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Baltic Internet Policy Initiative



office for european expertise  
and communications



**PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS AND  
CIVIC INITIATIVES IN BELARUS:  
PARTICIPATION POTENTIAL**



## Summary

Reliable data on civic activism, on attitude towards civil organizations and initiatives, on readiness to participate in their activities is an essential element in the development of strategies, action plans and project proposals of public organizations and civic initiatives.

The issue of factors determining civic activism is the focus of the survey "Public Associations and Citizens Initiatives: Participation Potential", conducted in 2019 by the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative (BIPI) and the Office of European Expertise and Communications (OEEC). The purpose of the survey is to "measure" (1) awareness and involvement of citizens in activities of public organizations and initiatives; (2) potential for participation in their activities. The survey involved 1434 respondents., 71 % of whom (1018 citizens) know about the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives in their locality and / or region.

The survey has shown:

- ▶ promising potential: the share of respondents who are ready to take part in activities of public organizations and civic initiatives is three times larger compared to the share of those who are already involved in their activities.
- ▶ the highest participation potential is among the residents of rural areas and small towns aged 15-24,
- ▶ voluntary participation prevails though 24,2% of respondents answered that they participate in civic activities because their managers/authorities make them do so,
- ▶ lack of information: 71% of respondents know about the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives in their locality and/or region, but 72% of them would like to know more,
- ▶ prospects for building confidence: 11% of the respondents fully trust public organizations and civic initiatives, and 69% of respondents have a positive attitude to such activities,
- ▶ degree of satisfaction with the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives: 55% of respondents believe that public organizations should solve local problems, but only 33% say that they actually do so,
- ▶ main criteria for judgment and evaluation of the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives: personal participation in events and information in social networks,
- ▶ main motives for participation: interesting projects, shared values, desire to help others, clear goals of organizations and initiatives,
- ▶ main barriers for participation: lack of awareness about opportunities for participation and lack of resources (time and competencies),
- ▶ most in-demand areas of activities: ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyle, social services, culture; but only ecology, healthy lifestyle, and human rights are among the five areas of activity in which respondents are likely to take part,
- ▶ formal membership in public organizations without active participation in their activities remains a serious challenge,
- ▶ the range of activities of the organizations of the "third sector" does not correspond to the perceptions of the respondents about the needed civil society activities and their readiness to participate in currently available activities.

To realize the potential, the following is needed:

- ▶ better inform the public about the goals, values and specific projects of organizations and initiatives,
- ▶ take into account the need to develop strategies aimed at building trust in civil activism,
- ▶ actively participate in solving specific problems of local communities,
- ▶ connect action plans with the agendas of new social movements (ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyles, etc.) both to attract supporters and to compensate for inconsistency between the thematic spectrum of the “third sector” organizations, perceptions of the relevance of civic activism and readiness to participate in such activities,
- ▶ to consider and use the opportunities of developing action plans for increasing civil activism, taking into account the data disaggregated by gender, age, education, employment and type of settlement.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, several large-scale studies and reports on structural conditions of activity and general development trends of the “third sector”<sup>1</sup> have been published. These documents allow activists to navigate within the context of the country and form the basis for development of sound strategies.

An essential element in the development of such documents, as well as strategies, action plans and project applications, is reliable data on citizen’s awareness about activities of public organizations and civic initiatives, attitude towards them and willingness to participate in their activities. What motivates citizens of different ages and education levels, living and working in rural areas and cities, to participate in activities of public organizations and civic initiatives? What initiatives are citizens willing to provide financial support for? How do citizens learn about the activities of organizations and initiatives? How much do citizens trust them and how useful do they find such activities?

To get answers to these questions, the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative (BIPI) and the Office of European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) conducted two pilot surveys of the Belarusian Internet audience in 2017-2018. The surveys showed that 6% of respondents actively participate in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives, 15% participate sometimes, and one third of respondents know about this possibility, but do not participate<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Belarus Civil Society Organizations in Cross-Sectoral Dialogue (2015), Konrad Adenauer Foundation(KAS), the Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations, NGO «ACT» and Belarusian Analytical Workroom: <http://www.kas.de/belarus/en/publications/42539/>;

Шелест О. Социальная база программ трансформаций в Беларуси // Центр европейской трансформации (2017): [https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2017\\_Innovation-Belarus-RU.pdf](https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2017_Innovation-Belarus-RU.pdf);

Исследование потенциала солидарности в белорусском организованном гражданском обществе / Центр европейской трансформации, Белорусский институт стратегических исследований // Центр европейской трансформации (2014): [http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2014\\_Solidarity\\_NGOs\\_Belarus.pdf](http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2014_Solidarity_NGOs_Belarus.pdf);

Потенциал солидарности в белорусском обществе / Центр европейской трансформации, Белорусский институт стратегических исследований // Центр европейской трансформации (2015): [http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2015\\_Solidarity-National-Belarus-RU.pdf](http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2015_Solidarity-National-Belarus-RU.pdf);

Зуйкова А., Егоров А. Роль и место гражданского общества в системе донорской помощи для Беларуси (2006–2014) // Центр европейской трансформации (2016): [https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2016\\_AidAssistance-WD-2006-2](https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2016_AidAssistance-WD-2006-2);

Гражданское общество Беларуси: актуальное состояние и условия развития (2018): [http://belaruspolicy.com/sites/default/files/articles/06.11.2018/2018\\_civil-society-belarus\\_ru.pdf](http://belaruspolicy.com/sites/default/files/articles/06.11.2018/2018_civil-society-belarus_ru.pdf);

Национальный опрос — 2019: Общественное мнение белорусов (2019): <https://thinktanks.by/publication/2019/10/29/beloruskiy-natsionalnyy-opros-2019-goda-obschestvennoe-mnenie-ne-menyayetsya.html>;

Онлайнный активизм и цифровые свободы / Human Constanta (2019): [https://humanconstanta.by/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Online-activism-and-digital-rights-in-Belarus\\_2019\\_Human-Constanta.pdf](https://humanconstanta.by/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Online-activism-and-digital-rights-in-Belarus_2019_Human-Constanta.pdf);

Измерение и оценка важности экологических проблем среди населения Беларуси. Картирование отношения к экологическим активистам и изучение мотивации жителей к участию в решении экологических проблем (2017): [http://greenbelarus.info/files/downloads/satio\\_zs.pptx](http://greenbelarus.info/files/downloads/satio_zs.pptx);

Smolianko J., Chavusau Y. (2019) CSO Meter Belarus Country Report 2017-2019: <https://csometer.info/countries/belarus/>.

См. также аналитику по различным секторам гражданского общества на сайте Офиса европейской экспертизы и коммуникаций: <http://oeec.by/category/expertise/sector-analysis/>.

