagreeing (about one third). A neutral position on the issue – neither agreeing nor disagreeing – is held by 28.1% of Bulgarian citizens. These figures show a slight negative shift from last year's survey. However, this comparison is not robust and should be approached with caution.



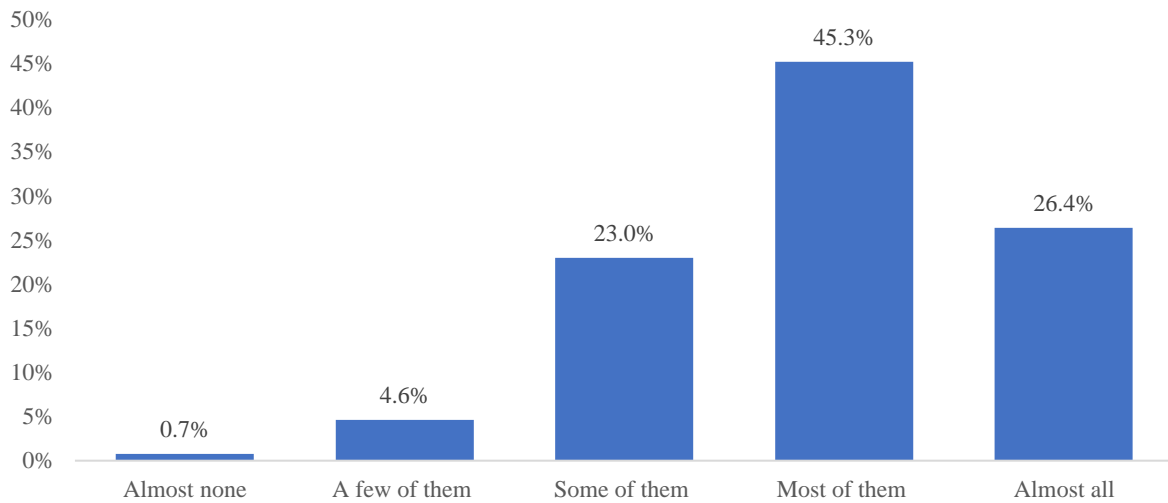
Agreement with the above statement is more often observed among GERB-UDF supporters, as well as among residents of the capital city.



Bulgarian citizens do not share particularly optimistic attitudes regarding the level of corruption in Bulgaria. Just over half of them are of the opinion that the levels of corruption in the country have increased over the last two years (33.3% – an increase to some extent, 18.2% – a big increase). 8.3% of respondents report a decrease in the level of corruption (7.7% – to some extent, 0.6% – large decrease). 40.2% is the share of respondents who believe that there is no difference in the levels of corruption in Bulgaria over the last two years. This trend reflects again a negative deviation compared to the survey conducted last year. Yet again, caution should be exercised when interpreting this comparison due to its limited statistical strength.

The perception of a decrease in corruption in the country to some extent over the last 24 months is stronger among supporters of PP-DB.

In your opinion, how many high-ranking public officials in Bulgaria are involved in corruption?



The majority of Bulgarian citizens believe that there is widespread corruption among high-ranking public officials. 45.3% of respondents state that most of these officials are involved in corrupt practices, and 26.4% – that this is the case for almost all high-ranking public officials. 23% is the share of respondents who believe that only some of these officials are involved in corrupt practices. 4.6% of the respondents report that a small number of high-ranking public officials are involved in corrupt practices, while 0.7% are of the opinion that almost none of the high-ranking public officials are involved in corruption cases.

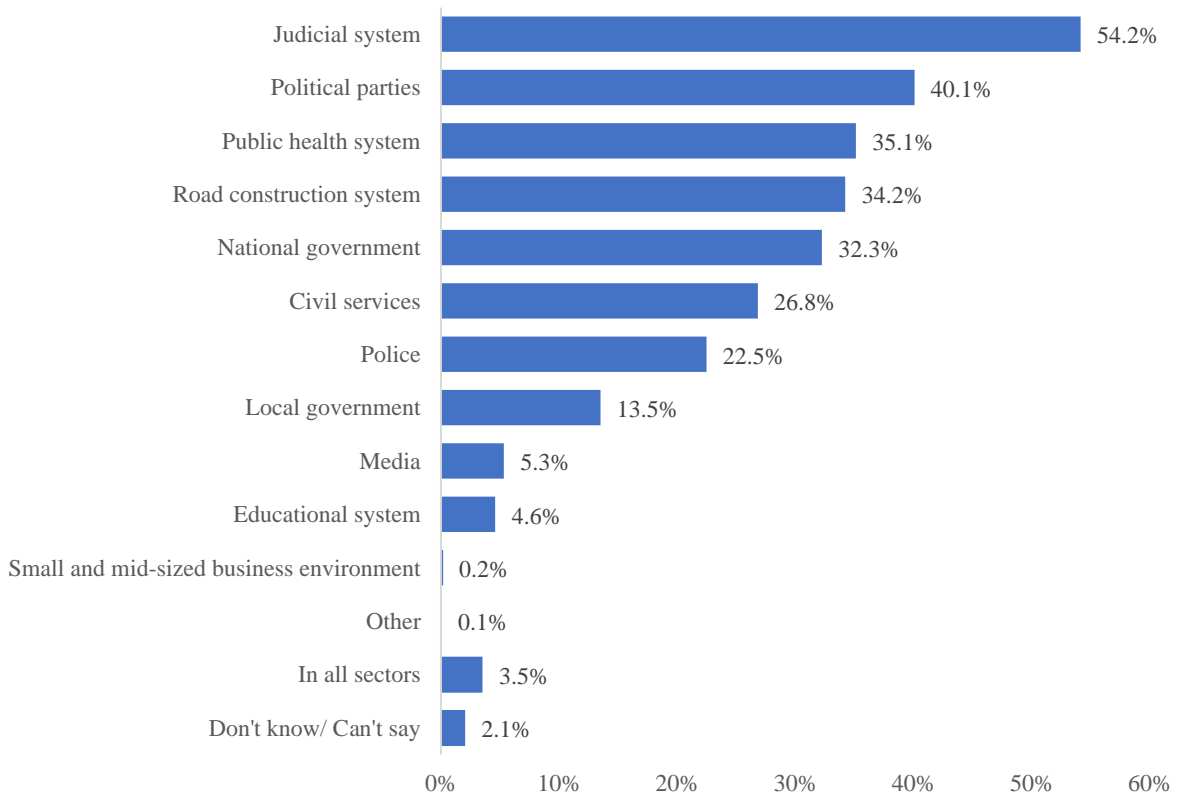
6 Sectors most affected by corruption

The majority of public sectors in Bulgaria included in the survey are associated with corruption by more than one third of the general population. The judicial system is the sector that is most affected by corruption according to the Bulgarian citizens – it is mentioned by 54.2% of the respondents.

This finding mirrors last year’s survey which also showed that respondents are experiencing the judicial system as most affected by corruption. Political parties (40.1%) and the public health care system (35.1%) are the sectors/spheres with the highest prevalence of corrupt practices after the judiciary. Road construction is largely affected by corruption, according to 34.2% of respondents, while 32.3% cited government as most affected by corrupt practices.

The civil service (26.8%) and the police (22.5%) were among the other more frequently cited sectors where corruption is believed to be widespread by respondents.

In your opinion, in which sector is corruption most widespread in Bulgaria? You can choose up to 3 options.



7 Messages on the anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian Government

7.1 Attitudes towards the anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian Government

For measuring the effect of different messages on public opinion and perception of government actions against corruption, an experiment was conducted for which the respondents were split automatically and randomly into four different groups by the software program of the survey. The first group was not exposed to any message (control group). The second, third and fourth group (treatment groups) were exposed to the following messages, which were prepared by

officials from the cabinet of Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov, who was in office when the survey was conducted:

Group A – no message

Group B – ***Integrity starts with me. Integrity is: transparency in public procurement. Our government has stopped corrupt procurement of 4 billion BGN for roads, guaranteeing quality for every expenditure made.***

Group C – ***In defence of public interest. Our government is reforming procedures – for transparent procurement and fair contracting. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for people.***

Group D – ***Transparency in the interest of the people. Our government is taking decisive action against corruption. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for the people.***

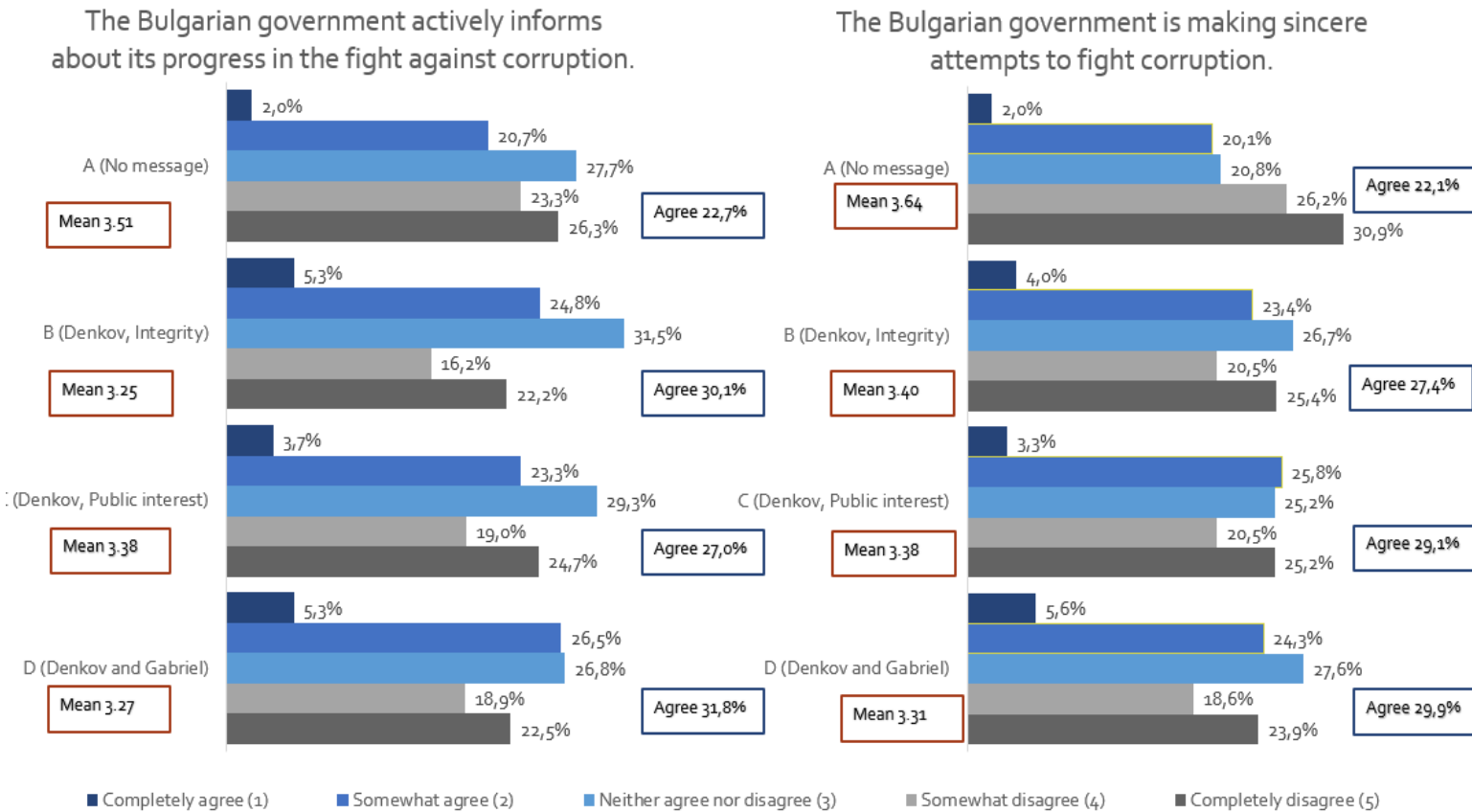
These messages were part of a poster campaign. Groups B and C saw a poster with a picture of Prime Minister Nikolai Denkov from the “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” coalition and Group D saw a poster with a picture of Prime Minister Denkov and Deputy Prime Minister Mariya Gabriel from “Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces” coalition.

