



Media in Montenegro

from the perspective of
citizens and journalists



Kingdom of the Netherlands

B | T | D The Balkan Trust
for Democracy
A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



Norwegian Embassy
Belgrade

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from the perspective of
citizens and journalists

Podgorica, 2021

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01 Introduction

The emergence of a multi-party system in Montenegro was simultaneously accompanied by the development of the media scene through the formation of the first private media. This parallel would have no significance in societies with developed democratic and institutional mechanisms, but it does in a society where political and media intertwining is intense. The fourth branch of government, as the media are often informally called, has the role of guardian of the public interest. In this context, the trust of citizens is crucial for the media that aspire to be the serious actors.

Within the general decline of journalistic standards, followed by ratings based on reality television programmes in which violence and light entertainment dominate, trust is what the media must strive for. In the harsh struggle for survival, in which marketing income often prevails over objective, professional and independent journalism, the fundamental functions of serious media such as informative, control and educational are easily forgotten.

Therefore, it is not surprising that public opinion findings indicate that the vast majority of citizens (87.2%) consider that the media in Montenegro are willing or somewhat willing to publish sensational information that are not verified at all or insufficiently verified to increase circulation and ratings. At the same time, research of citizens' perceptions of the media indicates that almost half of them consider that media in Montenegro are not impartial, and almost half of them think that media use facts mixed with rumours.

The role of journalists in protecting the interests of citizens is enormous, and the only proper manner to respond to that responsibility is to remain committed to the profession, no matter who holds the levers of power. In a time of misinformation and fake news, a journalist is the regulator of the content given to the public. Even the best self-regulatory and regulatory bodies are not strong enough mechanisms if there are no journalists with integrity, ready to protect the dignity of their profession. Journalists should oppose any internal and external manipulations of various interest groups through credible reporting.

In addition to empirical research, we conducted 10 profound, qualitative interviews with journalists, editors and media owners of different generations and genders, from the local and national levels. The publication also provides insight into their attitudes on the environment for the media work in Montenegro, the status of journalists, the role of the media in democratizing society, journalism ethics, influence on the work of the media (internal and external), sensationalism in the media, investigative journalism, economic sustainability of the media, etc. The additional value of this publication is that the responses of citizens and media representatives to identical questions can be compared in one place.

Thorough, qualitative interviews with journalists, editors and media owners conducted and processed researchers of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE). On the other hand, expert support in conducting a public opinion poll, from 20 to 25 March 2021, was provided by the Damar agency, with application of the CAPI method, and with a random stratified sample of 991 adult respondents. Similar research on citizens' attitudes was conducted by the Damar agency in 2018, which enabled comparative insight into the set of issues that can be valuable for understanding the complexity of the situation in the media sphere and planning further media policies, but also as an indicator of changes in certain aspects covered within this research.

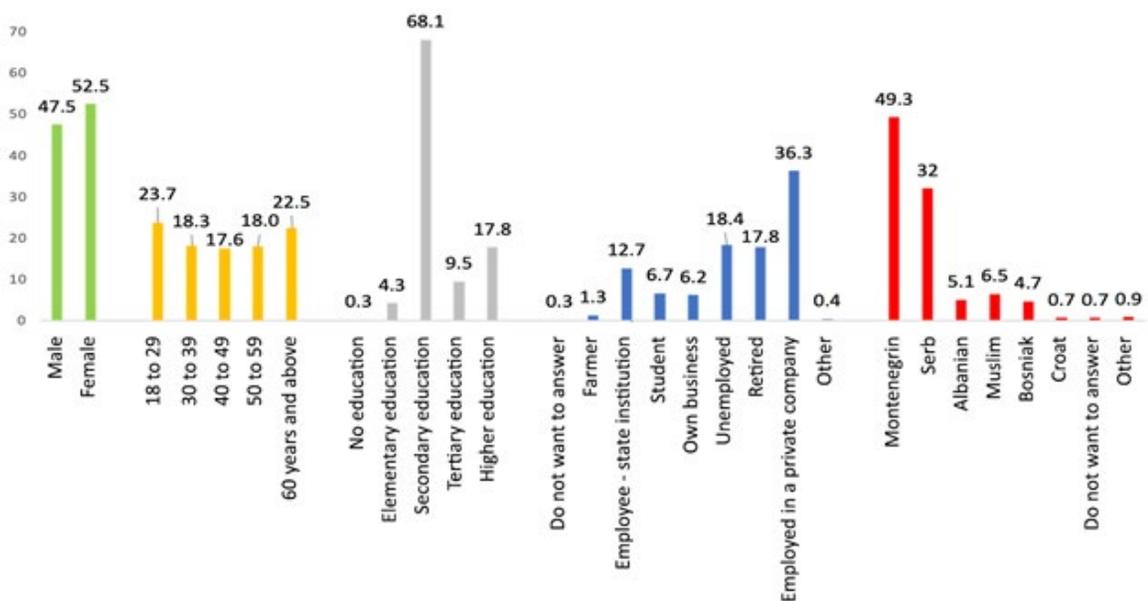
We owe special gratitude to the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway and the Balkan Trust for Democracy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (BTD) who supported the production of this publication through the project "Media for Me!", implemented by the CCE.

02 Citizens' perceptions of the media in Montenegro – methodology

Performance:	Data collection conducted from 20 to 25 March 2021
Sample frame:	Citizens of Montenegro older than 18 years according to the 2011 census
Sample size:	991
Sample type:	Three-stage, stratified, random sample
	First stage: Polling stations
	Second stage: Household by the method of random selection
	Third stage: Household member by birthday method
Research type:	CAPI with an average duration of 15 minutes

Graph 1 - General methodological notes

03 Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample



Graph 2 - Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

04 Citizens' perceptions of the media in Montenegro – findings

How frequently do you consume the following type of media?

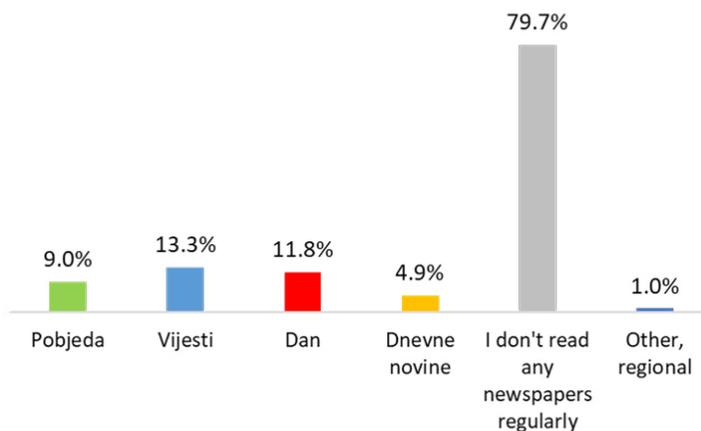
Citizens of Montenegro mostly (often and very often) watch TV - 75.3%, then they follow Internet portals 61% and social media 60.1%.

2021	Never	Very rarely	Rarely	Often	Very often
Print media	44.0%	19.4%	16.3%	12.7%	7.6%
Radio	31.9%	14.7%	18.6%	20.7%	14.1%
TV	2.0%	3.9%	18.7%	37.2%	38.1%
Online portals	20.4%	6.2%	12.4%	27.0%	34.0%
Social media	25.4%	3.5%	10.9%	25.0%	35.1%
2018	Never	Very rarely	Rarely	Often	Very often
Print media	25.7%	17.2%	23.6%	23.2%	10.3%
Radio	19.5%	14.7%	24.4%	32.4%	9.0%
TV	6.1%	5.4%	18.8%	45.5%	24.2%
Online portals	20.4%	7.9%	13.1%	36.6%	22%
Social media	28.8%	7.6%	11.9%	29%	22.7%

Graph 3 - Media popularity (by media type) - 2021 vs 2018

Compared to 2018, there was a significant decrease in the popularity of print media (by 13.2%), but also an increase in the consumption of social media (by 8.4%) and television (by 5.6%). Internet portal visits increased by 2.4% in the past 3 years, while listening to the Radio as a media decreased by 6.6%.

Which daily newspapers do you read on regular basis?¹

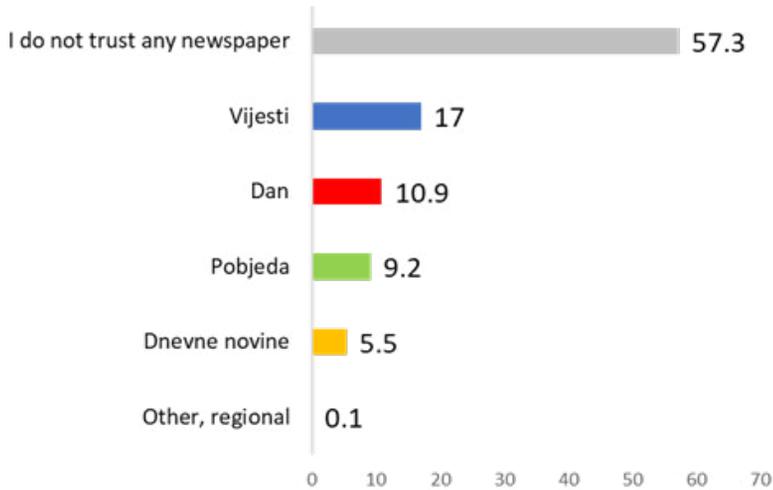


Grafik 4 - Čitanost dnevnih novina

¹ It was possible to give more answers, therefore the sum of answers is above 100%

There is a large number of Montenegrin citizens who do not read any newspaper regularly (almost 80%), whereas amongst those who read newspapers, most of them read *Vijesti* (13.3% of regular readers), followed by *Dan* (11.8%) and *Pobjeda* (9%), while *Dnevne novine* (4.9%) are at the bottom of the list.

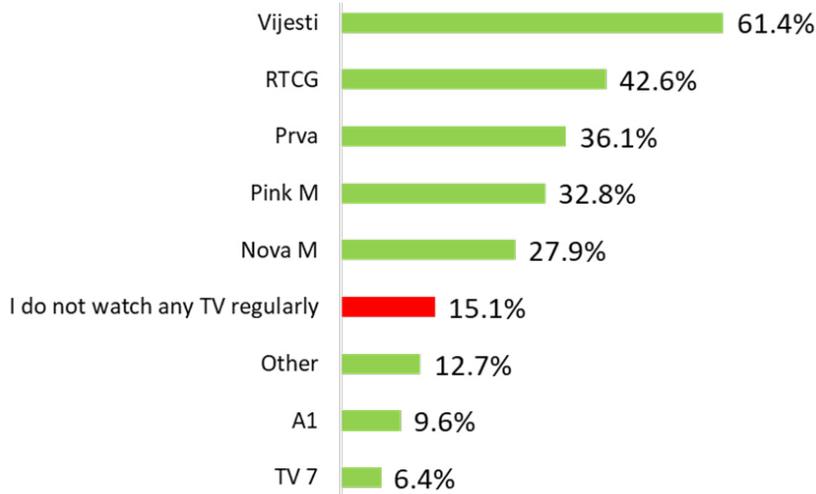
Which daily newspaper do you trust the most?



Graph 5 - Trust into daily newspapers

It is indicative that as many as 57.3% of citizens of Montenegro do not trust any newspaper. In this part as well, the newspaper *Vijesti* leads with 17% of those who trust them, followed by *Dan* with 10.9%, *Pobjeda* with 9.2%, and *Dnevne novine* with 5.5%.

Which TV station do you watch on regular basis? ²

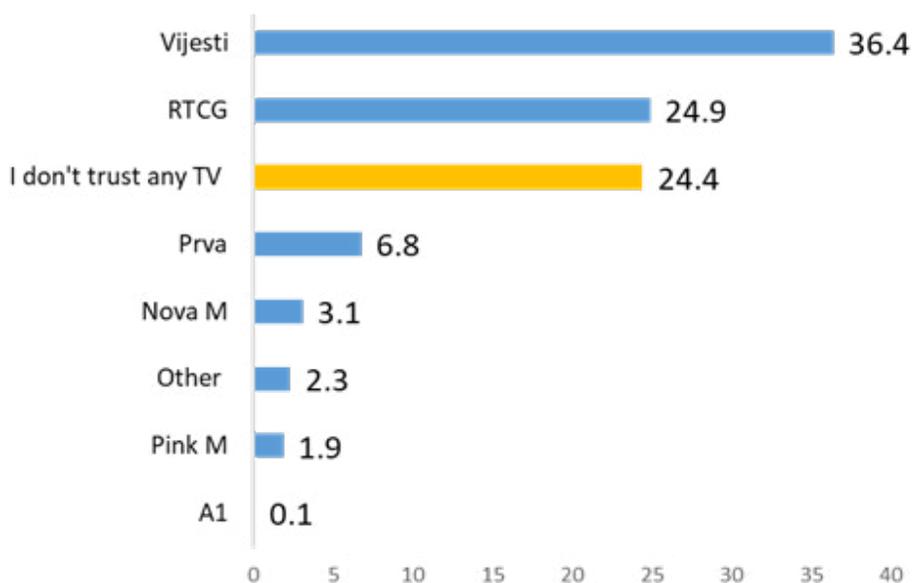


Graph 6 - TV station ratings

TV *Vijesti* is watched by 61.4% of Montenegrin citizens on regular basis, 42.6% regularly watch the Public Broadcasting Service RTCG, and 36.1% watch TV Prva. About one-eighth (12.7%) of respondents watch some of the other televisions, amongst which the most watched are film channels, regularly watched by one-fifth of those who chose the option Other. On the other hand, slightly more than one-sixth (15.1%) of citizens of Montenegro do not watch any TV station regularly.

² It was possible to give more answers, therefore the sum of answers is above 100%

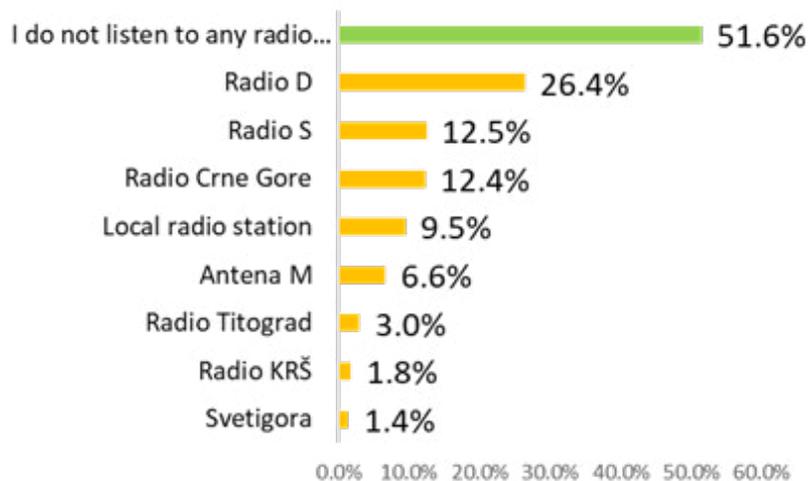
Which TV station do you trust the most?



Graph 7 - Trust in TV stations

More than a third of citizens trust TV *Vijesti*, while one in four respondents trust *RTCG*, and every fourteenth trust TV *Prva*. Almost one-quarter of citizens do not trust any TV station.

