



**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BULGARIA
OCTOBER 2000**

KEY FINDINGS

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KEY FINDINGS

These data are taken from the project 'Political Participation in Bulgaria', implemented by Alpha Research Agency on the request of a research team from the Irvine University in California and the Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski University. The research was carried out in the period 22 September - 8 October 2000. Interviews were taken from 1026 adults at their homes. The information was gathered through the method of face-to-face interview and by means of a standardized questionnaire.

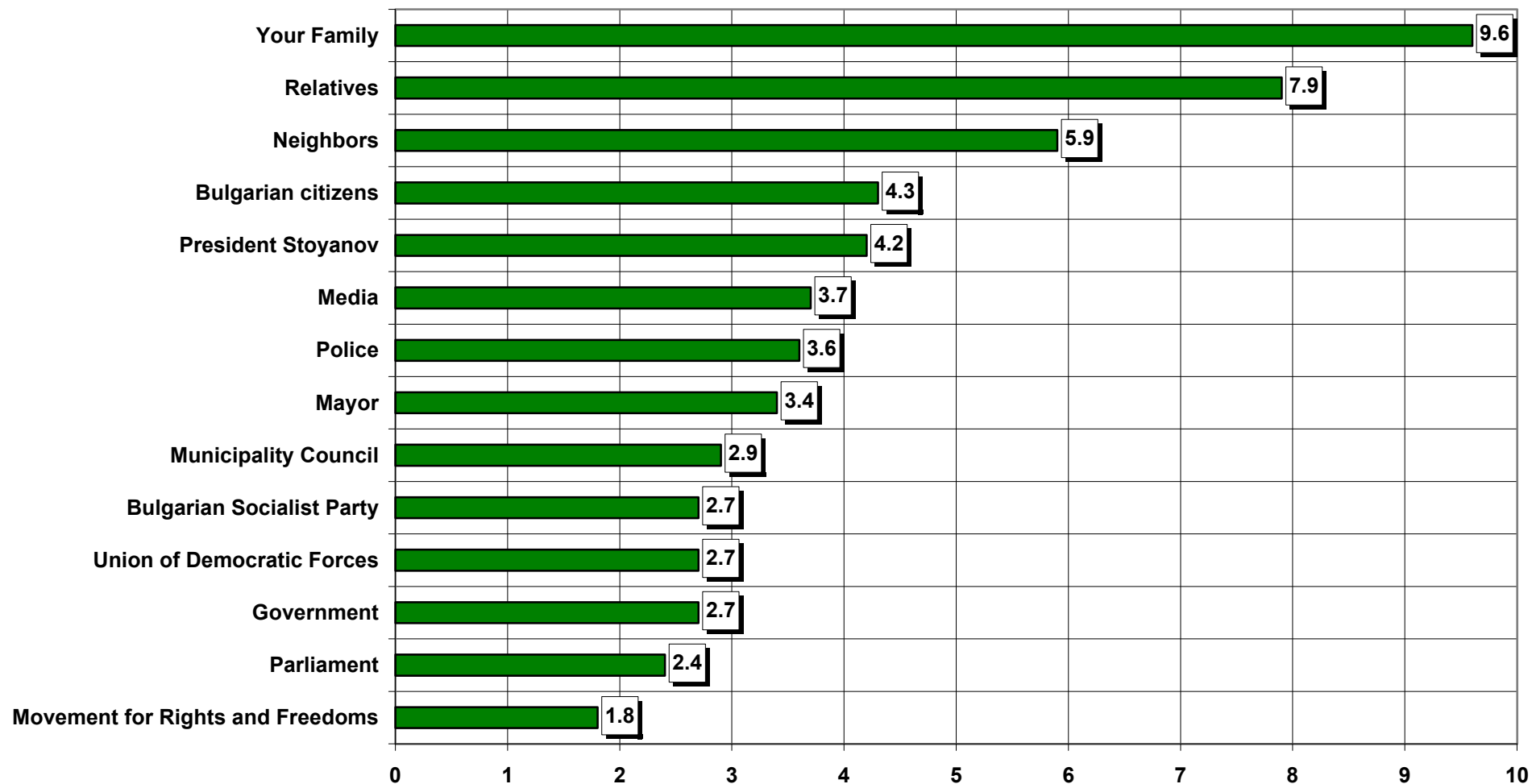
- ⇒ Study of the political attitudes of the Bulgarians reveals two main trends: first, low and further degrading in time political activity, and second, inclination towards participation in mass rather than individual forms to impact on politics.
- ⇒ The level of political action has substantially lowered over the past several years: 16% of the respondents took part in the protest actions in the period 1989-1991, and 9% - in 1997. Whereas, the share of the passive support for these actions has shown a slight growth: if in 1989-1991 31% of the people approved of demonstrations without joining them, then in 1997 this percentage was 33%.
- ⇒ Political meetings and gatherings appear as another form of political action, in which Bulgarians are apt to be involved, are - nearly one fourth of the respondents have participated in such activities over the last two years and a half. Hardly one third of the interviewees share the opinion that the protests from 1989, 1991, and 1997 did more or less achieve their goals.
- ⇒ Individual forms of action remain far behind in the set of means used for political impact: for the last two years and a half, barely 12% of the respondents have contacted a member of Parliament, a Government official, or a high-ranked politician. Activity is a little bit higher on a local level - for the same period, 28% of the respondents have addressed

