

# MONITORING

MB#10/2015EN, 25 February 2015

Belarusian Institute  
for Strategic Studies 

## BISS POLITICAL MEDIA BAROMETER

(July – September 2014)

### Introduction

The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) presents its tenth quarterly report **BISS Political Media Barometer** (July – September 2014). It provides information about political forces' communications, as well as tracks some major trends in the dynamics of the political communications field. This time we have introduced a new section that analyses some independent resources' contribution to the political forces' coverage. The purpose of this analysis is, among other things, to monitor political forces' representation in different sources throughout the 2015 presidential campaign.

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 22 individual politicians, 13 Belarusian political forces and two coalitions, basing on the systemic monitoring of the available open media sources.

The author of the **BISS Political Media Barometer** is 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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## Major Findings

### Overview of the political communications field

The present report covers the political communications field between July and September 2014. Below we present our major research findings.

- **The number of political communications continued to decline.** The time span between July and September is routinely marked by less activity in the political communications field. In the third quarter of 2014 we analysed 3,185 media references, which was even less than the 3,217 political communications in July – September 2013. This invariably leads us to a conclusion that it was the local elections on 23 March, 2014 that accounted for the growth in the number of political communications between October 2013 and March 2014.
- **The quality of political communications improved.** The activities of the political forces that belong to the 'National Referendum' campaign, as well as the Belarusian Christian Democracy resulted in enhanced quality of political communications. For example, there was an increase in the shares of regional events and regional representatives in the information field, the proportion of 'proactive' communications went up, while 'passive' ones went down, and the share of offline activities covered in the media showed positive dynamics. If the political actors and forces boost the proportion of their own communications, it may also further advance the quality of political communications, as this makes it easier for the political forces to be in control of the communications field.
- **The leading political forces maintained their rating positions.** The rating standing of the leading political forces did not undergo any changes mainly because the discussion around the nomination of one opposition candidate for the 2015 presidential race equally contributed to each force's presence in the information field. Unlike the political forces' rating, that of individual political actors was marked by significant changes. The latter is generally more volatile than the former. This fact may show that the political organisations on the one hand and their leaders on the other pursue different communication policies.
- **Procedural issues came to be discussed instead of the 2015 election.** The distribution of topics shows that the focus of discussion around the 2015 presidential race shifted towards debate over the preparatory process and the political forces' mutual cooperation. This premise is supported by a noticeable fall in the number of references to the election proper and a growing number of references to topics related to political parties.
- **How much coverage different political forces received depended on the media resources.** In terms of representation of various political forces we can differentiate between those media that give more or less equal coverage to the political forces (belaruspartizan.by, euroradio.fm, naviny.by, tut.by, *Belorusy i Rynok*) and those that feature certain political forces more prominently. Besides, the media with a strong concern for the Belarusian national identity are apt to focus on the like-minded political forces.

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

Characteristics	Trends in April – June 2014	Trends in July – September 2014
<b>Where and how the opposition speaks</b>		
Types of communication channels	The share of independent online resources kept going down to reach 47%, while the proportion of the partisan online resources grew from 31% to 39%.	The share of independent online media showed a downward trend: this time they accounted for only 36% of political communications. Meanwhile, the proportion of partisan resources surged up to 53% of all the analysed communications. This was in line with the general tendency towards less coverage of the opposition political forces.
Topics of communications	The elections slid into the background, with only 21% of communications related to this topic. Instead, it was social issues, politics and political parties that came to the forefront, with 39%, 32%, and 24% of communications, respectively.	Of the total number of communications, the elections became an even more low-key topic, mentioned in only 4% of references. Meanwhile political parties received the second biggest share of references – 20%, with society-related topics in the lead (31%). Economic issues showed a further downward tendency, dropping from 8% at the end of 2013 to 3% in the third quarter of 2014.
Levels of events: international, national, regional and personal	The proportion of regional events dropped to a mere 10%, whereas the share of national events surged to 60%.	The share of regional events reverted to the previous level, making up 18%. At the same time the proportion of personal events dropped from 17% to 11%.
Coverage of offline activities	The percentage of offline activities covered by the media did not only remain quite low but even went on gradually decreasing. Throughout the second quarter of 2014 it never exceeded 25%.	The share of offline activities covered by the media began to go up. From March 2014 it had not exceeded 25%, whereas in July it made up 26% and 34% in September.
Levels of activeness in communications: 'proactive', 'reactive' and 'passive' media references	In terms of their activeness the structure of communications remained unchanged. The share of proactive communications was still 24%.	'Proactive' communications surged from 24% to 36%, while 'passive' ones went down from 38% to 30%.

<b>Political forces' media profile</b>		
Political actors' affiliation with their political forces	The percentage of references to individual politicians without mentioning their affiliation rose to 38%.	The percentage of references to individual politicians without mentioning their affiliation slightly went down, making up 36%.
Types of representation	The share of regional representatives slightly went down, namely from 11% to 8%. This accounted for a modest growth in the representation of vice-chairpersons/members of the board from 22% to 26%.	The proportion of regional representatives grew markedly up to 13%. At the same time the share of those who did not represent a political force slid down. While the percentage of references to top leaders fell, the share of other leaders/members of the board rose from 26% to 31%.
Representation by gender	The share of female representatives continued to go down, making only 6%. <sup>1</sup>	The proportion of female representatives remained 6%.
Type of reference: as participant in the events, expert or commentator; new project, new strategy, general reasoning, mentioned in passing	The structure of types of references to the representatives of political forces remained virtually unchanged. The comments showed a slight shift in favour of expert opinions. General reasoning was present in 50% of the communications.	The share of general reasoning dropped to 43%, while the proportion of references to politicians as participants in events grew from 17% to 26%.
Types of political forces	The share of references to the coalitions dropped to 11%, with only 4% of communications mentioning the coalitions as such and 7% speaking about political forces as members of coalitions.	The coalitions were still mentioned in 11% of all the communications, but always in the context of parties as members of coalitions and never on their own.

<sup>1</sup> Maryna Adamovič gave way to her husband Mikola Statkievič on the individual politicians list. It was his communications that we analysed this time, which had an immediate impact on the general distribution of references to the politicians by gender.

## Detailed research findings

### Quantitative index

In quantitative terms, the political actors' and forces' communication performance in July – September 2014 continued to show negative dynamics. In the first quarter of 2014 the total number of political communications was 6,550; in April – June 2014 the figure plummeted to 3,818 and fell even lower in July – September to make up 3,185. As the number of political communications was on the rise in October – December 2013 and January – March 2014, we came up with a supposition that the media increased their attention to political issues in general. The theory, however, was disproved, as in July – October 2014 the total number of political communications was even lower than 3,217 – the figure for July – October 2013. It can be concluded that it was the local elections on 23 March 2014 that drove up the numbers of political communications between October 2013 and March 2014, while the political communications field generally reflects the dynamics of the electoral cycle. In the third quarter of 2014 the forthcoming presidential race had not yet had an impact on the number of political communications.

#### ***1. Individual politicians: total presence in the information field, media coverage and their own communications***

In July – September 2014 the quantitative characteristics of the individual politicians' media performance significantly changed. The research findings reveal that the individual politicians' ratings are much less stable than those of political forces. This fact may show that the political organisations on the one hand and their leaders on the other pursue different communication policies.

Žmicier Daškievič markedly lost his standing in the rating as compared to the previous quarter, moving from the first to the tenth position. This was due to the fact that he had owed his leading position by and large to the acts of repression against the Young Front activists. It was also a factor in the negative quantitative dynamics of the Young Front, even though to a lesser extent.

Anatol' Liabiedzka and Aliaksiej Janukievič were still in the lead, improving their relative standing in the ratings as Žmicier Daškievič lost ground. It should be pointed out, however, that Anatol' Liabiedzka's quantitative index – 892 points and 247 references – was much higher than that of Aliaksiej Janukievič, who ranked second with only 616 points and 141 references.

The top of the rating included politicians who were actually not any more actively involved in politics, which became a noticeable trend of the analysed time span. Thus, Stanislau Šuškievič continued his upward movement, rising from the sixth to the third position. The key factor in these dynamics was commentaries and references to him in connection with Aliaksandr Lukashenka's twenty years in power and the 23rd anniversary of Belarus' independence. Apart from that, Stanislau Šuškievič actively commented on the Ukraine – Russia conflict and the role Belarus played in brokering a ceasefire. Mikola Statkievič rose from the ninth to the sixth position due to lively debate around his possible nomination as one opposition candidate to run for presidency. The same reason was behind Aliaksandr Milinkievič's improved standing in the ratings, as he moved from the eighth to the fourth position. Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ, by contrast, showed worse media performance, moving from the third to the fifth position.

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 April – June 2014 is given in the brackets)
Anatol' Liabiedzka	247	892	<b>1</b>	↑(2)
Aliaksiej Janukievič	141	616	<b>2</b>	↑(4)
Stanislaŭ Šuškievič	71	489	<b>3</b>	↑(6)
Aliaksandr Milinkievič	109	456	<b>4</b>	↑(8)
Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ	114	447	<b>5</b>	↓(3)
Mikola Statkievič	127	447	<b>6</b>	↑(9)
Paval Sieviaryniec	95	439	<b>7</b>	↓(5)
Andrej Džmitryjeŭ	111	374	<b>8</b>	↓(7)
Zianon Pažniak	83	336	<b>9</b>	↑(10)
Žmicier Daškevič	52	293	<b>10</b>	↓(1)
Siarhiej Kaliakin	50	244	<b>11</b>	↑(18)
Andrej Saŭnikaŭ	37	227	<b>12</b>	↑(13)
Juraś Hubarevič	90	209	<b>13</b>	↑(14)
Ryhor Kastusioŭ	54	198	<b>14</b>	↑(15)
Siarhiej Hajdukievič	31	175	<b>15</b>	↑(17)
Alieh Hajdukievič	31	162	<b>16</b>	=(16)
Lieŭ Marholin	63	158	<b>17</b>	↓(12)
Vitaĺ Rymašeŭski	22	94	<b>18</b>	↓(11)
Viktar Karniaienka	26	85	<b>19</b>	↑(21)
Iryna Vieštard	18	72	<b>20</b>	=(20)
Ihar Masloŭski	45	67	<b>21</b>	-
Volha Karač	20	49	<b>22</b>	↓(19)

Anatol' Liabiedzka and Mikola Statkievič essentially cut the shares of their own communications. This fact demonstrates the vital role of increased media attention in the politicians' presence in the information field. When a political figure comes into the media spotlight, it is usually prompted by some external factor; in this case it was the debate in the media around the electoral procedure for the 2015 presidential race. As for Aliaksiej Janukievič and Aliaksandr Milinkievič, the shares of their own communications did not go down, which shows that they actively used their own communication sources, something that is less typical of summer time.

The Belarusian Christian Democracy representatives lost their standing in the ratings, Vitaĺ Rymašeŭski going from the 11th to the 18th position and Paval Sieviaryniec sliding from the fifth to the seventh place. The shares of their own communications also fell, which is evidence of failing to make intensive use of their own communications and the BCD's unrealised potential when it comes to their own communication channels.

It was the first time Ihar Masloŭski had made his way into our list of individual politicians. He had a lower quantitative index than the BSDP (H) leader Iryna Vieštard, but outdid her in terms of the number of references (45 vs. 18). The reason was that Ihar Masloŭski often spoke on behalf of 'Tell the Truth!' campaign.

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

Politicians	Media coverage		Their own communications		Share of their own communications in the total presence	Dynamics of the share of the politicians' own communications (the share in April – June 2014 is given in brackets)
	Number of references	Total index	Number of references	Total index		
Anatol Liabiedzka	167	812	80	80	32%	↓(49%)
Aliaksiej Janukievič	104	579	37	37	26%	↑(19%)
Stanislaŭ Šuškievič	71	489			0%	=(0%)
Aliaksandr	81	428	28	28	26%	↑(18%)
Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ	98	431	16	16	14%	↓(17%)
Mikola Statkievič	127	447	34	34	8%	↓(48%)
Paval Sieviaryniec	78	422	17	17	18%	↓(24%)
Andrej Dźmitryjeŭ	80	343	31	31	28%	↓(42%)
Zianon Paźniak	75	329	8	7	10%	↓(29%)
Žmicier Daškievič	48	289	4	4	8%	↑(7%)
Siarhieŭ Kaliakin	48	242	2	2	4%	↓(6%)
Andrej Sańnikaŭ	35	225	2	2	5%	↓(31%)
Juraś Hubarevič	59	178	31	31	34%	↓(40%)
Ryhor Kastusioŭ	40	184	14	14	26%	↓(38%)
Siarhieŭ Hajdukievič	26	170	5	5	16%	↑(15%)
Alieh Hajdukievič	24	155	7	7	23%	↑(13%)
Lieŭ Marholin	45	140	18	18	29%	↓(46%)
Vitaĺ Rymašeŭski	15	87	7	7	32%	↓(44%)
Viktar Karniajenka	25	84	1	1	4%	↑(0%)
Iryna Vieštard	13	67	5	5	28%	↓(32%)
Ihar Masloŭski	20	42	25	25	55%	-
Volha Karač	20	49	0	0	0%	↓(39%)

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

In the third quarter of 2014 the structure of the political forces' quantitative index basically remained unchanged, which was apparently its most noticeable feature during the analysed time span. The top-5 political forces as ranked in April – June 2014 maintained their positions.

As the total number of political communications fell, the 'National Referendum' campaign showed a considerable growth, with their quantitative index spiking by 50%, from 344 to 512 points. This was also a factor in the rating dynamics of the campaign's members, for example, the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (*Hramada*) rose from the eighth to the sixth position. By the number of their communications the 'National Referendum' campaign was about to catch up with the top-5 political forces, which is a big success for a campaign that was set up only a year ago.

The Belarusian Left Party 'A Just World' also noticeably improved its standing in the rating. This was mainly due to its leader's role in the debate around the nomination of one opposition candidate and the plans to hold a Convention of Left Democratic Forces.

This time the Young Front showed negative rating dynamics. Its rapid growth in the previous quarter had been explained by the acts of repression against its activists, brought into the spotlight by the media. In the previous quarter the topic of repression had been present in 20% of political communications, whereas in July – September 2014 it was mentioned in only 7% of references. Acts of repression may be an important factor in drawing the media attention, but its impact does not last long.