Which radio station do you listen to regularly? ³

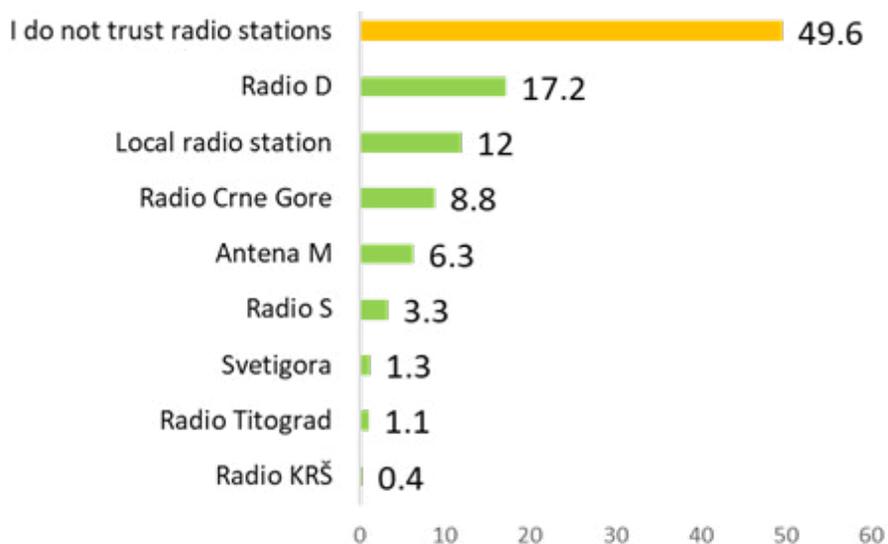


Graph 8 - Audience of radio stations

More than half of Montenegrin citizens do not listen to any radio station regularly. Amongst those who listen to radio stations, *Radio D* is the most popular (26.4%), followed by *Radio S* and *Radio Montenegro* (RCG), which regularly listens almost identical percentage of respondents (12.5% and 12.4%, respectively). Every tenth citizen of Montenegro listens to local radio stations.

³ It was possible to give more answers, therefore the sum of answers is above 100%

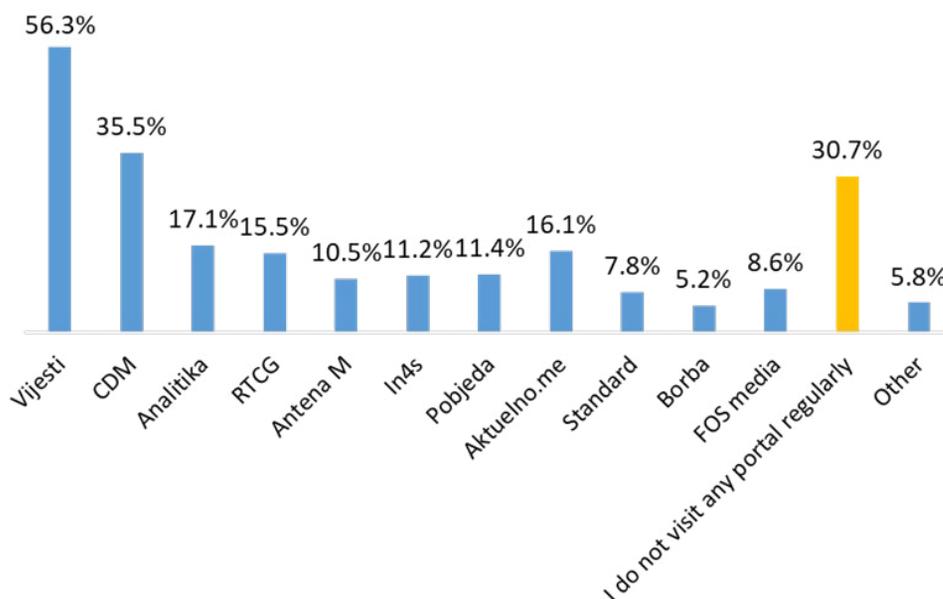
Which radio station do you trust the most?



Graph 9 - Trust in radio stations

Almost half of Montenegrin citizens do not trust any radio station. *Radio D* is trusted by 17.2% of respondents, one-eighth (12%) trust local radio stations, and 8.8% trust *Radio Montenegro* (RCG).

Which portal do you visit regularly? ⁴

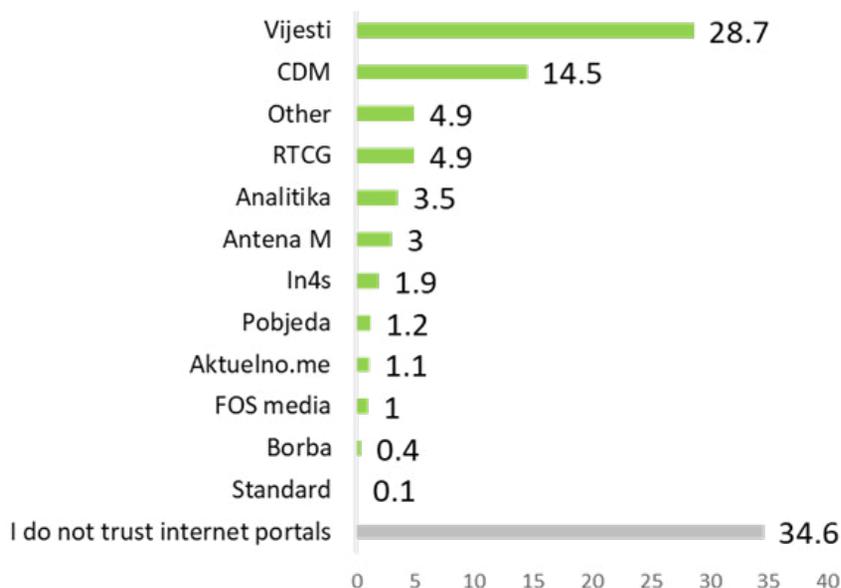


Graph 10 - Internet portal traffic

Portal *Vijesti* is regularly visited by more than half of Montenegrin citizens (56.3%), the portal *CdM* by 35.5%, and the portal *Analitika* by 17.1% of respondents. Every third citizen of Montenegro does not visit online portals on regular basis.

⁴ It was possible to give more answers, therefore the sum of answers is above 100%

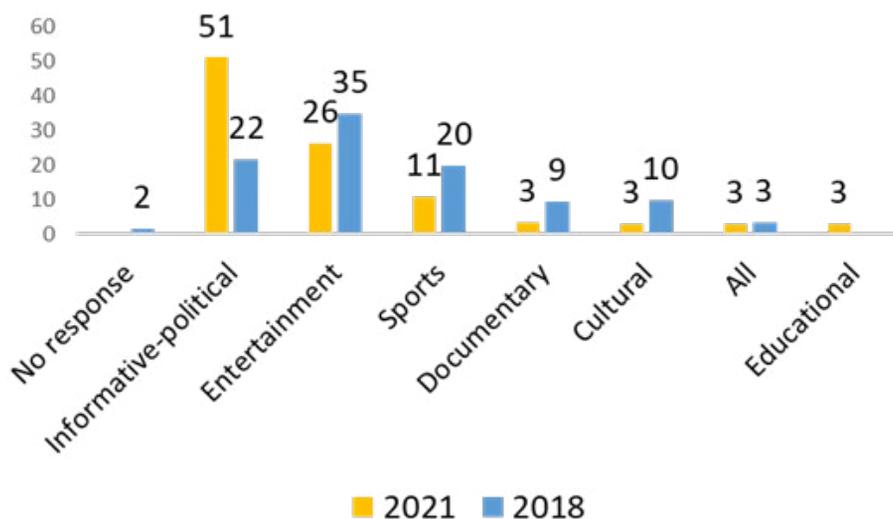
Which portal do you trust the most?



Graph 11 - Trust in internet portals

Amongst portals, portal *Vijesti* is the most trusted portal (28.7%), in second place is the *CDM*, which is trusted by 14.5% of citizens, while, far behind, in third place in terms of trust is the *RTCG* portal with 4.9% trust. Slightly more than a third of citizens do not trust the information they get through the Internet portal.

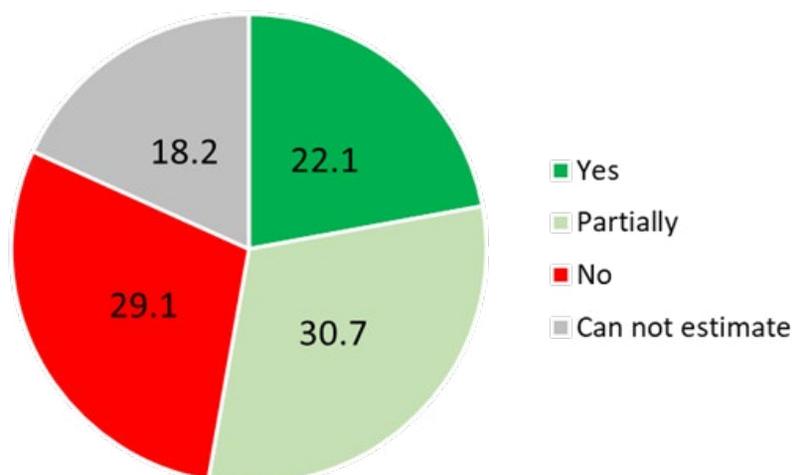
What type of media content (informative-political, entertainment, sports, documentary, cultural,...) do you pay the most attention to?



Graph 12 - Media content to which citizens pay the most attention

More than half of the citizens pay the most attention to the informative and political content, which represents a growth of as much as 29% in comparison with the 2018 results. Entertainment content attracts the most attention of more than one-quarter of respondents, while sports content is of interest to 11% of citizens.

In your opinion, does the Public Broadcasting Service RTCG fulfil the purpose of a media that serves the public interest?



Graph 13 - Citizens' attitudes about RTCG as a service that reports in the public interest

About a fifth (22%) of citizens consider that the public service RTCG completely fulfils purpose of a media that serves the public interest, and about a third (30%) assess that it is partially accomplished. Almost a third (29.1%) of citizens think that the Public Service does not accomplish that, while significant share of respondents do not have an opinion on this issue.

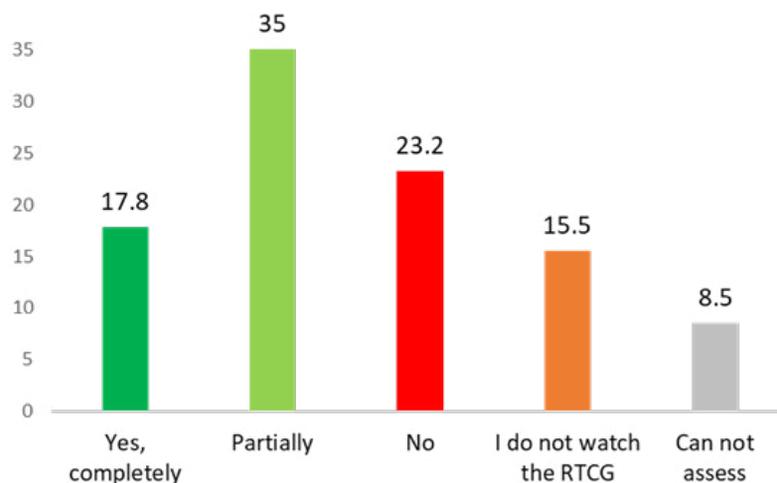
		Yes	Partially	No	Cannot assess
Gender	Male	20.0%	31.4%	32.7%	15.9%
	Female	24.0%	30.0%	25.8%	20.2%
Age	18 to 29	13.6%	28.5%	26.0%	31.9%
	30 to 39	16.0%	29.8%	37.6%	16.6%
	40 to 49	19.5%	32.8%	32.8%	14.9%
	50 to 59	29.8%	32.6%	25.3%	12.4%
	60 years and above	31.8%	30.5%	25.6%	12.1%
	EDUCATION	No education	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%
	Elementary education	34.9%	23.3%	20.9%	20.9%
	Secondary education	21.8%	32.6%	28.4%	17.2%
	Tertiary education	21.3%	35.1%	21.3%	22.3%
	Higher education	20.5%	23.3%	36.9%	19.3%
NATIONALITY	Montenegrin	29.2%	33.5%	19.2%	18.0%
	Serb	6.0%	24.9%	54.6%	14.5%
	Albanian	19.6%	31.4%	3.9%	45.1%
	Muslim	32.8%	40.6%	12.5%	14.1%
	Bosniak	46.8%	34.0%	2.1%	17.0%
	Croat	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	0.0%
	Do not want to answer	0.0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%
	Other	0.0%	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%

Graph 14 - Citizens' attitudes about RTCG as a service that reports in the interest of the public presented by gender, age, education, nationality

That RTCG, as a public service, fulfils (completely and partially) the mission of the media that reports in the public interest, is mostly considered by women (54%), then people older than 60 years (62.3% of them), respondents with higher education (56.4%), and in the national context, mostly by citizens who declare themselves as Bosniaks (80.8%).

On the other hand, that public service does not fulfil its role is considered by men, in a share higher than the average (32.7%), respondents aged 30 to 39 (37.6%), those who have a university degree (36.9%), as well as those who declare themselves as Serbs (54.6%).

Do you trust the information broadcast through the RTCG news programme?



Graph 15 - Trust in the RTCG news programme

Less than one-sixth (17.8%) of citizens fully trust the information broadcast through the RTCG news programme, while slightly more than one-third partially trust this information.

Also, almost a quarter of respondents do not trust the information they receive through RTCG news programme. 15.5% do not watch the public service programme, while 8.5% could not assess the level of trust in the information that RTCG provides to the citizens of Montenegro through the news programme.

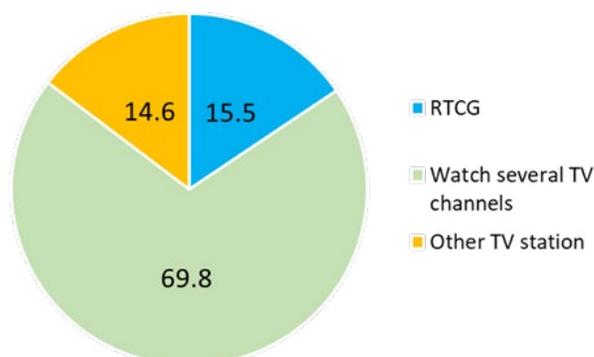
		Yes	Partially	No	Do not watch RTCG programme	Cannot assess
Gender	Male	17.0%	33.1%	26.1%	15.9%	7.9%
	Female	18.5%	36.7%	20.6%	15.2%	9.0%
Age	18 to 29	10.6%	31.1%	21.7%	23.0%	13.6%
	30 to 39	11.6%	32.6%	29.8%	18.2%	7.7%
	40 to 49	14.9%	35.6%	27.6%	15.5%	6.3%
	50 to 59	25.3%	36.5%	17.4%	13.5%	7.3%
	60 years and above	26.5%	39.5%	20.6%	7.2%	6.3%
EDUCATION	No education	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	Elementary education	32.6%	30.2%	16.3%	11.6%	9.3%
	Secondary education	16.7%	36.7%	22.7%	15.6%	8.3%
	Tertiary education	20.2%	37.2%	16.0%	21.3%	5.3%
	Higher education	16.5%	29.0%	30.1%	13.6%	10.8%

NATIONALITY	Montenegrin	24.3%	39.1%	15.5%	12.1%	9.0%
	Serb	2.2%	26.5%	42.9%	20.8%	7.6%
	Albanian	15.7%	37.3%	5.9%	29.4%	11.8%
	Muslim	28.1%	46.9%	15.6%	1.6%	7.8%
	Bosniak	46.8%	36.2%	2.1%	8.5%	6.4%
	Croat	28.6%	42.9%	0.0%	28.6%	0.0%
	Do not want to answer	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	71.4%	14.3%
	Other	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%

Graph 16 - Trust in the RTCG news programme presented by gender, age, education, nationality

In the structure of respondents who do not trust in RTCG news programme, men (26.1%), respondents aged 30 to 39, then highly educated citizens and those citizens who declare themselves as Serbs are above average.

When an important event happens in Montenegro, through which TV station do you get information?



Graph 17 - Informing citizens about important events through TV stations

When an important event happens in Montenegro, the largest number of citizens (69.8%) are informed by watching several TV stations. In such cases, 15.5% of citizens are informed through the RTCG, and 14.6% through other televisions (of this number, 79.3% of citizens cited TV Vijesti).

