

Report from the
general population
and civil society
surveys

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, WITH SPECIAL OVERVIEW ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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I **SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS**



Key findings from the general population survey

- ▶ Large share of surveyed citizens have not changed their place of residence, i.e. 81% of them reported they have been living in the same town/village for their entire life.
- ▶ Satisfaction with communities where they live is closely correlated to citizens' sense of belonging. Citizens who indicated greater sense of belonging to their place of residence also express greater satisfaction with their town/village and with North Macedonia as their country of residence, but are less convinced they can impact decisions about the state.
- ▶ Citizens report highest level of satisfaction with their place of residence – around 38% of respondents indicated they are very satisfied with their place of residence and almost the same share (39%) indicated they are partially satisfied.
- ▶ Level of satisfaction is decreased in respect to the Republic of North Macedonia, although responses are marked by similar trends of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with results obtained under previous surveys (2016) and according to age groups (variable marked by more prominent differences in views and attitudes compared to other demographic characteristics).
- ▶ Every third young person aged 20 to 29 years and every fourth young person aged 16 to 19 years see themselves emigrated abroad in the next five years. The share of citizens who do not see themselves living in North Macedonia in the foreseeable future is small at the level of the total survey population (17%), but is sufficiently significant and indicative in order to be taken into account. The total share of citizens who do not see themselves living in the country has decreased compared to the last survey from 2016, when it was higher and accounted for 26%.
- ▶ Although more than half of citizens believe it is important to impact decisions at their municipality, only a low share of them perceive betterment of the society as their personal responsibility. More specifically, almost every third citizen believes that betterment of the society is somebody else's, and not their personal, responsibility. Almost identical share of citizens believe this is their personal responsibility, and nearly every fifth citizen believes that betterment of the society is shared or mutual responsibility.
- ▶ Civic engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia is not marked by any significant changes, but the survey observed a general decrease of civic participation. Every fifth citizens reported he/she has participated in civic initiatives during 2019, accounting for a decrease by nearly 10% compared to the period 2012-2016.
- ▶ Likelihood for civic engagement in organized initiatives aimed at improving their place of residence is higher among younger respondents and among citizens with higher education (or higher income).
- ▶ Most frequently indicated reasons by majority of citizens who have not joined any civic initiative during 2019 (80%) include: lack of opportunities, insufficient interest, and lack of time.

- ▶ Civic engagement could be much greater if citizens are afforded easier access to and direct contacts with mayors (as indicated by most respondents, i.e. every fifth respondent believes this channel of communication could help and facilitate their impact on decision-making at their municipality). Some citizens indicated that municipal authorities should inform them about problems and issues discussed at their municipality (15%) or that municipal councils should directly approach them with invitation to join these processes (11%). Every seventh citizen would join working groups deciding on issues and problems at their municipality, and an equal share of them would like to submit their opinions in electronic format. (Although these channels of communication are in place, it is evident that citizens are insufficiently aware thereof or do not want to lose time browsing information on their own, which shows the need for transparent and clear indicator on available channels of communication with municipal authorities).
- ▶ Majority of citizens (72%) said they have voted on all or almost all elections after being entitled to universal suffrage, while 6% said they have never voted. Four out of five citizens from remaining 22% of respondents who have voted on some elections said they do not differentiate the type of elections underway, but vote whenever they are able to do that.
- ▶ Vast majority of citizens (82%) believe they are informed about the EU accession negotiation process. Half of citizens indicated ability to make own contribution in the EU negotiations and accession process, and would join these processes. Willingness for involvement in these processes increases in proportion to respondents' higher level of education (78% among respondents with completed higher education, 29% among those without formal education).
- ▶ Every fourth citizen believes that the EU negotiations process would significantly improve life of citizens in our country, while around 41% indicated it would somewhat improve life.
- ▶ The share of citizens who indicated that EU membership is important or very important to them (48%) is higher than the share of those who indicated no importance or no importance at all (24%).
- ▶ Citizens who expressed greater satisfaction with their place of residence and with the Republic of North Macedonia as their country also shared more positive attitudes in respect to the EU negotiations process and expectations therefrom. In particular, those who are very satisfied with their place or country of residence often have great expectations from the EU negotiations process, i.e. more frequently indicated that this process would significantly improve life in our country (44% versus 26% at the level of the total survey population).
- ▶ More than half of citizens (57%) have heard of the European Union's financial support mechanisms and the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance popularly known as IPA (51%), but much lower share of them (36%) also know that the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) allows funding opportunities for priorities in their local communities. Women and young people (aged 16 to 19 years) are less informed about IPA and IPA opportunities for local communities unlike other respondents.
- ▶ The most common form of help practiced by survey respondents in order to assist fellow citizens is purchase of supplies for neighbours and other people infected with

the coronavirus or support to persons who are unable to leave their homes.

- ▶ The least common forms of civic engagement (indicated by less than 1% of respondents per category) include: donating funds to the government's account designated for managing the crisis caused by the pandemic, donating funds to other initiatives raised by institutions (e.g. food packages organized by the President of State) or other individual actions (e.g. sewing protective masks).
- ▶ As regards crisis relief measures, the most utilized relief measure concerns payment card for purchase of domestic goods, as indicated by every fifth citizen. However, majority of citizens (72%) reported they have not personally benefited from relief measures adopted by the Government of RNM. Only 3% confirmed they have received support or assistance from civil society organizations, and here it should be noted that the share of young people aged 16 to 19 years benefiting from support by CSOs has increased to 13%.

Key findings from the civil society survey

- ▶ Almost half of surveyed organizations reported activity at national level, i.e. their activities are implemented everywhere in the state. The lowest share of organizations reported activity at broader regional level, i.e. the Balkan (8%), and around 14% of them operate at international level, i.e. within the European continent and/or beyond. Some organizations reported operation at the level of their narrow geographical region (20%), while 11% are active at the level of their municipality.
- ▶ As regards their 2019 budget, slightly more than half of organizations reported funds in the range from 0 to 50,000 euros. One-quarter of them reported annual budget in the amount of 50,001 to 100,000 euros. Such distribution of responses in respect to annual budgets shows significant difference in finances of civil society organizations and, consequently, significant difference in their operational capacity.
- ▶ Slightly less than half of surveyed organizations reported they have 0 to 3 projects on annual level, while most of them (31%) have 4 to 6 projects, and 21.2% reported 7 to 10+ projects. Increased number of annual projects implies higher budgets, which is very important to be noted because current distribution of annual projects implemented by civil society organizations shows that they are engaged in project-based operation, i.e. do not raise additional funds for program-based work or do not raise funds from the private sector.
- ▶ The highest number of organizations covered under this survey primarily work on topics related to the civil society, followed by topics related to social policy and inclusion, environmental protection and youth. Least represented are civil society organizations that work in the field of energy, cross-border cooperation programmes and topics related to home affairs and fight against organized crime.
- ▶ More than two-thirds of surveyed organizations indicated membership in civil society networks. Most often, they are members of national networks (50%), while 30% indicated membership in international/European networks, and low share of them (22%) participate in regional networks within the Balkan.
- ▶ Positive correlation is observed between development of policy activities and membership in civil society networks (.274). More specifically, network membership and participation have significant impact in terms of organizations' work on developing policy proposals and activities. In most cases, coordination among civil society organizations happens within informal networks (30%), followed by partner organizations in previous activities that are not part of formal or informal networks (26%), and formal networks (23%).
- ▶ Networking has direct effect on cooperation with institutions, i.e. networked organizations more frequently indicated they have been invited by local, municipal or national authorities to present their policy proposals and activities.
- ▶ Although 62% of surveyed organizations have been invited to directly present their proposals before institutions in the period 2018-2019, this share has dropped to 19% during the crisis. Lower level of participation cannot be attributed only to non-invitation by institutions, but also to lower proactivity on the part of CSOs, which is most certainly a result of the

crisis and conditions created by the crisis. Notably, civil society organizations are more inclined to and more often practice direct meetings compared to electronic communication, but use of these methods was visibly downsized due to the crisis and health protection measures in place, and even fully prohibited in certain periods throughout 2020. Moreover, organizations have been directly affected by the crisis and were unable to properly coordinate their activities during this period. This is confirmed by the fact that, in the period 2018-2019, 76% of surveyed organizations that developed policy proposals and activities have organized meetings with competent institutions on own initiative, while their share dropped to 53% during the crisis. High share of organizations that made policy proposals and activities have done that in coordination with other organizations profiled in their field of operation.

- ▶ Around 44% of civil society organizations indicated delays in project funding due to the COVID-19 crisis, while around 23% of them reported fully terminated/suspended project funding in that period. Moreover, one-third of surveyed organizations additionally reported lack of equipment that would have allowed them to adjust their work to the newly emerged circumstances by working at home.
- ▶ Data collected under this survey confirm that, in general, the crisis caused by COVID-19 has significantly impacted civil society participation in decision-making. On one hand, civil society organizations have developed significantly less policy proposals and activities, and on the other hand, state authorities have failed to find adequate ways to involve them in processes aimed at mitigating damages caused by the crisis. This trend could have a long-standing impact on the civil

society's confidence in their participation in the long run and therefore these phenomena need to be further monitored and observed in the coming years.

II DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS



1. INTRODUCTION

Findings presented in this report are based on primary data collected under a two-phased survey research conducted within the project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations”, as part of planned activities under the data collection methodology aimed at advancing the status of civil society organizations involved in sector working groups. In particular, the survey’s goal is to measure perceptions about civic forms of organization and participation in policy-making, both in the period before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

About the project

The project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations” aims to facilitate meaningful and structured participation of the civil society that expresses citizens’ views, to impact key sector-wide reforms under the EU accession process. It is implemented by the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia, in partnership with the Center for Civil Communications, Eurothink – Center for European Strategies, and Reactor – Research in Acton.

Through the project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations”, civil society organizations are able to receive timely and precise information about topics, areas and issues of importance for citizens and the civil society, in order to impact key sector-wide reforms under the EU accession process. For more information, visit the website: www.dijalogkoneu.mk.

About the survey research

The above-named project anticipates organization of several research studies to measure civic engagement and participation in various societal processes and to establish actual state-of-affairs within the civil society. This document present findings from two surveys conducted in the period October-November 2020, aimed at measuring attitudes and behaviours of citizens and civil society organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia and at establishing the actual state-of-affairs in respect to advocacy for citizens’ interests and civil society participation in policy- and decision-making, with the ultimate goal of identifying barriers and providing guidance on new opportunities for more efficient advocacy and participation by citizens and the civil society.

