

Albania

*Albanian young people –
hostage to a never-ending transition*

2024










Edited by

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About FES Youth Studies

What are young people afraid of or hopeful about? In a rapidly changing world that is challenged by the climate crisis and inequalities, and in many parts aging societies and democratic decline, **FES Youth Studies** investigate how young generations perceive the development of their societies and their personal future. Our aim is to foster informed debate about young people's views on politics and democracy against the background of their life circumstances and values. This includes key issues such as education, employment and mobility, family and friends, and their overall attitudes and perceptions. We focus on young people aged 14 to 29 to understand their perspectives on these critical topics.

FES has conducted numerous youth studies around the world since 2009. In 2024, young people in Albania were surveyed along with youth in other Southeastern Europe and Central Eastern Europe countries.

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Executive Summary

The Albania Youth Survey 2024 reflects the continuous efforts of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) to follow personal values of young people in Albania and different aspects of how they perceive themselves and Albanian society. Albania has gone through a long and difficult transition since the fall of communism in the 1990s. There has not only been a political and economic transition but also a transition towards new social and moral values. All the Albanian young people interviewed here were born after the 1990s and thus none of them experienced the communist regime, except through the stories of their parents. As a result, their individual, social, professional, political and civic identities have been created during this long period of transition, and thus in many ways reflect its fluctuations and disappointments. The apathy they sometimes exhibit may be the result of their knowledge of how things are in the rest of Europe and other developed regions and states. It should be noted that Albanian society has been highly unequal throughout the harsh transitional period of chaotic capitalism, without clear rules and market competition. The social norms and values characteristic of this period have influenced young people's attitudes, opinions and perceptions. It might be said that young people's social status seems to be determined mainly by their financial circumstances rather than their work or contributions to the common good. A variety of factors are believed to be at the root of the phenomena we are concerned with in this report.

They influence the formation of youth values with regard to family, relationships and gender equality. The data also reveal that young people are exposed to violence and criminality, which often affect the quality of their lives significantly, not to mention their trust in institutions, especially the justice system. Nevertheless, they believe in their potential as an instrument of change within society, although hitherto it has remained at the level of self-awareness and has yet to be realised.

Albanian youth engagement and opinions as reflected in the Albania Youth Survey 2024 are driven by a variety of variables, including gender, social class and place of residence. Increasing knowledge of differences in their expectations, values and opportunities will help policymakers and other stakeholders to address them properly. Education is clearly one of the most important issues affecting Albanian young people. Under the conditions of a global market economy, in which having multiple skills is crucial and a flexible labour market is all pervasive, education is increasingly becoming a very valuable asset. This is especially relevant at present as young people are facing the challenges of the so-called "Fourth Industrial Revolution" or "Economy 4.0", driven by the innovations of information technology and the unpredictable impact of so-called "artificial intelligence" in many professions. Most young Albanians still see education abroad as their best option. Urgent action is therefore needed to boost quality education in Albania. Young Albanians are still possessed by a "migration rush", considering it the only option when it comes to entering the global labour market. Emigration is seen as an opportunity for young people. However, through appropriate financing schemes, the labour market in Albania can be revitalised. Among other things, remote working is increasing the possibility for flexible employment. Such a policy approach requires continuous upgrading of skills and qualifications, however, to respond to the needs of the domestic and global labour market.

It should be noted that young people's interest and participation in politics is a key driver of change. This includes their engagement in political parties as the main actors of a democratic system, regular participation in voting, and involvement in political accountability through forms of public pressure for good governance. All these are considered prerequisites for the health of a stable democracy and young people are the main beneficiaries in the long term. Through active participation and inclusion, young people may have a special role to play within society. As the history of political developments in Europe and the world has shown, especially in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, young people have been able to launch powerful movements. These have made it possible to change political systems and improve the model of accountability and political responsibility, even in consolidated democracies. The period of economic globalisation and rapid development in information technology since the 2000s has overturned political and geographical borders, which has made even Albanian young people less interested in the development of domestic politics. Such political indifference or apathy is related to the fact that they now have many opportunities to seek their social and economic fortunes in other countries. In this way, engagement and political activism to change the realities in the country they live in are no longer seen as primary opportunities or actions. On the other hand, increasing access to studying abroad, the liberalisation of the global labour market, as well as free movement at low cost have transformed the world into a large global village. Such variables have encouraged even Albanian young people to see continuous mobility from their country as a space of freedom and to leave political engagement to politicians.

However, beyond such attitudes, which are often impacted by the external environment, the political indifference or apathy of Albanian young people is also related to the disappointment and lack of trust in politics and political parties as able to change the reality within the country and meet their expectations. However, hope remains for the EU as a station at which they want to arrive, regardless of how long the journey takes. The data of the study show that young Albanians believe in Albania's prospective membership of the EU and use it as a tool of comparison regarding the quality of standards of democracy, rule of law and social justice in Albania. Such an approach increases the chances of accelerating the EU integration process, can push young people to take on a greater role as agents of change in society, and especially to make the political system more accountable and responsible.

Key Facts



Young people are ambivalent about the quality of their education and concerned about the level of corruption.

The majority of young people feel that the quality of the education on offer in Albania is either average or subpar. Two out of three Albanian young people strongly believe that one can get the desired grade or pass the exam through money and bribes.

In order to be employed as a young person in Albania you often need to have

- the right political connections;
- accept a job that is below your level of education;
- work in a field unconnected to your degree.

A nation on the run

- More than one-third of those surveyed harbour a strong desire to leave the country.
- More than one-fifth of those that wish to leave imagine doing so for good.
- The key push factor for migration is the desire to attain better living standards and higher salaries.

57%

of young people see the main concern as the number of skilled people who are leaving the country, while 56.3 per cent consider immigration as a major issue.





A positive parent-child relationship is a stable marker of family relationships in Albania.

Family remains an important support for Albanian young people, not just for economic reasons but also for healthy and positive relations; hence, family plays an important role in their decisions.

65%
of these young people affirmed that economic security and democracy are key, closely interlinked values.

The top two values for most young respondents are healthy eating and independence.

Eating healthily is a constant attitude that can be discerned in Albanian culture. Additionally, most young people would like to be independent. This can also be noted in their growing tendency to live on their own. It is also noteworthy that a slightly higher proportion of females than males consider independence to be important.

64%
of young people said that in the coming decades corruption will be a major concern.

Young people are against bribery, cheating on taxes and using connections to get things done.

More than half of the respondents expressed antipathy towards the idea of accepting or paying a bribe. Additionally, a considerable number of young respondents think that cheating on taxes or using connections to get things done are not decent behaviour.

54%
of the young Albanians interviewed said that they are not interested in politics.

1 ■ Introduction

Since the fall of communism, Albania has undergone numerous complex transformations that are hard to explain in terms of a single theoretical model. As a result of such a multifaceted process, in which democratisation and transition occur in combination with state-building efforts, as well as legal and institutional initiatives to join the European Union, Albania is extremely hard to read (Jano, 2008).

Albania's economic, political and social dynamics have exposed young people to a challenging environment that shapes their perceptions of their role in society. Many individuals often struggle to meet their basic needs, while a few are able to indulge in conspicuous consumption. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the decline in the birth rate has reached a record low over the past three decades or so in Albania (2024). The reasons for this are yet to be discovered.

Social status seems to be determined mainly on the basis of financial circumstances and not on real work or engagement in community life. This can only discourage young people from committing themselves wholeheartedly to anything. Organised crime and corruption have been around for so long that there is little trust in the justice system. Even though the justice system is undergoing drastic reforms there is no sound evidence that youth perceptions have changed. Furthermore, youth participation in the social and political life of the country remains at a very low level (Kamberi and Cela, 2019).

Albania has undertaken substantial educational reforms. Despite these positive developments, however, it is currently facing serious challenges. The enrolment of young people at different levels of the education system in the past five years is noticeably declining, and the number of those leaving the country to continue their studies abroad and who remain there is increasing every year (Sherifaj, 2023).

Physical and psychological violence continues to be a serious social concern. Even though various factors such as low economic level, a patriarchal mentality (Haarr and Dharmo, 2009) and unhealthy family relationships (INSTAT, 2019) are believed to be at the root of this phenomenon, its impact on the development of the young generation's values with regard to family, relationships and gender equality is not known.

Nevertheless, despite numerous obstacles, the new generation has a natural drive to bring about positive changes in society (Keating and Melis, 2022). The regular examination of youth perceptions of personal values and different aspects of their lives constitutes a positive initiative. Exploring the diversity of youth behaviours and opinions due to social factors such as gender, social class or place of residence would also increase our knowledge of social inequalities and help to address them properly.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) has been undertaking research studies on youth issues in Southeast Europe and Albania since 2011. The Albania Youth Survey 2024 is the fourth national survey conducted by FES. The study covers a wide range of youth attitudes and experiences in different realms of life. Among these are education, employment and mobility, political and social participation, family relationships and so-called "artificial intelligence". This study allows for longitudinal comparison with findings from earlier FES surveys conducted in Albania and other Balkan countries. The authors go beyond data interpretation and draw solid conclusions that imply concrete actions for both policymakers and civic society.

2. Methodology

Ipsos conducted a representative survey of 680 young people aged 14 to 29 in Albania from 9 February to 25 March 2024. Interviews were conducted with CAWI (computer-assisted web interviewing) and CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing) via the Ipsos Online Access Panel. It should be noted that the use of online access panels for CAWI is an accepted research methodology used by public and private research organisations with solid results. Due to the low coverage of online panels, a mixed-mode approach was chosen in Albania (35% CAWI, 65% CAPI), where the distribution of offline and online interviews was based on local recommendations and past studies among a similar target group. The survey aimed to gain insights into how Albanian adolescents and young adults perceive politics, democracy, social values and their role as agents of change. Specifically, this survey aimed to determine the contribution of young people to democratic development. It was based on previous FES youth surveys, which were conducted in the southeast Europe region in 2018/2019, in Russia in 2019/2020, in Central Europe and the Baltics in 2021, and in the south Caucasus region in 2022.

Through CAWI, the survey was implemented online, with administration being done via a web browser or mobile application. For the CAWI mode, the target audience was limited to people who had registered in an online access panel, were residents of Albania and had access to online services on a digital device at the time of the survey.

Access to respondents in CAWI mode took place through established online access panels. Meanwhile for CAPI, households were selected using a defined starting point (buildings of public importance) and equal steps of HH choice (urban and rural). Respondents within the households involved were selected according to quotas and if there were respondents 14–17 years of age (as required for the ten teenager modules), consent for participation was obtained from parents or legal guardians. The CAWI sample was drawn from the Ipsos Online Access Panels by quota selection according to age, gender and region. This central socio-demographic information had been pre-defined so that IPSP could directly target respondents via invitation email to achieve a representative distribution. All offline interviews were also based on a quota selection of respondents.

Ipsos Interactive Services (IIS), the specialist in international online surveys within Ipsos, was in charge of programming the questionnaire and monitoring the Ipsos Online Access Panels and developing a user-friendly and intuitive survey link. The program was based on the English version of the questionnaire and was tested by the Ipsos Public Affairs team. The English questionnaire was also translated into Albanian by a native speaker from Ipsos' in-house global translation team.



3 Basic demographic characteristics and trends

According to the Albanian National Institute of Statistics in 2022, young people (defined as those aged 15 to 29 years old) constituted 22 % of the total Albanian population, roughly distributed into three age groups (Labor Market Survey, 2022): those between the ages of 15 and 19 constitute 6 % of the total; those between 20 and 24 years of age constitute 8 %; and those between 25 and 29 years of age also constitute 8 %. More updated data are expected by the end of 2024 when the final results of the 2023 census are expected to be published. The total number of respondents in this survey was 680.

Urban/rural settings

The composition of the sample based on respondents' views on their living environment shows a prevalence of urban environments. People who are fully urban or mostly urban comprise a little over 55 %, with 39.2 % reported living in a rural or mostly rural area. Those reporting their area as something in between, often called a semi-urban environment, made up only 4.5 %.

Parents' education level

Parents' level of education is often an indicator of a family's aspirations with regard to children's desired educational level, as well as the socio-economic profile of the household.



Of the respondents, the mothers of about 9 % had not completed any level of formal education, 33.3 % had finished primary education, 25.5 % had finished vocational school, 11 % had finished general high school, 9 % had a BA and another 9.3 % had a post-graduate degree.

Very similar figures emerged for fathers' educational level: 9.7 % finished no formal education, followed by 31.7 % who finished primary school; 25.2 % finished vocational school, 14.5 % completed general high school, 7 % have a BA and 8.5 % a post-graduate degree.

