

Public Perceptions of Elections in BiH: Reforms Needed

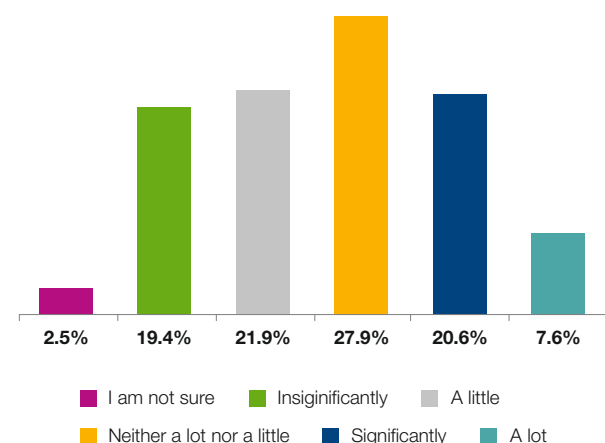
A country-wide public opinion survey of 1009 adult residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) carried out in August 2021 by the OSCE Mission reveals a low level of public trust in the integrity and fairness of election processes and the institutions and actors involved, as well as a high incidence among voters of direct experience of electoral fraud.

The survey findings highlight an urgent need to restore trust in election processes in BiH. In cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Mission will continue to support mandated institutions, including the Parliamentary Assembly and the Central Election Commission, in efforts to strengthen the integrity of elections in BiH, with the goal of rebuilding public trust in the election process.

KEY FINDINGS

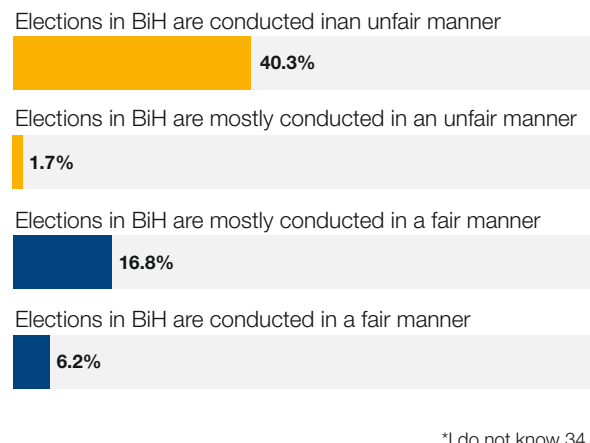
41.3% of respondents believe that the electoral system in BiH allows the expression of the true will of the citizens only to a small extent, while only 28.2% believe that the electoral system allows it fully.

Does the electoral system enable the true expression of the will of the citizens?



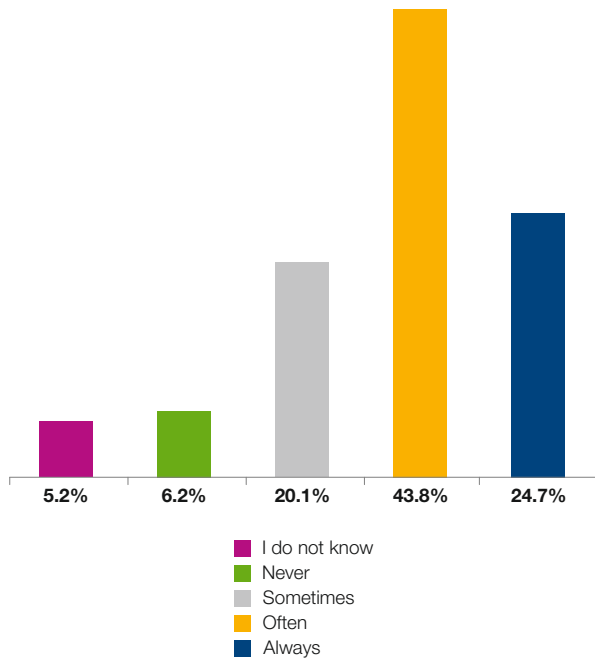
42% of respondents believe that elections are conducted in an unfair/mostly unfair manner; only 23% of respondents believe elections are conducted in a fair or mostly fair manner.

In your opinion, are elections in BiH conducted in a fair manner?*



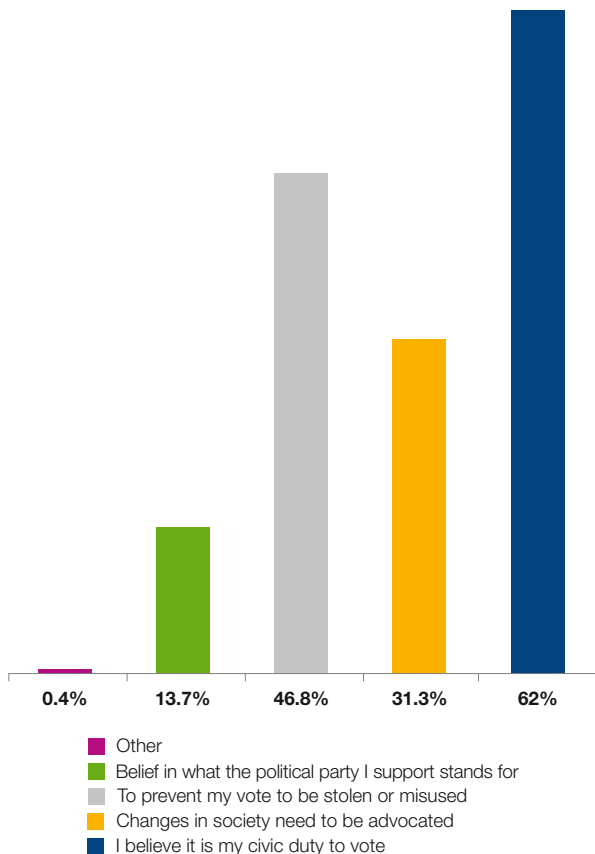
An astonishing 67.5% of respondents believe that election fraud in BiH happens 'often' or 'always'.

In your opinion, how often are there election frauds in BiH?



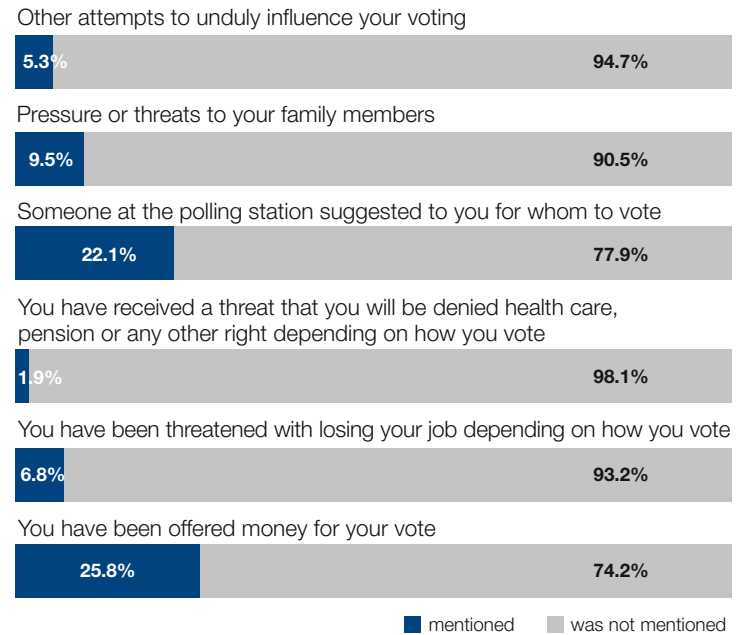
62% of respondents vote in elections because they believe that is their civic duty, while almost half of them also note going to the polls to prevent their vote being stolen or abused.

What motivates you to vote in elections?



