



State of institutions and the rule of law in Serbia

January 2025, Belgrade

Institutions and the Rule of Law

Institutional manipulation and impunity promotion 2024

Human rights violation: border detentions, leaks of confidential data, wiretapping, arrests, intensive coordinated campaign against civil society and individuals

Rule of law severely undermined: culture of impunity; unlawful disclosure of private information (e.g. civil society funding, students' private data)

Crammed agenda, procedural engineering and oversight maneuvers: usual tactics for ensuring full control over the Parliament

Reform Agenda undermined: Voter Registry Audit not conducted, REM Council appointment deviates from the law

Media laws failure: deliberate decision to neglect obligations, illegal and illegitimate process of appointing new REM Council

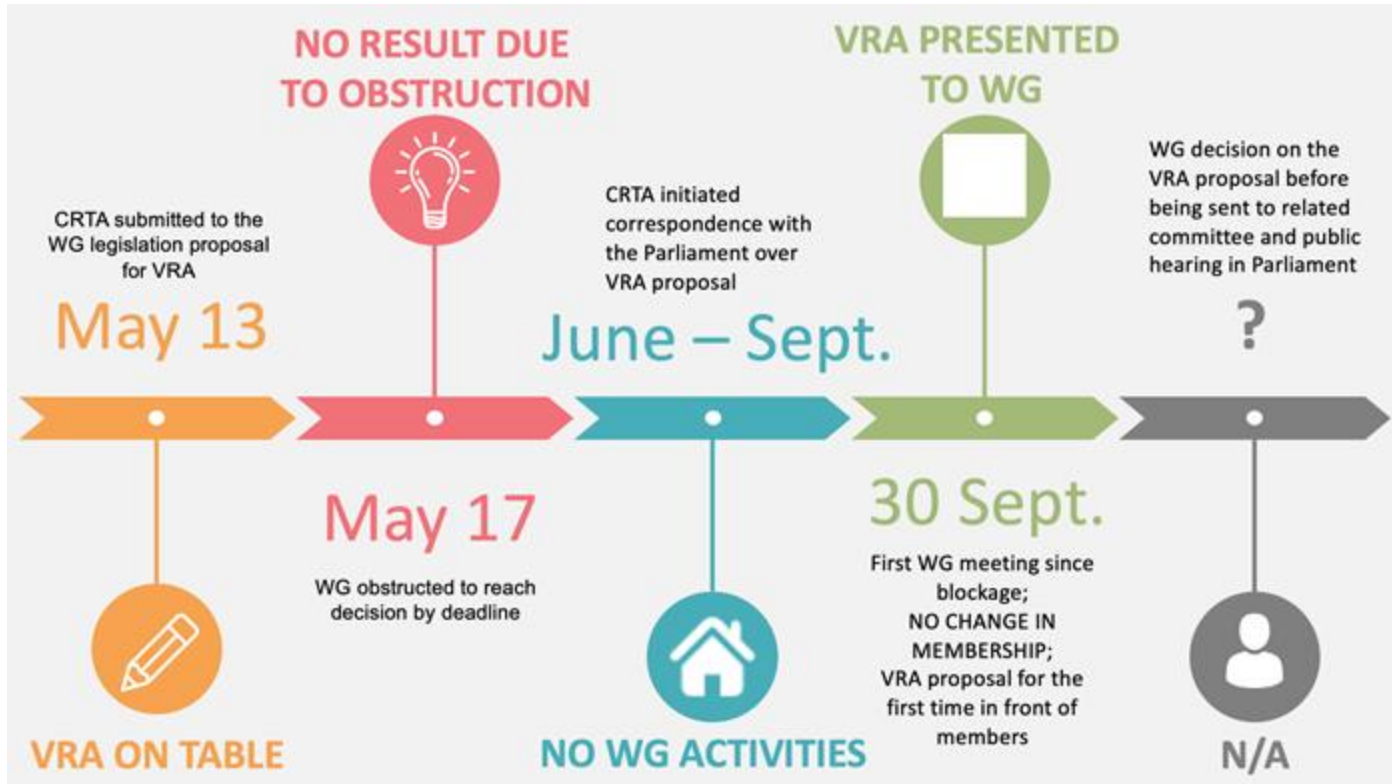
Reform Agenda, First composite step due by December 2024
(subject to ODIHR assessment as the verification mechanism)

A meaningful audit of voter register completed in accordance with ODIHR recommendations. This step means establishment of the Commission which will oversee and control voters register. The Commission should include representatives of opposition, as well as relevant civil society organizations. The implementation of this recommendation should be recognized/verified by ODIHR.