Financial situation

The young people come from very different families regarding financial means and opportunities. A small number of young respondents (around 1.6 %) say that their family's income is not enough to cover basic needs and primary bills, followed by 7.7 % who say their family can afford food and electricity but struggle with other expenses, such as clothing. A large group belong to the middle class and say that they feel comfortable with everyday expenses, including clothes, but would face difficulties with larger expenses, such as household appliances. Another 27 % also belong to the comfortable middle class, who are able to cover all their expenses but who would still struggle with major purchases, such as buying an apartment or a car. Only 11.5 % say that their family can buy whatever they need and deem it necessary to have good living standards.

The figures seem to be close enough to other surveys with national sample sizes, such as the IRI poll conducted at the same time in spring 2024. In this poll, 12 % of respondents described the economic situation of their household as very bad, followed by 23 % who described it as somewhat bad. The majority (57 %) described it as somewhat good and 7 % said it was very good (IRI WB Poll, March 2024).

4. Young people and education

The Albanian education system has yet to overcome the isolationist legacy of the communist regime through innovation and exchange of expertise. Young people naturally have high demands in terms of quality and integrity, which clash with the often static reality they find in their schools and university. On the lookout for a different, practical and impactful education often leads young people to seek opportunities beyond the country's borders.

Current situation

Of those interviewed, 23.3% were attending high school, either general or vocational. Another 20.6% were attending university, 8.6% were already pursuing an MA or PhD degree and a small group of less than 4% was enrolled in some other form of educational programme or training. About 40% are not participating in any educational programme; this includes those who are working. However, a worrying 7% of those aged 14 to 19 also fall in this category.



Quality and integrity: continuous challenges in education

The majority of Albanian young people feel ambivalent about the quality of their education. The largest group, at 40%, would characterise its quality as just average. This majority is flanked on both sides by a sizable group: about 26% say they are completely or mostly dissatisfied, whereas 27.7% say they are mostly satisfied. Only 4% of young people, an almost negligible sum, say that they are fully satisfied. Among young people, dissatisfaction grows with time: those that reach university age express even more discontent as they experience more of the sector.

The quality of education is a very controversial topic in Albania, with social and political implications. As far as pre-university education is concerned, the results of the PISA exam,¹ administered to 15 year-old pupils in 2022, were deeply upsetting. Albania ranked 62 out of 80, and second last in the entire Western Balkans region (Monitor 2023, Pisa results), experiencing a serious decline in maths, reading and science.

Quality of education is also an important factor in weighing a move abroad. One-quarter of young people believe that it is the decisive reason for studying abroad. However, a large group (around 40.7%) would choose to study abroad because their chances of employability would be higher. Another 25% would study abroad because they believe a degree obtained in another country has more value than one obtained in Albania. Although value may mean different things to young people, it comprises the prestige, employability and transferability of a degree. A very minor group of young people, less than 5%, would study abroad because it would give them better research opportunities and the opportunity to participate in more academic activities.

In an effort to gauge their perceptions of the presence of corruption in education, young people were asked whether they agreed that sometimes grades or exams could be bought. It is worrying that most young people have a moderate

40 % of young people use the internet as part of their educational activities hardly or not at all

to strong perception of such forms of corruption. Less than 10 % would fully or moderately disagree with this statement. About 16 % say that they are uncertain, whereas more than 68 % would strongly or even fully agree with the statement, indicating high levels of distrust in the system. This means that two out of three Albanian young people strongly believe that it is possible to obtain the desired grade or pass an exam through bribery.

Moreover, there has been a steady increase in this perception since the previous national youth survey: the figure has risen from 45 % in 2015 (Kamberi, Cela and Pici, 2015: 77) and 54 % in 2019 (Kamberi and Cela 2019: 45).

Always, everywhere online

When it comes to using the internet as part of their education, 40 % of young people seem not to use it very much: they are either not using it at all or spending less than 15 minutes to quickly check things they need for school. However, this number potentially includes those that are already working and therefore would not need to use the internet for this purpose. In fact, when it comes to going online for work purposes, more than 20 % of people stay online for between two and five and even more than five hours. The same percentage – around one in five respondents – say that they stay online for educational tasks and learning for two to five hours or more than five hours.

Respondents evidently spend long periods online on social networks. More than one-third spend anywhere between 30 minutes to two hours and another third between two and five hours. A small group (5.5 %) spends even more than five hours online in social media. On any given day, three out four respondents will be on social networks for hours on end.

It does not seem that respondents spend time reading newspapers or online content. More than 74 % either spend no time or a maximum of 15 minutes per day doing so. Only about 19 % spend a sizable time, between 30 minutes and 2 hours in this kind of activity online, followed by an even more engaged group of 4 % who spend more.

Main takeaways

1. The majority of Albanian young people feel ambivalent about the quality of their education. 40 %, the largest group, would characterise its quality as average and more than a quarter are dissatisfied.

2. Young people would choose to move abroad and study because then their diploma would have more value in terms of employability.

3. The perception of corruption in the higher education system is very high. Two out of three Albanian young people strongly believe that one can get the desired grade or pass an exam through bribery.

4. Respondents spend a considerable length of time online on their social media platforms. More than one-third report being online for a minimum of two and often for longer than five hours per day.

Fig. 1 Views on corruption in education among youth in Albania (in %)

Do you agree that there are cases when grades and diplomas are "bought" at institutions/universities in Albania?

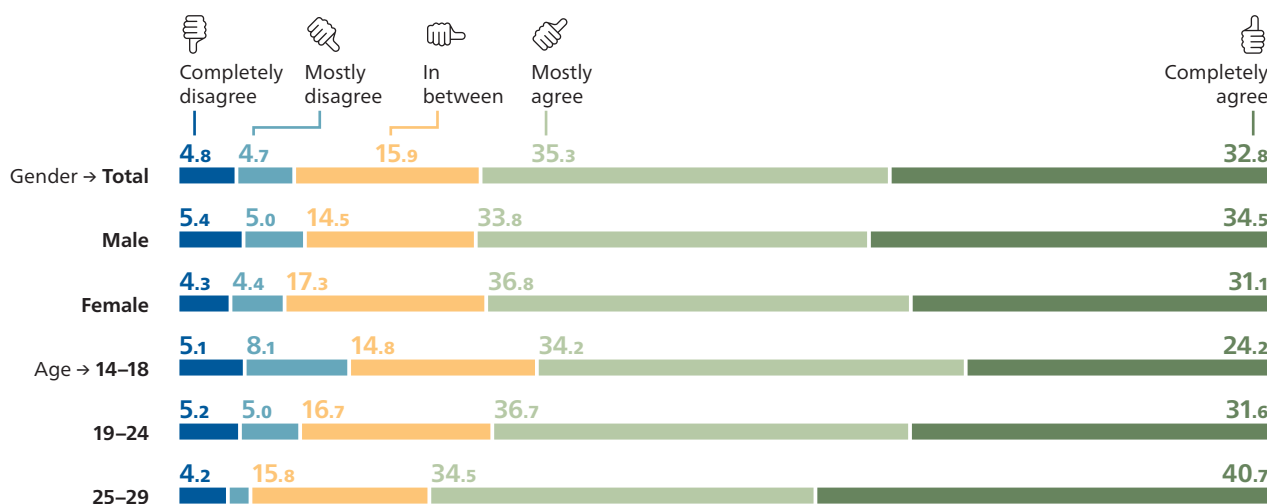


Fig. 2 Time spent online among youth in Albania (in %)

	For learning and school	For work tasks	Online news and content	Social networks
No time at all	36.5	49.4	40.2	5.0
Up to 30 minutes	12.8	11.3	34.5	12.8
30 minutes to 2 hours	27.1	14.0	19.0	36.8
2 to 5 hours	17.5	11.6	3.0	37.4
More than 5 hours	3.0	9.0	0.8	5.5

5. Employment

Youth unemployment in Albania at the end of 2023 was around 14.3%, according to the National Institute of Statistics, showing a steady increase since 2017 (INSTAT cited in Monitor, 2024). It is a curious phenomenon, given the increasing demand for labour, especially in tourism and services. It has generated a lively debate about the reasons why a sizable share of young people do not engage with the domestic labour market, preferring to seek job prospects abroad. Additionally, there is a budding phenomenon in Albania of recruiting foreign workers (BIRN, 2023), which will have social repercussions that need to be observed in the long term.

Employment status

The respondents were asked about their employment status. About 17% of respondents said they had a full-time contract and another 3.4% had a part-time contract. Another 13% had a temporary contract for a full-time position, followed by 2.7% who had a temporary contract for a part-time position. For 5.6% their employment comprised occasional jobs, whereas 7% were self-employed.

A very small number, about 2%, were in occupational training. Some 19% of young people asked were unemployed and actively seeking work. The largest group (24.4%) was neither unemployed nor looking for a job and includes those who are studying.

One key indicator is the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).² In the national labour market survey of 2022, the share of young people who were NEET aged 15 to 29 was 25.2%, much higher than the corresponding EU figure of 11.7% (NEET Position Albania, pp. 11–12).

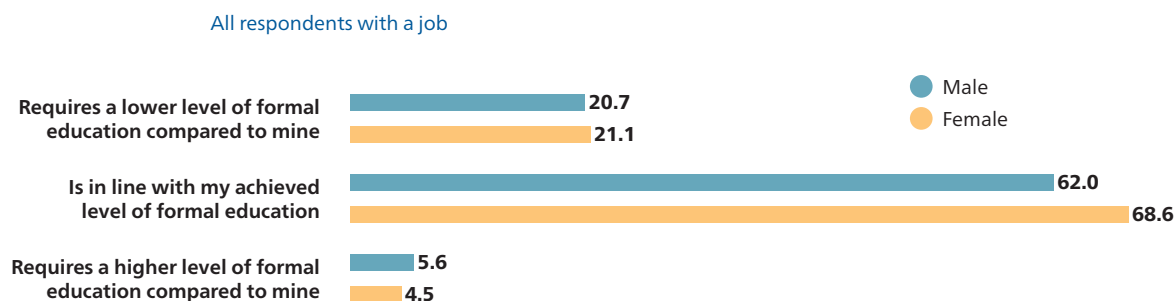
The respondents who answered that they were currently working were asked to define whether their job was in line with their educational background. Of those asked, 36.7% answered that they were working in a field matching their background and another 17.7% said their current job came close; 27.3% answered that they do not work within their field and 17% said they were not trained in any particular profession.

The relatively high number of those that indicate their current work does not match their profession – more than one-quarter – is an indicator of a mismatch of education with actual labour market needs. This is a persistent problem in Albania, where traditional degrees, such as in medicine and law, still exert a strong influence.

Additionally, to estimate the compatibility of their work with their overall education, respondents were asked to determine whether their current position was in line with the level of education and the degree they had obtained. A group of 21% said their job was beneath their acquired level of formal education. The majority of 65% said the job matched their level of education, whereas 5% said the job actually required a higher level of education than the one they had achieved. An additional 5% did not know how to answer the question.



Fig. 3 Current position and profession of youth in Albania (in %)



Factors involved in getting a job and reasons for refusing one

Finally, respondents were asked to express their opinion on factors important to searching for and finding a job. An overwhelming 40 % believe the most important factor is connections with those in power.

Experience from abroad is also very valuable. About 60 % of respondents say that it is mostly or very important. Party membership is also considered very important for about 45 % of those asked. Respondents also generally value expertise as a factor; however for 11 % this does not seem to matter and for another 23 % it is only an in-between factor.

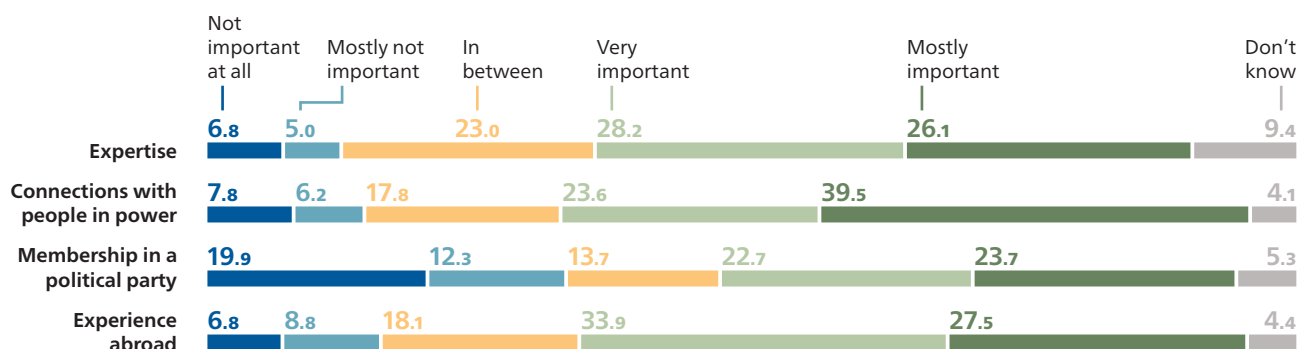
Compared with the previous survey (Kamberi and Cela, 2019: 57), there is a decrease in those pointing to connections to people in power as the key factor, from 57 % to 40 % whereas other factors such as party membership and experience from abroad stayed relatively steady.