<sup>2</sup> Осведомленность и включенность в деятельность общественных организаций и неформальных инициатив в Беларуси: [https://oeec.by/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/OEEC\\_BIPI\\_2018.pdf](https://oeec.by/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/OEEC_BIPI_2018.pdf)

The issue of increasing civic engagement and participation determined the format of the new survey “Public Associations and Citizens Initiatives: Participation Potential”, conducted in 2019. The objective of the survey was not only to “measure” the awareness and engagement, but also to check the potential for civic engagement and participation

The whole variety of areas of activities was framed according to the general theoretical taxonomy of civil society sectors<sup>3</sup>, rubrics of the study “Civil society of Belarus: current status and development conditions” (2018)<sup>4</sup> and self-classification of organizations and initiatives. The structure of thematic areas of activity was also clarified during three consultations with representatives of public organizations and initiatives, donors and experts in the field of sociological research<sup>5</sup>. As a result, the list of thematic areas of civic activism includes:

1. charity
2. gender equality
3. animal welfare
4. healthy lifestyle
5. information dissemination and media
6. culture
7. science and research
8. non-formal education
9. support for business and entrepreneurship development
10. human rights
11. professional associations
12. regional and local community development
13. religious activity
14. social services sphere (social services to vulnerable groups, etc.)
15. sports, tourism, recreation
16. ecology

The survey does not distinguish between NGOs and GONGOs as the focus is on public/social activism per se, despite ideological differences. However, a specific question was included to make distinction between voluntary activism and participation forced by management or by the authorities.

Two aspects were considered in the survey: “engagement” and “participation”, which differ at the individual and collective levels. Engagement at the individual level is manifested in interest and attention to certain issues, and at the collective level, in a sense of belonging to the communities with a certain agenda. Engagement provides an opportunity to measure the potential for participation. Participation manifests itself in a specific individual or collective activities<sup>6</sup>.

The report consists of three sections. The first section describes the methodology of the survey. The second section is devoted to the analysis of the survey data. The third section summarizes the main findings.

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<sup>3</sup> Deth J.W (2002) Associations Between Associations: The Structure of the Voluntary Association Sector [https://www.academia.edu/2883763/Associations\\_Between\\_Associations\\_The\\_Structure\\_of\\_the\\_Voluntary\\_Association\\_Sector](https://www.academia.edu/2883763/Associations_Between_Associations_The_Structure_of_the_Voluntary_Association_Sector); The Palgrave Handbook of Volunteering, Civic Participation, and Nonprofit Associations (2017); Yannis Theocharis & Jan W. van Deth The Continuous Expansion of Citizen Participation: A New Taxonomy [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310600660\\_The\\_continuous\\_expansion\\_of\\_citizen\\_participation\\_a\\_new\\_taxonomy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310600660_The_continuous_expansion_of_citizen_participation_a_new_taxonomy)

<sup>4</sup> Гражданское общество Беларуси: актуальное состояние и условия развития [2018]. <https://cet.eurobelarus.info/ru/library/publication/2018/10/11/grazhdanskoe-obschestvo-belarusi-aktual-noe-sostoyanie-i-1810110900.html>

<sup>5</sup> The three consultations took part in June 2019

<sup>6</sup> Erkman, J., Amna, E. Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology Joakim Ekman & Erik Amn // Human Affairs 22 (3):283-300 (2012) <https://philpapers.org/rec/EKMPPA>; Erkman, J., Amna, E. Standby Citizens: diverse faces of political passivity// European Political Science Review 6(02):261-281 · May 2014 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261286971\\_Standby\\_Citizens\\_diverse\\_faces\\_of\\_political\\_passivity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261286971_Standby_Citizens_diverse_faces_of_political_passivity)

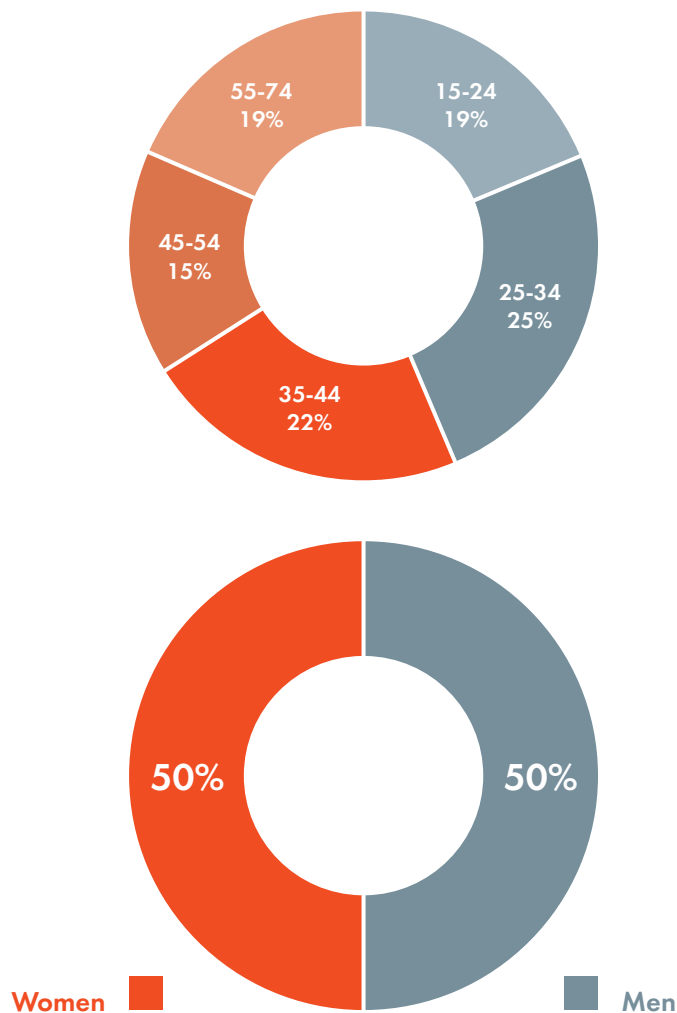
## I. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in a pop-up window format shown to randomly selected site visitors. Data collection methodology used was real-time sampling/river sampling. The general population was the Internet audience of Belarus. To provide a real picture of the distribution of socio-demographic characteristics, we used the weight coefficients of the results of a classroom study. Thus, the sample structure is adjusted by weighting the data by gender, age, region and place of residence. The study results include fully completed questionnaires for respondents who agreed to participate in the study and went through all filters.

The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions (including 6 socio-demographic questions). The sample size was 1434 respondents over the age of 15 years. The sampling error does not exceed 3% with a confidence interval of 95%.

The filter question "Do you know about the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives?" reduced the number of respondents to 1018 (the actual number of respondents who answered all the questions).

