



## Why Don't Citizens Trust Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

### MEASURE-BiH Issue Brief Series

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#### Study Background

Using data from the 2016 and 2017 National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions in BiH (NSCP-BiH), we examine if and how BiH citizens' perceptions on media trustworthiness are shaped by factors such as media consumption habits, age, gender, level of education, and ethnicity. We have also documented perceived independence of media by looking at citizens' perceptions on whether media are influenced by political parties, governmental institutions, and citizens.

Our findings show that television is the most important source of political/economic/civic news in BiH for all age, gender, and ethnic groups. However, internet is the dominating daily source of news among the higher educated. Our results also suggest variation in media trustworthiness perceptions across ethnic groups in different years. In NSCP-BiH 2016, Croats were less likely than other ethnicities to trust the media, whereas the Serbs trusted the media more than other ethnic groups. In NSCP-BiH 2017, Bosniaks trust the media more than other ethnic groups, while Serbs are less likely to trust the media. We also find for both years that women use media for news less than men.

For information on the study, see [www.measurebih.com](http://www.measurebih.com).

This Issue Brief examines the determinants of perceptions of media trustworthiness among BiH citizens using the 2016 and 2017 wave of National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions in BiH (NSCP-BiH)<sup>1</sup>.

In this study we examine media trustworthiness perceptions of BiH citizens, and whether media consumption habits, education level, age, and ethnicity shape these perceptions. We also examine the perceived independence of different types of media by looking at the citizens' perceptions on

how much influence do political parties, governmental institutions, and citizens have over media.

#### THE DATA AND THE METHODOLOGY

This Issue Brief is based on the NSCP-BiH 2016 and NSCP-BiH 2017 data. The analyses are carried out using:

- 3004 randomly selected individuals from BiH to the NSCP-BiH 2016 survey who were 18+ years old<sup>2</sup>, and
- 3084 randomly selected individuals from BiH to the NSCP-BiH 2017 survey who were 18+ years old.

For this Issue Brief, the multivariate regression analysis is used to study if gender, education level, age, and ethnicity are associated with trustworthiness perceptions of three types of media: newspapers, TV and Internet.<sup>3</sup> We also look at the association between the perceptions of influence citizens have over media and media trust. The main questions used to capture trustworthiness were:

- "How satisfied are you with the trustworthiness of political news on TV/newspapers/internet?"<sup>4</sup> and
- "How satisfied are you with the trustworthiness of political/economic/civic information and news in newspapers/TV/Online news sources/Social media?"<sup>5</sup>

Respondents were asked to answer this question on the Likert scale 1-7 (completely satisfied to completely dissatisfied). In addition, we examine whether the perceptions of political and/or governmental influence over media, correlates with the citizens' trust to media.

<sup>1</sup> NSCP-BiH is a nationally representative survey conducted by MEASURE-BiH to analyze trends and general attitudes of BiH citizens towards governance, rule of law, corruption, citizen participation and civil society organizations, media, social inclusions, youth development, and other topics on an annual basis. The survey is being conducted ever since 2015, with survey findings publicly available at: <http://measurebih.com/national-survey-of-citizens-perceptions>

<sup>2</sup> More information on data and sampling, as well as descriptive analysis of the data can be found at the Findings Report:

[http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/MEASURE-BiH\\_NSACP2016\\_FindingsReport\\_0511201720formatted.pdf](http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/MEASURE-BiH_NSACP2016_FindingsReport_0511201720formatted.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> In NSCP-BiH 2017, Internet as a source of information is divided into two categories: Online news sources and Social media. This issue brief focuses on online news sources when comparing to the results from NSCP-BiH 2016.

<sup>4</sup> National Survey of Citizens Perceptions 2016 questionnaire.

<sup>5</sup> National Survey of Citizens Perceptions 2017 questionnaire.