Asked whether they think they would find a job within one year with an Albanian university degree and associated skills, young people showed varied levels of confidence. More than 37 % do not believe that would be the case, disagreeing with the statement. Another group of 23.7 % feels uncertain. About 28 % feel fairly confident that armed with an Albanian university degree they could find appropriate employment within the year. Overall, only one-quarter believe in the value of an Albanian diploma to guarantee them employment in the short to medium term.

Young people were asked to describe various reasons for refusing a job offer in Albania, in an attempt to gauge what is important for them when choosing a job. A majority (63 %) mentioned that wages would be the decisive factor: an inadequate wage would cause them to refuse a job. Another 20 % mentioned the importance of working conditions. Other elements, such as proper career advancement opportunities and a mismatch between educational background and specific job position are mentioned by smaller groups, 5.4 and 8.5 %, respectively.

Fig. 4 Important factors for finding a job according to youth in Albania (in %)

In your opinion, how important are the following factors for a young person to find a job in your country?



Main takeaways

1. 19% of young people asked are unemployed and actively seeking a job.
2. A considerable proportion of those who work do so either in a job which does not align with their profession (27.3%) or in a position below their attained level of education (21%), confirming how difficult it can be for the education sector to match labour market needs.
3. When it comes to finding a job, having connections to influential people beats expertise. However, having experience abroad is also considered a very powerful asset.
4. Wages and working conditions are key factors that young people consider when accepting or refusing a position.

6. Mobility

Albania is often ranked as among the top countries in the world when it comes to the relative size of its diaspora. Emigration is quite high and the extent to which young Albanians wish to leave the country is a topic of great interest and debate. The perceptions and plans of young people and their vision of the future have a deep impact on policies regulating the country's economic and social life.

Experience abroad

Respondents were asked whether they had been abroad as part of their education or training or for similar reasons. Only 5.5% had done so as part of their higher education and a small group of less than 3% as part of their secondary education. Other small groups, of 4.4% and 0.6%, had been abroad either for vocational training or other programmes. A sizable group (41.7%) had not been abroad yet but intended to do so in the future, whereas 43% said they did not intend to go abroad in the future. Some 46% of girls/women desired to move abroad compared with 36% of boys/men. A minority, 18%, had been abroad for longer than 6 months.



Desire and plans to leave

Regarding the strength of their desire to emigrate (to leave the country for longer than 6 months), young people gave a wide range of answers. Some 27% say they harbour no such desire and wish to remain in Albania and 8.1% have a weak desire. One-quarter have a moderate desire to leave, indicating some level of ambivalence over the concrete decision to move or to stay. The largest group, 35.5%, has either a strong or a very strong desire to emigrate. Indeed, Albania has the second-highest figure in the region, surpassed this year only by Northern Macedonia with 39%.

Compared with the previous youth study in Albania, the numbers have changed very little. There has been a very slight decrease in the numbers at the two extremes: those not planning to migrate decreased from 32 to 27% and those very much wishing to leave decreased from 43 to 36% (Kamberi and Cela, 2019: 37–38).

Taking into consideration only those expressing any level of desire to leave the country, the survey gauged their perceived readiness to leave. Among those who wish to leave, 11% imagine doing so within the next six months and 18% within two years. These groups are often those that are more likely to seek quick migration options and often make plans and preparations to do so. One-fifth of the sample (21%) imagined themselves leaving in the medium term, within five years. Around 13% said they had longer-term plans, imagining leaving in 10 years or later. Over 35% said they did not know when they would leave.

Another question was posed to determine the duration of the period to be spent abroad. More than one-fifth of the sample (22.7%) said they intended to move and stay abroad for good. Another 5.7% said they intended to stay more than 20 years. A group of 7% said they were looking to stay between 10 to 20 years, a long period. Some 10% said they wanted to stay five to ten years, 15.7% less than five years and 7.5% less than one year.

Fig. 5 **Desire to emigrate among youth in Albania (in %)**

How strong is your desire to move to another country for more than six months (emigrate)?

	Gender ↓		Age ↓			Education ↓		
	Male	Female	14–18	19–24	25–29	Low	Medium	High
I do not intend to emigrate	27.6	26.7	32.4	24.8	25.7	30.4	29.0	22.9
Weak	8.9	7.3	6.8	8.7	8.4	8.2	6.8	9.2
Moderate	25.5	27.4	18.7	28.7	29.9	20.0	25.2	32.5
Strong	21.5	16.6	23.1	20.1	14.7	20.8	20.7	16.1
Very strong	14.3	18.7	15.3	14.7	19.4	15.2	16.9	17.1

Again, respondents with the desire to leave were asked whether they had taken any steps to realise their desires. About 5.6% had contacted the relevant embassies of their target destinations and another 8% had contacted potential employers in those countries. A group of 7% had established contact with schools or universities they aimed to attend or to explore going to and a small 2.2% had already gotten scholarships. The largest group, 30%, had just kept in contact with friends or relatives abroad to obtain information. More than half, 54%, had not taken any steps so far.

The results of this youth survey are in line with other surveys in Albania with national samples. For example, a survey done in 2023 indicates that around 13% of respondents were preparing to leave the country within a year and that 32% said that if they emigrated it would be for good. About 70% would seriously consider leaving Albania if they are given a chance to do so (Balla, 2023: 8–9).

Finally, those who had expressed a desire to leave were asked about their reasons. The key reason for about 39% was to seek a better standard of living, followed by 21.6% who said that the main reason was to obtain a higher wage. For 7.4% the reason was to obtain a better quality education, whereas for 13.5% better employment possibilities were the key reason.

Very small groups said their reason was either to experience a different culture (1.8%), to be close to loved ones (3.7%), to be in a stable country (2.4%), to escape an unfavourable situation at home (1%) or to have higher chances of starting their own business (2.7%). Some 3% said the reason pushing them away from Albania was corruption and clientelism.

Asked specifically about the most important factors in leaving Albania in general (as compared with personal reasons), respondents indicated economic reasons. The low level of incomes came up first, given by 57% of respondents, followed by the high cost of living, mentioned by over 29%, again indicating precarity and a lack of opportunity to have a dignified life. After these two reasons small groups of people of around 5% each had noted the labour market shortages in the EU, which might act as pull factors, as well as peer pressure or ‘imitating others’.

Encouraging return and diaspora contribution

Asked to evaluate different ways in which the Albanian government can engage with the skilled and entrepreneurial young people that have left the country respondents agreed with several options put to them: around 14% said that the best way is to provide them with a short- or long-term diaspora grant for the high skilled;

Fig. 6 Measures taken to emigrate by youth in Albania (in %)

What have you done so far to leave the country?

	Gender ↓		14–18	Age ↓	
	Male	Female		19–24	25–29
Contacted the respective embassy of intended destination	4.4	6.8	4.5	4.8	7.1
Contacted potential employers	9.8	5.9	2.2	9.1	10.4
Contacted potential universities/schools	5.7	8.2	7.9	9.5	3.4
Secured a scholarship	3.6	0.7	–	4.9	0.7
Contacted friends/relatives	31.3	27.7	24.5	29.6	32.7
Nothing	51.4	56.5	69.1	49.7	48.3

another 24.2% opted for a policy of zero taxation for the first five years after someone’s return to Albania and finally 40.6% said that the best way was to support business ideas with state loans, which are generally more favourable than private credit. Smaller percentages of respondents, around 7.7%, mentioned other possible ways.

Main takeaways

1. The number of respondents with educational experience abroad, whether for high school or higher education programmes remains small at around 12%.

2. More than 40% of young people who have not been abroad yet want to do so in the future, particularly young women.

3. More than one-third of those surveyed harbour a strong desire to leave the country. Among those, 11% see themselves leaving within the next 6 months.

4. Albania is surpassed in the region only by North Macedonia in terms of having the largest percentage of young people with a prevailing desire to emigrate.

5. More than one-fifth of those who wish to leave imagine doing so for good, whereas 30% do not really know for how long they wish to remain away.

6. The key push factors for migration as perceived by young people are seeking better living standards and higher wages. Pull factors such as labour market needs in target countries do not gather as many mentions – only 5% see them as primary factors.

7. More than 28% of those wanting to leave do not see themselves coming back to Albania.

8. Supporting new businesses with state loans is the favoured option for getting the diaspora back to the country.

7. Family and plans for the future

The transition to adulthood is characterised by changes in relationships with family members, peers and romantic partners. Typically, relationships with peers and romantic partners take up more attention (Lindell and Campione-Barr, 2017), while those with family members become more flexible and less dependent (Aquilino, 2006). Peers and romantic partners can become a focal point for young people during the transition to adulthood (Guan and Fuligni, 2015). Nevertheless, it looks as if family members still play an important role in young people's lives during this process. Young people often remain financially dependent on their parents even into their twenties (Lindell and Campione-Barr, 2017).

Choosing a romantic partner who could be a life companion is another marker of the transition to adulthood. Although romantic love is very often referred to as an inner drive that sweeps people away, the selection of a partner certainly involves a fairly accurate cost/benefit analysis (Little, 2016). The selection process that young people make is often influenced by various sociological and cultural variables, such as income potential, education, and values, to maximise the relationship's benefits or emotional rewards (Little, 2016). The information presented in this chapter will shed light on Albanian young people's households and the selection of romantic partners.



Households

In a cumulative analysis of collected data, it seems that most young people in Albania live with at least one of their parents (65.8% with the mother and 59.9% with the father). Compared with the results of the FES youth study conducted by Kamberi and Cela in 2019, in which 82% of young people reported living with their parents, there has been a fall in the number of young people who make this choice. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the number of young people who live on their own (7%) compared with 2019 (1%) (Kamberi and Cela, 2019). Although the overall number is not large, the results suggest that over the past four years a tendency has evolved towards seeking an independent life. Based on the data collected, almost half of the respondents (48.7%) live with their siblings. This is especially the case within those 14–18 years of age (72.3%). The data are in line with the theoretical assumption that siblings are a valuable source of support and companionship to each other, particularly during teen years (Branje, van Lieshout, van Aken and Haselager, 2004).

The findings reveal that only a small number of young people live with their children (7%). It is notable, however, that more women (10.8%) than men (3.4%) live with their children. This may suggest that the former are closer to their children. Bearing in mind that such young couples' children are usually very young, this finding could be related to the cultural attitude that the mother is the most important primary caretaker for toddlers and preschool children (Dervishi, Sado and Spaho, 2013).

The main reason why young people live with their parents is because they find it to be the most simple and comfortable solution (62%). The data show a decline compared with 2019 (78%) (Kamberi and Cela, 2019). The second reason why they choose to live with their parents is their financial situation. It's important to note that young people are more worried about this today (25.8%) than in 2019 (17%) (Kamberi and Cela, 2019). A small percentage of the young people (7%) who participated in the survey declared that they would prefer to live on their own, but do not do so because their parents do not allow it.

Relationship with parents

Adolescence represents an adjustment period for teens during which parent–child relationships seek a new balance. The establishment of a positive relationship with parents appears to be important for young Albanians. Most stated that they get along very well with their parents (63.1%). A smaller percentage of young participants (32.6%) reported having a good relationship with their parents overall, but that sometimes they have differences of opinion. Only a small number of young people responded that they do not get along with their parents (2.1%) and some seem to have a very conflictual relationship with them (1.2%). But generally speaking, there seems to be a low rate of conflict between young people and their parents. Based on the results, it can be assumed that youth–parent relations have evolved in a more functional direction, with more space for youth autonomy and less inappropriate parental control (Panahi, Modarres and Areshtanab, 2023).

Current relationship status

Based on the data we gathered most respondents are single (74.8%) and a much lower number are married (11.5%). In addition, some are in relationships and live with their partners (5.6%), while some others are in a relationship but live separately (6.9%). Compared with the FES youth study conducted by Kamberi and Cela in 2019, there has been a decline in the number of young people who are single (86%) and an increase in the number who cohabit (1%) and of those who live separately (1%), while the number of young people who are married has remained almost the same (11%). This lends credence to the idea that young people’s tendency to be in a relationship but without the institutional and traditional trappings has slightly increased over the past four years. It is noteworthy that divorce is not a common concern among Albanian young people (0.3%). This result is in line with the finding that Albania has among the lowest divorce rates in Europe (European Union, 2021).

Reasons for choosing a partner

In the survey, young people were presented with various factors they might consider when choosing a romantic partner. Figure 7 shows that the most important factor is level of education (64.2%). Compared with the findings presented by Kamberi and Cela in 2019, there has been a slight decrease (70%) in the proportion who consider this factor relevant. Moreover, women/girls seem to put more weight on education (69.6%) than men/boys (58.9%).

