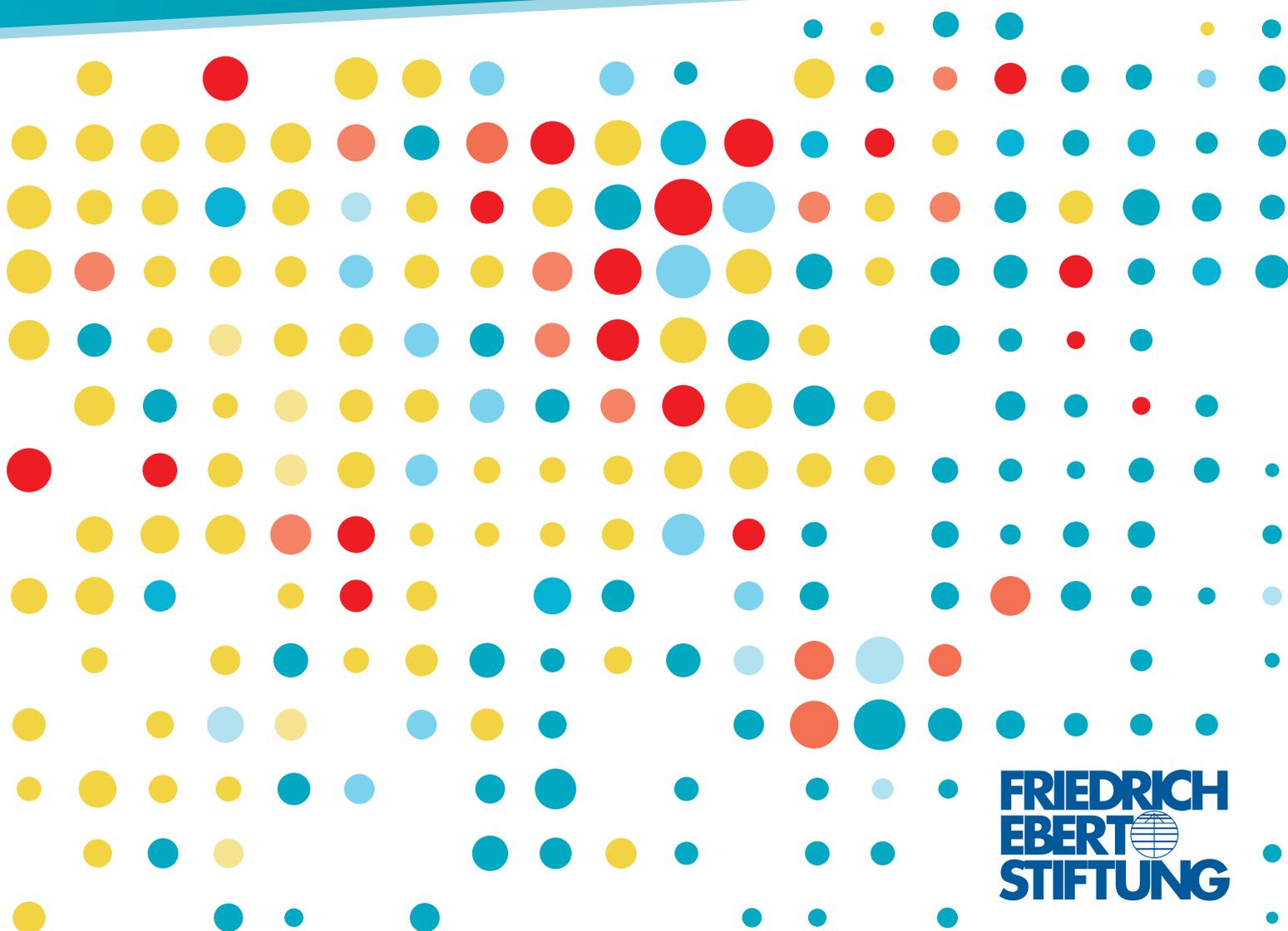


# YOUTH IN KAZAKHSTAN: ASSESSING THEIR VALUES, EXPECTATIONS, AND ASPIRATIONS 2021

*Dr. Dina Sharipova  
Dr. Serik Beimenbetov*



## THE FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany, with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to 1925. The work of the FES revolves around the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice, and solidarity. With its international network of offices in more than 100 countries, FES supports a policy for peaceful dialogue and cooperation, social development, and democracy. FES promotes the trade union movement and a strong civil society.

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

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

The “Youth in Kazakhstan” sociological research project employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Data collection took place between 17 February and 9 April 2020. The study focuses on life values, attitudes, and views of young people in Kazakhstan towards education, politics, family, immigration, foreign policy, and many other important issues. It provides latest insights into what young people expect in their future, their plans, aspirations in life as well as the challenges and difficulties they face. Findings are presented in Kazakh, Russian and English language.



# YOUTH IN KAZAKHSTAN: ASSESSING THEIR VALUES, EXPECTATIONS, AND ASPIRATIONS 2021

*Authors:*

*Dr. Dina Sharipova*

*Dr. Serik Beimenbetov*

This study focuses on life values, attitudes, and views of young people in Kazakhstan towards education, politics, family, immigration, foreign policy, and many other important issues. It provides latest insights into what young people expect in their future, their plans, aspirations in life as well as the challenges and difficulties they face. The study highlights differences in

attitudes among youth in Kazakhstan in terms of age, sex, ethnicity and place of residence. This comprehensive study is based on a nation-wide survey (N = 1000) conducted in 2020 by the BISAM Research Center. This study was authored by Dina Sharipova and Serik Beimenbetov with the help of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Kazakhstan.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	7
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	11
<b>CHAPTER I. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	15
Methodology .....	15
Quantitative data collection .....	16
Fieldwork organisation .....	17
Quality control of data collection .....	18
Qualitative data collection .....	18
<b>CHAPTER II. VALUES AND ORIENTATIONS</b> .....	21
2.1. Interpersonal Trust .....	21
2.1.1 Trust towards other ethnicities .....	21
2.1.2 Trust towards adherents of other religious groups .....	23
2.1.3 Trust towards people with different political views .....	23
2.1.4. Trust towards neighbours .....	24
2.1.5. Trust towards family members and friends .....	24
2.1.6. Trust towards classmates, student fellows and workmates .....	25
2.1.7. Making friends with people of other ethnicities and religions .....	25
2.1.8. Tolerance towards different social groups .....	27
2.1.9. Trust towards political leaders .....	31
2.2. Discrimination .....	31

2.3 Tolerance .....	35
2.3.1 Attitudes towards Corruption .....	35
2.3.2 Attitudes towards Homosexuality .....	35
2.3.3 Attitudes towards Abortion .....	36
2.3.4 Sexual Practices .....	37
2.3.5 Orientation towards family and marriage .....	37
2.3.6 Religious Orientation .....	40
2.3.7 Orientation towards leisure and lifestyles .....	42
<b>CHAPTER III. LIFE PLANS, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND IMMIGRATION</b> .....	47
3.1. Education .....	47
3.2. Employment .....	51
3.3. Migration and Mobility .....	56
3.4. Values and Rights .....	58
3.5. Fears and Concerns .....	58
<b>CHAPTER IV. YOUTH AND POLITICS</b> .....	61
4.1 Political Views, Attitudes and Participation in Politics .....	61
4.2 Politics, Friends, and Family .....	62
4.3 Participation in Elections .....	63
4.4 Forms of Political Activity .....	65
4.5 Institutional Trust .....	66
4.6 Views on Democracy and Authoritarianism .....	66
4.7 Government Goals and Policies .....	68
4.8 Youth and National Identity .....	70
<b>CHAPTER V. FOREIGN POLICY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA</b> .....	75
5.1. Views of Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy .....	75
5.2. Refugees and Immigrants .....	78
5.3. Regional Integration .....	80
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	83
Appendix 1: References .....	85
Appendix 2: Endnotes .....	85
Appendix 3: List of tables and figures .....	87





# ABSTRACT

Between 17 February and 9 April 2020, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung conducted a large representative survey among youth and young adults in Kazakhstan. The results offer exciting insights into the attitudes to life, self-image and ideas for the future of around 1,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 29 and are intended to create a picture of young society.

**Education.** Education is an important part of youth life. As the study finds, more young females are enrolled in Master's programmes than their male counterparts. On average, young people spend two hours per day studying outside the classroom. While many of them (41%) are satisfied with the quality of their education, 24.1% are not content with it. The high level of dissatisfaction is related to corruption present in the education system: The "buying" of grades taking place in the educational institutions was reported by 52% of the respondents. As such, 48.5% of the young people believe that education does not meet the demands of the global labour market. Whereas 45% of young people would favour receiving their education abroad, about one third (27.5%) said they would rather study in Kazakhstan. Most young people want to study in the USA, countries of the European Union, or Russia.

**Employment.** One third of the young people believe that it is easy to find a job in Kazakhstan while 10.5% say that it would be very difficult. There are some gender differences between young men and women in terms of employment, as more males (27.4%) have full-time permanent contracts than young females (18%). Additionally, more females are currently unemployed and not seeking a job. A difference between urban and rural areas in Kazakhstan was identified: 43.7% of rural residents are unemployed and not actively seeking employment, compared to 34.8% in urban areas

in the same situation. One of the most common obstacles regarding employment is that many young people (41.9%) do not work according to their educational specialisation, constituting a mismatch in skills. Of those employed, 21% work in the public sector, 62.9% in the private sector, and 4.2% of the youth work in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). However, their preferences regarding employment are different. More young people prefer to be employed in the private sector than in the public sector.

**Migration and Mobility.** The majority of young people prefer to study and work in Kazakhstan. However, some youth also plan to study and live abroad in the long-term. They see it as a way to improve their chances in finding a good job as well as increasing their general level of knowledge. While 61.6% of young Kazakh people do not plan to migrate to another country, 11.5% firmly want to change their place of residence, and 17.1% have moderate inclinations towards this option. The desire to improve their living standard is the primary factor to emigrate (25.3%). Next, the respondents named high quality of education (18.8%) as the second-ranked driving force, and 14.1% were drawn to experiencing life in a different culture. The USA is their preferred destination for emigration, which is followed by Russia, the countries of the European Union, and Canada.

**Values and Rights.** The study shows that young people value human rights, security and democracy. Security appeared more frequently among the respondents than other values, thus demonstrating that young people have concerns about this issue. This survey also clearly shows that young people are not satisfied with their current rights.

**Fear and Concerns.** Many young respondents mentioned war (51.8%), growing poverty (51.1%), pollution and climate change (50.8%), corruption (50.8%) as well as social injustice

(29.4%) as the sources of their fears. These factors are perceived by young people as threats to their existence. The loss of employment, illness, or getting attacked were, in turn, not deep concerns amongst these young people. The least feared issues refer to the number of immigrants in the country and the possibility of being robbed.

**Youth and Politics.** As the survey shows, young people in Kazakhstan do not discuss politics with their relatives or friends. Political views of young people resemble those of their parents. Their three most important sources for political information are the internet, TV, and social media. Yet many young people remain inactive in political life. Only one third of the respondents voted in the last parliamentary elections, 4.7% of youth signed political petitions while the majority (69.5%) has never done it. However, 20.6% are not against the notion of participating in this way in the future.

**Values and Orientations.** There has been a significant shift in the value system in society in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union in regard to democracy, education and tolerance. This chapter reports on the attitudes that young people have towards their family members, people of other ethnicities, religions, political views, and their perspective on neighbours, classmates and work colleagues. In addition, the chapter also explores the young people's attitudes towards social groups, such as LGBTQ+, and social phenomena, such as corruption. The findings reveal that the general level of trust among young Kazakhstani has been diminishing compared to the results of previous studies. Predominantly, young people trust their immediate family members and friends the most. Furthermore, informal relationships with families and friends are seen as more trustworthy than formal relationships in other institutional settings.

**Institutional Trust and Views on Democracy and Authoritarianism.** Young people largely trust the current President of Kazakhstan (48.3%). The next category of trust is placed in volunteer movements and organisations (40.5%). In general, half of the respondents (54.7%) believe that democracy is a good type of government, and 52.7% support the concept that political opposition is a necessary feature of democracy. However, every fourth individual supports authoritarianism. Surprisingly, one third of the young people (27.8%) agree with the idea that some conflicts can be resolved only with the use of force, 38.4% disagree with this statement, and 22.3% are neutral.

**Government Goals and Policies.** A majority (70.9%) of the young respondents believe that the state should assume more responsibility to provide care and support to the population. Young people also have a negative view regarding competition as 42.3% believe that "competition is harmful" and might "evoke negative traits in humans". Many young people believe that the gap of inequality between the rich and the poor in Kazakhstan should be

reduced. Most of them think that the government should fully focus on the provision of human rights and freedoms (88.5%), improvement of the situation of youth (88.4%), social justice and social benefits for all (87.9%), and preservation of the environment (88%). Young people do not find that government authorities have tried to resolve problems related to youth, which demonstrates a potential gap between state policies, programmes and people's expectations.

**Youth and National Identity.** Overall, two thirds of respondents are proud that they are citizens of Kazakhstan. Young people of Kazakhstan, firstly, identify themselves with their local identity such as city or town/village followed by national identity and then regional identity. In addition, young people between 14 and 24 years old are more likely to identify themselves as "world citizens" than those aged 25 to 29. In terms of language and particularly the transition from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet, 56% of the respondents do not approve of the change while 32.9% of the respondents support it.

**Foreign Policy and Attitudes towards other Central Asian Countries.** This chapter examines young Kazakhstani's attitudes towards their country's foreign policy, their expectations of the country's international role, and their attitudes towards the Central Asian region. The results show that most young people have a positive view of their home country's foreign policy and positive expectations for the country's international role in the future. However, Kazakhstani youth seems to be divided on very specific issues such as the reception of refugees and immigrants. Furthermore, there are differences in attitudes in relation to their ethnicity. Specifically, more youth of Kazakh than Russian ethnicity seem to endorse Kazakhstan's foreign policy.





# INTRODUCTION

According to statistics<sup>1</sup>, young people in Kazakhstan, i.e. those under 30, make up half of the total nineteen million citizens and thus represent a growing social group. This is the generation born after Kazakhstan's independence in 1991. The majority thus has no direct memories of the Soviet Union beyond the narrations based on their parents' or grandparents' recollections. As they were born after independence, most of them, especially the urban youth, have grown up in conditions of relative prosperity of their country — at least since the 2000s — as well as relative political stability. This is also a generation that had known only one president — Nursultan Nazarbayev — until he unexpectedly stepped down in March 2019. Additionally, they have grown up under the conditions of rapid digital transformation of their country, greater penetration of the Internet along with the introduction of numerous social media services in their daily lives.

Against the backdrop of these and many other social, political, economic and demographic changes that Kazakhstan has faced as a country since 1991, this study aims to explore the views, attitudes, opinions and the lifestyle of young people in Kazakhstan. The study is based on a premise that young people in Kazakhstan are the most dynamic and rapidly changing demographic in the society, which, ultimately, will define the future development of the country. It sheds light on different issues, including youth values, political views, attitudes towards family, society and the government. The study also reveals how young people perceive their own identity as well as their level of trust and tolerance towards others. The importance of this study is explained by the need to understand youth's values, aspirations, cultural and social practices as well as their intentions regarding themselves and other members of society.

Another reason for conducting this study is the dearth in the number of studies on youth in Kazakhstan. The exception is a volume titled *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan* which was edited by Marlene Laruelle (2019)<sup>2</sup>. Despite the merit of this collection, it does not examine many important issues and dimensions that are covered in this current study. Furthermore, this project is a continuation of the Molodezh Central'noy Azii study on youth carried out by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Foundation) in 2016.<sup>3</sup> This 2020 study has significantly expanded the 2016's work.

This study is a part of a larger project on youth in Central Asia and other countries such as Russia and Central European states.<sup>4</sup> It shows that "youth" are not a homogeneous cohort, but rather a diverse generation that has different views and attitudes depending on their age group, ethnicity and residential area. In some aspects, the youth of Kazakhstan are not so different from the youth of other countries. They value — to some extent — human rights, democracy, equality, quality education, and security. At the same time, the youth of Kazakhstan are different in terms of their life values and attitudes towards family. In general, it can be concluded that young people tend to have more traditional attitudes towards family, marriage, and children and more reserved views towards sex, homosexuality, and a low tolerance towards other social groups. Young people are rather apolitical and share common political views with their parents. Their engagement in political processes of the country is rather low. Furthermore, their level of trust in various political organisations and institutions is not high.

The study is structured as follows: The first part describes the methodology used to study young people's attitudes and values. During the study, qualitative and quantitative

methods, such as surveys and focus groups, were used to get a comprehensive overview of young people's views. This part is followed by an analysis of their views on interpersonal trust and tolerance towards different social groups and different social phenomena such as corruption. It also inquires into what young people think about discrimination in Kazakhstan and what experiences they have had with it. The third chapter examines young people's plans and aspirations for the future, their attitudes towards education, employment, and migration. It also reports on the youth's attitudes towards human rights as well as their fears and concerns. Chapter four discusses their attitudes towards politics, their level of engagement in the political process,

participation in elections and forms of political activities. Other topics explored in this chapter are institutional trust, including trust in the president, parliament, police, courts, international organisations and many others. The chapter also explores their views on different types of political regimes — as well as the role of the state in citizens' lives. The youth's self-identification is also explored in this chapter. The fifth chapter uncovers the research subjects' views towards foreign policy and their attitudes towards Central Asia and regional integration. It also focuses on their views towards refugees and migrants. The study concludes with a summary of key findings.





## 1

# METHODOLOGY

## METHODOLOGY

This sociological research project employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Data collection took place between 17 February and 9 April 2020. In the quantitative part of the study, 97 interviewers surveyed

young Kazakhstanis aged 14 to 29. The survey was conducted in several modes (in person, by phone, and online). The qualitative part of the study included a total of ten in-depth interviews with young people in Almaty, Nur-Sultan, Shymkent, Aktobe, and the Almaty region. The respondents chose to be surveyed in either Kazakh or Russian.

TABLE 1: **Distribution of the population of the country aged 14 to 29 by region, sex, and settlement type**

	Total population			Urban population			Rural population		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Kazakhstan	4 277 728	2 154 909	2 122 819	2 442 446	1 194 836	1 247 610	1 835 278	960 069	875 209
Akmola region	161 357	83 877	77 480	73 781	37 187	36 594	87 575	46 690	40 885
Aktobe region	210 240	105 177	105 063	132 303	64 641	67 662	77 936	40 536	37 400
Almaty region	446 765	231 714	215 051	96 966	50 124	46 842	349 797	181 589	168 208
Atyrau region	148 261	76 125	72 136	67 379	33 838	33 541	80 881	42 285	38 596
West Kazakhstan region	148 303	75 623	72 680	75 252	36 497	38 755	73 052	39 126	33 926
Zhambyl region	259 799	133 386	126 413	98 443	49 478	48 965	161 355	83 907	77 448
Karaganda region	306 965	156 524	150 441	241 772	121 389	120 383	65 193	35 135	30 058
Kostanay region	193 958	99 011	94 947	103 198	51 264	51 934	90 759	47 746	43 013
Kyzylorda region	191 921	99 793	92 128	80 628	41 467	39 161	111 293	58 326	52 967
Mangystau region	159 607	81 677	77 930	59 556	31 847	27 709	100 051	49 830	50 221
Turkestan region	505 560	265 538	240 022	87 439	47 133	40 306	418 122	218 406	199 716
Pavlodar region	157 994	80 667	77 327	110 131	55 090	55 041	47 864	25 577	22 287
North Kazakhstan region	112 524	59 117	53 407	52 996	26 014	26 982	59 528	33 103	26 425
East Kazakhstan region	304 736	149 273	155 463	192 864	91 460	101 404	111 872	57 813	54 059
Nur-Sultan	252 257	120 405	131 852	252 257	120 405	131 852	0		
Almaty	473 482	218 085	255 397	473 482	218 085	255 397	0		
Shymkent	243 999	118 917	125 082	243 999	118 917	125 082	0		

In the final stage of the fieldwork, the spread of SARS-CoV-19 and the subsequent introduction of lockdown measures significantly affected data collection. In light of this, the data collection approach changed as the population became more concerned about face-to-face interaction and non-essential travel was prohibited. Initially, data collection was done using door-to-door surveys. Then, survey respondents were started to be recruited outdoors (in the courtyards of residential buildings). Subsequently, respondents started to be recruited by phone and online. Finally, a snowball sampling method was used by asking respondents to recommend other people who could participate in our survey.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The target population of the study was male and female young people aged 14 to 29 who live in urban and rural areas. For the survey, a multi-stage stratified sampling procedure was used, where the sample was stratified in the

following sub-groups: settlement type (urban/rural), gender, ethnicity and age. The survey was conducted in cities and villages of 14 regions (oblast) of the country: Akmola, Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, West Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Kostanay, Kyzylorda, Mangystau, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan and Turkestan, as well as in three cities — Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and Shymkent. The total sample size was 1,000 people. The sample was selected in several stages. First, the proportion of respondents from different regions was calculated. Additionally, the distribution of the population aged 14 to 29 in rural and urban areas was calculated. The detailed distribution of the target population according to the official statistical data is presented in Table 1.

Secondly, the proportion of all subgroups in the final sample was calculated. In addition to stratification by rural/urban areas, the final sample was proportionally distributed between three age groups: 14-19 years old, 20-24 years old, and 25–29 years old. Table 2 shows the planned sample in the preparatory stage of the fieldwork.

Table 3 shows the actual final sample. That is, the number of respondents in each category who took part in the study.

TABLE 2: **Characteristics of the planned sample**

	Total population			Settlement type	
	Total	Males	Females	Urban	Rural
Kazakhstan	1 000	505	495	570	430
Akmola region	38	20	18	17	21
Aktobe region	49	25	24	31	18
Almaty region	104	54	50	22	82
Atyrau region	35	18	17	16	19
West Kazakhstan region	35	18	17	18	17
Zhambyl region	61	31	30	23	38
Karaganda region	72	37	35	57	15
Kostanay region	45	23	22	24	21
Kyzylorda region	45	23	22	19	26
Mangystau region	37	19	18	14	23
Turkestan region	118	62	56	20	98
Pavlodar region	37	19	18	26	11
North Kazakhstan region	26	14	12	12	14
East Kazakhstan region	71	35	36	45	26
Nur-Sultan	59	28	31	59	0
Almaty	111	51	60	111	0
Shymkent	57	28	29	57	0

TABLE 3: **Distribution by sex and settlement type of research sample**

	Total population			Settlement type	
	Total	Males	Females	Urban	Rural
Kazakhstan	1 000	500	500	570	430
Akmola region	38	20	18	17	21
Aktobe region	49	24	25	31	18
Almaty region	104	54	50	22	82
Atyrau region	35	18	17	16	19
West Kazakhstan region	35	18	17	18	17
Zhambyl region	61	30	31	23	38
Karaganda region	72	37	35	57	15
Kostanay region	45	23	22	24	21
Kyzylorda region	45	23	22	19	26
Mangystau region	37	18	19	14	23
Turkestan region	118	62	56	20	98
Pavlodar region	37	19	18	26	11
North Kazakhstan region	26	14	12	12	14
East Kazakhstan region	71	33	38	45	26
Nur-Sultan	59	28	31	59	0
Almaty	111	51	60	111	0
Shymkent	57	28	29	57	0

FIGURE 1. The distribution of the final sample by age

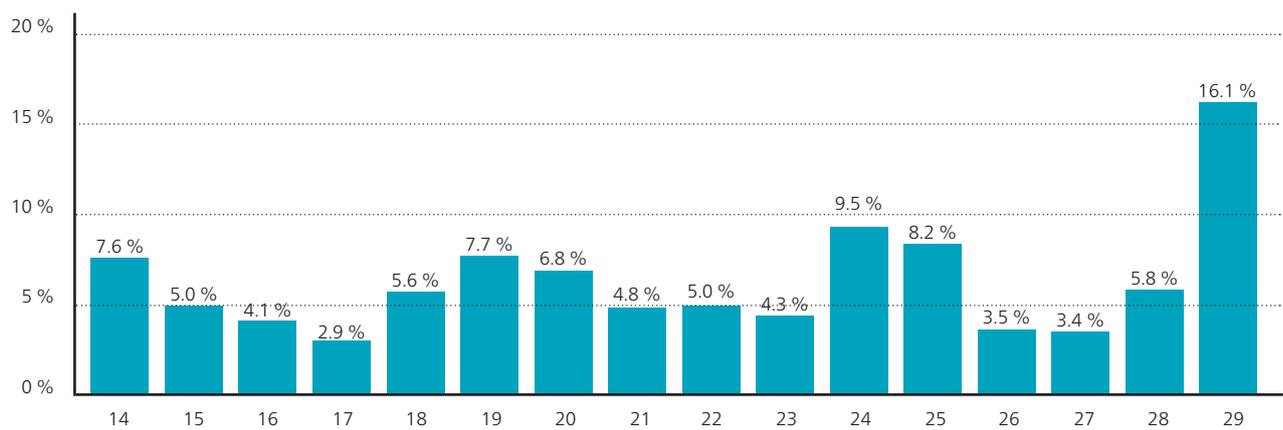


Figure 1 presents the distribution of the final sample by age, which, in turn, corresponds to the distribution of ages in the target population according to the official statistics<sup>5</sup>

## FIELDWORK ORGANISATION

### Selection of Survey Locations

The organisation of the fieldwork for the survey took place in several stages. In the first stage, the survey sites in each settlement were determined. The survey sites were selected as follows:

**Cities:** In each city, two districts were selected — the city centre and a residential district. Two sites were selected in each district, with no more than a quarter of the interviews conducted within each one.

**Villages:** In each village, two districts were identified — the central and the outskirts — to serve as survey sites. The number of interviews was the same for each location.

### Selection of Interviewers

Interviewers were selected depending on the survey mode. In cases where computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) was used, interviewers familiar with computers and mobile devices were supervised by BISAM Central Asia. Mandatory training was provided to all members of the project team before the start of the survey fieldwork.

### Training

Shortly before the fieldwork started, a briefing was held with the project administrative staff and the regional teams. In the briefing, the rules for conducting the fieldwork, the specifics of the tools used, and the structure of the questionnaire were discussed. The project staff and the regional supervisors organised data collection efforts in their localities. In Almaty, project field personnel were briefed directly at the BISAM

Central Asia office and in the presence of a representative of the Friedrich- Ebert-Stiftung in Kazakhstan. In other regions, the briefings were conducted using online conferences, also in the presence of a representative of the FES Kazakhstan. A mandatory requirement for the briefings with regional teams was the presence of the regional supervisor and the entire team of interviewers involved in the study. At the final stage of the briefing, each interviewer was given their quota assignment as well as a complete package of required field documents: route sheets, cover letters, route descriptions and a description of the respondent selection procedure.

### Selection of Respondents

In the second stage, the type of settlement determined the approach with regards to the selection of the respondents. The participants of the survey were selected in the following manner.

**Cities:** When interviewing respondents living in apartment buildings, the interviewers approached every second apartment. The interviewers entered the apartment buildings through the last entrance (the “pod’ezd” with the largest number) and started with the apartment on the top floor that had the largest apartment number. If the interview was successful, the interviewer skipped one floor and continued searching for respondents in the apartment with the largest number on that floor. When approaching respondents in the apartment buildings, the interviewers also adhered to the following rules:

- Only one interview could be conducted in one apartment. If according to the selection conditions, two potential participants were found in the apartment, the one whose birthday was closer to the date of the interview was selected.
- Only one interview was possible on one floor of an apartment building.
- In the case of a potential participant refusing to be

interviewed, the floor was not skipped. The interviewer consistently approached the adjacent apartments until a suitable respondent was found.

If the young people lived in detached houses, every fifth house was approached.

**Villages:** In rural settlements, every third household was selected for the survey. If no adult family members were present at the time of the visit, the interviewers visited the next house along the route. When selecting respondents, the interviewers also adhered to the following rules:

- a) Only one respondent was interviewed in each household.
- b) Two young people in one house could be interviewed if a stand-alone house was divided into two households, i.e. there were two separate families living in this dwelling.

In both the cities and rural areas, interviewers were allowed to return to the survey locations where they were not able to approach anyone (e.g. no one opened the door, no one was at home, etc.). This occurred on the condition that the required number of interviews on the route had not been obtained.

## QUALITY CONTROL OF DATA COLLECTION

Quality control of data collection was carried out at all stages of the study. A team of inspectors was appointed for the operational monitoring of the quality of the fieldwork. The inspectors began their work on the third day of the week after fieldwork began.

Thanks to the use of the special software Survey Studio, each interview in the database was accompanied by an audio recording, which in turn made it possible to monitor the quality of the information collected. The interviews that were rejected during the quality control were removed from the final dataset and the same number of interviews were conducted with other respondents.

Moreover, since geospatial data was also collected, the project team was able to monitor the interviewers and their established routes remotely.

## QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

As part of the qualitative data collection of the study, ten in-depth interviews were conducted with young people in Kazakhstan. The participants of the in-depth interviews were selected based on socio-demographic characteristics. This means that the sample was selected to have the widest possible diversity of interviewees: employed and unemployed, with and without higher education, living in the city and in the rural area, from the working class, professionals and academics. Only respondents from Almaty, Nur-Sultan, Shymkent, and Aktobe participated in the qualitative part of the study. The recruitment of these respondents was carried out by experienced BISAM staff in Kazakhstan. Against the background of the restrictive measures introduced due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-19 pandemic, the in-depth interviews were carried out online.





## 2

# VALUES AND ORIENTATIONS

There has been a significant shift in the value system in society in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, this change has been precipitated by increasing migration, urbanisation, globalisation, and the growing religious awareness in society as a whole. Compared to other Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has been considered the most globalised country. One effect of Kazakhstan's greater integration into the global economy is the growing number of young people studying abroad. According to UNESCO, a total of 89,505 students from Kazakhstan were studying abroad by the end of 2017.<sup>7</sup> More than 12,000 students had studied under the "Bolashak" scholarship programme initiated by former President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev in 1994.<sup>8</sup> Given expanding study opportunities alone, it can be assumed that young people's values and orientations have changed. In this study, young people were asked about their attitudes towards their family members, people of other nationalities and ethnicities, religions, political views and their attitudes towards neighbours, classmates and work colleagues. Additionally, they were asked about their attitudes towards different social groups such as LGBTQ+ and social phenomena such as corruption, etc.

## 2.1 INTERPERSONAL TRUST

An important aspect of this study is the level of trust that young people have towards different social groups such as their family members, friends, neighbours, ethnicities,

nationalities, religions, political leadership etc. It is assumed that the degree to which people trust other people is ultimately important for societies to live together peacefully. Based on the results that will be discussed in more detail in the sections below, it can be stated that the level of trust among young Kazakhstanis has been diminishing compared to the results of previous studies.<sup>9</sup> As expected, young people appear to trust their immediate family members and friends more than people of other ethnicities, religions or social class. Similarly, informal relationships with families and friends are more trustworthy than formal relationships in other institutional settings.

### 2.1.1 TRUST TOWARDS OTHER ETHNICITIES

The low level of trust in formal relationships is particularly noticeable when it comes to questions about trust in people of other ethnic groups. Young people were asked to rank their attitudes towards other nationalities on a 5-point scale where 5 corresponded with 'deep trust' and 1 with 'no trust at all'. The table below illustrates the results. As shown in the table, only 31.8% of young people trust people from other ethnic backgrounds while 32% distrust them. Particularly striking is the difference between ethnic Russians and ethnic Kazakhs as the two largest ethnic groups in the country. The Kazakh young people seem to harbour more distrust towards representatives of other ethnicities than the Russian minority

youth. Specifically, 26.4% of the Kazakh youth compared to 40.3% of ethnic Russians said they trust other ethnicities while 37.9% of the Kazakh youth compared to 22.8% of the ethnic Russian youth did not. A similar trend can be observed when looking at differences between ethnic Uzbek and Kazakh youth. The Uzbek youth appeared to have more trust towards other groups than native Kazakhs. The survey found that of Uzbek youth, 50% trust other ethnic groups, while 17.9% are distrustful. Arguably, as ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan, the non-Kazakh youth seem to be more tolerant towards other ethnic groups.

It is noticeable that the younger the respondents, the greater the degree of mistrust. The results of the current study have shown that 33.4% of respondents in the 14-19 age group

were more distrustful of other ethnicities than those in the 20-24 age group (30.6%) and the 25-29 age group (31.9%). This might have to do with the period of socialisation into society: with more experience and social interaction, young people may become more trusting. At the same time, there were no significant differences in attitudes between young females and males. When it came to trust in other ethnicities, both males and females had fairly the same level of mistrust (32.2% and 31.8% respectively). There were some notable differences in level of trust between young people living in the urban and rural areas. Of the young people living in the city, 33.8% reported that they trust people of other ethnic groups, while 29.4% said that they were more likely to mistrust them. In comparison, among the young people living in the

TABLE 4: The level of trust towards other ethnicities, (in %)

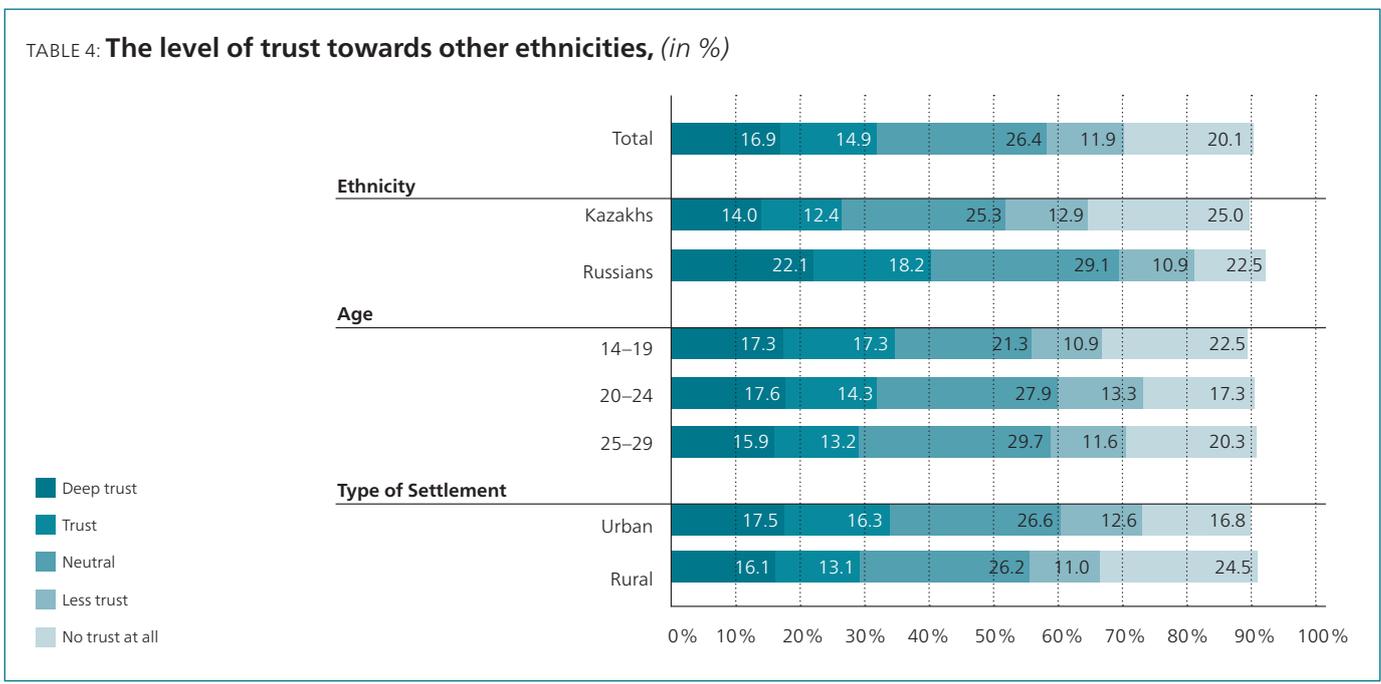
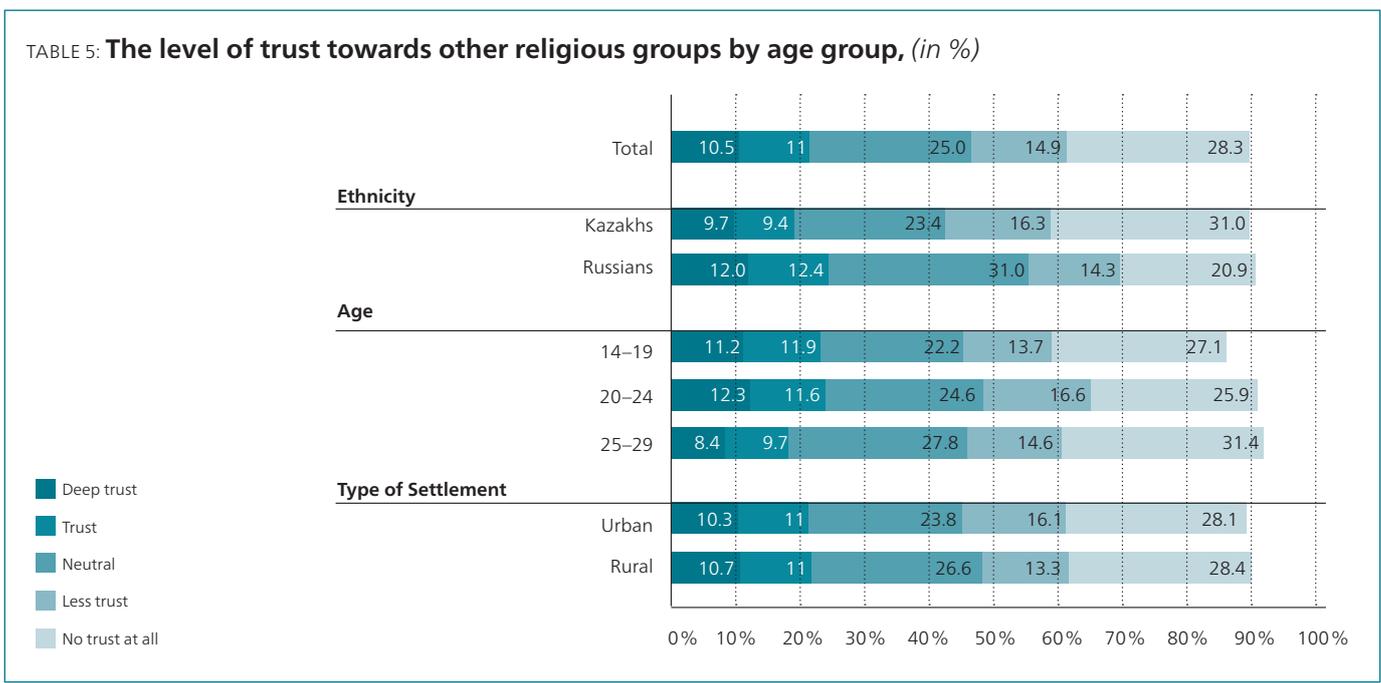


TABLE 5: The level of trust towards other religious groups by age group, (in %)



countryside, 29.2% of them trust people of other ethnic groups, while 35.5% are more likely to mistrust them. This might have to do with the fact that urban youth have more social connections and opportunities to develop relationships with people of other ethnic groups than those in rural areas.

## 2.1.2 TRUST TOWARDS ADHERENTS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Considerably significant were the differences in the degree of trust young people had in followers of other religions. Indeed, the table below shows that only 21.5% of young people said they trusted people of other faiths while a much larger proportion, 43.2%, said they had no trust at all or less trust in people of other faiths. As well, the degree to which young people tended to trust people of other religious denominations seems to decrease with age. In fact, 23.1% of those in the 14-19 age group were ready to trust people of other faiths. In the 20-24 age group and in the 25-29 age group, 23.9% and 18.1% respectively, were prepared to do so. In contrast, 40.8% in the 14-19 age group, 42.5% in the 20-24 age group and 46% in the 25-29 age group indicated that they have less or no trust towards people of other religions. Moreover, regarding place of residence, there were no striking differences in attitudes towards members of other religions between urban and rural youth. Both appeared to have similar levels of trust, which does not resonate with the findings made in the 2016 FES study of youth attitudes. That research found significant differences between urban and rural youth in their level of trust towards representatives of other religions.

At the same time, there are some notable differences in the attitudes towards other religions in relation to the ethnic origin of the respondents. Ethnic Russian young people

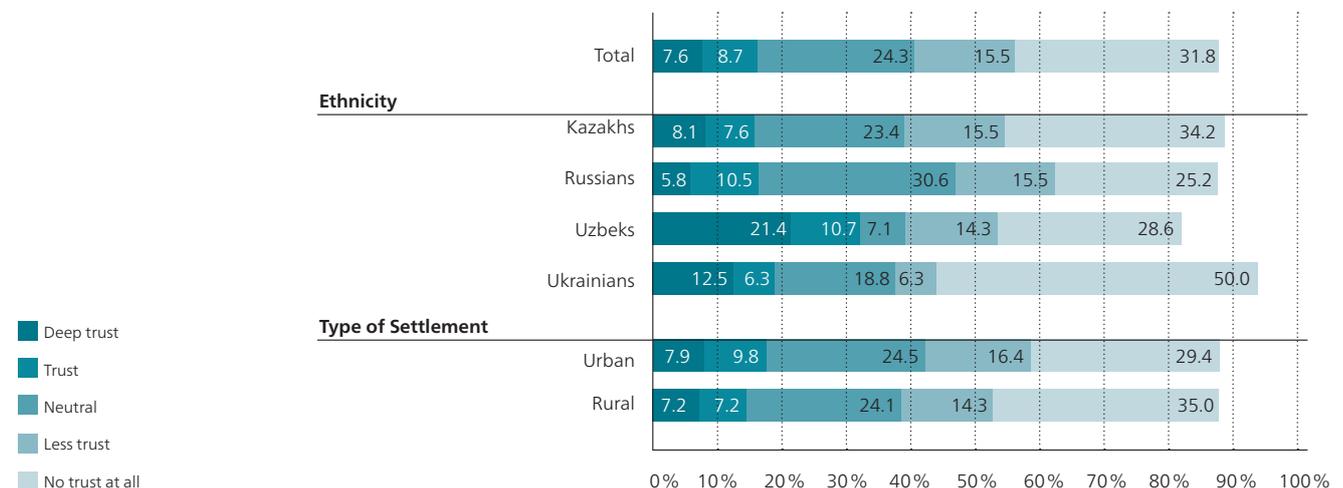
appear to be more tolerant of other religious groups than ethnic Kazakh youth. The survey data shows that only 20.9% of ethnic Russian respondents said they had 'no trust at all' in other religions, while 14.3% of young people had 'less trust'. At the same time, only 12% and 12.4% of young ethnic Russian people said they had either 'deep trust' or just 'trust' in people of other religions respectively. However, among ethnic Kazakh youth, 31% said they had 'no trust at all' and another 16.3% had 'less trust' in people of other religious confessions, while only 9.7% and 9.4% said they had either 'deep trust' or just 'trust' in people of other religions.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.1.3 TRUST TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL VIEWS

The current survey revealed that only 16.3% of youth have trust towards people with other political convictions while a far greater number (47.3%) tend to distrust them. The survey showed that 45.8% of the urban youth do not trust people of other political beliefs, while 17.7% indicated that they have 'deep trust' or just 'trust' in people of other political views. Speaking of those living in the rural areas, 49.3% of them reported that they do not trust people of other political convictions, while only 14.4% confirmed having 'deep' or just 'trust' in people of other political convictions.

More notable are the findings when looking at them in terms of ethnicity. The table below illustrates that 49.7% of ethnic Kazakhs, 42.9% of ethnic Uzbeks, 40.7% of ethnic Russians and 56.3% of ethnic Ukrainians have said that they have 'no trust at all' or 'less trust' in people with other political views. In comparison, only 15.7% of ethnic Kazakhs, 16.3% of ethnic Russians, 32.1% of ethnic Uzbeks, and 18.8% of ethnic Ukrainians have stated having either 'deep trust' or just

TABLE 6: Level of trust towards people with other political convictions by ethnicity and place of residence, (in %)



'trust' in people of other political views. At this point, it can be argued that the views expressed by young people on political dissent are consequential given the policies and practices of the current political regime, especially in light of the level of repression faced by political opposition and political dissent in the country. Based on this and other evidence, it can be assumed that the incumbent's regime values, institutions and practices affect the degree to which young people view their political differences.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1.4 TRUST TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS

A similar trend emerges when looking at young people's attitude towards their neighbours. For example, when asked about trust in neighbours, only 30.9 % of the young people seem inclined to do so. In contrast, 39.2% of the young people tend to distrust them. These figures are in line with the results of the previous FES study from 2016.<sup>12</sup> The difference in trust levels towards neighbours in conjunction to ethnicity is noteworthy, and this could be due to the contested yet critical importance of hospitality in the daily lives of ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians in general.<sup>13</sup> As the table below shows, more than 36.3% of the Kazakh youth tend to trust their neighbours, compared to only 23.2% of the ethnic Russians. On the other hand, 34.5% of ethnic Kazakhs and 42.3% of ethnic Russians found their neighbours not trustworthy at all or less trustworthy. The difference in the degree of trust in neighbours between young people living in the city and those living in the countryside is also remarkable. In urban areas, only 25.1% of the young people said that they had 'trust' or 'deep trust' in their neighbours. By contrast, 38.6 % of young people in rural areas disclosed that they had 'trust' or 'deep trust' towards their neighbours. The reasons for this

discrepancy can be manifold. On the one hand, it may be related to the higher mobility of the urban youth and thus the more frequent changes of neighbours compared to the countryside. Equally, it may be related to the higher degree of anonymity of city dwellers compared to rural dwellers.

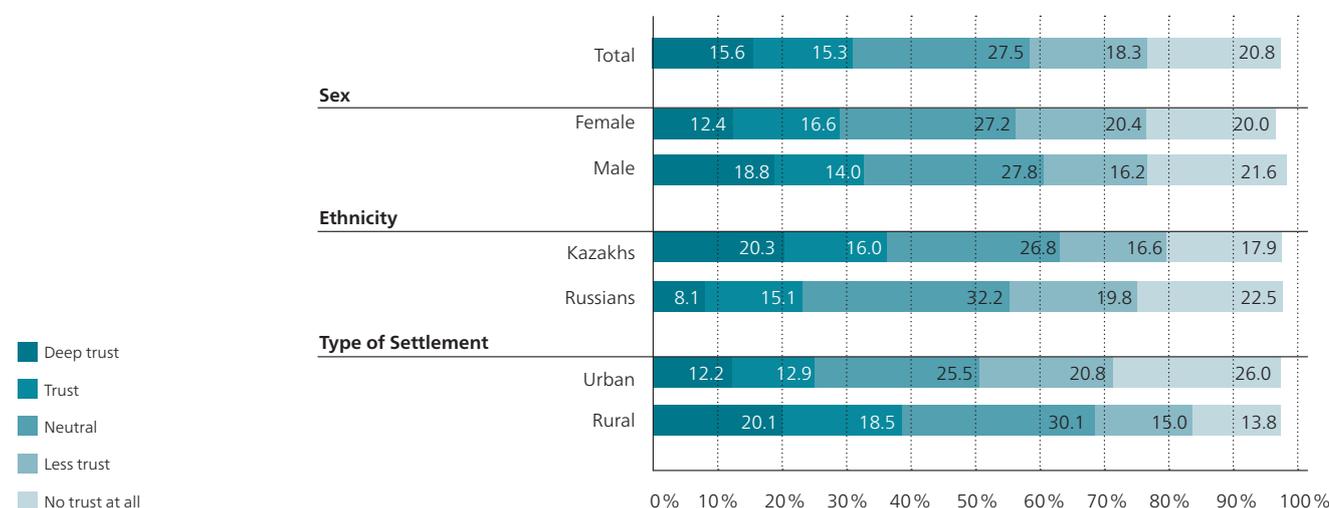
### 2.1.5 TRUST TOWARDS FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

As would be expected, in contrast to negative views of people of other ethnicities, religions, political views and neighbours, young people in the survey have more trust towards those people with whom they communicate most often in their daily lives. This includes immediate family members, friends, classmates, student fellows and workmates. The results suggest that this attitude has not changed since the last FES survey.<sup>14</sup> For instance, with regards to family, most young people appear to place a higher level of trust in the members of their own family, such as husband, wife, brother, sister, boyfriend or girlfriend. Specifically, 88% of the respondents revealed they have deep trust towards their family members. One of the respondents commented on that,

*" I always come home and tell my parents absolutely everything that happened during the day, even if it's common that people don't tell their parents about their bad friends with bad habits"*

Female, 19 years old, student

TABLE 7: Level of trust in neighbours by ethnicity, sex and place of type of settlement , (in %)



Interestingly, the indicators of deep trust in the closest family members are almost identical across all socio-demographic groups showing very little variation across age, gender, nationality or type of settlement. A slightly different picture emerges from the question about the attitude towards other family members. Indeed, the young people seem to have less confidence in their extended family relatives. When asked about their trust in extended family, only 45.8% of the young people stated that they had full confidence in them while 31.7% distrust them.

The situation is almost similar when it comes to young people's trust in their friends. Of the survey subjects, 71.6% indicated to have trust in their friends, while only a minor 8.5% have no confidence in them. With regards to the differences in gender, age and ethnicity of the respondents, the data changed very little compared to the survey in 2016, apart from a few deviations.<sup>15</sup> In terms of gender, 68.4% of the females and 74.8% of the males place confidence in their friends. In terms of ethnicity, 73.7% of the ethnic Kazakhs had trust in their friends while 72.1% of the ethnic Russians trust their friends.

## 2.1.6 TRUST TOWARDS CLASSMATES, STUDENT FELLOWS AND WORKMATES

The situation exhibits a slight variance with regards to trust that young people place in their classmates, student fellows, and workmates. When asked about their trust toward these groups of people, only 36.8% of the respondents indicated that they trust them and 26.8% were found to be more likely to mistrust them. The difference in the degree of trust between ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians was notable. Among the ethnic Kazakhs, 43.7% of them stated that they trust their classmates and colleagues while only 22.1% claimed to distrust them. Among ethnic Russian young people, the proportion of young people who trust their classmates and colleagues was only 27.5% as compared to 32.2% who distrusted them. The finding that ethnic Russian youth have less trust in their classmates or work colleagues is notable and deserves further investigation. At this point, it could be hypothesised that this is related to the general insecurity that ethnic Russian youth might feel amid increasing 'Kazakhization' — the process by which the ethnic Kazakhs are becoming more dominant in society, including in the workplace and at educational institutions.<sup>16</sup> When reviewing the data in terms of differences in place of residence, one also notices slight differences in the level of trust these groups have. In cities, 33.8% had confidence in their classmates while 30.6% had no confidence in them. In rural areas, 40.9% had confidence in their classmates compared to 22.2% who placed no confidence in them.

## 2.1.7 MAKING FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER ETHNICITIES AND RELIGIONS

The level of trust young people have towards other social groups could also be determined through the survey question of whether and to what extent they are willing to befriend someone of another ethnic group or religion. To determine this, young people's answers were rated on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 equated to 'yes', 2 to 'no', 3 to 'don't know' and 4 to 'no answer'. The table below reflects the results discussed in this section.

As it is shown in the table, when asked whether they would like to have a friend with a different ethnic background, 75.8% of all respondents answered 'yes', while 22.7% answered 'no'. While there were almost no differences in responses to this question between males and females, there are differences from the perspective of the respondents' ethnic background. Indeed, among ethnic Russian young people 96.5% were in favour of making friends with someone of another ethnic group while only 64.5% of the ethnic Kazakh youth were willing to do so. There was a significant difference when considering the place of residence. In fact, 82.9% of the urban youth were willing to be friends with someone of another ethnicity. However, only 66.4% of the rural respondents were inclined to do so.

A similar trend was seen regarding their willingness to befriend someone of another religion. In total, 71.5% of the respondents were willing, and only 26.7% were against it. Differences were again apparent when analysing the trend based on ethnicity. Only 60.2% of the ethnic Kazakhs compared to 91.9% of the ethnic Russians agreed to be friends with someone of another religion. There were also some differences when considering the place of residence. Namely, 78.8% of the youth in urban centres revealed they would be friends with someone of another religion whereas only 61.7% of the rural respondents would.

Views on their willingness to have a friend who speaks another language are in the same range. The majority of respondents (72.3%) were positive about this question, while 26.4% gave a negative answer. However, only 64.7% of the ethnic Kazakhs compared to 84.1% of the ethnic Russians said they were ready. Again, urban young people were more open to befriending someone who spoke another language than rural youth (76.6% and 66.6% respectively).

Having a friend with a different social status is not an issue for 79% of the respondents. Only 18.9% find it somehow detrimental to the relationship. Similarly, only 71.1% of the young ethnic Kazakhs compared to 93.8% of the ethnic Russian youth said they would like to have a friend with a different social status. As with the former categories, there were also some differences between urban

and rural youth in this aspect (83.6% versus 72.9% in favour of befriending someone with a different social status).

Overall, the answers to these questions show that ethnic Kazakh youth tend to have more reservations about people with a different religion and different social status compared to ethnic Russian youth. On the other hand, it can be seen that rural youth have more reservations about making friends

in general compared to urban youth. Looking at the data in terms of the age of the respondents, it is noticeable that the willingness to befriend someone of a different ethnic background or different religion increases with age, indicating that the longer one is socialised in society, the more willing and tolerant one becomes.

TABLE 8: Inclination for making friends by gender and ethnicity, (in %)

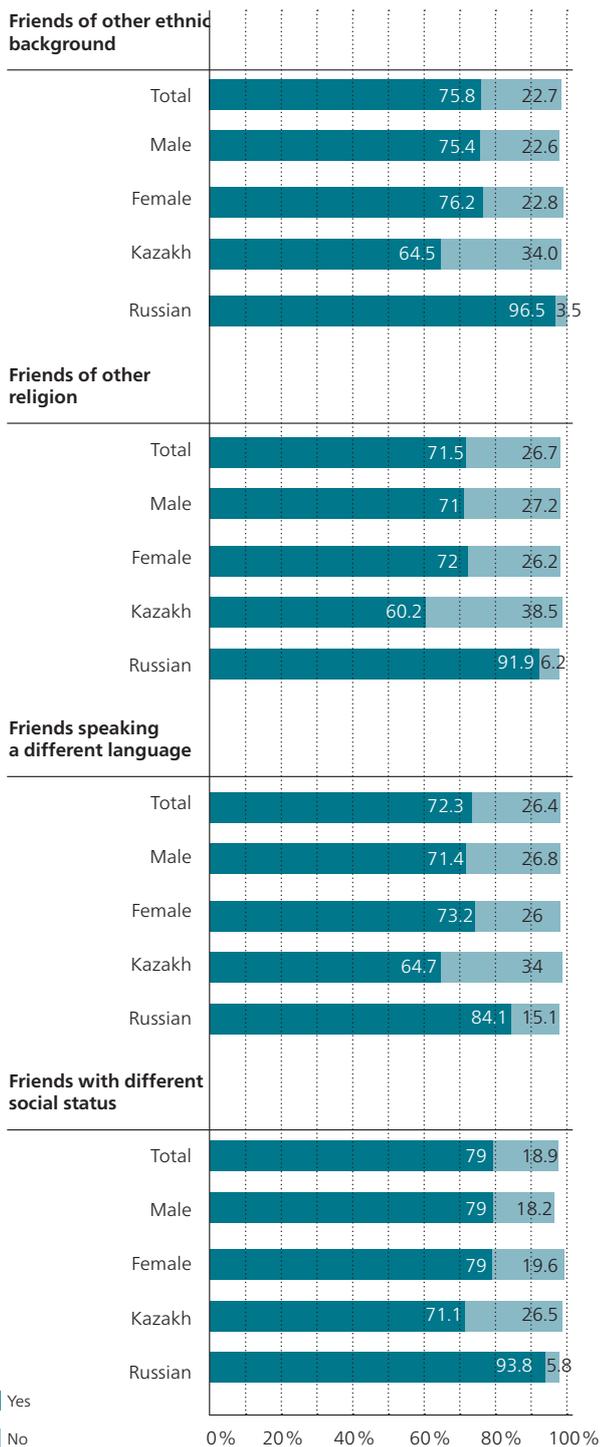
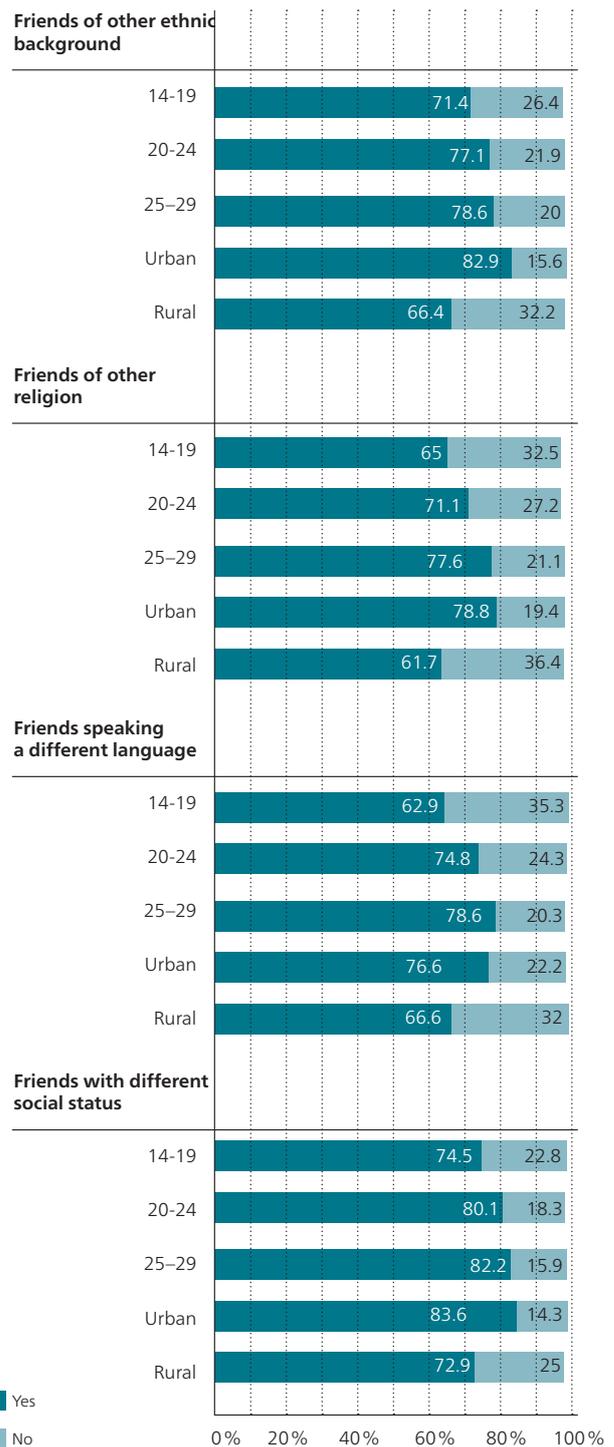


TABLE 9: Inclination for making friends by age group, (in %)



## 2.1.8 TOLERANCE TOWARDS DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS

This survey also intended to examine how young people behave towards representatives of other social groups, especially the socially disadvantaged, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ community. It was important to find out how young people accept different traditions and customs. Specifically, respondents were asked how they would feel if various groups of people moved into their district. In general, the findings corroborate our earlier statement that the young Kazakhstani seem to be less tolerant towards people who belong to other religions or come from a different ethnic background (see Chapter 2.1.1).

As shown above, most of the survey respondents do not want refugees to live in their neighbourhood. Only 14.2% view this perspective positively, but 57.8% of the young people reject it. As shown in the next table, there are some differences between the ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russian youth

regarding this question. Of the ethnic Kazakh youth, 65.8% viewed this possibility negatively while only 9.9% answered affirmatively. In contrast, 46.5% of the ethnic Russian youth rejected these neighbours while 22.1% would welcome them. Moreover, there are differences in negative attitudes towards refugees between young people living in the city and those living in the countryside (52.8% and 64.5% respectively). It is notable that there are no significant differences in attitudes towards neighbours with a refugee background between women and men. In fact, both gender groups share very bad or bad attitudes towards refugees (57.2% of women and 58.4% of male respondents who have very bad to bad attitudes). When it comes to a positive attitude, the differences are not far apart (16% of women and 12.4% of men have a positive attitude towards this prospect).

The prospect of having a Romany neighbour yields similar results. Only 11.3% of total respondents welcome this perspective while 65.3% see this negatively. The data

TABLE 10: Attitudes towards potential neighbours, (in %)

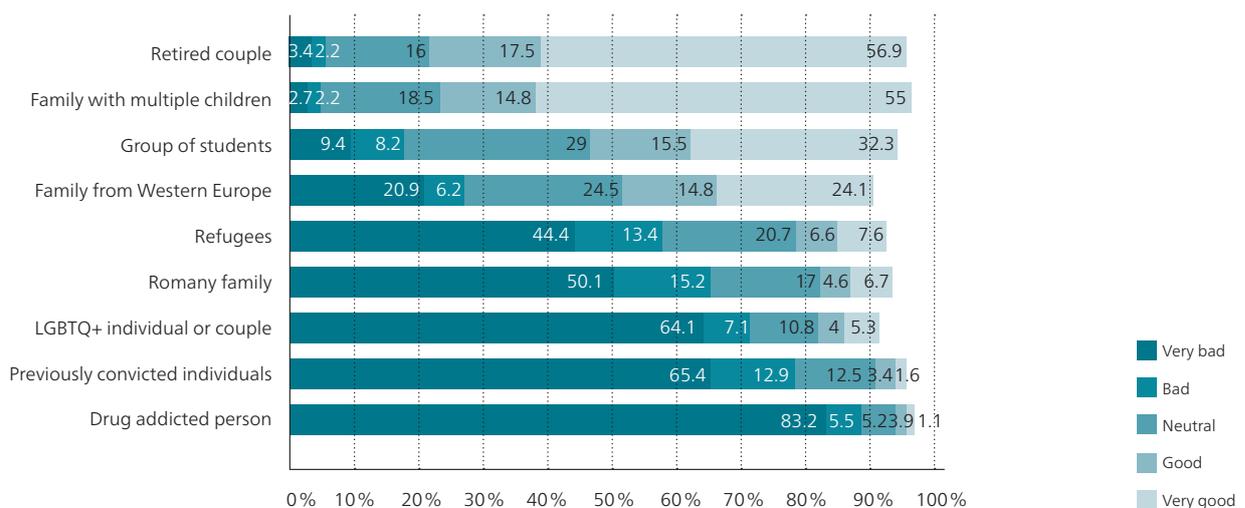


TABLE 11: Attitudes towards Refugee neighbours, (in %)

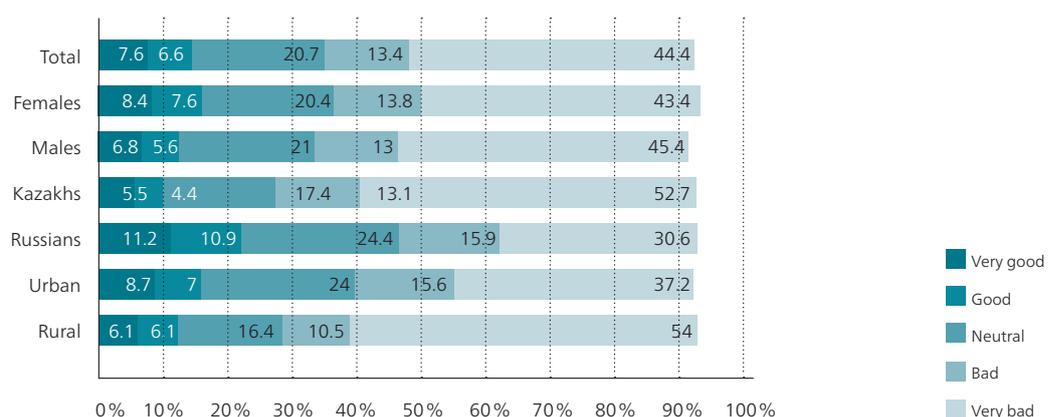
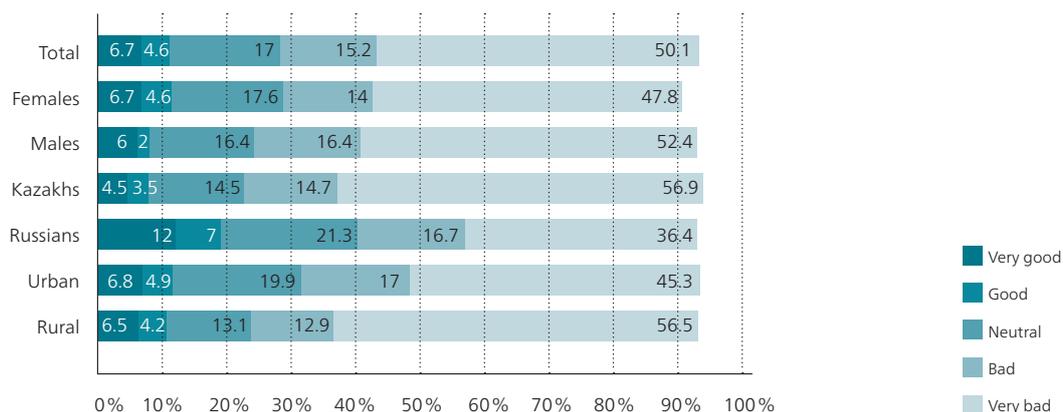


TABLE 12: Attitudes towards Romany neighbours, (in %)



in the next table indicate that females appear to be less negative regarding this situation than males (61.8% and 68.8% respectively). On the other hand, ethnic Russian youth seem to be more tolerant compared to ethnic Kazakh youth (53.1% and 71.6% respectively). Another interesting finding is the difference between urban and rural youth. Regarding these neighbours, rural youth appeared to be less tolerant compared to the urban youth (69.4% and 62.3% respectively).

The attitude of young people towards LGBTQ+ people is similar. When asked how they felt living near LGBTQ+ individuals or couples, only 9.3% of the respondents were willing to share their neighbourhood with them while 71.2% rejected such a prospect. Homophobic attitudes are particularly prevalent among young males. In fact, 77.6% of the males in this study stated that they would feel bad if they had LGBTQ+ people as neighbours while 64.8% of the females felt the same. Some differences can also be found between ethnic Kazakh (73.2%) and ethnic Russian young people (69.0%) who had negative views towards the perspective of sharing the neighbourhood with LGBTQ+ people. As shown in Table 9, living in a big city tends to lead to less homophobic perceptions of same-sex couples among young people. In fact, the percentage of those who were not willing to share a neighbourhood with LGBTQ+ people was 66.1% in urban areas, while it was 78% in rural areas. Correspondingly, more urban youth were willing to share a neighbourhood with LGBTQ+ people than rural youth (12.6% versus 4.9%). The observation that most respondents would react negatively to the question about LGBTQ+ people was partly expected and to a certain extent confirmed previous results. For example, a study commissioned by the Soros Foundation in Kazakhstan in 2009 found dramatic and disturbing facts about society's homophobic and transphobic attitudes towards people with a different sexual orientation.<sup>17</sup> These negative attitudes seem to persist in Kazakhstani society. One of the respondents shared his opinion about same-sex marriage in Kazakhstan,

*"I plan to build a same-sex family. Understandably, in Kazakhstani realities it is impossible to do this, [there is] no support from parents, no support from society. However, the new generation, all my entourage is very tolerant, and they understand that this is not really a choice, [they understand] that it's really biology and psychology. As a scientist, I understand this very well, but society does not understand this, it lives according to the old canons. I have not tried to change my mother's mind either, I understand that I will never get any goodwill or any blessing [from her]."*

Male, 20 years old, student

Additionally, the survey respondents held predominately negative views towards drug addicts and previously convicted people. When asked how they felt about such people moving near them, the answers were negative — 88.7% and 78.3% respectively. As expected, attitudes towards these people were equally negative, regardless of age group, gender, ethnicity and place of residence.

In contrast, most young people had no objections to living next to a family with several children or a retired couple. In fact, the respondents would prefer to have them as neighbours. Only a tiny proportion of respondents had a negative view with 4.9% for a family with several children and 5.6% for retirees. Some young people were also less enthusiastic about the prospect of living next door to a group of students (17.6%).

TABLE 13: Attitudes towards LGBTQ+ neighbours, (in %)

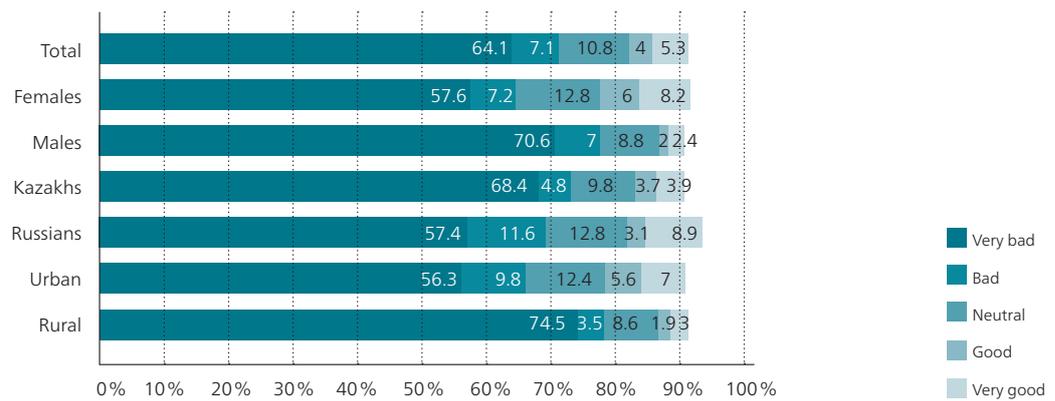


TABLE 14: Attitudes towards people with drug addiction, (in %)

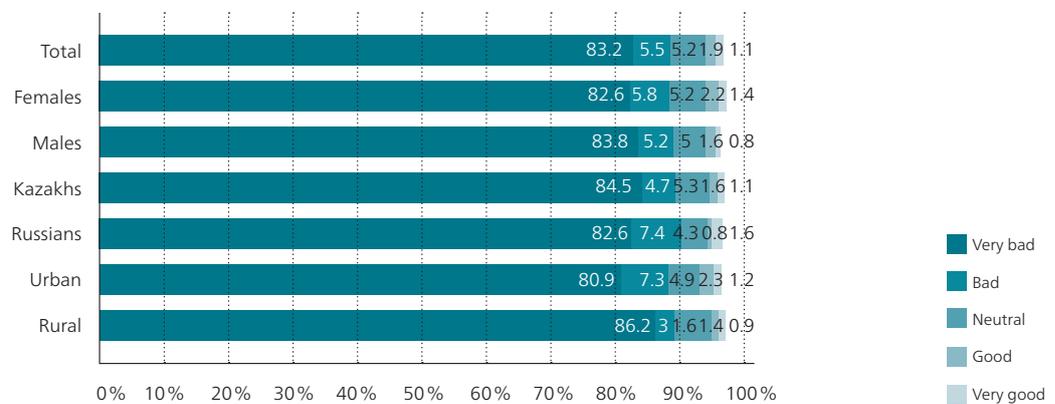
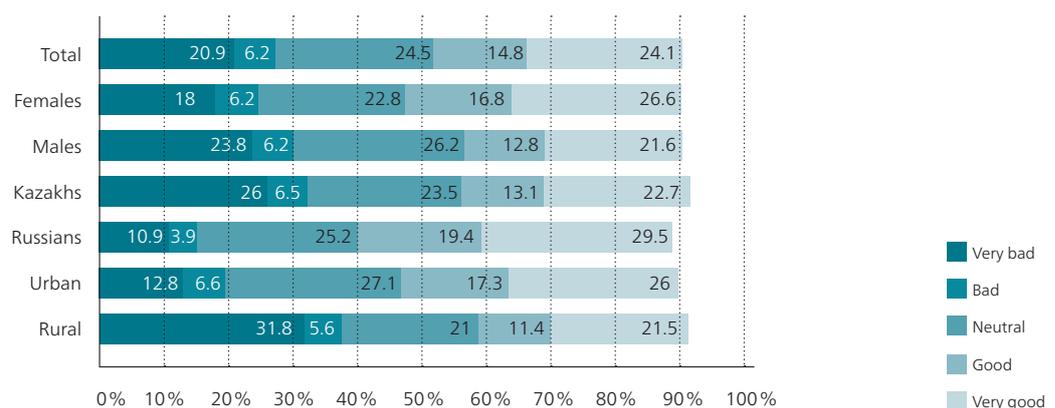


TABLE 15: Attitudes towards neighbours from Western Europe, (in %)

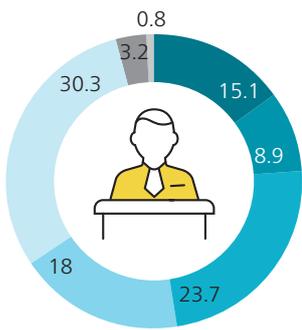


Surprisingly, comparatively few young people were willing to welcome Western European neighbours. Only 38.9% of the young people surveyed have a 'very good' or 'good' feeling about this prospect, while a total of 27.1% of respondents have a 'very bad' or 'bad' feeling about this prospect. The differences are particularly striking when looking at the data in relation to the ethnicity of the

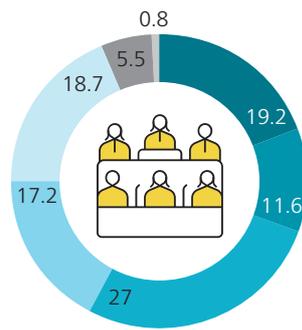
respondents. The survey found that overall 14.8% of Russian youth have a negative attitude towards the prospect of living in a neighbourhood with a family from Western Europe. Among Kazakh youth, the figure is even higher, at 32.5%. Positive attitudes towards Western European neighbours prevails among 35.8% of Kazakhs and 48.9% of Russians. Another surprising finding is that overall 37.4% of rural

**IN GENERAL, HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE PERSONS AND ORGANISATIONS LISTED BELOW? (in %)**

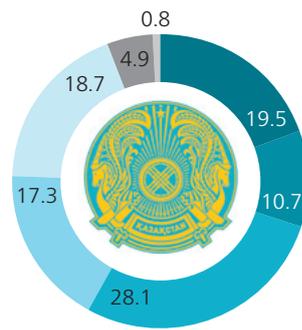
■ No trust ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ Full trust  
■ I don't know ■ No answer



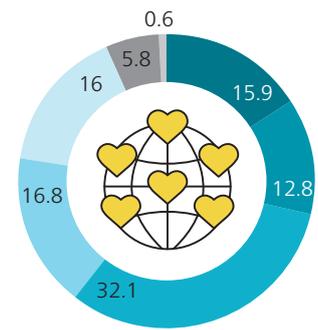
**President**



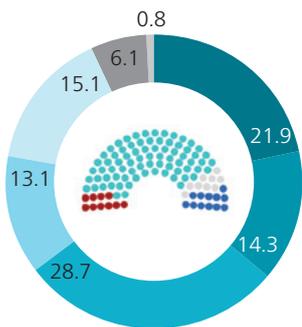
**Parliament**



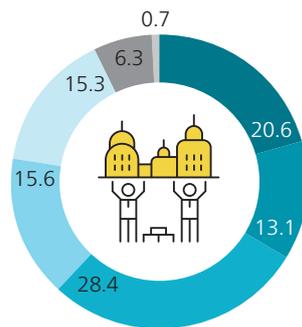
**National government**



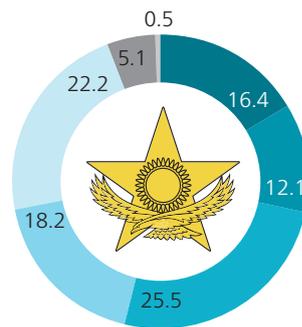
**NGOs**



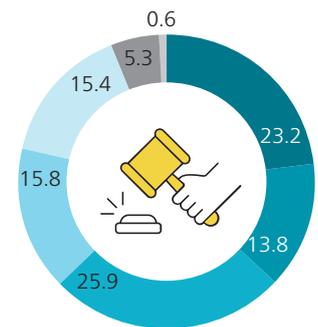
**Political parties**



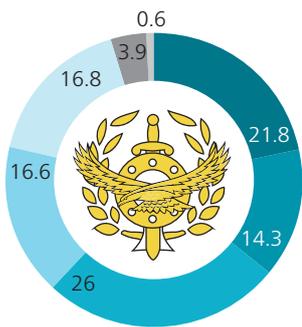
**Local administration bodies**



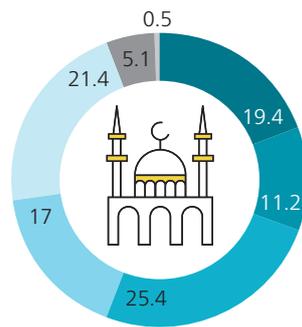
**Army**



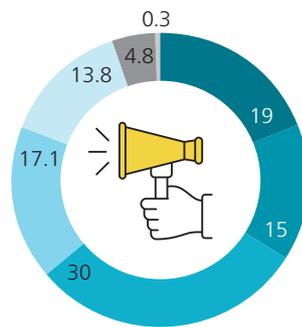
**Judiciary (courts)**



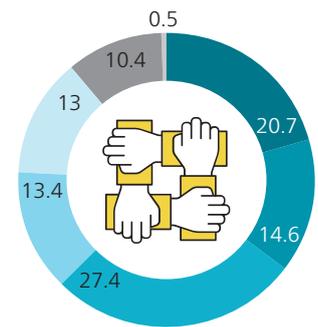
**Police**



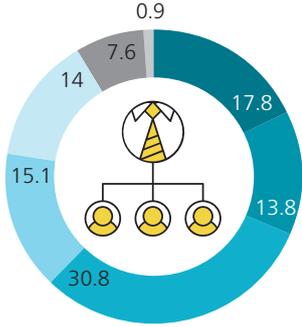
**Church, religious institutions**



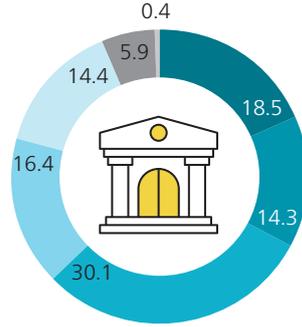
**Media in Kazakhstan**



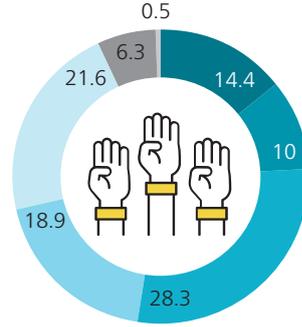
**Trade unions**



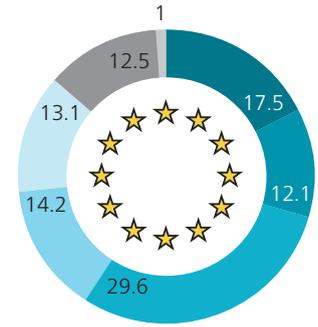
**Large companies**



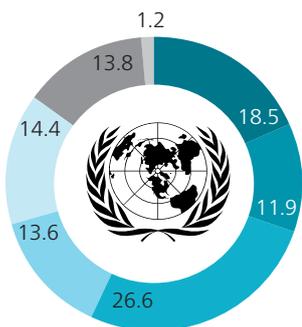
**Banks**



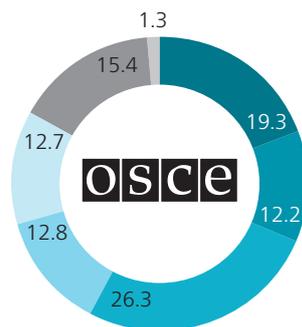
**Volunteer movements**



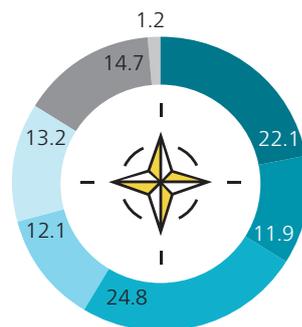
**European Union**



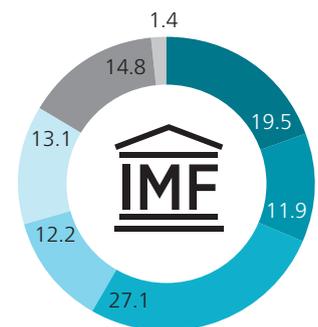
**UN**



**OSCE**



**NATO**



**IMF**

residents have a 'very bad' or 'bad' attitude towards Western European neighbours, compared to 19.4 % of the urban population.

## 2.1.9 TRUST TOWARDS POLITICAL LEADERS

Far less trust is placed towards political leaders. Indeed, only 13.8% of the young people have full confidence in them while a much larger number of young people, 56.1%, appear to have no trust in them at all. Males and females have very close levels of mistrust towards political leaders (55.8% and 56.4% respectively). Looking at the data in terms of the respondents' age, the level of mistrust towards political leaders is also almost the same across age groups. Of the 25 to 29-year-old group, 59.5% of the respondents have distrust in political leadership. Similarly, 57.5% of the 20 to 24-year-old cohort distrusts the leadership and 51.1% of those aged 14 to 19 feel the same.