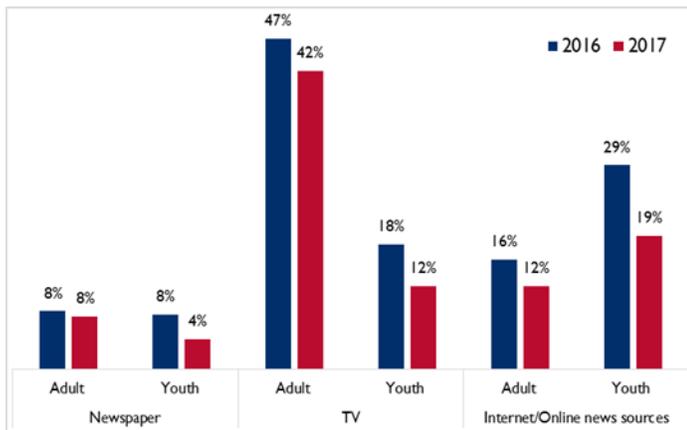
## KEY FINDINGS

### Media Usage

#### The primary media source of political news in BiH is TV

As shown in Figure 1, in 2017, the dominant daily source of political/economic/civic news for adults was TV (42%), whereas for the youth (respondents of the age range 18-30)<sup>6</sup> it was the Internet (19%). In 2016, the results were similar - 47% adults used TV, and 29% of youth used Internet as their main daily source of political news. However, in 2017, 38% of youth and 61% of adults said they never used internet as a source of political/economic/civic news (compared to 28% of youth and 56% of adults in 2016).

Figure 1. Political news consumption by type of media and age



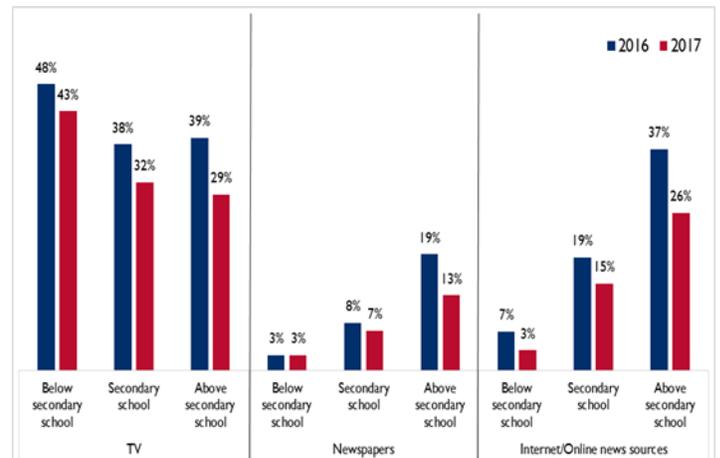
The least consumed political/economic/civic news source, regardless of age, are newspapers: 61% of adults and 65% of youth in 2017, and, 54% of adults and 50% of youth in 2016 stated they never use newspapers for political/economic/civic news. This is consistent to global trends of print media decline in the digital era.<sup>7</sup> In BiH, this phenomenon is enhanced by poor economic conditions which prevent many citizens from buying newspapers.<sup>8</sup>

#### Highly educated people rely more on the internet

There are small differences across education levels in

choosing TV as the main daily source of news. These differences are mainly between citizens that finished secondary school and lower levels of education. In 2016, 48% of citizens with lower than secondary school education, 38% of those with secondary school diploma and 39% of those with more than secondary school education chose TV as the main daily source of political news. Similarly, in 2017, 43% of citizens with no secondary school diploma, 32% of those with secondary school diploma, and 30% of those with more than secondary school education are choosing TV for getting news every day. Newspaper consumption increases with the level of education - 3% of those with no secondary school diploma, 8% of those with secondary school diploma, and 20% of those with more than a secondary education said they read newspapers. The use of the internet as a source of news also varies significantly based on level of education obtained. The NSCP-BiH 2016 results show that about 37% of citizens with more than secondary school education use internet for getting news every day, compared with 19% for those with a secondary school diploma and 7% for those with primary school education. In NSCP-BiH 2017, the situation is similar, 3% of respondents with no secondary school diploma, 15% with secondary school diploma, and 26% with education higher than secondary school use internet on a daily basis for the purpose of getting informed on political news (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Political news consumption by type of media and education level



<sup>6</sup> According to the Article 4 of the Youth Law of the FBiH (Official Gazette of the FBiH, No. 35/10), and Article 2 of the Law on Organization of the Youth of RS (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 98/04 and 119/08), young people refer to people aged 15 to 30 years.