The second most important factor when choosing a partner is family approval (59.7%). Although this remains valuable, it has fallen compared with four years ago (69%) (Kamberi and Cela, 2019). Family approval appears to be more important among young people with a low level of education (70.9%). It is also interesting that this factor is similarly important for both men/boys (58.1%) and women/girls (61.4%).

The third factor that young people believe to be important when choosing a romantic partner is financial status (44.2%). Twice as many respondents in the latest survey reported this factor as very important as in 2019, when only 22% did so. This result is nearly the same with that of the FES youth study in 2015, when 42% of participants considered the financial factor to be very important (Cela, Kamberi and Pici, 2015). This finding suggests that youth perceptions of the role of financial status in a relationship tend to be flexible and potentially affected by social and economic dynamics (Vykopalova, 2014).

As can be seen in Figure 7, 38.9% of young people consider national origin to be important when deciding to start a relationship. Although most do not see it as a determining factor, the result suggests they are not entirely indifferent to the role of cultural values and attitudes in choosing their partner. It needs to be mentioned that attitudinal compatibility is a significant predictor of marital stability (Apostu, 2021).

Fig. 7 Important factors when choosing a partner for youth in Albania (in %)

How important are the following for you when choosing a partner?

	Gender ↓		Age ↓		
	Male	Female	14–18	19–24	25–29
Religious beliefs	28.0	25.7	33.3	24.2	24.6
Economic standing	37.9	50.6	48.1	35.5	49.4
Family approval	58.1	61.4	70.9	49.7	60.7
Virginity	26.3	10.9	20.7	19.3	16.4
Education level	58.9	69.6	67.1	46.4	78.7
National origin	40.9	36.9	40.4	39.0	37.7

The data reveal that young people are not very interested in the religious beliefs of their future partner – only 26.9 % of them referred to it as a significant factor. However, the importance of this issue has increased compared with 2019 when a lower number of young people (19 %) considered religion very important (Kamberi and Cela, 2019).

Less than one-fifth (18.6 %) of young people who participated in the study asserted that virginity is important or very important for them when choosing a partner. This shows that most young people do not consider it important in the development of a positive and long-lasting romantic relationship. The proportion of young people who place particular weight on this matter has dropped sharply compared with four years ago, when 44 % of respondents considered it a significant factor (Kamberi and Cela, 2019).

Main takeaways

1. Most young people live with their parents but in recent years a tendency can be noted towards an independent life.

2. Young people live with their parents because it is more convenient. In line with this, young people’s concerns about living costs have increased over the past four years.

3. A positive parent-child relationship appears to be a stable marker of family relationships in Albania.

4. Most youth respondents are single. However, a potential trend toward cohabitation is noted.

5. Divorce is not an issue of concern for young people in Albania.

6. Education level is an essential criterion when choosing a partner. This is particularly important for women/girls.

7. Family approval remains important when choosing a partner but to a lesser extent than in 2019. On the other hand, young people’s interest in the financial situation of their partner had doubled compared with four years ago.

8. Young people show relatively little interest in religion and virginity. However, they pay more attention to religion and less to virginity compared with 4 years ago.

8 ■ General values, attitudes and perceptions

Attitudes are complex psychological mechanisms that influence and are influenced by numerous factors, such as personal experiences, social interactions and cognitive processes. They can also impact our decision-making, behaviour and assessments (Johnson, Martinez-Berman and Curley, 2022). Young people have opinions and attitudes about many sensitive social issues, which are significantly influenced by their surroundings. These individual values impact the way they view themselves and relate to others, how they develop their perceptions of social rights, justice, family and religion, and how they participate in the civil and political life of the country (Johnson et al., 2022). Therefore, increasing knowledge of youth attitudes and opinions on different aspects of their lives can increase social consciousness and assist the development of effective strategies for addressing community challenges.

As Figure 8 shows in a top two box model, a very high percentage (90.2%) consider healthy eating to be important. This is a fairly stable attitude that could be rooted in Albanian culture. Being independent is the value young people consider to be second most important (84.1%).



This result seems to be in full accordance with the finding mentioned in the previous chapter that there is a growing tendency among young people to live on their own. A slightly higher number of women/girls (88.1%) than men/boys (80.1%) consider this factor to be important. Another noteworthy fact is that a high number of young people (82.5%) believe that having children is a valuable aspect of one's life. This is equally essential for both men/boys and women/girls.

One's professional career is another aspect of life that a significant number (81.4%) consider important or very important. This is crucial for a slightly higher number of women/girls (84%) than men/boys (78.8%). Women/girls appear to be also more interested in getting a university degree (84.8%) than men/boys (73.1%). However, it needs to be mentioned that this remains a significant factor for both genders (78.9%). Furthermore, young people consider taking responsibility a valuable attitude (75.1%). There is not a significant gender difference in this regard. Additionally, more than half of respondents (61.1%) believe that being rich is something worth aspiring to.

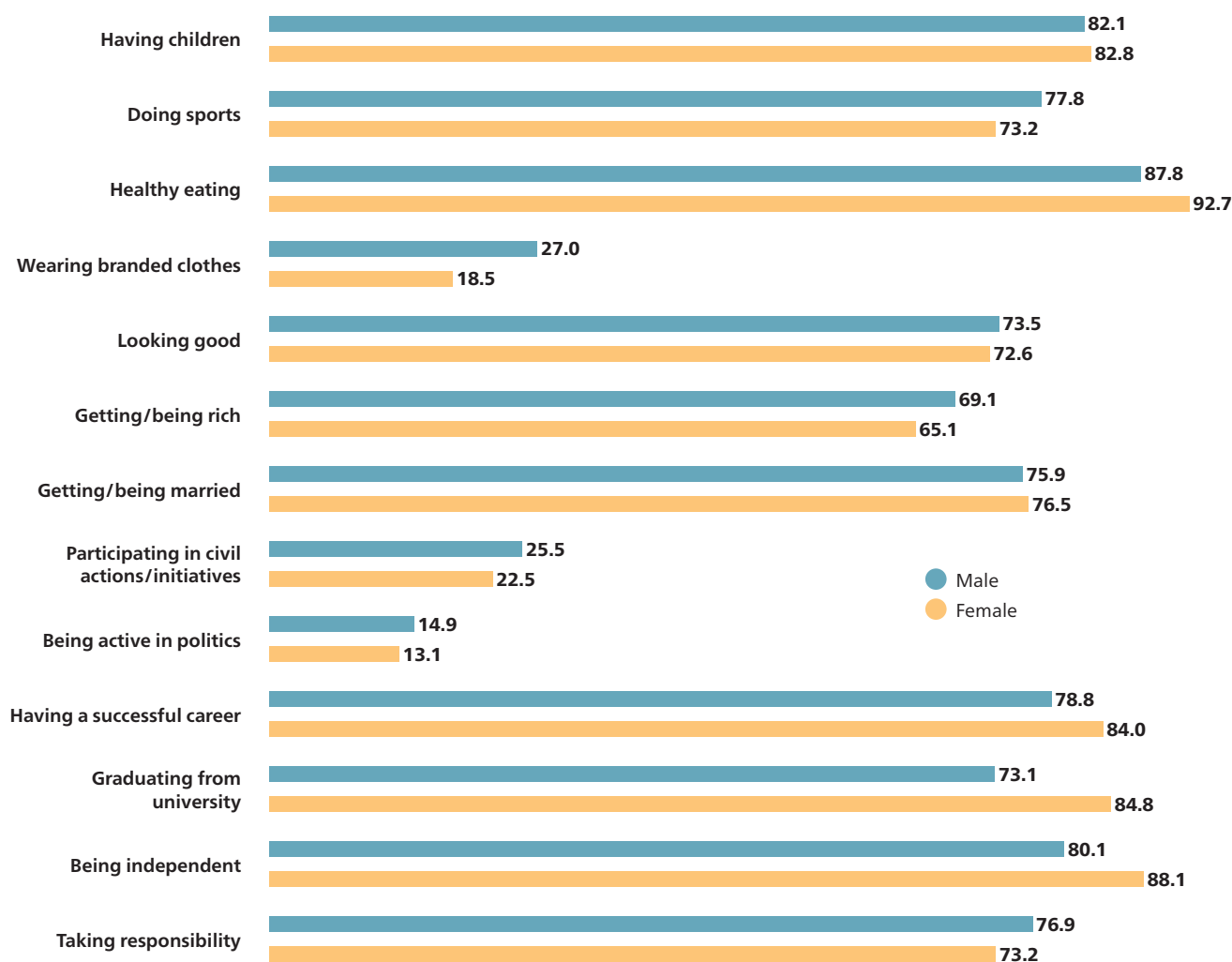
Considerable percentages believe that doing sports (75.5%) and looking good (73.1%) are important parts of people's lives. On the other hand, a fairly small portion of respondents (22.8%) thinks that wearing brand-name clothes is important. These results may lead one to assume that young people place significant weight on a healthy life and appearance. However, they do not seem to relate this to wearing expensive clothing.

The data reveal that young people are not very willing to participate in civil initiatives (24%) and are even less interested in political activities (14%). There is no gender difference in relation to these issues, however. Unfortunately, this is a quite stable attitude among young Albanians, who demonstrated similar attitudes in 2019 (Kamberi and Cela, 2019).

Fig. 8 Importance of values among youth in Albania (in %)

How much are the following items important for you?

'Very important' and 'Mostly important' answers combined



Life satisfaction

When asked about their satisfaction with life in general, on a scale from 1 to 10, many participants (48.5 %) responded that they are quite satisfied. Only a small percentage (5.9 %) reported not being happy with their lives. Furthermore, most young people (83.8 %) envisage their situation in the next decade as being better than at present. They seem to be less optimistic about the future of their country, but they are still positive about their own future (57.5 %).

Fears and concerns

When young people were asked to express their concerns related to the socio-economic situation of the country, they reported that their major fear is not finding a job (61.2 %). Many young respondents are also afraid of becoming seriously ill (56.3 %). This could be related to the fact that most do not rely on the Albanian health care system (59.3 %). Also noteworthy is that almost half of the respondents (48.6 %) reported being very afraid and 29.6 % somewhat afraid of war.

Young people seem to be concerned about being the victims of sexual violence, physical violence and robbery, at 38.6 %, 41.2 % and 43.8 %, respectively. Taking into consideration social sensitivity as well as the short- and long-term consequences of this behaviour on people's physical and mental health (Campbell, Greeson, Raja and Bybee, 2008), these fears seem to be significant among young people. The data show that women/girls are more afraid of these things than men/boys. By contrast, as Figure 9 shows, young people do not appear to be very concerned about domestic violence (48.7 %). This is in accordance with the finding that the vast majority (93 %) think that beating a partner on the ground that they are behaving disrespectfully is not acceptable behaviour.

The data also indicate that the respondents are afraid of terrorist acts (43.3 %), the negative effects of climate change (49.8 %) and the potential occurrence of a global pandemic (42.9 %). They seem to be somewhat worried about the potential negative effects of so-called "artificial intelligence" (37.6 %) and the increasing number of refugees in Albania (35.4 %). Furthermore, in relation to their future economic situation, young people doubt they will ever receive a decent pension, but they are not afraid about their housing situation.

Justified behaviour

Social values foster the development of norms, which are behaviours in particular circumstances based on socially accepted standards. In other words, they lay the ground for accepting or rejecting specific behavioural norms. Even though social values have this function in a society, they are often relative and tend to change depending on gender, age group or education level (Mernard, 2015). With this in mind, young people were asked to express their opinion on various social behaviours on a Likert scale from 1 to 10 points.

The data show that most consider homosexuality to be socially unacceptable (82.8 %). This result replicates the findings of the FES youth study in 2019 (Kamberi and Cela, 2019), in which young people also showed a lack of tolerance towards homosexuality.

More than half of respondents are against accepting or paying a bribe (54.8 %). It should be noted that men/boys show are more accepting of this behaviour than women/girls. Additionally, 42.1 % of young respondents think that cheating on taxes is not right. Some 39 % of young people are against using connections to get things done and also abortion.

As regards their willingness to live in the same neighbourhood as people from different social groups they exhibited a variety of opinions. Most were positive about living in the same area as Muslims and other Christians. A lower percentage accepted the idea of living with Jewish or Roma people. On the other hand, most young participants appear to be reluctant to live in the same community as LGBTQIA+ people. Also not with people who have drug addiction problems.