REM Council is re-elected (in line with the Law on electronic media) in a transparent and inclusive process. Clear explanation of this step is given in the relevant law.

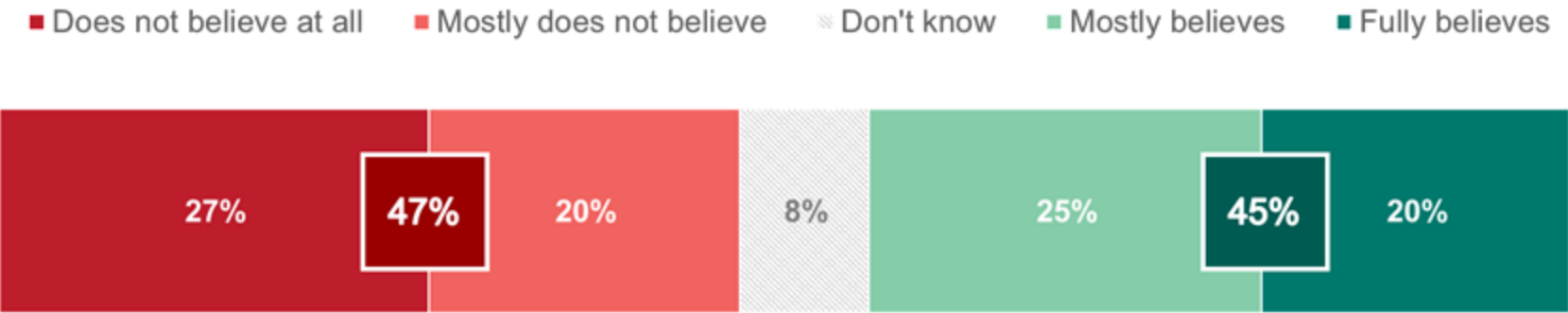
Where we stand with VRA regulation?

VRA - Voter Registry Audit
WG - Working Group



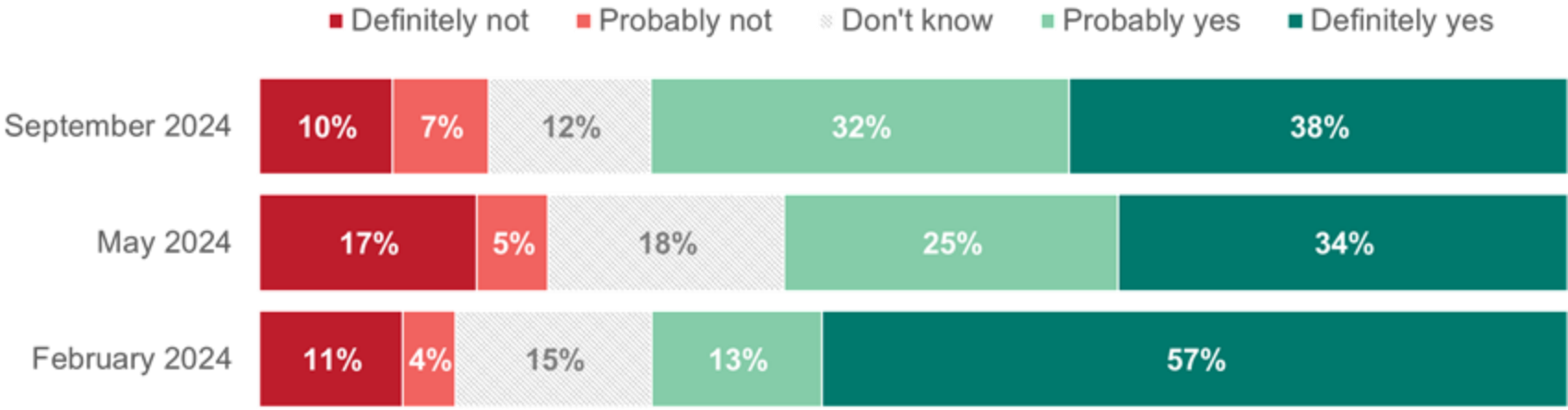
CRTA: Almost half of the citizens do not trust the state to ensure the accuracy and up-to-date status of the voter registry

To what extent do you believe that our state can ensure the accuracy and up-to-date status of the voter registry?



