



PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

National Representative Survey

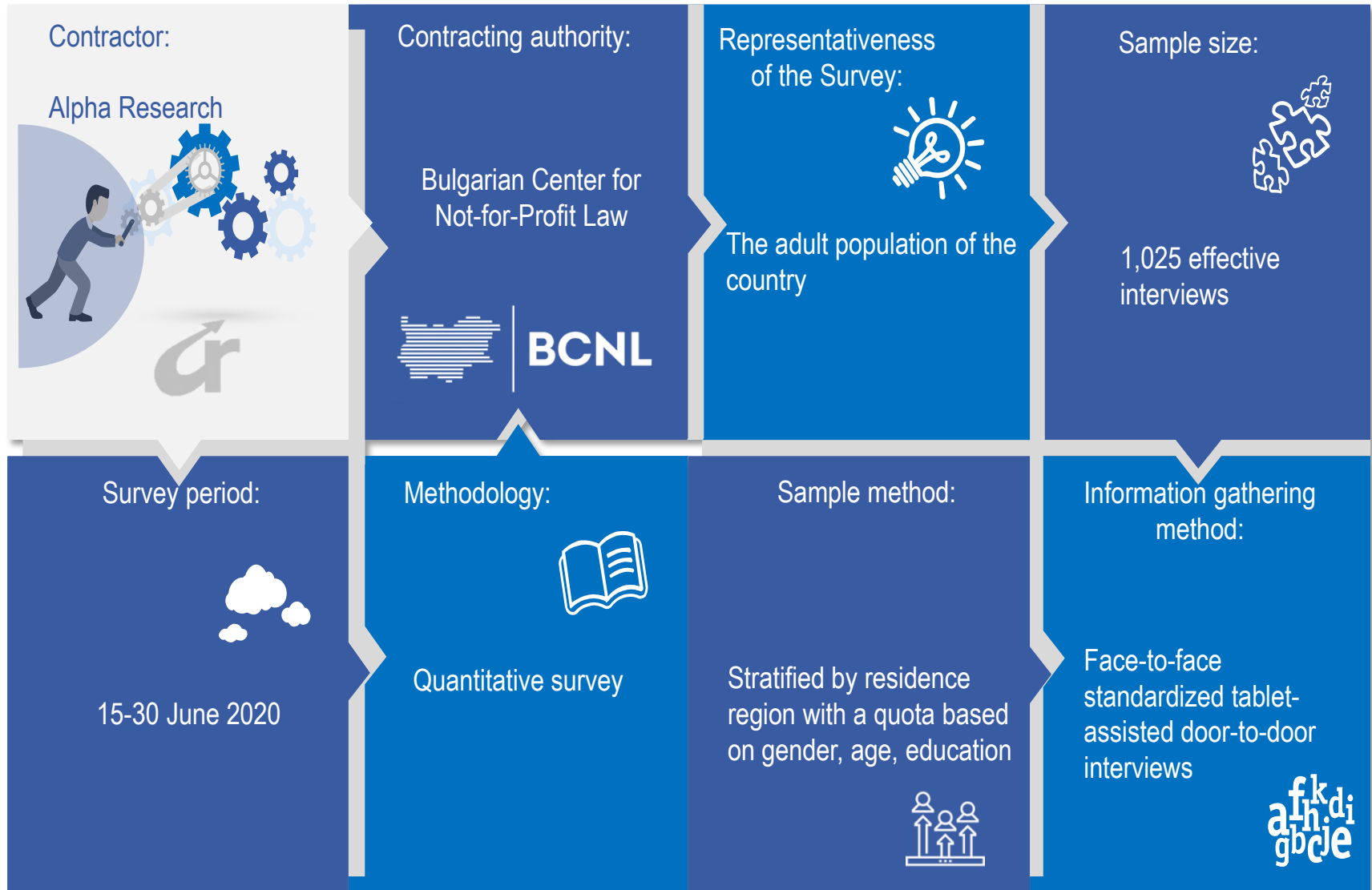
June 2020



BCNL

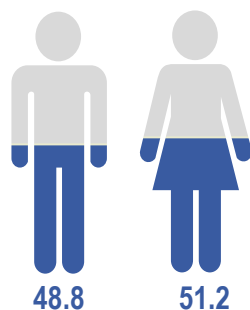


CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

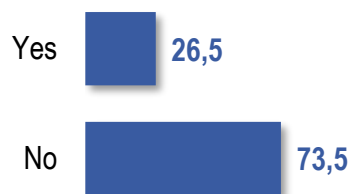


CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE (%)

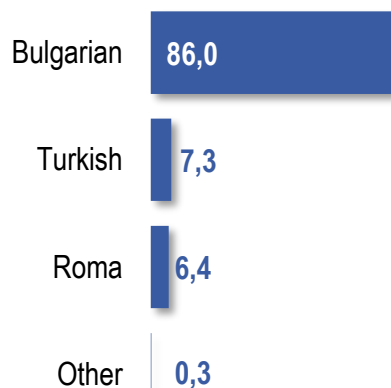
GENDER



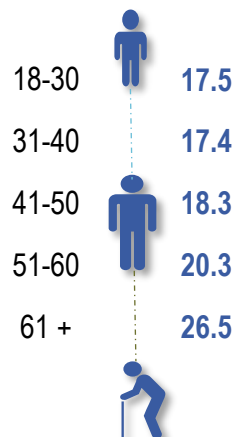
CHILDREN UNDER 18



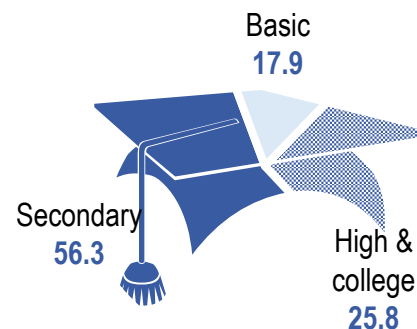
ETHNIC GROUP



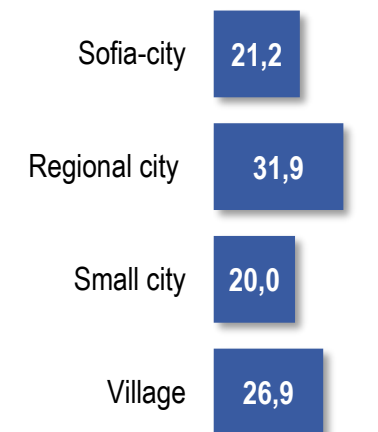
AGE



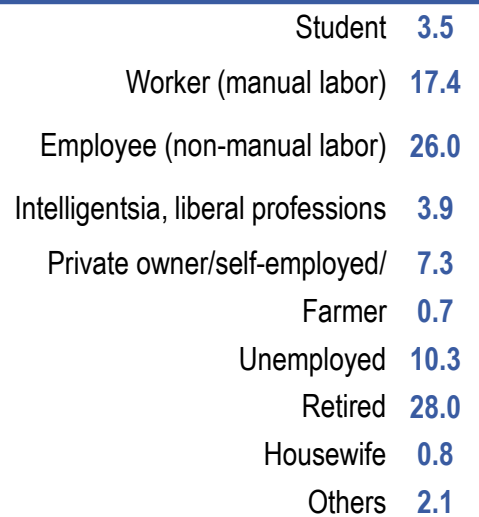
EDUCATION



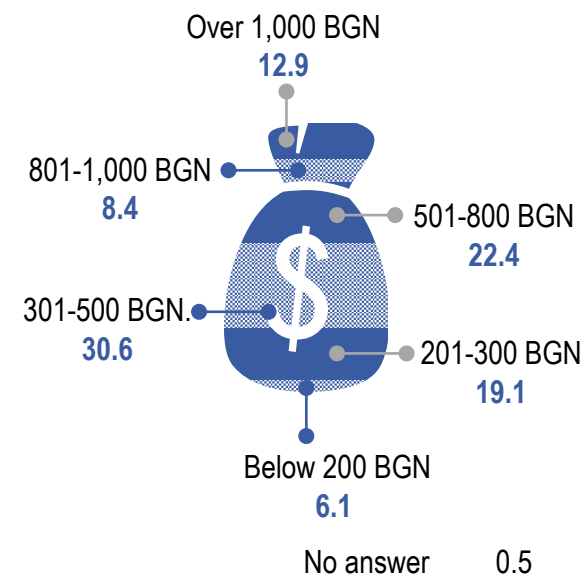
TYPE OF SETTLEMENT



SOCIAL STATUS



INCOME BY HOUSEHOLD MEMBER



GOALS OF THE SURVEY

This survey has the following **goals**:

- Measure the dynamics in the attitude towards non-governmental (NGO) and civil society organizations (CSO) after an prolonged period of attacks against them;
- Identify the forms of partnership between the state and the non-governmental sector that are acceptable to citizens; the degree of awareness of and attitude towards the newly established Civil Society Development Council within the Council of Ministers (COM); the attitude towards the EU monitoring over Bulgaria in relation to the observance of rule of law and democratic principles;
- Identify the levels of individual activity – participation in civil initiatives, level of awareness, significant causes and activities;
- Observe essential values shared by the Bulgarian citizens, and their role in the formation of an active civil society. “Drivers” for and “barriers” to the development of civil organizations and support for their activity.

The survey is partially comparable to an analogous survey of public attitudes conducted in 2018, and allows both tracking trends and highlighting characteristics inherent to the current situation.



MAIN FINDINGS



I. Evaluation of non-governmental, civil society organizations, and their overall contribution to public life

Social context

The last two years can be defined as critical for most CSOs in Bulgaria. CSOs have been subjected to a number of attacks during this period – by some political figures and certain media; targeted campaigns have been conducted with the aim to undermine their reputation by presenting a distorted image of their activity; important program documents which had been drafted with the contribution of CSOs and whose purpose is assisting the protection of basic rights of a broad range of social groups were not adopted. The negative international context should also be taken into consideration: attacks against similar organizations in Russia, Hungary, Poland were breeding ground for the “exchange” of techniques and tools in discrediting the whole non-governmental sector. It is self-evident that this situation had a strong negative impact on the activity of individual organizations.

Another circumstance to be added to the characteristics of the social context in the country prior to the survey is the coronavirus pandemic raging over the last four months. While the assessment of its effects is still to be made, it is indisputable that the pandemic brought to the forefront the citizens’ self-organization and volunteering, NGOs, etc. in a manner and on a scale that had not been attained over the last several years. Furthermore violent civil protests against corruption and the government broke out one month after the survey implementation. Interestingly, these protests give clear indications of enhanced social rigor and activity.

In the above context, the national representative survey conducted shows **growth in support for the non-governmental sector in three areas of paramount importance:**

1. Assessment of its role for the development of the society and safeguarding interests that citizens deem important;
2. Trust in CSOs;
3. Efficiency of its participation in solving issues in key public fields.

Level of support for the non-governmental sector/1

1. The role of the non-governmental sector

Against the background of an absolute polarization in the evaluation of the benefits from NGOs in 2018 (44.5:44.7), the positive assessments of the contribution of the civil sector started dominating by 11 percent (49.7%:38.8%). It should also be pointed out that even the 32 percent of the respondents who do not assess NGOs as particularly beneficial think they would rather exist. The assessments of NGOs being harmful has dropped from 7.2% to 3.7%. The stability of these assessments has also been confirmed by the opinion registered in the answers to another question regarding the possibility for CSOs to contribute to solving important public issues (44% “Yes” : 33% “No”).

The coincidence in terms of the number of positive and negative opinions in response to two different questions is relevant to the precise evaluation of public attitudes which eliminates random and situational factors that might influence the answer to an individual question. In this case we can make a strong conclusion about the existence of a substantial growth in assessing the role played by NGOs in the development of the society.

2. Trust in civil society organizations

Over the last two years the trust in civil society and non-governmental organizations has risen from 24.7% to 31.3%, while distrust has dropped from 23.7% to 17,7%. The attitude towards “foundations” remains unchanged, with a slight deterioration. As regards this form of organization, in 2018 we reached the conclusion that, given the negative connotations associated therewith, it had better not be actively used to denote civil sector agents. This conclusion has not changed ever since.

Level of support for the non-governmental sector /2

3. Efficiency

Even more impressive is the dynamics in the opinions regarding the role of CSOs in individual social spheres. In 2018 the predominant opinion regarding 13 out of the total of 15 spheres tested was that the state should solve the issues on its own, without the involvement of the civil sector. The latter were given priority only in respect of two spheres – environment and animals. In 2020 the respondents insist on the involvement of the civil society in a total of 11 spheres with a very broad scope of action – patient rights, consumer rights, freedom of opinion and the right to fair trial, prevention against violence, social service provision and protection of the rights of groups at risk, solving local issues, culture, traditions. Even areas such as national and everyday security, where the state is still holding to its monopoly role, mark a statistically significant growth in supporting the idea that the civil sector should be also involved in them.

