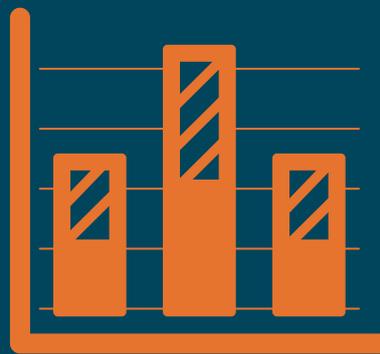




НВО ННФОЦЕНТАР



OPINION POLL:

What do citizens think of the institution of the Ombudsman?

**Report No. 6
March 2019**



This project is supported by the U.S. Embassy. The opinions, conclusions and recommendations presented here are of the implementing organisations and shall not be understood to reflect the views and positions of the U.S. Government.

01 INTRODUCTION AND POLLING METHODOLOGY

The NGO Info-centre, under the auspices of the Project «Civic Monitoring of the Office of the Ombudsman» supported by the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, conducted an opinion poll on how citizens view and perceive the work and performances of the Ombudsman.¹

The opinion poll was conducted on layered stratified sample of 1,202 citizens, age 18 and over. The sample is nationally representative for gender, age, ethnicity and region, rural and urban population. The polling was conducted bilingually, in Macedonian and in Albanian language. The margin of error of the poll results is 2.83%, with acceptable confidence interval of 95%. One limitation of the poll may be the fact that the sample was chosen on basis of data provided by the 2002 Census, which may be considered outdated and not fully reflecting the reality on the ground. In view of that, the sample has been modified in line with the State Statistics Office's periodic assessment of the population for 2017.

The first question, if they have heard about the institution of the Ombudsman, was asked of all respondents, while the subsequent remaining questions of the poll were asked only of those who gave an affirmative answer to the first question.

The poll was conducted in the period from February 16 to March 7, 2019.

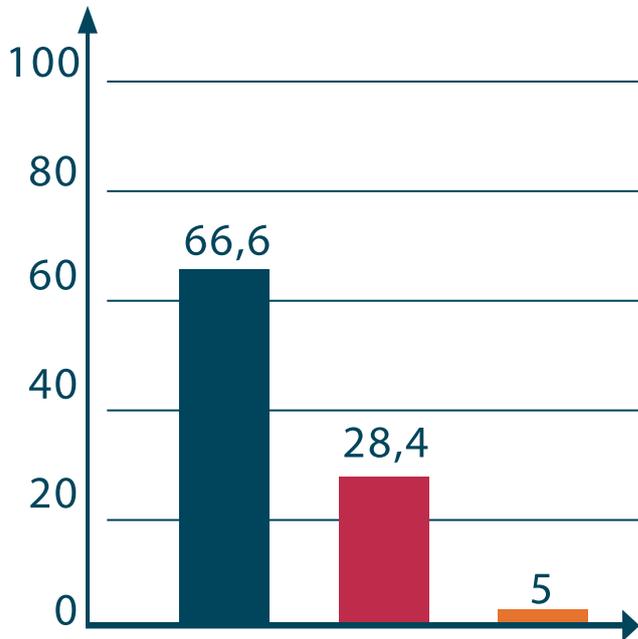
¹ The poll was conducted in cooperation with Eurothink – Centre for European Strategies, under the auspices of a bigger public opinion survey. The actual polling was conducted by the M-Prospect Agency.

02 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

- Two thirds of the respondents knew that the Office of the Ombudsman existed.
- The Ombudsman is best known in the Eastern Region, where 85.2% of the respondents said they knew about it, and is the least known in the Polog Region, where 43.8% knew about the existence of the institution.
- The older citizens are better informed about the Office of the Ombudsman, compared to the young people between ages of 18 and 29, who are the least informed.
- Men are better informed about the existence of the Office of the Ombudsman than women.
- Citizens with completed high school and university degree are better informed about the existence of the Ombudsman than the respondents that have completed only primary education.
- Respondents living in urban areas are slightly better informed about the existence of the Ombudsman than the respondents living in a rural area.
- Most citizens have some knowledge about a number of basic competences of the Ombudsman.
- Majority of the citizens – 76.3% of the polled – are prepared to seek help from the Ombudsman if some of their rights were violated.
- One half of the citizens don't know where or how to approach the Ombudsman.
- More than a half of all respondents said that the Ombudsman performs his office in a very professional manner.
- Almost 47% of the respondents believe that the institution is transparent, while 39% believe that the Ombudsman is independent.
- Slightly over 40% of the respondents believe that the Ombudsman was appointed to the office because of his close ties with the government, while 37% are convinced that he was appointed because of his expertise.

