



Secure

ENDURING VALUES, EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

STUDY OF MONTENEGRO'S YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATO

Enduring Values, Emerging Perspectives: Study of Montenegro's youth attitudes towards NATO

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CONTENTS

01

Introduction

02

Methodology

04

Awareness of NATO

08

Perception of NATO

13

Montenegro in NATO

14

NATO's Engagement

17

The Role of Women and Youth

20

Conclusions and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an overview of the key findings of the research titled "Enduring Values, Emerging Perspectives: Study of Montenegro's Youth Attitudes Towards NATO." The research was conducted by the NGO Secure in collaboration with the Faculty of Law at the University of Montenegro. The project team aimed to examine the attitudes of young citizens of Montenegro towards NATO, with a special focus on the perspectives of young women.

The report is based on a thoroughly conducted questionnaire and is divided into eight key chapters. The introduction provides basic information about the methods used and the data collected. The chapter "Awareness of NATO" analyzes youth's self-assessment of their knowledge and awareness of this military-political alliance, as well as patterns of such perception, while "Perception of NATO" summarizes key attitudes of youth regarding the Alliance and explores possible reasons for these attitudes. "Montenegro in NATO" offers an overview of youth's views on NATO concerning Montenegro and the obligations Montenegro has as a member of this alliance. "NATO's Engagement" provides an overview of young citizens' opinions on the further development of NATO and key issues of interest to the organization. The chapter "The Role of Women and Youth" pays special attention to the attitudes and participation of women and youth in NATO-related issues from a youth perspective. In the final chapter, "Conclusions and Recommendations," the main recommendations for further NATO actions in Montenegro, as well as for key stakeholders in Montenegro, are presented, the implementation of which could contribute to the reception of NATO among the Montenegrin youth.

In a time of global challenges, NATO, more than ever, represents a key pillar of preserving international stability and security. The role of NATO membership is not only significant for national security but also contributes to the development of Euro-Atlantic awareness and partnerships, which are crucial for regional stability. Increasing the involvement of women and youth in decision-making processes regarding NATO's activities is important for strengthening the democratic capacities of society and building sustainable peace, as well as for developing the idea of NATO as an organization based on values that form the foundation of the democratic order in Europe and beyond.

Youth, in particular, play a vital role in shaping the future of NATO and the security landscape of tomorrow. Their fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and digital fluency can enhance NATO's adaptability to emerging security threats and foster a deeper connection with future generations. Engaging young people in discussions and initiatives related to NATO helps ensure that the values of peace, stability, and security remain relevant and resonate across all layers of society. Through the active participation of all social actors, including a stronger focus on youth engagement, Montenegro can continue to contribute to the values that NATO upholds—peace, stability, and security—while fostering a new generation of leaders committed to maintaining these principles for years to come.

METHODOLOGY

The field research was conducted from May 19 to June 19, 2024, with a sample of 468 respondents. Data were collected using the CAPI method, and the sampling frame was based on the 2011 population census.

The study was also conducted in three stages, using a stratified random sample. The first stage was carried out through census circles. The second stage took place at the University of Montenegro, in collaboration with the Faculty of Law at UCG, while the third involved surveying a household member, selecting only one family member which belongs to the youth age group .

The results represent a snapshot of attitudes at a specific moment, specifically during the period from May to June 2024. The opinions expressed by the respondents may change depending on various factors, primarily geopolitical circumstances. This research could potentially serve as a form of extension of the annual studies conducted by NATO in all member countries, due to its specific youth focus, but could also evolve into a longitudinal study that continuously tracks the opinions and attitudes of Montenegro's youth regarding NATO and other actors mentioned in the research.

The project team conducted logical checks on each set of responses to ensure data accuracy. Additionally, for adequate data analysis, the project team made minor corrections regarding typographical errors in respondents' answers to open-ended questions during the initial data processing phase.

METHODOLOGY

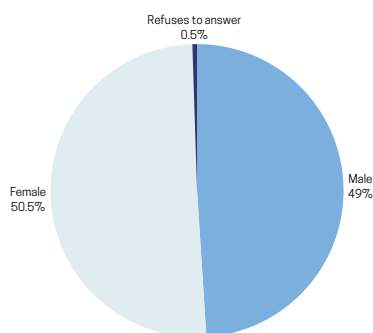
The gender distribution was balanced, with females making up 50.5% and males 49%. A small percentage (0.5%) refused to answer.

When it comes to the highest completed level of education, a significant portion has completed high school (38.7%), while 34.6% hold a bachelor's degree. A smaller group has specialized degrees (8.3%), master's degrees (13.7%), and doctoral degrees (1.7%). Around 1.6% chose not to answer.

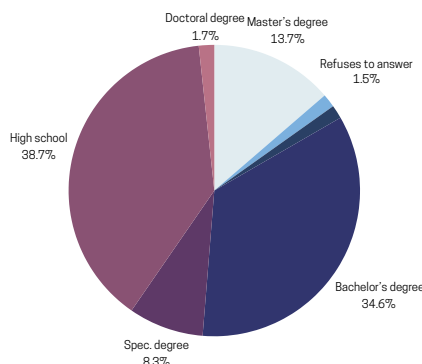
The majority of respondents are students (55.3%), followed by employed individuals (36.3%). Entrepreneurs make up 3.4%, while the unemployed represent 3.6%.

Most respondents currently reside in the central region (71.6%), with smaller proportions residing in the southern (15.2%) and northern regions (13.2%). The vast majority (90.1%) currently live in urban areas, while 8.9% reside in rural areas. A small percentage (1%) refused to answer.

