

**National Democratic Institute for International Affairs  
Montenegro**

**April 22 Parliamentary Elections  
Baseline Survey  
Key Findings**

**March 26, 2001**

## INTRODUCTION

The following report is a presentation and analysis of key findings from the baseline phase of NDI's public opinion research in Montenegro in 2001.

This research project is the property of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and is supported financially by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Its primary purpose is to assist NDI's partners – the political parties in Montenegro – to improve their ability to represent the interests of and communicate with the people of Montenegro. The research project is part of a political party assistance program conducted by NDI whose goal is to support the development of a democratic multi-party political system.

This baseline represents the first phase of NDI's public opinion research in Montenegro in 2001. The project will continue with additional tracking polls throughout the year.

Between 15 and 19 March, 1,265 residents in Montenegro participated in face-to-face interviews designed to measure their attitudes about the political parties, the upcoming 22 April elections, the issue of Montenegrin state status and other issues of importance to voters. The interviews were conducted in each of Montenegro's 21 municipalities. Prism Research, a polling firm established in Australia with offices throughout the region, conducted the fieldwork.

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

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For the last 18 months, public opinion in Montenegro has divided into three more or less equal groups – one third that views the government of Montenegro, the economic situation and developments in the last three years as generally negative; another third that views these issues as neither good nor bad; and, a final third that views these issues as generally positive. The current research confirms these divisions of public opinion.

The most important demographic division between these thirds is ethnicity – i.e., those identifying themselves as Serbs or Yugoslavs tend to view things negatively, while those identifying themselves as Montenegrins, Croats, Muslims or Albanians tend to view the situation in and government of Montenegro positively or as neither good nor bad. In particular, those identifying themselves as ethnic Muslims, ethnic Croats and ethnic Albanians evaluate most positively (generally, at between 85-95 percent) Montenegrin state institutions, the pro-independence parties, the pro-independence leaders and the question of independence, in general. Ethnic Montenegrins are either highly positive or neutral on these issues.

In terms of other demographic considerations, most age groups, occupation groups and income groups responded similarly to the questions. The only significant exceptions noted are respondents between the ages of 18-30 and students who are more likely to highly evaluate (above 70 percent) Montenegrin state institutions and demonstrate less confidence in the Federal Institutions and the Yugoslav Army. Younger respondents are also more likely to be clearly pro-independent.

Interestingly, voters are fairly certain about their choices of which party they will vote for in the upcoming election and their choice of party when compared to their position on independence is consistent. They also appear to have confidence in the electoral process and the potential to cast their vote without pressure from any political party.

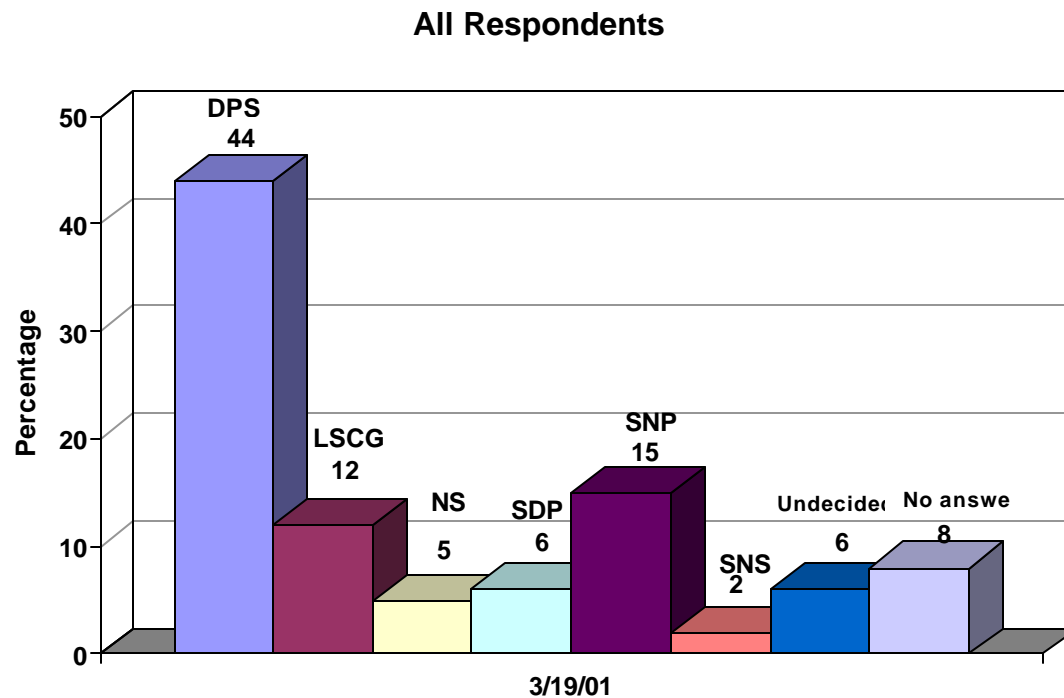
Based on the survey results, had the election been held in mid-March, the DPS/SDP coalition would have won a clear majority of seats in the Montenegrin Assembly. Fifty-one (51) percent of decided voters said they would vote for the Djukanovic-led DPS and another 6 percent would have voted for the SDP. The Liberal Alliance had 13 percent of decided voters.