The survey results show a significant difference in public opinion after respondents receive the message B and message D compared to those who were not exposed to any message. There is no statistically significant difference between those who have not received message (group A) and the group that received message C. Message B and message D increase the agreement with the statement “The Bulgarian government actively informs about its progress in the fight against corruption.” Message D gains agreement of 32% while message B gains agreement of 30%. The disagreement with message D is 41% while disagreement with message B is 38%.

Since there is no statistically significant difference between results of group B and group D we cannot conclude which of these two messages gain more positive results regarding the perception that the Bulgarian government actively informs about its progress in the fight against corruption.

The messages also increase the perception that the Bulgarian government is making real attempts to fight corruption. There is statistically significant difference between those who were exposed to one of the messages and those who were not exposed. At the same time, there is no statistically significant differences between group B, C and D and we cannot conclude which message has bigger impact. Seen from the descriptive statistics, message D “Transparency in the interest of the people. Our government is taking decisive action against corruption. We are

saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for the people.” gains more agreements than the other two messages, but also gains more disagreement compared to message B.

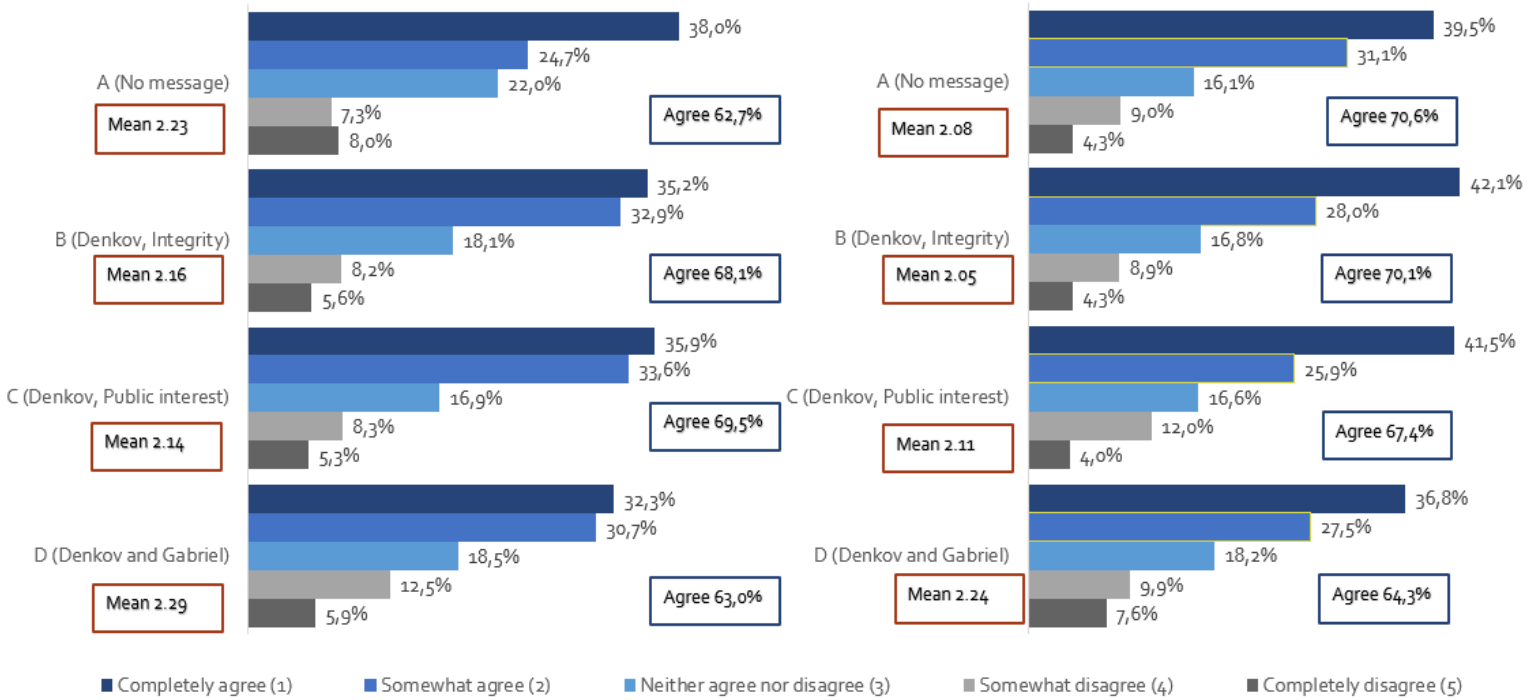


The messages cannot reduce the scepticism of people regarding the recent attempts of the Bulgarian government to fight corruption and that this will improve the situation in Bulgaria. There is no statistically significant difference between those who were exposed to messages and those who were not.

The messages do not change the attitudes that the government's efforts to fight corruption are mostly for show. With and without exposure to the messages the majority of people agree that the Bulgarian government has no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it. There is no statistically significant difference between those who were exposed and those who were not exposed to the messages.

I am skeptical that the latest attempts by the Bulgarian government to fight corruption will improve the situation in Bulgaria

I believe that the efforts to fight corruption are mostly for show. The Bulgarian government has no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it.



7.2 Possibilities of the leading political parties to tackle corruption

There is no statistically significant difference between the believe which party is most likely to fight against corruption in Bulgaria depending on the messages to which respondents were exposed. Message C slightly increase the opinion that this can be “Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces” (22.8%) and “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” (13%), but the difference is not statistically significant.

		Experiment_groups			
		A (No message)	B (Denkov, Integrity)	C (Denkov, Public interest)	D (Denkov and Gabriel)
Which of these parties do you think is most likely to fight corruption in Bulgaria?		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces	15,9%	15,8%	22,8%	16,0%
	Movement for Rights and Freedoms	3,5%	4,1%	4,2%	4,5%
	We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria	11,7%	8,9%	13,0%	10,1%

BSP for Bulgaria	14,1%	9,6%	9,1%	12,5%
Revival	12,0%	17,2%	9,8%	9,4%
There is such People	8,1%	9,6%	7,4%	6,3%
Other	2,8%	2,4%	1,8%	4,5%
None	24,4%	25,4%	24,9%	26,7%
Don't know	7,4%	6,9%	7,0%	10,1%

7.3 Credibility of anti-corruption messages

In all subgroups dominate opinion that the message **“Transparency in the interest of the people. Our government is taking decisive action against corruption. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for the people.” (with Prime Minister Denkov and Deputy Prime Minister Gabriel both on the poster)** is the most persuasive.

Since this is the message that gains more positive results on the first two statements (“the Bulgarian government actively informs about its progress in the fight against corruption” and “The Bulgarian government is making sincere attempts to fight corruption.”) and also compared to the other messages reduce slightly the scepticism that the latest attempts by the Bulgarian government to fight corruption will improve the situation in Bulgaria, this message can be seen as the most effective for the purposes of future campaign.

This message also gains more disagreement with the statement that the efforts to fight corruption are mostly for show and that the Bulgarian government has no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it. Although for the last two statements there is no significant difference between subgroups depending on the message they saw, the direction of answers and slight change which this message provokes (in addition to the effects on the first two statements) is evidence that it is the one that is the most effective and most liked among general public.

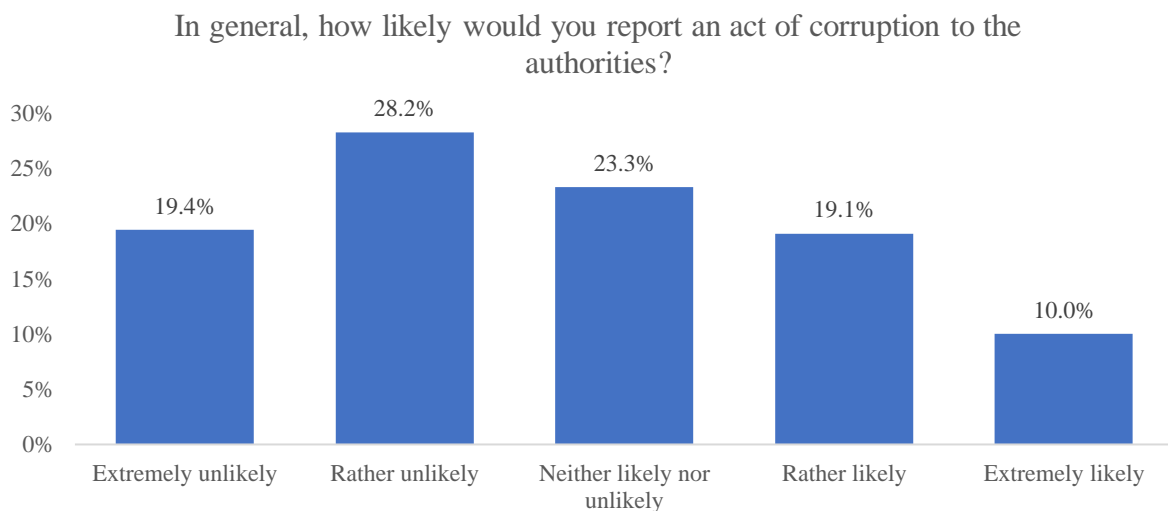
Which message is most persuasive to you?	Experiment_groups			
	A (No message)	B (Denkov, Integrity)	C (Denkov, Public interest)	D (Denkov and Gabriel)
	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
In defence of public interest. Our government is reforming procedures – for transparent procurement and fair contracting. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for	25,2%	24,2%	27,4%	20,4%

people.				
Transparency in the interest of the people. Our government is taking decisive action against corruption. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for the people.	35,2%	37,9%	33,7%	36,5%
Integrity starts with me. Integrity is: transparency in public procurement. Our government has stopped corrupt procurement of 4 billion BGN for roads, guaranteeing quality for every expenditure made.	16,9%	12,7%	16,2%	15,8%
No answer	22,6%	25,2%	22,8%	27,3%

8 Attitudes towards reporting corruption

8.1 Likelihood of reporting corruption in general

Bulgarian citizens are not very likely to report corruption to the responsible authorities. 47.6% is the share of respondents who are generally not likely to take such action (19% – extremely unlikely, 28.2% – rather unlikely). On the opposite position – willing to report a case of corruption, are 29.1% (19.1% – rather likely, 10% – extremely likely). 23.3% of respondents are neutral on the topic.