### Sampling structure





## II. ANALYSIS

### II.1. Awareness and trust as preconditions for participation

The survey data indicate that **71% of respondents are aware of the activities of public organizations and initiatives, 69% have a positive attitude about their activities and only 11% fully trust their activities.**

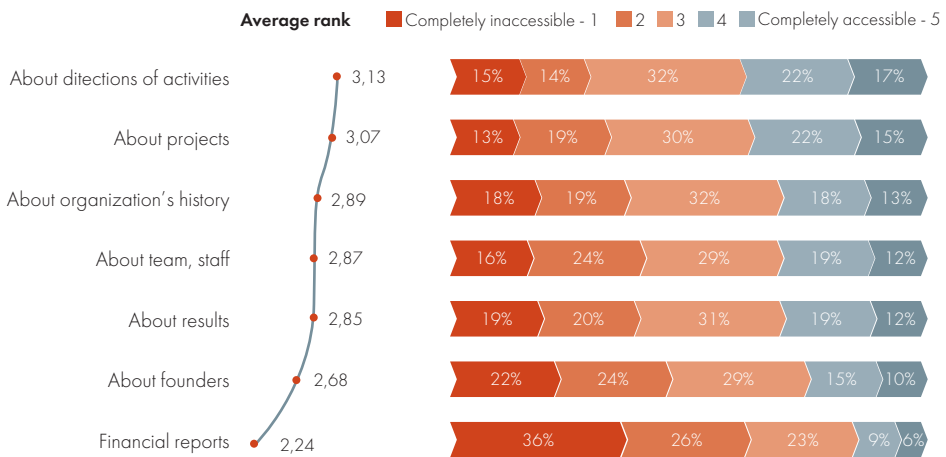
#### II.1.1. Awareness

71% of respondents are aware of the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives in their locality and / or region. About one third of respondents are well informed of these activities. The share is smaller in rural areas than in the cities (22 and 30-35%, respectively). Respondents aged 15-24 and 55-74 are the most informed ones. There is a significant gender difference among those that chose "difficult to answer": 32% of men and 25% of women.

The respondents consider that in general little information on the activities of organizations and initiatives is available. In their opinion, sufficient information is available for none of the rated topics (Diagram 1).

Diagram.1

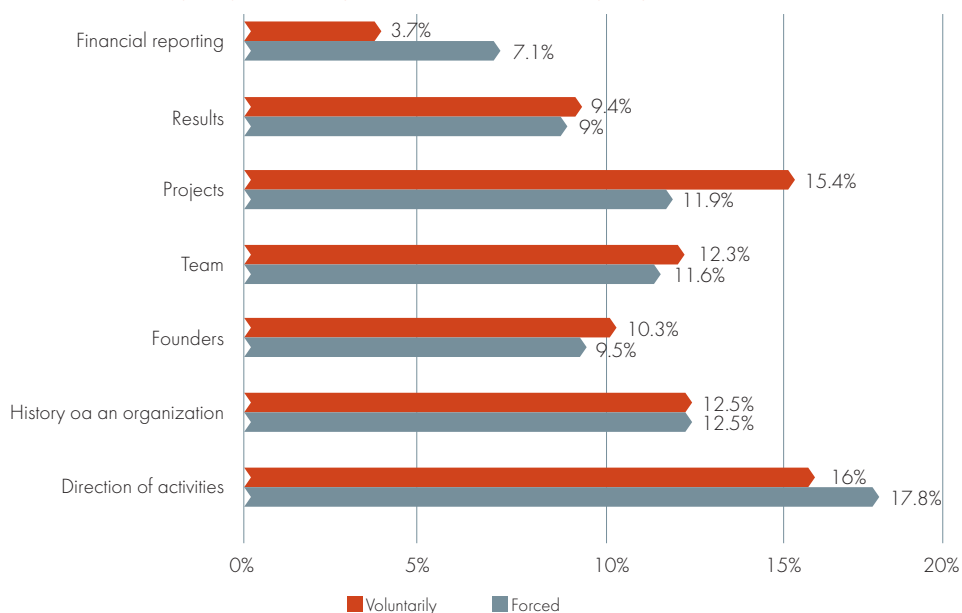
Distribution of answers to question 23 «Evaluate the availability of information on public organizations and civic initiatives on a five-point scale»



The survey has shown that the availability of information is considered insufficient by all respondents, regardless of whether they voluntarily or forcibly participate in social activities. There is some difference in the availability of the information about projects and financial reporting. The proportion of respondents who are informed about the finances is greater among those participating forcibly, and about projects - among those who take part voluntarily ( Diagram 2).

Diagram 2.

Comparison of the availability of information among the respondents who are forced to participate by management or by authorities, and those who participate voluntarily (answers «5», information completely available)



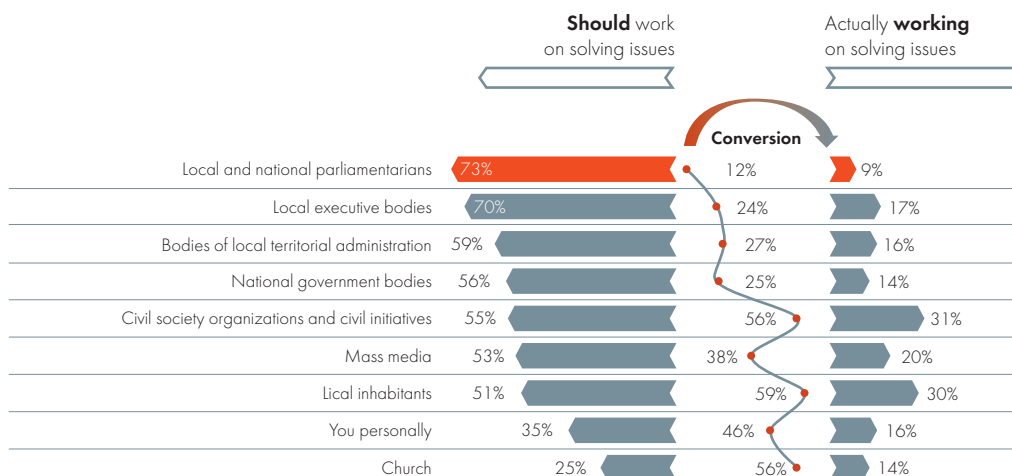
72% of those who know about the activities of organizations and initiatives would like to know more, 23% are not particularly interested (the answers "rather no than yes" - 13% and "no" - 10%). The largest share of those most interested in the activities of public organizations and initiatives is among the respondents 55+.

### II.1.2. Attitude towards to the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives

69% of respondents have a positive attitude to the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives, 27% do not see much sense in their activities (the answer "they do neither harm or good"), and 4% do not approve of such activities. There are more "negativists" among the respondents who are over 55 years old and among those who live in rural areas.