<sup>7</sup> Media Consumption Forecasts 2015, available at:

<http://zenithmedia.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Media%20Consumption%20Forecasts%202015.pdf>

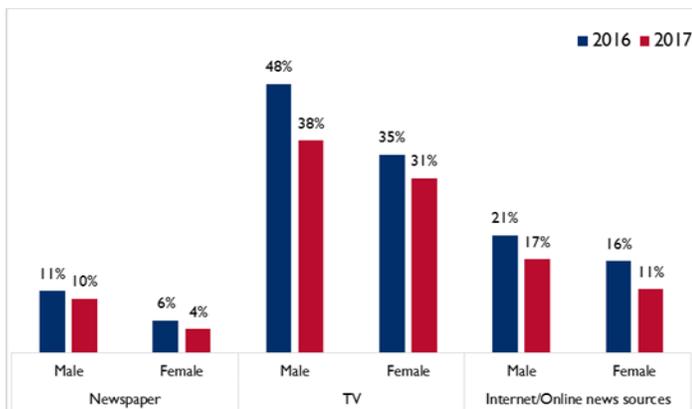
<sup>8</sup> Print media in BiH have over last 6 years, been continuously reporting income drop, according the monitoring results of MCA Group. <http://www.profitiraj.ba/2016/10/1928678/region/prihod-medija-u-bih-upadu-poslednjih-est-godina.php>



### Women tend to consume political/economic/civic news from media less than men

As Figure 3 shows, women in BiH are less likely than men to use the media for political/economic/civic news. This is true for all types of media (newspapers, TV, and internet/online news sources).

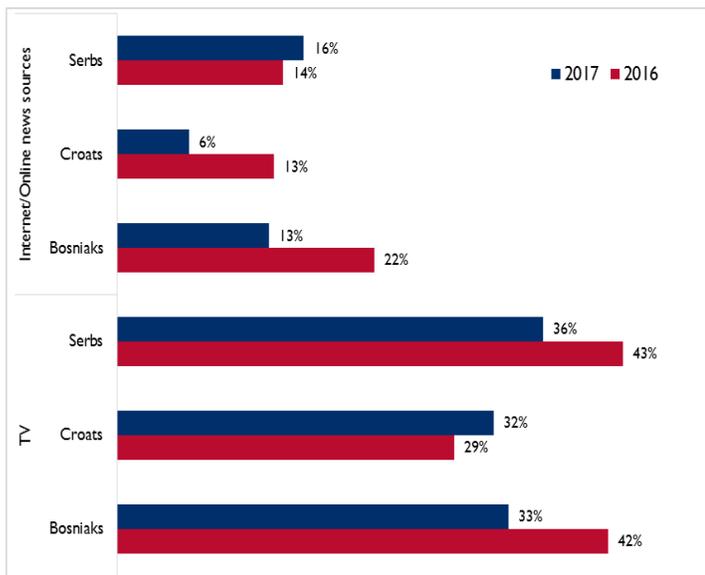
Figure 1. Political news consumption by type of media and sex



### Croats use TV for political/economic/civic news less often than Bosniaks and Serbs

As seen in Figure 4, the most significant differences in the consumption of political/economic/civic news on TV and internet exist across ethnicities. Among Croats, only 32% in 2017 and 29% in 2016 used TV for getting political/economic/civic news every day compared with 34% and 42% of Bosniaks, and 36% and 43% of Serbs.