Both surveys include additional modules on effects of the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on civic engagement. More details on both surveys are available under relevant chapters on methodology approach, later in this document.

1.1. CONTEXT AND STATE-OF-PLAY

The survey was conducted in a very specific period and was influenced by the newly-emerged situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Having in mind that the COVID-19 crisis was underway at the time of data collection, the main methodology challenge for this survey implied recollection of the pre-pandemic period. More specifically, citizens and civil society organizations had to recollect their activities in the course of 2019, which implies a period longer than 6 calendar months and opens space for such recollections to be insufficiently precise and comprehensive, i.e. they could result in somewhat “distorted” perceptions and experiences.

Moreover, the survey coincided with the period when the country’s EU accession process was challenged by reaction from the neighbouring Republic of Bulgaria and vetoed start of accession negotiations, which could have additional influence on responses and attitudes in respect to the EU and the country’s future.

As regards the local context, it should be noted that the survey was conducted immediately after the formation of the new government as a result of parliamentary elections held in July 2020. In particular, the elections were preceded by an institutional crisis which had, for the first time, put the executive branch of government in the position of legislative authority. Namely, the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia was dismissed in February 2020, i.e. immediately before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

1 “Parliament is dismissed, opening the path to elections”, Radio Free Europe in Macedonian language, February 2020, available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%88%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE/30437176.html>

Right before its disbandment, in January 2020, the Parliament voted to approve the caretaker government in order to comply with the Electoral Code, which stipulates that caretaker government should be in place six months before the general elections. Immediately after the Parliament’s dismissal, the COVID-19 crisis took full effect in the country and, in the absence of active parliament as legislative branch of government, the President of State declared a state of emergency in duration of 30 days² pursuant to relevant provisions from the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia.³ Hence, for the first time in the history of our state, the momentary situation implied the need for the Government of RNM to be given powers to adopt decrees with the effect of laws. This institutional situation and setup could have impacted citizens’ attitudes and engagement, as well as attitudes and behaviour of the civil society vis-à-vis institutions.

An additional factor that could have an effect on observed state-of-affairs and behaviour concerns full prohibition of public gathering, in compliance with the Decree of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.⁴ Notably, throughout the state of emergency that lasted from 18 March to 13 June 2020, the right to public assembly was fully suspended on the entire territory of the state. This implied prohibition of one civic engagement mechanism covered under this survey questionnaire for given period of time, which could also affect responses and results obtained.

2 “President Pendarovski declares the state of emergency”, Academic MK, 18th March 2020, available at: <https://akademik.mk/pretsedatelot-pendarovski-proglasi-vonredna-sostojba/>

3 Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 126, 127 and 128

4 Decree with the effect of law on enforcement of the Law on Public Assembly during the state of emergency, available at: <https://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/%d1%98%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%bd%d0%b8-%d1%81%d0%be%d0%b1%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%b8.pdf>

1.2. POSSIBLE COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH STUDIES

Vast portion of data collected under this research confirms trends observed and measured in the past when similar surveys were conducted on this topic in the period 2012-2016.⁵ Nevertheless, direct comparisons with results obtained under previous surveys are impossible because recently measured attitudes and behaviours are closely linked to developments in the society and to methods of interaction and communication applied by the community, which had been visibly changed as a result of the current context, i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying health protection and restricted movement measures. For example, while the parliamentary elections were held in 2020, they cannot be equitably correlated to the level and types of civic engagement measured or established in the period 2012-2016 due to the different nature of pre-election campaigns, but also due to limited interactions and movement of citizens.

⁵ More data on results from these research studies are available at: http://graganskoucestvo.mk/graganskoucestvo_old/index.html

2. METHODOLOGY APPROACH

The survey research involved two separate phases covering two relevant target groups: general population in the Republic of North Macedonia and civil society organizations registered in the country, and used a combined quantitative research method:

- ▶ **computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) with citizens; and**
- ▶ **computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) with civil society organizations, i.e. online questionnaires for individual completion, programmed with the LimeSurvey tool and made accessible to targeted respondents, i.e. representatives of civil society organizations, by means of link sent via e-mail.**

2.1. RESEARCH METHODS

Data collections relied on two separate quantitative surveys conducted with two target groups of interest:

1. Telephone interviews with citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia – dual frame survey sample (landline and cell phone)

Attitudes of the general population in the Republic of North Macedonia were measured by means of quantitative survey that included telephone interviews (CATI) with citizens aged 16 to 66 years, according to principle of random sample selection. The ratio of landline versus cell phone interviews is 20/80. In the case of the landline sample, interviews were conducted with adult household member who had the most recent birthday before the survey date (principle of random selection – first/last birthday), while

in the case of the cell phone sample, interviews were conducted with persons responding the call made to randomly selected telephone numbers, upon confirmation of their age (16+ years) and ability to participate in the survey by answering the questionnaire.

The general population survey was conducted in the period 14 to 29 October 2020.

Target population: citizens aged 16 to 66 years;

Sample: representative at national level, 1300 respondents, stratified according to gender, ethnicity, age group and regional distribution (statistical regions in the state), based on the most recent population estimates/ the last population census.

2. Online survey with civil society organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia – unassisted completion of electronic questionnaire by directly targeted civil society organizations

Computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) with civil society organizations, i.e. unassisted completion of online questionnaires, programmed with the LimeSurvey tool. The survey questionnaire was distributed through the LimeSurvey service that enables detailed overview of invitations to complete the survey, verification whether questionnaires were opened, and monitoring status of responses and replied invitations. This survey questionnaire was comprised of 76 questions.

Data collection from civil society organizations lasted from November 2020 until the first week of December 2020.

Target group: representatives of civil society organizations, including chambers of commerce and trade unions, with the status of active entities registered on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Sample: questionnaire was completed by total of 113 civil society organizations, of which 99 opened the link to the online questionnaire, while 14 of them responded to closed-type questionnaires, directly linked to their e-mail address.

2.2. SAMPLE FRAMEWORK AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The general population sample covered under this survey is representative at national level, i.e. for the Republic of North Macedonia, and included 1300 respondents aged 16 to 66 years. Definition of the sample framework took into consideration relevant parameters that ensure nationally-representative distribution, as follows:

- ▶ statistical region;
- ▶ place of residence (urban/rural);
- ▶ age group;
- ▶ gender; and
- ▶ ethnicity.

Summary of key demographic characteristics of the general population sample is given in Annex 1: Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Sample.

The civil society sample covers 113 entities that successfully completed the online questionnaire. Initially, the questionnaire was sent to 2111 civil society organizations, but was completed only by 113 civil society representatives. The list of civil society organizations was composed by the research team and project interns, and included consultation of all relevant and existing civil society databases. Having in mind that the research team was unable

to review and verify all 2111 e-mail addresses, additional copy of this questionnaire was uploaded on the web-platform dijalogkoneu.mk and was shared on the Facebook page hosted by the project [EU Dialogue](#) and the Facebook pages of the [Foundation Open Society – Macedonia](#) and [Reactor – Research in Action](#). More details on the type of civil society organizations covered by the survey are available under the relevant chapters i.e. the section of this report on results from the civil society survey.

3. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – GENERAL POPULATION

Civic engagement, as a concept, is a crucial component of any healthy democratic society. Engaged citizenship, i.e. citizens who are actively involved in improving their communities and their country are a huge benefit to the civil society and the main indicator of healthy communities, a democratic state and satisfied citizenry.⁶

This block of questions aims to define the context in which the surveyed population takes or does not take action within their communities, or more specifically, it aims to measure citizens' sense of belonging to their narrow or broader community, which is expected to be in tight correlation to the level of care and engagement within their community.⁷

In that, civic engagement is analysed in terms of three different aspects: (1) participation in civic initiatives for the common good, i.e. organization of citizens around actions to improve their communities; (2) practice of civic engagement as effort to address societal problems, by contacting authorities or by participating in public debates, working groups, civil protests, petitions, submissions and proposals; and (3) conventional civic engagement, i.e. voting at parliamentary, local and presidential elections.

⁶ Zaff, J., Boyd, M., Li, Y., Lerner, J. V., & Lerner, R. M. (2010). Active and engaged citizenship: multi-group and longitudinal factorial analysis of an integrated construct of civic engagement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(7), 736–750. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9541-6>

⁷ Ibid.

3.1. SENSE OF BELONGING AND SATISFACTION WITH THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE

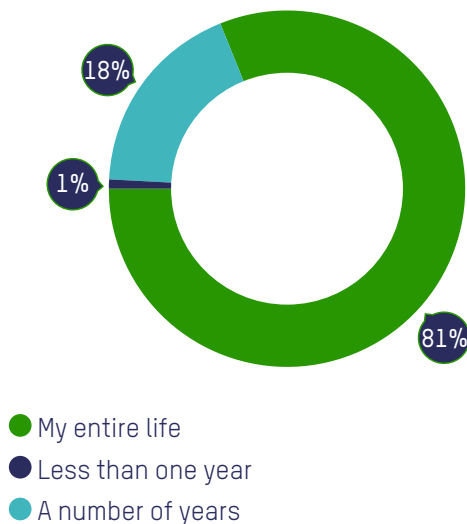
Place of residence and mobility

The place of residence holds great importance for research topics and issues covered under this survey as it represents the basic geo-space or societal discourse in which citizens often participate, are most affected by or react to through adequate initiatives.

Large share of surveyed citizens have not changed their place of residence, i.e. 81% of them reported they have been living in the same town/village for their entire life. Slightly less than one-fifth of respondents, more often women (22%) than men (13%), have changed the place of residence during their lifetime.

Chart 1. Q:

In approximate terms, how many years have you lived in your town/village?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

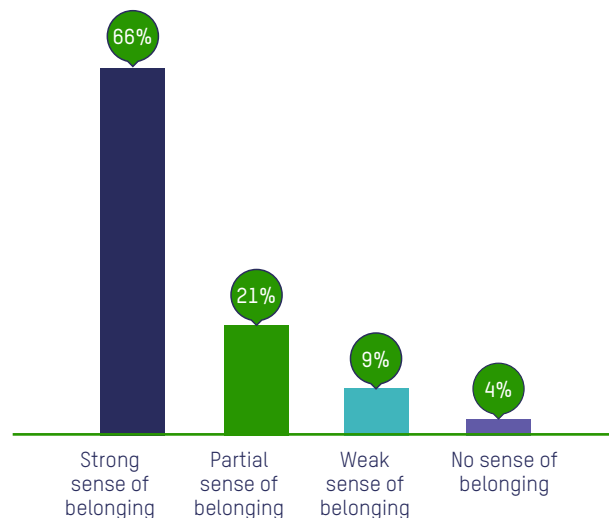
How much do citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia feel connected to the community where they live

Most citizens expressed great sense of belonging to their place of residence, a tendency that was confirmed under previous surveys conducted in the period 2012–2016. There are no significant changes in citizens' sentiments at the level of the general population.