A third of the respondents consider activities of public organizations and collective actions of residents (civic initiatives) to be a real opportunity for solving local problems. This is almost twice as much as the share of those who believe that the executive and representative state bodies solve problems. Based on the survey data, it can be concluded that the expectations of the respondents regarding the activities of the representative state bodies in solving local problems are not met. Only 9% of the respondents believe that deputies are actually engaged in solving local problems. Slightly more than a third of the respondents believe that they should deal with issues of local communities on their own (35% of answers). Far more those who consider collective action more effective (51% of responses). In the opinion of 30% of the respondents, the collective actions actually work for solving local issues. (Diagram 3)

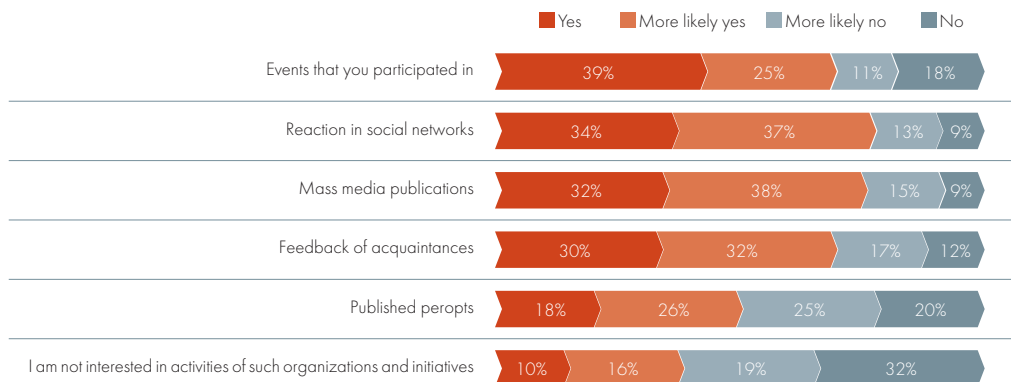
Diagram 3.  
Distribution of answers to question 12 «Who, in your opinion, should solve / actually solves problems of local communities?»



With age, the belief that the executive authorities must solve local problems decreases, and hopes for effectiveness of public organizations, collective actions and the media grows. The activity of public organizations is more noticeable in the cities with a population of more than 500 thousand (Minsk and Gomel) and is least noticeable in the rural areas (36% and 25% of respondents' answers, respectively). Residents in the rural areas are more individualistic: 50% of the respondents believe that they should solve problems on their own<sup>7</sup>.

The most important criterion for evaluating the activities of organizations and initiatives is respondents' own experience (Diagram 4).

Diagram 4.  
Distribution of the answers to the question 8. «Do you judge the effectiveness of the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives by ...»

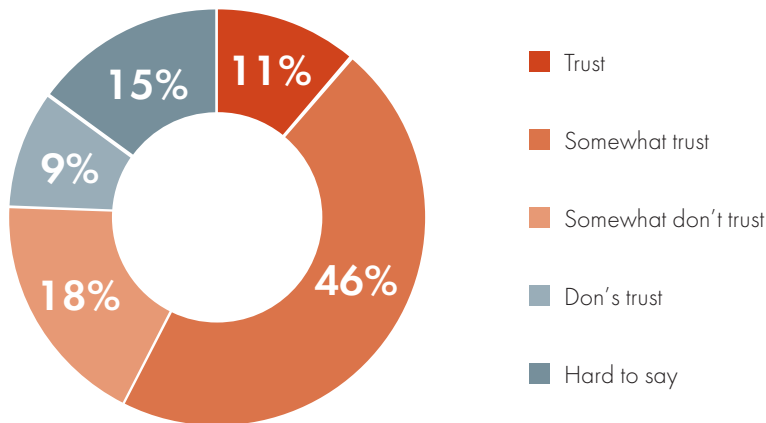


<sup>7</sup> For details check here: Дорошевич, М. Решение проблем местных сообществ <http://www.infopolicy.biz/?p=12955>

### II.1.3. Trust

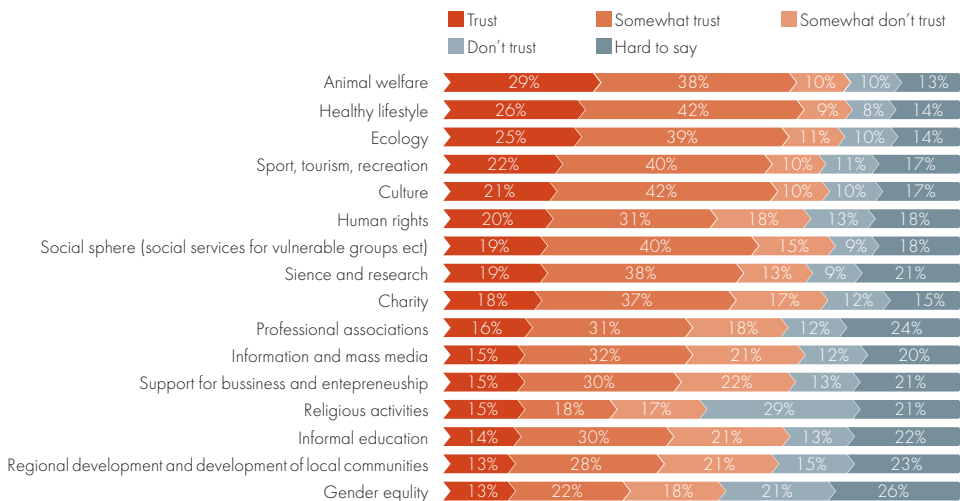
Regarding trust in the activities of public organizations and initiatives, a fifth of the respondents clearly defined their position (11% trust, 9% do not trust). (Diagram 4). The share of such respondents is the largest in the age group of 15-24. The activities of public organizations and civic initiatives are most trusted by students, by the respondents who are retired due to age, and by those living in cities, and working up to 40 hours a week. The lowest level of trust is among the unemployed respondents who are looking for job.

Diagram 5.  
Distribution of the answers to the question 21 «How much do you trust public organizations and civic initiatives in general?»



The respondents trust civic activities in the areas of animal welfare, healthy lifestyles, and the environment most (Diagram 6). A significant share of the respondents, aged 15-24, also trust cultural and human rights organizations and initiatives. Respondents aged 15-24 and 25-34 trust organizations and initiatives in the field of gender equality to a much greater extent (42% and 32% of answers, respectively) than the respondents 55 + (12% of answers).

Diagram 6.  
Distribution of the answers to the question 22 «How much do you trust public organizations and civic initiatives that work in the following areas?»



One of the 7 respondents trust charity organizations and initiatives, professional associations, civic activities in the fields of social services, science, information, support for business development, religion. One of the 6 trust organizations and initiatives involved in non-formal education, regional development, and gender equality issues. One of the 5 trust activities in the field of human rights, culture, sports and recreation. One of the 4 trust ecological activities and one of the 3 trust healthy lifestyle activities.