03 KEY FINDINGS – DETAILED OVERVIEW

Have you heard about the institution of the Ombudsman?



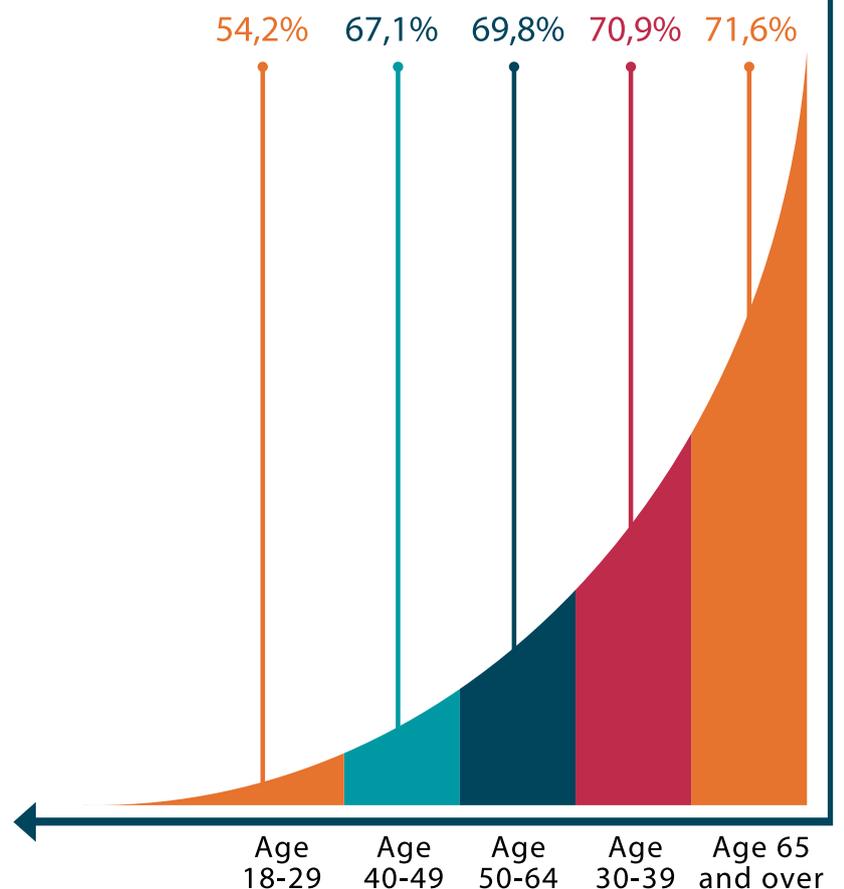
- Yes
- No
- Don't know/Refused to respond