CRTA: Support for the petition to form an independent commission for the revision of the voter registry is not declining

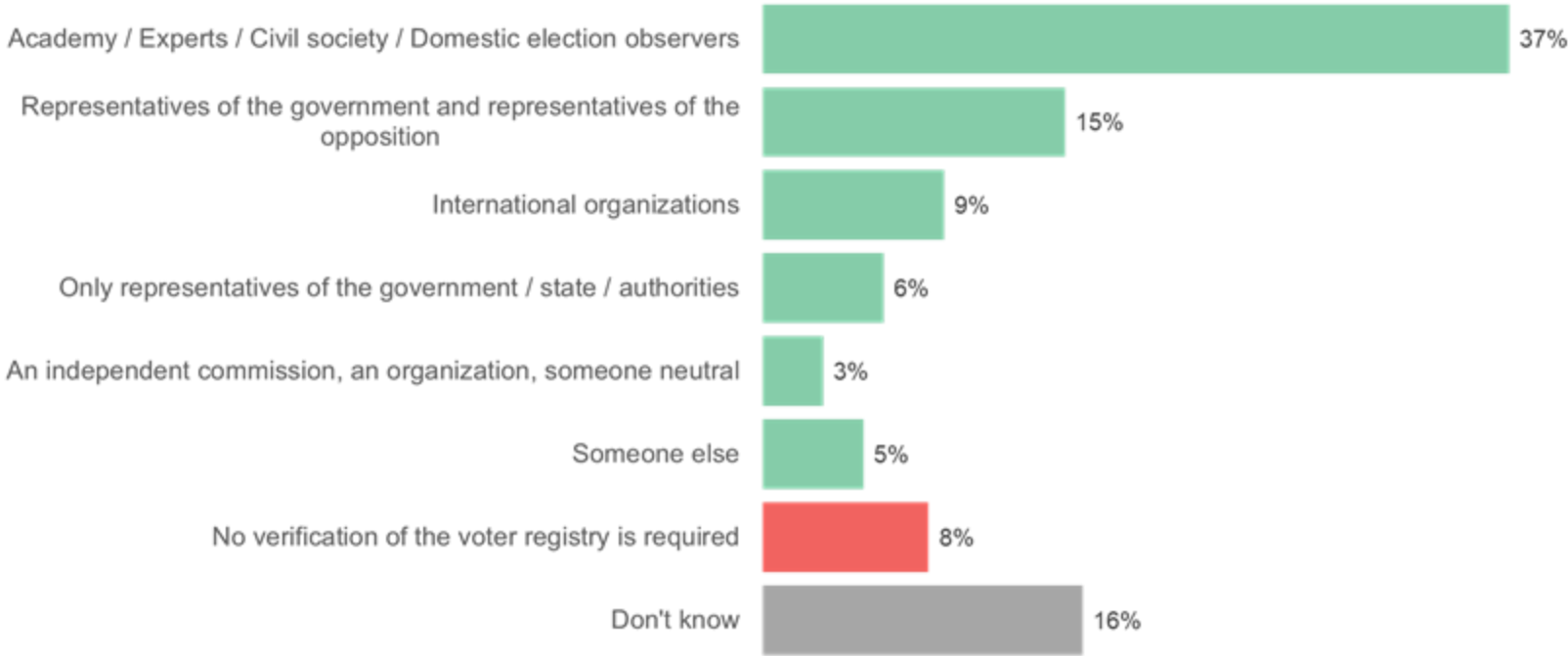
Would you personally support a petition to form an independent commission to verify the accuracy of the voter registry?



Source: CRTA's survey, September 2024. - February 2024.

CRTA: Experts, civil society and election observers are seen as best option for voter registry audit

In case of voter registry audit, what do you think, who should be the one to do the audit?



Source: CRTA's survey, February 2024. Methodology: CATI, n=1251, randomly selected, representative for adult population of Serbia, ME 2.8%

Legality and legitimacy of the new REM Council severely degraded

Only six out of 18 candidates for the new Council meet the legal criteria:

- entities do not fulfill criteria to nominate candidates:
 - i.e. United TV Experts; Professional Association of Journalists of Serbia; Association of Journalists from Niš, etc.
- individuals do not meet the criteria to be nominated:
 - i.e. **Milorad Vukašinović**, former REM Council Member; **Stevica Smederevac**, REM Assistant Director, etc.