The most important issues for voters at this time are: (1) the economic situation, start up of industry and unemployment; and, (2) the question of Montenegrin state status – i.e., independence of Montenegro or continued federation with Serbia. All other issues tested were identified as “most important” by less than 10 percent of respondents.

In terms of state status, the respondents favor a clear question (“are you for Montenegro as an independent country/state?”) and 61.6 percent would vote “for.” The most important areas that would improve if Montenegro became independent are considered to be tourism and the economy.

## VOTE INTENTION

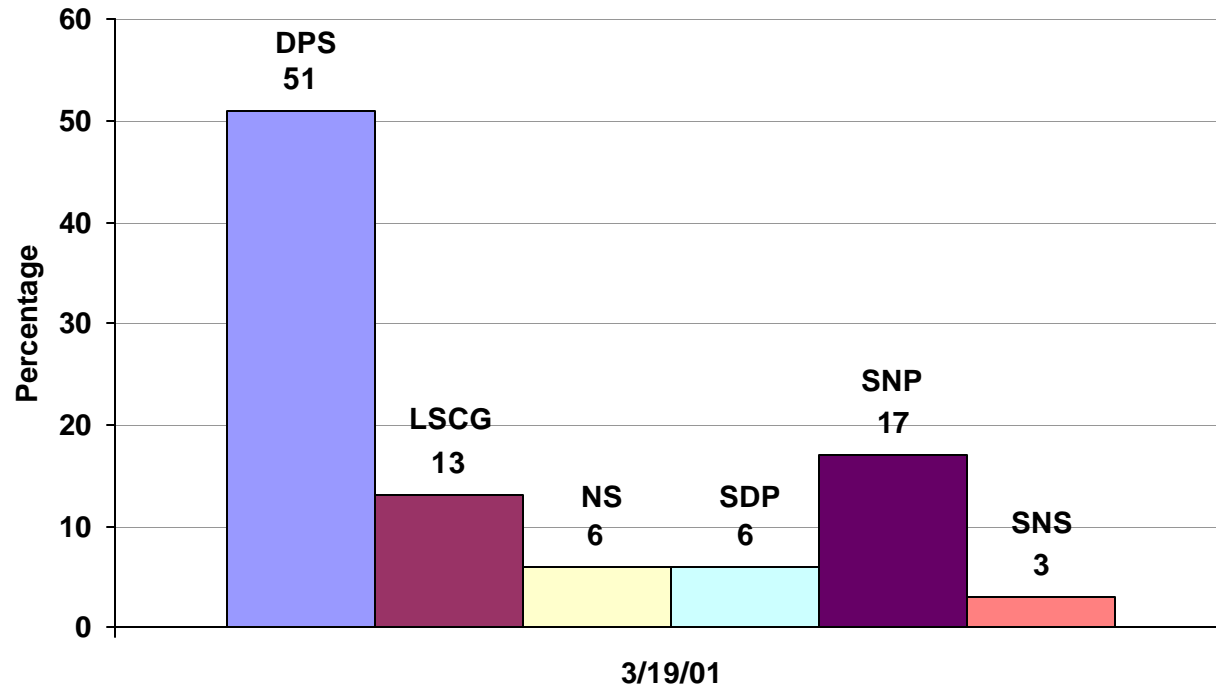
“If the elections in Montenegro were to be conducted tomorrow, which party would you vote for?”



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

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

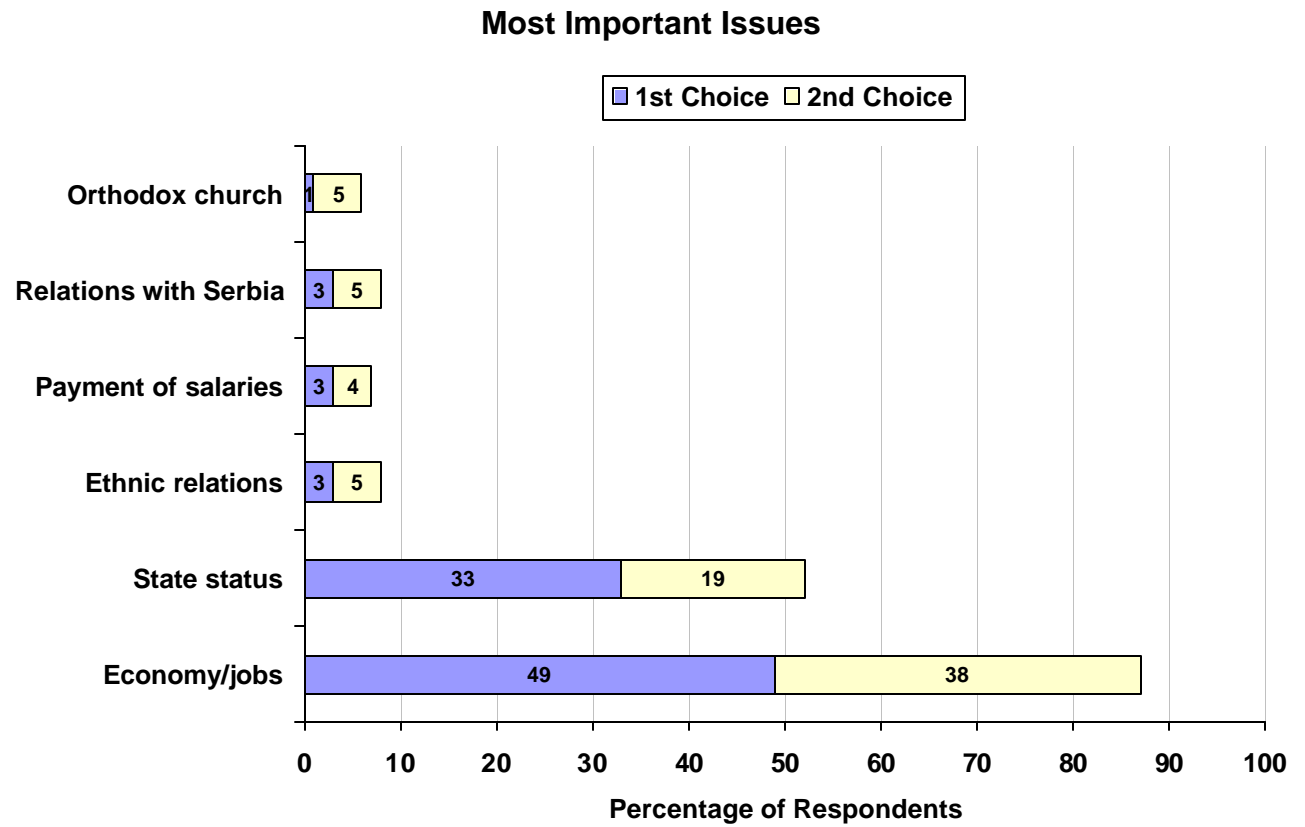
**Decided Voters Only\***



\* Undecided respondents and those not answering are proportionally distributed among the parties.

## MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

From the following list, respondents were asked to name their most important and second most important issue in the election: economic situation, international financial assistance, corruption, ethnic relations, non-payment of salaries, unemployment, independence, relations with Serbia, remaining part of FRY, start up of industry, agriculture, the rights of people to which I belong, Orthodox church, privatization, social security/health care, tourism or any other issue they felt important.



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

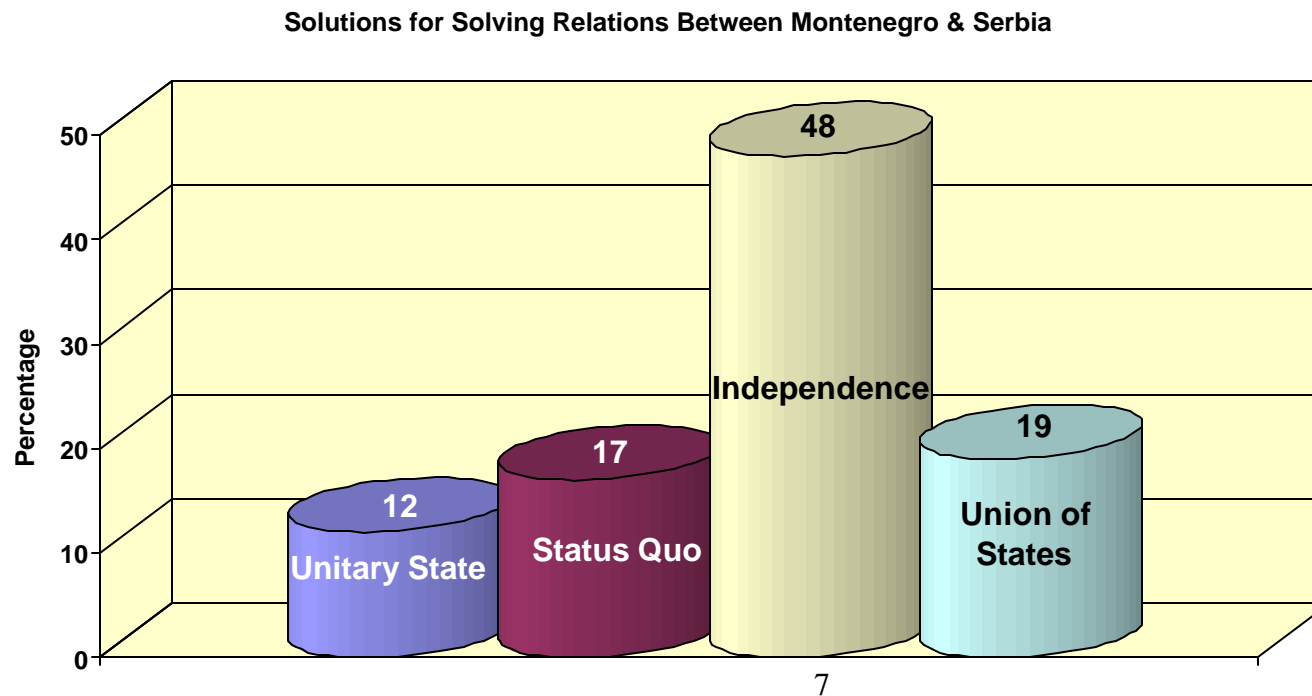
\* State status combines issues of independence and sovereignty of Montenegro, and Montenegro remaining as part of FRY.

## ELECTION FAIRNESS

Voters were asked several questions about their perception of the fairness of the upcoming elections, of the integrity of the ballot and of the potential for pressure from some political parties. In each case, almost three-quarters of those interviewed expressed no concerns about these issues. Ethnic Muslims, Albanians and Croats were most confident about fair elections, secret ballots and lack of intimidation, while those who identified themselves as ethnically Serb or Yugoslav were most skeptical about these issues.

## STATE STATUS

In the last 18 months, there have been numerous proposed solutions for the future state status of Montenegro. Ongoing public opinion analyses have tested Montenegrin public support for a variety of arrangements for Montenegro, Serbia and Yugoslavia, which have included: (1) ending the federation and establishing a unitary state; (2) a federation; (3) a confederal state; or, (4) an independent state. More recently, the political debate on state status has narrowed to just two options – independence or a continued federation. A third possible option is based on the December 2000 Platform adopted by the DPS and SDP: a union of two internationally recognized, independent states based on negotiations with Serbia.



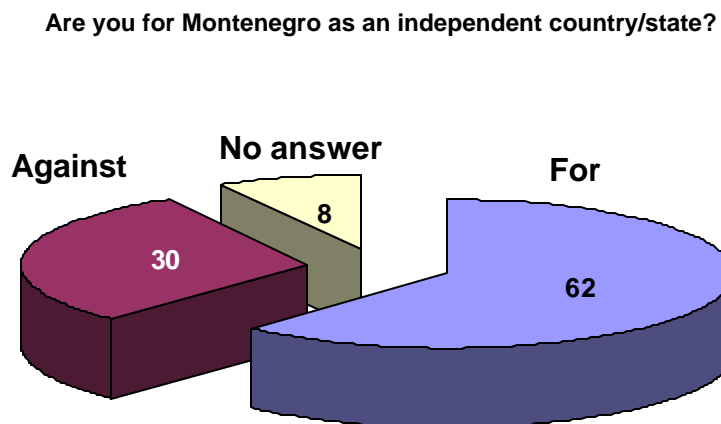
Given the multitude of possibilities, a number of questions on state status were posed to the interviewees in this public opinion survey.

First, voters surveyed were asked to give their opinion about the best solution for resolving relations between Montenegro and Serbia.