The likelihood of reporting corruption is lower among people living in rural areas and among respondents with primary education or less. The general finding corresponds to last year's survey results without major shifts.

8.2 Likelihood of reporting corruption in a specific case

The survey also tested to what extent information about measures and reforms taken in order to fight against corruption and information about prosecution of people involved change the likelihood for reporting the corruption cases.

The group “without information” was presented the same case of corruption but they did not have information regarding measures and reforms taken, neither about prosecution of people involved. The other group (“with information”) was presented not only the case of corruption, but also information about substantial reforms taken after citizens reported instances of bribery and favouritism and the followed effective actions taken by the state authorities.

Text presented to group “without information”

Imagine you are at the Annual Technical Inspection for your car. As you wait for the technicians to check your vehicle thoroughly, you notice another car owner discreetly giving an officer not just the required documents but also a large sum of money. The officer then assures that this person's car will pass the inspection and receive a certificate within an hour.

You now face a decision: to report what you witnessed. While you have no direct evidence, you clearly saw the exchange. You're aware that reporting the act might help to combat corruption, but also consider potential challenges in reporting such an incident.

Text presented to group “with information” (printed in blue)

Imagine you are at the Annual Technical Inspection for your car. As you wait for the technicians to check your vehicle thoroughly, you notice another car owner discreetly giving an officer not just the required documents but also a large sum of money. The officer then assures that this person's car will pass the inspection and receive a certificate within an hour.

It has recently been announced in the media that reports of corruption at other Annual Technical Inspection stations have led to substantial reforms. These actions were taken after citizens reported instances of bribery and favouritism. As a result, the officials involved were prosecuted, and the office introduced stricter, more transparent procedures. This change has made the process fairer and more honest.

You now face a decision: to report what you witnessed. While you have no direct evidence, you clearly saw the exchange. You're aware that reporting the act might help to combat corruption, but also consider potential challenges in reporting such an incident.

There is a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of both groups to report case of corruption. The information regarding measures and reforms taken for fighting against corruption and prosecution of people involved increase the likelihood for reporting the case with 6 p.p. Still the majority of people in both groups answered that it is unlikely to report such a case (66% in the group that did not read information for measures taken and prosecution and 60% in the group that read information for such measures.)

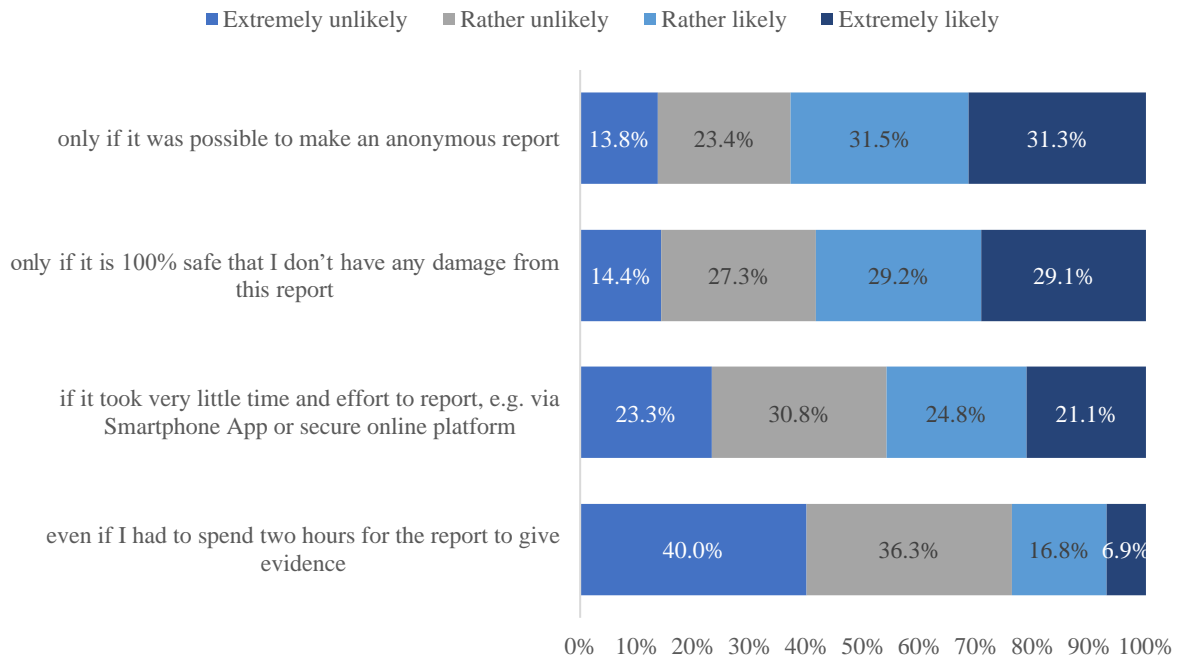
This may be substantially interpreted as confirmation that media reporting about effective action by the state against corruption has the potential to increase the willingness of people to report corruption even in a country with structural corruption problems as in Bulgaria.

		Without information	With information
		Col %	Col %
How likely are you to report this act of corruption to the authorities?	Extremely unlikely	25,9%	23,1%
	Somewhat unlikely	39,8%	37,1%
	Somewhat likely	23,6%	26,7%
	Extremely likely	10,7%	13,2%

8.3 Readiness to report corruption

The readiness of Bulgarian citizens to report corruption depends on a number of factors. Slightly more than 60% of the respondents stated their willingness to report a corruption case only if their anonymity could be guaranteed. Just under 60% share the position that they would only report corruption if they were 100% sure that there would be no negative consequences for themselves. The availability of a Smartphone App or a secure online reporting platform minimising the time taken to report is a factor leading to rather polarised attitudes – 54.1% would not report versus 45.9% who would. Prolonged reporting time, meanwhile, is a factor that would significantly reduce the likelihood of reporting cases of corruption – just over three-quarters of respondents said they would not report if they had to wait for two hours to do so.

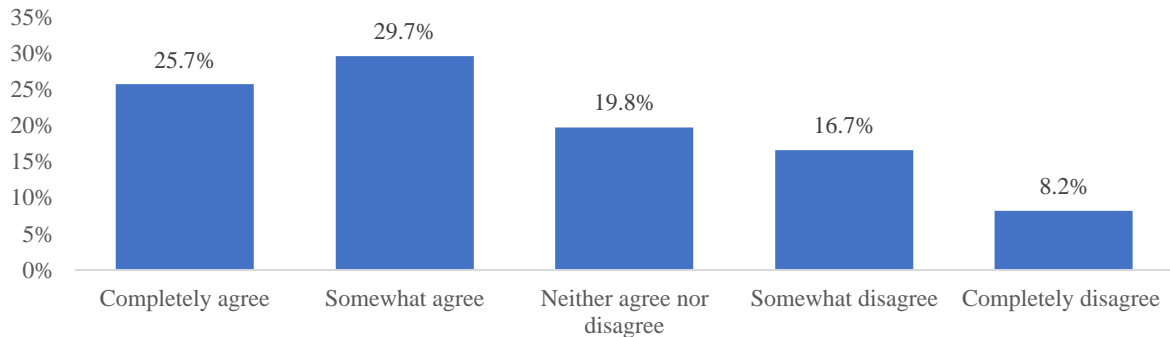
Please, tell us how likely it is that you would report corruption. I would report corruption to the authorities:



8.4 Attitudes towards the meaning and possibilities of participation in anti-corruption actions

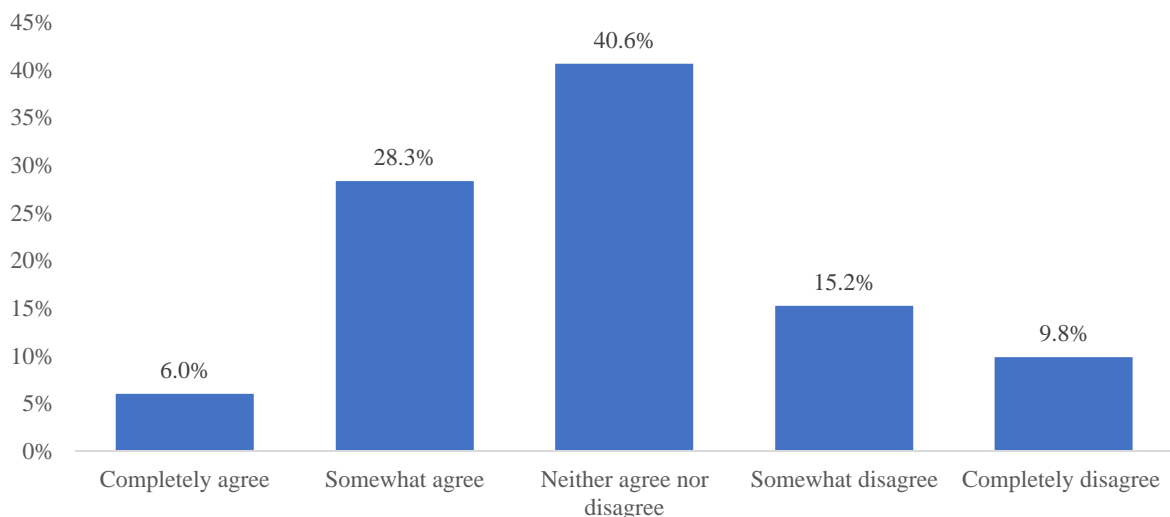
Bulgarian citizens are not very convinced about the sense of reporting corruption. This is illustrated by the high levels of agreement with the statement that there is no point in reporting corruption because nothing useful will be done about it – 55.4% (25.7% – completely agree, 29.7% – somewhat agree). Just under a quarter of respondents were of the opposite opinion, while just under a fifth remained neutral on the issue.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
There is no point in reporting corruption because nothing useful will be done about it.



The youngest respondents (18–24 years old) are the most optimistic about the meaning of reporting about corruption – the lowest share of respondents agree with the statement that there is no point in reporting because nothing useful will be done. As one moves into a higher age group, the share of those agreeing with such a statement also increases, with the highest proportion among those in the 70+ age group. Again, those results are rather similar to the findings of last years’ report and mirror the problem of perceived endemic corruption in a country: long lasting and bad experience leads to the fear of retaliation, mistrust in the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, or normalization of corrupt practices.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
It is now easier than five years ago for an ordinary citizen like me to report corruption or attend rallies against corruption.



Regarding the development of the environment in Bulgaria in the last five years in the context of participation in anti-corruption actions, the largest share of citizens has a neutral position on the statement “It is easier now than five years ago for an ordinary person like me to report

corruption or participate in protests against corruption” – 40.6%. Those who support the statement outnumber those who do not – 34.3% versus 25.1% respectively. These figures are more positive in comparison to last year’s survey findings on this question. However, it has to be kept in mind to be very careful with cross-survey comparisons due to the nature of the conducted surveys.

The statement is supported more often by the youngest respondents (18–24 years old), as well as by supporters of “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria”.

9 Attitudes towards the effects of corruption on society

Among the negative consequences of corruption, the main one, according to Bulgarian citizens when asked in an open-ended question, is its negative impact on the economy and the standard of living of the people. Corruption is also seen as a form of benefitting a few at the expense of the rest of the citizens, whose consequences are impoverishment and deterioration of the quality of public services.