Also many have a track record of being close to the ruling party and pro-government media:

Dejan Vuk Stanković, Kurir columnist; **Leontina Pat**, participating in the ruling party campaigns; **Zoran Jevtović**, editor-in-chief of the magazine “Napredak” published by Serbian Progressive Party

Legalization of Repression in 2024

Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Law Amendments:

Concerns about a "police state":

- Intent to criminalize a person who publishes material that promotes criminal acts and the abuse of state and secret data - broad definitions could easily criminalize activists
- Expanding Serbia's Security Agency (BIA) measures to other criminal acts.
- Erasing the rule which bans information about human rights violations from being classified as state secrets.

Foreign Agents Bill:

- The text closely resembles Russia's legislation in its definitions and language, particularly regarding "foreign agents", "political activity", and "inspections".
- The Serbian proposal mandates obligatory registration for organizations receiving over 50% foreign funding annually.
- The need for transparency justifies the proposal, safeguarding national sovereignty and replicating U.S. FARA rules - all of which Russia, Georgia, Hungary, Republika Srpska, and other countries used to defend the idea behind it.
- The proposed control mechanisms include regular and ad-hoc inspections and significant fines for non-compliance.

Freedom of Information Act Amendments:

- Degrading the achieved level of rights to information by introducing an "abuse of the right" institute.

CRTA: State builds an atmosphere against civil society, protests and student blockades

President of Serbia: "So, **for the last three days, I studied how much money entered our country through different political non-governmental organizations and everyone else.** (...) The fact that their intention is to overthrow me or, as they say, to professionally promote democracy and so on. (...) it seems to me that the public will find out how it goes and how it works. (...) you will see, a huge amount of money was poured into our country with the undoubted aim of destabilizing Serbia." - ([TV Pink](#), August 8, 2024)

Deputy Prime Minister: "I made the lists (*of activists held at the borders*), as Minister of Police and Director of the Security Agency, according to the law and my conscience. **I personally put on the lists Serbs who bring flowers to the graves of Kosovo Albanian killers. (...) I regret that I didn't dedicate more time to them, because I see how much scum has been unjustly forgotten.**" ([Movement of Socialists](#), August 27, 2024)

Speaker of Parliament: "This is not democracy when 20 or 50 people block an entire boulevard, paralyzing a whole city. **This is clearly a well-coordinated action from abroad.** What is the purpose of these actions, other than **creating chaos and destabilizing Serbia?**" ([November 22, 2024](#))

Ombudsman: "NGOs are a very unregulated area, and **I advocate introducing an order. If I open a popcorn stand, it will be controlled more often and more thoroughly than an NGO.**" ([RT Interview, November 28, 2024](#))

CRTA: Serbia saw the biggest protest in history: December 2024 with ≈ 100.000 people attending



Fotografija iz drona: Nepregledan broj ljudi na Slaviji

CRTA: The protests were organised at least once in over 100 municipalities since November

Aleksandrovac	Ćićevac	Lajkovac	Stara Pazova	Surdulica
Aleksinac	Ćuprija	Lazarevac	Subotica	Svrljig
Apatin	Dimitrovgrad	Lebane	Petrovac na Mlavi	Šabac
Arandelovac	Đurđevo	Leskovac	Pirot	Šid
Arilje	Gornji Milanovac	Loznica	Požarevac	Topola
Babušnica	Guča	Ljig	Požega	Trstenik
Bač	Indija	Majdanpek	Priboj	Ub
Bačka Palanka	Ivanjica	Mali Zvornik	Prokuplje	Užice
Bačka Topola	Jagodina	Mionica	Raška	Valjevo
Bački Petrovac	Kikinda	Mladenovac	Ruma	Velika Plana
Bajina Bašta	Kisač	Negotin	Senta	Vladimirci
Bečej	Knjaževac	Niš	Smederevo	Vlasotince
Bela Crkva	Kosjerić	Nova Pazova	Smederevska	Vranje
Beli Potok	Kostolac	Nova Varoš	Palanka	Vrbas
Beograd	Kovin	Novi Pazar	Sokobanja	Vrnjačka Banja
Bogatić	Kragujevac	Novi Sad	Sombor	Vršac
Bor	Kraljevo	Obrenovac	Srbobran	Zaječar
Bosilegrad	Krupanj	Odžaci	Sremska	Zrenjanin
Brus	Kruševac	Padina	Kamenica	Žabalj
Čačak	Kula	Pančevo	Sremska Mitrovica	Žabari
Čajetina	Kuršumlja	Paraćin	Sremski Karlovci	Žagubica