Respondents were overwhelmingly in favor (75.1 percent) of holding a referendum regardless of their opinion on the referendum. In terms of the question respondents prefer, a majority (54.5 percent) would like the referendum question to be: “Are you for Montenegro as an independent country/state?” This question is favored widely by people between the ages of 18-30, students and those identifying themselves as ethnically Montenegrin, Muslim or Albanian.

Twenty seven (27) percent favor the question: “Are you for the union of two internationally recognized states – Serbia and Montenegro – established on the basis of negotiations between the Montenegrin and Serbian governments?” This referendum question is favored by those over the age of 41, as well as by pensioners and housewives and those identifying themselves as ethnically Serb or Yugoslav. And, 13.6 percent – primarily from those identifying themselves as ethnically Serb or Yugoslav – do not like either question.

In response to the first question, 61.6 percent said that they would vote “for” and 29.9 percent said they would vote “against.”





In response to the second potential referendum question, 45.8 percent said that they would vote “for” and 37.5 percent said that they would vote “against,” while 8.1 percent did not know or could not answer and 6.7 percent said they would not vote.

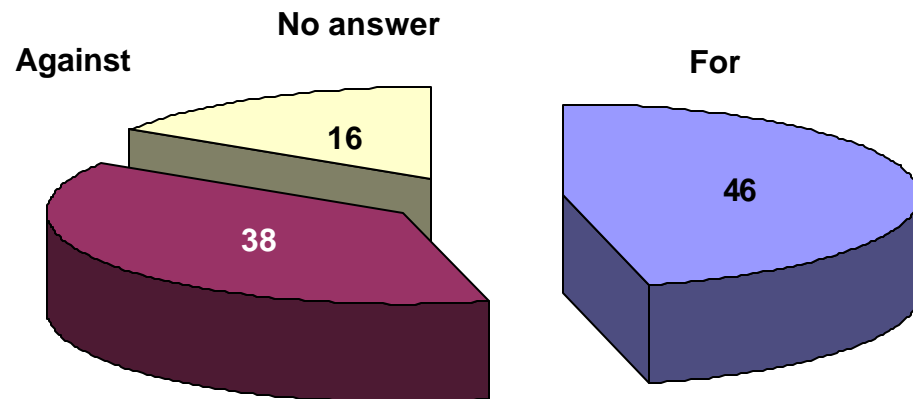
This result is consistent across all ethnic groups except the Muslims and Yugoslavs. Fifty-six percent (55.8 percent) of those who identified themselves as ethnically Muslim said they would vote “against” this question as formulated and 34.7 of ethnic Muslims said they would vote “for”; while 58.7 percent of those identifying themselves as Yugoslav said they would vote “for” and 25.6 percent said they would vote “against.”

When asked what two areas would improve the most if Montenegro became an independent state, respondents identified tourism (23.8 percent) and the economy (14.6 percent) most often, while 13.2 percent refused to identify any potential area for improvement.

However, when asked what two areas would improve the most if Montenegro stayed in a Federation with Serbia, 18.3 percent of respondents refused to identify any potential areas for improvement. All other issues, including the economy, tourism, university studies, stability in the Balkans and sport, were identified by less than 10 percent of respondents.

### Are you for the union of two internationally recognized states

...



The International Community has made it clear that the best solution for Montenegro and Serbia is the survival of the Federation based on negotiations between the two republics. 39.3 percent of respondents thought that the International Community position was an important factor in deciding on independence, while 55.3 percent (including 63.7 percent of students) did not think this was an important factor.

Equally, the Montenegrin government has argued publicly that Montenegro has the right to decide for itself about its future status. 83 percent of respondents agreed with this view, while 17 percent disagreed. Those in agreement included more than 90 percent of ethnic Montenegrins, Muslims and Albanians, 53.1 percent of ethnic Serbs and 72.2 percent of ethnic Yugoslavs.

And, finally, on the question of whether it was possible to negotiate successfully with the current leadership of Serbia on the future status of Montenegro, 49.6 percent thought that it was possible and 43.1 percent thought it would not be possible. Within the group that believed it was possible were 40 percent of those who identified themselves as ethnic Montenegrins, 90.8 percent as ethnic Serbs, 17.8 percent as ethnic Muslims and 90.3 percent as ethnic Yugoslavs; among those who believed successful negotiations were not possible were 75.2 percent of those identifying themselves ethnically as Muslims, 51.1 percent of ethnic Montenegrins, 5.9 percent of ethnic Serbs and 6.7 percent of ethnic Yugoslavs.