Figure 4. Political news consumption by ethnicity and type of media



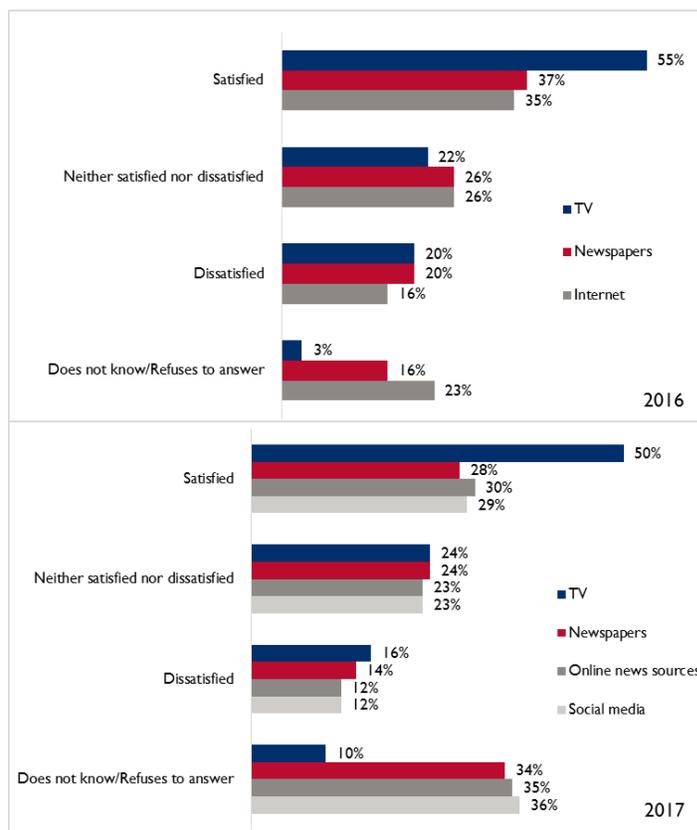
In 2016, Bosniaks led in the everyday use of internet/online news sources (22%), followed by Serbs (14%) and Croats (13%). However, in 2017, Serbs (16%) proved to be leaders in the everyday use of Internet/online news sources, followed by 13% of Bosniaks and 6% of Croats.

### Media Trustworthiness

#### Citizens trust TV more than newspapers and internet/online news sources for political/economic/civic news

In both waves of NSCP-BiH, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with trustworthiness of different types of media. The results show that BiH citizens have more trust in TV as a source of political/economic/civic news than in newspapers and internet/online news sources. Namely, in 2016, 55% of citizens were at least somewhat satisfied with TV in this regard, compared with 37% who were at least somewhat satisfied with newspapers and 35% with the internet. Similarly, in 2017, 50% of respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with TV as a main news source, compared to 28%, 30%, and 29% with newspapers, online news sources, and social media, respectively (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. BiH Citizens' Satisfaction with Trustworthiness of Information and News on Media





## Media Trust and Individual Characteristics

To assess the relationship between media trust and individual characteristics, we use regression models that estimate the likelihood of trustworthiness for each media.

Results are summarized in Table I.

**Table I. Regression results, trustworthiness by media type**

Effects on trust to TV	2016		2017			
	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE		
Bosniaks	0.129**	0.059	-0.276***	0.059		
Croats	0.492***	0.085	-0.193**	0.093		
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.653***	0.158	0.441**	0.191		
Females	0.085	0.054	0.047	0.053		
Secondary school	0.142**	0.063	0.036	0.067		
Above secondary school	0.267***	0.090	0.274***	0.089		
Youth	0.150**	0.068	0.139**	0.060		
Perception that citizens' influence over TV is too small	0.220***	0.061	0.111*	0.062		
Effects on trust to newspapers	2016		2017			
	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE		
Bosniaks	0.355***	0.063	-0.148**	0.065		
Croats	0.613***	0.092	0.030	0.104		
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.689***	0.157	0.595***	0.216		
Females	0.052	0.058	0.170***	0.060		
Secondary school	0.117*	0.070	0.030	0.079		
Above secondary school	0.201**	0.098	0.258*	0.099		
Youth	0.067	0.070	0.058	0.069		
Perception that citizens' influence over newspapers is too small	0.150**	0.066	0.102	0.073		
Effects on trust to:	2016		2017			
	Internet		Online news sources		Social media	
	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE
Bosniaks	0.230***	0.064	-0.158**	0.068	-0.187***	0.069
Croats	0.583***	0.096	-0.041	0.107	-0.036	0.111
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.538***	0.145	0.60**	0.239	0.385	0.235
Females	0.008	0.059	0.073	0.062	0.072	0.063
Secondary school	-0.022	0.072	-0.125	0.089	-0.088	0.089
Above secondary school	-0.060	0.095	0.050	0.108	0.041	0.108
Youth	-0.051	0.070	-0.016	0.067	0.057	0.067
Perception that citizens' influence over Internet/Online news sources/Social media is too small	0.284***	0.061	0.198***	0.066	0.230***	0.067

