

PUBLIC OPINION ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT



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INTRODUCTION

In line with the good governance principles, public procurement process should be honest, fair and transparent and subject to public scrutiny. Since it involves economic activities which are conducted by the state institutions on citizens' behalf and funded by citizens' money, the level of citizens' trust in those institutions and the way they conduct procurement is of particular importance. Citizens' awareness and level of trust in key institutions are some of the aspects that serve to illustrate a society's progress in the process of reform of public governance systems; therefore, keeping track of changes in the public opinion may serve important oversight and correction purposes in the entire process.

This report has been developed by Ipsos Strategic Marketing for the Institute Alternative. The survey that the report relies on was conducted in Montenegro between 30 January and 10 February 2020. It provides an overview of the views present in the Montenegrin public concerning the public procurement process. It aimed at identifying the degree of citizens' awareness of public procurement procedures, assessing the transparency and inclusiveness and estimating the degree of corruption in the sectors involved in public procurement and in other state institutions. Since the survey on public opinion concerning public procurement was previously conducted in 2015, the new survey enables a comparative approach. Thus, this report also points to any changes in attitudes that may have occurred over the past five years.

Survey results are organised into five thematic sections. The first one looks at citizens' awareness in terms of the basic understanding of the concept itself. Assuming a low level of awareness among the general public (which was subsequently corroborated), the intention was to get from the citizens brief explanations of the meaning of public procurement. The second thematic section concerned public opinion on public procurement, specifically their general assessment of the way public procurement was being conducted in Montenegro. After examining the potential for corruption across different state institutions, the third section of the survey addressed the issue of abuse of public procurement. This part of the survey specified the earlier general assessments provided by citizens and outlined the view of the public concerning different forms of abuse. The fourth section of the survey addressed media coverage of the relevant topics, while the final, fifth one, compared the results of the two rounds of surveys and presented citizens' assessment of the current situation against the situation five years ago. Lastly, the report presents the conclusions derived from the survey results.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY



Face-to-face survey constitutes one of the most popular and oldest methods of data collection surveys. Its specific feature is the physical presence of the interviewer at the household, asking questions and helping the respondents provide answers. The presence of the interviewer helps establish mutual trust, which is of particular relevance in the studies that include minors. This data collection method is often used precisely when seeking to minimise the number of questions left unanswered and maximise the quality of obtained data. In addition, face-to-face interviews allow for the use of visual aids (such as cards or audio-visual test material) to help the respondents provide answers.

The general population survey in question was conducted using the face-to-face method; it covered a representative sample of Montenegrin citizens older than 18 years of age. The sample of 1,007 respondents reflected the breakdown of the population of Montenegro. Sample size ensured credible results for the measured indicators, for both male and female subpopulations. In addition, the size and breakdown of the sample ensured credible results also per municipality and per type of settlement.

The quantitative survey¹ enabled exact measurement and quantification of relevant indicators per target group or population segment. It was implemented using a representative sample; in line with the specific procedures for sample planning and implementation, it enabled a generalisation of obtained results for the entire population. It can thus be stated with a certain degree of certainty that the survey results obtained using a random representative sample reflect the situation at the level of the entire population of adult citizens of Montenegro.

With regard to the technical details when implementing this type of survey, it should be stressed that the sample, according to its technical features and sampling principles, was a three-stage, stratified random one. Sample frame consisted of the areas served by the individual polling stations. Stratification was carried out per region and per type of settlement, while the three stages that guaranteed randomisation were: selection of sampling points, i.e. areas served by the polling stations included in the survey (probability of selection proportional to the size of the polling station, set according to the number of registered voters); selection of households (use of the Random Route technique) and random selection of respondents.

1 In social sciences, a quantitative survey is a systematic, empirical survey of social phenomena using statistical, mathematical or computer techniques. The aim of a quantitative survey is developing and using mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses related to the phenomenon in question. The process of measurement is critical for a quantitative survey, as it provides the fundamental link between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative links.

Table 1: General population quantitative survey sample features

Sample universe	Population of Montenegro, 18+
Data collection method	Face-to face interviews at the respondents' households
Data collection period	30 January-10 February 2020
Statistical documents used to design the sample	2011 Population Census
Sample frame	Area served by the individual polling station (similar in size to census units) within the strata defined per region and type of settlement (urban and rural). Note: The areas served by individual polling stations ensure the most reliable sample selection due to the fact that the data for these units tend to be the most complete and most up-to-date available.
Sample type	Three-stage random representative stratified sample
Stratification, objective and method	First level of stratification: municipality Second level of stratification: urban and rural settlement
	Objective: Optimised sample plan and reduced sample error Sample allocation across strata is proportionate to stratum size (number of citizens aged 18+).
Urban/rural definition	Settlement classification as urban or rural relies on the administrative decisions. Besides agricultural areas (classified here as rural), the administrative division of settlements into urban and rural ones relies on several combined criteria: number of inhabitants, infrastructure, existence/number of schools (elementary, secondary, university departments), existence/number of health care institutions etc. Thus, the administrative classification into urban and rural settlements is not entirely arbitrary; however, it is not based on the criteria that enable clear definitions of urban and rural.
Definition, number and method of selection - PSU, SSU, TSU	PSU – Area served by the polling station Definition: The area served by the individual polling station is defined as per the voters' register and includes the addresses of the voters assigned to the polling station. It usually covers several streets within a neighbourhood, with on average 200 households, except those settlements where more than 300 households constitute a single unit. PSU sampling type: Probability proportional to size Method of selection: Lahiri (cumulative) SSU – Household Definition: A household includes the people sharing the premises and costs of meals. SSU sampling type: Simple random sampling without substitution Method of selection: Systematic sampling with random selection of starting point and equal step TSU – Respondent Definition: Adult household member Respondent sampling type: Simple random sampling without substitution Method of selection: Random selection of respondents older than 18 years of age.
Error	±1.37% for the phenomena with 5% incidence ±2.72% for the phenomena with 25% incidence ±3.15% for the phenomena with 50% incidence (marginal error)
Sample size	1,007 respondents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the key findings of the survey concerns citizens' awareness of the concept of public procurement. According to the obtained data, 71% of citizens of Montenegro explicitly stated that they did not know what public procurement was and could not explain public procurement in a few words. The increase in the share of citizens unaware of the concept is evident, in comparison with the findings of the 2015 survey, when slightly over one-third could not explain the term "public procurement". On the other hand, the provided explanations included mostly neutral terms, such as "state procurement" and "tender"; positive references such as "transparency" were included less frequently, and negative associations such as "corruption" and "money laundering" also appeared. It therefore seems that, apart from the large share of citizens who could not provide an answer, the rest of the population tended to associate public procurement with the purchase orders made by the state institutions.

With regard to the public opinion on the method of implementation of public procurement in Montenegro, most citizens thought the process was largely unfair, non-transparent, non-objective, partial and unlawful, and that it was guided mainly by partisan rather than by public interests. However, these negative views, when compared with the situation five years ago, were somewhat more moderate, in particular concerning the impartiality of public procurement and its alignment with public interest. Still, as it is important to always place results in the appropriate context, public opinion on public procurement is set against the views on other institutions, taking the perception of corruption as the relevant indicator. This perspective shows that the general attitude of Montenegrin public towards state institutions is negative, the predominant opinion being that almost all of the institutions in the country are corrupt, in varying degrees. The prevalence of such perception enables the conclusion that corruption is most present in the judiciary, prosecution service, sectors involved in privatisation and the police service; majority of citizens provided positive assessments only with regard to educational institutions.

Although the lack of awareness and the generally negative attitude of the public towards state institutions suffice to generate a negative sentiment concerning public procurement, the questions focused solely on public procurement abuse provided similar results. 51% of the population thought that such abuse was widespread. Furthermore, almost one-half of citizens did not believe there were any differences between high- and low-value procurement in terms of abuse. The same assessment applied to the government policies governing public procurement – 60% of citizens thought them insufficiently inclusive of citizens and insufficiently transparent.