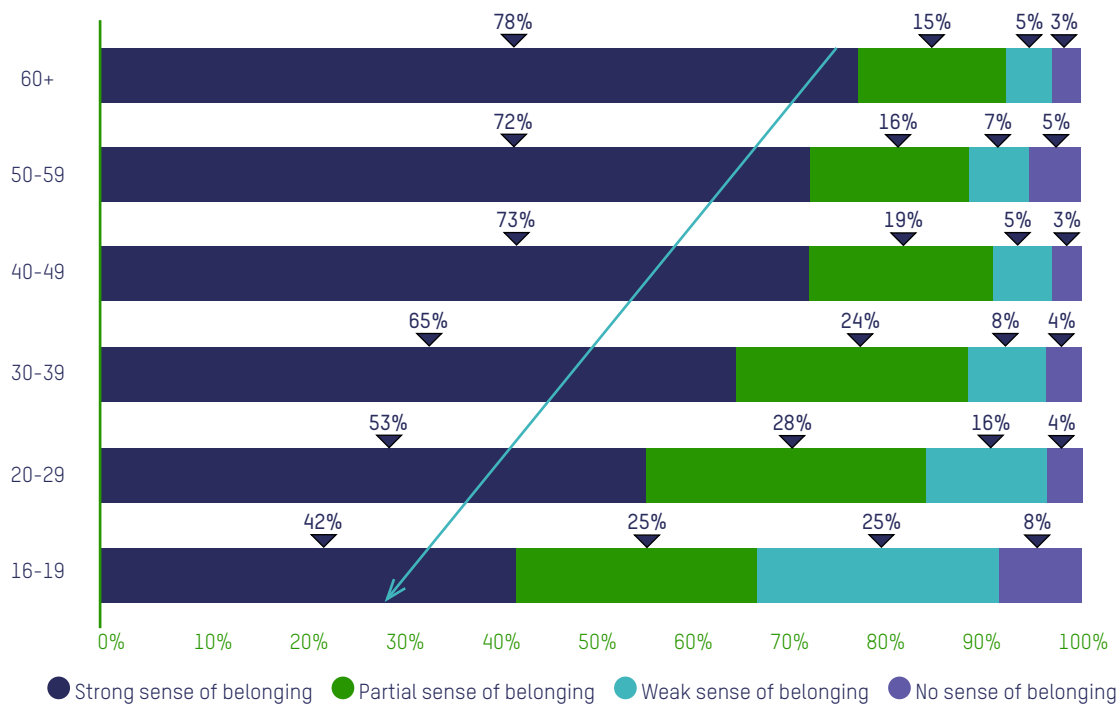
Again, as noted under previous surveys, the share of respondents indicating great sense of belonging to their place of residence proportionally increases with their age group, which is generally in line with expected population trends. Other socio-demographic variables do not provide any significant difference in terms of respondents' sense of belonging to the place of residence, except for small regional variations (as shown on Chart 2), whereby comparisons between the sums of positive and negative responses showcase biggest differences among citizens in the Polog region, who expressed lower sense of belonging compared to residents in other regions.

Chart 2. Q:

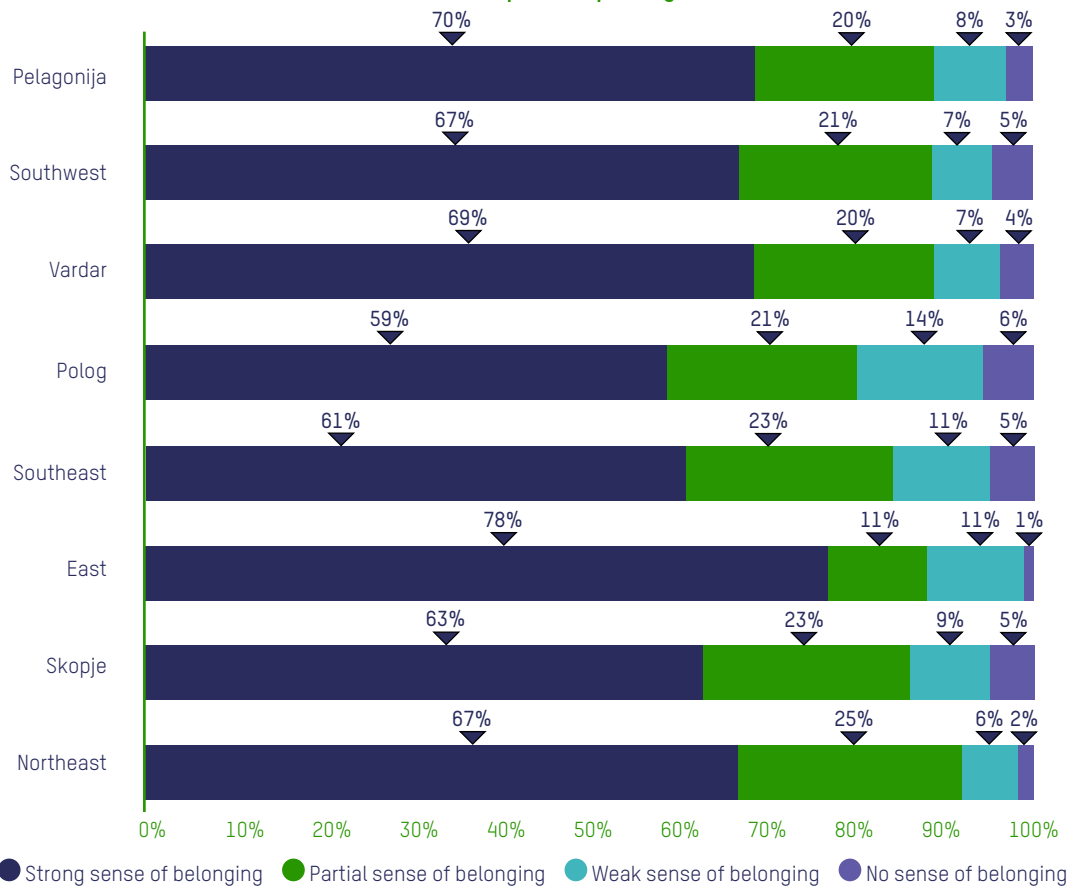
How strong is your sense of belonging to the place of residence? Would you say...



Distribution of responses per age group



Distribution of responses per region



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Respondents' satisfaction with their place of residence

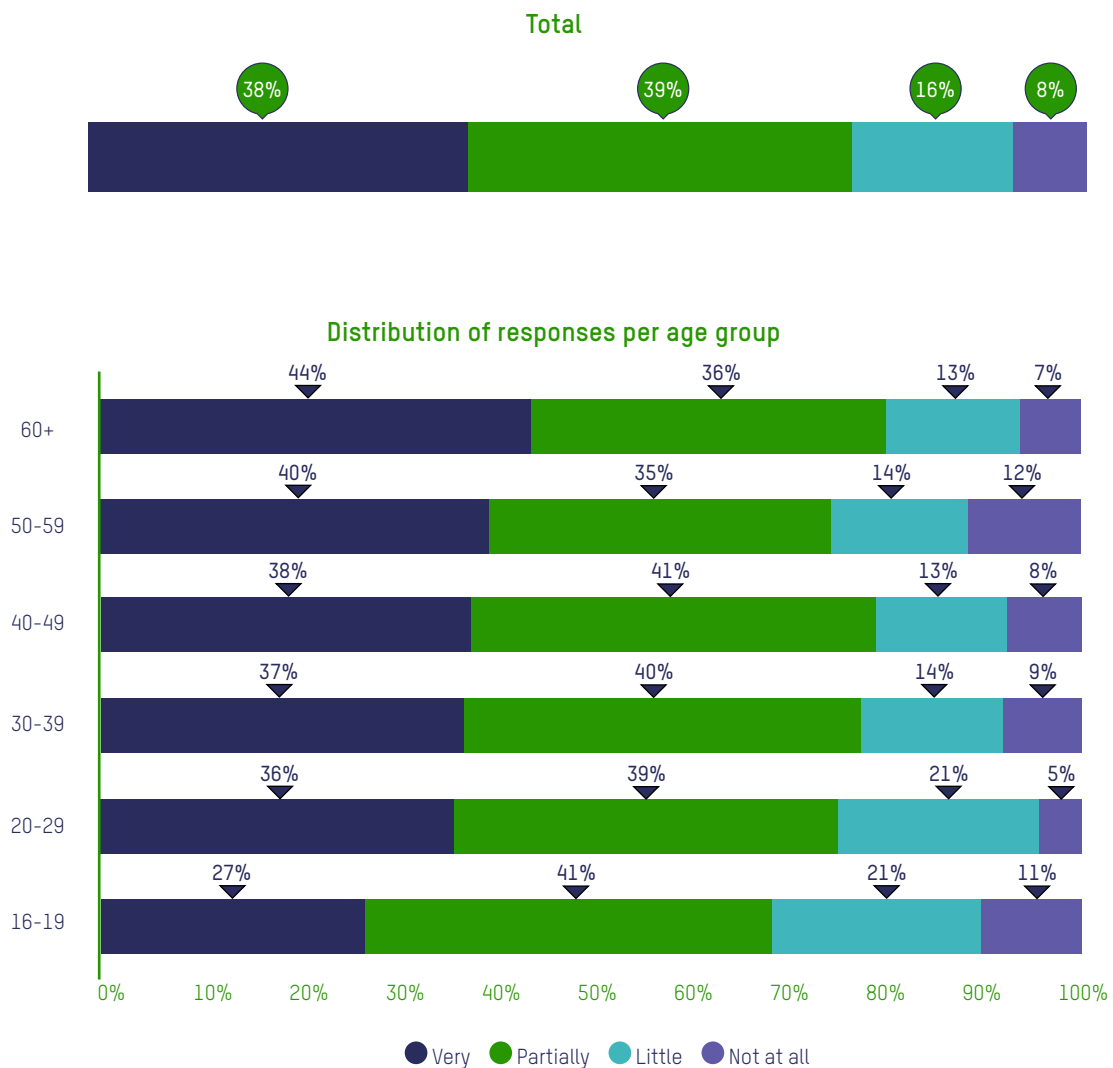
The level of satisfaction with the community where citizens live is closely related to their sense of belonging.

Citizens are most satisfied with their place of residence, i.e. around 38% of surveyed respondents reported they are very satisfied with their place of residence, and almost the

same share (39%) reported they are partially satisfied. Others do not share such opinion of the majority of citizens and indicated low satisfaction (16%) or dissatisfaction (8%) with their place of residence. As was the case in respect to the sense of belonging, respondents' satisfaction with the place of residence is marked by a mild decrease proportionate to their age group. There are no significant differences in responses to this question related to other socio-demographic variables.

Chart 3. Q:

How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with your town/village of residence?





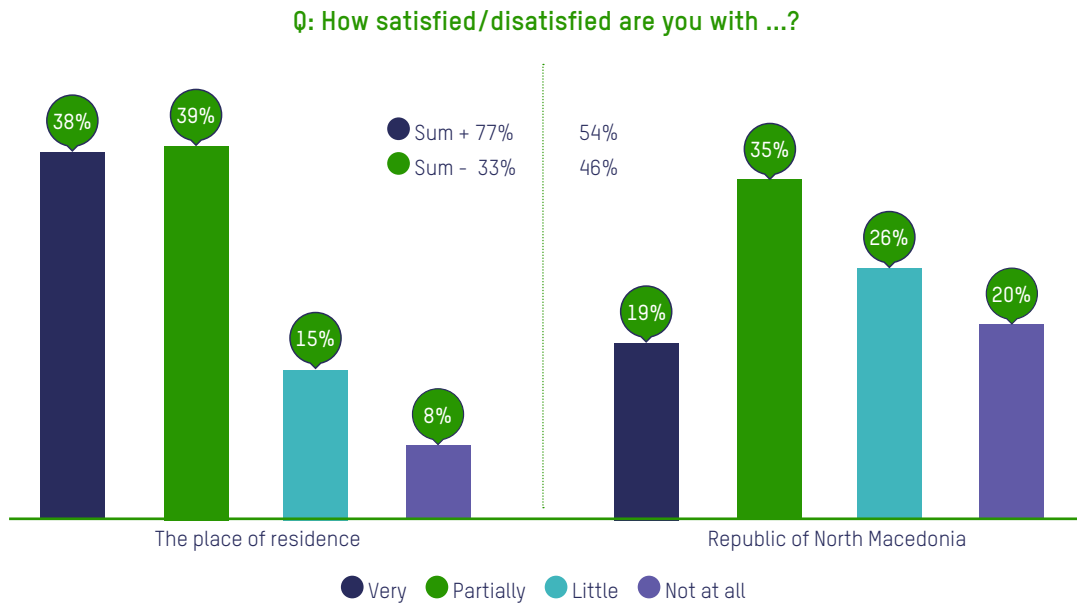
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Level of satisfaction is decreasing in the case of the Republic of North Macedonia, although responses are marked by similar trends of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with results obtained under previous surveys (2016) and according to age groups (variable marked by more prominent differences in views and attitudes compared to other demographic

characteristics). No significant differences are observed in terms of regional distribution of responses, except for small variations, but in this case as well the sums of positive and negative responses follow similar trends in almost all regions, as shown on Chart 3.1., but these deviations are very small to be interpreted as significant.

Chart 3.1.

Satisfaction – comparisons, local versus national level



On average, citizens are more satisfied with their town/village as place of residence (sum of positive responses – 77%) than with North Macedonia (sum of positive responses – 54%). Nearly one-third expressed partial or full dissatisfaction with their place of residence, while in the case of the Republic of North Macedonia these sentiments of dissatisfaction are more frequent and their share is increased to less than half of citizens (46%).

Compared to the period 2012-2016, there are no changes in respondents' satisfaction with the local community, but satisfaction with the country as place of residence is marked by decrease (in the period 2012-2016, around 28% of respondents were very satisfied with the Republic of North Macedonia, but under this survey their share has dropped to 19%).

An additional correlation that could be noted implies that **citizens who expressed greater sense of belonging to their place of residence are also more satisfied with towns/villages**

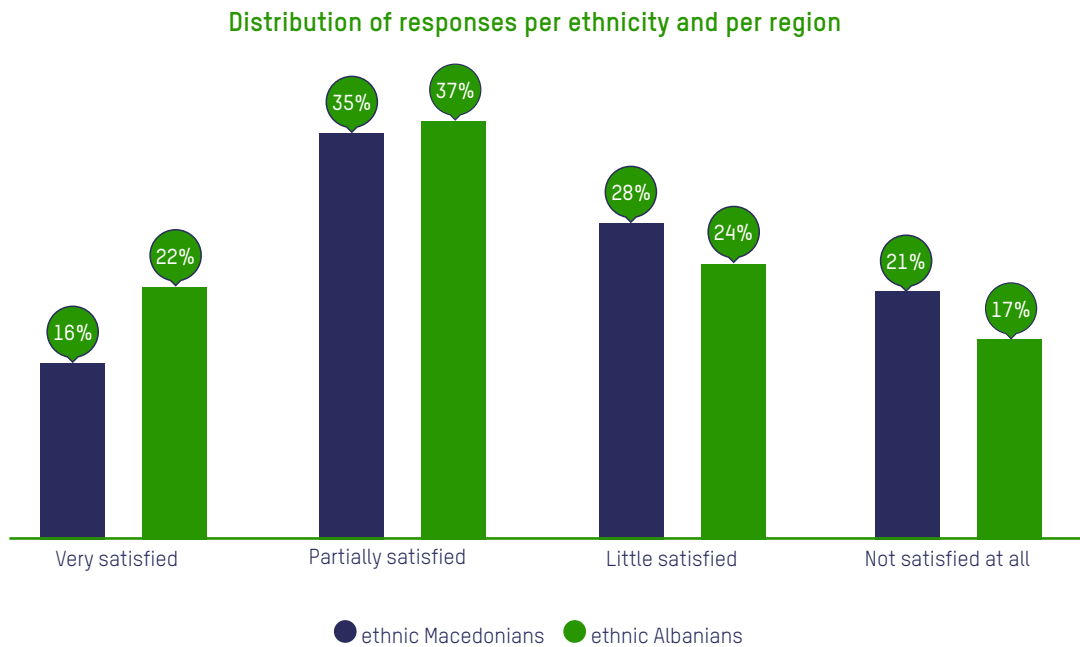
where they live and with North Macedonia as place of residence.⁸

Here, small variations are noted in regard to region and nationality of respondents, accounting for minor deviations that could be illustratively examined, but it should be noted that these shares are based on small number of responses, implying an inherent potential for greater statistical errors compared to mean values calculated at the level of the total survey population. Data presented in the tables below show somewhat higher satisfaction with North Macedonia as place of residence among ethnic Albanians (sum of positive responses = 59%) compared to ethnic Macedonians (sum of positive responses = 51%).

⁸ Significance of these values was tested with the two-dimensional statistical test measuring SIG values for positive and negative deviations from baseline values.

Chart 3.2 Q:

How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with North Macedonia as place of residence?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

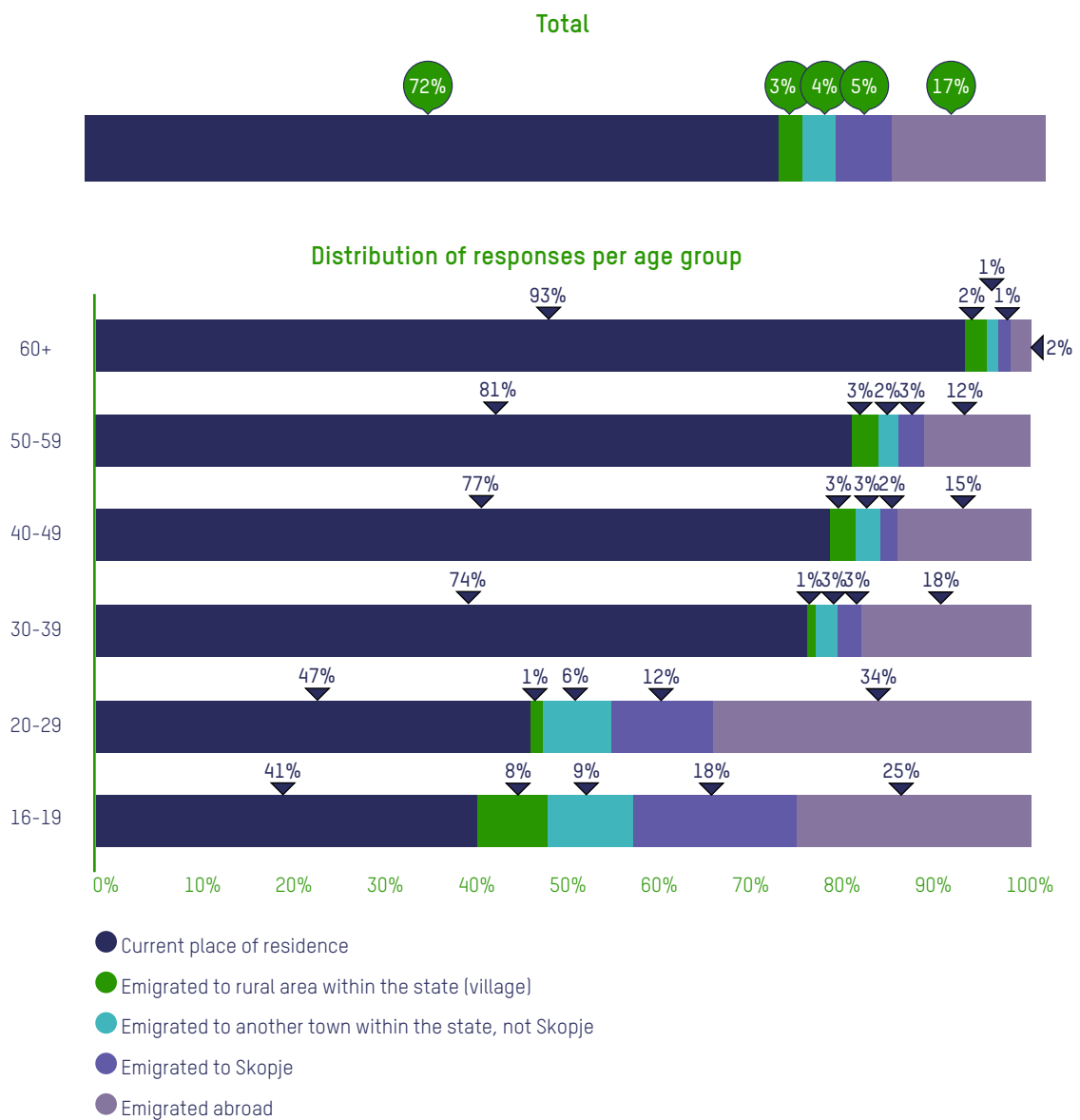
Where do citizens see themselves in the near future

A significant share of young citizens indicated they do not see themselves living in the country in the near future. Notably, every third young person aged 20 to 29 years and every fourth young person aged 16 to 19 years see them-

selves emigrated abroad. The share of citizens who do not see themselves living in North Macedonia in the near future is smaller at the level of the entire survey population, accounting for less than one-fifth of respondents (17%), but it is still significant and should be taken into consideration when discussing citizens' satisfaction and sense of belonging.