The 2016 findings demonstrate that Bosniaks, Croats, and other ethnicities are less likely to trust any media when compared to Serbs (the omitted category). Croats and individuals of other ethnicity are less likely than Bosniaks and Serbs (the omitted category) to trust any media source. However, the 2017 results show that Bosniaks are significantly more likely to trust all media sources compared to other ethnicities. Respondents in other ethnicities (Roma,

Jews, Bosnians and Herzegovinians, or those who do not declare on their ethnicity) appear to be more likely than other ethnicities to distrust media.

Our 2017 findings demonstrate that those with above secondary school education are less likely to trust any media for political/economic/civic news compared to those with a secondary school education or those with below secondary school education (the omitted category). For TV and newspapers these results are at a significant level. In 2016, findings were different - those with above secondary school education were less likely to trust TV for political news than those with a secondary school education or those with below secondary school education (the omitted category). Similar relationship holds for newspapers, with slightly lower statistical significance.

Both waves of NSCP-BiH also show that youth are less likely to trust TV than adults (the omitted category). As for the newspapers and internet (online news sources), the age range does not seem to be statistically significant predictor of trustworthiness.

The regression analysis in Table I shows that the perceptions of ordinary citizens' influence over media are significant in predicting the level of trust to media (except for newspapers in 2017).

Although we found some indications that women tend to distrust media more than men, those findings are not at statistically significant levels. There is a statistical significance when looking at the trust of females to newspapers in NSCP-BiH 2017 findings (see Table I).

## Influence of Political Parties and Government

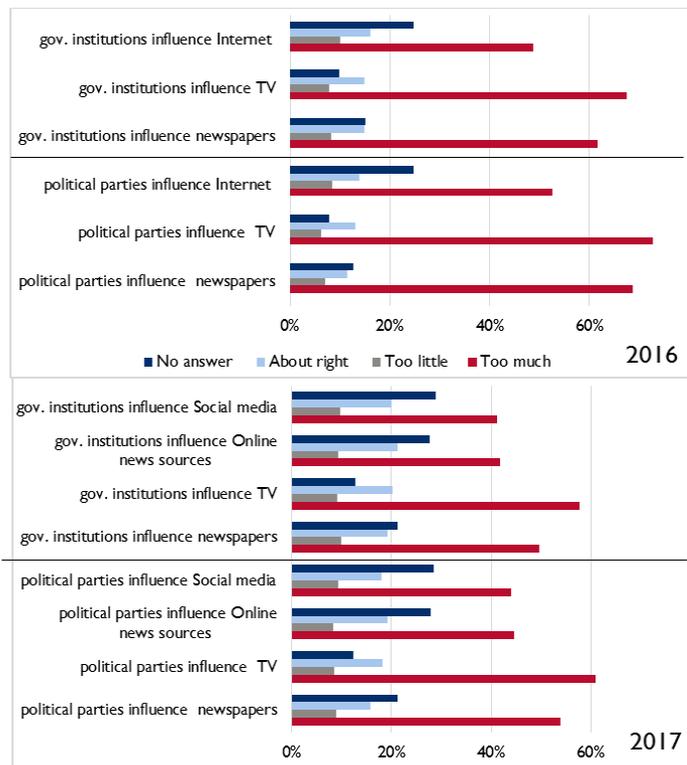
### Too much influence over media by political parties and governments affects trust to media negatively

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of how much influence do political parties and government institutions have over all types of media. Very high percentage of them, regardless of age, education level, or ethnicity believe that both, political parties and government institutions, have too much influence over all types of media.