Political abuse of public procurement was categorised as three types, and the assessment focused on citizens' perceptions of the frequency of occurrence of each type. It turned out that majority of population recognised all three types of abuse as more or less frequent phenomena. The scenario that was perceived as the most frequent one described the situations where a company would donate money to the political party after a tender. It was followed by the scenario where political parties awarded procurement contracts to their donors after elections. Lastly, citizens thought that it was not infrequent that the companies that a ministry does business with would be linked to the minister.

Bearing in mind all of the above, namely the negative associations linked to the term "public procurement", the estimated degree of corruption, the largely negative attitudes towards the government procedures and policies in the field, it did not come as a surprise that one-half of Montenegrin citizens were dissatisfied with public procurement review. Compared with the situation five years before, the share of those who were dissatisfied with the review was somewhat lower; still, at the same time, the share of those unaware of review-related issues increased. In relation to this matter, six out of ten citizens thought the media did not pay sufficient attention to the fight against malfeasance and abuse in the field of public procurement. This is particularly telling if we recall that 7 out of 10 citizens did not provide an answer when asked to define public procurement. Finally, almost one-half of the Montenegrin public reported that the situation in the field of public procurement was neither significantly better nor worse, but the same as five years earlier.

All of the above prompts three main conclusions. Firstly, citizens' views on public procurement are slightly more favourable than they were in 2015. Secondly, irrespective of the previous point, the public opinion remains predominantly negative. Lastly, the level of media attention devoted to this topic is low and corresponds with the level of citizen awareness.

SURVEY RESULTS

Do the citizens know what public procurement means?

The survey examined public opinion on public procurement procedures in Montenegro. However, before we examined citizens' assessments of the transparency, legality and inclusiveness of the work of the sectors involved in public procurement, we wished to examine to what extent citizens were familiar with the concept itself and what kind of references they used to describe it.

Citizens' responses to the open-ended question phrased: "What is public procurement? Please describe in a few words." were diverse and could be categorised into four groups. First of all, those who provided explanations of the term mostly used **neutral references** that linked public procurement to state institutions and tenders where the state acted as the purchaser of goods and services. The second group included those who described public procurement using **negative terms** such as "corruption", "money laundering" and "abuse of office". Lastly, an even smaller share of citizens described public procurement using **positive terms**, such as "transparency" and "purchases of public nature".

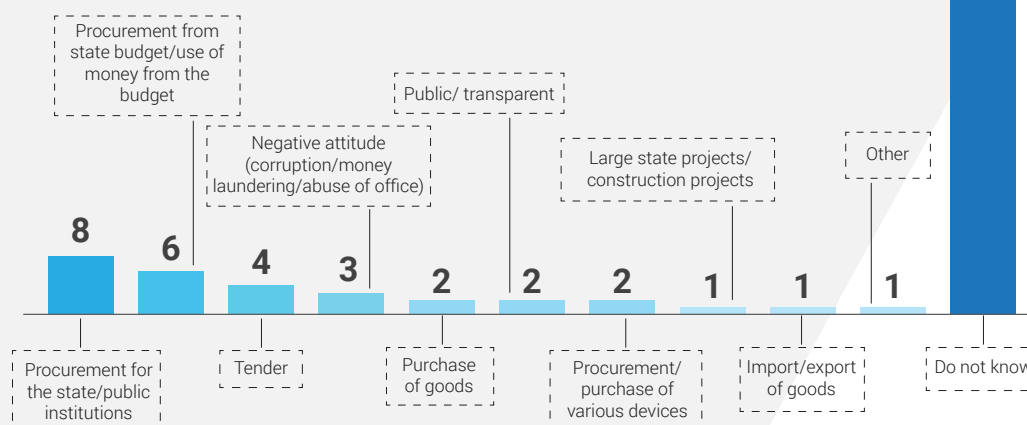
However, in the context of all the responses presented above, the elementary (lack of) awareness of the Montenegrin public concerning public procurement was evident from the following: while the share of general population unaware of the concept was 37% in the 2015 survey, **the new data showed that the number of citizens who explicitly stated they did not know what public procurement meant and could not describe the term in a few words had almost doubled, reaching 71%²**. That share increases further when this group is combined with those who provided incorrect answers (e.g. "import and export of goods") and those who mentioned "corruption", "money laundering" and "abuse of office" (these negative terms should be interpreted more as an attitude towards public procurement procedures in Montenegro rather than awareness of the concept).

Compared with the **results for the entire surveyed sample**, statistically significant differences are identified for some socio-demographic categories of population. Thus, the negative references such as corruption, money laundering and abuse of office are more frequently used by male respondents and those aged 30-39. **The level of awareness of the concept of public procurement could also be said to be proportionate to the respondents' level of education, with those with higher education levels being considerably better informed on the subject.**

2 The effect of high prevalence of respondents not informed on the subject-matter on the quality of obtained results was mitigated by the definition of public procurement provided after this question.

Graph 1. What is public procurement, in your view? How would you describe public procurement in a few words?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

What do citizens think of the public procurement in Montenegro?

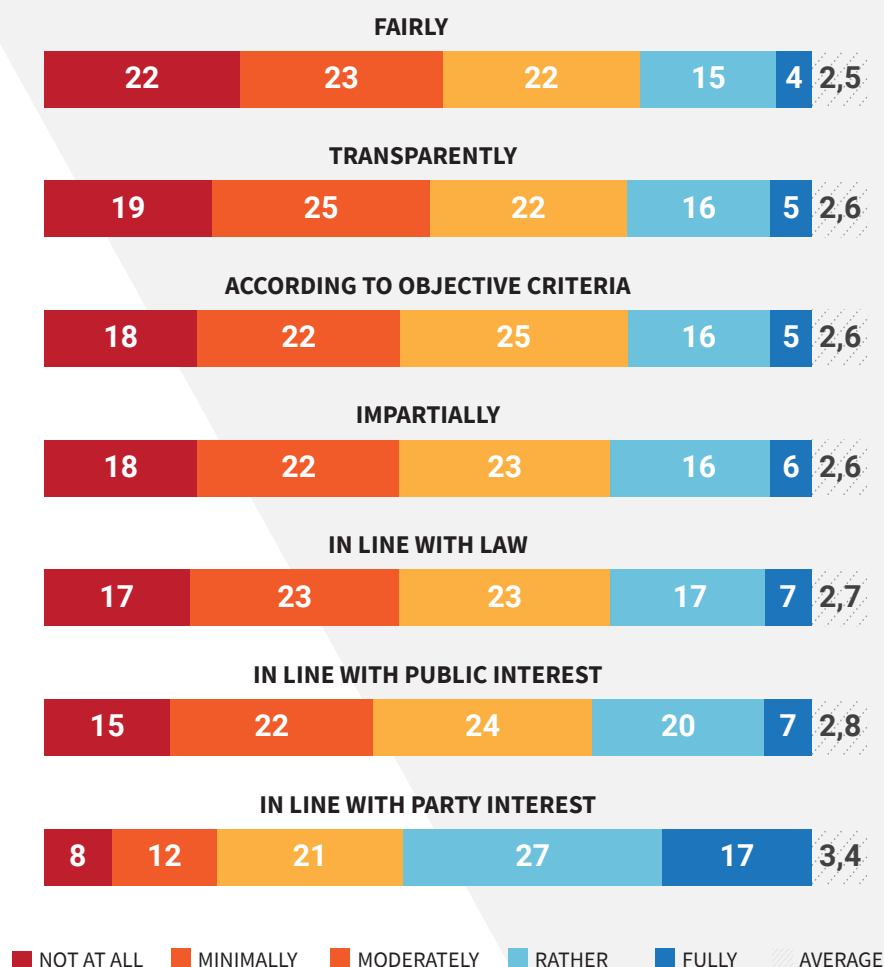
Although neutral references tend to prevail in the definitions of the concept of public procurement, **citizens tend to give negative assessment of the process when further specifying their attitudes**. On the five-level scale with 3 marking the average, all of the affirmative characteristics received below-average scores; the only one that was above the average (3.4) was the statement that public procurement were being implemented in line with partisan interests (i.e. majority of citizens agreed with the statement). From among the positive characteristics, the one that received the best score was the statement that public procurement were being implemented in line with the public interest (2.8), with smaller shares of citizens convinced of the impartiality, objectivity, transparency and, ultimately, honest implementation of the procedures.