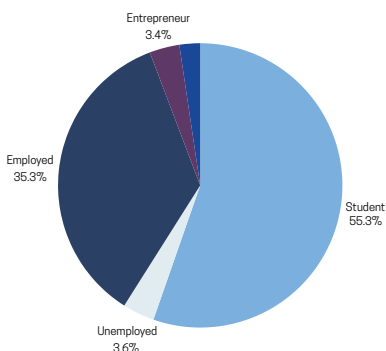
Gender Structure



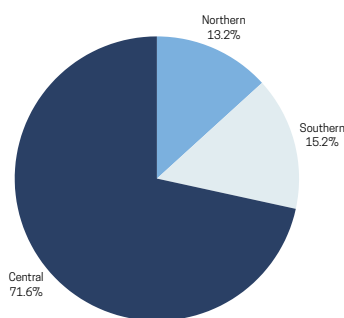
Level of Education



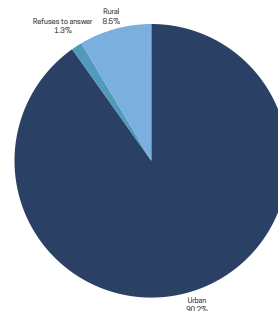
Employment Status



Region



Type of Residence

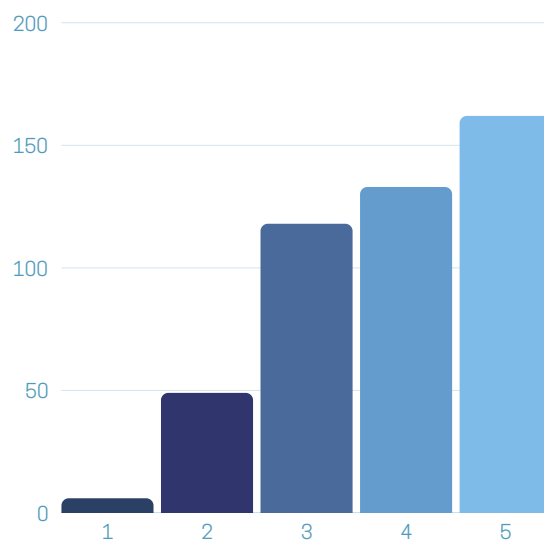


AWARENESS OF NATO

Starting from the hypothesis that the level and source of information about NATO play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards the Alliance, we examined the perception of young people regarding their own level of awareness, the reasons for a lower level of information, and the primary sources of information used by respondents to learn about NATO, with a special focus on online portals, which are the main source of information for the majority of citizens in Montenegro.

How informed do you consider yourself about NATO?

1 - completely uninformed; 5 - completely informed



3.83

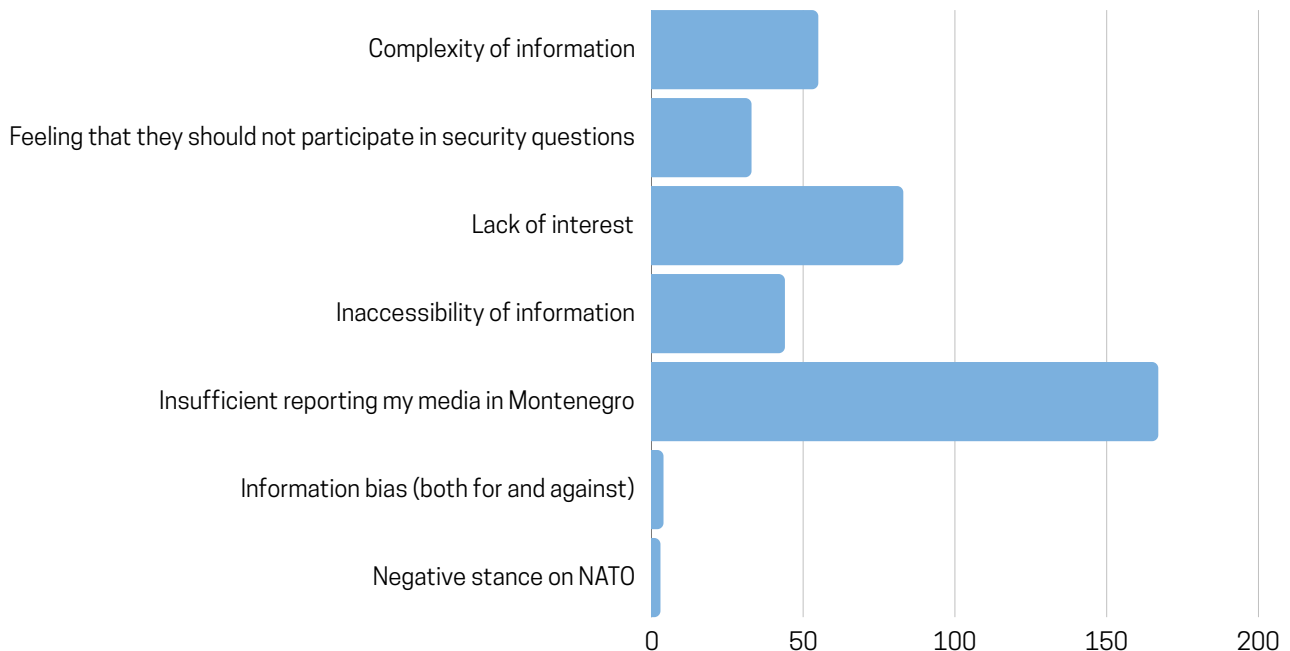
Average Level of Awareness of Respondents about NATO
(1 - completely uninformed; 5 - completely informed)

Young people of Montenegro believe they are fairly informed about NATO.

Additionally, young men believe they are significantly more informed about the Alliance (4.21) than women do (3.82). This could potentially be the consequence of gender stereotypes relating to security and international relations and the lack of representation of women in the security field in Montenegro.

AWARENESS OF NATO

If you selected less than 5 in the previous question, why do you not seek more information?