MOST CITIZENS HAVE HEARD THAT THERE IS THE INSTITUTION OF THE OMBUDSMAN -

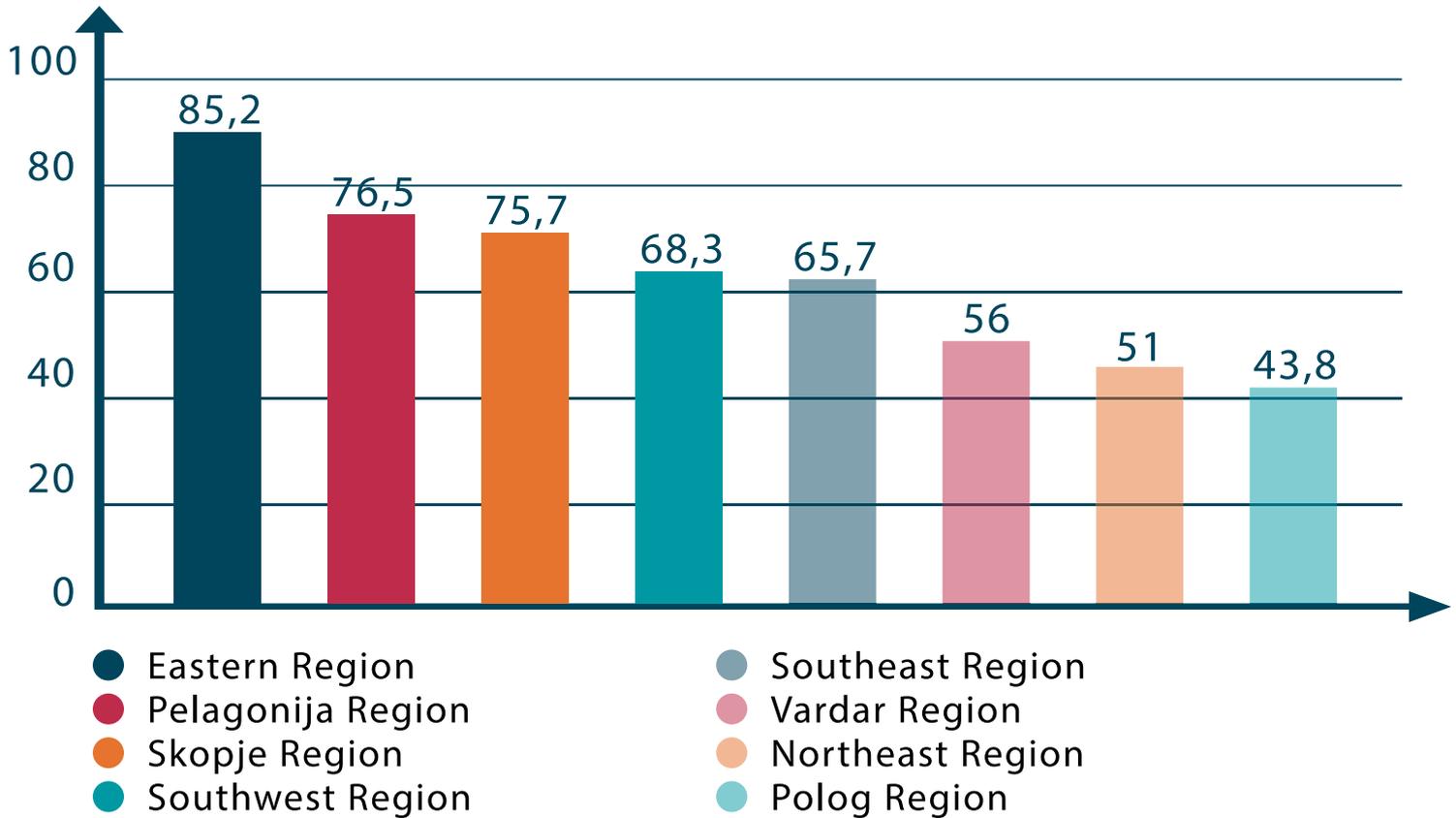
The analysis of the responses to the question if they heard about the institution of the Ombudsman shows that two thirds of the respondents, 66.6%, gave an affirmative answer.

Older citizens are better informed about the Office of the Ombudsman, 71.6% of respondents 65 years of age and older, as well as 70.9% of respondents between the ages of 30 and 39. The young population (ages 18 to 29) is the least informed about the existence of the institution of the Ombudsman, at 54.2%.

Respondents who have heard about the Ombudsman (by age group)



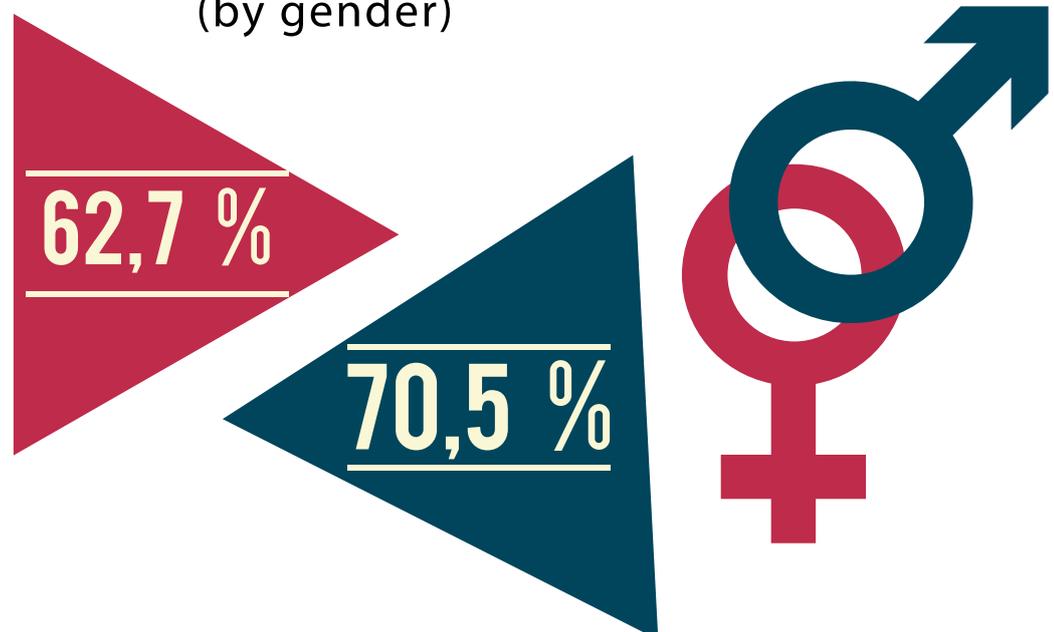
Respondents who have heard about the Ombudsman (Regional distribution)