**Table 3. Total presence of the 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 (the position April - June 2014 is given in the brackets)
BPF Party	437	1788	<b>1</b>	=(1)
United Civic Party	418	1375	<b>2</b>	=(2)
Belarusian Christian Democracy	304	1192	<b>3</b>	=(3)
'Tell the Truth!' civic campaign	388	1168	<b>4</b>	=(4)
Movement 'For Freedom'	328	1047	<b>5</b>	=(5)
Belarusian Social Democratic Party ( <i>Hramada</i> )	174	513	<b>6</b>	↑(8)
Belarusian Left Party 'A Just World'	90	426	<b>7</b>	↑(10)
Liberal Democratic Party	74	413	<b>8</b>	↑(9)
Young Front	65	409	<b>9</b>	↓(6)
'A European Belarus' civic campaign	41	346	<b>10</b>	↓(7)
BPF Conservative Christian Party	27	119	<b>11</b>	=(11)
'Our Home' civic campaign	32	70	<b>12</b>	=(12)
NGO 'For Fair Elections'	6	10	<b>13</b>	=(13)
'National Referendum' campaign	262	512	(The total presence index in April - June 2014 was 344)	
Civic Alliance <i>Talaka</i> for Just and Fair Elections for a Better Life	8	26	(The total presence index in April - June 2014 was 109.)	

If we consider the political forces' media coverage vs. their own communications, most of them increased the share of their own communications. This was true of the BPF Party, the Belarusian Christian Democracy, 'Tell the Truth!' campaign and the movement 'For Freedom'. Both the United Civic Party and its leader allowed the share of their own communications to drop. The fall, however, was less significant for the party than for Anató Liabiedźka.

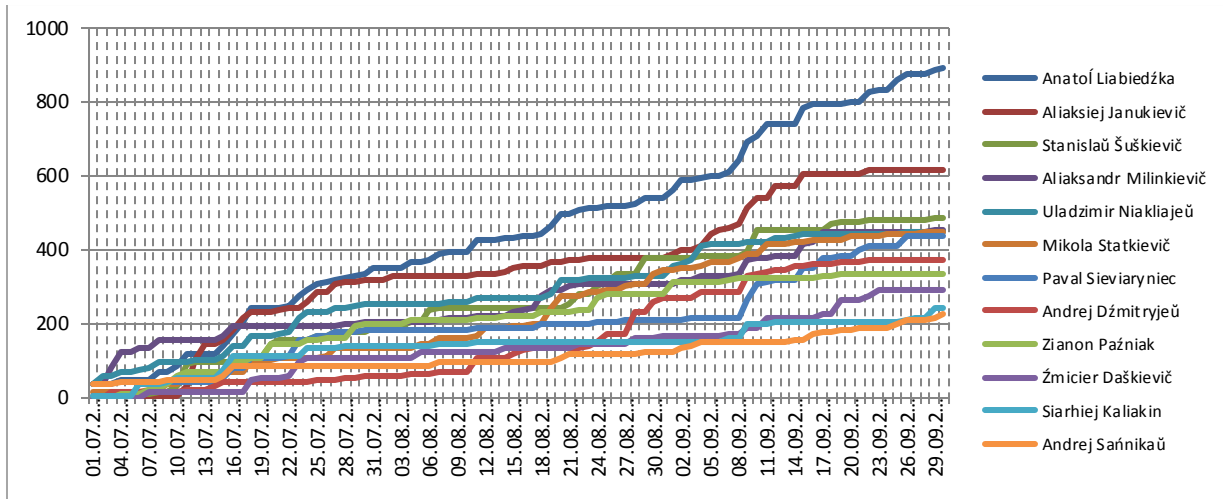
Table 4. Political forces: media coverage vs. their own communications

Political forces	Media coverage		Their own communications		Share of their own communications in the total presence	Dynamics of the share of their own communications (The share in April – June 2014 is given in the brackets.)
	Number of references	Index	Number of references	Index		
BPF Party	328	1679	109	109	25%	↑(19%)
United Civic Party	216	1173	202	202	48%	↓(52%)
Belarusian Christian Democracy	176	1064	128	128	42%	↑(41%)
'Tell the Truth!' civic campaign	219	999	169	169	44%	↑(33%)
Movement 'For Freedom'	198	917	130	130	40%	↑(32%)
Belarusian Social Democratic Party ( <i>Hramada</i> )	117	456	57	57	33%	↓(34%)
Belarusian Left Party 'A Just World'	88	424	2	2	2%	↓(8%)
Liberal Democratic Party	61	400	13	13	18%	↓(21%)
Young Front	57	401	8	8	12%	↓(21%)
'A European Belarus' civic campaign	39	344	2	2	5%	↓(10%)
BPF Conservative Christian Party	19	112	8	7	30%	↓(49%)
'Our Home' civic campaign	19	57	13	13	41%	↑(28%)
NGO 'For Fair Elections'	6	10			0%	=(0%)
'National Referendum' campaign	209	459	53	53	20%	↑(17%)
Civic Alliance <i>Talaka</i> for Just and Fair Elections for a Better Life	1	1			0%	=(0%)

### 3. Total presence dynamics in time

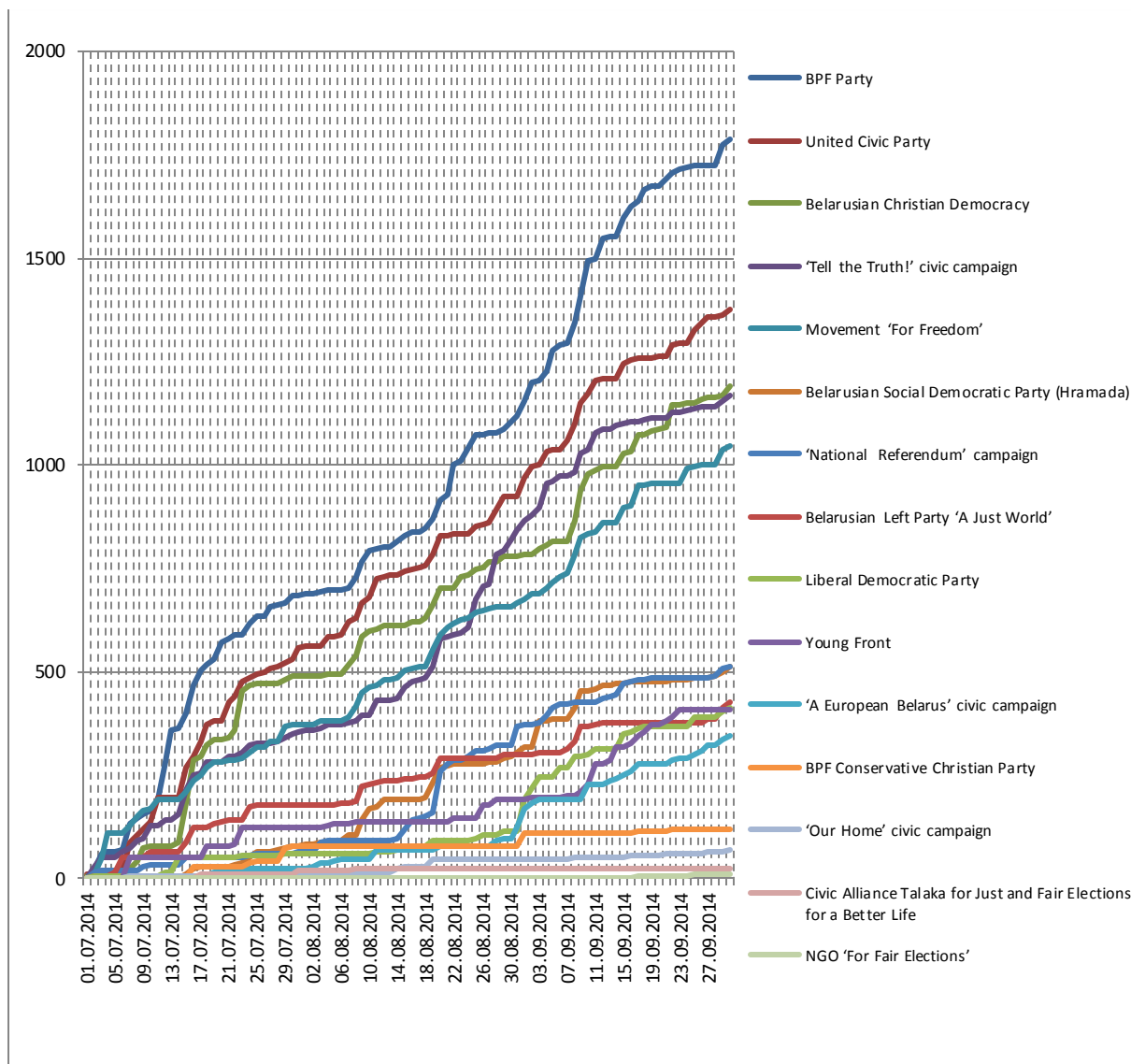
The dynamics of the quantitative index accumulation show that throughout the analysed three months Anatól Liabiedźka drew a lot of media attention. Aliaksiej Janukievič, who ranked second in July – September 2014, accumulated his total presence index unevenly. His presence in the information field boosted as the media brought into the focus of their attention the subject of one opposition candidate and from mid-July discussed the future of Belarus – Russia relations. Aliaksiej Janukievič also received more coverage in the context of regional meetings within the 'National Referendum' framework in late August and early September. However, the surges gave way to long periods of silence. This leads us to a conclusion that for maintaining the leading position constant presence in the information field does matter.

Chart 6.1. Accumulation of the total presence index for top-12 politicians



The reason why the top-5 political forces maintained their standing in the ratings becomes clear if we compare the dynamics of their total index accumulation. As the 2015 presidential race is getting closer, the major political forces get engaged in debate around the nomination of one opposition candidate. As a result, the debate equally contributes to each participant's media presence during the same time spans. The first stage of the debate occurred in the second half of July and the second covered the first half of September, when the subject of a Convention of Democratic Forces came to the fore in the media. These two time spans coincided with the most impressive accumulation of the total presence index by the BPF Party, the United Civic Party and the Belarusian Christian Democracy. Apart from the debate around one opposition candidate for presidency, the Hienadz Karpienka football tournament on 9 August 2104 was also a factor that equally contributed to these political forces' index accumulation.

Chart 6.2. Accumulation of the total presence index for political forces

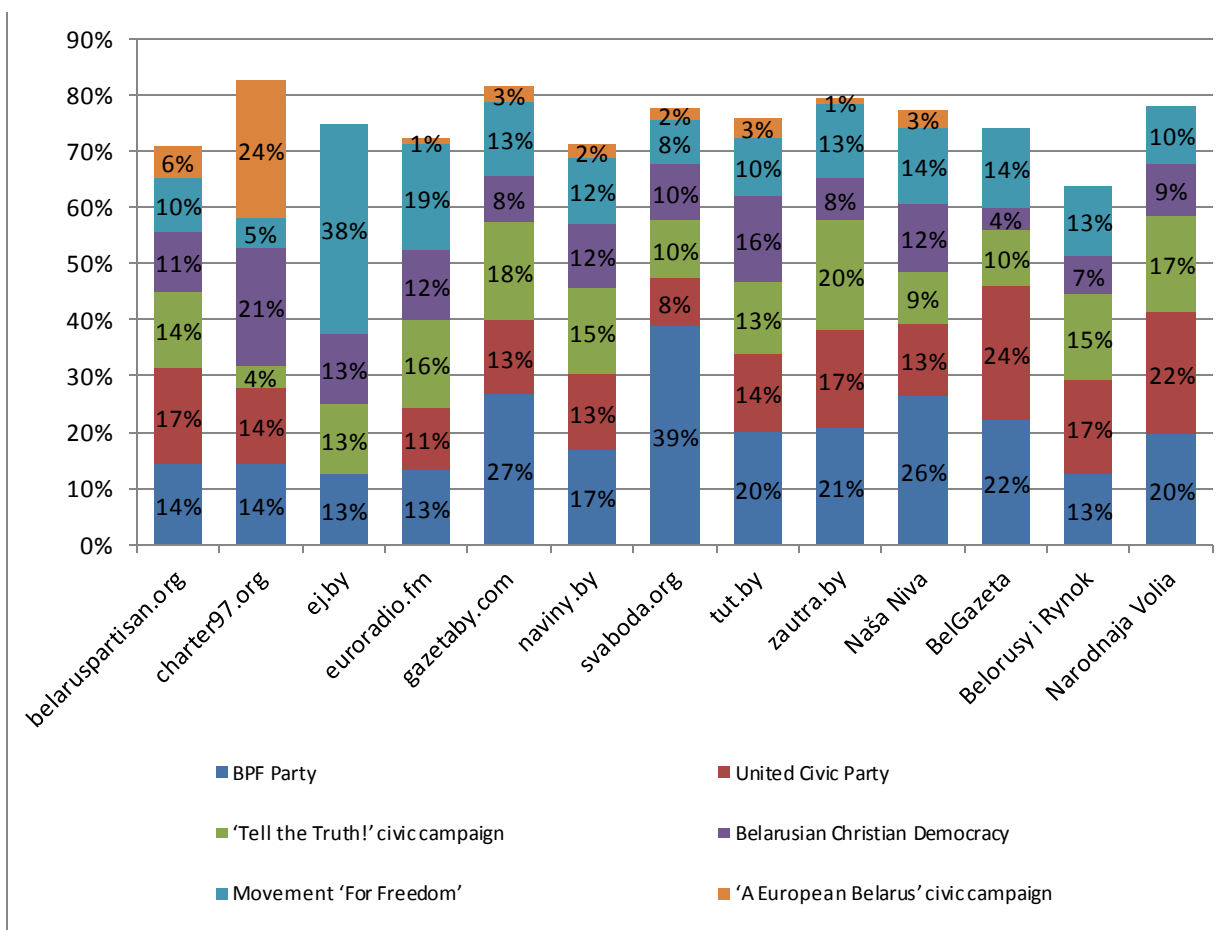


#### 4. Political forces' coverage by different resources

In order to track different independent media's input into different political forces' coverage and go on monitoring the dynamics of the political forces' representation in different media during the presidential campaign, this report looks into the distribution of references to the political forces by key media outlets.

With a view to making the data more reliable we have analysed six months' time span – from April to September 2014. Below you can see the distribution of references to the political forces by independent online and printed media.

**Chart 7. Political forces' presence in some independent online and printed media**



The top-5 political forces make up over 60% political communications in all these media resources. There are also media outlets that more or less focus their attention on a certain political force.

If we choose 20% as a benchmark for measuring the media's focus on this or that political force, the following media outlets appear to have certain preferences: charter97.org – with references to 'A European Belarus' campaign making up 24% and BCD-related communications accounting for 21% of the total; ej.by – with 38% of references mentioning the movement 'For Freedom'; BelGazeta with 24% of references to the UCP and Narodnaja Volia with 22% of communications featuring the UCP. A number of media outlets tend to give more coverage to the BPF Party. Among these are gazetaby.com with 27% of references to this political force, svaboda.org – 39%, zautra.by – 21%, and Naša Niva – 26%. Such resources as belaruspartisan.by, euroradio.fm, naviny.by, tut.by, and Belorusy i Rynok apparently have a more balanced structure of the political forces' coverage.