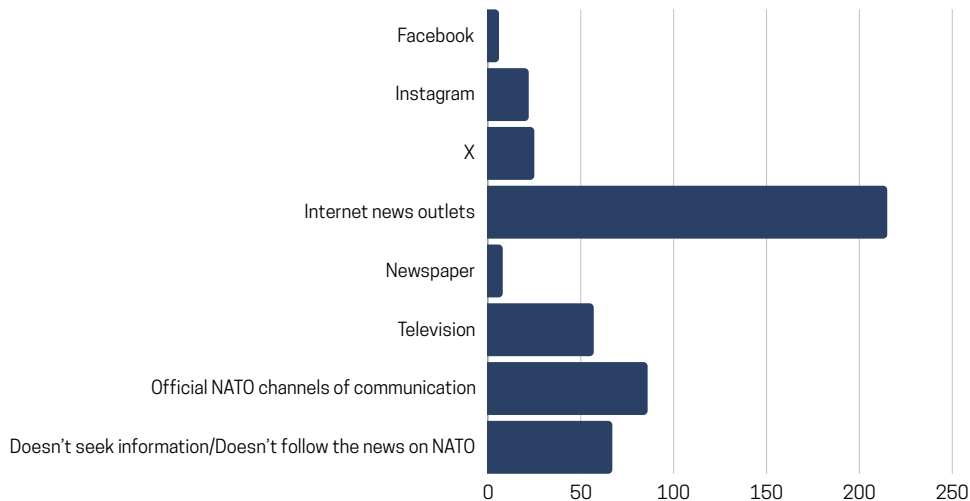
Young people of Montenegro most frequently cite insufficient media coverage in the country about NATO and its activities as the reason for their lower level of awareness. Following that, the most commonly mentioned reasons are a lack of interest in the topic, the complexity of the information available in the public domain, and a feeling that they should not participate in security issues. Some respondents emphasized that information on the topic is biased, given the ideological divisions associated with it, whether in a very negative or very positive light towards the NATO alliance. Some respondents indicate a negative attitude as a reason for their lack of awareness, but among those who are not proponents of NATO, a higher proportion state that they "seek information in order to argue their opinion."

Young respondents emphasize that information about NATO is inaccessible to them, that the media do not provide sufficient coverage on the subject, and that they are not interested in this topic. These three components often occur in combination, as respondents could select multiple reasons, indicating that **media reporting on NATO in an accessible and straightforward manner could potentially increase young people's interest in this subject.**

Women are more than 50% more likely than male respondents to state that they believe they should not participate in security issues. This feeling can likely be linked to the division of roles in society and the perception of security, the military, and politics as "male" professions.

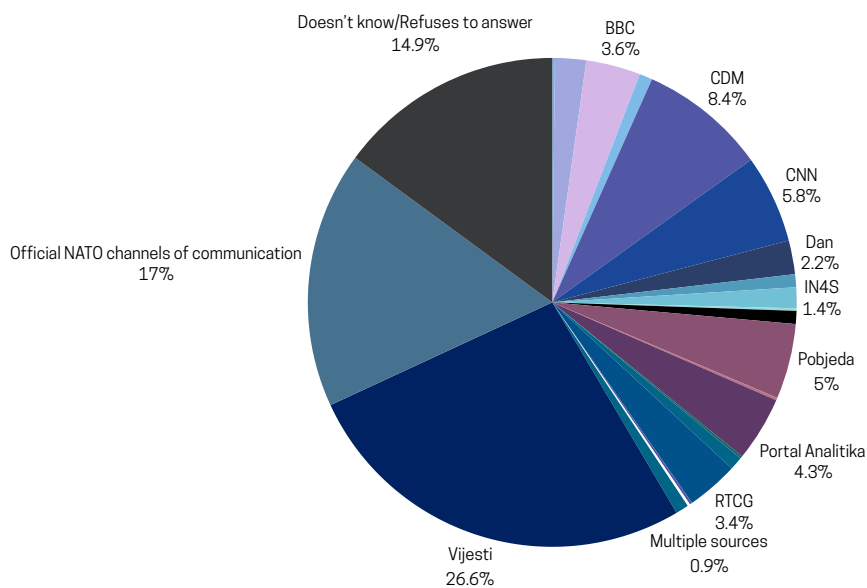
AWARENESS OF NATO

When it comes to NATO, which types of media do you use most for obtaining information?



Findings such as the unusually low percentage of awareness through social media, alongside the dominant sources of information being television, online portals, and official NATO channels, further emphasize the need for careful media reporting on this topic. The relatively high level of awareness through foreign portals like CNN and BBC suggests that respondents, in the absence of quality and frequent information in their own language, turn to English-language sources for information about NATO. However, most respondents are unable to do so due to insufficient foreign language skills, which leaves them deprived of timely and quality information.

What is your main source of online news regarding NATO?



AWARENESS OF NATO

We also analyzed young people's attitudes towards NATO in relation to the online portals through which they obtain information, as this category has the most diverse set of information sources.

In public discourse, Montenegrin portals are often labeled with terms like "pro-Montenegrin," "pro-Serbian," and "neutral," based on the side they express positive attitudes towards in the societal divide stemming from the two most numerous ethnic identities.

The findings indicate that 100% of citizens who obtain information from pro-Serbian portals hold an extremely unfavorable opinion of NATO, while citizens who access information through pro-Montenegrin portals have far more favorable views, with the ones obtaining information through neutral portals have a neutral, slightly favorable stance on NATO.

Attitude towards NATO on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents the most favorable opinion,

of citizens who obtain information through

pro-Montenegrin sources

3.82

pro-Serbian sources

1

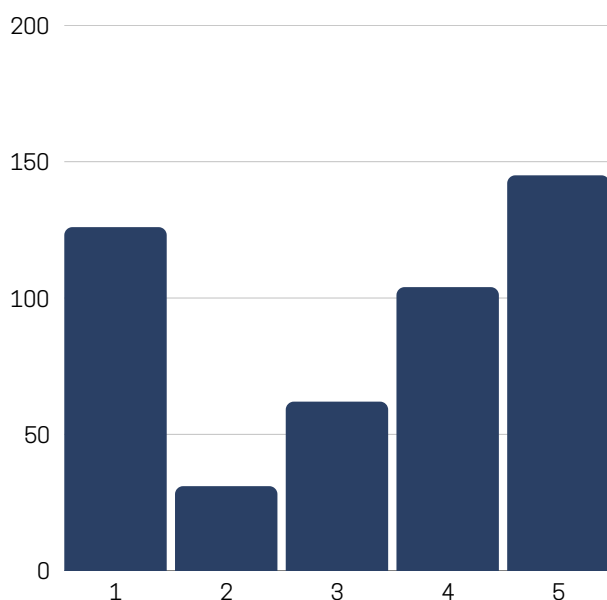
neutral sources

3.26

PERCEPTION OF NATO

ATTITUDE OF YOUTH TOWARDS NATO

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents the most favorable opinion, what is your attitude towards NATO?



