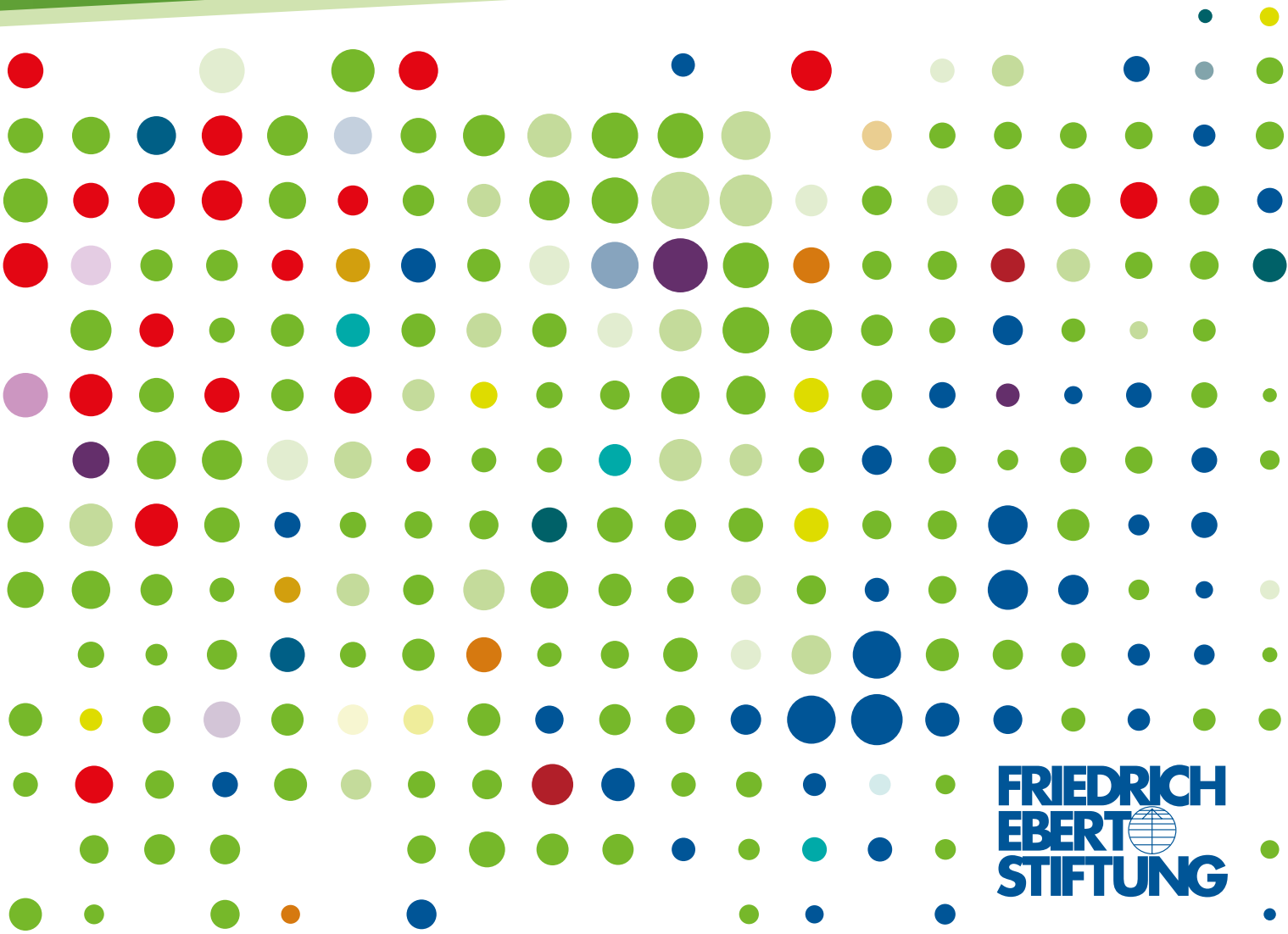


YOUTH STUDY ALBANIA 2018/2019



THE FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany, with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to 1925. The work of our political foundation revolves around the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity. This is what binds us to the principles of social democracy and free trade unions.

With our international network of offices in more than 100 countries, we support a policy for peaceful cooperation and human rights, promote the establishment and consolidation of democratic, social and constitutional structures and work as pioneers for free trade unions and a strong civil society. We are actively involved in promoting a social, democratic and competitive Europe in the process of European integration.

YOUTH STUDIES SOUTHEAST EUROPE 2018/2019:


“FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019” is an international youth research project carried out simultaneously in ten countries in Southeast Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. The main objective of the surveys has been to identify, describe and analyse attitudes of young people and patterns of behaviour in contemporary society.

The data was collected in early 2018 from more than 10,000 respondents aged 14–29 in the above-mentioned countries who participated in the survey. A broad range of issues were addressed, including young peoples’ experiences and aspirations in different realms of life, such as education, employment, political participation, family relationships, leisure and use of information and communications technology, but also their values, attitudes and beliefs.

Findings are presented in ten national and one regional study and its accompanying policy papers, which have been published in both English and the respective national languages.

YOUTH STUDY ALBANIA 2018/2019

Geron Kamberi, Alba Çela



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1

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Survey 2018-Albania is the third national survey carried out since 2011, through which the FES aims to measure the perception and attitudes of young Albanians on issues such as lifestyle, family, education, employment, politics, religion, etc. In this framework, the survey reveals that, after 30 years the importance of family and society still remain as almost firm economic and emotional pillars of support for Albanian youth. The relationship of the latter to familial and social values is slowly changing under the force of a combination between traditional principles and modern ones. Because opportunities for economic independence are concentrated in the capital and a few other major urban areas, the demographic migration of Albanian youth toward these urban metropolises indicates, among other things, an impetus to achieve independence and break free from traditional family norms. Besides the family, Albanian youth consider friendships and lifestyle and social relations to be an important element of their social identity. Daily contacts with their social friends and family are both real and virtual thanks to the social media phenomena that has helped create stereotypes as well as provide communication platforms for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Relationship with society constitutes a significant feature of young people's social behaviour and plays a special role in their lives. The Youth Survey 2018 provides a set of opinions and reflections on education by young people since during their study years, young people are able to create a civic and professional identity which will help them face the realities of the national, regional, European and global labour market. On the other hand, the correlation (or lack thereof) between education and employment remains an element persistently troubling young minds, as their investment in education does not always translate into stable employment. The issue of employment remains an inherent struggle for young people, a new reality where ideas and perceptions clash on the way to a new phase of life. In this context, the achievements of young people in their work and occupational careers constitute a point of special importance in their lives. Youth participation in the political process, including their ideas

and opinions on political parties, electoral processes, and their trust in governing institutions, constitutes a very important element. Politics and democratic institutions are instruments that have an impact on the lives of young people. Hence, the level of trust (or lack thereof) that young people express toward the political process is fundamental to their participation in the process itself. For that reason, the Youth Survey 2018 is a tool to reflect on the level of young people's political views since experience shows that young people are powerful actors who bring forth change and accelerate political processes. Meanwhile their political engagement or apathy is closely related to the quality of politics itself and the institutions it produces. Especially apathy, disappointment and lack of trust are drivers along the youth migration path, which is also explored through this national survey. It should be mentioned that young Albanians' values and beliefs on certain social norms are gradually changing under the influence of globalisation, open society, and social media. However most of them are rooted in the traditional approach strongly linked to the socio-economic context and their family legacy.

2

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative component for this study is based on a national survey with 1200 respondents, from 14–29 years of age. This sample of interviewed people is representative for Albania and offers the opportunity to analyse subgroups of interest. A detailed description of the quantitative part of the study is presented below:

NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In order to select a national representative sample, IDRA Research & Consulting has used a sampling method composed of 3 steps:

- i). First step – Selection of sampling points
- ii). Second step – Selection of houses/families
- iii). Third step – Selection of the interviewed persons

First step – Selection of sampling points

IDRA possesses the list of the voting centres made public by the Central Election Committee. This list includes the number of the voting centre, the number of the voters registered at that centre and the addresses of the voting centre. The selection is performed by means of Probability Proportion to Size in which the number of the registered voters serves as Measure of Size. This selection provides the voting centres the opportunity to be selected in proportion to the number of voters registered at that centre; in other words, the centres which have the highest number of voters registered also have the greatest chance of being selected. IDRA selects the sample based on regions and an urban-rural division. Thus, IDRA selects a certain number of urban and rural voting centres in each region. For this study, 120 voting centres were randomly selected and 10 interviews conducted in each of them.

Second step – Selection of houses/families

For each of the interviewers, a reference point was provided for each selection of the sample, which was generally the voting centre or a prominent building, a cross-road, school, public institution, etc. After the interviewer arrived at the reference point,

he/she was instructed to start from its back and start walking, while always keeping it on his/her right side. The interviewer was instructed to count the “lived-in” buildings /houses and conduct an interview in every third building/house.

Third step – Selection of persons interviewed

The selection of the persons interviewed was carried out applying the method of the latest birthday. The interviewer receives the list and the birthdays of the inhabitants of the house who are over 14 years old. Contact is made to arrange an interview with the inhabitant of the house who has most recently (distance in time from the interview date) had his/her birthday. If this inhabitant is not there, the interviewer tries to make an appointment and contact the person selected two more times. If the interviewer does not manage to contact the selected inhabitant even after the third attempt, the house is categorised as a refusal and the next house selected is contacted based on the methodology. The same procedure is followed even in cases where the selected inhabitant refuses to participate in the interview.

To be taken into consideration!

IDRA uses the number of the voters registered at a voting centre to perform the selection of the voting centres. The number of the registered voters is a very good tool if the sample is representative of the population over 18 years old. IDRA believes that the number of voters registered is a good sampling tool for the sample of this study (14–29 years old) as well taking in consideration that a voting centre that has more registered voters has more houses/building in its geographic zone. Consequently, the probability that individuals 14-29-years-old live in that zone is greater.

TABLE 1: **Weighting**

Albania		Before	After
Age	14–17 y.o.	40 %	20 %
	18–21 y.o.	25 %	35 %
	22–25 y.o.	20 %	25 %
	26–29 y.o.	15 %	20 %
Gender	Female	45 %	49 %
	Male	55 %	51 %
Margin of error:		2.8	
Response rate (Albania):		50.2 %	

CONCISE CONCEPTUAL SECTION

The FES Youth study is unparalleled in terms of its scope and focus on youth in Albania. Usually conclusions related to youth are extrapolated from publications of the National Statistics Institute (INSTAT), which uses national samples, by examining the data on age sub-groups. Other studies are focused on single topics such as employment or lifestyle patterns.

In the recent years, since the last FES Youth Study was published in Albania, the literature has focused on three main issues which affect the social fabric of Albanian society and especially young people: **new migration patterns, the appearance and then weaning away from religious radicalism and finally the persisting substantial scale of the narcotics trade and its connections to politics.**

First, the growing preference of young people and **especially young professionals** to migrate to western European countries, mainly Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, has intensified. This is causing a major problem, for example in the health sector, with thousands of doctors and nurses trying to seek a better life in Germany. All the language courses in Tirana are full and in other cities as well as young people are seeking to obtain the required language levels to become eligible for employment. Various studies have shown that the reasons behind such a desire to migrate combine lack of economic opportunities with a general lack of hope and trust in public institutions.

The second phenomenon which is fortunately on the retreat is the rise of religious radicalism as manifested in an especially aggressive form in the departure to and participation of several Albanian citizens in the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq. This ignited a discussion over the penetration of Albanian religious communities by foreign influences and also the involvement of a part of this community in a strand of Islam which is radical and does not follow traditional moderate patterns. After a toughening of the law and a crackdown on recruiters and mosques that were out of control and in the wake of the retreat of ISIS, the situation has improved. However, a major vulnerability has been exposed with regard to Albania and a need identified for a per-

severing alertness on the part of state and society in order to keep the phenomenon under control.

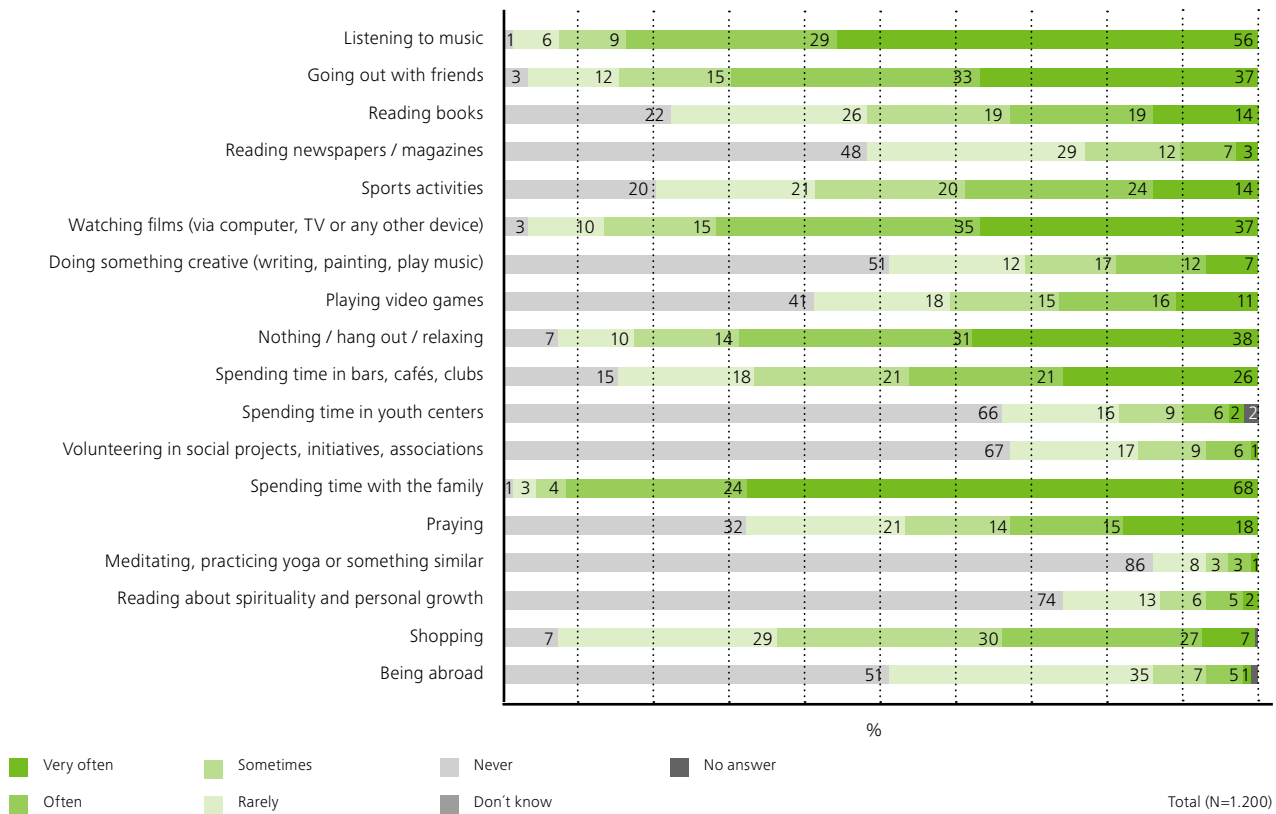
Finally, **Albania continues to be a major hub for the illicit narcotics production and trade** in Europe as witnessed not only in international reports (see below), but also by the great amounts of drugs confiscated in police raids in Albania, Greece and Italy. In only one of these raids, police seized no less than 600 kilograms of cocaine, worth millions of euros at market rates, setting a national and possibly regional record in this category.¹ The narcotics trade is not only a key problem for law enforcement agencies. It is most importantly making harmful dents in the core system of values held by young Albanians, who clearly discern a model for quick enrichment. It is also the main problem affecting Albania's image abroad, including its tourist prospects as well as chances for European membership.

These developments form the backdrop alongside which the perceptions, expectations and behaviour of young Albanians have been developing and changing.

The purpose of this youth study as well as the ones conducted in the past is not only to make a snapshot of the current situation and identify particular trends having particular significance for the future of society in terms of demographic expectations, political developments in the medium and long term, but also to encourage an informed debate about young people challenging stereotypes and to inform and enrich a form of policy-making that engages a vital segment of the population in a serious and consistent fashion. Down to the present day, we have often experienced national youth strategies or action plans which, although ambitious and detailed, sometimes seem to fail reality checks.

The study generates multiple revealing lessons and insight for various audiences, enriching the literature available to all researchers, policymakers and reporters on issues concerning young people in Albania.

FIGURE 1: How often do you engage, on average, in the following activities?



3

LEISURE AND LIFESTYLE

- Gender is a key factor determining what young people do in their free time: young men play much more videogames, go out more often and engage in sports, while young women use this time to read more books.
- Young people spend around 2.3 hours watching TV and 3.9 hours online every day.
- Key life events take place early on for young Albanians, with many of them getting married at 21 and becoming parents just one year later at 22.
- Young Albanians need about 105 euros monthly for expenses apart from food and tuition.
Choices of leisure

The choices that young people make about how to spend their free time are very important and indicative of other key aspects of both their current lifestyles and for their future plans. The most frequent activities which young people engage in almost every day or at least several times per week are listening to music (85 state that they do this very often or often), going out with friends (70 per cent state that they do this very often), watching films (72 per cent), relaxing/hanging out (per cent) and spending time with their families (92 per cent state very often or often)

Half of the young people surveyed stated that they frequently spend their leisure time in cafes and bars, while an additional 21 per cent do so sometimes. However, 15 per cent never go to cafes or bars, while 18 per cent do so very rarely. Albania has been ranked as the first country in Europe in terms of the density of its cafes, even surpassing Spain, where the number of cafes used to be the highest per capita.² Since the sight of Albanian cafes filled to the brim with young people at all times of the day throughout the week is a traditional fixture, at least in the capital, it is interesting to explore the profile of the young people who report that

they never go out to cafes or bars. The majority of these are females and members of the youngest age bracket (14–17 years old). One in four young people in the group with the poorest economic background also never go out to cafes and bars.

Only one-third of young Albanians read books regularly as part of their leisure routines. An additional 19 per cent of them read sometimes, while about half of them read either rarely (28 per cent) or even never (22 per cent).

The **gender divide** comes up frequently in analysing patterns of leisure among youth. 28 per cent of women compared to only 5 per cent of men rarely or even never go out with their friends. Going out with friends is also more common in urban as opposed to rural areas. Another important factor is the economic status of young people. 8 per cent of young people from the poorest income bracket surveyed do not hang out with their friends, while the national average for this response is just 1 per cent.

Reading books is also an area of accentuated gender differences. Whereas 20 per cent of women read regularly, only 8 per cent of males do so. Also, only 12 per cent of women say they never read compared to an alarming 31 per cent of men who state the same.

Reading newspapers and magazine is something only 10 per cent of youth engage in frequently, while almost 80 per cent of them do so very rarely or never. This percentage increases among university graduates, with 18 per cent of them regularly reading newspapers and magazines.

The reverse rule applies to engaging in sports and exercise, where men take the lead. 28 per cent of women compared to 46 per cent of men practice sports either very often or often. 41 per cent of Albanian youth in general do not exercise, never engage in sports or do so very rarely.

Men also play more video games than young women, 37 of them do this very often while only 13 per cent of young women prefer

to do this often. 62 per cent of young women never play video games compared to only 24 per cent of young men who also do not prefer them.

Doing something creative especially in the field of arts is a truly important pursuit in the modern world, where creativity is increasingly celebrated as a must skill for future professional and personal engagements. However, half of Albanian young people never engage in creative pursuits and an additional 17 per cent only do so very rarely. About 12 per cent do so sometimes, whereas only 19 per cent do so often.

Spending time at youth centres is something a very small minority of Albanian young people do since in fact the number of such centres in the country is very small. Hence 2/3 of all young people never spend time at a youth centre, while of the 17 per cent that do either do so often or sometimes, with the majority living in in urban areas. This is a missed opportunity for young people since youth centres are good vehicles for building communities, acquiring necessary skills and fostering civic participation.

Volunteering in social projects or various associations is also an indicator of the civic spirit and the feeling of community and responsibility amongst youth. In 2017, 16 per cent of young people engaged in volunteer activities at least sometimes with negligible numbers doing so often. 21 per cent did so in 2014 and only 16 per cent in 2011. The numbers would therefore appear to display a cyclical pattern.

Meditating, practicing yoga or similar activities as well as reading about spirituality and growth are the two activities that Albanian youth forgo almost entirely. About 87 of them report that they never engage in any of the aforementioned activities, while those who do so live mainly in the capital.

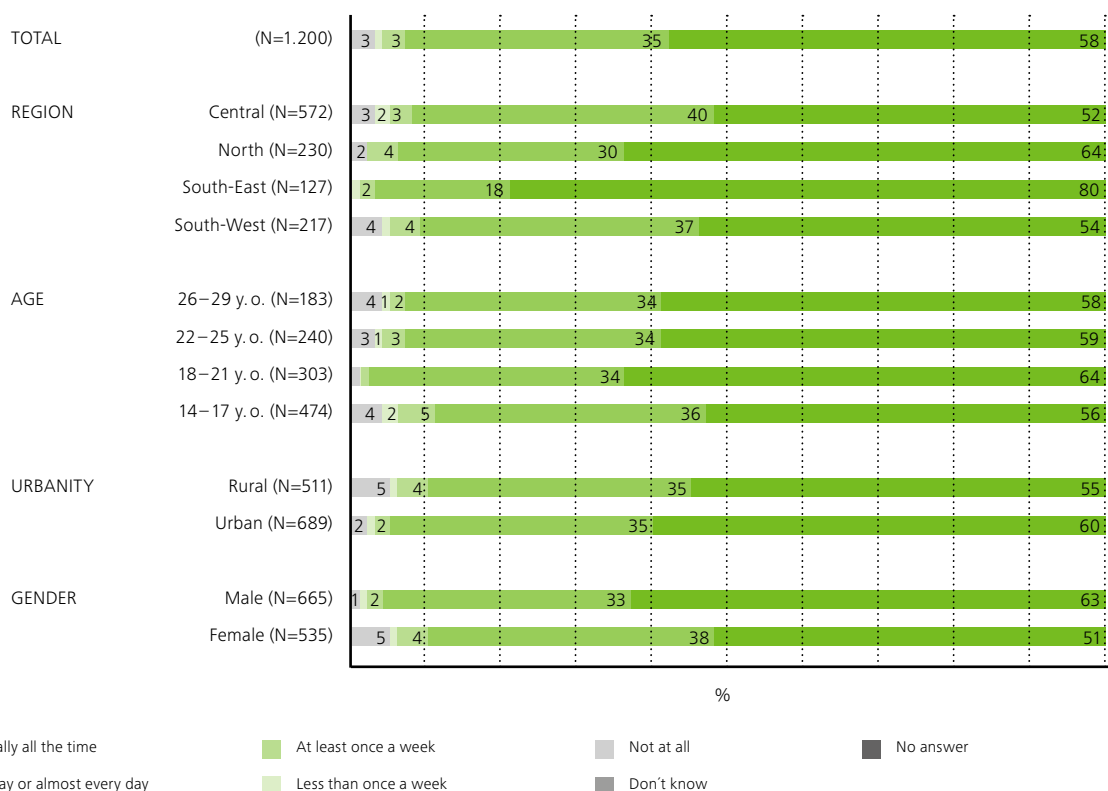
A full third of the young people surveyed said that they pray either every day or often during the week. Another third pray sometimes. Young women seem to pray much more often than young men. Interestingly enough, university graduates also seem to be a group that prays more frequently.

Shopping is an activity that one-third of the young people engage in regularly, with women taking the lead. 45 per cent of females shop frequently compared to just 25 per cent of males. About 1 in 10 young men almost never shop, leaving this task to female members of the family.

Spending time abroad remains a luxury for young people, 51 per cent of whom say that they never do so, while another 35 per cent report that they do so rarely. Only 6 per cent spend time abroad regularly. Young people in urban areas have much more opportunities to spend time abroad. Only 42 per cent of urban youth compared to 63 per cent of rural ones have never been abroad.

On average, young people spend 2.3 hours watching TV – a considerable decrease from previous years. In 2011 and 2014 youth spent 3.1–3.2 hours watching TV. The time spent in front of the big screen has now been shifted to smaller screens – those of smart phones. The least time was spent in front of the television by Tirana youth report at 1.9 hours.

FIGURE 2: Do you regularly have internet access (any: Wi-Fi, smart phone, public, PC ...)?



THE ONLINE REALITY

Access to Internet is a regular activity for about 93 per cent of Albanian youth, up from 85 per cent reported in the past. For the small minority of people who do not enjoy this kind of activity, economic status is the main indicator. 1 in 10 young people from the poorest income bracket do not have access to the Internet.

Young Albanians spend an astonishing amount of time online, about 3.9 hours daily. For males this is even a bit more, at 4.1 hours. The trend is a constantly upwards one, with only 3.2 hours being spent on this activity in 2014 and 2.9 hours in 2014.

The amount of time spent online plays a major role in young people's lives, as they use the World Wide Web for a variety of purposes.

The most frequent uses of Internet include: social networks (87 per cent report very frequent use), communicating for free using platforms such as Skype/ Viber (85 per cent state they do this very often), listening to music (70 per cent) as well as sharing pictures or videos (67 per cent).

These are followed by downloading movies (49 per cent), getting information for school projects and homework (48 per cent) and gaming (38 per cent).

Young people are not well-versed in utilitarian applications of Internet. Hence, these are rare: online shopping and banking are used by 5–10 per cent, while even email is a commonplace activity for only 25 per cent of respondents.

51 per cent of young people use the Internet to get their news and information quite frequently, while another 37 per cent do so occasionally. Older age groups use online news more frequently

than teenagers. This widespread reliance on online news needs to be explored in more detail. One regional report indicates that the countries in southeast Europe and Albania in particular are very vulnerable to the influence of fake news due to their low levels of media literacy.³

Social networks, so widely used by Albanian youth, hold an increasing appeal for them. 21 per cent of the young people report that they have up to 50 friends on the social network they use the most; 37 per cent of them have up to 200 friends, 30 per cent have up to 500 friends while 11 per cent have even more than 500 friends online.

However, when asked to describe how many of them they would consider to be real friends in everyday life, the numbers decrease sharply. On average, young people say that out of their online friends only 29 of them are friends in real life with whom they have close contact. For males, this figure climbs to 32, while for females it is 25. There is therefore a wide gap between the number of friends in social networks and those in the closer environment of everyday life.

Young people were also asked whether and how much they trust the social networks when it comes to protecting their personal data. The survey of course took place before the well-known scandals involving *Cambridge Analytica* ignited a debate about the vast amount of data that companies such as Google and Facebook have on their users and how they profit from it. About 46 per cent of young people do not trust or trust social networks very little. About 24 per cent trust them a lot or even completely, with 29 per cent providing responses in the middle area. Females appear a bit more sceptical about networks than males.

FIGURE 3: How often do you use the internet for the following purposes?

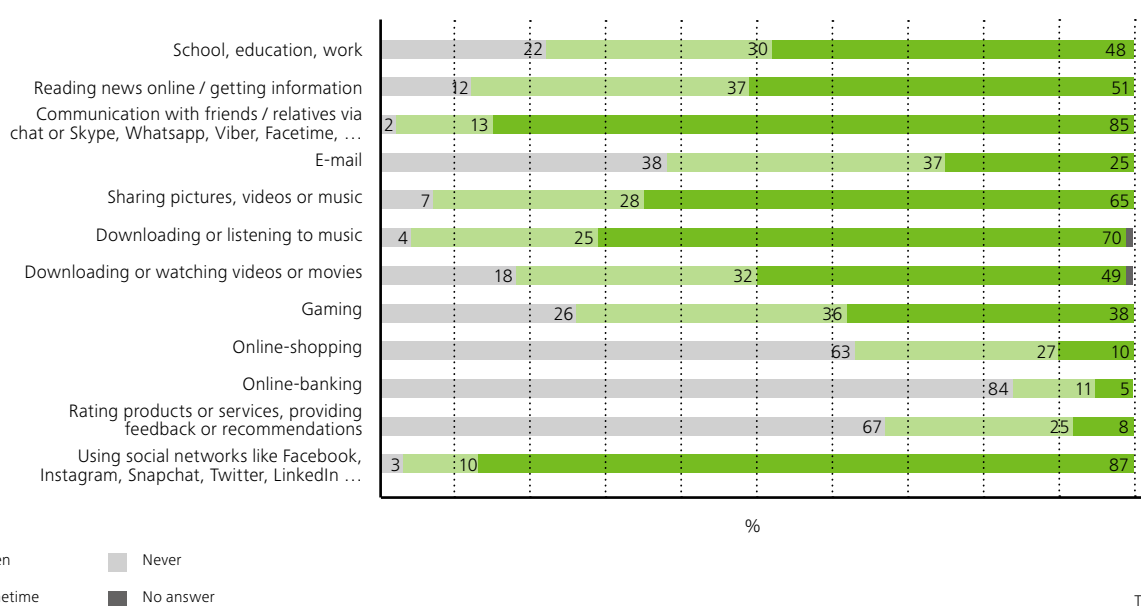


FIGURE 4: Approximately how many friends do you have on the social network that you use the most?

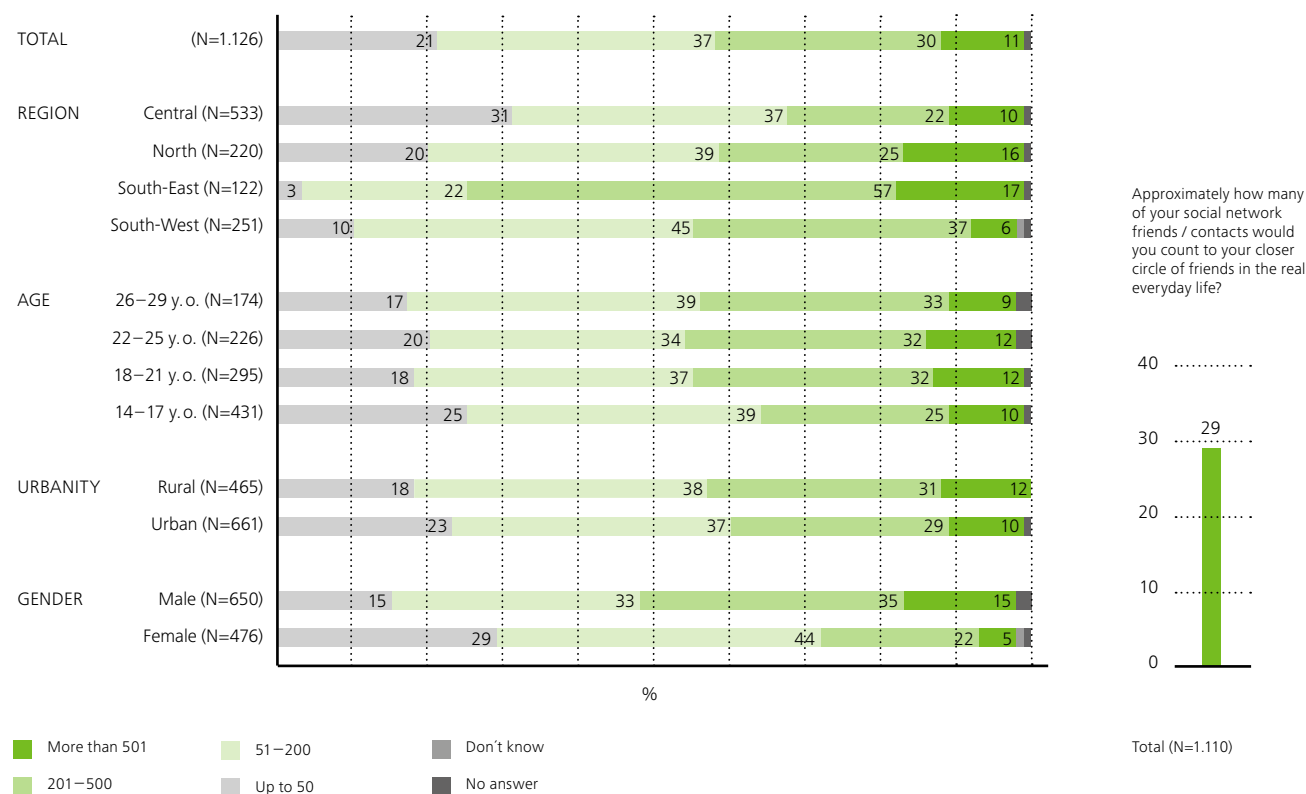


TABLE 2: Life events

Life event	Age	Males	Females	Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education
Finished formal education	18	18	18	15	18	22
Dropped out	17	17	16	15	19	19
Started temporary job	18	17	19	16	18	19
Started full-time job	20	20	21	18	19	22
Moved out of my parents' house	20	19	20	18	20	21
Started paying rent/mortgage	20	20	21	19	20	21
Started living with a partner	21	22	21	19	21	23
Got married	21	23	21	19	21	23
Had first child	22	24	22	21	22	24

OBSERVATIONS RELATED TO LIFE EVENTS

Young people in Albania and in the region in general tend to start their first temporary jobs later than their peers in the west who might become acquainted with temporary jobs through summer gigs and other part-time employment.

Young people who obtained more educational degrees chose to start living with a partner, get married and have a child much later than those with less education. The difference is 3-4 years in time. On the other hand, young people who complete educational studies less often become independent in financial terms by the start of their full-time job or, when

they begin paying rent/mortgage earlier than those who carry on with their educational training, are more likely to be supported by their parents.

The mean age for young Albanian women to get married and have their first child is still quite young. Interestingly, in both these categories there are no significant differences between young people in urban and rural areas, as used to be the case.

As the data in the table shows, moving in with a partner more often than not means getting married for young people in Albania.⁴

44% of young people over 25 have found a solution for their own housing, while those who have secured a job only account for 55 per cent.

MONTHLY BUDGET: SPENDING BEYOND THEIR MEANS

Most young Albanians, two-thirds, report that they have as much money for their personal needs as their peers have. They thus seem to feel equal to the rest of the society, a perplexing result considering rising levels of inequality in the country. 10 per cent believe that they are privileged, as they have more money than others, while 24 per cent state that they have less money than others to spend on their needs.

Young people's needs include various items with the exception of food, tuition fees and occasional expenses for necessities such as medicine/medical costs, travel costs, etc. We have selected three very commonplace expenses – going out, shopping for clothes and paying for cell-phone bills – in order to get a feeling for how much young people need to get by in a month. According to the results of the survey, young people need a budget of roughly 13,800 lek or 105 euros to meet these expenses, whereby about 60 per cent of this sum goes to buying clothes and shoes since they cost the most per item. There are slight variations, with females needing about 1000 lek (7–8 euros) less than men. The biggest differences are to be found between urban and rural dwellers, with the former extending up to 15,000 lek, while the latter only range around 12,000 lek. Financial resources available ultimately determine what young people spend, with young people from the poorest families spending less than 10,000 lek per month, while those in the highest income bracket surpass 18,000 lek.

TABLE 3: **Monetary value in Albanian Lek (ALL)**

To frequent bars, restaurants, cinema, etc. (ALL)	4,915
To buy clothes, shoes, etc. (ALL)	5,625
To buy cell phone cards/pay cell phone bills (ALL)	1,164
Other (ALL)	2,031
TOTAL	13,736

As the data shows, the average budget required by young people, in addition to the money needed for food, medicine and educational fees, amounts to about 13735 lek, or roughly 105 euros. This budget is quite high compared to average wages in Albania, which average less than 400 euros per month⁵.

CONCLUSION

School as an afternoon meeting-place as well as activity centres feature a program announced with much fanfare by the current administration, but which in reality has not worked well for much more than a few school in major urban areas. Looking at the data in this chapter, it would appear that there is a need especially for groups like young girls living in rural areas to have more opportunities to improve the quality of their social lives. This program should thus be revived and reinforced, as it is best positioned to produce benefits, even in remote areas.

Digital literacy and entrepreneurship programs are needed to educate young people and convey to them skills to use the Internet for constructive purposes such as education, their occupation and social engagement. Young people seem to spend hours chatting or checking social media, while the constructive time they spend online is very limited.

Finally, family-planning programs should also be reconsidered, as these best serve young adults in those ages in which young people marry and have children, often preceding the age when they get a house and job.

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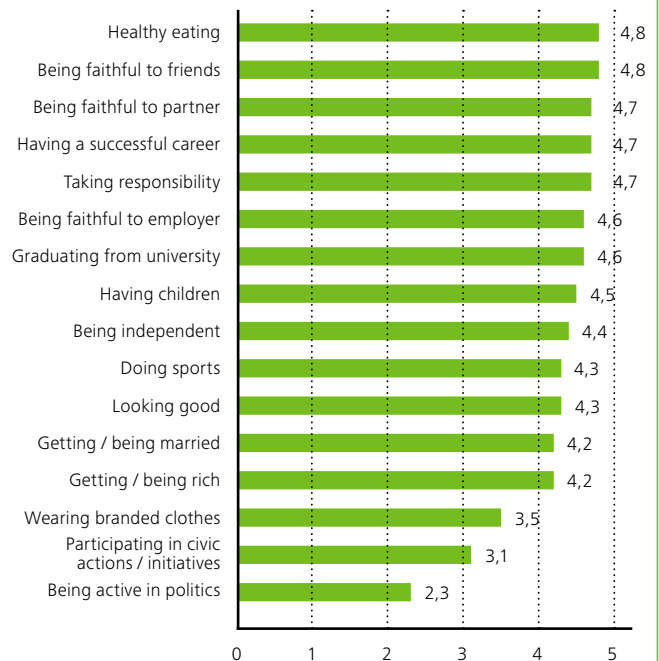
VALUES, RELIGION AND TRUST

- Young people are very optimistic about the future of their lives but much more sceptical about the future of Albanian society as a whole.
- Being poor unemployed and affected by corruption are the three main concerns for young people.
- Young people trust their families and remain significantly sceptical of about everyone else.
- The young generation in Albania is increasingly showing signs of tolerating and accepting illegal practices especially when it comes to employment and solving personal problems.
- Most Albanian young people identify themselves with one of the key religious confessions in Albania and for more than 62 per cent of them God has a special place in their lives. However, religion is still an aspect of identification and spirituality rather than a practice, since less than 15 per cent of young people attend rituals regularly.

VALUES AND OPTIMISM

Similar to previous years, young Albanians for the most part ascribe to conservative and family values and display a lack of interest in being active in civic affairs. Apart from healthy eating, which is obviously important to them for personal reasons, other things that they value highly are being faithful to friends, partners and employers, and having a successful career. These all rank 4.8 and 4.7 out of a maximum 5; the greatest importance is attached to these values. Of those who place the utmost value on having a good career, the majority are females. The same also applies to the value placed on a university degree. Females register a difference of 10–15 points in comparison to men with regard to assigning the greatest importance to both education and career.

FIGURE 5: How much are the following items important to you?

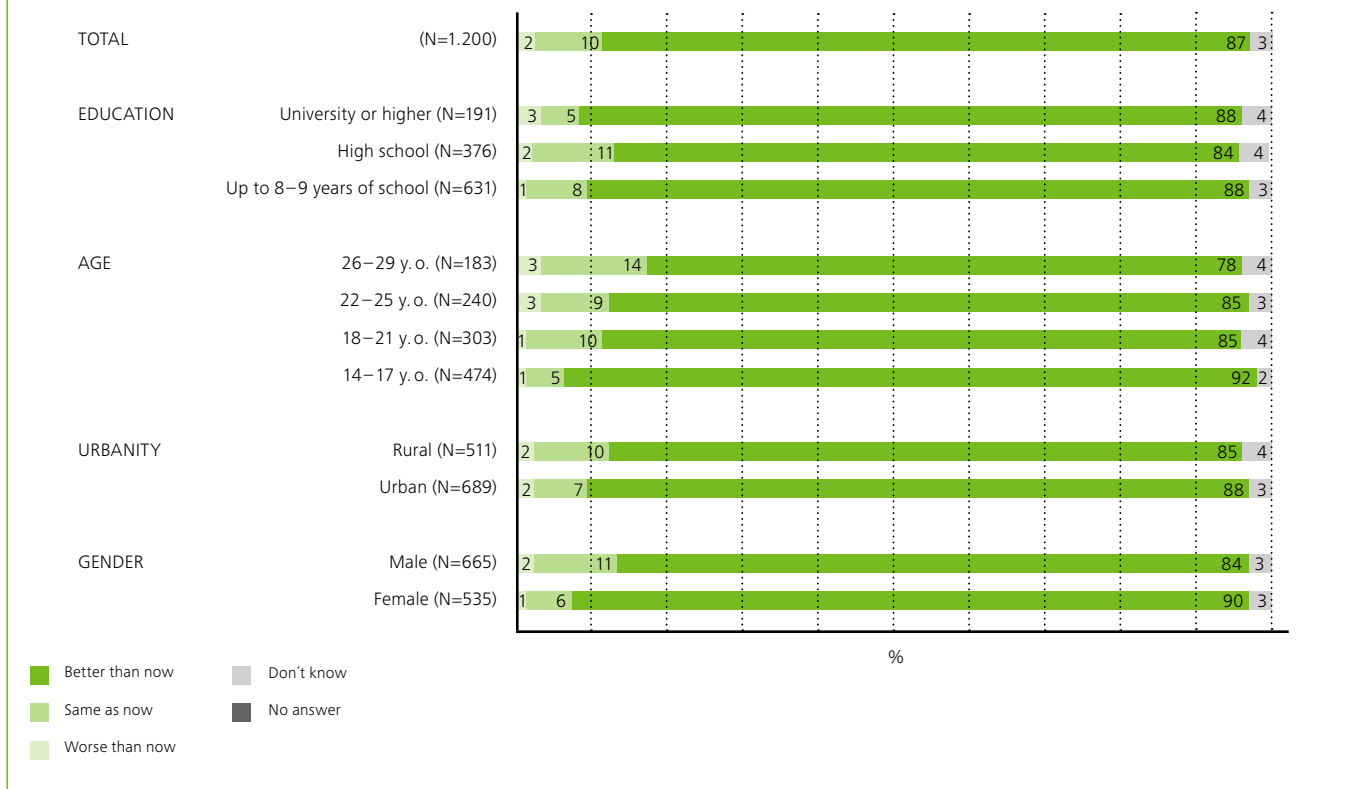


On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Not at all" and 5 means "Very important"

Taking responsibility is also a consistent value that crops up repeatedly in the surveys, including those conducted in the past, with this value being assigned 4.7 out of a maximum of 5 points this year.