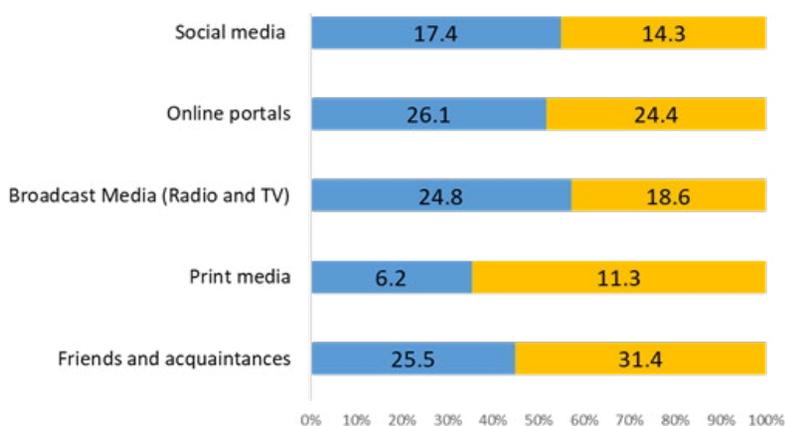
		RTCG	Watch several TV stations	Other TV station
Gender	Male	15.5%	71.1%	13.4%
	Female	15.6%	68.7%	15.8%
Age	18 to 29	11.5%	74.5%	14.0%
	30 to 39	7.7%	74.6%	17.7%
	40 to 49	12.6%	71.3%	16.1%
	50 to 59	14.6%	71.3%	14.0%
	60 years and above	29.1%	58.7%	12.1%
EDUCATION	No education	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%
	Elementary education	27.9%	51.2%	20.9%
	Secondary education	15.7%	69.3%	15.0%
	Tertiary education	14.9%	78.7%	6.4%
	Higher education	11.9%	71.6%	16.5%

NATIONALITY	Montenegrin	20.2%	68.9%	10.8%
	Serb	2.5%	73.2%	24.3%
	Albanian	21.6%	76.5%	2.0%
	Muslim	20.3%	71.9%	7.8%
	Bosniak	42.6%	51.1%	6.4%
	Croat	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%
	Do not want to answer	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%
	Other	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%

Chart 18 – Informing of citizens about important events through TV stations presented by gender, age, education, nationality

Differences are also noticeable in relation to the age of the respondents and the level of education, thus, citizens over the age of 60, as well as those whose level of education is less than secondary education, are mostly informed through the RTCG programme.

Where do you mostly obtain news of great importance to your daily professional and private life?



Graph 19 – Source of information - 2021 vs 2018

Slightly more than 3/4 of citizens get this information from various media, primarily through online portals (26.1%), then from broadcast media (radio and TV - 24.8%), social media (17.4%), and the least from print media (6.2%). One-quarter of the respondents mostly get information that is useful in their everyday professional and private life from friends and acquaintances, not through the media.

Compared to the research conducted in 2018, it is noticeable that citizens are now more informed about important information through Radio and TV (growth of 6.2%), social media (growth of 3.1%), and online portals (growth of 1.7%). They are slightly less informed from the print media (decline 5.1%) and through the exchange of information with friends and acquaintances (decline 5.9%).

Do you agree with the following statements about the media in Montenegro?

In this issue, 14 statements were offered, of which half with a positive and half with a negative connotation, and for easier of review, the findings are separated on that basis..

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Do not know
The media in Montenegro take into account the interests of citizens	17.8%	48.5%	25.7%	8%
The media in Montenegro protect democracy	16.5%	45.9%	25%	12.5%
The truth is in the first place for the media in Montenegro	15.1%	41%	37.9%	6%

The Media in Montenegro are impartial	8.9%	34.9%	47.3%	8.9%
Media in Montenegro respect the code of ethics	12%	48.7%	25.3%	13.9%
The media thoroughly verify the facts they publish	11.4%	41.9%	34.8%	11.9%
The media in Montenegro protect the victim's and children's right to privacy	27.4%	42.8%	14.3%	15.4%

Graph 20 – Agreement of the citizens with positive statements

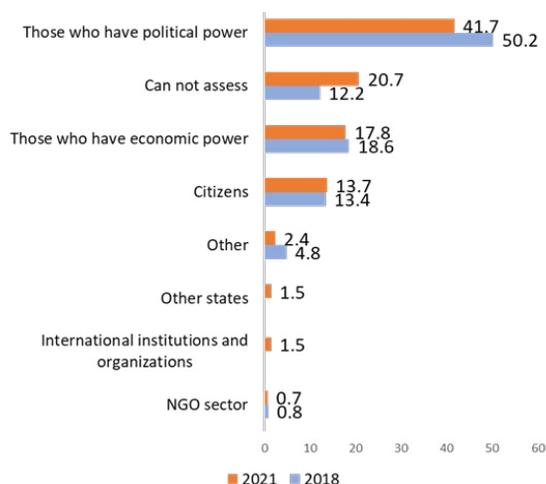
When it comes to affirmative statements, citizens mostly agree (sum of answers Yes and Somewhat) with the statement that the media in Montenegro protect the victim's and children's right to privacy (70.2%), take into account the interests of citizens (66.3) and protect democracy (62.4%). However, slightly less than half (47.3%) of citizens consider that the media are not impartial, and more than a third (37.9%) that the truth is not in the first place.

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Do not know
Media in Montenegro use facts mixed with rumors	44.8%	36.4%	8.9%	9.9%
The media in Montenegro strive for sensationalism and exaggeration	38.5%	38.2%	11.5%	11.7%
The media in Montenegro often issue a judgement before the court	43.5%	34%	11.6%	10.9%
The media in Montenegro are damaging democracy	18.2%	41.8%	22%	18.1%
The media in Montenegro are unethical	19.3%	43.1%	22.1%	15.5%
Editorial policy of the media is greatly affected by the political orientation of the owners	49.8%	34.4%	5.7%	10.1%
Government and state authorities obstruct investigative journalism	43.7%	35%	8.7%	12.6%

Chart 21 – Agreement with negative statements

When it comes to claims with a negative connotation, the vast majority (84.2%) of citizens believe that the editorial policy of the media is greatly affected by the political orientation of the owners, 81.2% of citizens thinks that the media in Montenegro use facts mixed with rumours, and 78.7% that the government and state bodies obstruct investigative journalism.

Which interests do the media in Montenegro primarily care about?



Graph 22 – Attitudes of citizens about the interest that the media mostly serve - 2021 vs 2018

Total of 41.7% of citizens deem that the media in Montenegro, in the first place, care about the interests of those who have political power (which is a decrease in comparison to 2018, when more than half of the

respondents had this attitude). Every fifth respondent cannot assess whose interests the media care about the most, while 17.8% think that the media care the most about the interests of those groups that have economic power. Only 13.7% of respondents believe that the media care about the interests of citizens.

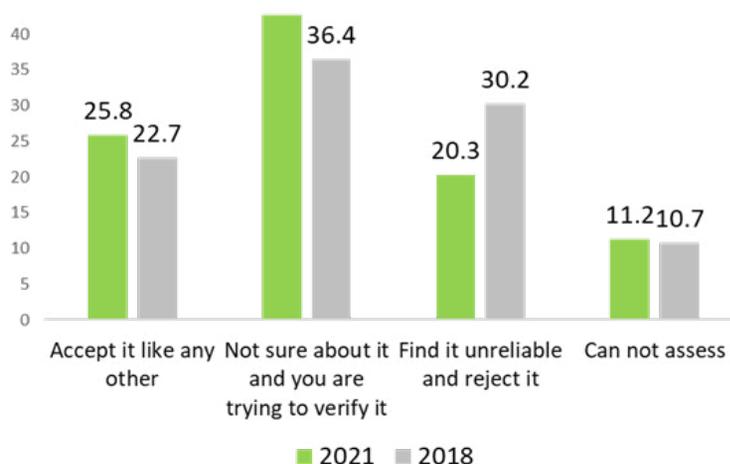
Hence, compared to the findings from 2018, there is no significant inconsistencies except on the perception of citizens about the influence of political centres of power. It is also worth mentioning that the perception of citizens indicates that today the media care less about the interests of the political elite than four years ago.

		Citizens	Those who have political power	Those who have the economic power	NGO sector	International Institutions and Organizations	Other States	Cannot assess	Others
Gender	Male	12.1%	43.1%	21.2%	0.6%	1.9%	2.3%	15.9%	2.8%
	Female	15.2%	40.4%	14.6%	0.8%	1.2%	0.8%	25.0%	2.1%
Age	18 to 29	11.9%	38.3%	17.9%	1.3%	1.7%	1.7%	24.7%	2.6%
	30 to 39	12.2%	41.4%	19.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	23.2%	0.6%
	40 to 49	8.6%	42.5%	21.8%	0.6%	2.3%	1.7%	19.0%	3.4%
	50 to 59	16.9%	43.8%	16.3%	0.0%	1.7%	0.6%	17.4%	3.4%
	60 years and above	18.4%	43.0%	14.3%	0.4%	0.9%	2.2%	18.4%	2.2%
EDUCATION	No education	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Elementary education	18.6%	34.9%	11.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	34.9%	0.0%
	Secondary education	14.5%	41.9%	18.4%	0.7%	1.9%	1.2%	19.1%	2.2%
	Tertiary education	14.9%	43.6%	14.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	22.3%	2.1%
	Higher education	8.5%	40.9%	18.8%	1.1%	1.1%	2.8%	22.7%	4.0%
NATIONALITY	Montenegrin	17.0%	41.3%	17.2%	0.6%	1.2%	1.2%	18.8%	2.7%
	Serb	10.7%	46.1%	21.5%	0.6%	1.9%	0.9%	17.0%	1.3%
	Albanian	13.7%	35.3%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	45.1%	0.0%
	Muslim	7.8%	40.6%	14.1%	1.6%	1.6%	3.1%	25.0%	6.3%
	Bosniak	12.8%	23.4%	19.1%	2.1%	2.1%	6.4%	31.9%	2.1%
	Croat	0.0%	42.9%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%
	Do not want to answer	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	

Chart 23 – Citizens' positions towards the interest in which the media mostly work presented by gender, age, education, nationality

Amongst those who believe that the media primarily care about the interests of those with political power, within percentages higher than the average (average 41.7%) are men, citizens over 40 years, then those with secondary and higher education, as well as respondents who declare themselves as Serbs.

What is your attitude towards information whose source the media does not disclose for any reason (e.g. “as we find out from reliable sources”)?



Graph 24 – Trust in information whose source the media do not disclose - 2021 vs 2018

The largest share of respondents (42.7%) is wary of information whose source the media does not disclose for any reason (e.g. “as do we find out from reliable sources”). Every fourth citizen accepts such information as every other, while every fifth considers it unreliable and rejects it. In comparison with 2018, certain trends can be noticed, which indicate that distrust in this type of information has decreased, but also that citizens are more inclined to check such information.

		Accept it as every other	You are distrustful and try to verify it	Consider it unreliable and reject it	Cannot assess
Gender	Male	24.2%	46.1%	21.9%	7.9%
	Female	27.3%	39.6%	18.8%	14.2%
Age	18 to 29	16.2%	45.5%	25.1%	13.2%
	30 to 39	23.8%	41.4%	22.1%	12.7%
	40 to 49	22.4%	49.4%	15.5%	12.6%
	50 to 59	27.5%	43.3%	20.8%	8.4%
	60 years and above	39.0%	35.0%	17.0%	9.0%
EDUCATION	No education	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	Elementary education	51.2%	18.6%	14.0%	16.3%
	Secondary education	28.7%	40.4%	18.8%	12.0%
	Tertiary education	13.8%	53.2%	25.5%	7.4%
NATIONALITY	Higher education	14.2%	51.7%	25.0%	9.1%
	Montenegrin	27.2%	44.4%	20.0%	8.4%
	Serb	22.1%	44.8%	18.6%	14.5%
	Albanian	21.6%	49.0%	23.5%	5.9%
	Muslim	23.4%	34.4%	28.1%	14.1%
	Bosniak	46.8%	23.4%	10.6%	19.1%
	Croat	28.6%	14.3%	57.1%	0.0%
Do not want to answer	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	42.9%	
Other	22.2%	33.3%	44.4%	0.0%	

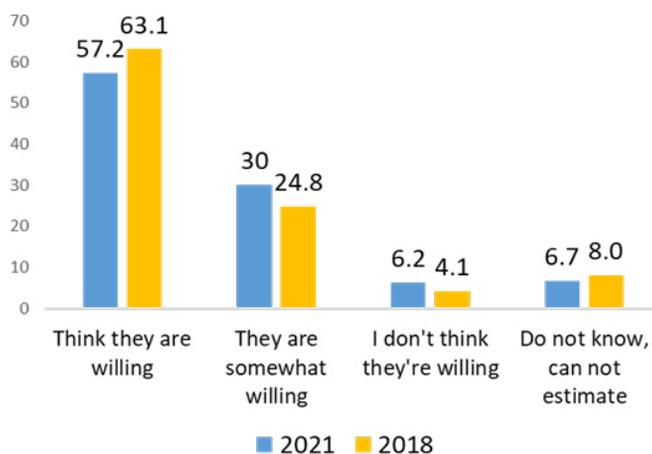
Graph 25 – Trust in information whose source the media do not disclose - presented by gender, age, education, nationality

The percentage of respondents who accept this information like any other is higher amongst women over the age of 60, and respondents with secondary and lower education.

Amongst those who distrust this information, within percentages higher than the average (average 42.7%) are men, respondents aged 40 to 49, then those with tertiary and higher education.

The largest share of respondents who consider this information unreliable and reject it is amongst men, young people (up to 29 years), as well as respondents with higher and tertiary education.

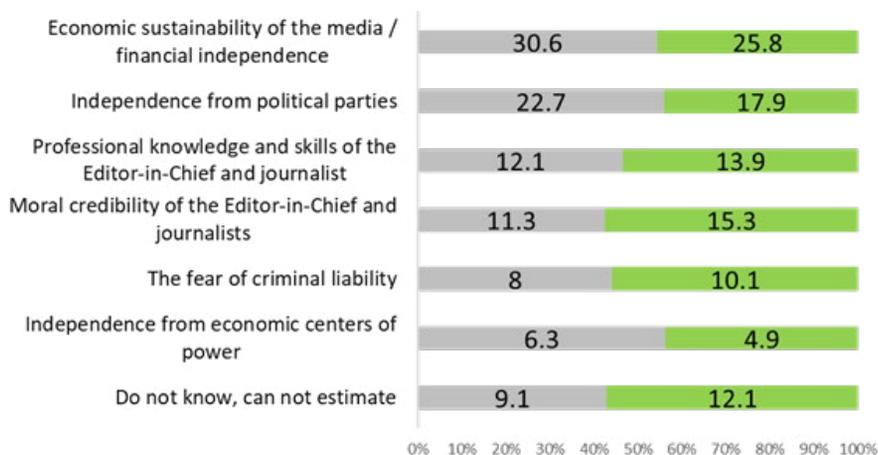
In your opinion, to what extent are the media in Montenegro willing to publish sensationalist information that is not at all or is insufficiently verified, in order to increase circulation and ratings?



Graph 26 - Attitudes of citizens about the willingness of the media to publish sensationalist and unverified information to increase the ratings - 2021 vs 2018

Cumulatively, the vast majority of respondents (87.2%) think that the media in Montenegro are willing or somewhat willing to, in order to increase circulation and ratings, publish sensationalist content that is not at all or is insufficiently verified, with no significant differences within different categories.

In your opinion, what is the strongest guarantee that a media will write/report truthfully, comprehensively and politically impartially?