In both 2016 and 2017, more than half of BiH citizens held the opinion that political parties and government institutions have too much influence over the content that is being published on TV. In particular, 73% of citizens in 2016 and 61% of citizens in 2017 believed that political parties influence TV content too much. On the other hand, 67% of citizens in 2016 and 58% of citizens in 2017 believed that government institutions have too much influence over TV. Similar results were found when investigating the perception on the newspapers' independence. Concretely, 69% of citizens in 2016 and 54% in 2017 held the opinion of political parties having too much influence over the content being published by the newspapers. Moreover, 62% of citizens in 2016 and 50% in 2017 believed the same for the government institutions. Even though the Internet (online news sources and/or social media) is perceived as the most independent media by BiH citizens, many people still believe it is under too much influence of both, political parties and government institutions (see Figure 6).

**Figure 2. Perceived Independence of Media**



In addition, the regression analysis demonstrates (Table 2) that the perception of too much influence by the political parties over TV and newspapers is a significant predictor of lower trust towards those types of media.

**Table 2. Political parties' and government institutions' influence over trust across all media types**

Effects on trust to TV	2016		2017					
	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE				
Perception that political parties have too much influence over TV	0.176**	0.079	0.094	0.071				
Perception that government institutions have too much influence over TV	0.229***	0.074	0.116*	0.067				
Perception that citizens have too little influence over TV	0.135*	0.069	0.097	0.066				
Bosniaks	0.156**	0.061	-0.305***	0.062				
Croats	0.517***	0.089	-0.199**	0.098				
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.611***	0.164	0.350**	0.207				
Females	0.109*	0.056	0.034	0.056				
Secondary school	0.163**	0.067	0.016	0.072				
Above secondary school	0.246***	0.094	0.228**	0.093				
Youth	0.116*	0.071	0.149**	0.063				
Effects on trust to newspapers	2016		2017					
Perception that political parties have too much influence over newspapers	0.245***	0.089	-0.009	0.089				
Perception that government institutions have too much influence over newspapers	-0.012	0.083	0.190**	0.086				
Perception that citizens have too little influence over newspapers	0.104	0.076	0.094	0.078				
Bosniaks	0.373***	0.067	-0.145**	0.069				
Croats	0.618***	0.097	0.032	0.111				
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.731***	0.161	0.660***	0.236				
Females	0.090	0.061	0.158**	0.063				
Secondary school	0.137*	0.074	0.021	0.083				
Above secondary school	0.199**	0.104	0.205**	0.104				
Youth	0.048	0.074	0.062	0.072				
Effects on trust to:	2016		2017					
			Internet	Online news sources	Social media			
			Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE	Coef.	Robust SE
Perception that political parties have too much influence over Internet/Online news sources/Social media	0.068	0.090	0.012	0.094	-0.299***	0.092		
Perception that government institutions have too much influence over Internet/Online news sources/Social media	0.142	0.088	0.065	0.092	0.246***	0.090		
Perception that citizens have too little influence over Internet/Online news sources/Social media	0.248***	0.069	0.232***	0.073	0.249***	0.073		
Bosniaks	0.250***	0.068	-0.171**	0.074	-0.231***	0.075		
Croats	0.639***	0.102	-0.104	0.115	-0.089	0.119		
Other ethnicities or did not declare	0.608***	0.156	0.487*	0.253	0.317	0.249		
Females	0.027	0.062	0.065	0.067	0.061	0.068		
Secondary school	-0.020	0.078	-0.114	0.097	-0.087	0.097		
Above secondary school	-0.066	0.102	0.013	0.116	-0.003	0.117		
Youth	-0.031	0.074	0.006	0.072	0.112	0.073		

Our analysis also shows that in 2016, government influence was not a significant predictor of trust towards newspapers, while in 2017, government influence is a significant predictor of lower trust to newspapers. The same applies to Internet/online news sources.

