

# **MOLDOVAN YOUTH:** ALIENATED AND POLARIZED



Conclusions of the  
**Moldova Youth Survey**  
2022



# MOLDOVAN YOUTH: ALIENATED AND POLARIZED

Conclusions of the Moldova Youth Survey 2022

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## Executive summary

*This report provides the main results of the analysis of data from the 2022 Moldova Youth Survey. While the survey offers a very rich body of evidence on lives, values, attitudes, concerns, and plans of Moldovan youth aged 15 to 29 years, the most striking findings are related to the sentiments of alienation and polarization of the young generation of Moldova.*

Alienation manifests along three dimensions. Economically, it is described by a very high share of the NEET group – 30% of the youth. Disinterest of youth in being economically active reflects two key factors. On the one hand, the dysfunctional labour market discourages many young persons from actively seeking jobs. On the other, there is a structural misalignment between the educational sector supply and labour market demand – half of respondents highlighting the mismatch between their job requirements and their level of professional education.

From the social perspectives, it seems that many of the young Moldovans live in their social bubbles rather than seeking wider social involvement. In this regard, the survey found that voluntary activities are neglected and sporadic among Moldovan youth. And when carried out, they resemble being more a mandatory component of the school program rather than truly voluntary initiatives of helping others.

The third dimension of alienation is the political one. Youth interest in politics is very low, especially among the youngest age cohorts in rural areas. This is often in parallel with parents' disconnection from politics – so, on the one hand, the political apathy may be a socially learned attitude. On the other, the disinterest in politics may be explained by the sentiment shared by 70% of respondents that they are not well represented in national politics.

As a reflection of social, economic, and political estrangement, the youth motivations of leaving Moldova are very strong, both among rural and urban inhabitants, among women or men. More than 50% of respondents would “certainly” and other 30% would “probably” go abroad for study or for work. Long-term or

permanent migration intentions prevail. Desired geographic destinations for migration depend on nationality. Moldovans prefer Germany and Italy, Romanians would rather go to Italy and France, Russians would choose mainly Germany and the USA, while in the case of Gagauz, Bulgarians, and Ukrainians, Russia is the top preference.

Feelings of alienation may also explain the low levels of appreciation in regards to the quality of governance. Widespread disappointment with how the Moldovan government managed the COVID-19 crisis is a testimony of these low perceptions. They are also reflected in the quite limited level of trust in state bodies, especially among Russian, Gagauz and Ukrainian ethnic groups. In their case, however, the lack of trust may also be partly fed by their geopolitical preferences.

Geopolitical preferences, as defined by expectations regarding Moldova's foreign policy and attitudes towards regional events, are the most significant lines of fracture among the Moldovan youth. Two key events that marked the year 2022 – the beginning of war in Ukraine and receiving of the status of EU candidate country by Moldova – exacerbated existing divisions.

Only 42% of the surveyed youth say to be “proud and optimistic” about Moldova receiving the status of candidate country for EU accession. Almost 35% of the surveyed youth said they “do not expect any change”. Slightly more than 11%, especially among ethnic minorities, think that Moldova will regret this move. Roughly 5% of the youth simply “don't care”, while about 8% “don't know” what to think about this.

Perspectives on the war in Ukraine also reveal a dramatic split among Moldovan youth.



Half of them think that military actions taking place in Ukraine are “an unjustified war by Russia against Ukraine”, but about one-fifth believe that what is happening in Ukraine is “an undeclared war between Russia and NATO/the West”, while 11% consider that the war in Ukraine is a “justified Russian special military operation”. The latter are almost the same who consider that Moldova will regret its European integration. About 5% said that they “do not have any feelings, do not care”, while 11% said that they did not know what to call the war.

Geopolitical leanings follow a clear regional/national pattern. The Gagauz region is clearly lenient towards Russia, closely followed by the region populated by Bulgarians. Prevalent sources of information are the key factor behind these preferences, with Gagauz and Bulgarians apparently living in a separate informational space strongly shaped by Russia’s perspectives on the war in Ukraine and on international relations.

Despite having no personal memories regarding life in Soviet times, one-third of the respondents consider the dissolution of the USSR to have been a good thing, 29% that it was neither good nor bad, and 22% that it was a bad development; only 15% report that they did not know. The socioeconomic situation seems to be one of the strongest predictors of attitudes concerning the USSR. Financially vulnerable persons or the un-

employed share regret about the end of the USSR, while those who are better off tend to view its disappearance positively. Yet again, the nationality-regional nexus emerges as a strong factor determining opinion regarding the USSR’s dissolution: half of Gagauz are nostalgic about the USSR, compared to less than one-quarter of respondents from the rest of the country.

Most of the interviewed subjects ideologically position themselves on the left side of the political scale. Men and women share the same life values to the same degree. Both consider of greatest importance such values as taking personal responsibility, being faithful to one’s partner, and being independent. Being active in politics and participating in civic actions is of very low importance for both groups.

More than half of the Moldovan respondents feel rather optimistic and expect that the lives of their families will improve in the next five years. This optimism is less articulated when it comes to the future of the entire country in the next five years.

Reflecting both alienation and polarization, only 17% of men and 3% of women report that they are ready to enrol in the army if Moldova was invaded. 43% and respectively 49% said they would leave Moldova in such a case. This choice is prevalent among those financially better off.

## Introduction |

*The purpose of this report is to present a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the data obtained from the 2022 Moldova Youth Survey. The report provides a comprehensive and consistent account of the lives, values, concerns, and plans of Moldovan youth aged 15 to 29 years. The study makes heavy use of various types of charts. Considering the exploratory orientation of the study, this is deemed to be the most useful communication tool.*

The study explores the following aspects of young people's lives:

- *Living conditions, financial and personal welfare (household structure, relations with parents, material wellbeing, and perceived safety in their communities).*
- *Education-employment nexus (educational enrolment, quality and relevance of the education received or to be received, and employment status).*
- *Attitudes regarding democracy and civic participation (voluntary work experience, political activism, representation, and voting, perceptions regarding the quality of governance in Moldova).*
- *Attitudes regarding foreign policy (who are Moldova's friends, attitudes regarding European integration, attitudes regarding the war in Ukraine).*
- *Views on the USSR and the transition (do they have regrets regarding the end of the USSR and what memories do they have regarding the 1990s?).*
- *Identity, values, beliefs (self-perceptions, political ideology, values in life, experience of being discriminated against, tolerance, and social distance).*
- *Feelings regarding climate change (how pressing is climate change in their perspective, what feelings do they have regarding this global challenge and what do they know about it?).*
- *Aspirations, plans, and expectations (imagining their medium-term future, plans regarding family and having children, migration plans, personal course of action if Moldova was invaded, and attitudes regarding the country's reintegration).*

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The report is structured into eight chapters along the elements described above. Each chapter begins with a summary of the key findings. The final, the ninth chapter, concludes.

In the analysis, only the most statistically significant elements and correlations are presented and discussed, to the extent possible. Statistical significance has been tested using relevant statistical tests, mainly a Chi-squared test.

## Methodology and data

This report represents a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the data from the Youth Survey conducted in the Republic of Moldova by **R-Research LTD** for the **Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung**.

The data collection fieldwork was conducted during the period  
29 October-12 December 2022.

A nationally representative sample of **1,600** respondents aged **15-29** was targeted and **1,609** fully completed interviews were collected, resulting in a sampling error of **+/-2.3%**.

Raw data were collected by means of **personal interviewing** using handheld devices (computer-assisted personal interviewing) at respondents' homes.

The actual fieldwork was conducted by CIVIS, a company headquartered in Chisinau. Five supervisors directly supervised 54 interviewers. All 54 interviewers were experienced

interviewers and they received thorough training before the start of the project. All five supervisors had at least five years of experience in that capacity.

The following **multi-stage sampling plan** was utilized:

- **Stage 1:**  
*Moldova was stratified by socio-economic regions (Chisinau, North, Centre, South, and Gagauzia) and type of locality (urban / rural), and interviews were allocated to urban and rural populations in each macro-region in proportion to the population size, and adjusted for the purposes of Stage 2.*
- **Stage 2:**  
*Urban (urban settlements, sectors in Chisinau) and rural (rural municipalities) primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected out of all such PSUs within each macro-region using the probability proportional to size as the method of selection.*
- **Stage 3:**  
*In each selected PSU, random routes (villages in rural PSUs) were randomly selected.*
- **Stage 4:**  
*On each selected random route (in each village) five households were randomly selected.*
- **Stage 5:**  
*In each selected household, one respondent was selected using quotas (male/female aged 15-17, 18-24, 25-29), and interviewed.*

The Transnistrian region was excluded from the sample as being outside the political control of the national authorities.

# Chapter 1

## Living conditions and wellbeing

*The first chapter discusses the main findings of the survey pertaining to the living conditions of the Moldovan youth. It sheds light on the relations of young people with their parents and their reasons for living separately or staying with their parents. The chapter also highlights key aspects of the material wellbeing of Moldovan youth and how these aspects vary across geographic and social groups.*

### Context

According to the Household Budget Survey of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, in 2021 about 8.3% of all Moldovan households were composed of young families with members aged 14–34 years, of which 81.9% were households formed of only young families, 10.5% were households with young families and parents, and 7.5% were households with young families and other persons. The share of households composed only of young families living separately from parents was 15.4 percentage points higher in the urban environment compared to the rural environment. At the same time, in rural areas, the share of households made up of young families living with their parents was about four times higher than in the urban environment, and the share of households made up of young families and other people was 1.2 times that in the urban environment.

In the same official data, the main sources of income reported for young people (in the same category of 14–34 years) were financial support provided by parents (33.2%) and their own labour (32.1%), followed by social benefits (9.9%), individual agricultural activity (7.2%) and transfers from abroad (6.3%). The official data suggest that sources of income vary significantly by age group. Transfers from parents decrease from 74.6% for the age segment 14–19 years down to 4.3% for those aged 30–34 years, which is broadly in line with the findings from the Youth Survey.

### Key findings

- *Approximately one-third of young people live within their parents' family, either with siblings or not. Another 16% live with their partners and with their own children, while 12% live alone.*
- *An absolute majority of the surveyed youth get along well or very well with their parents, with little differentiation by gender, area where they live, or type of household.*
- *Most of the young people participating in the survey report the financial situation of their household as "enough money for clothes but not for appliances", an answer which falls in the middle of the wellbeing scale. Those in the younger cohort, by the mere fact of living with their parents, tend to fare better than the older ones who live with their own partner and/ or their children.*
- *Any form of employment of the respondent is associated with a better financial situation as compared to lack of employment altogether or low-quality employment.*
- *One-third of youth report having an income derived from their own labour, while one-quarter report being financially supported by their parents.*

1 National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, "The youth in the Republic of Moldova in 2021"; available only in Romanian at [https://statistica.gov.md/ro/tinerii-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2021-9578\\_59664.html](https://statistica.gov.md/ro/tinerii-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2021-9578_59664.html).

## Household structure

The respondents to the Youth Survey were asked to indicate the people present in their household: none (living alone), mother, father, siblings, partner, children, grandparents, and friends / relatives. It can be calculated that there are 129 possible distinct models of household composition (128 multi-persons

households plus one one-person household). Only 51 models were practically encountered in the Moldovan survey. Table 1 displays the top 12 household models, where 90% of the young people taking part in the survey report living.

Table 1.  
Percent of youth living in various types of households

| Percent of youth | Living with ... |        |        |          |         |       |                   |         |
|------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|---------|
|                  | Nobody          | Mother | Father | Siblings | Partner | Child | Grandpar-<br>ents | Friends |
| 16.8             |                 | ✓      | ✓      | ✓        |         |       |                   |         |
| 16.0             |                 | ✓      | ✓      |          |         |       |                   |         |
| 15.7             |                 |        |        |          | ✓       | ✓     |                   |         |
| 11.6             | ✓               |        |        |          |         |       |                   |         |
| 11.1             |                 |        |        |          | ✓       |       |                   |         |
| 5.0              |                 | ✓      |        |          |         |       |                   |         |
| 2.9              |                 | ✓      |        | ✓        |         |       |                   |         |
| 2.5              |                 |        |        |          |         |       | ✓                 |         |
| 2.4              |                 |        |        |          |         | ✓     |                   |         |
| 2.0              |                 | ✓      | ✓      | ✓        |         |       | ✓                 |         |
| 1.5              |                 |        |        |          |         |       |                   | ✓       |
| 1.2              |                 |        |        | ✓        |         |       |                   |         |

*Source: All tables and figures in this report have been prepared by the author, based on data from the Moldova Youth Study 2022. In subsequent tables and figures, references to the source are omitted.*

Table 1 is not as complex as it may seem at first sight: the first column shows the percentage of young people living in various models of households, which are displayed in the form of potential members in the column headings. For instance, about 17% of youth live with their parents and their siblings, while 16% live only with their parents.

An important segment of the youth population is represented by those who have already moved out of their parental home and are living either with their own partner (11.1%) or with their partner and their children (15.7%). The marital status of almost 85% of the youth living in this type of household is "married", while 15% report being in a "relationship".

The sub-group of those living alone represents about 11.6% of the total and encom-

passes mostly men living in urban areas. Interestingly, living alone does not necessarily mean having "single" as one's marital status, with 27% of those living alone reporting other marital statuses, mostly being "in a relationship, but not living together".

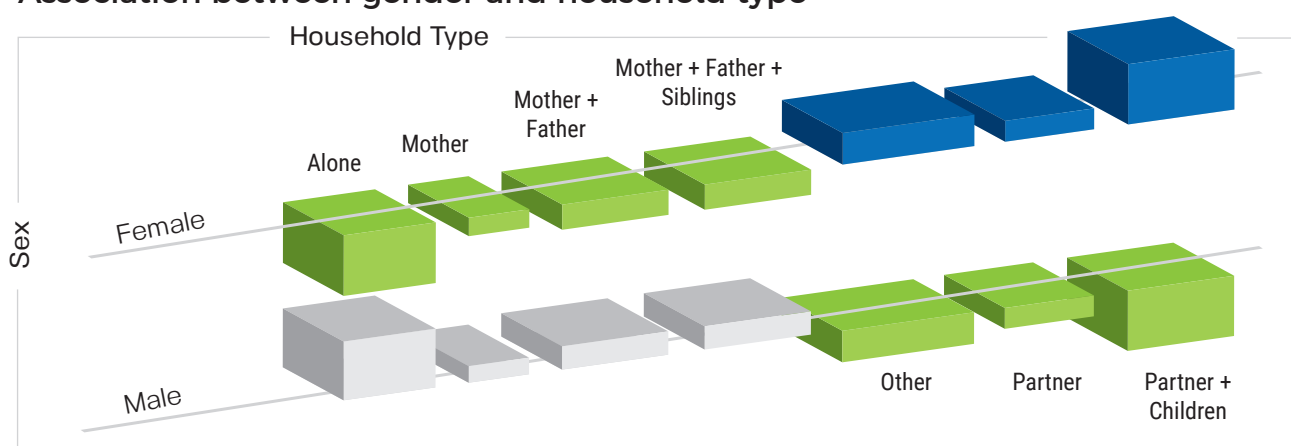
Roughly 5% of total respondents live only with their mother, while another 2.9% live with their mother and with other siblings. As shown by the survey data, these households are particularly vulnerable from a financial point of view, because many of the young people in this living situation report being unemployed, inactive, or having only occasional jobs. Around 2.4% of respondents live only with their children, with three-quarters of these being women. Only 2% of youth live in extended three-generation families – mostly in rural areas.



Gender and age appear to be the most statistically significant predictors of the type of household a respondent lives in. As shown in Figure 1, women are more likely than men to live with a partner and with their own children, while men are more likely to live with their parents or to live alone. This pattern is explained by the fact that Moldovan women

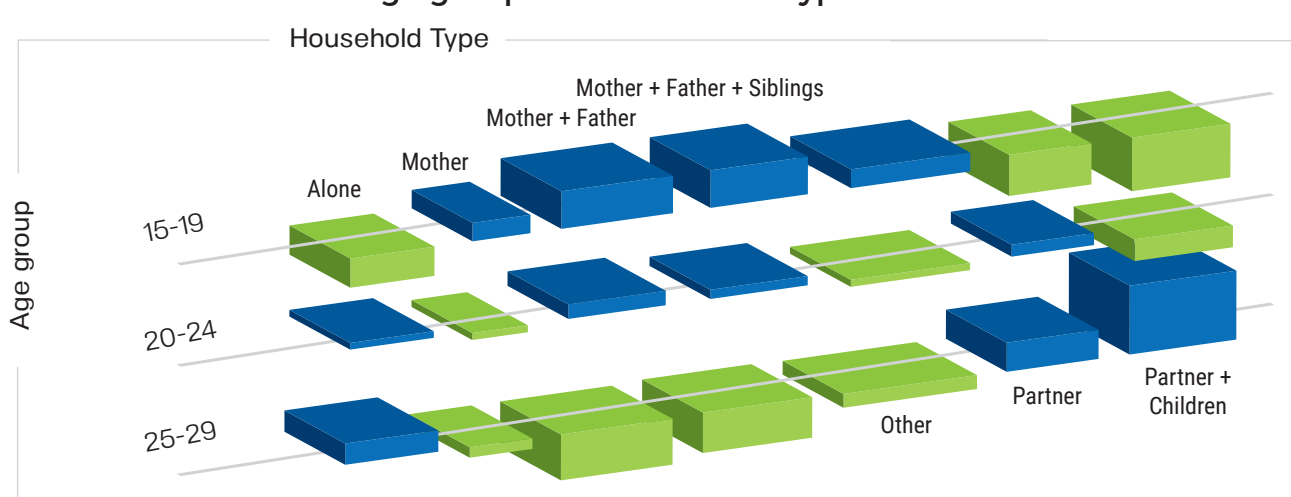
get married for the first time at about 26 years, while men do so at about 29 years. In line with this, there is a clear trend of a transition from living with one's parents in the 15–19 years age cohort to living in one's own family or living alone in the 25–29 age cohort (Figure 2).

Figure 1.  
Association between gender and household type



**Note:** Because most of the variables in the 2022 Moldova Youth Study are qualitative (categorical); the correlation between variables cannot be displayed in conventional scatterplot graphs. Association plots of the type displayed above are the most intuitive way of presenting the degree of association between categorical variables. In association plots, the **width** of the blocks corresponds to the number of observations in the respective pair, while the **height/ depth** corresponds to the strength of the link between variables in the pair. Blocks extending above the axis show positive associations, while blocks extending below the axis show negative associations. The taller (deeper) the block, the stronger the positive (negative) association. For instance, in the figure **above**, there is a tall wide block extending above the axis for the household type “partner + children” and a wide deep block for “alone” household on the women axis. This means that women are strongly inclined to live with their partner and their own children and strongly NOT inclined to live alone. The links between gender and other models of household are not strong. Other association plots in this report should be interpreted in a similar way.

Figure 2.  
Association between age group and household type



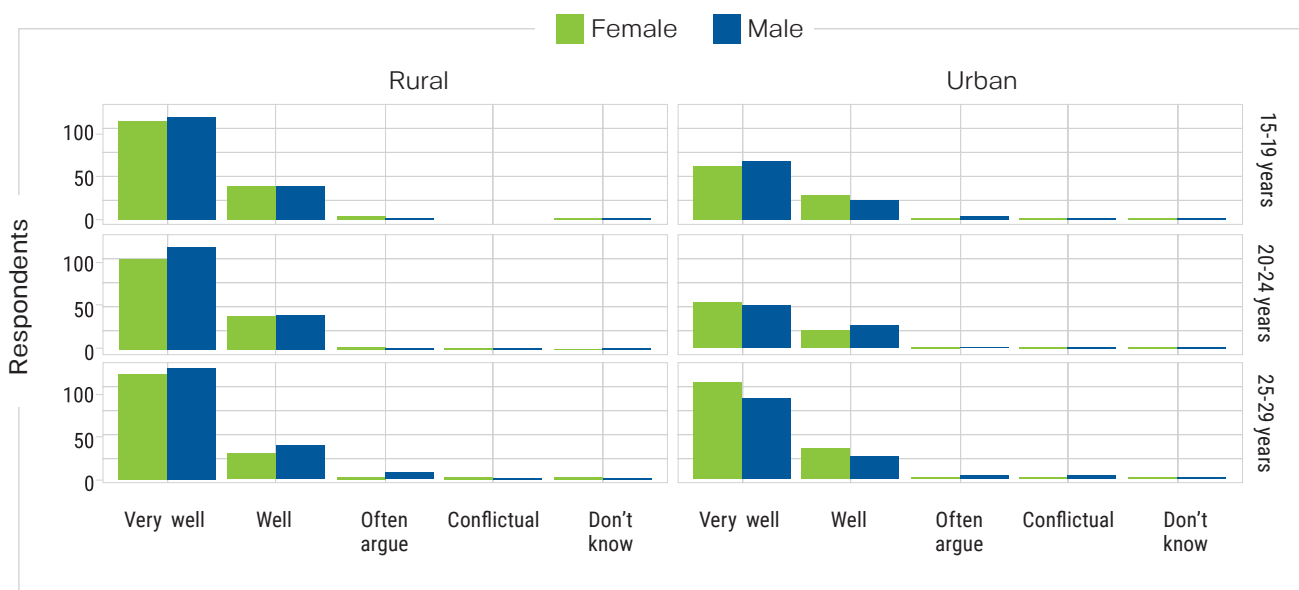
## Household structure

An absolute majority of the surveyed youth (71%) consider that they “get along very well” with their parents, while another 24% say that they “get along well, although sometimes there are differences in opinion”. Only 2%

state that they “often argue” and less than 1% that they “have a very conflictual relationship”. The distribution of answers does not differ dramatically by age group, area of residence, or gender of the interviewed person (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Which of the following statements best describes your relationship with your parents?” by gender, area of residence, and age group**



*Note: In this and the following charts, the answer values have been adjusted in a semantically coherent way to fit within the chart plot.*

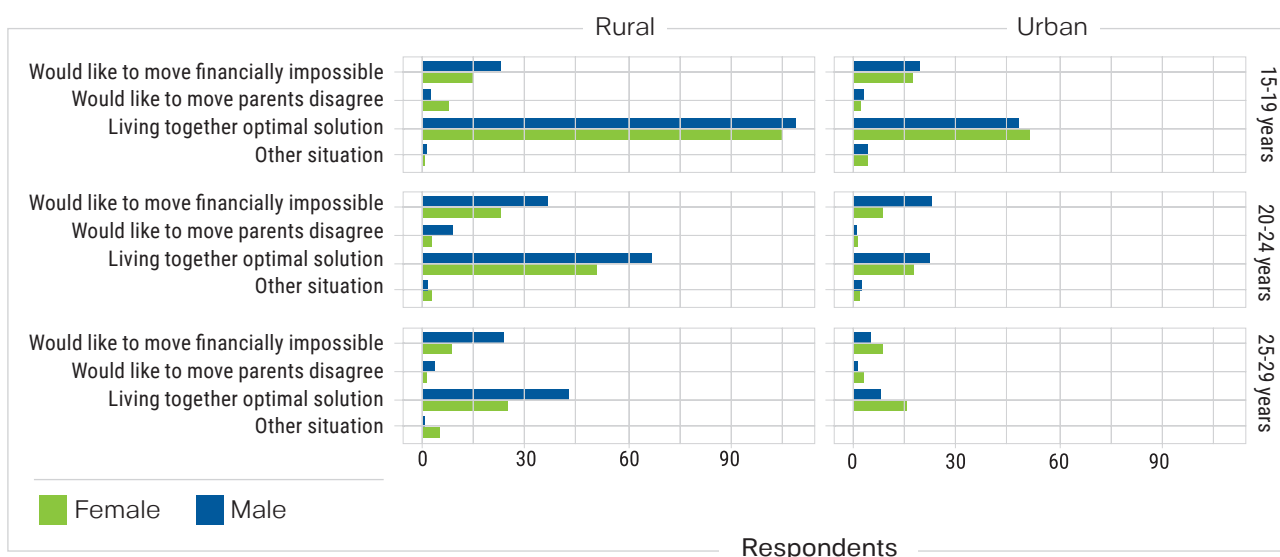
**Conflictual or difficult relationships** are a bit more common among the younger age cohorts as compared to the older ones.

Due to a rather small number of observations, the evidence on the link between the choice of living alone and the quality of the relationship with parents is not very compelling, with only some weak indications that those having conflictual relations might prefer to live alone. The direction of the causal link cannot be revealed from these observational data.

Two-thirds of those living with their parents stated as the reason for this the fact that “this is the most comfortable solution” (implicitly, this may also mean that they are not considering moving soon). This answer dominates all age groups, genders, and areas of residence (Figure 4). About 25% of the youth would like to live away from their parents if financial circumstances allowed. This choice is more common among the older cohorts of 20–24 and 25–29 years. Another 5% of the youth would like to live away from their parents but their parents disagree with this desire. A curious finding is that this is more common for the upper age cohort.

Figure 4.

