



# **Assessment of Intra-Municipal Relations and the Role of Neighborhood Self Government**

**STRATEGIC**  
**Marketing and Media Research Institute**

**Skopje, May/June 2004**

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## Overall Project Objective:

To determine the level of citizen participation at the neighborhood and municipal levels of government, explore relations between the municipal and neighborhood levels of government, survey the willingness of current mayors to devolve activities to the neighborhood level, and the willingness of citizens to participate in local decision making.

## Qualitative Survey

**Research Method:** In depth interviews with 30 mayors and 20 presidents of neighbourhood councils (both urban and rural municipalities)

**Questionnaire:** Formulated by OSCE and SMMRI

**Fieldwork:** May/June 2004

## Quantitative Survey

**Research Method:** Face-to-face interviews at respondents home

**Territorial coverage:** The entire country and four strata (Skopje, Northwest+Ku, Southwest and East&Central), both urban and rural municipalities

**Target population:** Total population 18+

**Sampling frame:** Census 2002

**Sample size:** 1000 questionnaires (1029 questionnaires from the field)

**Sample type:** Stratified three-staged probability sample

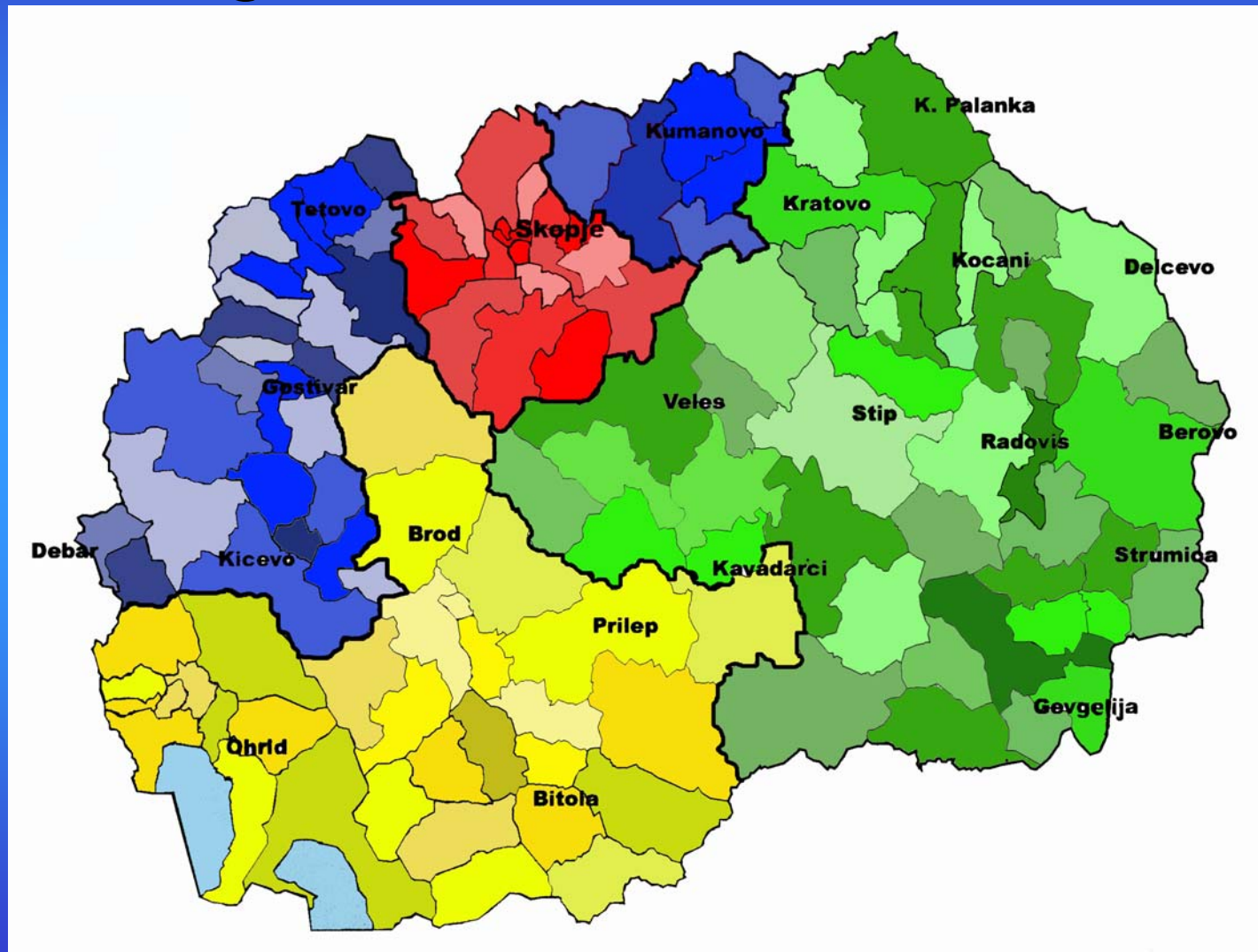
- Local districts – census block units
- Households by random route technique
- Household member by Kish scheme

The data were weighted to correct for imbalances

**Questionnaire:** Formulated by OSCE and SMMRI

**Fieldwork:** May 2004

# Regional Distribution



# Urban / Rural Distribution

Total country: 58% urban, 42% rural

Skopje region: 78% urban, 22% rural

Southwest: 56% urban, 44% rural

Northwest+Ku: 40% urban; 60% rural

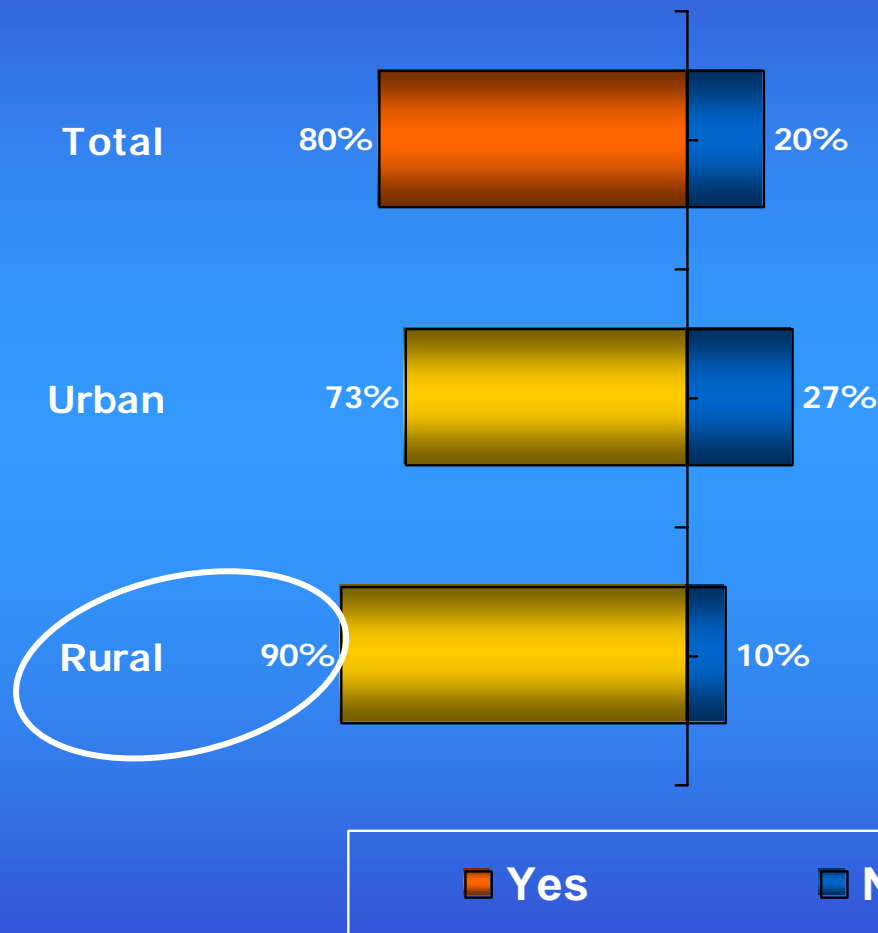
East & Central: 54% urban, 46% rural

# Overview

- Neighborhood Government
- Trust and Performance
- Devolution
- Awareness and Participation
- Potential for Participation

# NEIGHBORHOOD GOVERNMENT

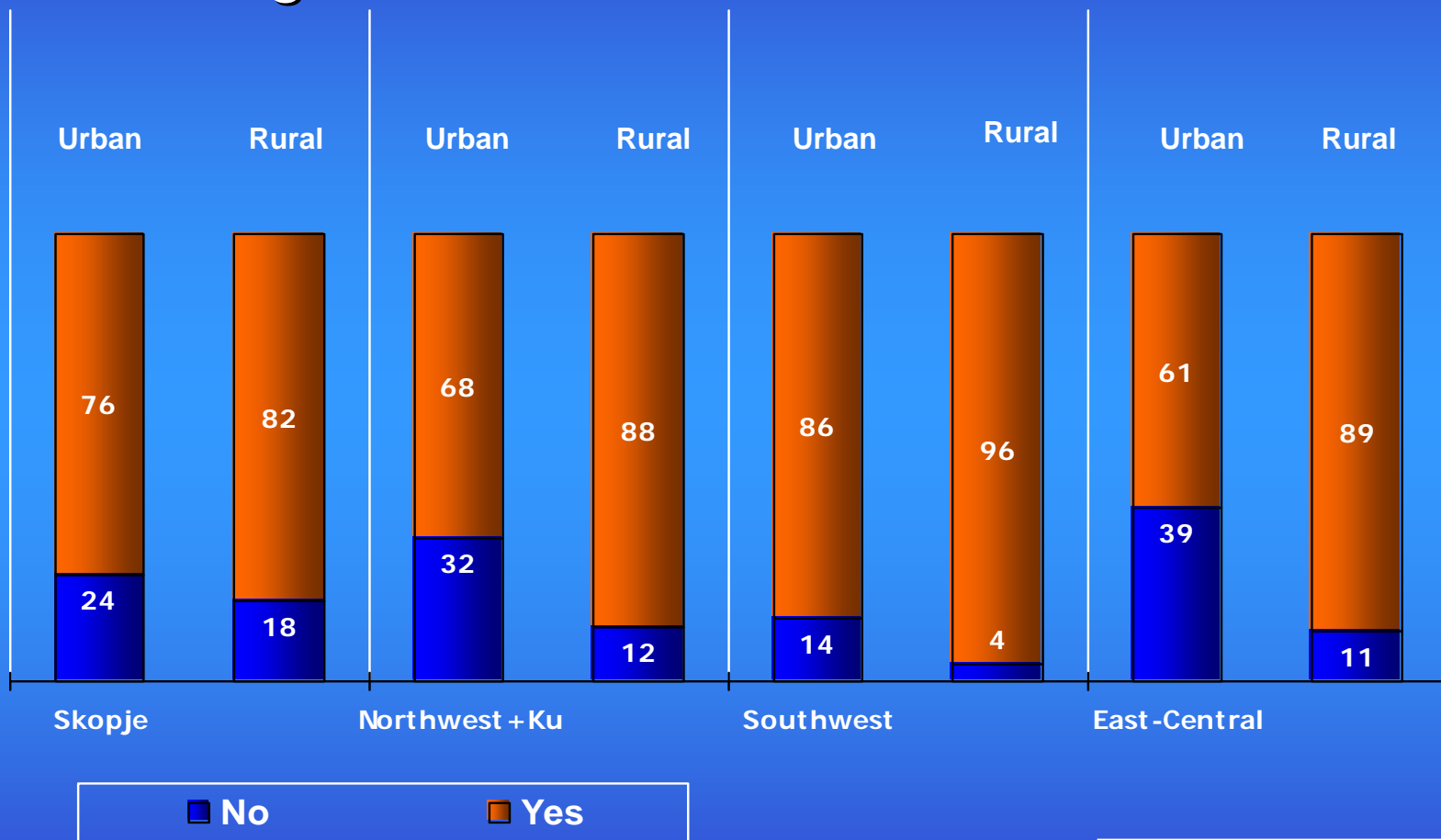
# Do you know the name of your neighborhood?



Comment: Rural areas have much greater neighborhood identification, sense of place, of belonging; urban areas more transient



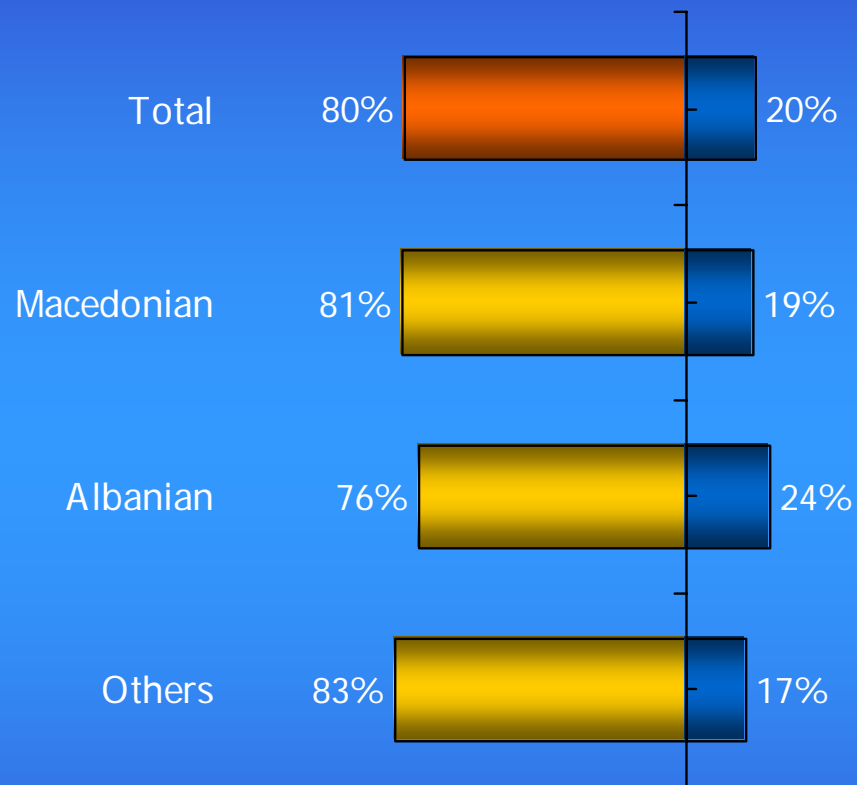
# Do you know the name of your neighborhood?



Base: 1029 respondents

**Comment: All ethnic groups in all regions have a strong sense of neighborhood, more so in the Southwest, least so in the Skopje region**

