

**National Democratic Institute for International Affairs  
Montenegro**

**Key Findings  
Tracking Poll – September 2003**

**October 13, 2003**

## INTRODUCTION

The following report is a presentation and analysis of key findings from NDI's first tracking survey. It follows a baseline survey conducted in April and represents the second part of NDI's political research in Montenegro in 2003. The project will continue with the conduct of additional quarterly tracking polls throughout the year.

This series of public opinion surveys follows on from a series of eight polls conducted by NDI between March 2001 and April 2002. The baseline questionnaire for this 2003 series was substantially changed to reflect current issues of the day. However, between April and September 2003, the basic framework of the questionnaire was maintained. Therefore, when possible and relevant, this analysis will make comparisons with results from the April 2003 baseline.

The current research 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.

Between 25 September and 1 October, 1,202 residents in Montenegro participated in face-to-face interviews designed to measure their attitudes about current government institutions, reform initiatives, the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, the political parties 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 former Yugoslav 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 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 any future elections.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Most Important Concern: Living Standards and Jobs**

At the end of September 2003, 79 percent of respondents described the current economic situation in Montenegro as bad or very bad; and a full 89 percent identified “improved living standards” as the most important or second most important issue when deciding for which party to vote. This priority is ahead of all other choices by 34 percent. When asked which of the government’s economic reform goals respondents considered most important, 59 percent identified creating new jobs.

### **Future Vote Intention**

When respondents were asked for which party they would vote should parliamentary elections be held again in Montenegro, one-third (34 percent) identified the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and 16 percent identified the Socialist People’s Party (SNP). As witnessed in April 2003, almost one-third of respondents (27 percent) was undecided or gave no answer. In the event that Group for Changes (GZP), a nongovernmental organization that has advocated repeatedly and publicly for reform, were to register as a political party, 30 percent of respondents said that they would consider voting for it.

### **The Government and Reform Initiatives**

In the last five months and as winter approaches, support for the current government declined 9 percent to 48 percent. Equally, the average trust in *elected* state institutions at the union, republic or local level declined an average of 10 percent. The institution of the Montenegrin Presidency enjoys 47 percent trust, while the Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro enjoys 38 percent trust. Among a limited number of ministries, respondents rated the work of the Ministries of Agriculture, of Health, of Labor and Social Welfare and of Education as the most successful.

More than 50 percent of respondents believed that recently adopted laws, such as the Tourism Law, the Value Added Tax, the Labor Law and the Laws on Local Self-Government, would yield results. In terms of the government’s Economic Reform Agenda, a full 51 percent of respondents believed that the government would achieve the goals of the Agenda. In both cases – trust in the implementation of adopted laws and success of the economic reform agenda – confidence fell an average of 10 percent but still represented more than half of respondents. The most important government goal for respondents was the creation of new jobs and the most important policy necessary to achieve the Agenda’s

economic reform goals was considered to be reducing the tax burden, followed by providing affordable credit and reform of the state administration.

In terms of future reform laws, 48 percent of respondents identify a Law on Extra Profit as either most important or second most important to be adopted in the near future. Another 38 percent identify the Law on Restitution and 37 percent the Law on Pension and Disability.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Defining Division**

The defining division in Montenegro continues to be one's ethnic identification. Self-identified Montenegrins and Muslims tend to trust the government, the parties that make up the government and its reform initiatives, while self-identified Serbs are distrustful of the ruling bodies and its initiatives. Furthermore, as was noted for the first time in April 2003, Montenegrin public opinion has developed a "gender gap" with women displaying a greater tendency than men to be optimistic about the future and the government's ability to conduct reforms. Men tend to be more interested in politics and, consequently, exhibit a greater degree of political polarization.

In this survey, those living in Coastal municipalities generally are more pessimistic about the future direction of Montenegro. They also display less interest in 'bread and butter' economic issues, such as jobs and salaries, and more interest in fundamental, long-term reform priorities, such as development of infrastructure and dealing with crime and corruption. Respondents living in Central municipalities (Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica) appear to be increasingly disaffected. They have a lower interest in dramatic political issues and are most likely to be unable to decide what is the best direction for Montenegro.

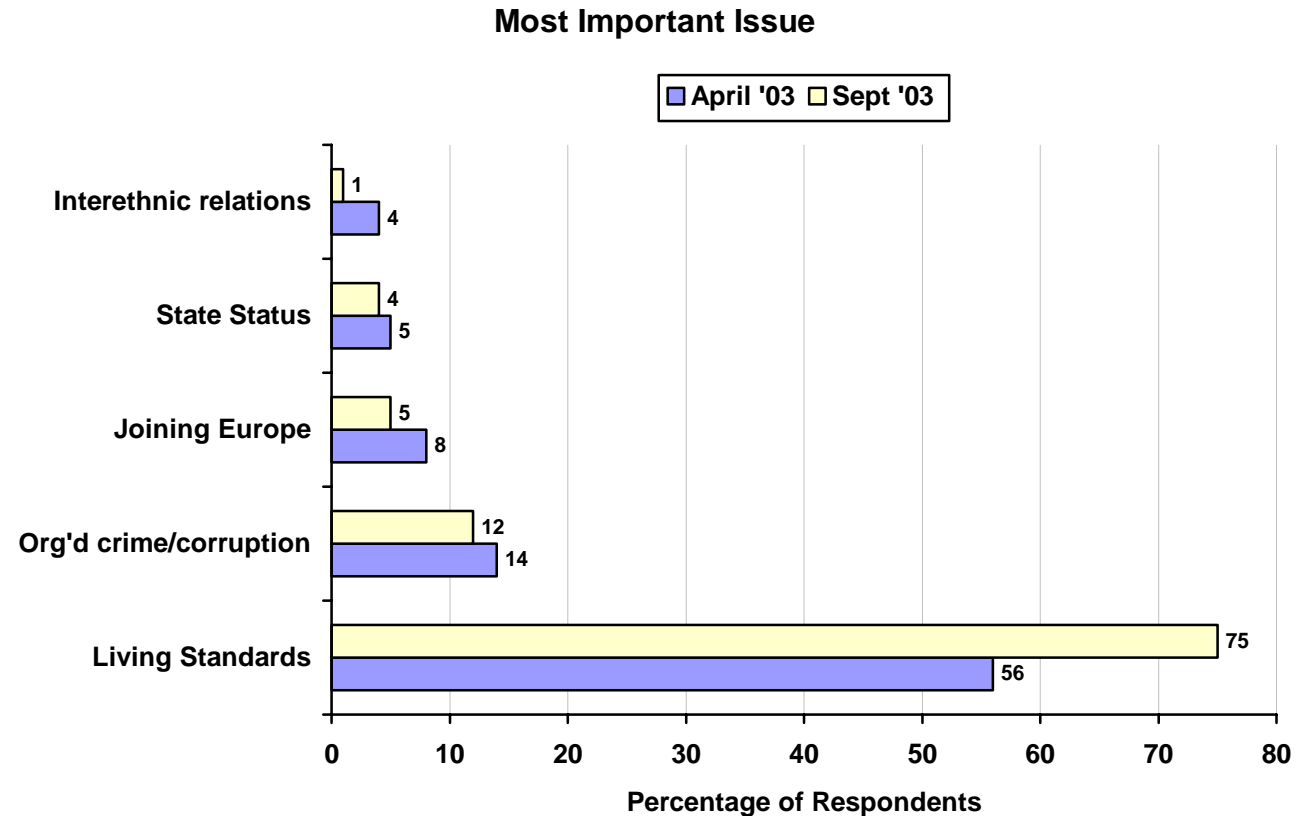
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<sup>1</sup> The Law on Pension and Disability was adopted by the Parliament the day before this survey went into the field.

## MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

From the following list, respondents were asked to name the issue they consider most important when deciding for which party to vote:

- Improved living standards (better and more regular salaries, more work places, etc.);
- Struggle against organized crime and corruption;
- Joining Europe;
- State status of Montenegro (independence or maintenance of state union with Serbia); and,
- Interethnic relations in Montenegro.

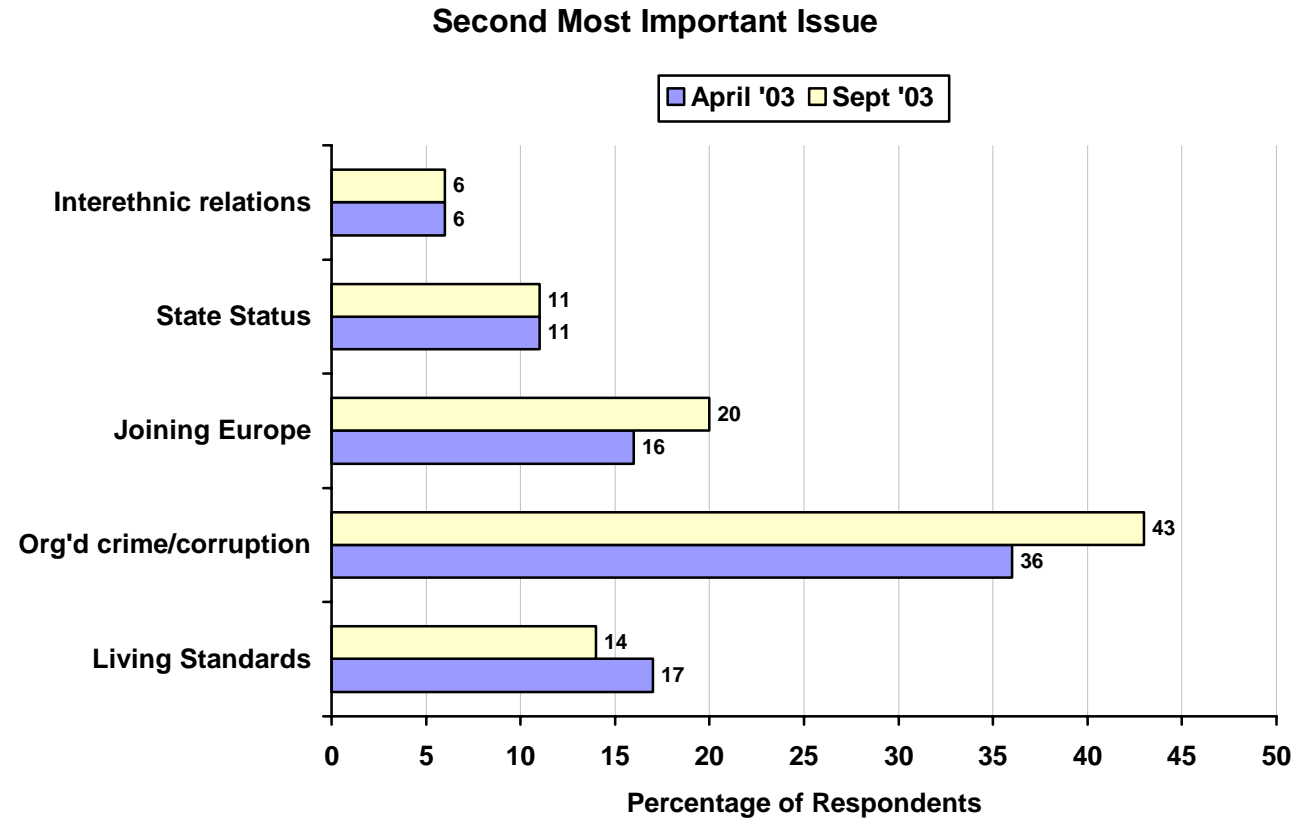


The importance to voters of a party's ability to improve living standards has risen 19 percent since April 2003.

## SECOND MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

Respondents were then asked to name the second most important issue in making their electoral choice. The options remained the same and were:

- Improved living standards (better and more regular salaries, more work places, etc.);
- Struggle against organized crime and corruption;
- Joining Europe;
- State status of Montenegro (independence or maintenance of state union with Serbia); and,
- Interethnic relations in Montenegro.

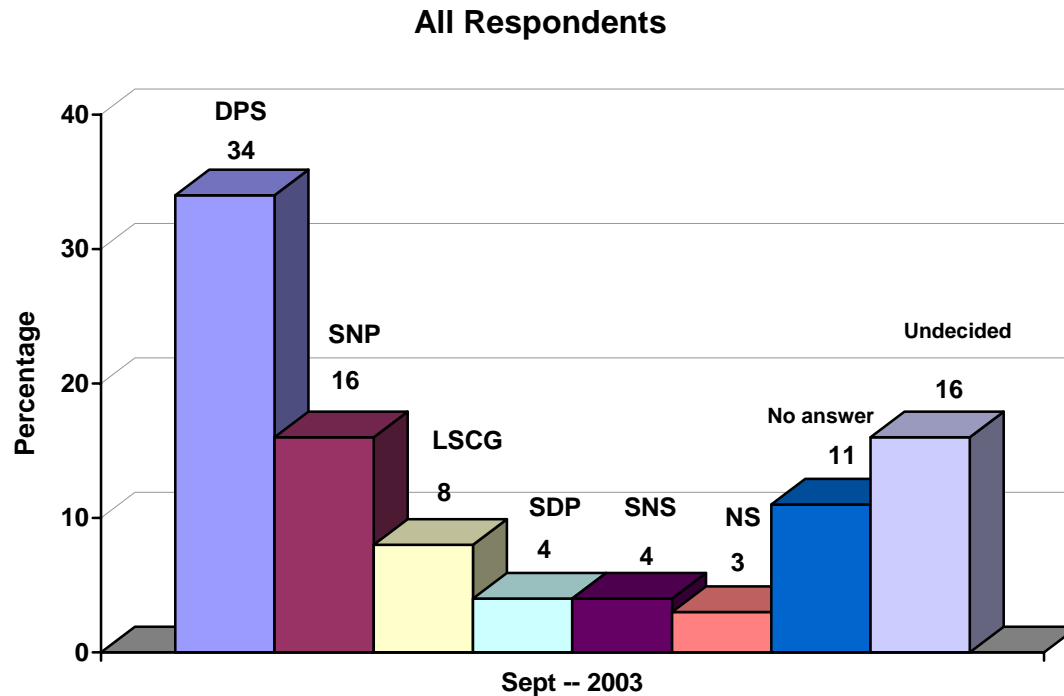


Three-quarters of respondents chose *improved living standards* as a first choice. As a second most important issue, these individuals identified *struggle against organized crime and corruption* or *joining Europe*.

## VOTE INTENTION

Respondents were asked: “If parliamentary elections were held again this week, for which party would you probably vote?” The chart below illustrates the answers received. It is interesting to note that there is a significantly large percentage (almost 30 percent) who are undecided or choose not to answer this question.

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if they would consider voting for Group for Changes (GZP) if it transformed itself into a political party. Thirty (30) percent responded that they might consider voting for GZP.

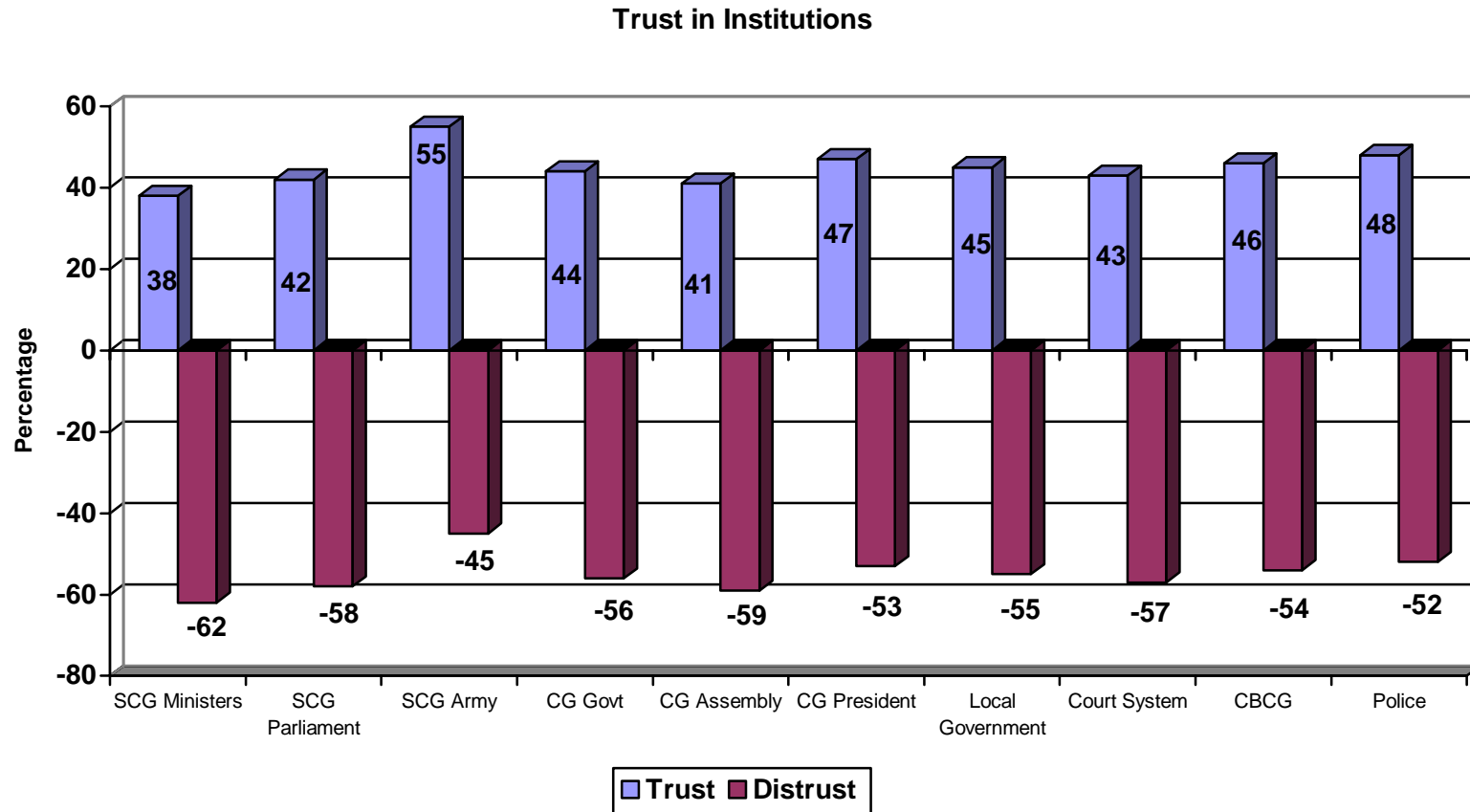


\* All other parties received less than 2 percent of support among respondents sampled.

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

## TRUST IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

Respondents were asked how much they trusted the following state institutions. Since April 2003, trust in *elected* state institutions at all levels (union, republic and local) has fallen an average of 10 percent. With the exception of the Army, trust in state institutions is now less than 50 percent.



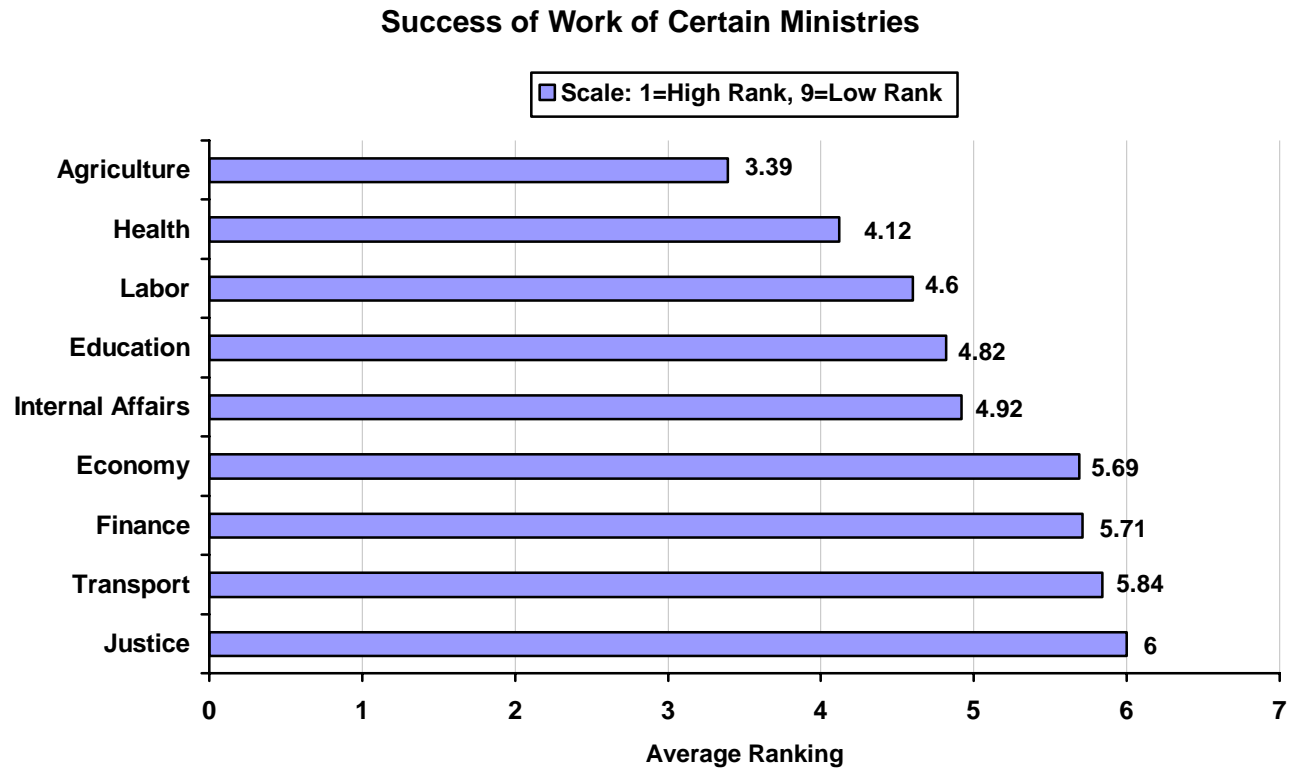


## THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS ECONOMIC REFORM AGENDA

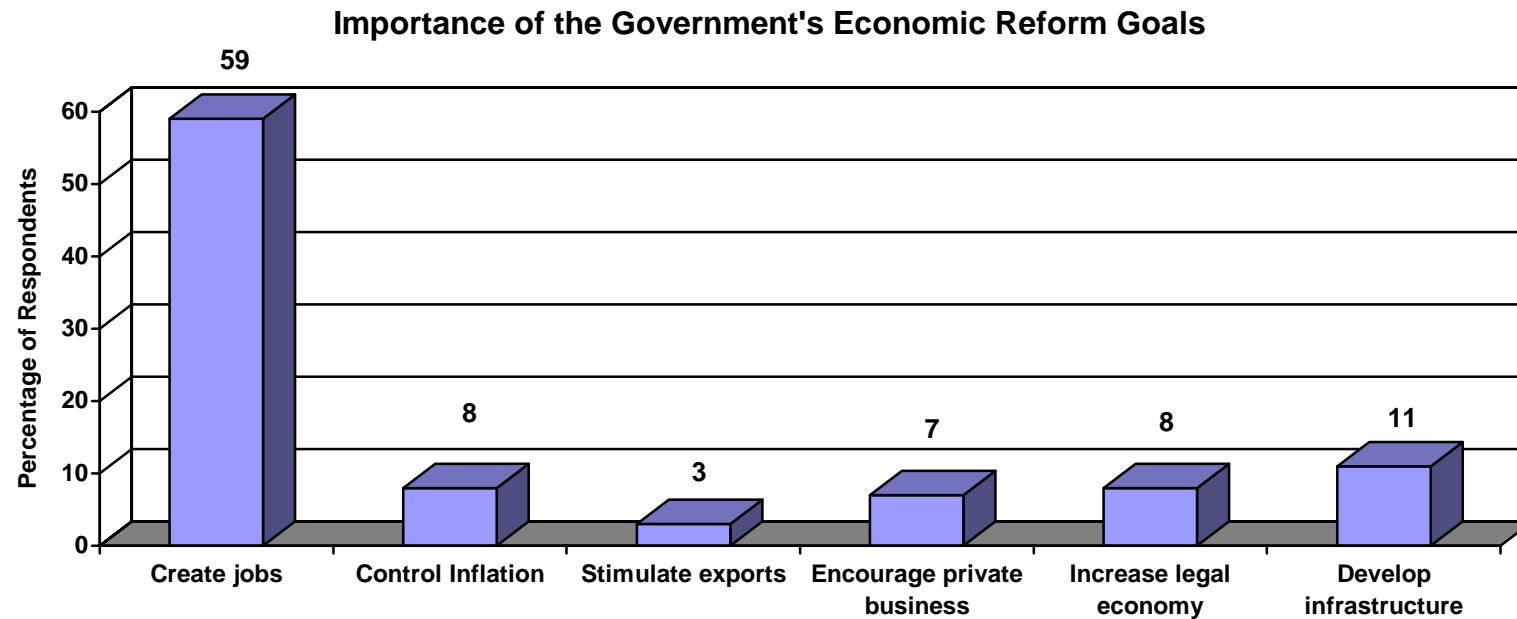
Respondents were asked about their opinion of the current government of Montenegro. As the winter approaches, 48 percent of respondents support the current government. This result represents a 9 percent decrease in support for the government when compared to April 2003.

Among a select list of ministries (not all government ministries were included), respondents were asked to rank which, in their opinion, worked most successfully. The ministries offered were:

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Science and Education
- Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Transport
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Health



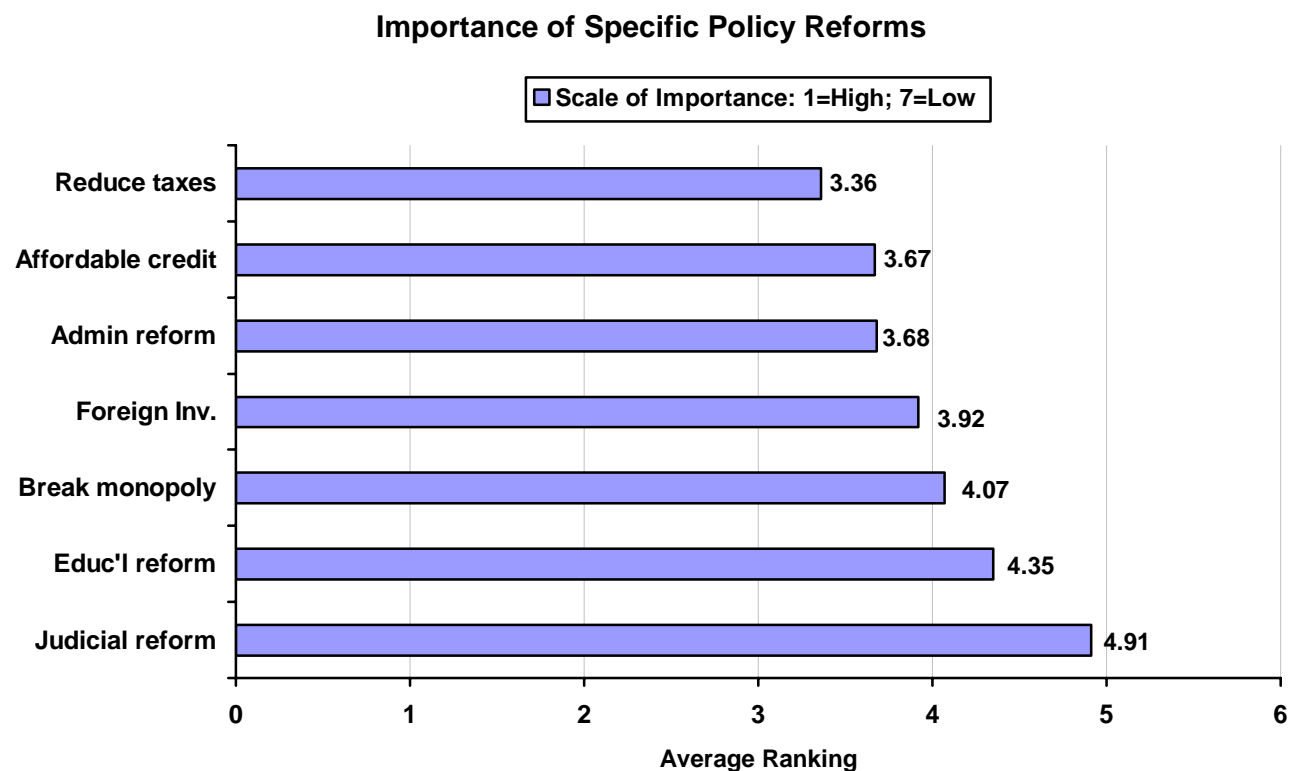
**ECONOMIC REFORM AGENDA:** In March 2003, Prime Minister Djukanovic laid out a four-year Economic Reform Agenda for Montenegro. As announced, the plan establishes a number of goals, and respondents were asked to choose the goal that was most important to them. Women and youth are more likely to consider the creation of new jobs as the most important goal, while those with higher incomes are more likely to identify development of infrastructure as important. Additionally, those living at the Coast are more likely to choose development of infrastructure rather than creating new jobs as a priority goal.



When asked whether the government would succeed in achieving its economic reform goals, 51 percent of respondents believed that it would succeed. Compared to April 2003, this result represents a 10 percent decrease in trust that the economic reform agenda would succeed. As in April 2003, women are more optimistic than men, as are self-identified Montenegrins and Muslims. More pessimism was found among self-identified Serbs and those living at the Coast.

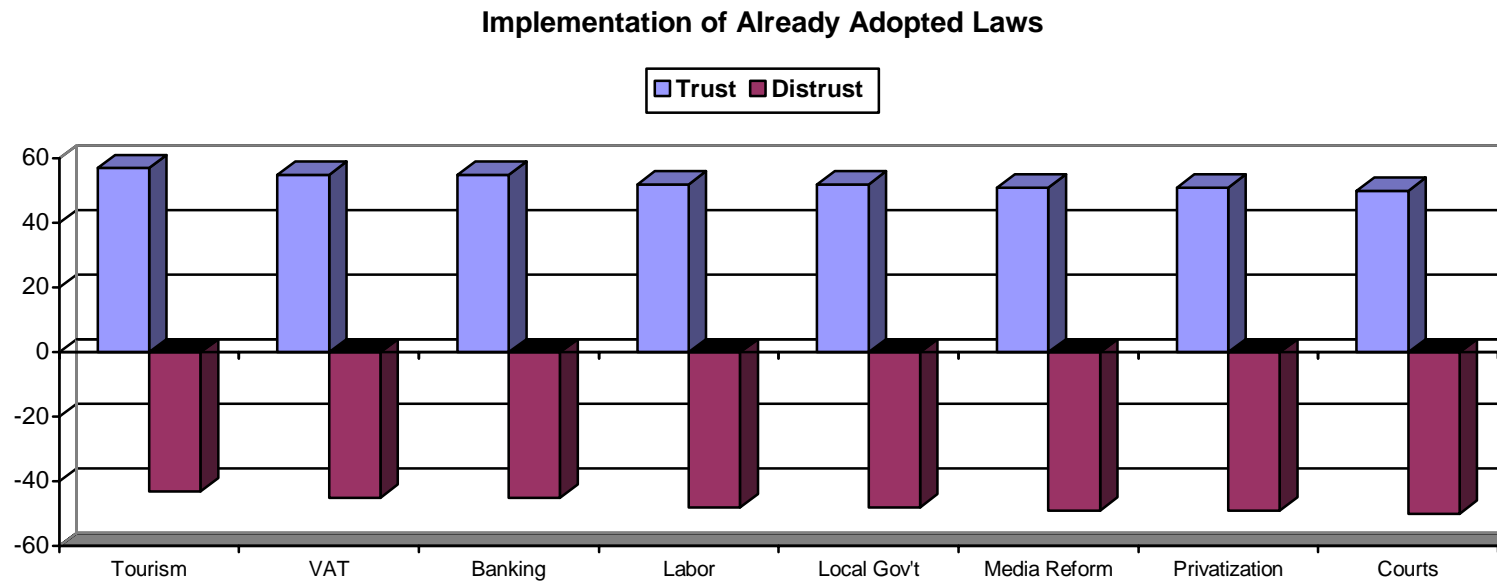
Respondents were asked to rank the importance of the following policy reforms to the achievement of the government's economic reform agenda:

- Reform of the judiciary;
- Reform of the educational system;
- Breaking the power of monopoly businesses;
- Attracting foreign investment;
- Reform of state administration/public services;
- Providing credits at affordable interest rates; and,
- Reducing the tax burden.



As can be seen in the chart, *reducing taxes*, *providing affordable credit* and *administrative reform* are considered the policy reforms most important to achieving the economic reform agenda.

**ALREADY ADOPTED LAWS:** Respondents were asked to what degree they believed that the following adopted laws would yield results. Since April 2003, trust in the successful implementation of these reform laws has fallen an average of 10 percent. Reflecting the general trend in this poll, women tend to have greater trust than men, as do self-identified Montenegrins and Muslims. Greater distrust in successful implementation of these laws is registered among self-identified Serbs and those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica.

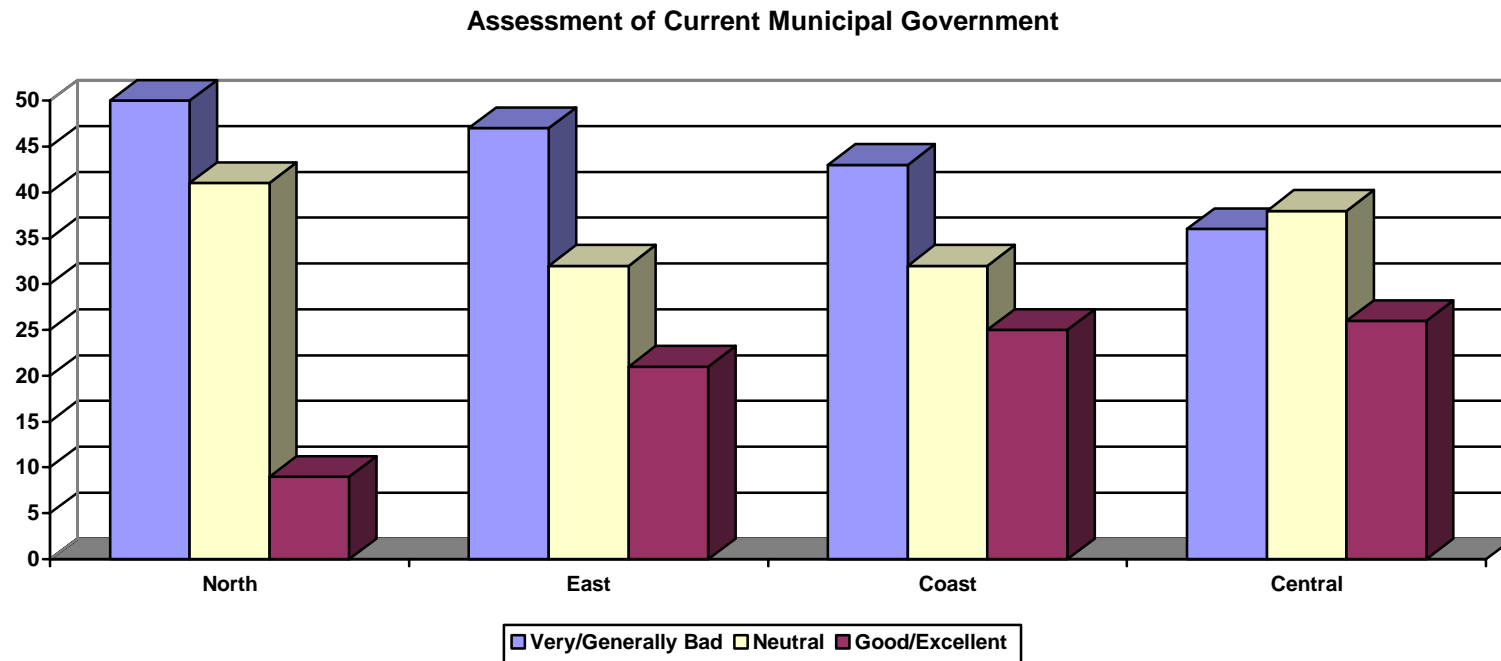


Laws explored included:

- Tourism Law (57 percent trust)
- Value Added Tax (55 percent trust)
- Banking Law (55 percent trust)
- Labor Law (52 percent trust)
- Laws on Local Self-Government (52 percent trust)
- Laws on Media Reform (51 percent trust)
- Privatization Laws (51 percent trust)
- Law on Courts (50 percent trust)

## ATTITUDES TOWARD MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Respondents were also asked to rate the work of their municipal government. It is notable that respondents from “northern” municipalities are significantly more dissatisfied with their local government, while those living in “central” or Coastal municipalities are relatively more satisfied.



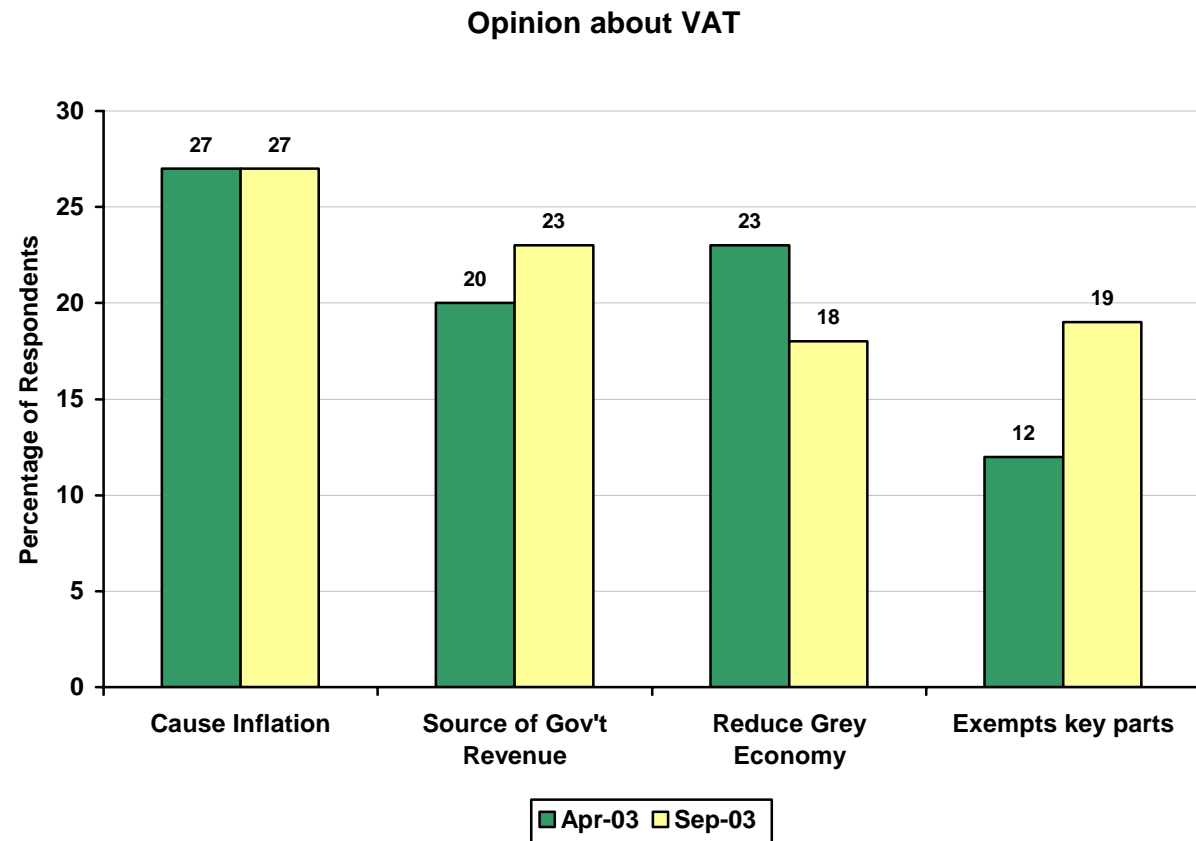
- **North:** Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak
- **East:** Andrijevisa, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Plav and Rozaje

- **Coast:** Bar, Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Tivat and Ulcinj
- **Central:** Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica

**VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT):** The Value Added Tax took effect on 1 April 2003. After almost six months of implementation, respondents were asked their opinion about this new method of taxation.

The chart at the right shows how respondents answered in April 2003 and September 2003 given the following options:

- VAT will contribute to inflation and reduced living standards.
- VAT will provide a regular source of income to the Government budget enabling it to meet its obligations to the citizens.
- VAT will contribute to reducing the grey economy.
- VAT exempted key parts of the economy that have been unregulated to date – and, therefore, it will have no effect.



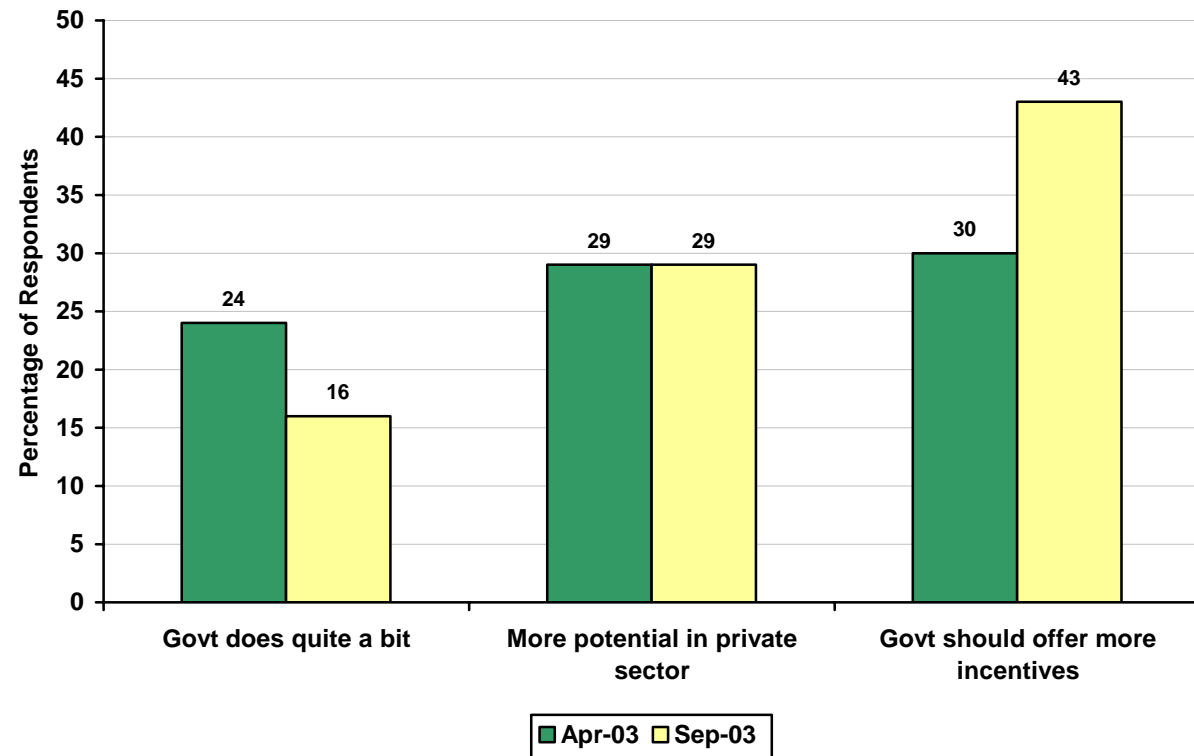
Since its implementation, more respondents (especially those living at the Coast) believe that key parts of the economy were exempted and that, therefore, VAT will have no effect.

**ATTITUDES TOWARD ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** Given the government’s focus on job creation, export stimulation and economic growth through the encouragement of entrepreneurship, respondents were asked which of the following statements best represents their opinion about entrepreneurship in Montenegro:

- The government does quite a lot to support the development of private business in Montenegro.
- The private sector offers more possibilities than the public sector.
- I would go into private business if the government offered more incentives.

The table to the right compares responses to this question from April 2003 and September 2003. It is notable that more respondents in September say they would go into private business if the government offered more incentives.

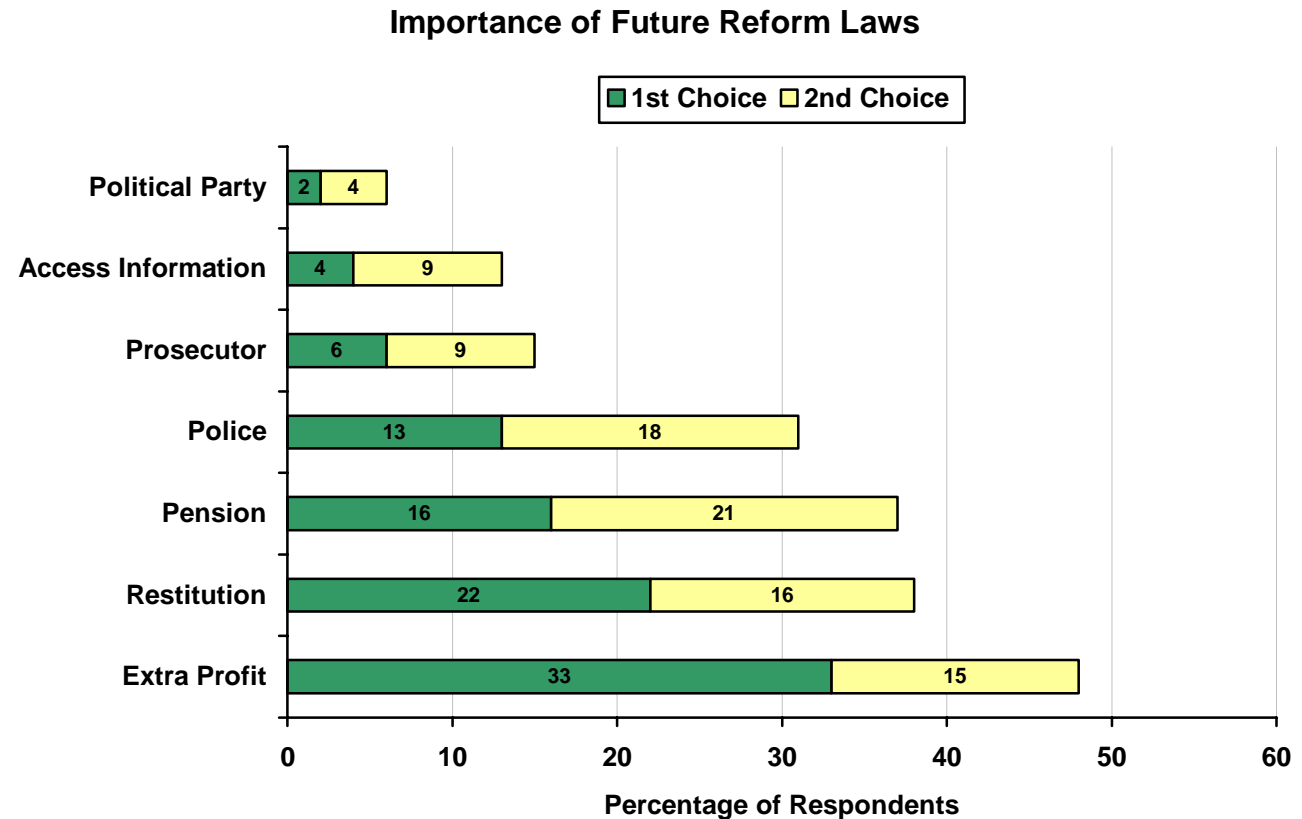
**Attitude toward Entrepreneurship**



## FUTURE REFORM INITIATIVES

Government, opposition and independent organizations have recently identified other reform laws as priorities. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these envisioned laws. They were asked to select the most important and second most important reform laws from the following list:

- Law on Extra Profit;
- Law on Restitution;
- Law on Pension and Disability;
- Laws on Police and State Security;
- Law on Prosecutor and the Criminal Code;
- Law on Free Access to Information; and,
- Laws on Political Party and Party Financing.



The most important laws are those that are currently the most discussed publicly. It is interesting to note that respondents living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica have a higher level of interest in the extra profit law, while those living at the Coast are more likely to choose the Law on Restitution.

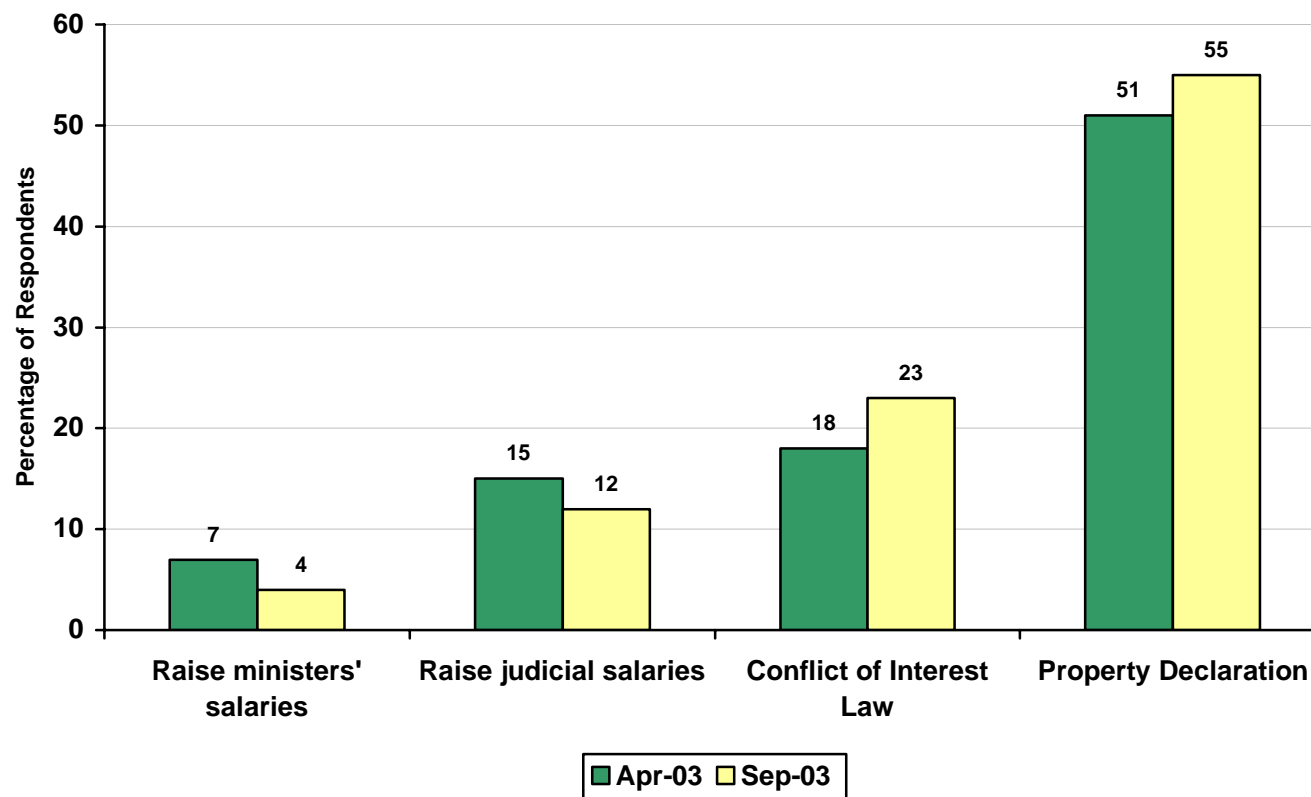


**COMBATING CORRUPTION:** On the topic of corruption in Montenegro, respondents were given a list of measures that have been mentioned publicly as necessary for the eradication of corruption in public administration. They were asked to identify which of the following measures should be undertaken first.

- Raising the salaries of Ministers and their deputies;
- Raising the salaries of those employed in the judiciary and legal systems;
- Passing a conflict of interest law for employees in the state administration;
- Requiring a property declaration every year from all ministers, their deputies and MPs to report property and its origin.

The table to the right compares responses to this question from April 2003 and September 2003. In September, there continued to be relatively little sympathy for raising salaries of high-level functionaries in state administration and majority interest in requiring a property declaration from ministers, deputies and MPs.

**Eliminating Corruption in Public Administration**



## ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ‘HOT’ POLITICAL SUMMER

In the September poll, respondents were asked a number of questions about the political debates that dominated the news throughout the hot summer months. These debates were sometimes between the governing and opposition parties and, at other times, were inter-coalition debates.

First, respondents were asked if they agreed with the following statement: “The root of mutual distrust between governing and opposition parties in Montenegro is a lack of national consensus on the most basic reform issues.” A full 45 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, while 32 percent disagreed. Those living at the Coast and in “northern” municipalities were more likely to agree with this statement, as were men.

Regarding the opposition’s decision to boycott parliament, 15 percent strongly oppose and 26 percent somewhat oppose the decision, while 20 percent, respectively, either somewhat support or strongly support the decision. Nineteen (19) percent of respondents were unable or unwilling to express an opinion.

With regard to the abolition of obligatory direct broadcast of all parliamentary sessions, which led the opposition initially to decide to boycott, respondents were asked which of the following best represents their interest in live parliamentary broadcasts.

STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
I think that RTV CG should again start with direct broadcast of all parliamentary sessions.	36%
I would be satisfied with direct broadcast of only those parliamentary sessions that deal with important issues in Montenegro.	23%
Instead of direct broadcast, I would be satisfied with short journalist reports on parliamentary activities.	15%
I am not at all interested in following the work of the Montenegrin Assembly.	21%

Men, pensioners and those living at the Coast are more likely to favor direct broadcast of all parliamentary sessions, while women, youth and those living in “northern” municipalities are more likely to say they are not at all interested in following the work of the Montenegrin Assembly.

With regard to tensions within the governing coalition, respondents were asked which of the following statements best represented their opinion.

STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
1. As a coalition partner in the Montenegrin government, SDP plays an important and necessary role in controlling the work of the DPS.	36%
2. DPS would work much better in government without the SDP as a coalition partner.	27%
3. Do not know/No answer	36%

Those living at the Coast and in the “eastern” municipalities are more likely to agree with the first statement, while those living in “northern” municipalities are more likely to agree with the second statement and those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica are more likely to be unable or unwilling to express an opinion.

Regarding the specific issue of the draft laws on Police and on the Agency for National Security whose passage has been delayed because of SDP’s insistence on several amendments, respondents were asked which of the following statements best represented their opinion.

STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
1. By insisting on its amendments, SDP is working to ensure that the functioning of the police and national security agency are under the control of the Parliament.	35%
2. By insisting on its amendments, SDP is blocking important reforms that conform to European standards.	21%
3. Do not know/No answer	42%

## UNION OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

On 4 February 2003, the Federal parliament adopted the Constitutional Charter. With this act, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro formally came into existence – although there is much that still needs to be done to establish all of the new state’s institutions.

Respondents were asked, which of the following statements best represented their opinion about the new union of Serbia and Montenegro. Compared to April 2003, there is an insignificant change in attitudes toward what the Charter represents. Demographically, it is most interesting that those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica are least able to decide what the Charter signifies to them.

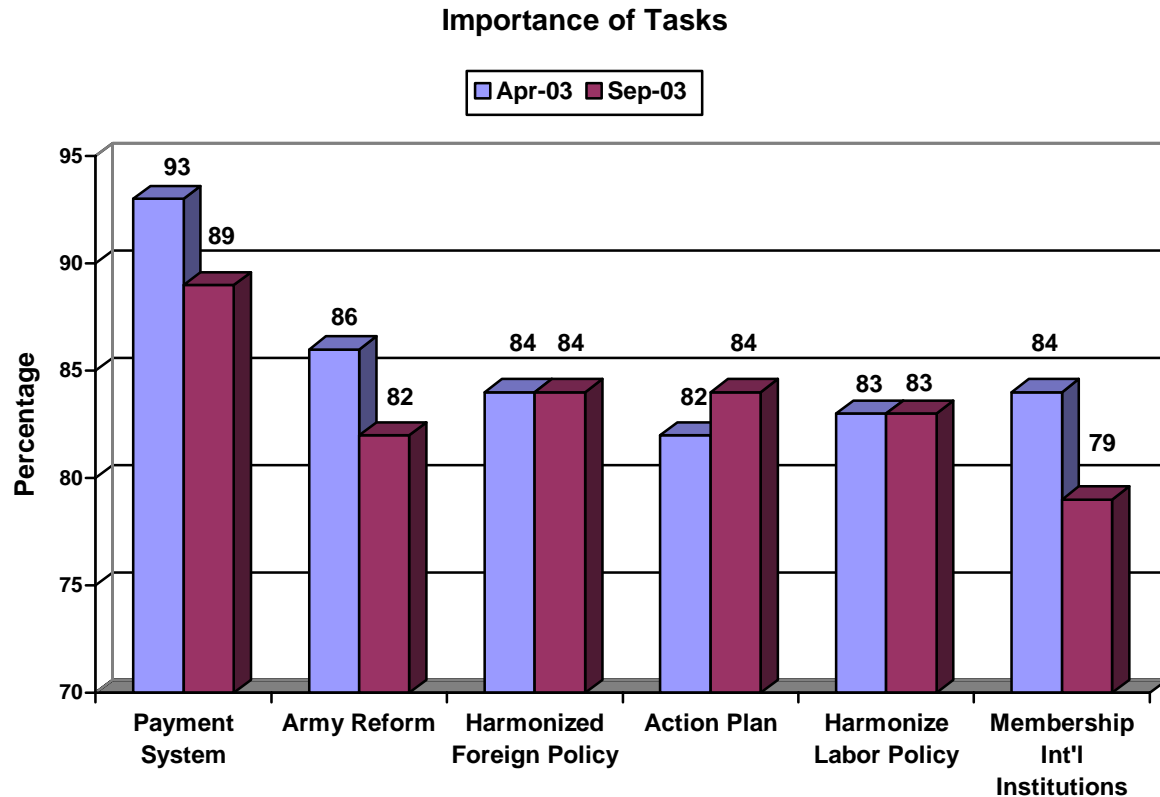
STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
The Charter establishes the foundation for preserving the state of Serbia and Montenegro. In three years time, there will be no interest in splitting.	38%
The Charter protects the interests of Montenegro and preserves the right of its citizens to decide in three years time on independence.	45%
Do not know/No answer	17%

***Importance of Upcoming Tasks for Establishing the State***

In order to establish a functioning state, the following are among the announced tasks that still need to be completed. Respondents were asked how important completion of each task was to them. The table below compares responses from April 2003 and September 2003.

Offered tasks were:

- Establishing an effective payment operations system between Montenegro and Serbia
- Reforming the Army
- Creating a harmonized foreign policy
- Adopting an Action Plan for harmonization of the internal market and foreign trade regime
- Harmonizing labor and employment policy
- Gaining admittance to international institutions such as the Council of Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace, etc.



### *The Significance of Membership in the European Union*

With the passage of the Charter, both governing and opposition forces declared that a significant step toward Europe had been taken. Respondents were asked to select among the following options the one that best reflected their understanding of the benefits of becoming a member of the European Union. The table below compares the responses from April 2003 and September 2003.

The offered options were:

- Ability to Travel Freely;
- Access to a Larger Market;
- Use of a Common Currency;
- Access to European goods and investment;
- Adoption of European work standards; and,
- European salaries.