Distribution of answers to the question “Which of the following statements best describes your situation [of living together with parents]?” by gender, area of residence and age group



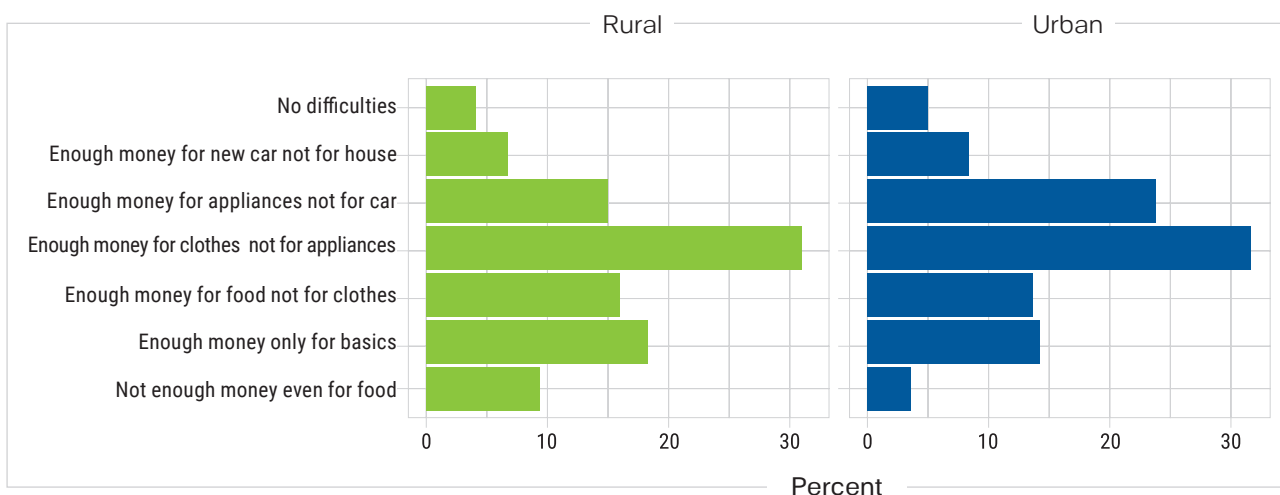
## Financial situation

The survey asked the respondents to give their opinion on the financial position of the household they live in. The grid of answers started from “There is not enough money even for food” up to “We experience no material difficulties, if needed we could acquire an apartment or house”. Almost 7% of youth report that in their household “There is not

enough money even for food”. Roughly 16% report that “We have enough money only for the most necessary things”. At another extreme, slightly fewer than 5% consider that their household faces no material difficulties at all. In general, the financial situation is better in urban households than in rural ones (Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Distribution of answers to the question “Which of the following descriptions most closely matches the financial position of your household right now?” by residence area, %

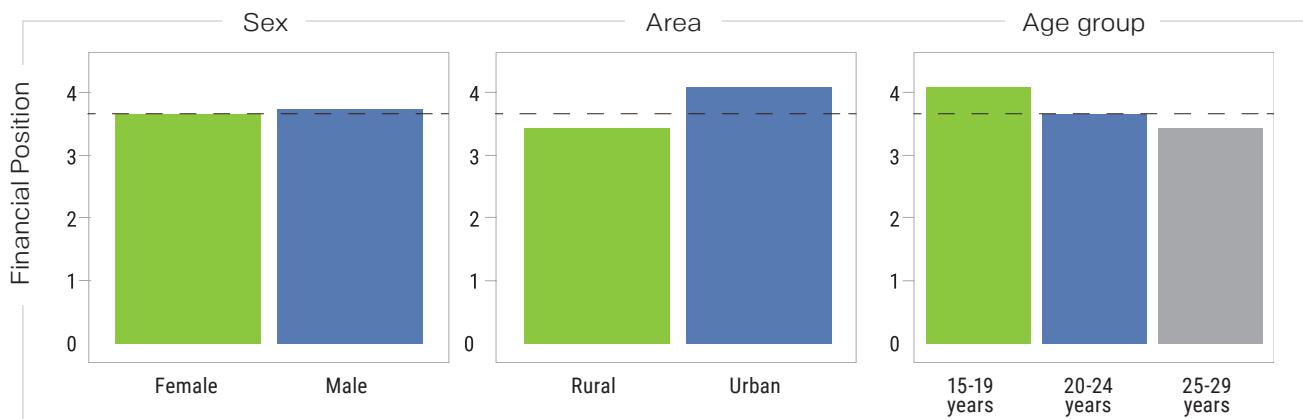


For the sake of a more intuitive quantitative comparison, we have introduced a metric of financial wellbeing taking, progressively, values from 1 ("Not enough money even for food") to 7 ("No material difficulties at all"). The computed national average is 3.8, which largely corresponds to the situation "Enough money for clothes but not enough for new appliances". This metric allows for a straightforward visualization of financial wellbeing across multiple criteria. As shown in Figure 6 (where the red horizontal or

vertical line delineates the national average of 3.8), there are no significant differences in wellbeing by gender. In urban areas, the situation is, predictably, better than in rural ones. The level of wellbeing decreases with age, which hypothetically could be explained by the fact that younger people live with their parents, while older people move away to live separately and/or start their own families. Encountering financial difficulties early in one's independent life is quite normal.

Figure 6.

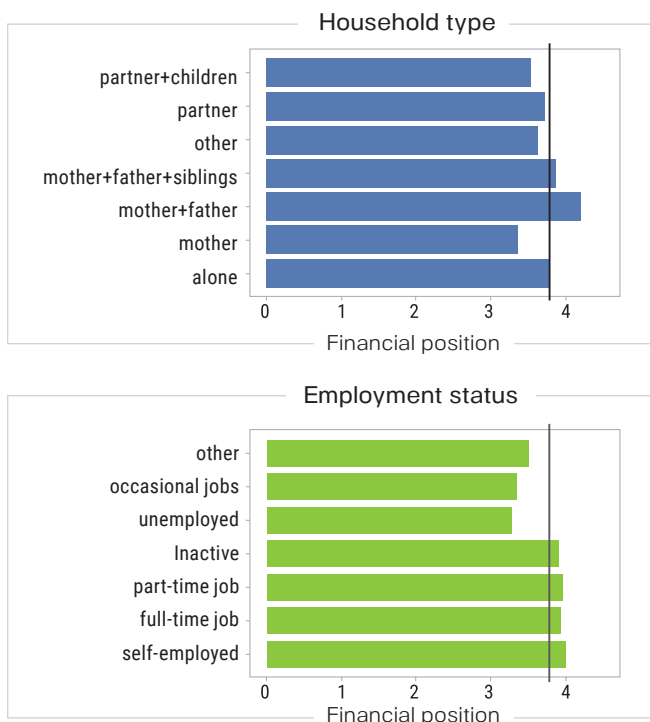
### Quantitative financial wellbeing by gender, area of residence, and age group compared to national average



Note: The thin horizontal line in the charts above indicates the survey average.

Figure 7.

### Quantitative financial wellbeing by type of household and employment status



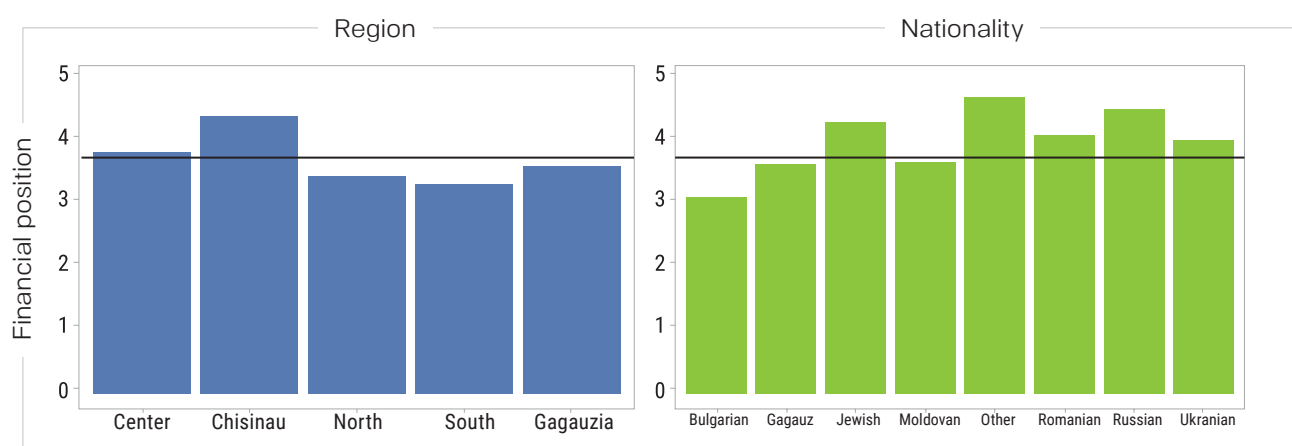
Note: The thin vertical line in the charts above indicates the survey average.

This hypothesis is partly confirmed by Figure 7, which shows that those living with their parents fare above the average, those living alone are in line with the average, whereas those living with their partner and especially with their partner and their children are worse off. Young persons living only with their mothers confront the most challenging financial situation.

The data also confirms the expected link with employment status: those having a regular job are financially above the average, whereas those unemployed or employed only occasionally struggle.

The chart displayed in Figure 8 corroborates Figure 6 and confirms the strong regional disparities in economic and financial wellbeing. People living in Chisinau are significantly better off than those in the more peripheral regions, with the Southern region appearing as financially the most disfavoured. In ethnic terms, Moldovans (who dominate in the rural areas) and Bulgarians and Gagauz (living in territorially compact groups in the South and in ATU Gagauzia) are below the national mean, whereas youth from other ethnic groups are more urbanized and correspondingly fare above average.

Figure 8.

**Quantitative financial wellbeing by region and nationality**

*Note: The thin horizontal line in the charts above indicates the survey average.*

From where do youth derive their income? The survey reveals two dominant sources of income. More than 36% of youth report having their own income derived mainly from labour, while another 25% indicate that they are sup-

ported by their parents. Another 6% depend on the income of their partners, while 5% rely on financial support provided by their relatives. The latter includes both youth living alone and those living with their partner and their children.

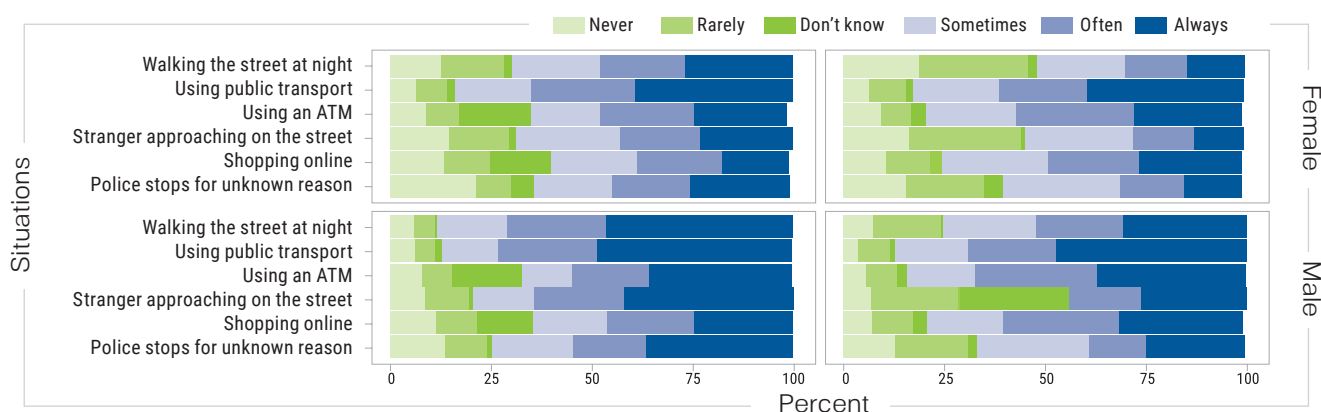
## Personal Safety

Personal safety is an important part of an individual's wellbeing. In the survey, the perceived level of personal security was assessed through six questions referring to perceptions of being safe in different hypothetical situations, such as walking at night, using public transport, etc. In each situation, females report feeling less safe than men. Females feel least safe when walking in the street at night and when strangers approach them, especially in urban areas – half of the surveyed women report that they “never” or “rarely” feel safe. For women in villages, the

same two situations are the most fear-inducing, albeit the level of discomfort is lower – around 30%.

In the case of men, being stopped by the police is the situation involving the highest level of insecurity: in rural areas, 25% of men said they “never” or “rarely” feel safe in such situations, while in the urban areas, about 33% reported this. It is interesting to note that household type (such as living alone) does not make significant differences to the perceived level of personal safety.

Figure 9.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Do you feel safe in your community while...”, by situation involved, area of residence, and gender, %**



## Chapter 2

# Education and employment

*This chapter begins by discussing the educational background and enrolment status of youth. It continues by taking stock of employment status and then looks at the links between education and employment*

### Context

National-level data suggest that in upper general education (lyceum), females and males are rather equally represented. However, gender differences emerge in professional and university education. In the case of secondary professional technical education ("trade schools"), about 73% of students are male, with construction, engineering, and manufacturing being the preferred specializations. In post-secondary professional education ("colleges"), females represent 55% of the student population, with business administration, law, health, and social protection as the preferred specializations. In university education, the share of women is even higher (58%), with business, law, and pedagogy the most frequently encountered specializations.<sup>2</sup>

According to the results of the Labour Force Survey, over one-third of Moldovan youth aged 15–34 years in 2021 were employed, about 2.0% were unemployed and the rest (61%) were economically inactive (outside the labour force). Among the latter, over 42.0% were enrolled in the education system. More than 17% of young persons aged 15–24 and about 26% of young people aged 15–29 were neither included in the education process (formal or non-formal) nor in employment, representing NEET youth. For all age groups, the value of this indicator was higher among women compared to men.<sup>3</sup>

### Key findings:

- *About 44% of the surveyed youth are enrolled in education. Most are satisfied with both the quality and relevance of the education they are going to receive or have already received.*
- *Despite this, only half of the respondents believe that their job satisfactorily matches their level of qualification. Overqualification tends to be associated more with men, while underqualification is more frequent among women.*
- *More than 40% of those not enrolled in education are employed in full-time jobs, while around 7% have part-time jobs and about 5% are self-employed.*
- *The inactive and unemployed represent about 30% of youth not in education, which approximates with the NEET group.*
- *Most women are in full-time jobs in the services sectors, mainly education, trade, and personal services. In the case of men, a significant proportion tends to be employed in occasional jobs in the construction sector or in full-time jobs in the transport, industry, and energy sectors.*
- *Education and previous work experience are universally considered to be the most important factors in getting a desired job, while membership in a political party is not seen as being of any help.*

<sup>2</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova, "Education in the Republic of Moldova. Statistical publication 2021/2022", [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Educatia/Educatia\\_editia\\_2022.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2022.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova, "Labor force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and unemployment 2022", [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Fora\\_de\\_munca/FM\\_editia\\_2022.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Fora_de_munca/FM_editia_2022.pdf). [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Educatia/Educatia\\_editia\\_2022.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2022.pdf)

## Educational enrolment

More than 44% of the surveyed youth are enrolled in education. Considering the different age cohorts surveyed, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the surveyed youth are rather evenly split by primary (36%), secondary (38%), and higher education (27%) (referring to the highest achieved levels, which also includes those still in education). Considering the urban location of higher education institutions, it is little surprise that the educational background of urban youth

is more advanced. However, it should be considered that more than half of youth in urban universities in fact originate from rural areas (Figure 10).

About 56% of the surveyed youth are not currently enrolled in formal education. As shown in Table 2, roughly one-third of youth not enrolled in education report having some form of “incomplete” education, especially incomplete secondary general.

Figure 10.

**Distribution of youth by educational level, age group, and area of residence, %**

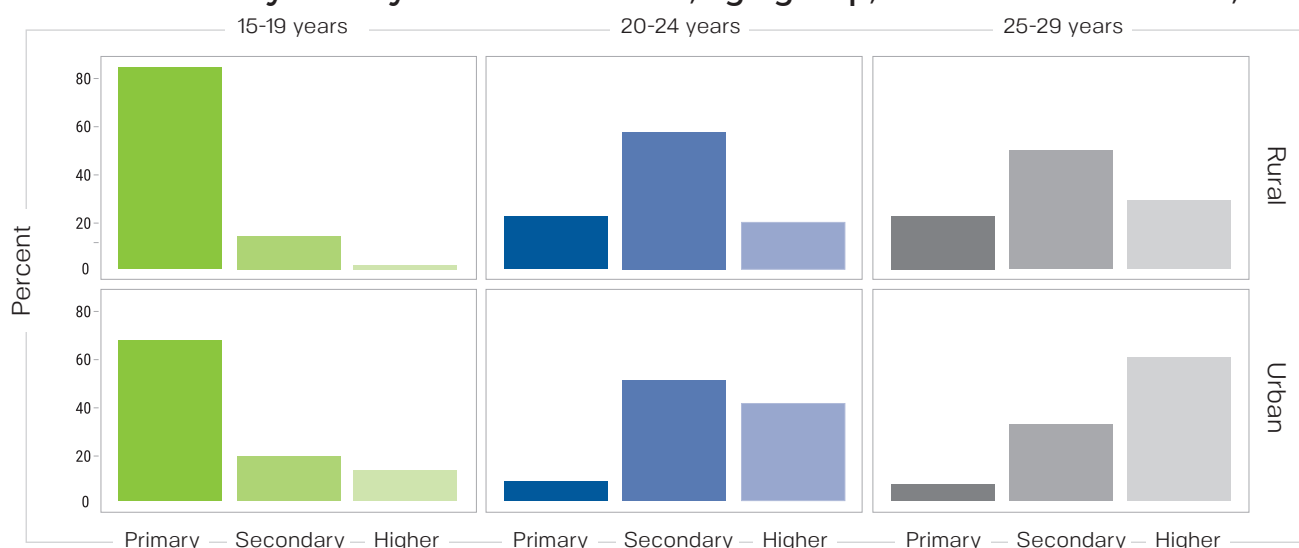


Table 2.

**Highest achieved level of education by current educational enrolment status**

| Highest achieved level of education | Currently enrolled? |       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
|                                     | No                  | Yes   |
| Primary                             | 1.0                 | 13.6  |
| Incomplete secondary general        | 18.7                | 42.9  |
| Secondary general                   | 9.9                 | 10.0  |
| Incomplete secondary special        | 5.8                 | 5.6   |
| Secondary special                   | 33.1                | 7.9   |
| Incomplete university               | 7.3                 | 16.7  |
| University                          | 19.5                | 2.6   |
| Post-university                     | 4.7                 | 0.9   |
| Total                               | 100.0               | 100.0 |

## Quality and relevance of education

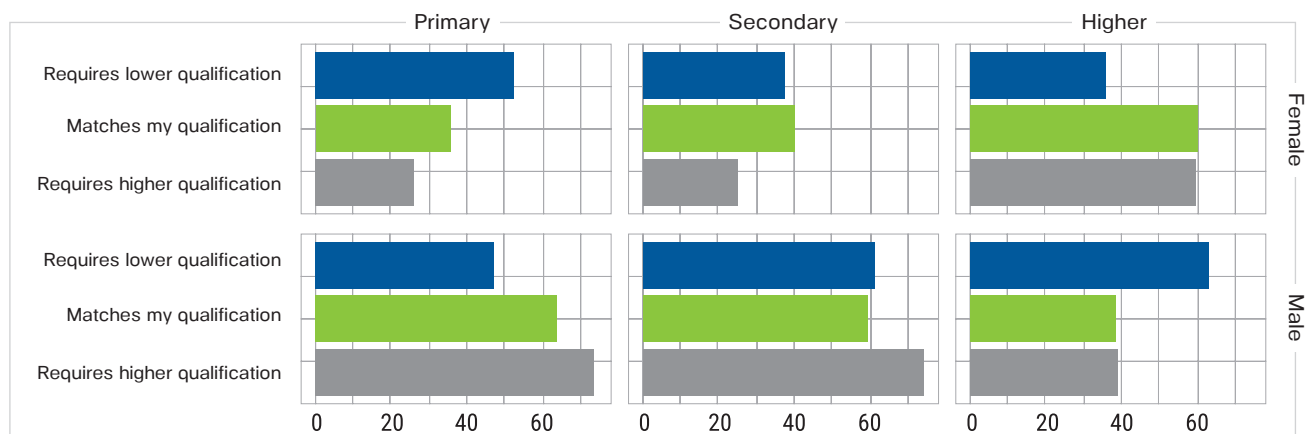
Contrary to the widely prevalent view in Moldovan society, the Moldovan youth who were surveyed rate the quality of education in the country relatively highly. More than 25% of the respondents are “very satisfied” with the quality of education they have received, while more than 58% are “mostly satisfied”. Only 3% report being “not satisfied at all”. Women are more inclined than men to be satisfied with the quality of their education. At the same time, those in urban areas are more inclined to be dissatisfied with the quality of their education, as compared to their rural peers.

These answers are closely associated with the answers to questions regarding the relevance of education for the labour market. It seems that young people tend to associate higher quality with higher relevance. Out of those currently in education, 23% are “very confident” that their education prepares them well for the labour market and 51% are

“mostly confident”. Those not currently in education are only a bit less optimistic: 19% believe their education has prepared them “very well” for the labour market, while 50% believe it has prepared them “well”.

Another criterion revealing the level of quality and relevance of education is the degree of alignment between the qualifications held by an individual and the qualification required by the job they hold. From this perspective, the situation of Moldovan youth is rather poor. Only 56% of the surveyed youth consider that their current job matches their qualifications. Overqualification (24%) seems to be more often a problem than underqualification (14%). Overqualification is more common among men who have attended higher education (Figure 11). Strangely, about 5% of the surveyed youth could not say anything about the correspondence between their education and the qualifications required by their job.

Figure 11.  
Distribution of answers to the question  
“Do you currently work in a job that ...” by level of education and gender



## Employment status

Figure 12 shows that more than 40% of those not enrolled in education are employed in full-time jobs, while around 7% have part-time jobs, and about 5% are self-employed. A significant proportion, about 10%, are occupied in lower-quality occasional jobs. The inactive and the unemployed represent a

total of about 30% of youth, which approximates to the NEET group.

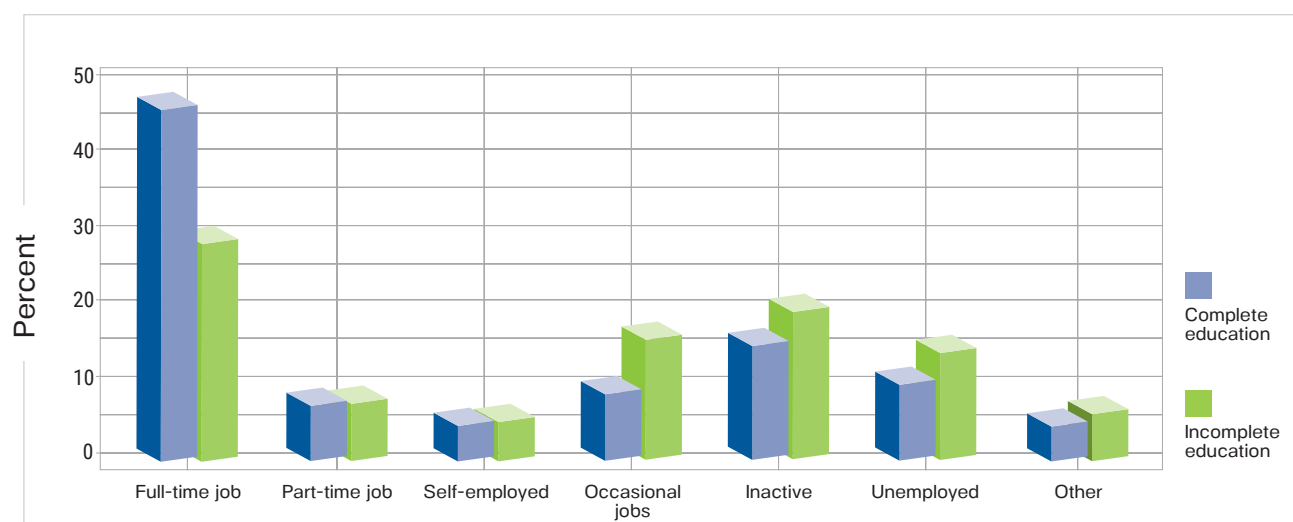
As Figure 12 compellingly shows, those who are out of education but with incomplete education are in a much worse situation on the labour market and the quality of their employment is

lower. Among those with complete education, almost 50% have a full-time job, but only 30% of those with incomplete education do, while the rate of having only occasional jobs for in-

complete education holders is twice that for those with complete education. The inactivity and unemployment rates are also significantly higher for those with incomplete education.

Figure 12.

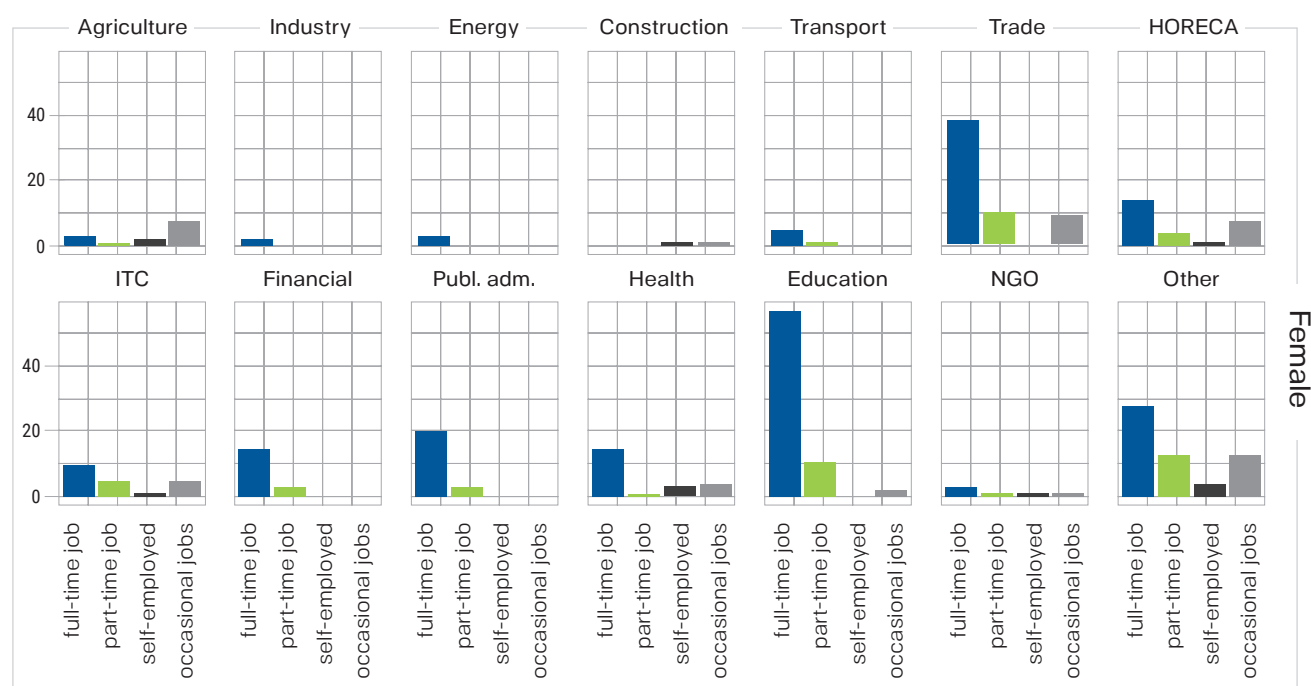
**Distribution of youth not enrolled in education by level of completion of education and employment status, %**



Contrary to a general belief that most youth are attracted by high-technology sectors, the Moldovan survey data show that most young people (15%) are employed in the construction sector, while the information and telecommunications (ITC) sector attracts only 8.3% of youth. About 14% are employed in the trade sector, 11% are employed in education, while about 7% are employed in agriculture. As evidenced by the survey, the ITC sector is certainly an option in urban areas, but it is completely missing in rural areas.

Figure 13.

