

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

YOUTH IN LIBYA

FES MENA Youth Study: Results Analysis

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This report explores questions around as well as the reasons behind the lack of political and civic engagement among Libyan youth, what they think about climate change and how they perceive their prospects for the future, both in their personal lives and in society.



On the topic of identity, we investigate the economic situation of young people and how it is linked to the education system. Identity covers gender relations and how perceptions of expectations and adherence to those roles have changed.



Young people's lack of participation in politics and their focus on building good lives for their families does not constitute a withdrawal from public life, rather it is about them investing their time and effort into a sphere that is within their control.



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This report seeks to analyse data drawn from a survey of 1,000 young people from various parts of Libya. The questions were varied and covered a wide range of topics. The relatability of the answers to some of these topics led to the creation of the main sections regarding young people's views on family structure, identity, political and civic engagement.



On the topic of family structure, we investigate household economics and generational differences to explore family dynamics from different angles. On the topic of identity, we investigate the economic situation of young people and how it is linked to the education system. Identity also covers gender relations and how perceptions of expectations and adherence to those roles have changed. Lastly, on the subject of political and civic engagement, we explore topics of interest to young people related to the environment and also look at reasons for the lack of engagement. The last section of this report looks at climate change and the environment as well as the prospects for the future of Libyan young people.



Young people's lack of participation in politics and their focus on building good lives for their families does not constitute a withdrawal from public life, rather it is about them investing their time and effort into a sphere that is within their control, since engagement in the public space can put them at risk. The economic situation is deteriorating further, and young people are concerned that the current political impasse might usher in a new conflict that would cause even more damage. This lack of security extends to issues of climate change, which is not even on the agenda of decision-makers. Young Libyans however are optimistic about their own prospects and those of society.

Further information on the topic can be found here:

<https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

<https://libya.fes.de/>

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1

INTRODUCTION

Young people make up the majority of the population in Libya. The average young person is still at school or university and living at home with their family. Most Libyans live in urban areas, with 78 per cent of the population residing in coastal cities of different sizes (UNFPA 2022). The government has always perceived youth as a problematic social group. There is a lack of both policies and proper programmes for Libya's young people and the actual age range for youth has not even been officially defined. After the uprising in 2011, the National Transitional Council (the de facto government and recognised opposition body) attempted to include youth in Article 5 of the new interim Constitutional Declaration, which states that »[t]he State shall take care of children, youth and the handicapped.« While there are still no public policies regarding young people in Libya, consecutive transitional governments have established a Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Young people have played a dual role in the conflicts in Libya. While young men and women dominate civic space in the country, they are also part of the different structures of armed groups and militias. However, their participation, be it »positive« or »negative«, is missing from the existing power structures that have been using young men, in particular, as »cannon fodder« for their wars. This generation of young people have been brought up in an entirely different environment to their parents and grandparents. With regards to work and personal aspirations, they are completely different from their predecessors, and can be described as self-reliant, ambitious and aware.

This report aims to interpret a data set from a survey conducted in Libya in 2021 by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in cooperation with Kantar Public and the University of Leipzig. The report starts by discussing the family and the vital role it plays in social and political engagement in Libya. The data highlighted a strong connection between young people and their families and their answers also indicate that they place a lot of value on the concept of the family

and how it should be preserved. The section of the report on the family focuses on the household economy, since most young people, even those who work, still receive support from their families. This, in turn, inspired the section on generational differences.

The second section of the report is on identity. This mainly focuses on how young people in Libya describe themselves, their motivation for work, development and their opinions regarding a multitude of issues. The next section is on young people's economic situation, how this is connected to the education system and the impact of all these factors on gender relations. The third section addresses politics and civic engagement, highlighting that while some young people are engaged in civil society, political participation is extremely low. There is a distinct lack of interest in politics and a severe lack of trust in the legislative body, the Libyan House of Representatives. The section on climate change and the environment highlighted an increase in both awareness of and concern about environmental conditions in the country. This report concludes with a section on prospects for the future, in which survey respondents share their visions and aspirations as well as their anxieties about the future, from conflict to pandemic to climate change.

2

METHODOLOGY

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results of a long-term survey, launched in 2016, the FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region. In 2021, the FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as in Tunisia and Yemen. With the 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of answers to around 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on a variety of topics.¹

2.1 SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

For reasons of feasibility, a nationwide quota sampling method was chosen, with the aim of conducting 1,000 interviews per country. This sample size is considered adequately representative of the target group as well as of socio-demographic and regional subgroups (e.g., age, gender, level of education).

In Libya, the local institute responsible for fieldwork and sampling was Diwan Research. The institute has an established set of methods for selecting sampling points and identifying eligible households to survey, with the aim of randomising the selection process as much as possible. The aim was to ensure a geographic spread of respondents that was as close as possible to the distribution of the survey universe in the respective country. For each geographic area, the institute provided a list of sampling points.

The fieldwork phase was conducted between September and November 2021. The survey ultimately reached 1,000 Libyan young people aged between 16 and 30 years. All interviews were carried out in the local Arabic dialect. Inter-

views were held at respondents' homes or in public places such as cafés, community centres and the like. It was of major importance that the respondents felt comfortable, and the interview locations were chosen accordingly.

The data was collected in face-to-face interviews conducted using the paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI) method. The data collected was entered manually via an online survey interface then transferred to an SPSS database. During the fieldwork, Kantar Public, a specialist research, evidence and advisory business, carried out data validation with sets of interim data via Excel and SPSS (statistical software program) syntaxes. In parallel, Kantar Public and the University of Leipzig conducted the final comprehensive data check. To ensure that the final structure of the sampling reflected the structure of the survey universe, differences were reduced with factorial weighting. The survey data was weighted for all target groups with respect to the structural variables of age, gender and region, based on available statistics.

2.2 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Of the surveyed population, 27 per cent resided in large cities (more than 500,000 people), 28 per cent resided in medium-sized cities (100,001-500,000 people), 24 per cent resided in small cities (20,001-100,000 people), 20 per cent resided in rural towns (1,001-20,000 people) and 1 per cent resided in villages (50-1,000 people). Of the total number surveyed, 93 per cent identified as »youth« and 7 per cent identified as adults. Moreover, 71 per cent of the total sample indicated that they were single at the time of the survey (higher among males, at 83 per cent, than females, at 58 per cent), 10 per cent said they were engaged and 19 per cent stated that they were married. Only 14 per cent of the sample stated that they had children (86 per cent said they did not), with the highest percentage (35 per cent) among respondents in the 26-30 age bracket, as would be expected. Looking at the numbers through a gendered lens, 22 per cent of female respondents reported having children

¹ For more information on the FES MENA Youth Study: <https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

(correlated to them being married in higher percentages), while only 7 per cent of males stated they had children. The average household size across respondents is 5.9 persons per household with 4.6 persons aged between 16 and 65.

When asked about their living situation, 83 per cent of respondents stated that they lived with their parents within the same household, 15 per cent lived with their own family (with their partner/without their parents). Just 2 per cent lived in other settings. When it comes to who heads the household, 72 per cent stated that the head of the household was their father, 13 per cent responded that their husband/wife was the head of the household, with just 9 per cent stating that their mother was the head of the household, 4 per cent stating that they themselves had this role and only 1 per cent stating that »someone else« headed the household. In line with more traditional family dynamics/views, a relatively large percentage of female respondents (26 per cent) stated that their husbands were head of the household, while a mere 1 per cent stated that their wives fulfilled this role. When asked to provide a broad assessment of their families at the time of the survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents shared that their family situation was very good (20 per cent) or rather good (67 per cent).

Half of respondents (51 per cent) stated that they were currently in school (42 per cent of this group) or at university (54 per cent of this group). Furthermore, 69 per cent of the sample confirmed that they had a more advanced level of schooling (high school diploma or higher), while 28 per cent had completed secondary/intermediate schooling, and just 3 per cent had only attended primary school.

The study broadly delves into aspects around: (1) family, (2) identity and (3) politics and civic engagement. This is all inferred from the established knowledge of the situation in Libya and of young people in particular.

3

FAMILY

In Libya, the family has always been at the heart of social and political dynamics, organising the tribes, clans and other social groups that make up Libyan communities. In 1973, when Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi proclaimed the establishment of »People's Power« and launched his own political philosophy with his »Green Book« two years later, the ideology was firmly rooted in the preservation and protection of the ideal family unit (Al-Qaddafi 1976). The state capitalised on existing social norms regarding the family and advocated for incorporating family attachments in the wider social networks that make up the nation and therefore the state. Families in Libya have traditionally been led by a patriarch, a male figure that provides for the family and makes the decisions. During the 42 years of his reign, Gaddafi attempted to emulate this model on a national scale. The result is a country that is not governed by institutions but by a central figure who supposedly has intimate knowledge of political and social affairs of every facet of »his« people lives.

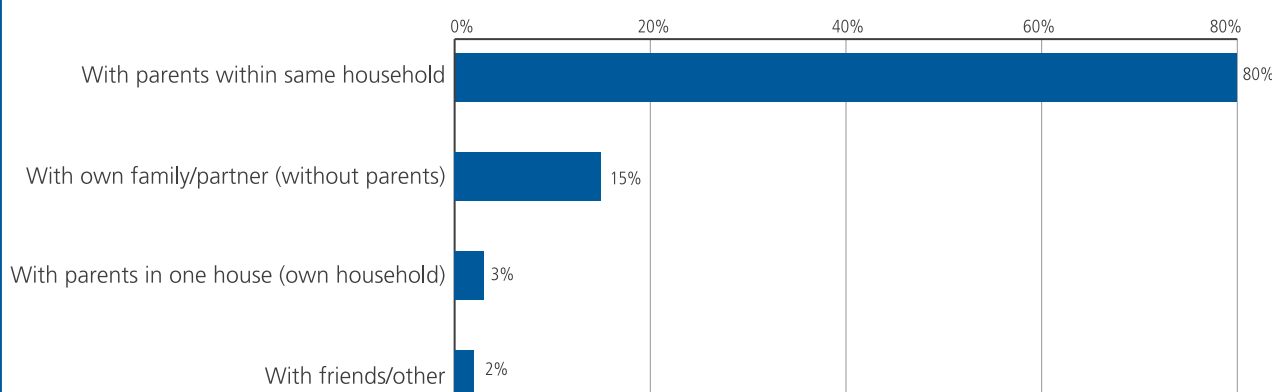
While family structures have undergone drastic changes over the decades, especially after 2011 and the subsequent violent conflicts that affected Libyan society at large, the family is still integral and perhaps one of the few remaining stable structures in the country. Libyans lives still revolve around the family. The results of the survey reveal that 80 per cent of all those who participated, whether from large cities or rural areas, continue to live with their families.

Although households are no longer exclusively led by the »father«, this remains the case for the majority (72 per cent, in addition to 17 per cent headed by a man from the younger generation, i.e., the male interviewee himself or the female interviewee's husband). The percentage is higher for lower-income families residing in medium-sized cities, which highlights that it is both an economic decision and a social one. It is not evident from the survey whether displacement has contributed to this. Humanitarian reports on the issue indicate that many displaced households are led by women as a direct consequence of conflict (UNFPA 2019).

Figure 1

Living situation

What is your current living situation?



3.1 HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

Information provided by interviewees regarding their parent's situation shows significant development in the backgrounds of Libyan families. The level of education of parents has changed dramatically over the decades, especially in light of the legacy of colonial Italy, which prevented the majority of Libyans from getting an education (Fuller, 2006). Between 1951 and 1962, school enrolment increased massively. Now, in 2021, 29 per cent of respondents shared that their fathers hold a university degree, 15 per cent have a technical or vocational diploma and another 42 per cent have completed secondary education. This also has implications for norms and customs. When it comes to education, there are only minimal differences between families residing in rural and urban areas. The increase in the level of education also means that the employment situation has changed. A total of 59 per cent of respondents stated that their fathers were employed by the state. This figure is slightly higher for rural areas (66 per cent). Overall, 81 per cent of respondents said their fathers were paid monthly, 88 per cent of whom lived in rural areas and 75 per cent in large cities. Regular monthly payments indicate that banks do not suffer from liquidity issues and there is no disruption of services like those experienced by civilians on a regular basis such as in cities like Tripoli. That said, household income is larger in cities.

When it comes to education, the inequalities between fathers and mothers is quite clear from the data, although 50 per cent of respondents, on average, reported that their mothers had acquired at least university entry-level qualifications, with only 10 per cent claiming that their mothers were illiterate. The percentage of the latter is higher in rural areas. The average income of mothers is less than that of fathers. Also, unlike fathers, mothers from low-income households receive little support when it comes to pension and sick leave.

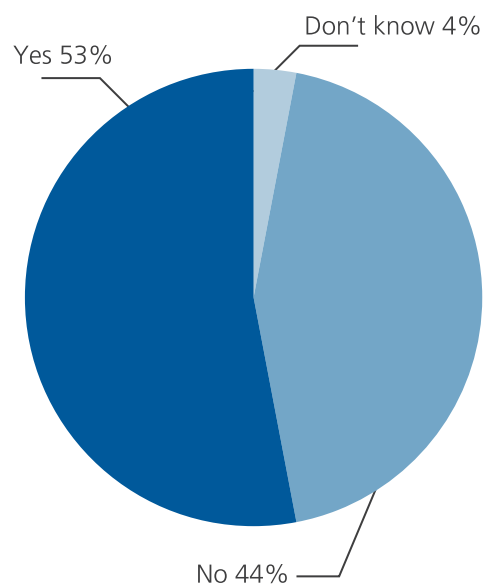
This means that households that are led and supported by women suffer from both the existing inequalities due to the wage gap and a systematic failure to recognise them as heads of households due to patriarchal norms. As a result they are not given access to the same services enjoyed by male-led households.

Questions regarding the assessment of family class point to a different understanding of social and economic class. This may be due to Gaddafi's aggressive social policy of redistribution of wealth and equalising Libyan society during the 1980s and 1990s when Libyans were encouraged to believe their country had an egalitarian social system (Vandewalle 2006). For instance, those who live in the city more frequently consider themselves as part of the upper middle class (34 per cent), while the remaining 61 per cent viewed themselves as lower middle class. Despite these numbers, 49 per cent overall still consider themselves working

Figure 2

Mother's retirement pension

Is your mother entitled to a retirement pension?



class. This perception is higher among those from higher educational backgrounds and those living in large cities than rural areas. A total of 77 per cent of those who consider themselves working class are within the 26-30 age group.

This could also be interpreted as an indicator of how Libyans measure wealth and good economic conditions. Having an income, owning your own property and being able to afford the basic necessities of life are the standard indicators of positive economic conditions. Similarly, being employed by the state and having a job is considered working class. This contradicts the responses regarding consumerism where the majority, even in rural areas, said that they did not have land, livestock or produce their own food.

A total of 88 per cent of respondents live in private housing that they or their families own. This percentage is higher for those based in rural locations. Many of those who participated in the study reported receiving support from their families even if they work. The inheritance of private property and family support, especially for men, makes a significant contribution to being able to have a family in Libya, which is perceived as important for individual happiness and well-being.

According to the respondents, the most important thing to secure their future prospects is to have a better job, followed by getting married and having good family relations.

3.2 GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

There are without a doubt growing generational differences within Libyan families. Young people have access to different online and offline spaces. They have different lived experiences and skills and expertise enabling them to engage with modern issues and modern solutions. However, when it comes to the family and traditions, 86 per cent of the young Libyans questioned in this study, believe that it is important for social relations to remain within the family first and foremost. This is still seen as being important moving forward into the future but going beyond the confines of the family is accepted to some extent. Families are more tight-knit in rural areas.

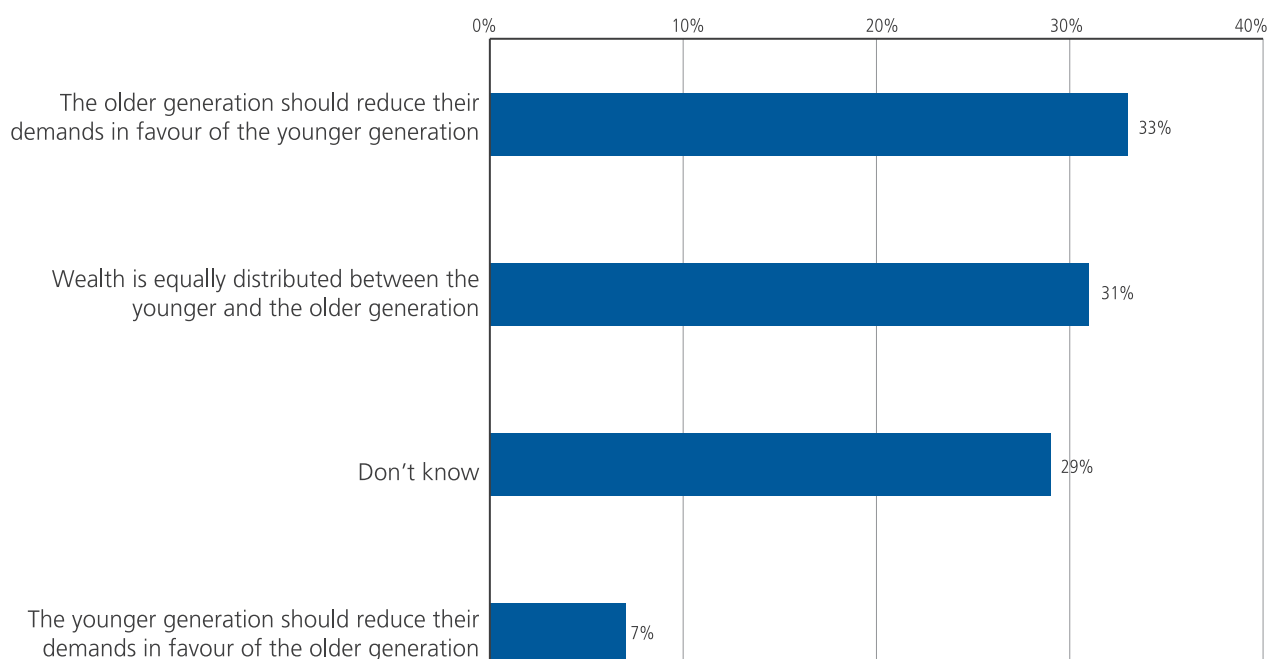
When it comes to questions regarding generational wealth distribution, 33 per cent felt that the older generation should reduce their demands in favour of the young generation. This perception is more pronounced in cities. Overall, 31 per cent of the respondents felt that wealth was equally distributed between the younger and older generation.

The figure below indicates that respondents from lower educational backgrounds believe that wealth is equally distributed between generations and those living in poor economic conditions have the opposite view, being of the opinion that the older generation must reduce their demands in favour of the younger generation. This could correspond to the fact that leadership positions in various spheres are held almost entirely by the older generation in Libya, and they tend to make the decisions.

Figure 3

Generational wealth distribution

What about the distribution of wealth between the generations? Which of the following statements corresponds most closely to your opinion?



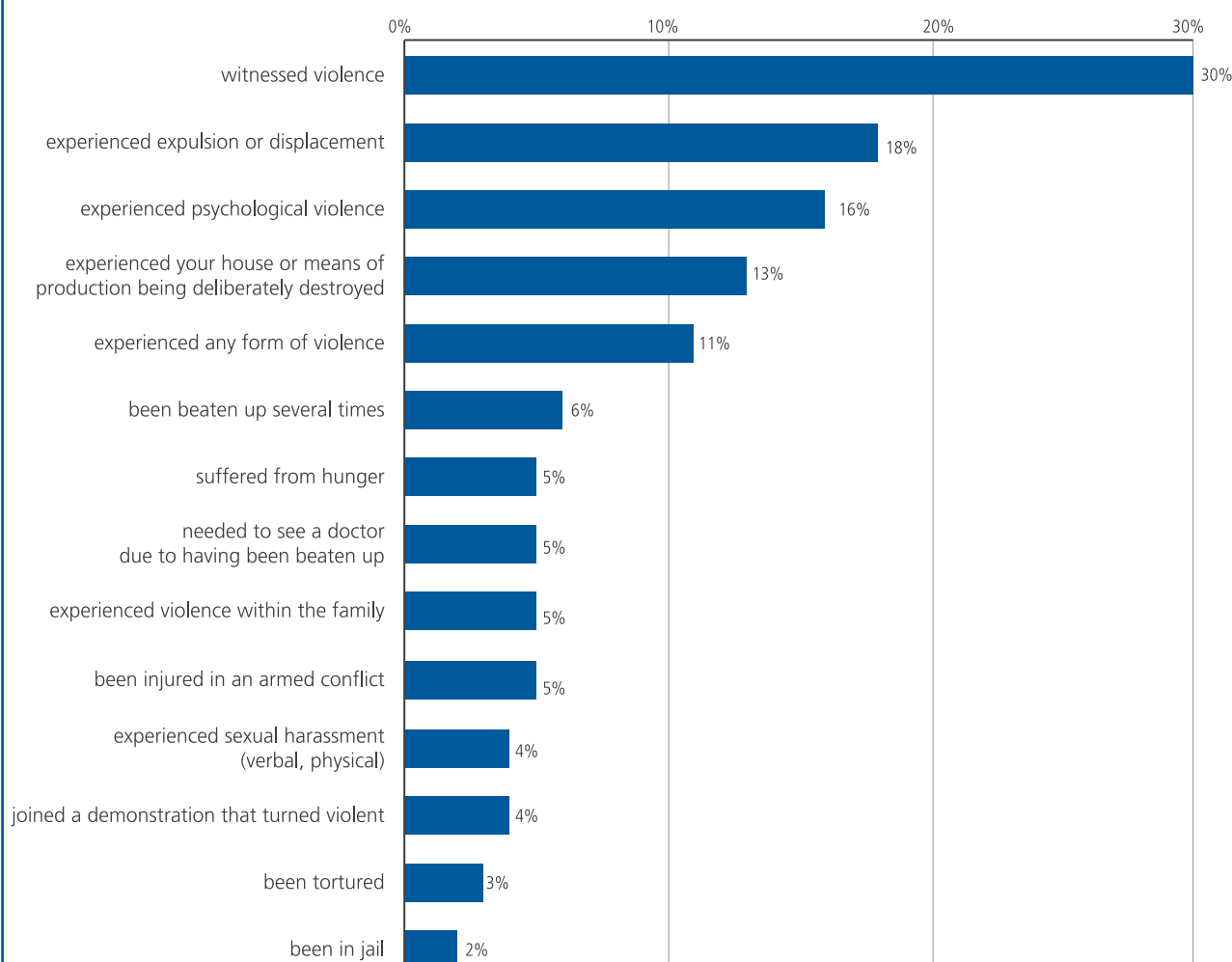
4

IDENTITY

Young people in Libya are forming their identity during a time of conflict and instability and this is reflected in their perception of and overall satisfaction with their lives. Their average response to questions regarding life in Libya is that they are somewhat satisfied (5.6 on a scale from 1 to 10), indicating that young people's focus is shifting away from what happens in the public space and onto themselves.

Young people becoming less interested in what is happening in the country does not equate to isolation from the public sphere but a distinct disinterest in Libyan politics in particular. It is evident from the survey that young people perceive the national economic crisis, supply shortages, insecurity, hunger, the Covid-19 pandemic, and its consequences, as well as armed conflict, human rights violations, mismana-

Figure 4
Experience of violence
Have you ever....?



gement of public institutions and the environmental crisis as important. However, they are also aware that opportunities for participation to change these circumstances are limited and dangerous.

They view the stability of their personal lives as being connected to the economic situation, being surrounded by trusted friends, having personal belief in their own skills, having good relations with their family and having a personal religious faith. This suggests that the personal sphere is where they choose to engage and where they are able to make decisions. The political situation continued to receive a low score across questions related to participation and voting. The risk factor mentioned above makes a key contribution to the low scores. A total of 30 per cent said they had witnessed or experienced violence, or experienced expulsion and displacement as well as experienced psychological violence.

Young people in Libya see the media as a major source of conflict (ACSS 2020). Respondents consistently agreed with the following statement »If I consider all the violence shown/reported in the media, I feel sad and depressed« (41 per cent strongly agreed and another 44 per cent agreed with the statement), which perhaps explains their decision not to use local media as a source of information. Views regarding migration indicate an increase in the anti-emigration sentiment. A total of 94 per cent of young people in the sample have never lived abroad and 85 per cent do not have family abroad. Those who do live abroad are mostly in Europe. A total of 33 per cent of those with family members abroad see this emigration as personally important to them, while 67 per cent disagree. Regarding their own situation, 80 per cent of respondents definitely do not want to emigrate. This sentiment is more widespread in medium-sized cities than rural areas. For those that do want to emigrate, Europe is the preferred target destination.

4.1 ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR YOUTH IN LIBYA

The fact that 67 per cent of all respondents do not have private bank accounts, and 92 per cent do not have private credit cards points to a lack of trust in the banking system and a lack of investment in public finance. The majority of the respondents work (30 per cent) or are students (48 per cent). Unemployment is high, at 26 per cent for those in the 26-30 age bracket. Respondents are likely to be considering the economic situation of their entire family when answering questions regarding their own situation, since students are mostly supported by their families, despite the fact that 69 per cent reported receiving only irregular income.

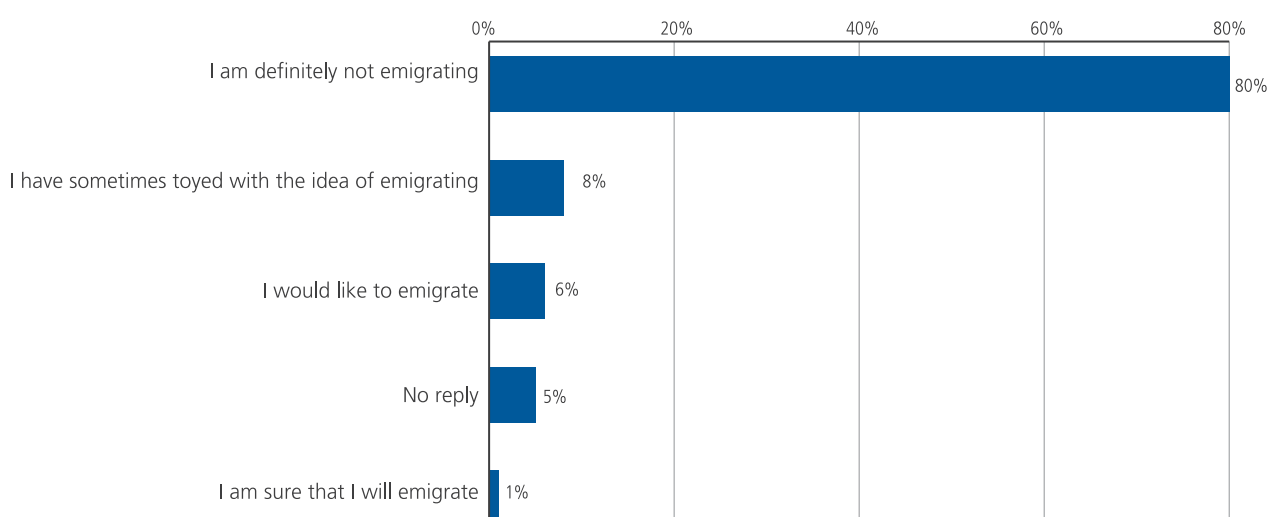
Before 2011, unemployment was on the rise, especially for young people who require a support system in order to survive in the country. The vast majority of respondents receive information regarding job opportunities from their friends, family and through personal connections. The private sector in Libya is somewhat unregulated, the lack of legal and logistical infrastructure places a lot of young people at risk of exploitation and mistreatment (Khalifa et al. 2022). This is reflected in responses about attitudes towards work and employment, which indicate that young people seek work not only for security but also social acceptability. Their working conditions are not satisfactory: responses highlighted the need for long-term employment, higher pay and the ability to advance in their careers.

Young Libyans do not feel they are reaching their full potential in their employment and the overwhelming majority (80 per cent) have no savings, which means that they are unable to leave their jobs. All these factors coupled with the pressure to own a property and start a family result in increased frustration with the current economic situation in the country.

Figure 5

Personal emigration plans

What would best describe your situation?



The situation is slightly better for those working in large cities who are more likely to be satisfied with their work. The percentage of respondents who expressed satisfaction with their jobs is higher for female respondents who also have more regular contractual employment than young men. One reason for this could be a new perception that women are more committed to their jobs than men or are unlikely to seek employment elsewhere since they do not face the same pressure as men to provide for their families. A total of 53 per cent of working respondents said that they needed a phone or a computer for their work, although most of them did not receive their work assignments via technology but know of someone who does.

4.2 GENDER RELATIONS

In Libya, young people's perceptions of gender relations are mostly limited to the family structure. Here, there is little difference between those living in urban and rural areas. When asked about finding a partner, 42 per cent responded that it had been increasingly difficult. Young men believed that this was because women demand more financial security and/or are more demanding in general and no longer accept traditional roles. Women think men are increasingly poor and cannot take care of a family, they also perceive men's moral standards to be in decline, and 20 per cent expressed a lack of trust in men in general.

Unpacking this gets to the heart of the change in gender perceptions and adherence to gender roles in Libyan society. Despite the fact that responses regarding the family point to a continuation of traditional views, the social change in educational and economic opportunities due to developments prior to 2011, such as more women in higher education, non-discriminatory economic laws and a social policy of promoting female labour participation resulted in more women being integrated in the workforce. This translates into improved independent decision-making skills and self-reliance, allowing women to challenge and/or navigate strict gender norms.

The development of the conflict and its consequences also show a change in how women and men relate to each other in society. While images of masculinities and femininities in war are set to disadvantage one side, especially in a gendered conflict like Libya, the loss of family providers, or their absence, allowed for increased participation of women both in decision-making and heading the households. This created a shift that is subtle but may yet manifest itself on a larger scale.

It is evident from the responses to the survey that more women than men seek education to improve their opportunities. This is reflected in women's ability to find regular employment, which, in turn, impacts how men and women perceive each other's roles within the household and challenges previously accepted expectations. These conditions are fraught with gender contestation, where expectations of gender roles and adherence to those roles are no longer relevant and/or important to women who are now able to provide for themselves and make their own decisions. That said, this change or shift is not yet acknowledged in the country and, at least in certain more conservative circles, is also not accepted.

The interactions between women and men remain largely within the private space. This means that these conflicted dynamics begin at home and manifest in sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence in public. For example, a prevalent form of gender-based violence in Libya is sexual harassment (Cordaid 2020). Two in three respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that women dressing inappropriately should not complain about sexual harassment. Male and female respondents are equally likely to give this response.

Libyan laws regarding harassment and gender-based violence are either underdeveloped or non-existent, partly due to the political and legal conflict and also because the issue is framed within Libyan society as a taboo and therefore inaccessible. This gives men and society at large the power to dictate who is a victim, using stigma and reputation to control women in society.

5

POLITICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

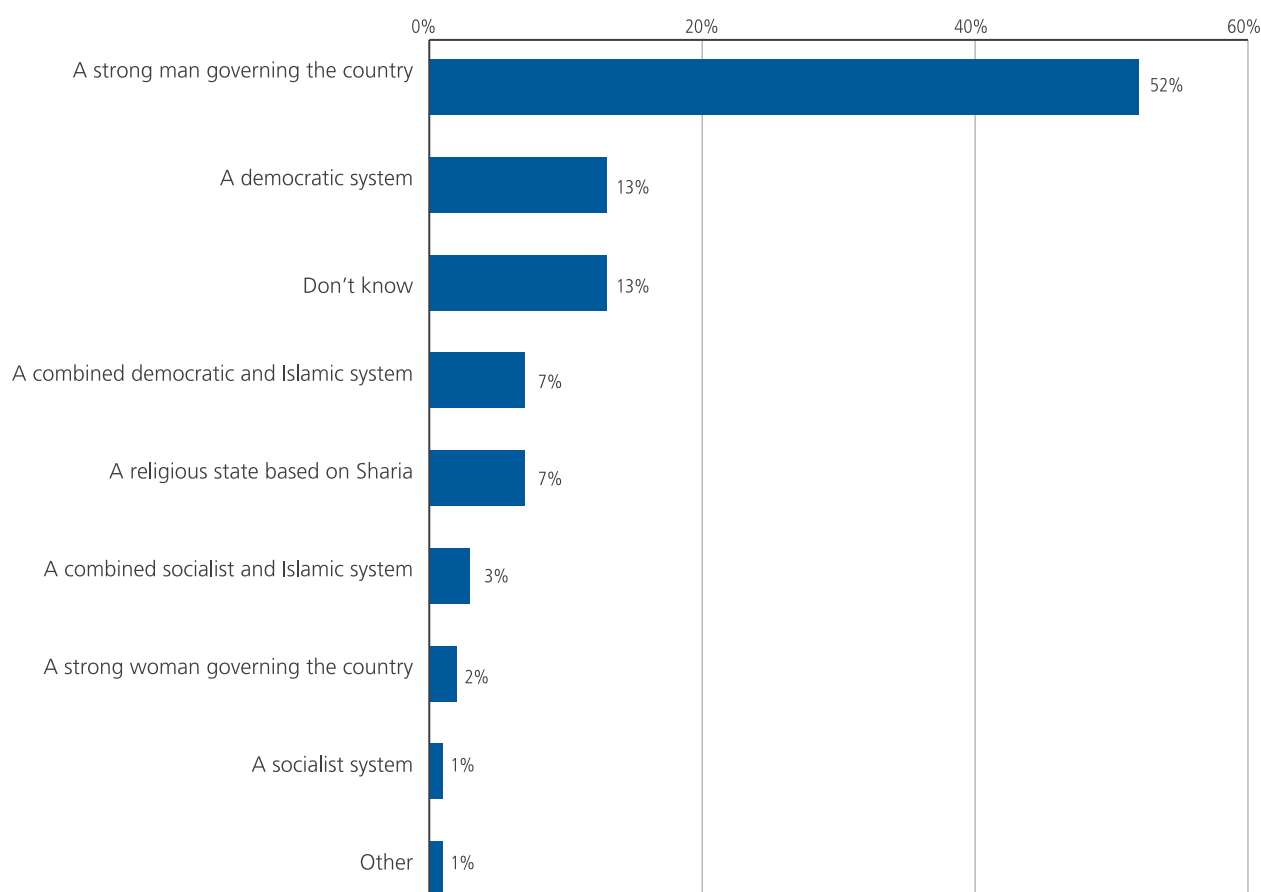
The political situation in Libya has been in a perpetual state of instability since the major upheaval of 2014, when post-electoral violence led to a power split and protracted violent conflicts that continue to this day. In a study published by the Arab Reform Initiative, a high percentage of Libyan youth stated that 2014 was a more pivotal year than 2011 in terms of dramatic changes to their lives, interruption of education and loss of opportunities and hope (Khalifa 2022). The corruption and the ability of the same

political elite to keep reappearing in a seemingly endless string of transitional bodies have led young people to lose trust and develop political apathy. The longer the lack of political participation continues, the bigger the generational gap between those in power and young Libyans will become. Figure 6 shows that 50 per cent of respondents, the majority of whom are male, prefer a strong man to govern the country, believing that power equates to the enforcement of strength and control.

Figure 6

Preferred political system

If you look around the world, what kind of political system would you prefer?



A total of 33 per cent of Libyan youth trust the public health system. Despite the fact that the Libyan health system has suffered from major damage to its infrastructure and has been targeted repeatedly during the wars, added to a general lack of development (Saieh 2021), it remains one of the few structures that deliver services, which is what young people perceive as important when it comes to governance. Trust in government is at 22 per cent. This is due to the limited capabilities and budgets of municipal governments as a result of a poorly formulated law on the local administration system (number 59/2012), which does not clearly outline the functions of municipalities. Interestingly, the police also receive a high trust rating (33 per cent) even though the police service itself is largely inactive. It is unclear here what respondents see as the police, due to the development of armed groups and their integration within the formal sector, such as the ministry of the interior in the western region of the country (Eaton et al. 2020).

Young people's trust in the United Nations (UN) is very low (5 per cent), confirming widespread media perceptions of this organisation. The military (41 per cent) and tribal structures (39 per cent) enjoy relatively high trust levels, even though the tribal system is largely ageist and on the decline among youth. The media scores low (11 per cent), as young people see the media as a tool for conflict. The biased and polarised coverage of the wars since 2014 as well as the lack of freedom of expression and the press have eroded public opinion of the Libyan media. On the whole, young Libyans also do not trust the country's judiciary (29 per cent), which has been seriously weakened, with judges and lawyers constantly being threatened and courts being

unable to enforce their verdicts depending on the sensitivity of the case and whether or not it is related to someone in the government or an armed group.

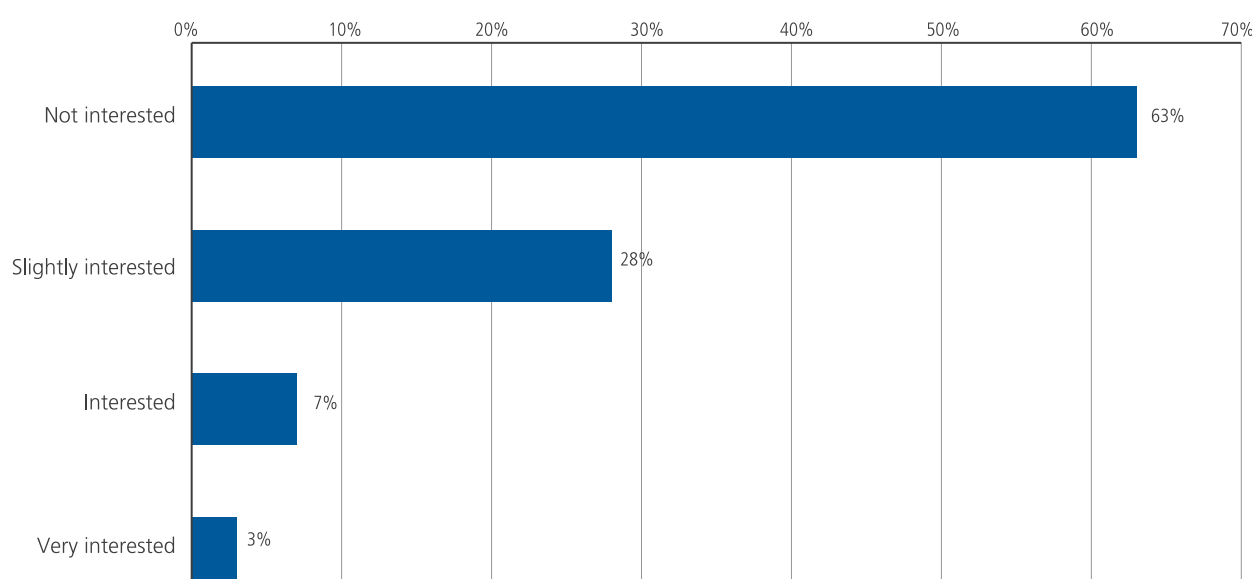
Like the regular media, social media also received a low trust rating (15 per cent). This is related to the conflict and how media misinformation forming false narratives, especially during 2019 war, has fragmented Libyan society. The war of 2019/2020 exposed large-scale foreign-backed misinformation campaigns on social media networks and online media. This influenced narratives on both sides to such an extent that it was difficult to navigate what was actually happening.

One of the least trusted institutions among young people is the House of Representatives (the Libyan parliament), at 15 per cent. Survey respondents were quite young during the 2012 elections and have perhaps not had the opportunity to vote or participate in electoral activities, with the exception of some municipal elections. The above opinions and experiences of young people regarding politics explain the lack of trust in the House of Representatives, since they do not view the parliament's activities as politics. There have been no elections since 2014 and the media portrayal of the conflict is very polarised. Generally, Libyan politician communication with the public is non-existent, yet reports about their corruption and implicit roles in various conflicts mean they are very much part of the problem.

This leads us to the set of questions regarding youth's assessment of protest movements of 2011. In this context, more female respondents said they would label 2011 a

Figure 7
Interest in politics

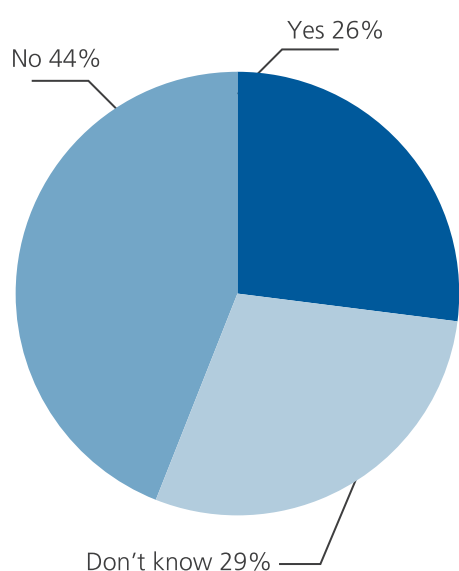
Are you interested in politics?



revolution (30 per cent of females versus 19 per cent of males), 28 per cent claimed it was a foreign intervention, with a higher percentage of male respondents giving this response (33 per cent, compared to 23 per cent among females). This apparently gendered assessment is indicative of the fact that more young women in Libya see the events that occurred in 2011 in a more favourable light than men. It could also be rooted in the changes which have occurred since 2011, which have seen women, in particular, play a bigger role in the public sphere, either through direct participation in these movements or engagement in civic and political institutions.

Figure 8
Recent developments

Are there recent events or movements in your country that are similar to those across the region in 2010/11?



The majority of young people do not think recent protests or actions are similar to those of 2011, which singles out the 2011 uprising as a once in a lifetime pivotal event that young people in Libya have yet to come to terms with. Since 2014, which had more impact on young people's lives in terms of disruption, the events are most commonly described as a foreign intervention (12 per cent of the sample) and civil war (9 per cent). This opinion highlights a greater awareness of the internal dynamics of the conflict and the role of the external international and regional actors involved. When asked about changes since the events five years ago, 39 per cent thought that the political situation in general had improved, while 34 per cent thought it had deteriorated.

5.1 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Libyan civil society had a major revival after 2011, when the space for civic activism and freedoms allowed it to flourish for a few years. Since 2014, however, it has been in decline and the civic space has been shrinking, with attacks and threats against human rights defenders, political activists and journalists. In early 2022, more activists were detained or disappeared due to their perceived liberal views regarding women's rights, migration and religion. Protest movements are often met with violence and dispersed before they can achieve very much (Reuters 2022). Civil society in Libya remains largely led by young people and women. It has grown in the fields of humanitarian response, culture and art, in particular, where youth have found a different form of expression for their engagement in society that has little to do with »politics« and »controversy« (Yomusiak et al. 2022). This was reflected in the responses to the survey as well, where the majority of respondents engaged in civic activities said that they participate in charity work and help provide services to their neighbourhoods to improve people's lives. A total of 23 per cent frequently engage in activities focused on the environment. The lowest level of engagement was 10 per cent for political or social change.

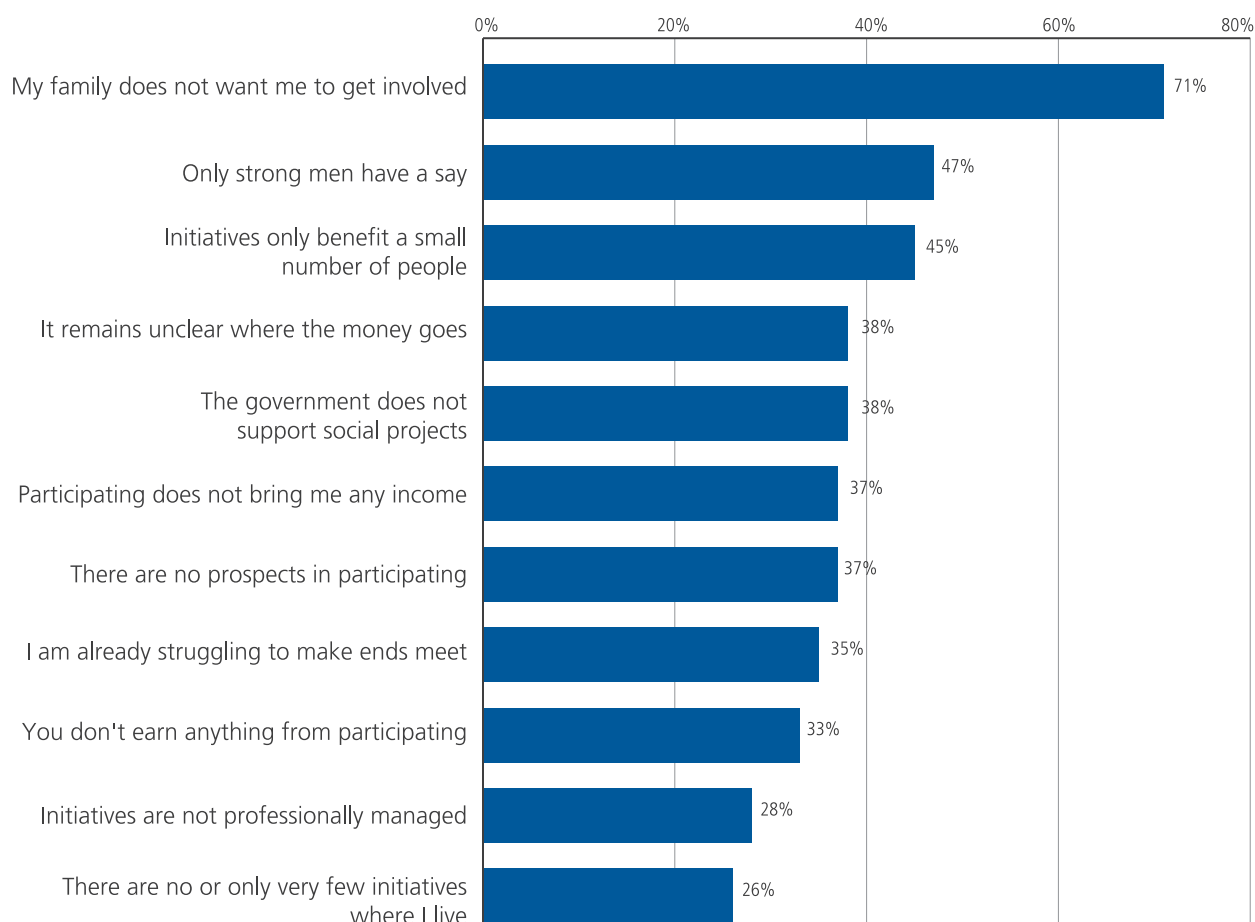
A total of 49 per cent of those participating in the survey said they prefer to engage individually rather than via institutions (NGOs). This is due to the fact that the eroded space for civic activities and attacks on activists have severely damaged the trust in and reputation of civil society organisations. The answer to the survey question regarding reasons for non-engagement (»What are the practical reasons for you are not engaging in social projects?«) often indicated that the respondent's family has a say in such a decision. This again points to the dire security situation of those who engage in civic activities and reflects families fears of being targeted. A total of 47 per cent of young people who said they did not engage in civic activities responded that only strong men can enforce their will and make decisions, which could be linked to the responses regarding the form of governance.

It is evident that over a decade of conflict and impunity, during which seemingly »strong, armed men« are the only ones able to enforce their will on society, is having an effect on the Libyan psyche. This is a dangerous shift in perception for young Libyans who are sceptical about all initiatives because they believe they only benefit those with the power to make decisions. This is a view which is supported by 45 per cent who said civic projects only benefit a small number.

Figure 9

Reasons for lack of engagement

What are the practical reasons for you NOT engaging in social projects?



Other responses provide a different perspective indicating a wider sense of fatigue when it comes to engagement. This is due to the lack of support given to independent civic projects (outside the humanitarian field) coupled with the high risk for participant security and safety. There is also the perceived lack of results due to ongoing conflict and mounting challenges. It is clear that young people in Libya find civic engagement unrewarding in an environment where they cannot effect change.

5.2 CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Libyan conflict has led to a total collapse of infrastructure. The divided institutions and entrenched corruption have made the remaining functioning institutions dysfunctional (Libya Update 2022). This has had a significant impact on the ability of the Libyan authorities to even consider the rising global temperature and related desertification in the

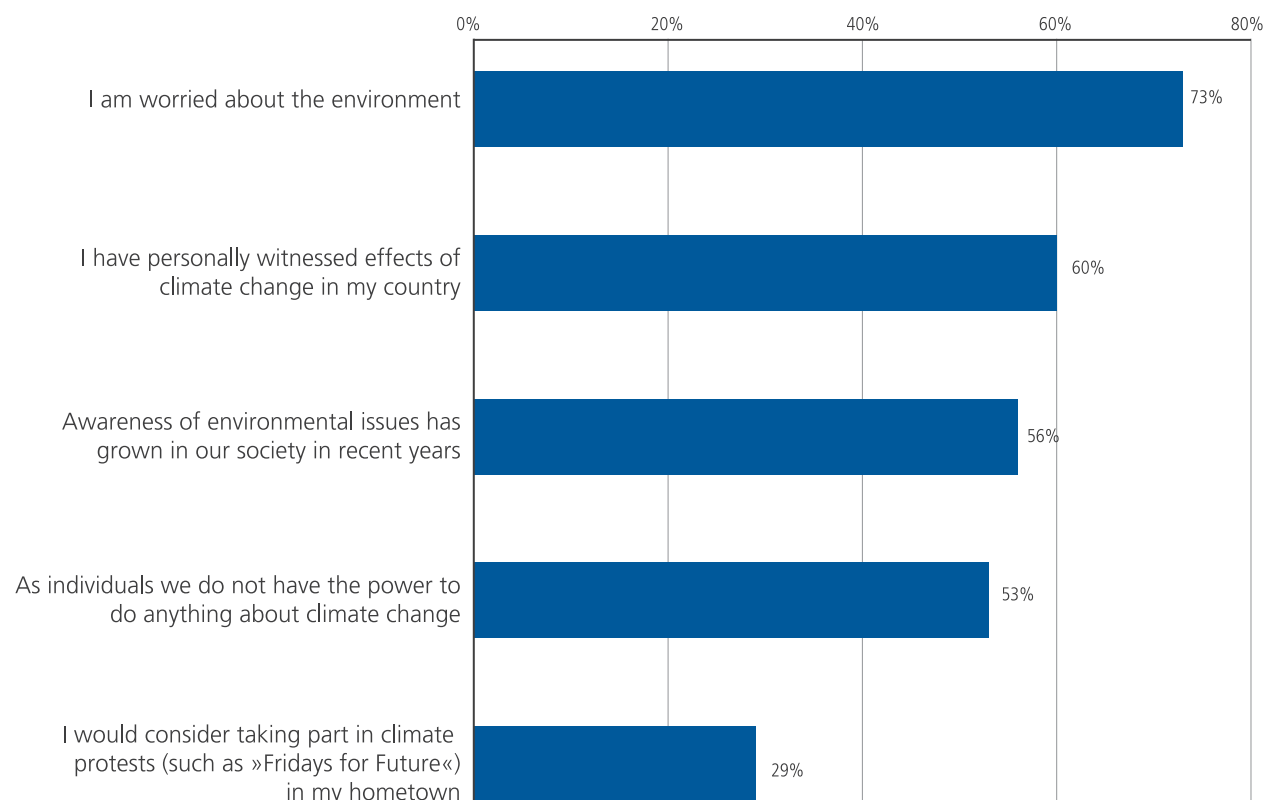
country. A total of 95 per cent of Libya is desert, and while the country has the longest coastline in the Mediterranean, agriculture has become increasingly impeded by water depletion. These climate conditions pose a significant threat to Libya since scarcity of resources can often exacerbate existing conflicts. In a recent study published by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), agricultural villages near southwest Tripoli have largely been abandoned or severely damaged because of conflict and displacement (ICRC 2022). On their return, farmers have found the infrastructure in an extreme state of disrepair and their crops dead due to the droughts that are common in Libya.

»As individuals, we do not have the power to do anything about climate change«. This statement shows that youth in Libya are increasingly aware of this important issue, yet because of the situation in the country, the avenues for them to effect tangible change are limited or non-existent. When asked about their future aspirations, many answered that they would behave in a more environmentally conscious manner on a personal level.

Figure 10

Climate change

Do you rather agree or disagree with the following statements?



Libya is heavily reliant on fossil fuels and their revenues. While awareness of climate change is high, its impact has yet to reach the group of young people who answered the survey. A total of 45 per cent said they did not consider climate change to be important, whereas 34 per cent did. This response mainly came from individuals living in rural areas whose families were particularly affected due to the impact on local agricultural production.

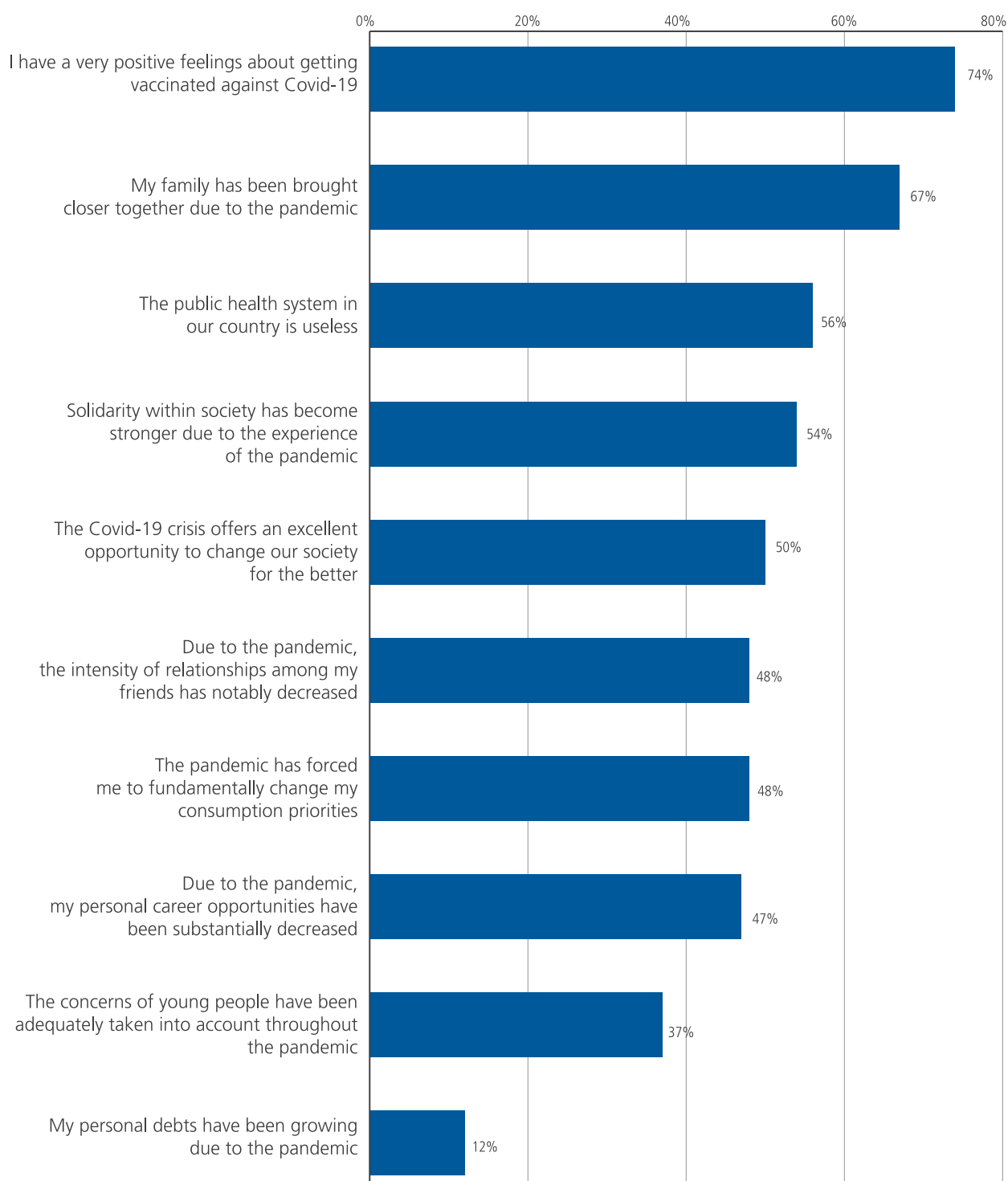
These consequences were felt more during the pandemic, with 25 per cent of young people saying they were often stressed, tired, unable to concentrate and were unproductive during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of youth said that due to the pandemic, their personal career opportunities had been substantially reduced. The pandemic forced them to fundamentally change their consumption

patterns. Others said that their families became closer because of the pandemic. A total of 32 per cent thought that the government's handling of the pandemic was mediocre. This is related, in particular, to how the government enforced crippling restrictions without making testing accessible or organising national campaigns for vaccinations and how it then relaxed all measures in the spring of 2021 (WHO 2021).

Figure 11

Life during the Covid-19 pandemic

Do you rather agree or rather disagree with the following statements?



6

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The priorities of Libyan youth are still to have a secure job, stability, marriage and family (Fitzgerald 2022). A total of 94 per cent of young people responded that family was their top priority. Being a member of a community or a social group scored second highest at 69 per cent. These social groups are often segregated by gender and young Libyans seem to be fine with this. The survey also included questions related to individual ideas and visions about personal life, attitudes and behaviour. The responses showed that the most important thing in this context was respect for law and order, which indicates a growing need for security. The second priority was achieving a high standard of living. Youth's aspirations are also intricately linked to codes of honour and shame in order for them to have a good family life. This is also connected to believing in God and consciously living a healthy life. Other responses indicate a self-aware and increasingly conscious generation when it comes to the role of the individual within a larger unit, such as the family or social circles.

Many respondents stated that it was important for them to develop their own imagination and creativity in order to evolve in the future. Another of their aims was to have more security and to be more self-reliant, acting independently of the advice of others. These aspirations were followed

by young people's desire to support socially excluded and marginalised people, to be diligent, hardworking and ambitious. Libyan youth want to reconcile with the history of their country and to do so strive to avoid Westernisation. Many expressed their wish to safeguard traditions.

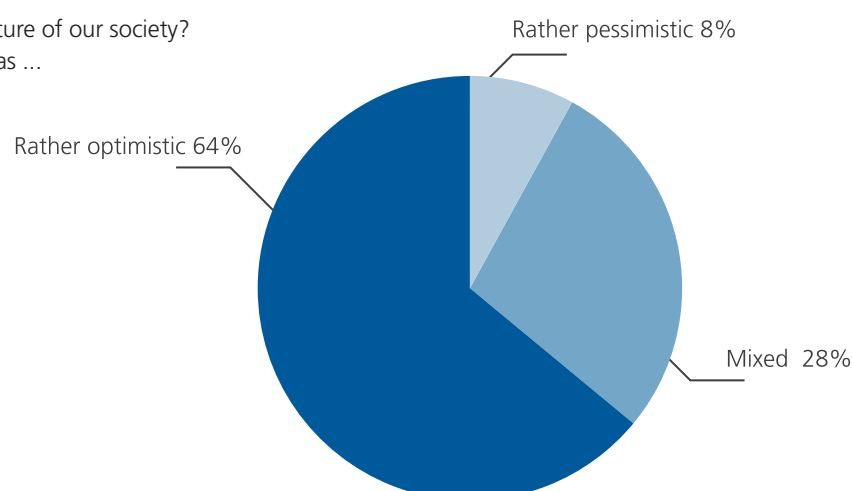
Given the situation in Libya in light of recent developments, namely political deadlock, violent clashes and a deteriorating economic situation, young people are experiencing increasing anxiety about the conflict restarting and are even more insecure about their situation. They are also concerned about health, being sick and losing their jobs. A total of 66 per cent reported being worried about Covid-19 and 49 per cent were worried about changes within the family. Survey responses highlight that for young people, social instability means growing violence and this impacts family relations. A total of 33 per cent said they were worried about the climate. That said, 76 per cent of young people reported being optimistic about the future. Overall, 64 per cent were optimistic about the future of society, which is less than the percentage who were optimistic about the country as a whole. This hints at societal conflicts. The percentage of those who are optimistic is lower for those from lower-income backgrounds.

Figure 12

Future of society

What about the future of our society?

Do you perceive it as ...



7

CONCLUSION

The findings of the survey paint a detailed picture of the world and lives of young people in Libya, full of contradictions and discrepancies. However, the importance of the family remains consistent throughout the different sections of this report. Young people see family relations as valuable but have yet to work out how the new values of individualism they have inevitably adopted can be part of that. However, creating a family and being able to provide it with security and stability remains one of the highest aspirations of Libyan youth.

The section on household economy highlights that gender inequality in Libya very much begins at home. Mothers and fathers are not equal in any aspect of life, despite the increasing role women are playing in both the private and public space. The systematic discrimination against women in Libya ensures that there is no support infrastructure, which forces women to be reliant on their families and more specifically on male family members. Libya endeavours to retain a traditional family structure in an environment that is becoming more and more different from how it was perhaps 80 or 90 years ago. This is one of the sources of conflict, as the responses of young men and women are often contradictory on different issues from governance to the choice of partner and shape of the family.

Youth in Libya face tremendous economic challenges and growing unemployment rates that make them vulnerable to unregulated and underpaid work. Respondents to the survey are anxious about the current political impasse and how it might impact the conflict and the economic crisis. Despite

all these issues being intricately connected to politics, disinterest in political life prevails, which does not bode well for the upcoming elections and youth participation. Much needs to be addressed to resolve this issue of trust, including increasing the accountability of politicians in positions of power and developing an electoral law that is sensitive to conflict.

Young people see engagement as ineffective and pointless unless there are ways of enforcing the results. This is a result of armed groups being perceived as effective and the fact that there are those who wield destructive power to effect change with complete disregard for agreements and or elections. The continuation of impunity in Libya and the side-lining of core issues of justice and reconciliation is having a dire impact on the younger population, which might, as a result, become even more disengaged.

Lastly, young people in Libya are aware of and would like to be involved in actions on issues of climate change and the environment by making conscious personal choices that increase awareness and limit the damage. These potential actions would be quite detached from the reality of the Libyan elite who continue to make economic plans based on oil and gas with no regard to the mounting climate problems. Despite the challenges mentioned and observed by youth in this survey, optimism regarding the future remains high, especially for young people's own future and that of society.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NTC	National Transitional Council
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

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ABOUT THE FES MENA YOUTH STUDY

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results of a long-term survey, launched in 2016, the FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region.

In 2021, the FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in 12 MENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as Tunisia and Yemen. With its 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of responses to more than 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on a variety of topics.

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