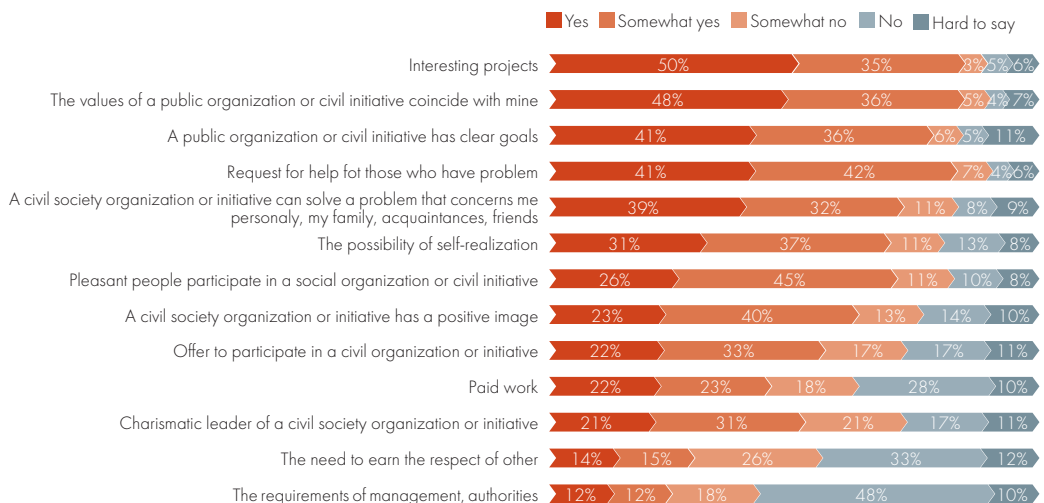
## II.2. Motivation

**Key incentives for participation: interesting projects, similarity of values, the desire to help others and clear goals of organizations and initiatives. The main barriers are lack of awareness about participation opportunities and lack of resources (time and competencies). 24.2% of the respondents take part in social activities forcibly (forced by management or by authorities). For the respondents who are on a disability pension, a serious barrier seems to be that they are not reached by civic activists.**

### II.2.1. Incentives

Diagram 7.

Distribution of the answers to the question 15. What encourage you to take part in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives?



For young citizens aged 15-24, interesting projects, opportunities for self-realization, contacts with interesting and nice people and paid work are more important than for older age groups. With age, the importance of such incentives as values pursued by organizations and initiatives and a request for help those in need increases. More than a half of the respondents replied that they voluntarily, without coercion from the management or authorities take part in activities of public organizations and civic initiatives. 24,2 % participate in these activities forcibly. The largest share of the respondents who participate in civil activities non-voluntarily is among respondents aged 15-24 and 35-44 years, the smallest - in the age group 45-54 (9%).

The opportunity of paid work and joint activities with pleasant people is somewhat more important for the respondents with higher education, and the need to earn the respect of others is more important for the respondents with secondary education.

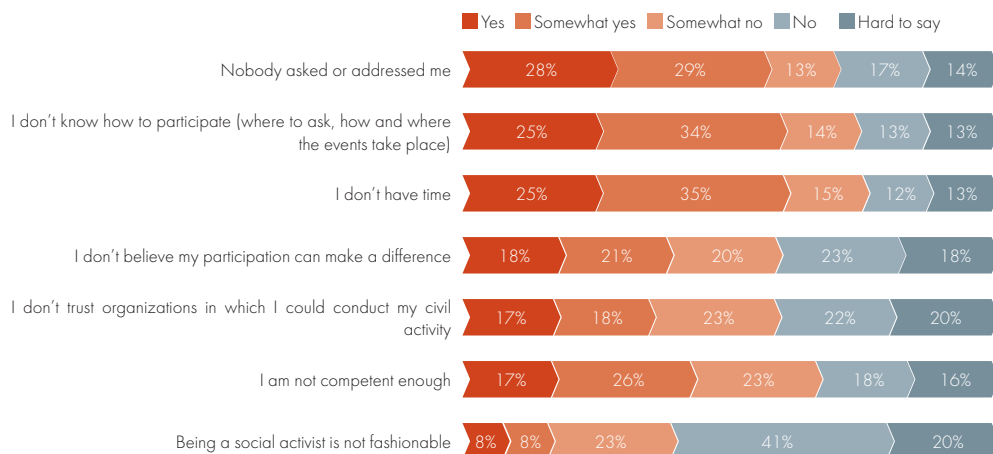
For the respondents who live in the rural areas, interesting projects (58% of the answers are "yes"), requests for help (51% of the answers are "yes"), pleasant people (36% of the answers are "yes") and paid work (37% "yes" ) are more important than for the urban residents.

## II.2.2. Barriers

Absence of information about “how specifically one can participate (where to go, where and how are activities carried out)”, insufficient engagement in the activities of organizations (“nobody asked me, nobody addressed me”), and the lack of time is named as the main barriers for participation (Diagram 8).

Diagram 8.

Distribution of answers to question 16 «What prevents you from participating in the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives?»



For young citizens aged 15-24, lack of skills and resources are more serious obstacles to participation than for respondents of all other age groups (all samples). (Table 1)

Table 1.

Question 16 «What prevents you from participating in the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives?» Distribution by age. The answers are «yes» and «rather yes».

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-74
I don't know how to participate (where to ask, how and where the events take place)	72%	64%	61%	47%	49%
I don't have time	68%	58%	61%	64%	50%
Nobody asked or addressed me	56%	54%	61%	48%	34%
I am not competent enough	52%	43%	44%	39%	34%
I don't believe my participation can make a difference	39%	39%	37%	34%	44%
I don't trust organizations in which I could conduct my civil activity	32%	30%	40%	34%	40%
Being a social activist is not fashionable	17%	13%	14%	14%	21%

For the respondents who are on a disability pension, a serious barrier seems to be that little effort is done to involve them in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives (38% of the answers are “yes” - “no one asked me, no one contacted me”). The respondents who neither have jobs nor study do not know where to go or where to apply for participation (32% of those who answered “yes”). The respondents who are retired consider themselves the least competent (21% of those who answered “yes”)<sup>8</sup>.

### II.3. Participation potential

**20% of the respondents are involved in the activities of public organizations and initiatives. The potential for participation is 3 times bigger (62% of responses). A third of the respondents expressed their readiness to support the initiatives of others, disseminate information, sign collective appeals, and participate in public discussions. The most acceptable types of volunteer activities: collecting things/products and raising awareness; the least acceptable- home at help and fundraising. Judging by the answers of the respondents, the thematic scope of the “third sector” activities does not fully correspond to the respondents’ perception of importance of the areas and the respondents’ willingness to participate in this activity.**

#### II.3.1 Participation

Among the respondents who know about civic organizations and initiatives in their locality and/or region, 20% are actively involved in their activities. The share of those participating is higher in the age groups of 15-24 and 55-74. There are no significant discrepancies between the responses of men and women (Table 2).