CRTA: President of Serbia calls to violence and threats

President of Serbia: "What was my reaction? **Should I have gone out and beat them up myself? To bring out the special forces and throw them around like ragdolls, it wouldn't take more than 6-7 seconds?"** (Ćirilica - TV Happy - December 21, 2024)

President of Serbia: "**Should I have gone out with the special forces, to break through them, to do anything - it wouldn't take us more than 7-8 seconds**" (The President's address to the youth of the Serbian Progressive Party in Belgrade's Sava Center December 25, 2024)

President of Serbia: "**There is a faction within SNS, and today they held a small gathering in a church** ... These are honorable people who came to me and said they never asked for anything—not ministerial positions, and they're not wealthy. **They are like guardians of the flame**, though a bit too extreme for my taste. They had a meeting. **These people warned everyone who might think of going against me that they will have no support within the party.**

They were at the founding conference, 1,019 of them, **mostly men, with only a small number of women. Back then, they swore blood oaths. My brother and a few others are part of that group**, but I'm not. He is just one among what is now **17,000 members. In times of crisis, none of these people ever left and always fought fiercely. They are mostly pro-Russian**, for a free Serbia, but more inclined toward Russia ... These are people who hold to their vows." (TV Prva, December 31, 2024)

CRTA: Physical attacks and threats against citizens and students

(November 2024 - January 2025, protests, student blockades and 15 minutes silence)

Minimum 27 car attacks on students peacefully protesting, injuries recorded

Minimum 12 cases of physical assault, including police brutality, injuries required surgery

Minimum 6 cases of threats and intimidations at faculties, suspecting involvement of Security Agency

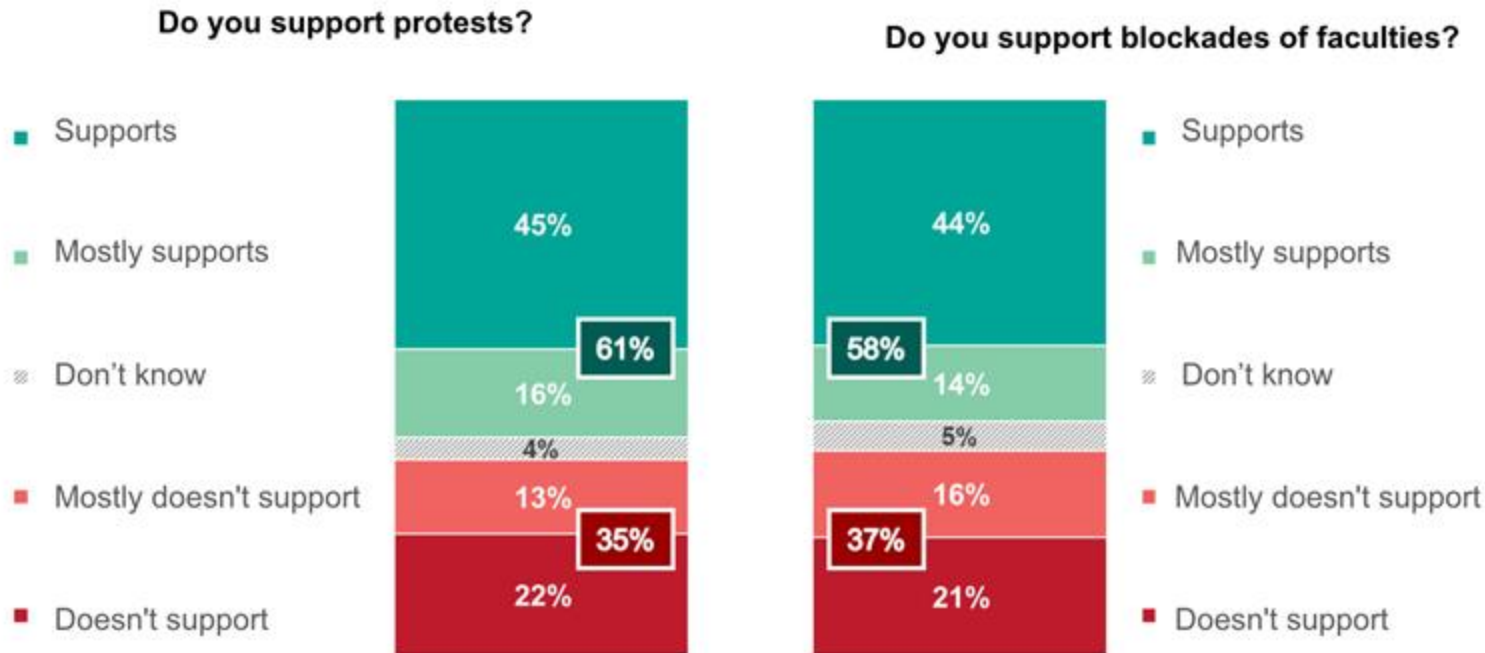
Court epilogues against perpetrators: Only one, result is a plea bargain