Having children and getting married seem to have about the same importance for both men and women, with children interestingly enough being slightly more important overall than marriage.

FIGURE 6: How do you see your personal future in 10 years?



Some interesting results are to be seen with regard to “an attractive appearance” and “wearing brands”, where men are equal or, in the case of clothing, surpass women in the importance they assign to these values. Unfortunately, being active in politics and in civic affairs are ranked last in importance by young people, indicating their disdain for, and disenchantment with, public life in Albania.

SATISFACTION, CONCERNS AND OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

Young people were asked to evaluate their overall satisfaction with their personal and occupational lives. On a scale where 5 indicates maximum satisfaction, young people appear to be very satisfied with their family life (4.7/5) and quite satisfied with their circle of friends. The least satisfaction they expressed was with their education and job, respectively rated at 3.9 and 3.6 on a scale of 5. In general life terms, the level of satisfaction was also positive at 4.3/5. The most significant differences with regard to life satisfaction within groups were related to current economic status, with young people coming from poor families generally reporting lower levels of life satisfaction than their peers from richer backgrounds.

Young people are very optimistic about what the future holds for them personally. The vast majority, 87 per cent, report that they believe it will be much better, while only 9 per cent think it will be the same and a small group of just 2 per cent expect it to

get worse. The figures are virtually unchanged from those reported back in 2014.

However, when it comes to expressing their expectations of the future for Albania and Albanian society in general, they are decidedly less optimistic. In this case, only 55 per cent believe it will be better, while 23 per cent think it will not change. Another 15 per cent think things will get worse for Albania. Among the optimistic members of the group, young people from the south stand out in much larger numbers.

When considering the biggest fears young people cite, the most serious concerns relate to their living standards and more concretely to their economic situation. **Being poor, unemployed and affected by corruption are the three main concerns voiced by young people.** In all three cases, more than half of the respondents reported being **very fearful** of these scenarios.

These are followed by fears relating to pollution and climate change, social injustice and illness. Being victims of violence and robbery do not appear to be major fears, but the figures here are more significant in the case of females, who report being more afraid of these situations compared to males.

Young people in Albania, who are for the most part not exposed to major conflicts and remain unaffected by major inflows of migrants or refugees, report the least amount of fear with regard to wars, terrorist attacks or having too many migrants in their country. These remain entirely hypothetical scenarios for most persons surveyed.

The hierarchy of importance and fear associated with these concerns seem to be largely unchanged since 2014, when poten-

FIGURE 7: How do you see the future of Albanian society in general?

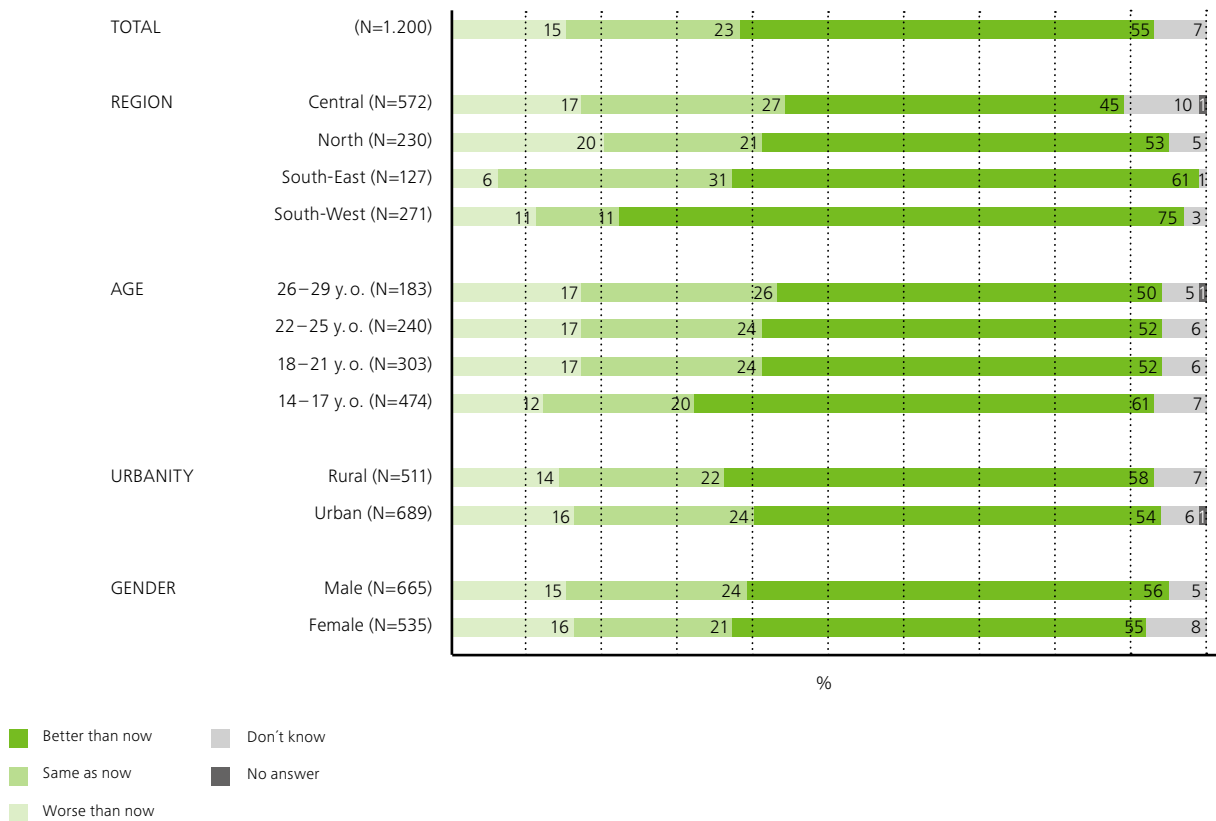
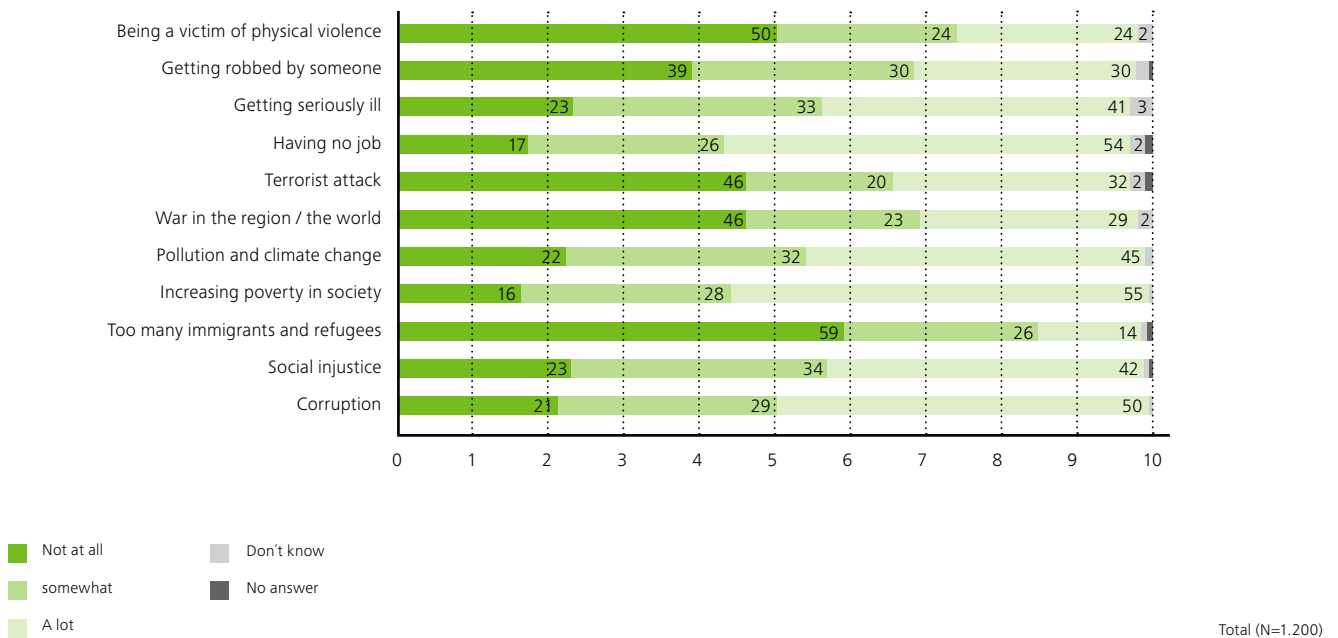


FIGURE 8: To what extent are you frightened of the following things?



tial negative economic developments also topped the list of fears, while security concerns did not preoccupy young people.

Young people were asked to point out whether various behaviours and actions were acceptable on a scale with 10 indicating complete acceptability. Informal practices that lead to greater

chances of becoming employed or solving personal problems were assigned almost average scores of 4.7 and 4.6 out of 10 by young people. The informal practice of using connections to find jobs, receive better treatment at hospitals and beneficial handling by government authorities is widespread in Albania, where petty

FIGURE 9: In your opinion, the following behaviors can always be justified, can never be justified, or something in between.

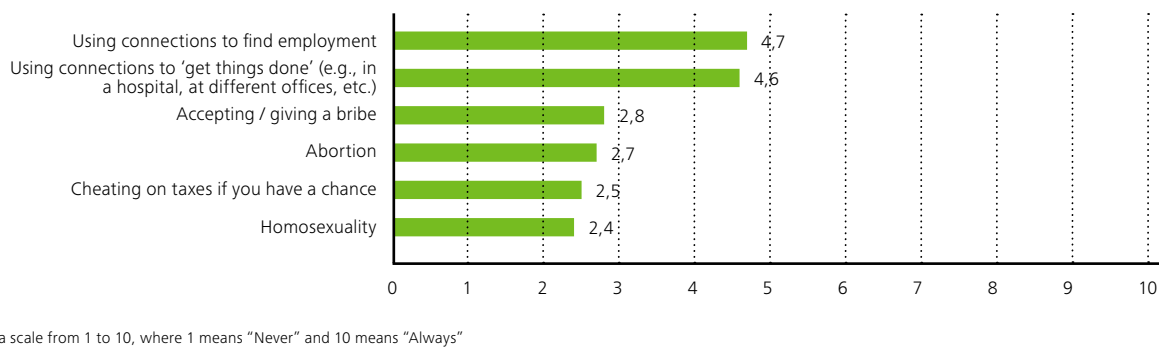
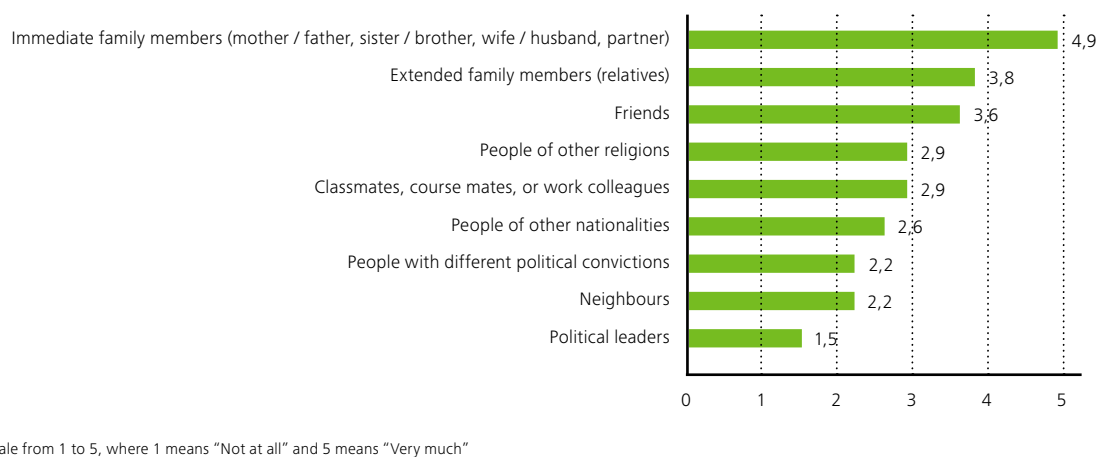


FIGURE 10: To what degree do you trust the following people?



corruption is almost as rampant as large-scale corruption. Especially when it comes to finding a job, as much as 20 per cent of all young people said it is always justified to use connections to secure employment. These results are corroborated by other research showing Albania to have the greatest levels of tolerance towards corruption in the region, with almost half of the people surveyed considering it acceptable to give bribes in return for services and favours.⁶

Similarly, in a survey undertaken by EBRD this year, 43 per cent of Albanians chose political connections as the key factor that determines success in life, similar to responses in Bosnia and Macedonia.⁷

The fact that there seems to be a certain degree of tolerance towards these practices on the part of the next generation is cause for concern looking towards the future. This result is also very telling when considering the fact that young people simultaneously report that they fear corruption. It seems that they would rather actively engage in it than be a victim of it.

Cheating on taxes, abortion and homosexuality seem to be the three least accepted things for young people with the latter item receiving a score of 2.4 out of 10. Bribes also rank at 2.8/10, although research on corruption carried out in 2016 shows that

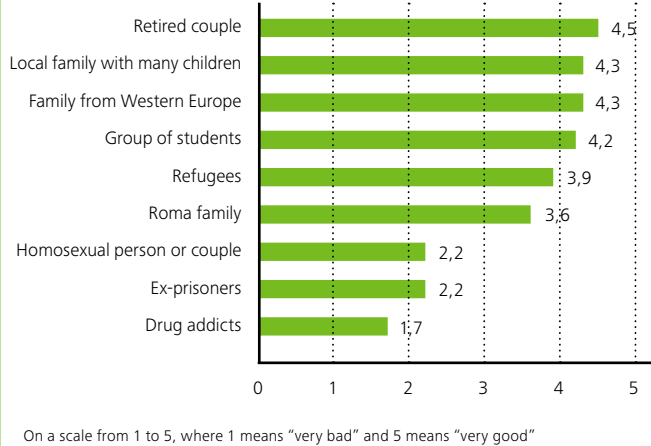
at least 40 per cent of Albanians surveyed admitted to giving bribes and 16 per cent did favours along unofficial lines.⁸

TRUST AND COMMUNITY

Just as in previous years, family members are the people most trusted by youngsters, receiving a score of 4.9 out of a maximum of 5. All other categories display a significant difference. Relatives come in at a second, although distant, 3.8 – similar to friends at 3.6. Young people still continue to have very little trust in classmates and colleagues at work, who are only assigned 2.9, a score similar to that assigned to people from other religions.

People with different political convictions as well as neighbours in general receive a score of 2.2, indicating a general scepticism held by young people towards them. Last in the category are political leaders, who receive a score less than 2. This is in line with all other research carried out, which reflects the disenchantment and scepticism of young people towards their leaders in the political arena.

FIGURE 11: **How would you feel, if one of the following families or persons moved into your neighborhood?**



In order to gauge stereotypes and probable discrimination, young people were confronted in the survey with a hypothetical situation in which people with certain traits become their neighbours. They are asked how they would feel about this.

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating extremely negative feelings, young people state that they would feel worst if drug addicts, homosexual couples or former inmates moved in next to them. These three categories hover around a score of 2. Reception of Roma families averages about 3.6, while even refugees do better at 3.9. Once again, the refugee scenario remains quite hypothetical in comparison to other categories, for which previous experiences might come into play.

Young people would have no problem with the following groups of persons, who are assigned scores above 4: retired couples, students, families with many children or families from Western Europe.

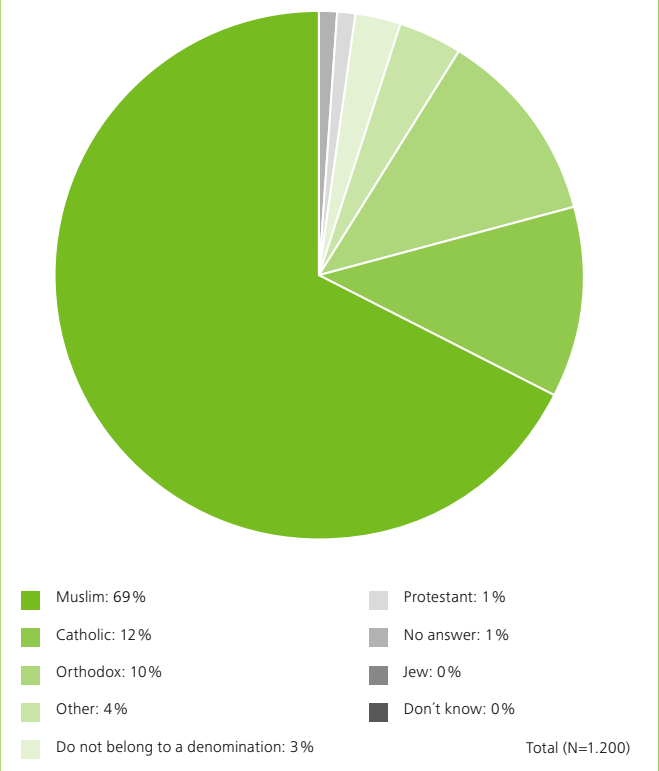
Asked whether they themselves have ever been at the receiving end of discrimination, young people in Albania appear to be quite fortunate, reporting very low levels of discriminatory practice and, when they do, on a moderate scale.

Only 12 per cent of women report gender discrimination, in which most of them have experienced this at some time, but not constantly. 16 per cent of young people say they have been subjected to discrimination based on their economic status, with poor young people leading here (28 per cent claim they have suffered discrimination). But 11 per cent of the richest young people also report being discriminated against. There is minimal discrimination based on regional origin or educational level, with around 7–8 per cent of young people reporting that they have experienced this at some point.

According to young people's individual assessments, there is virtually no ethnic or religious discrimination in their country.

FAITH AND PRACTICE

FIGURE 12: **Which religious denomination, if any, do you belong to?**



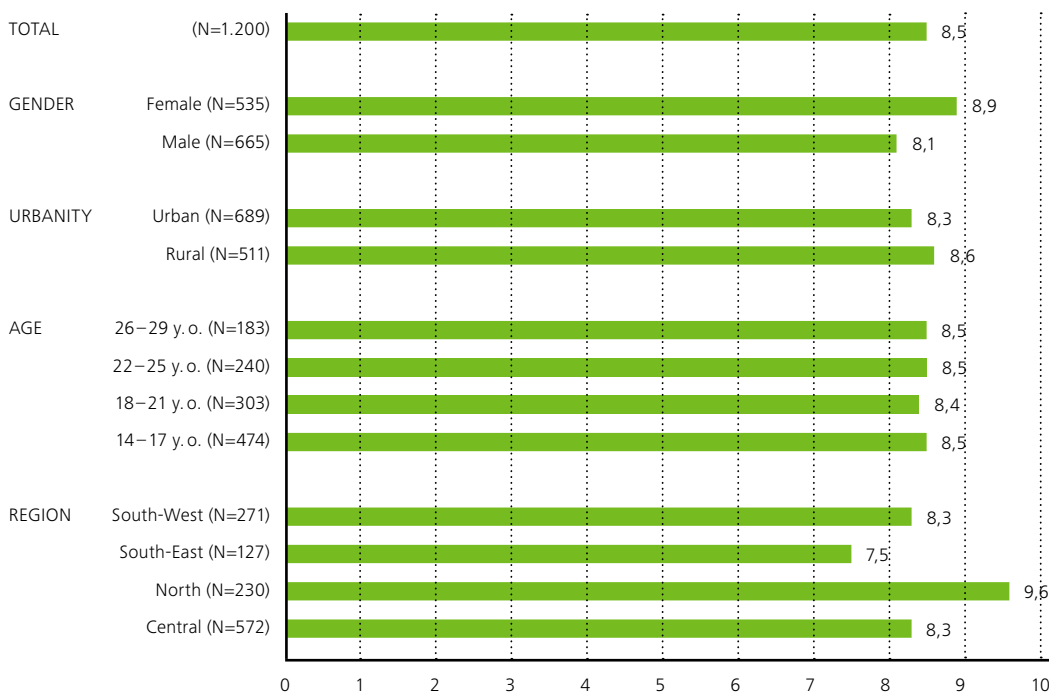
The majority of young Albanians say that they belong to the Muslim denomination (69 per cent), down from 2014 (76 per cent). Roman Catholics and Christian Orthodox communities are second at 12 and 10 per cent, respectively, while 4 per cent profess to be members of the Bektashi faith.

Asked about the importance of God in their lives, most young people (62 per cent) say that God is very important to them, with females taking a light lead at 70 per cent compared to 56 per cent of males. 9 per cent of young people seem to be in the middle, while only 3–4 per cent say it does not hold any importance for them whatsoever.

Just as in previous years, however, faith and religion serve more as points of identification rather than permanent fixtures in their lives.

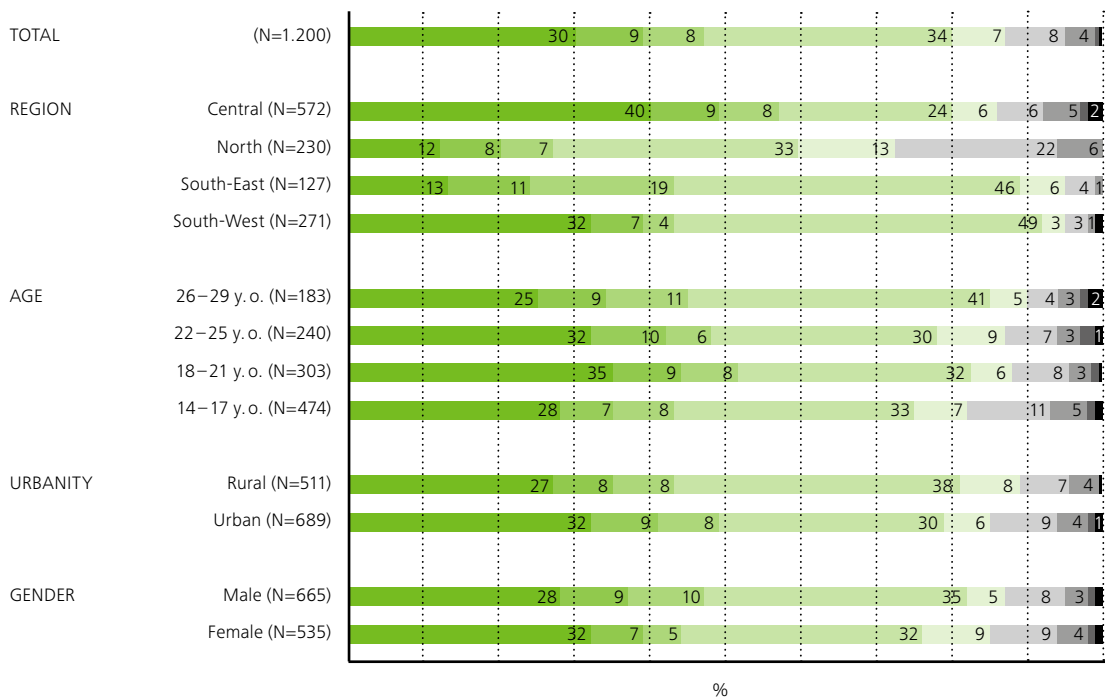
Asked about the frequency in which they attend religious services (*apart from weddings and funerals*), 30 per cent of young people say that they never attend such, while another 17 per cent say they attend such a maximum of once a year. A third of young people, about 34 per cent, do so only on holy days, while only 12 per cent attend services at least once a week. Data is similar to 2014, when 23 per cent also stated that they never practiced religion, while 61 per cent stated that they did so on holidays (back then the question was not unattached from attending services or performing other similar rituals).

FIGURE 13: How important is God in your life?



On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 means "very important" and 1 means "not at all important."

FIGURE 14: Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services these days?



■ Practically never ■ Only on special holy days ■ More than once a week
■ Less than once a year ■ About once a month ■ Don't know
■ About once a year ■ About once a week ■ No answer

Data from the section on leisure pursuits also indicates that one-third of young people pray. Hence faith and religiosity is something more personal and private for young people than a way of life that is visible to the outside world through the practice of rituals. Another survey carried out at a global level also indicated that, compared to other countries, Albania also seems to be less religious, with only 39 per cent of people describing themselves as religious.⁹

When asked about their parents, 48 per cent of young people say that their parents are either very religious or rather religious, while 23 per cent say that their parents are moderately religious. About 28 per cent report that their parents are not religious. The importance and presence of religion in Albanian families and therefore its importance for youth is still in transition, since their parents spent most of their lives under communism, when the ban on religious practice was harshly enforced.

CONCLUSION

For many young people, wearing brands is more important than being socially or politically active. The level of any form of social trust beyond the close family is virtually zero. Simultaneously, young people are becoming more comfortable with using connections and favours to solve problems and especially to get jobs. No wonder they view the collective future more sceptically than their personal one. Engaging in social activism even in the simplest form of volunteering is something that should be taught and encouraged in widely effective venues like schools. Meritocracy is harder to teach if not practiced, but it should be better promoted as a value nevertheless. Otherwise the pattern of complaining, yet being unwilling to engage oneself on the part of young people will in the future calcify into a passive citizen who only mobilises for narrow personal issues by using illicit means, aka connections. This spells major risks for democracy and development in a country which needs to complete a tough transition in both of these areas

5

FAMILY & FRIENDS

MAIN FINDINGS

- 82 per cent of young people continue to live with their parents
- 58 per cent of young people say they will raise their children the same way their parents raised them
- 74 per cent of young people tend to make decisions in close consultation with their parents
- 88 per cent of young people see themselves getting married and having a family in the future
- 83 per cent of young people value their partner's personality as very important
- 64 per cent of young people claim that having many friends is important to attaining a happy life
- 90 per cent of young people from the wealthier strata claim to have friends from other social strata

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Relationship with parents and family

According to the study's findings, Albanian youth are carrying on **the trend of living at home with their parents**. 82 per cent of them admit to be living with their parents, and findings show an increase from 80 per cent¹⁰ in 2015. There are no major differences between rural and urban areas and in a socio-economic context the family remains a stable environment. On the other hand, only 1 per cent of young people interviewed live on their own and only 3 per cent live with friends, indicating a persistent traditional approach among Albanian youth in this regard. In addition, 84 per cent of young people who come from wealthier strata and enjoy good economic opportunities still live at home with their parents, thereby contributing to this phenomena taking on the status of a social stereotype.

According to the majority of respondents, **the average size of their family** does not exceed four members, whilst it goes up to five members in rural areas, where a larger family is strongly linked to the needs of rural household economy. In addition, of those still living in the paternal/maternal home, 95 per cent claim they live with both parents, an indication of united families – in itself an important factor in young people's emotional stability.

Besides living at home with parents, few young Albanians experience an independent life. Meanwhile, 6 per cent claim they live in a home they have purchased on their own or with their partner. In this regard, females lead the way at 12 per cent, whilst males lag behind at only 1 per cent. The tendency is higher in the 26-29-year-old age group, a phase in which individuals seek lasting relationships and couples seek access to an independent life. On the other hand, 4 per cent of young people rent a house/apartment on their own. Renting is a wider practice in Tirana at 13 per cent as opposed to only 4 per cent in other cities. An interesting fact is that none of those interviewed was living in a student dormitory. Besides deteriorating dormitory conditions, this fact attests to students from different cities wanting to experience urban life.

Beyond the desire for an independent life, 78 per cent of young people interviewed claim that cohabitating with their parents is more convenient for them, marking an increase from 70 per cent¹¹ in 2015. Only 17 per cent of young people would choose to live on their own if they had the financial means. The huge difference in these statistics reflects the insecurity of young Albanians as regards the "independent lifestyle" model due to tradition, the care provided by the Albanian family and the unstable socio-economic conditions characterising a small economy like Albania. The age group of 22-25-year-olds registers the lowest percentage, with 66 per cent advocating co-habitation with their parents. At this age, young people are supposed to have completed university studies and be in the process of seeking a social and occupational identity of their own as well as live separately from their parents.

FIGURE 15: Where do you live?

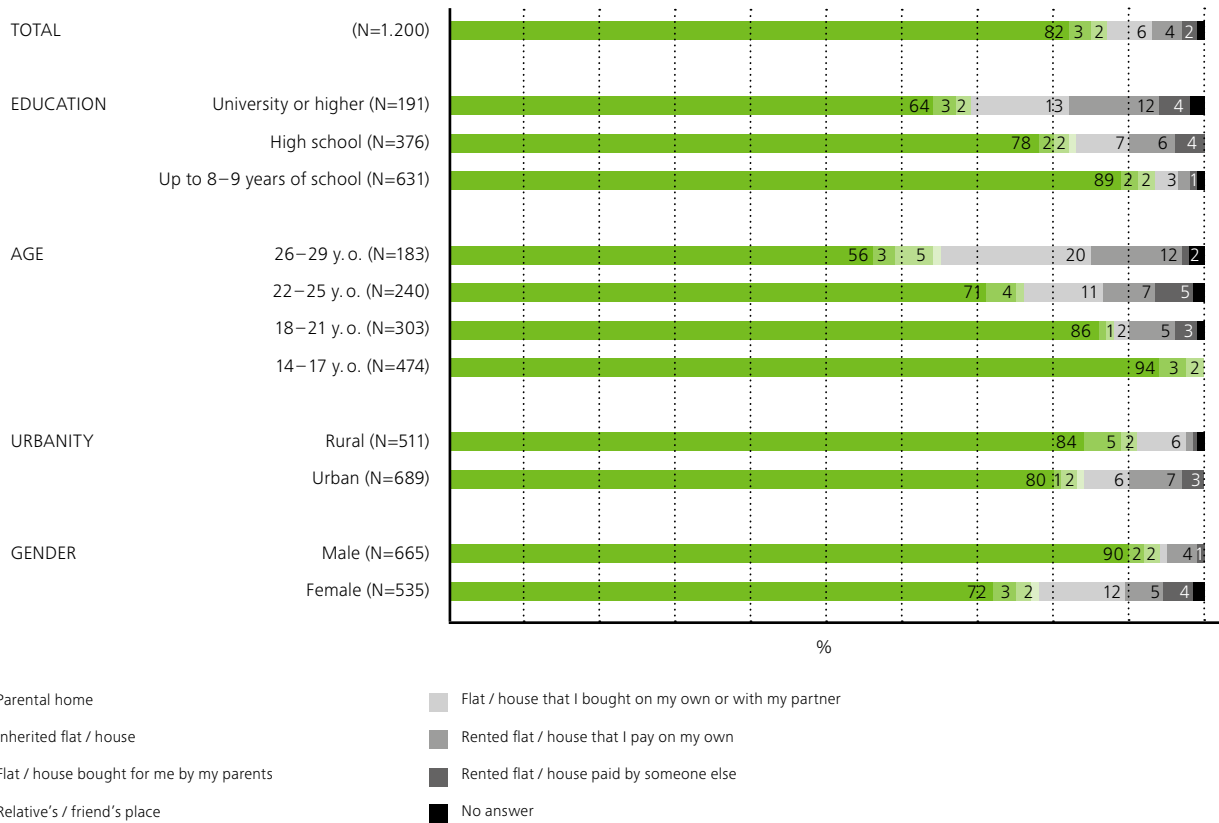
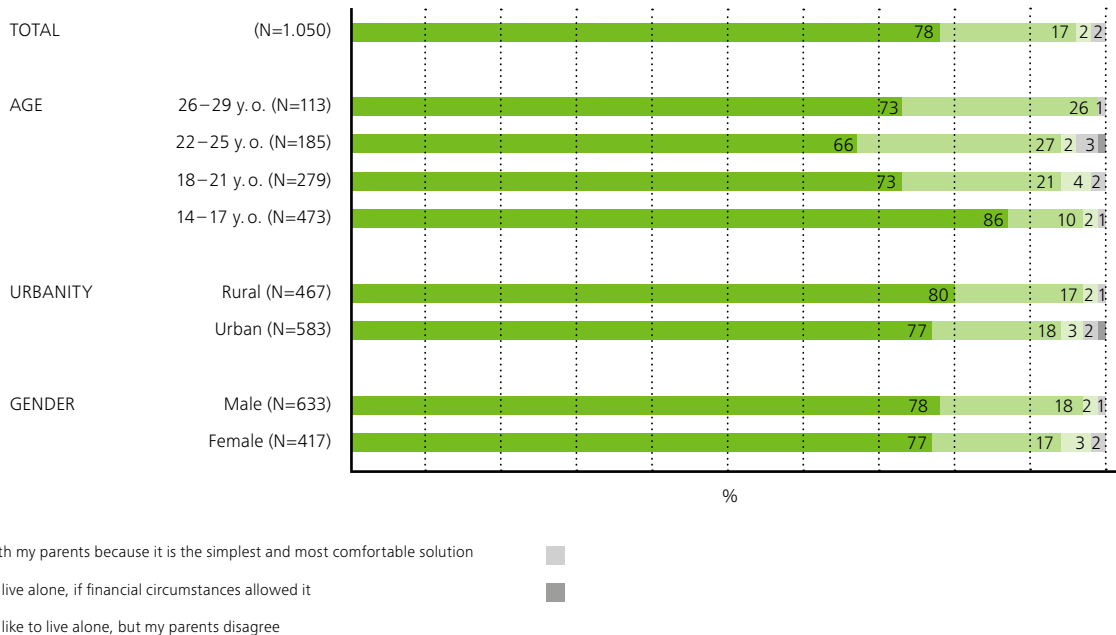


FIGURE 16: Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



Co-habiting with parents for a long time can be explained by the quality of the relationship young people have with other family members, where 60 per cent of respondents claim to experience no problems and enjoy a very good relationship. In this case, the data show males to be more positive than females at 63 per

cent and 56 per cent, respectively. The difference is related to the fact that the traditional Albanian family exercises greater control over females, which in turn may be a cause for more confrontations. This is evidenced by the fact that 43 per cent of females claim to experience some conflicts with their family versus 35 per

FIGURE 17: Which of the following statements best describes your relationship with your parents?

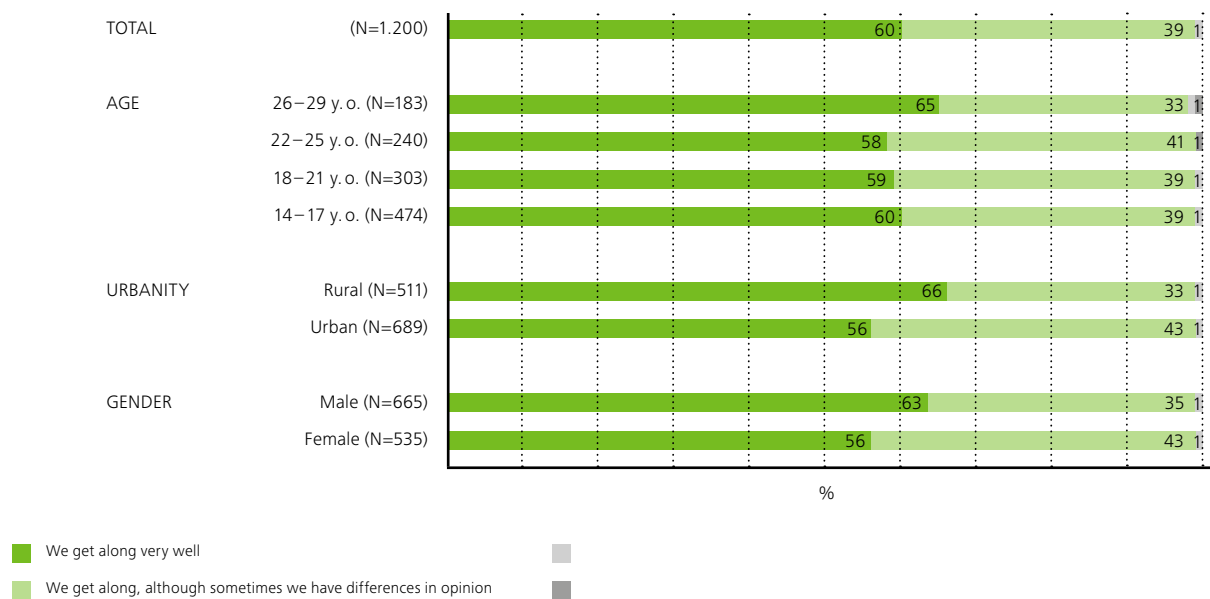
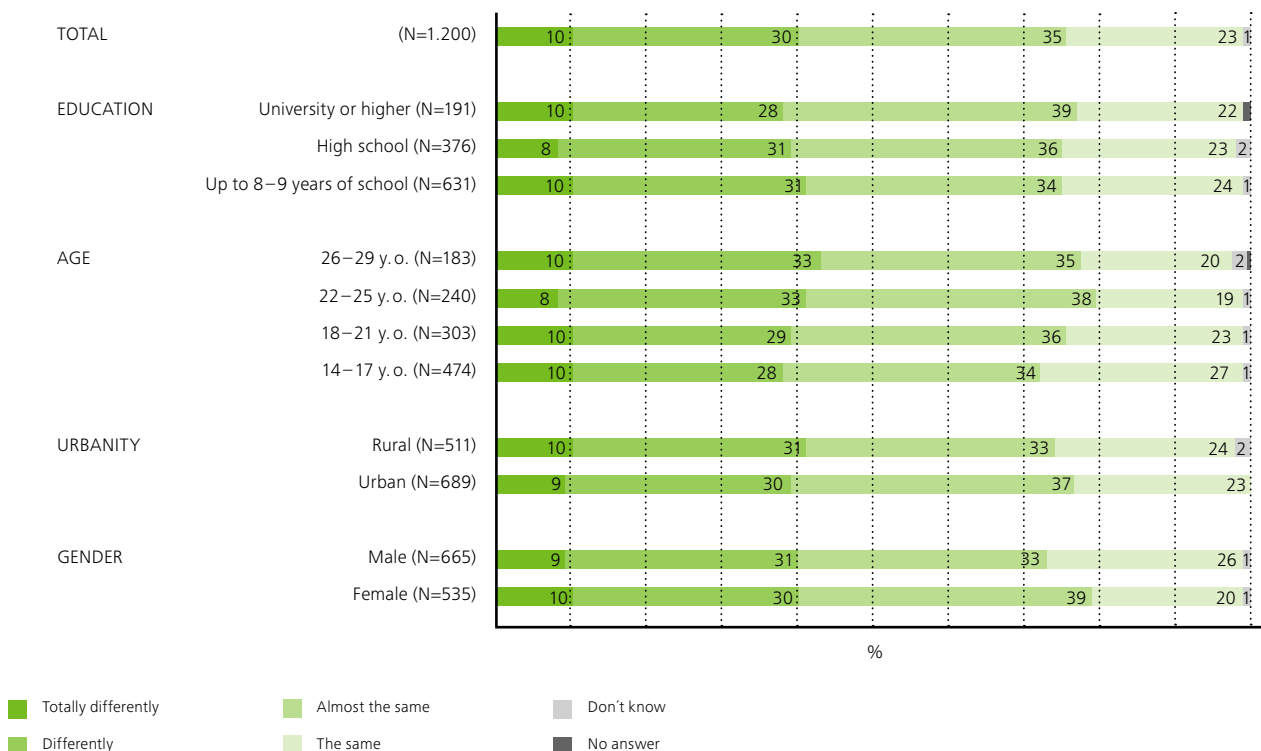


FIGURE 18: Would you raise your children like your parents raised you, or would you do it differently?



cent of boys. On the other hand, 53 per cent of young people from urban areas claim to have some conflicts with their parents compared to only 33 per cent of their rural counterparts, indicating that obedience to family authority is stronger in rural areas.

However, one element in support of the “strong” family model impact on youth is the finding that 58 per cent of respondents assert that they want to raise their children in the same way their

parents raised them. Only 30 per cent of respondents claim they will raise their children differently. The role of the strong family is passed down to the following generation and there are no major differences between rural and urban areas, attesting to a national trend.

The decision-making process for young Albanians is characterised by a close relationship with parents. About 74 per cent

admit they take their decisions in close consultation with their parents. There is no difference between rural and urban youth compared to 2015 findings, although there is an increase here among Tirana's young people from 67.5 per cent in 2015 to 74 per cent in 2018. The family exercises its decisive role in the decision-making of young people based on who holds more author-

ity, the father or the mother. 57 per cent of respondents claim the father plays a bigger role in their decision-making. Compared to 2015 findings, when 61.5 per cent of respondents made the same claim, there is a slight drop in the father's authority on young people's decision-making.¹² From a gender-relations context, 66 per cent of males state that their father plays a bigger role in their

FIGURE 19: Who, among your family members or acquaintances, has most influence on your important decisions?

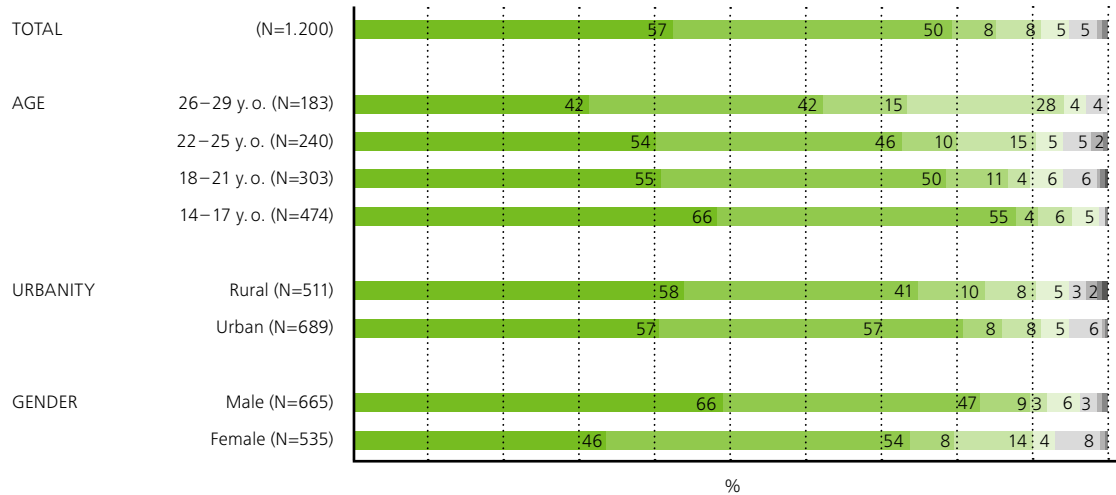


FIGURE 20: Do your parents influence important decisions about your life?