Some resources have very few references to the political forces, which makes the data on the political forces' distribution there statistically unreliable. Among such resources are ej.by and gazetaby.com with eight and nine references to the political forces, respectively.

If we are going to track the media outlets that account for the biggest share of each political force, the key mouthpiece for the BPF Party is svaboda.org, for the UCP it is *BelGazeta*, for the BCD and 'A European Belarus' campaign it is charter97.org and for the movement 'For Freedom' it is ej.by. None of the analysed resources tends to focus on 'Tell the Truth!' campaign and its work. The important thing is to see if there will be any changes in the media – political forces' relations during the presidential race.

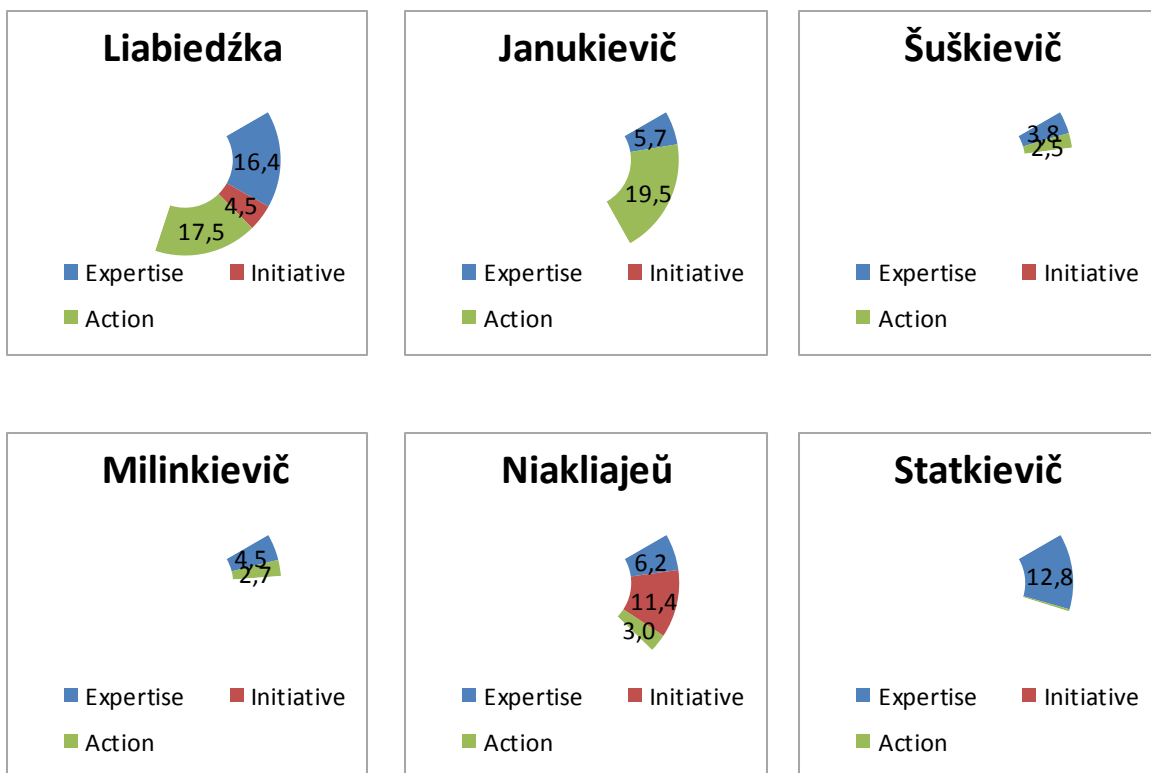
To sum it up, in terms of different political forces' representation we can make a distinction between those media that give more or less equal amount of coverage to different political forces and those that are centred on a certain political force. Further more, the media with a strong concern for the Belarusian national identity are apt to focus on the like-minded political forces.

### Qualitative index

The qualitative index demonstrates which political actors gain high standing in the quantitative ratings owing to increased media attention rather than purposeful activities aimed at the media and the electorate. Even though Stanislau Šuškievič ranked third in July – September 2014, he had low expertise and political action sub-indices. The politician found himself in the focus of media attention due to Aliaksandr Lukashenka’s twenty years in office and the 23rd anniversary of Belarus’ independence. A similar picture is characteristic of Aliaksandr Milinkievič, who appeared in the spotlight on account of the debate around presidential hopefuls.

Anatol Liabiedzka, who led in the rating in July – September 2014, had relatively high qualitative characteristics. As for ‘political action’, here Aliaksiej Janukievič outdid all the others with 19.5 points out of 100. Zmicier Daškevič, who initiated ‘Stop Empire!’ campaign, and Uladzimir Niakliajeu had the highest figures of political initiatives in their communications, 13.3 and 11.4 points out of 100, respectively.

**Chart 8. Distribution of the qualitative index parameters<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> The maximal index for each dimension can be 100 points, so the total maximum index can be 300 points.

### Sieviaryniec



■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action

### Dźmitryjeŭ



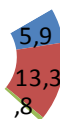
■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action

### Paźniak



■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action

### Daškievič



■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action

### Kaliakin



■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action

### Sańnikaŭ



■ Expertise ■ Initiative  
■ Action



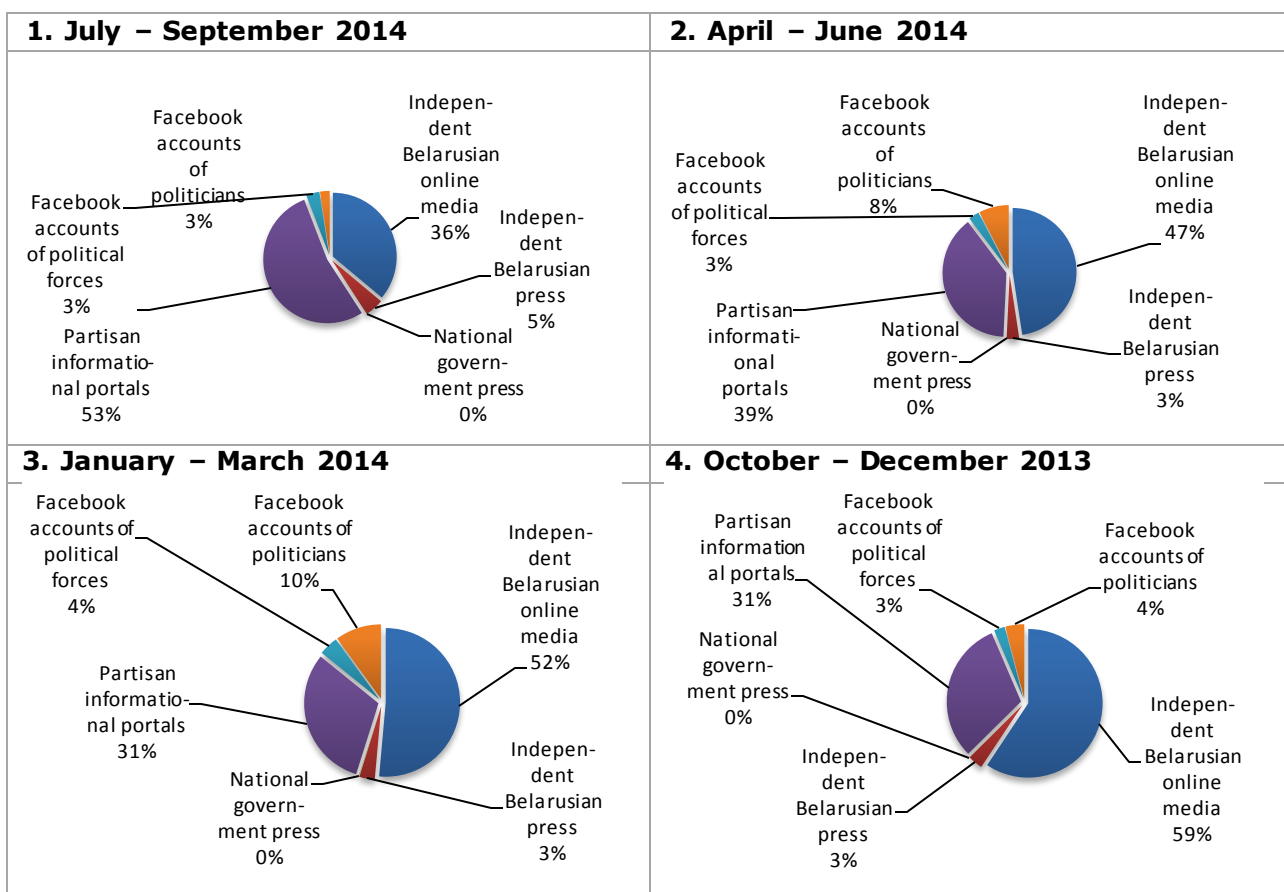
## Where and how the opposition speaks

### 1. Distribution of appearances in the information field by the source

After a period of increased media attention during the local elections the political field began to come out of the media focus. This premise is supported by both lower numbers of references to the political actors and forces and smaller share of independent online resources in their total presence in the information field, which fell from 52% at the beginning of 2014 to 36% in July – September. While the total number of political communications went down, the political forces pushed up the share of their own communications, with the partisan websites showing a growth from 39% to 53%. This fact shows that the political forces did not slow down even in the summer.

The fall in the share of independent online media made the political communications field in general more manageable, which may have been a factor in the improved qualitative characteristics of the communications. (We will focus on this matter in detail further in the text.)

**Chart 9. Distribution of appearances in the information field by the source**



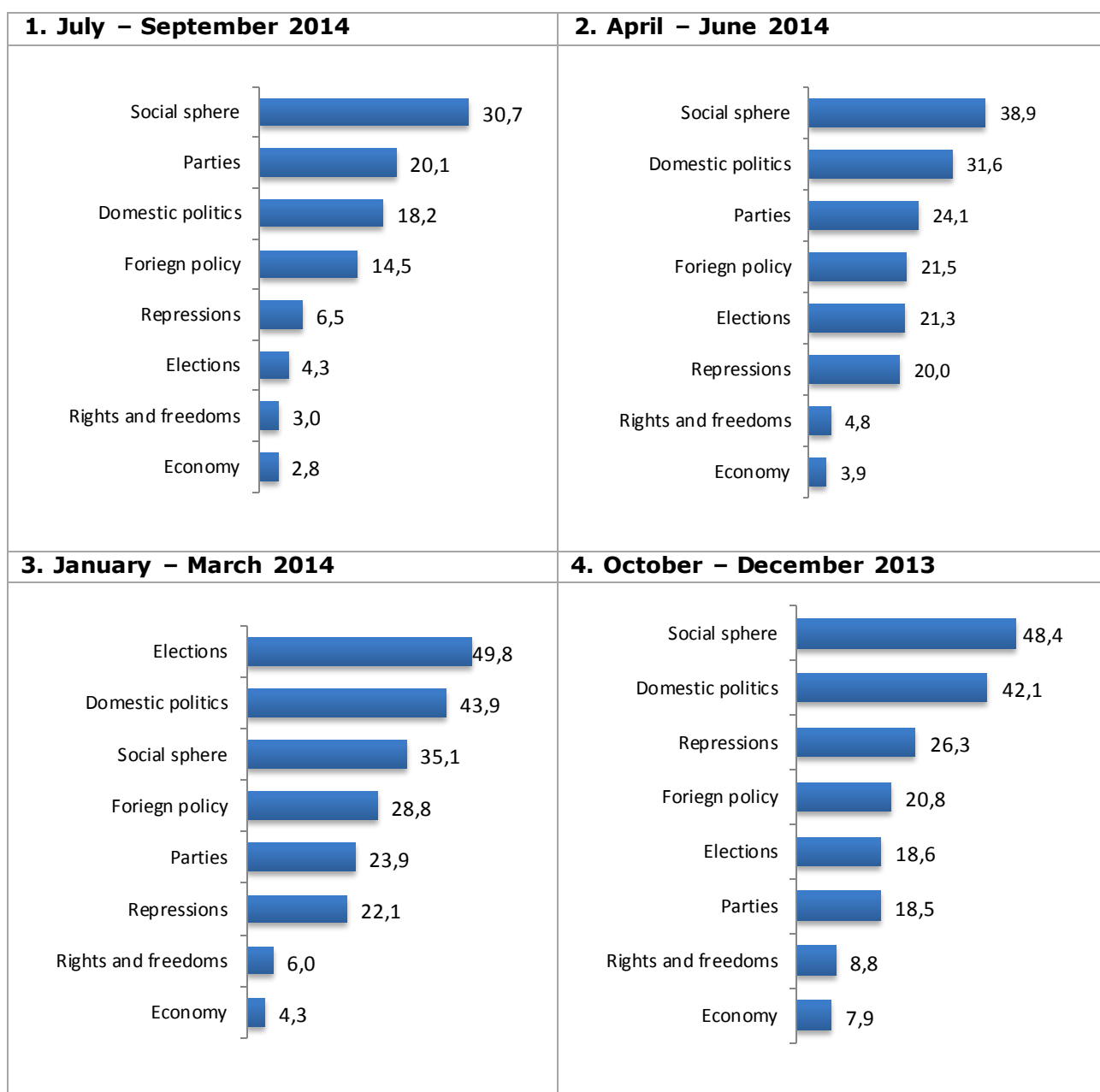
**2. How the independent Belarusian political forces use the available information field**

The topics of political communications in July – September 2014 became less diverse. Much less coverage was given to election-related issues, the share of this topic plunging from 21% to 4%. The proportion of references to acts of repression also dropped from 20% to 7%. The topics related to the life of society and social problems are still in the lead, but their coverage also fell from 39% to 30%.

In July – September 2014 communications about political parties ranked second. This was in many ways due to the fact that the focus of debate around the 2015 presidential election shifted to a discussion of preparatory processes, such as cooperation between the coalitions or a Convention of Democratic Forces, so that the election itself was not mentioned.