Comparisons of the results obtained for the entire population and those obtained for specific categories of population suggest that younger citizens (aged 18 – 29) and those from the southern region provided more favourable assessments of the public procurement process (though still predominantly negative), while the older ones (65+) and those from the northern region showed particularly critical attitude towards the method

of their implementation. For instance, while the younger population and those from the southern region on average awarded the score of 2.9 for public procurement legality, the score awarded by the older ones and the ones from the northern region was 2.5.

Graph 2.1. To what extent does the public procurement process unfold in the manner listed below, in your view?

Base: Total target population.

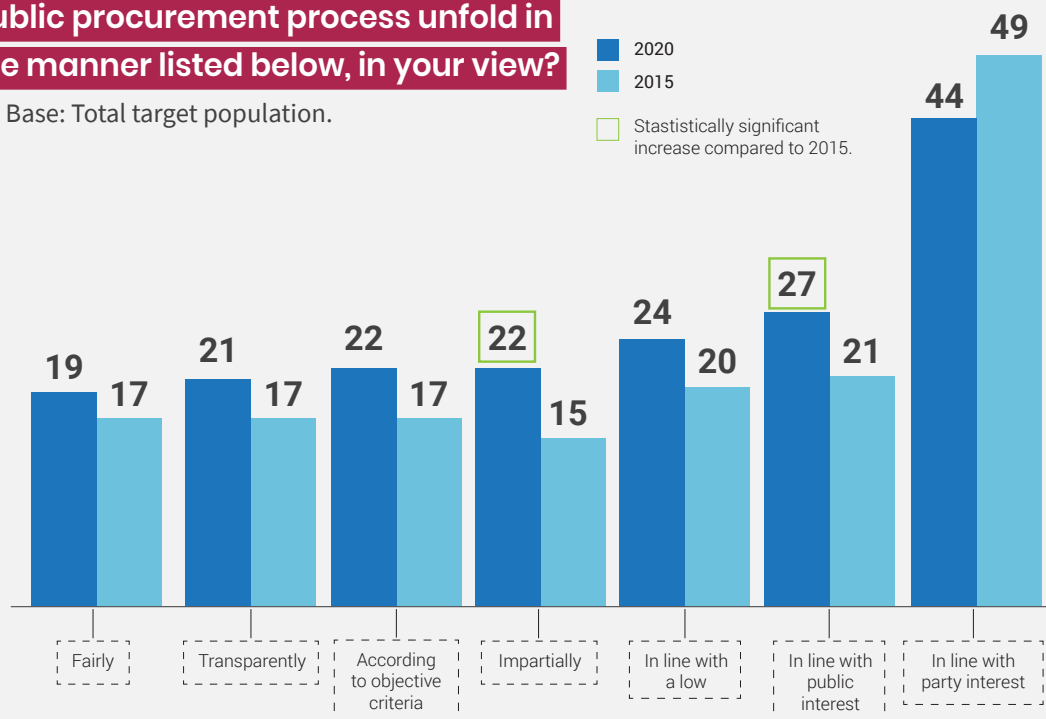


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to "round up" function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

Compared with the period four-and-a-half years earlier, the predominantly negative scores are still somewhat more moderate. This is suggested by the increase in the number of citizens thinking that public procurement was being implemented impartially (15% in 2015 vs. 22% in 2020) and in line with the public interest (21% in 2015 vs. 27% in 2020).

Graph 2.2. To what extent does the public procurement process unfold in the manner listed below, in your view?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

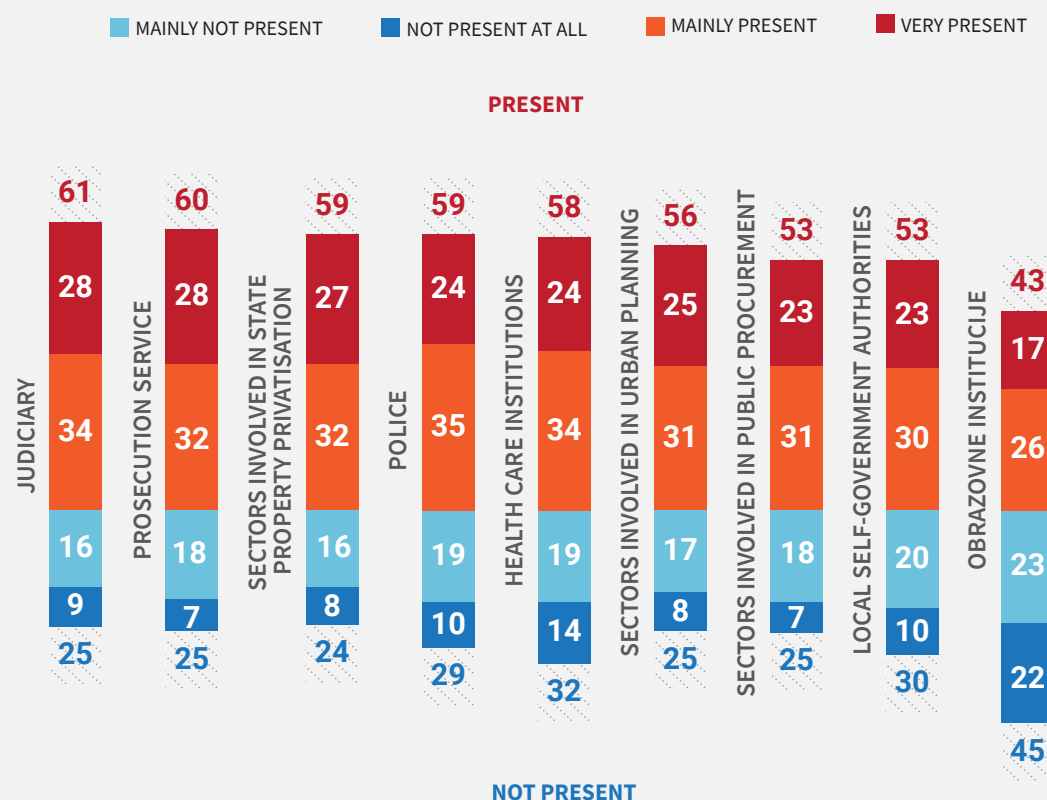
To get a complete picture of the public opinion concerning public procurement procedure, the obtained results need to be placed in context and the attitude towards public procurement set against the attitudes towards other institutions. Perception of corruption serves as a good for the purpose – in addition to assessing the public procurement process, it also shows the general attitude of the public towards corrupt practices in the country.

Corruption perception measurements showed that most citizens believed that corruption was present across practically all institutions in Montenegro. This finding applied in particular to the judiciary, prosecution service, sectors involved in privatisation of state property and the police, with perceived presence of corruption ranging between 59% and 61%. On the other hand, from among the group of institutions suggested, **only educational institutions possessed credibility in the eyes of most citizens**. In comparison, the sectors involved in public procurement ranked around the middle of the list. One-half of citizens saw them as corrupt, while one-quarter of citizens thought that corruption was mainly not present or not present at all. It could therefore be stated that the situation in general is poor, but still somewhat better than the situation of most other institutions.



Graph 3.1. To what extent is corruption present among the following institutions in Montenegro, in your view?

Base: Total target population.