Table 2

Question 13 «Are you ready to take part in the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives?» The answer is «Yes, and I’m already actively participating now.» Age distribution.

	Age					Gender	
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-74	Male	Female
Yes, ready, and am currently actively participating	22%	17%	17%	22%	24%	20%	17%

Among the respondents actively engaged in civic activism, there are more students, retired people, and those who work more than 40 hours a week<sup>9</sup> (Table 3).

Table 3.

Question 13 «Are you ready to take part in the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives?» The answer is «Yes, and now I am actively participating» in the context of employment. Distribution by employment.

	Studying at school, college, university	Work less than 40 hours a week	Work 40 hours a week	Work over 40 hours a week	Не работаю, ищу работу	Unemployed, receiving a pension due age	Unemployed, receiving a disability pension	Not in education or employment
Yes, ready, and am currently actively participating	24%	17%	17%	23%	6%	25%	13	22

<sup>8</sup> The largest share of respondents’ answers in the corresponding answer option

<sup>9</sup> As a rule, they are those who do not have fixed work hours, freelancers or self-employed individuals.

The respondents are most interested in participating in the events and campaigns organized by public organizations and civic initiatives (54% of the respondents' answers). Only 4% of the respondents received assistance or services from public organizations. The survey also showed an interesting correlation between participation in the activities and membership in organizations and initiatives: 20% of the respondents actively participate in the activities, while 42% answered that they are members of organizations (Diagram 9). If this is indeed a real situation, then it can be argued that the issue of "formal membership" described in the OEEC analysis conducted in 2016 remains a serious challenge for public organizations.

Diagram 9.

Distribution of the answers to the question «If you participated in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives over the past year, then indicate what was the form of your participation?»



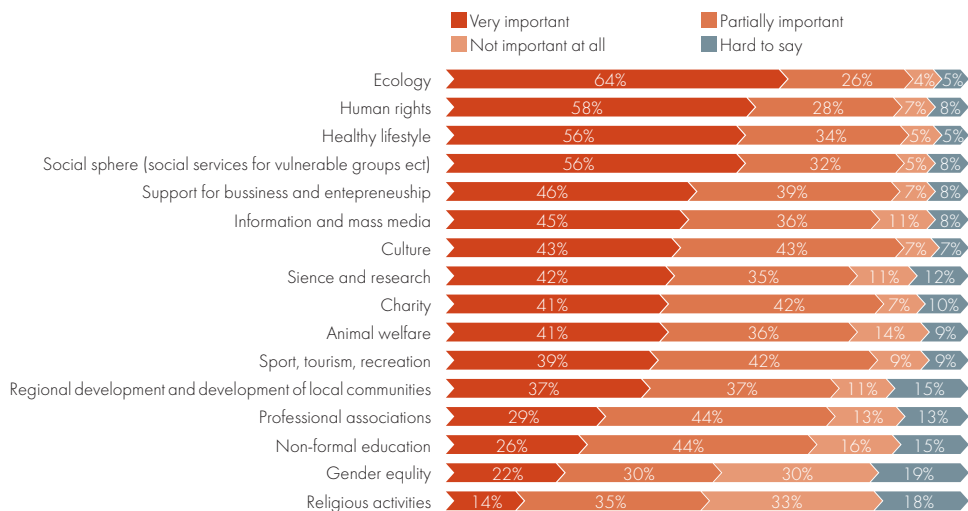
### II.3.2. Engagement

The degree of engagement in civic activism, as noted in the introduction, is primarily associated with awareness of the importance of the areas of this activities. From the point of view of the respondents, actions in the areas of ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyles, in the social services sphere, and in the field of support to business development and entrepreneurship is especially in demand (Top-5 answers "yes", whole sample). However, if we summarize the answers "yes" and "rather yes", the top five along with ecology and a healthy lifestyle will include culture, charity and sports/tourism/leisure (instead of human rights, social sphere and support for business and entrepreneurship) (Diagram 10).



Diagram 10.

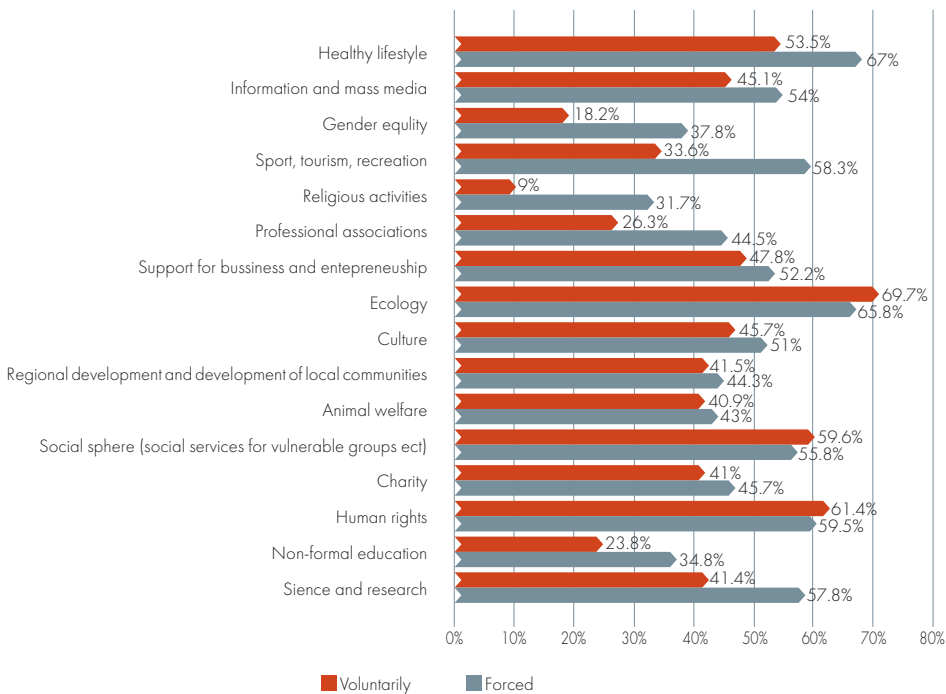
Distribution of answers to question 7 «In what areas the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives are currently most important in Belarus?»



Significant differences are indicated between the answers of those who participate in civic activities voluntarily and those who do it involuntarily. For “forced” activists, activities in the fields of science and research, sports / tourism / leisure, religious activities, the media, gender equality, a healthy lifestyle, and non-formal education are more important (Diagram 11)

Diagram 11.