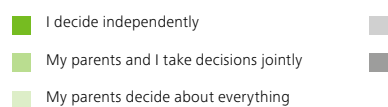
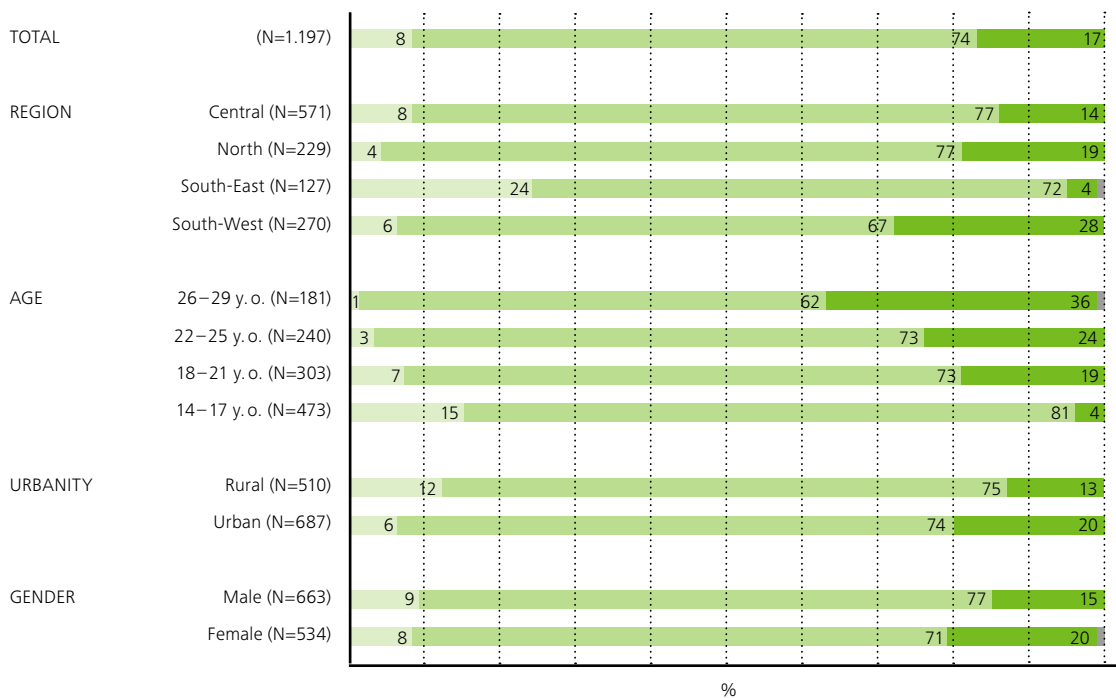
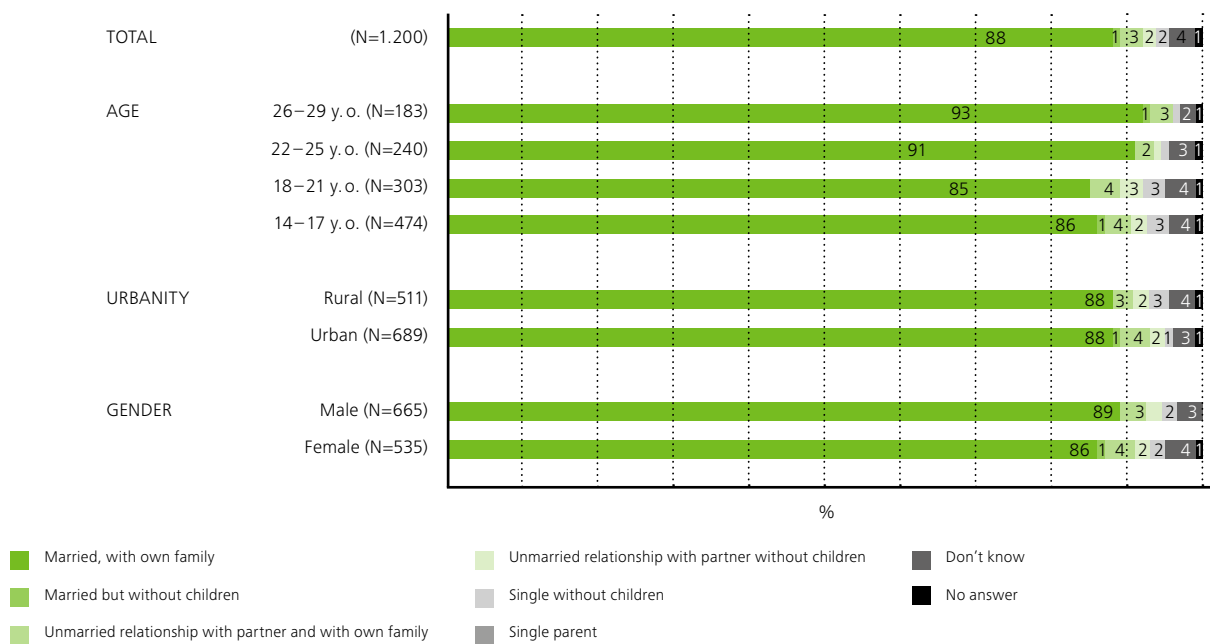


FIGURE 21: **How do you see yourself in the future?**



decision-making versus only 46 per cent of females. As far as the authority of the mother is concerned, 50 per cent of young people claim she plays a more decisive role in their decision-making. Compared to 2015 findings, the role of the mother has registered a significant increase among females, surging from 29.9 per cent to 54 per cent. In addition, mothers exercise a more decisive influence on urban youth than rural youth at 56 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. Such a difference attests to the more traditional model of the rural family, where the father holds a position of higher authority.

When it comes to **the role of siblings**, it is striking that only 5 per cent of Albanian youth state that their siblings have an impact on their decision-making. Other family members, such as grandparents, also seem to play an insignificant role in the decision-making of young people, with only 1 per cent of the respondents stating some degree of influence being exercised by grandparents. An interesting factor is that friends do not seem to have much of an impact in the decision-making of young Albanians, thus attesting to the stronger role of other factors. Only 8 per cent of youth admit to making decisions in an independent manner, implying that they closely consult with the most relevant family members, such as the father and/or the mother, when it comes to making important decisions.

When it comes to the most important decisions in life, however, 74 per cent of respondents tend to closely consult their parents. In this regard, 36 per cent of the 26-29-year-old age group tend to make these decisions independently. 24 per cent of young people from southeast Albania exhibit the most pronounced tendency to consult their parents before any decision they make.

MARRIAGE AND COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Young Albanians value the institution of marriage consistently highly. The findings show that 88 per cent of them see themselves in the future as being married and having a family. In this regard, it is worth noting a significant increase from 2015, when 80 per cent of young people responded in the same manner¹³. In addition,

FIGURE 22: **What is your current status?**

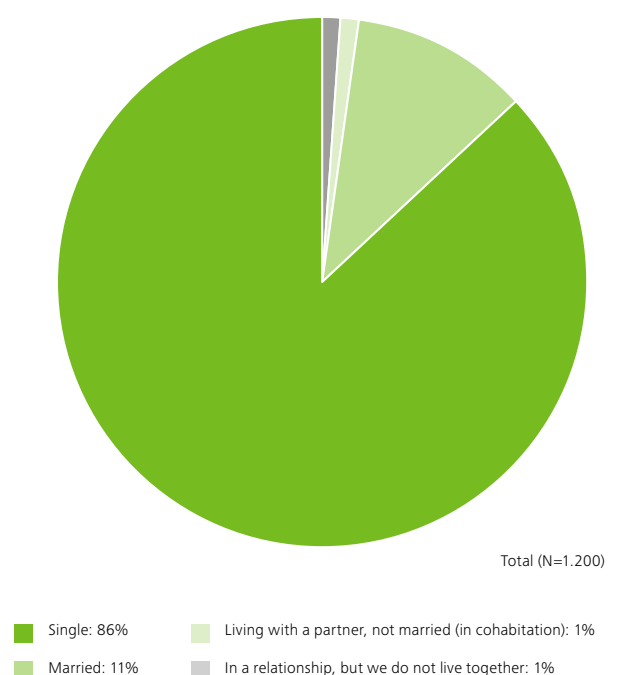
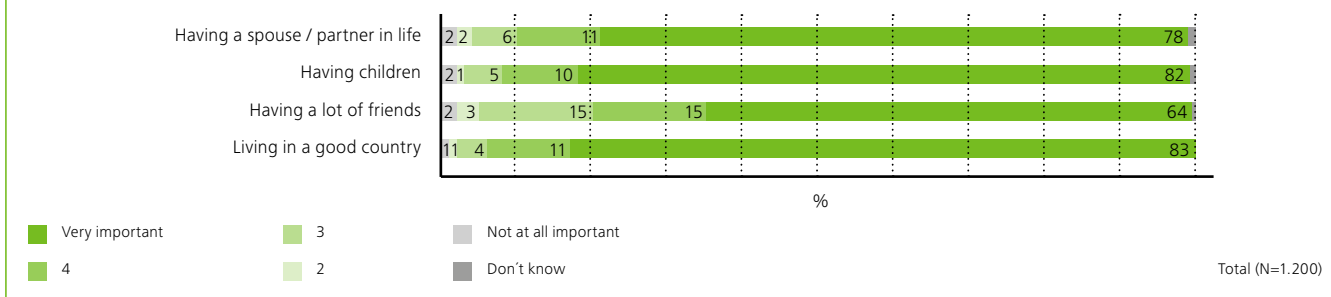


FIGURE 23: How important for a happy life, in your opinion, are the following things?



gender differences remain insignificant, with 86 per cent of males and 88 per cent of females expressing their support for marriage.

About 86 per cent of respondents reported their status as single and only 11 per cent were married. However, their support of the institution of marriage as a future prospect in their lives demonstrates their willingness to follow tradition. This is further attested by the fact that 78 per cent of young people consider being in a relationship to be a very important element in a happy life.

Living in a good place factors into a happy life and 83 per cent of respondents consider this element to be imperative to spiritual well-being.

According to young Albanians, the best age for females to get married is at the age of 25 to 26. Again, there are no differences between urban, rural, and geographical areas. On the other hand, this is another indicator reflecting the prevailing traditional psychology of Albanians, according to which females in this age group, including university graduates, must get married.

When it comes to males, the majority of respondents have identified the age of 28 to 29 to be the best age for marriage. Even here we notice a tendency to follow traditional norms, according to which males must be older when they get married than females, since they carry a greater weight in the family. All economic strata have stated the same optimal age group for marriage, apparently reflecting a social norm of Albanian society.

The importance of family for young Albanians is emphasised by a strong correlation between happiness and having children. 82 per cent of respondents state that having children is imperative to a happy life. As for the number of children they wish to have, the majority of young people expressed a preference for two children. The data does not reflect any major differences between rural and urban areas as regards the preference for the number of children. Compared to 2015, young Albanians, independently of their economic strata or geographical origin, have identified magic number "2" as the "golden mean" that guarantees the socio-economic stability of the family.¹⁴

The majority of respondents stated a desire to have their first-born at age 27 on average. Females expressed a preference for age 26, males for age 29. Yet again, males' preference to become fathers at a later age reflects an attitude gravitating toward the traditional model of the Albanian family, where the father is supposed to be the breadwinner.

Young Albanians pay close attention and evaluate and weigh out special factors when choosing a partner.

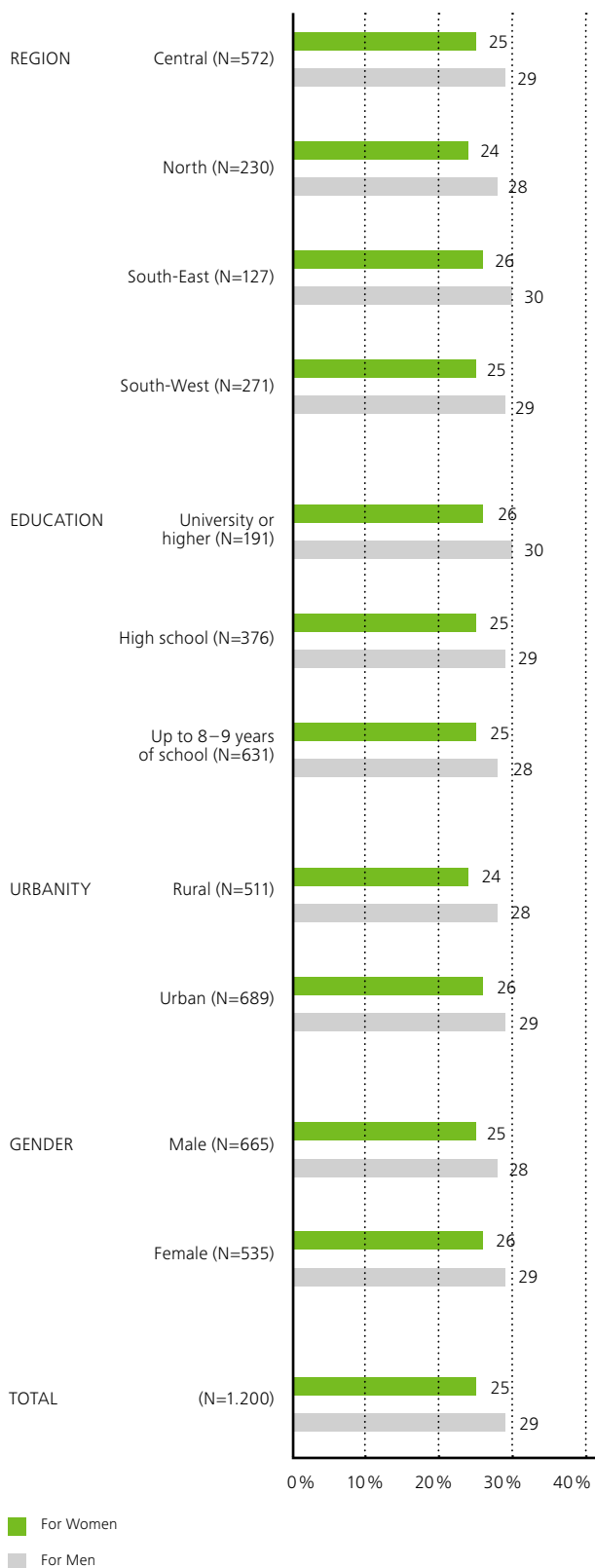
When asked about the importance of their partner's religious affiliation, 52 per cent of respondents stated that this does not matter to them. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 19 per cent of young people consider this factor to be very important. Of the latter, 25 per cent come from smaller communities in rural areas, where religious identity is stronger.

Economic status is also important when choosing a potential partner. However, only 22 per cent of young Albanians consider it to be very important when deciding to start a relationship, whilst 31 per cent consider it to be not important at all. Compared to 2015, when 42 per cent of young people considered economic status to be very important, the latest findings reflect a shift in values among the young generation with regard to starting a family.¹⁵

Yet again, the family plays a decisive role when young Albanians choose a partner. 69 per cent of respondents admit the family's approval is a key element when choosing a partner. Nevertheless, there is a regress when compared to 2015, when 76 per cent answered the same way.¹⁶ The latest findings suggest that young Albanians are seeking a more independent role from family authority when choosing a partner. A family's approval holds more weight among females, 56 per cent of whom attest to its importance, as opposed to only 46 per cent of males. Geographically speaking, a family's approval holds more weight in northern regions at 63 per cent, providing another indicator in support of stronger traditional family relations in northern Albania.

The virginity of a potential marriage partner remains a relevant factor in young Albanian's decision-making. According to findings, 44 per cent of young people consider their partner's virginity to be important or very important, whilst 34 per cent do not hold this to be an important value. Compared to the 2015 data, when the partner's virginity was important for 51.3 per cent of respondents, there has been an increase among young people who do not care about this issue.¹⁷ This is another indicator that, as a result of a more uninhibited lifestyle, young Albanians are abandoning certain traditional social norms that result in prejudice. This is further attested by a reduction in the gender gap, with 28 per cent of females and 38 per cent of males providing a similar answer. On the other hand, the same findings emphasise

FIGURE 24: **What, in your opinion, is the best marriage age?**



the traditionalist gap between rural and urban youth, with 43 per cent of rural respondents assigning major relevance to a partner’s virginity, as opposed to only 27 per cent of their urban counterparts.

To Albanian youth, their partner’s personality remains an important element. At a national level, 83 per cent of respondents value their partner’s personality as very important. Despite a slight drop in percentage from 2015, when 95.6 per cent of young people responded the same way, personality remains yet again a fundamental factor in guaranteeing a long-lasting and successful marriage.¹⁸ Females value personality more than males at 90 per cent versus 78 per cent, respectively, indicating that a long-lasting and productive marriage for females is dependent on their partner’s personality.

With regard to physical appearance as a requirement in choosing a partner, 59 per cent of young people interviewed say they consider this element to be important or very important. When compared to the 2015 findings of 75 per cent, however, it can be said that young people are re-evaluating the relevance of physical appearance in favour of other factors when choosing a partner for marriage.¹⁹ Again, females pay less attention than males when it comes to looks, with 52 per cent to 66 per cent of the respective genders affirming this. Nevertheless, the importance of physical beauty is one feature increasingly emphasised by young people as a result of social media.

Educational background is another element playing an important role when it comes to choosing a marriage partner. 70 per cent of young respondents value education as important or very important. 60 per cent of females and 42 per cent of males value their partner’s education as a key element to a stable relationship.

Having common interests is a prerequisite to a harmonious relationship; 86 per cent of young people accordingly consider this element to be important or very important. There are no significant differences at geographic or demographic levels, attesting to a generational trend.

60 per cent of young people pay little or no attention to their partner’s nationality, another telling indicator that open borders, youth mobility and relationships between individuals of different nationalities are becoming a social norm in Albania. Rural youth lag behind their urban counterparts at 44 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively, reflecting different levels of openness in mentality between rural and urban areas.

To young Albanians, the definition of a happy life is to achieve a balance between the desire to start a family, enjoy an extensive social circle and other factors of relevance. Developing diverse social relations and avoiding prejudice in social interactions constitute two important indicators in young peoples’ social tendencies.

Besides marriage, social relations and friends are other elements of importance to young Albanians. 64 per cent of respondents state that having many friends is very important to enjoying a happy life. In the present survey, 56 per cent of young people state that they have friends of different ethnic backgrounds, a reflection of an open-minded approach as opposed to a prejudiced one. On the other hand, 43 per cent admit to lacking a diverse social circle, mainly due to their geographic positioning, which is conditioned by a less diverse population as well as lack of contacts. Youth from urban areas have a more ethnically diverse social circle

FIGURE 25 A: Do you have friends with different background to yours?

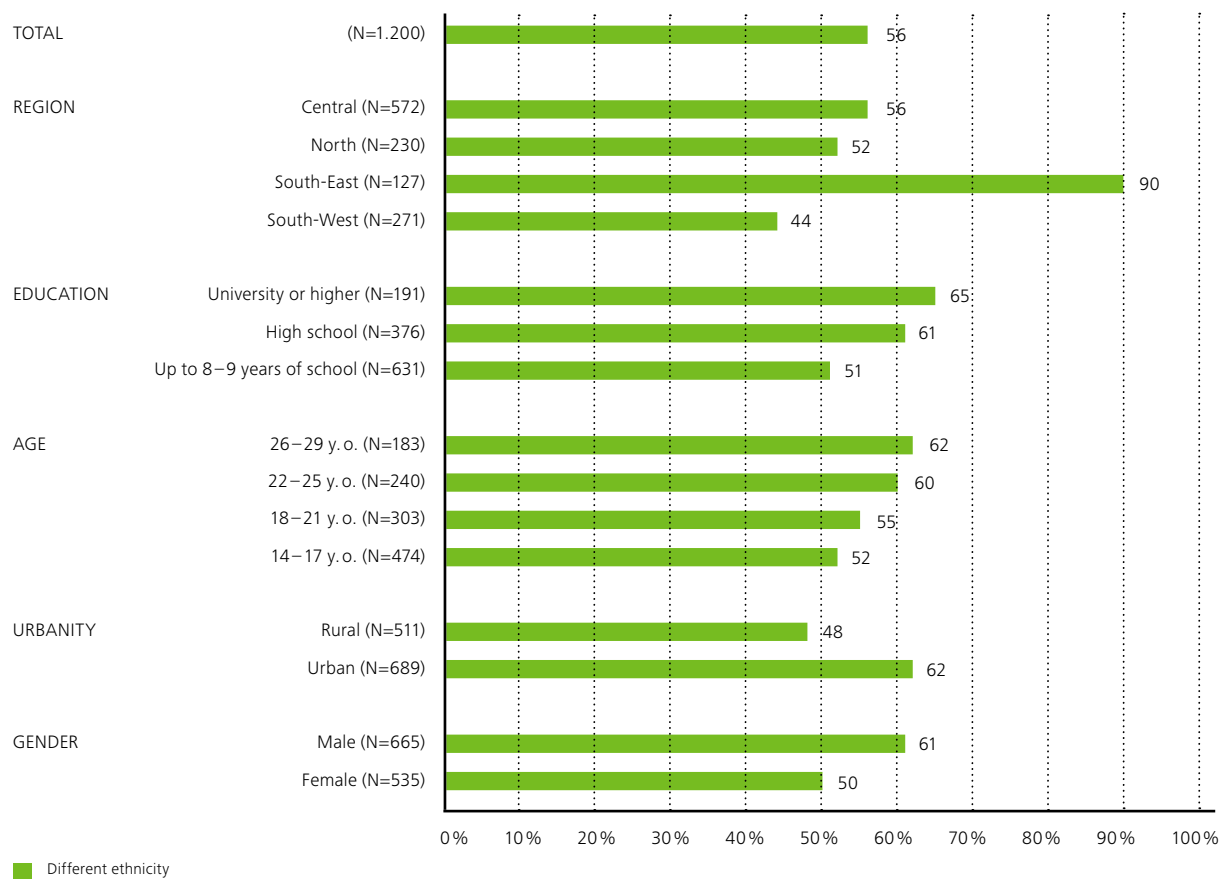


FIGURE 25 B: Do you have friends with different background to yours?

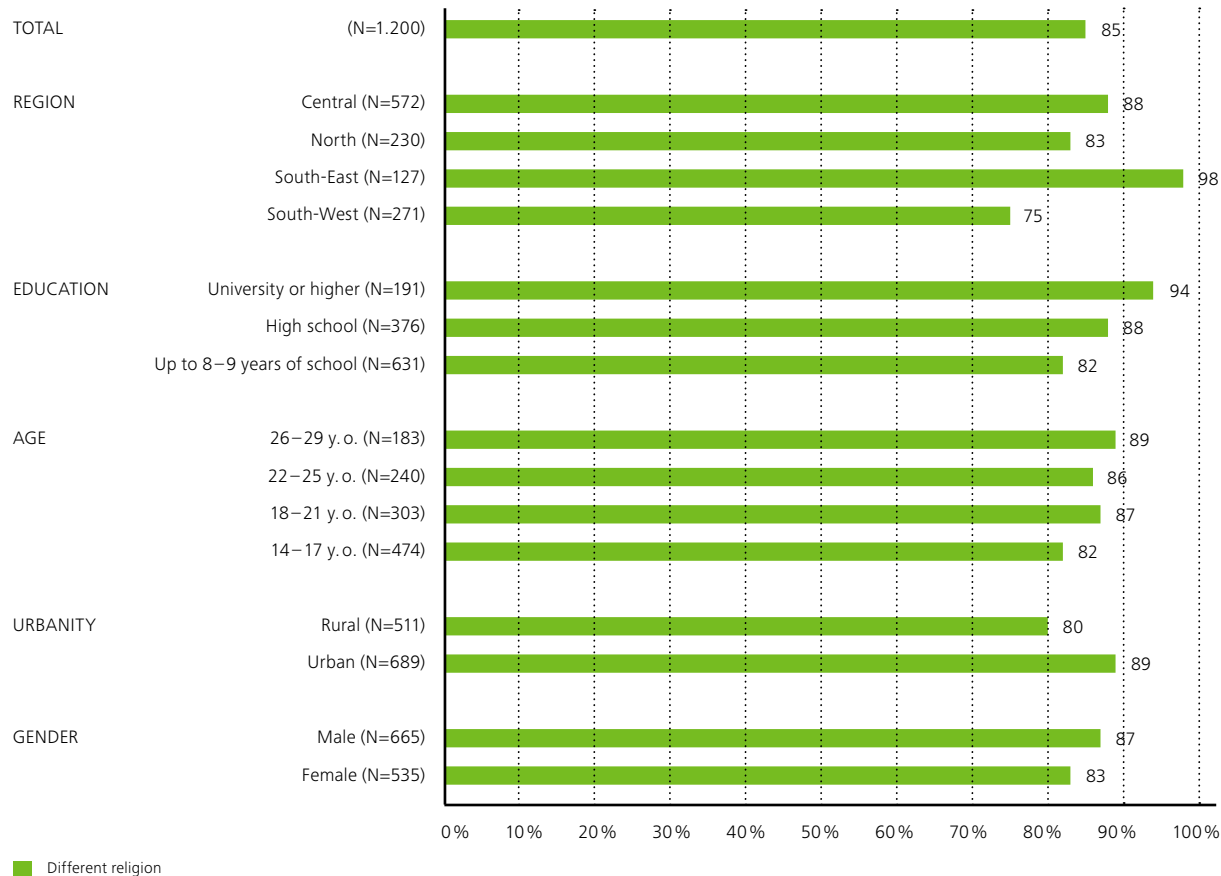


FIGURE 25 C: Do you have friends with different background to yours?

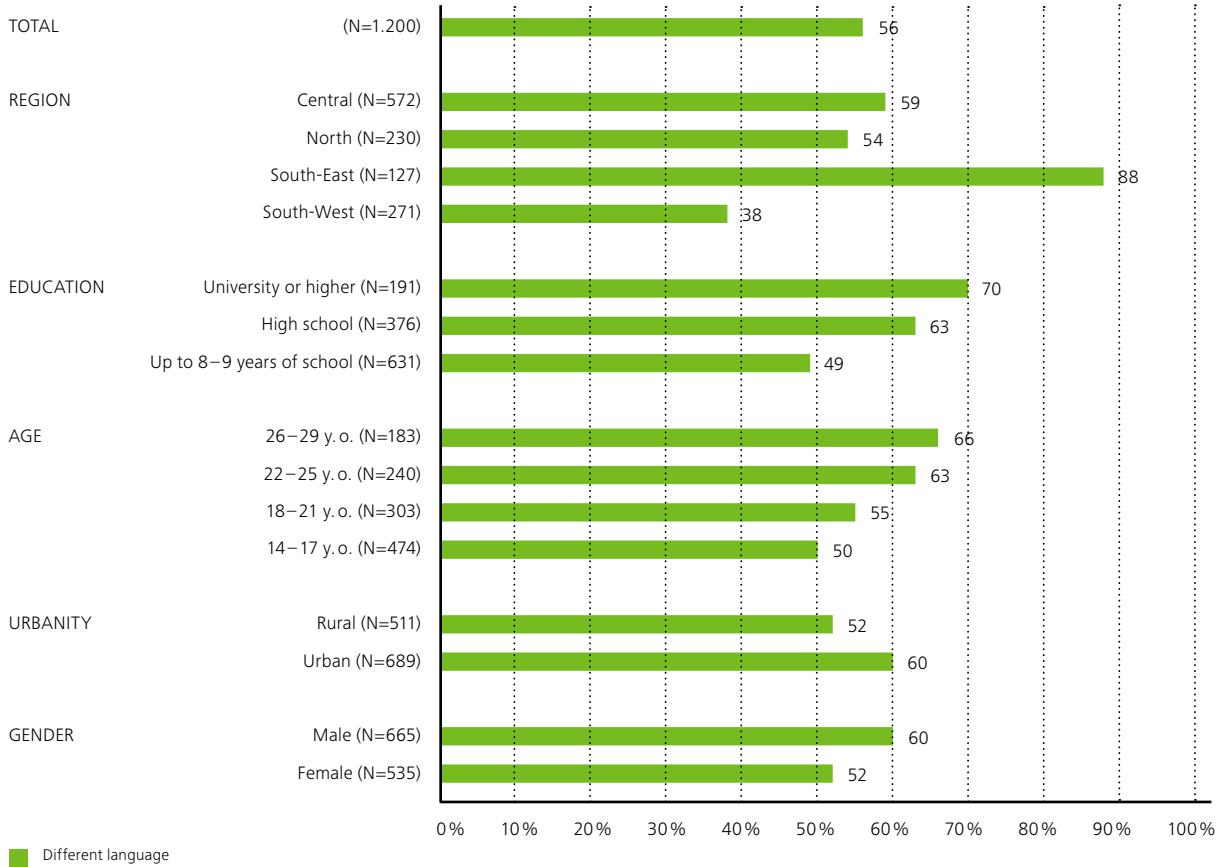
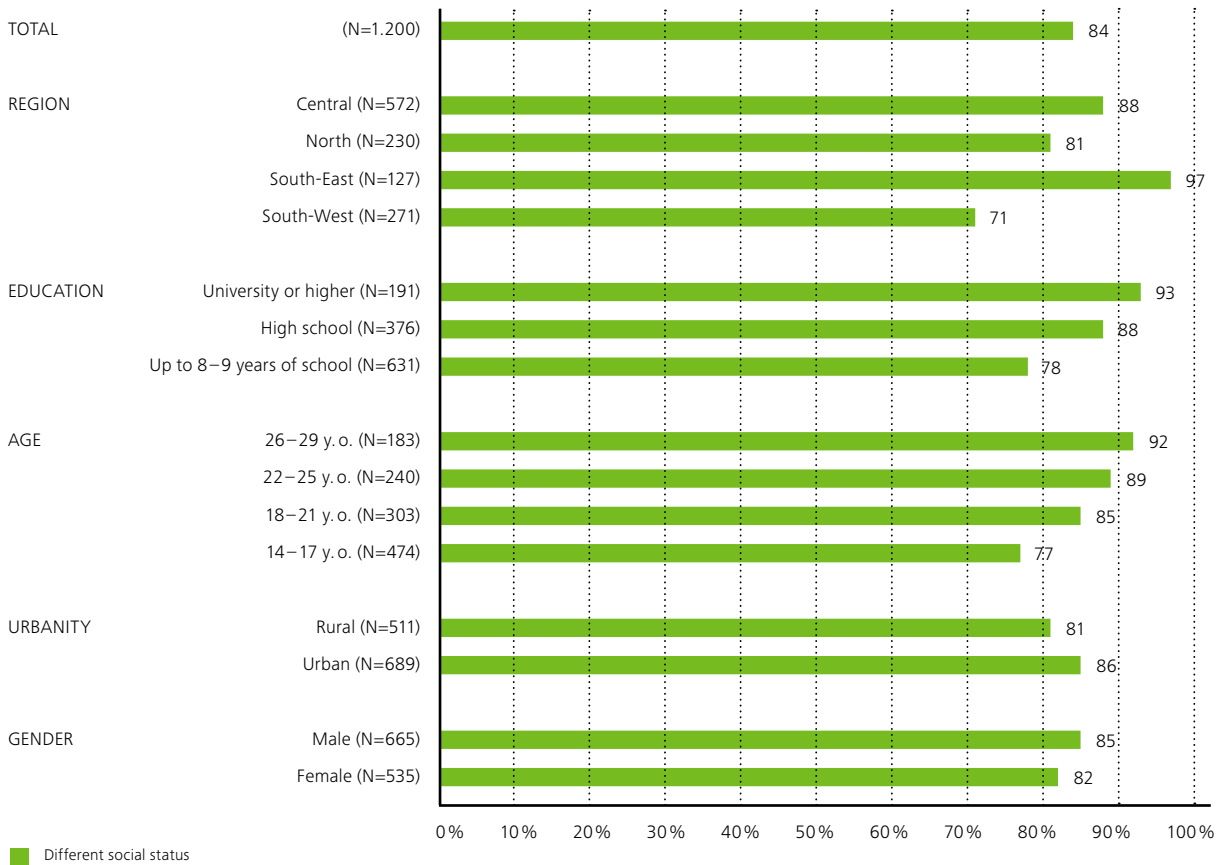


FIGURE 25 D: Do you have friends with different background to yours?



than rural youth at 68 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively, readily reflecting the presence of more diverse ethnic groups in metropolitan areas.

Worth noting is that social relations among young people are not conditioned by religious affiliation, therefore attesting to the presence of religious tolerance among this generation. 85 per cent of respondents state they have friends from different religious backgrounds. Tirana shows the greatest tendency at 93 per cent, a demonstration of the capital's urban diversity that tends to prevail over different religious backgrounds.

An interesting finding is that 5 per cent of respondents at the national level admit to having friends who speak a different native language from Albanian. The presence of minorities in different parts of the country as well as the opportunity for free movement has helped diversify the typology of social relations young Albanians enjoy.

Social stratification is a phenomenon that is taking place in various shapes and forms within Albanian society. However, 84 per cent of young people claim to have friends from different social strata. The absence of prejudice in this regard attests to the young age of the respondents as well as to the desire for an expanded social circle that also reflects migratory tendencies within Albanian society. Even among youth from wealthier strata, 90 per cent of respondents claim to have friends from other social strata.

CONCLUSION

Relationships and ties with the family continue to emerge as an overwhelmingly important feature of the social behaviour model among Albanian youth. Socio-economic conditions and traditions underlying these relations in Albanian society act as fundamental factors in protecting these relationships from any substantial change. On the other hand, the typology of the relationship model among young couples is conditioned by factors that ensure a lasting relationship, whereas the concept of marriage and having a family has not been affected, regardless of the forms manifested in recent years. The concept of a wide social network is considered by young people to be a fundamental element in enjoying an active life and improved emotional health.

6

MOBILITY

- More than 40 per cent of young people in Albania strongly desire to move abroad and the majority of them intend to do so for good. Another 20 per cent also have a moderate desire to migrate.
- The key reasons for this remain seeking better living standards and more satisfactory employment with education assuming a backstage role.
- Germany is the absolute preferred destination for all those aspiring to leave, followed by the UK, Italy and France.
- The young people set on leaving are determined to be excellent contributors to society in their host countries. This includes: learning the language, displaying their best citizen's behaviour and a solid work performance, sharing knowledge and even accepting jobs that others do not like so much.

The majority of young Albanians have not gone abroad for educational or training purposes, nor do they intend to do so in the future. Out of the 31 per cent that have plans to do so, most of them are women. About 7 per cent of Albanian youth have gone abroad to study in various programmes and to obtain degrees.

A significant 86 per cent majority have not been away from Albania for a period longer than 6 months compared to 14 per cent who have experienced this.

Asked whether they have the desire to move abroad and how strong this desire is, young Albanians can be split up into three main groups: a third of them do not intend to emigrate; about one-fourth of them, 23 per cent, have a moderate or weak desire to leave and the rest, a majority of 43 per cent, have a strong or very strong desire to emigrate (defined as leaving the country for more than 6 months). Out of those who report the strongest desire to leave the country, the majority currently reside in the north of Albania.

It is obvious from other statistics that the desire to emigrate is not only confined to the young. According to the Balkan Barometer, half of the Albanian people surveyed (not distinguishing persons by age) reported that they would consider living abroad.²⁰

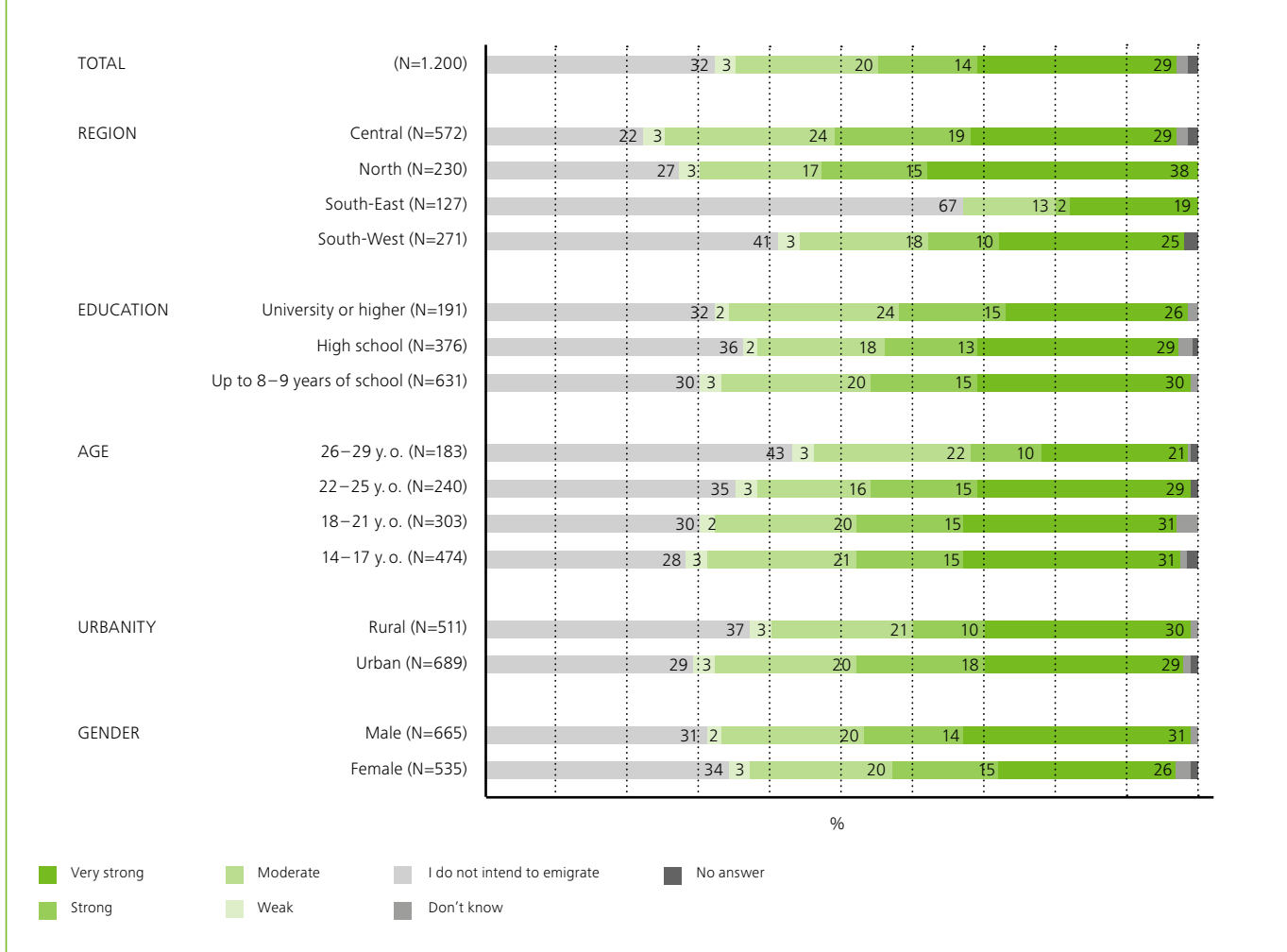
Indeed, Albanians have in the last three years showed that they mean what they say with regard to their emigration plans, whether by moving to Western European countries or applying for immigration programs for the US and Canada. Reporting on data from Eurostat, Albanian media recently published a report that about 22,000 Albanians, overwhelmingly under 35 years old, sought asylum in European countries in 2017, a number that is still small compared to over 60,000 in 2015 and about 29,000 in 2016.²¹ Last year marked record numbers of about two hundred thousand Albanians applying to the Diversity Lottery Program to get a US visa and move there.²²

Out of the young people who have the desire to emigrate, most of them, 26 per cent, see this happening in about two years, followed by another group of 22 per cent that see this development taking place in about five years. However, another group of 21 per cent see their plans to move abroad being realised as soon as in the next six months. Only one-tenth of those who desire to leave believe it will take a long time, 10 years or more, to actually happen. It is obvious that those who want to leave imagine this happening earlier rather than later in their life.

Another strong result from the questions relating to mobility is that most people who want to migrate wish to do so for good and have no plans to return. About 43 per cent of them plan to stay for good or longer than twenty years. 13 per cent report that they wish to stay between five and ten years, followed by 16 per cent who plan to stay up to five years. A smaller group of 8 per cent desire a short-term stay of about six months. Out of those who wish to emigrate for good and not return, the majority are females.

In contrast to their desires and expectations, however, most young people have not yet taken any specific action that would make their wishes come true. When asked what they have done

FIGURE 26: How strong is your desire to move to another country for more than six months (emigrate)?



so far in order to be able to leave, 65 per cent state nothing. Most of them who have taken some initiative in this regard report that they have asked for help from friends and relatives who are already abroad. Only about 13 per cent have taken concrete actions such as securing scholarships, talking to potential employers or even contacting respective embassies.

The main reasons for which young people wish to migrate remain of a very strong economic nature. This reality has not changed since 2014, when the last survey was carried out. 56 per cent of those who wish to leave, thus more than half, state that the main reason is to seek better living standards. Another 18 per cent specifically state that they are looking for better employment opportunities, while 17 per cent want to receive a better education than what is offered at home. Other reasons, such as living in a different culture or moving closer to loved ones, are not mentioned by more than 1-2 per cent of those surveyed.

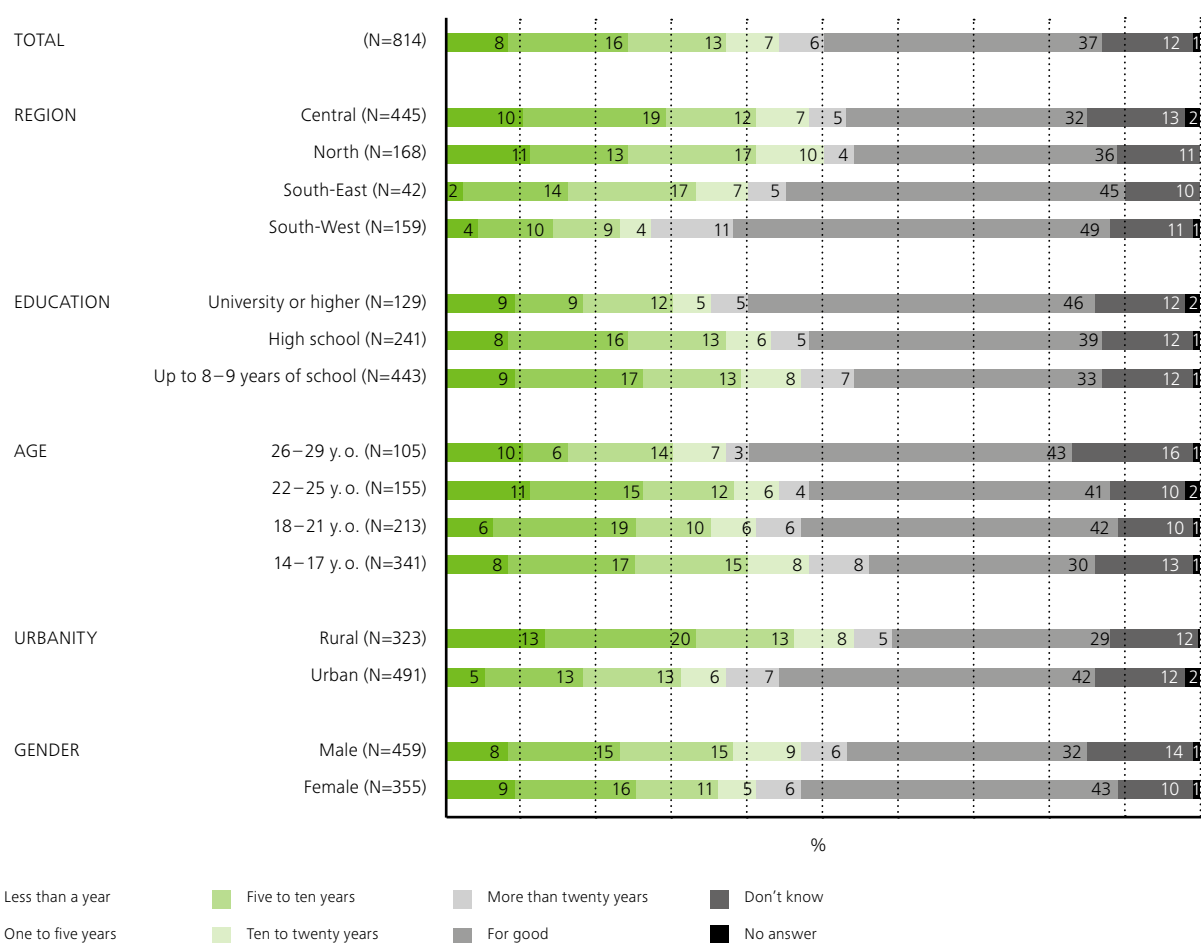
Women want to leave to get a degree, men want to leave to get a job, both want to leave for a better life on the whole.

While seeking better living standards is equally important to both genders, one can see stark differences when it comes to employment versus education as motives for leaving. Whereas 24 per cent of young males mention better jobs as a strong push to leave the country, only 12 per cent of young women say the same. The situation with education as the main reason is completely reversed, with a quarter of young women choosing this as their reason as opposed to only 12 per cent of young men.

Germany is the ultimate and unchallenged destination for young people both as a first and second choice. When asked to rank their top three preferences as destinations abroad, young Albanians mention Germany in large numbers. Germany is the preferred first choice for 25 per cent, the preferred second choice for 20 per cent and even third choice for 12 per cent.

The United Kingdom comes in at a solid second, accounting for 19 per cent of the picks for first choice and 17 per cent as second, with another 12 per cent as third choice. Other popular destinations include France, Italy and the United States. Germany has been gaining ground steadily since 2014, when the most frequently cited preferences were the UK, USA and Italy. Many reasons have contributed to this development, including the wave of asylum-seekers in 2015 as well as the

FIGURE 27: For how long would you like to stay abroad?



German demand for skilled workers and especially doctors and nurses. In Tirana and other towns, it is a common sight to see German-language courses crowded to the brim with students aspiring to leave for Germany for studies, internships and jobs.

Germany is an easy choice given the combination of strong pull factors²³ such as economic possibilities, but also assistance provided during the time one is waiting for immigration status to clear.

This massive desire to go to Germany accompanied by concrete steps such as the ones to acquire basic language skills could well cause some problems for Albania in the long run. Already with regard to social issues: journalists have raised the question of Albanian hospitals running into shortages of staff due to a large outflow of medical professionals that want to leave.

Young people who want to leave have very different sets of information and knowledge about various policies and characteristics of the countries they wish to immigrate to such as regarding employment, housing or even legal-status opportunities. In every policy category, there are about 30–40 per cent who know nothing or little about the policy and the same number who feel well informed. In the middle, there is a smaller group of about 20–25 per cent who have some knowledge.

Out of all areas, respondents seem to know slightly more about employment and housing and a little less about permission to stay and educational options.

Asked about what may be the most important integration factor – knowledge of the language of the place they wish to move to – young people mostly fall into negative categories. 30 per cent of them do not speak the language at all and another 35 per cent only have very basic communication skills. One-fourth of the young people feel they have good command of the foreign language and another ten per cent claim to have excellent command of it. What is striking is that out of the people who do not know or know only a few words of the language that is important for their moving plans, the overwhelming majority, about 90 per cent, appear very willing to learn it.

About 60 per cent of young people who desire to move already have an invitation or some support from someone they know who is already at their desired destination, whereas 40 per cent state that they do not have such a starting point.

FIGURE 28: What have you done so far in order to leave the country?

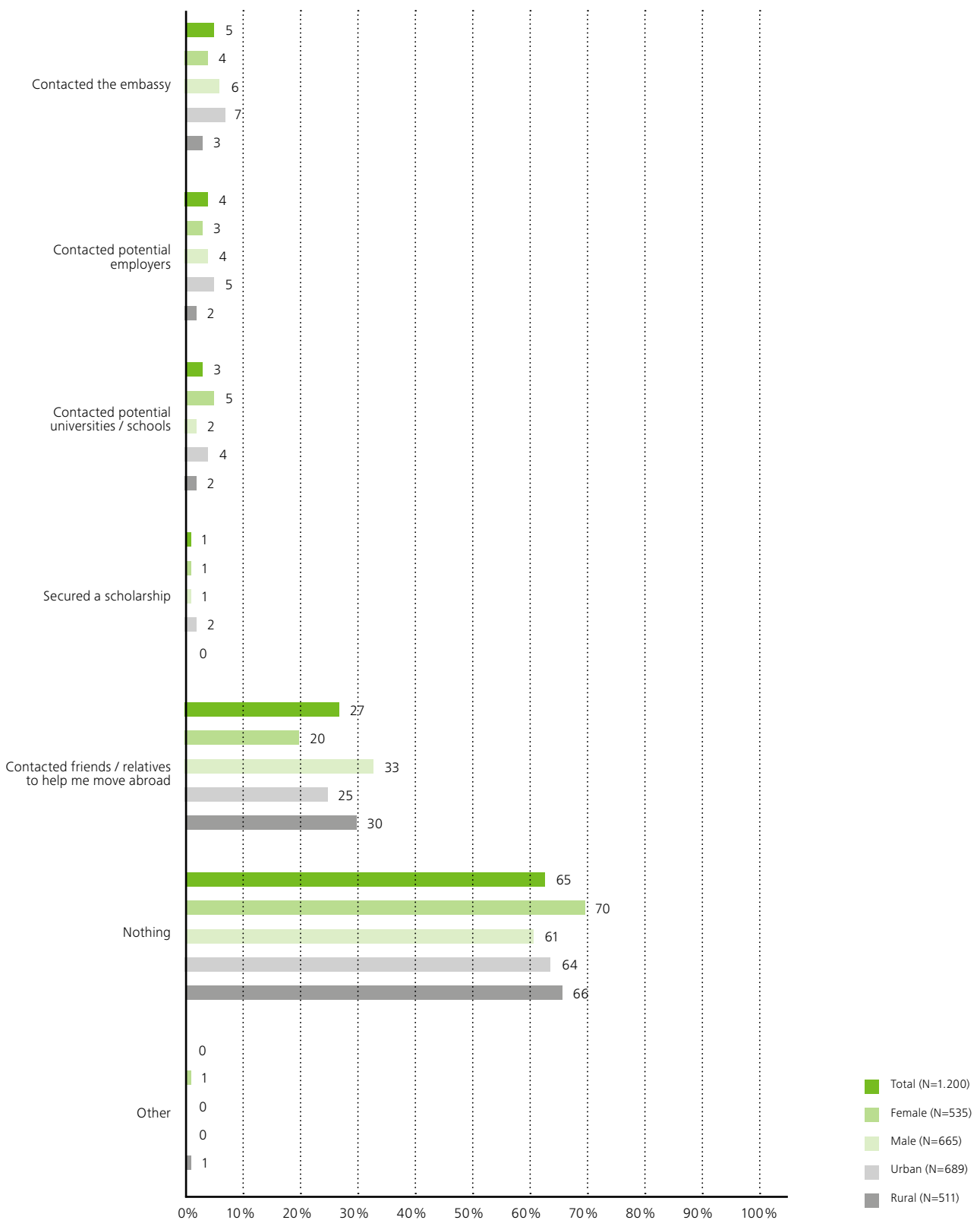


FIGURE 29: What is the main reason for which you would move to another country?

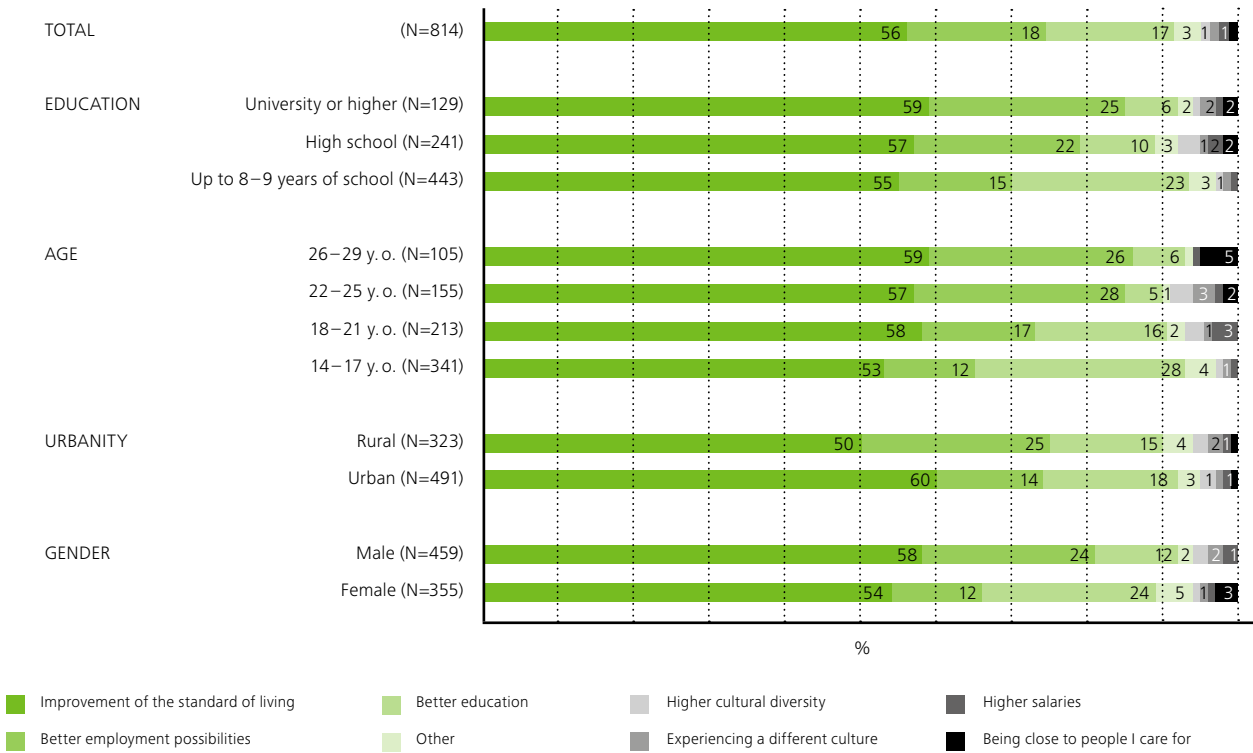


FIGURE 30: Where would you prefer to move to? Rank up to three countries you favor the most

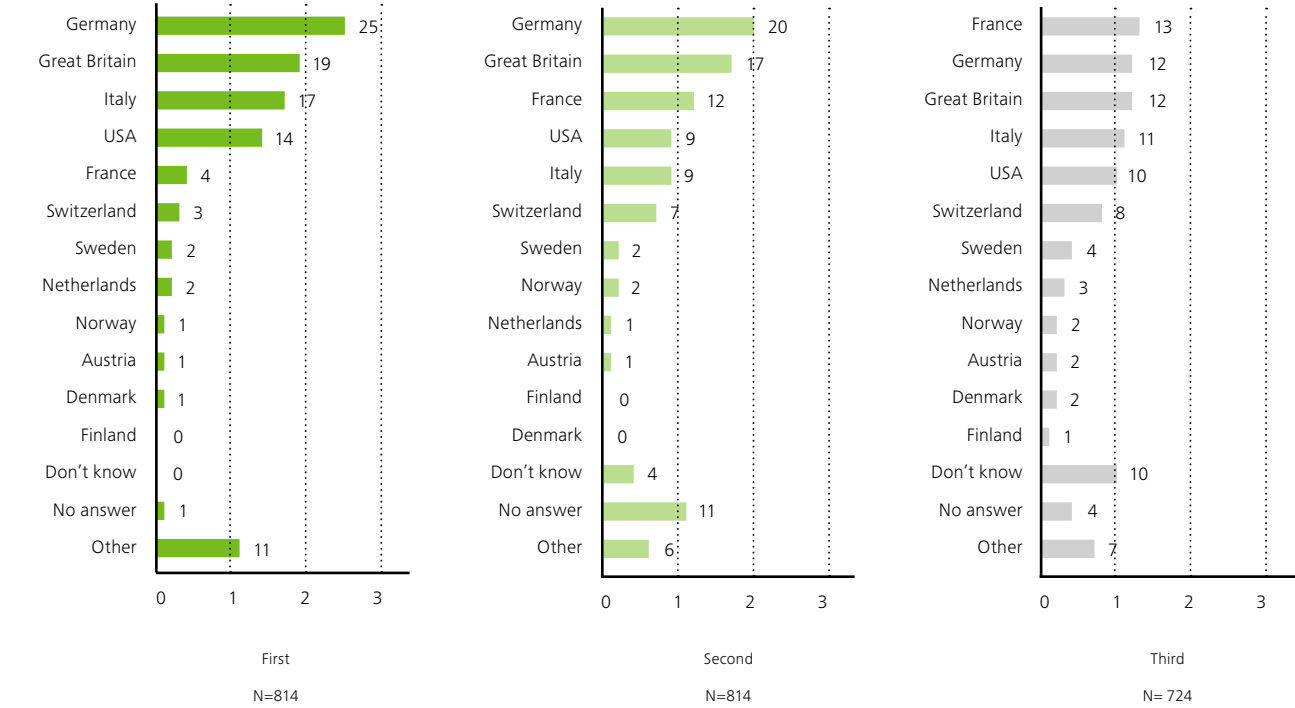


FIGURE 31: To what extent are you familiar with the available possibilities for immigrants / foreigners in the MOST desired (1st ranked) host-country in terms of:

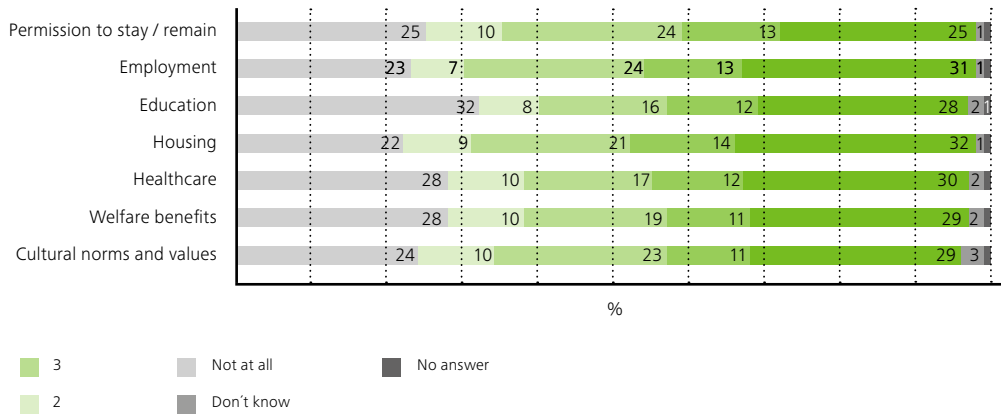
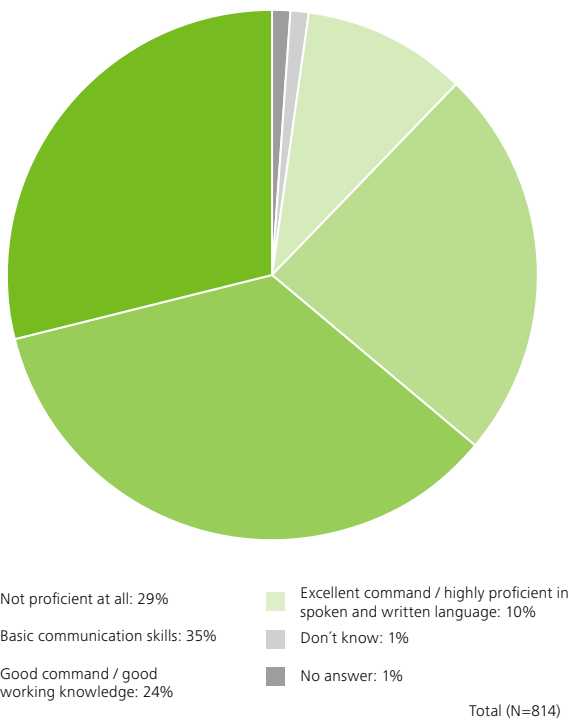


FIGURE 32 A: What is your level of proficiency of the official language of the MOST desired (1st ranked) host-country?



The majority of young people who want to leave to a foreign country want to be contributors to their host society in a variety of ways. The overwhelming majority of them, more than 90 per cent, are ready to be loyal and good citizens wherever they go, to summon up a high level of professional performance and even share their knowledge and skills. Again, a majority, over 80 per cent, are willing to contribute to the cultural and scientific development of their host country. Three-quarters of the people that want to leave, especially young males, are even willing to accept jobs that the local population might not like.

FIGURE 32 B: **If you don't understand / speak the official language of the MOST desired (1st ranked) host-country, to what extent are you willing to learn it?**

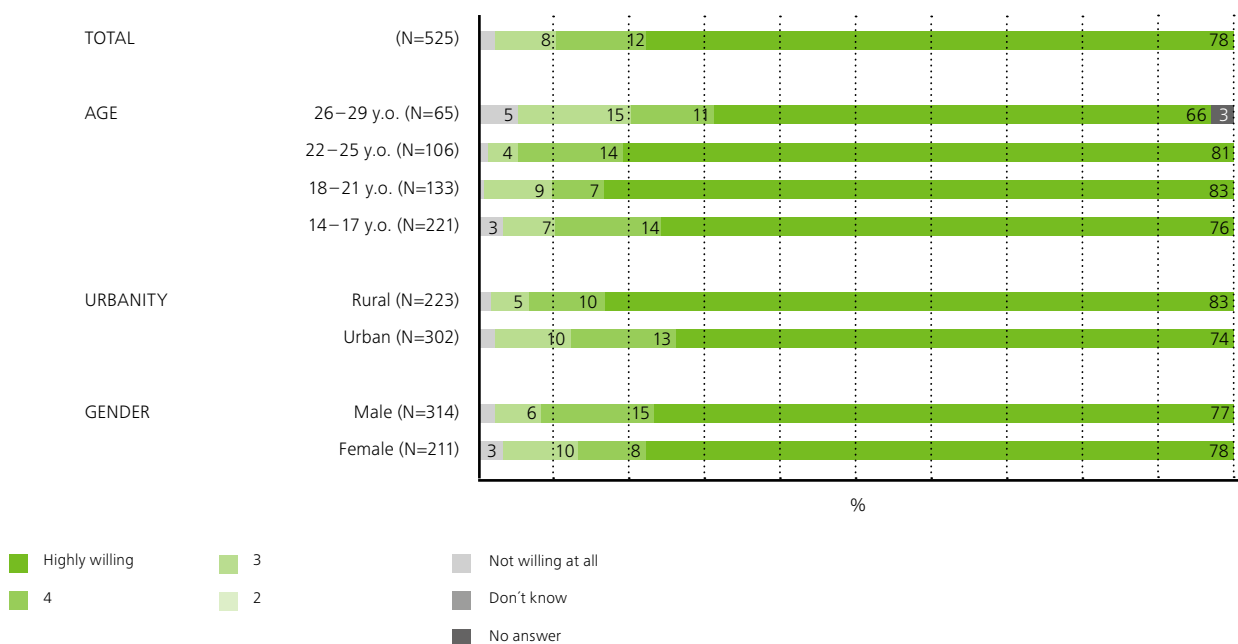
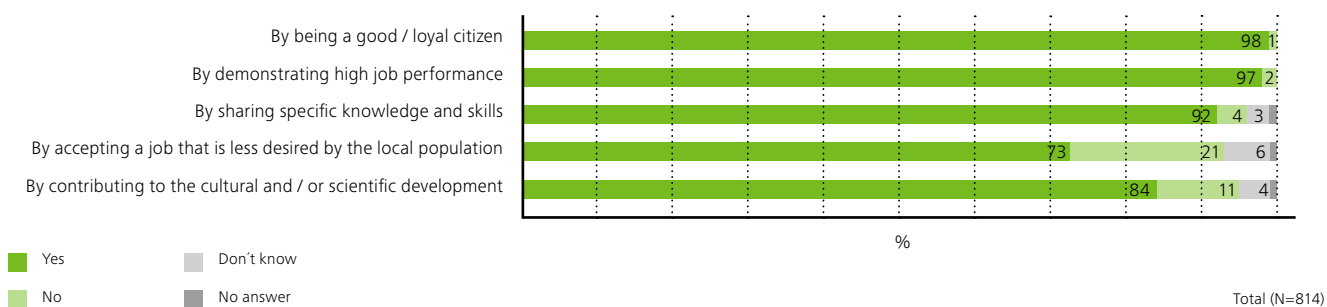


FIGURE 33: **Would you say that you will / would contribute to the development and prosperity of the host-country? How?**



CONCLUSION

The immigration potential of young Albanians is very high. Albanian institutions should reconsider the laid-back approach they have towards this issue and fully come to terms with the likely long-term ramifications of this issue, such as effect on the pensions scheme, lack of qualified medical staff as well as brain-drain.

It is at the very least baffling how young people can be intent on contributing all these positive traits and working hard to make it as valuable citizens abroad, but at the same time seem discouraged in doing the same at home. If this inspiration to perform and behave at their very best could be concentrated on life in Albania, many processes of change would be quicker and much

more efficient. The reasons for this lack of enthusiasm to excel at home are to be found in the difficult transition of Albania over a longer period of time and especially in the corruption and aggressive polarisation of Albanian politics. Policymakers should indeed tap into this potential and reverse its direction in the direction of the home society in order to achieve de facto European integration of Albania. Finally, host countries should also consider being more transparent and clear in their messaging to potential migrants as far as what their desirability, status and long-term opportunities are. This would negate the current *double-speak*, with some European countries complaining about migration while sponsoring many programmes which encourage qualified people to leave the region.

7

EDUCATION

MAIN FINDINGS

- 38 per cent of young people claim to be somewhat pleased with the quality of their education
- 54 per cent of young people admit to having paid money in exchange for better exam grades
- 63 per cent of young people state that current qualifications, school, and the university system do not reflect current needs in the labour market
- 49 per cent of young people claim to have achieved an 8–9 and 9–10 grade-point average (GPA) during their last year of studies
- 54 per cent of young people admit to having struggled in finding employment after concluding their cycle of studies.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

When it comes to the quality of education in Albania, only 38 of youth claim to be somewhat satisfied, as opposed to 55.5 per cent in 2015 ²⁴, whilst 17 per cent are not satisfied at all. Only 11 per cent of young people in Tirana claim to be very satisfied with the quality of their education.

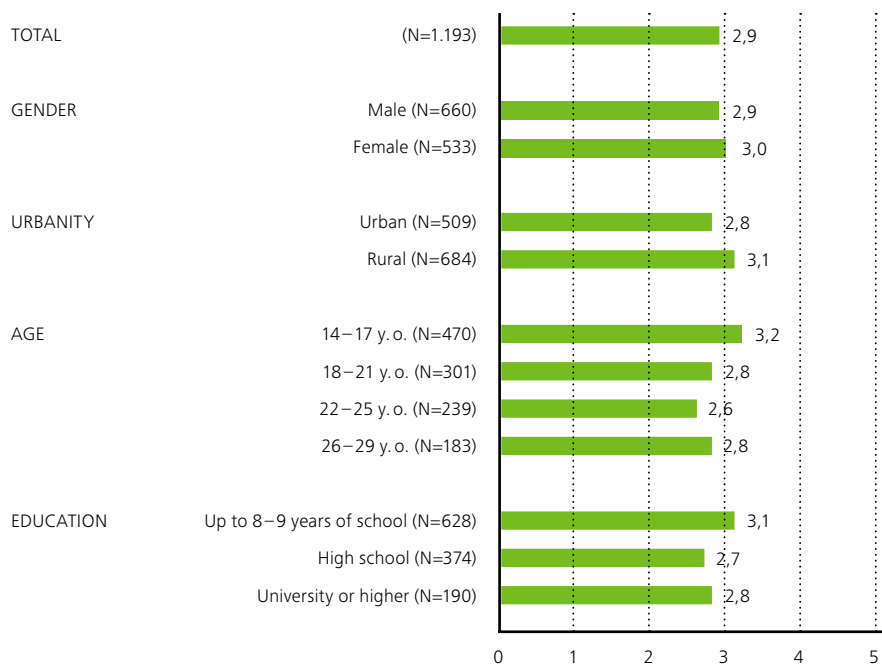
As for paying to better their grades on university exams, 54 per cent of Albanian students admit this phenomenon is widespread. Compared to year 2015, when only 45.7 per cent gave the same answer, there is a significant increase in youth's perception in this regard, especially among 61 per cent of the 18-21-year-old age group who have attended university.²⁵

A correlation between education and the labour market is very important to young people. 63 per cent of respondents state that the training, school and university system is not adapted to current needs in the labour market. The age groups of 22–25 and 26–29, who have completed their studies and are trying to meet the challenges of the labour market, account for the highest percentages at 69 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively.

Internships help improve the practical skills of youth. However, 83 per cent of young people, mainly with a high school education, claim to not have performed any internship during their study cycle. This indicates a significant gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of education, thereby having a negative impact on work skills of young Albanians. Rural youth suffer the most in this regard with 87 per cent stating they have not performed an internship, as opposed to 78 per cent of urban youth, who benefit from a higher concentration of institutions and businesses in cities.

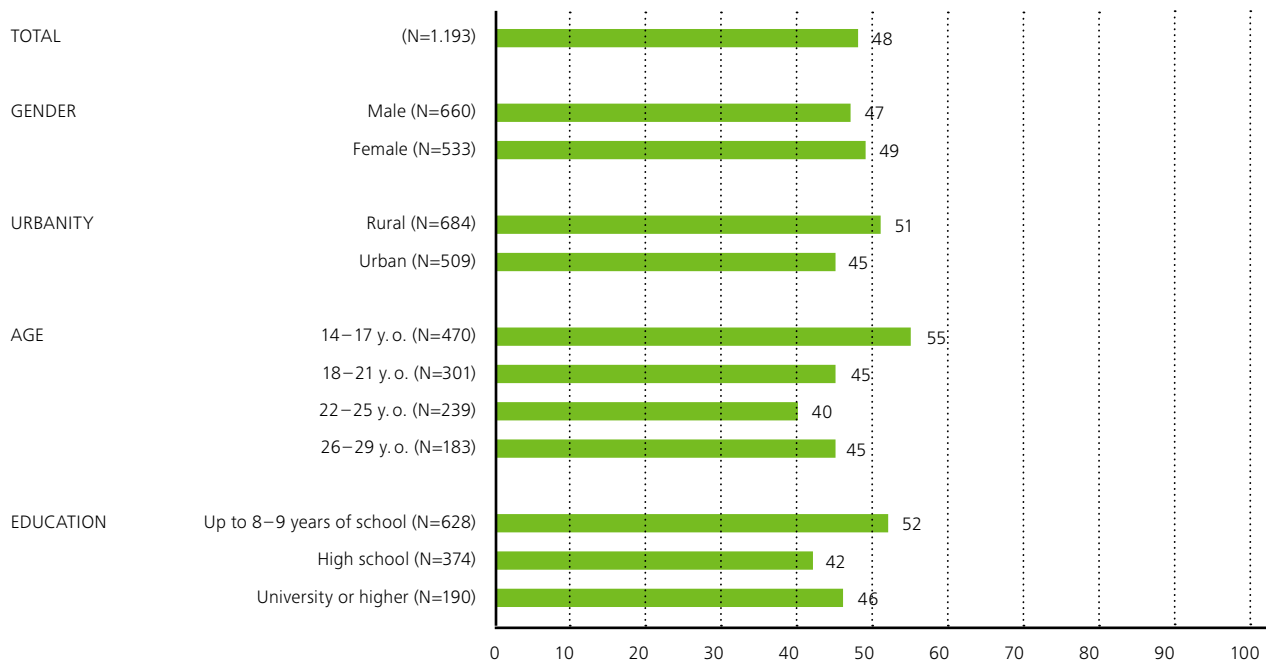
There are certain differences in the level of education among the young people interviewed. 43 per cent of respondents claim to have only completed primary education (9 levels) while another 27 per cent have completed secondary education (high school). 5 per cent of respondents have completed vocational education, 9 per cent have completed university studies and only 7 per cent have a post-university degree. The study does not include those who have obtained doctoral degrees.

FIGURE 34 A: **How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in Albania?**



On a scale 1 to 5 where 1=Not satisfied at all and 5=Very satisfied

FIGURE 34 B: **How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in Albania?**



On a scale 0 to 100 where 0=Not satisfied at all and 100=Very satisfied

FIGURE 35: How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in Albania?

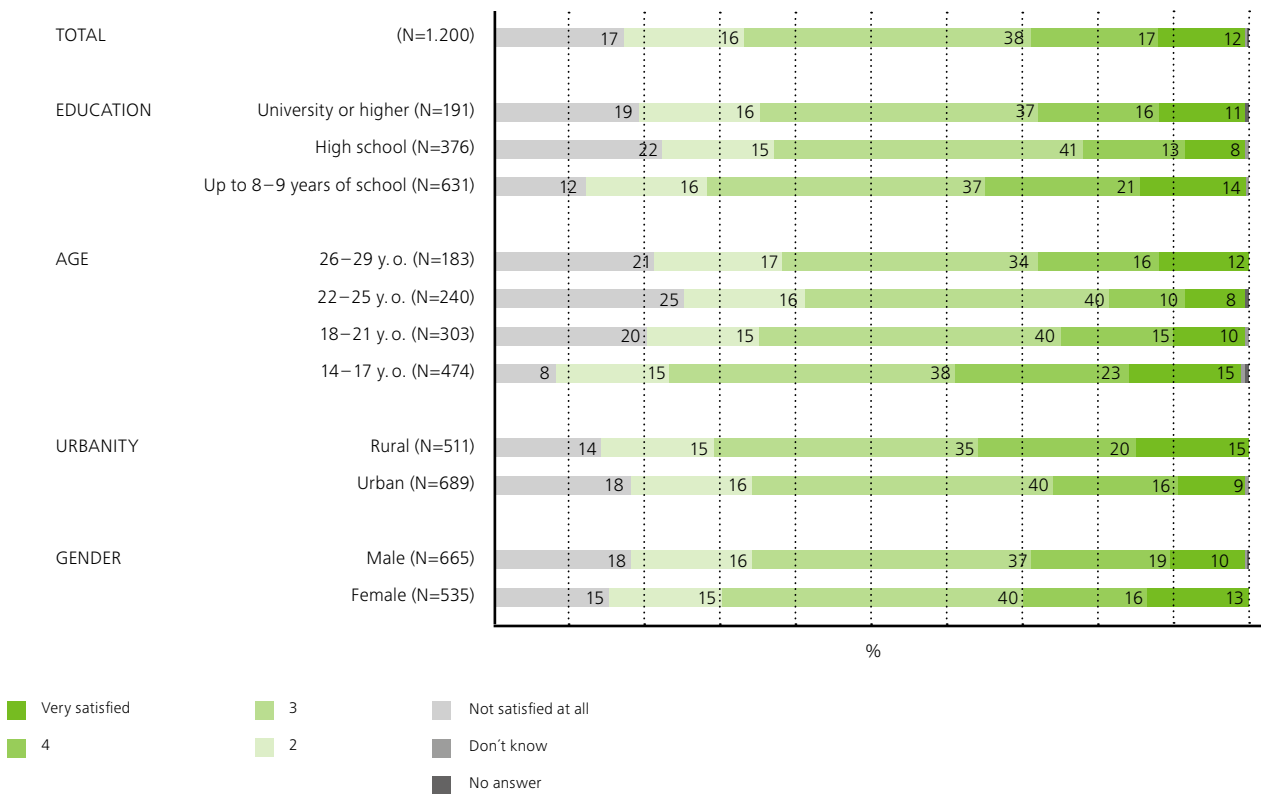


FIGURE 36: Do you agree that there are cases where grades and exams are 'bought' in institutes / universities in Albania?

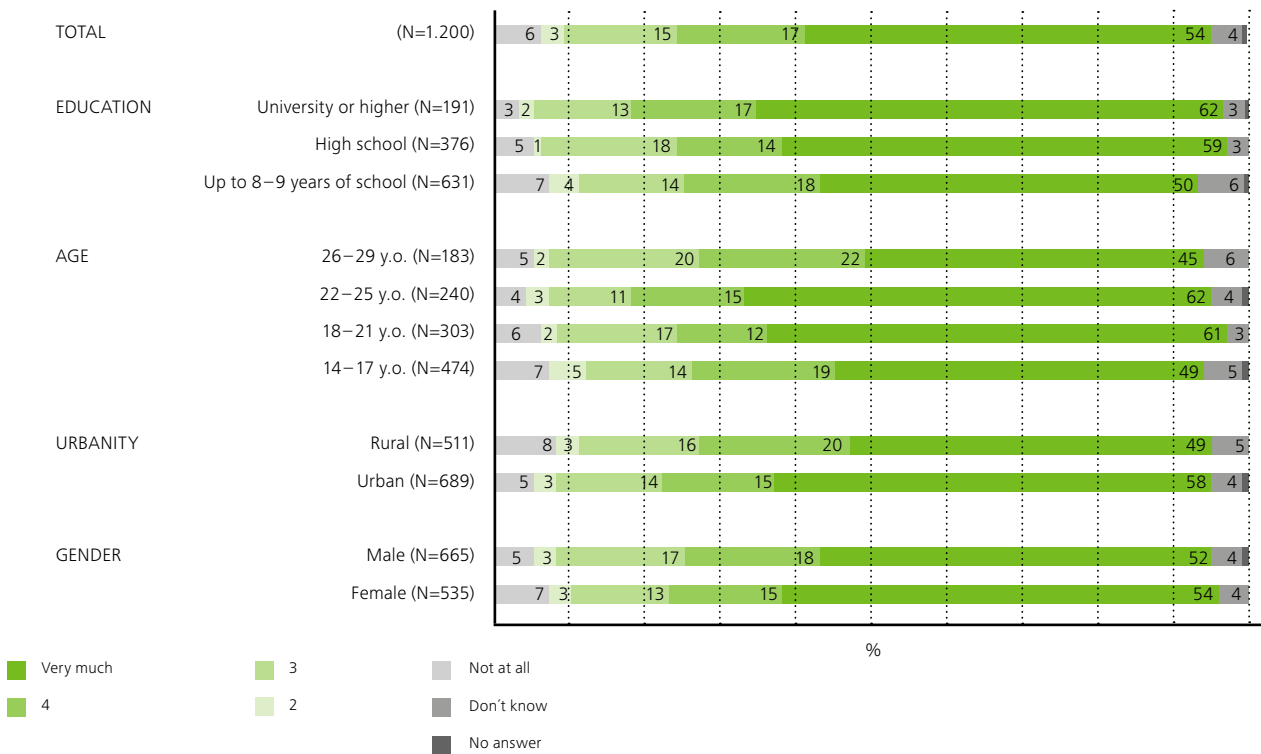


FIGURE 37: Do you think that in your country, training, school and university education are well adapted or not well adapted to the labor market?

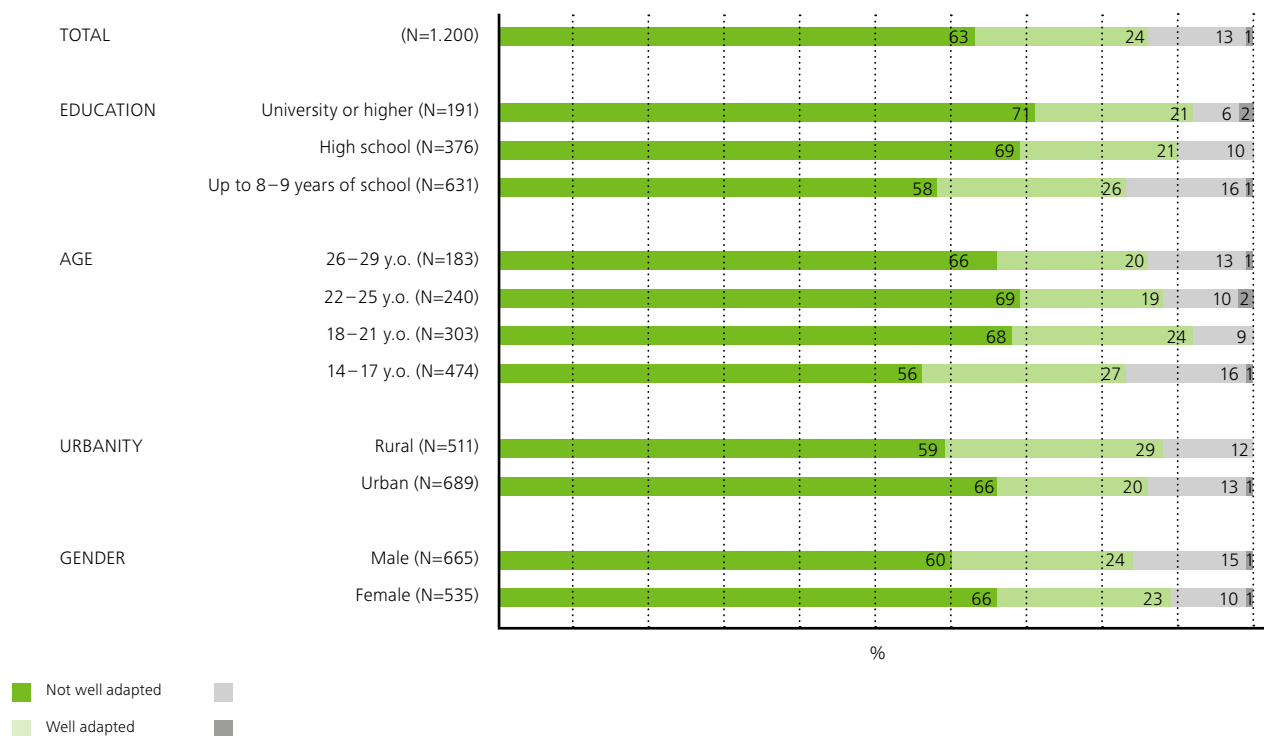


FIGURE 38: Within your education so far, have you ever participated in a practicum or internship?

