



2023

**YOUTH STUDY
YOUTH VOICES OF
AZERBAIJAN –
ATTITUDES, VALUES AND
FUTURE PROSPECTS**

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1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Half of all young people (51%) in Azerbaijan report that their households can afford more than just food and clothing, while 28% say there is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance. Fourteen percent are at the bottom of the financial ladder, with 10% only affording food and 4% basic necessities.
- Residents of Baku report being better off than those living in rural areas. In addition, ethnic Azerbaijanis and young people with higher education claim a higher subjective level of well-being, compared to youth that indicated their ethnicity as other than Azerbaijani¹ and those with primary education.
- The majority of young people (59%) in Azerbaijan believe that materially they are in the same condition as other fellow citizens. Men, Baku residents, respondents in the oldest age cohort, employed persons and holders of higher education are more likely to evaluate the material situation of their household as worse than the majority in their geographic area.
- More than half of young Azerbaijanis² have personal income, including salaries and other types of income, while 59% are financially dependent on parents, relatives or partners.³ Only 7% report receiving state support, including a family pension.
- The majority of youth in Baku (61%) possess some form of personal income, while more youth outside Baku depend on family members. Young women, those between the ages of 14 and 17 and those who indicated their ethnicity as other than Azerbaijani are more likely to be dependents than young men, older age cohorts and ethnic Azerbaijani youth.
- About a quarter of young people in Azerbaijan (26%) are enrolled in an educational institution, including secondary and tertiary educational establishments. More youth residing in Baku are in educational institutions (32%) compared to 25% of those in other urban areas and 24% of rural youth.
- More than half of Azerbaijani youth (56%) are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving or have received at schools. Respondents in or with higher education were most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of education that their institutions are giving or have given in the past.
- Many do not feel that schools prepare them for the labour market. About 72% of those who are still in educational institutions said that they are either not confident at all (27%) or mostly not confident (45%) that schools prepare them for the labour market, with only 10% being mostly or fully confident in this regard.
- Young people in focus group discussions were critical of the country's education system. Respondents noted that schools offer outdated curricula, instructors are not on top of the modern approaches to education and the quality of education itself fails to respond to the demands of the labour market.
- Half of the young people in Azerbaijan report being employed, either in full-time jobs (27%), part-time jobs (4%), occasional jobs (5%) or are self-employed (14%).

- Youth from Baku (59%), young men (62%), those between the ages of 25 and 29 (71%) and those with higher education (76%) are more likely to have a job compared to youth from outside the capital, young women (36%), younger age cohorts and those with a lower level of education.
- The proportion of NEETs⁴ among Azerbaijan's 14- to 29-year-olds is about 25%. Three times more young women (39%) neither have jobs nor are in education or training, compared to only 12% of young men. Similarly, youth outside Baku are more likely to be NEETs than those residing in the capital.
- Young Azerbaijanis believe that level of education (81%), friends and relatives (65%), family wealth (64%) and previous experience (62%) are the most important factors in obtaining a job they want. This indicates that meritocratic, as well as non-meritocratic factors play an important role in employment in Azerbaijan.
- Only about one in ten Azerbaijani youth (9%) has volunteered in the last twelve months. While few young Azerbaijanis have done volunteer work, groups such as youth outside the capital, ethnic minority youth, employed respondents and those older than 24 were more likely to have volunteered in the last year.
- More than half (54%) of young Azerbaijanis support the idea that democracy is the best way to govern Azerbaijan, with 28% being against this idea. Youngsters in Baku are least enthusiastic about democracy, with the plurality being either totally or somewhat against it (42%).
- The practice of democracy in Azerbaijan is seen either positively or fully positively (53%). Negative views on the practice of democracy in Azerbaijan prevail among young people living in the capital, with the plurality (42%) thinking so.
- Few young Azerbaijanis say that they are interested in politics. A plurality (43%) is not interested in politics at all, with about one-quarter of respondents (26%) saying they are not very interested in politics and one in five (20%) being somewhat or very interested in politics.
- Young men and 25- to 29-year-olds are more likely to have at least some level of interest in politics. Additionally, one in five respondents in the capital finds it hard to answer this question.
- Only 23% of those who had at least some degree of interest in politics⁵ discuss the subject with their peers frequently, with 64% doing it rarely and 6% never talking about politics with friends. Even fewer talk about politics with parents, with only 18% doing so frequently, 59% discussing politics rarely and 11% never talking about politics with their parents.
- Few young Azerbaijanis engage with political news, with only one-quarter accessing political information at least once a week. Over one-third (35%) of respondents report hardly ever consuming political news, while 7% do so infrequently, just once a month.
- A plurality of young Azerbaijanis (40%) believe that their interests are well-represented in national politics, while many are unsure⁶ or believe that their interests are poorly or not at all represented (30% each).

- Few young Azerbaijanis would take on a political function. Only about 18% of respondents said that they either gladly or maybe would take on a political function. Young men and respondents with higher education are slightly more likely to be willing to take on a political function.
- Overall, close to three-quarters of young Azerbaijanis (74%) have not participated in any social or political activities. Those outside Baku, younger respondents and those with lower educational attainment are less likely to be politically engaged.
- The economy is the most important grievance for young Azerbaijanis, with 58% of respondents naming rising prices as the most important problem facing the country. Importantly, the issue of territorial integrity is considered a major problem by 11% of Azerbaijani youth and was named most frequently as the second most important problem (45%).
- Few young Azerbaijanis claim association with left-leaning or right-leaning political ideologies. A plurality (36%) places themselves in the centre,⁷ with 32% unsure about ideological self-placement.
- Most respondents are unable to clearly identify left-wing or right-wing policies, highlighting that the results on ideological self-placement should be taken with a grain of salt.
- Only a minority (26%) of young people in Azerbaijan believe that Azerbaijan is a European country, with about an equal proportion (27%) unable to answer this question.
- The perspectives of youth towards Europe are complex. A plurality believes that Europe is a place of democracy and rule of law (45%), as well as cultural and scientific achievements (40%). Over one-third perceive Europe as the wealthiest and most prosperous region (35%). Still, negative sentiments are widespread – close to one-third associate it with an unfamiliar world with its own rules (36%) and approx. one-quarter of youth feel Europe is home to unwelcoming and cold people (22%), as well as moral decline and a loss of traditional values (24%).
- The majority (89%) state that Turkey is Azerbaijan's closest friend. Turkey is also perceived as the most important foreign actor that can contribute to the development of the Azerbaijani economy (86%), protection of human rights (80%) and national security (90%).
- A positive image of Turkey supporting the development of the economy, human rights and national security is elevated across all socio-demographic groups. A positive impact of the EU on the Azerbaijani economy is relatively more endorsed by youth from Baku and those with higher education.
- More than half of the young respondents believe that cooperating with Armenia can threaten the country's national values (52%), national security (53%) and statehood (51%). A plurality also claims that cooperation with Armenia could threaten Azerbaijan's economic system (44%). One-fifth is also afraid that cooperation with the United States can do the same.

- Perceptions about international organisations among young people are divided. While a plurality thinks that the EU (49%), international financial institutions (48%), NATO (46%) or other international organisations (44%) play a rather positive or clearly positive role, the rest of the young respondents either fail to provide any evaluation or think that those organisations impact the country negatively.
- When young people are given the choice of the “West” vs “Russia”, a plurality (48%) lean toward the “West”, however, intermediate positions such as “no polarisation is preferable” (16%) are also widespread. The rejection of polarisation is more widespread among young people in the capital and those with higher education.
- A plurality of young people in Azerbaijan either are not able to evaluate the impact of the end of the USSR [30% report that they do not know the answer or refuse to provide any answer (8%)]. Nearly equal proportions report neutral (24%) or positive (26%) responses, while only 12% believe that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a negative event.
- More than half of young people aged 14-17 and those with primary education do not have any position (“don’t know” or “refuse to answer”) regarding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, while those with higher education (38%) and those aged 25-29 (34%) more positively evaluate this event compared to their peers.
- Nearly half (48%) of young respondents are undecided regarding the consequences of the 1990s for Azerbaijan. The rest are divided on whether the first decade of independence brought more good (24%) or bad (27%).
- A positive evaluation of the end of the USSR is correlated with a positive assessment of the 1990s. Among those who believe that end of the Soviet Union was a good thing, 58% also think that the 90s eventually brought Azerbaijan good rather than bad things.
- Certain improvements since the 90s were mentioned in the context of earning money (25%) and getting qualified medical care (17%).
- A plurality (43%) of respondents report satisfaction with the outcome of the Karabakh conflict, while slightly more than one-quarter (28%) report neutral positions. Young people living in other urban (44%) or rural (47%) areas were slightly more satisfied with the outcome of the conflict when compared to those living in the capital (30%).
- Twenty-eight percent of young people reported that at least one person from their family participated in the 44-day Karabakh war as a soldier, military servant or volunteer. These figures were a little higher among other urban (28%) and rural (31%) settlements compared to the capital (22%).
- A plurality (45%) of respondents is against opening transport links between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This idea is less rejected in the capital (19%), while it faces more opposition among young people living in other urban (59%) and rural (48%) areas.

- A significant share of young people either do not know (29%) or refuse (7%) to respond to questions about the prospects of restarting the war in Karabakh over the next 5 years. While 38% think that there are no risks of resuming hostilities, 26% report a certain degree of possibility.
- Considering the context of the Karabakh war and Azerbaijan's relationship with its neighbours, the majority (60%) is inclined to believe that citizens must be ready to make different kinds of sacrifices for the sake of strengthening Azerbaijan's statehood. They believe that the only chance for Azerbaijan to progress is through deeper integration with Turkey (89%) rather than with Russia (55%).
- The majority (56%) disagrees with the statement that to achieve peaceful co-existence, it is "better to forget what happened in the past". An echo of this position is seen when comparing two statements about cooperation with states – nearly half of the young people (47%) acknowledge that it is important to cooperate with all countries except Armenia. Only 9% agree to cooperate with all countries including Armenia.
- Being a citizen of Azerbaijan (90%) is the most widespread self-identification among young people. This is followed by local-regional (68%) and belonging to the Caucasus (66%) self-conceptions. Conversely, more cosmopolitan identities, like being a citizen of the world (36%) or European (9%), are shared by significantly smaller portions of young people. Only one-quarter (25%) of young people see themselves as belonging to a specific ethnic group, while one-third (33%) of respondents reject this idea.
- While the majority (72%) of respondents disagree that religious institutions have a special role in Azerbaijani society, nearly the same share (67%) of young people oppose the idea that freedom of speech entails possible criticism of all religions. Those living in Baku (54%) are more supportive of the idea that free speech involves criticism of religion compared to those living in other urban (30%) or rural (24%) areas. At the same time, young people from the capital (50%) report the special role of religious institutions more frequently than rural (24%) or other urban (19%) youth.
- Young people are inclined to support the universality of the dominant culture: 58% think that immigrants should adapt to Azerbaijani cultural traditions and 50% claim that it would be best for the country if everyone follows the same customs and traditions. Furthermore, 64% also reject the idea that the fusion of different religions and cultures can be beneficial for Azerbaijan. Support for religious and cultural heterogeneity is more widespread among young people living in the capital (55%) compared to those from other urban (23%) and rural (36%) areas.
- Despite traditional-preservation stances on the culture and society, the majority (63%) of respondents report that minority children should have the opportunity to be taught their native language in addition to their ordinary classes in Azerbaijani.

- The position that individuals should take more responsibility and rely less on the government is accepted by 40% and rejected by 60% of respondents. Young people from the capital (52%) are more supportive of such individualistic values compared to respondents from other urban (36%) or rural (37%) areas. The prevalence of personal responsibility is greater among young people with higher education (50%) than youth with secondary (39%) or primary (35%) schooling.
- Family values and merits associated with personal success or physical appearance are universally accepted by Azerbaijani youth, while civic participation activities are less endorsed. For instance, marriage (82%), having children (77%), being faithful to a partner (86%), taking responsibility (86%), being independent (86%), healthy eating (87%) and looking good (82%) are important for a substantial majority of youth.
- Being active in politics (29%) or participating in civic actions or initiatives (32%) is a shared value for only one-third of the youth in Azerbaijan. Engagement in political and civic actions is relatively higher in the capital – for 44% being active in politics and for 49% participation in civic actions, is important.
- Personal dignity (35%), social prestige (19%) and material wealth (14%) are among the most important values for young people in Azerbaijan. From among compassion-related values, altruism (14%) was also frequently mentioned, while values like tolerance (3%) and solidarity (1%) were relatively neglected.
- Young people in Azerbaijan have a great deal of trust⁸ in law enforcement and executive government institutions: the army (97%), president (93%), police (83%) and national government (70%) are among the most trusted institutions.
- Among the least trusted institutions in Azerbaijan are the media (46% distrust⁹), political parties (46% distrust) and civil society organisations (42% distrust). These institutions are more trusted among young people living in Baku compared to those living outside the capital city. In addition, those with higher education tend to report relatively elevated levels of trust in the above-mentioned institutions.
- People from Armenia (57%), queer people¹⁰ (37%) and drug addicts (23%) are the most rejected groups, with respondents noting they should even be refused entry into Azerbaijan. As for the most welcomed categories, young people would accept a refugee (14%) and internally displaced people (10%) as members of their families.
- A majority of young people live with their parents in nuclear or extended families. In general, young people report getting well along with their parents (87%) and just a small minority report having a very conflicted relationship (2%). Only 5% report living with a friend or other relative and less than 1% say they live alone. The number of those living with their partner/spouse and children is higher among rural youth than urban and capital residents.
- Young people in Azerbaijan are not worried about climate change – less than 1% spontaneously mentioned it among the most important challenges Azerbaijan currently faces.

- When explicitly asked, 45% agree that climate change is a global emergency, but 28% find it hard to give a specific answer and 5% refuse to respond to the question.
- A majority (63%) believe that the causes of climate change are either entirely natural (31%) or primarily triggered by natural (32%) reasons. Only 33% consider that the roots of climate change in one way or another are related to human activities. Support for natural reasons is the highest among youth living in Baku (85%), while the same claim is shared only by 64% in other urban areas and 54% in rural areas.
- Despite the differences in causes, the majority (61%) of respondents back the introduction of preventive and restrictive measures to combat climate change. Young people living in the capital, those with higher education and those with high levels of living conditions are more enthusiastically supporting such measures compared to their peers with different socio-demographic characteristics.
- Overall, young people are optimistic about the future, as 72% report experiencing hope and 63% feel confident when they hear about the efforts to mitigate global warming. A considerable number of respondents, however, report being indifferent (51%) to those actions.
- Only a small portion of young people (13%) have traveled abroad. Those aged 25-29 and those with higher education have visited foreign countries more frequently than their younger cohorts and those without higher education.
- Even fewer (3% of all young people and 26% of those with experience traveling abroad) respondents have stayed abroad for longer than 6 months. Only 2% report visiting foreign countries for study or work reasons (18% of those who have ever been abroad).
- Moreover, the majority (80%) of young people do not wish to go abroad for study or work purposes. The desire to remain in Azerbaijan is highest in the capital, among females, married respondents, those aged 18-29 and young people with higher education.
- Among those who either have been abroad or would like to go abroad for employment or educational purposes, the majority name higher salaries (51%) and better educational prospects (44%) as the main reasons they would move to another country. The most desired destinations for relocation are Turkey (39%), Germany (16%) and Russia (12%).
- Young people in Azerbaijan are optimistic about the improvement of their family's (48%) and country's (55%) standard of living in the next 5 years, however, many are ambivalent.

2

INTRODUCTION



Understanding young peoples' attitudes, concerns and beliefs is especially important in countries like Azerbaijan, where young people make up a considerable portion of the society or around one-third of the population. Nevertheless, there is a lack of existing academic literature exploring the recent trends related to youth studies. As for those rare papers exploring this topic, they indicate the existing challenges related to youth policies and their detachment from young people's needs.¹¹

Therefore, the primary goal of this research project was to inquire into young people's lives in Azerbaijan. Referring to similar studies conducted in the region and other post-soviet countries, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung developed a comprehensive methodology and instruments to explore the main concerns, values, beliefs and aspirations of young people in Azerbaijan. Information was collected through a nationally representative survey of youth in Azerbaijan, as well as complemented by three focus group discussions with young people of different ages. Eventually, the study was able to collect the following information concerning young people in Azerbaijan:

- Household and living conditions of young people
- Education, employment and financial conditions
- Views on the Soviet Union's breakdown; evaluation of 1990s and second Karabakh war
- Interest in politics and ideological preferences
- Views regarding international politics
- Values, identity, belonging and institutional trust
- Predisposition and experience of mobility
- Climate change and global warming positions

Within the study "youth" or "young people" refer to young adults who are between 14 and 29 years old and reside in Azerbaijan.

This report is organised into several chapters and subchapters. In the next section of the report, the study's methodology is presented, followed by a section on findings. The findings section is broken down into eight broad chapters. First, the household and living conditions of young people are presented. In the subsequent chapter, the general educational environment, employment status and career development topics are discussed. The third chapter deals with young people's positions regarding democracy, their interest and involvement in politics as well as their ideological preferences. This chapter is followed by a section that presents young people's foreign policy preferences. Young people's positions regarding the recent history of Azerbaijan and significant events are then explored. The sixth chapter is the most voluminous as it investigates various topics related to youth identity, belonging and values. In addition, that chapter also presents findings regarding institutional trust and family environment. Moving to the next chapter, attitudes toward climate change and global warming are introduced. Sections on findings are concluded with a concerns and aspirations chapter, where young people's positions about emigration intentions and their future are outlined. The report ends with conclusions.

3

METHODOLOGY



The study applied triangulation of research methods to investigate young people's attitudes, opinions and experiences across various topics. Specifically, qualitative data collection using focus group discussions and a nationwide quantitative survey of young people aged 14-29 were used for data collection purposes. The methodology of the study was developed by R-Research Limited of the United Kingdom at the request of and in consultation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) South Caucasus Regional office.

The detailed sample plan and data collection protocol was developed by R-Research with input from Dr Félix Krawatzek of the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZoiS), Berlin and approved by FES. The questionnaire was prepared in English in consultation with FES offices in Tbilisi and Berlin. The fieldwork of the quantitative study was administered between June 8, 2022 and July 21, 2022. A nationally representative sample of 1,605 respondents aged 14-29¹² was collected by Baku-based firm. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage stratified cluster sample. Respondents in households were selected using an age and gender quota. On average, the completed interviews took about 42 minutes, with a standard deviation of 9.13 minutes.

The study findings from the quantitative survey apply components of exploratory and confirmatory statistical analysis. Depending on the variables investigated, specific regression models were used to report statistically significant differences among basic socio-demographic control variables. The main socio-demographic variables used in this report are age group (14-17, 18-24 and 25-29), gender, settlement type (capital, other urban, rural), level of education (primary / incomplete secondary, completed secondary and completed/uncompleted higher education) and ethnicity [ethnic Azerbaijani and those who identified themselves as other than Azerbaijani (for instance, Lezgins, Georgians or others)].¹³ To interpret the data more directly, differences between groups are presented using crosstabulation tables. It is important to note that due to rounding errors, in the same cases, the sum of the proportion may not add up to 100% or have 1% discrepancies between actual and reported data.

As for the qualitative part of the study, three focus group discussions were conducted in Baku among young people aged 14-29. The focus groups were organised and conducted by TEC Qafqaz under the direct supervision of R-Research. Research instruments included discussion guides and prompts developed in collaboration between FES, Dr Félix Krawatzek and R-Research. These discussions explored multiple themes, such as personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions,¹⁴ what it is like living in contemporary Azerbaijan, political and ideological preferences, as well as value orientation and beliefs. Moreover, young people provided their positions on climate change, emigration, education, as well as attitudes toward the Soviet Union and other events of the recent past. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. In this report, insights from the qualitative study are presented thematically alongside the results of the quantitative study.

Note: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, so that original values were kept instead. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

4

PART ONE: HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

This section presents a comprehensive overview of the perceived economic conditions of young people in Azerbaijan. The analysis focuses on how young Azerbaijanis see the conditions of their households through a comparative lens, as well as their sources of monetary income. Additionally, the text presents metrics of subjective well-being for investigation and identifies the differences between major socio-demographic groups of Azerbaijani youth.

MAIN FINDINGS

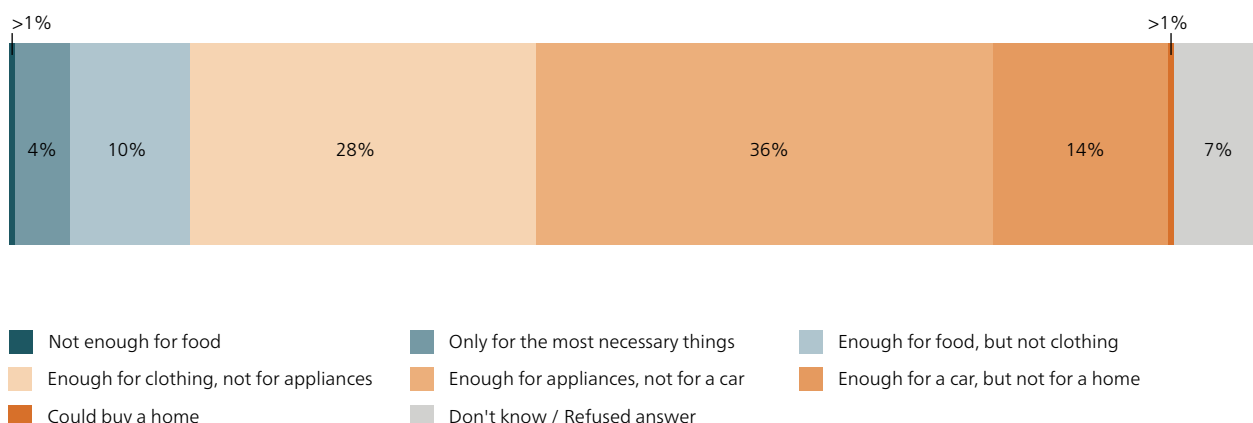
- Half of the young people (51%) in Azerbaijan report that their households can afford more than just food and clothing, including those who can afford a car (14%) or large household appliance (36%). Twenty-eight percent say there is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance. Fourteen percent are at the bottom of the financial ladder, with 10% only affording food and 4% just basic necessities.
- On average, residents of Baku score 5 points on a 7-point scale of subjective well-being, with rural Azerbaijanis scoring almost one point lower (4.2). The difference between those who have obtained higher education (5.2) and those with primary education (4.2) is even more pronounced. Youth who describe themselves as ethnic minorities are more likely to score lower on the subjective well-being scale than ethnic Azerbaijanis.
- A majority of young people (59%) in Azerbaijan believe that materially they are in the same condition as other fellow citizens. Men, Baku residents, respondents in the oldest age cohort, employed persons and those with higher education are more likely to evaluate their socioeconomic standing as worse than others.
- More than half of young Azerbaijanis have personal income, including salaries or other types of income, while 59% are financially dependent on parents, relatives and partners.¹⁵ Only 7% report receiving state support, including a family pension.
- A majority of youth from Baku (61%) possess some form of personal income, while more youth outside Baku depend on family members. Young women, those between the ages of 14 and 17 and those who indicated their ethnicity as other than Azerbaijani are more likely to be dependents compared to young men, older age cohorts and ethnic Azerbaijani youth.

FINANCIAL AND HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS

The first section of this chapter focuses on young people's subjective well-being. While subjective well-being is correlated with various socioeconomic outcomes and attitudes, its role is usually overlooked in economic analysis.¹⁶ Respondents were first asked to evaluate their household economic conditions and were then further probed on how, in their opinion, their standing would have compared to other households in their respective communities and in Azerbaijan.

Concerning the self-assessment of household economic situations, respondents were asked to name what items or services their household could purchase. Options were ranked from those denoting the most precarious ("there is not enough money even for food") to the most well-off ("we experience no material difficulties; if needed we could acquire an apartment or house") financial standing of a household (Figure 1). Overall, a plurality of respondents said that their households could afford expenses such as food, clothing and large household appliances, but could not buy a car (36%). The next most frequently named option was a step lower: 28% of respondents said that their households could purchase items such as food and clothing, but they could not afford to buy large household items.

FIGURE 1: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTIONS MOST CLOSELY MATCHES THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD RIGHT NOW? (% , full sample, single answer)



At the bottom of the financial ladder were fourteen percent of respondents. Ten percent said that they could only afford food, but not clothing, while 4% had money only for items of first necessity and close to zero reported not even having enough money for food.

As for the most well-off respondents, 14% could afford anything but an apartment or a house. Almost no one said that their households could easily purchase a home. Seven percent could not answer the question or refrained from selecting a category.

How do young Azerbaijanis across socio-demographic groups evaluate their households' financial situation? To understand the differences between socio-demographic groups, the question above was transformed into a seven-point scale, where 1 corresponds to the lowest financial standing ("not even enough money for food") and 7 corresponds to the highest status ("if needed, we could acquire an apartment or a house"). On such a scale, on average, young Azerbaijanis scored 4.5 points (Figure 2). The difference between those who have attained higher education (5.2) and respondents with complete secondary (4.3) or primary (4.4) education are staggering. A visible gap also exists between the financial well-being of Baku residents (mean score of 5.0) and young Azerbaijanis outside the capital city.

Regrettably, youth belonging to Azerbaijan's ethnic minority communities score considerably lower (3.9 points on average) than ethnic Azerbaijanis (4.5). Young people who are employed also score slightly higher (4.7) than those who are not in employment (4.3)(Figure 2).

Respondents were further asked to compare their households' economic standing to others within their communities and in Azerbaijan. Overall, the majority of young people in Azerbaijan believe that materially they are in the same condition as their fellow citizens, as the same proportion (59%) agreed that their households' economic situation is similar both to the majority of people living in their cities or villages and within Azerbaijan in general (Figure 3). A similar proportion said that their households are doing better than others in their communities (15%) or in Azerbaijan (16%).

Eighteen percent of respondents felt that their households are doing worse than others in their communities, while 14% said the same when comparing them with others in Azerbaijan. Notably, close to one in ten were unsure, as 8% did not know or refused to answer how their households compare to others within their communities, while 11% did the same when asked about comparing their households to others in Azerbaijan (Figure 4).

FIGURE 2: MEAN VALUES OF THE PERCEIVED ECONOMIC SITUATION BY MAJOR POPULATION (complete sample except those who said “don’t know” or refused to answer the question, 93%)

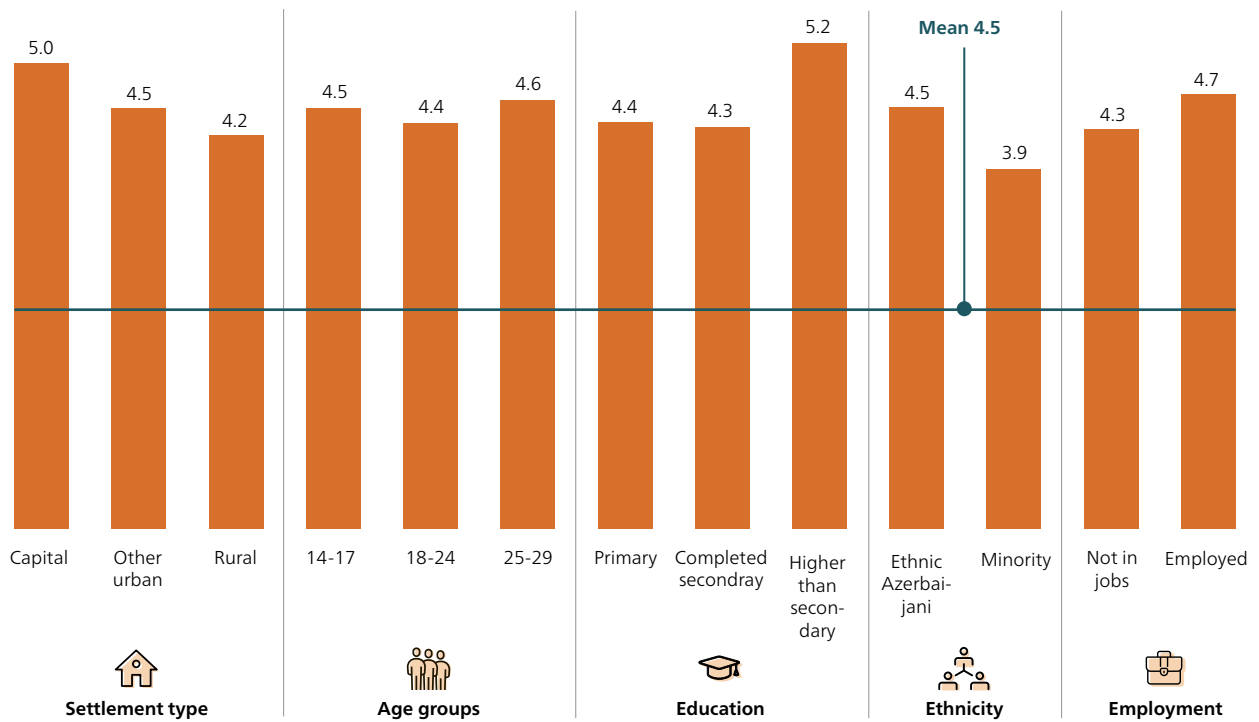


FIGURE 3: THINKING ABOUT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN..., HOW DOES THE MATERIAL STATUS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD COMPARE TO THEIRS? (% , full sample)

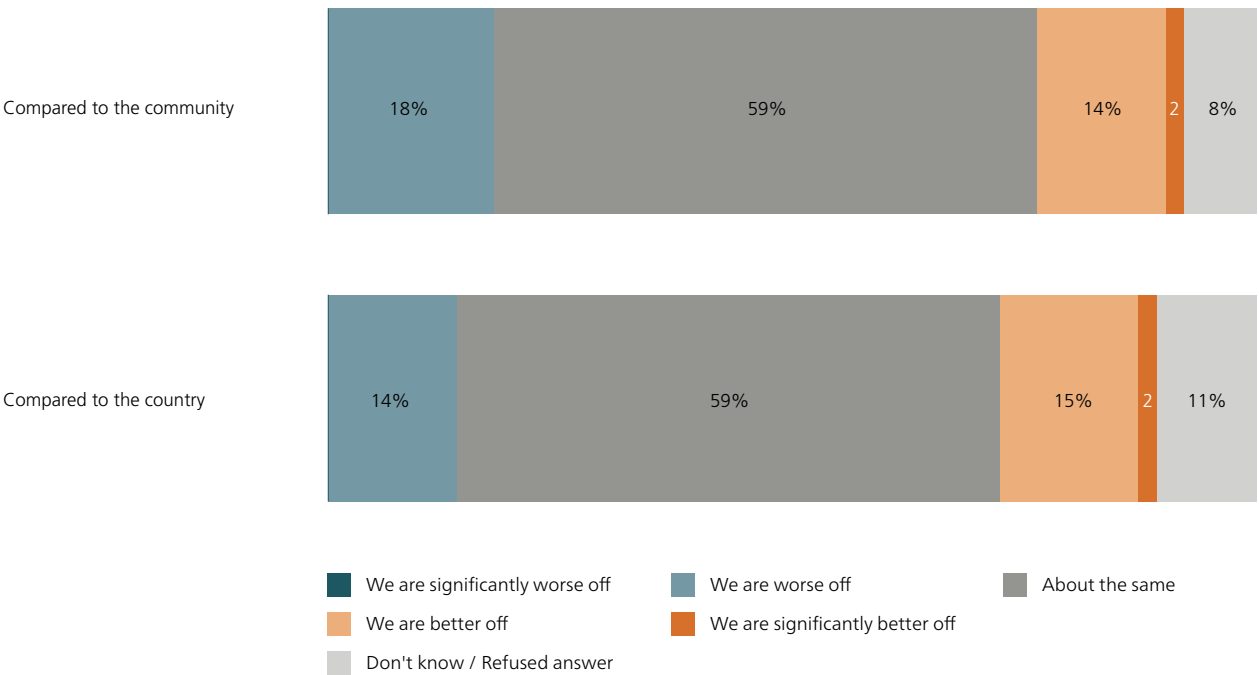
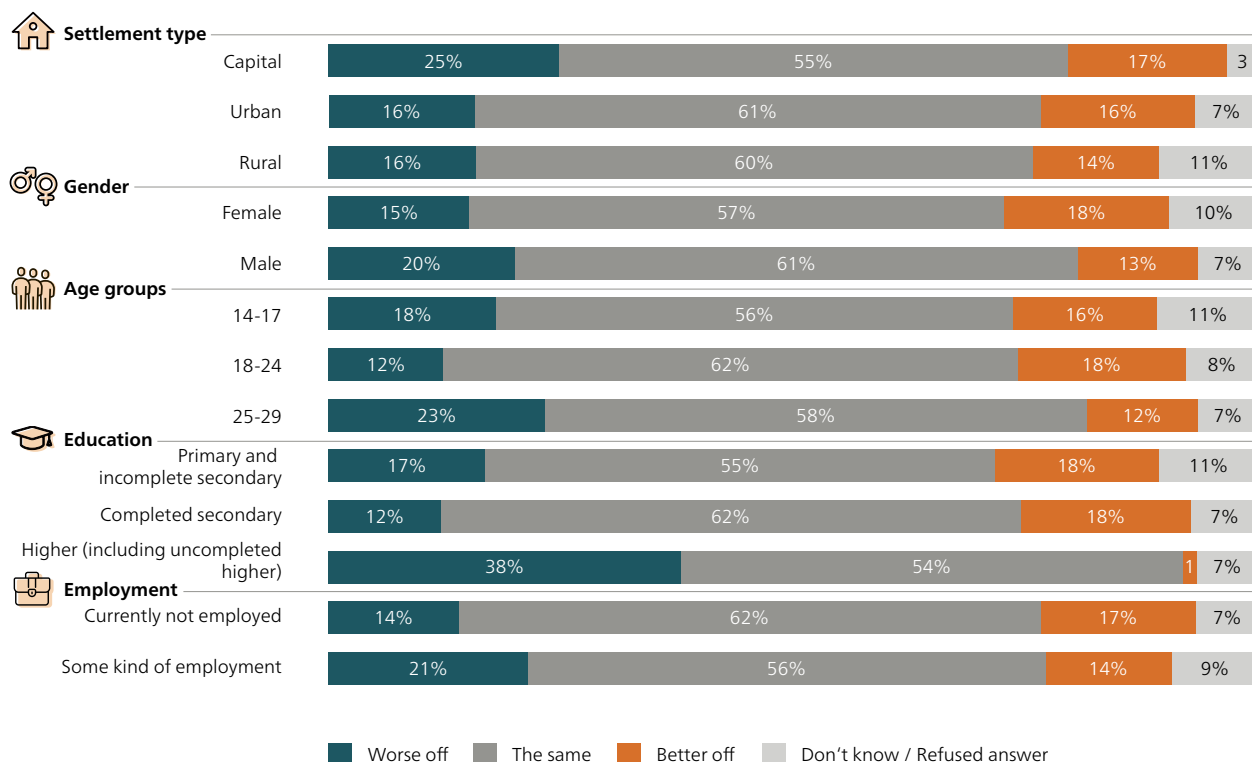


FIGURE 4: THINKING ABOUT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN YOUR TOWN OR CITY/VILLAGE, HOW DOES THE MATERIAL SITUATION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD COMPARE TO THEIRS?
 (% , by major population group. Answer options “significantly worse off” and “worse off” were combined into “worse off”. Options “significantly better off” and “better off” were combined into “better off”. Full sample.)



Notably, those groups who could be considered privileged (men, Baku residents, respondents in the oldest age cohort, employed persons and those with higher education) are more likely to evaluate the material situation of their household as worse than the majority in their community (Figure 4). One-quarter of young people in Baku think that their households are doing worse than others in their city, compared to 16% of youth outside the capital. One in five young men feels that their households are doing worse than others in their communities compared to 15% of young women. Notably, a higher share of the latter group (18%) considers that they do better than others within their communities, while only 13% of men say the same.

More than one-third of those with higher education (38%) believe they are financially worse off than others in their community, while only one percent believes that they are doing better than others. In comparison, more Azerbaijani youth with lower educational attainment consider themselves better off than worse off.

Almost one-quarter (23%) of respondents in the oldest age cohort (25 to 29 years) feel that their households are doing worse than others in their communities compared to 18% of those in the youngest cohort and 12% of those between the ages of 18 and 24. Notably, close to one in five (21%) employed respondents believe that they are doing worse than others in their communities compared to 14% of those who are unemployed.

Baku residents and holders of higher education degrees similarly negatively evaluate their relative socioeconomic standing when comparing it to other households in Azerbaijan. More than one in five (22%) Baku residents consider themselves to be worse off than other Azerbaijanis, while 31% of higher education degree holders think the same. Notably, only 3% of the latter group believe they are better off than other Azerbaijanis.

LIVELIHOOD SOURCES

Next, we examined the main sources of livelihood for Azerbaijani youth. Half of the country's population between 14 and 29 had some form of personal income (Figure 5). Another major source of income was support from parents, named by more than one-third (38%) of young Azerbaijanis. A similar proportion was financially assisted by parents or relatives (16%) and partners (15%). Fewer named options such as a family pension (6%), government support or income from renting (1%). Loans and other sources were almost never mentioned as a source of income (Figure 5).

The income sources outlined above can be grouped into three major categories. The first group includes respondents who are not dependent on others for money, such as those who have personal financial sources, receive income from rentals and have a grant or a student loan. Overall, about young 51% of young Azerbaijanis do not depend on others for their income (Figure 6). Importantly, this does not mean that they do not have other sources of income, as the respondents were allowed to mark as many answers as they deemed appropriate when answering this question.

More than half of young Azerbaijanis, approximately 59%, are dependent, that is, supported by their parents, receive financial help from parents or relatives or are supported by a partner. Only 7% report receiving some form of government aid, such as state support or family pension.

Young Azerbaijanis differ across major socio-demographic groups when it comes to livelihood sources. Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, is the most economically advanced geographic area in the country. Not surprisingly, a majority of young people residing in the nation's capital (61%) report having some form of personal income, with only 38% being dependent on others. In contrast, less than half of young people in urban areas outside Baku (47%) and rural residents (49%) have some form of personal income. A majority (67% and 64% respectively) in these groups are dependents, with 7-9% receiving state support.

There is a stark divide between young women and men, with fewer young women having personal income (36%) and more likely to be dependent (72%). Conversely, close to two-thirds of young men (64%) have some personal income, while less than half (48%) depend on others.

FIGURE 5: WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL INCOME SOURCES? (% , multiple choice, full sample)

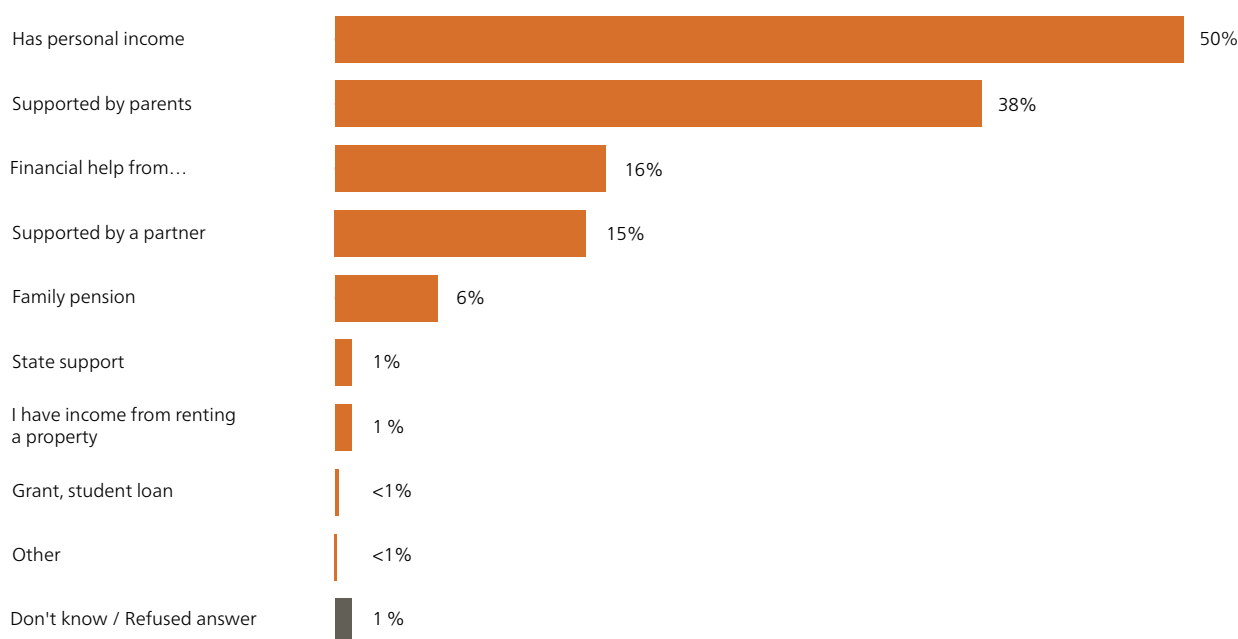
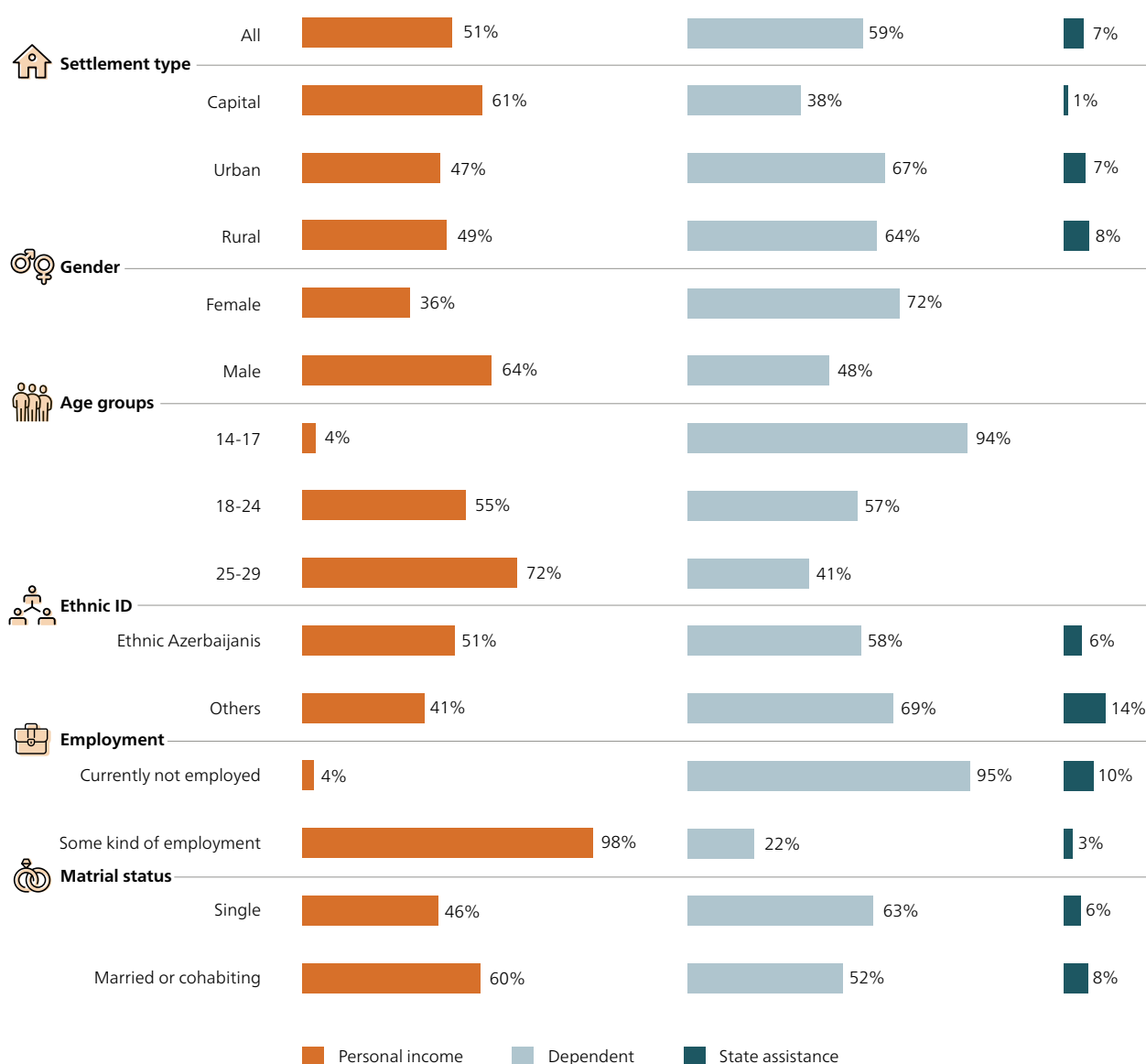


FIGURE 6: **SOURCES OF INCOME BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUP (% , only statistically significant differences are shown, full sample)**



Across age groups, those younger than 18 are expectedly overwhelmingly (95%) dependent on others, while 55% in the 18-24 age cohort and 72% of those aged 25-29 have personal income. Still, 57% of 18- to 24-year-olds depend on someone, while the numbers are lower (41%) for those aged 25 and older.

Ethnic minorities represent about 7% of the country's youth and they are more likely to be dependents (69%) than ethnic Azerbaijanis (58%). Only about 41% of ethnic minority youth have personal income, while every other ethnic Azerbaijani (51%) has personal income.

Minorities are also more likely to receive state assistance (14%) than ethnic Azerbaijani (6%) youth.

Expectedly, an absolute majority of employed respondents have personal income, while a majority of unemployed respondents are dependent on others. Fewer single youth have personal income as they are more likely to be younger and living with their parents. While married respondents are more likely to have some personal income, more than half (52%) depend on others for financial support.

DISCUSSION

Azerbaijan enjoyed impressive economic growth between 2004 and 2014, largely due to high oil prices and the booming extractive industry.¹⁷ This allowed the country to reduce poverty rates, which currently stand at 5-6%,¹⁸ and rank high in terms of inclusive economic development among emerging economies.¹⁹ While figures for income inequality are not available following the oil price shock in 2014, the Asian Development Bank estimates that Azerbaijan's regions significantly lag in terms of development and investment.²⁰

Survey results affirm these macroeconomic observations. While a majority of youth report having access to basic economic needs, a discrepancy between Baku and other areas is evident. Half of young people (51%) in Azerbaijan report that their households can afford more than just food and clothing, including those who could afford a car (14%) or large household appliances (36%). Notably, the latter represents a plurality of respondents. Twenty-eight percent say there is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance. Fourteen percent are at the bottom of the financial ladder, with 10% only affording food and 4% only affording basic necessities.

The gap between residents of Baku and rural areas is staggering. On average, Baku residents score 5 points out of a 7-point scale of subjective well-being, with rural Azerbaijanis scoring almost one point lower (4.2). Even more staggering is the difference between those who have obtained higher education (5.2) and those with primary education (4.4). Ethnic minority youth are more likely to score lower on the subjective well-being scale than ethnic Azerbaijanis.

Overall, a majority of young people in Azerbaijan believe that materially they are in the same condition as their fellow citizens, as the same proportion (59%) of respondents agreed that their household economic situation is similar both to the majority of people living in their cities or villages and within Azerbaijan in general. Surprisingly, those who could be in a more privileged position (men, Baku residents, respondents in the oldest

age cohort, employed persons, those with higher education) are more likely to evaluate their socioeconomic standing as worse than others.

Overall, 51% of young Azerbaijanis have personal income, including salaries or other types of income, while 59% are dependent on parents, partners or relatives.²¹ Only 7% report receiving state support. While a majority of Baku youth possess some form of personal income (61%), more youth outside Baku are dependents. Ethnic minority youth are more likely to be dependents than ethnic Azerbaijani youth.