3.24

average favorability of youth of Montenegro towards NATO

(1 - very unfavorable; 5 - very favorable attitude)

Respondents have a slightly favorable attitude towards NATO. Additionally, the median suggests that the central tendency of respondents' answers is generally positive, indicating that at least half of the respondents hold an overall favorable view of NATO.

84.8%

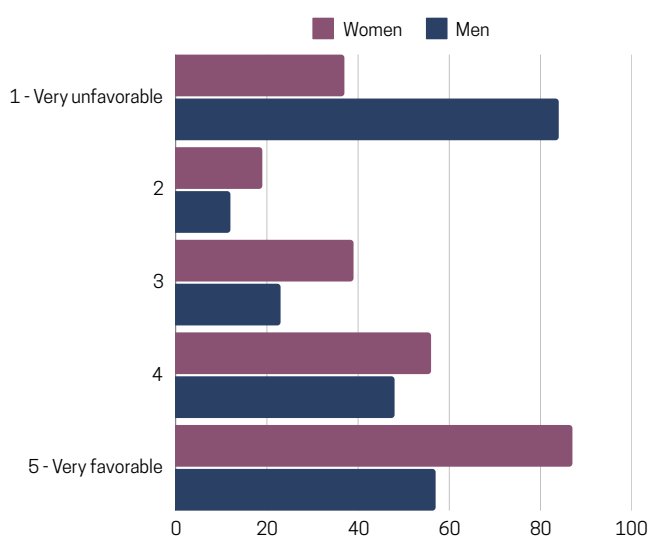
of the young people who support Montenegro's membership in NATO have a favorable or very favorable attitude towards this organization.

PERCEPTION OF NATO

The average rating of attitudes towards NATO on a scale of 1 to 5 for all respondents is 3.24, indicating a very polarized opinion, with a slightly positive attitude towards membership.

Interestingly, there is a difference between genders— young women, on average, give a rating of 3.57, indicating greater support for NATO among them, while men give a significantly lower average rating of 3.06, suggesting that young men are, on average, somewhat less favorable towards membership compared to women. These differences may be a result of varying perceptions of security, stability, or political priorities between genders and radicalization.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents the most favorable opinion, how would you rate your stance towards NATO?



3.24 Average rating on a scale from 1 to 5 (all respondents)

3.57 Average rating on a scale from 1 to 5 (women)

3.06 Average rating on a scale from 1 to 5 (men)

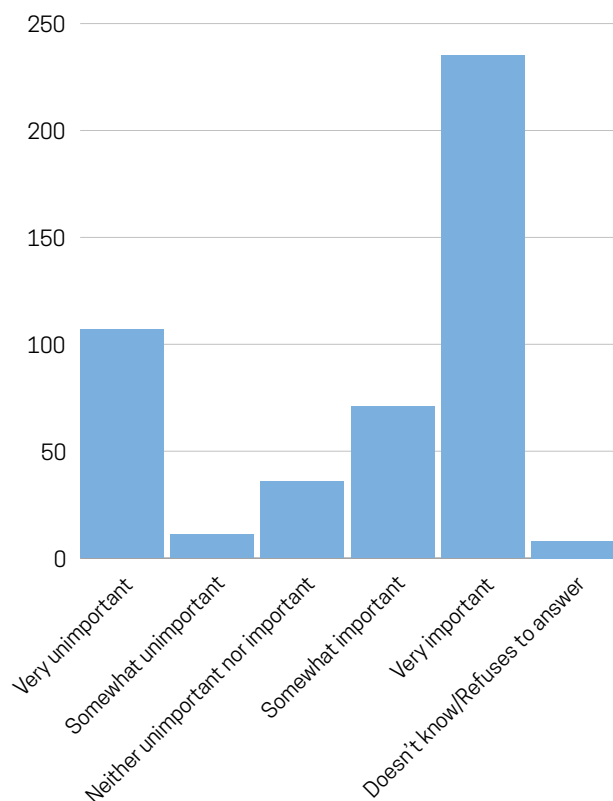
When it comes to other structural aspects, we find a very high level of **correlation between support for NATO and the young people's religious affiliation** (0.794), as well as between support for NATO **and nationality** (0.762). The correlation between the importance of NATO for Montenegro and all demographic characteristics (gender, age, national and religious affiliation of respondents, as well as level of education and employment status) is significant.

PERCEPTION OF NATO

When asked about the importance of NATO for Montenegro, 65.4% of respondents stated that they believe membership in NATO is important for the country. This result indicates significant support among young people for Montenegro's continued membership in this military-political organization. Such a high percentage of support can be linked to the perception of NATO as a guarantor of security, stability, and protection against potential threats, both regionally and globally. Additionally, membership in NATO may be seen as a confirmation of Montenegro's international position, its European path, and its alignment with Western structures.

However, it is important to note that around 35% of young people remain skeptical or do not attribute much importance to NATO membership. This group may hold different views due to historical, political, or ideological reasons. These data open up the space for further discussion and highlight the need to inform the youth about the role and significance of NATO to better understand the reasons behind such attitudes and potentially further reduce existing doubts among citizens regarding NATO's operations and mission.

How important do you think NATO is for the security of Montenegro?