In terms of ethnicity, those with Russian backgrounds seem to have more mistrust (63.2%) than the ethnic Kazakh youth (51.3%). The number of young ethnic Ukrainians who have no trust in the political leadership is 87.5% so this should be an alarming finding. For a lack of trust among young people, who as previously mentioned currently make up more than half of the population, could arguably affect their willingness to respond to public policies. The number of young people who expressed trust in the government is

also notable. Among the ethnic Russians, it is a tiny 7.4%, compared to 17.4% among ethnic Kazakhs and 0% among ethnic Ukrainian youth. This is another remarkable finding that deserves further investigation. As suggested above, the low level of trust amongst the non-Kazakh population towards the political leadership and the government may be because of their dissatisfaction with the increasing Kazakhization of society. Furthermore, there is also a striking difference in the degree of trust in politicians between urban and rural residents. In the cities, only 11.3% of the youth seem to trust politicians while a much larger proportion of urban youth, 63.2%, do not. In the rural areas, 17.0% trust them whereas a much larger proportion of youth also seem to distrust political leaders, 46.7%.

## 2.2 DISCRIMINATION

Given the fact that young Kazakhstanis displayed a low level of interpersonal trust and tolerance towards people who looked or thought differently, it was imperative to also investigate whether they had ever been discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, religious beliefs or political convictions. However, as the table below shows, the surveyed young people relatively rarely experienced discrimination so far in their lives. However, female respondents reported that they had experienced discrimination far more often than male respondents.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that ethnic Russians were discriminated against far more often than

TABLE 16: Trust towards political leaders, (in %)

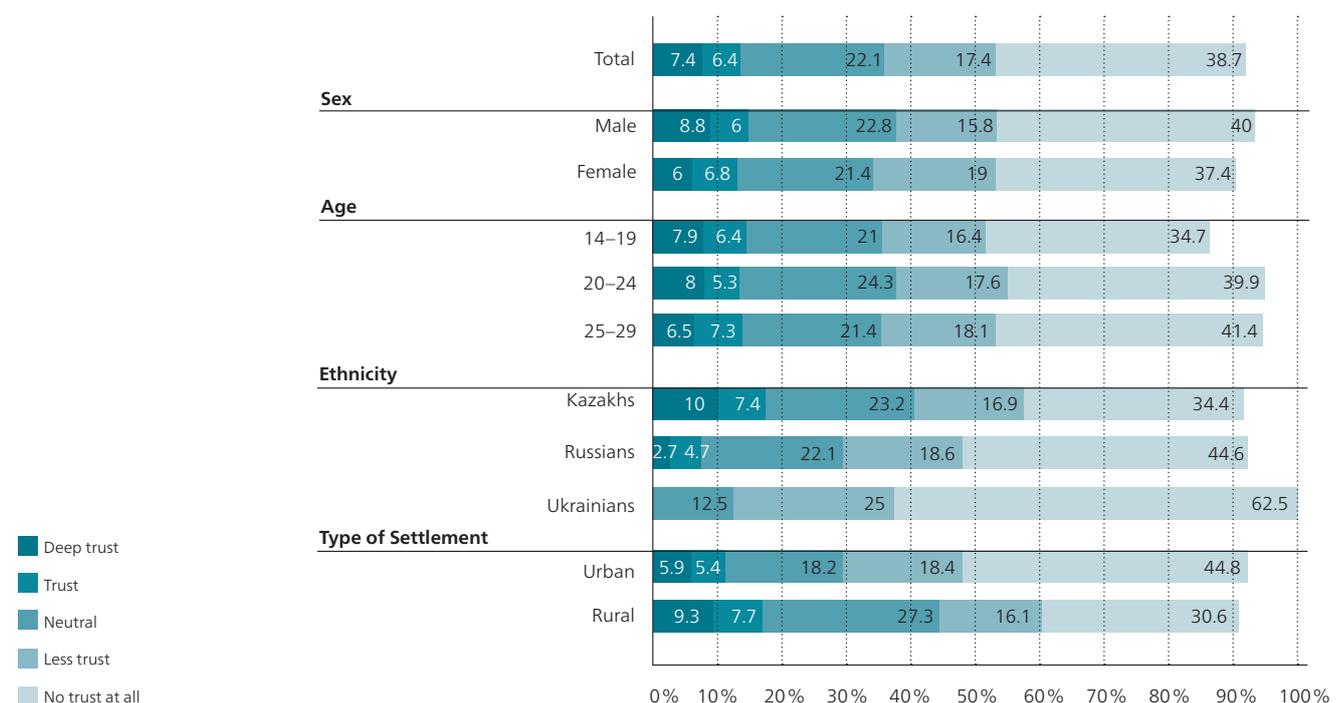
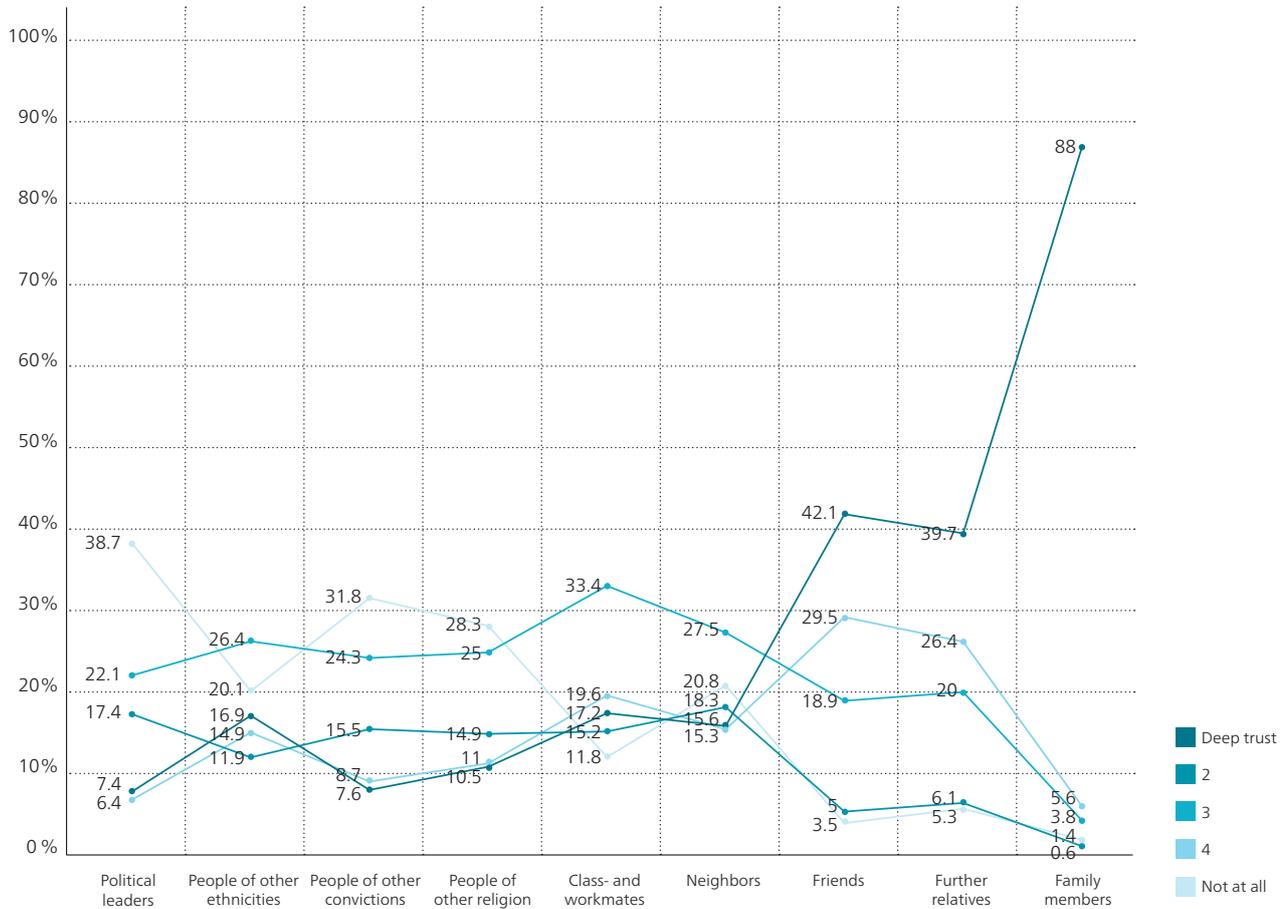


FIGURE 2: Summary of trust scores of young people, (in %)



ethnic Kazakhs. However, the number of people who have experienced discrimination ‘from time to time’ on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, political opinion or language is still high, even reaching double digits (e.g. for ethnicity and language). This is an important finding that begs further investigation.

In terms of ethnicity, for example, only 3.9% of the respondents reported that they were often discriminated against on this basis while 11.5% of them experienced discrimination from time to time. On the other hand, 82.5% of the young people stated that they had never been discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic origin. It is noticeable that ethnic Russians reported being discriminated against much more often on the basis of their ethnicity than Kazakhs. In fact, 76% of the ethnic Russians and 60.7% of ethnic Uzbeks, compared to 88.9% of the ethnic Kazakhs stated that they had never experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnic origin. Furthermore, 22.5% of ethnic Russians and 32.2% of ethnic Uzbeks as compared to 9.3% of ethnic Kazakhs said that they experienced discrimination from time to time or frequently. In relation to this question, females seem to be discriminated against much more often than males. In fact, 17% of the females reported

TABLE 17: Frequency of Discrimination experiences, (in %)

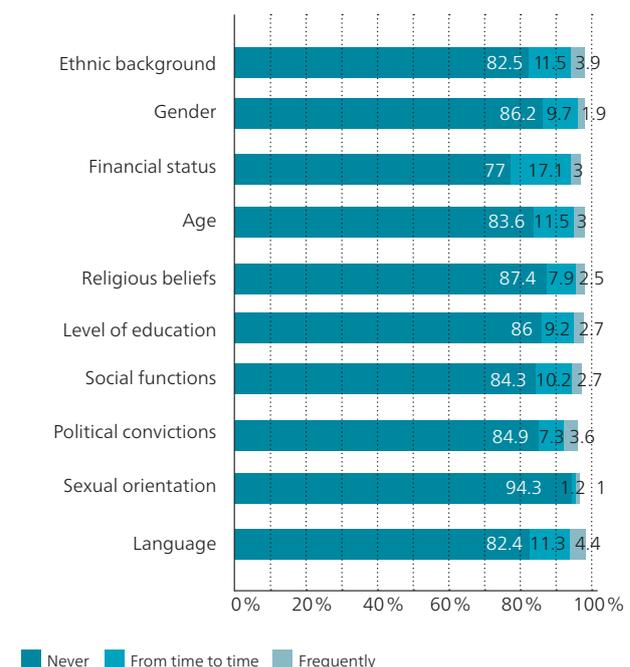
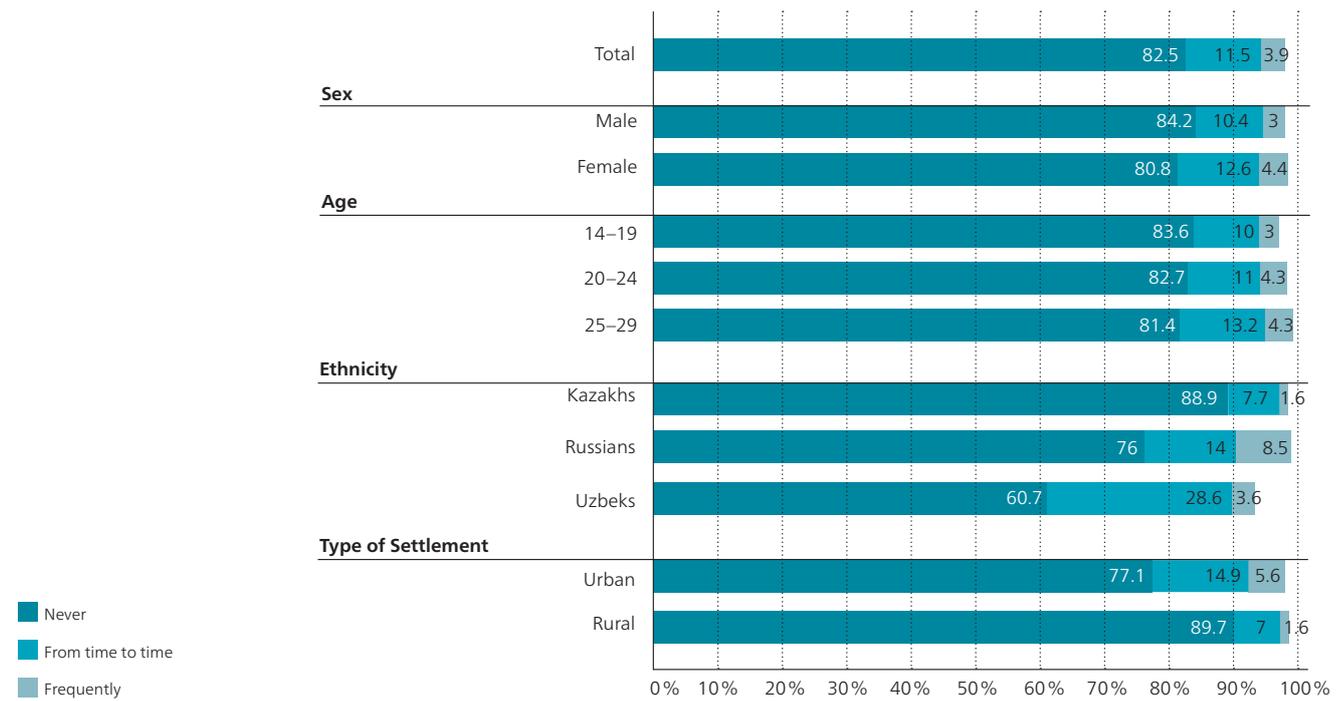
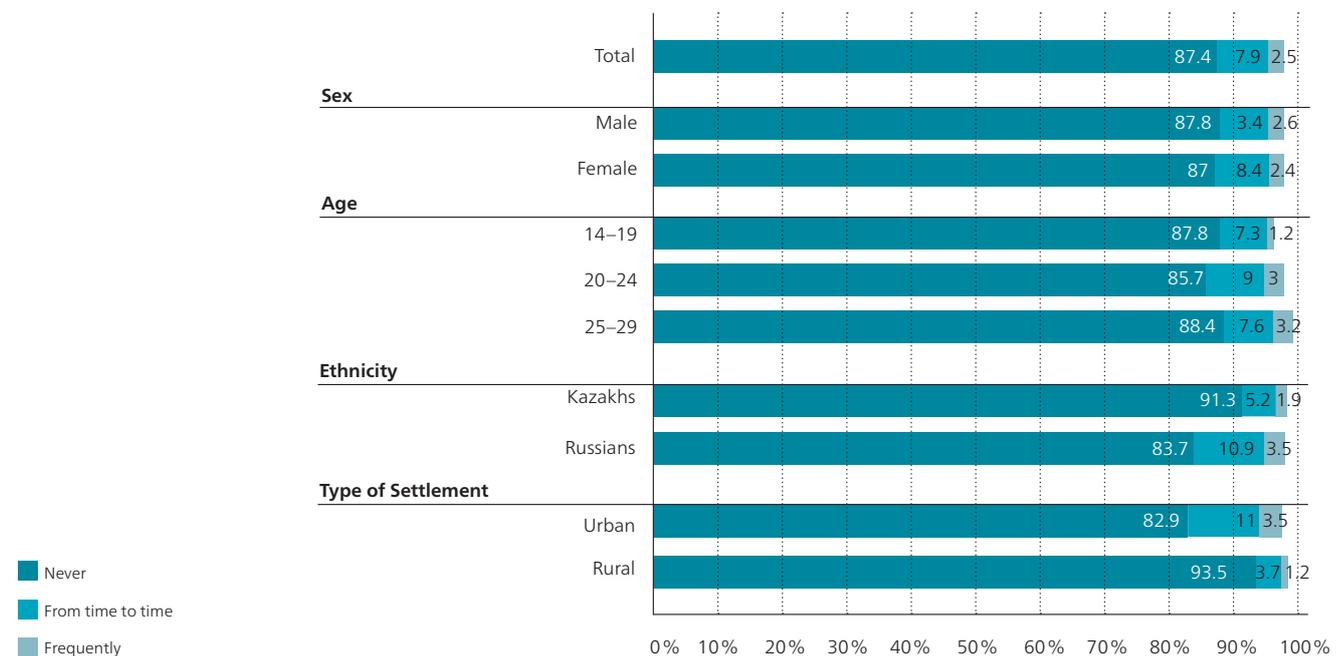


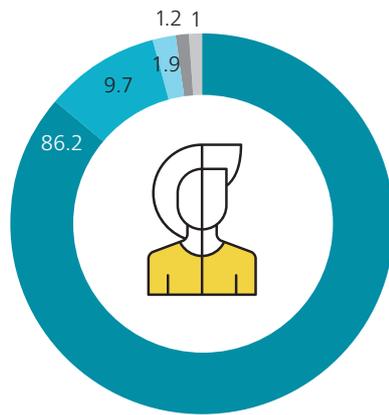
TABLE 18: **Ethnic discrimination by ethnicity, age, sex and residence, (in %)**TABLE 19: **Religious discrimination, (in %)**

that they were discriminated against either from time to time or frequently (compared to 13.8% of males). Also, in terms of age groups, it appears that more 25 to 29-year-old respondents (17.5%) experienced ethnic discrimination from time to time or frequently compared to 14 to 19-year-olds (13%). It was also crucial that urban youth experienced discrimination more than the rural youth (20.5% and 8.6% respectively).

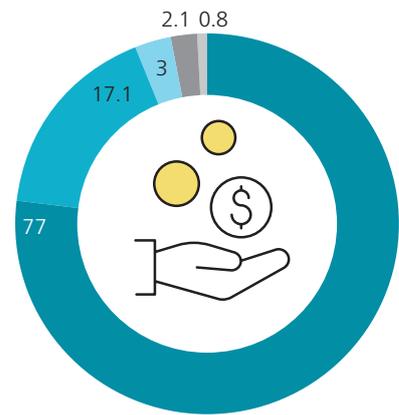
In terms of religion, 87.4% of the young people stated that they had never been discriminated against on the basis of their religion, but 2.5% and 7.9% of them had experienced it often or occasionally. There are also some differences in terms of ethnicity, with ethnic Russians are more likely (14.4%) than ethnic Kazakhs (7.1%) to say that they are discriminated against 'from time to time' or 'frequently' because of their religion.

**HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS? (in %)**

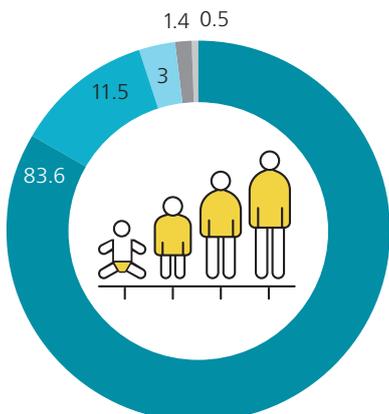
■ Never 
 ■ From time to time 
 ■ Frequently 
 ■ I don't know 
 ■ No answer



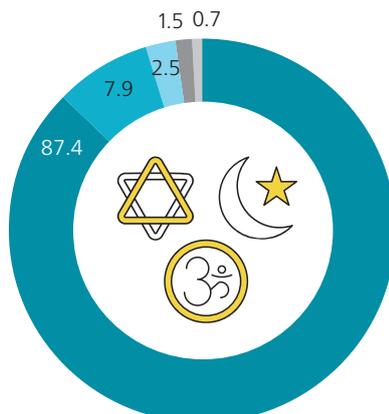
Your sex (male/female)



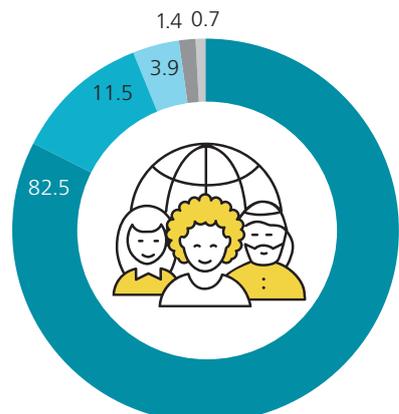
Financial status (bad/good)



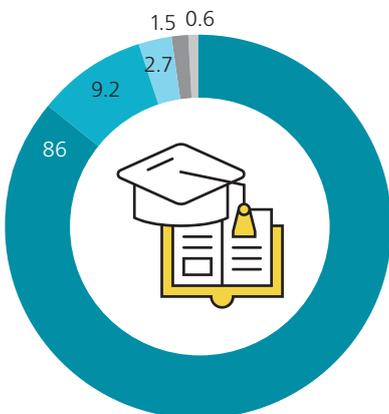
Your age



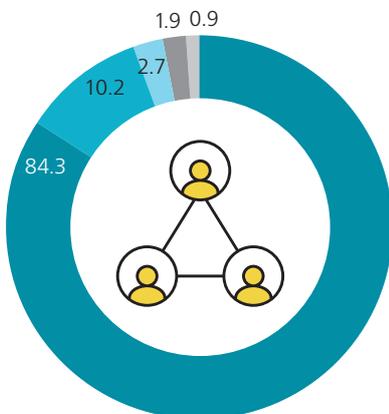
Religious beliefs



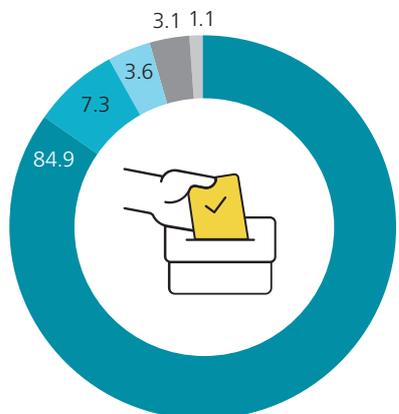
Your ethnic background



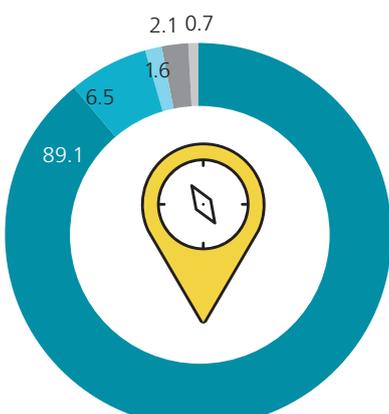
Your level of education



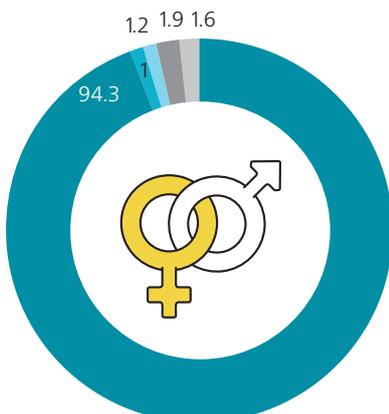
Your social functions



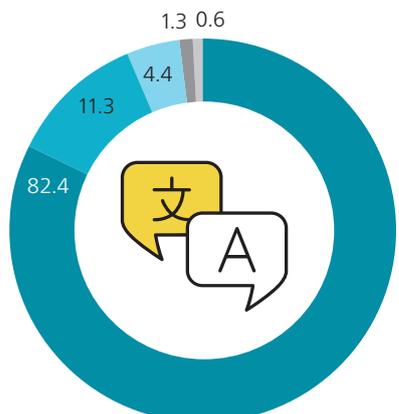
Your political convictions



Your geographic location



Your sexual orientation



Your language

As far as discrimination based on political convictions is concerned, the survey results are quite similar. While 86% of young people stated that they had never experienced discrimination based on their political beliefs, 3.6% had experienced discrimination frequently and 7.6% occasionally. The young ethnic Kazakhs reported being discriminated against more often because of their political views than the ethnic Russians (10.6% and 8.5% respectively). An almost negligible degree of discrimination was experienced regarding someone's sexual orientation. In fact, only 1% and 1.2% of young people respectively reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation either from time to time or frequently.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, 94.3% of the young people stated that they had never been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Contrary to this, the respondents were more often discriminated against on the basis of their financial status and social function with 20.1% and 12.9% respectively reporting this.

## 2.3 TOLERANCE

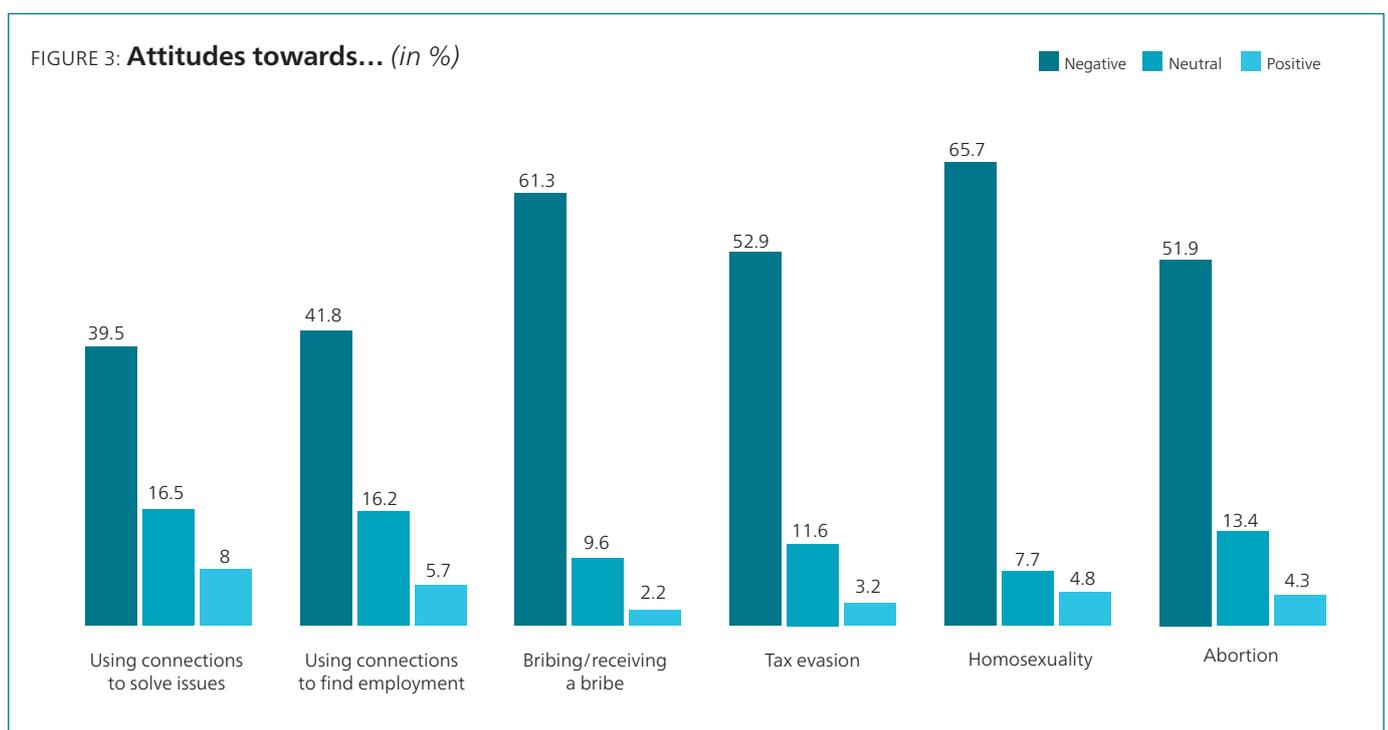
The current study also aimed at understanding young people's attitudes towards different and relatively common social practices and behaviours. The results show that most of the young people surveyed believed that phenomena such as abortion, bribery, tax evasion, and exploiting personal connections to find work were not justifiable. This indicates that young people's attitudes towards these phenomena and sexual practices have not changed significantly since the last FES study in 2016.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.3.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORRUPTION

As the next table illustrates, the majority of young Kazakhstanis have a negative attitude towards corruption. The survey asked the young people to rate their answer to the question "In your opinion, can the following types of behaviour ever be justified, never justified, or something in between?" on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 corresponds with 'never' and 10 with 'always'. Of those surveyed, 61.3% stated that corruption should never be accepted. Only a small minority, 9.6%, stated that it could sometimes be accepted, while 2.2% stated that bribing someone or receiving a bribe could always be accepted. The survey revealed that these negative attitudes towards corruption are equally high in all age groups. Even in the 14-19 age group, corruption was rejected by 60.2%, while only 2.7% said it was always justifiable. There is little difference in the rejection of corruption among young people of different ethnicities. Both Kazakhs and Russians reject bribery with 63.5% and 58.1% respectively, while 17.1% of the ethnic Russians have a positive attitude towards corruption in contrast to 9.9% of the Kazakhs. Moreover, the acceptance rate for corruption was slightly higher in the urban cohort (14.9%) compared to the rural youth (7.7%).

## 2.3.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY

It has also been found that a relatively large proportion of young people have rather negative attitude towards homosexuality. Same-sex sexual relations are not illegal in Kazakhstan. However,



the registration of same-sex marriage is officially prohibited. Same-sex couples, for example, do not enjoy the same legal protection as heterosexual couples. Furthermore, same-sex couples are prohibited from entering into legal marriage and adopting children.<sup>21</sup> In this context, it is not surprising that most young people have a negative attitude towards same-sex marriage. Indeed, 65.7% of the young people stated that same-sex relationships should never be accepted, while only 7.7% and 4.8% respectively stated that it can be accepted 'sometimes' or 'always'. Homosexuality is particularly strongly rejected among young males. In particular, 71.8% of the male respondents rejected homosexuality as compared to 59.6% of the females. Also, different attitudes were revealed between different ethnicities. Among the ethnic Kazakh respondents, homosexuality was rejected by 68.9% of them compared to 58.1% of the ethnic Russians. Homosexuality is more accepted among ethnic Russian youth than among ethnic Kazakh youth (19.4% and 9.2% respectively). As expected, homosexuality is

more accepted among urban youth whereas rural youth still seemed more tradition-bound (16.1% and 7.7% respectively).

### 2.3.3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

Abortion is a matter of concern for most young people. Next to homosexuality, abortion is another matter of concern for most young people. There is no real discussion in the country about the right of women to legal abortion, albeit the abortion rate in Kazakhstan exceeds the rate in the economically developed countries.<sup>22</sup> According to our survey, 51.9% of the youth did not believe abortion was ever justified. Only 13.4% and 4.3% respectively stated that abortion could be allowed 'sometimes' and 'always'. As expected, there are differences in attitudes towards abortion between males and females. While 50.6% of the females reject abortion, 6% think that abortion should be

TABLE 20: Justification for bribing/receiving a bribe, (in %)

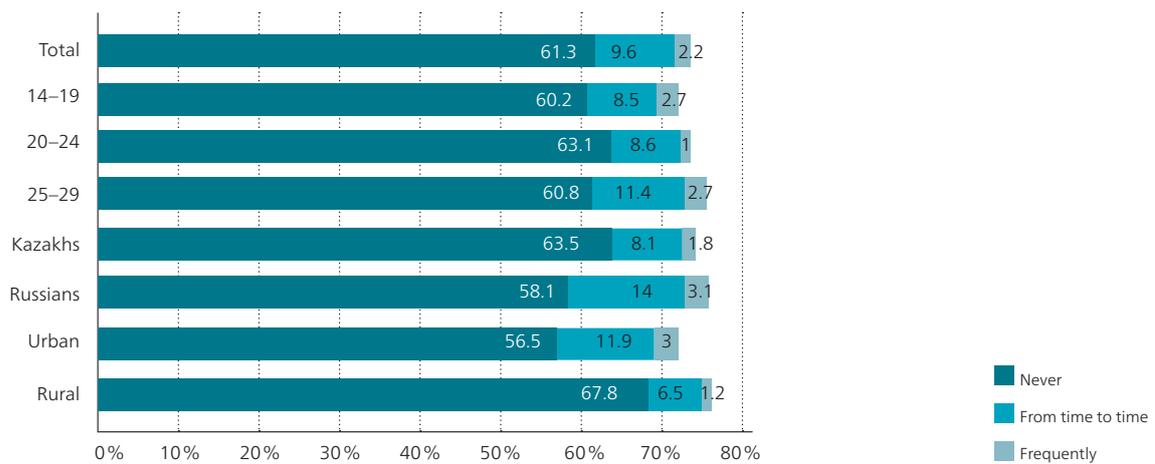
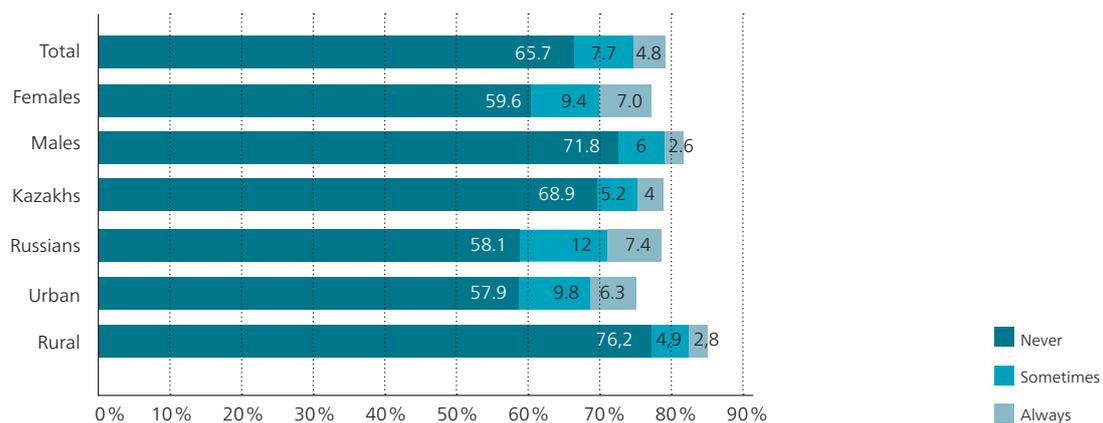


TABLE 21: Attitudes towards homosexuality, (in %)



allowed. Among the young men, 53.2% viewed it negatively compared to 2.6% of those who viewed abortion in positive terms. More remarkable is the difference in attitude towards abortion between ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russian youth. Among the ethnic Kazakhs, 58.4% of those surveyed rejected abortion. The survey revealed this negative view is much lower among ethnic Russian young people, namely the 39.5% who were against abortion. Obviously, the differences in attitudes towards abortion between ethnic Kazakh and ethnic Russian youth are related to the differences in the attitudes towards sexuality, which we will discuss in greater detail in the next section.

### 2.3.4 SEXUAL PRACTICES

In terms of attitudes and behaviours regarding sexuality, this study has revealed that at least a third of the young people in Kazakhstan appreciate more sexual freedom and believe that a premarital abstinence is an antiquated view (32.1%). Moreover, almost 15% believe that it places an unnecessary psychological burden on young people. Only 14.7% of the young people believe that virginity is still valuable and should be valued by both women and men: More females than males said that virginity should be valued and observed by both sexes (16.4% and 13.3% respectively) while 28.8% of the females and 18.1% of the males responded that it is important for females only. Almost half of the interviewees indicated that they had had sex either with one or several partners already (48.9%) while 30% said that they had not experienced sex yet. Virginity remains an issue for young women in particular. Males reported starting their sexual activity earlier in comparison to the female respondents. Only 17.8% of the male respondents had not had any sexual experience before the research began while for females this figure was 40.2%. Most respondents became sexually active after reaching adolescence. Only 19.4% of those aged between 14 and 19 years old indicated that they had sex while 68.7% said that they had never had sex before. Of those in the 20 to 24-year-old age group, 22.1% had no sexual experience. There are only slight differences if ethnicity is considered. Among ethnic Kazakh youth, 28.7% said they had never had sex compared to 30% of the ethnic Russian youth.

Using contraception during sex seems to be common for the majority of young people. Specifically, 41% of the respondents indicated using it frequently while 16% indicated using it sometimes. Only 2.6% of the respondents, overwhelmingly young males, did not know what contraception meant. However, when it comes to using contraception during sex, more female participants than males indicated that they never use it (38.4% and 22.9% respectively). Contraceptive measures are less popular among ethnic Kazakh youth. The number of ethnic Kazakh respondents, who reported using them infrequently or as a

rule is 50.7% while it is 58.1% for ethnic Russian youth. At the same time, the number of ethnic Kazakhs who had never used contraception during sex is 39% while it is 21.8% for ethnic Russians.

### 2.3.5 ORIENTATION TOWARDS FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Family is something that remains sacrosanct for young people in Kazakhstan. The majority of the surveyed young people live with their parents and have never permanently moved out of the parents' home. According to the data, 70.3% of the Kazakhstani youth live with their parents while 68.8% of the respondents said that they have never moved permanently out of the family home. Sixty six percent share the view that living with parents is the easiest and most comfortable arrangement. Almost 70% of the respondents reported that they get along with their parents well, and 27.5% of the respondents said they get along well with them although sometimes they have differences in opinion. Only 1.8% of the respondents said that they do not get well and often argue with their parents. At the same time, almost half of all the respondents believe and appreciate the view that young people need strict discipline from their parents (43%) while only 11.7% disagreed with this statement. As stated by many respondents, in most instances it is the family that teaches young people about rules in society and how one should behave. When asked if their parents taught them about those rules and how often, 61.9% of respondents said that it happened many times, while only 2.7% said it never happened. A third of the young people seem to take regular part in family discussions about the rules in the family. Specifically, 36.8% of the respondents indicated that they participated in establishing family rules 'many times' while only 11.2% had never done it.

Almost a quarter of the respondents want to live separately from their parents (23.3%). More males than females tend to live with their parents (74% and 66.6% respectively). Looking at the ethnicity data, ethnic Kazakhs appear to stick more to their immediate families than ethnic Russians (72.7% and 65.9% respectively). For most of the respondents, the parents serve as role models, particularly so when it comes to raising children. For instance, when asked if they would raise their children like their parents did, more than 71.9% of the respondents chose the option 'nearly the same way' or 'the same way'. Within the family, it is particularly mothers whom the young people listen to and who have the most impact on the decisions that the young people take (57.2% for mothers versus 37.1% for fathers) albeit there are some few differences in terms of gender. For instance, female respondents are more likely to listen to their mothers (63.4% for mothers as opposed to 25.6% who listen to fathers) while for males the numbers are quite similar (51% and 48.6% respectively).

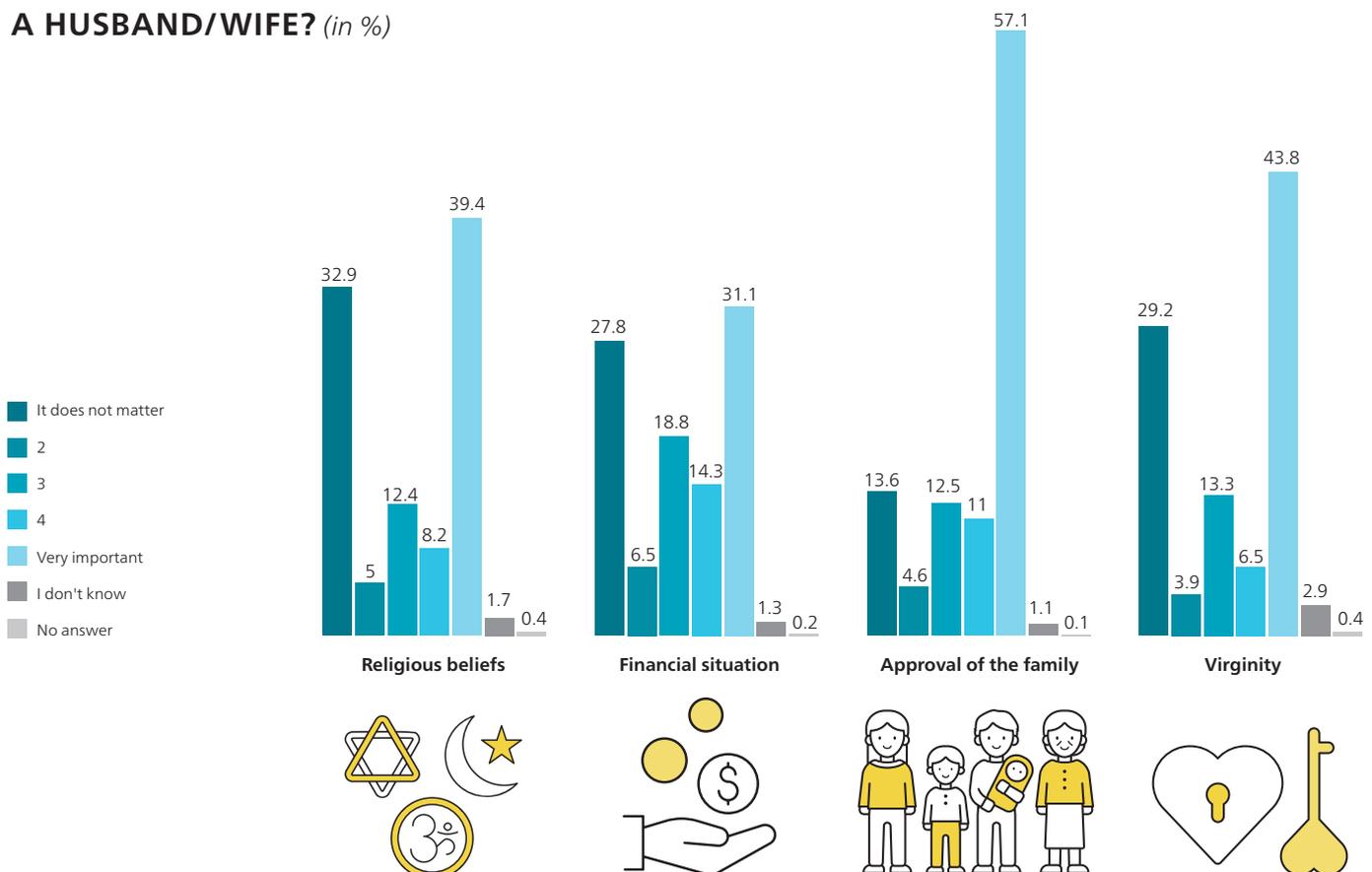
Most young people consider marriage as a very important step in their life and envision having a family and children in the future. Indeed, 64.6% of all the respondents stated they view getting married as very important and only 8% believe it does not matter. Furthermore, 86.1% of all the respondents prefer to have a family with children. The demographic data showed that 29.3% of the respondents are married while 58.2% of the respondents reported not being in a relationship yet. According to the survey, 66.3% of all the respondents reported to have never married prior to the research study. Among the male respondents, 72.2% have never married while 60.4% of the females had not. Only 6.5% of the ethnic Kazakhs respondents got married between 17 and 20 years of age. This trend is somewhat higher for young ethnic Russians. As found out during the survey, 11.7% of them got married in the same age group. Interestingly, expected marriage age is quite high. This is even true for ethnic Kazakhs who traditionally tended to get married quite early.<sup>23</sup> Most respondents believe that the optimum age for women to marry is the age of 25 (21.6%) followed by 19.2% who believe that women should marry at the age of 20. A slightly different picture emerges for males. Most respondents said that men should marry at the age of 25 (30.2%) followed by 12.7% who said that males should marry at the age of 30. When

asked for the number of children they wish to have in the future, most of the youth imagine two (31%) or three (29.3%) children. Far fewer respondents wish to have four (12.3%) or more children (15.7%). Most of the married respondents are happy with their marriage (79.5%) while only 1.7% and 0.6% assured that they are 'absolutely dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied' respectively. The responses are similar across age and gender. One of the respondents shares her outlook on family,

*"I didn't know that I wanted a family before, I wanted to work, to advance [my human capital]. But now I do not only think about work, and I don't want to live for that [career] only, but to create a good family and to live well. It's not just a dream, but it seems I am already doing it"*

Female, 24 years old, office worker

**IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN CHOOSING A HUSBAND/WIFE? (in %)**



When considering the choice of a partner, the overwhelming majority of the respondents consider the following traits to be very important: person's character traits (65.1%), common interests (64%), approval of the family (57.1%) and education level (45.2%). This is followed by their virginity (43.8%) and their appearance (42.7%). Ethnic background, religious beliefs, financial situation are considered very important by 44.3%, 39.4% and 31.1% of the respondents respectively. One of the respondents comments on marrying a person with different ethnic background,

*“ Because every nation has its own priorities, its own views on life and since I am a Muslim and just a Kazakh, and we have traditions, as it were, I think that if I married a member of another nation, there would be a misunderstanding between traditions and views on life.”*

Female, 24 years old, private company worker

Common-law marriage, living together with one's boyfriend or girlfriend, is not as widespread as it is in European societies yet. Of those surveyed, only 2% stated that they live together with their boyfriend or girlfriend, and only 1.1% of the respondents prefer to live with their boyfriend or girlfriend without getting married. On the other hand, 70% stated that they have never moved in with their boyfriend or girlfriend. However, differences are revealed when considering age and ethnicity. It is more likely for young people in the age group between 25 and 29 years of age to move in with their partner. Indeed, only 39.2% of the young people in this age group indicated that they have never moved in with their partner. In comparison, in the age group between 20 and 24 years old, 78.4% still had no experience of living with their partner. It is interesting to observe how the tendency to move in with one's boyfriend or girlfriend was distributed in terms of ethnicity. While 75.8% of the ethnic Kazakh youth stated that they had never lived with their partner, a significantly lower percentage (57.8%) of ethnic Russians said the same. An explanation for this discrepancy may be related to family background. In the ethnic Kazakh families, traditional values and attitudes towards family and chastity are strong while it appears there is less emphasis on these values within ethnic Russian families.<sup>24</sup> The remaining respondents were in a relationship but lived separately (8.5%), were divorced (1.9%) or were widowed (0.1%).

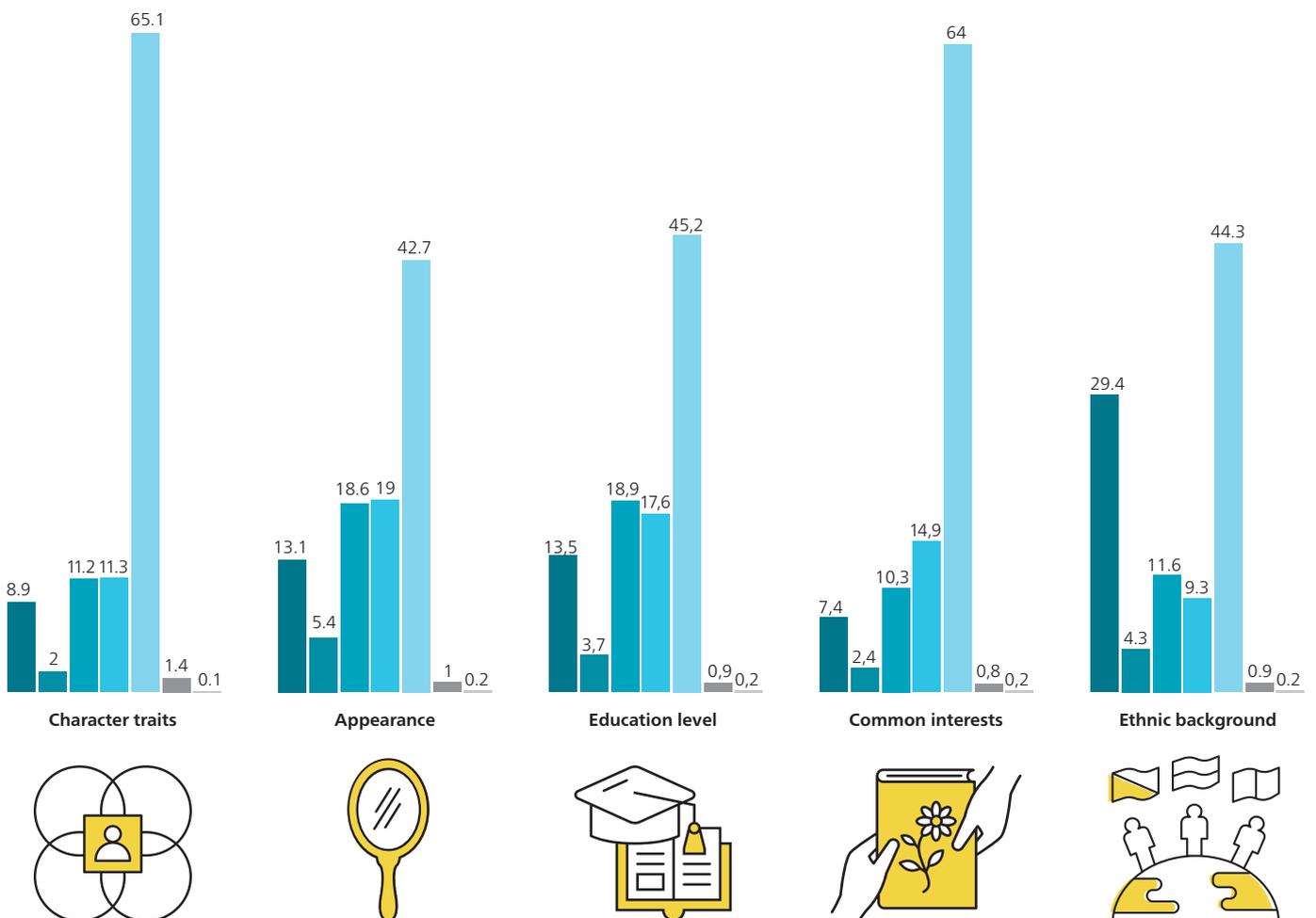
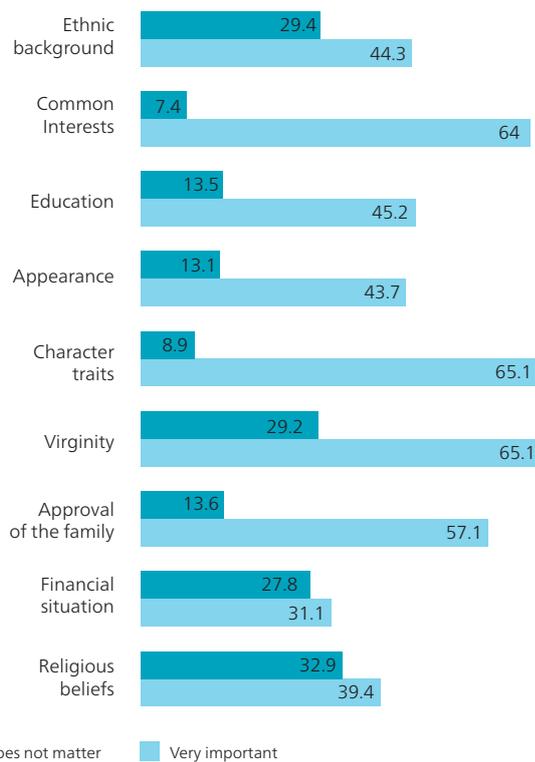


FIGURE 4: **Criteria in the choice of a life partner, (in %)**



At the same time, however, most respondents identify themselves as Muslims (63.9%), followed by those who affiliate themselves with Orthodox Christianity (23.6%) and other denominations such as Catholicism (0.7%), Protestantism (0.6) and Buddhism (0.2%). 10.2% of the young people reported they do not affiliate themselves with any organised religion or denomination (10.2%). When it comes to practicing their religion, however, it was revealed that only 14.8% of the young people belong to religious communities and observe religious norms regularly. When asked about attending religious services apart from weddings and funerals, 30.2% reported never attending them at all. The remaining young people responded they attend religious services only on special occasions (16%), once a month (10%), once a year (16.5%) and less than once a year (12.5%). On the other hand, a far greater majority, namely 55.1% of the respondents, indicated that they are religious but do not take part in religious life at all. This finding is notable as it speaks to the fact that religion does not play a central role in the life of young Kazakhstanis. It might further be the result of upbringing in an environment where religion does not play a decisive role. Indeed, only a little proportion (4.6%) of the respondents said that their parents are 'very religious.' In addition, it was revealed that the ethnic Kazakh youth is more religious than the ethnic Russian youth (18.1% and 5.4% respectively). Furthermore, young people in rural areas are more religious than those who live in the urban areas (19.9% and 11% respectively). One of the respondents shares his opinion on how the Internet affects people's religious beliefs,

### 2.3.6 RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, religion started to play a more visible role in the life of Kazakhstani citizens. To some extent, the surge of interest in religion could be because the absence of the dominant Soviet ideology left an ideological vacuum that people sought to fill by turning to faith.<sup>25</sup> Because of this possible ideological shift, the Kazakhstani youth were asked about their attitudes towards religion. Overall, it was revealed that the majority of youth considered themselves to be non-religious, in the sense that they do not follow religious practices. One of the respondents comments on that,

*"The internet helps to make people non-believers, because all the information is available there, and it often says that religion is designed to control people. Some people believe this information and shield themselves from religion so that they are not slaves, [they want] to be free."*

Male, 17 years old, student

*"Well, let's start with the issues of religion. I'll tell you straight away that religion doesn't play a decisive role in my life. I mean, I don't assess if my actions, my deeds comply with religion, yeah. But still, I wouldn't call myself an atheist. I do have some beliefs, though."*

Male, 23 years old, working

## IN WHICH RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION DO YOU AFFILIATE YOURSELF WITH?

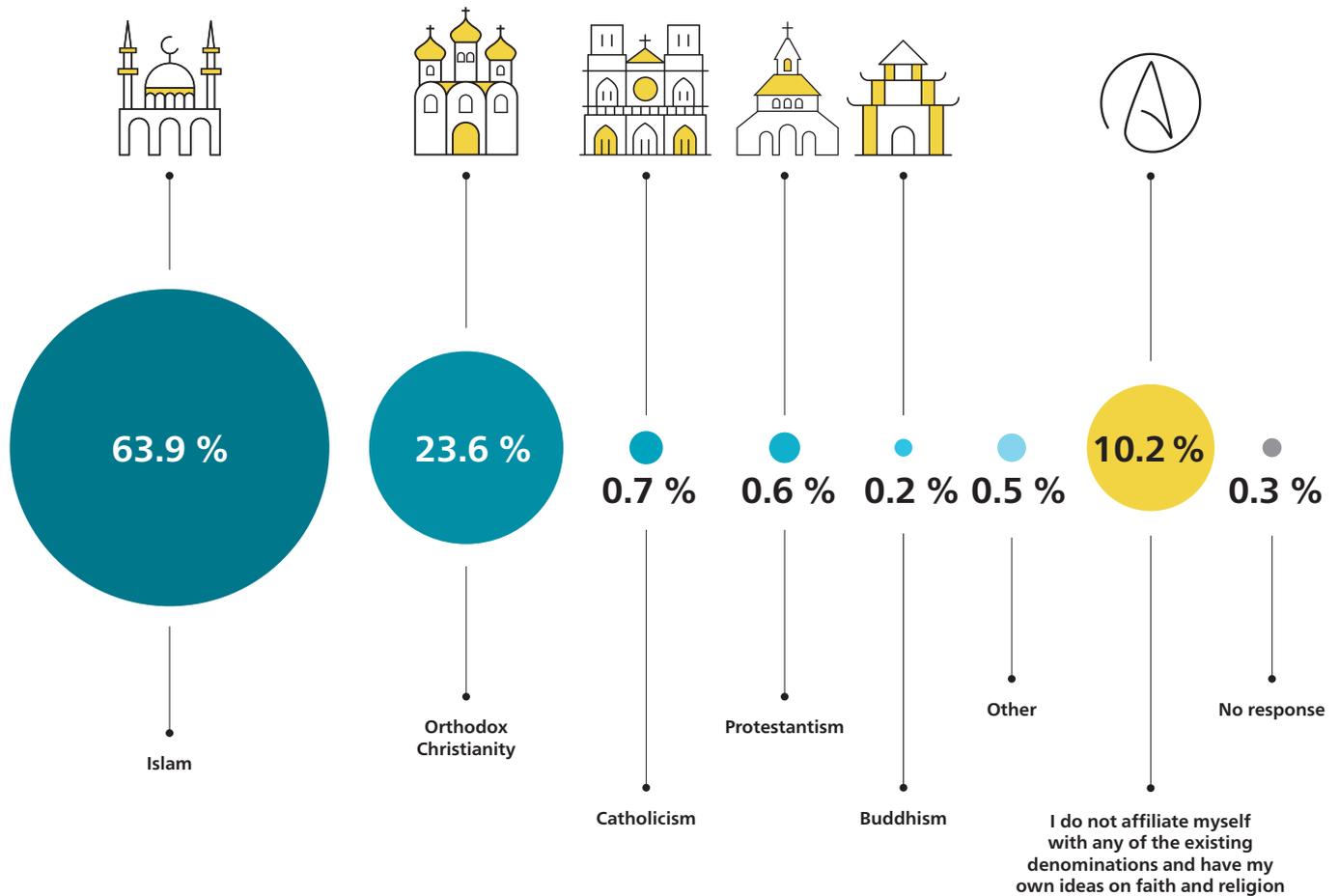
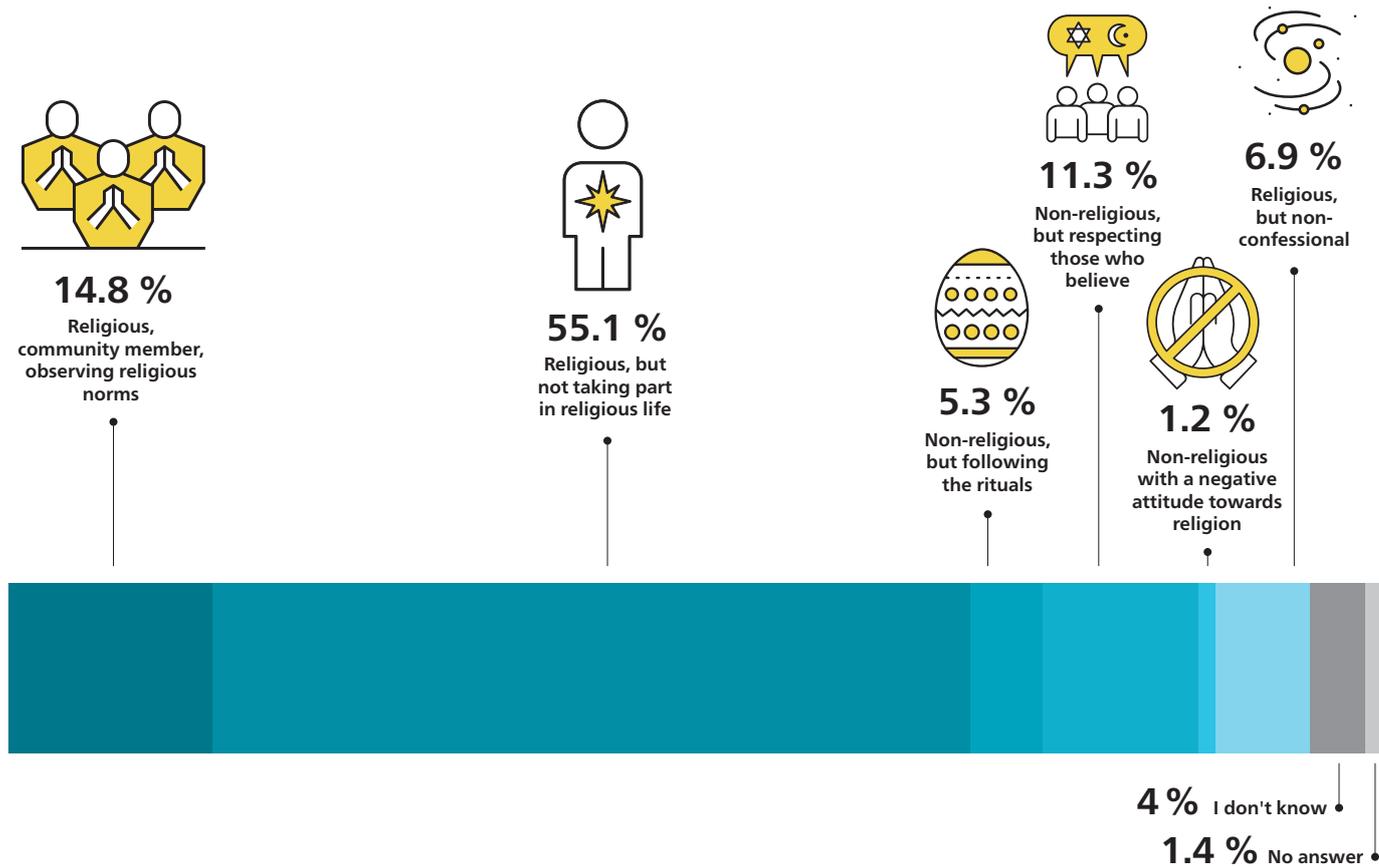


TABLE 22: **Current attitude towards religion, (in %)**

	Total	Women	Men	Kazakhs	Russians	Urban	Rural
Religious, community member, observing religious norms	14.8 %	11.4 %	18.2 %	18.1 %	5.4 %	11.0 %	19.9 %
Religious, but not taking part in religious life	55.1 %	59.0 %	51.2 %	58.1 %	52.3 %	52.6 %	58.4 %
Non-religious, but following the rituals	5.3 %	5.6 %	5.0 %	5.2 %	6.6 %	5.4 %	5.1 %
Non-religious, but respecting those who believe	11.3 %	11.6 %	11.0 %	7.3 %	19.0 %	14.2 %	7.5 %
Non-religious with a negative attitude towards religion	1.2 %	0.4 %	2.0 %	0.5 %	2.3 %	1.6 %	0.7 %
Religious, but non-confessional	6.9 %	7.4 %	6.4 %	6.5 %	8.1 %	9.1 %	4.0 %

## WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION AT THE MOMENT?



## 2.3.7 ORIENTATION TOWARDS LEISURE AND LIFESTYLE

As previously mentioned, the under-30s constitute a half of the 19 million people in Kazakhstan.<sup>26</sup> This generation has grown up in a completely different world than their parents. Most of them have no direct memories of life under Soviet rule and speak at least one European foreign language in addition to their native language and Russian.<sup>27</sup> This is how one of the respondents explained her passion for learning languages:

*“...everyone has responsibilities that they have to do. And when I finish those duties, like studying or something else that I can't cancel in any way, I have some free time after that. In my free time I like to learn languages. At the moment I know native Kazakh, Russian, English, Korean and German. In future I want to master these languages well”*

Male, 17 years old, student

Unlike their parents, this generation is more familiar with the internet and social media platforms. Moreover, young people in Kazakhstan have enjoyed political stability and relative material prosperity since the early 2000s and have developed a strong consumer culture.<sup>28</sup> All this has had a major impact on how today's young people spend their leisure time and the way they communicate with others. Hence, this research also wanted to find out what young people do in their free time and how they liaise with peers.

As our survey data shows, the internet remains the major preoccupation of young people, irrespective of the age group they belong to or their residential area. Indeed, according to the data only 0.6% of all the respondents indicated that they have no regular access to the Internet at all, while 96.2% of the youth indicated they use the Internet frequently. Thereby, there is not much of a difference in Internet use between youth living in urban and rural areas (96.7% versus 95.6% respectively). On average, the young people reported spending up to 5.6 hours on the Internet daily. This is how one of the respondents comments on the Internet usage in Kazakhstan,

*“ Today's youth can just sit at home and surf Instagram and the Internet, and look at others who are their age, or they can earn money somewhere (through Instagram) .... And they also want this and aspire to it. But the older generation did not have the same, here's your circle and that's it (...) There were fewer examples like that, but now you find it more and more. They look at each other and want to be like that too. And they are working on it.”*

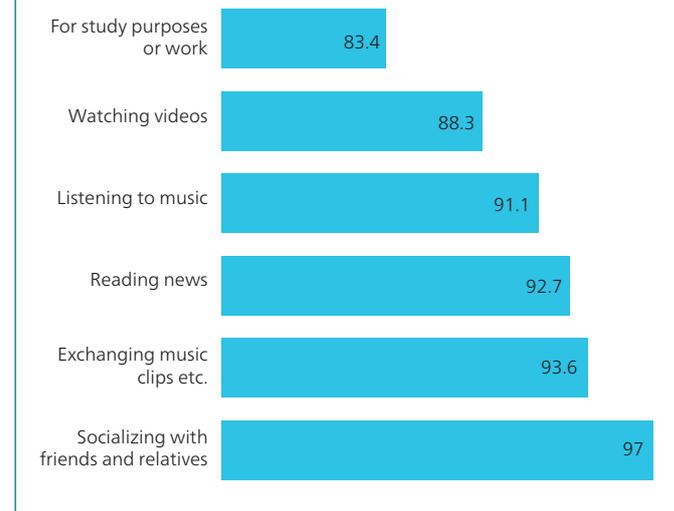
**Male, 17 years old, student**

The amount of time young people spend online varies according to the type of activity. The majority, 97%, use the internet at least sometimes or frequently to communicate with friends or relatives. One of the advantages of social media, which was highlighted by many respondents, is that they can communicate with several friends at the same time. For example, 40.7% and 11.3% of the respondents said that they have up to 200 or even 500 friends respectively in their social networks. Only 38.6% reported that they have fewer than 50 friends on the internet. However, when respondents were asked how many of these virtual friends they would count as their closest friends in real everyday life, the average number was 20. The fact that communication with friends has shifted to virtual space, and there is less physical and emotional contact between friends, has thus become a reality. One might assume that under these conditions, young people may feel alone or abandoned. However, this is not confirmed by the survey data. When asked whether they have friends in their circle of friends on whom they would rely in difficult times or who would listen to them, 93.7% and 96% respectively said that this was the case.

According to the survey, the majority (76,7%) prefer to hang out with friends, and only 3.1% of respondents avoid hanging out with friends. When asked about the purposes

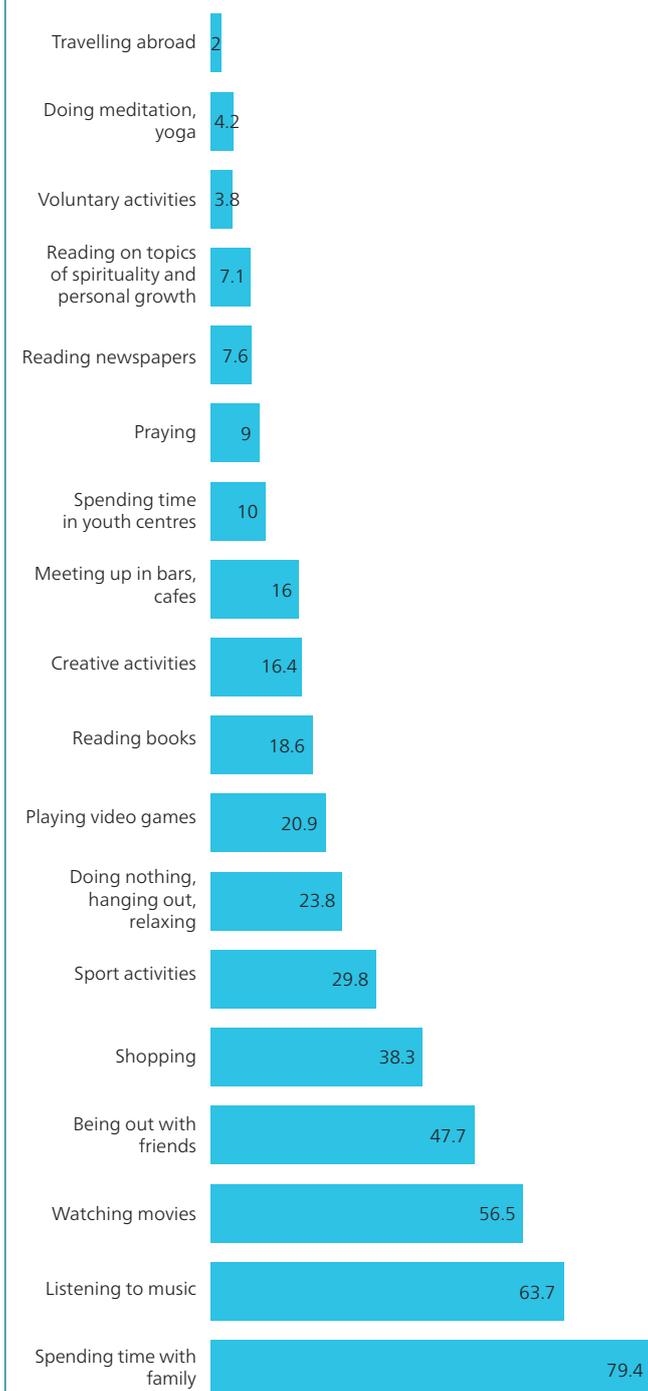
of internet use, 93.6% use the internet to exchange music, pictures and videos, 92.7% use it to read news/information, 91.1% to download and listen to music, 88.3% to watch videos and films, work or study (83.4%), and 80.8% send emails. Less frequent online activities include playing online games (59.7%), shopping (56.4%) and using online banking (60.3%).

FIGURE 5: **Internet usage by activity, (in %)**



If the internet has become the main pastime, television has lost much of its role as a leisure activity for the youth we surveyed. Compared to the internet, television is used for up to 2.4 hours on average per day. Other leisure activities that the respondents reported being engaged in either 'often' or 'very often' are ranked and shown in the table below.

As the table shows, many young people prefer to engage in more passive types of activities, such as listening to music, watching television, or simply being with their family. Somewhat behind this are 'doing nothing' and 'playing video games' as preferred leisure activities, which means that the respondents do it no less than once per week or everyday (23.8% and 20.9% respectively). It is remarkable how few young people participate in self-centred leisure activities, such as meditation/yoga or prayer. As the table shows, only a small number of respondents indicated that they engage in these activities at all (4.2% and 9% respectively). However, of the activities that promote a sense of community, only sports are rated slightly higher (29.8% or one third of respondents). On the other hand, meetings with friends and acquaintances specifically in bars and cafes or spending time at youth centres are quite unpopular. Only 16% and 10% of young people do this regularly. One exception is going out with friends, although no further information was provided (47.7%). What is particularly remarkable about the data in the table is how little Kazakhstan's youth read books and newspapers. Only 18.6% and 7.6% do so regularly. The Internet has gradually replaced or is replacing these two classic

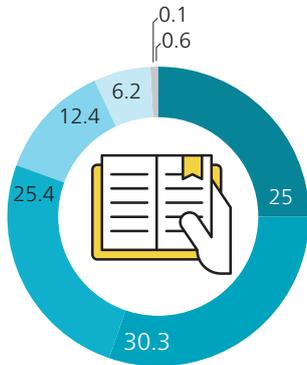
FIGURE 6: **Leisure activities, (in %)**

leisure activities, so it seems. The same fate applies to reading books about spirituality and personal growth. Only 7.1% devote themselves to this activity. At the bottom of the activity list are trips abroad, which may be linked to the financial situation of most young people in the country.

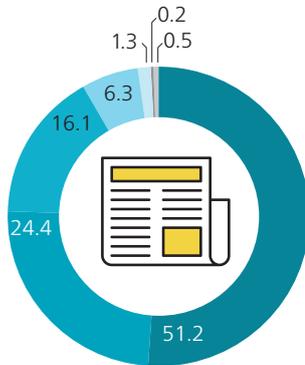
Another surprising observation is how little the young Kazakhstans in this study engage in voluntary activities. As shown in the chart below, only 8% of the respondents frequently commit themselves to voluntary activities. When asked whether they have participated in any kind of voluntary activity in the last 12 months, only 13.2% said they had while 85.6% of respondents said they had not. This figure remains the same when looking at it from a gender perspective (13% for females and 13.4% for males). More volunteer work can be found in the age group between 14 and 19 years old (16.7%). The higher the age group, the less likely they are to volunteer at all. Looking at the different ethnicities, there are only minor differences. Ethnic Russian young people are more likely to participate in voluntary activities than ethnic Kazakh young people (13.6% and 11.8% respectively). Moreover, volunteering is more common in cities than in villages. In terms of organisations, young people are more likely to volunteer in educational institutions such as schools and universities (40.9%), followed by youth organisations (18.2%), individual activities (13.6%) and civic associations (12.1%). In contrast, they are less likely to volunteer for associations and clubs (7.6%), NGOs (4.5%), political parties (0%) and trade unions (1.5%). The latter figures are especially concerning and stand in stark contrast to the value associated with democracy.

# HOW OFTEN ON AVERAGE DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME DOING THE FOLLOWING? (in %)

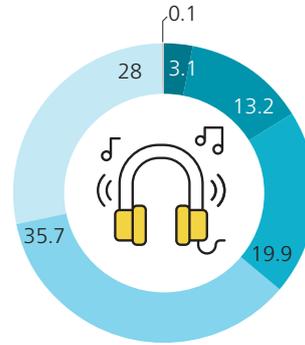
- Never
- Once a month or less
- Several times per month
- No less than once per week
- Every day or nearly every day
- I don't know
- No answer



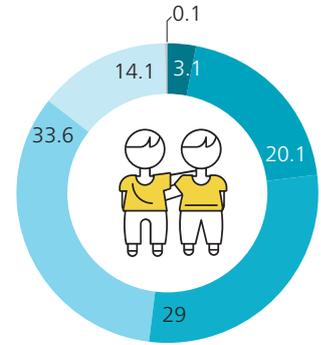
Reading books



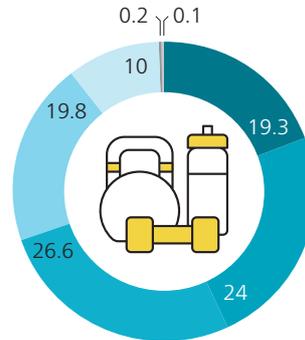
Reading newspapers/magazines



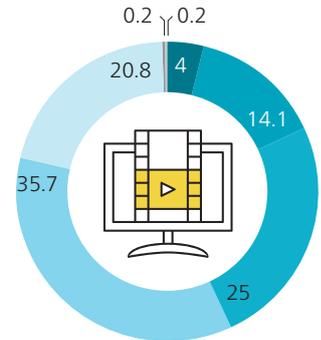
Listening to music



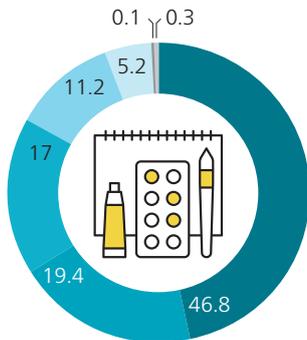
Being out with friends



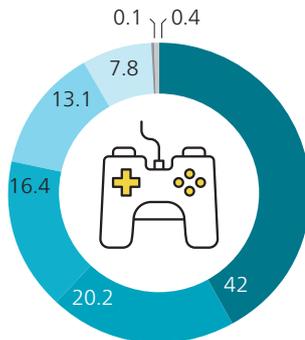
Sports activities



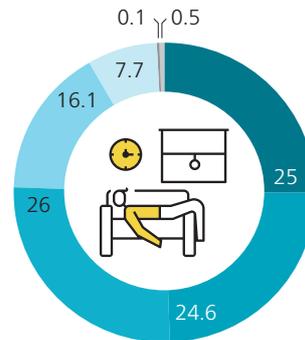
Watching films (on TV, computer or other devices)



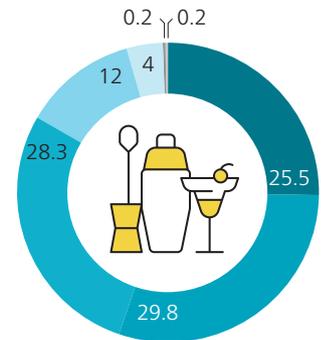
Creative activities (writing, drawing, music)



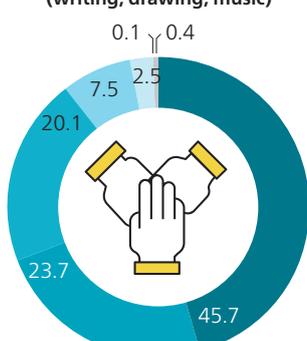
Playing video games



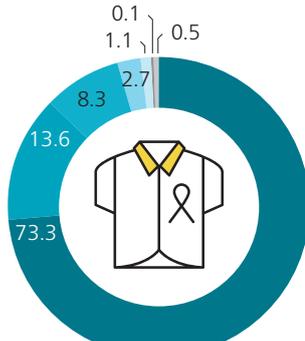
Doing nothing / hanging out / relaxing



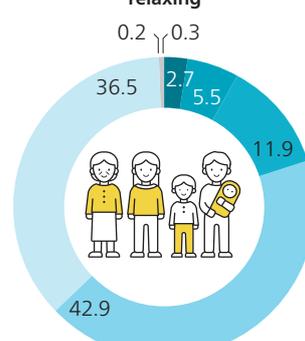
Meeting up in bars, cafés, clubs



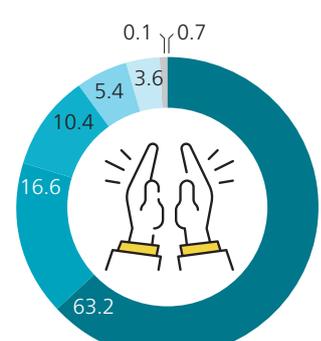
Spending time at youth centres



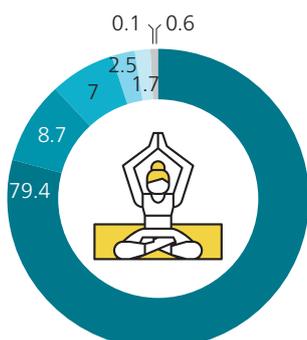
Voluntary activities in social projects, initiatives, or associations



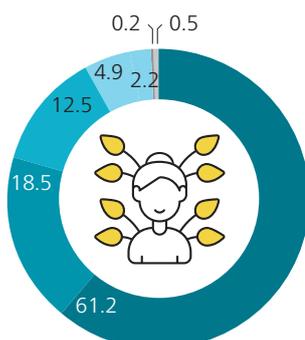
Spending time with family



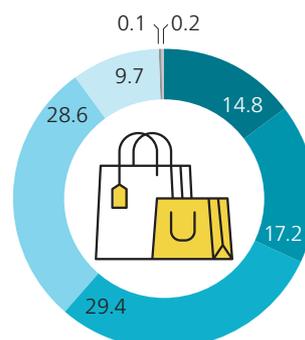
Praying



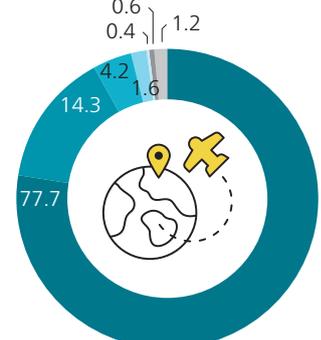
Meditation, yoga or suchlike



Reading on topics of spirituality and personal growth



Shopping



Spending time abroad



## 3

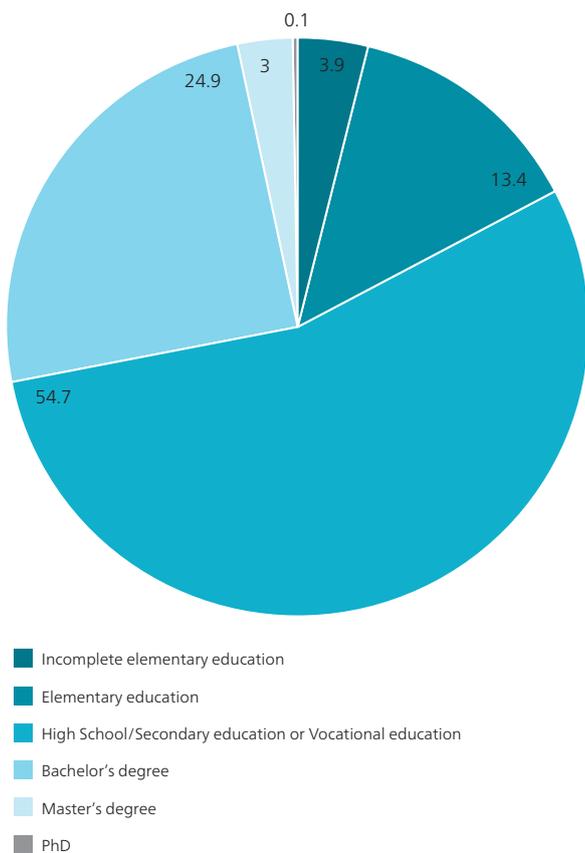
# LIFE PLANS, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND IMMIGRATION

## 3.1 EDUCATION

Education is an important part of young people's lives. According to the survey, 40.8% of the youth are currently enrolled in high schools and vocational education, 25.2% are enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes, 3.6% of the respondents are currently getting their master's degree or PhD; and 27.9% of the respondents are not enrolled in any education or training programmes. The survey results show that more young males and those who live in rural areas are receiving only a high school and vocational education than young women and urbanites. On one hand, youth living in rural areas have fewer opportunities to get a quality education than their urban counterparts, so they are less likely to be enrolled in graduate level education. On the other hand, rural youth can have different life goals and be more interested in vocational education with which it is easier to find a job in rural areas. As such, rural youth might not be motivated to obtain a graduate level education.<sup>29</sup> More urban dwellers (4.5%) are enrolled in master's and doctoral programmes than rural residents (2.3%). Similarly, more young females study in bachelor's and master's programmes than their male counterparts. In general, more young females study than young males.

As shown in the next figure, every fourth young male or female has acquired a bachelor's degree (24.9%), while only 3% of the young people have obtained a master's degree. In terms of gender, 58.8% of young males and 50.6% of young females have completed secondary and vocational education. The striking difference between young males and females, however, is in terms of acquiring bachelor's degrees. More young females (30.2%) than young males (19.6%) hold such degrees. This difference can be explained by the fact that more males have to find jobs and support families earlier. The highest percentage of those who hold a bachelor's degree is among ethnic Kazakhs (30%) followed by ethnic Russians (17.8%). Slightly more urban than rural youth have a master's degree.

Notably, many young people of Kazakhstan would like to receive a bachelor's and specialist's degree (38.3%), master's degree (18.9%), or be a Candidate of Sciences (4.5%). More ethnic Kazakhs (24%) than other ethnic groups aim to obtain a master's degree. Young people between 14 and 19 want to receive a bachelor's and specialist's degree (54.4%), and 29.2% say they also aspire to postgraduate education. Most young people (57.6%) are confident that they will obtain the desired education while only 3.4% are not sure about it. Ethnic Kazakhs living in rural areas are more optimistic in their views towards obtaining higher education than other ethnic groups and those who live in urban areas.