The Ombudsman is best known to respondents from the Eastern Region (85,2%), the Pelagonija Region (76.5%) and Skopje Region (75.7%), while citizens of the Polog Region (43.8%) new the least about the existence of the institution.

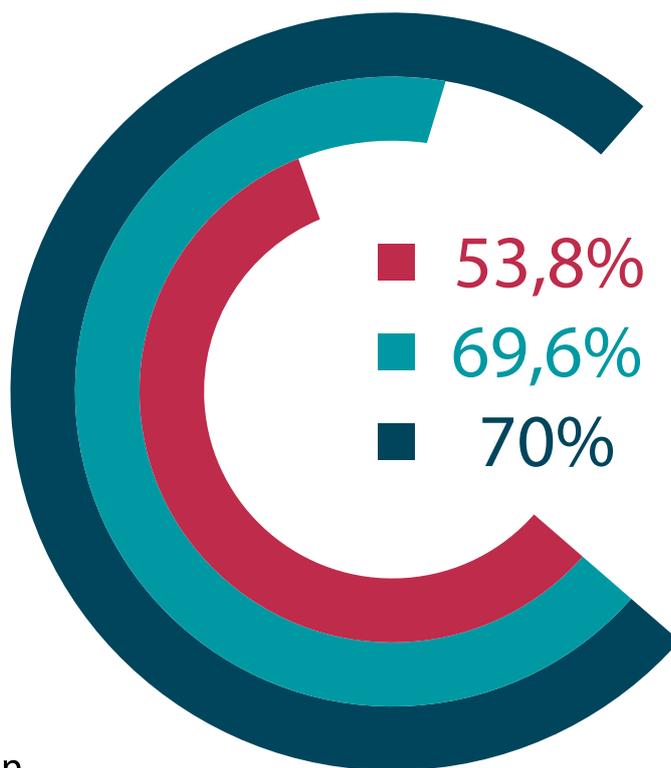
In terms of gender of respondents, more men have heard about the existence of the Ombudsman (70.5%) than women (62.7%).

Respondents who have heard about the Ombudsman (by gender)



From the viewpoint of education level, the analysis of the data shows that respondents with completed high school and university degree (70% and 69.6%, respectively) are better informed about the existence of the Ombudsman than respondents that have completed only primary education (53.8%).

Respondents who have heard about the Ombudsman
(Distribution by level of education)



- Higher education
- Secondary education
- Primary education

Respondents who have heard about the Ombudsman
(Rural vs. urban population)

Countryside

63%



City

69%



The analysis shows that respondents living in urban areas (cities and towns) are slightly better informed about the existence of the Ombudsman, compared to the citizens from rural areas – 69% and 63%, respectively.

MAJORITY OF THE CITIZENS ARE INFORMED ABOUT SOME BASIC COMPETENCES OF THE OMBUDSMAN –

To check if citizens know the basic competences of the Ombudsman, and to which extent, we read several statements to the respondents, asking them to judge if they were true or false. The analysis of their responses shows that high percentage (72%) of respondents knew that the Ombudsman protects the citizens from violations of their constitutional and legal rights by the state institutions. Also, almost two thirds of respondents (61%) knew that the Ombudsman protects and promotes the principles of non-discrimination and fair representation, while 82% of the respondents knew that the citizens have the right to file a submission to the Ombudsman if they believed that a local administration violated their rights and freedoms.

Although the Ombudsman has no competence over the private sector, more than a half of the respondents (55%) believe that the institution can protect their rights from violations by private companies.



13,4%

Responded that they wouldn't go to the Ombudsman, believing that there was nothing the institution could do to help them.