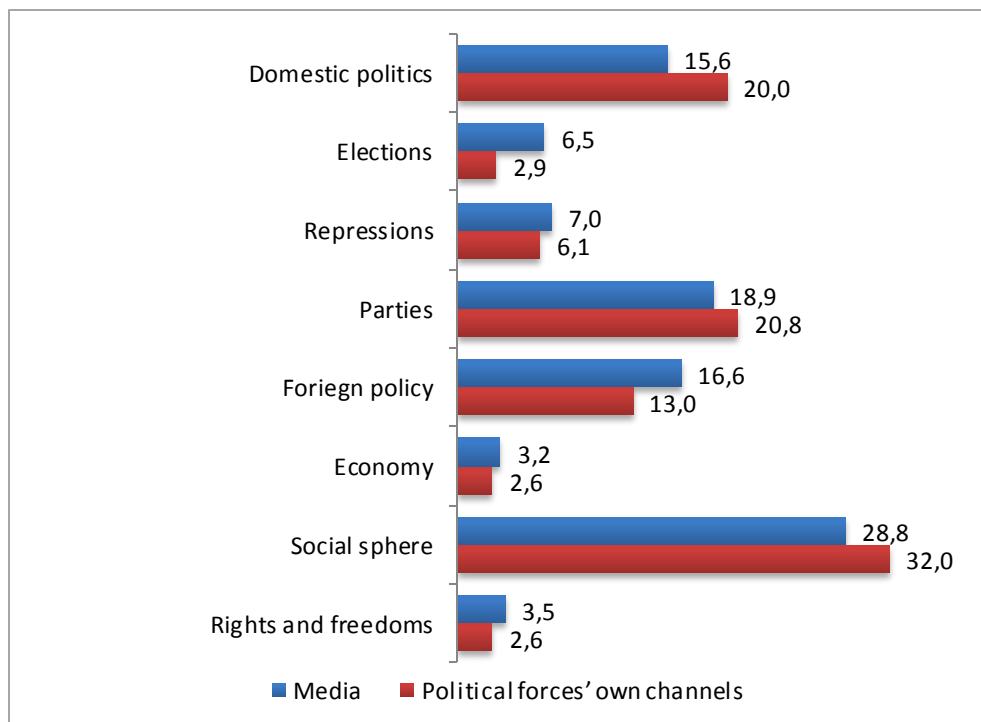
Economic issues continued to move out of the focus of attention. In the late 2013 they accounted for 8% of political communications, while in July – September the share of this topic was only 3%.

**Chart 10. Topics of communications**



The distribution of the topics in both the media and the political forces' own channels was nearly identical. The latter focused more on society, politics and political parties, while the former were more concerned with the election and international relations. This noticeable unity in the topics leads us to a conclusion that the political forces' communication policies and the topics of their communications have a significant influence on the range of topics raised in the media and that the political forces are by and large able to manage their media image.

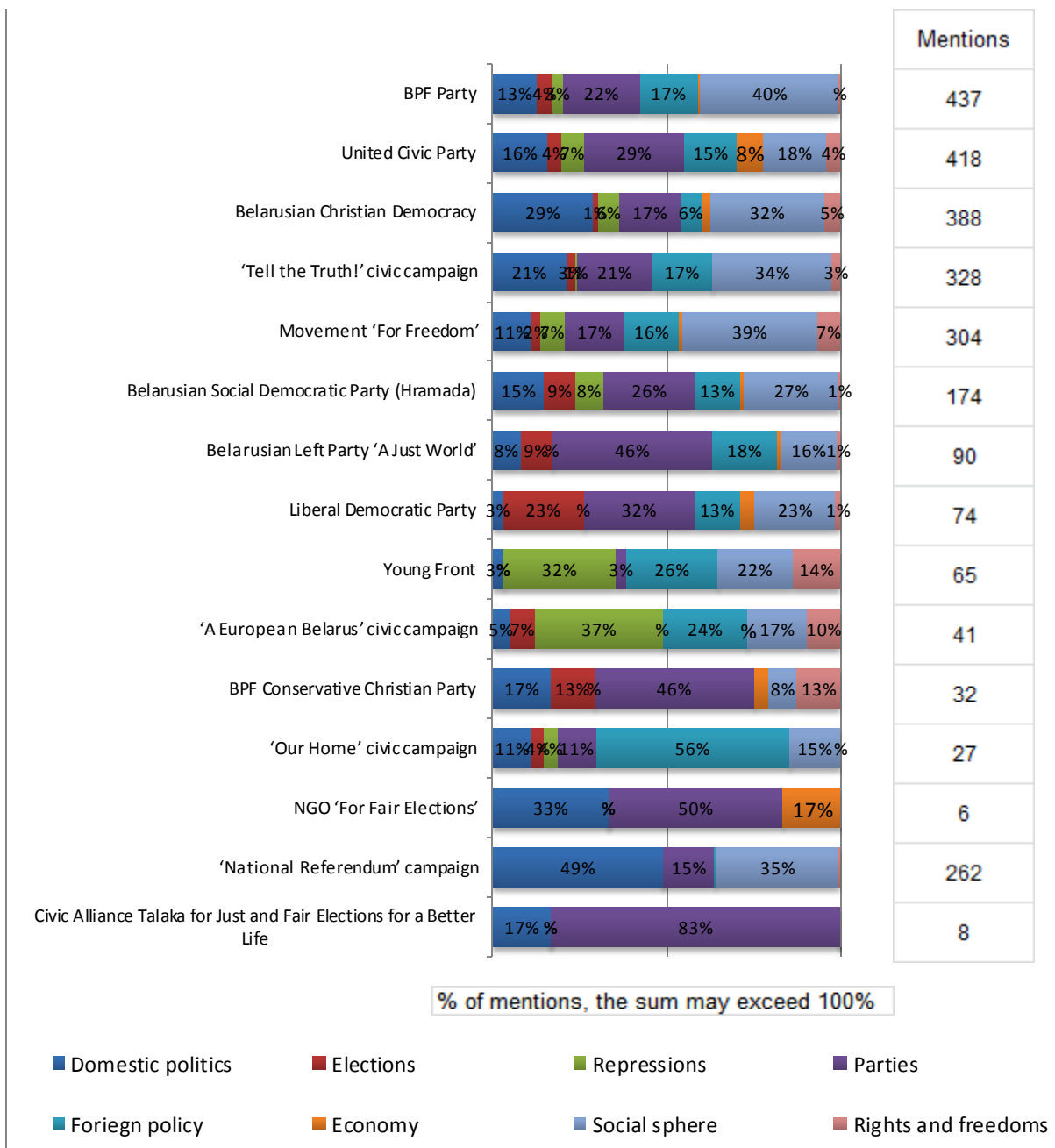
**Chart 10.1. Topics of communications by the type of communication channels**



The top political forces generally have a similar structure of topics, maintaining their diversity. However, the members of the 'National Referendum' campaign and the Belarusian Christian Democracy focused more on social problems. Meanwhile, the UCP led in the coverage of economic issues, with 8% of economy-related communications (for purposes of comparison: the average figure was 2.8%). The Young Front and 'A European Belarus' traditionally centred more on acts of repression.

A detailed analysis of the topics shows that the debate around one opposition candidate was still at the top of the list. The 'National Referendum' came to be mentioned much more often, ranking third among particular topics after it increased its share from 5% to 12%. The work of the 'National Referendum' campaign drove up the topic of education, which ranked fifth in July – September 2014 with 7% of references.

Chart 11. Distribution of topics of communications for political forces



The coverage of regional events increased in July – September 2014. It was a positive development, since it gave more diversity to the communications field and improved the political forces' image. The growth in the share of regional events was accompanied by less focus on personal events.

Members of the 'National Referendum', such as 'Tell the Truth!' campaign and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (*Hramada*), as well as the Belarusian Christian Democracy contributed a lot to the increased coverage of regional events.

**Chart 13. Levels of events**

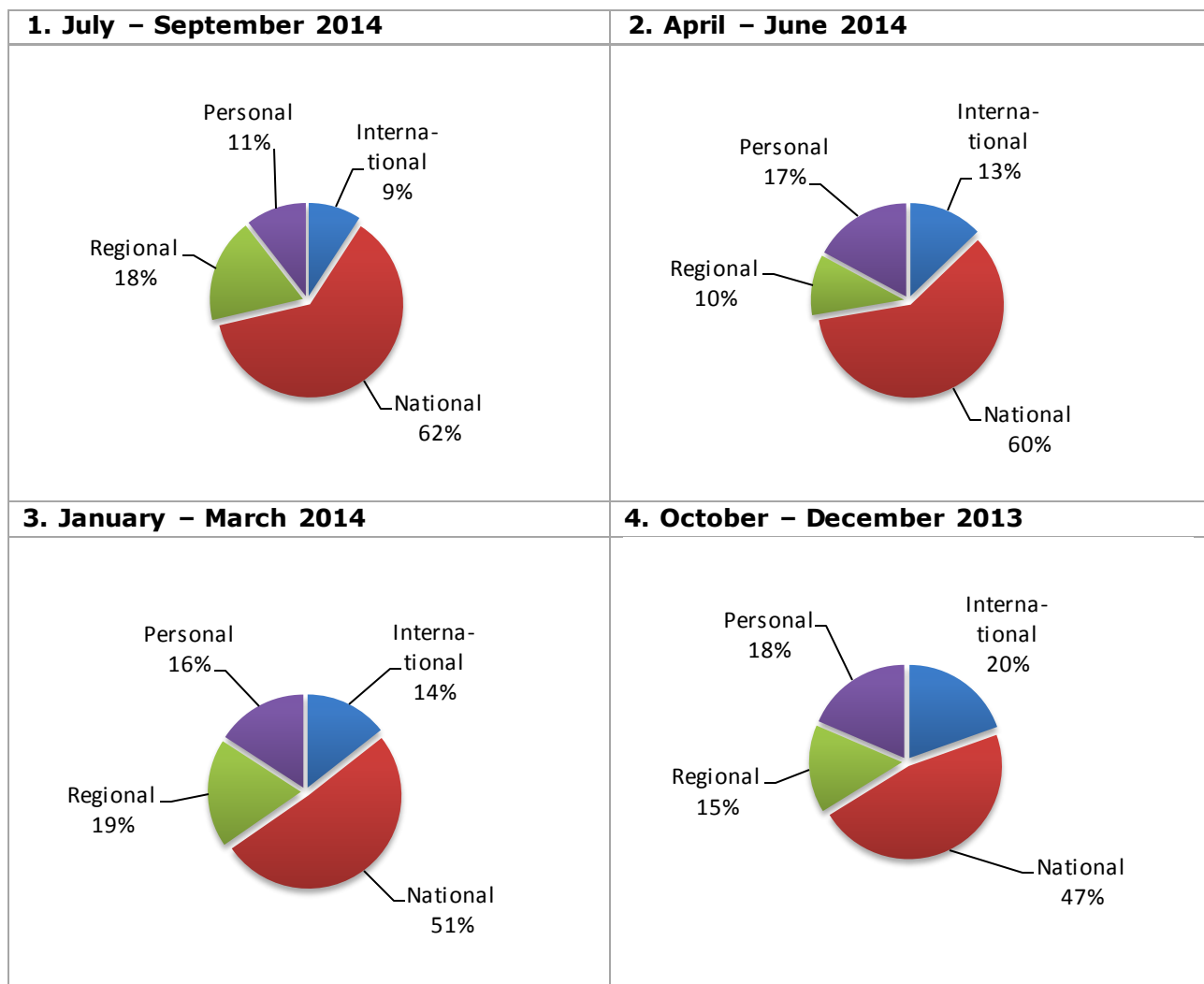
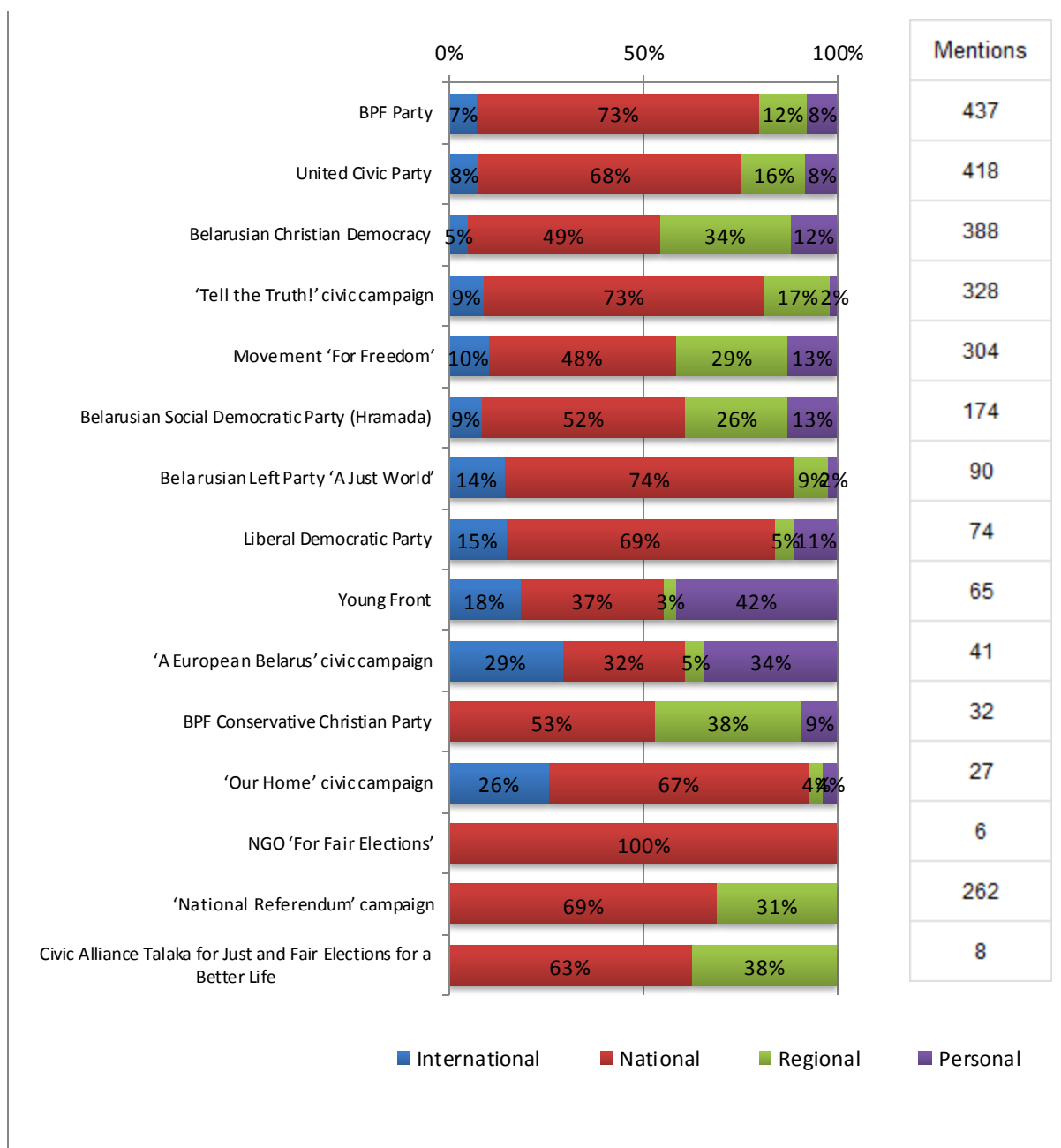


