



## Authors

Amer Osmić, Lejla Turčilo, Nermina Mujagić, Sanela Šadić, Abdel Alibegović, Anida Dudić Sijamija

## About FES Youth Studies

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

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

Executive Summary	4
Key Facts	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Methodology	9
3. Basic demographic characteristics and trends	11
4. Young people and education	17
5. Employment and mobility	20
6. Migration through the eyes of young people	24
7. Family and plans for the future	26
8. General values, attitudes and perceptions	30
9. Political attitudes and participation	39
Conclusion	50
References	52
Figures	53
About the Authors	54

# Executive Summary

**Youth Study 2024 aims to explore the positions, opinions and attitudes of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards themselves, their present and future, as well as towards society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the key issues, phenomena, processes and problems in society, the presence of which, either directly or indirectly, affects the lives of young people.**

The findings of this survey, conducted about young people and with young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, should also help these young people better understand themselves and their peers, their common (yet sometimes diverse) problems and concerns, their attitudes towards themselves and others, whilst also allowing them to find ways of addressing the problems and situation in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society that affect them. In addition, the analytical interpretation of the survey results aims to aid anyone engaged in the care of young people (pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, educators and parents) to understand both the needs of young people, and the perceptions they have of themselves and their environment. Finally, the results of this survey should inform youth decision-makers and youth policymakers on how to develop a social environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina that will be responsive to the needs of young people and that will appropriately utilize their aspirations, interests and potential.

All these considerations helped define key survey questions, regarding the attitudes and opinions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which seek to better understand these young people, what they prioritize both in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and in their own lives, what they consider acceptable and unacceptable, what would make them willing to become socially engaged, and what the problems and non-problems are both in their lives and in the lives of their communities.

Given this context, it seemed logical to ask young people questions about their personal lives (family, living conditions, education), about their perceptions of themselves and others (own values and attitudes towards diversity), as well as about participation in the labor market (present and future) in Bosnia-Herzegovina and abroad, and about political and social life (political preferences, readiness for political engagement, etc.).

## Methodological approach

The youth study was developed as an analytical study of the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It interpreted data obtained by means of a survey that was conducted online on a sample of 500 people aged 14 to 29. The survey questionnaire was of the self-administered type and the responses were interpreted in the context of the current knowledge and available data on Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and young people, in correlation with the theoretical views of leading authors, both from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, on not only young people, but also the social issues that were discussed in the survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used for data interpretation together with scientific explanations of the research findings.

## Areas covered by research

The youth study seeks to identify the attitudes and opinions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina on some of the key issues regarding the country's present and future, as well as on issues of global importance for understanding young people's attitudes towards themselves and the society they live in. Based on certain theoretical frameworks, the empirical findings of previous youth studies (2015 and 2019) and the data on Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, the survey questionnaire and consequently the survey results and their interpretation have been divided into several key areas, as follows:

- Education – to evaluate and assess their level of satisfaction with the present educational processes and systems, as well as their own role in acquiring knowledge, skills and competences in the very processes and systems they have at their disposal in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Employment and mobility – to better understand the perceptions of young regarding opportunities in the labor market in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, possibly, beyond its borders;
- Family and future plans – to understand how young people see their present and future in the context of the primary family they live in, as well as the one they plan to have in the future;
- General values, attitudes and perceptions of young people – to establish a framework for understanding the attitudes of young people towards themselves and others who are similar to them, but also (and more importantly) towards those who are completely different from them;
- Political attitudes and social participation – to try to better understand how much and in what way young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are (a)political, socially engaged and what their attitudes are towards the social and political actors (omni-)present in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

The target group of Youth Study 2024 is Generation Z (Gen Z, Zoomer), born between 1994 and 2010 and currently between 14 and 30 years old. In terms of the age structure, the respondents are divided into three subgroups: those between the ages of 14 and 18 (29 %), between 19 and 24 (37 %) and between 25 and 29 (34 %); the average age of the respondents is 21.85, with a median age of 22, the youngest respondent aged 14 and the oldest 29, while the most common age of the respondents is 15 and 29. According to the data, one in four young persons (28 %) states they live in a place they characterize as rural, while 43 % state they live in an urban area. A mere 6.6 % of young people state that they live alone, with the majority of the respondents most often living with both parents and brothers and/or sisters (66 %). Nearly one in five respondents (18.4 %) lives with a partner or a spouse and 7 % of the respondents state that they live in a household with one or more children. The most common reason for living in their parents' home, as given by young people, is the comfort it offers them, stating that living with their parents is currently the simplest and most practical solution (42.8 %). On the other hand, most of them, especially when it comes to the age group of young people aged 25–29 (61.3 %), state that they would live alone if their financial circumstances allowed it.

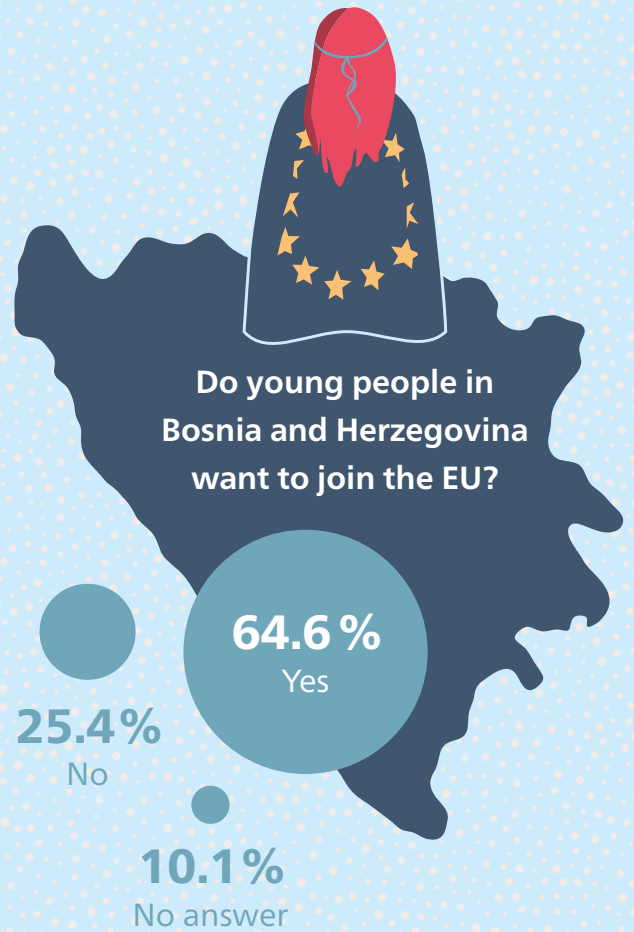
# Key Facts



The majority of young people have not taken concrete steps regarding plans to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina. Young people believe that they have the right to leave (for economic reasons mainly), yet at the same time they believe that those who come to BiH for the same reasons should not receive additional support from BiH.

Young people see the departure of the workforce, unemployment and corruption as three significant problems for the next decade.

Young people believe that the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not at a satisfactory level, but at the same time they do not believe that better education would be a sufficient reason to move to another country.







Young people believe that belonging to a political party or knowing people in positions of power can be a better guarantee of finding a job than being competent and well-educated; this makes them poorly motivated to invest in their own knowledge, skills and competences all the more so because they believe that they are able to meet the demands the labor market places on them with their existing knowledge and skills.

Support for leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina among young people is declining, while at the same time there is an increasing interest in less-known parties.

Economic pressures and high unemployment rates force young people to delay becoming independent, remaining economically dependent on their parents

The greatest problems that young people see in the next decade are the departure of the workforce, unemployment, corruption and a weakening democracy. Young people are generally uninterested in politics and have low trust in institutions. They are critical of corruption, bribery, homosexuality and abortion. There is a significant level of concern regarding various forms of discrimination and the protection of rights.

High levels of distrust towards political parties, parliament and government illustrate a profound crisis of trust in democratic institutions and their ability to represent the interests of young people.

Young people have a low interest in engaging in politics. More than half of young people categorically refuse any engagement in politics.

# 1 ■ Introduction

Youth Study 2024 is an empirical study that tries to provide insights, based on young people's responses to a typical survey questionnaire, into the opinions, positions and attitudes of young people on key areas of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, such as: family and future plans, education, employment and mobility, as well as political attitudes and social participation. The study also provides insights into the general values, attitudes and perceptions of young people, offering a broader framework and context of their thoughts on specific areas.

This is the third study in a row, after the studies of 2015 and 2019. The COVID 19 pandemic forced the rescheduling of the four-year implementation of the youth study; however, it was possible to maintain the continuity of research among young people with a slightly modified questionnaire form and a smaller and different type of sample.

## 3rd

This is the third study in a row, after the studies of 2015 and 2019 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Another aim of this study is to provide insights into certain key trends among young people by gathering data on how they view certain social areas where it is possible (and necessary) to develop both youth strategies at all levels of government, and educational and employment policies; moreover, by identifying models that address the key problems faced by young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, this study might be useful precisely because it provides certain input indicators that allow for a more concrete and improved planning of processes and models for the development of a society of young people and for young people.

For many years now, society in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been struggling with the problem of young people leaving, as well as with the dissatisfaction of young people with the living conditions in the country, on top of the issue of apathy and a lack of activism among young people in improving the quality of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This study finds some of the answers to the question of why this is so: young people across the country have given answers to certain questions that precisely detect the extent and causes of their (dis)satisfaction with various segments of their social reality. The study itself provides an exhaustive analysis of the collected data; however, these data can be additionally cross-referenced to learn more about the profile of a young person in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their view of the country's reality. Therefore, every careful reader of the interpreted data will surely uncover some other dimensions of the answers given, which may serve as a baseline for additional analyses and academic and professional research. The aim and purpose of this study is not to provide conclusive answers regarding young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to raise certain issues for further scientific and professional discussion and debate, as well as to encourage the taking of certain concrete steps and solutions for improving the standard of life (not only for young people) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If this study proceeds to have a long and fruitful life among academic and professional circles, as the previous two youth studies have had, it will have achieved its goal.



# 2. Methodology

The methodological approach to developing Youth Study 2024 involved a quantitative-qualitative approach, which was applied in order to ensure a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of young people's lives. The survey included a total representative sample (9,500 people) of the population aged 14 to 29 in the countries of the Western Balkans and Southeastern Europe, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Greece and Turkey. The data were collected simultaneously in all twelve countries in the period between 9th February 2024 and 25th March 2024. The data collection process and data collection methods were defined and implemented by the IPSOS research agency. Field work, i.e. data collection in Bosnia and Herzegovina was carried out using the CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interview) on a total sample of 500 young people via the Ipsos Online Access Panel.

Five hundred (500) young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina aged 14–29 took part in a survey that examined the needs, attitudes and ways in which young people perceive their role as a catalyst for change in the context of democratic development within Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

Ipsos (the agency that carried out the field work) used a proportional quota sample drawn from the Ipsos Online Panel based on the characteristics (quotas) of age, gender and region. Due to the direct targeting of survey respondents via an e-mail invitation, socio-demographic characteristics were pre-defined in order to achieve an adequate distribution of these quotas. The main rationale for choosing proportional quota sampling was the assumed low prevalence of the target group (young people) in the twelve countries where the survey was simultaneously implemented, which limited the feasibility of pure random sampling. Figure one summarizes the quotas that were achieved in comparison with the actual distribution of the target population in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the 2013 Census. Any deviations between the net and target populations were adjusted for by weighting (with an overall weighting efficiency of 88.6 %). The data collection process in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the previous cycles of the development of the youth study (2015 and 2019) was based on a random sample, while in 2024 the data were collected using a quota sample, rendering the results not strictly comparable with the results of the previous youth studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Fig. 1 Comparison of the total population of young people and the net sample in BiH (in %)

		Target population	Net sample
Gender	Male	51.3	34.4
	Female	48.7	65.6
Age	14–18	29.0	25.0
	19–24	37.0	53.4
	25–29	34.0	21.6
Region	Una-Sana Canton	8.5	5.4
	Tuzla Canton + Posavina Canton	14.5	19.6
	Zenica-Doboj Canton + Central-Bosnia Canton	18.7	26.4
	Herzegovina-Neretva Canton + West-Herzegovina Canton + Canton 10	11.4	10.8
	Sarajevo Canton + Bosnian-Podrinje Canton	12.5	25.8
	Republika Srpska (North of RS + East of RS)	32.2	9.2
	Brčko District	2.2	2.8

Special attention was paid to apply an appropriate categorical-conceptual apparatus adapted to the target population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on conceptual clarity and adaptability to the languages of the peoples of BiH, rather than on producing a literal translation of the survey questionnaire from English. Ipsos then distributed the online questionnaire to the target population in the languages of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian), in either the Latin or Cyrillic script depending on the respondent's preference. Field research proceeded through the Ipsos Online Panel with the final number of respondents being 500. The structure of the unweighted sample deviated from the population structure of the 2013 Census. It was therefore weighted to adjust the sample to the results of the 2013 Census based on the defined quotas (see figure 1). When calculating and defining the weighting factors, the "Rim weighting" procedure was used with the variables of gender, age and region.

The survey process ensured the anonymity of the respondents, with their personal data and survey data never being stored together and with data protection guaranteed. Furthermore, it was made sure that individuals could not be identified based on survey results, while the data sets did not contain any personal data or information that was stored in the panel. Once data collection, arrangement and processing were completed, the statistical analysis and interpretation of the data was done by the Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. The SPSS Statistics software package was used for these purposes. The data were processed descriptively, by applying the main statistical parameters of the measures of central tendency and data grouping, i.e., univariate (response distribution) statistical analysis. Socio-demographic characteristics such as the gender, age cohort, type of community (village, city), social and professional status and level of education of respondents were used as a basis for the identification of deviations or lack of correlation. The most significant results are presented in consecutively numbered tables or graphs, which show these results as percentages or absolute values.

# 3 Basic demographic characteristics and trends

The population of young people (aged 14–29) should be a dynamic force that significantly shapes the present and future in any society. Young people are often known for their energy, enthusiasm, openness to change, a desire to explore, learn and experiment, often seeking new ways of expression and identity. In addition, they are highly technologically literate and use digital tools for communication, entertainment and education. However, the subpopulation of young people in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society faces challenges of general apathy, unemployment, economic insecurity and difficulties in finding their place in society. In most developed Western societies, young people are a constantly changing and evolving vital force. It is therefore extremely important to make sure that young people are supported and given opportunities to develop and make a contribution to the progress of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

When talking about young people, we often categorize them as Generation Z, Y or α (alpha) without clearly understanding and knowing the differences in the interpretation and definition of these groups. The target group of Youth Study 2024 is Generation Z (Gen Z, Zoomer), born between 1994 and 2010 and currently between 14 and 30 years old.

Some of the main features of this generation are reflected in the fact that they have integrated digitalization into everyday life (Digital Natives), that they actively use social media on a daily basis, and that they have a more critical attitude towards having children and the institution of the family (Eldridge: 2024). On the other hand, young people born after 2010, i.e. those under 14 (Generation Alpha), are characterized by a heightened awareness of the environment, social cohesion and the development of well-being; however, it is assumed that Generation α (alpha) will be the one that will see many conflicts and wars (Eldridge: 2024). The generation that is now at a more mature age – between the ages of 31 and 44 (born between 1980 and 1993) – is Generation Y (Millennials, Gen Y) and is characterized as being well-educated and having grown up during the emergence and development of the internet and globalization (Zelazko: 2024).

Young people (Generation Z) or youths – according to the provisions of the laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Youth Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), Youth Law of the Republika Srpska (RS) and Youth Law of Brčko District (BD)) – are persons aged between 15 and 30. Youth is most frequently described as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. In terms of statistics, 15 years of age is most often taken as the lower limit of youth, while the upper limit varies, stopping most often at 24 and sometimes at 29 or 34 years of age. The trend recognized as “extended youth” (individuals between 31 and 34 years of age) is characterized by an increasingly long formal education, challenging and inadequate employment, delayed socio-economic independence, postponement of starting a family and poor involvement in social decision-making (Hadžimahmutović and Martić: 2013).



According to the census conducted in 2013, there were 764,511 young people aged 14–29 living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., they accounted for 21.6 % of the population or every fifth person in BiH was a member of Generation Z. In the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ratio was slightly more favorable than in the other entity, with 22.7 % of the population being young people aged 14–29, while in the Republika Srpska it was 19.8 %.

When we analyze the 2013 Census data shown above, we notice that one in five people in Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged to the category of young people. Regrettably, the census that was supposed to be carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2023 has not been implemented. Some projections indicate a significant decline in the number of young people in the total population, with the main reason for this decline being a sense of hopelessness in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, often leading to the end result of the external migration and permanent departure of a significant number of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

---

**66 %** The majority of the respondents most often living with both parents.

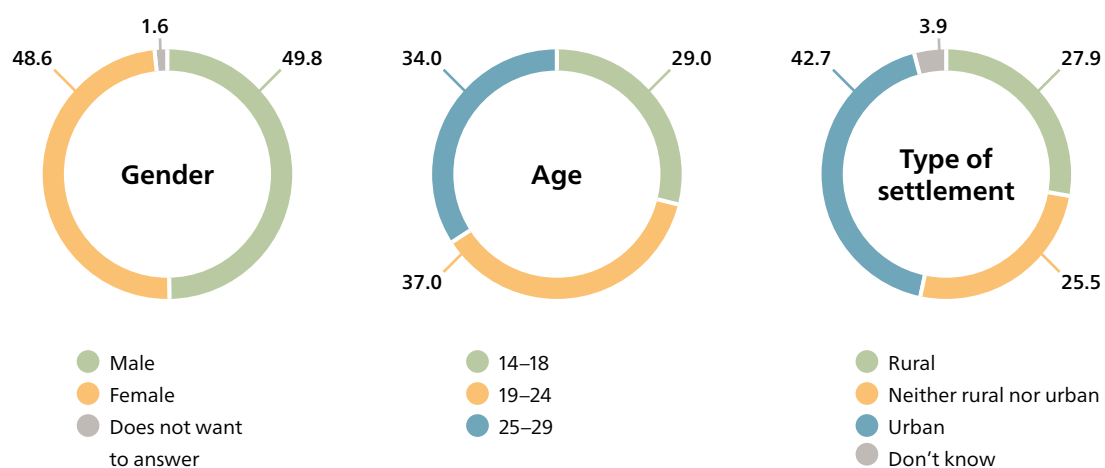
---

The analysis of the collected data shows that in terms of gender structure, the sample of respondents includes 49.8 % men and 48.6 % women, while 1.6 % of the respondents did not want to answer this question. In terms of age structure, the respondents are divided into three subgroups: between the ages of 14 and 18 (29 %), between 19 and 24 (37 %) and between 25 and 29 (34 %); the average age of the respondents is 21.85, with a median value of 22, the youngest respondent aged 14 and the oldest 29, while the most common age of the respondents is 15 and 29.

According to the data, one in four young persons (28 %) states they live in a place they characterize as rural, while 43 % state they live in an urban area. The type of area where one lives has a significant impact on everyday life. Young people living in urban areas in BiH have more comprehensive access to educational, cultural and health institutions as well as diverse social and sports activities, which has a positive impact on their individual development. Young people living in rural areas often face limited access to education, a lack of employment opportunities and limited infrastructural connectivity, which may lead to a sense of isolation and the view that they live in a society that offers fewer opportunities. On the other hand, life in a rural environment can certainly provide a significantly more stable social network and a sense of community, while an urban lifestyle is more oriented towards individual and professional growth.

Having analyzed the position of and trends among young people in contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, we can note that young people continue to be on the margins of social developments and that their position is complex, marked by various challenges and opportunities. This complex position is primarily reflected in young people's accumulated dissatisfaction with nearly all aspects of social life in Bosnian-Herzegovina, starting with the socio-economic conditions that directly contribute to economic insecurity and the process of becoming independent beset with significant difficulties. Becoming independent is actually a very important factor for young people, allowing them to develop personal, emotional and life skills that are critical ingredients for their success and happiness in adulthood, and it further contributes to the growth and development of the young population on an individual level, as well as to the progress of society as a whole. A mere 6.6 % of young people state that they live alone, with the majority of the respondents most often living with both parents and brothers and/or sisters (66 %).

Fig. 2 Sociodemographic characteristics of youth in BiH (in %)



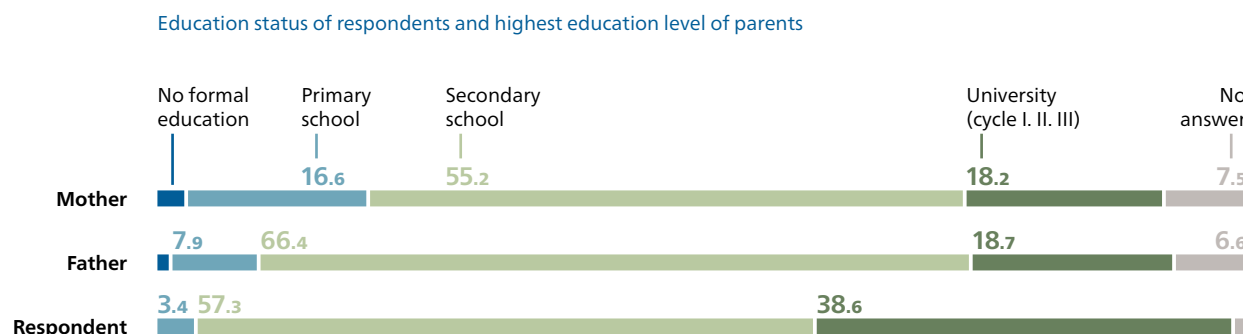
Nearly one in five respondents (18.4 %) lives with a partner or a spouse and 7 % of the respondents state that they live in a household with one or more children. The most common reason for living in their parents' home, as given by young people, is the comfort it offers them, stating that living with their parents is currently the simplest and most practical solution (42.8 %). On the other hand, most of them, especially when it comes to the age group of young people aged 25–29 (61.3 %), state that they would live alone if their financial circumstances allowed it. Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina want to become independent, but it appears that giving preference to the parental home allows them a certain amount of "carelessness" when it comes to daily chores and activities that are much more easily done at the "Mama Hotel", especially in light of the fact that 96.2 % of the respondents state that they have a good relationship with their parents.

A critical factor in the progress of any society is the quality, competitiveness and supply of educational content, and this factor in Bosnia and Herzegovina has its limitations that are primarily of a qualitative, geographical and financial nature.

High-quality education plays an essential role in transition and post-transition countries, as it ensures the development of the skills and knowledge necessary for success in life, in addition to providing access to opportunities, encouraging social mobility, innovation and progress and strengthening democratic values and social cohesion. Young people in BiH often lack opportunities for professional development and employment based on their acquired competencies after finishing school, and this is especially true in less developed and rural areas. It is therefore hardly surprising that merely 22.8 % of young people state they are satisfied with the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many studies have shown, both at the international level and at the BiH level, that high-quality education is one of the important requirements for greater employability, yet Bosnia and Herzegovina still struggles with an extremely high unemployment rate, especially when it comes to young people. The data show that only 15.2 % of young people state that they have permanent full-time employment, while 11 % of the respondents state that they have fixed-term full-time contracts. When it comes to education and the level of education of respondents compared to their parents, the situation is shown in the graph below.



Fig. 3 Education of youth in BiH in relation to their parents (in %)



A clear trend of young people in contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian society aspire to a level of education higher than what their parents achieved; this is reflected in the fact that twice as many young people have tertiary education compared to their parents (38.6 % compared to 18.7 %), and this percentage should actually be higher when we take into account that many of the respondents are still in the educational process and have not completed their educational

Furthermore, increased parental awareness of the importance of education and the ability to provide assistance in doing schoolwork additionally contributes to the success of children/young people in their educational journey.

The graph above shows that young people in BiH, together with their peers from Montenegro, have some of the highest levels of satisfaction with their lives among the twelve countries covered by the survey. These indicators suggest that young people are satisfied with their lives, which helps them build self-confidence and resilience to face the obstacles and uncertainties that accompany their growing up. Based on the data on the life satisfaction of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the general average score in 2023 was 5.63 (71st of 137 countries) (Helliwell, J.F.; Huang, H.; Norton, M.; Goff, L., Wang, S.: 2023). We can conclude that young people as a subpopulation are more satisfied with their lives (7.43) than the overall population in BiH (5.63). This positive attitude towards life among young people is additionally beneficial in that it has a significant impact on their motivation for and involvement in education and professional development, and on their establishing and maintaining positive social relationships, which helps improve the bond between young people and their communities. In addition to its individual benefits, life satisfaction among young people also has a wider social impact, since satisfied young people are more likely to become active members of their communities, by volunteering and taking part in civic initiatives.

**Young people as a subpopulation are more satisfied with their lives (7.43) than the overall population in BiH (5.63).**

journey. This leads us to conclude that success in the educational process is not genetically determined. Nevertheless, some studies conducted in Western societies indicate that the education of parents often has a significant impact on the education of their children because “parents with higher levels of education have higher expectations and usually provide more support to their children” (IHE: 2018). This effect of higher expectations and more support creates a more stimulating learning environment for children/young people. Parents with higher levels of education participate more often in school activities and communication with teachers (Casey Foundation: 2022), which provides additional motivation for children/young people and helps them achieve better results at school.

Fig. 4 Life satisfaction of youth in BiH compared to SEE countries (in %)

On a scale from '1 – very dissatisfied' to '10 – very satisfied'

	Very dissatisfied (1–2)	(3–4)	(5–6)	(7–8)	Very satisfied (9–10)
Albania	3	8	23	37	28
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	5	17	42	32
Bulgaria	6	13	25	32	21
Croatia	4	11	21	41	22
Greece	4	15	30	41	10
Kosovo	1	5	22	40	29
Montenegro	2	8	23	38	25
North Macedonia	1	3	20	38	37
Romania	6	8	22	37	27
Serbia	5	10	23	36	25
Slovenia	3	8	19	43	26
Türkiye	13	14	27	30	15

Furthermore, life satisfaction can have a long-term effect on the reduced prevalence of risk-taking behavior, as well as on the health and prosperity of the entire society. In conclusion, we may say that life satisfaction among young people in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society shows positive development, unlike satisfaction with the social system, considering that the overall economic conditions, the education system, health care and the perception of security largely result in a significant number of young people wanting to permanently migrate from the country.

Based on the data, two-thirds of young people have a moderate to very strong desire to move to another country for more than six months, 14.2% have a weak desire to emigrate, while one in five young persons has no desire to emigrate. When the age and gender of the respondents is taken into account, we can see that young women aged 19 to 24 have the greatest desire to emigrate, while men of the same age have a significantly lower desire to emigrate. The main reasons for this are undoubtedly the need to improve their standard of living (32.3%), higher wages (16.5%) and better employment opportunities (11.3%).

While young people often leave the country in search of better education, merely 9.1% of young people cite this as a key reason. The migration of young people, mostly educated ones, which has worryingly increased in intensity since 2015, has a significant impact on contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian society in all its segments. The permanent emigration of young people results in demographic changes in society, such as the rapid

---

**2/3** of young people have a moderate to very strong desire to move to another country for more than six months.

---

aging of the population, reduced birth rates and negative natural population growth. This demographic picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina, without a significant number of young people, has a very negative impact on the economy, social system and political dynamics. The departure of young people also negatively affects the workforce and economic development, as a potential workforce and human capital, which are key to productivity and innovation, are lost. As a result, Bosnian-Herzegovinian society is giving up its most valuable asset without trying to motivate the young population to stay by developing appropriate strategies and measures. In addition, the migration of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina causes a 'brain drain', an outflow of highly educated young people (brains) who seek better educational and employment opportunities abroad, primarily in the countries of the European Union (EU), which has the long-term effect of limiting the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina's capacity to attract and retain talent.

The migratory movements, primarily of young people, that we have witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past ten years have also had a major impact on social relations and culture, changing the dynamics of relationships among different ethnic, cultural and religious groups, which could lead to future challenges in integrating labor migrants into Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and creating an inclusive environment that respects diversity. It is extremely important to understand and manage the consequences of the migration of young people – which may be beneficial in cases where the young person leaves the country to gain new knowledge, skills and competences, and is motivated and has plans to return to their country – in order to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts on society.

# 4. Young people and education

It is a known fact that the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely complicated and complex, making access to high-quality education difficult for many young people, in particular for those from deprived groups and communities. Virtually all attempts to systematically improve education at the state level remain incomplete or unsuccessful, largely due to the fact that the education system is fragmented, i.e., there are effectively two parallel systems in place: a centralized one in the entity of Republika Srpska and a decentralized one in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The issue of the “fragmentation” of the education system and its impact on the quality of education is also pointed out by the World Bank, which states that there are fourteen authorities responsible for education in BiH, which manifests as a problem in practice because expenditures for all officials, teachers, directors and non-teaching staff employed in this sector account for more than 90 % of spending on education, compared to the EU average of 77 %. This leaves very little room for the procurement of teaching materials, equipment and teacher training and for improving the conditions for learning and staying in school (World Bank: 2024).

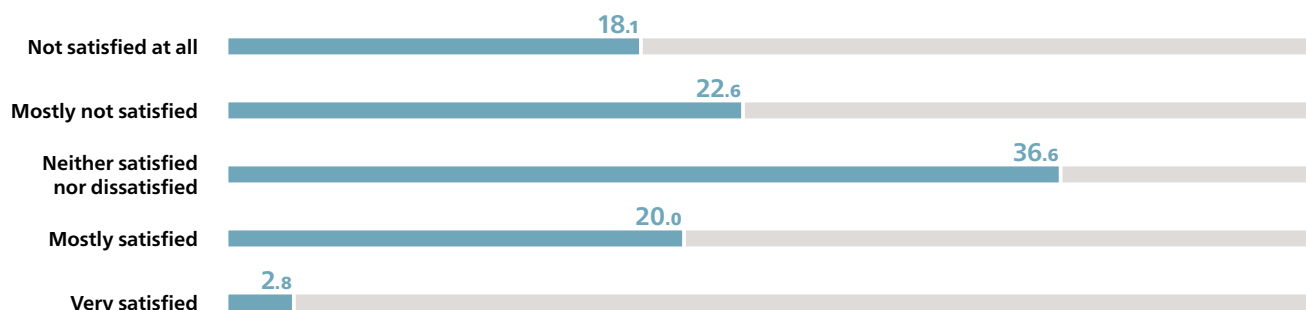
It seems that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are able, through their own experience, to see all the shortcomings of education, given that 40.7 % of them state they are dissatisfied with the quality of education (18.1 % completely dissatisfied, 22.6 % mostly dissatisfied). A mere 2.8 % of the respondents state that they are very satisfied with the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Particularly worrisome is the fact that 77.3 % of the young people surveyed believe in the presence of corruption in education in BiH. As this type of research did not allow for detailed answers regarding the forms of corruption present in education, as well as whether the respondents had actually witnessed any of these forms or whether their views are based on the common narratives regarding corruption in the public sector (including education), it would be important to probe further, through either in-depth interviews or focus groups, in order to gain better insight into the reasons for such a large percentage of the respondents believing in the existence of corruption.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has participated in PISA testing (student assessment program: PISA Test – PISA (oecd.org)) only once in this century, in 2019, when 15-year-old students were tested in reading, mathematics and natural sciences. The results were such that between 50 and 60 % of the students were evaluated with a “poor performance”. This means that more than half of the students failed to demonstrate basic knowledge in reading, mathematics and natural sciences, compared to an average of 31 % of such students in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) and 24 % in the European Union (EU). In our survey, 23 % of the respondents state that they do nothing at all on a daily basis related to their education, i.e., school-related activities, while 36.2 % spend less than an hour on a daily basis fulfilling their education-related obligations. It is apparent from these answers that systemic deficiencies are not the sole cause of the low levels of education among young people and their poor results compared to their European peers; it is also due to the attitude young people have towards their own education.



Fig. 5 Satisfaction with the education system among youth in BiH (in %, N=490)



65.5 % of the respondents spend more than one hour a day on social media (6.8 % of them even spend more than 5 hours a day), while 40.7 % of the respondents spend more than one hour a day on education-related activities (4.1 % of them spend more than 5 hours a day), which means that the respondents spend more time on social media than on educational activities on a daily basis (not counting the time formally spent at school).

Young people's motivation to increase their own level of knowledge, skills and competences was not directly explored in this survey, but it may be surmised from the answers given to the question of how well the demands of the labor market match the level of formal education of young people. Only 10.8 % of young people believe that employers demand a higher level of education than they have, while 30 % of them believe that a lower level of education than theirs is actually demanded. One in four respondents believes that competence is not a factor (15.8 %) or is a very small factor (10.9 %) in finding a job. 59.3 % of them believe that knowing people who are in positions of power is mostly important and very important in finding a job, while 57.1 % of them believe that being a member of a political party is important in that process. Given this context, we can conclude that young people have low motivation to invest in their own education, because they do not believe that this can provide them with better employment and a better standard of living. Furthermore, young people do not believe that having experience abroad (whether educational or practical) is important for finding a job in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 36.4 % of them think that it is not important at all and 23.2 % think that it is mostly not important.

It is therefore not surprising to see extremely low levels of participation among respondents in educational programs outside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is extremely worrisome and shows not only a lack of opportunities and an unwillingness of young people to take advantage of opportunities for education abroad, but is also indicative of an unwillingness to leave one's comfort zone and gain international experience. 95.4 % of the respondents have never attended an educational program abroad as part of their higher education, while 96.7 % of them forwent the same experience during their secondary education. 55.4 % of respondents state they have no such intention. In this context, we may say that young people have no experience outside their own educational process or outside the education system they have in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so they are essentially unable to make any comparisons regarding the quality of education they receive in their country. Furthermore, merely 9.1 % of the respondents cite a better quality of education as a potential reason for moving to another country, while 32.3 % of them believe, for example, that a better standard of living would be an important motive to leave the country. 89.1 % of the respondents have never contacted an educational institution abroad in order to prepare the ground for leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina. This leads to the conclusion that young people, specifically the respondents in this survey, do not view education as a mechanism for increasing the quality of life and standard of living, either in BiH or abroad.



Graduating from university is very important for 42.6 % of the respondents and is mostly important for 20.4 % of them. At the same time, for a little more than one fifth of the respondents, graduating from university is not important at all (14.4 %)

**59 %**

of them believe that knowing people who are in positions of power is mostly important and very important in finding a job.

or is mostly not important (7.1 %). 88.4 % of the respondents believe that their personal future in the next ten years will be better than now. However, considering that a significant portion of the respondents spends less than an hour a day on educational activities, that more than half of them have no plans to travel and stay outside BiH for educational purposes, and that the respondents do not believe that better education is a good enough reason to move from BiH to another country, it is clear that they do not see education as a means to a better personal future. In view of the fact that 34 % of the respondents state that they believe that the overall situation in ten years will be worse than now, and that 33.4 % of them say that it will be the same as now, it is not quite clear what young people's basis for optimism regarding their own personal future is, especially because 51.6 % of them cite the inability to find a job as a serious concern, while at the same time, as already noted, raising one's own competencies is not a way to find a job more easily for a quarter of the respondents. 69.1 % of the respondents believe that young people do not have enough rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina; however, judging by their answers regarding education, the right to a better education is not something that is of particular concern for them, either on a personal level or in general.

If we were to create, based on the respondents' answers, a portrait of a young person and their views regarding education, we would say that this is someone who is dissatisfied with the current education system and processes in BiH, but at the same time this is not someone who wants to gain educational experience outside the borders of BiH.

Furthermore, this is someone who believes that corruption in education is a significant problem, yet at the same time believes that when trying to find a job, it is better to have connections and to be a member of a political party rather than be well-educated. Judging by the respondents' answers, a young person in Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that, regardless of the future of the state and society, they themselves have a good outlook and will have a better future for themselves personally. This relatively contradictory set of answers seems to provide sufficient grounds to conclude that young people (or at least those that were included in our survey sample) do not demonstrate critical thinking with regards to education, both their own and in general, neither in the context of the present nor in the context of the future. Admittedly, they do recognize (some) problems in this context, but not the solutions, not even in terms of increasing their personal knowledge, skills and competences.

## Main takeaways

**1.** Young people believe that the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not at a satisfactory level, but at the same time they do not believe that better education would be a sufficient reason to move to another country.

**2.** Young people believe that belonging to a political party or knowing people in positions of power can be a better guarantee of finding a job than being competent and well-educated, which makes them poorly motivated to invest in knowledge, skills and competences, all the more so because they believe that they are ready to meet the demands the labor market places on them with their existing knowledge and skills.

**3.** Internationalization of education is not an important factor for young people given the fact that a vast majority of the respondents have never traveled abroad for educational purposes, and half of them have no intention of doing so.

**4.** On a daily basis, young people spend more time on social networks than in self-directed educational activities.

# 5. Employment and mobility

## Challenges and perspectives of young people in the labor market

Unemployment trends have been shifting over the last ten years, but there have been no significant changes in their dynamics. Since 2015, the World Bank has recorded a decline in the number of unemployed young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina between the ages of 15 and 24, with the lowest rate in 2023 at 29.8 % (World Bank: 2024). In spite of these slightly more optimistic indicators, however, unemployment among young people remains high. The real question is: who are these unemployed young people? The youth unemployment rate refers to the share of the economically active population between the ages

**53 %** of them see being a member of a political party as an important factor in finding a job.

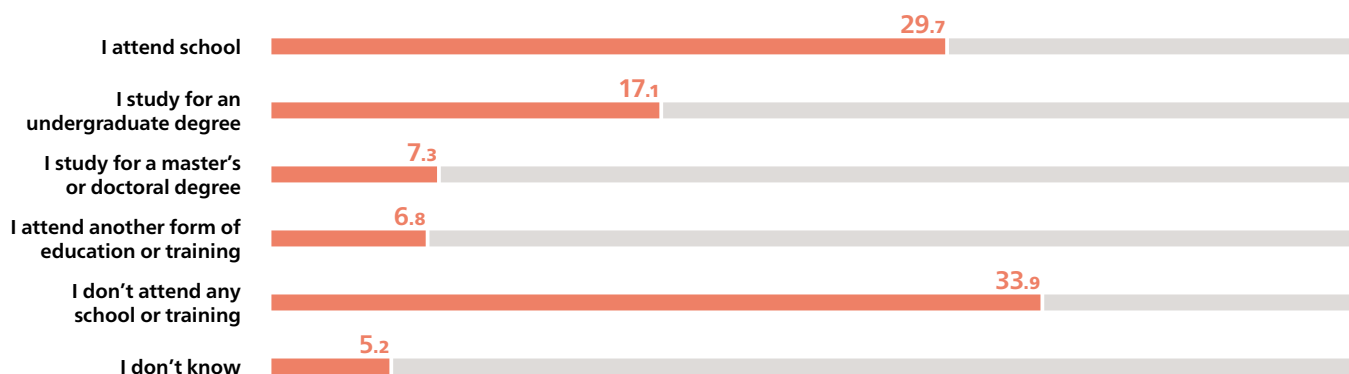
of 15 and 24 who are currently unemployed, but are looking for a job. Our survey has shown that there is a significant percentage of young people who are at the secondary level of regular education (29.7 %) and/or students at the undergraduate level (17.1 %), so they are not actively looking for employment according to this definition.



Finding employment is among the greatest concerns of every young person, even if this is something that awaits them in the near or distant future. This is not only a question of securing sustenance and social status, but also of achieving psychological and emotional fulfillment. Preparing for the labor market takes a very long time, and the investment itself is complex not only at the individual level, but also at the level of society. The issue of youth employment should therefore be approached in earnest and with a clear strategy.

The results obtained regarding the current employment status of young people lead us to conclude that 22.9 % of the young people included in the survey state that they do not have a job, but are actively looking for one, while 19.2 % of them are not looking for a job. One of the reasons for such results is the fact that a significant number of the young people (29.7 %) involved in this study are still attending secondary education. Only 15.2 % of the respondents have an open-ended contract on a full-time basis and 1.5 % have such a contract on a part-time basis, which may mean that permanent and stable jobs are not widely available. 11 % of the respondents have a fixed-term contract on a full-time basis, while 9.4 % of the respondents state that they perform occasional work; these data may indicate that the labor market relies more on flexible forms of employment, which may contribute to uncertainty and a lack of work-related benefits. This characteristic of our sample of respondents, i.e., young people who have a job (40.9 %), could be correlated with the fact that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian labor market is marked by uncertainty, high unemployment rates and a substantial dependence on temporary and informal forms of employment. This can have wide social and economic consequences, including income instability and a lack of social security for a large number of persons of working age. The labor market in Bosnia and Herzegovina is limited and has insufficient capacity to absorb most university-educated people, which results in serious disappointment among young people who have been training and preparing for the labor market for many years.

Fig. 6 Current education status of youth in BiH (in %)



If the survey results obtained for the respondents who are in employment (N=205; 40.9 %) are analyzed, we notice that 31.8 % of them work directly in the profession they trained for, while 14.1 % have jobs that are quite close to their profession. We can therefore conclude that nearly half of the respondents (45.8 %) work in a field that is related to their profession in some way. However, there are 46.2 % of the respondents that still do not work in their profession, while 3.5 % state that they have never trained for any profession, with an additional 4.4 % saying they do not know. This may be an indication of a potential mismatch between education and employment or of a deficit of opportunities in certain professions.

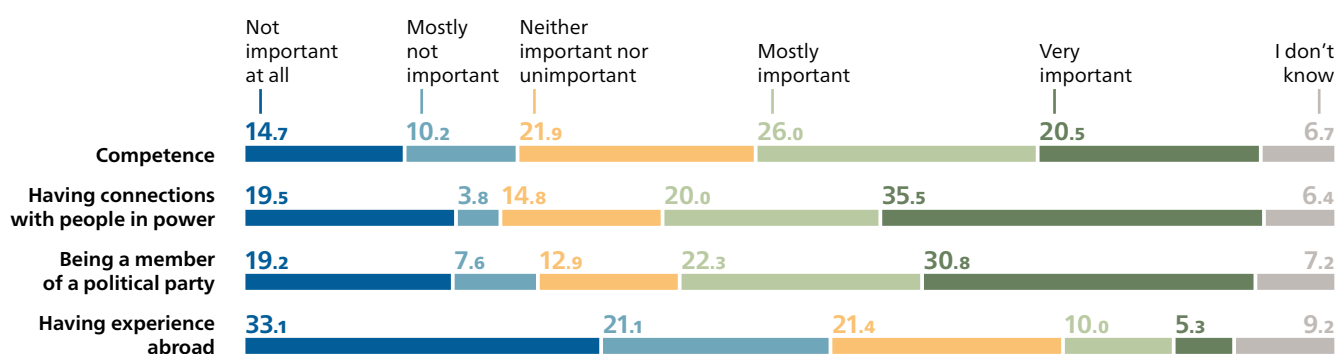
This survey also dealt with the issue of whether the level of formal education and the requirements of the job, i.e., employment, were matched. It found that one in two respondents (40.9 %) who have the status of employed persons (N=205) works in a job that matches the attained level of formal education. This may indicate a good match between the educational qualifications of the respondents and the requirements of their current jobs. In addition, 12.3 % of the respondents work in jobs that require a lower level of education than their own, while 10.8 % of the respondents work in areas that require a higher level of education than what they have attained.

When it comes to important factors in the process of finding a job, 49.8 % of the respondents believe competence to be important, which indicates that the surveyed target population views education and competencies important in finding a job. Nonetheless, a part of the respondents (24.9 %), i.e., one in four respondents, believes that competence is not important, while 21.9 % do not have a clear position on the importance of competence in finding a job. Furthermore, 55.5 % of the respondents believe that having connections with people in power is an important factor in finding a job, while 53.1 % of them see being a member of a political party as an important factor in finding a job. On the other hand, experience gained abroad is an important factor in finding employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 15.3 % of young people. The obtained data may also be arranged hierarchically so that, according to young people, the most important factors in finding a job are having connections with people in power (55.5 %), being a member of a political party (53.1 %), competence (46.5 %) and having experience abroad (15.3 %).

Fig. 7 Current employment status of youth in BiH (in %, N=500)



Fig. 8 Views among youth in BiH on important factors for finding a job (in %)



Considering that a significant number of young people included in this study were still in the educational process, this was reflected in their answers to the question regarding labor union membership. Thus, 24 respondents or 4.9 % of the total number are current labor union members, which indicates a relatively low level of membership. Some of them, 15.1 %, say they are interested in joining a labor union. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the respondents (76.4 %) are not interested in labor union membership, which is indicative of a lack of interest or a negative perception of labor unions and their ability to protect workers' rights.

In spite of the significant technological progress in nearly all areas of life, young people (85.6 %) do not see robotization and the transformation of employment as key problems in the next decade. This may mean that they do not see technological progress as a direct threat. Conversely, a minority of 14.4 % of the respondents believe these are significant challenges. However, when it comes to the respondents' opinions regarding fears and concerns related to the negative effects of artificial intelligence, 31.8 % of them are very worried, 30.1 % are somewhat worried, while 32.4 % are not afraid or concerned about the adverse impact of artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, 48.3 % of young people have a lot fears and concerns regarding unemployment, 27.3 % state that they are somewhat concerned, while only 18 % are not at all afraid of unemployment in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. When it comes to projections of the social system regarding care for people of the third age, i.e., the fear or concern that the respondents will not have decent pensions, 46.7 % of them state that they have a lot of fear, while 29.8 % are somewhat concerned and/or afraid.

## Main takeaways

- 1.** The youth unemployment rate remains high.
- 2.** Security and employment are the two most important issues for young people.
- 3.** One in two respondents works in a job that matches his/her professional qualifications.
- 4.** While awareness of the importance of having (political) connections for finding a job is high, young people do not see political activity as a key aspect of their lives.
- 5.** A significant number of young people are considering the option of emigration, largely for better economic opportunities.
- 6.** A relatively low number of young people have taken concrete steps regarding plans to leave.



# 6 Migration through the eyes of young people

When it comes to migration, Bosnia and Herzegovina has seen two parallel processes in recent years: an increasing number of residents leaving the country, but at the same time, BiH becoming a country of transit and, to a significantly lesser extent, the final destination for migrants with regular and irregular status. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), BiH authorities registered the arrival of nearly 35,000 irregular migrants in 2023, an increase of 25 % from 2022. As was the case in 2022, most of the arrivals were from Afghanistan (42 %), Morocco (21 %) and Syria (7 %). Women and children accounted for only 17 % of these migrations (IOM, 2023).

**32 %** of young people believe that there are too many immigrants in BiH.

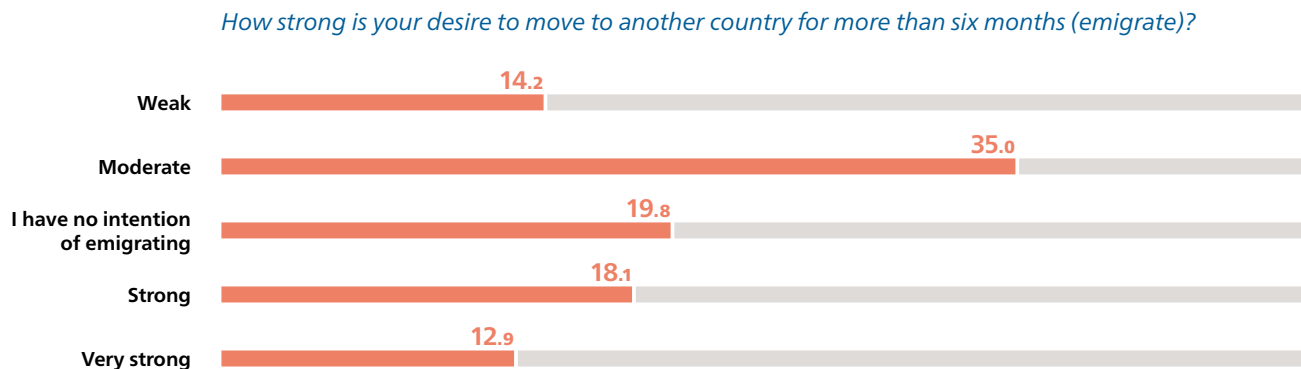
Examining the views of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the migrant population, we find out that 32.5 % of young people believe that there are too many immigrants in BiH, while 27.9 % of them believe that their number is not too large at all. 39.6 % of the respondents are only somewhat in agreement with the view that there are too many immigrants in BiH.

While this relatively even distribution of responses may at first glance give the impression of a neutral attitude of young people towards immigrants, the answers to the question whether Bosnia and Herzegovina should receive more migrants show that 68.8 % of the respondents completely or mostly disagree with this, with only 8.7 % of the respondents agreeing that larger numbers of immigrants should be accepted. 43 % of the respondents absolutely disagree with the statement that immigrants enrich our culture; 16.3 % of them disagree; while merely 9.3 % of the respondents believe that immigrants enrich the culture of BiH. These responses show that young people have a generally negative view of immigrants and their arrival in BiH, although the ratio of those who see immigration as the greatest problem in the next ten years and those who do not see it as such is 54 %:46 %, which effectively means that young people are not overly concerned about this issue in the future.

A source of concern for young people, greater than the arrival of foreign migrants to Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the departure of skilled professionals from Bosnia and Herzegovina. 73.2 % of them believe that this will be one of the greatest problems in the next ten years. Even though they understand that the departure of qualified workers is a great problem, young people are thinking about leaving themselves, such that 31 % of them have a very strong or strong desire to leave, while 35 % have a moderate desire to leave. Only 19.8 % of the respondents expressly state that they have no intention of emigrating.

When it comes to the preferred countries of emigration, the previous Youth Study from 2019 identified the following countries as the main destinations: Germany (47.6 %), followed by Austria (12.5 %), Switzerland (7.0 %), Sweden (4.5 %) and the USA (4.1) (Turčilo et al.: 2019). In this, as in 2024, survey, a question about preferred destinations was not asked; however, a question was asked about how soon young people could imagine themselves leaving the country.



Fig. 9 **Desire to emigrate among youth in BiH** (in %, N=464)

Answering this question, 26.8 % of the respondents say they do not know whether they could imagine themselves leaving the country, and considering that 19.8 % of the respondents say they have no intention of emigrating, we can say that between one fifth and one quarter of the respondents show no desire in leaving the country. 10.6 % of the respondents state that they can imagine themselves living abroad in ten years. If this piece of data is contrasted with 34 % of young people who believe that the overall situation in the country will be worse in ten years, then 10.6 % of the respondents seeing themselves somewhere else is not such a large percentage. Nevertheless, 22.8 % of the respondents stating they would leave the country forever is not a negligible figure. It is noteworthy, on the other hand, that the majority of young people have taken absolutely no steps to secure any means of leaving the country. 50.3 % of the respondents say so directly, while indirect answers show that more than three quarters of young people have not contacted any relatives or friends to help them move abroad (78.8 %), have not secured a scholarship (95.9 %), have not contacted educational institutions to continue their education abroad (89.1 %), and have not contacted any employers (90.8 %).

All of this leads us to conclude that even for those who want to emigrate, it is actually more a matter of desire than of a concrete and thought-out plan. It is in this context that we can also interpret data on the motives and reasons for young people wanting to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina and move abroad.

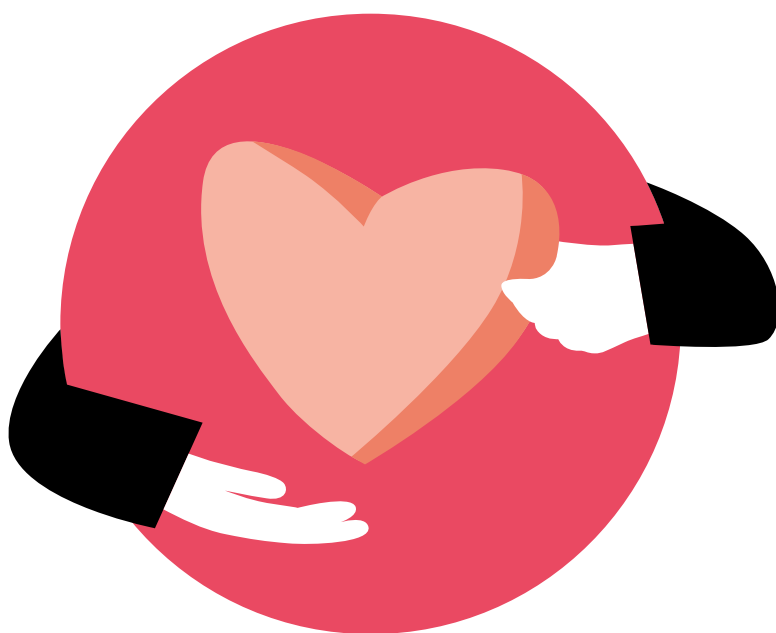
Improving the standard of living was stated as a key motive (32.3 % of the respondents state this as the reason for wanting to live outside Bosnia and Herzegovina), but it is not clear how young people define that standard and what they consider to be the parameters of a good standard of living, considering that the main reasons for leaving for only 11.3 % of them are better employment opportunities, while 16.5 % cite better wages and only 2.4 % cite an opportunity to start their own business. Getting to know other cultures (1.9 %) and cultural diversity (0.3 %) are not recognized at all as motives for leaving. Judging by the responses of young people that immigrants do not enrich the culture of BiH (43 % of responses) and the responses that getting to know other cultures would not be a reason for moving (1.9 %), we can conclude that there is a certain amount of resistance to cultural diversity and the “meeting” of cultures, or that young people simply do not see these aspects as important.

In short, young respondents in this survey have demonstrated very conflicting views of migration as it relates to them personally and to other migrants: when talking about themselves, those who want to leave mostly say they want to do so for socio-economic reasons, but they would deny the same opportunity to others migrants who are arriving in or transiting through BiH. Likewise, while expressing concern about the departure of educated people, this does not prevent them from thinking about leaving themselves, which implies that they give priority to their own needs and well-being over the development of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

# 7. Family and plans for the future

In terms of the structure of households in which young people live, only 6.6 % of the respondents live independently, while 93.4 % are in some form of family unit. The mother is present in 63.3 % of the households, the father in 55.8 % and brothers and sisters in 43.3 % of the households. 5.9 % of the respondents state that grandparents also live in the household, but the question of whether there are also parents in such households was not asked, so we cannot reach a clear conclusion as to whether such household structures include two or three generations. 43.3 % of the respondents say that they are not in a relationship, i.e., they are single, while 14.9 % of them are married. Given the age structure of the respondents, it was to be expected that a small percentage (18.5 %) of them would live with marital or cohabiting partners and children (7 %). 24.9 % of the respondents state that they are in a relationship, but do not live with their partner, which may be linked with several factors: the age of the respondent, the choice not to live together before marriage, financial (in)capabilities, etc.; however, since the questionnaire did not probe these causes in more detail, we can only suggest that they be analyzed in some other research.

A mere 0.7 % of respondents live with friends or other family members. Here, too, due to the structure of the question, it is not possible to conclude whether this small percentage of respondents, who do not live in a household with primary relatives or marital or cohabiting partners, predominantly involves a household model with relatives (e.g., young people without parental care who are cared for by members of the extended family or young people who live in another city with members of the extended family for reasons of education), or a household model that includes friends sharing the same living space. At any rate, the percentage is negligible compared to the predominant household model: parents-children (whether the respondents are parents themselves or they live with their parents). 42.9 % of the respondents would actually rather live independently, if their financial capabilities allowed it, which indicates that nearly half of young people do not consider the predominant household type (parents-children) to be the best model, but cannot afford a better one. It is not surprising also that there is an almost identical percentage (42.8 %) of respondents who believe that living with their parents is the simplest and most comfortable solution. In the youngest age group of the respondents (14–18 years old), 63 % believe that living with their parents is the simplest and most practical solution. This view is shared by 32.5 % of the respondents in the 19–24 age group and 28 % of the respondents in the 25–29 age group. More women (48.4 %) than men (36.1 %) stay in their parents' home because this is the simplest solution for them, while more men (50.9 %) than women (35.5 %) stay in their parents' home due to financial circumstances. It is also interesting that only 2 % of the respondents say that their parents disagree with them living alone, although they would like to do so, which may indicate a high degree of agreement between young people and their parents about the need for living independently, which is prevented for financial reasons. T



he data show that 61.3 % of the respondents in the 25–29 age group and 51.3 % of the respondents in the 19–24 age group (compared to 20.5 % of the respondents in the 14–18 age group), while wanting to live independently, live with their parents due to financial hardship. The situation is further complicated by high youth unemployment rates, which often renders young people economically dependent on their parents, resulting in significant delays in the process of becoming independent.

---

**96 %** young people believe that they get along with their parents very well.

---

In terms of the relationship between young people and their parents, 96.2 % of them believe that they get along with their parents very well (46.3 %) or well, although they sometimes have differing opinions (49.9 %). This piece of information regarding almost half of the respondents getting along with their parents despite differences in opinion may suggest an air of democracy within families; however, it would be interesting to see which issues their opinions differ on and whether these are related to less important topics or to matters that are crucial for the lives of young people. Based on the responses to the question of how important it is for them to have family approval for their choice of partner, in response to which 39.2 % of the respondents say that this approval is not at all important (22.3 %) or is not very important (16.9 %), while 31.6 % of the respondents say that this approval is important (13.4 %) or very important (18.2 %), we can conclude that for some key issues, such as choosing a partner, young people do try to achieve a certain level of agreement with their parents, whether this involves the choice of marital partners or those with whom young people are in short- or long-term romantic relationships.

## Plans for the future

When we look at young people's plans for the future, in view of the wording of the questions related to the criteria that are important to young people in choosing a partner (not specifying whether this involves a marital partner, a cohabiting partner or a partner in a short- or long-term romantic relationship but not living together, a same-sex partner, etc.), and also considering the absence of any questions regarding plans to have children within or outside the family, it is not possible in this context to associate young people's plans for the future with living within or outside the family in its traditional meaning (marriage with or without children). We can therefore draw some conclusions only about the perceptions of young people regarding the importance of certain factors in choosing a partner (for marriage or any other form of relationship), and about whether and at what age they plan to have children (in wedlock, out of wedlock, by birth or by adoption, etc.), given that this type of relationship typology was not specified in the questionnaire itself. Nevertheless, it should be noted that when asked how important it is for them to be married, 70.3 % of the respondents say it is very important (48.4 %) or mostly important (21.9 %).

The respondents were asked questions about the extent to which certain criteria influence the choice of a partner. These criteria relate to: family approval (interpreted already), religious beliefs, level of education, ethnic origin, economic status, virginity.

Religious beliefs are important or very important when choosing a partner for 44.5 % of the respondents, while for 38.1 % of the respondents they are unimportant or completely unimportant.

For one-third of the respondents (33%), ethnic origin is important or very important, while for 48.1% of the respondents it is not important or not at all important. In future research, it would be good to ask some control questions here in order to establish to what extent the respondents give socially desirable answers. However, the fact that nearly half of the respondents find religious affiliation and a third of the respondents

While this is another instance where control questions should be used to check for desirable answers, it seems that when choosing a partner, young people find it more important to have an educated person by their side, rather than a person with a better economic status. Virginity is a factor that is not important or not at all important for slightly more than half (57%) of the respondents, while for slightly more than a quarter of them (26.2%) it is important or very important. However, when the responses to this question are analyzed in the context of the respondents' gender, we see that virginity is a more important factor to men than to women, considering that 35.6% of men say that it is important or very important to them, compared to 16.6% of women for whom it is important or very important. In conclusion, when choosing a partner, religious beliefs are important for slightly less than half of the respondents (44.5%), ethnic origin is important for one third of respondents (33%), level of education is important for slightly less than half of the respondents (45.7%) and economic status is important for slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (27.2%).

### 44 % Religious beliefs are important or very important when choosing a partner.

find ethnic origin a significant factor in choosing a partner is a sufficient indicator of a quite apparent unwillingness to engage in interreligious or interethnic relationships, especially in light of the preceding remark that the term "partner" includes not only partners for marital or cohabiting unions, but also partners for short- and long-term romantic relationships.

Level of education is important or very important for 45.7% of the respondents, 26.3% of them state that it is not important or not at all important, while 28% of the respondents say that it is somewhat important. On the other hand, economic status is not at all or not important for 44.2% of the respondents, and for 27.2% of the respondents it is important.

Fig. 10 Views on important factors for choosing a partner among youth in BiH

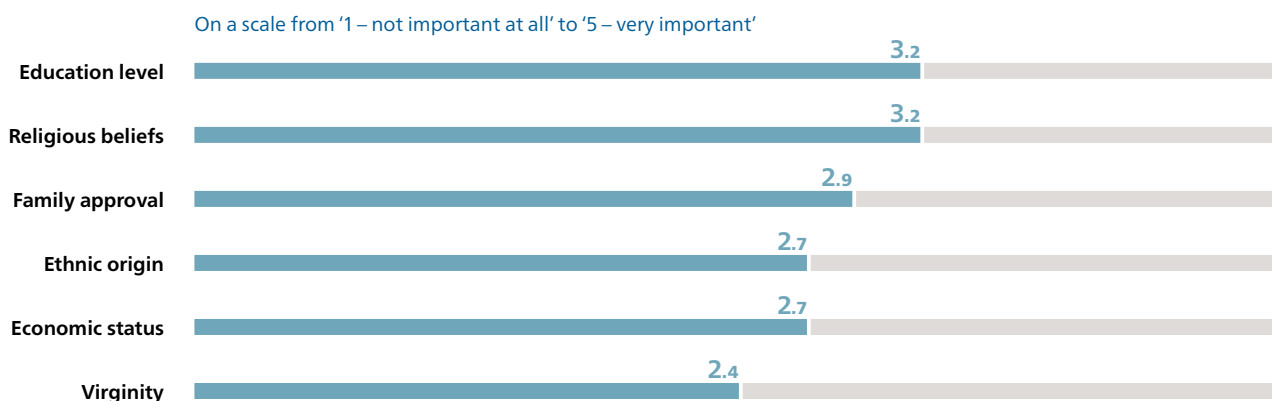
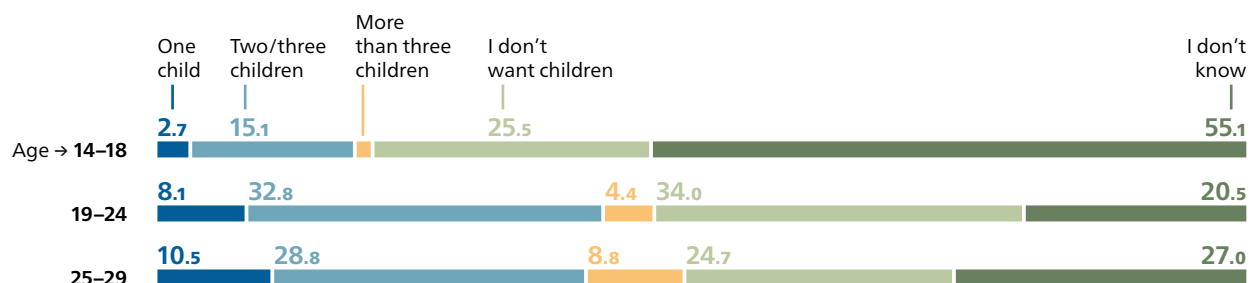




Fig. 11 Family plans of youth in BiH (in %)

*How many children do you plan or imagine to have in your life altogether?*

The questions in the questionnaire asked about young people's plans or perceptions as to how many children they would like to have (without specifying whether these were biological or adopted children, in wedlock or out of wedlock): 39.5% of the respondents opted for two children, 28.9% for three children and 18.8% for one child, while 12.7% of the respondents wanted to have more than three children. On average, the desired number of children is 2.4. No significant differences between the sexes were observed when asked about plans for having children: men and women equally want to have children in the future. On the other hand, there were differences in relation to age; among the younger respondents (14–18 years old), 60.7% of them preferred a lower number of children (most often two), while older respondents (groups aged 19–24 and 25–29) wanted to have three or more children on average (44.6%).

Young people believe that one's late twenties or early thirties are the best years to have children: 38.4% of the respondents plan to have children between 26 and 29 years of age, while 27.5% would prefer to enter parenthood in their early thirties (30–34 years of age). Another 23.3% want to become parents in their early or mid-twenties (20–25 years of age) and some 6.5% of the respondents are thinking about having children upon reaching adulthood (18–19 years of age).

Only 3.3% of the respondents want to have children before reaching adulthood (16–17 years of age). It is noteworthy that the younger groups of respondents (14–18 years of age and 19–24 years of age) prefer their late twenties for having their first child (38.3%), while the older group of respondents (25–29 years of age) would wait until their early thirties to have children (33.4%). Women want to have children in their mid-twenties (at an average age of 24.9) and men in their late twenties (an average age of 27.1). One quarter of the respondents (25.5%) in the 14–18 age group, as well as one third (34%) of the respondents in the 19–24 age group and one quarter (24.7%) in the 25–29 age group do not plan to have children in the future. Earlier surveys have also shown that young people, faced with economic insecurity, prolonged education and career ambitions, also influenced by changes in social values and an emphasis on individual freedom and rights, align with the global "childfree" trend, i.e., it is increasingly common for young people to decide to live their lives without children.

Finally, we can say that a significant percentage of the respondents (70.3 %) believe marriage to be important or very important, but 43.3 % of them are currently single, which could undoubtedly be attributed to the age structure of the respondents. When choosing a partner, religious beliefs are important for slightly less than half of the respondents (44.5 %), ethnic origin is important for one third of respondents (33 %), educa-

---

**70 %** of young people believe that marriage is important or very important.

---

tion level is important for slightly less than half of the respondents (45.7 %) and economic status is important for slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (27.2 %). One quarter of the respondents (25.5 %) in the 14–18 age group, as well as one third (34 %) of the respondents in the 19–24 age group and one quarter (24.7 %) in the 25–29 age group do not plan to have children in the future. Currently, 93.4 % of the respondents live in some form of a union and only 6.6 % of the respondents live independently. These unions are most often of the parents-children type. However, 42.9 % of the respondents say they would live independently if their economic capabilities allowed it. This shows that living in a union is actually more of a necessity than a choice for young people, even though most of them get along well with the other members of their households.

## Main takeaways

**1.** As a result of social processes, the structure of the family in Bosnia and Herzegovina is undergoing a transformation, with the nuclear family prevailing and most young people living with their parents, brothers and sisters.

**2.** Economic pressures and high unemployment rates force young people to delay becoming independent, remaining economically dependent on their parents. In addition to economic hardship, young people stay in their parents' homes because they see this as the simplest and most practical solution.

**3.** Decreased social pressure and emphasis on the importance of individual autonomy and freedom of choice in making important life decisions contribute to giving up or delaying having children until the later years of life.

**4.** Education is a key factor for young people in choosing a partner, with some ambivalence when it comes to the importance of religious beliefs and ethnic origin in this regard.

**5.** Contradictory views demonstrated by young people regarding family approval in choosing a partner illustrate the conflict between deeply ingrained traditional values and the influence of modern values on young people's social interactions.

# 8 ■ General values, attitudes and perceptions

## General values and social dynamics

In our present-day societies (knowledge societies, high-tech societies, risk societies, fluid societies, networked societies), regardless of their transitional or other characteristics, social interactions (Field: 2008) and networks of social dynamics (association, networking, social cohesion) doubtlessly constitute a potential of sorts (Koković: 2009) for individuals within society – in the form of each individual's legitimate individual goals and demands, as well as extremely important potential for the entire social community – in the form of continuous development, sustainability and the advancement of the human community as such. Within the horizons of Bosnia-Herzegovina's social, economic and political communities, research into general values among young people is extremely important. The context for an adequate and holistic understanding of Bosnia-Herzegovina's social environment, preferred and less preferred value positions and attitudes among young people in the future should be analyzed on a micro and macro level.

The perceptions of and the ways of understanding social cohesion, social distance and overall social relations will help us understand young people's self-perceived trust in contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. A direct link has been established with the concept of social influence, social accumulation and the social exploitation of various sources of power and the complex structure of networks of influence. Both classical and modern social theorists share an understanding of social values, attitudes, norms and common ideas as significant regulatory mechanisms in the actions of social actors. This will be treated as a social repository of clear indicators for understanding Bosnia and Herzegovina's future.

## Attitudes, perceptions and opinions

In the context of estimating their personal standard of living, 14.9 % of the respondents estimate their standard of living as very good, in the sense that they can buy almost everything they need, 49.5 % of young people say that they can buy and satisfy most of their living needs, while 3.4 % of the respondents believe they do not have enough money for basic needs and utilities, and 8 % believe they have enough money for food, clothes and shoes. The self-estimate of the living standard of young people in BiH indicates their general satisfaction. Compared to their peers in the countries of Southeast Europe, young people in BiH in most cases (65 %) estimate their standard of living in positive terms when it comes to the material aspects of life.

How young people see and understand the future and what they expect of it is a critical question for an adequate understanding of their perception of themselves and the society they live in. While 32.5 % of them expect a better future, 34 % predict an even more difficult and uncertain future in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, which may be linked with the perceived standard of living.



When it comes to their personal future, in terms of plans and expectations for the next ten years, young people hope for better days (88.4 %), with 4.9 % having reservations about their personal future, saying that it will be worse than at present. On a summative, sociological-descriptive level, we have observed a very clear tendency of dual-ambivalent perception among young people regarding the future situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, 32.5 % of young people have a positive attitude and expect a better future and see opportunities for progress and improvement in their living conditions. This optimism may be a result of their personal and/or collective experience, such as educational successes and positive examples in the immediate environment of these young people, or their belief in potential economic and political reforms.

On the other hand, 34 % of young people have negative expectations, predicting a more difficult and uncertain future in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of unemployed people in BiH in 2023 decreased by 14 % compared to 2022. According to a report by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this reduction in the number of unemployed people was mainly due to the demographic attrition of the population, so the above-mentioned pessimism may be a reflection of economic indicators such as the high unemployment rate, as well as the daily tendency to generate political instability.

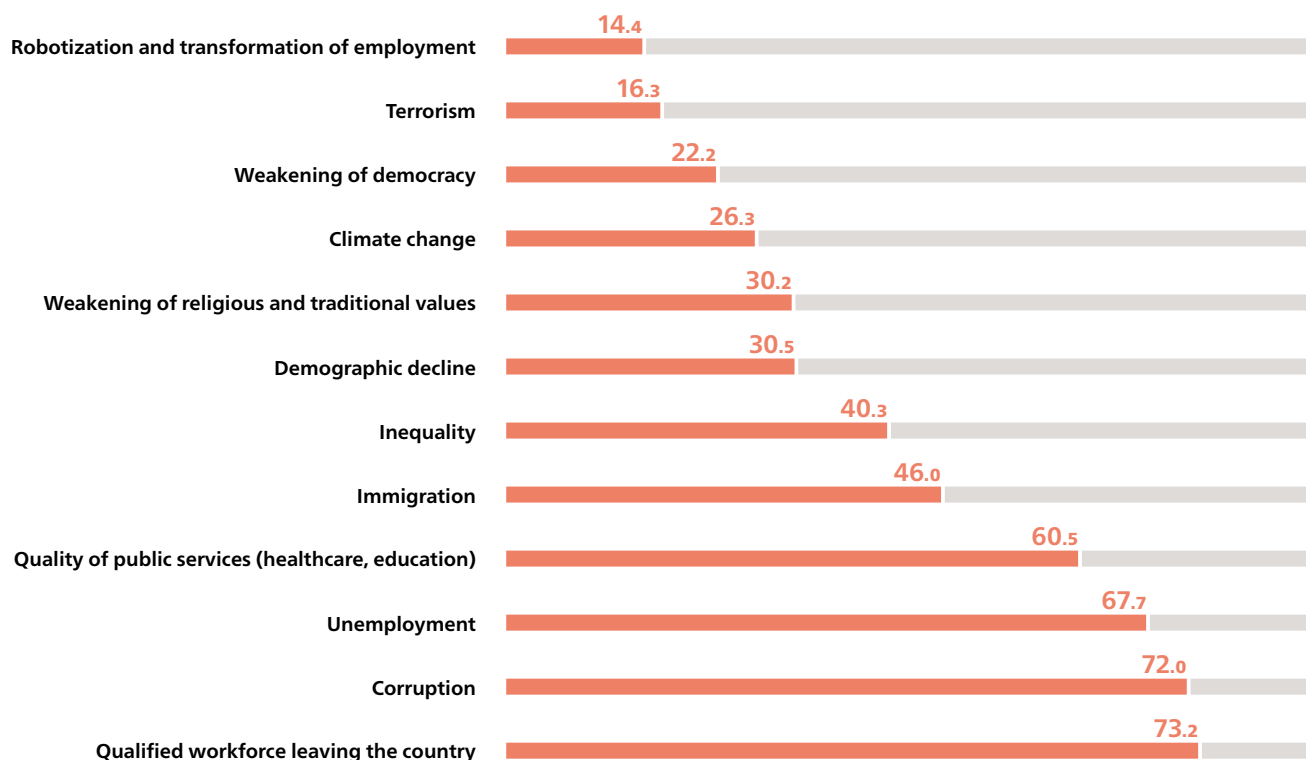
An analysis of the problems in the coming decade provides insight into the values and perceptions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The greatest problem recognized by young people is the departure of a qualified workforce (73.2 %), which shows that there is a serious concern about the emigration of educated professionals.

Fig. 12 **Estimation of personal living standard among youth in BiH (in %)**

*Which of the following descriptions most adequately describes the financial situation in your household?*

	We don't have enough money for basic utilities (electricity, heating, etc.) and food	We have enough money for basic utilities and food, but not for clothes and shoes	We have enough money for food, clothes and shoes, but not enough for more expensive things (fridge, TV set, etc.)	We can afford to buy more expensive things, but not as expensive as a car or an apartment	We can afford to buy everything we need for a good standard of living	I don't know
Albania	2	8	48	27	12	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	8	17	50	15	8
Bulgaria	7	13	20	34	14	12
Croatia	2	10	26	39	16	8
Greece	9	20	31	27	8	6
Kosovo	2	19	31	38	9	2
Montenegro	4	10	29	39	9	9
North Macedonia	2	5	30	40	21	3
Romania	8	14	30	34	8	6
Serbia	6	12	26	37	11	9
Slovenia	4	8	29	40	13	6
Türkiye	7	12	26	36	13	6

Fig. 13 Young people's views on the greatest problems faced by BiH in the next decade (in %)



Young people believe that better conditions for life and work can be secured abroad, beyond the borders of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian state and society. An extremely high percentage of young people see corruption (72 %) as an acute and long-term problem of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, which indicates a profound dissatisfaction with the institutions and the political system in general. It should be noted that the perception of widespread corruption undermines trust in the entire social apparatus, contributing to pessimism regarding social and economic progress. Unemployment (67.7 %) is recognized by young people as one of the three greatest problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which corresponds with the high unemployment rate among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This situation fuels the sense of economic insecurity and uncertainty about a better, more sustainable and promising future. Concern about the quality of public services (60.5 %), especially in health care and education, is indicative of the value young people attach to essential public services, showing how relevant the quality of public services is in the overall perception of the quality of life. Young people seem to be aware that there can be no social progress or individual prosperity in the absence of sound health care and education systems. The problem of immigration (46 %) is identified as significant by almost half of young people, which indicates their complex attitude towards immigration and its impact on the domestic labor market and social services. The attitudes of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the greatest problems they will face in the next decade reflect their concern about economic, political and social challenges.

The extent of pessimism regarding the “brain drain”, corruption, unemployment and the quality of public services illustrates the profound problems that affect their daily lives and future prospects. These insights are key to developing policies that will address these problems and ensure a more stable and prosperous future for young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**60 %** have concerns about the quality of public services, especially in health care and education.

When it comes to the values that are most important to young people in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, safety ranks first (22.7 %), indicating a need for stability and protection from crime, violence and other threats. The second priority of young people is employment (19.2 %), which reflects young people’s concern about high unemployment rates and economic insecurity, which is most often a result of the inability to find adequate employment. Third in the ranking of priorities are human rights (18.6 %), which indicates that young people are aware of the importance of the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as of the need to afford equal treatment to all citizens and to have a society that is based on competences, knowledge and skills. While not ranked high, personal freedoms (9.2 %) remain an important aspect for young people, reflecting the values of individualism and autonomy. Very low priority given to democracy (1.9 %) indicates, on the one hand, skepticism towards the political system and a sense that democratic values are insufficiently in place or are ineffective in solving the problems they face. On the other hand, such a selection or ranking of priorities among young people indicates a social pattern according to which when there is “enough” of something or it is available in “certain satisfactory quantities” and is difficult to measure, it is often not noticed or is accepted as a given. The values ranked highly by young people clearly indicate the need for security, economic stability and the protection of human rights.

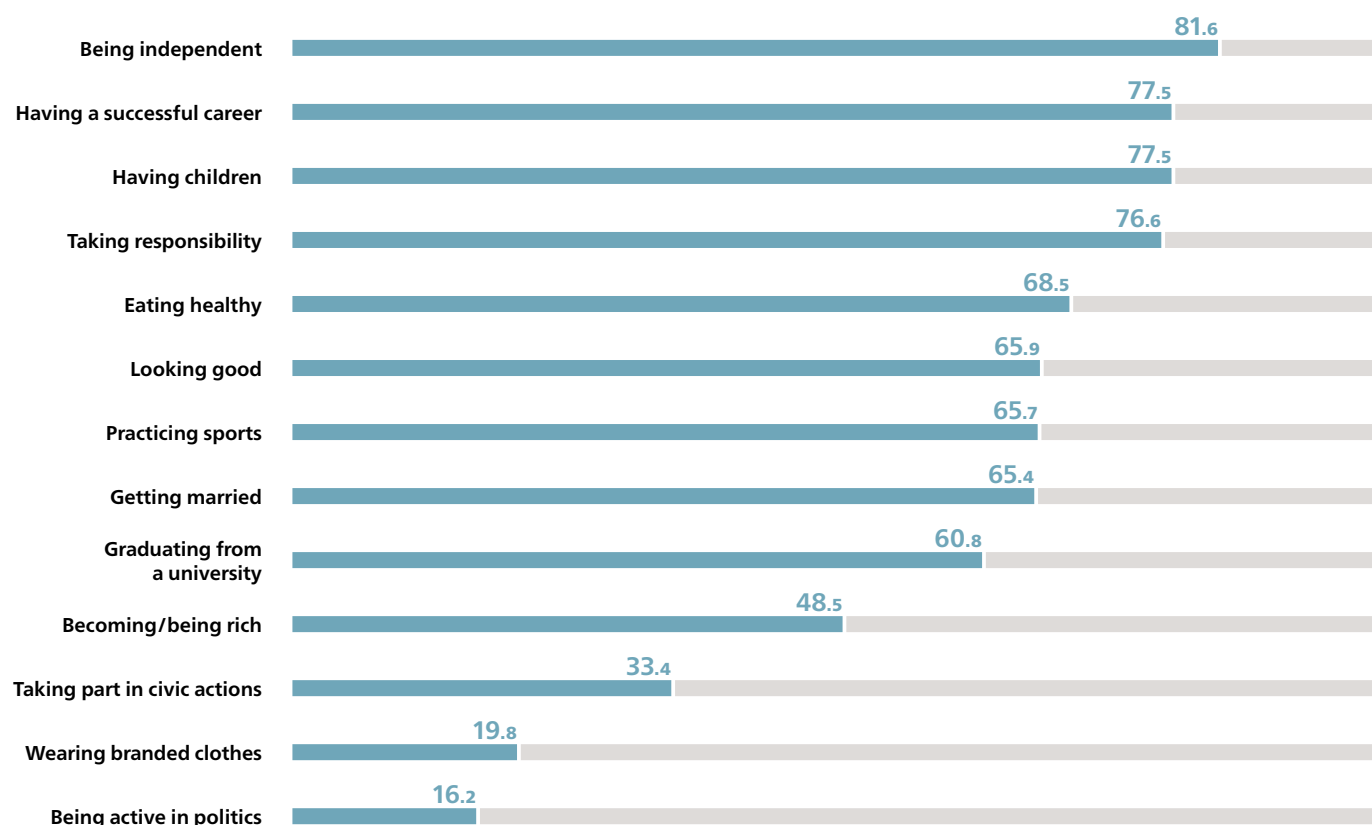
Skepticism expressed regarding institutions and low priority given to democracy suggest that young people are looking for changes that will directly address their daily problems and challenges.

When it comes to the preferences of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding certain status issues, we can observe different priorities and attitudes that shape their perception of the future and the society they live in. Young people see being independent (81.6 %), having children (77.5 %), having a successful career (77.5 %) and taking responsibility (76.6 %) as important in this regard. This indicates a desire for independent decision-making and active participation in social processes, as well as aspirations for a successful career and emotional life. This trend may be a reflection of their desire for more substantial autonomy and becoming independent, and for achieving personal and professional success. In contrast to stating their preferences, young people also had the opportunity to rank their own attitudes (between 1 and 10) regarding behaviors/ orientations that can always be justified (10), can never be justified (1) or something in between.

The average values of the obtained results, ranked hierarchically from lowest to highest, show which behaviors most often cannot be justified: bribing or accepting a bribe (2.81), tax evasion (2.99), homosexuality (3.63), using connections to ‘get things done’ (e.g., at the hospital, in different institutions, etc.) (3.69) and abortion (4.31). Here we observe that men have significantly more negative attitudes towards abortion and homosexuality than women; when it comes to age groups, young people between 19 and 24 years of age are more tolerant of homosexuality and abortion than young people under 19 and over 24. It is interesting to note a significant difference among respondents who state that homosexuality can always be justified (a value of 10 on the scale), the overall result being 7.4 %: the result for women was 9.8 % and the result for men was 5.3 %.



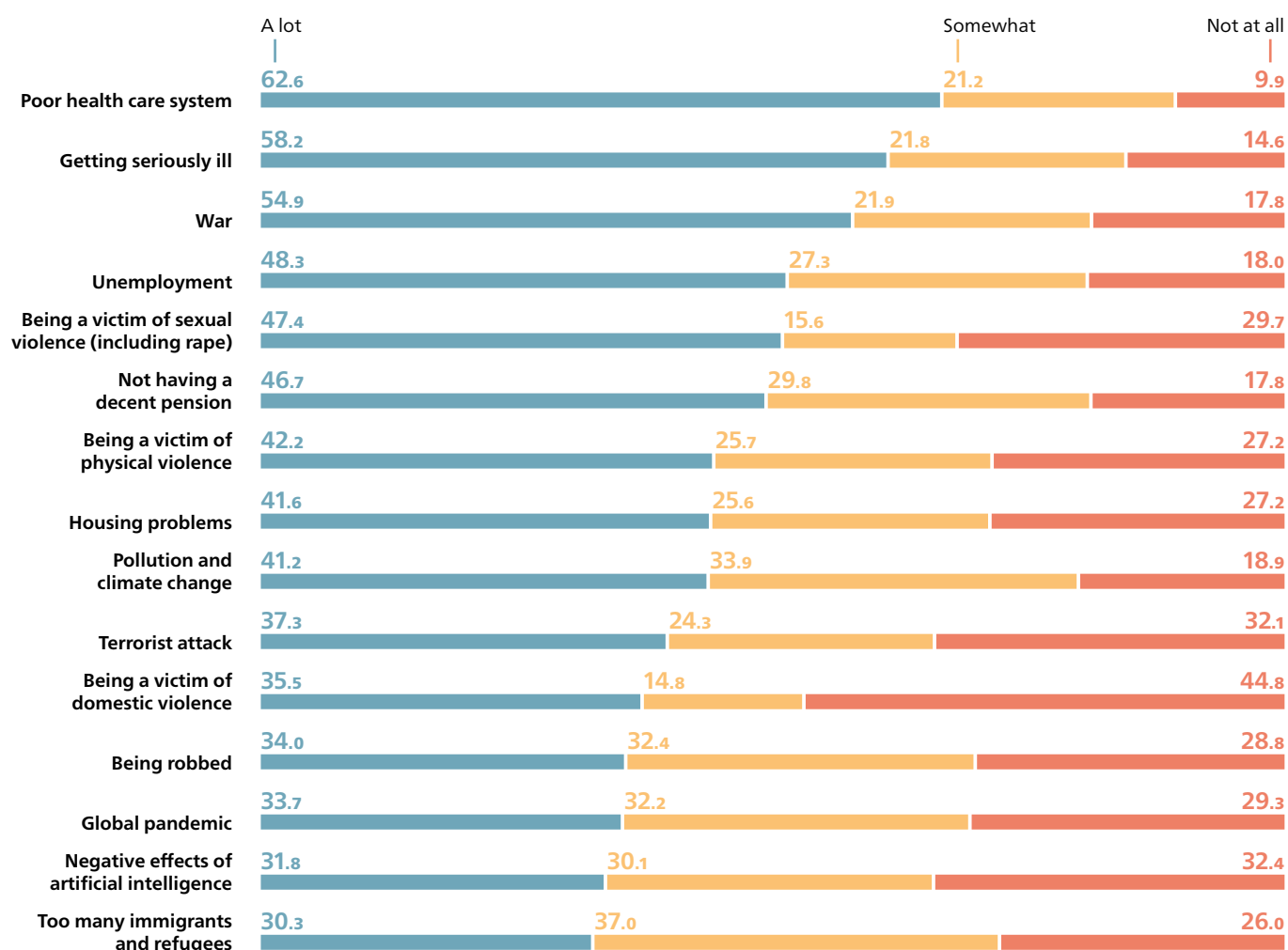
Fig. 14 What youth in BiH find 'important' and 'very important' (in %)



We observe a similar pattern regarding abortion, where overall 9.2 % of the respondents believe that it can always be justified, with 4 % of men and 14.8 % of women sharing this opinion. On the other hand, 32 % of the respondents believe that homosexuality can never be justified (value 1 on the scale); if these values are disaggregated by gender, 41.5 % of men state they would never justify a homosexual orientation, while 22.9 % of women gave the same answer. Abortion can never be justified for 23.5 % of young people: 29.9 % of men state that they would never justify abortion and 14.9 % of women share the same view. In line with these statements, the opinions of and attitudes towards others are not surprising, with young people demonstrating negative attitudes towards members of minority groups when it comes to hypothetical close contact.

Thus, the majority of young people would feel bad if drug addicts (1.61) and members of the LGBTQIA+ population (2.6) were to move into the neighborhood. Young people do not have a clear attitude when it comes to neighbors who are Jewish or Romani, but the majority of the respondents would feel good if Muslims or Christians were to move into the neighborhood. These data paint a picture of complex social and cultural dynamics, as well as of current local and global development and varying levels of acceptance and tolerance. It seems noteworthy that young people support the idea of legalizing cannabis in 68.4 % of cases, but a significant percentage approves the legalization of cannabis only for medical use (45.9 %).

Fig. 15 Concerns and fears of young people in BiH (in %)

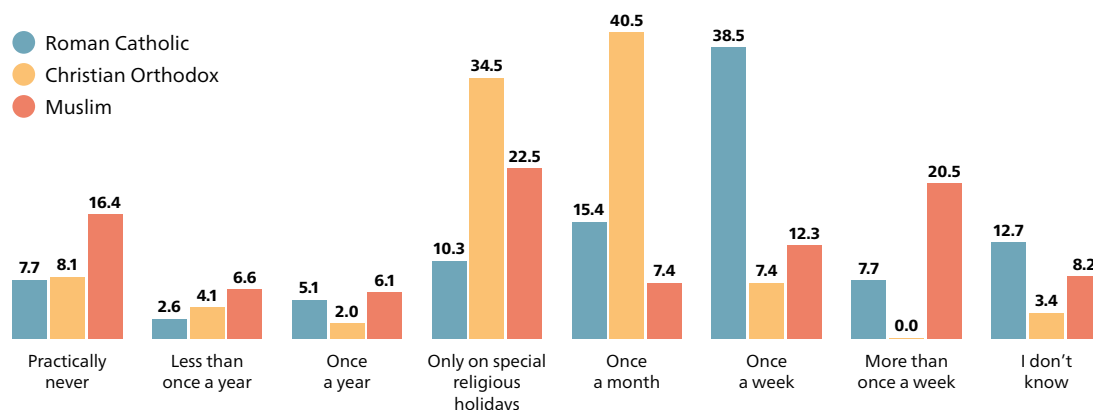
*To what extent are you frightened or concerned in relation to the following things?*

Furthermore, the target group perceives the rights of certain social groups as insufficiently protected. Specifically, 69.1 % of the respondents believe that the rights of young people are insufficiently protected, while 86.1 % believe that the rights of the poor are compromised. Similarly, 57.6 % of young people believe that minority ethnic groups do not enjoy adequate protection, and 41.2 % of them believe that women are insufficiently protected.

On the other hand, 33.8 % of young people believe that the rights of the LGBTQIA+ population are inadequately protected, while 37.7 % of them believe that this population enjoys too many rights. These results indicate a substantial level of intolerance towards the LGBTQIA+ community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, 57.9 % of young people completely disagree with the statement that same-sex parents and parents who are not of the same sex are equal, while 64.1 % of young people oppose the right of same-sex couples to marry.

Fig. 16 Religiosity among youth in BiH (in %)

Affiliation with religious communities and frequency of attending religious services



In addition, while 5.8 % of young people support the LGBTQIA+ population, 15.9 % believe they “need medical help or treatment”. This analysis shows that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a certain level of prejudice when it comes to gender roles, cultural influences and the rights of marginalized groups, and these results point to a need for extensive discussions and education in order to promote the values of tolerance, equality and inclusion in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. The fears and concerns of young people are often reflected in the current socio-economic, cultural and political contexts they live in, so the graph below shows the results in terms of the concerns and fears faced by young people in everyday life.

A substantial majority of young people express serious concern about the poor health care system (62.2 %) and the fear of getting seriously ill (58.2 %). This indicates that the health system is perceived as inefficient and unreliable, which is a result of the poor quality of health services, long waiting times for treatment and a lack of medical resources and staff. These fears and concerns have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further revealed the deficiencies of health care infrastructure.

Fear of war (54.9 %) shows the lasting consequences of the 1992–1995 war in BiH and insecurities resulting from daily political and regional tensions and conflicts. This points to long-term psychological trauma and a sense of insecurity, both of which are still prevalent in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and, judging by the results of the survey, to which most young people are not immune. Fear of unemployment (48.3 %) and not having a decent pension (46.7 %) are actually indicative of a poor economic system, which has a direct impact on the ability of young people to plan and build their future in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As the survey also explored attitudes regarding exclusion and experiences and the perception of discrimination, young people state that never experience discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (91 %), political beliefs (81 %), sex (80.4 %), language (79.6 %), ethnic origin (74.2 %), religious beliefs (71.5 %) and economic status (65.9 %). Nevertheless, one in three young persons state that they experience discrimination sometimes (24.7 %) or often (8.8 %) on the basis of their economic status, which often results in a feeling of lower value, low self-confidence and decreased self-esteem among young people and directly affects their mental health and affiliation with a certain group.

On the other hand, young people display certain forms of prejudice and stereotyping when it comes to diversity, such that the majority of the respondents (53.1 %) believe that it is necessary to protect Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture from the influence of other cultures, while 59.3 % believe that immigrants do not enrich Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture. These results indicate that the majority of young people have exclusionary attitudes towards immigration and are prejudiced against migrants, especially irregular ones.

---

**69 %** of the respondents believe that the rights of young people are insufficiently protected.

---

When we observe the attitudes of young people towards religion and religious institutions, we can see that 48.9 % belong to the Muslim community, 29.6 % belong to the Orthodox community, and 7.6 % of the respondents belong to the Catholic community. Interestingly, 7.3 % of young people state that they do not belong to any religious community, i.e., these young people do not identify with a particular religious identity.

According to the survey, 13.5 % of young people do not attend or participate in religious services, which may be an indicator of a trend of distancing themselves from organized religious practices. A small percentage of the respondents, 4.7 %, participates in religious services only once a year, which reflects minimal involvement that is often associated with specific religious holidays or family traditions. On the other hand, nearly one in four young persons (24.3 %) regularly participates in religious services once a week or more than once a week, which indicates religious dedication and an active practicing of religion. Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina show diverse attitudes towards religion and religious practices: while the majority belong to one of the aforementioned religious communities, their participation in religious services varies, from those who have completely distanced themselves to those who are very active in their communities.

It is clear that these data can help understand religious dynamics among young people, as well as inform policy development to make better contributions to understanding the spiritual and social needs of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Main takeaways

**1.** Various social interactions, networks of social dynamics and social cohesion in the context of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society constitute significant potential for both individuals and the community, especially when the multilateral character of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society is taken into account.

**2.** Young people see the departure of the workforce, unemployment and corruption as three significant problems for the next decade

**3.** Young people are generally uninterested in politics and have low trust in institutions.

**4.** Young people place high value on taking responsibility, independence and education and are critical of corruption, bribery, homosexuality and abortion. There is a significant level of concern regarding various forms of discrimination and the protection of rights.

**5.** Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have different attitudes towards religion and religious ceremonies, where a significant number of young people regularly participate in religious ceremonies, while a small percentage of them do not belong to any religious community.

# 9. Political attitudes and participation

## Attitudes Towards the EU

Young people's support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the European Union has been extremely high for a number of years, ranging always between 85 % (2019) and 64.6 % (2024). Young people have supported the country's EU membership and its European integration primarily because they see an opportunity for a better future in the European Union. Nevertheless, the level of support for BiH's entry into the EU has decreased compared to the previous survey. While the demonstrated support for EU membership should be understood as exemplary of the strong commitment of young people to the European project, it is important to recognize that this popularity has declined compared to previous surveys. One in four young persons (25.4 %) opposes EU accession, while 10.1 % say they are undecided on the issue. This trend of declining support for Euro-Atlantic integration is not confined to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but is part of a much wider reexamination of the neoliberal influence on European democratic processes. It reflects a crisis of political authorities, a rise of populist right-wing orientations, oversized political and economic relations and developments and crises within the EU itself.

There has also been a significant change in European attitudes towards expansion, such that Bosnia and Herzegovina was recently recognized as a "candidate country" through the symbolic approval of accession negotiations. When the results of this survey were placed in context, the study actually showed us a recognizable or expected pattern in the forms of political behavior that young people manifest. Specifically, throughout this time, there has been no rationalization of politics, no social consensus on BiH's entry into the EU and, most importantly, no shift in the programs, rhetoric and practical actions of political parties that would reflect the strong commitment of young people in BiH to the EU. This study also revealed a pronounced distrust in international institutions. Distrust in EU institutions is fairly high (53.9 %), while distrust in NATO is as high as 66.4 %. Institutional theories teach us that this ratio often varies based on current political and social processes, so the fact that there is a significant statistical sample of those who "somewhat" trust the EU (26.9 %) and NATO (18.9 %) should not be ignored, nor should we ignore the fact that support for European integration increases in relation to level of education. In this survey, high support for BiH joining the EU is expressed by 74.5 % of young people with university education.

Comparing the results of this survey with the characteristics of transition in Central and Eastern Europe during the nineties of the last century, we can draw several conclusions. The first and most important conclusion is that in that transition process during the nineties, the starting point was true democratization and advocacy for the freedoms and rights of citizens, and also that there was social consensus on this issue, and that most aspects of joining the EU were neither problematized nor questioned, nor an object of political manipulation (Mujagić: 2011). The political elite approached this process with responsibility and positioned themselves as partners of the EU and its member states, aware that their sensitivity to human rights issues was a contribution to European society.

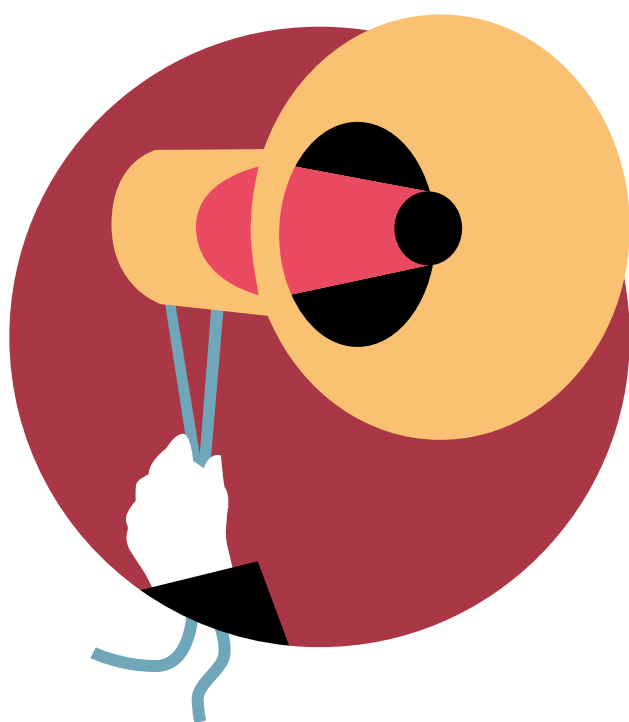
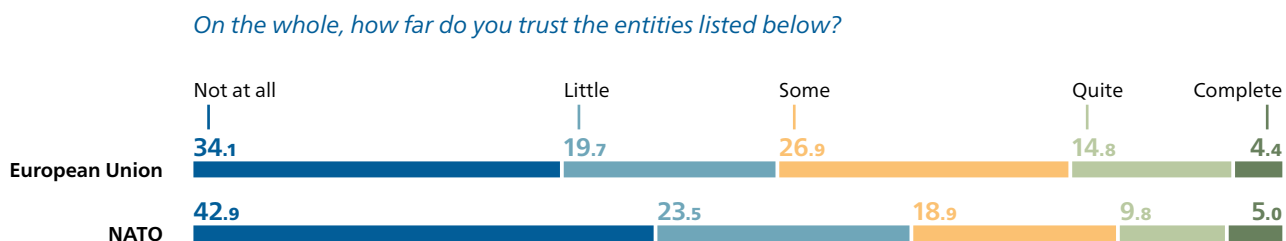


Fig. 17 Levels of trust in the European Union and NATO among youth in BiH (in %)



The EU, for its part, insisted on these values even outside the framework of the bureaucratic negotiation process. The situation in BiH is significantly different, however, because since the beginning the priority has been given to stabilization over democratization. Young people perceive themselves as “not at all” and “a little” European in terms of identity (44.6 %), while 27.9 % of them “moderately” identify with Europe. Only 27.6 % of the respondents have a “full” and “complete” perception of themselves as Europeans. Unfortunately, even identification with one’s own country bears some significant contradictions. Only 55.6 % of young people are able to identify with Bosnia and Herzegovina, 13.8 % are in between, while 30.6 % of young people are estranged from their own country.

This low level of civic identification can be linked to attitudes regarding the state of values in BiH compared to the EU. Analyzing survey results by means of average value ratings between one and five, we observed that within their own country, the majority of young people express negative attitudes towards the economic well-being of citizens (1.77), rule of law (1.82), employment (1.85), social equality (1.96), human rights (2.12), democracy (2.14) and individual freedoms (2.45). It is encouraging to see that the popularity of European values has not been completely obscured. Young people still see the EU as a role model in many respects, in particular when it comes to the rule of law (3.24), human rights (3.34), economic well-being (3.58) and employment (3.59).

However, a more negative attitude prevails when it comes to social equality (2.87), democracy (2.73) and individual freedoms (2.92) in the EU, and this disproportion is reflected in the perceived state of values in BiH compared to the EU.

## State of democracy and (dis)trust in institutions

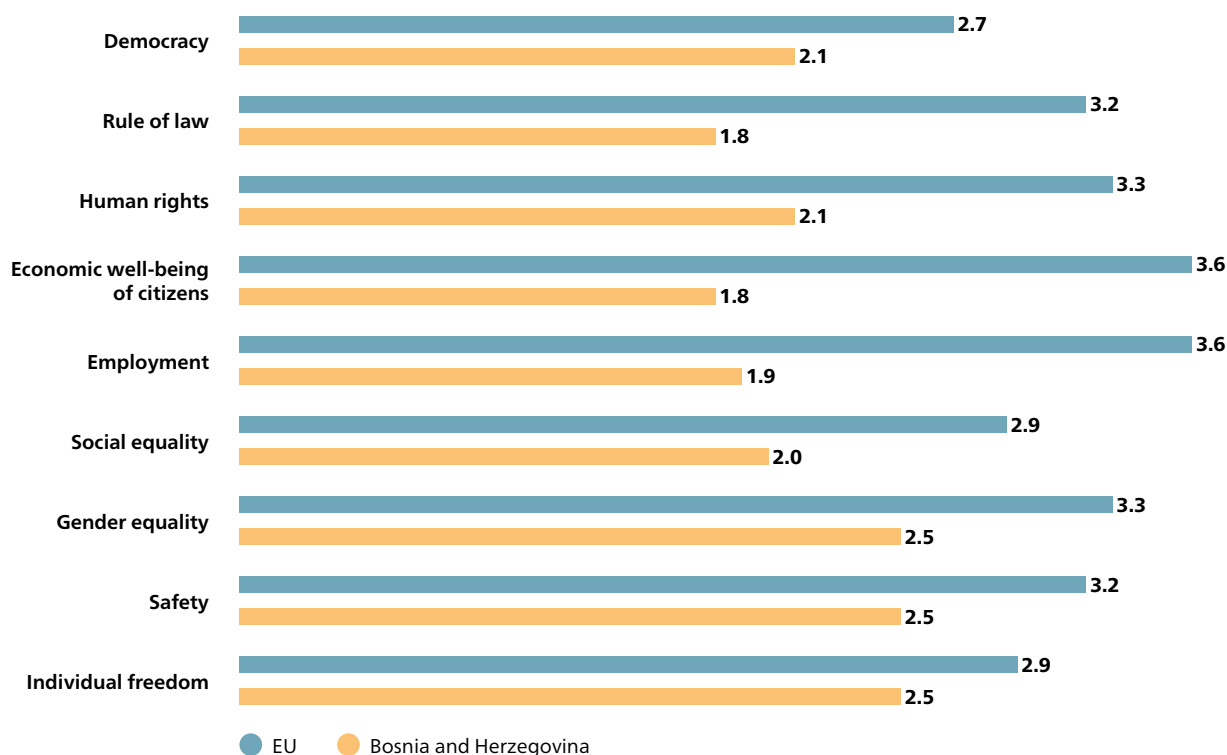
Young people mostly or completely agree that democracy is a good form of government (43.9 %), while a significant number (42.1 %) believe that democracy is always and under all circumstances the most desirable form of government. It is concerning, however, that 27.8 % of young people are undecided, stating that for them, under certain circumstances, dictatorship would be a better form of government than democracy. Explicit authoritarian mechanisms of government are supported by 21.9 %.

In other words, a significant portion of young people is not completely convinced by the advantages of democracy. A fair majority (45.7 %) of young people believe they should have a strong leader who “does not need to bother with parliament or elections”, which indicates a tendency towards authoritarian leadership among certain segments of the youth population. Considering that expressions of authoritarian political attitudes are now often tolerated even by Brussels and other international organizations, the restriction of individual freedoms in BiH would, regrettably, not be rejected or condemned by young people.



Fig. 18 Perceived state of social values in BiH and the EU among youth in BiH

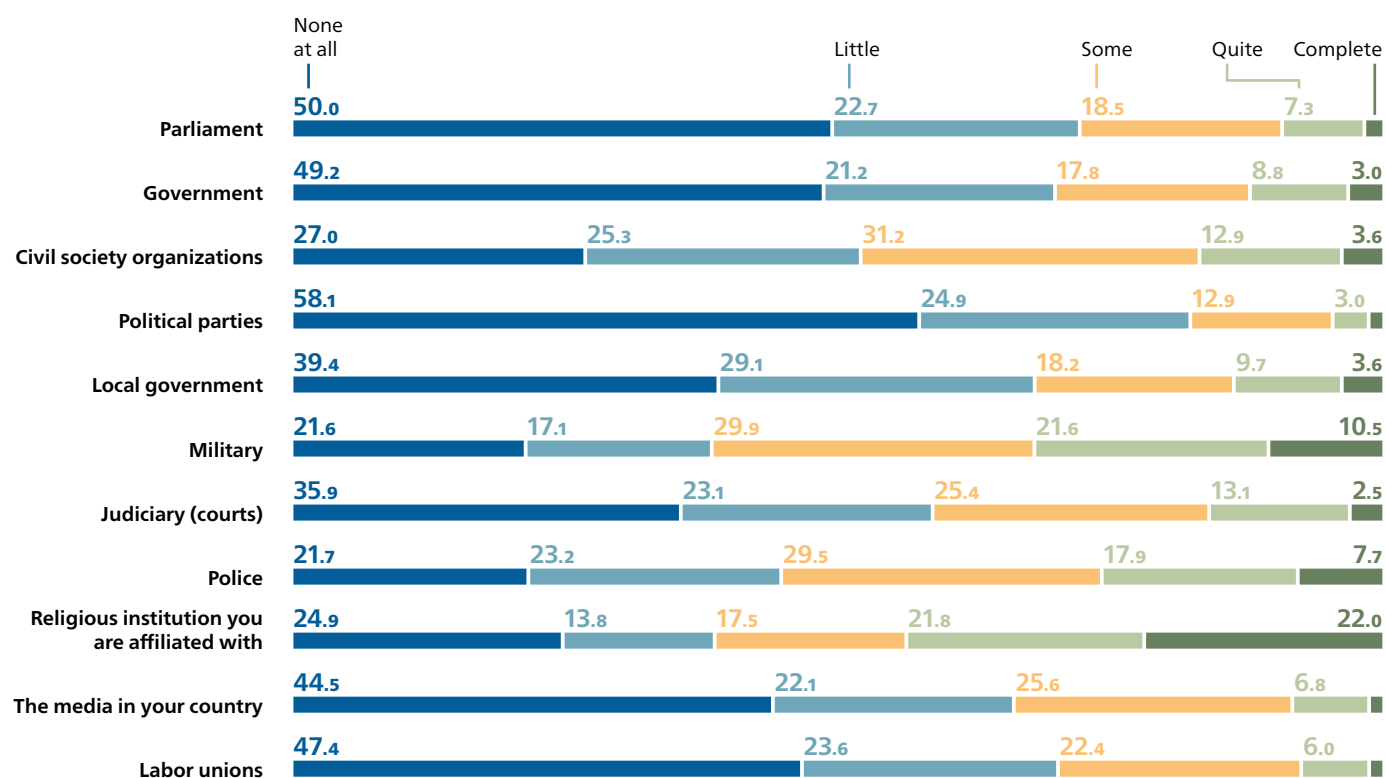
*How good or bad, in your view, is the status of the following listed values in your country and the EU?*  
Mean values on a scale from '1 – very bad' to '5 – very good'



This research has confirmed the results of various other public opinion surveys regarding low trust in governments, parliaments and political elites. Respondents state that they trust political parties a "little" or "not at all" (83 %), followed by parliament (72.7 %), labor unions (71 %) and government (70.4 %), then local administration (68.5 %), local media (66.6 %), judiciary (59 %) and civil society organizations (52.3 %). Virtually all the institutions responsible for the democratization of society have thus lost their appeal with young people, compared to, for example, the police (44.9 %), religious institutions (38.7 %) and the army (38.7 %), where the level of distrust is still below 50 %. This crisis of trust in institutions is also caused by young people's belief that their interests are "poorly" or "not at all" represented in politics (around 60.5 %).

A mere 11.6 % of the respondents believe that their interests are represented in politics "fairly well", with only 1.4 % believing they are "very well" represented. There is also a certain number of respondents (26.5 %) whose opinions on the representation of young people in politics are in-between, indicating a need for greater involvement of political institutions in representing the interests of young people, or for the active participation of young people in the political process in order to ensure better representation of their needs and views. Regardless of the crisis of trust in institutions or the need for better knowledge of state governance processes, young people still understand their role in giving legitimacy to representative democracy.

Fig. 19 Level of trust in institutions among youth in BiH (in %)

*On the whole, how far do you trust the entities listed below?*

Nevertheless, when considering a redesign of institutions for the benefit of young people, it is important to note that interest among young people in running for political office is very low. Only 22.5 % of them would run for office, 15.2 % are undecided, while 62.3 % categorically refuse running for office. These data correlate with the ranking of priorities among young people, as “being active in politics” was important to only 16.9 % of the respondents. There is no doubt that abstention from politics in this case is a form of protest against and resistance to the political system, as their views on how the government should run the country are clearly stated.

The reasons for distrust in institutions could be diverse, including the fact that the institutions are trapped or inaccessible, as well as the fact that those who lead the institutions are incapable of dealing with contemporary challenges, crises and turbulence in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. The OHR could be said to be a new political institution in BiH (Mujagić: 2010), considering its role and significance in BiH. One in two respondents (51.7 %) does not have a clear opinion and does not know what to think about the OHR. The other half believes that: the OHR should never have existed (10.6 %); that it had an important role after the war, but it should have been closed by now (9.8 %); it has lost all credibility and it is time to abolish it (7.8 %).

There is a slightly lower percentage (6.7 %) of those who believe that the OHR should remain, but it lacks strong powers, while 12.4 % of the respondents believe that the OHR should actively intervene until BiH becomes a “normal” country.

---

**55 %** of young people are proud to be nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

---

It is precisely these insights, which are fairly controversial yet match the current political narratives, that open up enormous space for EU action. Young citizens of BiH should be the first and true partners of the representatives of various international institutions and they should be (re)socialized in the context of the development of democratic values. If priority was given to them as well as to political leaders, young people would have a chance to become owners of the process of the development of democratic institutions. Such a form of political participation would go beyond the framework of submissive political culture (Almond and Verba: 1963), in which mimicking the ruler is common and desirable. This recommendation is supported by data regarding the level of political activism among young people in BiH. The majority of young people have never participated in specific political initiatives, but there is significant interest and willingness to become involved in the future. This suggests that there is potential for stronger political participation if the appropriate channels were to be opened and opportunities for civic engagement provided.

## Young people on the future (dis)integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina

American political scientist Steve McIntosh, author of the book *Developmental Politics: How America Can Grow Into a Better Version of Itself*, emphasizes that it is important to clearly formulate the key problem facing the country, and then offer a choice. Guided by his approach, we can say that the clash between the ethnic and civil concepts of the organization of the country is the central socio-political problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment.

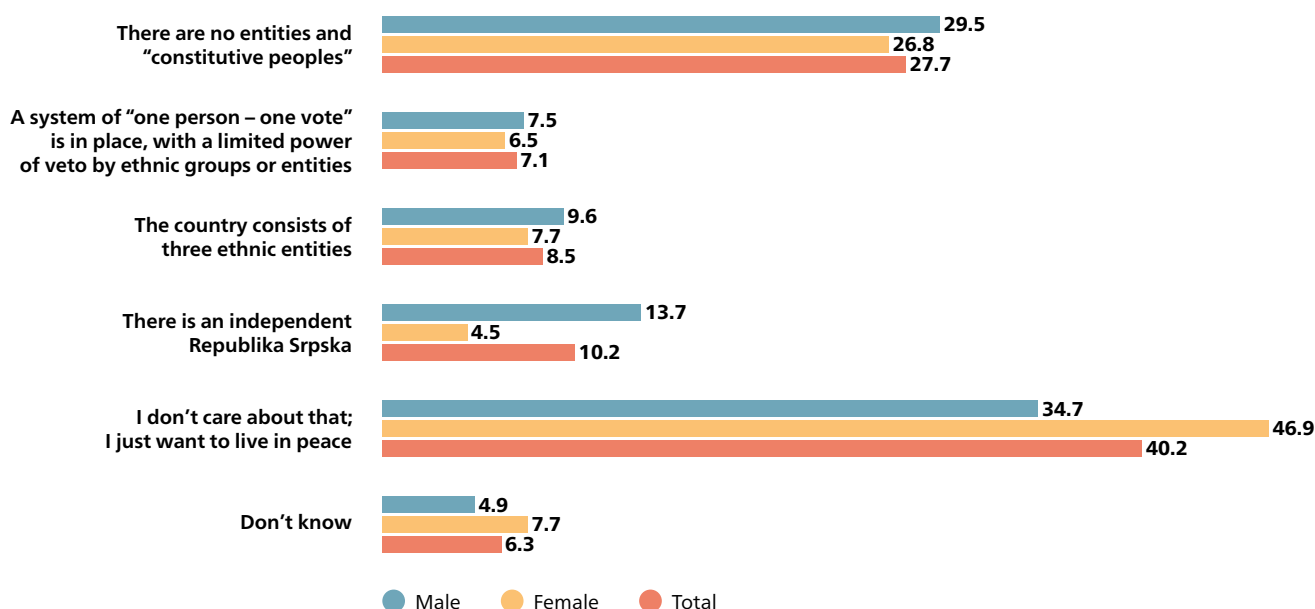
On one side are those who advocate for a state of constitutive peoples and mono-ethnic territories (insisting on territories dominated by one ethnic community), and on the other side are those who advocate for a society based on citizens, claiming that the citizen (and not the constitutive people) should be at the center of the Constitution of BiH. Politicians who are positioned somewhere in the center believe that a kind of symbiosis should be created – a combination of civic and ethnic principles – so that people’s individual rights would be protected by virtue of being citizens of BiH, while their ethnic and other collective rights (right to religious belief) would be protected through the constitutional framework based on the fact that they belong to one of four groups – Serbs, Bosniaks, Croats and “Others”.