Comparison of answers on the importance of the sphere of activity among those who participate in social activity voluntarily and those who participate forcibly



The attitude to the importance of the activities depends on the age and place of residence of the respondents. While ecology is equally important for all respondents, then human rights move to the second position for the age groups 25–34 and 45–54, and to the third one for the age group 55–74. The social sphere is more important for the respondents of 35-44 and 55-74 years old (second position) and less important for the respondents of 25-34 years old (fifth position). Business support is more important for the respondents of 25-44 years old. Among the five most important for the respondents aged 15-24 is science, 45-44 - charity, 55-74 – informing.

Only for the respondents who live in the cities with a population of more than 500 thousand, support for business and entrepreneurship development remains in the top five list. In all other types of settlements positions 4 and 5 are occupied by culture and information.

There are no significant differences in the answers of men and women. For example, 21% of men and 21% of women consider gender issues to be important. The only significant discrepancy in assessing the importance of civic activism is in the sphere of healthy lifestyle (52% of men and 59% of women).

As noted earlier, interest and attention to certain issues largely determine the willingness to participate in civic activism. No less important is the degree of the awareness and trust (Diagram 12, Diagram 13 and Diagram 6).

Diagram 12.  
Willingness to participate depending on the importance and degree of trust

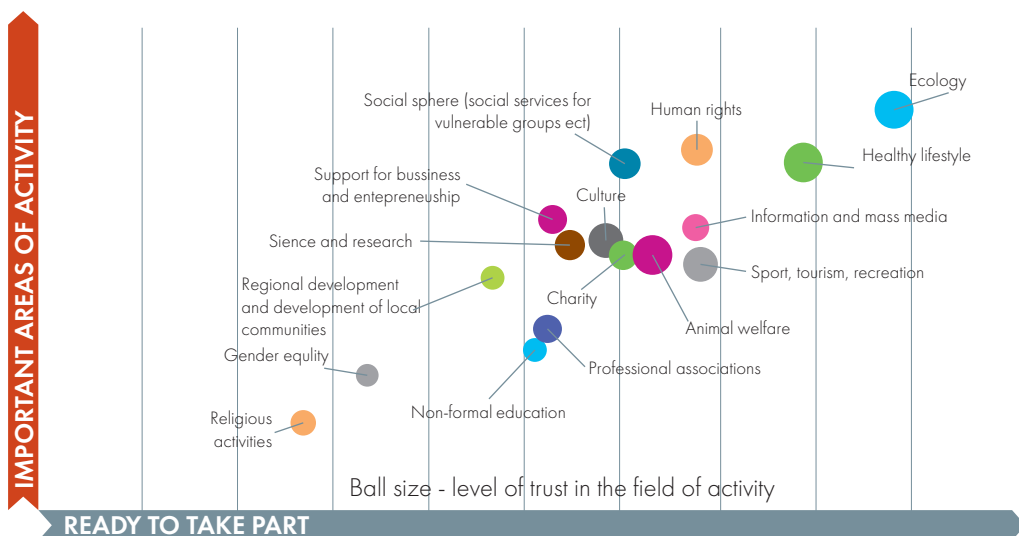


Diagram 12.  
Trust and willingness to give 1% of taxes to finance the activities of public organizations and initiatives<sup>11</sup>



In general, 11% of the respondents are confident that they will take part in civic activities, 51% do not exclude this possibility, 12% are not ready to participate, and 7% found it difficult to answer. Willingness to participate is lower at the age of 35-54 years, as well as among the respondents who are looking for job and those who are on a disability pension. Most respondents who are confident that they will participate in the activities of public organizations live in rural areas (15% of the answers are "I am sure that I will"). However, among them there are fewer (compared with residents of other types of settlements) of those who do not exclude this possibility.

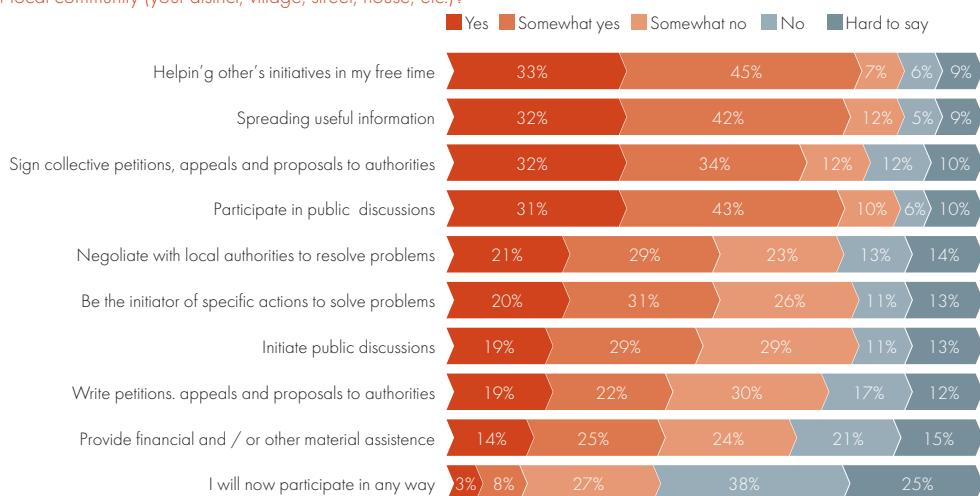
<sup>11</sup> For details check here: Дорошевич, М [2020] Готовность к участию в общественных организациях и инициативах. <http://www.infopolicy.biz/?p=12742>

### II.3.3. Forms and types of activism

Most of the respondents are ready to help to the initiatives of others and to take part in public discussions ("yes" and "rather yes" responses - Diagram 13).

Diagram 13.

Distribution of the answers to the question 18. "How ready are you to participate in the process of solving relevant problems of your local community (your district, village, street, house, etc.)?"