The damages suffered by NGOs are clearly visible in two spheres in which they were subjected to attacks – the family and upbringing of children and education. In terms of both spheres, the predominant opinion is still in favor of the decisive role of the state. 44%:37% in the area of upbringing children (this sphere was not measured in 2018). While in the area of education the ratio is 47%:38%, it should be noted that in 2018 it was 78%:20% in favor of the role of the state. Against the background of the positive development in a number of other spheres, the attacks in relation to these two spheres, without changing the overall positive trend, have obviously left a mark.

Another important conclusion to be drawn on the basis of this data is that, while the survey was conducted well in advance of the protests demanding the resignation of the government and the Prosecutor General, it contains clear indications about an emerging process of delegitimizing the state with regard to its capacity to perform some of its basic functions.

Level of support for the non-governmental sector /3

The insistence that CSOs get involved, whether as providing assistance or as a corrective to government policies, comes as a result of both the enhanced capacity of CSOs for solving specific cases and issues and the disappointment in the efficiency of and the outcomes from the policies implemented.

It is no accident that, in answering the summarizing question about the type of relations between CSOs and the state in solving various issues, only 16% say that the state should solve issues on its own. 37% share the opinion that CSOs should assist the state, as the latter cannot successfully deal with the problems on its own, while **according to 32% CSOs should also firmly uphold the citizens' rights due to potential abuse thereof by the state**. Hence yet another clear indication of the line along which public perceptions have evolved – a decline in 'pro-statist' attitudes, approval of the pressure exerted in protecting the citizens' rights against abuse thereof by the state.

Whatever the development of the political crisis, the upcoming months will be a turbulent period, with a much stronger focus on party activities than on policy-making. This means that **as a counterpoint to 'partization' and in the context of severe social issues, CSOs stand the chance of exercising a substantial influence with a view to assisting considerable social groups within a very broad range of activities**. These months may prove to be crucial to either strengthening the positive trends or eroding the positions won.

Factors for the change in the attitude towards CSOs /1

One of the key issues to be addressed via this survey concerns the factors contributing to the positive change in the trust in CSOs in the aftermath of a prolonged period of attacks against them and rolling back from important positions of theirs. The data analysis allows identifying **three main factors**:

1. **The accumulation, sustainability, and presence in the local communities that CSOs have gradually won for themselves over time.** This factor is manifested through the synergy effect of the activity of large and identifiable organizations such as BRC, BHC, ABF, “Four Paws”, “Green Balkans”, “Caritas”, “Animus”, BCNL, etc., as well as smaller local organizations which are active in solving serious local issues or in providing services.

Empirical indicator for the impact of the ‘accumulation’ factor – the enlargement of the positive attitude towards CSOs from the nucleus of the regular NGO supporters towards the periphery: a 5-10% growth in the indicators for relevance, trust, and efficiency amongst persons with secondary education, employees, people in smaller settlements, middle-aged to elderly population.

2. **Internal mobilization in countering the attacks against CSOs** – The long-lasting and aggressive attacks against the civil sector (in Bulgaria, and in other Eastern European countries), and the government abandoning key documents aimed at safeguarding causes that CSOs are strongly committed to have provoked the re-mobilization of everybody for whom, based on their values, this sector is close to their hearts.

Factors for the change in the attitude towards CSOs

/2

Empirical indicator for the 'mobilization' factor – the considerably high growth (from 15% to 35%) of the positive assessments along all the lines of the survey amongst the relatively small but hard nucleus of stable supporters of CSOs – citizens of Sofia, women, persons with higher education, representatives of the intelligentsia, and high-ranking officials.

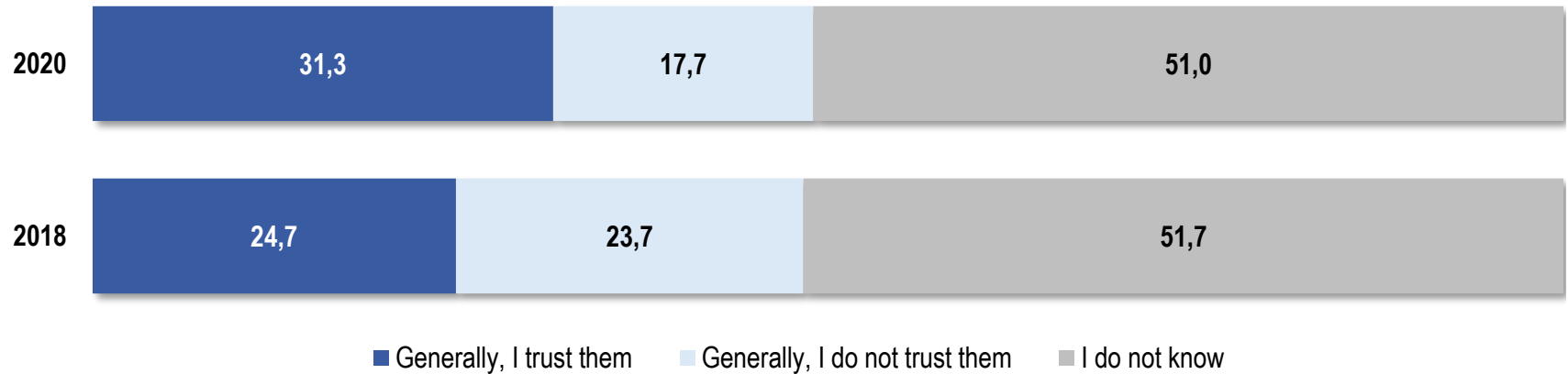
3. An indirectly visible benefit from the enlarged scope of the activity of CSOs and volunteers during the coronavirus pandemic – while prior to COVID 19 many people linked NGO activities to niche policies, the crisis has reversed or has at least has broadened this understanding: the civil sector has come to be perceived as having a focus on issues of significance to most Bulgarians and as directly safeguarding their needs.

Empirical indicator for the impact of the 'broadened scope of activity' indicator – enriching the perception of the civil sector as being efficient not only in terms of 'environment' and 'animals' but also in a number of other spheres; a substantial growth of the assessments regarding its role in respect of healthcare and patients' rights; improvement of the assessments amongst wider social groups who uphold, by way of principle, traditional values.

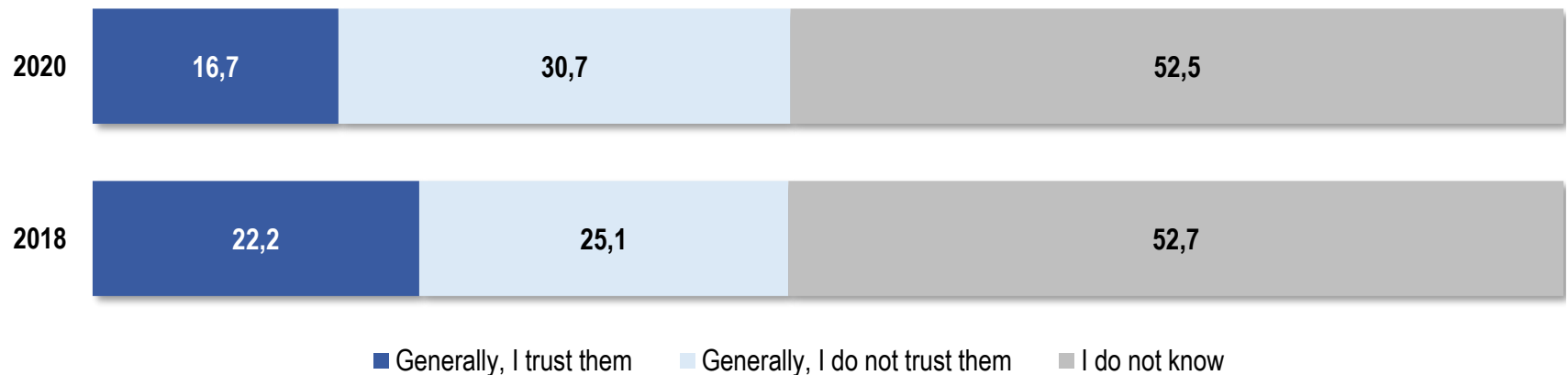
To sum up, the improved image of and trust in CSOs is due both to the internal mobilization of the groups that directly identify themselves with them (i.e. the nucleus that is strongly positive but small in size) and to the assessments of the broader periphery that the niche policies of CSOs have covered to a lesser extent. The COVID 19 pandemic has raised people's awareness of the fact that CSOs have the capacity for efficient actions to the benefit of all citizens.

Dynamics of the trust in the various forms of civil society organizations

Attitudes towards civil society and non-governmental organizations



Attitudes towards foundations



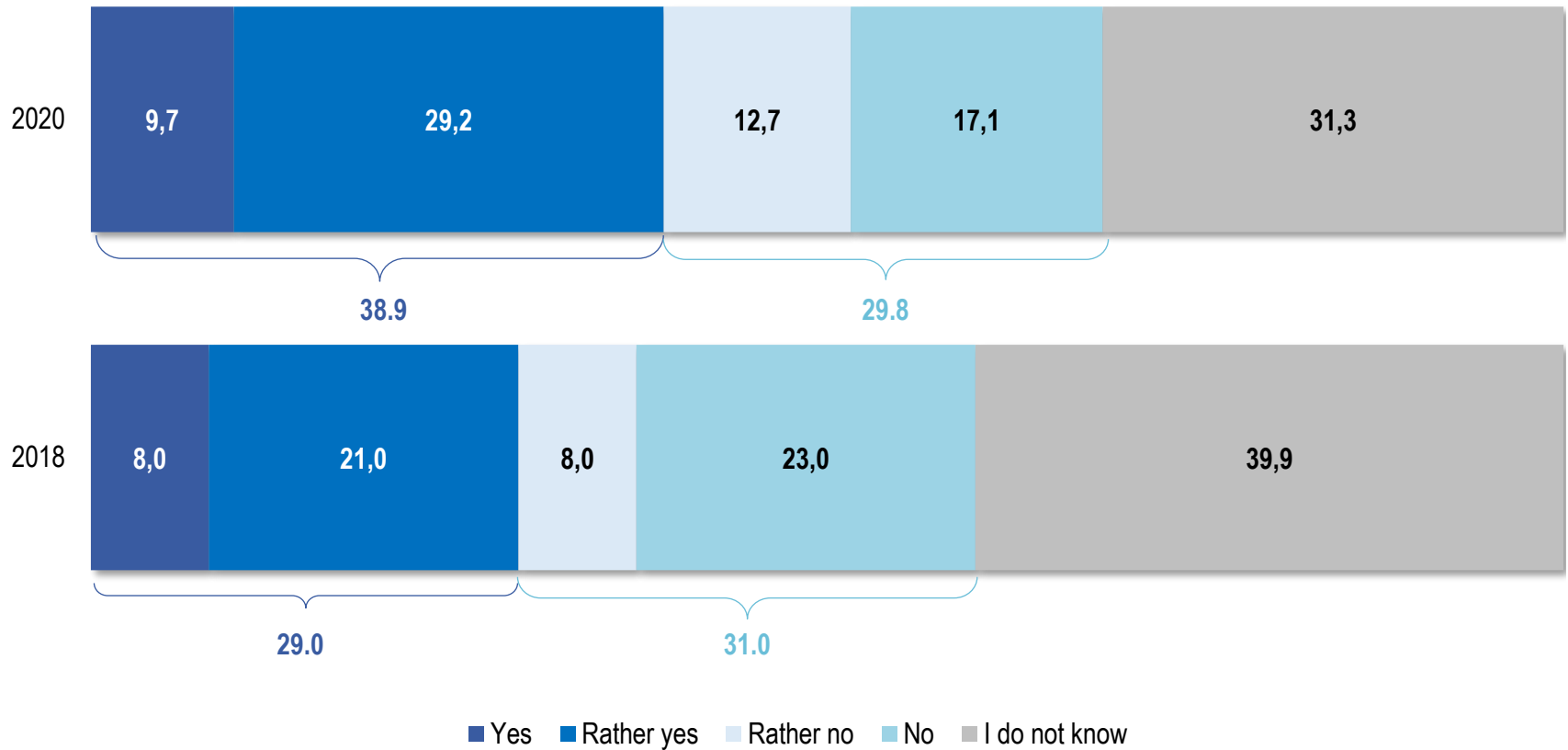
Base: Total sample

Q12. And taking into account all your pros and cons, what is your overall attitude towards the civil society and non-governmental organizations?

Q13. And what is your attitude towards the foundations operating in Bulgaria?

Willingness to receive support or provide assistance to NGOs (%)

Would you approach an NGO for support or would you provide assistance to an NGO?