5

PART TWO: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

The government policy documents on youth recognise the importance of youth employment and education and highlight them as key priority areas. The Youth of Azerbaijan 2017-2021 programme links skills development with increasing entrepreneurship and employment opportunities.²² Bilateral documents such as the Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and Azerbaijan that charts key deliverables promoting sustainable development policies in Azerbaijan name youth education and employment as important pre-conditions for the country's inclusive growth.

Despite declared priorities, actual policy outcomes paint a rather complex picture. Even state documents hint at existing shortcomings of youth and employment policies, namely the disconnect between the attained knowledge at school and the demand for skills in the labour market.²³ Notably, state policy documents fail to provide a sufficient mapping of concrete steps to increase opportunities for Azerbaijani youth.²⁴ State policies aside, international donors also failed to acknowledge the role of local context in terms of youth policies, for instance, by implementing fly-in-fly-out pilot projects without properly considering their long-term implications.²⁵

Structural factors, such as the underfunded higher education system²⁶ and informal practices like bribery,²⁷ have long plagued Azerbaijan's educational system. None of the Azerbaijani higher educational institutions are among the top 1,000 universities globally,²⁸ hence young Azerbaijanis go abroad in increasing numbers to obtain higher educational degrees, an endeavour rather inaccessible to many, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.²⁹

Shortcomings aside, while Azerbaijani school children initially showed mixed results in terms of international standardised test scores such as PIRLS and TIMSS, their scores have considerably improved over the last decade.³⁰ Results of the PISA standardised testing in Baku revealed that 15-year-olds in the Azerbaijani capital, while still performing poorly in mathematics, science and reading, scored better than, for instance, students in neighbouring Georgia.³¹

While the unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds in Azerbaijan is more than twice as low (13.1%) as in neighbouring Armenia (36.6%) and Georgia (30.5%),³² nonetheless, many jobs are part-time, pay meagre salaries and are in low-productivity sectors.³³ Those between the ages of 15 and 29 also represent half of the unemployed population of Azerbaijan, with a considerable skills mismatch.³⁴ Yet another challenge for Azerbaijan is a high share of Not in Employment, Education or Training youth (NEETs), comprising 23% of the population in 2017,³⁵ a key challenge to reducing unemployment in the country.³⁶

Yet another challenge for Azerbaijani youth is a pronounced gender disparity, especially among those who transition from education to work. Among 18- to 35-year-old Azerbaijanis who left the education system, inactivity rates were almost seven times higher among women (40.4%) than among men (6.3%).³⁷ While employment rates among women and men in Azerbaijan are generally comparable, women bear a considerably higher burden of unpaid domestic work than men.³⁸

The following section analyses these issues in relation to young people. Specifically, it looks at how young Azerbaijanis assess the educational environment, the main patterns of their employment and NEET status and finally, view opportunities to volunteer.

MAIN FINDINGS

- About a quarter of young people in Azerbaijan (26%) are at an educational institution, including secondary and tertiary educational establishments. More youth residing in Baku are in education (32%) compared to 25% of those in other urban areas and 24% of rural youth.
- More than half of Azerbaijani youth (56%) are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving or have received at schools. Respondents in or with higher education were most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of education that their institutions are giving or that they have received so far.
- Many do not feel that schools prepare them for the labour market. About 72% of those who are still in educational institutions said that they were either

not confident at all (27%) or mostly not confident (45%) that schools prepare them for the labour market, with only 10% being mostly or fully confident in this regard.

- Young people in focus group discussions were critical of the country's education system. Respondents noted that schools offer outdated curricula, instructors are not on top of the modern approaches to education and the quality of education itself fails to respond to the demands of the labour market.
- Half of the young people in Azerbaijan report being employed, including those with full-time jobs (27%), part-time jobs (4%), occasional jobs (5%) and self-employment (14%).
- Youth from Baku (59%), young men (62%), those aged 25 to 29 (71%) and those with higher education (76%) are more likely to have a job than youth from outside the capital, young women (36%), younger age cohorts and those with lower levels of education.
- The proportion of NEETs among Azerbaijan's 14- to 29-year-olds stands at about 25%. Three times more young women (39%) neither have jobs nor are in education or training, compared to only 12% of young men. Similarly, youth outside Baku are more likely to be NEETs than those residing in the capital.
- Young Azerbaijanis believe that level of education (81%), friends and relatives (65%), family wealth (64%) and previous experience (62%) are the most important factors in getting a job they want. This indicates that meritocratic, as well as non-meritocratic factors play an important role in getting a job in Azerbaijan.

- Only about one in ten Azerbaijani youth (9%) has volunteered in the last twelve months. While few young Azerbaijanis have done volunteer work, certain groups such as youth outside the capital, ethnic minorities, employed respondents and those older than age 24 were more likely to have volunteered in the last year.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

About one-quarter of young people in Azerbaijan are at an educational institution, including secondary and tertiary educational establishments (26%, Figure 7). Those residing in Baku are more likely to be in education (32%) than those outside the capital, with 25% in other urban areas and 24% of rural youth being enrolled in school. About 9% of young people in Azerbaijan aged 17 and younger are not in school, with 91% being at educational institutions. The share of those in education decreased markedly among older groups, with only 15% of 18- to 24-year-olds in school and only 1% of youth aged 24 or older being in educational institutions (Figure 7).

Employment status (most probably through the confounding effects of respondent age) is associated with higher enrolment in schools, with more than half of those who are unemployed being at educational institutions. Conversely, only 1% of those who are employed also study. Thirty-nine percent of single respondents are in schools as opposed to close to zero percent of married respondents (Figure 8).

FIGURE 7: PROPORTION OF THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUP (%)

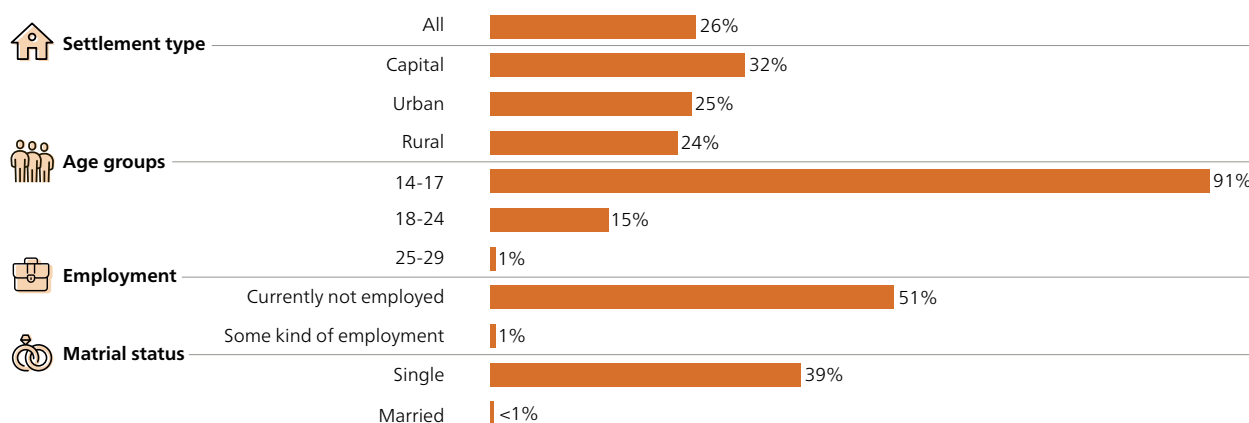
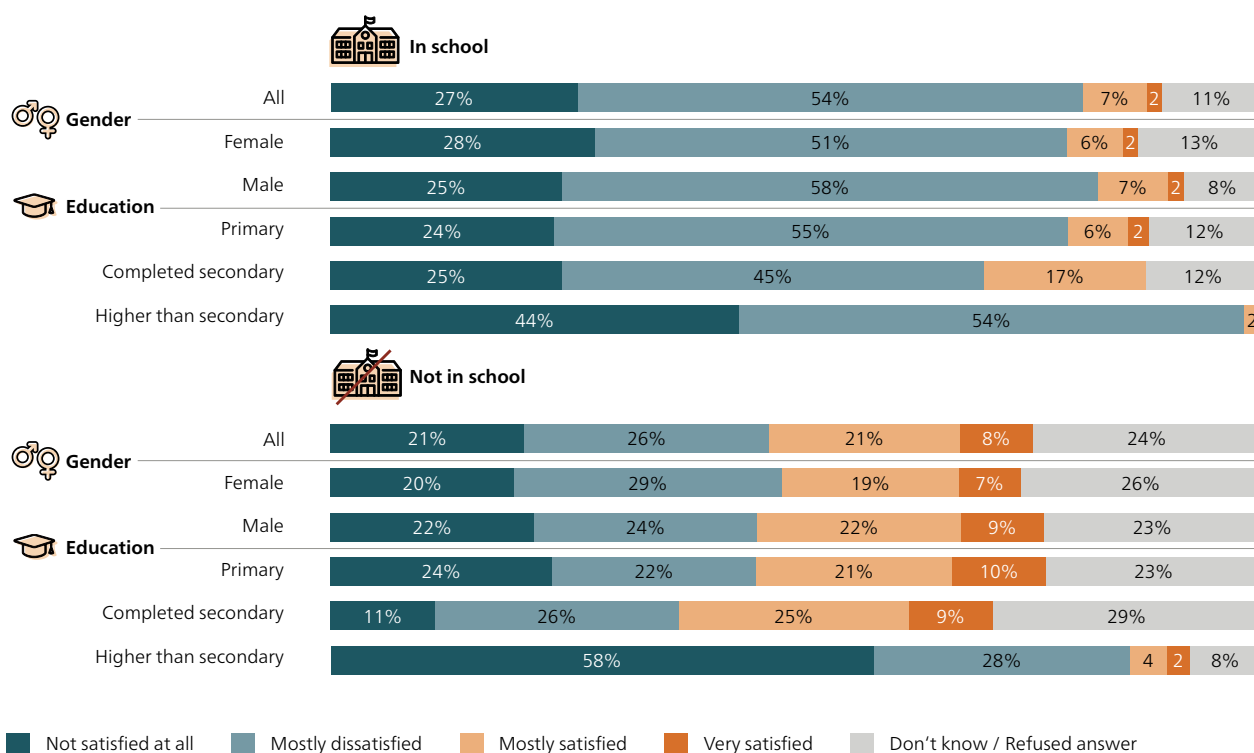


FIGURE 8: ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION YOU ARE RECEIVING / YOU HAVE RECEIVED? (% , by major population group, full sample)



More than half of Azerbaijani youth are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving or have received in school. To gain more insight on this topic, respondents who were currently in educational institutions, that is, about one-quarter of the sample were asked about the quality of education in their current schools. Others who are not in educational institutions were probed about the quality of education they have received so far.

Overall, the most prevalent attitude in both groups was dissatisfaction, with an overwhelming share of youth in schools (81%) being dissatisfied with their education, similar to the nearly half of those not in school (47%). Notably, more than one in four in the latter group (25%) were unsure.

Respondents in or with higher education were most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of education that their institutions are giving or that they have received so far. Respondents who were not in school were slightly more likely to say that they were satisfied with the education that they have received so far (Figure 8).

As most young Azerbaijanis are dissatisfied with the quality of education, many do not feel that schools prepare them for the labour market. When those who are still attending educational institutions were asked how confident they feel in terms of how well their education prepares them for the labour market, 72% said that they were either not confident at all (27%) or mostly not confident (45%), with only 10% being mostly or fully confident in this regard.

Similarly, a plurality of respondents (42%) not in education say that the education they received has either very badly (12%) or rather badly (31%) prepared them for the labour market. Notably, almost one-third of this subset of respondents were unsure (32%). Importantly, respondents across the board were similar in their assessment of how well their education prepares them for the labour market.

During the focus groups held in Baku, young people discussed issues related to education in Azerbaijan. While a low level of education was named among the most important issues the country is facing,

education was also mentioned as the primary field the state should address to prevent young people from leaving the country. When asked whether the education system prepares them well for the labour market, in all three focus groups, young people reported a negative answer. According to the participants, teachers are mostly very old and the methods of education are incorrect and rather outdated. Young people mostly acquire theoretical knowledge, while employers require practical experience: “In general, there is no practice in classes. For example, if they say something, we do not see it. So, I do not know what we are talking about. But if you practice...” (Female, 21).

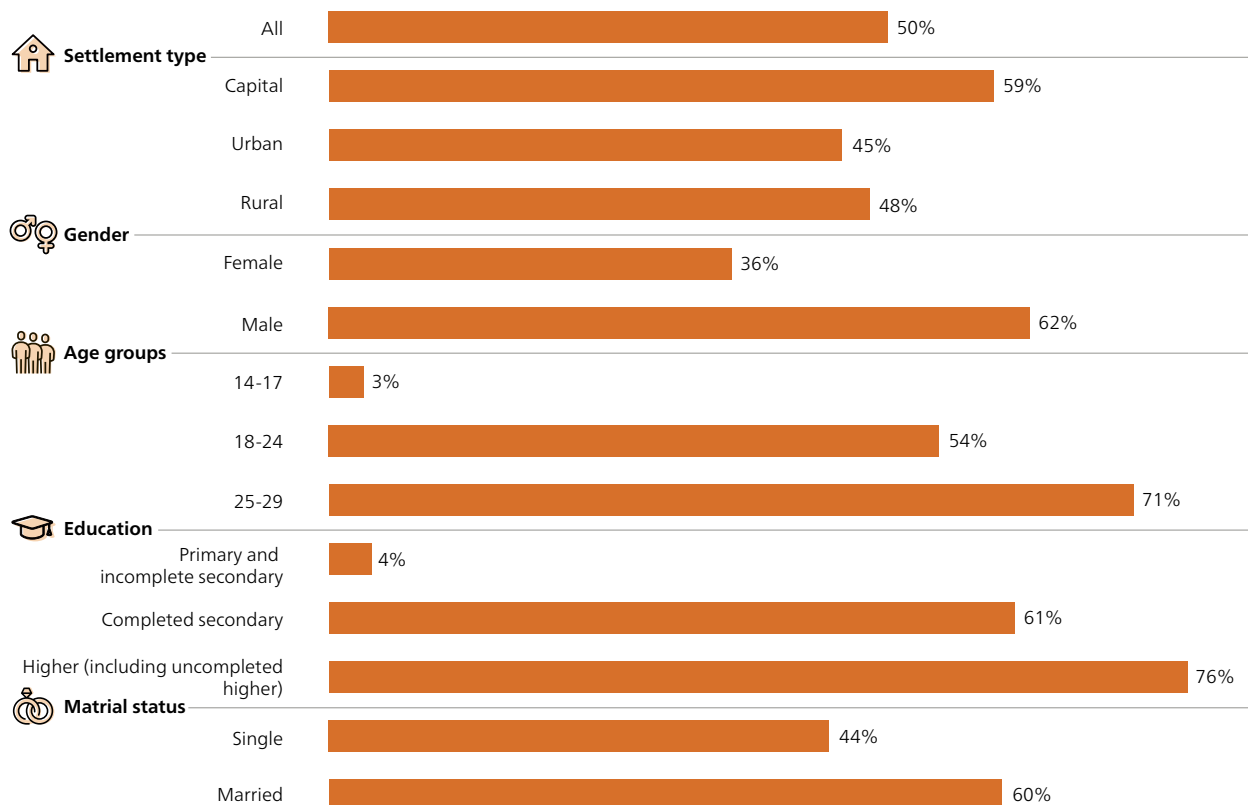
Young people suggest that during their studies or after graduation, people should be sent to work to gain experience. In addition, for young people no high levels of experience should be required when starting a new job: “High levels of experience should not be required. Wherever you go, they require 2 or 3 years of experience” (Female, 21). Young people also brought

up examples from other countries, emphasising the importance of internships: “In other countries, students from the second year are sent for an internship. We are only sent to practice in the fourth year because it is necessary. In America, universities accept those who have 2 years of work experience for a master’s degree” (Male, 27). Overall, young people claim that practice is more important than acquiring theoretical information, which is currently the case in Azerbaijan.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Half of the young people in Azerbaijan report being employed. This figure includes those with salaried full-time jobs (27%), part-time jobs (4%), occasional jobs (5%) and self-employment (14%). Almost the same share (49%) of respondents is unemployed, including 7% who are actively looking for work, 26% who are not looking for work and 15% who picked another option.

FIGURE 9: PROPORTION OF EMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP (% , full sample)



Which groups of young Azerbaijanis are more or less likely to be in jobs? Youth from Baku (59%), young men (62%), as well as those aged 25 to 29 (71%), are more likely to be employed (Figure 9) compared to youth from outside the capital, young women (36%) and younger age cohorts. Additionally, more young people with higher education (76%) are employed compared to those with completed secondary education (61%) or primary or incomplete secondary schooling (4%). Single respondents (44%) were also less likely to be in jobs than married (60%) respondents.

The majority of employed respondents believe that the requirements of their current job are in line with their achieved formal education status (71%). Fewer (10%) respondents consider that their employment requires a lower level of training or skills when compared to the degree of formal education. Thirteen percent believe

that their jobs require a higher level of skills compared to the degree of formal education.

Youth who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) account for one-quarter of young Azerbaijanis (Figure 10). Regrettably, there is a substantial gender gap between young women and men who are NEETs. Three times more young women (39%) are NEETs compared to only 12% of young men.

Youth outside Baku are also more likely to be NEETs than those residing in the capital. More young adults older than 17 are NEETs than those 17 or younger, probably due to the latter group’s enrolment in secondary schools. Additionally, married respondents are more likely to be NEETs than those who are single. Here too, age is the most plausible explanation for the discrepancy between the two groups (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: PROPORTION OF NEETs (NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING) BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUP (%)

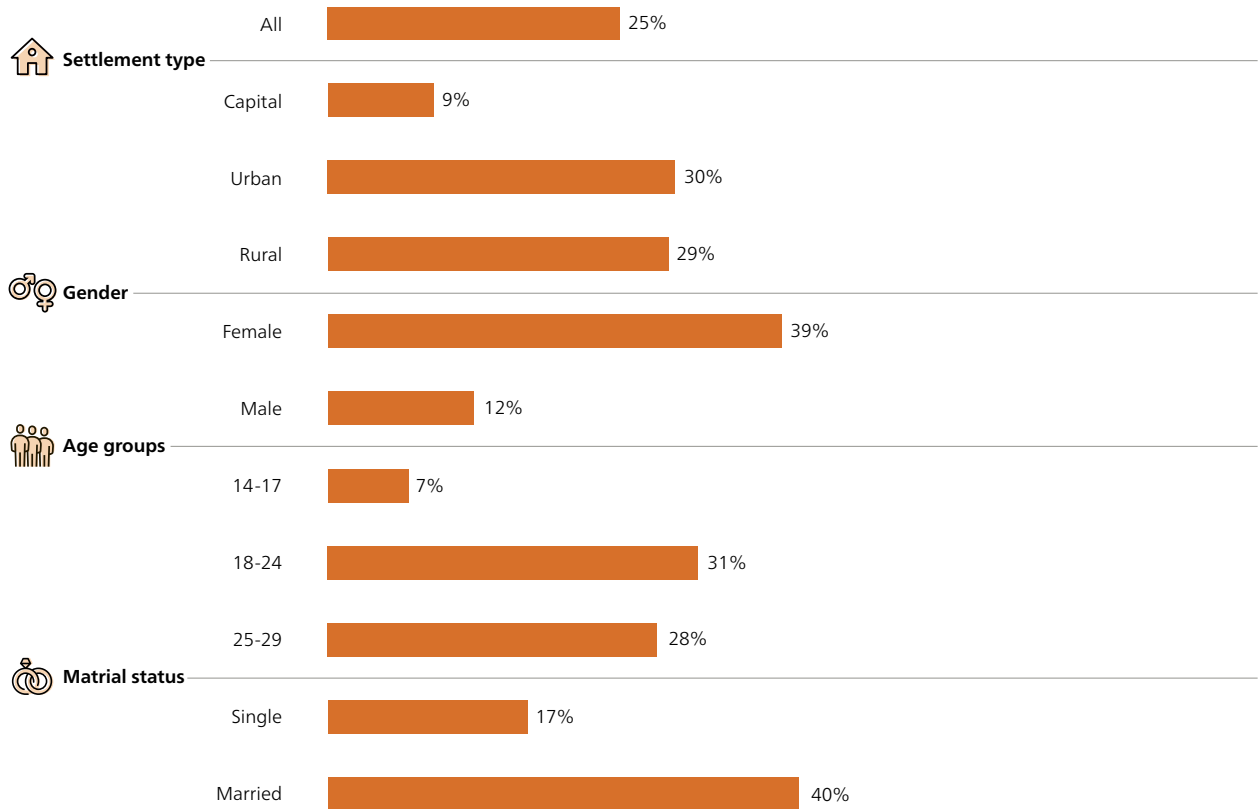
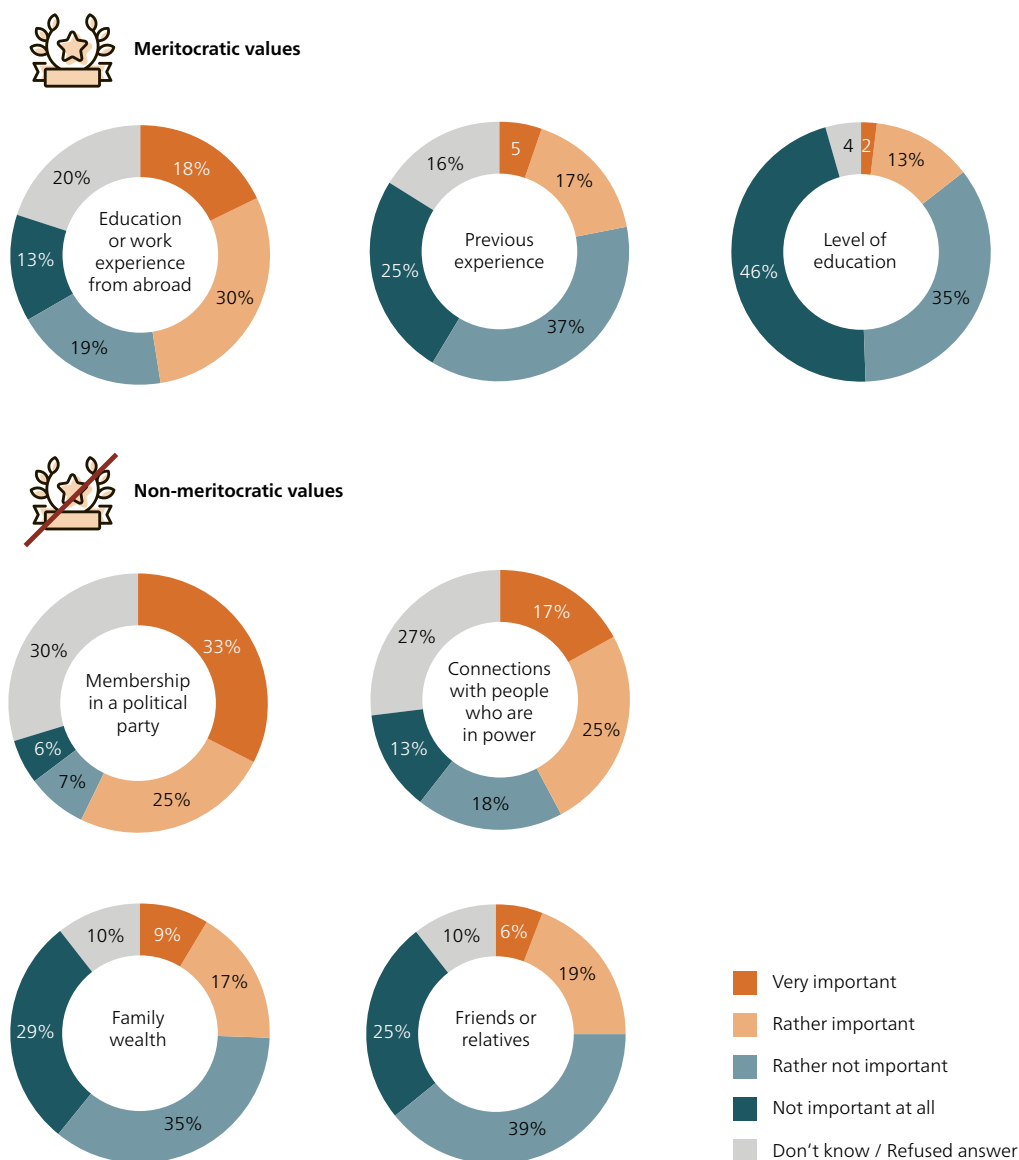


FIGURE 11: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TO GET A JOB YOU REALLY WANT? (% , FULL SAMPLE)



Next, we examined the factors young Azerbaijanis believe help a person land a job they really want. Respondents were presented with a set of statements that described both meritocratic values, such as education, previous work experience, employment experience or a degree from abroad, as well as non-meritocratic characteristics such as family wealth, connections, political party membership and personal connections.

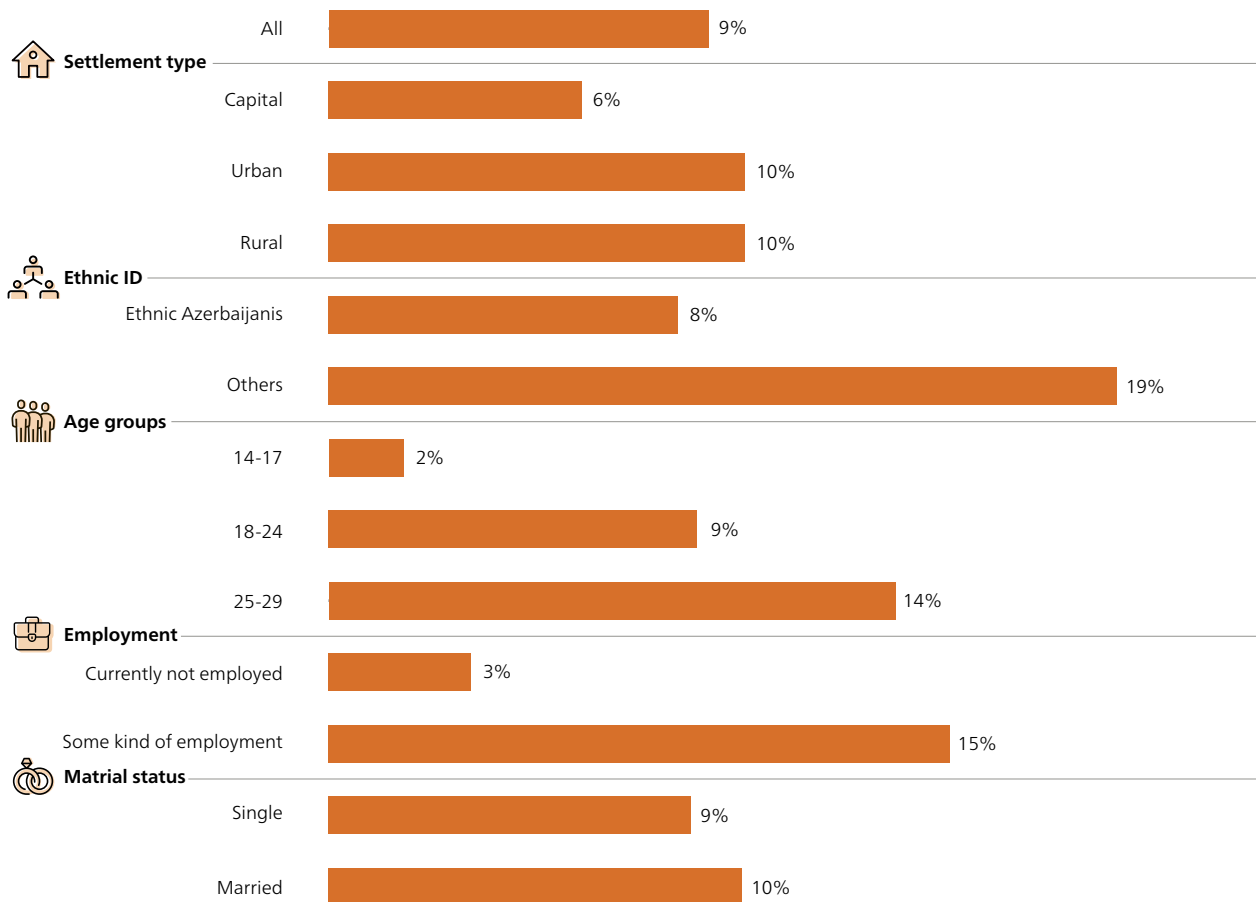
Overall, young Azerbaijanis think that level of education (81%), family and relatives (65%), family wealth (64%) and previous experience (62%) are the most important factors for getting a job they want. When it comes to non-meritocratic values, 31% of respondents believe that connections with people who are in power are important, while 42% disagree. Furthermore, 13% believe that membership in a political party is very important or rather important and 57% believe this factor is unimportant. Notably, about 30% of respondents are ambivalent.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Only about one in ten Azerbaijani youth (9%) has volunteered in the last twelve months, that is, has done unpaid work voluntarily. Among those who have volunteered, half did so in a citizens' initiative (50%), while others volunteered with a youth organisation (26%), school or university (21%) and so forth.

While few young Azerbaijanis have done volunteer work, certain groups such as youth residing outside the capital, ethnic minorities, employed respondents and those older than 24 were more likely to have volunteered in the last year (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12: HAVE YOU DONE ANY UNPAID WORK VOLUNTARILY IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS? (% , by major demographic group)



DISCUSSION

Enrolment in higher educational institutions remains lower, despite the growth in the number of students in recent years.³⁹ About one-quarter of young people in Azerbaijan (26%) are at an educational institution, including secondary and tertiary educational establishments. More youth residing in Baku are in education (32%) compared to 25% of those in other urban areas and 24% of rural youth.

The education system in Azerbaijan has faced multiple hurdles in the last three decades. Its drawbacks, especially the disconnect between the knowledge that schools give to students and the demands of the labour market, have been widely acknowledged both by the government⁴⁰ as well as international developmental organisations.⁴¹ Both quantitative and qualitative components of this study attest that dissatisfaction with the educational system is rather widespread.

More than half of Azerbaijani youth are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving or that they have received in school. Respondents in or with higher education were most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of education that their institutions are giving or that they have received so far.

Just as most young Azerbaijanis are dissatisfied with the quality of education, many do not feel that schools prepare them for the labour market. When those who are still in educational institutions were asked how confident they feel in terms of how well education prepares them for the labour market, 72% said that they were either not confident at all (27%) or mostly not confident (45%) and only 10% are mostly or fully confident in this regard. Notably, these findings further attest to the existing discrepancy in skills that students attain at schools and those required by the labour market.⁴²

In a similar vein, young people in focus group discussions were critical of the country's education system. Respondents noted that schools offer outdated curricula, instructors are not on top of the modern approaches to education and the quality of education itself fails to respond to the demands of the labour market. Respondents noted that higher education should be

supplemented with practice, thus indicating the importance of apprenticeships following undergraduate education.

Unlike its neighbours, Azerbaijan has a relatively low level of official unemployment.⁴³ Notably, survey results conform to this observation. Half of the young people in Azerbaijan report being employed, including those with salaried full-time jobs (27%), part-time jobs (4%), occasional jobs (5%) and self-employment (14%). That said, economic inactivity rather than unemployment levels are more accurate measures in this context.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, there is a significant disparity across gender, geography and attained level of education. Youth from Baku (59%), young men (62%), those between the ages of 25 and 29 (71%) and those with higher education (76%) are more likely to have a job than youth from outside the capital, young women (36%) and younger age cohorts.

A high share of NEETs has been outlined as a challenge for Azerbaijan,⁴⁵ with the government aiming to reduce their share from 23% in 2017 to 15% by 2030.⁴⁶ Regretfully, this study shows that the proportion of NEETs among Azerbaijan's 14- to 29-year age range remained largely stagnant, at about 25%. Importantly, there is a substantial gender gap between young women and men who are NEETs, with three times more young women (39%) being NEETs compared to only 12% of young men. Similarly, youth outside Baku are more likely to be NEETs than those residing in the capital.

With informality playing an important role in Azerbaijan, including in education and the employment sector,⁴⁷ a large part of young Azerbaijanis believe that non-meritocratic factors such as friends and relatives, as well as family wealth, are important factors for obtaining a job.

Only about one in ten Azerbaijani youth (9%) has volunteered in the last twelve months, that is, has done unpaid work voluntarily. While few young Azerbaijanis have done volunteer work, certain groups such as youth outside the capital, ethnic minorities, employed respondents and those older than 24 were more likely to have volunteered in the last year.

6

PART THREE: DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

The following section tackles the challenging task of characterising young Azerbaijanis' views on politics, democracy and participation. Notwithstanding the challenging context of the country, the survey still paints a rather complex picture of how young people in Azerbaijan feel about politics. That said, a due level of care needs to be discerned when characterising the nature of public opinion in the country.

MAIN FINDINGS

- More than half (54%) of young Azerbaijanis support the idea that democracy is the best way to govern Azerbaijan, with 28% being against this idea. Youth in Baku are least enthusiastic about democracy, with a plurality being either totally or somewhat against it (42%).
- Ethnic minorities overwhelmingly support democracy, with 77% being either fully (20%) or partially (58%) supportive of this form of governance.
- The practice of democracy in Azerbaijan is seen either positively or fully positively (53%). Negative views on the practice of democracy in Azerbaijan prevail among a plurality (42%) of young people living in the capital. Additionally, one in five respondents is ambivalent.
- Few young Azerbaijanis say that they are interested in politics. A plurality (43%) is not interested in politics at all, with about one-quarter (26%) of respondents saying they are not very interested in politics and one in five (20%) being somewhat or very interested in politics.
- Young men as well as those aged 25 to 29 are more likely to have at least some level of interest in politics. Additionally, one in five respondents in the capital finds it hard to answer this question.
- Only 23% of those who had at least some degree of interest in politics discuss the topic with their peers frequently. A majority (64%) discuss this topic rarely and 6% never talk about politics with friends. Even fewer talk about politics with their parents, with only 18% doing so frequently, 59% discussing politics rarely and 11% never talking about politics with their parents.
- Few young Azerbaijanis engage with political news, with only one-quarter accessing political information at least once a week. Close to one-third of the youth are ambivalent, claiming that they don't know or refuse to answer. Over one-third (35%) report hardly ever consuming political news, while 7% do so infrequently just once a month.
- A plurality of young Azerbaijanis (40%) believe that their interests are well-represented in national politics, while many are unsure or believe that their interests are poorly or not at all represented (30% each).
- Few young Azerbaijanis would take on a political function. Only about 18% of respondents said that they either gladly or may take on a political function. Young men and respondents with higher education are slightly more likely to be willing to take on a political function.
- Overall, close to three-quarters of young Azerbaijanis (74%) have not participated in any social or political activities. Those outside of Baku, younger respondents and those with lower educational attainment are less likely to be politically engaged.
- Rising prices (58%) are the most important grievance for young Azerbaijanis. Importantly, the issue of territorial integrity is considered as a major problem by 11% of Azerbaijani youth and was named most frequently the second most important problem (45%).
- Few young Azerbaijanis claim association with left-leaning or right-leaning political ideologies. A plurality (36%) of respondents place themselves in the centre, with 32% unsure about ideological self-placement. Most respondents are unable to clearly identify left-wing or right-wing policies, highlighting that the results above on ideological self-placement should be taken with a grain of salt.

PERCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY

What do young Azerbaijanis think about democracy being the best system of governance for Azerbaijan? Overall, the majority (54%) of respondents support this idea, with 28% being against it (Figure 13). Notably, almost one in five is ambivalent, that is, neither supports nor is against democracy (5%), while the number of those who said “don’t know” or refused to answer is 13%.

Youth in Baku are the least enthusiastic about democracy, with a plurality being either totally or somewhat against it (42%) and just 29% supporting the idea that democracy is the best system of governance for Azerbaijan. An equal percentage is ambivalent (being neither for nor against democracy, claiming “don’t know” or “refuse to answer”). Conversely, a majority of youth outside the capital supports democracy, with 62% in urban areas and 61% in villages being in favour of democracy as the best system of governance for Azerbaijan.

Ethnic minorities overwhelmingly support democracy, with 77% being either fully (20%) or partially (58%) supportive of this system of government. Notably, unemployed respondents are more likely to support democracy than employed respondents (Figure 13).

When it comes to evaluating the actual practice of democracy in the country, most young Azerbaijanis evaluate it either positively or fully positively (53%, Figure 14). Importantly, a plurality of Bakuvis see Azerbaijan’s practice of democracy in negative terms (42% net negative evaluation), with 29% viewing it positively and one in five being ambivalent.

Ethnic minorities are most likely to evaluate the practice of democracy in Azerbaijan positively, with close to three-quarters (73%) seeing it either positively or very positively. In a similar vein, unemployed respondents view Azerbaijan’s practice of democracy positively (59%), while fewer young employed Azerbaijanis think the same (48%).

When it comes to the qualitative evidence of how young people interpret what democracy means, the notion is primarily associated with the freedom of speech, protection of human rights, ensuring human freedom and (social) equality between people. Furthermore, for young people, democracy also means equal rights between men and women, an independent lifestyle and freedom of religion. According to part of the focus group participants, Azerbaijan lacks these concepts, as there is no freedom of speech, no social equality and no protection of human rights or individual freedoms. In addition, participants also mentioned that elections are not transparent in Azerbaijan and there is corruption and inequality.

Young people named Germany, Norway, Switzerland, France and other European countries as democratic. A few also mentioned the United States, Canada and Russia. However, Germany was most frequently mentioned: “...human rights are adequately protected in Germany. This means that such transparency is observed in court proceedings. At the same time, as we have said, medicine is developing, that is, the health of people and citizens is important” (Female, 17). According to another respondent, there is equality and freedom in Germany, in contrast to Azerbaijan: “[When] going out, we can’t say yes, I’m free, because we face people’s eyes, but there is no such situation in Germany. If you follow the laws set there, you are already free, they do not take away your freedom, they do not steal it” (Male, 16). In addition, when comparing Germany to Azerbaijan, focus group participants mentioned that in Germany, transparency is observed in court proceedings and the media is also free. People’s way of life is different and while in Azerbaijan peoples’ mentality says that man is superior to woman, in Germany everyone is equal. Moreover, “It is different, it is comfortable, there are no difficulties [in Germany]. Unemployment is low. Cultural, beautiful, simple... Once the country is like that, people will be like that” (Male, 24).

FIGURE 13: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE IDEA THAT DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE FOR AZERBAIJAN? (% , full sample)

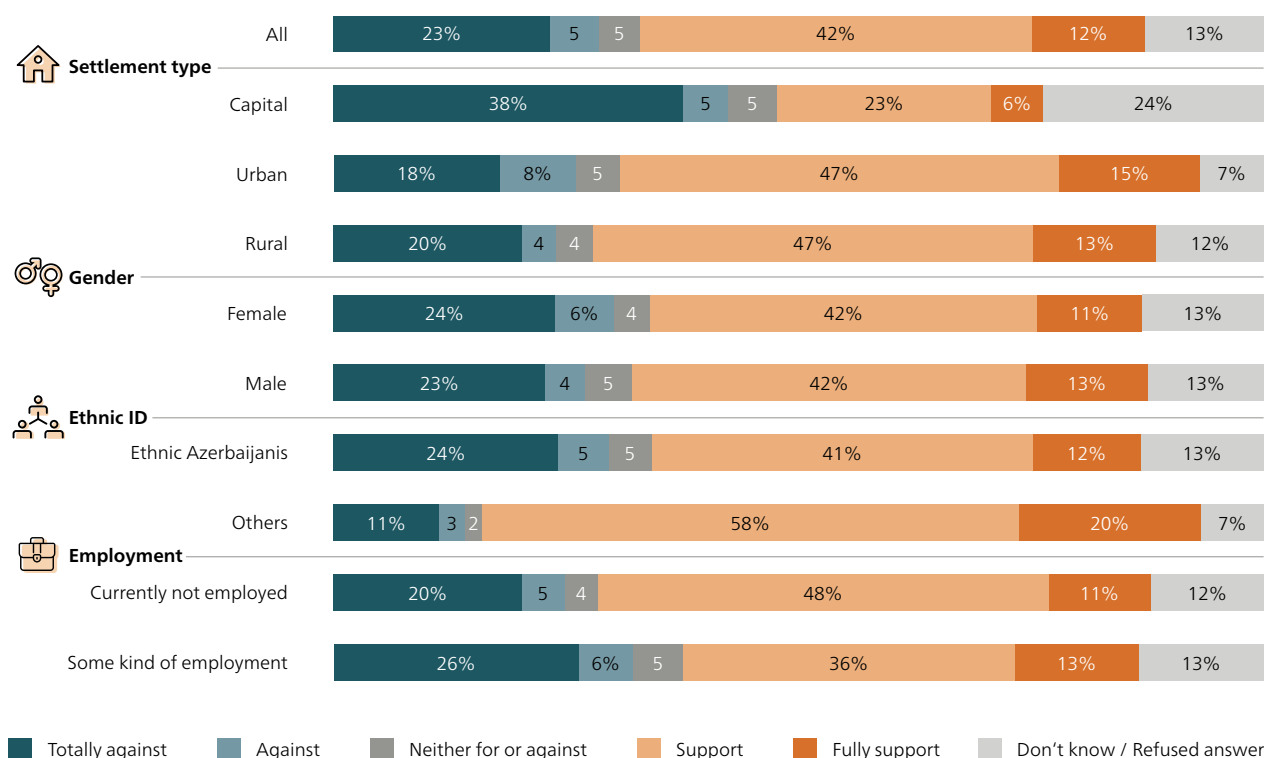
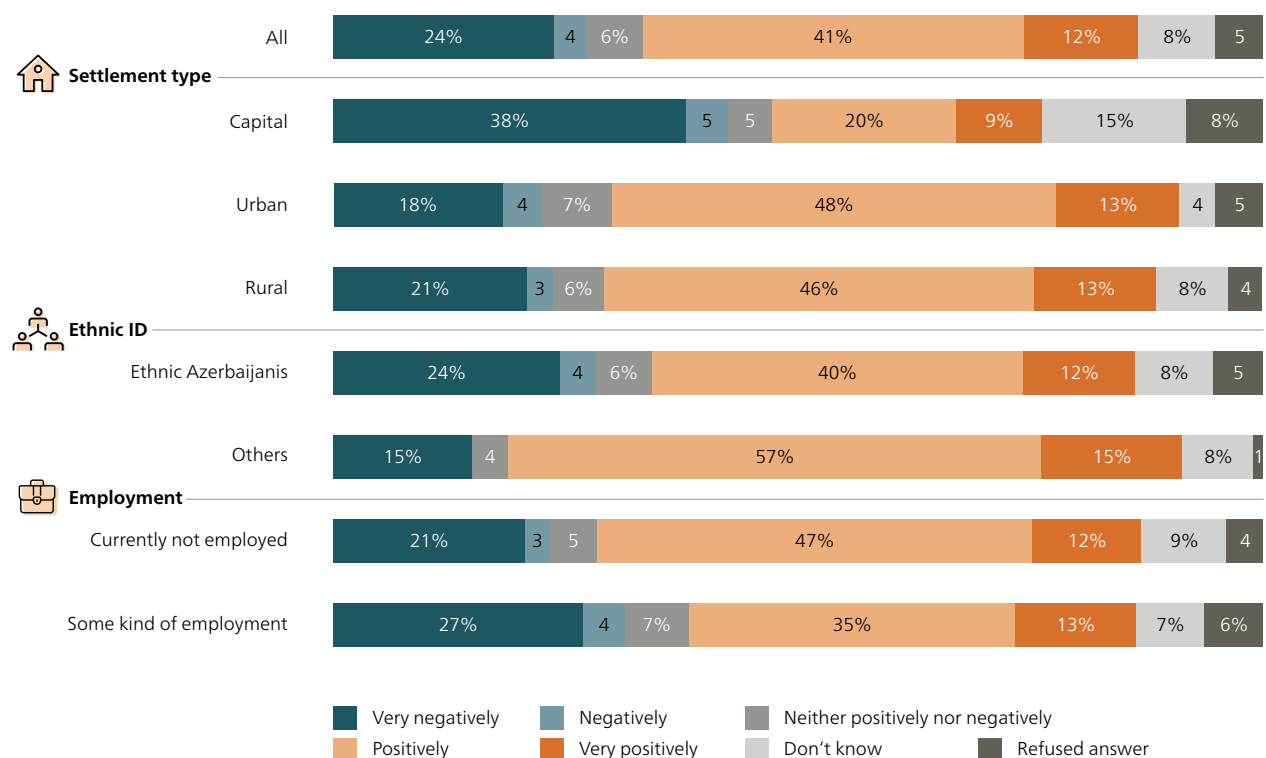


FIGURE 14: HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE THE ACTUAL PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY IN AZERBAIJAN TODAY? (% , full sample)



INTEREST IN POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

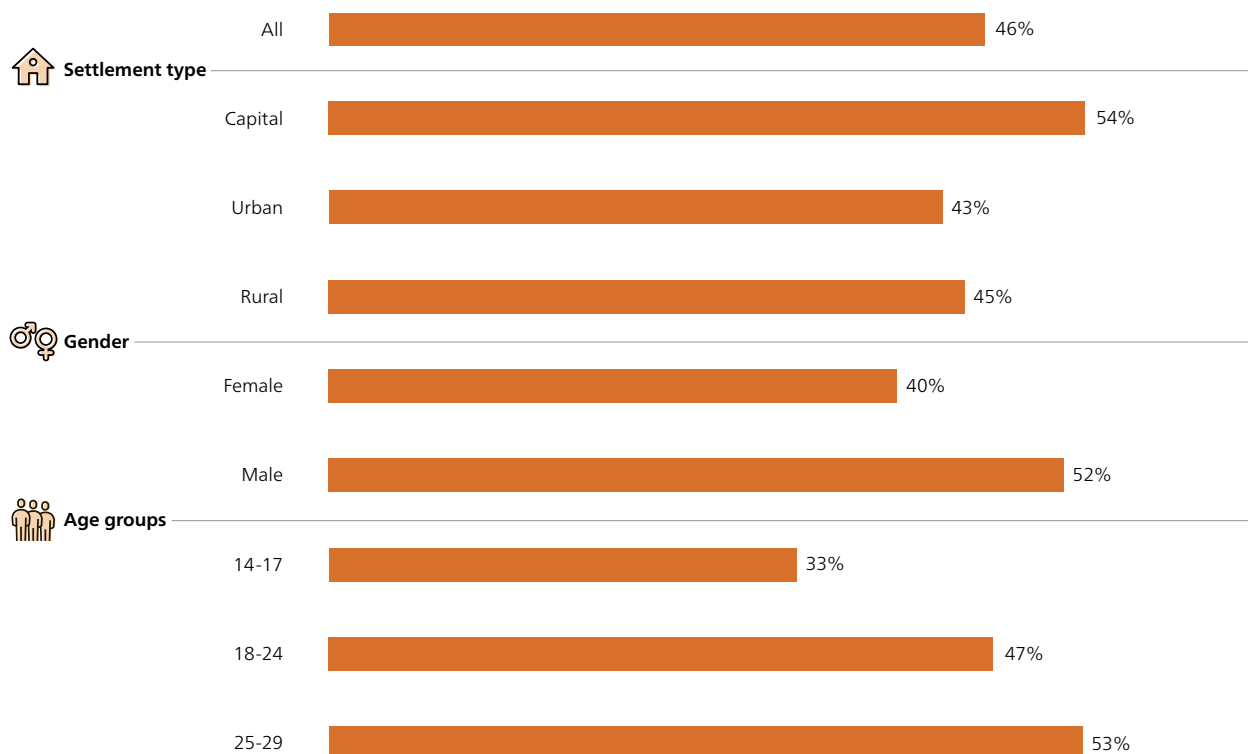
Young Azerbaijanis are almost equally split between those who are not at all interested in politics and those who report at least some interest in politics. Overall, 43% of Azerbaijani youth said that they are not at all interested in politics. Forty-six percent had slightly more interest in politics, including 26% who said they are not very interested in politics, 16% who said they were somewhat interested and 5% who said they were very interested in politics. About 11% were unsure or refused to answer the question.