Chart 4. Q:

Where do you see yourselves in five years?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

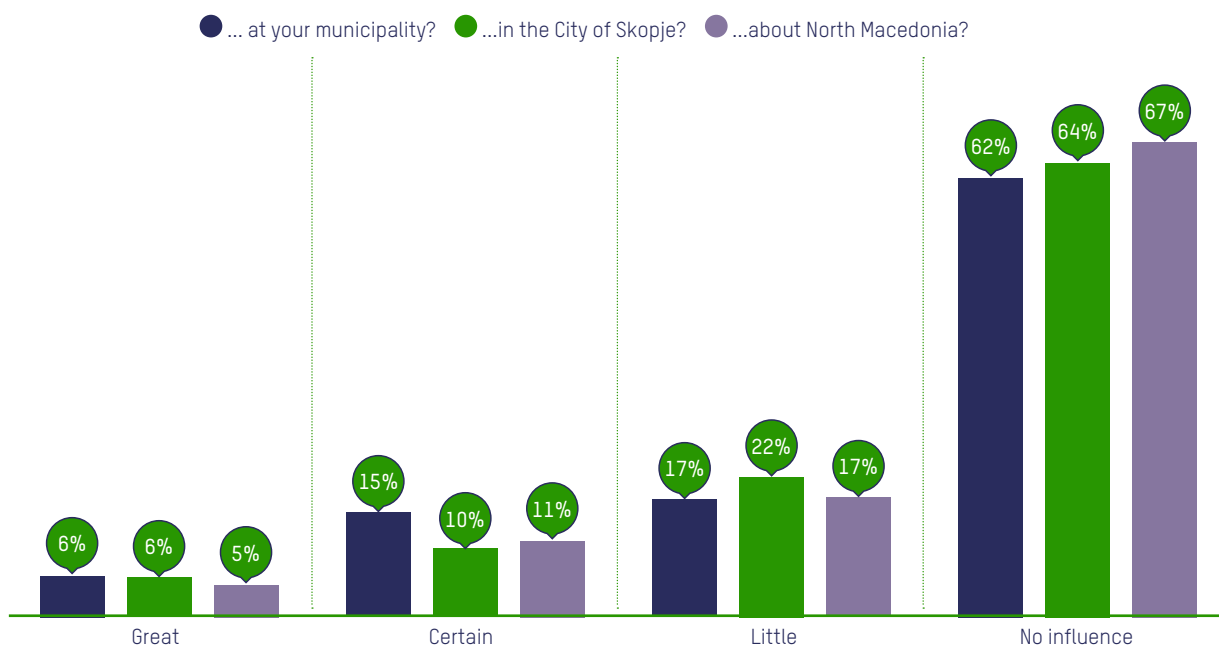
It should be noted that the total share of citizens who do not see themselves living in the state (17%) is marked by a decrease compared to the last survey from 2016 when their share was higher and accounted for 26%. It is difficult to ascertain whether such decrease is due to the ongoing crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which most certainly affect mobility of citizens, or it might be due to great satisfaction among citizens, as there are no measured values on specific reasons behind this type of responses.

3.2. ATTITUDES ON CIVIC ACTION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY: OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO EXERT INFLUENCE

Views on civic action – possibility to exert influence

Majority of citizens believe they are unable to influence or have very small influence on decisions taken at their municipalities, the City of

Chart 5. Q:
How much influence do you have on decisions taken....?



Database: general population survey, total responses concerning municipalities and RNM (n=1259), responses from residents of Skopje (n=318)

Skopje, or at state level. On average, citizens more often believe they could influence decisions at municipal level and have smaller influence on decisions taken at state level.

Nevertheless, differences observed in this regard are small and responses are marked by same trends across all three entities.⁹

⁹ Here, it must be noted that shares indicated in respect to the City of Skopje are based on much smaller number of responses (n=318) which means they imply a potential for greater statistical error.

Chart 6. Q:

How much influence do you have on decisions taken at: your municipality?

Distribution of answers per gender and per age group

	Total	Women	Men	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
N =	1.239	611	628	88	236	250	242	189	234
Great	6 %	7 %	6 %	11 %	7 %	6 %	6 %	7 %	5 %
Certain	15 %	14 %	16 %	32 %	22 %	15 %	10 %	12 %	9 %
Little	17 %	14 %	21 %	17 %	25 %	18 %	18 %	14 %	12 %
No influence	62 %	65 %	57 %	60 %	54 %	61 %	66 %	67 %	74 %

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

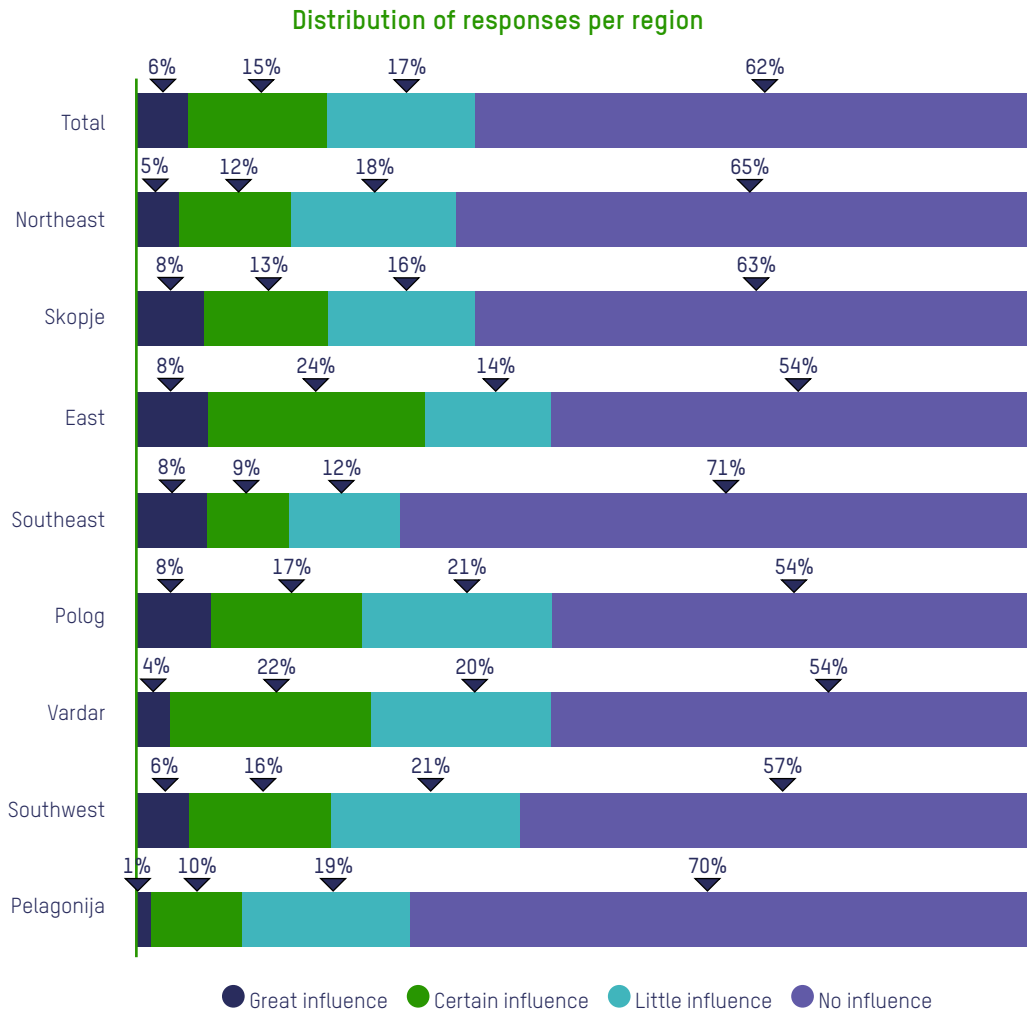
Distribution of responses per age group shows almost identical trends for all questions in this block. The chart with responses on citizens' influence within their municipality is given for

illustration purposes, i.e. to provide an overview of responses according to some key socio-demographic variables, such as, for example, gender and age.

Interesting correlations:

- ▶ Citizens who expressed greater sense of belonging to their place of residence are also **more satisfied** with towns/villages where they live and with North Macedonia as place of residence, but are **less convinced** they could influence decisions at state level.
- ▶ On average, citizens from the Pelagonija region expressed lower belief they could influence decisions at municipal level (SUM+ = 11%) and at state level (SUM+ = 10%), while citizens from the East and Polog regions are more optimistic about opportunities to influence such decisions, with the East region accounting for the highest share of positive responses (SUM+ = 32%) and the same share of negative responses, which is the lowest in these two regions (SUM- = 53%).

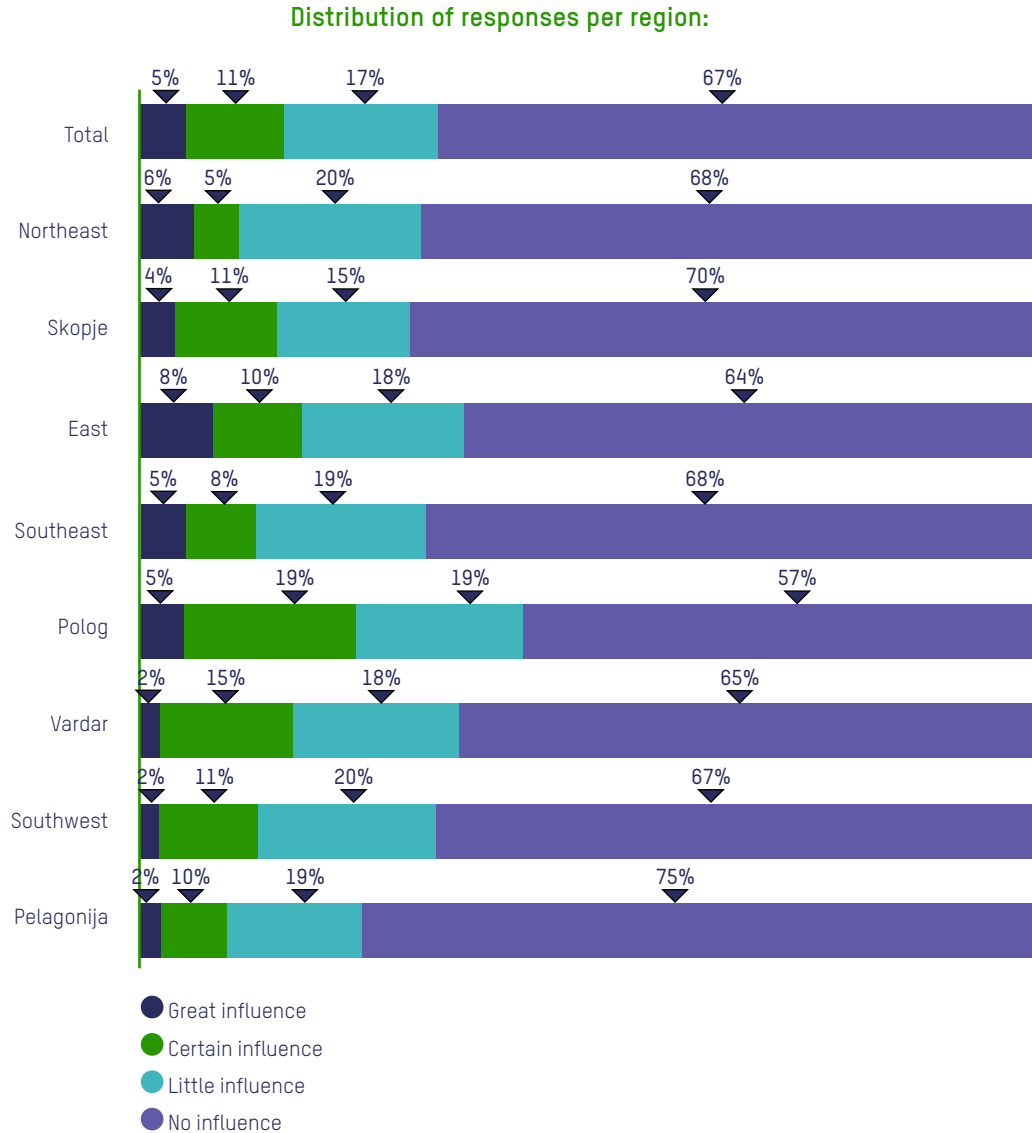
Chart 7. Q:
 How much influence can you exert on decisions taken by your municipality?
 Distribution of responses per region



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Chart 8. Q:

How much influence can you exert on decisions taken by your municipality?



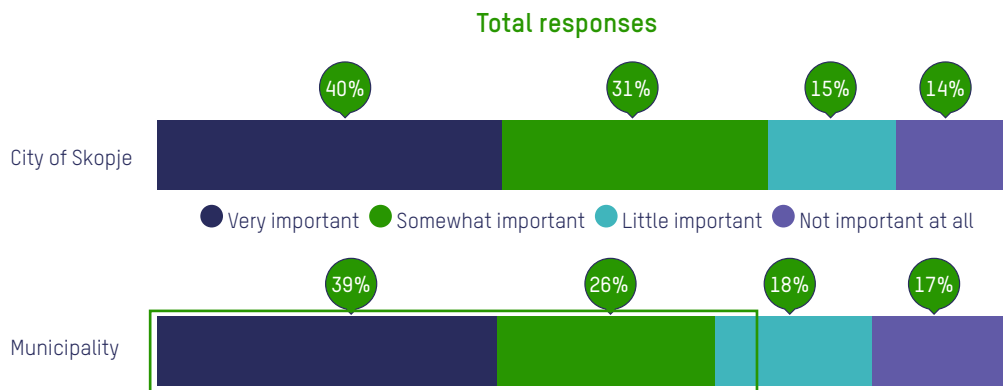
While majority of respondents believe they are unable to influence decisions at their municipality (or the City of Skopje, in the case of residents in the Skopje region), higher share of them still believe it is important or it is somewhat important to them to be able to influence decisions at their municipality (65%) or deci-

sions taken by the City of Skopje (72%). However, the total share of positive responses at municipal level is marked by a decrease compared to the survey conducted in 2016.¹⁰

¹⁰ The question about the City of Skopje was not featured in the previous surveys. Moreover, comparisons should be taken with some reservation due to different formulation used in this question which, in its own right, could affect distribution of responses.

Chart 9. Q:

How important it is to you to be able to influence decisions taken by..?



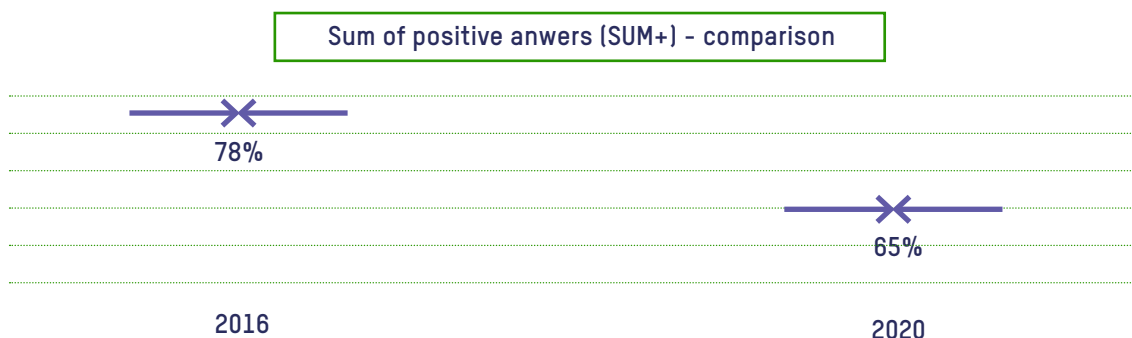
Database: general population survey, residents in the City of Skopje (n=311) and all responses (n=1300)

Comparison of these responses against the 2016 survey data shows that the share of citizens who find it very or somewhat important to influence decisions taken by/at their municipality is by 13% lower in 2020, i.e. it is marked by a decrease from 78% to 65%. Reasons behind this phenomenon are not additionally researched and therefore any additional con-

clusion (e.g. that the current distribution of responses might be due to the ongoing pandemic as one of many possible impact factors) could be made only in the form of hypothesis or assumption because the instrument used (survey questionnaire for telephone interviews) did not include measurement and confirmation of reasons that might serve as basis for this significant difference in responses.

Chart 10. Q:

How important it is for you personally to be able to influence decisions at...? (comparison to previous years)



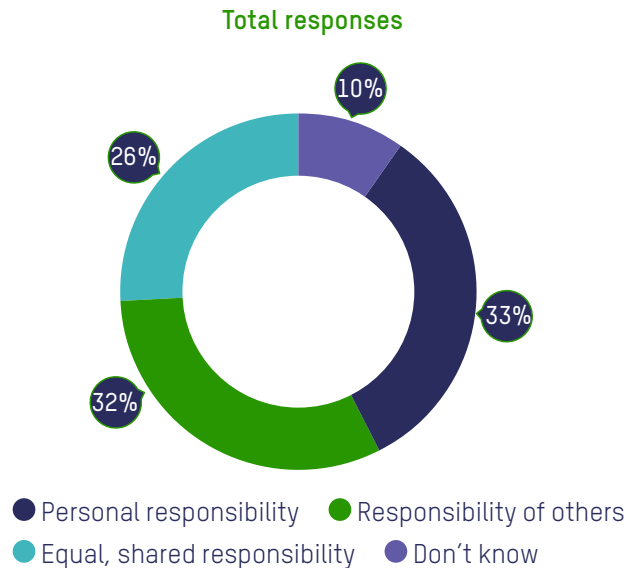
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Views on civic action – responsibility to exert influence

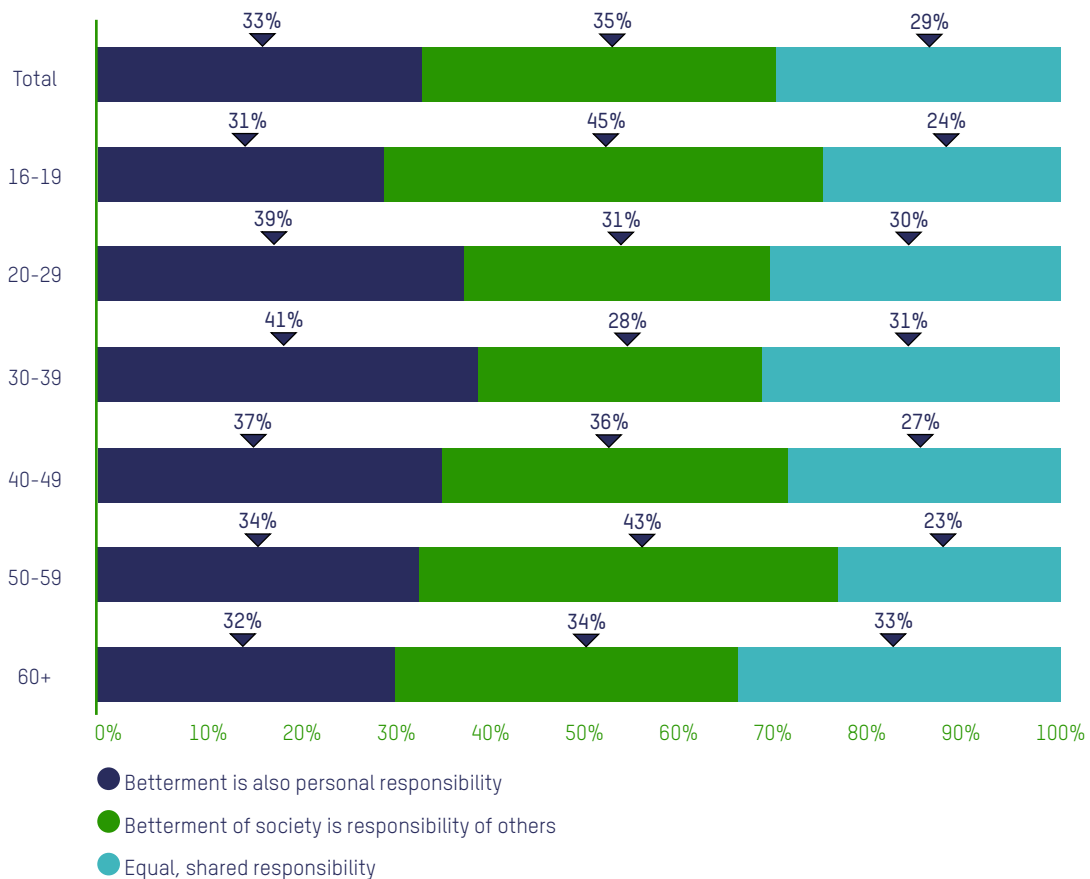
Although slightly more than half of citizens believe it is important to influence decisions at their municipality, a smaller share perceive betterment of the society as their personal responsibility. More specifically, almost every third citizen believes that betterment of the society is responsibility of others, not their personal responsibility. Almost identical share of citizens believe this is their personal responsibility, while nearly every fifth citizen believes that betterment of the society is shared or mutual responsibility.

Chart 11. Q:

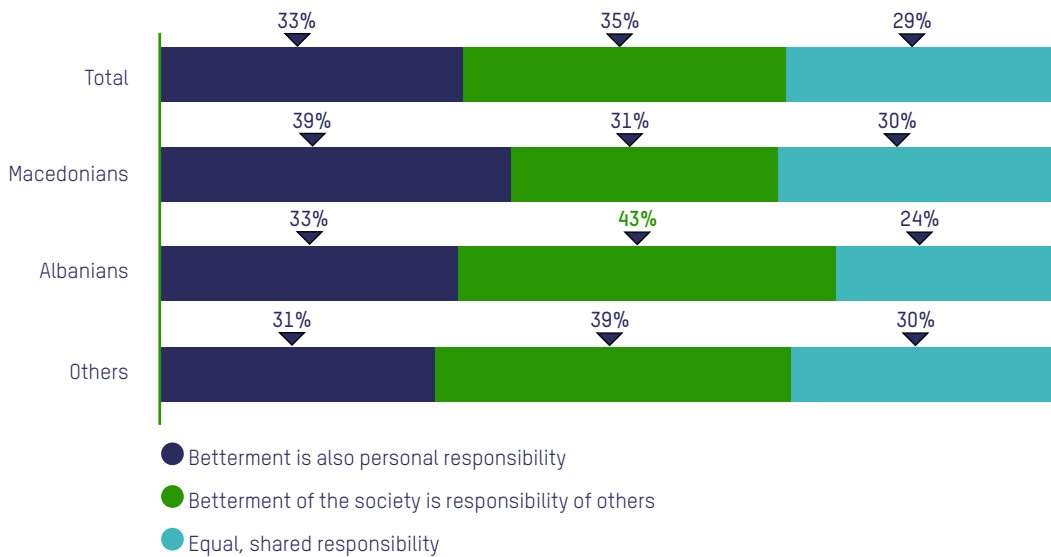
Do you believe that betterment of the society is your personal responsibility or responsibility of others?



Distribution of responses per age group



Distribution of responses per ethnicity



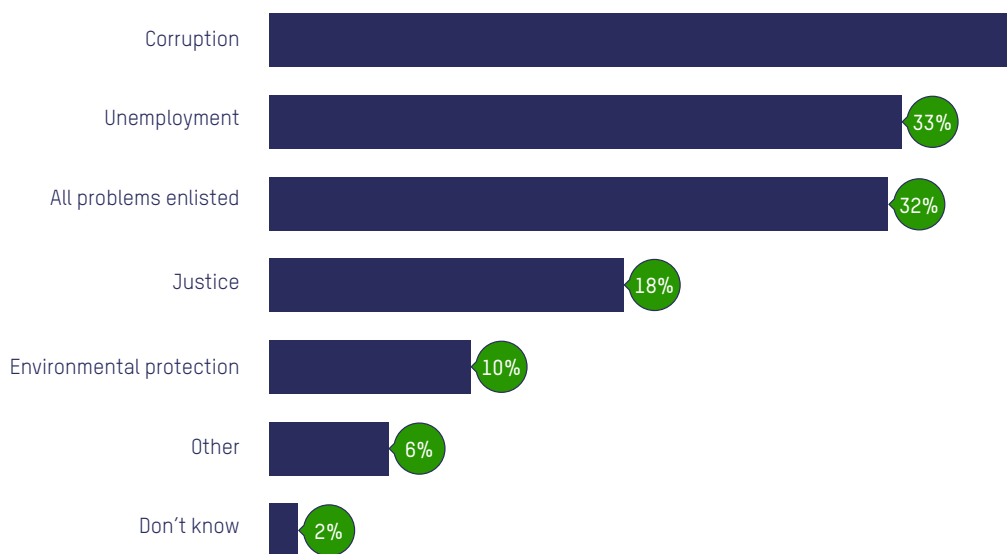
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Key problems in the country according to citizens

In the opinion of citizens, corruption (indicated by 39% of respondents) and unemployment (32%) are the biggest problems in the country, while a similar number of respondents (33%) also believe that all enlisted problems are of

key importance for the Republic of North Macedonia. Around one-fifth believe that environment protection and situation with the legal system are also key problems in the country. Socio-demographic comparisons of responses obtained on this question do not refer to any significant differences in priority-ranking of problems.

Chart 12. Q: In your opinion, what is the biggest problem in the country?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

3.3. STATUS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: INITIATIVES, ACTIVISM AND CONVENTIONAL CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Analysis of survey data on civic engagement shows that likelihood for participation in civic initiatives and other types of activism increases with the increased trust in opportunities to exert influence at local and national level. Hence, one manner in which civic engagement can be increased is inevitably linked to restoring citizens' trust in opportunities for effective participation. In that, it should be noted that citizens' attitudes about their influence on decision-making are closely linked to their confidence in own competences for efficient participation, but also with their attitudes and expectations in terms of feedback/response from authorities and competent institutions they are addressing with requests and participation.¹¹ Survey findings presented in this chapter and directly related to civic engagement should be viewed in that context.

Participation in organized initiatives

Civic engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia is not marked by significant changes, but the survey observed a general decrease of civic participation. **Every fifth citizen reported he/she has participated in civic initiatives during 2019, accounting for a decrease by nearly 10% compared to the period 2012-2016.**¹²

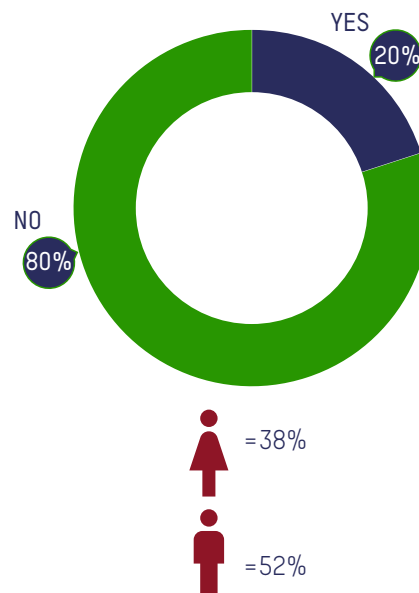
¹¹ Niemi, R. G., Craig, S. C., & Mattei, F. (1991). Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(4), 1407-1413. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.2307/1963953>

¹² In the period 2012-2016, on average, around one-third of citizens have attempted to take action by communicating with authorities or public institutions (more information on results obtained under these surveys are available on this link: http://graganskoucestvo.mk/graganskoucestvo_old/index.html).

Nevertheless, specificities that surround this last survey (referral to more distant period and newly-emerged situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic) do not allow direct comparisons of data with great level of certainty and verification that the situation observed is actually a result of decreasing civic engagement.

Chart 13. Q:

In the period January 2019 – January 2020, have YOU participated in any organized initiative aimed at improving your town/village or Macedonia?



(distribution of affirmative responses per gender)

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

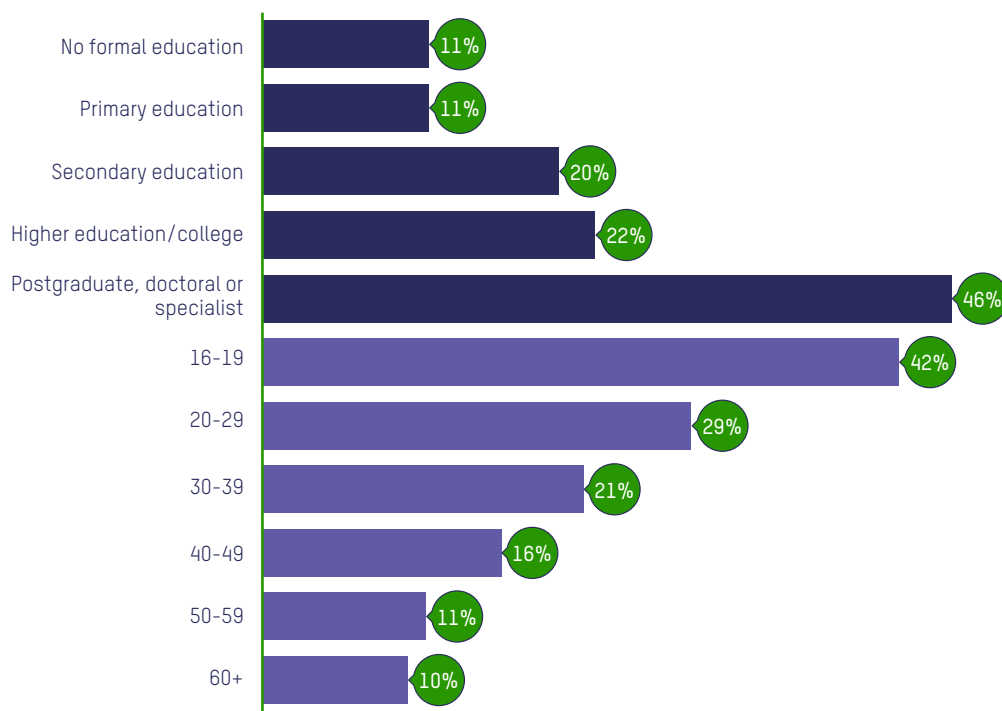
It should be noted that the survey observed small variation of responses in terms of respondents' gender. Namely, the share of women who have joined organized initiatives is somewhat lower (15%) that the share of men who reported participation in such initiatives (24%).

This confirms the trend noted under previous surveys, whereby likelihood for civic engagement in organized initiatives aimed at improving their place of residence is higher among younger respondents and among citizens with higher education (or higher income).