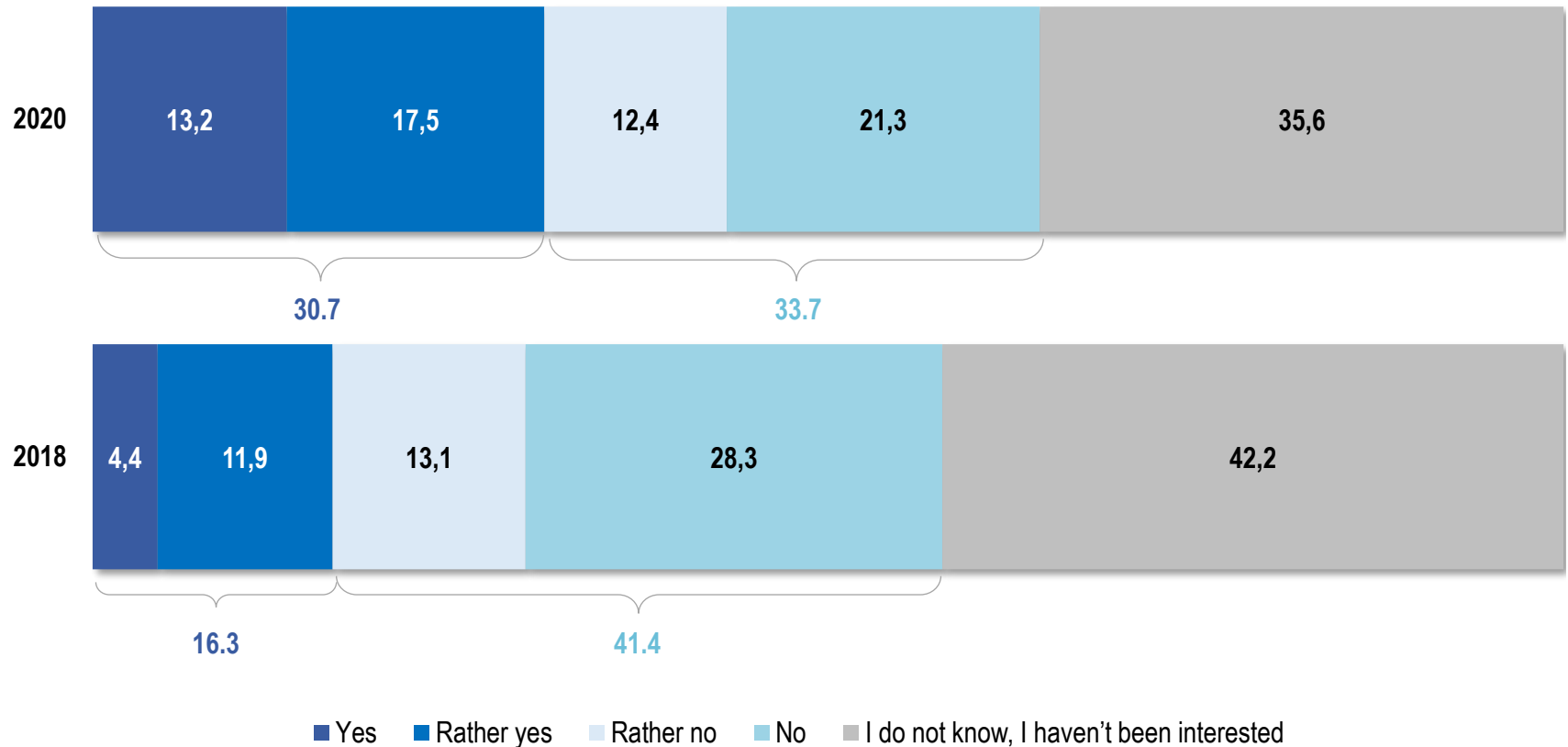


Base: Total sample

Q8. Irrespective of whether you have had contacts with an NGO so far, are you willing to approach an NGO for support or to provide assistance for its activity?

Degree of identification with civil society organizations (%)

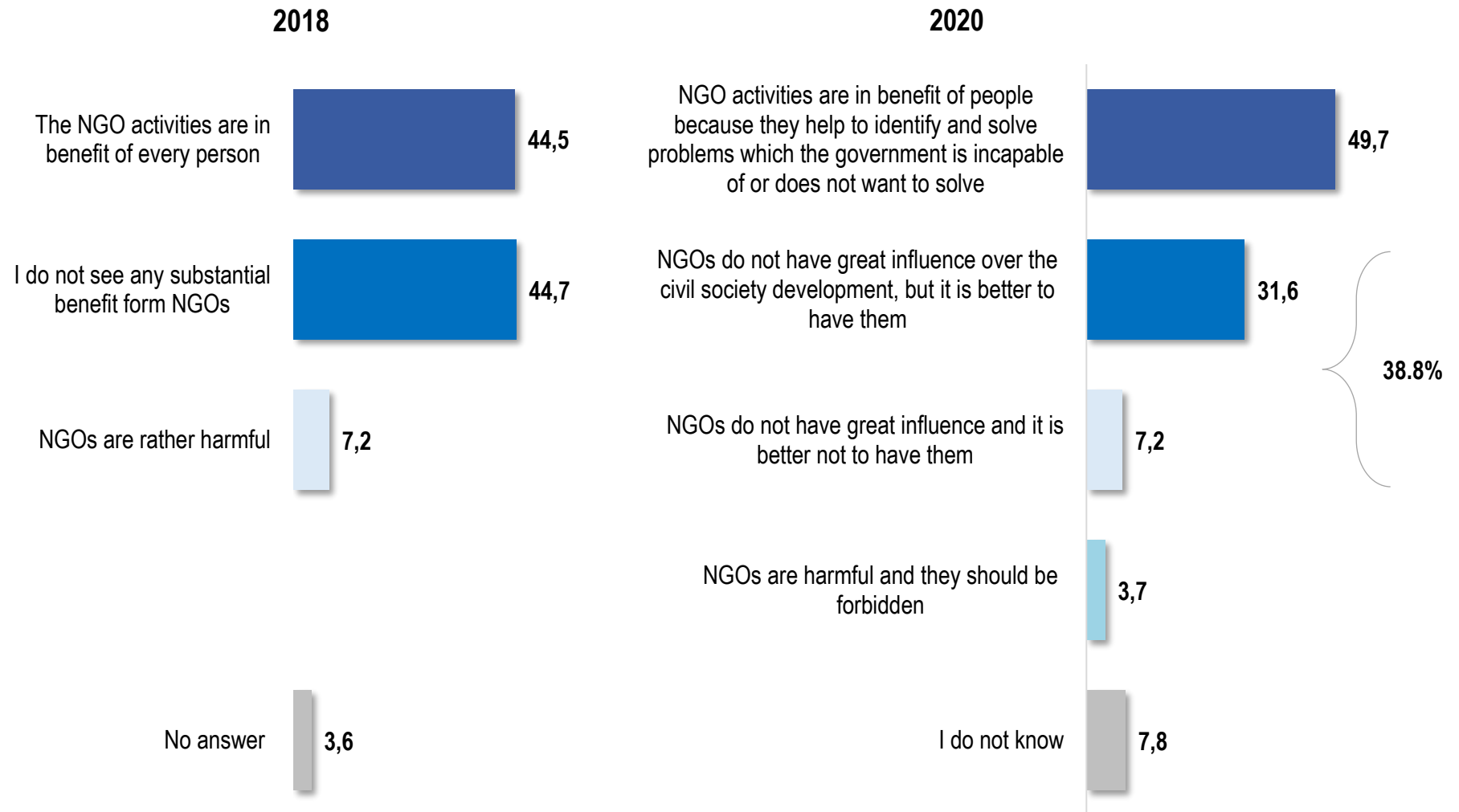
Are there any CSOs that express your positions or assist with solving important issues?



Base: Total sample

Q11. Are you aware of the existence in our country of non-governmental organizations (foundations or civil society associations) that represent and defend positions of yours and/or assist in solving issues of significance to you?

Importance of non-governmental organizations (%)

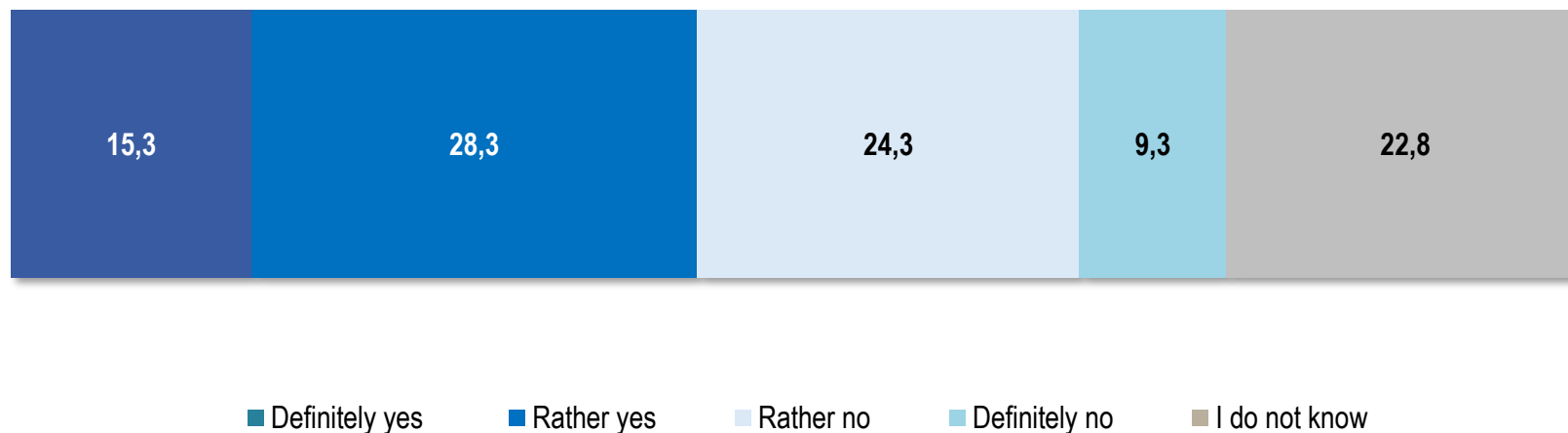


Base: Total sample

Q17. Some people say that NGOs are very useful, others say that they are not that useful. Which of the following opinions of the existence of these organizations is closest to yours?

Efficiency of the non-governmental sector (%)

Do non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria have the ability to assist in solving serious social issues?



Base: Total sample

Q25. Judging by the practice over the last one year, including the coronavirus crisis, do you think that NGOs in Bulgaria are able to assist in solving serious issues?

Spheres of involvement of civil society organizations (%)

| In which of the following cases the government should take action independently and in which cases it is necessary to have involvement, including pressure from citizens and various citizens' organizations? | Independent state action | | CSO's involvement | | No opinion | |
|---|--------------------------|------|-------------------|------|------------|------|
| | 2018 | 2020 | 2018 | 2020 | 2018 | 2020 |
| National security | 82.1 | 61.0 | 14.5 | 23.1 | 3.4 | 15.8 |
| Everyday security of citizens (at home, on the street, on the road) | 73.2 | 48.6 | 24.2 | 35.8 | 2.6 | 15.6 |
| Education | 77.6 | 46.8 | 20.0 | 37.8 | 2.4 | 15.4 |
| Family and upbringing of children | - | 43.5 | - | 37.0 | - | 19.5 |
| Culture and traditions 2018/Traditions, identity 2020 | 54.4 | 37.8 | 42.5 | 44.8 | 3.1 | 17.4 |
| Solving community issues (construction and development of areas for living, infrastructure, community centers for children)) | 59.9 | 37.3 | 37.7 | 47.8 | 2.4 | 14.9 |
| Healthcare, rights of patients | 67.6 | 35.8 | 29.9 | 49.4 | 2.6 | 14.8 |
| Individual rights (unfair justice, freedom of opinion, right to choose, etc.)) | 56.5 | 34.5 | 40.4 | 48.0 | 3.1 | 17.5 |
| Prevention of and protection against violence – at the work place, at home, in the family) | - | 32.3 | - | 51.5 | - | 16.2 |
| Labor rights and professional activities of citizens | 52.0 | 31.6 | 44.4 | 49.4 | 3.6 | 19.0 |
| Provision of HELP, SUPPORT, SERVICES to vulnerable groups | 63.1 | 31.2 | 34.0 | 51.2 | 2.9 | 17.5 |
| Protection of the RIGHTS of vulnerable groups (poor, marginalized, with disabilities, in risk of trafficking, violence, etc.) | 66.7 | 29.7 | 31.4 | 50.6 | 1.9 | 19.7 |
| Consumer rights | 53.4 | 28.1 | 43.7 | 56.2 | 2.9 | 15.7 |
| Protection of animals | 40.3 | 21.7 | 57.5 | 62.7 | 2.2 | 15.6 |
| Protection of nature | 42.8 | 21.0 | 53.9 | 63.7 | 3.2 | 15.3 |

Base: Total sample

Q23. In which of the following cases the state should act on its own and which of them require the involvement, including via pressure, of the citizens and various organizations of theirs in view of solving specific issues? (for each item



II. Understanding of the relationship “civil organizations – state”. Views regarding the role of the Civil society Development Council

The partnership “state – non-governmental sector” – cooperation or opposition?

One of the important aspects of this survey is determining the extent to which the public attitudes NGOs influence and could influence the citizens’ attitude towards their involvement in legislative activities, and the efficiency of the newly established Civil Society Development Council.

Unlike the findings about the overall increase in the trust in CSOs in various areas and against various indicators, the opinions in terms of the partnership “state – non-governmental sector” remain strongly polarized. This polarization has two major dimensions:

- *Firstly*, in spite of the growth found in terms of the assessments that CSOs had better be involved in law-making (from 39% to 47%), almost the same share still think that their involvement *should not be decisive or that they should not at all be committed to this process*.
- *Secondly*, in response to the direct question how the government and NGOs should interact within the newly established Civil Society Development Council, 48% indicate “in cooperation”, 16% “in opposition”, 36% “no opinion”. **What is interesting, however, is the viewpoint behind this public opinion which seemingly favors “cooperation”.** The names indicated in response to the open ended question **“Who would be best suited to lead this council?”** are figures from the opposition, and not the **government** – Maya Manolova, Slavi Trifonov, Rumen Radev, Boris Bonev, Tatyana Doncheva, etc. It is only Tomislav Donchev that ranks amongst the top five. Outside the top ranking names, the overview of the others also shows that they are linked to the opposition, and not to those in power. In other words, the overall attitude on this matter is also strongly polarized, in addition to a high degree of uncertainty as to what functions the Council will have, how they will be performed, and for what purpose.



Attitude towards the EU monitoring and the financing of NGOs

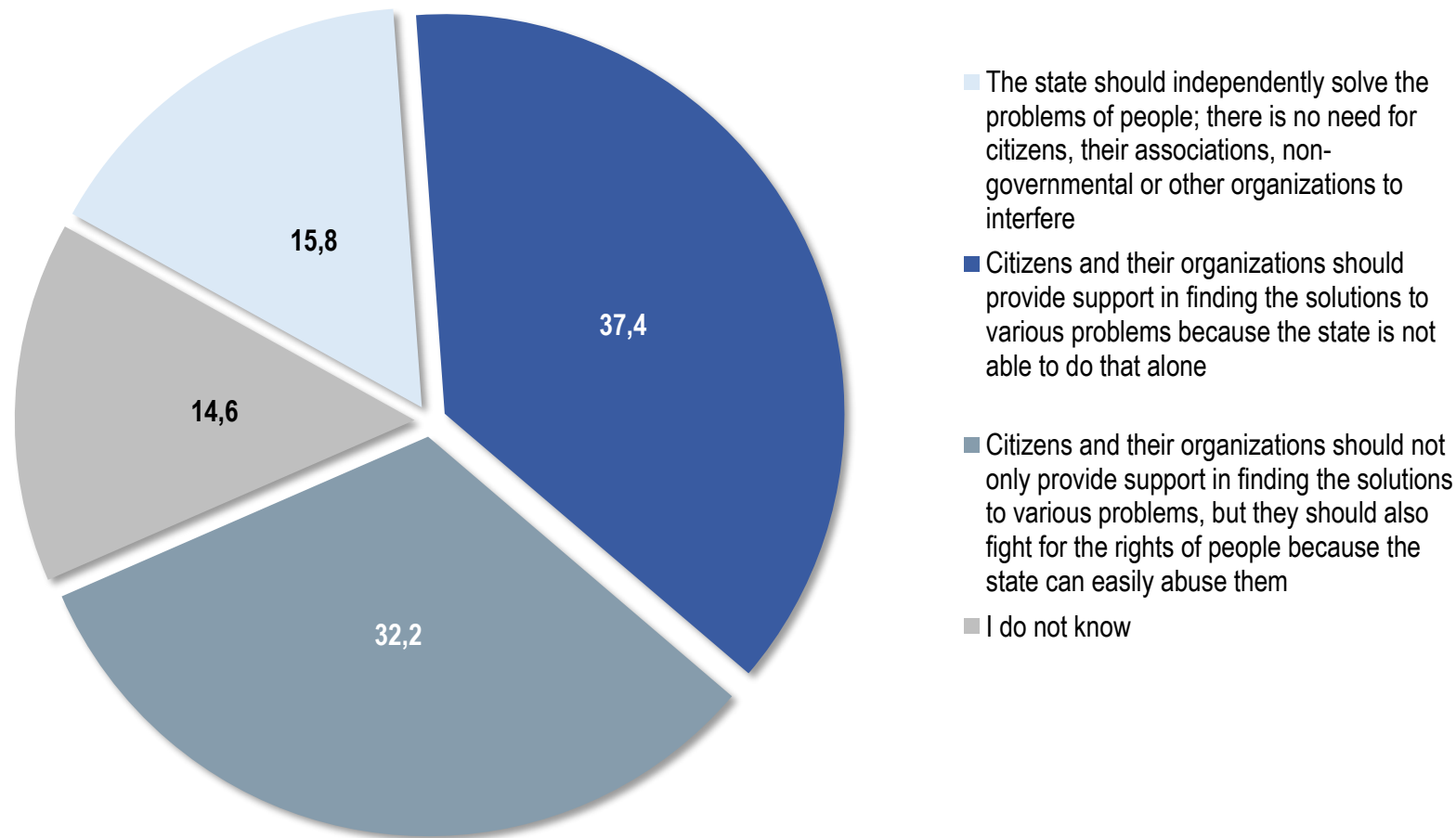
Given this degree of opinion cleavage on this matter, we can draw the following hypothesis: If opposition attitudes take the upper hand in the society, then the expectations in respect of NGOs will also be in favor of being “in opposition” to the government. If those in power, whoever they be, enjoy confidence, CSOs will be expected to cooperate with a view to a more efficient solving of social issues. **Taking into consideration the current point in time, it would be best for CSOs to draft and submit their own proposals concerning measures and policies with regard to various social groups, as these will be crucial for the upcoming autumn and winter period.**

Yet another two issues have been addressed in the context of the relationship “CSOs – state”: The first question is about the need for EU monitoring on the observance of the democratic principles of governance. **The majority, 66%, firmly support such monitoring** for reasons of still existing premises for abuse, and of the inefficient judicial system in Bulgaria. The second one concerns another hot topic: the financing of CSOs. Once again a large share of respondents without an opinion on these issues (44%). According to those who have an opinion, the most legitimate financing comes from organizations linked to the EU (21%), from the Bulgarian state (16%) or from Bulgarian private donors (13%). The remaining sources (foreign NGOs, foreign private donors, Russia or the USA have fewer percentage points, and are indicated mainly by persons who are familiar with the operation mode and the financing of the non-governmental sector. 20% express the opinion that NGOs should not receive any financing.

In this context, the main focus of CSOs should be on demonstrating the relevance of the causes, projects, and activities to which they are committed, instead of an abstract focus on financing.

The state and the non-governmental sector – involvement and/or pressure?(%)

According to you, is it sufficient that only the state addresses the issues on the public agenda or should the citizens also assist and protect their rights?

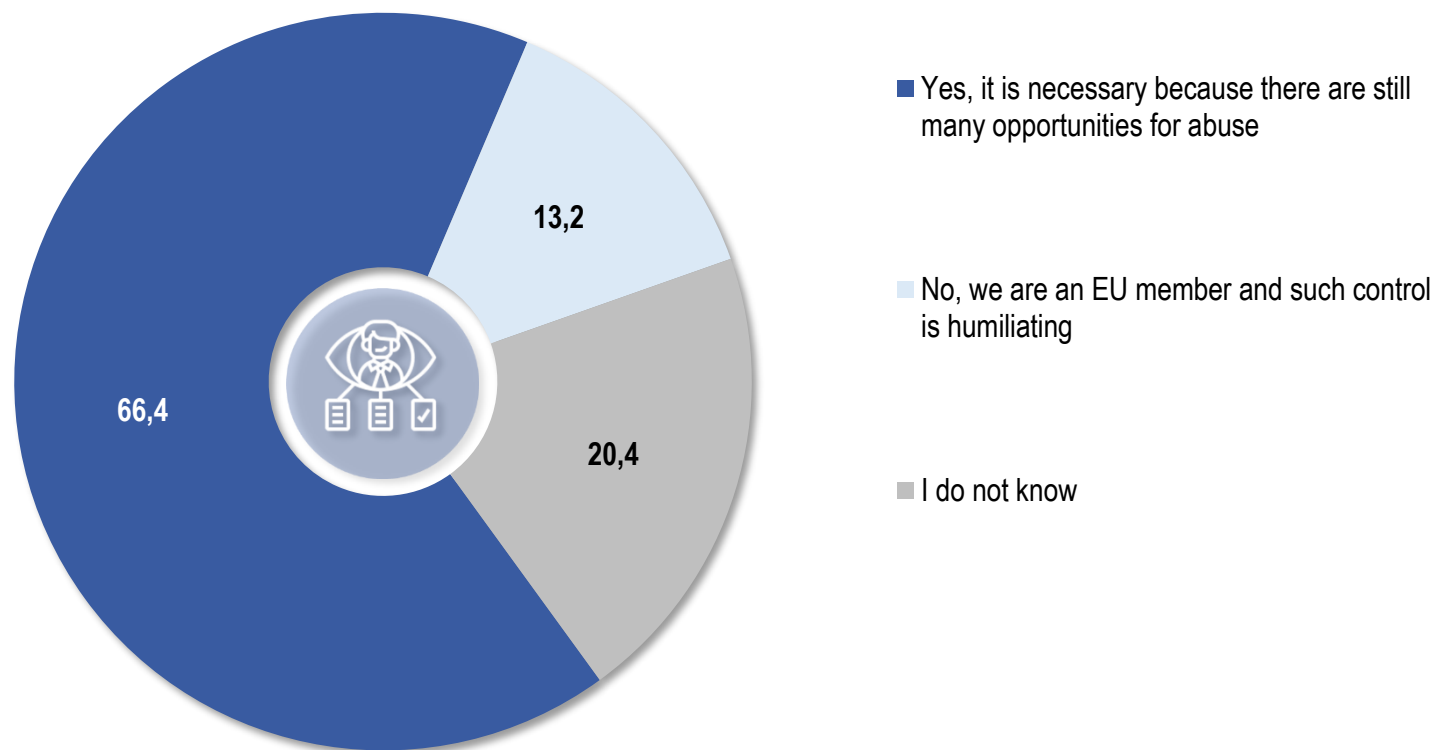


Base: Total sample

Q10. Thinking of the development of the Bulgarian society, what do you think – is it sufficient that only the state addresses the issues on the public agenda or the citizens should also assist and protect their rights?

The need for EU monitoring on the observance of the democratic principles of governance (%)

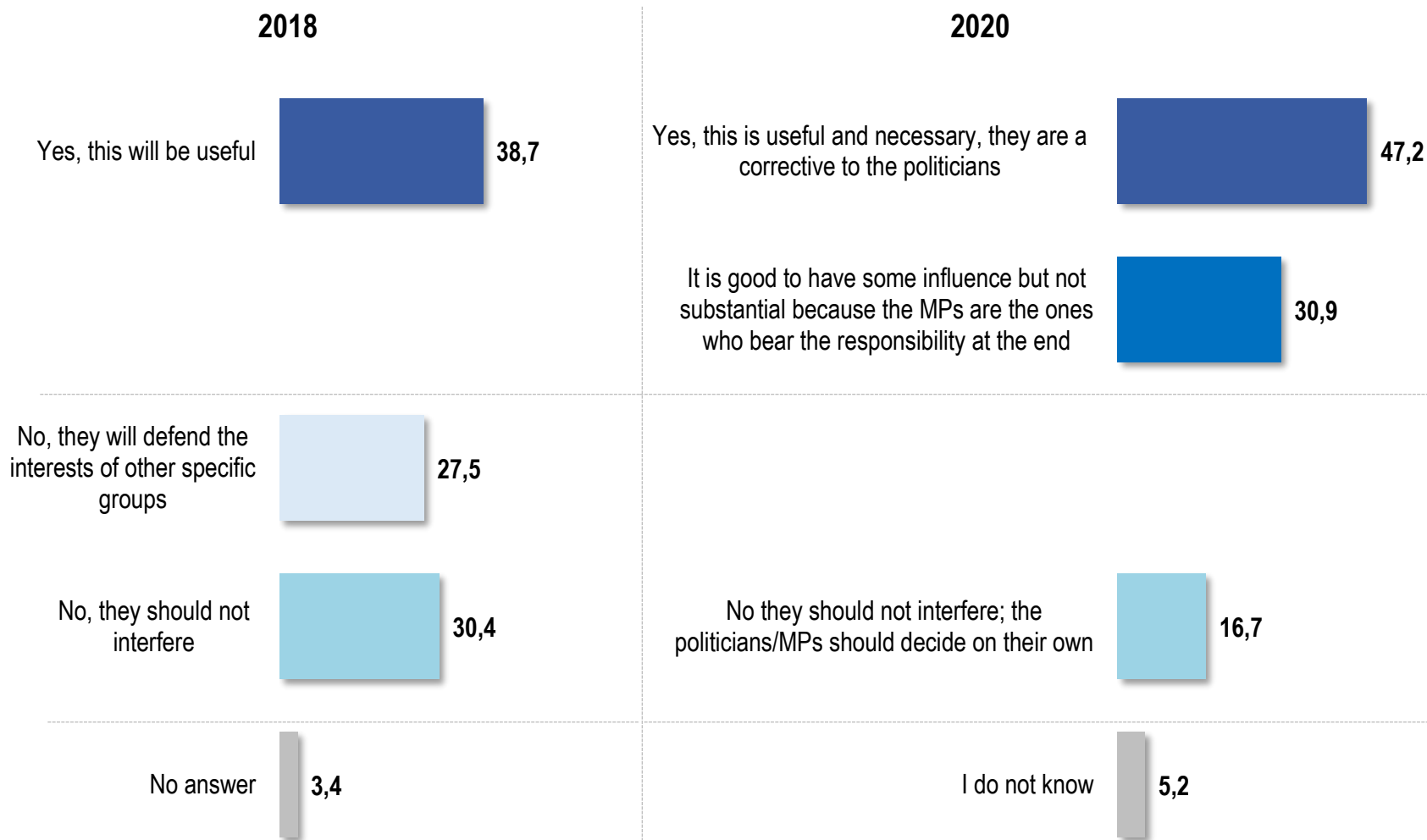
Do you think there should be monitoring and control by the EU institutions on the Bulgarian authorities in relation to the observance of the democratic principles and EU rules?