CRTA: Citizens apprehended by individuals who refuse to identify
- pointing to expanding involvement of the Security Agency
(November 2024, first protests)

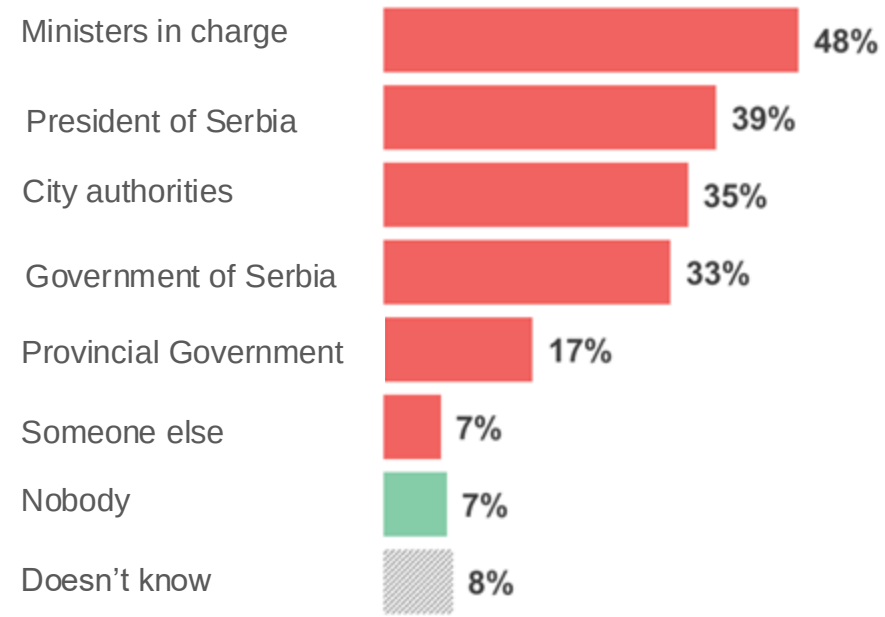


CRTA: Fears of increased state repression are growing as public support for student protests and citizen dissent expands (~60%)

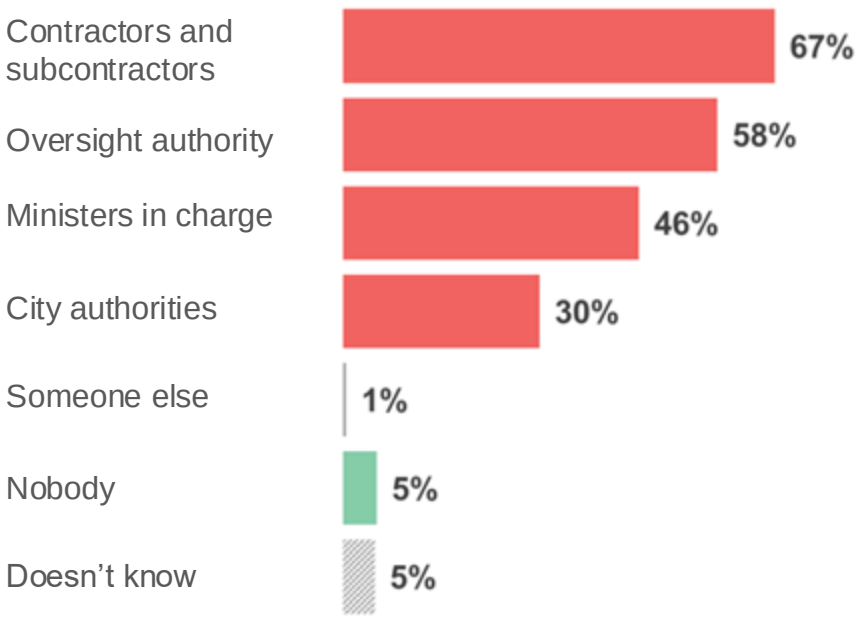


CRTA: Fears further grow as the support to the Government and the President drops, seeing them as politically and criminally accountable