While there are no striking differences across major demographic groups, Baku residents, young men and those aged between 25 and 29 are more likely to report at least some degree of interest in politics (Figure 15). Young women, those between the ages of 14 and 17 and those residing outside the capital are less likely to say they are interested in politics.

Those who report at least some interest in politics (46%) were asked follow-up questions on how often they discuss politics with friends and parents. Overall, only close to one in four such respondents (23% of those interested in politics) discuss politics with friends, 64% discuss politics rarely and 6% never talk about politics with friends. Even fewer, less than one-fifth (18%) of those youth who are at least somewhat interested in politics discusses this topic with their parents. Fifty-nine percent of respondents rarely talk about politics with their parents, while 11% never discuss this subject.

When it comes to access to political information, more than one-third (35%) of youth report hardly ever consuming political news. Seven percent do so at least monthly, one-fifth access political information at least once a week, while only five percent report being frequent consumers of political news and accessing this type of information daily. Notably, about one-third (32%) of respondents were ambivalent, that is, they either could not or refrained from providing a definite answer (Figure 16).

FIGURE 15: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORT AT LEAST SOME DEGREE OF INTEREST IN POLITICS (“not very interested”, “somewhat interested” or “very interested” in politics, %, by major population group)



Which groups are more or less likely to access information on political events (Figure 16)? Young residents of Azerbaijan's capital city seem to be least keen on getting political news (only 22% access political news at least once a week) than their peers from other urban areas (25%) or rural settlements (28%). Still, half of the respondents from the former group don't know or refuse to answer the question. Young men are more likely to read political news, compared to young women, as are the representatives of the oldest age cohort. Almost half of those with higher education (45%) receive political news at least once a week, while one-third of those who are employed receive political news compared to those who currently are not in jobs (18%).

While a plurality of young Azerbaijanis (40%) believe that their interests are well-represented in national politics, many are either unsure or believe that their

interests are poorly represented (30% each). Across the socio-demographic spectrum, urban youth outside Baku, 18- to 24-year-olds and those with completed secondary education are more likely to say that their interests are poorly represented or not represented at all in the national government. Conversely, those with higher education emerge as the most likely to say that their interests are quite well or very well represented, with 65% saying so.

While many young people in Azerbaijan seem to a certain extent interested in politics, few would take on a political function. Only about 18% of respondents said that they either gladly or may take on a political function. Two-thirds of young Azerbaijanis definitely would not (42%) or probably would not (26%) take on a political function (Figure 17). Notably, young men and respondents with higher education are slightly more likely to be willing to take on a political function.

FIGURE 16: HOW OFTEN DO YOU ACCESS INFORMATION ON POLITICAL EVENTS? (% , full sample)

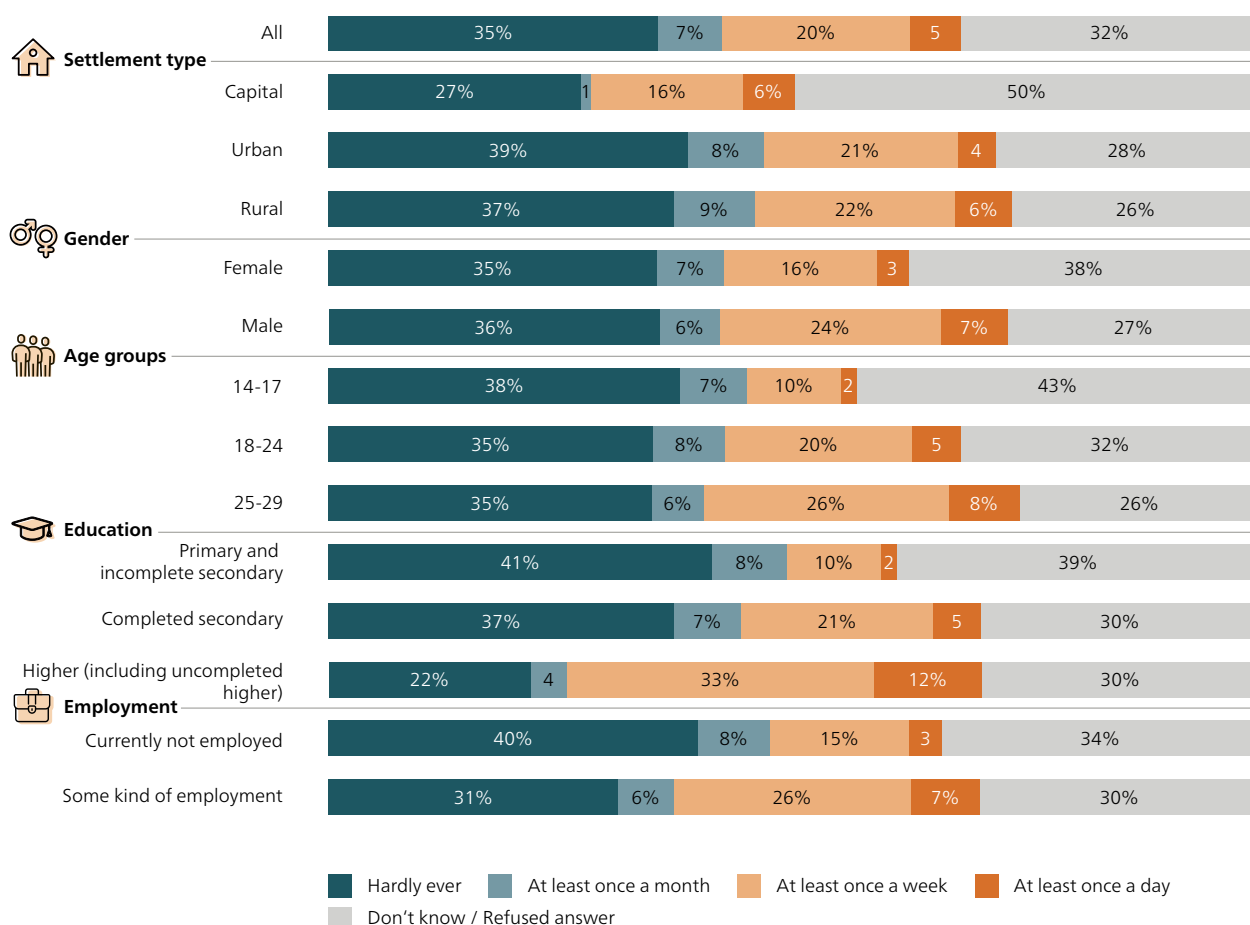
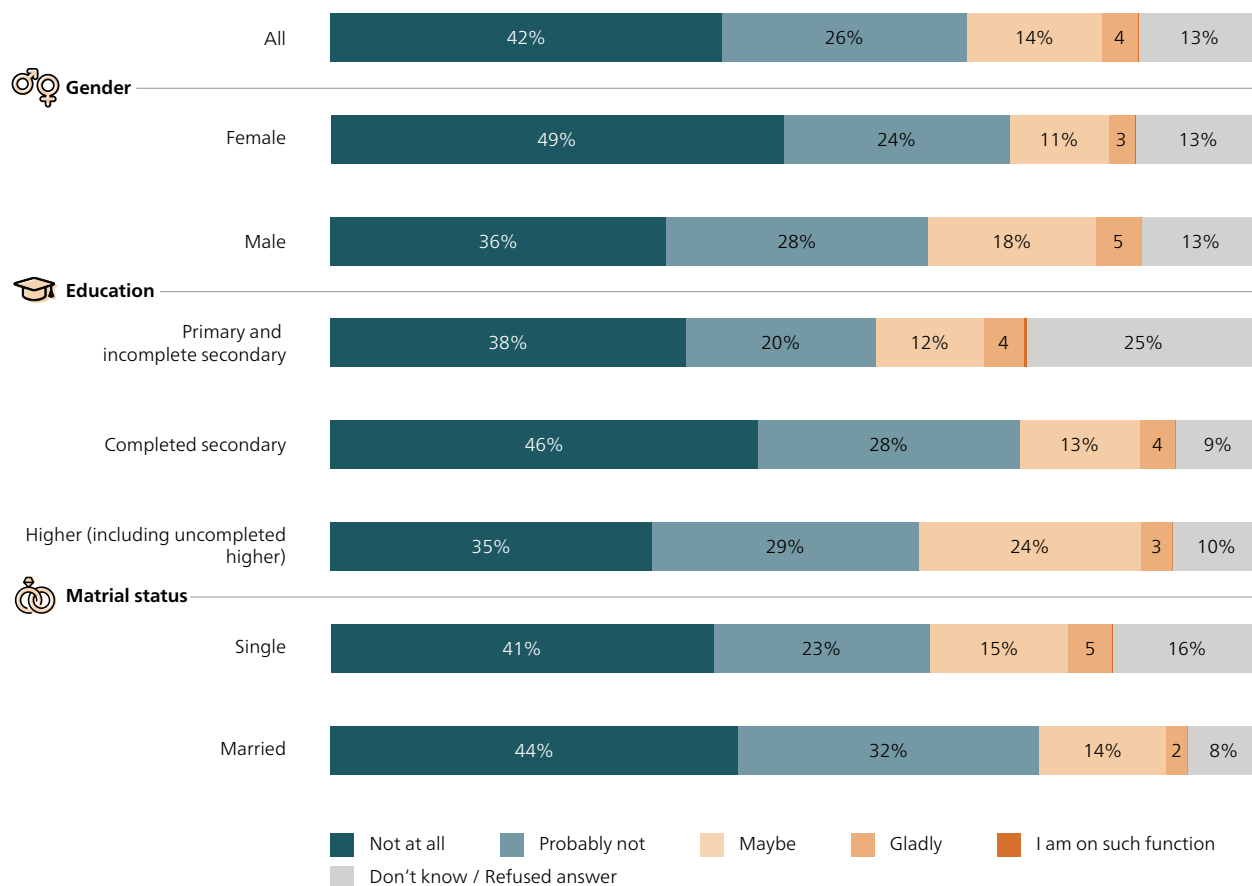


FIGURE 17: **WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TAKE ON A POLITICAL FUNCTION? (% by major population group, full sample)**



When it comes to young people's political engagement, few young people participate in such activities. Overall, 14% of respondents have taken part in resolving problems in their neighbourhood or settlement (Figure 18). About 9% reported volunteering, taking part in civil society activities or donating to a social or political organisation. Seven percent have signed a petition or a political request, while six percent or less have done other activities such as stopped buying products due to political or environmental considerations, expressed opinions online, worked for a political party or a group or participated in a demonstration.

Which groups are more or less likely to report participating in political activism? For this, a summary index was created that counts the number of political activities a respondent participated in. If a respondent answered "No", "Have not, but would consider", "do not know" or "refuse to answer" to all questions listed in Figure 18,

such cases were assigned the value "0", meaning no participation in political activism. Similarly, if someone answered "yes" to only one item, they would get a score of one and so forth (Figure 19).

Overall, close to three-quarters of young Azerbaijanis (74%) have not participated in any political activities, nine percent scored one, while seven percent scored two points on the index. On average, Azerbaijani youth participated in 0.59 activities with a median score of 0.

When it comes to specific groups, youth in the capital, those between the ages of 25 and 29, as well as respondents with higher education score comparably higher on the political participation index, as do those who are employed and those who are married. When it comes to those outside Baku, younger respondents and with lower educational attainment, such respondents are less likely to be politically engaged.

FIGURE 18: THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHOW POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT. HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS OR WOULD YOU SERIOUSLY CONSIDER DOING IT? (%)

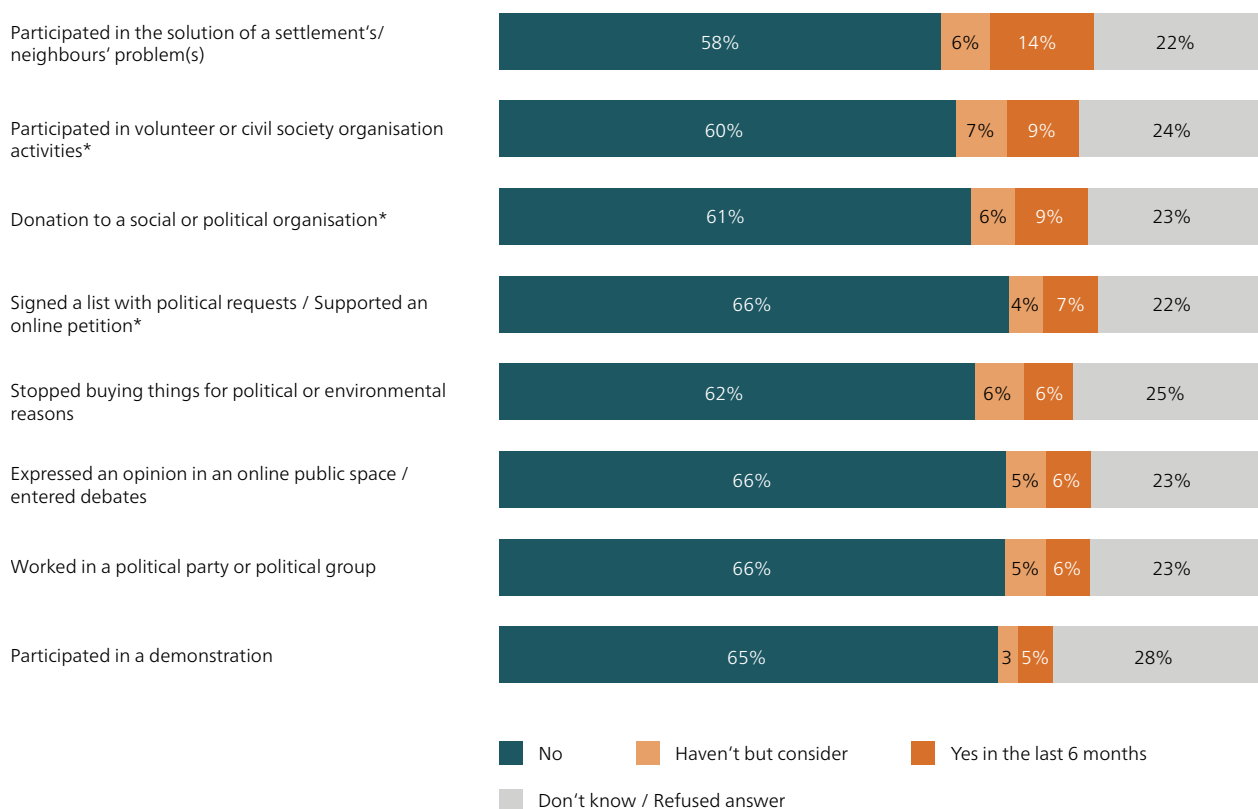


FIGURE 19: AVERAGE VALUES OF THE PARTICIPATION INDEX BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP



AZERBAIJAN'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES

The economy is the most important grievance for young Azerbaijanis. A majority (58%) picked rising prices as the most important, followed by unemployment (11%). The issue of territorial integrity is considered a major problem by 11% of Azerbaijani youth. Notably, territorial integrity was the most selected item when respondents were asked to pick the second most important problem. Few respondents named issues such as education, conflicts with neighbours, environment and domestic political strife among the major problems facing Azerbaijan. One in ten Azerbaijani youth believes that the country has no problems (Figure 20).

While across major population groups, young Azerbaijanis agree on the most salient issues for the country, ethnic minorities are more likely to say that the most important issue facing Azerbaijan deals with rising prices (Figure 21). Notably, young people with higher than primary education are less likely to name rising prices as a problem.

When focus group discussion participants were asked about Azerbaijan's biggest challenges, participants in Baku primarily mentioned the coronavirus and the Karabakh war. While the coronavirus is perceived more as a global issue, the Karabakh war and its consequences are one of the most important challenges facing the country. Young people also named social inequality and stratification, as well as nepotism as common challenges facing Azerbaijan. In the context of inequality, participants mentioned that rich people have privileges, while the poor are oppressed. One respondent named the inheritance of power among the problems facing the country, while problems with how the country is governed were also named by focus group participants.

Further challenges that the country faces relate to the economy and unemployment: "I see economic problems in the fact that elderly people receive a very small pension and are forced to work because of this" (Male, 26). Respondents also mentioned issues such as education, healthcare, environmental pollution and infrastructure.

FIGURE 20: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM? (% , full sample)

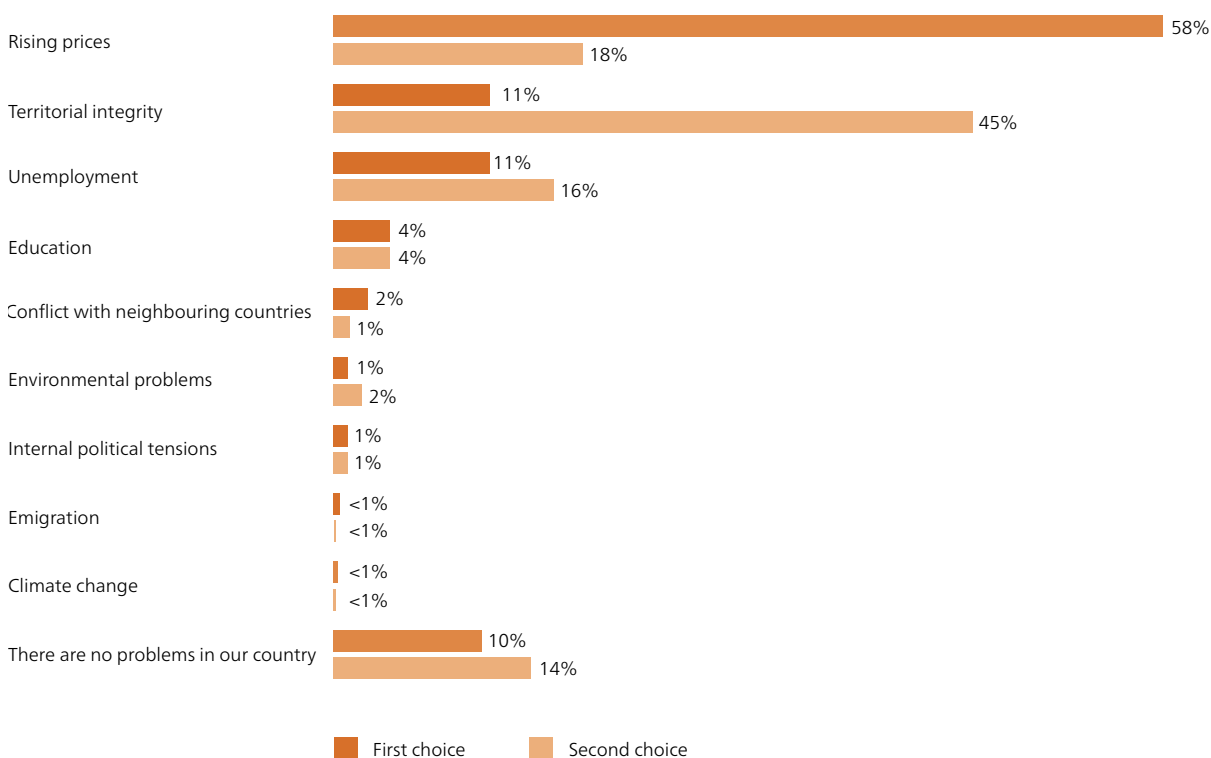
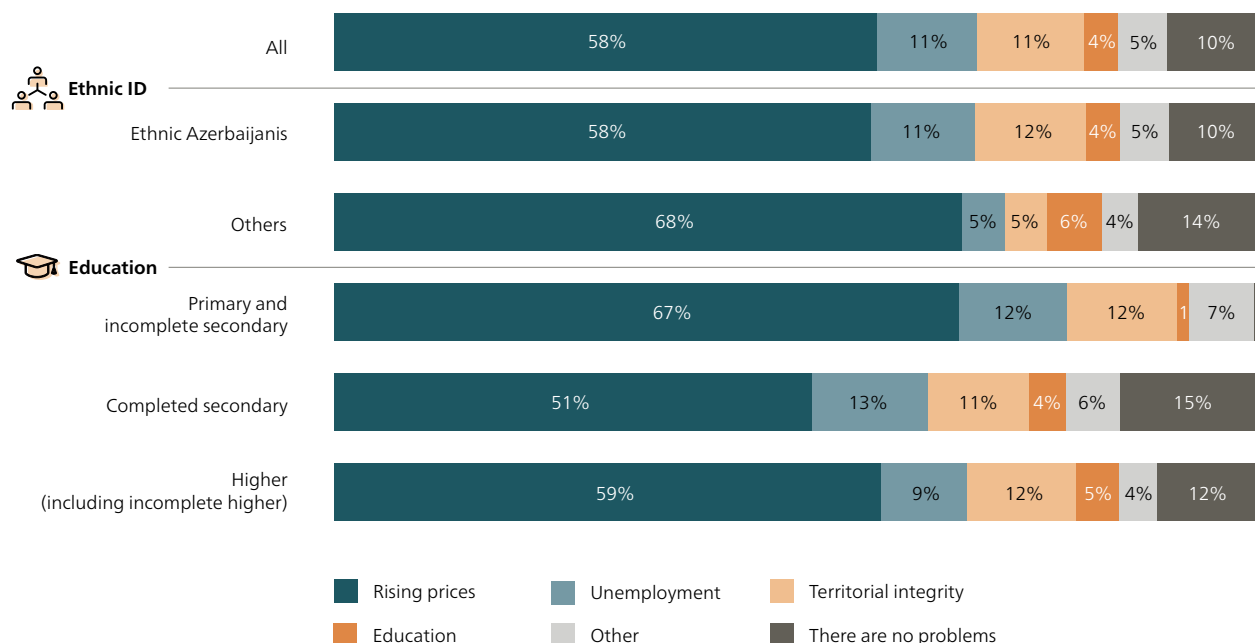


FIGURE 21: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? (% , full sample by major population group)



YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

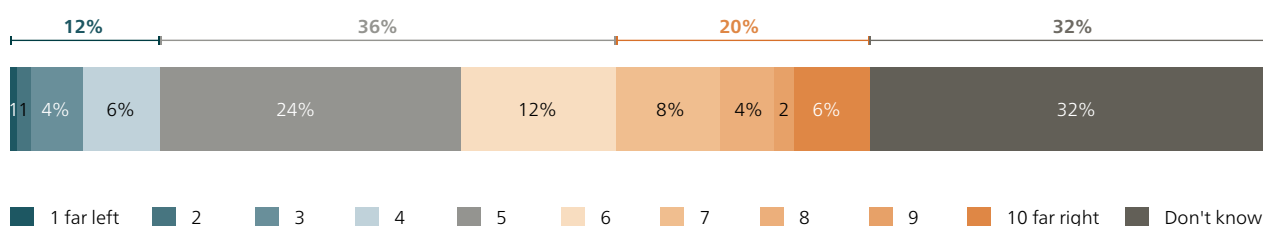
Where do young Azerbaijanis place themselves in terms of political ideology? Notably, similar to other contexts in the region and the greater post-Soviet space, the left-right ideological division does not clearly reflect the population's political leanings. This applies to Azerbaijan and it will be shown below that many young people do not differentiate between left-leaning and right-leaning policies.

Overall, few respondents claim that they associate themselves with a left-leaning or right-leaning

political ideology. A plurality (36%) placed themselves in the middle of a 10-point scale and 32% were unsure about ideological self-placement. One in five leans to the right, while 12% lean to the left.⁴⁸

While there are few if any major differences across population groups, more youth in Baku (46%), the youngest respondents (47%) and those with primary or lower education (45%) are more likely to say that they cannot place themselves on the left-right ideological spectrum. Respondents who have obtained higher education and 25- to 29-year-olds are slightly more likely to consider themselves as right-leaning, while there is no considerable variation among those who consider themselves leftists.

FIGURE 22: WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR OWN POLITICAL VIEWS ON THIS SCALE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, GENERALLY SPEAKING? (% , full sample)



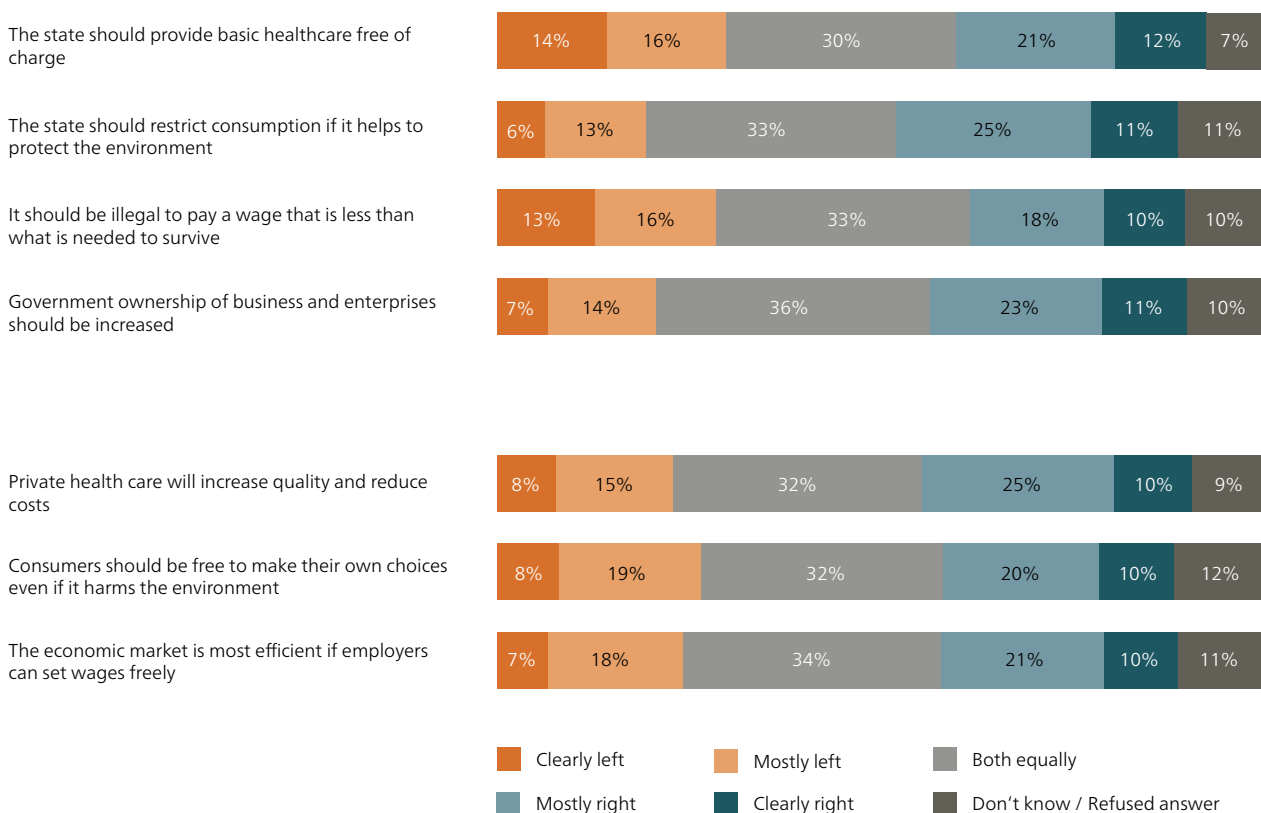
To understand how correctly Azerbaijani youth understand ideological positions, respondents were read a set of statements and were asked to evaluate whether they would consider these statements as left-leaning or right-leaning. Overall, the data hints that most respondents are unable to clearly identify between left-wing or right-wing policies (Figure 23). For instance, a plurality of respondents (36%) identified clearly left-leaning ideas such as restrictions on consumption as right-wing.

Which specific groups are more or less likely to place ideological positions as left-leaning or right-leaning? To understand this, a compound index was created that counts the number of times a respondent correctly answered the statements given in Figure 23. Overall, 17% of the Azerbaijani youth were not able to correctly place any of the statements on this index, while about 0.5% correctly identified all positions. On average, respondents correctly identified two out of seven statements.

Notably, socio-demographic characteristics as well as respondents' interest in politics predict how well they fare in terms of identifying left- or right-wing policies. Respondents with higher education, from urban areas and with an interest in politics identified an average of two statements correctly, while those with secondary or lower education, from rural settlements and with no reported interest in politics correctly identified an average of 1.8 statements.

Opinions of focus group participants diverged regarding the left-right division in political ideologies. Many stated that the right-leaning ideology is close to their views, as they are against the government interfering in the economic sphere and letting people pay high taxes: *"I am for the right in terms of taxes. I think that if taxes were lower, people would be more inclined to develop and build their own business"* (Female, 27).

FIGURE 23: WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL BELIEFS, THEY OFTEN SPEAK ABOUT LEFT-WING AND RIGHT-WING. IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WHICH POSITION IS CLOSEST TO THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT? (% , full sample)



Respondents expressed support for self-regulation of the economy and less state intervention. For some young people, right-leaning ideas are associated with liberalism, which is acceptable for them, while the left wing is aligned more with conservatism, dictatorship and socialism – ideas that the country has left in the past: “When I say left, it reminds me of conservatives and when I say right, it reminds me of liberals. I am a supporter of liberalism because the Conservatives are more in favour of the past” (Female, 17).

Those who claim to support left-wing ideas claim that high taxes are collected to be used for the development of the country and “are directed to scholarships and pensions” (Male, 25). Some also say that neither left-nor right-wing ideologies are good and that “it would be better if it was a mixture of both” (Male, 27). This way, according to some participants, the best aspects of both regimes could be combined. Others stated that they have no idea about these ideologies and refrained from stating their opinions.

Young people also had diverse opinions regarding individualism and collectivism. Those in favour of individualism state that individualism means freedom and respecting everyone’s individual choice: “I am also a proponent of individualism, because each individual has his own interests, his own way of looking and everyone should respect this idea, whether it is a difference of religion or race, I think it should not be restricted and therefore someone should not be condemned” (Female, 17).

In contrast, supporters of collectivism emphasize the idea of supporting common values (e.g. religion): “Individualism can lead to a violation of our religion. If we are a group, if we are strong and if we are united, our religion becomes beautiful and our country becomes beautiful. We can be a developed country both culturally and morally” (Female, 27).

Supporters of right-leaning individualism claim that they are for individual freedom, as well as for low military spending and low taxes: “There should be no high taxes, because if you keep the individual freedom of the population, you should think not only about the place where they live, the way of life, but also about the expenses that come out of their pockets. It is difficult to

protect individual freedom with high taxes” (Male, 16). On the other hand, supporters of right-leaning collectivism are for greater expenses in the army, patriotism and the protection of culture, while still believing that the economy should be self-regulated. Finally, only a few supported higher spending, although those who did also substantiated this position with existential threats: “We have to preserve our culture. It is necessary to allocate expenses for the army. Everyone should pay taxes, no matter how much they ask for” (Female, 29).

DISCUSSION

While earlier surveys showed that the Azerbaijani public has become largely ambivalent towards democracy, young people seem to be more enthusiastic. More than half (54%) of young Azerbaijanis agree that democracy is the best way to govern Azerbaijan, with just 28% disagreeing. Youth in Baku are least enthusiastic about democracy, with a plurality being either totally or somewhat against it (42%). Ethnic minorities overwhelmingly support democracy, with 77% being either fully (20%) or partially (58%) supportive of this form of government.

The actual practice of democracy in the country is seen either positively or fully positively (53%). Negative views on the practice of democracy in Azerbaijan prevail among Baku residents, with a plurality (42%) thinking so. Additionally, one in five respondents is ambivalent.

Notably, focus group discussions further corroborate these findings. As discussions were primarily held with the residents of Azerbaijan’s capital, many participants also believed that Azerbaijan lacks democracy, arguing that there is no freedom of speech, no social equality and no protection of human rights or individual freedoms.

With limited opportunities for political participation, few young Azerbaijanis say that they are interested in politics. A plurality (43%) of respondents is not interested in politics at all, with about one-quarter (26%) saying they are not very interested in politics and one in five (20%) being somewhat or very interested in politics. Young men and 25- to 29-year-olds are more likely to have at least some level of interest in politics.

Politics is not a widely discussed topic among Azerbaijani youth. Only 23% of those with at least some degree of interest in politics discuss issues with their peers frequently, with 64% doing it rarely and 6% never talking about politics with friends. Even fewer talk about politics with parents, with only 18% doing it frequently, 59% discussing politics rarely and 11% never talking about politics with their parents.

In a similar vein, few young Azerbaijanis engage with political news, with only one-quarter of respondents accessing political information at least once a week or more frequently. Close to half of the youth are ambivalent. One-third report hardly ever consuming political news, while 7% do so infrequently, just once a month. While Baku residents are least likely to report accessing political news, young men, those with higher education, employed persons and respondents in the oldest age groups are most likely to engage with political news.

While a plurality of young Azerbaijanis (40%) believe that their interests are well-represented in national politics, many are still unsure or believe that their interests are poorly represented (30% each). Urban youth outside Baku, 18- to 24-year-olds and those with completed secondary education are more likely to say that their interests are poorly represented or not represented at all in the national government.

While many young people in Azerbaijan seem to a certain extent interested in politics, few would take on a political function. Only about 18% of respondents said that they either gladly or may be willing to take on a political function. Young men and respondents with higher education are slightly more likely to be willing to take on a political function.

When it comes to young people's political engagement, few young people participate in such activities. Overall, close to three-quarters of young Azerbaijanis (74%) have not participated in any political activities. Those outside Baku, younger respondents and those with lower educational attainment are less likely to be politically engaged.

Rising prices (58%) is the most important grievance for young Azerbaijanis. Importantly, the issue of territorial integrity is considered a major problem by 11% of Azerbaijani youth and was named most frequently as the second most important problem.

Few young Azerbaijanis claim association with left-leaning or right-leaning political ideologies. A plurality (36%) of respondents place themselves in the centre, with 32% unsure about ideological self-placement. One in five leans to the right, while 12% lean to the left. That said, most respondents are unable to clearly identify left-wing or right-wing policies.

7

PART FOUR: YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy matters traditionally play an important role in the formation of Azerbaijani society. Being situated at the crossroads of empires and larger foreign policy players, modern Azerbaijan was influenced by coexisting with its neighbours – Turkey, Russia and Iran.⁴⁹ Due to sharing common ethnic, linguistic and cultural features, and to a certain degree secular-oriented policies, Turkey has become a role model and the closest ally for Azerbaijan.⁵⁰ Being the first state to recognise the Independence of Azerbaijan in 1991, Turkey has formed special relations with Azerbaijan and cooperation between the two countries is often dubbed as “One nation two states”.⁵¹ Azerbaijan, like its neighbours in the South Caucasus, however, is still a post-Soviet country with close economic, political and cultural ties to Russia. Historically, for nearly the last two centuries, Russia has been an imperial metropolis for Azerbaijan. Following the restoration of independence in 1991, the countries experienced turbulent relationships due to Russia’s political support for Armenia, but eventually recognised mutual interests and built pragmatic relations.⁵² Despite the suspicions of Russia’s impartiality and not being an “honest broker” in the Karabakh conflict,⁵³ Azerbaijan still maintains strong economic and cultural ties with its northern neighbour.⁵⁴

Azerbaijan, besides being located at a crossroads, is also part of a globalised world and it plays a significant role due to owning large shares of oil and gas. Since the restoration of independence, the country started actively collaborating with Western and European institutions, trying to integrate economic and energy infrastructure systems.⁵⁵ In this regard, it later became the most important and decisive factor in the relationship between Azerbaijan and the “West”. In this regard, the relationship between Europe and the United States was perceived through the lens of “mutual benefit” from cooperation in the energy sector and still largely follows those pragmatic lines.⁵⁶

Consequently, the official foreign policy of the Azerbaijani state is balanced, multidimensional and “going it alone.”⁵⁷ Though relations with Turkey are above pragmatic calculations and occupy a special role, the official

discourse may differ from the views and sentiments widespread among younger generations. Considering the sheer importance of foreign policy attitudes on the internal dynamics of societies, this study also investigated what is going on in the hearts and minds of young people in Azerbaijan regarding foreign policy: their positions concerning neighbouring countries, Europe, international institutions and their impact on Azerbaijan.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Only a minority (26%) of young people in Azerbaijan agree that Azerbaijan is a European country. In addition, a significant portion of youth (27%) failed to provide any specific answer to this question. Support of Azerbaijan as a European country does not differ across the different socio-demographic groups, however, rates of refusal or do not know answers are highest among young people living in the capital, those with higher education and those with higher degrees of self-ascribed household financial position.
- The perspectives of youth towards Europe are complex. A plurality believes that Europe is the wealthiest and most prosperous region (35%), a place of democracy and rule of law (45%), as well as cultural and scientific achievements (40%).
- Nevertheless, negative sentiments are also widespread – close to one-third of respondents associate Europe with an unfamiliar world with its own rules (36%), while for one-quarter of youth Europe is the home of unwelcoming and cold people (22%), as well as moral decline and a loss of traditional values (24%).
- A vast majority of young people (89%) clearly state that Turkey is the closest friend of Azerbaijan. This position is so dominant, that the second (Russia – 5%) and third (Pakistan – 2%) most frequently mentioned countries do not exceed the 5% threshold. All EU countries together do even cumulatively reach 1%.
- Turkey is perceived as the most important foreign actor that can contribute to the development of the Azerbaijani economy (86%), the protection of human rights (80%) and national security (90%).

- The importance of countries varies depending on the topic – while Russia (44%), the EU (35%), Georgia (28%) and the United States (24%) are believed to have a positive impact on the country's economic growth, their role in protecting human rights or facilitating national security is considered modest.
- The positive image of Turkey supporting the development of the economy, human rights and national security is elevated across all socio-demographic groups. The positive impact of the EU on the Azerbaijani economy is relatively more endorsed by youth from Baku and those with higher education. At the same time, compared to their peers from other settlements, youngsters from the capital also report higher levels of support for the idea that cooperation with Russia could be beneficial for Azerbaijan's economic growth, the protection of human rights and assuring national security.
- More than half of the youth believe that cooperating with Armenia can threaten the country's national values (52%), security (53%) and statehood (51%). A plurality also claims that cooperation with Armenia could endanger Azerbaijan's economic system (44%). One-fifth of respondents are also afraid that cooperation with the United States can do the same.
- Perceptions about international organisations among young people are divided. While a plurality thinks that the EU (49%), international financial institutions (48%), NATO (46%) or other international organisations (44%) play a rather positive or clearly positive role, the rest either fail to provide any evaluation (don't know or refuse to answer) or think that those organisations' impact on the country is negative.
- When young people are given the choice of the "West" vs "Russia", a plurality (48%) of respondents lean toward the "West". Despite this fact, claims that "no polarisation is preferable" (16%) are also widespread. Such a rejection of polarisation is more widespread among young people in the capital and those with higher education. At the same time, youth from other urban and rural areas, as well as those without higher education tend to report refusals and "do not know" responses a bit more frequently.

WHAT DOES EUROPE REPRESENT?

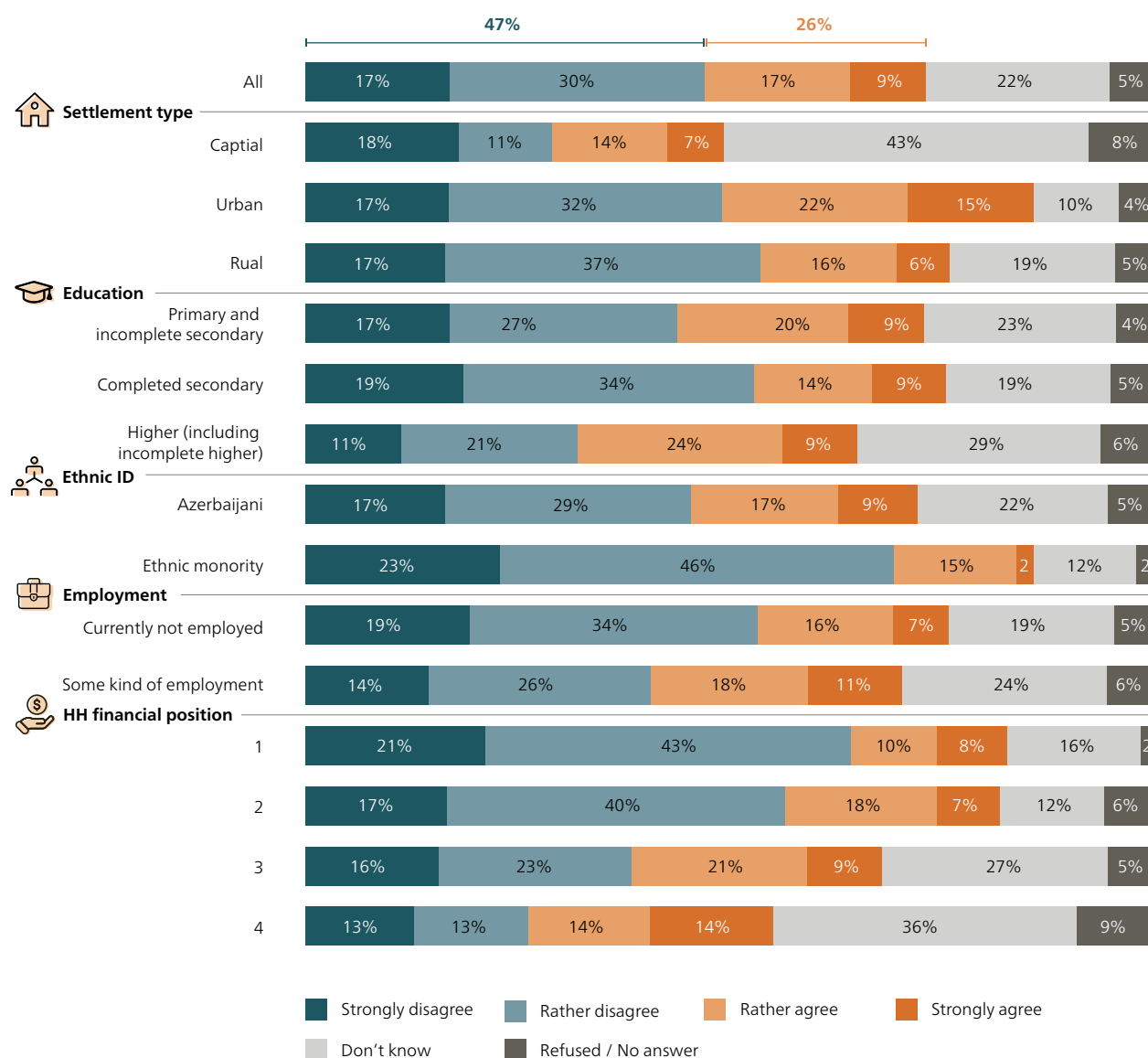
A plurality of young people does not identify Azerbaijan with Europe. When asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement that Azerbaijan is a European country, nearly half (47%) disagreed, while only slightly more than one-quarter (26%) agreed with this statement (Figure 24). In addition, a fair share of young people in Azerbaijan either does not know how to answer this question (22%) or refuse (5%) to provide any answer. Those disagreeing with the statement that Azerbaijan is a European country are fewer in number in the capital (29%) compared to other urban (49%) or rural areas (54%), however, more than half of surveyed young people in Baku (51%) refused to provide a specific answer to this question. Those with higher education, youth that self-identify as ethnically Azerbaijani, employed persons and those with higher degrees of self-ascribed household financial position⁵⁸ also tend to report lower levels of disagreement with this idea, however, rates of refusal or do not know answers are also the highest among those particular subgroups of young people.

Focus group discussions conducted in Baku provide more information on why young people see or do not see themselves as part of Europe. Some young people say that even though the mentality in Azerbaijan does not allow people to "move forward" and fully become part of Europe, they feel a certain degree of closeness to the continent. Participants said that they feel part of Europe because they are modern and support the idea of freedom and democracy. On the other hand, others argue that they do not feel part of Europe, because the people and the culture are different in Europe and Azerbaijan. In all three focus groups, young people pointed out that Azerbaijan does not have the same high standards and that it still needs to develop in order to be ready to be part of Europe. As one of the respondents stated: "[I do not feel part of Europe] because we are not completely independent, we do not know how to say our word, in some places we have problems, the mentality hinders" (Female, 29).

Another participant claimed that joining the European Union is not the choice of people in Azerbaijan: “It is the choice of the countries that are there. Everyone wants to be in the European Union. But when I think, our country does not have such standards” (Male, 16). Because of this, some participants think that Azerbaijan should not or cannot join the European Union. At the same time, in all three focus groups, young people showed a desire to be part of the EU, claiming that if Azerbaijan wants development in several fields (like health, education, etc.) it should be part of the European Union.

“We highlighted three reasons [for joining the EU]. For unity, freedom of speech and democracy” (Male, 20). In addition, there will be economic benefits: “From the economic point of view, more tourists will visit our country. It will be recognised” (Female, 20). Some participants say that being a part of the EU will only have positive aspects, as the country will be protected.

**FIGURE 24: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT AZERBAIJAN IS A EUROPEAN COUNTRY?
BY SETTLEMENT TYPE, EDUCATION, ETHNICITY, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL POSITION.
(%, full sample)**



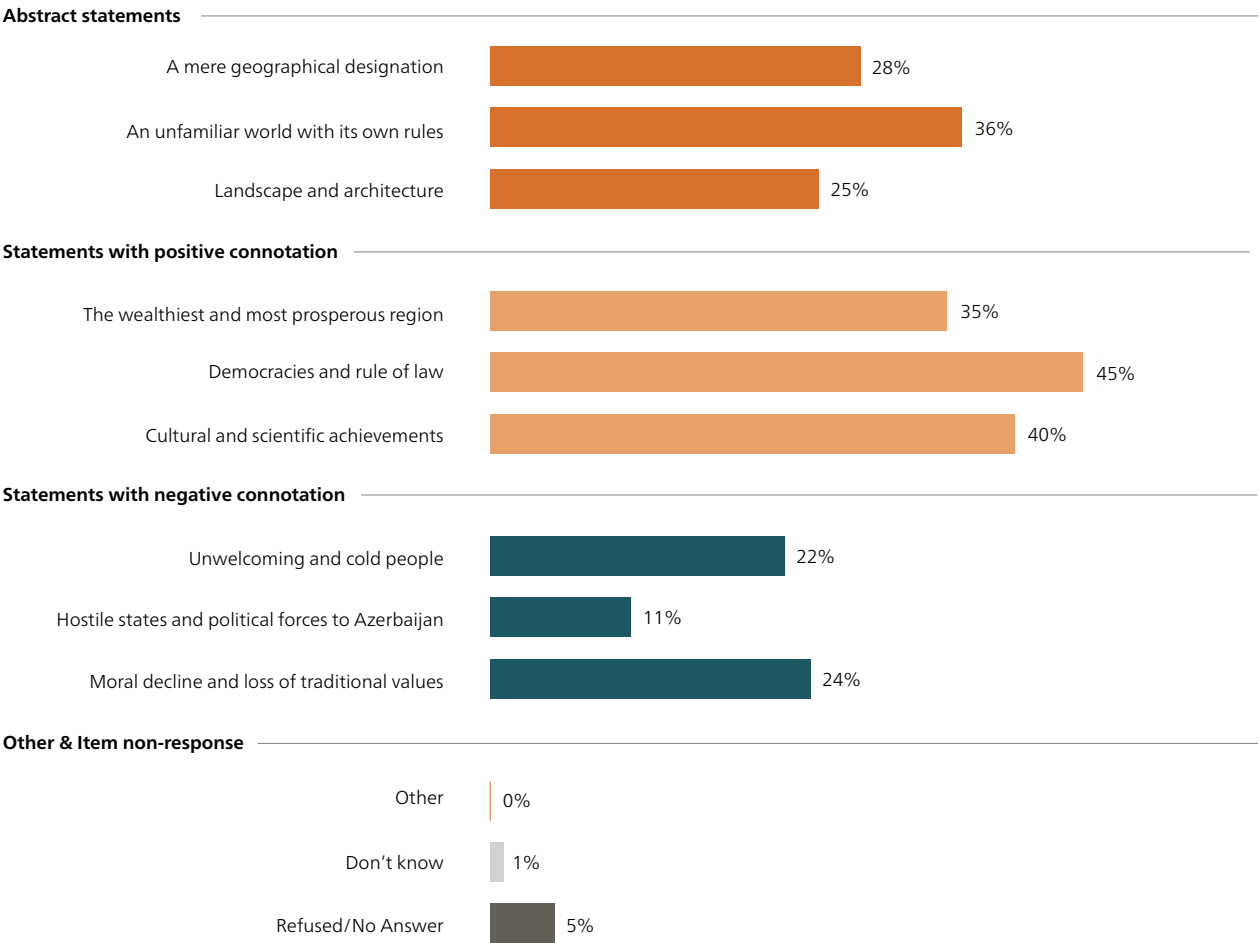
Nonetheless, for part of the focus group participants joining the EU is associated with some problems. They claim that “some bad things” will come with “Europeanisation”, like a free lifestyle, clothing style and drug addiction. In addition, some values unacceptable for Azerbaijan will become dominant, like not respecting parents, living separately, refusing to get married, etc. Finally, another downside could be that Russia and Iran will become political enemies of the country.