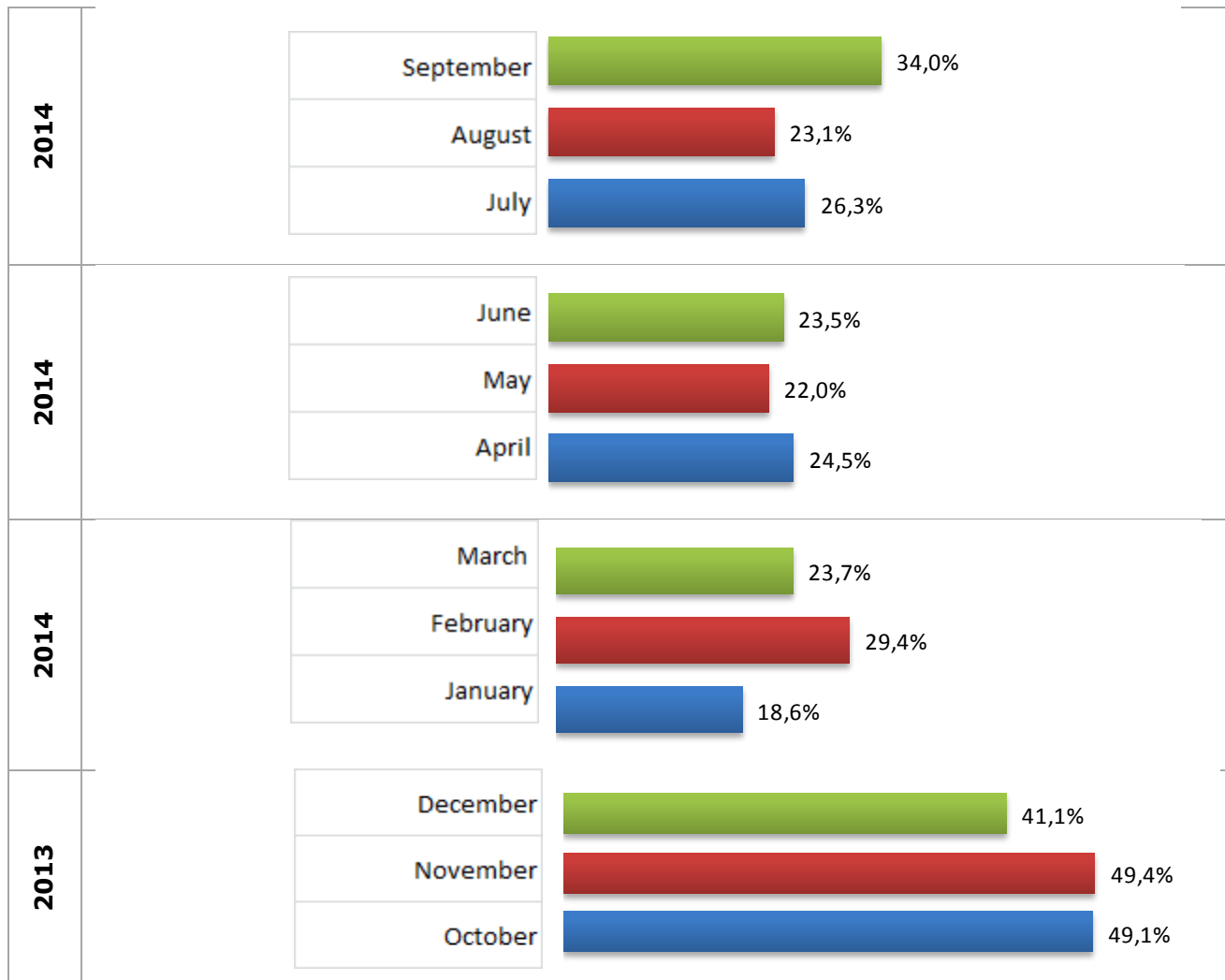
Chart 13.1. Levels of events for political forces



**3. Correlation between offline activities and political communications**

It was the first time in quite a long period that the proportion of offline activities covered in the media had grown, once again thanks to the 'National Referendum' campaign and the BCD. In September the share of offline activities went up to 34%, after having stayed below 30% throughout 2014.

**Chart 14. Correlation between offline activities and political communications**

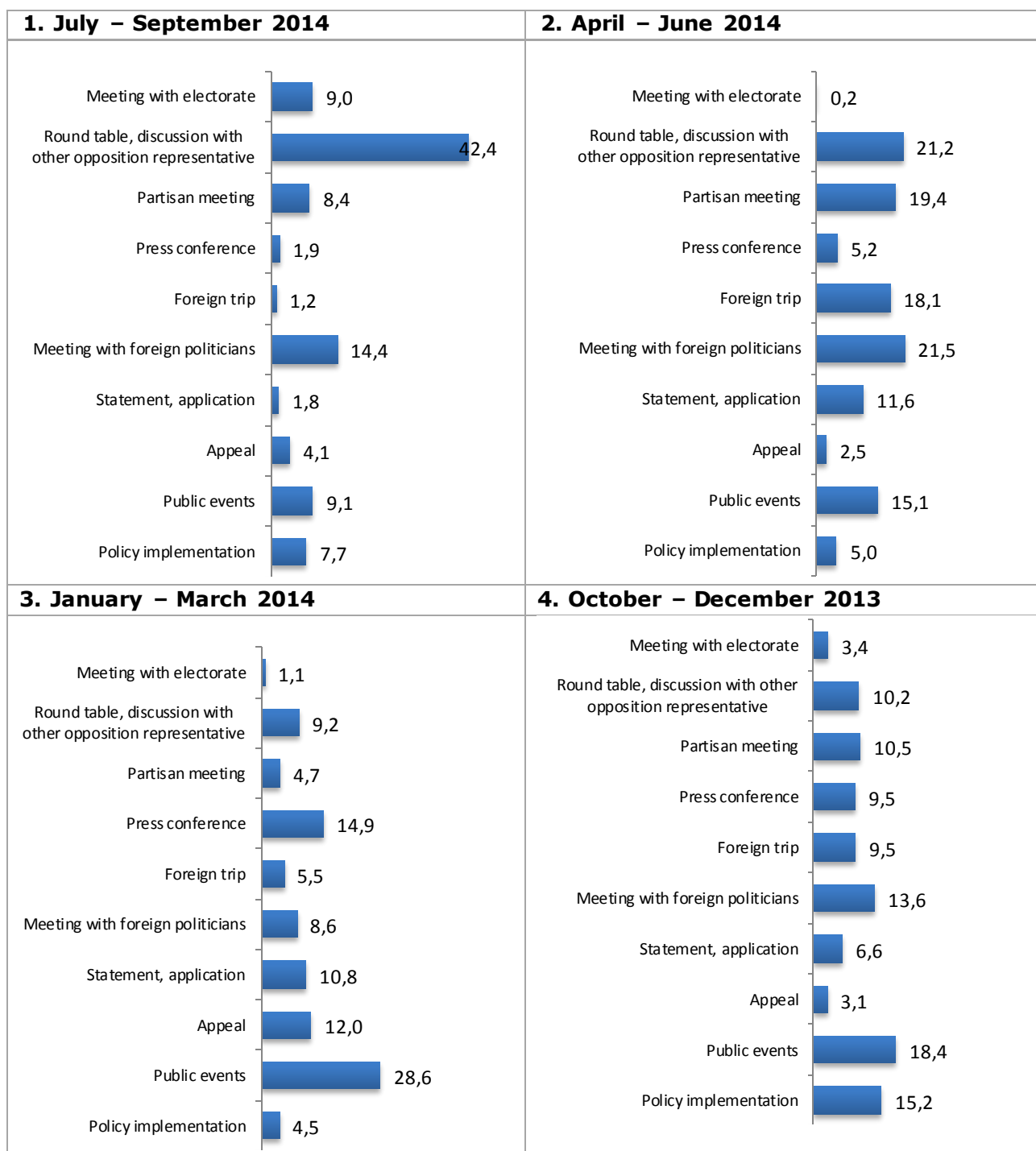


The share of offline activities grew due to an increased number of party-to-party meetings, like the debate around measures to tackle corruption in mid-August, the opening of the centre of democratic forces' supporters in Brest and round table discussions held by the 'National Referendum' campaign. Meetings with the electorate also made up a notable proportion of offline activities, as their share grew from 0.2% in the second quarter of 2014 to 9% in July - September.

At the same time such activities as party meetings, public events, foreign trips and meetings with European political figures received considerably less coverage, perhaps due to the fact that their numbers dwindled in the summer.

All the top political forces had pretty high levels of offline activities; however, here the UCP was behind the members of the 'National Referendum' campaign and the BCD. The 'National Referendum' itself had a very high level of offline activities, which positively influenced the image of its political forces.

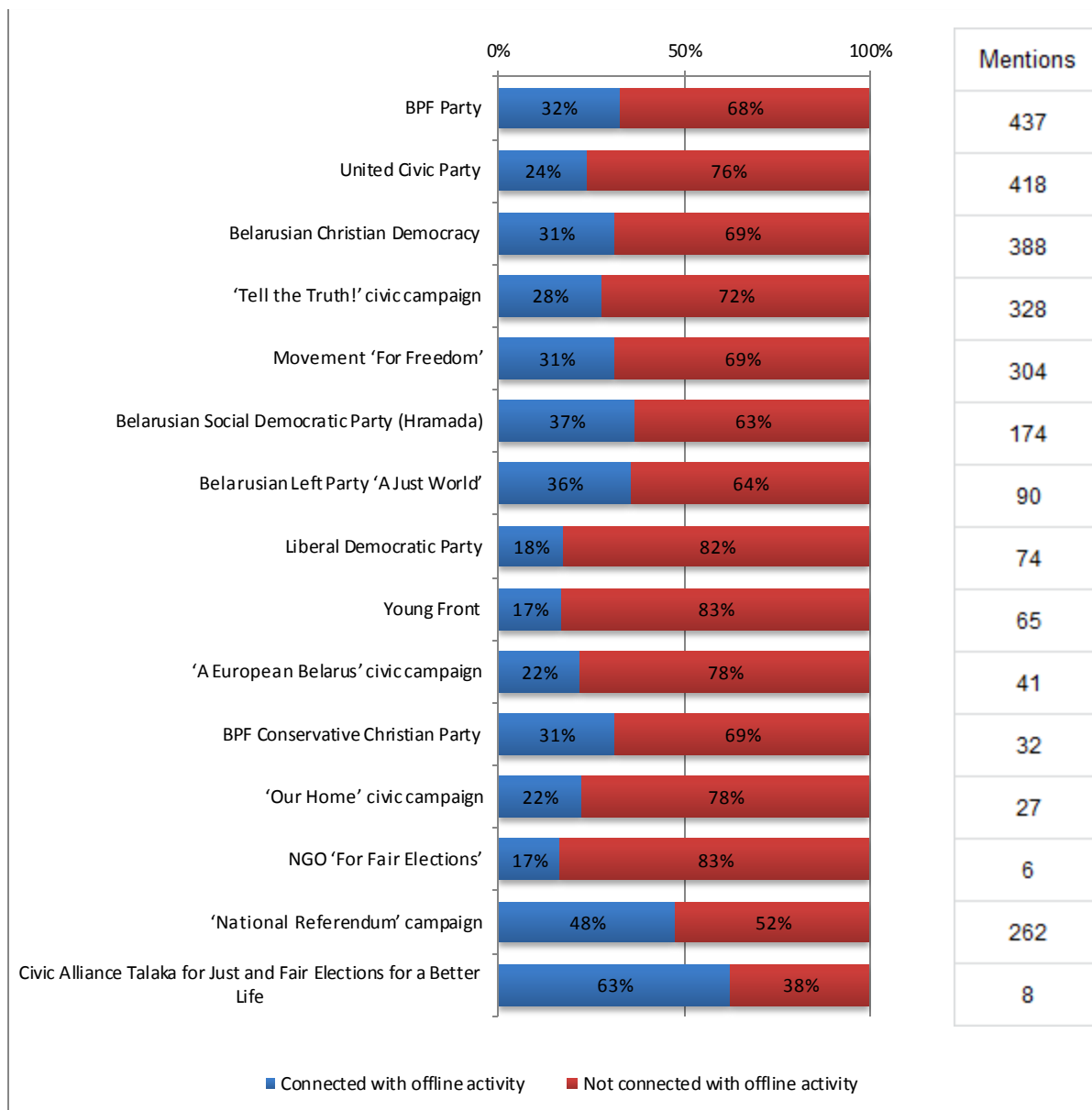
Chart 15. Types of offline activities<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> The sum total exceeds 100%, as one article can mention several events.