FIGURE 7: **Completed Level of Education, (in %)**

Overall, after classes or at home, 11% of the respondents spend 1 hour per day studying, 23.7% of respondents 1 to 2 hours, 27.8% of the youth devote 2 to 3 hours for learning, and one third of them spend more than three hours per day to prepare for school or university. Young females study around three hours and more per day and in general they study more than young males in terms of time spent. Similarly, rural dwellers devote more time to educational activities than their urban counterparts. Youth of metropolitan areas appear to be better prepared for university life than rural youth and thus spend less time studying. This might be due to the fact that urban youth have more opportunities to attend various training and educational programmes as well as get extra help from tutors before they enter a university. As such, it is easier for them to navigate university life. More than a third (35.5%) of all the respondents believe that their university life is easy without difficulties while 18.4% of the respondents consider that university life is difficult and intense and 37.5% think that it is difficult to some extent. Many students self-reported that they have a good GPA and study well. On average, 30% students said that their GPA is 3-4, while 63.2% have 4-5.<sup>30</sup> As expected, more female respondents (69.9%) and rural residents (67%) have a high GPA (4-5) than males (56.6%) and urban youth (60.5%) since they spend more time studying.

The quality of education is a big issue discussed at various levels of government and society in Kazakhstan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the educational system has undergone a number of reforms. Primary, secondary, and higher education has faced the challenges of creating a new curriculum and developing new textbooks. The quality of school textbooks, however, still requires improvement. There have been a number of complaints from parents and school children about mistakes in textbooks as well as the mismatch between the age of children and assignments provided.<sup>31</sup> Despite many complaints regarding the education system, the survey results show that there are young people who have a positive stance on the quality of education. Overall, 41% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of education in Kazakhstan while only 24.1% of them are completely dissatisfied. One of the respondents who was not happy with the quality of education shared her views saying that,

“

*They [teachers] are not interested in us as students. They give us the information just to hold a lecture. Nobody is interested in what we will be in the future. For instance, if you write to a teacher saying that you do not understand, and [asking] what you can read on this topic, you write to nobody. But we communicate with teachers from our first year who are still helping us. In other words, it [the quality of education] depends a lot on the outlook and mindset of people with whom you communicate. We were taught that we should think wider and that we should communicate, discuss different topics and make conclusions. In post-soviet states, people did not get used to it and it is perceived as a strange thing. If there is a problem, it is better to keep silent. I think that it is a problem. In other words, decisions made unilaterally in the system of education. Someone made a decision without consultation, the policy was introduced, nobody is happy, but no feedback is provided”.*

Female, 19 years old, student

The survey results revealed difference in terms of age. High school youth aged between 14 to 19 years old (24.6%) has higher level of satisfaction with the overall quality of education in Kazakhstan than the older cohorts. The level of satisfaction among young people aged 24 to 29 is 18.9%. This is not surprising because in higher education institutions young people may encounter a higher level of corruption than they might have in secondary education. One of the interviewees mentioned,

“

*I think that everyone has money now. If someone [a teacher at a university] would ask about money, I would give it to solve the issue. However, everything is done through connections. If you do not have connections, then you cannot bribe. Because now everything is controlled...It is not money but connections.”*

Female, 22 years old, working

At the same time, despite the higher levels of corruption at the university level, there is a decline of corrupt activities in higher education institutions over the last few years due to the state policy of fight against corruption. One of the focus group participants said,

“

*Well, now corruption is under control in our university. In other words, students are expelled from the university or teachers are fired. If anyone learns about it, then it is published, it's like from Oruell. It is sent to all students with names and last names why and how it happened. Also, we have such a thing that each semester we have new teachers. Each semester we have new instructors. Maybe this is another factor that helps to root out corruption.”*

Female, 22 years old, working

Another interviewer also noted that corruption is now more under control than before.

“

*In general, like in another university, corruption is under tight control. Even if there is a rumour that one teacher takes bribes, he can be fired immediately. Once, deans wanted to give a cake to the rector at the end of the semester. He said no, you cannot give me anything because then we are responsible for that. It was prohibited to present with anything, even cakes. Even such small things cannot be done because it is under strict control”.*

Female, 22 years old, working

In addition, university students are more concerned with competition in the job market and possible employment opportunities, which might directly depend on the quality of their education. Thus, they may be more critical of the quality of their education.

Dissatisfaction with the quality of education is not the only problem young people are concerned with. Corruption in education is also a big issue in Kazakhstan. While 52% of the young people agree that “buying grades” takes place in the educational institutions of Kazakhstan, 16.6% disagree with this statement. There is some variation across age groups. Fewer respondents aged 14 to 19 years old (41.3%) than other cohorts of young people agree that “buying grades” takes place. Of those between 20 and 24 years of age, 56.2% and 58.1% of those between 25 and 29 years old hold this view. It shows that corruption is more widespread at the university level than in schools. Students in schools do not encounter much corruption since the government has had some success at reducing informal payments and other forms of corruption. The government prohibited making informal payments to teachers and school directors by creating Councils of Trustees and school bank accounts so that parents could make financial transfers to schools legally.<sup>32</sup> At university level, those measures have not been taken and the practice such as “buying” grades is therefore more inherent to higher than to secondary education.

As a result of the poor quality coupled with a high degree of corruption, young people hold a low level of trust towards their education obtained in Kazakhstan:

Whereas 48.5% of the respondents believe that school and university education in Kazakhstan does not meet

"

*Nobody is interested in us. Nobody cares. You come and you leave and that's it. And what irritates me is that students should study on their own but this is medical education.. A doctor should explain everything. We pay 1.2 million tenge. What do we pay for if I should learn everything on my own?...And what else is that nobody teaches us but demands from us I do not know what... "*

Female, 22 years old, student

"

*I want to study abroad to see how it works there, what system they have and all other things. Then I want to come back and get employed where I can find [a job]. I can, of course, because nobody will give it to me for free just because I studied abroad. So, I will try and then if I have a PhD for instance, I can get employed at Nazarbayev University to work as a teacher. So, there will always be an opportunity, the most important thing is a will"*

Female, 22 years old, student

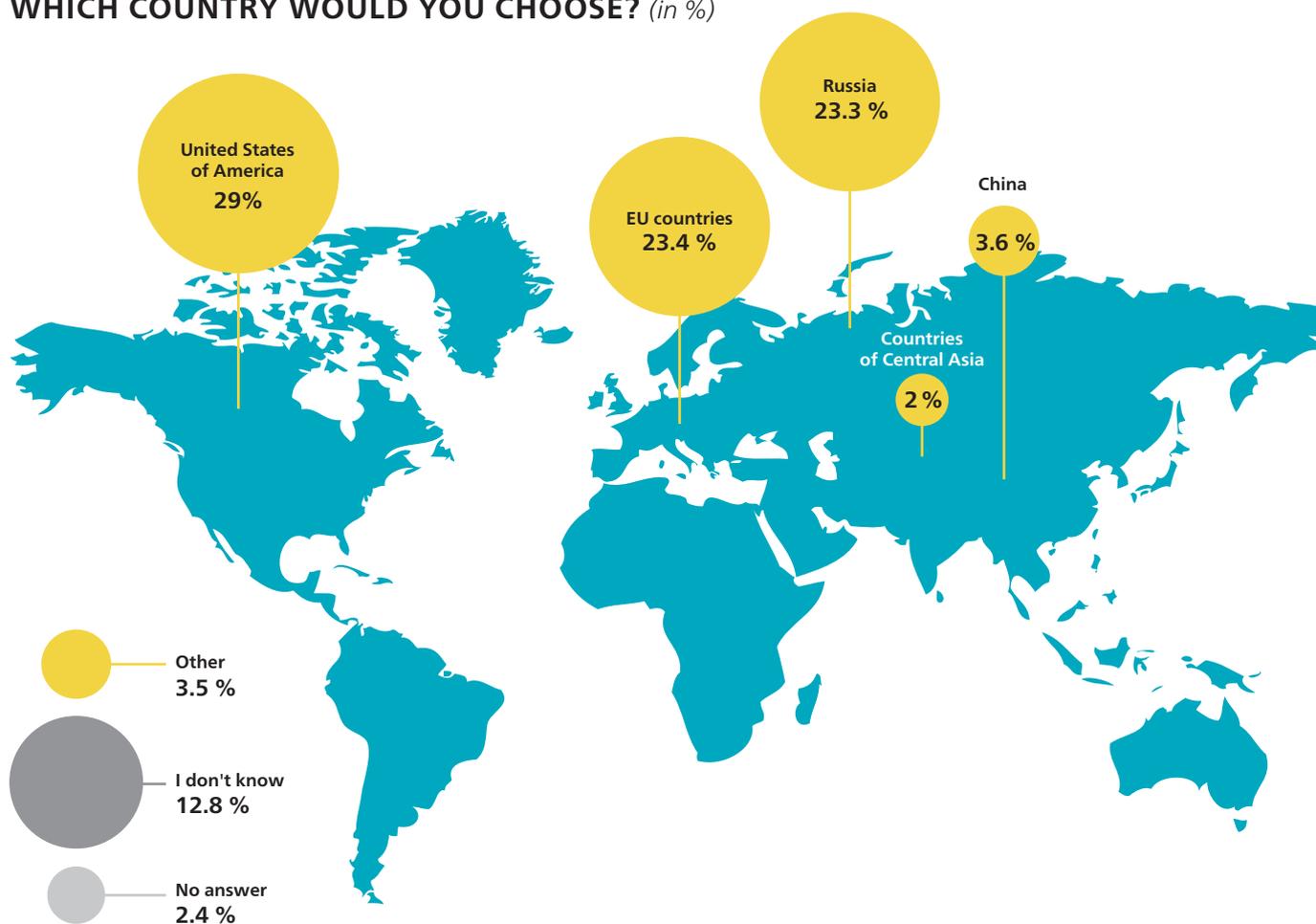
the demands of the world labour market, 29.3% of the respondents think that education received in Kazakhstan meets the market's expectations well. There are no gender differences — males and females believe that Kazakhstani education is not well adapted to the demands of the global market (47.4% and 49.6% respectively). Since more young people between 24 and 29 years old are already on the labour market to seek employment, they are less optimistic about the education system compared to the cohort aged 14 to 19 years old who have not had such an experience yet. In terms of ethnicity, more ethnic Koreans and ethnic Ukrainians believe that education in Kazakhstan does not meet the market's expectations than ethnic Kazakhs. More urbanites (51.7%) than rural residents (44.2%) are negative about the Kazakhstani system of education. Urban youth have more opportunities in terms of education and job markets than rural residents and thus evaluate the system of education more critically. Overall, urban citizens in Kazakhstan are more pessimistic than rural residents. For example, more than 60% of the respondents in Shymkent and Nur-Sultan and the Akmola and Kostanay regions believe that education does not meet the market's expectations.

When the perceived low quality of education in Kazakhstan, and its low capacity to meet the market's expectation, is contrasted with the high reputation and popularity of studying abroad, many young people believe that it is better to obtain education in foreign universities. According to the survey, 45.2% of the young people would favour receiving an education abroad while close to one third (27.5%) said they would prefer to study in Kazakhstan, and 15.8% would prefer to study abroad for some time. For instance, one of the interviewees noted that after obtaining a foreign education her chances to find a good job might be increased. She said,

Younger people in the cohort aged 14 to 19 years old (49.2%) indicated they prefer to study abroad, and every fourth prefers to study in Kazakhstan. A higher number of ethnic Kyrgyz and Kazakh youth when compared to other ethnic groups are in favour of receiving education in Kazakhstan. More urban youth (50.7%) prefer to study abroad than rural residents (37.9%). Rural dwellers do not have access to the same level of quality of education as their counterparts in urban areas and as such they have fewer opportunities to go and study abroad.

In terms of choice of a country for education, young people's preferences have slightly changed. In 2016, Russia was in first place followed by the USA and then countries of the European Union (EU)<sup>33</sup>. Now, many young respondents prefer to study in the USA (29%) and then in the countries of the EU (23.4%). Russia remains an important destination for education among young people as 23.3% of the youth indicated they would choose to study in that country. This, however, is lower than in 2016 when 29.6% of respondents wanted to study in the Russian Federation<sup>34</sup>. Only 2% of the current respondents chose countries of Central Asia, which is slightly more than the number in 2016 (1.3%). The choice of Western countries can be explained by the opportunities students have through the Bolashak state educational program. The large percentage of those who want to study in Russia is likely due to the very active recruitment activities conducted by Russian universities which also provide generous educational grants to students from Kazakhstan. More ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians prefer to go to study to Russia than other ethnic groups, which is understandable due to their ethnic and cultural background and knowledge of the Russian language. Only 15.2% of the ethnic Kazakhs would choose Russia for their education (lower by 1% than in 2016). There is also some variation in terms of place of residence. Young people living in metropolitan areas prefer to study in the USA, while rural residents prefer to go to Russia.

## IF YOU HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY ABROAD (OR TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES ABROAD), WHICH COUNTRY WOULD YOU CHOOSE? (in %)



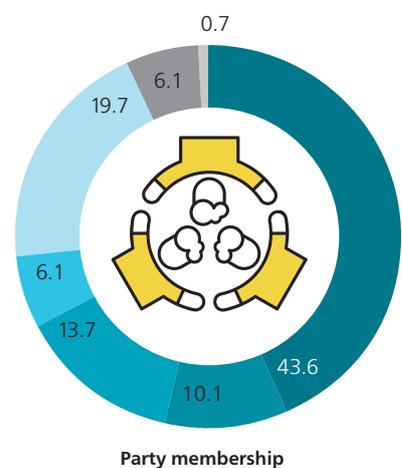
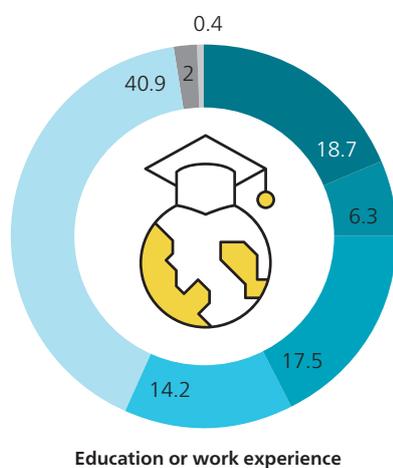
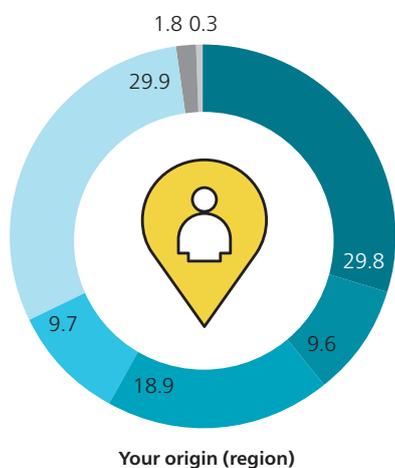
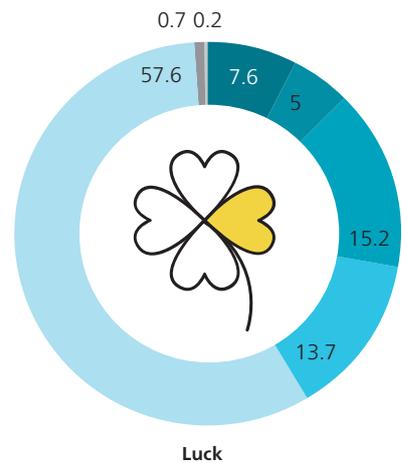
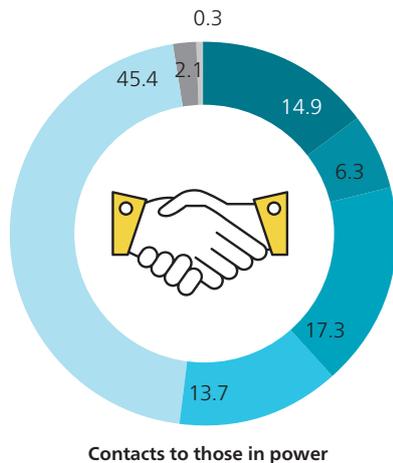
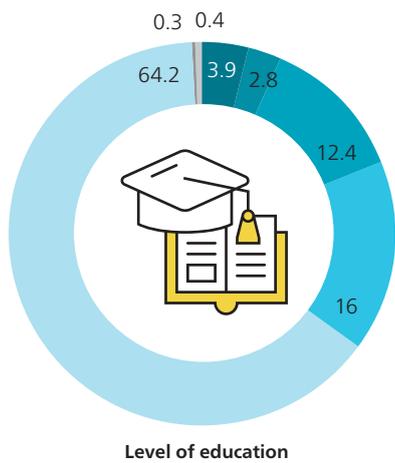
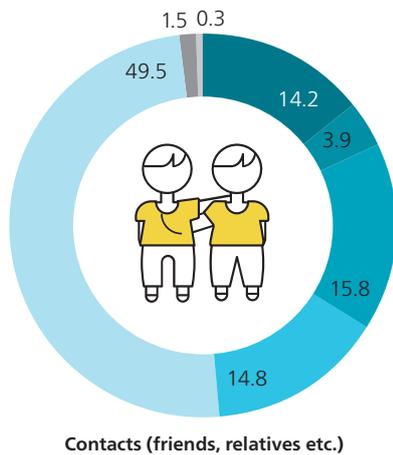
### 3.2 EMPLOYMENT

In general, the youth is quite optimistic in terms of future job opportunities. A little less than a third (32.9%) of the respondents thought it would be very easy to find a job after completing school. This is slightly fewer than those researched in 2016 (35.6%). In 2020, 10.5% of respondents said that it would be very difficult, while in 2016, 30.8% said that it would be hard to find a job. In 2020, 35.8% of the respondents evaluated their chances as average. This difference can be explained in part by the economic crisis that happened in 2015 when prices on oil fell and there was a high rate of inflation in Kazakhstan. This could have affected young people's prospects to find jobs in the market in 2016. To raise the level of employment, the government has also implemented programmes and policies to help young people to obtain an education and find jobs. For instance, the Serpyn programme allocates grants to young people from the south to obtain education in the north of the country and find jobs there. The difference between 2016 and 2020 also shows that young people today are more positive when evaluating their chances to be employed than those four years ago. Slightly

more young males believe that their chances to find a job are lower than young females do. It might be related to their education level. As it was shown above, more females have a master's degree, which significantly raises their opportunities to find a job compared to young males. However, more urban dwellers than rural residents believe that it will be very difficult to find a job. This is related to the higher level of competition and availability of qualified workforce in cities than in rural areas of Kazakhstan.<sup>35</sup>

Currently, 22.7% of the survey respondents have full-time permanent contracts and 3.1% of the respondents have part-time permanent contracts. At the same time, 6.9% of the respondents have fixed-term full-time contracts while 2.2% of them have fixed-term part-time contracts. A little proportion of young people (7.3%) have part-time jobs or are self-employed (11.3%). A large percent (38.6%) is currently unemployed and is not seeking employment. High school students as well as those who are at universities might not be looking for any job at the moment. Among the respondents, 6.7% of them are seeking employment. This distribution shows that a little more than half of the survey respondents are employed.

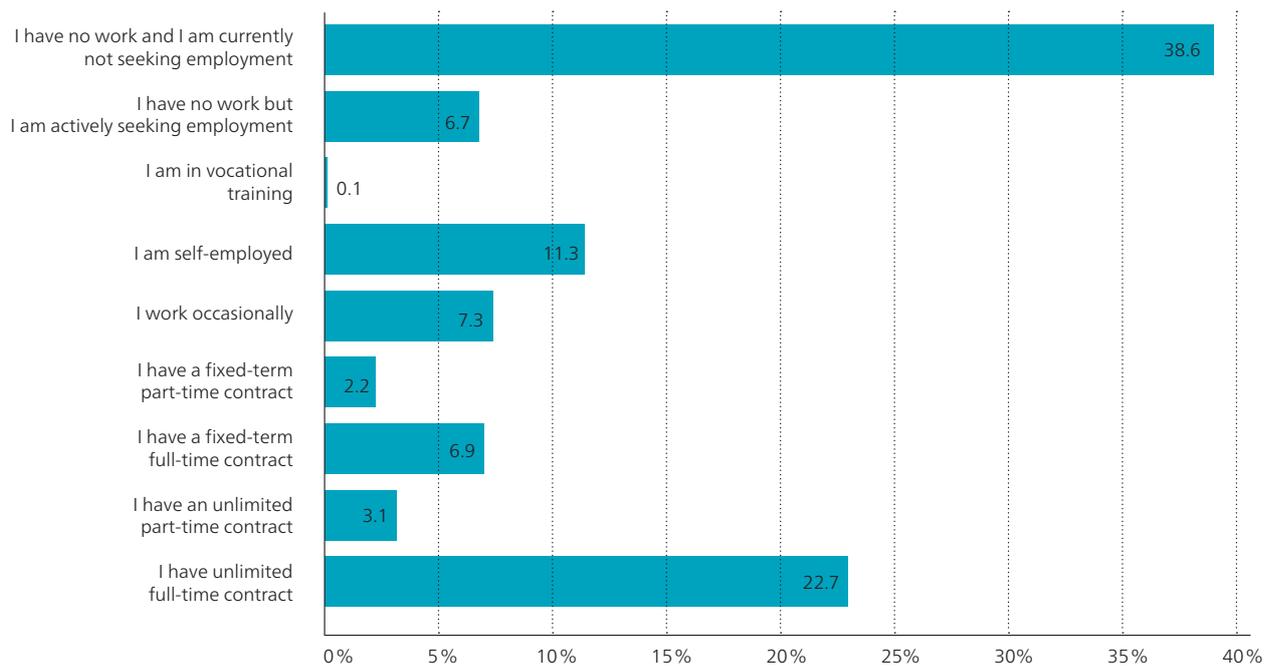
**IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN TERMS OF FINDING WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR COUNTRY? (in %)**



The results of the survey have also revealed a general trend in terms of gender and employment. More males (27.4%) have full-time permanent contracts than young women (18%) while more women are currently unemployed and are not searching for work. This finding supports previous research on employment in Kazakhstan.<sup>36</sup> Some women also prefer to stay at home even if they have a high level of education. In addition, the creation of a family and having children also negatively affects women's opportunities to be on the labour market.

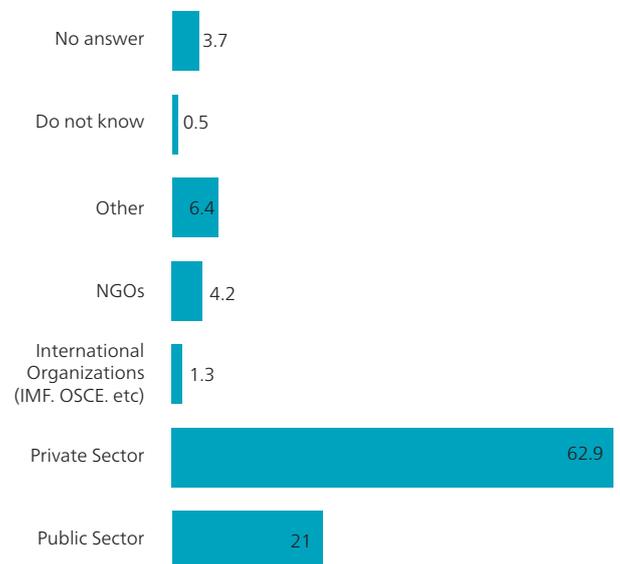
The same number of rural and urban young people have full-time permanent job contracts (21.5% and 23.6% respectively). Data revealed that 43.7% of rural and 34.8% of

the urban residents do not have employment nor are they looking for it. The higher rate of unemployment in rural areas can be explained by the shortage of jobs in villages than in cities. The results of the survey also show that 22.5% of respondents could not get employment because of a low level of education. More urban dwellers (25.2%) could not find a job due to their level of education compared to rural residents (19.4%). To secure employment, 12.5% of the respondents had to move to another area because they could not find jobs in their own regions. Being in a disadvantaged position, more females than males reported that they moved to another region for employment.

FIGURE 8: **Current Employment status, (in %)**

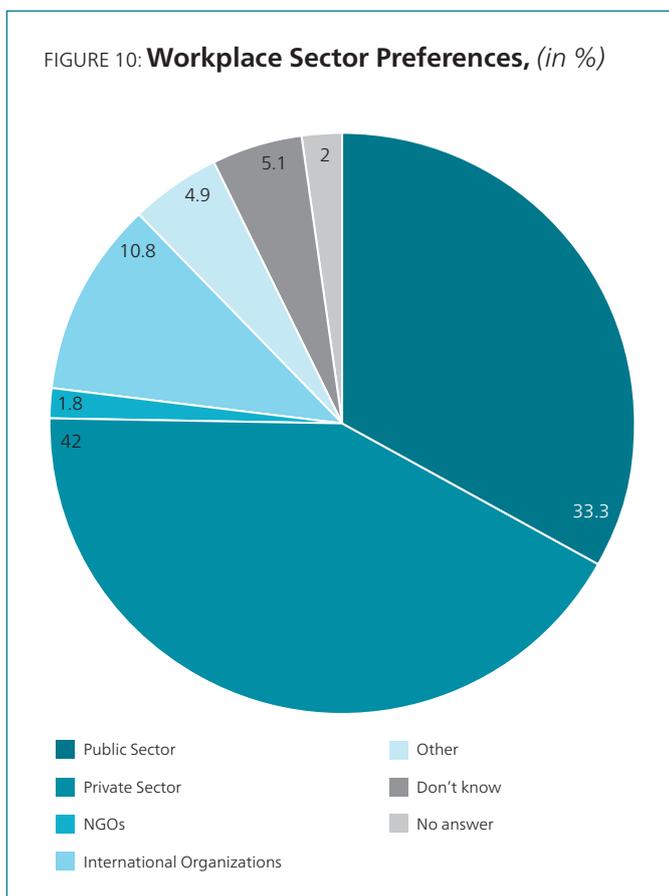
One of the challenging issues in Kazakhstan is that many young people do not get employment according to their specialisation after graduation. For this research, 41.9% see themselves in this position. In contrast, 43.5% do work according to their specialisation and only 6.4% have jobs that are close to their specialisation. Notably, more young women than young men work according to what they studied. Respondents have education that meets the workplace requirements; however, 21.4% of them believe that they are overqualified for their jobs and 8.8% mentioned that their level of education does not correspond to their job requirements and they need further education. More urban residents believe that their jobs require a lower level of education than they have, while fewer rural residents think so. It shows that fewer urban dwellers are satisfied with their type of current employment. At the same time, 55.1% of the urban respondents compared to 69.8% of the rural respondents believe that they have jobs corresponding to their level of education. More ethnic Kazakhs than ethnic Russians answered that they have jobs that correspond to the level of education they received.

As shown in the next figure, the employment of youth is distributed across different sectors of the economy. Survey data revealed that 21% of young adults work in the public sector, 62.9% are employed in the private sector, 4.2% work for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), 1.3% of them are employed in international organisations, and 6.4% are in other organisations. As this distribution shows, most young people find jobs in the private sector rather than in the public sector. It also shows that the business sector provides more

FIGURE 9: **Employment of all respondents by sector of the economy, (in %)**

opportunities than any other sector. In terms of gender, more young females work in the public sector, while more males are employed in the private sector. More ethnic Kazakhs are employed in the public sector than other ethnic groups. This is due to the requirement of the knowledge of Kazakh language in civil service. More than 70% of ethnic Russians and ethnic Uzbeks, and 80% of ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Koreans are employed in the private sector.

There is also variation between urban and rural citizens in terms of their occupation. While 14.5% of the urbanites and 31.2% of the rural youth work in the public sector, many more urban dwellers are employed in the private sector than rural dwellers (66.6% and 57.2% respectively). Whereas 4.8% of the urban respondents work for NGOs, 3.3% of the rural residents are doing the same. However, one third of the respondents (33.3%) stated they prefer to work in the public sector and 42% of young people want to be employed in the private sector. A notable proportion of young people would prefer to have work experience in international organisations (10.8%, Figure 10). There are also some differences across gender. More females than males expressed their preference to work in the public sector while young males prefer to be in the business/private sector. This might be related to the risk-averse behaviour inherent in women versus risk-acceptance behaviour that is characteristic in males.<sup>37</sup>



Similarly, more rural dwellers (45.6%) than urban citizens (25.3%) expressed their preference to work in the public sector. The attractiveness of the public sector for rural citizens and females is likely defined by the stable and guaranteed salaries as well as social benefits provided by the state. In addition, rural areas do not have a lot of opportunities for business development due to the community's lower income and thus their low purchasing power. More metropolitan youth than rural residents also prefer to work in international

organisations. For the question about the importance of various factors for gaining employment, the majority of respondents mentioned "work experience" (66.2%), level of education (64.2%), and luck (57.6%) (see Figure 11). Connections, however, still play an important role in job opportunities, and 49.5% of the respondents indicate that connections and acquaintances are very important, while 45.4% of the respondents believe that connections with government officials are useful if one wants to secure employment. One respondent commented on the necessity to have connections in order to get a job,

//

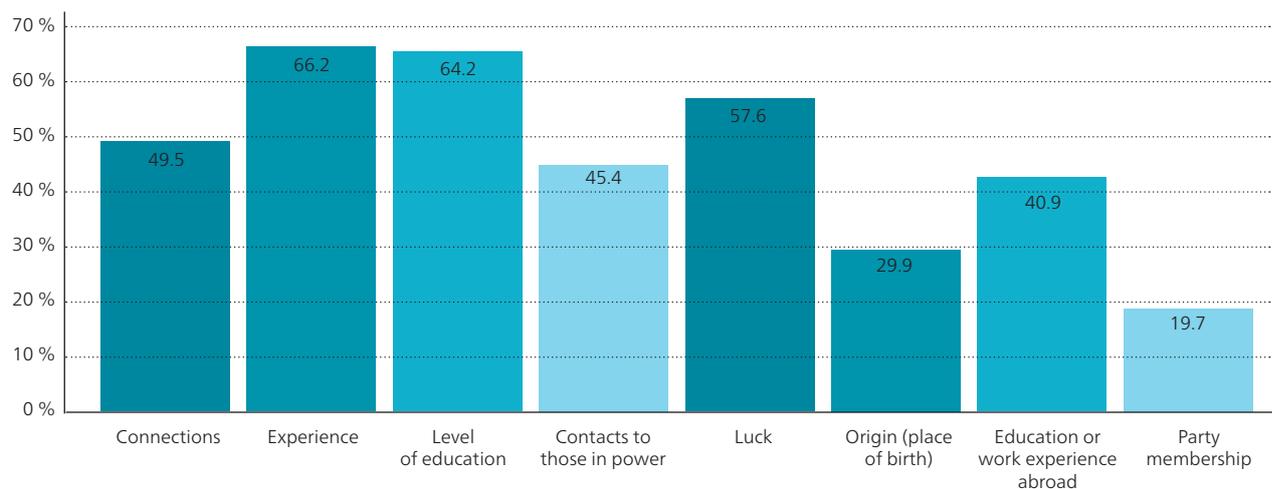
*Well, in some places [connections] are really required. It became kind of a tradition with the Kazakhs (laughs). Well, not only Kazakhs, everywhere, it seems. Or maybe not. For example, if you get a job as a police officer, they require big money, obligatory. If not, they'll find someone else in any case, so that you do not get the job, and you have to pay and only then you will be hired."*

Male, 23 years old, Entrepreneur

One third (29.9%) of the respondents believe that place of origin or region is important while 19.7% of the young people consider that membership in a political party is a crucial factor. These results reveal that even though meritocracy is becoming a valuable principle in Kazakhstan, it is perceived that connections still play a significant role for finding employment. More ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Koreans, compared to those in other ethnic groups, believe that connections are very important to find a job through cultural traditions and the important role of extended family members may be an explanation. Interestingly, personal connections are not a priority for many rural dwellers. This might again be explained by fewer job opportunities in rural areas.

A significant number of the respondents (40.9%) believe experience and education abroad are determining factors when obtaining a job. A high percentage of ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians consider work experience and the level of education as the main factors for getting a job while most ethnic Uzbeks have chosen luck, work experience, and connections as important factors. Rural residents believe that the level of education, experience, and luck are important to find a good job. More young urbanites mentioned work experience, education, and connections as important to

FIGURE 11: Important factors for securing employment, (in %)



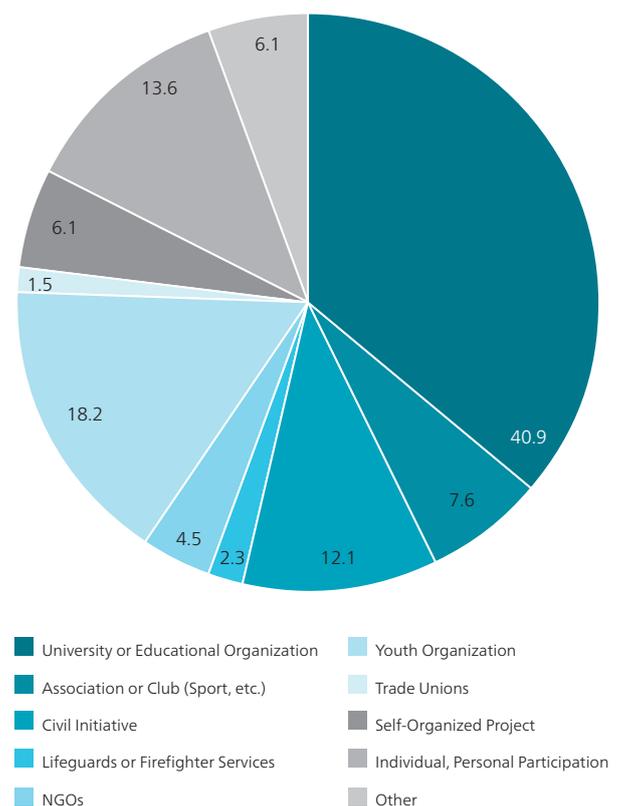
receive employment. Thus, the main difference between rural and urban youth is that the former believe that luck is important to get a job, whereas the latter believe that connections are crucial.

For many young people the size of salary is a determining factor for employment (89.3%), followed by the feeling of goal achievement (82.7%) and career development (81.1%). Other factors that influence the choice of jobs include the availability of free time (78.7%), guaranteed employment (77.3%), and the opportunity to be useful for society (73.6%). Rural residents (76.6%) value more work with people than urban citizens (62.4%). This is due to more close ties and relations rural citizens develop with each other than people of metropolitan areas where those ties are less strong if not absent.<sup>38</sup> Slightly more rural citizens value the ability to be useful to other members of society than young people in urban metropolitan areas. Thus, young people in rural areas value jobs that involve communication with other people more than urban dwellers.

Unlike young people in Western countries, youth in Kazakhstan tend not to volunteer. Only a small percentage (13.2%) of young people participated in volunteering activities within the previous 12 months. A very high percentage of the respondents (85.6%) did not take part in any volunteer activities within the last year. Of those who volunteered, more youth between 14 and 19 years old volunteered than older youth. It appears that volunteering is becoming more popular in Kazakhstan. In terms of ethnicity, more ethnic Ukrainians volunteered, and they were followed by Russians, and then ethnic Kazakhs. Universities, educational institutions, and youth organisations are places where young people are actively engaged in volunteering. The next figure shows where young people had volunteered for the 12 months before the survey: Universities (40.9%), youth organisations (18.2%), on an individual basis (13.6%), civil initiated organisations

(12.1%), associations (7.6%), self-organised projects (6.1%), and NGOs (4.5%). Overall, young women are more active in volunteering than young men. Along the same line, the youngest group from 14 to 19 years old volunteers more in universities than other age cohorts. This might be related to their level of enthusiasm, which might be higher among the youngest respondents than the older cohorts. There is also some difference between rural and urban residents. Whereas

FIGURE 12: Youth volunteering by organisations, (in %)



urban youth prefer to volunteer in different NGOs, twice the number of rural youth volunteer for youth organisations. More NGOs are located in urban than rural areas, so the urban youth have more opportunities.

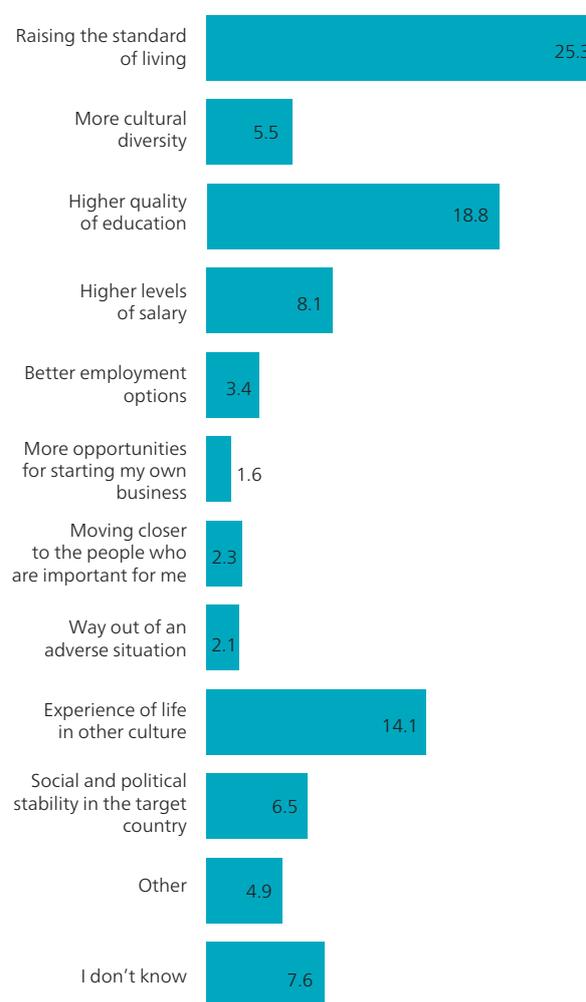
### 3.3 MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

The majority of young people prefer to study and work in Kazakhstan. However, there are also some who plan to study and live abroad. They see it as a means to improve their chances in life by increasing their level of knowledge and having better job opportunities. Overall, only 3.8% of the respondents in our research have lived or studied abroad, 8.8% of the respondents spent more than six months outside of Kazakhstan. Most of the respondents (64.8%) have not lived nor studied in other countries and do not intend to do so in the future. In contrast, 26.7% of the young people indicated they plan to do so in the future. There is variation in terms of age. More young people (33.2%) aged between 14-19 years old intend to live and study abroad than young people aged 25 to 29 years old (23.5%). We can assume that young people in this age group (25–29) are more settled in their lives. They may have already obtained an education, found a job or started a family, etc. In this regard, we can suggest that the tendency towards emigration decreases with age. Overall, 61.6% of young people are not wishing to migrate to another country. When asked how strong their wish is to leave, 11.5% strongly want to change their place of residence while 17.1% want to do so moderately. The desire to emigrate is higher among the urban youth (33.8%) than among those in rural areas (21.8%). Perhaps this is because urban youth have more exposure to new opportunities in terms of education, social capital and connections than rural youth. They tend to be more prepared to take on new challenges than rural citizens. As a result, urbanites express more desire to leave Kazakhstan. Those who want to immigrate have already taken some measures. While 8.3% have already gotten in touch with their relatives and family members who can help them move to another country, 7.6% have applied to foreign universities or other educational institutions. The others have not done anything nor taken any measures yet.

As shown in the next figure, the reasons young people want to emigrate vary. In the first place, is the desire to improve their living conditions (25.3%). Then, respondents chose a better quality of education (18.8%), life experience in a different culture (14.1%), higher salaries (8.1%), and social and political stability (6.5%). Many young people have the view that it is possible to achieve high living standards in the Western countries. Receiving an education in Western countries is very popular in Kazakhstan, and many young people seek to obtain it. The state sponsored Bolashak

program has been an important contributing factor in promoting Western education among young people. More young females (22.5%) than young males (14.4%) want to emigrate because of the quality of education. However, more young males (12.2%) than females (4.4%) prefer to emigrate because of higher salaries. The results also showed that more rural dwellers (30%) than urban citizens (22.8%) want to improve their standards of living, which could demonstrate a rather disadvantaged position of youth and lower quality of life in rural areas. However, more of the urban youth want to immigrate because of education than rural residents.

FIGURE 13: What would be the main reason for you to move to another country?, (in %)



The respondents have been offered to rank their favourite destination countries by putting them on the first, second and third place. The USA is the most favoured destination for emigration of young people, followed by Russia, the countries of the EU and then Canada. More young people between 14 and 24 years old (34.2%) prefer the USA than those aged 25 to 29 (24.1%). In terms of ethnic groups, the choice of countries slightly varies. While 42.2% of the ethnic Kazakhs would like to immigrate to the USA, only 16.7% of the ethnic

Russians do. Not surprising, ethnic Russians would like to live in Russia (46.4%), while ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz also prefer to immigrate to the USA. The urban youth prefer to go to the USA (32.3%) while rural residents prefer to immigrate to Russia (35.4%). This might be related to the knowledge of foreign languages with urbanites knowing better English, French or German compared to rural residents.

In general, although a lot of young people want to live and study abroad, 20.3% indicated they have no command of the language of the country they want to emigrate to. When asked about proficiency, 35.2% indicated they have only basic skills; 21.6% possess good practical skills, and 19.3% reported they can write and speak at a high level. More young males (38.9%) than females (31.9%) reported a basic knowledge of their target country's language while more females (22.1%) than males (16.1%) believed they could write and speak freely. It can be assumed that young females have better knowledge of languages than males since they tend to study more and have higher levels of education. The results of the survey show that the lowest percentage of those who report not having any skills of the language of their target country is among the young people between 14 and 19 years old (15.8%) while more young people between 25 and 29 years old do not know the language (28.4%). It shows that more young people in the younger age group have some knowledge of a foreign language.

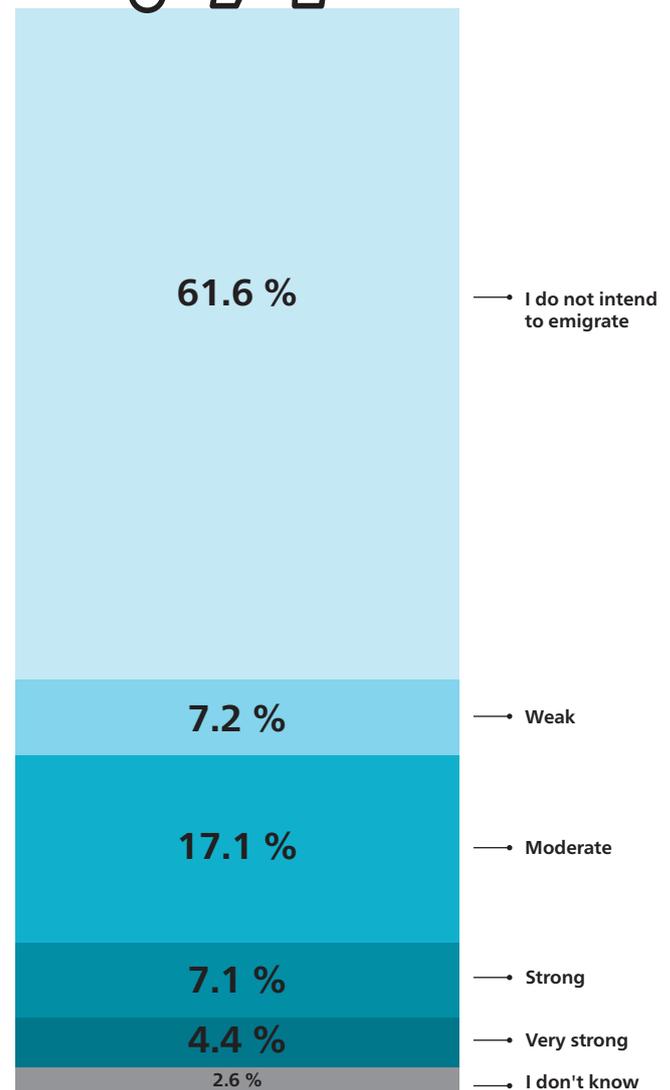
There is some variation across places of residence. Of the urban youth, 38.6% indicate they have some basic language skills compared to 28.5% of rural residents. More young people living in rural areas have indicated that they possess a practical knowledge of the target language (26.2% compared to 19.3% for urban citizens). Slightly more rural respondents claimed they can write and speak freely in the language of their target country compared to urbanites. Since many rural residents indicated Russia as their favoured destination, there is no surprise that they have a good command of the Russian language.

The survey results show that in the northern Kazakhstan region, 44.4% of the young people report having a high command of the target language. Most ethnic Russians live in the north of the country, so many of them speak Russian very well. A big number of young people (38.5%) in Karaganda also indicate knowing the language of the country they would like to emigrate to.

In terms of destination, the second favoured place had interesting results. USA was chosen by 26.8% of the respondents while 21.5% chose Canada, 13.7% desire to move to EU countries, and 11.5% want to go to Russia. Ethnic Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Russians put the USA in second place as a country of immigration. Ethnic Kyrgyz youth would like to emigrate to the USA and Australia while Uzbeks prefer to go to Canada (50%).

In third place, 17.9% of the respondents put countries of the EU and Canada, 14% of them chose the USA, and around 11%

## HOW STRONG IS YOUR WISH TO MOVE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY FOR OVER SIX MONTHS (TO EMIGRATE)?



of the young people want to emigrate to Russia and Australia. In terms of gender, more females (17.6%) indicated Canada as their third country for emigration. Young males prefer to move to EU countries (20%). In this category, young people also prefer the USA, the EU and Canada. Ethnic Kazakhs put Canada as their third place while ethnic Kyrgyz chose Russian and Israel. Russians and Ukrainians prefer to go to the countries of European Union.

### 3.4 VALUES AND RIGHTS

The survey respondents were presented with eight values and were asked to identify their three most important values. The young people placed the highest importance on these values: human rights (44.6%), security (13.7%) and democracy (with only 12.1%). The second choice includes human rights (23.8%), equality (18.7%), and security (16.3%). The respondents' third choices are security (27.5%), equality (13.8%) and economic well-being (13.2%). The choice of these values shows what young people want to experience and see them implemented. These results indicate that human rights and security are two very important values for Kazakhstani youth. Security appeared in all three categories of values by the respondents as well, which demonstrates its overall importance. This concern with security among young people could be a result of different events. The threat of terrorism, on one hand, which is often discussed in mass media and, on the other hand, the murder of a famous Kazakhstani figure skater Denis Ten, the 2014 Olympic bronze medallist in July 2018, could contribute to their concerns.<sup>39</sup> His death in the centre of Almaty during the day revealed serious problems in the provision of security by the state to its citizens. After this incident, the government launched a wide-scale reform of the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Corruption scandals in the Ministry of Internal Affairs have also contributed to the low level of trust in the police and belief that it cannot provide an appropriate level of security.<sup>40</sup> The concern with human rights among young people can be based on what they have learned through the communication of local activists and international organisations working in Kazakhstan that have raised the issue. For instance, it has been emphasised that the rights of disabled people or religious people have not been observed properly.<sup>41</sup>

It was also important to understand what the respondents thought about the status of rights that various groups within the population experience. They were asked to indicate if eight population groups had not enough, enough or too many rights. Many respondents believe that not all groups in Kazakhstan experience their rights to the fullest. The respondents indicated the most disadvantaged group is the poor people followed by the people with disabilities or limited abilities and then youth. The people with disabilities cannot exercise their rights fully because of limited access to resources, including quality education and healthcare.<sup>42</sup>

The results clearly show that young people are not satisfied with their rights either. As it will be demonstrated in the section on politics, young people believe that the government neglects their views and interests and does not provide an opportunity to voice their concerns. Young people in the 14-19-age cohort support human rights more than young people who are 24 to 29 years old. One third of all the respondents (33%) believe that children and LGBTQ+ people (32.5%) do not have enough rights in Kazakhstan. More rural youth than urban youth think

that different groups (children, youth, disabled people, etc.) in Kazakhstan have enough rights. Urban youth believe that poor people and people with disabilities do not have enough rights in Kazakhstan. The youngest group (14-19 years old) believes that various social groups such as poor people (32.8%), children (53.5%), people with disabilities (40.1%) and youth (52.9%) have enough rights. The older cohorts aged 20 to 29 believe almost the same way. Overall, slightly more female than male respondents believe that the social groups mentioned above do not have enough rights. However, this difference is particularly large in regards to women, disabled and poor categories. The percentage of females who believe that women do not have enough rights is almost double the number of males who hold this view (31.4% and 17.6% respectively). This can be explained by the more vulnerable and disadvantaged positions of women in Kazakhstan.

### 3.5 FEARS AND CONCERNS

This research intended to determine the current level of anxiety and concerns of the young people. The survey question had respondents indicate the intensity of their fear regarding various issues including the possibility of war, growing poverty, pollution, and corruption. The results revealed that many young people experience fears which are not necessarily related to real threats but things that individuals cannot control.

Issues that cause the most significant or strongest anxiety for the respondents are war (51.8%), growing poverty (51.1%), pollution and climate change (50.8%) as well as corruption (50.8%) and social injustice (49.4%). These factors are perceived by young people as threats to their existence. Concerns over employment loss, illness, or terror attacks were not strong among these young people. The respondents are least concerned about the number of immigrants in the country and the possibility of being a victim of robbery.

More urban dwellers have fears and concerns than rural youth. Youth living in metropolitan areas especially fear losing their job and have more concerns about pollution, war, social justice, and getting seriously ill. The higher level of anxiety in cities than in rural areas may be due to the high level of competition, pollution and other factors. As for rural dwellers, they mostly fear corruption (47.9%) and growing poverty in society (47.7%). The fear of job loss is particularly high among the group of young people aged 24 to 29 followed by the youngest group (14 to 19 years old), while youth between 20 and 24 are less concerned with the loss of income. This might be explained with the latter age group getting their higher education. Females are more likely than males to be concerned about their physical security issues. For example, 47.2% of the females are afraid of becoming victims of physical violence compared to 22.4% of the males. One of the respondents shared her fears about violence against women,

//

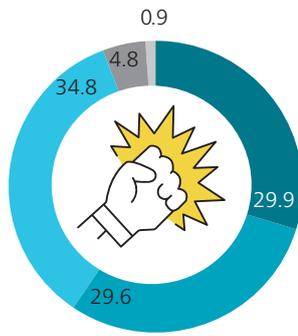
*I like to read the social page of the World Health Organisation, there is a statistic that one out of three women in the world is sexually and physically abused. And that every year 90,000 women die as a result of physical violence in their families. That statistic horrifies me, and I kind of think that there is no guarantee that I can avoid being the one out of the three women [who is abused], no one gives me a guarantee."*

Female, 25 years old, student

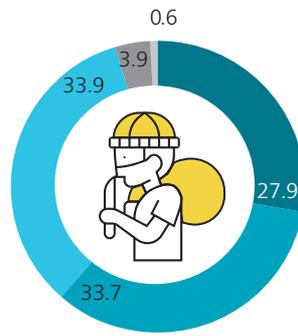
Similarly, females are almost twice as afraid as males of getting robbed (43.2% versus 24.6% for males). Females also have more fears in terms of war (58.8% versus 44.8% for males), terrorist attacks, becoming seriously ill, social injustice, pollution, poverty, immigrants, and corruption. The main fears of young males are corruption (49.4%), unemployment (47.2%) and growing poverty in society (47%).

### HOW ANXIOUS ARE YOU ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ISSUES? (in %)

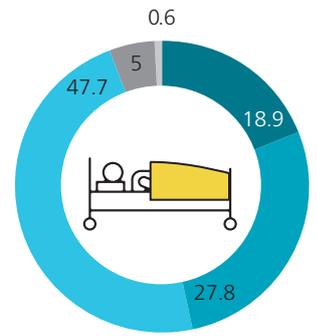
- Certainly not
- To some extent
- Significantly
- I don't know
- No answer



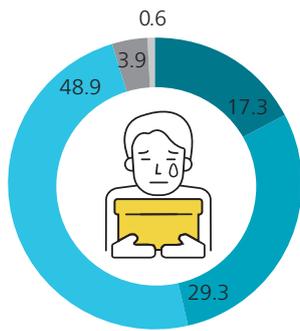
Becoming a victim of physical violence



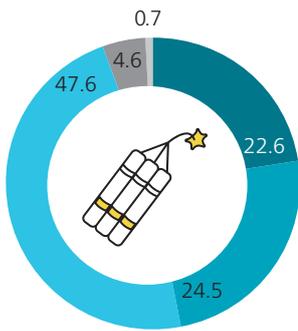
Becoming a victim of a robbery



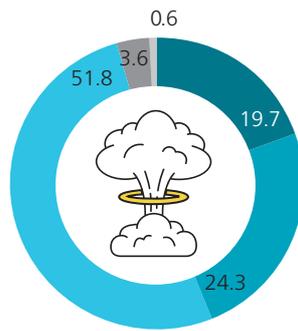
Serious illness



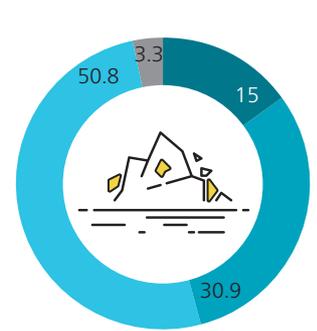
Unemployment



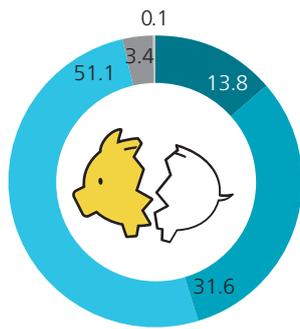
Terror attack



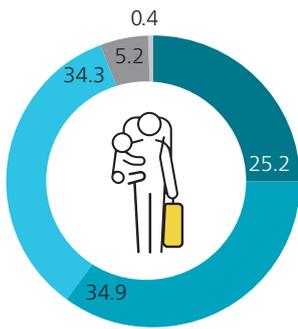
War in the region/world



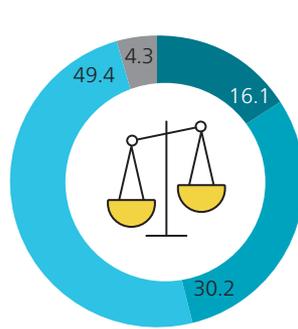
Environmental pollution and climate change



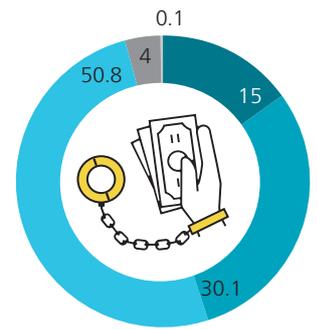
Growing poverty in the society



Too many migrants and refugees



Social injustice



Corruption



## 4

# YOUTH AND POLITICS

## 4.1 POLITICAL VIEWS, ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

This chapter covers issues related to young people's views and attitudes towards political life as well as their level of participation in Kazakh politics and provides important insights on how much young people are interested in political issues and to what extent they know about politics. As the next figure shows, almost half of the respondents (47.8%) answered that they were not interested in politics at all, 10.5% were not interested, 11.4% were very interested, 7.8% just interested and 20% of the respondents were indifferent to political matters. In terms of knowledge of politics, only 16.9% agreed that they know a lot about politics, while 49.5% of them disagreed with the statement, and 24.3% neither agreed nor disagreed. More young people (20.8%) in small towns and rural areas know about politics than those in urban areas (14%). These results show that young people in Kazakhstan are mostly apolitical. The 2020 research results demonstrate that slightly more young people have become uninterested in politics compared to the 33.6% of the 2016 research respondents that indicated their indifference.<sup>43</sup> On one hand, young people might be busy with their daily routine such as education, starting a family, serving in the army, or looking for job opportunities. On the other hand, the passive political culture that existed in the Soviet period could be continuing to shape people's attitudes and views towards politics in the post-independence period as well. In addition,

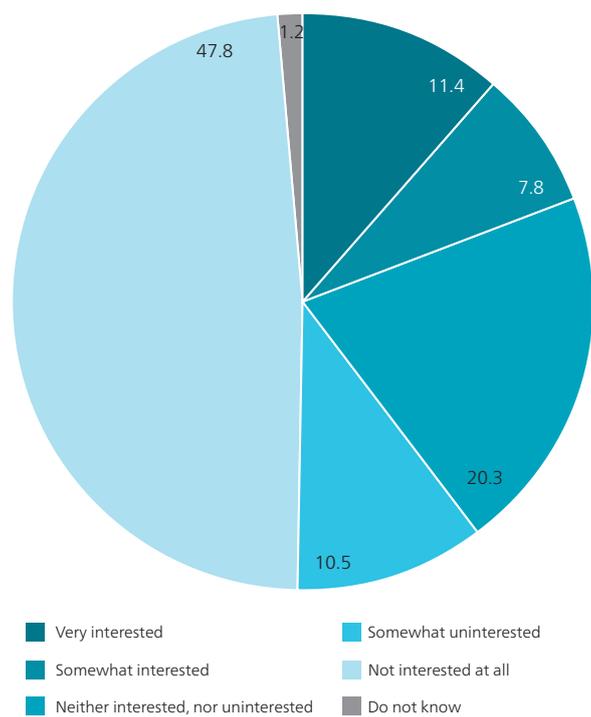
some young people might be disillusioned by the prospects of making a political career due to the absence of social mobility, and consequently, are uninterested in political affairs. Both rural and urban youth showed the same level of interest in politics. One of the respondents shares his opinion on political inactivity in Kazakhstan,

“

*Regarding our politics and involvement of our citizens in politics, what I wanted to say is that we have a very low involvement of our citizens in politics. And that includes our youth and the older generation. I mean, we have this perception that politics is to be made by politicians... we kind of have to stay out of it. And it's none of your business, you've got your own thing to do, leave this to them [politicians].”*

Male, 23 years old, working

FIGURE 14: Interest in politics in general, (in %)



Kazakhstani youth is not only indifferent to domestic politics but also to international political issues. The majority of young respondents indicated they are not interested in political life abroad. Only around 14.8% expressed their interest in EU- and USA-related political issues. Slightly more young people (18.2%) are interested in the political affairs of Russia. This is likely due to the geographic proximity and cultural ties with this northern neighbour as well as the considerable influence of the Russian Federation on Kazakhstan's internal and external affairs.

Politics at the regional and local levels stir the same level of interest among the young people. Less than a quarter of the respondents (28.4%) pay attention to regional and local political agendas while 47.3% are not interested in politics on both levels. There is a minor difference between rural and urban youth in terms of interest towards regional and local politics. Slightly more rural young people (30.6%) are interested in politics at the regional and local level than urbanites (26.7%). The results also showed that almost the same proportion of young women (18.6%) are interested in politics than young men (19.8%).

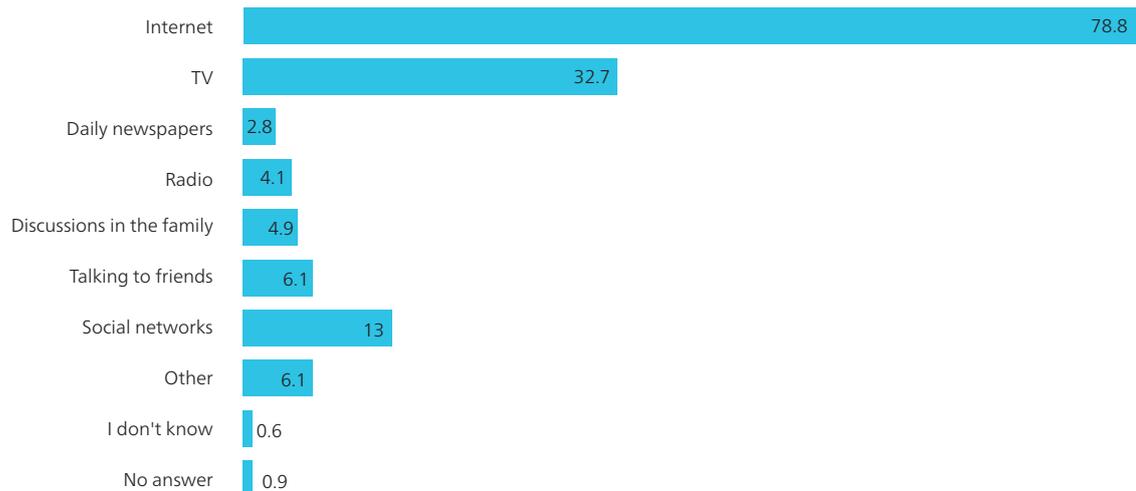
## 4.2 POLITICS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY

As the present survey revealed, young people do not tend to discuss politics with their relatives or friends. Most respondents (36.9%) indicated that they never do that, while 18.6% rarely discuss politics, 24.5% sometimes exchange their political views,

and only 16.6% discuss political issues often. The research also reveals that the political views of the young people in Kazakhstan are quite similar to those of their parents. Indeed, family is an important agent of socialisation for young people through which political ideas and views are transmitted across generations.<sup>44</sup> The lack of interest in politics and the absence of ideological leaders among youth might push young people to follow the views of their parents. The trend over the last four years is that more young people hold similar political views as their parents today than those in 2016. In this survey, 20.8% of the respondents answered that the views of their parents fully align with their own compared to 11.9% of respondents in 2016.<sup>45</sup> While 13.7% of the young people to a certain extent share political views with the older generation, 24.6% hold somewhat similar political ideas, 8.1% have substantially different political views compared to their parents and 7.9% differ entirely with their views and ideas towards politics compared to their parents.

The similarity of political ideas across generations is more profound in rural than in metropolitan areas (25.2% and 17.5% respectively). As a rule, cities are characterised by more opportunities and the diversity of political cultures and political views. This diversity might shape young people's views towards politics so that they might differ from those of their parents. In addition, peers in schools or universities can be an important source of different views and ideas. As it has been expected, more young ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Uzbeks have common political views with their parents than ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. This may be a result of cultural traditions and relations within Kazakh and Uzbek families which are characterized by continuity, authority and subordination. Thus, we can notice that political views across generations are similar rather than different.

Compared to the survey of 2016, some changes in the sources of political information for young people have been observed. In 2016, TV was the first source for receiving political information, the internet was second and social media was in third place. Only 10% of young people obtained information from social media in 2016<sup>46</sup>. In 2020, the three most important sources of political news are the internet (78.8%), TV (32.7%), and social media (13%). Also sources include friends (6.1%), family (4.9%), radio (4.1%) and daily newspapers (2.8%), other (6.1%). Thus, electronic sources, particularly the internet, are the most popular sources of information among the youth today. Some variation, however, exists between urban and rural residents. More rural young people receive information predominantly from watching TV while more urban dwellers get information from social media than rural youth. Access to the internet in rural areas is still a problem in Kazakhstan. Even if there is access to it, its quality and speed might be quite poor in the countryside. This can affect the ways people prefer to receive political or any other information. Similarly, family and friends have become less important sources of information about politics and world events than in 2016.

FIGURE 15: **Main sources of information on political events, (in %)**

### 4.3 PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

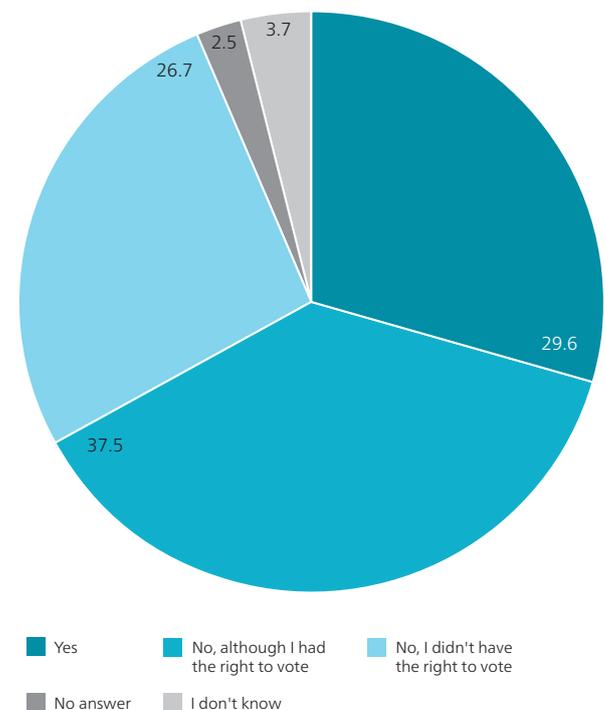
We were also interested to learn how politically active youth are and whether they vote in the national elections. Although 59.1% of the respondents agree that every citizen of democratic societies must vote, not all of them take part in elections in Kazakhstan. The results in the next figure show that many young people remain inactive in political life — only around one third of the respondents (29.6%) voted in the last parliamentary election, 37.5% did not vote although they had the right to do so, and 26.7% did not take part in the elections due to the age requirement. In terms of age groups, around 40% of the young people between 20 and 29 years old voted in the elections and more than 45% did not vote. Very often a low level of participation in voting is rooted in a low level of trust and fairness of the electoral results. As one of the respondents noted,

“

*I don't go to elections because we don't have any elections. Because for example there was a parliamentary election recently. And before that there were snap elections. Before the elections the party Nur Otan was already rehearsing how it would celebrate its victory. All the students were standing there... So, does it make sense to go (...) to vote? And even if you vote for others, at the end you find out that somebody has already gotten ninety-eight percent.”*

Female, 22 years old, student

More ethnic Kazakhs (32.1%) and those who live in rural areas voted in the last parliamentary elections compared to other ethnic groups and urbanites. This could be explained by the low level of social, political and cultural activities in rural areas as well as positive peer influence, since in smaller communities residents tend to have closer relationships.

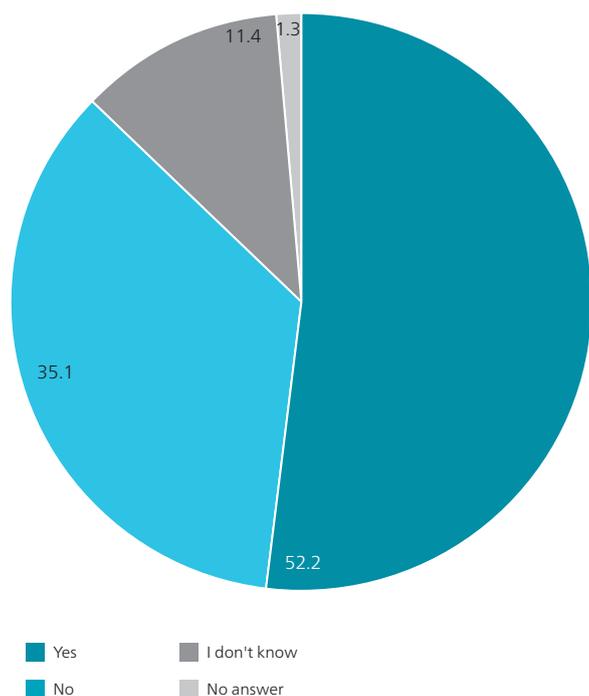
FIGURE 16: **Casting a vote in the last parliamentary elections, (in %)**

The actual behaviour of young people stands in contrast to their statements about voting. For example, as the next figure illustrates, 52.2% of the young respondents mentioned that if they have the right to take part in parliamentary elections, they would vote and 35.1% answered negatively. Of the rural respondents, 61.2% indicated they would vote in parliamentary elections whereas only 45.5% of the urban youth indicated they would vote. This inconsistency appears in other questions as well. Young people believe, for instance, that voting must be present in democratic regimes, but, as already established, they do not actively exercise their political rights in Kazakhstan. This might partly be explained by more optimistic views held by rural citizens towards the state and political institutions of the country, and the feeling of powerlessness when it comes to impacting politics. In general, there is a gap between real voting in parliamentary elections and declared willingness to do so.

might provide a more socially accepted view. In contrast, the 25- to 29-year-old cohort has a more realistic vision towards their life and career. At this stage, they have already settled in life and have chosen their career paths.

Rural dwellers are less likely to participate in politics than urban citizens. Most of them (66.4%) reject the idea about taking part in politics compared to 60.7% of urban citizens. Thus, this research demonstrates that political apathy is a defining feature of Kazakhstani youth. The low level of young people's willingness to be engaged in politics might be closely related to fewer opportunities for them. Indeed, most young people (69.2%) believe that youth should have many more opportunities to express themselves in the political life of Kazakhstan. This disillusionment in politics and lack of opportunities can be based on the lack of support from the state. One of the young respondents claimed,

FIGURE 17: **Willingness to vote in parliamentary elections, if the right exists, (in %)**



Furthermore, the lack of interest in political life also entails a low level of willingness to take on a political role. The majority of young people (80%) stated they are not willing to be engaged in politics, 13% answered that there is some possibility of their involvement in political life and a very small number of youth (3%) would like to participate in political affairs. The youngest group of respondents (14-19 years old) is slightly more willing to be engaged in politics (3.6%) than the other age groups. On one hand, this might be related to a more idealistic vision of the future as well as politics, and on the other, teenagers

“*In my opinion, politics in Kazakhstan is centralised, it is every man for himself. That is, the one who steals the most from the state wins. That's probably the whole point, because no one thinks about others, because no one thinks about you. You can see it everywhere, not just in politics, but in life. But yes, there are people who come to protest rallies, but they are catastrophically few. I have an acquaintance who is an activist. They were cordoned off for six hours and no one from the neighbourhood came out to defend them. Well, because everyone is more concerned about themselves. Most people who are trying to do something decide to leave the country, because you can't fight alone. But you can't put up with it either. Well, that's the whole point.*”

Female, 19 years old, student

While some of the young people are disappointed and disillusioned by political processes in Kazakhstan, other respondents have a more optimistic view. For instance, one of the respondents said,

“

*I was born in the year 2000, so in principle I am only twenty years old and I am already considered to belong to the Nazarbayev generation. I mean from the time I was born I was ruled by Nazarbayev, and now, when Tokayev came to power, I can see that at least some changes have taken place. We have had more or less at least one percent of a 'hearing state', because I see that our president has started to respond to all kinds of events that are discussed in social networks and I think that changes are possible. And even though everybody is criticising Madi Akhmetov who became the youngest MP in Kazakhstan, I believe this is also a kind of progress. I myself am critical about this person, but still. I think changes are possible because one young person has been nominated from the youth movement to defend at least some of their interests. I also very much hope that the percentage of women in our government will increase, because I think that in order to make changes, it is very important to take into account different groups.”*

Female, 19 years old, student

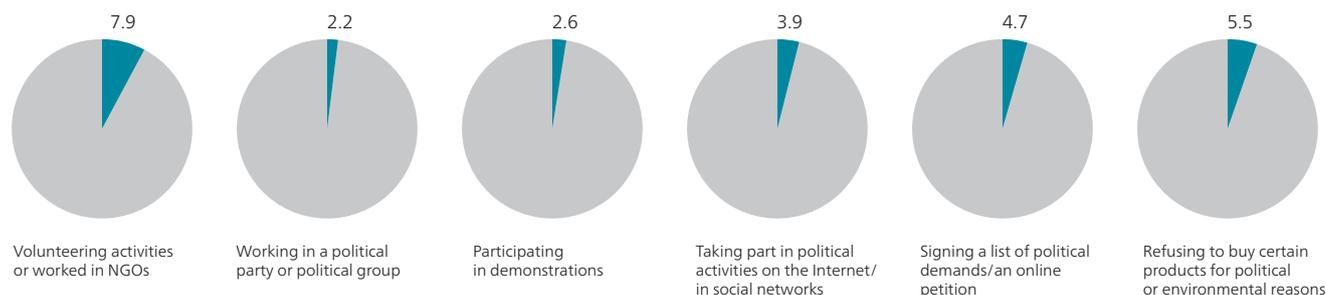
As the survey shows, 59.1% of the respondents believe that politicians in Kazakhstan do not take into account their political views and opinions. As a result, young people feel that their needs and interests are not considered despite the government implementation of various youth programmes and policies. This drifts youth policies and programmes implemented by the government and the young people's actual views and opinions apart, resulting in a wide gap between them.

## 4.4 FORMS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY

In general, young people do not take an active part in social and political movements or processes in Kazakhstan. The respondents revealed that only 4.7% of them signed political petitions while the majority (69.5%) have never done so. However, 20.6% are not against signing a petition in the future. Even fewer young people (2.6%) reported they have participated in demonstrations, whereas the majority of youth have never done that before (78.7%). Interestingly, 15.3% of the respondents did not exclude the opportunity to participate in demonstrations in the future. Nevertheless, once again we observe the difference between actual and intended political behaviour which shows that those intentions might be declarative by nature. Judging by this and the previous study, young people tend to be apolitical.

Slightly more young people took part in volunteering activities or worked in NGOs (7.9%); however, the majority (65.1%) did not have this experience, and 22.9% would be willing to do it in the future. Thus, volunteering as a form of activity or work in NGOs is more attractive than other forms of political expression such as being a member of a political party or political group. Regarding membership, 77.2% of the young people have never been a political party or political group member. This trend reflects the general situation with political parties which are highly personified and are largely elite-dominated organisations. Moreover, strict regulations for the registration of a political party create certain impediments for young people to establish their own political organisation. Although recent amendments to the law on political parties have reduced the required number of members from 40,000 to 20,000 people, it is still difficult to register a political party in the country.<sup>47</sup>

Although social media and the internet have become popular platforms where young people can express their views, only a small percentage of the surveyed youth engage in political activities through them. According to the results, the majority of young people (76.2%) remain inactive although 16.1% intend to be involved in political life via these platforms. Just over 68% of the young females would not like to take part in politics while only 57.8% of the young males would not like to. One form of political participation and protest is not buying products for political or ecological reasons. While 5.5% of the respondents confirmed that they have refused to buy some products due to the aforementioned issues, 17.4% intend to do so in the future. The survey also showed a difference in terms of residence. More urban dwellers (7.5%) than rural youth (2.8%) refused to buy products due to political and ecological reasons. Furthermore, there was no difference across gender. However, many young people prefer not to use their purchasing power for politics. The low participation of youth in various forms of political activity demonstrates a passive political culture and a high number of restrictions on political processes and activities in the country.

FIGURE 18: **Have you ever tried to participate in political activities in one of the following ways? (in %)**

## 4.5 INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

Institutional trust is an important indicator of the credibility of the state, its institutions, and legitimacy. People trust institutions because they have confidence that their problems and issues will be resolved while their aspirations will be supported. In Kazakhstan, according to this survey, the most trusted institutions include the president, volunteer movements and the armed forces. Almost half (48.3%) of the young people trust the president. In Kazakh society, the president commonly enjoys more trust of the population than other political institutions. In other words, the president has always been recognised as a figure standing above all other institutions of power. He is expected to resolve all the national issues and conflicts. The president is seen as the leader of the nation, guarantor of sovereignty and security of Kazakhstan. The respondents in rural areas show more loyalty to the president than the urbanites. Geographically, 60.1% of the rural respondents hold trust in the president while 39.5% of the urban youth express their trust in him. Similarly, fewer young people in rural areas (17%) mistrust the president while 29.2% of urban respondents are less confident in the head of the state. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that in Kazakhstan, citizens of urban areas are often more critical of the authorities than those in rural areas. It can be explained by the existence of the middle class and access to different sources of information. The level of trust in the government and parliament was found to be lower than in the president. Only 36% of the young people place trust in the government and 35.9% in the parliament. Again, rural respondents trust these institutions more than their urban counterparts.

The second highest level of trust is placed in volunteer movements. Interestingly, 40.5% of the young people trust volunteer movements despite the fact that only a small percent of youth has been involved in volunteer activities. This high level of trust can be related to the transparency of those organisations and the altruistic behaviour of their members. Furthermore, 40.4% of the respondents place trust in the armed forces of the country. The armed forces of Kazakhstan have recently implemented several reforms

including the professionalisation of the army and updating of the military equipment. This could enhance the level of trust in the army which is viewed as the vanguard of sovereignty and national security.

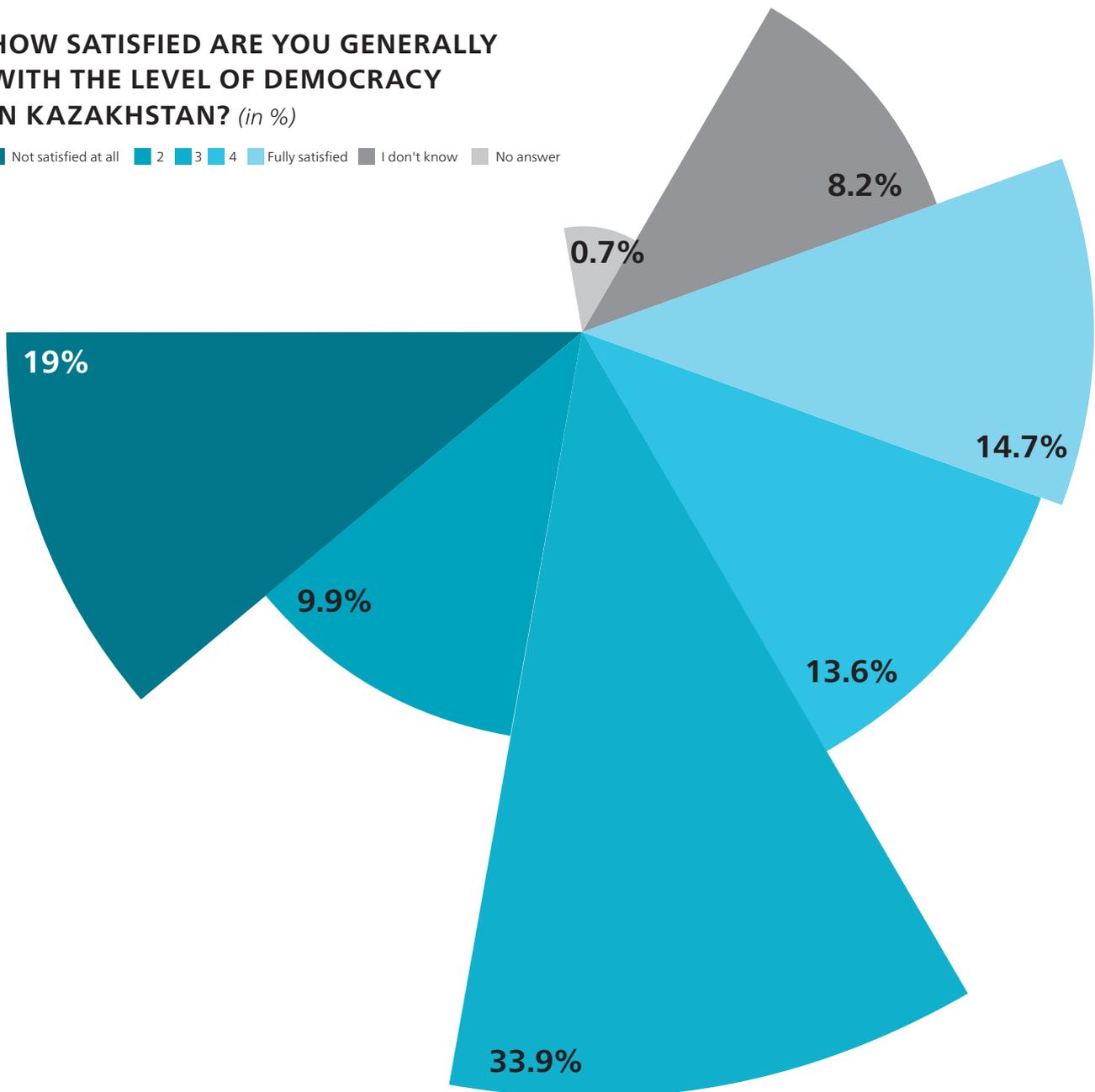
All other institutions of the country are trusted less. Around 31% of the respondents trust the mass media, big business companies, banks, and public organisations. The least trusted institution in Kazakhstan for 37% of the young people are the courts and judicial system. Similarly, 36.1% of the youth do not trust Kazakhstan's police force. This is hardly surprising because the judicial system and law enforcement bodies have a rather negative reputation among the population and are considered to be highly corrupt. As in the case with the government and parliament, twice as many rural youth in comparison to urban youth have trust in the judicial system and the police. Unlike in large cities, the communication in rural areas (villages and small towns) is rather personified because people know each other very well. Rural youth also place much more trust in the local government, the army, and mass media (mostly TV) than urban youth. This demonstrates that citizens of rural areas rely more on the state and state institutions than urban dwellers. As previously established, many young people in rural areas are dependent on state jobs and state support. This can affect their attitudes and the level of trust towards the government. The youngest group of people (14-19 years old) place more trust in various institutions and organisations than those aged 25 to 29 years old which might be explained by their more idealistic views about life and the lack of work experience.

## 4.6 VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIANISM

It was also important to find out the attitudes of young people towards different types of regimes — democracy and authoritarianism. Although only a small percentage of young people are interested in politics, many of them have their own views and preferences regarding political regimes. As shown in the next figure, more than half of the respondents (54.7%)

## HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU GENERALLY WITH THE LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY IN KAZAKHSTAN? (in %)

■ Not satisfied at all ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ Fully satisfied ■ I don't know ■ No answer



believe that democracy is a good type of regime, while 13.5% of respondents disagree with this. In response to another question, 52.7% indicated support for the idea that political opposition is a necessary feature of democracy. When asked about their satisfaction towards the level of democracy in Kazakhstan, the responses were split evenly between being satisfied, unsatisfied, and indifferent. These results significantly differ from the 2016 figures since 52% of those respondents were satisfied with the development of democracy in the country — 28.3% vs. 52.1% respectively.<sup>48</sup> Equally, over the last four years, the number of those who are not satisfied with democracy in Kazakhstan has dramatically increased by more than five times from 5.2% in 2016 to 28.9% in 2020. This disappointment and disillusionment may be related to various political events that have taken place in Kazakhstan within

these four years, including renaming Astana to Nur-Sultan and the Presidential elections of 2019. Both events were met with protests and the detention of protesters by the police.