Survey results also show that young people in Azerbaijan have diverse and mixed opinions about Europe. For many, Europe is associated with wealth and prosperity (35%), democracy and rule of law (45%), as well as cultural and scientific achievements (40%). Significant portions of young people, however, have more reserved and sometimes negative views of Europe. For more than one-third (36%) of young respondents,

Europe is an unfamiliar world with its own rules, while according to 28%, it is a mere geographical designation. Furthermore, for 24% of youth, Europe is a place of moral decline and loss of traditional values and 22% also believe that it is a place where unwelcoming and cold people live (Figure 25).

Focus group participants also talked about what qualities they associate with Europe. These are predominantly positive concepts, related to democracy, liberalism, the protection of human rights, development, economic and political cooperation, high level of education, welfare, security and unity. “When I say Europe, I mean democracy, liberalism, protection of human rights” (Female, 16). These participants claim that Europe is the most developed continent in the world.

FIGURE 25: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING VIEWS MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF EUROPE? (% , full sample)



THE FRIENDS AND THE FOES OF THE NATION

Young people in Azerbaijan have quite straightforward and unambiguous views regarding national security issues and attitudes toward foreign countries. **When asked to name one specific country they believe is Azerbaijan's closest friend, the vast majority (89%) named Turkey** (Figure 26). The second most frequently mentioned country – Russia – received just 5% of responses, followed by Pakistan with 2%. Only two “traditional” European countries were mentioned –

Germany (0.3%) and England (0.19%) – and cumulatively the EU member states were named by less than 1% of young people. Despite the dominance of Turkey, tiny discrepancies were observed among different sub-groups of youth. Namely, young people in capital (9%) tend to mention Russia as Azerbaijan's closest friend more frequently than those from other urban (4%) or rural (3%) areas. The same tendency was observed in case of ethnicity: young people that indicated their ethnicity is other than Azerbaijani (9%) believe Russia is the closest friend to Azerbaijan, compared to those who self-identify as ethnically Azerbaijani (4%).

FIGURE 26: **FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHICH COUNTRY IS AZERBAIJAN'S CLOSEST FRIEND?**
(%, single choice, full sample)

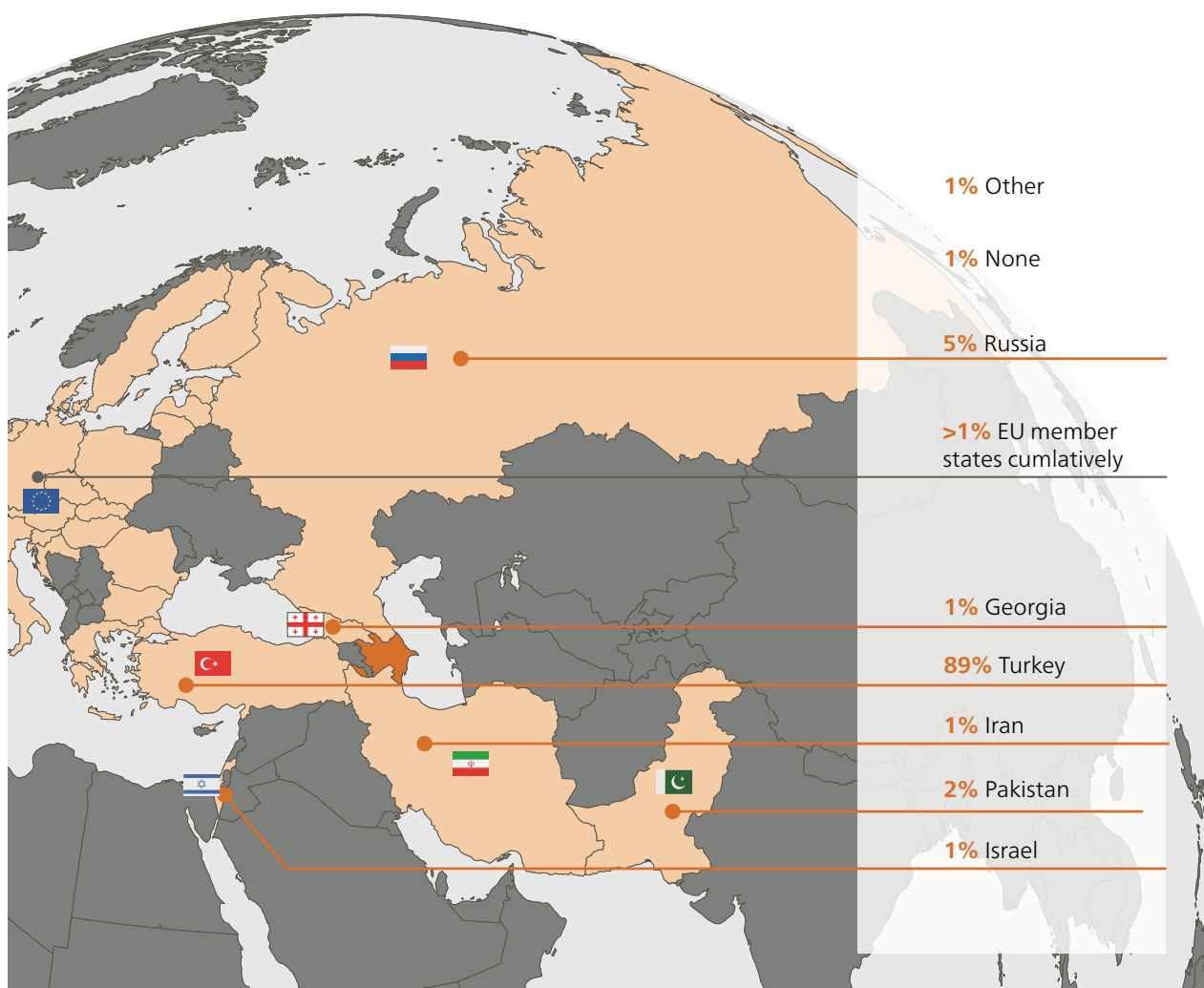
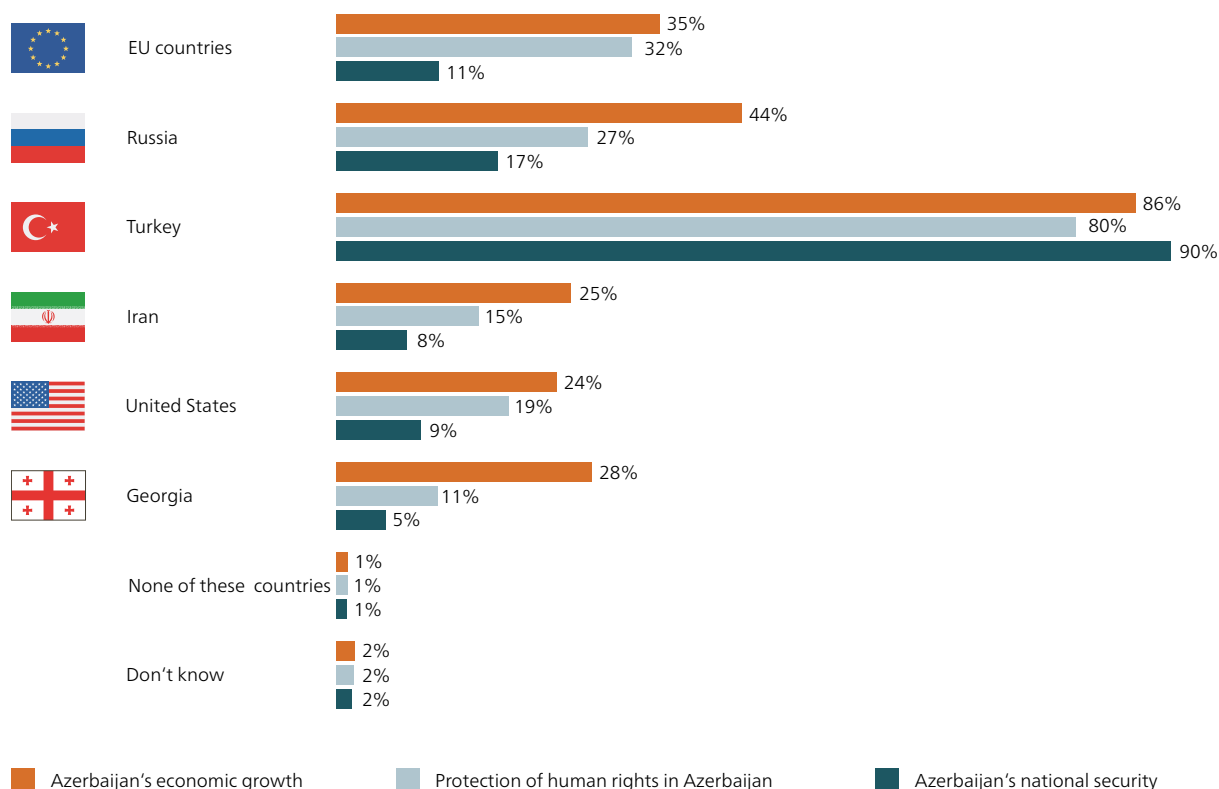


FIGURE 27: **AZERBAIJAN'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO... A) AZERBAIJAN'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AZERBAIJAN AND C) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , multiple choice, full sample)**



Follow-up questions were asked regarding how young people view foreign nations' role in facilitating Azerbaijan's economic growth, the protection of human rights and national security (Figure 27). **According to young people in Azerbaijan, cooperation with Turkey is the most important factor for assuring the country's economic growth (86%), the protection of human rights (80%) and national security (90%).** The role of Turkey in contributing to national security is undisputed and dominant, as no other country or entity received more than 20% of responses. When it comes to economic growth, the role of Russia (44%), EU countries (35%) and Georgia (28%) is also perceived as important. As for the protection of human rights, EU countries (32%) and Russia (27%) are the most frequently mentioned besides Turkey.

Young people differ across educational and geographic lines when it comes to how they perceive the benefits of Azerbaijan's cooperation with various international actors (Table 1).

Young people from the capital and those with higher education are more likely to say that cooperation with EU countries could lead to better economic growth. In addition, young people with higher education tend to see a positive impact for the protection of human rights while cooperating with EU countries. **Young people from the capital also more frequently mention the importance of cooperation with Russia to achieve better economic growth, the protection of human rights and improved national security when compared to peers from other urban or rural areas** (Table 1). The same applies to Turkey – while reporting the highest possible levels of support for collaboration with Turkey in all discussed dimensions, **young people from the capital are relatively more predisposed to mention Turkey as important to Azerbaijan's development compared to other settlement types.**

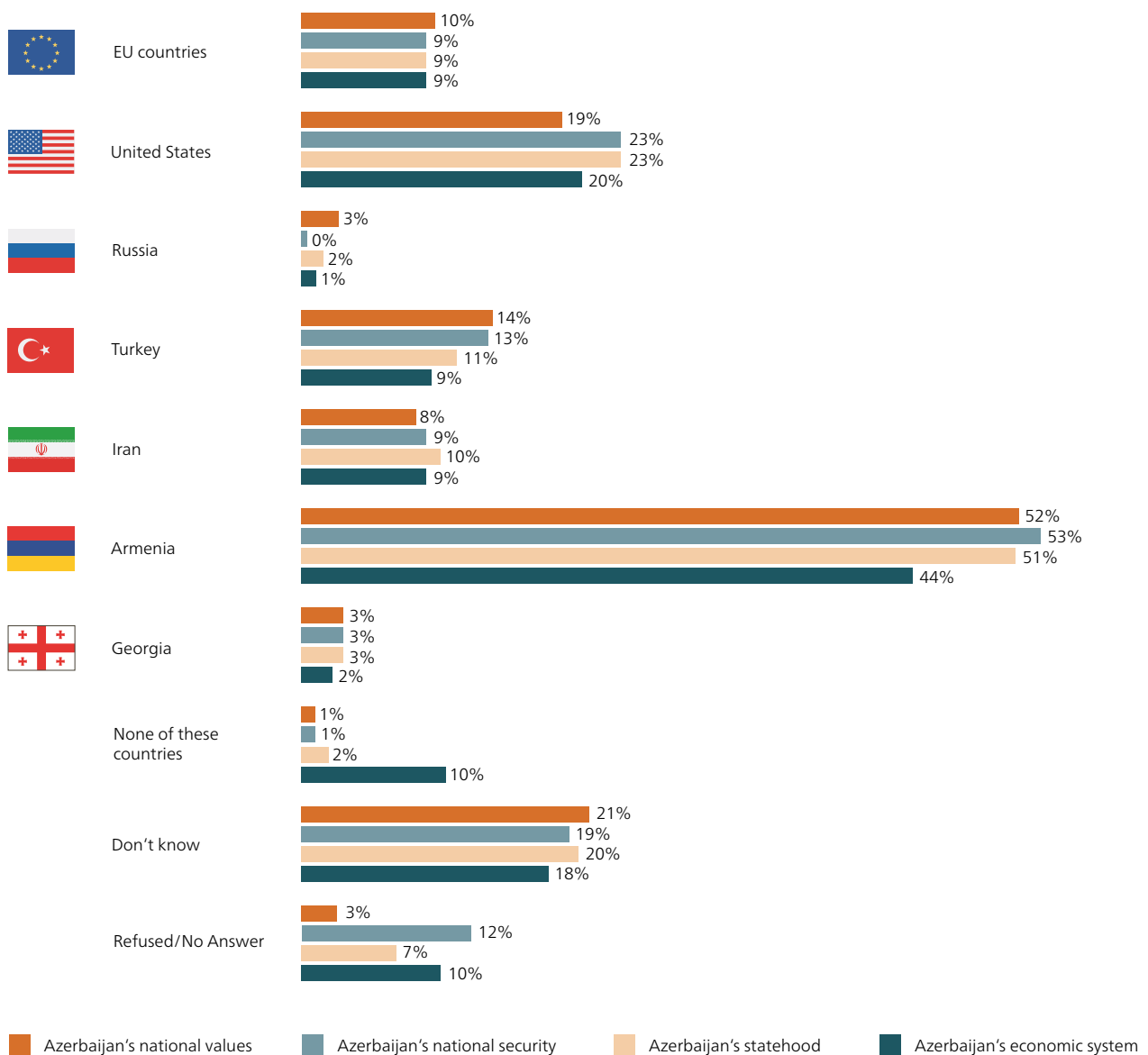
TABLE 1: AZERBAIJAN'S COOPERATION WITH EU COUNTRIES/RUSSIA/TURKEY WILL CONTRIBUTE TO...
A) AZERBAIJAN'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AZERBAIJAN AND
C) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , multiple choice, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically
significant differences).

Topic	Settlement type			Education		
	Capital	Urban	Rural	Primary and incomplete secondary	Completed secondary	Higher (incl. uncompleted higher)
 EU countries						
Azerbaijan's economic growth	44*	34	32	31	32	51*
Protection of human rights in Azerbaijan	29	32	33	28	30	44*
Azerbaijan's national security	15	8	11	10	10	15
 Russia						
Azerbaijan's economic growth	84*	34	32	39	41	59
Protection of human rights in Azerbaijan	59*	19	18	24	26	37*
Azerbaijan's national security	29*	14	14	14	18	20
 Turkey						
Azerbaijan's economic growth	98*	78	87	86	86	89
Protection of human rights in Azerbaijan	96*	70	79	77	80	83
Azerbaijan's national security	97*	86	90	88	90	94

Besides the potential positive impacts of foreign countries on Azerbaijan, respondents were asked if cooperation with certain countries would threaten Azerbaijan's national values, national security, statehood and economic system (Figure 28). **More than half of young people in Azerbaijan see Armenia as a threat to Azerbaijan's national values (52%), national security (53%) and statehood (51%).** Cooperation with Armenia is also perceived as the most significant threat for Azerbaijan's economic system (44%). **The United States is the second most**

frequently mentioned country in terms of potential threat to Azerbaijan's national values (19%), national security (23%), statehood (23%) and economic system (20%). Compared to questions about the positive aspects of contribution, the threat questions generated a significant share of "don't know" and "refuse to answer" responses: around one-quarter of young people could not indicate a particular country for the national values, statehood and economic system questions, while the same figure was one-third (31%) in the case of national security (Figure 28).

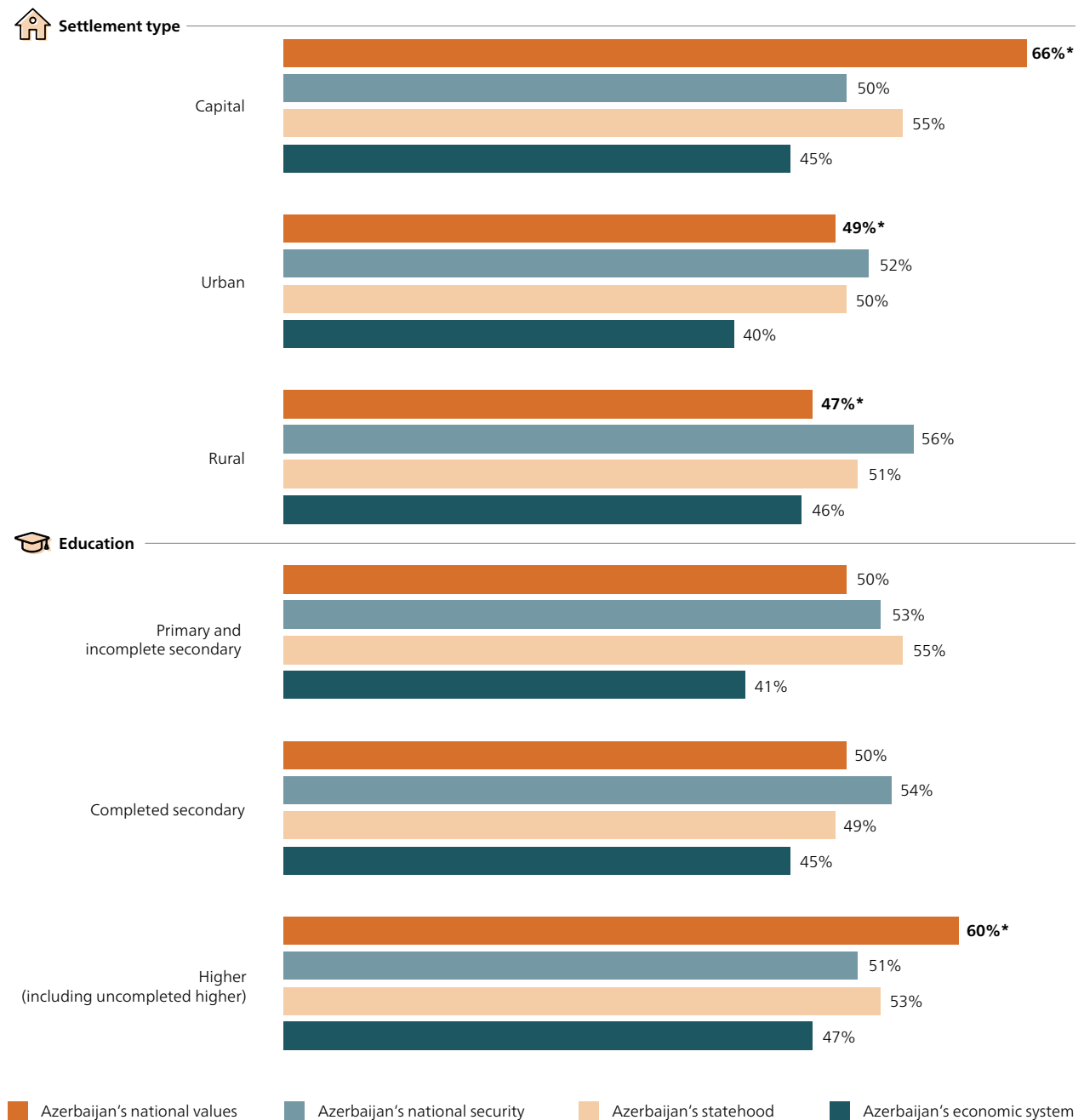
FIGURE 28: AZERBAIJAN'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL THREATEN ... A) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL VALUES, B) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY, C) AZERBAIJAN'S STATEHOOD AND D) AZERBAIJAN'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM (% , multiple choice, full sample)



The perception of Armenia as the biggest threat to Azerbaijan's national values, security, statehood and economic system is equally shared across different socio-demographic groups of young people. There are a few exceptions, however, such as: **those living in the capital tend to perceive threat of cooperation with Armenia at a higher degree compared to those**

living in other urban and rural areas (Figure 29). Education level is also associated with threat perception: young people with higher education (60%) are slightly more likely to name cooperation with Armenia as a threat to Azerbaijan's national values than those with secondary (50%) or primary and incomplete secondary (50%) education.

FIGURE 29: **AZERBAIJAN'S COOPERATION WITH ARMENIA WILL THREATEN... A) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL VALUES, B) AZERBAIJAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY, C) AZERBAIJAN'S STATEHOOD AND D) AZERBAIJAN'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM (%)**, multiple choice, full sample



ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL CHOICES

Young people were asked to assess the roles of international political, military and financial institutions to get a better understanding of their perspectives on foreign policy. Overall, a plurality believes that the EU (49%), international financial institutions (48%), NATO (46%) and international organisations (44%), for instance the United Nations, play a positive or rather positive role in Azerbaijan. It is important to note, however, that one-quarter to one-third of young people either

believe that those institutions play a negative role or do not have specific positions on this subject (Figure 30).

Further investigation of this topic among different socio-demographic groups of young people reveals that attitudes are not evenly distributed. In general, young men tend to evaluate the role of international organisations and institutions slightly more positively than young women (Figure 31). Those living in the capital tend to assess international organisations and institutions less positively than respondents living in other urban and rural areas. Those with higher education are also more likely to see the role of international institutions in a negative light when it comes to the EU and International organisations (United Nations).

FIGURE 30: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN AZERBAIJAN? (% , full sample)

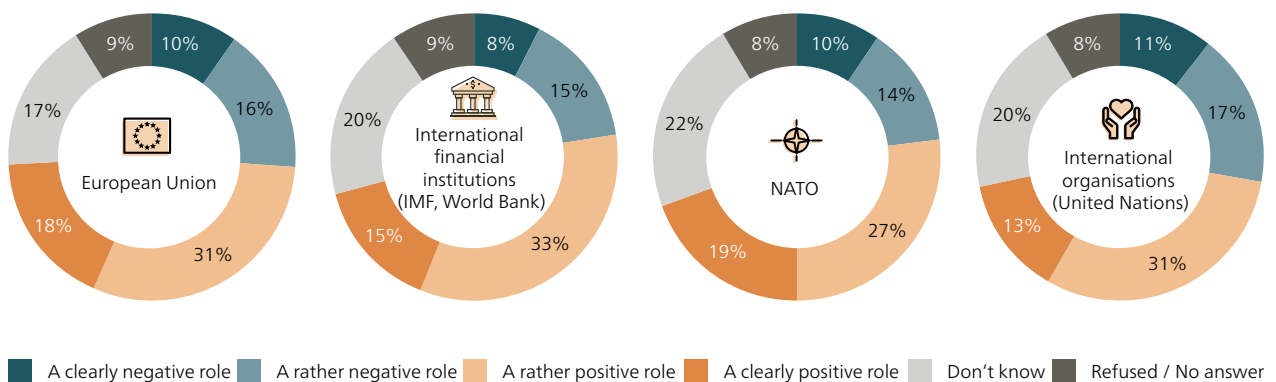
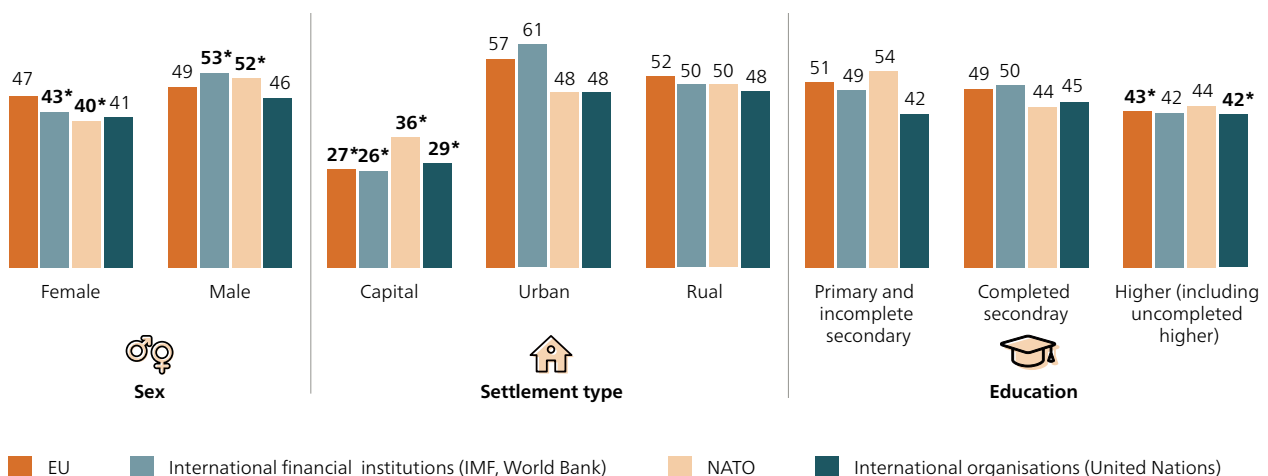


FIGURE 31: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN AZERBAIJAN? (Only the sum of the "a rather positive role" and "a clearly positive role" answers provided. %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

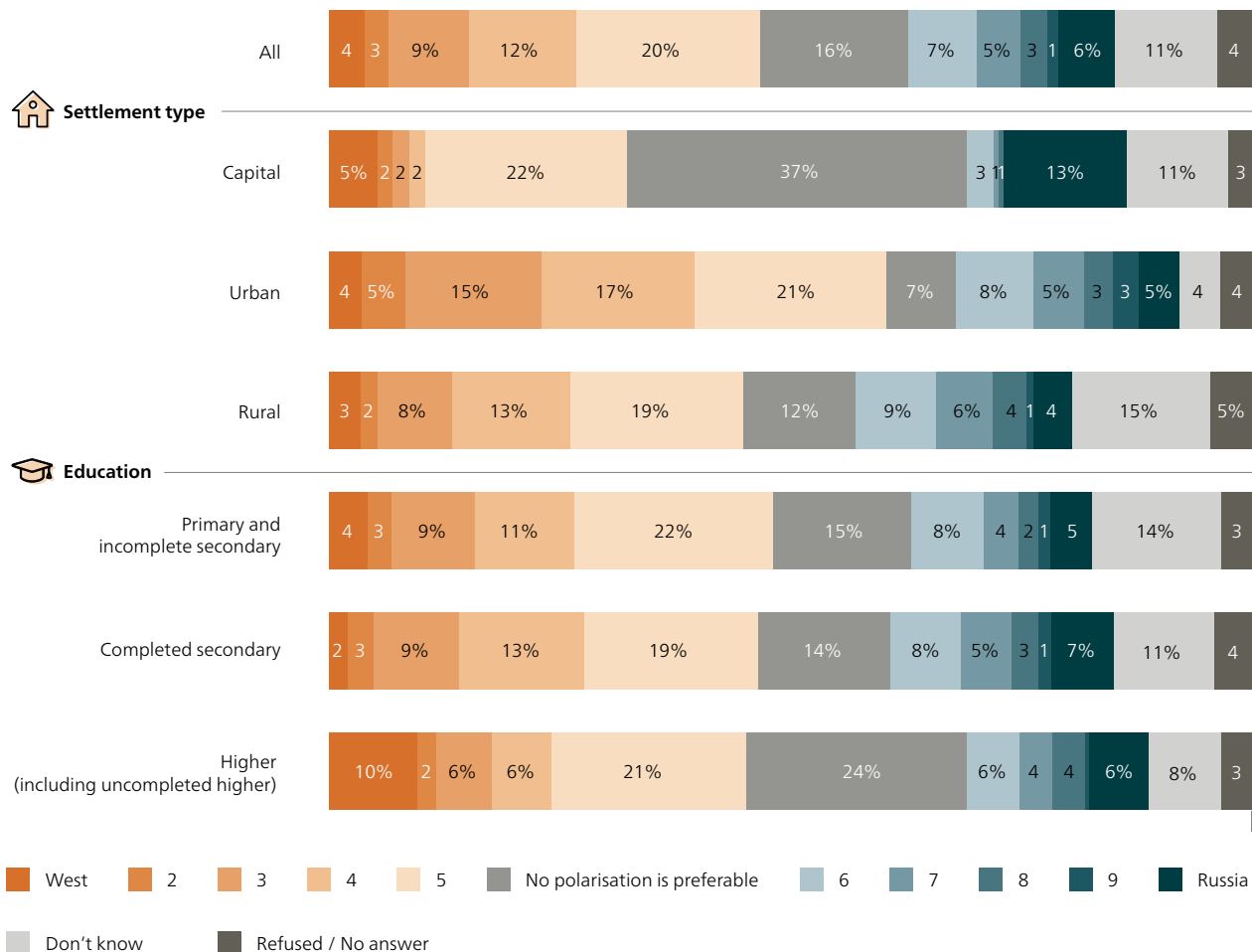


During the survey, foreign policy choices and tastes were also investigated. For example, when young people were asked to choose between the “West” and Russia, a plurality reported “Western” leaning sentiments (48%, sum of scale options from 1 to 5). It is important to note that the most frequently selected option on a 10-point scale, where 1 meant “West” and 10 meant “Russia”, was “5” with 20%, indicating a slight preference for the west (Figure 32). As for youth who lean toward Russia (sum of scale options 6-10), cumulatively they reach slightly more than one-fifth (22%) of all young people.

Further analysis showed that young people living in the capital tend to report a more neutral position: a plurality (37%) in Baku reported that “no polarisation is preferable”, while the same options were selected by only 7% in other urban areas and 12% in rural settlements.

While pro-Russian leaning sentiments across the settlement types cumulatively are approximately the same, the extreme point on the scale (10 – Russia) was selected by 13% of young people in Baku, while the same rates were 5% in other urban and 4% in rural areas (Figure 32). As for educational attainment, those with higher education (24%) tended to select neutral statements more frequently than young people with primary and incomplete secondary education (15%) or those with completed secondary education (14%). Cumulatively, attitudes toward the West do not differ significantly across education level, however those with higher education report somewhat more explicit pro-Western attitudes (10% of the extreme point on the scale: 1 – the West), compared to their peers with primary and incomplete secondary (4%) and complete secondary (2%) education (Figure 32).

FIGURE 32: HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE AZERBAIJAN TO BE CLOSE TO EITHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OR TO RUSSIA? (1 means very close to the West and 10 means very close to Russia. %, full sample)



DISCUSSION

Following the official pragmatic and balanced foreign policy, youth in Azerbaijan most often select neutral or not extreme foreign policy stances, preferring to avoid polarisation and selection of sides among different western or Russian camps.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, a slight preponderance was observed toward western countries. There might be several potential explanations for this and the primary reason could be a certain distrust and resentment toward Russia due to its historical role in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relationship. Yet another explanation could be the general perception of the West and particularly Europe, as a place of economic well-being and welfare, emphasised from the outcomes of the youth survey. Moreover, other studies confirm that though the Azerbaijani public has neutral and moderately positive attitudes toward the EU, close to three-quarters associate the EU with human rights (75%), economic prosperity (74%) and rule of law (74%).⁶⁰ A positive image can also be a factor for nudging the Azerbaijani public to slightly favour western countries over Russia. The latest 2022 study on EU perceptions in Azerbaijan indicated that 48% of Azerbaijani people have a positive image of the EU and 76% of them acknowledge good relations with the EU.⁶¹ This does not imply that the West, Europe or the EU is something close and very familiar to young people in Azerbaijan. Moreover, while interpreting the results of the survey, it is important to acknowledge the context in which the study was conducted: the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine reinforced views of a feeble Europe, versus a strong USA and Britain and confident and forceful Russia. Nevertheless, many in Azerbaijan negatively evaluated Russian aggression in Ukraine and showed solidarity and support for Ukraine, as the occupation of Ukrainian territories was seen as similar to what happened to Azerbaijan in the early 1990s.⁶²

For youth in Azerbaijan, Europe seems something distant and unfamiliar, at some point contrasting with their values, but still charming and attractive because of its material well-being, rule of law, as well as cultural and scientific development. For many years, Azerbaijani and EU or broader European relations were sporadic or solely focused on strategic cooperation over hydrocarbon resources.⁶³ Despite the fact that in 2009

Azerbaijan was formally invited to the Eastern Partnership (EP) initiative, little has been done in deepening cooperation or integration.⁶⁴ Moreover, before the war in Ukraine, both Europe and the West showed little interest in Azerbaijan.⁶⁵ The 2020 study conducted under the EU Eastern neighbourhood barometer has shown that while the general perception of the Azerbaijani public regarding the EU is mainly positive (44%), a significant share also reports a neutral position (35%). Similar to the youth study, a considerable part of the general public was either not sure (32%) or believed that the EU does not foster the preservation of traditional values (21%).⁶⁶ When the same survey asked open-ended questions about what associations respondents had about the EU, around 31% indicated that they “had nothing to say” and for 6% the question was “too hard to answer”. Hence, the existence of vague and sometimes uncertain positions regarding Europe is not surprising.

Europe was overshadowed while investigating friendly countries of Azerbaijan. Here, Turkey has dwarfed all other countries, both neighbouring and distant. Besides having close political and economic ties, more importantly, they share a common culture and traditions and often describe themselves as “One nation, two states”.⁶⁷ This goes far beyond symbolic gestures and has deeper roots in the original nation-building and modernisation project, when Turkey was one of the most important role models for development.⁶⁸ Furthermore, during the turbulent 1990s, Turkey backed and supported Azerbaijan in the Karabakh war, including the recent iteration of the military conflict that resulted in an Azerbaijani victory and the reclaiming of significant portions of occupied territories.⁶⁹ Therefore, the dominance of pro-Turkic sentiments among all socio-demographic subgroups of Azerbaijani society is not accidental.

A pragmatic foreign policy focused on mutual benefit and maintaining more or less good working relations with the majority of neighbours and key players of the region probably echoed among young people’s views of different countries. While investigating how different countries and regions can contribute to Azerbaijani development, it is not surprising that the EU, USA, Russia and Georgia received significantly higher positive assessments for contributing to the economic development of the country. Despite this fact, young

people do not think that Azerbaijan can rely on them to strengthen national security. In that case, only Turkey enjoys total support due to the above-outlined reasons. More importantly, the war in Ukraine makes Azerbaijani foreign policy more complicated, as the country “needs to balance with Moscow on the issue of Karabakh and work closely with the West in ensuring its energy security”⁷⁰. It is anticipated that Baku will continue the experienced balancing approach in order to “not irritate the powerful centres as well as its policy of restoration of territorial integrity and keeping its independence as a country through small steps and actions”⁷¹.

Besides having a clear protagonist in Turkey, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy and public discourse are also dominated by the obvious antagonist and the main rival – Armenia. The roots of the Armenian-Azerbaijani multifaceted conflict go back to the Czarist Russia period and abundant academic literature has been dedicated to investigating this topic.⁷² The tense and hostile relations between the two countries over the last 30 years naturally had its mark on young people’s evaluation of Armenia as the most important threat to the country’s economic development, national security or national values. The subsequent chapters will show that the dominance of negative attitudes toward Armenia among young people not only related to the Armenian state, but to a certain degree to Armenian nationals as well. The current state of affairs, despite numerous attempts at mediation and peace talks, is close to a stalemate. Recent political developments show some positive steps toward mutual recognition, but this process is still in a germinal state and fragile. Therefore, further research on young people can be focused on understanding the possible ways of building mutual confidence, trust and rebuilding relations. There is no doubt that this will be a complicated process. Academic literature suggests some potential ways to achieve this goal. For example, a laboratory experiment conducted in 2015 in Azerbaijan showed that an “appropriate combination of message and medium” can change and modify existing hostile attitudes to a certain degree.⁷³ Due to the complexity and delicacy of the topic, it is not possible to provide simple readymade receipts. Among other things, this study tried to investigate different dimensions of this problem and the Armenian-Azerbaijani relationship will be investigated through the lens of recent history, identity and value orientation in the following chapters.

**PART FIVE:
REVISITING THE
RECENT PAST
AND THE WAR
IN KARABAKH**

INTRODUCTION

The study, investigation and construction of historical narratives have significant importance for Azerbaijani society. Contemporary Azerbaijani scholars sometimes indicate that there are certain gaps and misconceptions, both in the western and regional academia associated with researching Azerbaijani history and heritage⁷⁴. It is worth mentioning that this is a widespread trend characterised by all small nations, including those neighbouring Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus. Keeping in mind that there is a massive volume of historical artifacts worth investigating, this study decided to solely concentrate on recent history. The primary rationale for this decision is to enhance the awareness, experience and attachment of young people toward the events that occurred during the last three decades. Hence, the attitudes of young people toward the Soviet Union and its demise, the turbulent 1990s and the second Karabakh war were explored during the focus group discussions and quantitative survey.

The history of contemporary Azerbaijan is closely intertwined with the Soviet Union. Despite a brief spell of independence during 1918–1920, most of the nation-building projects, including the “first official attempt at building a national history in Azerbaijan”, were realised during soviet rule.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, anti-Soviet sentiment and the desire to leave the USSR intensified toward the end of the 1980s due to multiple factors, including ethnic and territorial tensions with Armenians, as well as dissatisfaction with how Moscow was reacting to those tensions.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the Soviet past had its impact and influence on the Azerbaijani elites that were in the vanguard of building a new nation-state during the 1990s.⁷⁷ Hence, investigating youth attitudes toward the soviet past and contrasting them with dominant political and cultural discourses could shed light on how the legacy of the Soviet Union is kept in modern Azerbaijan and whether it has any impact on the present discourse or public opinion.

During the first decade of independence, Azerbaijan experienced military conflict with Armenia and the brief revival of nationalistic forces, coupled with economic difficulties and “general disappointment with the nationalists’ policies and there was a move

towards a more balanced external orientation”⁷⁸. The initial excitement of gaining sovereignty was soon substituted by the realisation of challenges and difficulties associated with the total transformation of the economic, political and international environment.⁷⁹ Current attitudes toward the 1990s among the Azerbaijani public, however, have not been deeply investigated in academia. Consequently, besides empirical importance, the investigation of youth attitudes toward this subject also has academic significance.

The last facet investigated in the context of revisiting the recent past was young people’s attitudes toward the second Karabakh war, its outcomes and future expectations. While there is rich academic literature about the origins, development and socio-political aspects of the broader Karabakh conflict, this study only focused its efforts on investigating youth positions on the recent “44-day war.” Hence, the youth study provided a unique opportunity for researchers to better understand young people’s thoughts, future concerns and preferred ways of developing regional and inter-country relationships. In this regard, this chapter provides the possibility for understanding the complex array of reflections spanning from the recent past and going into the future.

MAIN FINDINGS

- A plurality of young people in Azerbaijan are either not able to evaluate the impact of the end of the USSR (30% reporting do not know the answer) or refuse to provide any answer (8%). When it comes to the rest of the youth, nearly equal shares report neutral (24%) or positive (26%) responses, while only 12% believe that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was eventually a negative event.
- More than half of young people aged 14-17 and those with primary education do not have any position regarding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, while those with higher education (38%) and those aged 25-29 (34%) more positively evaluate this event compared to their peers.
- Similar to the evaluation of the USSR, nearly half (48%) of young respondents are undecided about the consequences of the 1990s for Azerbaijan. Another half of the youth is divided on whether the

first decade of independence brought more good (24%) or bad (27%). Compared to the other urban (30%) or rural (25%) areas, youth in the capital are less enthusiastic about the positive impacts of the 90s. At the same time, younger cohorts of young people (14-17 years old) fail to state their positions when compared to older generations.

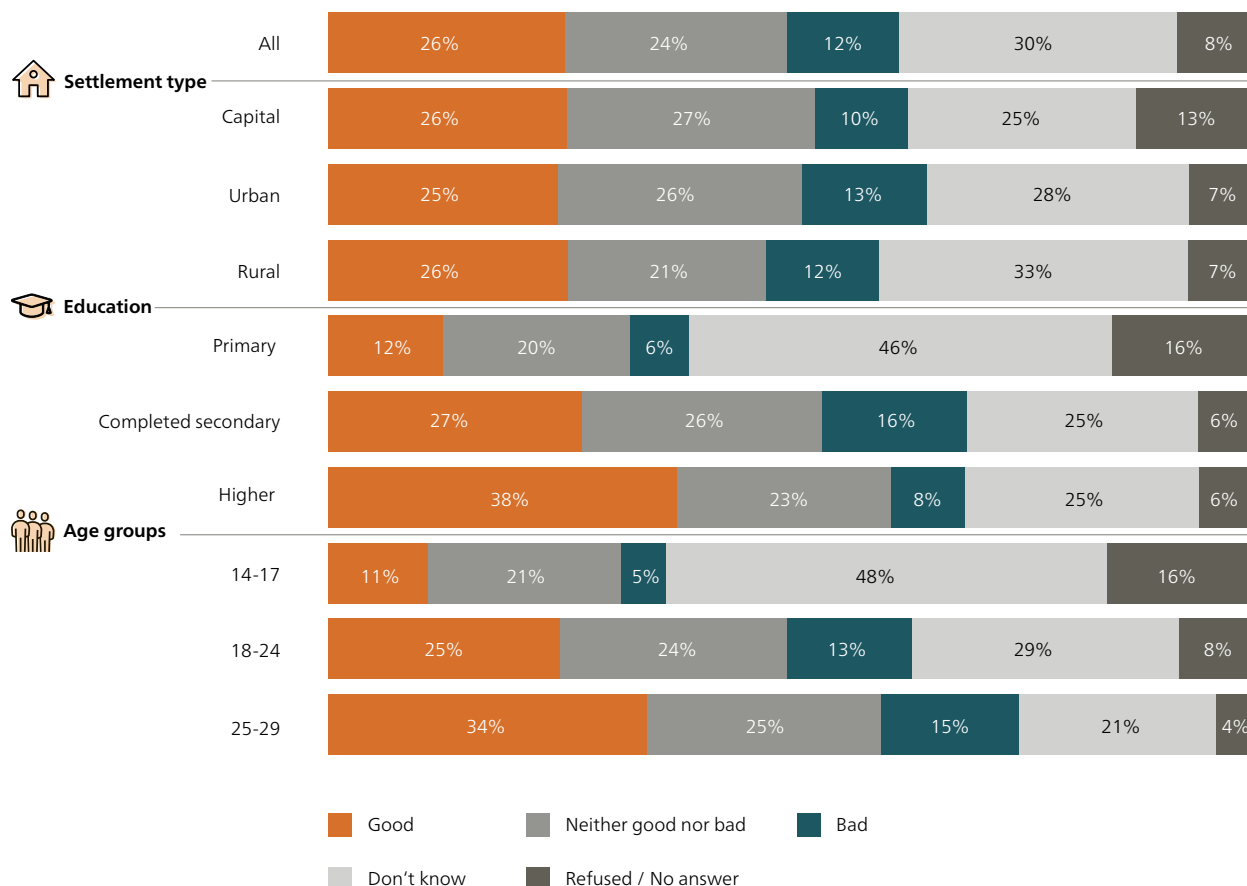
- A positive evaluation of the end of the USSR is correlated with a positive assessment of the 1990s. Among those who believed that end of the Soviet Union was a good thing, 58% think that the 90s eventually brought Azerbaijan good rather than bad things.
- While contrasting current times to the 1990s, many things became more difficult. The areas where the most deterioration is present are associated with the ability to make decisions on religious life (59%), live independently (60%), say whatever you want (55%), feel safe (51%) and participate in political life (41%).
- Certain improvements since the 1990s were mentioned in the context of earning money (25%) and receiving qualified medical care (17%).
- The second Karabakh war of 2020 is one of the most important events in the modern history of Azerbaijan. A plurality (43%) of respondents report satisfaction with the outcome of the conflict, while slightly more than one-quarter (28%) report neutral positions⁸⁰. Young people living in other urban (44%) or rural (48%) areas were slightly more satisfied with the outcome of the war than those living in the capital (30%).
- Twenty-eight percent of young people reported that at least one person from their family participated in the war as a soldier, military servant or volunteer. These figures were a little higher among other urban (28%) and rural (31%) settlements when compared to the capital (22%).
- Going forward, a plurality (45%) of respondents is against opening transport links between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This idea is less rejected in the capital (20%), while it faces greater opposition among young people living in other urban (59%) and rural (48%) areas.
- A significant share of young people either do not know (29%) or refuse (7%) to state their positions on the prospect of resuming war in Karabakh over the next 5 years. At the same time, 38% think that there is no risk of resuming hostilities, while 26% report a certain degree of possibility.

- Considering the context of the Karabakh war and Azerbaijan's relationship with its neighbours, a majority (60%) of respondents is inclined to believe that citizens must be ready to make different kinds of sacrifices for the sake of strengthening Azerbaijan's statehood. They believe that the only chance for Azerbaijan to progress is through deeper integration with Turkey (89%) rather than with Russia (55%).
- A majority (56%) disagrees that for peaceful co-existence it is "better to forget what happened in the past". An echo of this position is seen when comparing two statements about cooperation with states – nearly half of the young people (47%) acknowledge that it is important to cooperate with all countries except Armenia. However, only 9% agree to cooperate with all countries including Armenia.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION

Young people's attitudes toward the Soviet Union in Azerbaijan are uncertain. A plurality of youngsters either does not know (30%) how to evaluate the dissolution of the Soviet Union or refuses to answer (8%) that question. Furthermore, among those who reported specific attitudes, around one-quarter (24%) believes that end of the USSR was neither a good nor a bad thing (Figure 33). Positive or negative sentiments regarding the end of the USSR do not differ among geographic areas, however, those in rural settlements (33%) tend to report "do not know" answers slightly more frequently than those in Baku (25%) or other urban areas (28%). Education is an important factor in shaping these positions – those with higher education (38%) tended to agree that the end of the Soviet Union was a good thing compared to those who only completed secondary (27%) or primary (12%) school. Importantly, the share of "do not know" answers is remarkably higher among those with primary education (46%). An analysis of this question by age group mirrors the findings of the education level comparison: younger cohorts of respondents report higher levels of uncertainty, while older groups have the greatest tendency to view the end of the Soviet Union as a positive event (Figure 33).

FIGURE 33: THE USSR DISSOLVED SOME 30 YEARS AGO. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE USSR, DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , full sample)



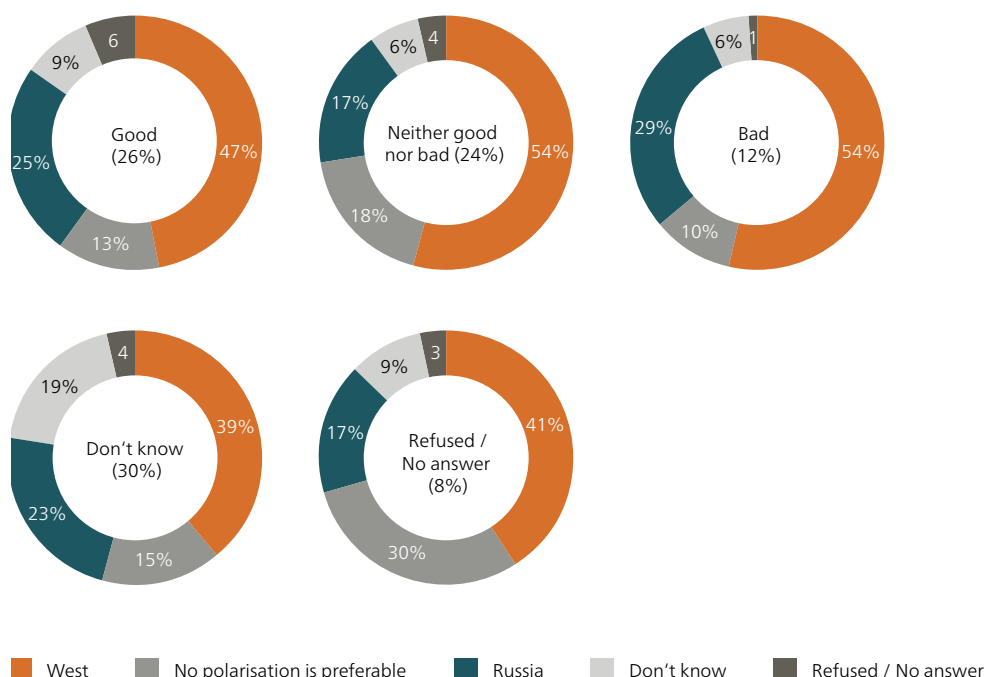
Positions regarding the end of the Soviet Union are somewhat related to attitudes toward contemporary Russia and sometimes are perceived through the prism of the West vs Russia dichotomy. Therefore, attitudes regarding the Soviet Union's downfall were additionally examined by contrasting opinions regarding the preferable geopolitical affiliation of Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, the data analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among those who positively or negatively evaluated the end of the USSR in terms of supporting Azerbaijan's alignment with Western countries or Russia (Figure 34).

Diverse attitudes towards the Soviet Union and its collapse were also evident during the focus group discussions in Baku. Those young people who say that the collapse was a positive event explain that, as opposed to the soviet era, Azerbaijan is now free,

independent, has its own language, constitution, flag and army. In addition, some stated that the country's wealth now belongs to them and the country's resources can be used as they desire.

On the other hand, those who evaluate the collapse of the Soviet Union as a negative event claim that the unemployment rate was almost zero, everyone could afford to buy food and that there was more equality among people: "Not everyone now lives in the same class. In the Soviet Union, everyone was equal. The state itself provided jobs for people with higher education. In Soviet times, the state provided jobs. There were factories. There was equality" (Male, 24). It should also be stated, however, that no one in the focus group with young people aged 25 to 29 assessed the collapse of the Soviet Union as a negative event.

FIGURE 34: HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE AZERBAIJAN TO BE CLOSE TO EITHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OR TO RUSSIA? (ANSWER OPTIONS 1 TO 5 WERE CODED TO THE “WEST”, WHILE ANSWER OPTIONS FROM 6 TO 10 WERE CODED TO “RUSSIA”). DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , full sample)



REVISITING THE FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENCE: MEMORIES OF THE 1990S AMONG YOUNG AZERBAIJANIS

Young people’s opinions regarding the 1990s in Azerbaijan are equivocal. Nearly half of the young people (48%) have no position on how the 1990s can be evaluated, frequently reporting either “do not know” or “refuse to answer”. At the same time, nearly one-quarter (24%) feel that the decade just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union brought positive things to their country and nearly the same share of respondents (27%) believe that the consequences were negative (Figure 35). While those positions do not differ significantly by gender, settlement type, age group or self-reported financial household conditions, they indicate certain discrepancies. Young people in the capital are the most critical (only 15% report that the 90s brought

good things to the country) and, at the same time, the most uncertain (61% reporting either “do not know” or “refuse to answer”) about the impact the 1990s had on Azerbaijan. As for age group, the level of uncertainty is highest among those aged 14-17 (74% cumulatively), compared to those in the 18-24 (46%) and 25-29 (36%) age cohorts. Those with the highest self-reported levels of household financial situations more frequently say “don’t know” (24%) or “refuse to answer” (38%) this question when compared to young people with worse household financial conditions (Figure 35).

Positions regarding the impact of the 1990s seem to be associated with views on the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Figure 36). Among those who felt that the end of the USSR was a good thing, 58% thought that the 1990s brought Azerbaijan rather good things, while 32% felt the 1990s brought rather bad things. Opinions are reversed in the case of those who negatively assessed the end of the Soviet Union – only 26% believe that the 90s were ultimately positive for Azerbaijan, while 54% feel that this decade brought more bad than good to the country (Figure 36).

FIGURE 35: **DO YOU THINK THAT THE 90s BROUGHT MORE GOOD THINGS OR MORE BAD THINGS TO THE COUNTRY? (% , full sample)**

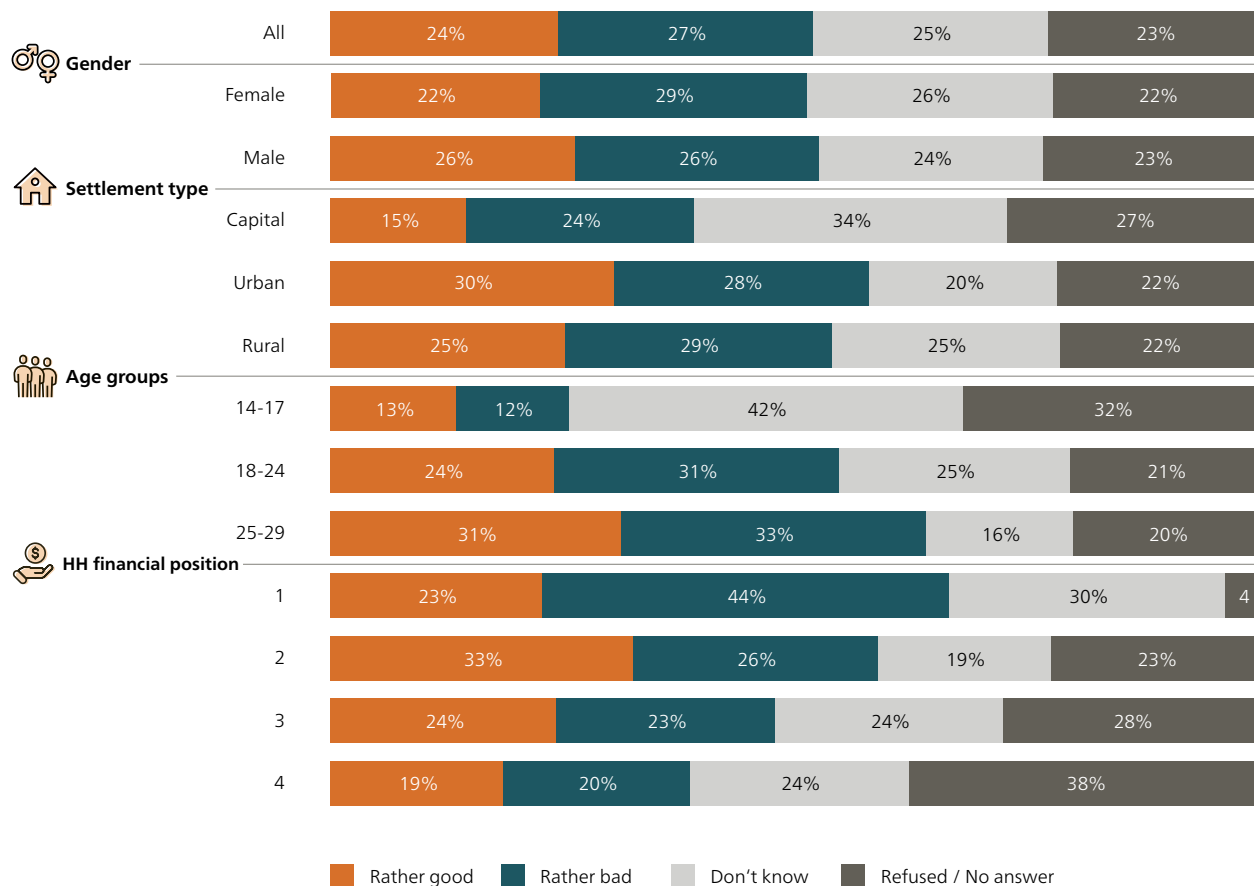
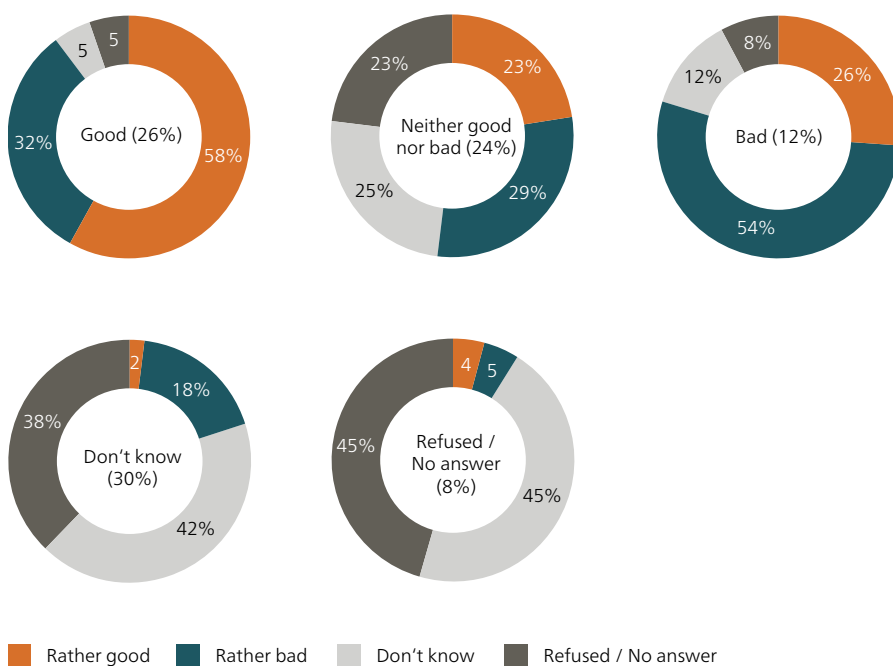
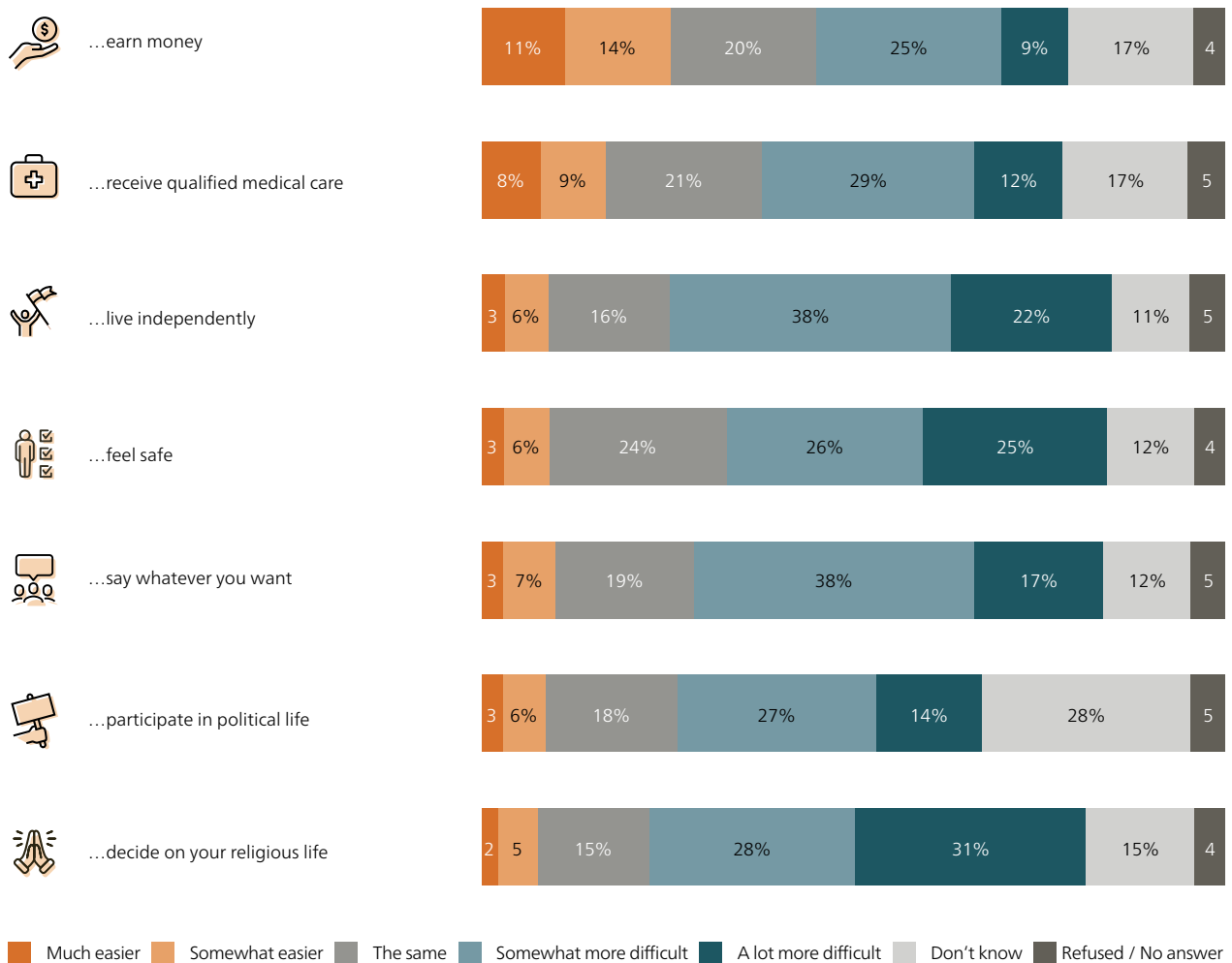


FIGURE 36: **ASSESSMENT OF THE 90s BY WHETHER THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING. (% , FULL SAMPLE)**



While positions about the impact of the 90s are divided, comparisons of the 1990s to current times indicate that those surveyed felt that life became a lot more difficult in Azerbaijan (Figure 37). For instance, young people in Azerbaijan report that today it is a lot more or somewhat more difficult to decide on your religious life (59%), live independently (60%), say whatever you want (55%), feel safe (51%) or participate in political life (41%). Despite the fact that a plurality of respondents recorded worsening conditions, a significant share of respondents reported improvements in terms of earning money (25%) and receiving qualified medical care (17%).








FIGURE 37: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT TODAY AND WHAT YOU KNOW OR IMAGINE ABOUT THE 1990s, HAS IT BECOME EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT TO... (% , full sample)



While comparing attitudes regarding the changes between the present day and the 1990s, certain geographic and educational differences were observed (Table 2). Young people in the capital were more critical than young urban and rural area residents when evaluating participation in political life, earning money and receiving qualified medical care. Conversely, the worsening of the situation regarding deciding on religious life was mentioned by young people in rural areas more frequently (64%) compared to youth in the

capital (51%) and other urban areas (55%). Increasing difficulties in this aspect were also highlighted more frequently by young people with higher (61%) and complete secondary (61%) education compared to those with primary and incomplete secondary (51%) education. However, it is important to note that education was significantly correlated with the age of respondents and logically, those from younger cohorts of the young people tend to report that they “do not know” or “refuse to answer” at a higher rate.

TABLE 2: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT TODAY AND WHAT YOU KNOW OR IMAGINE ABOUT THE 1990s, HAS IT BECOME EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT TO... BY SETTLEMENT TYPE AND EDUCATION LEVEL (% , full sample, only sum of “somewhat more difficult” and “much more difficult” answers. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

Compared to the 1990s has it become more difficult to...	Settlement type			Education		
	Capital	Urban	Rural	Primary and incom- plete sec- ondary	Completed secondary	Higher (incl. uncom- pleted higher)
 ...say whatever you want	51	57	56	51	56	57
 ...participate in political life	49*	39	39	38	39	53
 ...decide your religious life	51	55	64*	51	61*	61*
 ...earn money	48*	26	32	29	31	49
 ...receive qual- ified medical care	47*	40	37	35	40	51
 ...feel safe	43	50	55	52	49	56
 ...live inde- pendently	50	63	61	58	60	60

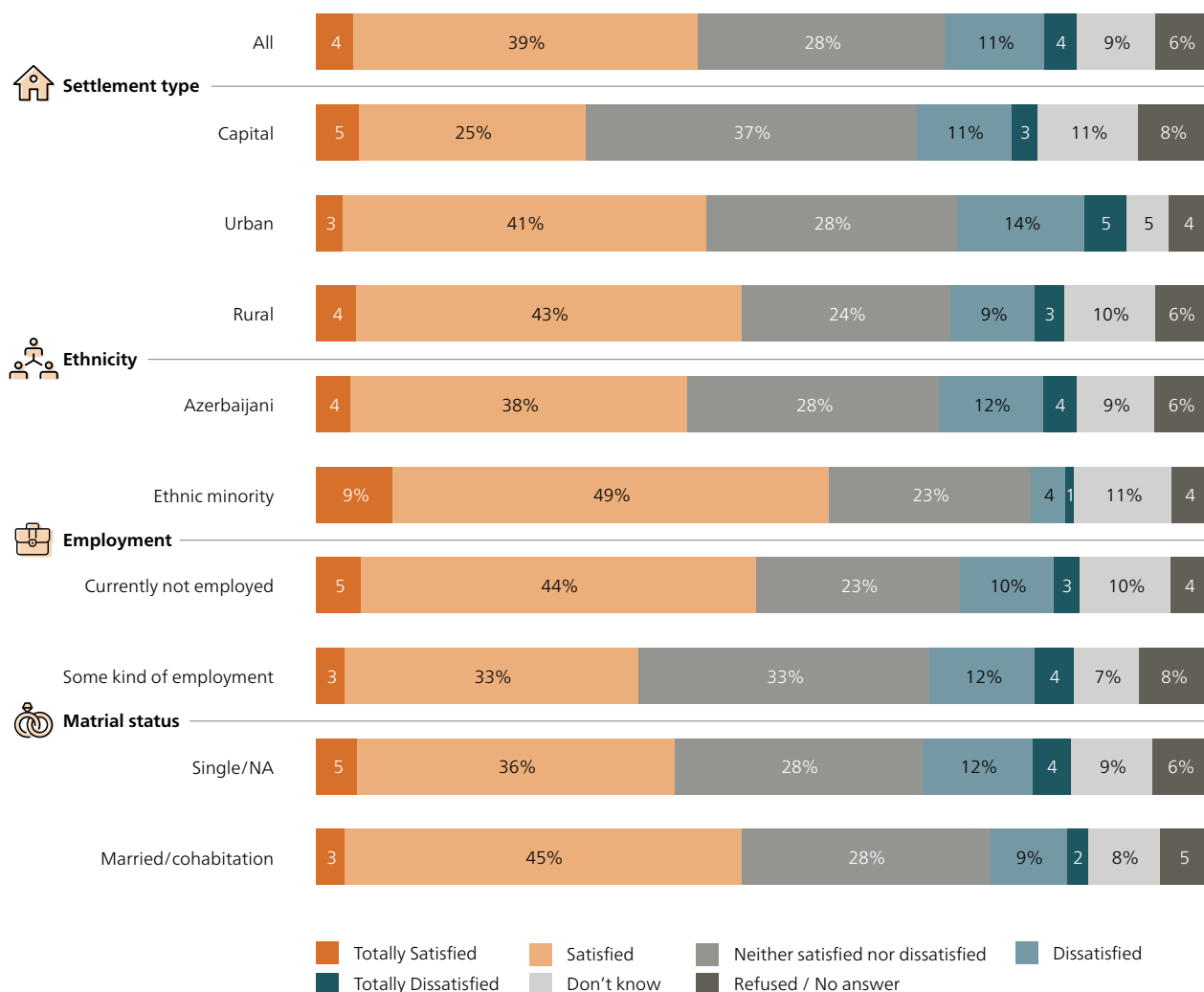
THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR

The second Karabakh war in 2020 is probably the most significant event in recent Azerbaijani history. While this conflict has been studied and investigated from multiple dimensions and by various disciplines, the purpose of this study was to get information about youth attitudes toward the events of the 44-day war, its impact on young people's immediate circle and family, as well as attitudes toward the prospects of all involved parties of the conflict.

A plurality of young people in Azerbaijan is satisfied with the outcome of the Karabakh conflict, with 43%

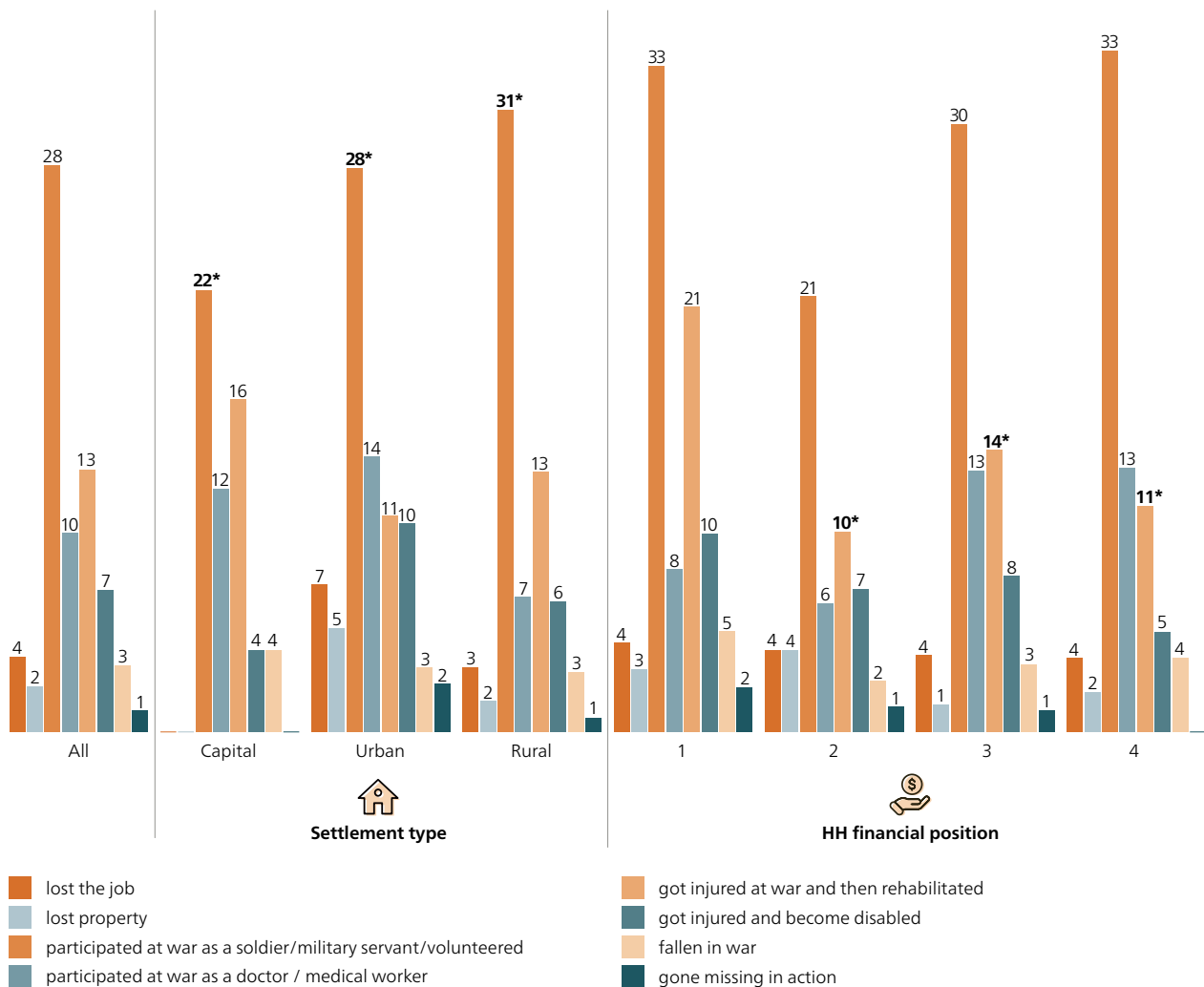
of respondents indicating different degrees of satisfaction. In general, satisfaction prevails in all investigated subgroups of young people, albeit at different degrees and intensities (Figure 38). Young people in rural (47%) and other urban areas (44%) tend to report higher overall satisfaction with the results of the 44-day war, while among youth in the capital such attitudes are a little bit more reserved (30%). The majority of youth who indicated their ethnicity was other than Azerbaijani (58%) are to a certain degree more satisfied with the consequences of the war than ethnic Azerbaijanis (42%). Interestingly, those currently not employed (49%) and married (48%) also tend to be more inclined to express satisfactory positions on this topic when compared to their peers (Figure 38).

FIGURE 38: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE KARABAKH CONFLICT? (% , full sample)



Besides being a watershed moment for contemporary Azerbaijan, the 44-day war also touched the lives of people across the country in multiple ways (Figure 39). In Azerbaijan, 28% of young people reported that members of their family participated in the war as a soldier, military servant or volunteer. These claims are more frequently made by youth from rural (31%) or urban (28%) areas than by youth from the capital city (22%). According to 13% of young people in Azerbaijan, at least one person from their family got injured in the war and was subsequently rehabilitated. Young people from the first (lowest) self-reported household financial position tend to report this at a higher rate (21%) compared to those young people from higher levels (Figure 39).

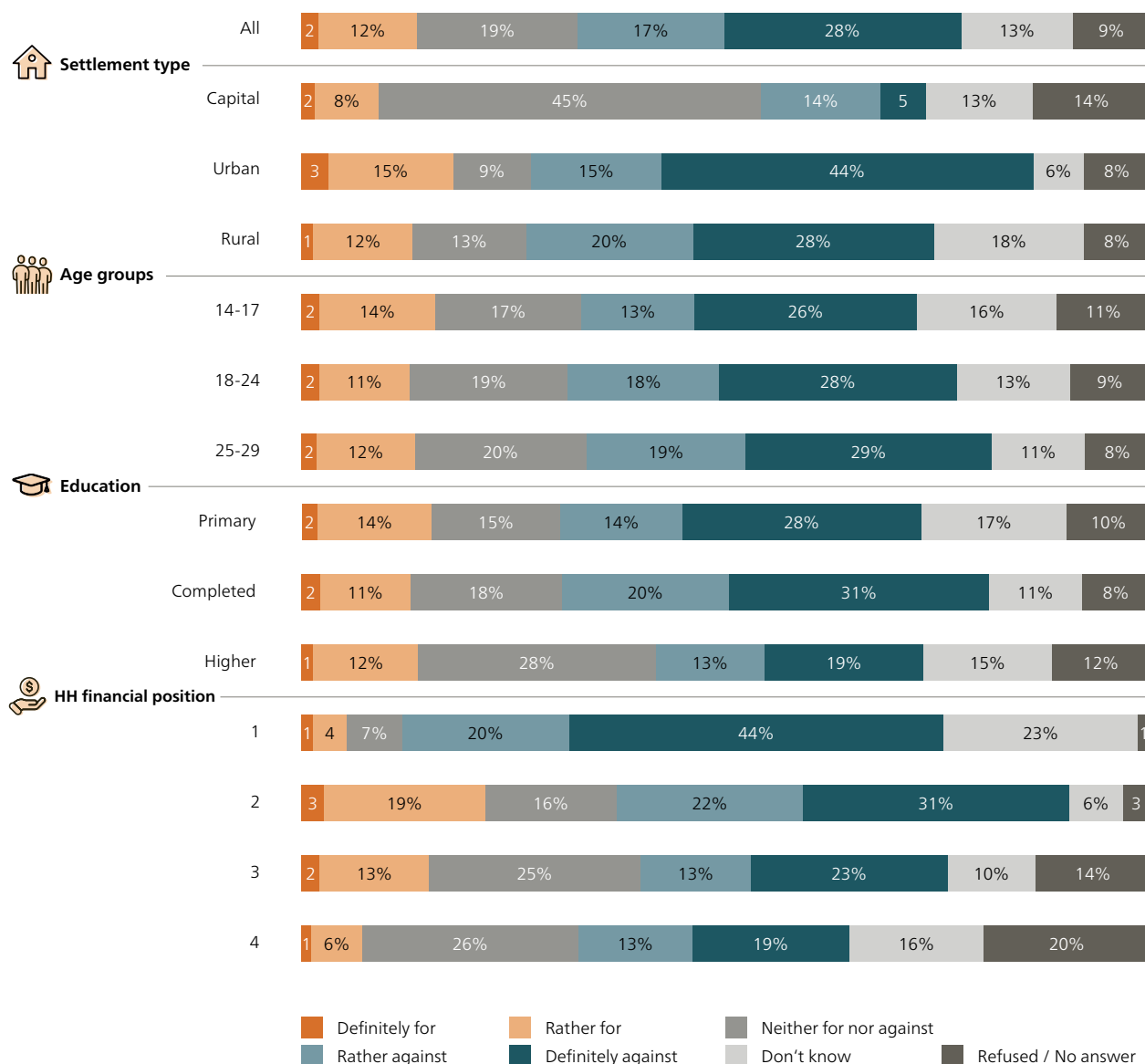
FIGURE 39: AS A RESULT OF THE 44-DAY WAR, HAS ANYONE OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS...?
(%, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Besides reflecting on the past, during the survey young people were asked questions about possible potential developments and future of the conflict. One of the most important aspects of post-war negotiations and discussions was opening the transport links between Azerbaijan and Armenia. A plurality of respondents (17% rather and 28% definitely) is against this proposition, around one-fifth of respondents (19%) have neutral positions and only 14% back this idea. The negative sentiments regarding resuming transportation between the two countries are predominant in

rural (48% against) and other urban (59%) areas, while in the capital neutral positions (45%) are prevalent. Slightly more widespread unwillingness is also observed among those with primary or complete secondary education, while young people with higher education tend to report more neutral positions regarding this topic. As for the self-reported financial positions of households, those at the bottom are the least supportive, while the degree of agreement increases as a household's financial position increases (Figure 40).

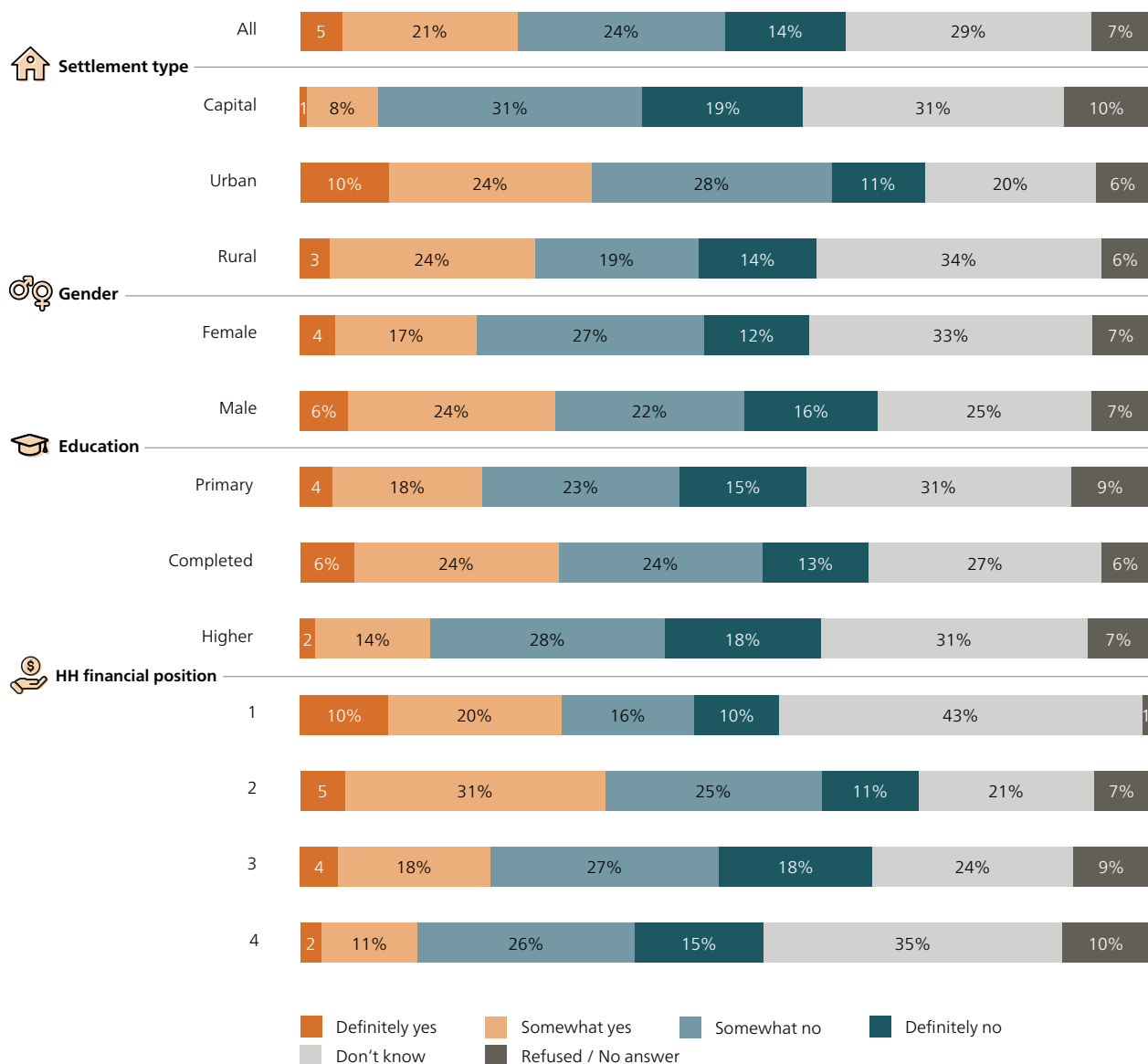
FIGURE 40: ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST OPENING THE TRANSPORT LINKS BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA? (% , full sample)



When asked about the risk of the resumption of war in Karabakh over the next 5 years, a plurality of respondents either do not know how to answer the questions (29%) or refuse (7%) to provide any response. Out of those who provided a response, the majority (38%) are inclined to think that there is no risk of a resumption of war, while 26% feel that there is some possibility of renewed hostilities. Those in the capital are less likely to feel that war in Karabakh can happen again within

the next 5 years, while this sentiment is higher in other urban and rural areas (Figure 41). Males (30%) tend to see the risk of resumption of the war more than women (21%). In addition, those with higher education and a higher self-reported household financial position also tend to feel that there will not be a new war in Karabakh over the next 5 years, while their peers with primary or secondary education and the lowest household financial positions are more pessimistic (Figure 41).

FIGURE 41: DO YOU SEE A RISK OF THE RESUMPTION OF WAR IN KARABAKH OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS? (% , full sample)

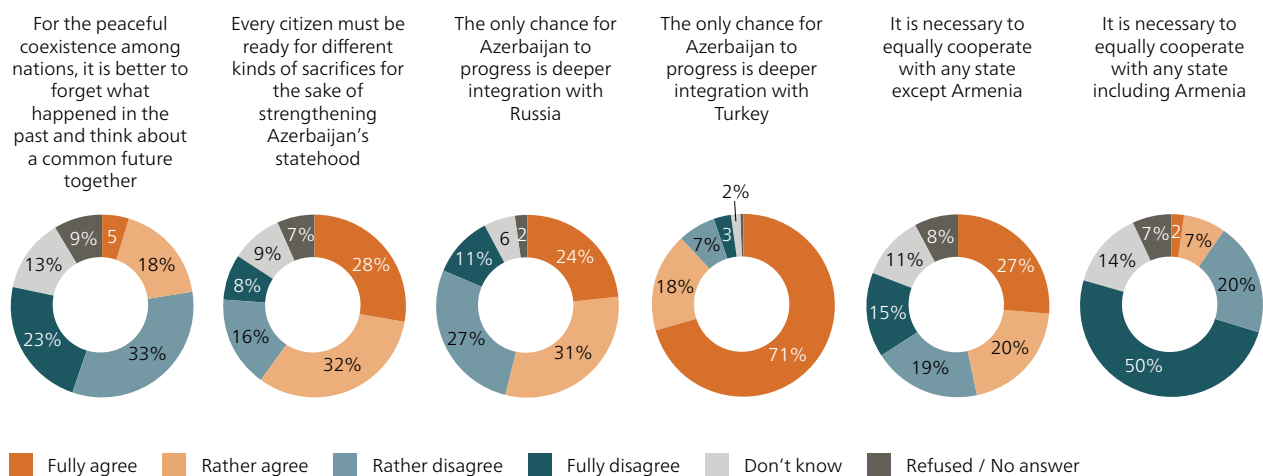


The Karabakh issue was also brought up by focus group participants. While some think that losing Azerbaijan's land and the occupation of Karabakh was the biggest mistake the government/country has made in the past (since the 1990s), most participants are also happy with the return of Karabakh and the victory on this territory. When talking about the most important issues facing the country, participants said that Karabakh has been a problem for the past 30 years and the country is now dealing with its consequences: "The press subconsciously imposes this on us and also our sense of patriotism tells us that Karabakh is our most important problem" (Male, 27). Young people mentioned that the government is now busy with construction in Karabakh and with landscaping work, which will take some time: "The landscaping of Karabakh will take at least 30-40 years, since the Armenians destroyed it" (Female, 26). In this context, according to young participants, the government of Azerbaijan is providing "assistance to veterans and families of martyrs". Participants think that it is a duty of the state to take care of these people and their families "...because they died for us and lost their families" (Female, 16). In addition, some young people also claim that the government should put more effort into promoting Karabakh in the world, "to announce that Karabakh does not belong to Armenia" (Female, 20).

While reflecting on the outcomes and consequences of the 44-day war in Karabakh, during the survey young people were also asked more general questions regarding the future of Azerbaijan, reconciliation and cooperation with its neighbours. In general, young people in Azerbaijan believe that the interest and needs of the state are above all: 60% of respondents agree that each citizen must be willing to make a variety of sacrifices to enhance Azerbaijan's statehood. For future development and progress, the absolute majority (89%) agrees with the idea that Azerbaijan should have deeper integration with Turkey. Fewer agree with this idea in the case of Russia, but still a majority (55%) think that for the country's progress, deeper integration with Russia is necessary (Figure 42).

While cooperation with large neighbouring countries is endorsed by the majority, not all nations are treated the same way. Young people in Azerbaijan reject (56%) the idea that it is convenient to put the past behind them and concentrate on a shared future for nations to thrive harmoniously and only 23% accept this opinion to a certain degree. This circumstance has implications on the positions of young people regarding the cooperation of specific neighbouring states: while 47% feel that it is necessary to equally cooperate with any state besides Armenia; when Armenia is included in the statement, the share of those who agree falls to 9% (Figure 42).

FIGURE 42: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? (% , full sample)



DISCUSSION

Young people largely have neutral or ambiguous attitudes toward the Soviet Union. The fact that more than one-third of youth fails to provide any position regarding the evaluation of the USSR's end suggests that this topic is not relevant or actively discussed among youth. The Soviet legacy, including its presence in the public sphere, architecture or placenames, has been actively replaced by modern Azerbaijani symbols and monuments.⁸¹ The shift and alienation of the Soviet Union can partially be explained by changing paradigms of what was perceived as prestigious, modern or important for advancing in the public sphere over the years or different periods. More specifically, the 1990s saw a reorientation from Russian and Russophone-centred manners to Western and Turkish-centric paradigms.⁸² The negative perception of Moscow's involvement during the tragic events of January 1990 and its perceived role in the Karabakh conflict also did not contribute to the formation of a positive or appealing image of the late Soviet Union.⁸³ Yet another possible explanation of why the Soviet Union has experienced relatively "cold neutrality" from young people is related to the nature of soviet rule in Azerbaijan. Despite enormous efforts at modernisation, socialisation or partial russification, a relatively small circle of urban residents and "intelligentsia" were affected,⁸⁴ while the broader society experienced a relatively superficial impact.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, there are a limited amount of empirical and scientific studies that can be referenced while talking about attitudes toward the Soviet Union in Azerbaijan. The scarcity of such sources makes it hard to put the survey findings into a bigger picture and draw conclusions. Therefore, more empirical studies need to be done to deeply investigate this subject.

The lack of scientific publications likewise impacted the interpretation of young people's attitudes toward the 1990s. Similar to the Soviet Union-related questions, another challenge was linked to the fact that a fair share of eligible respondents inquired during the survey had not experienced or lived in the 1990s, therefore the explanation of the provided answers becomes even more complicated. For instance, it can be argued that young people's attitudes toward things they have never experienced or witnessed could be influenced

by existing public discourse. Therefore, the fact that nearly half of the young people either do not know or refuse to provide an answer to the question of how they would evaluate the first decade of independence indirectly indicates the absence or lack of widespread public discourse on that matter. Furthermore, opinions were nearly equally divided indicating unambiguous attitudes regarding the 1990s. This decade was full of turbulent events, military conflict, civil unrest and economic hardship.⁸⁶ However, during the 2000s and 2010s, due to the increasing price of oil, the country's economic and financial capacities have been boosted.⁸⁷ Therefore, it can be theorised that the following decades have overshadowed the 1990s. However, economic improvements do not assume that other aspects of social life have developed. A plurality of young people indicated that compared to the 1990s it has become challenging to make decisions about religious life, live independently, have freedom of speech, feel safe or participate in political life, while slight improvements were mentioned in financial positions and access to medical care. This is aligned with existing scholarly literature that suggests revenue from selling oil products enabled the government to satisfy the economic needs of the population, but at the same time restricted democratic liberties and freedom of speech.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, young people's attitudes toward the 1990s are still less investigated and further research on this topic is required.

The second Karabakh war is probably one of the most significant events in modern Azerbaijani history. Unlike the Soviet Union or the 1990s, this event touched and directly influenced the young people in Azerbaijan.⁸⁹ The victory in the war and reclamation of significant portions of occupied territories has boosted the public mood in Azerbaijan.⁹⁰ This is consistent with the survey findings, as a plurality of young people are also pleased with the outcome of the war. At the same time, few support the establishment or renewal of any kind of relationship with Armenians or the Armenian state. Despite the victory in the war, Armenia is still perceived as a major threat to Azerbaijan. Probably, that is why for a plurality of young people cooperation with the Armenian state or Armenians is off the table. This is in part because, formally, the chapter of war has never been closed and a fragile peace makes it hard to think about the future.⁹¹

PART SIX: IDENTITY, VALUES AND RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

Young people's values and identities, as well as their stances on the important topics of religion, societal norms and institutions greatly impact and shape their personalities. The significance of investigating young people's positions regarding those crucial aspects of social life becomes even more meaningful when taking into consideration the fact that youth make up a third of the country's population.⁹² The successful socialisation and integration of young people into mainstream educational or economic institutions has been argued to be the key to societal stability in Caucasian and central Asian countries and Azerbaijan is no exception.⁹³ Nevertheless, recent studies on this topic suggest that the situation is far from perfect.⁹⁴ Specifically, Valiyev and Babayev claim that state youth policies are not fully effective and policymakers show "little to no commitment for understanding the needs and challenges encountered by the youth."⁹⁵ Therefore, this study provides yet another possibility for all stakeholders to understand young people's characteristics. In this chapter the identities and value orientations of youth will be covered.

That said, the first investigated topic in this chapter is focused on young people's identities and sense of belonging. The Azerbaijani state has invested a lot of resources, including those appealing to younger cohorts of society, to finalise the state- and identity-building project.⁹⁶ Moreover, it has been suggested that the promotion of civic-national identities is a very important and desired outcome of the nation-building project in Azerbaijan.⁹⁷ Hence, during the survey, young people were inquired about how they perceive themselves, as well as their desired way of arranging social interactions and relationships between different groups in society.

Institutional trust is another investigated area, as previous studies have shown that despite rich financial capacities the quality of Azerbaijani institutional development is relatively fragile.⁹⁸ At the same time, institutional trust is a crucial element of the successful functioning of state institutions and in this regard findings from the study could be used to explain the effectiveness and efficiency of the state apparatus.

Last but not least, the final topic covered in this section of the report is the family environment and conditions of young people. The family occupies a special role in Azerbaijani society and culture and traditionally significantly influences people's lives.⁹⁹ Therefore, it was interesting to investigate this topic among young people living in modern Azerbaijan, how attached or detached they are from their families and what type of dynamics exist between different generations. Moreover, the positions of young people related to their parental intentions were investigated. Ultimately, this makes it possible to perceive the nearly complete picture of youth living in contemporary Azerbaijan.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Azerbaijani citizenship (90%) is the most widespread self-identification among young people. This is followed by local-regional (68%) and Caucasian (66%) self-conceptions. Conversely, more cosmopolitan identities, like being a citizen of the world (36%) or European (9%) are shared by significantly smaller portions of young people.
- Interestingly, only a quarter (25%) of young people see themselves as belonging to their ethnic groups, while a third of respondents (33%) reject this idea.
- Local regional (belonging to a specific town, village or region) or Caucasian identities are more prevalent among young people living outside the capital. As for ethnicity, young people that indicated their ethnicity other than Azerbaijani emphasise belonging to a specific ethnicity (66%) more frequently than youngsters who identified themselves as ethnic Azerbaijanis (22%).
- While the majority (72%) disagree that religious institutions have a special role in Azerbaijani society, nearly the same share (67%) of young people oppose the idea that freedom of speech entails possible criticism of all religions.
- Attitudes toward religion and freedom of speech differ by settlement type. Those living in Baku (54%) are more supportive of the idea that free speech involves criticism of religion compared to those living in other urban (30%) or rural (24%) areas. At the same time, young people from the capital (50%) report the special role of religious institutions more

frequently compared to youth from rural (24%) and other urban (19%) areas. Those with higher education also highlight the importance of religious institutions more frequently than those with a lower level of education.

- Young people are mostly inclined to support the universality of the dominant culture: 58% think that immigrants should adapt to Azerbaijani cultural traditions and 50% claim that it would be best for the country if everyone follows the same customs and traditions. Furthermore, 64% reject the idea that the fusion of different religions and cultures can be beneficial for Azerbaijan.
- Support for religious and cultural heterogeneity is more widespread among young people living in the capital (55%) compared to those living in other urban (23%) and rural (36%) areas. Urban youth are also a bit less supportive of the idea that immigrants should adapt to Azerbaijani cultural traditions.
- Despite traditional-preservation stances on culture and society, the majority (63%) of respondents report that minority children should have the opportunity to be taught their native language in addition to their ordinary classes in Azerbaijani. Moreover, the majority (54%) think that Azerbaijani society shares certain cultural traits with other countries.
- A minority of respondents (40%) accept the position that individuals should take more responsibility and rely less on the government. Young people from the capital (52%) are more supportive of such individualistic values than other urban (36%) or rural (37%) youth. The prevalence of personal responsibility is greater among young people with higher education (50%) compared to youth with secondary (39%) or primary (35%) schooling.
- Family values and merits associated with personal success or physical appearance are universally accepted by Azerbaijani youth, while civic participation activities are endorsed less frequently. For instance, marriage (82%), having children (77%), being faithful to a partner (86%), taking responsibility (86%), being independent (86%), looking good (82%) and eating healthy (87%) are important to a substantial majority of youth. A smaller majority of young people mentioned doing sports (58%) and getting rich (62%) as important.
- Being active in politics (29%) or participating in civic actions or initiatives (32%) is a shared value for only

a third of the youth in Azerbaijan. Engagement in political and civic actions is relatively higher in the capital – for 44% being active in politics and, for 49% participation in civic actions, is important. At the same time, 27% of other urban settlements believe that being active in politics is important, while this index is 24% among rural youth. A total of 34% of urban and 24% of rural youth also believe that participation in civic initiatives is important.