the respective mayor or the municipal council. Insignificant is the share of the people that have contacted politicians in writing (5%), have addressed the media (4%), have been employed during a pre-election campaign (9%), or have taken part in a strike (7%) or in a petition (7%).

- ⇒ Passivity of the Bulgarians comes to a large extent from the sense of futility as regards the results of their actions. 70% of the respondents think they could do nothing against a legislation, passed in the Parliament, which they consider unfair, and 58% of them share the same opinion concerning municipal regulations. According to a decimal grade scale (where 1 signifies unlikely, and 10 means quite likely), the Bulgarians assess with 1.27 the probability of success in an eventual attempt to influence a Parliament decision.
- ⇒ Family and political institutions are positioned in the two poles of the public trust. Strongest is the confidence in kinship. According to a decimal grade scale (where 1 means absence of trust, and 10 marks the full trust), only family and relatives receive grades close to the maximum - family takes 9.6, and relatives are assessed with 7.9. Next in place are neighbors (5.9) and Bulgarian nationals - that is, those with whom people communicate directly.
- ⇒ The marks regarding the institutions vary in the range from 1.8 to 4.2. Despite the years of democratic development of the country (which suggests enhancing the dialogue between the people and the representatives from the public sphere), there is an extremely negative attitude towards all the institutional forms. The interviewees express a very high level of mistrust to the institutions directly engaged with government. According to the above decimal scale, the popularity of the Parliament falls within 2.4, and that of the Government is 2.7. The two biggest political parties (having been at the rule during the recent years) receive the same low level of trust - average 2.7. The media are graded a little higher - 3.7, while the police get 3.6. Amidst the overall negative attitude towards the institutions, the support for the President stands out with 4.2, along with the mayor credited with 3.5.

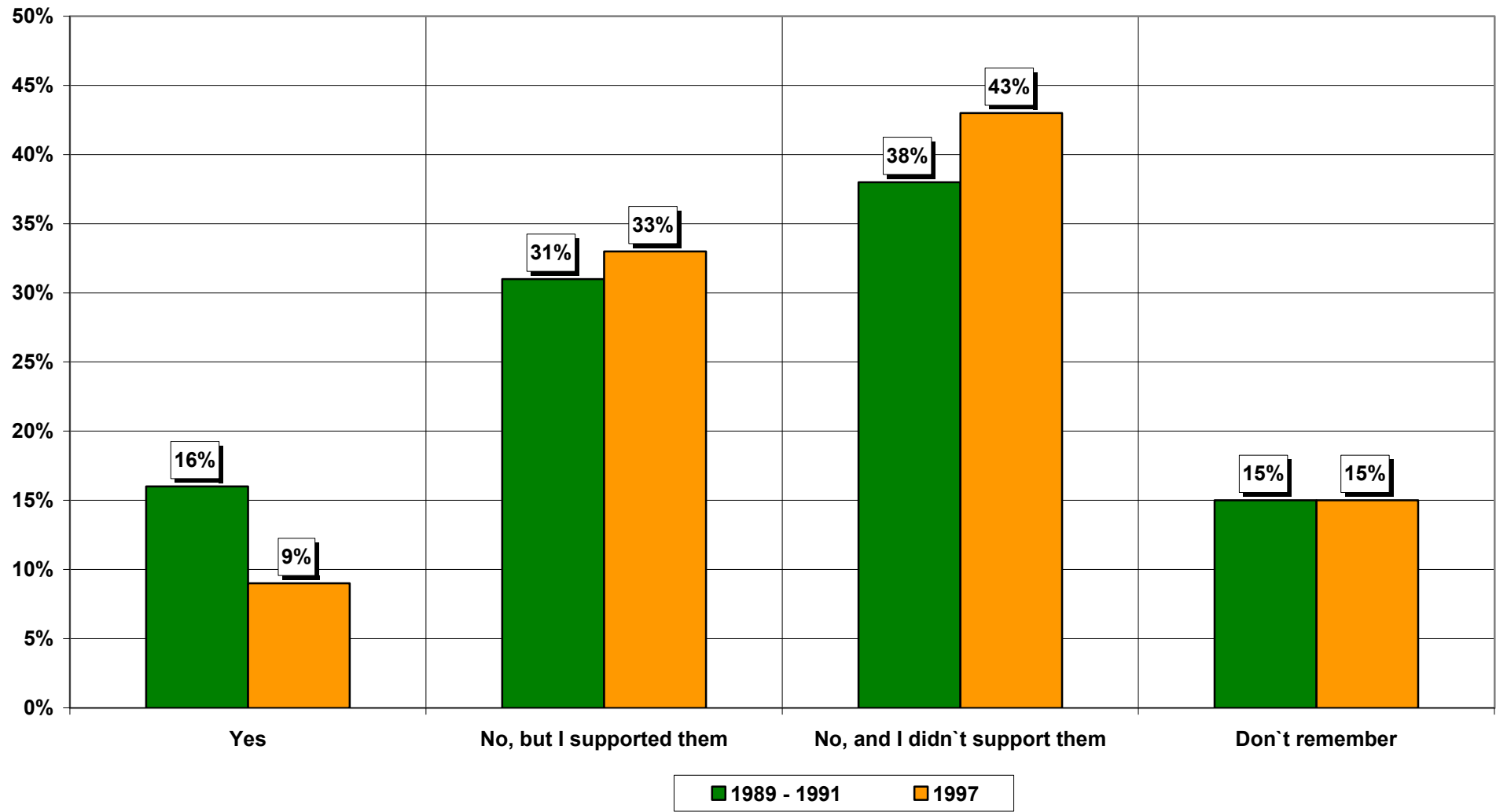
- ⇒ In general, the Bulgarians are more likely to trust institutions as the President and the mayor, which are directly elected and are embodied by a certain personality. This to large extent is due to the strict reticence towards the people around - 77% of the respondents stand to the position that "one has to be very cautious with the people".
- ⇒ 43% of the interviewees hold as an opinion that the best manner of governing the country is through democratic rules and laws. 22% of them consider the variant of 'Expert Government' as the most appropriate, whereas not more than 17% defend the rule of a strong leader prevailing over the Parliament.
- ⇒ In this respect, ten years after the start of changes in Bulgaria, the democracy has certainly replaced the totalitarianism from the focus of the public consciousness.
- ⇒ However, the Government continues to receive principal role in ensuring the social welfare. More than three fourths of the respondents perceive the provision of health care as Government's first-rank duty, with 59% holding the opinion that it must be responsible for everyone's economic security, and 52% impose upon it the task of shortening the gap between incomes of the rich and the poor.
- ⇒ As of the present situation, scarcely 15% of the respondents are satisfied with the manner with which the democracy in the country is functioning. To some extent, this is due to the fact that people continue to expect active involvement of the Government in re-allocation of resources, while it is not in a position to control them.

To what level do you trust to:*

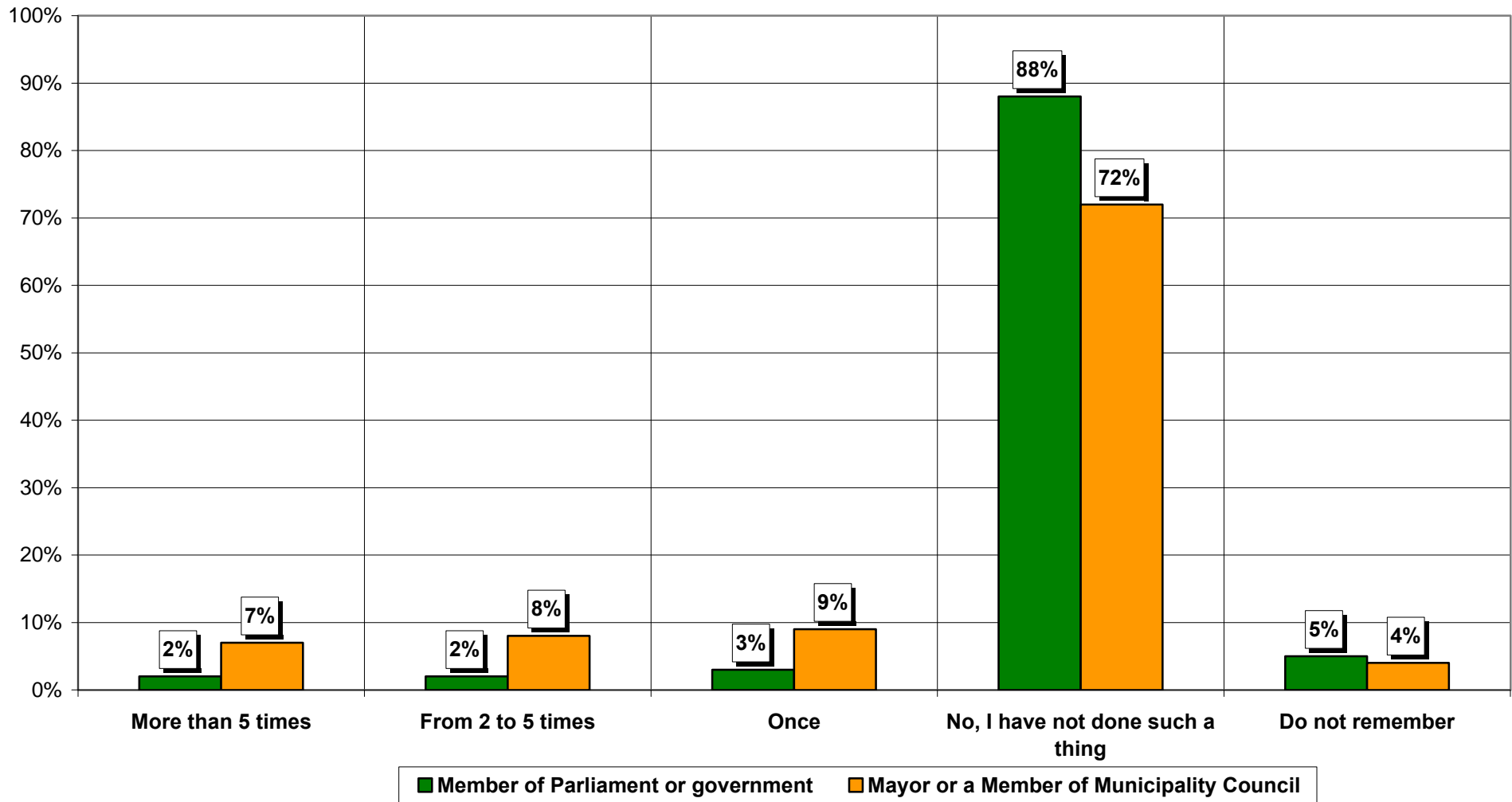


**Average grade. 1 - means no trust and 10 - complete trust.*

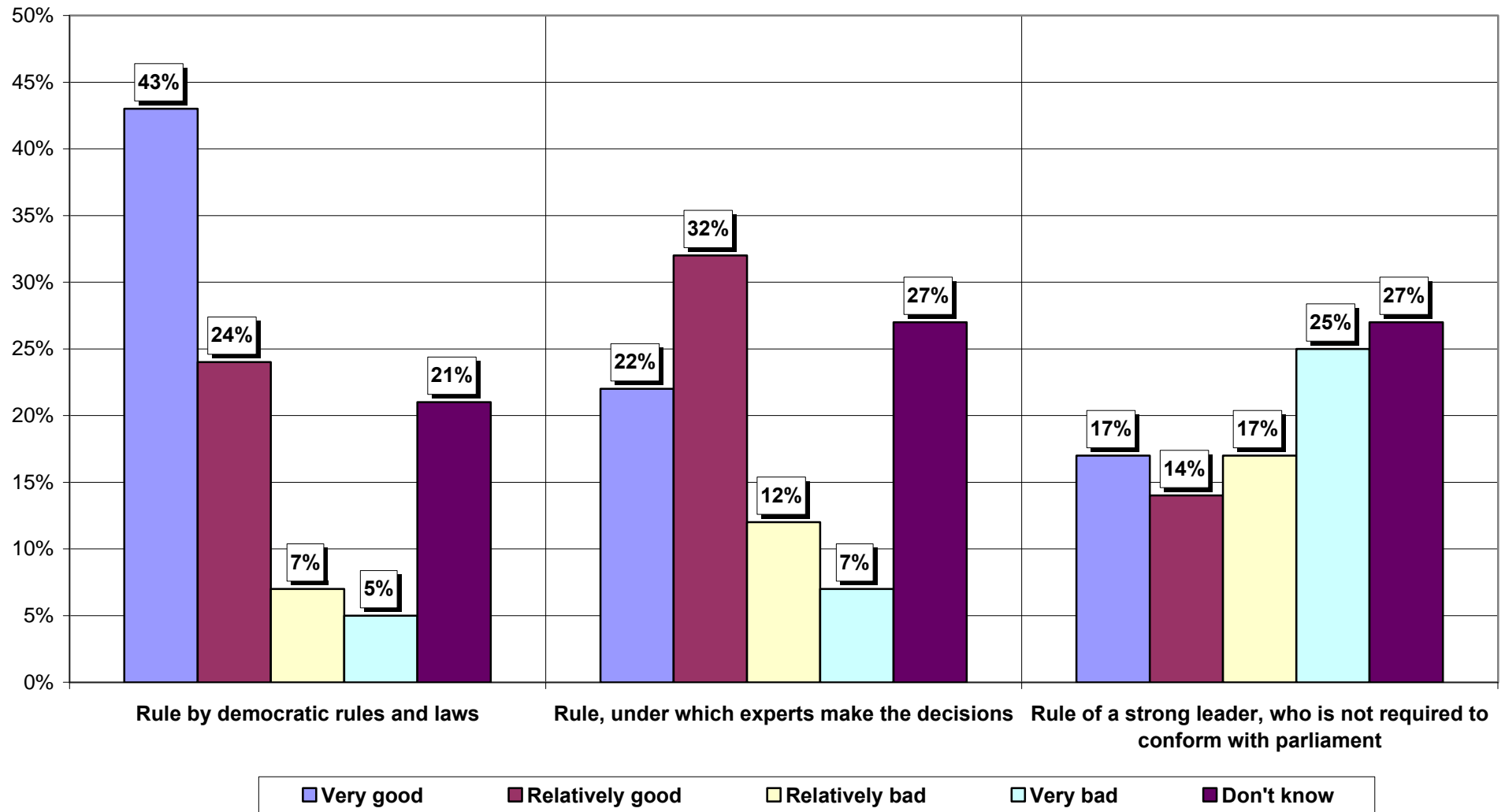
Did you participate in any protests or demonstrations during the years:



How many times have You contacted the following institutions during the last 2,5 years?



How do you assess the following ways of the country government?



Which of the following things the government should do?