A key negative consequence of widespread corruption is the significant reduction in citizens’ trust in government, reflected in pessimism, scepticism, lack of participation in decision-making processes, etc. To this can be added a stronger sense of injustice in society, which further exacerbates the above negative trends.

An important consequence of corruption appears to be the increase in inequalities in society and large income disparities.

Another experiment in the survey tested how information of different effects of corruption influence public opinion regarding appointment of potential candidates for the position of the minister of economy. The following information about negative effects of corruption were presented to half of the respondents (randomly selected) while the other half answered the question without being presented the text:

Research shows that widespread corruption has far-reaching effects. Among others, it mentions:

1. Economic Stagnation: Corruption skews resource allocation because it directs money and resources to corrupt officials’ personal interests rather than to public needs like roads and schools.

2. *Weakened Public Services: Diverted funds lead to weakened public services because money meant for things like hospitals and schools ends up in the wrong hands, not where it's needed most.*
3. *Increased Inequality: Corruption enriches a few, widening the wealth gap and limiting equal opportunity.*
4. *Eroded Trust: As corruption becomes evident, public trust in institutions diminishes, weakening democratic processes.*

The question measured attitude toward two candidates for the position of the minister of economy who were presented with the following characteristics:

Please imagine the following situation: The party you favour has won the elections and now forms a government. For the minister of economy, there are possible candidates, both of whom have previously served as mayors in their hometowns. Consider the following profiles and choose who you would prefer as the Minister of Economy:

Candidate A:

Achievements: As mayor, successfully boosted economic growth in the town due to substantial reforms.

Controversy: The candidate has been accused by anti-corruption organizations of being most likely involved in the embezzlement of taxpayer money.

Candidate B:

Achievements: Known for non-corrupt practices and integrity. Introduced economic reforms in his hometown, though they resulted in less significant economic growth than for candidate A.

There is no statistically significant difference between the opinion of both groups (those who read the text and those who did not) which candidate they would choose for the Minister of Economy. Candidate B is preferred by 75% of the group who read the text and 71% of group who did not read the text. Even though there is no statistically significant difference, the support for candidate B in the group that read the information about negative consequences is with 4 p.p more than in the group that did not read the text.

The results show that candidate with integrity and not associated with corruption is 3.75 times more preferred than candidate who is accused of being most likely involved in the embezzlement of taxpayer money, although the latter being able to boost economic growth. Potentially, subgroup analysis can provide more results.

		With text	No text
		Col %	Col %
Given these profiles, which candidate would you choose as the Minister of Economy?	Candidate A	19,9%	24,2%
	Candidate B	75,1%	71,1%
	No answer	4,9%	4,8%

The main reason for choosing candidate B is that respondents believe candidate B is honest and has integrity. The choice of this candidate is also motivated by the fact that he is not corrupt and has not been involved in corruption scandals.

The choice of candidate A (suspected of corruption) is justified through his/her ambition to work for the good of the city and the people (reference to the time he/she was mayor). The perception that all politicians steal is also highlighted, but it is important that there are benefits from their rule (which are probably recognised in the higher economic growth that occurred in the candidate's term as mayor). Another more common argument is the belief that likely involvement in corruption does not yet imply actual involvement in corrupt practices, which should be confirmed.

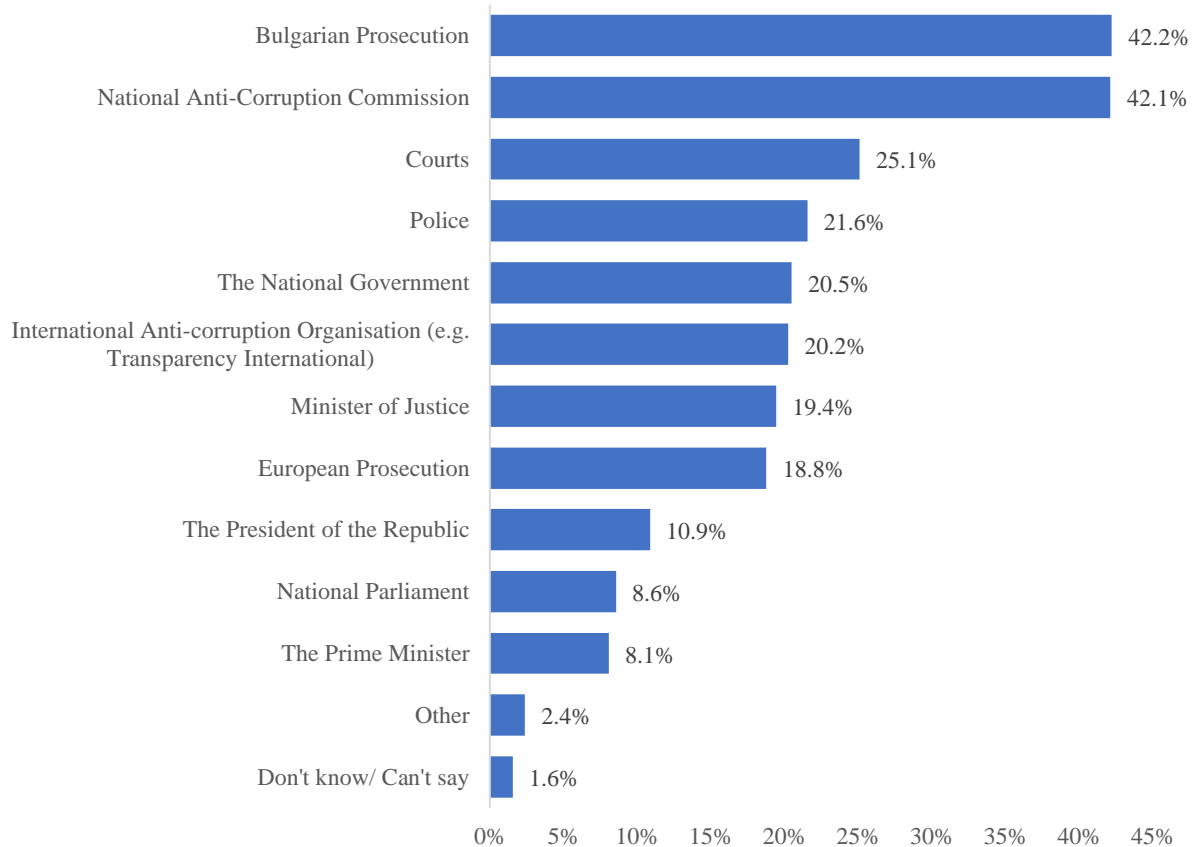
10 Fight against corruption

10.1 Leader in efforts to fight corruption

The Bulgarian Prosecution (42.2%) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (42.1%) are the leading institutions, according to the Bulgarian citizens, which should be at the heart of anti-corruption actions. With just over a quarter of the responses, the courts come next, making up the top three institutions that should play a leading role in the fight against corruption in Bulgaria. The police (21.6%), the government (20.5%), an international organisation (20.2%), the Minister of Justice (19.4%) and the European Prosecution (18.8%) were also recognised as such institutions.

The President (10.9%), the National Assembly (8.6%) and the Prime Minister (8.1%) were noticeably less frequently mentioned as the main driving forces in the fight against corruption in the country. One notable difference from last year can be observed: the National Anti-Corruption Commission is mentioned comparatively more often. However, please keep in mind that this difference might occur based on the different sample of respondents and not necessarily be a result of structural reform.

In your opinion, who should organize and lead the effort to combat corruption? (Up to 3 options)



10.2 Awareness of the Bulgarian Government's efforts to fight corruption

In an open-ended question, respondents were given the opportunity to list all anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian government that they are aware of. The results should be taken with some qualification due to the mixing in respondents' perceptions of the differences between an anti-corruption effort or action by the government on one hand and a corruption case or scandal that citizens can think of on the other.

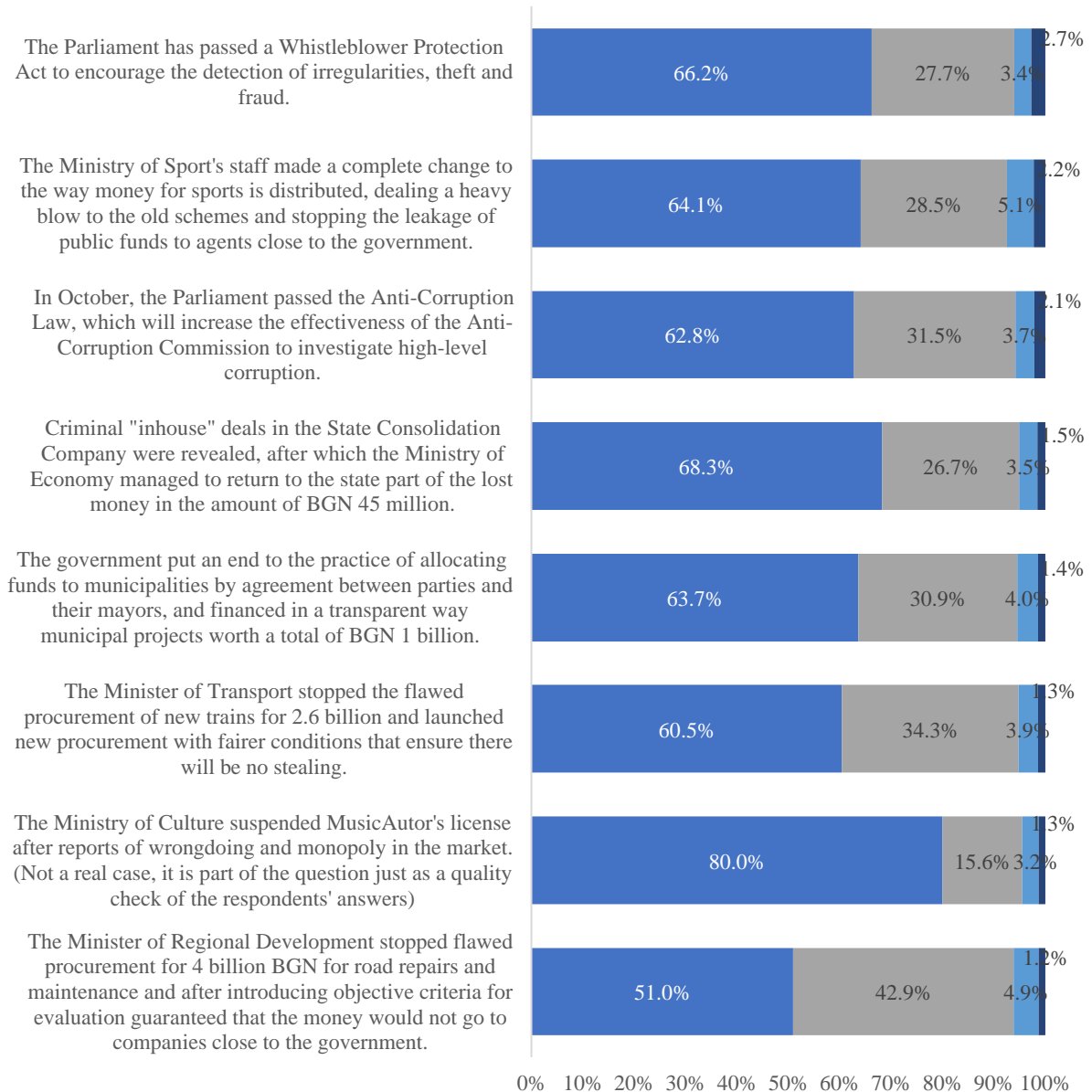
The anti-corruption efforts of the Bulgarian government have not reached the majority of Bulgarian citizens. 54.7% could not name a single anti-corruption effort of the Bulgarian government, 6.6% left the question unanswered and 9% described the government's actions as "inaction" or "pseudo anti-corruption actions". In the cases where some anti-corruption measure can still be pointed out, it is the suspension/stopping of certain public procurement – for highways, for railways, etc.