65.4%

**of young citizens
believe that
membership in NATO is
important for
Montenegro**

PERCEPTION OF NATO

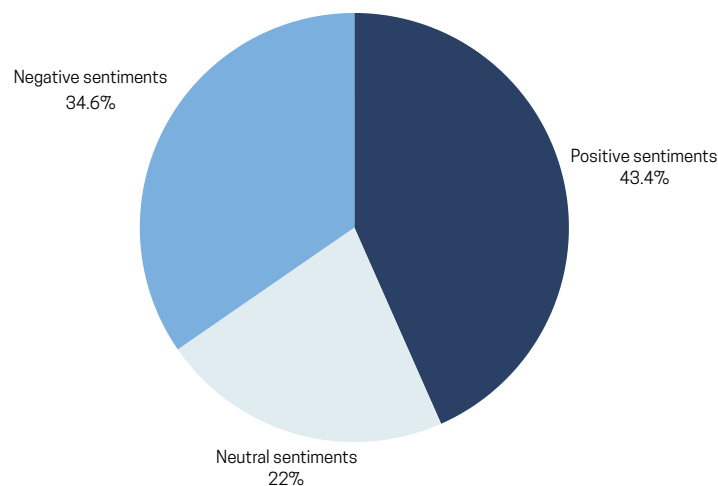
Respondents were asked to share their first association with NATO. These associations were recoded into negative, positive, and neutral categories to measure the level of positive, negative, and neutral sentiments toward the Alliance. The majority of associations were positive (43.4%), while 34.6% were negative, and only 22% were neutral. It was noted that most negative terms were associated with NATO's intervention in the former Yugoslavia in 1999, while positive terms primarily referred to the protection and security NATO provides (generally, but also against Serbia and Russia), as well as the alliances and transatlantic relations NATO represents. Additionally, most terms were related to the military aspect of NATO's activities, with a smaller portion related to the political and diplomatic component.

What Young People Associate with NATO

Map:

Positive associations
 Negative associations
 Neutral associations

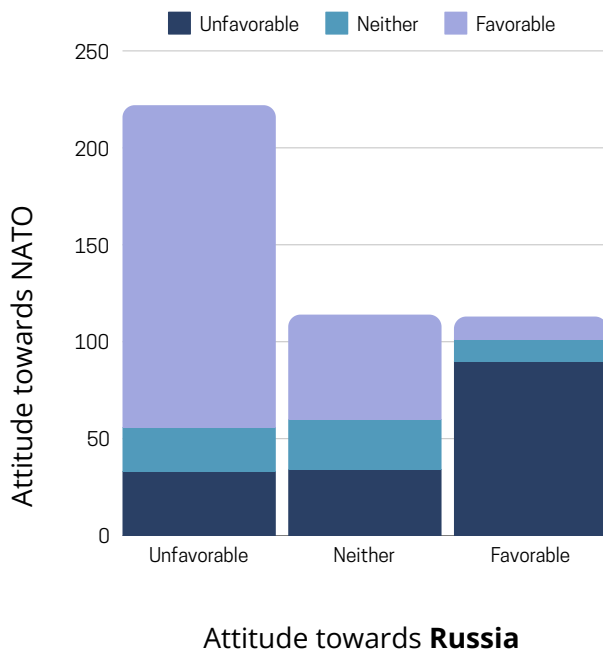
**The associations are visually represented in a model proportionally to their prevalence in the responses.*



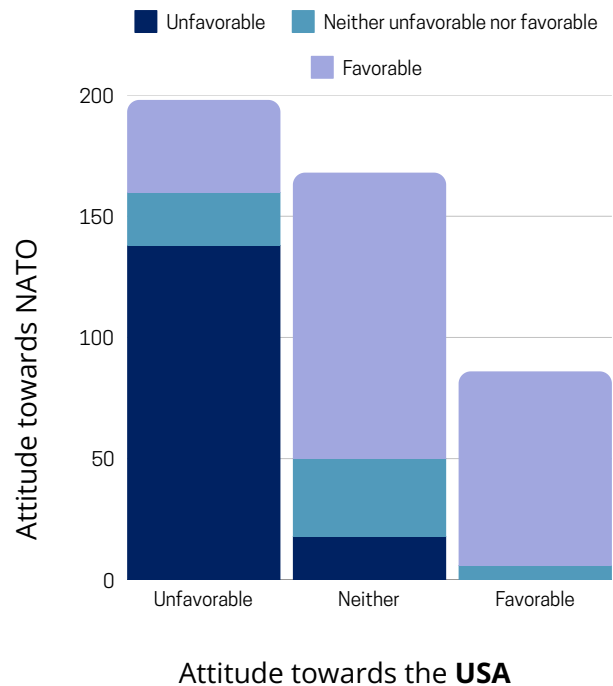
PERCEPTION OF NATO

It is particularly important to note the high correlation (Phi coefficient = 0.727) between attitudes towards NATO and attitudes towards Russia, and a similar correlation of 0.739 with the USA. As affection for Russia increases, young people's opinions on NATO become more negative, and conversely, this is true for the USA. Additionally, a high correlation exists between a positive opinion of NATO and the belief that Montenegro should continue to support Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression (0.932).