Base: Total sample

Q21. Do you think there should be monitoring and control by the EU institutions on the Bulgarian authorities in relation to the observance of the democratic principles and EU rules?

Involvement of the non-governmental sector in the legislative process (%)

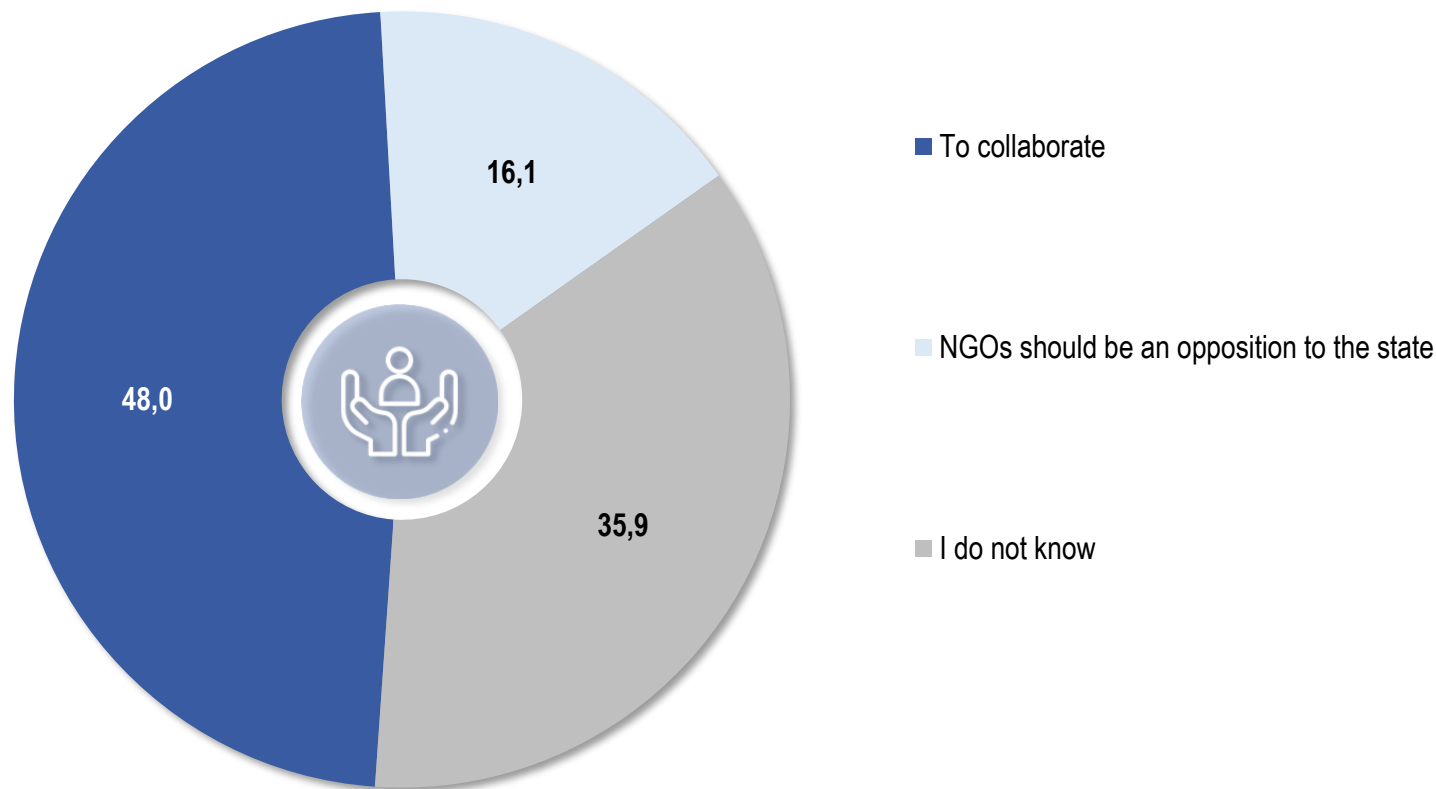


Base: Total sample

Q18. According to you, is it a good idea or not that the non-governmental sector be involved in the legislative process of the National Assembly?

Relationships between the non-governmental sector and the government (%)

What should the relationships be between the non-governmental sector and the government within the established Civil Society Development Council?



Base: Total sample

A couple of months ago, after e-elections took place, a Civil Society Development Council with COM was established; the non-governmental sector elects their own representatives of the Council whose purpose is improving the partnership between the organizations and the state structures. In this connection, we have a few questions:

Q19. Should the non-governmental sector and the state work in cooperation via this Council?

Preferences for the Chairperson of the Civil Society Development Council (%)

Which public figure would you nominate as Chairperson of the Civil Society Development Council?

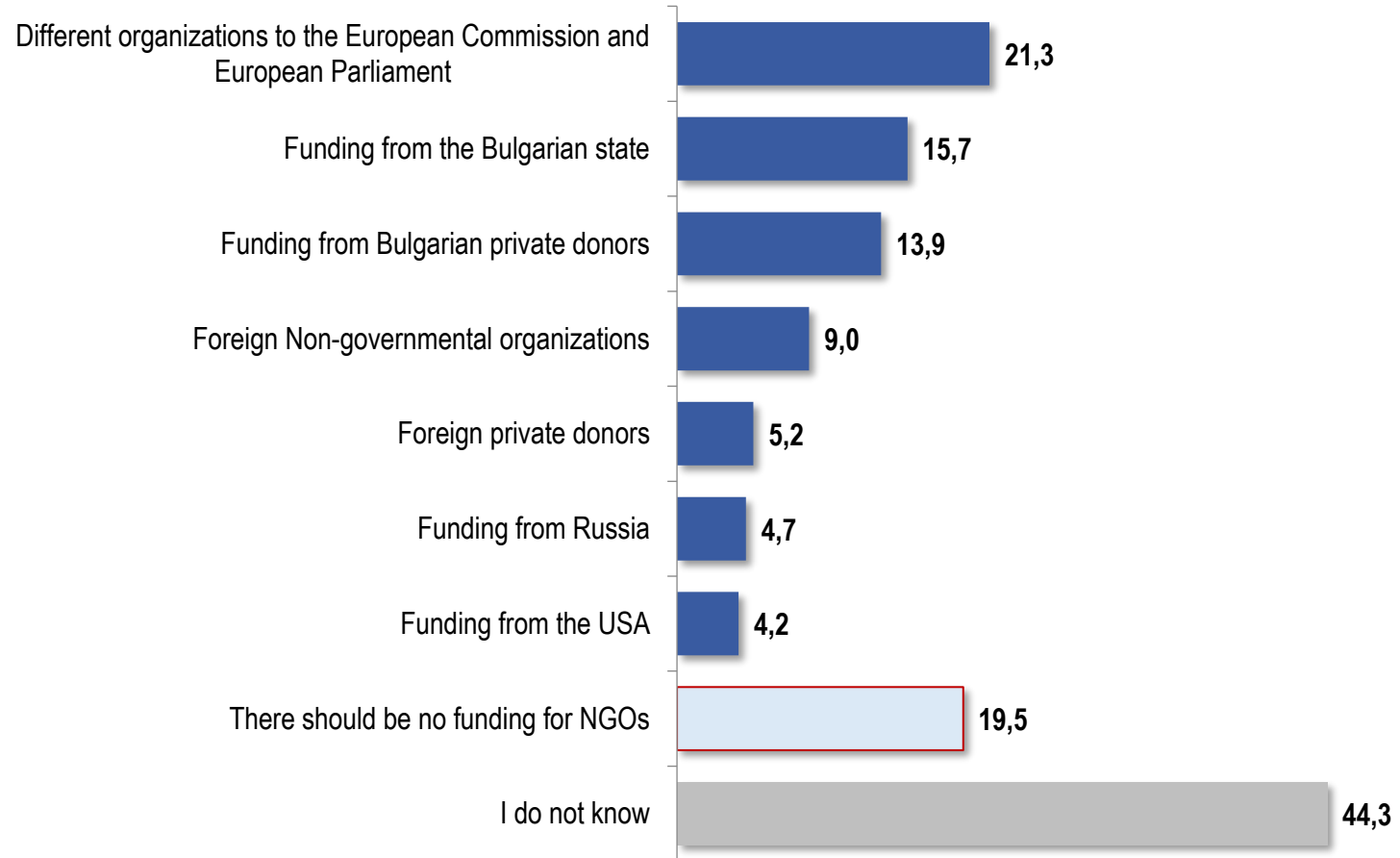
| | | | |
|--|-----|---|------|
| Maya Manolova | 9.4 | Gen. Mutafchiyski | 0.1 |
| Slavi Trifonov | 3.4 | Miroyuba Benatova | 0.1 |
| Tomislav Donchev | 0.9 | Mincho Hristoiv | 0.1 |
| Rumen Radev | 0.9 | Milan Milanov | 0.1 |
| Boris Bonev | 0.7 | Grisha Ganchev | 0.1 |
| Tatyana Doncheva | 0.5 | Metodi Lalov | 0.1 |
| Boiko Borissov | 0.5 | Martin Karbovski | 0.1 |
| Plamen Paskov | 0.4 | Maria Gabriel | 0.1 |
| Niki Kanchev | 0.4 | Ivan Mareshki | 0.1 |
| Yordanka Fandakova | 0.4 | Magardich Halvadjan | 0.1 |
| Solomon Passi | 0.3 | Lyuben Dilov | 0.1 |
| Prof. Ivo Hristov | 0.3 | Krassimir Valchev | 0.1 |
| Petar Stoyanov | 0.3 | Kostadin Kostadinov | 0.1 |
| Petar Moskov | 0.3 | Krassimir Karakachanov | 0.1 |
| Kornelya Ninova | 0.3 | Yordan Kamdjalov | 0.1 |
| Nadya Shabani | 0.3 | Ilyan Vassilev | 0.1 |
| Ivan Kostov | 0.3 | Elena Vatashka | 0.1 |
| Ivaylo Tzvetkov - Noisy | 0.3 | Evgeniy Dimitrov | 0.1 |
| Elisaveta Belobradova | 0.3 | Prof. Chirkov | 0.1 |
| Vassil Bojkov | 0.3 | Dr. Petar Beron | 0.1 |
| Borislav Sandov | 0.3 | Dr. Nikolay Mihailov – psychiatrist, theologist | 0.1 |
| Borislav Ignatov | 0.3 | Georgi Koritarov | 0.1 |
| Alexandar Kashamov | 0.3 | Georgi Gergov | 0.1 |
| Tzveta Kirilova (Azbukari Association) | 0.1 | Vesselin Marivov | 0.1 |
| Hristo Stoichkov | 0.1 | Velizar Enchev | 0.1 |
| Stefan Tzanev | 0.1 | Vassil Ivanov | 0.1 |
| Rumen Bahov | 0.1 | Vanya Grigorova from Podkrepa TU | 0.1 |
| Rossen Plevneliev | 0.1 | Valeri Simeonov | 0.1 |
| Prof. Ognyan Gerdjikov | 0.1 | Angel Djambazki | 0.1 |
| Petar Pisarski | 0.1 | Acad. Yulian Revalski | 0.1 |
| Petar Boyadjiev | 0.1 | | |
| Ognyan Minchev | 0.1 | Ombudsman | 1.2 |
| Nikolay Doinov | 0.1 | Others | 0.4 |
| Nikolay Barekov | 0.1 | I don't know | 71.1 |

Base: Total sample

Q20. Which public figure would you nominate as Chairperson of the Civil Society Development Council? (open question)

Financing of civil society organizations (%)

From which sources would competition-based financing allow CSOs and NGOs to operate in the most efficient way and to protect citizens' interests?



Base: Total sample

Q22. According to you, from which sources would competition-based financing allow CSOs and NGOs to operate in the most efficient way and to protect citizens' interests?



III. Individual civil activity – intensity, forms, sources of information

Participation in NGO activities and civic initiatives

The citizens' personal contacts with, participation in and commitment to the non-governmental sector are an important indicator of its maturity and influence, and of the social basis within the society on which it can rely. In this respect several trends confirming the general landscape and providing some additional nuances can be highlighted:

- Over the last two years the number of people who are either CSO members or have directly approached a CSO for assistance has remained almost unchanged (a total of 9%). **However, the share of volunteers has been on the rise. In 2020, 9% reported participation as volunteers in a variety of initiatives, against 6.4% in 2015, and 3.6% in 2018.**
- In parallel, **participation in various civic initiatives has intensified – out of 20 comparable options, 16 register a higher level of participation.** These are: donation campaigns, support for petitions, participation in campaigns dedicated to important causes, membership in Facebook groups, volunteering, filing of complaints, boycotting specific commodities and retails, etc. As noted above, the increase in the number and locations of active citizens is one of the important prerequisites for broadening the support for CSOs outside the scope of their traditional supporter groups.
- The higher level of recognizability achieved, the widening of the geographic range of the small but stable CSOs, and the stronger trust in the sector **have logically contributed to growth in the willingness to approach CSOs for assistance – from 29% in 2018 to 40% in 2020. Once again it should be emphasized that the growth registered concerns not only the increased number but also the broader profile of the persons who would approach an NGO** – from predominantly women to a rise in the number of men, people with lower educational background and income, and those living in smaller towns. It is only in villages that NGOs remain unknown, unrecognizable, and hence a much lower chance for people living there to get in touch with an NGO.

Recognizable areas of activity and recognizable NGOs

The main recognizable areas of CSO activity remain environmental protection, charity and consumer protection. The following should be added: protection of people/children with disabilities, of patients, human rights, children rights, support for socially disadvantaged people.

The comparison between the recognizable areas of activity and the recognizable names of NGOs/foundations does not indicate a direct match between them. In terms of names, the recognizable ones are the organizations that are larger, with a stronger presence in the public debate, and media organizations (BRC, BHC, ABF, Four Paws Foundation, Green Balkans, Open Society Institute), even though a part of their causes are not directly indicated. At the same time, the analysis of the full list of CSO names indicated (just above 90) confirms the conclusions about the broadening of recognizability in terms of both their geographic and demographic range. **More social groups, in more locations across the country, can identify specific CSOs, which logically boosts the overall trust.**

Based on the aggregate analysis of this data, a conclusion can be drawn about the existence of a broader general horizon and increased awareness of the range of causes and activities that CSOs are involved in. This, however, does not suffice to promote the organizations themselves. The consolidation of NGOs and the existence of individual campaigns for promoting their image are an important aspect of achieving a higher level of recognizability, and, based on this, of trust.

The top 5 causes which the citizens recognize to the highest extent as being specific to CSOs and of the greatest benefit to the development of the Bulgarian society continue to be healthcare and the protection of patient rights (which ranks first), environmental protection, consumer protection, better education (almost doubled compared to 2018), support for people with disabilities, and social services for socially disadvantaged people.

Sources of information and awareness-raising events contributing to the recognition of NGOs

The ranking of these causes is undoubtedly linked to reports on specific activities of NGOs, and shows that increased publicity has a strong impact on focusing public attention on important social issues which are, however, often neglected by the government.

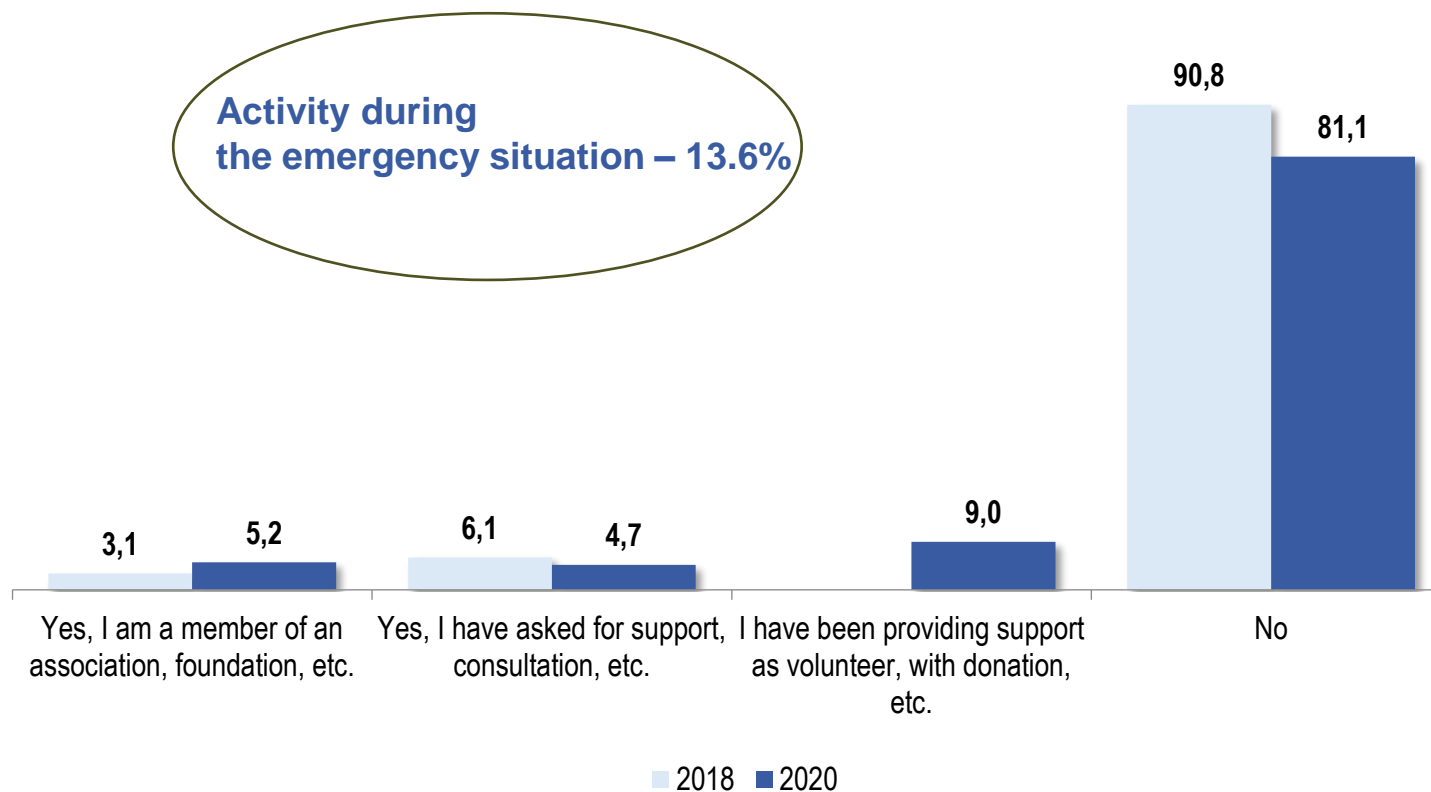
TV outlets remain a main source of information about the activity of NGOs (48%, but with a drop of almost 20% compared to 2018). Web-based media or websites (26%) rank next, and right after them – the social media which definitely rank above websites among those aged under 30. A total of 39% receive information from the internet. Relatives/close friends and acquaintances, and personal contacts rank lower. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the share of personal contacts as a source of information has risen from 6.7% to 10.5%, which is in line with the trend registered in the survey about a growing number of people approaching NGOs.

One out of five respondents recalls a specific awareness-raising event from which they learnt something about NGOs. It is the cases with broad media coverage that were the ones to be remembered – the protests of mothers with children with disabilities, the campaigns related to Natura 2000 protected areas, the COVID 19 epidemic, etc. The exhaustive list is presented on slide 38.

The general conclusion to be drawn is that except for the several repetitive policy-related actions enjoying broad media coverage, the remaining cases involve a picturesque range of cases and occasions which are a source of information about NGOs for the public. And this is not by accident, taking into consideration the fact that a considerable part of the information about this sector comes from the social networks which, by their nature, are conducive to segmentation and fragmentation. They should continue to be used for reaching out to groups with specific needs or interests. In addition, the sector may also consider several large-scale, mass campaigns on an annual basis, which will promote the names of more organizations (or a cluster of organizations) as an obligatory step towards achieving recognizability and building more trust.

Personal contacts/participation in NGO activities (%)

Contact with an CSO, foundation or another non-governmental organization



*Note: Option for volunteering and donations asked only in 2020.

Base: Total sample

Q7. Have you ever had contacts with an CSO, foundation or another non-governmental organization?

Participation in civil initiatives (%)

| In which of the following initiatives have you participated during the last two years? | | | | | |
|--|------|---|------|---|-------------|
| | 2015 | | 2018 | | 2020 |
| Donation campaign | 18.2 | ↑ | 31.2 | ↑ | 39.5 |
| Membership in Facebook groups | 9.3 | ↓ | 7.3 | ↑ | 23.4 |
| Support for a petition | 9.3 | ↓ | 1.8 | ↑ | 18.2 |
| Referendum | 7.0 | | - | ↑ | 10.3 |
| Civil initiatives in support of important causes | 8.2 | ↓ | 5.2 | ↑ | 9.7 |
| General assemblies for solving problems in the town/city/neighborhood where you live | 7.0 | ↑ | 9.5 | | 8.5 |
| Petition for initiating/holding a referendum | | | 13.6 | ↓ | 8.2 |
| I have volunteered | 6.4 | ↓ | 3.6 | ↑ | 9.0 |
| Submission of complaints to an institution (police, local authority, ministries) | 5.8 | ↓ | 2.0 | ↑ | 7.7 |
| Participation in blogs and fora | 5.6 | ↓ | 4.4 | ↑ | 7.1 |
| Boycotting (of specific commodities, retails) | 2.6 | ↓ | 1.6 | ↑ | 6.0 |
| Public discussions | 4.1 | | - | | 5.2 |
| Community center | - | | 4.4 | | 5.2 |
| Sports club | | | 2.4 | ↑ | 4.8 |
| An event organized by a local authority | 11.8 | | - | ↓ | 4.6 |
| The Managing body of the condominium / neighborhood council | - | | 1.7 | ↑ | 4.6 |
| Protests | 5.7 | ↓ | 4.3 | | 4.3 |
| Choir, pensioner club | - | | 4.0 | | 4.2 |
| An alert to the media | 2.3 | ↓ | 1.3 | ↑ | 3.5 |
| Participation in an NGO activity | 1.4 | | 1.1 | ↑ | 3.5 |
| In a trade union | - | | 0.5 | ↑ | 2.9 |
| An alert to the local/national ombudsman | - | | 0.5 | ↑ | 2.6 |
| An event organized by a state institution | 4.9 | | - | ↓ | 2.4 |
| In a political party | - | | 2.0 | | 2.1 |
| I have taken action against an institution | 0.8 | | 0.1 | ↑ | 1.2 |
| Strikes | 2.2 | ↓ | 0.7 | | 0.8 |
| Others | | | | | 3.0 |
| None | 52.0 | ↓ | 47.2 | ↓ | 42.2 |

Q6. In which of the following initiatives have you participated during the last 2 years? (you can give more than one answer)

Base: Total sample

List of the names of specific organizations indicated (%)

Exhaustive list of specific names indicated (a total of 119)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|---|-----|--|-----|
| BRC | 5.2 | National Student Association for Educational Exchange AIESEC-Bulgaria | 0.3 | Atlantic Club in Bulgaria | 0.1 | Bulgarian Fund for Women | 0.1 |
| Bulgarian Helsinki Committee | 3.7 | Greenpeace-Bulgaria | 0.3 | National Youth Forum | 0.1 | Association "I Love Plovdiv" | 0.1 |
| America for Bulgaria | 3.5 | Union of the Bulgarian Writers | 0.3 | Bulgarian Organization of Voluntary Blood Donation | 0.1 | Foundation "Trace for People" | 0.1 |
| FOUR PAWS Foundation | 3.4 | Civic Movement "Rise UP. BG" | 0.3 | Sofia Development Association | 0.1 | "Foundation "Lift Safety " | 0.1 |
| Green Balkans | 2.0 | WWF | 0.3 | Hans Seidel Foundation | 0.1 | Association "Children with Onco-chematological Diseases" | 0.1 |
| Open Society Institute | 1.4 | Environmental Association "For the Earth" | 0.3 | SECTOR BUSINESS CHAMBER | 0.1 | Euro-Atlantic Security Center | 0.1 |
| Via Pontica Foundation | 1.3 | Workshop for Civic Initiatives | 0.3 | Because Foundation | 0.1 | European Consumer Center | 0.1 |
| Dimitar Berbatov Foundation | 1.2 | HelpKarma | 0.3 | Association "Ecomission 21 Century" | 0.1 | Bulgarian Association of Health Professionals | 0.1 |
| Caritas | 1.0 | Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Dobrich | 0.1 | DobroJantzi Association | 0.1 | Civil Initiative for the Prohibition of Precious Leather Farming in Bulgaria | 0.1 |
| Animus Association Foundation | 0.9 | "Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" | 0.1 | Association "Give a Hand and Support" | 0.1 | Animal Rescue Sofia | 0.1 |
| Together in Class Foundation | 0.8 | International Foundation "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" | 0.1 | Agency for Economic Development Varna | 0.1 | Foundation "Dear Mother" | 0.1 |
| PULSE Foundation | 0.7 | Alternative Energy Association | 0.1 | Association "Movement We - the Women" | 0.1 | Association Phenylketonuria BULGARIA | 0.1 |
| Bulgarian Donors Forum | 0.7 | Foundation "Nana Gladwish – One of 8" | 0.1 | Civic Association FIGHTER | 0.1 | Association of Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis | 0.1 |
| UNICEF | 0.5 | National Alliance for Social Responsibility | 0.1 | Bulgarian Association of Road Accident Victims | 0.1 | National Association of Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Professionals | 0.1 |
| Konrad Adenauer Foundation | 0.5 | Wild Animals Foundation | 0.1 | Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights | 0.1 | Association "Bulgarians – Memory and Future" | 0.1 |
| Center for Victim of Torture – ACET | 0.5 | Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria | 0.1 | Association of Parks in Bulgaria | 0.1 | Association "Bulgaria - Spirit and Culture" | 0.1 |
| Coalition of Environmental and Civic Organizations "For the Nature in Bulgaria" | 0.5 | Union of the Deaf in Bulgaria | 0.1 | Foundation "Anti-corruption Fund" | 0.1 | Videley Foundation | 0.1 |
| SOS Childrens' Villages | 0.5 | Union of Bulgarian Commandos | 0.1 | Foundation "The Small Prince" | 0.1 | Association "Child Heart" | 0.1 |
| BCNL | 0.5 | National Federation of Employers of Disabled People | 0.1 | Association "National Network for Children" | 0.1 | Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion | 0.1 |
| Save Sofia | 0.4 | Protectors Association-Montana | 0.1 | Society of Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria | 0.1 | Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation | 0.1 |
| Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds | 0.4 | Association of People with Serious Physical Disabilities - Courage | 0.1 | Bulgarian Psychiatric Association | 0.1 | Association for Wild Life "Balkans" | 0.1 |
| ALLAINCE OF TOURISM IN THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION Association | 0.4 | Balkan Research and Training Centre of Ecology and Environmental Protection, Sofia | 0.1 | Association "Independent Authors, Musicians and Producers" | 0.1 | Association "National Chamber Fire Safety of Buildings" | 0.1 |
| Citizen Participation Forum | 0.4 | Association of Bulgarian Kinesiotherapists | 0.1 | Alternative for the Future | 0.1 | Dechitsa Foundation | 0.1 |
| Diabetes Association | 0.4 | Association of Physiotherapists in Bulgaria | 0.1 | DAR Association | 0.1 | Save CORAL | 0.1 |
| For Our Children Foundation" | 0.3 | Association CLEMENCY BERCOVITZA | 0.1 | Atlantic Council of Bulgaria | 0.1 | Tourist Society "Our Balkans" | 0.1 |
| Russophiles National Movement | 0.3 | Foundation "Our Premature Children" | 0.1 | Foundation YOU ALSO COME | 0.1 | Radostina Konstantinova Foundation | 0.1 |
| Ascension Foundation | 0.3 | Bulgarian Prisoners' Rehabilitation Association | 0.1 | Thracia Foundation | 0.1 | Art Forum Association | 0.1 |
| Future for Bulgaria Foundation | 0.3 | Foundation "Young People with Mission— Bulgaria" | 0.1 | Association "For Children-2017" | 0.1 | Association EDELWEISS CLUB 2012 | 0.1 |
| Friedrich Ebert Foundation-Bulgaria | 0.3 | Foundation "The Star of Hope" | 0.1 | Foundation "Charity and Mercy" | 0.1 | Regional Agency for Entrepreneurship and Innovations - Varna | 0.1 |
| Strength for Life Foundation" | 0.3 | Kalina 21 Foundation | 0.1 | Association "For a Better Life for People with Bechterew's Disease" | 0.1 | | |

Q14. Please, name specific non-governmental organizations (foundations, association, etc.) whose activity you know or of which you have just heard? (open question)

Activities and causes of the non-governmental sector (%)

| Which activities and causes of NGOs do you deem as most beneficial to the development of the Bulgarian society? | | |
|---|------|------|
| | 2018 | 2020 |
| Healthcare and protection of patient rights | 15,2 | 49.3 |
| Environmental protection | - | 41.7 |
| Consumer protection | 37,9 | 38.4 |
| Better education | 15.9 | 34.9 |
| Better integration of people with disabilities | 24.4 | 31.2 |
| Social services for socially disadvantaged people | - | 31.2 |
| Protection of democratic values – human rights, independent judiciary, media, fair elections | 14,8 | 30.1 |
| Prevention of and fight against violence, including domestic violence | - | 27.7 |
| Support for victims of drug abuse, human trafficking, etc. | - | 24.8 |
| Development of culture and arts | 10.4 | 21.7 |
| Protection of the traditional family | - | 20.4 |
| Returning of Bulgarian living abroad | 15.7 | 14.2 |
| Support for working families | 15.0 | - |
| Others | - | 1.2 |
| I don't know | - | 17.9 |

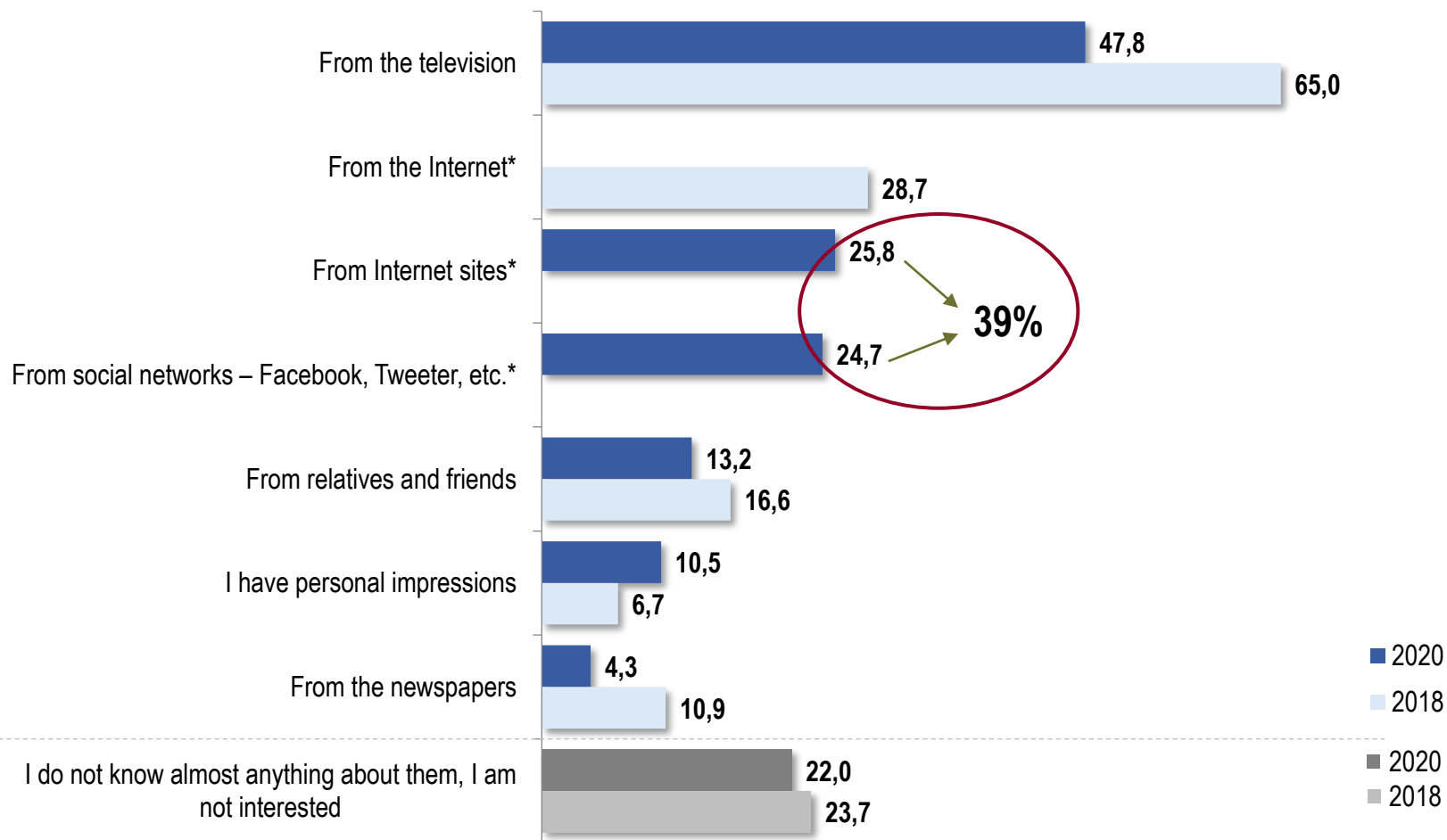


Base: Total sample

Q9. Which activities and causes do you deem as most beneficial to the development of the Bulgarian society? (you can give more than one answer)

Sources of information (%)

Sources of information about CSOs



*NB: The option is only for the relevant year..

Base: Total sample

Q16. Where do you most often leant about NGOs from? (you can give more than one answer)



IV. Core values, main issues, and their role for developing active civic positions

Importance of values and value identification for the development of civil society

The strong development of civil society and civil society organizations is possible only in a specific social environment (existence of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect and safeguards for individual rights), and in the context of sharing the values of liberal democracies. At the same time, uniting people around common causes and interests in a pluralistic society is achieved on the basis not only of values but also of similar challenges that people face and want to jointly address.

In the short term, the monitoring of the levels of people's awareness, trust and involvement in NGOs is an important part of defining the strategy of CSOs for their development. This, however, does not suffice for the development of long-term strategies. What is required is the best possible understanding of people's attitudes towards values, the essence of the challenges facing them, and the motivating (respectively, demotivating) power of both in terms of citizen activity. In this respect, the present survey included a group of questions regarding people's essential values and their main challenges, as well as the extent to which they feel free in sharing, upholding and protecting these values.

Core Values/1

The survey includes 16 values; the question is which values the respondents regard as the most important ones. These fall into two main groups identified in contemporary social theories – *the so-called traditional values* (related to traditional communities – attachment to family, genus, religion, the homeland), and *the so-called modern or individualistic ones* (related to contemporary democracies where the rights holder is the individual – attachment to freedom, free expression of opinion, right to private life, right to protest, etc.).

What do the results show?

The fundamental and highly predominant values in the Bulgarian society are the so-called traditional ones. 73% of the respondents rank the family as the most important value, 66% - children, 42% - parents. Another two values from this groups which Bulgarians deem important rank lower: the homeland (30%) and religion, faith (21%).

In terms of their significance, individualistic values are at a considerably lower level compared to traditional ones: freedom and the right to private life (40% each), free expression of opinion and voting in elections (36%), freedom of movement (29%), the right to association and peaceful protests (12%). These values are not recognized as a priority in the answers of the majority of the respondents, while approx. one-fifth of them do not simultaneously share 3 to 4 of them.

It is this value aspect of the citizens' mindset that was underestimated in the context of several significant documents (Istanbul Convention, National Strategy for the Child, Social Services Act), even though it was key to reversing the public opinion against the modernization policies upheld by the state and CSOs. An important lesson learnt by the CSO sector is that you cannot just defend policies and approaches, without, in parallel, taking into account the core values of the society as of a specific point in time.

Core Values/2

Another relevant issue in the context of this survey is whether people perceive the values they deem important as safeguarded in the Bulgarian society or they feel threatened in terms of sharing these values and the protection of their rights.

A total of 42% report that at a certain time in life they felt threatened in relation to important matters in their life. 58% give a negative answer. Out of those who felt at risk a total of 18% took some action. The majority of the remaining ones just expressed their indignation (52%), while another 30% did nothing being convinced of the pointlessness in doing so. The actions taken were mostly: complaints to official institutions (9%), approaching CSOs (7%), media (2%).

The first conclusion based on the above data is almost self-evident and it has often been made in similar surveys – the feeling of dissatisfaction in Bulgaria is often situation-based, and is not linked to the values and principles which are at the core of social life. Hence the sporadic nature of responses – the most frequent actions are complaints and comments made amongst friends, and when tension rises – organizing protests..

The second important conclusion is that the perception of threat is most clearly manifested amongst those with individualistic values (approx. 80% of those who ever felt threatened belong to this social group). It is a well-known fact that most CSOs rely on this particular group of values – “the individual as a rights holder”.

Unlike the above, the respondents who hold traditional values, the family ranking first (in addition to health, children, parents), have rather rarely felt at risk. However, as soon as they have felt at risk (or have been made to feel so), their response is very strong. These are the cases with the Istanbul Convention, the National Strategy for the Child, the health status in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, etc.

Core Values/3

The positive conclusion from the value analysis is about a high degree of overlapping between CSO ideology and the views of their supporters nucleus. The negative one is that these people represent a rather small core which is very difficult to broaden considerably except for ad hoc situations.

In view of this, it is extremely important that CSOs, without breaking out of the scope of the values upheld, broaden the range of issues and groups with which they work. It would be helpful if the CSO enlarge their activity to other causes, in addition to the niche ones. It is this process of spontaneous opening that occurred in the coronavirus situation when people recognized CSOs as a factor in the real protection of their existential needs.

Core Values (%)

Thinking of your current life, which of the following items are most important for you; which of them, if put at risk, would make you do your best to protect them?

| | |
|---|------|
| Health | 75.8 |
| Family | 73.2 |
| Children | 65.9 |
| Parents | 41.7 |
| Clean environment - air, water, nature | 41.0 |
| The right to private life (not being restricted by religious and ethnic norms, not being under surveillance, not having my correspondence restricted) | 40.7 |
| Freedom | 40.5 |
| Personal dignity, not being humiliated either in the family or outside it | 40.0 |
| My right to freely express an opinion, vote, and elect | 36.3 |
| The right to property | 34.6 |
| My good reputation | 32.3 |
| My job, my profession | 29.9 |
| The fatherland | 29.9 |
| The right to freedom (the right to travel to various places and other countries) | 29.2 |
| My religion, my faith | 20.8 |
| To right to gather and associate in peaceful protests | 12.2 |

Base: Total sample

Q1. While most people have similar values, depending on the situation certain values get to the forefront. Thinking of your current life, which of the following items are most important for you; which of them, if put at risk, would make you do your best to protect them?

Interrelation between the types of values and the perception of threat (%)

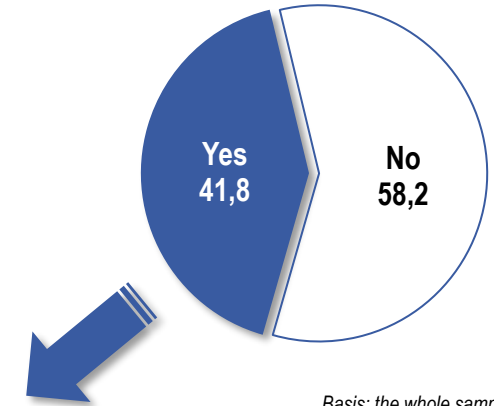


42% have felt threatened in terms of their values. 80% of them -> come from the liberal nucleus of NGO supporters

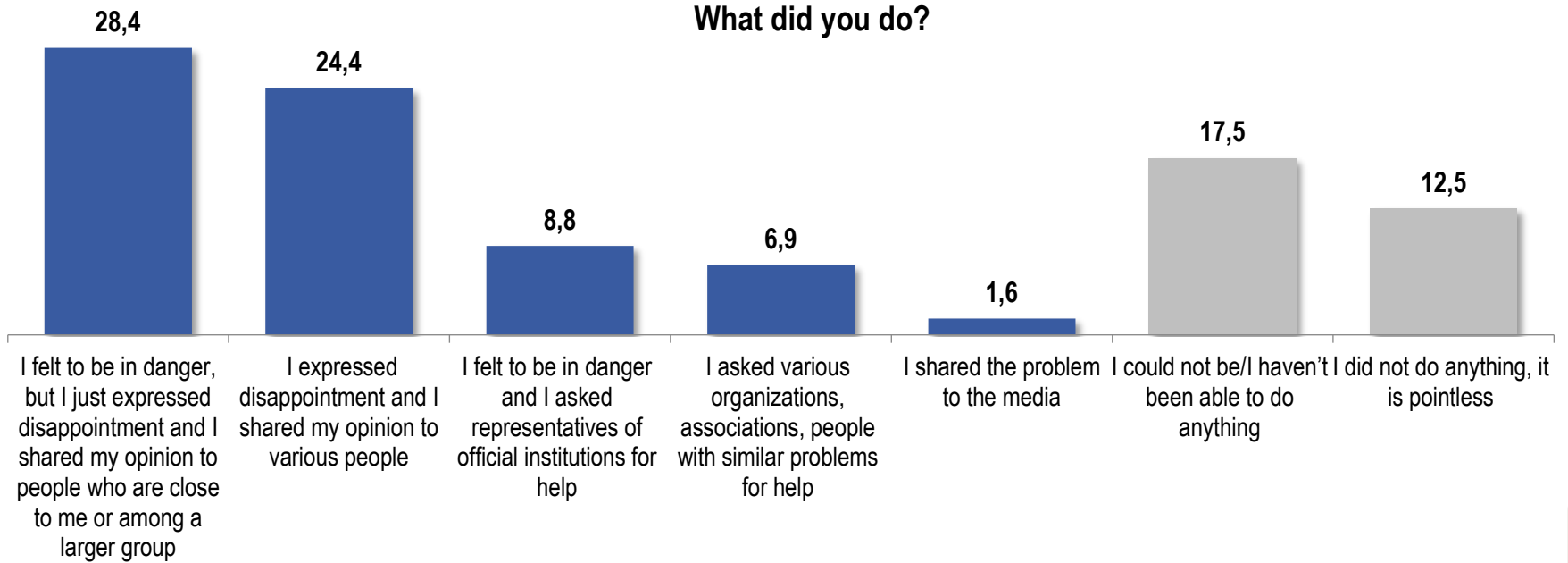
| | | Values | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|----------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------|--|---|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | Children | Family | Parents | Health | Freedom | The right to private life | The right to movement | The right to property | Clean environment - air, water, nature | My job, my profession | Personal dignity | The right to freely express an opinion, vote and elect | The right to associate in peaceful protests | My good reputation | My religion, my faith | The Fatherland |
| | | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % | Row % |
| Have you ever felt threatened in terms of any of the issues that you indicated as the most valuable ones for you? | Yes | 70.3 | 75.6 | 45.6 | 77.5 | 54.1 | 51.9 | 36.9 | 43.8 | 48.8 | 39.4 | 47.5 | 47.8 | 20.0 | 39.7 | 24.7 | 36.9 |
| | No | 62.7 | 71.5 | 38.9 | 74.6 | 30.8 | 32.6 | 23.6 | 28.1 | 35.5 | 23.1 | 34.6 | 28.1 | 6.5 | 27.0 | 18.0 | 24.9 |
| Total | | 65.9 | 73.2 | 41.7 | 75.8 | 40.5 | 40.7 | 29.2 | 34.6 | 41.0 | 29.9 | 40.0 | 36.3 | 12.2 | 32.3 | 20.8 | 29.9 |

Forms of activity in cases of violation of rights or serious problems (%)

Share of persons who have felt threatened in terms of issues that are important to them



What did you do?



Q2. Have you ever felt threatened in terms of any of the issues that you indicated as the most valuable ones for you?

Q3. What did you do?



V. Summary

Summary/1

Following a long period of targeted attacks against the non-governmental sector and attempts to erode its reputation, the National Representative Survey conducted by Alpha Research in late June 2020 (one month after the end of the COVID 19 emergency situation) shows, at the first glance, surprising outcomes – growth in the support for CSOs which was registered within a broad range of comparative indicators included in the survey.

An increase in the assessments for NGOs has been established in three key areas – contribution to the development of the society, thrust in NGOs, efficiency. The results for all three indicators mark a rise by 10 percent compared to the 2018 survey. Several factors have had the strongest impact on this positive dynamic of the public attitudes – the accumulation and the broadening of the geographic scope of the stable local CSOs over time; counter-mobilization of the strongest NGO supporters in response to the attacks against them; breaking out of the scope of niche policies during the coronavirus pandemic, and reaching out to broad social groups for the sake of overcoming the health and social crisis which was existential to everyone.

The survey has reached the conclusion that the improved image and trust in CSOs have resulted from both the internal mobilization of the groups that directly identify themselves with CSOs (i.e. the nucleus with a strong response, but small in size) and the assessments of the wider periphery that has usually been left outside the range of the predominant topics of interest to the majority of CSOs. **If the process of CSO commitment to causes relevant to larger social groups continues, the sector could be expected to gain, step by step, broader support among the public by enlarging the basis of people who recognize it as a factor defending them and expressing key interests.**

Summary /2

Unlike the overall increase found in the trust in CSOs along various lines and against various indicators, the opinions on the partnership “state – non-governmental sector” remain strongly polarized. These opinions are also characterized by a substantial lack of clarity in terms of CSOs activity – the role of CSOs in law-making, the most appropriate forms of financing of CSOs, and the way of functioning of the newly established Civil Society Development Council.

The underlying rationale in the public attitudes is: while the state and CSOs should work in cooperation for solving various social issues, NGOs should continuously exert pressure on the state in this process, as the latter *a priori* is prone to abuses of citizens' rights.

The expectations are that the non-governmental sector be led by outstanding, well-known defenders of citizens' rights who can make the state either remedy its policies or fulfill its commitments. The same is the rationale behind the insistence that the EU continue its monitoring over Bulgaria in relation to the observance of the rule of law.

The best approach to be applied by CSOs at present is drafting their own proposals (and potential policies) on the most serious and topical issues – social, health, protection of children and vulnerable groups, election laws, protection of personal rights. In countering polarization and given the expected acute social problems, CSOs will stand the chance to exercise a substantial influence and support relevant social groups within a very broad range of activities. The upcoming months may prove crucial to either reinforcing the positive trends or eroding the positions won.

Summary /3

Over the last two years, while the share of people who are CSO members or have directly approached any of them for help has remained almost unchanged (a total of 9%), the share of volunteers and participants in various citizen initiatives has risen.

While TV outlets continue to be the main source of information about NGO activities, the importance of internet-based media and social networks has grown. Growth has also been found in terms of the number of causes to which NGO activities are considered relevant. It is, however, only the largest of them that are known by name, while the awareness-raising events contributing to the highest degree of general recognizability are linked to and overlap with events of a civic nature which enjoy a noisy media coverage, but provoke a strong political response. At the same time, however, the recognizability of small, but stable CSOs with a local focus has increased.

Given the above, it is advisable to combine a more targeted approach to groups with specific needs or interests (which can be achieved through the social media), with organization of several large-scale, mass campaigns on an annual basis that would promote the names of important organizations (or a cluster of organizations). Recognizability is an obligatory step towards a higher level of trust.

Traditional values continue to dominate over modern (individualistic) values in the Bulgarian society. This cleavage is very important to understand the social basis of CSOs, the attitude towards them, and the commitment to their causes. **To sum up, the majority of CSOs defend causes related to individualistic values, while the majority of the citizens adhere to the traditional ones.**

Summary /4

The nucleus of the stable CSO supporters consists of people upholding individualistic values, which makes the connection between organizations and supporters very strong. At the same time, the growth in the positive attitudes towards CSOs is due not only to mobilization within the nucleus but also to enlarging the influence towards the periphery.

From this perspective, it is crucial that non-governmental organizations, without getting out of the scope of the values they uphold, broaden the range of the issues and groups with which they are involved. It is this particular process that occurred in the context of the coronavirus crisis when people recognized NGOs as a factor for the real protection of their existential needs.

As of today, while the positive changes in the attitude towards CSOs occurring in the periphery of their supporters has contributed to enhanced support, these groups are still rather prudent in identifying themselves with them. **Therefore, in order to be recognized as “their CSOs” by larger social groups, it is crucial for CSOs to keep the door widely open and enrich the range of their activities. It is for the reason of being “civil” organizations that they should be able to also provide protection for a broader palette of causes and interests, instead of leaving the more common needs in the field of political manipulations. It is only a broader social basis that can boost social commitment, and thus – a more sustainable citizen influence on the institutions, policy-making, and society development.**

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