76,3%

Of the citizens are prepared to seek help from the Ombudsman if some of their rights were violated

Majority of the citizens are prepared to seek help from the Ombudsman if some of their rights were violated – 76.3% expressed such preparedness, while 13.4% responded that they wouldn't go to the Ombudsman, believing that there was nothing the institution could do to help them.

One half of the citizens don't know where or how to submit a case to the Ombudsman – asked how and whether one can file a submission to the Ombudsman, 49.5% of the respondents said they didn't know, while 46.5% gave an affirmative answer.

Don't know

4%

YES

46,5%

NO
49,5%

Do you know where or how to file a submission to the Ombudsman?

According to the responses, the citizens with completed university degree (59.7%), living in an urban area (49.4%), in the Northeast (55.1%), Skopje (52.9%) and Southeast (49.3%) regions, between the ages of 50 and 64 (49.2%) were best informed about the manner of filing submissions to the Ombudsman.

59,7%
University degree

49,4%
Living in an urban area

55,1%
Northeast Region

52,9%
Skopje Region

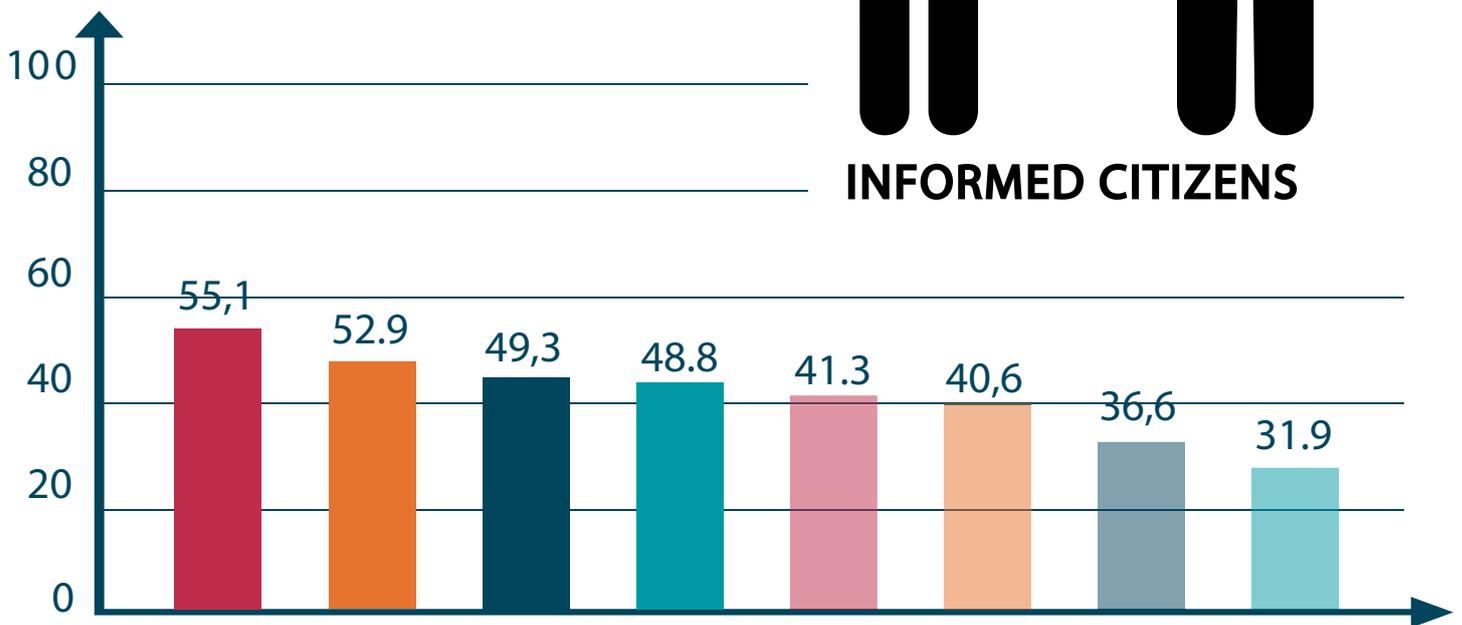
49,3%
Southeast Region

49,2%
Ages of 50 and 64



INFORMED CITIZENS

Do you know where or how to file a submission to the Ombudsman? (by region)