Attitude towards **Russia** x Attitude towards NATO



Attitude towards **the USA** x Attitude towards NATO



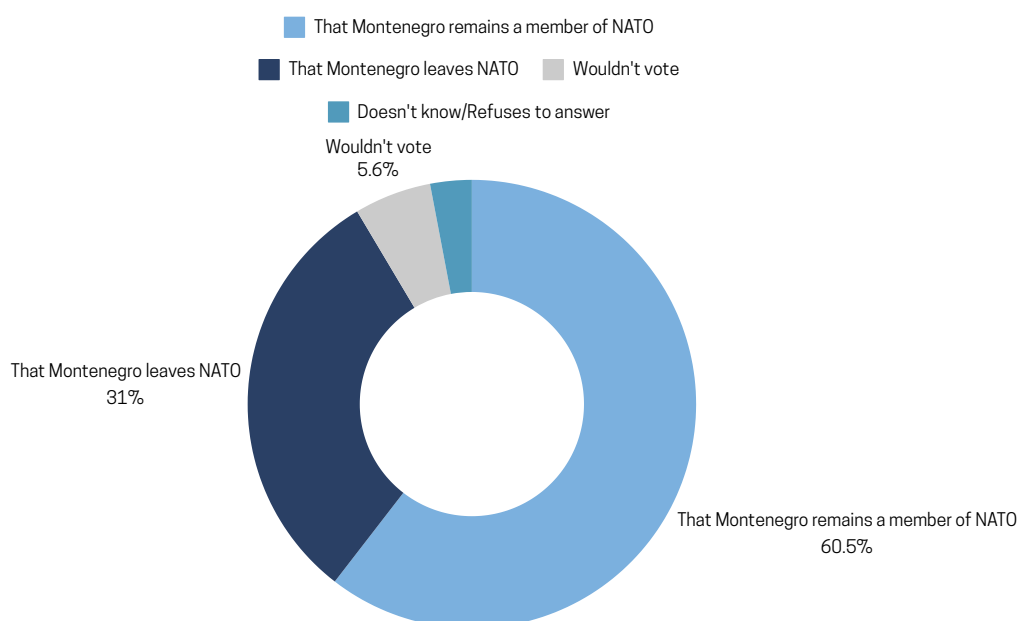
The data in the graphs above indicate that **the more favorable the opinion of Russia, the more unfavorable the opinion of NATO, while the connection between a negative attitude towards Russia and a positive attitude towards NATO is even stronger.**

When it comes to the United States, a highly negative opinion of this country negatively impacts the attitude towards NATO, while **an affirmative view of the U.S. almost always correlates with a very affirmative stance towards NATO.**

MONTENEGRO IN NATO

The results show that 60.5% of respondents would vote for Montenegro to remain in NATO, and the referendum would result in a 66.1% which is very close to the official NATO survey this year, according to which 67% of all citizens would support membership in a referendum. This indicates stable support for NATO among young citizens. However, this support is lower when compared to their seniors, based on NATO and CGO data. This is worrying, since young people have grown up in an Euro-Atlantic Montenegro, but they still did not develop a high support for the Alliance. Furthermore, the number of young people who would abstain from voting is quite large, showing a lack of interest and perception of low importance of this question.

If you could vote for or against Montenegro's membership in NATO, would you vote...



60.5% of young citizens would vote for Montenegro to remain in NATO

If we exclude those who don't know how they would vote or who refused to answer:

66.1% of young citizens would vote for Montenegro to remain in NATO

In the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is very important to note that there is a significant degree of correlation between a positive attitude towards Russia and the belief that Montenegro should leave NATO, and vice versa.

MONTENEGRO IN NATO

43.4% of young people in Montenegro believe that, in the event of an attack, the country should defend another NATO member, reflecting a relatively low level of trust in the collective defense obligations arising from NATO membership compared to support for membership itself. Only 25% of young citizens think that Montenegro should defend a country that is not a NATO member but has close ties with it. These results indicate that young citizens place greater importance on formal obligations to NATO allies while being more cautious regarding countries outside the alliance, even if they have close diplomatic or economic relations with Montenegro, also showing pacifist tendencies.

43.4%

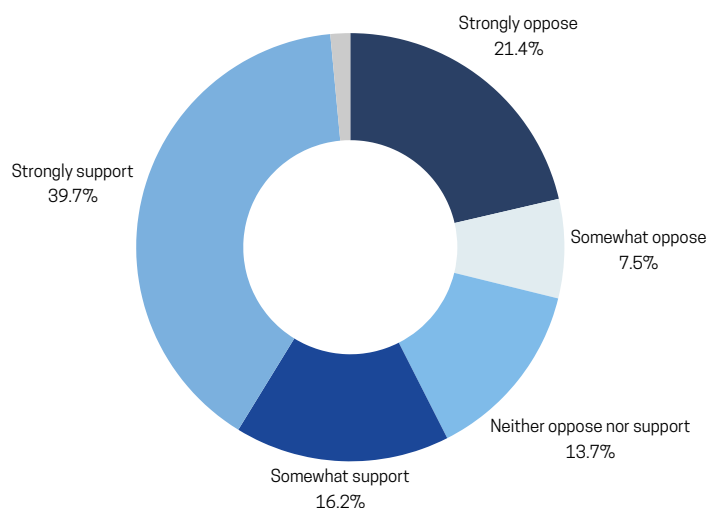
of young people believe that, in the event of an attack, Montenegro should defend another NATO member.

25%

of young people believe that, in the event of an attack, Montenegro should defend a country that is not a NATO member but has close ties with it.

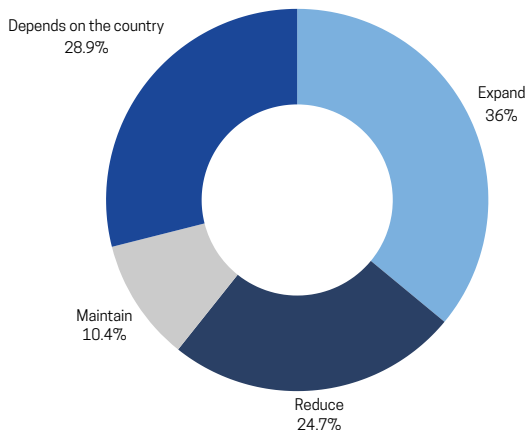
There is also strong support for providing assistance to Ukraine in light of the Russian invasion, demonstrating a high awareness of the current obligations of NATO members.

When it comes to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, how strongly do you support or oppose Montenegro continuing to provide assistance to Ukraine?



NATO'S ENGAGEMENT

Do you think NATO should expand, reduce, or maintain its current membership?

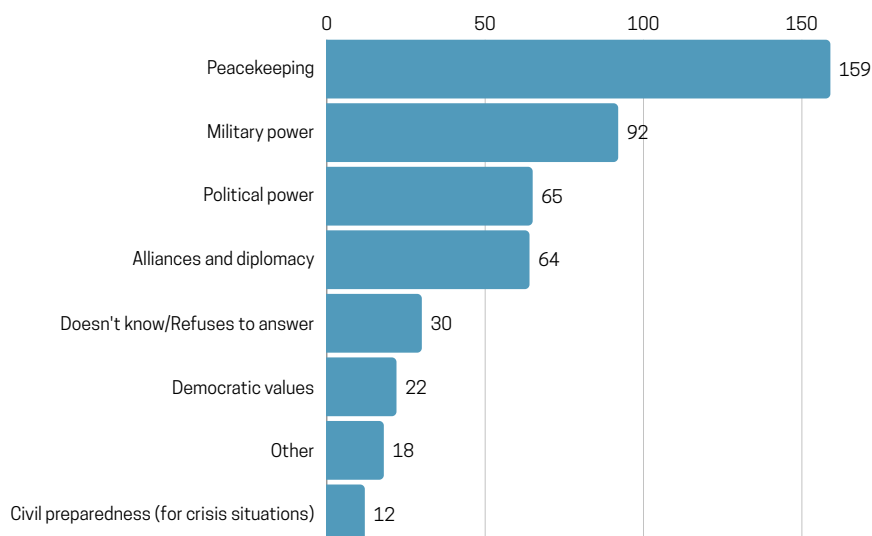


The data shows that 36% of respondents believe NATO should expand its membership, while 28.9% think it depends on the specific country. These results suggest that there is significant interest among young people in strengthening NATO through the inclusion of new members, which may reflect a belief in the collective security and stability that membership brings.

On the other hand, 24.7% of respondents feel that NATO should reduce its membership, while 10.4% think it should maintain the current state. These views may be characterized by concerns about overburdening the alliance or ideas about redirecting focus to internal issues within existing members, as well as a negative attitude toward NATO in general.

Similar to the associations related to NATO, respondents see maintaining peace and military power as the highest priorities when it comes to NATO's areas of action. This is followed by the political component—political power, alliances, and diplomacy—while democratic values hold a slightly lower position in the hierarchy of priorities for young citizens. The least focus is placed on the preparedness of the civilian population and other components of the Alliance.

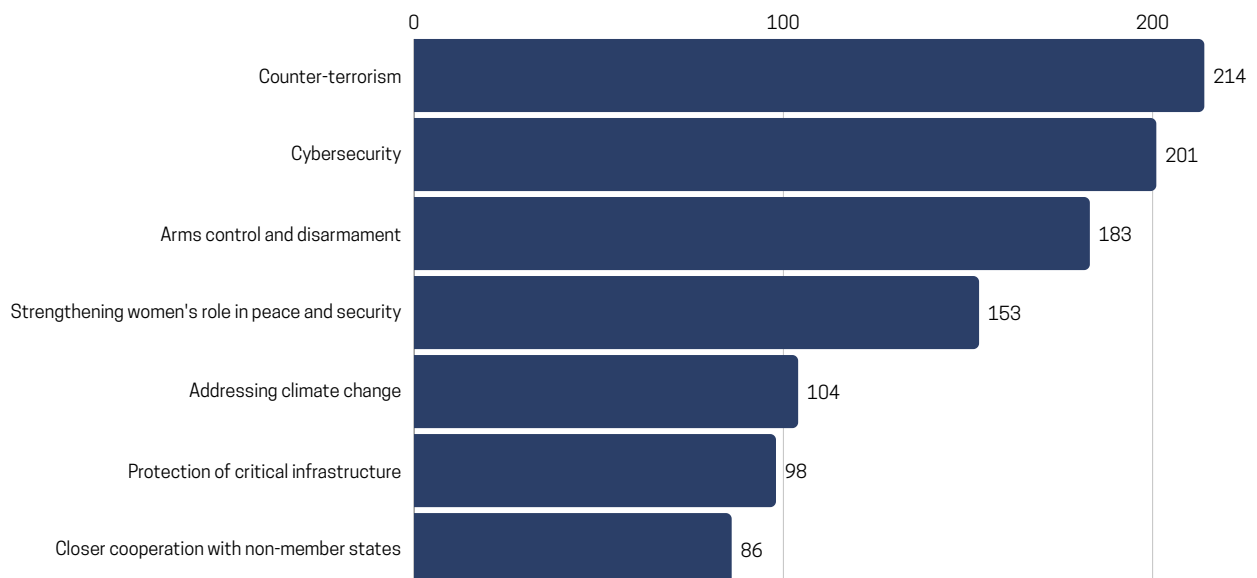
What is the most important thing about NATO?



NATO'S ENGAGEMENT

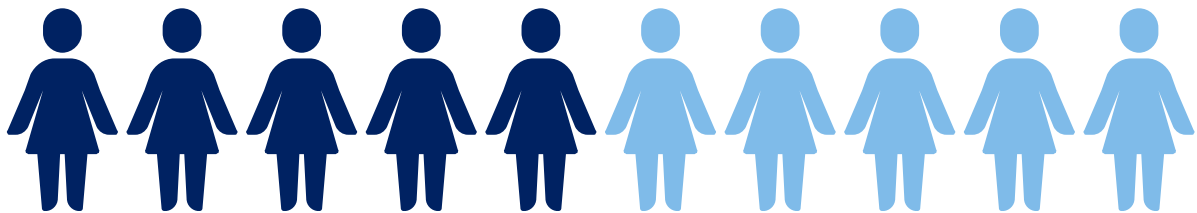
When it comes to future priority areas of NATO, Montenegrin youth places the highest importance on the fight against terrorism, with 214 votes, indicating a broad perception of terrorism as a major security challenge. This area is crucial for maintaining global stability and security, which explains the high support among respondents. On the other hand, cybersecurity is also recognized as an important issue, with 201 votes, reflecting the growing awareness of threats in the digital space and hybrid threats. Other areas, such as arms control and disarmament (183 votes), addressing climate change (104 votes), and protecting the critical infrastructure of member states (98 votes), suggest that citizens believe NATO should adopt a comprehensive approach, focused not only on traditional military threats but also on modern and global challenges that impact security.