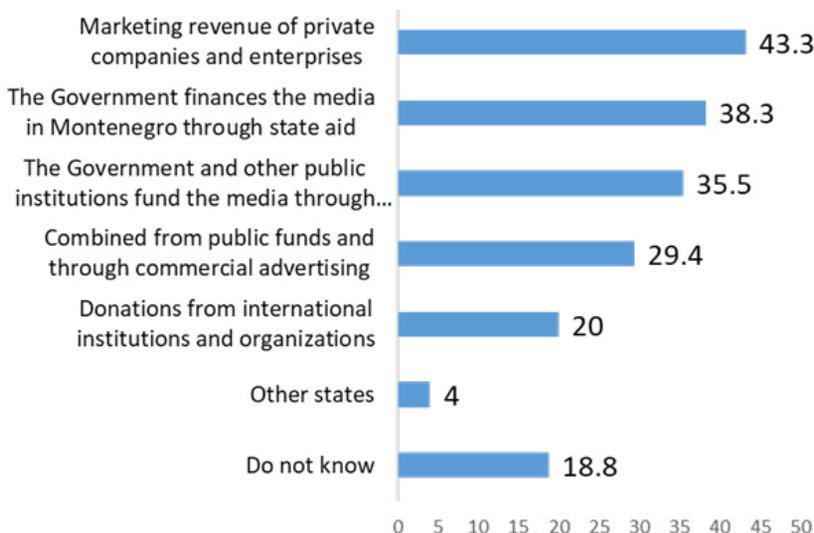


Graph 27 - Positions of citizens on conditions in which some media will write/report truthfully, comprehensively and politically impartially - 2021 vs 2018

Almost a third of respondents (30.6%) consider that the economic viability of the media is the best guarantee that a media will write/report truthfully, comprehensively and politically impartially.

In second place, according to the frequency of responses, is the position that independence from political parties (22.7%) is the best guarantee of media independence, while in third place is the professional knowledge and skills of the Editor-in-Chief and journalists (12.1%). In this part, there are no major inconsistencies in comparison with the citizens' perceptions from 2018.

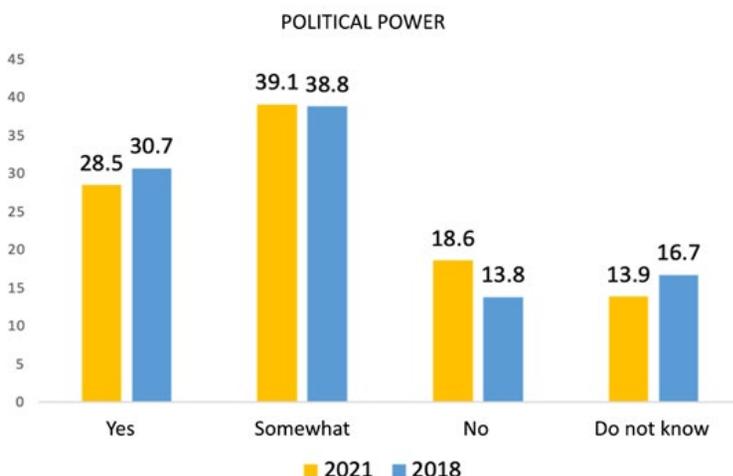
In your opinion, how are the media in Montenegro financed⁵:



Graph 28 – Attitudes of citizens on media financing in Montenegro

Total of 43.3% of Montenegrin citizens believe that the media in Montenegro are financed through advertising revenue by private companies and enterprises, while more than a third consider funding by the Government through state aid (38.3 %) as crucial, i.e. that the Government and other public institutions finance the media through advertising (35.5%).

In your opinion, do the media in Montenegro play the social role of controllers of those who have:



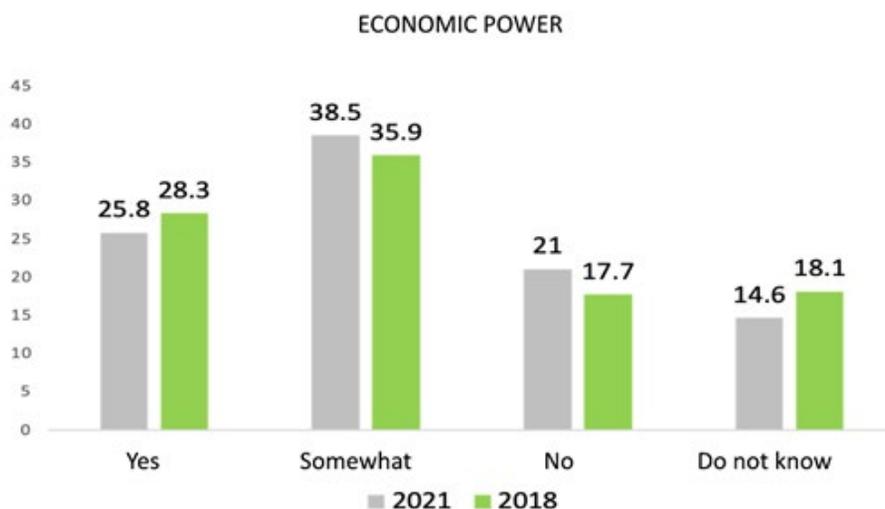
Graph 29 – Citizens' attitudes about the role of the media as a controller of those who have political power - 2021 vs 2018

⁵ It was possible to give more answers, therefore the sum of answers is above 100%

Total of 28.5% of citizens are explicit that the media in Montenegro manage the social role of controllers of those who have political power, while 39.1% believe that they do so partially. Therefore, it can be concluded that 67.6% of citizens estimate that the media fully or mainly play the role of controller of those actors that have political power, which is almost at the level of the 2018 results.

Compared to the 2018 results, the only significant change is that now there are more citizens (by 4.8%) who think that the media do not play that role, while the percentage of those who do not have a clear position on this issue has increased (by 2.8%).

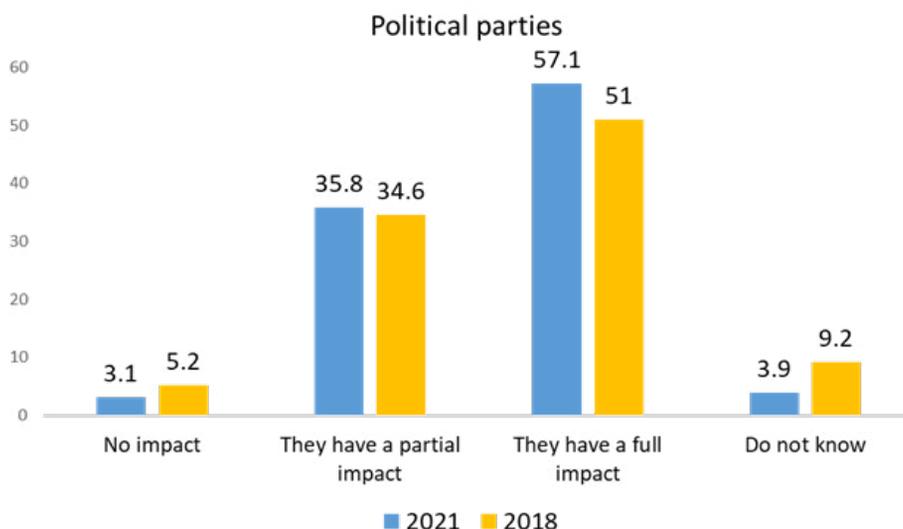
Some 64.3% of Montenegrin citizens estimate that the media in Montenegro fulfil (fully or partially) the social role of controllers of those who have economic power (sum of answers Yes and *Partially*). 21% of respondents have the opposite opinion, while 14.6% do not have an opinion on this issue.



Graph 30 – Citizens' attitudes about the role of the media as a controller of those who have economic power - 2021 vs 2018

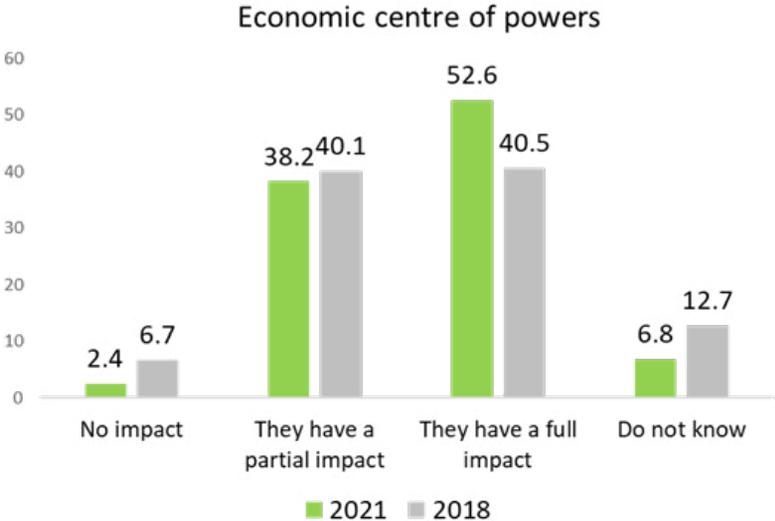
Compared to the results of the 2018 survey, there are no significant shifts.

In your opinion, to what extent do political parties have an impact on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro?



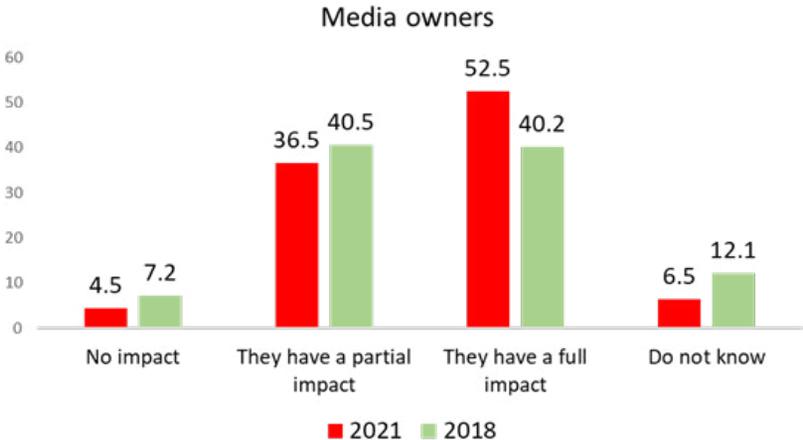
Graph 31 – Impact of political parties on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018

The vast majority of citizens (57.1%) believe that political parties have a full influence on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro, and compared to 2018 results, there was an increase in the share of those who agree with this position (growth of 6.1%). Slightly more than one-third of respondents deem that political parties have a partial influence on the editorial policy of the media, while only 3.1% believe that political parties have no influence on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro.



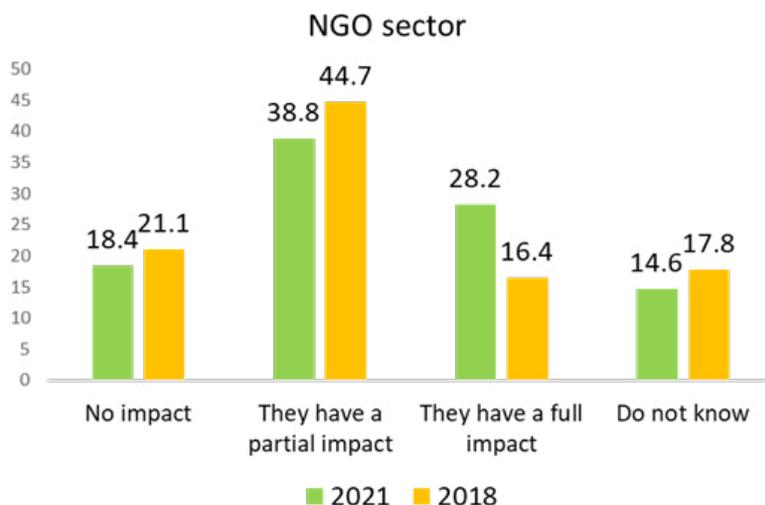
Graph 32 – Impact of economic centres of power on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018

More than half (52.6%) of respondents are of the opinion that economic centres of power have full influence on the editorial policy of the media, which represents an indicative growth of as much as 12.1% compared to 2018 results. Also, 38.2% of citizens believe that economic centres of power have a partial influence. Very few are of the opinion that economic actors do not have an influence on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro (only 2.4%).



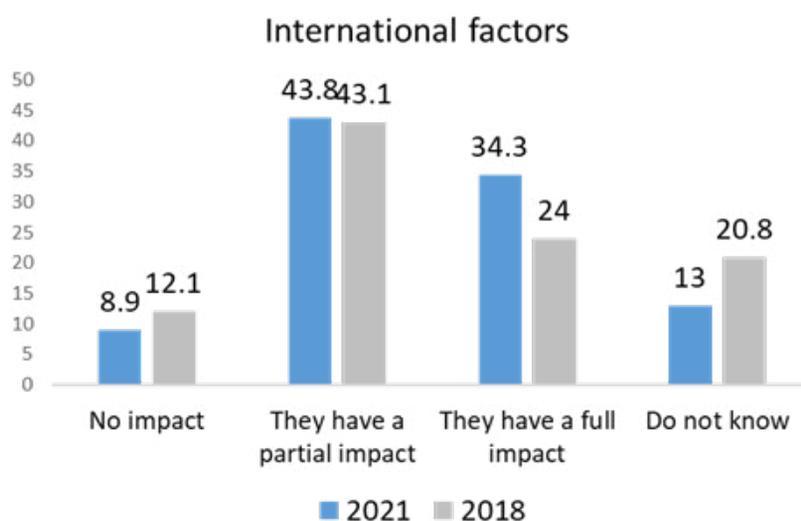
Graph 33 – Impact of the media owners on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018

More than half of the citizens (52.5%) believe that media owners have a complete influence on the editorial policy of the media, which is an increase of 12.3% compared to 2018. 36.5% of respondents are of the opinion that media owners have a partial influence on editorial policy, while only 4.5% deem that media owners have no influence.



Graph 34 – Impact of the NGO sector on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018

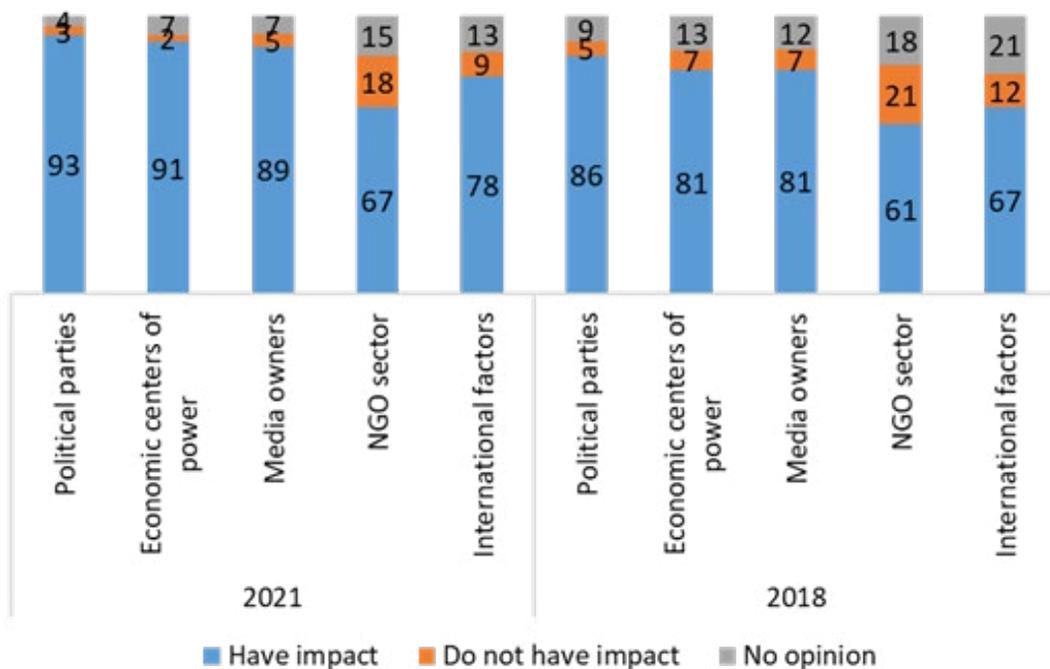
It is interesting that 28.2% of respondents consider that the NGO sector has a complete influence on the editorial policy of the media, which is 11.8% more than in 2018. In addition, more than one-third (38.8%) believe that the NGO sector has a partial influence, and less than one-fifth (18.4%) that NGO sector has no influence on editorial policy of the media.