Finally, our analysis shows that political parties have similar perceived influence towards different media. Interestingly, in 2016, high influence of political parties over newspapers led

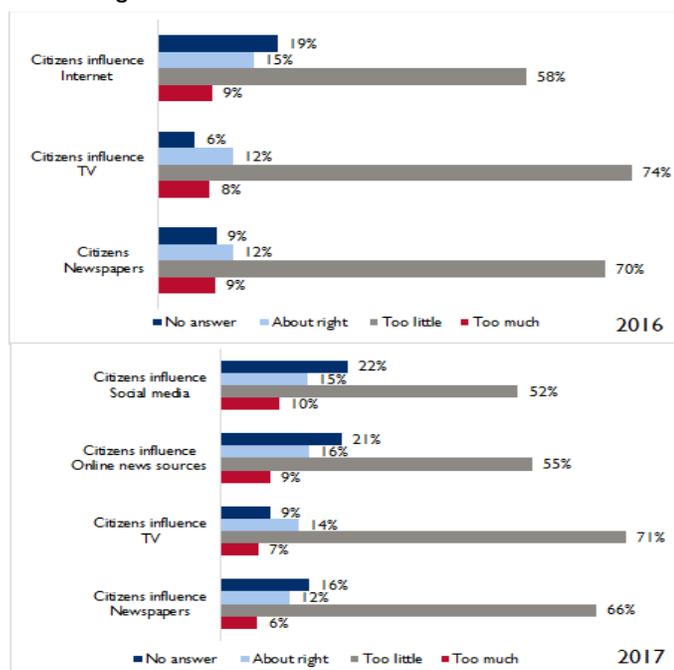


to citizens' lower trust to this media, while in 2017, high influence of political parties over newspapers resulted in citizens' having higher trust towards newspapers.

### Too little influence over media by citizens

On the other hand, as illustrated by the Figure 7, very few respondents believe that citizens of BiH have any influence over media. In 2016, almost two thirds of BiH citizens (70%) said their influence over newspapers is too small. When it comes to TV, percentage of citizens who believed that they have too small influence over the content being published is even larger - 74%. Finally, 58% of citizens held this opinion for the content being published on the Internet. Results of NSCP-BiH 2017 show that citizens' beliefs regarding their influence over media content remain mostly unchanged. In particular, small influence over content being published by newspapers is recognized by 66% of citizens; 71% of citizens held this opinion for TV; 55% for online news sources; and 52% for social media.

**Figure 3. Perceived Citizens Influence over Media**



<sup>9</sup> For more details, please see: MEASURE Assessment of the media Sector in BiH, 2016 available at: <http://measurebih.com/uimages/Assessment%20of%20the%20Media%20Sector%20in%20B&H.pdf>; Ibrahimbegovic Tihak, V. 2015 Media Literacy in Digital Age, available at: [https://issuu.com/internnewsbih/docs/zbornik-a5\\_final](https://issuu.com/internnewsbih/docs/zbornik-a5_final); Tajic, L. 2013, Media Literacy in BiH, available at: [http://www.internnews.ba/sites/default/files/resursi/Medijska%20pismenost%20u%20BiH\\_0.pdf](http://www.internnews.ba/sites/default/files/resursi/Medijska%20pismenost%20u%20BiH_0.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> According to the 2016 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without borders, BiH overall score dropped for two places comparing to

### IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this Issue Brief suggest that the perceived trustworthiness of the three types of media we examine is significantly influenced by the ethnicity of BiH citizens. Also, the lower trust in TV by citizens with higher education is important finding for media literacy advocates in BiH, as it suggests that respondents with higher education have more critical attitude towards TV content. It implies questioning and analyzing media content, rather than taking it for granted, which a media literate audience would do.

This however, needs to be looked at in the BiH context. In 2016, only few of the respondents have education higher than secondary school (9% graduated from university, 3% started university, and 1% completed some kind of specialized education after secondary school). In 2017, 1% of respondents have finished post-secondary school specialization, 4% high school and first grade of faculty, and 12% have a university degree. Therefore, the portion of those with some critical attitude towards TV content, is minimal. This is in line with the existing research in BiH, according to which, media literacy education is heavily under-developed in the curricula of primary and secondary school. Moreover, the quality of the available media education is questionable, as it is not aimed at developing critical approach to media content, but it is rather descriptive of existing media forms.<sup>9</sup>

An interesting finding is that ethnicity is a significant predictor of media trust. However, at least part of the explanation most likely lies in the specific BiH media landscape where media and audience(s) are divided along the ethnic lines. In order to fully explain this finding, further research is required. Furthermore, the citizens' perceptions on the very strong influence of political parties and governmental institutions over the media, indeed suggest the scarcity of media independence, which is consistent with the overall decline in media freedom in BiH<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it is no surprise that it affects the trust towards media negatively.