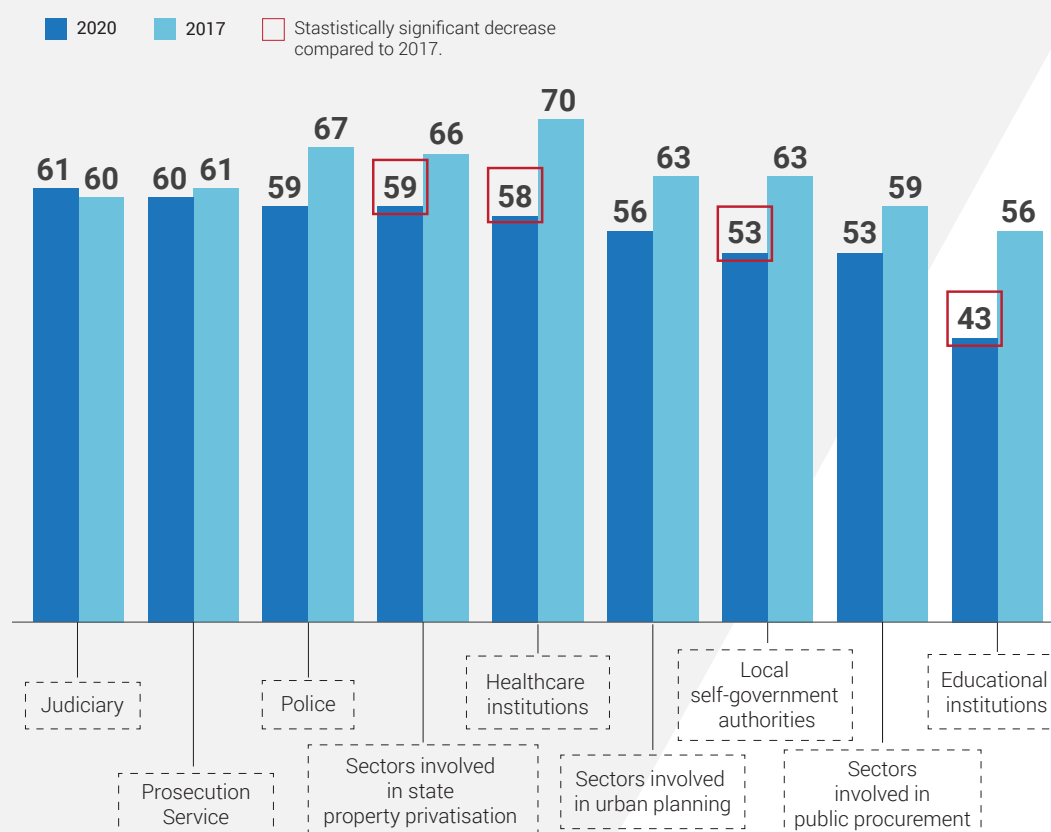
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

Compared with the perceptions of corruption from 2017,³ **several institutions recorded progress.** Health care institutions achieved biggest progress: perceived as the most corrupt ones in 2017, they ranked fifth on the list; according to the latest data, educational institutions were the only ones that obtained a positive score. In addition, considerable progress was recorded in relation to the sectors involved in privatisation of state property and local self-government authorities. Data seem to suggest progress also in relation to the sectors involved in public procurement; still, the difference between the two rounds of surveys is not statistically significant and as such does not support such a statement. The degree of perceived corruption for the rest of the institutions remained the same.

³ Public opinion on corruption – survey conducted by the Ipsos Agency for the Institute Alternative in November 2017, within the project “Towards Qualitative Signs of the Anti-corruption Efficacy”. The report with the survey results is available at: <https://bit.ly/2WQBtCN>

Graph 3.2. To what extent is corruption present among the following institutions in Montenegro, in your view?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

What is public opinion on public procurement abuse?

As already shown, a larger share of the population in Montenegro believed that corruption was present in the sectors involved in public procurement. Furthermore, a certain share of citizens described the term by referring to abuse and corruption. However, this applied even more to other institutions in the Montenegrin society. Thus, in order to obtain a more detailed picture of the specific aspects of public procurement abuse, we examined the frequency and distinguished between types of abuse depending on the size of procurement and the relations between the entities involved.

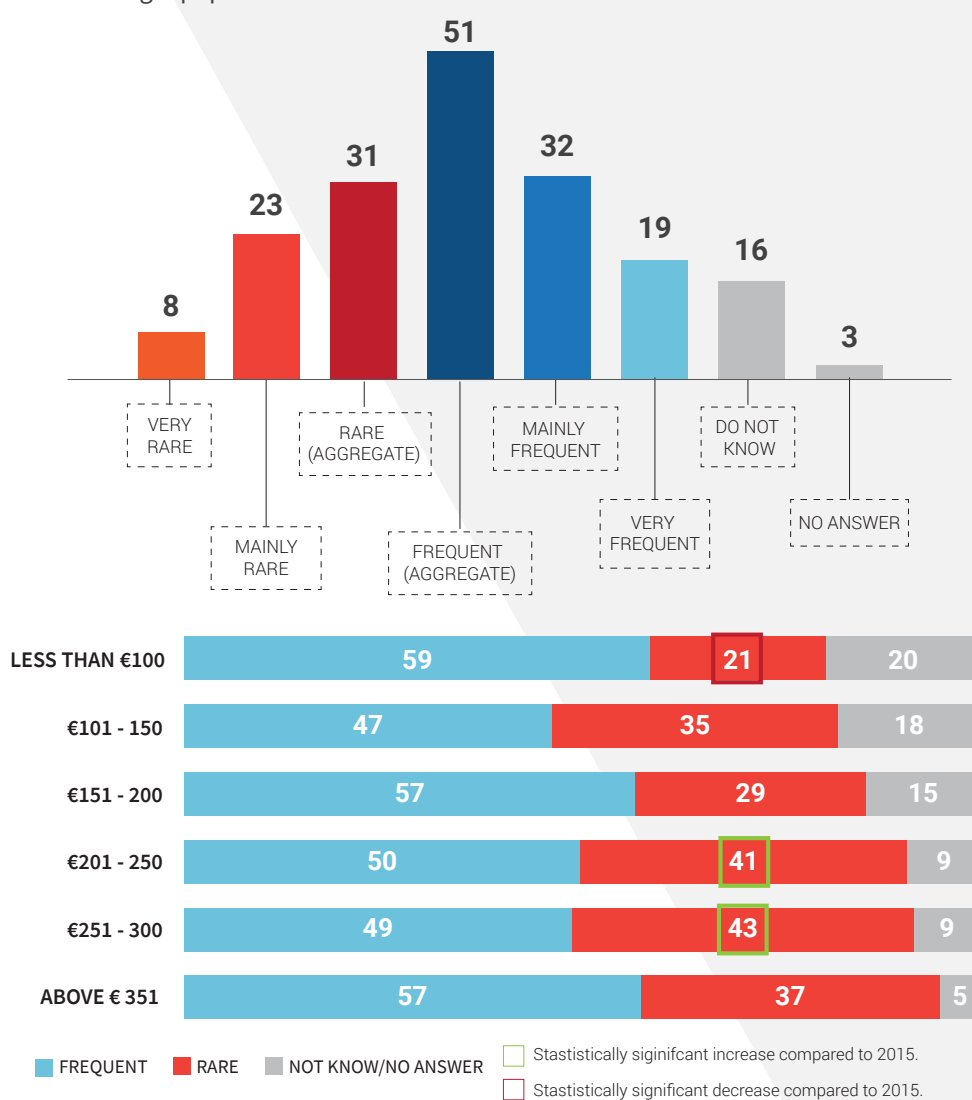
One-half of citizens of Montenegro thought that abuse and malfeasance were frequent phenomena in public procurement implementation. On the other hand, one-third of citizens thought that abuse and malfeasance were rare. The ratio between

the negative and positive views was mirrored by the difference in intensity – almost one-fifth of citizens thought that abuse and malfeasance occurred very frequently, while 8% attributed the same intensity to the view on the opposite side of the scale.