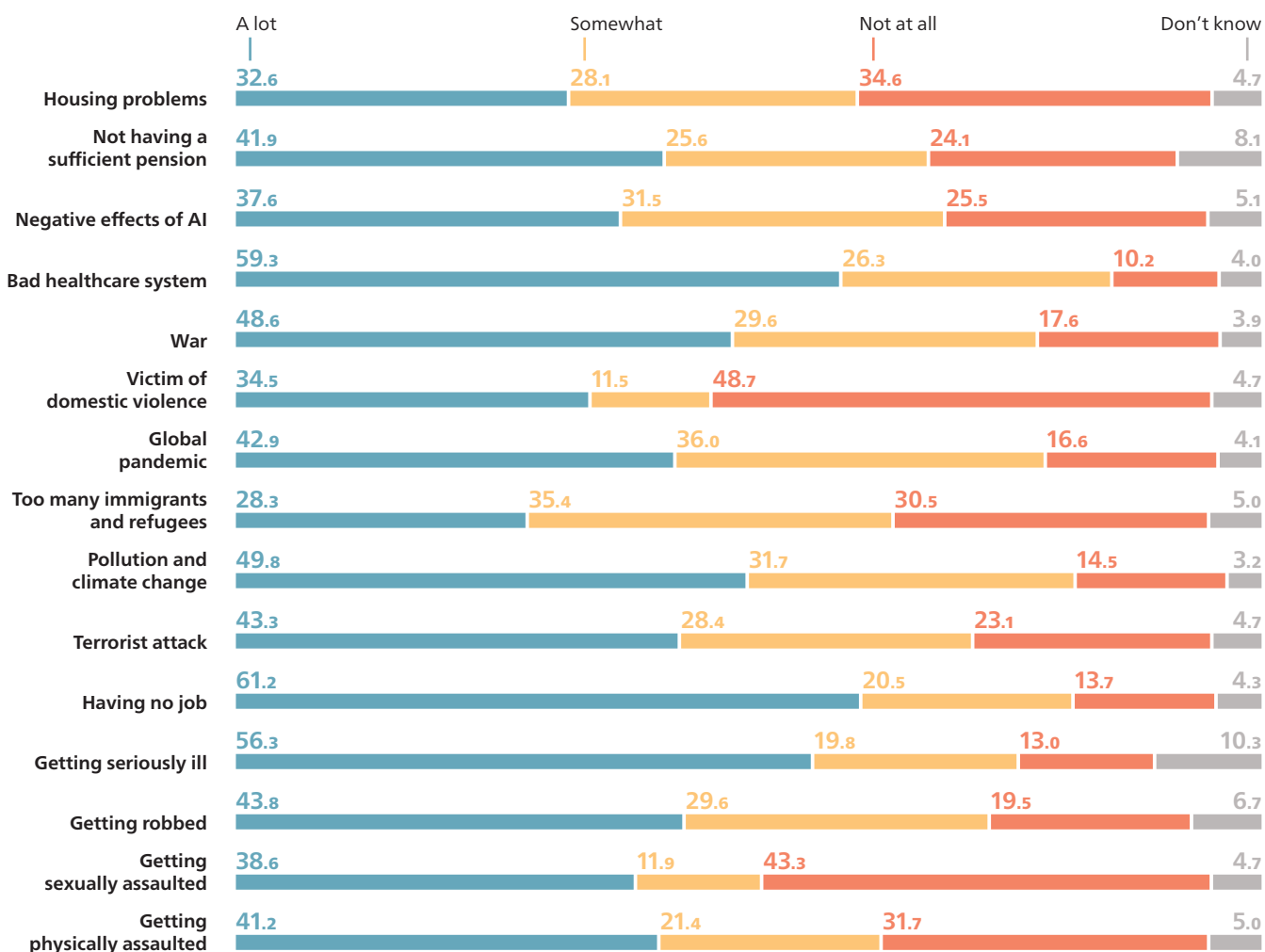
Discrimination

Discrimination refers to the differential treatment of people just because they belong to a certain social group. People may be victims of discrimination because of their age, origin, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language and many other reasons. This social phenomenon, which tends to originate from people's prejudices, may have significant negative consequences on people's lives, preventing them from being socially or politically engaged, as well as limiting their access to work or health care and education services (Fibbi, Midtbøen and Simon, 2021).

When asked about discrimination, the vast majority of young participants responded that they have never faced discrimination based on their gender (86.5 %), economic background (79.6 %), religious beliefs (87.2 %), origin (85.3 %), political views (83.7 %), sexual orientation (91.6 %), or language (84.3 %).

Fig. 9 **Fears and concerns of youth in Albania** (in %)

To what extent are you frightened or concerned in relation to the following things?

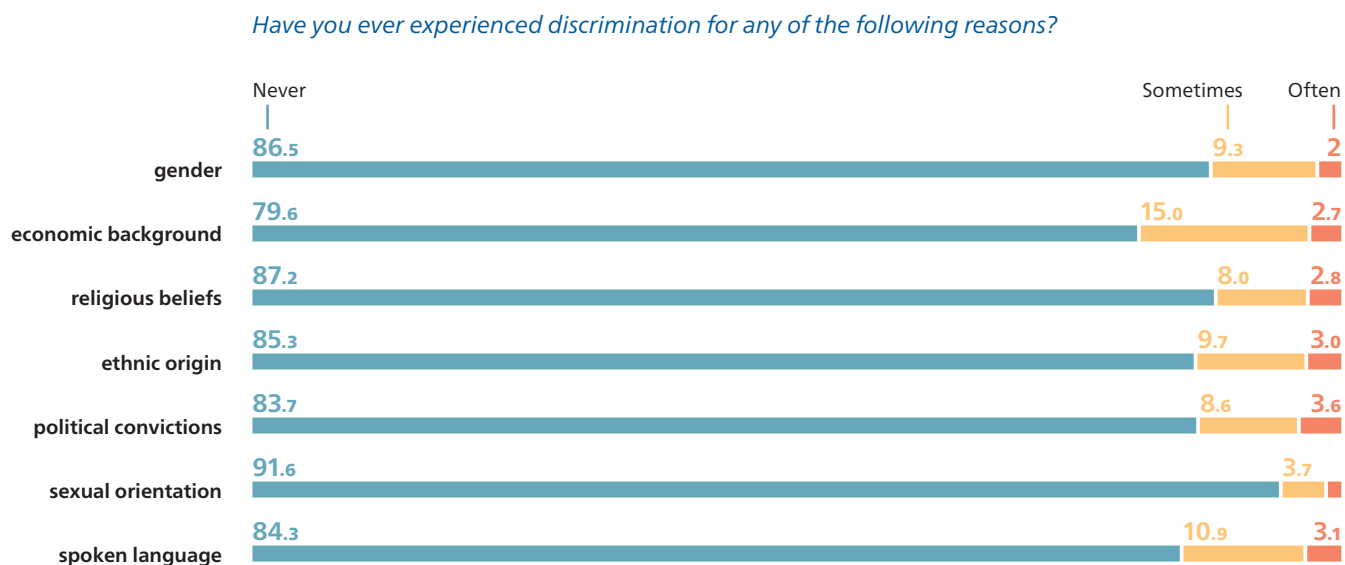


Some of these findings seem to contradict the conclusions of other studies conducted in Albania, however, which affirm the existence of gender-related inequalities in various respects, such as access to politics, public administration and business (Kuci, 2023), not to mention ethnic discrimination against Roma and Balkan Egyptian community members (Jasini, 2024). These contradictions need to be explored further in future research studies.

Religion and minority groups

The majority of young people who participated in the survey (67.6%) declared themselves to be Muslims. However, they don't seem to be religious practitioners because when asked how often they have participated in religious events, 36.9% responded practically never, 25.3% only on special occasions and 10.8% once a year.

Fig. 10 Experience of discrimination among youth in Albania (in %)



The rights of minority groups are based on the recognition that they are in a vulnerable situation compared with most of the population. They are established to protect minorities from discrimination due to their social status and serve to give all members of society equal access to their fundamental rights (Mihandoost and Babajanian, 2016). The perceptions of young Albanians differ in relation to the rights of some minority groups. For example, 48.5 % believe that women as a minority group already have enough rights, but 42.6 % think that they don't. As regards ethnic minority rights, 48.8 % of young people believe they have enough rights and only 25.8 % believe that they do not have enough rights.

In relation to LGBTQIA+ people, most young people (53.9 %) believe they have enough or too many rights, and a significantly lower number of young respondents (22 %) think they do not have enough rights. The data suggest that young people believe that members of this community are not discriminated against by society or its institutions. On the other hand, young people think that people from lower economic classes are discriminated against in Albania, with 61.9 % responding that they do not have enough rights.

The study also aimed to understand young people's perceptions of their own rights. The results revealed that 53.2 % do not think they are discriminated against, while 42.6 % believe that they do not have enough rights.

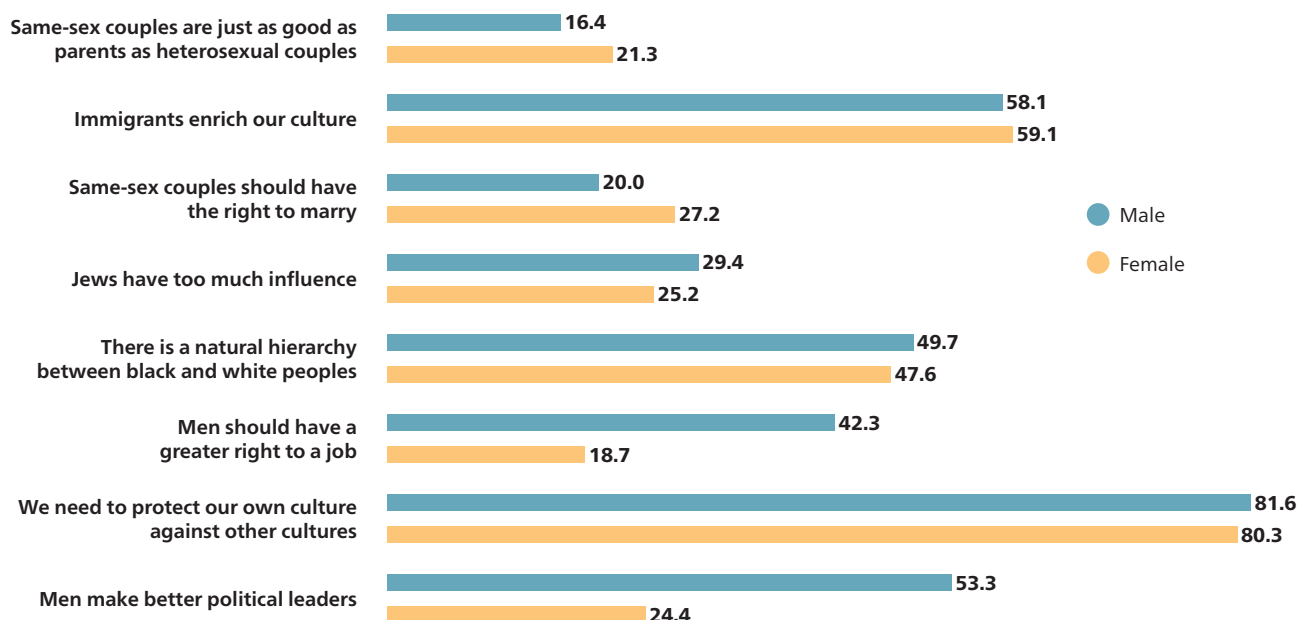
Societal views

It is important to acknowledge that diversity of views and beliefs is natural. But it is also crucial to be mindful that such differences can contribute to social divisions if they are not properly understood. In the survey, young people were asked to give their opinions on various sensitive social situations.

As Figure 11 shows, more than half of youth respondents (55.3 %) believe that men/boys do not make better political leaders than women/girls and 38.9 % believe the opposite. Considering that political life in Albania is dominated by men, this is a surprising result. It shows that most young people are not satisfied with the "male" style of doing politics. The results also suggest that the involvement of women/girls in politics needs to be stepped up considerably.

Fig. 11 Societal views among youth in Albania (in %)

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?
 'Agree' and 'Neither agree or disagree' answers combined



However, there is a gender difference in this regard: the percentage of women/girls who believe that men do not make better political leaders is significantly higher (70.9%) than the percentage of men/boys with that opinion (40%).

In relation to equal employment opportunities, most think that men/boys should not have more access than women/girls. It is notable, however, that more women/girls (78.3%) hold this opinion than men/boys (52.6%). It is also worrying that a considerable number of young people (48.6%) support the idea that there is a natural hierarchy between white and black people, while 39.2% do not share this same opinion.

59% of young Albanians think that immigrants enrich their culture

The data show that most young Albanians (61.9%) tend to be protective of their own cultural norms and values from the influences of other cultures. On the other hand, more than half (58.6%) think that immigrants enrich their culture. These opposing views might be an indicator of youth confusion in relation to the acceptable influences of other cultures on their customs.

A substantial majority (68.6%) believe that same-sex couples should not have the right to marry. A high percentage (73.6%) also think that same-sex couples cannot be good parents.

The data show that young people in Albania are interested in environmental protection. When asked whether the government should take concrete initiatives to protect the environment, 67.6% appeared supportive.