Political Accountability

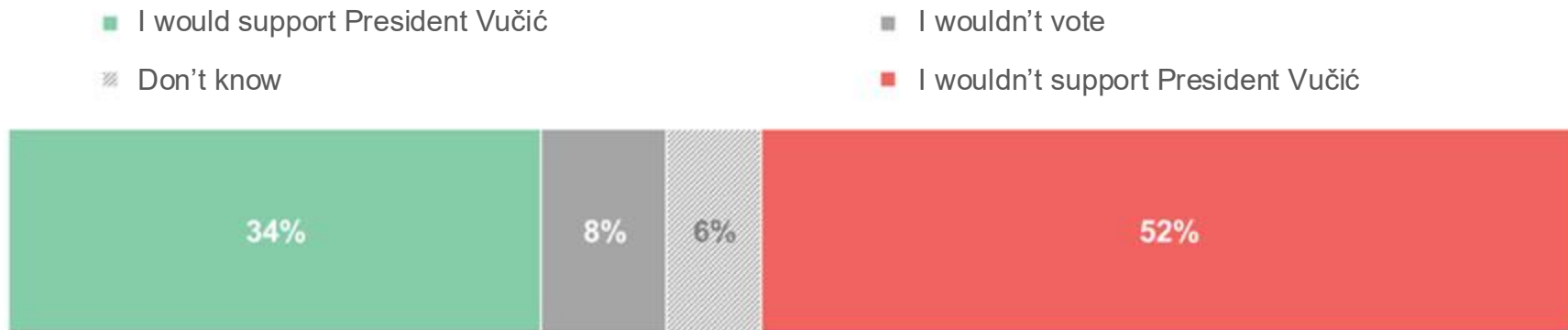


Criminal Accountability



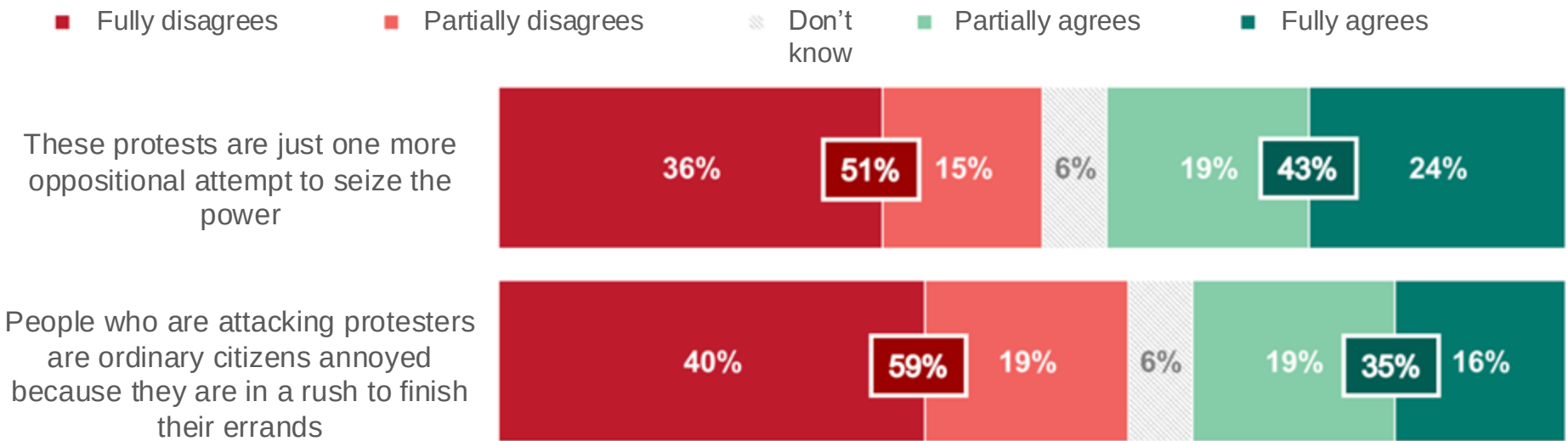
Izvor: Crta istraživanje, decembar, 2024. Metodologija: F2F, n=1030, slučajni uzorak, reprezentativan za punoletne građane Republike Srbije (bez KiM), MG 3.1%