Young people who think about different visions of the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina (59.5 %) generally follow political discourses that are present in the public sphere. Of this percentage, 27.7 % advocate integration through a single system with no entities and no concept of ‘constitutive peoples’. Support for the idea of an independent entity of the Republika Srpska is as high as 10.2 %, while the preservation of ethnic identity policies is preferred by 8.5 % of young people. Then come those who support the “one man – one vote” system with limited veto-power for ethnic groups or entities (7.1 %), while one segment of young people (6.3 %) does not know what the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be. The deep political polarization in the country does not affect 40.2 % of young people, who are uninterested in political concepts and want to “live in peace in the country”. This implies that young people lack both the knowledge and interest to understand the political concepts of ethnic and civic states, as well as concepts such as people and nation. A significant portion of them also have misconceptions that cause resistance to an integrated model of the organization of the state.

The level of political awareness certainly influences why some young people advocate for an ethnically organized state and others for a civil organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The political options that exist in BiH as polar opposites also have a causal effect on identification with the state itself. Only 55 % of young people are proud to be nationals of BiH, while 23.2 % are estranged from their identity as nationals of the country. A good society and a good state are those that provide for a decent life and the conditions necessary for the growth and development of each individual and the community as a whole. The ethnic and civic models are not “polar opposites” as models of state organization, because traditional-conservative, modern-liberal and postmodern-progressive politics are natural stages in the development of political awareness.

Each subsequent stage encompasses the previous one, transcending it (Haračić and Nović: 2022). The kind of policy that we will advocate largely depends on where we currently stand on the spiral of development. Unfortunately, the future seems even more uncertain in this regard, as 58.1 % of young people show minimal or no interest in politics. 21.9 % of young people are in-between (“neither interested nor uninterested”), which may also indicate an ambivalent attitude towards politics. Only 30.9 % have a basic knowledge of politics, and there is also a group of 14.9 % of respondents who admit that they have virtually no knowledge of politics.

Fig. 20 How young people in BiH wish for their country to look like in the future (in %)



Such diverse levels of knowledge of politics indicate the need for better political education and communication and the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will make young people competitive and equal participants within their own country (e.g., when Eastern European countries were joining the EU, information about the EU was introduced at all levels of education, with specialized programs being established at universities to train and educate future generations of experts in EU law, civic virtues, contemporary state governance, private sector management and many other areas).

## Electoral participation and representation of young people

When discussing the participation of young people in processes in which they more or less directly influence the election of the ruling elite (Schumpeter, Weber), a declining trend in voter turnout can be observed. In line with the general disillusionment with the position of young people in politics, the turnout percentage in the most recent elections was 55.4 %, compared to 78 % recorded in earlier studies (Žiga et al.: 2015, Turčilo et al.: 2018). There is a significant number of respondents who were unable to vote (29 %) due to their age (young people aged 14–17), but there is also a significant number of those (15.5 %) who did not vote in spite of having the right to vote. Non-voting by those who had this right is justi-

A significant statistical difference has also been observed in terms of media consumption. Specifically, responding to questions regarding the six media outlets offered that broadcast their programs and content in BiH, young people not only state that they do not trust the media, but that these media are unlikely to be the means by which they inform themselves about politics. Namely, with regards to how much time is spent following politics, young people most often spend “none at all” (57 %) or “less than half an hour” (15 %) on average per week. This effectively means that even when they consume the media, they generally do not follow political content, and if they follow political content, it is most often through N1, Dnevni Avaz, Klix.ba, Nezavisne novine, RTRS and Bljesak.info. These outlets are generally the most followed news media, so we can say that young people follow the usual pattern of consulting popular media, without exposing themselves to alternative or less mainstream media that might offer different political views or generally broaden their horizons. The data provide an insight into the various motives and obstacles standing in the way of voting in elections, raising the matter of a need to develop strategies to encourage young people to act and influence at least the decisions of the ruling elite, through influencing election campaigns and through direct action. We believe this issue to be crucial, because civic engagement itself, a kind of subpolitics as Beck calls it (interest in and discussion about politics), could lead to a discussion about the democratic deficit in BiH, the latter of which has been identified among young people in this survey. Specifically, 72 % of young people see corruption as the greatest problem the state will face in the next decade, followed by unemployment (67.7 %) and the departure of a qualified workforce (73.2 %). Articulating these and other concerns and fears in an appropriate way could help overcome the feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, at least in the segment regarding the protection of fundamental human rights.

---

**72 %** of young people see corruption as the greatest problem the state will face in the next decade.

---

fied to a lesser extent by reasons such as illness or vacation (31.5 %); however, there is a substantial number of young people (68.5 %) who are disillusioned with politics, of which: 19.1 % believe that their vote would not make a difference; 14.4 % have no interest in politics at all; 5.6 % do not vote on principle; 4.5 % claim that there is no party they would vote for; and 5.2 % do not feel sufficiently informed to make a voting decision.

## Perception of political parties among young people: from motivation to choice

The following parties received support from respondents who voted in the most recent elections: SDA (15.3 %), SNSD (11.1 %), SDP BiH (10.2 %), NiP (9.1 %), SDS (7 %), PDP (6 %), DF (4.3 %), HDZ BiH (4 %), Za pravdu i red Nebojša Vukanović (1.9 %) Naša stranka (1.5 %), and the coalition of parties Narodni evropski savez – Za nove generacije (NES-ZNG) (0.3 %). 4.8 % of the respondents voted for parties that were not included in the survey questionnaire. Responses to the question directed at young people, which asked “if the parliamentary elections were to be held in the coming days, which party would you vote for?”, provide some interesting insights. Namely, the survey results presented in the graph of voting preferences and projections of voting behavior of young people in BiH indicate a trend of decreasing support for the leading parties. When it comes to voter-intentions for the next elections, support for SDA decreases by 3.1 %, SNSD by 6.6 %, SDP BiH by 1.7 %, NiP by 4.9 %, SDS by 3.1 %, PDP by 2.2 %, DF by 0.5 %, HDZ by 1.5 %, while support for lesser-known parties, such as the party Za pravdu i red – Nebojša Vukanović, increases from 1.9 % to 3.9 %. A substantial portion of young people (42.3 %) do not know who to vote for.

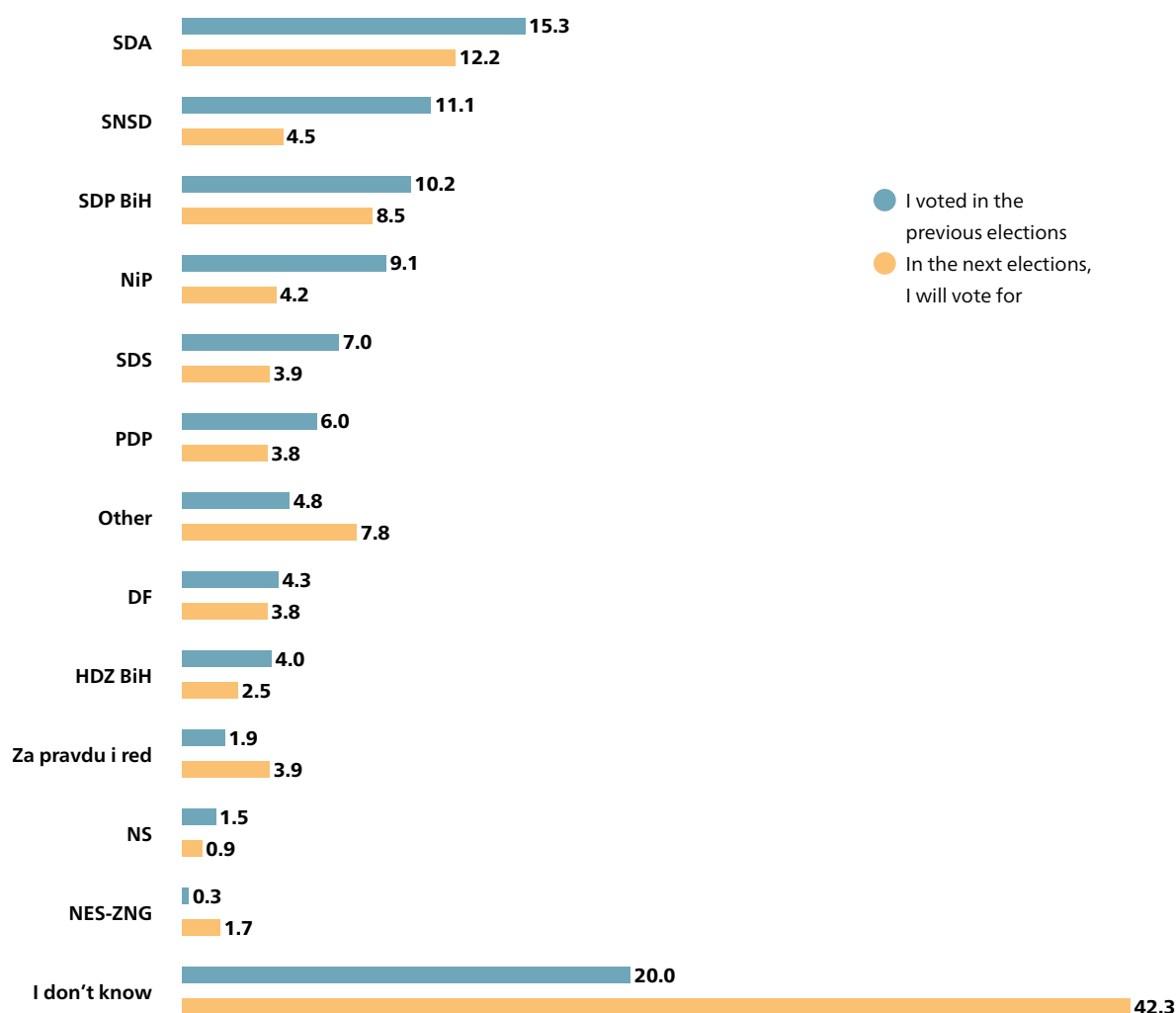
The fact that support is not concentrated on a few leading parties only, but is diverse and spread across several parties, suggests that there is a fragmentation of the political body in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has significant implications for political stability and the decision-making process. The degradation of politics and the party system itself in BiH is a result of its causal relationship with the political system, which has been determined by provisions of the Dayton Constitution, rendering it incapable of either disintegration or repair.

Ideological motivation and personal loyalty to a party leader are usually the most stable drivers of voting among young people. In our survey, however, these factors were not decisive for electoral participation. Specifically, 56 % of young people believe that parties do not have “cool campaigns and posts on the social media”; 39 % state that parties do not offer simple and quick solutions to problems; 35.7 % do not identify with any party’s ideology, nor are motivated by it to vote. The party president is also not a motivating factor for voting (53.3 %). Young people believe that all parties are the same (32.4 %), so instead they vote for certain individuals within parties. Other factors, such as the influence of parents, friends or good campaigns, are less prominent, giving the impression that voting is least driven by political reasons. In spite of the strong support (66.1 %) for giving more opportunities to young people to express themselves in politics, when we compare these findings with other variables (such as political activism), we can conclude that young people perceive participation as having a marginal role in democracy because they are more focused on representative democracy and political leaders. Participation, however, is actually instrumental and lacks educational or social functions. The act of voting itself does not substantively contribute to the development of participatory democracy; voting is expressive and focused on the individual/citizen, and has an educational and social role because it constitutes good governance (Dahl: 1989) that takes into account the interests of young people.

Most of the respondents identify closer to the center of the political spectrum (34.7 %), which suggests a wide variety of political views. While a significant number of the respondents identify as left-wing (26.7 %), the percentage of those who identify as right-wing is lower (10.1 %). This diversity of political views is important for a democratic society as it provides for the exchange of ideas and opinions; however, if we view it in the context of global trends in which these ideological divisions are gradually blurred by skillful political and media manipulation of the narratives, the anti-political and apolitical attitudes of young people in BiH remain a concern for this society.



Fig. 21 Voting preferences and projections of voting behavior of young people in BiH (in %)

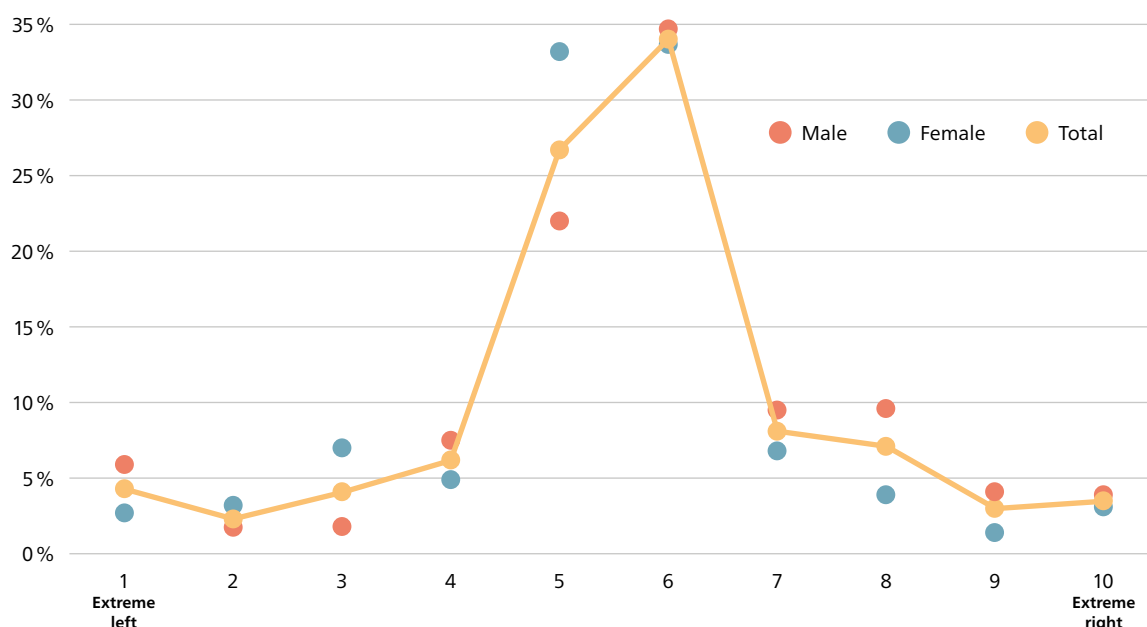


The former attitude, caused by a form of deliberate political non-participation, and the latter attitude, which is a result of ignorance and a lack of awareness about the significance of socio-political processes, permeate the views of young people regarding issues of civil liberties. Specifically, we note a tendency among young people towards authoritarian forms of government with regards to the restriction of freedoms in order to achieve economic security. Thus, 31.8 % of young people would sacrifice civil liberties to ensure a higher standard of living, while 32.7 % would support a restriction of civil liberties to be better protected against terrorism or other threats.

Young people are still highly aware of the issues of social justice and economic equality within Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. Thus, the majority of the respondents (63 %) agree with the statement that the incomes of the poor and the rich should be more equal, which corresponds with the fact that young people tend to identify with left-wing political programs, since the general opinion is that left-wing political parties are more likely to support major social programs and the redistribution of wealth to achieve greater economic equality.

Fig. 22 Political beliefs of youth in BiH (in %)

On a scale from '1 – far left' to '10 – far right'



The same is true when it comes to the government's responsibility of ensuring social security. 66.8% of the respondents claim that "the government should assume greater responsibility in ensuring that everyone is taken care of". However, being aware of what is right in a social system is not enough to drive social change. Young people in BiH must awaken and be active if they genuinely want to see a shift in focus from the old

The most effective social movements in the world rely on mainstream tactics – such as voting, lobbying and the drafting of laws, as well as non-violent mobilization tactics – such as protests, boycotts, initiatives, civil disobedience, labor strikes and other forms of alternative political action. In the context of the implementation of ideas supported by young people, which are deeply just and democratic, effective youth activism should advocate for policies of equality through the empowerment of underprivileged groups in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society (e.g., the poor). The survey has found that youth activism is at a low level, but there is significant potential for change. Participation in civic action/initiatives is important to 36% of young people.

**62 %** categorically refuse any engagement in politics, which is a result of the perceived ineffectiveness of political institutions in addressing the problems and interests of young people.

to new politics. This does not mean a revolution, either, as such promises are unrealistic and have failed too often. The false dichotomy between "participation within the system" and "participation outside the system" is a myth that limits our ability to effect change.

However, most of them have not participated in political demands or supported online petitions (43.9 %); have not participated in demonstrations (51.3 %), nor in volunteer activities or activities organized by civil society organizations (30.8 %); have not worked in a political party (64.2 %); have not stopped buying products for political or environmental reasons/boycotts (43.7 %); or have not participated in political activity on social media (59.6 %). Nevertheless, a significant portion of young people would become politically active if given the opportunity. Regardless of the poor image of civil society organizations in BiH, young people would be primarily active in NGOs (42.6 %), followed by supporting online petitions (33.7 %) and participating in demonstrations (32.5 %). Young people would also boycott products (29.1 %) and participate in political activity online (27.2 %). The smallest proportion of young people would work in a political party (23.7 %).

High levels of support for views that question the foundations of democracy, such as support for dictatorship in certain circumstances or the opinion that democracy is not always preferable, are indicative of a democratic deficit in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and the need to strengthen democratic institutions and values. The study reveals the risks of political abstinence among young people, which encourages a rise in populist parties and authoritarian mechanisms of governance in society. The survey indicates that authoritarianism may be prevented only by promoting participatory democracy, a culture of democratic dialog and the respect for civil rights and freedoms, for which young people have shown partial interest. Launching programs and developing strategies to educate young people about the “political” in politics and the “valuable” in the democratic process would show that, at least in normative terms, a fairer political and economic framework, free of discrimination and inequality, is an essential need of every young person in BiH.

## Main takeaways

**1.** Although young people’s support for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s membership in the EU has traditionally been high, this survey has noted a decline compared to previous years. While support was at 85 % in 2019, it has since dropped to 64.6 % in 2024. Support for European integration increases with the level of education, with 74.5 % of young people with university education showing support for BiH joining the EU.

**2.** High levels of distrust towards political parties, parliament and government illustrate a profound crisis of trust in democratic institutions and their ability to represent the interests of young people.

**3.** Young people have a low interest in engaging in politics. More than half of young people (62.3 %) categorically refuse any engagement in politics, which is a result of the perceived ineffectiveness of political institutions in addressing the problems and interests of young people.

**4.** Through different visions of the future of BiH, which are more or less aligned with those promoted by the political elite in BiH, the study reflects deep political polarization around the issue of the social and political organization of the state.

**5.** Support for leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina among young people is declining, while at the same time there is an increasing interest in less-known parties.

**6.** The lack of ideological motivation and loyalty to political parties among young people suggests that political participation is not driven by strong political beliefs.

**7.** Low levels of youth activism, despite the potential for change, imply that young people have limited influence on political processes, which in turn contributes to maintaining the status quo and the lack of change in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

# Conclusion

According to the data obtained in Youth Study 2024, the profile of a young person who lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that of a 22-year-old, on average, residing in a settlement that is predominantly urban. Unless they are a high school or university student, the young person is most often unemployed and has a high school diploma. They live with their parents and one brother/sister. They are digital persons and spend their free time on social media. They are satisfied with their life and want to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina because they distrust its political system. They are dissatisfied with the present education system and educational processes in BiH. They consider corruption a great problem and believe that, regardless of the future of the state and society, they themselves have a good outlook. Security and employment are the two most important issues in BiH for them. They want to become independent, but due to economic pressures postpone independent life. They believe that level of education is important when choosing their marital partner and they see themselves as a family person with two children. They are not interested in politics, but support BiH's accession to the EU, and display a high level of distrust towards domestic political institutions. They are neither socially nor politically active.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in many other societies, young people face complex challenges and uncertainties regarding the future. Analyzing their attitudes, perceptions and expectations, we can gain deeper insight into the complexity of the socio-economic context and the factors that shape their perception of the future. Optimism among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is evident in the hope for a better future that is shared by 32.5 % of the respondents. Young people see the potential for progress and believe in the improvement of their living conditions, which may be a result of their own personal positive experiences, educational achievements or belief in potential economic and political reforms. Nevertheless, there is also some pessimism, as 34 % of young people predict a more difficult and uncertain future for both Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and the state. Economic problems, high unemployment rates, political instability and daily challenges could be contributing factors to this pessimism among young people. Socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, such as the quality of education, political affiliation and family support, play an important role in shaping young people's attitudes. Distrust in institutions and a lack of faith in the system also affect their perceptions of the future. Media culture and media literacy also have a significant impact on young people's perceptions. In order to support young people and ensure a more positive outlook for them, it is critical to develop initiatives and policies that address the specific needs and problems they face. Increasing employment opportunities, improving the quality of education and strengthening trust in institutions are among the key steps towards creating a better future for young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



The results of this survey highlight the complex challenges faced by young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the labor market. The transformation of the labor market, driven by technological progress and globalization, has opened up new opportunities, but this has also deepened existing problems such as the increase in precarious jobs and economic insecurity. However, high unemployment rates among young people and their dependence on unpredictable and unstable jobs have created a climate of uncertainty that makes it difficult to plan for the future, especially regarding decisions to start a family and long-term economic well-being. This situation in turn fuels migratory tendencies, with young people often seeing emigration as the only way to improve their living conditions.

---

**32 %** optimism among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is evident in the hope for a better future.

---

We can reasonably claim that understanding and addressing the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of young people is critical for developing policies and strategies that will improve their position and contribute to the stability and sustainability of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and the state. Based on the obtained data, we can conclude that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have complex attitudes and perceptions regarding various social, political and cultural issues. The concerns and priorities they have are a reflection of the profound socio-economic and political challenges faced by Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as of broader social trends and dynamics.

High levels of distrust in political institutions, economic insecurity and concerns about the health care system clearly highlight the need for changes and reforms at various levels of society. Furthermore, the presented data point to the importance of education and raising awareness about human rights, as well as the need to strengthen democratic processes and institutions. Prejudice against and intolerance of certain social groups also require attention and action in order to promote inclusiveness and equality in society. Finally, in spite of the considerable concern about the political situation and social justice, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina display substantial resilience and ambition to achieve professional success, regardless of the economic and social obstacles. This highlights the need to make further investments in young people, through education, supporting entrepreneurship and the development of a more stable social and economic environment that will allow young people to use their full potential in their own country, rather than looking for opportunities abroad. In the interest of the continuous development, sustainability and advancement of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, the priority is to make efforts to strengthen social cohesion, social interactions and networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will contribute in the long term to the development of a more inclusive, resilient and prosperous Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. It is through cooperation, exchange and working together that Bosnian-Herzegovinian society can overcome the challenges it faces and build a sustainable future for all its citizens. Therefore, Youth Study 2024 provides valuable insights into the concerns, values and needs of young people, which should inform the development of policies and initiatives that will ensure a better future both for young people and the entirety of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

# References

- BiH Agency for Statistics (2024): Demografija (Demographics); → [bhas.gov.ba](https://bhas.gov.ba)
- Beck, U. (2001): *Rizično društvo – u susret novoj moderni* (Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity). Beograd: Filip Višnjić.
- Dahl, R. (1989): *Democracy and its Critics*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Eldridge, A. (2024): Generation Z. Encyclopedia Britannica. → [britannica.com/topic/Generation-Z](https://britannica.com/topic/Generation-Z)
- Eldridge, S. (2024): Generation Alpha. Encyclopedia Britannica. → [britannica.com/topic/Generation-Alpha](https://britannica.com/topic/Generation-Alpha)
- Field, J. (2008): *Social Capital*. London: Routledge.
- Hadžimahmutović, B.; Martić, M. (2013): *Nezaposlenost mladih: EU i BiH dijele isti problem, mogu li rješenja biti zajednička?* (Youth Unemployment: EU and BiH Have the Same Problem, Are There Common Solutions?), Centar za istraživanja i studije: GEA.
- Haračić, A.; Nović, I. (2022): *Na kom si nivou svijesti: priručnik za političare i one koje politika zanima* (How Aware Are You: A Handbook for Politicians and Those Interested in Politics). Sarajevo: Centar za kritičko mišljenje.
- Haralambos, M.; Heald, R. (1980): *Uvod u sociologiju* (Introduction to Sociology). Zagreb: Globus
- Helliwell, J.F.; Huang, H.; Norton, M.; Goff, L.; Wang, S. (2023): *World Happiness, Trust and Social Connections in Times of Crisis*. In *World Happiness Report 2023* (11th ed., Chapter 2). Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- ILO (2011): *Youth and Precarious Work*. → [ilo.org/resource/conference-paper/youth-and-precarious-work](https://ilo.org/resource/conference-paper/youth-and-precarious-work)
- International Organization for Migration (2023): *Annual Report 2023*. Sarajevo: International Organization for Migration. → [bih.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11076/files/2024/final\\_iom-bosnia-and-herzegovina-annual-report-2023\\_eng.pdf](https://bih.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11076/files/2024/final_iom-bosnia-and-herzegovina-annual-report-2023_eng.pdf)
- Koković, D. (2009): *Društvo i obrazovni kapital* (Society and Educational Capital). Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing.
- McIntosh, S. (2020): *Developmental Politics: How America Can Grow Into a Better Version of Itself*, Paragon House.
- Mujagić, N. (2010): *Tihi govor Bosne* (The Silent Speech of Bosnia), Sarajevo. Heinrich Boll Stiftung Foundation.
- Mujagić, N. (2011): *Gradani Bosne i Hercegovine između univerzalnog i etničkog* (Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina Between Universal and Ethnic). In Srđan Puhalo (ed). *Na putu ka Europskoj uniji* (Towards the European Union). Banja Luka: PRO EDUKA.
- Pašalić-Kreso, A. (2004): *Koordinate obiteljskog odgoja* (Coordinates of Family Care). Sarajevo: Jež.
- Recalcati, M. (2014): *Šta ostaje od oca?* (What Is Left of The Father?) Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga.
- Schultheis, F. (2001): *Youth precarity as the new face of the social question*. → [ilo.org/resource/youth-precarity-new-social-question](https://ilo.org/resource/youth-precarity-new-social-question)
- Turčilo, L.; Osmić, A.; Kapidžić, D.; Šadić, S.; Žiga, J.; Dudić, A. (2019): *Studija o mladima Bosne i Hercegovine 2018/2019* (Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019). Sarajevo: Fridrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- World Bank (2024): *Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate) – Bosnia and Herzegovina* → [data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=BA](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=BA)
- Zelazko, A. (2024): *millennial*. Encyclopedia Britannica. → [britannica.com/topic/millennial](https://britannica.com/topic/millennial)
- Žiga, J.; Turčilo, L.; Osmić, A.; Bašić, S.; Džananović Miraščija, N.; Kapidžić D.; Brkić Šmigoc, J. (2015): *Youth study Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Sarajevo.



# Figures

- 10 **Fig. 1** Comparison of the total population of young people and the net sample in BiH (in %)
- 13 **Fig. 2** Sociodemographic characteristics of youth in BiH (in %)
- 14 **Fig. 3** Education of youth in BiH in relation to their parents (in %)
- 15 **Fig. 4** Life satisfaction of youth in BiH compared to SEE countries (in %)
- 18 **Fig. 5** Satisfaction with the education system among youth in BiH (in %, N=490)
- 21 **Fig. 6** Current education status of youth in BiH (in %)
- 22 **Fig. 7** Current employment status of youth in BiH (in %, N=500)
- 22 **Fig. 8** Views among youth in BiH on important factors for finding a job (in %)
- 25 **Fig. 9** Desire to emigrate among youth in BiH (in %, N=464)
- 28 **Fig. 10** Views on important factors for choosing a partner among youth in BiH
- 29 **Fig. 11** Family plans of youth in BiH (in %)
- 32 **Fig. 12** Estimation of personal living standard among youth in BiH (in %)
- 33 **Fig. 13** Young people's views on the greatest problems faced by BiH in the next decade (in %)
- 35 **Fig. 14** What youth in BiH find 'important' and 'very important' (in %)
- 36 **Fig. 15** Concerns and fears of young people in BiH (in %)
- 37 **Fig. 16** Religiosity among youth in BiH (in %)
- 40 **Fig. 17** Levels of trust in the European Union and NATO among youth in BiH (in %)
- 41 **Fig. 18** Perceived state of social values in BiH and the EU among youth in BiH
- 42 **Fig. 19** Level of trust in institutions among youth in BiH (in %)
- 44 **Fig. 20** How young people in BiH wish for their country to look like in the future (in %)
- 47 **Fig. 21** Voting preferences and projections of voting behavior of young people in BiH (in %)
- 48 **Fig. 22** Political beliefs of youth in BiH (in %)

# About the Authors

**Abdel Alibegović** PhD was born in Bugojno on 23 May 1982. He completed primary school in his hometown and secondary school in Travnik. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, Department of Philosophy and Sociology. Between 2007 and 2014, by decisions of the Senate of the University of Tuzla, he was appointed teaching assistant and senior teaching assistant in "Sociology" at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla. Between 2010 and 2012 he worked as a teacher of philosophy, sociology and logic as well as a teacher of democracy and human rights and the history/culture of religions in several primary and secondary schools in Sarajevo. In March 2013, by decision of the Teaching and Scientific Council of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, he defended his Master's Thesis in Sociology and was awarded the title of Master of Sociology. Between 2013 and 2021, by decisions of the Senate of the University of Sarajevo, he was appointed teaching assistant and senior teaching assistant in "Sociology" at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, in the research field of Sociology. In July 2021, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, in the research field of Sociology. He is currently an assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, Department of Sociology. At the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, he works as a lecturer/associate in the following courses: Social and Cultural Anthropology, Social Ecology, Sociological Theories, Sociology of Politics, Ecological Security, Ethnology. He has authored and co-authored several scientific and professional papers in the areas of Sociology of Bosnia-Herzegovina society, Contemporary Sociological Theories, Contemporary Sociology, Economic Sociology, Sociology of the Family, Sociology of Education, Sociology of Genocide, Sociology of Technology, etc. He has participated in several national and international conferences as a panelist and moderator. Areas of interest: Sociology of Bosnia-Herzegovina society, Biopolitics, Sociology of Technology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Sociology of Genocide, Social Ecology, Sociological Theories, Sociology of Education, Sociology of Politics, Ethnology.

**Anida Dudić-Sijamija** PhD is an assistant professor at the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, where she teaches the following courses: Social Work with Individuals, Social Work with Groups, Field Practice 3 in the first cycle of studies and Ethics of Social Work and Mediation in Social Work in the second cycle of studies. She has published scientific and professional papers in international and national journals and has been engaged in national and international research projects. She has participated in several national and international scientific meetings, conferences, seminars, trainings and workshops. Books published as a co-author: *Youth study 2018/19* and scientific-research study *Social Work in Education* (2019). She is editor of the Proceedings of Field Practice and Social Work in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia (2023), and a book of abstracts of papers presented at the international conference "Use of Counseling in Social Work Practice – Challenges and Contemporary Knowledge" (2023), as well as a book of abstracts of papers presented at the Fourth Scientific Conference "SOCIAL CRISIS AND SOCIAL WORK: 'Buen Vivir': A Common Future for Transformative Change" (2024).

**Nermina Mujagić** PhD was born in Višegrad in 1974. She finished primary and secondary school in Sarajevo. She graduated in journalism from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. Her many years of experience as a journalist led her towards a master's degree and later a doctorate in political science, which she defended in 2006. As part of the ERASMUS Basileus program, she also completed her postdoctoral studies at the Fakultet za družbene vede, University of Ljubljana, Department of Cultural Studies, researching the culture of conflicts in relation to the conflict over the Gulf of Piran between Croatia and Slovenia. She was appointed full-time professor in 2017. She was awarded the prestigious Fulbright scholarship by the US Department of State (Scholar-in-Residence), which she realized in the academic year 2019/2020 by teaching at Wittenberg University and Antioch College (Ohio, USA). At both of these universities she taught a course in Political Conflicts in the Balkans. As part of this scholarship, she researched *The Understanding of Constitutional Narratives: A Comparison between the American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian System of Political Representation*, which was part of her Fulbright project. Prof. Mujagić is an alumnus of the Monroe E. Price Program of Comparative Media Law and Policy, which is implemented as part of the Centre for Global Communication Studies. She completed this specialization at the University of Oxford in 2014, in cooperation with the Annenberg School for Communication of the University of Pennsylvania. She has authored the following books: *Pro et Contra Constitution: a Comparison of US and Bosnian-Herzegovina Policies*, Faculty of Political Sciences, Sarajevo 2022; *Multi-Citizenship: Analyses and New Theories on the Relationship of State, Citizens and Society*, Faculty of Political Sciences, Sarajevo 2017; *Politics as a Spectacle: Casting a Net into the Neighbor's Fish Pond*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung BiH, Sarajevo 2013; *The Silent Speech of Bosnia*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung BiH, Sarajevo, 2010; *Beyond Politics*, Faculty of Political Sciences, Sarajevo, 2007; *Political De/Re-socialization and the Media*, Internews, Sarajevo, 2004.

**Amer Osmić** PhD was born in Jajce in 1984. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo (Department of Sociology). In May 2007, he started working as a teaching assistant in social sciences at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. He was employed with the Department of Sociology as a teaching assistant, senior teaching assistant and assistant professor, and is currently working as an associate professor. His personal development focuses on the methodology of social research and research processes. He researches the position of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina through situational and perspectives analyses. He has participated in a number of national and international projects, as a researcher and/or project manager, most notably in projects of the European Union, UNICEF, UNSECO, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and others. He has participated in numerous scientific and professional conferences in the country and abroad. He is the (co)author of several books, studies and scientific and professional papers in sociology, youth sociology, migration and research methodology.

**Sanela Šadić** PhD was born in Sarajevo in 1973. She graduated in social work from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo (1998). She completed her master's degree at the University of Applied Sciences, Alice-Salomon-Fachhochschule Berlin, on the international postgraduate program of Intercultural Work and Conflict Management (2002) on the subject of The Phenomenon of Prejudices in BiH Social Work Practice. She completed her doctorate at the Faculty of Political Sciences on the subject of Social Rights in the Human Rights System and Social Work (2009). She also completed a two-year education in reality therapy and choice theory (2006). She is a full-time professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. She teaches the following courses: Social Work with Individuals, Social Work with Families, Social Work with Groups, Human Rights and Social Work and Ethics of Social Work. She is the author of the book *Human Rights and Social Work* (2014), and she co-authored the following books: *Social Work Case Analysis-Global Perspective* (2018), *Family Violence: Development Study in BiH* (2005), *Child and Youth Problems in the Context of Human Rights* (2006), as well as the Handbook for Social Workers regarding the Phenomenon and Forms of – Child Labor Exploitation – Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation – Prostitution – Pornography and Pedophilia. She is the author or co-author of several scientific and professional papers published in international and domestic journals. As a visiting lecturer, she has taught at universities in the country and abroad. She has participated in the organization of international and national scientific conferences and scientific-research projects, and has presented at a number of conferences. She is a member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the Association of Social Workers of the Sarajevo Canton.

**Lejla Turčilo** PhD was born in Sarajevo in 1977. She is a full-time professor at the Department of Journalism/Communication Science at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, where she teaches Media Theory, Online Journalism and Media and Politics in undergraduate and master's studies, as well as Media and Communications in the Post-Truth Age in doctoral studies. She has authored four published books, co-authored eight books, as well as one manual and five research publications. She has published more than forty scientific and professional papers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, France, Belgium, Germany, USA and Colombia. She has participated in more than fifty scientific and professional conferences, symposia and congresses in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad. She is the head of the Lifelong Learning Center at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, and the head of Department of Journalism/Communication Science. Her areas of interest include online communication, intercultural communication, media literacy and media freedom.



## **Imprint**

### **Editor & Publisher**

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Sarajevo  
Kupreška 20  
71000 Sarajevo  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

### **Responsible for Content**

Sarah Hees-Kalyani  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Sarajevo  
Tel.: +387 33 72 20 10  
bosnia-and-herzegovina.fes.de

### **Youth Study Series 2024**

Lead Researcher: Elena Avramovska,  
FES Democracy of the Future  
Project Management: Saša Vasić, FES SOE  
Communication SOE: Ema Džejna Smolo-Zukan, FES SOE  
Editing Coordinator and Communication non-SOE:  
Margarete Lengger, FES Democracy of the Future  
Project Assistant: Krisztina Stefán,  
FES Democracy of the Future

### **Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2024**

Project Coordinator: Rasim Ibrahimagić, FES BiH  
Proofreading in Bosnian: Diwan d. o. o. Sarajevo  
Translation into English: Diwan d. o. o. Sarajevo  
Copy Editing in English: Jakub Salihović

### **Orders / Contact**

bih@fes.de

### **Design Concept**

René Andritsch & Heidrun Kogler

### **Layout**

4S Design

Commercial use of all media published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted without the written consent of the FES. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organization for which the author works.

© 2024





Scan the code  
and read online:

