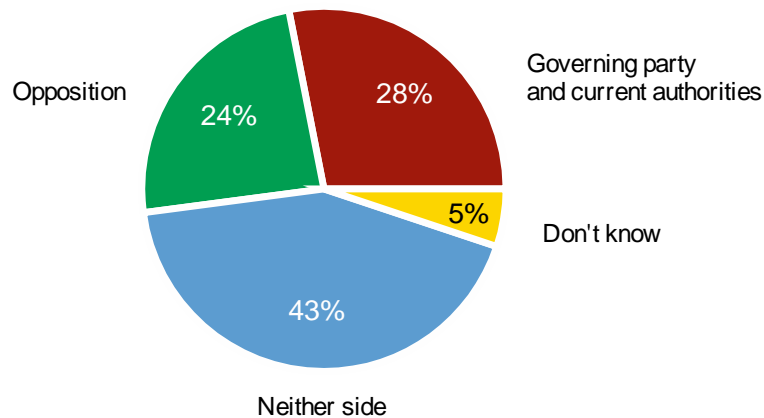


Public perception of the parliamentary crisis

The end of 2016 and the beginning of January 2017 were marked by a crisis on the political scene. Members of opposition parties protested against the planned restrictions on the access of journalists to the Parliament, and also against exclusion of one of MPs from Sejm deliberations by the speaker. After the procedures of the Sejm were moved to a different hall, the budget was voted by the ruling party. In the opinion of the opposition the vote was defective and violated parliamentary principles. The protest of the opposition parties Civic Platform (PO) and Modern Party (Nowoczesna) turned into a rotating occupation of the parliamentary rostrum, which lasted until the end the first decade of January. Although the parliamentary crisis was finished, the end of the occupation of the plenary hall does not close the political conflict in Poland.

Generally speaking, Poles can be divided into two more or less equally large groups: those who advocate one side of the political conflict (52% in total), and those who avoid taking sides and distance themselves from the dispute (48% in total, including 'don't know' answers). Respondents who sympathize with either side are slightly more often in favor of Law and Justice (PiS) and current authorities (28%) than the opposition (24%).

Which side do you support in the current political conflict?



Each side of the political conflict in the last months uses other arguments and builds different narratives to justify its actions and discredit opponents or critics. Declarations of respondents show that neither side managed to convince a clear majority of the population. However, some arguments invoked in discussions are more convincing than others.

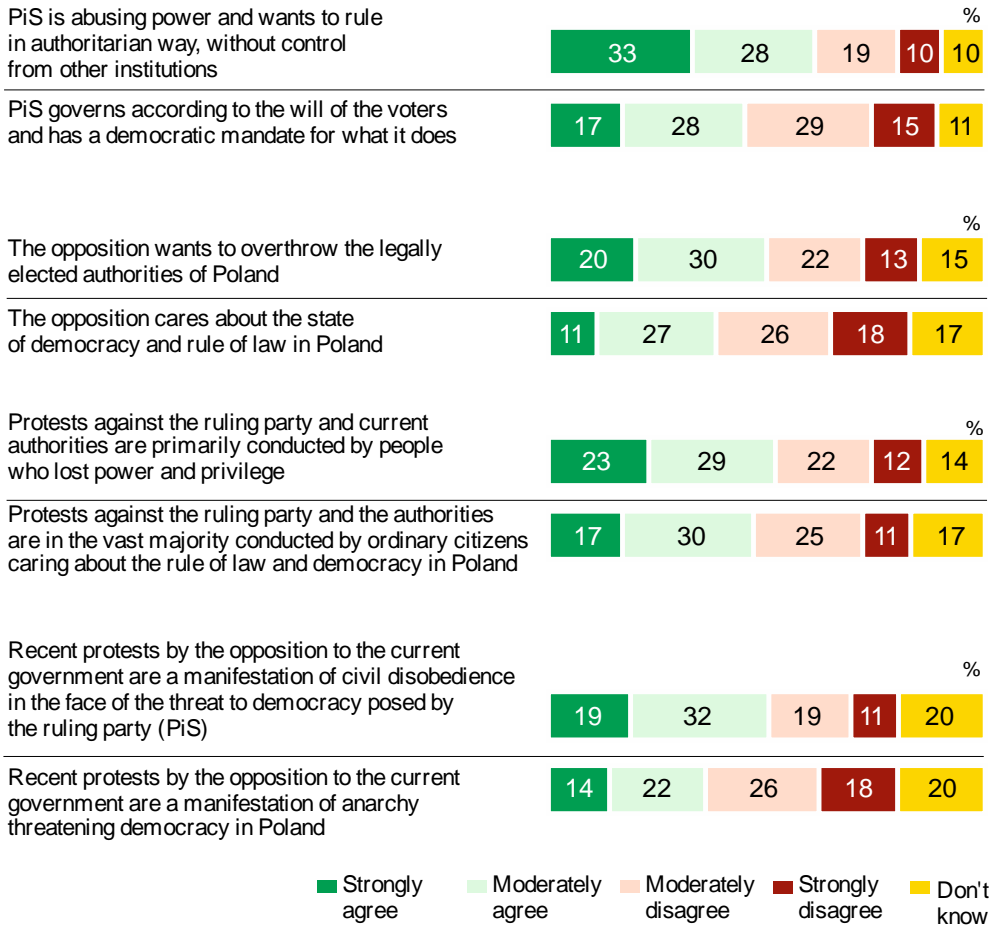
The majority of respondents (61%) agree with the opinion that PiS is abusing power and wants to rule in authoritarian manner, without control by other institutions. The counterargument that PiS governs according to the will of the voters and has a democratic mandate for what it does is more controversial: 45% of respondents agree and 44% reject it.

In the opinion of half of respondents the opposition wants to overthrow the legally elected authorities of Poland. A few months ago, in April 2016, a similar question asked in the context of the dispute over the Constitutional Tribunal was answered in the affirmative by far fewer people (33%). At the same time, presently more than two-fifths of respondents (44%) disagree with the view that opposition is motivated by concern about the state of democracy and the rule of law in Poland (in April 2016 the negative answer was given by 38%). Now 38% of respondents believe that the opposition is fighting for democracy and the rule of law (in April 2016 the corresponding figure was 39%). This means that the actions of the opposition in relation to the Constitutional Tribunal crisis were seen as more credible than the recent protest in the Sejm.

The opinion that protests against current authorities are primarily conducted by people who were deprived of power and privilege is quite popular, as more than half of Poles agree (52%). At the same time, however, almost as many people (47%) believe that the protesters against the ruling party and current authorities are, in the vast majority, ordinary citizens caring about the rule of law and democracy in Poland.

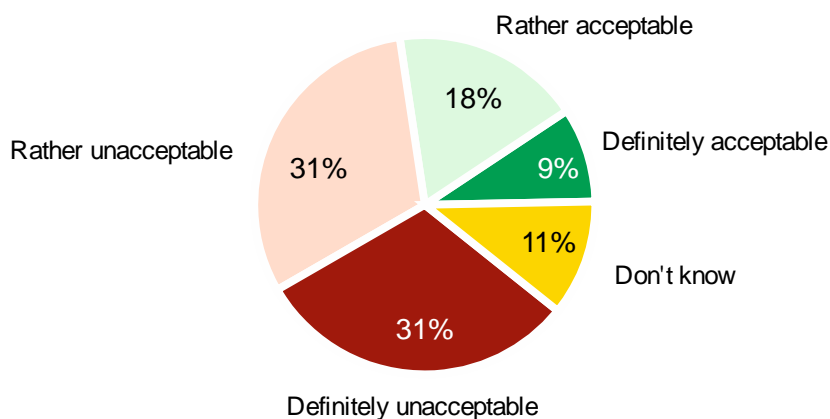
More than half of respondents (51%) consider the protests as an expression of civic opposition to threats to democracy posed by the ruling party, PiS. At the same time, more than two-fifths of respondents (44%) do not see them as manifestations of anarchy threatening democracy in Poland. Such danger is seen 36% of respondents.

Do you agree with the following statements?



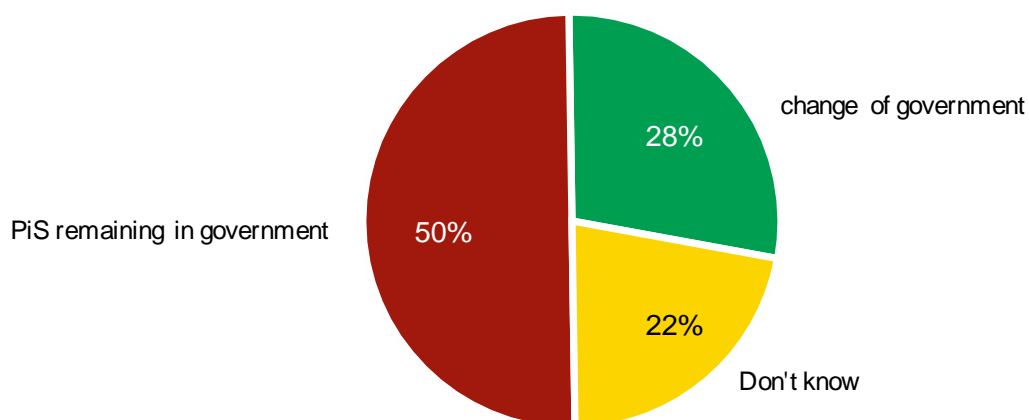
Most respondents (62%) think it is unacceptable for the opposition to occupy the plenary hall of the Sejm to protest against the actions of the governing party.

Is it acceptable for the opposition to occupy the plenary hall of the Sejm to protest against the actions of the governing party



During the protest in the Sejm a proposal was made to call early parliamentary elections. In public opinion, if they occurred, they would not bring a change of government. Half of respondents think that PiS would remain in power, and only slightly more than one in four (28%) expect their result to be the change of government.

If early elections to the Sejm and Senate were held, they would lead to...



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Image Impact of Parliamentary Crisis", January 2017. Fieldwork for national sample: January 2017, N=1025. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.