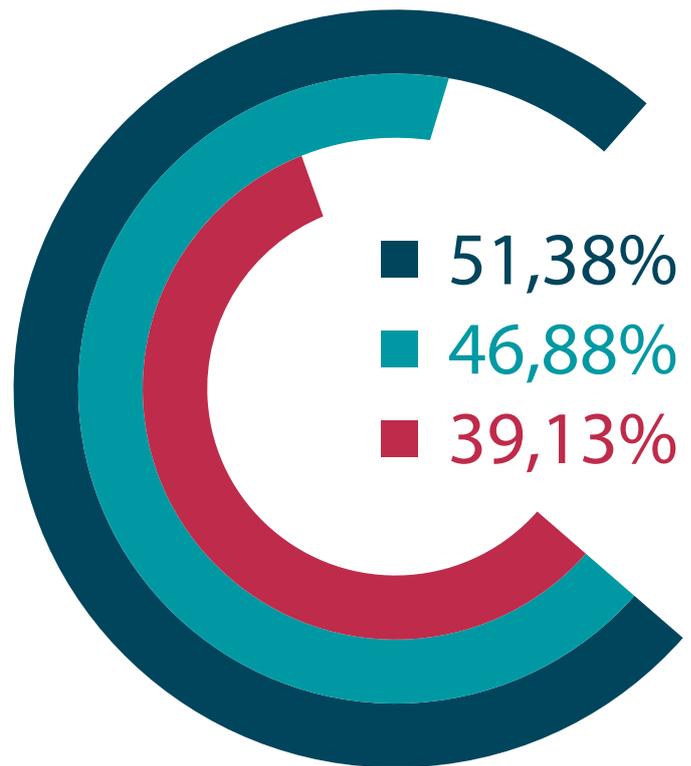


- Northeast Region
- Skopje Region
- Southeast Region
- Polog Region

- Eastern Region
- Pelagonija Region
- Southwest Region
- Vardar Region

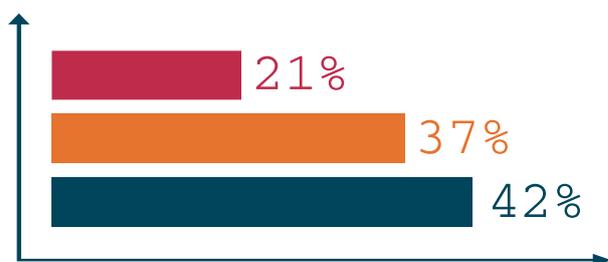
More than a half of respondents believe that the Ombudsman performs its duties in a professional manner – 51.38% gave a positive response, while 46.88% believe that the institution works in a transparent manner. Slightly fewer respondents, 39.13%, believe that the Ombudsman is independent in its work and operation from political party, government or business interests.

Independence, professionalism and transparency of the Ombudsman



- Professional
- Transparent
- Independen

Reasons why the Ombudsman was appointed to that office



- Both statements
- Because of his expertise
- Because of his close ties with the Government

To collect the personal views/perceptions of the citizens, we read two statements to the respondents referring to the reasons why the Ombudsman was appointed to that office. According to the responses, 42% of the respondents believe that the Ombudsman was appointed to his office because of his close ties with the government, while 37% are convinced that he was appointed because of his expertise.

04 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The results of the poll indicate that a significant number of citizens are well informed about the existence of the institution of the Ombudsman and some of its basic competences.
- The fact that more than a half of the respondents who have heard of the Ombudsman believe that it can protect their rights from abuses of the private sector points to the conclusion that citizens are not, however, well enough informed about the institution's competences and that they need additional information.
- The fact that large proportion of respondents said they were prepared to go to the Ombudsman in cases of violations of some of their rights indicates that the citizens recognize the institution as protector of their rights from violations by state and public institutions.
- On the other hand, the fact that one half of the respondents didn't know where or how to submit a case to the Ombudsman is another indicator of the need for enhanced promotion and visibility of the institution, its competences, as well as improved and more intensive information about where and how the interested citizens may file submissions and communicate with the Ombudsman.
- The Ombudsman should direct its future promotional activities primarily towards young people and women, and it should increase its presence in the rural areas.
- The Ombudsman, as perceived by the citizens, exhibits high levels of professionalism and expertise, as well as transparency and independence of its work. Those are not extremely high percentages, especially those that refer to its independence from political and economic centres of power, but the figures are noticeably better compared, for instance, to the corresponding figures for the public administration, which consistently get low and even unsatisfactory grades from the citizens about its independence, professionalism and transparency. Therefore, the findings of the poll undoubtedly indicate a need for further continued advancement of integrity, professionalism, expertise and transparency of the Office of the Ombudsman which will surely take it in the direction of greater independence and citizens' confidence.