Some variation in terms of the level of satisfaction has been observed across age groups and place of residence. The youngest group (between 14 and 19 years old) is more satisfied with democracy than those aged 20 to 29 years old. The least content people, however, are the 25 to 29 years old respondents who live in urban areas. The results show that 37.1% of the urbanites are unhappy with democracy in Kazakhstan versus 18% of the youth in rural areas. The youth that expressed the most discontent with the level of democracy live in the largest cities of Kazakhstan — Shymkent (47.4%), Almaty (38.7%) and Nur-Sultan (37.2%). Ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Russians are the two ethnic groups which

showed their highest level of discontent with democracy in Kazakhstan. This may be related to underrepresentation of these two large ethnic groups in different governmental institutions of the country.

However, there is also some percentage of young people who also have a positive view towards authoritarianism. The idea that dictatorship as a regime might be better than democracy under certain circumstances was supported by 24.3% of respondents. Whereas 34.3% disagree with this view, 26.6% neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Thus, every fourth young individual supports authoritarianism in certain circumstances which demonstrates an undeniable level of tolerance to this type of regime. These young people may have internalised the values that have been promoted via mass media, including populist views such as the importance of a strong leader or a strong government or the ideas of “economy first and then politics” or “people are not ready for democracy yet”. One of the respondents elaborated on that,

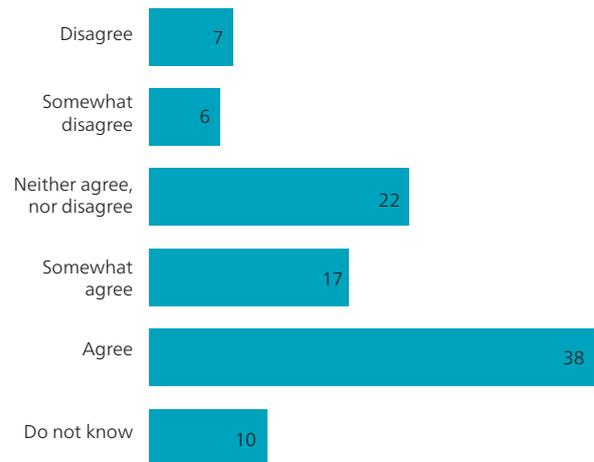
“

*It seems to me that our society is not yet ready for this [democracy] in 2021. If they gave power to the people completely, there would be real anarchy. Roughly speaking, if they gave power to the people, it could happen like in Kyrgyzstan, where a group of people wanted to overthrow the white house. Also, it seems to me that this is not democracy, but its bad side, not every society is ready for it, but we would have the same if we were not held in these iron gauntlets. In 10-15 years, as our current generation of young people grow up, these things will change, society will slowly move towards democratisation, but it cannot happen in one fell swoop, for obvious reasons.”*

Male, 20 years old, student

Therefore, they may find authoritarianism more appropriate under certain circumstances. These views are promoted not only through local mass media but also through Russian mass media, which are popular in Kazakhstan. As previously established, unlike urban residents, rural residents tend to consume most information from their TV and do not have many alternative sources of information. Thus, they may be more accepting and tolerant

FIGURE 19: **Attitudes towards democracy as a good form of governance, (in %)**



of authoritarianism than youth living in metropolitan areas. In addition, the long-term practice of appointing local akims (heads of local government) leaves little room for alternative views on how politics should be conducted in the country.

Surprisingly, almost one third of young people (27.8%) agreed with the idea that some conflicts can be resolved with force only, 38.4%, however, disagree with this statement, and 22.3% neither agree nor disagree. In terms of gender, more young males than females agree with the use of force — 31.2% vs. 24.4% respectively. In a similar vein, 67% of the young people also support the idea that Kazakhstan currently needs a strong leader who will govern in the interests of the majority while 11.2% disagree and 14.6% expressed no opinion. Many of the respondents also believe in the need for a strong political party (59.2%). Thus, young people have seemingly conflicting views towards democracy and authoritarianism as they combine support for democracy, on one hand, and the use of force and strong leadership on the other.

Freedom of speech is one of the important indicators of the level of democracy. The young people were asked if they have experienced any improvements in terms of freedom of speech in Kazakhstan. The highest percentage answered negatively while 20.1% mentioned that more diverse reports and articles have appeared in the mass media. Some improvements in the internet news sites were only noted by 18.1% of the respondents and 4.6% mentioned some positive changes in printed media, TV and radio. Those who live in urban areas (42.3%) and are aged between 24 and 29 (45.9%) do not observe any positive changes in terms of freedom of speech in the country. Again, ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians are more negative in their evaluation of freedom of speech than ethnic Kazakhs.

## 4.7 GOVERNMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

The results of the survey demonstrate that paternalistic sentiments among the young people are quite prevalent. People continue to rely on and expect help from the state in terms of social support and benefits. Despite radical cuts in social welfare in the 1990s due to the economic crisis and state rhetoric that people should not rely on the state for social support, many people have not lost those expectations. A strong majority (79%) of the young respondents believe that the state should take more responsibility for providing care and support to the population. This deep expectation from the government is particularly striking considering their expression of disinterest in politics, relative political inaction as well as their minimal individual efforts. Only 36.7% of the youth believe that hard work might lead to the improvement of life while 37.5% disagree with this statement. Thus, a conflict can be detected: they seem to have high demands regarding the state's provision of public goods but they are not willing to make their own efforts to achieve social justice and improve their standard of living. This high reliance on the state in terms of social support and provision of justice reflects the continuity of Soviet socialist legacy. Their resilience of socialist beliefs is also revealed in their view of the state's role in the economy. While 52% of the young people believe that the share of the state participation in business and industry must be increased, 19.4% disagree with this. The respondents also have a negative view regarding competition as 42.3% believe that "competition is harmful" and might evoke negative traits in humans. This distribution indicates that the free-market economy does not have many supporters in Kazakhstan. In addition, the market economy is associated with the growth of inequality in Kazakhstan which did not exist during the Soviet period.<sup>49</sup> Regarding the gap in income between the rich and the poor, 66.4% of the young respondents believe it should be narrowed. Only 15.8% disagree that the gap needs to be reduced, and 13.9% neither agree nor disagree. Indeed, in the last few years, the gap between the rich and the poor has been growing. This might affect young people's attitudes towards the state and its role in the economy. Despite the growing inequality, 54.3% of the respondents believe that the economic well-being of the Kazakhstani population will improve within the next decade while 10.4% predict that it will get worse and 24.8% of the respondents do not anticipate a change.

Rural youth express themselves more optimistically than urban youth in terms of the economic well-being of the population (68% and 44.1% respectively). This optimism can be based on 4.5% of economic growth experienced by Kazakhstan within the last few years (before the spread of SARS-CoV-19 in 2020 and the lockdown it caused). In addition, the rate of poverty in Kazakhstan has been reduced over the

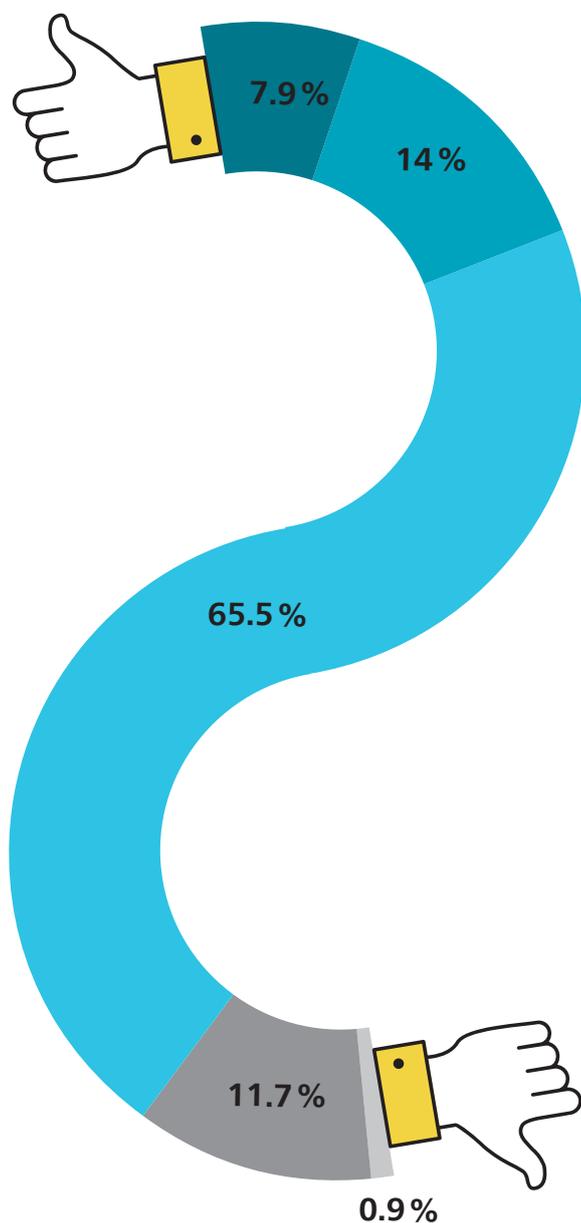
FIGURE 20: Prediction of economic well-being over next 10 years, (in %)



last decade, which could also provide the basis for optimism regarding the economic well-being of the population within the next ten years.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, a significant percent of the young respondents (51.9%) expects an improvement of the current situation after the 2019 election of the new president while 25.5% believe that the situation will not change and 4.8% mentioned that the situation may deteriorate. These positive attitudes can be associated with the hope for change inherent in youth. In general, the young people in this study have quite optimistic views regarding the development of the political and economic situation in the next decade.

## HOW DO YOU ENVISAGE THE FUTURE OF THE SOCIETY IN KAZAKHSTAN IN GENERAL?

■ Worse than now   
 ■ Same as now   
 ■ Better than now  
■ I don't know   
 ■ No answer



The youth were asked to judge how much the government should focus on implementing goals for some urgent issues. The majority of the young people believe that the government should focus on securing human rights and freedoms (88.5%), improving the situation of youth (88.4%), covering social justice and social benefits for all (87.9%), preserving the environment (88%), reducing unemployment (86.8%) and fighting corruption and criminality (85.8%), improving the position of women (84.8%). On the one hand, this list might reveal the most acute problems existing in Kazakhstan today in the eyes of young people. Youth encounters the violation of their human rights and freedoms in various spheres. These young people do not feel that government authorities are trying to resolve problems related to youth, and this demonstrates the gap between state policies and programmes and their expectations.<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that compared to the 2016 data, many of the problems identified by youth are similar albeit some changes in their priorities have taken place. For instance, in 2016 young people identified unemployment, growing poverty and the protection of the environment as the most acute problems in Kazakhstan. In 2020, social justice issues and environmental problems are also on the list of the most important concerns the government should address. However, many of the current respondents identified the observation of human rights and freedoms as the most important concern for the government to improve. This change likely relates to the presidential elections and violations of human rights during protests that occurred right after the elections.<sup>52</sup>

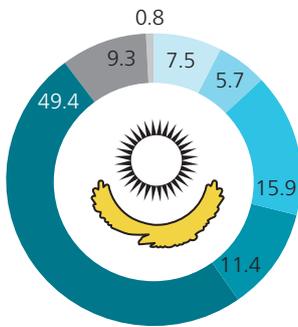
In 2020, the issues of environmental protection, reduction of unemployment rate, and corruption are on the list of youth's priorities for the government as well. Young people are a vulnerable group in Kazakhstan because they encounter a high rate of unemployment after graduation from universities. Similarly, the worsening of the ecological situation in Kazakhstan increases their concern for the environment. A high percentage of youth is also concerned with the position of women in Kazakhstan. The priority given to these particular issues can be explained by discussions of these problems in public discourse as unemployment, environmental problems as well as the position of women are regularly present in mass media. In this regard, one can say that youth preferences are definitely shaped by mass media and the events that take place in the country. Other issues that the respondents want the government to pay attention to include strengthening military power and national security (81.3%), nurturing private entrepreneurship (81%), fighting illegal immigration (76.6%), increasing economic growth and economic development (84.8%) and promoting national identity (60.8%).

## 4.8 YOUTH AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

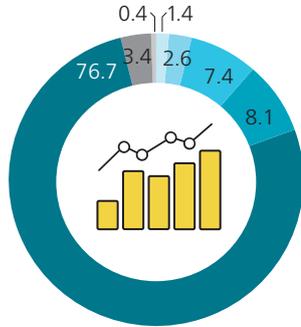
National identity is an important concept that defines people's attachments and sense of belonging to a nation. One of the important indicators of national identity is a sense of pride that citizens have being a member of their nation. Overall, 66.4% of the respondents are proud to be citizens of Kazakhstan. Just

9.4% expressed disagreement with this statement. It appears that young people with a more disadvantaged background who live in rural areas are prouder of being citizens of Kazakhstan (73.5%) than people living in metropolitan areas (61%). In terms of ethnic groups, we observe some variation. More ethnic Kazakhs are proud of their citizenship than the other ethnic groups.

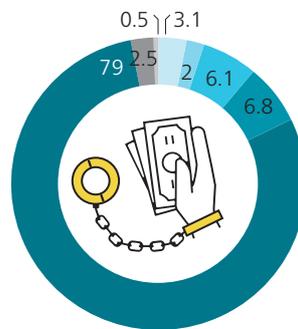
### TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTING EACH OF THE FOLLOWING GOALS? (in %)



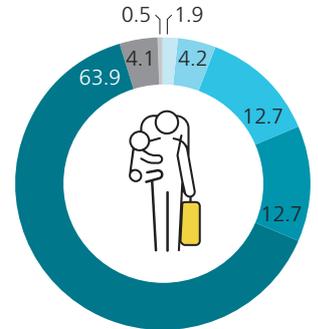
Promoting national identity



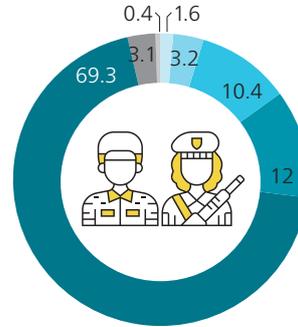
Economic growth and development



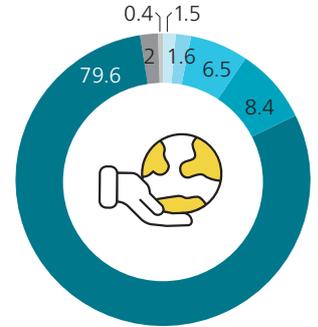
Fighting crime and corruption



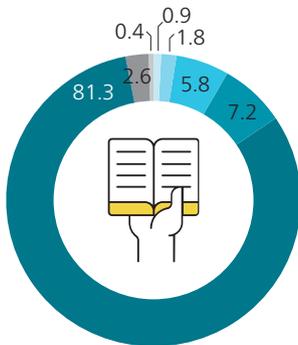
Fighting illegal immigration



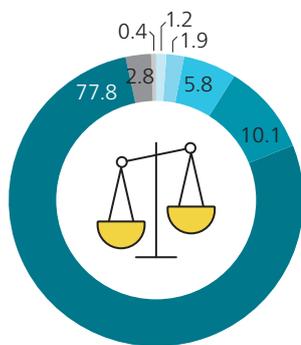
Fostering military power and national security



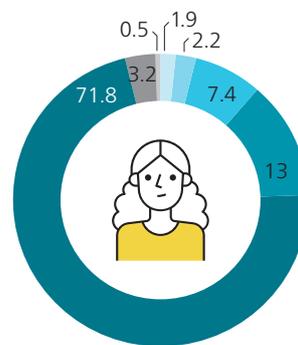
Preserving the environment



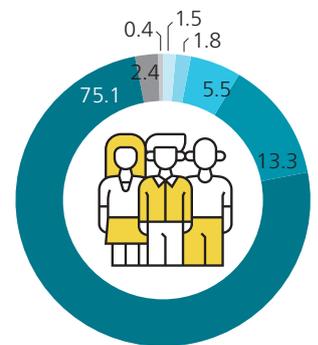
Securing human rights and freedoms



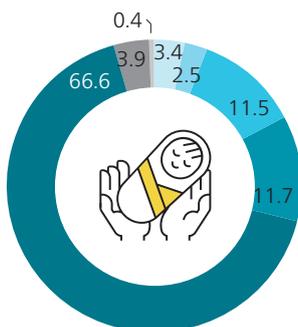
Social justice and social service coverage for all



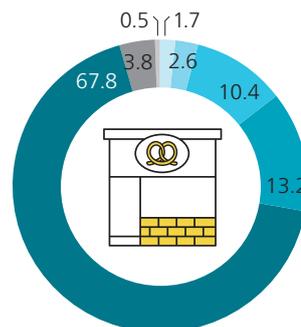
Improving the position of women



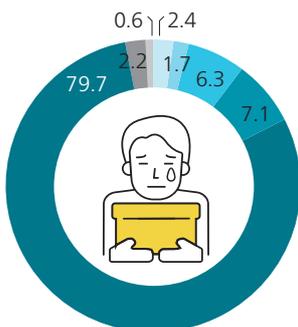
Improving the position of youth



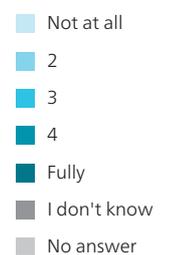
Providing incentives for population growth



Developing private entrepreneurship



Reducing unemployment



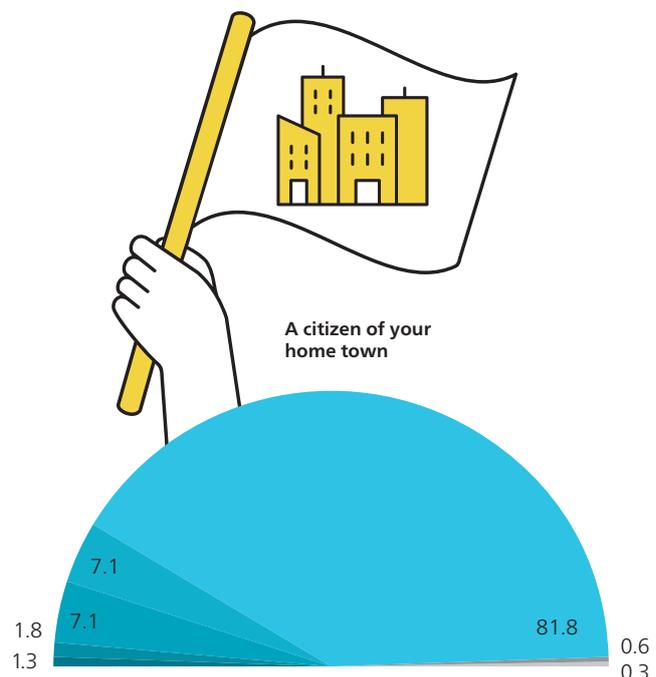
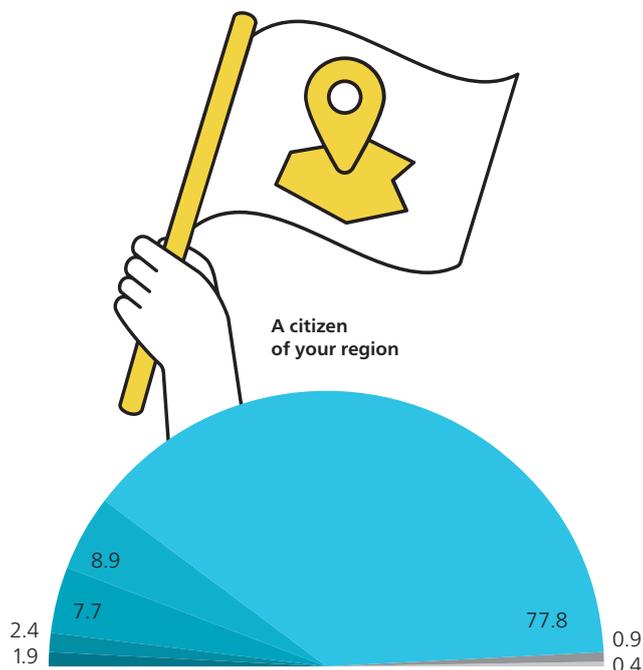
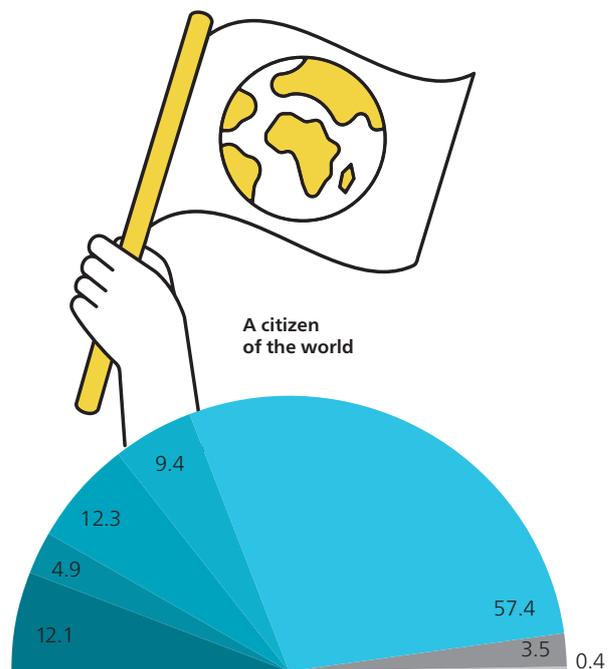
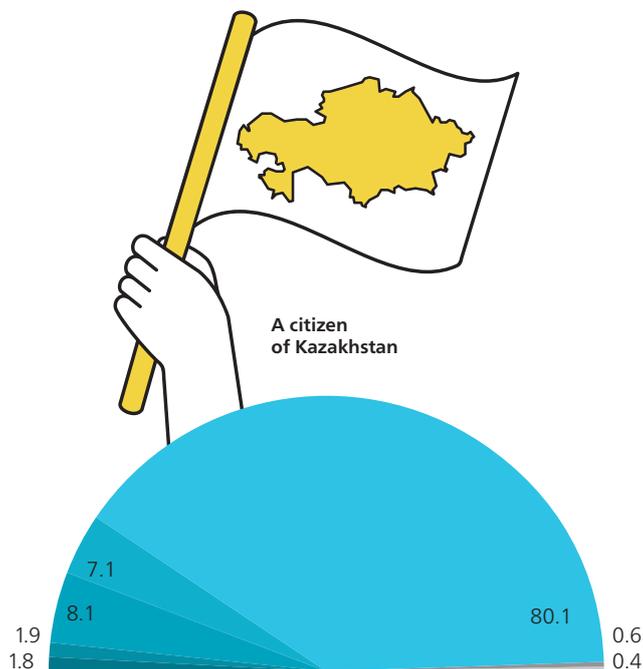
Because people might hold multiple identities, we tried to measure identity through this question: "To what extent do you identify yourself as a...?" The results show that the young respondents identify themselves foremost with their geographical identity — country, city or town/village. National identity was named by 87.2% of the respondents. Particularly, ethnic Kazakhs (90.8%) mentioned that they first identify themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan and secondly — by

their region (89.8%). Thus, local identity is as important and meaningful for people in general as national identity (86.7%). Regional identity, however, is more prevalent among rural than urban youth — as evidenced by 91.1% versus 83.4%.

Similarly, many more young people of rural areas and ethnic Kazakhs describe themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan than other ethnic groups and youth living in metropolitan areas. These youth identify themselves as "world citizens" to a lesser

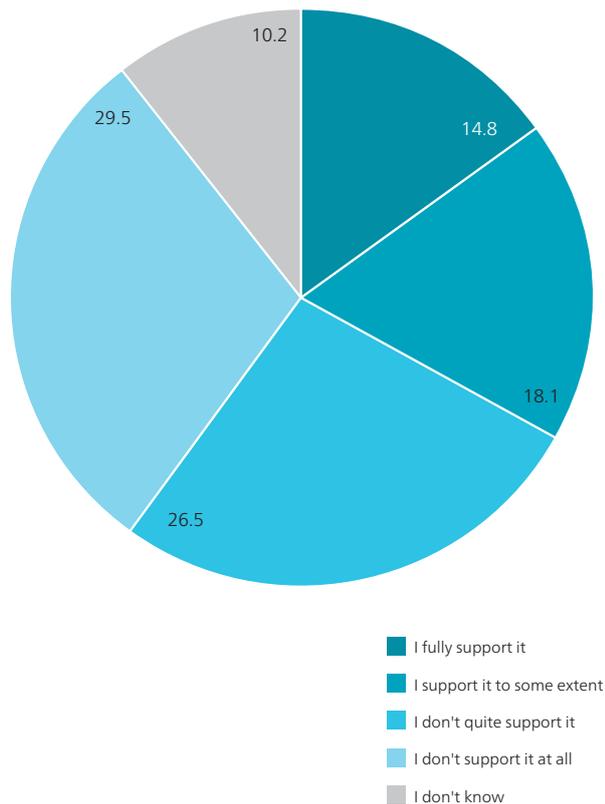
**TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (in %)**

■ Certainly not ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ Fully ■ No answer ■ I don't know



degree. There is some difference in terms of age cohorts. Young people between 14 and 24 years old (more than 70%) are more likely to identify themselves as “world citizens” rather than those aged 25 to 29 (58.9%). This might be due to their young age and the fact that they were more exposed to globalisation than the older cohorts.

FIGURE 21: **Attitudes towards the adoption of Latin alphabet for Kazakh language, (in %)**



Language is an important marker of national identity. In Kazakhstan, the status and use of the Kazakh language has been on the agenda of public discourse for many years. Recently, the government of Kazakhstan made the decision to change the Cyrillic script to the Latin alphabet. This move has not been accepted unequivocally. Despite various discussions and evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages, consensus regarding the introduction of the Latin script has not been reached. As illustrated in the next figure, the results of the survey indicate that 56% of the young respondents are not in favour of changing the alphabet, 32.9% are in favour and 10.2% are undecided on this issue. The negative attitudes may be related to the expenditures associated with the change of all signage and documents into the Latin script. Many young people believe that there are other important tasks that should be resolved first, including the issues of unemployment, protection of the environment, and others. The youngest group of people aged 14 to 19 is more supportive of the Latin script (39.5%) than the other two cohorts (31.9% and 27.8%). Rural youth are also in favour of the Latin alphabet to a larger degree than youth of metropolitan areas. One of the respondents commented on the Latin script,

“

*The attempt to switch to the Latin alphabet is such a weak attempt to get closer to the West. But whether this makes sense is another question, because the West, from my point of view, is not particularly interested in Central Asia as a partner.”*

Female, 19 years old, student



## 5

# FOREIGN POLICY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

## 5.1 VIEWS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

This chapter deals with the question of how young Kazakhs view their country's foreign policy. In particular, it investigates how they assess the international role of their home country on one hand, and how they assess Kazakhstan's role in the Central Asian region on the other. The current study demonstrates that the foreign policy of the country and the international role of Kazakhstan are assessed positively by the youth. However, Kazakh youth seem to be divided on very specific issues such as the reception of refugees or immigrants.

Overall, there is no uniform pattern of attitudes towards Kazakhstan's international role and foreign policy. The majority of young people are inclined to believe that the international role of their home country needs to be strengthened. One of the respondents believes that Kazakhstan has no clear statement of its international politics,

---

//

*If you look at the concept of Kazakhstan foreign policy it is always about general ideas, general points, 'we will continue the policy of Elbasy [Nursultan Nazarbayev] on the trend of nuclear disarmament', 'we are proud of that', '[we should] definitely reinforce confirmation of our state as a peace-loving nation'. We hear this tale for 30 years, and they constantly speak about peace, the peaceful sky over our heads, and so on. But I do not see any outlined national interests, which we will work on in the future. I don't see any clear politics on how we will build our relations with other countries at the moment."*

Female, 21 years old, student

When asked about Kazakhstan's national interests and if they are underrepresented in global politics, 31.8% of the young people strongly agree and 12% rather agree. Only 8.5% of the respondents strongly disagree with this statement and 6.2% rather disagree. A far greater proportion placed themselves in the middle between these two extremes (23.4%). A deep conviction that their country's global interests are underrepresented happens to be higher in the age group between 25 and 29 years old (35.4% as compared with 28.6% and 30.9% for the age groups 14-19 and 19-25 respectively) which is most likely due to the level of education and thus overall awareness of global affairs of the young people in that cohort. The difference between those who agree that Kazakhstan's national interests are underrepresented in global politics is also notable among ethnic Kazakhs (34.5%) and ethnic Russian youth (25.6%). Arguably it is a matter of pride — primarily so for the ethnic Kazakhs — that they perceive their home country to have more international standing than the ethnic Russian youth would view it. The same pattern can be observed for the question of whether or not Kazakhstan will gain more international recognition in the near future. Overall, 27.7% of all respondents strongly agree that the country will propel its international reputation, and 14% rather agree while 9.8% strongly disagree, and 9.5% rather disagree. When considering ethnicities, the ethnic Kazakh youth seem to be more positive about their country's future standing compared to the attitude shared by the ethnic Russian youth (49.5% and 26.3% respectively).

The assumption that the assessment of Kazakhstan's international role is based on one's ethnicity and thus national identity is partly justified if one looks at the survey data on whether young people are proud about their Kazakh citizenship. According to the survey, 66.4% of the respondents feel proud about their citizenship, while only 9.4% did not. Thereby, ethnic Kazakh youth seem to feel more proud than ethnic Russians about their citizenship (73.4% of Kazakhs and 53.5% of Russians). Nonetheless, the survey also reveals that a significant proportion of young Kazakhstanis, both ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians, appear to have some

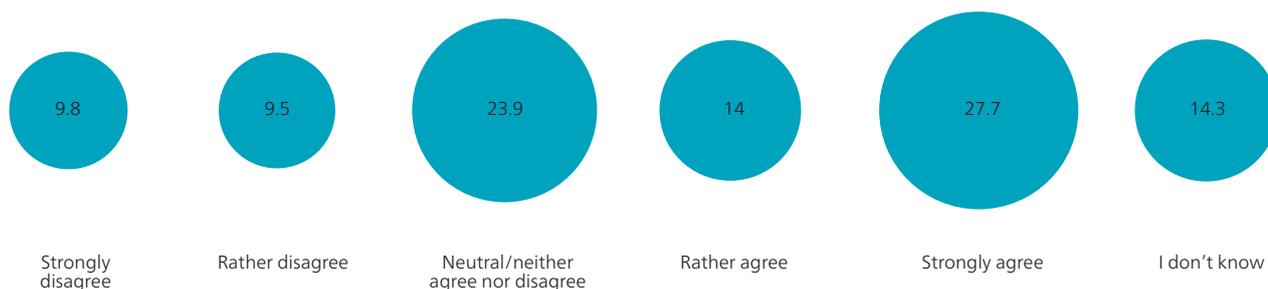
reservations about their national identity. This is particularly so in the north Kazakhstan region that borders Russia and where ethnic Russians outnumber the ethnic Kazakhs. The percentage of those young people who live in the North Kazakhstan and who feel proud of being a Kazakh citizen is comparatively low (34.6%). Similarly, it is low for the ethnic Ukrainian youth as only 37.5% of them expressed pride about being a Kazakh citizen. In contrast, in the predominantly ethnic Kazakh populated regions in the south (such as the Turkestan region), the percentage of those who feel proud of their Kazakh citizenship is 76.2%. This finding is notable as it can serve as indication that a significant proportion of the ethnic Russian youth in the northern regions has some mental reservations or doubts about their citizenship. Similarly, high acknowledgement of Kazakh citizenship is found among the ethnic Uzbek community in Kazakhstan (67.8%).

As far as young people's attitudes towards the international powers are concerned, opinions are quite diverse and unevenly distributed among them as to their age, place of residence, and nationality. As shown in the table below, young people generally have a positive attitude towards the EU. In their assessment, the EU is primarily associated with opportunities for study and work (28.9%). The EU is seen as a friend (20.2%) and, much less, as an enemy (2.1%). Finally, the EU is considered a model country for values such as democracy (17.3%), freedom (15.3%) and human rights (13%).

Furthermore, young Kazakhstanis have the same positive attitudes towards the US, although compared to the EU, the US is associated less with terms such as enemy and potential threat (6.6% and 12.3% respectively) and comparatively more with terms such as friend (17%) or support (8%). Where the US does comparatively well is in the perception of it as a country of opportunity for study and work (27.4%).

Far more positive attitudes compared to the EU and the US are held by most young people towards Russia, which many associate with terms such as friend (56.8%), big brother<sup>53</sup> (20.8%) and support (23.3%). Accordingly, the vast majority of the respondents (0.2% and 2.6% respectively) do not see Russia as an enemy or threat. At the same time, interestingly

FIGURE 22: Extent that Kazakhstan's international significance will increase, (in %)



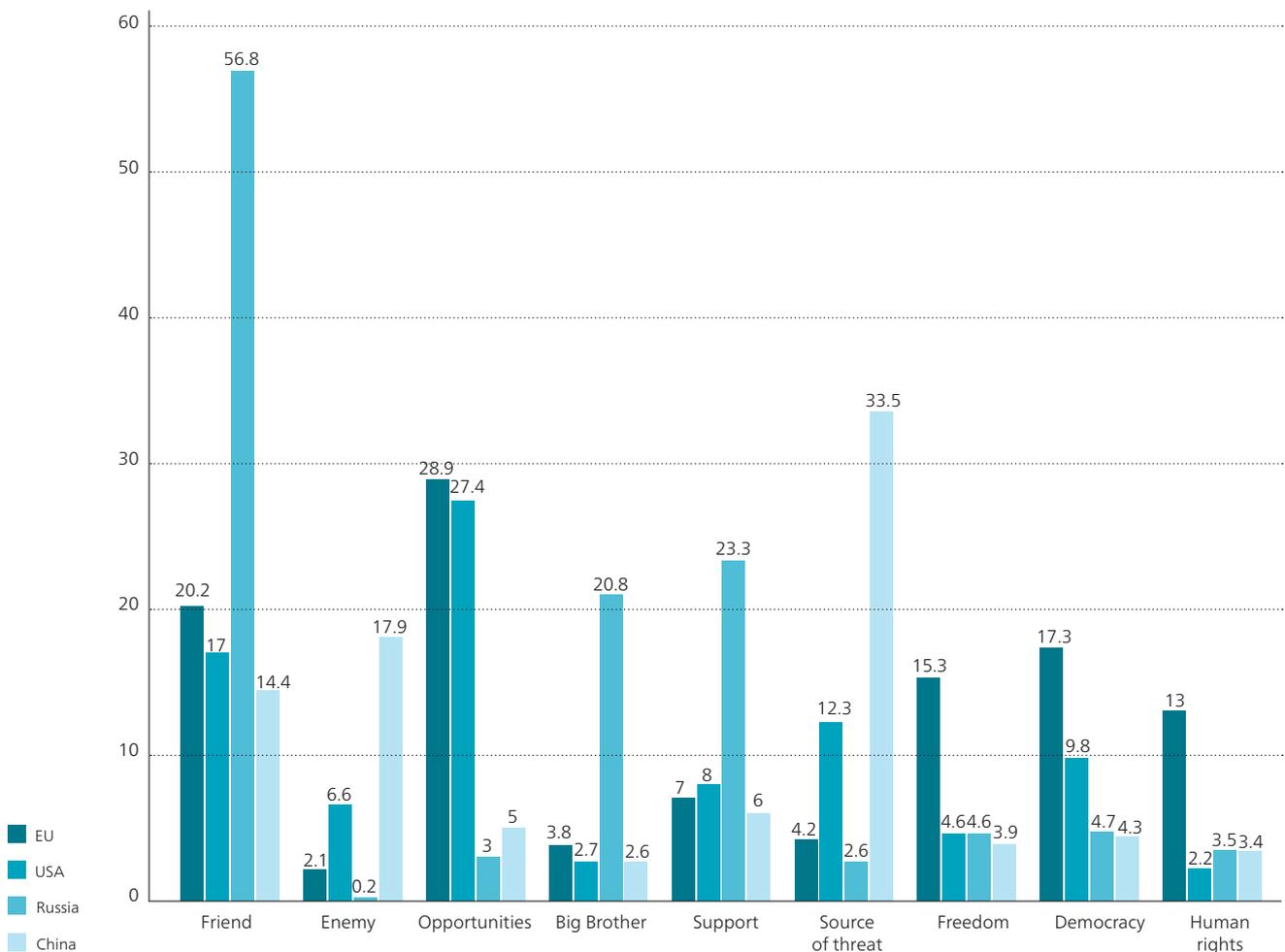
enough, the association of Russia and some values were rated quite low: democracy (4.7%), freedoms (4.6%) and human rights (3.5%).

At the other end of the assessment scale is China, to which many young Kazakhstanis appear to have hostile attitudes. In fact, China is viewed primarily by the respondents as an enemy (17.9%) and a potential threat to Kazakhstan (33.5%). In contrast, only 14.4% of the young people consider China as a friend. Far fewer young people consider China as a support for their home country (6%), which is surprising given the increasing Chinese investments in Kazakhstan's economy with China's Silk Road Initiative in Central Asia. As in the case of Russia, China is not seen positively in terms of democratic values such as democracy (4.3%), human rights (3.4%) and freedom (3.9%).

The young people were also asked about their confidence in international organisations such as the EU, UN, NATO, OSCE and the IMF. Surprisingly, the survey revealed that many young people have very little trust in these. For example,

only 27.3% of young Kazakhstanis have confidence in the European Union. In contrast, 29.6% of the young people reported that they distrusted the EU. Ethnic Russian youth seem to trust the EU far less (19.4%) than ethnic Kazakhs (30.6%). The United Nations, of which Kazakhstan is a member, is also defined as less trusted by young people (28.0%) while 18.5% distrust it completely. Surprisingly, only a quarter 25.5% of the young people have confidence in the OSCE, which Kazakhstan chaired in 2010. However, 31.5% of the respondents stated that they did not trust this institution. The young Kazakhstanis seem to have a low level of trust towards NATO and the IMF. In fact, 34% of the young people stated that they had no confidence in NATO, and only 25.3% were inclined to trust it. The situation is similar with the IMF, which happens to be distrusted by 31.4% of the young people while only 25.3% have confidence in it. The negative attitude of young Kazakhs towards international organisations is probably related to Western sanctions against Russia, which, as already mentioned, indirectly affect Kazakhstan.<sup>54</sup>

TABLE 23: **Attitudes towards foreign countries, (in %)**



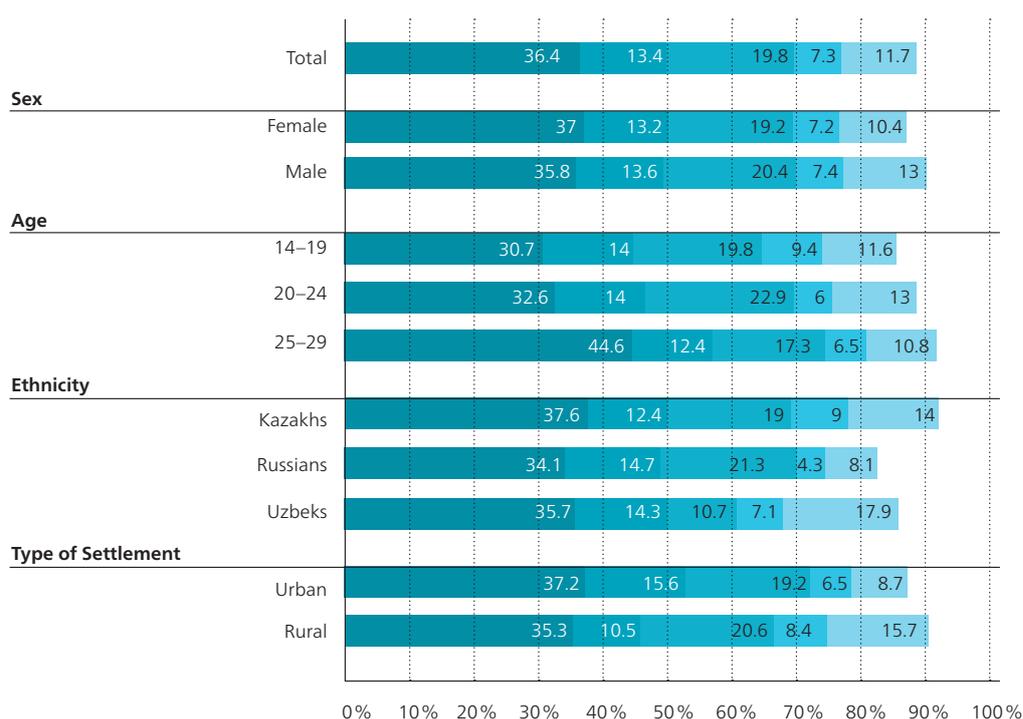
## 5.2 REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Part of a country's international reputation is its ability to accommodate refugees and migrants fleeing war-torn regions. Kazakhstan, as the leading economy in the region, is an attractive destination for many migrants and refugees from countries such as Afghanistan. However, the need to accommodate refugees may not be welcomed in society, including within the young community. According to the survey, only 19% of all the respondents agreed with the statement that Kazakhstan should accept more refugees while 49.8% disagreed. At the same time, however, a far greater proportion of the young people seem to be concerned about the presence of foreigners in their country (34.9% chose 'to some extent' and 34.3% chose 'significantly'). In terms of ethnicity, both Kazakhs and Russians seem overwhelmingly opposed to their country taking in refugees (50% and 48.8% respectively). A similar picture emerges for Uzbek youth. In respect to the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities that led to an exit of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks living in the southern Osh and Djalal-Abad regions to the neighbouring Uzbekistan, it could be anticipated that ethnic Uzbek youth would have more sensitivity towards accepting more refugees. However, only 25% of those surveyed agreed with the statement that Kazakhstan should accept more refugees, while 50% disagreed.