Chart 16. Media coverage of political forces' activities

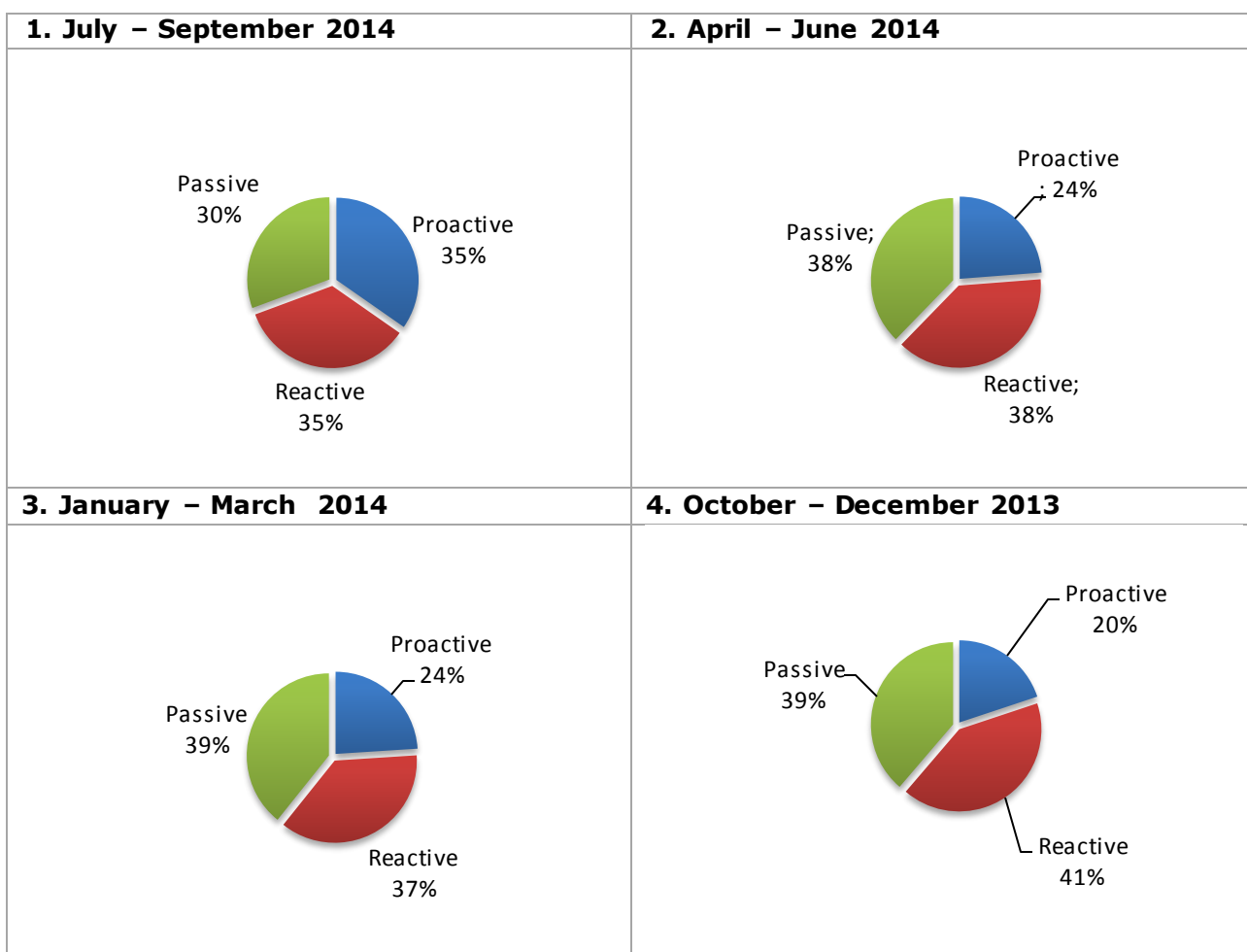


**4. Levels of political actors' and forces' activeness in the media**

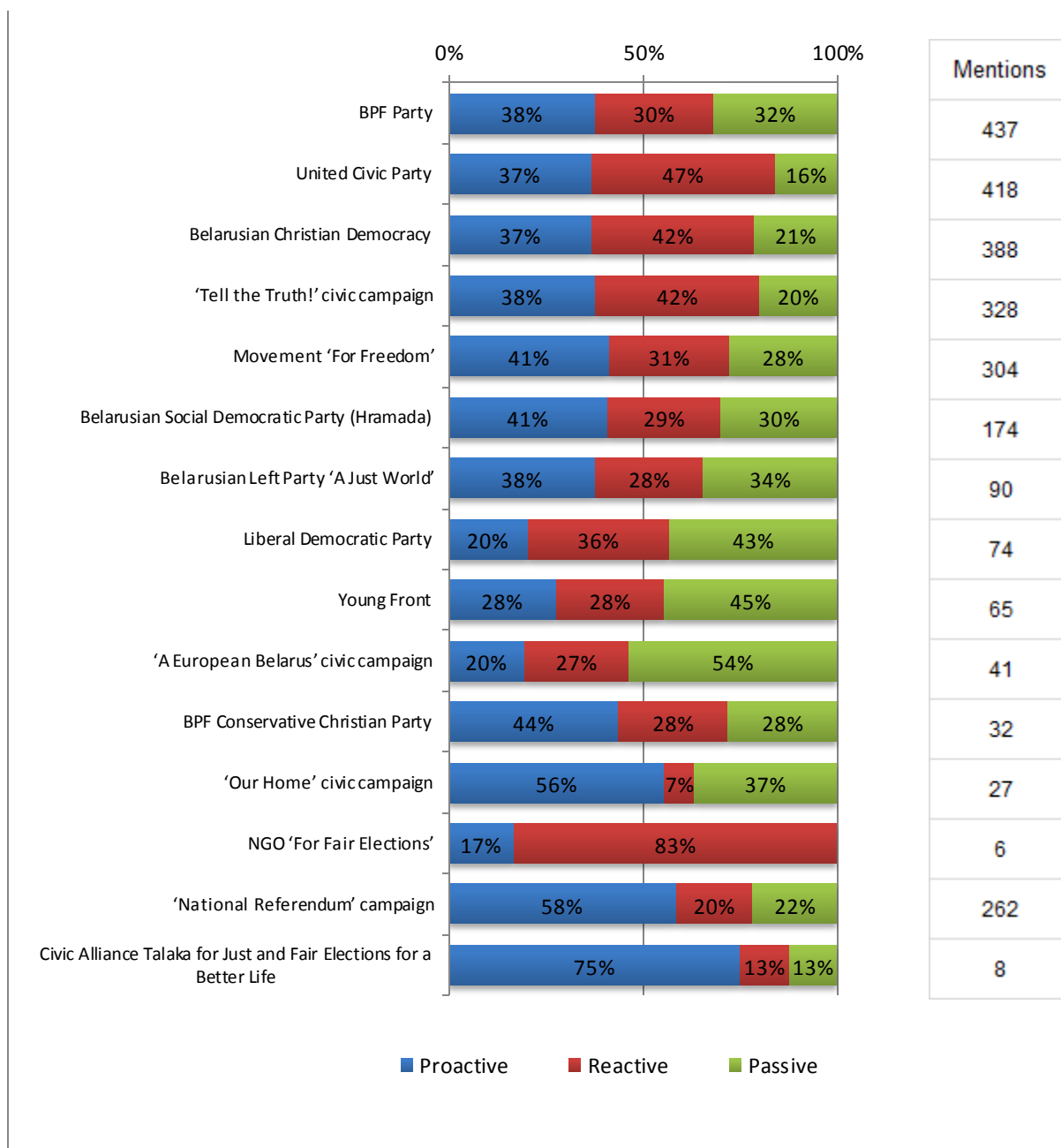
Besides the positive changes in the content quality of political communications, the third quarter of 2014 was also marked by the political forces' growing activeness in the media. The number of 'proactive' communications was very much on the increase, reaching 35%, whereas it had not exceeded 24% in the previous nine months. The growth of proactive communications went in line with the fall in passive ones. It testified to less attention to the political field by the media on the one hand, but contributed to better communications quality on the other.

The top political forces had nearly the same levels of 'proactive' communications; the 'National Referendum' campaign, however, markedly exceeded the average figure with 58% of 'proactive' communications.

**Chart 17. Levels of activeness in communications**



**Chart 18. Distribution of levels of activeness in political forces' communications**



### Political forces' media profile

Although the share of references to the political actors mentioning their political affiliation was high enough, it did not reach the early 2014 figures, when the politicians were positioned as representatives of their political forces in 67% of cases. In the third quarter of 2014 the figure was only 64%. In many ways it was because of Stanislau Šuškievič's increased media presence. Uladzimir Niakliajeu also represented his political force much more seldom than the other top politicians – his political affiliation was not given in 44% of his media appearances.

**Chart 19. Positioning of messengers**

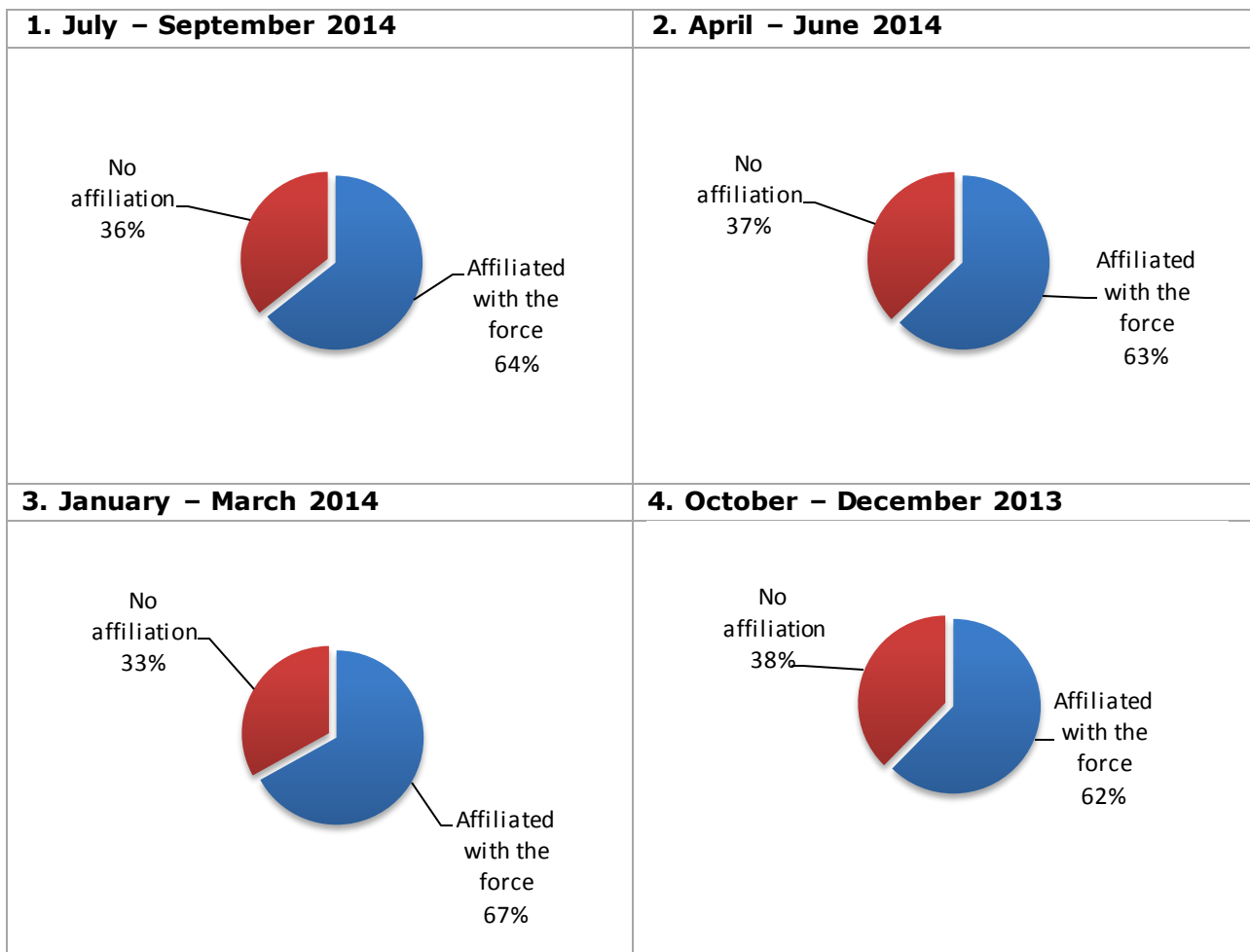
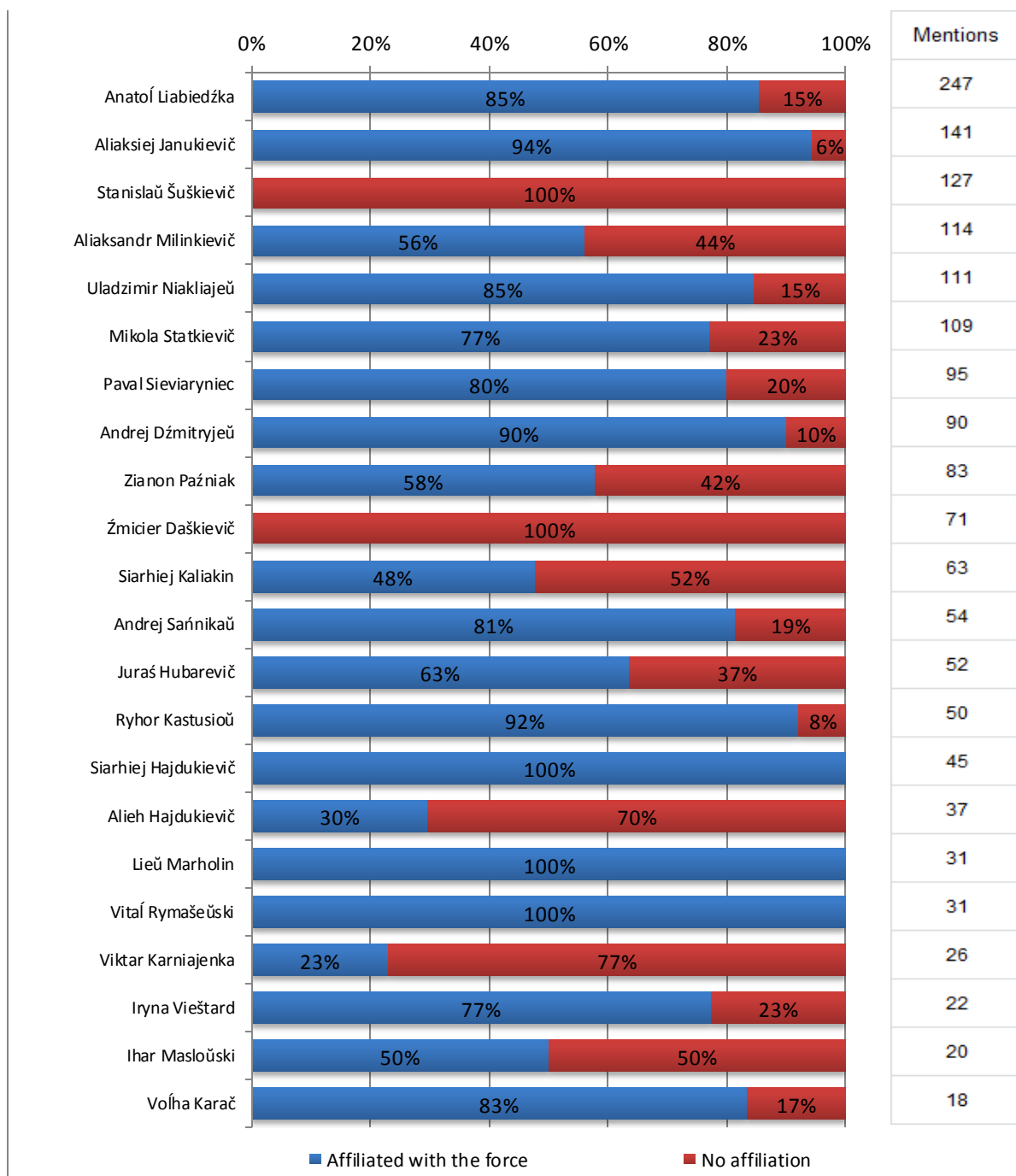


Chart 20. Positioning of messengers for individual politicians



As the media coverage of regional events grew, so did the share of the political forces' regional representatives. Regional leaders' presence went up from 4% to 7% and the proportion of regional rank-and-file members increased from 4% to 6%. The share of top leaders somehow fell as the percentage of other leaders/members of the Board rose. All these developments made the political forces' media profile more diverse, which was good for their image. 'Tell the Truth!' campaign, the BCD and the BSDP (H) had the highest proportions of regional representatives – 23%, 36% and 37%, respectively.

It should be mentioned that the top leader of the movement 'For Freedom' represented his political force in the media in only 33% of communications and the corresponding figures for the top leaders of 'Tell the Truth!' campaign and the BSDP (H) were 24% and 14%, respectively.