To a lesser extent, the establishment of commissions to investigate irregularities is also recognised – with an emphasis on the activities of Martin Bojanov.¹ The remaining answers received in the question refer to isolated cases that either cannot be clearly attributed to a specific anti-corruption action of the Bulgarian government or describe a specific corruption scandal rather than an effort of the government to fight corruption.

¹ A recently murdered person with allegedly enormous improper influence in the judiciary.

To what extent are you familiar with the following government actions in the fight against corruption?

- I have not heard about this government action
- I have heard about it but I have only general idea what it is about
- I have heard about it and could broadly explain what it is about
- I am well acquainted with this measure and could explain it in some detail



Bulgarian citizens are not very familiar with specific actions the Bulgarian government and the ruling parliamentary majority are taking to counter corruption in the country. The majority of the respondents (between 51% and 66.2%) have not heard of any of the anti-corruption actions listed in the question (this percentage is logically higher in relation to MusicAutor, as the action

has not actually been implemented, but is put in the question only as a quality check of the respondents' answers. Existing responses indicating familiarity with the measure are likely due to the assumption that it is "more prestigious" to be familiar with such actions). Even among respondents who had some information about specific government actions to combat corruption, the majority said they had heard of the action but had only the most general idea of what it was.

From this point of view, the most recognizable is the action of the Minister of Regional Development, expressed in the suspension of questionable public procurement for the construction and repair of roads in the amount of BGN 4 billion and the subsequent introduction of objective evaluation criteria to ensure that the money does not go to companies close to the government.

The adoption of the Whistleblower Protection Act and the overall change in the way funds for sport are allocated, undertaken by the sports ministry's team, are the actions that have reached the narrowest range of Bulgarian citizens. At the same time, these are also the government measures that received the highest proportion of "I am well acquainted with this measure and can explain it in some detail" responses – 2.7% and 2.2% respectively for the Whistleblower Protection Act and the changes in the Sports Ministry.

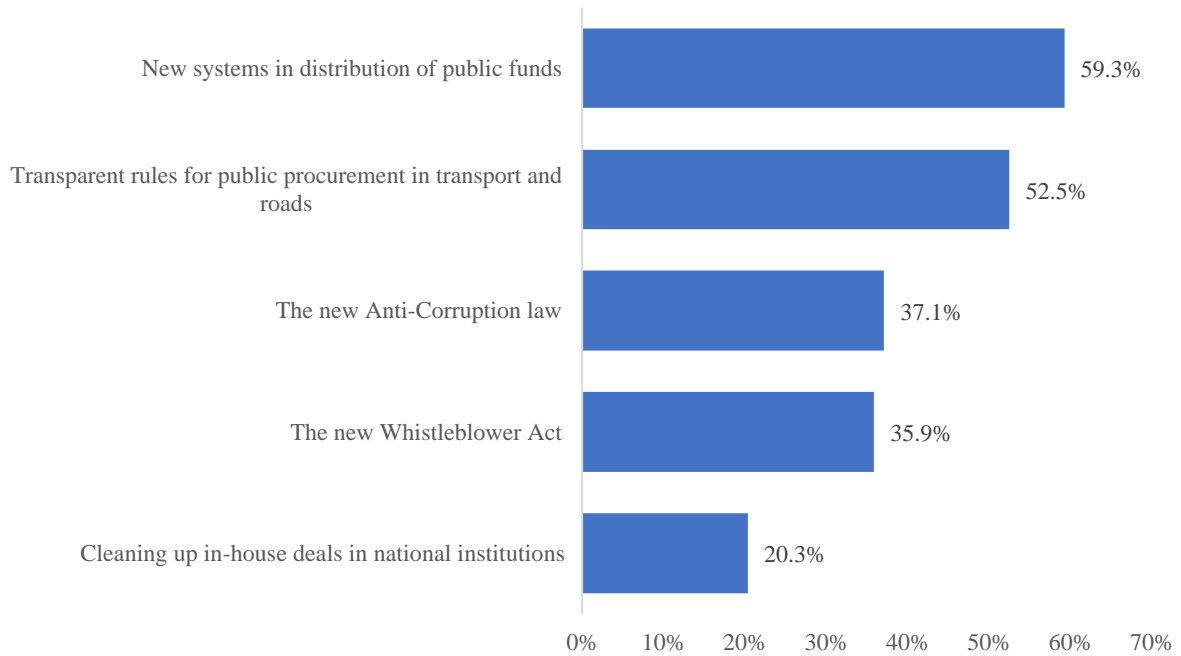
27.1% of Bulgarian citizens have not heard of any of the anti-corruption actions of the Bulgarian government listed in the question.

10.3 Factors for successful anti-corruption results

The new transparent systems for distribution of public funds (59.3%) and the transparent rules for public procurement in the transport and road construction sectors (52.5%) are the two government actions that are recognised by the majority of Bulgarian citizens as the most effective in the fight against corruption. The new Anti-Corruption Law (37.1%) and the new Whistleblower Protection Act (35.9%) are less recognised as the most effective. The smallest proportion of respondents (20.3%) cited the cleaning up of inhouse deals² in national institutions, possibly due to the potentially lower popularity of the action among the public.

² The term "Inhouse deals" refers the so-called practice of internal contracting without open competition related to public procurements. In Bulgaria, over the last several years, the practice has been the subject of public criticism as it was believed to be a means to circumvent the more cumbersome transparency requirements for public procurements in order to give money to preferred subcontractors close to those in power without a tender and with obscured ability for public scrutiny. The practice has been associated with considerable corruption in Bulgaria.

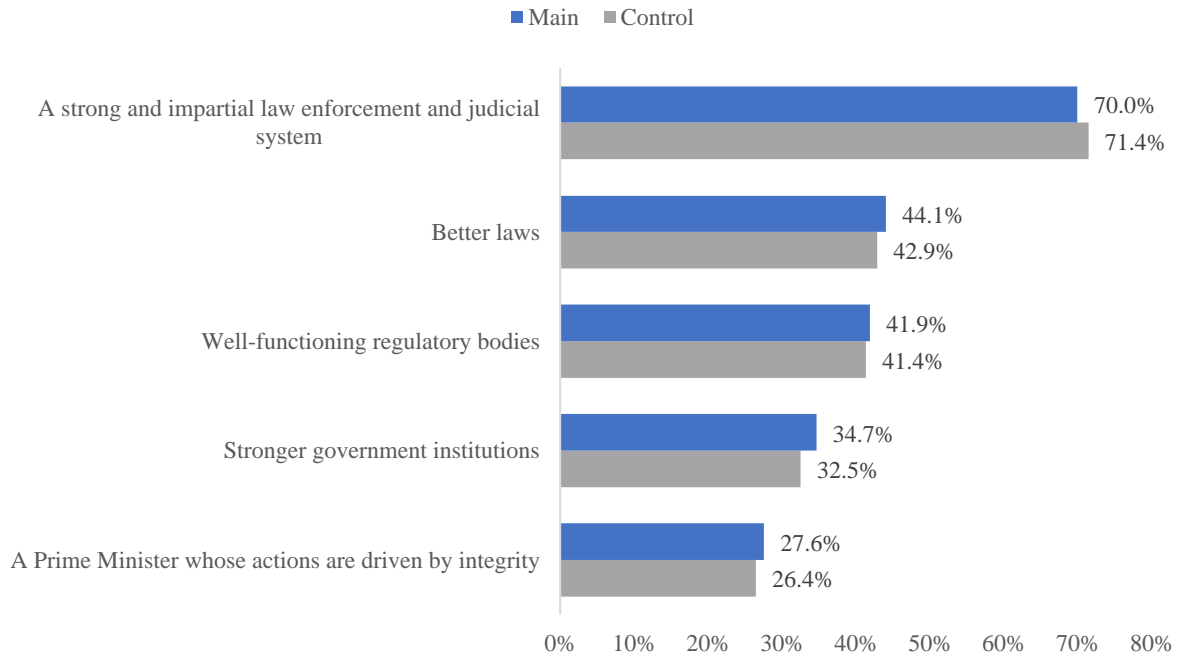
Please choose the government efforts which you believe to be most effective in the fight against corruption (up to 3 choices):



The messages and information provided to the respondents do not influence the general perception which factors people consider most important in the fight against corruption. There is no statistically significant difference between the groups depending on the information they received or the messages they were exposed to. The main factor, mentioned by 71% of people, is strong and impartial law enforcement system. All other factors are mentioned by less than a half of general public. The role of the prime minister is considered to be the least important in the fight against corruption mentioned by just 26% of people.

The introduced associations with integrity also do not influence public perception and attitudes toward which factors people consider as most important. There is no statistically significant difference between people who first read list of different association with integrity and those who did not read this list before answering the question about factors for fighting corruption.

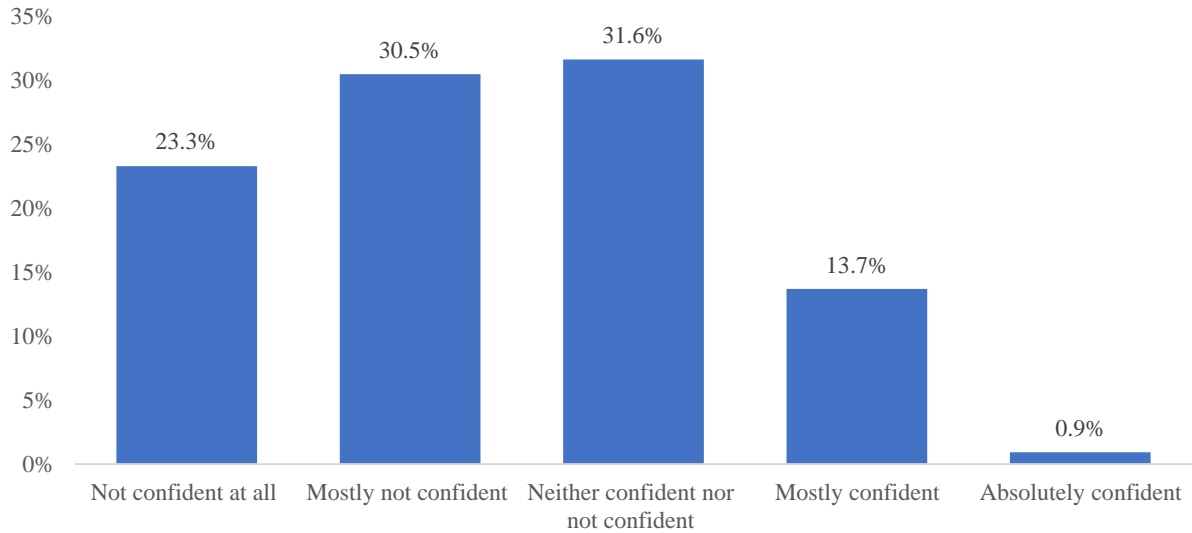
Please tick the factors you consider most important in the fight against corruption:



10.4 Effectiveness of certain Government actions in the fight against corruption

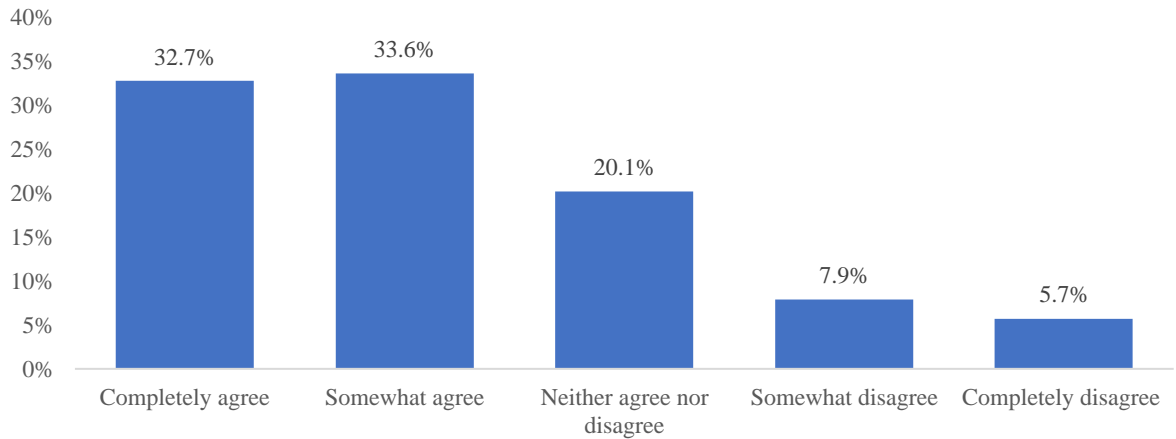
Bulgarian citizens are sceptical about the effects on the levels of impunity that would result from the actions of the newly formed Anti-Corruption Commission. Just over half of respondents (53.8%) are not confident that the new institution will be the driving force in countering impunity in the country. Only 14.6% of the respondents are either mostly or absolutely confident that the establishment of the new Anti-Corruption Commission will be an effective measure against corruption, while 31.6% are neutral on the issue raised.

The government is involved in the drafting and adoption of a new anti-corruption law, under which the new Anti-Corruption Commission will have real powers to investigate and prosecute corruption-related crimes of a particularly high magnitude. How confident



The voters of “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” express higher confidence in the decisive role of the newly formed Anti-Corruption Commission in the fight against impunity in the country.

The Government has prioritized recovering the assets stolen by the corrupt and investing them in services for the benefit of the people of Bulgaria. Do you agree that depriving the corrupt of their ill gotten assets is a strong punishment?



Just over two-thirds (66.3%) of Bulgarian citizens share the view that depriving corrupt individuals of their illegally acquired assets is a serious enough punishment. 13.6% either somewhat or completely disagree, while just over one fifth (20.1%) take a neutral position on the issue.

The supporters of “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” significantly more often share the opinion that depriving corrupt persons of their illegally acquired property is a serious enough punishment.

11 Integrity as a factor for reducing corruption levels

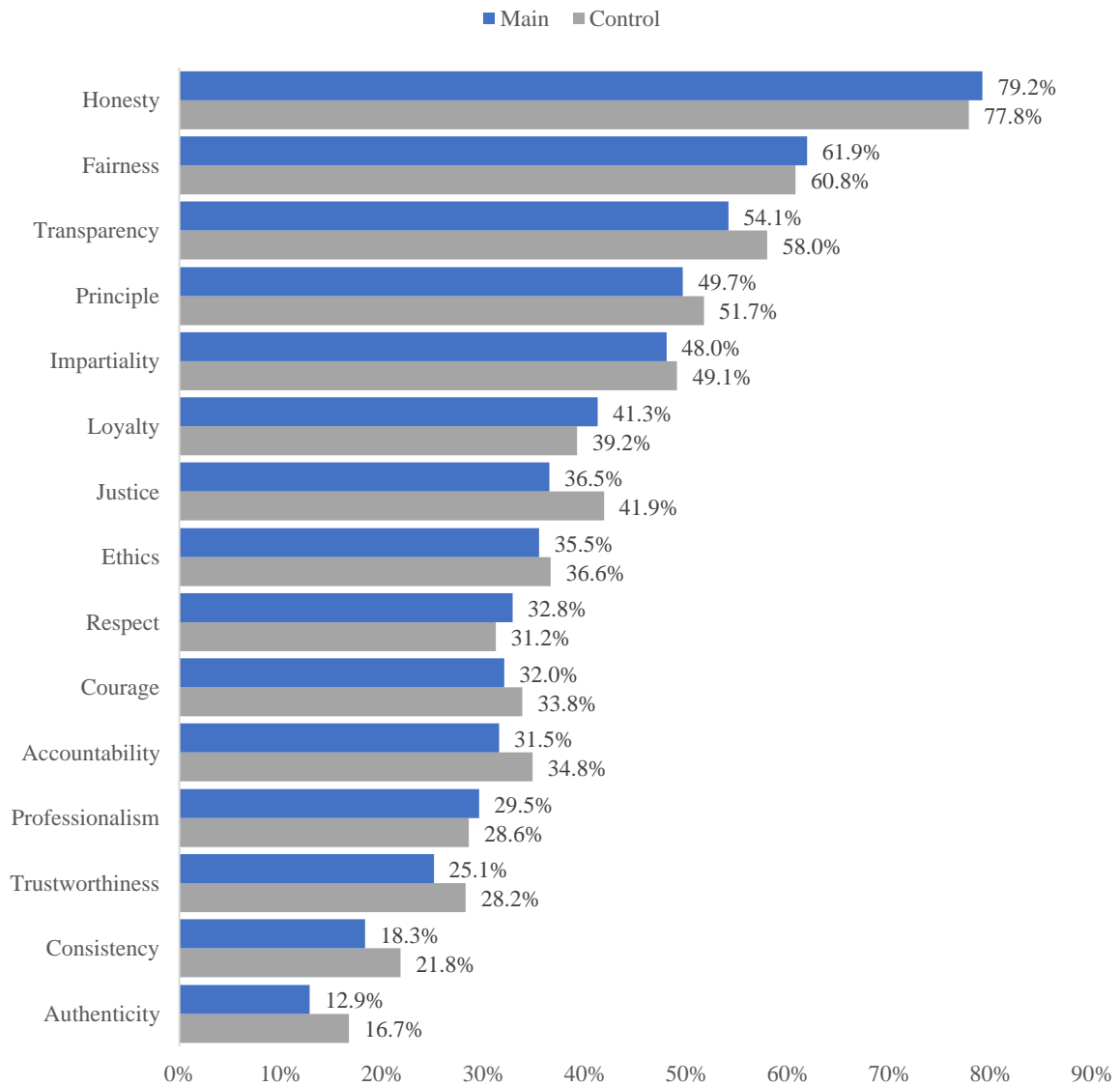
11.1 Common associations with the concept of integrity

Different messages and information provided to respondents do not influence which words are associated with integrity. Neither information about measures taken for fighting against corruption, nor the effects of corruption on economic and social life change the general attitudes which words are associated with corruption. There is also no statistically significant difference in the associations of people who read different messages³ and those who did not.

The main associations with the word integrity are honesty (77.8%), fairness (60.8%) and transparency (58%). The second group of words mentioned by 40-50% of the general public are principle (total 51.7% mentioning this association), impartiality (total 48.6% mentioning this association), loyalty (mentioned by 40.2%) and justice (mentioned by 39.2%). All other associations are mentioned by less than a third of the general public.

³ Message group B – **Integrity starts with me**. Integrity is: transparency in public procurement. Our government has stopped corrupt procurement of 4 billion BGN for roads, guaranteeing quality for every expenditure made. Message group C – **In defence of public interest**. Our government is reforming procedures – for transparent procurement and fair contracting. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for people. Message group D – **Transparency in the interest of the people**. Our government is taking decisive action against corruption. We are saving millions for better roads and higher incomes for the people.

Which of these words do you associate with integrity?



11.2 Possible outcomes of increasing integrity in Government

To explore whether interaction with the concept of 'integrity' and its meaning influences perceptions of the Prime Minister's ability to combat corruption through promoting integrity, a

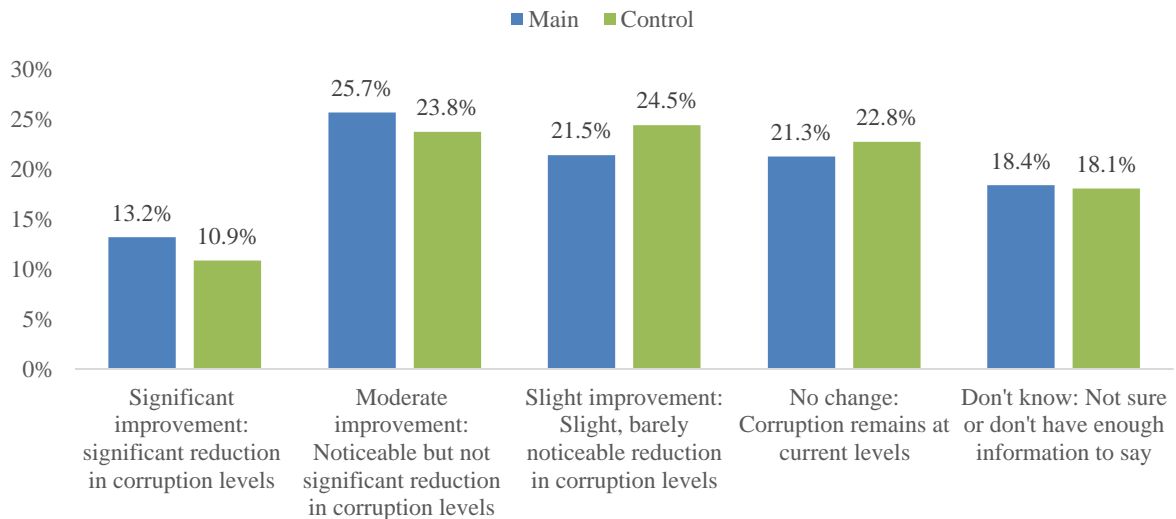
small-scale experiment was conducted.⁴ Survey respondents were randomly divided into two groups: one group engaged in an association game linking 'integrity' with its synonyms before assessing whether a Prime Minister acting with and advocating for integrity could impact corruption levels. The other group responded to the question about the Prime Minister and corruption before participating in the word association activity.

The introduced list of words that can be associated with the word "integrity" does not change the general perception of the possible outcomes in fight against corruption. There is not statistically significant difference between those who read the list and those who did not in their answers regarding the expected impact for the level of corruption in Bulgaria if the Prime Minister successfully promote integrity in all government actions. In both groups significant change in the level of corruption is expected by 13.2% and 10.9% respectfully. If we sum up those who engage with the list of associations with integrity have 4 p.p. more in the answers "significant" and "moderate" change compared to those who did not see the list of association before answering this question.

While this is both an initial and limited indicator that warrants cautious interpretation, the findings suggest that educating the population about the concept of 'integrity' may not have a significant short-term impact on their attitudes towards high-ranking politicians advocating for integrity, nor on their expectations for positive changes in fighting corruption.

⁴ The experiment was conducted to support the Denkov-Gabriel cabinet in their intention to design and implement a national public integrity campaign centred around the idea to "set the integrity tone from the top" with more focus on integrity rather than corruption.

The Prime Minister announced that he wants to promote integrity in all government actions. If he is successful, what do you think will be the results for the levels of corruption in Bulgaria?

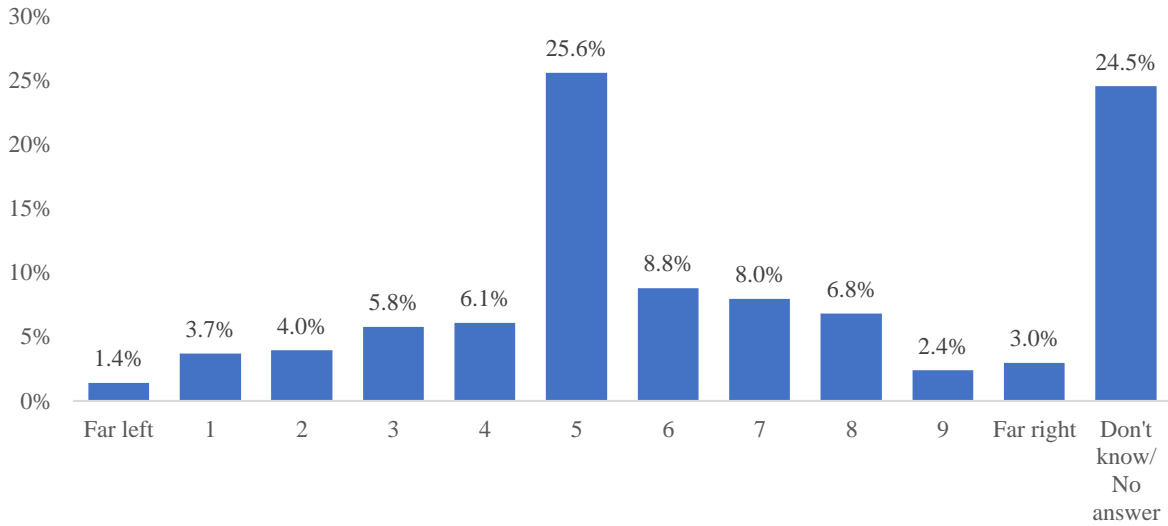


The public opinion is also not influenced by the messages and information received regarding the expected changes and possible results in fight against corruption. The majority of people are sceptical that the Prime Minister will be able to achieve integrity in all government actions and how strong the possible results associated with this will be. There is no statistically significant difference between the groups depending on the fact if they saw the messages or not. In conclusion, the messages D and B change the perception of people about the government efforts but still cannot persuade and change attitudes regarding the expected outcomes.

12 Political attitudes and positions

Bulgarian society can be defined as rather centrist in terms of the political views it expresses. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is "far left" and 10 is "far right", the average score is 5.24. The highest proportion also chose a 5 when asked to self-identify on the "left-right" scale. At the two poles are 3% – far right, and 1.4% – far left, respectively. On the basis of the question asked, a distinct indifference of Bulgarian citizens on the issue is also visible – 24.5% do not know how to define themselves or leave the question unanswered.

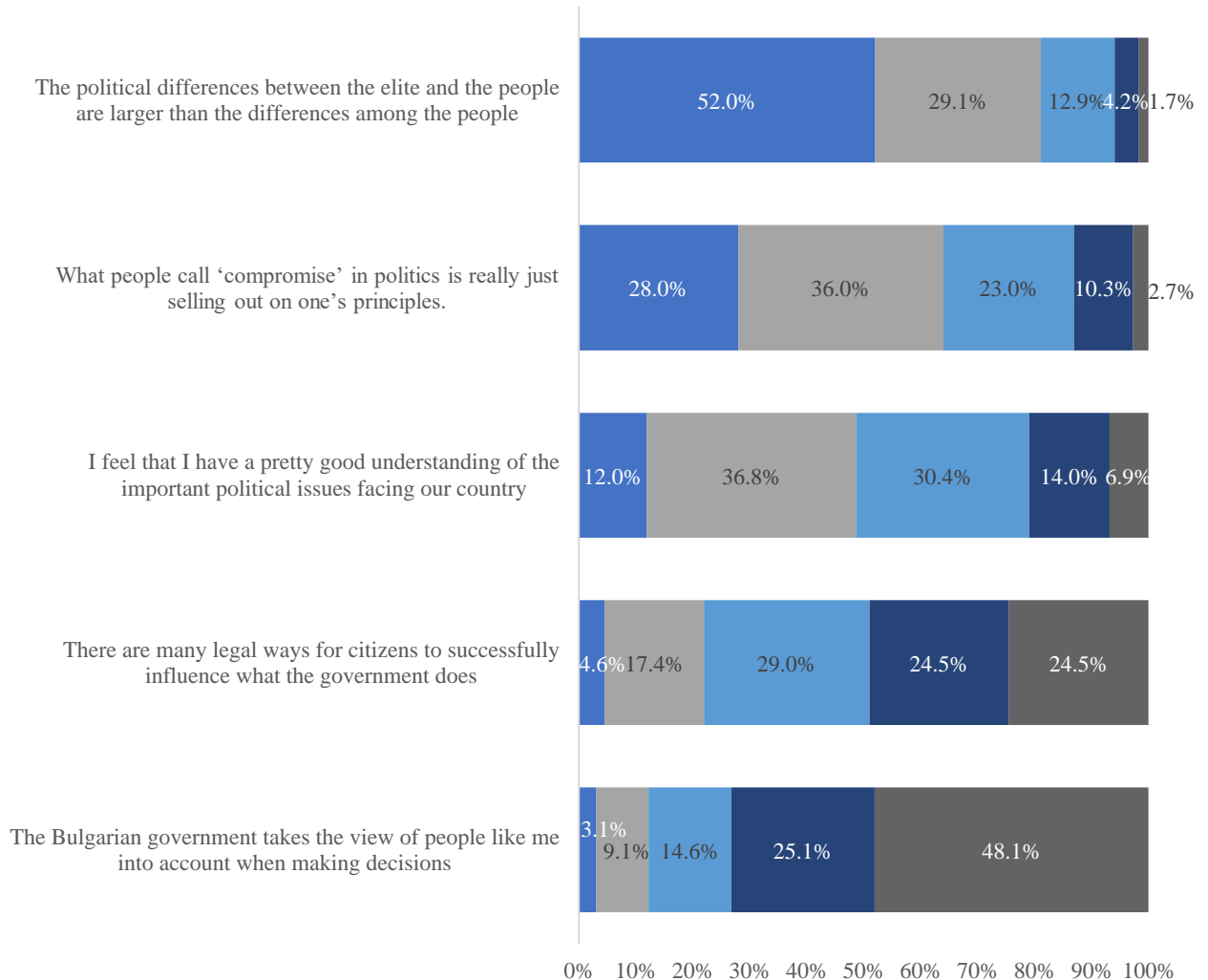
The concept of a political left-right scale is often used to describe a person's political opinions.
 Where would you place yourself on such a scale (0 – far left, 10 – far right)?



Bulgarian citizens perceive significant differences between the country's elite and ordinary people. Over 80% of respondents agree with the statement that political differences between the elite and the people are significantly greater than the differences observed among ordinary people. High levels of agreement are also seen with regard to the claim that 'compromise' is in fact simply a rejection or surrender of one's principles – just under two-thirds share a similar view. In terms of personal understanding of the important political issues facing the country, respondents who self-identified as somewhat familiar (48.7%) outnumbered those who self-identified as unfamiliar (20.9%). However, Bulgarian citizens tend to be sceptical about their own ability to influence the country's politics – 49% do not think there are many legitimate means of influencing the government's actions to any extent, while 73.2% are of the opinion that the Bulgarian government does not take into account the views of people like them when making one decision or another.

Please choose for the next statements whether you disagree or agree or neither.

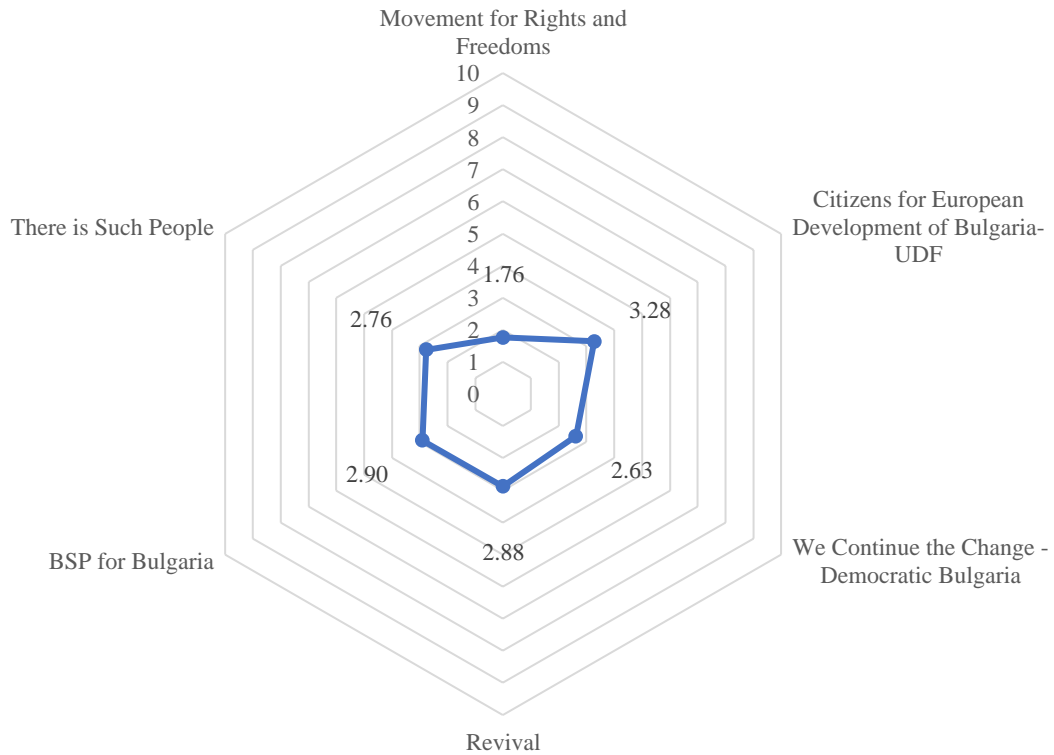
■ Completely agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Completely disagree



The attitude of Bulgarian citizens towards the parliamentary parties and coalitions can be defined as negative. This finding is in line with previous studies that describe Bulgaria as one of the countries with highest partisan polarization. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is "I do not like the party at all" and 10 is "I like the party a lot", the highest average score is for GERB-UDF – 3.28. 2.90 is the average score for the coalition "BSP for Bulgaria", while for the party "Revival" it is 2.88. The next two places go to "There is such people (ITN)" (2,76) and "We continue the change – Democratic Bulgaria" (2,63). The least liked political party is the "Movement for Rights and Freedoms" – 1.76 is the average score given by Bulgarian citizens.