A somewhat similar picture emerges from the survey question asking young people if Kazakhstan should accept more immigrants. Only 17.9% of the youth agreed with this statement while 49.4% of young people opposed this perspective. Particularly strong opposition to this idea was expressed among the group aged between 25 and 29 years old, that is those of working age (56.5%) while only 15.9% agreed with this statement. Looking at the results in terms of respondents' ethnicity, these are especially ethnic Kazakh and ethnic Russian youth who do not want the country to accept more immigrants (50.8% and 48.8% respectively). On the other hand, only 20% ethnic Kazakhs and 12.4% ethnic Russians agreed with the statement. More acknowledgement of immigrants is found among the ethnic Uzbek youth, namely 35.7% of those surveyed agreed that Kazakhstan should accept more immigrants. As in the case with refugees, this higher acceptance of immigrants is most likely linked to the fact that more Uzbek nationals from Uzbekistan migrate to Kazakhstan for employment.

Being asked if the respondents have friends abroad, particularly in other Central Asian countries, only 14.6% of the respondents answered affirmatively. Surprisingly, the low propensity towards making friends abroad is similar for all age groups (14-19, 20-24, 25-29). Within this cohort, ethnic Kazakhs (12.4%) appear to be less likely to maintain relationships with friends from Central Asian countries than ethnic Russian youth (16.3%). As would be expected, the

TABLE 24: **Should Kazakhstan accept more refugees?** (in %)



urban residents, regardless of their nationality, are more versatile or cosmopolitan in terms of having friends abroad than the rural residents (18.4% compared to 9.6%). In terms of how often they get in touch with their friends, a third of all

the respondents get in touch with them 'from time to time' (32.9%) and only a few (10.3%) of them communicate with their Central Asian friends very frequently. It is remarkable that most of the respondents have friends in Kyrgyzstan and

TABLE 25: **Should Kazakhstan accept more immigrants?** (in %)

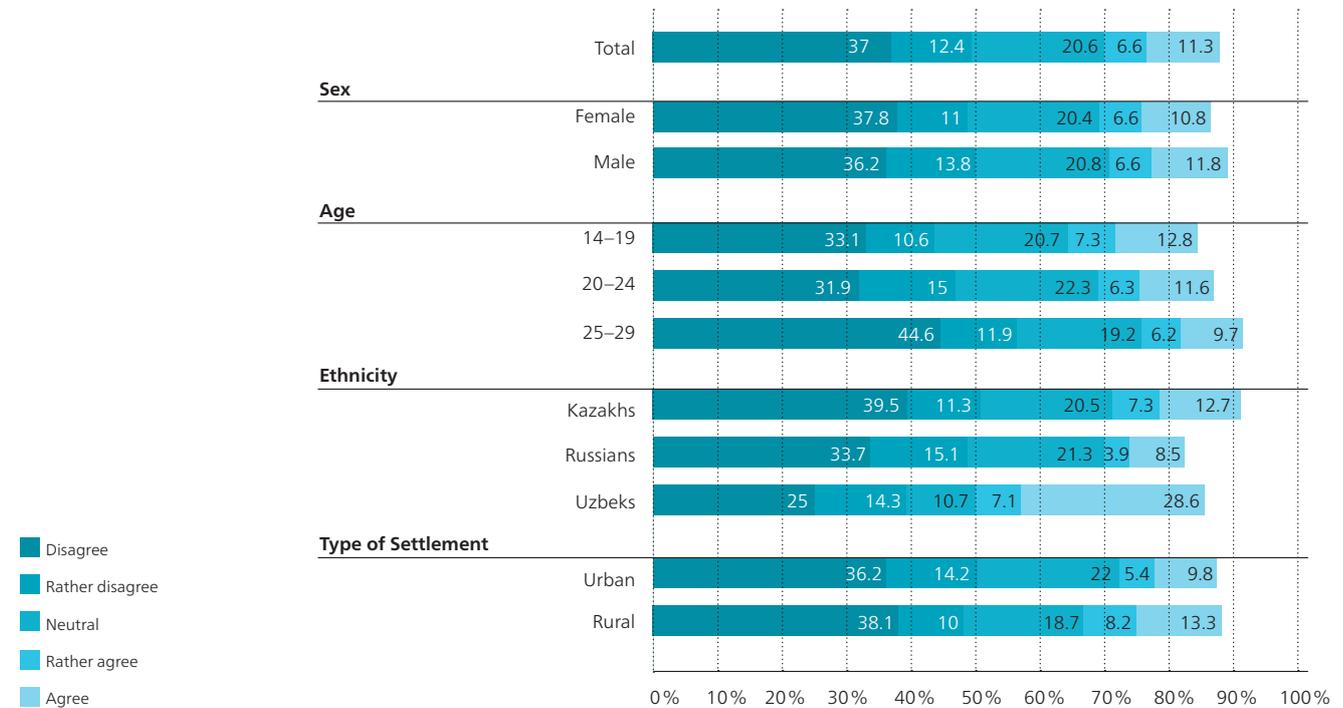
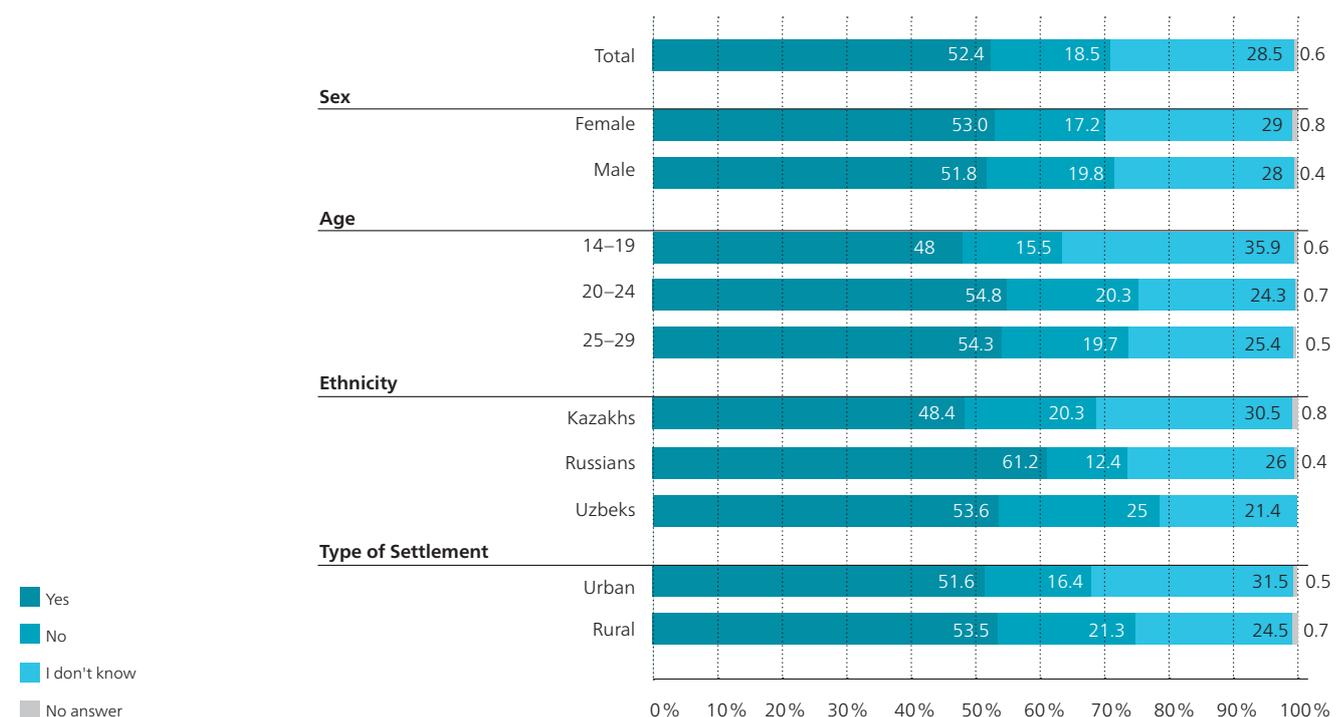


TABLE 26: **Do people in Central Asia have common values?** (in %)



Uzbekistan (48.2% and 51.1% respectively), which can be explained by geographical proximity of these two countries and their common borders. Far fewer Kazakhstani youth have friends in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (8.8% and 13.1% respectively). It is also remarkable that only 36.6% of the respondents expressed eagerness to visit other Central Asian countries.

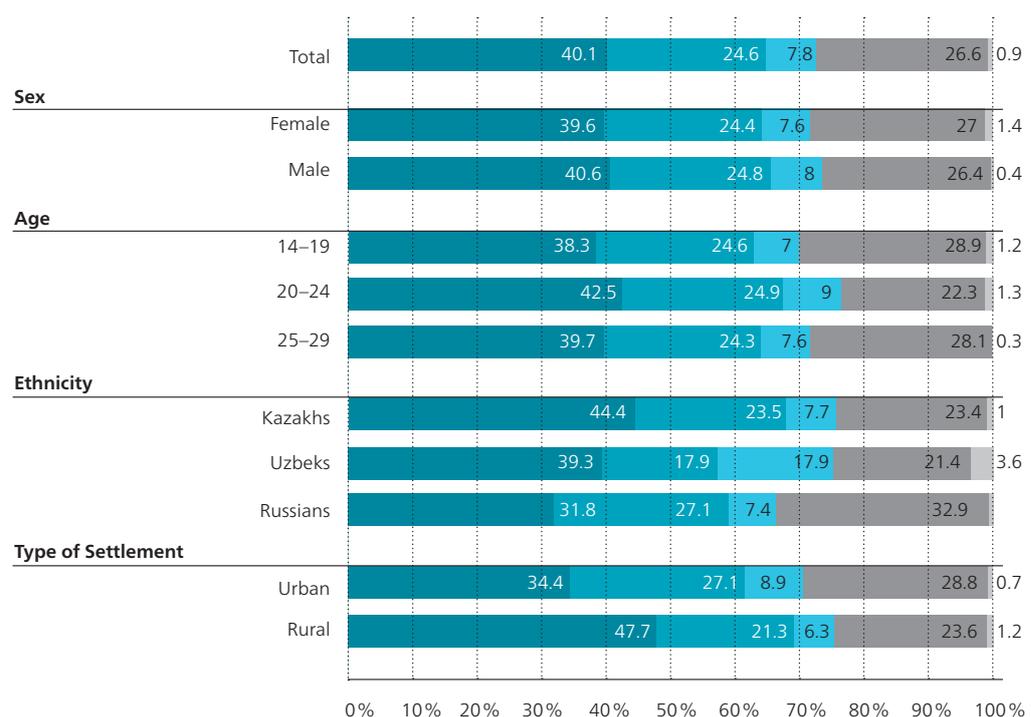
### 5.3 REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In terms of regional cooperation and the prospects for Kazakhstan within the region, most respondents seem to be positive about the role and the future prospects of their country in the region. Surprisingly, however, only 52.4% of the young people believe that the residents of Central Asian countries share common values while 18.5% do not support this view. By far many more people could not answer this question at all (28.5%). It is noticeable that Russian and Uzbek young people have much more positive assessments of common values among the peoples of Central Asia than Kazakhs (61.2%, 53.6% and 48.4%, respectively, who answered the question in the affirmative).

When asked if Kazakhstan will benefit from regional cooperation with other countries of Central Asia, 40.1% of the respondents believe that the country would certainly benefit while 24.6% said that the country can partially benefit from it. Only 7.8% believe that the country does not benefit at all

from such cooperation. Surprisingly, a significant proportion of young people, namely 26.6% of the respondents, have no answer to this question. It will be interesting to look at the figures from the perspective of the ethnicity of the respondents. For more than a third of the young people among the Russians, Uzbeks and a third of the Kazakh young people<sup>55</sup> either answered the question in the negative or did not have any answer ready. At this point, one can only speculate that this is either due to a lack of information or, much more likely, to a critical perception of the rather slow cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Russia, which was reflected in these statements.<sup>56</sup>

TABLE 27: Will Kazakhstan benefit from regional cooperation with other Central Asian countries? (in %)







# CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to examine values, opinions, attitudes of youth in Kazakhstan. The report focused on different aspects of the lives of young people between the age of 14 and 29.

Our study shows that no uniform picture of young people in Kazakhstan can be established based on the survey data. The palette of opinions is so diverse that any conclusion must be drawn with caution. It is safe to say that the level of trust among young Kazakhstanis towards other ethnic groups, religions, and political views has been diminishing compared to the results of the 2016 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung study on youth.

In general, ethnic Kazakh youth appear to be less tolerant towards other social groups compared to ethnic Russian youth. The rural youth seem to be more attached to traditional values than urban youth. This is particularly noticeable in the attitudes of rural youth towards marriage, LGBTQ+ people, abortion and sex. On the other hand, it was found that young people's attitudes towards their family, relatives and friends have remained almost unchanged since the last survey. Similar to the study in 2016, this research found that young people appear to trust their immediate family members and friends more than people of other ethnicities, religions or social class. Informal relationships with families and friends are more trustworthy than formal relationships in other institutional settings.

This report finds that youth in Kazakhstan are rather apolitical. A very small percent of young people expressed their interests in both domestic and international politics. Only one third of the respondents expressed interest in local politics. Similarly, a very low number of young people have taken part in political activities, including signing petitions, joining demonstrations, or obtaining membership in political

parties. One of the activities in which Kazakhstani young people are more engaged in is volunteering and working in NGOs. This reflects a general picture in Kazakhstan which has a passive subjective culture and low level of engagement of people in political life. Young people do not discuss politics in their families, however, they share common political views with their parents. This means that family is an important socialising agent in Kazakhstan. In addition to family, the internet is a critical source of political information for these young people, especially in an urban setting.

In terms of trust towards political institutions, it is particularly higher regarding the president of Kazakhstan than other institutions of power. An interesting finding was that they also highly trust volunteer movements and organisations, which indicates the popularity of these among the younger generation. It shows some shift in values of young people towards a slightly active position in public life. These organisations can represent a positive channel or gateway for youth's engagement in public life.

The results of the survey have also revealed that paternalistic sentiments among the young people towards the state are rather high. They expect the state to play a large role in business and want it to provide care and support to the population. This might reflect the values of their parents who lived under the Soviet Union and experienced extensive state support. At the same time, young people do not feel that the government has tried to resolve problems related to the youth which demonstrates the gap between the declared state youth policies and programmes and the youth's expectations.

Young people value human rights, security, equality, and democracy. However, young people recognise that not all social groups in Kazakhstan experience their rights to the fullest. In their view, the poor and the disabled are the two

groups of people who exercise their rights the least. The young people in general, however, are not satisfied with their rights either. They believe that the government neglects their interests and does not provide an opportunity for them to voice their concerns nor to be heard.

The problem of migration remains acute in Kazakhstan. Many young people would like to study and work abroad. The most popular country of emigration is the United States of America and the Western European states. Many young people also want to go to the Russian Federation, albeit mostly ethnic Russians.

The study also explored the youth's attitudes towards other powers, international organisations and regional neighbours. Although the data is relatively sparse, it can be said that young people take the international position of their country seriously. Most young people seem to agree that the international role of their home country needs to be strengthened. We found that this perspective is of immense importance, especially for the ethnic Kazakh youth. Across all ethnicities, ethnic Kazakh youth seem to have a more positive view of their country's future standing than ethnic Russian youth. This assumption can also be followed in terms of national identity, where we found striking differences between ethnic Kazakh and ethnic Russian youth regarding the question of whether they are proud of their Kazakh citizenship. However, the survey also showed that a significant proportion of young Kazakhstanis, especially ethnic Russians, seem to have some reservations about their national identity. This attitude should be taken with caution in light of the territorial aspirations of some politicians in Russia in the past but also in the present. This is also important to take into consideration because, as it has been noted, a considerable proportion of ethnic Russian youth in the northern regions have some mental reservations or doubts about their citizenship. Considering international actors, positive attitudes towards Western international organisations and actors were noted, which is encouraging considering their role in the international arena. On the other hand, increasing anti-Chinese sentiments can be observed. Finally, there is little willingness on the part of young people to support the cause of refugees.

## APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

'Abortion statistics in Kazakhstan remains alarming', KazInform, 10.09.2009, available at: [https://www.inform.kz/en/abortion-statistics-in-kazakhstan-remains-alarming\\_a2196774](https://www.inform.kz/en/abortion-statistics-in-kazakhstan-remains-alarming_a2196774)

Agadjanian Victor, Post-Soviet demographic paradoxes: Ethnic differences in marriage and fertility in Kazakhstan. In *Sociological Forum*, 14(3), 1999: 425-446.

Agrawal, Pradeep. Economic growth and poverty reduction: Evidence from Kazakhstan. In *Asian Development Review*, 24(2), 2007: 90-115.

Alima Bissenova, Social change unsettles Kazakhstan. In *Current History*, 118(810), 2019: 271-275.

Beggs, John J., Valerie A. Haines, and Jeanne S. Hurlbert. Revisiting the Rural-Urban Contrast: Personal Networks in Nonmetropolitan and Metropolitan Settings. In *Rural sociology*, 1996: 306-325.

Beimenbetov Serik, Perspektiven und Entwicklungslinien in Zentralasien, in: Sebastian Mayer, Jakob Lemmp, Alexander Brandt (Eds.), *Die politischen Systeme Zentralasiens*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2020: 359-374.

Serik Beimenbetov, Disabling Public Discontent: The 2021 Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan, in: CAP Papers, Nr. 250, <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/19032>

Brauer Birgit, Calls for Police Reform in Kazakhstan after Murder of Olympic Medalist Denis Ten, The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, August 9, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/calls-for-police-reform-in-kazakhstan-after-murder-of-olympic-medalist-denis-ten/>

Charness, Gary, and Uri Gneezy. Strong evidence for gender differences in risk taking. In *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organisation*, 83(1), 2012: 50-58.

Fimyar Olena, Yakavets Natalia, Bridges David, Educational Reform in Kazakhstan: The Contemporary Policy Agenda. In David Bridges (Ed.), *Education Reform and Internationalisation. The Case of School Reform in Kazakhstan*, Cambridge University Press, 2014: 53-70

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, Almaty, 2016.

Groce, Skalamera Morena, Political Transition on the Great Steppe: The Case of Kazakhstan. In *Survival*, 62(1), 2020: 157-168.

Junisbai Barbara and Junisbai Azamat, Are Youth Different? The Nazarbaev Generation and Public Opinion. In Marlene Laruelle (Ed.), *The Nazarbaev Generation. Youth in Kazakhstan*, Lexington Books, 2019: 25-48.

Kim Cheng Low, P., The value of diversity: the Kazakhstan perspective. In: *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 26 No. 7, 2007, pp. 683-699.

Laruelle Marlene, Introduction. *The Nazarbayev Generation: A Sociological Portrait*. In Laruelle, Marlene (Ed.), *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019: 1-22.

Meidinger, Peter C., and Debra A. Hope. Differentiating disclosure and concealment in measurement of outness for sexual minorities: The Nebraska Outness Scale. In *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(4), 2014: 489-497.

Michaels Paula A., An Ethnohistorical Journey through Kazakh Hospitality. In Jeff Sahadeo and Russel Zanca (Eds.). *Everyday life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, India University Press, 2007: 145-159.

Miroglov Alexander, "Ataka Almatinskogo strelka: Chto tvorilos' na ulitsakh vo vremya terakta" (Almaty gunman attack: what was going on in the streets during the attack), *Sputnik News*, 18.07.2018, <https://ru.sputnik.kz/columnists/20180718/6479800/almatinskij-strelok-den-terakta.html>;

Molodezh Tsentralnoi Azii: Kazakhstan [Youth of Central Asia: Kazakhstan], Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Almaty, 2016, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kasachstan/13342.pdf>

Nurzhanova, G. I., S. U. Niyazbekova, A. A. Nurpeisova, Z. A. Imangozhina, and D. E. Satenova. Youth labor market analysis and assessment of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In *International Scientific Conference "Far East Con" (ISCFEC 2020)*, Atlantis Press, 2020: 360-366..

Ozgecan Kesici, The dilemma in the nation-building process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani nation. In *JEMIE (Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe)*, 10(1), 2011: 31-58.

Podoprighora Roman, Religion in Kazakhstan: A general view. In *Bringham Young University Law Review*, 2, 1999: 581-588.

Rustami Sukhrob, Tsentral'naya Aziya — neslozhivshayasya integratsiya? In *Central Asian Analytical Network (CAAN)*, June 4, 2020, <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/19909>

Sagintayeva Aida and Zhumakulov Zakir, Kazakhstan's Bolashak Scholarship Program. In *International Higher Education*, 79, 2015: 21-23.

Sharipova, Dina. State Reforms and Informal Payments in Secondary Education of Kazakhstan. *Central Asian Affairs*, 7(2), 2020: 175-195.

Shahbaz, Muhammad, Mita Bhattacharya, Mantu Kumar Mahalik. Finance and income inequality in Kazakhstan: evidence since transition with policy suggestions. *Applied Economics*, 49(52), 2017: 5337-5351.

The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Introduction of Amendments and Additions to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Political Parties, available at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=33966664](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=33966664)

"Unacknowledged and unprotected: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Kazakhstan", Soros Foundation, Almaty, 2009, [https://www.soros.kz/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2013\\_09\\_04\\_04\\_43\\_19\\_269.pdf](https://www.soros.kz/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2013_09_04_04_43_19_269.pdf)

Violations by Kazakhstan of the Right of Transgender Persons to Legal Recognition of Gender Identity Submitted for consideration at the 117th Session of the Human Rights Committee Geneva, June-July 2016, available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/INT\\_CCPR\\_CSS\\_KAZ\\_24305\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/INT_CCPR_CSS_KAZ_24305_E.pdf)

Voloshin George, Western Sanctions against Russia Leave Kazakhstan Exposed. In *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 10.10.2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/western-sanctions-against-russia-leave-kazakhstan-exposed/>

## APPENDIX 2: ENDNOTES

[ 1 ] Marlene Laruelle, Introduction. *The Nazarbayev Generation: A Sociological Portrait*, in: Marlene Laruelle (Ed.), *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan*. Rowman & Littlefield. 2019: 2

[ 2 ] Marlene Laruelle (Ed.). *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

[ 3 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, Almaty, 2016

[ 4 ] The "FES Youth Studies" is an international youth research project carried out in many countries in East, Southeast Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The main objective of the project has been to identify, describe and analyse attitudes of young people and patterns of behaviour in contemporary society. To illustrate, please see the study on the youth in Russia at: <https://www.fes.de/jugendstudien-russland>

[ 5 ] <https://stat.gov.kz/api/getFile/?docId=ESTAT332677>

[ 6 ] Alima Bissenova, Social change unsettles Kazakhstan. *Current History*, 118(810), 2019: 271-275.

[ 7 ] *Ibid.*, 274.

[ 8 ] Aida Sagintayeva and Zakir Zhumakulov, Kazakhstan's Bolashak Scholarship Program. *International Higher Education*, 79(2015): 21-23.

[ 9 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Almaty, 2016

[ 10 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, 101. Specifically, it was found that young people from rural areas were more trusting than their peers from urban areas towards representatives of other religious denominations.

[ 11 ] Barbara and Azamat Junisbai's groundbreaking study on the political attitudes of youth in Kazakhstan found that the majority of young people, those aged 18-29, are less bothered by nepotism and family rule that ail Kazakhstani society. Compared to those socialised before Nursultan Nazarbayev consolidated presidential power, this generation is more likely to reflect the values that underlie Kazakhstan's personalist regime and its associated practices and policies See: Junisbai, Barbara, and Azamat Junisbai. Are youth different? The Nazarbayev generation and public opinion in Kazakhstan. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 67.3 (2020): 251-263.

[ 12 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, 112. In 2016, the trust scores of urban youth towards neighbours were slightly higher than those of rural youth. On average, the values were in the middle range and similar to the values in this study.

[ 13 ] Paula Michaels A., An Ethnohistorical Journey through Kazakh Hospitality, in: Jeff Sahadeo and Russel Zanca (Eds.). *Everyday life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, India University Press, 2007: 145-159.

[ 14 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. 100. The study found, among other things, that respondents trust members of their immediate family the most and religious and political leaders the least. They are relatively trusting of members of their extended family and friends.

- [ 15 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, 102.
- [ 16 ] For discussion of 'Kazakhization' policy please see: Smagulova, Juldyz. Language policies of Kazakhization and their influence on language attitudes and use. In Aneta Pavlenko (Ed). Multilingualism in post-Soviet countries, *Multilingual Matters*. 2008: 166-201.
- [ 17 ] "Unacknowledged and unprotected: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Kazakhstan", Soros Foundation, Almaty, 2009, available at: [https://www.soros.kz/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2013\\_09\\_04\\_04\\_13\\_19\\_269.pdf](https://www.soros.kz/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2013_09_04_04_13_19_269.pdf).
- [ 18 ] Why women in Kazakhstan are more discriminated against than men because of their ethnic, religious and political affiliation is a subject that certainly needs further research. Unfortunately, due to a lack of data here, we are not in a position to investigate this question further. In literature, the topic has also found little illumination except for a few studies. According to given studies, one reason for this may be the male-dominated work environment and, above all, the above-average predominance of men in leadership positions in Kazakhstan, while women remain in secondary positions. For entry into the topic please see: Kim Cheng Low, P., The value of diversity: the Kazakhstan perspective. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 2007: 683-699.
- [ 19 ] This data may give the impression that there is no discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in Kazakhstan, which in the light of the studies such as the Soros Foundation study mentioned earlier cannot be true. Most likely, the reason for high rates of concealment of discrimination is the fact that many of the LGBTQ+ people are afraid of being recognised as such. For discussion of disclosure and concealment among LGBTQ+ people in research please see: Meidlinger, Peter C., and Debra A. Hope. Differentiating disclosure and concealment in measurement of outness for LGBTQ+ people: The Nebraska Outness Scale. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(4), 2014: 489-497.
- [ 20 ] In the FES survey in 2016, it was found that 60.4% of Kazakh youth and 45% of Russian youth respectively disapproved of heterosexual marriages. See: Youth in Central Asia. Based on a sociological survey, 104.
- [ 21 ] "Violations by Kazakhstan of the Right of Transgender Persons to Legal Recognition of Gender Identity Submitted for consideration at the 117th Session of the Human Rights Committee Geneva", June-July 2016, available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/INT\\_CCPR\\_CSS\\_KAZ\\_24305\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/INT_CCPR_CSS_KAZ_24305_E.pdf)
- [ 22 ] 'Abortion statistics in Kazakhstan remains alarming', *KazInform*, 10.09.2009, available at: [https://www.inform.kz/en/abortion-statistics-in-kazakhstan-remains-alarming\\_a2196774](https://www.inform.kz/en/abortion-statistics-in-kazakhstan-remains-alarming_a2196774) .
- [ 23 ] According to Agadjanian, in the 1990s the ethnic Kazakhs' median age of entry into first marriage was around 21.7. See: Victor Agadjanian, Post-Soviet demographic paradoxes: Ethnic differences in marriage and fertility in Kazakhstan. *Sociological Forum*, 14(3), 1999: 425-446, here: 429.
- [ 24 ] Marlene Laruelle, Introduction. The Nazarbayev Generation: A Sociological Portrait, 10.
- [ 25 ] Podoprigrora, Roman, Religion in Kazakhstan: A general view. *Bringham Young University Law Review*, 2, 1999: 581-588.
- [ 26 ] Laruelle, Marlene, Introduction. The Nazarbayev Generation: A Sociological Portrait, 2.
- [ 27 ] Serik Beimenbetov, Perspektiven und Entwicklungslinien in Zentralasien, in: Sebastian Mayer, Jakob Lempp, Alexander Brandt (Eds.), *Die politischen Systeme Zentralasiens*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2020: 359-374, here: 370;
- [ 28 ] Skalamera Morena Groce, Political Transition on the Great Steppe: The Case of Kazakhstan. *Survival*, 62(1), 2020: 157-168. Laruelle, Marlene, Introduction. The Nazarbayev Generation: A Sociological Portrait, 3.
- [ 29 ] Chankseliani, Maia, Sophia Gorgodze, Simon Janashia, and Kairat Kurakbayev. Rural disadvantage in the context of centralised university admissions: a multiple case study of Georgia and Kazakhstan. *Compare. A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(7), 2020: 995-1013; Sharipova, D., State Reforms and Informal Payments in Secondary Education of Kazakhstan. *Central Asian Affairs*, 7(2), 2020: 175-195.
- [ 30 ] GPA is a grade point average calculated based on the weighted average of all course grades earned by a student in an academic year. In Kazakhstan the grading system ranges from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest GPA.
- [ 31 ] For discussion please see: Olena Fimyar, Natalia Yakavets, David Bridges, Educational Reform in Kazakhstan: The Contemporary Policy Agenda. In David Bridges (Ed.), *Education Reform and Internationalisation. The Case of School Reform in Kazakhstan*, Cambridge University Press, 2014: 53-70.
- [ 32 ] Sharipova, D., State Reforms and Informal Payments in Secondary Education of Kazakhstan. *Central Asian Affairs*, 7(2), 2020: 175-195.
- [ 33 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, 21
- [ 34 ] Ibid.
- [ 35 ] Nurzhanova, G. I., S. U. Niyazbekova, A. A. Nurpeisova, Z. A. Imangozhina, and D. E. Satenova. Youth labor market analysis and assessment of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In *International Scientific Conference "Far East Con" (ISCFEC 2020)*, Atlantis Press, 2020: 360-366.
- [ 36 ] Ibid.
- [ 37 ] Charness, Gary, and Uri Gneezy. Strong evidence for gender differences in risk taking. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organisation* 83(1), 2012: 50-58.
- [ 38 ] Beggs, John J., Valerie A. Haines, and Jeanne S. Hurlbert. Revisiting the Rural-Urban Contrast: Personal Networks in Nonmetropolitan and Metropolitan Settings. *Rural sociology*, 61(2), 1996: 306-325.
- [ 39 ] Alexander Miroglov, "Ataka Almatinskogo strelka: Chto tvorilos' na ulitsakh vo vremya terakta" (Almaty gunman attack: what was going on in the streets during the attack), *Sputnik News*, 18.07.2018, <https://ru.sputnik.kz/columnists/20180718/6479800/almatinskij-strelok-dent-terakta.html>;
- [ 40 ] Brauer, Calls for Police Reform in Kazakhstan after Murder of Olympic Medallist Denis Ten.
- [ 41 ] Podoprigrora, Roman., 2003. Religious freedom and human rights in Kazakhstan. *Religion, State & Society*, 31(2), pp.123-132; Koishibayev, Manarbek M., Yelena L. Nechayeva, and Vladimir M. Kapitsyn. National plans to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in Kazakhstan—amendments to the legislation. *Disability & Society* 35(8), 2020: 1355-1359.
- [ 42 ] "On the Margins". Education for Children with Disabilities in Kazakhstan, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/03/14/margins/education-children-disabilities-kazakhstan>.
- [ 43 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, Chapter 5
- [ 44 ] Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. Politics across generations: Family transmission reexamined. *The Journal of Politics* 71(3), 2009: 782-799.
- [ 45 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, 169.
- [ 46 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, 137.
- [ 47 ] The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Introduction of Amendments and Additions to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Political Parties, available at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=33966664](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=33966664)
- [ 48 ] Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. Based on a Sociological Survey, 128-129.
- [ 49 ] Shahbaz, M., Bhattacharya, M. and Mahalik, M.K., Finance and income inequality in Kazakhstan: evidence since transition with policy suggestions. *Applied Economics*, 49(52), 2017: 5337-5351.
- [ 50 ] Agrawal, Pradeep. Economic growth and poverty reduction: Evidence from Kazakhstan. *Asian Development Review* 24(2), 2007: 90-115.
- [ 51 ] See for instance Kontseptsiya Gosudarstvennoi Molodezhnoi Politiki Respubliki Kazakhstan do 2020 "Kazakhstan 2020: Put v Budushcheye", [The Concept of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2020 "Kazakhstan 2020: The Pathway to the Future", available at <https://www.enbek.kz/docs/ru/node/163>
- [ 52 ] Serik Beimenbetov, Disabling Public Discontent: The 2021 Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan, in: CAP Papers, Nr. 250, <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/19032>
- [ 53 ] The term 'big brother' is used here in the sense of 'older' brother.
- [ 54 ] Due to Kazakhstan's close involvement in the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the current and possible further Western sanctions against Russia are highly worrying for Kazakhstan. For discussion, please see: George Voloshin, Western Sanctions against Russia Leave Kazakhstan Exposed, in: The Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 10.10.2018 (<https://jamestown.org/program/western-sanctions-against-russia-leave-kazakhstan-exposed/>).

[ 55 ] There were only 2 responses among the Kyrgyz youth, half of which were 'no' and half 'yes'. For this reason, the figures for them are not considered in the analysis here.

[ 56 ] Media reports from regional experts, journalists, and bloggers on lack of or obstacles to regional cooperation, primarily in the trade sector, are indeed numerous and varied, even for the period prior to COVID-19 induced transport and travel restrictions when the study was conducted. To illustrate, please see: Sukhrob Rustami, Tsentral'naya Aziya — neslozhivshayasya integratsiya? in: Central Asian Analytical Network (CAAN), June 4, 2020, <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/19909>

## APPENDIX 3: LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>15. TABLE 1.<br/><b>Distribution of the population of the country aged 14 to 29 by region, sex, and settlement type</b></p> <p>16. TABLE 2.<br/><b>Characteristics of the planned sample</b></p> <p>16. TABLE 3.<br/><b>Distribution by sex and settlement type of research sample</b></p> <p>17. FIGURE 1.<br/><b>The distribution of the final sample by age</b></p> <p>22. TABLE 4.<br/><b>The level of trust towards other ethnicities, (in %)</b></p> <p>22. TABLE 5.<br/><b>The level of trust towards other religious groups by age group, (in %)</b></p> <p>23. TABLE 6.<br/><b>Level of trust towards people with other political convictions by ethnicity and place of residence, (in %)</b></p> <p>24. TABLE 7.<br/><b>Level of trust in neighbours by ethnicity, sex and place of type of settlement, (in %)</b></p> <p>26. TABLE 8.<br/><b>Inclination for making friends by gender and ethnicity, (in %)</b></p> <p>26. TABLE 9.<br/><b>Inclination for making friends by age group, (in %)</b></p> <p>27. TABLE 10.<br/><b>Attitudes towards potential neighbours, (in %)</b></p> <p>27. TABLE 11.<br/><b>Attitudes towards Refugee neighbours, (in %)</b></p> <p>28. TABLE 12.<br/><b>Attitudes towards Romany neighbours, (in %)</b></p> <p>29. TABLE 13.<br/><b>Attitudes towards LGBTQ+ neighbours, (in %)</b></p> <p>29. TABLE 14.<br/><b>Attitudes towards people with drug addiction, (in %)</b></p> <p>29. TABLE 15.<br/><b>Attitudes towards neighbours from Western Europe, (in %)</b></p> <p>30. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>In general, how much do you trust the persons and organisations listed below? (in %)</b></p> | <p>31. TABLE 16.<br/><b>Trust towards political leaders, (in %)</b></p> <p>32. FIGURE 2.<br/><b>Summary of trust scores of young people, (in %)</b></p> <p>32. TABLE 17.<br/><b>Frequency of Discrimination experiences, (in %)</b></p> <p>33. TABLE 18.<br/><b>Ethnic discrimination by ethnicity, age, sex and residence, (in %)</b></p> <p>33. TABLE 19.<br/><b>Religious discrimination, (in %)</b></p> <p>34. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>Have you ever experienced discrimination based on one of the following items? (in %)</b></p> <p>35. FIGURE 3.<br/><b>Attitudes towards... (in %)</b></p> <p>36. TABLE 20.<br/><b>Justification for bribing/receiving a bribe, (in %)</b></p> <p>36. TABLE 21.<br/><b>Attitudes towards homosexuality, (in %)</b></p> <p>38. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>In your opinion, how important are the following factors in choosing a husband/wife? (in %)</b></p> <p>40. FIGURE 4.<br/><b>Criteria in the choice of a life partner, (in %)</b></p> <p>41. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>In which religious denomination do you affiliate yourself with?</b></p> <p>41. TABLE 22.<br/><b>Current attitude towards religion, (in %)</b></p> <p>42. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>What is your attitude towards religion at the moment?</b></p> <p>43. FIGURE 5.<br/><b>Internet usage by activity, (in %)</b></p> <p>44. FIGURE 6.<br/><b>Leisure activities, (in %)</b></p> <p>45. INFOGRAPHIC.<br/><b>How often on average do you spend your time doing the following? (in %)</b></p> <p>49. FIGURE 7.<br/><b>Completed Level of Education, (in %)</b></p> <p>51. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>If you had an opportunity to study abroad (or to continue your studies abroad), which country would you choose? (in %)</b></p> <p>52. INFOGRAPHIC<br/><b>In your opinion, how important are the following factors in terms of finding work for young people in your country? (in %)</b></p> <p>53. FIGURE 8.<br/><b>Current Employment status, (in %)</b></p> <p>53. FIGURE 9.<br/><b>Employment of all respondents by sector of the economy, (in %)</b></p> |
|---|--|

54. FIGURE 10.  
**Workplace Sector Preferences, (in %)**
54. FIGURE 11.  
**Important factors for securing employment, (in %)**
54. FIGURE 12.  
**Youth volunteering by organisations, (in %)**
56. FIGURE 13.  
**What would be the main reason for you to move to another country? (in %)**
57. INFOGRAPHIC  
**How strong is your wish to move to another country for over six months (to emigrate)?**
59. INFOGRAPHIC  
**How anxious are you about the following issues? (in %)**
62. FIGURE 14.  
**Interest in politics in general, (in %)**
63. FIGURE 15.  
**Main sources of information on political events, (in %)**
63. FIGURE 16.  
**Casting a vote in the last parliamentary elections, (in %)**
64. FIGURE 17.  
**Willingness to vote in parliamentary elections, if the right exists, (in %)**
66. FIGURE 18.  
**Have you ever tried to participate in political activities in one of the following ways? (in %)**
67. INFOGRAPHIC  
**How satisfied are you generally with the level of democracy in Kazakhstan? (in %)**
67. FIGURE 19.  
**Attitudes towards democracy as a good form of governance, (in %)**
69. FIGURE 20.  
**Prediction of economic well-being over next 10 years, (in %)**
70. INFOGRAPHIC  
**How do you envisage the future of the society in Kazakhstan in general? (in %)**
71. INFOGRAPHIC  
**To what extent should the national government focus on implementing each of the following goals? (in %)**
72. INFOGRAPHIC  
**To what extent do you see yourself as...? (in %)**
73. FIGURE 21.  
**Attitudes towards the adoption of Latin alphabet for Kazakh language, (in %)**
76. FIGURE 22.  
**Extent that Kazakhstan's international significance will increase, (in %)**
77. TABLE 23.  
**Attitudes towards foreign countries, (in %)**
78. TABLE 24.  
**Should Kazakhstan accept more refugees? (in %)**
79. TABLE 25.  
**Should Kazakhstan accept more immigrants? (in %)**
79. TABLE 26.  
**Do people in Central Asia have common values? (in %)**
80. TABLE 27.  
**Will Kazakhstan benefit from regional cooperation with other Central Asian countries? (in %)**

# IMPRINT

**PUBLISHER:** Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Kazakhstan  
Kazakhstan, Almaty 050010, 43 Dostyk Ave., office 405  
+7 727 291 41 08  
www.kazakhstan.fes.de  
info@fes.kz

**RESPONSIBLE:** Tolganay Umbetaliyeva

**CONTACT:** Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kazakhstan,  
info@fes.kz

**AUTHORS:** Dr. Dina Sharipova, Dr. Serik Beimenbetov

**EDITOR:** Danel Kabysheva

**DATA COLLECTION/FIELDWORK:** Social and Marketing  
Research Center "BISAM Central Asia"

**DESIGN:** Olga Gambaryan

**PRINTED BY:** "DELUXE Printery"

**ISBN:** 978-601-06-73298

**DATE:** 2021

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Commercial use of any media published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.