One of the objectives of this survey was to address a particularly sensitive social issue in Albania, namely so-called “blood revenge” and “private justice”, interrelated concepts rooted in ancient customs (Sadiku, 2014). Young people were asked what they would do if someone from their family were murdered: 38% said they would leave this matter to the justice system, 28% said they would take revenge and 35% of participants chose not to answer. This result indicates that even though most respondents trust the justice system, a substantial part of young people still believe that personal justice is better than state justice to protect the family honour.

Main takeaways

- 1.** The top two values for most young respondents are healthy eating and independence.
- 2.** Young people report being willing to take responsibility for their own lives and being highly focused on education and professional career.
- 3.** Young people are not interested in engaging in the social and political life of the country.
- 4.** Two major fears of young people are not finding a job and becoming seriously ill.
- 5.** The majority of young people are against bribery, cheating on taxes and using connections to get things done.
- 6.** Young people show a fairly positive attitude towards religious and ethnic minorities, but they are far less tolerant towards LGBTQIA+ and people with drug problems.
- 7.** A major proportion of young respondents believe that minorities enjoy full rights in Albania. Nevertheless, more than half believe that people from the lower economic classes are discriminated against.
- 8.** A significant percentage of young people exhibit racist attitudes toward black people.
- 9.** Most young participants think that men are not better leaders than women. However, it is important to stress that more women/girls than men/boys take this view.
- 10.** The majority of young people are against same-sex marriage and do not believe that they can be good parents.
- 11.** The concept of blood revenge is still present among young people in Albania. Although most respondents trust the justice system, more than a quarter state they would take justice into their own hands to “save” the honour of the family.

9 Political attitudes and participation

Political apathy as defined in Merriam and Gosnell (1925) and Dean (1965) is clearly reflected in the attitudes of young Albanians. The survey results show that 53.6% of respondents are not interested in politics, while only 8.7% are very interested in it. This is a huge difference, representing political indifference that has already turned into a genuine social syndrome, disconnecting young people from politics, despite the fact that it necessarily plays a major role in young people's lives. Although the high percentage – 68.7% – of young people aged 14–18 who lack interest in politics is understandable because this age group does not vote, it is also observed in other age groups, namely those aged 19–24, at 49%, and those aged 25–29, at 47.1%.

Interest in politics

Against this background, self-reported knowledge of politics is at a low level among young people of all age groups: 31.2% state that they have no knowledge of politics at all. With regard to gender, women/girls and men/boys seem to have a similar level of knowledge. This is regardless of level of education or geographical origin. In general, 89% of young people state they lack knowledge of politics, while a small percentage (5.6%) confirm they do have such knowledge.

Although interviewees expressed having no interest in or knowledge about politics, they responded to how their interests are represented through policies and political party discourse. From the survey data, 24.8% of young people confirm that their interests are not reflected in politics, while 33.7% affirm that they are represented poorly and without the attention that would make it possible for politics to provide solutions to their problems. However, young people are able to perceive the weight and influence of public policies on their daily life. These policies include those that directly affect important aspects such as education, employment and professional development. Only 10% of the young people interviewed state that their interests are very well represented in politics.

Representation of young people's interests in politics

Participation in elections is considered a key element of inclusion in a country's political processes. According to the official data of the Central Election Commission, there is a high number of voters aged 18 in Albania who can vote for the first time among the 3,588,869 eligible voters. Due to high emigration, with about 40% of Albanian citizens living abroad, the number of voters on the electoral rolls, according to the General Directorate of the Civil Register, is 26% higher than the resident population in Albania. According to INSTAT, the resident population in the country is 2,845,955 people, of whom about 23.7% are under the age of 19. As a result, the country's resident voting age population is about 60% of those eligible to vote. In the last election held in 2023, 107,024 voters were able to vote for the first time. Here, 50% of those interviewed said that they had voted in the last elections. Participation in elections expresses an interest in politics as an instrument of change. Here, young Albanians do not show electoral indifference, but are more inclined to follow a passive approach than a proactive one with direct involvement in politics.

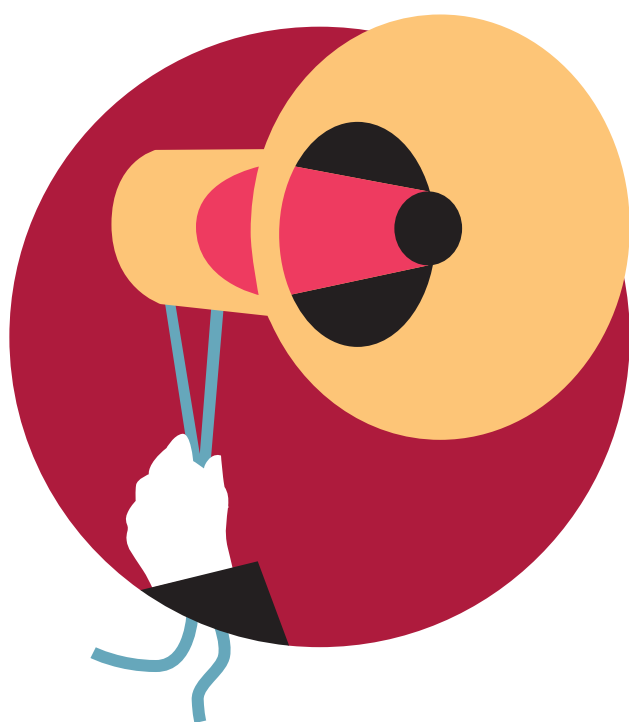
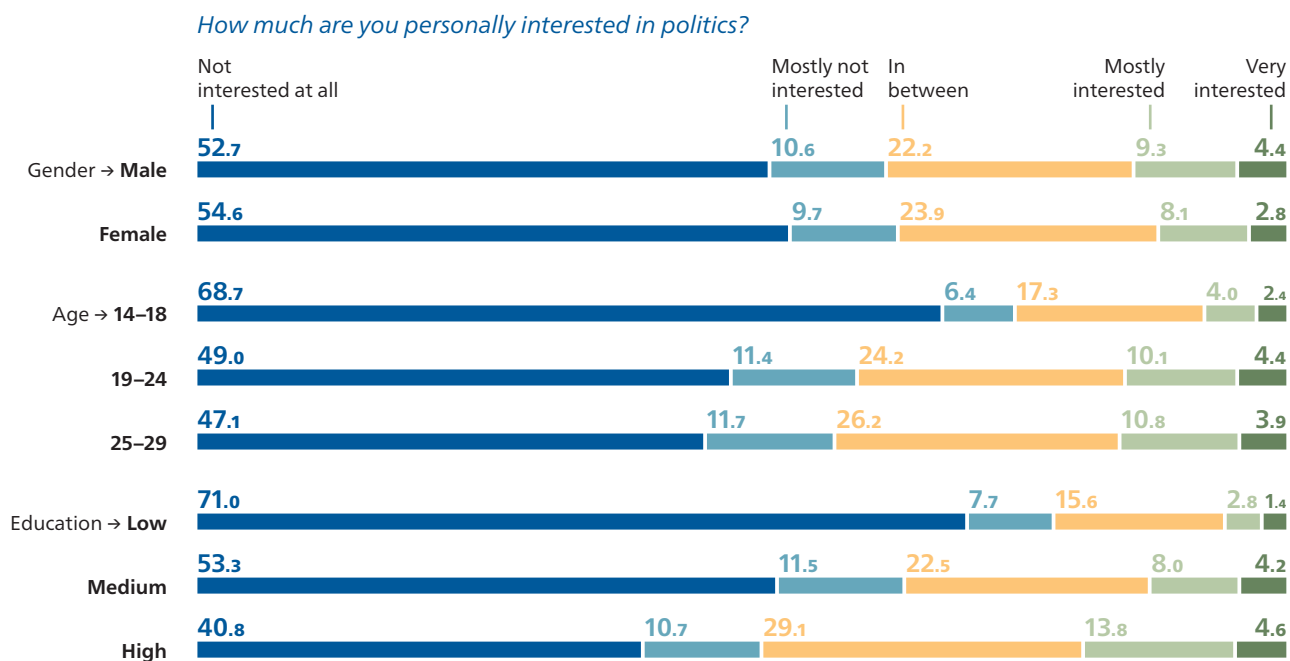


Fig. 12 Interest in politics among youth in Albania (in %)



The political preferences of young Albanians in the last elections to some extent reflect the general tendencies of the Albanian electorate overall, who in the last elections voted primarily for the Socialist Party, which has been in power since 2013. Based on the survey data, 45.09% of the young people questioned said that they had voted for the Socialist Party in the last elections. There are only minor gender differences as regards choice of party: 45.5% of young men and 46.2% of young women said they had voted for the Socialist Party.

The young people who did not vote in the last elections gave a variety of reasons. Some 17.3% answered that their participation would not change anything in the electoral result. The opinion that Albania has an electoral status quo is reflected in the portion of young people who consider elections to be a formality. This is especially true among young women, 22.2% of whom have this opinion compared with 13.3% of young men. Some 13.6% of respondents justified their non-participation on the grounds that the parties were not offering anything new. The largest percentage of young people, 27.5%, responded that their abstention from voting in the last elections was due to their lack of interest in politics in general.

Regarding how they intend to vote in the next elections, 25.4% said that they would again vote for the Socialist Party. However, another 30% have not yet decided. Such a high percentage of undecided young people suggests a space for new parties, but it can also be a sign of non-participation in the next elections, implying a lack of hope for change from the current parties. However, even the level of support for recently created parties expected to compete in the 2025 elections is only between 0.1 and 0.4%. Such figures show that young people have little hope in politics as an instrument for change.

In relation to left- or right-wing political orientation, the young people interviewed have a slight inclination towards the left. However, generally speaking young people's levels of interest with regard to left and right are more or less the same.

Fig. 13 Youth in Albania’s opinion on their representation in politics (in %)

How well do you think young peoples’ interests are represented in national politics?

	Gender ↓		14–18	Age ↓			Education ↓		
	Male	Female		19–24	25–29	Low	Medium	High	
Not at all	25.1	24.6	21.4	24.7	27.6	24.8	28.9	21.1	
Poorly	34.0	33.4	32.1	31.9	36.9	33.3	30.2	37.3	
In between	23.6	26.0	28.7	25.1	21.5	25.3	22.5	26.6	
Quite well	9.2	7.8	7.6	10.7	6.7	5.4	11.2	8.3	
Very well	2.9	1.3	0.8	2.9	2.1	1.4	2.0	2.7	
Don’t know	4.8	6.4	8.6	4.0	5.0	9.8	4.7	3.3	

Regarding the influence of the church or other religious institutions in social and political life, young people are convinced that it is low or not significant. Some 53.1% claim that these institutions do not have power over young people in the choices they make or in the life of the country as a whole. On the other hand, 24.1% believe that such institutions have the right to more power, while only 10% of the young people interviewed say that they have power over Albania’s social and political life.

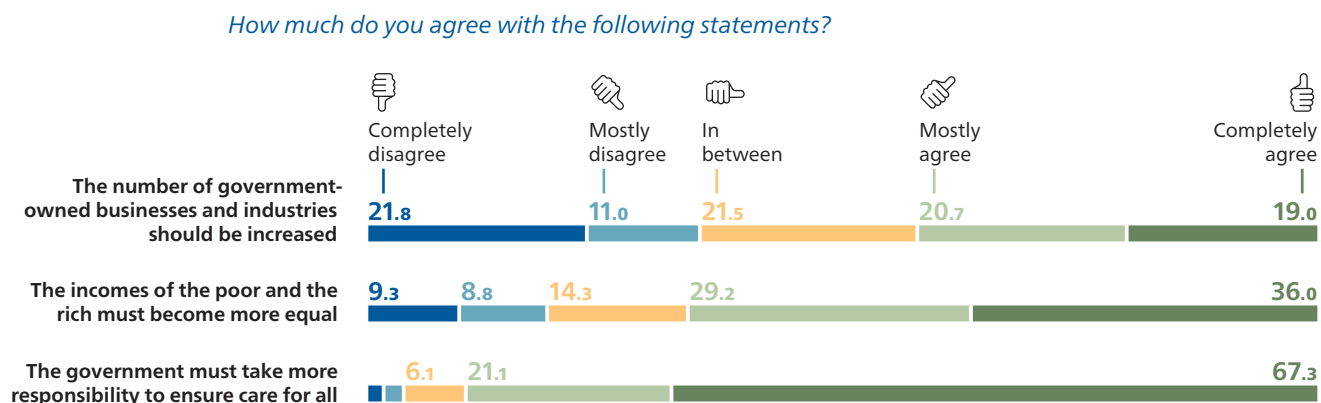
Some 39.7% of young people accept the role of the state in the economy. It seems that young people believe that the state can play a significant role. It should be noted that the strategies followed in Albania since the 1990s have led to policies that have significantly reduced the role and participation of the state in the economy.