**Distribution of employed youth by main economic sectors, gender, and forms of job, persons**



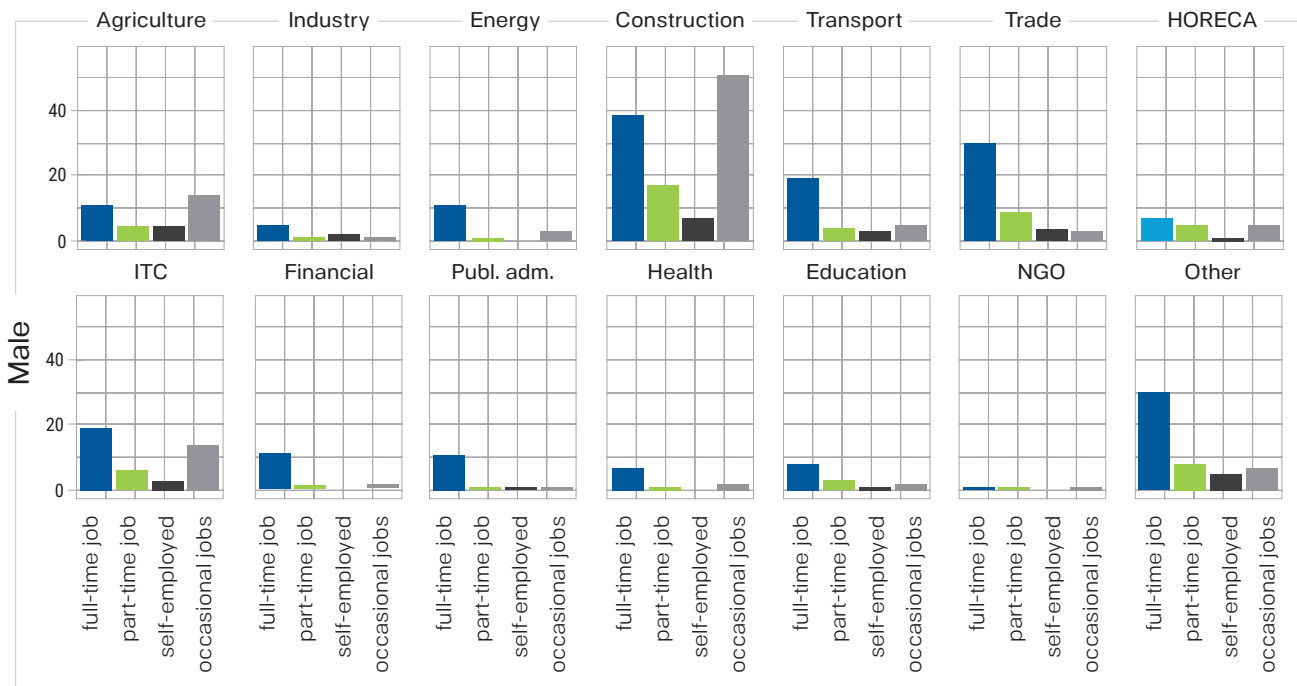


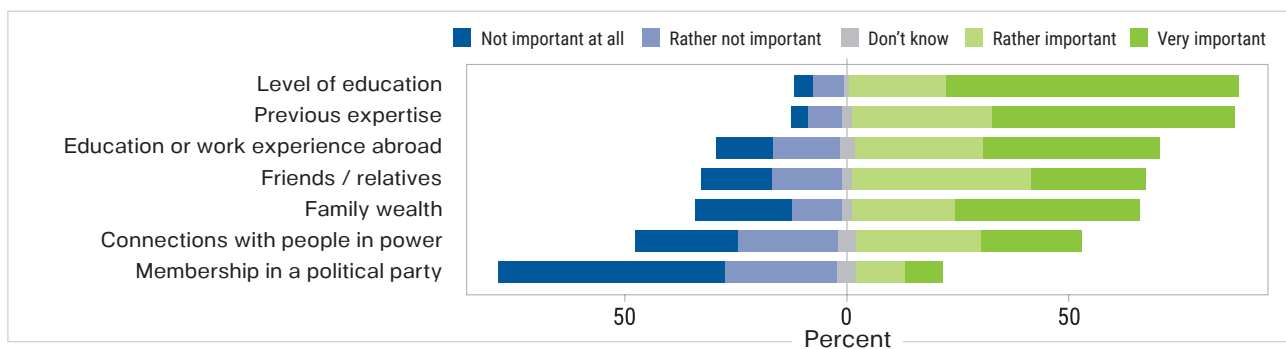
Figure 13 reveals some remarkable differences in sector employment by gender and prevalent type of job. Most women prefer permanent full-time jobs in the service sectors, with a relative majority going to education, trade, and other sectors (the latter includes mainly personal services), as well as in public administration. In the case of men, a significant proportion tends to be employed in occasional jobs in the construction sector. Full-time jobs in the construction sector represent another attractive form of employment for men. Transport, industry, and energy are other sectors dominated by men, while in the ITC sector, the share of men is significantly larger than the share of women. In the agricultural sector, too, there are more men than women, contrary to the widely shared social perception that agriculture is the sector of women.

The survey elicited young people's views concerning the importance of different fac-

tors for getting the job they really want. It is unknown to what extent their opinions are based on their own experience and to what extent on perceptions. However, it is beyond any doubt that youth attach the greatest importance to such factors as level of education and previous experience (Figure 14). Experience abroad, well-connected friends and family, and social prestige also appear to be important in getting a job, though not as much as education and experience. Having good connections with people in power is also seen by many as a rather beneficial factor for getting a good job – this may reflect some forms of administrative corruption in Moldova (especially for getting jobs in the public sector). However, an equal number of youngsters consider such connections irrelevant for getting a job. At the same time, membership in a political party is found to be largely irrelevant in this respect.

Figure 14.

**Distribution of answers to the question “How important are the following to get the job you would really want?”, %**





# Attitudes regarding democracy and governance

*This chapter presents the survey data on several issues which are important for democracy and governance. It begins by looking at the youth's voluntary work experience. Data on effective and intended electoral participation are then examined. The chapter ends with a look at the effectiveness of government and trust in various state and non-state institutions.*

## Context

In 2010 the Government of Moldova put in place the necessary legal framework – a law on voluntary activity and an application regulation – to encourage voluntary activity in the country. According to a 2015 official statistical survey, about 42% of the Moldovan population had some voluntary experience at that time.<sup>4</sup> Voluntary activities were shown to be more common among women and rural inhabitants. The rate of participation in voluntary activities among youth (about 35%) was significantly lower compared to that among adults (about 50%), especially in urban areas.

Youth electoral participation – another manifestation of civic education – is also quite low compared to adults. According to an analysis led by the Central Electoral Commission, in the 2021 early parliamentary elections, the rate of electoral participation among the youth aged 18–25 was 41%, compared with 44% for those aged 26–40, 51% for those aged 41–55, and 70% for those aged 56–70.

## Key findings

- *In line with the findings from a 2015 official survey on voluntary activity, the Youth Survey found that voluntary work is relatively rare among Moldovan youth, and the work that is done is likely driven by quasi-mandatory school activities.*
- *Interest in politics is also quite low, especially among the youngest age cohorts in rural areas.*
- *This lack of interest among youth is often paralleled by their parents being uninterested in politics. In general, political discussions, either with parents or friends, are rare.*
- *The lack of interest in politics may be explained to some extent by the prevalent sense among youth that they are not well represented in national politics, an opinion shared by more than 70% of respondents.*
- *Around 70% of youth with the right to vote said they participated in the most recent national elections, but this is not particularly well supported by the youth turnout figures for the presidential elections in 2020 and the parliamentary elections in 2021.*
- *Youth do not rate the quality of governance in Moldova particularly highly, as revealed by the opinion that the Moldovan government managed the COVID-19 crisis rather poorly.*
- *The rather poor appreciation of the quality of governance is also reflected in quite low levels of trust in state bodies, especially among Russian, Gagauz, and Ukrainian ethnic groups.*

<sup>4</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, "Voluntary work in the Republic of Moldova", year 2016, available only in Romanian at [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Voluntariat/Voluntariat\\_2015.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Voluntariat/Voluntariat_2015.pdf).

## Voluntary work experience

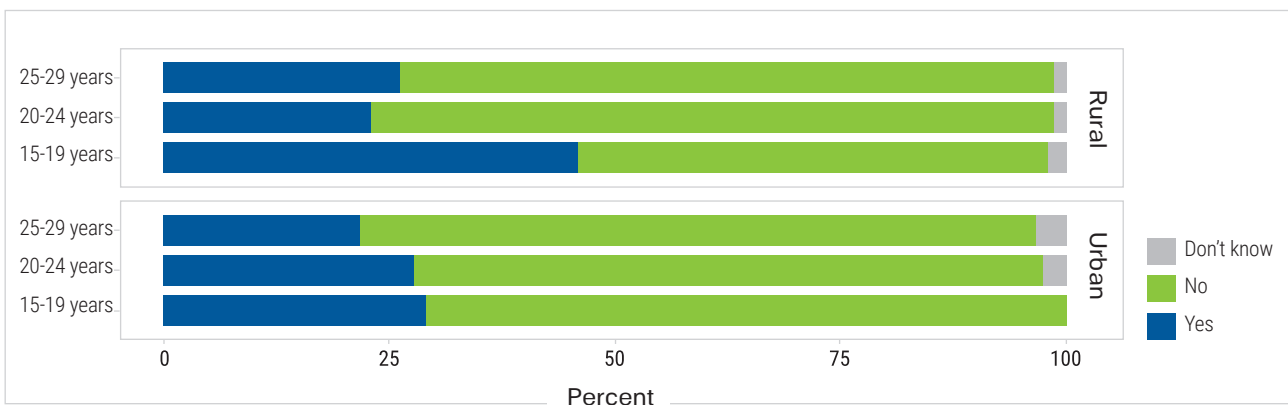
30% of the surveyed youth report having some voluntary work experience, with a slightly higher share in rural areas (32%) compared to cities (26%). An intriguing finding is a strong association between voluntary experience and enrolment in education: 39% of those who are currently enrolled report undertaking voluntary work experience in the last 12 months, while among those not enrolled it is 22%.

This is explained by the fact that 32% of all voluntary experience reportedly takes place in

schools or universities. This raises some questions over whether the work is truly voluntary because such activities in schools are known to be driven by the civic education curriculum and to be quasi-mandatory. This hypothesis is consistent with the age profile of voluntary workers (Figure 15). Only 15% of youth with voluntary experience mention citizens' initiatives as the place where they volunteered, while another 11% mention youth centres or organizations. Moreover, among all surveyed young people, none report more than one place of voluntary work in the last year.

Figure 15.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Have you done any unpaid work voluntarily over the last 12 months?” by age groups and residence areas, %.**



There is little evidence in the survey data that the inclination to undertake voluntary work is in some way associated with religion. In the case of nationality, those identifying themselves as Romanians report significantly higher than average rates of doing voluntary work. There is also some evidence that those emphasizing the role of previous experience in

finding their desired job tend to be more active as volunteers. This is consistent with the fact that young people try to accumulate voluntary experience to enhance their future employability chances. Finally, the data suggest that those from the materially better-off categories are slightly more inclined to engage in voluntary work than those who are worse off.

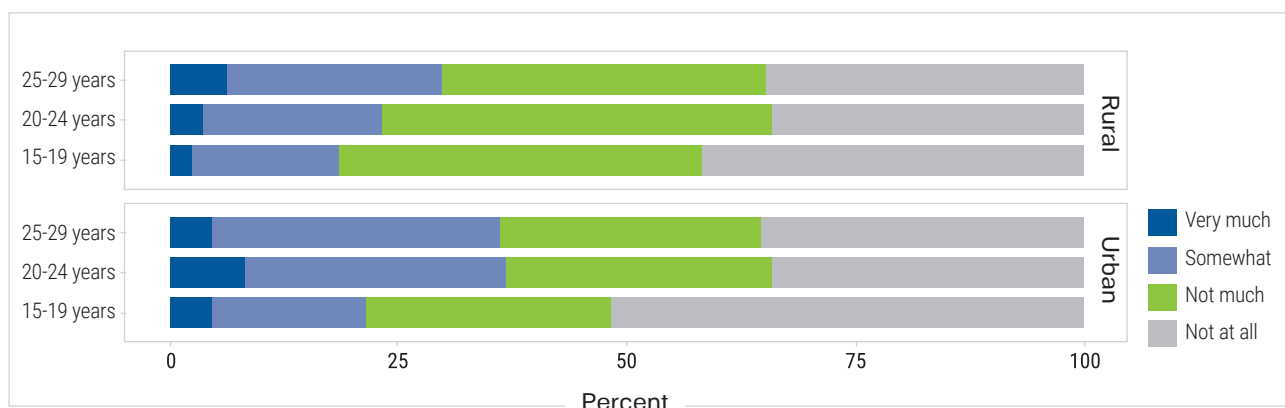
## Political activism

Moldovan youth do not demonstrate a high level of interest in politics. Less than 5% are “very much” and 22% are “somewhat” interested in politics. Those not interested are split between the rather equal categories of “not much” (36%) and “not at all” (38%). Gender differences in answers are insignificant. By area of residence, youth in rural areas show a slightly lower level of interest in politics, especially within the youngest and the oldest age cohorts. The only significant differ-

ence between rural and urban areas is for the age category 20–24 years (Figure 16). These are students in colleges and universities, i.e., places known for catalysing political activism among students. In addition, those having experience of voluntary work in NGOs also tend to exhibit a much higher level of interest in politics. An intriguing finding is the relatively high level of interest in politics among youth in Gagauzia, with about 40% being at least “somewhat” interested in politics.

Figure 16.

**Distribution of answers to the question “How interested would you say you are in politics?”, by age group and area of residence, %**



Politics is not a common topic of discussion for youth, either among friends or family members, with only 3% claiming that they discuss politics “very often”, while about 17% do so “often”. About 19% never discuss politics with their parents and 24% never do so with friends. In fact, answers regarding the frequency of discussing politics with friends almost perfectly correlate with those on the frequency of discussing politics with parents.

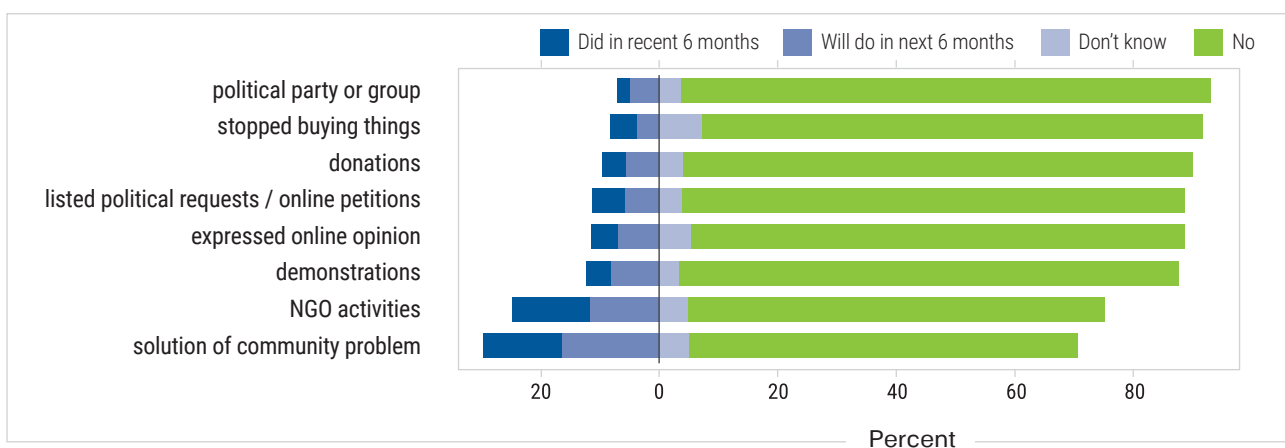
This lack of interest in politics is reflected in low rates of accessing information about political events. A bit more than 25% of youth “hardly ever” seek such information, while 42% report accessing such information “at least once a month”. The “at least once a week” option accounted for 19% of answers, while “at least once a day” accounted for 14%. A puzzling fact is that in the Gagauzia region, half of the respondents claim they “hardly ever” access political information, which is inconsistent with their relatively high level of declared interest in politics.

Political disagreements are rare among young people’s close social circles, including disagreements with parents. Only 1% of youth say that they disagree all the time, while 6% say they do so often. Another 7% say that they try not to confront each other despite having differing political views. In the case of 9% of young people, disagreements are absent because their parents are not interested in politics at all. About 20% of respondents have only occasional disputes, as their political views mostly align with those of their parents. The absolute majority of 52% of respondents said that they never disagree.

Political activity can take many forms. The survey asked the respondents whether they engaged in eight types of activities, from drafting political requests to solving community problems. The answers reveal a rather weak level of political engagement among youth, with engagement in community problems and NGO activities being the dominant forms of political activity, and with activities related to political parties being the least common (Figure 17).

Figure 17.

**Engagement of youth in various forms of political activity, %**

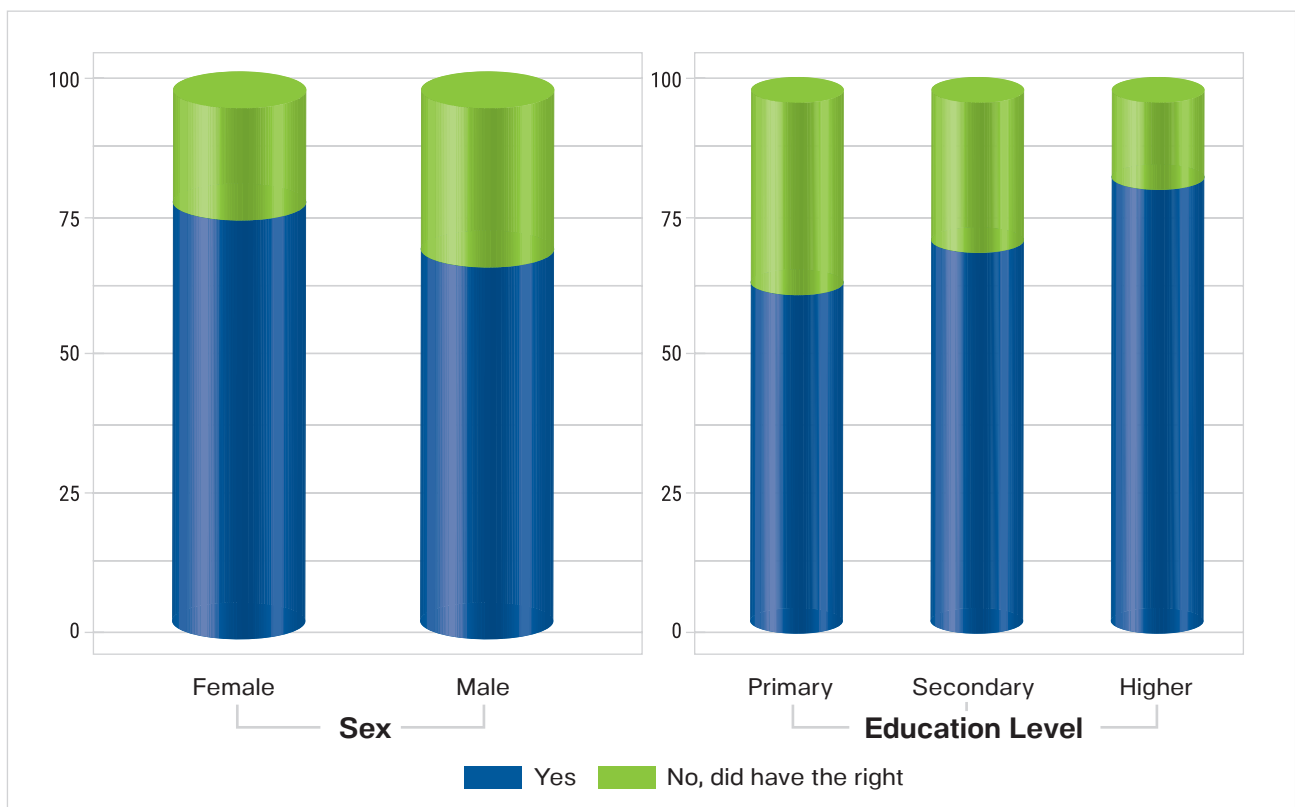


## Representation and voting

An absolute majority of respondents consider that the interests of young people of Moldova are either “poorly” (52%) or “not at all” (20%) represented in politics. On the positive end, only 18% consider that youth are “quite well” represented in national politics, and 1% think they are “very well” represented. Considering the widespread lack of interest in politics, the share of “don’t know” answers to this question is quite high, at 9%. Despite some differences in nuances between “poorly” and “not at all”, the balance of answers does not differ significantly by gender, area of residence, or region. It is worth mentioning, though, that “don’t know” answers are less than half as prevalent in Chisinau as compared to the national average, while in Gagauzia they are significantly above the national average.

Leaving aside the puzzling finding that 1% of respondents “don’t know” if they voted in the most recent elections, almost 52% did vote in them. About one-quarter of the surveyed youth did not vote because they were below the legal age. However, another 4% said they would have voted if they were of the legal age. Only 17% said that they did not vote albeit having the right to do so, and this is inconsistent with the national figures on effective participation of youth in elections in 2020 and 2021. According to the survey, women tend to show up at the polling station more often than men (Figure 18). In addition, the rate of participation increases significantly with the level of education.

Figure 18.  
Participation in voting by gender and education level, % of those having the right to vote

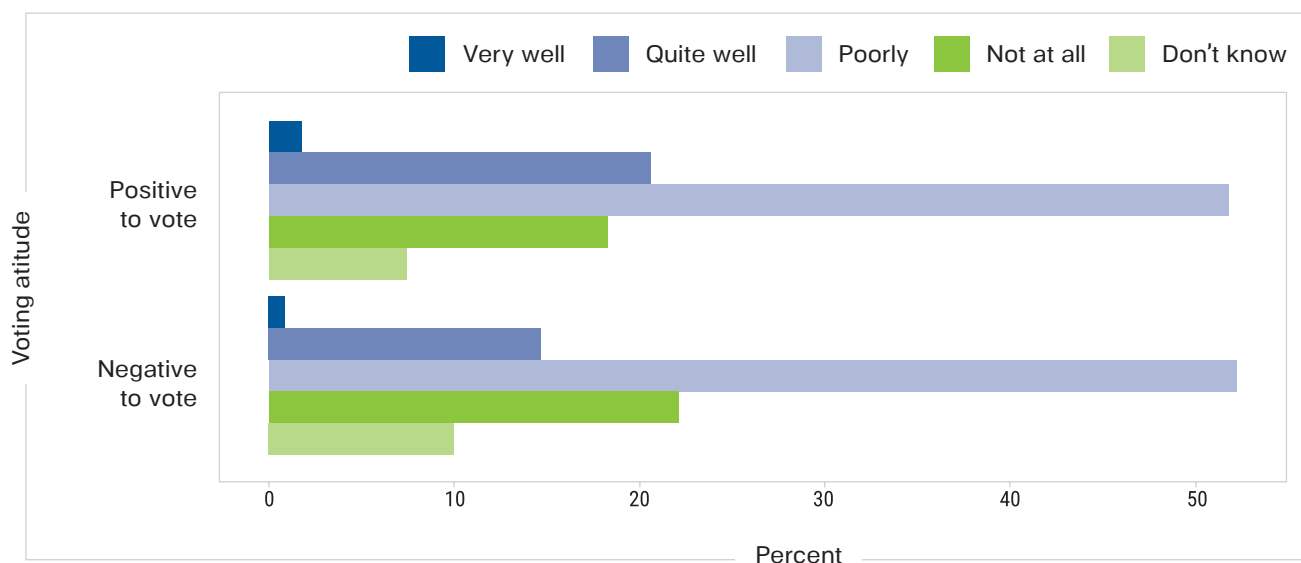


Youth perceptions regarding the level of political representation may have something very important to do with their electoral behaviour. Those adopting positive voting behaviour (either voted or would have voted if they had been of the right age) are more inclined to believe that youth enjoy a higher level of rep-

resentation in politics as compared to those having negative voting behaviour (not participating even if they had the right or not stating that would participate if they had the right) and for whom negative perceptions regarding the level of representation are more prevalent (Figure 19).

Figure 19.

Distribution of answers to the question “How well do you think the interests of young people are represented in national politics?” by voting attitude, %

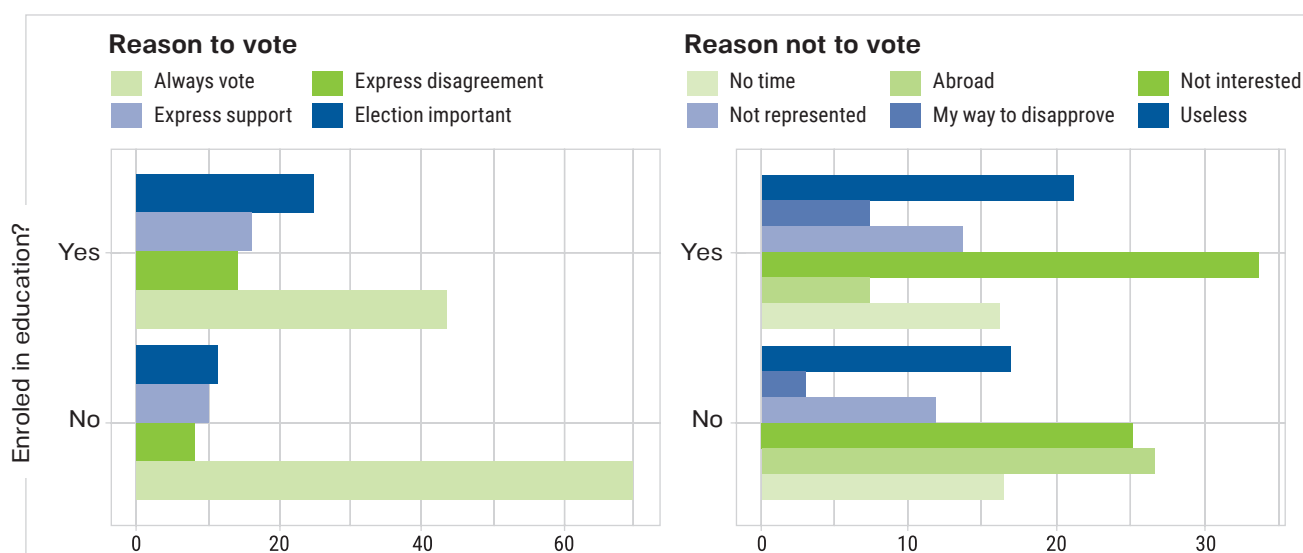


It is interesting to note that the reasons given for voting in elections, as well as the reasons for not doing so, vary by the status of enrolment in education (Figure 20). For youth enrolled in education, the argument that elections are important is more prevalent than in the case of those who are not enrolled. Instead, those who are not enrolled more often

believe that they vote just because they “always vote”. Moving to the camp of non-voters, for those enrolled in education the main reason for not participating is that they are “not interested”, while the “elections are useless” argument came second. For those not in education, the main reason given was “being abroad”, and then “not being interested” at all in elections.

Figure 20.