It should also be noted the strong indifference of the Bulgarian citizens on the topic and their probable inability to assess their attitude towards the main Bulgarian parties and coalitions – between 17.5% and 25.1% is the share of those who did not answer the question.

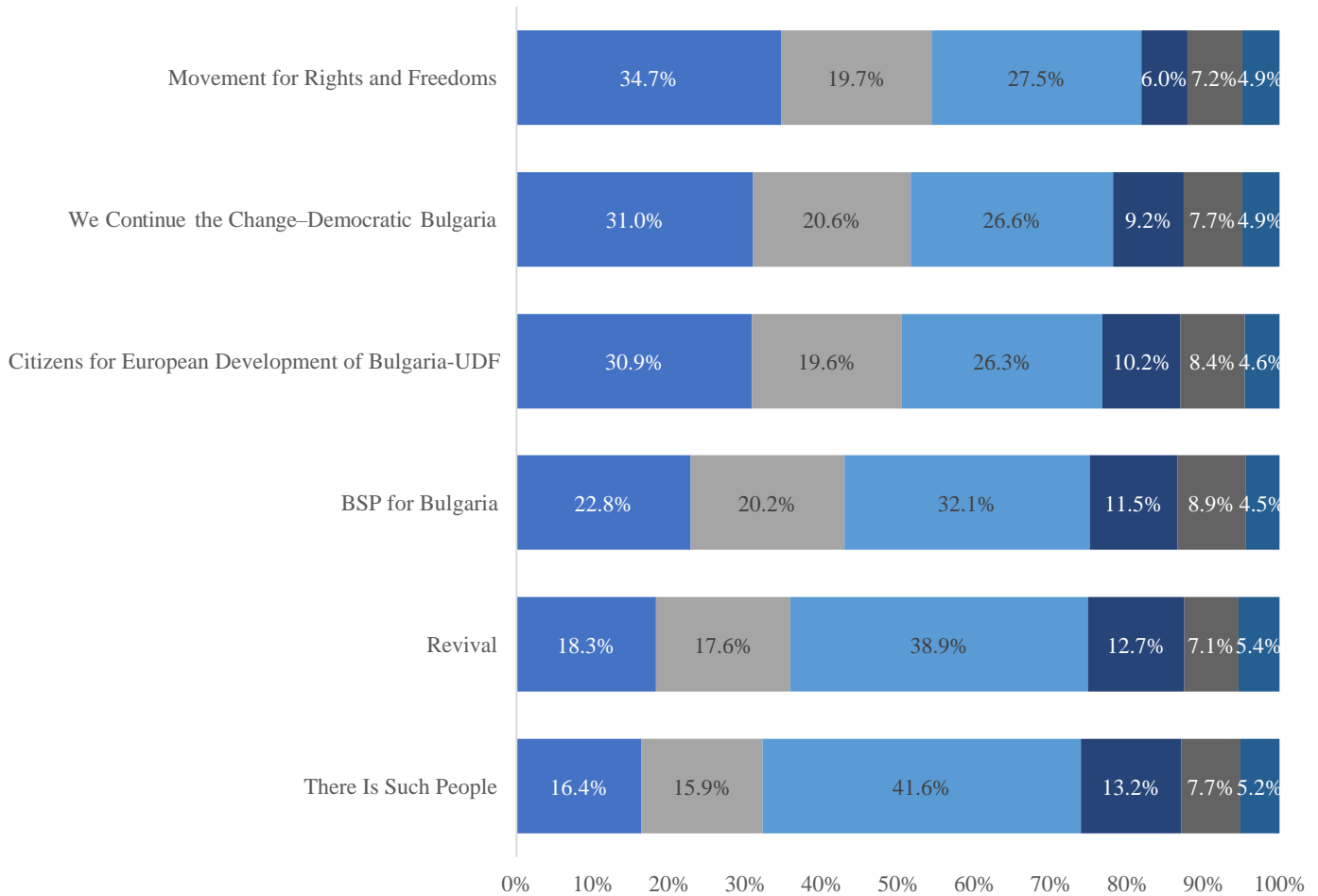
Please indicate how much you like the following parties on a scale between 0 and 10. 0 means that you do not like the party at all. 10 means that you like the party a lot.



A little over half of the Bulgarian citizens say that the members and supporters of “Movement for Rights and Freedoms” (54.4%), of “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” (51.6%) and of “Citizen for European Development of Bulgaria-UDF” (50.5%) are more likely to be dishonest. 43% of the respondents have a similar position regarding the members and supporters of “BSP for Bulgaria”, and a little over a third – for the supporters of the “Revival”. Just under a third of Bulgarian citizens think that members and supporters of “There is Such People” are more likely to be dishonest or dishonest compared to other citizens. Between 4.5% and 5.2% of the respondents show indifference to the topic and leave the question unanswered.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that members and supporters of the following parties are more likely to be dishonest than other Bulgarian citizens?

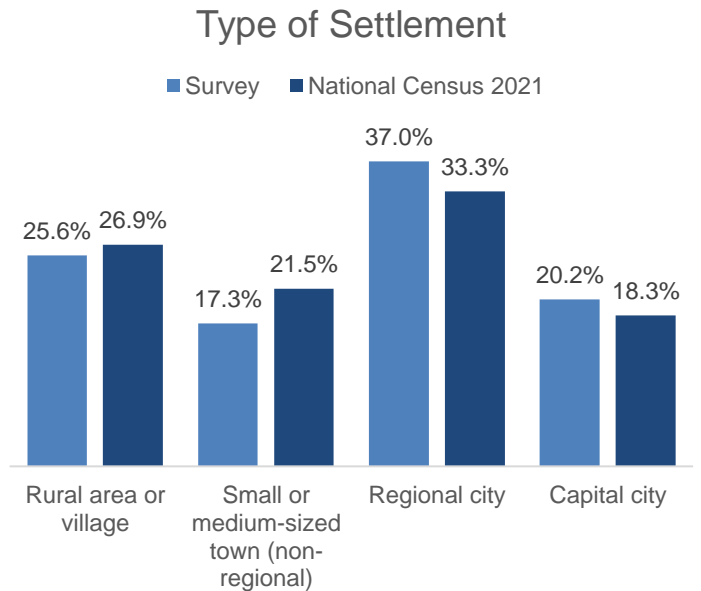
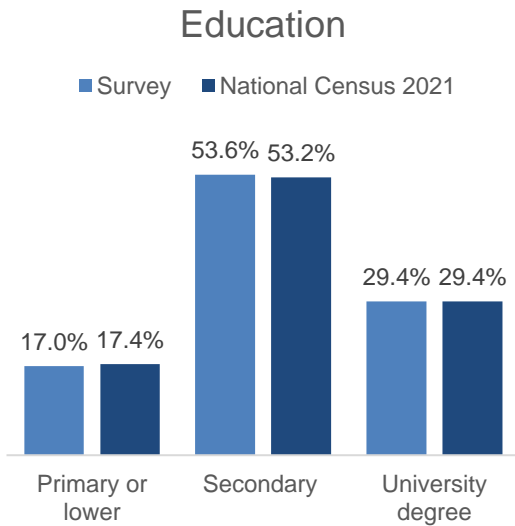
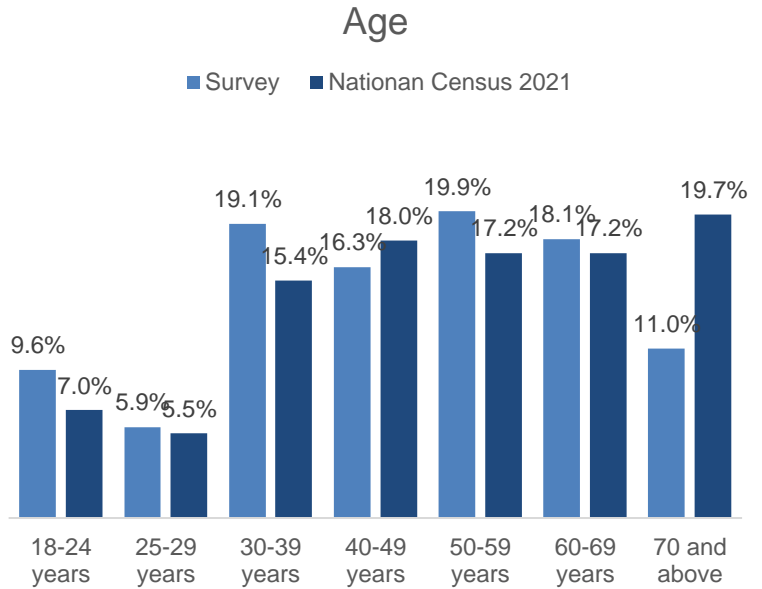
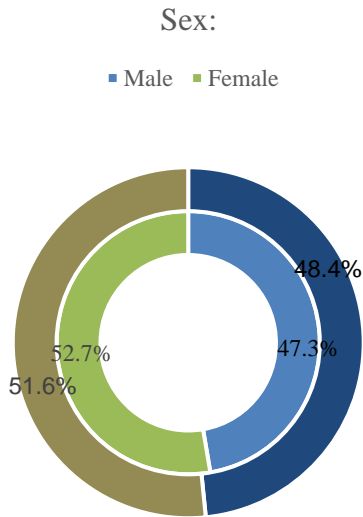
■ Completely agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Completely disagree ■ No answer



13.3% of Bulgarian citizens believe that members and supporters of all parliamentary parties or coalitions are dishonest.

Among the residents of the capital there are higher shares of those who said that the supporters and members of the “BSP for Bulgaria”, of “Movement for Rights and Freedoms”, of “Revival” and of “There is Such People” are more dishonest compared to other Bulgarian citizens.

Annex: Demographic profile of the respondents



The sex structure of the survey (47.3% male and 52.7% female) nearly perfectly represents the composition of the Bulgarian population (48.4% male and 51.6% female). The age structure is highly accurate as well – 9.6% in the age group 18-24 (7.6% according to the National

Statistical Institute NSI), 5.6% in 25-29 (6.1% according to NSI), 19.1% in 30-39 (16.6% according to NSI), 35.9% in 40-59 (35.3% according to NSI) and 29.1% are 60 years old or more (34.3% according to NSI).

17% of the respondent are with primary or lower education compared to 17.4% of the entire Bulgarian population. 53.6% of the surveyed are with secondary education (53.2% of Bulgarian population) and 29.4% is the share of those with university degree (equal to the share of people with higher education in Bulgaria as a whole).

25.6% of the surveyed live in rural area or village compared to 26.9% of the entire population. 17.3% live in small or medium-sized towns (21.5% of the entire population), while the shares of those residing in regional cities and in the capital are 37% and 20.2% accordingly. As for the entire population, 33.3% live in regional cities and 18.3% reside in the capital.