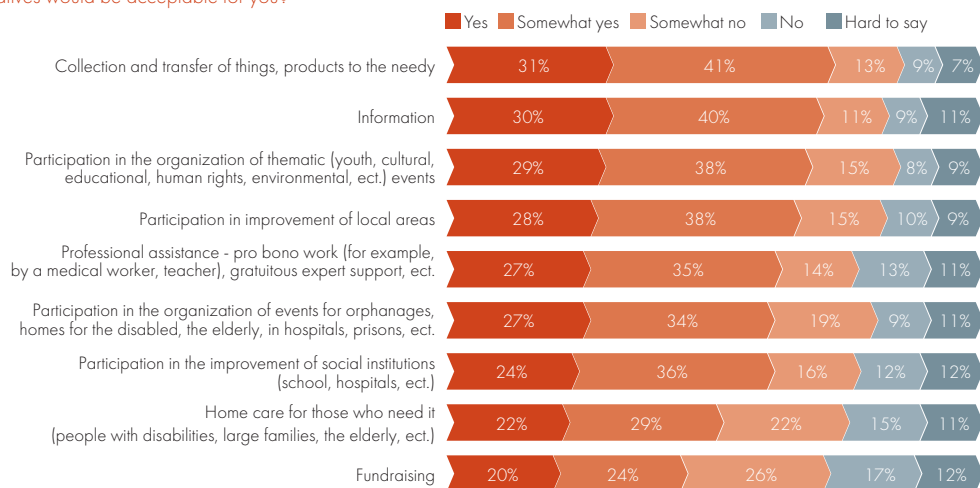


3% of men and 6% of women replied that they were not attracted to any of the proposed types of activities. There are slight differences in the answers of men and women on the issues of spreading information (50 and 55%, respectively), participation in public meetings (46 and 52%, respectively) and negotiating with local authorities (32 and 37%, respectively). The respondents who are ready to initiate specific actions (59%) and to help the initiatives of others (85%) are most likely to be the residents of rural areas. More than half of respondents from all age groups are ready to help others' initiatives and about a third are ready to initiate specific actions.

From one-fifth to one-third of the respondents are ready to take part in various types of volunteer activities (Diagram 14).

Diagram 14.

Distribution of answers to question 19 "What types of volunteer participation in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives would be acceptable for you?"



The most acceptable type of volunteering for the respondents aged 15-24 is participation in organizing thematic events (79% of answers), 25-34 - collecting things for those in need and participating in organizing thematic events (72 and 73% respectively), 35-44 – informing and participating in the organization of thematic events (66 and 64%), 45-54 years - collecting things for those in need and participation in land improvement (73 and 71%), 55-74 - landscaping (78%). In the rural areas, participation in land improvement comes to the fore. The respondents in the regional centers and in Minsk are more likely to take part in informing and collecting things for those in need. (70 and 71% of responses, respectively).

The greatest readiness for volunteer work was shown in the answers of the respondents of 15-24 years old and of 55-74 years old living in rural areas. Informing and fundraising is more interesting for young women, and participation in organizing events for orphanages is more interesting for young men.

#### **11.3.4. Thematic scope of the third sector activities and participation potential**

According to the study “Civil society of Belarus: current status and development conditions”, most organizations and initiatives operate in the fields of social services (20%) and culture (24%). Least - in the areas of information and media (1%), regional development (3%), gender equality (4%) and human rights (4%)<sup>12</sup>. In other words, organizations whose activities are related to social well-being number most. The organizations associated with the problems of «new social movements» are the least numerous.

The answers of respondents about the relevance and willingness to participate in certain areas of activity of public organizations and civic initiatives indicate that the structure of the “third sector” does not correspond to the existing participation potential. An analysis of the respondents’ answers allows us to conclude that, the agenda of “new social movements” comes to the fore<sup>13</sup> (ecology, human rights, animal welfare, healthy lifestyle) (Diagrams 9 and 10).

During the discussions of the survey results with the representatives of public organizations and civic initiatives conducted online in June 2020, representatives of organizations working in the areas of “human rights”, “gender equality” emphasized a mismatch of their impression of the participation potential with the data obtained. The discussion has led to the general conclusion that to solve this issue, it is necessary

- 1) to conduct studies to identify public awareness of the goals and essence of the areas of civic activism (first of all - in the field of human rights)
- 2) strive to describe goals, objectives, activities not only in simple terms but also in understandable “cases” that are as close as possible to the real life, and to emphasize the legitimacy of these activities.

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<sup>12</sup> «Гражданское общество Беларуси: актуальное состояние и условия развития» <https://cet.eurobelarus.info/ru/library/publication/2018/10/11/grazhdanskoe-obschestvo-belarusi-aktual-noe-sostoyanie-i-1810110900.html>

<sup>13</sup> New social movements (NSMs) appeared from the 1960s onward. These movements are seen as “new” in contrast to the “old” working class movement identified by Marxist theory as the major challenger to capitalist society. By contrast, NSMs are organized around gender, race, ethnicity, youth, sexuality, spirituality, countercultures, environmentalism, animal rights, pacifism, human rights, and the like

### III. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the answers of respondents showed the presence of significant potential:

- ▶ 71% of respondents know about the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives in their region/city, 72% out of these respondents would like to know more about them,
- ▶ the number of respondents who are ready to take part in the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives is three times larger than those who are already involved in their activities,
- ▶ voluntary participation prevails, but 24, 2% of respondents said that they are forced to participate by authorities,
- ▶ 69% have a positive attitude towards civic activism, but only 11% fully trust this activity,
- ▶ One-third of respondents expressed their readiness to support the initiatives of others, disseminate information, sign collective appeals, and participate in public discussions,
- ▶ 55% of respondents believe that organizations should solve local problems, but only 33% say that this takes place actually,
- ▶ Respondents consider ecology, human rights, a healthy lifestyle, social services for vulnerable groups and support for business and entrepreneurship as the most in-demand areas of activity of public organizations and civic initiatives,
- ▶ civic activities in the fields of animal welfare, healthy lifestyle, ecology, sports, culture are the most trusted ones,
- ▶ Respondents are most likely to take part in the activities of environmental and human rights organizations and in initiatives in the field of a healthy lifestyle, sports, dissemination of information and media,
- ▶ The highest participation potential is among residents of villages and rural towns aged 15-24 years,
- ▶ Formal membership remains a serious challenge for public organizations and initiatives: 40% of respondents are members of organizations, but only 20% of respondents reported that they participate in the activities of public organizations and initiatives.

#### **To realize the existing potential, it is important to:**

- ▶ Inform citizens more widely about the activities of public organizations and civic initiatives, including:
  - projects,
  - values and goals,
  - participation opportunities.
- ▶ Consider the need to develop strategies aimed at building confidence in civil activities.
- ▶ Consider the need for research and development of action plans aimed at identifying gaps and the formation of competencies necessary for participation in public activities
- ▶ Actively engage in solving the problems of local communities.
- ▶ More actively involve underrepresented groups in public activities<sup>14</sup>.
- ▶ To link action strategies with the agenda of new social movements (ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyles) both to attract supporters and to compensate for the inconsistency of the thematic spectrum of activities of the "third sector" with public awareness of urgent issues and the willingness to take part in the relevant activities .
- ▶ Consider and use the possibilities of developing action plans for civic engagement, considering the data, disaggregated by gender, age, education, employment and type of settlement

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<sup>14</sup> Millennium Forum Declaration and Program of Action "We Peoples: Strengthening the United Nations in the 21st Century (2000)  
[https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/declarations/forumdec\\_dec\\_a.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/declarations/forumdec_dec_a.shtml)

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