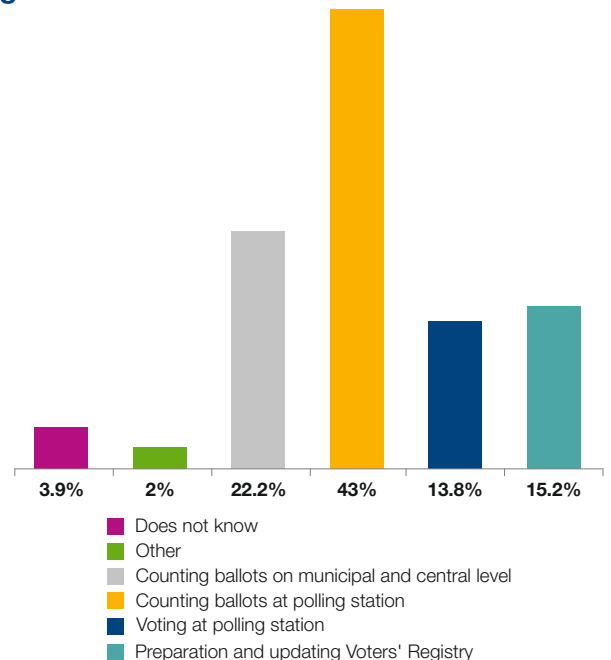
The survey shed light on the most common fraudulent practices for election manipulation. More than one in four respondents (25.8%) was offered money to vote for a party or candidate. More than one in five respondents (22.1%) reported that someone at the polling station suggested for whom to vote. Smaller, but nevertheless significant percentages of respondents report threats (9.5%) or blackmail (6.8%).

Personal experience with election manipulations



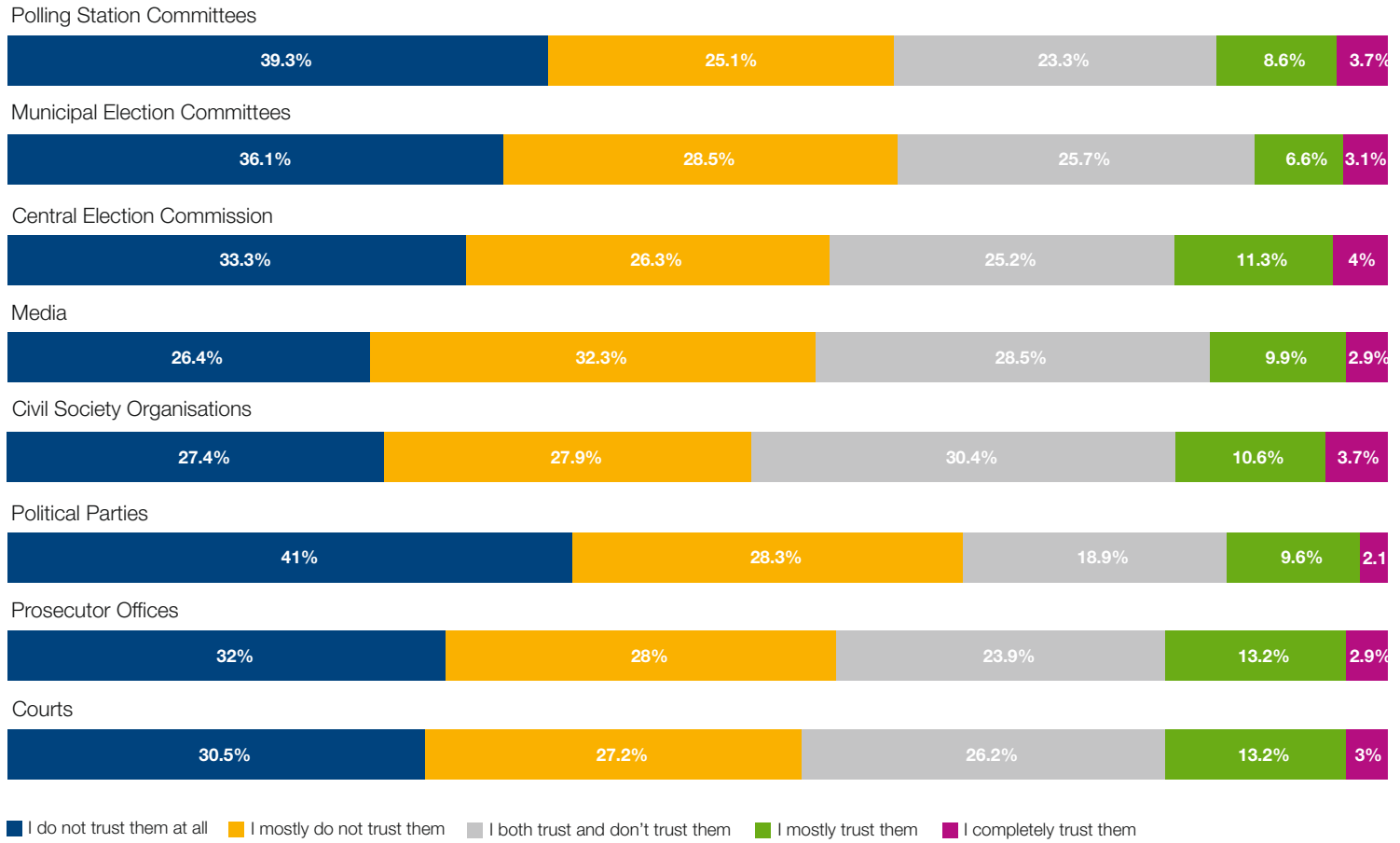
43% of respondents consider that the most irregularities occur during the counting of ballots at polling stations; 22% of respondents point to ballot counting at Municipal Election Commission (MEC) and CEC level as the most problematic phases. 15.2% of respondents mention Voter Registry irregularities as a concern.

In which phase of electoral process do most of irregularities occur?



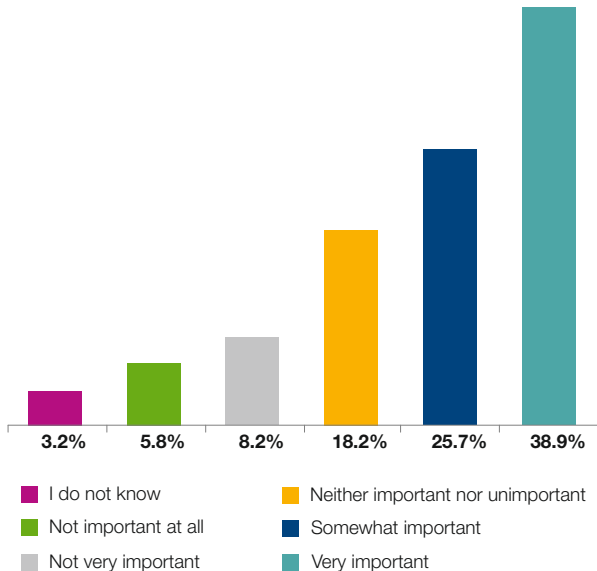
There is little trust in institutions and actors involved in the electoral process. 9.1% of respondents mostly or completely trust Municipal Election Commissions, 12.3% trust or mostly trust Polling Station Committees and 15.3% trust or completely trust the Central Election Commission. Similar low levels of trust are recorded for civil society organizations (14.3%), the media (12.8%), political parties (11.8%), courts (16.2%) and prosecutors' offices (16.1%).

How much do you trust the following when it comes to election?



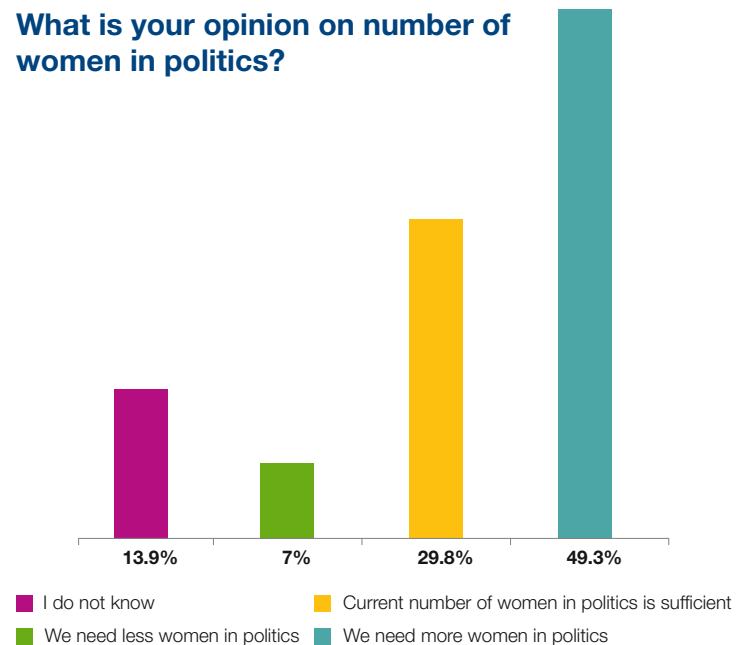
Respondents believe it is important to amend the Election Law: 64.6% of respondents support this view; 14% stated that amending the Law is either not important at all or not very important.

How important is it to amend and improve the BiH Election Law?



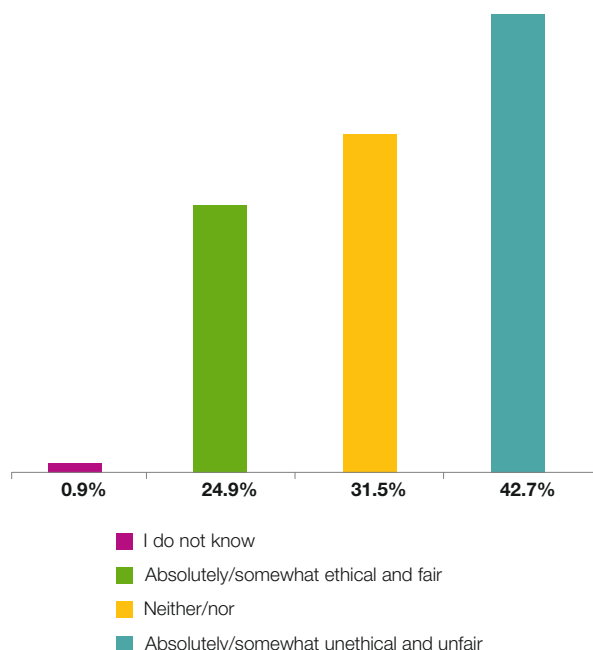
Less than one in three respondents believe that women are sufficiently represented in BiH politics. 49.3% of respondents stated that there is a need for more women in politics, including 56.7% of female respondents and 34.8% of men.

What is your opinion on number of women in politics?



A large share of respondents (42.7%) believe that election campaigns are absolutely or somewhat unethical and unfair, while only 24.9% stated that election campaigns are somewhat or absolutely ethical and fair.

Do you think that election campaigns are ethical and fair?



METHODOLOGY

The survey, which was conducted¹ through in-person interviews, was carried out in the period between 11 and 21 August 2021, drawing on a sample of 1,009 adult residents of BiH in 29 municipalities in the Federation of BiH,² 21 municipalities in Republika Srpska,³ and in Brčko District of BiH.

Several demographic indicators were considered to select a representative sample: overall population in the entities and Brčko District of BiH; overall residents in each regions and cantons; ratio of urban / rural population in each area; population of different settlements within each region; and a balanced number of male and female respondents.

The selection of respondents was random. The expected error on the sample of 1009 respondents, with a probability of 95%, is +/- 3.1% in cases where 50% of respondents answered the question.

¹ Conducted by Prime Communications (www.prime.ba).

² Bihać, Cazin, Bosanska Krupa, Bužim, Tuzla, Srebrenik, Živinice, Banovići, Lukavac, Kalesija, Zenica, Kakanj, Visoko, Donji Vakuf, Travnik, Vitez, Novi Travnik, Mostar, Jablanica, Čitluk, Široki Brijeg, Ljubuški, Centar, Ilidža, Novi Grad, Novo Sarajevo, Vogošća, Livno, Tomislavgrad.

³ Banja Luka, Gradiška, Laktaši, Srbac, Mrkonjić Grad, Prnjavor, Prijedor, Novi Grad, Doboј, Stanari, Teslić, Bijeljina, Ugljevik, Zvornik, Bratunac, Srebrenica, Istočno Sarajevo, Višegrad, Trebinje, Ljubinje, Bileća.

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