Graph 35 – Impact of the international factors on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018

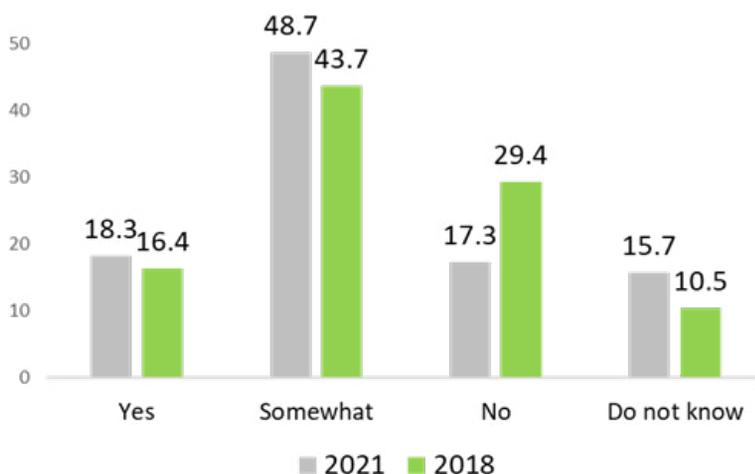
Slightly more than one-third of citizens are of the opinion that international factors have a complete influence on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro, which is 10.3% more than three years ago. 43.8% of citizens deem that these entities have a partial influence, while 8.9% of respondents consider that they have no influence.

Generally analysing the data of all five entities, it can be concluded that the perception of citizens on this issue has changed compared to 2018, so today citizens believe that there are numerous and intertwined influences on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro.



Graph 36 – Impact of the various factors on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro - 2021 vs 2018 (sum of replays)

Do the media in Montenegro provide enough space for public debate to boost the best decisions or compromises on important social issues?

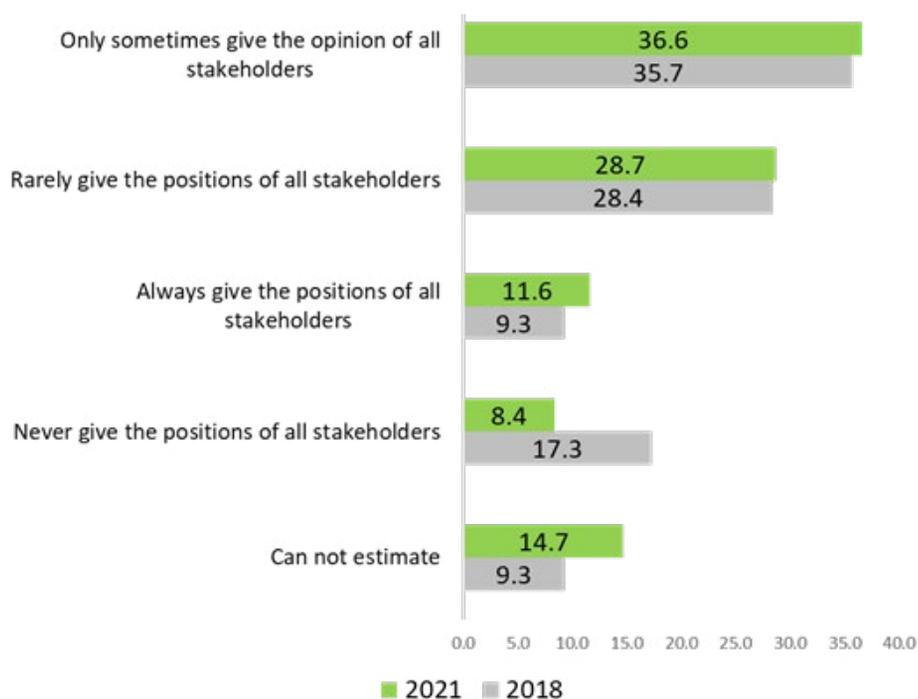


Graph 37 – Provision of space for public debate on important social issues - 2021 vs 2018

The largest percentage of respondents (67%) think that the media in Montenegro *fully* (18.3) and *somewhat* (48.7%) provide enough space for public debate to make the best decisions or reach compromises on important social issues.

Compared to 2018, it can be concluded that the perception of citizens on this issue has changed in a positive direction for the media, because now there is a significantly higher share (by 6.9%) of those who think that the media in Montenegro provide space for public debate.

When reporting on a controversial event, the media in Montenegro:



Graph 38 – Citizens' attitudes on the representation of all stakeholders - 2021 vs 2018

Over a third of citizens (36.6%) believe that the media, when reporting on a controversial event, only sometimes give the position of all stakeholders. When the share of those who stated that the media rarely give the positions of all stakeholders is added to these percentages, we get data that almost two-thirds (65.3%) of citizens think that the media do not have balanced approach. On the other hand, 11.6% of respondents think that the media always report the positions of all stakeholders, while 8.4% of respondents deem that the media never report the positions of all stakeholders. This data represents a significant difference compared to 2018 results, when 17.3% of citizens chose this response. Accordingly, a significantly smaller share of citizens (by 8.9%) think that the media never report the positions of all stakeholders when reporting on a controversial event.

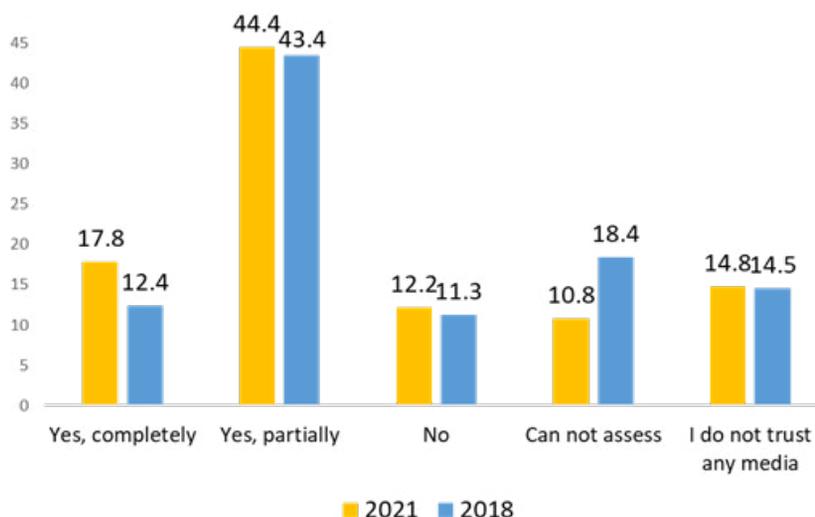
In general, do you think that the media in Montenegro are independent /objective?

2021	Yes	Partially	No	Cannot estimate
Print media	8.9%	36.4%	35.8%	18.9%
Radio	11.3%	34.5%	33.0%	21.2%
TV	14.1%	41.5%	38.0%	6.4%
Online portals	10.5%	35.7%	36.7%	17.1%
2018	Yes	Partially	No	Cannot estimate
Print media	11.8%	38.1%	39.2%	10.9%
Radio	15.0%	35.6%	35.6%	13.8%
TV	11.4%	37.3%	41.5%	9.8%
Online portals	12.7%	35.8%	36.1%	15.4%

Graph 39 – Citizens' attitudes about media independence and objectivity - 2021 vs 2018

In contrast with research from 2018, when the largest share of respondents considered that the media in Montenegro are not independent/objective or partially independent / objective, this research shows that there has not been a change in citizens' perceptions of this issue. On the contrary, somewhat smaller percentage of citizens in certain categories of media (print, radio, portals) consider that the media are partially independent and objective, while the growth of trust in this respect is recorded only by TV.

Is the media you trust the most independent/objective?



Graph 40 – Citizens's attitudes about the independence of the media in which they have the most trust – 2021 vs 2018

The largest share of respondents (44.4%) believes that the media they trust the most is partially independent/objective, and 17.8% that it is completely independent/objective. Every tenth respondent could not assess the extent to which the most trusted medium is independent/objective.

When this is compared with the data from 2018, it is noticeable that the share of citizens who believe that the media, in which they have the greatest trust, are independent or objective, has increased.

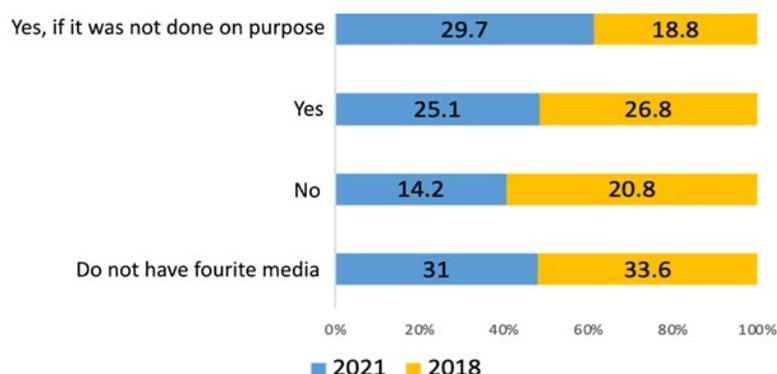
	Respondents who trust following media:	Yes, absolutely	Yes, partially	No	Cannot assess	Do not believe any media
Print media	Pobjeda	35.2%	46.2%	3.3%	12.1%	3.3%
	Vijesti	20.8%	58.3%	7.1%	10.7%	3.0%
	Dan	21.3%	49.1%	10.2%	10.2%	9.3%
	Dnevne novine	18.2%	54.5%	7.3%	7.3%	12.7%
	I don't trust any newspaper	13.2%	38.2%	16.0%	11.1%	21.5%
	Others, regional	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TV	RTCG	28.7%	38.5%	9.7%	12.1%	10.9%
	Vijesti	19.1%	56.2%	12.2%	9.1%	3.3%
	Prva	14.9%	50.7%	9.0%	9.0%	16.4%
	Nova M	12.9%	71.0%	6.5%	6.5%	3.2%
	Pink M	10.5%	52.6%	15.8%	21.1%	0.0%
	TV 7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	A1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	I don't trust any TV	5.0%	28.1%	16.9%	13.2%	36.8%
	Others	34.8%	34.8%	0.0%	0.0%	30.4%

Online portals					
Vijesti	14.1%	56.3%	15.5%	8.8%	5.3%
CDM	18.1%	47.9%	10.4%	9.0%	14.6%
Analitika	28.6%	42.9%	11.4%	8.6%	8.6%
RTCG	26.5%	38.8%	10.2%	10.2%	14.3%
Antena M	6.7%	40.0%	23.3%	6.7%	23.3%
In4s	10.5%	26.3%	31.6%	5.3%	26.3%
Pobjeda	25.0%	41.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Aktuelno.me	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
Standard	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Borba	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FOS media	10.0%	10.0%	30.0%	0.0%	50.0%
I don't trust any portal	19.0%	36.4%	8.2%	13.7%	22.7%
Others	24.5%	44.9%	4.1%	14.3%	12.2%

Graph 41 - Attitudes of citizens about the independence of the media in which they have the greatest trust categorized by the media

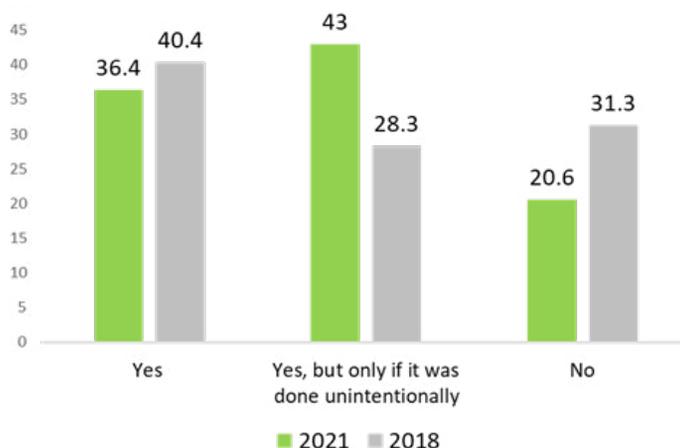
The opinion that their favourite media is completely or partially independent/objective ranges, for the print media, from 70.4% (*Dan*) to 81.4% (*Pobjeda*); for TV from 63.1% (*Pink M*) to 83.9% (*Nova M*) and for Internet portals ranging from 20% (*FOS media*) to 71.5% (*Portal Analitika*).

Are you willing to forgive your favourite media if they published false information about someone they do not like, for whatever reason?



Graph 42 - Citizens' willingness to forgive untruth to their favorite media - 2021 vs 2018

If those who stated that they do not have a favourite media are excluded from these results, the following findings are obtained:



Graph 43 - Citizens' willingness to forgive untruth to their favorite media - 2021 vs 2018 (excluded citizens who do not have a favorite media)

More than one-third of those who have a favourite media are willing to forgive that media if they published false information about someone they do not like, for whatever reason, while less than a half of respondents (43%) would forgive if it was not done on purpose. Every fifth respondent who has a favourite media is not willing to forgive that medium for the untruths published.

Comparing with the data from 2018, it is concluded that a larger share of citizens (by about 15%) are willing to forgive their favourite media if they published false information only if it was not done on purpose, while the share of those who are willing to forgive unconditionally (by 4%) decreased. Also, the number of those who would not forgive their favourite media for publishing false information (by about 11%) has decreased.

The following chart provides a distribution of responses correlated with respondents' trust in specific media.

	Respondents who have trust in the following media:	Yes	Yes, if it was not done on purpose	No
Print media	Pobjeda	35.4%	46.2%	18.5%
	Vijesti	40.0%	44.2%	15.8%
	Dan	40.0%	36.3%	23.8%
	Dnevne novine	23.8%	50.0%	26.2%
	I don't trust any newspaper	36.2%	42.6%	21.3%
TV	RTCG	35.4%	46.4%	18.2%
	Vijesti	43.2%	42.1%	14.7%
	Prva	33.3%	46.7%	20.0%
	Nova M	44.4%	40.7%	14.8%
	Pink M	47.1%	23.5%	29.4%
	I don't trust any TV	16.7%	42.6%	40.7%
	Ostali	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%
Online portal	Vijesti	38.3%	42.8%	18.9%
	CDM	41.0%	35.2%	23.8%
	Analitika	25.9%	63.0%	11.1%
	RTCG	47.2%	22.2%	30.6%
	Antena M	17.6%	41.2%	41.2%
	In4s	35.7%	42.9%	21.4%
	Pobjeda	72.7%	27.3%	0.0%
	Aktuelno.me	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%
	Borba	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%
	FOS media	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
	I don't trust any online portal	31.5%	49.3%	19.2%
Ostali	41.9%	41.9%	16.1%	

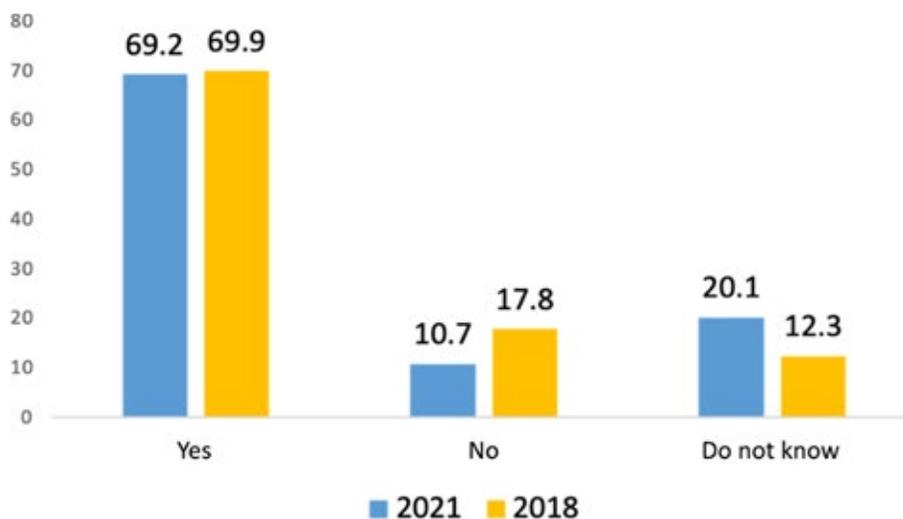
Graph 44 – Citizens' willingness to forgive untruth to their favorite media presented by each media

Readers of *Dan* and *Vijesti* are most willing to forgive this newspaper the untruths published, while the least willingness is expressed by the readers of *Dnevne novine*.

The audience of *TV Vijesti* are the most willing to forgive this TV the untruths published, while the audience of *TV Prva* are the least willing to do so.

The visitors of the portal *RTCG* are the most willing to forgive the untruths published, while the visitors of the portal *Antena M* are the least willing to forgive it.

Do you think that, in order to improve the overall work and freedom of the media, the state should financially support the media that fulfil their social role?



Graph 45 – Citizens' attitude on state financial aid to the media -2021 vs 2018

The largest percentage of respondents (69.2%) consider that, in order to improve the overall working conditions and freedom of the media, the state should financially support the media that fulfil their social role. Every tenth respondent has the opposite position, and every fifth has no position on this issue.

Compared to 2018, the share of those (by about 7%) who believe that the state should not financially support the media that fulfill its social role decreased, and at the same time the of citizens percentage who do not have an opinion on this issue increased (by about 8%).

Do you agree with the following statements?

2021	Yes	Somewhat	No	Do not know
Journalists in Montenegro should have a license to work	78.3%	12.1%	3.1%	6.5%
Media Law should prescribe a definition of journalists	79.9%	13%	2.2%	4.8%
Journalists should specialize in narrower thematic areas	74%	17%	4.4%	4.6%
Journalists in Montenegro serve the interests of media owners, not the interests of citizens	54.5%	28.9%	9.3%	7.4%
Journalists in Montenegro have the last word in terms of creating their texts / articles, etc.	23.9%	33.9%	27.9%	14.3%
Journalists in Montenegro must be honorable and moral people	73.7%	17.6%	5.3%	3.4%
Journalists and media assets in Montenegro are safe	20.2%	29.7%	38.5%	11.6%
Journalists in Montenegro are adequately paid for their work	16.4%	26.6%	34.2%	22.7%
Journalists in Montenegro are subject to corruption	33.4%	36.3%	10%	20.3%

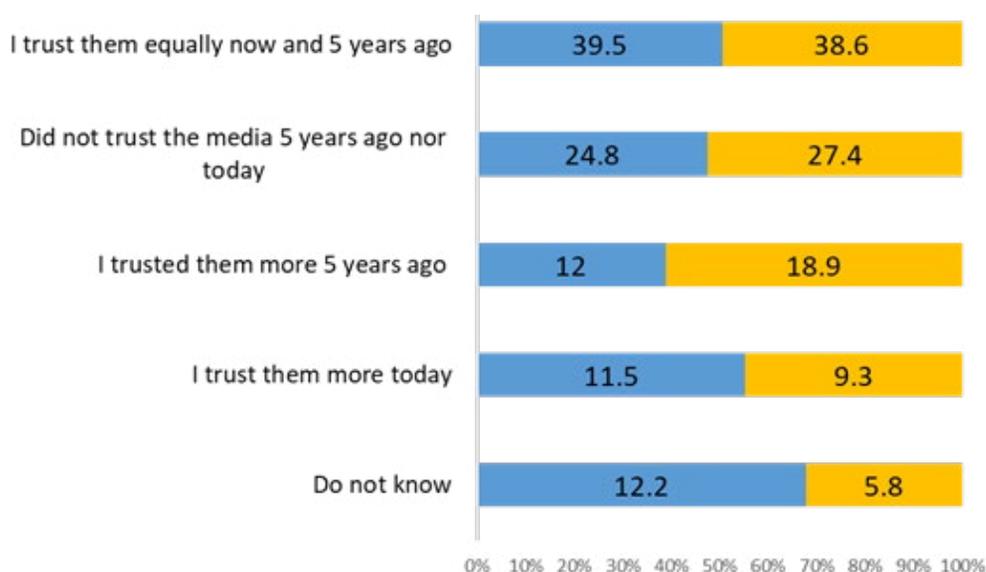
	2018	Yes	Somewhat	No	Do not know
Journalists in Montenegro should not only point at problems, but also investigate and look for possible solutions and / or answers	51.8%	29.8%	8.7%	9.8%	
Journalists in Montenegro should have a license to work	80.8%	12.6%	4.1%	2.5%	
Media Law should prescribe a definition of journalists	78.6%	10.6%	5.7%	5.1%	
Journalists should specialize in narrower thematic areas	74.3%	15.4%	4.5%	5.8%	
Journalists in Montenegro serve the interests of media owners, not the interests of citizens	57.4%	25.5%	12.1%	5.0%	
Journalists in Montenegro have the last word in terms of creating their texts / articles, etc.	26.3%	26.3%	35.9%	11.5%	
Journalists in Montenegro must be honorable and moral people	70.7%	16.1%	8.7%	4.5%	
Journalists and media assets in Montenegro are safe	15.0%	25.4%	50.4%	9.2%	
Journalists in Montenegro are adequately paid for their work	14.4%	17.2%	37.7%	30.7%	
Journalists in Montenegro are subject to corruption	45.2%	26.2%	6.8%	21.8%	
Journalists in Montenegro should not only point at problems, but also investigate and look for possible solutions and / or answers	62.5%	22.2%	6.9%	8.4%	

Graph 46 – Citizens’ agreement with statements - 2021 vs 2018

An almost consensual majority (93%) of citizens completely or partially agree with the statement that the Media Law should prescribe a definition of journalists, and 91.3% think that journalists should be honourable and moral persons. The vast majority (74%) of citizens believe that journalists in Montenegro should specialize in narrower thematic areas.

Over a third of respondents disagree with the claim that journalists and media assets in Montenegro are safe, nor that journalists are adequately paid for their work.

Do you trust the media more now or 5 years ago?



Graph 47 – Citizens’ trust in the media in the last five years - 2021 vs 2018

Almost two-fifths of respondents (39.5%) claimed that they trust the media now equally as 5 years ago, while one-quarter (24.8%) state that they did not trust the media 5 years ago nor nowadays.

05 Perceptions of journalists, editors and owners about the media in Montenegro

The CCE team conducted also 10 interviews with individuals covering various positions in the media, which included journalists, editors and media owners. Having in mind the epidemiological situation, during the implementation of this activity, and the impossibility of direct contact due to restrictions in intercity traffic, part of the interview was conducted with the help of digital services. The interviews aimed to, through direct communication with people working in the media, take a closer look at the media picture in Montenegro, the problems faced by the media and media representatives, but also possible intervention measures to improve the position of the media in Montenegro. More specifically, the interviews focused on assessing the environment for media work in Montenegro, the status of journalists, the role of the media in democratizing society, ethics in journalism, influence on media work (internal and external), sensationalism in the media, investigative journalism, but also the economic sustainability of the media.

In the gender structure, men (70%) dominate among the interviewees. The average age of the interviewees was 39 years (the youngest interviewee was 21 and the oldest 59 years old), all of which were highly educated. Also, regional representation was taken into account, hence seven interviewees were from the central region, one from the northern region, and two from the southern region. Four were engaged in local, and six in national media coverage, while the type of media in which the interviewees worked was different.

When it comes to their positions, 40% of those interviewed were journalists, 40% editors, and 20% media owners. The duration of the work of these persons in the media was also different, varying from at least one to four years (10%), then from five to nine years (30%), then from 10 to 19 years (30%) and slightly less than a third have been in the media for more than 19 years (30%). One interlocutor wanted his answers to remain anonymous, while the others agreed to have their answers published under their full name.

Analysing the financial aspect of working as a journalist, all interviewees were asked about possible changes in their earnings. This is actualized in the light of the economic situation in the country, the COVID-19 virus pandemic, but also other changes in socio-political relations, as well as changes in legal regulations, or their announcements, which could affect the status of media and media employees.

All respondents stated that their earnings remained the same. However, one of the interlocutors, working as a journalist in one of the print media, pointed out that there is „an *announcement of wage cuts and layoffs*.”



“Print publications today cannot be as successful as portals”.

When speaking about the media in which he works and financial position, Marko Vešović, editor of the daily newspaper *Dan*, explains how in the previous period “*work was done to preserve the circulation of the print edition*”, noting that it is currently “*mostly influenced by obituaries published in newspapers*.” He also announced that the media would soon launch a portal “*because print editions today cannot achieve the same success as portals*”, adding that “*portals often download texts from print editions*.”

When asked how many hours they work on average per day, half of the respondents stated that it is usually up to eight hours (50%), slightly less than half over eight hours (40%), and only 10% stated that they work up to 4 hours a day.

The questionnaire also included a number of statements with which the interviewees could express a certain degree of (dis) agreement.

Thus, 80% of the interviewees somewhat agree with the statement that the media in Montenegro take into account the interests of citizens, whereas 20% fully agree with that. Furthermore, 60% of the respondents agree or to some extent agree that the media in Montenegro protect democracy.

In the context of this group of questions, President of the Board of Directors of *Vijesti*, Željko Ivanović explains that *the category 'somewhat' is not appropriate in relation to the current situation, and that it would be more precise to say how that applies only to 'certain' media in Montenegro.*

The vast majority (80%) of those interviewed believe that the truth is in the first place for the media in Montenegro, while a fifth do not agree with that. At the same time, all respondents assess that the media in Montenegro use facts mixed with rumours.

Commenting on this issue, Danilo Ajković, a journalist for *TV Vijesti*, points out that *“it is more common for the media in Montenegro to use facts mixed with personal views.”* Marko Vešović, from *Dan*, adds that *“one part of the media has a classic political agenda and it is more important to them than the truth.”*



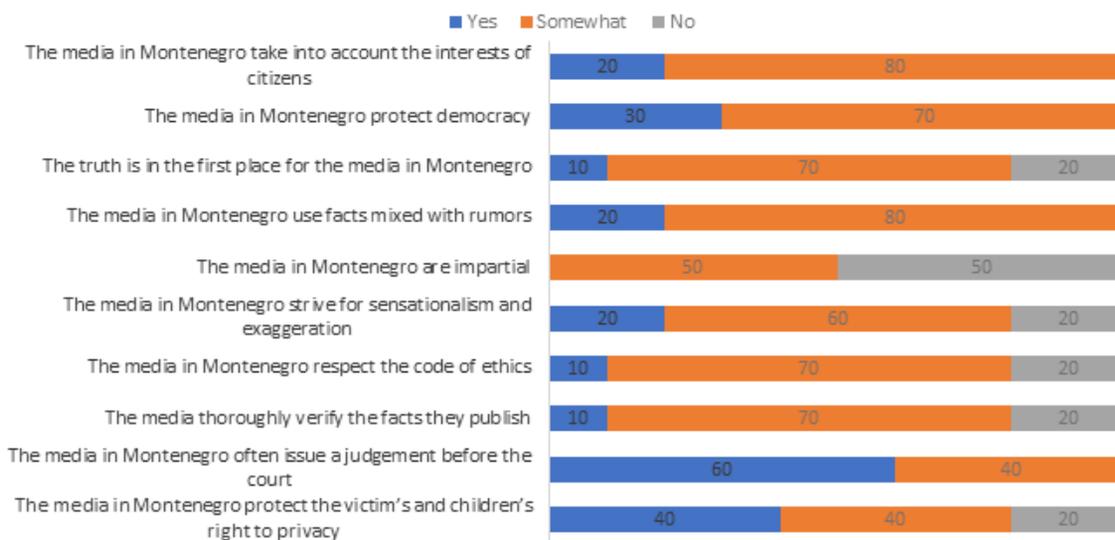
„It is more common for the media in Montenegro to use facts mixed with personal views”.

Opinions are divided over whether the media in Montenegro are impartial, but the vast majority (80%) assess that the *Journalists' Code* is to some extent or fully respected, with the *presumption of innocence* being recognized as a problematic category.



„Awareness among journalists and editors regarding professional reporting is higher nowadays than it was 10 years ago”.

One of the interlocutors of the print media explains that *“this is what the Code of Ethics entails, but also other acts, which in a concrete example means that when reporting a murder, a certain person cannot be labelled as someone who committed murder, but only as a person suspected of committing that crime.”* However, the prevailing impression is that *“awareness among journalists and editors regarding professional reporting is higher nowadays, than it was 10 years ago.”*



Graph 48 - Do you agree with the following statements (part of the given statements)?

Among the offered statements, there was also the one about which only the journalists with whom the interview was conducted answered, that is, it was not offered to the editors and owners. Thus, all journalists agree that the editorial orientation of the media is greatly influenced by the political orientation of media owners.

All interviewees agree with the statement that the previous government and state bodies restricted investigative journalism, whether it was completely (70%) or to some extent (30%). Opinions about the new government were divided, with half of the interviewees remaining reserved (50%) and without an assessment, stating that it is a short period from the establishment of the new government for such an assessment (at the time the interviews were done it was about four months). However, slightly less than a third of the respondents believe that the new government does not have a different practice, while a fifth is of the opposite view.

Commenting on the statement, the interlocutor from the print media states that *“the biggest problem for investigative journalism is the administration’s silence on requests for free access to information.”* In essence, as he points out, *“all of that is done so that in the end, when the story is published, one side is missing, and so that it can be said that the story is not developed adequately.”*



“All of that is done so that in the end, when the story is published, one side is missing, and so that it can be said that the story is not developed adequately.”

That the previous government i.e., its officials, were not open enough to the media, and that they rarely gave interviews or talked to journalists who were critical of them, is fully agreed by 7 out of 10 media representatives, while 30% somewhat agree with that statement. On the statement of identical content, which this time referred to the new government and how much they were open or closed to the media, 60% of interviewees believe that the new government does not show sufficient openness to the media, 30% have the opposite view, and 10% cannot assess, by arguing that there was not enough time for the new government to demonstrate it.

The interlocutor from the print media is of the opinion that *“the new government calls for transparency from the beginning”*, but that *“for many things it is even worse than the previous government”*, illustrating this with an example from when on some issues of public health importance, they were met with a *“wall of silence”* by the new government.

On the other hand, Marko Vešović, from *Dan*, says that *“the previous government was the enemy of investigative journalism”*, and that *“it is difficult to comment due to the short period of time whether the new coalition majority will be able to position itself as a credible partner to the media.”* He believes that what the new government can do is mainly reduced to three things: *“an attempt to create additional momentum in investigations into earlier cases of attacks on journalists, especially the one on Duško Jovanović, then amendments to the Law on Free Access to Information and the Law on Data Secrecy, as well as essential work on transparency through investment in public relations services within state institutions, in order to make those people more competent and ready to respond to journalists’ inquiries.”*



“The previous government was the enemy of investigative journalism.”

Speaking about previous political structures and the situation in the media during the period in which they exercised power, he says that, *“looking at the countries of the region, and beyond the region, which have a greater democratic tradition than Montenegro, where from the fall of the Berlin Wall the government changed for the first time only last year, he is not unsatisfied with how that turned out, because a critical mass always existed in Montenegro”*, alluding to the part of the media that maintained a critical relationship throughout that period.