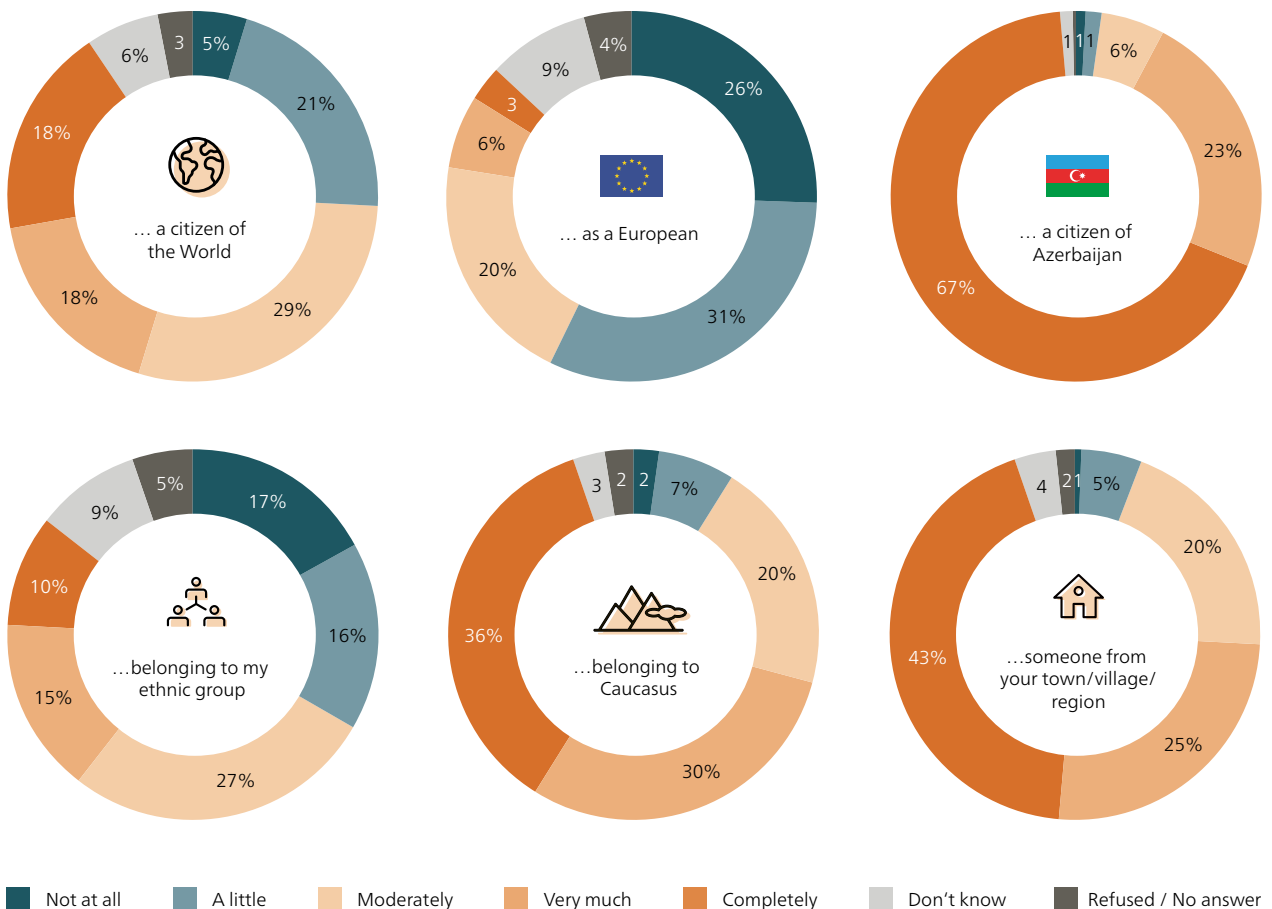
- Personal dignity (35%), social prestige (19%) and material wealth (14%) are among the most important values for young people in Azerbaijan. And for compassion-related values, altruism (14%) was also frequently mentioned, while values like tolerance (3%) and solidarity (1%) were slightly neglected.
- Young people in Azerbaijan have a great deal of trust in law enforcement and executive government institutions: the army (97%), president (93%), police (83%) and national government (70%) are among the most trusted institutions.
- Among the least trusted institutions in Azerbaijan are the media (46% distrust), political parties (46% distrust) and civil society organisations (42% distrust). Those institutions are more trusted among young people living in Baku compared to those living outside the capital city. In addition, those with higher education also tend to report relatively elevated levels of trust in the above-mentioned institutions.
- People from Armenia (57%), queer people¹⁰⁰ (37%) and drug addicts (23%) are the most rejected social groups and respondents noted they could even be refused entry into Azerbaijan. As for the most welcomed categories, young people would accept refugees (14%) and internally displaced people (10%) as family members.
- A majority of young people live with their parents in nuclear or extended families. In general, young people report getting along well with their parents (87%) and only a small minority report having a very conflicted relationship (2%). Only 5% report living with a friend or other relative and less than 1% say they live alone. The number of those living with their partner/spouse and children is higher among rural youth than among urban residents and young people from the capital.
- Half of the youth in Azerbaijan (52%) are single and around one-third (34%) are married. Marriage

rates are slightly higher among rural (37%) youth compared to young people from urban areas (33%) or the capital (29%). Young women are more likely to indicate being married (42%) than young men (27%). Being married is strongly correlated with having children (34% reported having at least one child). As for those without children, the majority (60%) plan to have children in the future.

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Civic national self-identification prevails when young people in Azerbaijan are asked how they see their identities in terms of ethnic, regional or international self-identification. Nine in ten (90%) youth view themselves as citizens of Azerbaijan. Simultaneously, a vast majority of young people have a local and broader regional identity – 68% indicated having town, village or regional bonds and 66% reported belonging to the Caucasus. Interestingly, ethnic identification is shared by only 25% of respondents, while 33% do not see themselves as part of their own ethnic group. Young people in Azerbaijan predominantly do not see themselves as Europeans – with only 9% agreeing with this statement. However, slightly more than one-third of young people (36%) see themselves as citizens of the World (Figure 43).

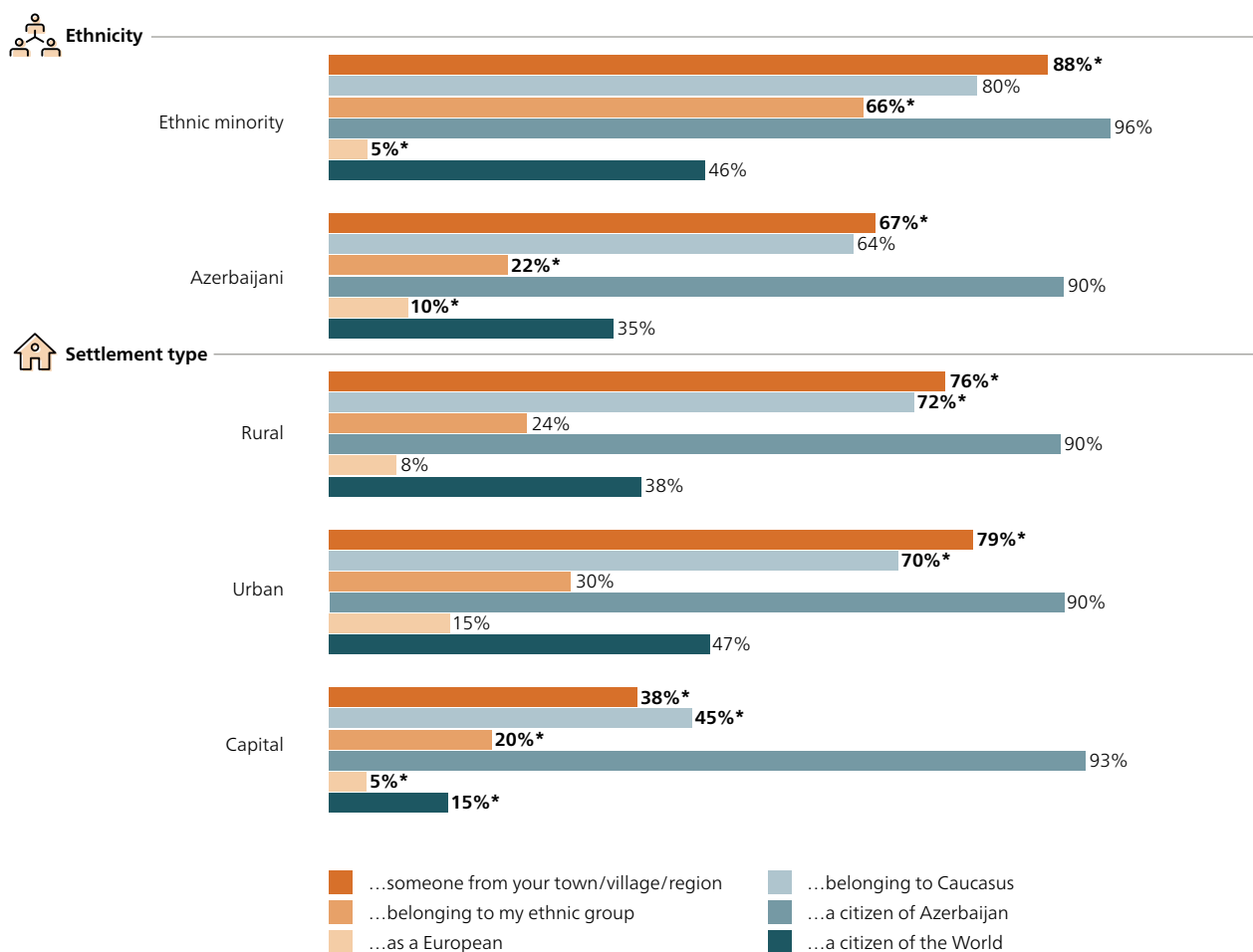
FIGURE 43: HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (% , full sample)



Self-reported ethnicity and settlement type is associated with how young people in Azerbaijan perceive themselves (Figure 44). For example, youth that indicated their ethnicity was other than Azerbaijani tend to be more likely to say that they see themselves as someone from their hometown, village or region when compared to ethnic Azerbaijanis (88% vs 67%). The same applies to the ethnic group belongingness option – young people that indicated their ethnicity was other than Azerbaijani more strongly associate themselves with their ethnic groups (66%) compared to their peers among ethnic Azerbaijanis (22%). As for the differences among settlement types, the biggest discrepancies are attested in the case of local self-identification:

while in rural (76%) and other urban (79%) areas, more than three-quarters of respondents associate themselves with a local town, village or region, the same figures are only 38% in the capital city. Those living outside the capital also (rural 72%, other urban 70%) tend to associate themselves with Caucasian identity, while in Baku (45%) less than half of the young people share this tendency. The capital city versus rest of the country dichotomy is present in case of belonging to an ethnic group, being European or being a citizen of the world. In all cases, young people in rural and other urban areas seem to report slightly higher rates of acceptance answers than their peers in the capital (Figure 44).

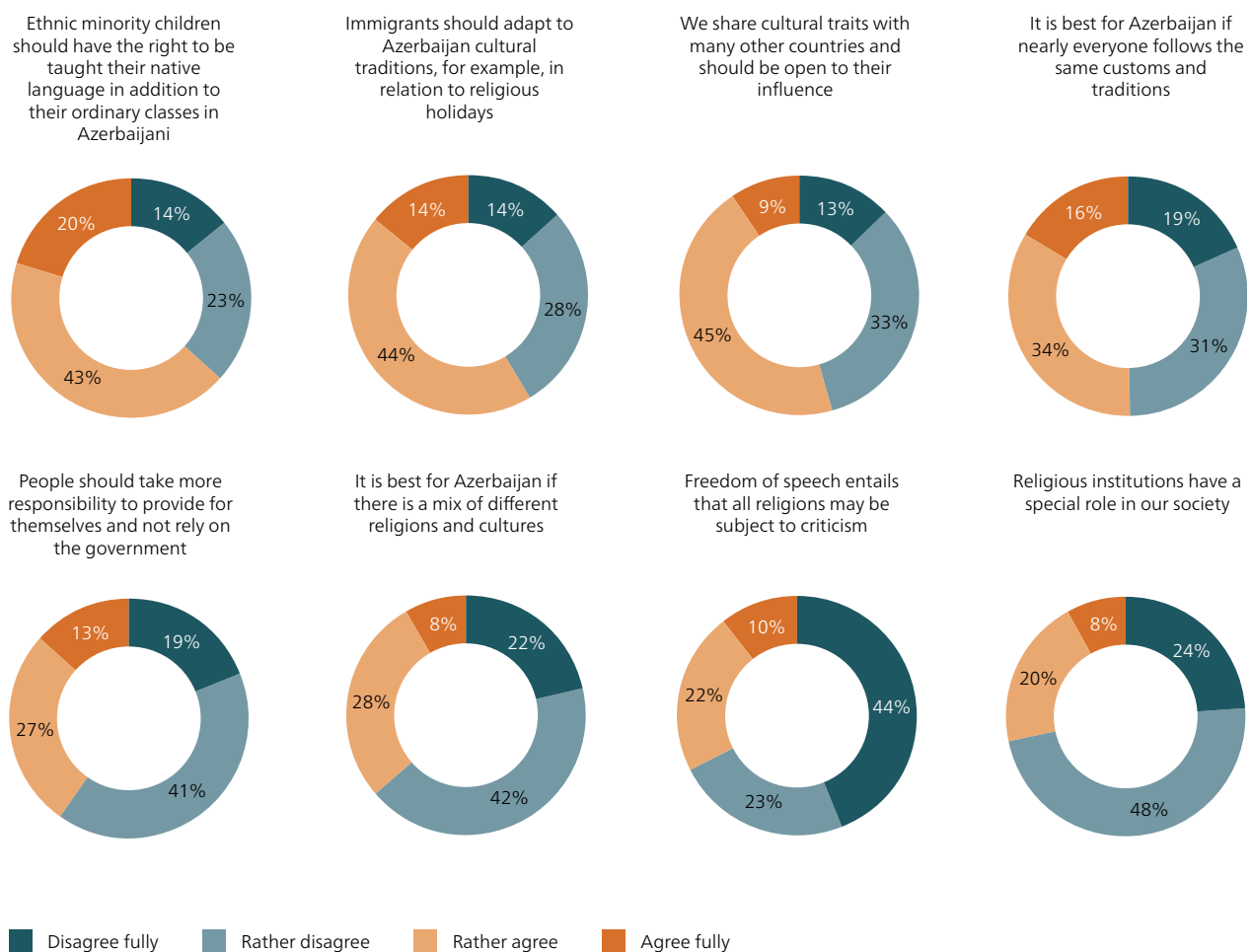
FIGURE 44: HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS ...? (Only the sum of the “very much” and “completely” answers provided, %. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Young people in Azerbaijan have diverging attitudes regarding multiple topics that generally shape personal identity and values. According to survey results, youth tend to lean towards conservative and conversation-related values, while showing a certain degree of openness to foreign cultures (Figure 45). For example, 63% agree that ethnic minority children should have the ability to be taught their native language in addition to the Azerbaijani language. A majority of respondents (54%) also believe that Azerbaijani society shares cultural traits with other countries and hence should be open to their influence. Besides such elements of cultural openness, in other aspects young people tend to be more traditional. A majority of respondents (58%) claim that immigrants should accommodate their cultural traditions to Azerbaijani traditions and, in general,

half of the youth (50%) believes that it is desirable if everyone adheres to the same customs and traditions. Moreover, young people in Azerbaijan predominantly (64%) tend to disagree with idea that a mixture of different religions or cultures could be beneficial for the country. In terms of attitudes regarding religion, young people report varied positions: while rejecting the idea that freedom of speech entails that all religions may be subject to criticism (67% disagree), less than one-third of respondents (28%) thinks that religious institutions have a special role in Azerbaijani society. Last but not least, our observation of the Azerbaijani youth indicates that a majority lean toward paternalistic opinions regarding the state, as 60% disagree that individuals should be more responsible and not rely on the government (Figure 45).

FIGURE 45: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH OPTIONS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (% , full sample)



Variation across settlement type, gender and educational achievement is apparent when examining the degree of endorsement of the above-stated opinions between key socio-demographic categories (Figure 46). Notably, those living in the capital (55%) report higher levels of support for cultural and religious diversity compared to those in other urban (23%) or rural (36%) areas. Young people from Baku (53%) and other urban areas (55%) are also somewhat more prone to report lower levels of support for immigrants adapting cultural traditions than rural (63%) youth. Conversely, rural youth are more supportive (70%) of ethnic minority children learning their native language in addition to Azerbaijani than youngsters from urban areas (59%) and the capital (53%). This position is also supported more by young people with higher (61%) and completed secondary (67%) education than those with only primary education (54%).

Young people in the capital are also more supportive of the universality of freedom of speech (54%), even if it entails criticism of religion, in comparison to other urban (30%) and rural (24%) youth. When it comes to the role of religious institutions in society, however, 50% of young people in Baku agree that they have a special role, while only 19% of other urban and 24% of rural youth agree. The latter statement is more supported by young people with higher education (41%) than by those with complete secondary (24%) or primary education (28%). In addition, young people with higher education, males and those living in the capital tend to be more supportive of the idea of personal responsibility over reliance on the government (Figure 47).

FIGURE 46: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH OPTIONS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (Only the sum of the “rather agree” and “agree fully” answers provided, %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

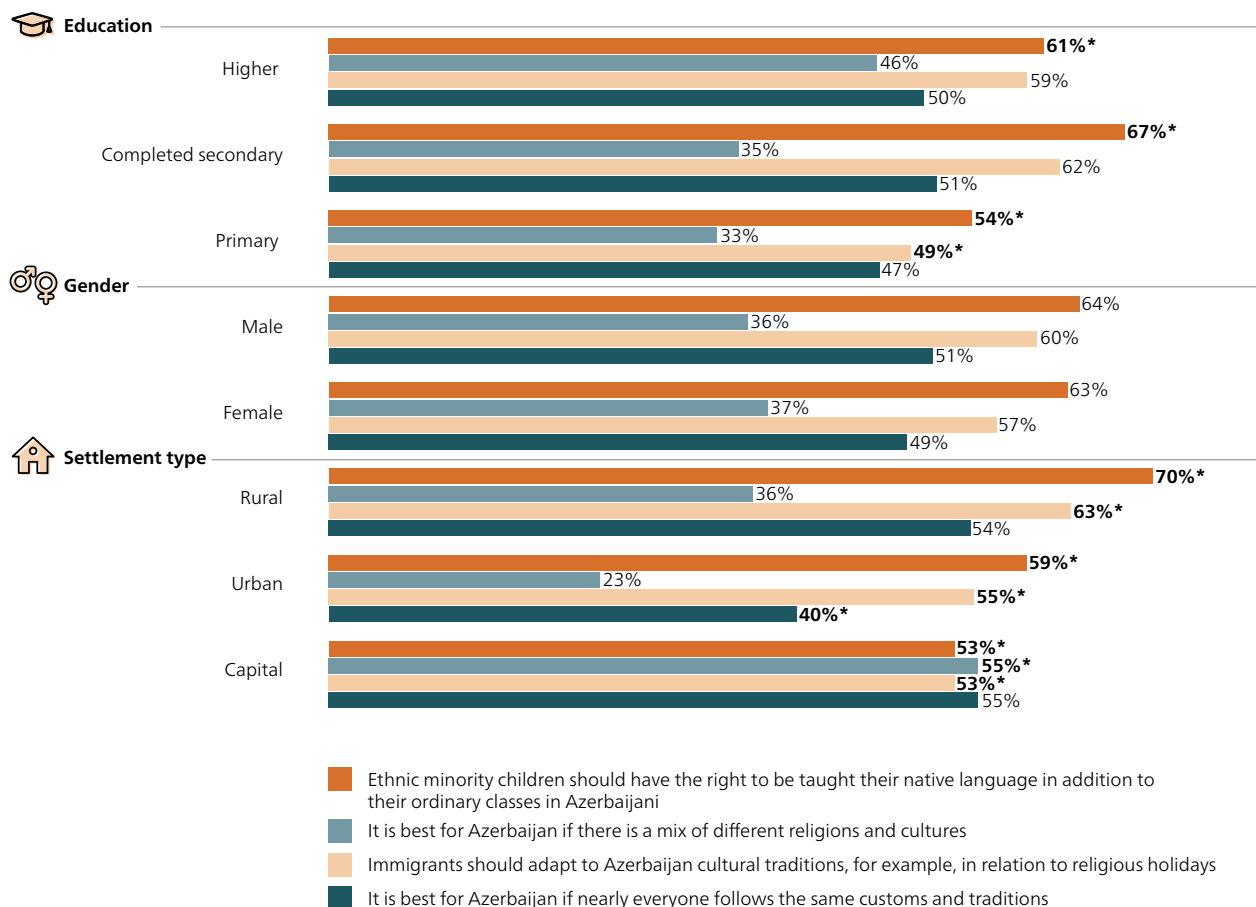
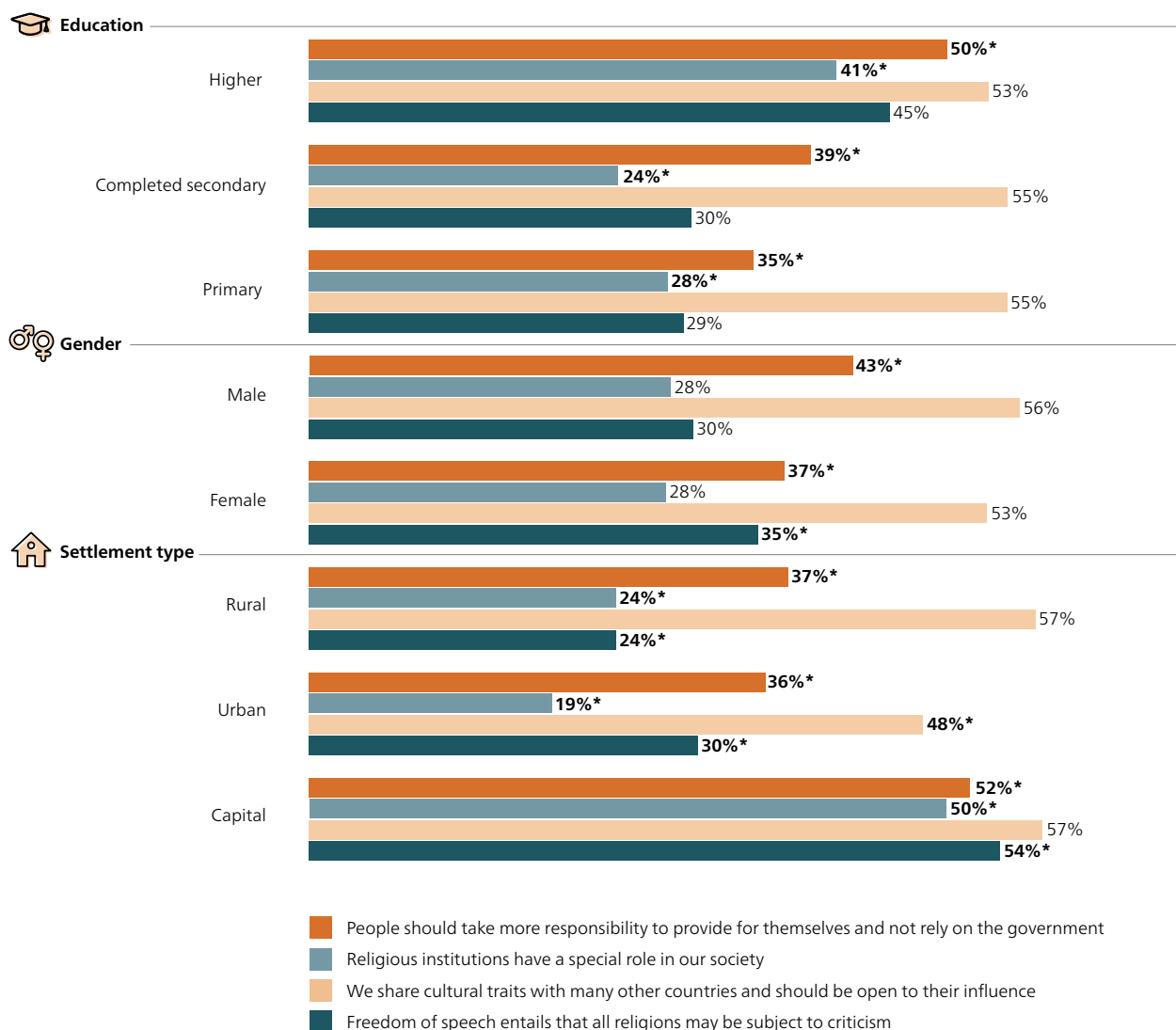


FIGURE 47: **IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH OPTIONS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (Only sum of the “Rather agree” and “Agree fully” answers provided %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)**



In conclusion, young people in Azerbaijan typically hold traditional and conservative beliefs. A plurality of respondents prefer cultural homogeneity and uniformity over the diversity of cultural traditions or religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the majority acknowledges that ethnic minority children have full rights to be educated in their native languages while simultaneously studying Azerbaijani. When it comes to positions regarding religion or religious institutions, young people's positions diverge. On one hand, the majority believe that in the context of freedom of speech one can also criticise

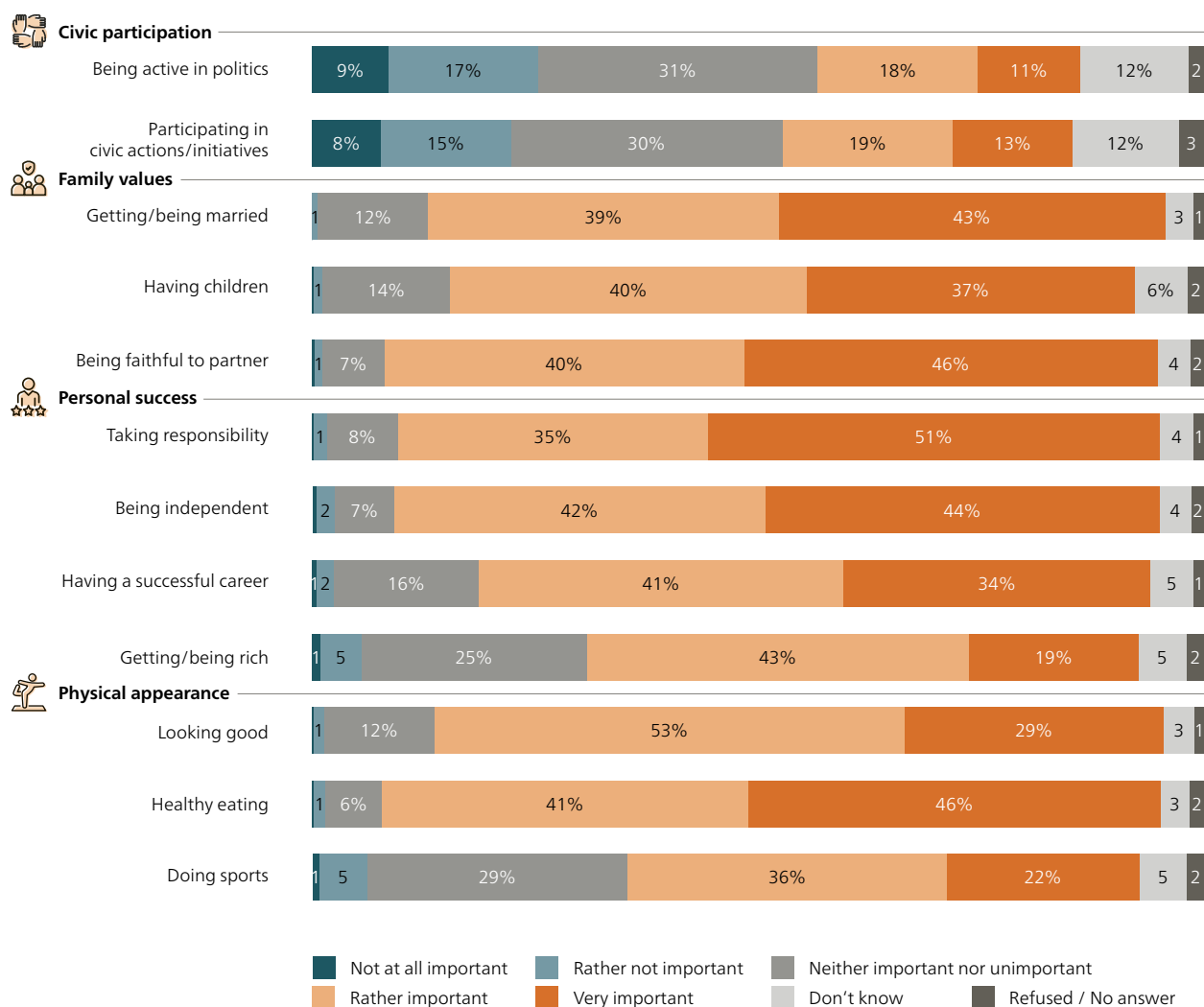
religion, while almost the same portion of respondents agrees that religious intuitions hold a special position within the society. A more detailed analysis also reveals that those with higher education and living in the capital or urban areas tend to be relatively more open to cultural diversity and freedom of speech. Yet another characteristic of young people is a trend toward paternalistic values, however, in Baku, the majority of respondents support the idea of taking more personal responsibility.

THE VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The survey also investigated the positions young people in Azerbaijan hold regarding different values, beliefs and aspirations. In total, 12 different statements were investigated that were theoretically grouped into four broad categories: civic participation, family values, personal success and physical appearance (Figure 48). The least endorsed values were associated with civic participation: a plurality of young people have indifferent and neutral positions regarding the importance of being active in politics (31%) or participating in civic actions and activities (30%). Moreover, around a

quarter of respondents believe that political (26%) and civic (23%) activities are not important. Unlike civic participation, the remaining set of values received the support of most young people. The strongest support was shown for family values: a vast majority of young people think that being faithful to their partner (86%), getting or being married (82%) and having children (77%) are important. In general, personal success is also valuable for young people, however, taking responsibility (86%) or being independent (86%) are rated a bit higher than having a successful career (75%) or enrichment (62%). As for physical appearance-related values, participating in sports (58%) is less important for youth in Azerbaijan than looking good (82%) or eating healthy (87%).

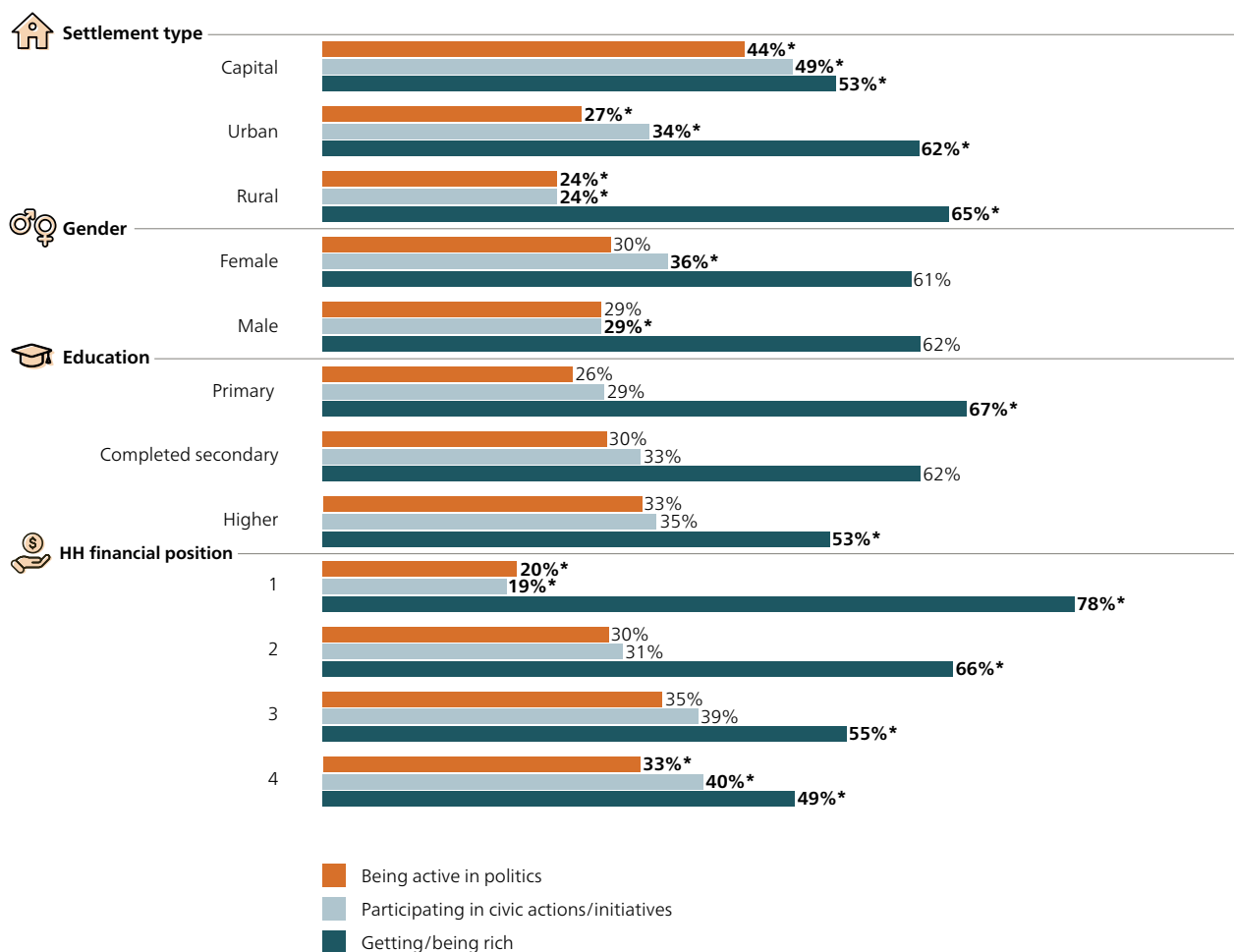
FIGURE 48: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (% , full sample)



A detailed analysis of different subgroups of young people showed that the most meaningful differences are observed for civic participation values and getting rich aspirations. Young people in the capital (49%) seem to be more supportive of civic participation than those living in other urban (34%) and rural (24%) areas. In addition, females (36%) tend to be slightly more supportive of civic participation than males (29%). As for the financial position of households, those households with the highest self-reported financial position tend to be more supportive of civic activities than those at the bottom of the imaginary financial ladder. Apart from gender, being active in politics mirrors the findings of

civic participation values: those living in the capital and with a better household financial condition are more likely to say that being active in politics is important (Figure 49). When it comes to getting rich aspirations, those living in rural (65%) and other urban (62%) areas seem to value it relatively more than youth in the capital (53%). Young people at the lowest step of household financial positions (78%) value getting rich to a higher degree compared to those with leading financial positions (49%). In addition, those with higher education mention the importance of this value less frequently than those with primary education (Figure 49).

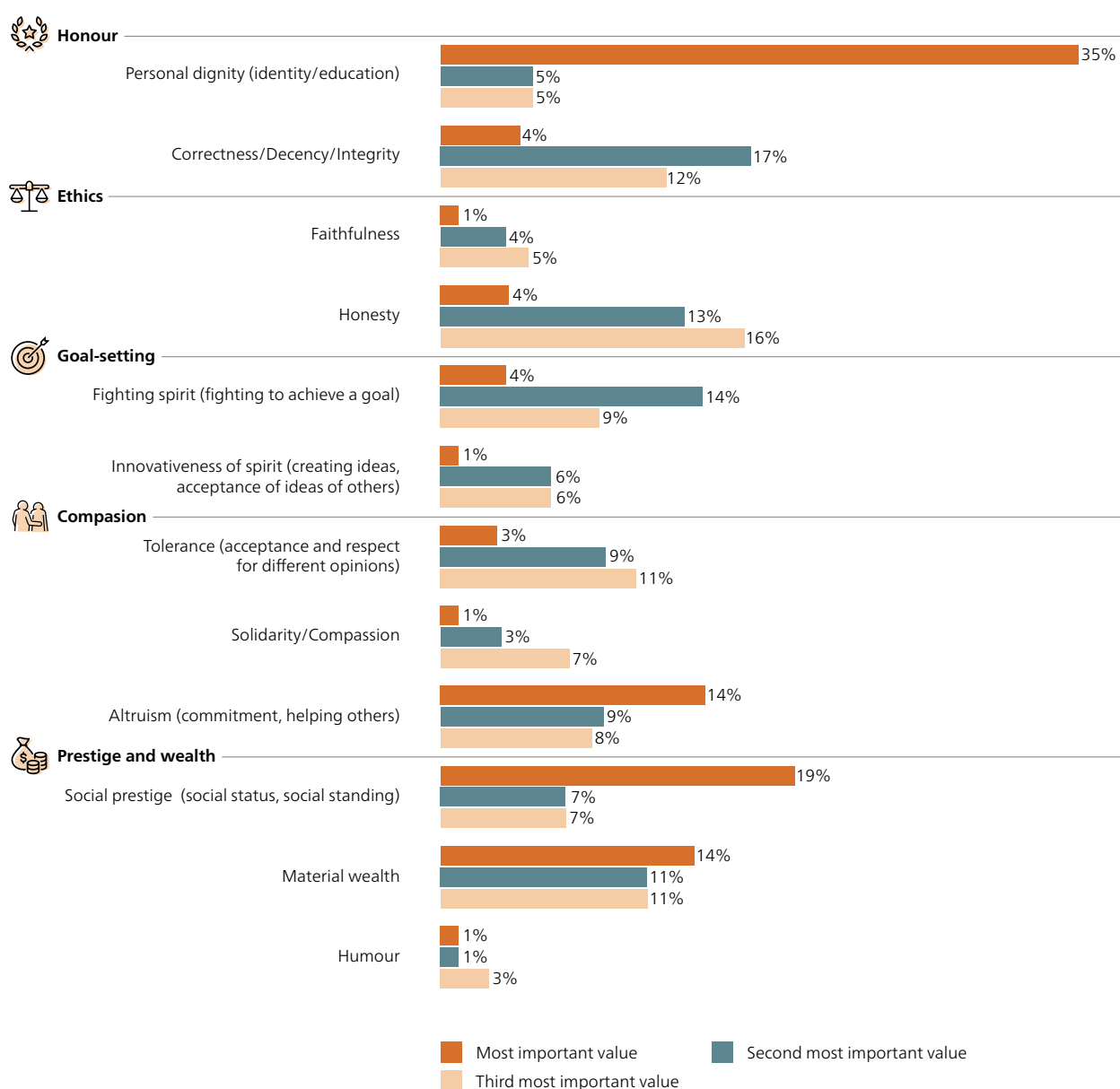
FIGURE 49: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (Only the sum of the “very important” and “rather important” answers provided, %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Young people were also inquired about how they rank different values. These values can be categorised as honour, ethics, goal-setting, compassion, prestige and wealth. Young people in Azerbaijan mostly value honour-related principles like personal dignity (35%), as well as social prestige (19%) and wealth (14%) (Figure 50). From compassion-related topics, altruism (14%) was the most frequently mentioned value. While ethical-related factors are rarely selected as the most

important values, honesty was one of the most mentioned as the second and the third most important value. A similar trend was observed for correctness, decency and integrity (17% as the second most important and 12% as the third most important), as well as tolerance (9% as the second most important and 11% as the third most important). Values like faithfulness, solidarity, innovation or humour were rarely mentioned (Figure 50).

FIGURE 50: WHICH THREE OF THE OFFERED VALUES DO YOU VALUE MOST? (% , full sample)



TRUST AND DISTRUST

Young people's attitudes toward various social and governmental institutions in Azerbaijan indicates the existence of extreme trust and distrust (Figure 51). The Azerbaijani army is the most trusted institution as 91% report full trust, while an additional 6% also trust it quite a lot. Other institutions associated with authority, like the president (93%), police (83%) and national government (70%) also enjoy the support of more than two-thirds of the youth in Azerbaijan. The remaining institutions experience moderate or reserved levels of trust, as a significant portion of young people find it hard to report specific positions regarding those institutions. The least trusted institution turned out to be political parties (46%) and the Azerbaijani media (46%), while nearly one-third of young people (30%) find it hard to evaluate their positions regarding trade unions.

While investigating the differences regarding institutional trust across different socio-demographic groups of young people, certain variations were detected, however, trust towards the most trusted institutions is often on the same level regardless of gender, age, settlement type or educational attainment (Figure 52). For instance, trust in the army is high across every socio-demographic group of Azerbaijani youth. As for the second most trusted institution, the president, trust is also enormous across all groups, albeit there is a modest difference across settlement type. Young people in the capital (100%) are more likely to report higher levels of support than those living in other urban (89%) or rural (91%) areas. In general, young people in the capital report higher levels of institutional trust in the case of the national government, judiciary (courts) and police than their counterparts in other urban and rural areas. As for gender, females tend to be a bit more trusting of the national government, judiciary and police than males, however, the differences are not immense. As for educational attainment, those with higher education trust the judiciary and police more compared to those with completed secondary and primary education (Figure 52).

FIGURE 51: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (% , full sample)

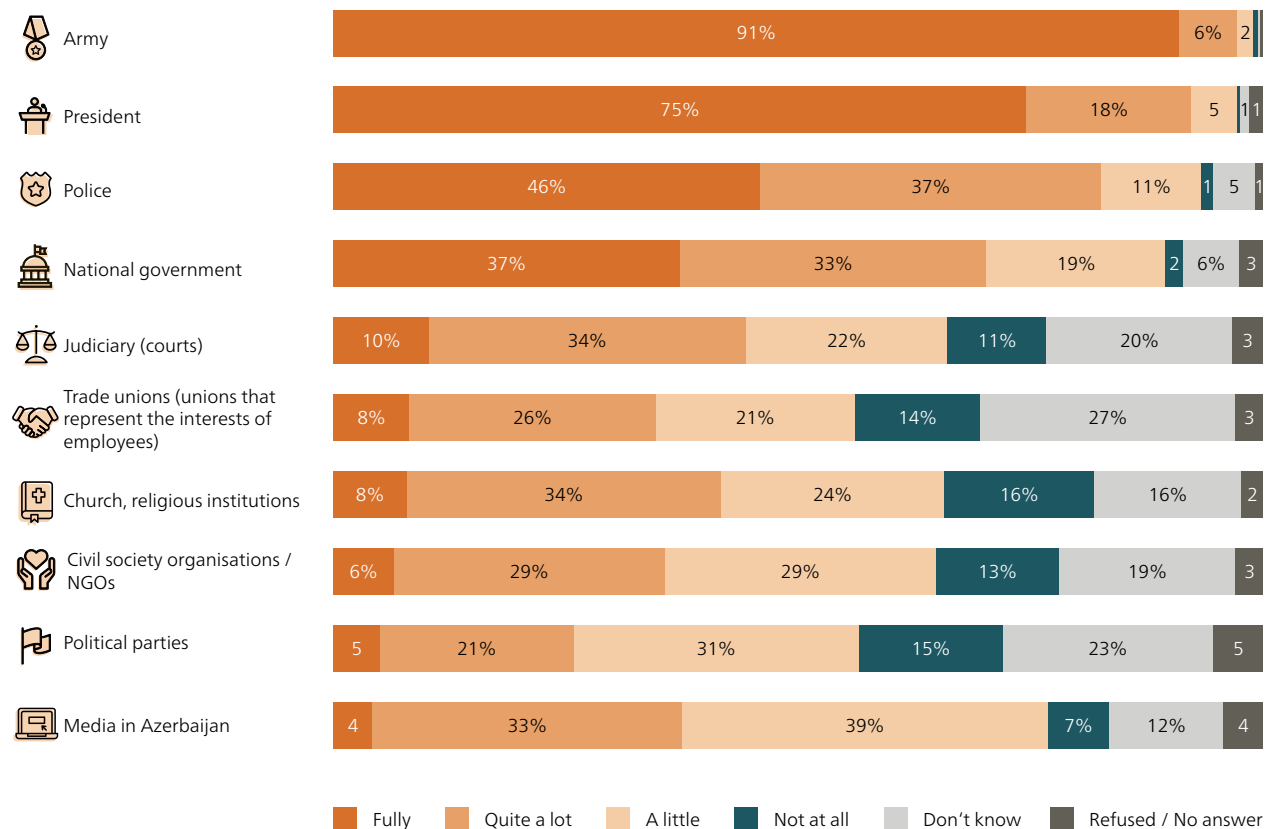
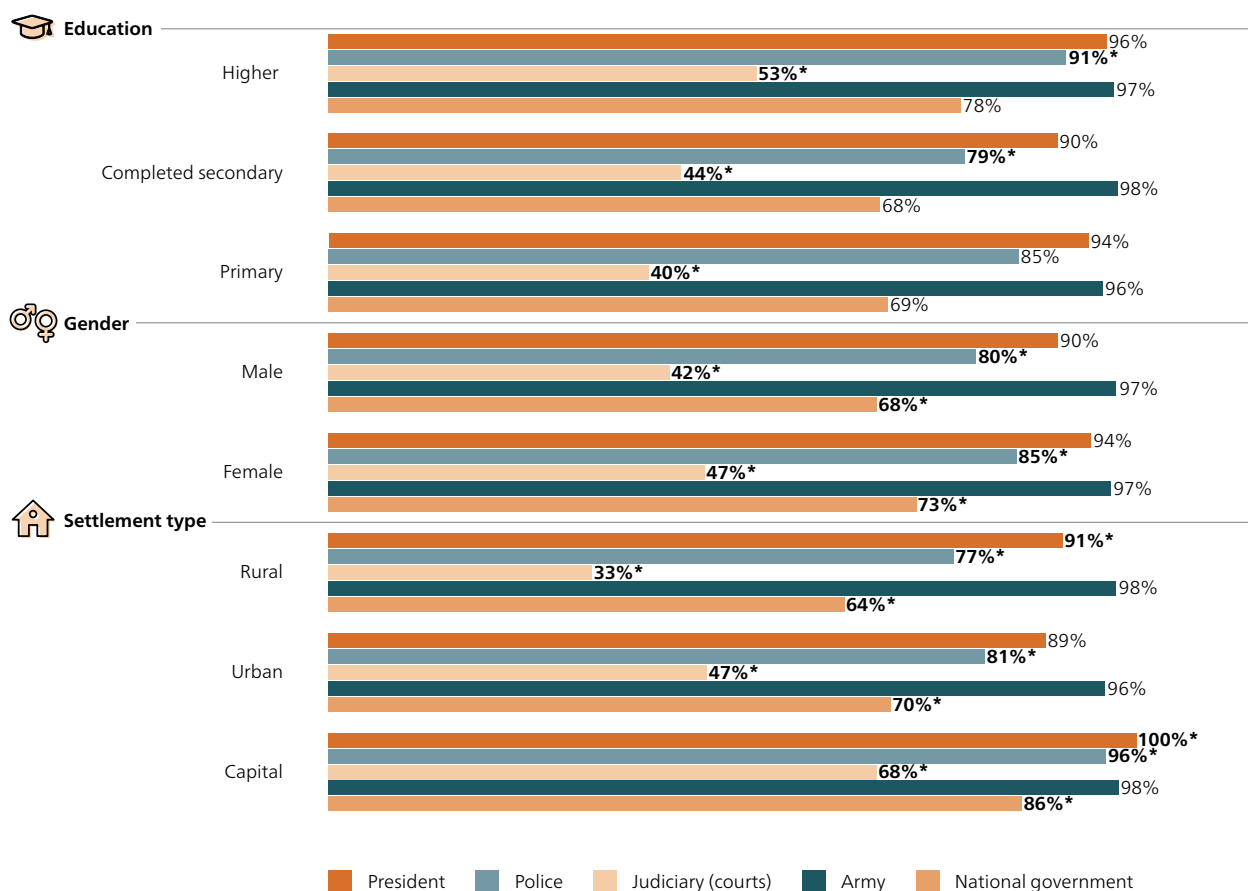


FIGURE 52: **HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (Only “quite a lot” and “fully trust” answers, %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)**



Differences were also attested among less trusted institutions (Figure 53). For instance, despite the reserved levels of nation-wide institutional trust in civil society organisations, political parties, religious institutions, the media and trade unions, all of them enjoy the trust of a majority of young people living in the capital, while in the other urban and rural areas, the levels of trust diminish by nearly half (Figure 53). Similar to certain highly trusted institutions, the media and religious institutions are slightly more trusted by females than males. In addition, those with higher education tend to trust trade unions (55%) and the media (46%) more than those with lower levels of secondary education.

The situation related to institutional trust among young people in Azerbaijan can be more precisely and holistically explained through the institutional trust index. The index was computed based on the survey question discussed above. Interpretation of

this cumulative index is straightforward – when it equals zero, it means that the respondent has either distrusted or failed to report any position regarding all discussed institutions, while 30 is the highest positive value indicating full trust toward all institutions. Therefore, the highest level of overall institutional trust is associated with a higher index. The average of the index is 16.2, which is slightly higher than the middle point of the index (Figure 54). Moreover, young people from the capital (20) tend to report higher rates of institutional trust than those living in other urban (16.1) or rural (14.6) areas. Females (16.4) are also marginally more trusting of institutions than males (15.9). When it comes to education, youth with higher education (18.1) are on average more trusting of Azerbaijani institutions than their peers with completed secondary (15.7) or primary (15.8) education. Finally, those with better household financial conditions tend to trust institutions to a greater extent than those with more modest financial capacities (Figure 54).

FIGURE 53: **HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (Only “quite a lot” and “fully trust” answers, %, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)**

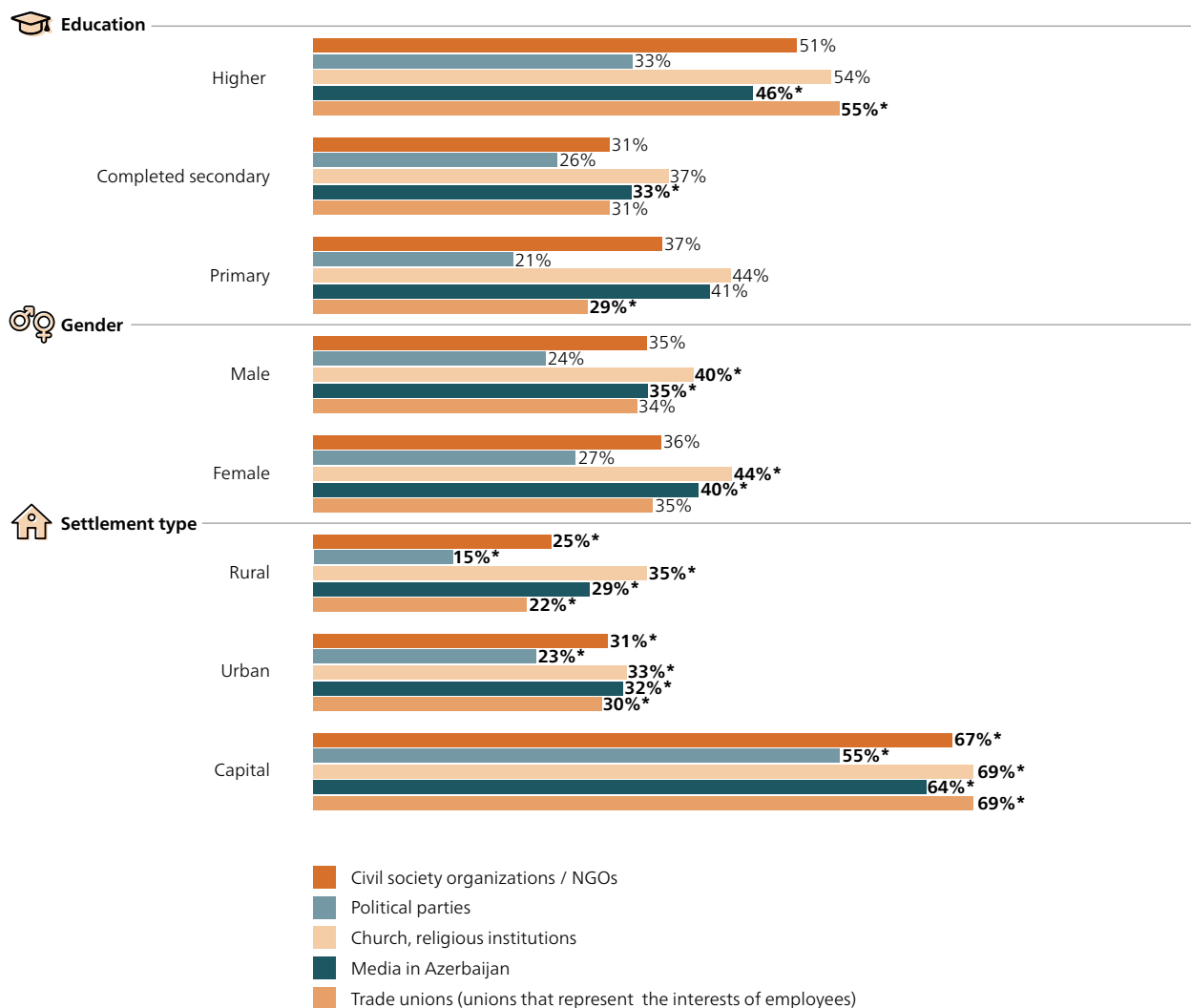
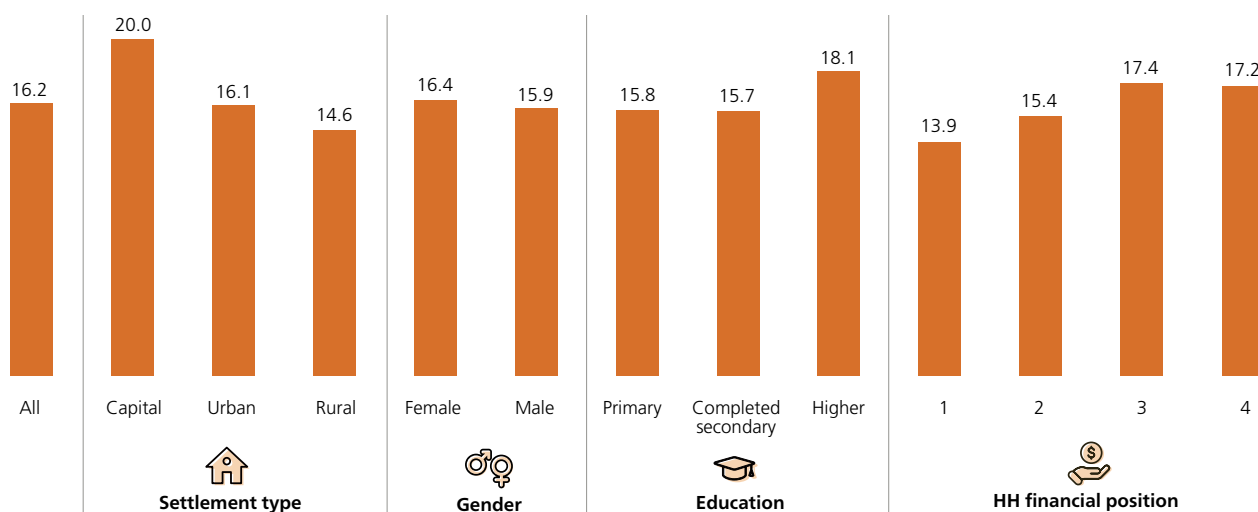


FIGURE 54: **INSTITUTIONAL TRUST INDEX BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUP**

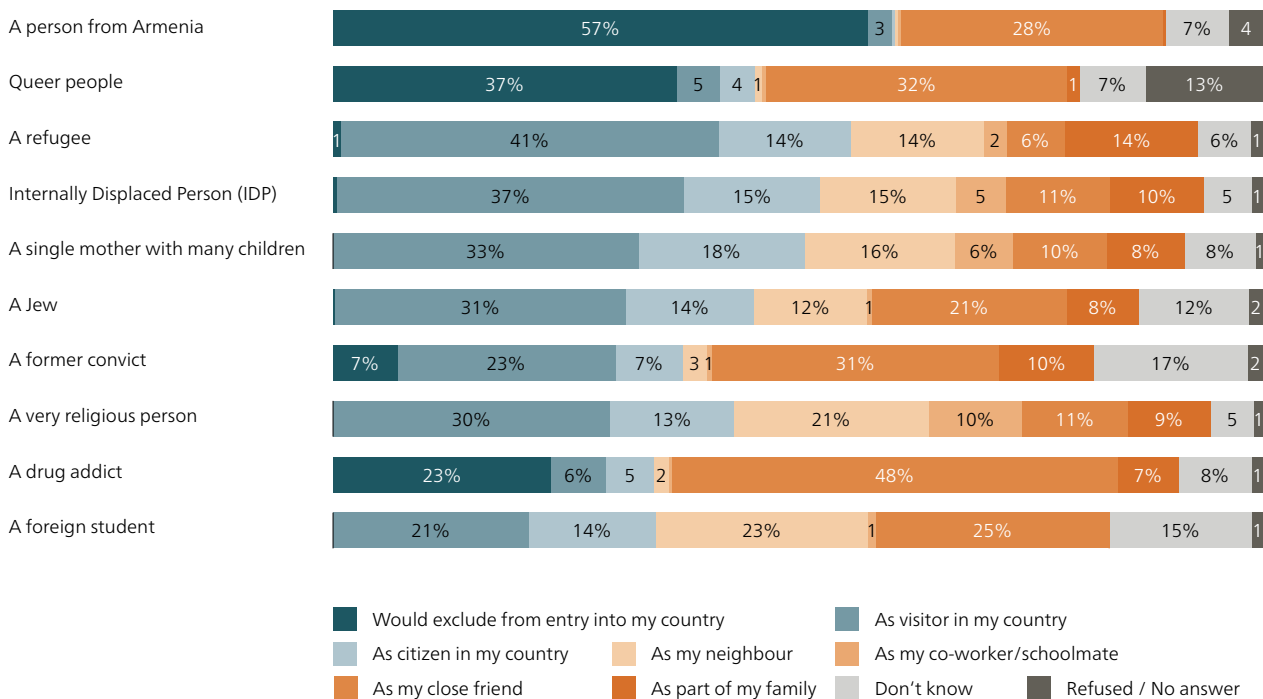


In addition to institutional trust, young people were queried about their personal judgments of interpersonal relationships (Figure 55). They were instructed to specify the characteristics of the social interactions they would like to engage in with individuals from 10 different social groups. Based on the traditional scale recommended by Bogardus, which ranges from complete exclusion to commitment to acknowledgment of the individual as a family member, the levels of social distance or acceptance were evaluated. People from Armenia (57%), queer folks¹⁰¹ (37%) and drug addicts (23%) are the least welcomed groups for young people in Azerbaijan. In addition, refugees (41%) and internally displaced people (37%) are only welcomed as visitors to Azerbaijan. At the same time, refugees (14%) and IPDs (10%) are those groups that received the highest frequency of answers on the opposite end of the acceptance scale – becoming part of the family. Another peculiarity observed while analysing the data was related to ambivalent positions regarding the most frequently rejected groups. For example, 28% of respondents said that they would accept a person from Armenia as a close friend, even though more than half of the young respondents would exclude them from entry into Azerbaijan.

The same figure, acceptance as a close friend, is 32% for representatives of sexual minorities, 31% in the case of former convicts and 48% for drug addicts, even though all those groups were not welcomed by a significant portion of young people (Figure 55).

Overall, young people in Azerbaijan report relatively high levels of institutional trust and all key governmental institutions enjoy an abundance of confidence from the youth. In general, young people from Baku and those with higher education report higher levels of institutional trust on average, while those residing outside the capital or without higher education are more reserved. An important caveat here is the fact that young people from other urban and rural areas, as well as those with primary or secondary education, find it hard to report specific answers to trust-related questions and more often select “do not know” or “refuse to answer” options. When it comes to social distance, results seem to be mixed and sometimes contrasting. For instance, while people from Armenia, sexual minorities or drug addicts are the least welcomed by young people, significant portions simultaneously report that individuals from those groups can be accepted as close friends.

FIGURE 55: IN WHAT CAPACITY CLOSEST TO YOU WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING PERSONS...? (% , full sample)



FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

The family environment and intrafamily relationships significantly shape young people's lives in Azerbaijan. This impact is intensified by the fact that parents and other family members are present in their daily lives as they share a common household. For instance, slightly less than three out of four young people live either with their mother (72%) or father (68%). Half of young respondents (51%) also report living with siblings. One-third (34%) of young people already live with their partners or spouses. Moreover, young people could be parents themselves – 32% report sharing their

dwelling with their children. If it is not immediate family, distant relatives or friends (5%) are still present in young people's daily lives. Only 0.4% of young people reported living alone (Figure 56).

The structure and composition of the family differs across settlement types. While the presence of parents does not vary across different settlements, other factors are not equally distributed. For instance, the number of young people that report living with their siblings, spouse or partner, children and grandparents is on average higher among those living in rural areas. It can be argued that this fact reflects the predominance of an extended family household among rural youth and the importance of family institutions in rural settlements (Figure 57).

FIGURE 56: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONS LIVES WITH YOU IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD? (% , full sample)

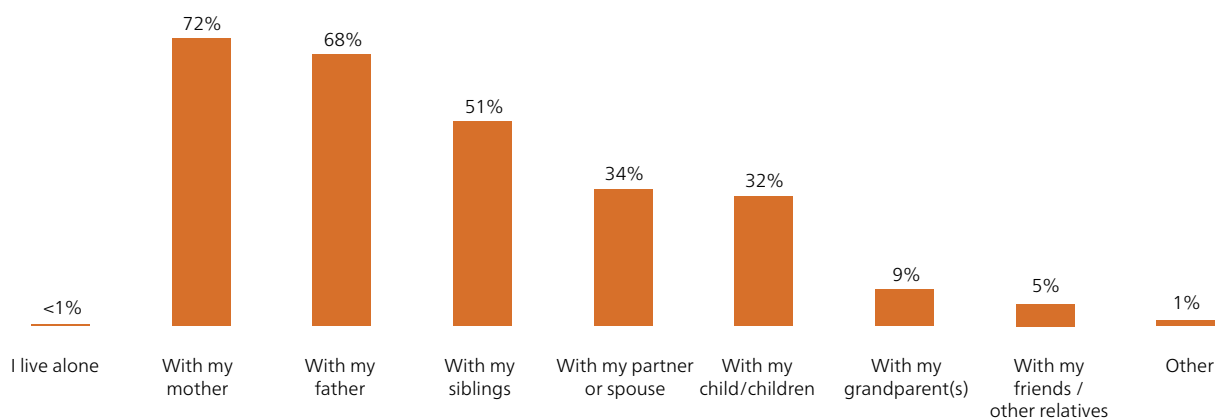
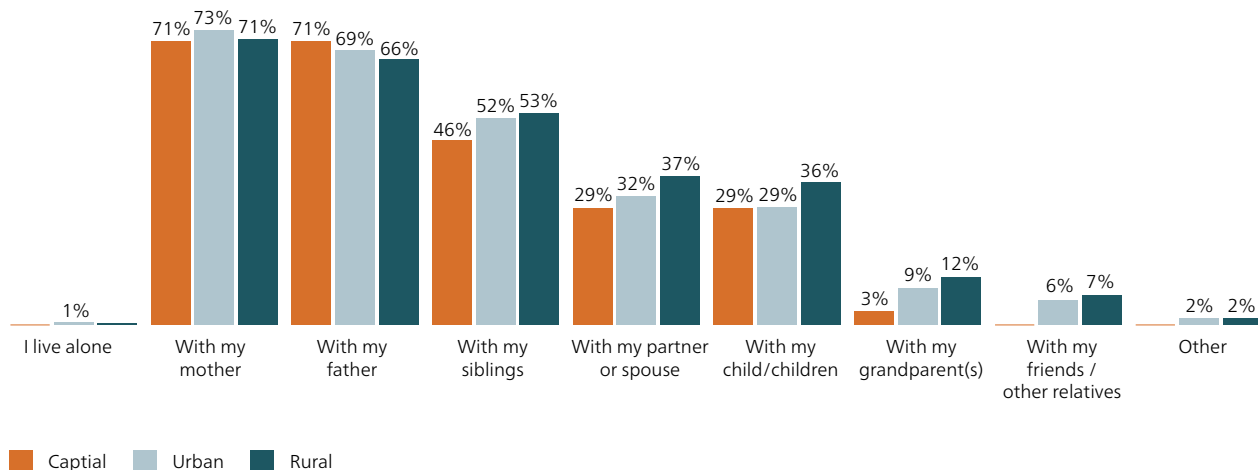


FIGURE 57: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONS LIVES WITH YOU IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD? BY SETTLEMENT TYPE (% , full sample)

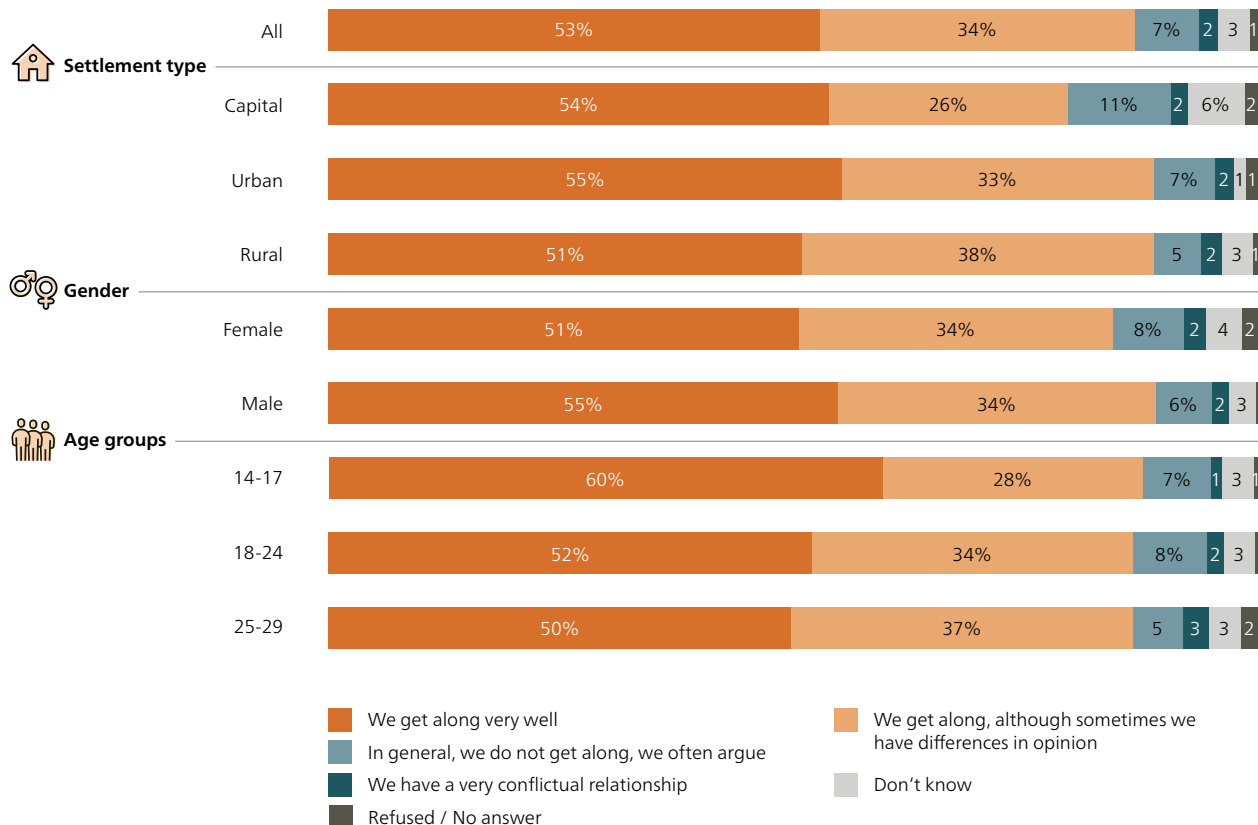


The vast majority of young people in Azerbaijan have good relationships with their parents (Figure 58). More than half (53%) report getting along very well and another third (34%) also report having a strong bond despite certain differences regarding various topics. These tendencies are mostly similar across various socio-demographic groups; however, some small variations can be detected (Figure 59). For instance, the share of young people reporting frequent arguments with their parents is slightly higher in the capital (11%) compared to urban (7%) and rural (5%) areas. Variations are even higher in the case of age and education: younger cohorts (aged 14-17) of young people more frequently say that they get along with parents very well (60%) compared to those aged 18-14 (52%) or 25-29 (50%).

Slightly more than half (52%) of young people in Azerbaijan are single, while around one-third (34%) report being married. The share of married youth is relatively lower in the capital (29%) and urban (33%) areas,

and slightly higher in rural settlements (37%). Female youth more frequently report being married (42%), while the same figures are significantly lower among males (27%). In general, marriage seems to be a normative action among 25-29 year olds, as 75% of young people in that age group reported being married. Around one-third of youth (34%) also reported having children. When young people without children were asked about their future intentions, 31% were fully confident and another 29% were probably willing to have children. The rest either did not know (26%) or refused to answer (14%) this question. The mean age for those intending to have children among respondents who currently do not have children was 26 years. The plurality (43%) of young people without children indicated that they anticipate having two children. When young people in Azerbaijan without children were asked a multiple-choice question about their preferred gender, male (44%), female (40%) and indifferent (44%) answers were nearly equally distributed.

FIGURE 58: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS? (% , full sample)



DISCUSSION

The study results depict a portrait of young people with a high sense of civic nationalism and self-reported beliefs associated with secularism, while at the same time adhering to strong traditional and conservative values. While family, traditional morals or beliefs linked to personal success are dominant, participatory values are less frequently endorsed. Young people, while reporting higher levels of support for authority-related institutions, report skepticism and distrust of political and civic society institutions. Each of the above-listed characteristics is not coincidental and fits into the broader picture of Azerbaijani society.

Azerbaijani youth have a strong sense of civic nationalism that aligns with official state rhetoric, which emphasises the importance of citizenship of Azerbaijan rather than representation of a given region or ethnic group.¹⁰² Nearly all young respondents stressed that they perceive themselves as Azerbaijani citizens, while other identities are relatively less endorsed, especially among those with ethnic and European identities. The key official policies and endorsements since 1991 cultivate such an understanding of national identity, so young people in this regard report attitudes that resonate with the dominant discourse.¹⁰³ Similar conclusions can be made regarding other aspects of youth identities and values.

For centuries, Azerbaijani culture and values were dominated by Islamic traditions and customs. However, modern Azerbaijan is the rightful heir of the first secularisation and modernisation project performed during the first several decades of the twentieth century that transformed the country into “the first democratic and secular republic of the Muslim world”, with modernist cultural achievements, including “the first opera produced in the Muslim world.”¹⁰⁴ While investigating the role of religion in Azerbaijani society, it was claimed that secular values play a leading role in binding national identities, while religion has a lesser role and is associated with morality and traditions, as part of the cultural heritage.¹⁰⁵ The survey findings support this claim – while the majority of young people are respectful of religion, they do not think that religious institutions should play a significant role in society.

Nevertheless, things are not that straightforward. The echo of the traditional importance of religious and traditional beliefs is in turn manifested in the dominance of ideas that are conventionally associated with traditional values.¹⁰⁶ The majority of young people report supporting conservative values, stressing the importance of keeping traditional systems of beliefs and the homogeneity of society. With this configuration, the importance of family and kinship ties play a significant and decisive role.¹⁰⁷ The survey results also confirm that young people are attached to family values and family structure. Interestingly, this circumstance also has an indirect impact on another topic discussed in this chapter – institutional trust.

Previous studies have shown that institutional trust in Azerbaijan has the peculiar tendency of transferring one institution’s high trust toward the remaining institutions – i.e. “trust in one institution spills over to another one.”¹⁰⁸ That said, it is not surprising that military successes or relative economic prosperity, manifested in high trust in the army and presidential office, has positively impacted other state institutions. However, a study by Valiyev and colleagues has also demonstrated that well-entrenched “bonding social capital” also impacts political trust and thus cultural theories of political trust are more relevant explainers for the phenomenon of institutional trust than “government performance and individual evaluation.”¹⁰⁹ Additionally, the same study also resonates with other findings of this inquiry of young people: females and those with higher education are more trusting of institutions than males and those without higher education.¹¹⁰ Going forward, further studies on institutional trust and its relation to young people’s attitudes should be conducted as trust is believed to be one of the necessary preconditions for the proper functioning of those institutions. Nevertheless, what can be said for the moment is that the institutional trust situation partially mirrors the general value orientation attitudes of young people.

10

PART SEVEN: CLIMATE CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is an emerging global agenda that has a significant influence on policymaking, as well as economic and technological development. Moreover, the responsibilities of fossil fuel producing countries have been discussed in policy and academic circles.¹¹¹ Oil-producing countries also acknowledge the existing challenges and risks associated with climate change. Those risks are not solely related to environmental challenges, but to the vulnerabilities associated with the dependency on a single industry. Azerbaijan is not an exception and the country also aims to diversify its economic and energy sectors.¹¹² Besides diversification, the switch to renewables or more ecologically friendly sectors is important because of the natural and environmental issues that were also challenging for Azerbaijan during the 1990s and early 2000s.¹¹³ Hence, the survey aimed to investigate young people's knowledge, attitudes and awareness regarding climate change and global warming in general, as well as their attitudes toward different measures proposed to combat climate change and its negative consequences.

MAIN FINDINGS

- There is no concrete indication that young people in Azerbaijan are worried about climate change – less than 1% spontaneously mentioned it among the most important challenges Azerbaijan currently faces.
- When explicitly asked, 45% agree that climate change is a global emergency, but 28% find it hard to give a specific answer and 5% refuse to respond to the question.
- The majority (63%) believe that the causes of climate change are either entirely natural (31%) or primarily triggered by natural (32%) reasons. Only 33% consider that the roots of climate change in one or another way are related to human activities. Support for natural origins is the highest among youth living in Baku (85%), while this index is just 64% in other urban areas and 54% in rural areas.
- Despite the differences in causes, the majority (61%) of respondents back the introduction of preventive and restrictive measures to combat climate change. Young people living in the capital, those with higher education and those with higher living conditions are more enthusiastic about supporting such measures when compared to their peers with different socio-demographic characteristics.
- Overall, young people are optimistic about the future as 72% report experiencing hope and 63% feel confident when they hear about efforts to mitigate global warming. However, a considerable number also reports being indifferent (51%) to such actions.

CLIMATE ANXIETY OR CLIMATE INDIFFERENCE?

Young people in Azerbaijan do not explicitly report having concerns about climate change. Just under 1% of them mention climate change as either the most or the second most important problem the country currently faces. Awareness about climate change issues, however, is considerably prevalent while asking a specific question. In that case the plurality (45%) agrees that climate change is a global emergency. Yet for 22% of respondents this is not an issue and around one-third of young people either do not know (28%) or refuse (5%) to provide an answer to this question. Interestingly, the share of those who declined to respond is highest among youth in the capital (58%), while in other urban (22%) and rural (29%) areas this figure is nearly two times lower. Differences are small and marginal in the case of gender: males (49%) more frequently provided a positive answer to the climate change emergency question than females (41%). As for age or education, there are no statistically significant differences between groups (Figure 59).

Young people in Azerbaijan tend to believe that natural causes are the main contributing factor of climate change (Figure 60). At the national level, 63% believe that to some degree climate change causes are natural, while the prevalence of human-related factors is backed by 33% of youth. Further analysis showed that belief in the natural causes of climate change is enormous among young people living in the capital (85%),

while in other urban (64%) and rural (54%) areas this index is considerably lower. Differences are insignificant according to gender or different age groups. However, when it comes to education those with higher education (74%) more frequently report that climate change causes can be traced to natural processes than those with primary (62%) or secondary (60%) education.

Similar to the survey results, the qualitative data analysis also shows the diverse opinions of young people regarding climate change. Even though this topic barely came up while naming major problems in Azerbaijan and only one person named environmental pollution as an issue, when directly asked about climate change, focus group participants provided several responses. Some of the focus group participants think that humans are mainly responsible for climate change, while others think that it is a natural process that is impossible to prevent. Those who blame people for climate change argue that human activity is responsible for the damage in the world, stating that “...forests do not burn themselves, people burn them, people throw garbage outside and toxic gases from cars pollute the atmosphere”. One of the respondents also brought up the example of coronavirus and how, during the two years of lockdown, there was an improvement in the atmosphere, which according to him proves the role of humans in environmental pollution. Other young people argued that climate change is a natural phenomenon and that humans have little to do with natural disasters. According to them, fires and floods happen. So does global warming and as a law of nature – it cannot be prevented.

FIGURE 59: DO YOU THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS A GLOBAL EMERGENCY? (% , full sample)

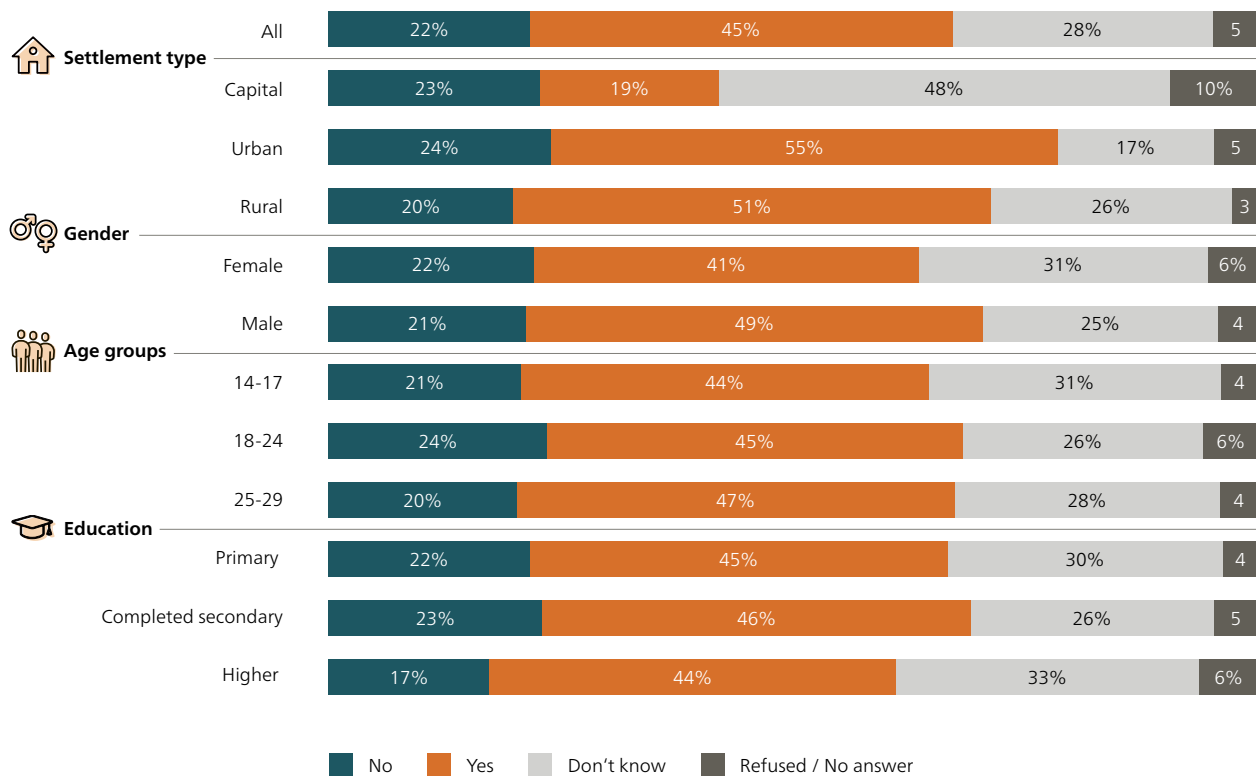
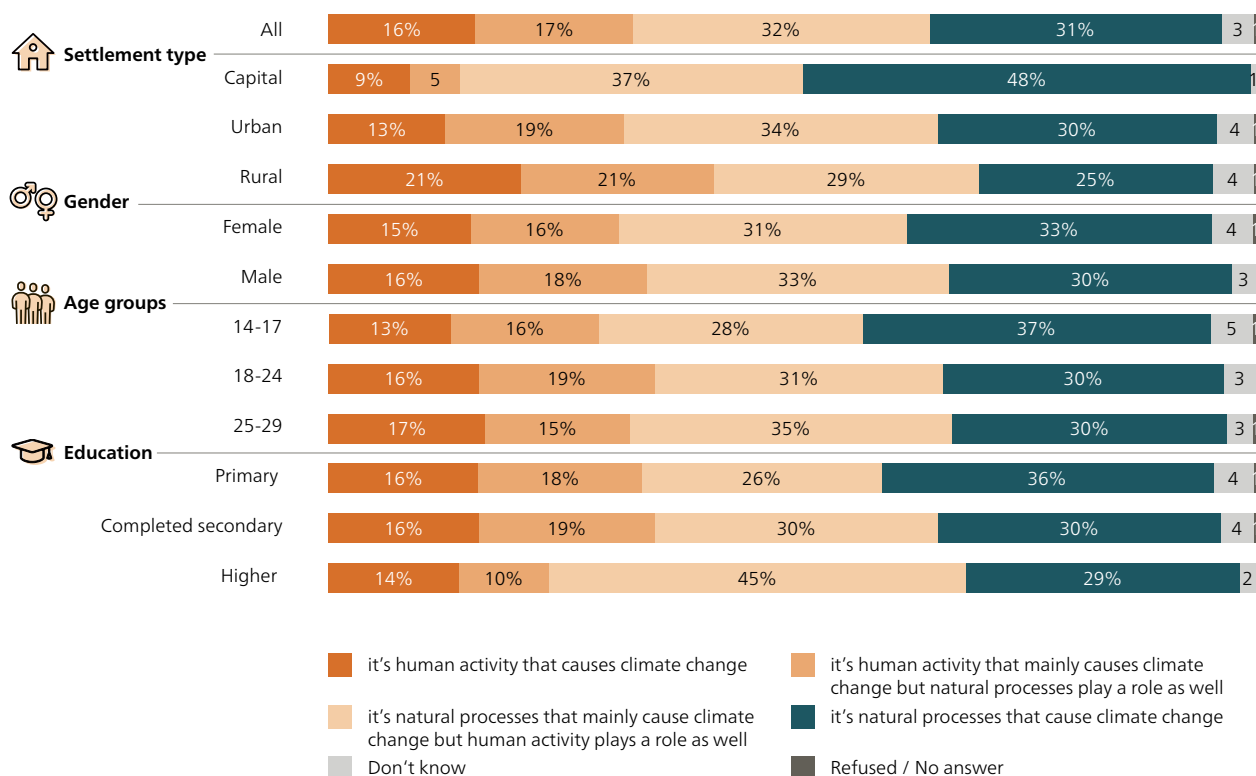


FIGURE 60: SCIENTISTS WARN OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND, IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING. THERE ARE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON WHAT CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE. WHICH ONE IS CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW? (% , full sample)



As for the introduction of specific measures in Azerbaijan to combat climate change, the majority (61%) support this idea and only a quarter (25%) reject it. Very strong support for the introduction of restrictive measures is higher among young people from Baku (44%) than among young people from other urban (25%) or rural (28%) areas, but the cumulative positive answers do not differ across settlement type. While differences are not meaningful in the case of gender, age groups reveal a slight variation among young people. Namely, those aged 14-17 (53%) are a bit more reserved regarding restrictive measures, compared to those in the 18-24 (62%) and 25-29 (65%) age groups. As for educational attainment and financial well-being of the household, young people with higher education and those residing in more well-off households tend to support imposing measures to combat climate change more frequently than their peers with lower levels of education or household financial conditions (Figure 61).

Part of the focus group participants in Baku named how they changed their behaviour in response to climate change in order to preserve the environment. Some claimed that they do not throw rubbish on the

ground, while others do not use plastic containers and bags, reduced water waste and replaced light bulbs in their apartment. However, despite the severity of the issue, not everyone thinks that the government should drastically intervene in the fight against climate change by introducing regulations and restricting individual freedoms (for example increase the taxes for flights): *"Flight prices are already quite expensive in our country. If they raise prices, people will not be able to use it. Instead of restricting the opportunities of the middle class, the state should control the construction of environmental facilities in factories and plants and prevent pollution in rivers and the Caspian Sea"* (Female, 17).

According to the survey findings, young people in Azerbaijan predominantly report having hope (72%) while thinking about global warming and efforts to mitigate it (Figure 62). A bit less, but still a majority (63%) also feel confident when hearing about these topics. It is important to note that at least half of young respondents (51%) are indifferent about global warming and efforts to fight it. Fewer than half report feeling rage (42%), fear (47%) or helplessness (48%).

FIGURE 61: IN SOME COUNTRIES, GOVERNMENTS IMPOSE STRONG MEASURES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE. FOR INSTANCE, OLD CARS POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANTLY AND IN SOME COUNTRIES THEY CAN NO LONGER BE USED SO PEOPLE HAVE TO BUY NEWER CARS THAT USE LESS PETROL. WOULD YOU AGREE IF SUCH AND/OR SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS WERE INTRODUCED IN YOUR COUNTRY? (% , full sample)

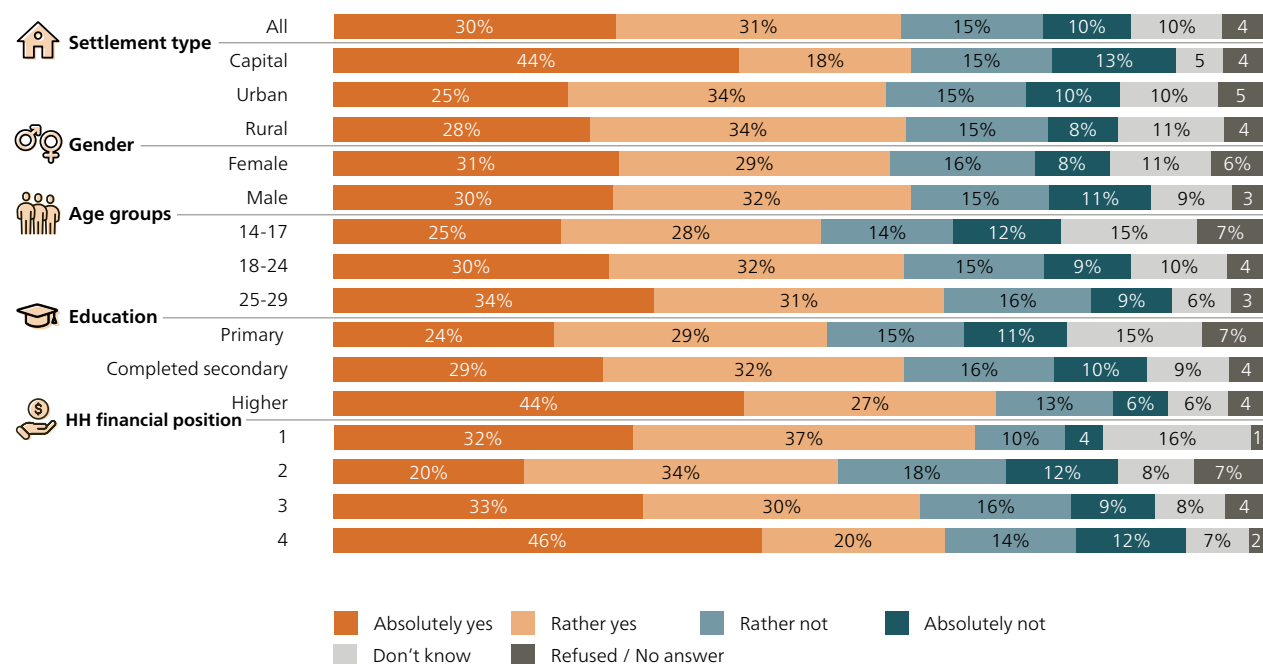
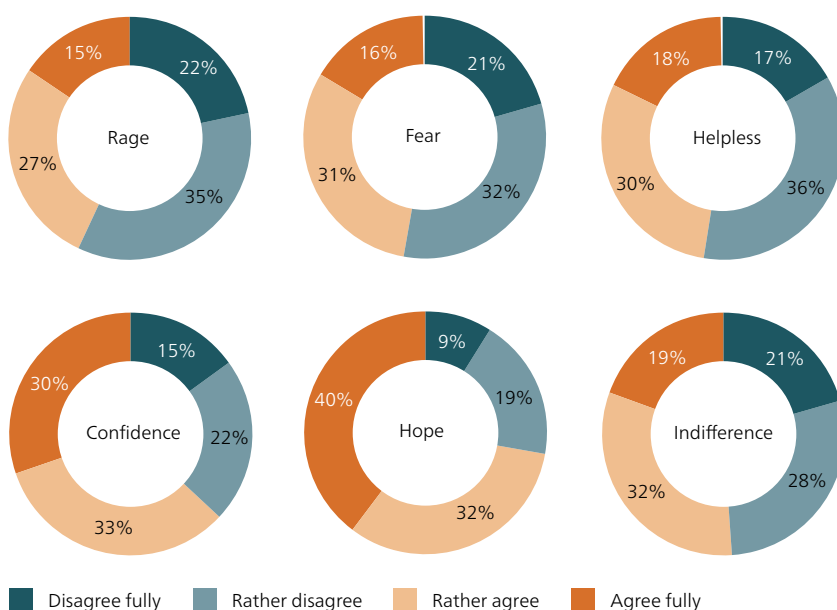


FIGURE 62: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT? WHEN I HEAR ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING AND EFFORTS TO MITIGATE IT, I MOSTLY FEEL... (% , full sample)



DISCUSSION

Climate change, affecting many countries around the globe, is an existing challenge for Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani citizens. This process affects various aspects of the quality of life, including access to and availability of drinking water.¹¹⁴ Even though scientific studies demonstrate the risks associated with climate change, for young people in Azerbaijan this topic is not explicitly concerning – less than one percent mentioned that climate change is a challenging issue for the country. Interestingly, when directly asked if climate change is a global emergency, nearly half of the young respondents gave a positive answer. Even in this case, however, the other half of young people did not feel that this topic was appealing or important.

There might be several contributing factors to this phenomenon. It can be theorised that the existence of strong green movements and campaigns for environmental causes could kindle a climate awareness agenda.

Neither the green movement nor in general youth-led interest groups are currently active in Azerbaijan's dominant public discourse.¹¹⁵ This could be one reason for the relative irrelevance of environmental issues among young people. Whether this claim is accurate or not, it cannot be the only reason for low levels of climate-related concerns. Another potential explanation could be associated with how young people explain climate-related changes. The inquiry of young people in Azerbaijan has shown that slightly less than two-thirds of young people think that natural causes affect climate change, thus opposing the primary impact of human-related actions. Therefore, modest levels of anxiety or worry about climate change could be the result of perceiving this process as having natural origins.

To clearly understand the situation regarding young people's opinions and attitudes toward climate change, further studies are necessary. The lack of empirical data and research makes it difficult to explain the results outlined in this study and to make theoretically sound conclusions.

11

PART EIGHT: CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter deals with the concerns and aspirations of young people. Specifically, it focuses on the migration intentions and experiences of staying abroad, as well as expectations regarding the future. Migration from Azerbaijan, mostly related to work reasons has been one of the characteristics of the country since the 1990s.¹¹⁶ The quantitative studies also showed that intentions to relocate from Azerbaijan were associated with low employment rates.¹¹⁷ Moreover, migration intentions are not only based on economic needs, but are also a potential source of accumulating social capital. Studies have shown that experience living, studying or working abroad has a positive impact on career success and social mobility in Azerbaijan.¹¹⁸ Therefore, it was interesting to investigate the situation regarding the migration intentions among current generations of young people, inquiring about their motives for going abroad and learning about their desired countries of destination.

The aspiration aspects of the study concluded with young people imagining the future and their satisfaction with life. Life satisfaction is an important factor for societal prosperity as it not only impacts the immediate well-being of individuals, but as studies show also has its say on the appropriate functioning of social institutions and state apparatus.¹¹⁹ Hence, within this study, both personal and country-level projections of the standard of living have also been investigated.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Only a small portion of young people (13%) have been abroad at least once. Those aged 25-29 and with higher education have visited foreign countries more frequently than younger cohorts of youth and those without higher education.
- Even fewer (3% of all young people and 26% of those with experience traveling abroad) youth have stayed abroad for more than 6 months. Only 2% report visiting foreign countries for study or work reasons (18% of those who have ever been abroad).
- Moreover, the majority (80%) of young people do not wish to go abroad for study or work purposes. The desire to stay in Azerbaijan is the highest in the capital, among females, those who are married, aged 18-29 and those with higher education. Interestingly, young people from families with the lowest financial positions have a higher probability of wishing to go abroad for study or work commitments than those with better financial conditions.
- From those who either have been abroad or who would like to go abroad for employment or educational purposes, the majority name higher salaries (51%) and better educational prospects (44%) as the main reason for which they would move to another country.
- Among those who want to go abroad for work or study, the majority aim to stay there for a significant period of time: 31% indicated one to five years and another 23% want to remain there for a five to ten years. Moreover, one in ten (12%) wants to stay abroad permanently. The most desired destinations for relocation are Turkey (39%), Germany (16%) and Russia (12%).
- Young people in Azerbaijan are optimistic about the improvement of their family's (48%) and country's (55%) standard of living in 5 years. In spite of this statistic, more than a quarter of youth in both cases fail to imagine the future and provide a specific answer. Positive sentiments prevail among youth from Baku, those with higher education and those from families with strong financial conditions.

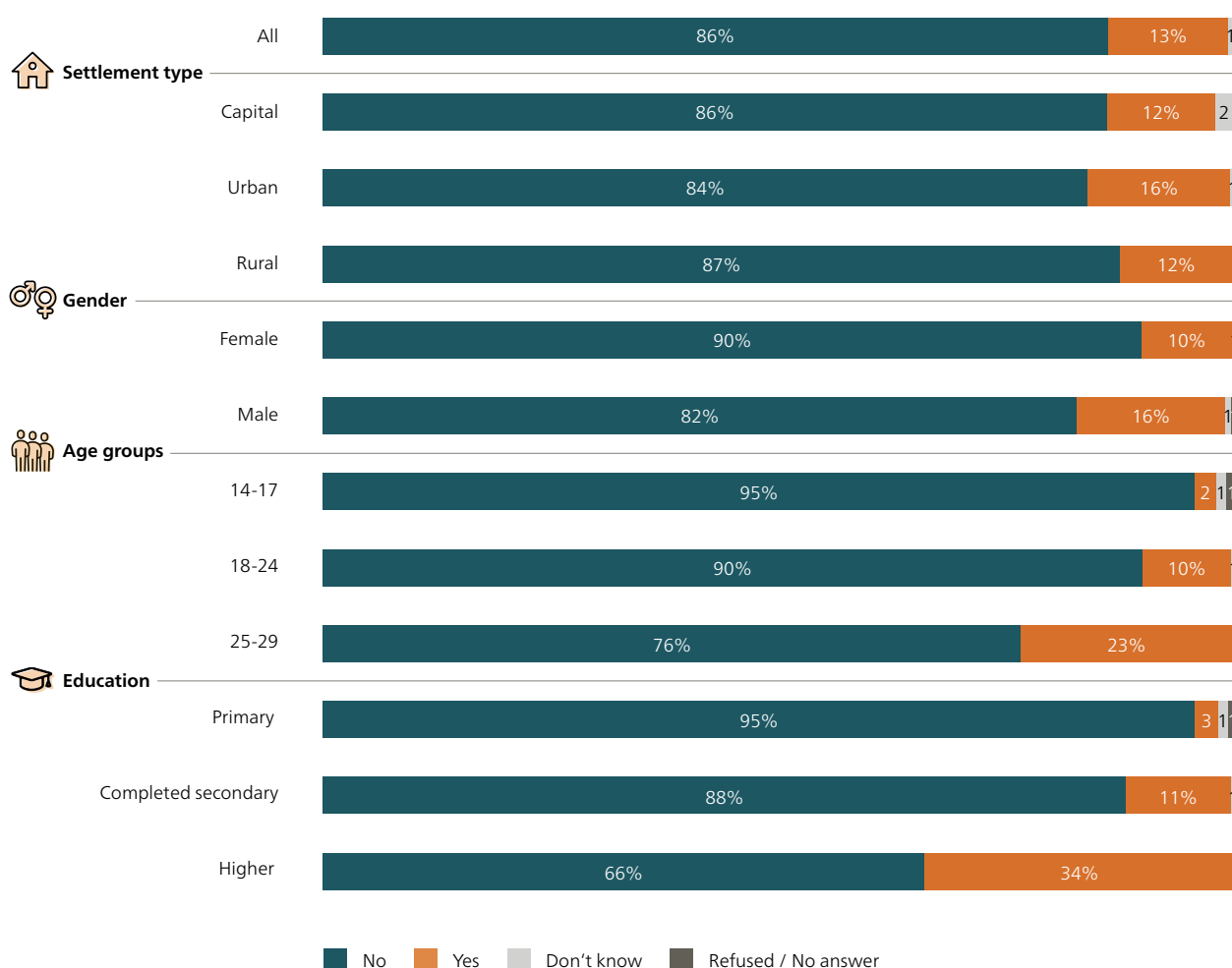
MOBILITY: MIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

Only a slight share (13%) of young people from Azerbaijan report having experience visiting foreign countries (Figure 63). From a geographic point of view, young people living in the capital, urban or rural areas do not report statistically different rates of having such experience. Differences are also marginal when comparing females (10%) and males (16%). As for the age groups and education levels, disparities are more pronounced. Around one-quarter (23%) of young people aged 25-29 reported being abroad at least once in their lifetime. In the case of young people aged 18-24, only 10% report visiting other countries and almost no-one (2%) has done so among youth aged 14-17. Differences are even greater in the case of education: 34% of those

with higher education report having been abroad, while only 11% with secondary and 3% with primary education have done so (Figure 63).

When investigating prolonged stays abroad, from those with experience visiting foreign countries, only 26% reported staying for longer than 6 months (3% of all young people). Only 2% of respondents have visited foreign countries for study or work purposes. When those young people who have not been abroad at all, or who have been abroad but not for study or work purposes (98% of the whole sample), were asked theoretical questions about going abroad to study or work, the vast majority (80%) are certainly not planning to do it (Figure 64). Only 14% reported a possible or determined desire to go abroad to study or work. Such intentions are significantly higher in rural (16%) and other urban (20%) areas, while not common among

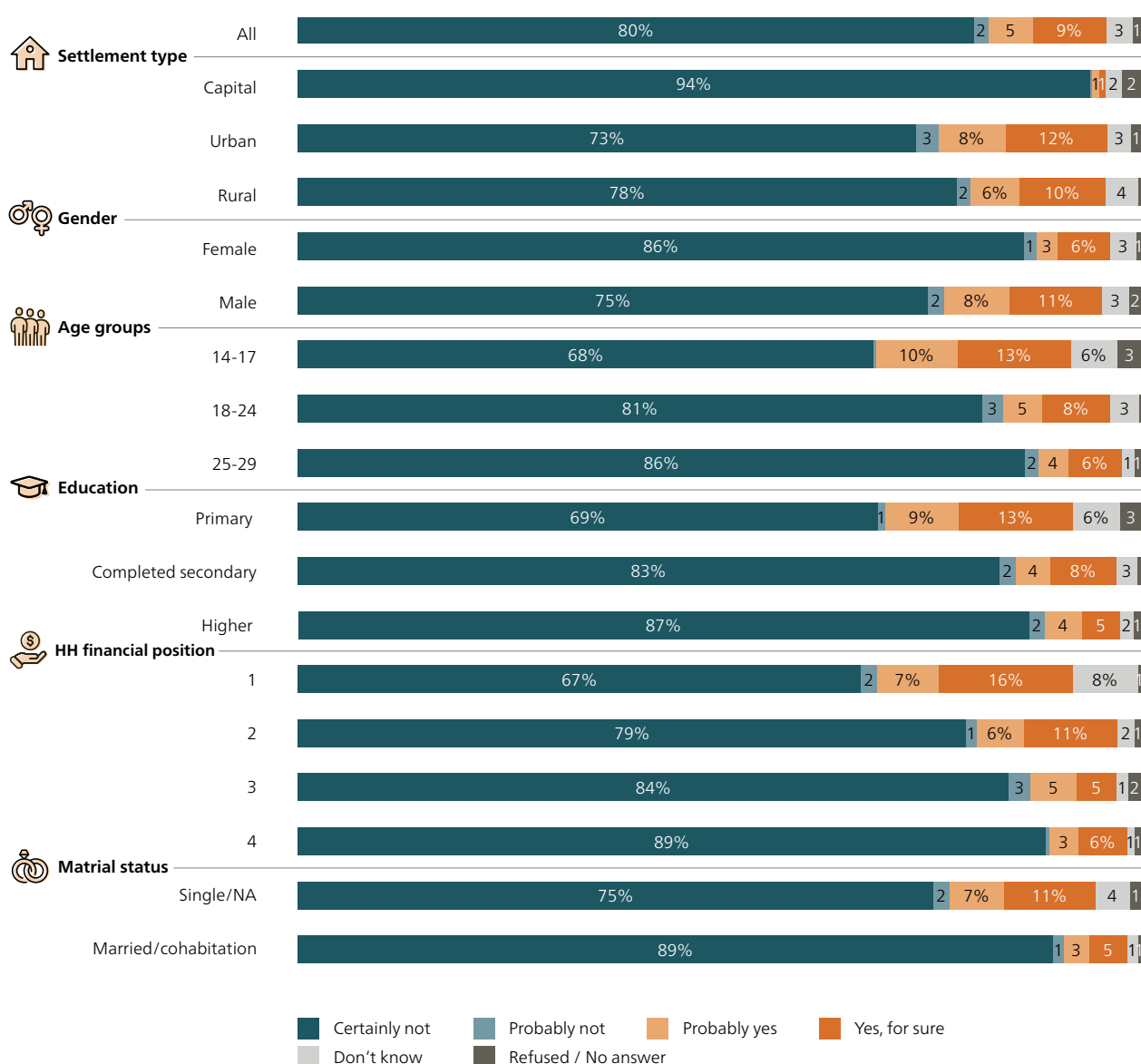
FIGURE 63: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABROAD? (% , full sample)



youth from Baku (2%). When it comes to gender differences, males (19%) are more likely to report the intention to emigrate on a temporary basis when compared to females (9%). The gender and educational analysis showed a sort of reverse picture compared to the experience of being abroad. Namely, when it comes to future intent, younger cohorts of youth aged 14-17 (23%) are more likely to report the intention to go abroad for study or work compared to those aged 18-24 (13%) or 25-29 (10%). Moreover, young people

with primary education (or still studying at school) want to go abroad for educational or employment reasons more frequently (22%) than those with complete secondary (12%) or higher (9%) education. Furthermore, young people living in households with poor financial conditions and those reporting being single are more prone to express the desire to go abroad than those with a better financial environment and those who are married (Figure 64).

FIGURE 64: **WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ABROAD TO STUDY OR WORK? (% , only those respondents who have not been abroad at all or who have been abroad, but not for study or work purposes)**



Young people with foreign experience or a willingness to go abroad for work or study purposes mention a variety of reasons for possible relocation (Figure 65). Among them, the existence of high salaries (51%) and better educational opportunities (44%) are the most frequently mentioned. Among other reasons, experiencing different cultures (21%) and better opportunities for starting business ventures (20%) were also identified. A further comparison of different subgroups of young people in terms of potential motives has shown that opinions vary by settlement type and educational attainment. For instance, in the case of aiming for better educational possibilities abroad, those living in the capital mention this motive rarely (25%) compared to other urban (43%) and rural (48%) residents. Furthermore, better education is more regularly mentioned by those with primary education (74%) than those with secondary (25%) and higher (42%) education.

When examining the option “better opportunities of starting a business”, however, young people living in the capital (54%) are more likely to mention it than other urban (15%) and rural (20%) youth. Geographic differences are starker in the case of experiencing different cultures—youth from Baku (71%) mention it very frequently, while urban (20%) and rural (17%) youth name it more seldom. Young people with higher education (32%) also tend to name this factor a bit more frequently than those with primary (20%) or secondary (19%) education. When young people who intend to stay abroad were asked about the length of their intended visit, the most frequent answer was one to five years (31%), followed by five to ten years (23%). Short-term periods such as less than 6 months (14%) or between 6 months and one year (8%) were named by a minority of young people (Figure 66).

FIGURE 65: WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON WHY YOU WOULD MOVE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. (% , only those respondents who would like to move to another country for work or study purposes)

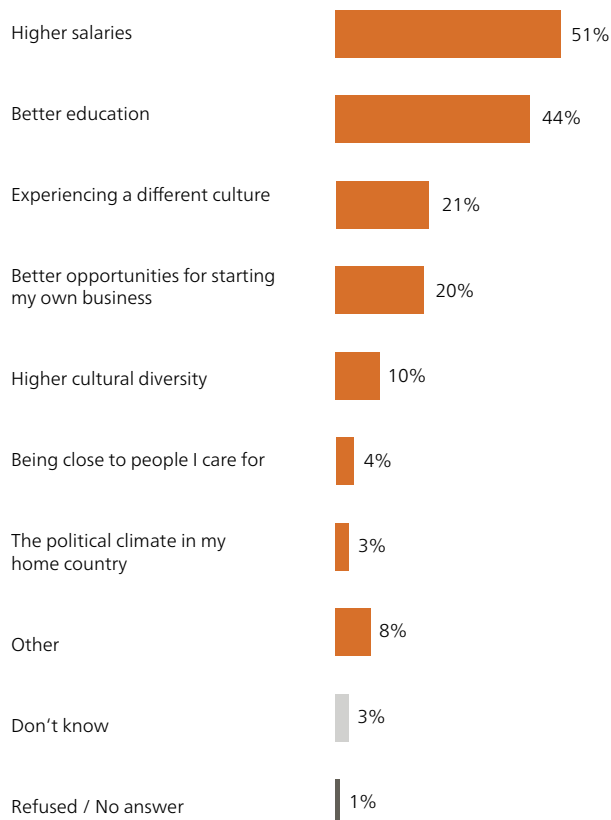
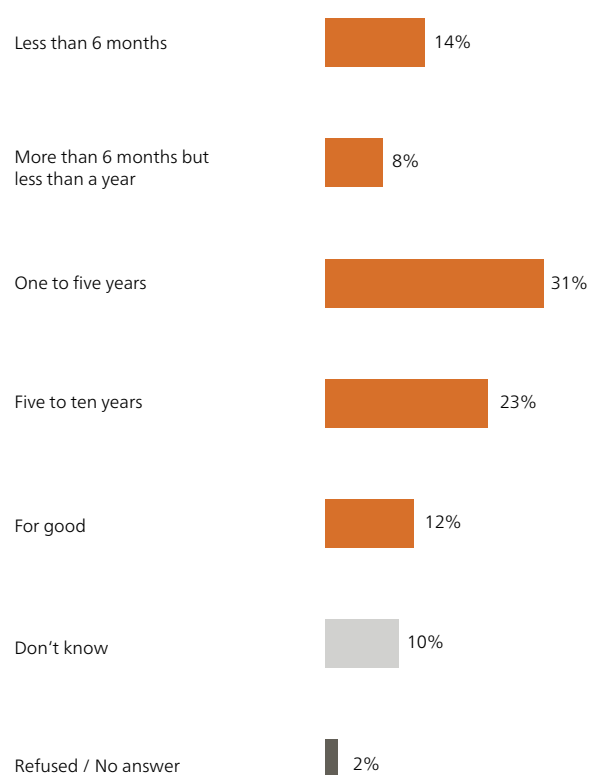


FIGURE 66: FOR HOW LONG WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY ABROAD? (% , only those respondents who would like to go abroad for work or study purposes, including the “probably no” answer)

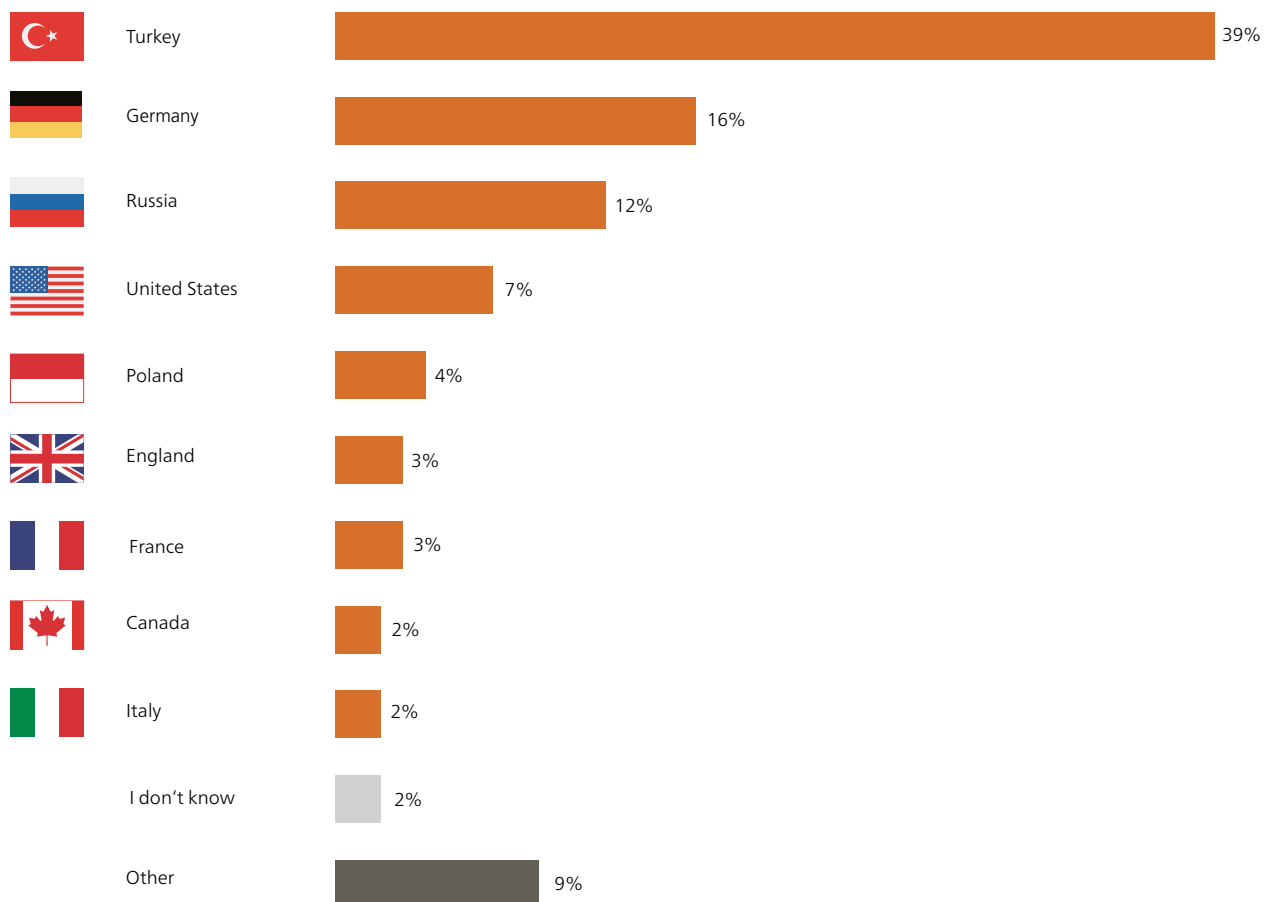


Among those with the intention to go abroad (22% of all young people in Azerbaijan), Turkey (39%) is the primary destination. It is followed by Germany (16%) and Russia (12%). Besides those three most frequently mentioned countries, the United States (7%) and other European countries were also mentioned, albeit with a lower frequency (Figure 67).

Even though only about one-fifth of surveyed young people stated the desire to go abroad (for study or to work), focus group participants showed more enthusiasm. In all three focus groups, there were participants who reported that they are thinking about leaving the country. Among the most desired destinations were Germany, USA, Turkey and Russia. The reasons for emigration are diverse: some respondents

want to receive better education, while others want to earn more money. Some participants claimed that people want to leave the country because “they are oppressed by the state” (Male, 27) or because they “look at the older generation and become demotivated” (Male, 17). The latter is linked to the fact that people are unemployed even though they have received education. In this context, young people also talked about what the state should do to prevent youth from leaving the country. Participants mentioned that the government should listen to young people’s needs, learn about their problems and take their opinions into account. Furthermore, the state should take care of economic problems and ensure employment possibilities, high salaries and a high level of education in order to motivate young people to stay in the country.

FIGURE 67: WHICH ONE COUNTRY WOULD YOU PREFER TO MOVE TO? NAME THE ONE YOU PREFER MOST. (% , only those respondents who would like to go abroad for work or study purposes, including the “probably no” answers)



IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Young people in Azerbaijan seem to be positive regarding the future of their family, as well as the whole country, albeit a significant share of youth find it hard to predict what will happen in the future. For example, when asked to evaluate the standard of living of their family in the next 5 years, nearly half of the young people in Azerbaijan (48%) predict improvements. Nevertheless, 28% either do not know how to respond to this question or refuse to provide a specific answer. A detailed analysis of this question by socio-demographic groups identified that nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents in Baku anticipate that the standard of living in their families will rise, while only 38% believe so in other urban areas and 43% who reside in rural settlements. Young people with higher education (68%) are also more optimistic regarding improvements to their families' standards of living compared to those with primary (46%) or secondary (50%) education. In addition, young people from financially well-off families are more optimistic than young people from less prosperous households (Figure 68). The self-evaluation score of the household's current financial position is weakly associated with this topic,

however, young people with relatively well-off households predict improvement a bit more often than those living in financially less secure households (Figure 68).

Going forward, opinions regarding the changes in the standard of living in Azerbaijan were also examined (Figure 69). Findings mostly mirror what was discussed during the standard of living of households. The majority (55%) expect improvement in the quality of life in the country, but there is still a considerable portion of young people (27%) that either refuse or find it difficult to provide a specific assessment. Youth in the capital (74%) are way more enthusiastic about future improvements in the country compared to young people in other urban (47%) or rural (52%) areas. Similar to the evaluation of changes in family life, young people with higher education (71%) are more likely to report positive developments in the country's standard of living compared to those with primary (55%) or secondary (50%) education. In addition, young people from financially well-off families are more optimistic than young people from less prosperous households (Figure 69).

FIGURE 68: DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF YOUR FAMILY WILL... (% , full sample)

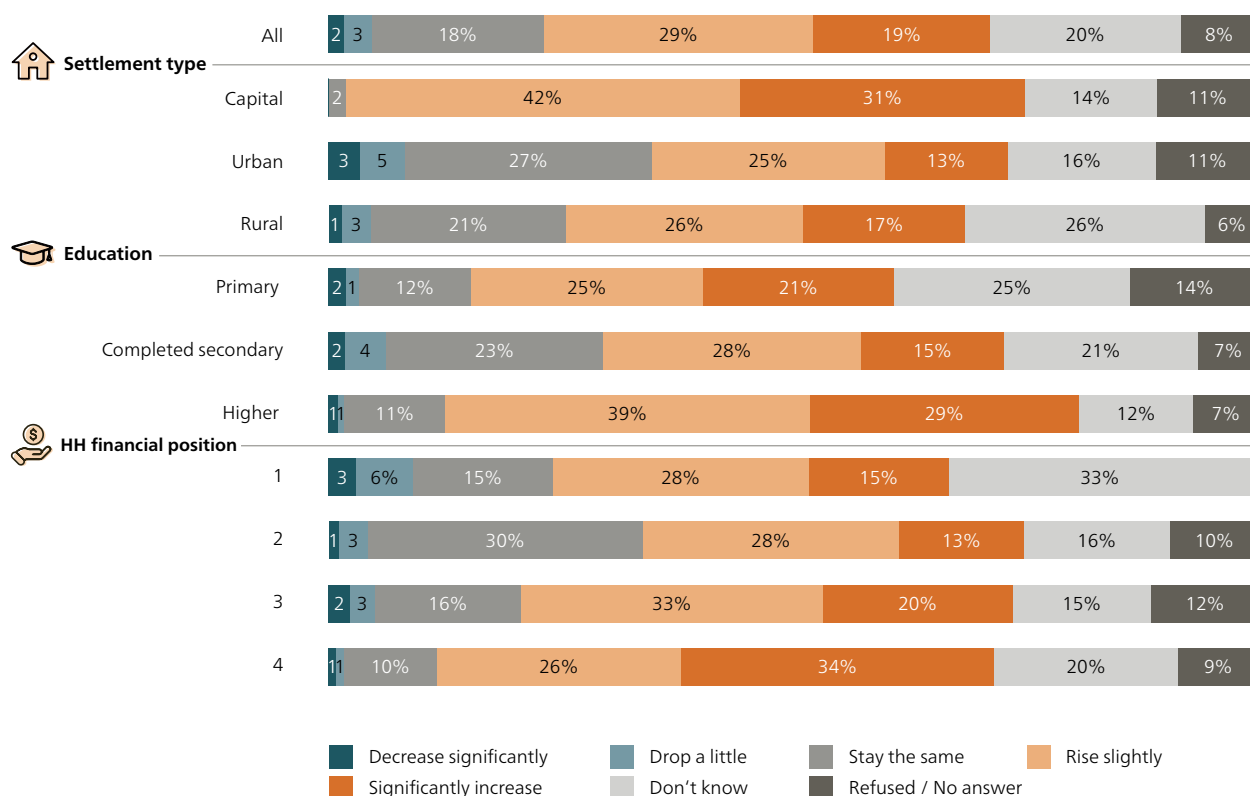
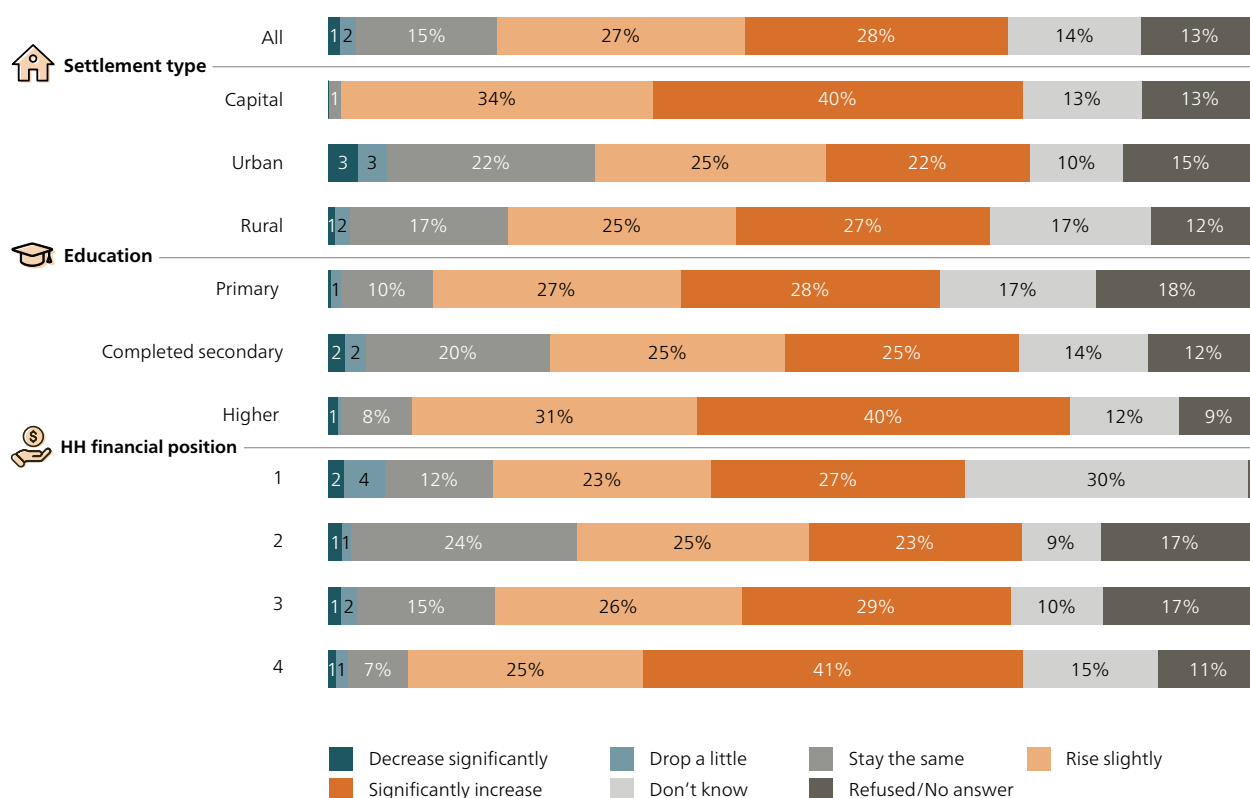


FIGURE 69: DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE COUNTRY WILL...
(%, full sample)



DISCUSSION

Despite officially calculated figures of migration numbers from Azerbaijan, just a small portion of young people reported even visiting a foreign country at least once.¹²⁰ The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has estimated that “among the post-Soviet countries, Azerbaijan has had one of the highest emigration rates”, even though emigration numbers have fallen over the recent years.¹²¹ That could be an explanatory factor for relatively lower rates of self-reported experiences of staying abroad. Nevertheless, a counterargument here could be the fact that migrants from Azerbaijan rarely return to their home country. This claim has its rationale, as when young people were asked about the projected length of staying abroad, the plurality indicated from five to ten years or indefinite periods.

The investigation of the potential reason for migration or relocation was associated with better financial prospects and education opportunities. These results mostly reflect the aspect of migration patterns from Azerbaijan. According to UNESCO data, in 2015 nearly 40 thousand students from Azerbaijan were registered at higher educational institutions abroad, with the majority of them studying in Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. Language skills and proficiency were theorised to be contributing factors “for the strong regional focus of student mobility.”¹²² Labour-related migration traditionally accounted for the major reason pushing people to emigrate.¹²³

Students from Azerbaijan tend to choose regional countries to continue their studies, because of the linguistics and possible cultural factors. Young people in this study also predominantly name similar untries as desired destinations for relocation.

Germany (the second most preferable country to move to) in this case is a slight outlier. As the ethnographic observation and qualitative studies have shown, besides purely economic reasons, Germany is also a desirable country for migrants who left the country due to political reasons.¹²⁴ Hence, it can be theorised that the selection of the country to move to depends on the motivations and socio-economic background of the person.

Eventually, besides the challenges or concerns raised by young people, they are optimistic about the future. The optimism and expectation of improvement in quality of life are equally anticipated both at the family and country levels. There might be several factors, like economic improvement, success in the second Karabakh war or a general tendency to be optimistic that contributes to the attested results. Further studies are necessary to investigate the potential reasons for such optimistic viewpoints and a replication of this study in several years can guide us to understand the degree to which expectations were met.

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CONCLUSION



This report summarises the findings of a large-scale study conducted among young Azerbaijanis and investigates their opinions, attitudes, grievances and values. It also outlines structural factors, including those that stem from long-established political, economic and societal realities, offering potential explanations for the patterns that emerged in the survey.

Many young Azerbaijanis enjoy access to basic economic needs, with the majority reporting that their households can afford basic items such as food and clothing. That said, a wide gap between the country's capital and other areas is evident. Baku residents score higher on the scale of subjective well-being, especially compared to rural youth. A similar discrepancy can be observed between those with higher education and respondents with secondary or lower education, as well as ethnic minorities.

While a majority of the youth in Azerbaijan are employed and have personal income, close to two-thirds still depend on others, primarily parents.

Enrolment in higher educational institutions remains low, despite an increasing number of students in recent years. Only about a quarter of young people in Azerbaijan (26%) are at an educational institution, with youth in Baku being more likely to be enrolled in an educational institution (32%) than those outside the capital.

Dissatisfaction with the educational system is rather widespread. More than half of Azerbaijani youth are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving or have received at schools. Many feel that schools do not prepare them for employment. Focus group discussions showed that young people complain about outdated curricula, instructors who are not aware of modern educational approaches and a lack of apprenticeships. Not surprisingly, young Azerbaijanis also believe that it is political connections rather than education that gets one a desired job in the country.

Half of all young respondents in Azerbaijan report being employed. Nonetheless, there is a significant disparity across gender, geography and the attained level of education. Youth from Baku (59%), young men (62%), those aged 25 to 29 (71%) and those with higher education (76%) are more likely to have a job than youth from outside the capital, young women (36%) and younger age cohorts.

A high share of NEETs has been outlined as a challenge for Azerbaijan, with about a quarter of 14- to 29-year-olds being neither in education, employment or training. Three times more young women (39%) neither have jobs nor are in education or training compared to only 12% of young men. Youth outside Baku are also more likely to be NEETs.

Azerbaijan's closed system leaves few options available for young people's political participation. There is little enthusiasm for democratic participation, which could be attributed to the ever-shrinking window of opportunity for young people to take part in politics. That said, ambivalence is a widespread answer when young people are asked about democracy. Despite more than half of young Azerbaijanis agreeing that democracy is the best way to govern the country, close to one in ten does not know,

or refuses to answer. Similarly, just over half of the respondents view the actual practice of democracy in the country either positively or fully positively (53%), while one-fifth of respondents are ambivalent.

With limited opportunities for political participation, only one-fifth of young Azerbaijanis say that they are interested in politics. Few discuss politics with peers or parents, engage with political news or contemplate taking on a political function. Moreover, three-quarters have not participated in any civic or political activities. While the plurality feels that their interests are well-represented, about 30% disagree, with the other 30% being ambivalent. These results indicate frustration rather than pure ambivalence.

Young people showed neutral and sometimes contradictory attitudes, especially when it came to foreign policy views and values. Young Azerbaijanis most frequently pick neutral rather than extreme foreign policy stances, avoiding “choosing sides” between the Western or Russian camps, with pro-Western sympathies slightly prevailing. That said, this does not imply that the West, Europe or the European Union is something close and very familiar to young people in Azerbaijan. For youth in Azerbaijan, Europe seems something distant and unfamiliar, at some point contrasting with their values, but still charming and attractive because of its material well-being, rule of law and cultural and scientific development.

Turkey emerges as the most important country that Azerbaijani youth believe their country should remain closest to pragmatic foreign policy focused on mutual benefit and maintaining more or less good working relations with the majority of neighbours and key players of the region probably matched young peoples’ positions.

The study demonstrated that the dominance of negative attitudes toward Armenia among young people is not only related to the Armenian state but, to a certain degree, to Armenians as well. A majority of young Azerbaijanis believe that cooperation with Armenia will damage the country’s national values, security and statehood. Many have antagonistic views toward Armenians, preferring to avoid contact with them or to avoid letting someone from Armenia enter Azerbaijan.

Young Azerbaijanis have neutral or ambiguous attitudes toward the Soviet Union. The fact that more than one-third of youth fail to provide any position regarding the evaluation of the USSR’s end suggests that this topic is neither relevant, nor actively discussed among young people in the country. While the shift could be attributed to the “active forgetting” of the Soviet past from the public realm (with a few exceptions), this should also be attributed to a shift from Russia- and Russophone-centric approaches to Western and Turkey-centric paradigms.

The victory in the Second Karabakh war and the reclamation of significant portions of occupied territories has boosted the public mood in Azerbaijan, including among young people, who were also pleased with the outcome of the war. As mentioned above, few support relations with Armenia or Armenians as, despite victory, the country is still perceived as the most important threat to Azerbaijan.

Young Azerbaijanis have a high sense of civic nationalism and self-reported beliefs associated with secularism, but at the same time many adhere to strong traditional and conservative values. Nearly all young people stressed that they perceive themselves as Azerbaijani citizens, while other identities are relatively less endorsed, possibly echoing dominant discourses cultivated by the government since independence. While family, traditional morals and beliefs linked to personal success are dominant, participatory values are less endorsed, potentially explaining low civic and political participation.¹

Young people, while reporting higher levels of support for authority-related institutions, report skepticism and distrust of political and civic society institutions. Military successes or relative economic prosperity, manifested in high levels of trust towards the army and the presidency, has positively impacted other state institutions. It can be argued that the state of institutional trust in Azerbaijan partially mirrors the general value orientation attitudes of young people.

Notwithstanding being a salient global issue, young people in Azerbaijan are largely not concerned about the climate change. While, when asked explicitly, nearly half of the young people agreed that it is a challenge, many still do not believe in its salience.

Despite officially calculated figures of migration numbers from Azerbaijan, just a small portion of young people reported even visiting a foreign country at least once. Notably, the majority of young people in Azerbaijan do not want to go abroad either for study or work.

While young people are generally optimistic about the future, many were still ambivalent. The optimism and expectation of improvement in quality of life are equally anticipated both at the family and country levels. Notably, optimistic attitudes prevail among residents of Baku, those with higher education and better socio-economic standing.

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FOOTNOTES



- 1 Young people who indicated their ethnicity other than Azerbaijani will be referenced as “ethnic minorities” for the rest of the report
- 2 Throughout the report, young people in Azerbaijan are also referred to as “young Azerbaijanis” or “Azerbaijani youth”. These terms are used to describe the same group of young people which includes ethnic Azerbaijanis as well as young people who indicated their ethnicity other than Azerbaijani.
- 3 Note that proportions do not total 100 as respondents were allowed to choose more than one source of income. A respondent might have had personal income and also being partially supported by parents.
- 4 Not in Education, Employment or Training.
- 5 Excluding those who are not at all interested.
- 6 Report “don’t know” or “refuse to answer”.
- 7 Sum of 5 and 6 on a 10-point scale.
- 8 Sum of “fully” and “quite a lot”.
- 9 Sum of “not at all” and “a little”
- 10 The questionnaire made use of the word “homosexual” as there is no Azerbaijani equivalent of “queer”. Authors are aware of contextual differences between the English and Azerbaijani usage of this word.
- 11 Valiyev and Babayev, “Azerbaijani Youth in Transition.”
- 12 Three regions have been excluded from the sample due to security concerns, namely: Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, Karabakh economic region and Eastern Zangazur economic region.
- 13 Seven percent of the sample is different ethnicity than Azerbaijani. From these, 2% identified themselves as Lezgins, while about 5% represent other ethnicities.
- 14 Valiyev and Valehli, “COVID-19 and Azerbaijan.”
- 15 Note that proportions do not total 100 as respondents were allowed to choose more than one source of income. A respondent might have had personal income and also being partially supported by parents.
- 16 Graham, “Subjective Well-Being in Economics.”
- 17 Asian Development Bank, Azerbaijan.
- 18 World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, Fall 2022.
- 19 World Economic Forum, “The Inclusive Development Index 2018.”
- 20 Asian Development Bank, Azerbaijan.
- 21 Note that proportions do not total 100 as respondents were allowed to choose more than one source of income. A respondent might have had personal income and also being partially supported by parents.
- 22 President of Azerbaijan, Azərbaycan gəncliyi 2017-2021-ci illərdə “Dövlət Proqramı [The state programme for youth of Azerbaijan between 2017 and 2021].
- 23 President of Azerbaijan, 2015-2025-ci illərdə Azərbaycan gənclərinin İnkişaf Strategiyası [Azerbaijani Youth Development Strategy for 2015-2025].
- 24 European Training Foundation, Policies Supporting Youth Transition to Work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- 25 Valiyev and Babayev, “Azerbaijani Youth in Transition.”
- 26 Isakhanli and Pashayeva, “Higher Education Transformation, Institutional Diversity and Typology of Higher Education Institutions in Azerbaijan.”
- 27 Sayfutdinova, “Tapş.”
- 28 Times Higher Education, “World University Rankings.”
- 29 Ergun and Kondakci, “The Internationalisation of Higher Education and Identity Construction in Azerbaijan.”
- 30 I.V. Mullis et al., “International Results in Mathematics and Science.”
- 31 OECD, “PISA 2018 Results. Combined Executive Summaries I, II & III.”
- 32 European Training Foundation, Policies Supporting Youth Transition to Work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- 33 Asian Development Bank, Azerbaijan.
- 34 Asian Development Bank.
- 35 Valiyev and Babayev, “Azerbaijani Youth in Transition.”
- 36 Valiyev, “Attaining SDG 8 in Azerbaijan.”
- 37 Hajizadeh et al., “Descriptive Analyses of Youth Transitions in Azerbaijan.”
- 38 Asian Development Bank, “Azerbaijan Country Gender Assessment.”
- 39 Isakhanli and Pashayeva, “Higher Education Transformation, Institutional Diversity and Typology of Higher Education Institutions in Azerbaijan.”
- 40 President of Azerbaijan, 2015-2025-ci illərdə Azərbaycan gənclərinin İnkişaf Strategiyası [Azerbaijani Youth Development Strategy for 2015-2025].
- 41 Asian Development Bank, Azerbaijan.
- 42 Amirova and Valiyev, “Do University Graduate Competences Match Post-Socialist Labour Market Demands? Evidence from Azerbaijan.”
- 43 European Training Foundation, Policies Supporting Youth Transition to Work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- 44 Valiyev, “Attaining SDG 8 in Azerbaijan.”
- 45 Valiyev and Babayev, “Azerbaijani Youth in Transition.”
- 46 Valiyev and Babayev, 146.

- 47 Sayfutdinova, "Taps"; Aliyev, "Institutional Transformation and Informality in Azerbaijan and Georgia"; Isakhanli and Pashayeva, "Higher Education Transformation, Institutional Diversity and Typology of Higher Education Institutions in Azerbaijan."
- 48 Codes 1 to 4 on a 10-point scale, where 1 means "far left" and 10 means "far right" correspond to "left-leaning", codes 5-6 correspond to "centre" and codes 7-10 correspond to "right-leaning".
- 49 Alberto Priego Moreno, "The Creation of the Azerbaijani Identity and Its Influence on Foreign Policy."
- 50 Aliyev, "Azerbaijan - Turkish Relations (1992-2012)."
- 51 Çelik and Iseri, "Turkish Nation-State Identity and Foreign Policy on Armenia."
- 52 Valiyev, "Azerbaijan-Russian Relations after Five Day War."
- 53 Thomas de Waal, "More Storm Clouds Gather Over Armenia, Azerbaijan."
- 54 Welt and Bowen, "Azerbaijan and Armenia: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict."
- 55 Alieva, "Azerbaijan and the Impact of the Lack of Democratisation on Relations with the EU."
- 56 Strimbovski, "The Influence of Energy Resources in Developing 'Pragmatic' Relations Between Azerbaijan and the West."
- 57 Cornell, "Azerbaijan: Going It Alone."
- 58 The variable HH financial position is constructed from the original variable describing self-evaluated financial position of the household. In the first rank we grouped the following options - "There is not enough money even for food", "We have enough money only for the most necessary things" and "There is enough money for food, but not enough to buy clothing and shoes". The second rank - "There is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance", the third rank - "There is enough money for household appliances, but we cannot buy a new car". In the fourth rank, the following options are merged: "There is enough money for a new car, but we cannot permit ourselves to buy an apartment or house" and "We experience no material difficulties, if needed we could acquire an apartment or house".
- 59 Welt and Bowen, "Azerbaijan and Armenia: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict."
- 60 ECORYS, "Annual Survey Report: Azerbaijan."
- 61 EU Neighbours East, "Annual Survey 2022."
- 62 Kakachia et al, "The Black Sea Security after Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Views from Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan."
- 63 Nuriyev, "Azerbaijan and the European Union."
- 64 van Gils, "The Inevitable Non-Performance of the Eastern Partnership in Azerbaijan."
- 65 Valiyev, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: What Role for the West in the South Caucasus?"
- 66 ECORYS, "Annual Survey Report: Azerbaijan."
- 67 Makili-Aliyev, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: Between East and West..."
- 68 Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren*.
- 69 Yavuz and Huseynov, "The Second Karabakh War."
- 70 <https://www.laender-analysen.de/cad/pdf/CaucasusAnalytical-Digest130.pdf>
- 71 Ibid
- 72 Croissant, *Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict*, The.
- 73 Radnitz, "Historical Narratives and Post-Conflict Reconciliation."
- 74 Hasanov and Hasanov. "Applied features of comparative technical, sociological investigation of historical and contemporary heritage of Azerbaijan."
- 75 Goff, "Nested Nationalism"; Yilmaz, "The Soviet Union and the Construction of Azerbaijani National Identity in the 1930s."
- 76 Entessar, "Azeri Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union and Iran."
- 77 Tokluoglu, "Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s."
- 78 Ibid, p. 728.
- 79 Rasizade, "Azerbaijan After a Decade of Independence."
- 80 Important to note, that the fieldwork of this study was conducted in June-July 2022. All positions regarding this topic reflects societal attitude as of that time.
- 81 Abdullazade and Abasov, "Memory Politics."
- 82 Tokluoglu, "Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s."
- 83 Shiriyev, "Betwixt and Between."
- 84 This term describes the specific segment of soviet society, usually the university-educated segment that was engaged in intellectual or artistic labour.
- 85 Tohidi, "Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private."
- 86 Swietochowski, "Azerbaijan."
- 87 Khalilzade, "Modernisation and Social Change in Azerbaijan."
- 88 Guliyev, "Oil and Regime Stability in Azerbaijan."
- 89 Rahimova, "Invisible Scars."
- 90 Ergun Özbolat and Valiyev, "An Account on Karabakh War."
- 91 Valiyev and Gurbanli, "One Year after the Karabakh War."
- 92 According to UNICEF, "Azerbaijan has a young population, with nearly 1 in 3 people between the ages of 14 and 29 (UNICEF Azerbaijan, "What We Do?")
- 93 Silova, Johnson and Heyneman, "Education and the Crisis of Social Cohesion in Azerbaijan and Central Asia."

- 94 Valiyev and Babayev, "Azerbaijani Youth in Transition."
- 95 Valiyev and Babayev.
- 96 Ismayilov, "State, Identity and the Politics of Music."
- 97 Broers and Mahmudlu, "Civic Dominion."
- 98 Niftiyev, "A Comparison of Institutional Quality in the South Caucasus."
- 99 Tohidi, "Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private."
- 100 The questionnaire made use of the word "homosexual" as there is no Azerbaijani equivalent of "queer". Authors are aware of contextual differences between the English and Azerbaijani usage of this word.
- 101 The questionnaire made use of the word "homosexual" as there is no Azerbaijani equivalent of "queer". Authors are aware of contextual differences between the English and Azerbaijani usage of this word.
- 102 Siroky and Mahmudlu, "E Pluribus Unum? Ethnicity, Islam and the Construction of Identity in Azerbaijan."
- 103 Cornell, Karaveli and Ajeganov, Azerbaijan's Formula: Secular Governance and Civic Nationhood.
- 104 Cornell, Azerbaijan Since Independence.
- 105 Ergun and Çitak, "Secularism and National Identity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan."
- 106 The latest Inglehart-Welzel world cultural map for 2022 places Azerbaijan at the traditional-survival quarter of the value axis, however, its position is relatively central, leaning toward secular and self-expression values. For more details, refer to https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/photos/Map%202022_June%202022.png
- 107 Babayev and Abushov, "The Azerbaijani Resilient Society."
- 108 Valiyev et al., "Do Citizens of the Former Soviet Union Trust State Institutions and Why."
- 109 Valiyev et al.
- 110 Valiyev et al.
- 111 Frumhoff, Heede and Oreskes, "The Climate Responsibilities of Industrial Carbon Producers."
- 112 Vidadili et al., "Transition to Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy Development in Azerbaijan."
- 113 Shelton, "Azerbaijan."
- 114 Asian Development Bank, Climate Risk Country Profile.
- 115 Nikolayenko, "The Emergence of Youth Movements in Azerbaijan."
- 116 Iunusov, "Migration in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan."
- 117 Yüksel et al., "Measuring International Migration in Azerbaijan."
- 118 Ergun and Kondakci, "The Internationalisation of Higher Education and Identity Construction in Azerbaijan."
- 119 Nadirov et al., "Life Satisfaction and Tax Morale in Azerbaijan."
- 120 Hosner, Guluzade and Wagner, "Baseline Study on Migration in Azerbaijan."
- 121 Hosner, Guluzade and Wagner.
- 122 Hosner, Guluzade and Wagner.
- 123 Wistrand, "Social Consequences of Seasonal Labour Migration."
- 124 Musavi, "A Portrait of a Migrant."

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ZoIS	Centre for East European and International Studies

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ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES

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

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

AUTHORS

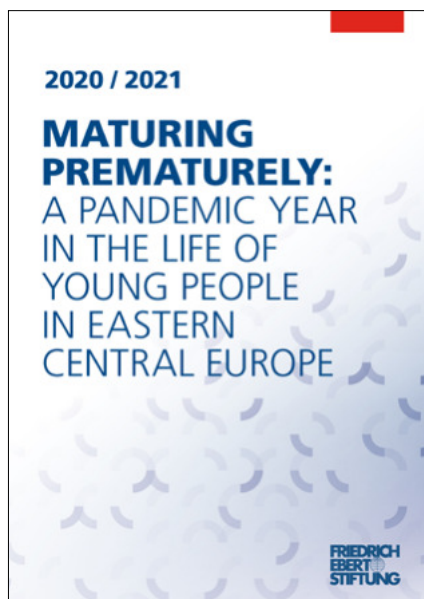
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OTHER YOUTH STUDIES PUBLICATIONS

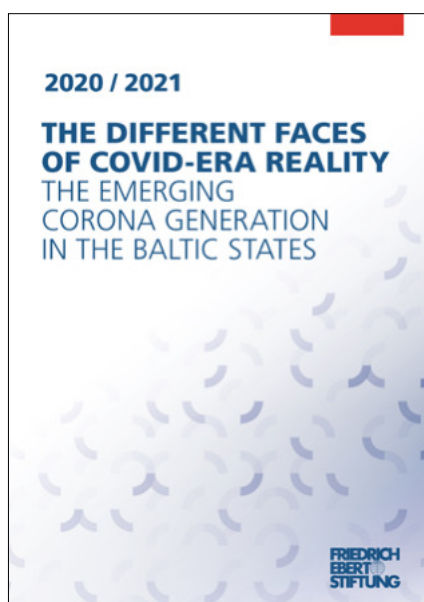


The coronavirus pandemic has been a great shock to societies in Central Europe. The restrictions it has brought about are extensive and must have been particularly new for the young generation that cannot remember the eras before the democratic regimes were established in this region. In this report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



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



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