Around 88.4% of respondents believe that the government should bear more responsibility to care for all citizens. Such a high percentage shows that young people see the responsibility of the state as very important, regardless of the mainstream discourse that individuals in a free society must face challenges themselves. The paternalistic role of the state is a general trend in countries that are originated from a tradition in which the state controlled everything. It is fuelled in Albania by the difficult social and economic transition, with high migration and economic uncertainty.

32% trust local government somewhat, while 19% do not trust it at all

As regards income equality, about 65.2% agree that the government should take an active approach. Young people’s desire to narrow the differences in income and wealth between rich and the poor reflects a desire for more social justice in a polarised economic environment. This would mean a greater role for the state in policies redistributing wealth and income through fair and honest taxation.

Fig. 14 Political views among youth in Albania (in %)



Political views

Young people’s (lack of) desire to become involved in politics remains unchanged. When asked whether they are ready to take a political position, 61.7% stated that they have no interest. However, young people’s abstention from political engagement and the reasons behind it should be further reviewed and evaluated.

Trust in a country’s political institutions indicates the degree to which social stakeholders interact with them, regarding them as key elements of a democratic society that relies on the separation of three powers: legislative, executive and judicial. In that framework, the level of trust that young Albanians have in these institutions also reflects their performance in daily life.

Trust in political institutions

The national parliament, the most important institution in a representative democracy, enjoys little support among those interviewed: 33.2% do not trust it at all, while 26% trust it only a little. Such a low level of the trust reflects the general sceptical tendency of young people in relation to political institutions.

On the other hand, trust in the national government is also relatively low: 34.5% trust it somewhat, 22.0% do not trust it at all and 21% very little. Meanwhile, although young people are usually closer to civil society organisations 24.5% of those interviewed do not trust them at all, while 23% trust them only a little.

The level of trust in political parties among young people is somewhat higher, at 40%, but even that is not particularly high and it explains their lack of engagement in politics.

Even local government, which is considered to have a more direct relationship with young people because of such community-level services as schools and cultural and sports infrastructure, enjoys a low level of trust among those interviewed: only 32.4% trust it somewhat, while 19% do not trust it at all.

Meanwhile, respondents report a high level of trust in security institutions: for example, 41% trust the military, although Albania abolished mandatory military service for young people years ago. Such a high level of trust might be linked to Albania’s NATO membership since 2009, which established the image of an institution offering national security as part of the world’s most important military alliance.

Fig. 15 Trust in institutions among youth in Albania (in %)

Overall, how much do you trust the entities listed below?

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Fully	Don't know
National Parliament	33.2	26.0	25.8	8.9	2.4	2.0
National Government	22.9	21.0	34.5	12.4	4.8	2.6
Civil society organizations	24.5	23.0	30.2	10.5	3.7	6.0
Political parties	40.0	25.7	22.3	4.7	2.9	2.4
Local governments	19.5	23.2	32.4	15.5	5.4	2.7
Army	10.6	15.5	28.2	29.0	12.4	3.2
Judiciary (courts)	20.9	23.2	33.9	13.4	4.6	2.9
Police	7.9	12.2	41.7	26.9	8.7	1.4
The religious institution you belong to	19.1	12.2	22.5	19.5	15.9	6.7
Media in your country	24.2	23.7	34.9	13.6	2.3	0.9
Trade unions	38.2	19.4	21.1	7.7	1.5	9.9
European Union	9.1	9.5	29.3	31.9	17.1	2.3
NATO	6.5	11.5	23.9	35.3	19.7	2.3

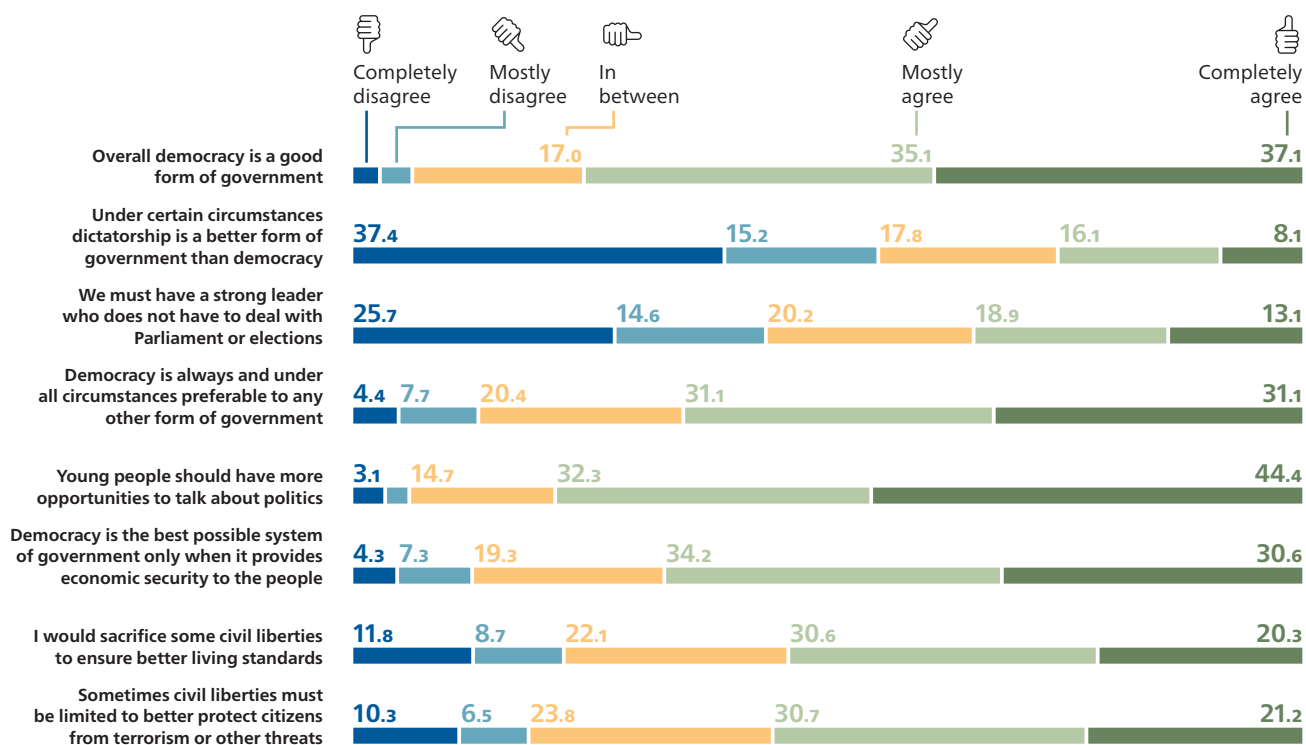
Particularly interesting is the low level of trust in the courts: 20.9% do not trust them at all, while 23.2% have little trust. Although Albania has undertaken radical reform of the justice system since 2016, there is too little confidence among young people in one of the most important branches of power in a democratic society.

On the other hand, the police and military attract greater trust: 41% of respondents trust the military and 35.5% trust the state police. Religious institutions are also relatively trusted: 35.4% of young people report trusting these institutions very much.

Regarding the media, the so-called "fourth estate", 47.9% of young people state that they do not trust Albanian media at all or only a little. As for trade unions, despite the importance of their role in every society, they were found to have a low level of trust among young people: 38.2% do not trust them at all, while 19.2% trust them very little. By contrast, young Albanians clearly have a lot of confidence in the two most important international organisations linked to Albania's Atlantic integration, NATO and the EU: 61.2% trust the EU and 59.2% trust NATO.

Fig. 16 Opinions on democracy among youth in Albania (in %)

How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?



Regarding their views on democracy and the values of the political system, the young people interviewed in this survey present a consistent belief in democracy as the right system of government: 72.2% agree with the statement that democracy is the best form of government; 52.6% of young people rule out dictatorship as the best form of government, even in certain circumstances, reflecting a change in their collective beliefs about democracy as a positive value; 40.3% do not agree that a strong leader should lead the country, while 32% agree. Meanwhile 62.2% agree that democracy is always preferable to other forms of government. Given that all those interviewed were born after 1990 and did not live under the totalitarian system, their lack of doubt that democracy is the best and most apt form of government shows an established opinion.

On the other hand, there are no parties in Albania that try to elicit communist nostalgia. Perhaps this reflects the fact that, as already mentioned, young people have no memory at all of the totalitarian period in Albania from 1945 to 1990.

Opinions on democracy

Some 77.6% of young people agree that they should have more opportunities to talk about politics. This seems to indicate some interest in participating in decision-making about policy issues, both in general and with particular reference to young people, especially by the government, parliament and political parties. The link between democracy as the best political system and economic security for citizens remains a basic principle among young people: 64.6% of those sampled affirm that the economic security and democracy are interconnected.

Fig. 17 **Biggest issues in the next decade according to youth in Albania (in %)**

Which of the following do you think will be the biggest issues facing your country in the next decade?

	Gender ↓		Education ↓		
	Male	Female	Low	Medium	High
Climate change	30.2	36.2	35.3	31.8	32.8
Immigration	58.5	54.1	56.1	54.0	58.7
Inequality	47.7	51.6	44.7	49.9	53.2
Robotization and transformation of employment	28.8	24.3	28.8	23.6	27.5
Weakening of religious and traditional values	21.8	24.0	24.9	18.2	25.8
Weakening of democracy	27.3	23.0	21.4	19.4	33.5
Corruption	64.9	63.9	59.4	64.4	68.2
Terrorism	24.3	21.8	23.6	24.8	21.0
Unemployment	56.7	64.9	63.6	51.9	67.1
Skilled workforce leaving the country	54.8	59.8	53.2	52.1	65.3
Demographic decline	35.5	33.5	27.6	32.0	42.0
Quality of public services (health, education)	30.6	37.1	25.6	34.8	39.1

The importance of good economic living standards for all may pose dilemmas that demand the sacrifice of part of their freedoms for the sake of economic benefits.

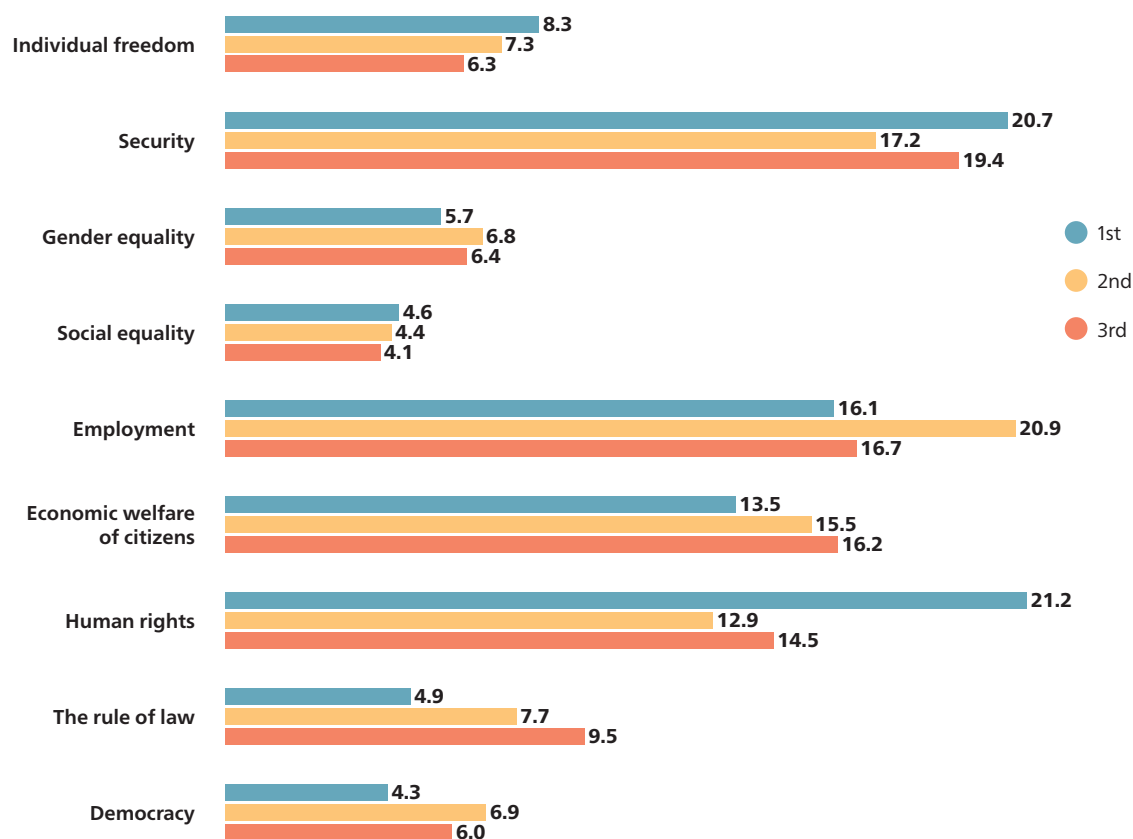
73% of young Albanians state that they have never participated in a demonstration

Some 50.9% stated that they would agree to sacrifice a certain level of freedom for more economic security and 51.9% would do so for more safety against the risk of terrorism. Life and economic security are very important, but conversely, there should be more awareness of what is at stake with regard to the exchange of freedoms for safety and the risk of authoritarianism.