**Chart 21. Positions of political forces' representatives**

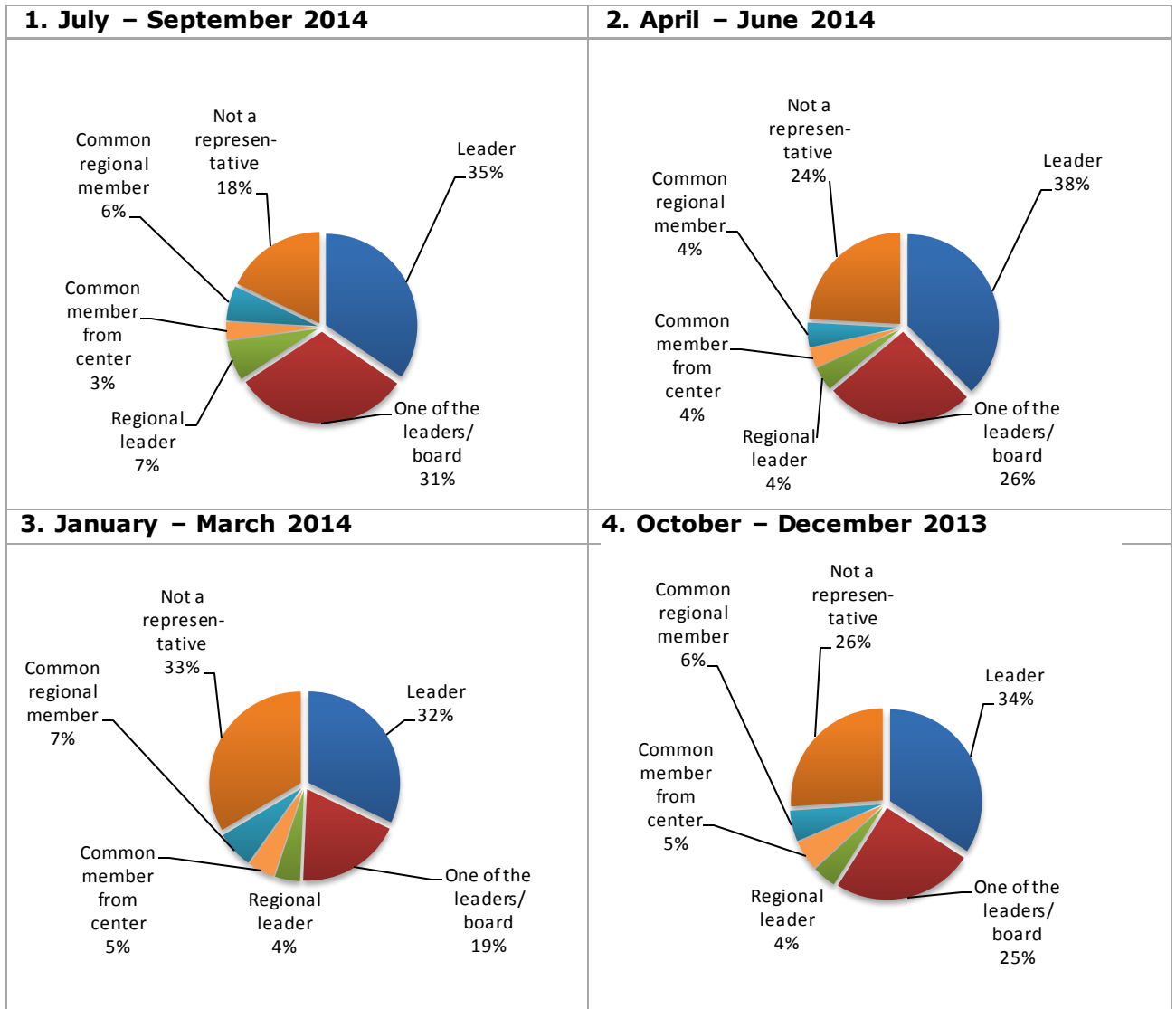
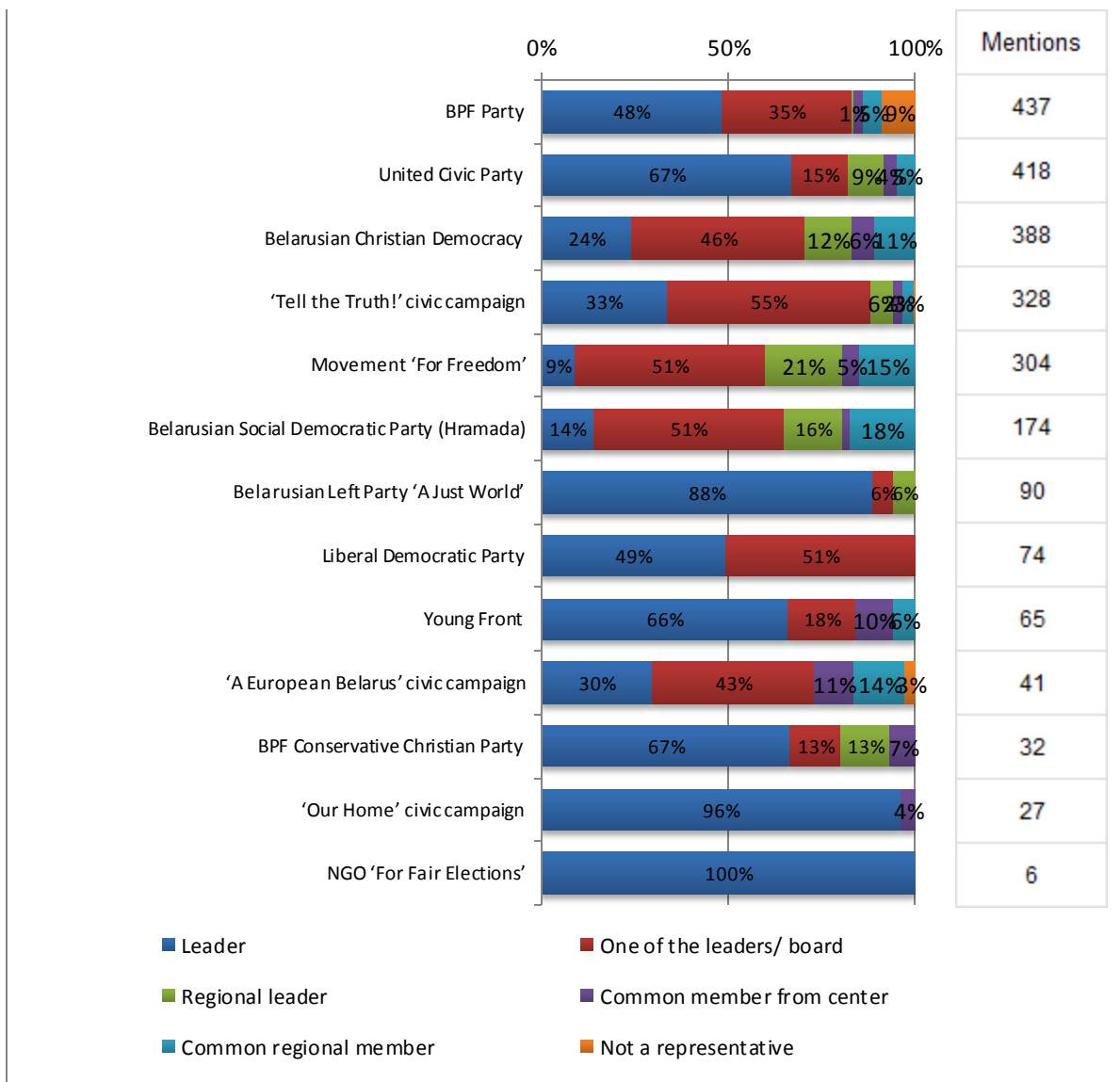
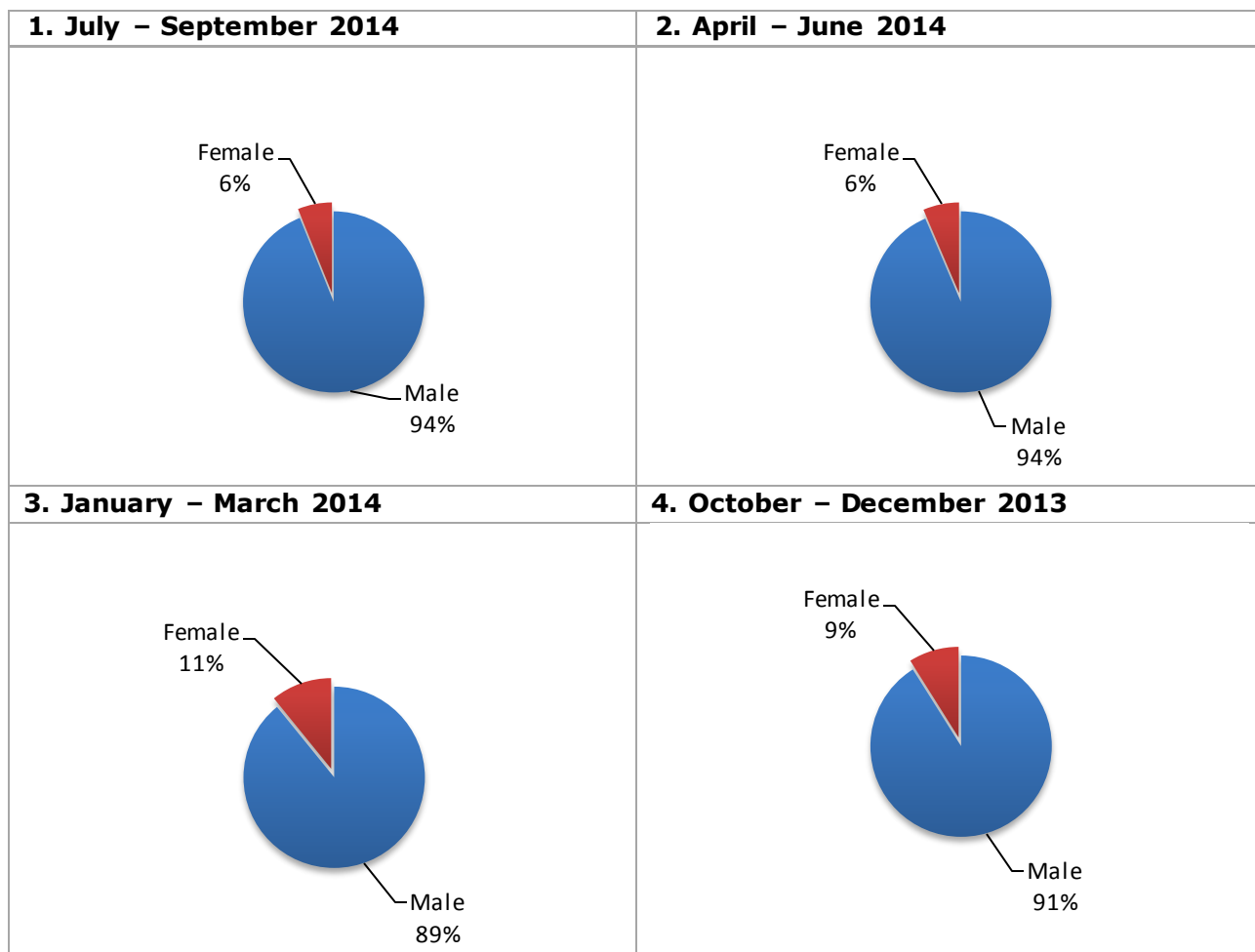


Chart 22. Positions of political forces' representatives for each force



Female voices in the political forces' communications were traditionally low, the share of women being as little as 6%. The political forces themselves cannot solve the problem of gender diversity, as the growth in the share of their own communications and more diverse representation did not result in a growth of female voices.

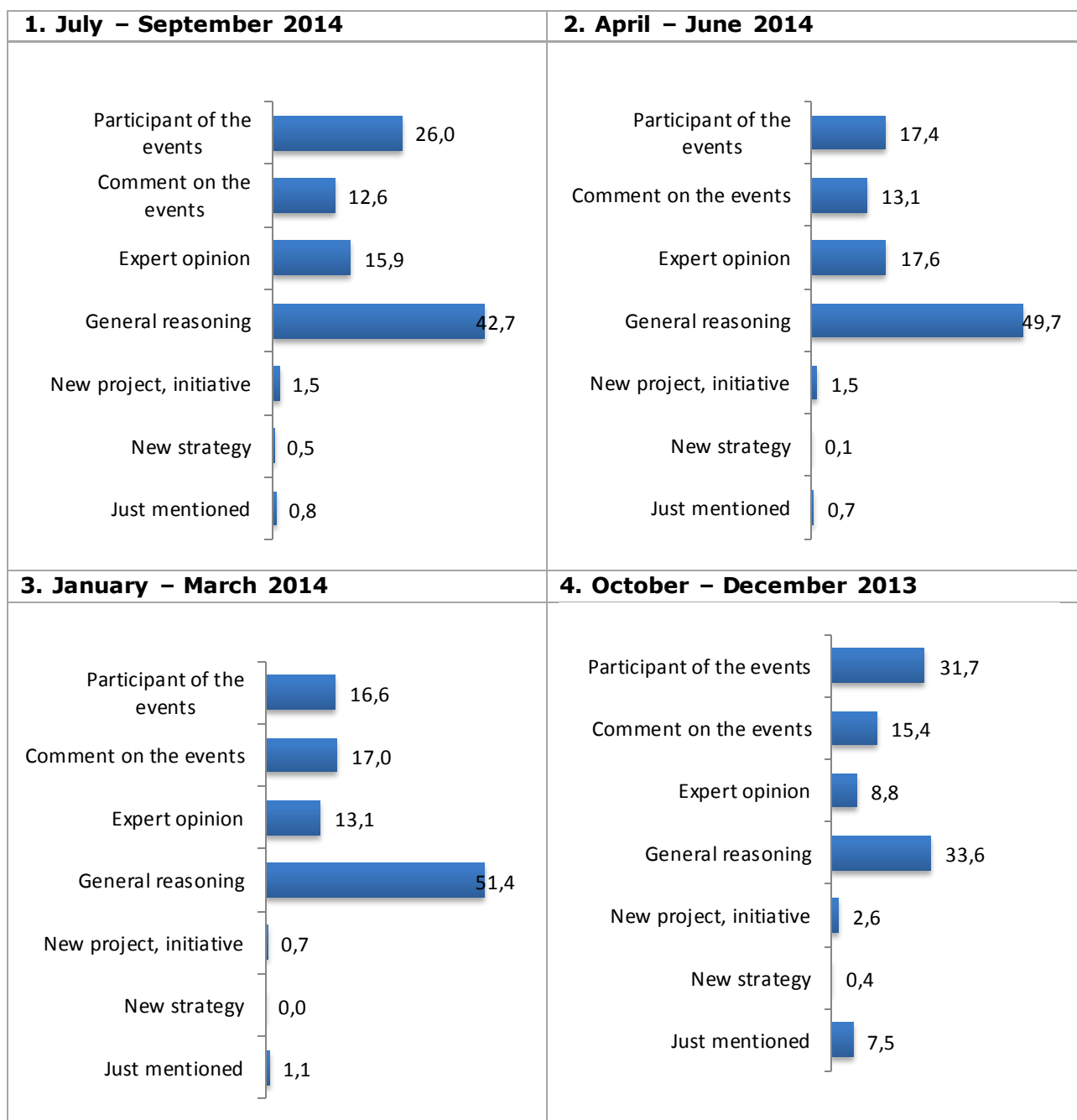
**Chart 24. Representation by gender**



As the levels of offline activities and the share of 'proactive' communications grew, so did the proportion of politicians represented as participants in the events. It went up from 17.4% to 26%. At the same time the share of general reasoning went down from 49.7% to 42.7%. The representatives of political forces more seldom appeared as experts and commentators, which leads us to a conclusion that these types of media appearances are more typical of 'passive' communications, initiated by the media themselves.