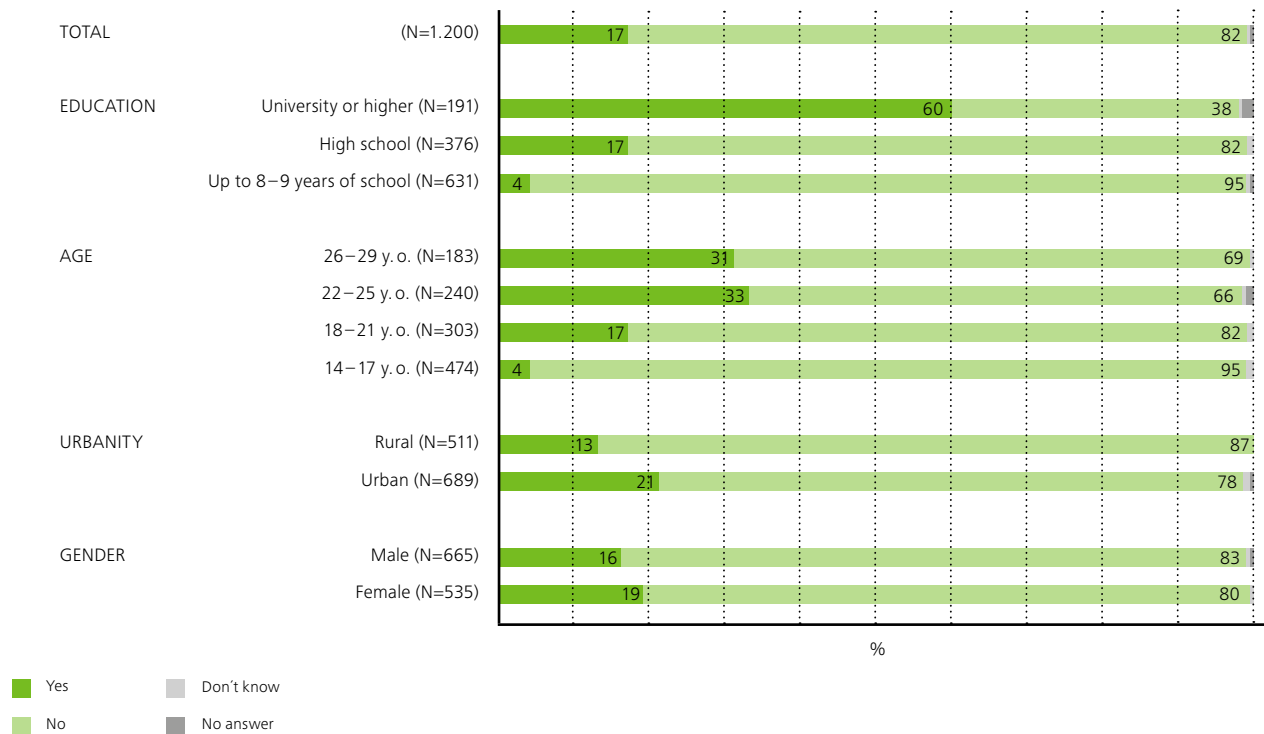
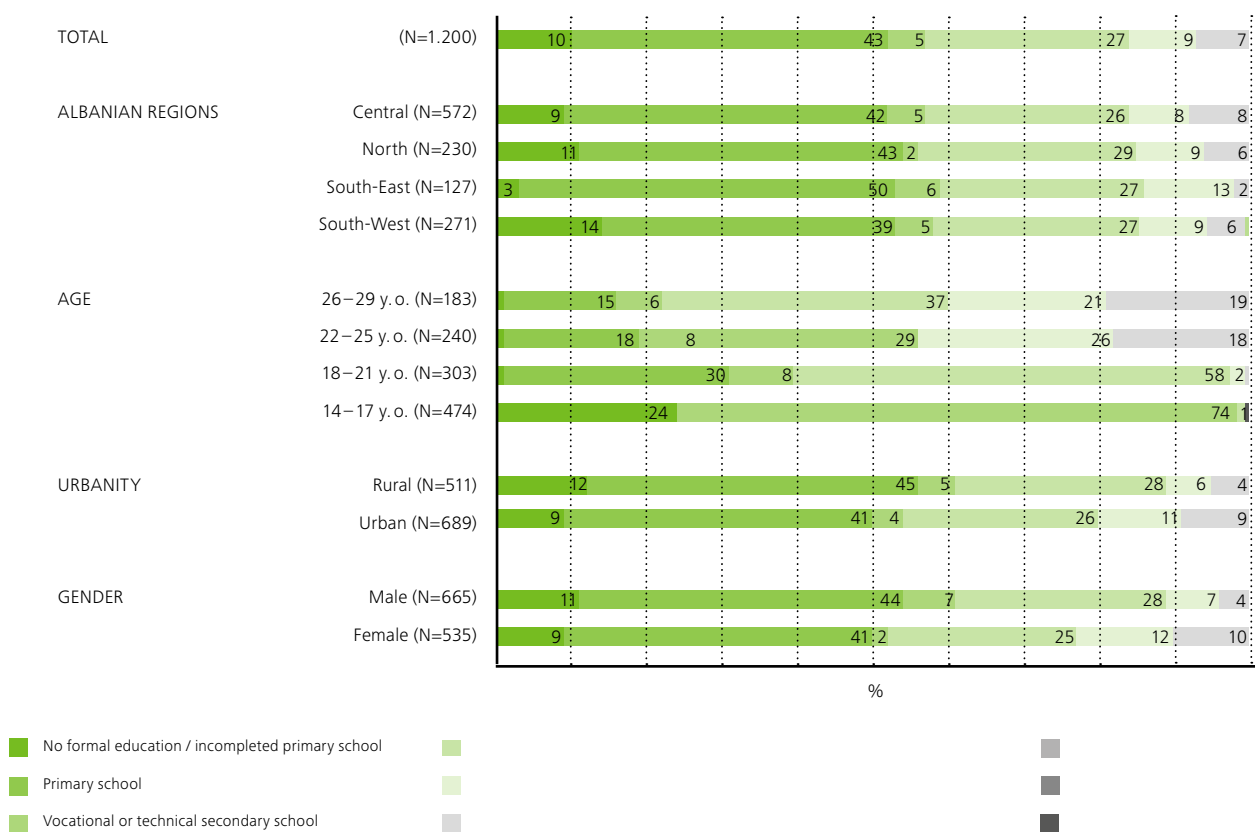


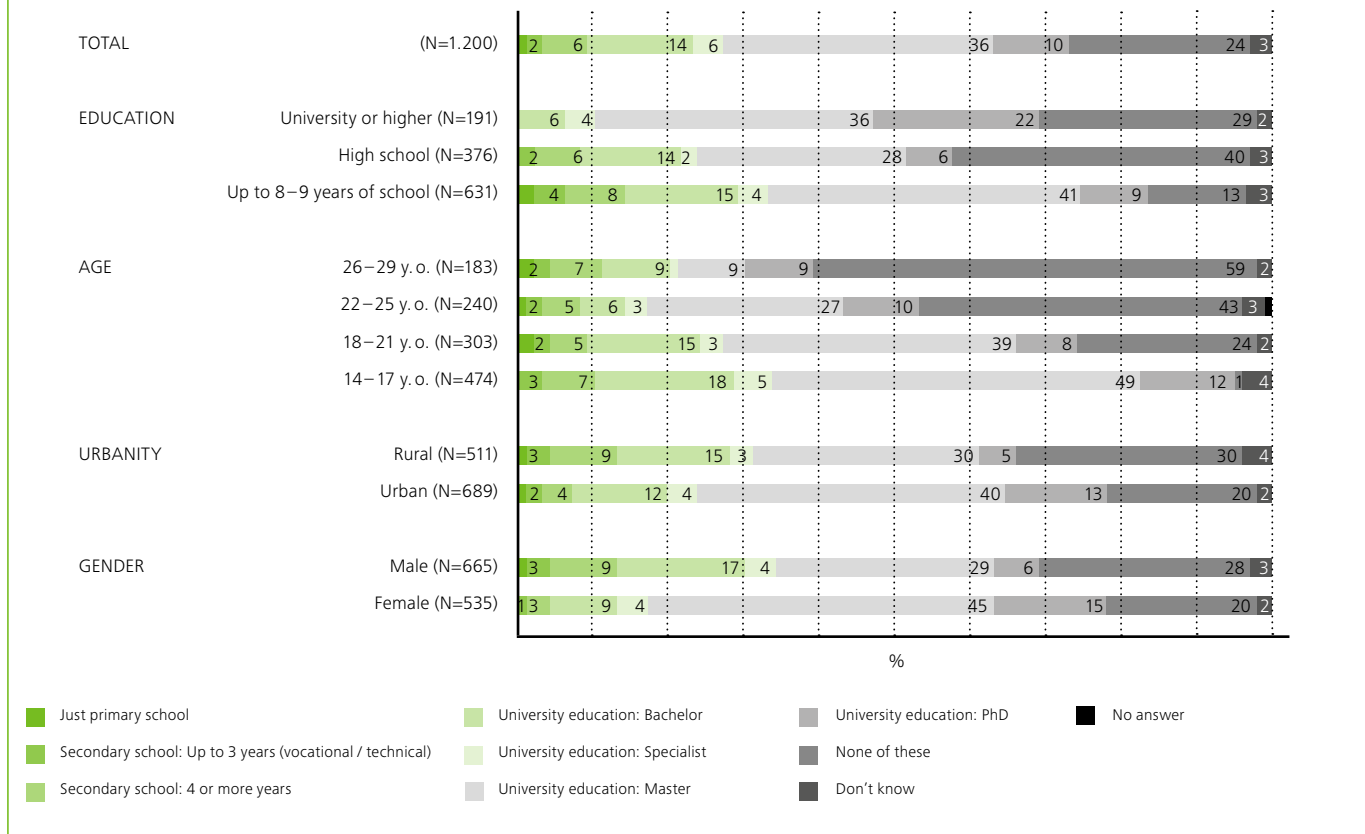
FIGURE 39: What is your highest education level completed so far?



Young Albanians have different objectives and goals with regard to their education. Findings show that 36 per cent of respondents aim to complete an MA as their highest level of education. Females lead in this regard at 45 per cent, as opposed to only 29 per cent of males, which indicates a tendency for a long-lasting educational cycle among females. Only 14 per cent of young Albanians aim to complete their studies by achieving a BA, whilst another 10 per cent wish to complete doctoral studies. On the

other hand, only 2 per cent of respondents wish to pursue vocational education despite an extensive campaign from the incumbent government to increase awareness of the impact of vocational education on employment opportunities. Completing studies up to an MA degree remains the main educational objective of young Albanians. This is a drop from 54.8 per cent in 2015, but the difference of 4.8 points has not translated into other choices of education by young people.²⁶

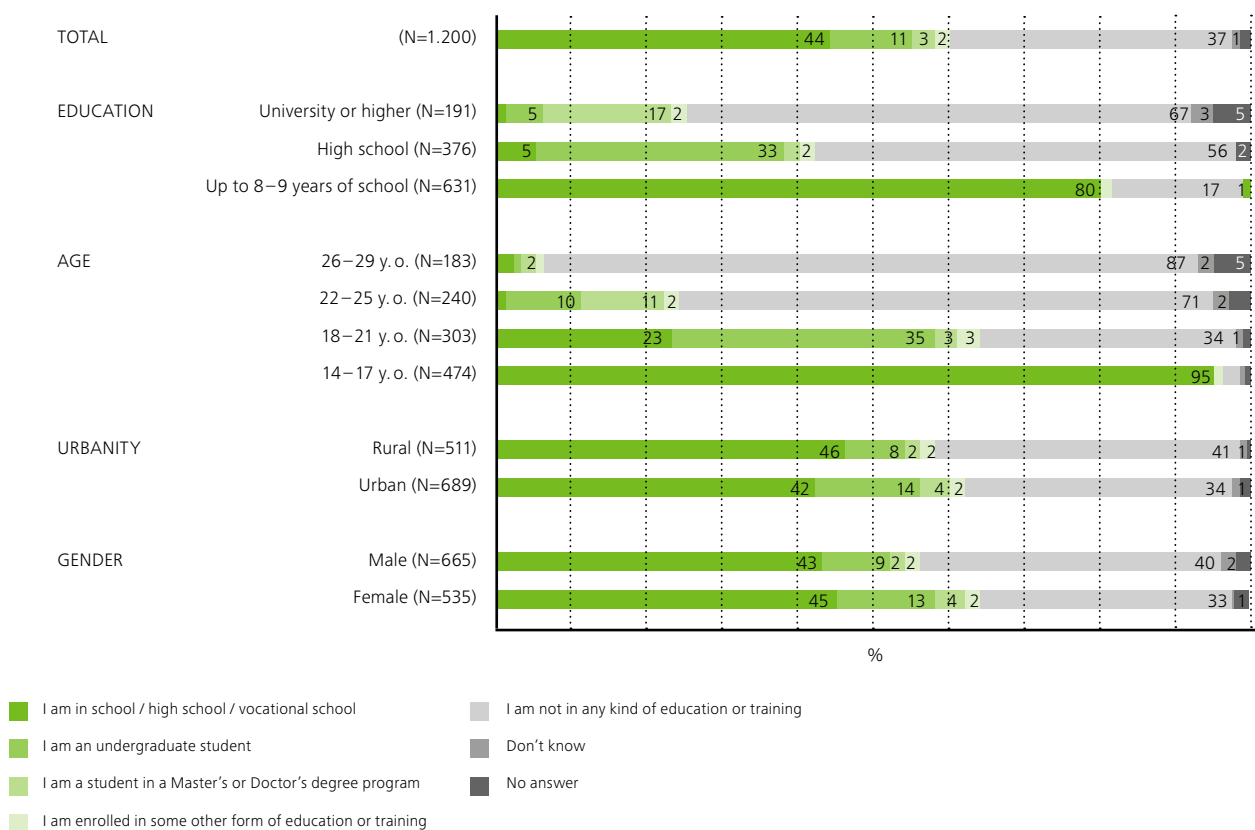
FIGURE 40: What is the highest education level you are aspiring?



Young Albanians have strong convictions when it comes to the type of education they want to pursue, with 76 per cent of respondents claiming to be certain or very certain about their choices. In addition, young people express a conviction that their educational choice reflects positively on their skill set and employment opportunities in the labour market. In this regard, Tirana youth express a stronger conviction than their counterparts in the rest of the country with 65 per cent and 47 per cent of responses, respectively.

The current educational status of young Albanians is as follows: 44 per cent currently attend high school, 11 per cent are pursuing postgraduate studies, whilst another 37 per cent are not attending any level of education. Of the latter, 41 per cent come from rural areas with limited educational opportunities after the completion of compulsory primary education, whilst 34 per cent are members of the 18-21-year-old age group and therefore are part of the active workforce.

FIGURE 41: What is your current status in terms of education?



How young people spend their study time and how they feel regarding education is an indicator of their inner awareness with regard to education challenges.

Findings show that young Albanians spend on average two hours a day studying. 17 per cent of respondents state they spend 0–1 hour/day studying, 32 per cent spend 1–2 hours, 27 per cent 2–3 hours, and 23 per cent spend more than 3 hours/day. For the

latter group, there is a significant increase from only 14.1 per cent recorded in 2015, which points to an increase in awareness among young people in a world dominated by the knowledge economy.²⁷

In this regard, gender ratios attest to females spending more time studying than males at 38 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively. Nevertheless, findings show a drop from 2015, when 42.7 per cent of female students spent more than 3 hours per day studying.

FIGURE 42: How many hours on average do you spend studying (after classes / at home) per day?

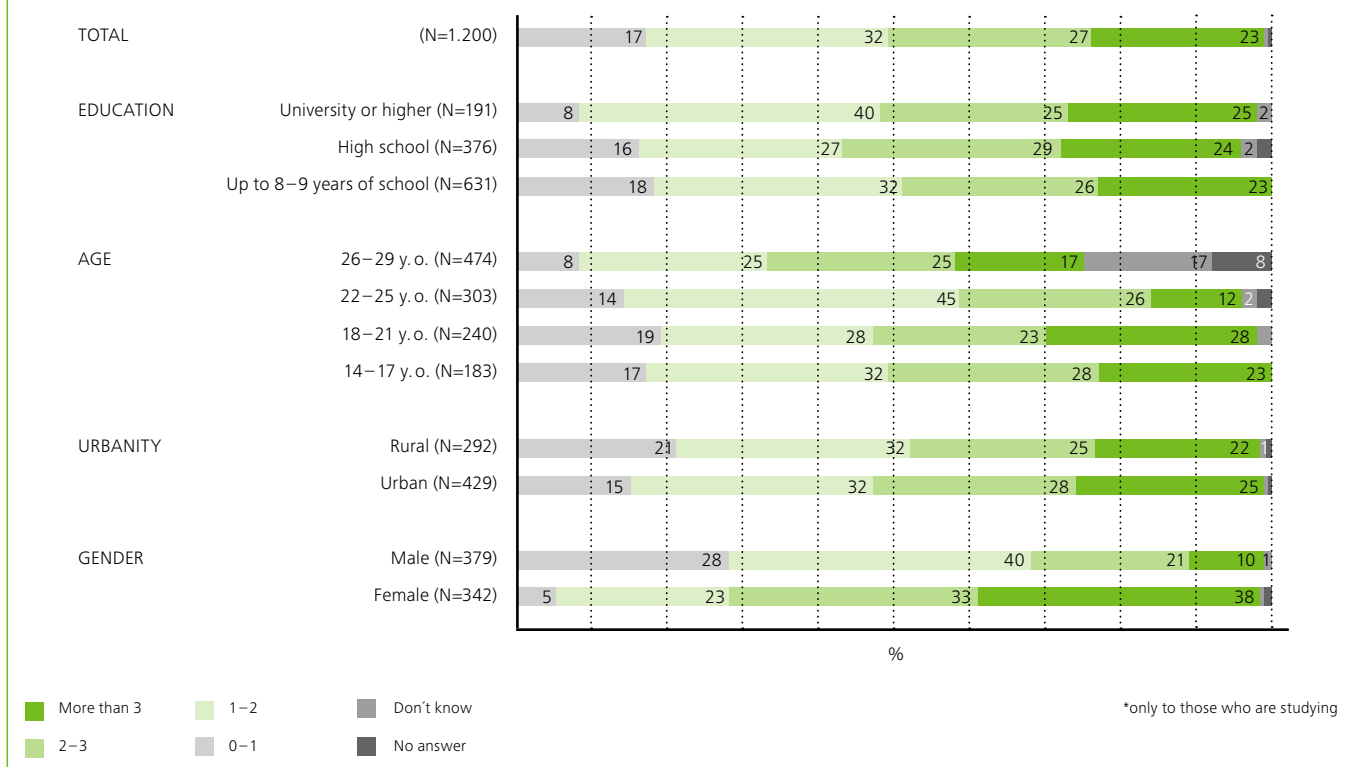


FIGURE 43: In your opinion, what is everyday life in your school / university like?

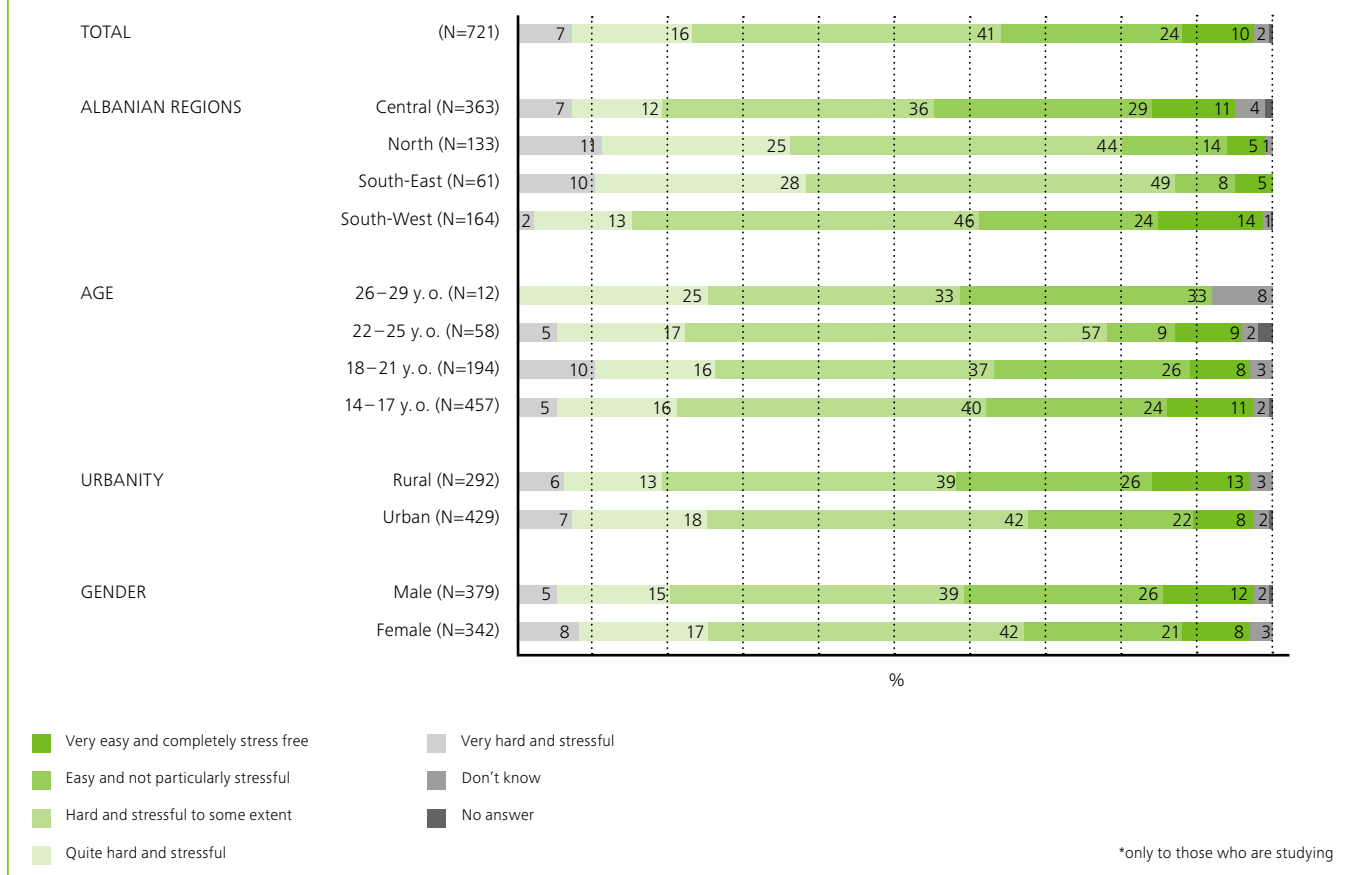
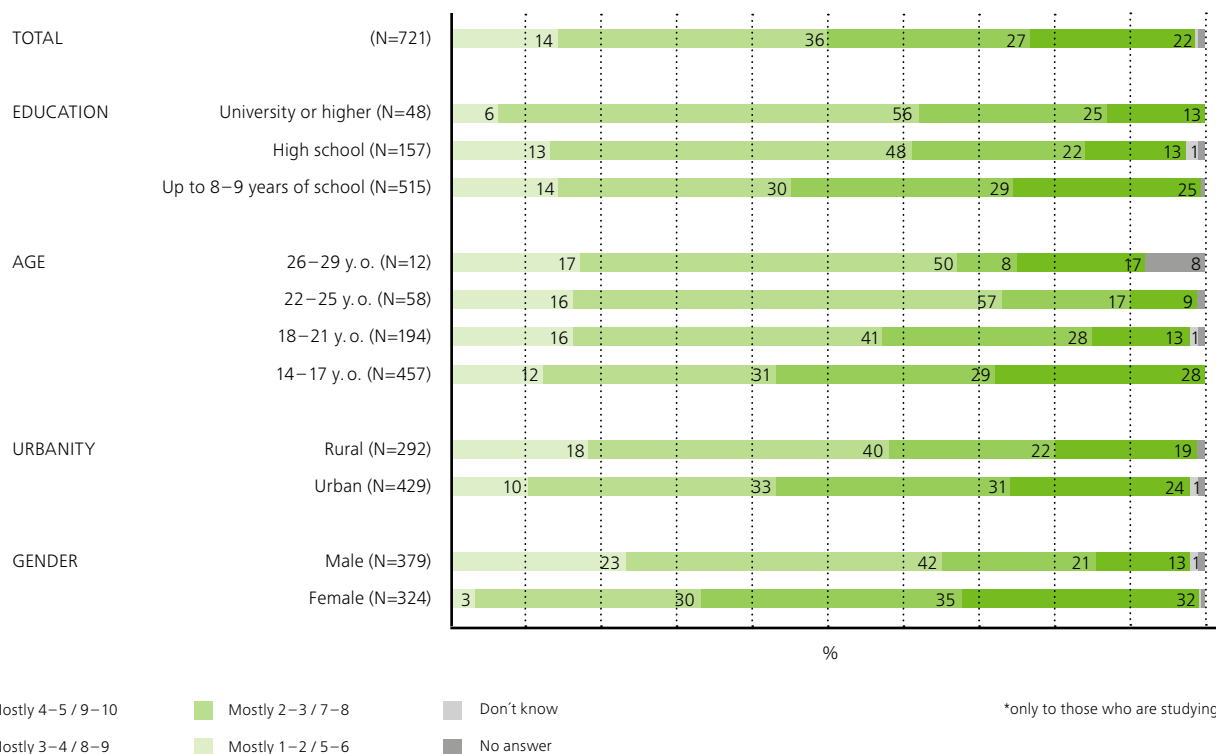


FIGURE 44: What was your average grade during the last academic year?



Daily life at schools and universities is somewhat difficult and stressful for 41 per cent of young people interviewed. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 34 per cent of respondents claim it is an easy-going and stress-free experience. 57 per cent of the age group of 22-25-year-olds claim to experience greater difficulties and stress, indicating a more challenging environment in post-graduate studies.

When it comes to GPA scores during the last year of studies, 49 per cent of respondents claim to have achieved a GPA of 8-9 and 9-10, whilst 3 per cent concede a GPA of only 7-8. In both cases, females lead males with 35 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, in the 8-9, 9-10 GPA range, and 32 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively, in the 7-8 GPA range, emphasising the strength of female students in the education cycle. Only 19 per cent of students from rural areas claim to have scored in the 9-10 GPA range, as opposed to 24 per cent in urban areas, an indicator of the specific conditions in rural areas where, beside their studies, young students also spend time contributing to the household economy.

Education and employment are two inseparable elements. However, 54 per cent of respondents expect they will have a hard time or very hard time in finding employment after finishing their studies. Only 38 per cent expect little to no difficulty in finding a job. Here the gender gap is striking at 35 per cent of

females expecting a very hard time finding a job, as opposed to only 28 per cent of males. Formally speaking, the labour market should be free of gender discrimination, but in reality females are faced with various discriminatory practices that make their employment more difficult.

CONCLUSIONS

The level and quality of education, considered to be strongly related to employment, remains an issue of persisting concern among Albanian youth. Their concerns about education are related not only to phenomena within the school, but especially to the need to match educational programs to labour market demands. Gender categories among Albanian youth continue to display different approaches toward studying and therefore different outcomes along with these, attesting to a stubborn trend among them. However, despite an increase in numbers of those who are undergoing vocational education, completing university studies remains a fundamental objective in the conviction that a university degree provides for better employment opportunities.

8

EMPLOYMENT

MAIN FINDINGS

- 48 per cent of employed young people say their job does not fit with their profile of education and qualification
- 36 per cent of employed young people say their job requires a lower level of qualification/education than their own
- On average, young people work 41 hours per week. In rural areas, they work 43 hours per week
- 45 per cent of respondents expressed a preference to work in the public sector. 44 per cent prefer the private sector
- 81 per cent of respondents state that family and social contacts are important or very important in finding a job
- 71 per cent of young people state that expertise or professional skills for a certain job are a very important factor in receiving that job
- 86 per cent of youth consider salary to be the main motivation for employment
- 76.5 per cent of young people state that is very important to feel a sense of accomplishment when choosing a job
- Only 22 per cent of respondents claim to have been involved in volunteer activities in the last 12 months.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Employment status among young people remains a persistent problem. 51 per cent of those interviewed claim they are not employed and are not actively seeking employment. 81 per cent of this category are members of the 14-17-year-old age group and in the process of attending high school. 17 per cent of respondents claim they do not have a job, but are actively seeking one. 33 per cent of the latter are members of the 22-25-year-old age group and 28 per cent are in the 26-29-years-old age group. Young people from these two age groups have completed all stages of the study cycle and face an uphill battle to find employment. On the other side of the spectrum, only 10 per cent of re-

spondents claim to have a permanent employment contract, a much lower percentile than the 22 per cent registered in 2015, indicating a significant drop in employment rates.²⁸

According to young Albanians, there are several barriers toward employment, as they have had various personal experiences in facing such barriers. Hence, the study's focus has concentrated only on those age groups that have completed the study cycle and are actively seeking employment.

According to the above categories, the quality of school grades has not constituted a barrier to employment in the local labour market. 82 per cent of respondents state they have never been refused an employment opportunity because of their GPA during undergraduate and graduate studies. However, only 26 per cent of those with only a high school diploma could state the same. This trend is the same in urban as in rural areas, indicating that employers look first and foremost at previous work experience and practical skills when hiring a potential employee.

Nor has the level of education been an employment barrier in the local market, according to respondents. 75 per cent of young people claim they have never been refused a job application because of their level of education, whilst 23 per cent state the opposite. 24 per cent of youth in the 18-21-year-old age group have had a negative experience in this regard. It is worth noting that in the same age group, 40 per cent of those with a high-school diploma and 30 per cent of those with only a primary education (9 levels) have suffered a negative experience.

Only 15 per cent of young Albanians interviewed claim to have migrated in search of better employment opportunities, but 83 per cent say they have not felt such a need. It is worth emphasising that 24 per cent of respondents in the 26-29-year-old age group, who have completed the study cycle, have migrated toward regions with greater employment opportunities.

Employed youth face a different average number of working hours per week depending on gender and geographical location. In general, respondents state that they work an average of 41 hrs/week, registering an increase from 38 hrs/week in 2015.²⁹ It is

FIGURE 45: What is your current employment status?

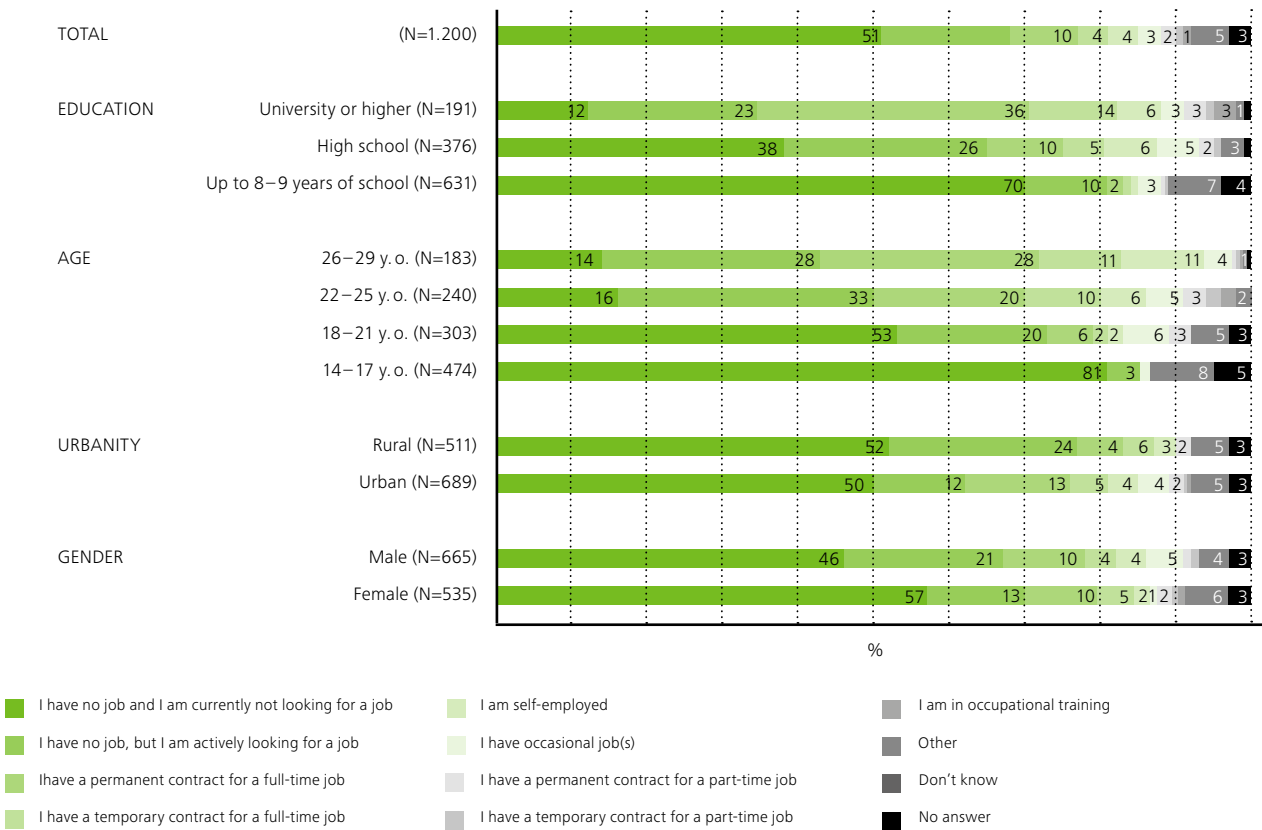
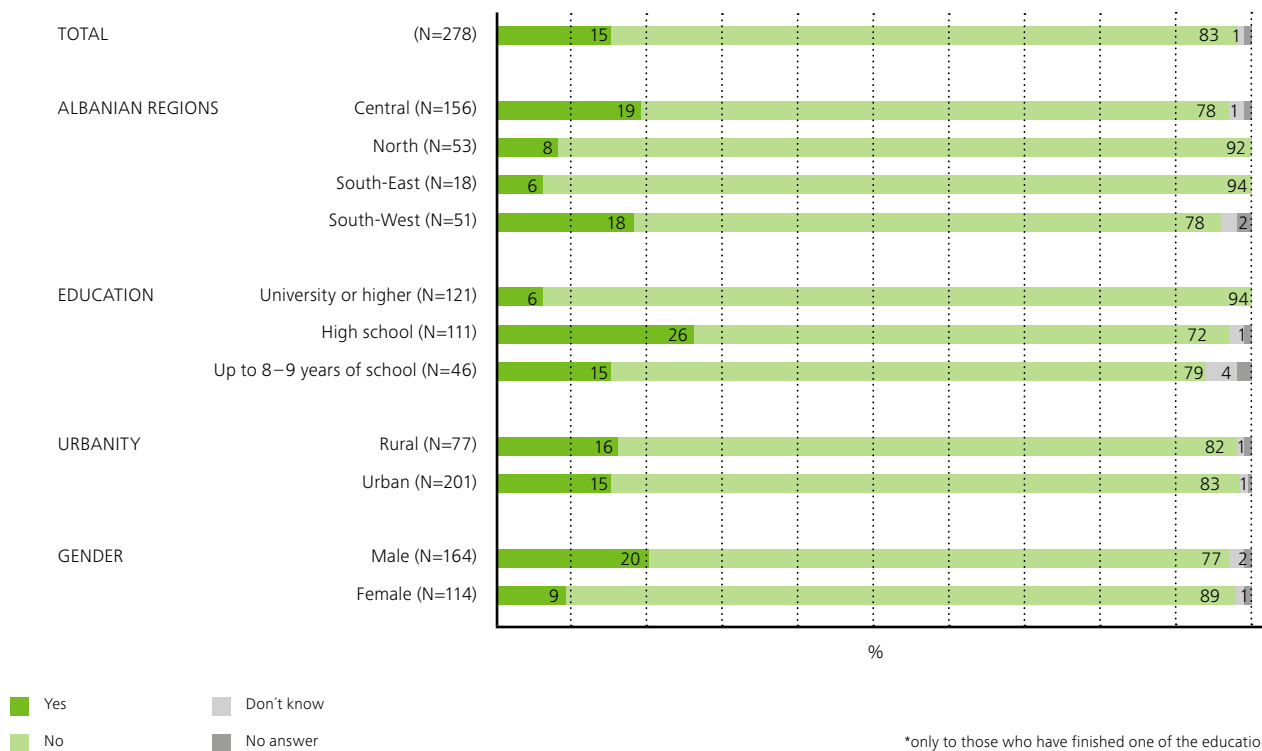


FIGURE 46: Have you personally made one or more of the following experiences: Not being able to get the aspired job, because of bad school grades



*only to those who have finished one of the education cycles

FIGURE 47: **Have you personally made one or more of the following experiences: Moving for job after school, because there was no appropriate job for me in my region**

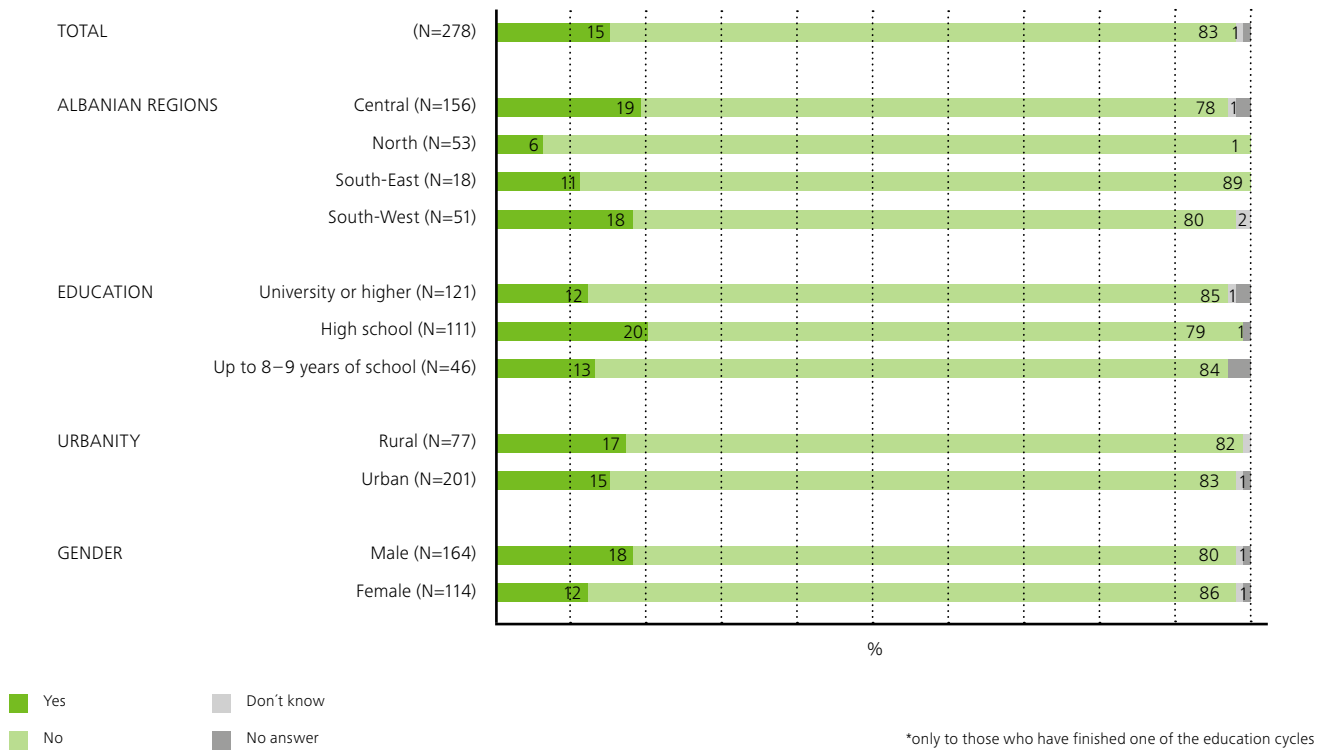


FIGURE 48: **How many hours per week do you work on average?**

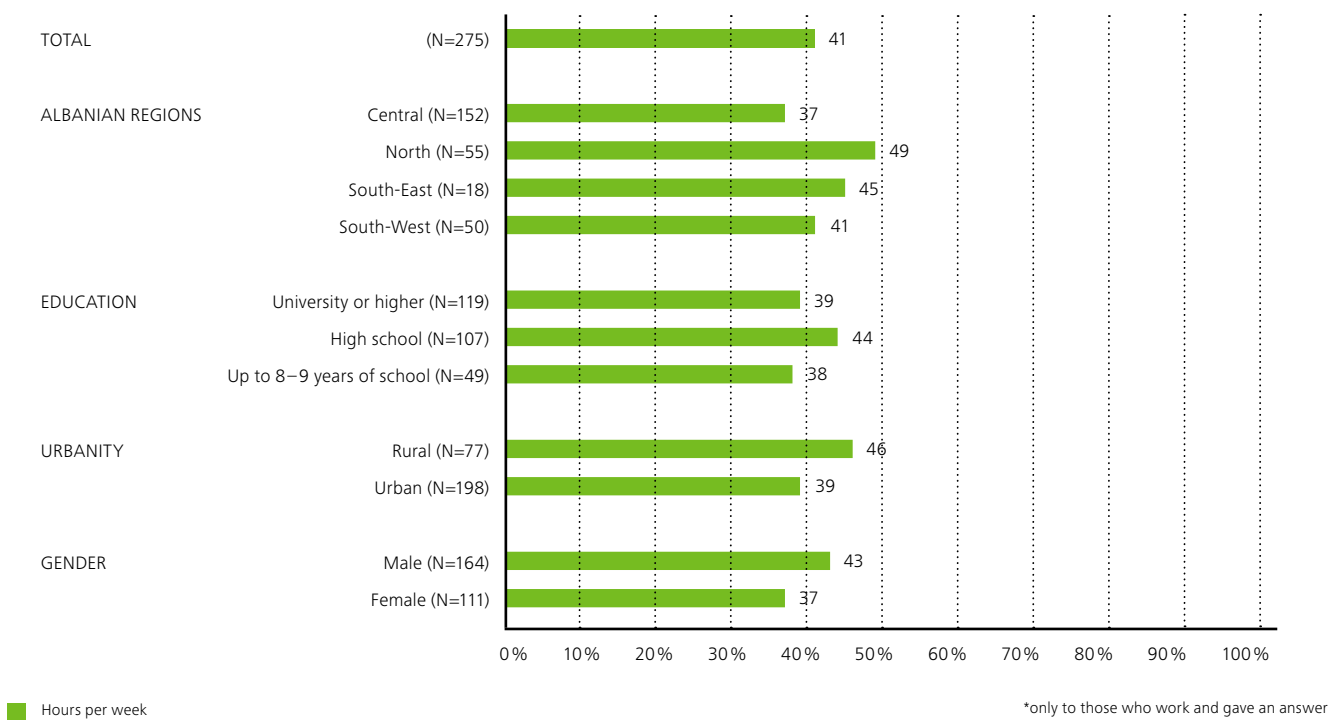
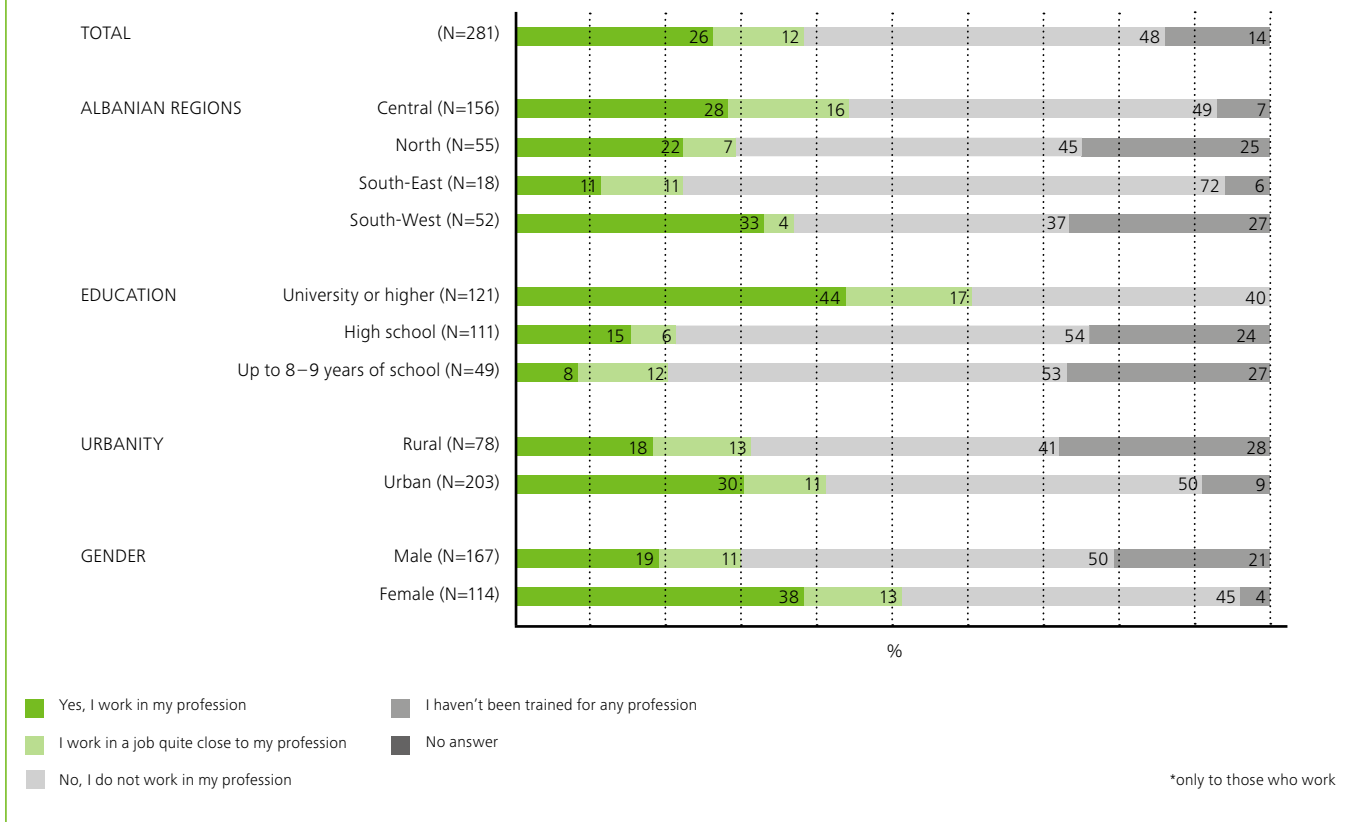


FIGURE 49: **Do you currently work on a job within your profession (one that you have been trained / educated for)?**



also worth noting the difference in gender, with an average of 43 hrs/week for males and 37 hrs/week for females. There are also differences between rural and urban areas, with an average of 46 hrs/week for rural youth and 39hrs/week for their urban counterparts. In addition, there is a difference between Tirana and other urban areas, with averages of 34 hrs/week and 43 hrs/week, respectively. Such discrepancies attest to the differences in socio-economic conditions among Albanian regions, which in turn have an impact on the average number of working hours per week.

Compatibility between job positions and educational background among young people remains a common challenge in day-to-day reality. 48 per cent of young people currently employed say their jobs do not align with their occupation and qualification. The discrepancy is greater than the score of 41 per cent in 2015.³⁰ The widening gap indicates a lack of coordination between the educational system and the labour market. Nevertheless, 38 per cent of young people claim their job is almost or fully compatible with their education, which is only a 1 point increase from the 2015 level of 37 per cent.

On the other hand, 53 per cent of young people interviewed state they currently hold a job in accordance with the formal level of their education. Another 36 per cent claim they work at a job requiring a lower level of education. The need for employment pushes young people to accept opportunities below their level of qualifications. Such an approach is similar among males and females; however, there is a difference between socio-economic

strata. 45 per cent of young people from the poorest economic strata are more likely to accept a job position for which they are overqualified, as opposed to only 34 per cent of those coming from the middle class.

There is also a significant difference in employment between private and public sectors. 84.5 per cent of respondents are employed in the private sector and only 14 per cent work in the public administration. None of the respondents work for a domestic or international NGO.

Young people's desires and preferences for employment are closely linked to their perception of the labour market. 45 per cent of young people express a preference for employment in the public sector, a 3-point drop from 48 per cent in 2015. This could be explained by changes in labour-market dynamics. On the other hand, 44 per cent of respondents claim they have a preference for the private sector, a 6-point increase from 38 per cent in 2015.³¹ The decrease in the gap in preferences between public and private sectors indicates that young Albanians are re-evaluating the private sector as a provider of good employment opportunities. Males show a greater preference than females for work in the private sector at 52 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively, perhaps a reflection of gender-related difficulties females may face in this sector.

Meanwhile 57 per cent of females are actively seeking work, followed by 46 per cent of males, a telling indicator of the greater difficulties women face in this regard due to labour-market

FIGURE 50: In your opinion, how important are each of the following factors, when it comes to finding a job for a young person in your country?

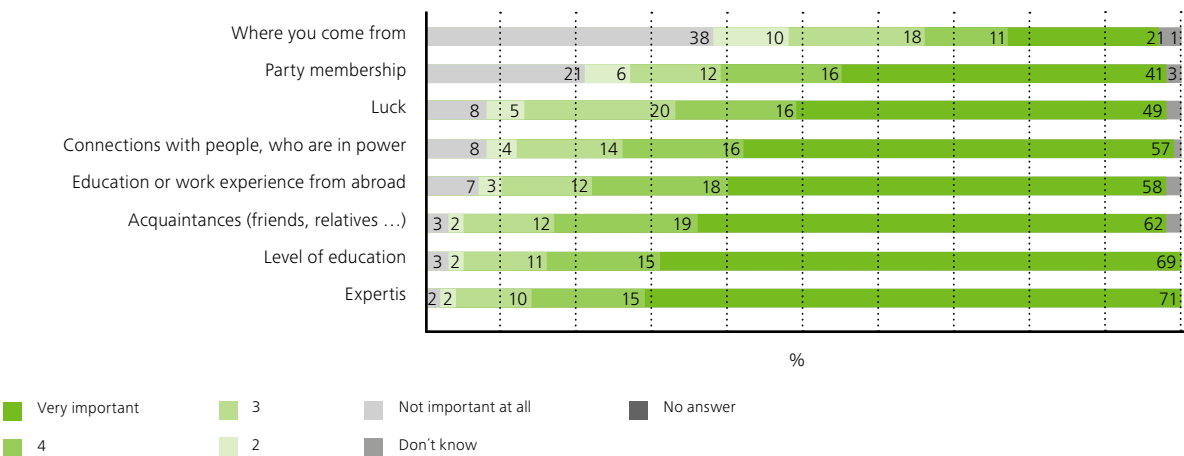
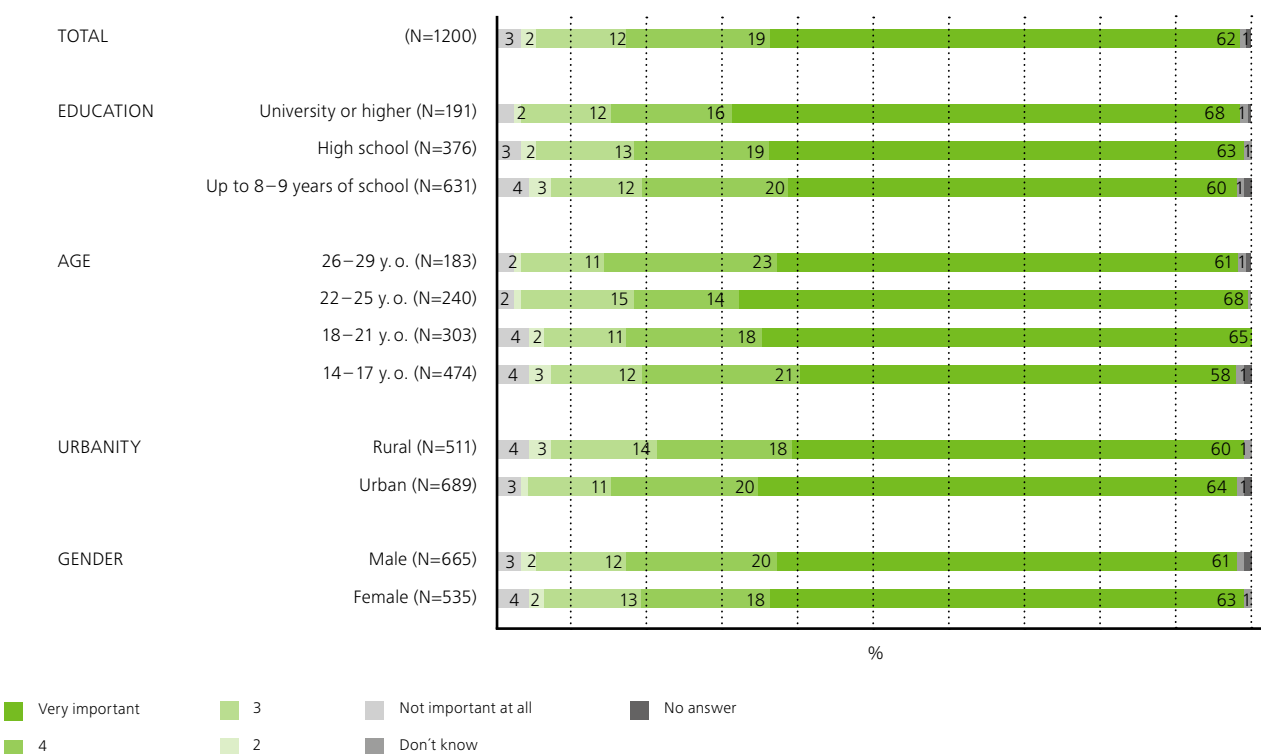


FIGURE 51: In your opinion, how important are acquaintances (friends, relatives ...) when it comes to finding a job for a young person in your country?



typology. Both urban and rural areas display the same percentage of active young job-seekers, as employment challenges remain the same beyond geographical aspects.

According to findings, there are a number of formal (education, experience) and informal (social ties, luck) factors that better describe dynamics in the domestic labour market.

Connections and social ties remain among the most important factors in youth employment. 81 per cent of young people state that social ties (relatives, friends) are important or very important in finding a job, a 5-point increase from 76 per cent in 2015, indi-

cating an increase in relevance in this category.³² Also, for 73 per cent of respondents in Tirana and 60 per cent of respondents in other cities, social ties remain a very important element, adding emphasis to this indicator, as the capital is the biggest employer of youth in the country.

On the other hand, 71 per cent of young people maintain that expertise and professional skills are very important in getting hired. Hence, young Albanians are aware that qualifications remain a deal-breaker even in the face of informal factors impacting employment.

FIGURE 52: In your opinion, how important is level of education when it comes to finding a job for a young person in your country?

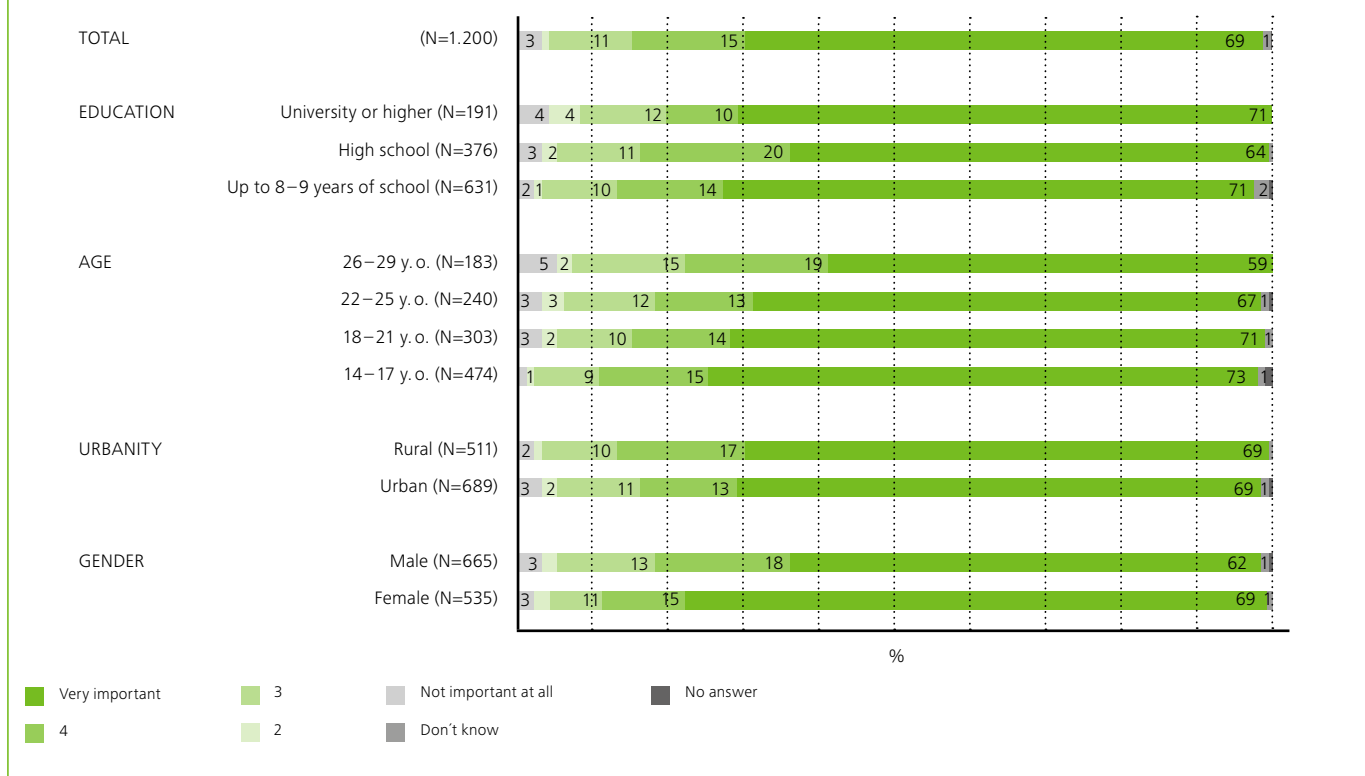
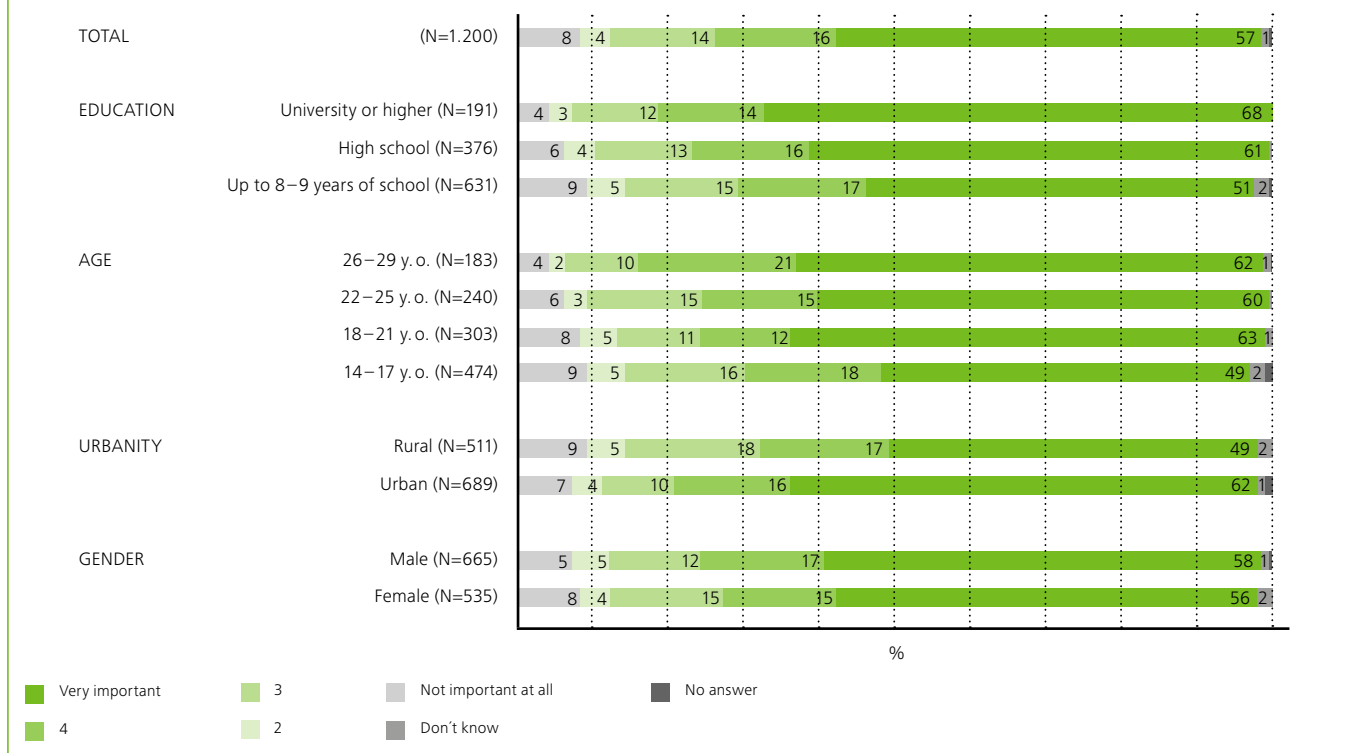


FIGURE 53: In your opinion, how important are connections with people who are in power when it comes to finding a job for a young person in your country?



Educational level is also highly valued by young people as a key factor in increasing employment chances. 69 per cent of respondents characterise education as being very important, and there are no significant differences between rural and urban youth in assigning relevance to this factor.

Ties to powerful people could also play an important role in finding employment. 57 per cent of young Albanians consider such connections to be very important, hence providing another indicator adding emphasis to the relevance of informal factors in employment. Urban youth are more convinced in this regard than those in rural areas, with 62 per cent and 49 per cent of respective respondents considering connections to be a very important factor.

Luck is another element young people value as a relevant factor in employment. 49 per cent of the young people interviewed identified luck as very important in finding a job. Women seem to be more superstitious in this regard, at least as far as 52 per cent of them are concerned, as opposed to 47 per cent of males. This is another indicator that perhaps informal factors hold more weight than formal ones in the domestic labour market.

One's **birthplace or origin** is not considered a relevant factor in finding employment. Only 21 per cent of young people considered it to be very important, whereas 38 per cent consider it not at all important.

Finishing your studies and/or having work experience abroad play an important role in employment. 58 per cent of young people think that being educated and/or having worked in another country is very important in finding a job. The numerous young Albanians studying abroad, emigration, and the transfer of skills have become key factors for Albanian employers. In this regard, females value these factors more than males with 63 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively.

The relation between employment and **membership in a political party** has long since become a social cliché. 41 per cent of respondents admit that membership in a political party plays a very important role. Here there are no major differences between males and female respondents or between rural and urban youth. However, Tirana youth show a stronger trend in this regard, registering 48 per cent, as opposed to only 29 per cent in other cities where family ties are perhaps a more decisive factor given the smaller population.

Other than the abovementioned elements, young Albanians have to consider a number of motivating factors (salary, work environment, career path, ethics, and colleagues) when faced with the challenge of employment.

Salary is always a key motivator when considering a job. 86 per cent of young people identify salary as a very important factor when choosing a job. The demand for dignified pay that reflects education and experience is more than legitimate.

Workplace safety is another major element when accepting a position. Findings show that 85 per cent of young people consider workplace safety to be very important when deciding whether to accept a job offer. Both sexes seem to have the same awareness in this regard: this is affirmed by 90 per cent of females and

89 per cent of males, respectively. However, workplace safety is more important among young people in Tirana than those in other cities at 93 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively.

Working with other people plays a significant role when choosing a job. For 74 per cent of respondents, the possibility of working with other people is a very important factor when deciding on a job. The opportunity to strengthen social ties in the work environment is an indicator of motivation. 85 per cent of Tirana youth consider this element to be very important, with this figure being 72 per cent in the other main cities, attesting to a more dynamic socialisation trend in metropolitan areas.

Working with colleagues of your liking is both a matter of satisfaction as well as a very important factor in the job one chooses. Hence, 65 per cent of respondents did not hesitate to identify this element as very important to their job of choice. Females seem to have a slightly more pronounced preference in this regard than males, with 67 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively, affirming this. There are no notable differences between urban and rural areas.

The opportunity to have a career is the motivational pillar of employment. 72 per cent of young people state that having a career path is very important in choosing a job. Young women value career opportunities more than males at 77 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively, indicating a stronger drive among women to fight gender differences and achieve gender equality.

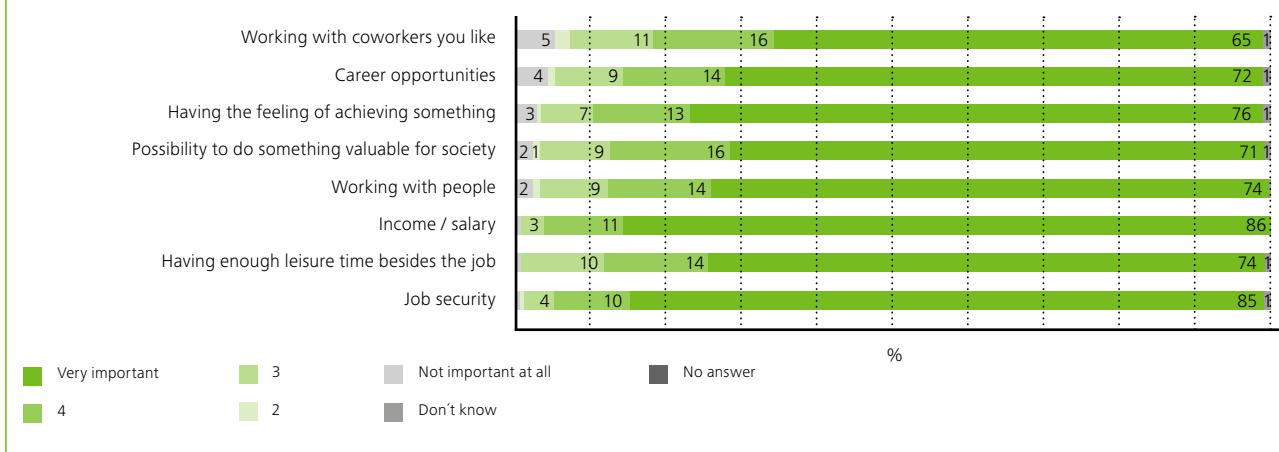
Feeling fulfilled is another highly motivating element in choosing a specific job. Findings show that 76.5 per cent of young Albanians think it is very important to choose a job that gives them a sense of fulfilment.

The opportunity to contribute to society is an ethical objective. Nevertheless, 71 per cent of respondents felt this element is very important when choosing a job. This indication of social empathy is stronger in Tirana than in other cities at 81 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively.

Free time after work plays an important role in the emotional health of young people and in strengthening social ties. Thus, for 74 per cent of young people it is very important to consider free time when choosing a job. Tirana youth lead the way in this regard at 86 per cent, as opposed to 71 per cent in the other cities. Perhaps this could be explained by the fact that the country's capital provides for more leisure opportunities, and free time after work matters to them.

The level of **voluntary commitment in a society** reflects the level of social engagement and responsibility felt among young people. However, only 22 per cent of respondents admit to having performed some volunteer work during the last 12 months. The majority of 78 per cent have not participated in any volunteer (unpaid work) activity in the last 12 months. It is worth noting that, within the 18-29-year-old segment, the older the respondents, the less likely they were to get involved in volunteer work. 90 per cent of respondents in the 26-29-year-old age group admit to not having been involved in volunteer activities, which might indicate that voluntary engagement usually takes place during school years. For

FIGURE 54: How important for you personally are the following when it comes to choosing a job today?



those who have been involved in voluntary activities in their life, 14 per cent say this was during university or school years, while 86 per cent say they have not performed any voluntary work in the last 12 months.

Voluntary work for NGOs remains low. Only 2 per cent of respondents claim they have performed voluntary work for NGOs, whilst 98 per cent have not done so in the last 12 months. Also, involvement in civic initiatives remains insignificant. Once again, only 2 per cent have been involved in civic initiatives, whilst this has not been the case for 98 per cent in the last 12 months. None of the respondents claimed to have performed some unpaid or voluntary work with public services such as a fire brigade or first-aid service. When asked about voluntary work for international NGOs such as Amnesty International or Red Cross, only 2 per cent answered in the affirmative, whilst the remaining 98 per cent stated that they have had no experience whatsoever in this connection. The almost non-existent commitment, only 1–2 per cent, also applies to voluntary work for political parties, unions, and youth organisations.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of youth employment remains a key element conducive to the future occupational and individual development of young people. Their concern is that job offers in the labour market do not match their education qualifications, yet they have no choice but to accept them. On the other hand, they continue to appreciate the importance of informal employment criteria (social ties, acquaintances, etc.) compared to formal ones (education, experience) in the labour market. In choosing a job, young people take into account salary and working conditions as well as relations with colleagues, which they consider to be a prerequisite for a positive environment that promotes career development. Youth engagement in unpaid volunteer work with various NGOs and institutions remains low, indicating limited social involvement.

9

POLITICS

MAIN FINDINGS

- 62 per cent of young people say they have no interest in politics
- 31 per cent of respondents think they are not at all represented in politics
- 28 per cent of youth admit that their political convictions do not align at all with those of their parents
- 69 per cent of respondents state they would vote in the next elections
- Internet is their main source of information on politics for 63 per cent of respondents
- Only 24 per cent of respondents use social networks as the main source of information on politics
- 52 per cent of young people would prefer a strong-handed leader for the public good
- 53 per cent of young people think that political opposition is necessary for a healthy democracy
- 80 per cent of respondents stated the fight against organised crime and corruption to be a main priority for the government
- Young Albanians stated that economic well-being and employment are the most important political values

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Information and interest in politics

With regard to politics, 62 per cent of young Albanians claim to be not at all interested. Of significance here is the increase of 22 points from 40 per cent recorded in 2015, a telling indicator of how quickly young Albanians are losing interest in politics. Only 3 per cent state that they are very interested, a drop of 4 points from the 7 per cent recorded in 2015.³³ The level of disinterest in politics is the same among urban and rural youth, reflecting general apathy on a national level. Females show a greater level of disinterest than males at 73 per cent versus 62 per cent.

The level of disinterest among youth is also reflected when it comes to political developments in the EU. 61 per cent of respondents admit to being completely disinterested. Even here there is a significant increase of 18.3 points from the 42.7 per cent recorded in the 2015 survey.³⁴ However, perhaps due to a higher need for information, the numbers are lower among university students, where only 48 per cent state that they are not at all interested in political developments abroad.

In the same vein, 62 per cent of young people show no interest at all in political developments in any country in particular. This trend persists even when respondents are queried about the politics of a country at a regional and/or local level: 61 per cent state that they are not interested.

The United States of America and the Russian Federation are two major players in the international political arena and the level of interest among young people as regards political developments in these two countries can also serve as an indicator of the level of information they have and of their attitudes in this regard.

Young Albanians are not interested in US politics, however. 66 per cent of respondents express a complete lack of interest in political developments in that country and only 5 per cent of them stated that they are extremely interested. Despite the global political weight of the US, young Albanians display complete indifference towards this. The same could be concluded as regards politics in Russia. Findings show that 84 per cent of respondents have no interest at all in Russian affairs. Given that Russia is not a major player in Albanian politics, it is not surprising that the level of disinterest in Russian politics is greater than with respect to US politics.

Young people display similar political indifference when it comes to their families. 45 per cent of respondents say they never discuss politics with their family or relatives, with no discernible difference between rural and urban youth. Only 4 per cent of young Albanians claim to often discuss politics with their parents.

FIGURE 55: How much are you personally interested in each of the following:

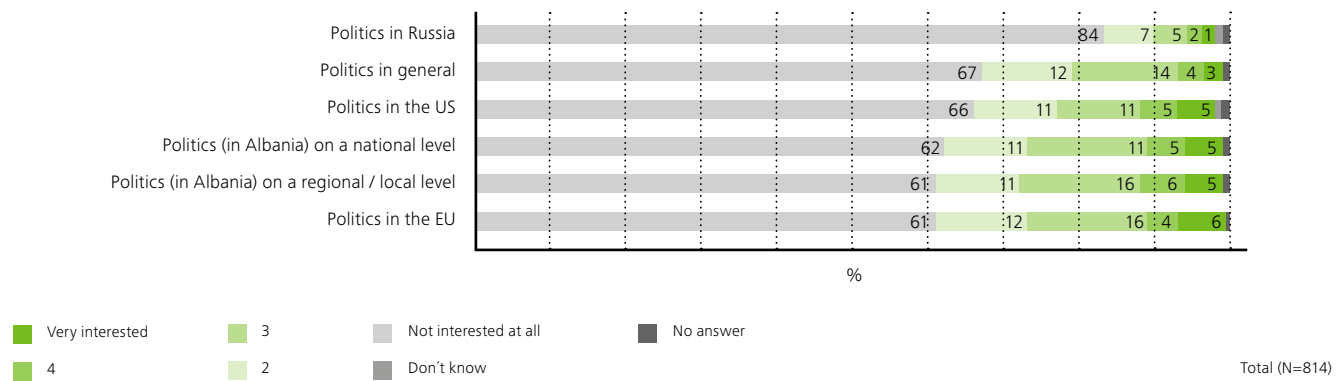
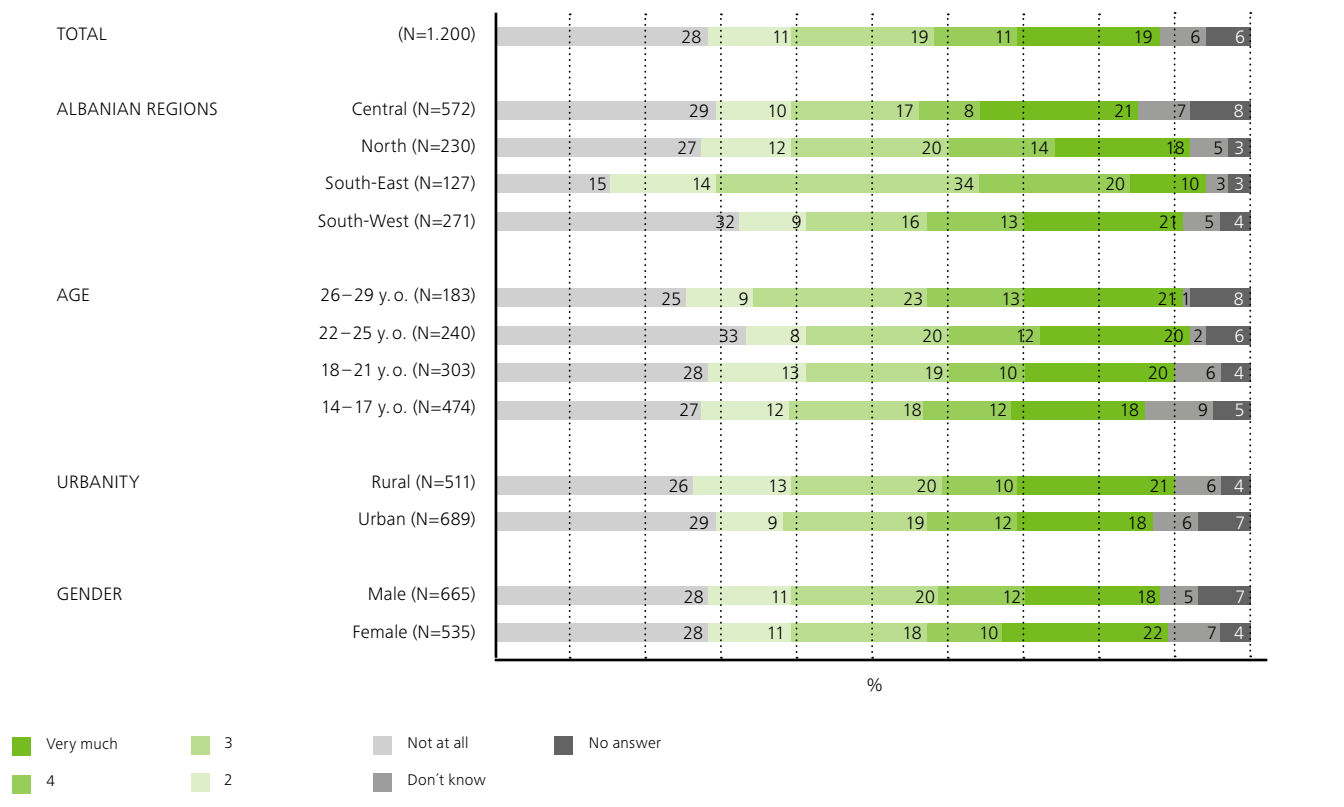


FIGURE 56: To what extent are your political views and beliefs aligned with those of your parents?



The degree with which political convictions between young people and their parents align is a social curiosity. When asked how compatible their political views were with their parents, 28 per cent of respondents contend that they are not compatible at all. Here it is worth noting that there has been an increase of 14.2 points from the 13.8 per cent recorded in 2015.³⁵ In other words, the latest trend indicates a more independent way of political thinking among young people. This is further attested to on the opposite side of the spectrum: whereas in 2015 31.7 per cent stated that their political convictions were fully compatible with their parents, the latest results indicate a 12.7 points drop has taken place, with only 19 per cent of respondents affirming compatibility. The change could be an outcome of disappointment

and indifference, resulting in attempts to avoid identification with politics.

With regard to youth representation in politics, 31 per cent of young people feel they are not represented at all and another 30 per cent believe they are only a represented to a small extent. Such findings are more encouraging than in the 2015 data, when 54.5 per cent of respondents believed young people were not very represented in politics.³⁶

Electoral behaviour and engagement of young people is crucial, given that they constitute a considerable portion of the electorate in Albania.

41 per cent of eligible young voters have voted, whilst 13 per cent of them have not participated in elections even though they

FIGURE 57: How well do you think young peoples interests' are represented in national politics?

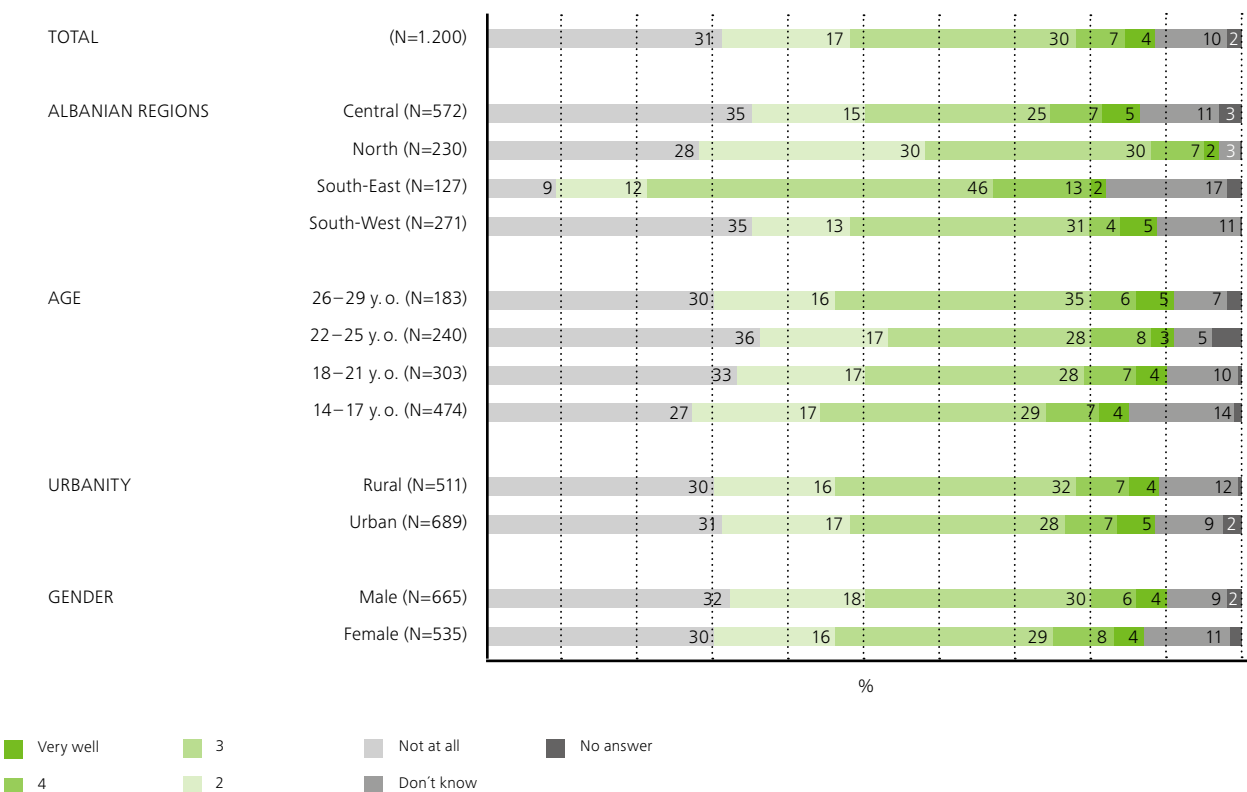
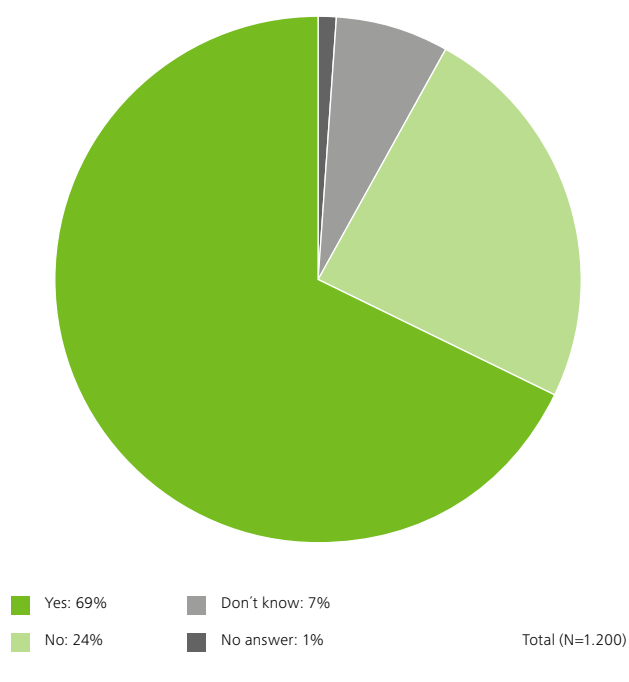


FIGURE 58A: If elections for the national parliament were to be held and you would be eligible to vote, would you go to vote?



were eligible. The percentage of voter turnout increases by age groups, with 18–21 being at 57 per cent, 22–25 registering 74 per cent and 26–29 turning in 80 per cent, indicating a growing

awareness of the importance of voting in an electoral process compared to 2015, when only 28.3 per cent of young people stated that they had voted.³⁷

With regard to their willingness to take part in the next electoral process, 69 per cent of respondents stated they would vote. Young people from rural areas express a more pronounced intention to participate at 72 per cent, as opposed to 66 per cent of youth in urban areas. Even young people from other major cities are more committed voters, with 69 per cent and 73 per cent expressing support for voting as opposed to only 60 per cent of young people from Tirana. Youth of voting age are not characterised by indifference, as the electoral process is apparently the moment when they feel the weight and impact that their vote may have.

Embarking on a political career is something young people do not look forward to. When asked if they would like to hold a political office, 52 per cent of respondents answered negatively. On the other hand, 26 per cent of young people stated that they would perhaps be willing to hold a political office, reflecting the dilemma of youth as regards political engagement. Males show a stronger trend than females toward a political career at 29 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively.

How young people get their information on politics is important given their role in the formation of opinion.

Internet continues to grow as an important source of political information for young Albanians. 63 per cent of respondents stated that the Internet is their main source of information, a significant

FIGURE 58B: If elections for the national parliament were to be held and you would be eligible to vote, would you go to vote? By gender and by urbanity

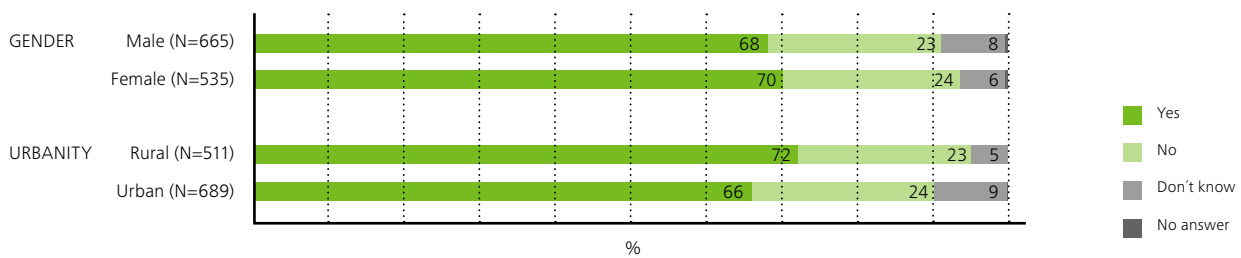
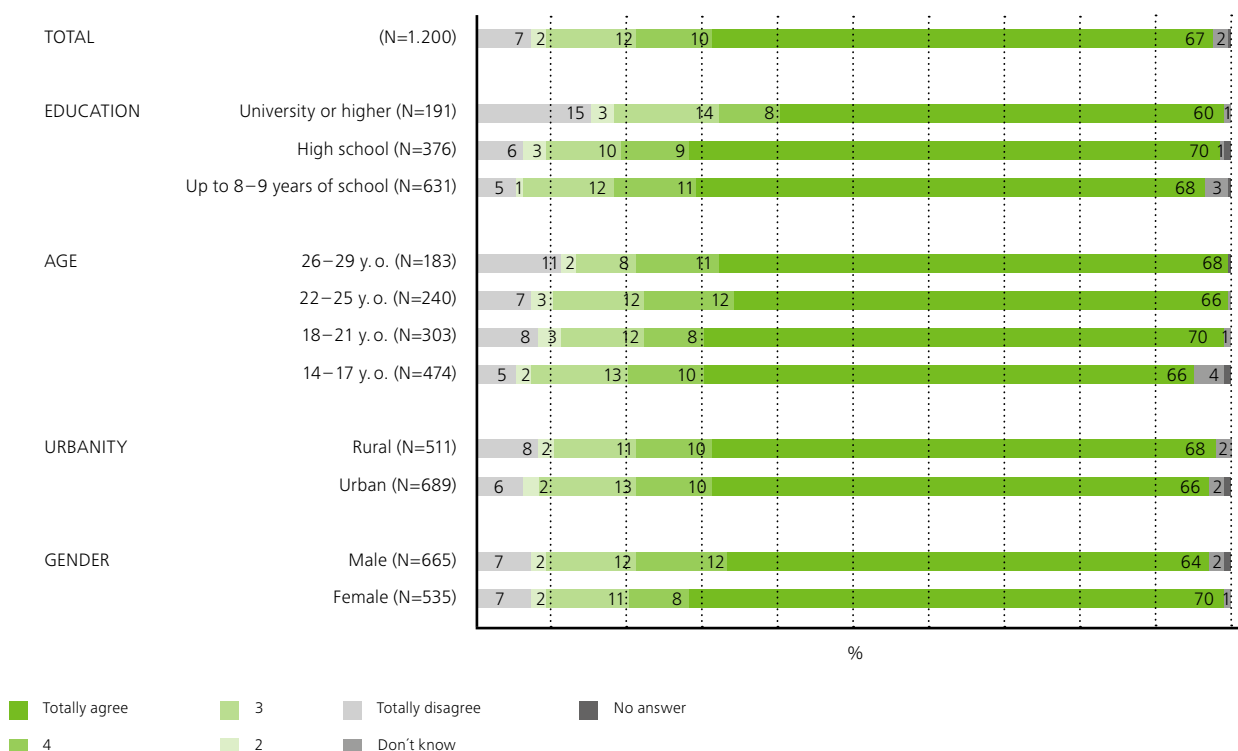


FIGURE 59: "Incomes of the poor and the rich should be made more equal"



increase of 24 points from 39 per cent in 2015. In this regard there has also been a significant increase among youth in rural areas, reaching 59 per cent. On the other hand, television remains the classic medium of information for youths. 73 per cent of respondents state that they receive their information from TV, registering a drop of 14 points from 87 per cent in 2015. Clearly, other mediums and above all the Internet have moved up in priority. ³⁸

Printed press and radio have gradually lost ground as information sources in the face of new communication technologies. 96 per cent of respondents claim they do not use the written press as a source for daily political information, while 98 per cent do not use radio. Nor do discussions with family or friends constitute a source of information for young people at 82 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively. We see here a significant increase of more than 40 points from the 40 per cent recorded in 2015.

Even though social networks have become the bread and butter of communication for young people, only 24 per cent of them claim to use social networks as a source of information on daily political developments, whilst 76 per cent state just the opposite. Therefore, it is safe to say that social networks prefer to focus on other subjects, and not on politics.

About 23 per cent of young people believe that their political convictions align with the left, 29 per cent with the centre, and 18 per cent with the right.

The attitude of young people on issues such as social inequality, public property, and the role of state in society defines their level of conviction and opinions on elements of public policy. With regard to social inequality, 67 per cent of young people agree there must be a more equal distribution of income between the rich and poor. The level of social inequality affects young people head on. It is interesting that 58 per cent of young people from

FIGURE 60: **How satisfied are you with the state of democracy in (Albania) in general?**

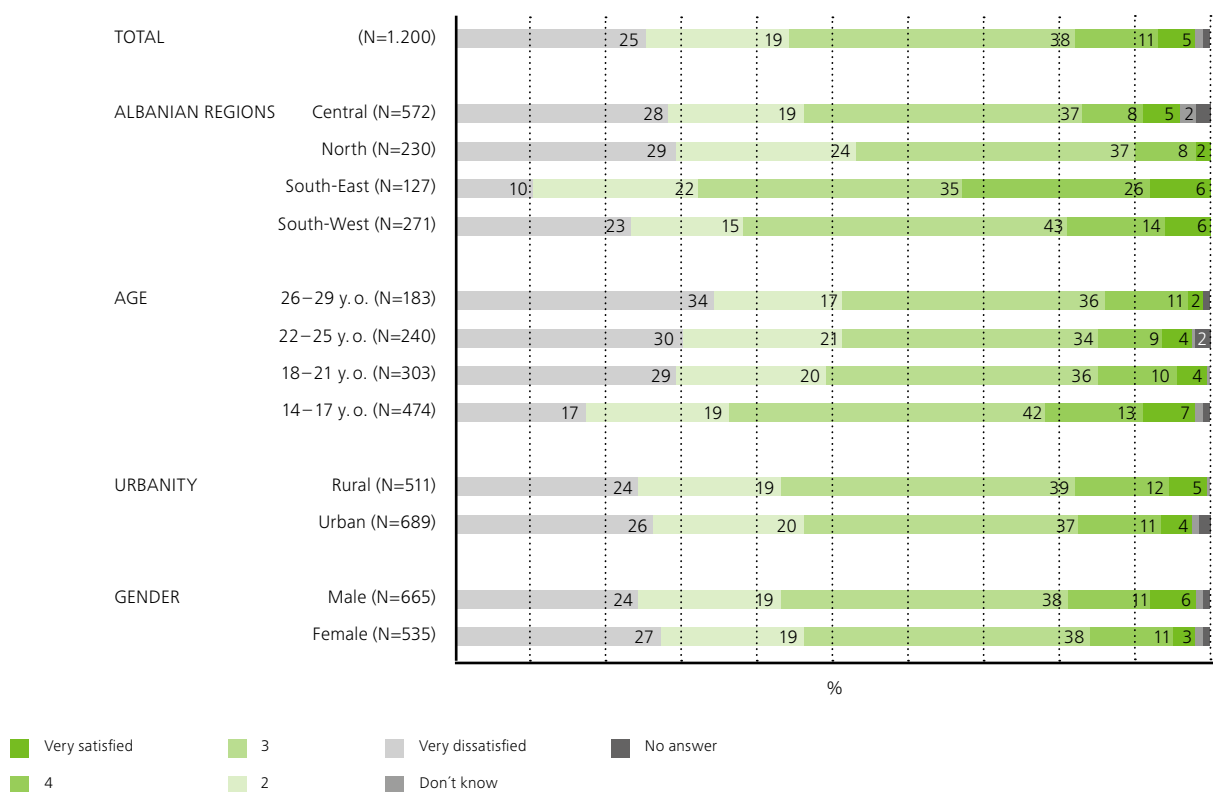
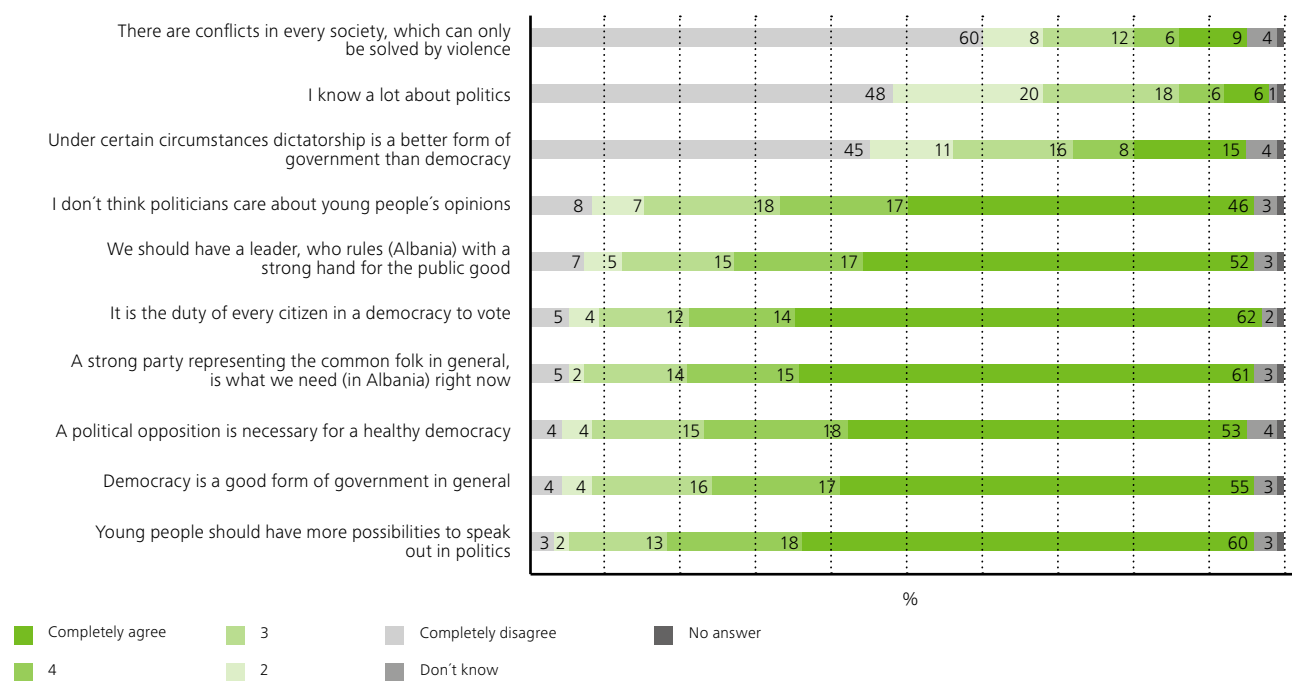


FIGURE 61: **Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**



wealthier strata are in favour of a more just distribution of income, indicating that everyone has something to gain from the struggle for social equality.

What is more, 55 per cent of young people agree that the state must increase its ownership of businesses and enterprises,

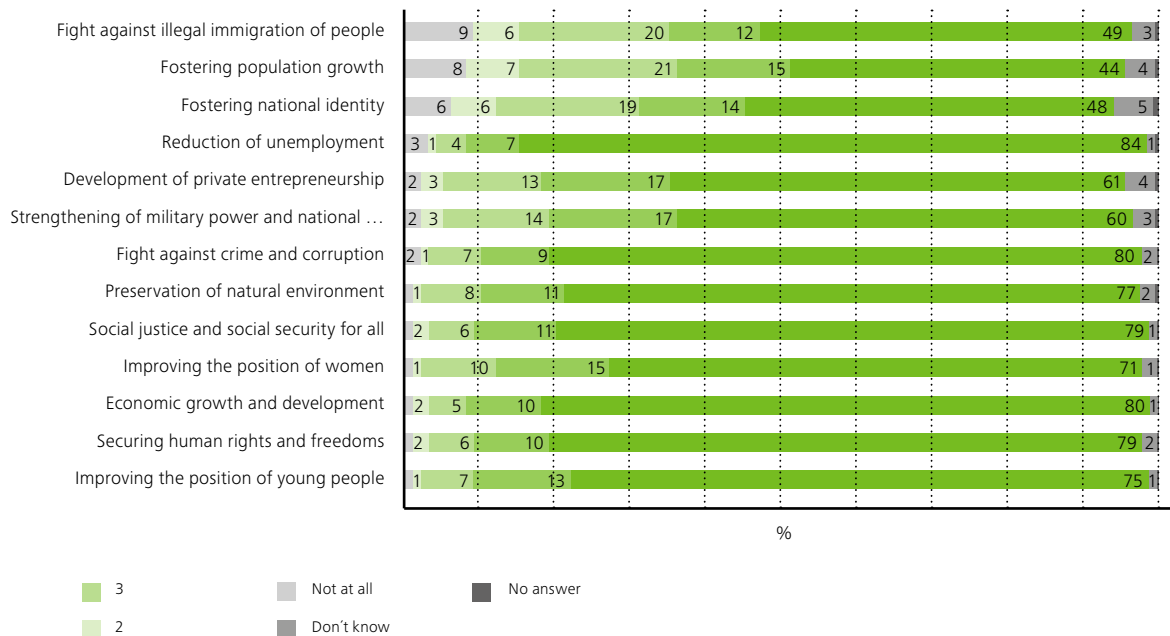
which indicates that the public management of enterprises in a free market context need not be a taboo.

On other hand, 80 per cent of young people agree that the state must take more responsibility upon itself and 80 per cent of respondents from wealthier strata approve of this notion of the social state.

FIGURE 62: Have you tried to do each of the following:



FIGURE 63: To which extent should the national government focus on the realization of each of the following objectives:



Competition is not seen as something negative by young Albanians. 32 per cent of respondents do not agree that competition in a free market context brings the worst in people. Urban youth show a more positive attitude in this regard at 36 per cent, as opposed to only 25 per cent of youth in rural areas, where competition may be more unforgiving. On the other hand, 28 per cent of young people agree with the statement that competition brings out the worst in people.

78 per cent of young Albanians agree that honest and dedicated work brings about a better life from a long-term perspective – perhaps a reflection of young people's ethical attitude towards work.

Trust in institutions is of fundamental importance in a democratic system in guaranteeing social cohesion and sustainability. This group of institutions includes the government, the

President's Office, the Parliament, local government, political parties, and civil-society organisations.

Young Albanians have little faith in the country's main institutions such as the President's Office, the Parliament, and the government. 51 per cent of respondents say they have no faith in the President's Office, 51 per cent have no faith in the Parliament, and 48 per cent have no faith in the central government. There is a slight improvement compared to the 2015 results, but the lack of faith remains high.³⁹

Young people also display high levels of mistrust toward civil society organisations. 40 per cent of respondents have no faith in CSOs. The level of distrust is greater toward political parties. 58 per cent of respondents say they have no faith in these organisations.

In addition, 39 per cent of young Albanians have no faith in local government.

In the same vein, 30 per cent of young people do not have faith in the printed press and 44 per cent do not trust the unions. The same could be said with regard to big companies, in which only 6 per cent have faith, while 31 per cent of respondents do not trust them. With regard to banks, 28 per cent trust them and 25 per cent do not trust them at all.

Young people express weak trust in volunteer movements. 28 per cent have faith in them, but 27 per cent do not.

International organisations such as the EU, UN, OSCE, and NATO play an important role in the global arena as well as in Albanian affairs. However, the faith of young people in these organisations varies according to the scale of information and perceptions they have. The European Union is a cherished destination for Albanians, yet only 50 per cent have complete trust in the EU. Complete faith in UN is only at 42 per cent, 37 per cent for the OSCE, and 42 per cent for NATO.

Quality of democracy becomes an important element when young people view it as a political system of governance.

With regard to the level of democracy in the country, 25 per cent of respondents are not happy, 38 per cent are somewhat happy, and only 11 per cent are very happy. This is a notable increase from 2015, when only 22.5 per cent of young people said that they were somewhat happy. Yet statistics show a general lack of faith in the various institutions that make up the democratic system in Albania.

55 per cent of young Albanians fully agree that democracy is a good form of governance and only 4 per cent disagree with this statement. This is further emphasised by 45 per cent of respondents disagreeing with the statement that dictatorship can be a better system of governance than democracy under certain circumstances, even if 15 per cent do agree.

On the other hand, 52 per cent of young Albanians expressed their preference for a leader who rules with a strong hand, which could be explained by the fact that many young people have yet to acquire the political awareness that there is a risk that strong-handed leaders will become authoritarian. In the same vein, 61 per cent of respondents agree that the country needs a strong party to represent the interest of the people.

62 per cent of young Albanians agree it is every citizen's duty to vote in a democracy, thereby reflecting a degree of awareness that casting one's vote is the most important instrument in a democratic system.

Not surprisingly, young people seek to have an impact on politics. 60 per cent of respondents declare they should have more opportunities to make their voices heard. On the other hand, 46 per cent of respondents think that politicians are not interested in young people's opinions, a clear reflection of youth's general distrust in politics.

Young Albanians have clear notions as regards the political system in democracy. 53 per cent agree that political opposition is necessary for a healthy democracy.

They do not see violence as an instrument for conflict-resolution and 60 per cent of respondents disagree with the statement

that every society has conflicts that can only be resolved by violence. Young people are usually the first victims of violence and their awareness lends a stronger emphasis on resolving conflicts by other means.

48 per cent of young people interviewed admit to not knowing much about politics. This lack of political knowledge is stronger in rural than in urban areas at 54 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively.

Young people are not afraid to voice their political indifference, while 86 per cent state that they have signed a political petition or participated in similar initiatives.

Protests are a common means of democratic disagreement, but 83 per cent of young Albanians state that they have not participated in any such civic activities, which is telling of the general apathy when it comes to possibilities for citizens to react in a democratic system. Nor are young Albanians interested in volunteer and/or civil-society activities. 75 per cent of respondents admit they have not participated in any such activities, once again emphasising a tendency for apathy.

Young people's inclination to stay away from politics is emphasised by the fact that 87 per cent of them state that they have never been involved with a political party or group.

With regards to ethical decisions, young Albanians display an ethical awareness that is only in the early stages of development. 92 per cent of respondents state they have not taken an ethical stance by refusing to purchase certain products for political or environmental reasons. Product boycott campaigns for political or environmental reasons are a novelty in Albanian society, which in turn can explain the lack of involvement of young Albanians in this regard.

The lack of engagement in politics by young people is also supported by the fact that 90 per cent of respondents have not participated in online political activities via social networks.

The way young people define and assess priorities in governance also reflects the level of their awareness regarding the development process of their country.

80 per cent of young Albanians consider the fight against organised crime and corruption to be a priority for the government. On the other hand, this is an indicator of ongoing public discourse since 2015 in connection with reform of the judicial system and other aspects.

With regards to illegal emigration, 49 per cent of respondents agree the government must do more to fight the phenomena. Young women express stronger agreement with this statement than young men at 56 per cent compared to 46 per cent. 58 per cent of Tirana youth support this statement, while 58 per cent are opposed, compared to 46 per cent in other cities.

Strengthening the national identity is another element young Albanians consider to be a priority for their government. 48 per cent of respondents agree the Albanian government must do more in this regard. Globalisation, migration, conflicts with neighbouring countries, the role of the media in the multiplication of aspects relating to identity have pushed young people to seek to protect and strengthen their national identity.

80 per cent of Albanian youth consider economic growth and development to be an important national priority which requires a stronger engagement by the government. On the other hand, it is interesting that 60 per cent of young people also assign priority to strengthening the Albanian military and national security.

Young Albanians feel strongly about nature and the environment in their country. 77 per cent agree that protecting the environment must be a priority and that the government must do more in this regard.

Social and economic freedoms are two pillars of social development and this is reflected in the strength of awareness of these among young people.

79 per cent of young people interviewed agree that it is very important for the government to guarantee human rights and freedoms as well as provide social security. Given the role of youth and women in society, 71 per cent of respondents agree that women's position should be strengthened and 75 per cent agree that youth's position should be strengthened. Only 44 per cent of young people agree the government must work harder to encourage demographic growth, which indicates a low degree of awareness on demographic issues.

Priorities in economic development are directly connected to young people's perspective on life, reflecting a strong focus on employment issues. Thus, 84 per cent of respondents agree that reducing unemployment must be the government's number one priority, whilst 61 per cent consider it to be very important for the government to foster growth of private entrepreneurship.

When asked about prospects for economic development in the next 10 years, 27 per cent of young people believe the economy will improve considerably, noting a 15.4-point increase from 11.6 per cent of respondents in 2015. 32 per cent think that economic growth will only be moderate, a drop of 32.1 points from 64.1 per cent in 2015. Given these findings, one can say that optimists and sceptics account for roughly equal percentages in young people's perception of economic development.

The role and weight of Albania in regional and international politics and the juxtaposition of Albanian values with EU values reflect different levels of information and perception among youth.

31 per cent of young Albanians state that national interests are not strongly emphasised in global politics because Albania is a small country. Only 32 per cent believe the role of Albania will increase globally in the next few years. However, 70 per cent of respondents state that they are proud of being a citizen of their country. Rural areas score a higher percentage here at 76 per cent, whilst urban areas drop to 66 per cent.

Even though Albania has not been affected by the massive wave of immigrants and refugees, 31 per cent of young people state they would not accept many immigrants and refugees in their country, whilst 16 per cent would. Once again, rural youth are the most conservative elements, at 34 per cent as opposed to 29 per cent in urban areas. Given the fact that Albania is a country with a high percentage of emigrants, the opposing tendency of accepting immigration is surprising.

Young Albanians reflect upon the rights of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and religious communities in accordance with their convictions and level of information.

43 per cent of young people agree that women do not enjoy many rights, with this being affirmed by 55 per cent of females and 32 per cent of males, respectively. On the other hand, 40 per cent of respondents agree that women enjoy enough rights (30 per cent of women and 48 per cent of males, respectively). There is clear gender gap in the assessment of whether women possess or do not possess enough rights.

Ethnic minorities have different perceptions as regards their rights. 36 per cent of young people from ethnic minorities believe they do not have many rights. It is worth noting that this conviction is strongest in southwest Albania at 50 per cent of respondents as opposed to 37 per cent in the north and 17 per cent in the southeast, which may reflect the greater concentration of ethnic minorities in these regions.

With regard to LGBT, 52 per cent of respondents believe that this community does not have enough rights, which could also be a result of a media campaign regarding LGBT rights.

60 per cent of young Albanians agree that people with disabilities do not have many rights, whilst 66 per cent of them, including in the wealthier strata 68 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively, think that the poor do not have enough rights. 46 per cent of respondents believe different religious communities have full rights, whilst 20 per cent believe they do not possess enough rights. 61 per cent of young people state that their age group does not have enough rights, reflecting their awareness of the rights they are able to exercise in this country. In addition, 44 per cent of young Albanians believe that children have enough rights, whilst 33 per cent disagree.

Albanian youth are faced with the need to compare the democratic values of Albanian society with those of the European Union. These values include democracy, rule of law, economic well-being, social equality, job security, etc.

24 per cent of young people assess democratic values in their country as weak, whilst only 5 per cent feel that they are adequate. On the other hand, 51 per cent of respondents approve of the democratic values they see in the EU. 33 per cent think that the rule of law in Albania is very weak, whilst 54 per cent agree it is very strong in the EU. Meanwhile 26 per cent of youth assess the situation surrounding human rights in Albania as very weak and 61 per cent consider it very strong in the EU. On the other side 39 per cent of young people think that the economic well-being of Albanian citizens is lagging behind, and 60 per cent are of the opinion that EU citizens enjoy high standards of economic well-being. Also 49 per cent of young Albanians view the employment situation in Albania as being very bad, but 59 per cent believe that the employment situation in the EU is very good. It should be noted that 30 per cent of respondents think social equality in Albania is non-existent, whilst 60 per cent believe that the EU has achieved a good level of social equality. About 29 per cent of young people believe that they do not have any security, whilst

54 per cent of young Albanians think EU citizens enjoy considerable security. A figure of 31 per cent of respondents believe that individual rights are not protected, 22 per cent think they are somewhat protected, and 62 per cent are of the opinion that individual rights in the EU are fully protected.

Young Albanians have selected economic well-being and employment as the two most important values. In a classification of most important values, economic well-being and employment were each ranked by respondents as: 1st by 22 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively; 2nd by 24 per cent of both respective genders; and 3rd by 18 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.

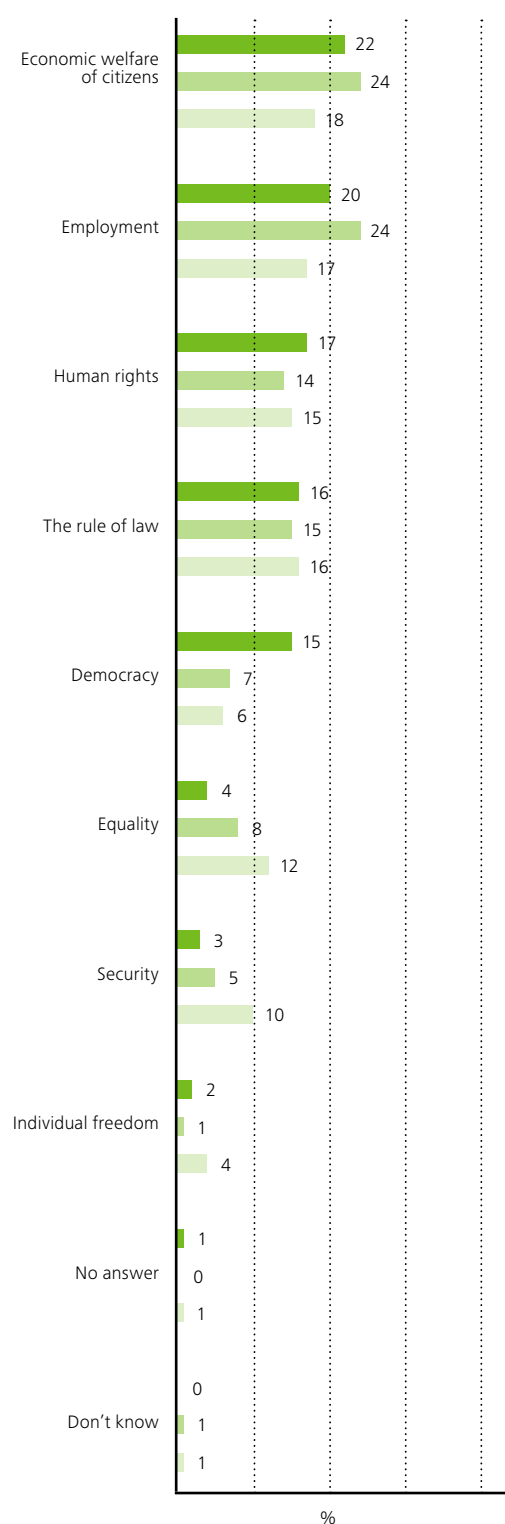
The awareness of young Albanians with regard to national and local identity remains stable in the face of globalisation and emigration. 77 per cent of young people feel like they are completely Albanian, with 80 per cent of males and 73 per cent of females stating so.

Only 24 per cent of young people consider themselves to be completely European when comparing their situation with the rights and freedoms enjoyed by young Europeans, whilst 17 per cent do not feel at all European. 34 per cent see themselves as global citizens, perhaps fully embracing globalisation, whilst 57 per cent of young people see themselves as citizens of the region in which they live, and 76 per cent feel they are citizens of the city of their birth.

CONCLUSIONS

Young people continue to exhibit distrust and disinterest in the political process, demonstrating a general apathy and indifference. Yet they remain active in elections, suggesting that they see the voting process as the main instrument with which to impact the political process. In addition, by listing economic well-being and employment as key elements to development, they demonstrate an acute awareness of the policies and priorities needed for the country's socio-economic development. Their concept of human rights is in line with the norms of an open and liberal society. On the other hand, they feel proud of their national identity and believe that their European identity will be complete when they feel they have achieved the same freedoms and rights enjoyed by European citizens.

FIGURE 64: Which are the most important values for you personally (ranked):



Ranked 1st (N=1.200)
 Ranked 2nd (N=1.192)
 Ranked 3rd (N=1.189)

10

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Young people in Albania rate their health as very good and are satisfied with their physical appearance.
- One-third of young people, mostly over 25 years of age, are regular smokers, while virtually no-one admits to smoking cannabis.
- Half of young people are sexually active, however only 30 per cent use protection regularly.
- About half of young people have consistent nationalistic feelings and beliefs about what constitutes the real Albanian character and what others should do to conform to it in Albania.
- The majority of young people shy away from violent or criminal behaviour; however, at least a quarter of them display increased acceptance of unethical behaviour such as cheating on school exams.
- There is no dominant model of parenting in Albania. Young people are raised by their parents with very different styles ranging from very conservative and controlling to quite liberal and trusting. Experience of physical and emotional violence in childhood is present in at least in half the cases.

HEALTH AND CONSUMPTION

Most young Albanians (over 60 per cent) are confident that they have very good or even excellent health. Another third describe their health as good, with very small numbers stating that their health is bad. The result is quite natural given the ages we are surveying. However, in Albania illnesses such as high blood pressure and diabetes are seeing a substantial increase. Although the symptoms of these ailments appear in older ages, these illnesses are related to poor habits in youth and therefore reflect a need

for better information and educational campaigns regarding diet and exercise.

At the same time, young people in Albania seem to be for the most part content with their appearance. 28 per cent of them are very satisfied, 42 per cent are satisfied and another 19 per cent are somewhat satisfied. This leaves only 11 per cent who are not content or profoundly discontent with how they look. The data is based on individual statements and might miss some of the changing reality for many young people. Cases of bullying and conflict due to appearance affecting mostly teenagers have been on the increase in schools.

Most of the young people surveyed (67 per cent) do not smoke and have never been smokers. Another 4 per cent have quit. Out of the smokers, who account for almost one-third of the sample, half are regular everyday smokers and the other half smoke only occasionally. The figures differ sharply for men and women. 25 per cent of young Albanian males smoke every day in comparison to only 4 per cent of young women. The number of occasional smokers is also significantly higher among men than women. The tendency to smoke is also higher among those over 25, one-third of whom smoke every day.

Half of the young people surveyed state that they never drink alcohol and another 38 per cent says they drink rarely. Only 9 per cent drink either on weekends or several times in a week. Males tend to respond that they drink occasionally or rarely much more often than women. Most of the latter state that they never drink.

40 per cent of young people believe alcohol is unacceptable and 47 per cent of them state that it is only acceptable on certain occasions and under certain conditions. Acceptability of alcohol under certain circumstances increases substantially with age and educational level.

FIGURE 65: Do you smoke?

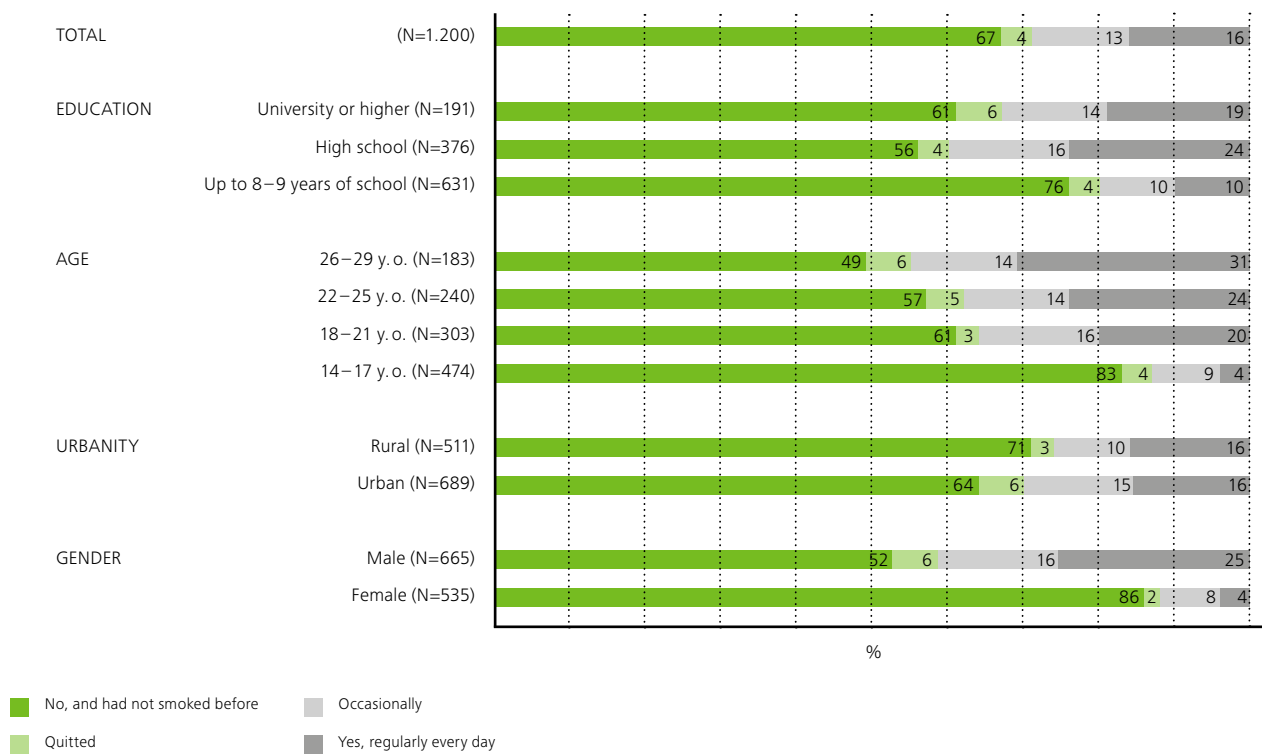


FIGURE 66: Do you drink alcohol?

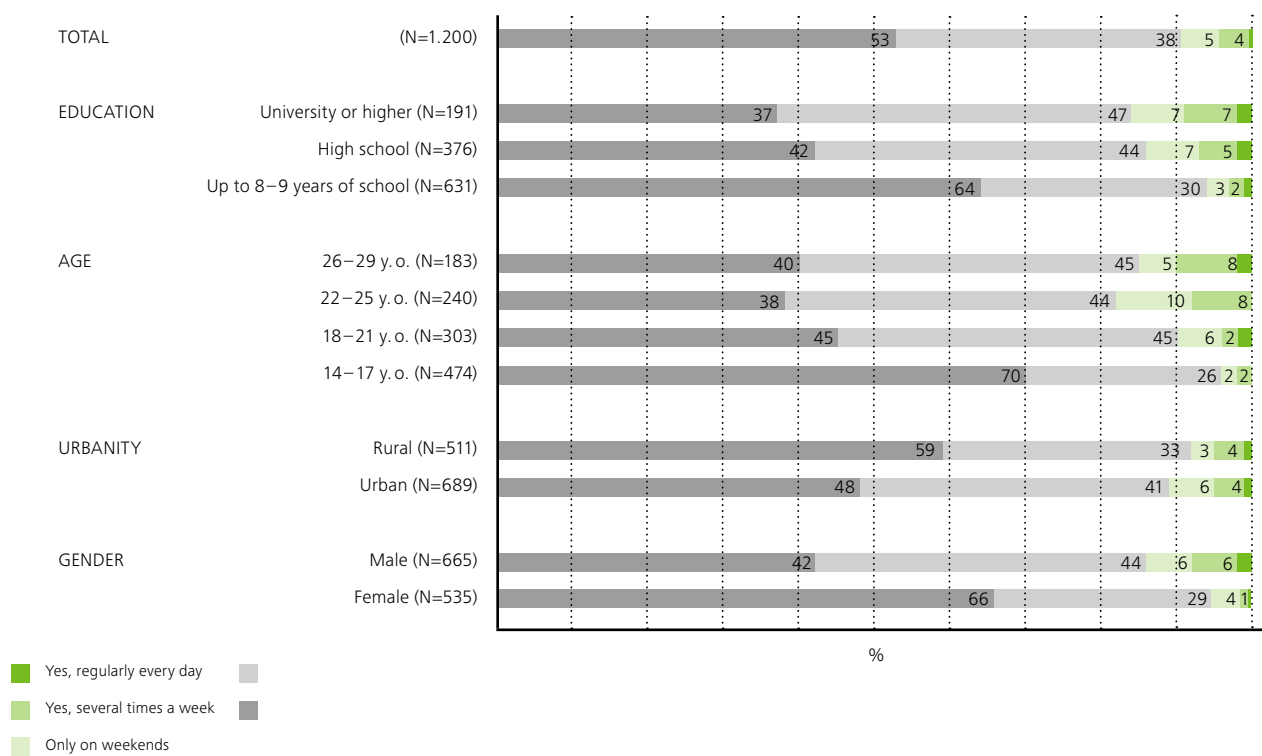
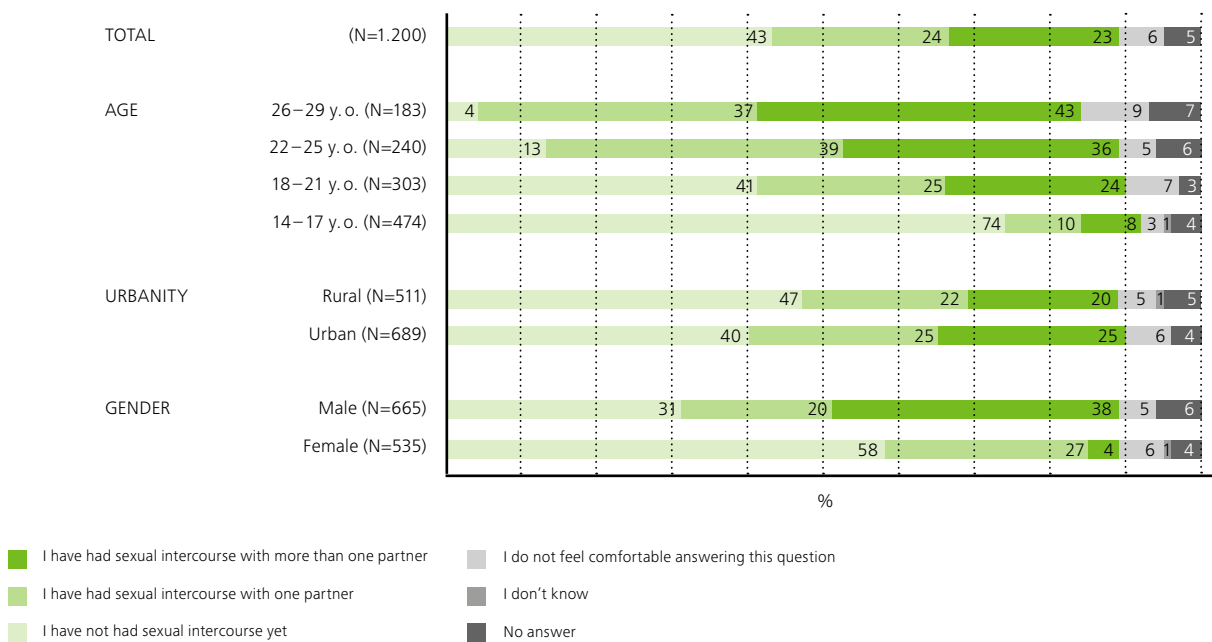


FIGURE 67: Which of the following statements describes your sexual experience best?



Young people overwhelmingly state that they do not consume marihuana. Only 3 per cent of young people have done so on a few occasions, most of whom are males over 25 years of age. Production of, and trade in, cannabis in Albania is a hot issue with strong political connotations. All relevant reports point out the fact that cannabis is mostly intended for export rather than for internal consumption, however.

SEXUAL LIFE

43 per cent of young people have not had sexual intercourse yet, while 24 per cent have already had it with one partner. Another 25 per cent have had sexual relations with multiple partners. Around 6 per cent did not feel comfortable answering the question and an additional 5 per cent simply gave no answer.

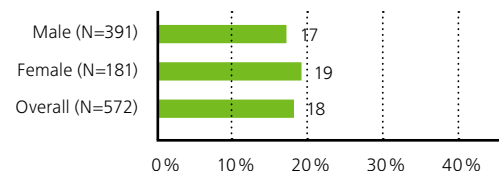
Only 31 per cent of men are still virgins compared to 58 per cent of women. Men also make up the majority of those who have had sexual relations with multiple partners. The number of young people who have had multiple sexual partners has slightly increased over previous years.

On average, the age when young people have their first sexual experience is 18, with a slight gender difference (17 for men and 19 for women).

Only 30 per cent of young people use protection regularly in their sexual encounters. Another one-third of them use protection occasionally. 23 per cent of them do not use any protection and the majority in this group is made up of young women. Young people tend to be informed about what protection measures are available, as only 4 per cent state that they do not have the necessary information. The percentage of persons regularly using

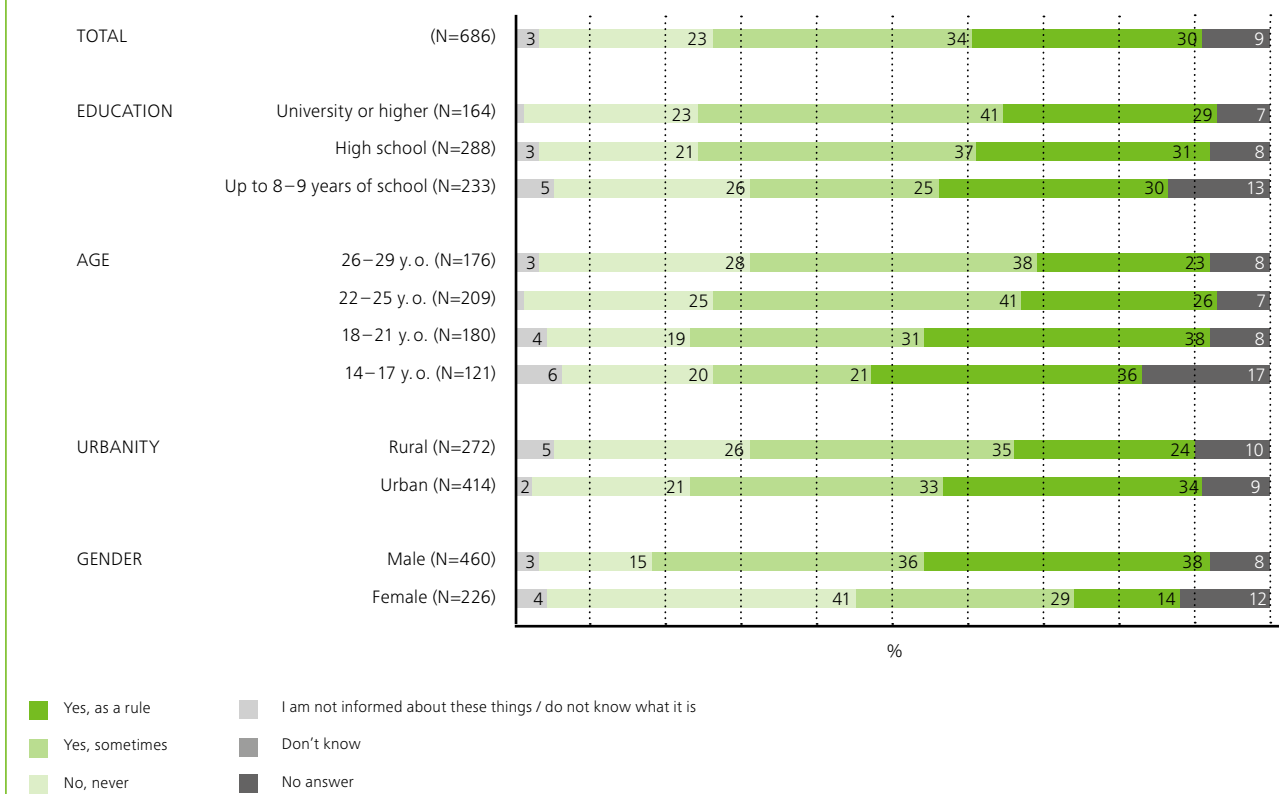
protection is much higher in urban areas (34 per cent) than in rural ones (24 per cent).