Reasons to vote versus reasons not to vote by education enrolment status, %

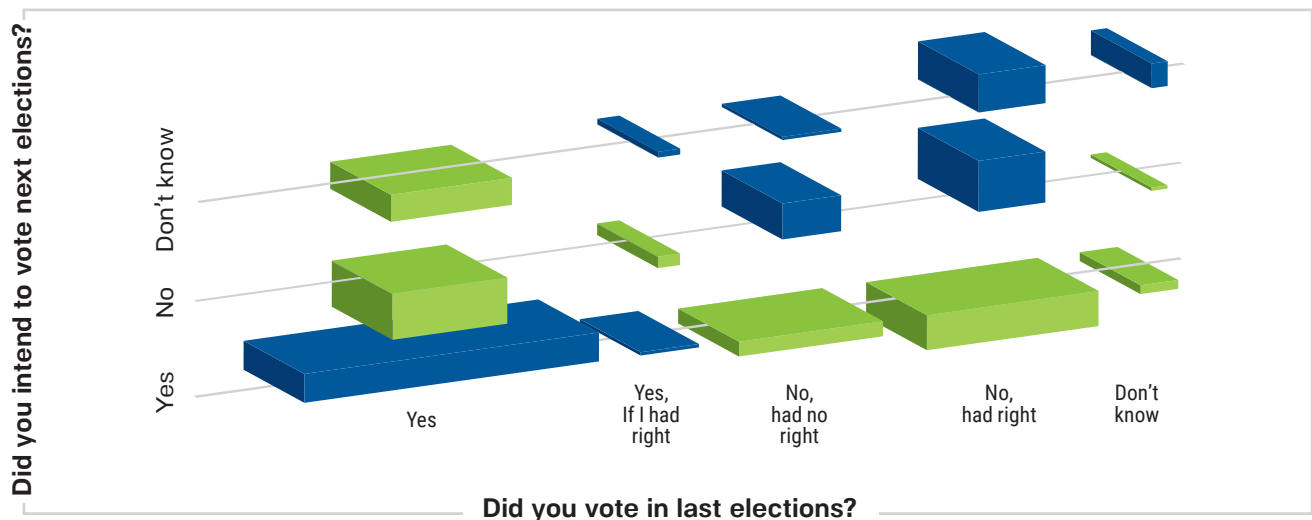


The survey also included a question on respondents’ interest in voting in the next important elections. More than 76% of young persons show readiness to vote, 11% are not willing to vote, while 13% do not know what they are going to do. A clear association can be traced

between voting behaviour during previous elections and the intention to vote in the next elections (Figure 21). Those who voted in the last elections are very likely to vote next time, and vice versa, thus revealing symptoms of a self-perpetuating behavioural pattern.



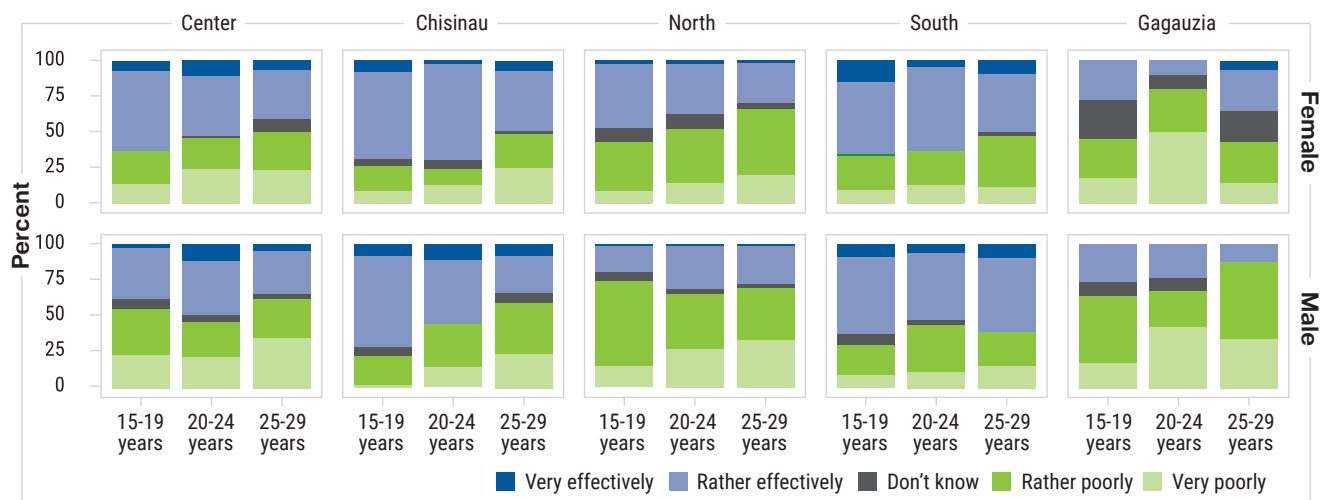
Figure 21.

**Association between electoral behaviour and electoral voting intentions****Perceptions regarding the quality of governance and trust in governance**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a large-scale crisis that tested to the limit the governmental and societal response capacities and resilience. From this perspective, the COVID experience can be used to evaluate what the public thinks of the quality of governmental management. The balance of answers in this regard is rather negative, with half of the re-

spondents believing that the Government of Moldova managed the crisis "rather poorly" or "very poorly". Almost 39% consider that the government engaged in "rather effective" crisis management, while only 6% gave a "very effectively" appraisal. Almost 5% did not know what to answer.

Figure 22.

**Distribution of answers to the question "Overall, how has the government managed the COVID-19 pandemic" by gender, age group, and region, %**

These answers differ dramatically by age, gender, and region (Figure 22). In general, women tend to give more credit to the government's effectiveness in managing the COVID crisis. The youngest and the median

cohorts also tend to be more optimistic as compared to the oldest ones. Unlike those from Chisinau, youth from Gagauzia and the North are less inclined to think well about the government's management of the crisis. In

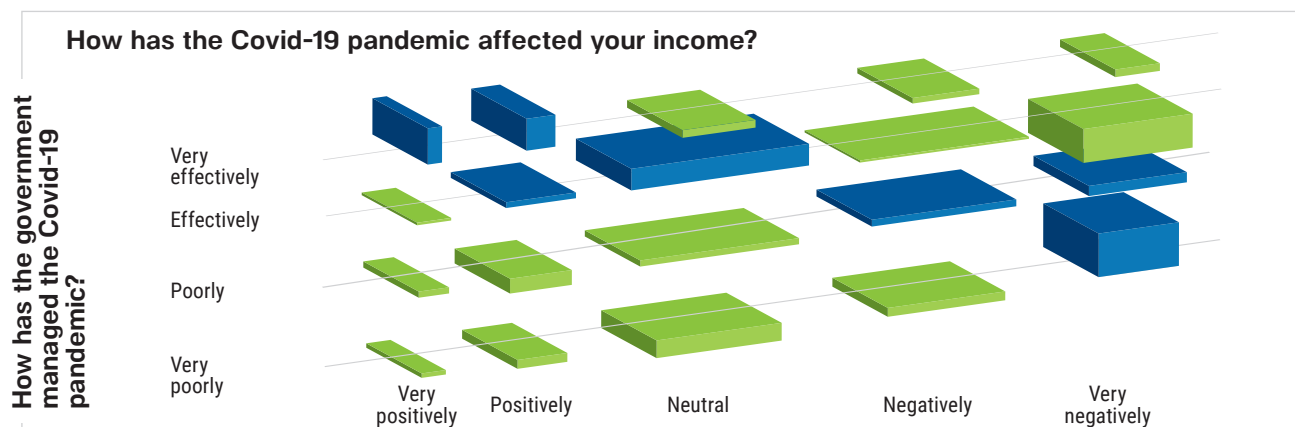
the case of Gagauzia, this may be explained by the information bubble which surrounds the region (discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

Respondents' opinions on governmental effectiveness in managing the COVID crisis are likely shaped by their own experiences regarding the impact of COVID on personal income, the country's economy, and the quality of

health protection services. The diagonal series of columns in the association plot displayed in Figure 23 shows clearly that favourable (unfavourable) answers regarding government effectiveness in managing the COVID crisis are associated with a low (high) impact on household income. There is a similarly strong association in the case of COVID impact of the crisis on the country's economy and on the quality of services within the health protection system.

Figure 23.

### Association between electoral behaviour and electoral voting intentions

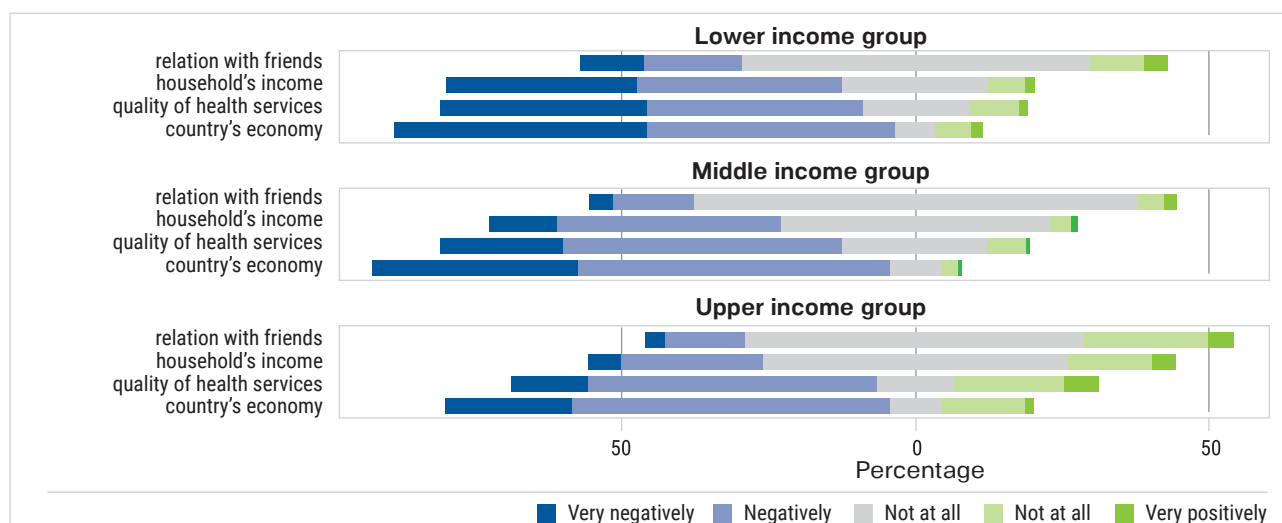


These perceptions are likely to have been shaped by the “regressive” character of the COVID crisis. Based on the survey data, we classify households into three groups of income: lower (made up of those choosing the answers “not enough money even for food” and “enough only for basics” to the question on households' financial situation), middle (“enough money for food but not for clothes”, “enough money for clothes but not for appli-

ances”, and “enough money for appliances but not for a new car”) and upper (“enough money for a car but not a house” and “no material difficulties”). The poorer the household, the deeper the perceived impact of the COVID crisis (Figure 24). This refers not only to the income of the household but also to relations with friends, as well as to the impact on the country's economy and on the quality of services provided by the health protection sector.

Figure 24.

### Distribution of answers to the question “How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected...?” by income group, %

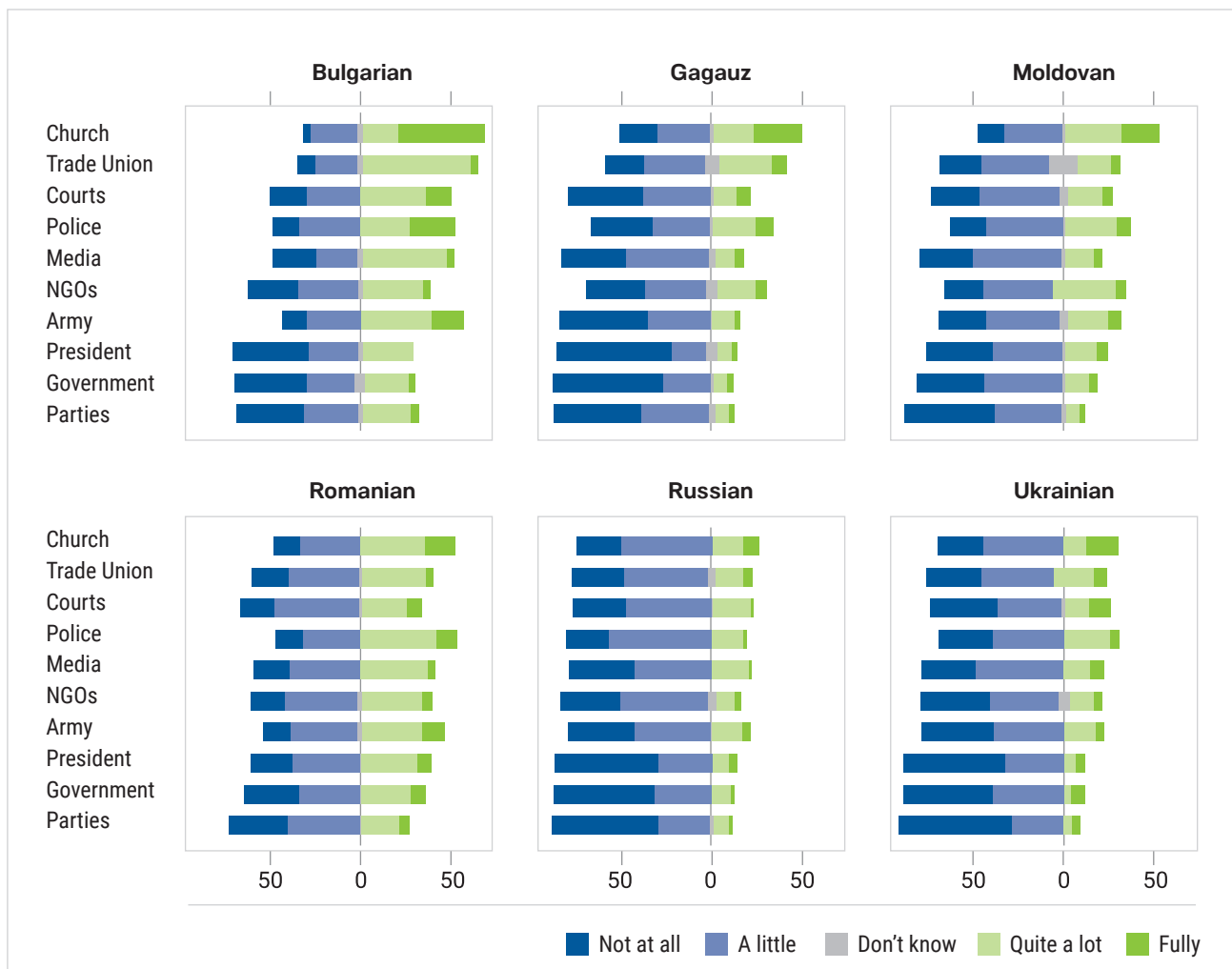


The survey included a set of 10 questions addressing the level of trust in various state and non-state institutions. Analysis of these answers reveals a general prevalence of low levels of trust in executive and judicial bodies and a slightly higher level of trust in non-state institutions, especially in the church and trade unions. However, trade unions also attract a significant share of “don’t know” answers, which hypothetically can be explained by two factors. The structural factor is that unionization is more common in the public or quasi-public sectors (education, public administration, health), where the share of youth aged 15–29 among employees is rather small (and declining). This group is significantly inclined to choose occupations in the private sector, where Moldovan trade unions

are practically absent or very weak. A cultural factor may also be important: trade unions are just not “interesting” for youth and there is no active interest among youth in the trade union movement and union membership.

The level of trust also differs significantly by national groups (Figure 25). Bulgarians and Romanians have higher levels of trust, in general, and their trust in parties, the government, and the president is relatively higher (though it should be considered that there are relatively few representatives of either group in the survey). Russians, Moldovans, Gagauz, and Ukrainians report the lowest levels of trust in these institutions. The church enjoys a positive net level of trust among Bulgarians, Moldovans, Gagauz, and Romanians.

Figure 25.  
Level of trust in various institutions by nationality, %



A very interesting finding is that the answers related to trust are in a very strong mutual relationship. For instance, trust in the country’s president is positively associated with trust in the government – those having a high level

of trust in the president share a high level of trust in the government and vice versa. Also, trust in the police is associated very strongly with trust in the courts.

## Chapter 4

# Attitudes regarding foreign policy, EU integration, and international affairs

*Chapter four discusses youth's perceptions regarding Moldova's external friends, and how these perceptions vary across key criteria. It then looks at support for Moldova's European integration, which since 2022 has been a defining issue in domestic politics. The chapter ends with a discussion of the attitudes of Moldovan youth regarding the war in Ukraine and potential factors behind these attitudes.*

## Context

2022 brought about some tidal changes for the Republic of Moldova. Following the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Moldova (together with Ukraine and Georgia) received the status of candidate country for EU accession. According to the most recent sociological polls on the general population conducted by the Institute for Public Policy, 51% of the population reported being certain to vote in favour of joining the EU in a hypothetical referendum, while 30% reported being certain to vote against.<sup>5</sup> Youth aged 18–29, in general, are not much more in favour of joining the EU (52%) as compared to the national average; however, youth are less antagonistic to European integration than adults.

Moldovan youth are only a bit more sympathetic towards Ukraine in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine. While 38% of the general Moldovan population surveyed in the Barometer of Public Opinion in November 2022 consider that what is taking place in Ukraine is an unjustified invasion on the part of the Russian Federation, in the case of youth the share is 42%.

About 35% of the current generation of youth are in favour of reunification with Romania, which is slightly below the level of support expressed by the generation aged 45–59 who witnessed or participated in the political events in the early 1990s, 38% of whom are in favour of reunification. The difference between the level of support for Moldova joining NATO is not significant (25% of those aged 18–29 and 24% of those aged 45–59).

## Key findings

- *One-third of surveyed young people consider that the EU is Moldova's biggest friend, while about 27% think Romania is. About 14.3% consider that Russia is Moldova's key friend abroad, while 5% think this is the United States and 2% think it is Ukraine. It is worth mentioning that about 20% of respondents said they did not know how to answer this question.*
- *About 42% of the surveyed youth are "proud and optimistic" about Moldova obtaining the status of candidate country for EU accession, while almost 35% report that they "do not expect any change" to come from this. Slightly more than 11% think that Moldova will regret this move. Roughly 5% of youth simply "don't care", while about 8% "don't know" what to think about this subject.*
- *Perspectives on the war in Ukraine reveal a dramatic split within Moldovan youth. 50% of young people think that the military actions taking place in Ukraine are "an unjustified war by Russia against Ukraine". About one-fifth believe that what is happening in Ukraine is "an undeclared war between Russia and NATO/the West", while 11% consider that the war in Ukraine is a "justified Russian special military operation". About 5% said that they "do not have any feelings, do not care", while 11% did not know how to categorize the war.*

<sup>5</sup> [https://moldova.fes.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ForeignPolicyNewsLetters/BOP\\_11.2022\\_final.pdf](https://moldova.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/ForeignPolicyNewsLetters/BOP_11.2022_final.pdf)

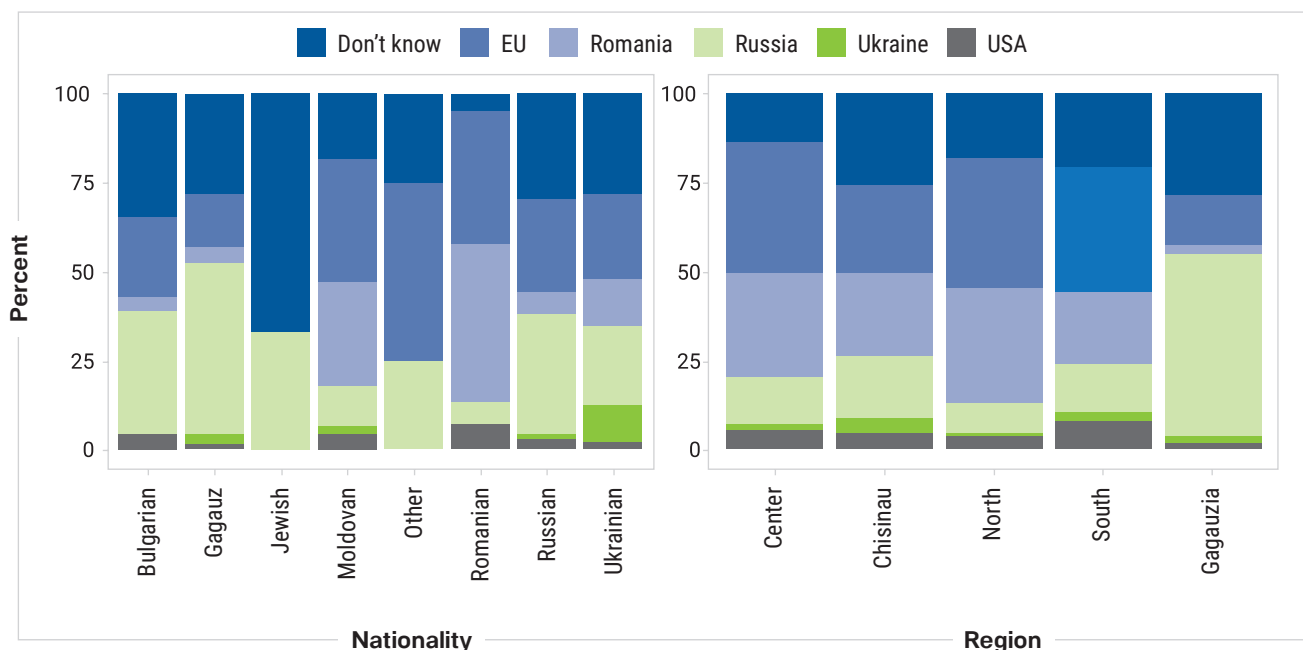
- In all cases, there is a clear regional/ national pattern in the answers to these questions. The Gagauz region emerges as being clearly lenient towards Russia, followed closely by Bulgarians. Prevalent sources of information are found to be the key factor behind these preferences, with Gagauz and Bulgarians living in a separate information space that is shaped by Russian perspectives on the war in Ukraine and international relations.

## Moldova's friends

Youth perceptions regarding who are Moldova's biggest friends are quite fragmented. First of all, about 20% of youth were not able to tell who Moldova's biggest friend is. Surprisingly, the share of "don't know" grows with age and with the level of education. Roughly 33% of youth think that the EU is Moldova's biggest friend, while about 27% tend to think the same about Moldova's Western neighbour Romania. About 14.3% believe that Russia is Moldova's key friend abroad, and the older cohorts are more inclined to see Russia as Moldova's main friend. Almost 5% think the United States is Moldova's biggest friend. Moldova's other neighbour – Ukraine – attracted 2% of responses to this question.

While there are some differences by gender, age, or education level, the answers do not differ as dramatically by these criteria as they do by the nationality of respondents (Figure 26). Gagauzia as a region and Gagauz as a nationality demonstrate a clearcut geopolitical leaning, with roughly half of the corresponding youth seeing Russia as Moldova's biggest friend, while Romania is missing from their preferences and the EU is referred to at a rate of half the national average. This pattern is common also among Bulgarians. What is particularly striking is the fact that among Gagauz and Bulgarians, sympathy towards Russia is stronger than among those of Russian nationality.

Figure 26.  
Distribution of answers to the question "From your perspective, who is Moldova's biggest friend?" by nationality and region, %



This question also reveals that external alignment is potentially a significant factor differentiating Moldovans from Romanians (who share the same language and culture). Persons identifying themselves as Romanian consider Romania to be Moldova's biggest friend (44%), while the EU comes second

(37%). In the case of Moldovans, the EU was chosen by 34% of respondents, while Romania was chosen by 29%.

A finding that is worth noting is the unexpectedly high share of sympathy for Russia as Moldova's biggest friend among the Ukrai-

nians of Moldova (22% of surveyed youth of Ukrainian ethnicity). Ukrainians represent the second most important ethnic group after Moldovans/Romanians. Ukrainians seem to be a bit underrepresented in the 2022 Youth Survey, but it is striking to discover that, despite Russia's war against their country of origin, and despite the economic hardship that the war has inflicted on Moldova, such a high share of Ukrainians think of Russia as Moldova's key friend. Because of the small number of observations, the correlation be-

tween Ukrainians' answers and the dominant sources of information regarding the war is not statistically significant. However, it is symptomatic that in the Barometer of Public Opinion of November 2022, about one-third of Ukrainians living in Moldova considered the war in Ukraine to be a war in defence of the "republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk (cf. 17.1% on average among the Moldovan population), while about 26% considered that what is taking place in Ukraine is a war of liberation from Nazism (cf. 15% within the general population).

## Attitudes regarding Moldova's European integration

Opinions on European integration have traditionally been a central political marker in Moldovan political debates in the last two decades. With the recent recognition of Moldova as a candidate country for joining the EU, the subject has become even more important. What does Moldova's youth think about European integration of their country?

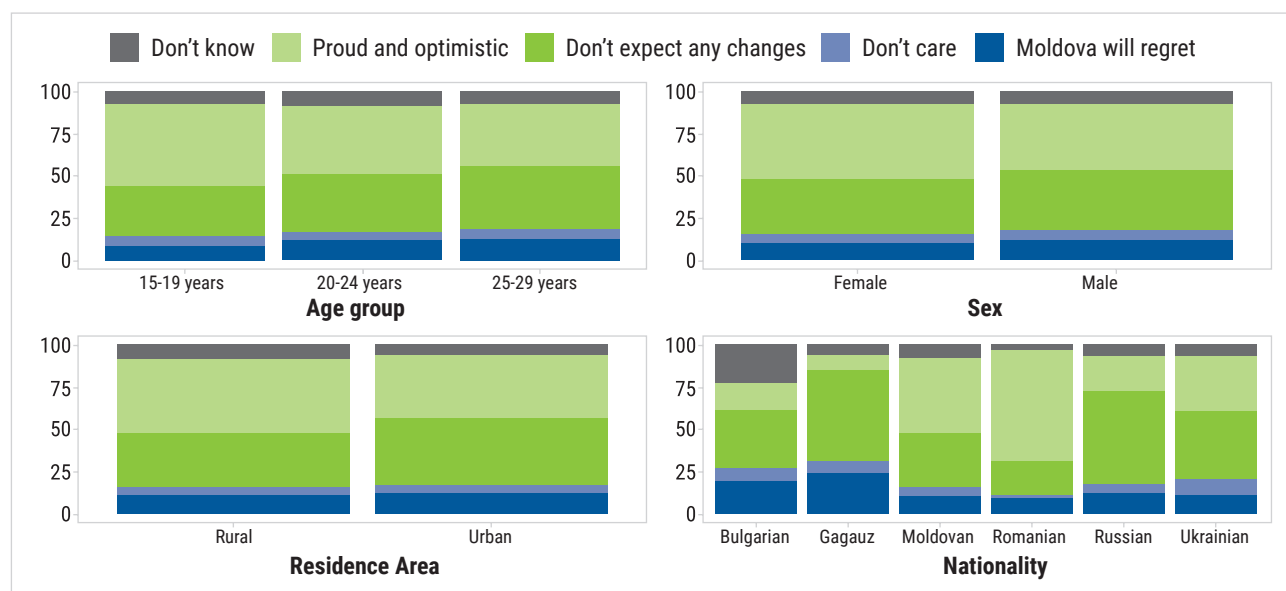
According to the survey, only 42% of the surveyed youth are "proud and optimistic" about Moldova receiving the EU candidate status. Almost 35% of the surveyed youth do not expect any change following Moldova receiving the candidate status. Slightly more than 11% think that Moldova will regret this move. Roughly 5% simply "don't care", while about

8% "don't know" what to think about this subject.

Attitudes to European integration differ dramatically by many criteria (Figure 27). Quite interestingly, the older age group is less enthusiastic about Moldova's receiving the status of candidate country for EU accession than the youngest group. Men, in general, are less optimistic than women. In rural areas, those who are proud and optimistic (44.1%) prevail numerically over those not expecting any change (31.5%). Opposite to this, in urban areas, the share of those not expecting any change (39.2%) is slightly bigger than the share of those feeling proud and optimistic (37.4%).

Figure 27.

**Distribution of answers to the question "What feelings do you have about Moldova's receiving the status of candidate country for EU accession?" by age group, gender, area of residence, and nationality**

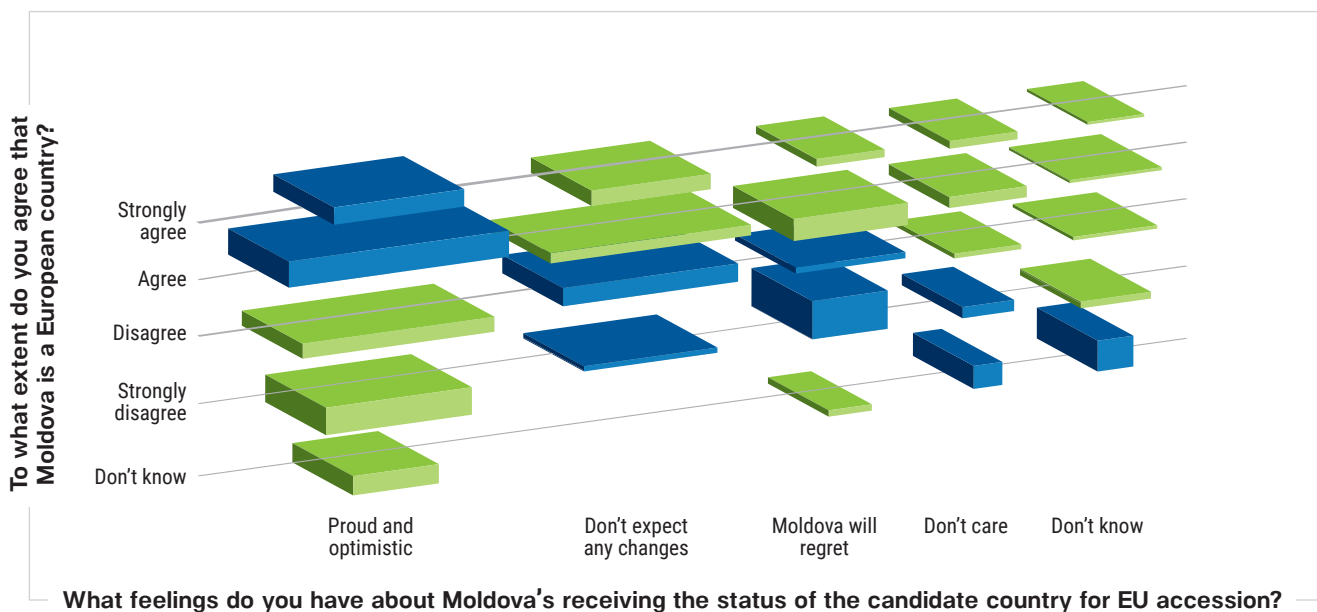


Yet again, nationality (which overlaps with regions in many cases) emerges as a factor that sharply differentiates respondents. Only 9% of Gagauz and 15% of Bulgarians feel “proud and optimistic”, while 54% and 34.6%, respectively, do not expect anything to change following Moldova becoming a candidate country. Russians are also sceptical, with 56% not expecting any change, and only 20% feeling “proud and optimistic”. Romanians and Moldovans are the main supporters of Moldova’s European integration. More than 66% of Romanians and 44% of Moldovans are “proud and optimistic”, while 21% and 32.6%, respectively, do not expect any change. The view that “Moldova will regret” the move is deepest among Gagauz (24%) and Bulgarians (19%). Only 9% of Russians and 11% of Ukrainians share this feeling.

Feelings related to Moldova becoming an EU accession candidate country may be deeply rooted in cultural perceptions regarding Moldova being a part of European civilization. This is demonstrated by the very intense association between answers to the question on feelings related to European integration and answers to the question “To what extent do you agree that Moldova is a European country?” As Figure 28 clearly shows, those who consider Moldova to be a European country tend to be “proud and optimistic” about Moldovan getting the EU candidate status. Those who do not agree that Moldova is a European country consistently feel that the EU candidate status is not likely to change anything or that Moldova will regret the move. Finally, those who do not know if Moldova is a European country also tend to be agnostic about its European fate or do not care about the European choice.

Figure 28.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Overall, how has the government managed the COVID-19 pandemic” by gender, age group, and region, %**



## War in Ukraine

Since its beginning, the war in Ukraine has been a significant factor that has polarized even further the already highly fractured Moldovan society. How people categorize the war says much about their intimate beliefs about who is right and who is wrong in this war, and reveals their geopolitical preferences and even their way of seeing the world. From this perspective, the data from the survey reveal a dramatic split among Moldovan youth. Only

50% of them think that the military actions taking place in Ukraine represent “an unjustified war by Russia against Ukraine”. Almost 22% believe that what is happening in Ukraine is “an undeclared war between Russia and NATO/the West”. Another 11% believe that the war in Ukraine is a “justified Russian special military operation”. About 5% said that they “do not have any feelings, do not care”, while 11% did not know how to categorize the war.



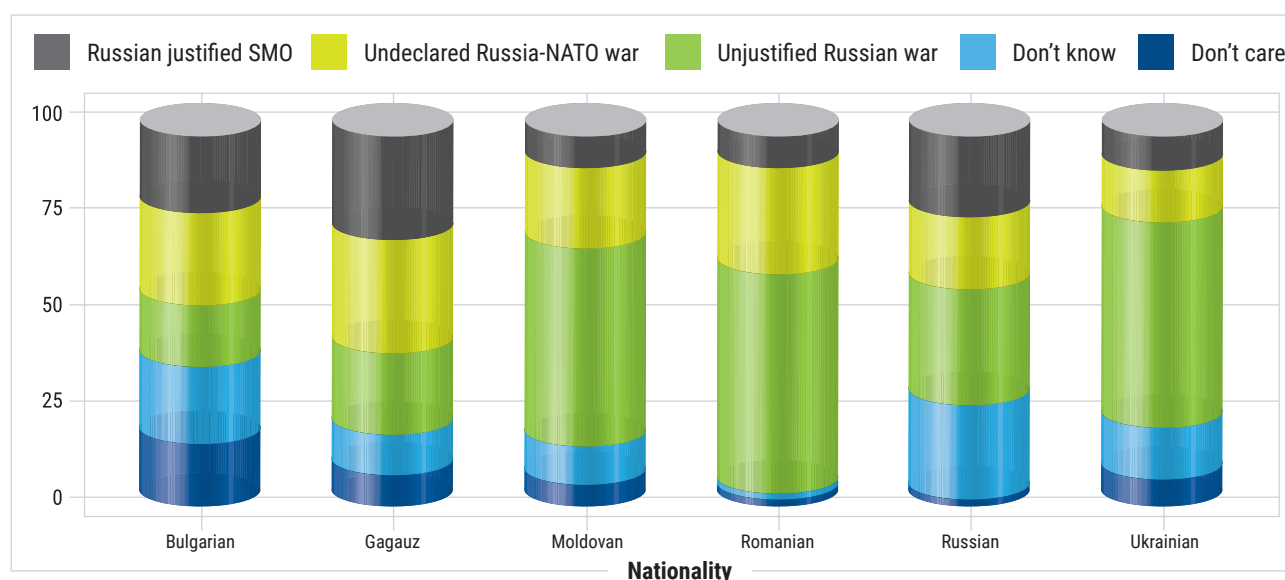
While the gender differences are not that significant, the cohort of youth aged 15–19 is more inclined to call the war in Ukraine a war (58%), while those aged 20–24 are a bit less inclined to do so (52%) and those in the 25–29 years category are even less inclined to do so (44%). Support for the view that the conflict is an “undeclared war between Russia and NATO/the West” goes in exactly the opposite direction along the age groups: 18%, 22%, and 25%, respectively.

Yet again, nationality is the most important factor in predicting attitudes regarding the war in Ukraine (Figure 29). While among Romanians (60%), Moldovans (53%), Ukrainians (56%), and even Russians (32%) the

prevailing view is that the military actions are an unjustified war by Russia against Ukraine, Gagauz believe that what is happening in Ukraine is either an “undeclared war between Russia and NATO” (30%) or a “justified Russian special military operations” (28%). In the case of Bulgarians, the proportions are 25% and 21%, respectively. The number of Bulgarians and Gagauz who answered this question is rather small (31 and 69 persons, respectively); however, even if we add them together to obtain a larger group for inhabitants of the region where they predominantly reside, the distribution of the answers remains largely unchanged and they remain mostly sympathetic to the Russian discourse regarding the war in Ukraine.

Figure 29.

### Categorization of the military actions in Ukraine, by nationality, %



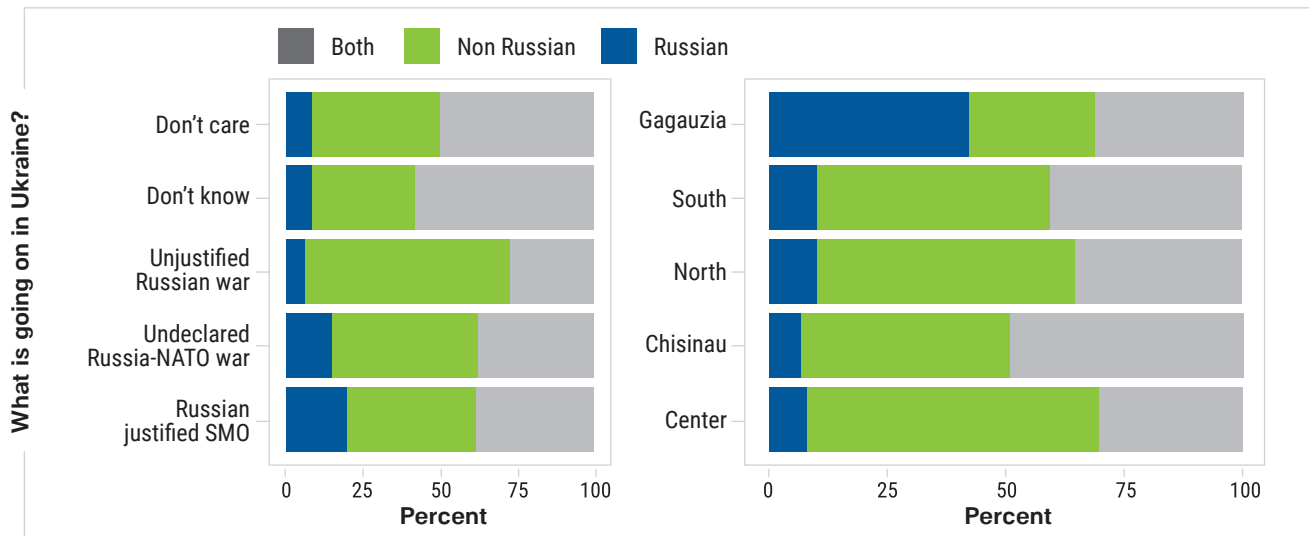
What factors might explain the nationality/regional pattern of these answers? In the case of Gagauz and Bulgarians, important factors are probably the mere fact of their living in compact and ethnically homogeneous regional groups. Their historical sentiment of “being under siege” may create a tendency to think alike, rather than differently. Moreover, their regional clustering may have also created a kind of cultural and informational isolation from the rest of Moldova. To test this hypothesis, we looked at the sources of information that respondents use to inform themselves about the events in Ukraine.

The survey provides data on preferences regarding types of information sources (social media, TV, radio, and newspaper) and the origin of information sources (Russian and non-Russian). For each respondent, we

first calculated the total number of preferred sources by origin and then created a new variable called “dominant source”. The latter takes the value of “Russian” if the total number of preferred Russian sources is larger than the total number of selected non-Russian sources, “non-Russian” if the opposite applies, and “both” if the number of Russian sources equals the number of non-Russian sources chosen by the respondent. Then, looking again at the preferred categorization of the military actions by the dominant source of information, one can immediately spot the role of the source of information in shaping perceptions about the war in Ukraine (Figure 30). Analysis of the distribution of respondents by regions and dominant sources of information reveals the information bubble in which Gagauz inhabitants live. This can probably be extrapolated to the Bulgarian group.

Figure 30.

Structure of answers regarding the military actions in Ukraine and structure of nationality by dominant information source, %



## Views on the USSR and the transition

*The fifth chapter deals with a topic of particular interest – perceptions of Moldovan youth on the USSR's dissolution and the ensuing transition period, especially the early phase of the 1990s. The subject is all the more interesting since the surveyed youth (aged 29 at most) have no personal experience or memories of living in Soviet times, while their experience and memories of the 1990s, for the same reason, are likely to be blurred or fragmented.*

### Context

The USSR dissolved more than 30 years ago, which means that none of the surveyed young persons have personal memories of living in the USSR. For the same reason, few would be expected to recall well the early transition period and the “wild” 1990s. It is therefore all the more interesting to understand the attitudes of today's youth about the USSR's dissolution and the impact of the 1990s on people's livelihoods. Any answer other than “don't know” to questions requiring personal attitudes should be interpreted as reflecting the impact of formal or informal cultural sources (school, family, older friends) or propaganda. Which one is more dominant (culture or intended propaganda) cannot be inferred from the data offered by the Youth Survey. Still, it is worthwhile mentioning that political parties in Moldova which are nostalgic about the USSR have very substantial rates of adherence among youth, which means that both factors are probably at play.

### Key findings

- *Despite having no personal memories regarding life in Soviet times, 34% of the respondents consider that the dissolution of the USSR was a good thing, 29% that it was neither good nor bad, and 22% that it was a bad development, with only 15% saying they do not know.*
- *The socioeconomic situation is one of the strongest predictors of attitudes concerning the USSR's dissolution. Those in a financially more vulnerable situation or / and unemployed tend to regret the dissolution of the USSR, while those at the upper financial end or having decent jobs tend to view the USSR's disappearance in opposite terms.*
- *The nationality-regional nexus emerges yet again as a strong factor determining opinion regarding the USSR's dissolution. Half of the inhabitants of the Gagauz region regret the end of the USSR, compared to less than one-quarter in the rest of the country.*
- *Contrary to what intuition might suggest, there is no strong association between attitudes concerning the USSR's end and attitudes about the period of the 1990s. What is particularly interesting, however, is that 30% of respondents “don't know” the impact of the 1990s, compared to 15% responding “don't know” to the question on the more remote dissolution of the USSR.*
- *More than 70% of the interviewed subjects consider that it is nowadays “somewhat easier” or “much easier” compared to the 1990s to decide about one's own religious beliefs, receive qualified medical care, feel safe, live independently, earn money, and participate in political life. The youngest cohort tends to be a bit more optimistic in their perspectives compared to the oldest one.*

## Regrets regarding the dissolution of the USSR

The oldest survey respondents are 29 years old, meaning that they do not have any personal memories of the USSR's dissolution. Against this background, it would be quite surprising to find any firm answers to the question "Do you think that the end of the USSR was a good or bad thing?". However, 34% find that the dissolution of the USSR was a good thing, 29% that it was neither good nor bad, and 22% that it was a bad development, with only 15% saying they did not know what to answer.

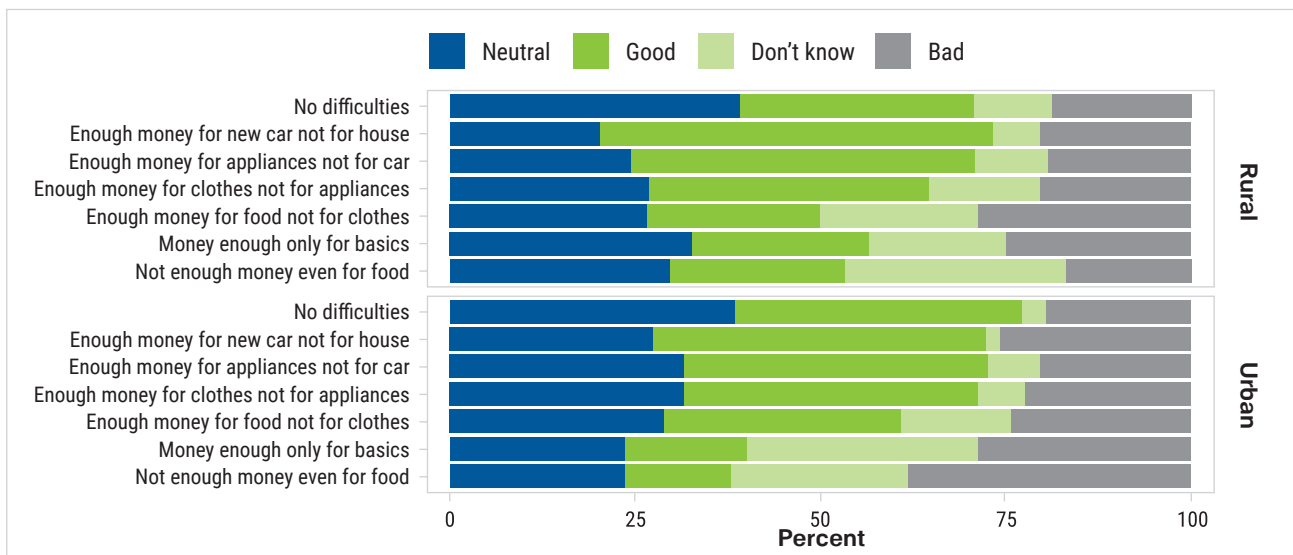
The gender differences in the answers to this question are not significant, albeit men are slightly more inclined to think that the end of the USSR was a bad development. The age criterion is more relevant, with 26% of the older group of youth and 20% of those in the youngest cohort thinking that the dissolution was a bad thing. Education is in a bit more complex relationship with attitudes to the USSR's dissolution. On the one hand, 42% of those holding a high educational level think

that the USSR's disappearance was a good thing, which is 10 percentage points above those with primary and secondary education. At the same time, 32% of those with higher education are neutral about the USSR's dissolution, compared to 26% in the case of those with primary education.

It is particularly interesting to note that there is quite a strong level of correlation between opinions on the USSR's dissolution and households' financial status. In general, those in a financially more vulnerable situation tend to regret the USSR's dissolution, while those at the upper end of the financial wellbeing segment tend to view the USSR's disappearance in positive terms. 32% of unemployed people think that the USSR's dissolution was a bad development, compared with 21% in the case of those having full-time jobs. In general, the link between economic hardship and nostalgia regarding the USSR is well established in urban areas (Figure 31).

Figure 31.

**Distribution of answers to the question "Do you think that the end of the USSR was a good or bad thing?" by financial status of household and area of residence, %**

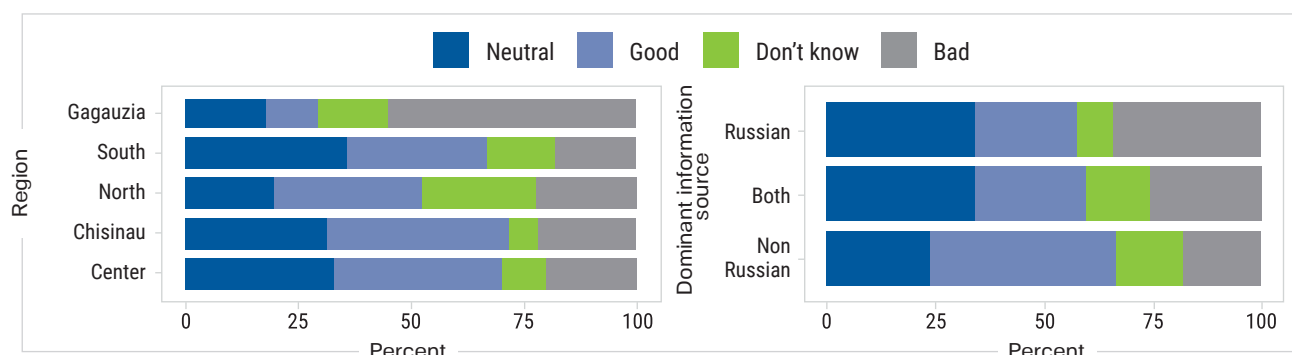


The nationality/region criteria emerge, yet again, as strong predictors regarding nostalgia for the USSR (Figure 32). Half of Gagauz regret the USSR coming to an end, compared to less than 25% in the rest of the country. There is also very clear evidence that the sources of information the respondents access on the war in Ukraine represent another strong determinant of attitudes to the USSR. Almost 40% of those preferring

Russian sources also regret the USSR's dissolution, while 30% are rather neutral. Why is this the case? The only reasonable explanation is that information sources promoting the Russian view on the war in Ukraine also happen to promote pro-USSR values and beliefs, positioning the USSR's dissolution as a "geopolitical tragedy" and leading those who have never lived under the Soviet regime to regret it.

Figure 32.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Do you think that the end of the USSR was a good or bad thing?” by region and dominant source of information, %**



## “Memories” of the 1990s

The period of the 1990s was objectively one of the most difficult in Moldova’s history over the last three decades. In the collective memory, the early and mid-1990s are sometimes called the “wild 90s”, as they are associated with economic collapse, financial crisis, the loss of jobs, criminality, and the start of mass labour migration. It is useful to obtain the subjective assessments of the surveyed young people on that period. Considering the age of the surveyed youth, most of them will have no or only vague memories of the 1990s.

Curiously enough, only 30% of the respondents chose the answer “Don’t know” to the question “Do you think that the 90s brought the country more good or more bad?”. What is particularly strange is the fact that the share of “don’t know” answers to this question is higher than in the case of the question on the USSR’s dissolution, which chronologically is a more remote event. The distribution of the “don’t know” answers concerning the impact of the 1990s does not depend on the age group of the respondent. About 38% chose the answer “rather bad”, with a clear age pattern: 36% of those aged 15–19 selected this answer, compared to 37% of those aged 20–24 and 41% of those aged 25–29. On average, 32% consider that the 1990s were “rather good” – again, with an age trend: 34% in the group 15–19 years, 33% in the next group, and 31% in the group 25–29 years.

In addition, there is a strong association between gender and the perceived impact of the 1990s (Figure 33), as well as between area of residence and perceived impact (Figure 34). Men tend to perceive the impact of the 1990s as negative. The same goes for urban inhabitants. This may have some important connections with the effective impact of the 1990s – men were affected more than women, both financially and psychologically. At the same time, the urban-based industrial sector suffered more profound shocks during the 1990s as compared to the rural areas, which significantly depend on subsistence agriculture.

Figure 33.

**Association between gender and perceived impact of the 1990s**

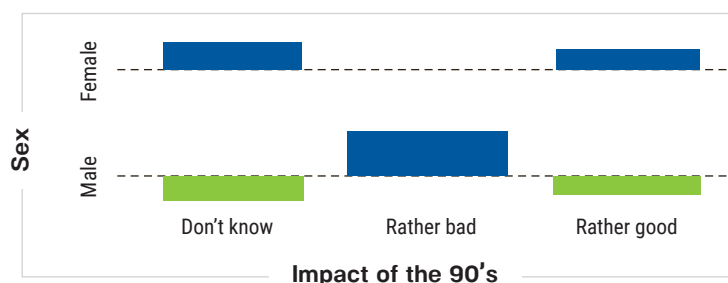
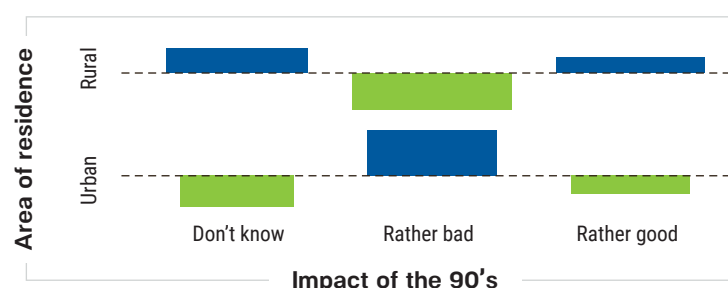


Figure 34.

**Association between area of residence and perceived impact of 1990s**

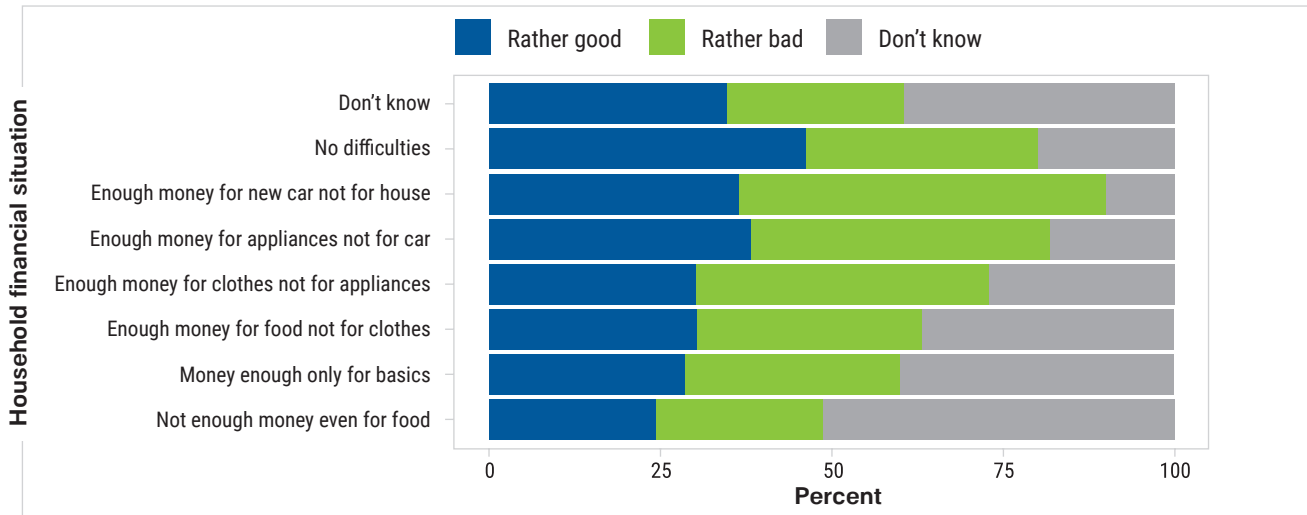


In addition, the data confirm a very strong correlation between the financial situation of young people and their perceptions on the impact of the 1990s (Figure 35). The financially better-off respondents view the impact

of the 1990s positively, in net terms. Such positive perceptions are less dominant the worse off households are, while the share of those answering “Don’t know” grows significantly.

Figure 35.

**Association between area of residence and perceived impact of the 1990s**

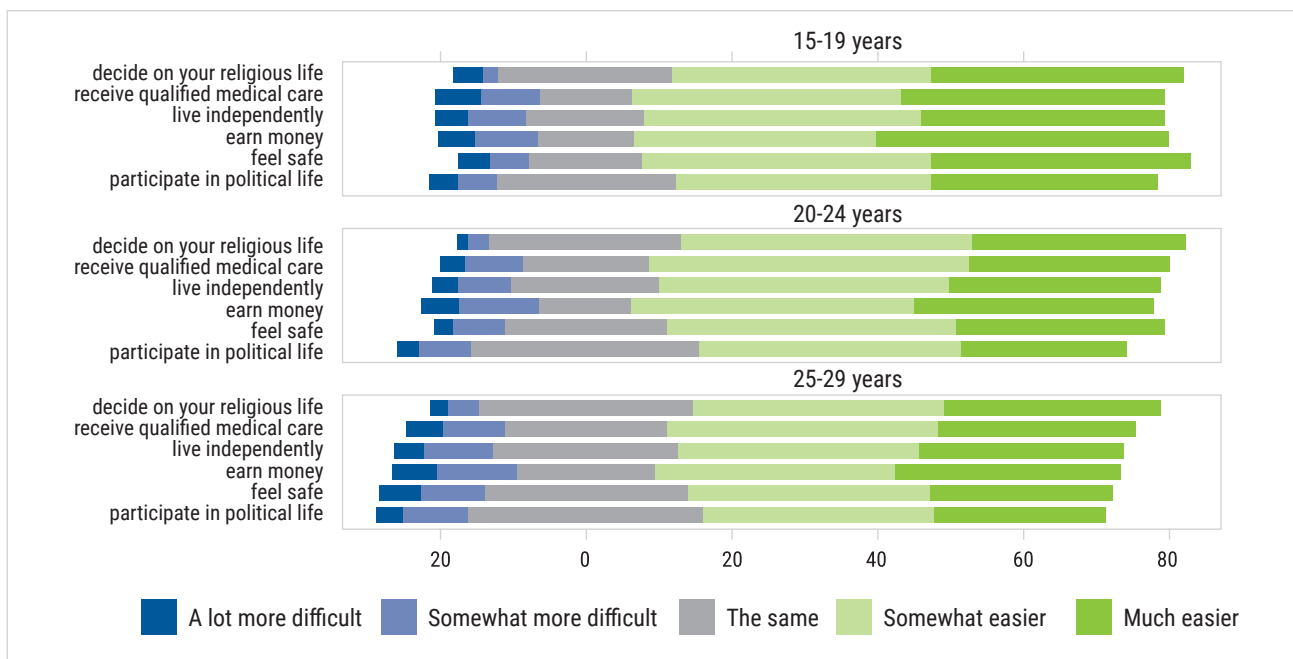


The questionnaire also includes specific questions that aim to compare the current situation with the situation in the 1990s across six dimensions: religious freedom, quality of medical care, political participation, money-earning opportunities, perceptions regarding personal safety, and chances

of starting an independent life. On each dimension, “easier” answers prevail over “more difficult” answers. A comparison of answers by main age groups reveals that the youngest cohort is a bit more optimistic in their views as compared to the oldest one (Figure 36).

Figure 36.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Compared to the 1990s, has it become easier or more difficult to...?”, by age groups, %**



## Chapter 6

# Youth identity and values

*The sixth chapter looks into how young people identify themselves in relation to others, and what their dominant values are, including religious ones. It also considers the important metric of the rejection of “others”, as measured by socially tolerant distance towards foreigners, drug addicts, and other groups.*

### Context

In the early 1990s political and social sentiments in favour of unification with Romania were high. In time, the tide turned, with pro-unification sentiments becoming more pragmatic and less rose-tinted. Still, thanks to the close historical, linguistic, and cultural ties with Romania, as well as due to the fact that they have regained Romanian citizenship, many Moldovans perceive themselves as Romanians. However, the 180 years of separation from Romania and the different influences that Moldova/ Bessarabia has experienced since the early nineteenth century have preserved and reinforced a distinctive Moldovan identity. A high percentage of Moldovans have ethnically mixed family backgrounds. This has given rise to three distinct groups: 1) Moldovan citizens who feel Moldovan and speak “Moldovan” as their native language; 2) Moldovan citizens who feel Moldovan and speak Romanian; and 3) Moldovan citizens who feel Romanian and speak Romanian.

Moldova has historically been a multiethnic region, and ethnic relations generally are considered good, albeit with regional and historical nuances. In the North, Moldovans, and Ukrainians have lived together peacefully for centuries and share cultural features and political preferences. In the South, in the early 1990s Moldova was close to seeing open conflict between Gagauz and Moldovans, but fortunately, the conflict was kept below the level of large-scale violence. Nowadays, Gagauz enjoy a high level of cultural, economic, and political autonomy in their region. Still, the roots of the conflict have not been eradicated, as shown by the ongoing politically tense dialogue between Chisinau and Comrat, and by the outcome of the regional elections in May 2023. On the left bank of the Dniester, for over 30 years, there is an unrecognized separatist region, resulting from an artificial political and ideological conflict fuelled by the Kremlin, which the Russian Federation used to launch a war against the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova in the spring of 1992. The conflict resulted in around 1000 victims, with tens - if not hundreds - of thousands of displaced people, with Russian troops on the sovereign territory of the state and with the need to reintegrate the country. Despite these realities, the Transnistrian conflict was never an ethnic or religious one, but strictly based on (geo)political criteria, fuelled by (geo)political and, subsequently, economic interests. At the same time, the people from the two banks continued to interact with one another.

### Key findings

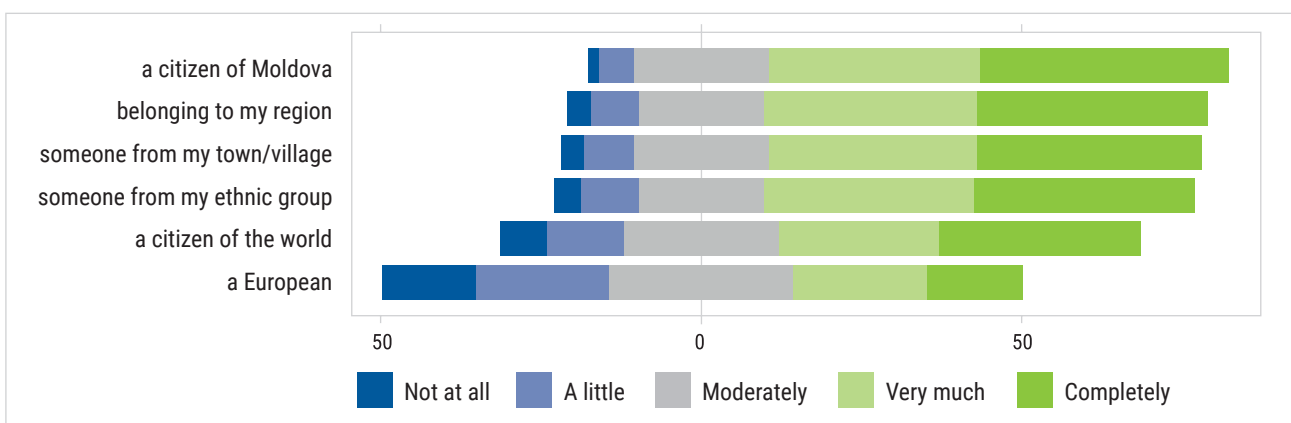
- *Most of the surveyed youth perceive themselves, first, as citizens of Moldova, then as belonging to their regions, then to their communities, and then to their ethnic group. The affinity with European civilization is of a lower extent than feelings of a being citizen of the world. Self-identity strongly depends on nationality.*
- *Youth from the titular nation (Moldovans/Romanians) strongly perceive themselves as being Moldovans, with only 6% calling themselves Romanians. At the same time, only 35% of those calling themselves Moldovans selected “Moldovan” as their native language, with 51% selecting Romanian as their native language and about 9% choosing both “Moldovan” and Romanian as their native languages.*



- In terms of political ideology, most of the interviewed subjects position themselves clearly on the left side of the political scale, including some very close to the far left. However, this positioning is not supported by the (generally wrong) classification that young people performed regarding a set of left or right political statements.
- The data indicate that the life values of young women are very much in line with those of young men. Both genders consider of greatest importance taking responsibility, being faithful to their partner, and being independent. Eating healthily emerges as a little more important than having a successful career, getting rich, and having children. Both men and women give very low importance to being active in politics and participating in civic actions.
- More than 83% of the surveyed youth declared that they practice a religion, with an absolute majority of 94% among them being Orthodox. The data suggest that this is a rather internalized religiosity as most prefer to pray at home rather than in places of worship.
- Contrary to widely held beliefs, the survey found a relatively low incidence of experiences of being discriminated against on any grounds. Discrimination based on economic background seems to be the most frequently encountered type, with 1% of respondents being discriminated against “very often” and 4% “often”. Youth from financially worse-off households are more exposed to economic discrimination than those from better-off households.
- The data reveal quite a low level of tolerance in Moldovan society, with very low percentages willing to accept people from “suspect” groups within their family or as close friends. Some groups are rejected much more than others. Foreign students raise the least concerns among respondents, with about half of the respondents willing to accept them at least as their neighbours. At the bottom of social preferences are drug addicts, previously convicted persons, and homosexual persons. More than 70% of respondents would not allow drug addicts to enter Moldova and 50% would not allow homosexual persons to enter Moldova.

## Who are Moldovan young people?

Figure 37.  
Distribution of general answers to the question “Do you see yourself as...”



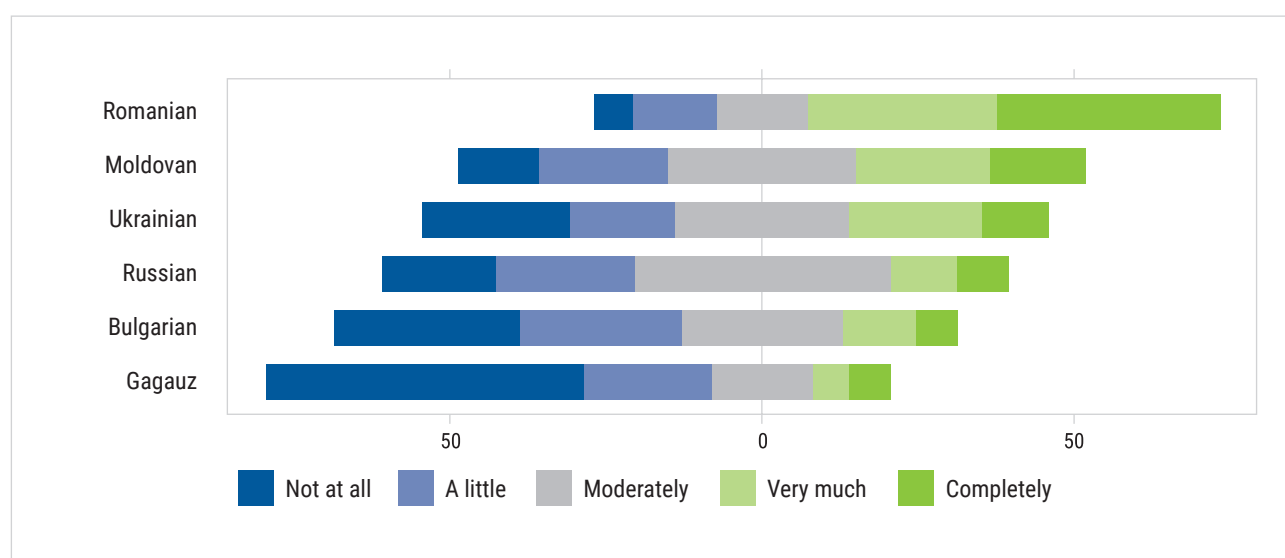
The survey included a set of questions addressing the feelings of young persons about being citizens of Moldova, as belonging to their region, community, or ethnic group, or as being citizens of the world, or European. The distribution of the general answers to these questions makes for very interesting reading. Looking within Moldova's framework, feeling that one is a citizen of Moldova comes at the top of respondents' self-perception, followed

by feelings of belonging to own's region, then town/village, and then ethnic group (Figure 37). What is particularly interesting is the fact that more youngsters perceive themselves as citizens of the world than as Europeans. Only about 35% of respondents see themselves “very much” or “completely” as Europeans, which is the same proportion as those seeing themselves as “a little” European or “not at all” European.

As the European integration of Moldova is currently a more realistic perspective than it was a couple of years ago, it is useful to look more closely at the structure of answers to the question “Do you see yourself as European?”. The perceptions regarding European identity do not differ significantly by gender or age group. There is an interesting differentiation between rural and urban areas, with slightly more rural dwellers feeling European “very much” or “completely” compared to urban ones who are a bit more reticent. At the same time, there is a dramatic split on the

sentiment of being European by nationality (Figure 38). Those belonging to the Romanian nationality clearly see themselves as being Europeans. In the case of those who consider themselves Moldovans, the feeling of being European (“very much” or “completely”) marginally prevails over the feeling of not being European (“a little” or “not at all”). Other national groups are very much inclined to see themselves as “a little” or “not at all” European. These feelings are particularly strong among the Gagauz nationality, half of whom chose the “not at all” European option.

Figure 38.  
Distribution of feeling of being European by nationality, %



Of particular interest is the differentiation between the Romanian-speaking local population along nationality (Moldovans versus Romanians) and language (“Moldovan” versus Romanian) criteria. Along the nationality criteria, 6% of the surveyed Romanian-speaking youth identify themselves as Romanians, while 94% consider themselves Moldovans. Education level is, in this regard, an important element of differentiation: the higher the education level, the higher the share of youth perceiving themselves as Romanians.

Still, even in the case of Romanian-speaking youth with a high education background, only 9% see themselves as Romanians.

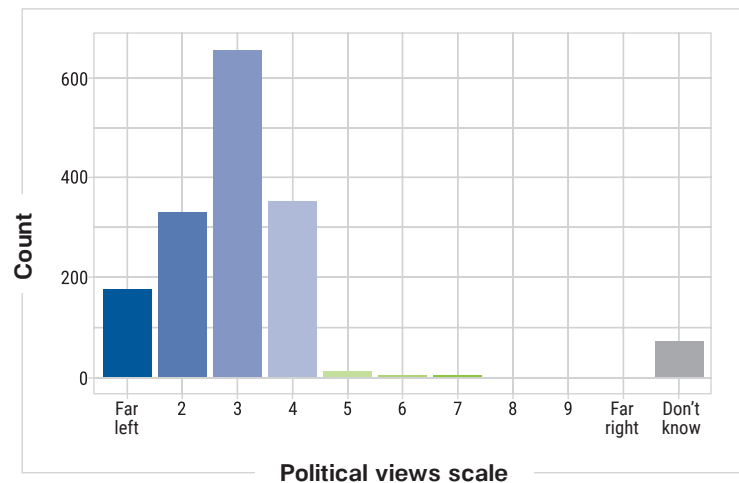
What about the “Moldovan”/Romanian language divide? Things are not that black and white in this regard. Only 35% of Moldovans selected “Moldovan” as their native language, while 51% selected the Romanian language as their native language. About 9% of Moldovans chose both “Moldovan” and Romanian as their native languages.

## Left or right?

The respondents were asked to position themselves on the political spectrum from far left (indexed to 1) to far right (indexed to 10). The views are clearly concentrated on the left half of the political scale (Figure 39).

However, the excessive concentration depicted in Figure 39 raises some doubts about whether the respondents have a coherent understanding of the left-to-right political spectrum.

Figure 39.  
Histogram of answers to the question “How would you place your own political views on this scale from left to right?”

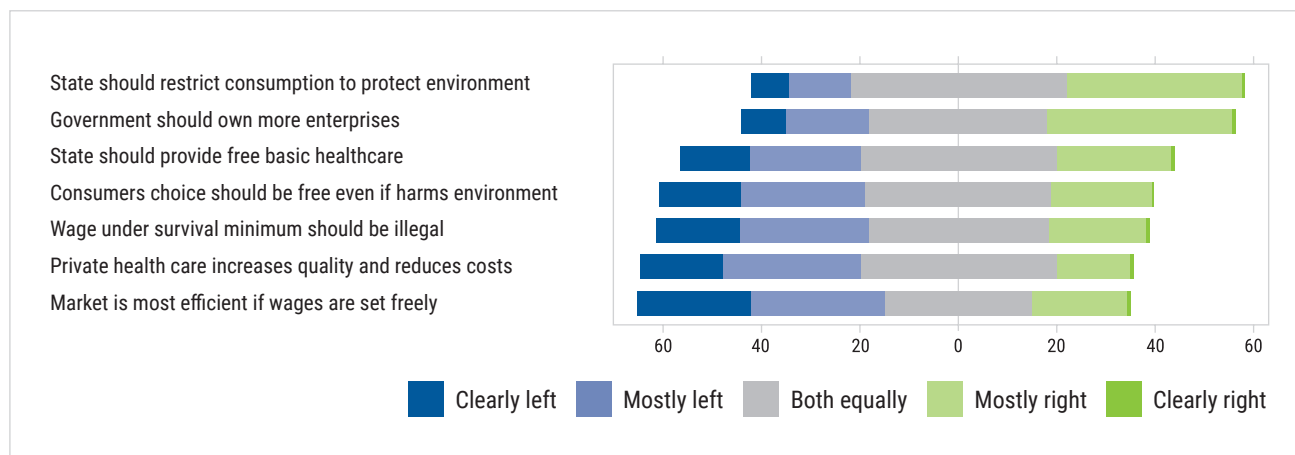


Substantial checks on understanding of the true meaning of, and of differences between, “left” and “right” political views can be done using the set of seven questions in the survey which asked respondents to classify basic ideological statements on a left to right political scale. Three of these statements are essentially “right”, while four are essentially “left”. However, most of the respondents were completely wrong when classifying these political statements (Figure 40). For instance, the statement “The state should restrict consumption if necessary to protect the environment” and “The government should own more enterprises” are leftist political ideas, while most of the respondents classified them as

rightist. In contrast, the ideas that “Markets are more efficient if entrepreneurs are allowed to set wages freely” and “Private health care can increase quality and reduce costs” are widely shared by right-wing political parties, whereas the majority of the respondents took them as leftist.

The “don’t know” answers have not been plotted in Figure 40, their share going from 4% in the case of the “governmental ownership of companies” question to 13% in the case of the “free consumer choice” question. The classification of the ideological statements by left-wing or right-wing does not become more accurate the higher the educational level of the respondents.

Figure 40.  
“Left or right?” Distribution of general answers to political statements



## Values in life

The survey data clearly show that contrary to prevailing social stereotypes, the life values of women (Figure 41) resemble very much those of men (Figure 42). Both attach great importance to personal and

social values, such as taking responsibility, being faithful to one’s partner, and being independent. Interestingly, eating healthily seems to be a little more important to the respondents than having a successful ca-

reer. Getting rich and having children are given the same importance for both genders, albeit these appear to be seen as a bit less important than looking good and

engaging in sports. What is striking in both cases is the low importance both men and women attach to being active in politics and participating in civic actions.

Figure 41.

**Distribution of women's answers to the questions "How important it is to...?"**

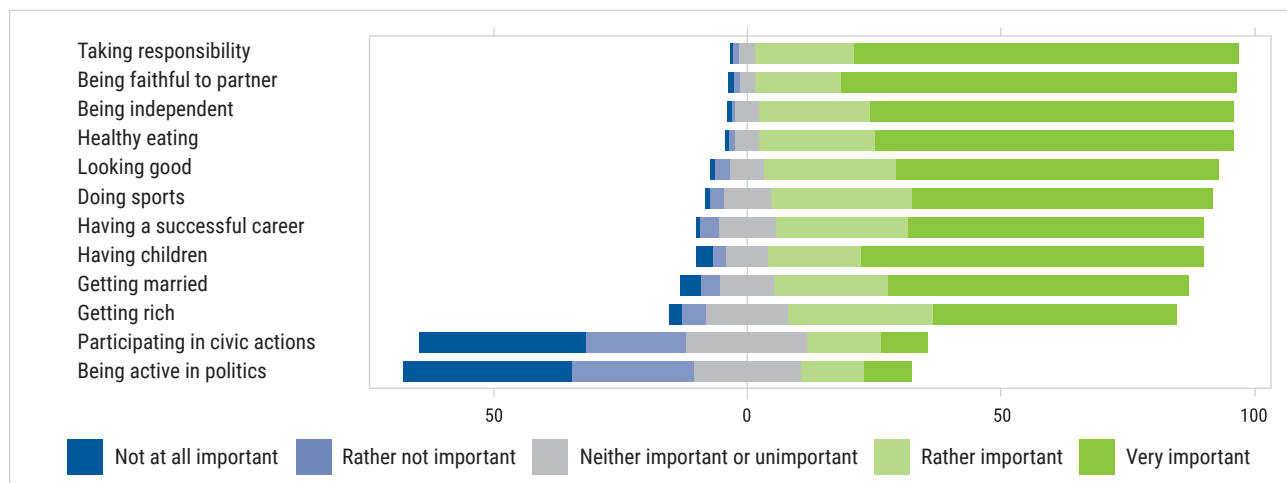
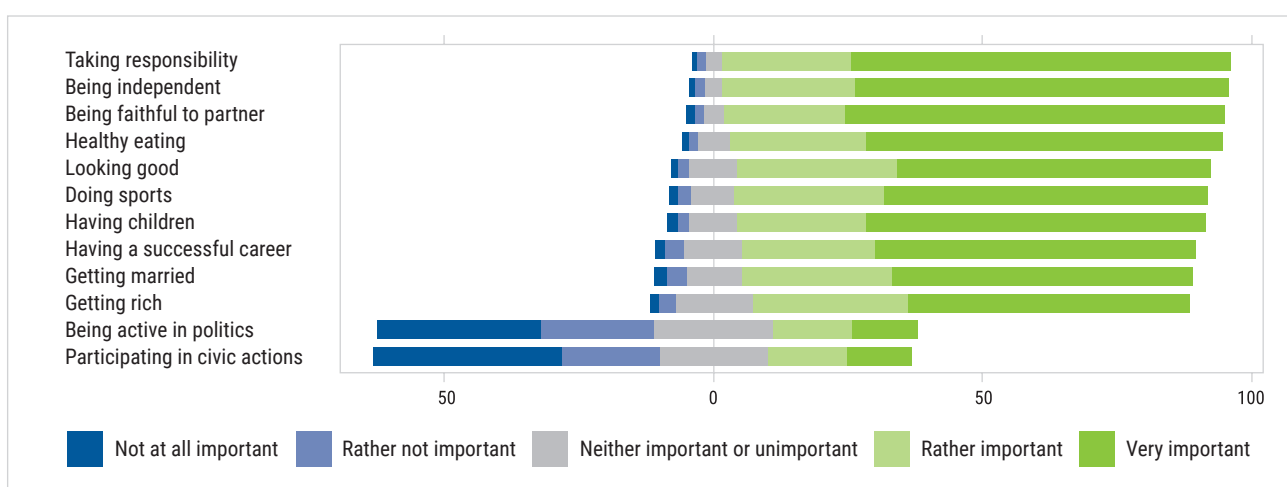


Figure 42.

**Distribution of men's answers to the questions "How important it is to...?"**



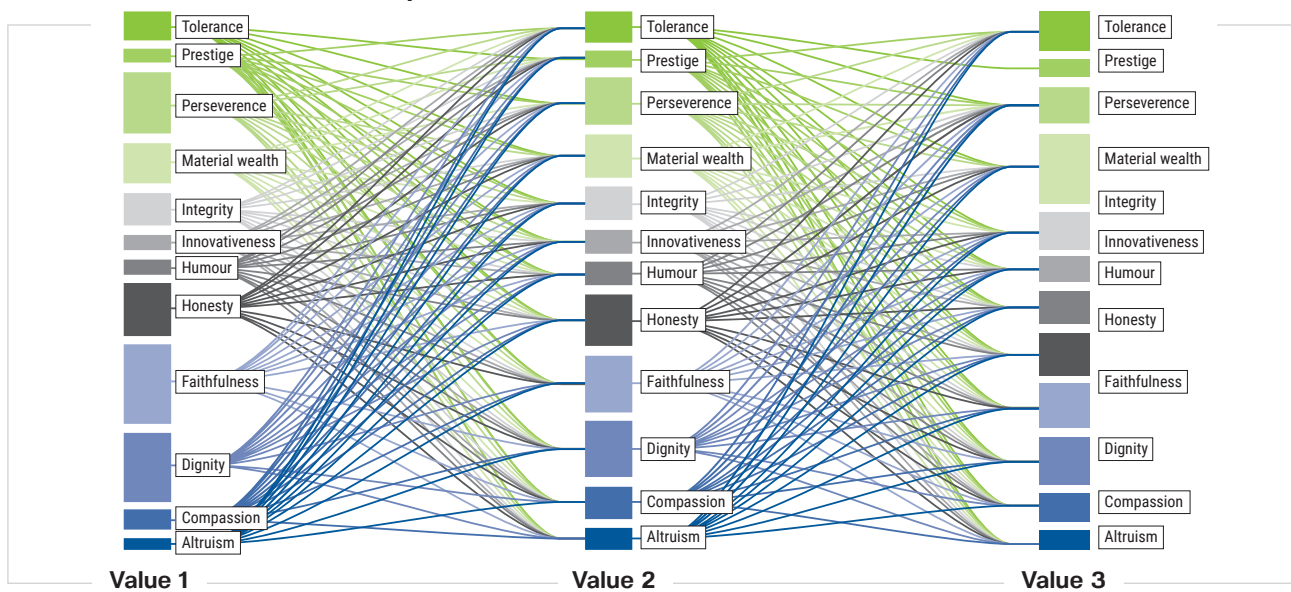
The importance given to the values varies by different criteria. For instance, in the case of rural inhabitants, "healthy eating" comes second, and "being faithful to one's partner" comes only fourth. For urban dwellers, "becoming independent" is slightly more important than "being faithful".

The respondents were also asked to select the first, second, and third most important values for them out of a set of 12 values, including dignity, prestige, altruism, material wealth, tolerance, a fighting spirit, correctness, honesty, innovativeness, solidarity, humour, and faithfulness. These values are interrelated and flow from each other, which

makes it a bit difficult to visualize them in their entirety. A useful way of comprehending the links between the first, second, and third most important values is to use a so-called Sankey diagram (Figure 43). As it can be seen, "faithfulness" is seen as the most important value and those selecting this option tend to choose "honesty" and "dignity" as their second most important value and then to choose "material wealth" as their third most important value. "Altruism", "humour", "innovativeness" and "prestige" receive the fewest votes as being the most important value, with "humour" seen as more significant, being viewed as the third most important value.

Figure 43.