Although Tarrow (1998) and Goodwin and Jaspers (2009) see social movements as driven by young people, the young people we interviewed showed indifference and apathy towards political activities: 74.6% of respondents answered that they had never signed an online petition, while 72.8% claim never to have participated in a demonstration. It can be seen that a large proportion of young people exhibit the same behaviour in terms of being politically (in)active. They also report a low level of engagement in social activism: 60.3% confirm that have not been involved in the volunteer activities of civil society organisations.

Fig. 18 **Most important values for youth in Albania (in %)**

What are the three most important values (listed below) to you personally?



In general, those interviewed affirm a lack of strong ethical opinions about products produced by exploiting the environment or child labour. Furthermore, 71.5% state that they would not stop buying such products. Some 67.9% admit that they have not been involved in online political activities or social networks. In general, questions measuring young people’s motivation and political attitudes demonstrate indifference towards political action in all forms.

Because of their age, they are constantly thinking about what challenges will face them in the near and more distant future. Those interviewed were asked what they consider the main concerns in relation to the next 10 years. Their answers reflect four main issues: corruption, unemployment, immigration and skilled people leaving the country.

Some 64% note that corruption will be a major concern, followed by unemployment at 57%, skilled people leaving the country at 57.3%, and immigration at 56.3%. Their perception of corruption and unemployment as the key concerns reflects the lack of good governance, leading to unemployment, high emigration and the diminution of the skilled workforce. This is also fuelled by the impact of globalisation on the Albanian labour market, especially for people with special skills from developing countries. Some 49% consider inequality to be another concern for the next decade, 33.2% mentioned climate change and 26.5% the automation/transformation of the labour market as key concerns. It seems that young people have identified a clear framework of concerns, linked to public debates taking place in traditional and social media that could affect their individual, social and professional potential.

Fig. 19 Youth in Albania's views on the state of values in their country and in the EU (in %)

In your view, how good or bad is the status of the following listed values in your country and in the EU?

		Very bad	Bad	In between	Good	Very good
Democracy	Albania	18.4	26.9	33.7	16.8	0.9
	EU	4.8	3.0	15.1	31.7	39.2
The rule of law	Albania	16.7	29.0	38.9	12.7	1.6
	EU	1.3	1.3	9.7	39.2	42.7
Human rights	Albania	14.5	23.6	35.4	20.5	2.8
	EU	1.8	2.6	12.6	29.3	46.6
Economic welfare of citizens	Albania	22.1	35.7	32.1	8.6	0.3
	EU	3.2	1.5	10.1	45.0	36.9
Employment	Albania	20.2	33.1	31.5	13.3	1.4
	EU	1.6	1.1	10.4	36.4	45.6
Social Equality	Albania	25.3	23.7	27.9	11.4	5.3
	EU	2.9	2.5	16.1	30.6	38.4
Gender Equality	Albania	14.1	24.2	32.8	12.6	10.3
	EU	3.9	3.1	17.6	34.4	33.0
Security	Albania	17.4	29.3	30.0	21.0	1.7
	EU	1.5	2.6	14.9	45.9	28.9
Individual Freedom	Albania	9.6	21.3	37.2	24.0	5.4
	EU	1.5	3.4	15.4	28.7	46.4

Fig. 20 Views on joining the EU among youth in Albania (in %)



Issues for the coming decade

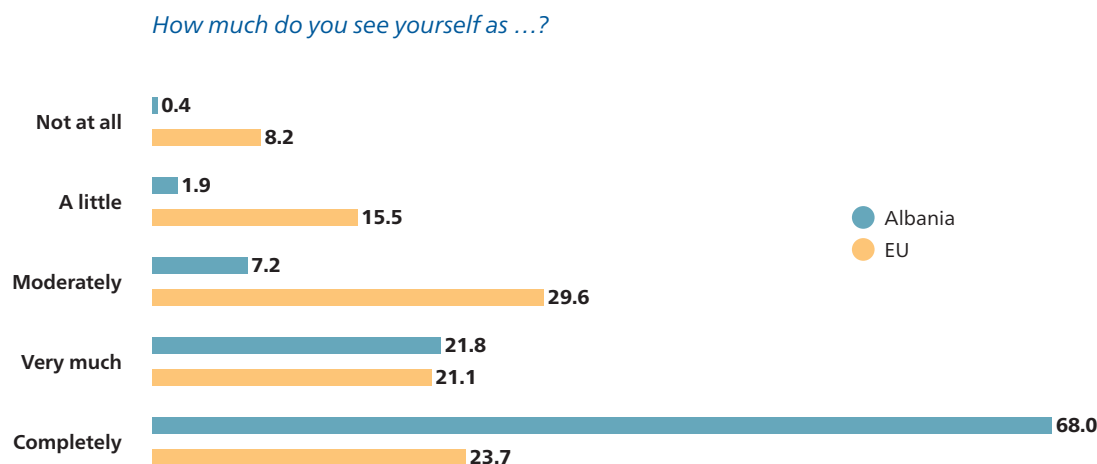
Albania has a rich electronic media market. Television channels are categorised according to type of distribution and coverage: private national television stations; local television stations, for which there are 74 broadcast licenses; private satellite television stations; digital satellite television stations; and cable television stations. The private national television stations currently operating are TV Klan and Top Channel, and TVSH is the national public broadcaster. The young people surveyed prefer receiving information from Top Channel TV and TV Klan rather than from the public broadcaster RTSH.

Five parliamentary political parties contested the last elections in April 2021. Young people have a high level of disapproval of such parties: 47 % dislike them, ranging from 26.6 % who dislike the Socialist Party to 57.7 % who dislike the Freedom Party.

Some 30 % of young people affirmed that they would not feel comfortable if they learned that a close friend supported any of the major parties. The difference among the main parties is quite small and 27 % of those interviewed confirmed attitude in relation to friends who have joined the Socialist Party and 31.6 % for those of the Democratic Party.

Some 60.9 % state that they are proud to be Albanian, but such strong feelings about their national identity also makes them reluctant to accept more immigrants. In this survey, 37.8 % of young people would not like Albania to accept more immigrants. However, 49 % affirm that immigrants who live in Albania must adapt to the social norms and customs of the country. Meanwhile, 57.95 % shared the view that a “real citizen” is someone born in Albania.

Fig. 21 **Self-identification as Albanian/European among youth in Albania** (in %)



This view seems to represent a conservative standpoint in contrast to a multicultural attitude among those young people who consider themselves today to be more citizens of the world rather than citizens of a particular country.

Ranking of values

Young Albanians see joining the EU as the only opportunity for their country and culture to change, and 91% hope that the country will become a member. Young people trust in Albania’s commitment to EU membership and are not worried about public fatigue with regard to enlargement.

91% of young Albanians hope that their country will become a member of the EU

Young people listed the following as their most important values: 21.2% of young people value the human rights most highly, while 20% favour security, 16.1% employment and 13.5% economic welfare.

Important values

The young people surveyed believe that the EU is a place in which values are recognised and implemented. Among those interviewed, 44.5% stated that democracy in Albania is not in a very good state in comparison with the EU; 70.5% of young people think that democracy in the EU is very good. The same seems to apply in the case of the rule of law: 45.7% of young people affirmed that in Albania it is very bad, while 81.9% said that it is very good in the EU.

Opinions about joining the EU

According to Buckingham (2008) youth identity fluctuates in response to different variables. Young people in Albania do not seem to feel that their identity might come under threat from globalisation or a world of fewer restrictions in which free movement might impinge on national identity and everyone could choose to live anywhere. Some 68% of Albanian young people feel completely Albanian, while only 23% consider themselves European. This seems to indicate that they regard being European as linked to full Albanian membership of the EU.

Trade union

Albania has a weak trade union tradition and especially over the past few years the movement has been greatly diminished, in many respects because of the structure of Albania's economy, which mainly comprises small and medium-sized businesses. Some 84 % of young people stated they are not a member of a trade union, while only 11.8 % would like to become part of such an organisation, if given the opportunity.

Main takeaways

- 1.** 53.6 % of respondents stated that they are not interested in politics.
- 2.** 24.8 % stated that their interests are not reflected in politics, while 33.7 % noted that they are poorly represented.
- 3.** 50 % said that they had voted in the last elections.
- 4.** 65.2 % agreed that the government should intervene to increase income equality.
- 5.** 88.4 % stated that the government should bear more responsibility for caring for all citizens.
- 6.** 33.2 % do not trust the national parliament.
- 7.** 41 % trust the state police.
- 8.** 64.6 % noted that the values of economic security and democracy are closely interlinked.
- 9.** 64 % answered that over the coming decades, corruption will be a major concern, followed by unemployment (57 %), skilled people leaving the country (57.3 % and immigration issues (56. %).

Conclusion

Clinging to traditional values and outdated prejudices

Family remains an important support system for Albanian youth, not just for economic reasons but also when it comes to developing healthy and positive relationships. Family plays an important role in all their decisions. Ironically, young people are not very motivated to start their own families, but once they marry, they see divorce as a last resort when it comes to resolving marital problems. Besides emotional connection or physical attraction, young people factor in both personal and social aspects when choosing a partner. They are certainly interested in the benefits that a partner's education and economic status would bring. On the other hand, young people do not consider religion and virginity to be particularly relevant.

Young people in Albania pay particular attention to healthy eating and appearance. They also want to have a good education and a promising professional career. Young Albanians are focused on their personal needs, such as the natural drive to be independent and take responsibility, but they do not see themselves as active contributors to the social and political life of the country.

Although they have serious concerns about employment opportunities, they are against socially unacceptable behaviour such as bribery or using connections to build a career or obtain other benefits.

Young people do not feel discriminated against because of their youth. Alongside that, they show signs of racism and prejudice toward LGBTQIA+ people. On the other hand, they are sensitive toward the rights of people from lower economic classes. Their concepts of family and parenting are strongly based on Albanian traditional norms and values, rejecting the ideas of same-sex marriage and even adoption.

Perhaps surprisingly, young people's perceptions of political leadership have not been influenced by the political context of the past three decades, dominated by men. They appear to be convinced that political skills are not gender-related. But although they have a modern approach to politics, their concept of justice is still somehow influenced by specific customs when it comes to family matters.

Education, employment and migration: the Bermuda triangle of the future

Dissatisfaction with education and corruption continues to trouble Albanian young people. At the same time they are sceptical about the value of their qualifications in the labour market.



When it comes to their employment prospects, young people value expertise and experience but continue to be realistic about the prevalence of other factors, such as connections with those in power and party membership.

Albanian young people can be divided into three distinct and roughly similar sized groups: remain, leave and those trying to decide. Albania has the second largest proportion of young people wishing to leave the country in the region. Only half of those wishing to leave have made any sort of preparations, whereas a significant part of those who harbour such a desire do not plan to return home once they leave. Despite the prevalence of economic considerations that explain this desire to emigrate, a deeper look reveals other factors, such as the low quality of education, the mismatch between level of education and the employment situation, as well as social concerns about the future.

64 % think that corruption will be the major concern for Albania in the next decade

Many interlinked factors influence young people's perceptions, expectations and decisions in relation to their future, but *the trifecta of education, employment and the decision to leave or not* is the major one. Generally dissatisfied with the quality of education and discouraged about job prospects, not to mention persisting nepotism and political favouritism in public administration, young people often decide to leave. For Albania, at least in the medium term, migration is set to become the most serious challenge to social stability, economic development and democratic consolidation.

Politics: a nexus of apathy, disappointment and distrust

Young Albanians' attitudes to politics are shaped by indifference and apathy. This is demonstrated by their lack of desire to become actively involved in politics through engagement in political parties or other forms of political activity. It is also reflected in the low level of their knowledge about politics, which often turns them into passive voters with a sense of inertia in relation to the electoral process rather than active citizens with a desire to change things by voting. They are disengaged, disappointed and without trust in politics as a tool for change. Their trust in political institutions such as parliament, the government, political parties and even the judiciary is low. They consider democracy a good form of government, but on the other hand, corruption, unemployment and emigration, especially of skilled workers are key concerns.

Given that democracy's remedies for such diseases are voting and active political participation, they need to change their attitudes if they are to address the challenges ahead. Young people believe in the EU, however, and see it as the only possibility for real change. On the other hand, they feel proud of their national affiliation as Albanians and are aware that one day they may become EU citizens.

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Endnotes

- 1 Created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), PISA exams test the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in mathematics, reading and science. More info at [→ oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa.html](https://oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa.html)
- 2 The NEET rate according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is defined as the share of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), as a percentage of the total number of young people in the corresponding age group.

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