

Information Technology and Journalism 2009

NEW MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY

**HOW HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATIONS
ARE USING WEBSITES TO
COMMUNICATE AND BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS?**

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Research project

- This study examines the mediated communication of human rights associations to understand how these groups use their websites to communicate and build relationship with publics.
- **The concept and methodology** - partially taken from scientific article (*"How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationship"*, Taylor, Kent, White) published in scientific journal Public Relations Review in 2001

Research work

- **Time code** – the research was carried out during December 2008 and January 2009
- **Sample** - 33 human rights associations in Croatia that had their own websites and were listed at Croatian Associations Register (*133 were listed, but only 33 had websites)
- The method for data acquisition - **the content analysis**

Research work

- The research was based on five principles:
 1. **ease of interface**
 2. **usefulness of information (for media and volunteers)**
 3. **conservation of visitors**
 4. **generation of return visits**
 5. **dialogic capacity**
- *all of them divided into different questions*

- **Ease of interface** (site maps; links to the rest of the site clearly identified on the home page; a search engine box; minimal graphic reliance incorporated into site design)
- **Usefulness of information** (press releases; speeches; downloadable graphics; clear statements about organization and its policy; details how to become affiliated with organization or how to contribute the money; the creation of memorable logos and icons ...)
- **Conservation of visitors** (organizational messages on the first page; the amount of time that the site loaded on a medium speed; clear posting of the date and the time the site was last updated)

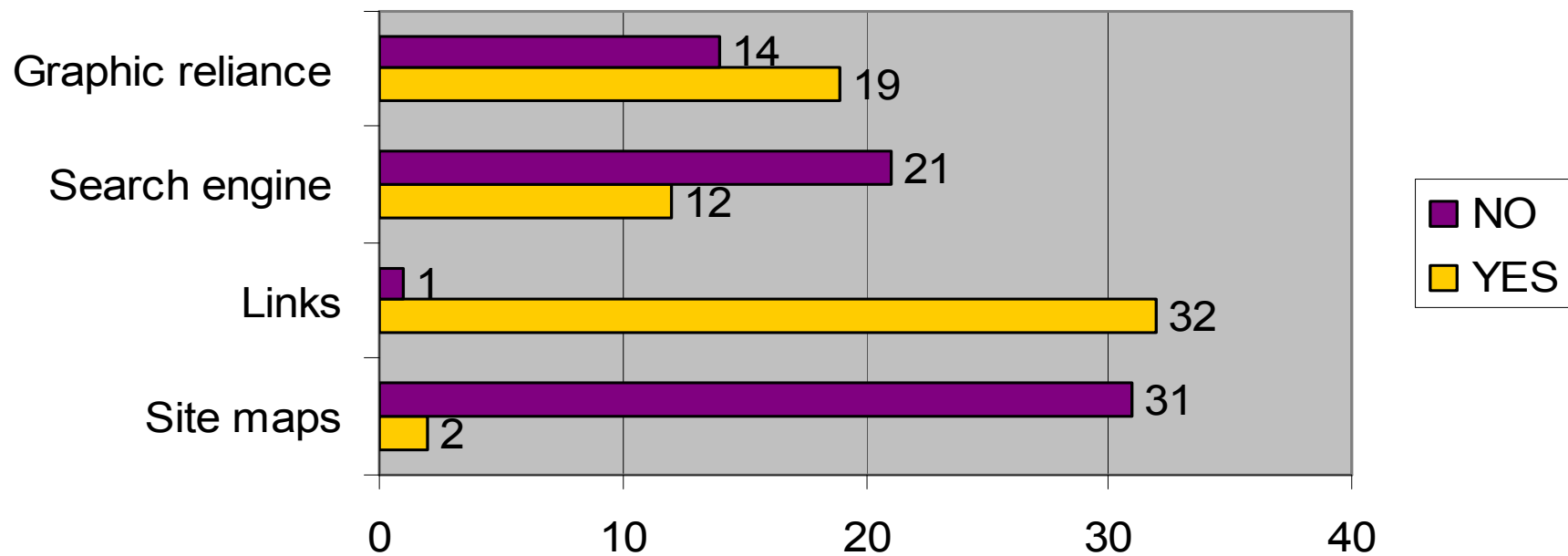
- **Generation of return visits** (explicit statements inviting visitors to return; links to other activist websites; calendar of events; downloadable information; offering information that can be delivered through e-mail; posting news stories within last 30 days)
- **Dialogic capacity** (opportunities for visitors to send messages to the organization; opportunities to vote on issues, fill out surveys; communication through blogs; facebook profile/group; e-newsletter ...)
- *All items were separately identified*

HYPOTHESES

- **H1:** Human rights associations websites don't fulfil previously specified principles
- **H2:** Human rights associations websites don't use new communicational tools (such as Facebook, blogs, forums ...)
- **H3:** Human rights associations don't respond to requests for information (via e-mail), and don't strive to build good and long term relationship
 - To verify H3 I sent same e-mail message to all associations expressing interest in becoming their member (after the analisis and gathering all e-mail addresses)

RESULTS – Ease of interface

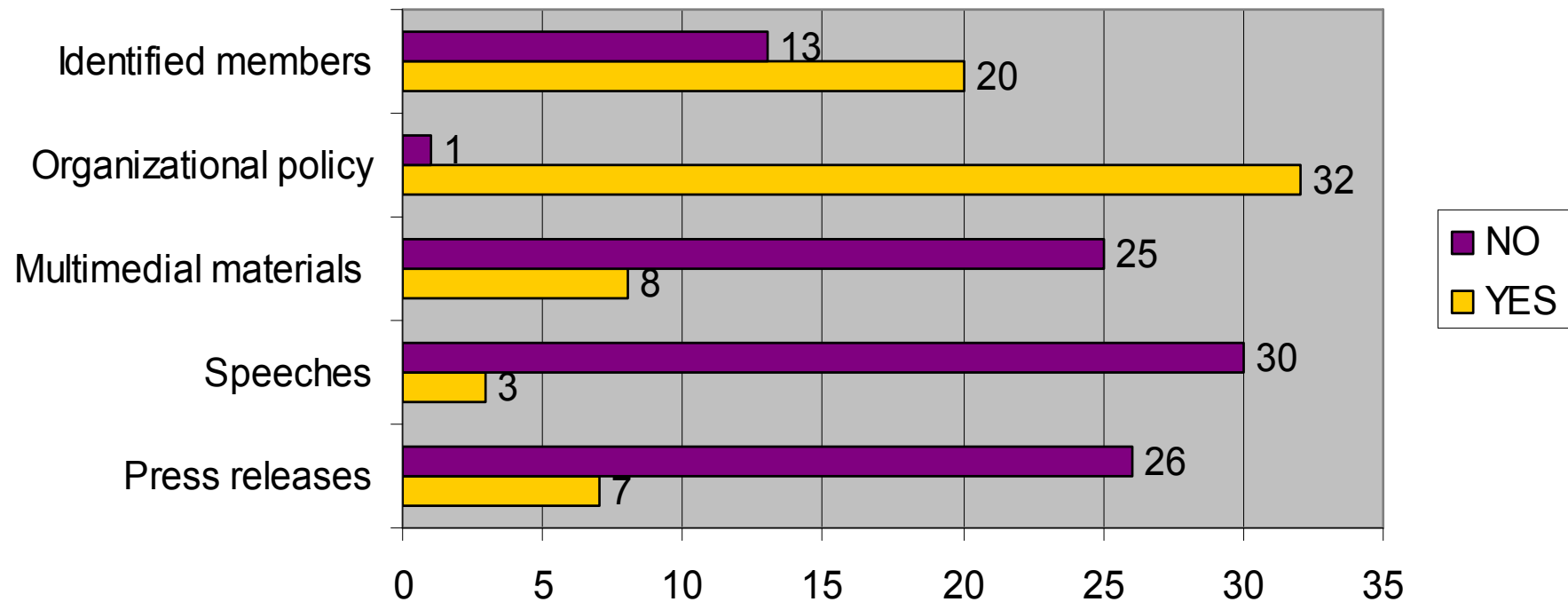
EASE OF INTERFACE



	Site maps	Links	Search engine	Graphic reliance
NO	31	1	21	14
YES	2	32	12	19

RESULTS – Usefulness of information

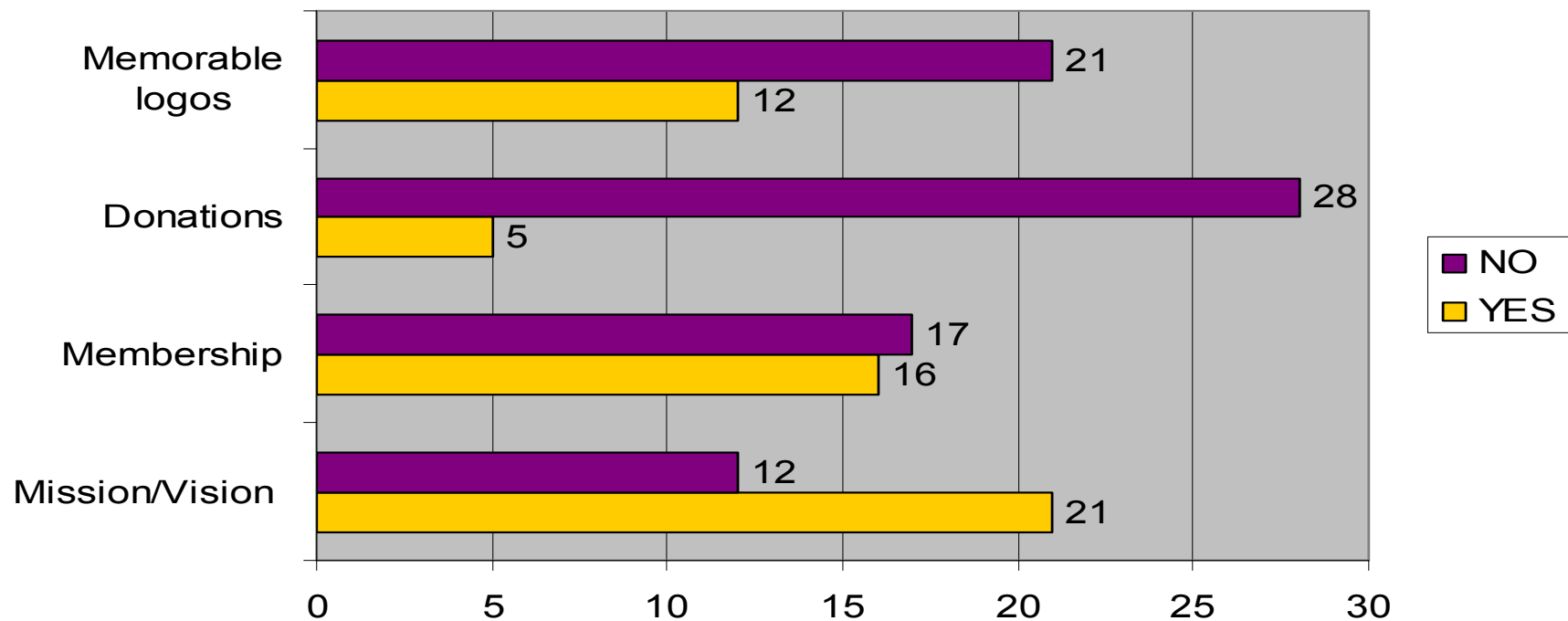
USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION (for media)



	Press releases	Speeches	Multimedial materials	Organization al policy	Identified members
■ NO	26	30	25	1	13
■ YES	7	3	8	32	20

RESULTS – Usefulness of information

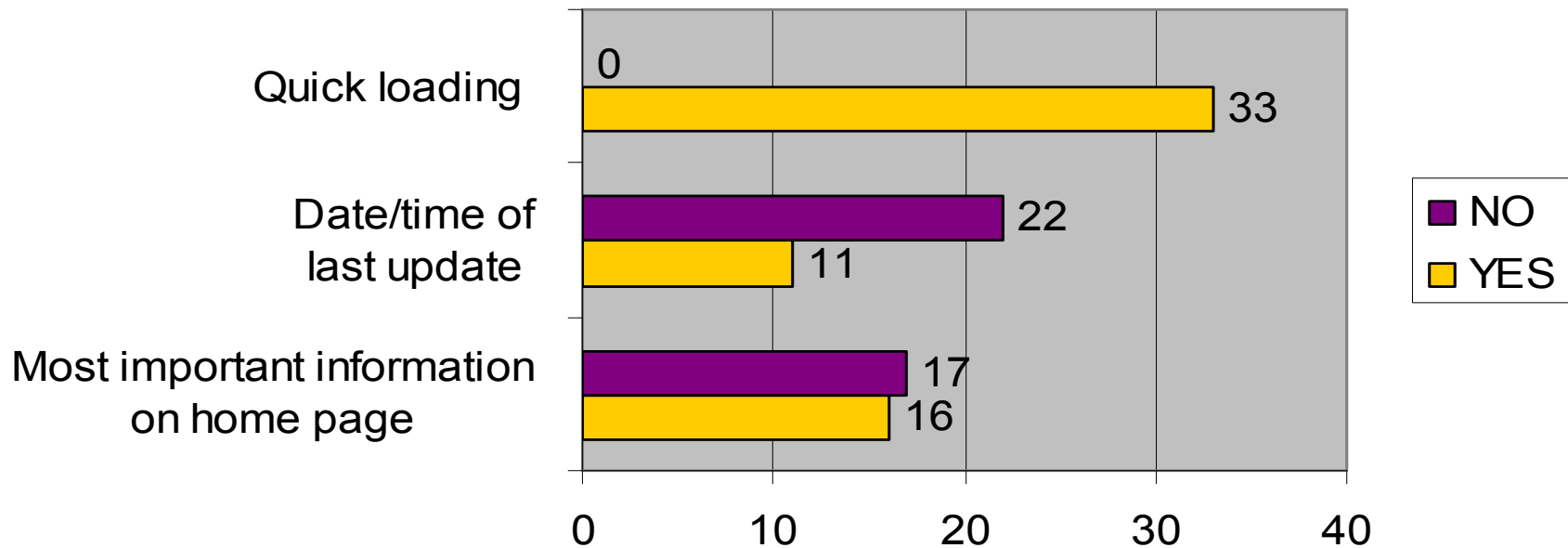
USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION (for volunteers)



	Mission/Vision	Membership	Donations	Memorable logos
NO	12	17	28	21
YES	21	16	5	12

RESULTS – Conservation of visitors

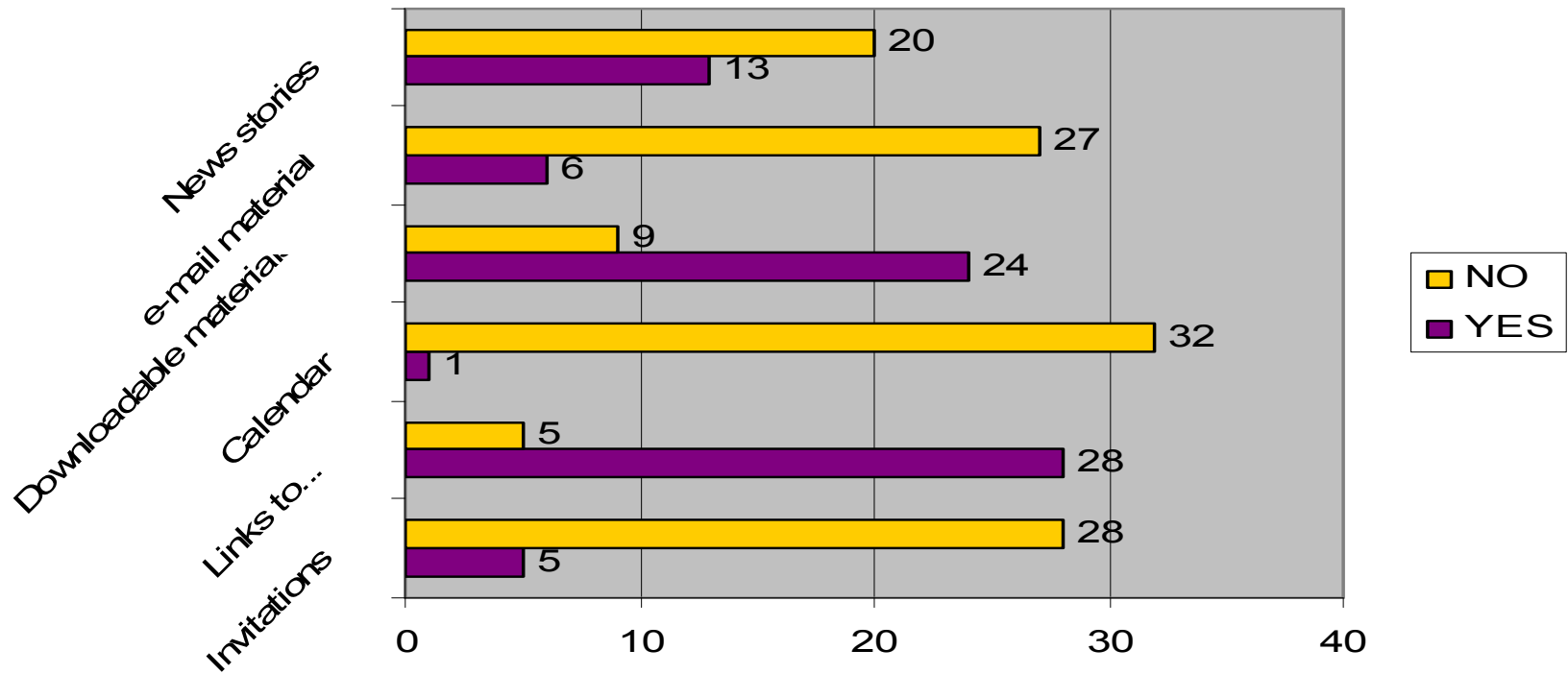
CONSERVATION OF VISITORS



	Most important	Date/time of	Quick loading
■ NO	17	22	0
■ YES	16	11	33

RESULTS – Generation of visitors

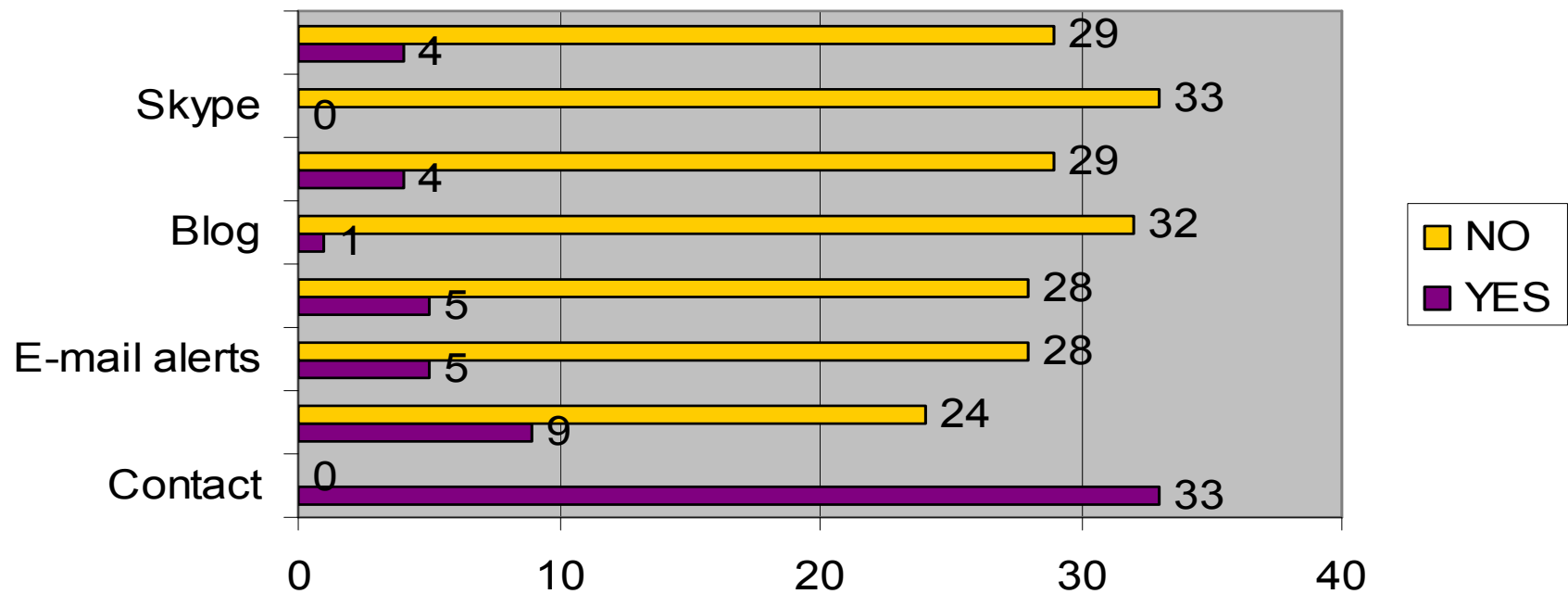
GENERATION OF RETURN VISITS



	Invitati ons	Links to...	Calend ar	Downlo adable materi	e-mail materi al	News stories
■ NO	28	5	32	9	27	20
■ YES	5	28	1	24	6	13

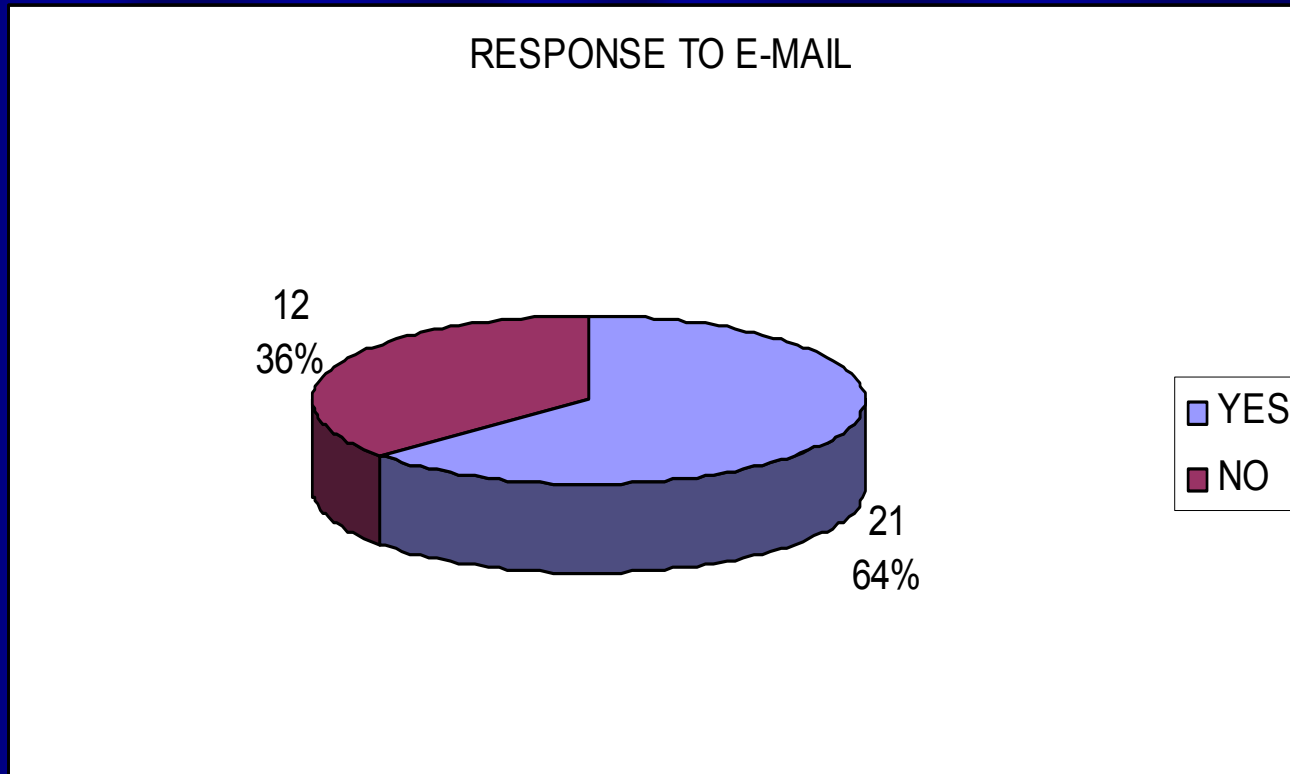
RESULTS – Dialogic capacity

DIALOGIC CAPACITY



	Cont act	Surv ey	E- mail	e- newsl	Blog	Face book	Skyp e	Foru m
■ NO	0	24	28	28	32	29	33	29
■ YES	33	9	5	5	1	4	0	4

RESULTS – Response to e-mail



- 11 of them answered the same day, 7 the day after, and one each next day

CONCLUSION

- All three hypotheses were confirmed/supported
- The data suggest that croatian human rights associations are not employing dialogic capacity and other opportunities of the Internet as expected
- The relationship-building an interaction with public are lacking
- One of the main weaknesses is ignorance of new tools such as Facebook, blogs, Skype ...
- This research could be conducted on all other associations, and, unfortunately, I believe that the results would be the same

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**