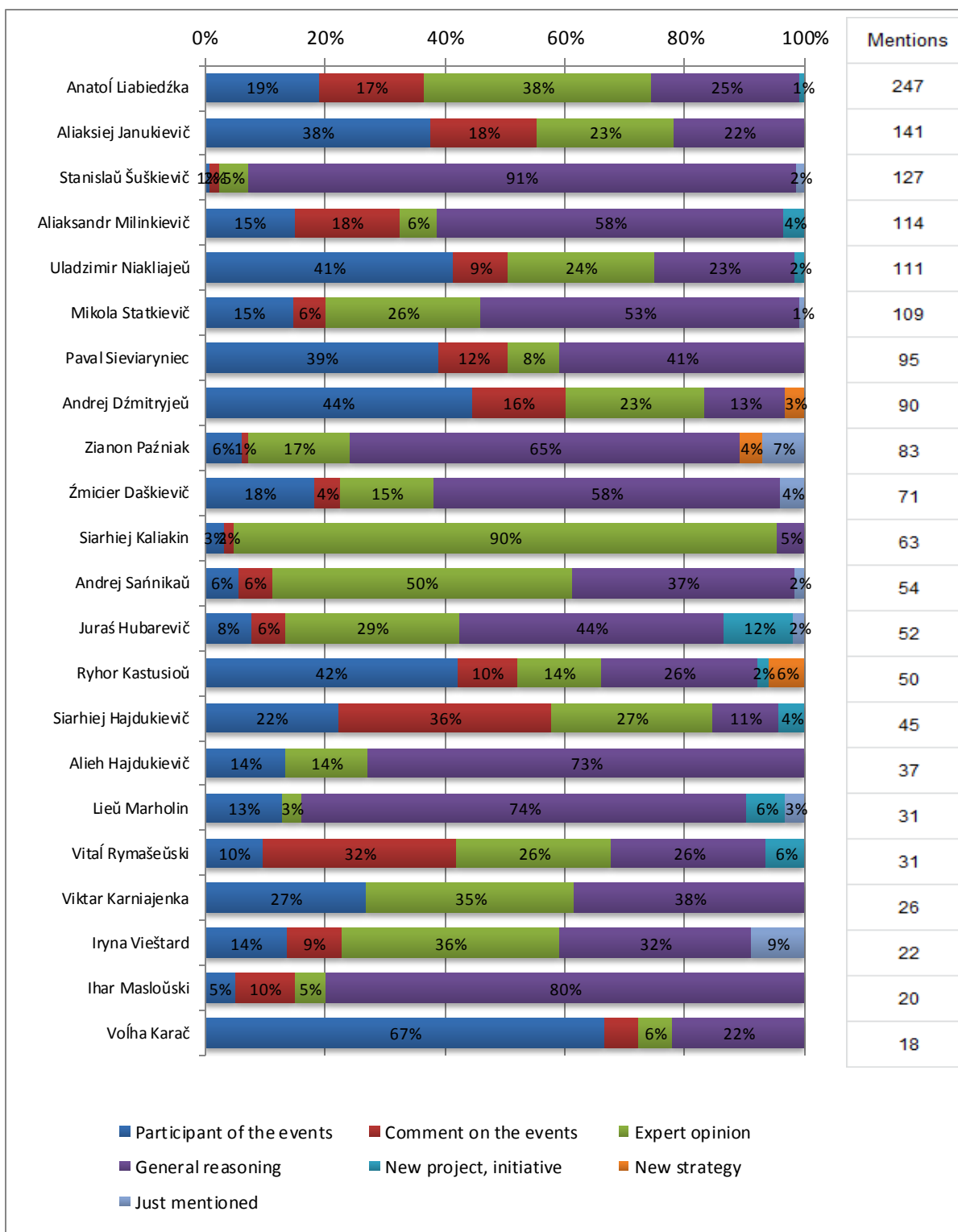


Chart 25. Types of references



Of the leading political actors the following ones most often appeared as participants in the events: Aliaksiej Janukievič (38%), Andrej Džmitryjeŭ (41%), Paval Sieviaryniec (39%), and Jury Hubarevič (44%). Anató Liabiedźka's Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ's and Aliaksandr Milinkievič's figures of appearances as participants in the events were significantly lower than the average.

Chart 26. Distribution of types of references for individual politicians



The third quarter of 2014 was marked by absence of media references to coalitions proper. At the same time the proportion of references to political forces as parts of coalitions rose from 4.4% to 6.6% due to the political forces that belong to the 'National Referendum' campaign. This figure was 14% for the BPF Party and the BSDP (H), 22% for 'Tell the Truth!' campaign and as much as 26% for the movement 'For Freedom'. Judging by the improved quality of the political forces' communications, they benefited from affiliation with the coalition.

**Chart 27. Types of political forces**

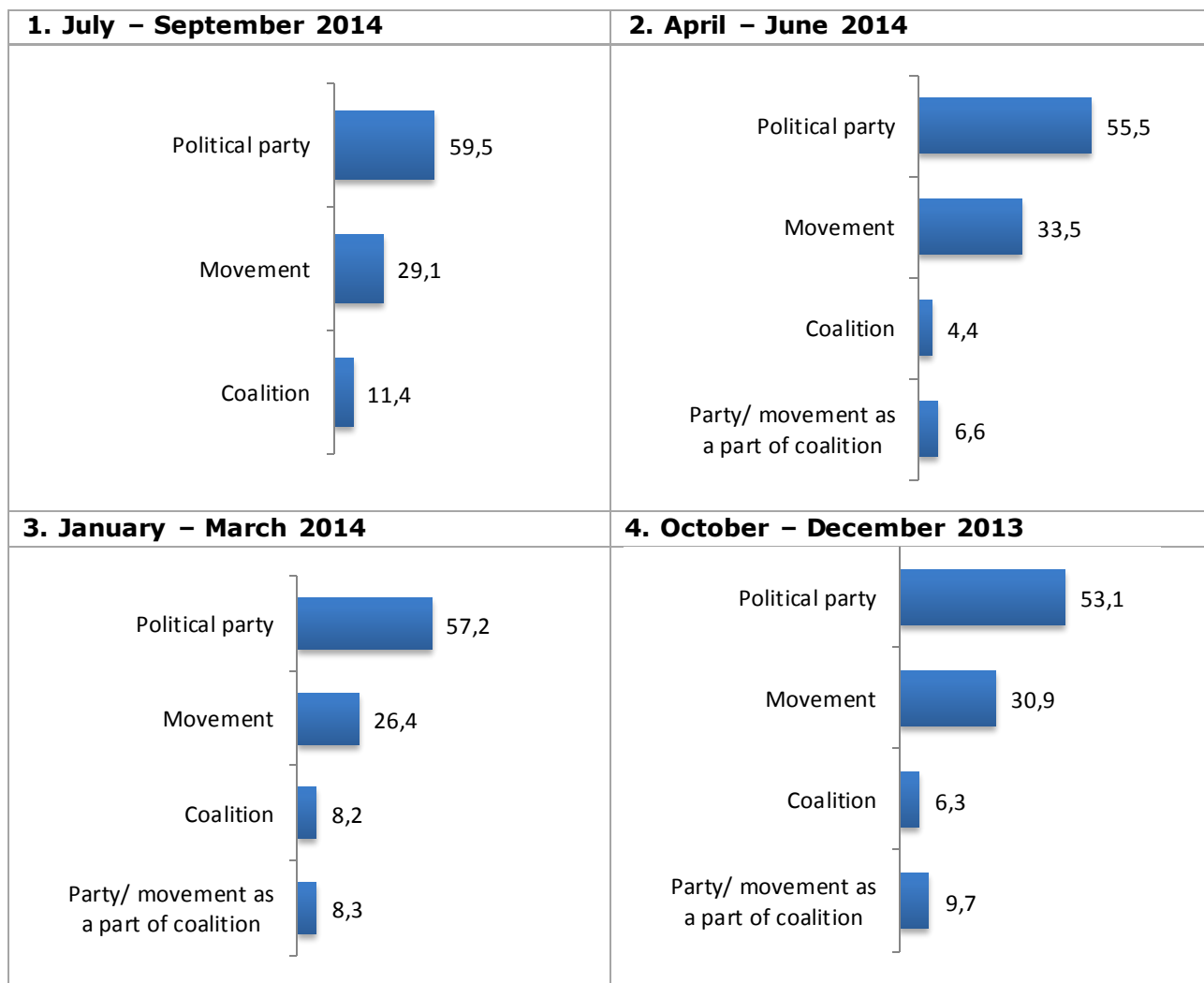
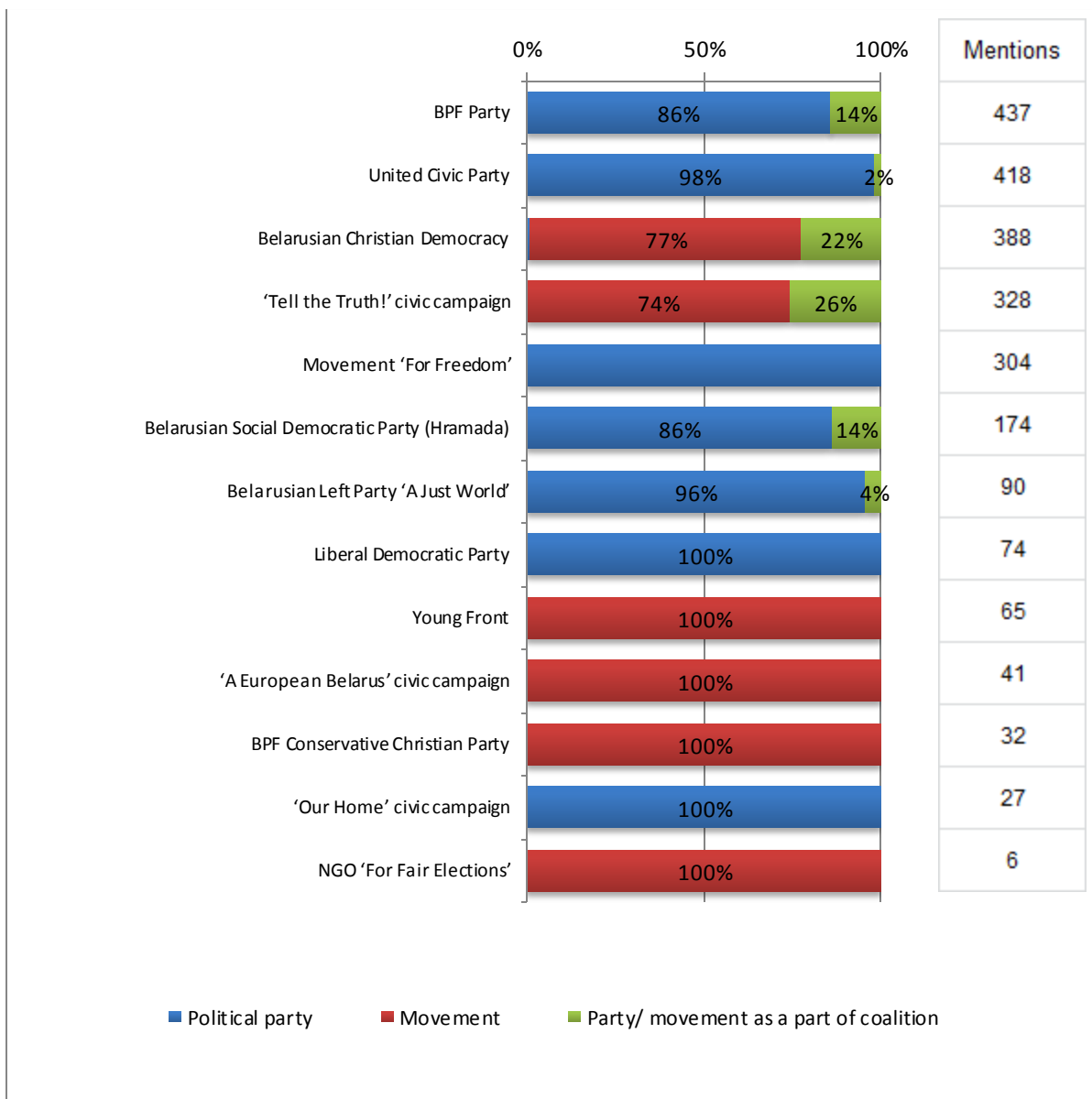


Chart 28. Types of political forces for each force



There were no changes in the evaluation of the political actors and forces in the media. Most commonly neither individual politicians nor political forces were assessed in news items. 7% of communications about the political actors and 8% of communications about the political forces gave them neutral and balanced assessment in the media.

Chart 29. Evaluation of politicians

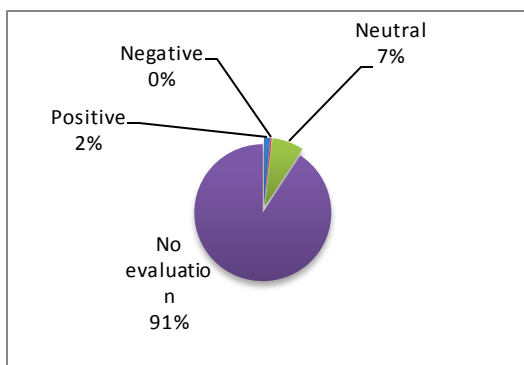
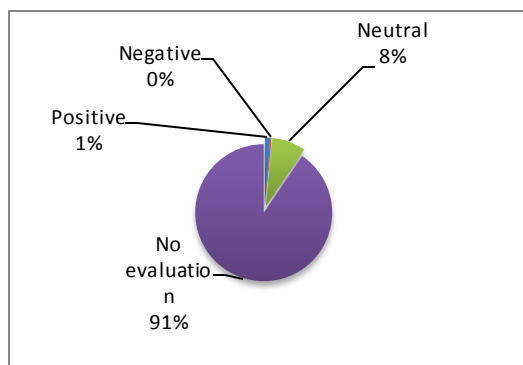


Chart 30. Evaluation of political forces



## Appendices

### Detailed findings

Chart 32. Topics of communications

