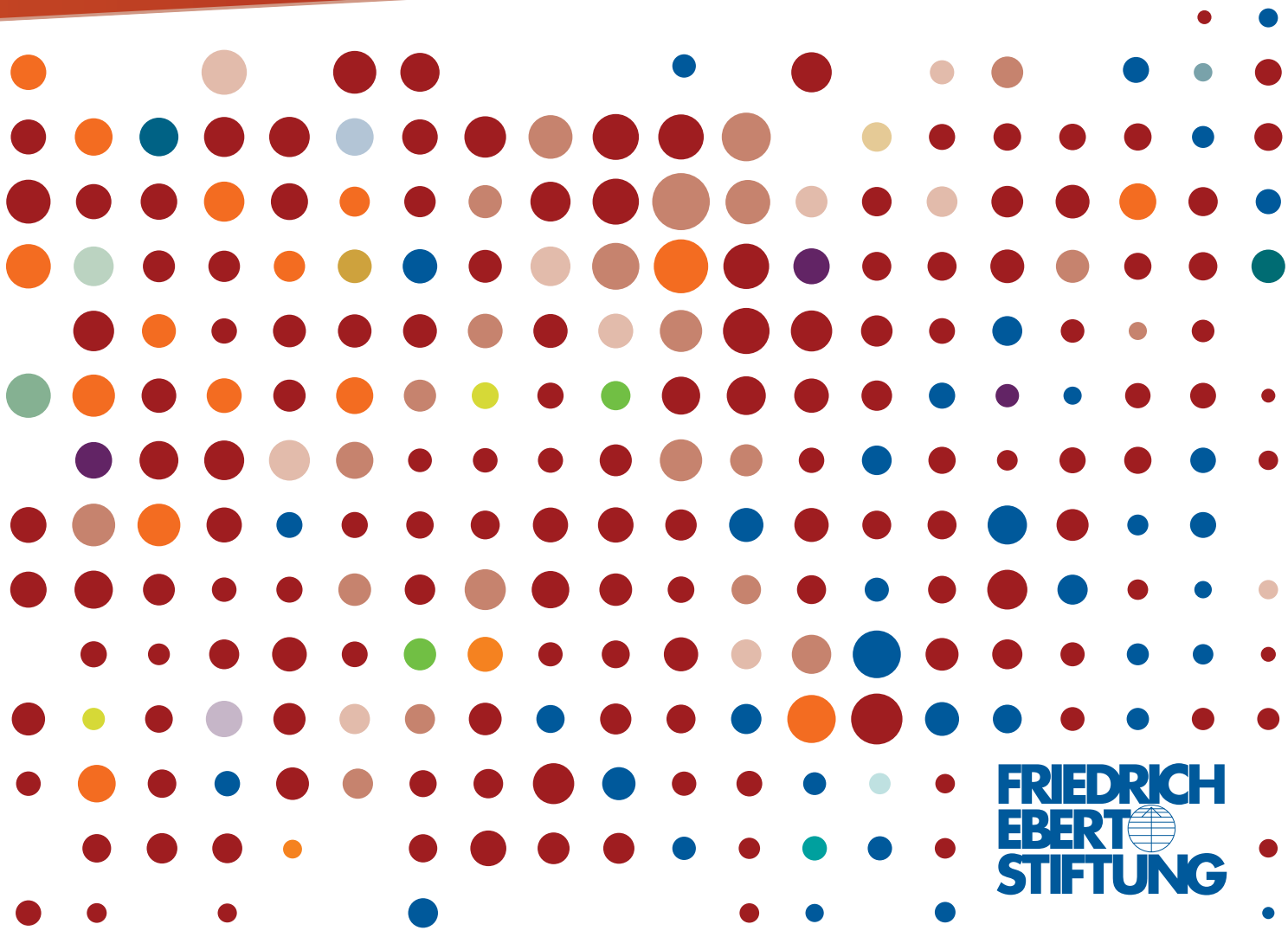
YOUTH STUDY KYRGYZSTAN:

LOST IN TRANSITION?

2020/2021

A study exploring values and attitudes of young people in Kyrgyzstan



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YOUTH STUDIES CENTRAL ASIA, SOUTHEAST AND EASTERN EUROPE 2018/2019 AND 2020/2021

The "FES Youth Studies" is an international youth research project carried out in many countries in Central Asia, East, Southeast Europe and the Caucasus. The main objective of the surveys has been to identify, describe and analyse attitudes of young people and patterns of behaviour in contemporary society.

The data for "Youth Study Kyrgyzstan" was collected in Spring 2020 from 1000 respondents aged 14–29. A broad range of issues were addressed, including young peoples' experiences and aspirations in different realms of life, such as education, employment, political participation, democratic aspirations, family relationships, leisure time and use of information and communications technology, but also their values, attitudes and beliefs. Findings are presented in Russian and English language.

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2020/2021

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FOREWORD

Kyrgyzstan is considered a young nation, with more than half of its population under the age of 25. What are the values and views of the young people who not only grew up during the transitional times of the formation of an independent Kyrgyz Republic, but also represent the majority of the country's population? The authors of this study, Dr. Marius Harring, Daniela Lambi, Julia Peitz, and Medet Tiulegenov, attempted to answer these questions by analyzing the results of a national quantitative survey of 1,000 young citizens conducted from March to May 2020. To better understand Kyrgyzstan's society and where it is headed, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation periodically publishes youth studies. The obtained data represents comprehensive information on relevant topics that will be of interest not only to policy-makers, but also to other stakeholders engaged in youth work.

Since the survey was conducted in 2020, it does not take into account some national and regional affairs that occurred in 2021, such as the transition to a Presidential republic, the drafting of a new Constitution, the election of the new Parliament, the exacerbation of interregional tensions at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border and overtaking of Afghanistan by the Taliban. Nonetheless, the study delineates the realities of Kyrgyz youth; additionally, Focus Group Discussions offer valuable insights into young people's perceptions of the Covid-19 pandemic and the events following the October 2020 Parliamentary Election – both of which are perceived as critical.

Detachment from the ethos of the Soviet Union, the search for a national identity, the growing market economy, and globalization are just some of the contextual factors that shape the lives of young people in Kyrgyzstan. Is this a generation that is lost in transition, or can we see the shapes of forming identities? This study allows for a better grasp of the values, attitudes, and aspirations held by young Kyrgyzstani citizens regarding topics such as education, political engagement, migration, employment, and other subjects. This study also attempts to crystallize our comprehension of present developments in the country by offering data on a vast array of social and political topics.

To visualize a representative of the youth and an average citizen, readers should pay attention to the findings on the following topics: perspectives for the future, values, migration, and its relation with employment and education, and political engagement. According to the findings, a passive social-political stance and being stuck between intentions and actions — two sides of the same coin — can be discerned in an encompassing panorama of the values and attitudes of Kyrgyzstan's youth.

Unengaged and disillusioned, young people have little or no interest in politics and consequently demonstrate low interest in participating in political processes. However, a younger cohort (14-17) expresses interest in assuming a political role – an intention the average Kyrgyz citizen might lose as he/she matures and assumes more social roles. The passive "recipient" position is characterized by a broader interpretation of the state; for many young people the state consists of two main components: The President and the people, with the President acting on behalf of the state as a provider while the people, on the other hand, act as passive recipients. Therefore, unsurprisingly, support for a strong leader and authoritarian practices do not conflict with desires for democratic developments and the promotion of human rights. The professed discrepancies in views are framed by the notion of the state as an active actor that must take responsibility for not only providing welfare for its citizens, but also to act as a defender (shown by respondents' high level (40%) of full trust in the army) and promoter of democracy and human rights..

Interestingly, young people place a greater emphasis on social engagement (such as volunteering, signing petitions, etc.) than on political participation. For instance, a surge in youth participation was recorded during both the October 2020 events and the first wave of Covid-19. During the October 2020 events, youth inclusion, alongside transparency stood out as a leitmotif of the protests. Young people comprised the majority of the protesters and supporters during the events. Moreover, youth social engagement was notable during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic where youth volunteering organizations assisted doctors, provided transport, and gave coverage to the happenings of the pandemic. 34% of participation in the Parliament 2021 election echoes the following arguments deduced from the study. These actions highlight the level of interest to help when it comes to fellow countrymen and countrywomen.

Conformity of political views with those of their family, coupled with political disengagement and apathy, are among the factors negatively affecting young people's desire to migrate. A significant majority (81,6%) of the respondents believe that both social and economic advancements await Kyrgyzstan in the future, and this optimism does not negate young people's desire for improved living conditions and understanding that there are comparatively more chances to find a job abroad, based on either a higher level of education or a lower level of education.

Despite the political apathy, young people place significant importance on such values as youth participation, freedom of speech, democracy, and human rights.Though a contradiction could, and should, be expected, being stuck between intentions and actions stems from being passive "recipients". This idea is also supported by young people's strong affiliation with their immediate social environment (family, friends) – a perceived zone of bi-directional influences, where national and global processes do not matter much as long as they do not affect these circles. The family institution acts not only as a support group but also as the main foundation for forming political views, gender roles, social expectations (e.g., choice of a partner). The young generation places great emphasis on family and over the course of their lives tries to extend the family circle, rather than separate from it. Consequently, as family and the immediate social circles stand as cornerstones in young people's pyramid of priorities - it is not surprising that the most active civic positions are assumed by young people on a local level. Thus, participation in local volunteering initiatives, involvement in the social life of city districts, and/or village-wide cleaning works are far more widespread among young people than participation or initiation of nation-wide initiatives. Moreover, experiences differ along regional, settlement, and age lines, bringing out different attitudes and views in young people. This might be considered as an extra obstacle to the aforementioned nationwide initiatives. Thus, markers of identity might differ to such a degree that it is simply easier to associate with fellow citizens on the local level.

As dispiriting as it may seem, there are optimistic findings in the present study as well. Young people do actively engage in local initiatives and actively partake in Internet activism. With Internet access not being an issue for the majority of young people, it serves not only as a source of communication, but also as a main news source. As found with the aforementioned insights, it must be noted that the Kyrgyz youth is generally satisfied (95,6%) with their lives. This, coupled with a low interest in politics and a deeper interest in their closest social circles might indicate that young people are optimistic about what is happening in these circles and are not looking farther than their immediate surroundings.

Passivity and apathy are the main factors characterizing youth political engagement in Kyrgyzstan. However, social engagement, especially on the local level, is quite prominent and was demonstrated in 2021. Democracy and human rights stand as significant values, though they are expected to be practiced and promoted by the state rather than the individual. The exposition of youth to more local initiatives, the popularization of political education, and the development of an inclusive civic identity are seen as possible ways to encourage a thoughtful civic engagement among young citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

Daria Gavriushchenko, Program Manager
Friedrich Ebert Foundation Kyrgyzstan

1

INTRODUCTION

To grow up in Kyrgyzstan is to grow up under unstable political and economic conditions. A landlocked country in Central Asia with a little over 6.5 million residents, Kyrgyzstan is a relatively young state in terms of its political and economic structure, which declared its independence on 31 August 1991 amid the collapse of the Soviet Union and distinguished itself by being an "island of democracy" among the successor republics in the early years of the Post-Soviet world. In its early years, Kyrgyzstan started a transition period from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. The country concurrently saw a series of internal and international conflicts, as well as a temporary trend towards an authoritarian presidential democracy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The developments that followed were beset by economic troubles, rooted primarily in government corruption, and by social conflicts between the comparatively wealthy north of the country and the predominantly rural south. Events came to a head in the "Tulip Revolution" of 2005 and in massive demonstrations in 2010. The latter ultimately culminated in a constitutional referendum which laid the foundations for the establishment of a parliamentary republic. This republic was consolidated by another amendment of the constitution in 2016 and by a strengthening of the country's parliament. More constitutional amendments were to take place in April of 2021, transitioning the country to a presidential republic. Economically, Kyrgyzstan is the second-poorest state in Central Asia. These political, social, and economic tensions still remain in the present day, affecting successive generations of young people.

Being born after the declaration of independence in 1991, the current generation of young people has grown up with the realities of this transitional period. Currently, over half the population is under 25 years of age, while the average age is 26.2 years old (National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, 2021).

The nation's youth is not only a reflection of the socio-political realities of 30 years of independence, but is also the main force defining Kyrgyzstan's future. That the Kyrgyzstani youth are not a group that can easily be ignored can be seen in the country's demographic structure. According to the Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030 (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2019), youth represent a major cornerstone of development and are seen as important social agents. In this context, it is crucial to be aware of young people's perspectives and values they hold.

This is the starting point of the present study, which explicitly focuses on young people in Kyrgyzstan for the purpose of identifying their current living situations and views on a variety of topics, such as life satisfaction, future prospects, values, families, education, health, leisure time, migration, and politics, as well as patterns in their attitudes to these issues.

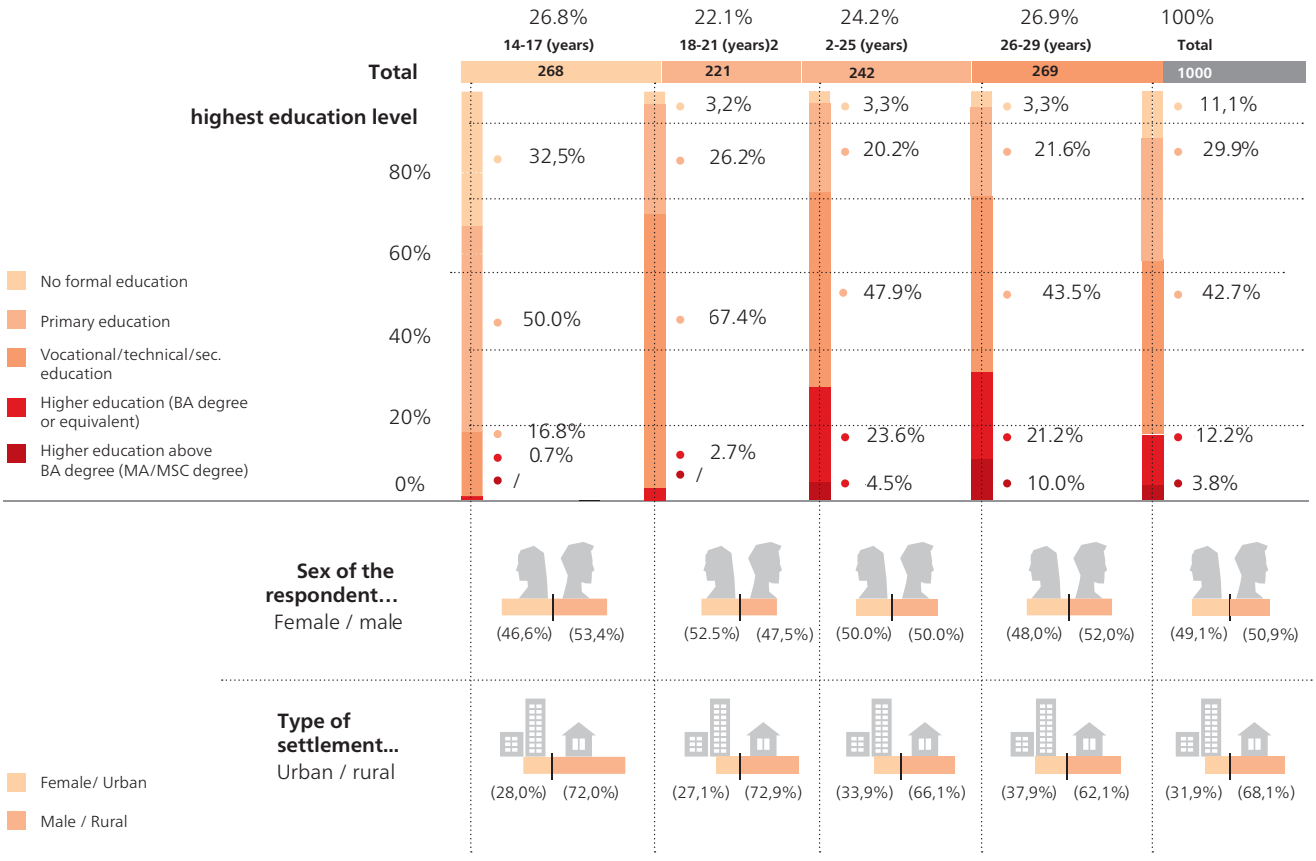
2

METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of the present study, which aims to pinpoint the reality of the living conditions of young people in Kyrgyzstan from their own perspective, is supplied by a quantitative ex post facto survey and a cross-sectional study design with one date of data collection. The survey was followed by supplementary qualitative interviews with young people in order to probe individual issues in greater depth.

At the time of the study in 2020, the part of the population between 14 and 29 years of age in Kyrgyzstan consisted of 1,704,335 people (National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, 2021). In order to draw conclusions about this population, a representative sample of n = 1,000 young people was selected from this age group for the quantitative study. Socio-demographic aspects such as age, sex, region of residence, and education played a key role in the composition of the sample (Table 1).

TABLE 1. **Composition of the sample by age groups according to socio-demographic criteria**
Young people aged 14 to 29, n = 1,000; absolute frequencies. Percentage values in parentheses refer to the total.



The four age groups were approximately equal in size; the sample included 268 young people aged between 14 and 17 years, 221 aged between 18 and 21, 242 aged between 22 and 25, and 269 aged between 26 and 29 (for detailed documentation of the age structure of all young people in the sample, see fig. 1). In addition, the standardised interview succeeded in tracing the differences in access to education among the youth of Kyrgyzstan. About one in ten (n = 111) of the young people in the sample had not completed their secondary education. About one in three (29,9%) had only completed primary school at the time of the interview. Almost half 42,7% (the largest portion of the sample) had secondary credentials either through vocational or technical training, or by having completed secondary school. In contrast, only a small number had a university degree. 12,2% stated that they had completed a bachelor's degree, while 3,8% had a master of arts or master of sciences degree.

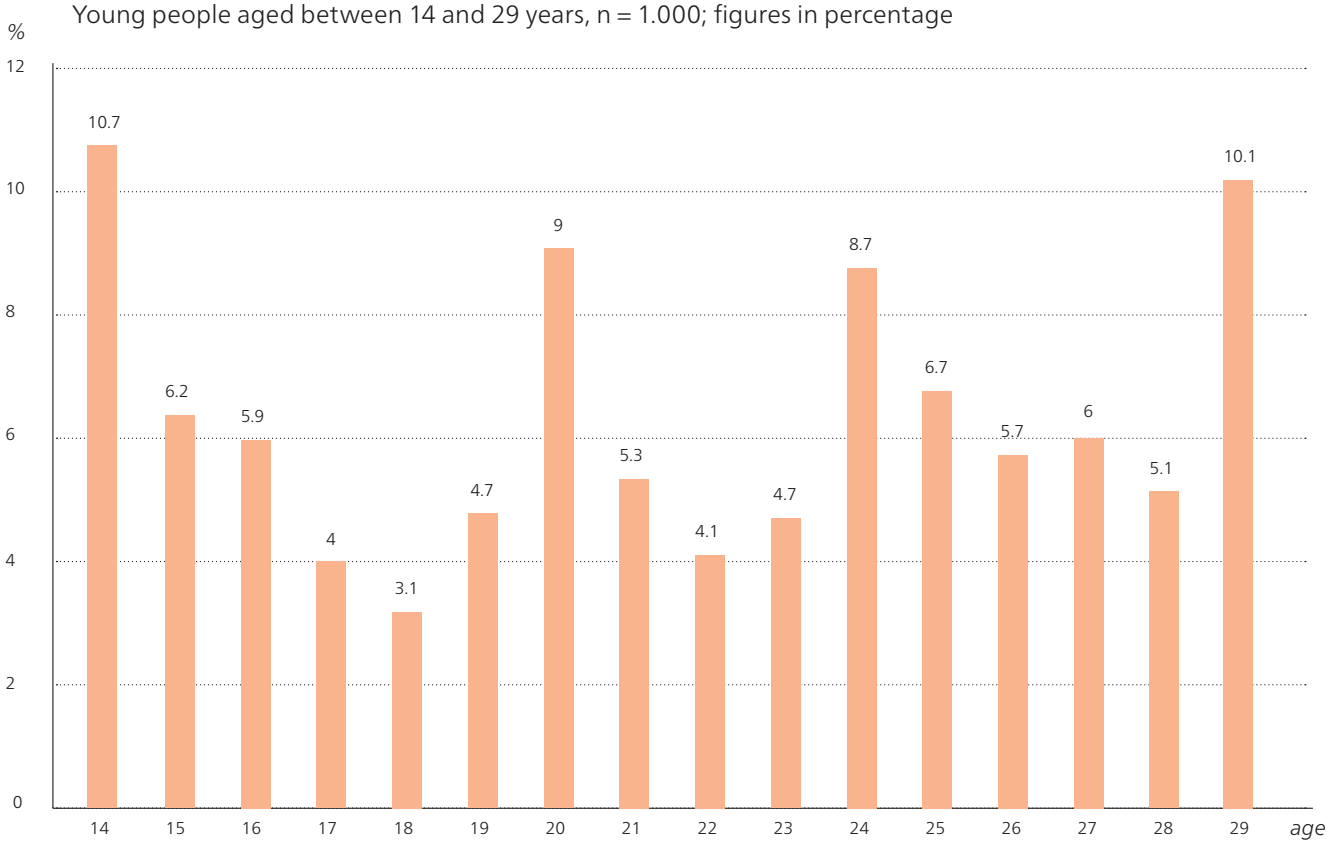
The sex ratio is approximately equal, with 50,9% male and 49,1% female interviewees in the cross-sectional sample. Across both sexes, the median age of the young people at the time of the study was 21.6 years. A glance at the regions of residence shows that two-thirds of the young people (68,1%) had grown up in rural areas, and one-third (31,9%) in urban areas.

The survey took place in the period between March and May, 2020. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we abandoned our original intention of conducting face-to-face interviews, and instead used an online questionnaire.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, we began by developing a quantitative survey consisting of a standardised questionnaire predominantly employing closed answers, i.e., a limited selection of answers. The questionnaire was based on a proven tool that had previously been used in FES Youth Studies in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, which we adapted to reflect conditions in Kyrgyzstan with questions specific to this country. The total questionnaire comprised 133 questions with a total of 472 items grouped into nine thematic sections: Leisure and Lifestyle; Values, Religion, and Beliefs; Family and Friends; Migration/Mobility; Education; Employment; and Politics. Added to these thematic sections are socio-demographic questions and a module specific to Kyrgyzstan. The implementation of country-specific questions served to assess national interests and needs. The closed, predefined answers were constructed using three- or five-point Likert scales. The standardised questionnaire was used in all participating Central Asian countries in order to facilitate regional and longitudinal comparisons. To ensure their validity, the catalogue of questions was translated and back-translated in a double-blind procedure before the field phase – in other words, the questionnaire was translated from English into the various target languages and then translated back into English in order to verify the accuracy and unambiguity of the questions.

FIG. I. **Age distribution of the sample**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



The quantitative data was analysed via SPSS using univariate and bivariate analysis procedures and tests of significance to examine statistically relevant correlations. Chi2-based test procedures were applied for this purpose. These tests examine the extent to which the empirically observed distribution of values deviates from a theoretically assumed distribution of values that would be expected in the case of statistical independence of the units of analysis and determines the distribution of values throughout the overall sample that may be assumed if the domain is statistically independent (see, e.g., Backhaus et al. 2008).

The focus group discussions were conducted in 4 locations, allowing us to obtain data on the attitudes and perceptions of Kyrgyzstan's youth, as well as helping us study the needs of young people with different backgrounds. In the framework of the project, 4 focus group discussions (FGD) were held with target communities in Bishkek city, Sokuluk village (Chui region), Osh city, and Osh region. The sample for this focus group discussion was chosen so that young people of different ages would feel comfortable ignoring "authoritative opinions". The related sample consisted of age groups between 14-22 years old and between 17-29 years old, to reduce the age difference between respondents in the same session. The breakdown of the focus groups was as follows:

— Bishkek: 1 group of respondents aged 14–22;
— Osh: 1 group of respondents aged 14–22;
— Osh region: 1 group of respondents aged 17–29;
— Chui region: 1 group of respondents aged 17–29.

Each focus group had 8 people in total, with the discussion lasting for 90-120 minutes. All 4 discussions were recorded with respondents remaining anonymous. Topics for the discussions were developed in consultation with the authors and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and were correlated with the survey questions.

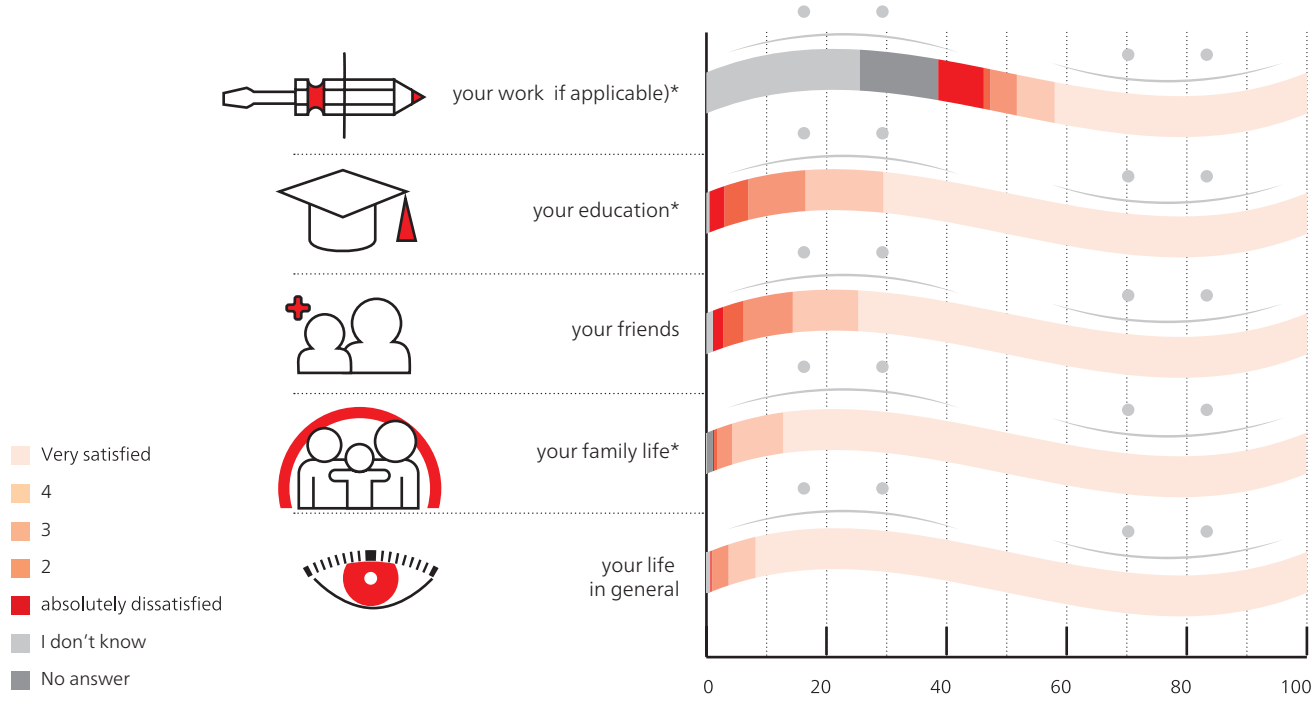
3

SATISFACTION AND PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUTURE

For a deeper understanding of the current life situations and views of young people in Kyrgyzstan, a closer look at the subjective self-assessment of their quality of life is instructive. Against this background, the first crucial question is how they are doing at the present time, i.e., how satisfied they currently are with their lives. Thus, one of the focal points of the study was asking young people about their individual feelings of wellbeing in different contexts. The analysis provides indications of the primary benchmarks by which young people in the survey defined their wellbeing and the factors on which it depended, as well as the extent to which young people differed in their perceptions of wellbeing. Against the

FIG. 2: **Young people's satisfaction**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



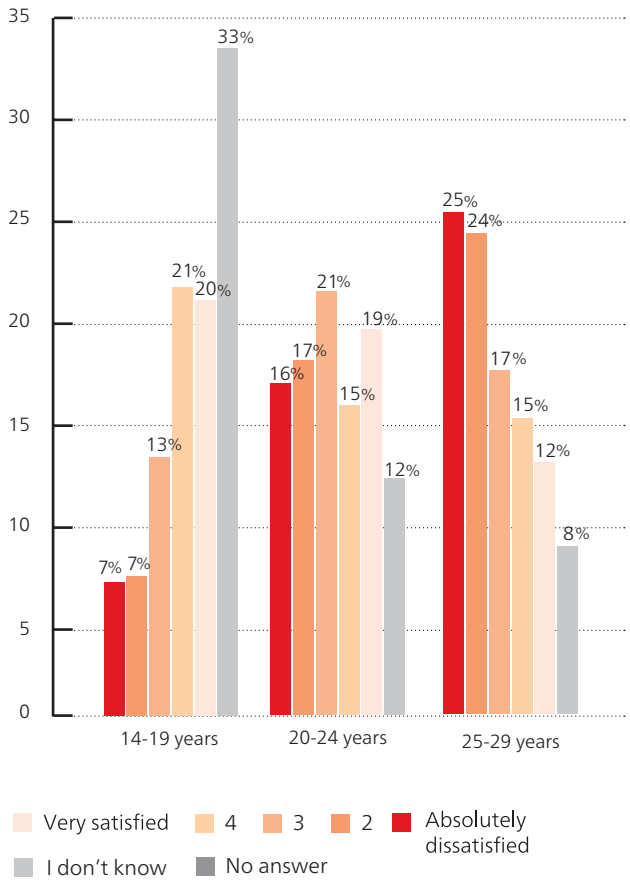
background of this generation's subjective assessment of their current wellbeing, their prognoses for the future were then examined, not only with respect to the young people's own lives, but also to the development of Kyrgyzstan.

Young people are currently fairly satisfied with their lives in general (fig. 2). 95,6% stated that they were very satisfied (87,1%) or satisfied (8,5%). This predominantly positive assessment pervaded the entire cohort of young people; there were no significant differences either between the sexes or between age or ethnic groups. While young people living in rural areas express somewhat greater satisfaction overall, the main factor on which young Kyrgyz people's life satisfaction depends is how happy they are with their family lives. Additionally, education plays a decisive role alongside employment. Friendships did not affect the degree to which young people were satisfied with their lives.

In other words, those young Kyrgyz people who were satisfied with their families, their education, and their work subjectively reported greater overall satisfaction.

It's very easy [to get a job in the informal sector]. For example, you can come up and ask, well, if you come up, they'll take you because you can work. Especially in such places the wages are quite low, so many do not worry about paying a

FIG. 3: **Satisfaction with education by age**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



I would like to get an education there, to go to some university in Europe or America, because they have a better quality of education. To get some valuable experience that I can use here. Then when I come back here, I can support other young people who don't have such opportunities'

FGD, Kyrgyz, age 17, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

I am satisfied with my place of work but not satisfied with my salary, because the money is not enough to live on.'

FGD, Russian, age 24, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

lot to their employees.

On closer examination, a comparison of these spheres of life reveals a clear ranking (fig. 2). At the top of the standings is the young people's high satisfaction with their family lives, which a total of 96.6% describe as very satisfactory (91,8%) or satisfactory (4,8%). This area also has the greatest impact on their general life satisfaction: those who were happy in their families were more satisfied with their lives, independently of their financial and material wealth. No other social contacts are so closely linked with life satisfaction. The second most important factor in this generation's life satisfaction is their circle of friends. Three-quarters (74,7%) said that they are very satisfied with their friends, while another 10,9% say they are satisfied.

Education is the sphere of life occupying third place in the satisfaction rankings, with 83,5% saying they were very satisfied or satisfied with their education. 9,5% were ambivalent, while 6,5% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. These ratings are not linked to sex; but the age of the interviewees was an important factor (fig. 3).

The younger respondents reported the highest satisfaction with their education (37,3%). At first glance, satisfaction seems to decrease with increasing age, while dissatisfaction simultaneously increases. Thus only 12% of the dissatisfied group consisted of those aged 14 to 19, while over twice as many (28%) belonged to the cohort aged between 20 and 24 years. 60% of those aged over 25 said they were absolutely dissatisfied with their education. It must be noted, however, that only 20% of those aged over 20, compared to 60% of the youngest age group, responded to this question with "I don't know". Thus, it would be an oversimplification to claim that the younger respondents were simply more satisfied with their education. Rather, the responses showed that the younger cohorts gave considerably less thought to education than young people aged 20 or over. It seems that education does not become an issue for them until they reach their twenties, and conscious engagement with their own education only begins to acquire broader relevance once they transition from school to the world of work. Thus, it seems that young people's satisfaction with their education is related mainly to economic factors and the usefulness of their qualifications for entry into the job market. This would also explain the large numbers of younger interviewees who gave little thought to the relevance of their education. As they grew older, they retrospectively re-evaluated their satisfaction more consciously and, for the most part, more negatively; this new assessment is closely related to their transition into the world of work and the options available to them there.

The most promising perspectives for job entry are offered by high educational qualifications, which also correlates with the highest scores of satisfaction in the context of work (fig. 4). These high qualifications are the ones a majority of the young people aspire to.

Overall, the young people's responses indicate that the higher their educational level, the greater their potential for experiencing high satisfaction in their working lives. However, almost one in five adolescents with no incomplete schooling also reported high satisfaction with their job. Al-

FIG. 4: **Satisfaction with work and educational level**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage

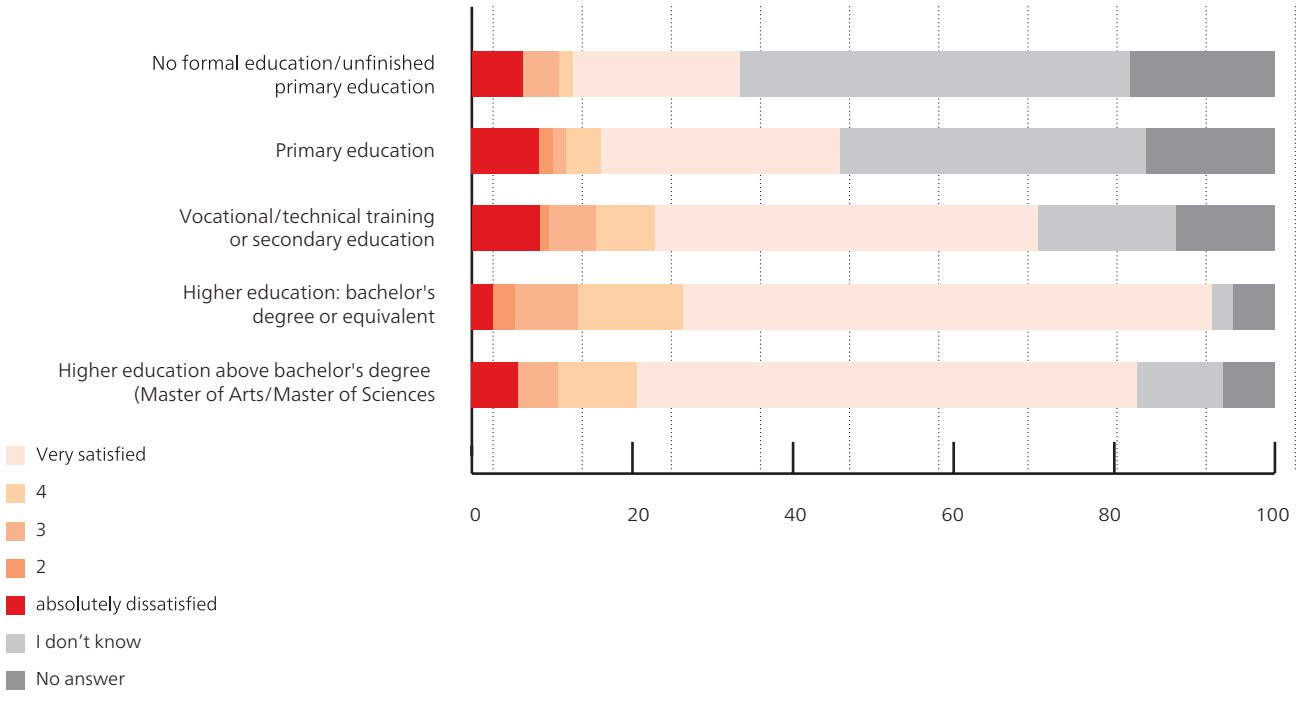
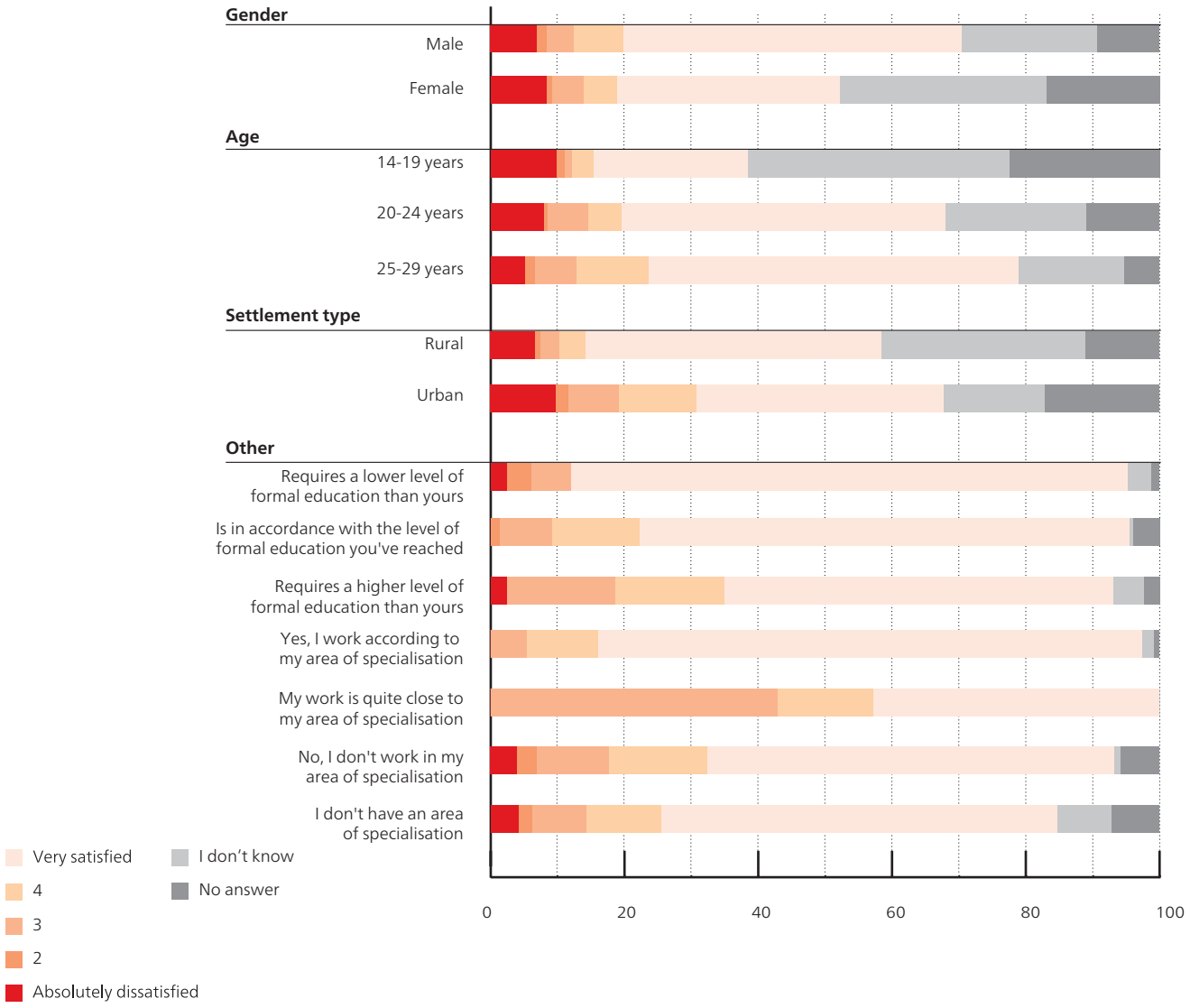


FIG. 5: **Satisfaction with work**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



most one-third (29,8%) of respondents with an elementary school certificate also reported being very satisfied with their working lives, but it must be noted that the majority of those with these two lowest educational levels did not think too much about how satisfied they were with their jobs. This distinguishes these young people from those with higher qualifications. The higher the educational level, the more consciously respondents focused on how they experience their workplace.

This being the case, young people's experience of their spheres of work appears to be ambivalent, and less than half of them (48,3%) stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs. Like the educational level, this sphere is experienced differently by the two sexes and by residents of different regions of Kyrgyzstan. Above all, however, the subjective fit of the workplace plays a crucial role for young people (fig. 5).

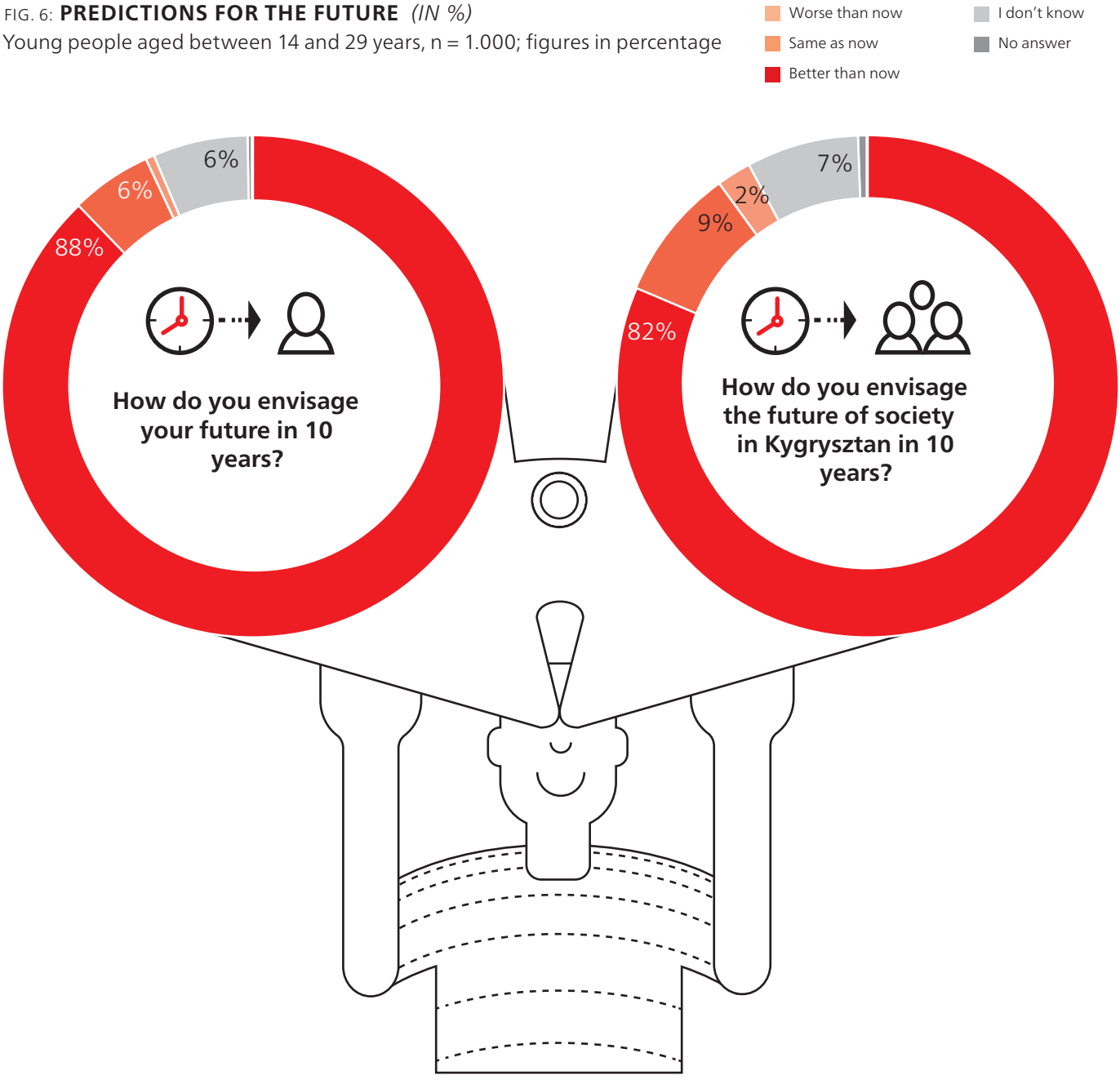
As in the case of the spheres of life previously discussed, young people in rural areas were significantly more likely (44,3%) to be very satisfied with their work than urban young people, of whom only slightly more than one in three (37,0%) gave this assessment. The proportion of those who are absolutely dissatisfied with their work is also higher in urban areas than in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. What is most conspicuous, however, is that women gave significantly less thought to satisfaction at the workplace than men, although only 33,2% of young women stated that they were very satisfied and almost one in ten women said they were absolutely dissatisfied. The high dissatisfaction of women with their working lives is not a youth phenomenon; rather, it is widespread in Kyrgyzstan. A study dealing explicitly with women at the workplace in Kyrgyzstan showed that many adult women in Kyrgyzstan feel an urge to return to their traditional roles, a phenomenon known as retraditionalization (Commercio 2015). Thus, the lower propensity of young Kyrgyz women to think about their working lives, along with their lower job satisfaction

scores, which could also point towards a role conflict among the female respondents.

However, one of the primary factors determining young people's satisfaction with their workplace is the perceived congruence of their job with their educational qualifications. Of those who reported such congruence, 73,2% were very satisfied with their work, while none at all said that they were dissatisfied. In contrast, satisfaction becomes less unequivocal and dissatisfaction increases when they feel that their jobs do not reflect their educational level. Young people thus care about having a job that corresponds to their qualifications – but they would rather be overqualified than underqualified for the work they do: 72,3% of those who thought their work is beneath their educational level were satisfied with their jobs, while only slightly more than half (58,1%) of those who felt their jobs would require higher qualifications said they are very satisfied. Against this background, it is no surprise that satisfaction is highest among those respondents (81,3%) who work in their area of specialisation. In other words, young people prefer their work to reflect their qualifications and training, which suggests that education and training is regarded as a means for securing employment.

Unlike other spheres of life, the work context has a profound effect on young people's levels of optimism. Those surveyed who were satisfied with their jobs were also more likely to think that their personal life situations would improve within the next ten years. Conversely, those who were very dissatisfied tended to be more pessimistic. Thus, an initial economic situation that is perceived as satisfactory contributes significantly to the young people's assessments

FIG. 6: **PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE** *(IN %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



of their future.

All in all, young people have a very positive outlook on their own futures (fig. 6). 87,8% thought that their personal situation would improve within the next ten years, while a small minority of 5,5% assumed that there would be no change whatsoever, and only 0,4% feared that their living situation would worsen. In contrast, they were somewhat less optimistic, albeit fairly confident, when it came to the future development of Kyrgyzstan as a whole. 81,6% assumed that the country's situation would improve, while almost one in ten (8,5%) expected it to remain the same. Finally, 2,2% believed it would worsen.

Female respondents were slightly more positive than their male counterparts about both their personal future and that of the country. The optimists among the young generation were predominantly to be found in rural areas. In these regions, 90,7% assume that their own life situation would improve within the next ten years, while this expectation was shared by a lower proportion (81,5%) of young people in urban areas. Conversely, almost twice as many young people (8,2%) in urban areas than in rural regions (4,3%) expected their situation to remain the same. Rural young people were also significantly more optimistic about the future of Kyrgyzstan (85,5%) than their urban counterparts (73,4%). Once again, more young people in the cities (11,0%) than in rural areas (7,3%) expected that the situation would remain the same. The age cohort between 20 and 24 years old exhibited the greatest degree of pessimism about their own future, with the comparatively low proportion of 84,3% believing that their situation would improve. In contrast, 88,1% of those aged over 25 and fully 90,8% of those aged 14 to 19 shared this view. The youngest cohort was also the most optimistic about the future of Kyrgyzstan, while those aged between 20 and 24 gave the most cautious assessment about this issue.

Alongside these age-related and regional differences, young people's assessments of the future of Kyrgyzstan were primarily dependent on the country's expected economic potential. Those who believed the economy would improve were more optimistic about their country's future. Thus, their prognosis for their country's continued development depended significantly on their expectations with regard to the performance of the economy and thus to the economic perspectives they foresee. Expectations of an economic boom were strongest among young people between 14 and 19 and among the oldest cohort of 25 and over in rural areas. These cohorts were also the most optimistic that the overall situation in Kyrgyzstan would improve in the next ten years. Urban youth about to enter the workforce, i.e., those aged approximately 20, were more hesitant to predict an increase in economic power and expressed less optimism about the future of Kyrgyzstan.

'I think that thanks to "Jerooy", we can improve our economy.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 29, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

'in general, employment and exports will increase, there will be good progress in the future.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh city

'By observing current events, I get the impression that things are only going to get worse. For some reason, we have less and less freedom of choice, expression and speech, wages remain the same, education is still the same, but prices are increasing. It seems to me that it will be harder for the people.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female, aged 17, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

'If we take three years, then great difficulties, obstacles await us. We are already going backwards in economic terms. In three years we could take a lot of debt, but at the expense of this economy will go backwards, the level of poverty in Kyrgyzstan will increase.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Osh region

'It's just that it [the situation in Kyrgyzstan] is changing so fast, you can't tell what's going to happen tomorrow.'
FGD, Korean, 20 years old, Bishkek city

'I think that now there are shifts. The current government reveals corruption. We think that they will be able to cleanse the departments of corrupt officials and we will go forward.'
FGD, Uighur, female, 29 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

4

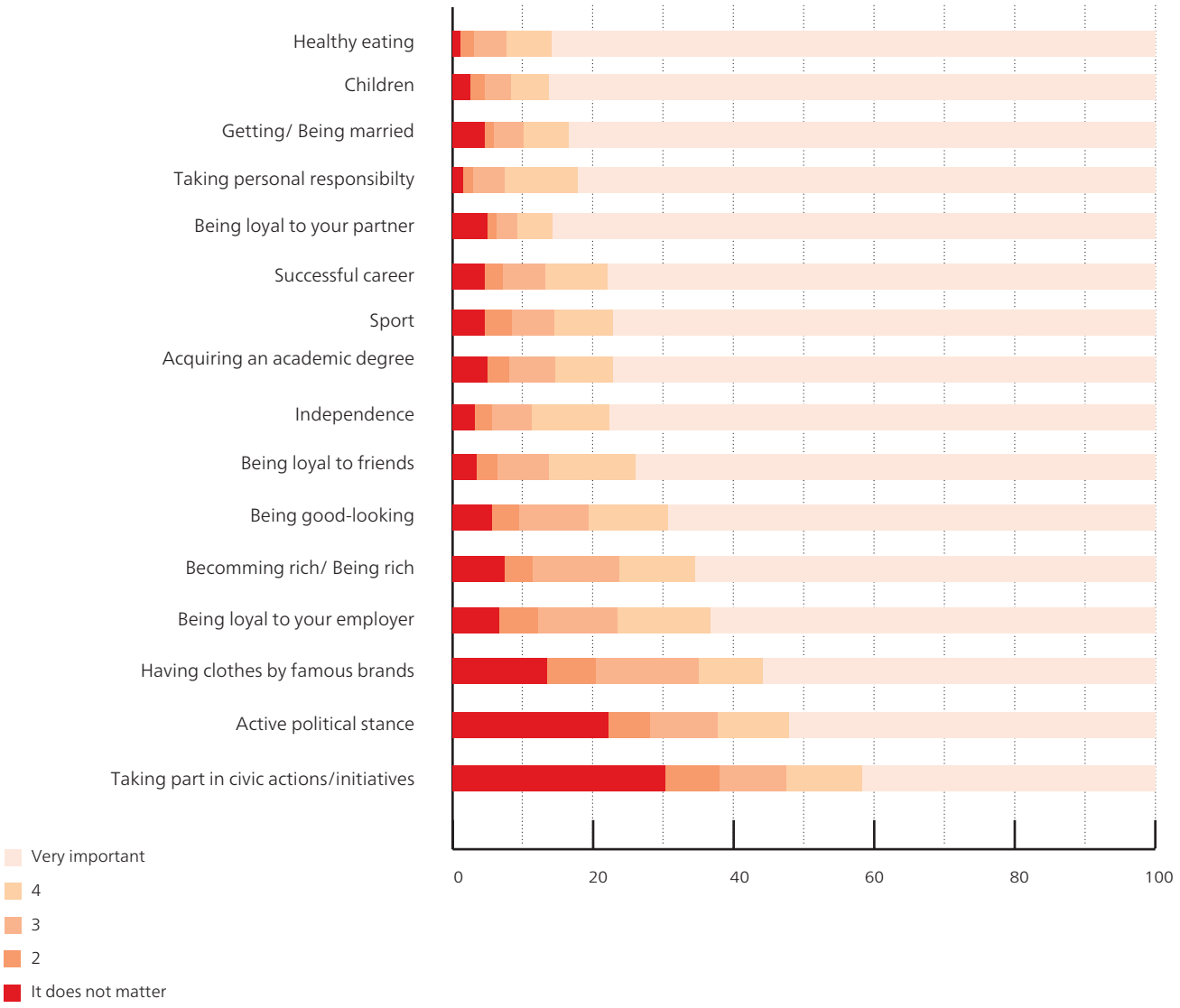
VALUES AND IDENTIFICATION PATTERNS

A CONFORMING, TRADITION-CONSCIOUS YOUNG GENERATION

The young generation in Kyrgyzstan regards the values underpinning life in their country as something special compared to neighbouring countries. Almost every second youth from the survey (49,7%) believed that Kyrgyz values differs significantly from those of neighbouring Central Asian states. They also thought that Kyrgyzstan has a special status in domestic and foreign policy which sets it apart among the countries of Central Asia (Lempp & Wolters 2020). This special status is also reflected in the young people's self-image. What is more, by aligning themselves with Kyrgyzstan's special values, they identify with their country and feel a sense of national belonging through living these values. Thus, the young people's values serve as a crucial means of identification in terms of national affiliation and differentiation. 47,7% also believed that all those living in Kyrgyzstan – including immigrants and people from different ethnic or national backgrounds – respect the country's norms and values and reflect them in their conduct. Thus, young people in Kyrgyzstan apply the ideas to which they align their lives as a yardstick for judging the behaviour of others and as a measure of their integration into Kyrgyz society. They care not only about being aware of and respecting values themselves, but simultaneously regard them as a system of social guidance and order.

This brings us to the question of which values they respect and expect or wish others to observe as well. What do they want to implement in their own lives, and what ideas do they follow to live well? The paragraphs that follow will focus on these questions. In this study, young Kyrgyz people were asked about the personal significance of a total of sixteen different values (fig. 7). Desirable life goals were identified through the young people's views on family: they evaluated the importance of having children, being married, assuming personal responsibility, and being faithful to their partner and loyal to friends. Life goals in the context of the workplace or career were revealed through their assessment of the importance of a successful career, an academic title, independence, and loyalty to one's employer. The importance they ascribed to healthy eating and being physically active reveals their health-consciousness. Their striving for representativity and status emerges from their answers to questions about the importance of brand-name clothing, wealth, and good looks. Finally, the questionnaire examined young people's attitudes towards taking an active political stance and involvement in civic actions or initiatives. After an overview of general trends in the attitudes of young Kyrgyz people and the things they consider very important or less important, we identified the dominant value patterns that they shared. These patterns offer insights into the values that most significantly shape the young people's lives, their ideas about the future, and their identity.

FIG. 7: **Importance of different values to the Kyrgyz youth**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



The overall assessments of relevance showed that young people are mainly concerned with their personal environment. They ascribed high importance to their immediate social surroundings, starting with themselves, for example healthy eating is particularly in vogue. Additionally, a majority were oriented towards family values, and many of them aspired to starting families of their own. Thus, their most important focus is on their immediate personal environment. In particular, having children was considered very important, more so even than getting married. Having children has high approval ratings among both sexes, all age groups, and all educational levels and regions of Kyrgyzstan. However, young people with no school-leaving qualifications were significantly less likely (67,6%) to feel that getting married is important, as was the younger age cohort of 14 to 19 years (75,1%).

Overall, however, starting a family is regarded as a more important life goal than having a career, even though the latter is still a desirable goal, with 76,9% of young people interviewed thinking that a successful career is very important and 76,4% aspiring to obtain a university degree. It was primarily the younger interviewees (14 to 19 years) who regarded this as a significant life goal. Longitudinal studies should be performed to assess whether this could be an indication of an emerging new trend of career-consciousness among the young Kyrgyz generation, or whether certain events, occurring at crucial times in their lives, contributed towards a change in attitudes.

Most young people attach little importance to status and representativity. Good looks, getting rich, and designer clothing ranked lowest in their hierarchy of values. Rural and female young people set slightly more store by their appearance and wearing designer clothes compared to males and those growing up in cities. Additionally, the higher their educational level, the more they aspired to becoming wealthy: only 54,1% of young people with no qualifications regarded

this as important, while 76,3% of those with a master's degree believed that it is important to acquire material wealth. Thus status-based values are exhibited by only a small number of young people, while the majority is not focused on this lifestyle.

Occupying the two lowest ranks are values related to civic involvement. Less than half the young people think it is important to have an active political stance or to take part in civic actions and initiatives. Thus, the young people's rankings are also symbolic of their generation's values: young people are primarily focused on themselves and their immediate surroundings. Shaping these surroundings in accordance with their life goals is more important to them than being active within a wider context.

The comparative analysis of young people's values in connection with their mindsets, attitudes, and religious beliefs points towards at least three overarching patterns that substantially characterise this generation and shape their lives. Their value patterns reveal a generation which, against the background of their country's highly unstable situation, is anxious to create security and continuity for themselves and their community through traditionalism and conformity. While clinging to the values which they learned from their faith and their families, they take pains to disassociate themselves and their peers from other forms of life rather than standing out among their peers by pursuing individualistic lifestyles. Tradition, religion, and collectivisation through conformity are the prevailing life principles that colour the values of this generation.

In any case, the best strategist is still a man, a woman by nature cannot be a strategist. There is no need for many women in power.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 29 years old, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

I think young people should be in politics to represent the interests of youth, to provide opportunities for the younger generation, because often the older people, who are in power, they do not support young people. Probably this is the echoes of Soviet conditioning, because at that time they usually tried to put everyone into a "box", where everyone was the same, where everyone fitted in with society, it was a gray mass. And now the younger generation is trying to express itself, to do what they like and involve other people in that. I think in this respect it is very important to give young people the opportunity to create some kind of society in which they can help others as well.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 17 years old, Chuy region

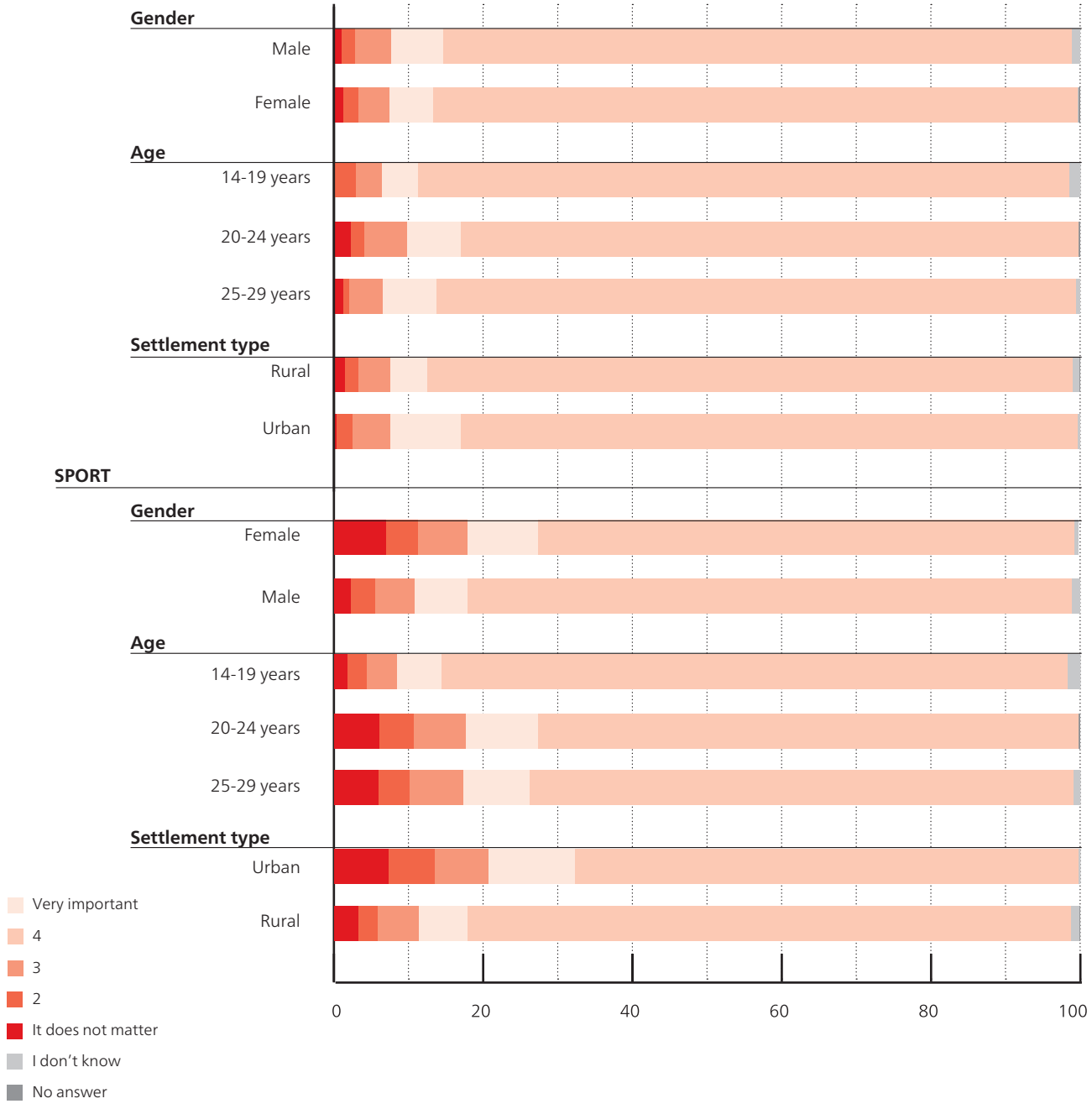
Young people are trying [to be involved in political life], they just don't have support, they don't have hope. They still think that nothing will work if they go there. I have heard from many villagers that young people collect money and build sports fields to attract young people to sports, they repair the roads. But now they have no hope for the future, what and how it will be, so corruption must be eliminated, we must cleanse ourselves of these corrupt people and support the younger generation.'

FGD, female, aged 29, Uighur, Osh region

And in general, it seems to me that women do not have the same opportunities as men in our country. Let's say, even when it comes to work or education, most often they [employers] do not accept them[women]. They believe that a girl will get married, have children, she does not need education - this diploma will gather dust on a shelf in a closet…'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 17 years old, Chui region

FIG. 8: **Importance of healthy lifestyle by age**



A healthy (religious) lifestyle

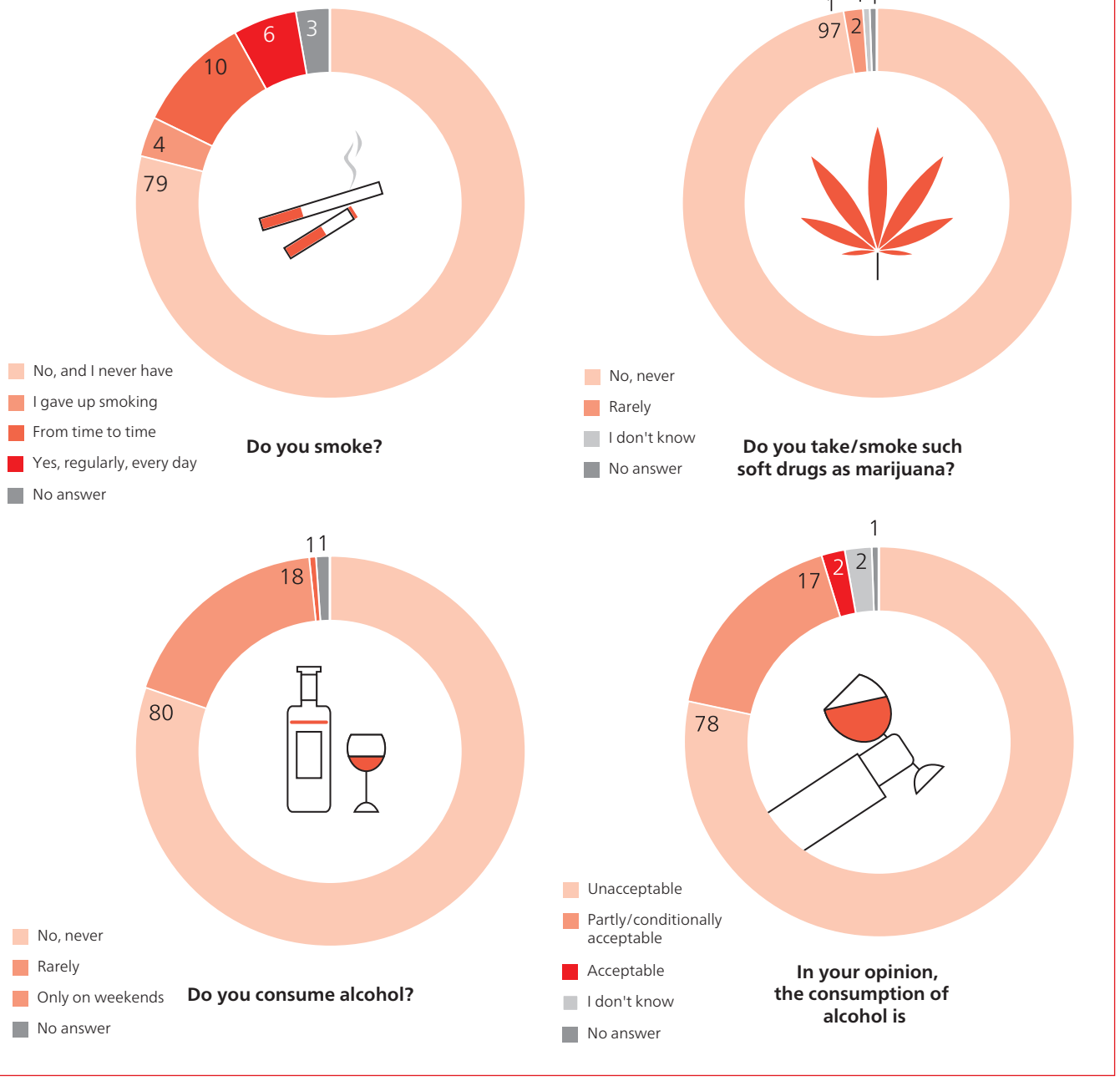
A health-conscious lifestyle is very popular with young people. They are extremely interested in their physical well-being and strive to treat their bodies responsibly, from diet through exercise to their attitude to drugs. Overall, the young people's responses indicated that the popularity of a healthy lifestyle continues to increase among their generation (fig. 8).

Between 82,7% and 85,7% of those aged between 20 and 25 considered healthy eating very important, while the highest approval rating for this aspect can be found among those aged 14 to 19 (87,3%). Similarly, 83,8% of those aged 14 to 19 regarded sports as important, while 72,3% of those aged 20 to 24 and 72,9% of those aged 25 to 29 shared this view. The younger cohorts increasingly seem to express their health-consciousness in terms of the holistic formula of healthy eating plus sports. At present, young people in rural areas attach more value to healthy eating (86,5%) and sports (80,8%) than their urban counterparts, where 82,8% ascribed high importance to healthy eating and 67,4% to physical activity. Moreover, women tend to be more mindful of nutrition than men, for whom sports have the higher priority.

Young people's high awareness of a healthy lifestyle is also evident in the fact that they tend to be averse to the consumption of alcohol and drugs (fig. 9).

They unequivocally reject the use of marijuana (97,5%) and tobacco (78,9%). While both sexes agree in their attitude to marijuana, young men are more likely to smoke every now and then and occasionally drink alcohol on special occasions.

FIG. 9: **Youth and drugs**



However, when it comes to regular alcohol use in Central Asia (Cockerham et al. 2006) and, specifically, in Kyrgyzstan (Cockerham et al. 2004), disapproval is widespread among respondents in this age cohort. More than eight in ten (80,4%) stated that they never consume alcohol, while 78,4% regarded alcohol use as entirely unacceptable. While this attitude is primarily attributed to the low social acceptance of alcohol (Aliiaskarov & Bakiev 2014), the young people's motivations for rejecting alcohol are mainly religious.

Most of them perceive themselves as very religious and state that they live according to religious standards and commandments. An overwhelming majority of 94,1% is affiliated to the Islamic faith and it is primarily the religious standards, morals, and values of Islam that shape young people's lives. Their desire to cultivate health-promoting habits and their widespread abstinence from drugs is thus also an expression of religious awareness and conformity.

Family first – focus on stability and tradition

The dominant characteristic of today's young generation is its strong focus on alignment with family. Thus, being part of the social fabric of family is not only the primary factor in young people's wellbeing; many of the values they consider most important are connected with the life goal of starting and raising a family of their own. For example, assuming responsibility (90,8%), having children (90,1%), being married (87,2%), and faithfulness to one's partner (83,5%) were regarded as very important or important by the interviewees. In other words, the main thing the young generation regards as important is to actively assume responsibility for creating – and then being loyal to – a family community of their own through marriage and children.

This life path is one the young generation takes for granted. They do not question it, but regard it as a given and arrange their lives accordingly. Having a family of their own is the highest priority of the Kyrgyz youth, one that is far from a distant objective to be aspired to in the future. Rather, their motto seems to be "family first". It is a kind of fundamental task which they begin actively working towards and implementing at a very early age. Specifically, they consider the optimum age for getting married to be 20 for women and 25, on average, for men. It follows that over one-third (33,6%) of the interviewees were married, while slightly less than one-third (30,4%) already had children (usually one or two).

Therefore, young Kyrgyz people feel the need to create their own family network early in life and strive to establish a stable family structure that provides continuity and security. This desire for continuity and security in their immediate personal environment can also be read as a response to the socio-political instability in their country. The unrest, shifting power relationships, and continually changing conditions in Kyrgyzstan are hardly conducive towards creating a sense of security in terms of continuity and reliability.

Starting a family of their own is a powerful way for young people to create a sense of security for themselves, since they look to the structures and values of the families in which they grew up for guidance on starting and raising their own families. In other words, starting a family is tantamount to the continuation or extension of the young people's families of origin, a collective wish for a family of their own expressing a desire to preserve and continue their familiar values and the experienced settings within their own family. In terms of structure, too, their aim is to recreate as accurate an image as possible of the family structures in which they grew up. Most of the respondents (57,7%) currently live in a household with three to five people. Single-person households (1,2%) and non-familial apartment-sharing communities were few in number. Thus, the young people's lifeworlds are dominated by the concept of the large family and growing up with multiple siblings, and this concept also predominates in their own personal ideas. When asked about their visions for the future, 95,1% answered that they want to live with their

FIG. 10: **YOUNG PEOPLE'S MORAL CONCEPTS** *(IN %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000;

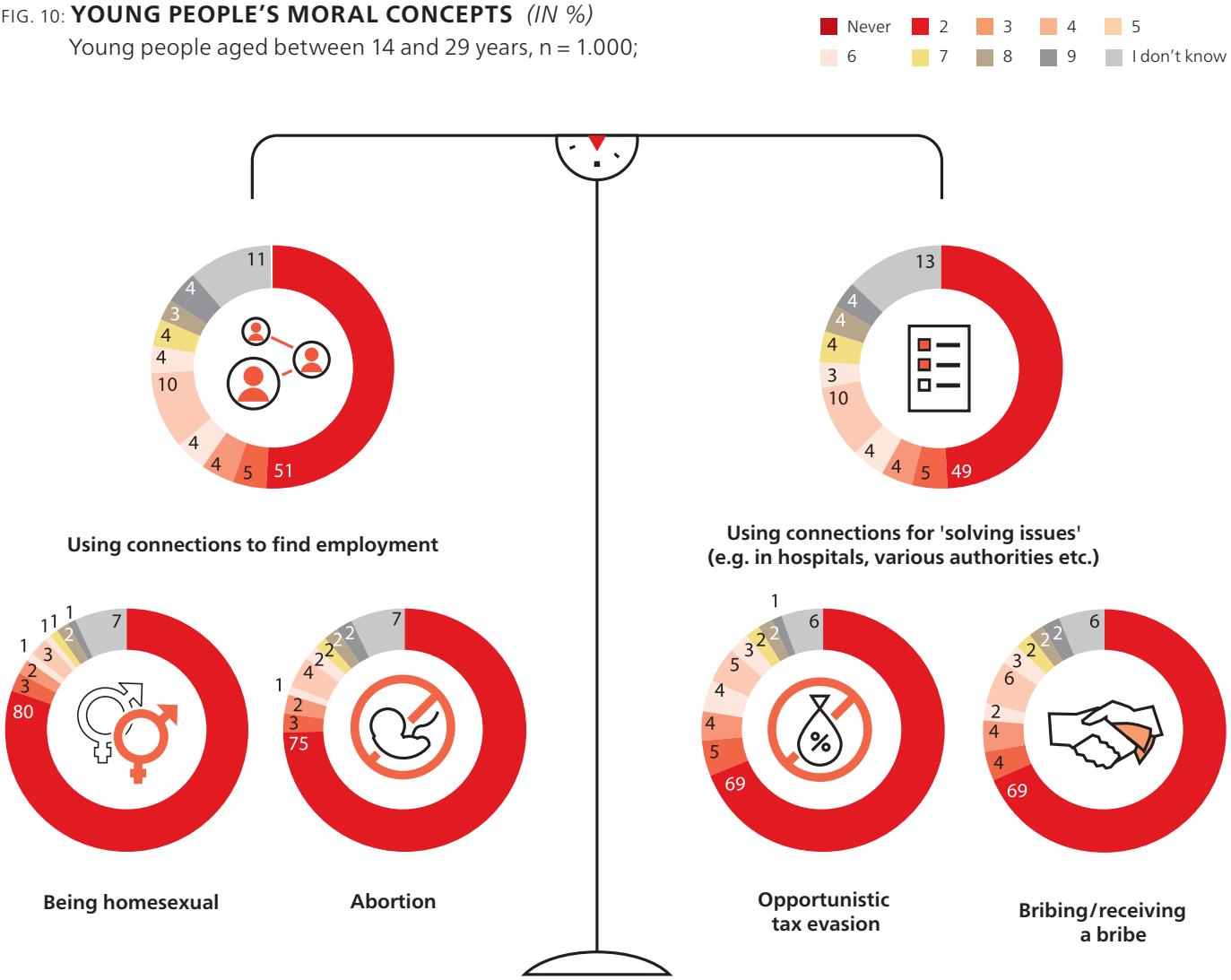
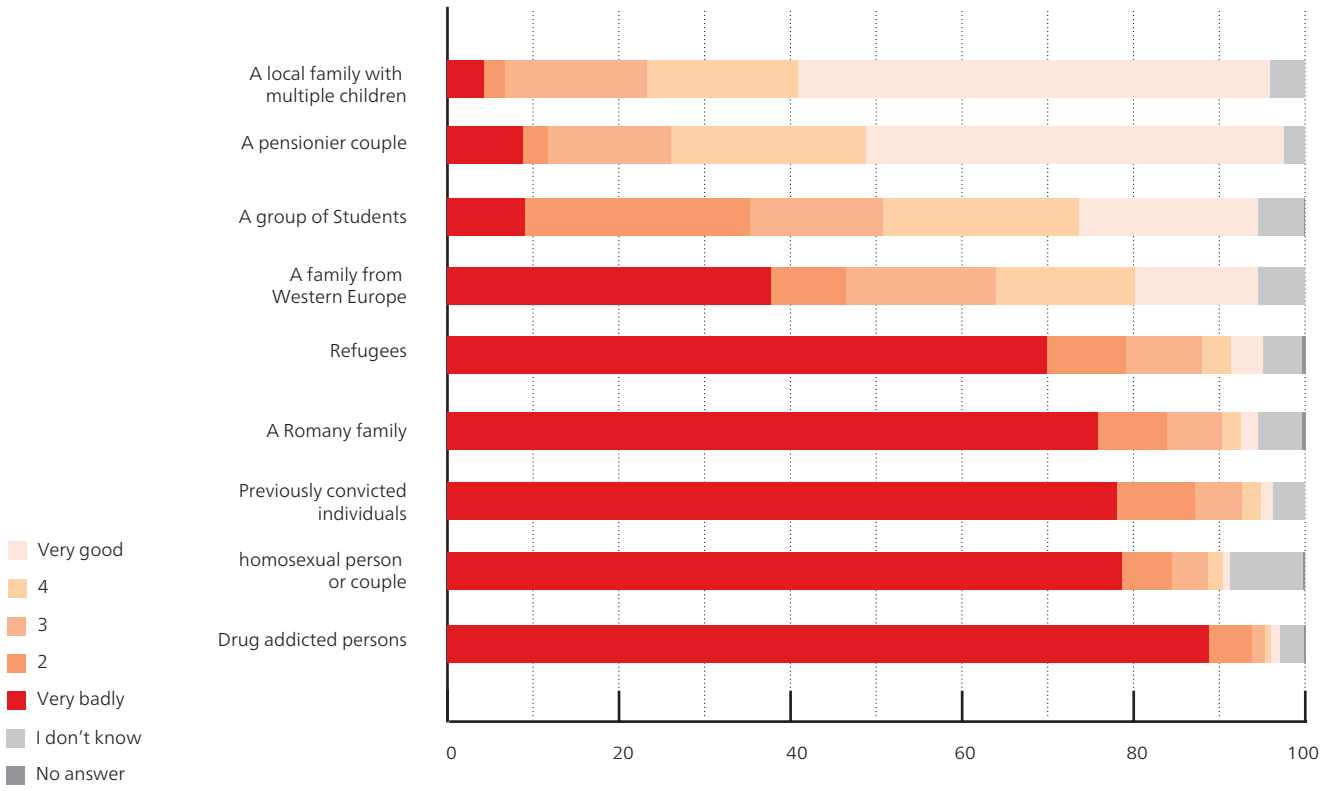


FIG. 11: **Young people's preferred neighbours**



spouse and an average of four to five children in the future. They therefore seek to transition directly from their families of origin into an analogous family structure of their own.

However, the ideas that accompany this transition are not exclusively structural. Their traditional outlook and their quest to preserve and continue is also expressed in the way they conduct their family lives. Far from desiring to change the inner workings of the family, they seek to perpetuate the values they learned in their families of origin and pass them on to their own children. Approximately 80% intended to raise their children in the same way they were raised by their own parents. In this context, discipline is very important to young people. 72,4% tended to agree that one of the core duties of parents is to instil strict discipline in their children. This indicates that parenting, in their view, serves to prepare children to abide by rules and regulations by inculcating discipline, and is therefore geared towards teaching conformity. The young people take conforming with their own families for granted and expect their own children to conform in turn.

Sticking to one's kind and disassociation through preservation

The young generation also exhibits another pattern in their interactions with one another (i.e. youth as part of society). Young Kyrgyz people obviously do not value status-related aspects very highly. Thus youth does not emphasise those aspects that express a certain status in society, that underline prestige, and that distinguish individuals within the

> *'They [LGBTQ people] do not fit our mentality, our religion, our thinking, so society does not accept them.'*
>
> FGD, male, 22 years old, Osh oblast

> *'Honestly, if given a specific answer to that question, I think everyone would agree with my answer. If such a question is asked of me anywhere else, I would say that I am 100% against it. If for example you say we are a Muslim country, our religion has no such thing, we live according to what is written in the Koran…For example, if a gay man comes to us now and tells us what problems he has, I will not be able to control myself - I will take him and drag him along the ground.'*
>
> FGD, male, 22 years old, Osh city

People will say he [an LGBTQ person] will have a negative impact on society, and if he's wearing makeup - they'll tell him it's not religiously appropriate, or they might beat him up.
I think we should be sympathetic to them. Of course, you don't have to be in touch with [be friends with, etc.] them, but you can understand them.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh city

collective. Like in the social structure of the family, young Kyrgyz people have little interest in standing out from one another or excluding or disassociating themselves from the group. Far from wanting to be different from other Kyrgyz people, they value collectivisation through preservation over individualisation and change.

This means that young people in society are anxious to demonstrate that they are part of the Kyrgyz community, which they show this by aligning themselves and their behaviour with the values through which they identify as Kyrgyz: values learned while growing up and which they now embody, live, and preserve. In the social context, young people want to preserve and perpetuate the awareness of tradition and religion as well as moral concepts, the factors through which identification and belonging are negotiated. The conformity of their lives and their rejection of divergent behaviours and ways of life engenders an identification and communitisation among the young people that ultimately leads to disassociation from the other.

Analysis of the young people's assessments showed the extent to which they regard certain behaviours as justified as well as the social and societal moral concepts with which they identified and through which they simultaneously distance themselves from differing ways of life (fig. 10).

These moral concepts are primarily coloured by the young people's religious affiliation and testify to their strong leanings towards these principles. A majority clearly rejects any phenomena and ways of life that diverge from religious guiding principles. Their values primarily centre around sexuality in the form of lived partnerships and pregnancy. 80,4% of young people rejected homosexuality and 74,8% rejected abortion. This rather narrow and restrictive attitude to sexuality is a form of religious expression. They consistently exhibit the desire to live in accordance with their faith, abide by religious commandments, and carefully choose their environment according to the same maxims. Three-quarters of young people in the survey (75,0%) thought that it is very important for their life partner to share their religious convictions. Thus their rejection of life plans that are inconsistent with the teachings of their faith demonstrates their strong focus on living in conformity with religion. These principles serve as the foundations of their own lifestyle and behaviour and give them confidence in evaluating their environment.

The high significance – and obligatory observance – of religious, god-fearing moral values has priority over man-made laws, i.e. the laws of the state. Thus things like tax evasion (69.1%) and stratagems for asserting one's own interests are rejected less strongly by young people. Social order is maintained primarily by respecting, preserving, and living moral values that are coloured by religion. Communitisation occurs through young Kyrgyz people's observing and adhering to these values on the one hand, and publicly rejecting and demonstratively distancing themselves from deviant behaviour and life philosophies on the other. The feeling of belonging to their cultural value system also disassociates them from those who diverge from these socially entrenched ideas. In other words, young people want to stick to their kind and their life models and moral values. Their responses to the question about how welcome various groups would be as potential neighbours underscore that they prefer to literally keep their distance from those who do not share these values (fig. 11).

The responses to this question reveal that those things which young people perceive as being outside the bounds of their moral universe should preferably also remain outside the bounds of their immediate surroundings. Drug addicts represented undesirable neighbours (88%), as did people living in homosexual partnerships (78,6%). They are immediately followed by families from other nationalities, with Roma families being rejected by 75,8% and refugees by 69,9%, followed by families from a Western European background. In contrast, a local family with many children had a high approval rating as prospective neighbours. At first glance, therefore, Kyrgyz youth appears to be nationalist, although on closer examination this attitude is an expression of their desire for preservation, remaining among their own kind, and achieving security and continuity through collectivisation. Young people in Kyrgyzstan are exposed to different Western cultures, lifestyles, and products as a result of globalisation (Kirmse 2009). However, despite – or perhaps because of – this exposure, they demonstratively express their attachment to their Kyrgyz values and morality. Experiences abroad do not result in changes in their value structures. On the contrary, young people who have spent several months outside Kyrgyzstan say that it is extremely important to them to live according to Kyrgyz principles. Thus this generation of young people creates the impression that they seek to preserve their lived ideas of norms and values by disparaging and excluding divergent ways of life and that they prefer to remain within their self-created structures of order, which provide security and orientation.

5

YOUTH AND FAMILY

FAMILY – LASTING ATTACHMENT

For young Kyrgyz people, family is more than just the setting in which they grow up. In their family, they have a sense of living with the people in whom they place the highest trust (fig. 12).

For the young generation, (great-)grandparents, parents, and siblings are more than just the people with whom they find themselves living in a collective by accident of birth. Rather, family members are consciously selected as advisors and companions; they represent the pillars of young people's psychosocial support structures and the driving force of their personal wellbeing (fig. 13).

FIG. 12: **Trust and family**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage

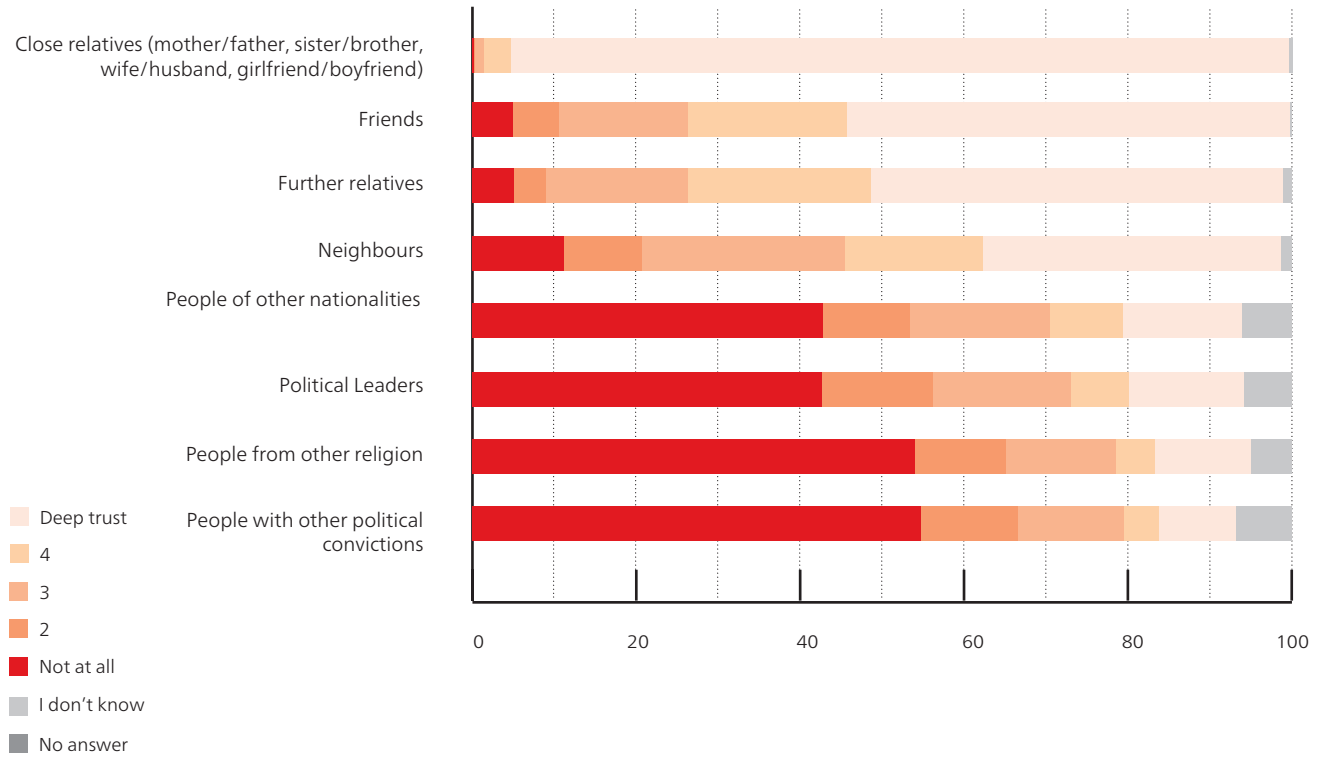
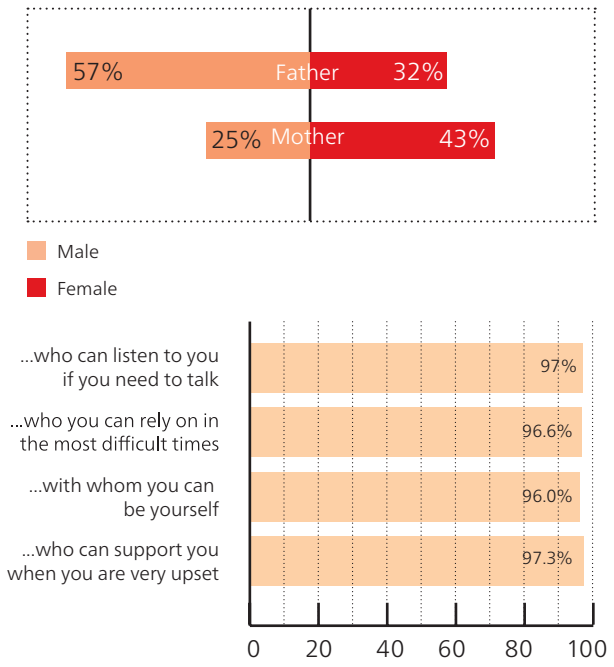


FIG. 13: **Psychosocial support**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



Thus, 97,0% of all respondents said that they had someone with whom they could discuss problems and who would listen to them. Almost as many (96,6%) felt secure in the knowledge of being able to rely on people around them in crisis situations. This support also manifests itself in the fact that they mentioned receiving specific support from these people when they felt angry or upset. The majority of young people (96,0%) felt that they could be themselves in the presence of these people without any need to dissemble. These findings must be viewed against the background of profound trust which young people feel towards those in close social proximity. The immediate family circle, which may consist of a mother, a father, siblings, grandparents, and/or a spouse, enjoyed the trust of 98,4% of respondents, more than any other group of people. And yet these high approval ratings should not obscure the fact that almost one in ten young people in Kyrgyzstan said they felt lonely "very often" or "often, while about another third (31,4%) felt lonely at least sometimes. This is most often the case among those who perceive their relationship to their parents and other family members as being particularly problematic – once again underscoring the importance of the family for young people's well-being.

Family is also where the foundations of gender roles are laid. Young women feel most comfortable in confidential conversations with their mothers, while young men are more likely to seek communication with their fathers. In this way, female family members serve as a corrective for young women and male family members provide direction for young men. These significant gender differences in the current young generation indicate that the traditional gender roles of Kyrgyzstan still function as a powerful source of identity and orientation. The fundamental ideas about these gender roles seem to be transmitted primarily within the family, where young people model themselves according to family members of their own gender.

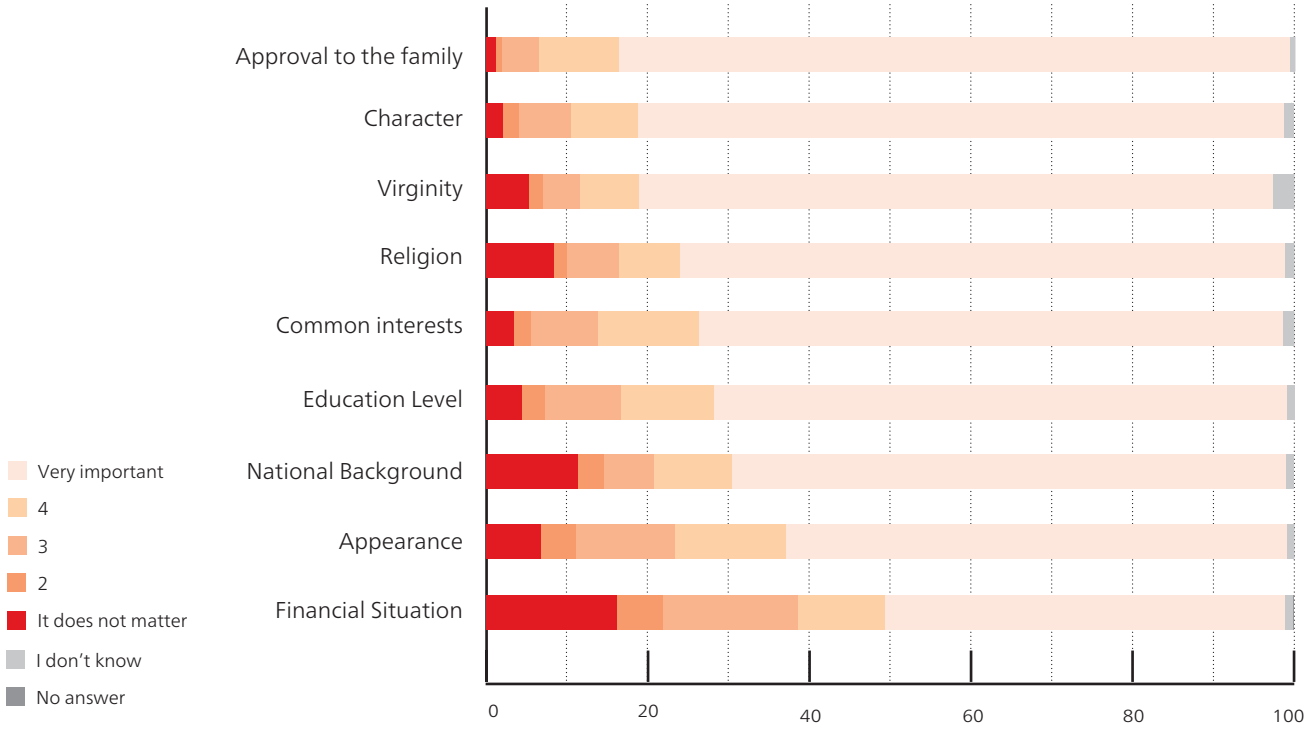
Ideas about family are a strong source of orientation for young Kyrgyz people in general and have a decisive and long-term impact on their lives. This is particularly obvious in their choice of a partner with whom to start a family (fig. 14).

Young people are evidently concerned with more than merely taking the family's values into consideration. The family's approval is not only the most important criterion when choosing a partner, with 92,7% regarding it as very important or important; it also outweighs their own personal preferences, like character (very important or important for 88,4%) and appearance (very important or important for 75,8%). Thus, the family's ideas about their choice of partner – whether they correspond with their personal wishes or not – represent crucial guidelines for almost all members of the young generation. They are not concerned with breaking free from this obligation or responsibility to the families into which they were born. On the contrary, the way they conduct their lives is significantly and lastingly shaped by the family values they learned there, which appear to give them a sense of security by providing a trustworthy frame of reference for their life decisions. This creates the impression that young Kyrgyz people do not – or at least not openly – criticise their families' viewpoints and do not feel the urge or the desire to question them or disassociate themselves from them in favour of developing their own personal maxims. Because of the strong bonds and deep connectedness between young Kyrgyz people and their families, their identity development is in harmony with familial obligations and expectations (Schwittek 2017). That they align their life decisions with their families shows that young people have no desire to disassociate or separate themselves from family ties. Rather, the family's guidelines become the guiding principles with which they identify and which they use for orientation.

For Kyrgyz young people, the family does not have the connotation of a nest which one abandons in the course of one's development. Instead, it is a germ cell that gives rise to additional family groups which remain linked to one another. This lasting connectedness with family is the characteristic by which this young generation stands out. While youth in Western countries functions as a phase that facilitates processes of separation from the parental home on the psychological, cultural, and material/spatial levels, this time of life on the cusp of adulthood appears to have an entirely different developmental purpose in Kyrgyzstan: the focus is not on initiating a process of separation from the family in order to achieve independence and individuality, but rather

FIG. 14: **Family and choosing a partner**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



'The pandemic has showed us that family is the most important thing. We need to spend more time with each other. The pandemic has showed us that we have to take care of ourselves and our health.'
FGD, Uzbek, male, 17 years old, Osh

'People simply do not know where to go. For example, in many cases the problem is solved within the family, because people of the older generation have a very strong influence on young people, so often they [young people] keep silent and the issue remains unresolved. But now it is good that many young people began to speak openly, they began to apply to local or international organizations, they try to solve their issues.'
FGD, male, 22 years old, Osh region

'I think that young people should also have the opportunity, not only the older generation. For example, when we go to school and ask parents, they say that they prefer a teacher who is a pensioner, because he/she is more reliable and that there is no trust in young people. Why is there no trust? I think we have to start fixing that in ourselves.'
FGD, Uighur, 29, village Gulbahar, Osh region

'I think people's outlook has already changed, life is divided into before and after [Covid-19]. You start to think about your life more often, about the lives of your loved ones, your relatives...'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Bishkek city

on stabilising the quality and intensity of relationships within the family. Social norms and values that are closely linked to the function and role of the family are internalised across all life contexts – including the joint organisation of leisure activities – and consolidated for the future based on a historically developed and socially entrenched inter-generational contract (see also the section on values). Families provide stability and continuity for young people's development processes and serve as a compass for transmitting a canon of values that transcends generations.

6

LEISURE TIME

Leisure activities occupy a position of central importance in the way people in (post-)modern societies conduct their lives. In general, leisure time reflects an individual's quality of life and serves as an indicator of life satisfaction. As such, the definition of leisure time can no longer be limited exclusively to a time of regeneration after work or school (see, e.g., Prahl 2010). Rather, having free time at one's disposal fulfils a number of functions above and beyond simple recreation. Leisure time allows young people to shape their personalities by pursuing personal interests and developing or discovering their talents and competences. It is also a time of interpersonal communication, for example in the family or the peer group, where social integration – and isolation – takes place and young people learn to assume important roles (Harring 2018; Beniwal 2020).

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The young people interviewed for the study spent their leisure time in a variety of ways. They rarely pursued only one activity in their free time; rather, we observed a bundle of different activities according to individual preference. These could be digital as well as offline. Table 2 documents the leisure settings preferred by young people aged between 14 and 29, assigning them to three overarching groups: (a) media; (b) social contacts and sports; and (c) chilling, reading, creativity, and shopping. The data revealed differences in leisure behaviour which are attributable partly to gender and age group.

Conspicuously, only a small number of leisure settings can be described as classical mainstream activities. For example, sports were highly relevant to only a little over one in five (21,6%), and those playing sports, primarily in informal contexts, were predominantly boys (32,5%). Among the girls, only 10,4% engaged in sports, but girls were comparatively more likely to read books, periodicals, or magazines. In general, organised leisure activities appear to be rare. Youth centres and other youth hangouts were frequented by a very small minority of Kyrgyz young people, irrespective of gender: only 1,5% of girls and 4,1% of boys regularly visited such places in their leisure time. Engaging in club activities and getting involved in projects or (political) initiatives are also not very popular, with only 3,1% of young people saying that they regularly did so in their spare time. It follows that leisure activities take place mainly outside of organised settings. For a large proportion of the young people, these leisure activities included living their faith, as can be seen in specific patterns of their religious practice: for 42,5% of respondents, prayer was an activity which they frequently or very frequently incorporated into their everyday lives and which they regarded as an integral part of their leisure time.

TABLE 2. **Young people's leisure activities overall and by gender and age group?**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1,000; responses[1] "very frequently" and "frequently"; figures in percentage

	Total	female	male	14-17 years	18-21 years	22-25 years	26-29 years
Media							
Listening to music	46	44	48	55**	45	47	38**
Watching videos. films. series	49	45**	54**	58	37***	50	50
Social networks (Facebook. Twitter. etc.)1	57	56	58	59	60	58	51
Communications media (chats. Skype. WhatsApp. Viber. Facetime. etc.)1	75	73	75	76	75	76	72
Game console or computer games	15	8***	22***	27***	14	12	8***
Social contacts and sports							
Meeting friends	32	22***	42***	47***	34	29	19***
Sporting activities	22	10***	33***	38***	21	15	12***
Meditation. yoga. or similar	3	4	3	4	4	4	2
Spending time with family	83	85	82	88	80	83	81
Meeting in bars. cafés. clubs	4	2*	5*	3	3	5	3
Involvement in projects/initiatives/clubs	3	3	3	3	5	4	1
Visiting youth hangouts. youth centres	3	2*	4*	4	4	4	0*
Chilling. reading. creativity. shopping							
Doing nothing. chilling	11	11	12	17***	7	6	13
Reading books	24	30***	18***	43	24	17	12***
Doing something creative or artistic	10	10	11	17	9	9	6***
Shopping	22	23	22	15*	21	29*	25
Reading periodicals or magazines	10	13*	7*	11	9	11	9
Reading about spirituality and personal growth	7	7	7	6	7	7	6
Prayer	42	42	43	35*	42	46	47

0<14 15<28 29<42 43<56 57<70 71<84

Significance level: * p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; *** p < 0,001

Nine out of 10 young people (91,3%) described themselves as religious, although institutional structures such as religious communities or services played a subordinate role for two-thirds of them (62,1%). However, religious rituals in the private sphere are observed almost as a matter of course and their significance in the context of leisure time rises steadily in proportion to the young people's age. Thus, approximately half of those aged between 27 and 29 said that they use their free time for regular prayers.

In contrast, a consistently opposite trend can be observed for most other leisure activities. As the young people grow older, so do their views change over change. At its core this results in the compaction of youth: to the extent that moratorium, as a phase of experimentation and exemption from social responsibility, takes place in Kyrgyzstan at all, it occupies a compressed time frame which, as leisure behaviour shows, falls primarily between the ages of 14 and 17. It is during this phase that young people have the greatest scope for pursuing their own interests in leisure settings that may be to a greater or lesser degree of their own choosing. This they rarely do alone. Rather, social relationships with friends and family members represent their main reference points in

> *'In general, if we talk about Kyrgyzstan, there are no cultural places or places of recreation for young people to spend their free time.'*
>
> FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

the context of leisure activities, flanked by digital media and a characteristic user behaviour. These three areas – friends, family, and digital media – will be examined more closely in what follows.

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FRIENDS

Peers play a central role in young people's leisure behaviour. One in three (32,2%) often or very often meets friends in their free time, while another one in four (24,3%) does so at least from time to time. The differences between urban and rural youth are slight: rural young people tend to be integrated into friendship groups more frequently than their urban peers. Meeting peers is not only a form of leisure activity in and of itself; rather, numerous other leisure activities like sports, listening to music, or playing video games are far less likely to be pursued alone than in the peer group. In this context, peers are not only partners with whom to simply spend their free time, but much more. While hanging out together, young people can discuss problems and share intimate thoughts, feelings, and worries. Thus, these conversations not only yield practical advice, but primarily serve psycho-hygienic purposes (Valtin 2006; Köhler et al. 2016). Accordingly, friendships are accompanied by mutual loyalty and trust. 85,2% of the respondents stated that friendships based on loyalty were important or very important. Three-quarters (74,6%) said they trusted their friends, while one in two (53,8%) went so far as to say they could deeply trust their friends. These were the highest approval ratings given by young people for others in their social environment; only their family members received higher approval.

Alongside psycho-social factors, friendships also enable and open up spaces for informal learning processes that resonate far beyond adolescence into adulthood. Friendship groups primarily transmit social, emotional, and communicative competences. By negotiating positions, young people acquire relational capacity, co-constructively establish their roles in the community and society, and (continue to) develop their personalities (Harring & Peitz 2021; Bukowski, Laursen & Rubin 2018; Youniss 1982).

However, the significance of peer relationships does not remain the same throughout Kyrgyz young people's youth. Rather, it is primarily the youngest cohort aged 14 to 17 for which peers are relevant as leisure partners. Almost half the respondents in this cohort (47%) said that they often or very often meet with friends. With increasing age, however, social contacts with peers become significantly less frequent. While one in three (33,5%) in the group aged 18 to 21 still regularly met friends in their free time, only 28,9% of those aged 22 to 25 still did so and among those aged 26 to 29, fewer than one in five (19,4%) maintained close social contacts with people of the same age. The triggers for this process in their biographies can be identified as the assumption of social responsibility at a young age, their roles within their families of origin, and the relatively early age at which they start their own families. Additionally, the forming of friendships appears to be a question of social status contingent on the financial possibilities of the family (see fig. 15).

A clear trend can be observed here. The more precarious the family's financial situation, the less frequently young people meet their friends regularly. In particular, the everyday lives of young people affected by or in danger of poverty do not appear to permit this form of social contact. In contrast, those with a high standard of wealth also have more scope for socialising.

Alongside the socio-economic factor, the gender differ-

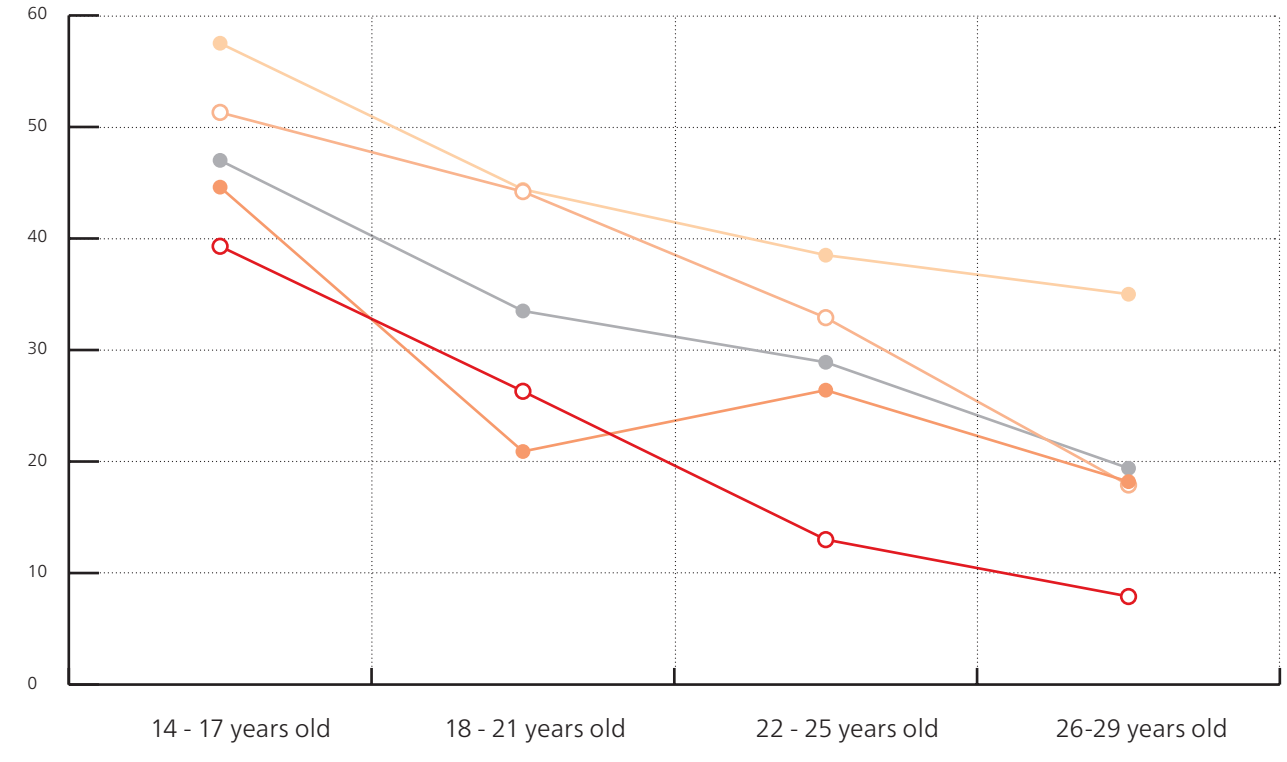
ence is particularly striking. Young women meet up with friends outside the context of the family considerably less frequently than their male peers. While almost one in two young men (41,9%) stated that they regularly meet with friends, only one in five young women (22,2%) did so. This is also reflected in the places chosen for meetings with peers, with young women visiting bars, cafés, clubs, and youth hangouts noticeably less frequently than young men. The differences are statistically significant; when girls or young women meet their friends, they do so primarily in a private setting within the home rather than in public spaces. This form of gender-specific socialisation during leisure time is surely not specific to young people in Kyrgyzstan. Similar trends can be observed internationally (see, e.g., Videnović/Pešić/Plut 2010) and they can be traced primarily to the historically entrenched role of women in these societies. However, the situation in Kyrgyzstan is particularly striking with respect to the link between gender-specific factors and people's backgrounds.

To obtain a nuanced picture of young people's friendship structures in Kyrgyzstan, respondents were also asked whether they had friends from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and social backgrounds (fig. 16).

The first thing to be noted here is that, apart from the religious background, the other three dimensions of heterogeneity do not present a uniform picture. For about half the young people, ethnicity, spoken language, and social status were not relevant when choosing friends. Additionally, all four categories of heterogeneity correlate strongly with one another. In other words, young people who are open-minded in their choice of friends in one particular category are more likely to be open-minded in the other three as well. As a consequence, these young people move in multicultural and socially diverse circles with a degree of ease. These heterogeneous peer groups can be observed particularly among young people in urban contexts, who are significantly more likely than rural youth to have friends from different ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds. One of the main reasons for this is that the social makeup of large cities offers more possibilities for meeting different kinds of people. The picture is somewhat different when it

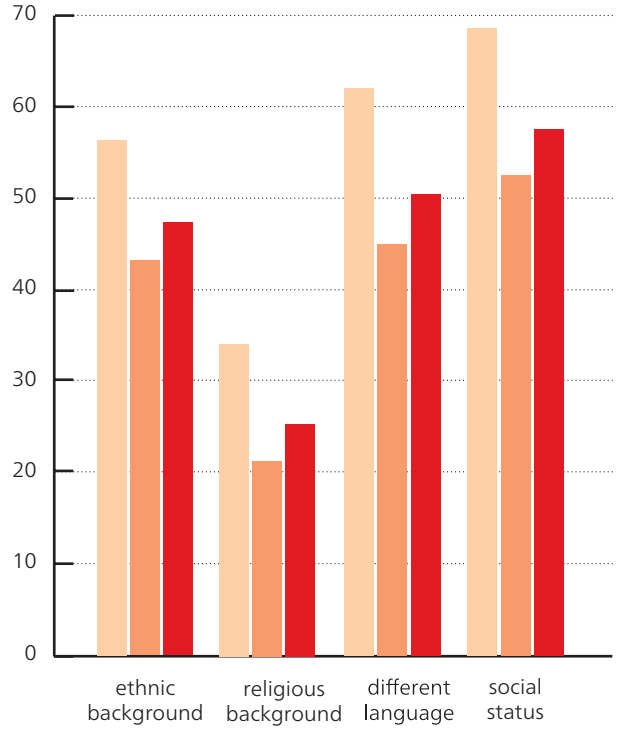
FIG. 15: **Friendships and financial situation**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; responses "very often" and "often"; figures in percentage



Financial situation (young people's self-assessment): Poverty = ""We don't have enough money for basic bills (electricity, heating…) and food"/"We have enough money for basic bills and food, but not for clothes and shoes"; Basic security =" "We have enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things (fridge, TV set, etc.)"; Financial scope ="We can afford to buy some more expensive things but not as expensive as car or a flat, for instance"; High standard of wealth = "We can afford to buy whatever we need for a good living standard".

FIG. 16: **Friends from different backgrounds – differences by place of residence**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; responses "very often" and "often"; figures in percentage



comes to religious affiliation. Only one in four young people (25,5%) stated that they were part of a peer group in which some of their age-mages belong to different religious faiths. However, it would be too simple to conclude that the data point to the existence of conscious processes of exclusion whereby peers of other faiths are actively avoided. Given that Kyrgyzstan is overwhelmingly Muslim – with 94,1% of respondents giving Islam as their religion – opportunities for forming inter-religious friendships are simply very rare. Thus, it might be argued that the percentage of social relationships across religious divides, which is 25,5% in the present study, is in fact disproportionately high.

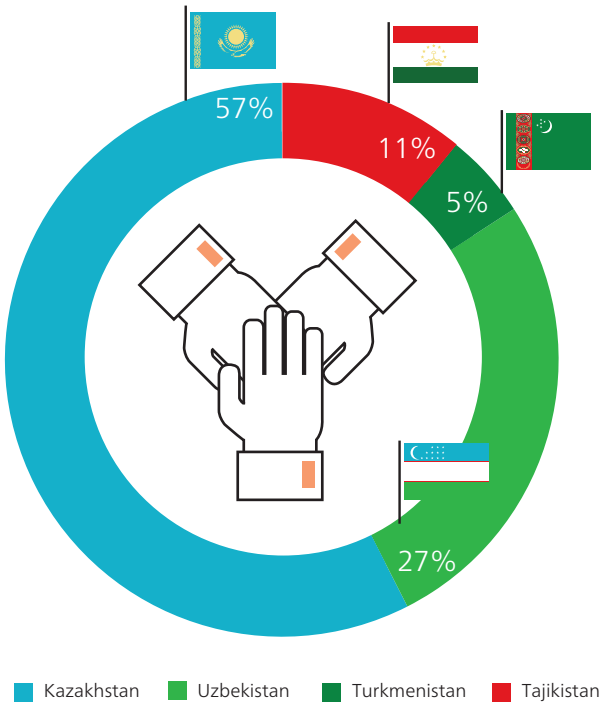
However, the many possible facets of friendship are also revealed by the fact that some of the young people in the study had friends not only in their immediate social environment, but also in the wider region of Central Asia beyond the borders of Kyrgyzstan. One in four respondents (25.9%) claimed to have a friend or acquaintance outside the country; this is significantly more likely to be true of urban than rural young people. The close ties between Central Asian countries that can be observed on a wider social level is reflected here on an interpersonal level among the young generation. And we are not exclusively dealing with superficial acquaintances; these contacts take place regularly either in person or via social media. Over one-third (36,7%) of respondents stated that these exchanges occurred frequently or very frequently, while almost another third (30,6%) said they occur from time to time. A clear tendency can be discerned when it comes to the countries of origin of these acquaintances and friends (fig. 17).

A clear majority (57,4%) is regularly in touch with friends and acquaintances living in Kazakhstan, while about one-quarter (26,5%) is in touch with peers in Uzbekistan. In contrast, contacts with peers in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are significantly less frequent (11,0% and 5,1% respectively).

FAMILY

Family is of high importance, and family members are not only possible candidates, but strongly preferred candidates, when it comes to choosing how and with whom to spend leisure time. 82,9% of respondents said that they spent much time or a great deal of time with their family during their free time. Thus, the family is the lynchpin of young people's leisure time, and no other social contacts are as important to young Kyrgyz people as their immediate families. This relevance is higher than that of their peers not only in the immediate present, but remains stable throughout the entire life phase of youth, with families receiving the highest agreement rates of all possible leisure contexts from all age groups. Eight out of 10 young people – and 9 out of 10 among those aged 14

FIG. 17: **Friends and acquaintances in other Central Asian countries.**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 244; multiple responses; figures in percentage



to 17 – across all age cohorts and independently of gender and socio-economic status said that they frequently or very frequently spend their leisure time in the family and with family members (see table 2). Thus parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, and other members of the household are young people's most important leisure partners.

DIGITAL MEDIA

The advance of digital media in social relationships – which is not limited to cities, but has been increasingly extending to rural areas of Kyrgyzstan as well, meaning young people in the country are at no significant disadvantage in terms of Internet access compared to their urban counterparts – also affects young people's leisure activities. Digital media fulfils the classical role of a source of entertainment – streaming and downloading music (46,0%), playing video games (15,1%), and watching videos, films, and series (49%). Over half the young people (55,8%) spent up to two hours a day watching television, while another quarter (23,5%) spent up to four hours a day.

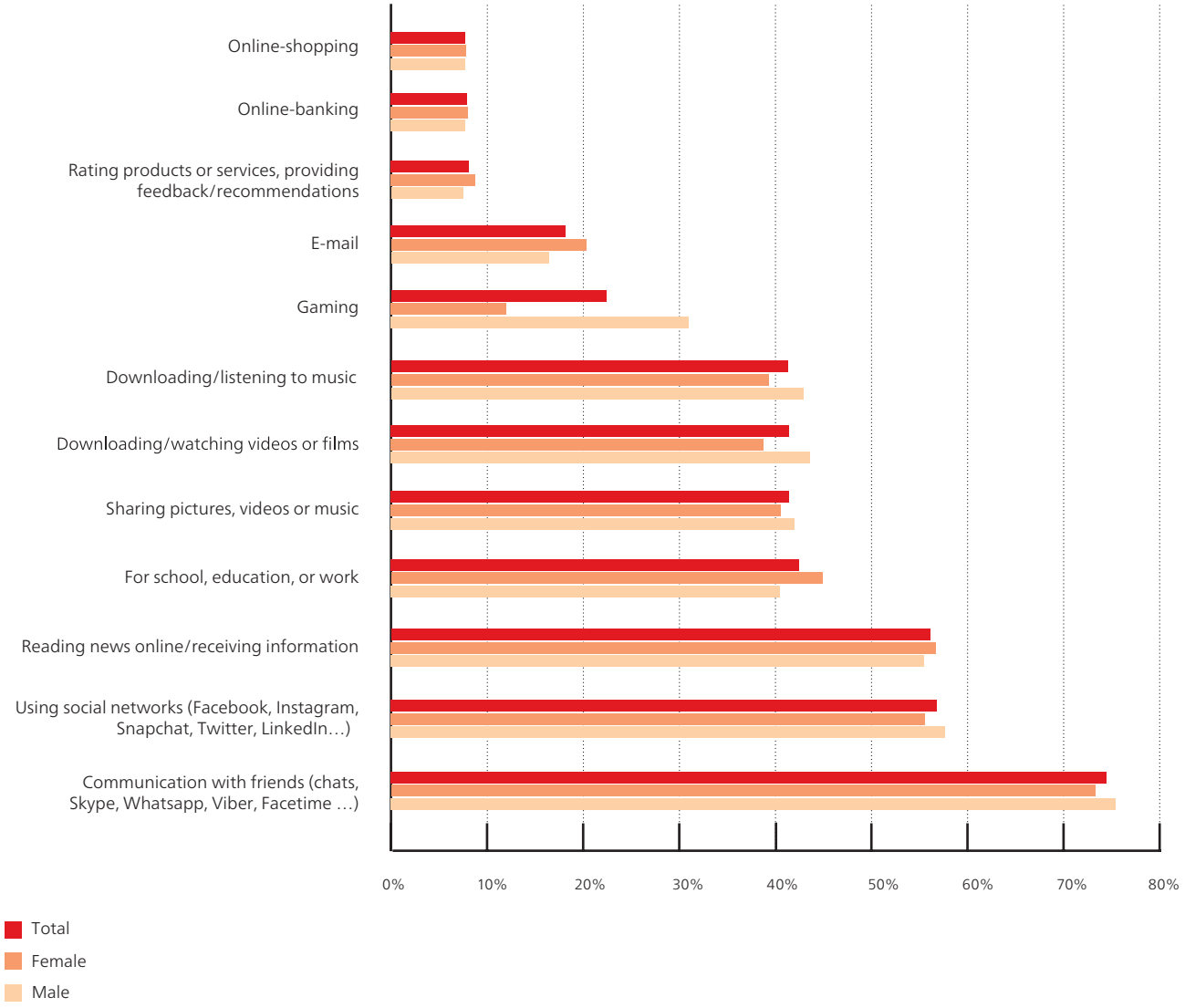
Additionally, digital media is an entrenched means of maintaining everyday social contacts. As a means of communication, digital media offers an additional enhancement to young people's socialising rather than a replacement for personal, face-to-face interaction. On the contrary, it complements and intensifies real-life interactions, allowing experiences to be communicated instantly at any time, collectively processed, and developed, adding it to a shared horizon of experience without the need for everyone to be physically present at the scene of the action. This makes social media extremely popular among the young generation in Kyrgyzstan. Chats, Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, Facetime, and other services are frequently used by three-quarters of young people (74,5%) and from time to time by almost a quarter (23,1%). Similarly, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and similar services are not merely sites for isolated activity, but rather are integral elements of everyday life, with 56,8% of respondents using digital media regularly during the week and another 23,8% using it from time to time. Usage rates of messenger services and social networks are stable across all age groups, and there are no statistically relevant differences in usage between genders. For those who use social networks, virtual friendships play an important role. One in three young people (33,8%) claimed having up to 50 virtual friends and another one in three (37,1%) had between 51 and 100, while about one in 5 (18,4%) had between 201 and 500. A further 7,3% mentioned having over 500. In the case of 8 out of every 10 young people (80,0%), up to 30 of these online friends were people who they knew in person and regularly met offline for a variety of reasons. The question of safety when sharing personal information on social networks reveals an ambivalent picture: While 35,1% largely or completely trusted social media in this respect, one in four (25,7%) was uncertain whether their personal data was being used responsibly and safely. One in ten (9,4%) did not feel competent to assess the issue with any certainty.

Smartphones play a central role as modern communications devices and for Internet access. It can be assumed that every household has at least one smartphone. Only a very small proportion (0,7%) said that they or their parents did not own a mobile phone. Almost two-thirds of households (62,6%) had three or more smartphones, while one-quarter (25,6%) of households and about one in ten young people (10,7%) owned only one mobile device. The numbers vary at a statistically significant level primarily in proportion to the financial status of the household in which the young person lives. As one might expect, young people from more affluent families have more access to mobile phones. Three-quarters (73,7%) of these young people said that there were at least three smartphones in their household. In contrast, access to PCs and notebooks is significantly less frequent. Two-thirds of young people (64,7%) did not have any such device, while a third (32,1%) did. Internet access is of crucial significance, irrespective of the device that is used to access it. More than one in two young people (56%) had almost non-stop Internet access, while about one-quarter (19,3%) had almost daily Internet access. It should be noted, however, that 17,4% of respondents had no Internet access at all. For these young people, the digital divide with all its concomitant processes of social exclusion is an everyday reality. About one in three (36,3%) spent up to two hours online per day, one in two (50,8%) spent between three and six hours online, and about one in ten (9,6%) spent over six hours online.

Although user behaviour does not vary by gender except in a few areas, there are significant differences between the different age groups. Specifically, the younger age groups (14 to 17 years) use the Internet to access entertainment (music, videos, films, streaming series, gaming, etc.) and search for information for school or work purposes with disproportionate frequency, while activities like reading news or using online banking occur significantly more often among those aged 26 to 29.

FIG. 18: **Internet user behaviour by gender**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; response: "often"; figures in percentage



7

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Educational achievements are often shaped by a young person's background. Some studies, for example from the south of Kyrgyzstan (Joldoshalieva 2016), have shown different trajectories based on belonging families of the intelligentsia, the new "merchants" (kommersants) or the former kolkhoz workers. Moreover, Whitsel et al (2019) studying educational inequality in Central Asia found that gender and ethnic differences tend to contribute most to inequality. Education and employment at the age of our respondents is often interlinked with educational aspirations and affects job prospects in the future, although education is important for young people for other reasons as well.

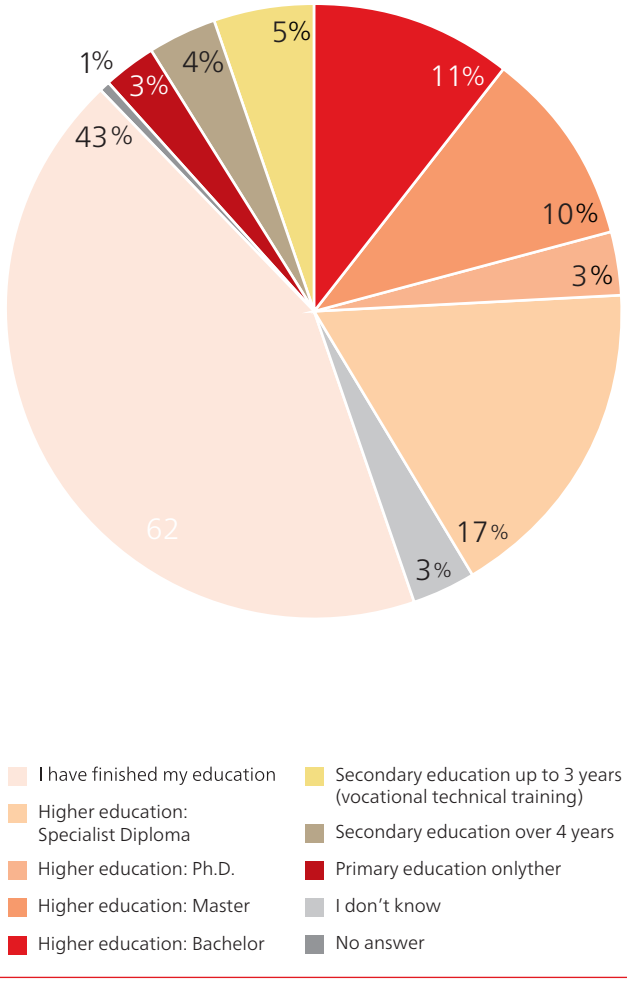
The educational status of respondents varied with some of them still in the process of finishing their high schools, while others were already working after graduating from university. Educational aspirations may have varied based on the level of their completed education. Many of them (43%) reported that they had finished their education while others still wanted to pursue vocational education (5%), to acquire a specialist's diploma (17%), to earn a bachelor's degree (11%) or to get a Master's degree (10%)(fig. 19).

This comes in stark contrast with the assessment of grade-buying (discussed below). The satisfaction level is higher among rural youth compared to urban (35,8% and 28,5%), and more among female respondents compared to the male (35,4% and 31,6%).

Many of the respondents (37%) agreed that the grade buying as a practice takes place in the universities of Kyrgyzstan, though quite a few respondents (27%) also stated that they do not consider this to be a practice in higher education.

FIG.19 : **Maximum level of education**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



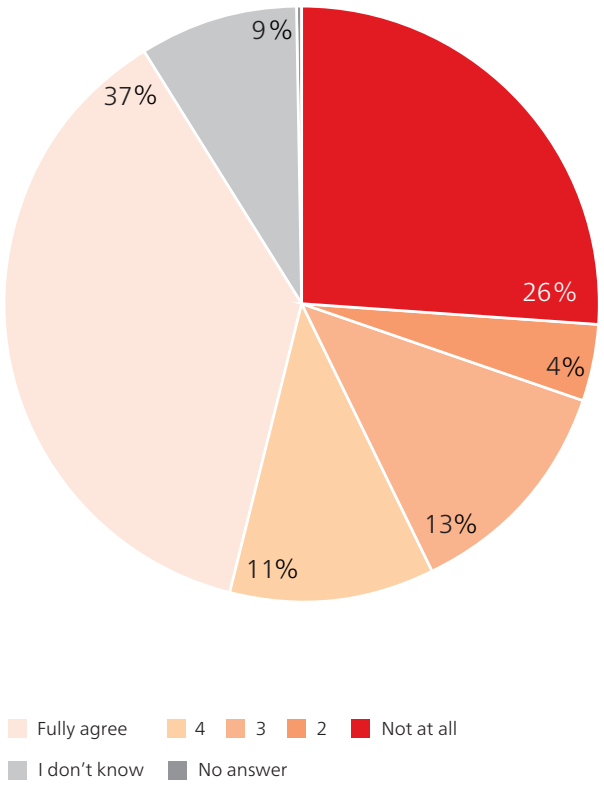
More youth in urban than in rural areas considered corruption and bribery in universities a regular practice – 40,1% compared to 30,6% fully agreed that such practice exists, and only 17,9% compared to 30,2% completely disagreed with this statement.

When such answers are compared to the level of completed education it is clear that those who have higher education (bachelor/equivalent or higher) tend to agree fully or close to full agreement that bribery takes place. The difference between agreement and disagreement seen in the above graph could be explained by the actual experience of those who either did or did not complete higher education (fig. 20).

When respondents are asked to describe of their everyday life at university, the answers cross the spectrum in a bell-shaped curve, though leaning more towards assessing their lives as hard and stressful.

Gender-based distribution of answers showed that male respondents were more likely to view their life at university as easy or very easy compared to female respondents. Those in the age range of 20-24 viewed their everyday lives as more stressful than respondents of other age groups, which is understandable since they are the ones who are most likely still continuing their studies. The urban youth also tended to view(fig. 23) their everyday life as stressful compared to the rural youth. This may also explain the lower level of satisfaction with quality of education among urban youth discussed above. In general, young people are rather optimistic about their prospects of finding a job in their home country upon graduation from an educational institution. Every fifth respondent (21,1%) thought that it would be easy, and only 12,7% viewed this prospect to be very difficult. There is a gender variation among respondents with female youth perceiving the possibility of finding a job as more difficult.

FIG. 20: **Do you agree that there are cases of 'buying' grades at the institutes/universities?**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



The youth in the age category of 20-24 thought that it would be more difficult for them than young people 14-19 or 25-29 years old.

FIG.21: **Do you agree that there are cases of 'buying' grades at the institutes/universities – differences by level of education**

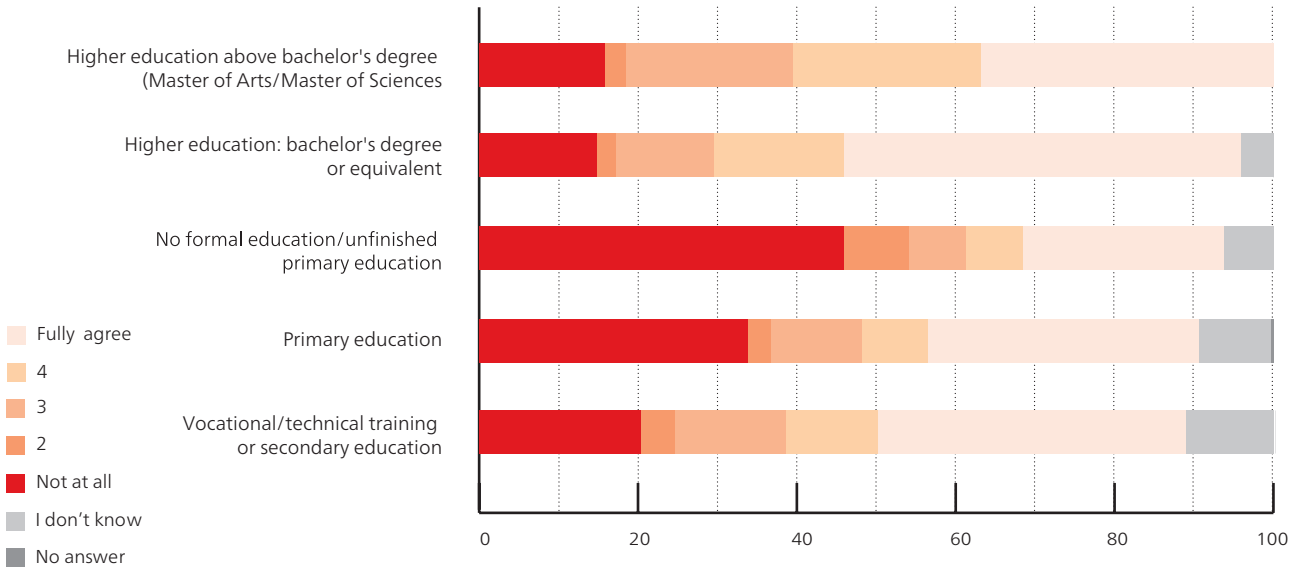


FIG.22 : **What do you think, how would you describe the everyday life at your institution/university?**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage

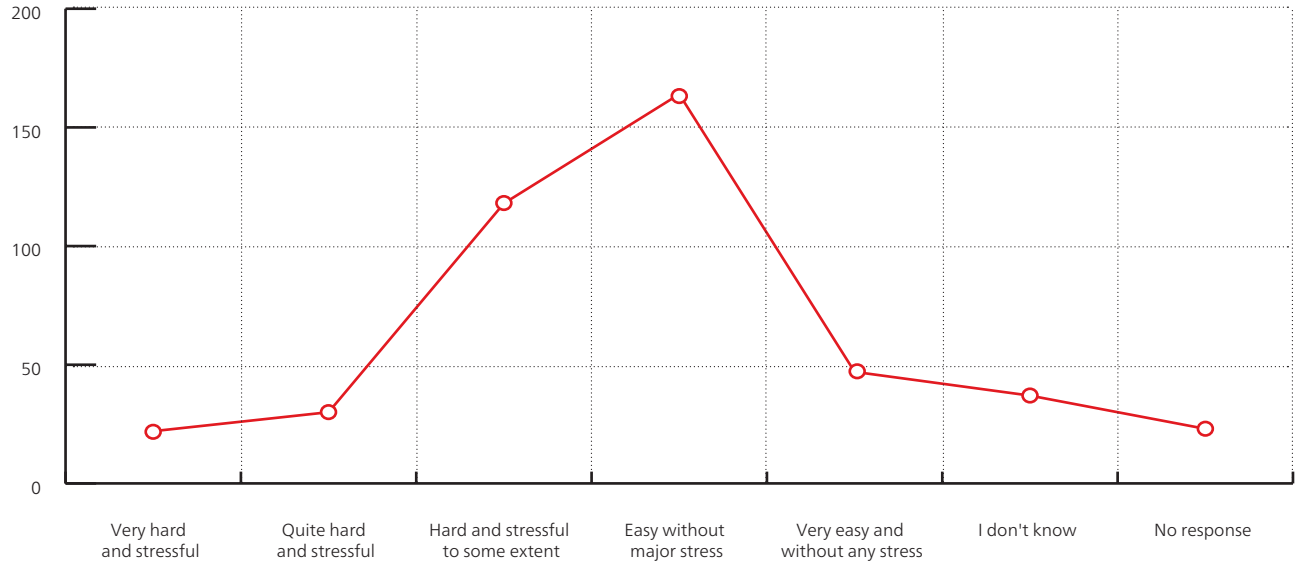
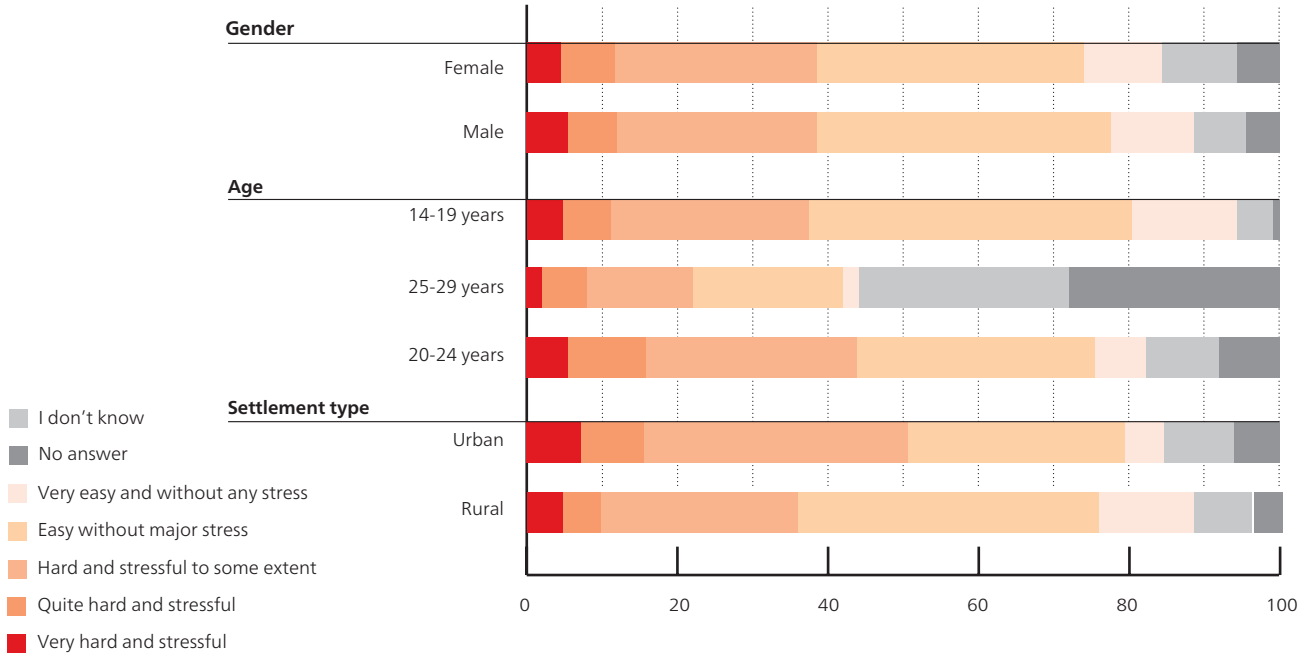


FIG. 23: **What do you think, how would you describe the everyday life at your institution/university - differences by gender/age/residence**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The mismatch between skills gained at university and what is expected at the workplace in Central Asia is often attributed (Jonbekova 2015) to the declining quality of higher education. This is often based on expectations that universities give a professional specialization which would be immediately useful in the workplace upon graduation. This stands in contrast with young people's satisfaction with the quality of higher education disused above. This could be explained by the dissected perception of quality versus usefulness of education. The standards of general perception of quality mostly apply to the overall educational process and these perceived standards are low, whereas the mismatch of skills is more tangible and standards are established at the workplace.

Education is often viewed as a gateway to decent employment and when the respondents were asked about whether it would be easy to find a job in their country upon graduation,

FIG.24: **EASE OF FINDING WORK AFTER FINISHING FORMAL EDUCATION**
(IN %)
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; multiple responses; figures in percentage

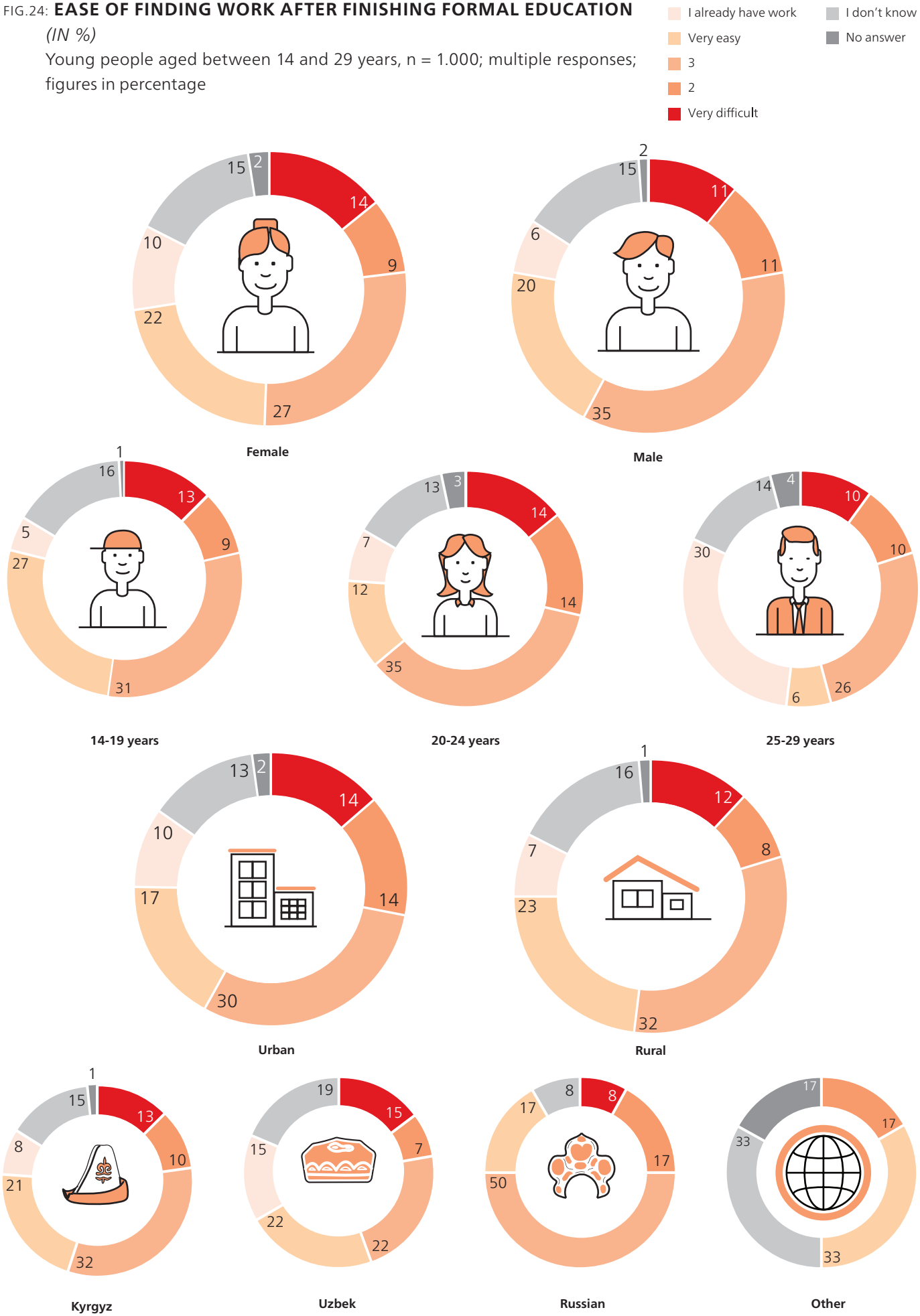
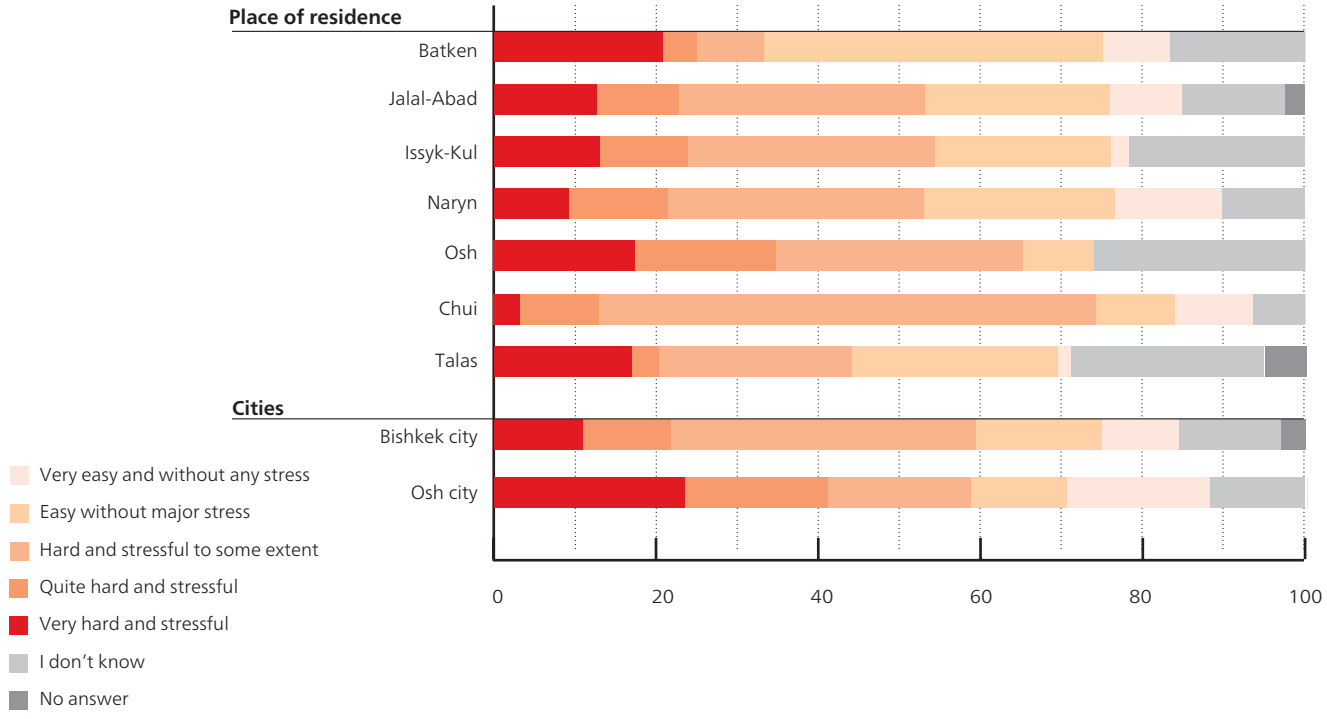


FIG. 25: **Ease of finding work after finishing formal education – differences by place of residence/cities**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



'Teachers have low salaries - so they do not try, do not look for new methods of teaching, do not interest students in learning.'
FGD, Uzbek, 22 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'We have good teachers. There are good teachers in every school, but on average they are not enough. Teachers are not paid enough, and they are burned out too. The school where I study now is heated with kerosene, it is impossible to breathe there on the second floor and it is very cold in winter. But in spite of everything, the teachers tried to do their work well.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 18, Bishkek

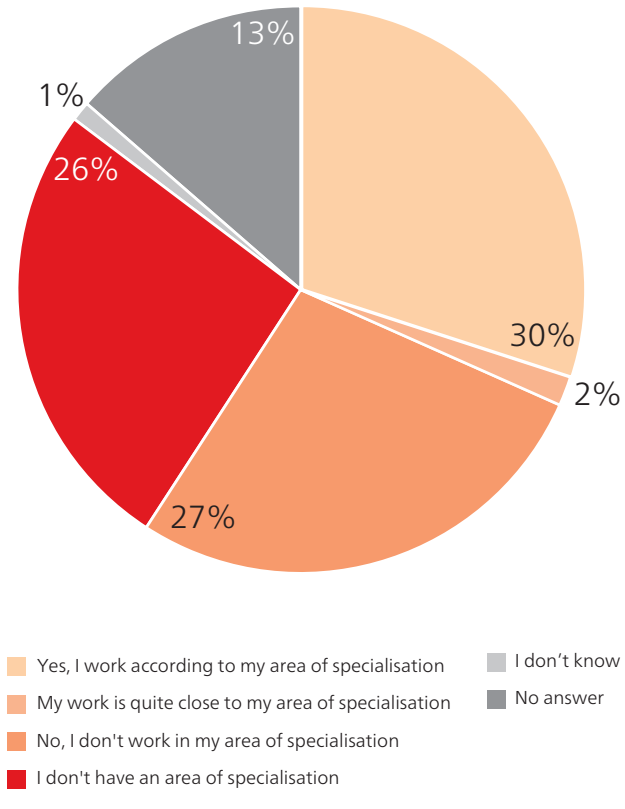
'I think that strong teachers work abroad, that's why we don't have good ones here.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 15 years old, Osh city

'We don't have facilities at our school or even in some universities. For example, our school has no laboratory for physics class.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, age 29, Sokuluk village, Chuy region.

'I do not think that our secondary education is of high quality. Again, it depends on the regions, for example, in remote parts of Kyrgyzstan education is worse than here [in Chui region] or in the city. If you compare with other countries, our education is really weak, both secondary and higher education.'
FGD, female, Kyrgyz, age

FIG. 26: **Field of specialisation and current place of employment**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



17, Chui region

'The worst experience was that the teachers didn't listen to us, they insulted me and all of us. It directly affected the quality of my education and my psyche in general. After graduation, when I went to university, I could not ask a single question. I didn't understand and I was afraid. I think we all have this fear, because at school we were all treated like this: "Are you stupid?", "You don't know that, sit down!"'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, age

22, Bishkek

'Let's say, if you don't give money to teachers at school, they won't pay attention to a child. For example, my brother constantly asks for money for some fees at school, and if you don't give it, teachers will treat the student differently.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 23 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

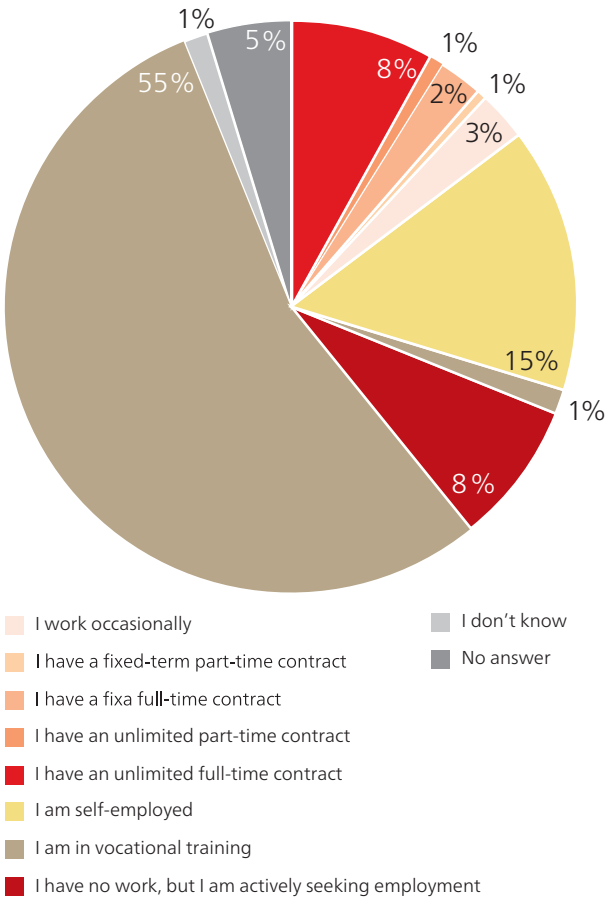
they exhibited a cautious optimism – 21,1% reported that this would be easy, 31,3% - relatively easy and 10,2% and 12,7% that it would be difficult and very difficult. Male respondents were slightly more optimistic than the female ones, and those in the age of being enrolled at university (20-24) were less optimistic than respondents from other age groups. Among the youth of three largest ethnic groups – Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russians, a roughly equal proportion of combined "difficult" and "very difficult" can be found. In urban areas there is slightly more pessimism in this regard, and this is also seen in the variety of answers in Osh city when compared to some other regions. Looking at the regional distribution of answers, it is worth noting that remote regions such as Batken and Talas exhibit relatively higher pessimism in this regard (fig. 25).

Once looking for a job, there is the possibility of attributing the finding or lack of work to a completed or non-completed level of education. Male respondents tended to attribute the lack of work to education more than female respondents (29,3% compared to 18,9%). Among ethnic groups, this attribution is more visible among ethnic Russian youth (46,7%) compared to Kyrgyz (26,4%), Uzbek (21,1%) and others (25%). And the urban youth also tended to blame education levels more than the rural youth (30,1% compared to 23,9%).

There are often expectations of finding work which closely relates to one's field of educational specialization. For many, the search for a proper education is associated with a specific work field. The study showed that only 30% worked in their field. Almost the same proportion (27%) of youth did not work in their field (fig. 26).

In general, no more than thirty percent of respondents worked in the field of their studies. Women were more likely to be working in their field of studies than men, and there is no difference in this regard between respondents living in urban and rural areas. Male respondents felt more often than the female ones that their current work required a lower level of formal education than the one they have. Interestingly (in the next section) this may also explain why they tend to be less educationally aspirational.

FIG. 27: **Current employment status**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



Work opportunities: private versus public sector

Young people have different employment statuses and, when employed, find jobs in various ways while having differing views on what "work" means to them. While official statistics put the general unemployment level at 5,5% in 2019[2] , employment status varies among young people. A majority (55%), seemingly mostly made up of those who are studying, reported not having jobs, but they were not seeking employment. Many of them were self-employed – 15%. Male respondents tended to more often be self-employed (23%) than the female respondents (6,7%). More urban youth (19,7%) were self-employed than the rural youth (12,8%). Some (8%) had unlimited time contracts (fig. 27).

More urban respondents (8,2% compared to 7,9%) and more men than women (10,2% compared to women's 5,7%) were unemployed and seeking jobs than rural and male respondents.

Interestingly more female respondents (15,1% compared

FIG. 28: **Areas of employment**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage

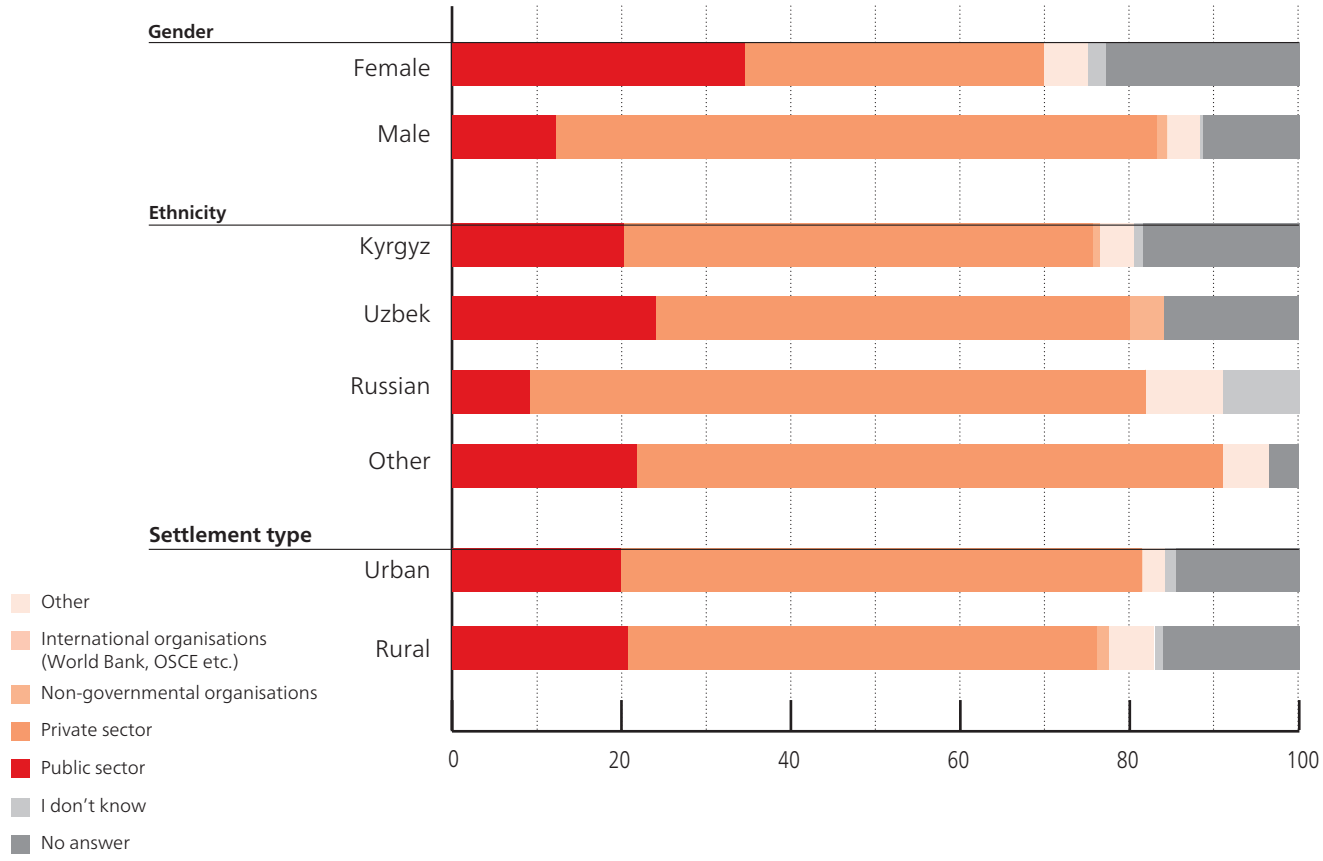


FIG. 29: **Factors important for choosing a job**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage

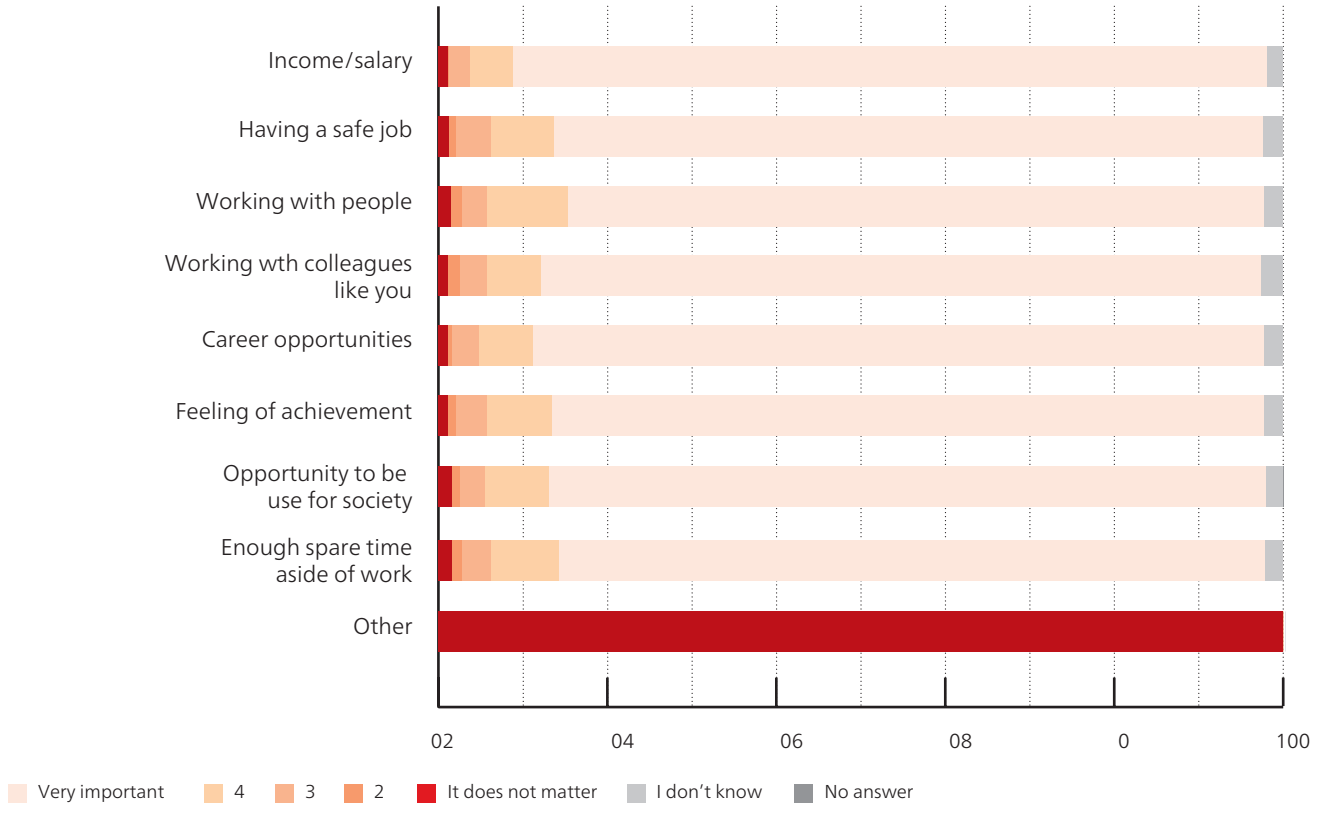
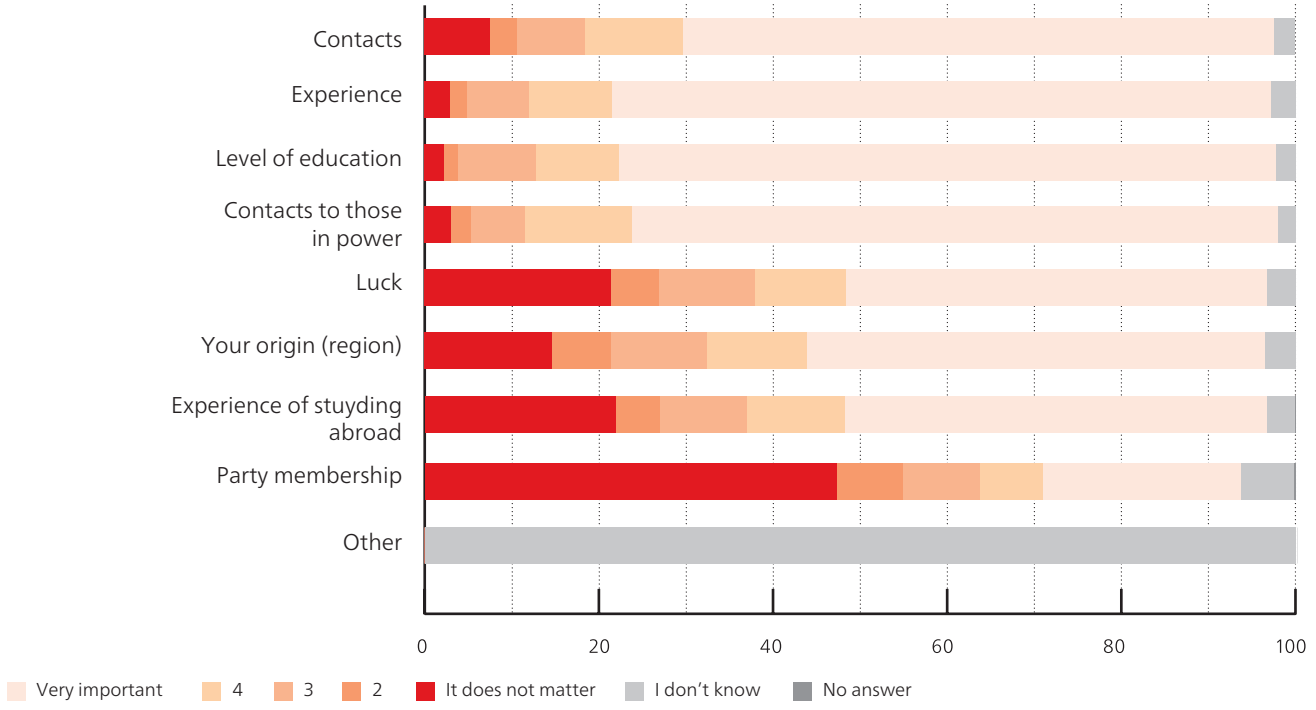


FIG. 30: **Factors important for getting a job**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; multiple responses; figures in percentage



to men's 9,8%) migrated internally because of the lack of jobs in their regions. This is the reason given for job mobility for ethnic Russians (26,7%), and less for Uzbeks (2,6%) and Kyrgyz (11,6%), mostly among urban respondents (20,5%) rather than rural ones (5,3%).

Figure 28 shows that 57,9% of the surveyed youths worked in the private sector, with male respondents tending to be more likely to work for private organisations than women (70,9% compared to the female respondents' 35,3%). Ethnic Russians tended to prefer to work in the public sector, and female respondents even more so when compared to the male respondents. Respondents from an ethnic Russian background also relied less on circles of friends and relatives or on the geographic origin of birth to find jobs than respondents from other ethnic groups. The private sector gives more job opportunities and better jobs than the public sector, and with a culture of men being encouraged to be breadwinners this sector attracts more male youth. For example, the share of women working in secondary education in the 2015-2016 academic year was 83,9%[3] Among the youth of various ethnic origins, ethnic Russians tended to work more (24%) in the public sector compared to others (Kyrgyz – 20,3%, Uzbeks – 21,8%, others – 9,1%). In rural areas the youth tended to work more in the private sector rather than in the public, which could be explained by engagement in the agricultural sector.

Work conditions in the country are not always up to labor standards, and time spent while working varies among the youth. Mostly the interviewed youth worked either 40 or 48 hours per week (14,7% and 13,7% correspondingly), although quite many of them worked 50, 60 or even 70 hours per week. There was no big variation in regard to the gender or the urban/rural youth in this regard.

'After the pandemic the situation with jobs got even worse.'
FGD, male, Kyrgyz, 15, Osh city.

'Probably because of the lack of experience of young people, often they are not hired because they [employers] think they are still "green," they are not mature enough. They take those who already have experience in one field or another. Instead of giving them [young people] an opportunity to get that experience, they usually just don't hire them.
It's just people without education and people who can't find a job, even if they have secondary and higher education, they start working illegally, without paying taxes, because there are simply no jobs or they simply won't be accepted.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 17 years old, Chui region

'It is difficult for all categories of people (with and without education) to find a job in Kyrgyzstan. I am an English teacher by profession, I was asked for money when I wanted to get a job at school.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'I think there are not enough jobs in our country, that's why many people with higher education do things that are different from their profession. '
FGD, Russian, aged 24, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

'It's very hard [to find a job]. I knew doctors and bankers - in order to get a job, they work for free for three months, either in a bank or in a hospital. And the salary there is miserable, 3-4 thousand [KGS], that's why young people do not want to get such a job, and go to another country, because there are no opportunities here.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female 24, Osh region

'Nowadays you have to give money everywhere [to get a job]. My brother graduated from a medical school, and to get a job at the city hospital, he was asked [to pay] $7,500. Well, you can't earn $7,500 in one or two years.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17, Osh region

'You cannot say that there are no jobs in Kyrgyzstan, there are jobs, but it depends on who is lucky and who is not. As they said above, you have to pay a bribe or have an acquaintance, then you can get a job, they [employers] will not hire you without an acquaintance.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 22 years old, Osh city

'It's very easy [to get a job in the informal sector]. For example, you can come up and ask, well, if you come up, they'll take you because you can work. Especially in such places the wages are quite low, so many do not worry about paying a lot to their employees.'
FGD, Turk, male, 16 years old, Bishkek city

8

YOUTH AND MIGRATION

Kyrgyzstan is a country of transition, continual progress, and a young emergent democracy. All these factors tend to encourage young people to remain in the country. However, many factors could also cause them to face the need to migrate.

Kyrgyzstan has a long tradition of migration. The 1990s were characterised by post-Soviet migration movements from all the Central Asian states to Russia, especially against the background of all parts of life being ethnicised in favour of the "titular nation" (Abaschin, 2017, p. 3). The emigration of many people who now found themselves in the minority was accelerated by political and economic instability (Abaschin, 2017). From the turn of the millennium to the present day, emigration for the purpose of finding work and securing an income became increasingly frequent. Russia's demand for workers, easier access to visas, and the weakening Kyrgyz economy intensified this labour migration.

Today, migration continues to be driven by the opening of new perspectives and the quest to escape from poverty and conflict. The German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) (2021) points out factors such as strong regional, ethnic, economic, and intergenerational controversies, widespread poverty, and high maternal and neonatal mortality. "Over one-third of the population lives below the national poverty line […] [Maternal mortality] is the highest of all the 53 countries of the WHO European region" (GIZ 2021). Unicef corroborates this assessment and states that over 40% of young people are affected by poverty and unemployment, a situation that is exacerbated by corruption and low levels of government aid (Unicef 2021, p. 11). Coppenrath (2020, p. 9) also cites the absence of attractive economic sectors and high corruption among government officials.

All these circumstances are classical push factors that are reflected in the high number of migration processes (KFW 2021). According to official figures of the Kyrgyz State Migration Service, almost one million of the country's 6.5 million residents work abroad (Turmush 2019) and their income amounts to one-third of GDP: "[…] making Kyrgyzstan one of the remittance-dependent countries in the world" (The World Bank 2019). Additionally, one should not underestimate internal rural-urban migration (Unicef 2021, p. 11), which also affects an estimated million residents, primarily in the regions of Bishkek and Osh. The reasons for this migration are finding better educational opportunities, searching for jobs, and escaping from poverty and backwardness: "According to the statistics committee, an average of less than 38% of households countrywide was permanently connected to the sewerage system in 2018, compared to over 97% in Bishkek (Coppenrath 2020, p. 5). The data from our study tended to confirm these impressions. Thus 81,7% of respondents said that they were highly likely to find a well-paid job abroad, while only one-third (33,9%) expected to find one in Kyrgyzstan.

In a country where over 50% of the population is under 25 years old and little is known about the effects of migration on children and young people (Unicef 2021, p. 11), it is crucial to establish young people's attitudes to migration. In what follows, we will examine this issue.

FIG. 31: **Desire to migrate for more than six months**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 244; multiple responses; figures in percentage

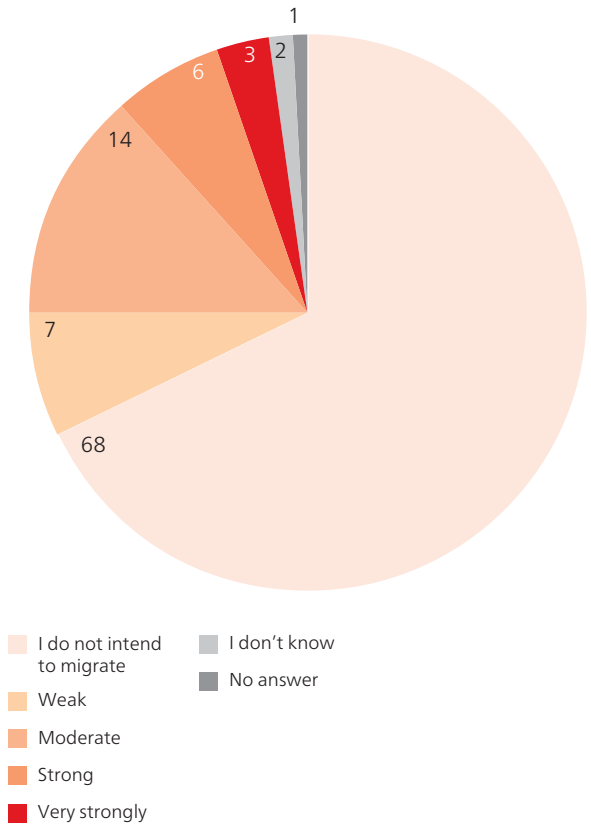
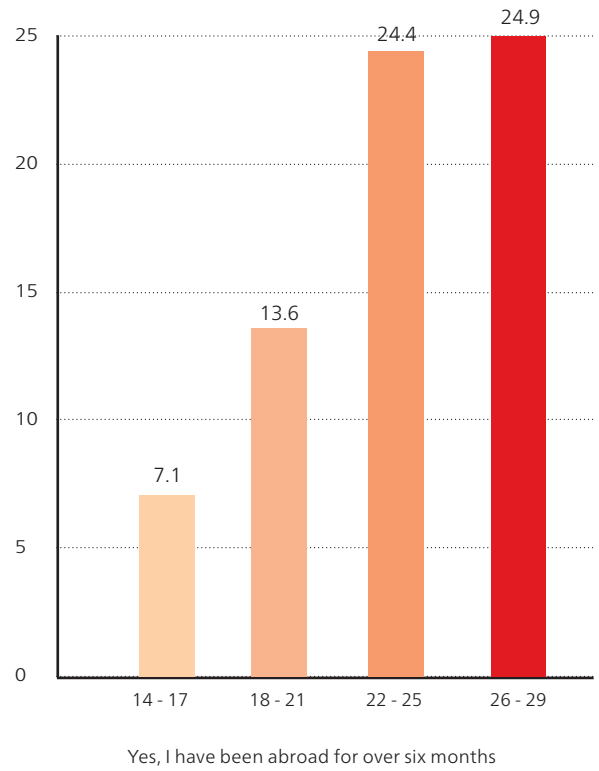


FIG. 32: **Age distribution of young people with personal experience of migration**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, Ø 17,5%, n = 175; figures in percentage



INITIAL INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH AND MIGRATION

Before we discuss the selected topics in greater depth, we will touch on the general views and experiences of young people regarding migration.

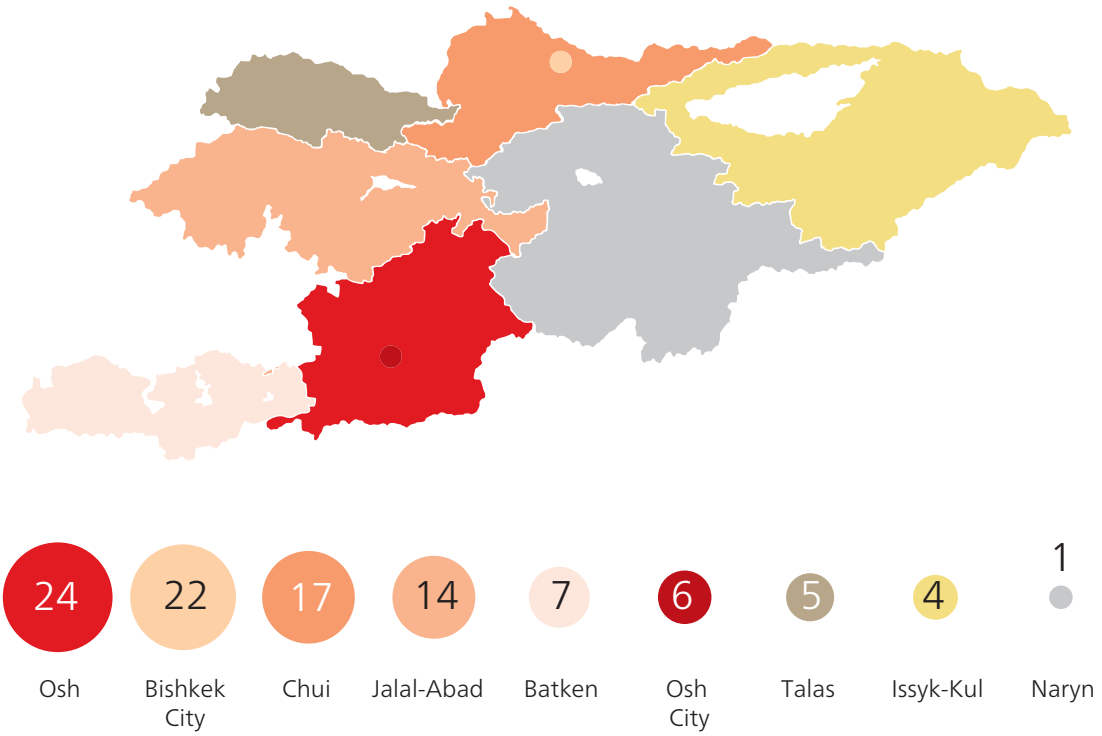
Right at the start of the section on migration, respondents were asked about their personal aspirations concerning migration. Figure 31 shows that the desire to migrate is relatively low on the individual level.

Over two-thirds of respondents (67,9%) stated that they had no intention to migrate. Less than one-tenth (9,2%) had a strong or very strong desire to spend more than six months abroad. On closer examination, it appears that young people with a strong aspiration to migrate are predominantly male and predominantly from the Osh region or from rural areas. Although rural young people have a slightly greater tendency to wish to migrate, this group is also more certain that they do not want to migrate. Thus 70,8% of rural youth stated that they definitely did not want to migrate, compared to 48,6% of urban youth. Additionally, young people from poor and wealthy backgrounds had a lower desire to migrate. One explanation could be that those who come from poor families simply lack the resources to do so (obtaining visas, work permits, etc.), while those from affluent backgrounds have no financial pressure to migrate. Young people aged between 18 and 21 also had a slightly greater wish to migrate. This is the age when they gain full access to various spheres of social life that offer new possibilities – including in the field of migration. However, the desire to migrate decreased again with increasing age. About 50% of those aged 14 to 17 stated that they did not wish to migrate, while roughly three-quarters of those aged 26 to 29 had no aspirations whatsoever to migrate. Most of these young people had found their feet in life, started their own family, and secured a permanent job. This makes migration more difficult and reduces the desire to do so.

We must now ask how many of those young people with a wish to migrate actually follow through on this desire. It must be noted that migration in Kyrgyzstan is mostly circular and driven by the search for income and employment, which we will confirm further on. Authors like Sergej Abaschin likewise confirm the phenomenon of circular migration. Abaschin writes: "Even those who rarely return home regard their situation as a temporary one" (Abaschin 2017, p. 4). This temporary migration is often also due to the migrants' frequently illegal status and the high costs of legal immigration in, for example, Russia, the main destination, as well as deportation and re-entry bans on the part of the Russian government even for petty offences (Abaschin 2017).

Since we were unable, for obvious reasons, to interview

FIG. 33: **Young people with experience of migration by region**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 175; figures in percentage



young people who were sojourning abroad at the time of the study, we instead asked the question: "Have you ever been away from your home country for over six months?" It emerged that slightly over one-sixth (17.5%) had been abroad for longer than half a year. Those with personal experience of external migration were a diverse group, but slight trends can be observed in that they tended to belong to the older cohorts, as Figure 32 shows.

Among those aged 14 to 17, 7.1% had personal experience of migration, as did about twice as many of those aged 18 to 21 (13,6%). Young people with prior migration experience were most numerous among those aged 22 to 25 (24,4%) and 26 to 29 (24,9%). This age distribution was to be expected.

The gender distribution among young people who said that they had been abroad is significant, with 63,2% of male and 37,7% of female young people claiming personal experience of migration. Young men with foreign origins were more likely to migrate. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan is an exception when it comes to female migration, since approximately 40% more young women emigrate from here than in the other Central Asian states (Abaschin 2017, p. 4).

These statements are corroborated by the data we gathered about the desire to migrate, which does not vary according to gender. Thus, even though both genders have equal aspirations to migrate, male young people are more likely to put their plans into action. This can be explained in part by the fact that young women have more pressing family obligations, since they traditionally care for children and the household, as well as by the higher demand for labour in the agricultural and building sectors which predominantly employ men. It should be added that the question of gender and migration is one of the core areas in which differences can be observed within Kyrgyz society. Although almost one-quarter (24,3%) of young people believed that migration does not result in changes in the relationship between men and women, 32,9% of respondents believed that migration is indicative of a shift in gender relationships.

Differences between urban and rural areas with respect to migration experience are very slight, with the rural population slightly more likely to migrate. However, more marked differences can be observed between the regions (fig. 42).

It is plain that most of the young people come from southern Osh (24%), the capital city of Bishkek (22%), and the northern province of Chui (17%). Young people from the eastern regions of Naryn (1%) and Issyk-Kul (4%), and the province of Talas (5%) are least often represented among migrants. Contrary to expectations, the observation that young people from poorer and wealthier backgrounds have a lower desire to migrate is inverted when it comes to this question: it is predominantly young people from precisely these backgrounds who state that they have already spent a lengthy period abroad. In what follows, we will examine income differences and economic conditions more closely.

The respondents were also asked about the top three

FIG. 34: **Favorite destinations for external migration**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000; figures in percentage

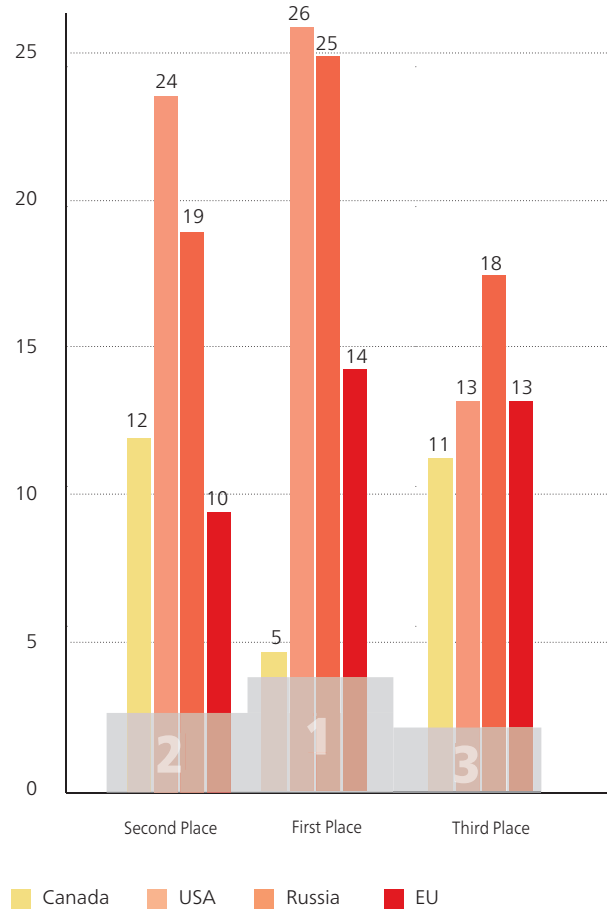
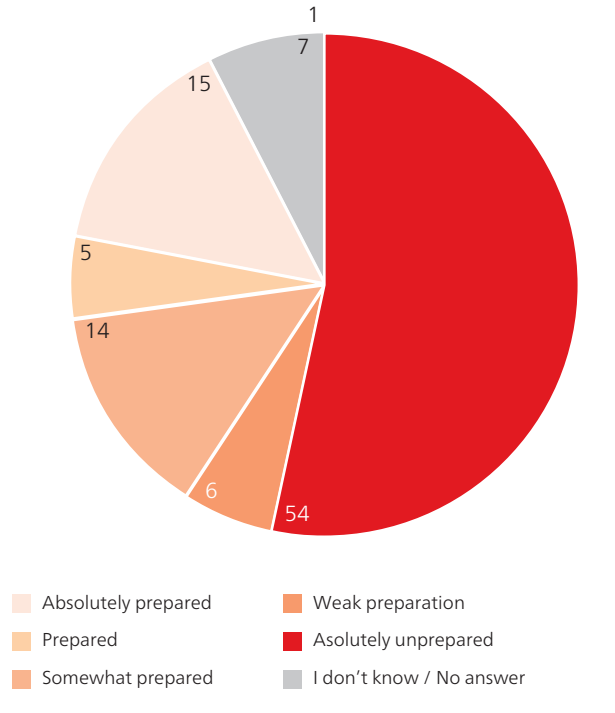


FIG. 35: **Preparation for moving abroad,**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, Ø 17,5%, n = 1000, figures in percentage



countries to which they would like to migrate (fig. 34).

The USA, Russia, the EU, and Canada rank high in all three places. Approximately one-quarter (25,9%) of young people gave the USA as their no. 1 destination, followed by Russia (24,9%), the EU (14,3%), and Canada (4,7%). The USA once again leads the rankings as the no. 2 destination (23,6%), followed by Russia (19%), Canada (12%), and the EU (9,5%). In third place, Russia leads with 17,5%, followed by the USA and EU (both 13,3%), and Canada (11,3%). Australia also ranks high as the no. 3 destination (15,6%; not shown in fig. 34). Internal migration within Kyrgyzstan is named by approximately 10% of respondents as their no. 2 and no. 3 destination of choice.

The desire to migrate to neighbouring states like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is extremely low, scoring values of one percent or lower. The reasons why young Kyrgyz people rarely desire to migrate to neighbouring countries are varied and, in general, obvious. To begin with, the economic situation of adjacent states like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is worse than in Kyrgyzstan and opportunities for work or education there are equally poor. Additionally, the shared history of the Central Asian states is a factor that divides as much as it unites. Taschtemchanowa and Medeubajewa (2017, p. 2) cite "distrust, suspicion, and hostility (…)" and "border issues (…) between the Central Asian states that have not been fully resolved to this day". These unsolved issues have resulted in exclaves, disputes about water and grazing, and armed conflict (Taschtemchanowa & Medeubajewa 2017). Yet these authors also report about hopes for mediation, especially by the political elites, who are reaching out to one another and laying the groundwork for further progress.

Kyrgyzstan continues to maintain close ties with Russia, and this is reflected in the fact that almost one-quarter (24,9%) of respondents gave Russia as their no. 1 destination for migration. The manifold reasons for this include Russia's geographical proximity; numerous economic and political agreements that favour migration (such as recognition for educational qualifications and easy registration procedures); language; high remittances -about one-third of GDP comes from labour migrants in Russia (Ortmann 2019 p. 3; Gast 2018) -; and the shared past, to name but a few of the pull factors. Specifically, and with relevance to everyday life, the closeness between the two states manifests in the fact that Russian media is consumed by many Kyrgyz citizens, creating a shared frame of reference (Ortmann 2019). This too corroborates the statements of one-quarter of our respondents who name Russia as a destination for migration.

We also asked respondents about the preparations they had personally made for migrating, starting with a general assessment of how prepared they were (fig. 35).

It emerged that over half of the young people (53,5%) had made no preparations at all and only 14,6% said they were absolutely prepared. This brings us to the phenomenon of informal migration, to which we must now turn. While the degree of preparedness is somewhat higher among those who have the intention to migrate, the general level of preparations is nevertheless very low. Less than one-quarter (23,3%) of the young people stated that they were competent or very competent in the language spoken in their first choice of destination country. When asked what, if any, preparations they had made to leave the country, only 3,7% said they had contacted the embassy; 1,6% said they had reached out to potential employers; 2,8% had contacted potential universities or other educational institutions; and less than 1% had a scholarship. All these low values reinforce the image of informal migration. 10,3% have reached out to relatives and friends for support with their migration plans.

This "culture of the informal" is a social phenomenon that pervades all aspects of society, including the context of migration. The low commitment to obtaining qualifications (applications and language proficiency), the avoidance of formal barriers, and the general low level of engagement shows that migration does not invariably require elaborate preparations and that informal contacts such as friends and family can be sufficient. The usually temporary labour migration that is the most frequent type of migration in Kyrgyzstan is achievable by these means. Moreover, agreements within the Eurasian Union mean that Kyrgyz citizens need only register at their place of residence and produce a work contract in order to be able to migrate to Russia and other countries (Abaschin 2017, p. 4). As the cost of official registration is high, migration is frequently illegal and facilitated by personal contacts and corruption (Abaschin 2017, p. 4).

A new generation of happy, optimistic youngsters? The relevance of education and jobs for migration

Since the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan has found itself in a process of continual transition, driven by political and economic reforms, towards a market economy and a democratic system in contrast to its own past and that of the Soviet Union. The Road and Belt Initiative of the Chinese government is a source of additional economic possibilities and challenges. The resultant improved infrastructure could provide opportunities for Central Asian countries, according to Pomfred (2019), and could also change migration trends. Additionally, the national poverty rate is in continual decline – from 39,9% in 2008 to 22,4% in 2018 (The World Bank, 2021). At the same time, the average income is rising – from 3,270 Kyrgyz Som in 2006 to 16,427 Kyrgyz Som in 2018 (Кыргыз Республикасынын Улуттук статистика комитети 2021). Increasing privatisation and social inequality within the Kyrgyz educational system may also influence young people's decisions to migrate. Abdoubaetova (2020) points out that social advancement and

FIG. 36: **Satisfaction in education and the wish to migrate**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

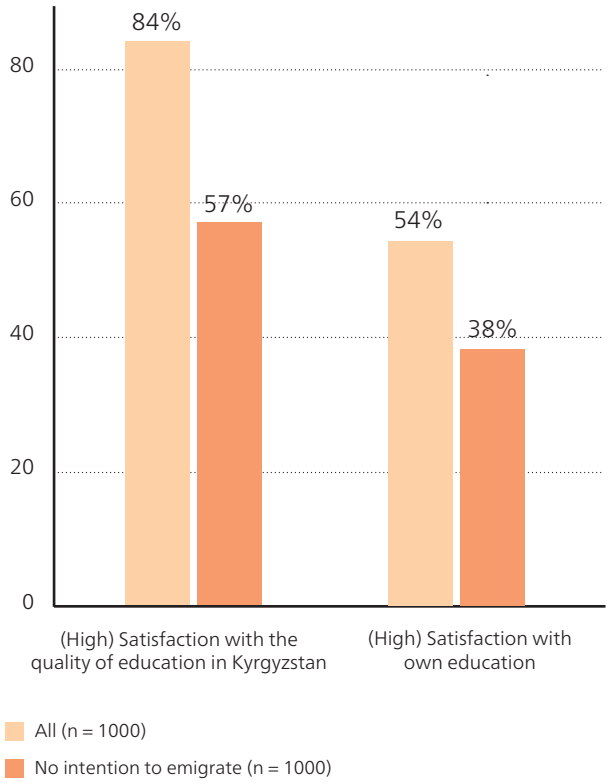
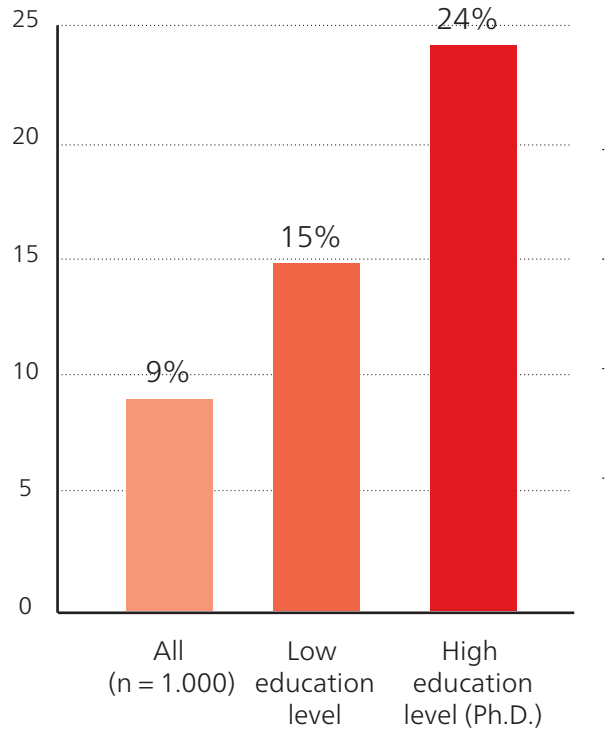


FIG. 37: **Aspiration in education and the wish to migrate**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



scholastic and professional success are generally the privilege of the wealthy urban upper class. Unlike private schools, public schools are often underfunded and the quality of their pedagogy and teachers is low. We will now take a quick look at the educational and economic systems and examine how satisfaction with these systems affects the decision to migrate. The respondents' educational qualifications and employment situation play a significant role in what follows. Entry into the world of work is a developmental milestone for young people for which the groundwork is laid at school.

In the following, we begin by looking at education and migration and examining possible relationships between the two. Next, we will turn to an analysis of the links between the economy and migration.

We have already seen that 17,5% of respondents had spent time abroad for various purposes. With increasing age, the probability of young people having had such a migration experience also increased. Since fewer than 4% across all age groups had been abroad for study or training purposes, it is impossible to speak of educational migration, as our other findings will show. The question is why so few young people wish to migrate for educational reasons. A glance at their satisfaction with their own education and the educational system overall could offer possible answers (fig. 36): 83,5% of all young people were very satisfied with their education, and over half (57,3%) of these satisfied people did not intend to migrate. Satisfaction with the Kyrgyz educational system is also high, with over half (54,4%) of respondents saying that they were very satisfied with the quality of education in Kyrgyzstan. 38,3% of those who said they were satisfied with the educational system do not intend to migrate. Only 12,2% said they were dissatisfied with the educational system, but even here the percentage of young people migrating for educational reasons is no higher.

One difference between young people with different educational levels is that those with less education (no school-leaving certificate / primary education) have significantly more experience abroad than those with a bachelor's degree or higher. 29,8% of young people between 22 and 25 with no school-leaving certificate / primary education stated that they had been abroad for over six months compared to 22,1% of those with at least a bachelor's degree.

However, young people aspiring to higher education are significantly more likely to want to migrate (fig. 37). Overall, 9,2% of surveyed young people had a strong or very strong desire to migrate. Among those who wanted to migrate, 14,8% sought to complete their primary education and 24,1% planned to obtain a doctorate.

Finally, let us return to those who migrate for educational purposes. What are the characteristics of this group? Analysis shows that these respondents – with the desire to migrate for educational reasons - were more satisfied with their own education (93,5% compared to 81,6% of all respondents with the desire to migrate) and that they spent more time on their education (21,1% compared to 16,6%).

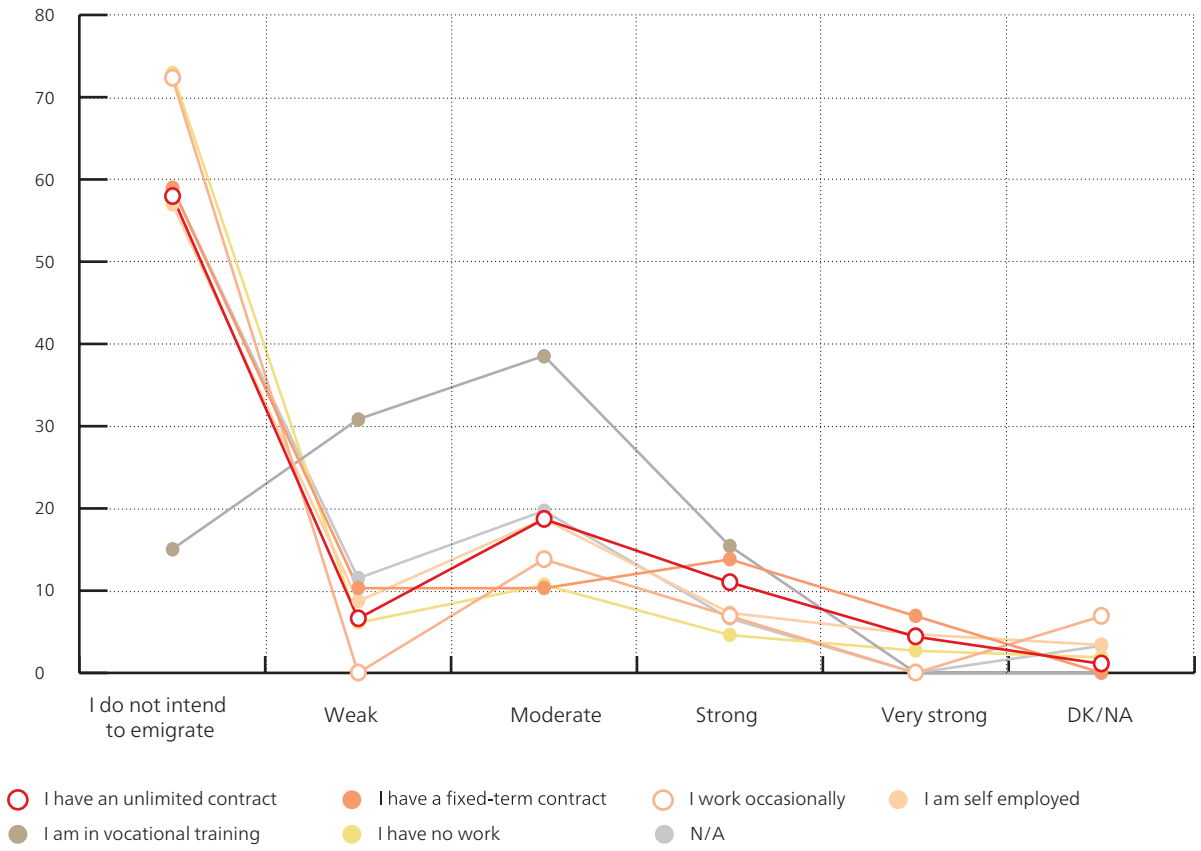
Economic factors provide a much stronger motivation for migrating. Almost one-third (29.,3%) of young people stated that their main motive for migration was to improve their living standard, while another 19,3% migrated for a better education and 15,6% for higher wages. Thus, the primary motive for migration is work. Young people frequently assume that a sojourn abroad will improve their job prospects, but the economic motivation goes a great deal further. 92,2% assumed that the bulk of their earnings abroad would be spent on their family's day-to-day needs. Thus, they migrate not for pleasure, to gain experience, broaden their horizons, learn languages, and get to know other cultures, but rather out of strategic and economic considerations. Young people who migrate seek to optimise their life situations, support family members who remain behind, and later maximise their success at home. More than half the young people (56,8%) had the impression that returning migrants have an advantage in the job market.

Additionally, there is a significant connection between their own experiences of migration and the reasons their parents migrated. In cases where the parents left the country to earn money, there is a greater probability that their children will migrate as well. A small digression on migration in general is necessary here.

Experience of migration generally begins in childhood when one or both parents migrate. In particular, children of internal migrants on the outskirts of Bishkek and Osh often live under life-threatening conditions at the fringes of legality (Unicef 2021, p. 11). They also suffer from social stigmatisation, exclusion, and psychological strain, according to the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) (2016). Children and young people often suffer as a result of increasing numbers of mothers migrating for work purposes, in a phenomenon that has been described as the *feminisation of migrant flows* (Eurasianet 2013).

On the situation of women, the FIDH's publication *Women and children from Kyrgyzstan affected by migration* (2016) states that they are often poorly prepared for migration and subject to exploitation and inadequate living conditions. These take the form of restrictive access to healthcare, lack of access to justice, violence, abusive conditions of detention, sexual abuse, and insecurity. Their children are immediately and unavoidably affected by these conditions, which also make access to education more difficult. The children of parents who migrated exhibit no increased desire to migrate themselves, but their financial situation is significantly dependent on their own experiences of migration, even if the relationship is only slightly significant.[4]

FIG. 38: **Wish to migrate and current occupation**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



Those who are in a better financial position, i.e., who at least have the ability to purchase more expensive items like refrigerators, TVs, etc., tend to be more afraid of unemployment (47%) than those who are in a very bad financial situation, i.e., who can only afford food and electricity/water (39,3%). However, this situation of poverty does not intensify their intentions to migrate, although a somewhat stronger desire to migrate can be observed in those who fear increasing poverty in society. The more positive the young people's outlook on their country's economy, the less likely they are to wish to migrate.

In general, those who think that it is difficult to find a job after completing their education have a stronger wish to migrate than those who believe this will be very easy or who already have a job. The observation that young people affected by poverty have less desire to migrate is corroborated by the data represented in fig. 38.

It is primarily young people without a job (72,6%) who do not intend to emigrate. In contrast, only 58,5% of young people in a stable employment situation share this intention. The desire to migrate is found most frequently (20,7%) in people with temporary work contracts.

Further analysis shows that almost two-thirds (63,9%) of those who have a higher level of education than their job requires do not wish to migrate, but the same is true of only one-third (32,6%) of those who are underqualified for their jobs. Those with a particularly strong desire to migrate (9,2% of all young people) include young people from urban areas, especially from the city of Bishkek. Two other groups can be identified in which the desire to migrate is stronger on average: 1. losers in education, and 2. winners in education. Thus, economic factors, origin (rural/urban), and education are three decisive factors in migration.

The relevance of democracy for migration processes

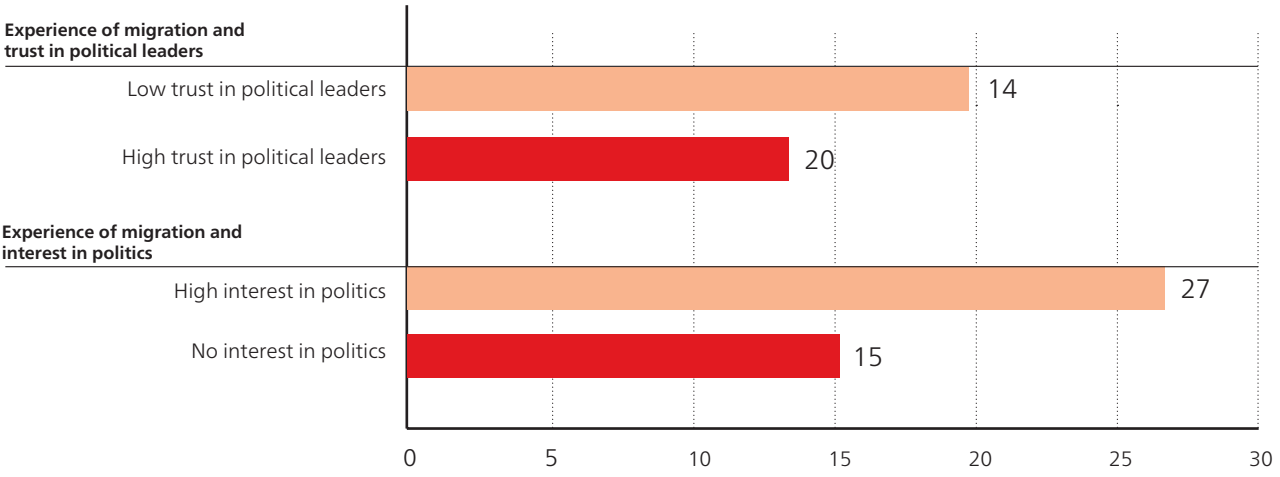
As a parliamentary democracy, Kyrgyzstan enjoys a special political status: "Kyrgyzstan is the only democracy in the fragile Central Asian region" (BMZ 2021). Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan is subject to the same continual cycle of change, insecurity, protest, progress, and backwardness as other countries in the region, and numerous changes to the constitution and violent transitions of power are part and parcel of Kyrgyz politics (Sadyrbek 2021, p. 4f.)

The question is how relevant the stability of this democratic system is to young people's migration patterns.

Fig. 39 clearly shows that young people with low trust in political leaders leave the country far more frequently. 20,4% of those who did not trust their political leaders at all said that they have more than six months of migration experience, while the same is true of only 13,6% who had the highest trust in their political leaders.

FIG. 39: **Experience of migration and trust in political leaders / interest in politics**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



Similarly, the desire to remain in Kyrgyzstan is greater in young people who trust the political leadership. 82,9% of young people with high trust in political leaders have no intention to go abroad, while 63% of those who do not trust their leaders share the intention not to migrate. Thus, it can be observed that political distrust is an indicator for migration processes.

Fig. 39 clearly shows that respondents with high interest in politics have a comparatively greater degree of migration experience abroad (27,4% compared to 15,4% of those with no interest in politics). This political interest and a concomitant knowledge of various political processes and actions of the protagonists within the political system cause a greater affinity for migration and a greater probability of actually migrating.

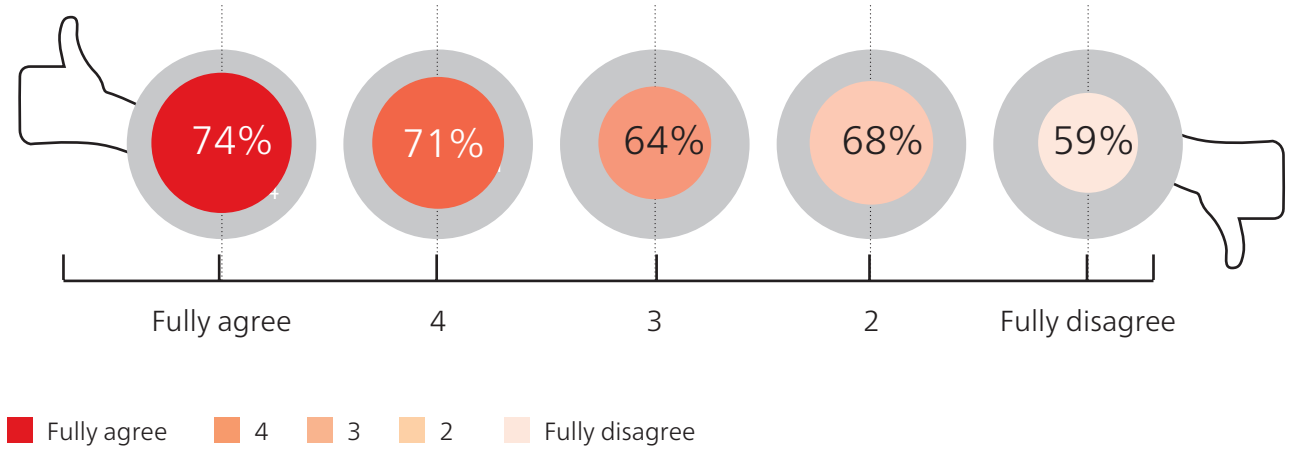
In general, as we have seen, over two-thirds (67,9%) of all young people intended to remain in their home country of Kyrgyzstan. However, fig. 40 shows that young people who favour democracy as a form of government had a significantly stronger intention to remain in Kyrgyzstan.

73,8% of those who fully agreed that democracy is a good form of government said that they wished to remain in Kyrgyzstan, while the same is true of 58.6% of those who reject democracy.

The young people who favour democracy also have less experience of migration overall. Thus, our data shows that the special role of Kyrgyzstan as a parliamentary democracy is a significant advantage when it comes to retaining young people in the country. In contrast, political instability, corruption, and distrust are obvious push factors.

FIG. 40: **The conviction that democracy is a good form of government and the intention not to migrate**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



'The standard of living is different abroad, where you can simply work and afford to travel and take vacations.'
FGD, female, Kyrgyz, 22, Bishkek

'When I was pregnant, I purposefully went to Moscow to give birth. I gave birth there for free. You can stay in the hospital completely free of charge, and when you are discharged, they give you gifts, maternity allowances, benefits. There is no such thing in Kyrgyzstan, that's why many people leave.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 23 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'Previously, low-skilled people were leaving the country to somehow earn money to feed their families. But now, mostly highly skilled people leave, in search of a better life, because they know they deserve more and can earn more.'
FGD, male, Uzbek, 17, Osh City

'I personally have seen highly qualified people who are good at their jobs go to other countries. There is no stable life, stable income in Kyrgyzstan. They think that their labor is not appreciated here and that they will be well appreciated abroad.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 23 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'Here we do not have any conditions for human development, the state does not create it for us, we do not have the capital to develop the country. That's why people go back [abroad], because the living conditions there are good, the salary is also good. And we have no conditions in medicine, no conditions in education, the standard of living is low, the food is expensive.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 22, Osh region

'Our salaries are very low, and food is expensive. It seems to me that the highest salary in Osh is 20 thousand KGS, and you can't live on 20 thousand [KGS]. In our country, food is becoming more expensive, and gasoline has become more expensive - so people are looking for a better life abroad and go there.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 24, Osh region

9

YOUTH AND POLITICS

POLITICALLY APATHETIC OR ENGAGED? YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN POLITICS

The extreme volatility of politics Kyrgyzstan should have drawn the attention of its citizens, many of whom have not only been witnesses of a variety of momentous events, but which have also often been direct participants. The country has experienced three violent overthrows of power. In March 2005 and in April 2010, the two first presidents of the country had to flee abroad as the result of popular revolts against their autocratic regimes. By now, the country is on its 6th president since early independence, but of the 6 that have been in power two have had to flee the country, and one is in prison.

The instability of politics in Kyrgyzstan, with occasional mass scale events, should be of interest to many people in the country. If not attracting direct action from the population, at least there ought to be a certain amount of attention given. Throughout the lives of the surveyed youth, there should have been enough events to draw their attention, and perhaps interest as well.

Kyrgyzstan has seen violent clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in its south in the summer of 2010, and has witnessed changes to its constitution almost every three years - often accompanied by political tension. Politics in Kyrgyzstan have often taken the shape of frequent protests throughout the country in any given year, which inadvertently draw in, if not participation, at least the attention of its citizens.

Youth political activism has been often talked about mostly due to a variety of youth organizations being active in politics and civil society. Political parties started to form their own so-called "youth wings" to mobilize young people not only in terms of participation in party activities, but also to draw in as many votes of young people as possible. In response to this rise in youth activism the government even created a special Youth Ministry in 2010 – later on it was dissolved, but the youth affairs function has always been part of the function of some ministries. The development of the concept of youth has been taking place in the different

FIG. 41. **Interest in politics** *(in %)*

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

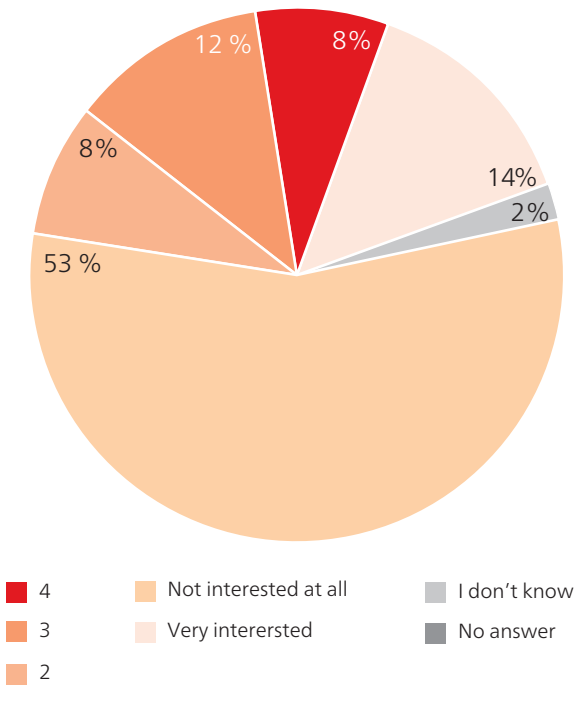
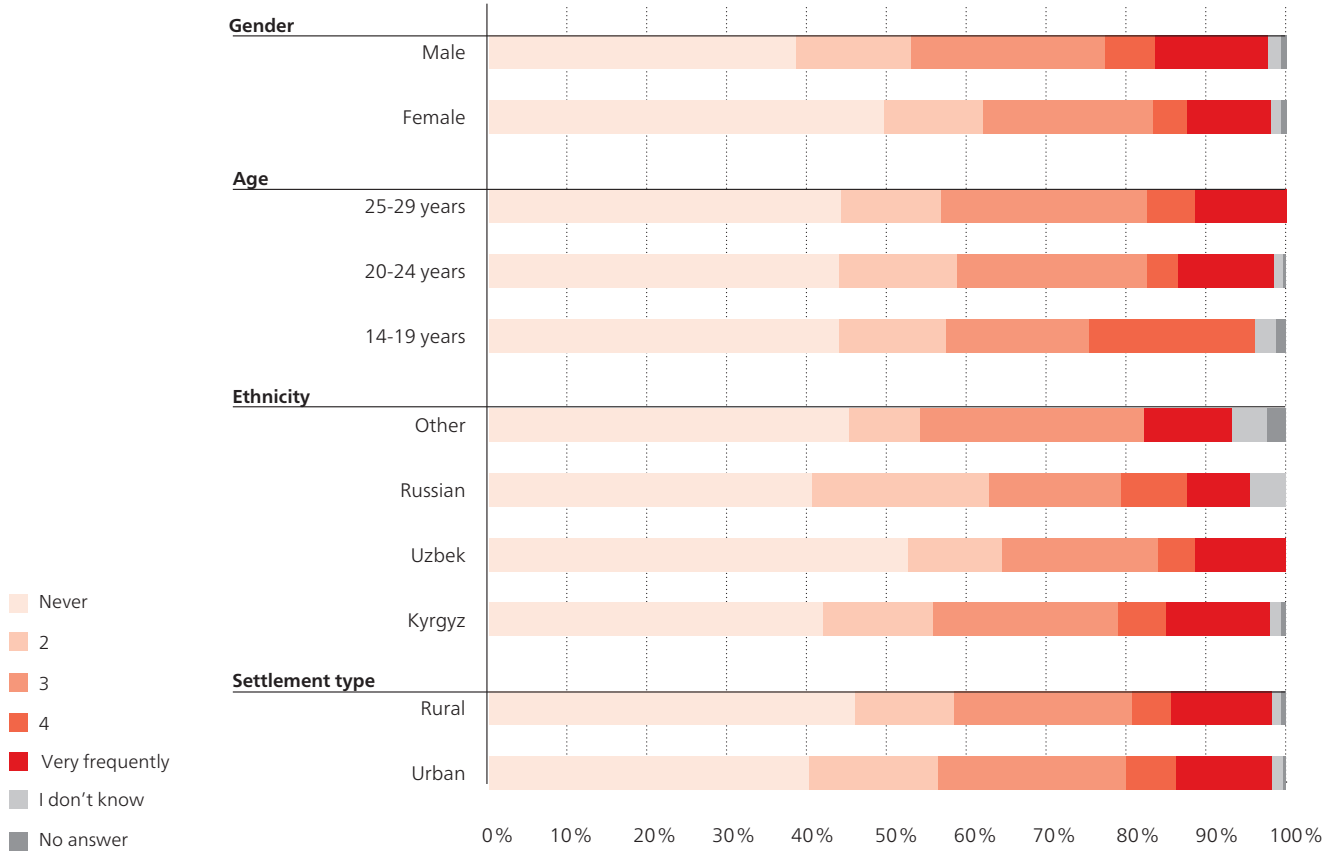


FIG.42. **Frequency of discussing politics with family members and friends**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



contexts (Kirmse 2010a) of the post-soviet world, and this is true for various time periods in Kyrgyzstan's three decades of independence.

Yet, this survey confirms another largely shared observation that the youth are not much interested in politics and that there is significant political apathy and indifference among them. Some studies have indicated that it is not only Kyrgyzstan's youth that has a low interest in politics. A similar study ("Generation Putin or generation protest? Between adaptation and rebellion" - 2020) showed that the Russian youth had low interest as well – 57% of them not being interested in politics. This perhaps speaks to the generational effect of the abstraction from politics.

Despite the rise in youth activism, the overall interest in politics remains quite low. More than half (53%) of young respondents reported no interest at all, and those who had an interest or were very interested made up less than a quarter of the respondents (fig. 41).

Lack of interest is more common among girls and young women (60,1%) than among boys and young men (46,6%), and similarly is more common among urban youth (47,6%) than among rural youth (55,8%). Among those young people not interested in politics, ethnic Russians stand out when compared to other ethnic groups. Also, when looking at the age of respondents, those in the age group between 20-24 were slightly less interested in politics than subsequent age groups.

The above also matches with results related to the frequency of political discussion. Young people's interest in politics is naturally connected to discussion about it with peers and other people in their surroundings. A significant portion of young people (44%) never discussed politics, and the overall distribution of answers leans towards less frequent discussion.

And again – female respondents tended to discuss politics less than their male counterparts, and urban residents also discussed politics less than people from the countryside. Ethnic Russian youths tended to discuss politics less than youths from other ethnic groups (fig. 42).

The survey results show that interest in politics in Kyrgyzstan is lower for women, urban residents and ethnic Russian youths. This conjunctural variation will also have similar tendencies in regard to other questions related to politics, state and international affairs.

One possible explanation for the gender variation in regard to the interest in politics is an established patriarchal culture, which does not encourage much interest in politics among girls and young women. The general picture of women's political participation is not encouraging for girls and young women to think about equal chances with men to be part of politics. One notorious example being the Parliament elected in 2005, where there was not a single woman

appointed as an MP. However, some studies (Coffé, 2013) challenge the notion of there being lesser interest in politics among women, but rather suggest that women are interested in different political issues to men. Since it was not possible to unpack the notion of politics in the survey, the interest in politics meant something different for various categories of respondents. Some studies (Haug 2017) on children's development of interest in politics also show quite a big variation in regard to topical interest. Young women and men come from different backgrounds in terms of their upbringing – religious values, ethnicities, residences (urban/rural) etc. This affects their perception of various topics, and in another study of Haug's (2017) found that were differences in regard to gender and educational levels, and it stressed that influences on the development of political interest develops in childhood and whether or not adolescents and young people have interest in politics is shaped in some stages of their childhood, which may speak again to the factor of families and their cultural (ethnic, religious) backgrounds.

Physical proximity to the centers of political decision making and major political events makes young people more disinterested in politics. Perhaps, the same is true for urban youth and young people of ethnic Russian origin who physically tend to be close to political decision-making processes, which means that for them the notion of politics is related to a struggle for power in its crudest sense. Certainly, it is not the actual distance between the youth and places of political events which produces such an effect, but the urban residence which shapes different attitudes unlike those in rural areas. This matches the fact that in general usually urban voter turnout is lower than the overall voter turnout in the country.

Another significant factor in understanding the ethnic variable can be found in survey results (Gorina & Agadjanian 2019) obtained after the 2011 presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan– they indicated that interest in politics is closely associated with a sense of national belongingness. It appears that ethnic minorities may feel disenfranchised from the political process, and do not develop keen interest in political participation.

BEING USEFUL FOR SOCIETY: YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF VOLUNTEERING

While young people may tend to distance themselves from politics, connection to society was seen as a different notion as it triggers different emotions. Kyrgyzstan has had a vibrant civil society since independence, which engages actively with volunteers. The survey conducted in 2006 by the Association of Civil Society Support Centers showed that 62% of NGOs work with volunteers (Tiulegenov 2008). The same survey showed that among these volunteers, only 10% were professionals - meaning that a significant majority of volunteers are young people and quite often students.

The volatility of politics may not have prompted growth of interest in politics, but it has certainly created situations for youth engagement in volunteering. This has often been the case with popular revolts and massive self-organized efforts by citizens (and with many young people among them) to prevent looting in the capital city. One of the recent cases of the surge in volunteering was the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kyrgyzstan.

The pandemic had two episodes of massive waves of volunteering – when lockdown was first introduced for two months in March of 2020 in various localities in Kyrgyzstan, and when in July of the same year there was a huge spike in infections. During the lockdown, many groups of volunteers, including youth, helped vulnerable groups of the population and medics with food packages, medicine and medical equipment. During the spike of infections in the summer, the same youth volunteers were helping doctors and medical institutions. According to the survey commissioned by UNFPA and UNICEF, around 10-12% of young people took part in various volunteering activities during the pandemic in 2020[5].

The popularity of some youth groups has grown so high that some of them have created a political party (Nash Narod, or Our People) which successfully ran for the Bishkek city council in April 2021, though the results of this election were cancelled and Our People were unable to take part in the second round due to a lack of finances. Other groups of young volunteers joined the Reforma political party, which successfully introduced innovations in financial crowdfunding to pay an electoral deposit to run in the parliamentary elections in October of 2020, and also took part in protest movements such as "Reaction" against corruption, the referendum on the new constitution, the absence of state transparency.

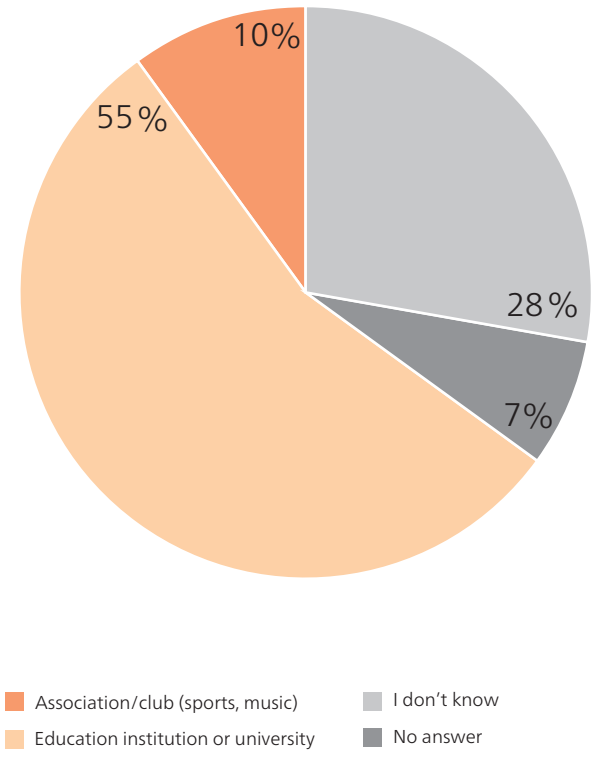
It is unsurprising that most of the youth (85%) think it is crucial to be useful for society (fig. 43). Unlike interest in politics, here the gender perspective is flipped – the importance of being useful to society is a relatively higher concern for the surveyed women and girls. Some reports[6] showed slightly higher participation of women in volunteering activities. The notion of engagement in socially meaningful activities is also more important for rural youth than for urban youth. In terms of the age distribution, both the younger and older respondents thought that social engagement is more important than the women and girls in the mid-range of ages (20-24 years old). Among the youth of the various ethnic origins, Uzbeks and Russians put comparatively less emphasis on the need to be useful for society. This may again speak to what has been suggested by some studies (Coffé , 2013) on the issue of national belongingness. As was the case with interest in politics, the relation to a society could be explained by a general sense of social estrangement from the wider political and social context for young people.

FIG.43: **Importance of being useful for the society**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

FIG.44: **Volunteering in the last 12 months**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



Remember July, when everything was closed and students from the medical school were going to help those in need as if they were going to work. They collected money and medicines to help those who lived alone, who had no opportunity. It was all done by young people.'

FGD, female, Kyrgyz, 21 years old, Bishkek

The contribution of young people in the political sphere might be less visible, but in rural areas they make a meaningful contribution to the development of the community, in road repair, for example. This is done on their own initiative, without asking for help from the authorities.
We saw it when young people were helping other people during the pandemic. There was a shortage of ambulances, so young people, both girls and boys, came out with their own cars to volunteer. Meanwhile, migrants formed a group and bought an X-ray machine and a disinfection chamber for the hospital.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 23 years old, Osh region

On the good side, during the pandemic we realized that people cared about each other. They helped each other, there were volunteers, there were vigilantes, there were activists who offered their help, there were philanthropists, rich people who helped with money and bought some medicines and masks.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 23 years old, Osh region

Younger people have higher aspirations in regard to feeling useful to society, and the same is true for the older cohort of young people who may witness and, perhaps, engage in various activities such as charities, occasional volunteering, etc. Though these aspirations are, as stated above, less frequent amongst youth aged between 20-24 years of age.

Notably, despite there being an interest in being of use to society, the actual proportion of the youth who volunteer is low, with only 7% of the respondents having had volunteer experience in the last 12 months (fig. 44). Despite the evidence above that NGOs regularly take on volunteers, the effects of civil society on youth engagement are rather small. Institutions which might potentially encourage the youth to volunteer are not limited NGOs which, certainly, are small compared to the potential number of interested youths. Other institutions might include schools and universities, as well various state and local government agencies which do not have proper practices of engaging young people in community service and other forms of volunteering. Despite the number of potential occasions (which were mentioned during focus group discussions, see below) related to social unrest during political turmoil and COVID-19 and palpable aspirations of young people to volunteer, not all opportunities were realized by state and non-state actors.

Interest in politics, the relation to society and the feeling of being useful all connect young people with the wider social context of where they live. As the study shows, there is a wide divide between the desire to be useful and actually acting upon this desire and doing something like volunteering. Certainly, volunteering is not the only way to express your value to society, but as a proxy measure it may still show this existing gap. The reason for that is, perhaps, the structural absence of demand for volunteering for young people, when the youth is not always able to find opportunities to be engaged.

FAMILY AS A CORNERSTONE IN FORMATION OF POLITICAL VIEWS

While young people are part of their parents' family, it is a formative period for them to formulate their political views and attitudes. Other family members (especially older ones) may affect their choices in terms of alignment of views. As some studies have shown (Albott et al. 2013), the post-soviet youth can be disengaged from political citizenship, but socially integrated through family and circles of friends, which gives them a sense of belonging to a society.

Values and attitudes of young people may often originate from within their families, although the extent of the congruence of opinions between young people and their parents may significantly vary. According to the results of the study, few youths believe that their political views are different from those of their parents, with only 16% being certain that their views differed from their parents'. 29% think that their views completely overlap.

Gender, age and ethnicity have a varied effect on whether young people tend to have political views similar to those of their parents. Young women have a relatively higher proportion of extremes – the number of those who reported that their views either completely or absolutely do not overlap with those of their parents is higher than those of male respondents.

The proportion of disagreement slightly increases with age, but not radically. Among ethnic groups, ethnic Russians differed the most, albeit slightly, with 18,4% thinking that their views did not overlap compared to, for example, to Kyrgyz (16,9%), Uzbeks (15,3%) (fig. 45).

Overall, there is a high congruence between the views of young people and those of their parents. This perhaps should be viewed as an absence of disagreement on various political issues. Perhaps unpacking the spectrum of issues would have shown some more disagreement. However, taken in as a whole it may show either the degree of influence on their political identity held by parents, or that they simply tend to have views which closely match those of their parents. Given the survey results showing that politics is not frequently discussed, it may be that the former is more likely.

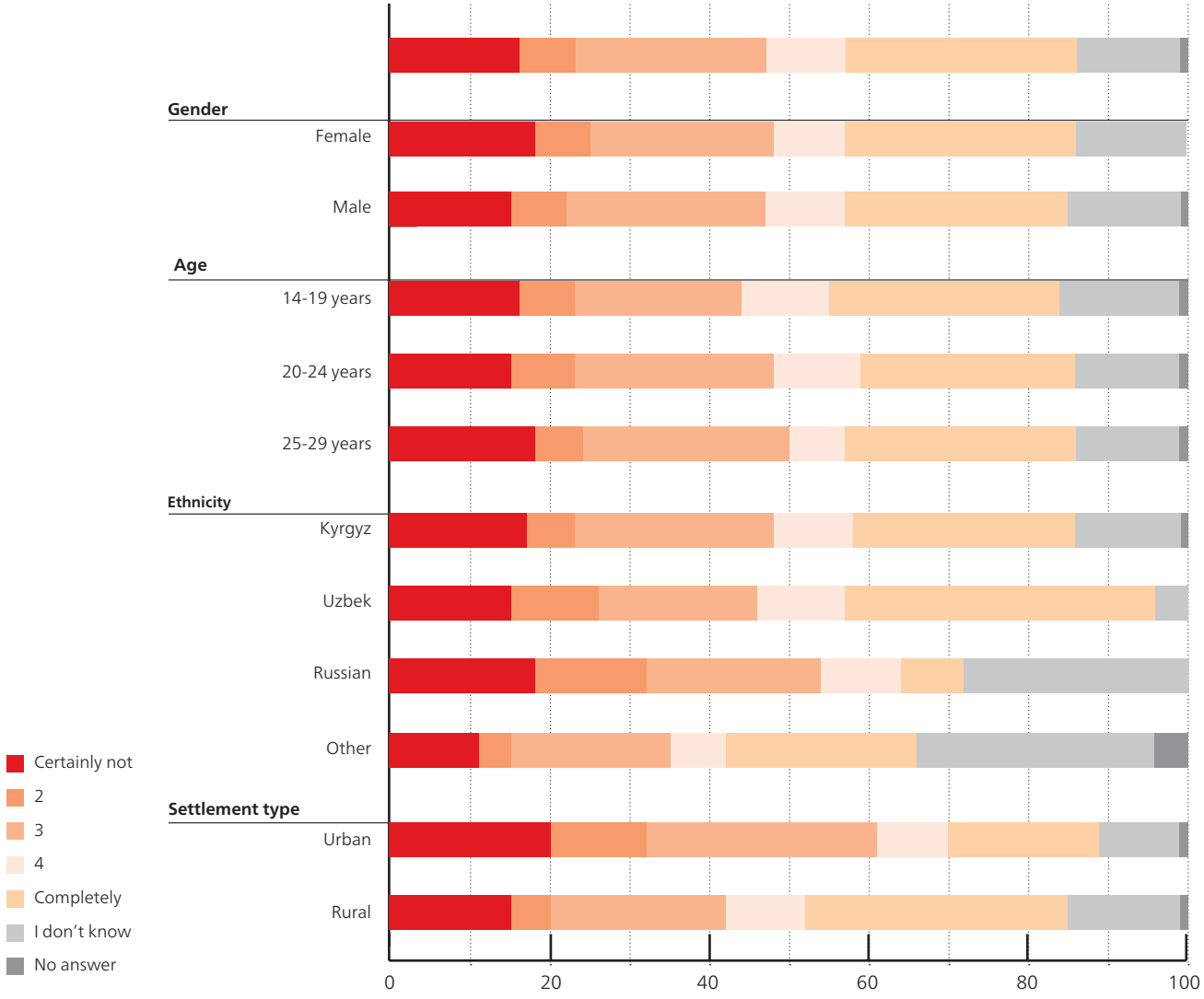
Urban residence and older age (25-29 years) make young people less agreeable with the opinions of their parents. Perhaps, assuming financial independence from one's parents and residing separately from them, as well as having some personal experience of interaction with political issues makes those above 25 form more independent views. The differences on the ethnic level could perhaps be explained by Kyrgyz and Uzbek cultures putting a stronger emphasis on filial piety and respecting elders, at least compared with modern Russian culture in Kyrgyzstan.

POLITICAL VIEWS AND ATTITUDES: BETWEEN INTENTIONS AND ACTION

Political views and attitudes manifest themselves in actions such as voting, internet activism, willingness to take on a political role and views on freedoms of speech. Voting and internet activism are behavioral patterns which show to what degree young people self-report their engagement in politics. Political participation in the form of voting and Internet activism does not stand as significant for the young people, which corresponds with the low degree of interest in politics and in political discussion.

Electoral politics in Kyrgyzstan is quite dynamic - elections take place regularly at both the national and local levels. Young people have the opportunity to take part in presidential, parliamentary or local councils' elections. In recent electoral cycles, many of these elections have become more

FIG. 45. **Do your political views and convictions overlap with those of your parents?** *(in %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



competitive. Since the 2015 parliamentary elections which introduced biometric registration, the vote count and voters registry became more transparent, increasing trust in elections.

Though, as the examples of many countries have shown, voting absenteeism is present across various age groups, and Kyrgyzstan is not an exception in this regard, the results of this survey show that among those young respondents who had the right to vote, quite a significant number (42%) of youth do vote, at least in elections that took place in 2020 (fig. 46).

More male respondents vote than female respondents, and slightly more rural youth vote than people from cities. Among respondents of various ethnic backgrounds – the Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth tended to vote much more than members of other ethnic groups (fig. 47). Continuing the discussion of political estrangement of youth from different ethnic groups, one may argue that, while at the national level there is a sense of weak belongingness, elections as specific activities take place locally and thus the youth is drawn into voting in significant proportion.

Voting enables the youth to exercise their active political rights and elect representatives. Another stance on politics manifests itself through their willingness to take on a political role. While a good number of young people voted, at the same time most of the respondents did not see themselves in any political role – 62% "clearly" stating that they couldn't imagine themselves in such a role (fig. 48).

Young women are less likely to assume a political role than young men, and this is congruent with the gender variation in interest in politics. This seemingly goes in line with the traditionalist expectations of gender roles which often view women assuming active roles in politics as undesirable, - views which are then internalized by women as well. Interestingly, rural respondents were less likely to be able to imagine themselves taking on political roles, despite their interest in politics being higher (fig. 49). Perhaps the urban youth perceive themselves being in a more advantageous position to participate in politics and take on a political role. Proximity to centres of power often viewed as being located in big cities such as Bishkek and Osh help to, if not engage di-

rectly in various political events, at least closely observe them.

Overall, willingness to assume a political role decreases with age. Growing older naturally shrinks the spectrum of possible opportunities, as well as becoming entrenched in professional roles which may be far from the realm of politics. The desirability of a political role is much less among ethnic Russians, and to some extent among ethnic Uzbeks as well. This once more speaks to the survey results which were discussed in the prior sections, and may show not only a stronger sense of estrangement from the political community, but also a perception of there being major obstacles in becoming a politician from select ethnic backgrounds. Some of these obstacles may relate to patronal clientelist politics which prompt stronger ethnic ties within political groups. Other obstacles may be the language barrier, with Kyrgyz becoming more commonly used in various spheres of political and state structures.

When it comes to elections, it seems that a younger age plays a role in making respondents more willing to take on a political role and perhaps to go vote as well. Some studies (Cohen & Chaffee 2013) have shown a positive correlation between civic knowledge and probability of young people voting. There could be a possibility for more engagement with young people at this age.

Which sources of information people use often affects

FIG. 46: **Did you vote during the last elections in the national parliament?**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

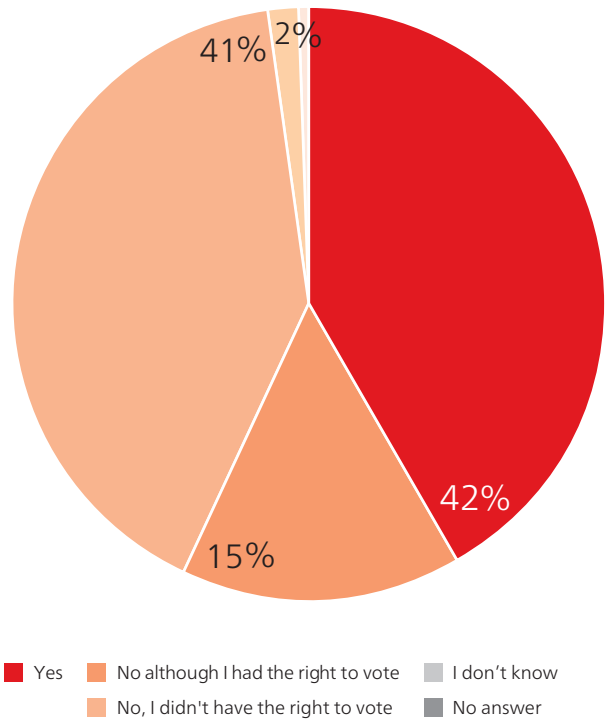


FIG. 47: **Did you vote during the 2015 election in the national Parliament** *(in %)*

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

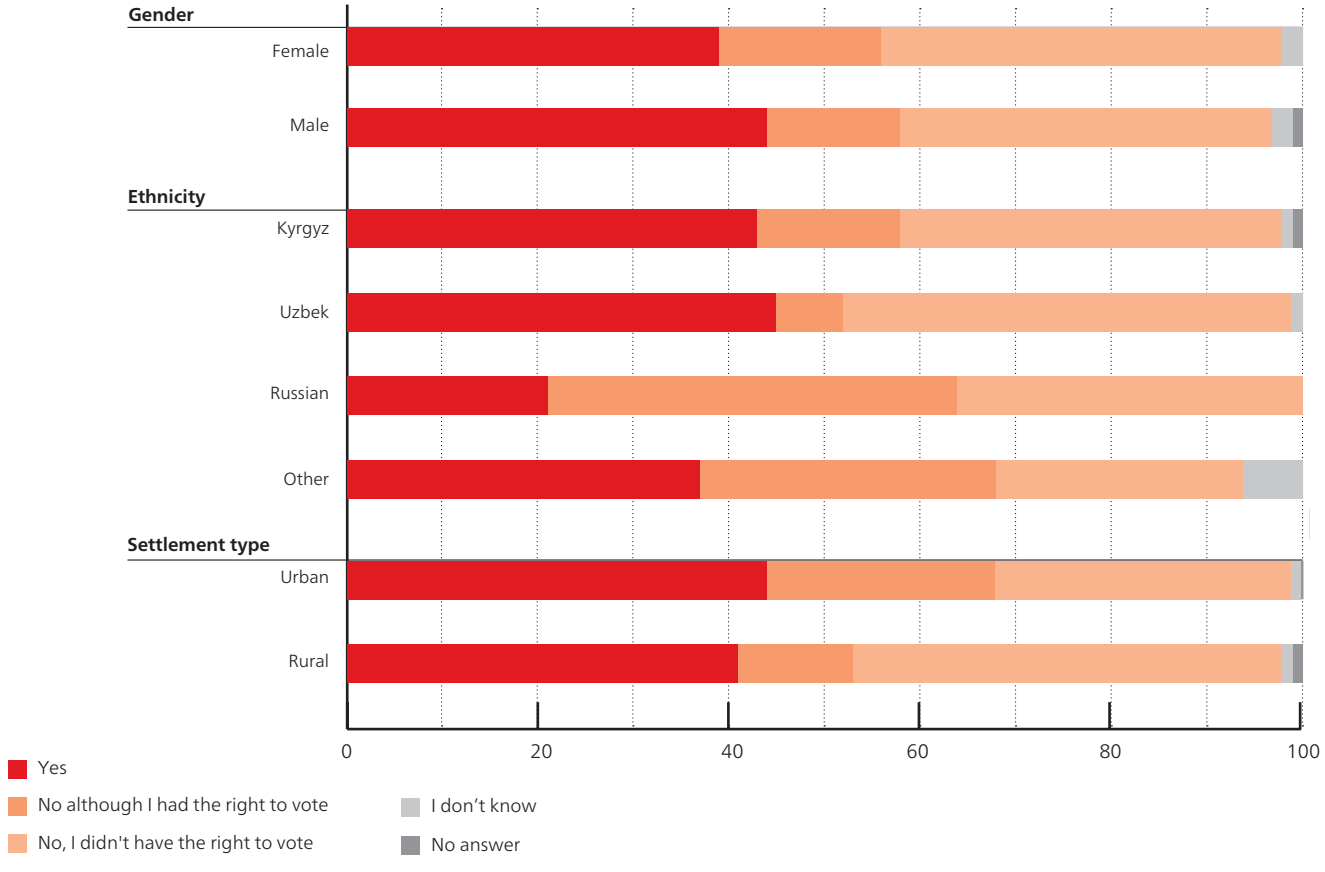
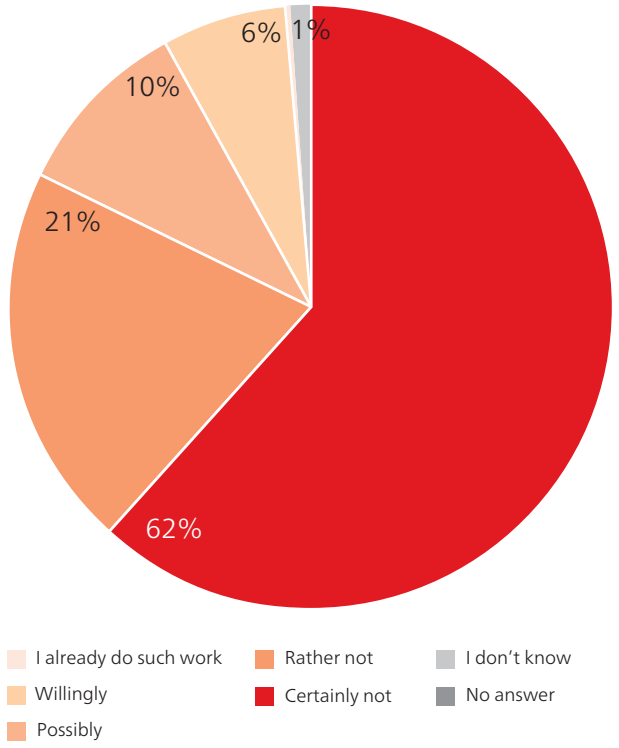


FIG. 48: **Willingness to take on a political role**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

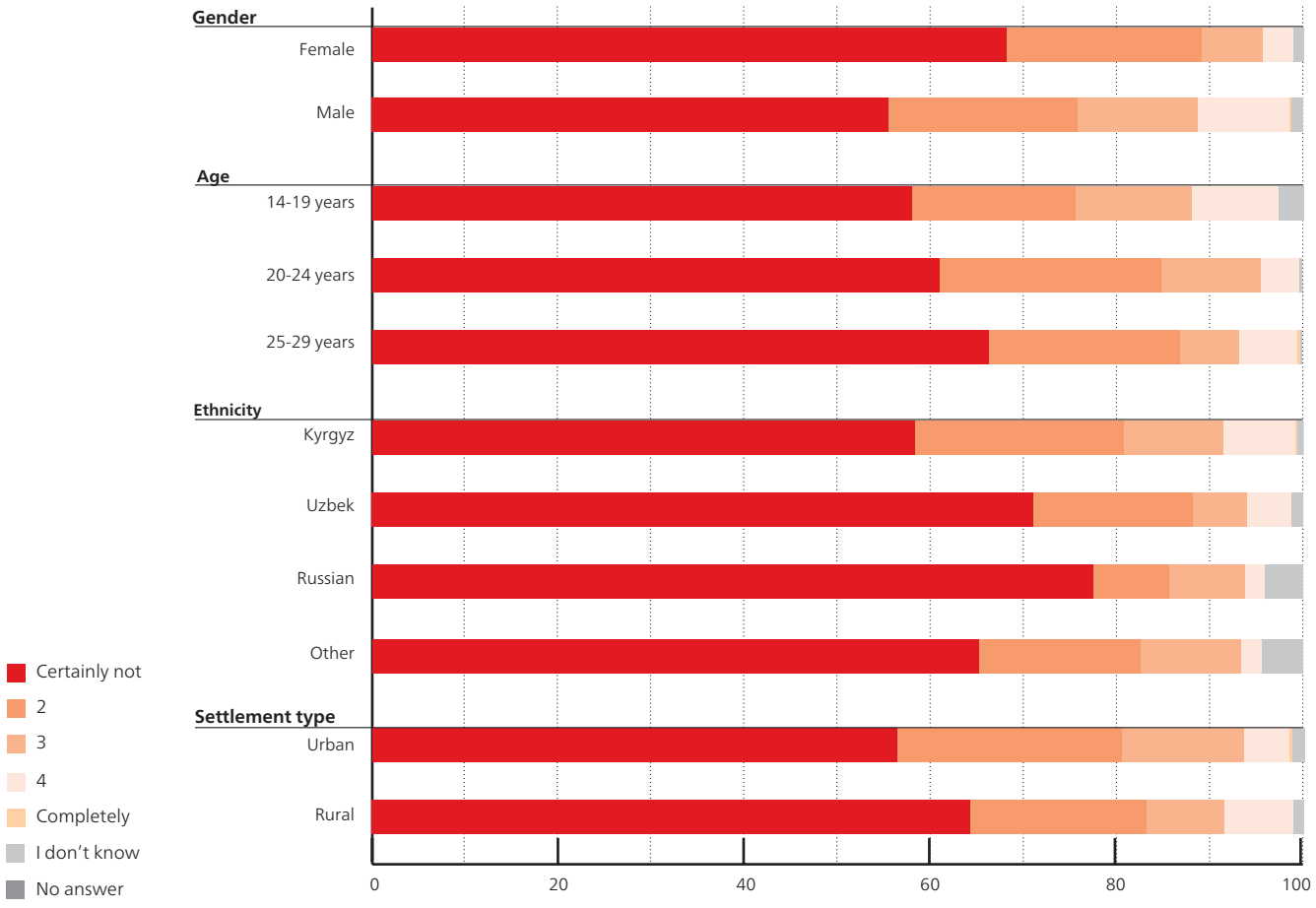


the way political views are shaped. A choice of which sources to trust for relevant political information coming from various media, or from the circles of friends needs to be made. Kyrgyzstan's media is much freer compared to the neighboring countries, and various political events are covered from different perspectives. Yet Junisbai et al (2015), when comparing Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, found that while Kyrgyzstan may have independent media, it is less trusted. Political competition seemingly has had a dampening effect on trust in the media.

Figure 50 clearly shows that to receive news and information, half of the young people surveyed relied on the Internet. TV is used as a source of information for fewer young people (34%). Among other sources are social media (5%), friends and acquaintances (3%), family (2%), radio (2%), and daily newspapers (2%). In general, the dynamics are seemingly shifting towards Internet-based sources becoming the more frequently-used and trusted sources of information for young people. Young men and urban residents rely more on the Internet as a source of their information than young women and rural residents. Most respondents also viewed their knowledge on politics as minimal.

The situation with freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan in the last few years has not been stable. In 2020, the Freedom House's Freedom on the Net gave Kyrgyzstan a score of 56

FIG. 49: **Willingness to take on a political role** *(in %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



The older generation is distrustful of us (i.e. young people) and thinks that we are inexperienced, not mature for politics. It seems to me that if young people would come to politics in large numbers, we would see more changes than with the current politicians.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, Russian, aged 17, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

I have an acquaintance who is 21 years old and he was going to be a deputy of the city council and a member of the parliament. But he was asked for money - $50,000 for the town council and $500,000 for the parliament.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 20, Osh City

Young people who understand politics - primarily its legal aspects - do not see prospects in Kyrgyzstan and they leave. They are wasting their youth, they still have to live, they have children, and they want to see the world and never come back to Kyrgyzstan.
It is clear that there must be a strong leader [among young people] who will not change his word under the pressure of circumstances, and they [young people] must all unite. But as reality and statistics tell us, this is not happening. I believe that there is enough funding, there is enough will of these people and there is patriotism. But when you repeatedly fail - people walk away from you, saying "okay, you can't change anything," accordingly, that strong leader, he doesn't stay there, he goes somewhere else.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17, Bishkek

People say that during the change of power [in October 2020], young people made demands. And if you look at it this way, they use young people as puppets, they just use us. In the beginning young people came out with good programs, with actual problems, but in the end, you see, again, old politicians are still in power. Young people are now slowly trying, but now there are no results.'

FGD, Kyrgyz , male, 22 years old, Osh region

I think that young people should also have the opportunity, not only the older generation. For example, when we go to school and ask our parents, they say that they prefer a teacher who is a pensioner, because he/she is more reliable and that there is no trust in young people. Why is there no trust? I think we have to start fixing that in ourselves.'

FGD, Uighur, 29, village Gulbahar, Osh region

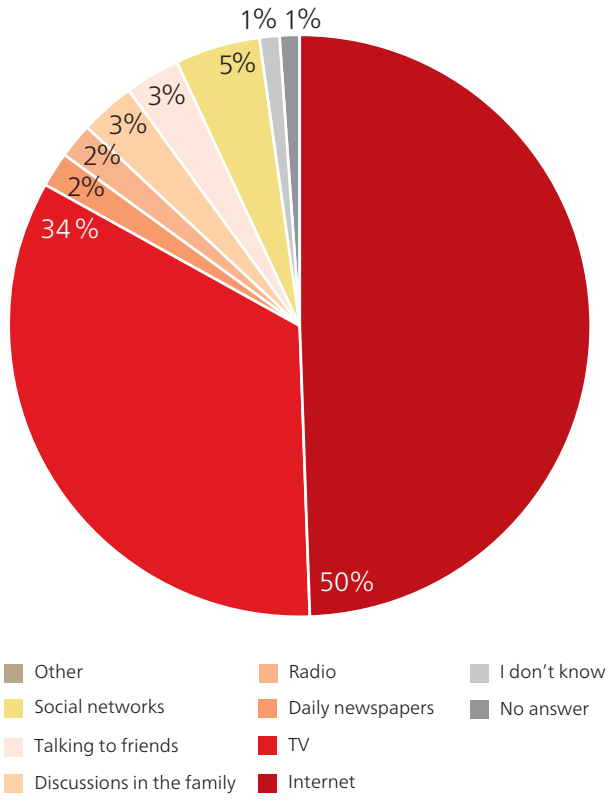
We don't see representatives of young people in government or anywhere else. We even now sit and wonder who we see other than people over 45 years old.'

FGD, female, 21, Bishkek

I don't trust either the Internet or television. I get my information from Kloop.kg and Azattyk, and I don't trust the rest, neither the Internet nor television because it feels like they work there for one person, which they do.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 22 years old, Osh region

FIG. 50: **Main information source on political events**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



They [TV channels] provide completely reliable information because everyone watches television, the deputies, the poor and the rich - everyone watches it.'

FGD, male, 15 years old, Osh city

Television doesn't have the same credibility as the Internet, probably because they impose what is beneficial to the authorities. in one way or another. On the Internet, though there are a lot of people, there are fakes, there are bots but everyone can express their opinion... That is, you can decide for yourself what you think is right and what is wrong, but there is no such choice in television.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 17 years old, Chui region

Social networks represent pure subjectivity, it's not very trustworthy to get information from there, it's a social network.

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17 years old, Bishkek city

Now we get news from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, we don't watch TV anymore. I don't trust the Internet, there is little accurate information. Why don't we trust the Internet? Because they post for the sake of likes, if we go to their page - they get money for views.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh city

I don't really trust TV, because they might be afraid of the officials and might not give true information. They will dictate to them what to show and what not to show.'

FGD, female, Kyrgyz, 20 years old, Osh city

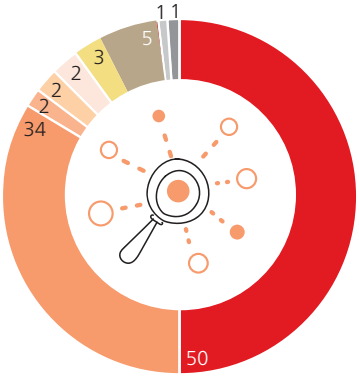
out of 100 , which was lower than the previous year's score (61/100). Furthermore, the controversial law "On Protection from Inaccurate (False) Information", was adopted in 2021. The youth's perception of the situation with freedom of speech does not show much improvement in this area. Half of young respondents (50%) reported that they do not feel any change (fig. 52). If some felt positive change, it mostly happened on the Internet, but not with other information sources. Young people's perception of the media was mostly shaped by the overall vibrancy of content development in media which was noticeable.

More than two thirds of young respondents fully agreed that they should have more opportunities to express their opinion (fig. 53). And the majority of them also thought that politicians should take into account the opinion of the youth (fig. 53). Quite often the views of the youth with regards to participating more actively in politics are quite pessimistic. Interestingly, some young people described youth involvement in politics as being used as resources in political processes – "they use young people as puppets, they just use us" (Kyrgyz, male, 22 years, from Osh), or that the older generation does not trust young people because they are viewed as not ready yet for politics – "The older generation is distrustful of

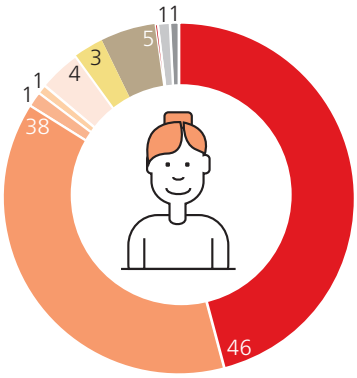
FIG.51: **MAIN INFORMATION SOURCE ON POLITICAL EVENTS** *(IN %)*

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

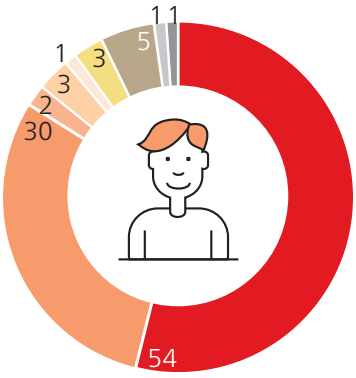
Radio
Daily newspapers
TV
Internet
Discussions in the family
Talking to friends
Social networks
Other
I don't know
No answer



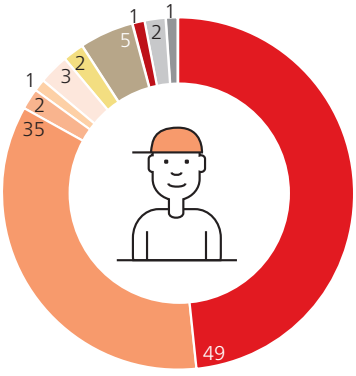
Source of information



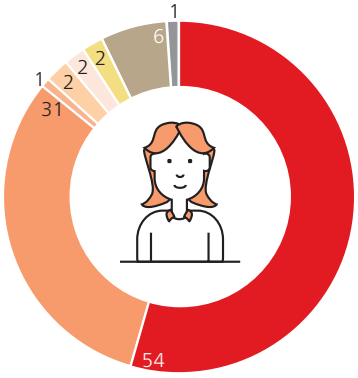
female



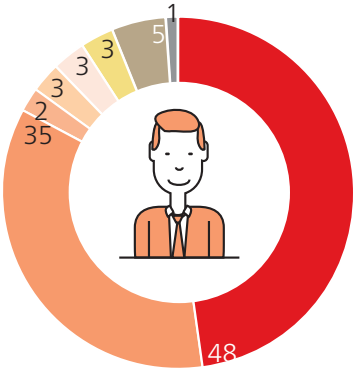
male



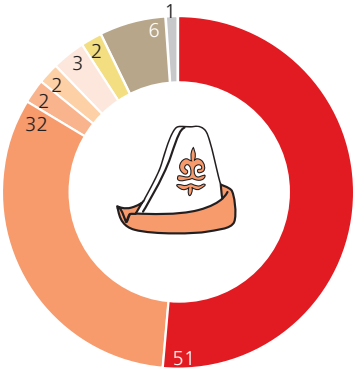
14-19 years



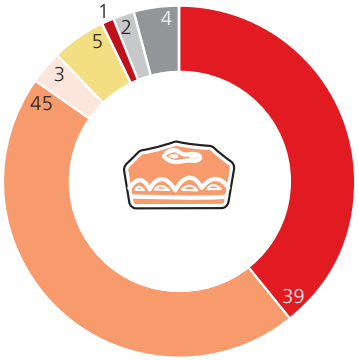
20-24 years



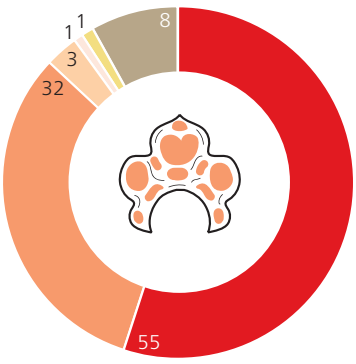
25-29 years



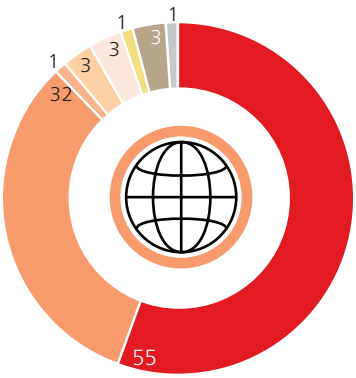
Kyrgyz



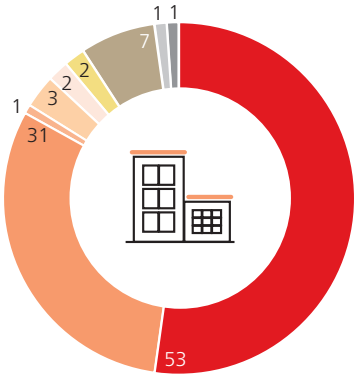
Uzbek



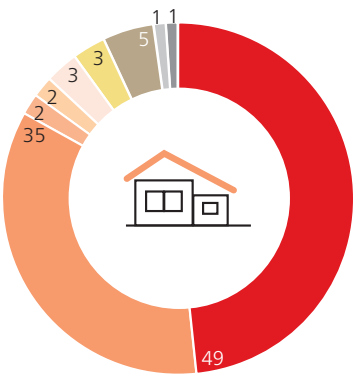
Russian



other



Urban



Rural

FIG. 52: **Youth political engagement**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

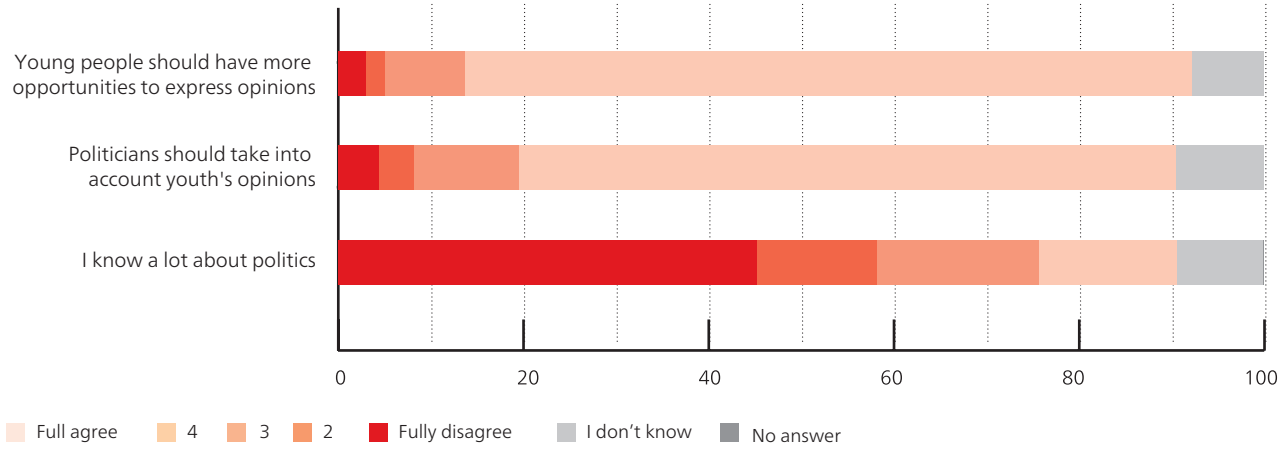
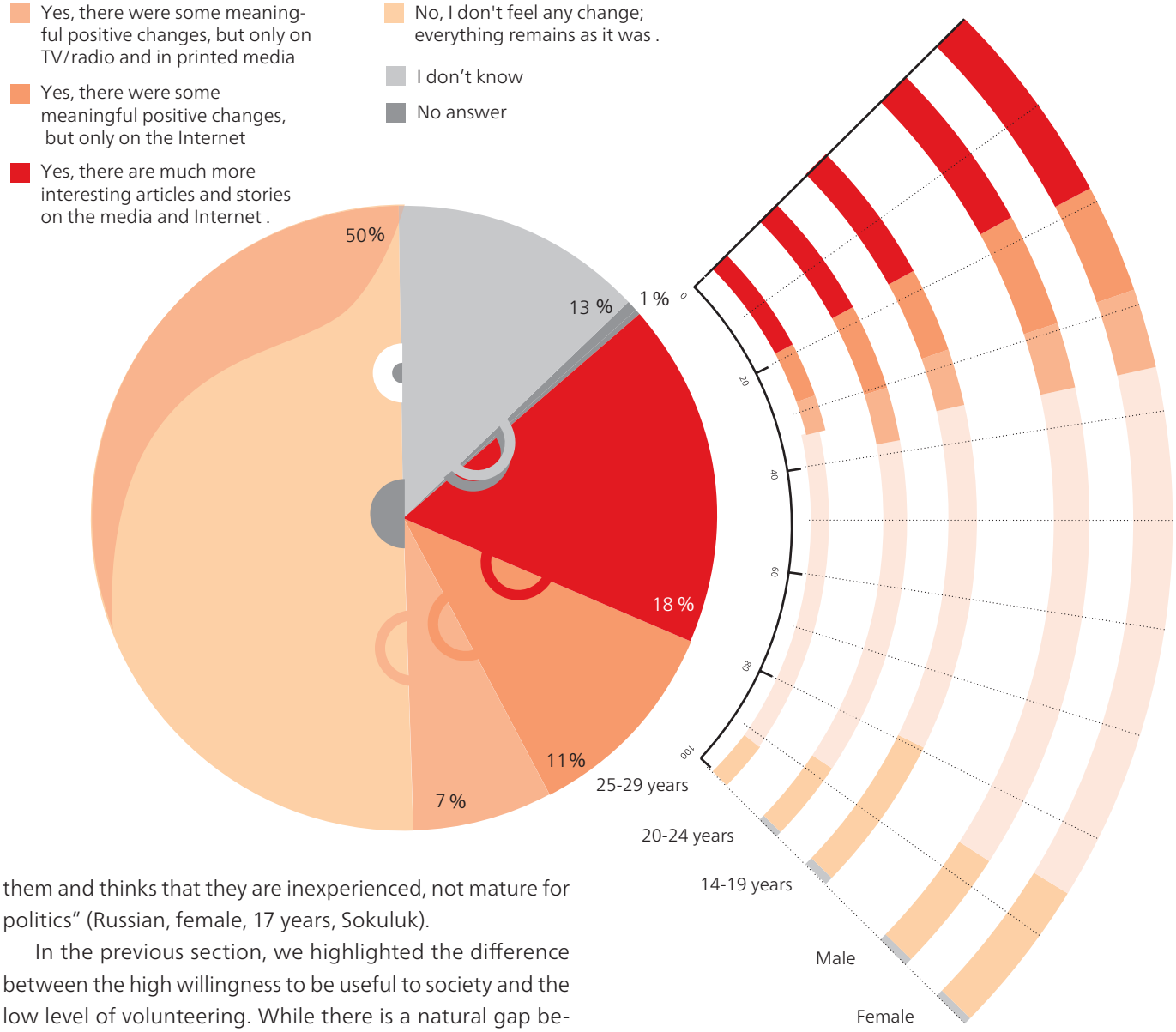


FIG.53: **PERCEPTIONS ON CHANGES IN FREEDOM OF SPEECH** *(IN %)*

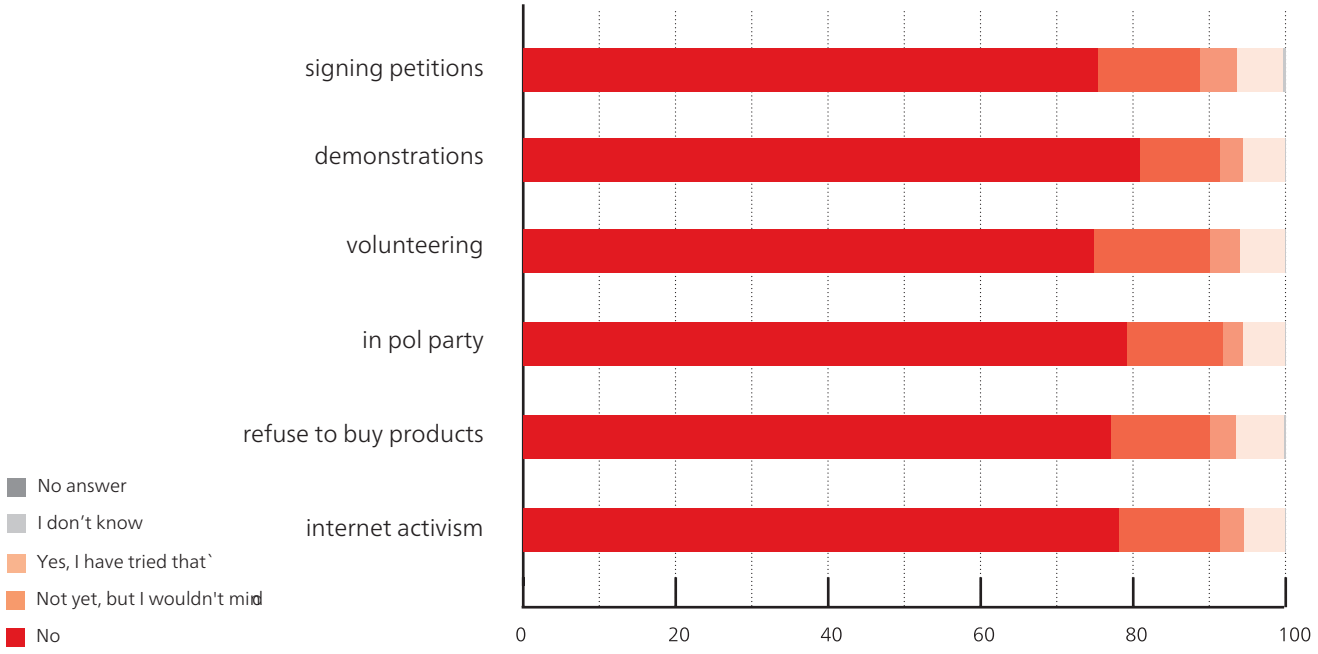
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



them and thinks that they are inexperienced, not mature for politics" (Russian, female, 17 years, Sokuluk).

In the previous section, we highlighted the difference between the high willingness to be useful to society and the low level of volunteering. While there is a natural gap between intentions and actual deeds, the difference is reflected

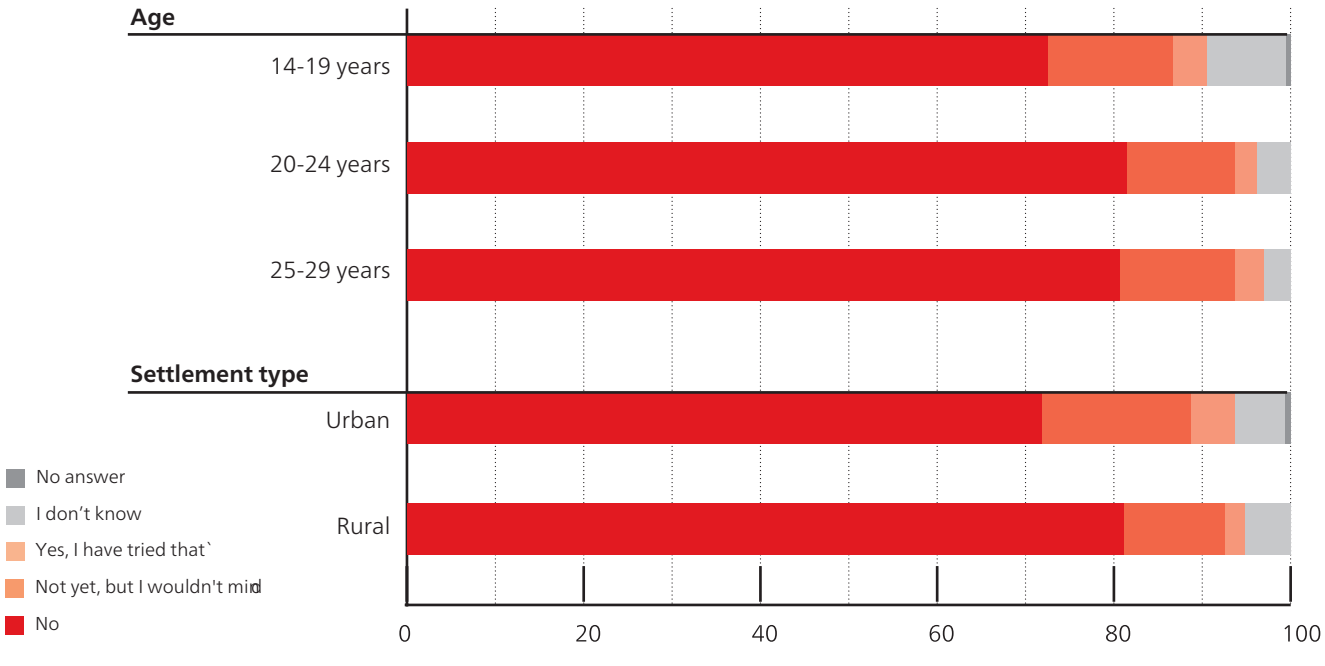
FIG. 54: **Experience in different forms of political activism** *(in %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



in other forms of actual civic engagement. Other examples of this low level are also reflected in various other forms of activism – signing petitions, participating in political party's activities, demonstrations, etc. Figure 54 shows that in regard to political and social activism, only a few responded that they had had such experience (volunteering, being part of political parties, taking part in demonstrations and signing petitions, etc.), which matches with the conclusions mentioned above.

There is a slight age variation – younger respondents (14-19 years old) and urban respondents had slightly more experience, or were more likely to be open to taking part in activism. Singling out internet activism from other types of activism shows that. Even though virtual activism is sometimes coined as "slacktivism", as it doesn't require much effort or commitment, this can still be an important step towards greater civic engagement for young people in their formative years. For urban residents, an easier access to and relatively more time spent on the Internet and social media can explain this difference. For younger boys and girls (aged 14-19), Internet activism could often be one of the few available means for civic and political participation (fig. 55).

FIG. 55: **Distribution of internet activism**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



10

YOUTH AND THE STATE

The lifetime of this survey's respondents overlaps with the state building process after Kyrgyzstan gained its independence in 1991. The notions of pluralistic political parties, an independent judiciary system, parliament and others have gained ground since the early 1990s, but whether these are simply window dressing or have become real institutions is still doubtful. The youth, as any other citizen of the country, have witnessed how these institutions developed throughout the period of independence.

They have seen how the parliament was sometimes very vocal, but was more often subservient to the presidential institution, how elections were rigged and electoral institutions became illegitimate. They also saw protests over stolen elections which led to popular revolts as was the case with the 2005 political upheaval. The 2005 and 2010 popular revolts were replicated in some form in October of 2020.

The events in 2005 unfolded in almost the same way as in October 2020 – the spark being a number of opposition politicians who were denied access to the elections. This led to continuous protests in various regions throughout the country, resulting in major demonstrations in the capital city which then led to the overthrow of the first country's president, Askar Akayev.

Like in 2005, the 2020 upheaval started with mass protests over stolen elections which led to a cancellation of the results and the forceful release from prison of some politicians. Among them was also Sadyr Japarov, who quickly rose to power. Within a dozen days he became the prime minister and also the acting president of the country after his predecessors in these positions resigned under coercion from

'I think that the change of power had a negative impact on my life. Because young people, and me in particular, were negatively affected by the fact that the government used young people as a resource back then. Me personally and all young people - we didn't see ourselves in the future of Kyrgyzstan.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, male, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'When there was a change of power, people often started going to rallies. But we didn't participate, we saw it on the Internet, that there were lootings, fires, and shooting everywhere. When I saw a video like that, I sat and cried. I was so worried that I didn't even want to turn on the TV and the Internet.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 24 years old, Osh regionvillage, Osh region

Because the change of power was not within the law - as they say when the term is up or when they [state officials] are elected in elections - they [the new government] seized the power, so communication with the outside world was cut off, investors refused to come to us. Also, because of the change of power, imported food became more expensive.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 22 years old, Osh region

The protest didn't just happen, it happened because of the parliamentary elections, many parties were handing out money to voters, there was corruption everywhere. People couldn't stand it, because life in Kyrgyzstan was getting very difficult.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 24 years old, Osh region

various political groups. The parliament was also pressured to make all necessary decisions to ensure this rise to power.

This state crisis was also preceded by another manifestation of weakness of state institutions during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kyrgyzstan. The inability of the government to take action in times of crisis made many people feel that they needed to rely on themselves. Both the pandemic and political crises demonstrated how citizens of the country hold little faith in the state, which was not able to resolve either of these crises.

Young people are divided on the issue of trust in public institutions, depending on their location. The parliament gets high numbers at both extremes – a big proportion of those who trust as well as those who do not trust. The army gets one of the highest scores in trust and not only from males – there is no significant gender variation in this regard. A high trust in the army is higher among rural youth and youth residing in border provinces such as Batken (65,5% of full trust), which can be attributed to the frequency of territorial disputes with bordering Tajikistan – a distinctive characteristic of the region.

The presidential institution also receives a high amount of full trust (41,14%), as well as religious institutions. Among the highest proportions of distrust are the judiciary system (28,8%) and political parties (40%).

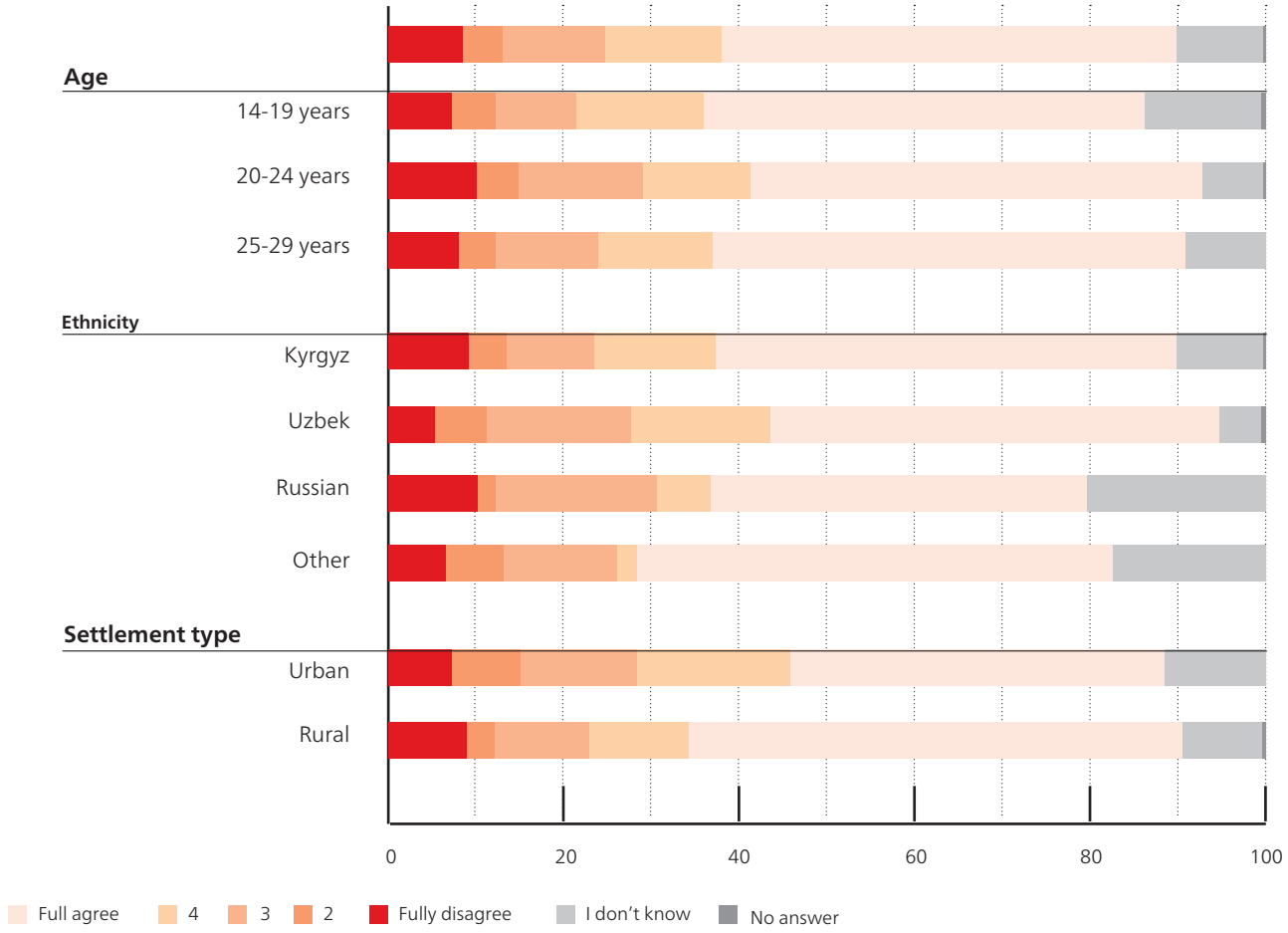
Trust in institutions in post-Soviet republics represents a significant measure in accessing political participation. That being said, studies of youth political culture in neighboring Kazakhstan (Rystina 2013) showed that, while trust in institutions may increase, it does not necessarily mean an increase in political engagement. Yet another study (Sapsford, et al 2015) compared trust among post-Soviet republics and found that, while Kazakhstan has the highest level of trust in political institutions, Kyrgyzstan, as some other post-Soviet republics, has the lowest level of trust in political institutions. This could be related to the factor of the strength of the state and political regime. Wealthier authoritarian states may elicit paternalistic feelings among the youth and thus enjoy more trust than poorer semi-democratic states like Kyrgyzstan.

It was during the pandemic that the former president was supposed to support his people, to speak to the people with words of support, but he was not seen in the arena [in public]. Other countries allocated money to our country, but it did not reach low-income families, many could not tolerate it any longer, so there was such a riot. You could say that the overthrow of the government happened at the will of the people, but this time there was no looting. I think the president should have come out to the people then and said his word - it seems to me that because he didn't come out, this [the overthrow of government] happened. There was no contact with the people, that's why this change of power happened, I think it had to happen.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 29 years old, Osh region

FIG. 56: **The share of state in business and industry should be increased**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



ROLE OF THE STATE

The survey was conducted among young people who were born after Kyrgyzstan gained independence, , including privatization and the weakening of the role of the state in the economy. Kyrgyzstan is a lower middle country with a weak economy and with a GDP of less than 1220 USD per capita[7].

Overall, there is a proclivity among youth to support a "bigger state" – more than half of the respondents fully agreed that the state's presence in the economy should be bigger. This view is more prevalent among rural youth (fig.56). Also, almost two thirds of respondents fully agreed that there should be a welfare program run by the state (fig.57) and this number was again bigger among the rural youth. While those in favor of a "bigger state" have pretty similar views on other issues and what the state should focus on (such as welfare), there is a slight divergence between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

The same attitude was found with the question of welfare provided by the state. Almost two thirds (64%) agreed with this. This attitude was more common among the mid-age group (20-24) and more prevalent among the rural youth compared to urban youth (fig.58).

FIG. 57: **The state should take on more responsibility to make sure everyone is provided for**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage

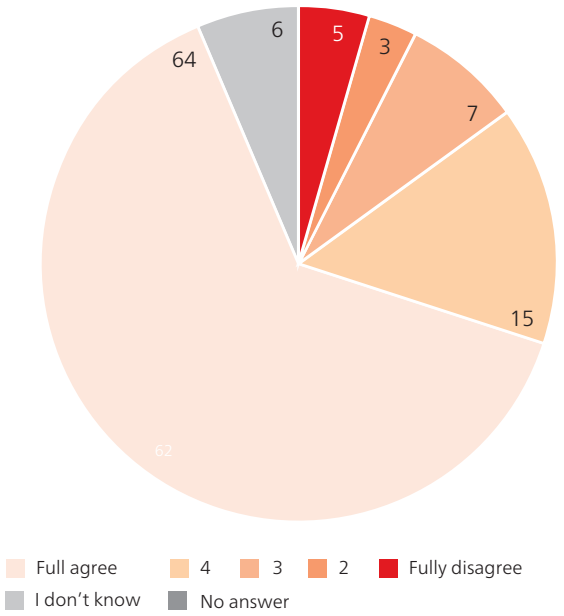
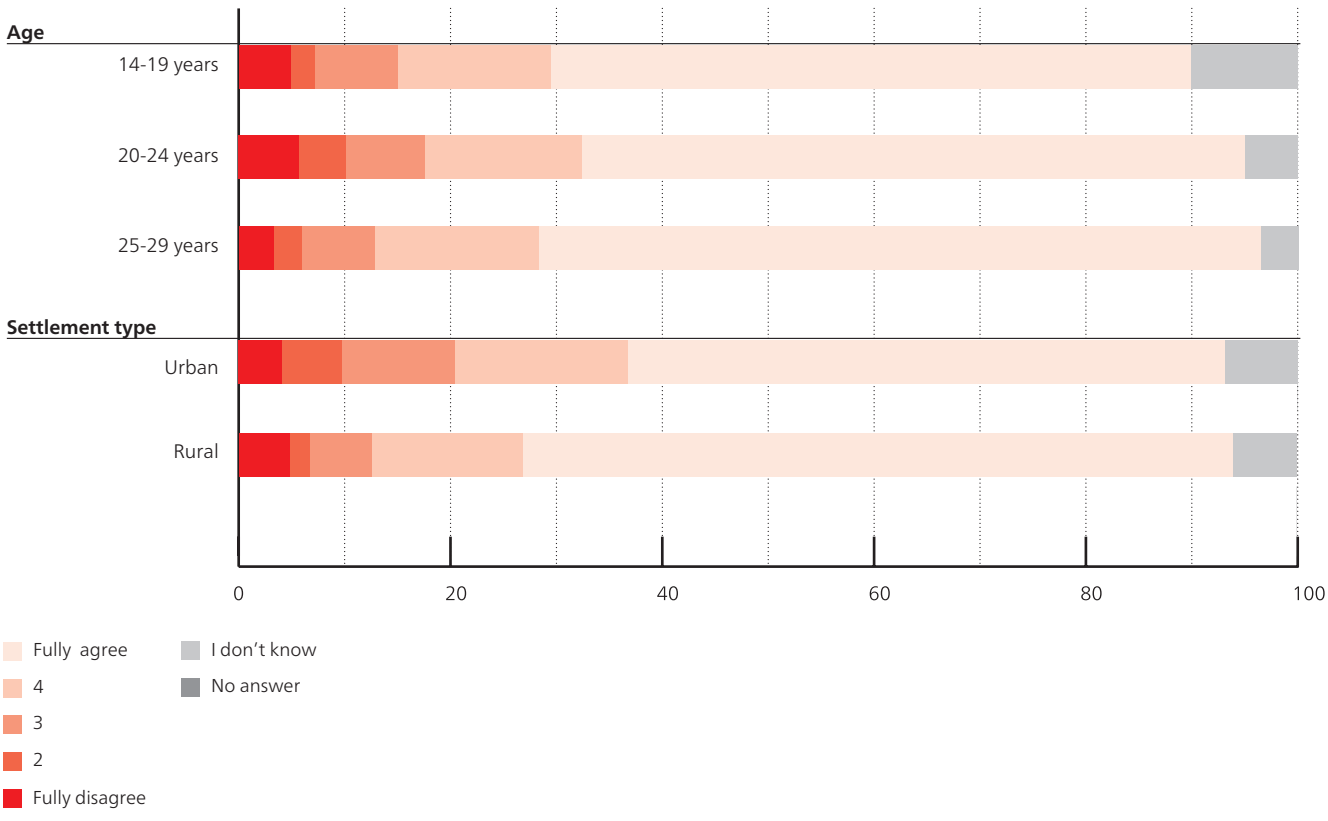


FIG. 58: **The state should take on more responsibility to make sure everyone is provided for**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



Answers to other questions such as the harm to business competitiveness (42,6% fully agreed that it is harmful) shows that the youth largely lean towards supporting the bigger state.

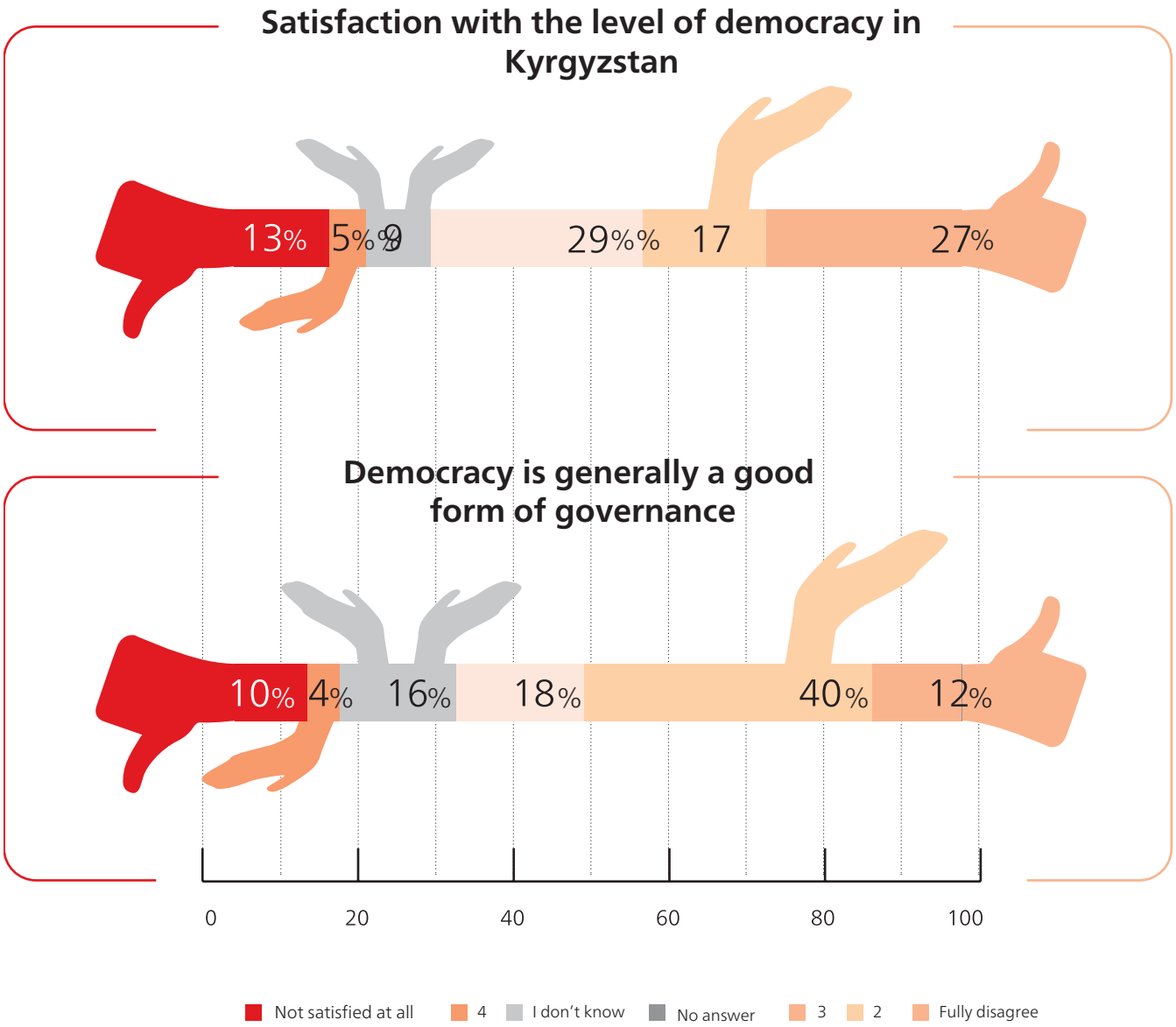
DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS

According to various standards, Kyrgyzstan has been considered relatively more democratic than its neighbors and even for a long time was named an "island of democracy". Various measures undertaken by Freedom House, Bertelsmann Foundation, Varieties of Democracy Institute and others put the country on the list of semi-democracies at different times. However, in 2020 Kyrgyzstan dropped in the rankings and Freedom in the World moved it down from being a "partially free" country to a "not free" country on their Freedom index.

Unlike in some other post-Soviet countries, in Kyrgyzstan democratic ideals were not only part of the political rhetoric, but were also practiced to some extent. A dynamic civil society, independent media, the possibility to engage in relatively free and fair elections were present to a certain degree in Kyrgyzstan and shaped the understanding of its citizens of what democracy means in practice. The meaning of democracy reflects the experience of young people in Kyrgyzstan, which was shaped by their experience of observing relatively open politics in their country.

Nostalgia for the Soviet past was viewed (Castaneda 2016) as an obstacle for democratization, therefore raising hopes for the younger generations to have greater democratic aspirations than their forebears. In this regard, the perceptions of young people may somewhat differ from surveys of the general population. When compared to attitudes to democracy in other countries, some studies (Junisbai & Junisbai 2019) found no difference between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in support for democratic ideals and that this is explained by

FIG.59: **: SATISFACTION WITH THE LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY IN KYRGYZSTAN** *(IN %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years; n=1000, figures in percentage



patronal politics which these two countries have in common.

Satisfaction with democracy is fairly widespread, with a high proportion of people who think that the situation with democracy is good. This tendency also increases when youths are asked whether democracy is a good form of government – more respondents answer positively than not (fig.59).

Yet, when asked whether dictatorship is sometimes better – many also answered positively. And even more positive were the responses to questions about the need for a strong popular leader and strong political party. The term "democracy" in the minds of young people (and not only them) does not necessarily contradict the possibility of having an authoritarian approach, when needed. When asked such questions, youths may manifest the norm of acceptance and pronounce democracy generally as a good form of government (other general alternatives are not even conceived as viable), but are also inclined in times of uncertainty to accept authoritarian rule or a strong hand as a temporary measure (fig.60). These two perceptions of young people may not necessarily contradict each other, as circumstances when dictatorship is needed are quite vague and unspecified, and young people may tend to only tentatively accept such a possibility given their overall preference for democracy.

In regards to the desire for strong leaders/parties, some widely held assertions that the youth may potentially become marginalized and acquire "extremist" orientations are disputed based on survey data from 2010-2011 (Kubicek 2019), a study according to which age is not a predictor of such orientations.

In similar proportions young people also answer the question whether there is a need for opposition positively. This also parallels the large proportion of respondents answering positively to the possible use of violence as the only way to end conflicts. As with democracy and occasionally needing to have a strong hand to settle issues somehow being compatible ideas in the mindset of young people, here the notion of conflict is not seemingly extended to the political arena even though the question is asked in the same section. The norm of having opposition is as embedded in the perception of the youth as is the idea of the normalcy of using violence to solve conflicts. The notion of conflict is seemingly viewed as dramatic and violent events which justify use of any means to end them.

> *I would like a liberal state, because, after all, people have to choose and decide. And it would be difficult for me to live under some sort of command.'*
>
> FGD, Russian, age 24, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

'There has to be democracy, the people have to decide, because it's the people. It's up to us to decide what we want. And the president should execute, he is a servant of the people.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, 28 years old, Sokuluk village, Chuy region

'Democracy was introduced by our first president, Askar Akayev, he said we would have Switzerland. But we embraced democracy early, because people didn't really understand it then. As a result, referring to democracy, many organizations were given into private hands.'
FGD, male, Kyrgyz, 20 years old, Osh city

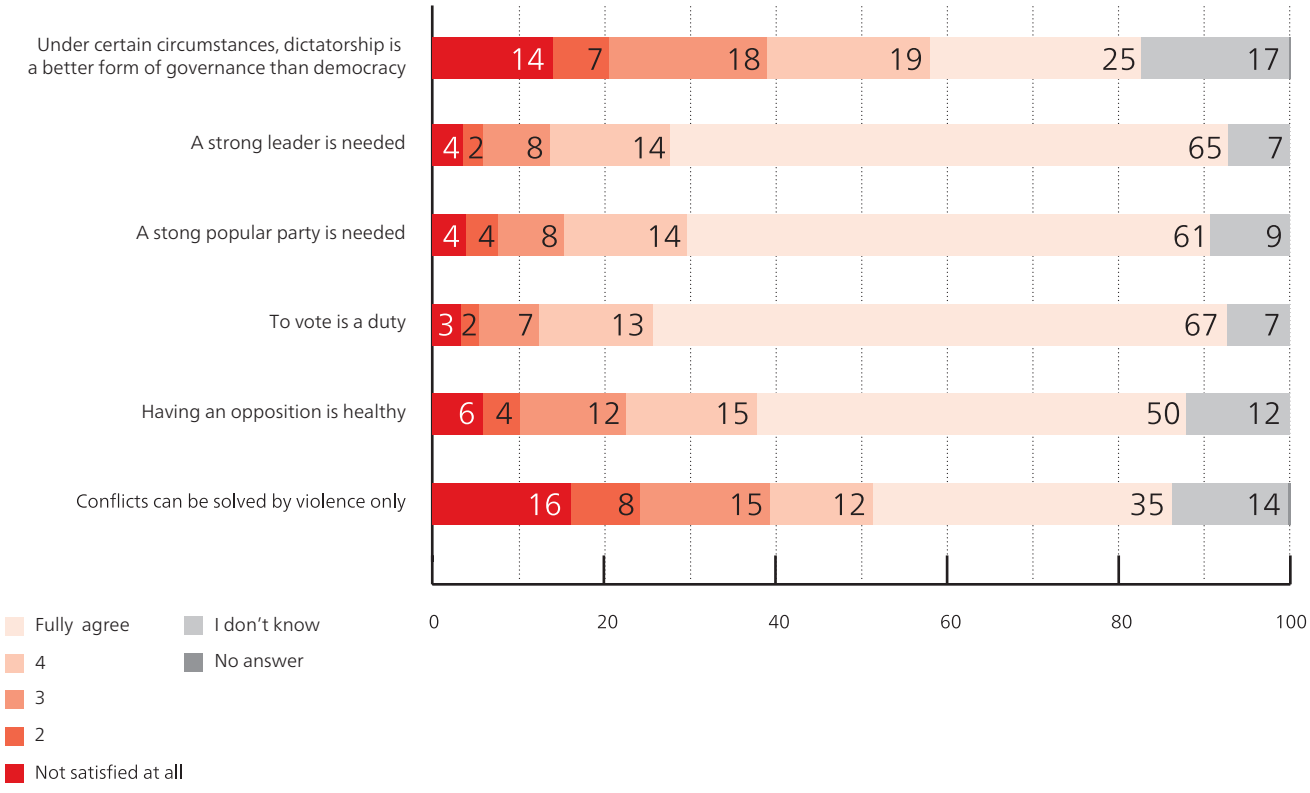
'Our previous history has shown us that the parliament, the deputies can't solve anything. It has been 30 years and we have nothing. We already voted for him [Sadyr Japarov], we elected our real leader. And we believe in him, that this president can give some kind of opportunity for our people to thrive.'
FGD, female, Uzbek, 17 years old, Osh city

'We are now shifting to presidential rule, but it would be better to move to liberal government in the future. We are nomadic people, for example Kyrgyz and other minorities living here, we love freedom, we cannot stay in one place.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, age 22, village Gulbahar, Osh region

'If one person decides, he alone is responsible, only he will be punished. And if the people [decide collectively], then you will not find the culprit, it will be difficult to find the one who is responsible. We had the Parliament, where deputies made decisions and, in the end, it was hard to find the guilty party. If a person is alone, he will be afraid, especially of our people, if they don't like it.'
FGD, male, 29 years old, Chui region

'And at the moment 120 deputies, we had complete chaos, we could not find a specific culprit, everyone shifted the blame on each other. And here, if there is prosperity, we know who is behind it, and if there are any failures, we can blame a certain person and remove him from office.'
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17

FIG. 60: **Perceptions of state regimes and forms** *(in %)*
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



years old, Osh city

'When there is authoritarian rule, the president will decide and listen to the opinion of the people, and then make a decision. And when there is a parliamentary government, each deputy thinks about his own interests. As you said above, we do not know who is to blame here.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh city

Well, now there is a certain illusion that the people choose, but in fact it is more likely that the higher ranks decide everything. I don't know whether [we have] a liberal or an authoritarian [form of government], probably more liberal. If the president decides everything, he may have the last word, but he must listen to the people. He is the leader of the country after all.'

FGD, Russian, male, 17 years old, Chui region

'Yes, it is better to solve problems together. I think it would be better if there was a parliamentary system rather than an authoritarian one. I support a liberal country, because there will be progress and it is good for development.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, village Gulbahar, Osh region.

'I think democracy has gone beyond what is acceptable. For example, people call the former President Jeenbekov "Soke", this is very wrong, we should say «Dear Sooronbai Sharipovich». Our democracy is overused.'

FGD, Uzbek, female, 18 years old, Osh city

'The main flaw in our state is that not only do we not respect ourselves, but we don't respect others. As you said above about our comedians, no need to parody someone, they(presidents) simply did their job and left, and that's it, we should forget them. If he did something wrong, he should be prosecuted under the law, we shouldn't humiliate them like this. We have freedom of speech, unlike other countries. But in many places, it happens that freedom of speech is used excessively. For example, you can call it the fall protest [against the results] of the [Parliamentary] elections - it is an excessive use of free speech.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male 22 years old, Osh city

PRIORITIZATION OF VALUES IN PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES

When asked what should be the focus of governmental policies, the respondents fully supported various policies (fig.61). There was some ambivalence regarding the national identity policy which received less support from respondents. Young people may not have experience of deep engagement in policy deliberations on different occasions (election campaigns, town hall meetings, etc.) and hence we do not see significant variations over different topics.

Some policy issues are viewed as relatively easily observable and thus prompt stronger opinions, such as unemployment, illegal migration, the environment, the economy, etc. These and some other policy areas prompt a stronger desire to have higher governmental focus on them. Some other policy areas such as population growth are viewed as unimportant, while still others, such as national identity policy, lack the tangibility to be made a proper focus of state policy.

FIG.61: **TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTING EACH OF THE FOLLOWING GOALS?**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage

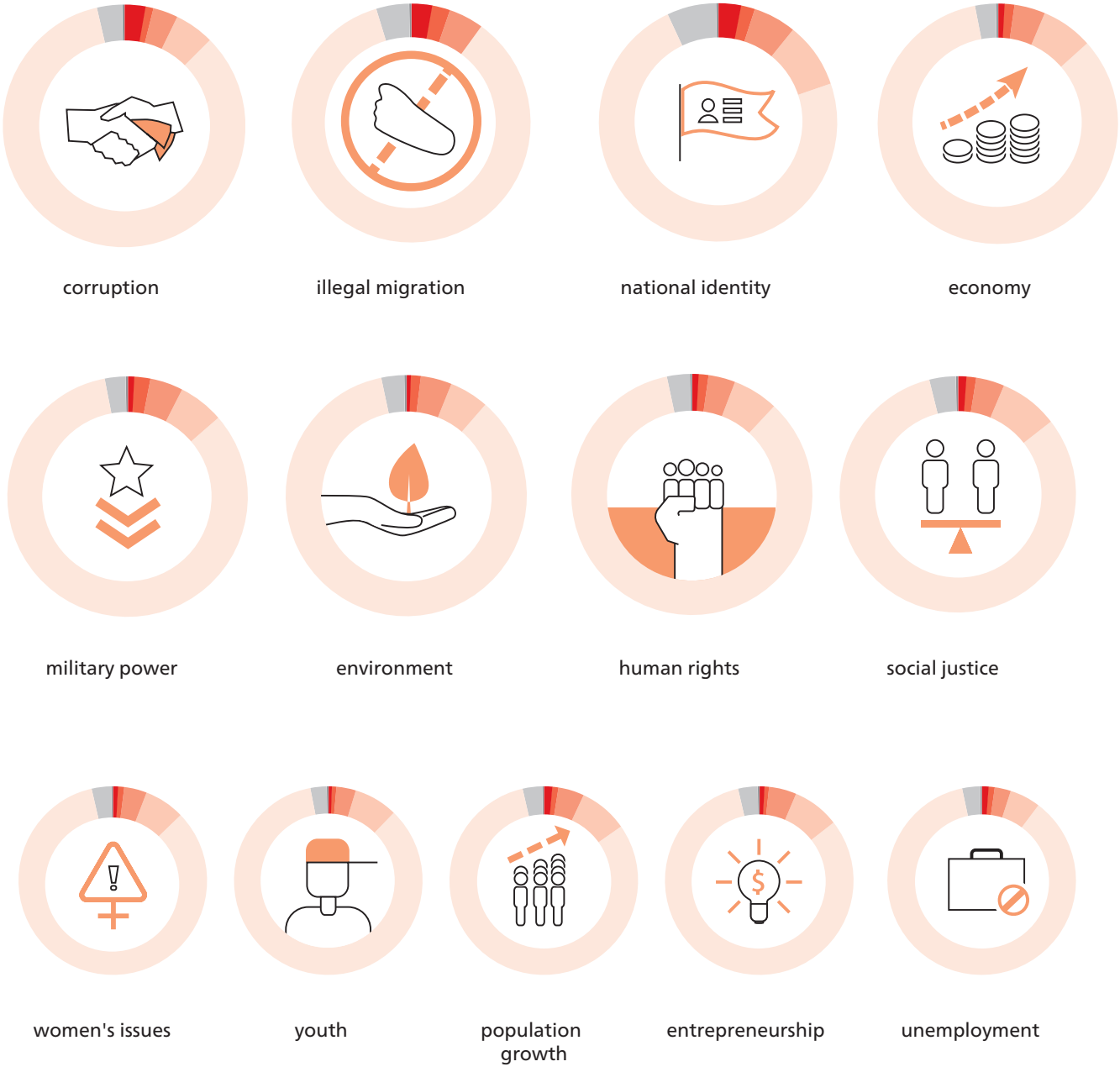
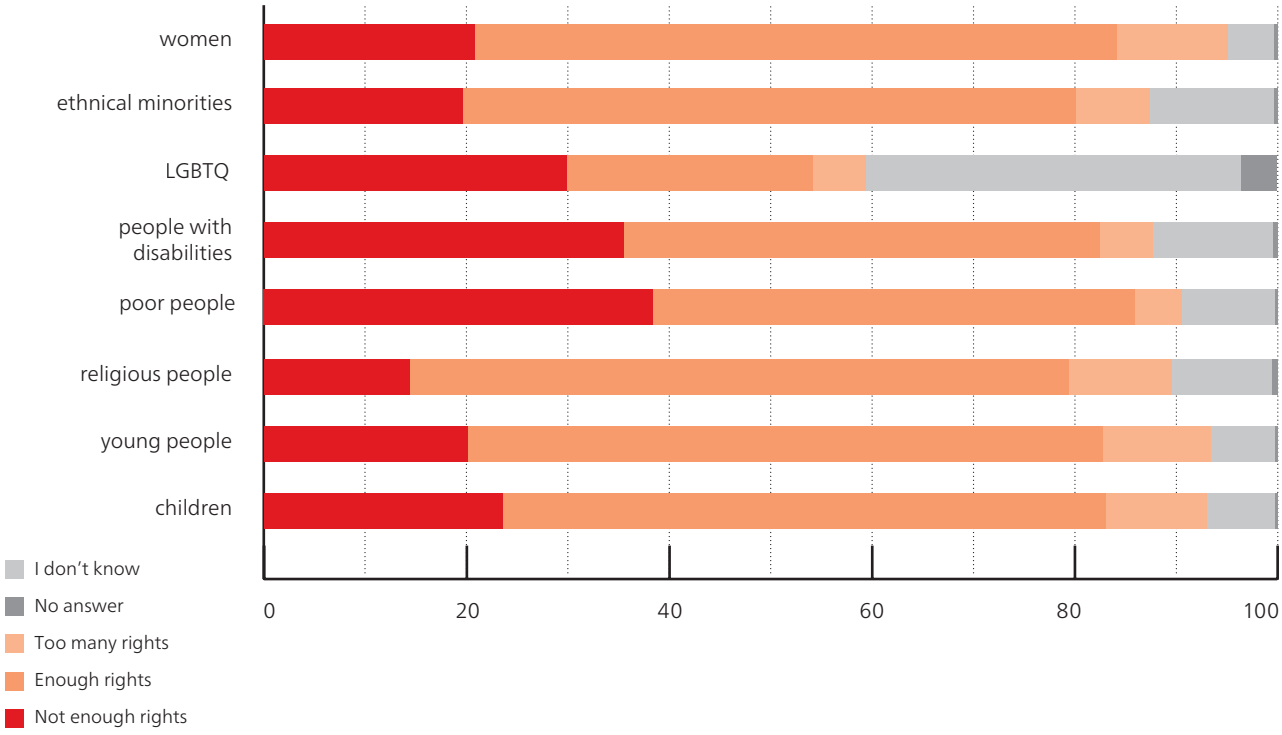


FIG. 62: **In your opinion, do the following population groups in Kyrgyzstan have too few rights, enough rights or too many rights?**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage

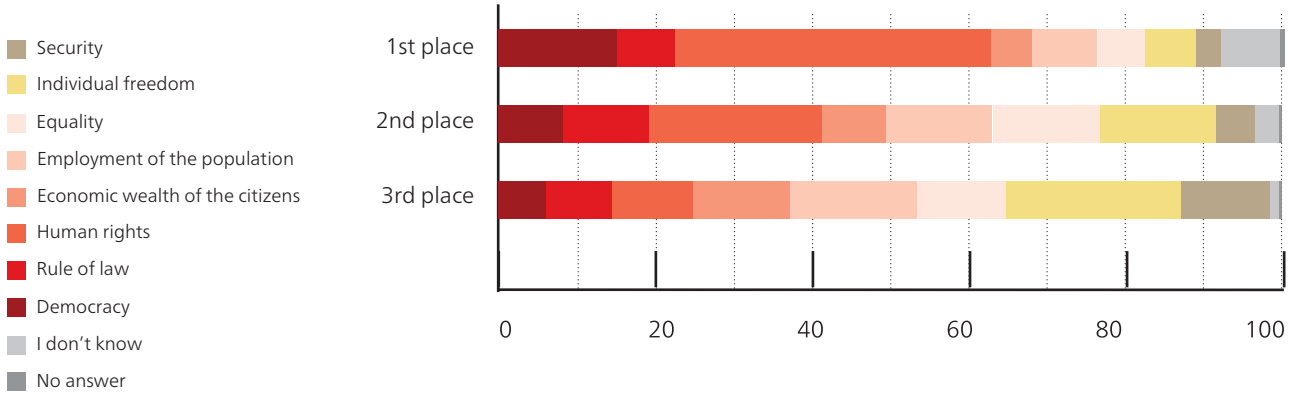


Kyrgyzstan has signed and ratified a number of international conventions on human rights – the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a number of other international accords. One of the most recently ratified conventions is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Unfortunately, the implementation of these norms of course varies in practice, which led to the aforementioned downgrading to the status of "not free country" by Freedom in the World in 2020.

Young people view the poor, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community as groups who do not have enough rights. In regard to the LGBTQ community (fig.62), 30% of the youth held this opinion. This stands in contrast to the generally widely spread negative attitude towards the LGBTQ community in society. However, it should be taken into account that the language of rights is adopted by the youth through the framework of international standards. Regardless of the attitudes (societal or personal) one may recognize that there are not enough rights for this group.

When asked about prioritizing their values, 40% of respondents put human rights in 1st place. 15% prioritized democracy (fig.63).

FIG. 63: **Importance of different values**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



We have a good Constitution, good laws, but they don't work. Human rights are still not protected, especially women's rights. Kyrgyzstan is in a miserable state in this respect.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

'For example, if we take political rights, I, as a citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic, have the rights: to vote for president or for a deputy, the right to be elected when I reach a certain age or to elect, to participate in elections; there are civil rights, I can speak freely, freely express my thoughts – there will be no consequences, the right to education, the right to housing, the right to own property, the right to have family, to practice religion - [I have] many rights.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17 years old, Osh

'I think it's okay, because we, without fear of anything - not even the president, not even politicians or rich people -can express our opinions. And no one condemns us for this, no one holds us accountable, we can express our opinions, our words, our actions. Unlike our neighboring countries, our rights are freer.

FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 17 years old, Osh

'For example, many people are not aware of their rights. We have a saying that the rich are always ahead, and it's true. For example, a man who stole a chicken is put in jail for 5 years - this is also part of the rights. And the person who was corrupt, who had always stolen money, he paid off with money and they let him go. Here human rights are unequal, they trample the rights of ordinary people, and those of the rich – they do not [trample]. People who don't know their rights have a hard time. That's why if everyone knows their rights, their rights won't be trampled on. We have a lot of people who don't know their rights.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh

'When human rights are violated, many people go to court, to law enforcement agencies. For example, one can file a complaint against another person that he violated his rights, but again, corruption plays a role here. Well, the fact that a person's rights are average or better is debatable. For example, a person who has not seen anything bad in life, he will say what he has seen. And a person who has seen the bad side will also give answers based on that. But honestly, human rights in our country are average, neither bad, nor good, but average.'

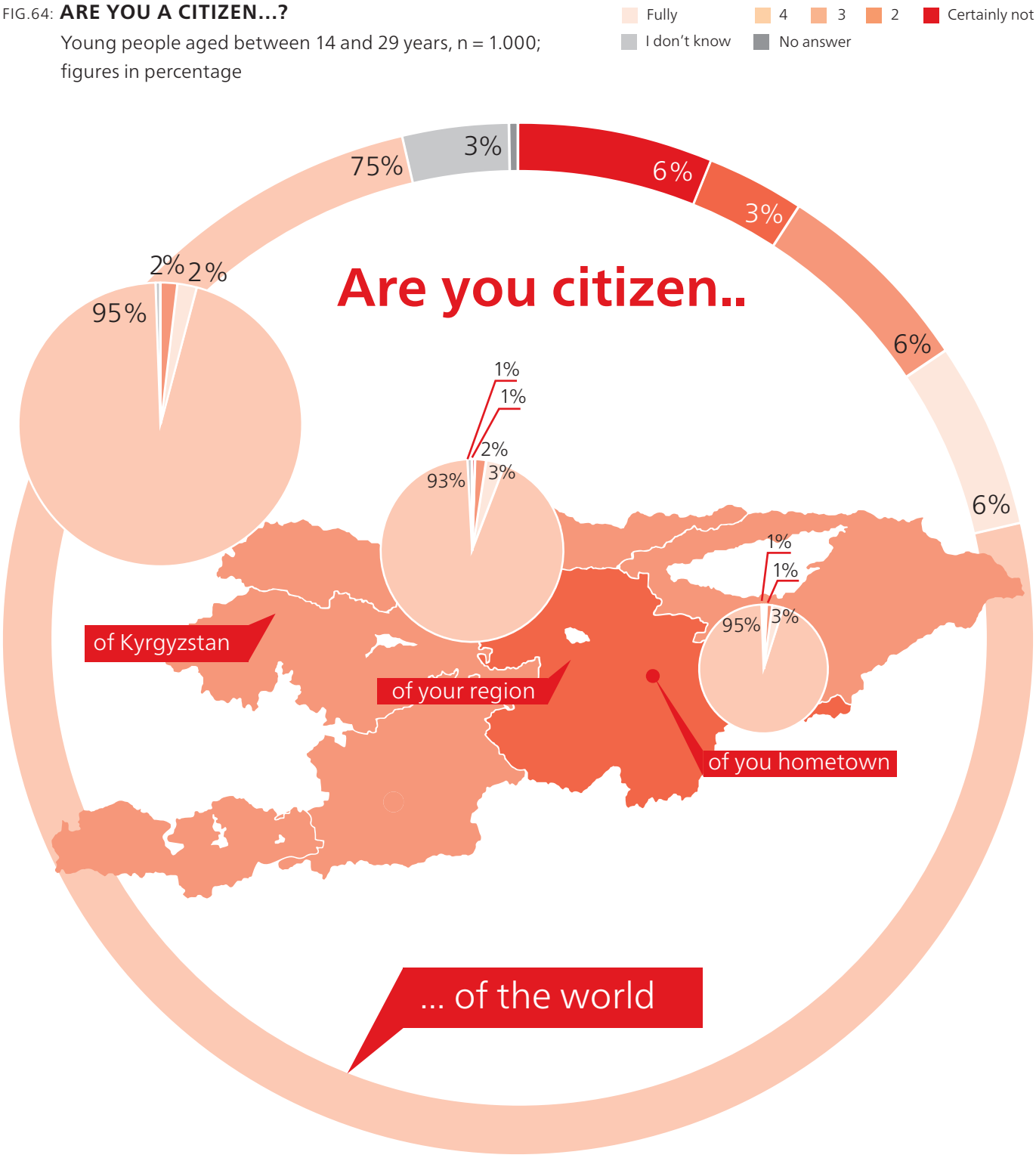
FGD, Kyrgyz, male, 22 years old, Osh

'I mean, we've taught them [law enforcement bodies] to give them money; so, if we give them money, they'll pay attention to us and consider our issue. And if you don't give them money and don't remind them often, they'll forget the matter, it will lie dormant for years and not move.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 18 years old, Osh

The youth's own self-positioning indicates that local markers of identity (hometown, region and a county) are important, while being part of the world is less important. Interestingly, among those who fully believed that they are part of a "global" society, rural respondents (79,1%) were more prominent than urban youth (65,8%) and a bigger share of positive replies came from the Ferghana valley region (fig.64).

FIG.64: **ARE YOU A CITIZEN...?**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1.000; figures in percentage



Although globalization may prompt young people to lean more towards accepting the wider world, some studies of youth culture Kyrgyzstan's south (Kirmse 2010b) emphasized that this is determined by socio-economic, ethnic, gender and other backgrounds. In the survey there was not much variation between genders when it came to perceiving oneself fully as a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, although ethnic Russian youths (87,8%) differ more from Kyrgyz (96%) and Uzbek (97%). The ethnic factor is once more important when it comes to the sense of fully being a citizen of the world. Maybe, ethnic Kyrgyz (74,4%), Uzbek (84,7%) and Russians (63,3%) feel differently about it.

11

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE WIDER WORLD

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Kyrgyzstan, as a small mountainous country adjacent to three other post-Soviet states (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and to China has diverse regions. It is also a member of various regional organizations which reflect the political vectors of the country's orientations. With Kazakhstan it is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – the Commonwealth of Independent States, with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan – the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and with all of the neighbors – the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Citizens of a small country which borders four other countries and is engaged in various attempts to build regional cooperation mechanisms may often ponder the need for and benefit of such cooperation. When young respondents are asked this question, the answers are varied.

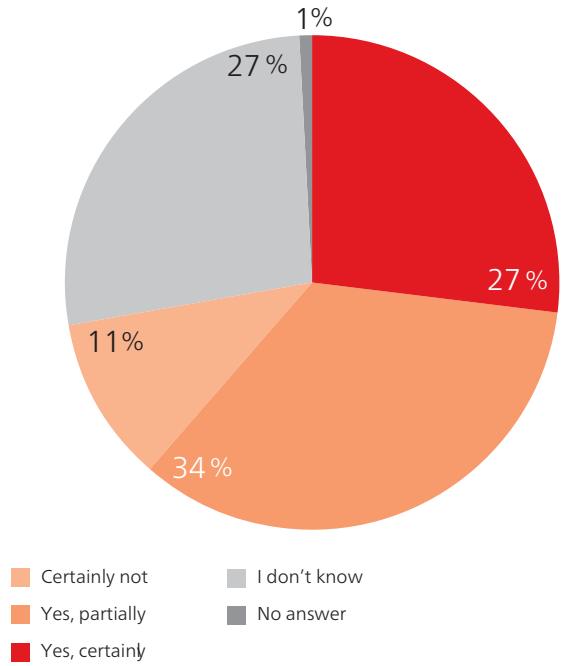
Fewer young ethnic Russians are positive about regional cooperation than respondents from other ethnic groups. The same goes for urban youth – they are relatively less positive about regional cooperation compared to rural youth. This is also reflected in the regional distribution of respondents – those from regions in close vicinity with other countries (Talas, Osh, Jalal Abad and Batken) tended to view cooperation as more beneficial than respondents from other regions.

'We have border problems with Tajikistan all the time, they could solve this issue, so that people wouldn't die. Mutual relations might be good, but now we have very strained relations.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Gulbahar village, Osh region

FIG. 65: **In your opinion, will Kyrgyzstan benefit from regional cooperation with other countries of Central Asia?**

Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



'They [Kazakhstan] produce goods themselves, they have a trade turnover, they are very developed economically, and they have good relations with other countries.'

FGD, Uzbek, male, 15 years old, Osh

'We can develop [together] with Kazakhstan because we depend on each other. If Kazakhstan closes the border – the food industry will also fall into decline. Anyway, our dairy products and any other products get through Kazakhstan to Russia or through Kazakhstan to Europe, the CIS. This is why we need Kazakhstan to get into Russia.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 28 years old, Chui region

'I have a positive attitude [towards Uzbekistan]. Everything that now exists in Uzbekistan was privatized by Islam Karimov after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Investors also came to us [to Kyrgyzstan], for example, Samsung came to Kyrgyzstan and offered to cooperate together. But the Kyrgyz [government] asked them for money and so they left for Uzbekistan. Here they say that Uzbekistan produces the Nexia [car model], this is not an Uzbek company. They were able to retain these investors in their time, I appreciate Karimov's work and his program.'

FGD, Kyrgyz, female, 20 years old, Osh

'In general, Uzbekistan is an authoritarian country. We've seen how their people lived poorly; they're just making progress [now]. Because after the dictatorship, even a little bit of freedom has given the people an opportunity. For example, in Uzbekistan, they freed small businesses from taxes for three years, so they increased their small businesses and they began making progress.'

FGD, male, Kyrgyz, 22 years old, Osh region

TRUST IN INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is a member of various international organizations such as the United Nations, Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and is engaged in working with many of them. The youth's perception of these organizations often depends on their visibility and the youth perceive these organizations' activities in Kyrgyzstan. Visibility of various organizations varies. Some are more present in the news, with high officials attending their summits, while others are also active as donors and their actions are perceived through the tangible results of their project activities. In this regard, the EU and UN are widely known organizations, which are also engaged in donor activities, and they enjoy relatively higher trust than other organizations.

Overall, there is a conservative stance in Kyrgyzstan towards international issues – more than half of the surveyed youths held negative views towards accepting refugees and migrants, and before Afghanistan's recent takeover by the Taliban felt that refugees and asylum seekers were issues for other, more influential countries to handle. Many of them thought that Kyrgyzstan's interests are underrepresented in the international arena and even more thought that the international significance of Kyrgyzstan would grow (fig.66).

FIG. 66: **Trust in different international organizations**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage

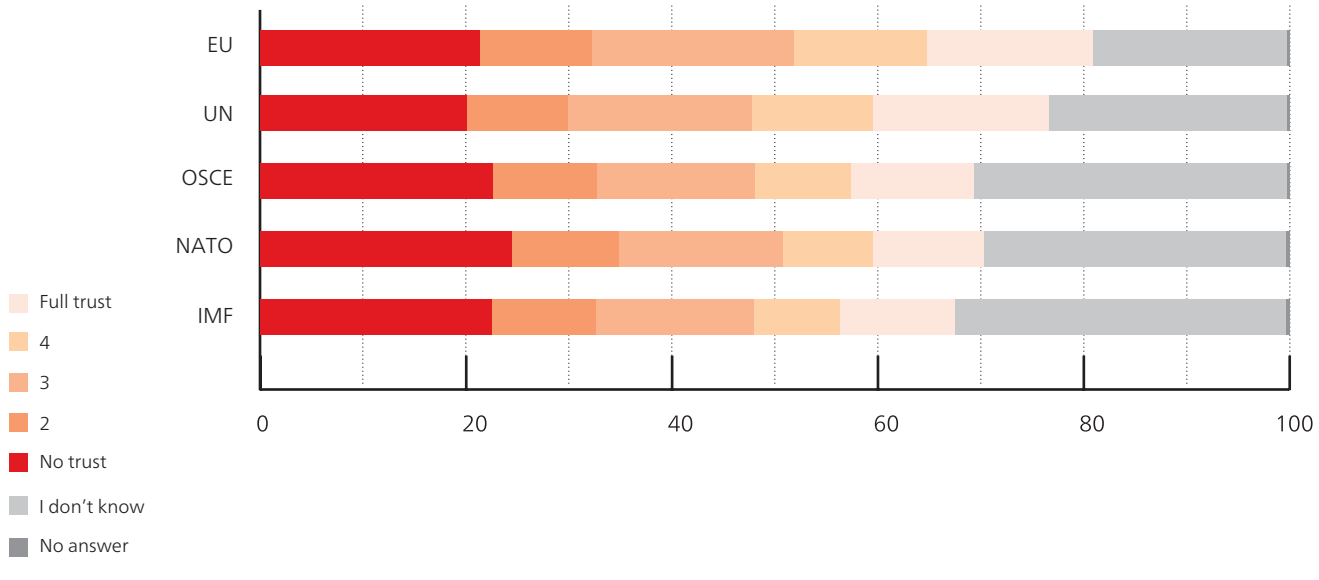


FIG. 67: **In your opinion, will Kyrgyzstan benefit from regional cooperation with other countries of Central Asia**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage

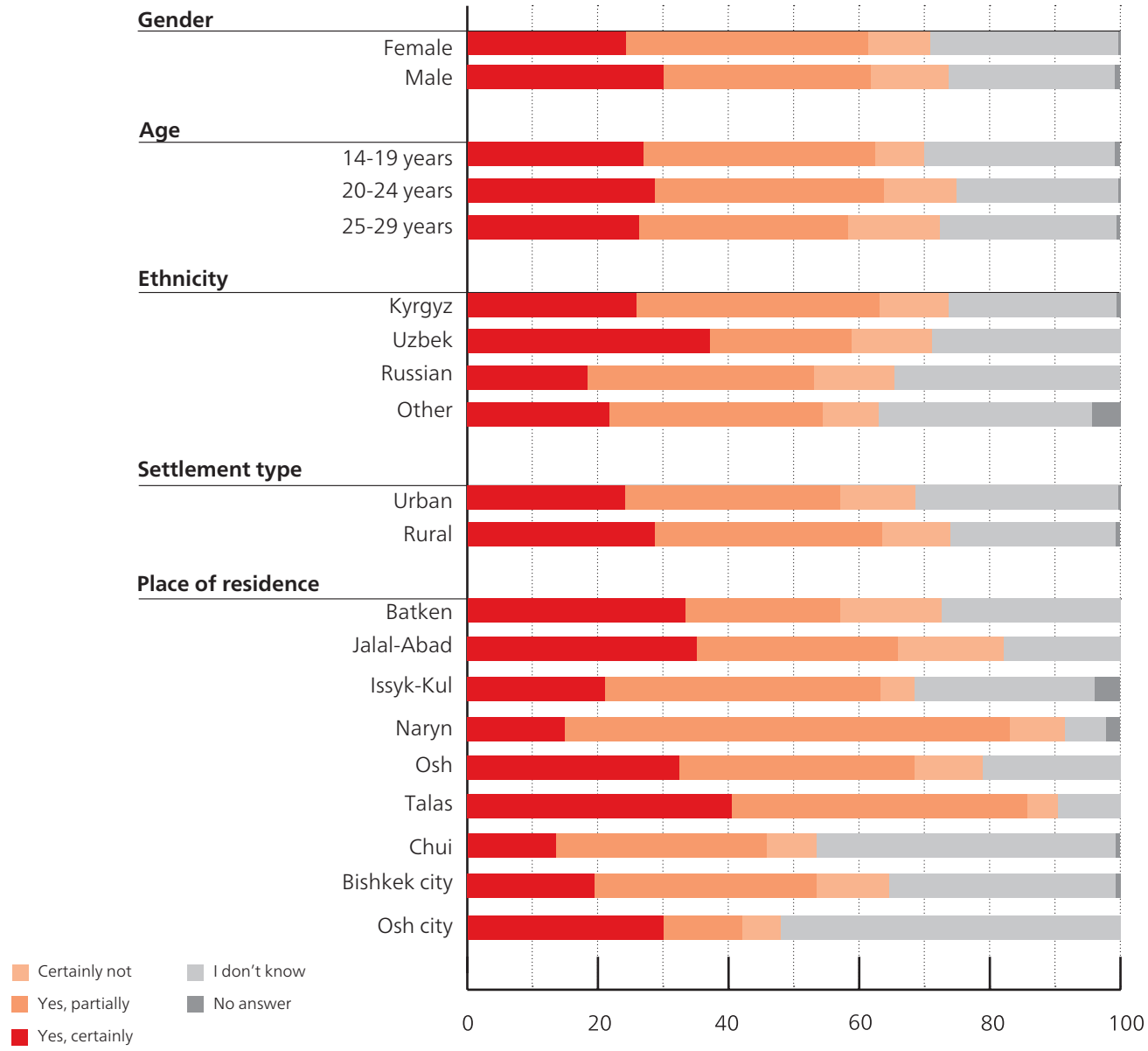
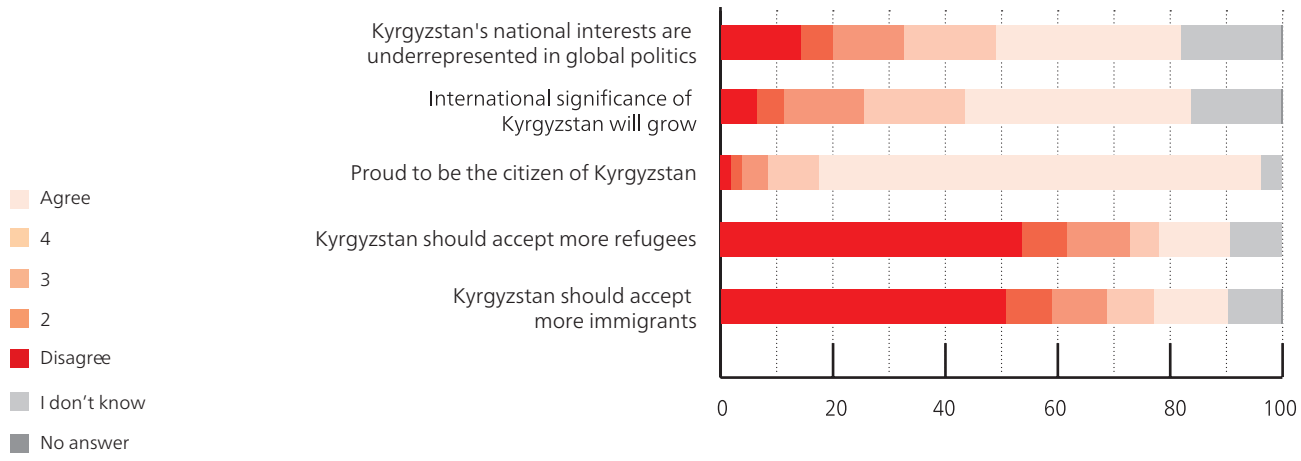


FIG. 68: **Kyrgyzstan and international issues**
Young people aged between 14 and 29 years, n = 1000, figures in percentage



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APPENDIX 2: FOOTNOTES

[1] Significance level: * p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; *** p < 0,001

The leisure activities were recorded using a five-point scale. The present representation is based on the responses “very frequently” and “frequently”. The items “social networks” and “communications media” are based on a three-point scale, so that the present representation contains only the highest level (“often”).

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APPENDIX 3: LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES (TENTATIVE)

11. TABLE 1.
Composition of the sample by age groups according to socio-demographic criteria

27. TABLE 2.
Have you ever experienced discrimination for any of the following reasons?

12. FIG. 1.
Age distribution of the sample

15. FIG. 2.
Young people's satisfaction

16. FIG. 3.
Satisfaction with education by age

17. FIG. 4.
Satisfaction with work and educational level

18. FIG. 5.
Satisfaction with work

19. FIG. 6.
Predictions for the future

24. FIG. 7.
Importance of different values to the Kyrgyz youth

26. FIG. 8.
Importance of healthy lifestyle by age

27. FIG. 9.
Youth and drugs

28. FIG. 10.
Young people's moral concepts

29. FIG. 11.
Young people's preferred neighbors

33. FIG. 12.
Trust and family

34. FIG. 13.
Psychosocial support

35. FIG.14.
Family and choosing a partner

40. FIG. 15.
Friendships and financial situation

41. FIG. 16.
Friends from different backgrounds – differences by place of residence

41. FIG. 17.
Friends and acquaintances in other Central Asian countries

43. FIG. 18.
Internet user behavior by gender

45. FIG. 19.
Maximum level of education

46. FIG. 20.
Do you agree that there are cases of 'buying' grades at the institutes/universities?

46. FIG. 21.
Do you agree that there are cases of 'buying' grades at the institutes/universities – differences by level of education

47. FIG. 22.
What do you think, how would you describe the everyday life at your institution/university?

38. FIG. 23.
What do you think, how would you describe the everyday life at your institution/university – differences by gender/age/residence

48. FIG. 24.
Ease of finding work after finishing formal education

49. FIG. 25.
Ease of finding work after finishing formal education – differences by place of residence/cities

49. FIG. 26.
Field of specialisation and current place of employment

50. FIG. 27.
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51. FIG. 28.
Areas of employment – differences by gender/ ethnicity/ place of residence

51. FIG. 29.
Factors important for getting a job

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Factors important for choosing a job

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Desire to migrate for more than six months

56. FIG. 32.
Age distribution of young people with personal experience of migration

57. FIG. 33.
Young people with experience of migration by region

58. FIG. 34.
Favorite destinations for external migration

58. FIG. 35.
Preparation for moving abroad

59. FIG. 36.
Satisfaction in education and the wish to migrate

59. FIG. 37.
Aspiration in education and the wish to migrate

61. FIG. 38.
Wish to migrate and current occupation

62. FIG. 39.
Experience of migration and trust in political leaders

62. FIG. 40.
The conviction that democracy is a good form of government and the intention not to migrate

65. FIG. 41.
Interest in politics

66. FIG. 42.
Frequency of discussing politics with family members and friends b

68. FIG. 43.
Importance of being useful for the society

68. FIG. 44.
Volunteering in the last 12 months

70. FIG. 45.
Do your political views and convictions overlap with those of your parents?

71. FIG. 46
Did you vote during the 2015 election in the national Parliament

71. FIG. 47.
Did you vote during the 2015 election in the national Parliament – differences by gender/ethnicity/settlement type

72. FIG. 48.
Willingness to take on a political role

72. FIG. 49.
Willingness to take on a political role – differences by gender/age/ethnicity/settlement type

74. FIG. 50.
Main information source on political events

75. FIG. 51.
Main information source on political events – differences by gender/age/ethnicity/ place of residence

76. FIG. 52.
Youth political engagement

76. FIG. 53.
Perceptions on changes in freedom of speech

77. FIG. 54.
Experience in different forms of political activism

77. FIG. 55.
Distribution of internet activism

81. FIG. 56.
The share of state in business and industry should be increased

82. FIG. 57.
The state should take on more responsibility to make sure everyone is provided for

82. FIG. 58.
The state should take on more responsibility to make sure everyone is provided for – distribution by age/ place of residence

83. FIG. 59.
Satisfaction with the level of democracy in Kyrgyzstan

85. FIG. 60.
Perceptions of state regimes and forms

86. FIG. 61.
To what extent should the national government focus on implementing each of the following goals?

87. FIG. 62.
In your opinion, do the following population groups in Kyrgyzstan have too few rights, enough rights or too many rights?

87. FIG. 63.
Importance of different values

89. FIG. 64.
Are you a citizen…?

91. FIG. 65.
In your opinion, will Kyrgyzstan benefit from regional cooperation with other countries of Central Asia

92. FIG. 66.
Trust in different international organizations

93. FIG. 67.
In your opinion, will Kyrgyzstan benefit from regional cooperation with other countries of Central Asia – differences by gender/age/ethnicity/settlement type/place of residence

93. FIG. 68.
Kyrgyzstan and international issues

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