Commenting on the openness of the previous government towards the media, Duška Pejović, editor at the *Radio Television of Montenegro (RTCG)*, said that former officials were open to the media when it

suit them: “When certain conditions in the country suited them, then they opened up more than usual, and when it was necessary not to talk about something, that is, to keep it under the carpet, or to remove some topics from the focus of the public eye, then they were not in the mood to talk, nor to come to appear on shows.” She adds that the role of the media is to re-examine, because the media are in fact guard dogs of democracy. “They are there to point out that public officials have an obligation, not a choice or an alternative to address the public, as well as to explain certain things for which they are responsible.”



“The role of the media is to re-examine, because the media are in fact the guard dogs of democracy.”

That, without specifying whether talking about the new or old government, “it was difficult to get statements from officials, except before the elections”, confirmed Nenad Pavićević, a journalist from RTV Budva. The government in that municipality changed several times in a short period of time.

The vast majority (9 out of 10 interviewees) state that the media in which they work is not ready to publish sensationalist information that is not at all or insufficiently verified in order to increase the rating, while only one media representative stated that he/she thinks their media is somewhat ready for that. The question of the same content, which concerned the media in Montenegro in general and their readiness to publish unverified texts for the sake of sensationalism, was also addressed to the interviewees, and 30% of the interviewees said that they thought that the media in Montenegro were ready for that. That the media in Montenegro are somewhat ready thought 70%.

In your opinion, to what extent is the media in which you work ready to publish sensationalist information that is not at all or is insufficiently verified, in order to increase circulation and ratings?



■ I think it's ready ■ Somewhat ready
■ I think it's not ready ■ I do not know

In your opinion, to what extent are the media in Montenegro in general ready to publish sensationalist information that is not at all or is insufficiently verified, in order to increase circulation and ratings?



■ I think they're ready ■ Somewhat ready
■ I think they're not ■ I do not know

Graph 49 - Comparative analysis of two questions



“The media in Montenegro are less inclined to sensationalism and exaggeration than is the case with the media in other countries.”

Branko Čupić, a journalist from Nikšić, working for the local portal *Indirekt*, in addition to answering the question, states “that the media in Montenegro are less inclined to sensationalism and exaggeration than is the case with the media in other countries.”

Opinions were divided on what the greatest guarantees are that a media outlet will write or report on the basis of facts, comprehensively and politically impartially. Thus, some of the interviewees believe that such a situation is possible *only with the financial stability of the media*, the other part finds the answer in *the capacities of people working in the media, as well as their integrity, especially thinking of editors and journalists*. The third part, on the other hand, believes that the guarantees are based on *legal solutions and their implementation*.

According to Jelena Kavarić, editor at *radio Krš*, the guarantee for something like that is, above all, *“legal regulation, with the possibility of legal sanction.”* She also points out that *“there is a large number of mass media platforms that are not even registered in Montenegro or that are not registered at all, which is why there is no possibility of any sanction.”* She points to financial independence as a condition for media impartiality, using as an example the media in which she works for, and that *“as a media they did not want to accept different projects or funding from different political parties, in order to preserve independence, which continuously brings existential problems.”*



“The biggest guarantee is legal regulation, with the possibility of legal sanction.”

Milena Bubanja, from the *portal of Radio Berane*, says that she does not believe that there is a guarantee, but that *“there should be preconditions that would contribute to that guarantee, which is, above all, education.”*

Mustafa Canka, owner of the *UL info* portal, estimates that the biggest guarantee is *“media credibility, economic independence, as well as the personnel and editorial structure of the media.”* Unlike some of his interlocutors, he believes that legislation *“does not greatly affect the freedom of the media and reporting.”*

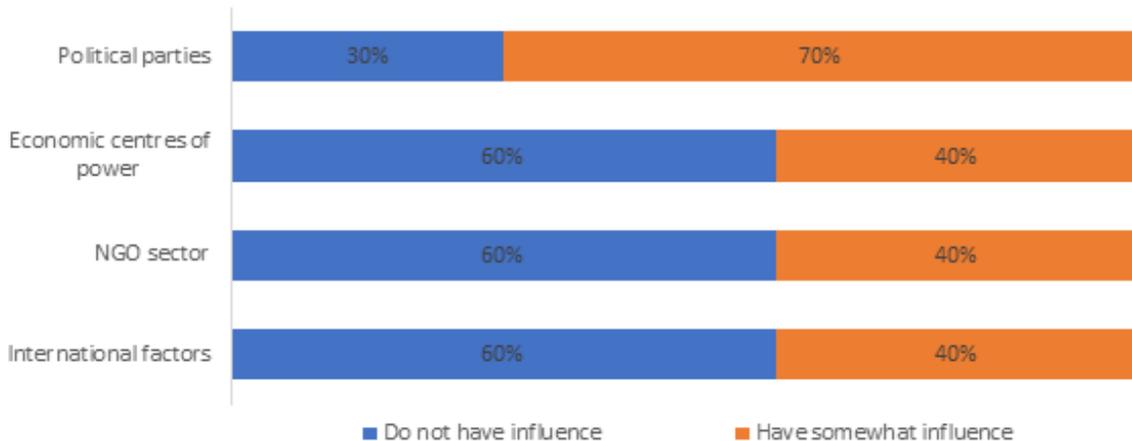
When asked to what extent the media which they work for fulfils the social role of someone who controls those who have political power, about a third (30%) of the interlocutors state that the media which they are associated with absolutely fulfils that role, one fifth (20%) do so more in relation to other media or do so partially (20%), while a fifth (20%) also think that they do it less than other media, that is 10% that they do not do it at all. The same question was asked about the control of those who have economic power, with a fifth (20%) estimating that the media in which they work for absolutely fulfils that role, a fifth (20%) that it does more than other media, about a third (30%) that it does in part, a fifth (20%) that it does less than other media, and 10% said they do not do it at all.

Some of the interlocutors explain that the degree of control of those who have economic power is conditioned by advertising, meaning that it is *difficult to control and put into a negative context a business entity that brings income to the media for which they work for*.

In this part, Mustafa Canka points out that the dispersion of income is one of the main reasons why the media he owns fulfils the role of a social controller more than other media. *“We do not depend on one advertiser, donor, institution, political party ... We have various types of income, and this gives us independence in relation to each institution, party, body or company,”* he says.

About a third (30%) of those working in the media estimate that political parties have no influence, and as many as 70% that they have somewhat influence. Economic centres of power, according to 60% of these individuals, have no influence, while 40% believe they have somewhat influence. The same applies to the influence of the NGO sector, where 60% believe that the NGO sector has no influence on the editorial policy of the media in which they work, and 40% to have somewhat influence, the same applies to the influence of international factors, where again 60% believe that international factors have no influence, and 40% that international factors have somewhat influence.

In your opinion, to what extent do the following actors have influence on the editorial policy of the media in Montenegro:



Graph 50 - Influence on the editorial policy of the media in which you work

*** the chart does not show the category of media owners, which was offered to journalists and editors**

Željko Ivanović, from *Vijesti*, thinks that it is not possible to talk about the NGO sector influencing the editorial policy in that sense, however the topics that they follow as a media are also followed by the NGO sector and that “therefore it can be said that there is some influence, more in terms of cooperation and work on common topics.” Nenad Pavićević, from TV Budva, also assesses that the influence of the NGO sector “is reflected through the fact that the NGO sector publicly points out problems”, adding that “this influence cannot be characterized as some influence from the background.”

Reflecting on 2018 and the project that CCE implemented together with the public service broadcaster RTCG, which included investigative journalism, and which was misused to dismiss the Director general of RTCG, Andrijana Kadija, Duška Pejović, the editor working for the same media, says that RTCG in that year and a half showed that it was able work, that it had the staff and the capacity to do investigative topics.

As a reminder, due to the joint project of CCE and RTCG, which was financed by the EU, Andrijana Kadija, Director General of RTCG was dismissed in 2018, with the explanation that the project agreement between CCE and RTCG enabled inappropriate impact of CCE on the editorial policy of RTCG. Subsequent final verdicts in favour of Kadija, but also in favour of the director of TVCG, Vladan Mićunović and the editor of the First Program of RTCG Aleksandar Mirković, showed that it was a matter of political manipulation and action in RTCG, which is still the subject of the European Commission report, the working documents for Chapters 23 and 24, State Department reports, numerous relevant international media monitoring organisations, EU institutions, EU Member States and autonomous NGOs in Montenegro.

A special question was posed only to the editors and journalists who were interviewed, and it referred to the influence of media owners on the editorial policy of the media for which they work. As many as 50% of the interviewees state that the owners have full influence on the editorial policy of the media in which they work, 37.5% state that they have partial influence, and 12.5% state that they do not know the answer to that question.

Marko Vešović claims that “the influence of the media owner is a matter of sound logic, because it is questionable who can determine the influence of the owner, without taking into consideration the rules and laws.” However, he also points out “not to assume that the interests of media owners are contrary to the interests of citizens.”

The vast majority (80%) of the interviewees state that the medium which they are associated with

provides enough space for public debate in order to make the best decisions or reach a compromise on important social issues, while 20% state that they agree to some extent. Only 10% of the interviewees believe that the state should not financially support the media that fulfil their social role, in order to improve the work and freedom of the media, while 90% believe that the state should do so.

According to Mustafa Canka, from *UL info* portal, “the state should help the media, but that financial assistance should be limited and not exceed 10-15% of the total media income.” Branko Čupić, from the *Indirekt* portal, expresses fear that the state’s financial assistance could have an impact on the editorial policy of some media, perhaps on the media with less financial power.

The interlocutor from the print media has the opposite opinion, who believes that “the state should not help the media, but it should create conditions for the media to operate financially healthy”, taking as an example funds to which all media would have access.



“The state should not help the media, but it should create conditions for the media to operate financially healthy.”

However, there is an agreement among a large number of respondents that this kind of funding, if any, would have to be carried out “under strict criteria”, so that, as Milena Bubanja from *Radio Berane* portal states, “the state could not be able to directly influence by giving money to certain media close to itself.”

Furthermore, 60% agree with the statement that journalists in Montenegro should have a work license, 10% somewhat agree with it, while 20% have the opposite view and 10% have no opinion. Nine out of ten interviewees agree with the statement that the Law on Media should define who a journalist is.

Milena Bubanja from *Radio Berane* portal is not of the opinion “that we can strictly define who a journalist is, but we need to define what a journalistic act is.” She explains “how everyone who deals with this act, that is, who does journalistic work, is a journalist - whether it is someone who is a freelancer or a permanent employee.”



“New portals appear practically every month, for which it is not known who the owner is, neither who is behind them, nor who finances them.”

Branko Čupić states that “there is no clear selection and that everyone can be a journalist”, who also states that “portals are sprouting like mushrooms and there is no control in that.” A large number of new portals, although in the context of another issue, is noticed by the owner of *Vijesti*, Željko Ivanović, who says “that new portals appear practically every month, for which it is not known who the owner is, neither who is behind them, nor who finances them.”

As many as 90% of the interviewees believe that journalists in Montenegro should specialize in narrower thematic areas. However, commenting on that, the interlocutor from the print media says that “almost no newsroom has the luxury of specializing journalists in specific field”, which is followed by his story about investigative journalism, which he says that in developed countries “there are newsrooms that solely deal with it”, and that they, if they want, “have the luxury of dealing with one story even for a year and a half”, which no one can do here.

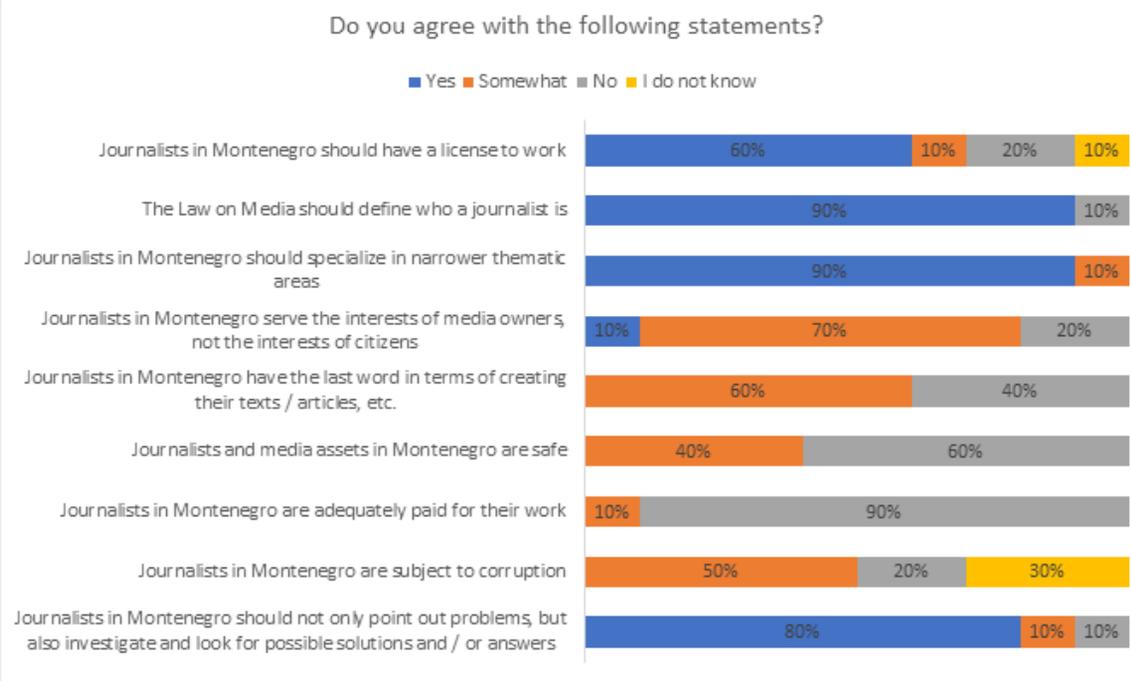


“Almost no newsroom has the luxury of specializing journalists in a specific field.”

On the conclusion that journalists in Montenegro work for the interests of media owners, and not for the interests of citizens, 10% stated that they agree with that, 20% do not agree, while 70% claim to be somewhat in agreement with that statement. That the journalists in Montenegro have the last word in terms of creating their articles, 60% of the interviewees think partly so, while 40% do not agree with that.

That journalists and media assets in Montenegro are not safe estimated 60% of the interviewed. There is almost complete agreement that journalists in Montenegro are not adequately paid for their work (90%). Those journalists are somewhat susceptible to corruption is considered by 50% of those interviewed, while 20% oppose this claim.

Finally, the vast majority (80%) of interviewees agree or somewhat agree with the statement that journalists in Montenegro should not only point out problems, but also question and seek possible solutions or answers.



Graph 51 - Do you agree with the following statements?

Commenting on the statement about the safety of journalists and media in Montenegro, Duška Pejović from RTCG considers that journalists “do not have the opportunity to use the state apparatus to protect them in any way, as, for example, ministers have on the public scene.” Milena Bubanja from Radio Berane portal agrees with that, saying that she thinks that “it is extremely important to protect journalists, i.e. to give them the status of a protected person or to treat an attack on journalists as an attack on an official.” She also points out that they should be protected in such a way that “attacks on journalists are punished more severely and that an attack on a journalist is not treated in the same way as an attack on anyone else.”



“You do not need to corrupt a journalist, if you have the possibility of calling the owner get that something done for you.”



