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YOUTH STUDY ARMENIA (IN)DEPENDENCE GENERATION

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For Publishers:

Marcel Röthig (FES)
Liana Badalyan (FES)

Authors:

Harutyun Vermishyan
Sona Balasanyan
Tatyana Darbinyan

Proofreading:

Renee Barlow, Writer, Editor and Educator

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FOREWORD



What are the concerns, aspirations, values and lifestyles of Armenia's youth after the Velvet Revolution in 2018, after the 44-day Karabakh war in 2020 and, of course, after the Covid-19 pandemic?

The last five years were of great importance for the Republic of Armenia. Young people played a crucial role in the Velvet Revolution of 2018, which is also known as The Youth Revolution. These same youths had to face all the heavy consequences of the 44-day Karabakh war and pandemic difficulties.

Fortunately, the demands and expectations of the youth in Armenia after these ups and downs is still high. Nevertheless, the public discourse often falls into the trap of extremes – we either have excellent youth or the entire generation is lost. The reality is much more complex. The results of the study draw an interesting picture of young people in Armenia by showing the challenges they deal with in terms of economic, political and private life, mostly sharing it with their parents. For Armenian youth, family is one of the most important social units and institutions within society.

The study explores the worries, aspirations, values and lifestyles of Armenia's youth. Young people who are today aged between 14 and 29 years grew up in independent Armenia – the “generation of independence”. They face economic, political and physical insecurity caused by an insufficient educational system, high unemployment, a semi-democratic political structure and the on-going threat of regional conflicts.

The research is based on a countrywide, representative survey that was conducted from May to June 2022 in Armenia among young people aged between 14 and 29. It is based on the Shell Youth Study, which has been periodically conducted in Germany since 1953 and has proven to be a valuable indicator of the society's mid-term development. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung implemented a series of similar studies in Western Balkan countries as well as in Central Asia. This study is part of a series in Eastern Partnership Countries, including Georgia and Azerbaijan. All of the studies are designed to allow comparison between the countries.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Armenia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “(In)dependence generation: Armenia – 2023” research reveals important aspects of the dispositions, opinions, perceptions and expectations of the country’s youth. The results show the current lifestyles and attitudes of Armenian youth after political crises and the war indicate conflicting values and social contradictions. Within the framework of this research the issues of education, employment, political participation, concerns, identity aspirations, religion, tolerance, family life, entertainment and the lifestyle of young people in Armenia were addressed. The main research findings are as follows:

- Armenian youth tend to rate their socio-economic situation as good compared to others both in their community and in the country. At the same time, female participants rated their socio-economic situation worse compared to other groups. This is in contrast to male representatives.
- Only 1/3 of youth has personal income; 1/4 is dependent upon parents, and even 1/4 of those employed is financially dependent on some other person (usually the parents of their spouse).
- Females and rural residents among the youth are the most financially dependent.
- Urban youth are more often enrolled in an educational institution than those in rural areas.
- About half of the surveyed young people are employed, and male representatives are more engaged in the labour market.
- The majority of those not enrolled in school and not employed are female, from rural areas and married.
- Only 16% of young people have done any kind of volunteer work in the last year.
- More than half of the Armenian youth are generally not interested in politics. Moreover, 18-29-year-old females from Yerevan with a pre-university education are not interested in politics at all.
- Among the problems facing the country, young people singled out the conflict with neighbouring countries, territorial integration and foreign political tensions as most important. They placed a secondary emphasis on socio-economic problems such as unemployment and increasingly rising prices.
- The majority of young people prefer Armenia stand close to and in solidarity with the West; no one has emphasised such a position unequivocally towards Russia.
- The vast majority of young people consider Armenia to be a European country, having a perception of Europe more as a positive and/or abstract than a negative phenomenon.
- The negative connotation of Europe in the perceptions of young people is mainly connected with the collision of what is considered “Europeanness” with traditional values.
- From the point of view of Armenia’s national security and Armenia’s economic development, young people believe that cooperation should be first of all with Russia, and secondly with the USA.
- Armenian youth tend to think that military structures, such as NATO and CSTO, play a more negative role for Armenia, and international financial and civil structures play a more positive role.

- Younger and female participants tend to emphasise the more positive role of the European Union and international organisations like the UN, CSTO and NATO for Armenia.
- The overwhelming majority of Armenian youth emphasise citizenship of the Republic of Armenia as an important part of their self-identity; ethnic and religious aspects of their identity were also well represented.
- The vast majority of young people in Armenia are not inclined to self-identify as Europeans. At the same time, young men with a high level of education, and those of older age, tend to consider themselves as RA citizens, and so do not generally consider themselves as Europeans.
- In the hierarchical value system of Armenian youth, values emphasising personal characteristics and virtues come first, and family values second. At the same time, the values of civic participation and/or involvement are barely emphasised.
- Among the values of young people personal dignity, respect, loyalty and fighting spirit are considered of greatest value, and the least important is an innovative spirit. Among the values given less importance are altruism, sense of humour, and decency.
- The youth see the army, the church and the police as the most reliable institutional structures, while the most unreliable ones are the political parties, the mass media and the current president.
- Military, church, police, courts and trade unions are more likely to be trusted by the least educated, male, younger, rural youth.
- Armenian youth mostly live with their parents or spouse and have good relations with their parents.
- Males, especially younger ones, have good relations with their parents, while females, although they do not have specific issues in their relations with their parents, have disagreements more often.
- Almost half of young people view the collapse of the Soviet Union as a bad phenomenon.
- Younger males are more likely to go abroad for education and/or work.
- Young women living in Yerevan prefer to go to the USA, while slightly older young men from Marzes prefer to go to Russia.
- Armenian youth mostly tend to think that climate change is a global threat, and when hearing about climate change and efforts to reduce it, young people mostly feel anger, helplessness, indifference and fear; few cited hope and confidence.
- The majority of Armenian youth are more inclined to think that there will be a resumption of the Karabakh war within the next five years. Meanwhile, the importance of proximity to Russia is more pronounced among young people who consider that there is a high possibility of another Karabakh war within the next five years.
- Despite this, the majority of young people are more optimistic about the future, believing that their family's living conditions will be better in five years.

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INTRODUCTION



If in 2016 Armenian youth, in the context of post-Soviet developments, was known as or called the “Independence Generation” (Mkrtichyan et al., 2016), after 2020 the younger generation constructed social qualities in the face of crises of militarism (after the 44-day war over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020) and healthcare (after the COVID-19 pandemic). This generation is a “Youth in Crisis”, and the crisis is twofold: it is post-war and post-COVID. Specifically, during the last two years, Armenia has gone through serious critical situations, the outcomes of which are vivid in almost every domain of social life. In addition to Armenia-specific critical contexts, global challenges are persistently interfering with the lives of the youth. The geopolitical interests of super-powers and their influences over the Caucasus region and Armenia have changed what it means to be Armenian. The interchangeable influences lead to reformulations of social justice and authorities for youth, their departures for judgments (of the contexts they are experiencing) have changed. Social pressures on youth can be observed both on the individual subject and on the larger social scale.

Social crises, and the associated war-related socio-psychological trauma in the overall context of changing socio-political moods in Armenia, especially affect the youth leading to reconstructions of beliefs, emotions and social behaviour. Today, the issues related to youth re-socialisation, as well as a rapid policy response to their needs are becoming vital.

This research creates an important opportunity to understand today's youth in Armenia and their problems, and to offer a way of approaching these problems through the lenses of policy and social response.

In line with the conventional definitions of youth culture (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2015; Scott & Marshall, 2005, p. 813; Woodman, 2012), the personal dimension of youth is accentuated within the framework of this research. The research looks at youth from the prism of the larger social environment and focuses on social status and social life. According to this approach, for the purposes of this study, a youth is a person engaged in personal development with the intention of finding a place in social life and, therefore, undertaking social responsibilities. The youth of the country represent one of the fundamental human resources for any society and societal development (Cote, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study was developed by R-Research Limited of the United Kingdom, at the request of, and in consultation with, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) South Caucasus Regional office. The study makes use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to study the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of young people aged 14-29 in Armenia.

The detailed sample plan and data collection protocol was developed by R-Research with input from Dr Félix Krawatzek of the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Berlin, and approved by FES. The questionnaire was prepared in English, in consultation with FES offices in Yerevan and Berlin. The fieldwork of the quantitative study was administered between 30 May 2022 and 16 June 2022.

A nationally representative sample of 1,200 respondents aged 14-29 was collected by the Yerevan-based firm “R-Insights”. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage stratified cluster sample. Respondents in households were selected using an age and gender quota. On average, the completed interviews took about 45 minutes, with a standard deviation of 14.38 minutes.

The analysis below uses elements of exploratory and confirmatory statistical analysis. Unless otherwise indicated, differences are statistically significant and identified using appropriate regression models controlling for basic demographics. For convenience purposes, differences between groups are presented as crosstabulations. In some cases, proportions might not add up to 100 or have 1% discrepancies with actual and reported data due to rounding errors.

As for the qualitative part of the study, four focus group discussions were conducted in Yerevan among young people aged 14-29 years. The focus groups were organised and conducted by “R-Insights” under the direct supervision of R-Research. Research instruments, including discussion guides and prompts, were developed in collaboration with FES, Dr Félix Krawatzek and R-Research. These discussions explored multiple themes, such as personal life and the COVID-19 pandemic, perception of politics and democracy, today's challenges for societies across the world, views on the collapse of the Soviet Union and feelings of belonging to Europe and Emigration. Focus groups were observed online by researchers from R-Research and FES. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. During focus group discussions, participants answered to a short online survey that provided additional information for qualitative data analysis. In this report, insights from the qualitative study are presented thematically alongside the results of the quantitative part of the study.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research was conducted in Summer 2022. Research findings should be viewed in the context of this specific period considering the fact that the survey was carried out during the Russia-Ukraine war before the Azerbaijani aggression, increasing border tensions and military operations in September 2022. Particularly after those incidents in September, the unrealised public expectations about CSTO intervention and the visit of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi have had their special effect on Armenian youth's present perceptions, which is not reflected in this analysis. Along these lines, socially and politically sensitive themes and the contradictory perceptions of the image of Russia should be considered in this context.

NOTE FOR ALL INFOGRAPICS: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, so that original values were kept instead and/or any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

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PART ONE: HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

Although understanding the lifestyle of Armenian youth means understanding the macro-social environment and the culture of the country they live in, it is also important to have information about their micro-social life, i.e., way of life and subjective viewpoints/opinions. In the overall social context, younger people's lifestyles are generally more dynamic (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006) than older generations; today's youth have even more opportunities for this flexibility (digital, technological, global, etc.). On the other hand, previous studies on Armenian youth have indicated their emotional and socio-economic dependency on their families, more specifically their parents (Manukyan, 2011; Mkrtichyan et al., 2016). This indicates it is important to reflect on family ties and subjective dependencies to understand how Armenian youth live.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Armenian youth assess their socio-economic well-being as being better than average.
- More females assess their socio-economic well-being as worse than their male counterparts, more youth of 25-29 age assess their socio-economic well-being as worse than their 14-17 year-old counterparts.
- Youth in general thinks that they are socio-economically better off than other people in their communities and country.
- Only 1/3 of young adults has a personal source of income, while 1/4 is dependent upon their fathers.

- Even those 1/4 of youth with a personal source of income is dependent upon some other person.
- Only 1/4 of female young adults is financially independent.
- Rural youth have more financial dependences compared to their urban counterparts.

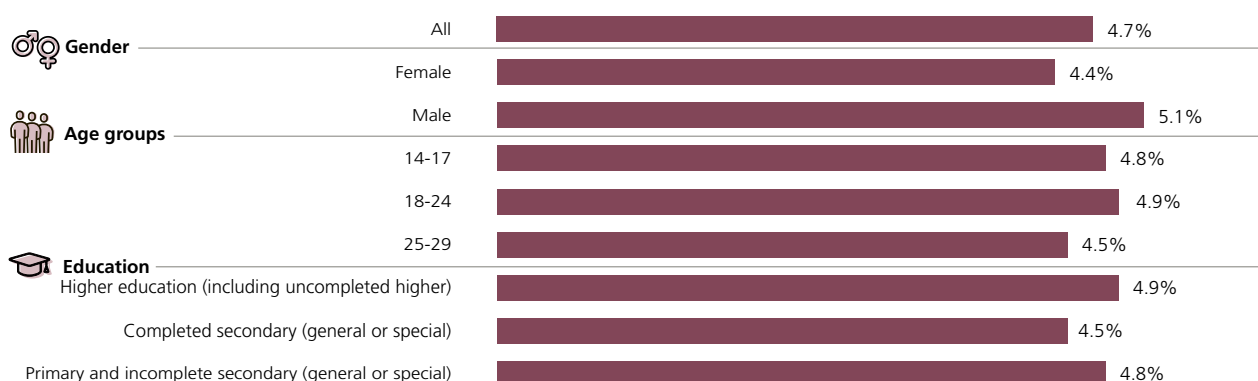
ANALYSIS

FINANCIAL AND HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS

To reveal Armenian youth's evaluation of their socioeconomic situation, their subjective well-being was measured by evaluating respondents' self-perception of their material well-being. Respondents were asked how they would evaluate the state of their households in terms of access to primary resources and services.

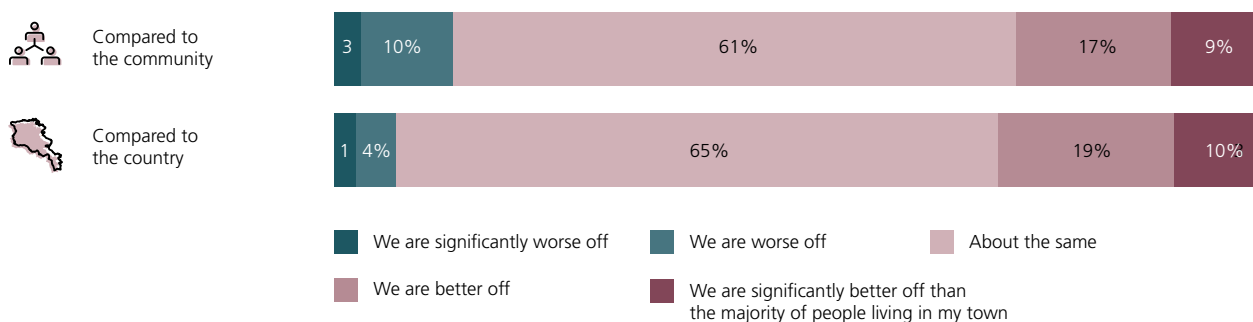
The variable measuring the subjective well-being was transformed into an ordinal scale with one corresponding to the lowest socio-economic standing (food insecure, i.e. not enough money for food) and seven corresponding to the highest (we experience no material difficulties). The mean values of perceived economic situation were calculated. As shown in Figure 1, the respondent's gender, age and education are correlated with one's subjective evaluation of their socioeconomic status. The difference in subjective perception is especially notable between gender. Here we see that males score higher (5.1) than females (4.4). Also, respondents aged between 25 and 29 tend to evaluate their socio-economic status slightly lower (4.5) than those under 24 (4.8 and 4.9).

FIGURE 1: **MEAN VALUES OF THE PERCEIVED ECONOMIC SITUATION BY MAJOR POPULATION (COMPLETE SAMPLE EXCEPT THOSE WHO SAID "DON'T KNOW" OR REFUSED TO ANSWER THE QUESTION)¹**



¹ Here, and in the rest of the cases, the presented two-dimensional relationships are statistically significant.

FIGURE 2: THINKING ABOUT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN..., HOW DOES THE MATERIAL STATUS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD COMPARE TO THEM? (%)



Further, respondents were first asked to compare their material situation with those living in the same community (city, town or village) and then with other Armenians. Figure 2 depicts that, in general, most young people in Armenia believe that they are in the same material condition as others in their same community (65.4%) and as other Armenians (61.2%). Approximately 13% of young people think that they are worse off than others in their country, and only 5.7% think the same compared to other people in their communities. More than a quarter of respondents think that they are doing better than others, either in their communities (26.0%) or in Armenia (28.8%) or both.

Young people's attitudes toward economic differences were touched on during the focus group discussions. Specifically, participants were asked about economic inequality. The majority of participants think economic inequality is negative; they tend to believe that it should be lower in the country. The participants mostly held the opinion that inequality in Armenia is average or high. During the discussions, it was mentioned that inequality became higher after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"I mean that umm, there are people who are either rich or poor nowadays. The rest either ignore them, or..."

[Female, 15 years old]

The majority of the participants identify economic inequality as a form of social inequality or injustice. One of the participants noted the differences among people in terms of affordability of differently priced products. The majority of the participants have a positive attitude towards what they consider to be "fair" inequality, yet they do not have a firm opinion or idea about it.

LIVELIHOOD SOURCES

To further understand the living situation of Armenian youth, the study asked respondents about their sources of income. The overall results based on a multiple choice analysis are shown in Figure 3. The largest group of respondents (35.8%) say that they have personal income. Additionally, 25.6% report that they are fully supported by their parents. 13.8% receive financial help from parents or relatives and 10.7% are fully supported by partners. Comparably, a very small number of respondents mentioned family pension (6.5%), state support (3.5%), grants or student loans (2.8%) or renting (1.3%)^{2*}.

Further in order to comprehend the dependence of Armenian youth on different livelihood sources from another angle, the options described above were grouped into three income source types: the youth support themselves, they depend on someone or receive state assistance.

Figure 4 shows that respondent's gender, age, geographic location, education and employment status strongly positively correlate the dependency on different livelihoods. Those who have some kind of employment are more likely to support themselves (67.3%), while those who are unemployed are more likely to depend on someone (75.2%). As for the educational status, the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood of that person having personal income. The reverse was also true. The same statement is relevant for different age groups, as respondents aged 14-17 are more likely to be dependent on someone (77.3%), while those aged 25-29 are more likely to have their own income (50.0%). The figure also shows that female respondents are more likely to be dependent on someone (65.0%) than male respondents (39.1%).

^{2*} The results are presented based on weighted data. Hereinafter, in all the cases where the options "Refused to answer", "Don't know" or "Difficult to answer" are not presented, it means that these options are not significant within all the answers.

FIGURE 3: **WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL INCOME SOURCES? (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE)**

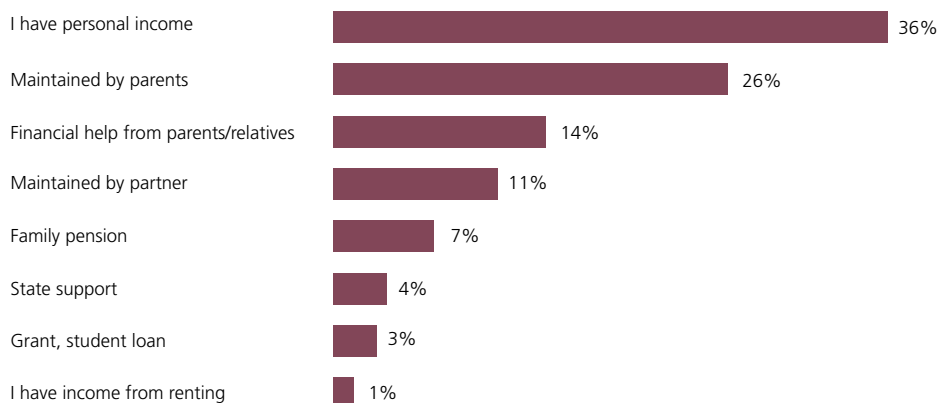
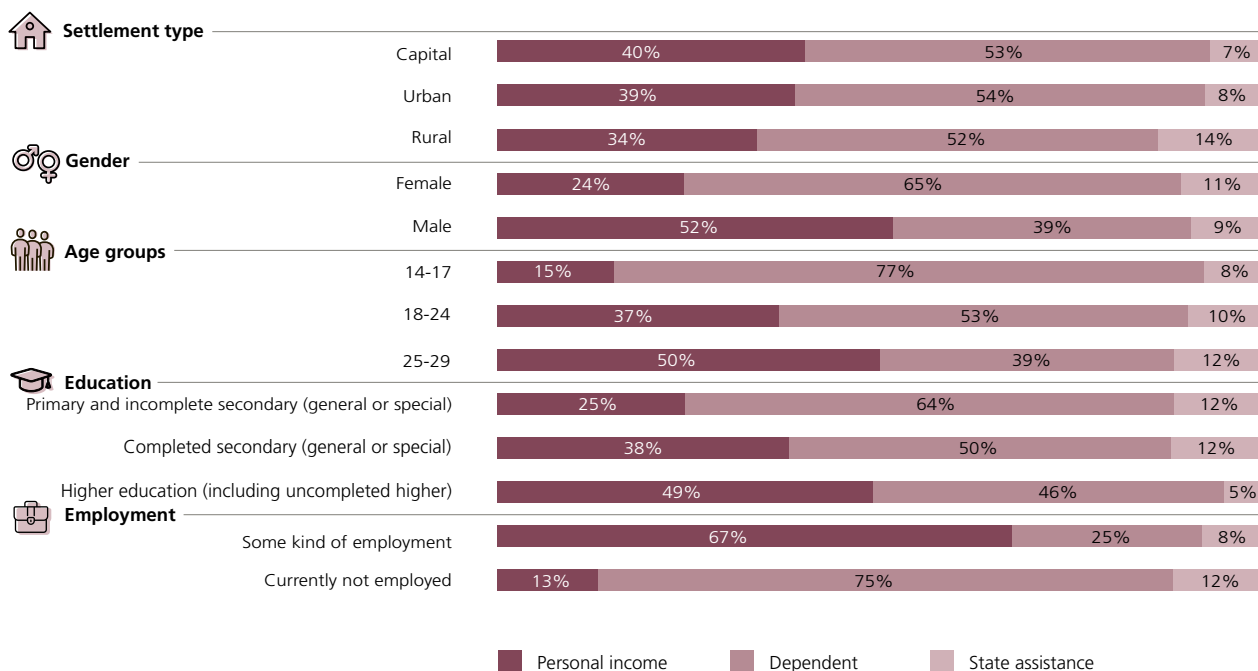


FIGURE 4: **SOURCES OF INCOME BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS (%)**



Correspondingly men are more likely to have their own income (51.7%) than women (24.4%). The differences among geographical locations are not that remarkable. However, it is worth noting that the comparably highest score of state assistance is reported by rural residents (13.6%).

DISCUSSION

Armenian youth subjectively assess their socio-economic well-being as high: their most urgent economic needs are mostly being met. Compared to other people living their communities/neighbourhood and in Armenia,

young people view themselves as socio-economically better off. On the other hand, the subjective assessment of economic well-being is not based on their personal abilities and opportunities to self-sustain as only 1/3 of youth has a personal source of income, and 1/2 of them are dependent upon their parents, relatives and/or wife or husband. Overall, 1/4 of the youth has some kind of financial dependency on another person, with females far more vulnerable in this respect as only 1/4 of them having a source of personal income. Financial dependency is also higher among those in rural areas compared to their urban counterparts.

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PART TWO: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Armenian educational system has undergone many changes during the post-Soviet period, and as experts in the field emphasise, educational reforms in post-Soviet countries are a battlefield for ideological conflicts (Wiseman, 2010). In general, Soviet, American and European ideological approaches collide in the field of education in Armenia.

The pathway from policies written on papers to the daily educational reality of Armenian youth is still not clearly explored yet and is under-researched (Mkrtichyan et al., 2016, p. 21). The issues of youth employment are also crucial and directly related to the problems with the educational system. Youth employment issues are multifaceted, interrelated with issues of quality of life and social well-being. Recent research from 2019 shows Armenian unemployment levels in young people ages 15-24 are more than two times higher (27%) than the average rate in European countries (11%). Additionally, the unemployment level was an even higher 33% among young people aged 15 to 29. The number was especially high among females (42%) (Karamyan, 2020). Furthermore, the level of employment of young people aged between 20 and 29 declined within the interval from 2014 to 2019 (The State Program of Employment Regulation 2022, 2021). Research on youth working conditions highlights the challenges of the youth-related sector, with particularly serious problems in the area of precarious employment (Vermishyan et al., 2021).

Based on this data, it is important to describe the social environment in which Armenian youth receive their education and determine what the major features of the education-labour market relationship are today. In addition to formal educational and work practices, it is important to acknowledge volunteer practices as more informal and value-based manifestations of work and life.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Only 7% of 25 to 29-year-olds attend any educational institution.
- Urban youth are more often enrolled in any educational institution than rural youth.
- Enrollment of male and female representatives in educational institutions is equal.
- Armenian youth are mostly satisfied with the education they receive.
- Residents of Yerevan are less satisfied with the education they receive / are receiving, while residents of rural areas are more satisfied.
- About half of the interviewed young people were employed.
- Unmarried young people, those with higher education and male representatives are most engaged in the employment sector.
- 1/3 of the surveyed young people do not study and work at the same time.
- The majority of young people neither in education nor work is female, from rural areas and married.
- Only 16% of young people have done any kind of volunteer work in the last year.
- Unmarried males with higher education were most involved in volunteer work.
- About half of the young people involved in volunteer work performed it in an educational institution or some civil society organisation.

ANALYSIS

GENERAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

In total, 38.4% of Armenian young people aged between 14 and 29 are studying in some type of educational institution (Figure 5). Here we can see the relationship between education and age, gender, employment, settlement type and marital status. The results show that the vast majority (94.4%) of respondents whose age coincides with that of secondary schooling report studying at formal educational institutions. A lower number of young people aged between 18 and 24 are studying (39.1%). In a higher age cohort (25-29 years), only 7.1% report attending an educational institution. The results also show that young people in the capital and other urban areas are more likely to study in educational institutions (42.4% and 41.9% respectively) than those in rural areas (33.6%). The likelihood of studying is almost equal for male and female respondents. We can further see that a greater number of single respondents say that they are studying (40.5%) as compared to those who are married (4.5%). As for the employment status, unemployed respondents are more likely to be in school (46.6%) than those who have some kind of employment (27.1%).

The general educational environment was further explored by measuring the level of satisfaction Armenian youth have with the quality of education that they received or are receiving now. Overall, the majority report being satisfied (84.2%). Figure 6 also shows that respondent's age, settlement type and level of education predict whether they are satisfied with the education they received or are receiving. Respondents aged between 14 and 17 are comparably more likely to be satisfied with the quality of education (91.7%) than young people in other age groups (83.6% and 80.8%). Similarly, respondents who attained primary or incomplete secondary education are slightly more likely to be satisfied (88.8%) than those who have completed secondary education (84.9%) or attained either complete or incomplete higher education (77.8%). Meanwhile, there are some differences based on the geographical location of respondents. Young people living in the capital are a little bit less likely to be satisfied with education quality (78.0%) than those in other urban (83.9%) or rural areas (88.3%). Despite all these statistically-significant differences, it is noteworthy that the plurality of respondents across all major demographic groups report being satisfied with the education quality.

In addition, some slight differences are observed depending on the fact whether the respondents are currently in school or not (Figure 7).

FIGURE 5: PROPORTION OF THOSE WHO ATTEND AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUP (%)

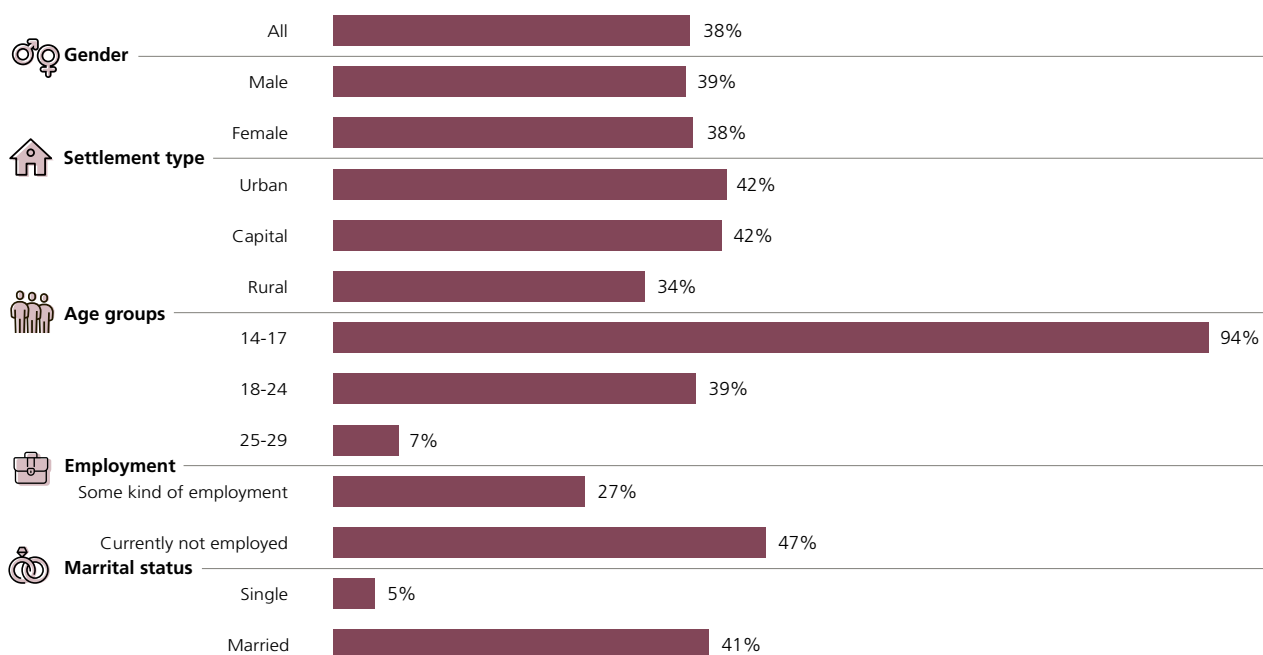


FIGURE 6: **ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION YOU ARE RECEIVING / YOU HAVE RECEIVED? (% OF VERY SATISFIED AND SOMEWHAT SATISFIED, BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS)**

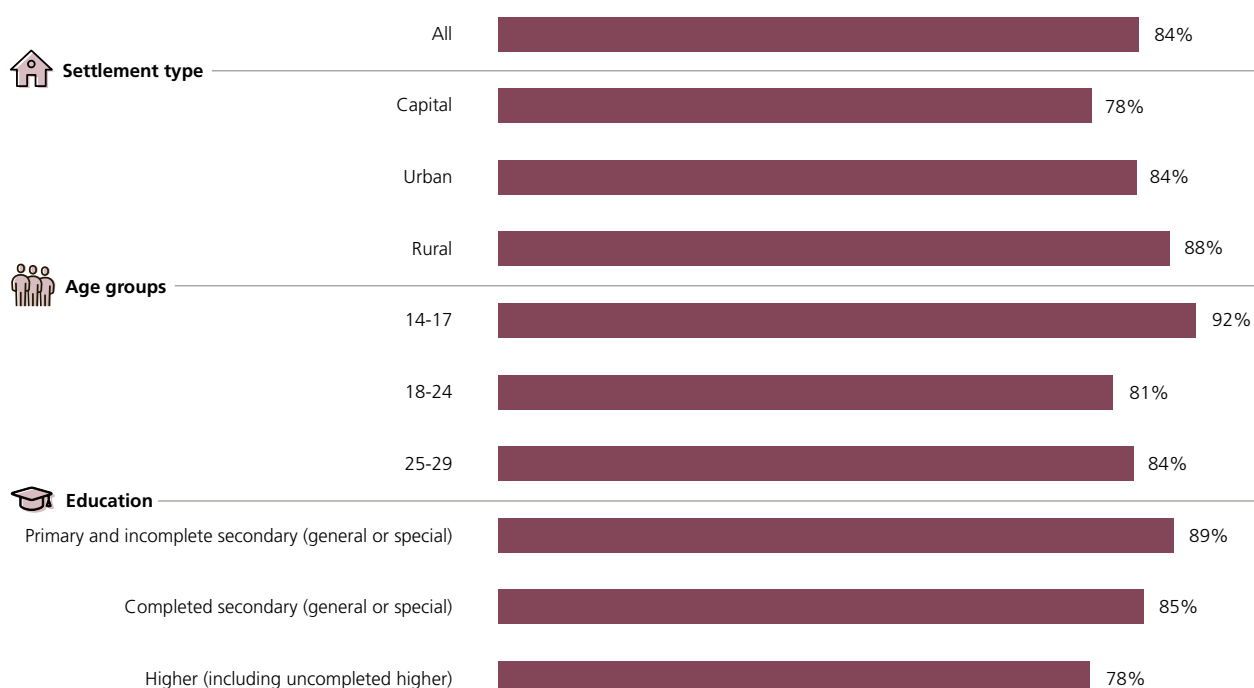
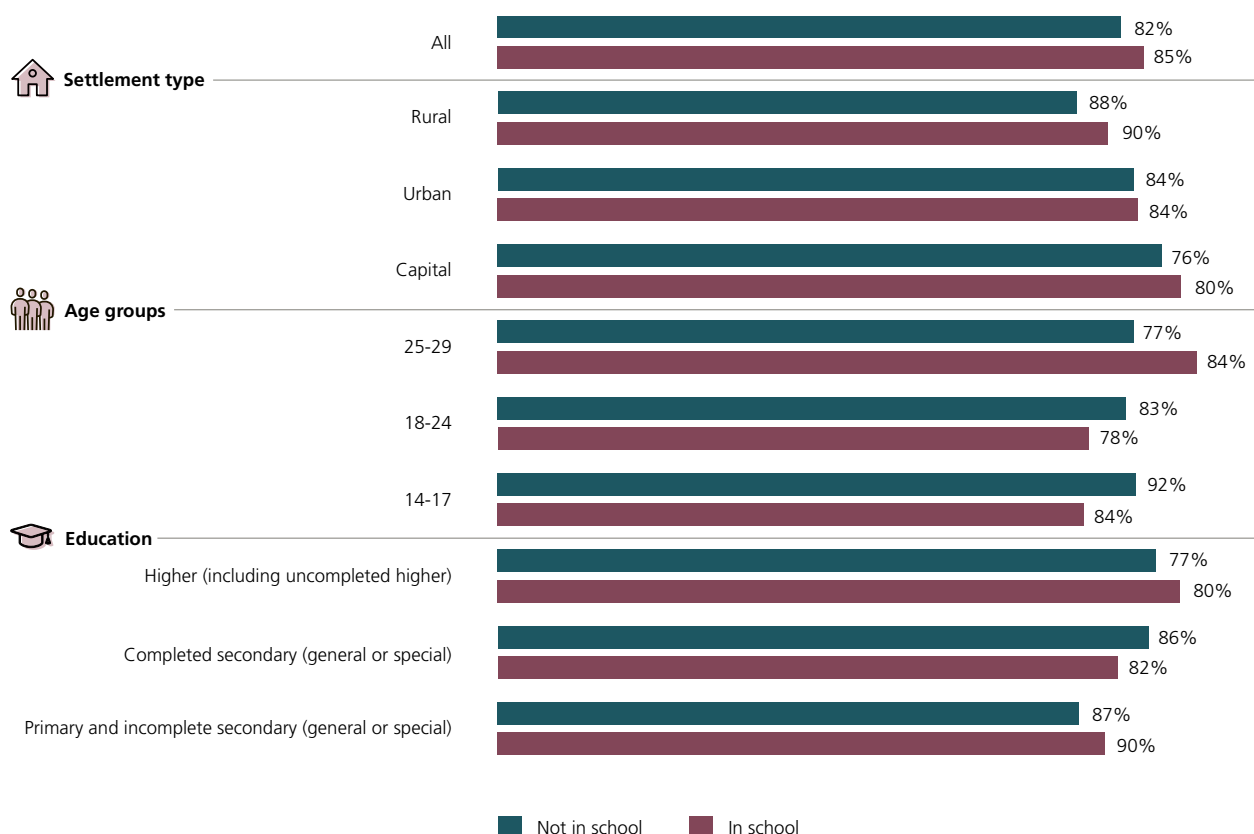


FIGURE 7: **ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION YOU ARE RECEIVING / YOU HAVE RECEIVED? (% OF VERY SATISFIED AND SOMEWHAT SATISFIED, BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS)**



EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In total, almost half (47.8%) of young people aged between 14 and 29 in Armenia are employed (Figure 8). Figure 8 portrays the relationship between respondent's gender, age, educational attainment, marital status, geographical location and employment status. More than half of male respondents are employed (56.4%) as opposed to only about one-third of females (29.3%). Younger respondents are less likely to be employed (20.7%), as are those with primary and incomplete secondary education (31.7%). Young people living in urban areas and the capital are slightly more likely to be in jobs (47.7% and 43.3%) than those living in rural areas (39.1%). Interestingly, young people from the capital are comparably less likely

to be employed than those in other urban areas. As for the marital status, single young people are more likely to be employed (50.5%) than those who are married (34.7%).

One-third of young people in Armenia are neither in education nor in employment (NEET) as seen in Figure 9. Gender, geography, age and marital status predict respondents' NEET status. Young women are more likely to be outside education and employment (41.5%) compared to young men (19.4%). More than half (63.1%) of married young people are NEETs, as opposed to single ones (27.5%). 44.1% of respondents in the higher age cohort between 25 and 29 have NEET status. Respondents in rural areas are more likely to neither be in education nor in employment (35.9%) than those in the capital (26.9%) or other urban areas (25.9%).

FIGURE 8: PROPORTION OF EMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS (%)

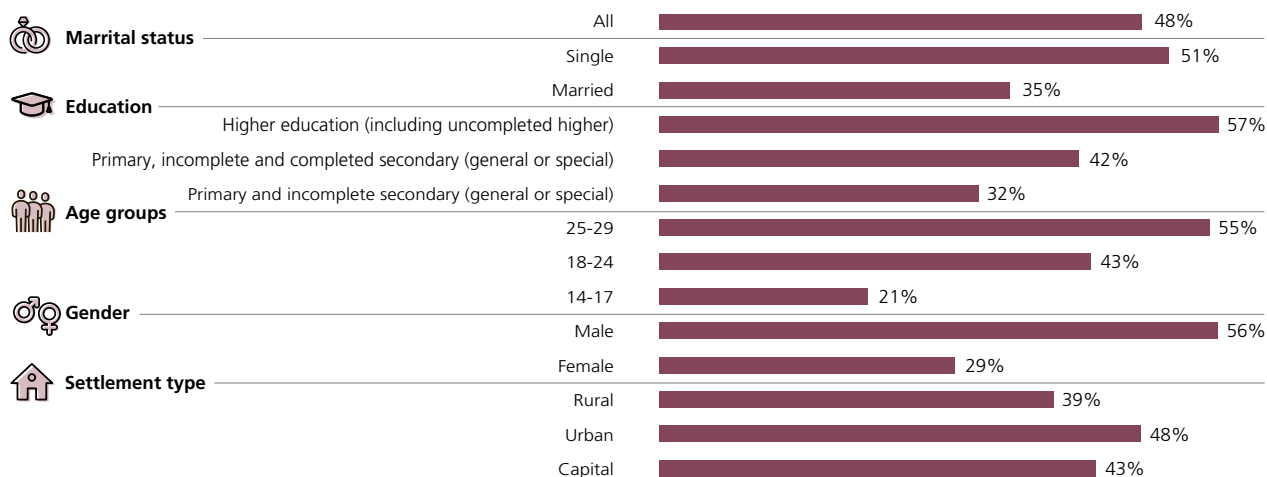
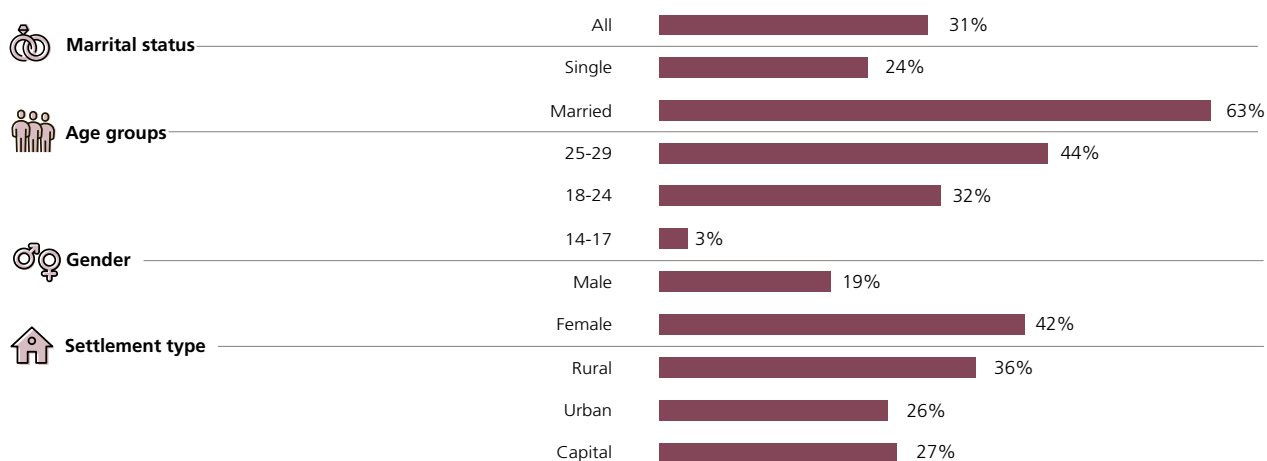


FIGURE 9: PROPORTION OF NEETS (NOT IN EDUCATION, NOT IN EMPLOYMENT) BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS (%)



VOLUNTEERING WORK AND EXPERIENCE

Figure 10 reveals volunteering experience of Armenian youth. Only 15.9% of young people have done an unpaid volunteer work in the last twelve months. Male respondents tended to volunteer at higher rates (17.3%) as opposed to females (14.5%), and single people are slightly more likely to report that they have done some unpaid volunteer work (18.1%) than married people (10.2%). About a quarter of those who attained complete or incomplete higher education have been engaged in some kind of volunteer work, while those with primary, incomplete or complete secondary education are

approximately two times less likely to report that they were engaged in volunteer work.

The data shows about one quarter (26.1%) among those who have volunteered have done so in school or university and approximately one in five (21.6%) in NGOs (Figure 11). More than one in ten volunteered in associations, self-organised projects, or youth organisations. Less than 5% of respondents report that they have done unpaid work in civil initiatives, life-saving services, or political parties. The proportion of respondents volunteering in labour unions is almost nonexistent (0.3%).

FIGURE 10: HAVE YOU DONE ANY UNPAID WORK VOLUNTARILY IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS? (% , BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS)

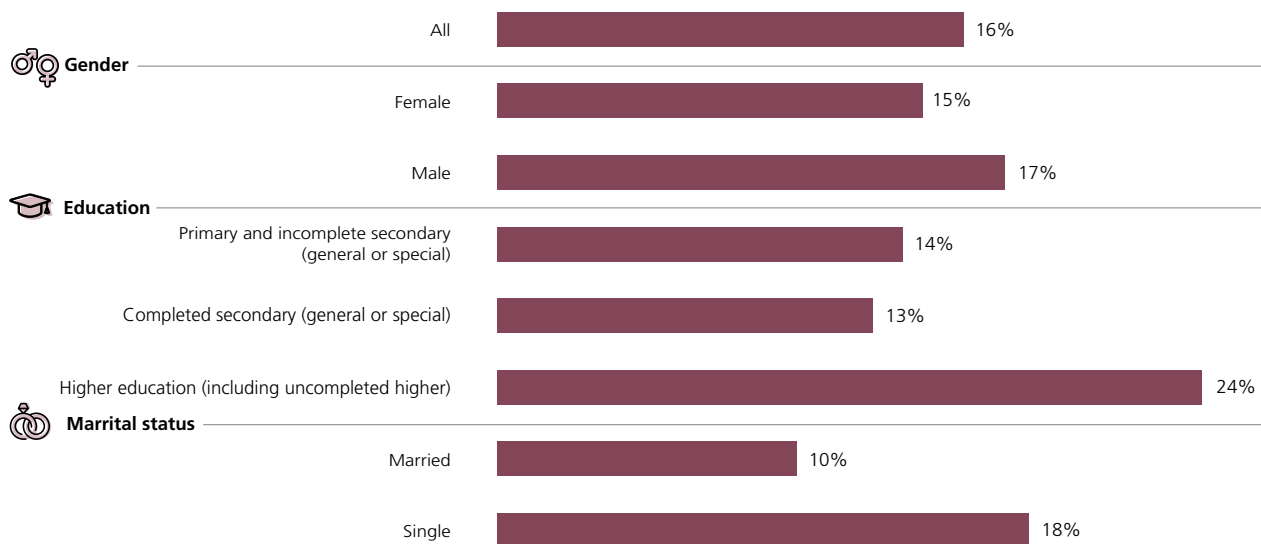
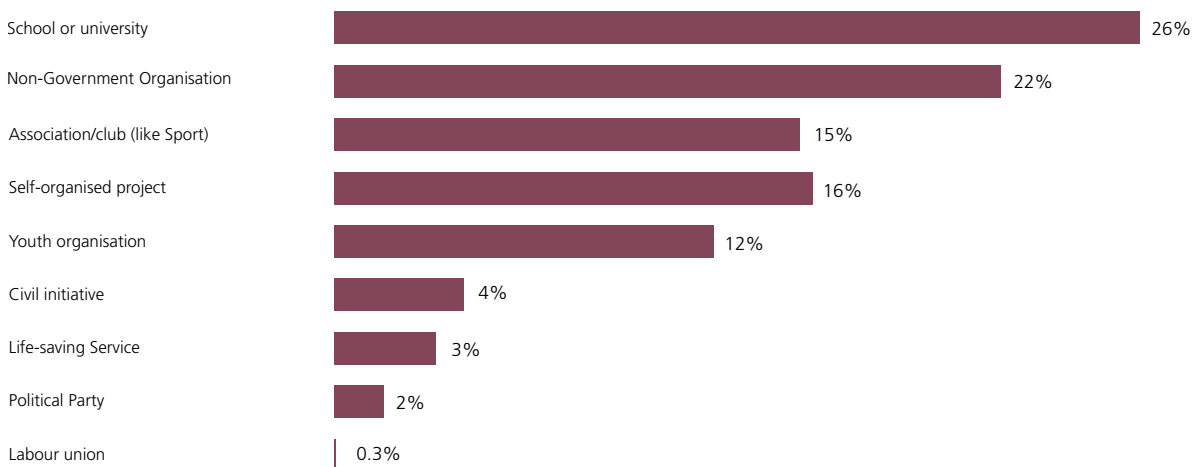


FIGURE 11: WHERE HAVE YOU VOLUNTEERED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE)



DISCUSSION

The index of participation of Armenian youth in education is one of the unique areas where gender equality is noticeable. This is due to the mandatory nature of general education on the one hand, and the competitiveness of girls in the field of higher education on the other hand. However, the education-labour market connection and the career-education relations is distorted in respect to further life strategies. Women receive diplomas at an equal rate, but do not continue professionalisation and do not develop a career. In particular, the research shows that although youth with higher education are more engaged with the labour market, the majority of them are male and/or not married participants of either gender. Marital status and women's employment issues have also been reported in previous youth studies (see, e.g., Mkrtichyan et al., 2016). The most significant indicator is that 1/3 of surveyed youth do not study and work at the same time, the majority of these are female, from rural areas and married.

If participation in the workforce is far from egalitarian in terms of gender/sex, then it is interesting to see what the picture is like in terms of informal and civil involvement. In general, voluntary work or volunteering is indicative of the reproduction of the core values of civil society (Musick & Wilson, 2007, pp. 459-85); it is an important manifestation of social cohesion, particularly participation and inclusion (Strauß, 2008, p. 32).

In recent decades the spread of volunteerism as an ideology and introduction of volunteering as a civic practice have been particularly manifested within the context of post-Soviet transformations (Juknevičius & Savicka, 2003; Vermishyan & Darbinyan, 2021).

Despite this, the rate of young people involved in voluntary practices is quite low in Armenia, with the highest rate of involvement among those with/receiving higher education, male and unmarried. Volunteer work is primarily carried out in an educational institution or some civil society organisation. Moreover, one of the latest studies (Vermishyan & Darbinyan, 2021) shows that the ideological foundations and cultural manifestations of volunteering activities among Armenian youth have a rational nature due to the dominance of personal interests (subjective aims and values) rather than public/social interest.

6

PART THREE: DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

Mass political protests in Armenia in 2018 led to a change of government called the “Velvet Revolution”. The path of democratisation adopted by Armenia in the post-Soviet period seemed to have reached a peak, creating new opportunities for the reactivation of democratic institutions. In the context of these events, the youth factor was particularly central. The “Velvet Revolution” was characterised as a revolution of the young generation as the youth participated in street protests and state politics.

The rejuvenation of state employees, especially management, at the expense of civil society representatives, gave rise to conflict with the clashing interpretations of “freshness” and “experience”. The newly created public discourse quickly became obsolete for two reasons. First, the post-revolutionary social and political expectations were not justified by the outcome. Second, the 44-day Artsakh war in 2020, created contradictory socio-political trends in the society and amongst youth.

Today, the Armenian society, particularly the youth, is sensitive to internal and external state policies, and it is important to address their ideological views and forms of political participation.

MAIN FINDINGS

- More than half of Armenian youth are generally not interested in politics.
- Armenian youth prefer donating to social or political organisations and participating in the solution of neighbourhood or neighbourhood problems more than formal political involvement.
- Those who are not interested in politics at all are generally women between 18-29, living in Yerevan with pre-university education.
- Among the problems that Armenia is now facing, young people primarily emphasised conflict with neighbouring countries, territorial integration and foreign political tensions, with only a second emphasis on such socio-economic problems as unemployment and increasingly rising prices.
- Military and political issues were relatively more important to rural youth and females, and socio-economic issues were mentioned more by the residents of Yerevan and males.
- Only 15.6% of young people found it difficult to place their views in right-left ideologies, and 29.4% of them placed their views on extreme poles.

ANALYSIS

DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS

In general, the majority of Armenian youth (52.4%) agree that democracy is the best form of government for Armenia, although 24.6% of them responded against it. Respondents were asked to evaluate the actual practice of democracy in Armenia today: 39.9% of young people evaluated it positively, 28.5% negatively, and 31.6% neither positively nor negatively (Figure 12).

Further analysis shows that those who agreed that democracy is the best form of government for Armenia were mostly those with the lowest educational level, the female gender, the lowest age and young people living in the rural regions. The actual practice of democracy in Armenia today was positively evaluated by young men with the lowest educational level who live in the rural regions (Figure 13).

The qualitative component of the present study helps to gauge young people's opinions on politics and democracy. When asked about political ideologies, participants' views are rather diverse. Some participants mention that they favour socialism, others say liberalism, and others mention conservatism. In the case of liberalism, it is equality and liberty that are considered most desirable; in the case of socialism, it is the formation of a well-developed economy; in the case of conservatism, it is the preservation of the national values.

"In my opinion, nationalism in the specific case of the Armenian people. In general, if we look at ideologies, at the level of all nations, I consider liberalism, but in the case of the Armenian nation, nationalism corresponds to what I think, of course, nationalism in rationality. If I say nationalism, I do not mean take the sword, go to liberate Western Armenia, no. In rational thinking have a national thinking."

[Male, 21 years old]

It is important to note that most often young people tend to indicate political regimes when asked about preferred ideologies. The majority mention democracy. Some participants are more supportive of dictatorship.

Especially in higher age groups, participants mention dictatorship as a preferred option for present day Armenia. They mention the positive sides of dictatorship such as unity, law obedience and citizen's awareness of their responsibilities.

"Our people are like, when you teach them the law, even after that they cannot understand that they have responsibilities. I think it was a little early to teach a people with this kind of development what the is right..."

[Female, 25 years old]

"It seems to me that, like the people should be afraid of the state, because today whoever is idle or dissatisfied with something takes a poster and immediately goes to the government, which is not punished, it is not right. Or, let's say, who writes a curse to the head of the country and is not punished."

[Male, 25 years old]

As was mentioned above, most young people believe in democracy. They associate democracy with a society that is characterised by equality, unity, high consciences, respect, tolerance, obedience to the law and a high level of quality in education. Most participants mention the following associations with democracy: being heard and exercising fundamental human freedoms and rights (e.g. freedom of speech, free will and protection). A minority indicated that free market and absence of corruption were associated with democracy. Participants frequently mention the USA as an example of a democratic country.

"Well America comes to my mind when I hear the word 'Democracy'."

[Male, 17 years old]

Participants also often mention several European countries (more often, Germany and France), and a minority mentioned Cuba and China as democratic countries.

According to participants, for Armenia to become as democratic as these countries it must ensure the following: good government and leadership, effective diplomacy, less dependence on external influence in international relations, high quality education, social capital, national unity and financial resources.

FIGURE 12: THE PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARMENIAN CONTEXT (%)

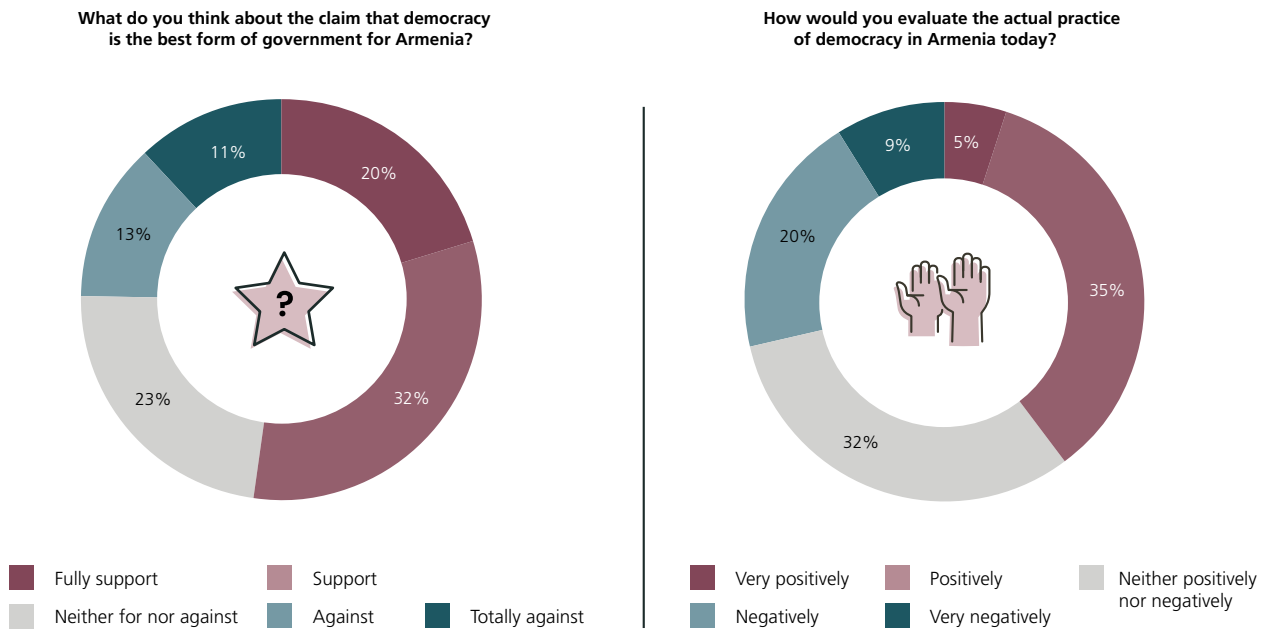
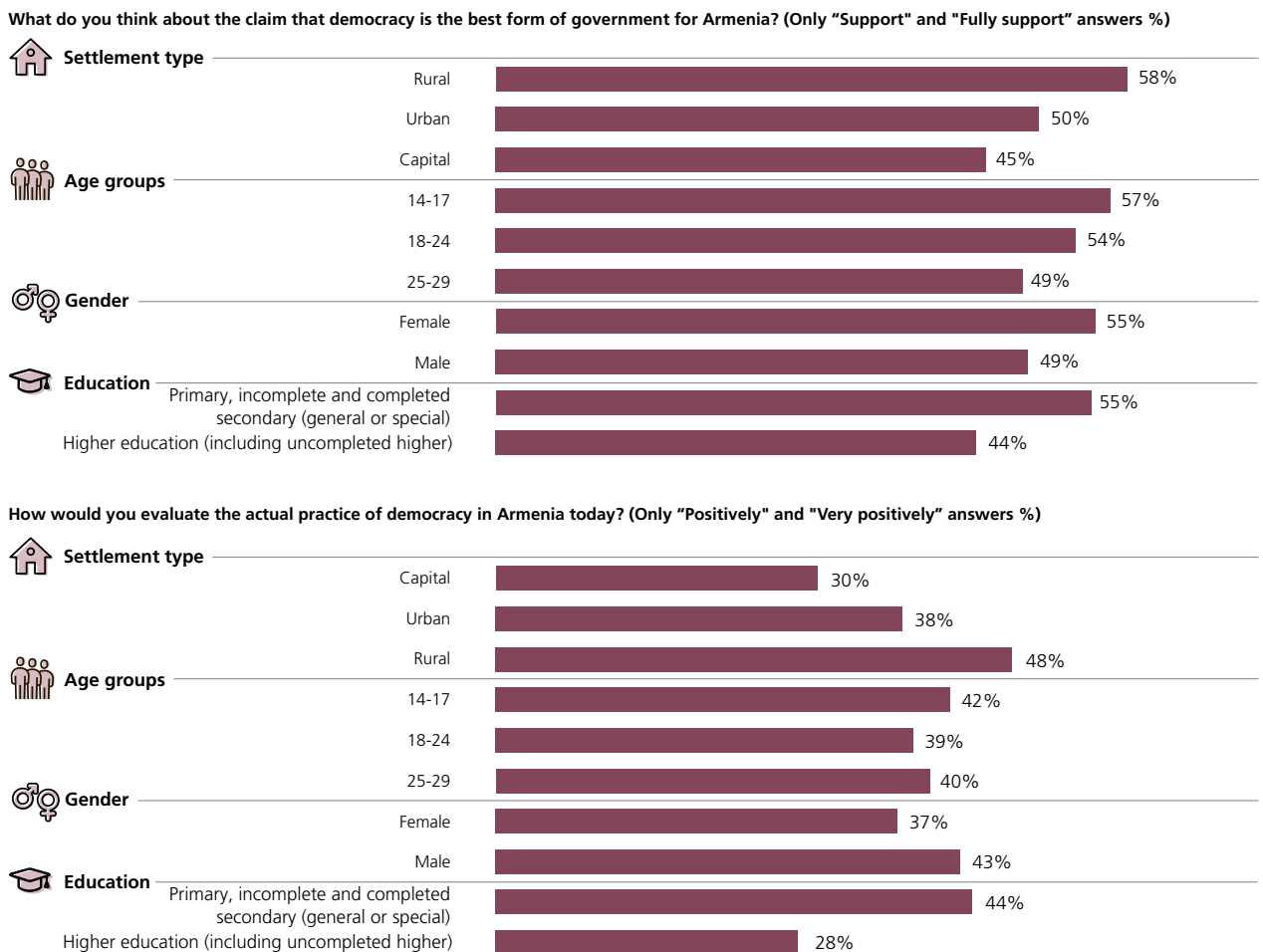


FIGURE 13: THE PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARMENIAN CONTEXT (% BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS)



YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Overall, most young people in Armenia report political indifference. Figure 14 displays that almost two thirds of respondents say that they are not at all interested in politics (59.1%). Here we examine the relationship between respondents' age, gender, employment status, educational level, geographical location and the degree of interest in politics. The data show that respondents with higher education (including incomplete higher) are comparably less likely to report that they are not interested in politics at all (52.1%), than those with primary, incomplete and completed secondary education (63.1%). Regardless of gender or employment status, most report almost the same degree of interest in politics. Interestingly, respondents under 17 are slightly less likely to be politically indifferent (54.7%) than those in higher age groups (61.5% and 62.1%). When we look at the differences among geographical locations, it is evident that young

people in the capital tend to be slightly more indifferent to politics (65.3%) than those in other cities, towns or villages (57.3% and 60.0%).

Figure 15 depicts young people's civic and political involvement based on their engagement in different activities. Approximately two in ten has participated in the solution of their settlement's/ neighbour's problem, and one in ten has considered doing it. 9.1% of young people report to have donated to a social or political organisation, while 13.3% consider doing so. 7.1% stopped buying things for political or environmental reasons, and 6.6% consider doing that. A very small proportion of young people report that they expressed an opinion in an online public space, participated in a demonstration, signed a list with political requests/online petitions or considered doing so. The proportion of youth who worked in a political party or political group or who consider doing that is almost non-existent (3.8%).

FIGURE 14: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAID THEY ARE NOT AT ALL INTERESTED IN POLITICS (% , BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS)

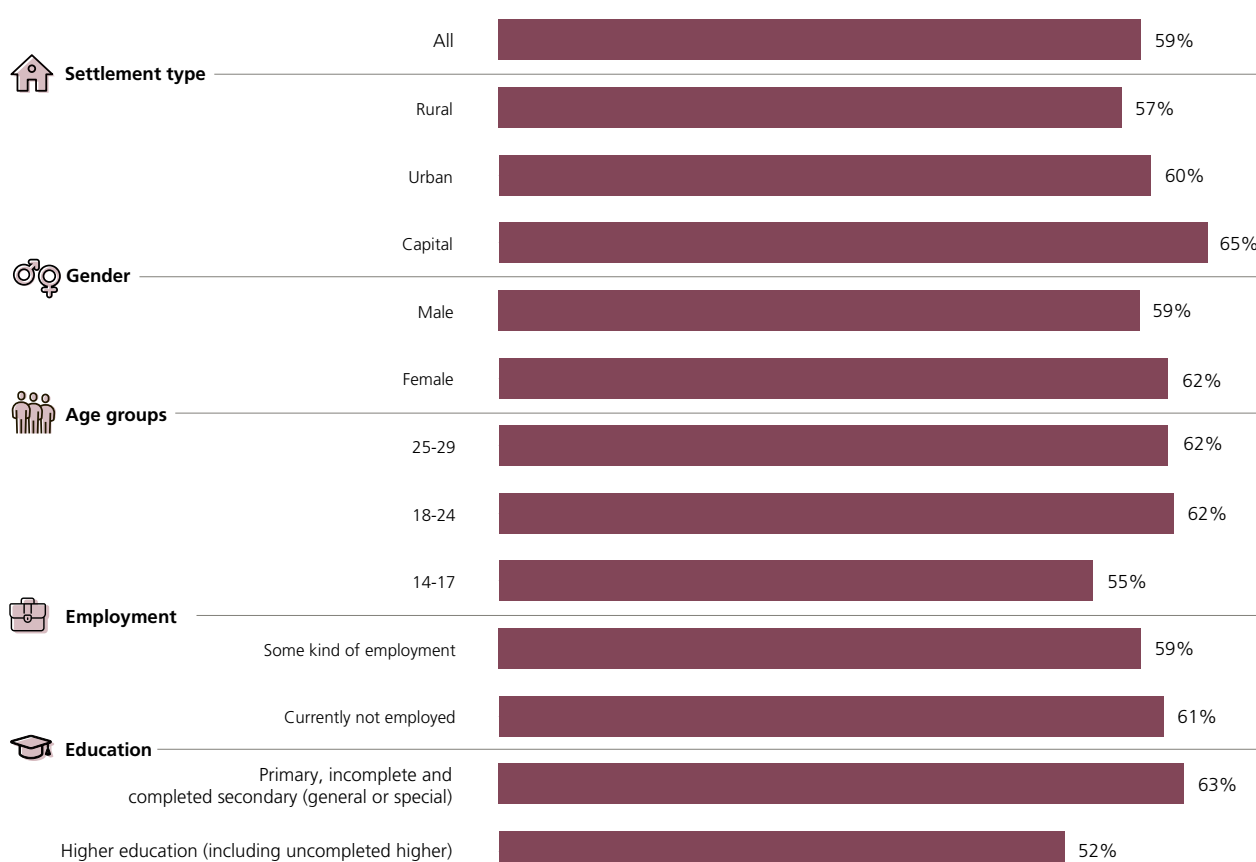
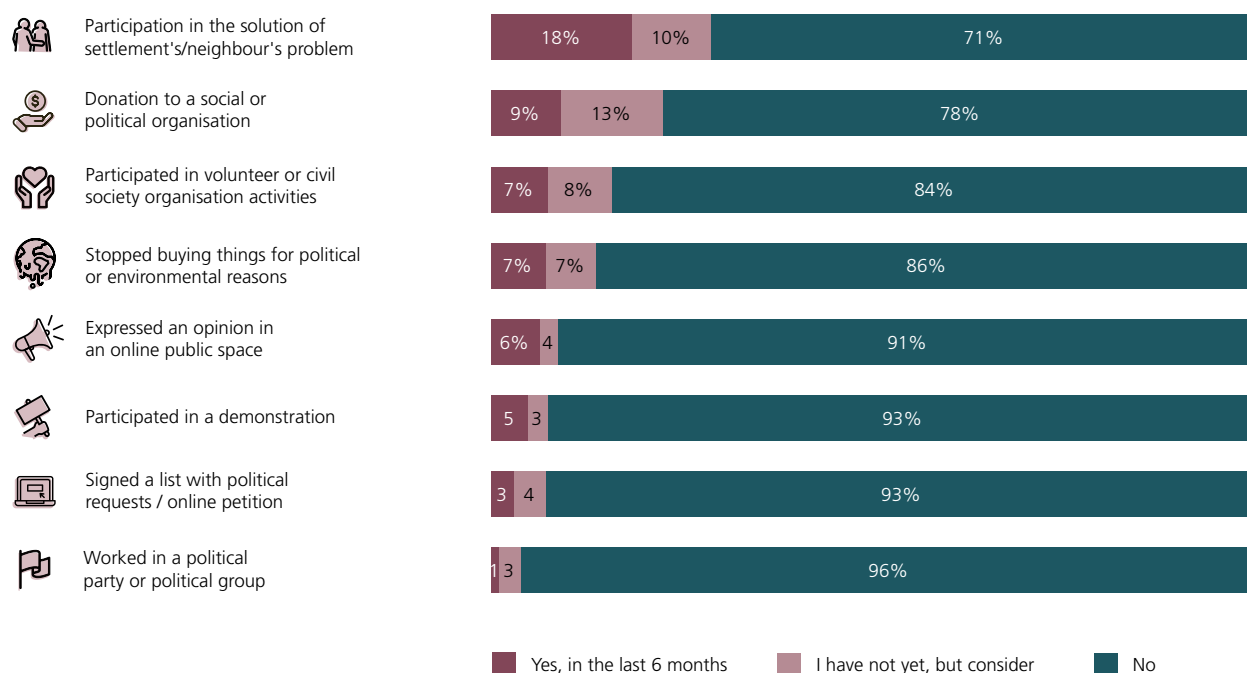


FIGURE 15: **THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHOW POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT. HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, OR WOULD YOU SERIOUSLY CONSIDER DOING IT? (%)**



The qualitative data collected through focus group discussions help to further understand the practices of political engagement and civic participation of youth in Armenia. To begin with, most participants consider protests to be efficient means to influence the decisions made by the government. However, they believe protests have to be peaceful and in compliance with laws. Violence and destruction of property are not acceptable.

“Well, it depends on the type of the protest. If it is peaceful, I am always for it, if it involves destruction, etc., I am not.”

[Male, 26 years old]

“If there is no bloodshed during the events and all the legal norms are preserved, it is not a shameful act but a thing to be proud of. I think we can feel pride that a velvet revolution or, I don’t know, protests that influenced the government’s actions have once taken place in Armenia.”

[Female, 16 years old]

A majority of the older participants say that they have participated in protests, especially during the Velvet Revolution of 2018. Most of the participants are now ready to participate in a protest aimed at changing the government or concerning specific decisions, such as rising prices,

border-related issues, or the demand for an increase in salaries and pensions. They also are ready to protest against laws like a LGBT law. A smaller number of participants are ready to participate in protests against violation of human rights (e.g. obligatory nature of wearing a mask, obligatory testing or vaccination, violation of the right to freedom of speech, violation of the rights of political prisoners). In the 16-17 age group, one of the participants spontaneously expressed the willingness to participate in protests related to environmental topics; the other members of the group agreed.

Most of the participants consider online protests as an ineffective means of influencing the government. In line with that, some participants participated in online campaigns aimed at raising awareness among an international audience during the 44-day war; in certain cases, they also helped mobilise participants through social networks during the Velvet Revolution and used an online petition to protest the events marking the 30th anniversary of independence.

“I participated in an online petition. During the war I also shared a German-language song about Artsakh via WhatsUp, Viber among as many friends as possible. This action raised awareness about Artsakh.”

[Male, 27 years old]

Most participants value citizens' participation in elections, regardless of their age and level of education. Some of the participants believe that those who go to vote at the elections should have sufficient knowledge of political processes, be serious about the elections and have a specific position and well-formed opinion. A question about an upper limit of voting age has been discussed in the 25-29 age group as they have concerns that elderly people could easily be manipulated and taken advantage of when they go to vote.

"I have a 90-year-old grandfather. He was told not to go but he had gone and voted for someone who wanted him to participate."

[Female, 26 years old]

Overall the participants opted for universal suffrage from the age of 18 regardless of education. Most of the adult participants mentioned they feel freer since the Velvet Revolution of 2018. In the 16-17 age group, most participants find it hard to assess this issue due to their comparatively younger age.

Similar to the survey results (Figure 15), most participants of the focus group discussions say that they have not changed their consumer behavior for political reasons. Among a minority who have done so, it has mostly been a rejection of Turkish products after the 44-day war and, in certain cases, boycott of the pharmaceutical network belonging to a former deputy. One of the participants mentioned that they have always tried to use Armenian products in order to contribute to the development of the country's economy.

GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL POLITICS

Here the most important problems for Armenia are revealed according to the perceptions of youth (Figure 16). Almost one-fifth of respondents (18.6%) mention conflict with neighbouring countries as the most important problem. Relatedly, a significant number referenced territorial integrity (15.3%), followed by internal political tensions (13.7%). There are some differences reported when it comes to the second most important problem as perceived by Armenian youth. As the second most important problem many mention unemployment (13.9%), followed by internal political tensions (11.0%) and rising prices (10.7%). The responses mentioning environmental

problems and climate change are almost nonexistent, which shows that Armenian youth do not generally perceive these problems as important issues for their country. Notably, a large number of people (38.0%) mentioned that there are other problems that are not mentioned in the presented list of options that they consider to be most important.

The qualitative data corresponds with the findings of the survey. The main problem facing the country as mentioned by the participants is the security of the country. The security concern is a consequence by the 44-day Artsakh war, the danger of its resumption, the tense situation on the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan and the lack of security for the population of the border regions. Quite often respondents mention the Coronavirus as an important problem (discussions were held in the last months of 2021). A minority of participants mentioned rising prices, job shortages, internal political tensions, emigration and inefficient management as well as educational and environmental problems (pollution).

Furthermore, the data shows that the differences by gender, age and settlement type are not that great (Figure 17). However, some differences are worth noting. For instance, respondents living in rural areas are slightly more likely to consider conflict with neighbouring countries as the most important problem (23.3%) than those living in the capital (18.4%) or other urban areas (11.6%). Meanwhile, young people in the capital are comparably more concerned with rising prices (9.5%) than those living in rural (5.3%) or other urban areas (3.6%).

As mentioned above, during the focus group discussions young people often highlighted the Coronavirus as an important problem for Armenia. Meanwhile, the survey data shows that 58.2% of Armenian young people think that the government managed the Covid-19 pandemic rather or very effectively, and the rest of them (41.8%) think the opposite way (Figure 18). Some differences can be observed based on respondents' gender, age, education and settlement type. In particular, male respondents are slightly more likely to think that the government fought the pandemic very or rather poorly (44.4%) than female ones (39.4%). Young people with higher education think more negatively about the government's actions against Covid-19 (52.4% mention very or rather poorly) than those with completed secondary (40.0%) or primary and incomplete secondary education (35.1%). Younger respondents aged between 14 and 17 feel less negative

FIGURE 16: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT / SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? (%)

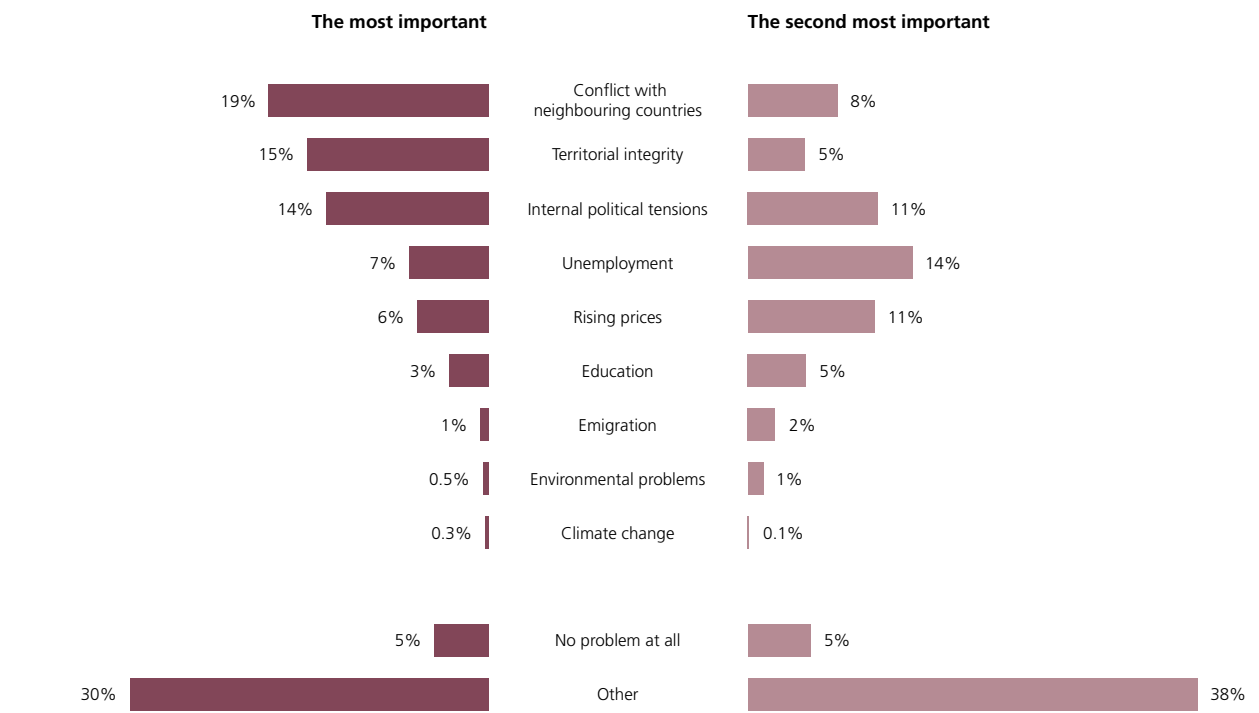


FIGURE 17: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? BY GENDER, AGE GROUPS AND SETTLEMENT TYPE (% , FULL SAMPLE, SINGLE CHOICE)

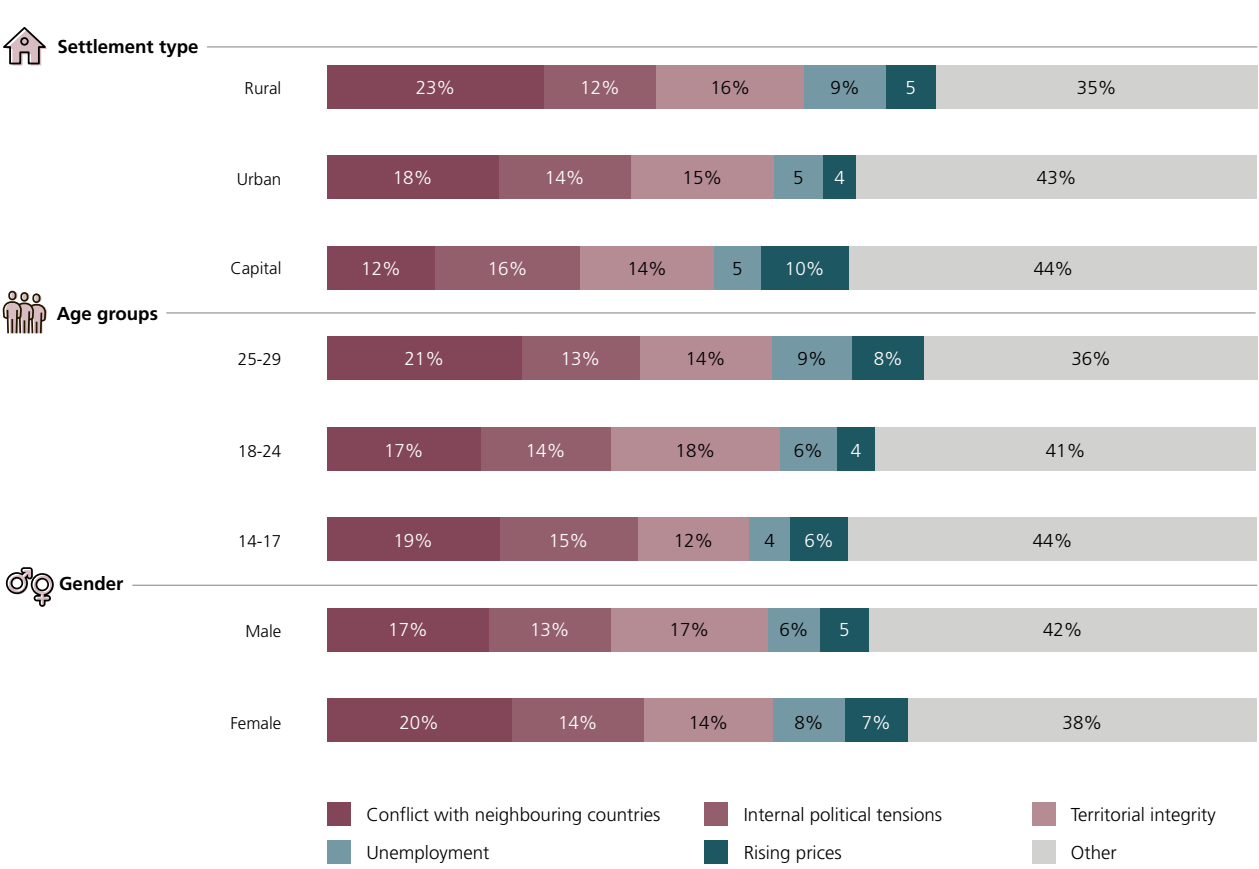
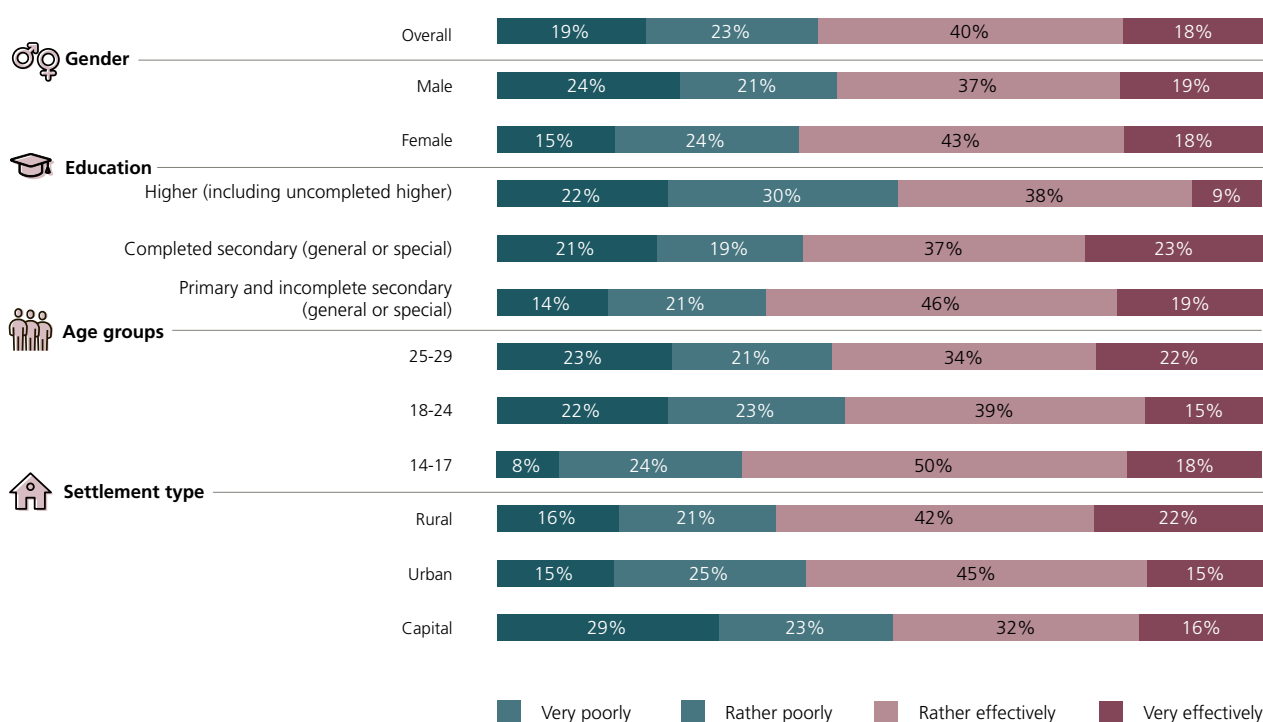


FIGURE 18: **HOW HAS THE GOVERNMENT MANAGED THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ARMENIA? (%)**



about this issue than those in higher age cohorts: 68.0% of young people under 17 think that the government managed the pandemic very or rather effectively. As for the settlement of the respondents, here we can observe that those living in Yerevan tend to answer the question more negatively (51.7% mention very or rather poorly) than those living in the urban (40.4%) or rural (36.4%) areas of the regions.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

First, political ideology and views were examined based on how respondents perceive their own beliefs on a left-right spectrum. The results show that 13.4% identify their own political views as far left, and 16.0% as far right (Figure 19). It is notable that 15.6% find it difficult to answer choosing the option “I don’t know”. Additionally, 23.3% choose 5 on the 10-point scale offered to them. The reason may be the fact that 5 is often perceived as the middle point of such a scale, and respondents wanted to choose something in the middle as not being precisely oriented. It is important to state that these results may not be that representative or trustworthy in this specific case. The reason is that Armenian youngsters generally may find it difficult to differentiate between right-wing and left-wing politics.

Focus group discussions confirm this. Mainly, young people find it difficult to define the differences between left and right policies. Very few participants are familiar with the concept of right-left; they associate it with the authorities and the opposition, the present and past authorities, and the failure and success of the government.

“When we say Left, I think of our present Government, present leadership. When we say Right, I think of the Opposition. In my opinion, it is wrong to divide the nation into two parts because, to me, they would rather be united, than split into two. That is how civil wars break in various countries and we really don’t need it in our country.”

[Male, 15 years old]

Armenian youth’s perceptions of the left-right spectrum were additionally measured based on a set of statements describing left-wing and right-wing policies. The respondents were asked to evaluate how they would place the items in ideological terms. For all the statements more than one thirds of respondents choose the option “both equally” (Figure 20). Meanwhile, more than one respondent in ten answered “I don’t know”. Overall, the results signify that young people in Armenia do not accurately distinguish between ideologically left or right oriented policies.

FIGURE 19: **HOW WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR OWN POLITICAL VIEWS ON THIS SCALE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, GENERALLY SPEAKING? (% , FULL SAMPLE)**

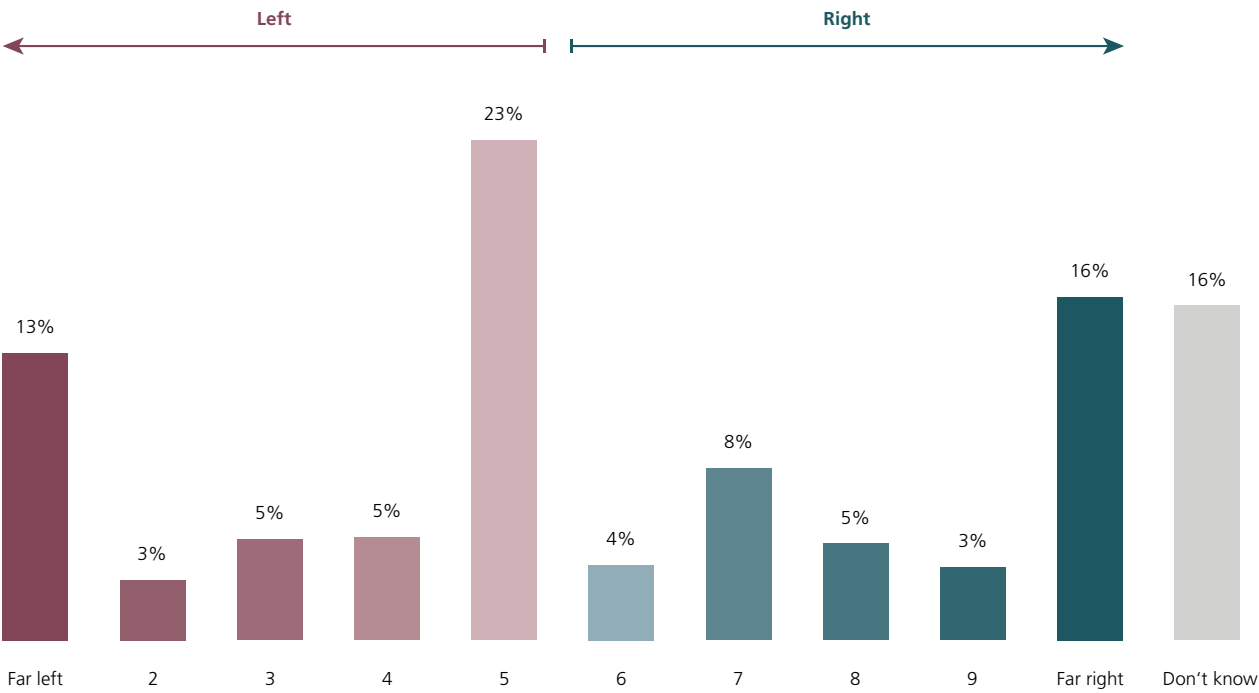
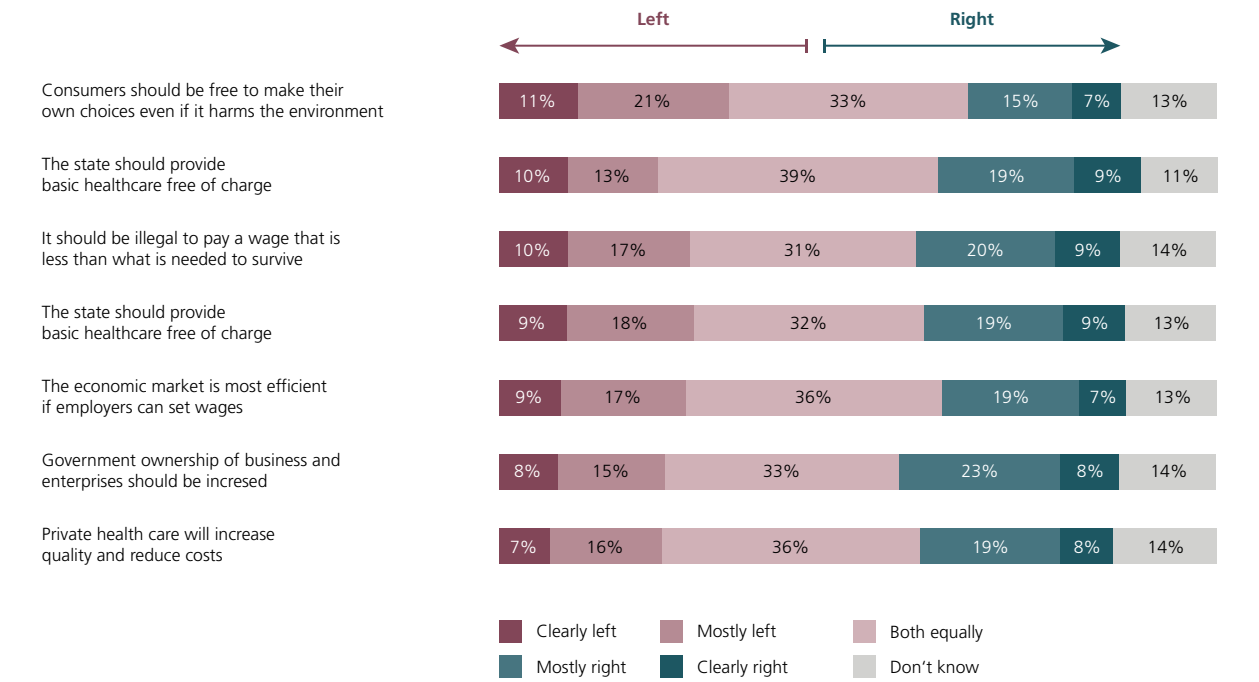


FIGURE 20: **WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL BELIEFS, THEY OFTEN SPEAK ABOUT LEFT-WING AND RIGHT-WING. IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WHICH POSITION IS CLOSEST TO THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT? (% , FULL SAMPLE)**



During the focus group discussions participants were introduced to the basic concepts of left-right division. After they were familiarised with the differentiation, they could somehow indicate their ideological and political preferences. The majority prefer the right-wing ideology mainly because of low taxes.

"I think I will exclude left-wing ideology because here we come across our previous problem, the problem of not counting someone's opinion. There may be a family, which is not rich enough, and if the taxes rise, they might not be able to pay. So, we are having a situation of not counting someone's opinion. That's why I think right-wing ideology is better."

[Female, 14 years old]

However, the preference of right vs. left changes when the second ideological cleavage (groupism/individualism) is introduced. Most participants opt for the left wing groupism. Those who select the left wing attach importance to the state subsidy, provision of social service as well as state interference into the economy in case of high taxes which, it has been assumed, would positively affect the development of the economy if distributed efficiently.

"I think that the state policy is the most important thing for each state and the role of the state is very important for the country in different spheres, whether it is an educational sphere, or economic one, it is the state that should regulate everything."

[Female, 18 years old]

The majority of the participants select groupism by emphasising the importance of preserving the national culture.

"You know it seems to me that our country, our nation in general, differs from the world by our culture, by our conservative approaches. For example, in my life I do not want LGBT to become a normal thing in our country. I can't accept that. I think it is groupism and it's more conservative. If this has a cultural component, then the above mentioned can't ever be in Armenia. Just my ideas."

[Male, 26 years old]

Half of the participants selected the left groupism. The preservation of national culture and high military costs were highlighted as reasons to prefer this quadrant. Some participants would prefer individualism.

Around one in four participants preferred the right groupism quadrant because they value the preservation of the national culture and allow for high military expenses; a more active interference of the state into the economy is also preferred here. Those who identified with right individualism underline the role of an individual, yet higher military expenses are still preferred. The participants who selected left individualism favour personal liberties, high taxes and state control over the economy. Female participants selected ideological quadrants that contained individualism most often. In the group of 25 to 29-year-old participants, two contrasting quadrants were selected: left groupism and right individualism. In the view of most of the participants, their parents would attach importance to the preservation of national culture, higher military costs, and the active interference of the state in the economy, thus suggesting their parents would most likely select the "left" quadrants.

DISCUSSION

Although the driving force of the "Velvet Revolution" of 2018 were young people who also became involved in the state administration system, this research indicates current Armenian youth are politically passive and indifferent to politics. At the same time, indifference was even more characteristic of young people from Yerevan, those with pre-university education, females and those aged 18-29. Moreover, among the forms of political participation of youth, non-direct political work like donating to social or political organisations and civil practices like participating in solving a neighbourhood or neighbour's problem are more common.

Despite this indifference, young people in general began to value citizens' participation in elections more than in the last post-revolutionary political elections, which were unprecedented in terms of participation in the democratic process. The youth, however, emphasised conscious voting. They emphasised the importance of informed decision-making, i.e., having sufficient knowledge of political processes, taking elections seriously, having a specific position and a formed personal opinion.

In general, the political priorities of young people are in line with the political context of the country by emphasising the importance of conflict with neighbours,

territorial integration and foreign political tensions. Only secondly was the importance of socio-economic problems such as unemployment and rising prices mentioned. Moreover, the military-political problems were given relatively more importance by the residents of Marzes (rural youth) and female respondents, whereas the socio-economic problems were more important to the residents of Yerevan and male participants.

It is difficult to say to what extent the Armenian youth clearly distinguish between the right and left ideologies, but the results of the survey indicate only 15.6% of them found it difficult to place their views in the right-left wings. At the same time, around 1/3 of young people placed their views in the extreme poles (either right or left). The ideological positions of the Armenian youth became more explicit during the discussions when it was recorded that they prefer the right-wing ideology mainly because of low taxes associated with it.

7

PART FOUR: YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

The question of East or West, Russia, US or Europe, which geopolitical direction is relevant for the modern Armenian history, is gradually being re-interpreted in the post-Soviet period. The public and state discourse on complementary politics has always depended on which superpowers were interested in the Caucasus region and to what extent. Today, the global crises resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is yet another challenge for the region, where discourse has already shifted after the 44-day Nagorno Karabakh war of 2020.

On the one hand, Russia's military presence and importance in the region is unequivocal; on the other hand, the role of the European Union in democratising Armenia cannot be denied. In this regard, it is necessary to address Armenian youth's perception of Armenian foreign policy, emphasising Armenia-EU and Armenia-Russia relations and ideas about state security.

MAIN FINDINGS

- The majority of young people think that Armenia should definitely stand close to the West (i.e. Europe and the US), and no one has emphasised such unequivocalness towards Russia.
- Proximity to Russia is more pronounced among young people who believe there is a high likelihood of a reoccurrence of the Karabakh war within the next five years.
- The overwhelming majority of young people consider Armenia to be a European country.
- The belief that Armenia is a European country is more likely to be mentioned by young people with the lowest educational level, females and those living in the regions.
- Young people perceive Europe more as a positive and/or abstract than a negative phenomenon.
- The negative connotation of Europe in the perception of young people is mainly connected with the collision of Europeanisation with traditional values.
- About half of young people believe that cooperation with Russia can contribute to Armenia's national security, the USA is the second most commonly named country with which to cooperate.
- From the point of view of the economic development of Armenia, young people consider that cooperation should be first with Russia, second with the USA and third with Iran.
- From the point of view of Armenian national values, national security, statehood and the economic growth of Armenia, young people consider cooperation with Azerbaijan and Turkey to be more dangerous.
- In addition to Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenian youth consider cooperation with Russia as a threat to Armenia's statehood and national values, and cooperation with Georgia as a threat to economic and national security.
- According to Armenian youth, cooperation with the European Union will contribute to the protection of human rights and economic growth in Armenia. Young people with higher educational levels, females and urban youth were more inclined to have this opinion.
- Cooperation with Russia is thought to contribute to Armenia's national security and economic growth: males, older participants and urban youth were more inclined to have this opinion.
- Some mentioned that cooperation with the USA will contribute to the protection of human rights, national security and economic growth in Armenia. Urban youth with a lower educational level, female and younger ages were more inclined to have this opinion.
- Armenian youth tend to think that military structures, such as NATO and CSTO, play a more negative role for Armenia, and international financial and civil structures play a more positive role.
- Younger and female representatives tend to emphasise the more positive role of the European Union and international organisations (UN), CSTO and NATO for Armenia.

ANALYSES

GEOPOLITICAL IDENTITY

One of the central points in understanding the geopolitical identity of Armenian youth is revealed by their orientation towards the West or Russia. Figure 21 displays that almost two thirds (59.1%) of young people report that they would like Armenia to stand in full solidarity with Western countries. In contrast, no one mentioned that they prefer Armenian to be completely close to Russia. However, this does not mean that Russia isn't important to youth: respondents show some level of identification with or interest in Russia by choosing different numbers on the scale (Figure 21).

The data shows that respondents' perception of the risk of resumption of the Karabakh war within the next 5 years is related to their geopolitical orientation towards Western countries or Russia (Figure 22). Those who consider the risk of resumption are slightly more likely to desire to be closer to Russia (16.5%), whereas those who deny the possibility of war in the next 5 years (13.6%) are more likely to want closeness with the West.

Respondents were further asked whether they agree that Armenia is a European country or not. Overall, the majority either strongly (40.7%) or mostly (28.6%) disagree with the statement (Figure 23). In contrast, only 29.8% consider Armenia to be a European country.

Focus group discussions show that most of the participants do not feel that they are part of Europe, mostly mentioning that a European identity does not correspond to Armenian national values and mentality.

"But with some reservations, there are many things, many European morals that are not acceptable in our culture."

[Male, 26 years old]

Some of the participants mentioned that Armenia does not have sufficient financial resources, respective legal regulations or social equality to be considered part of Europe. Other participants who considered themselves part of Europe pointed out Armenian cultural affinity with Europe (e.g. belonging to the Indo-European language family, European urbanisation and clothes), ideological similarity (free thinking, liberalism) and legislation.

"Judging by our culture, language and urban development, we are closer to Europe than to Asia."

[Female, 15 years old]

Respondents' age and educational attainment predicts whether young people agree that Armenia is a European country. Figure 24 shows that respondents living in the capital are less likely to agree that Armenia is a European country (22.8%) than those living in other urban areas (30.0%) or in rural areas (36.4%). Additionally, young people in the age cohort between 14 and 17 are more likely to consider Armenia a European country (39.8%) than those aged between 18-24 (29.6%) or 25-29 (27.1%). It is notable that half of young men strongly disagrees with the statement (50.6%), while less than one third of young women do (31.1%). As for the level of education, those with primary and incomplete secondary education are slightly more likely to agree with the idea that Armenia is European (37.8%) than those with completed secondary education (29.0%) or higher education (including incomplete higher) (26.3%).

FIGURE 21: HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE ARMENIA TO BE CLOSE TO EITHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OR RUSSIA? (%)

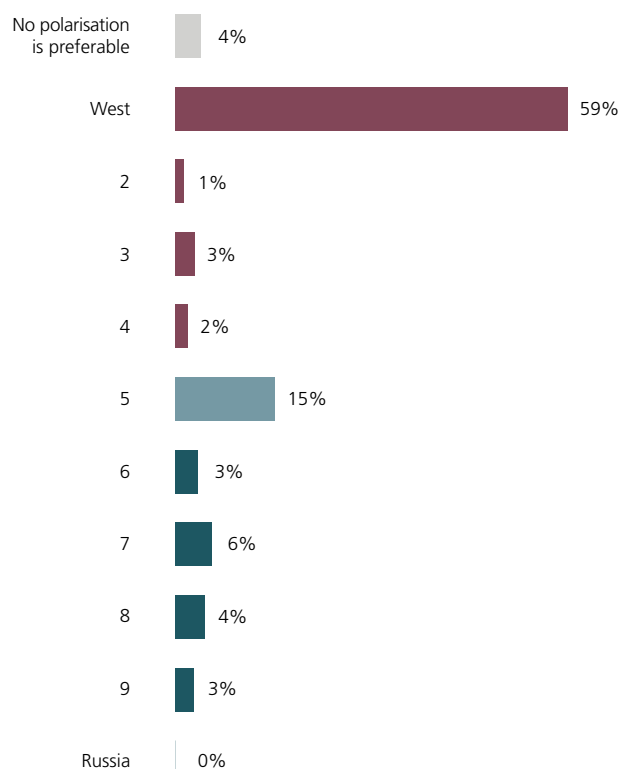


FIGURE 22: **HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE ARMENIA TO BE CLOSE TO EITHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OR RUSSIA? (%)**

Do you see a risk of resumption of the war in Karabakh in the next 5 years?

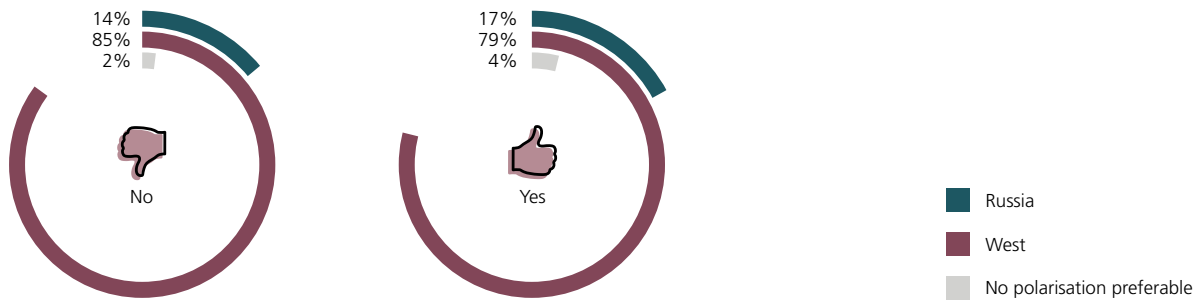


FIGURE 23: **TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT ARMENIA IS A EUROPEAN COUNTRY? (%)**

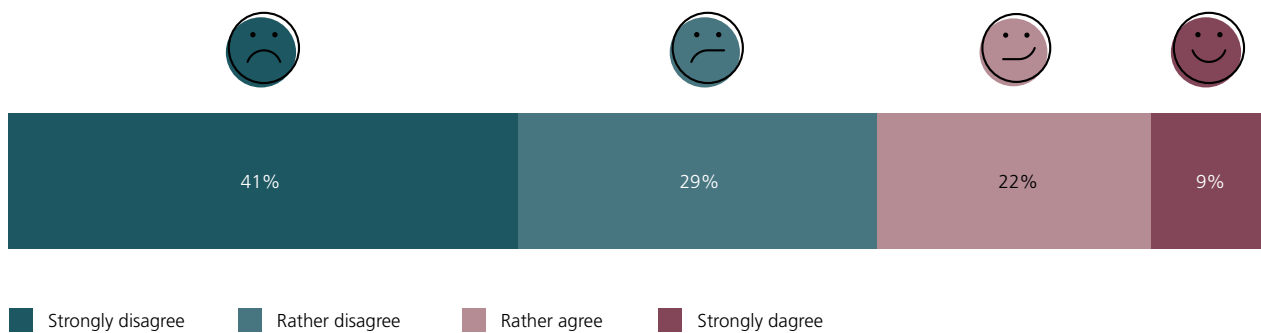


FIGURE 24: **TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT ARMENIA IS A EUROPEAN COUNTRY? BY SETTLEMENT TYPE, GENDER, AGE GROUPS AND EDUCATION LEVEL (% , FULL SAMPLE)**

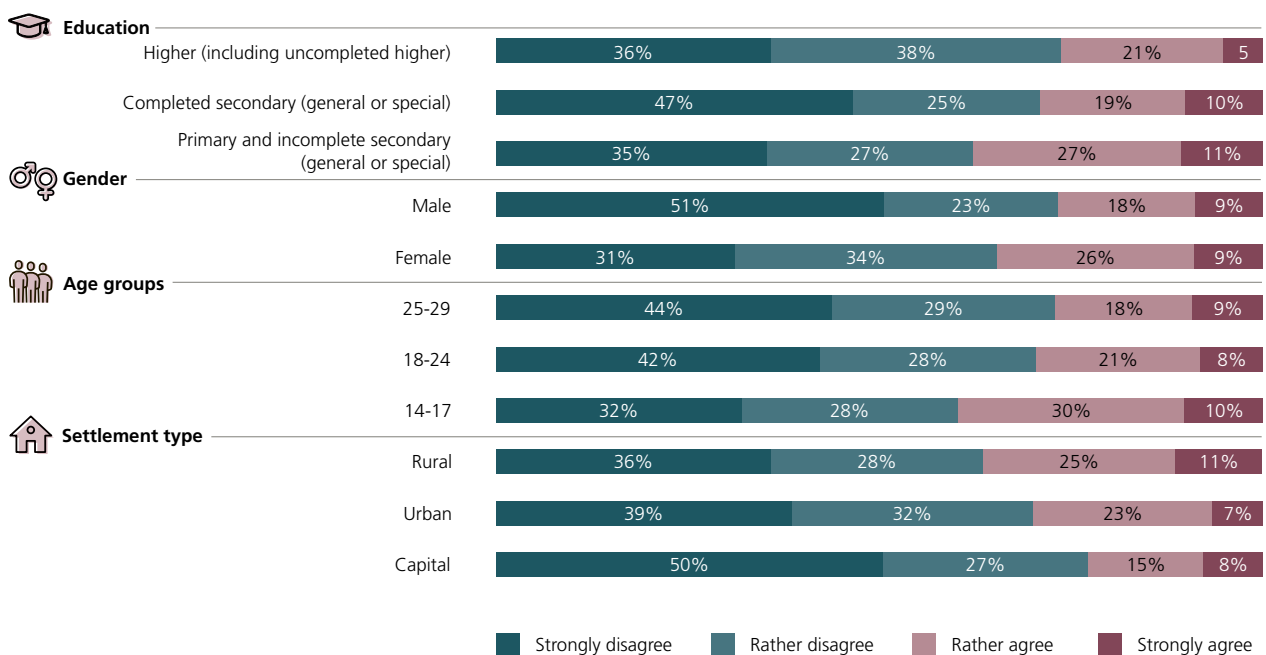
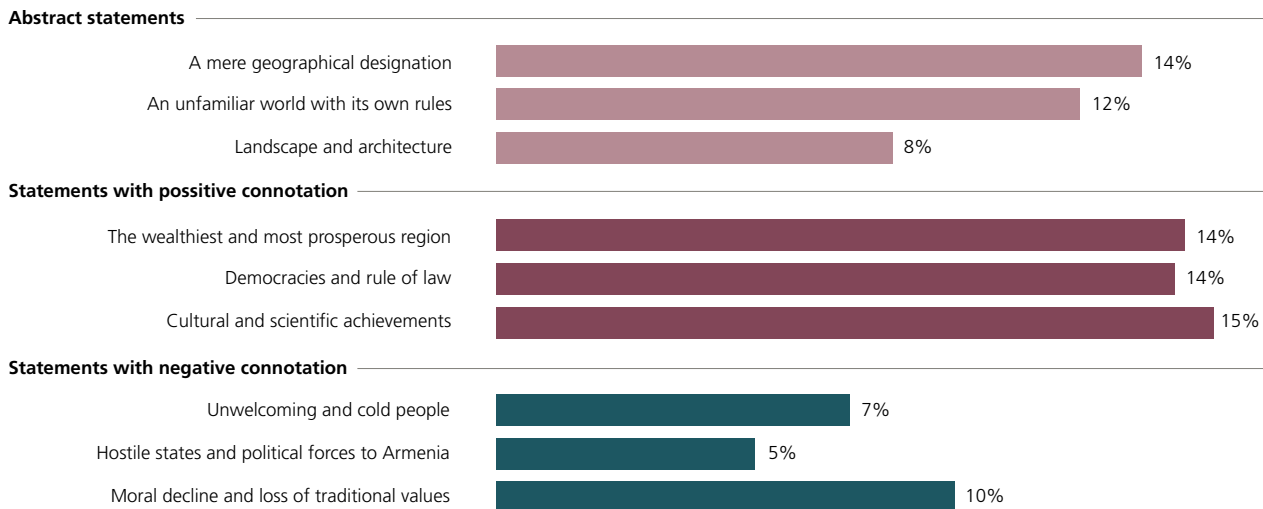


FIGURE 25: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING VIEWS MOST CLOSELY MATCH YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF EUROPE? (% , FULL SAMPLE)



The survey also reveals youth's perceptions of Europe. Respondents were given a set of statements and were asked to show which matched their opinion of Europe. Across participant categories statements with positive connotation were mentioned more frequently (Figure 25), e.g., statements like "cultural and scientific achievement" (15.0%), "the wealthiest and most prosperous region" (14.4%) and "democracies and rule of law" (14.2%). A similar proportion of youngsters also noted more abstract statements such as "a mere geographical designation" (13.5%) and "an unfamiliar world with its own rules" (12.2%). It is also worth noting that almost one in ten associated Europe with a "moral decline and loss of traditional values".

NATIONAL SECURITY AND STATEHOOD

Apart from the geo-political division between Western countries and Russia, other measures were also applied to identify youth's perceptions about foreign countries, their relations with Armenia and the outcomes of those relations for Armenia. As Figure 26 shows, Russia is perceived by a considerable number of people (49.0%) as the country which will contribute to Armenia's national security the most. The United States (18.9%) and Iran (11.8%) were the other countries named as contributing to Armenian security. Russia is also mentioned as the country which will positively impact Armenia's economic growth (34.0%) and help protect human rights in

Armenia (32.4%). In terms of human rights protection, many young people also mention the United States (29.7%) and EU countries (23.4%) as contributing forces. As for contribution to Armenia's economic growth, Russia is followed by the United States (23.9%), Iran (16.8%) and the EU (13.3%) in perceived aid. Overall, the role of European countries is considered to be most important in the protection of human rights in Armenia. Georgia and Turkey are not seen as countries that have a large positive impact on any of the three spheres of improvement. However, 7.1% mentioned that Georgia can positively influence Armenia's economic growth.

In line with the beneficial relations with other countries, the survey also reveals which relationships are perceived as threatening for Armenia. In this context, Turkey and Azerbaijan are by far the most mentioned (Figure 27). These two countries are perceived as threatening to Armenia's national security, statehood, national values and economic system. Notably, some portion of youngsters consider that Armenia's cooperation with Russia will also threaten Armenia's statehood (6.1%), economic system (5.5%) and national values (4.7%). A small number of young people think that cooperation with Georgia will threaten Armenia's economic system (5.4%), national values (4.3%), national security (3.7%) and statehood (2.9%). Similarly, a small portion thinks that the United States (3.8%), EU (3.2%) and Iran (3.1%) are a threat to Armenia's national values.

FIGURE 26: **ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO... A) ARMENIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMENIA, AND C) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE, FULL SAMPLE)**

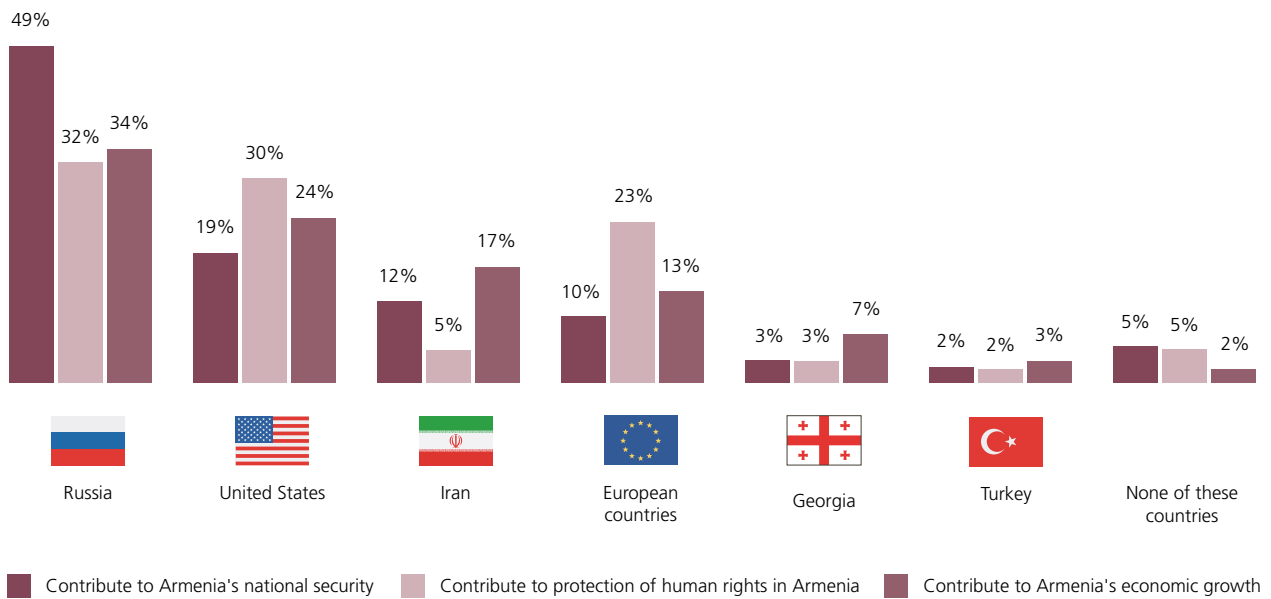
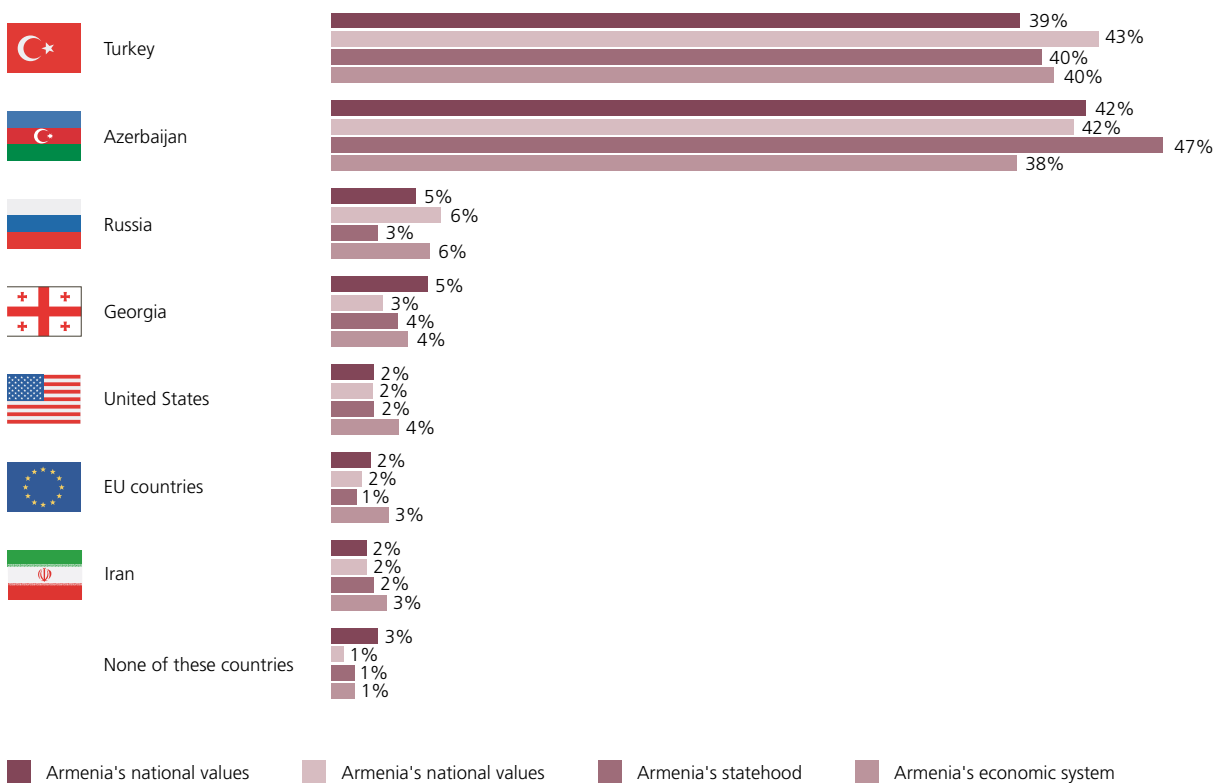


FIGURE 27: **ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL THREATEN... A) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL VALUES, B) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY, C) ARMENIA'S STATEHOOD, AND D) ARMENIA'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE, FULL SAMPLE)**



Further, young people's opinion regarding Armenian cooperation with EU countries is correlated in relation to respondents' education, gender, age and geography. The data shows that respondents with higher education are more likely to believe that cooperation with EU countries will contribute to protection of human rights (35.6%) and economic growth in Armenia (29.1%) than those with primary and incomplete or complete secondary education (Figure 28). Female respondents are slightly more likely to think that EU countries will contribute to Armenia's economic growth, national security and human rights protection than males. Youth in the 18-24 age group are comparably more optimistic about the benefits of cooperation with the EU than those in higher or lower age cohorts.

The results of the focus group discussions show that most participants want Armenia to join the EU. They believe that joining the EU would have many positive consequences including strengthening independence, increasing financial support, aiding economic development and improving political institutions. The majority of participants, however, think that the chances of Armenia gaining EU membership are low. The youngest 14-15 age group is more optimistic about Armenia's chances of joining the EU compared to the older participants. The main concern about a closer relationship with the European Union is the threat to national values. Also, this could provoke Armenia's strategically Russia's negative reaction, and even result in a war.

"Because no matter how much we want to join the European Union, first of all the European Union will not accept our country, secondly... And secondly... Russia will not allow our country to join the European Union."

[Female, 16 years old]

"It is not us, we are dependent on Russia and we know that the European Union is not in good relations with Russia, and Russia would not like that step. Europe can interest us with its financial investments; I do not say that we should not keep in touch with Europe at all, we should, but we should not immediately obey the European Union, the European countries, because in this region, the preference is given, not to Europe, but Russia."

[Male, 15 years old]

Respondents' age, gender, education and geographical location strongly correlate to their views regarding cooperation with Russia. Respondents in higher age groups tend to be more optimistic about Russia's contribution in all three aspects (economic growth, national security, human rights) than those in lower age groups (Figure 29). Men are slightly more likely than women to consider the relationship with Russia to be beneficial to Armenia. It is notable that young people with higher education are less likely to mention that the cooperation with Russia will contribute to human rights (28.5%) than those with primary and incomplete secondary (39.2%) or completed secondary (37.9%) education. Respondents in rural areas are more likely to think that relations with Russia will positively impact economic growth (57.3%) and human rights (41.4%) in Armenia than young people living in the capital or other urban areas. In contrast, young people in the capital and urban areas are more likely to think so about Armenia's national security.

FIGURE 28: **ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH EU COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO...**
A) ARMENIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMENIA, AND
C) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE, FULL SAMPLE)

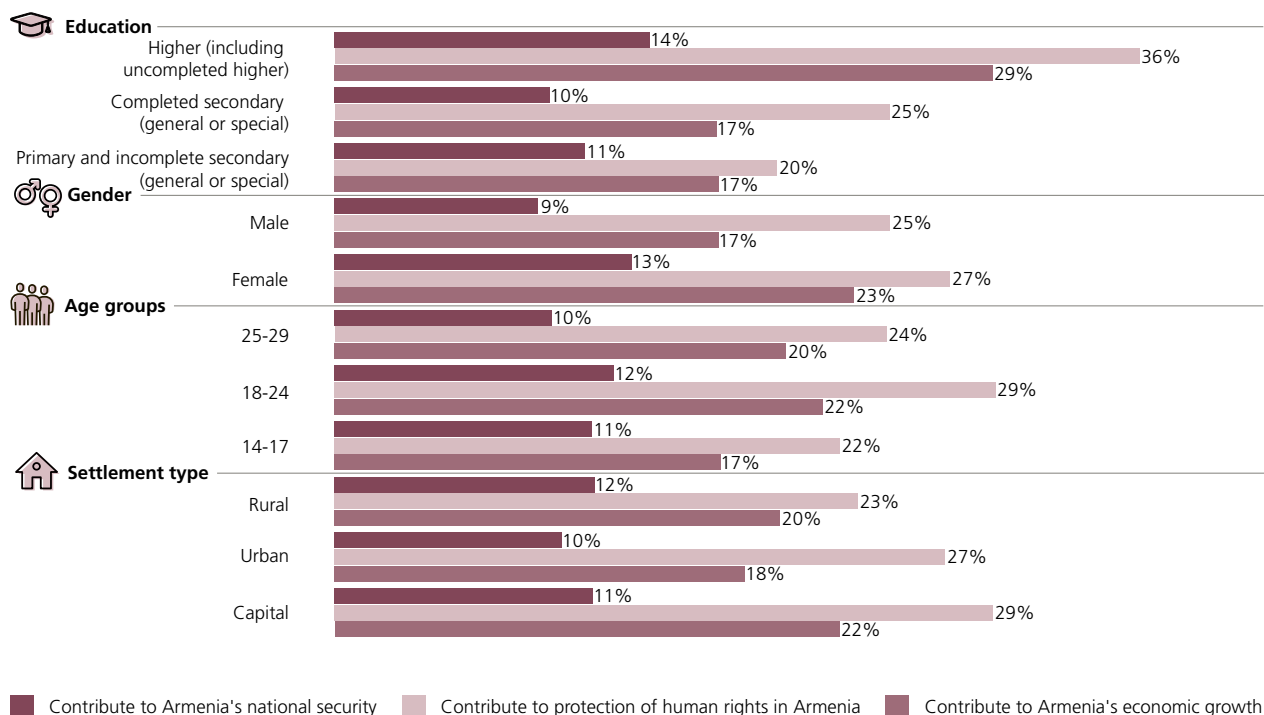
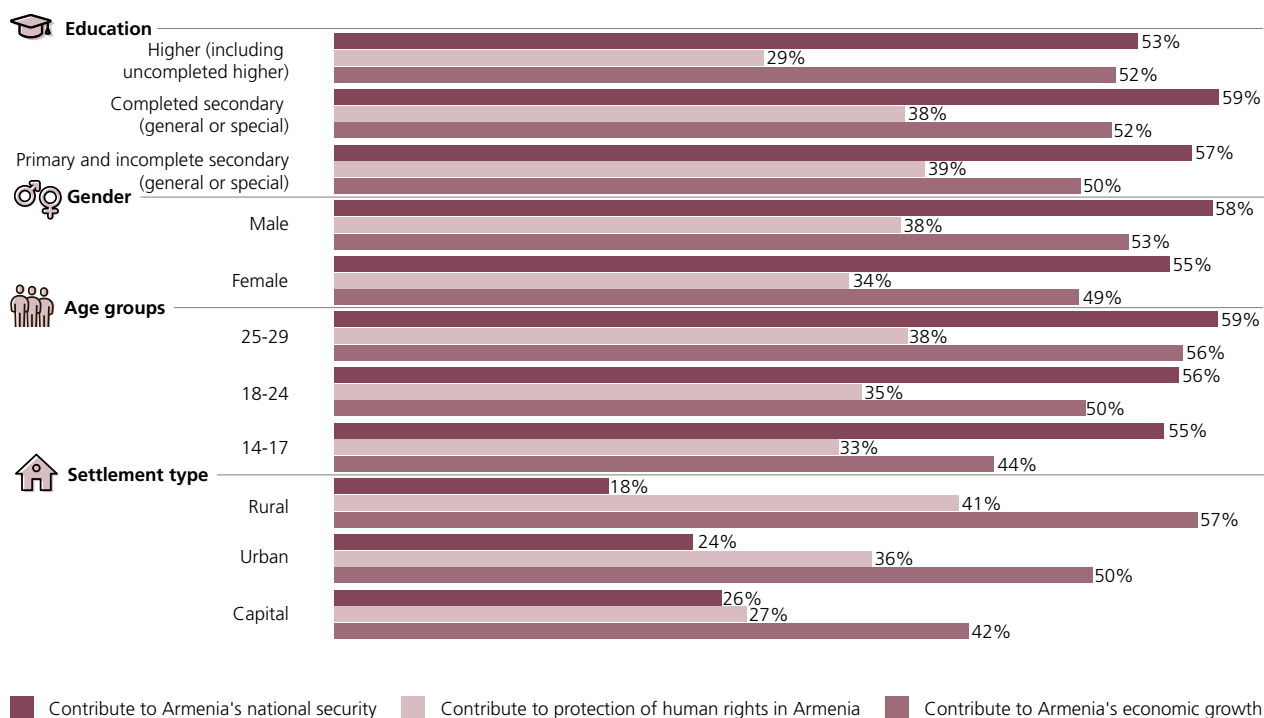


FIGURE 29: **ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA WILL CONTRIBUTE TO...** **A) ARMENIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMENIA, AND C) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE, FULL SAMPLE)**



Demographic variables determine respondents' perception about future cooperation with the USA (Figure 30). Respondents with primary or incomplete secondary education tend to perceive cooperation with the USA more beneficial to Armenia's economic growth (40.7%) than those with completed secondary (33.8%) or higher education (34.5%). Females are slightly more likely to see the relationships with the US as positive for economic growth and human rights in Armenia than males. This is similar to how respondents view cooperation with the EU. Young people aged between 25-29 are less optimistic than those in lower age groups about there being any benefit for Armenia in cooperating with the USA. Notably, young people in rural areas are less likely to think that the USA will contribute to Armenia's national security (18.2%) than those in the capital (25.7%) or urban areas (23.8%).

Youth attitudes toward foreign policy were further revealed based on their evaluations of the roles of international political, military and financial institutions. Figure 31 shows that more than two thirds of the respondents evaluate international financial institutions (76.9%),

international organisations (69.3%), the European Union (65.2%), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (60.8%) positively. NATO is perceived comparably more negatively: 51.5% of respondents think that NATO plays a negative role in Armenia.

Demographic determinants then predict how positively or negatively respondents perceive the role of international institutions (Figure 32). Interestingly, respondents with higher education are less likely to attribute positive roles to all the mentioned institutions than those with primary or secondary education. This difference is especially remarkable in reference to NATO and the EU. Similarly, respondents aged between 25 and 29 are less likely to perceive the role of international institutions positively than those under 25. Females tend to think more positively about the roles of international institutions than males (especially about NATO and the EU). Furthermore, young people in the capital are considerably less likely to assign a positive role to the Collective Treaty Organization, NATO or the EU than those living in rural or urban areas.

FIGURE 30: **ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH USA WILL CONTRIBUTE TO... A) ARMENIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMENIA, AND C) ARMENIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , MULTIPLE CHOICE, FULL SAMPLE)**

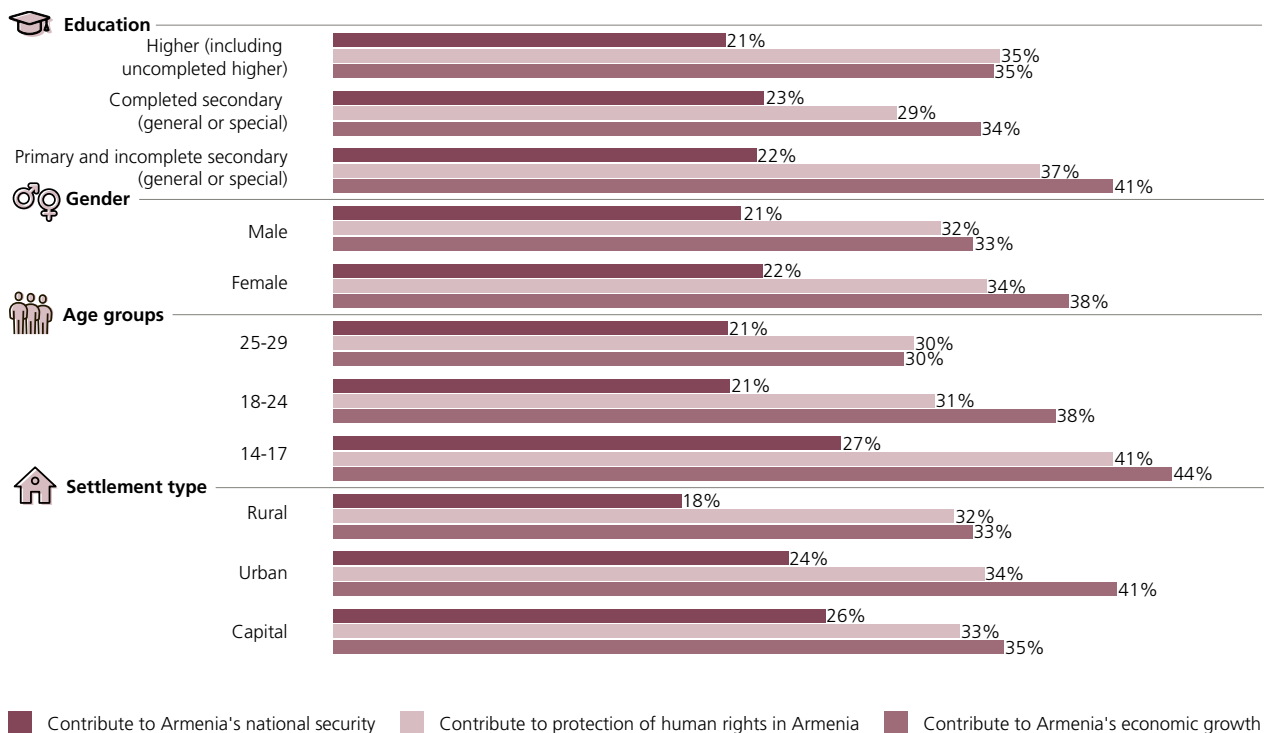


FIGURE 31: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN ARMENIA? (% , FULL SAMPLE)

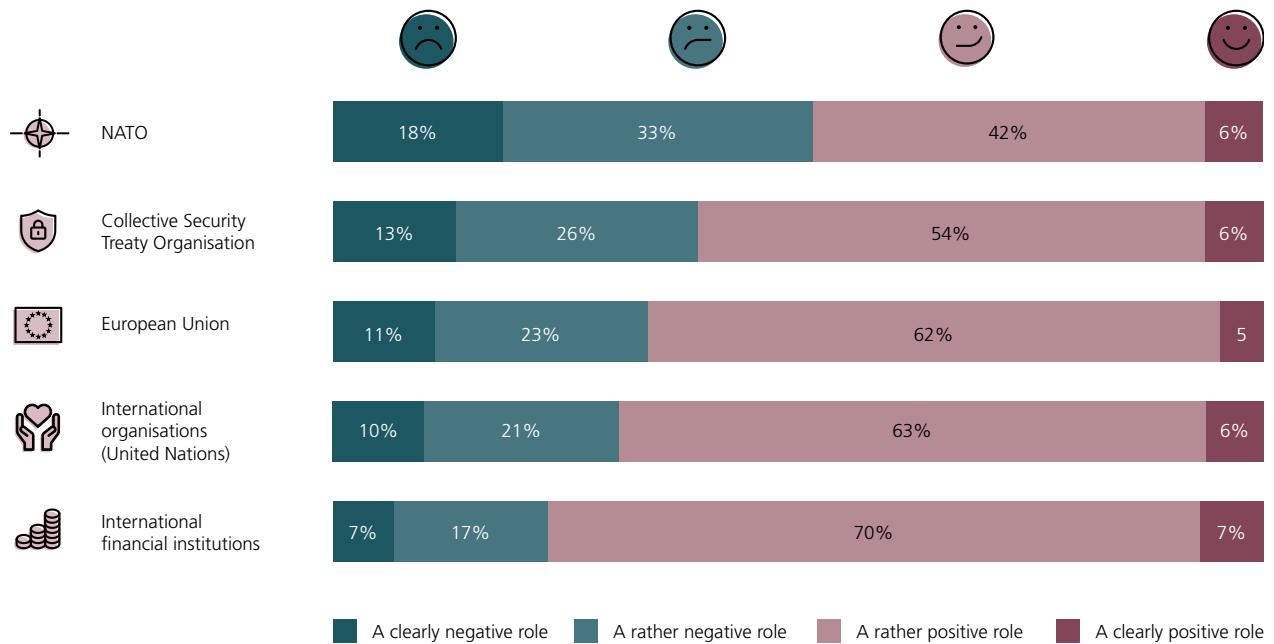


FIGURE 32: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN ARMENIA? (ONLY SUM OF THE “A RATHER POSITIVE ROLE” AND “A CLEARLY POSITIVE ROLE” ANSWERS PROVIDED %, FULL SAMPLE)

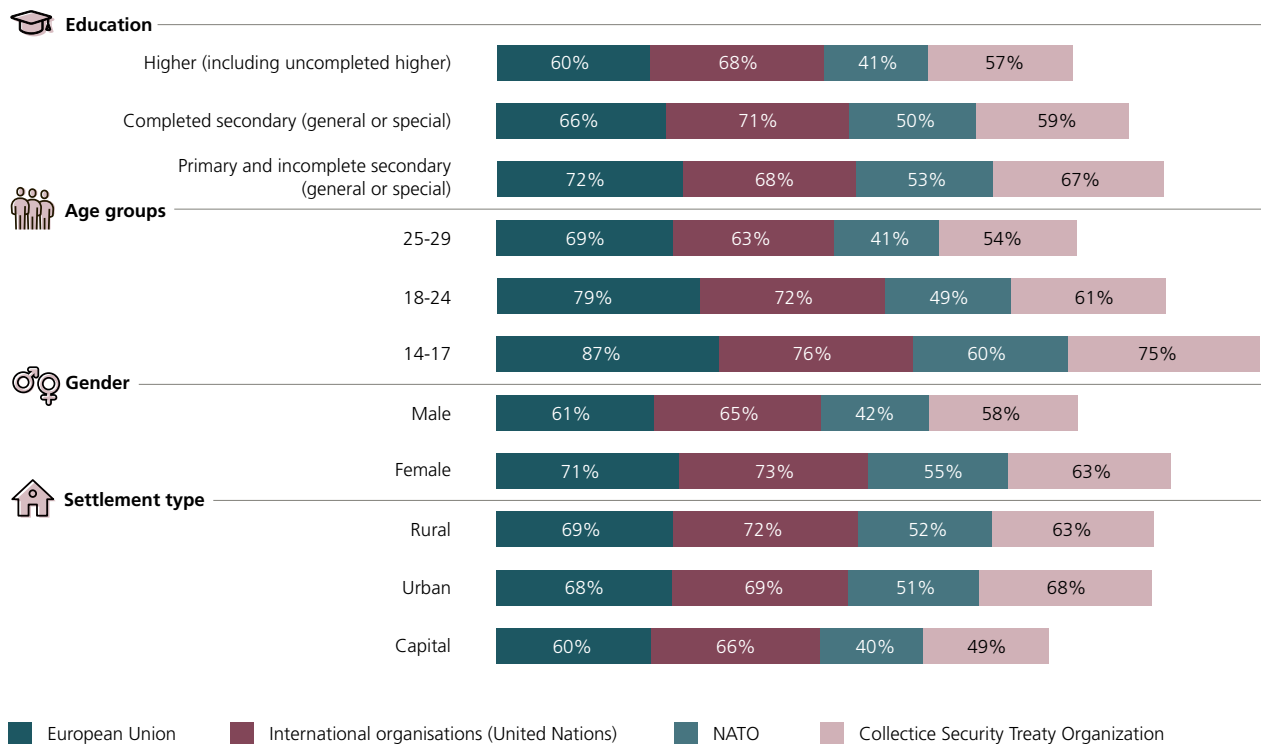


FIGURE 33: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN ARMENIA? (ONLY SUM OF THE “A RATHER POSITIVE ROLE” AND “A CLEARLY POSITIVE ROLE” ANSWERS PROVIDED %, FULL SAMPLE)

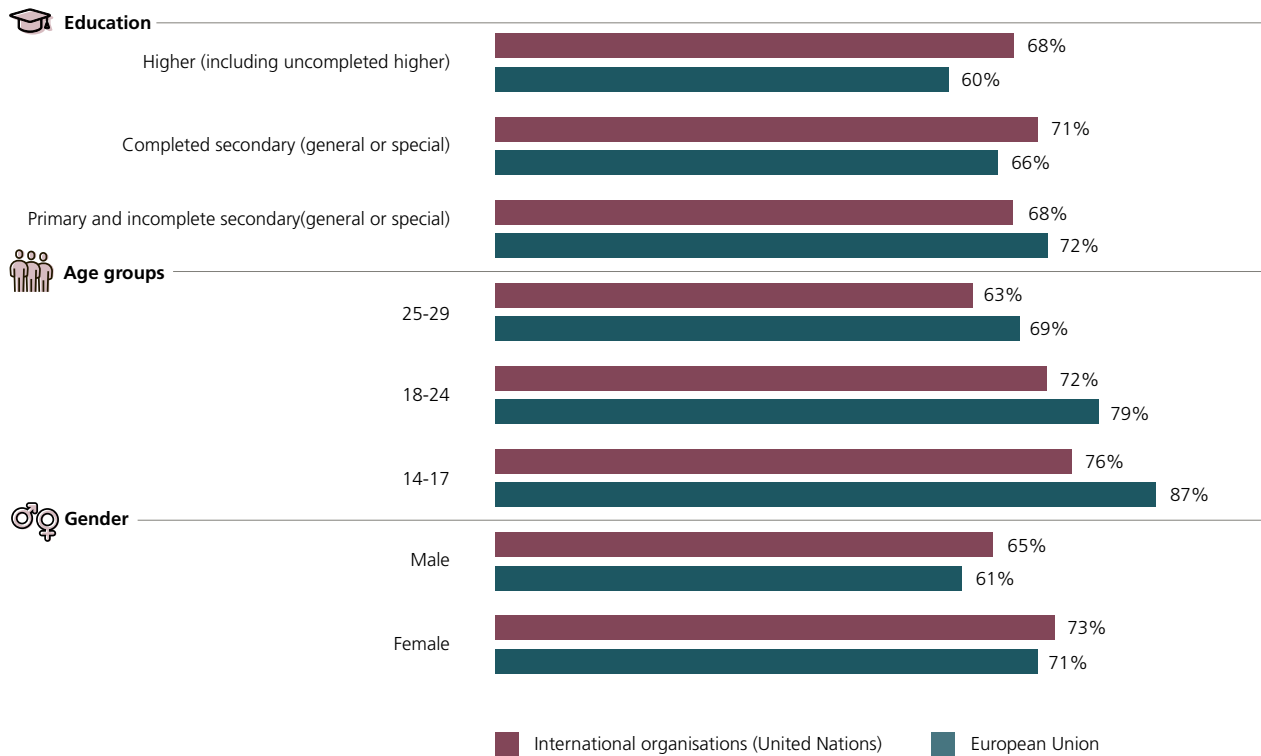
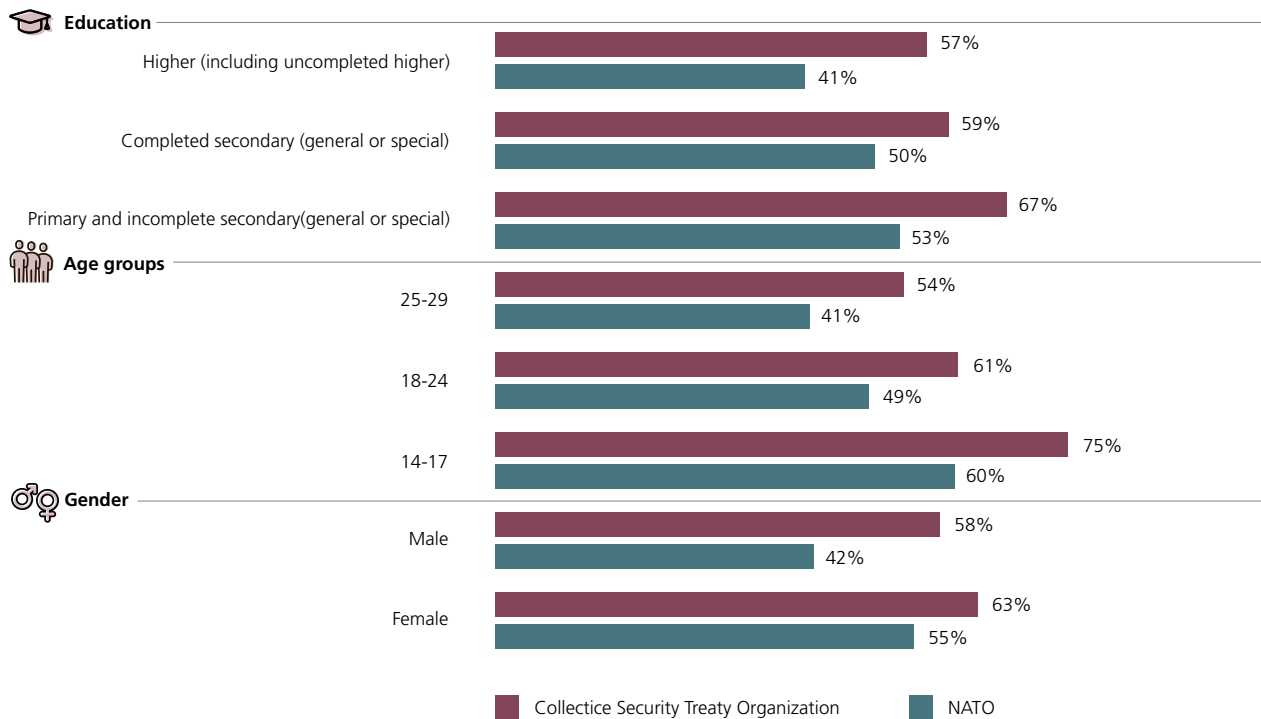


FIGURE 34: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN ARMENIA? (ONLY SUM OF THE “A RATHER POSITIVE ROLE” AND “A CLEARLY POSITIVE ROLE” ANSWERS PROVIDED %, FULL SAMPLE)



Comparing the attitudes towards international organisations and the European Union, we can see that there are also some differences based on respondents' education, age and gender. Overall, the results are similar for both institutions. Figure 33 shows that respondents with higher education are slightly less likely to think that the European union plays a positive role in Armenia (59.5%) than respondents with primary and incomplete secondary (72.4%) or completed secondary (65.9%) education. Also, young people above 25 are less likely than those aged between 14-17 or 18-24 to ascribe positive roles to the EU and other international organisations. Young women are more likely than young men to say that the European Union and international organisations play a positive role in Armenia.

Further, we compare perceptions toward two international military institutions: NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Figure 34). In all demographic groups, the Collective Security Treaty Organization is more likely to be perceived as playing a positive role in Armenia than NATO. Young people with higher education and in the highest age group (25-29) are comparably less likely to think positively about the roles of both military organisations than young people with a lower educational level or in a lower age group. Young women are more likely to feel positively about NATO (54.9%) than young men (41.7%).

DISCUSSION

The classic problem of how a country should position itself within the current geopolitical arena is relevant today. In this regard it is worth noting that the majority of Armenian youth definitely locate Armenia as being close to the West. The minority of young people consider Armenia to be a European country, this disposition primarily characterises young people with the lowest educational level, females and those living in the regions. Among the reasons for positioning Armenia closer to the West are the ambiguous statements towards Russia given by respondents.

Generally, we see that Armenian youth see the country as dependent on Russia militarily, even if this is also sometimes perceived as a threat. Those who emphasise the closeness of Armenia to Russia do so because they see the possibility of the Karabakh war resuming in the next five years. In the context of the real "presence" and vital "necessity" of Russia, Europe appears in the same abstract

forms in the perceptions of young people. Despite the abstract description of Europe, it mostly has positive connotations for participants. The negative connotation of Europe in the perception of young people is mainly related to the collision of Europe with traditional values.

Within the framework of the collective image of the West, the USA stands out as it is rated as second in importance after Russia as beneficial to Armenia's national security. The USA, along with Russia and Iran, is also among the three countries most important in terms of the economic development of Armenia.

If Azerbaijan and Turkey are considered the most dangerous from the point of view of national values, national security, statehood and economic growth, the Armenian youth consider cooperation with Russia as a threat from the point of view of statehood and national values. Cooperation with Georgia is seen as a threat from the point of view of the economic system and national security.

It is important to note that overall, the perception of Russia is rather ambiguous and contradictory. Armenia's national security, on one hand, and the threat to its national statehood, on the other hand, certainly form a dichotomy that is central to this uncertainty. More precisely, young people in Armenia tend to support cooperation with Russia when it comes to national security and economic development. In contrast, there are certain fears and concerns in terms of statehood and national values. The confusing and uncertain image of Russia is also highlighted from the point of view of human rights.

Interestingly, cooperation with Russia in the context of Armenia's national security and economic growth was seen as more important to males and older youth than for females and younger youth, who emphasised the role of the USA in these issues.

In general, the Armenian youth consider cooperation with any military structure (both NATO and CSTO) as dangerous and undesirable, while viewing cooperation with international financial and civil structures as more favourable.

PART FIVE: IDENTITY, VALUES AND RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

Defining “young persons” as individuals actively involved in the process of personal development, in search of a place in society and beginning to assume social responsibility means it is necessary to address their normative value system. This means understanding the larger socio-cultural environment that forms this value system and the forms of activity deemed valuable by it. Previous research has determined that in the process of self-identification Armenian youth do not consider civic affiliation as important. However those aspects of culture associated with national identity, ethnicity, religion and family affiliation are of central importance in the self-identification of Armenian youth (Mkrtichyan et al., 2016). Meanwhile, it is necessary to make sense of how Armenian youth define themselves and their tendency to value personal interests and undervalue the public good typical of post-Soviet societies (Skrebyte et al., 2016). Despite the post-Soviet context, it should be noted that every sphere of social life is today radically transformed by the influence of global developments, which has contributed to the spread of Western values (Gasparyan, 2020). Today, the issues of religious and linguistic-cultural identity, social trust and tolerance are gaining more importance and have distinct or unique manifestations in Armenia.

The family environment and contemporary understandings of the family as a social phenomenon are central to the formation of the value systems of contemporary Armenian young people. Research conducted in our region shows that young people have strong family ties, and their behaviour is largely controlled by the family (Mkrtichyan et al., 2016; Roberts, Pollock, Rustamova, et al., 2009; Roberts, Pollock, Tholen, et al., 2009). The role of the family in the lives of young people and their ideas about marital and family relations are other significant issues that need to be addressed in this context.

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overwhelming majority of Armenian youth emphasise citizenship of the Republic of Armenia as a point of self-identification, with ethnic and religious aspects of their national identity identified as extremely important.

- The vast majority of young people in Armenia are not inclined to self-identify as Europeans.
- Young men with a high level of education, males and older youth definitely tend to consider themselves as citizens of Armenia and are generally not inclined to consider themselves as Europeans.
- About half of Armenian youth strongly agree that children of ethnic minorities should have the right to learn their mother tongue in addition to their regular classes in Armenian (more young females expressed this opinion), and that people should take more responsibility for their own needs and not rely on the government.
- The vast majority of young Armenians do not agree that it would be best for Armenia if there were mixed religions and cultures within Armenia.
- Males and rural youth are more likely to think that people should take more responsibility for their own needs and not rely on the government.
- Young males were more inclined to think that Armenians have the same cultural characteristics as many other countries and should be open to other influences.
- The fact that it would be best for Armenia if there were mixed religions and cultures was more likely to be accepted by young women and young people living in Yerevan.
- The fact that immigrants should adapt to Armenian cultural traditions, e.g., religious holidays, was more likely to be voiced by young people with a higher educational level, females, those of older age and those living in the regions of Armenia.
- The fact that religious institutions have a special role in our society was more likely to be mentioned by youth with a lower educational level who live in the regions of Armenia.
- Freedom of speech implying that all religions can be criticised was more likely to be accepted by female, regional youth.
- In the value system of Armenian youth, personal qualities and virtues are in first place and family values second place.
- The values of civic participation and/or involvement were hardly emphasised in the value orientations of Armenian youth.
- Family values were seen as more important among males, older youth, regional youth, and the values of civic activity and/or involvement were seen as more important by older youth and rural residents.

- Among the values of young people, personal dignity, respect, loyalty and fighting spirit were mentioned in first place.
- The least important values were an innovative spirit, and among the least important values were altruism, sense of humour and decency.
- Among the most reliable institutions were the army, the church and the police, while the most unreliable were the political parties, the mass media and the president.
- Military, church, police, courts and trade unions were more likely to be trusted by the least educated, males, younger participants and rural youth.
- The president, the mass media, political parties, CCPs and the government were more likely to be distrusted by the male, older youth living in Yerevan.
- From the perspective of social distancing Azerbaijanis, drug addicts and homosexuals were the most distant groups from the Armenian youth, and single mothers, foreign students and refugees were the closest.
- Armenian youth mostly live with their parents or spouse.
- Armenian youth generally have good relations with their parents.
- Young people, especially males, report almost universally to having a good relationship with their parents.
- Although female representatives do not have specific problems with their parents, they often have disagreements.
- Young couples mostly want to have children.
- Males are more inclined to have a boy than females.
- Avoiding responsibility, not being financially ready and prioritising their career were among the main reasons for not having a child in the near future.

ANALYSES

IDENTITY

In terms of self-identification, Armenian young people mostly define themselves as citizens of Armenia (78.3% choose “very much” or “completely”) (Figure 35). Thus, civic national identity is dominant. Only then does ethnic identity follow, as more than half of respondents very much or completely identify themselves as belonging to their ethnic group (62.1%). Self-identification with a certain town/village or region is also comparably common (57.0%). Some portion of respondents also completely or very much identify themselves as citizens of the World (42.1%) and belonging to Caucasus (36.1%). Important to note, European self-identification is rather uncommon among Armenian youth. More than half of respondents (57.4%) mention that they do not identify themselves as Europeans and 23.1% report that they perceive themselves as Europeans only “a little”.

The relationships between respondents’ education, gender, age, settlement type and their self-identification as a citizen of Armenia or as a European are explored in Figure 36. Young people aged between 14 and 17 are less likely to say that they see themselves completely as citizens of Armenia and not at all as Europeans. Female respondents are less likely than males to identify completely as citizens of Armenia and not at all as Europeans. The differences based on education and settlement type are not that notable.

FIGURE 35: **HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (%)**

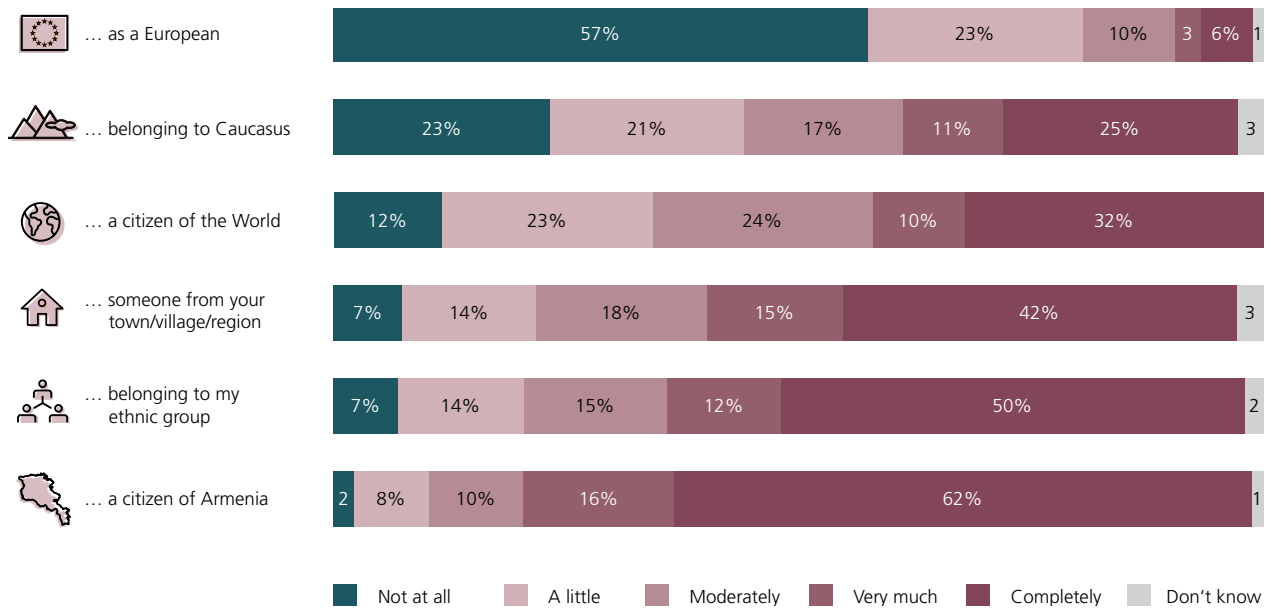
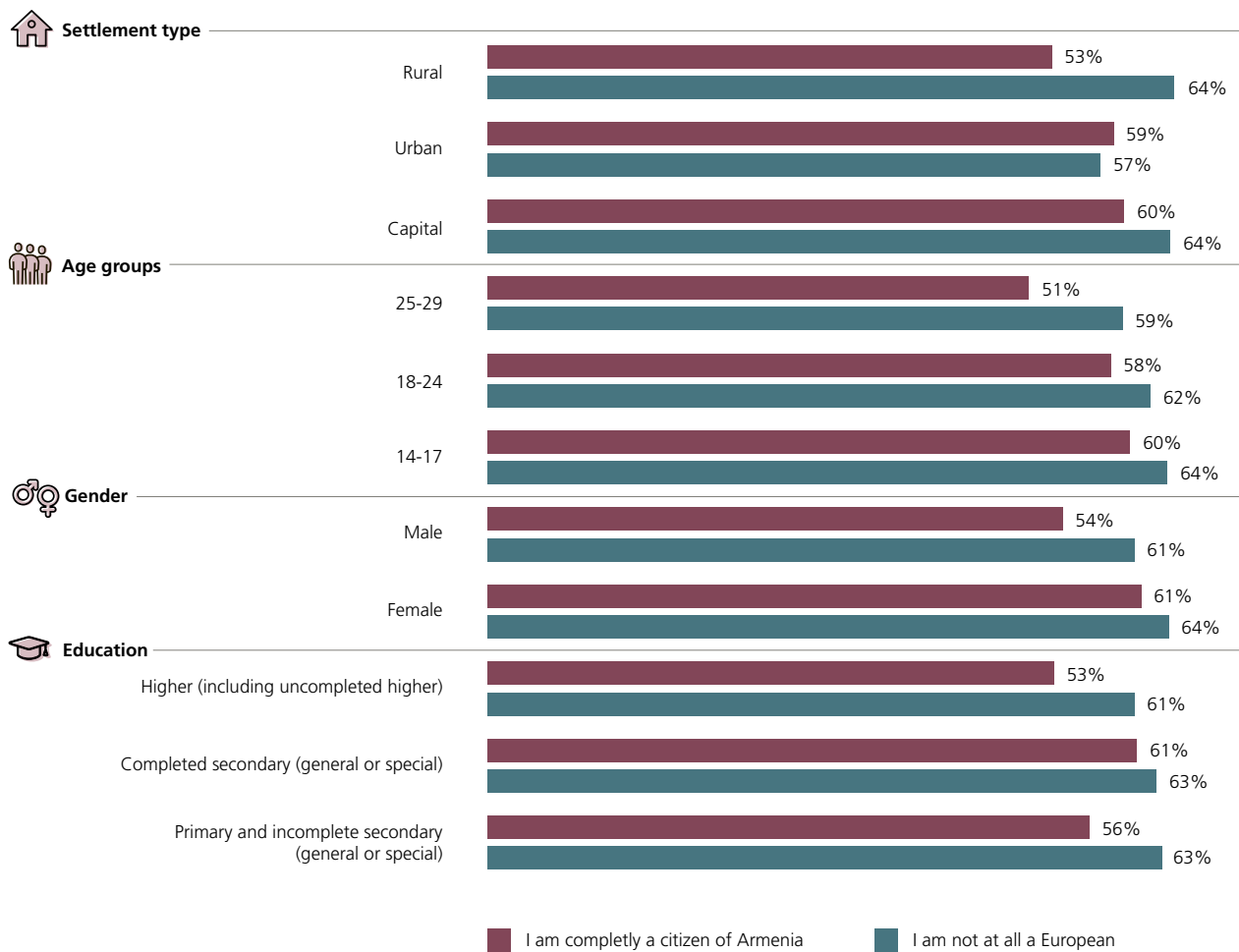


FIGURE 36: **HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (% , BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS)**

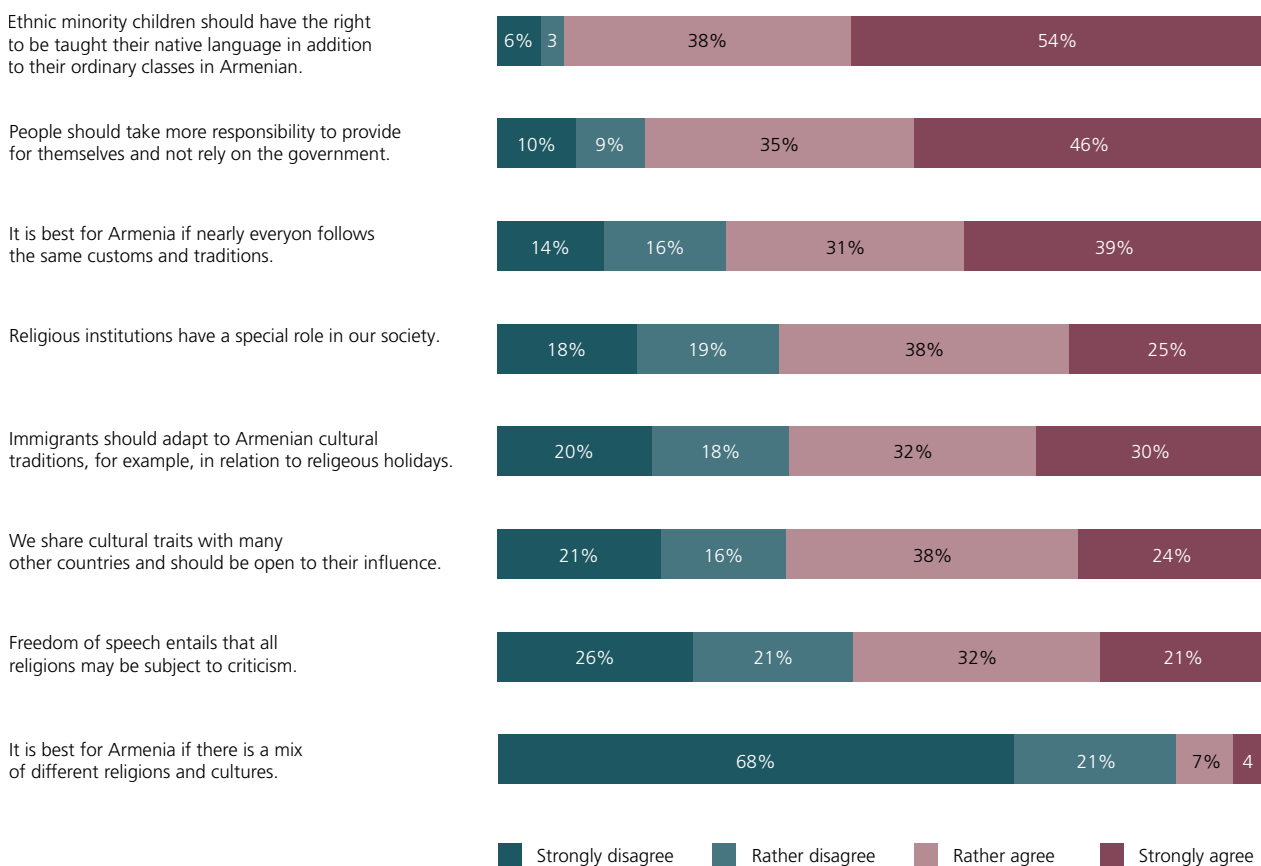


SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Several statements that cover attitudes towards religion, the state, immigration, minorities and culture were offered to the respondents to be evaluated. Notably, most respondents (88.8%) fully or rather disagree with the statement that “it is better for Armenia if there is a mix of different religions and cultures” (Figure 37). Thus, Armenian young people are not that supportive of cultural or religious heterogeneity. In correspondence with this, more than two thirds of the respondents fully or rather agree that “it is best for Armenia if nearly everyone follows the same customs and traditions” (70.1%), and two thirds of them say that they fully or rather agree that “immigrants should adapt to Armenian cultural traditions, for example, in relation to religious holidays” (61.9%). However, almost the same portion of youngsters (62.4%) also support cultural openness, accepting the idea that “we share cultural traits with many other countries and should be open to their influence”. Also, a vast majority (91.2%)

fully or rather agree that “ethnic minority children should have the right to be taught their native language in addition to their ordinary classes in Armenia”. This may mean that Armenian youth are rather supportive of linguistic heterogeneity. When it comes to religion and religious institutions the data shows that more than two thirds of respondents (63.3%) fully or rather agree with the following statement: “religious institutions have a special role in our society”. However, when it comes to the criticism of all religions and freedom of speech, contradictory opinions are visible: 53.6% of young people think that freedom of speech entails that all religions may be subject to criticism, while the rest of them think in the opposite direction. Finally, when we look at the attitudes towards government, we can note that a considerable percentage of youth (80.8%) agrees that people should take more responsibility to provide for themselves and not rely on government. So, young people in Armenia mainly perceive themselves as being independent from the government and being responsible for themselves.

FIGURE 37: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (%)



The reported attitudes toward the government, religious institutions, immigration and cultural heterogeneity differ between demographic groups. Figure 38 shows that the idea that people should take responsibility to provide for themselves and not rely on government is comparably more popular among young men (72.2%) than young women (68.1%). Also, those living in rural areas are slightly more likely to think so (72.6%) than those who live in the capital (68.7%) or urban areas (67.8%). The figure further shows that young people living in the capital are less likely to think that it is best for Armenia if nearly everyone follows the same customs and traditions (86.9%) than those who live in rural (91.5%) or urban (95.3%) areas. Therefore, youngsters in the capital are comparably less

supportive of cultural homogeneity. Young people aged between 25 and 29 are also less likely to support this idea than those in other age groups. As for the cultural openness, young men are slightly more likely to think that we share cultural traits with many other countries and should be open to their influence (82.0%) than young women (79.8%). In contrast, females (64.7%) are more supportive of the idea that ethnic minority children should have the right to be taught their native language in addition to their ordinary classes in Armenia than males (60.0%). Young people under 17 are also more likely to think so (66.9%) when compared to those between 18 and 24 (59.7%) or 25 and 29 (62.7%).

FIGURE 38: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (ONLY SUM OF THE “RATHER AGREE” AND “AGREE FULLY” ANSWERS PROVIDED %)

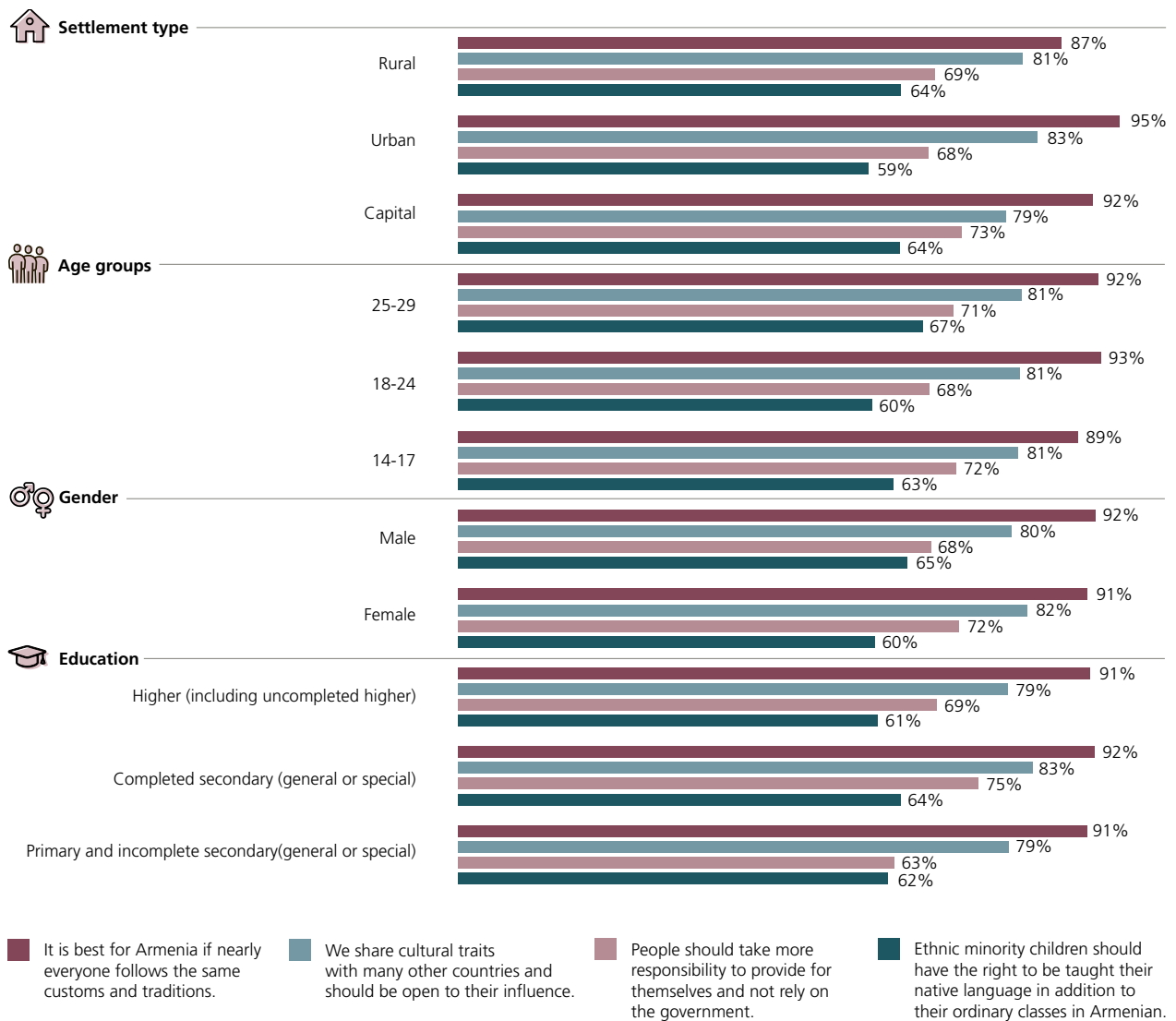
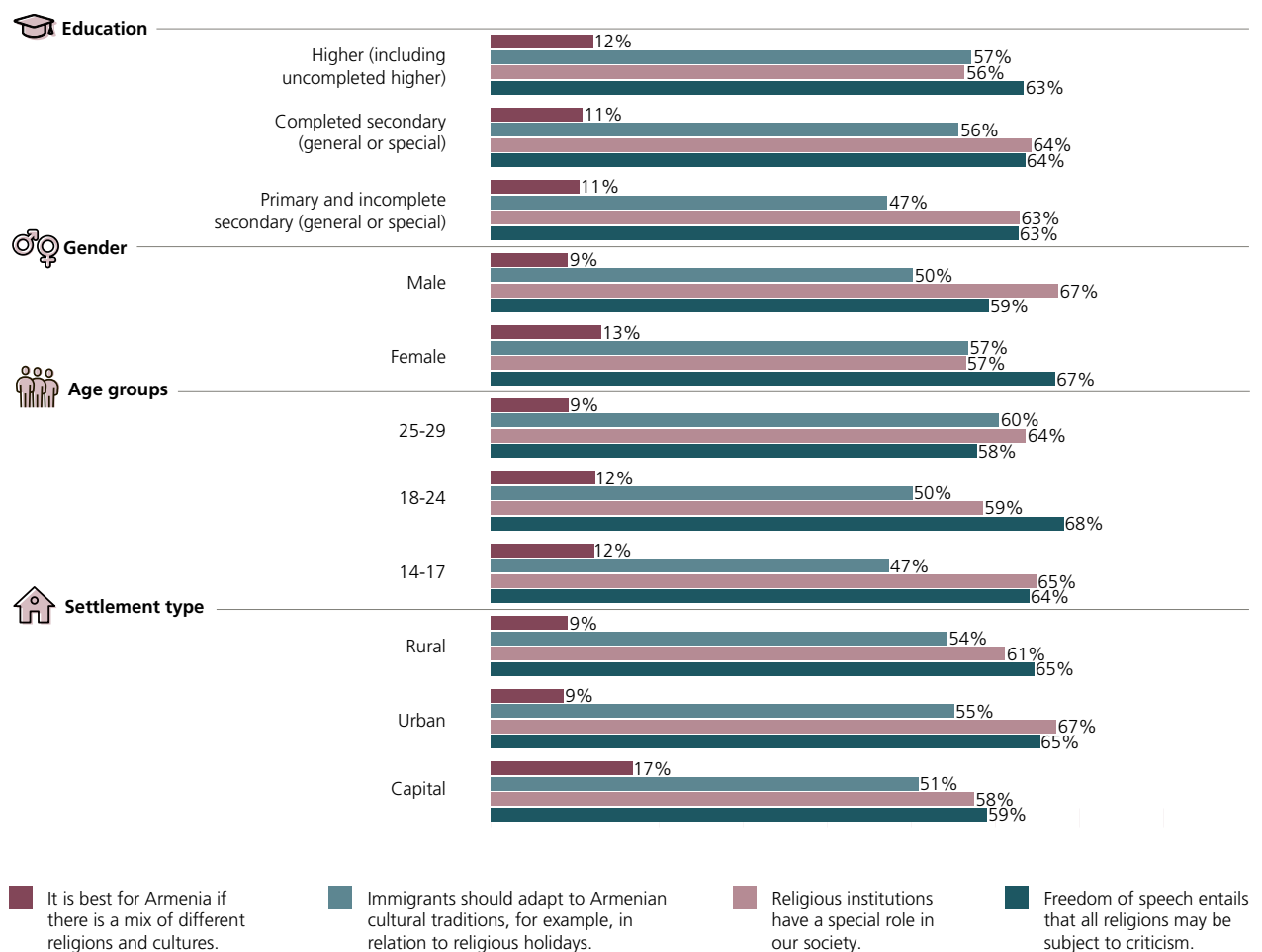


Figure 39 further depicts how young people evaluated the statement list based on their demographic differences. Clearly female respondents are more likely to think that it is best for Armenia if there is a mix of different religions and cultures (13.2%) than males (9.1%). Young people living in the capital also tend to be more supportive of this statement (16.9%) than those living in rural (9.1%) or urban (8.6%) areas. Again, it indicates that the youth in Yerevan are more supportive and tolerant towards cultural and religious heterogeneity. Interestingly, youngsters in a higher age group (25-29) are less likely to favour cultural and religious heterogeneity (9.2%) than those in lower age groups. Additionally, young people between 25 and 29 are more likely to claim that immigrants should adapt to Armenian cultural traditions, for example, in relation to religious holidays (60.5%) than those between 18 and 24 (50.2%) and under 17 (47.4%). Young men are less likely to support this idea than young women.

Those living in the capital are also less supportive of this view. Young people with higher (57.2%) and completed secondary education (55.7%) are more likely to agree with the statement than those with a lower level of education (47.1%). The statement that religious institutions have a special role in our society is more popular among young men (67.4%) than young women (56.5%). Respondents with higher education are less likely to agree with this idea (56.3%) than those who have completed secondary (64.4%) or primary and incomplete secondary education (62.9%). Those living in the capital are also comparably less likely to think so than those living in the rural and urban areas in the regions. Females more frequently agree that freedom of speech entails that all religions may be subject to criticism (67.1%) than males (59.3%). Those in a higher age group between 25 and 29 and those living in the capital are less likely to agree with this idea when compared to other age groups and settlement areas.

FIGURE 39: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (ONLY SUM OF THE "RATHER AGREE" AND "AGREE FULLY" ANSWERS PROVIDED %)

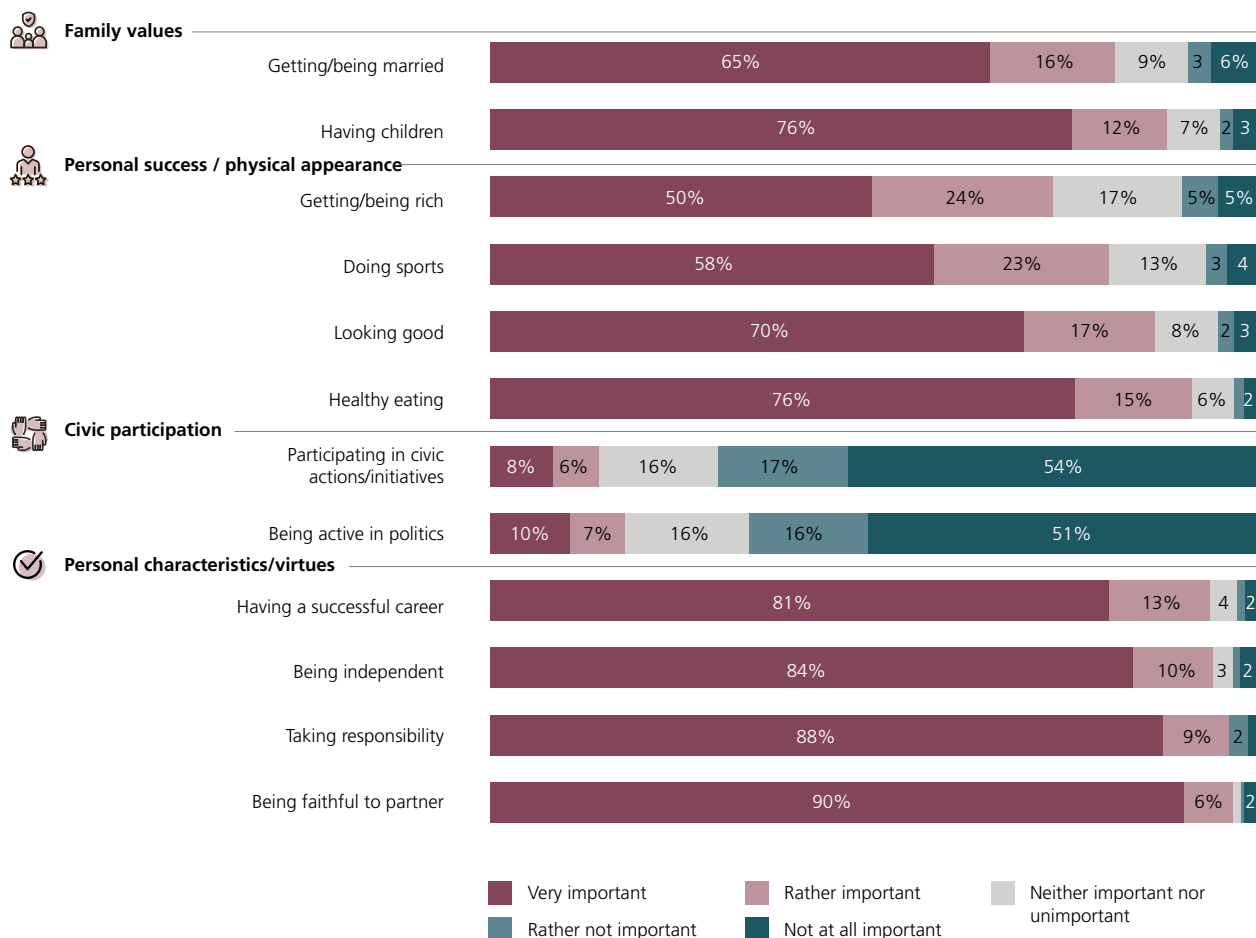


THE VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The values of young people were evaluated based on their response to twelve statements grouped into four main categories: family values, personal success / physical appearance, civic participation and personal characteristics / virtues (Figure 40). According to the results, personal characteristics or virtues are the most important values to Armenian youth. More specifically, the vast majority of respondents (96.8%) think that it is very or rather important to be faithful to their partner (nine in ten agree that it is very important). Similarly, the plurality thinks it is very or rather important to take responsibility (96.3%), be independent (94.2%) and have a successful career (93.8%). Thus, personal characteristics are dominant values.

The second category is family values. When it comes to family values, 88.2% agree that having children is very or rather important, and 81.5% thinks so about getting/being married. When we look at the data for personal success / physical appearance it is notable that participants rate healthy eating (91.5%) and looking good (86.6%) as important. Doing sports and getting/being rich are comparably less valued, especially when we compare only those who rated them as “very important”. Among the four main categories examined here, civic participation is highlighted as the least important. 70.4% of young people in Armenia think that participating in civic actions/initiatives is rather or not at all important. 66.3% think this about being active in politics.

FIGURE 40: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (%)



Respondents' gender, age and geographical location determine their attitudes towards family values and civic participation (Figure 41). Male respondents are more likely than female ones to consider family values very important. More precisely, 80.9% of young men think that it is very important to have children, while only 70.8% of young women do so. Correspondingly, 73.2% of male respondents think that getting or being married is very important, and only 57.2% of females think so. Family values are more important for young people aged 25 and 29. Young people living in rural areas are also more prone to value family. 80.5% of rural youth think that having children is very important, and 69.5% think the same about marriage. Respondents in higher age groups are more likely to value civic participation when compared to those under 17. Interestingly, the rural youth participants are more likely than youth living in the capital or other urban areas to believe that participation in civic actions and activity in politics are very important.

To further gauge the values of Armenian youth another twelve-item statement list was offered to participants. Respondents were asked to select the most important

items. Here the statements cover five main categories: prestige and wealth, compassion, aiming goals (i.e. how one approaches goals), ethics and honour. Figure 42 shows the results based on multiple choice analysis. Personal dignity is the most frequently selected value (22.8%). Then follow honesty (16.7%), faithfulness (12.2%) and fighting spirit (10.4%). Notably, innovativeness of spirit is the least valued item (1.9%). Altruism, humour and correctness/decency/integrity are also least valued.

When we look at the data based on the ranking of items (considering how respondents evaluated first, second and third most important items) it is evident that personal dignity is rated as the most important item by more than half of the respondents (Figure 43). In addition, about one in ten respondents rank either honesty (12.9%) or faithfulness (11.3%) as the most important value. The items representing prestige and wealth, compassion, and aiming goals were not frequently selected as most important. When it comes to the second and third important items, honesty, faithfulness and fighting spirit were valued most frequently. Notably, 11.4% of young people in Armenia mention tolerance as the second most important value.

FIGURE 41: **WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (ONLY "VERY IMPORTANT" ANSWERS PROVIDED %)**

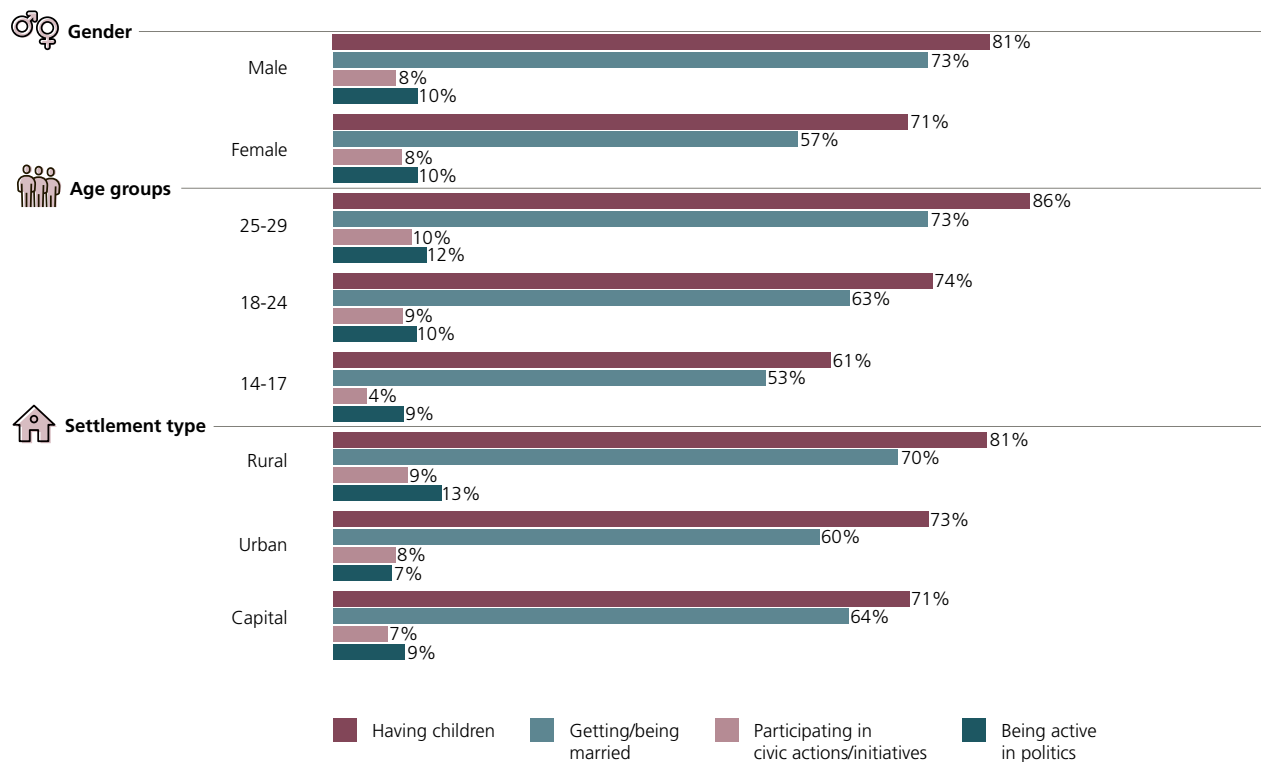


FIGURE 42: WHICH THREE OF THE OFFERED VALUES DO YOU VALUE MOST? (MULTIPLE CHOICE, %)

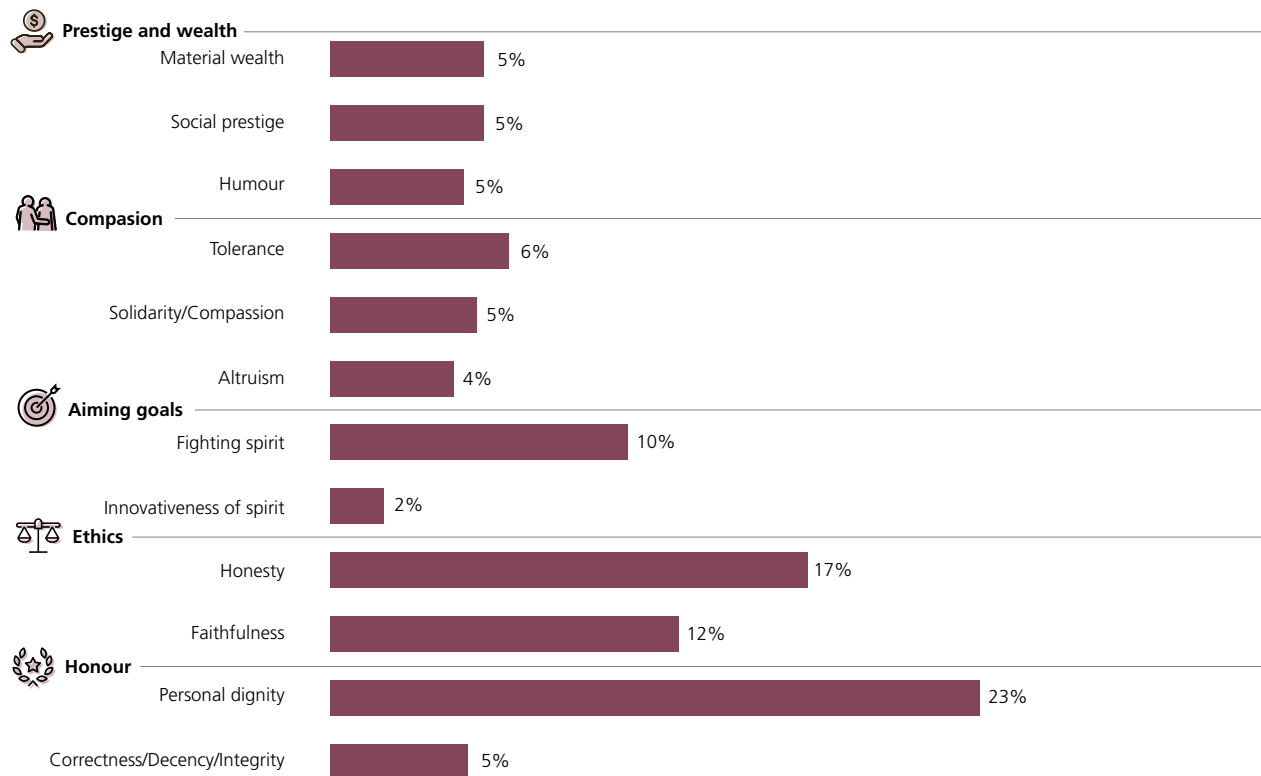
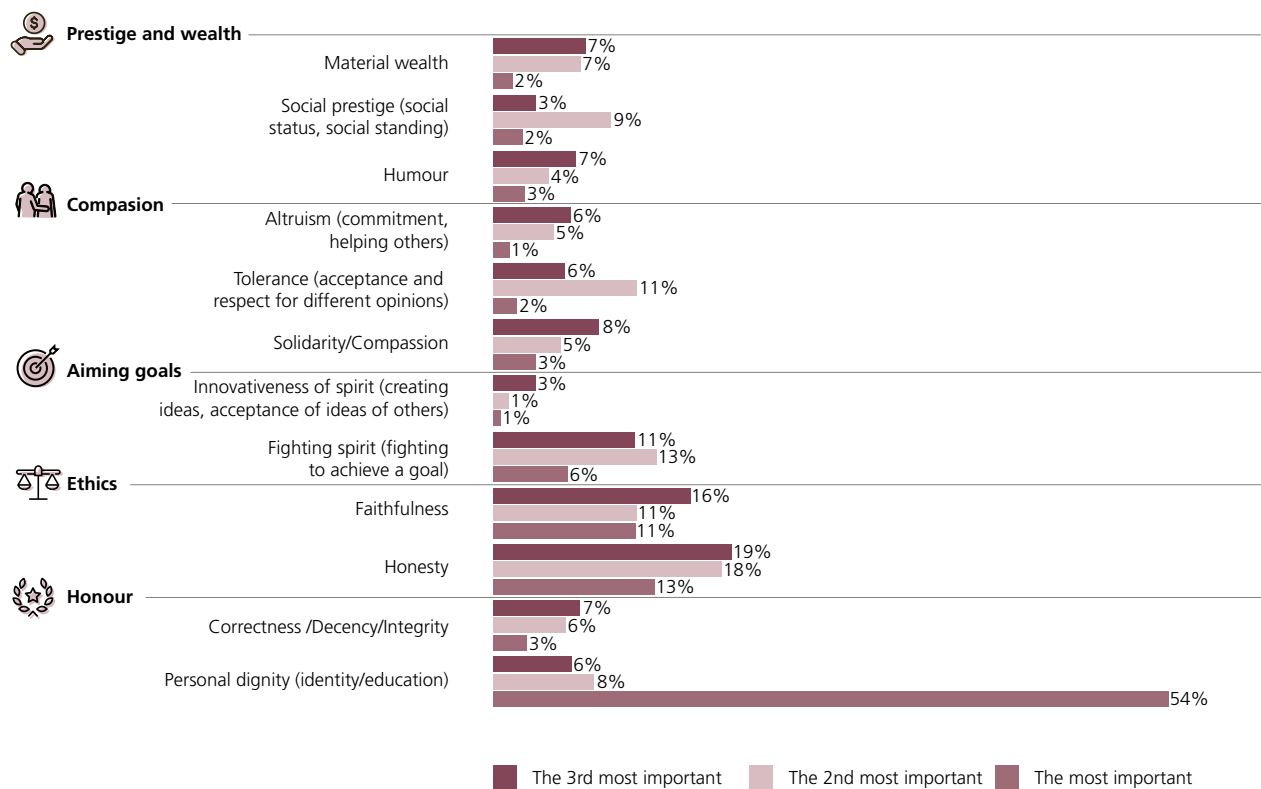


FIGURE 43: WHICH THREE OF THE OFFERED VALUES DO YOU VALUE MOST? (%)



TRUST, DISTRUST AND SOCIAL DISTANCE

Trust and distrust towards various institutions is revealed using a four-point scale (Figure 44). The army is by far and away the most trusted institution according to Armenian youth as more than half of respondents (56.7%) say they trust the army fully and almost a quarter of them (23.6%) trusts it quite a lot. The second most trusted institution is the church, as 34.0% trust it fully and 28.4% trust it quite a lot. 37.4% mention that they trust the police and 24.0% trust the judiciary system. However, the attitudes towards these institutions of law enforcement are controversial. A quarter of respondents (25%) do not trust the police at all. Even a greater proportion of youth (35.8%) reports complete distrust toward the courts. The degree of trust toward trade unions, civil society organisations or the national government is considerably low. However political parties, the media and the president are the institutions with the lowest degree of trust. 45.2% of young people in Armenia state they do not trust the president at all. More than half of respondents (51.6%) fully distrust the media in Armenia, and approximately two thirds (59.5%) report complete distrust toward political parties.

The attitudes toward different institutions and the level of reported trust vary across demographic groups. Figure 45 portrays the differences in the level of trust in five more institutions with respect to respondent's gender, age, education and settlement type. Here it is evident

that young people with primary and incomplete secondary education report a higher level of trust in the army, religious institutions, police, judiciary and trade unions than those with completed secondary or higher education. Males are comparably more likely to trust the army (81.8%) and church (64.8%) than females (78.9% and 60.2% respectively). Interestingly, young women trust the police more (43.2%) than young men (31.5%). Respondents under 17 report a higher degree of trust in all five institutions than those above 17. As for the geographical location, youth living in the rural and urban areas in the regions of Armenia trust these institutions much more than youth living in Yerevan. The attitudes differ also regarding the institutions with the lowest degree of trust. Figure 46 shows these differences between demographic groups. Young men tend to report a higher level of distrust than young women towards the president (60.7%), the media (55.8%), political parties (47.0%), NGOs (44.3%) and the national government (39.8%). Respondents above 17 are more likely to say that they do not trust these institutions at all. Young people with higher or completed secondary education are also more likely to report distrust towards these institutions than those with primary and incomplete secondary education. This is also true of the respondents living in the capital when compared to those living in the regions. For example, more than half of respondents living in Yerevan (56.0%) say that they do not trust civil society organisations at all, while the percentage of respondents with this response is comparably low in rural (33.0%) and other urban areas (38.4%).

FIGURE 44: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (%)

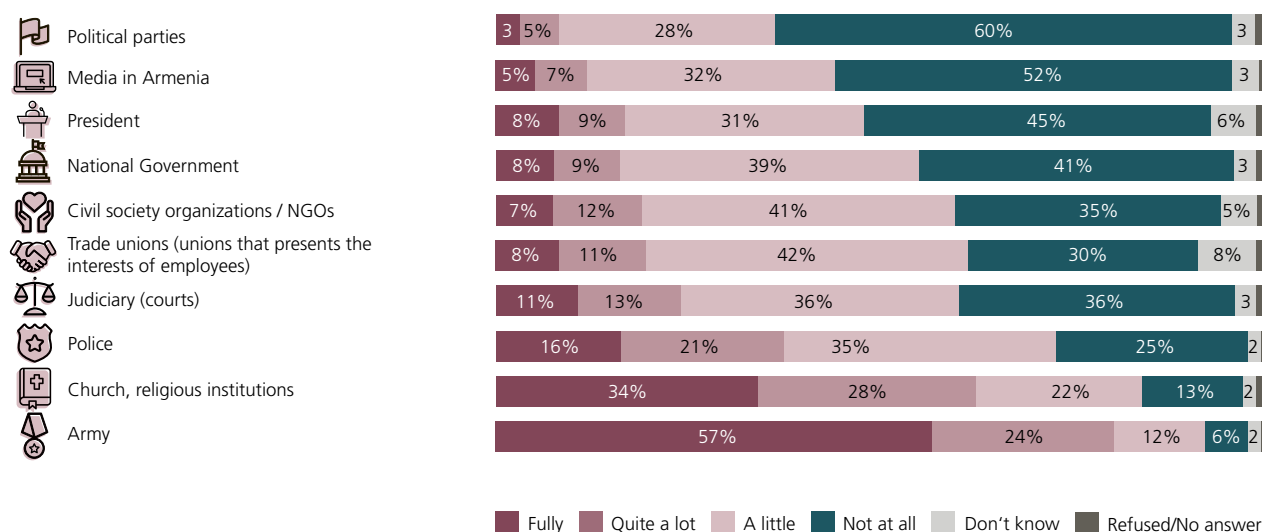


FIGURE 45: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (ONLY “QUITE A LOT” AND “FULLY TRUST” ANSWERS %)

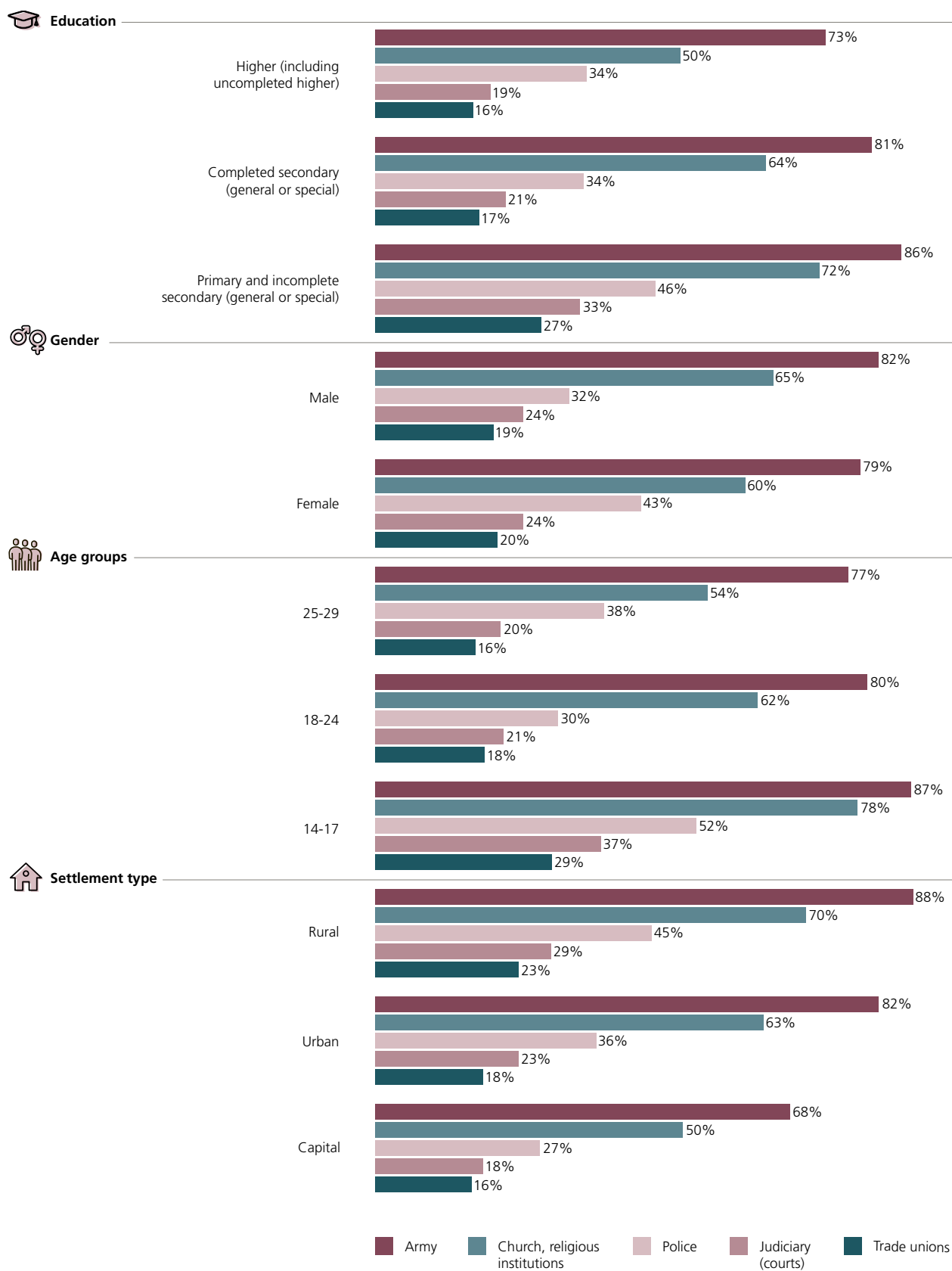


FIGURE 46: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (ONLY “NOT AT ALL” ANSWERS %)

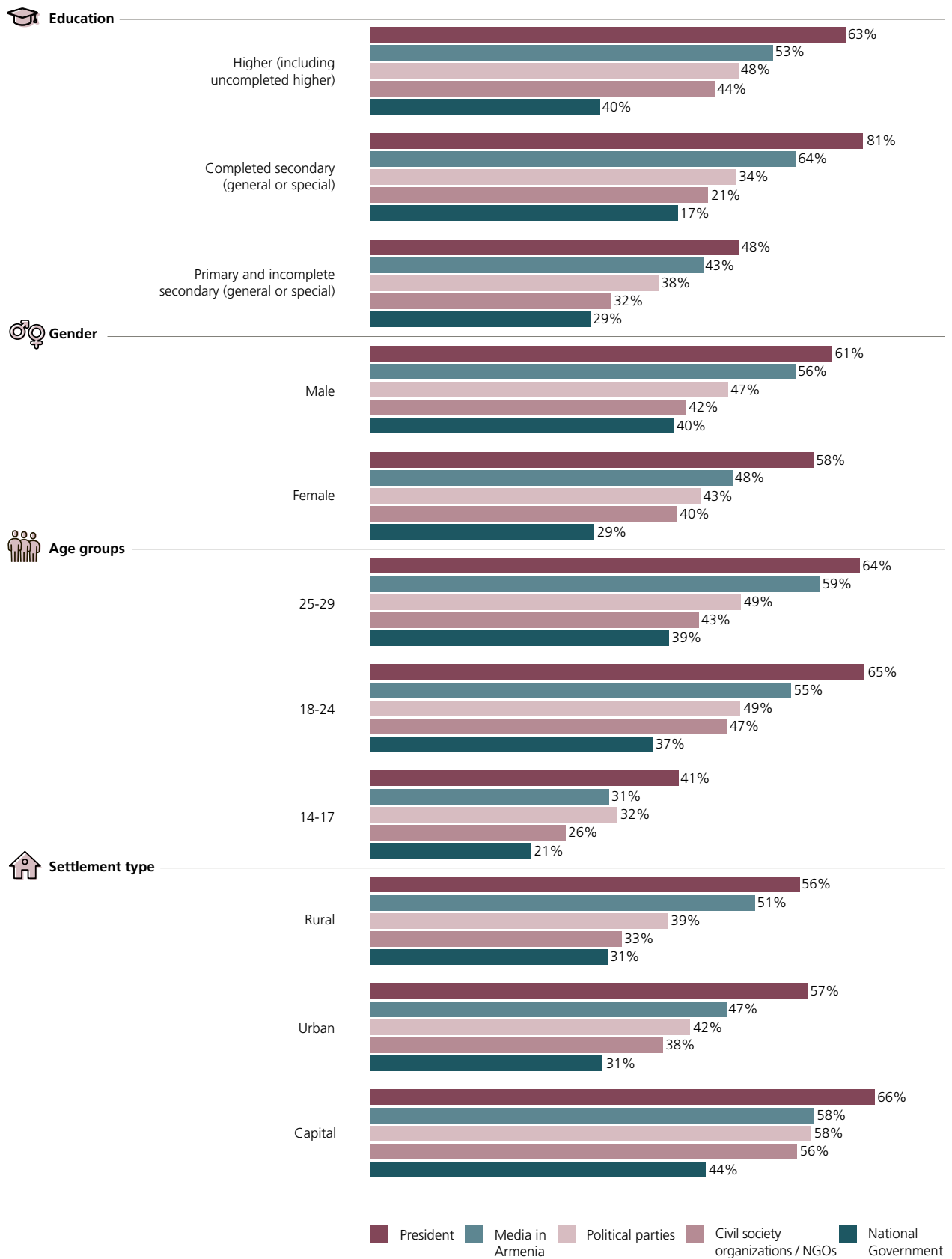
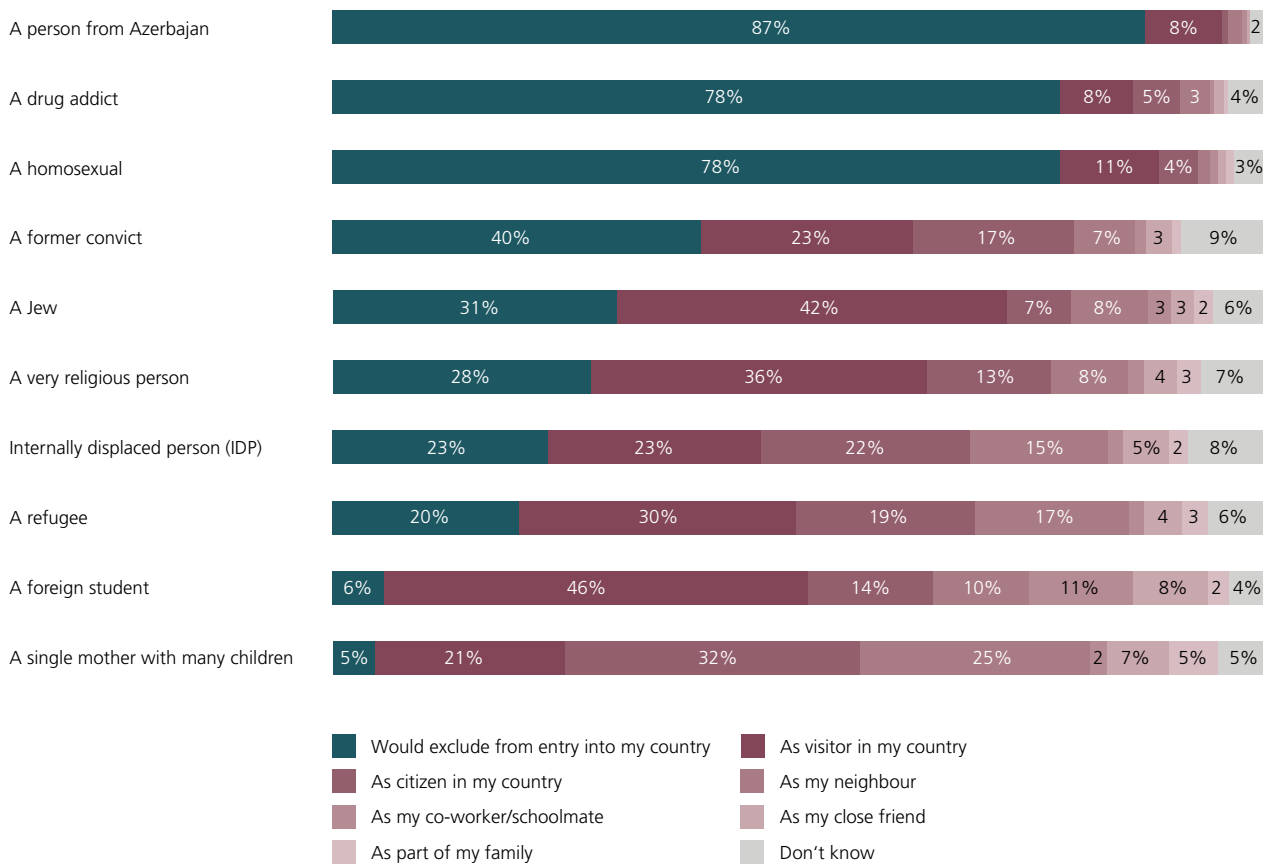


FIGURE 47: IN WHAT OR CLOSEST TO WHAT CAPACITY WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING PERSONS...? (%)



Apart from these measurements of how much trust Armenian youth have in various civil and political institutions, there was also a measurement of inclusivity toward perceived others. Participants were given a list of ten distinct social groups. They were asked to note which types of social relationships they are willing to have with the members of those groups. Here social distance is measured based on the classical scale suggested by Bogardus. The scale consists of seven points starting from the complete exclusion of a certain group member up to acceptance as a family member. Figure 47 shows that most respondents (87.3%) say that they would exclude a person from Azerbaijan from entry into Armenia and only 8.2% are ready to accept them merely as visitors in their country. The acceptance of people from Azerbaijan is almost nonexistent in higher levels of social proximity. Drug addicted and homosexual people are also rather excluded. 78.1% of youngsters say that they would exclude both groups from entry into Armenia. One in ten (10.7%) is willing to

accept homosexuals as visitors and only 4.11% would be willing to accept them as citizens in Armenia. 39.6% of respondents would exclude former convicts from entry to Armenia. Notably, social distance is also comparably big in relation to Jewish people. The majority are willing to either exclude them from entry into Armenia (30.5%) or accept them only as visitors (41.9%). Participants felt similarly about very religious people; 27.7% would exclude them completely, and 36.1% would accept them as visitors. Some young people are, however, willing to accept internationally displaced persons (IDPs) even as neighbours (14.9%). The closest groups for Armenian youth in terms of social distance are single mothers with many children, foreign students and refugees. Approximately a quarter of respondents (24.8%) are willing to accept single mothers with many children as neighbours and 16.5% are ready to accept refugees as neighbours. One in ten respondents (11.1%) is willing to accept foreign students as coworkers or schoolmates.

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION (CHILDREN, ETC.)

The family environment of Armenian youth is explored here as one of the key components of their social environment. The data shows that young Armenian people very often mention that they live with their mothers (26.7%), fathers (22.2%) and siblings (19.8%) (Figure 48). Also, one in ten (10.0%) reports living with grandparents, which may be an indicator that extended families are somewhat common in Armenia. The proportion of young people who live alone is almost nonexistent (0.9%).

Family environment is further described in terms of interpersonal relationships. Most of the respondents in all demographic groups indicate that they are in good relationships with their parents and get along with them (Figure 49). However, there are some notable differences between the groups. Male respondents are more likely to say that they get along very well with their parents (72.4%) than females (58.1%). Female respondents more often state that they get along with their parents while having some differences in opinion (41.4%). Young people under 17 are comparably less likely to get along with their parents very well (58.5%) than those between 18 and 24 (63.2%) or 25 and 29 (71.0%).

FIGURE 48: WHO OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONS LIVES WITH YOU IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD? (%)

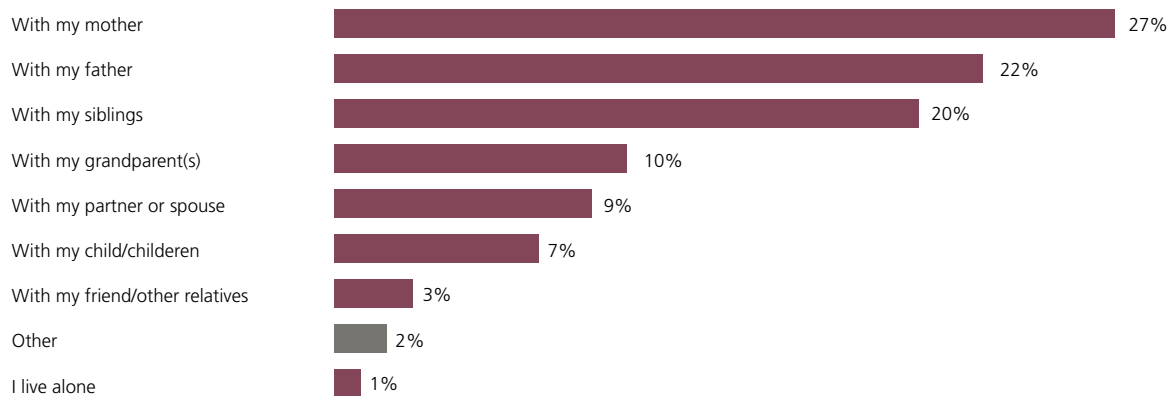
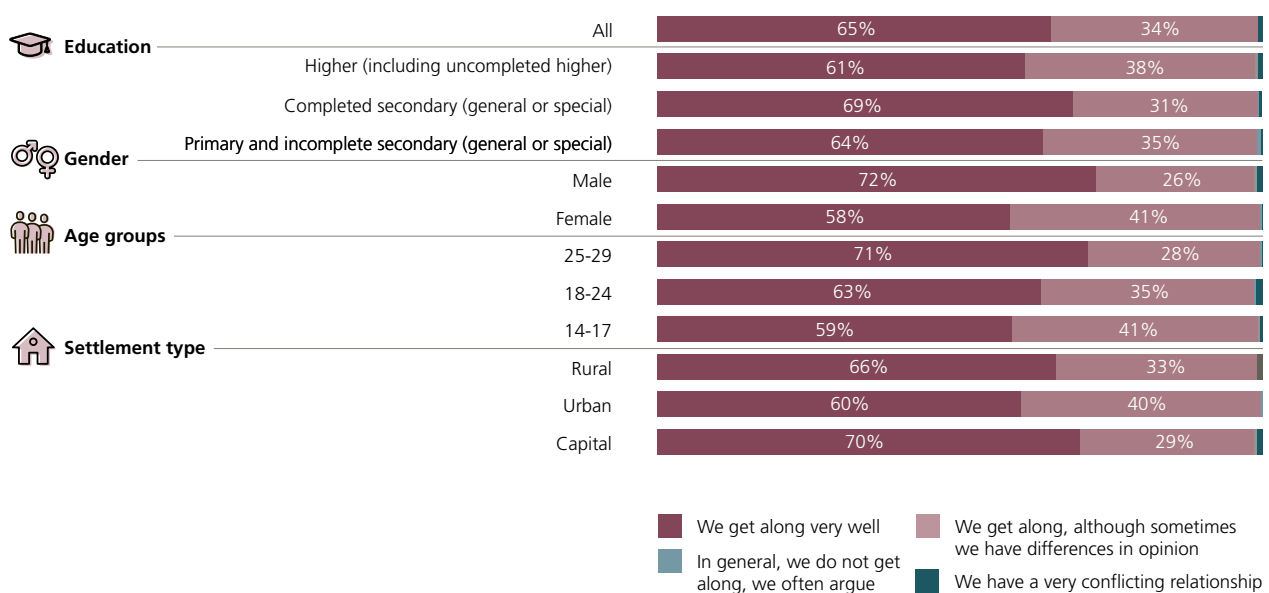


FIGURE 49: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS? (%)



As previously indicated, having children is one of the most important family values for Armenian youth. Figure 50 shows that over 90% of young people in Armenia definitely (73.1%) or probably (19.7%) intend to have children in the future. The portion of youth who do not intend to do so is under 5%.

Participants were also asked what age they intended to have children. Figure 51 shows the mean values in different age and gender groups. The differences based on gender are not that considerable. There are some differences worth noting between age groups. Respondents in lower age groups tend to mention that they want to have children at an earlier age than those in the highest age group. Overall, both males and females aged between

25 and 29 say that they intend to have children at about 29. 25 is the mean value for females aged between 14 and 24 and for males between 14 and 17. Males aged between 18 and 24 mostly intend to have children at the age of 26.

The survey also explored participants' attitudes toward the sex of children (Figure 52). Notably, more than half of both males (56.3%) and females (56.9%) say that they are indifferent to the sex of children. Young men tend to prefer having male children (34.7%) more than young women do (23.6%). Only 13.5% of young men and 20.3% of young women prefer having female children. In line with this it is important to note that female children are comparably less preferred among male respondents.

FIGURE 50: **DO YOU INTEND TO HAVE CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE? (%)**

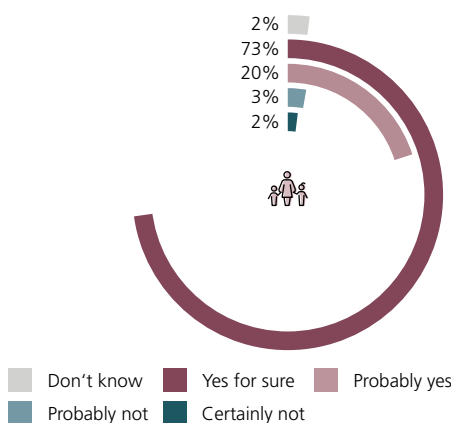


FIGURE 51: **DO YOU INTEND TO HAVE CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE? (%)**

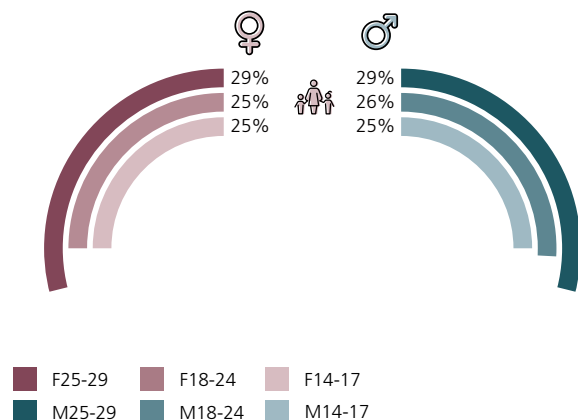


FIGURE 52: **WHAT SEX OF CHILDREN WOULD YOU PREFER?**

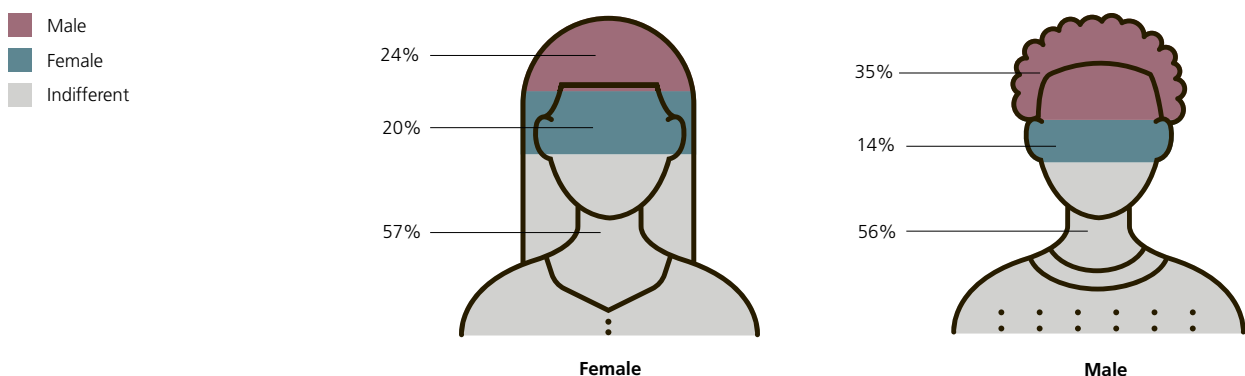
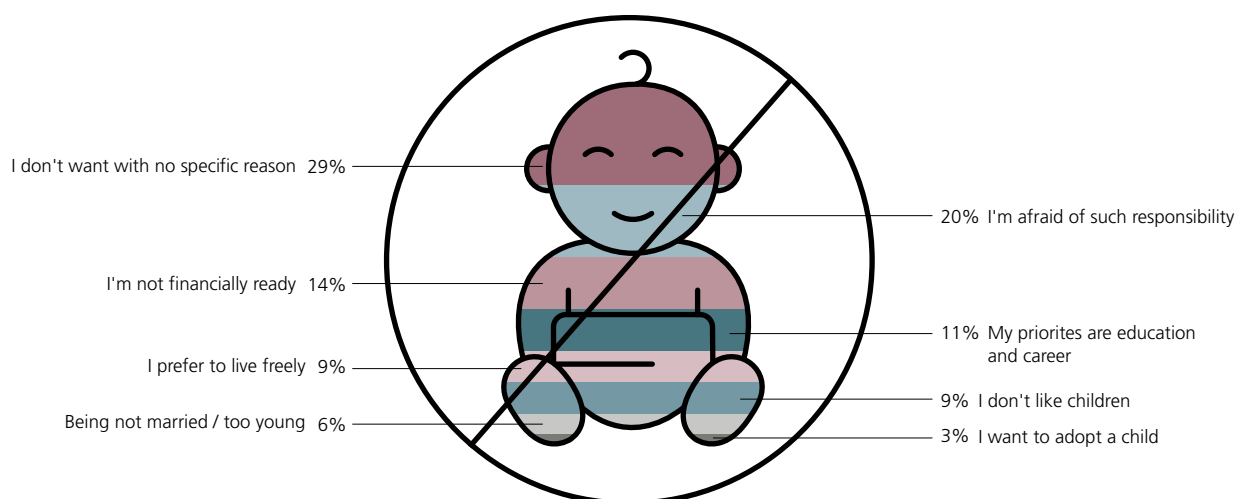


FIGURE 53: WHY WOULD YOU WOULD NOT WANT TO HAVE CHILDREN? (%)



Respondents not intending to have children were asked about their reasoning. As shown in Figure 53, young people most often say that they don't want to have children without having any specific reason (28.6%). One-fifth of the respondents mention that they are afraid of such responsibility. 14.3% mention the lack of financial readiness and 11.4% say that their priorities are their education and career.

DISCUSSION

If the data of the Armenian youth study from 2015 (Mkrtichyan et al., 2016, p. 124) showed that the cornerstones of self-identification were the components of ethnicity, and not statehood and citizenship, then things have very much changed. Now the vast majority of young people in Armenia emphasised their self-identification with RA citizenship, and only then did they accentuate ethnicity and religion. Perhaps the change in the discourse around citizenship can be explained to a certain extent by the civic activism that has gained momentum since 2018, and by demystifying the concept of the citizen. There are similarities with the 2015 study. The vast majority of young people still do not identify themselves as Europeans. At the same time, young men with a high level of education, males generally, and older youth definitely tend to consider themselves as RA citizens, and they are generally not inclined to consider themselves as Europeans.

Those young people who generally do not feel part of Europe point to the issue of inconsistency of national values and mentality with European ones. Some of them highlighted Armenia's financial, legal and social inability/issues as reasons for not being integrated into European society.

Despite the supremacy of civic identity, Armenian youth desire a social structure which values a mono-ethnic environment. In particular, the vast majority of Armenian youth do not agree that the best scenario for Armenia is the presence of mixed religions and cultures. In contrast, females, youth of younger age and those living in Yerevan are more tolerant.

Despite the strong civic self-identification, citizenship is mostly perceived as a rigid, static form, and the values of civic participation and/or involvement are hardly emphasised in the value system of Armenian youth. In general, the values that emphasise personal qualities and virtues are in first place for the Armenian youth and the values of marriage and family are in second place. Marriage and family are given great value by male participants, those of older age and regional/rural youth; in contrast, values of civic activity and/or involvement were given more importance by females. It should be noted that Armenian youth mostly live with their parents, maintaining good relations with them. Young men, especially the younger ones,

have good relations with their parents, whereas females have disagreements more often.

Although most young people want to have children, the main reasons for not having children in the near future are avoiding responsibility, not being financially prepared and prioritising career. Moreover, male representatives, in contrast to female representatives, have a greater preference to having a boy child.

The value of personal dignity is consistently at the top for youth in Armenia, and the least important value is the spirit of innovation. It is worth noting that altruism is among the values perceived as unimportant, which once again emphasises the generalisation made in the second chapter about the self-interested (one may also say “egoistic”) nature of youth volunteering practices.

Those structures deemed most reliable are the army, the church and the police and those seen as most unreliable are the political parties and the mass media. At the same time, the trust in CSOs is quite low with only 1/5 trusting these institutions.

From the point of view of social distancing, Armenian youth position the Azerbaijanis, drug addicts, and those with non-traditional sexual orientation as most distant to them. Moreover, the results of qualitative information indicate that young people are ready to participate in protests opposing the adoption of the LGBT law.

PART SIX: CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

The social and political upheavals of recent years have not only caused geopolitical and/or security problems, but also changed the structures of everyday life at the micro level for Armenian youth, forming new perceptions, social moods, anxieties and approaches to war and peace. Those who bear the consequences of those changes the most are modern Armenian youth, whose education and socialisation, political orientation and future planning were developed in the midst of socio-political upheaval. According to analysts, with the continued “individualisation” of public risks in modern society, young people need to acquire appropriate skills (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Young people’s aspirations are significantly influenced by their awareness of the situation in their micro and macro (especially ecological) environments. Understanding the social and political sentiments of young people as a system of emotions, beliefs and actions (Bosse et al., 2013) give profound insight into many social problems, providing both optimistic and pessimistic perspectives for the future.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Almost half of young people view the collapse of the Soviet Union as a bad phenomenon.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union is more likely to be seen as a bad phenomenon by male, rural youth with the lowest educational level.
- Younger, male representatives tend to believe that the 90s brought good things to the country.
- The majority of young people tend to think that compared to the 90s, it is now easier to earn money and live safely, and it is more difficult to express oneself freely, decide on a religious life and live independently.
- Although male, urban youths travelled abroad most often, rural youths went abroad most often for educational and/or work purposes.
- Male, younger youths are more inclined to go abroad for educational and/or working purposes.
- Younger women and living in Yerevan prefer to go to the USA, while young men, who are older and living in rural areas prefer to go to Russia.
- Armenian youth are mostly inclined to think that climate change is a global threat.
- Climate change as a global threat is more likely to be considered by the highly educated, females, older participants and rural youth.
- When hearing about climate change and efforts to reduce it, young people generally feel anger, helplessness, indifference and fear, and significantly less hope and confidence.
- Male, rural youth are more in favour of the Amulsar mining operation.
- The majority of Armenian youth are more inclined to think that a resumption of the Karabakh war within the next five years is possible.
- The likelihood of the resumption of the Karabakh war was seen as higher, especially among young people with a higher educational level, females and those of older age.
- The majority of young people are more optimistic about the future, believing that their family’s living conditions will be better in five years.
- Young people with a higher socio-economic status, males and those of younger age are more optimistic about the future.
- After five years, young people are less optimistic about the living conditions in Armenia generally as compared to the future of their own families.

ANALYSES

REVISING THE PAST

Perceptions and attitudes towards past events can be a starting point to understand a people's present situation and future perspectives. One of the central events of the recent past was the collapse of the Soviet Union. Armenian youth's attitudes towards USSR dissolution are shown in Figure 54. Notably, a considerable portion of respondents thinks that the end of the USSR was a bad thing (43.4%). Comparably, a smaller number of young people consider this transition as something good (21.6%). More than a quarter of them mention that the collapse of the USSR was neither good nor bad (27.9%) and 7.2% find it difficult to answer.

The findings of focus group discussions are somehow different. During discussions the majority of participants spoke about the collapse of the Soviet Union as a positive event, mentioning national independence as the most important positive consequence.

"As for me, very briefly, because now there is the Republic of Armenia, there is independence... Independence is the greatest value, we should not depend on anyone, because we have been a country for centuries and we have come for centuries."
[Female, 22 years old]

Other positive consequences were mentioned as follows: freedom of speech and religion; liberalisation of education; opportunity to go abroad freely; importance of

national culture, including a process of recognising the genocide; and the development of one's own laws and currency.

Among the negative consequences, the following have been highlighted: the collapse of the economy, the closure of industrial factories and the disappearance of workplaces, the loss of the advantages of the Soviet educational system (quality, free for all), the increasing social inequality and loss of political allies. Some participants associate the escalation of the Karabakh conflict with the collapse of the USSR, noting that within the Soviet Union, the war could not have taken place as the borders of the countries that were part of the Soviet Union were of lesser importance. Hence the border disputes would not have resulted in a war. This thinking is more dominant in the 25-29 age group. The participants, however, expressed concern that, within the Soviet Union, the solution to the Karabakh problem could have been resolved disadvantageously to Armenia, who would not have had a say in the conflict resolution process.

Respondents' sociodemographic characteristics predict their perception of the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Figure 55). Respondents with higher education are more likely to think that the collapse of the USSR was a good thing (30.8%) than those with lower levels of education (16.2% and 22.1%). Male respondents are considerably more likely (50.1%) than females (36.8%) to see the USSR dissolution as a bad thing. Young people living in rural areas are also more likely to feel negative about this event (48.9%) than those living in the capital (40.3%) or other urban areas (37.8%).

FIGURE 54: THE USSR DISSOLVED SOME 30 YEARS AGO. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE USSR, DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , FULL SAMPLE)



FIGURE 55: THE USSR DISSOLVED SOME 30 YEARS AGO. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE USSR, DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , FULL SAMPLE)

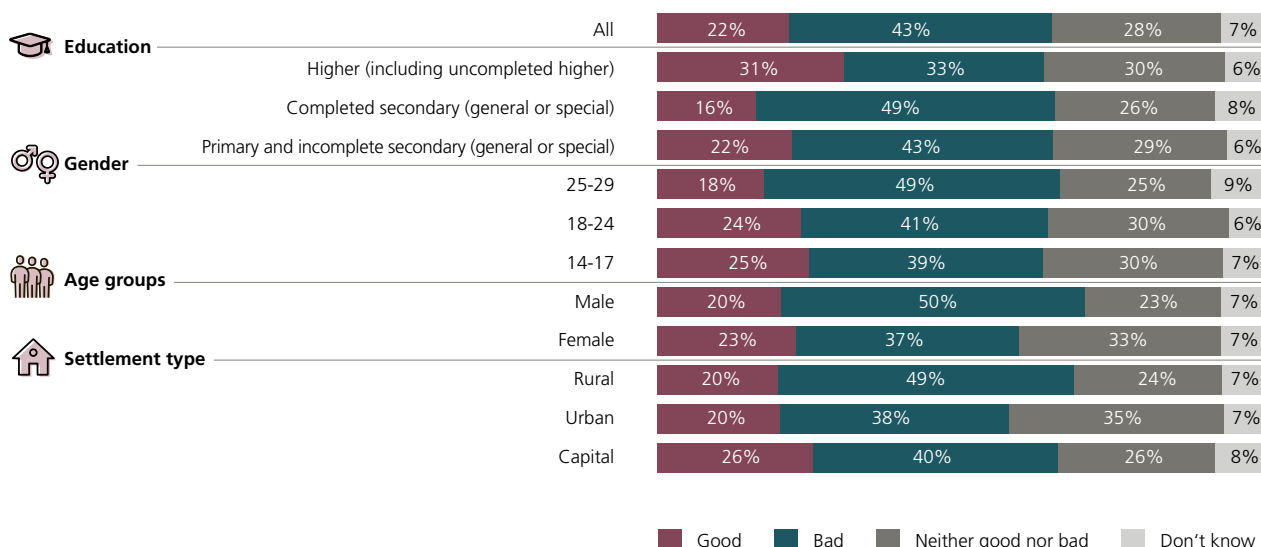


FIGURE 56: THE USSR DISSOLVED SOME 30 YEARS AGO. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE USSR, DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , FULL SAMPLE)



Young people's perceptions and thoughts regarding the 90s are also investigated in this study. The opinions split into two almost equal and contradictory ways. 43.2% of the respondents believe that the 90s brought better things to Armenia, while 41.6% perceive these years as rather bad (Figure 56). The rest of the respondents find it difficult to answer (15.2%). Some differences can be observed based on sociodemographic groupings. Respondents with

primary or incomplete secondary education are more likely to think that the 90s were rather good for the country (49.3%) than those with completed secondary (39.3%) or higher education (43.4%). Young people above 25 tend to feel less positively toward the 90s (36.5%) than those between 18 and 24 (45.1%) or those under 17 (51.8%). Young women are slightly more likely to find the question difficult to answer (17.5%) than young men (12.8%).

Figure 57 examines youth perceptions of the 90s in relation to their attitudes towards the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Here we see that young people who think that the end of the USSR was a good thing are slightly more likely to consider the 90s as good (46.1%) than those who feel negatively (43.4%) or those who were neutral (43.0%) about the collapse of the Soviet Union. Those who found it difficult to answer the question regarding the USSR dissolution were more likely to feel the same for the question about the 90s (45.3%).

To analyse young people's perception of the 90s they were asked to compare present day Armenia with that period. Respondents were given a set of items presenting different

activities and were asked to evaluate them in comparison with the 90s. Comparably, more young people say that today it is much or somewhat easier to earn money (35.0%) and feel safe (29.6%) than it was in the 90s (Figure 58). Participants rated all other items as more difficult to do than in the 90s. In particular, more than half of the respondents (51.7%) say that it is a lot more difficult today to say whatever you want than in the 90s. A considerable number of young people think that today it is a lot more difficult to decide on your religious life (48.7%) or live independently (45.3%). According to the respondents' views, participating in political life (32.4%) and receiving qualified medical care (41.8%) are also a lot more difficult today than in the 90s.

FIGURE 57: ASSESSMENT OF WHETHER THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING IN COMPARISON TO THE 90s (%)

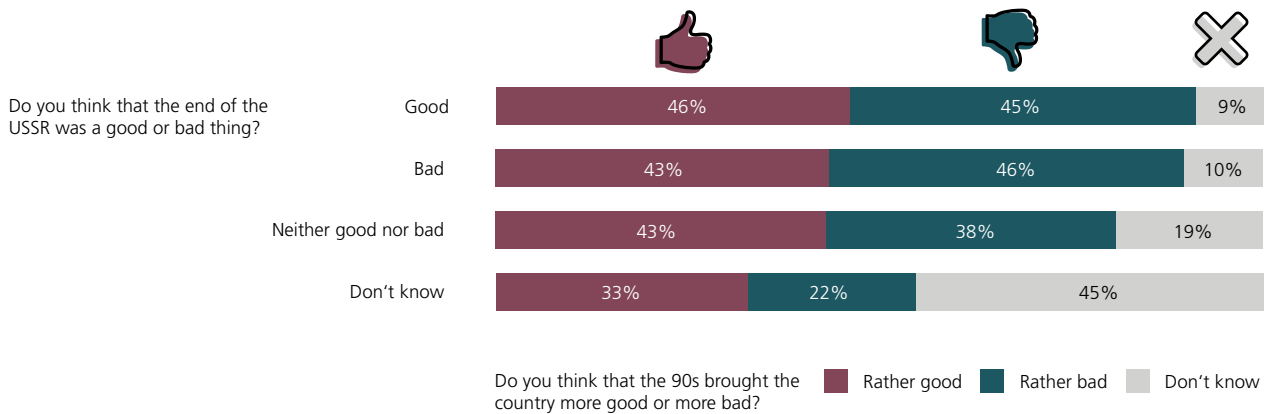
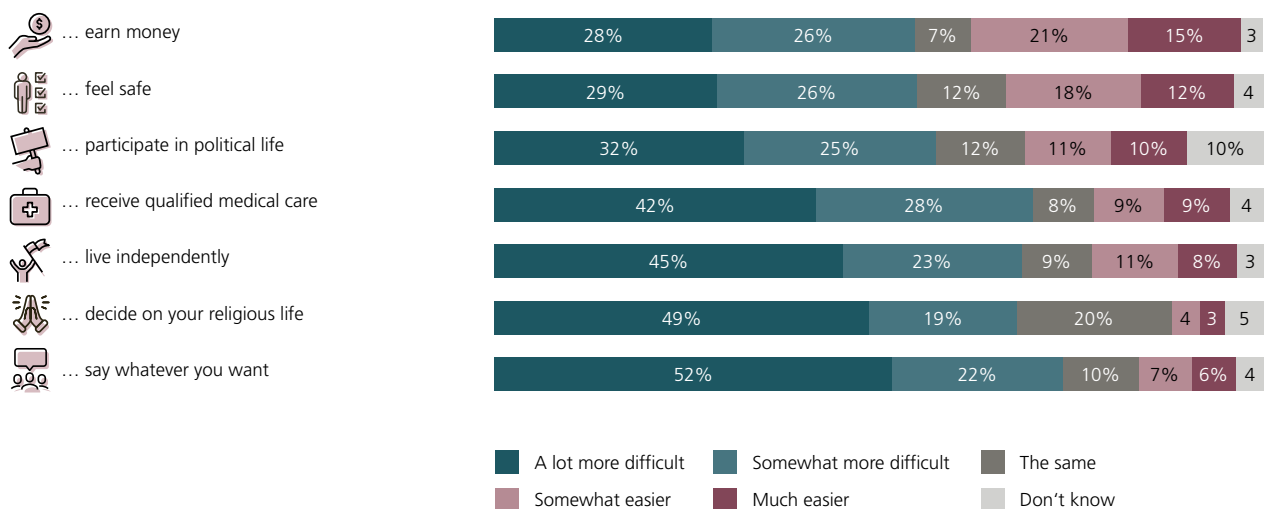


FIGURE 58: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT TODAY AND WHAT YOU KNOW OR IMAGINE ABOUT THE 1990s, HAS IT BECOME EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT TO... (%)



MOBILITY: MIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

Approximately two-fifths (39.6%) of young people in Armenia report having been abroad (Figure 59). Some differences are observed between sociodemographic groups. Male respondents are more likely to have been abroad (48.4%) than females (31.1%). Respondents living in rural areas are less likely to report having been abroad (31.0%) than those living in urban areas (44.2%) or in the capital (48.6%). Young people with higher education are more likely to report travelling abroad (49.1%) than those with lower levels of education (37.7% and 34.5%).

The data shows that 33.6% of respondents report being abroad to study and/or work (Figure 60). Contrary to what was found about being abroad generally, rural youth are more likely to report being abroad for work or education (44.3%) than those living in the capital (22.9%) or other urban areas (33.1%). In terms of work and education, young men are more likely to report going abroad (40.8%) than young women (22.1%). The differences are not that notable regarding the educational status of respondents. As for the age groups, young people above 25 are more likely to say that they have been outside Armenia to study or work (45.4%) than those aged between 18 and 24 (31.8%) or under 17 (12.8%).

FIGURE 59: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABROAD? (%)

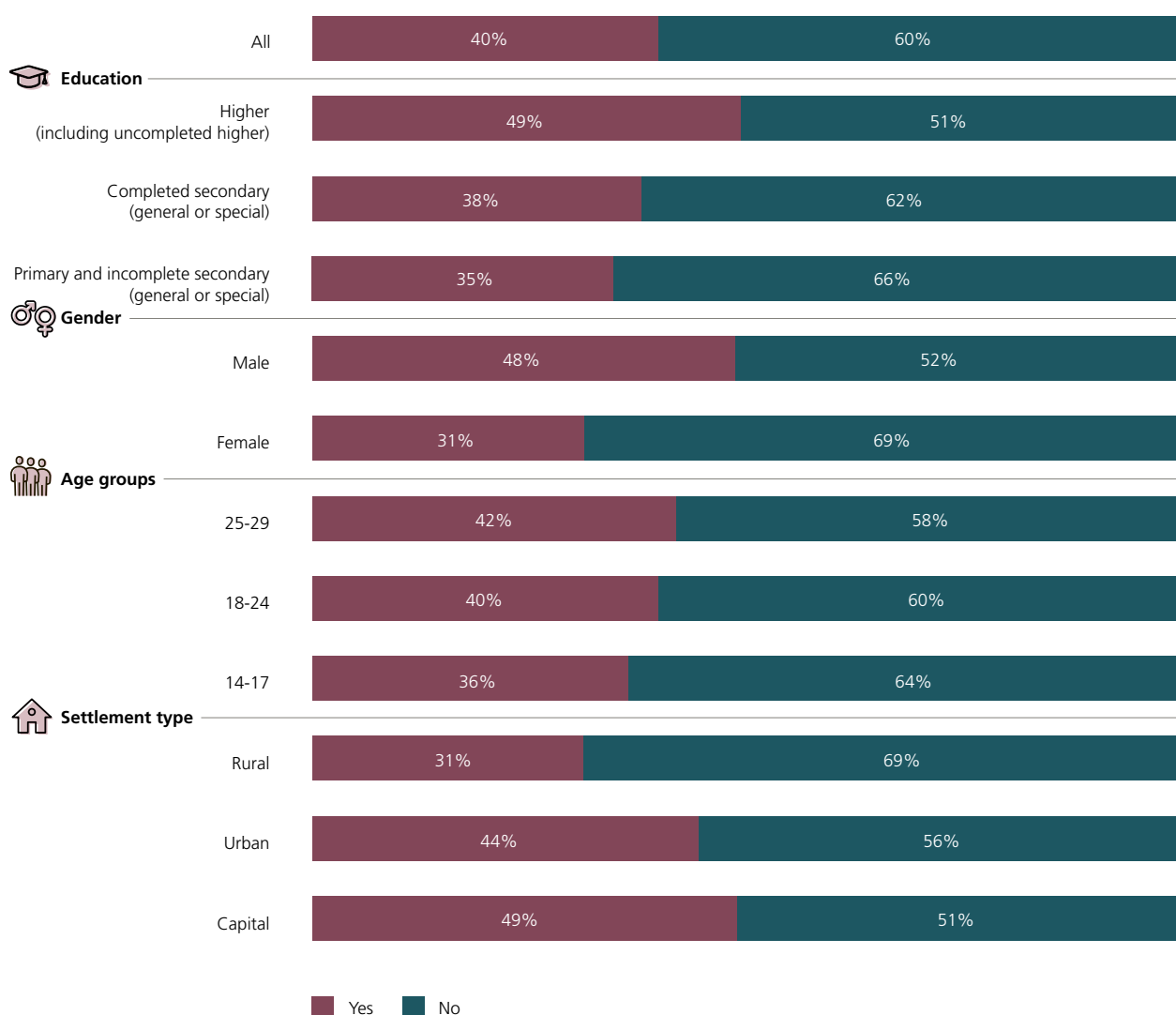


FIGURE 60: DID YOU GO ABROAD TO STUDY AND/OR WORK? (%)

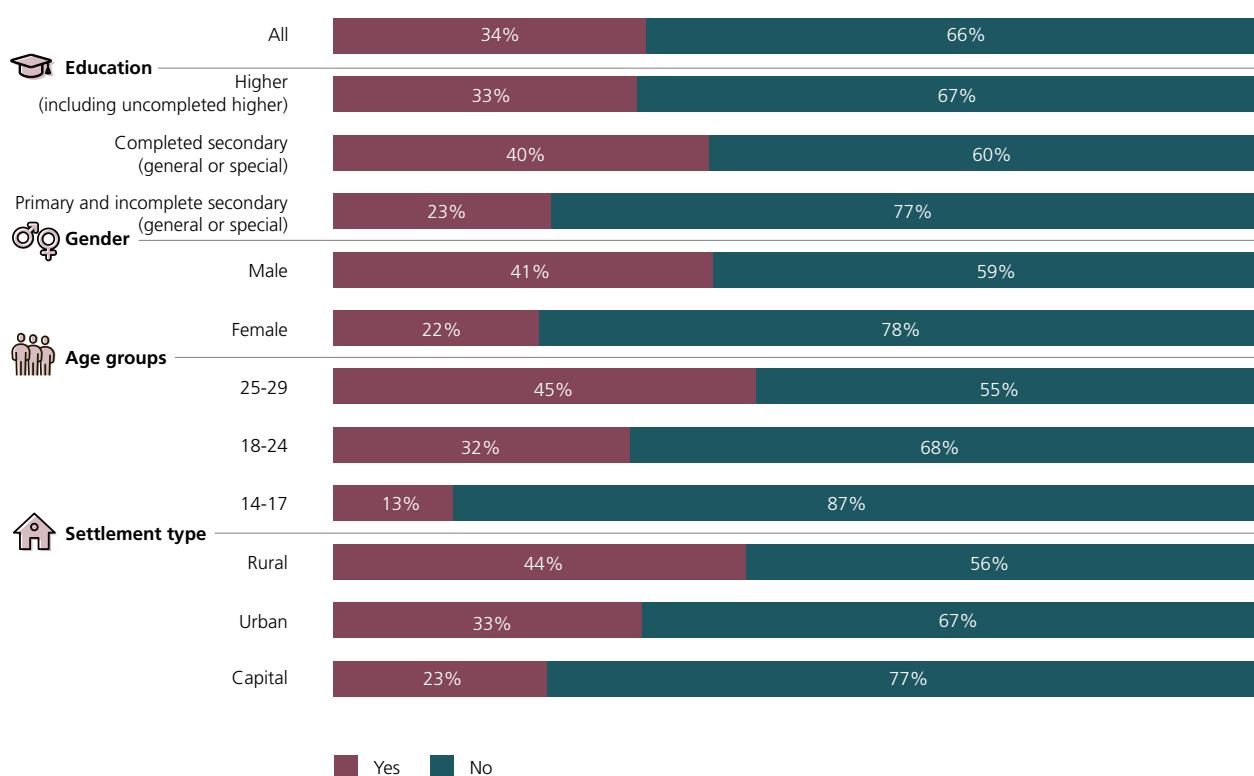
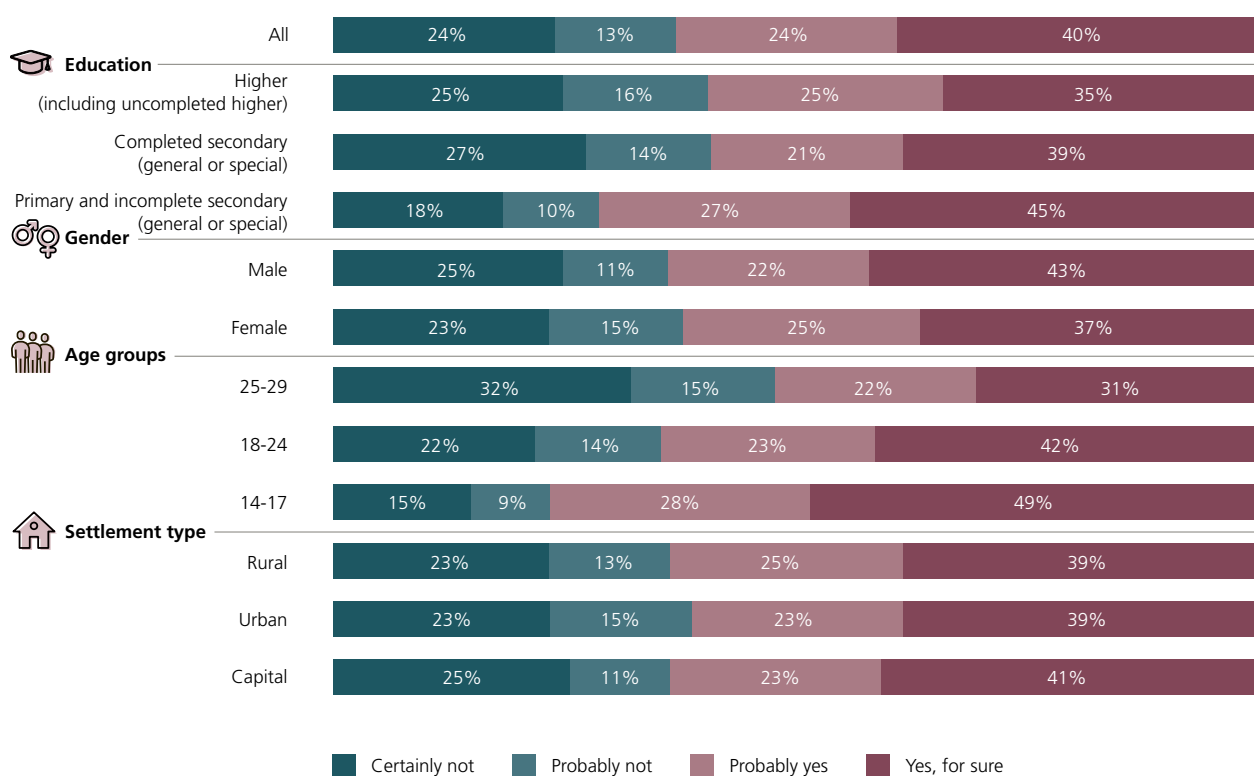


FIGURE 61: WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ABROAD TO STUDY OR WORK? (%)



The majority of young people in Armenia report they would absolutely or probably like to go abroad for study or work (63.2%) as shown in Figure 61. Young people below 17 are more likely to say that they would absolutely like to go abroad for study or work (48.8%) than those aged between 18 and 24 (41.9%) or above 25 (31.0%). This desire is relatively greater among participants with primary and incomplete secondary education (44.5%) than those with completed secondary (38.8%) or higher education (34.5%). Young men are more likely to say that they would want to go abroad for education or work (42.5%) than young women (37.0%). The differences based on settlement type are not that notable.

Looking at the reasons for moving to another country we can note that higher salaries (25.4%), better education (20.5%) and better opportunities for starting a business (20.0%) are the most frequently mentioned reasons (Figure 62). One in ten respondents mentions such personal reasons as being close to people they care for (10.3%) or experiencing a different culture (9.7%). Experiencing a higher degree of cultural diversity (6.5%) and the political climate in their home country (6.4%) were reported by only a small proportion of respondents.

During the focus group discussions, only a minority of the participants believed that political change would affect their decision to emigrate. Examples of such change

include an anti-democratic political party coming to power or new economic limitations being imposed in response to the Coronavirus. According to the participants, to dissuade the young from emigrating, the government should develop the country's economy, create new jobs, curtail rising prices, provide affordable business loans, ensure border security and increase the quality of education.

When asked how long they would like to stay abroad, the answers were quite diverse. Overall, 41.6% of young people in Armenia would prefer to stay abroad for less than a year (Figure 63). Approximately a quarter of them say that they would like to stay in another country between one and five years (25.6%). Notably, a considerable portion of youth (19.1%) report they would like to stay abroad forever. Some differences are observed based on gender, age and settlement type. Young women are more likely to report that they would stay abroad for less than a year (46.0%) than young men (37.0%). In addition, young men more frequently mention that they would stay in another country from one to five years (28.8%). Respondents aged between 14 and 17 are considerably less likely to say that they would stay abroad for good (11.7%) than those in other age groups (19.2% and 23.7%). Young people living in the capital are less likely to say that they would stay abroad for less than a year (35.3%) than those who live in rural (43.0%) or urban areas (45.2%) of regions.

FIGURE 62: WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON WHY YOU WOULD MOVE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. (%)

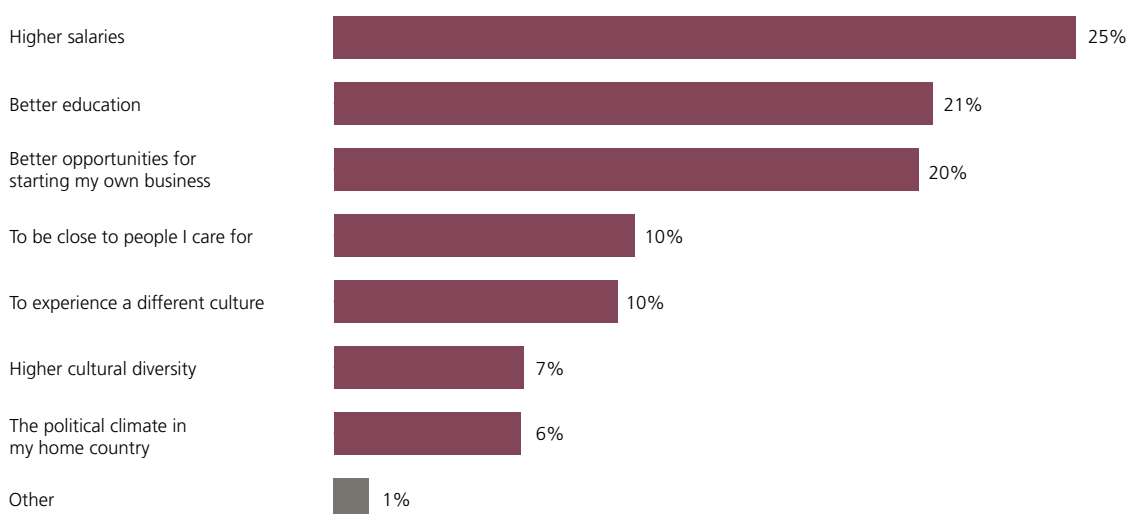


FIGURE 63: **FOR HOW LONG WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY ABROAD? (%)**

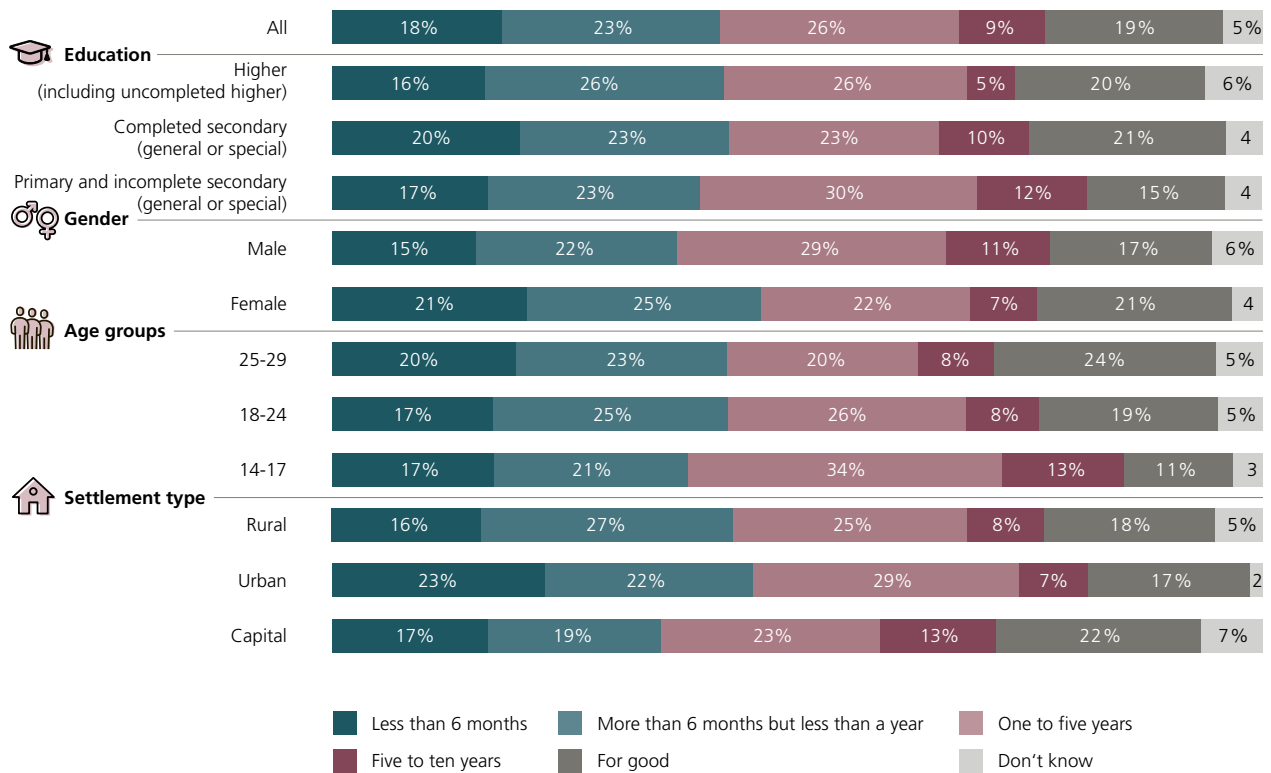
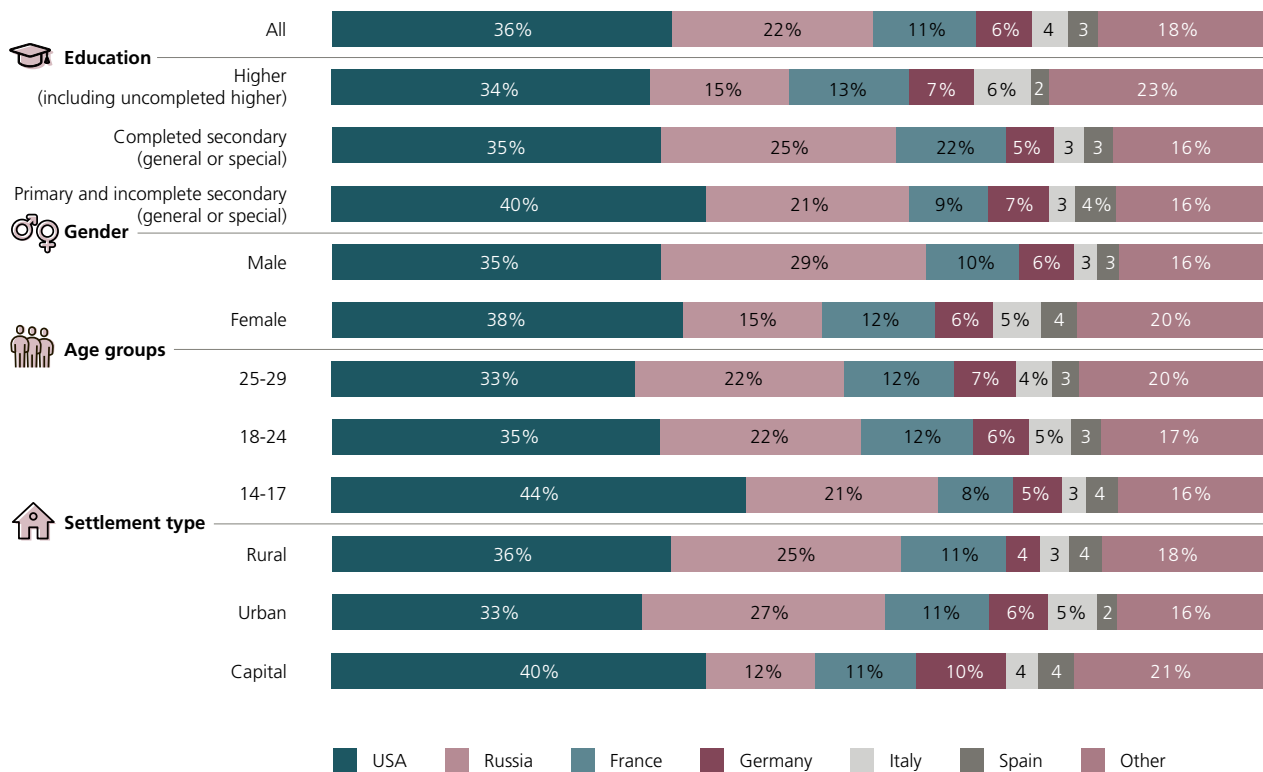


FIGURE 64: **WHICH ONE COUNTRY WOULD YOU PREFER TO MOVE TO? NAME THE ONE YOU PREFER MOST. (%)**

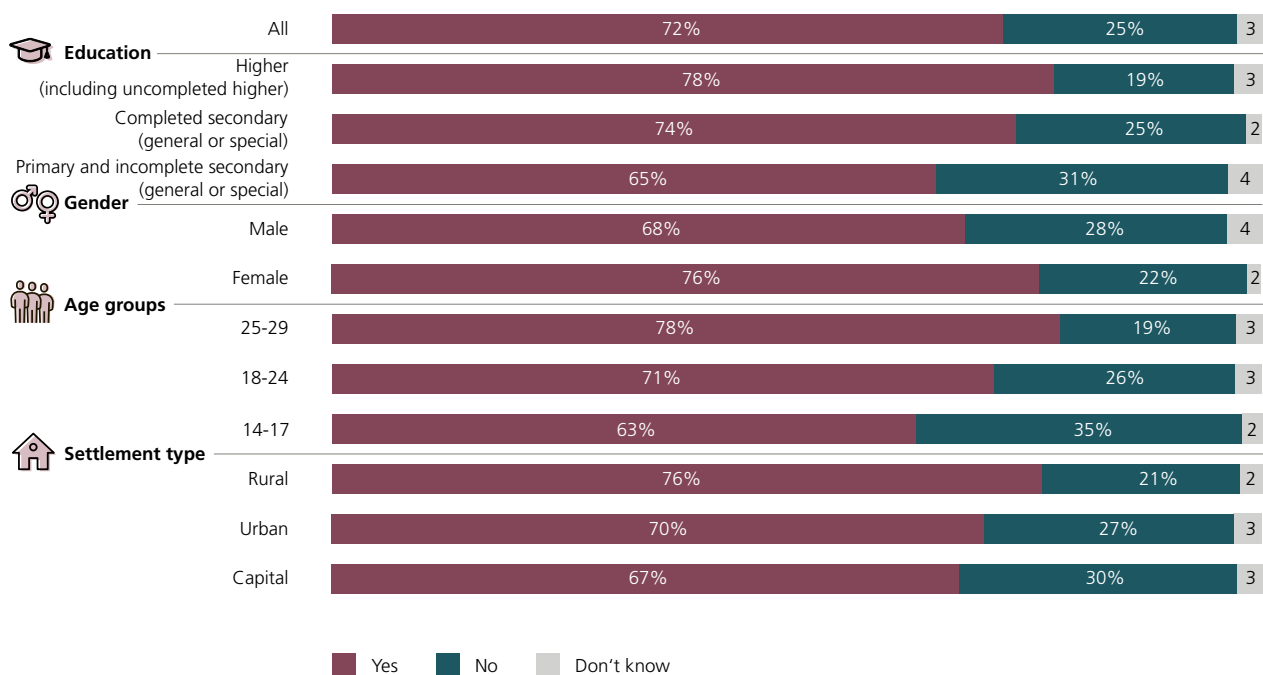


According to the views of Armenian youth, the most preferable country for relocation is the USA (36.4%) (Figure 64). Russia followed in second place (21.6%). Some portion of youth also mention France (11.0%). Other options had significantly less popularity. For example, overall, only 6.1% of youth say they would prefer to move to Germany. Interestingly, sociodemographic characteristics predict respondent's choice of preferred country. For instance, male respondents are more likely to mention Russia as the preferred country for relocation (28.5%) than female respondents (14.9%). Respondents with higher education are less likely to say that they would prefer to move to Russia (14.9%) than those with completed secondary (25.3%) or primary and incomplete secondary education (21.7%). Young people under 17 are more prone to relocate to the USA (44.4%) than youth between 18 and 24 (35.1%) or above 25 (32.5%). The type of settlement also determines the preferences for relocation. Youth living in the capital are approximately two times less likely to say that they would prefer to move to Russia (11.7%) than those living in other urban (26.1%) or rural areas (24.7%). Additionally, young people in Yerevan are comparably more likely to indicate Germany as their preferred country for relocation (9.6%) than those living outside the capital (6.4% and 3.7%).

CLIMATE CHANGE: ANXIETY OR INDIFFERENCE?

As it was demonstrated in Figure 16, very few Armenian young people consider climate change an important problem for the country. It would appear Armenian youth are not that concerned with this issue. However, when they are asked more specifically and directly as to whether they consider climate change a global emergency or not, a considerable number of them answer positively (72.1%) (Figure 65). The attitudes towards climate change vary between sociodemographic groups. Young people with higher education are more likely to think that climate change is a global emergency (77.6%) than those with completed secondary (73.5%) or primary and incomplete secondary education (64.9%). Females are slightly more likely to think so (76.0%) than males (68.0%). As for different age groups, youngsters in a higher age group between 25 and 29 more often say that climate is a global emergency (78.2%) than those aged between 18 and 24 (71.1%) or under 17 (62.7%). Rural youth are comparably more likely to consider climate change as a global emergency (76.3%) than young people living in the capital (67.4%) or other urban areas (70.1%).

FIGURE 65: DO YOU THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS A GLOBAL EMERGENCY? (%)



In addition, respondents were asked whether they would support the Armenian government imposing strong measures to combat climate change. For instance, old cars which pollute the environment significantly have been banned from use in some countries forcing people to buy newer cars that use less petrol. Most of the respondents (74.0%) say that they would absolutely or rather agree with such restrictions (Figure 66). Notably, females are considerably more likely to agree (absolutely or rather) with such restrictions (81.1%) than males (66.7%). The differences between other demographic groups are not that notable.

Focus group discussions also show that most of the participants believe that the state should interfere in regulating ecological problems and, if necessary, impose certain limits on citizens' rights. The 14-15 age group said that the state needs to financially motivate the population to go out and clean rubbish and to promote cleaner technologies and equipment to businesses.

"It seems to me that it can be financially tempting for the citizens to organise "Subbotniks" (community workdays), where they will receive a certain amount of money in return for cleaning."

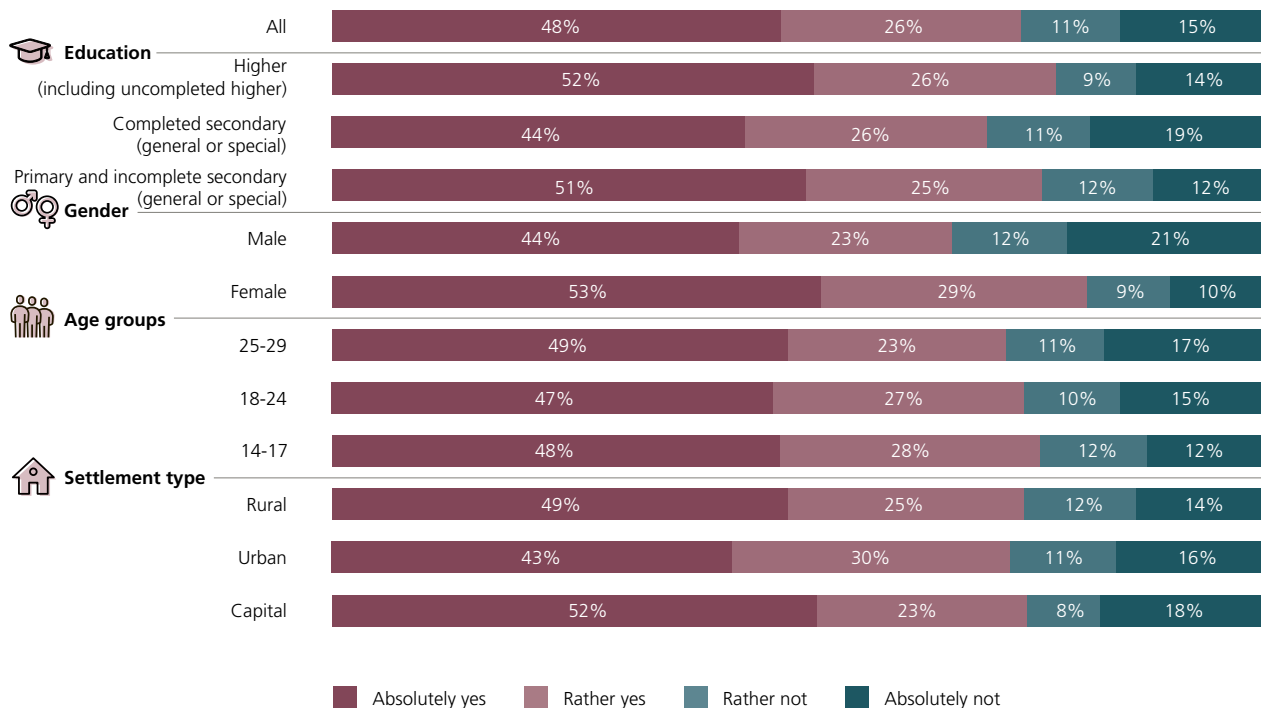
[Male, 14 years old]

The opposite opinion is that any state intervention that could lead to the violation of citizens' freedoms is not acceptable, i.e., the state should not impose limitations, but rather contribute by increasing citizens' awareness of and participation in solving ecological problems.

"I repeat, in my opinion, there is no need to force people to do anything. It is necessary to work in a way that the people realise by themselves. So, this all is not considered a violation of fundamental freedom of humans. People should take those steps by themselves, not forced by the state."

[Female, 22 years old]

FIGURE 66: IN SOME COUNTRIES, GOVERNMENTS IMPOSE STRONG MEASURES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE. FOR INSTANCE, OLD CARS POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANTLY AND, IN SOME COUNTRIES, THEY CAN NO LONGER BE USED AND PEOPLE HAVE TO BUY NEWER CARS THAT USE LESS PETROL. WOULD YOU AGREE IF SUCH AND/OR SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS WERE INTRODUCED IN YOUR COUNTRY? (%)



The feelings associated with climate change are further revealed to be predominantly negative. Most often respondents say that they feel rage (68.4%), helpless (62.3%), fear (57.1%) and indifference (63.4%) (Figure 67) when hearing about global warming and efforts to mitigate it. Expectedly, hope and confidence are not associated with global warming and the efforts to mitigate it; a considerable number of young people rather or fully disagrees that they feel hope (67.2%) or confidence (60.5%)

Young people were then asked about their views on the reasons for climate change. Based on the data, comparably more respondents think that human activity is the cause of climate change (26.5%) than those who think that natural processes are responsible for it (13.9%) (Figure 68). However, most respondents believe it is caused by some mixture of both. To be more precise, 30.2% of respondents think that natural processes account for most of the climate change, but human activity also plays a role, and 29.5% agree that human activity is the main driver of climate change, but natural processes also play a role.

FIGURE 67: **HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT? WHEN I HEAR ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING AND EFFORTS TO MITIGATE IT, I MOSTLY FEEL... (%)**

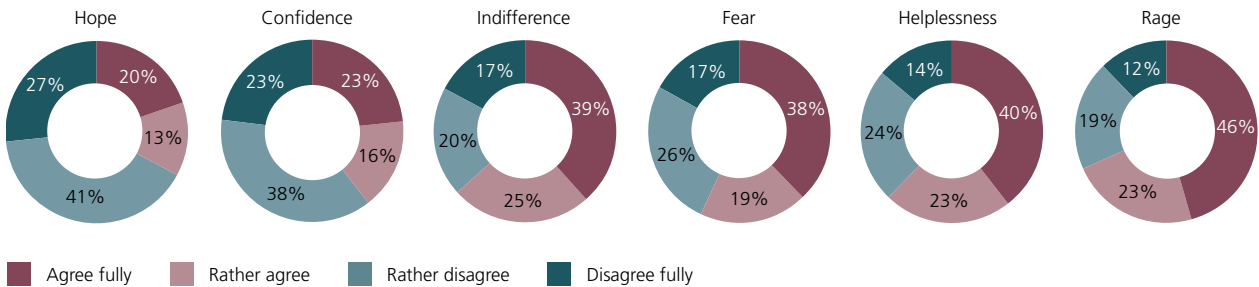
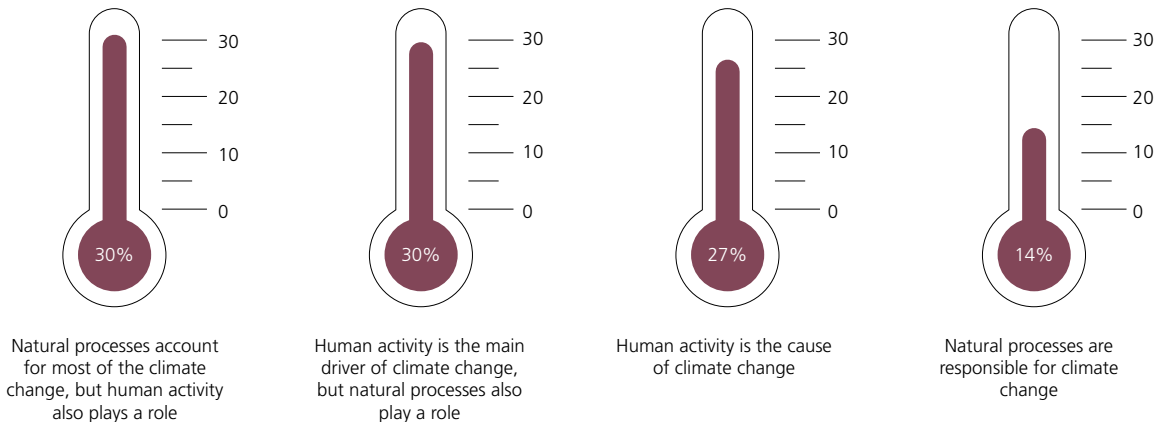


FIGURE 68: **SCIENTISTS WARN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE; IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING. THERE ARE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE. WHICH ONE IS CLOSEST TO YOUR OPINION? (%)**



Any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown.

During the focus group discussions, most participants agreed that human activity is the main reason for climate change. They cited the pollution of the environment with waste, car-emitted gases, plastic and unsustainable use of natural resources (i.e. logging). However, they do not exclude natural processes either. Generally participants are prone to say that both factors play some role.

“Honestly, I agree with both sides. I think climate changes because of both human activity and by itself. There are various forms of human pollution – plastic, CO2 emissions. And it changes by itself being influenced by the Earth’s motion, magnetic change. All these factors together influence our planet.”

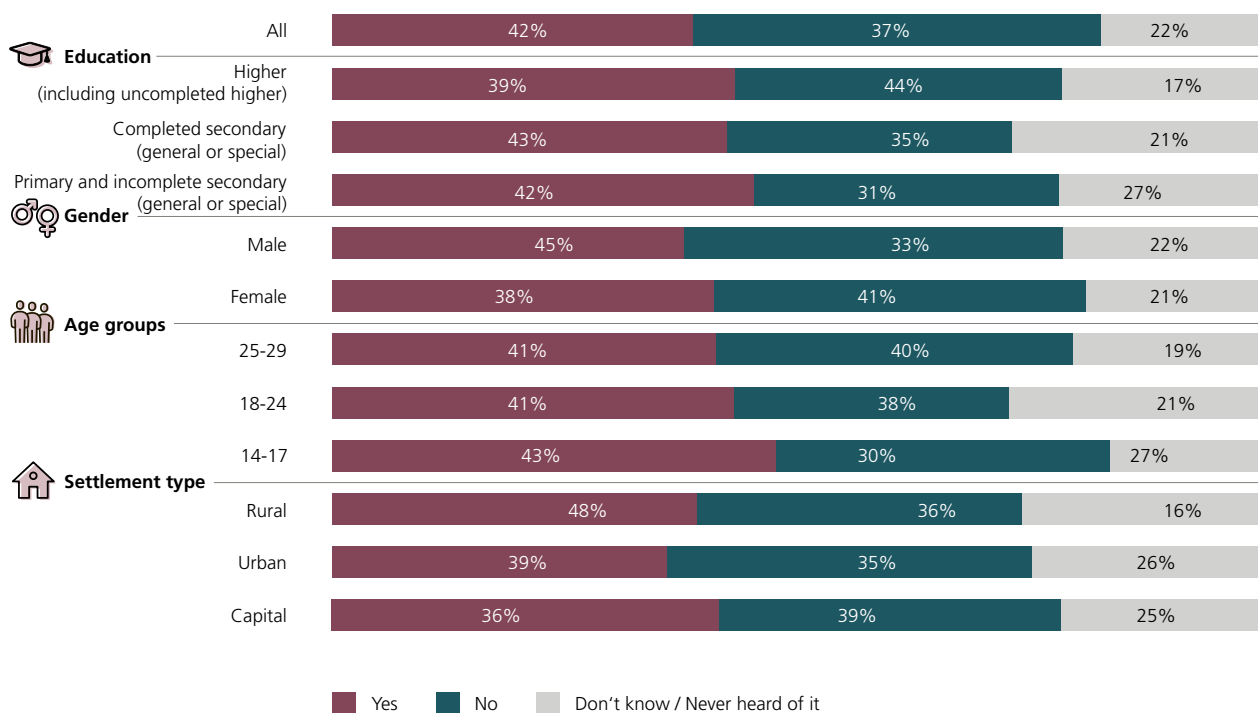
[Female, 17 years old]

The participants consider it more efficient to develop new survival technologies rather than fight against climate change. They are inclined to invest available resources to develop these survival technologies, yet they note that these should be safe from the climate preservation perspective.

During the discussions, one in three participants mention that they have changed their behaviour because they have become concerned about the climate change and ecological problems; in particular, they have refused or reduced the usage of plastic and paper, started sorting waste, cleaning rubbish and/or planting trees. Most of them (nine) were females.

The Amulsar gold mine development is a controversial project in Armenia in terms of environmental, ecological and human rights issues. Young people’s opinions regarding this project split into two parts: 41.6% approve and 36.7% disapprove of it (Figure 69). Notably, more than one-fifth of respondents (21.7%) mention that it is difficult for them to answer, or they never heard of the Amulsar mining project. Differences in view on the project are observed based on respondents’ sociodemographic characteristics. There are some notable differences regarding gender and settlement type. Young men are more likely to approve the Amulsar mining project (45.3%) than young women (37.8%). Those living in rural areas are also more likely to be supportive of the mining project (47.7%) than those who live in the capital (39.2%) or other urban areas (36.0%).

FIGURE 69: DO YOU APPROVE THE AMULSAR MINING PROJECT? (%)



Focus group discussions show that the majority of the participants say they are familiar with the problems surrounding the Amulsar project and they were against its exploitation because of potential harm caused to nature in the process.

“I think that it should not be exploited. Of course, we know that the government budget/treasury would benefit from the big amount of money coming from this gold mine; however it would cause a lot more damage to the area/environment around the mine, which will have an impact... In process of the exploitation of that mine, various chemicals and explosives will be used, and we know that the city of Jermuk is situated nearby, which is the most famous resort city in Armenia, and it is not worth destroying our wealth just for that gold, for that money. Let us think about our wealth.”

[Male, 15 years old]

One of the participants reasons that the exploiting organisation is private and not local; hence the exploitation efficiency is low.

“I did not study this issue deeply, but I heard the viewpoints of both sides in quite different cases, so to speak. In my opinion, the first thing that I am not okay with is that the operating company should be a British operating company. I mean, if it was operated by our country, I would somehow understand it in the sense that it would provide some income. But the whole income that is expected to come will be from taxes paid by a private company. In other words, it is different if we could manage our taxes personally. The second more convincing fact is that environmentalists have no reason to cheat, they are just people, they are researchers, and they have a pretty good reputation; they say it will have consequences that are irreversible for centuries. Third, I think that according to the mining industry, taxes will be 30 million dollars per year, and it is not such a huge amount of money, for which it is worth destroying the beautiful nature of Vayots Dzor for at least 50-100 years.”

[Male, 21 years old]

There also some participants who support the mining project. Those in favour of the exploitation cite the potential for economic development, which is especially important in the current economic crisis, a result of the 44-day war.

“Look, now our country needs money, means to enrich the economy, need for resources more than need for clean air. And if we think that by exploiting, that is not exploiting Amulsar, we should keep the air clean, instead we can take other measures to reduce the impact. For example, in our country cars don’t have exhaust systems.”

[Male, 27 years old]

“I repeat, we are in a very bad situation right now, very bad. Therefore, for even a small economic growth we definitely need production, I think that we need it. It’s true, there will be great damage, but in any case, the interests of the state are prioritised.”

[Female, 22 years old]

IMAGING THE FUTURE: POLITICAL CONCERNS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS

The potential resumption of the war in Karabakh is an alarming issue for Armenian youth. Cumulatively, 81.8% of young people in Armenia report that they see a risk of resumption of the war in Karabakh in the next 5 years (Figures 70 and 71). Moreover, 39.7% of them think that there is a definite risk. The percentage of young who deny the risk of resumption is relatively low: 7.7% of them choose the option “somewhat no” and 7.1% answer “definitely no”.

Respondents’ educational level, gender and age predict how they estimate the risk of Karabakh war resumption in the next 5 years. Respondents with higher education are more likely to see a risk that the war would resume (85.4%) than those with primary (79.1%) or secondary

education (81.6%) (Figure 71). So do the respondents in the higher age group (84.5%) when compared to those between 18 and 24 (79.8%) or under 17 (80.6%). Comparably, female respondents are more prone to think that there is a risk of continuation of the war (83.7%) than males (79.9%).

The qualitative data also indicates that young people in Armenia are rather worried about the resumption of Karabakh war. In some cases, it is mentioned as one of the major problems faced by Armenia.

“...because you cannot guess every second when war could start again, or some other problems may appear. I am from Kapan myself and it is a real problem for us right now; it is near the border, and it is very dangerous.”

[Female, 26 years old]

FIGURE 70: DO YOU SEE A RISK OF RESUMPTION OF THE WAR IN KARABAKH IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS? (%)

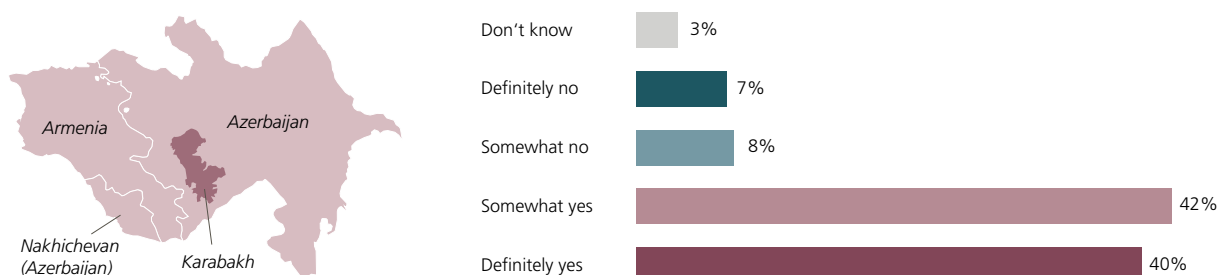
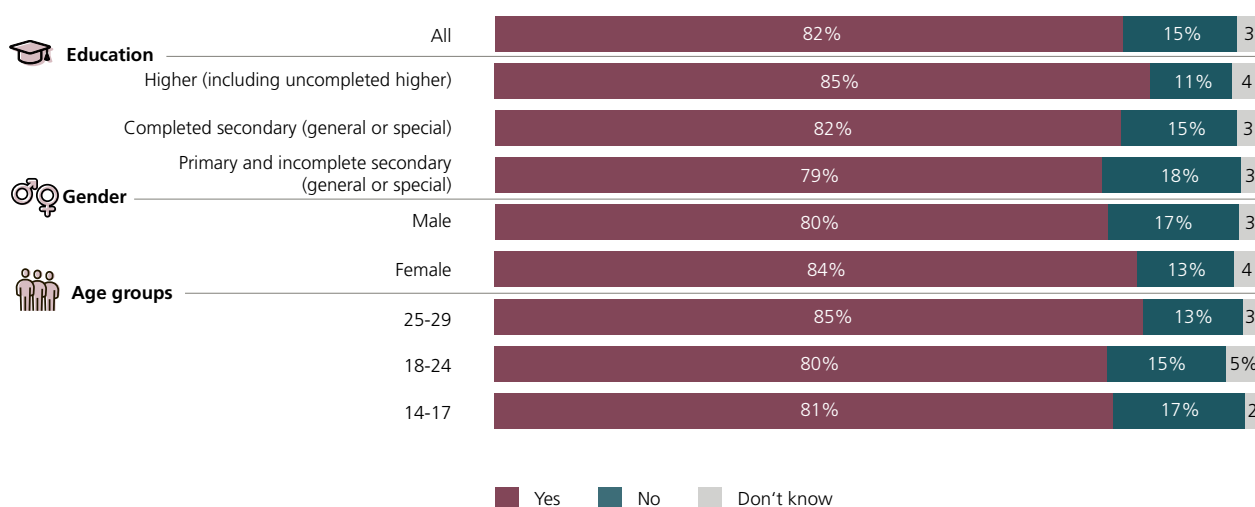


FIGURE 71: DO YOU SEE A RISK OF RESUMPTION OF THE WAR IN KARABAKH IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS? (%)



Overall, young people in Armenia feel optimistic about the future living standards of their families. 44.2% respondents think that the standard of living of their families will increase significantly in 5 years (Figure 72). Additionally, 37.4% think that it will rise slightly. There is some relationship between the household financial self-assessment level and perceptions of future living standards. Young people who are at the highest, 4th level of HH financial position are more likely to say that their future living standards will significantly increase (56.5%) than those in lower positions. Respondents in lower financial positions (1st and 2nd) are more likely to say that their living standards will stay the

same in 5 years (22.2% and 20.7%) when compared to those in higher positions. Young men tend to be considerably more optimistic of their future living standards (52.6%) than young women (36.2%). Age also effects these attitudes towards the future. The higher age group (24-29) young are less likely to say that future living standards of their families will increase significantly (39.6%) or slightly (36.5%) compared to those under 24. In addition, young people between 24 and 29 are comparably more likely to feel that their living standards will remain the same in 5 years (19.0%). No remarkable differences are observed in relation to education or settlement type.

FIGURE 72: DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF YOUR FAMILY WILL... (%)

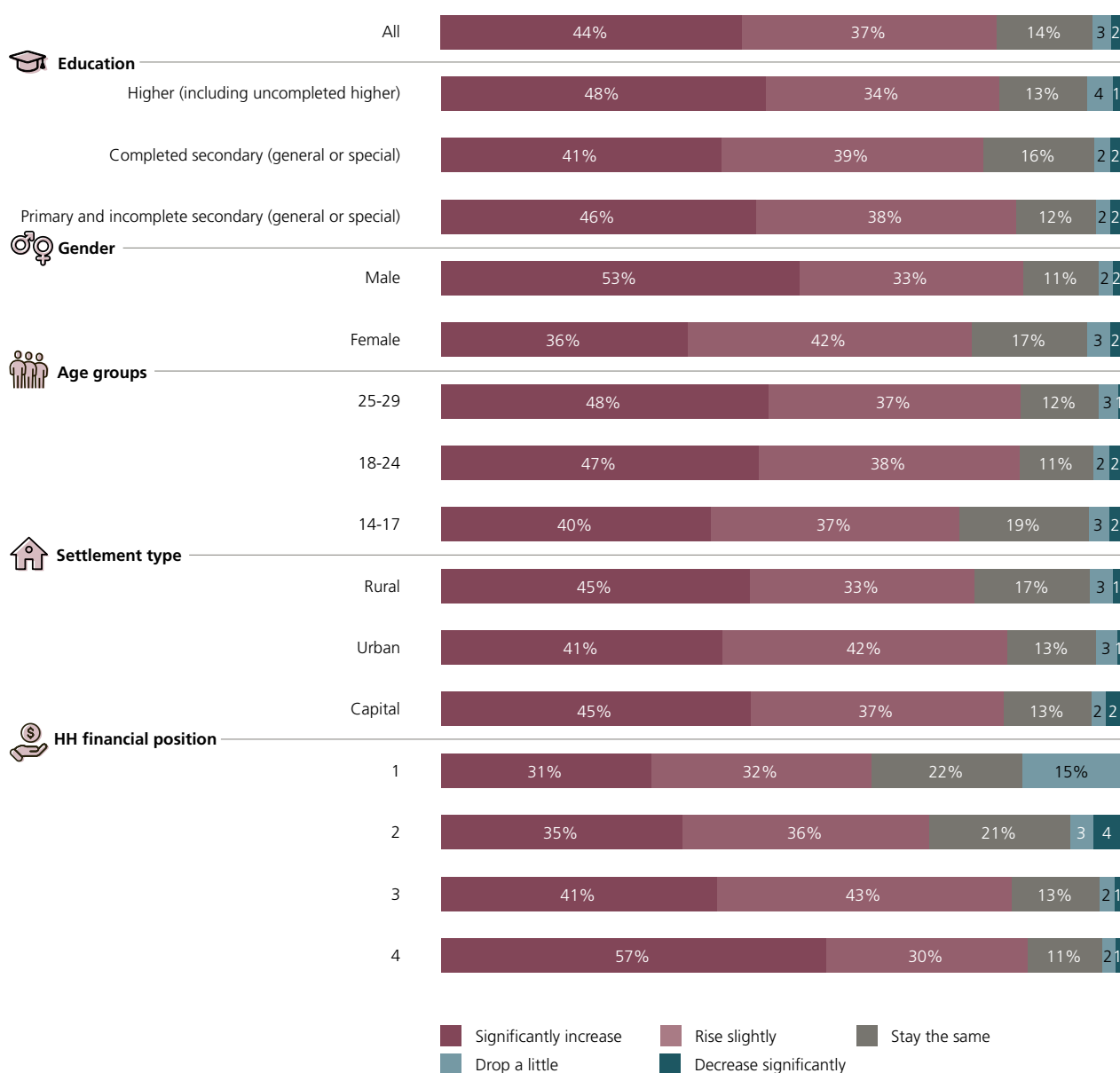
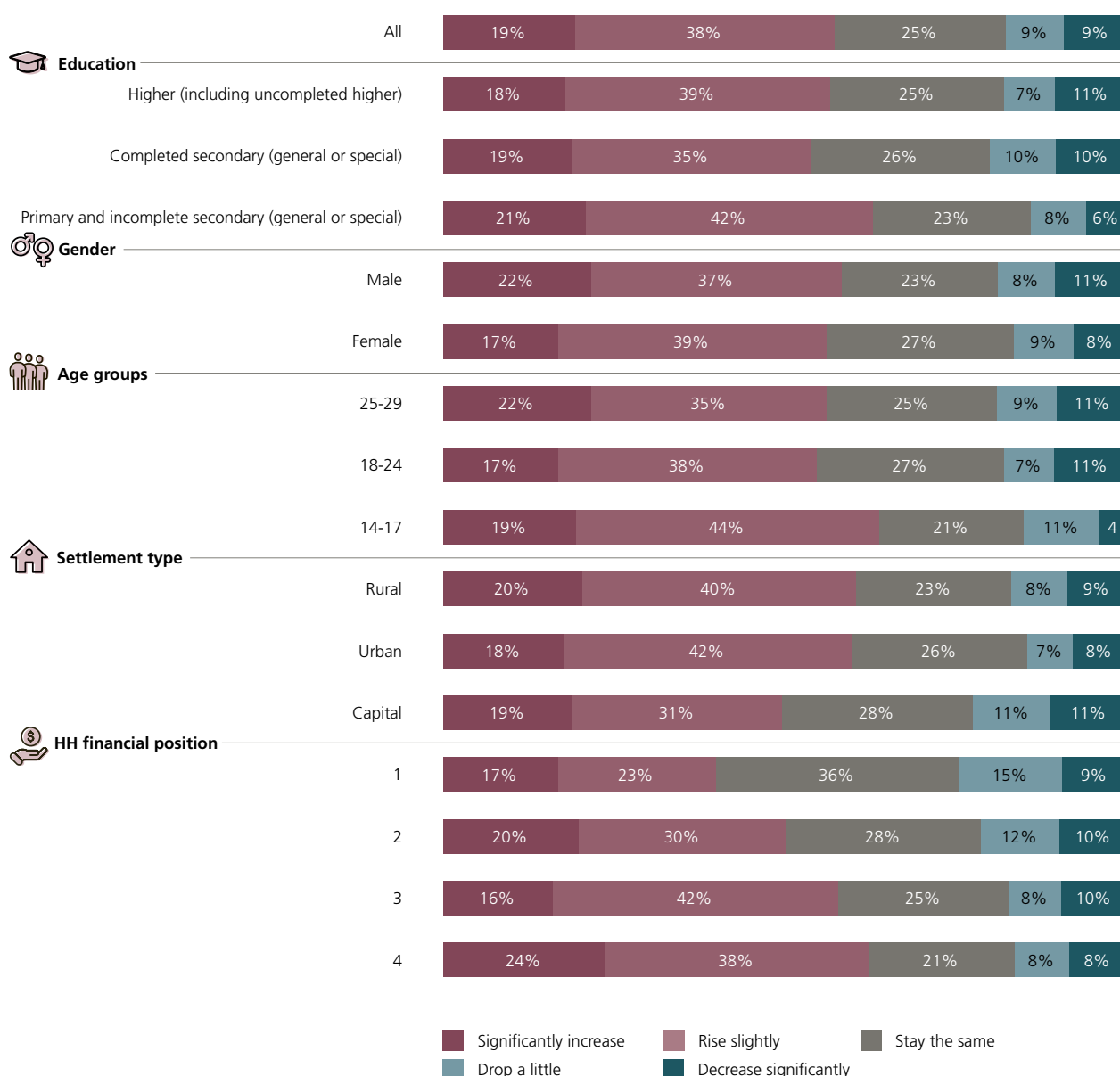


FIGURE 73: **DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE COUNTRY WILL...**
(%, BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS)



Young people are less optimistic when it comes to the future living standards in Armenia. Only 19.2% of respondents say that the living standards in Armenia will significantly increase in 5 years (Figure 73). 38.0% think that the standards will rise just slightly, and a quarter of young people think that the living situation will stay the same. The rest of them (17.8%) feel that it will drop a little or decrease significantly. Here again, as it was in case of family, respondents at the 4th or highest level of household financial position tend to be more optimistic than those in lower positions. Female respondents are slightly

more likely to think that the living standards in Armenia will stay the same (27.4%) than males (22.7%). Young people with primary or incomplete secondary education tend to be relatively more optimistic than those with higher levels of education. Respondents living in Yerevan are more likely to feel negatively about the future living standards in Armenia than those living in rural or urban areas of regions. Overall, Armenian youth feel more optimistic about the future living standards of their families than the future living situation in the country.

DISCUSSION

Almost half of the youth (mostly the least educated, male and rural youth) have a negative view of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It should be noted that the young people interviewed (born between 1993-2008) are those most affected by the social environment of post-Soviet Armenia. Their ideas about the Soviet Union, and partly the 90s, are at best determined by the stories of those close to them, and more often by the collective myths that are spread and circulated. From this point of view it is interesting to observe that they mostly tend to think that, compared to the 90s, it is now easier to earn money and live safely, and it has become more difficult to express oneself freely, to decide one's religious life or to live independently. Perhaps the last three statements will be difficult for young people who came of age in the 90s to agree with.

In general when asked about the history of Armenia in the last thirty years, young people singled out a number of political issues. These include corruption in the form of electoral fraud and patronage, a poorly equipped army and the recent defeat in war with its subsequent surrender of land to the enemy. Since the first Karabakh war, political mistakes include ineffective negotiations to ensure peace, the privatisation of industrial organisations after independence, the transfer of state property to the Russian Federation in lieu for debt and incorrect personnel policy in the army and legislature.

In general, it is interesting to parallel the reinterpretations of the past with the ideas young people have about the globally significant issues of the present. Referring to climate change in this context, Armenian youth consider it as an active global threat. At the same time, climate change is more likely to be seen as a global threat by the highly educated, female, older and rural youth. Moreover, when hearing about climate change and efforts to reduce it, young people mostly feel anger, helplessness, indifference and fear; they report much less hope and confidence. It should be noted that despite the sensitivity of young people to environmental issues, only 1/3 of them expressed their opposition to the operation of the Amulsar mine, which is especially favoured by male and rural youth. Despite the results of the quantitative research, the qualitative research showed that most of young people are familiar with the problem of Amulsar and are against its exploitation due to the potential damage to nature.

In general, young people are seriously concerned about the possibility of the resumption of the Karabakh war within the next five years. Although young people's perceptions of living conditions in the country in five years are less optimistic, they are mostly more optimistic about their personal future, believing that their family's living conditions will be better in five years. Young people with higher socio-economic status, males and those of younger age are more optimistic about their future.

10

CONCLUSION



This research revealed the unique and diverse collective image of the contemporary Armenian youth. In general, Armenian youth, their worldviews and attitudes are differentiated depending on gender (male/female), place of residence (village/city), age range (14-17/18-24/25-29), educational level and marital status. The local and global social dimensions are mixed in the opinions of today's youth; they are characterised by a shaky nature and an uncertainty of values. In one case they value Western values, expressing liberal positions; in another case they position themselves in opposition to Europe and not considering themselves European. The subjective assessments of young people and their objective living conditions are also often contradictory. Although they rank themselves as higher than other young people on the scale of subjective well-being, in fact only 1/3 of them have personal income, and more than 1/2 of them depend on parents and relatives in financial and other social matters.

Although compared to the results of the 2015 survey the young people of Armenia have begun to place greater value on participation in elections, they continue to remain politically passive and indifferent to politics. They are also quite passive in volunteer practices, and their activism is more rational and self-motivated rather than altruistic. Moreover, their trust in civil society organisations is quite low.

In the context of the military-political crises, the political priorities of young people are primarily concerned by the conflict with neighbours, territorial integration and foreign political tensions. Only secondly do participants discuss socio-economic issues. Against this background, the trust of young people, especially towards political parties and the media, is very low.

Being raised in post-Soviet Armenia, the youth have contradictory and ambiguous ideas about the Soviet past and the 90s. Their perceptions are at best conditioned by the stories of those close to them, more often by shared and circulated collective myths. Conflicting perceptions about the past are combined with anxieties and fears about the global problems of the present. In particular, climate change and efforts to mitigate it evoke rage, helplessness, indifference and fear; less often do they inspire hope and confidence.

In general young people have serious concerns about the future, considering the possibility of a resumption of war in the near future. Despite this young people are more optimistic about the future socio-economically, and most of them do not intend to leave the country long-term or permanently.

By generalising the collective image of young people and distinguishing them according to socio-demographic indicators, we get the following picture.

Sex	
Male	Female
Social inclusion	Social exclusion
Financial independence	Financial dependence
Mostly pro-Russia	Mostly pro-USA
Age	
Low	High
Optimism	Pessimism
Mostly pro-USA	Mostly pro-Russia
Tolerance	Intolerance
Family values	Civic values
Residence	
Village	City/town
Financial dependence	Financial independence
Educationally active	Educationally passive
Education	
Low	High
Optimism	Pessimism

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NOTE FOR ALL INFOGRAPICS: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, so that original values were kept instead and/or any differences in the presentation result from the decimal not being shown. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

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ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES

This publication is a part of the FES International Youth Studies. Starting in 2009 FES has conducted numerous Youth Studies around the globe. Since 2018, Youth Studies have specifically focused on Southern Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Central Europe and the Baltic States. Further studies are being planned for the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as in individual countries around the globe. The International Youth Studies are a flagship project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in its endeavour to research, shape and strengthen the democracy of the future. It strives to contribute to the European discourse on how young generations see the development of their societies as well as their personal future in a time of national and global transformation. The representative studies combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research in close partnership with the regional teams aiming for a high standard in research and a sensitive handling of juvenile attitudes and expectations.

A dedicated Advisory Board (Dr Miran Lavrič, Univ.-Prof. Dr Marius Harring, Daniela Lamby, András Bíró-Nagy and Dr Mārtiņš Kaprāns) supports the methodological and conceptual design of the Youth Studies. The Board consists of permanent and associated members and provides essential expertise for the overall project.

AUTHORS

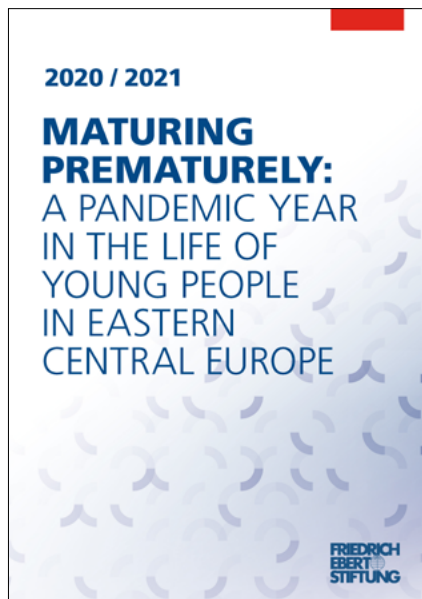
Harutyun Vermishyan, Ph.D., is head of the Chair (2017) of Theory and History of Sociology at Yerevan State University, co-founder (2009) and president (2020) of “Societies” expert centre NGO. Harutyun has more than fifteen years of teaching and expert work experience in local and international organisations. Since 2008 he has delivered undergraduate: “General Sociology”, “Historical Sociology”, History of Armenian Sociology” and graduate: “Research Design and Methods”, “Sociological Analysis”, “Methods of Comparative Historical Analysis”, “Qualitative Research Methods in Criminology” courses. His professional interests include methodological issues in sociological research, problems of identity crises and ideological/cultural transformations of urban space, historical analysis. He is the author of more than thirty scientific and educational publications among which are three monographs: “Rurality Crisis in Armenia” (2022), “Independence Generation” (2016), “Local Identities in Yerevan: The structures of Urban Space” (2015),

“Issues of Social Identity Preservation in Armenian Rural Communities” (2013).

Sona Balasanyan is senior researcher at the Laboratory of Applied Sociological Research, Yerevan State University and the CEO of Caucasus Research Resource Center – Armenia. Sona holds MA (2009) and PhD (2012) degrees in Sociology from the Yerevan State University (YSU), as well as MSc in Education (Research Design and Methodology) from the University of Oxford, Department of Education, UK (2015). Currently involved at the University of Vienna for PhD in Education. During her time in the UK, she passed an internship at the Oxford Learning Institute. Since 2010, as an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, YSU, Dr Balasanyan has delivered a series of courses (including Media Text Analysis, Evaluation Methodologies and Mixed Methods Research). She was involved in project-based activities collaborating with national and international organisations, among which are the US Department of State, UNDP, CRRC-Armenia, Open Society Foundation, State Committee of Science and Scientific Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (the Matenadaran). Sona was a Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung scholarship holder, an AGBU scholar and is a Luys alumna. She has authored three books (in Armenian), articles, essays and analytical reports.

Tatyana Darbinyan is a master’s student at the “Sociological Research Methodology” study programme at the Faculty of Sociology, Yerevan State University, and programme and communications coordinator (2022) at “Societies” expert centre NGO. Tatyana obtained a bachelor’s degree (2021) in Sociology from the Yerevan State University. She took part in the Erasmus+ Student Exchange Programme (2022) studying at Ludwigshafen University of Economics and Society, Germany. Tatyana passed a research fellowship (2021) at “Societies” expert centre in the framework of the “Data for Accountable and Transparent Action” (DATA) programme cocreated and supported by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by Eurasia Partnership Foundation. Her research interests include issues of volunteering and civic participation and youth studies. Tatyana coauthored a scientific article published in the Journal of Sociology: Bulletin of Yerevan University: “Ideological Foundations and Cultural Manifestations of Youth Volunteering in Armenia” (2021).

OTHER YOUTH STUDIES PUBLICATIONS

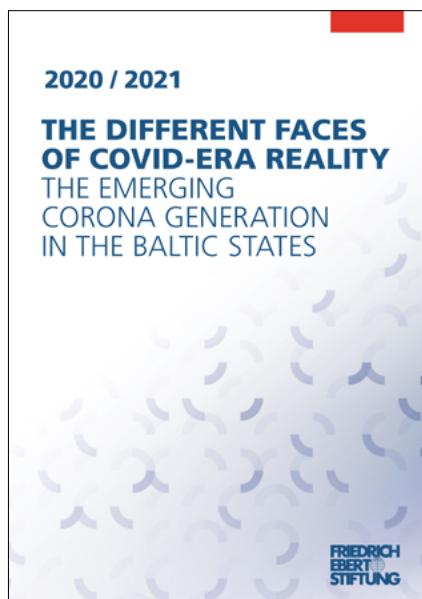


The coronavirus pandemic has been a great shock to societies in Central Europe. The restrictions it has brought about are extensive, and must have been particularly new for the young generation that cannot remember the eras before the democratic regimes were established in this region. In this report youths' experiences of the first year of the pandemic were studied in four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in each country, in which young people talked about a variety of topics and issues that had impacted their lives. In the study it is argued that in areas like healthcare, inter-generational relationships and education young people were pushed into becoming like adults, that is, into maturing prematurely.



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The goal of this research report is to explore the life of youth in the Baltic States during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). The report focuses on how young people perceive and make sense out of social as well psychological changes caused by pandemic and how they position themselves in terms of these changes. The focus of this study lies on young people between the age of 14 and 29. The report is based on online interviews with 30 respondents that were conducted in April 2021 via the platform MS Teams. Ten respondents were interviewed in each of the Baltic States.



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