FIGURE 68: At what age did you have your first sexual intercourse?



A quarter of young people believe that sexual abstinence before marriage, or virginity, as is popularly referred to in Albania, is valued by both sexes, while a full third of the sample believe it is an important value for girls/women. Another group do not value virginity, stating that is either an unnecessary burden for youth (15 per cent) or simply an outdated concept (20 per cent.) Men tend to believe a bit more than women that virginity is an important value for girls. The number of people attaching no particular value to virginity increases slightly with age and level of education. The general attitude towards sexual abstinence before marriage has interestingly enough remained unchanged through the years since 2011, however.

FIGURE 69: Do you use contraceptives or birth control methods?



'TRUE' ALBANIANS

About half of young people in Albania believe that a true Albanian is a person with Albanian blood. One-third of them disagree with this statement, with another 9 per cent being somewhere in the middle.

Once again, 50 per cent of those surveyed stated that non-Albanians living in our country should adopt Albanian customs and traditions and therefore conform to the majority. One-fifth of the responses disagreed with this statement.

A bit more than half of the young people said that it would be best if Albania was inhabited only by true Albanians, while about 30 per cent disagreed with this scenario.

In general there seems to be a split among young people, with half of them embracing nationalist categories and claims and another, slightly weaker, half in terms of numbers having a more relaxed attitude towards these notions.

UPBRINGING EXPERIENCES

Young people tend to agree with the statement that what they need is strict discipline from their parents. Around 58 per cent agree with this sentence, while only 22 per cent disagree with it. Similarly, at least half of persons surveyed believe that for most people who do not get ahead in life it is due to their lack of willpower. One-fifth of the sample disagree with this statement, indicating that for some of these young people explanations can be found in other factors such as fate and luck.

Young people are split when it comes to whether one should forgive an insult to one's honour or not. Generally the mean response to this question is 3.4 on a scale of 5, with around 47 per cent believing it should not be forgotten.

Young people were asked about their involvement in illegal or unethical activities. Overwhelmingly they deny ever being involved in shoplifting or stealing, using hard drugs or going to school while being under the influence. The same goes for wanton destruction of other's property. Three-quarters of young people also state they have never hit or threatened another person, while only about 8 per cent appear to have done so more than once. More frequent 'bad' behaviour is affirmed and reported by them in school, whether this be simply in connection with missing classes even when their parents thought they were at school or, even worse, cheating on their exams and tests. Only half of young people deny having made these mistakes, while about one-fifth of them state that they have committed both quite frequently. 23 per cent of

FIGURE 70: **To what extent do you agree with the following**

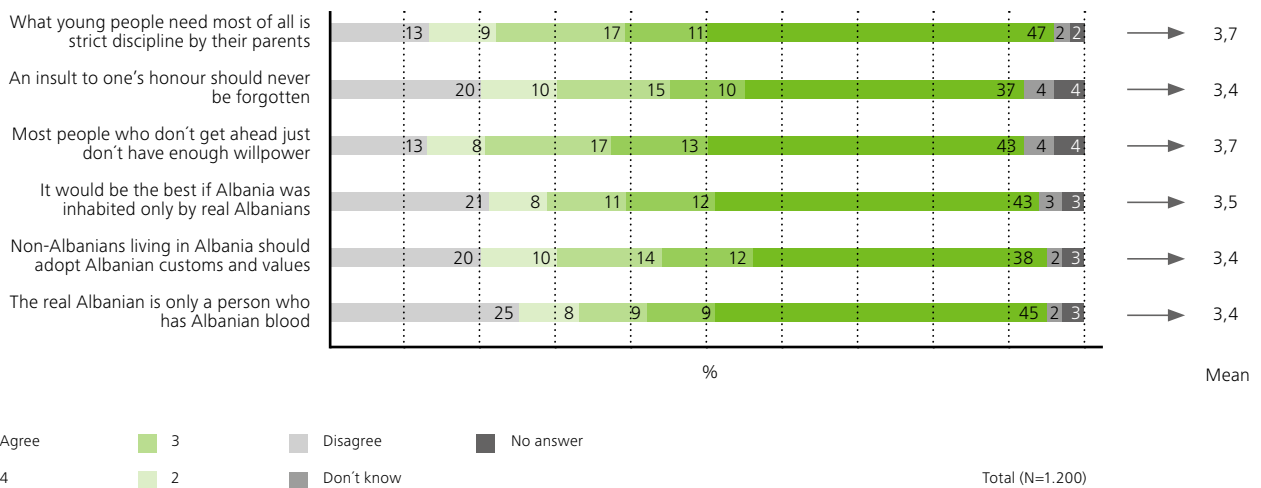
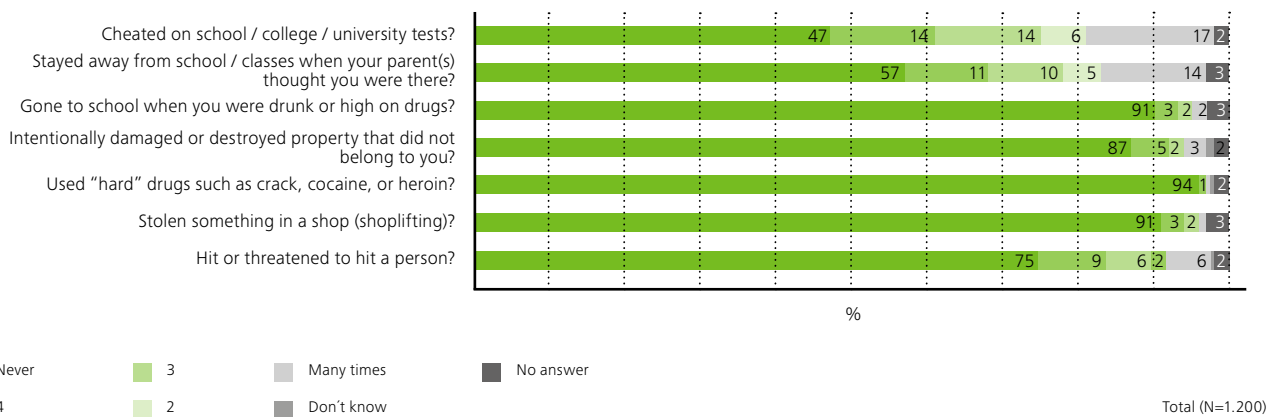


FIGURE 71: **How often have you done any of the following behaviors?**



young people admit they have cheated many times on their exams, revealing a certain acceptance of this behaviour, as they do not appear to be hesitant in admitting it.

Looking back on their early years in elementary school, young people report interesting aspects about their parents' style of educating and raising them. While two-third of young people say that their parents explained to them many times why they should obey certain rules when it matters that they take part in establishing the rules themselves, only 37 per cent were frequently involved directly along with the rest of the family. Moreover, 28 per cent stated that they have never been asked to participate in setting rules.

Only half of young people stated that their parents were in sync with their concerns in school, while 15 per cent say that their parents are mostly in the dark. The rest seem to be somewhere in the middle, with their parents knowing some things but not having the complete picture.

Half of the people surveyed state that they have never been slapped by their parents when they misbehaved, while 20 per cent have been hit for such many times. On the other hand,

young people reported having been scolded and criticised when they did not meet their family's expectations, with about half of them experiencing this quite often. One-fourth of young people say their parents often shouted and yelled when the kids misbehaved, while 40 per cent state that they have never experienced this situation.

Albanian parents seem to fall into very different groups when it comes to 'opposition' to their kids' desire to get something and determination to cause a commotion over it. One-fourth of young people state that they often got what they wanted when they really 'insisted', while 39 per cent said this did not work for them.

Quite a few parents have used little bribes such as candy or toys to encourage good behaviour by their kids. This behaviour is reported as frequent by 31 per cent of young people. 50 per cent have not experienced it in their family, however.

When it comes to threatening the children with specific punishments, Albanian parents seemed to make good on their words. Only 18 per cent of youth report that the threats for punishment on the side of their parents remained hollow, while the rest experienced these threats being carried through.

FIGURE 72: **Think about how your parents raised you when you were in the elementary school. How often have the following things been occurring?**

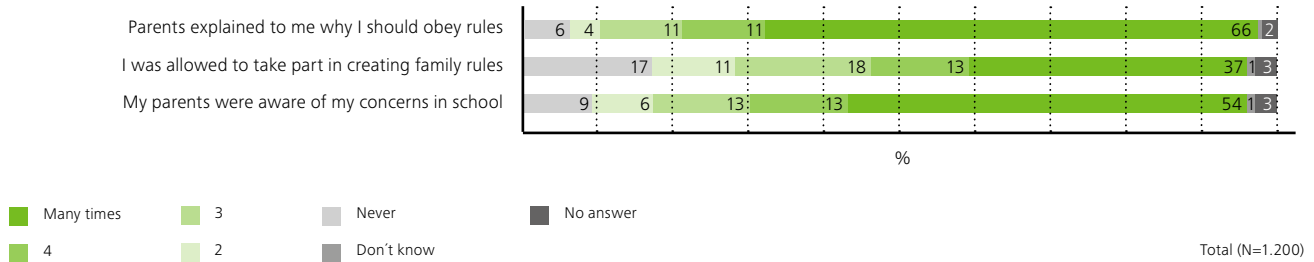
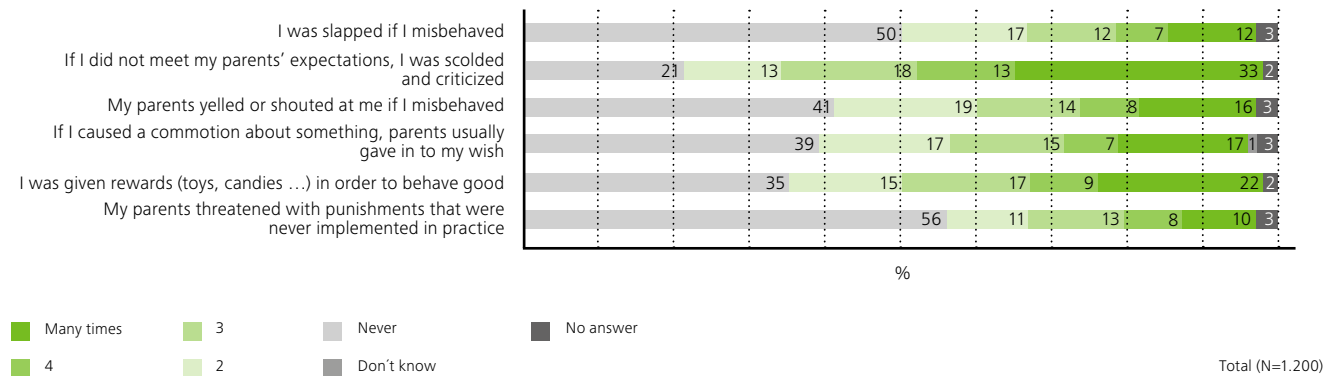


FIGURE 73: **Think about how your parents raised you when you were in the elementary school. How often have the following things been occurring?**



Overall the parenting style that young people describe is split into two groups: a tougher approach and another, more lenient one, with testimonies concerning behaviour being provided in all groups.

CONCLUSION

Smoking is becoming a pervasive habit for young Albanians, with increasing numbers of females also joining the club. Health effects of smoking are not yet portrayed in a visible way on cigarette packs in Albania as they are in EU Member States. This should change in order to try to decrease these numbers.

Schools should consider drafting and reinforcing ethical codes or so-called honour codes to decrease the likelihood of students cheating on exams and, even worse, bragging about it. This would also address the growing tolerance of informal practices by youngsters in Albania.

All young people, but especially young women, should be educated and encouraged to regularly use protection in their sexual contacts.

Educational and awareness programs that encourage parents to refrain from several types of violence are necessary. High school students can also be encouraged by their school social workers to report physical violence exercised in families. Domestic violence is among the top three types of serious crimes committed in Albania and early education about this may nip the issue in the bud for many families.

11

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

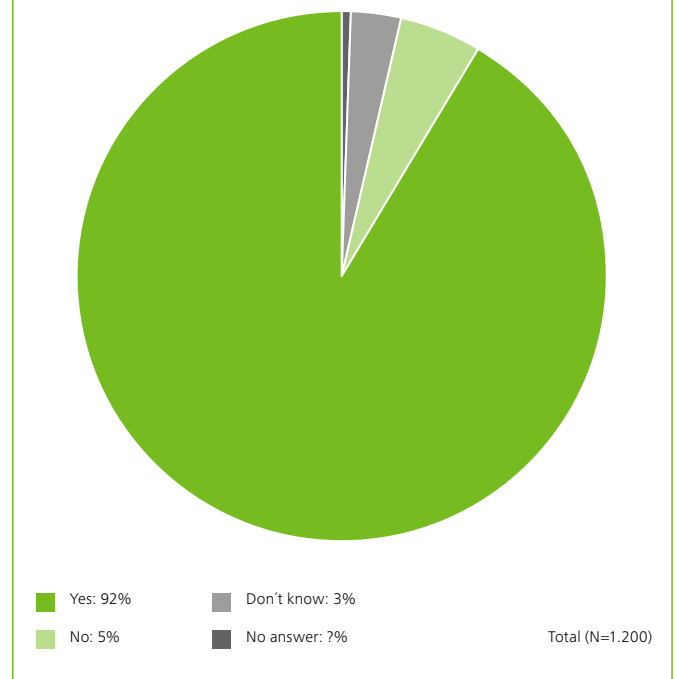
- The overwhelming share of young Albanians are in favour of their country becoming an EU Member State. They have unrealistic expectations about the timing of this milestone.
- Albanians appear split when it comes to their expectations about the ongoing judicial reform. They are slightly more optimistic about the vetting process and more sceptical about the possibility of high-profile arrests being carried out.
- The majority of young people in Albania believe that crime has strong connections to politics, law enforcement and even media. This level of collective distrust in institutions is held to be a major impediment in the success of reforms to progress along the path of EU integration.
- Half of the young people surveyed support the idea of Albania uniting with Kosovo while the other half are in favour of normal neighbourly relations.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND KEY REFORMS

An overwhelming majority of Albanian young people (92 per cent) believe their country should join the EU, while only 5 per cent are Eurosceptics and think Albania would be better off not joining. The remaining 3 per cent who are undecided are mostly located in the capital. In 2014, 89 per cent would vote yes in an accession referendum while the number of those who were against or would not go to vote was higher at a combined level of 11 per cent.

According to the most recent Balkan Barometer, Albania together with Kosovo also top the list of countries that believe EU integration would be a very positive development (Barometer, 2017).⁴⁰

FIGURE 74: Do you think Albania should join the European Union?



The majority of young Albanians (37 per cent) are overly optimistic about the chances of joining the European Union because they expect this to happen within 5 years. Another 32 per cent believe it will happen in about 10 years. 12 per cent believe it will take from 10 to 20 years, while a small percentage of 5 per cent believe this will never happen.

The results show that a large group of young people lack the right information on the integration process. This result is consistent with surveys performed in previous years as well. Once again,

FIGURE 75: When do you think Albania will join the European Union?

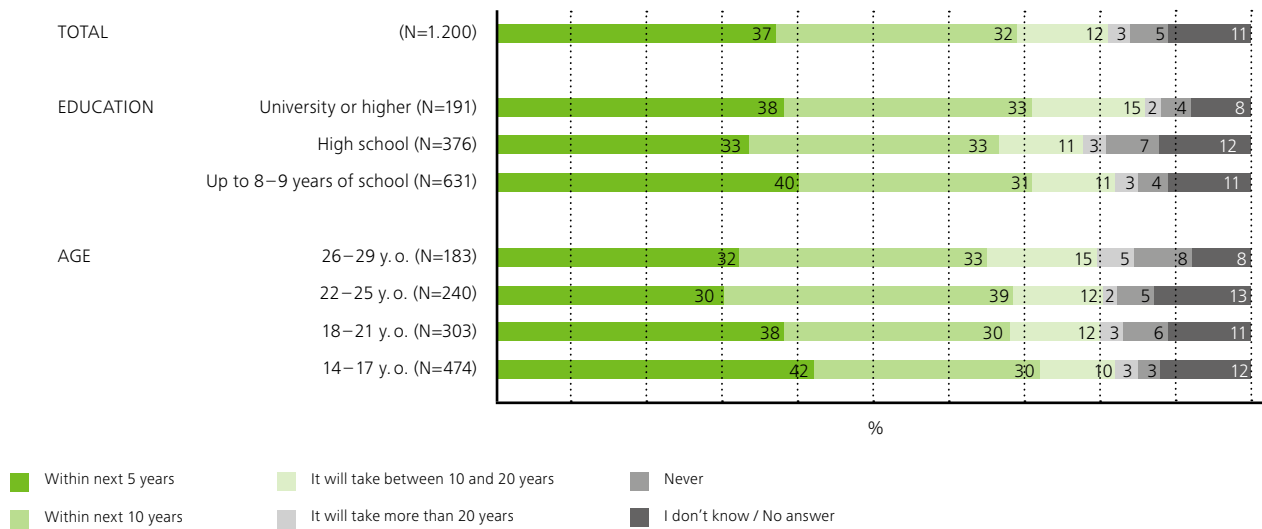


FIGURE 76: Do you think that the process of "Justice Reform" will be accompanied by trials and arrests in the upper levels of politics and justice systems?

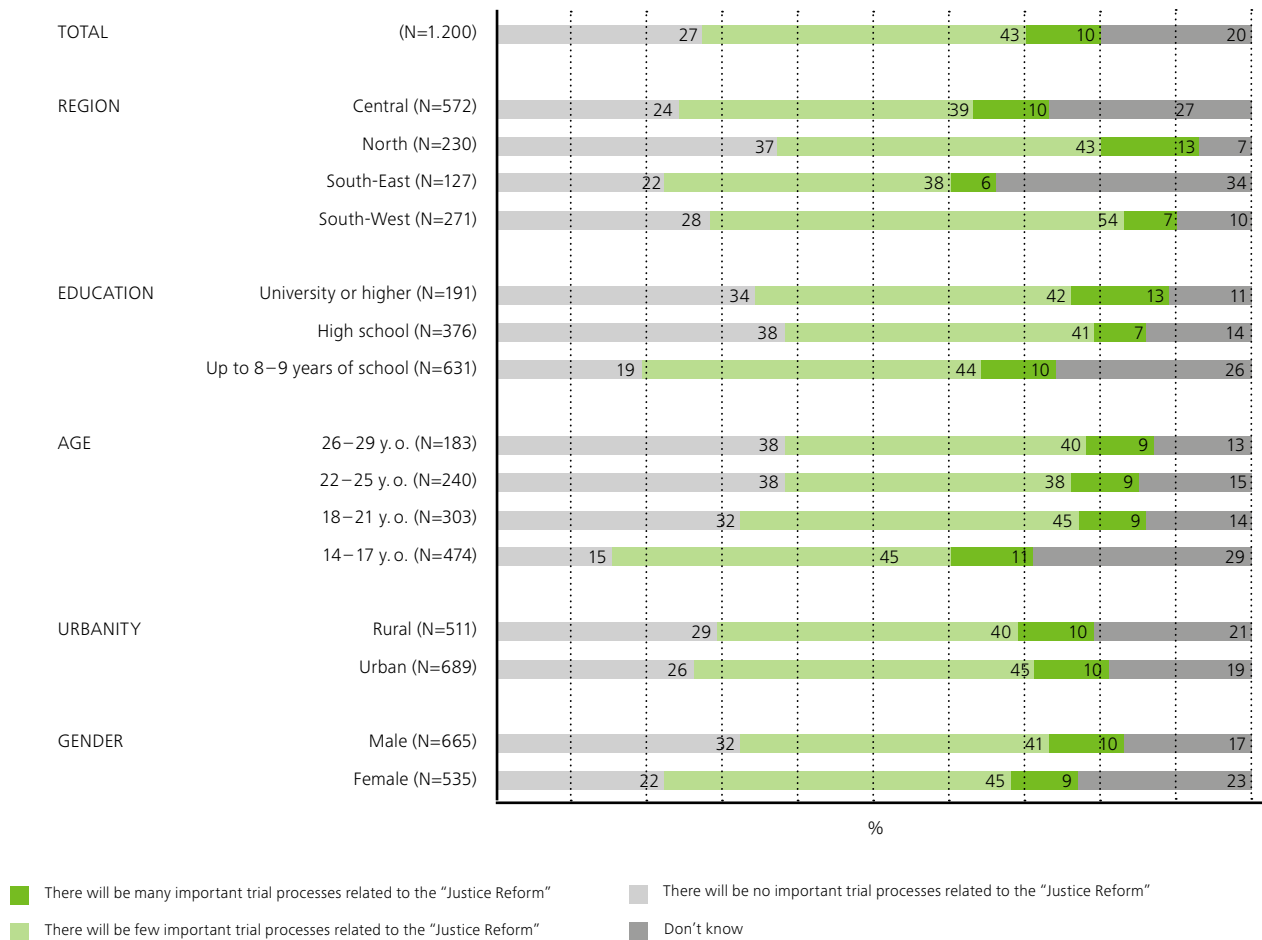


FIGURE 77: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Crime and politics have strong ties with each other

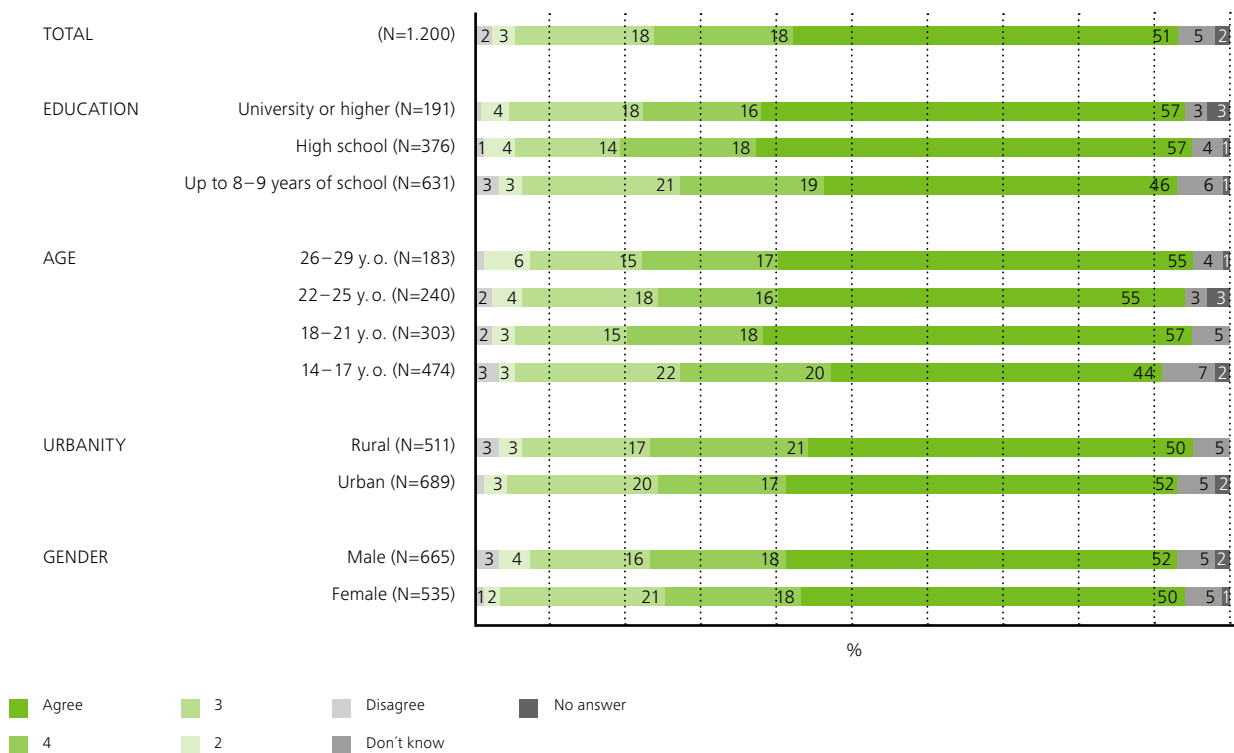


FIGURE 78: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Crime and Media have strong ties with each other

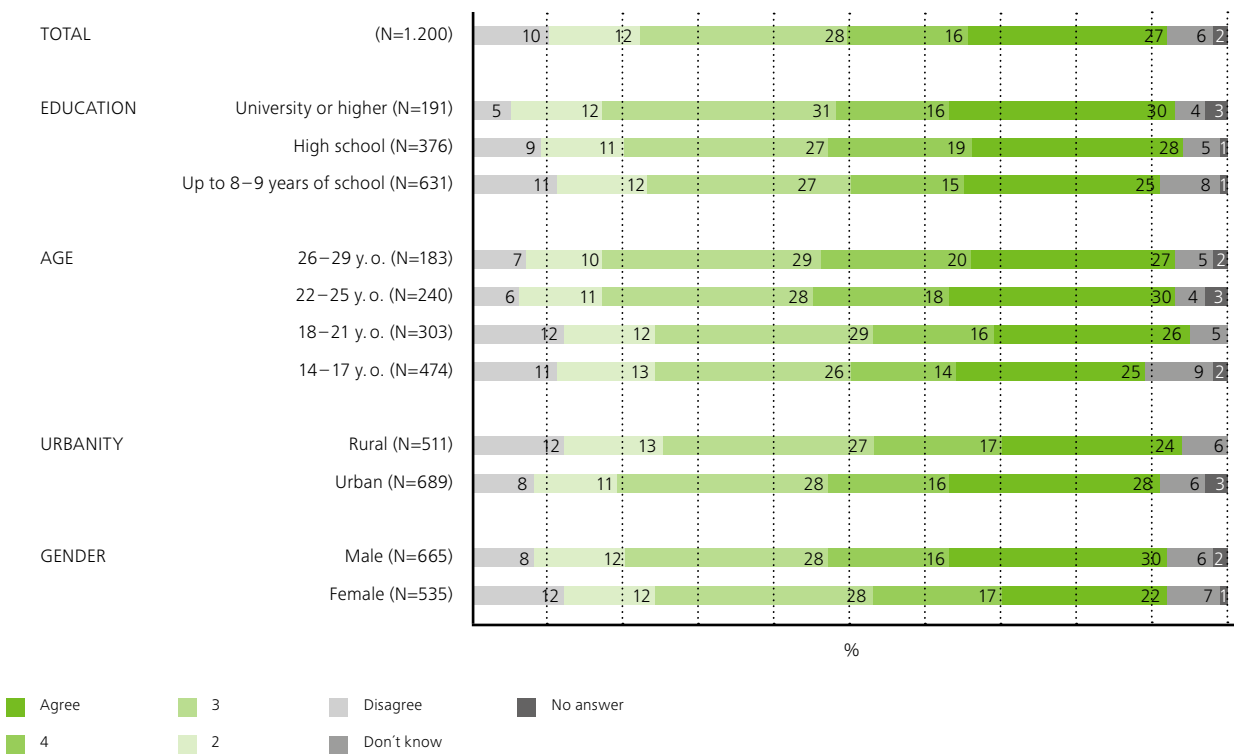
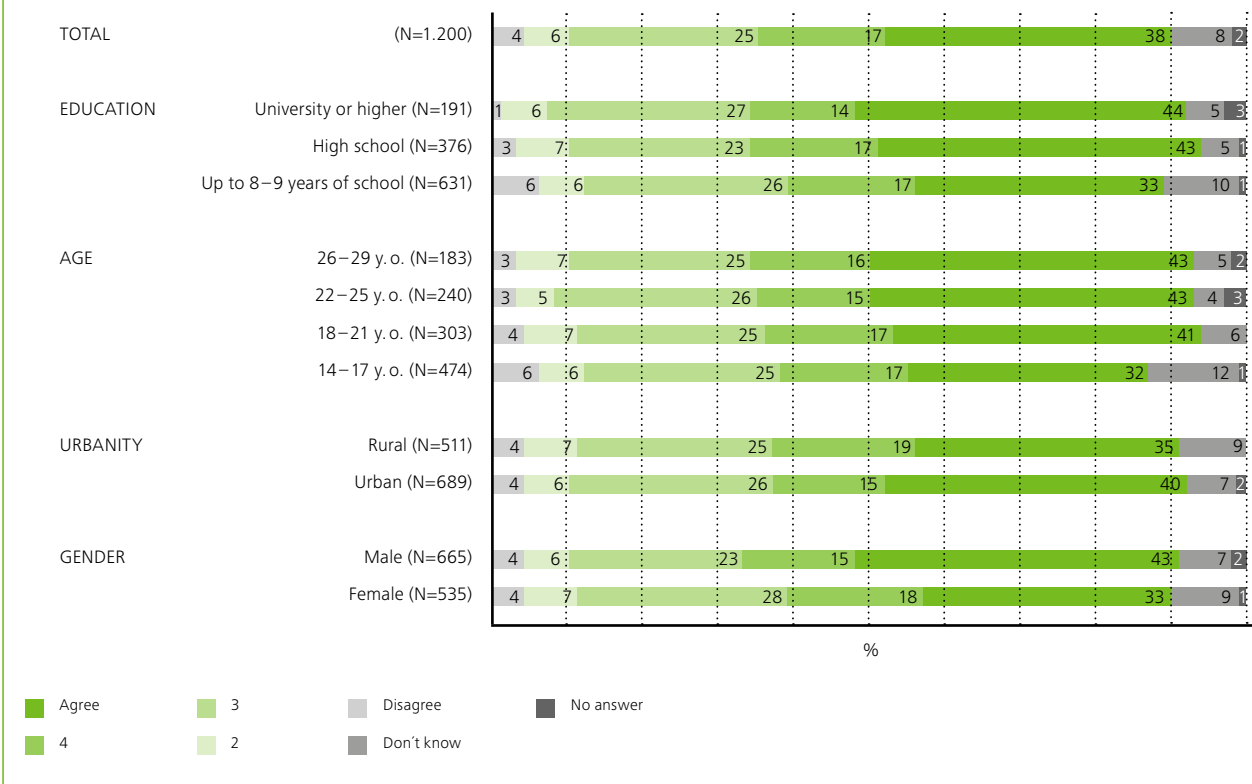


FIGURE 79: To what extent do you agree the following statement? Crime and Enforcement have strong ties with each other



the Balkan Barometer, which surveys people from all age groups, in the case of Albania reports that the majority expect accession to take place as early as 2020, with another significant group expecting it by 2025.⁴¹

29 per cent of young people judge that the Albanian government has not done enough to further the country's European prospects, while another 39 per cent believe it has done just about enough. Only a quarter are satisfied with the government's commitment and performance with regard to integration.

There are two key processes that make up the conditionality surrounding Albania's European prospects: implementation of the judicial reforms, particularly the first process of vetting judges and prosecutors as well as the fight against crime and corruption, which is focused on the battle against the narcotics trade. In the last two years both issues have been the subject of heated political and social debate and have occupied most of the media attention. Young people's views in this regard are very important, as they show perceptions as well as expectations regarding these two processes, including for the future.

58 per cent of Albanian youth, slightly more than half, believe that the vetting process will either not be successful or not very successful in cleansing the judiciary system of corrupt and unprofessional members. 26 per cent are pessimistic, saying it will not work. The number of those persons that cannot make up their minds about this issue is also high at 16 per cent.

The expectation of young people regarding the reform of the judiciary is that it will either result in few processes that touch high

levels of the political sphere and therefore large-scale corruption or no such processes at all. Only 10 per cent of young people think that judicial reform will mean high-level politicians being tried by the courts. Here again, 20 per cent of young people do not know how to answer this question concerning the future of the reforms. Both questions reveal that young people are only cautiously optimistic about the reform, expecting mostly systemic changes rather than high-profile arrests and indictments. They also reveal that young people, much alike the rest of the population, believe that there is a certain level of impunity among the top tier of their political class.

Rising levels of criminal activity, especially in the field of narcotics, as well as ties between politics and crime have been the subject of the most intensive debates recently. About 70 per cent of young Albanians agree with the statement that crime and politics have strong ties with each other. Only 5 per cent disagree with this statement, while 18 per cent are somewhere in the middle. This marked perception has also been evident in previous surveys.

Even more troubling is the number of those who believe that law enforcement agencies, which are supposed to be at the forefront of the battle against crime, in fact have strong ties to this milieu. Thus, 55 per cent of young people are suspicious of law-enforcement agencies, possibly believing they benefit from crime through corrupt links. Only 10 per cent of young people disagree with the statement, while a full quarter of respondents are somewhere in the middle.

It is interesting to observe that a fair share of young people remain highly sceptical about media as well. 43 per cent of young people asked believe that media also has ties to crime, while 22 per cent do not believe this is so.

Young people were also asked to evaluate the efforts different stakeholders are making to combat crime in the country. It is ironic at best to see that young people place the state police at a par with international community when describing the actors most involved in this fight. Thus, 26 per cent of young people mention the police as the actor making the greatest efforts, while 25 per cent think the international community is at the forefront in this fight. They are followed by 22 per cent of people surveyed who believe it is the media that in fact is doing most of the job. Less than 10 per cent of young people give credit to prosecutors and courts, while 12 per cent say that no institution whatsoever is doing much about this fight.

In conclusion, the numbers reconfirm that young people remain highly sceptical of key institutions that are supposed to safeguard the public order and fight crime. Scepticism also applies to the watchdogs in society. This low level of public trust is a strategic impediment in the construction of democratic societies and properly functioning states.

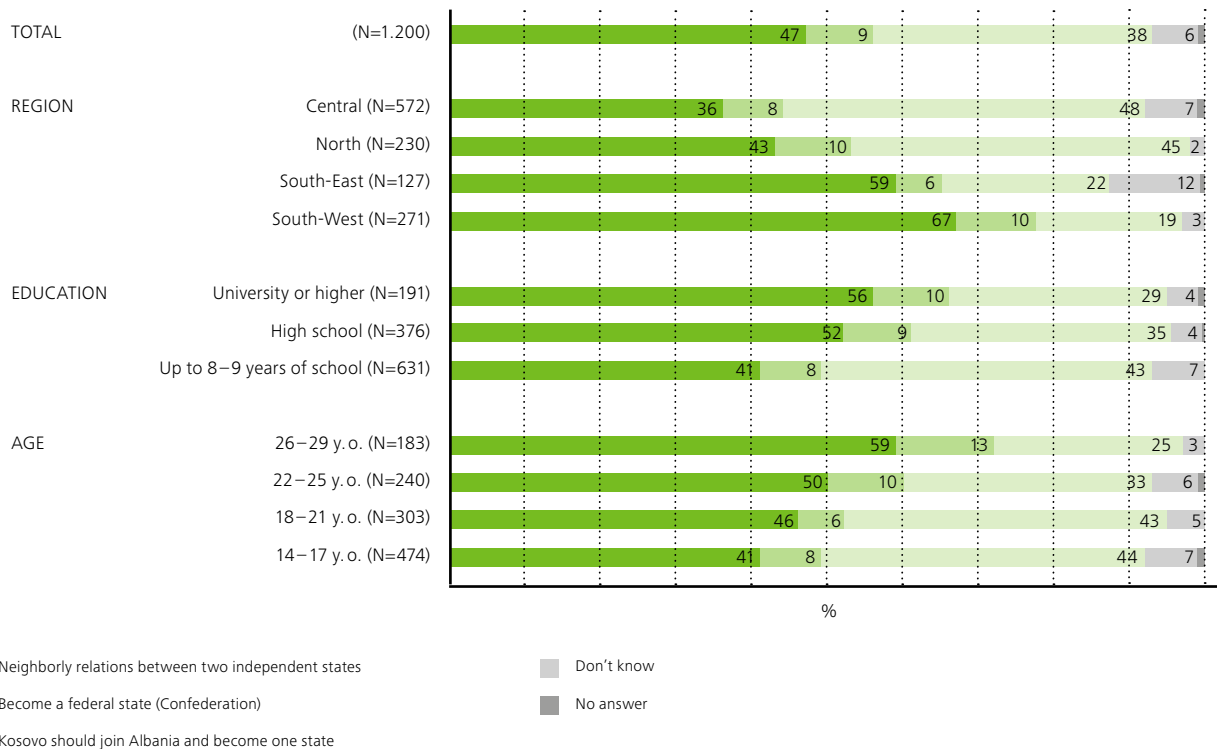
ALTERNATIVE PATHS?

Young people in Albania seem to be split right down the middle in their opinions about the future of the relations between Albania and Kosovo. While 47 per cent of them say that the two countries should have normal neighbourly relations, another 47 per cent believe that the countries should be united in some form, whether as a confederation (9 per cent) or downright as a unified state with Kosovo joining Albania (38 per cent). Support for such a union is remarkably higher in the northern and central regions of the country. Support for a union drops and support for neighbourly relations increases among young people with age and level of education.

Support for unification has alternated in different surveys over time. In 2012, “62 per cent stated that they would vote in favour of unification in a hypothetical referendum, as opposed to 39 per cent in the 2011 survey. Furthermore, 59 per cent believe that unification would be positive”⁴²

The change in opinion over time is also evident from other surveys performed with a representative country sample, i.e. including older ages in the survey. In a recent pre-electoral survey, for example, only 1 per cent of people surveyed said that unification with Kosovo should be a priority of the Albanian government and parliament.⁴³ Nationalist fervour seems to be a feeling that most Albanians outgrow with time.

FIGURE 80: **According to your opinion, what kind of formal relations should Albania and Kosovo have?**



CONCLUSION

Support for European integration continues to be accompanied by low levels of knowledge and local ownership of the process. Structured information about the EU is not yet part of official school curricula at any educational level and the Ministry of Education and Science needs to address this.

The credibility of judicial reform depends on the transparency and effectiveness of the vetting process. This is a delicate ongoing development and the decision-makers involved in it are already aware of its gravity. The degree of distrust and even disdain that young people display with regard to politicians, police and media, viewing them to be accessories to crime, is very disturbing.

Law enforcement agencies as well as media should be made aware of the bad reputation they have among the young generation and take steps to redress this by conducting themselves more professionally and communicating their stance more clearly. Media ownership in Albania remains obscure and editorial lines change frequently to accommodate power constellations. This is another factor that prompts young people to turn towards online portals, even if their credibility is, however, very questionable.

FOOTNOTES

- [1] <http://www.tiranatimes.com/?p=136005>
- [2] <http://www.monitor.al/rekordi-shqiperia-kalon-e-para-ne-bote-per-numrin-e-larte-te-bar-kafeve-per-banor/>
- [3] <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/report-balkan-countries-most-vulnerable-to-adverse-effects-of-fake-news-03-29-2018> OSI Bulgaria report
- [4] Indeed, cross-referencing with data in the chapter on family indicates that only 1 per cent of Albanian youth cohabit with their partner.
- [5] <http://open.data.al/sq/lajme/lajm/lang/sq/id/1442/Paga-mesatare-mujore-ne-sektorin-shteteror-dhe-privat-Shqiperia-dhe-vendet-e-rajonit>
- [6] The state of corruption in Southeast Europe”, SELDI, 2016 http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/RAR_2016/SHADOW_POWER_EN_FINAL.pdf pg 19
- [7] EBRD/World Bank Life in Transition Survey cited in Tirana Times: “One in two Albanians believe political connections are key to success, survey shows”, April 20–26, 2018, pg 15 (www.tiranatimes.com)
- [8] Ibid, pg 18.
- [9] “Mapped: The world’s most (and least) religious countries” January 14, 2018 The Telegraph <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/>
- [10] Albanian Youth 2015, a study, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, page 42, web link <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12300.pdf>
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- [16] Ibid, page 54
- [17] Ibid, page 55
- [18] Albanian Youth 2015, a study, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, page 55, web link <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12300.pdf>
- [19] Ibid, page 56
- [20] Balkan Barometer, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), 2017, Pg 79
- [21] “Mbi 22 mijë shqiptarë kërkuar azil në BE më 2017”, March, 20, 2018 Reporter .al <https://www.reporter.al/mbi-22-mije-shqiptare-kerkuar-azil-ne-be-me-2017/>
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- [25] Ibid, page 76
- [26] Albanian Youth 2015, a study, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, page 70, web link <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12300.pdf>
- [27] Albanian Youth 2015, a study, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, page 74, web link <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12300.pdf>
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- [29] Ibid, page 83
- [30] Albanian Youth 2015, a study, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, page 84, web link <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12300.pdf>
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IMPRINT

PUBLISHER: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e. V.
Referat Mittel- und Osteuropa
Hiroshimastr. 28 • 10785 Berlin
www.fes.de/referat-mittel-und-osteuropa/
www.fes.de/youth-studies/

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LANGUAGE EDITING: James Turner
DESIGN: Andrea Schmidt • Typografie/im/Kontext
PRINTED BY: bub Bonner Universitäts-Buchdruckerei

ISBN: 978-3-96250-288-1

DATE: 2019

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