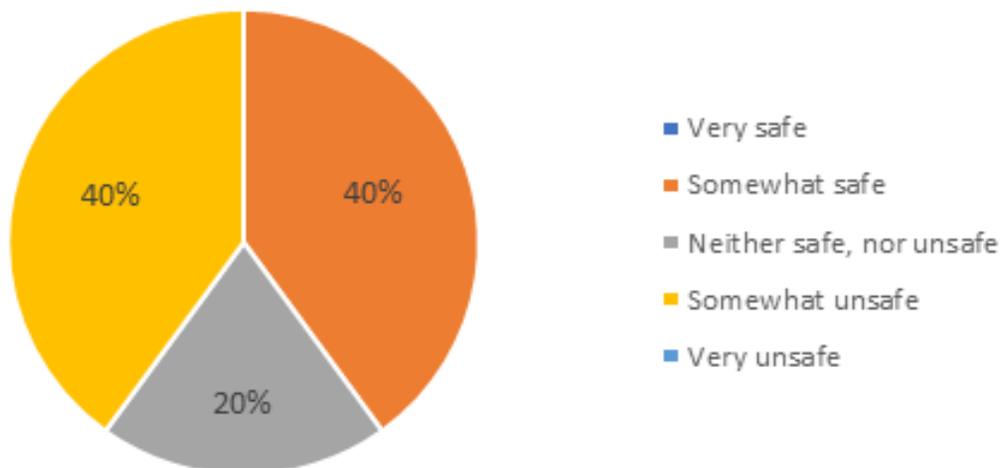
“Journalists do not have the opportunity to use the state apparatus to protect them in any way, as, for example, ministers have on the public scene”

Marko Vešović, from Dan, states “that he does not believe that corruption is widespread among journalists and thinks that in such a small country as Montenegro, such things would be known.” He adds that “you do not need to corrupt a journalist, if you have the

possibility of calling the owner to get that something done for you.”

Assessing their safety while working, interviewees most often say that they are partly safe (40%) and partly unsafe (40%), while 20% state that they feel neither safe, nor unsafe.

How safe do you feel doing your job?



Graph 52 - How safe do you feel doing your job?

Several interviewees commented on the safety of journalists, the media and their property as a particularly important issue, and several also shared unpleasant experiences with attacks on them or their colleagues.

A journalist from the local RTV Budva, Nenad Pavićević, cites as an example the situation when, during one of the demonstrations, his colleague was attacked while she was on a work assignment. Namely, his colleague, accompanied by a cameraman, “was attacked by a man who was carrying out the blockade, and who attacked them and their official car.” Despite a request to a police officer who was nearby to help them and escort them to the television building, he says that did not happen, because the police officer said that he “must check for that.” He concludes that the attack was reported to the authorities, but he does not know whether there were any results in the procedure after the report.

“I feel very unprotected ...”, says Duška Pejović from RTCG, “... maybe not completely, but I can imagine how some other people who have families, children, some people who they have to think about and some people who depend on them. She also says that “I was set on fire several times in my career from hate speech, media lynching, insults, threats ...”



“I was set on fire several times in my career from hate speech, media lynching, insults, threats...”



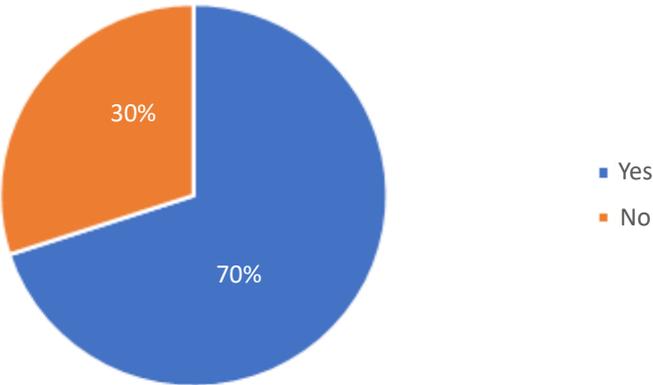
“Those who, between essential freedom and safety, chose safety, do not deserve either freedom, nor safety.”

Milena Bubanja states the situation connected to the topic of endangered safety, and for which she explains that from the current standpoint it seems harmless to her, even though it did not have to be then. “It was when on my personal Facebook profile, a girl called me out asking what was I doing covering ‘the lity’, because in her opinion I didn’t belong there, given that I’m not like-minded with the group that was walking. She literally

drew a target on my forehead, and I know that at least a hundred other people like her follow it.” Unlike some of his interlocutors, Mustafa Canka, from UL info, says that “he has never had any unpleasantness in his life, nor did he consider himself endangered. However, those who, between essential freedom and safety, chose safety, do not deserve either freedom, nor safety.”

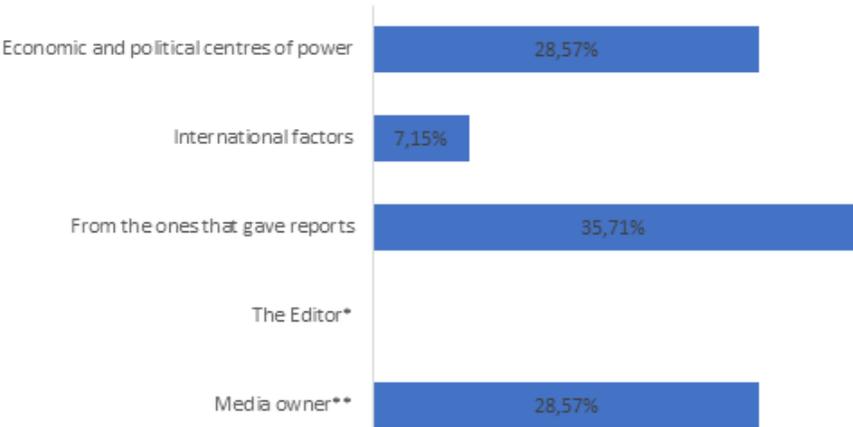
The majority (70%) of the interviewees claim that during their work they were exposed to pressure or blackmail to do something other than what they thought was right, while 30% claim that they were not in such a situation. When asked where these pressures came from, in relation to the offered answers and with the possibility of choosing more options, the largest number of answers is related to those that were reported (35.71%). According to them, pressures came from economic and political centres of power (28.57%), but also from media owners (28.57%), while the least pressure came from international factors (7.15%). None of the interviewees stated that the pressure came from the media editor.

Were you exposed to pressure or blackmail while doing your job to do something other than what you thought was right?



Graph 53 - During your work, were you exposed to pressure or blackmail to do something other than what you thought was right?

If you were exposed to pressure or blackmail, they came from:



Graph 54 – If you were exposed to pressure or blackmail, who did they come from?
 * question posed only to journalists
 ** question was not posed to media owners

Speaking of pressure, Nenad Pavićević from RTV Budva says that there were situations when they “did a report about problems in the city and a day after broadcasting it, there were calls urging to record a statement, or an article on how the problem would be solved.”

In general, Željko Ivanović says that “most media in Montenegro pay minimum wage, and that this is one of the ways to pressure and blackmail journalists.” This is supported by the comment of the interlocutor from the print media, who thinks that, unfortunately, “a lot of people are forced to do that job and do it only because there is nothing else to do.” However, he also thinks that “if someone thinks that they can’t do the job properly, then they shouldn’t do it at all.”



“If someone thinks that they can’t do the job properly, then they shouldn’t do it at all.”

Speaking about the extent to which they resort to self-censorship when doing their job, half of the interviewees state that they never do it (50%), 40% of the respondents that they do it rarely, while 10% claim that they do it often.

An interlocutor from the print media states that he often resorts to self-censorship, because, as he says, “when a person works for a private media, they must be taught to know approximately how far they can go.” Duška Pejović, editor at RTCG, however, says that she never resorts to self-censorship, because she “does not want anything that is in the public space, and that comes from her as an author, who gives her signature and who is behind that content, to be a product her self-censorship.”

In order to assess journalistic autonomy, all journalists were asked how often their texts and articles undergo changes through editorial interventions, to which everyone stated that this is done rarely (100%). On the other hand, editors were asked how often they change journalistic texts or articles, to which half of the editors stated that they rarely do so (50%), a quarter that they do so very often (25%), while a quarter had no answer (25%), due to the inapplicability of the question, considering the specificity of the work that they do. Both journalists and editors were asked if they reacted because of that, i.e., if any of the journalists reacted because of those interventions, to which 75% of journalists state that they reacted to that, and 25% state that they did not. Of the editors interviewed, all who responded stated that none of the journalists reacted because of that, while a quarter of the editors did not find the question applicable due to the nature of their work.

Commenting on this question, the interlocutor from the print media says that he does not react to editorial interventions when it comes to technical interventions, but that, when it comes to content, he asks for clarification on what the problem is, to which he receives an answer.

According to journalist Danilo Ajković, the changes in their articles and texts are only of a “stylistic nature”, which is also confirmed by journalist Branko Čupić, who says that “so far he has had experience only with minor interventions concerning some aesthetic part, and that there was no change in the context and content of the text.” That the changes are not made “because of the content, but that they are changes of a grammatical, technical or informational nature”, is the experience of the editor Marko Vešović.



“I do not react when it comes to editorial intervention of a technical nature.”

Analysing the financial aspects of working in the media, 50% of the interviewees state that they are partially satisfied with their earnings, 30% that they are not satisfied at all, and only 10% of the interviewees are completely satisfied, while 10% are largely satisfied with their income.

The answers to this question differ significantly from the already given answers to the question that generally dealt with the issue of salaries in the media in Montenegro, where 90% of interviewees state that journalists are not adequately paid for their work.

Answering this question, Mustafa Canka says that he is partially satisfied with his earnings, but also

adds that the situation is difficult, and that “people working in the media are forced to do two other jobs, as well as other part-time jobs in order to secure resources”, because otherwise, as he says, “if you’re a family man you can’t make a living from just one job.”

Speaking about the technical conditions for working in the medium which they work for, 50% of the respondents express their satisfaction to a lesser extent, 10% partial satisfaction, and 40% are very or completely satisfied. The conditions for engaging in investigative journalism in the media in which they work for, most assess as poor, stating that they are not satisfied with them at all (30%) or that to a lesser extent (20%) are satisfied with these conditions, while the same number applies to those who are partially satisfied with these conditions (20%). Only 10% of the interviewees fully express their satisfaction with the conditions for engaging in investigative journalism, and 20% express their satisfaction to a large extent.

To what extent would you express satisfaction with the technical conditions for working in the media which you worked for?



■ Completely ■ To a large extent
 ■ Partially ■ To a lesser extent
 ■ Not satisfied at all

Graph 55 - To what extent would you express satisfaction with the technical conditions for working in the media which you work for?

To what extent would you express satisfaction with the conditions for engaging in investigative journalism in the media which you work for?



■ Completely ■ To a large extent
 ■ Partially ■ To a lesser extent
 ■ Not satisfied at all

Graph 56 - To what extent would you express satisfaction with the conditions for investigative journalism in the media which you work for?

Judging by the answers, the technical working conditions mostly affect people who work in the local media. *Indirekt* journalist Branko Čupić, talking about his experience on a new and previous job on another local portal, says “as a small portal they did not have the possibility to have their own premises, that is their office for most of the time, and had to use their own technical means to do the job.” Milena Bubanja also confirms that this is not an isolated case, saying that they do not have a company car. “If we have location shooting, I have to use my car, until recently, until we got the project, I didn’t have a computer, I had to use my own”, she explains, adding that the mobile phone she used for the recordings was her personal. She concludes that “everything depended on her own equipment, because nothing was bought by the radio.”



“Fear for personal safety and poor financial situation leads journalists to avoid certain topics.”



“Until recently, until we got the project, I didn’t have a computer, I had to use my own.”

Marko Vešović in terms of investigative journalism problematizes the financial aspect “I see this in our correspondents who work in cities in Montenegro where various controversial figures from the world of crime and the underground come from, or some local

corrupt politicians about whose jobs and activities would certainly be interesting to write about, and which would attract the attention of the Montenegrin public”, he specified. However, he also raises the question – “how is someone supposed to do that when they have a salary of 200 euros and how is anyone ready to risk their life while having those conditions.”

Journalists, editors and media owners had the opportunity to point out the biggest problems facing the media and journalists in Montenegro through an open-ended question. The answers to that question seem to be inexhaustible, and several interlocutors sublimate what the biggest problems are.



“Changes in legislation should be directed towards increasing responsibility, and not increasing rights, as it has been the case.”

As such, Danilo Ajković says that the problems of the media in Montenegro are “poor legislation, the link with sources of funding that affect editorial policy, the insufficient professional capacity of journalists.” He also believes that “changes in legislation should be directed towards increasing responsibility, and not increasing rights, as it has been the case.”

Jelena Kavarić recognizes as the biggest problem “pressures and influences from the outside, with the authorities trying to infiltrate their power through the media”, and that the radio in which she worked “suffered pressure from political parties.”

Mustafa Canka says that the biggest problems are “a polarized society, corruption, a small market, the economic situation, as well as the owner’s influence on the work.”

Duška Pejović also recognizes polarization in the media as “terribly problematic, because one cannot talk about creating, contributing and promoting any value that contributes to cohesion if they themselves are divided and at different poles.” She adds that a particular problem is that “many colleagues do not want to be further educated and sensitized, under the pretext that they do not have time for that, which is contrary to the concept of lifelong acquisition of knowledge and work on oneself.” Another problem is that “they do not know where to draw the line between freedom and hate speech.”

As one of the possibilities to prevent polarization in the media, the “single self-regulatory body” was mentioned, bearing in mind that there are several different self-regulatory bodies in Montenegro. Duška Pejović thinks that “we do not have dialogue capacities, which is a precondition”, as well as that we must have it, “regardless of the fact that we do not agree with each other’s editorial policies - we cannot perform self-reflection, we cannot act self-critically, we cannot spot our own shortcomings, and if we don’t do all of that then our public role as someone who works in the public interest is called into question. Editorial policies are one thing, we can talk about it, but we have to have a dialogue.”

Željko Ivanović, one of the interviewees with a fairly long experience in the media, gives another dimension to the situation in the media in Montenegro. He points out that the biggest problems of the media are the “new and poor market, political and economic monopolies, but also the traditional society and poor ownership structure.” That the market is poor is also suggested by an interlocutor from the print media, who estimates that “there are too many media in the country, and usually there is a quarrel over the distribution of the marketing cake.”



“As long as there are media that have a list of protected or untouchable politicians, or protected or untouchable companies or businessmen, we cannot talk about media freedom and professional journalism.”

Further commenting on the opportunities in the media, Željko Ivanović emphasizes that *“the media are not the ones who create the media environment alone or dominantly, but that the environment is created by the holders of executive and legislative power.”* He adds that *“as long as there is no, as Brussels would say, strong and clear political will, to regulate the market in a way that encourages quality, investigative journalism, as well as serious and responsible journalism, it is impossible to talk about the normal work of the media.”* He also says that, *“unfortunately, all the negative things that occurred in the 1990s, even during the war, along with the emergence of organized crime, had a terrible impact on the media sector.”* He concludes that *“as long as there are media in Montenegro that have a list of protected or untouchable politicians, or protected or untouchable companies or businessmen, we cannot talk about media freedom and professional journalism.”* Speaking about measures to improve the media scene in Montenegro, he says that *“the ownership structure must be made transparent, which means media financing as well, while the other existing legal provisions should be respected, instead of not being respected, or done selectively so.”*

There are some observations on the Reporters Without Borders report that registered a decline in media freedom in Montenegro this year. According to Mustafa Canka, that report is *“very unfavourable for us. Although these assessments may be harsh and difficult, if we are convincingly in a bad place, then it is a warning sign for all of us who work in the media and especially for the decision makers.”* He points out that it is also a warning sign for all who are free, because *“media freedom is the oxygen of democracy.”*



“RTCG is a public service, not a state service.”

Duška Pejović also explains how *“RTCG is a public service, not a state service.”* She also states that her impression is that *“the public service is in some way often influenced by certain policies and political actors. This is something that is recorded in the documents of international organizations and I think that a lot of work needs to be done on that”,* she concluded.