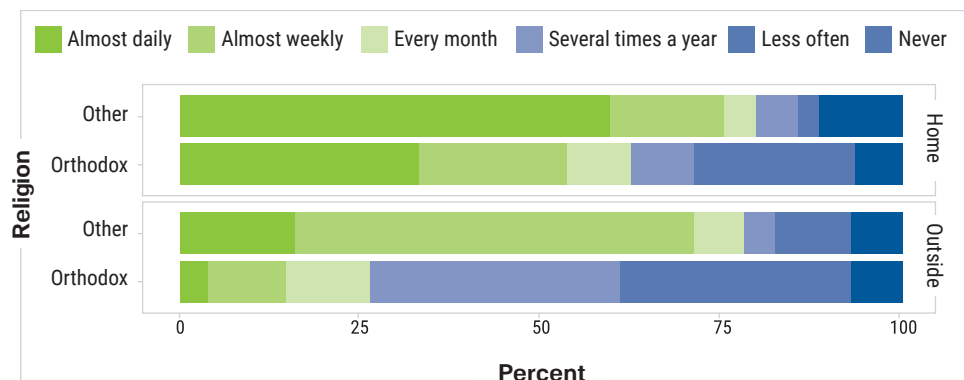
Sankey diagram of choices for most important value, second most important value, and third most important value



From the data, religion appears to play an important role in the life of Moldovan young people. About 79.3% of respondents identify themselves as Orthodox, 5.2% profess other religions, while 15.5% report having no religion at all. The available data do not reveal the level of activity involved in professing the religion. However, judging by the reported frequency of praying at home and outside, it seems that people of both the Orthodox and other religions are more inclined to pray at home rather than in a place of worship outside (Figure 44). In addition, those of the Orthodox religion tend to report a significantly slower frequency of praying, both at home and outside, as compared to other religions. The answers are strongly correlated – those praying more often at home tend also to pray more often outside in places of worship.

Figure 44.

Reported frequency of praying by religion and place of worship, %



## Experience of being discriminated against

Contrary to what may prevail in social perceptions, the respondents taking part in the survey do not report a very high incidence of experiences of being discriminated against on any grounds (Figure 45). The economic background seems to be the main ground on which 1% of respondents report being discriminated against "very often" and 4% being discriminated against "often". More than 85% report "never" and 7% report "rarely" being discriminated against on the basis of religion. In the case of gender-based discrimination,

85% report "never" and 6% report "rarely" experiencing this.

However, these general perceptions may appear quite different if we zoom in a bit on the data. For instance, Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses tend to more often report instances of discrimination. However, their numbers in the survey are so small that it is not possible to infer any systemic issues of discrimination.

Women tend to report experiencing gen-

der-based discrimination more often than men (Table 3). 81% of women report never being discriminated against because of being a woman, which means, however, that every fifth woman has at least sometimes encountered instances of discrimination. However, Table 3 does not reveal significant gender differences in experiences of being discriminated against on economic grounds.

At the same time, there is a clear pattern of discrimination based on economic background when considering this experience by groups with different levels of material wellbeing (Table 4). Youth from more financially vulnerable groups tend to feel more often discriminated against based on their economic background.

Figure 45.  
Distribution of general answers to the question “How often have you been discriminated against on one of the following grounds?”, %

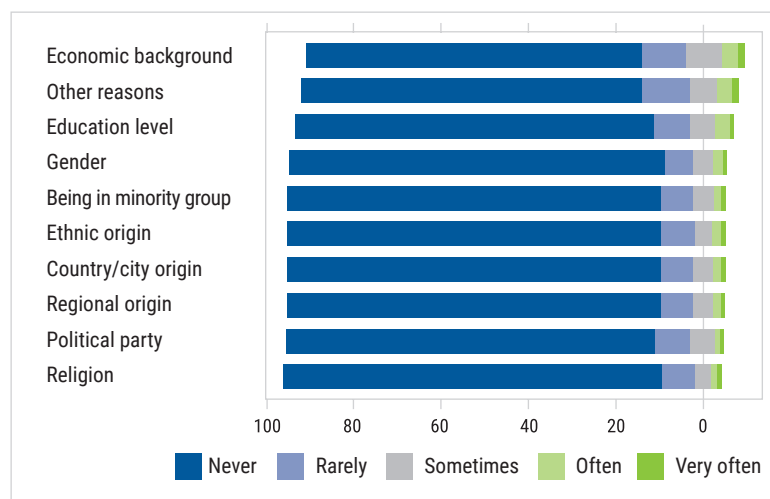


Table 3.  
Distribution of answers to the question “How often have you been discriminated against on one of the following grounds?” by gender, %

|            | Gender discrimination |      | Economic discrimination |      |
|------------|-----------------------|------|-------------------------|------|
|            | Women                 | Men  | Women                   | Men  |
| Very often | 1.1                   | 0.4  | 1.1                     | 1.1  |
| Often      | 2.4                   | 2.0  | 4.0                     | 4.0  |
| Sometimes  | 6.3                   | 3.0  | 8.8                     | 7.5  |
| Rarely     | 7.7                   | 5.2  | 7.8                     | 10.9 |
| Never      | 81.3                  | 88.5 | 77.2                    | 75.4 |
| Don't know | 1.3                   | 1.0  | 1.1                     | 1.1  |

Table 4.  
Distribution of answers to the question “How often have you been discriminated against based on economic background?” by level of material wellbeing, %

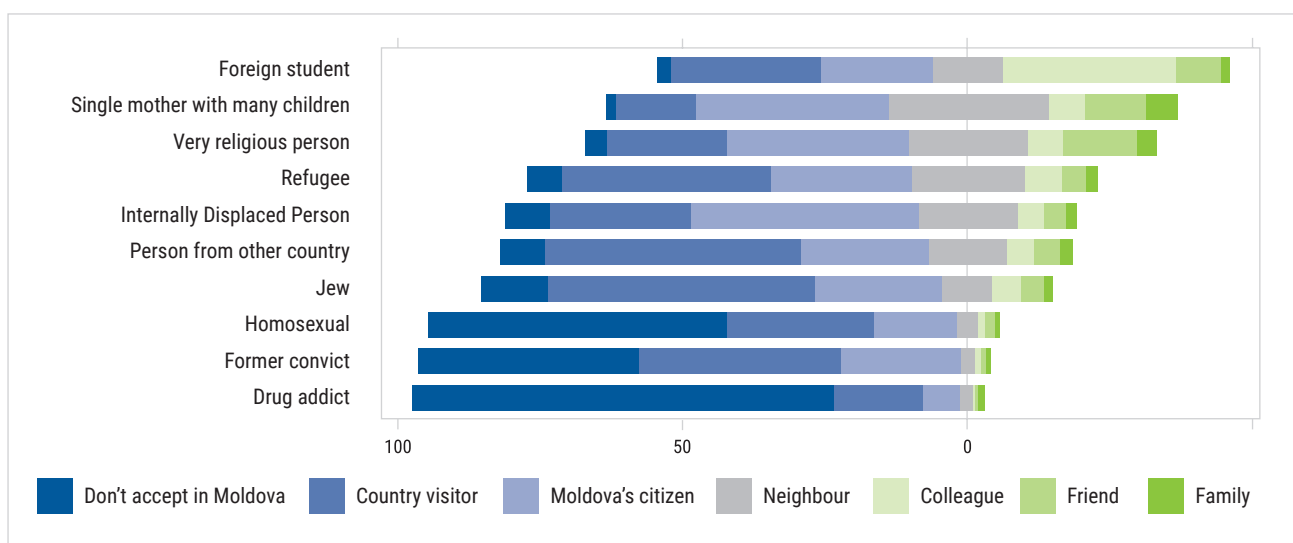
|            | Not enough money even for food | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | No material difficulties at all |
|------------|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------------------------|
| Very often | 5.6                            | 2.0  | 2.2  | 0.2  | 0.4  | 0.0  | 0.0                             |
| Often      | 11.2                           | 7.4  | 5.2  | 2.3  | 2.5  | 0.0  | 2.8                             |
| Sometimes  | 12.2                           | 11.3 | 11.3 | 5.7  | 6.8  | 5.2  | 7.0                             |
| Rarely     | 13.1                           | 11.7 | 6.9  | 7.0  | 12.8 | 8.7  | 1.4                             |
| Never      | 57.0                           | 66.2 | 73.6 | 84.4 | 76.5 | 82.6 | 87.3                            |
| Don't know | 0.9                            | 1.6  | 0.9  | 0.4  | 1.1  | 3.5  | 1.4                             |

## Social distance

Figure 46 reveals the respondents' preferred social distance vis-à-vis other people. In general, the level of tolerance is quite low, as revealed by the very low percentages of those willing to accept other people in their family or as friends. Some groups are rejected much more significantly than others. Foreign students seem to raise the least concerns for re-

spondents, as about 50% of the respondents report being ready to accept them at least as their neighbours. At the bottom are drug addicts, previously convicted persons, and homosexuals. For instance, more than 70% of respondents would not allow drug addicts even to enter Moldova and 50% would not allow homosexual people to enter Moldova.

Figure 46.  
Distribution of general answers to the question "In what capacities closest to you would you be willing to accept a ...?", %



The data reveal some important gender differences. For instance, men appear less tolerant than women in respect of homosexual persons: 54% of males would prohibit their entry into Moldova, compared to 46% in the case of females. In the case of former convicts, women tend to be less tolerant: 40% would prohibit them from entering Moldova, compared to 34% of men.

In addition, people who identify themselves as religious are less tolerant of drug addicts and homosexual people compared to those choosing the "none" option for religion. More than half of religious persons would prohibit homosexuals from entering Moldova, compared to one-third in the case of non-religious people.

In the case of drug addicts, their entry into Moldova would be prohibited by 73% of persons belonging to religions and by 63% of non-religious persons. Such differences between religious and non-religious persons are not manifested with respect to, say, internally displaced persons or single mothers with many children.

The dominant sources of information regarding the war in Ukraine may have a significant impact on respondents' preferred social distance. For instance, 12% of those using Russian sources would not allow refugees to enter Moldova, compared to 4% in the case of those using non-Russian sources.



## Chapter 7

# Feelings regarding climate change

*This chapter deals exclusively with respondents' stance on climate change. It starts by addressing how pressing youth believe global climate change to be. It then proceeds to an analysis of feelings about and knowledge of the causes of climate change. Being an existential issue for humanity, the subject is analysed from many relevant perspectives.*

## Context

While contributing very little to global emissions of greenhouse gases, Moldova is strongly affected by global climate change. In the last three decades, five severe episodes of droughts (1994, 2007, 2011, 2012, and 2015) have been ranked by the national meteorological authorities as extreme in their intensity and as catastrophic in their geographic coverage.<sup>6</sup>

These droughts have had a severe social and economic impact, as shown by the drought in 2007 which had dire consequences for the country's food security and caused direct economic costs of around 1 billion USD. Climate change directly translates into productivity and competitiveness losses, as the agricultural sector, which is highly exposed and highly vulnerable to global climate change, generates about 12% of GDP and employs, depending on the season, from 25% to 30% of the Moldovan population.

## Key findings

- *As part of an open question regarding key problems facing Moldova, climate change is clearly of no concern to the youth.*
- *At the same time, about three-quarters of the respondents acknowledge that climate change is a global emergency. University graduates and women are more inclined to consider climate change as an emergency.*
- *Fear and helplessness are the strongest feelings that climate change provokes among Moldovan youth, while indifference and rage are the feelings least often provoked. Rural inhabitants tend to be less fearful compared to urban ones and do not feel as helpless as people in the cities.*
- *The links between religiosity and feelings about climate change are complex. On the one hand, non-religious Moldovan youth are more fearful and feel more helpless compared to religious ones; they also nurture stronger sentiments of rage and hope. On the other hand, more religious people are more confident.*
- *At the same time, more religious people are clearly more inclined to distrust scientific evidence regarding the causes of climate change. Those preferring Russian sources of information are also significantly more inclined to consider climate change as a natural occurrence rather than a human-caused process.*

<sup>6</sup> State Hydrometeorological Service of the Republic of Moldova, "Risk of droughts in the Republic of Moldova", [http://www.meteo.md/index.php/ro/description\\_codes/hazards/8](http://www.meteo.md/index.php/ro/description_codes/hazards/8).

## How pressing is the problem of climate change?

Climate change is not perceived by Moldovan young people as being a significant problem for Moldova. Only one respondent out of the 1,609 taking part in the survey said that climate change is the number one problem facing Moldova, and only eight other respondents said that it is the number two problem facing the country. This lack of concern may be to some extent explained by the fact that few young people work in the agricultural sector, which is directly exposed to and vulnerable to climate change. In addition, climate change may add little to the already complex challenges that Moldovan youth encounter in their lives.

Still, about 75% of youth agree that climate change is a global emergency. Another 16% do not consider climate change to be a global emergency, while slightly less than 10% do not know if it is or not. More than 83% of those with higher education see climate change as a global emergency and thus clearly distance themselves from those with only primary and secondary education (71%). Quite interestingly, women are significantly more inclined to see climate change globally as an emergency

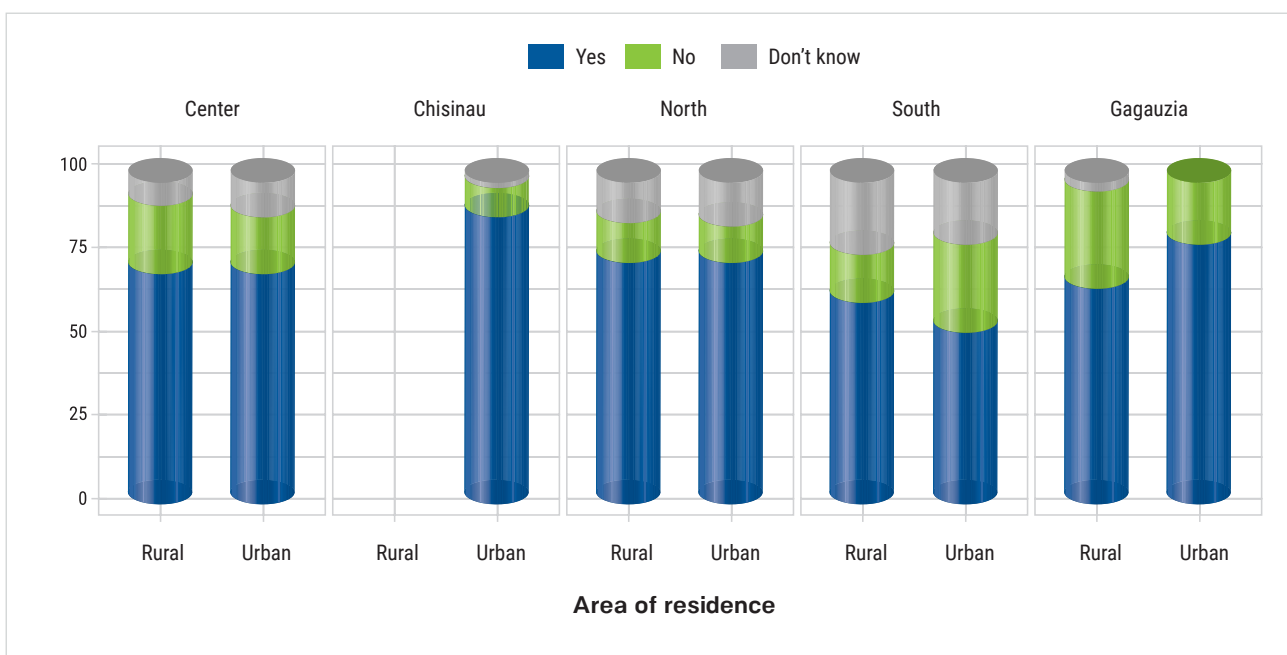
(78%), compared with men, who are a bit more sceptical (70%).

However, the most dramatic and intriguing difference is between rural and urban inhabitants. As agriculture is the key economic activity in rural areas and has suffered dramatic losses caused by droughts in the last three decades, it would be natural to expect villagers to be more aware and concerned about climate change. In stark contradiction to this hypothesis, relatively more urban dwellers consider climate change to be a global issue (80%, compared to 70% in rural areas). The share of “don't know” responses is also considerably higher in rural areas. It is troublesome to see the low level of awareness, or scepticism, regarding the global changes exactly in those regions of Moldova which have suffered the most because of drought – the South and Gagauzia (Figure 47).

Those employed in the agricultural sector are not more aware of the urgent and global character of climate change. True, in the survey there were very few subjects employed in agriculture (49 persons). Still, only 30 of them agree that climate change is a global emergency.

Figure 47.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Do you think climate change is a global emergency?” by areas of residence and region, %**



## How pressing is the problem of climate change?

The answers to the questions regarding respondents' feelings when they hear about global warming are quite mixed and are not necessarily fully consistent. Indeed, while feeling "helpless" is largely opposite to feeling "hope", while "fear" is in contrast to "confidence", about 5% of respondents reported feeling both fear and confidence, and about 8% reported feeling both helplessness and hope.

The distribution of answers is depicted in Figure 48, which shows that rural inhabitants tend to be less fearful as compared to urban ones regarding global climate change. They also do not feel as helpless as those in cities. At the same time, the sentiments of hope and rage are significantly more accentuated in urban areas compared to rural ones.

An interesting question is whether feelings related to climate change differ systematically depending on people's religiosity. One would, for instance, expect that more religious people would be more hopeful. In this regard, the data show a mixed pattern (Figure 49). Non-religious people are more fearful and

more helpless as compared to religious ones; at the same time, they also nurture stronger sentiments of rage and hope. Religious people are significantly more confident than non-religious people.

There is quite a broad range of opinions among respondents concerning the causes of climate change. 39% think that it is caused by human activity, while 36% believe that it is mainly caused by human activity but natural processes also play a role. About 7% think that climate change is taking place due to natural processes, while another 13% add to natural processes human activity as a secondary cause. It is useful to know more about these 20% of respondents who see natural processes as the only or primary cause of climate change (which is wrong). Gender is not a strong predicting factor; however, age is – the older respondents are, the less inclined they are to trust the science regarding the anthropogenic causes of climate change. In addition, climate sceptics in Moldova clearly tend to be more religious and to inform themselves mainly based on Russian sources.

Figure 48.

**Distribution of answers to the statement "When I hear about global warming and efforts to mitigate it, I mostly feel...", by areas of residence, %**

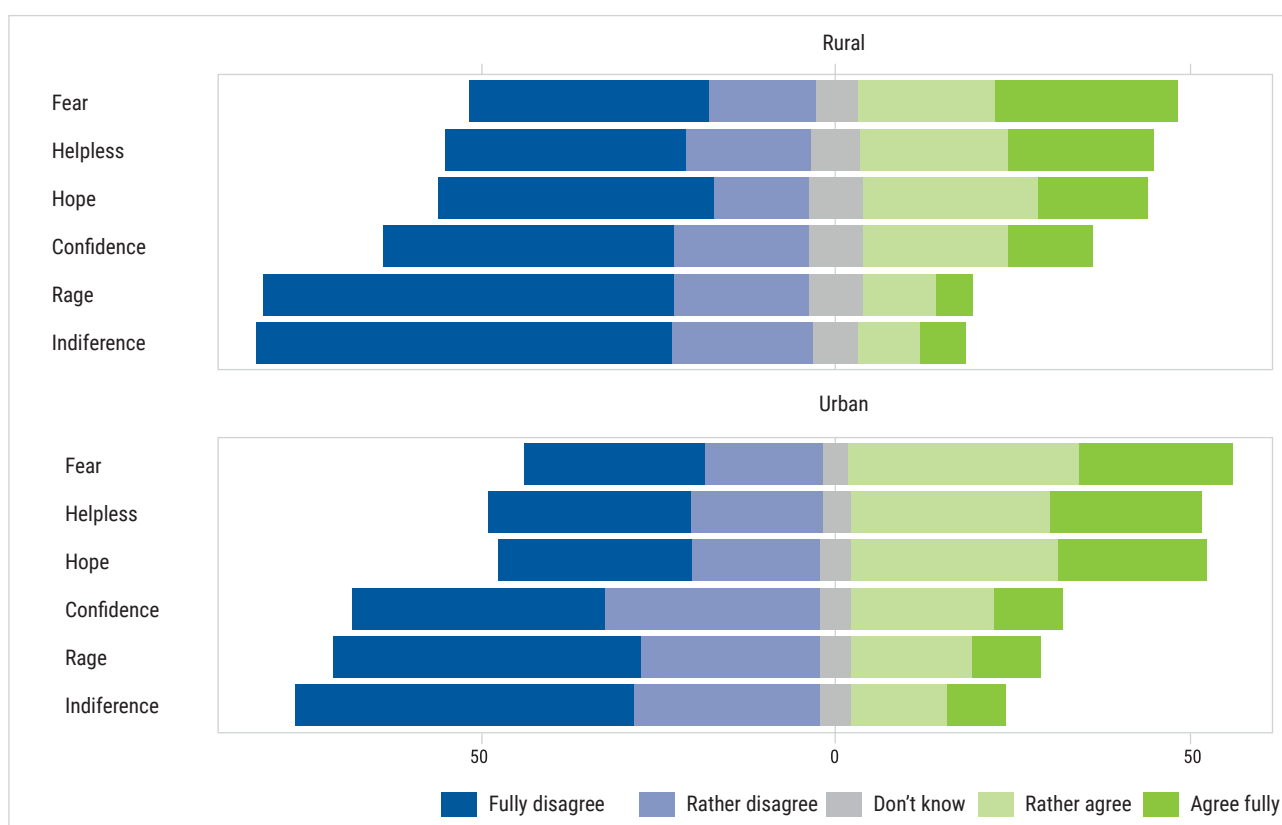
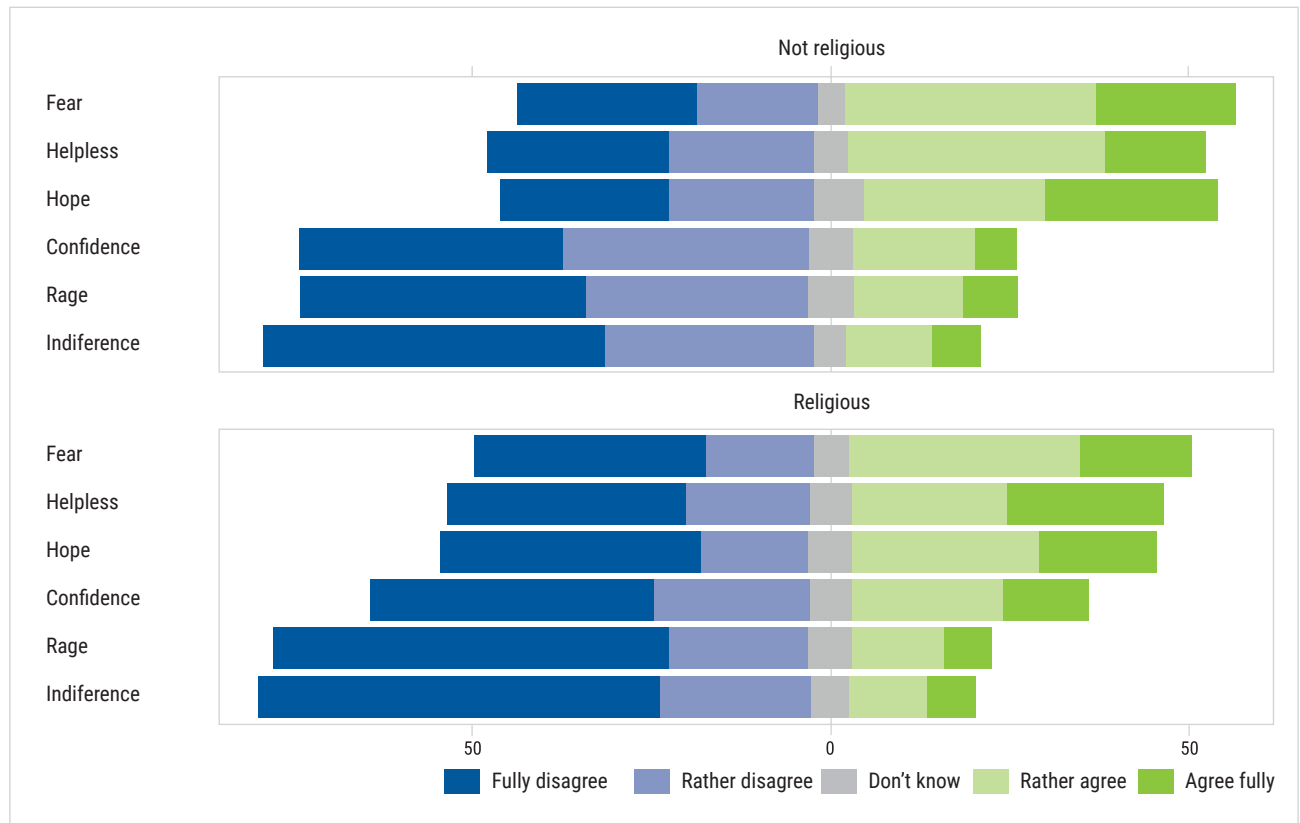


Figure 49.

**Distribution of answers to the statement “When I hear about global warming and efforts to mitigate it, I mostly feel...”, by religiosity, %**



## Chapter 8

# Aspirations, plans, and expectations

*Chapter eight begins by trying to understand how Moldovan youth view the future, in terms of the wellbeing of their families and of their country. Then it deals with their plans concerning family and children. The chapter ends with an analysis of the migration aspirations of Moldovan youth, including reasons for migrating, preferred length of stay and preferred destination countries.*

### Context

After the Russian financial crisis in 1998, labour migration gradually turned into a defining phenomenon for Moldova's development. Over time, the median migrant has got younger, and until 2014 this was the most worrisome aspect of labour migration. Thereafter, the share of youth aged 15–29 out of the total cohort of labour migrants declined, from 35% in 2014 to 30% in 2022. This decline is a consequence of the declining share of youth in the total population, from 23% to 17%, over the same period. Still, as can be seen from these figures, those aged 15–29 are overrepresented in the migrant population, especially in the case of rural males – they represent 34% of all male migrants from the countryside while representing only less than 20% of the total rural male population<sup>7</sup>

Emigration, coupled with the more general demographic transition, has vast implications for fertility and, implicitly, family plans. Women's total fertility rate decreased from 2.0 in 1994 to 1.7 in 2021, while the average wage of birth-giving mothers increased from 25.0 years to 28.0 years in the same period. This means that women prefer to give birth to fewer children and to do so later in life.<sup>8</sup>

### Key findings

- *More than half of Moldovan respondents are rather optimistic about the living standards their families will enjoy in the next five years. However, less than one-third are optimistic about living standards in Moldova in general. Women from cities who are in the age segment of 20–24 years seem to be the most optimistic group with respect to both the prospects for their family and the country.*
- *About two-thirds of the surveyed youth do not have children, but among them, 66% are "certain" they will have children in the future, while 26% think they "probably" will have children. The average number of desired children is two.*
- *Among those not willing to have children in the future, the simple "don't want" argument is the dominant one. However, other reasons for not having children are that "children are expensive", they "don't like children", it is "too early", it would be "financially difficult", they have "no time", they are "not ready", and "sickness".*
- *The intention of migrating abroad is very strong, with 50% of the surveyed persons saying that they will "certainly" go abroad for study or work, and another 30% reporting they will "probably" do so. The intention of undertaking long-term migration (longer than one year) is prevalent. A key factor deterring people from undertaking long-term migration is having their own children, especially among young women.*
- *Geographic destinations of migration depend on nationality. Moldovans prefer Germany and Italy, Romanians would rather go to Italy and France, Russians would choose Germany and the USA, while for Gagauz, Bulgarians, and Ukrainians, Russia is the top preference.*
- *In the context of the war in Ukraine, only 17% of men and 3% of women said they would enrol in the army if Moldova was invaded. 43% and 49%, respectively, said they would leave Moldova in such a case. The "leave" sentiment is stronger the younger the respondents are and the better off their families.*

<sup>7</sup> Calculated by the author based on National Bureau of Statistics data from the Statbank database "Usual residence population", [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice\\_\\_POP010\\_\\_POPPro/POP010400rc/reg.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procese%20demografice__POP010__POPPro/POP010400rc/reg.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774) accessed 26 May 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Idem

## Visions of the future

About 58% of respondents expect that the standard of living their family will increase a little or a lot in the next five years, while around 15% are afraid that it will drop at least a little. Around 23% think that nothing will change. For the country in general, the balance of answers is rather negative: 29% are optimistic, but 33% are pessimistic, while around 32% expect no change at all.

In general, the respondents' beliefs regarding their family's situation in the next five years strongly correlate with their expectations regarding the country's situation over the same horizon. Those who are more hopeful about their own family's prospects tend also to be more optimistic about the country. Across all age groups, areas of residence, and genders, though, respondents are more optimistic regarding improvements in the standard of living of their family (Figure 50) than regarding the country in general (Figure 51). While in the

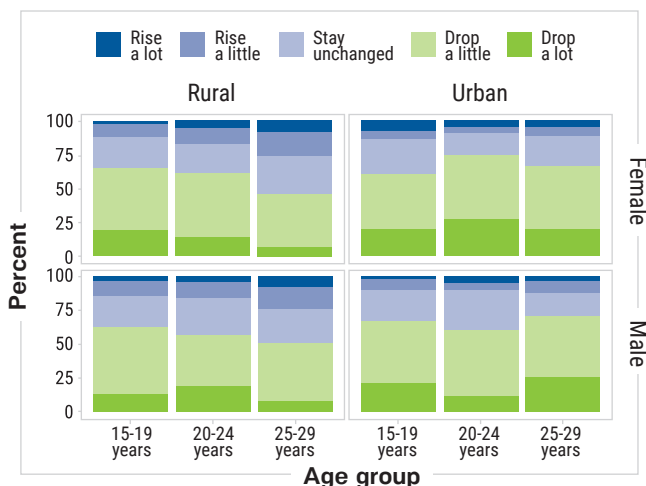
case of the family there are no statistically significant differences between men and women, in the case of the country, women are more optimistic than men.

Urban residents tend to be more optimistic about family prospects compared to rural residents. This is probably a reflection of the more vibrant economic life and labour market in cities compared to villages.

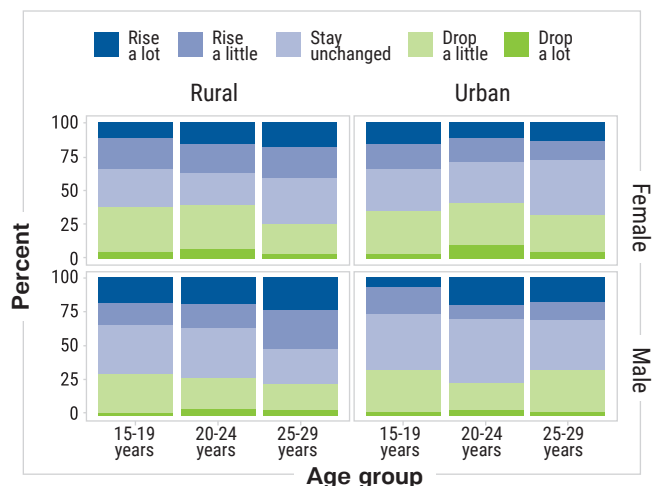
Age is by far the most important predictor of optimism, rather than gender or area of residence. More than 62% of youth aged 15–19 are optimistic about the standard of living of their family, compared to 60% in the case of those aged 20–24 and 54% of those aged 25–29.

Urban females aged 20–24 are by far the most optimistic group with respect to the prospects of both family and country over a five-year period.

**Figure 50.**  
Distribution of answers to the question “Do you think that in five years the standard of living of your family will...”, by area of residence, gender, and age group, %



**Figure 51.**  
Distribution of answers to the question “Do you think that in five years the standard of living of Moldova will...”, by area of residence, gender and age groups, %

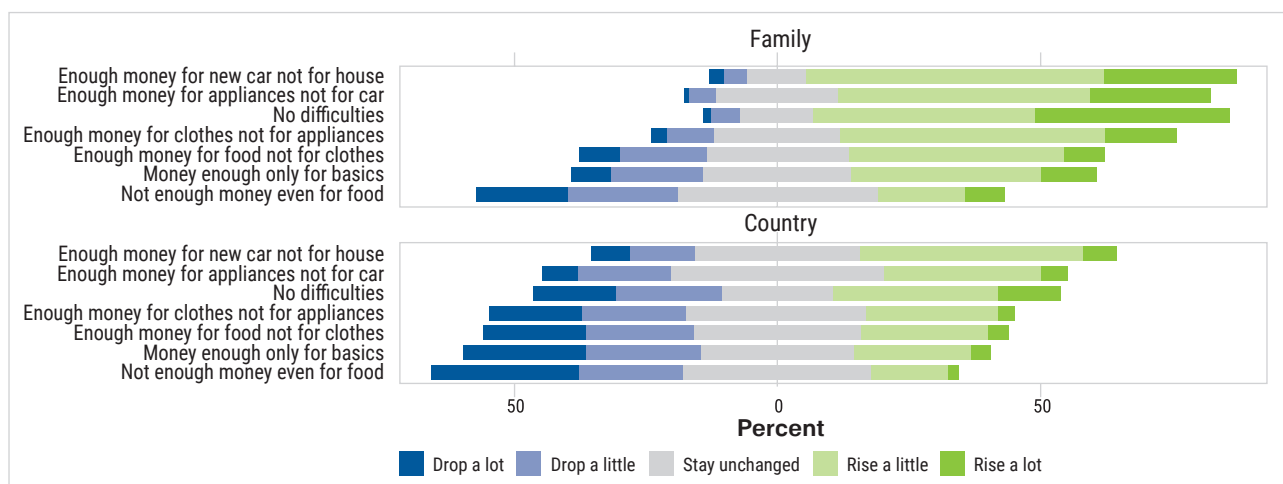


At the same time, the survey data clearly demonstrate the existence of a virtuous (or vicious, depending on the adopted perspective) link between a person's current and prospective wellbeing (Figure 52). In regard to views about the country's prospects, this link is less strong, but it is still quite clearly discernible. Families which are already better off expect their wellbeing to increase even more in the future, and they

also expect a brighter future for the country as a whole. The opposite applies in the case of the worst-off families. Youth from households that do not have enough money even for food are on balance very pessimistic about both their personal and the country's standard of living in the next five years. The bottom four groups are, on balance, negative about the standard of living in the country as a whole in the future.

Figure 52.

Distribution of answers to the question "Do you think that in five years the standard of living will...", by object of the question and household financial situation, %



## Family and children

Only 33% of the surveyed young people are married. The survey contained no clear-cut questions addressing family plans. However, the surveyed youth attach relatively high importance to getting married – among those who are not married, 28% consider getting married as something “rather important” and 49% as something “very important”.

Also, 34% of the surveyed youth have children, and most of them (82%) have them within a legally registered marriage. 66% of those who do not have children are “certain” they will have children in the future, while 26% will “probably” have children. The average number of desired children is two. Only about 6% of all respondents are rather certain they will not have children in the future. The data reveal

that more religious youth are more certain they will have children in the future (70%) as compared to non-religious youth (51%).

Among those who are not willing to have children in the future, the reasons for this decision were expressed in the form of free statements. The optimal way to visualize these reasons in a simple form is to use a word cloud. In the word cloud in Figure 53 the size of the words depends on their respective frequencies. The argument that they “don’t want” children is the central one; however, there are also other reasons for not having children, such as: “children are expensive”, they “don’t like children”, it is “too early”, it would be “financially difficult”, they have “no time”, they are “not ready”, “sickness”, and others.

Figure 53.

**Distribution of answers to the question “Do you think that in five years the standard of living of Moldova will...”, by area of residence, gender and age groups. %**





## Migration experience and migration plans

About 70% of the surveyed persons have been abroad and 29% of them have stayed abroad for more than six months. Of those with experience of being abroad for more than six months, work was the main reason for their being abroad (85%), while the rest went abroad for education reasons; in about half of the cases the stay was related to higher education.

The intention to go abroad in the future is very strong among Moldovan young people. More than 50% of the surveyed persons reported they will “certainly” go abroad for study or work, while another 30% will “probably” go. Only 10% are certain they will not go abroad in the future for any of these rea-

sons. Differences by gender, region, and area of residence, while they exist, are milder compared to differences by age group (Figure 54) and compared to differences by the financial situation (Figure 55). Those in the 15–19 years bracket are about 10 percentage points more positive that they will go abroad compared to those aged 20–24, and almost 20 percentage points more positive compared to the upper 25–29 years cohort. At the same time, the poorer the household, the less likely are its young members to express willingness to migrate soon. Those in the worst-off group are particularly negative about migration intentions – which may reflect that the costs of migrating are unaffordable for them.

Figure 54.  
Distribution of answers to the question “Would you like to go abroad to study or work?” by age group, %

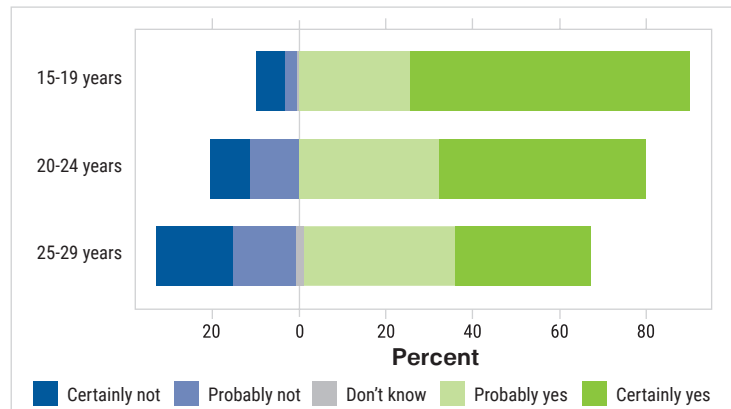
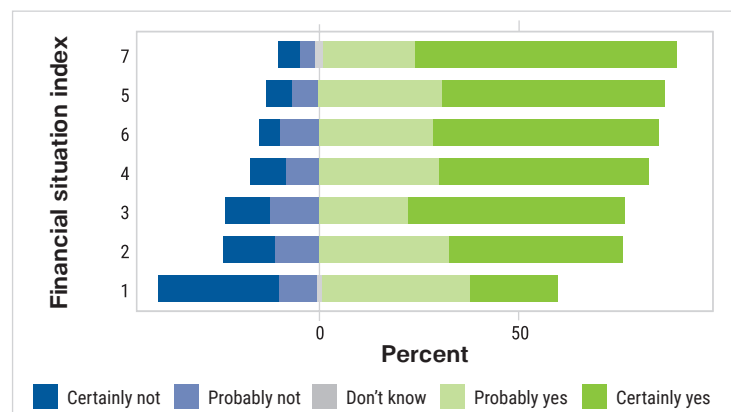


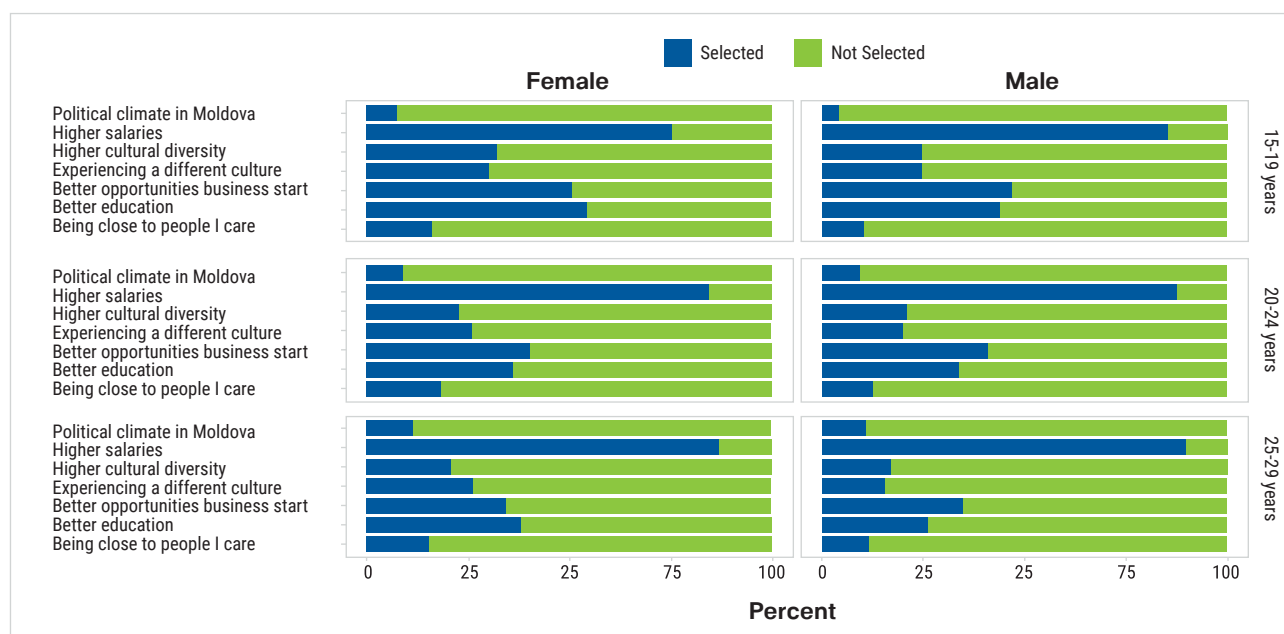
Figure 55.  
Distribution of answers to the question “Would you like to go abroad to study or work?” financial situation, %



By far the main reason for moving abroad is the pragmatic aim of receiving higher wages (Figure 56). More than 85% of all respondents selected this reason; men are more inclined than women to go abroad for this reason, and older respondents are more inclined to select it as compared to younger respondents. Ambitions of more medium-term nature – such as receiving a better education or starting one’s own business abroad – come second

(reported by 39% and 41% of respondents, respectively) and they are more prominent for the younger cohorts. Experiencing a different culture and a higher cultural diversity are not that important for the respondents, while the political climate in Moldova is barely a reason for moving abroad (selected by only 9% of all respondents and being a bit more important for older respondents than for younger ones).

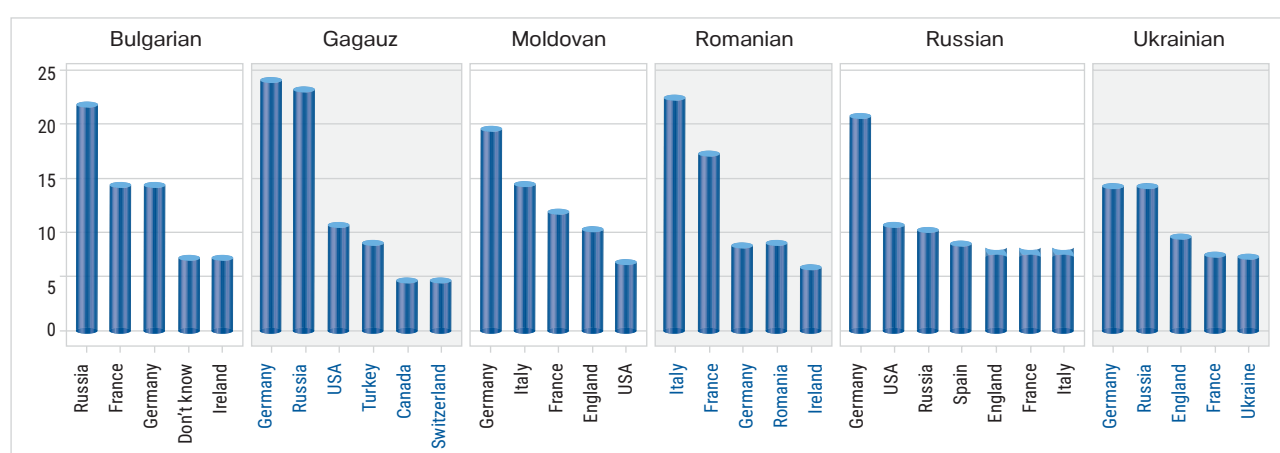
Figure 56.  
Reasons for moving abroad by gender and age group, %



The length of the intended stay abroad is an important dimension of future migration plans. Perpetual or long-term migration plans seem to prevail for would-be migrants. Half would go abroad for longer than one year. This includes around 19% of the surveyed youth who would consider leaving Moldova for good, another 10% who would do so for five to 10 years, and more than 19% who would do so for a period from one to five years. Gender differences are

not that significant in this respect, with both men and women considering rather long periods of staying abroad. Only 14% of those aged 15-19 consider periods of migration shorter than six months, compared to 23% in the case of those aged 20-24 and more than 26% of those aged 25-29. This is apparently because having children is a factor that significantly deters respondents from planning longer periods abroad, especially for women.

Figure 57.  
Top five preferred destination countries, by nationality, %



What countries would Moldovan youth like to go to? On aggregate, Germany, Italy, France, the UK, and the USA are the top five destination countries. However, the preferred destinations vary greatly by nationality (Figure 57). For Moldovans, Germany and Italy are the first two priorities, whereas for Romanians

it is Italy and France. In the case of Bulgarians and Gagauz, Russia is at the top, albeit Gagauz prefer Germany a bit more. For the Russian national group, Germany is the most attractive destination, whereas in the case of Ukrainians, Germany and Russia share the top two places.

## What if Moldova was attacked?

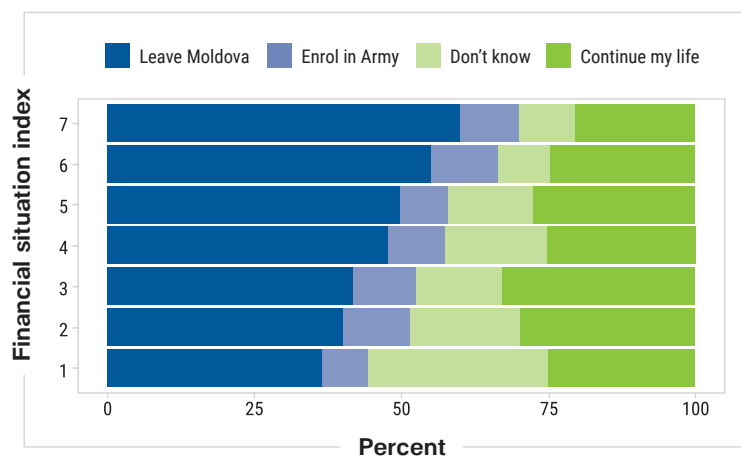
With the war in neighbouring Ukraine already lasting more than a year, the question in the heading above does not seem misplaced. If Moldova was invaded, only 17% of men and 3% of women say they would enrol in the army to defend the country, while 43% and 49%, respectively, say they would leave Moldova. About 24% and 30% hope they would be able to continue their lives. About 16–17% of each gender do not know what they would do in such a case.

There are significant variations in responses by age groups. For instance, 52% of those

aged 15–19, 45% of those aged 20–24, and 41% of those aged 25–29 would leave the country in the case of an attack.

However, the most surprising link is the one between the financial situation of the youth and their willingness to defend the country: the higher their financial wellbeing, the stronger respondents' inclination to leave Moldova in such a scenario (Figure 58). It is difficult to find an appropriate economic or sociological interpretation of this finding, which is nonetheless very significant in statistical terms.

**Figure 58**  
**Distribution of answers to the question “If Moldova was invaded, what would you most likely do?”, by financial situation index**

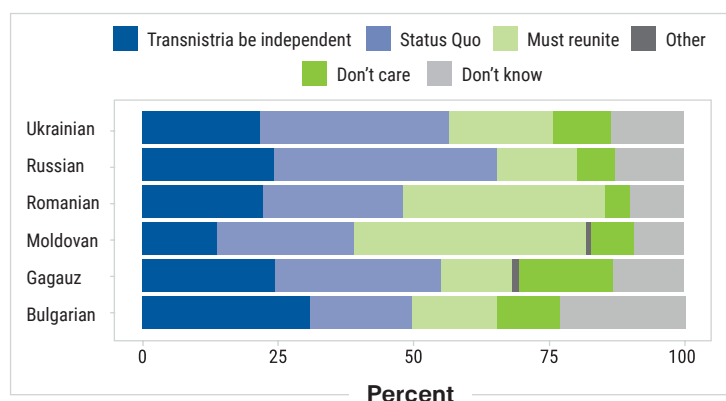


## Reintegration of the country

Most of the youth (39% of the total) consider that Moldova and the breakaway Transnistrian region should reintegrate, while 26% prefer the status quo. About 16% of the respondents believe that the region should get its independence. A significant share do not care about the future of reintegration (9%) or do not know what to answer (10%). Nationality is clearly an important factor shaping perceptions concerning future re-

lations between Transnistria and the rest of the country (Figure 59). Moldovans are the least inclined to allow the region's independence (14%), whereas in the case of other nationalities, the share goes above 20% and even above 30% in the case of Bulgarians. A majority of Russians and Ukrainians are in favour of the current status quo, while 44% of Moldovans believe that reintegration is the right solution.

**Figure 59.**  
**“What feelings do you have regarding the relationship of Moldova with the Transnistrian breakaway region?”, by nationality**



## Chapter 9

# Key conclusions

The 2022 Moldovan Youth Study uncovered a very diverse population of young people aged 15–29 years. They have different concerns, plans, attitudes, values, and expectations. However, two defining features of the Moldovan youth are 1) their alienation and 2) their polarization.

To begin with economic alienation, the survey found that a very high share of the surveyed youth are not in employment, education, or training, especially in rural areas. This may be a result of many causes, such as an undiversified economic base, the negative impact of the migrant remittances on willingness to work, and the limited territorial mobility of the labour force. While there are clearly mismatches between the level of education received and qualifications required on the labour market, Moldovan youth do not want to work for the prevailing level of wages, while employers probably consider the wage expectations of youth to be exaggerated as compared to productivity. As evidenced by the survey data, poor wage prospects at home may be the key factor explaining the very high share of young people who are willing to leave Moldova for long periods of time, or even for good.

At the same time, an absolute majority of the surveyed young people do not feel that their concerns and interests are adequately represented within the national political agenda. This might combine with economic disappointment to produce very high levels of electoral absenteeism among youth. This may also be the chief explanation behind the rather chilly welcome young people have given to the news of Moldova receiving the status of candidate country for EU accession. Many of them probably do not yet see a direct link between Moldova's European trajectory and young people's prospects as regards personal growth and wellbeing.

There are also clear indications that youth in Moldova are disconnected from global concerns, such as climate change. Even though Moldova is directly exposed and highly vulnerable to the consequences of global climate change, climate change is clearly not considered by young Moldovans as posing significant problems for Moldova. Moreover, a high proportion of the youth do not believe the scientific evidence and consider climate change to be a natural process, rather a man-made challenge.

Here, polarization comes into the picture. With a violent war taking place for more than one year in neighbouring Ukraine, almost half of the respondents either do not know how to categorize this war, do not care about it, or consider it is a justified special military operation or a war between Russia and NATO. This is in stark opposition to the other half, who consider that what is happening in Ukraine is an unprovoked and unjust war by the Russian Federation. Similar indicators of a fracturing of the youth population of Moldova are evident in relation to many other issues – such as COVID-19, the dissolution of the USSR, the impact of the 1990s, foreign policy, and the treatment of minority groups.

The ultimate factor explaining the polarization of Moldova's youth is its vulnerability to the influence of propaganda. This is especially the case for youth living in Gagauzia, Taraclia, and Balti, regions that seem to exist in a completely different information universe than the rest of Moldova. Unaddressed, this poses significant risks for Moldova's cohesion and long-term security as a state.

## Considering the findings from the survey, several policy recommendations seem relevant:

- Economic insertion of youth should represent a core priority of public policy in Moldova. Public policies should support both those seeking jobs and those seeking entrepreneurial opportunities. In fact, considering the socioeconomic and political implications, the latter may be more important in the long-term compared to the classical forms of employment support.
- Youth should be stirred away from informal occupations and encouraged to pursue formal ways of economic life. This involves higher individual costs in the short-term (taxes, mandatory contributions) but improve personal wellbeing in the long-run (through higher pensions). The Government should also support the financial education of the youth.
- It is crucially important to achieve a better alignment of the supply of the educational sector with the labour market demand. This refers both to quality of the initial training provided (relevance of skills) and to the structural alignment (specializations and professional tracks).
- Schools, NGOs and youth centres should provide more structured opportunities for a true manifestation of the voluntary initiatives of young people. Pupils and students should be encouraged rather than forced to identify the needs of others and to get involved in the community initiatives addressing these needs.
- At the same time, it would be warranted for political parties, in addition to the classical political work they do with young people (debates, educational meetings), to get more involved in community work at the grass-roots level.
- Moreover, political parties have to review and align their political offers so to achieve a better representation of the aspirations and concerns of young people. It will be very difficult to increase youth political participation without giving the youth a higher stake in the political process.
- In this regard, it is very important that political parties to function as melting pots in which youth of different ethnic backgrounds come together, allowing them to cross ethnic and regional differences.
- Finally, all projects initiated by mass-media, schools, universities, NGOs that aim at shaping critical thinking and media education should be actively supported. Without this, youth in Moldova will remain very vulnerable to miss/disinformation regarding climate change, international order, human rights etc.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDIES ABOUT YOUTH:

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This publication is a part of the FES International Youth Studies. Starting in 2009 FES has conducted numerous Youth Studies around the globe. Since 2018, Youth Studies have focused 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 the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung in its endeavour to research, shape, and strengthen the democracy of the future. It strives to contribute to the European discourse on how young generations see the development of their societies as well as their personal future in a time of national and global transformation. The representative studies combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research in close partnership with the regional teams aiming a high standard in research and a sensitive handling of juvenile attitudes and expectations.

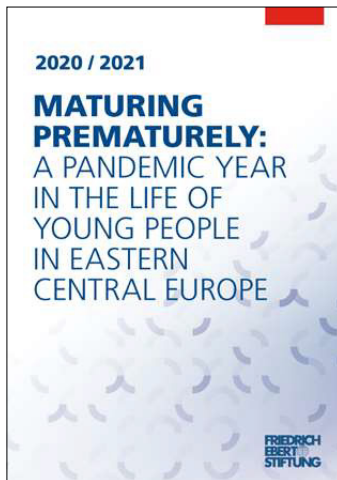
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## OTHER YOUTH STUDIES PUBLICATIONS



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, 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.



**AVAILABLE AT:**

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/18498.pdf>



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



**AVAILABLE AT:**

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