# Do you know the name of your neighborhood?

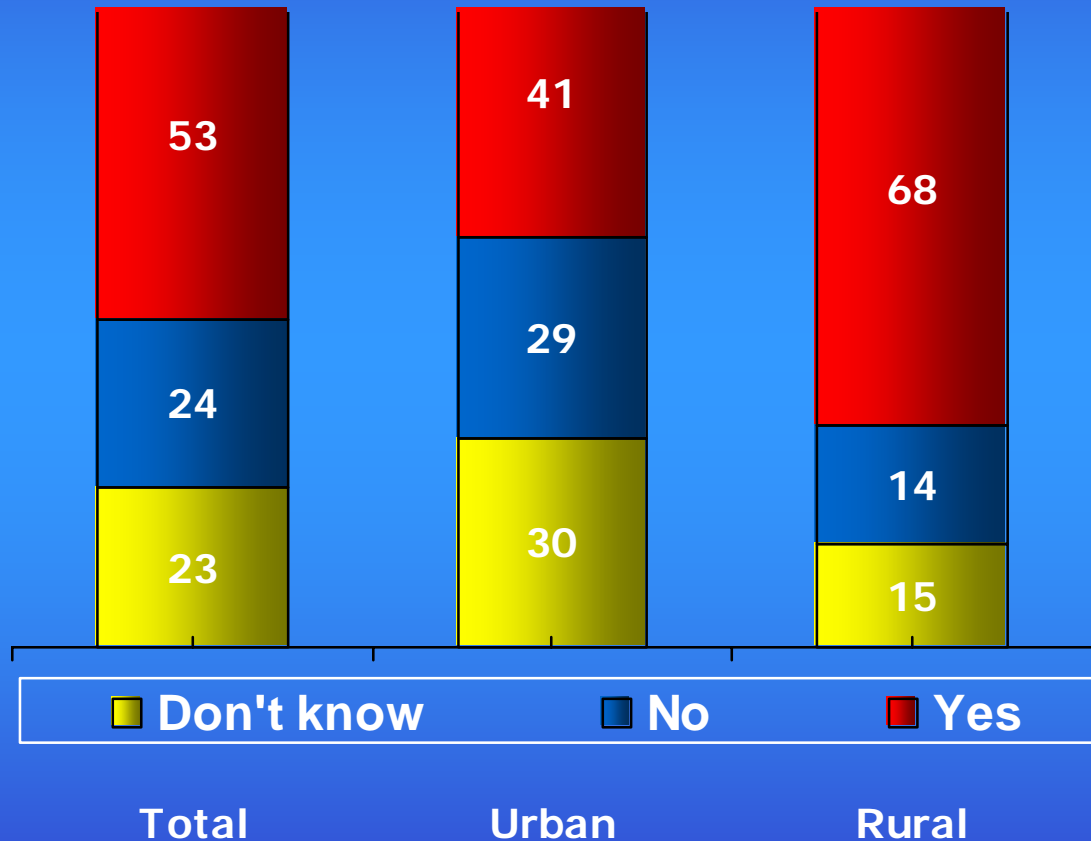


Yes No

Base: 1029

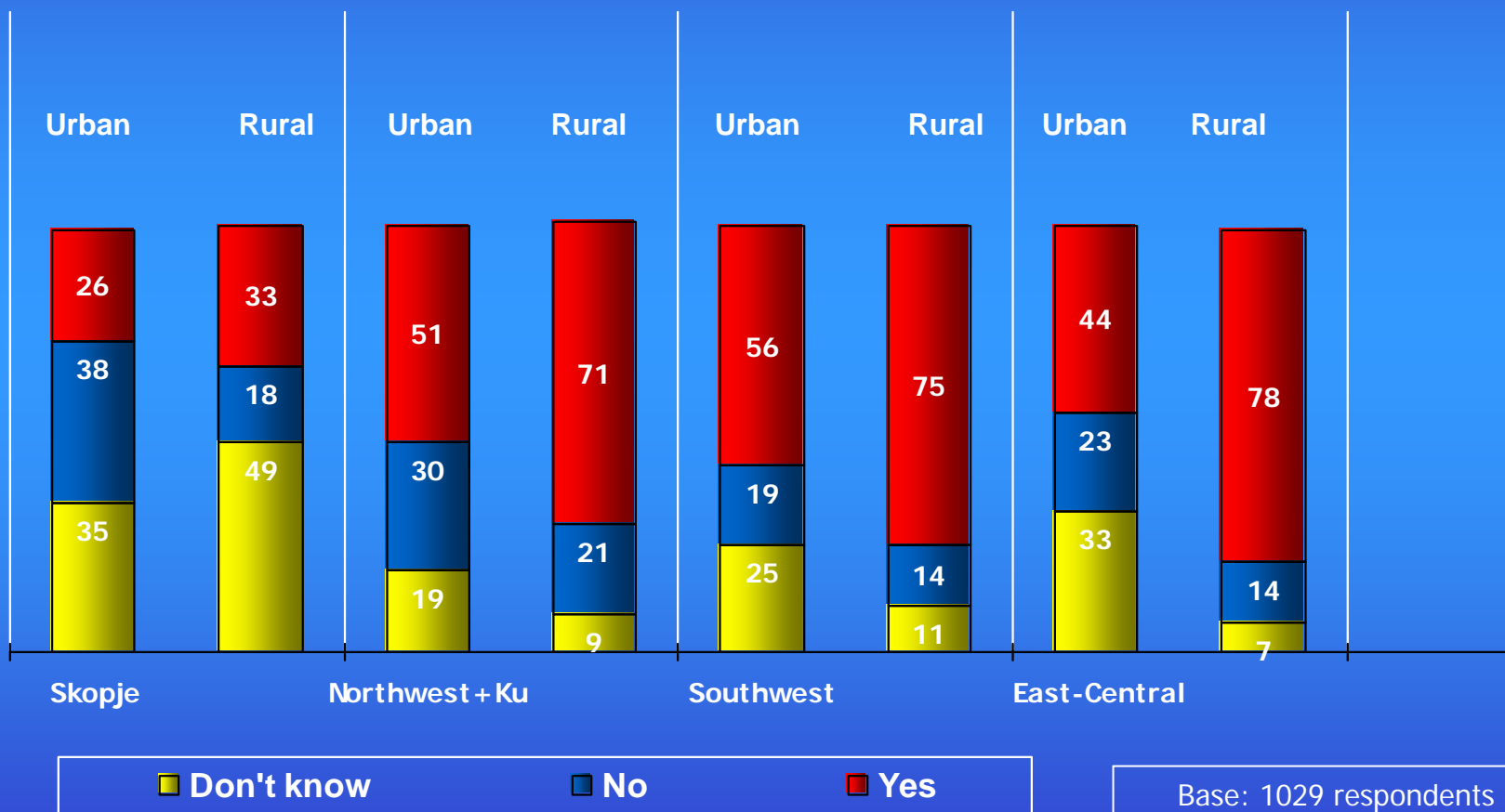
Comment: All ethnic groups have a strong sense of neighborhood

# Do you have an active neighborhood self-government?



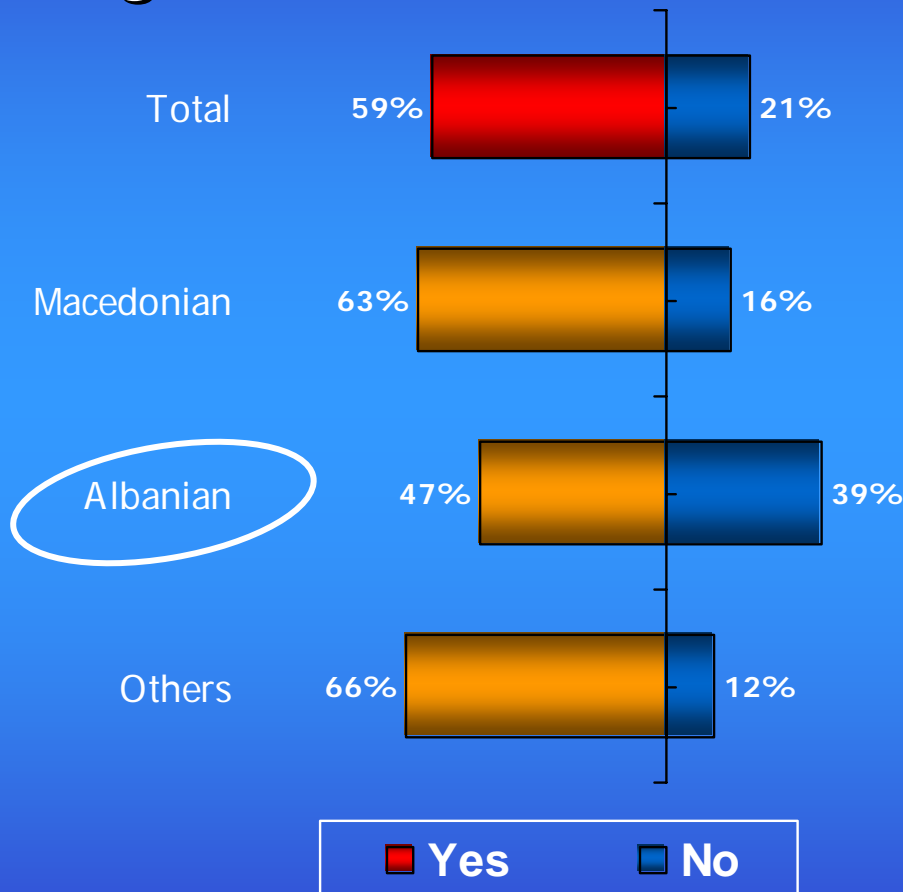
Comment: The majority of the respondents say they have an active neighborhood government, and almost 70% of rural residents say they have an active neighborhood government and twice as many people in urban areas don't know whether they have an active neighborhood government.

# Do you have an active neighborhood self-government?



Comment: Here we can see that neighborhood governments are even more active in rural areas outside of Skopje.

# Do you have an active neighborhood self-government?



Base: 1029

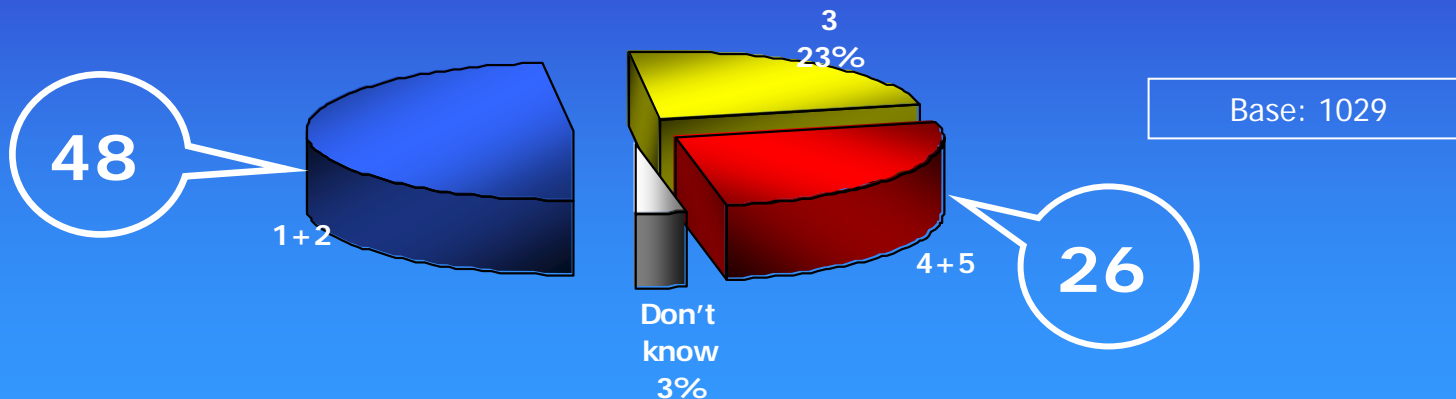
Comment: Neighborhood government common to all ethnic groups. The lower level of neighborhood governments reported by Albanians is due to a 14% rate from the Albanians from Skopje, while Albanians from NW responded with rate of 58%.

# Neighborhood Government

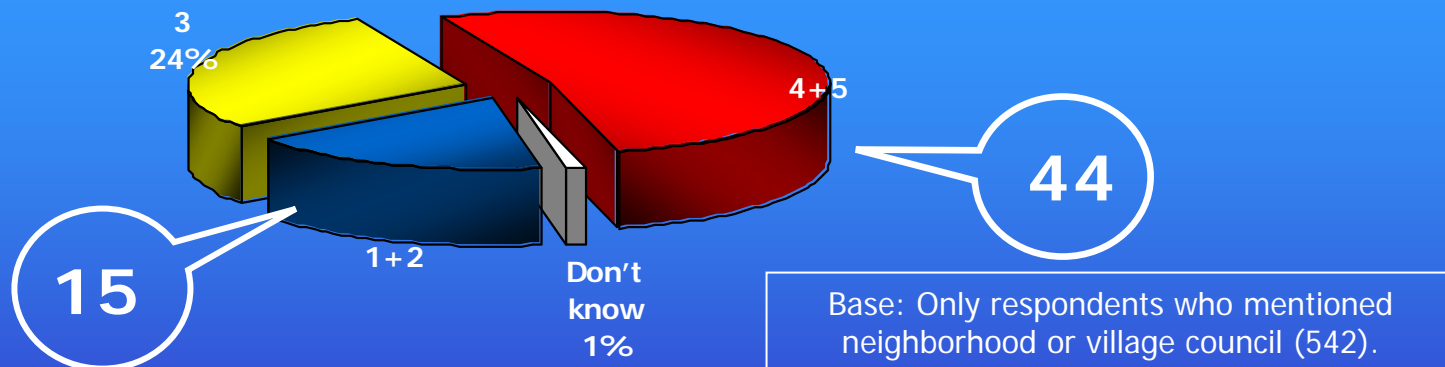
- ❑ **More than half** (53%) of the respondents said that they had neighborhood government
- ❑ **More prevalent in rural areas** (68%) than urban (41%)
- ❑ The Skopje region has significantly fewer active neighborhood governments than the rest of the country: 28% vs. 60%
- ❑ Very common in rural areas outside the Skopje region (71 to 78%)
- ❑ **Common to all ethnic groups**
- ❑ **The disparity in distribution of neighborhood governments is an urban/rural disparity and a regional split between the Skopje region and the rest of the country. There are no ethnic distinctions in the distribution or prevalence of neighborhood government.**
- ❑ All mayors interviewed were aware of the neighborhood governments in their municipality and the extent to which they were active or not, and generally maintain regular communication, some much more frequently than others

# TRUST AND PERFORMANCE

# To what extent is your municipal government aware of the problems citizens face in everyday life?



# To what extent is your neighborhood self government aware of the problems citizens face in everyday life?

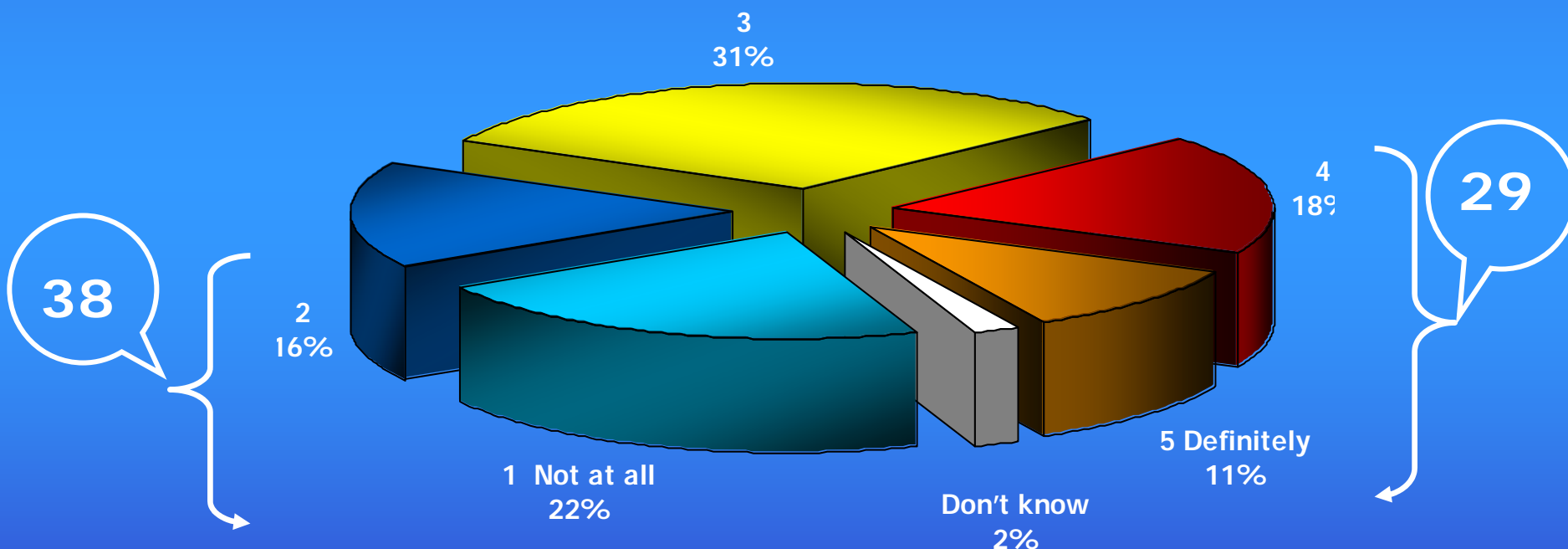


**Comment:** Those with neighborhood government overwhelmingly believe that their NSG is in touch with the citizens in contrast to the way citizens feel about the municipality. The Northwest and Southwest feel that the neighborhood level is most aware of their problems. These are also the two regions most willing to pay fees to the neighborhood level for improvements.



# Does your neighborhood self-government do a good job of representing your interests to the municipality?

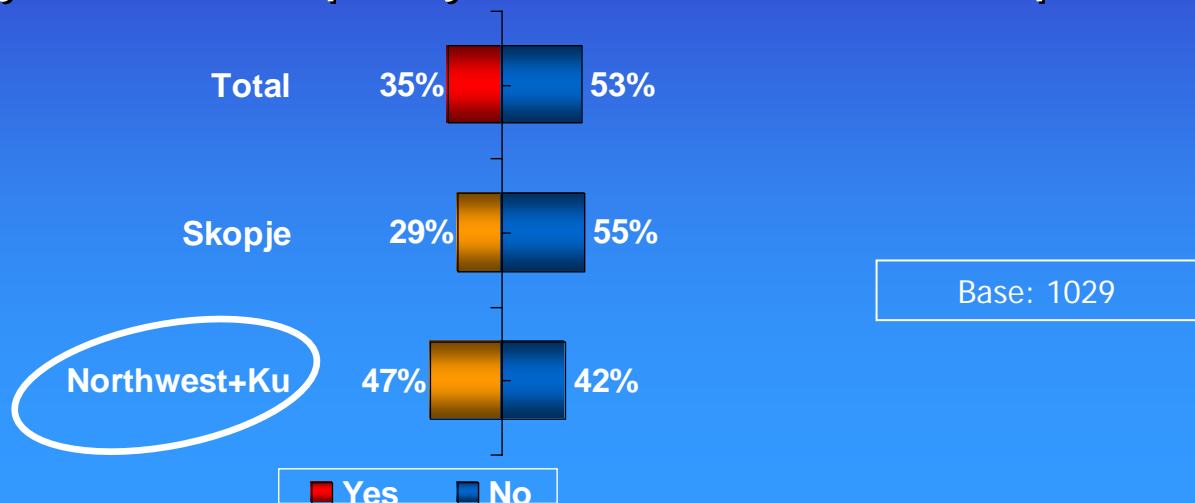
Grades from 1 to 5 like in the school



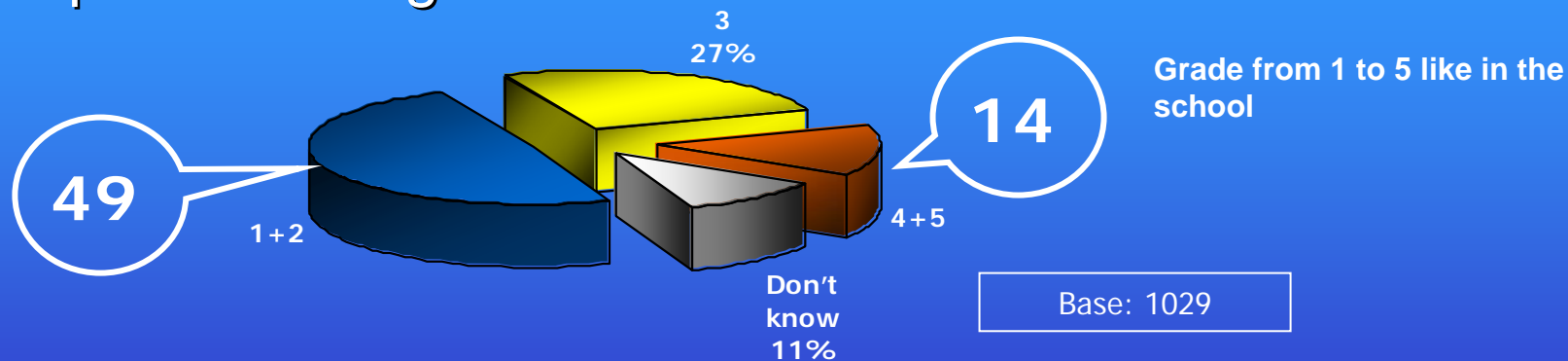
Base: Only respondents who mentioned neighborhood or village council (542).

**Comment: They feel that their NSG is in touch with their problems, but their performance is not high.**

When preparing a strategy for municipal development, does your municipality consider citizens' opinions?

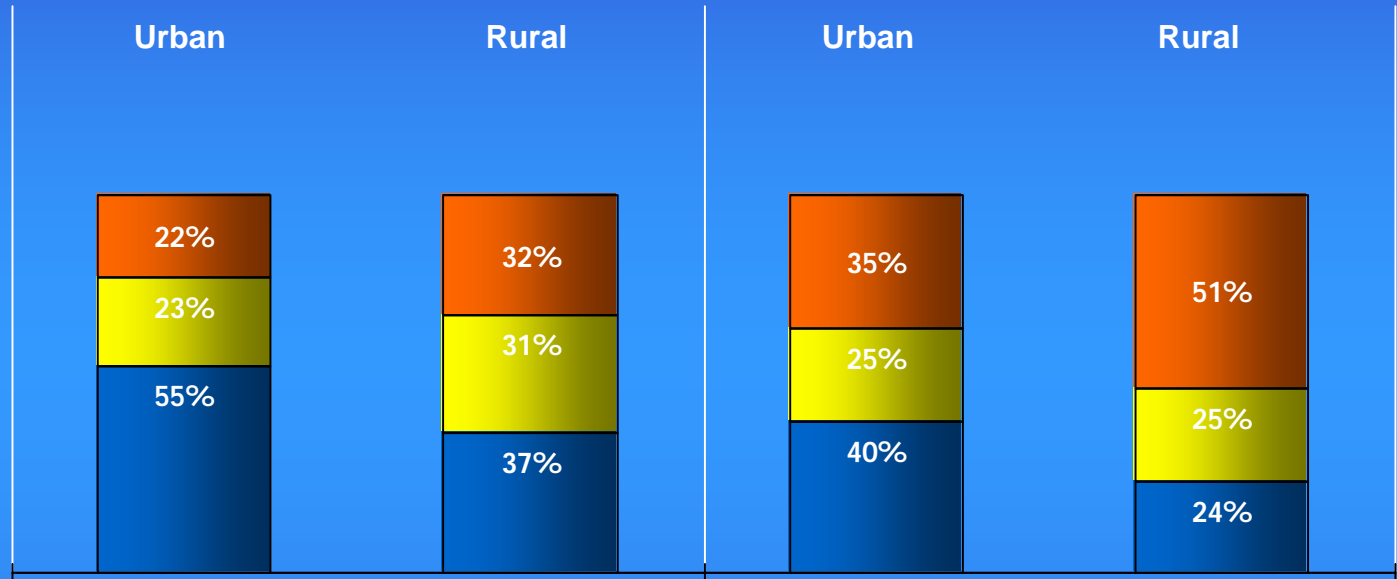


To what extent does your municipality take the opinion of neighborhood leaders into account?



Comment: The responses to these questions demonstrate a large gap between the citizens and the municipalities according to the citizens. There is much less of a gap in rural areas than in urban (44% - rural and 28% - urban)

# Awareness of the citizens' problems and representing their interests



Base: 1029

To what extent is municipal government aware of the problems citizens face in everyday life

To what extent is neighborhood self government aware of the problems citizens face in everyday life

Base: 542

■ 1+2

■ 3

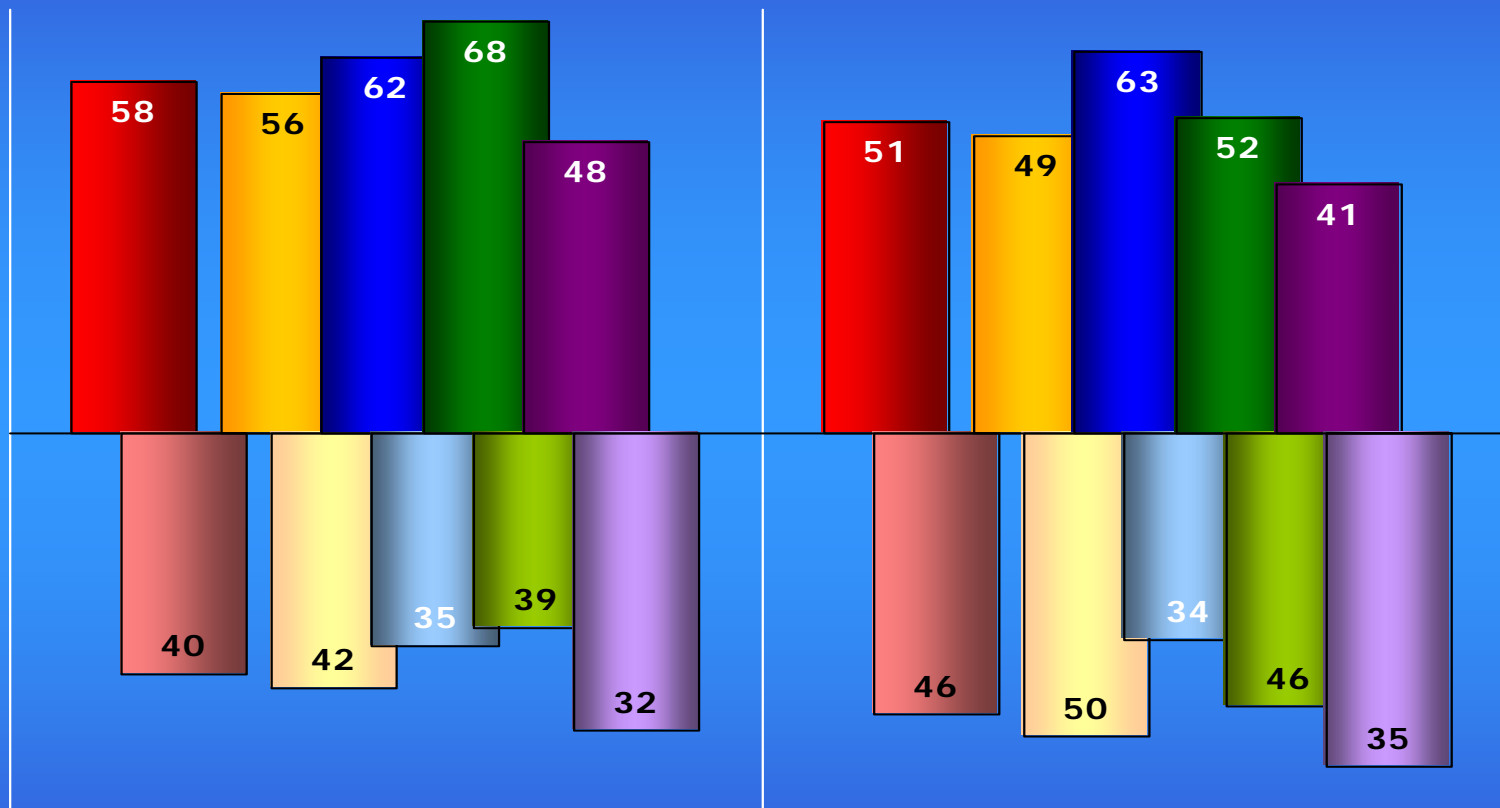
■ 4+5

**Comment: NSG generally is perceived as more representative of citizens interests, most particularly in rural areas.**

# Would you trust your ... to levy fees from you for municipal improvements?

neighbourhood self government

municipal government



■ Total   ■ Skopje   ■ Northwest+Ku   ■ Southwest   ■ East+Central

Base: 1029 respondents

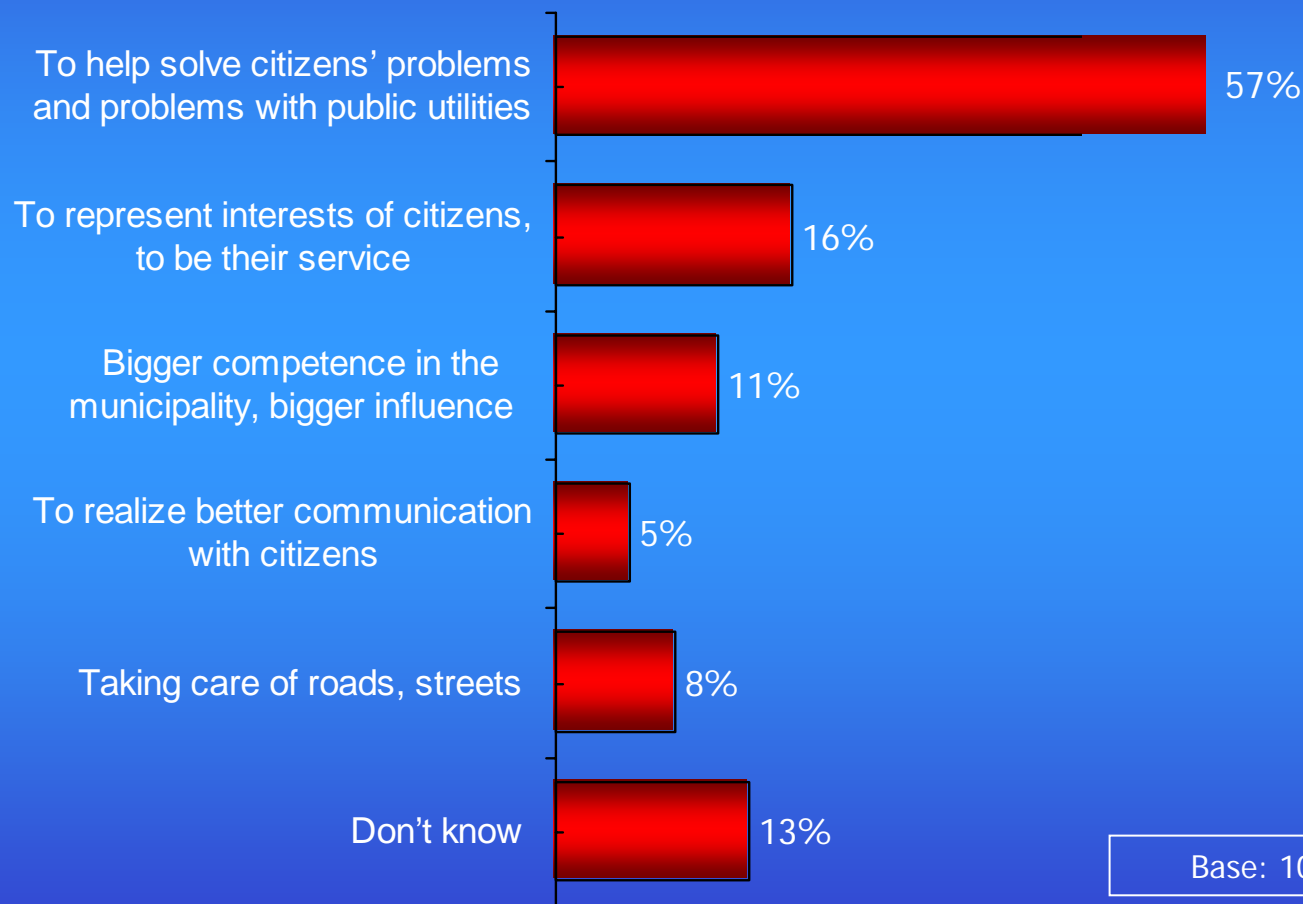
Comment: Residents are willing to trust both NSG and MG to levy fees, yet rate the municipality low on considering citizen and neighborhood leaders' opinions, and rate the neighborhood level low on performance. Regional distribution on this issue varies. Correlates with awareness of problems – highest at NG level in NW and SW. But, MG most aware in SW.

# Trust and Performance

- ❑ Only a quarter (26%) of all respondents think municipal government is aware of their problems and only 35% think their municipality considers citizens' opinions when preparing a municipal strategy. This demonstrates **a large gap between municipal government and the citizens.**
- ❑ Though only 29% of those with neighborhood government think neighborhood government does a good job, almost half (44%) of them think neighborhood government is aware of everyday problems. **Though the performance of neighborhood government is not rated highly, people still believe that neighborhood government is more in touch with them.**
- ❑ Mayors interviewed stated that they do consider citizen concerns through meetings with neighborhood leaders, communication in citizen information centers and municipal offices, public hearings, and other meetings.
- ❑ **Mayors interviewed were generally favorable toward neighborhood government** and cited the ability of a well organized neighborhood government to assist the municipality in identifying citizen concerns and representing their interests.

# DEVOLUTION

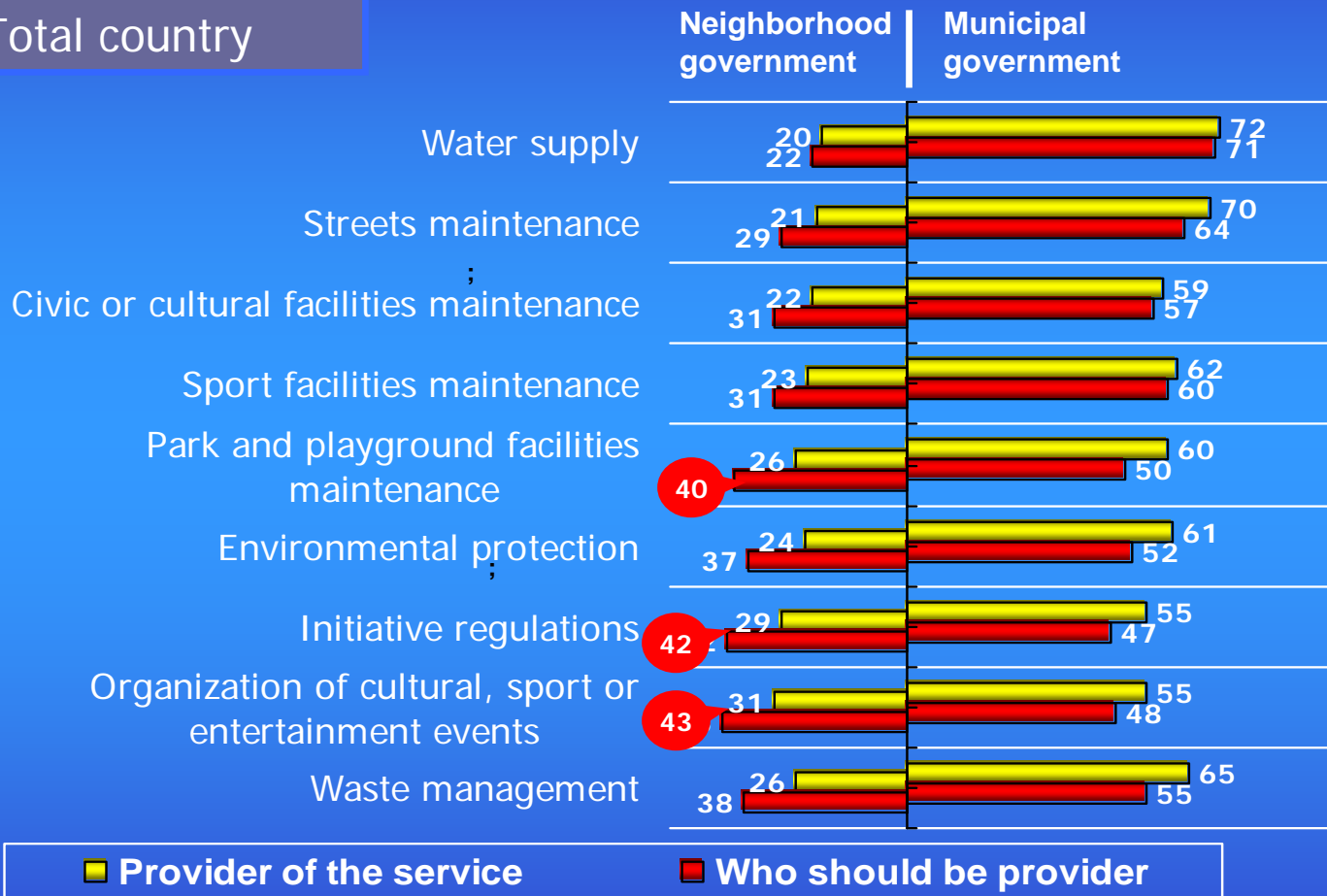
# What role do you think neighborhood self government should have under decentralization? (open ended)



**Comment: Overwhelmingly people want their problems solved.**

# Who is providing the following services and, in your opinion, who should be responsible for providing them?

Total country

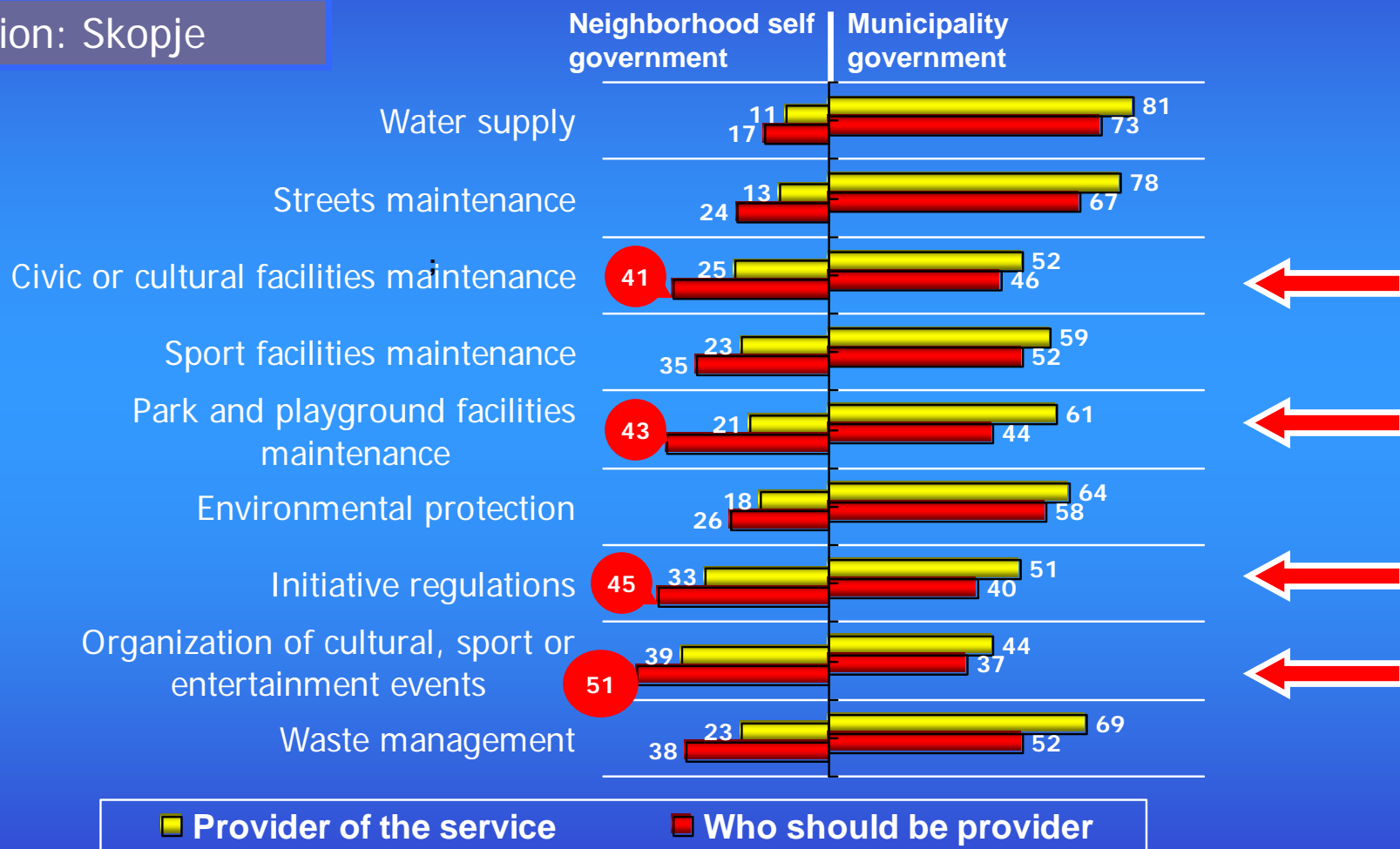


Comment: 29% now think municipal government is responsible for initiating regulations, and 42% think neighborhood government should be; 31% think municipal government organizes events and 43% think neighborhood government should. But, there is quite a regional disparity.



# Who is providing following services and, to your opinion, who should be responsible in providing it?

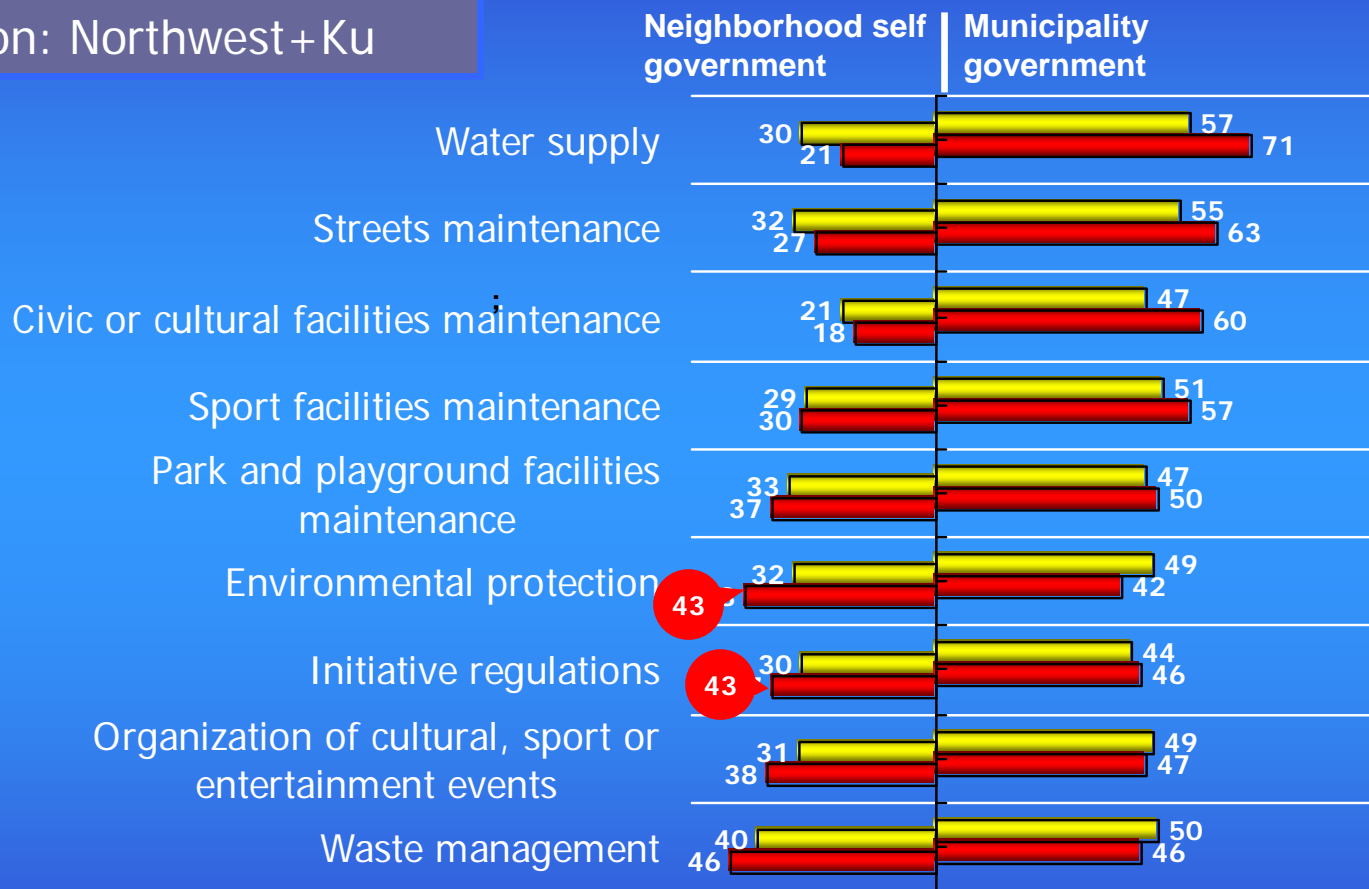
Region: Skopje



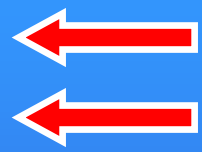
Base: Skopje -284

# Who is providing following services and, to your opinion, who should be responsible in providing it?

Region: Northwest+Ku



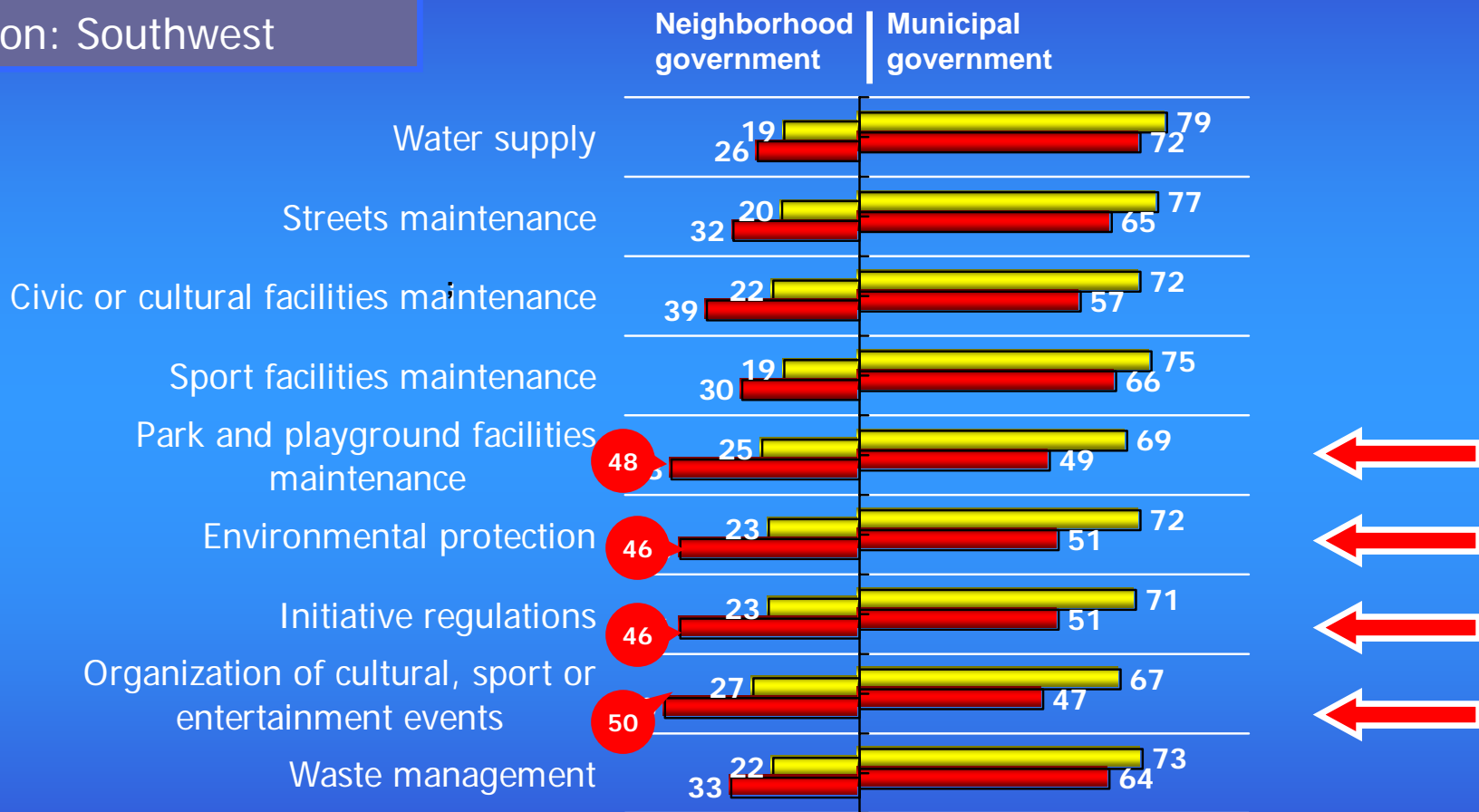
■ Provider of the service     
 ■ Who should be provider



Base: Northwest+Ku -256

# Who is providing the following services and in your opinion, who should be responsible for providing them?

Region: Southwest



■ Provider of the service    
 ■ Who should be provider

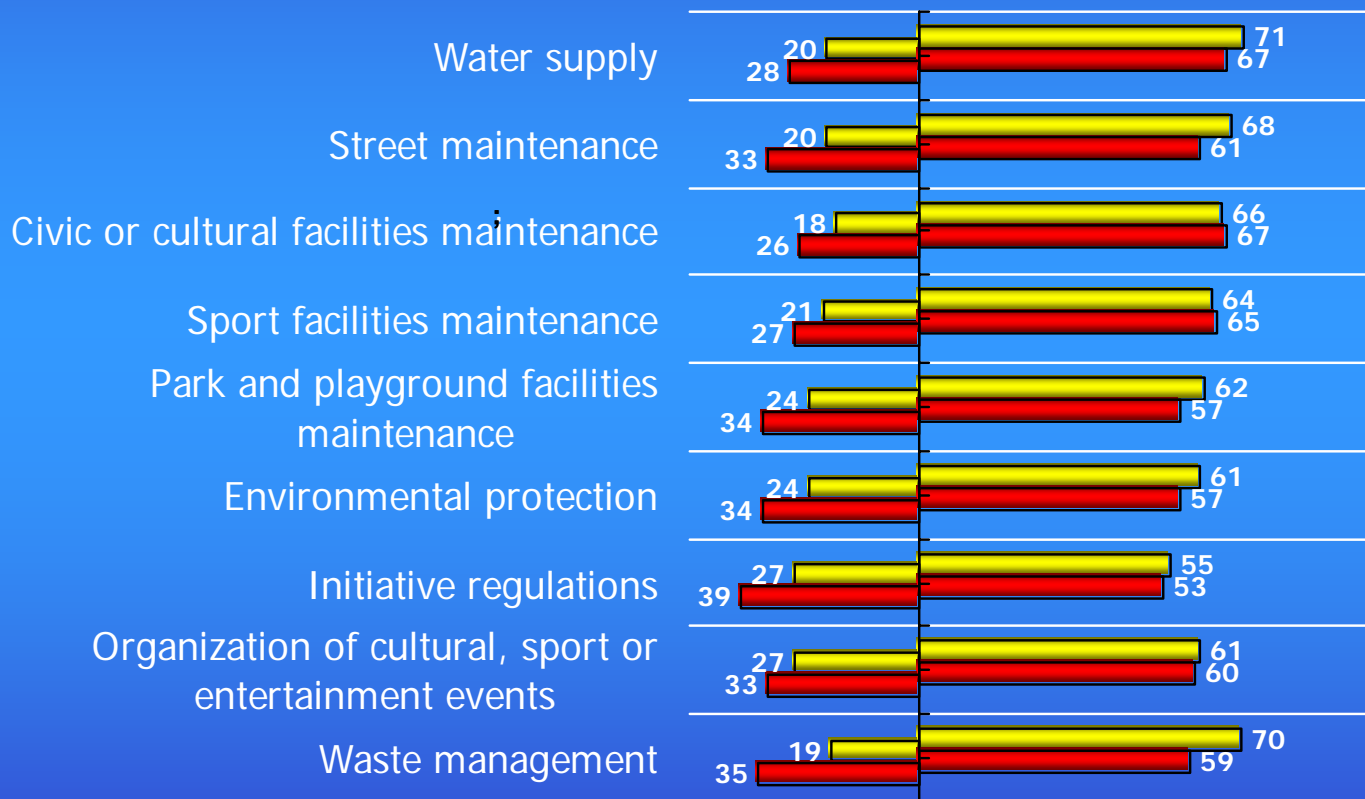
Base: Southwest -221

# Who is providing following services and, to your opinion, who should be responsible in providing it?

Region: East & Central

Neighborhood self government

Municipal government



■ Provider of the service

■ Who should be provider

Base: East&Central-269

# Devolution

- When asked an open ended question about the role of neighborhood government, more than half (57%) said neighborhood government should **help solve citizens' problems**. When asked about delivery of services and organization of specific activities, a majority responded that **park maintenance** and **environmental protection** should be the responsibility of the neighborhood government.
- Overall, when asked which level of government should be responsible for certain services and activities, there is a noticeable shift in citizen thinking that park maintenance, environmental protection, organization of cultural events and responsibility for initiatives and regulations could be devolved to the neighborhood level. Citizens support not only decentralized activities, but further devolved activities to the neighborhood level.
- The majority nationwide believe neighborhood government should help solve citizens' problems, take responsibility for maintaining parks and playgrounds, and for environmental protection.
- And, almost all mayors and neighborhood presidents agreed that the main responsibilities of neighborhood government are to identify the citizens' problems and represent the citizens' interests
- But, not all citizens of all regions agreed, nor did rural and urban residents, nor did mayors of all regions

# Devolution

- ❑ A majority in the Skopje Region want to shift event organization to the neighborhood level
- ❑ A significant number want to shift cultural facilities, parks maintenance and responsibility for initiatives and regulations to the neighborhood level
- ❑ Mayors in the Skopje region favor shifting responsibility for initiatives and regulations, environmental protection, organization of cultural events, and maintenance of parks to the neighborhood level
  
- ❑ A significant number in the Northwest/Kumanovo Region want to shift responsibility for environmental protection, and initiatives and regulations to the neighborhood level
- ❑ However, mayors interviewed in the region are in favor of devolving only responsibility for initiatives and regulations and environmental protection.

# Devolution

- ❑ A bare majority in the Southwest Region wants to shift responsibility for initiatives and regulations to the neighborhood level
- ❑ A significant number want to shift park maintenance, event organization and environmental protection to the neighborhood level
- ❑ Mayors in the Southwest region favor shifting responsibility for initiatives and regulations, environmental protection, organization of cultural events, and maintenance of parks to the neighborhood level
  
- ❑ Citizens in the Eastern Region don't want to change anything
- ❑ Mayors and neighborhood presidents interviewed in the region said all of the listed activities could be devolved to neighborhood governments

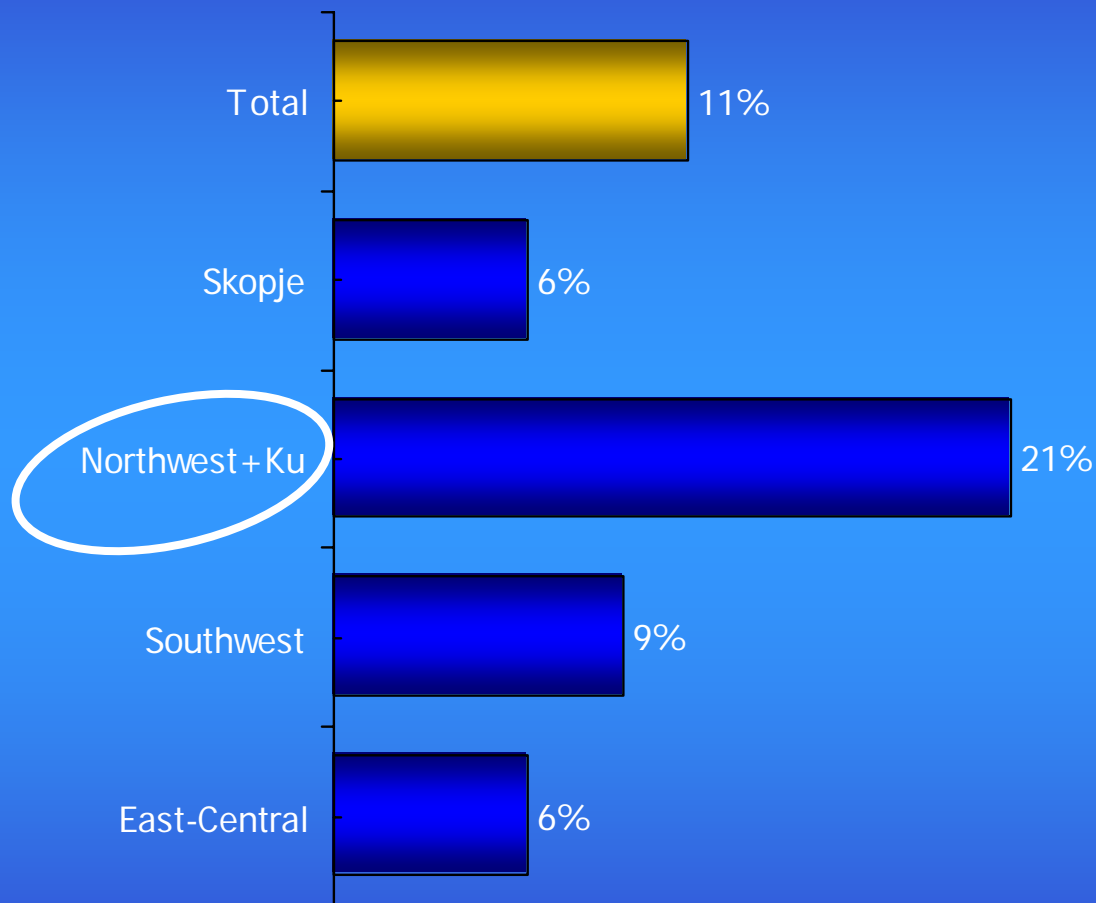


# AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

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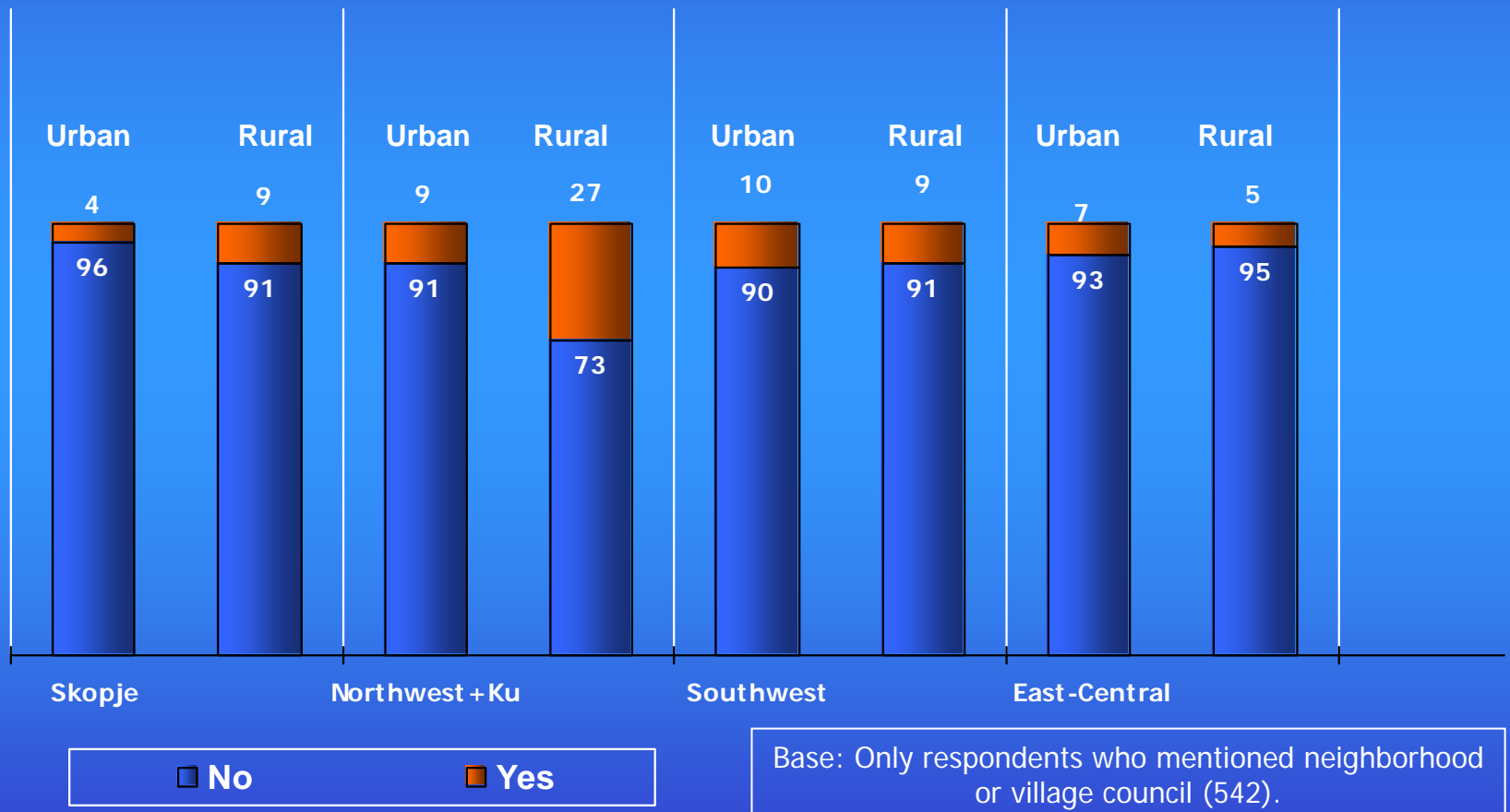
# Do you participate in any activities held by your neighborhood or village self government?



Base: Only respondents who mentioned neighborhood or village council (542).

**Comment: Though 53% stated that they have an active NSG or village council with an even regional distribution outside of Sk region, the NW+Ku region has the highest level of participation in neighborhood government.**

# Do you participate in any activities held by your neighborhood or village self government?



**Comment: The main difference can be seen in rural areas of the Northwest + Ku region.**

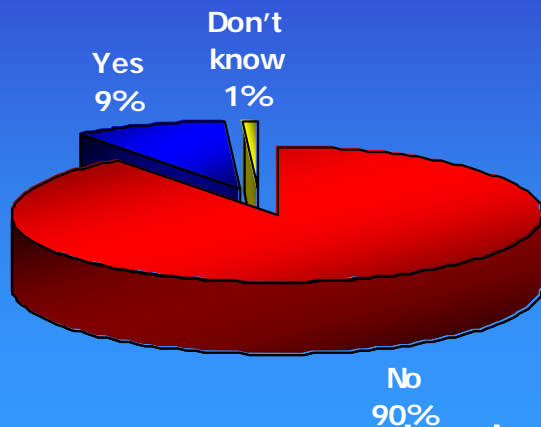
# How do you participate, what is your role? (open ended)



Base: Only respondents who mentioned neighborhood or village council. Multiple responses possible (61).

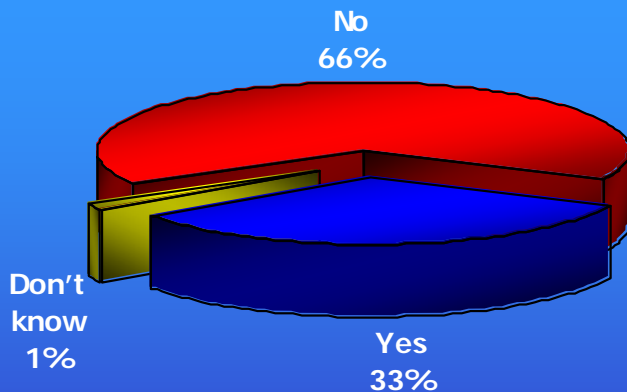
**Comment: 1/3 of those who participate are elected members of the council which shows a low ratio of participation of non-officials.**

# Have you ever attended a City Council meeting in your municipality?



Base: 1029

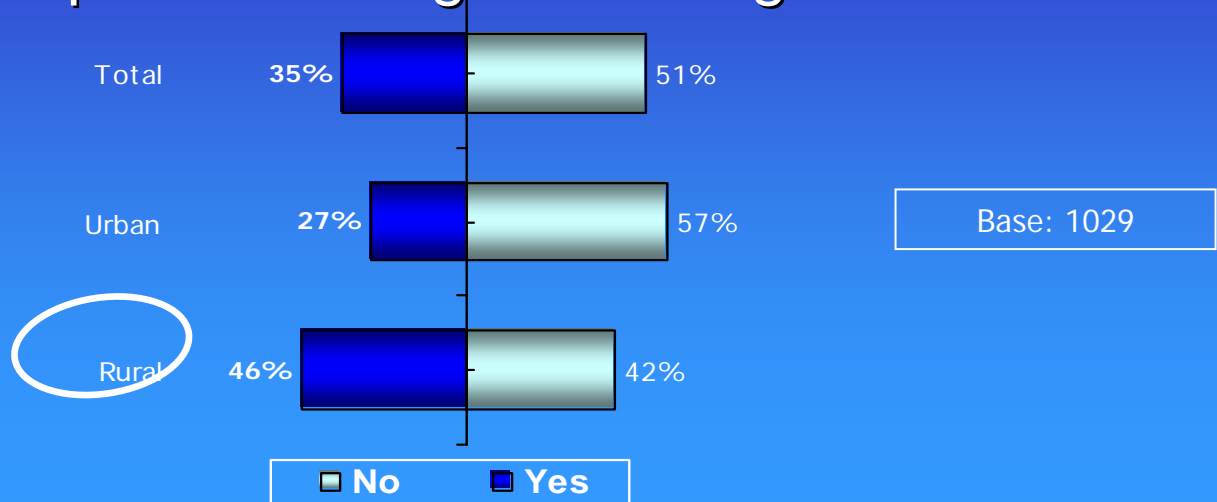
# Do you know anyone who has attended a City Council meeting in your municipality?



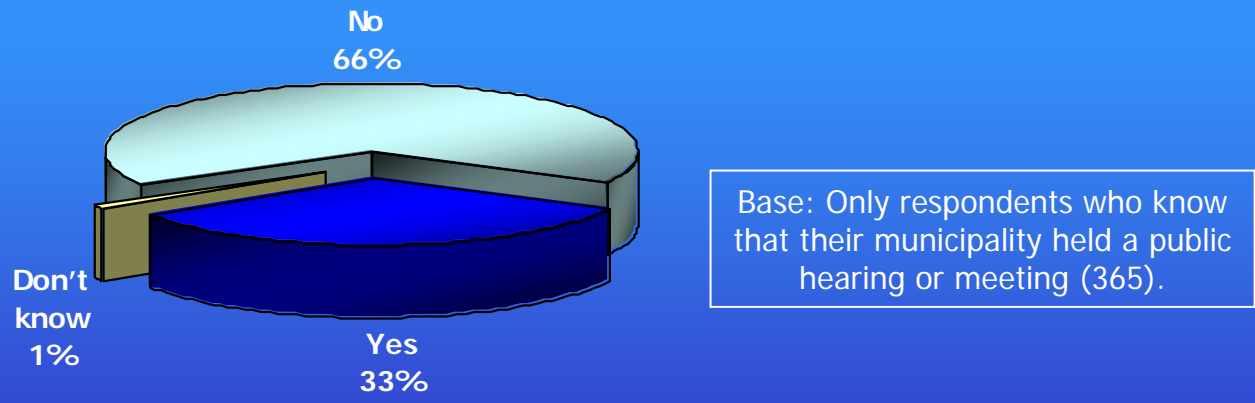
Base: Only respondents who have not attended a city council meeting in their municipality (932).

**Comment: Higher than expected awareness of and attendance at open City Council meetings, with higher participation in rural areas among higher educated people over the age of 40.**

# To your knowledge, has your municipality ever held a public hearing or meeting?

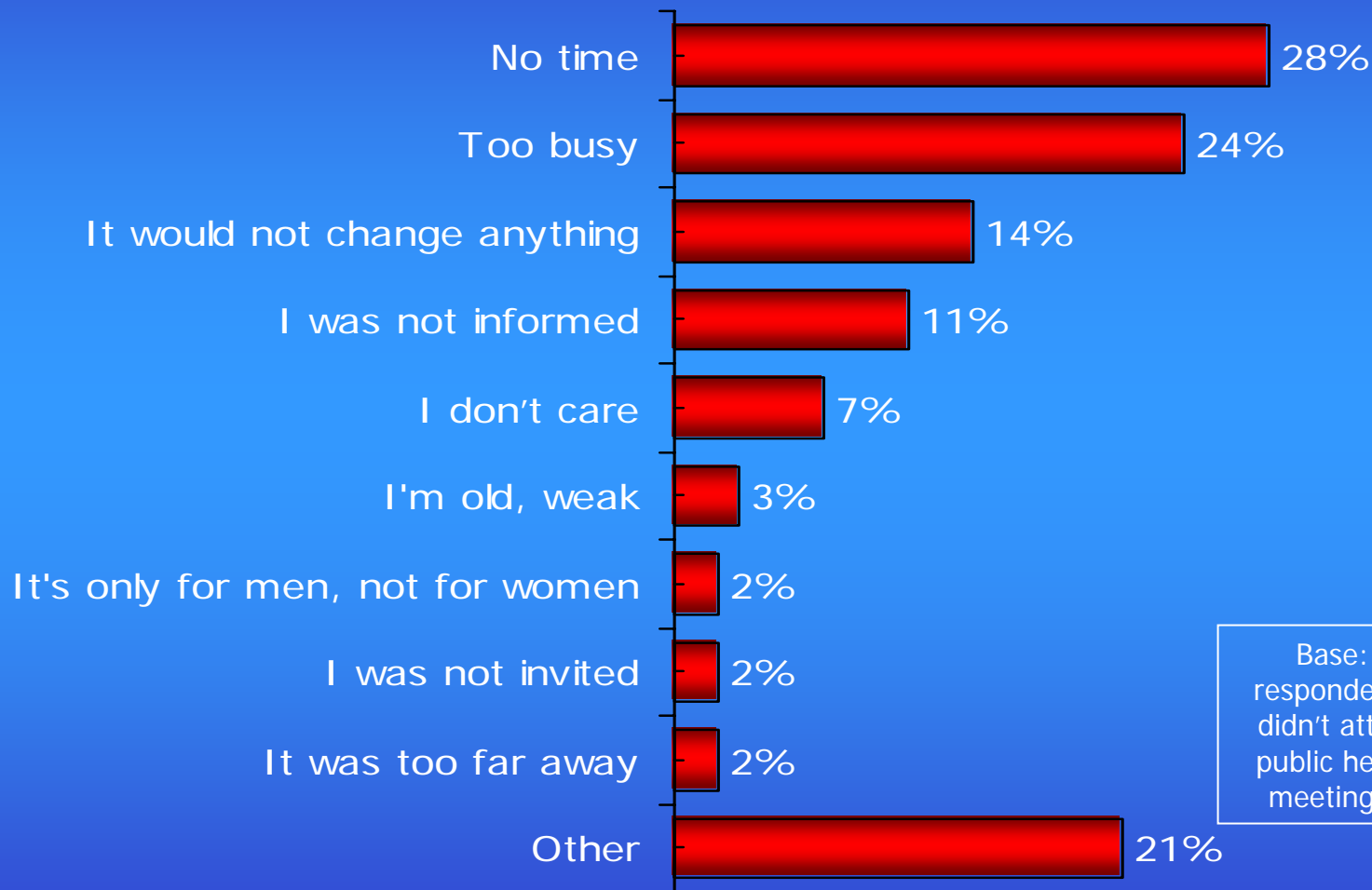


# Did you attend that public hearing or meeting?



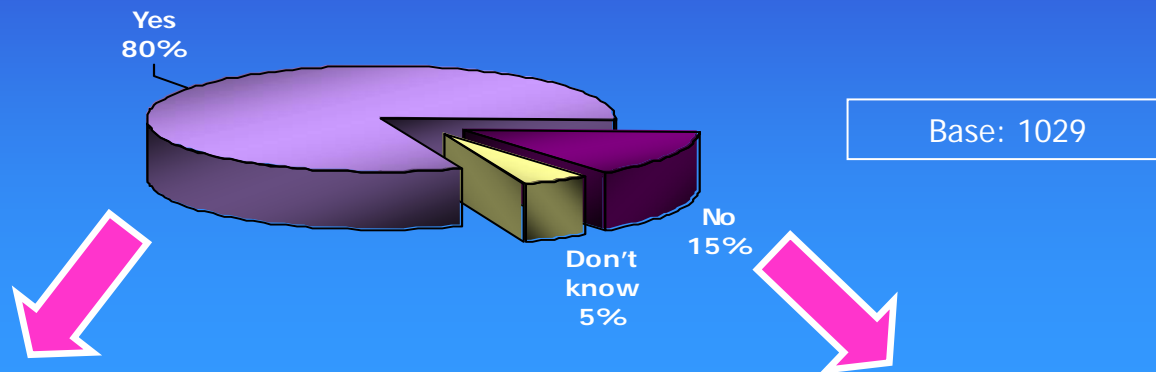
**Comment: 1/3 of citizens who are aware of municipal public hearings have attended them.**

# What was the reason that kept you from attending? (open ended)

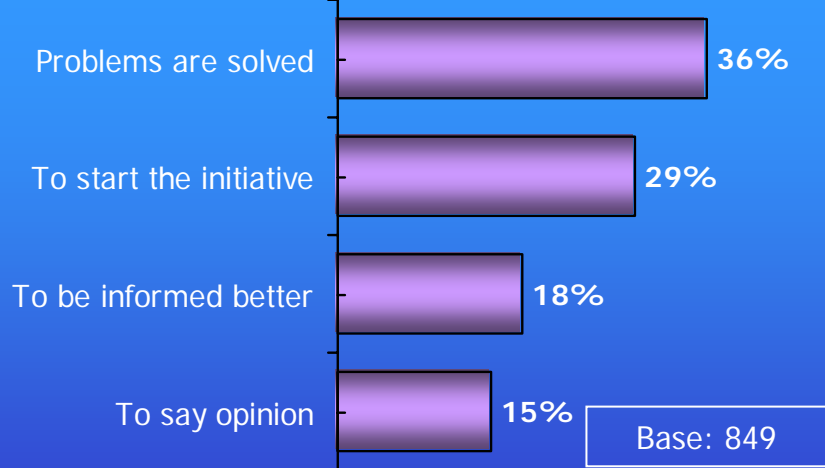


Comment: Excuses that respondents have mentioned.

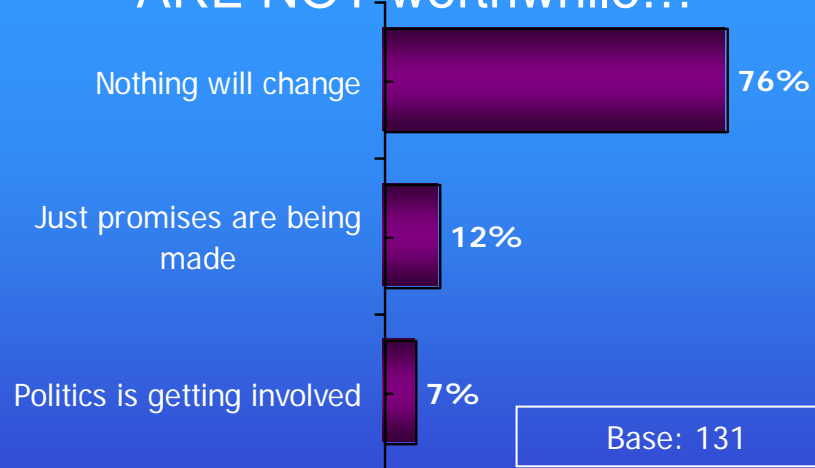
# Do you think the public hearings or meetings in your municipality are worthwhile?



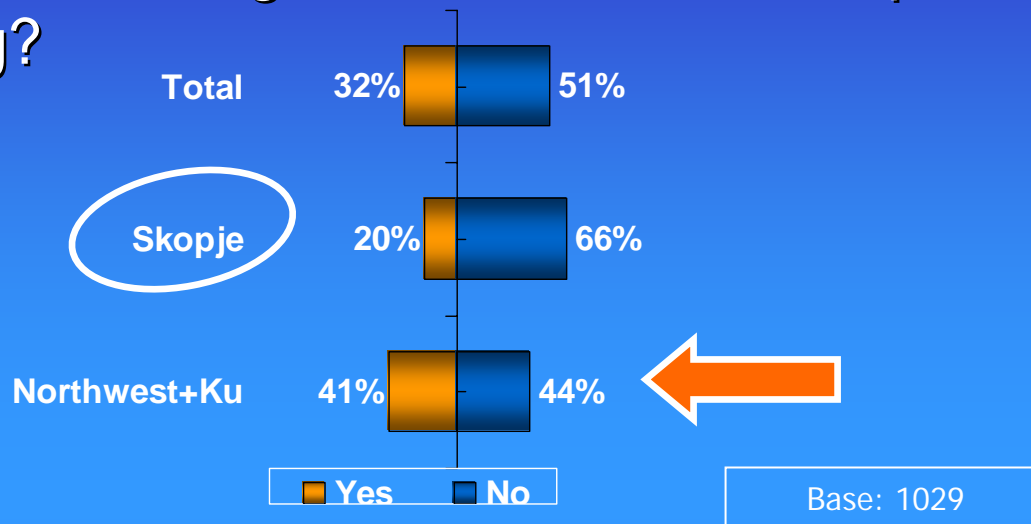
## Why do they think they ARE worthwhile...



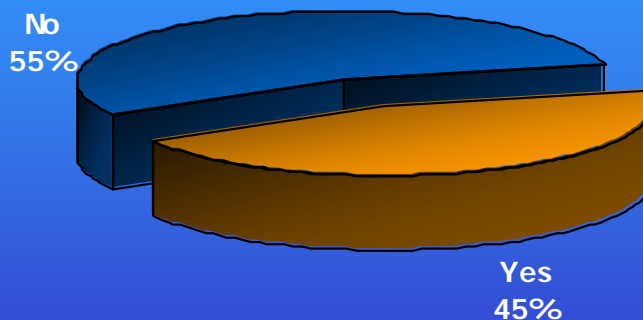
## Why do they think they ARE NOT worthwhile...



To your knowledge, has your neighborhood self government or village council ever held a public hearing or meeting?



Did you attend that public hearing or meeting?

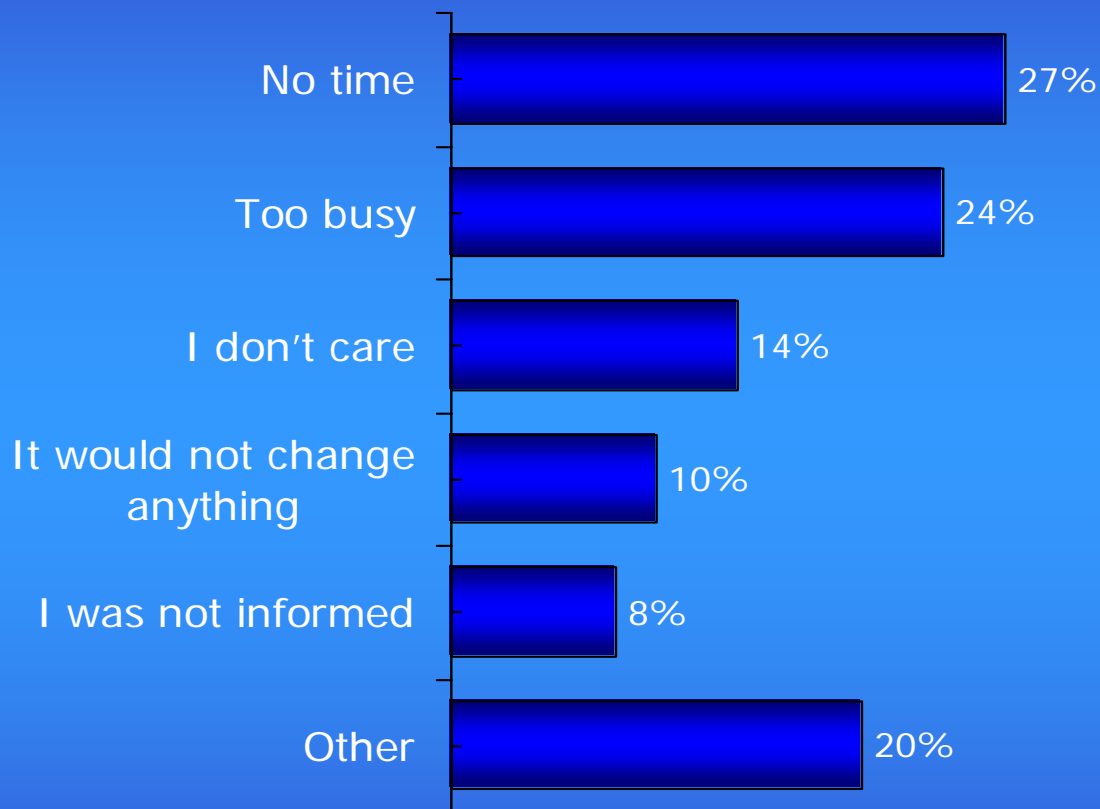


Base: Only respondents who mentioned that their neighborhood self government unit or village council has held a public hearing or meeting (324).

Comment: When people are aware of neighborhood meeting the attendance is higher than at municipal meeting of which they are aware.



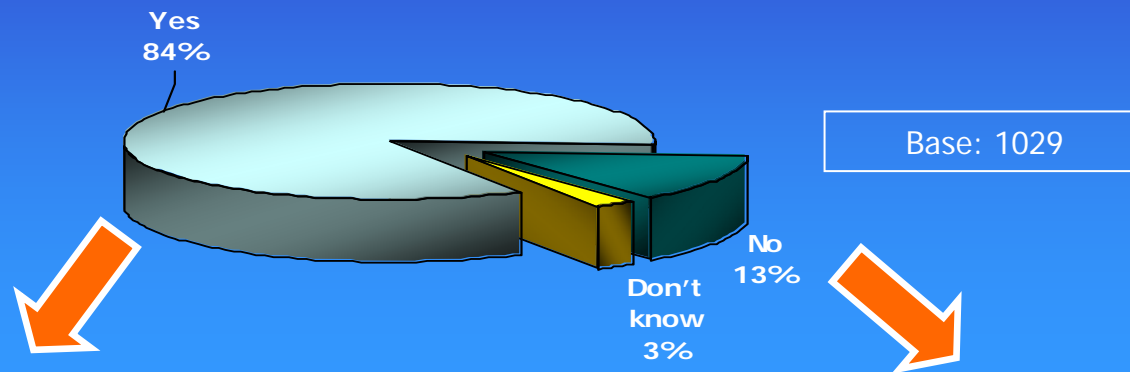
# What was the reason that kept you from attending?



Base: only respondents who have not attended the public hearing or meeting who knew that there was one (177).

Comment: More excuses...

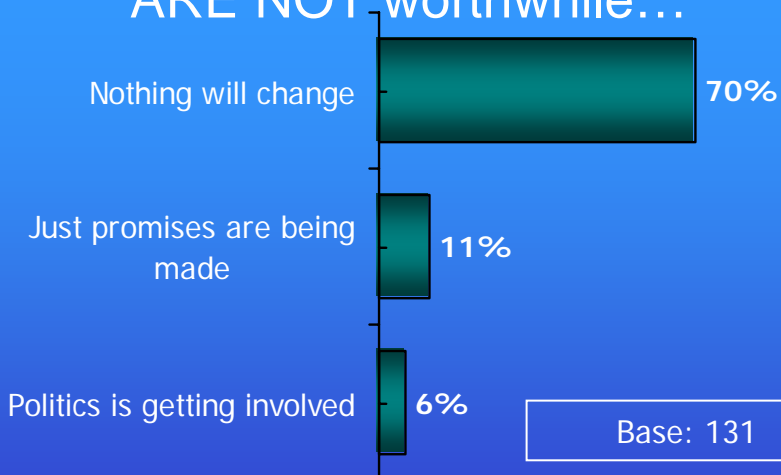
# Do you think the public hearings or meetings in your neighborhood are worthwhile?



## Why do they think they ARE worthwhile...

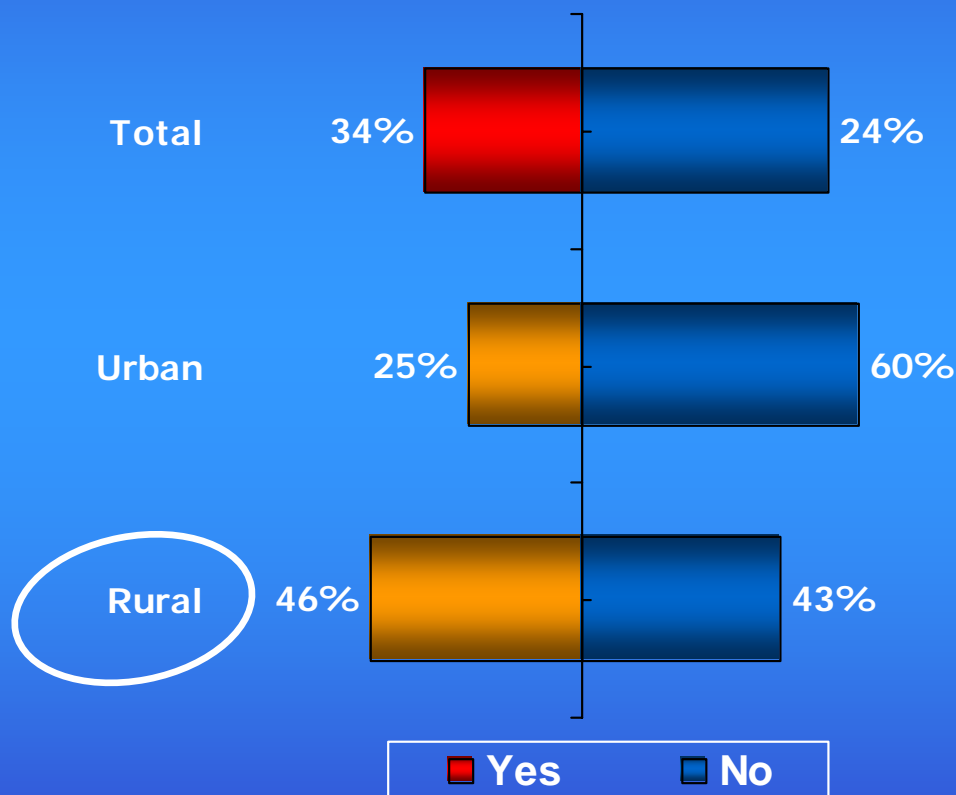


## Why do they think they ARE NOT worthwhile...



**Comment: This shows a link between the support of public meetings and the citizens' view of the principal role of neighborhood government as the problem solver.**

To your knowledge, have the citizens in your municipality or neighborhood ever conducted a citizen initiative?



Base: 1029

Comment:

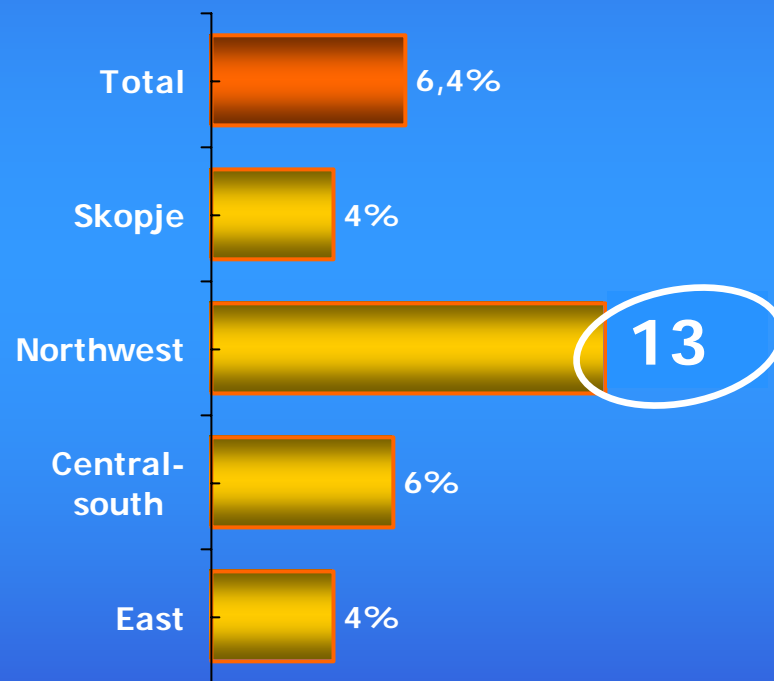
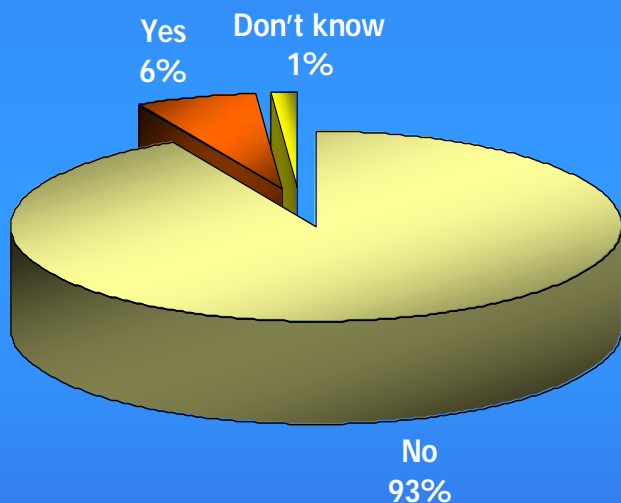
## On what subject have the citizens in your municipality or neighborhood conducted a citizen initiative?



Base: Only respondents who are informed that citizens in their municipality or neighborhood have conducted a citizen initiative (347).

Comment:

# Have you ever been involved in deciding how to spend donor's money in your municipality or your neighborhood?

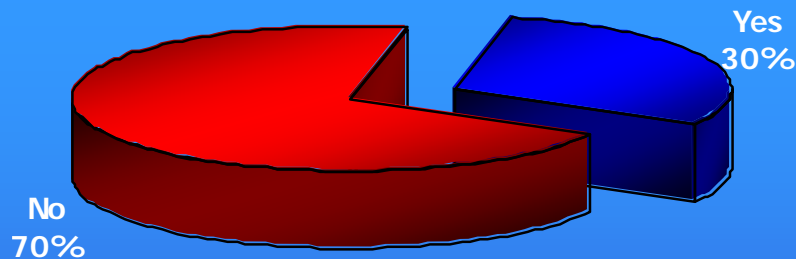


Base: 1029

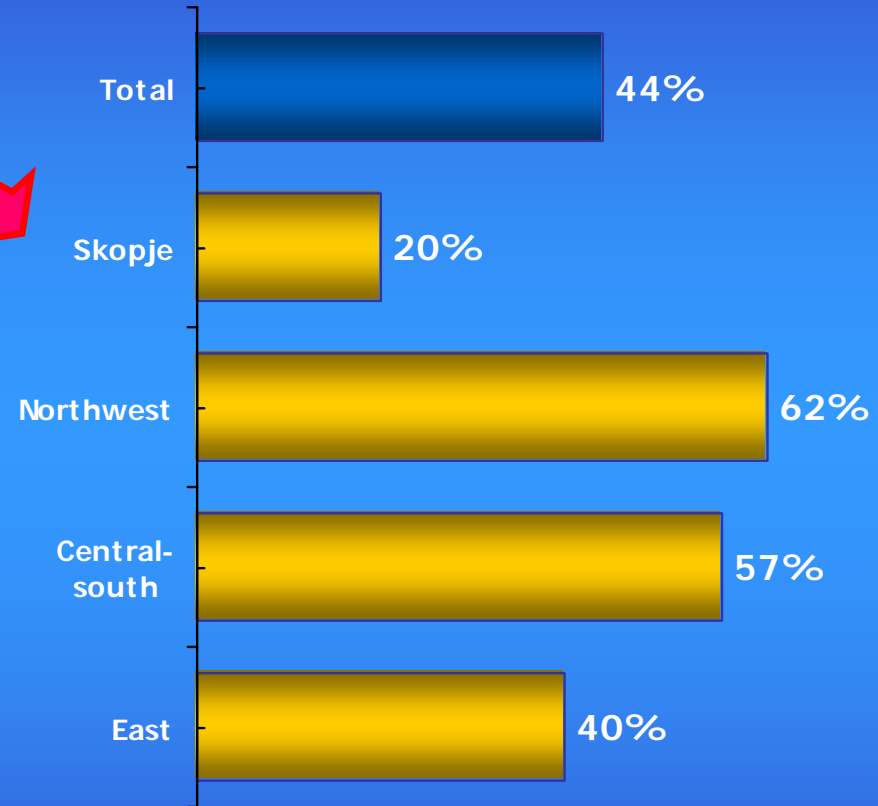
Comment: This correlates with a generally higher level of participation in the NW+Ku region, but the participation level may be higher due to a higher level of donor activity.

# Does your municipality have a Citizen Information Center?

Have you heard about Citizen Information Centers that provide information and documents to citizens?



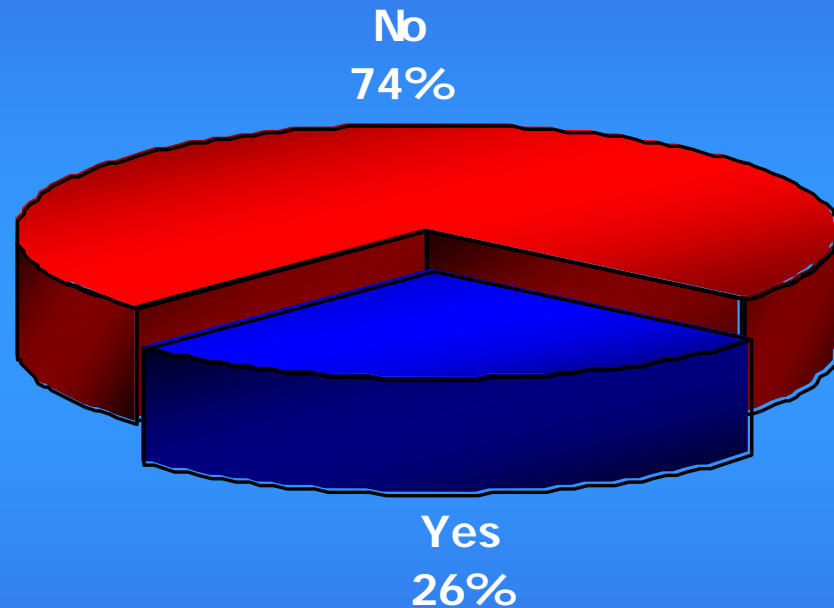
Base: 1029



Base: Only respondents who have heard of CIC (308).

Comment: 1/3 of awareness with divers regional distribution.

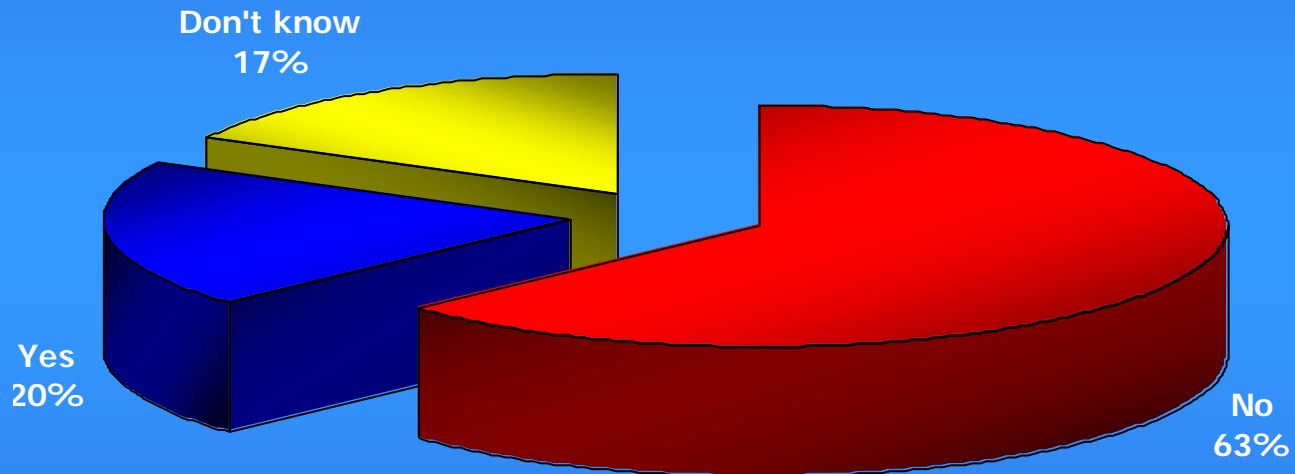
# Have you ever visited a Citizen Information Center?



Base: Only respondents who know that in their municipality exists citizen information center (134).

Comment: Only 3% of all respondents have visited a CIC.

# Can you name any organizations that are active in your municipality?

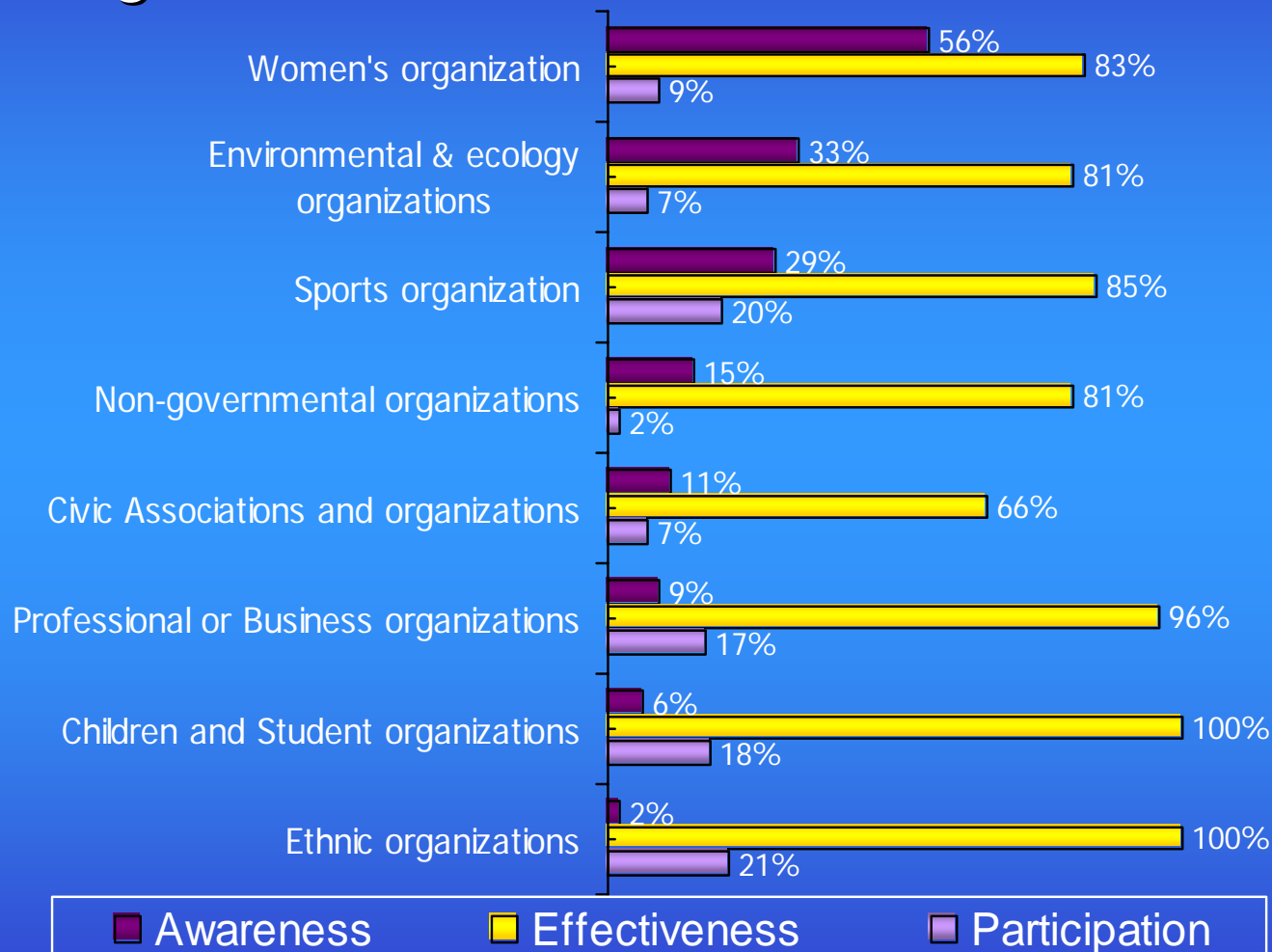


Base: 1029

Comment: Awareness of organizations is lower than awareness of public meeting, city council meetings or CICs.



# Awareness, effectiveness and participation in organizations



Base: 196

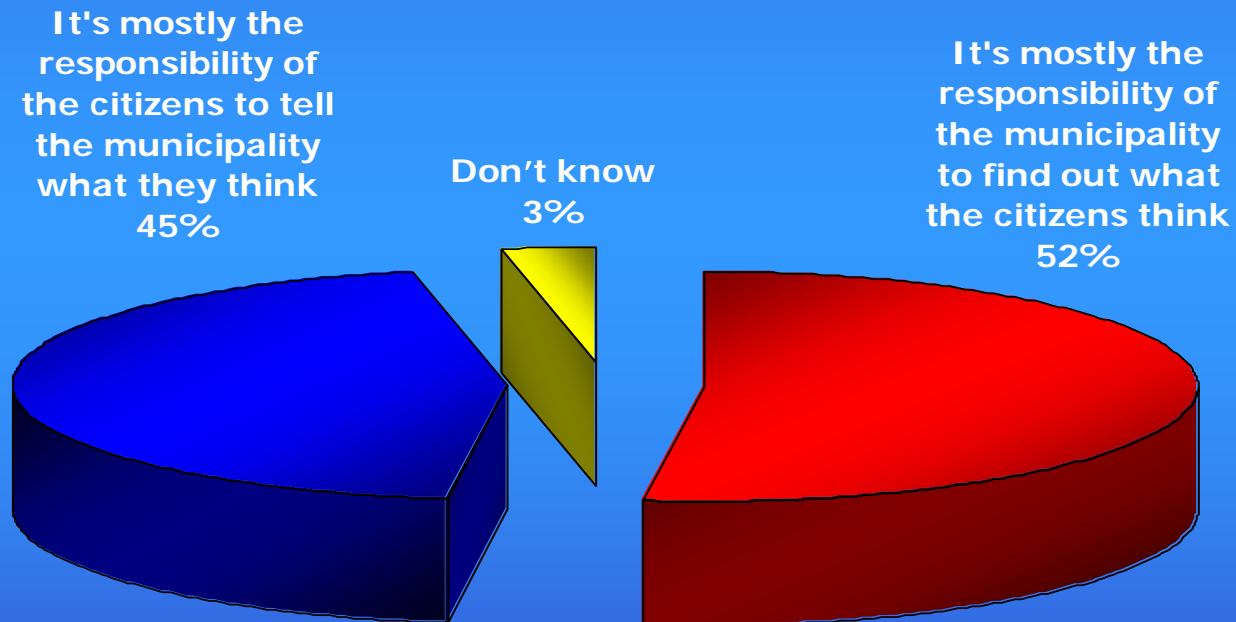
Comment: Women's' organizations mentioned consistently throughout the country; environmental organizations mentioned overwhelmingly in the east; sports organizations dominant in the NW



# POTENTIAL FOR PARTICIPATION

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Is it the responsibility of the citizens to tell the municipality what they think, or the responsibility of the municipality to find out what the citizens think?



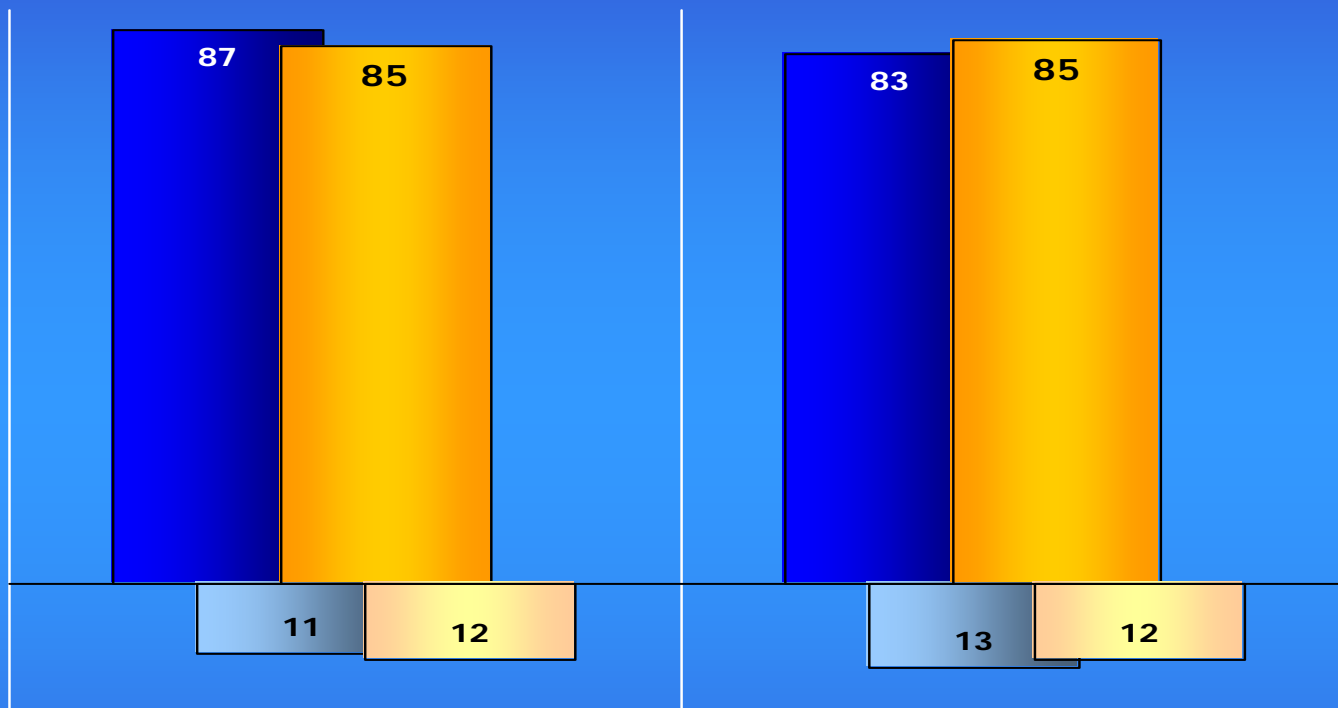
Base: 1029

**Comment:** Almost half of respondents are not passive and acknowledge some citizen responsibility; may indicate willingness to participate in meetings, to vote, to sign petitions, to seek out information, to take the initiative.

# Do you think citizens are...

Interested in what is going on in their...

Willing to participate in resolving problems in their...



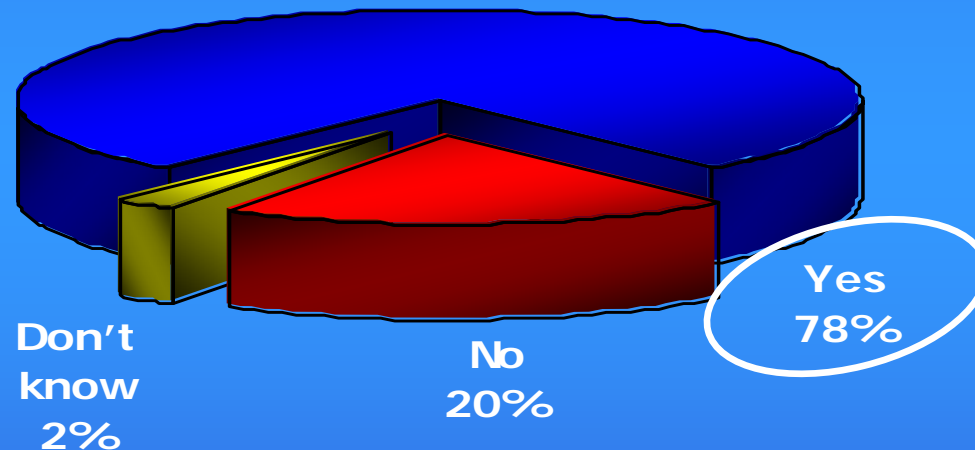
■ Municipality

■ Neighbourhood

Base: 1029

Comment: This shows a high level of optimism.

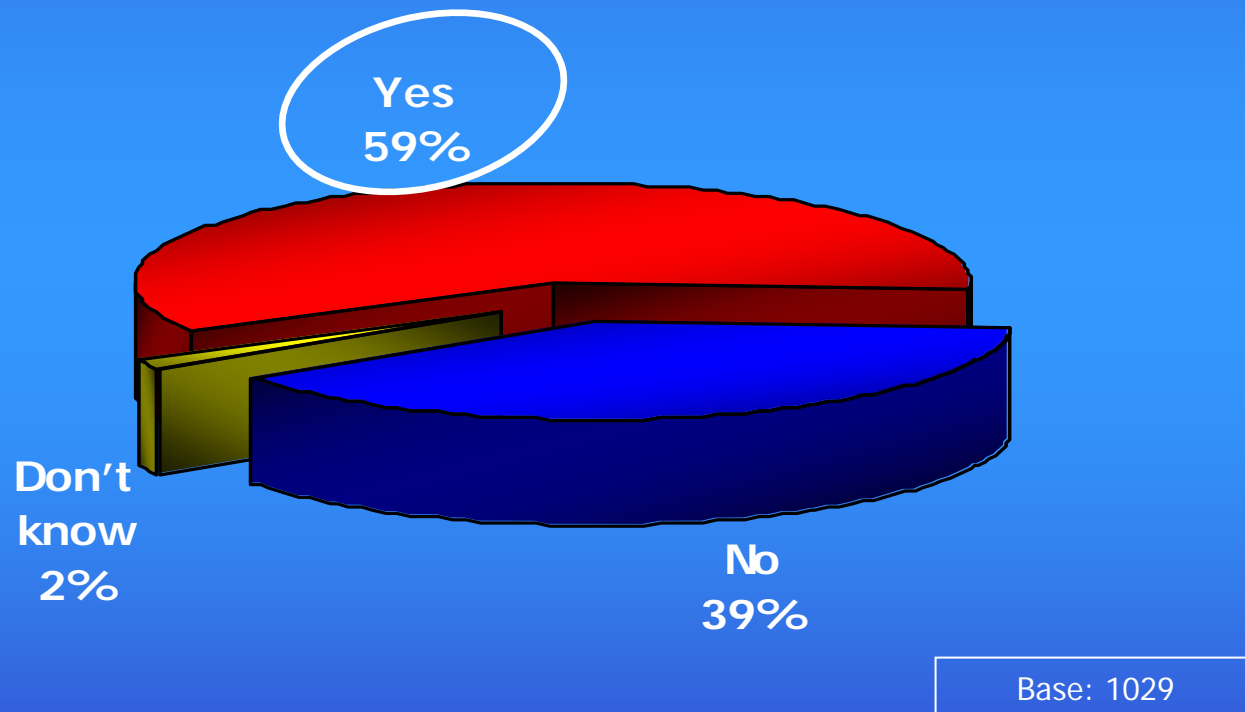
# Do you think citizens can influence changes in their municipality or neighborhood?



Base: 1029

Comment: And again optimism or remarkable wish for changes.

# Are you willing to be involved?



Comment: Almost 60% are willing to be involved in contrast to the current participation rate in NSGs of 11%.

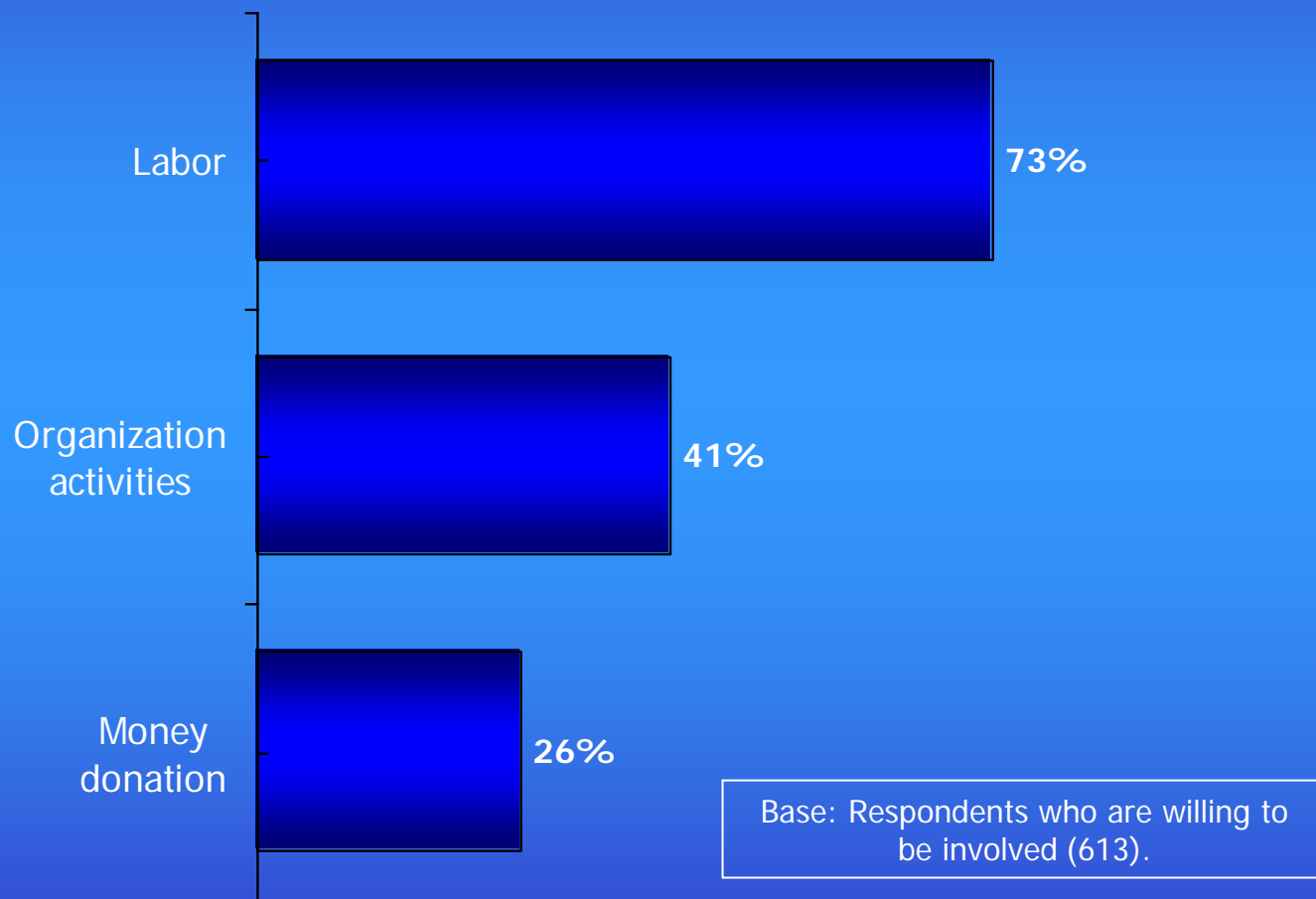
# In what areas are you willing to be involved?



Base: Respondents who are willing to be involved (613).

Comment: People are ready to be involve in various areas...

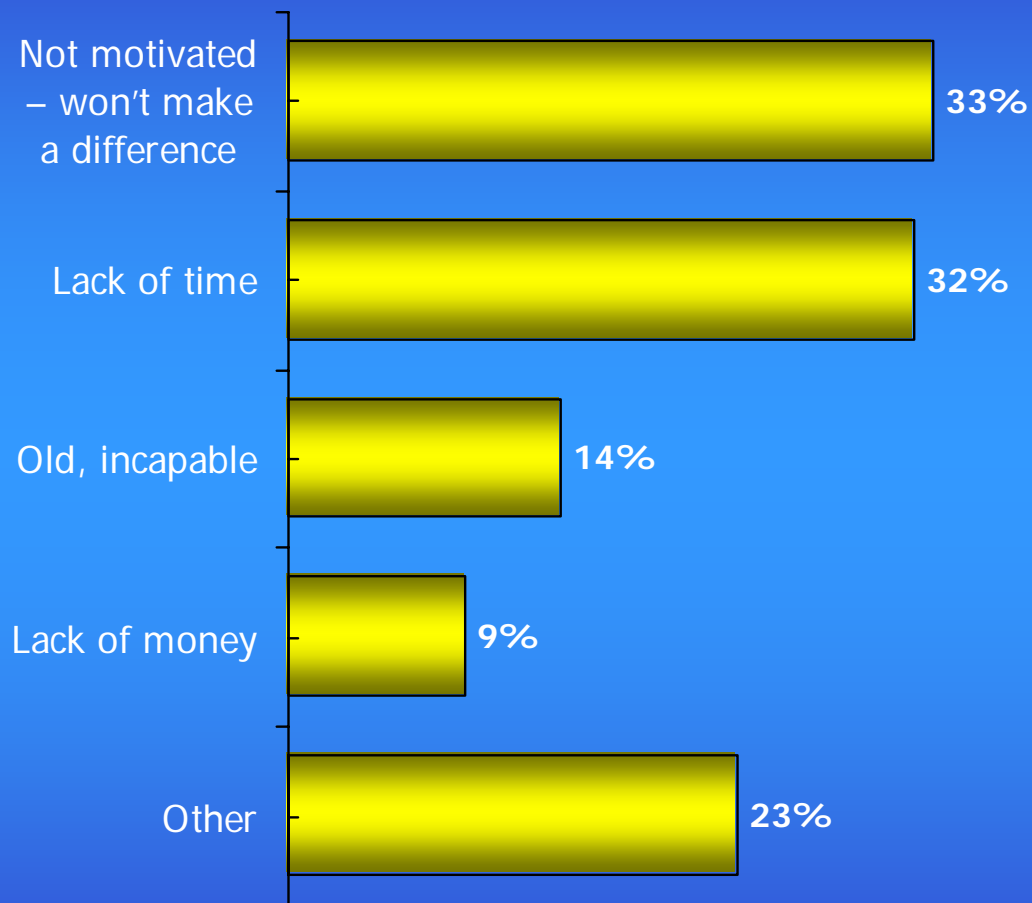
# How would you like to be involved?



Comment: ...mostly in labor and less so in contributing financially



## Why you are not willing to be involved?



Base: Respondents who are not willing to be involved (400).

**Comment: level of cynicism is low, less than 15%; including other, approximately 30%**

# Potential for Participation

- Approximately **one third of respondents are aware** of public meetings or hearings that have been held in their municipality or neighborhood, know someone who has attended a City Council meeting, or have heard of Citizen Information Centers.
- **Participation levels** at meetings or hearings, city council meetings, in neighborhood government, and in organizations is **less than 20%**.
- 78% think citizens can effect change, more than 80% think others are interested and willing to become involved, and 60% are willing to become involved themselves
- Huge gap between willingness to participate and actual participation. Let's look at two areas where the gap is not so large: rural areas, and the Northwest and Kumanovo region
- **Rural Areas:** Stronger sense of neighborhood and 72% **active neighborhood governments** vs. 48% in urban areas. Participation rate in neighborhood government is twice as high as in urban areas. Rate **confidence in neighborhood government** and in the president of the neighborhood council higher than in urban areas. Rate the **performance of neighborhood government** at a higher level. Higher level of trust in both neighborhood and municipal government to levy fees for improvements.

# Potential for Participation

- ❑ **The Northwest and Kumanovo** The percentage of respondents with neighborhood government is similar in the three regions outside the Skopje region. However, the Northwest and Kumanovo region has much **higher participation levels**, and **levels of trust** in both municipal and neighborhood government and in the president of neighborhood government. The region also has strong trust in neighborhood and municipal government to levy fees for improvements
- ❑ Participation levels at municipal hearings, at City Council meetings, and in deciding how to spend donor funds are the highest of all regions. Respondents had a much greater awareness of neighborhood meetings than those in other regions, but the rate of attendance wasn't much greater than that of those in other regions.
- ❑ Almost 50% of Northwest residents say their municipality considers citizen opinions when preparing a municipal strategy, in contrast to 30 to 40% in other regions.
- ❑ The gap between the neighborhood and the citizens and between the municipality and the government is much smaller in this region than in other regions. The gaps in rural areas are smaller than the gaps in urban areas.

# Conclusions

- ❑ There is a high correlation between active neighborhood government, higher levels of participation, higher trust in local government (both local and municipal), and greater willingness to pay fees for local improvements.
- ❑ Overwhelmingly, citizens want their neighborhood governments to solve problems. They are also willing in some areas to see some activities devolved to the neighborhood level
- ❑ Citizens are willing to be involved, think they can change things, but do not participate. They are not motivated to participate.
- ❑ Citizens should be motivated to participate in resolving their problems at the neighborhood level.
- ❑ This is what citizens are willing to do (be involved), and want (their problems solved). It would increase participation which correlates with higher levels of trust and confidence in local government.

# Recommendations

- Accelerate decentralization, advocate and support further devolution to the neighborhood level where feasible, and strengthen neighborhood government
  - Establish a devolution committee within ZELS to foster sharing of information and best practices
  - Establish a neighborhood government committee within ZELS to foster sharing of information and best practices, and to set up an organization for neighborhood presidents to share information and to receive training in leadership, organization, activities management, and problem solving.
  - It is important to institute these committees in ZELS as the new local government law allows neighborhood governments to implement activities and services only to the extent that they are devolved to them by the mayor.



# STRATEGIC MARKETING

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