Thinking about the future, which of the following areas do you think NATO should prioritize for development within its future programs? (multiple answers allowed)

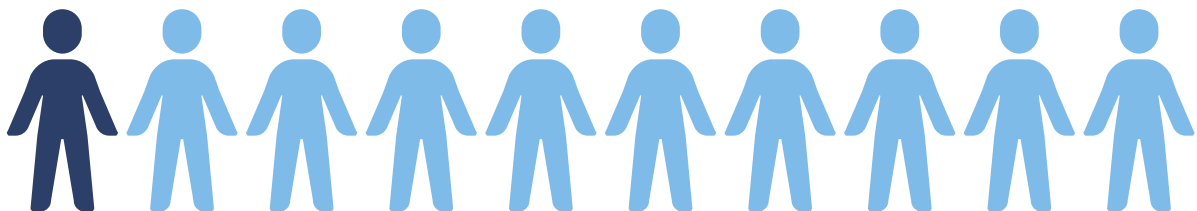


THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

The role of women in NATO is becoming increasingly important as the organization recognizes that gender equality and the inclusion of women are key to achieving long-term security and stability. NATO actively promotes initiatives that support the strengthening of women's roles in peace and security, including training, mentorship, and empowering female leaders within military and civilian structures. These activities not only enhance NATO's capacity in crisis management but also contribute to improving peace and reconciliation in post-conflict societies and promote gender equality overall. The inclusion of women brings diverse perspectives and approaches to conflict resolution, which is essential for developing comprehensive security strategies that consider the different needs and interests of communities. In this way, NATO not only empowers women but also strengthens its own capacities and legitimacy on the international stage.



Every fifth young woman and every tenth young man believe that strengthening the role of women in peace and security should be one of NATO's priorities.



50.84% of young women believe that strengthening the role of women in peace and security should be one of NATO's priorities, while only 12.5% of young men share this view. These results indicate a significant difference in perception between genders, with young women recognizing the importance of their involvement in security structures as crucial for achieving sustainable peace and stability.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

34% of respondents

believe that strengthening the role of women in peace and security should be one of NATO's priorities.

Additionally, 34% of all respondents believe that this issue should be among the priorities in NATO's actions, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and inclusion of all members of society in discussions about gender equality in the context of security. This data can serve as a foundation for developing policies and strategies within NATO that focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women in military and civilian operations, thereby contributing to strengthening the alliance's capacity to address complex global challenges.

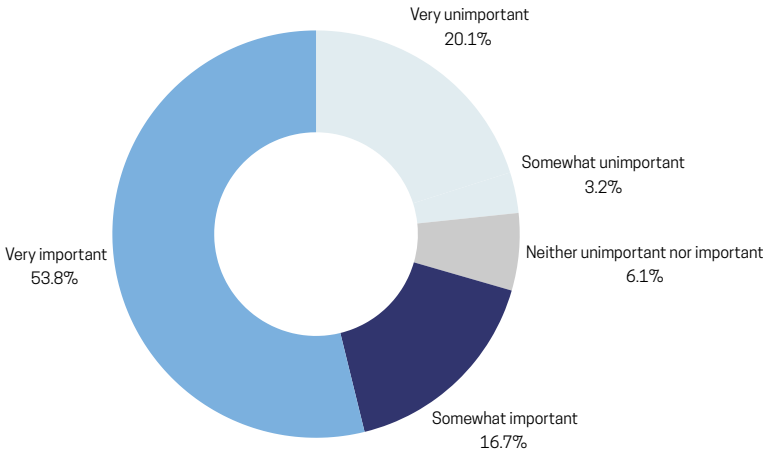
A high degree of correlation (0.8, Phi coefficient) is present between gender and the areas they consider important, indicating that young women can indeed contribute to the further development of NATO with fresh perceptions and ideas.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

72.5% percent of the surveyed young people believe that it is important for NATO to include young people in its activities, indicating a broad recognition of the significance of youth engagement in security issues and the organization's activities. This perception is further emphasized by the fact that as many as **95% of young people who support NATO believe that young people should have an active role within the alliance.**

These results suggest that young citizens recognize themselves as key actors in shaping the future of our security, which can contribute to strengthening NATO's legitimacy and reinforcing shared values, as well as lead to innovative ideas and approaches to the challenges facing NATO. Involving young people can enrich the discussion and bring new perspectives, as well as improve their attitude toward the Alliance, thereby creating a more sustainable and resilient framework for future security policies.

How important is it for NATO to include young people in its activities?



72,3%

of young people believe that it is important for NATO to include young people in its activities.

95%

of young people who support NATO believe that NATO should include young people in its activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the attitudes of young citizens of Montenegro towards NATO indicates a clearly expressed need to involve young people, especially young girls in security in defense activities in Montenegro and in its NATO activities. There remains quite a large group of youngsters who are negatively oriented towards NATO, who are more Russian oriented and have negative sentiments about NATO's history with Montenegro. This can further polarize youth among themselves and cause issues in future decision-making processes related to Montenegro's role in NATO on a national level.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Increase NATO's presence in Montenegrin media through more intensive reporting and by organizing training sessions and study visits for young journalists and young leaders with NATO's support.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Focus on educating young people, especially women, considering their lower level of awareness about NATO and its role, through training sessions, information sessions and social media.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Involve young people, especially young women, in NATO activities and ensure greater visibility of their contributions, as well as create new formats for discussions with youth within the civilian population.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Engage in dialogue with the young population that holds a negative view of NATO due to the intervention in the FRY, highlighting alternative missions and roles of NATO that can increase their commitment to the Alliance, through official channels, school curriculums and NGO activities.

Contact

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