Although all categories of the population largely thought that abuse and malfeasance were frequent, some socio-demographic groups thought them rare. Thus, citizens aged 18-29, those whose income per household member was EUR 200-300 and those living in the southern region were more inclined than the rest to think that abuse and malfeasance were rare. On the other hand, citizens with less than EUR 100 per household member were considerably less likely to have this view than the rest of the population.

Graph 4.1. Would you say that abuse and malfeasance in implementing public procurement in Montenegro are:

Base: Total target population.

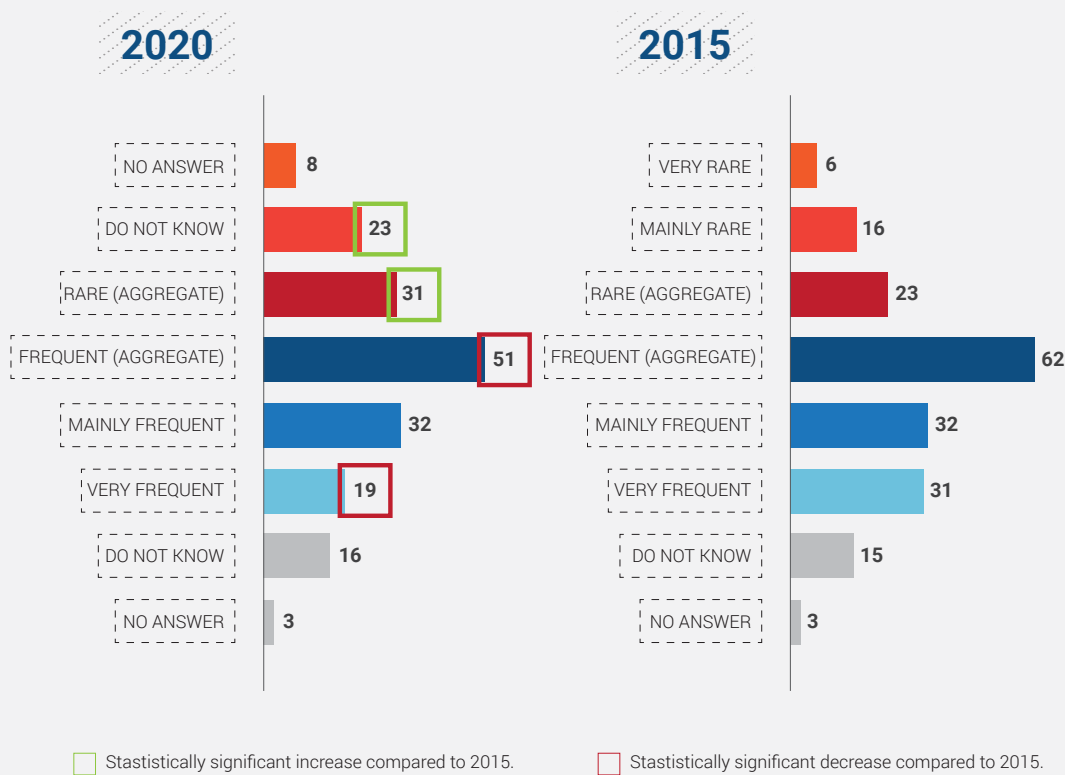


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

Compared with the period five year earlier, the attitudes of the public concerning the frequency of abuse and malfeasance showed evident improvement: 62% of the population thought that the two were frequent in 2015, compared to 51% in 2020. It is important to note here that the smaller share of citizens reporting that abuse was frequent did not spill over into the undecided category, but pushed up the number of those sharing the opposite view, namely that abuse was rare (from 23% to 31%). The positive change in the ratio between negative and positive views is also mirrored by the intensity of such views: earlier, almost one-third of the population thought that abuse and malfeasance took place *very frequently*, compared to one-fifth in the new survey.

Graph 4.2. Would you say that abuse and malfeasance in implementing public procurement in Montenegro is:

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

Since public procurement may vary in size and scale and value, we wished to examine whether the public distinguished between corrupt practices in relation to the size of procurement. To that end, we asked the citizens whether they thought that abuse and malfeasance were more frequent in relation to high- or low-value procurement. According to the data, **most citizens, i.e. almost a half of the population of Montenegro thought that corrupt practices were equally present in the two categories.** In the group of citizens



who could distinguish between the two categories, more citizens thought that abuse was more frequent in high-value procurement. Thus, 28% of citizens thought that abuse was more frequent in high-value procurement, while 7% thought that low-value procurement was more prone to abuse.

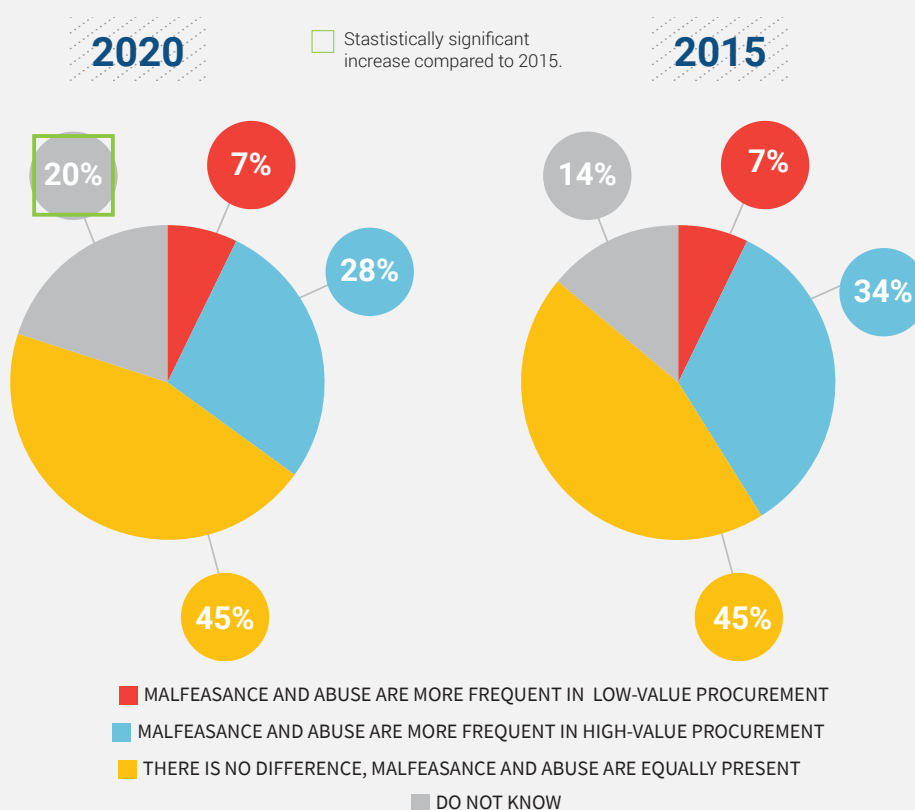
There was no major change in the public opinion in this regard compared to the period five years ago. However, the statistically significant change referred to the share of respondents who were undecided, i.e. could not give an answer. **The share of this group in the general population in 2015 and in the latest round was 14% and 20%, respectively.** When looked at in relation to specific socio-demographic categories, the share of the undecided was even higher among women (24%), citizens with lowest education levels (28%) and citizens from the northern region (26%).

Thus, citizens' attitude towards public procurement procedures in Montenegro tends to be largely negative. The biggest share thought abuse in general was frequent, regardless of the size of procurement.

Graph 5. In your view, are abuse and malfeasance more frequent in Montenegro with regard to implementation of low-value procurement or high-value procurement, or there is no difference?

Base: Total target population.

Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to "round up" function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.