CRTA: The numbers for the incumbents are even less in favour when it comes to the President of Serbia - only $\frac{1}{3}$ of citizens would support him in the advisory referendum of confidence

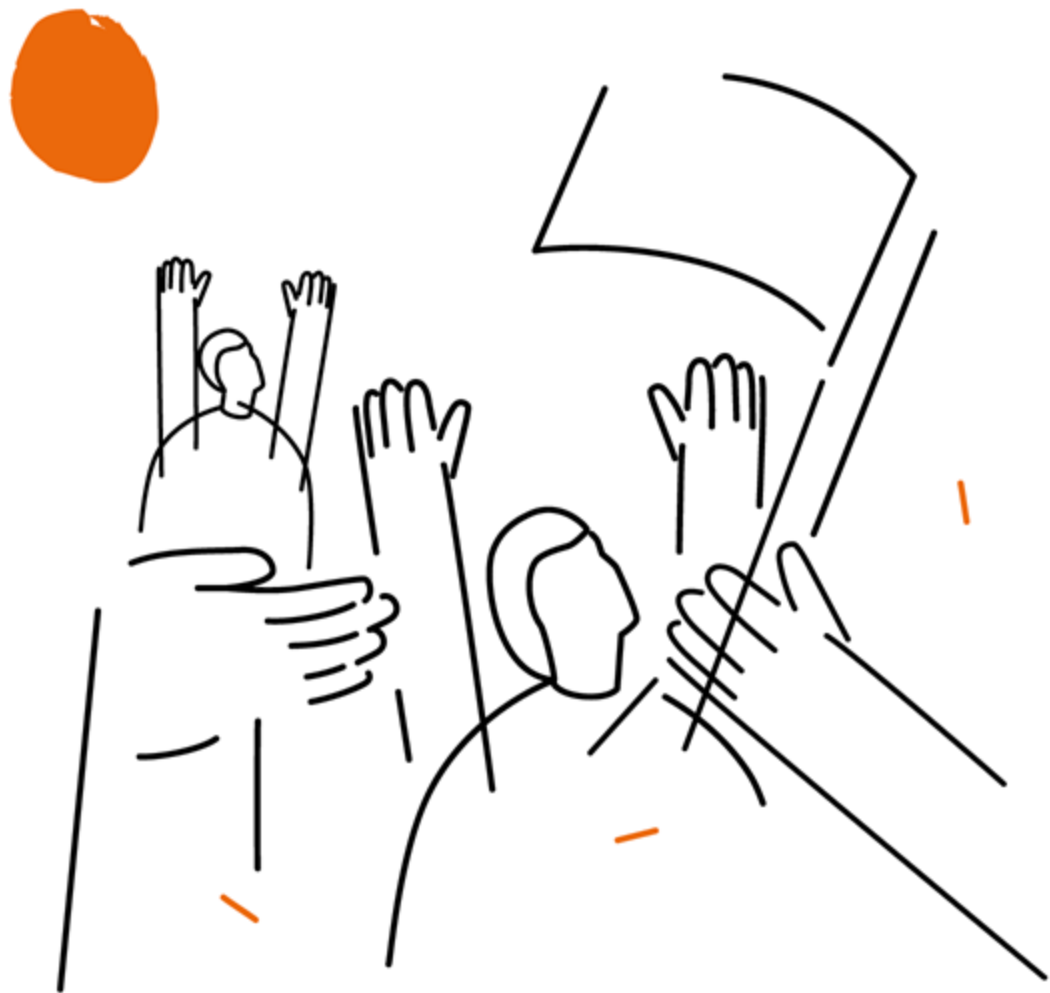


With higher age and lower education the support to the President at the advisory referendum increases.

CRTA: Government propaganda is failing - majority of citizens doesn't agree with narratives that opposition is behind the protests ("protests are political, not student") and that attackers are ordinary citizens



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CRTA: