

BISS POLITICAL MEDIABAROMETER (October - December 2013)

Introduction

The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) presents its seventh quarterly report ***BISS Political Media Barometer (October - December 2013)***. It sums up the Belarusian political forces' media performance in 2013 and offers information on the forces' political communications and their media coverage. The report presents both tendencies typical of 2013 on the whole and trends characteristic of the fourth quarter in particular.

Following our mission as a non-partisan, independent Belarusian think-tank we designed this product with one major goal in mind: to scientifically analyze the quality of the political communication between the democratic Belarusian political forces and the society and contribute to its improvement.

To accomplish this goal, the BISS Political Media Barometer objectively and quantitatively evaluates media appearances of 24 individual politicians, 13 Belarusian political forces and two coalitions, basing on the systemic monitoring of the available open media sources.

The analysis of political communications throughout the year has led us to a number of conclusions about the overall development of the independent political communications field, as well as the most and the least successful communication strategies pursued by the political forces. The report also concludes that preparations to the local elections did not have a considerable impact in the independent political forces' communications.

The authors of the *BISS Political Media Barometer* are grateful to the International Board of the project for their insightful comments and recommendations. We are open to discussion on the research methodology, dimensions of analysis and data interpretation. All responsibility for any errors or shortcomings rests solely with the BISS.

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Summary and recommendations

Overview of the political communications field

The present report covers the political communications field from October to December 2013. Below we give our basic research findings.

- **The number of political communications increased dramatically.** The time span from October to December 2013 was marked by a spike in political communications. The number of references to the political forces and individual politicians in the analyzed sources grew from 3,217 in the third quarter to 5,998 in the fourth. There were several factors that boosted interest to the political sphere. First and foremost, it was Paval Sieviaryniec's release; the politician immediately went to number one in the quantitative index of total presence in the information field. The second driving force in the political communications field was the BPF Party, which celebrated its 25th anniversary. Furthermore, the events in Ukraine and three years since the presidential election of 19 December 2010 brought the political subjects in general into the spotlight.
- **The structure of the political communications field remained unchanged.** Paval Sieviaryniec's release as a 'personal story' made him a major newsmaker during the analyzed time span. This, however, did not alter the structure of the communications field in terms of the topics, pro-activeness in communications and the levels of the covered events. Under similar circumstances there had been an upsurge in the media coverage of repressions, personal events and passive communications before. Yet, the fourth quarter of 2013 r. did not demonstrate these trends. The leaders of the political communications field deserve credit for maintaining the balance of communications' contents and staying focused on relevant topics.
- **The local elections received low-key coverage.** Although the fourth quarter of 2013 was supposed to be marked by active preparation for the upcoming local elections, this did not have any essential influence on the structure of communications. From this perspective, the performance in the political communications field can be regarded as unsuccessful. Firstly, the weight of elections-related communications went down as compared to the previous time span. The proportion of regional events, which should have gone up as the local elections were approaching, remained unchanged, making up 15%. The share of references to parties as parts of coalitions showed a downward trend, too. Moreover, the coverage of economic issues, which are a number one priority for the general population and consequently should have been brought into the spotlight in the run-up to the elections, fell from 10% to 8%. At the same time the information about economic initiatives accounted for only 0.6% of all the initiatives that received coverage. Events aimed at the electorate were at a low level, meetings with electorate making up only 3% of all offline activities.
- **The coalitions showed comparatively low levels of communication activity.** The present report includes a detailed analysis of the communications by two political coalitions, namely the 'People's Referendum' campaign and the Civic Alliance *Talaka* for Just and Fair Elections for a Better Life. In general they are characterised by relatively low communication activity. The 'People's Referendum' came ninth in the total presence index for political forces, while the *Talaka* held

the 15th position. The communications of the 'People's Referendum' campaign look much more effective, showing a greater proportion of offline activities, proactive communications and diversification of its representatives. However, the overall share of references to parties as parts of coalitions was below 10%, which was a major drawback in their communication strategy. The positive aspect was that economic issues accounted for a large proportion of topics covered in the communications by the coalitions.

The following table describes major trends in the dynamics of political forces' and actors' communication performance. They are interpreted further in the text.

Trends in July – September 2013	Trends in October – December 2013
Where and how the opposition speaks	
There remained a considerable share of the independent press, namely 10%. The share of independent online resources went up from 43% to 58% due to more active use of politicians' own online resources, while the proportion of partisan resources dropped from 38% to 28%.	The share of the independent Belarusian press fell to 3%, while the proportion of online resources rose up to 59%. The share of the political actors' and forces' own channels of communication showed a certain growth rather than a fall, the partisan portals increasing their share of communications to 31%.
International relations went down in the topic rating. Social issues showed a growth from 40% to 45%, while the proportion of references to repressions increased from 17% to 26%.	The distribution of topics remained unchanged, with social issues and internal politics in the lead (48% and 42%, respectively). In the fourth quarter neither the elections nor political repressions acquired any extra weight.
The share of national events dropped because of a slight growth in regional events – from 12% to 15% – and a dramatic growth in personal events – from 12% to 29%. International events were covered in only 9% of communications, which constituted a marked fall as compared to 24% in the previous quarter.	The proportion of international events went up from 9% to 20%. The reasons were the Eastern Partnership Summit on 28 – 29 November and an active discussion of the developments in Ukraine. The share of personal events dropped to 18%.
Throughout the analyzed time span the share of communications related to offline activities remained rather high. Having reached the peak of 57% in July, it never fell below the 40% line.	The share of related to offline activities remained rather high. It peaked at 49% in October and November, to fall slightly in December, making up 41%. (It is now absolutely clear that the levels of offline activity are not subject to seasonal changes, as in October – December 2012 they fluctuated between 9% and 24%.)

The proportion of 'reactive' communications went back to normal due to a growth in 'passive' communications. After a fall to 6% the share of 'proactive' communications got back to 14%.	There were minor changes in the levels of activeness in communications. The proportion of 'proactive' communications rose to 20%, while the share of 'passive' ones did not increase.
Types of representation of political forces in the media	
The share of references to political actors without mentioning their affiliation grew from 27% to 35%.	The proportion of references to individual politicians without mentioning their affiliation was still at a quite high level, showing a growth to 38%.
The proportion of individuals who are not members of political parties grew considerably. There was a slight increase in the representation of regional rank-and-file activists, which made up 3%.	The types of representation of political forces became more diverse. Rank-and-file activists were mentioned in 11% of the communications.
If we take the total number of references to political forces and actors, the share of women went back to 16%.	There was a marked fall in the share of female representatives, from 16% to 9%.
Political forces were presented as members of coalitions in 22% of references, which was an all-time maximum throughout the research.	The proportion of references to political forces as members of coalitions dropped to 10%. The coalitions were mentioned in 6% of communications.
The share of references to politicians as participants in the events fell to 32%, while the proportion of general reasoning grew to 33%.	The proportions of references to politicians as participants in the events and experts remained unchanged: in 32% of communications they were presented as participants in the events, while in 34% of communications they came up with some general reasoning.
Over 90% of communications did not include any evaluation of political actors or forces.	There was a slight growth in the number of evaluations of political actors and forces. Individual politicians were mentioned without any evaluation in 87% of cases, while for political forces this figure made up 84%.

Detailed research findings

Quantitative index

1. Total presence in the information field for individual politicians and political forces by the number of references

The individual politicians' rating underwent essential changes. Paval Sieviaryniec went to the top for the first time since the research was launched. As we are going to explain further in the text, it was not only owing to 'passive' communications, initiated by the media because of his release, but also due to his active presence in the information field throughout the analyzed quarter. Paval Sieviaryniec quickly plunged himself into the work of the Belarusian Christian Democracy and commented on the overall situation in the political sphere. At the same time it is important that the share of personal events as compared to the previous quarter dropped, in spite of the leader's 'personal story' with its powerful news-making potential.

The following political actors also improved their standing in the rating: Vitaľ Rymašeŭski (from the 8th to the 3rd position), Zianon Paźniak (from the 20th to the 9th position), Juraś Hubarevič (from the 17th to the 13th position), Ryhor Kastusioŭ and Siarhiej Kaliakin (they both rose by one point, to the 14th and the 15th positions, respectively), Lieŭ Marholin (from the 18th to the 17th position) and Dźmitry Vus (from the 23rd to the 21st position).

Iryna Chalip and Andrej Sańnikaŭ plummeted down from the 5th to the 20th and from the 3rd to the 7th positions, respectively, their personal situation probably being a major factor in how much media attention they get. Volha Karač and Andrej Dźmitryjeŭ also moved down in the rating, from the 14th to the 22nd and from the 6th to the 11th positions, respectively. The drop in the number of references to the latter two may be attributed to their private circumstances, as they both had babies in the fourth quarter of 2013.

The other politicians' rating position dynamics was insignificant, mainly caused by the emergence of Paval Sieviaryniec as the new leader and the inclusion of Žmicier Daškevič into the list.

Table 1. Total presence in the information field for individual politicians

Politicians	Number of references	Total presence index	Position in the rating	Rating position dynamics (the rating position in July – September is given in the brackets)
1. Paval Sieviaryniec	377	1957	1	↑(10)
2. Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ	400	1831	2	↓(1)
3. Anatoľ Liabiedźka	405	1659	3	↓(2)
4. Žmicier Daškevič	278	1540	4	
5. Aliaksiej Janukievič	289	1411	5	↓(4)
6. Vitaľ Rymašeŭski	212	1167	6	↑(8)
7. Andrej Sańnikaŭ	170	1004	7	↓(3)
8. Aliaksandr Milinkievič	171	694	8	↓(7)
9. Zianon Paźniak	151	606	9	↑(20)
10. Maryna Adamovič	136	558	10	↑(11)
11. Andrej Dźmitryjeŭ	146	552	11	↓(6)
12. Stanislau Šuškievič	90	527	12	=(12)
13. Juraś Hubarevič	111	465	13	↑(17)
14. Ryhor Kastusioŭ	81	442	14	↑(15)
15. Siarhiej Kaliakin	88	396	15	↑(16)
16. Alieh Hajdukievič	54	389	16	↓(13)
17. Lieŭ Marholin	110	361	17	↑(18)

18. Nastaśsia Daškevič (Palažanka)	62	354	18	↓(9)
19. Viktor Karniajenka	54	245	19	=(19)
20. Iryna Chalip	37	191	20	↓(5)
21. Dzmitry Vus	31	139	21	↑(23)
22. Volha Karač	62	120	22	↓(14)
23. Siarhiej Hajdukievič	18	111	23	↓(21)
24. Iryna Vieštard	19	47	24	↓(22)

2. Individual politicians: media presence vs. their own communications

The share of individual politicians' own communications dropped for all of them except for Maryna Adamovič and Dzmitry Vus. This can be viewed as a general trend for the independent political communications field.

However, for many politicians the absolute numbers of their own communications either did not fall or fell only insignificantly. The decrease in the proportion of the politicians' own communications can be attributed to the growth in the number of media references.

The potential of the politicians' own communications is limited, and even important news-making opportunities have not led to a growth in this variable in the last few research periods.

Table 2. Individual politicians: media coverage vs. their own communications

Politicians	Media coverage ¹		Their own communications ²		Share of their own communications in the total presence	Dynamics of the share of the politicians' own communications ³
	Number of references	Index	Number of references	Index		
1. Pavel Sieviaryniec	322 (47)	1902	55 (23)	55	15%	↓(33%)
2. Uladzimir Nialkajeu	352 (169)	1783	48 (54)	48	12%	↓(24%)
3. Anatol Liabiedzka	263 (134)	1517	142 (129)	142	35%	↓(49%)
4. Zmicier Daškevič	252 (58)	1514	26 (-)	26	9%	
5. Aliaksiej Janukievič	232 (94)	1354	57 (56)	57	20%	↓(37%)
6. Vital Rymašeŭski	154 (56)	1109	58 (40)	58	27%	↓(42%)
7. Andrej Saŭnikaŭ	159 (116)	993	11 (22)	11	6%	↓(16%)
8. Aliaksandr Milinkievič	141 (67)	664	30 (46)	30	18%	↓(41%)
9. Zianon Paźniak	137 (22)	592	14 (5)	14	9%	↓(19%)
10. Maryna Adamovič	85 (53)	507	51 (23)	51	38%	↑(30%)
11. Andrej Dzmitryjeu	97 (72)	503	49 (59)	49	34%	↓(45%)
12. Stanislau Šuškievič	90 (43)	527			0%	↓(30%)
13. Juraš Hubarevič	72 (24)	426	39 (42)	39	35%	↓(64%)
14. Ryhor Kastusioŭ	64 (30)	425	17 (19)	17	21%	↓(39%)
15. Siarhiej Kaliakin	82 (27)	390	6 (37)	6	7%	↓(58%)
16. Alieh Hajdukievič	51 (26)	386	3 (6)	3	6%	↓(19%)
17. Lieu Marholin	61 (19)	312	49 (37)	49	45%	↓(66%)
18. Nastaśsia Daškevič (Palažanka)	55 (28)	347	7 (27)	7	11%	↓(32%)
19. Viktor Karniajenka	52 (14)	243	2 (9)	2	4%	↓(39%)
20. Iryna Chalip	37 (83)	191				
21. Dzmitry Vus	31 (10)	139				
22. Volha Karač	19 (38)	77	43 (24)	43	69%	↑(39%)
23. Siarhiej Hajdukievič	15 (12)	108	3 (3)	3	17%	↓(20%)
24. Iryna Vieštard	15 (10)	43	4 (13)	4	21%	↓(57%)

¹ The number of references in July – September 2013 is given in brackets.

² The number of references in July – September 2013 is given in brackets.

³ The share in July – September 2013 is given in the brackets.

3. Political forces: total presence in the information field, media coverage and their own communications

The BPF Party rose from the second position in the previous quarter to the first. The Belarusian Christian Democracy came second. It was the first time within a long period that the campaign 'Tell the Truth!' had not come top but gone down to the fourth position, giving way to the United Civil Party, which took the third place.

Furthermore, the Young Front rose from the sixth to the fifth position and the BPF Conservative Christian Party moved from the thirteenth to the eighth place. Thus, the final quarter of 2013 was marked by an increased media presence of the right political forces, albeit for quite different reasons.

Among the significant events that had an impact on the BPF Party's media presence was its 25th jubilee. A number of events were held to celebrate it, including a meeting of the party's Sojm (Board). The 25th anniversary since the creation of the Organizing Committee to establish the *Adradžeńnie* Belarusian People's Front also drove up the media presence figures for the BPF Conservative Christian Party and Zianon Paźniak. In addition, the rally in Kurapaty at *Dziady* (Forefathers' commemoration day) and the party's deputy chairperson Juraś Bielieński's controversial statement on the use of Russian were relevant factors in the BPF Conservative Christian Party's increased media presence. The BPF Party's representatives also often appeared in the media in connection with Viktor Ivaškevič's death. Furthermore, the picketing in protest against the deployment of Russian Air Force Bases in Belarus also contributed to the BPF Party's increased media presence.

The rise in the Belarusian Christian Democracy's media presence was first and foremost due to the release of their leader Paval Sieviaryniec, who immediately became actively engaged in political work. The key factor in the increased media presence of the Young Front was their eighth convention on 26 October 2013.

Interestingly enough, neither the participation in the 'People's Referendum' coalition, nor the forthcoming local elections strengthened the standing of the campaign 'Tell the Truth!', the Movement 'For Freedom' and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party *Hramada* in the political communications field.

By the total presence index the 'People's Referendum' campaign found itself in the middle of the political forces' rating with 248 references and 986 index points. The *Talaka* Alliance came last but one, with 43 references and 186 index points.

Table 3. Total presence of political forces in the information field

Political forces	Number of references	Total presence index	Position in the rating	Dynamics of the position in the rating ⁴
1. BPF Party	724	3634	1	↑(2)
2. Organising committee to create the Belarusian Christian Democracy party	679	3411	2	↑(4)
3. United Civil Party	692	2690	3	=(3)
4. Civil Campaign «Tell the Truth!»	573	2198	4	↓(1)
5. «Young Front»	393	2058	5	↑(6)
6. Movement «For Freedom»	310	1326	6	↓(5)
7. Civil campaign «European Belarus»	155	1124	7	↑(11)
8. Conservative Christian Party – BPF	181	1009	8	↑(13)
9. «People's Referendum» campaign	248	986	9	
10. Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Assembly)	209	876	10	↓(7)
11. Liberal Democratic Party	107	759	11	↓(8)
12. Belarusian United Left Party «A Just World»	149	742	12	↓(9)
13. Public Association «For Fair Elections»	51	210	13	↓(12)
14. Civic Alliance <i>Talaka</i> for Just and Fair Elections for a Better Life	43	186	14	
15. Civil campaign «Our House»	79	159	15	↓(10)

A fall in the proportion of their own communications was typical of all the political forces. At the same time the Belarusian Christian Democracy, the United Civil Party and the Young Front increased the absolute number of their own communications. There was a fall both in the shares and numbers of their own communications among such key players of the 'People's Referendum' campaign as the BPF Party, the campaign 'Tell the Truth!' and the Movement 'For Freedom'. However, the coalition itself had very substantial figures of both the proportion and the number of its own communications: 48% (a maximum for all the analyzed political forces) with 120 references at its own resources.

⁴ The position in July – September 2013 is given in the brackets.

Table 4. Political forces: media coverage vs. their own communications

Political forces	Media coverage		Their own communications		Share of their own communications in the total presence	Dynamic s of the share of their own communications ⁵
	Number of references ⁶	Index	Number of references ⁷	Index		
1. BPF Party	635 (243)	3545	89 (155)	89	12%	↓(39%)
2. Organizing committee to create the Belarusian Christian Democracy	479 (150)	3212	200 (150)	200	29%	↓(50%)
3. United Civil Party	410 (171)	2408	282 (223)	282	41%	↓(57%)
4. Civil Campaign «Tell the Truth!»	415 (236)	2040	158 (219)	158	28%	↓(52%)
5. «Young Front»	324 (105)	1989	69 (38)	69	18%	↓(27%)
6. Movement «For Freedom»	227 (127)	1243	83 (143)	83	27%	↓(53%)
7. Civil campaign «European Belarus»	153 (44)	1122	2 (10)	2	1%	↓(19%)
8. Conservative Christian Party – BPF	179 (25)	1007	2 (8)	2	1%	↓(24%)
9. «People's Referendum» campaign	128	866	120	120	48%	
10. Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Assembly)	157 (62)	824	52 (10)	52	25%	↓(48%)
11. Liberal Democratic Party	96 (41)	748	11 (10)	11	10%	↓(20%)
12. Belarusian United Left Party «A Just World»	141 (48)	734	8 (51)	8	5%	↓(52%)
13. Public Association «For Fair Elections»	51 (31)	210				
14. Civic Alliance Talaka for Just and Fair Elections for a Better Life	6	6	37	180	14%	
15. Civil campaign «Our House»	58 (41)	58	21 (57)	101	73%	↑ (58%)

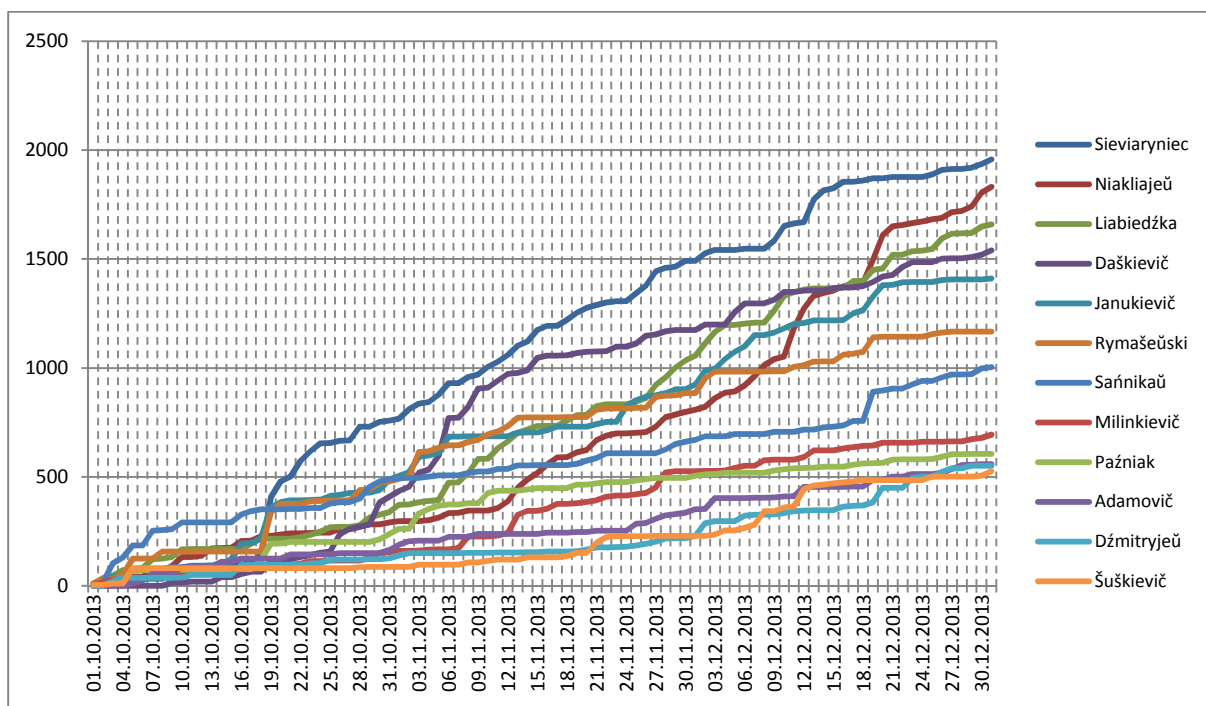
⁵ The share in July – September 2013 is given in the brackets.⁶ The number of references in July – September 2013 is given in brackets.⁷ The number of references in July – September 2013 is given in brackets.

4. Total presence dynamics in time

Unlike the previous analyzed time spans, in October – December 2013 the dynamics of quantitative index accumulation for individual politicians was not marked by any significant spikes, with the indices being accumulated evenly. This was particularly true for the rating leader Paval Sieviaryniec. Although his release on 19 October put him in the focus of media attention, the quantitative index accumulation rate shows that his media presence did not drop in the following months.

There was a slight surge in the total presence index accumulation for such political actors as Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ, Aliaksiej Janukievič and Andrej Sańnikaŭ on 19 December, three years after the voting day in 2010 and the events that followed. Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ's index accumulation rate also went up after his speech at Euromaydan in Kyiv on 8 December. Źmicier Daškevič showed another considerable upsurge in his index beginning from the Young Front convention on 26 October. Then he found himself in the focus of media attention due to the information that his wife was expecting a baby and his detention on 6 November, followed by three days' arrest.

Chart 5. Accumulation of the total presence index for individual politicians



Overall, even accumulation of quantitative indices was also typical of the political forces. They fell into three groups by the index accumulation rate and its final figure.

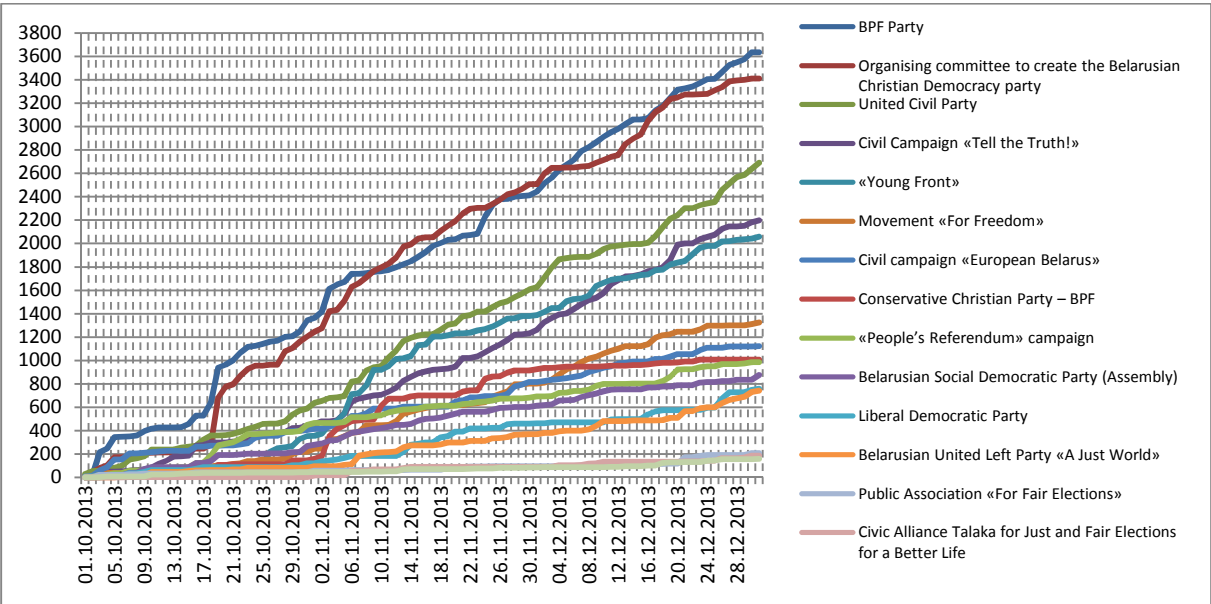
The first one consists of the BPF Party and the Belarusian Christian Democracy, which led in the rating in the fourth quarter of 2013. The major events that helped the BPF Party make the news, ensuring its presence in the political communications field, were distributed evenly, so that the media kept the party in the focus of their attention all the time. This type of media presence dynamics can serve as an example of sound media strategy planning, by the political force. The Belarusian Christian Democracy, just like its leader Paval Sieviaryniec, maintained high index accumulation rate and extensive media presence. This can also result from the fact that the media invariably mention Paval Sieviaryniec's political affiliation, which leads to a growth in references to the party and its recognition. The BPF Party and the Belarusian Christian Democracy demonstrated an upsurge in their index accumulation rates in the second decade of October, the former

due to the celebration of the party’s 25th anniversary and the latter because of Paval Sieviaryniec’s release.

The second group includes the United Civil Party, the campaign ‘Tell the Truth!’ and the Young Front. Traditional leaders in the ratings, the campaign ‘Tell the Truth!’ and the UCP couldn’t keep up with the new leaders, who showed extensive media presence and high index accumulation rates. Meanwhile, the fact that the Young Front is included here does credit to the organization. After a hike in the media attention during the convention, its index accumulation rate went down, but the Young Front managed to show much better performance than the political forces in the third group.

The third group includes political forces characterized by homogeneous index accumulation rates and final outcomes.

Chart 6. Accumulation of the total presence index for political forces



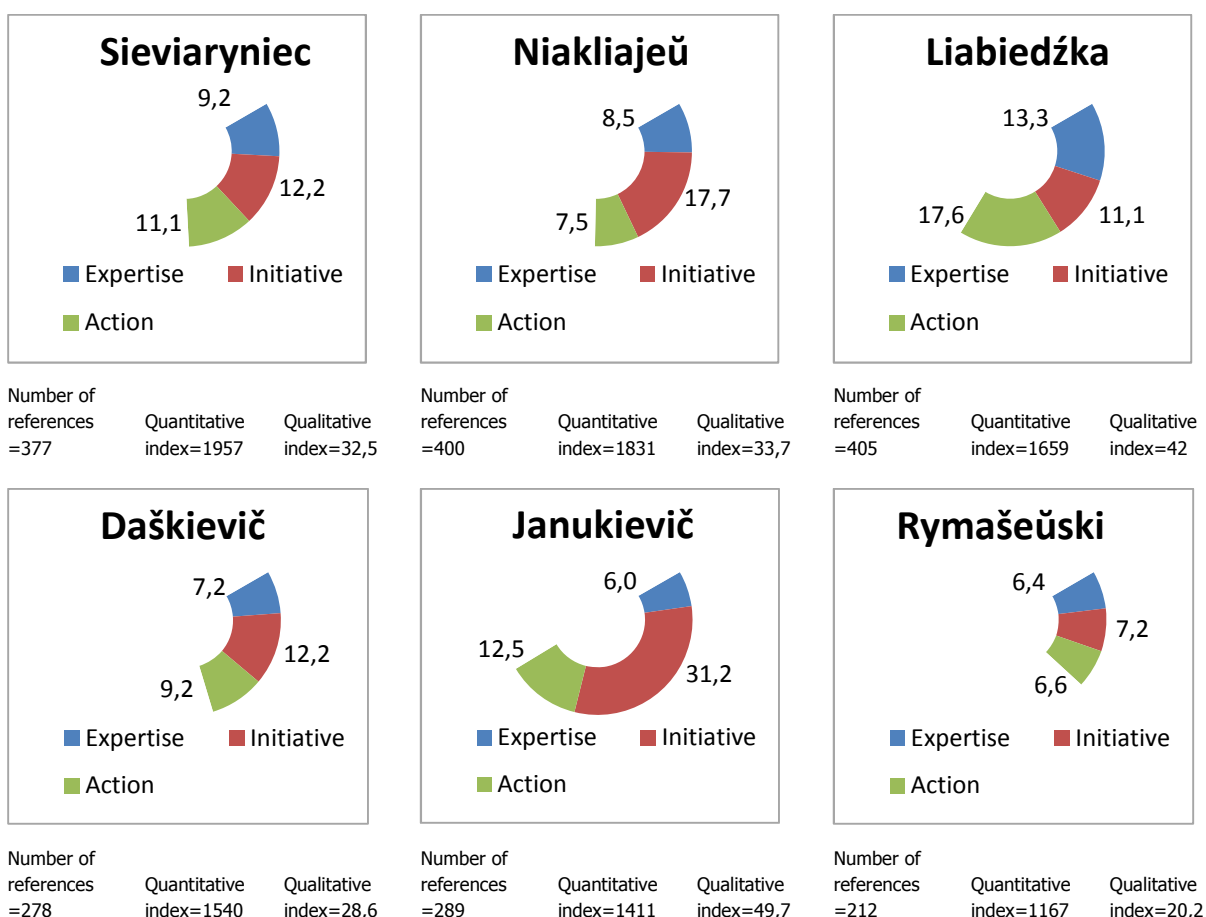
Qualitative index

Qualitative index of media presence assesses the contents and balance of topics of political actors' communications.⁸ By the qualitative index, the top-12 political actors fall into three groups. The first one includes rating leaders with balanced communications and high levels of initiative, such as Paval Sieviaryniec, Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ, Anatol Liabiedźka, Žmicier Daškevič, Aliaksiej Janukievič and Vitaľ Rymašeŭski. The second group consists of politicians with much lower qualitative indices and actually zero levels of initiative. They made their way into the top-12 not due to active promotion of their political agenda and in some cases they work outside Belarus. The third group includes politicians with relatively low qualitative (and quantitative) indices who nevertheless act in Belarus, coming up with political initiatives, such as Andrej Dźmitryjeŭ and Aliaksandr Milinkievič. Although their communications were balanced, their numbers dropped, probably due to their private circumstances.

In contrast with the previous quarter, the qualitative indices of the top politicians looked rather well-balanced. Paval Sieviaryniec's leading position may have had something to do with his 'personal story', but his communications maintained high levels of both 'political action' and 'initiative'.

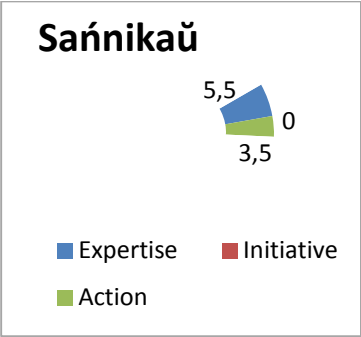
Aliaksiej Janukievič came top in the 'initiative' sub-index, which must have contributed to his party's leading position in the quantitative index.

Chart 7. Distribution of the qualitative index parameters⁹



⁸ For further details, see 'Description of methodology'.

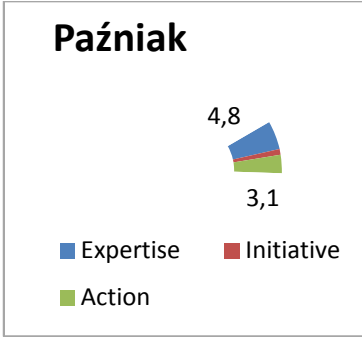
⁹ The maximal index for each dimension can be 100 points, so the total maximum index can be 300 points.



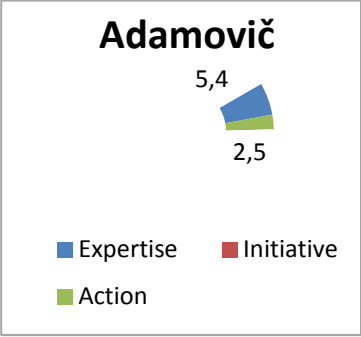
Number of references =170 Quantitative index=1004 Qualitative index=9



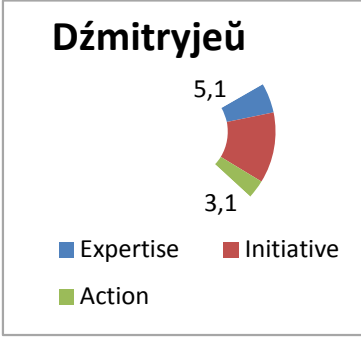
Number of references =171 Quantitative index=694 Qualitative index=12,8



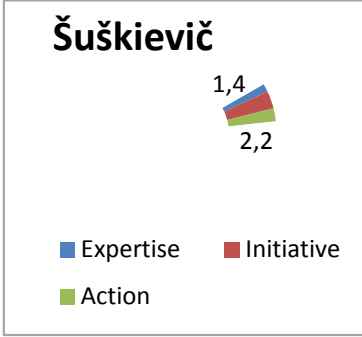
Number of references =151 Quantitative index=606 Qualitative index=8,9



Number of references =136 Quantitative index=558 Qualitative index=7,9



Number of references =146 Quantitative index =552 Qualitative index=20,1



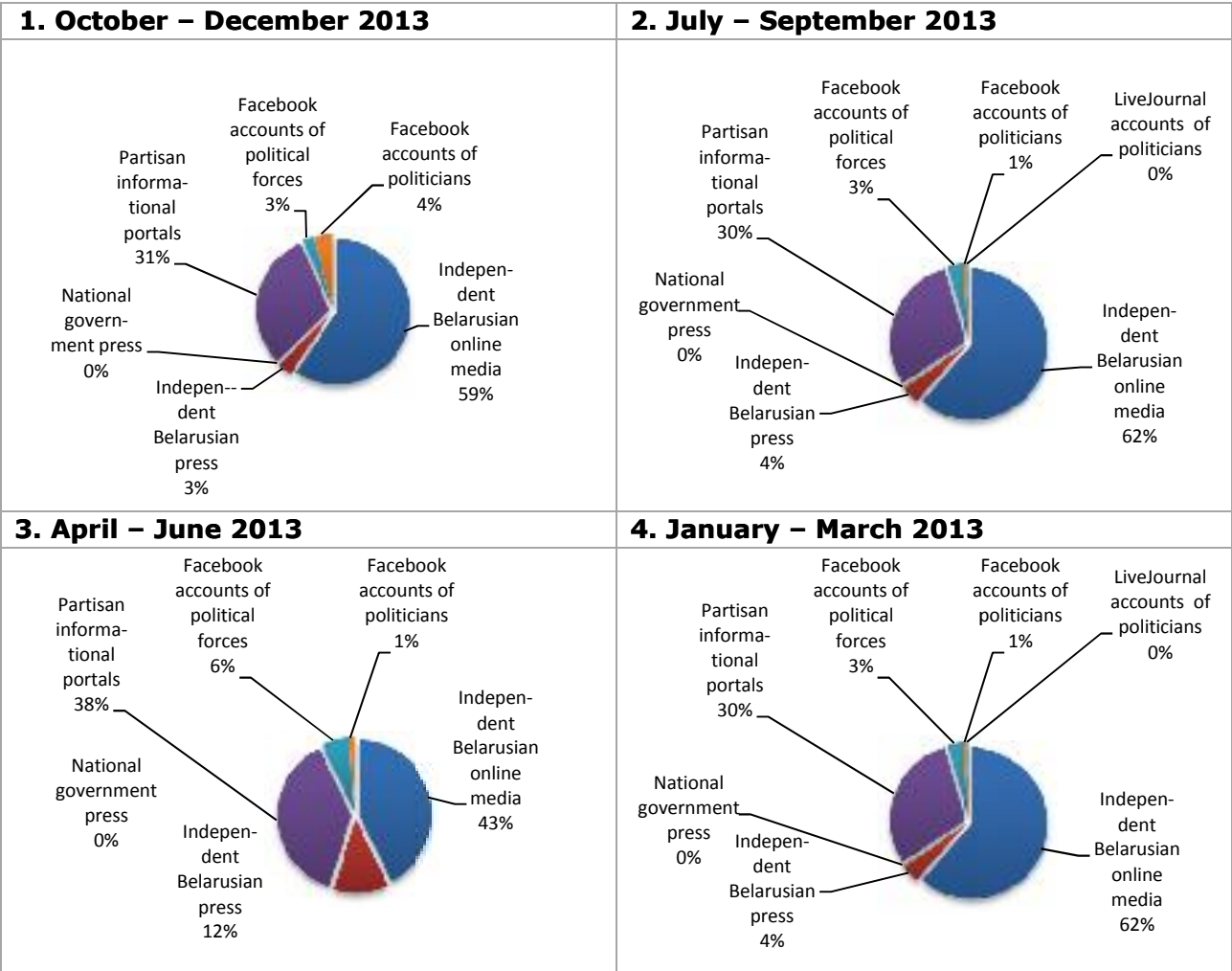
Number of references =90 Quantitative index=527 Qualitative index=6,5

Where and how the opposition speaks

1. Distribution of total presence by the source

The distribution of communication channels in the political sphere remained unchanged. A vast majority of communications appeared in the independent online media. A specific trait of the fourth quarter was a fall in the share of the independent press. However, it was not caused by a drop in attention to the political field. The reason was a considerable growth in the number of references in the online media, which, unlike their printed counterparts, are not limited in the amount of information they can present.

Chart 8. Distribution of appearances in the information field by the source

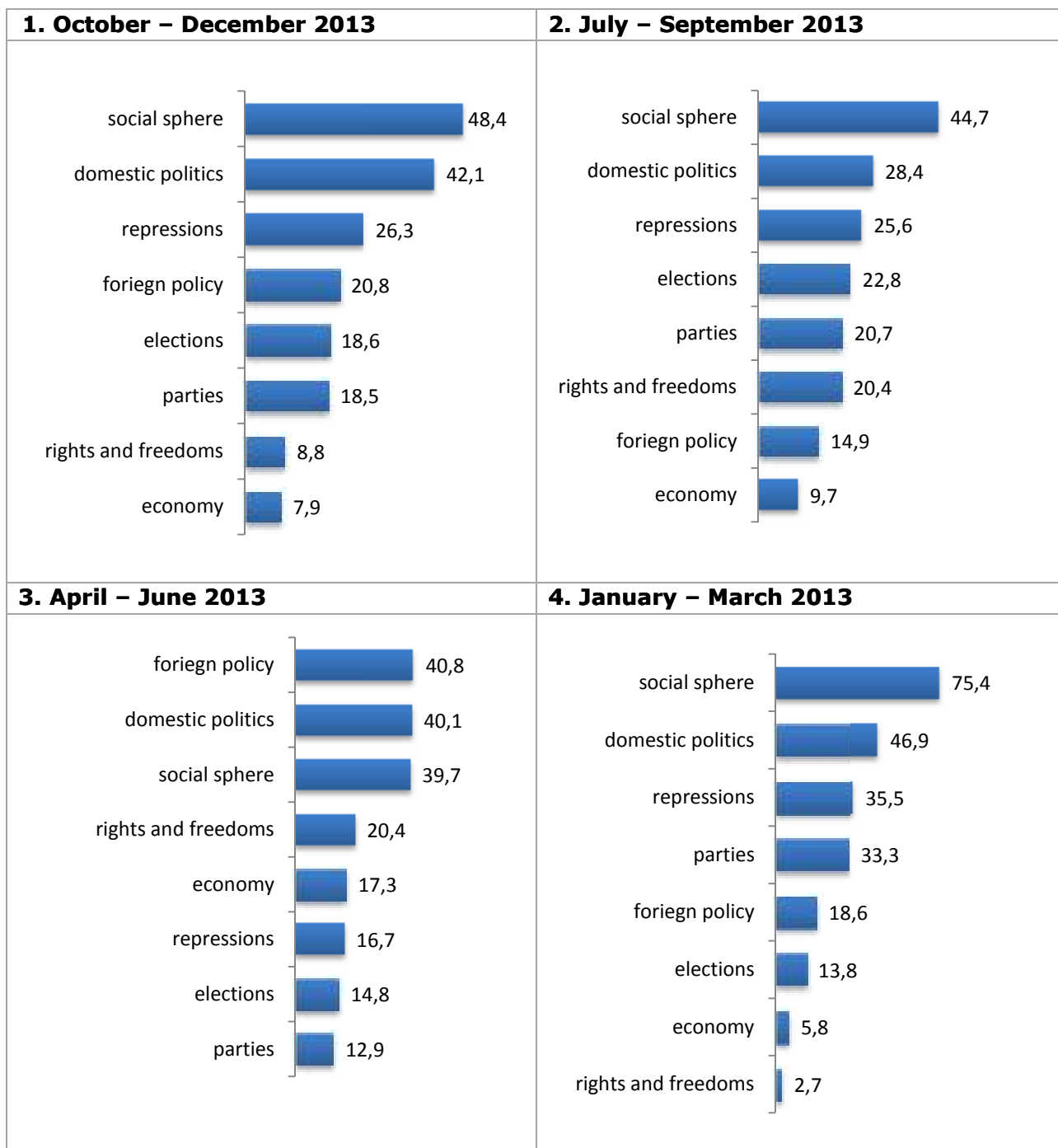


2. How the independent Belarusian political forces use the available information field

The distribution of topics of political communications remained actually unchanged. Just like in the third quarter, the biggest coverage was given to issues that belong to the category called 'society'. It includes both 'personal stories', like Paval Sieviaryniec's release and Viktor Ivaškiievič's death, and issues related to culture, religion and social sphere. In the final quarter of 2013 Stanislau Šuškievič, Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ and Anatol' Liabiedzka presented their new books. Paval Sieviaryniec's release and three years since the events of 19 December 2010 did not result in more focus on repressions, which were mentioned in 26.3% of messages (in the third quarter the figure was 25.6%). **The events in Ukraine** brought international relations into the foreground (20.8% of communications as compared to 14.9% in the previous quarter). Economic issues

received a little less coverage – 7.9% as compared to 9.7% in July – September 2013, even though the new duties on cars were actively discussed by the political actors, particularly by the UCP representatives. Strange as it may seem, as the local elections were approaching, they were getting less coverage – 18.6% in contrast with 22.6% in the previous quarter. Furthermore, topics related to political parties received less attention, so their share fell from 20.4% to 18.5%. This leads us to a conclusion that the local elections are not going to become a significant event in Belarusian political life and the opposition forces are not interested in running for local councils. In all the other aspects the distribution of topics did not undergo any changes.

Chart 9. Topics of communications



There were certain essential differences in the topics of communications depending on the political force. In the first place, it was coalitions that centered on economic issues. Focus on economic problems is an effective strategy for new election-oriented political

structures. Nevertheless, in the general context of other forces' communications economic issues were diluted.

The Belarusian Christian Democracy paid a lot of attention to repressions, which can be explained by Paval Sieviaryniec's release. The Young Front and 'A European Belarus' traditionally feature prominently the same topic.

The UCP and the Movement 'For Freedom' had a larger proportion of communications on international relations than the other political forces. This often reflected their increased media activity connected with the developments in Ukraine.

Chart 10. Distribution of topics of communications for political forces

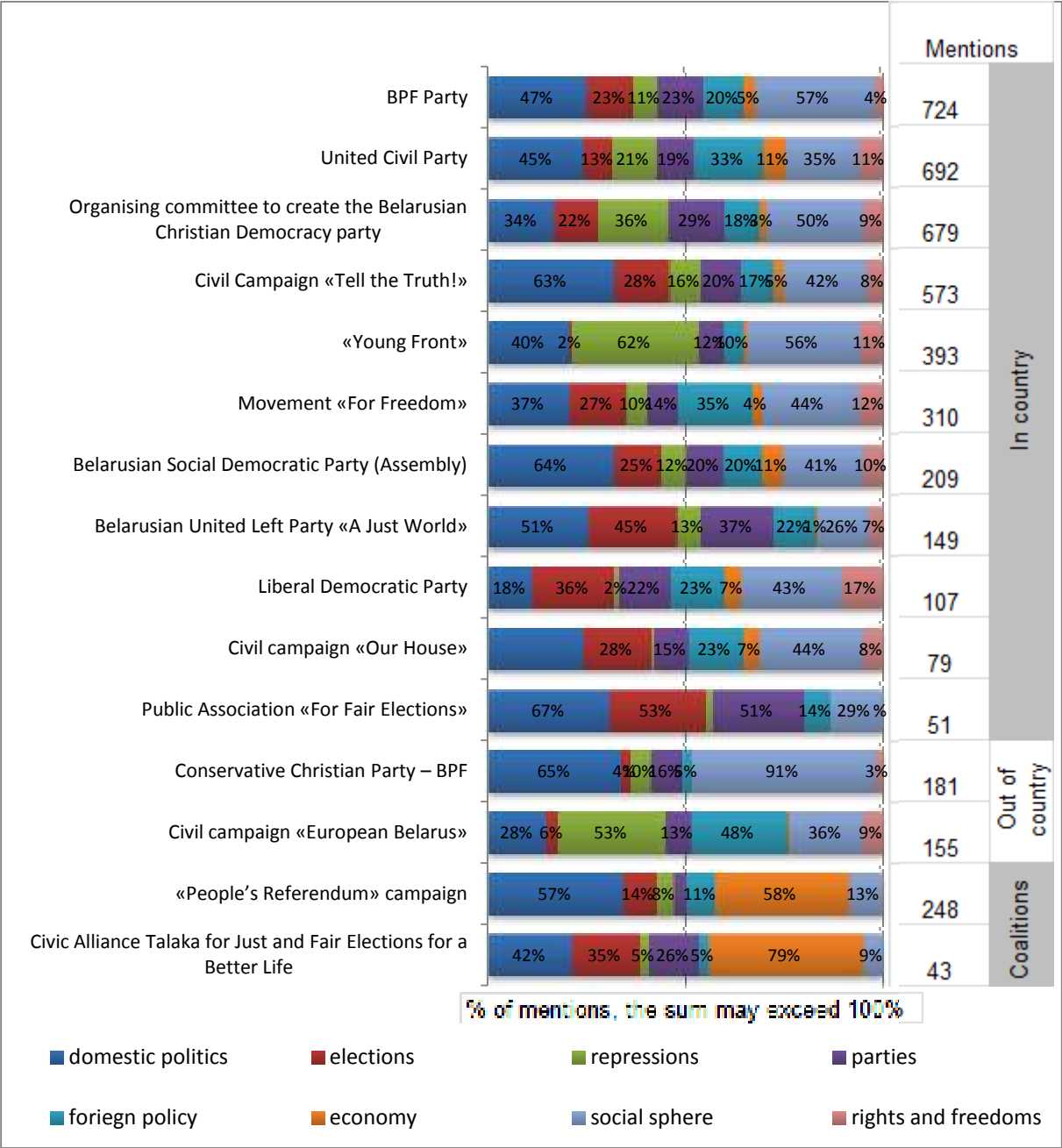
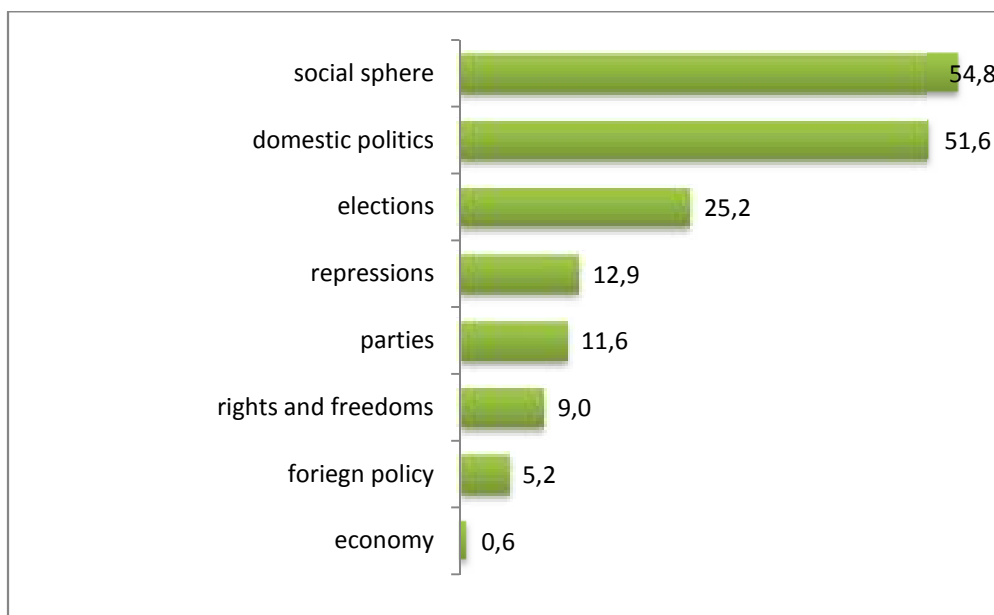


Chart 11. Distribution of topics of political initiatives

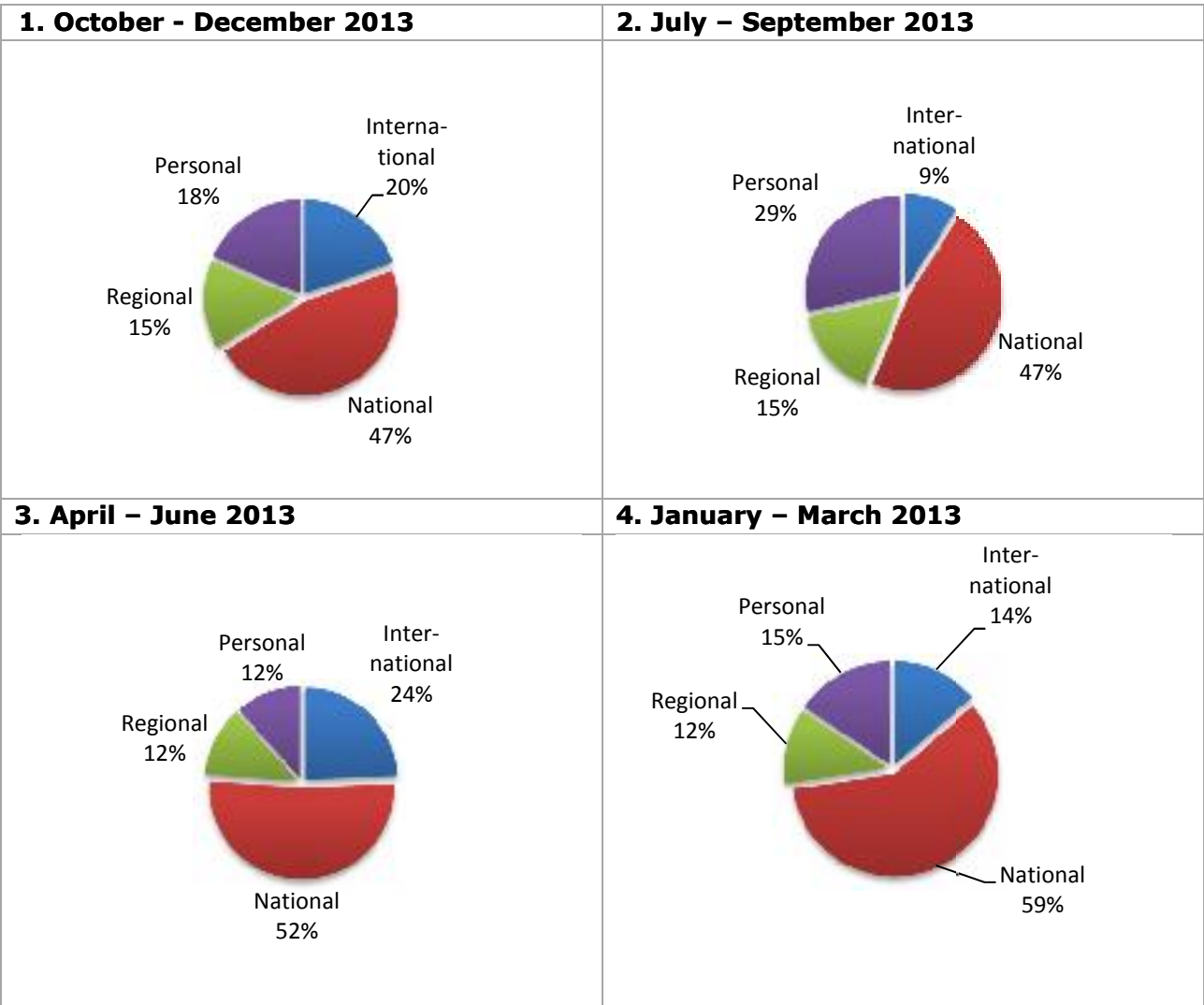
If we look into the topics of communications dealing with political initiatives and new projects, their structure appears to be similar to the overall distribution of topics. 'Society' and 'politics' (internal political processes) remained in the lead. The proportion of references to the elections increased to a certain extent, as 25.2% of initiatives covered in the media were related to this topic.

Although economic issues could make the independent political sphere more attractive to the general public in view of the forthcoming elections, the share of economic initiatives was miniscule – it did not exceed 0.6%. This is evidence of the fact that economic discussions in the independent political sphere are limited to criticism of what is being done without developing and presenting any alternative proposals.

The structure of the levels of the events changed due to the discussion of the developments in Ukraine, the proportion of international events reaching 20%. Despite some important events in the politicians' private lives, the share of personal events fell.

The percentage of regional events remained unchanged, even though the local elections were approaching.

Chart 12. Levels of events



3. Correlation between offline activities and political communications

In the final quarter of 2013 political actors and forces looked quite active. Like in the previous quarter, the levels of offline activities in the media coverage remained pretty high, reaching 49% in October and November and slightly falling in December to 41%.

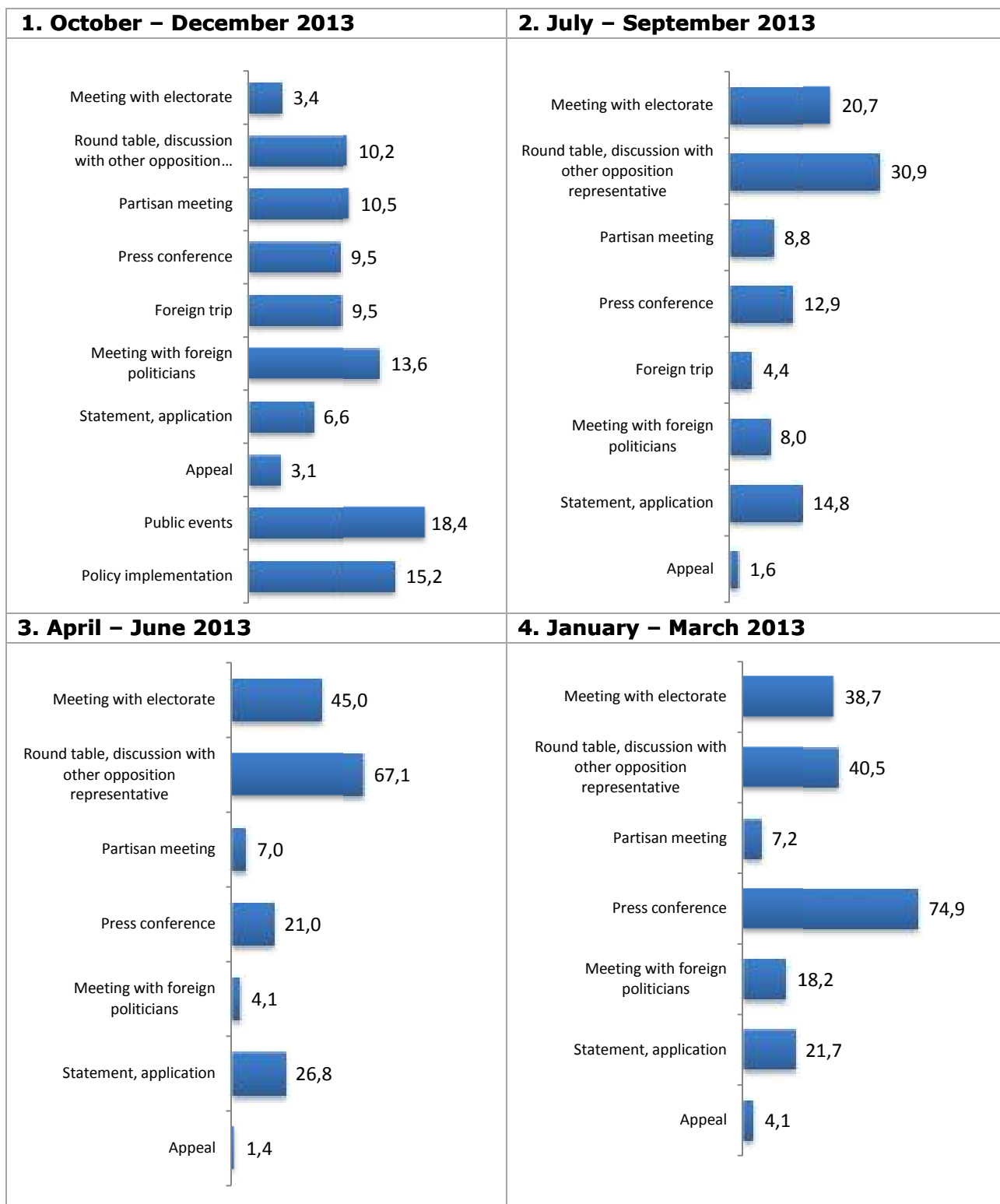
Chart 13. Correlation between offline activities and political communications



The activities appeared to be rather varied. Certain changes had been made in the methodology: thus, two separate categories called 'policy implementation' and 'public events' had been singled out. The former presupposes the use of some institutional mechanisms for achieving certain political goals and objectives. The latter covers events for a limited circle of participants and journalists, such as presentations, public debates, etc. In the past these events were categorized as meetings with the electorate, though in fact they were not, as members of the public were not present there. When these types

of activities were excluded from the category 'meetings with the electorate', it substantially lost weight. In the fourth quarter of 2013 this form of offline-activities made up only 3.4%. This is a very low figure in view of the upcoming elections. On the other hand, such activities should be sanctioned by executive bodies, which is a considerable obstacle under the current circumstances.

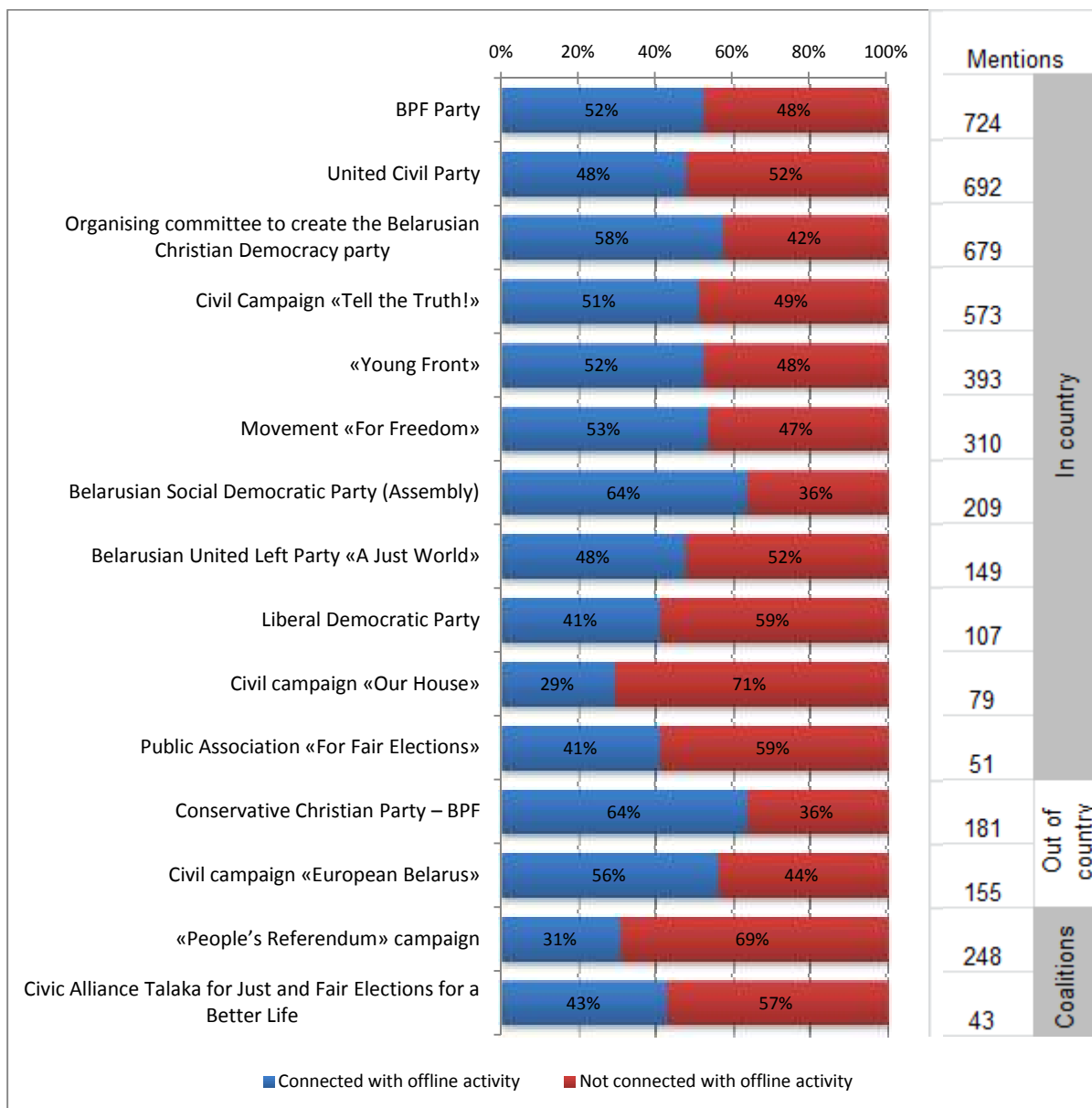
Chart 14. Types of offline activities¹⁰



¹⁰ The sum total exceeds 100%, as one article can mention several events.

There is not much difference between the political forces depending on the proportion of communications related to offline activities. 'Our House' campaign fell behind the others, which was also typical of the previous quarter. The 'People's Referendum' campaign displayed a lower level of offline activities than the *Talaka* alliance – 31% vs. 41%.

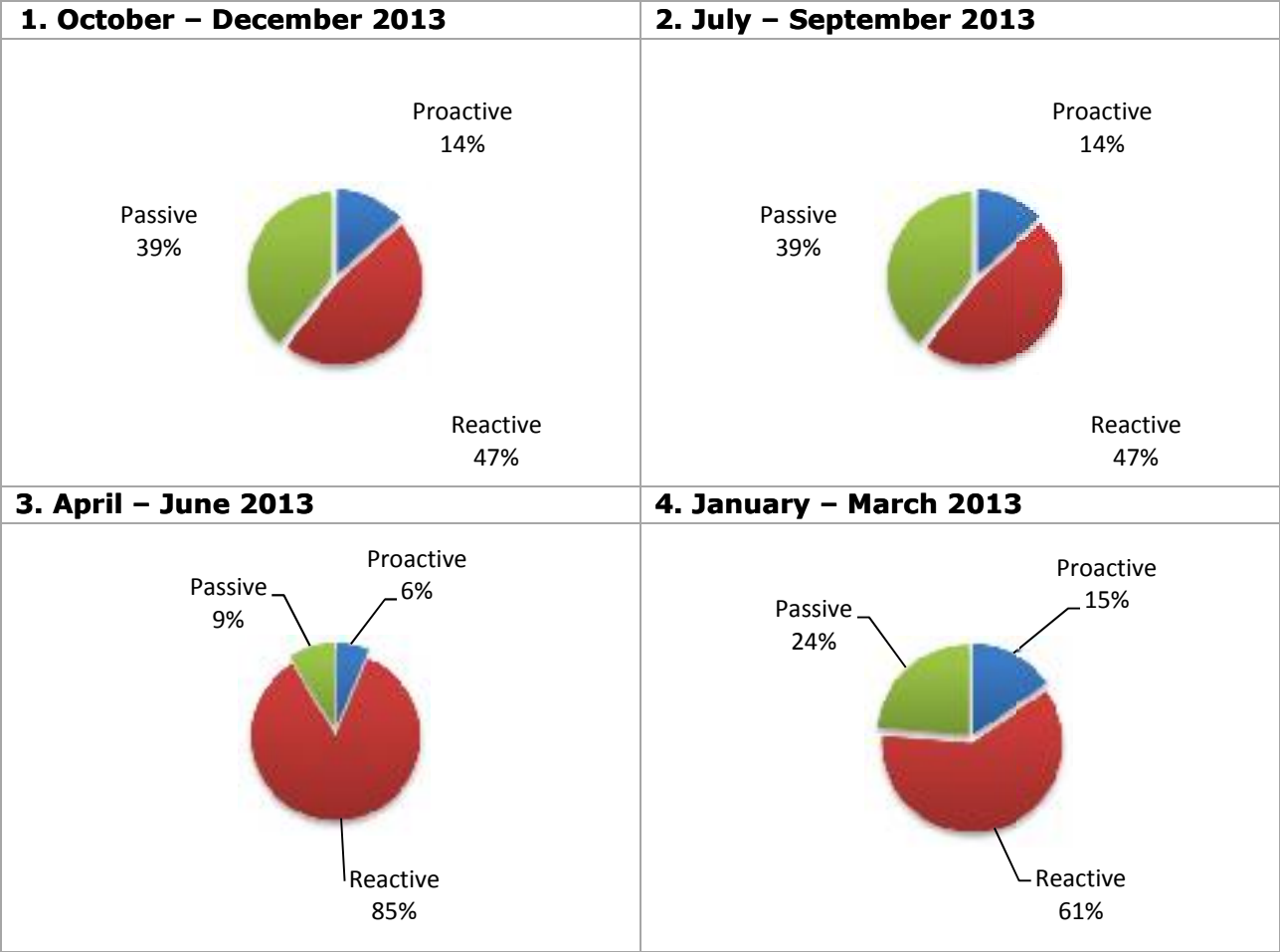
Chart 15. Media coverage of political forces' activities



4. Levels of political actors’ and forces’ activeness in the media

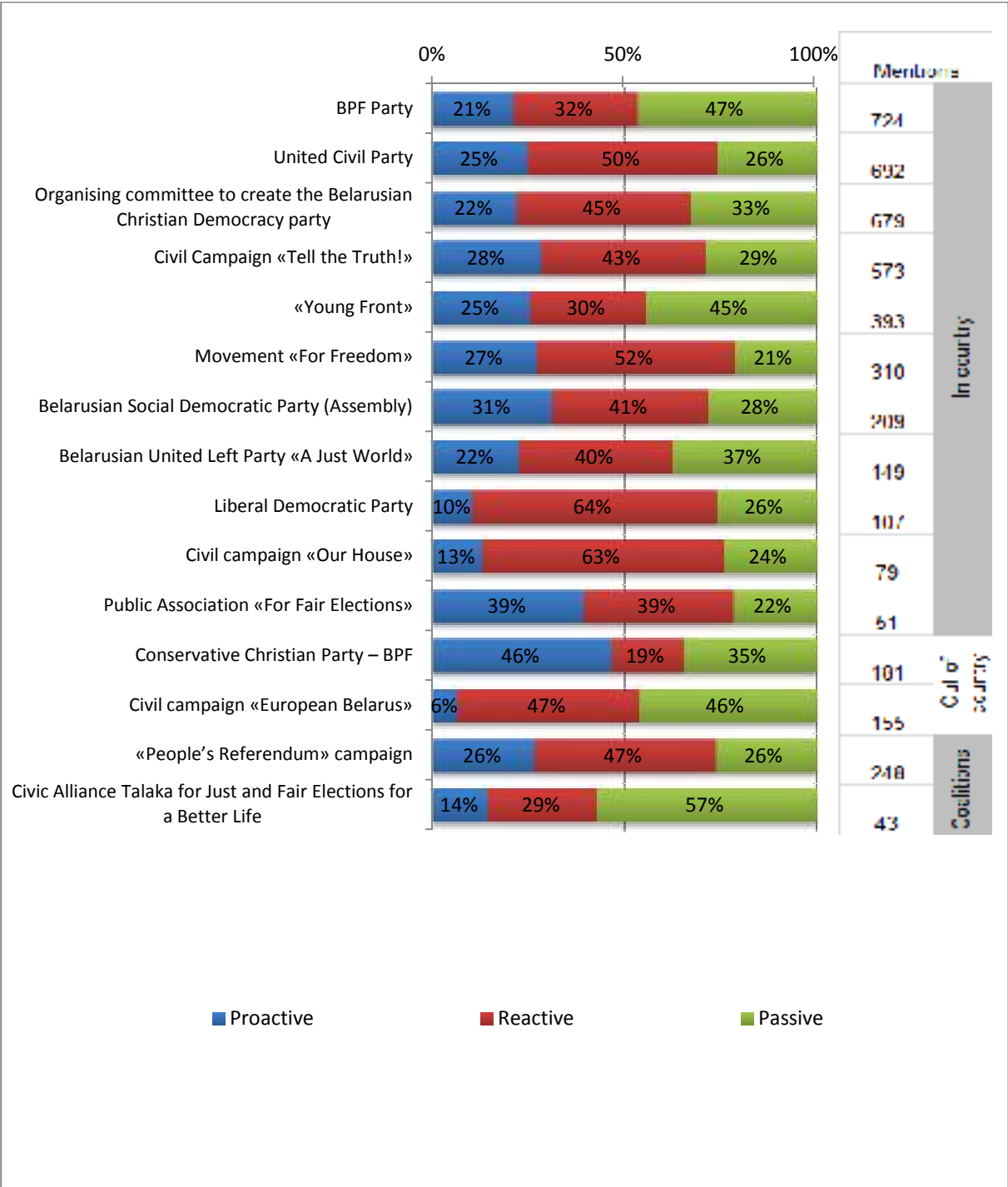
The distribution of political communications by the level of activeness did not undergo any essential change. There was a slight growth in the share of ‘proactive’ communications, while the proportion of ‘reactive’ ones went down a bit. The share of ‘passive’ communications remained at the same level – 39%, which was very good for a time span marked by a spike in the number of political communications. Dramatic upsurges in the number of political communications are usually caused by the media’s particular focus on some news-making events. In the analyzed time span, however, the growth resulted from political actors’ and forces’ active performance. Yet, throughout 2013 ‘passive’ communications were in the lead.

Chart 16. Levels of activeness in communications



The BPF Party and the Young Front displayed a bit higher proportion of ‘passive’ communications than the overall figure. The Liberal Democratic Party, ‘Our House’ campaign and ‘A European Belarus’ showed the lowest levels of ‘proactive’ communications.

Chart 17. Distribution of levels of activeness in political forces' communications



Types of representation of political forces in the media

1. Profiles of political forces’ representatives

The media profiles of political forces’ representatives hardly changed at all as compared to the third quarter of 2013. Like in the previous analyzed time span, the proportion of references to individual politicians without mentioning their affiliation was quite high. It made up 38%. It can be attributed to a considerable number of events where the politicians featured as individuals, such presentations of new books by Stanislau Šuškievič, Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ and Anatoł Liabiedźka, Paval Sieviaryniec’s release and Zianon Pažniak finding himself in the focus of media attention in connection with the BPF Party’s jubilee. Moreover, the leaders of political forces that belong to coalitions were often referred to as coalition leaders, without mentioning their own political forces. The same trend had been characteristic of the previous quarter.

The representatives of the BPF Party and the Liberal Democratic Party had the highest proportion of references mentioning their political affiliation. In the case of the BPF Party we can see that this strategy had a positive effect on its media presence.

On the other hand, an increase in the number of references to Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ as the leader of ‘Tell the Truth!’ campaign might have resulted in its higher quantitative index and prevented the fall in the rating.

Chart 18. Positioning of messengers

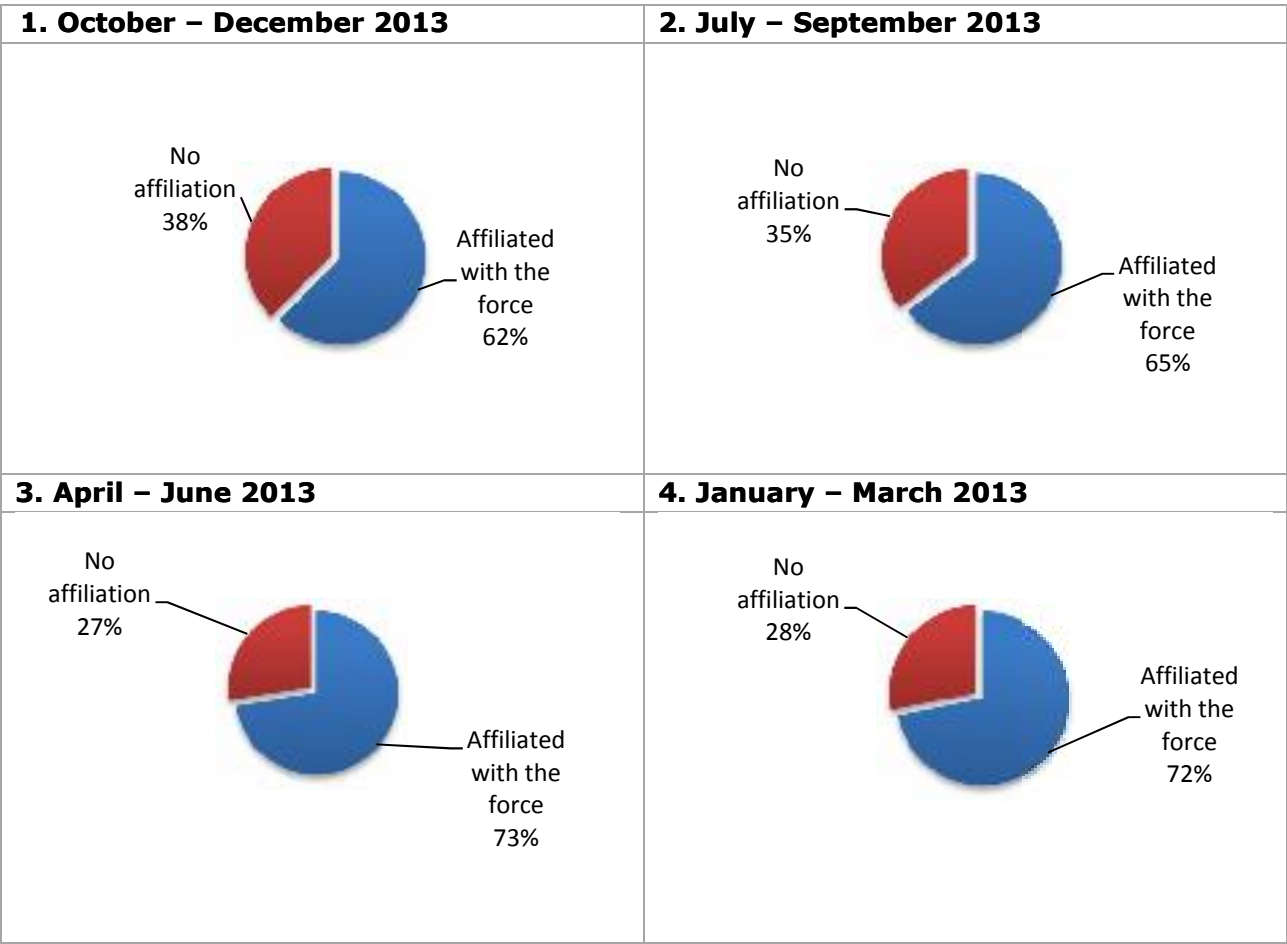
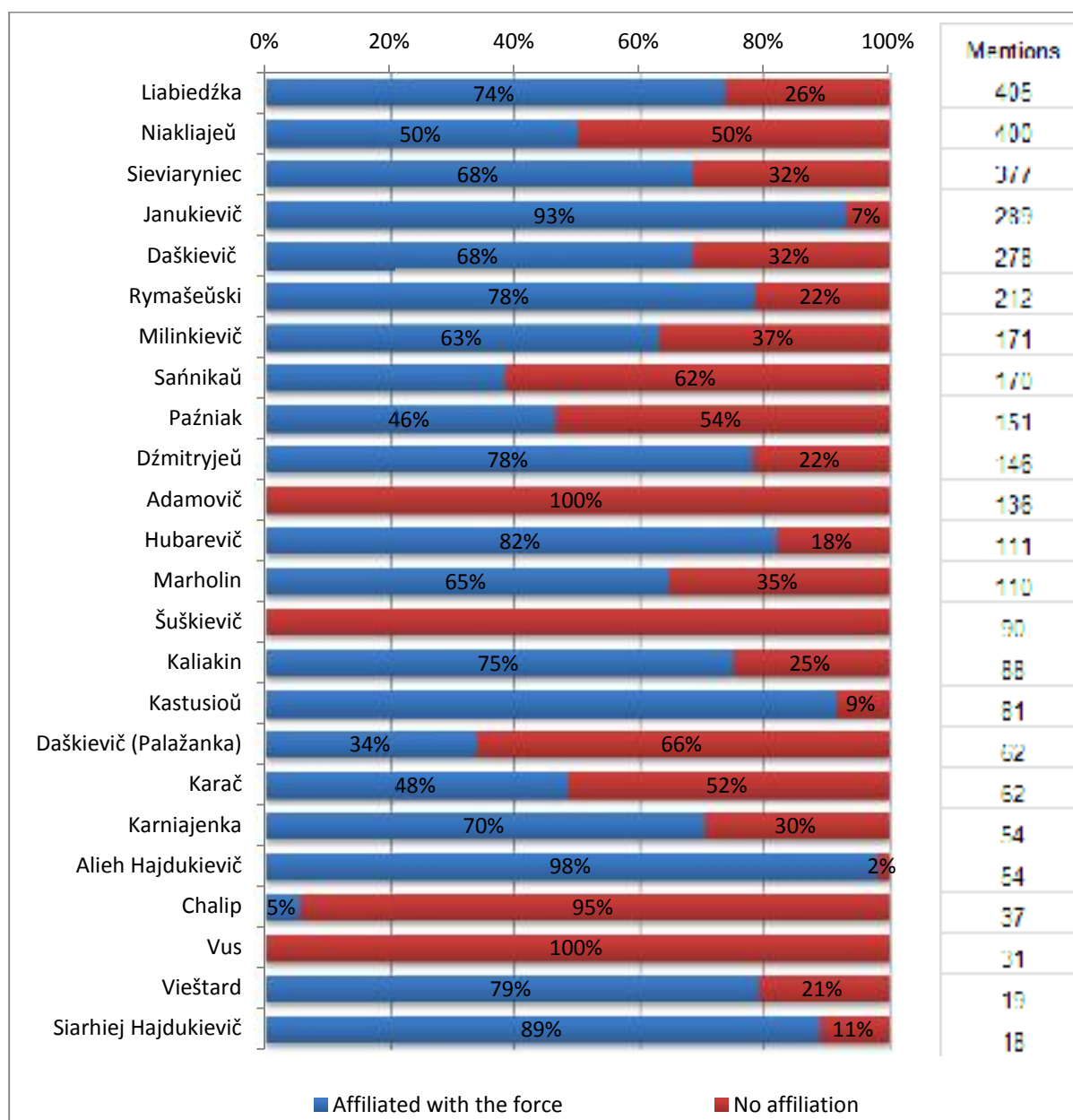


Chart 19. Positioning of messengers for individual politicians

In the last two analyzed periods the diversity of political forces' representation had been growing, with the share of regional leaders increasing up to 4% and the proportion of rank-and-file activists from Minsk rising up to 3%. This was accompanied by a fall in the representation of top leaders from 45% to 34%. However, it could be attributed to a specific methodological detail, which puts the co-chairmen of the Belarusian Christian Democracy, including Paval Sieviaryniec, under the tag 'one of the leaders/member of the Board'.

Chart 20. Positions of political forces’ representatives

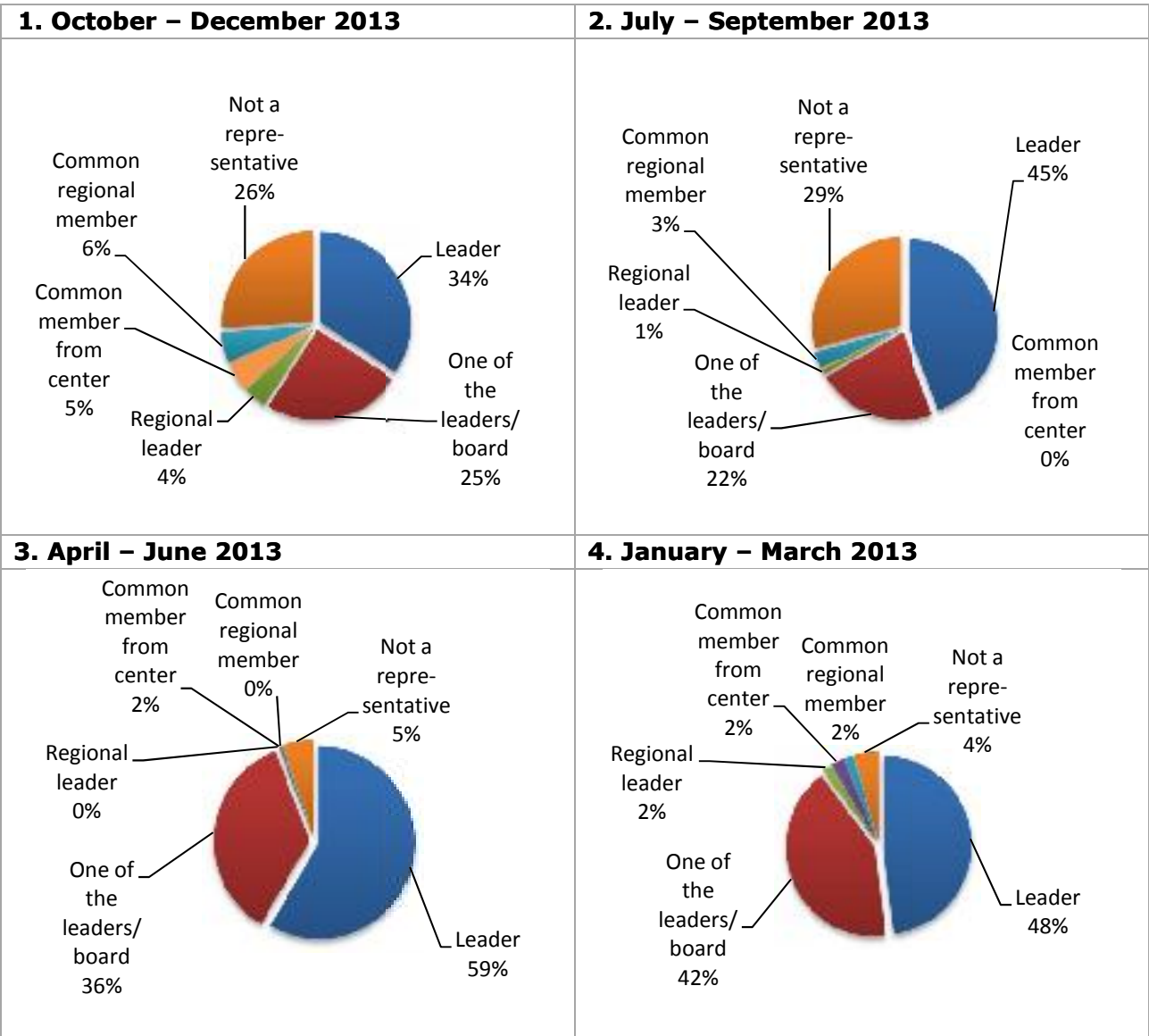


Chart 21. Positions of political forces’ representatives for each force

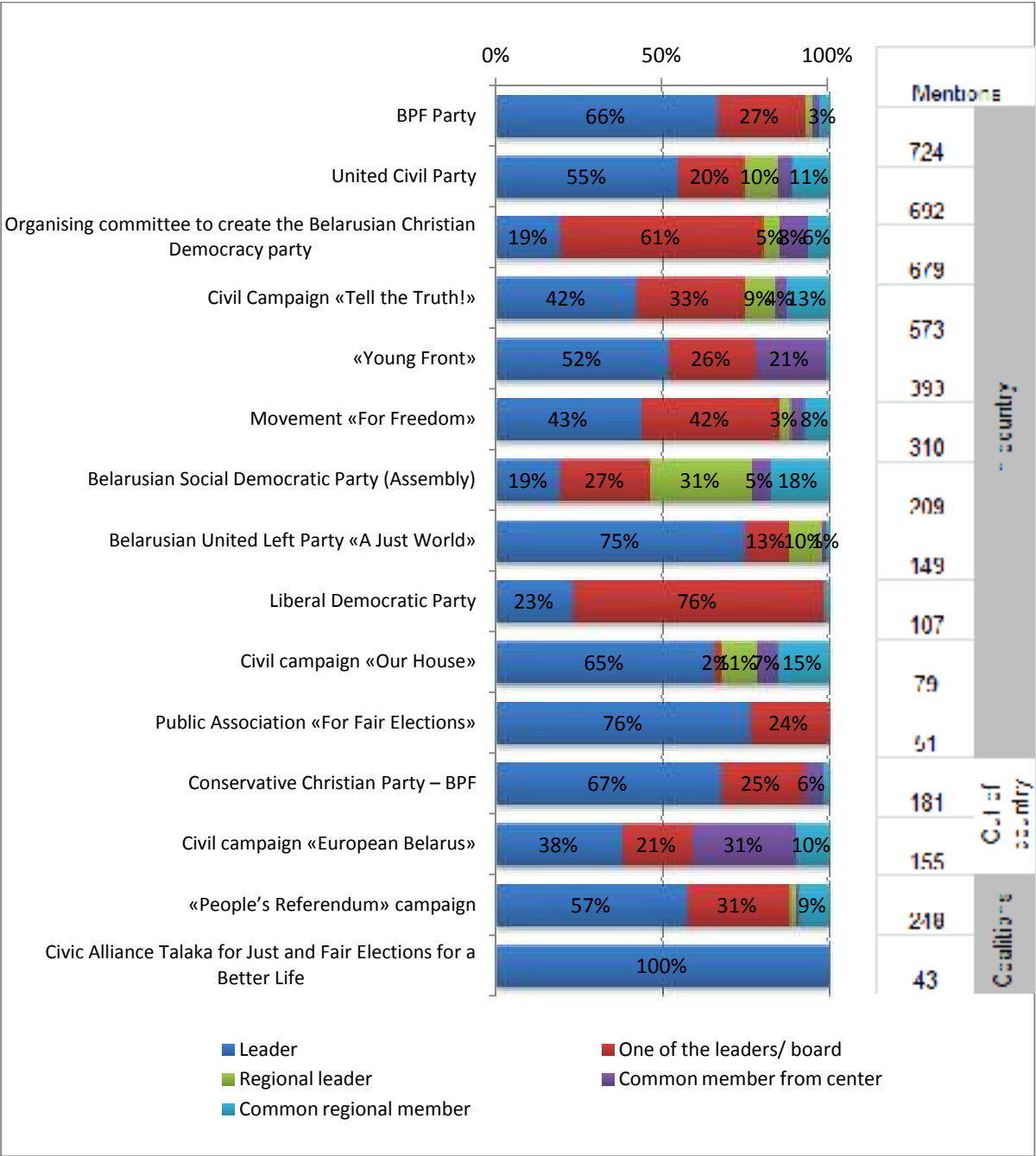
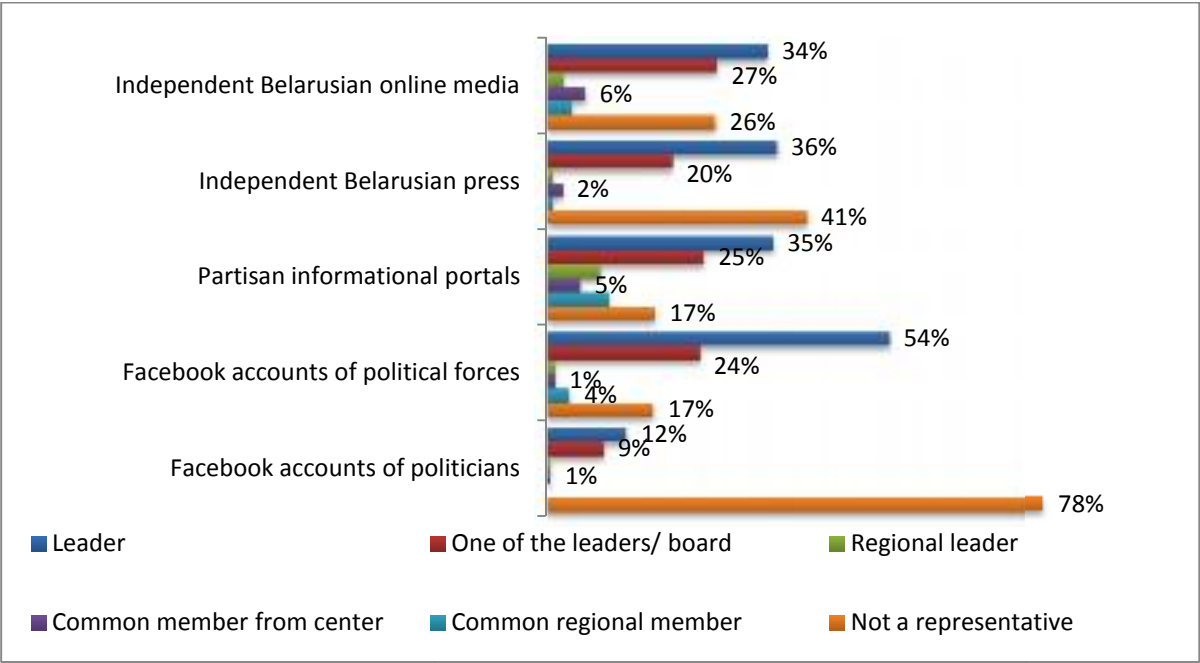
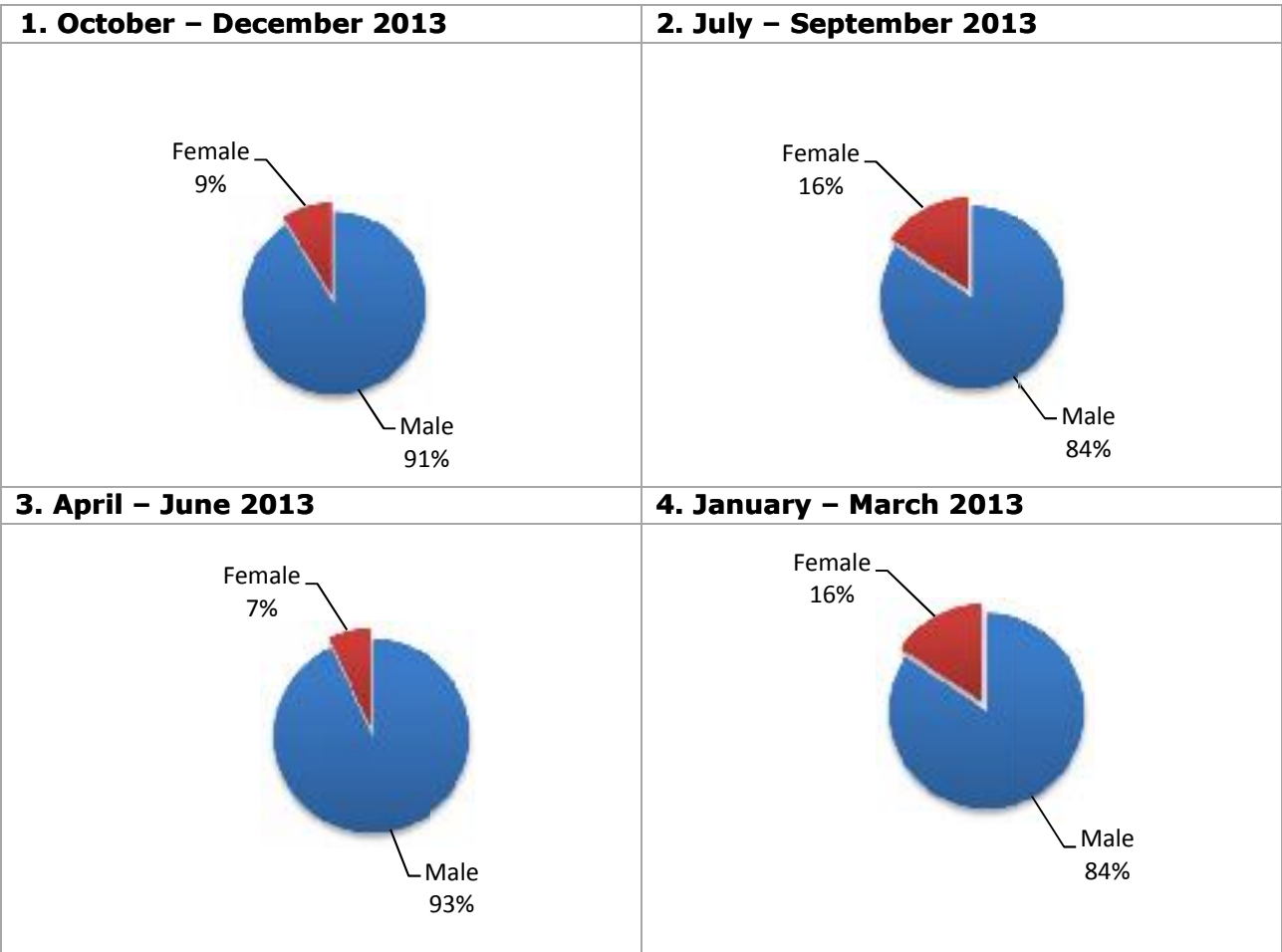


Chart 22. Positions of political forces’ representatives by the resource



A fall in female representation from 16% to 9% marked an essential change in the overall profile of the political actors. The reason is that women had traditionally spoken on behalf of the repressed politicians rather than presented the political forces’ strategic proposals or initiatives. As a rule, following the politicians’ release female voices are hardly ever heard.

Chart 23. Representation by gender



The distribution of types of references remained unchanged. One-third of the references presented general reasoning and one-third featured the politicians as participants in events. Aliaksiej Janukievič and Juraś Hubarevič had the largest proportion of appearances as participants in events, as they had been present at Maydan in Kyiv.

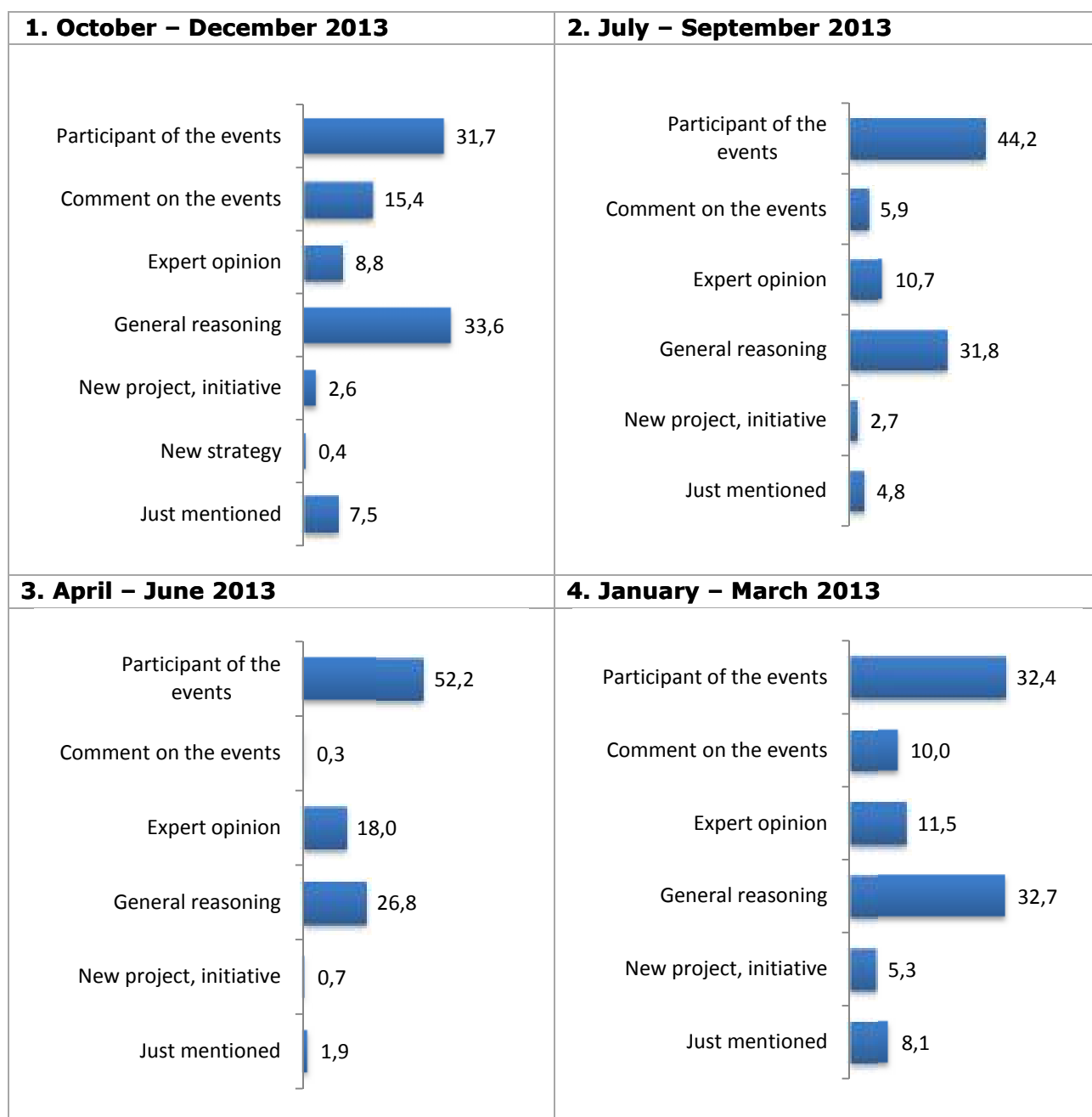
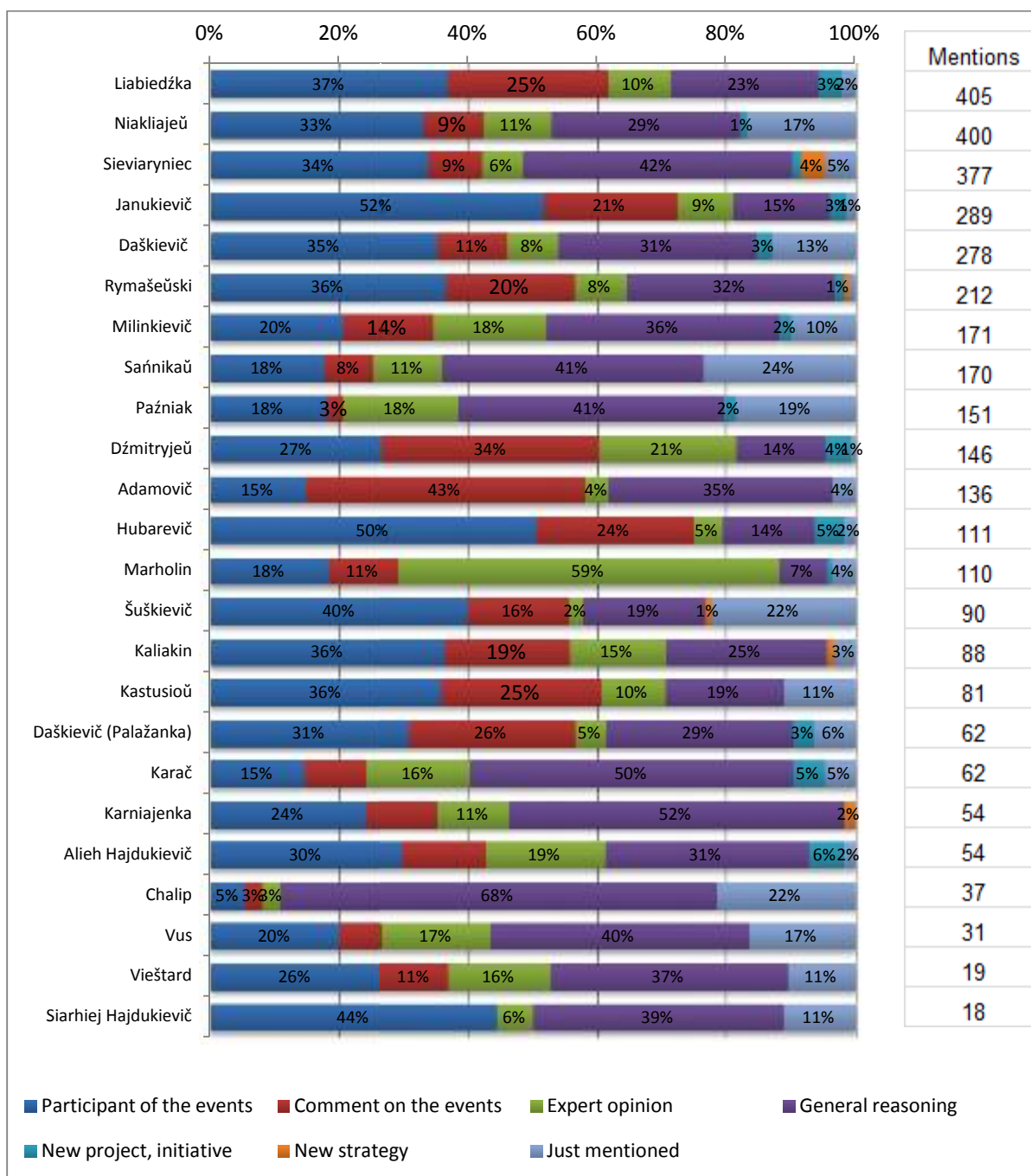
Chart 24. Types of references

Chart 25. Distribution of types of references for individual politicians

2. Political forces' profile

By the fourth quarter of 2013 the two political coalitions had already taken shape and begun working. Even though, the share of political forces' representation as parts of coalitions dropped from 22% in the third quarter to 9.7% in October – December. However, the proportion of references to coalitions as such grew up to 6.3%.

It should be mentioned that in the fourth quarter the UCP was not mentioned as part of the *Talaka* alliance at all. (The same was true of the Movement 'For Freedom' as a member of the 'People's Referendum' campaign.) The *Talaka* civic alliance was most commonly represented by the NGO 'For Fair Elections' (31%). The Belarusian Social Democratic Party *Hramada* was most often mentioned as part of the 'People's

Referendum’ campaign. ‘Tell the Truth’ campaign and the BPF party were less often presented as members of the coalition (25% and 24%, respectively).

The share of positive evaluations of political actors was a bit higher than that of political forces. Positive evaluation of political forces most often appeared in communications through their own channels.

Chart 26. Types of political forces

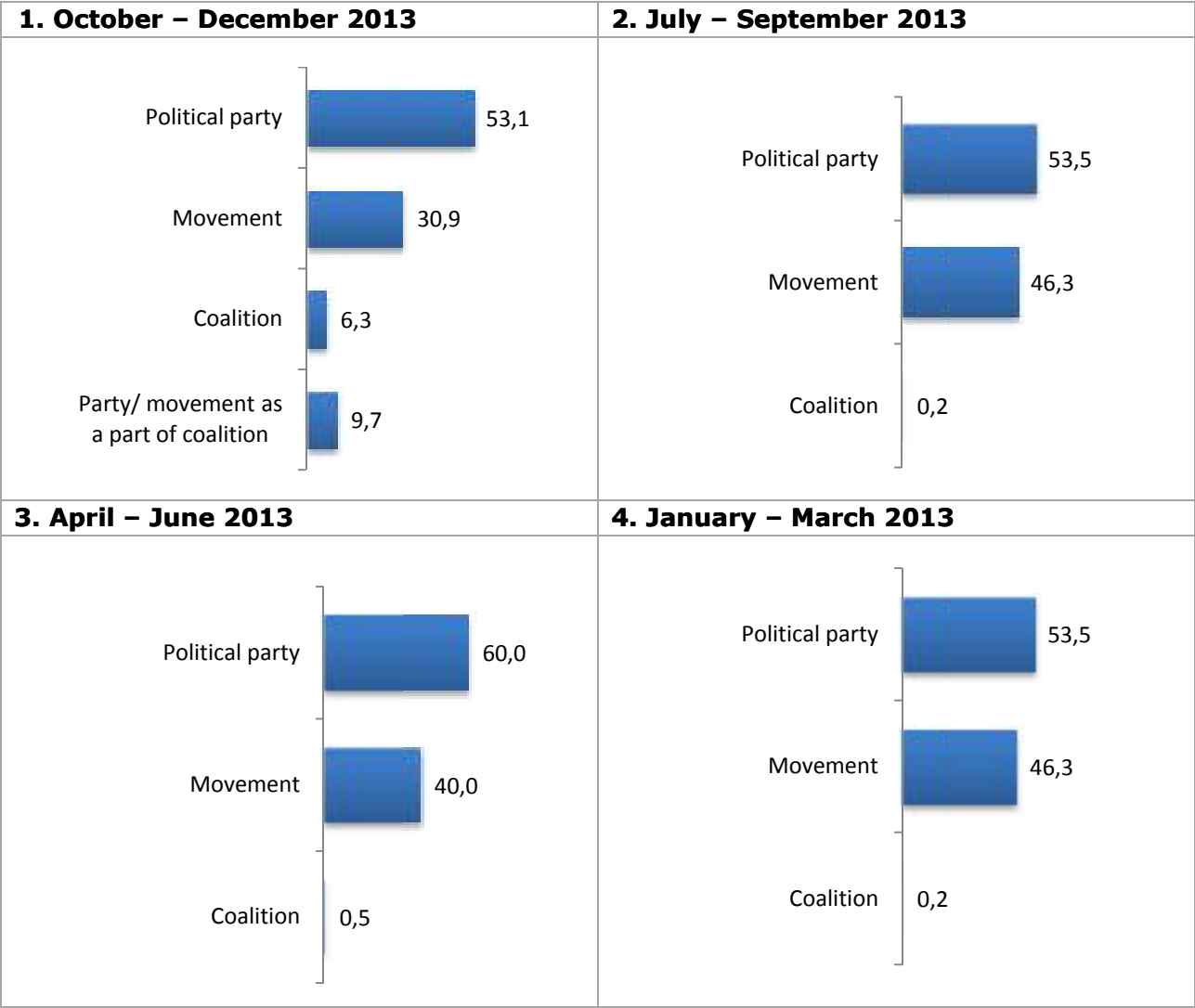


Chart 27. Types of political forces for each force

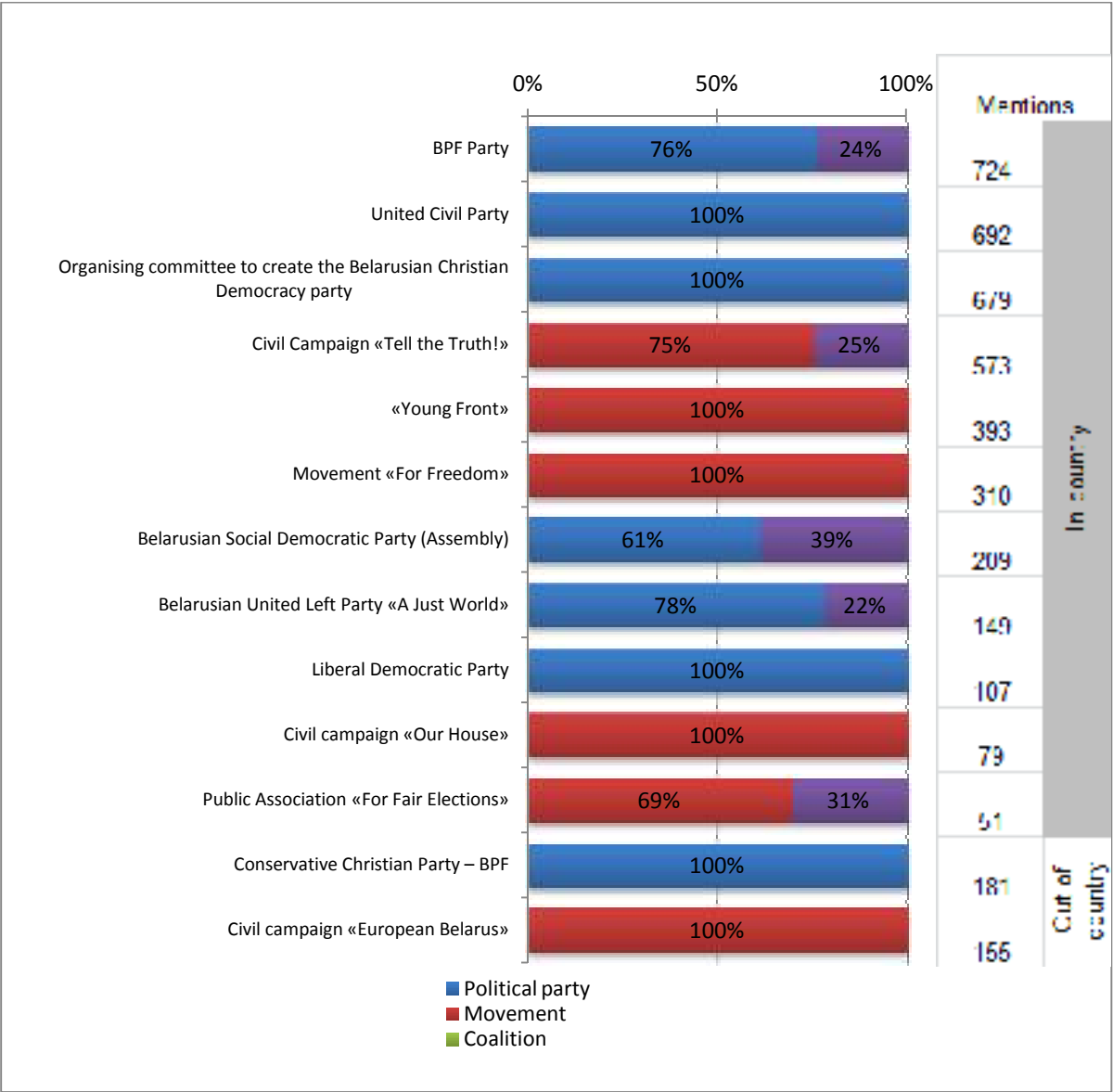


Chart 28. Evaluation of politicians

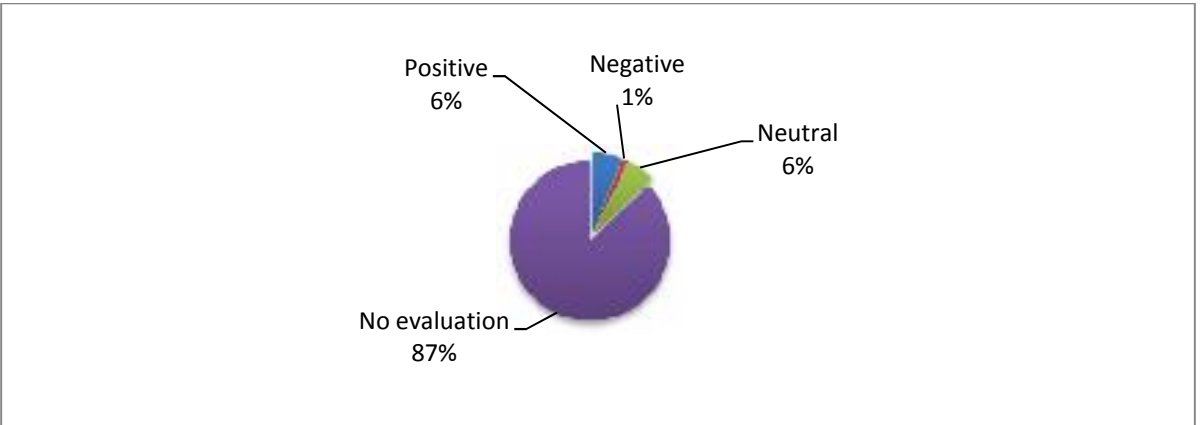


Chart 29. Evaluation of political forces

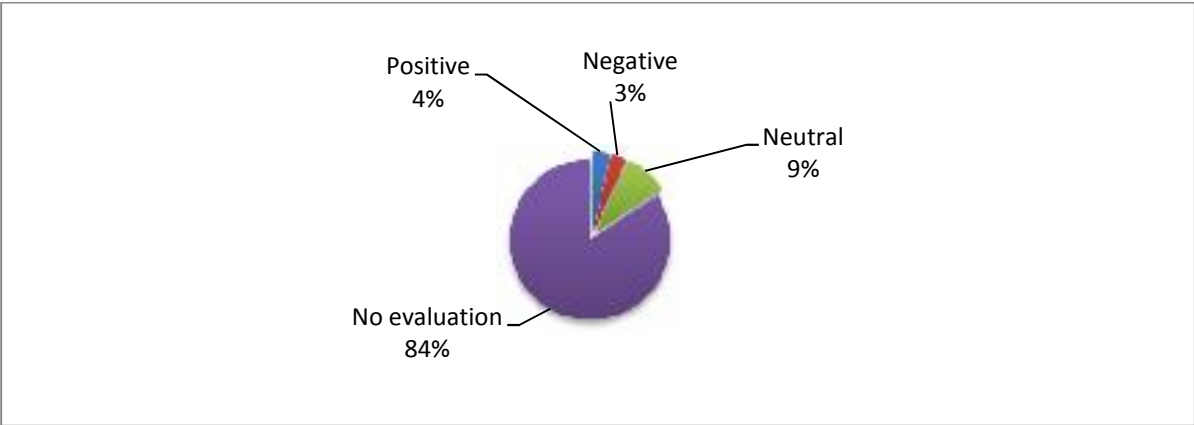
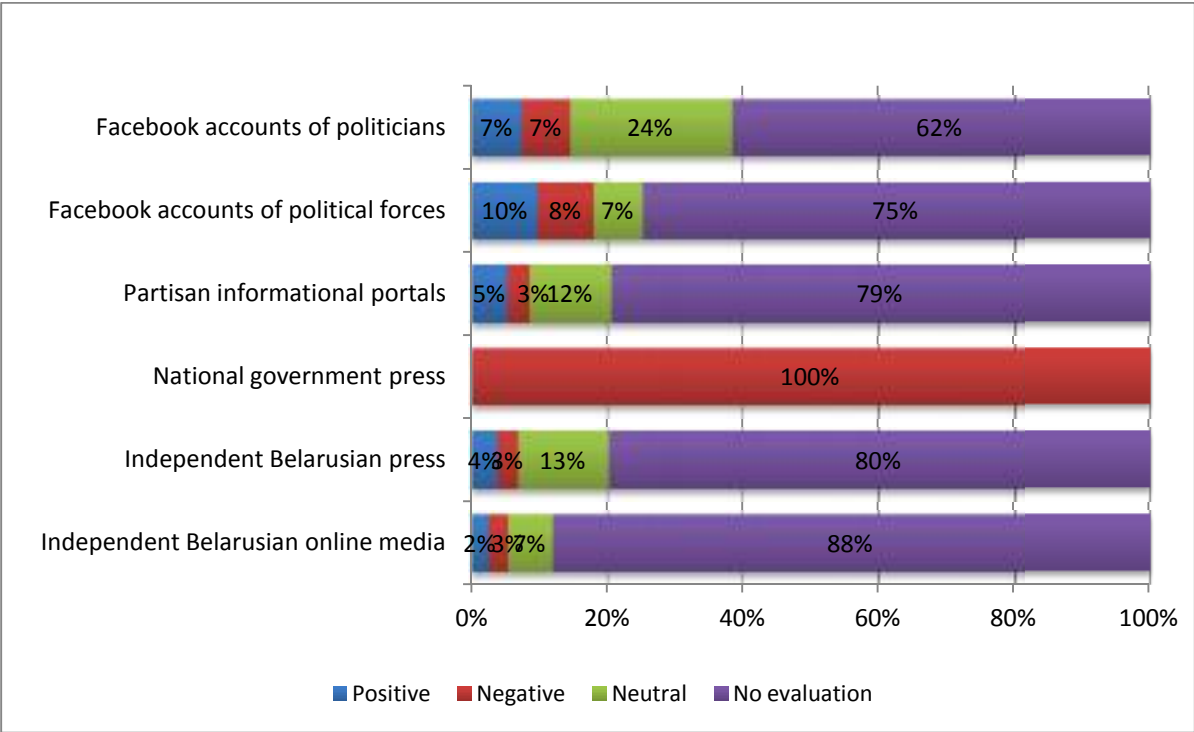


Chart 30. Evaluation of political forces by the source



Appendices

Appendix 1. Detailed findings

Chart 31. Topics

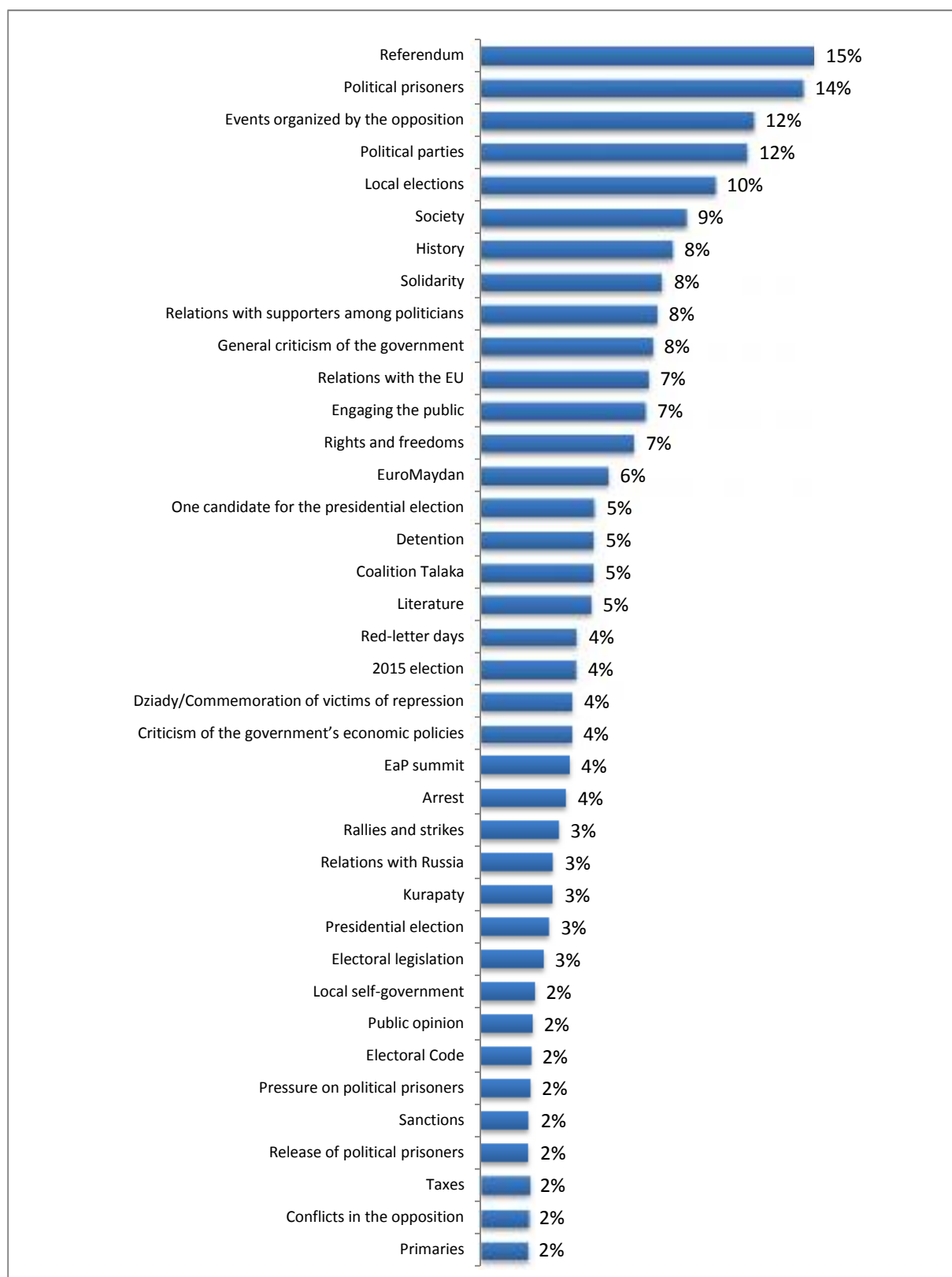


Chart 32.1. Accumulation of the total presence index for the 'top-6' individual politicians by the date

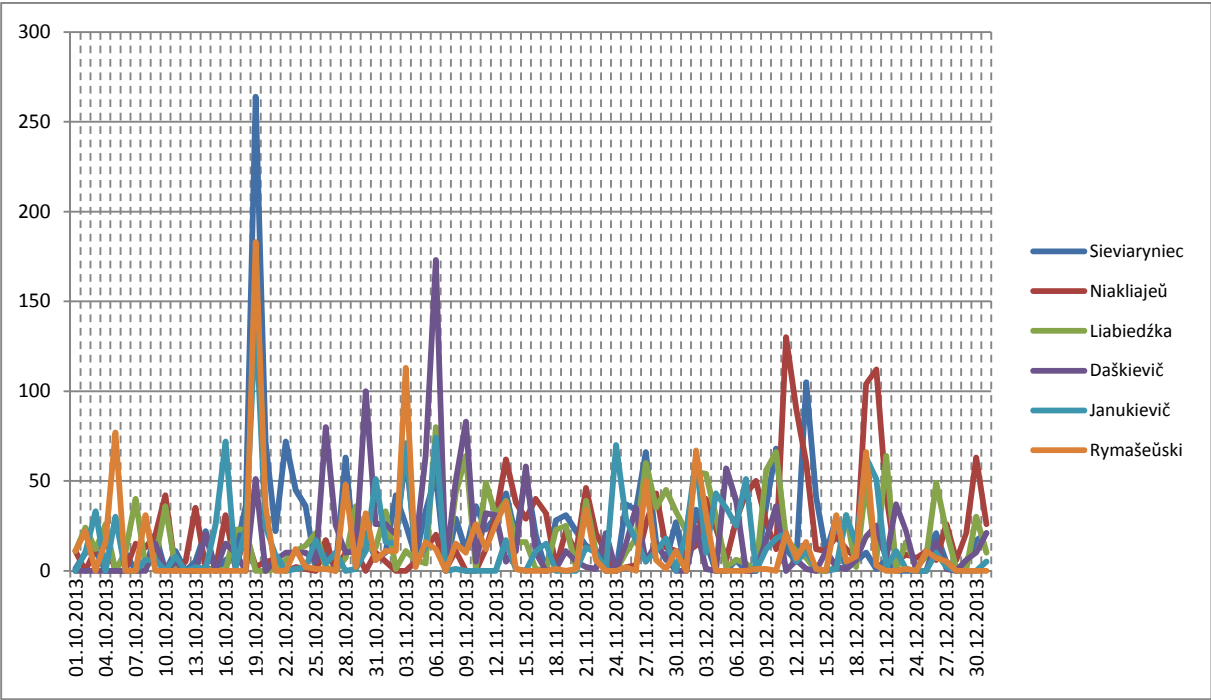


Chart 32.2. Accumulation of the total presence index for individual politicians ranking 7th to 12th in the quantitative index rating by the date

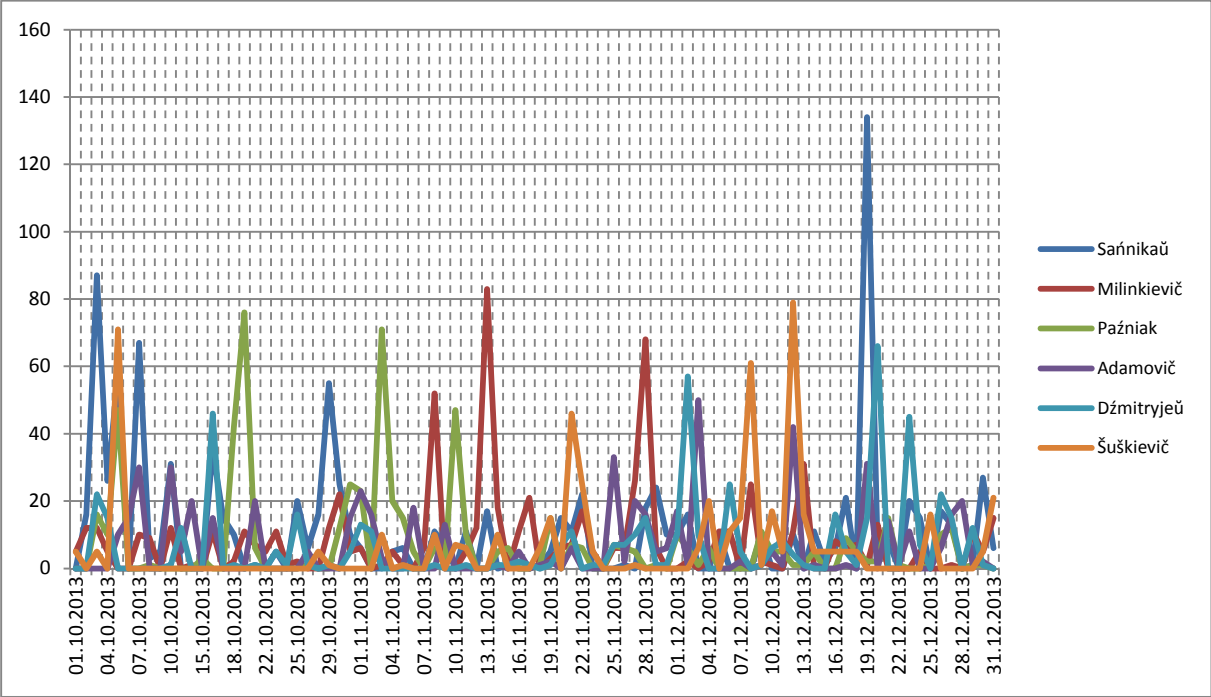


Chart 33.1. Accumulation of the total presence index for the 'top-8' political forces by the date

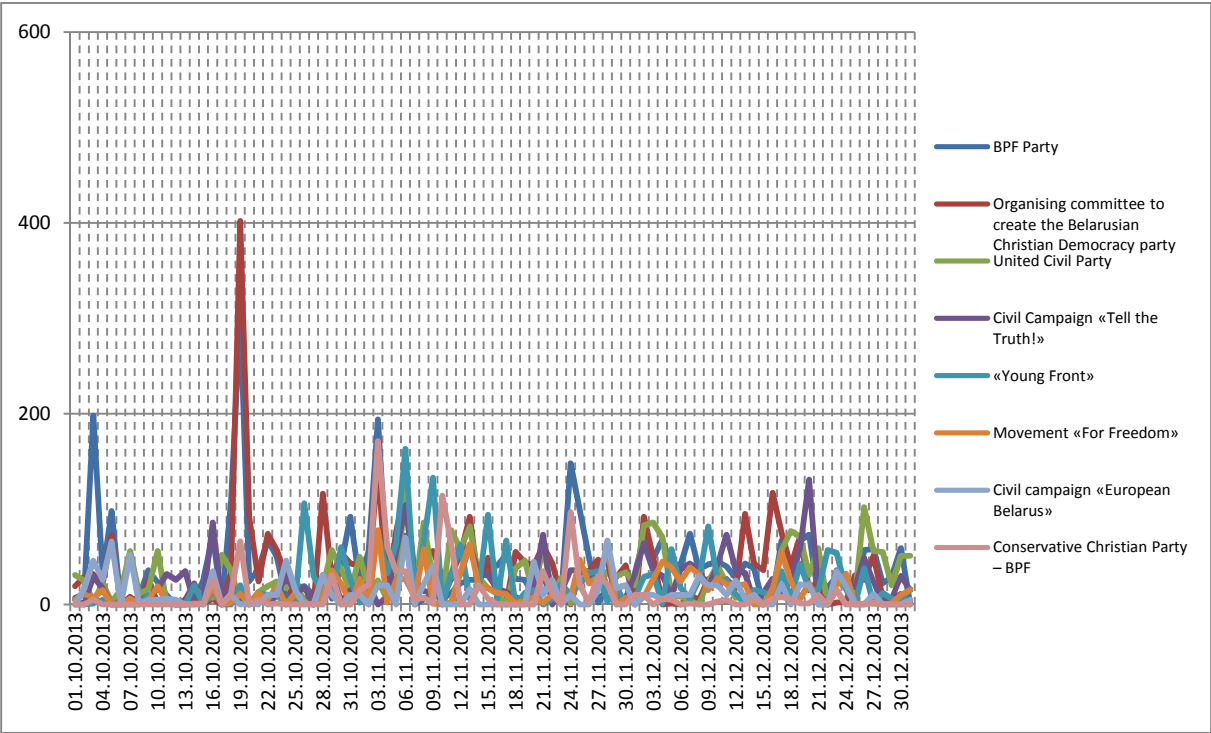
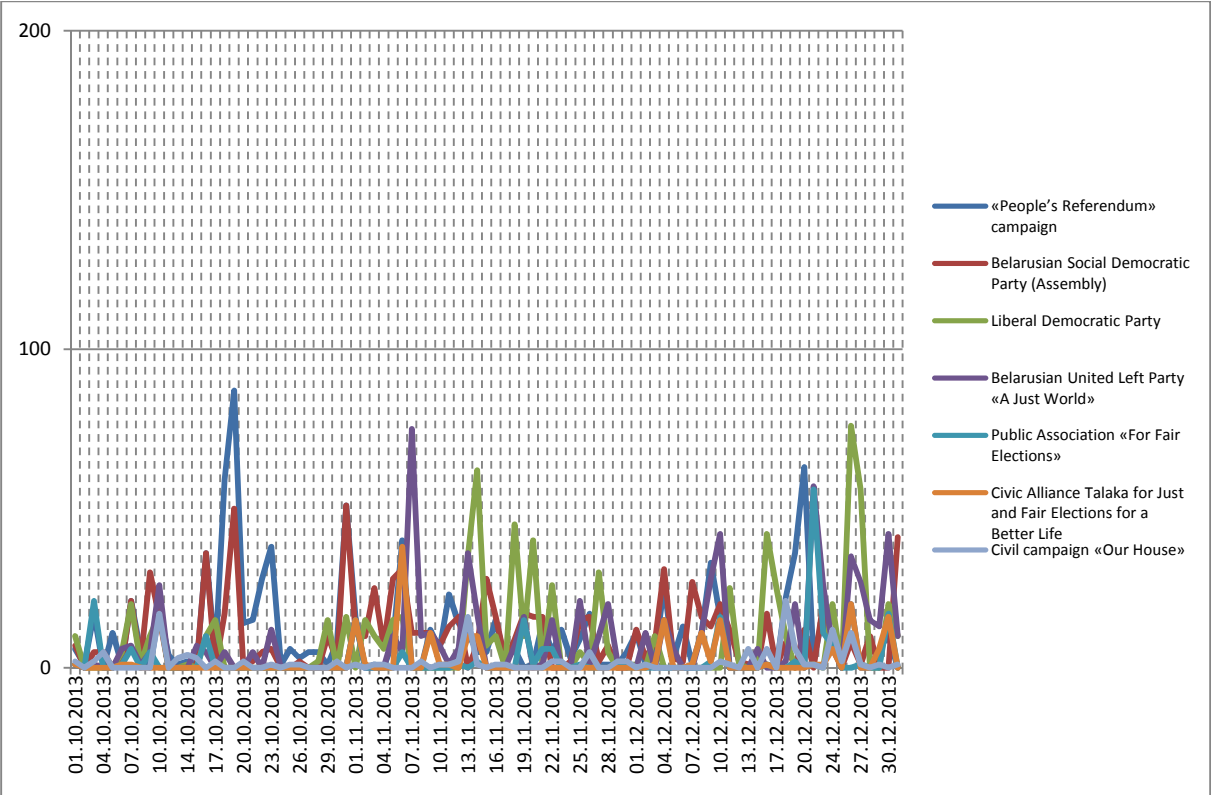


Chart 33.2. Accumulation of the total presence index for the political forces ranking 9th to 15th in the quantitative index rating by the date



Appendix 2. Major trends of the political communications field in 2013

The following table describes major characteristics of the political communications field in 2013.

Major trends of the political communications field in 2013
<p>2013 was characterized by the quite a lot of activity in the political communications field. There was not a single quarter with less than 3,000 references to political actors and forces. The numbers were 3,900 in January – March; 3,084 in April – June; 3,217 in July – September and in October – December the figure peaked at 5,988 references. However, judging by the topics of communications, the amount of attention to the political sphere depends on personal stories, related to waves of repression and release of repressed politicians rather than the stages of political and business cycle in the country.</p>
<p>Throughout 2013, Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ and Anatoł Liabiedźka competed for the top position in the quantitative index ratings. It was only in the fourth quarter that Paval Sieviaryniec took the lead.</p> <p>Among the political forces 'Tell the Truth!' campaign consistently led in the ratings. Yet, in October – December the BPF Party, which had been steadily improving its standing, went to the top, while 'Tell the Truth!' campaign gave way to the Belarusian Christian Democracy and the United Civil Party.</p>
<p>The proportion of the political forces' own communications must have reached its maximum and inevitably began to go down as the number of media references increased. On the whole it was the online media that accounted for the growth in the number of references, as they are free from such limitations as frequency and a fixed number of pages that are typical of the printed press. For this reason as the number of communications fell in the second and third quarters, the share of the press increased, but it dropped again in October – December.</p>
<p>During 2013 the distribution of topics became more balanced. Whereas in January – March over 75% of communications focused on society-related issues, from the second to the fourth quarters the most popular group of topics did not exceed a 50% threshold. Overall, society-related topics received most coverage, with the exception of the second quarter, when international relations went into the foreground.</p> <p>In general the distribution of levels of events did not undergo sufficient changes. Approximately half of communications were about events of national level. The other half was more or less evenly distributed between regional, personal and international events.</p>

The proportion of media coverage of offline activities was steadily growing, from a modest 16% in January to over 50% in June. By the end of the year, it had stabilized at 40% to 50%.

Meanwhile, the share of 'reactive' communications had fallen: they made up 60% in the first quarter, peaked at 85% in the second but began going down in the third, to account for only 41% of communications at the end of 2013.

The profile of political forces' representatives remained quite stable. The share of communications that mentioned the political actors' affiliation fell from 72-73% in the first half of 2013 to 62-63% in the second. The reason was the huge amount of information about politicians as individuals, particularly Źmicier Daškevič's and Paval Sieviaryniec's release. Still, the roles in which the politicians appeared in communications remained unchanged. In about one-third of cases the politicians came up with some general reasoning and in one-third of references that were presented as participants in events.

Throughout 2013, the share of female voices among individual politicians fluctuated between 7% and 16%. The representation of political forces was becoming more diverse. In the first quarter references to their leaders made up 48%; in the second quarter the figure was 59% but in the fourth quarter it dropped to 34%.