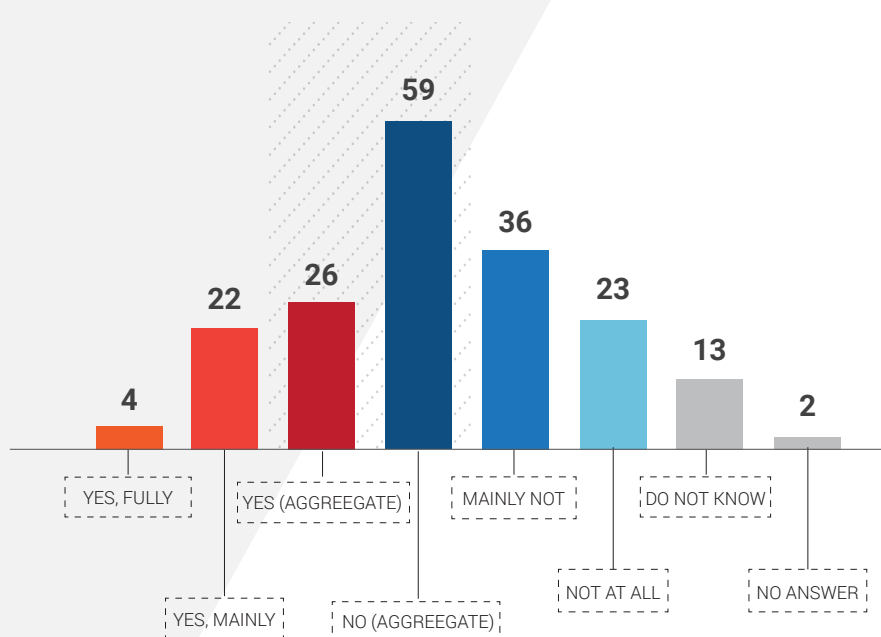
The questions above referred to the public opinion concerning the frequency and nature of public procurement abuse in general. Since the field of public procurement is regulated by political institutions, the citizens' views presented below refer also to the practices of political actors. We primarily wished to identify the degree of citizens' satisfaction with the transparency of government policies in this field.

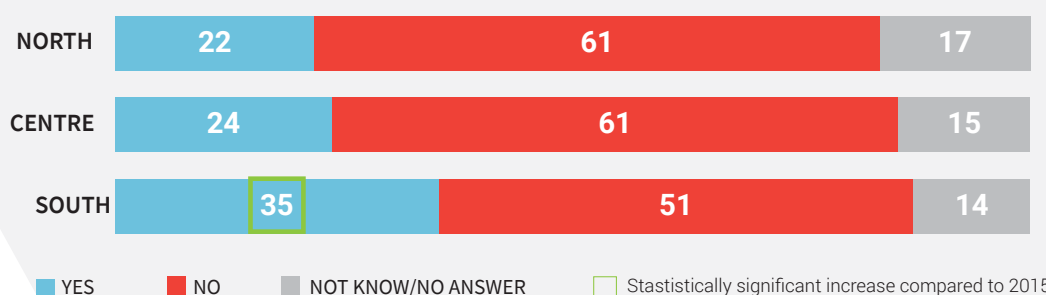
Six out of ten citizens believed that government policy in the field of public procurement was not sufficiently transparent or inclusive of citizens. On the other hand, one in four held the opposing view. As with the answers to the previous questions, the ratio between positive and negative attitudes was mirrored by the different degrees of intensity. While 23% of citizens thought that government policy was not transparent or inclusive at all, the share of citizens who held the opposing views of the same intensity was 4%.

The subpopulation of retired people stands out in relation to these data, with 33% holding an extremely negative view ("not at all") on the government policy in the field of public procurement; in aggregate, citizens from the southern region held a more positive view (35% vs. 26% for the entire sample).

Graph 6. Do you believe that the government policy in the field of public procurement is transparent, accessible and visible to the public and sufficiently inclusive of citizens?

Base: Total target population.





Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

As shown above, the public predominantly saw the public procurement process in Montenegro as unlawful, unfair, prone to abuse and non-transparent. We further wished to explore citizens’ views on the more specific patterns of abuse, such as links between political and economic actors i.e. political parties and their donors. We looked at the citizens’ assessments of the frequency of three types of abuse: 1) companies donating money to parties following tenders; 2) parties awarding procurement contracts to their donors following the elections; 3) each minister being linked with some companies that the ministry does business with. **The results show that all three types of abuse are recognised as frequent.**

The first type of abuse, *where companies, having won tenders, show their gratitude to the parties by donating them money in the next election*, was seen as the most frequent one. 20% of citizens thought that this occurred almost always, 27% frequently, and 24% sometimes. **In aggregate, almost one-half of the general population of Montenegro thought that such malfeasance took place often or almost always.** Statistically significant differences were identified for the subpopulations of male respondents, retired people and those from the northern region – they were more likely than the rest to believe that this type of abuse occurred almost always.

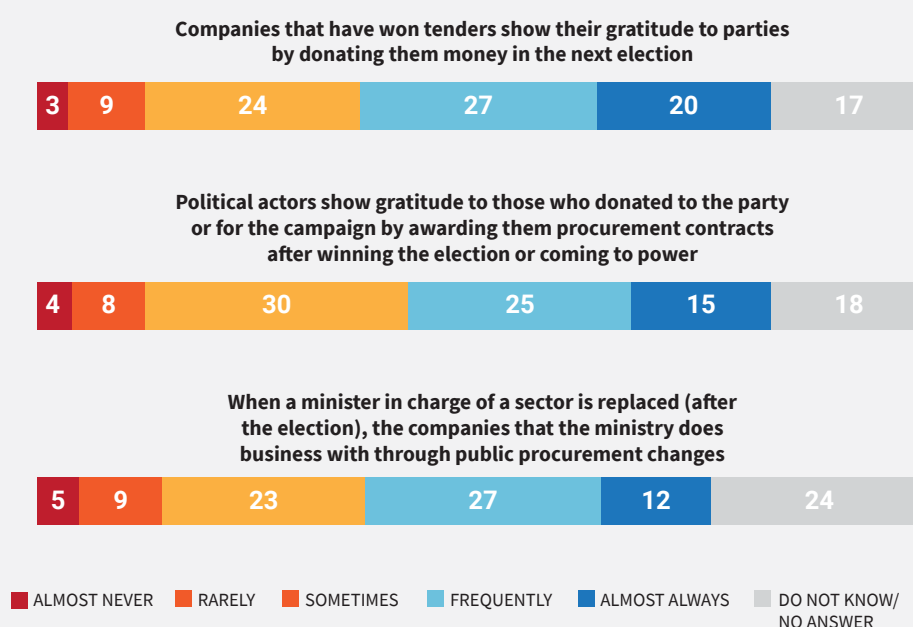
Citizens thought that the second type of abuse, *where political actors showed gratitude to those who donated to the party or for the campaign by awarding them procurement contracts after winning the election or coming to power*, was somewhat less frequent than the first one. **In aggregate, 40% of the general population of Montenegro thought that this form of abuse occurred frequently or almost always.** Here, more responses indicating maximum frequency (*almost always*) were provided by the citizens from the northern region and those with income below EUR 100 per household member.

In aggregate, the form of manipulation *where a change of minister in charge of a particular sector means also a change in the selection of companies that the ministry does business with through public procurement*, obtained similar results as the form described above.

Two-fifths of the Montenegrin public thought this was frequent or even regular. However, a higher share of those undecided in their responses i.e. not sure which frequency to opt for, was also evident here (the question may have been more difficult to answer, since it required more awareness than the previous two, as suggested by the fact that the share of undecided answers was higher among the less educated groups of population). The responses provided by male respondents stand out from among the socio-demographic categories of population, with 16% of them stating that this type of abuse occurred almost always.

Graph 7. How frequently do these situations take place, in your view?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

As shown above, the majority of citizens identified specific types of abuse; depending on the case, the belief that abuse takes place often or almost always was present among 39% to 47% of respondents. Consequently, such attitudes of the public may be expected to be accompanied by widespread dissatisfaction with public procurement review.

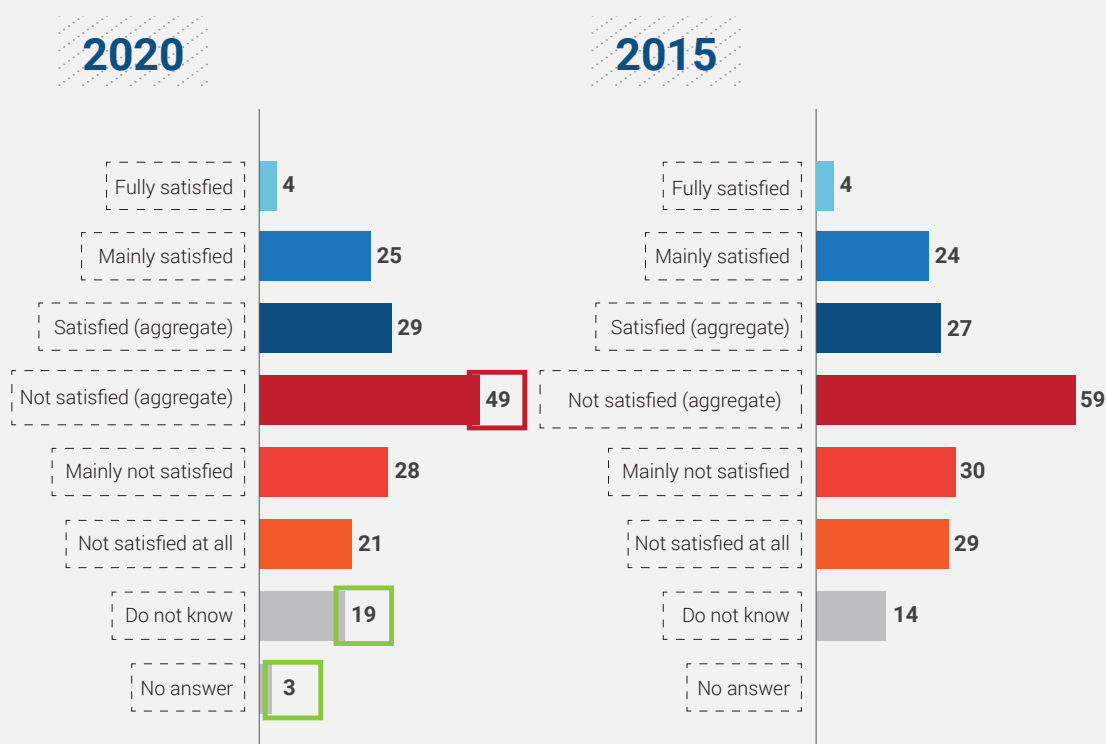
The survey results are consistent in this regard. **One half of the Montenegrin public was dissatisfied with public procurement review.** On the one hand, 28% of adult population were mainly dissatisfied with public procurement review, while 21% were not satisfied at all. On the other hand, 25% of adult population were mainly satisfied, while the share of those fully satisfied was 4%.

When broken down by education levels, data shows that the share of dissatisfied respondents was lower among those who held primary education certificate (35%), but so was the share of those unable to assess or answer (32%).

The results thus show that the bigger part of the public identify frequent abuse, which makes many citizens dissatisfied with the public procurement review. However, comparison with the attitudes of the public from 5 years ago shows two significant differences. Firstly, **the number of dissatisfied citizens in 2020 was lower than 5 years before**. While, dissatisfaction in 2015 was present among 59% of citizens in aggregate, the share in 2020 was 49%. However, the smaller share of dissatisfied respondents was coupled with the bigger share of the undecided ones. Unlike 2015, the share of members of public unaware of public procurement review was higher in 2020 (increase from 14% to 19%), along with a certain share of citizens who declined the answer to the question in 2020 (3%).

Graph 8. In general terms, how satisfied are you with the public procurement review in Montenegro?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

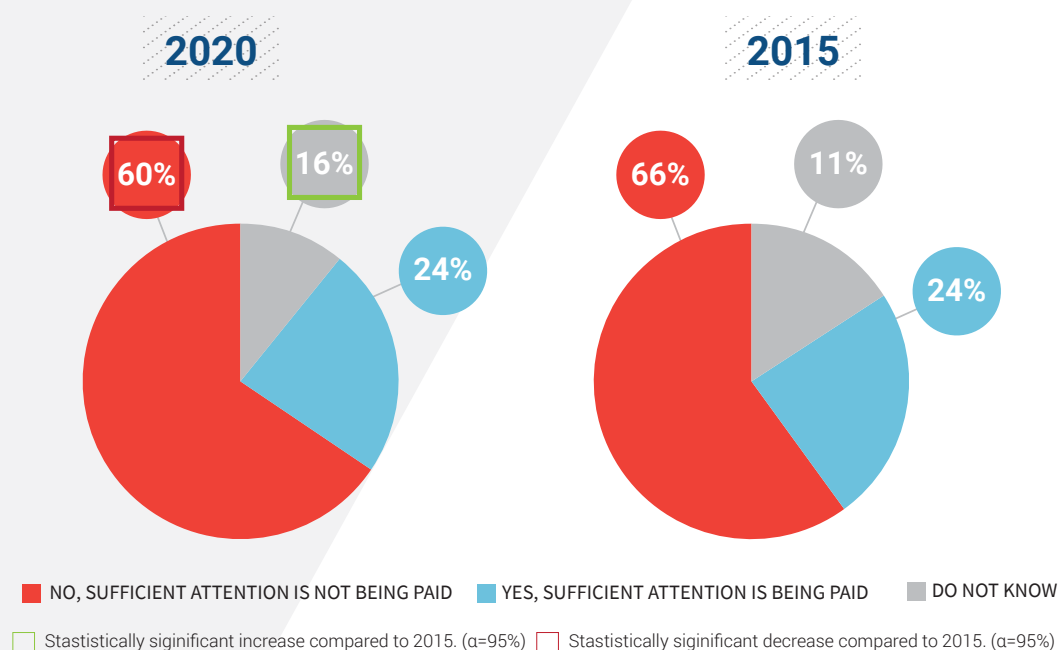
Media coverage of public procurement

The comparison between the two rounds of surveys shows that the public is less aware of public procurement than in 2015. Since the media play an important role in informing the public, we wished to see whether there was adequate media coverage of the topics related to public procurement abuse.

According to the data, **six out of ten citizens thought that the media did not pay sufficient attention to the importance of countering malfeasance and abuse of public procurement.** On the other hand, one-fifth of citizens thought that these topics were adequately covered by the media. Positive views in this regard were expressed to a larger extent by the citizens with higher education levels (32%), while the share of those unfamiliar with the issue was higher in the subpopulations of housewives (25%), those living in the northern region (23%) and those with lowest education level (23%). The situation did not change much compared with the period five years ago. Positive assessments of the media were equally distributed, with a certain share of negative answers spilling over into the undecided group, thus lowering the share of those who thought that the media did not pay sufficient attention to the fight against abuse and malfeasance.

Graph 9. Do the media pay sufficient attention to the importance of countering malfeasance and abuse of public procurement, in your view?

Base: Total target population.



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to “round up” function, the sum of the percentages will not always be 100.