2015 Index. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/bosnia-herzegovina>. Other media quality assessment tools are also showing negative trend of media quality decline in BiH. For more information see Media Sustainability Index by IREX, available at: <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2016-bosnia.pdf.pdf>, as well as the Freedom House Index available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2015#.WHydFIMrK00>



Similarly, it is not surprising that respondents' perceptions on the very low influence the citizens have on media, are also affecting their trust to media in a negative way. These findings are in line with the existing research on media integrity in the Balkans, such as the study from 2014 done by 3 authors from BiH, Croatia and Slovenia<sup>11</sup>. The mentioned study shows that the media (and journalism) in Balkans, including BiH, has stopped serving the public interests, and thus has lost integrity. In order to re-claim it, media needs to come back to its genuine purpose - public interest.

Our study provides some interesting findings regarding the use of internet. It is becoming increasingly important (and comparing to other types of media more trustworthy) source of news, following the global trend<sup>12</sup>. In addition, as our results suggest, the individuals with higher education tend to use internet as a source of news more often than people with less schoolings. Other research in the field, like the study on measuring new media literacies<sup>13</sup>, points to similar findings as well.

Furthermore, the study shows that internet is the most frequent source of news for youth in BiH with 29% (2016) and 19% (2017) use it daily. In the same time, almost the same portion of young respondents (28% in 2016 and 38% in 2017), never uses it for the news. However, this finding does not imply that youth do not use internet at all. The recent research on youth behavior on internet among the youth from the three cantons in FBiH of age 15-17, suggests high risks from developing addiction to Internet<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, according to this research, 80% of the surveyed youth uses internet mostly for the communication with friends, 45.7% for the school and studying, and 23.5% uses it mostly for playing games.

An explanation of our study result talking about almost equal percentages of youth who use and don't use internet

for news, could be looked for in a recent study on youth in BiH.<sup>15</sup> This study showed the low interest in political and civic participation of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which among other things includes low interests in following the political and social news on local, regional and global level regardless whether it is online or off.

<sup>11</sup> Znacaj medijskog integriteta: Vracanje medija i novinarstva u sluzbu javnosti. Petkovic, Basic-Hrvatini and Hodzic, 2014, available at: [http://www.media.ba/sites/default/files/znacaj\\_medijskog\\_integriteta\\_vracanje\\_medija\\_i\\_novinarstva\\_u\\_sluzbu\\_javnosti.pdf](http://www.media.ba/sites/default/files/znacaj_medijskog_integriteta_vracanje_medija_i_novinarstva_u_sluzbu_javnosti.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Media Consumption Forecasts 2015, available at: <http://zenithmedia.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Media%20Consumption%20Forecasts%202015.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Literat, I. Measuring New Media Literacies: Towards the Development of a Comprehensive Assessment Tool. The National Association for Media Literacy Education's Journal of Media Literacy Education Volume 6: Issue 1 page 15-27. Available online at: [www.jmle.org](http://www.jmle.org)

<sup>14</sup> Putokazi u zdravije društvo. Istraživanje o kockanju, korištenju interneta, te navikama konzumiranja alkohola i marihuana među djecom i mladima u tri kantona u FBiH. Narko ne, Sarajevo. 2016. The research encompasses the representative sample of around 2000 youth from 3 cantons and was done by the Association for the prevention of addictions Narko ne and a Public institution on health Protection of Sarajevo Canton, in the cooperation with 3 cantonal Ministries of Education (Sarajevo, Zenica\_Doboje and Srednja Bosna Cantons), Available at:

[http://prevencija.ba/images/publikacije/Rezultati\\_istrazivanja\\_2016\\_NarkoNe.pdf](http://prevencija.ba/images/publikacije/Rezultati_istrazivanja_2016_NarkoNe.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Žiga, J et al. Studija o mladima u Bosni i Hercegovini. Friedrich Ebers Stiftung and Sarajevo University. 2015. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/11436.pdf>