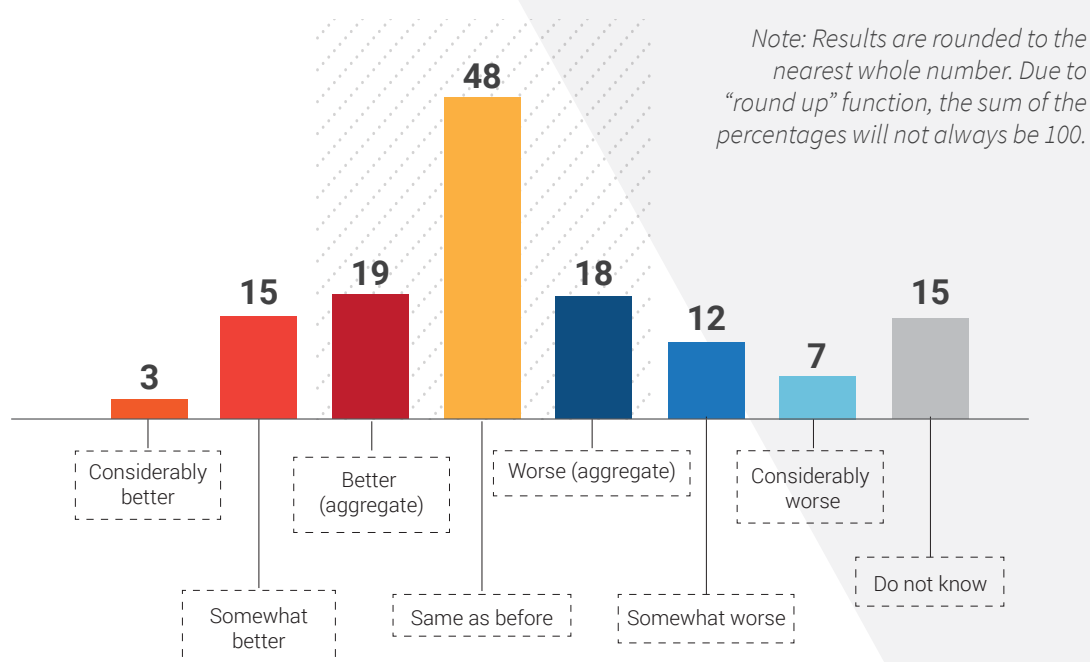
Is the public procurement process better now?

The attitudes of the public covered by this survey indicate the degree of satisfaction among citizens during the period in question; thus, the responses serve as performance indicators for the institutions involved in regulating and implementing public procurement and promoting good practices in the field. In that sense, the reference point for each question was the citizens' subjective view of the extent to which public procurement was transparent, inclusive, free from corruption and abuse.

By keeping track of the relevant attitudes over time, we obtain an insight into the potential changes in the mentioned attributes, taking as reference points the results of the previous survey conducted in 2015. So, we asked citizens to compare the current process of public procurement implementation with the one that was in place 5 years before.

One-half of citizens thought that public procurement procedures and processes were being implemented in the same manner as 5 years before. The answers were distributed quite symmetrically: in addition to most citizens not perceiving any changes, there was an almost equal share of those who thought that the public procurement process was better (19%) and those who thought it was worse (18%) than five years before. Breakdown by socio-demographic categories shows differences in views across income brackets. Those citizens whose income per household member was up to EUR 100 were more likely to state that the situation was worse, while the ones whose income exceeded EUR 250 were more likely to state that the situation had improved. Finally, those from the northern region (22%) seemed to be less familiar with the issue than the rest.

Graph 10. If you compare, in general, the way public procurement procedures and processes are implemented now and the way they used to be implemented 5 years ago, would you say the situation now is:





CONCLUSIONS

The survey presented here aimed to examine the knowledge and attitudes of the public concerning public procurement procedures, policies that govern them, presence of corruption in public procurement, and media coverage of relevant topics. To that end, data were collected through a survey of adult citizens of Montenegro, using a nationally representative sample, which enabled reliable generalisation of results. The obtained data were compared with the results of the previous round of surveys, which allowed for the comparison of the situation in the field of public procurement with the one five years earlier.

The data presented here prompt several conclusions::

Citizens of Montenegro tend to give a negative assessment of the public procurement procedures

Most citizens believe that public procurement procedures are mainly implemented in an unfair, non-transparent, non-objective and partial manner and that they are guided more by partisan rather than public interests. Abuse and malfeasance are believed to be frequent phenomena. It is also believed that there is a strong unlawful link between political and economic players. Given this, one in two citizens of Montenegro are not satisfied with the review that is supposed to prevent abuse.

The presence of negative attitudes varies depending on gender, age, region and income

Although members of all socio-demographic categories of population show scepticism and negative attitudes, the presence of such beliefs varies. Thus, negative attitudes are more frequent among male respondents, older citizens, citizens from the northern region and those in the lowest income brackets. On the other hand, negative attitudes are comparatively less present among younger citizens, those from the southern region and those in higher income brackets.

Presence of negative attitudes is lower in comparison with 2017...

The general impression is that the negative attitudes of the public towards state institutions are more moderate than some two years ago. The current data suggest a smaller share of citizens who see the institutions involved in health care, education, privatisation, and local self-governments as corrupt. This general sentiment is reflected in the attitudes concerning public procurement. A slightly lower share of citizens believe that abuse is frequent, which then results in the somewhat less widespread dissatisfaction with public procurement review. Still, if we rely on citizens' assessment, only one-fifth of the population believe that the situation is better, while one-half perceive no change.

...but the public is drastically less familiar with the field of public procurement.

When the two survey rounds are compared, the most striking finding is the almost doubled share of the citizens who demonstrate a lack of awareness concerning public procurement. While the share of those who provided no explanation of the term in 2015 was 37%, in 2020 71% of adult population could not define public procurement. This worsening in the level of citizen awareness is illustrated by the increase in the share of citizens who could not distinguish between abuse in high- and low-value procurement in 2020, and the share of citizens who could not specify their level of satisfaction with public procurement review. Since the chief social function of the media is citizen information, such lack of awareness does not come as a surprise and coincides with the view shared by 60% of the population that the media do not focus sufficiently on the importance of countering public procurement abuse.

[Institute Alternative \(IA\)](#) is a non-governmental organisation, established in September 2007 by a group of citizens with experience in civil society, public administration and business sector.

[Our mission](#) is to contribute to strengthening of democracy and good governance through and policy analysis as well as monitoring of public institutions performance.

[Our objectives](#) are to increase the quality of work, accountability and transparency, efficiency of public institutions and public officials; to encourage open, public, constructive and well-argument discussions on important policy issues; raising public awareness about important policy issues, strengthening the capacity of all sectors in the state and society for the development of public policies.

[The values](#) we follow in our work are dedication to our mission, independence, constant learning, networking, cooperation and teamwork.

We function as a [think tank](#) or a research centre, focusing on the overarching areas of good governance, transparency and accountability.

On the basis of our five programmes, we monitor the process of accession negotiations with the EU, actively participating in working groups Public procurement (5), Judiciary and Fundamental rights (23) and Financial control (32). Our flagship project is the Public Policy School, which is organised since 2012, and in 2018 we organised the first Open Budget School.

So far we cooperated with over 40 organisations within regional networks in the Western Balkans and with over 100 organisations in Montenegro. Institute is actively engaged in regional networks: Think for Europe (TEN), Pointpulse, SELDI, WeBER, UNCAC Coalition, Global BTAP, PASOS and The Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection.

The results of our research are summarised in 107 studies, reports and analyses, and the decision-makers were addressed 1036 recommendations. Over four thousand times we communicated our proposals and recommendation to the media for better quality public policies.

We started three internet pages. [My town](#) is a pioneer endeavour of visualisation of budgetary data of local self-administrations. [My Administration](#) followed, which serves as an address for all those citizens that have encountered a problem when interacting with public administration and its service delivery system. The newest internet portal, [My Money](#), provided national budget data visualisation.

Institute Alternative regularly publishes information about finances, projects and donors that support the work of the organisation. For this reason, the Institute have five-stars rating third year in a row, according to a survey conducted by the international non-profit organisation Transparify, which evaluates transparency for over 200 research centers.

President of the Managing Board is Stevo Muk, and our organisation currently has ten members.