Chart 14. Q:

In the period January 2019 – January 2020, have YOU participated in any organized initiative aimed at improving your town/village or Macedonia?

**Affirmative responses (20%)
– distribution per education background and per age group**

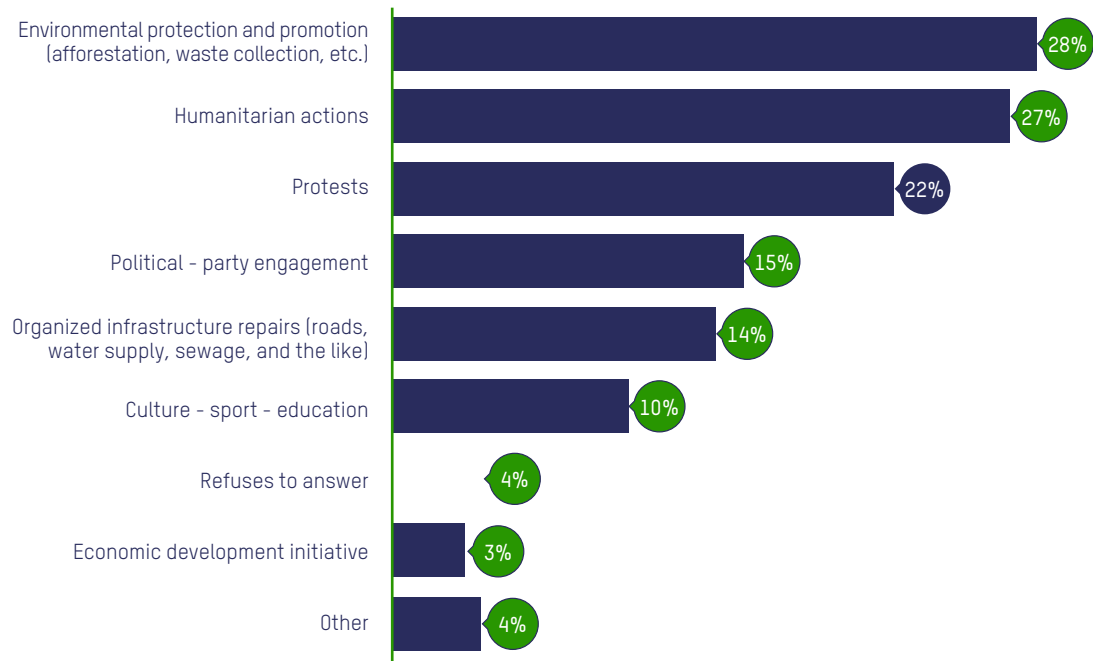


Most frequently indicated forms of civic engagement among citizens who have reported participation in organized initiatives (20% of all respondents) include humanitarian actions or environmental preservation and promotion

(afforestation and waste collection). Protests account for the third most frequently indicated action among active citizens, followed by engagement for party or political goals and organized infrastructure repairs.

Chart 15. Q:

What type of civic initiative did you participate in?



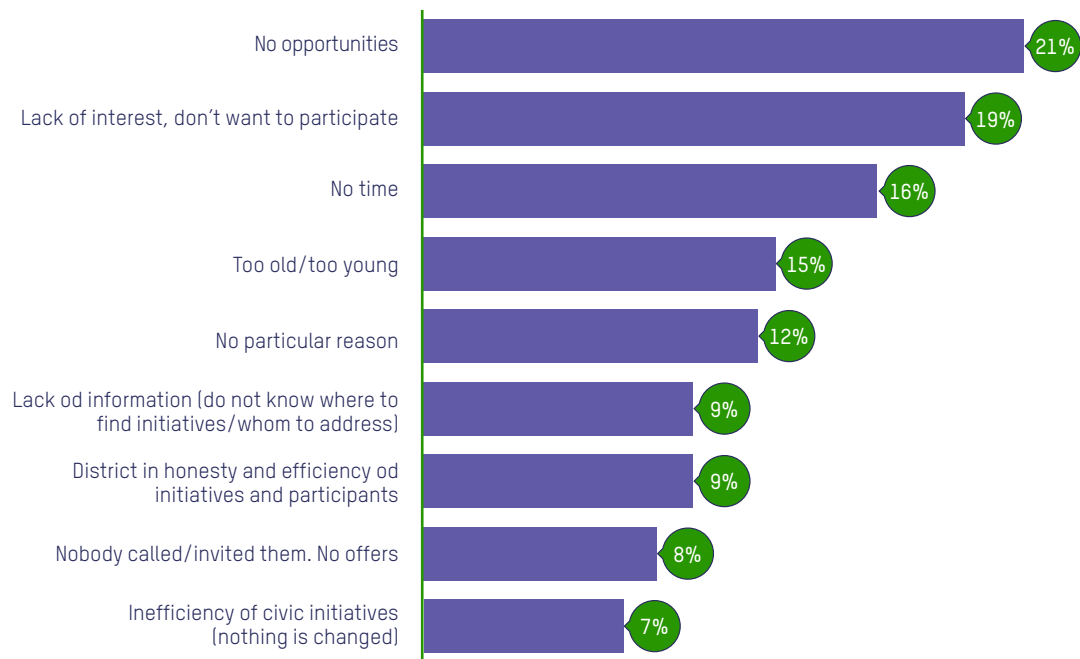
Database: general population survey, affirmative responses (n=253)

Reasons indicated by majority of citizens (80%) who have not joined any civic initiative in

the course of 2019 for their non-involvement include lack of opportunities, lack of interest, or lack of time.

Chart 16. Q:

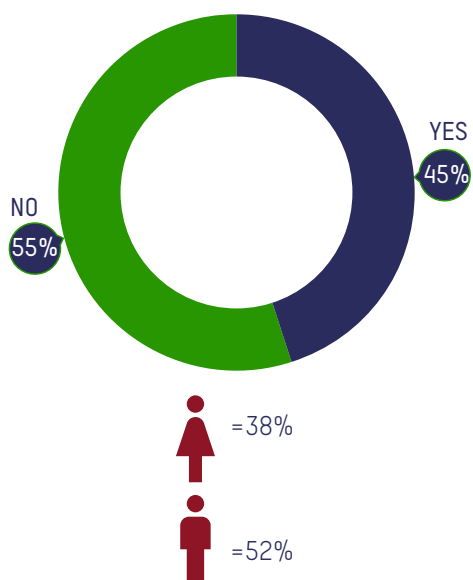
Why you have not joined any civic initiative?



Database: general population survey, negative responses (n=1038) (multiple answers allowed)

As regards future disposition for civic engagement, it could be concluded that citizens are of divided opinion: almost half of them indicated they would join organized initiatives and slightly more than half would not join. Again, variations are observed in terms of respondents' gender that are similar to distribution of responses on civic engagement in the course of 2019, i.e. man expressed greater preparedness for civic engagement (52%) compared to women (38%).

Chart 16.1. Q:
In the future, would you join any civic initiative?



(distribution of affirmative responses per gender)

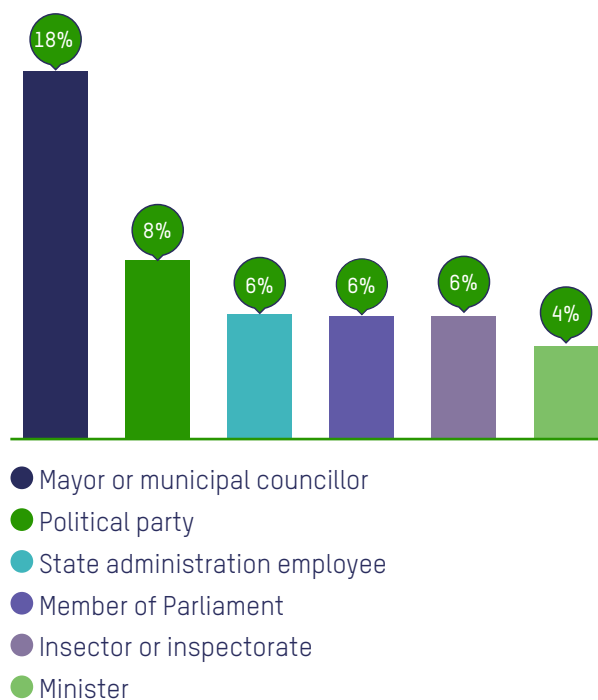
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Contact activism and other types of civic engagement

Similar to the situation observed in the period 2012-2016 and related to "contact activism" as form of civic engagement through existing institutions, citizens reported they most often contact mayors or members of municipal councils, i.e. 18% of respondents indicated they have contacted these entities as key institutional mechanisms for resolution of prob-

lems in their community. Although marked by insignificant difference, similar to the situation observed under previous surveys, again it could be noted that citizens are more likely to contact political parties instead of their already elected representatives in order to have certain societal problem resolved.

Chart 17. Q:
In the course of 2019, did you contact any of below enlisted institutions or persons, in order to resolve particular societal problem as individual, unrelated to your job?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Similar to the situation observed in respect to "contact activism", practice of other types of civic engagement is equally unenviable. Most frequently indicated responses include participation in public debates on local problems and participation in civic protests (7%) and demonstrations (7%), although the share of those who have participated is twice as lower compared to

survey findings in the period 2012-2016. (In this period, the survey observed movements under all three types of activism that are proportional to ongoing developments in the society, i.e. increased activism at protests organized in the analysed period or increased contacts with MPs during the parliamentary elections. Due to specific conditions under which this survey was conducted, trends from the past cannot be observed or confirmed).

Chart 17.1. Q:

In the course of 2019, have you...?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

What would help citizens be more proactively engaged

According to surveyed citizens, civic engagement could be much greater if they are afforded easier access to and direct contacts with mayors (most respondents selected this option, i.e. every fifth citizen believes that this channel of communication would help them influence decision-making at their municipality). Some citizens indicated they would like to be better informed, i.e. municipal authorities need to proactively disseminate information about problems and issues discussed at the municipality (15%) or that municipal councils should directly approach them with invitation to join these processes (11%).

Chart 18. Q:

In your opinion, what could facilitate influence on decision-making in your municipality?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n= 1300)

Less than one-fifth of respondents (13% or every seventh citizen) would join working groups deciding on issues and problems within their municipality, and the same share of them would like to submit their opinion in electronic format. This last finding again indicates the need for proactive information dissemination and digital channel preferred by citizens when addressing their municipalities. (Although such channels of communication are in place, it is evident that citizens are insufficiently aware thereof or do not like to waste time browsing information on their own, which shows the need for transparent and clear indicator on

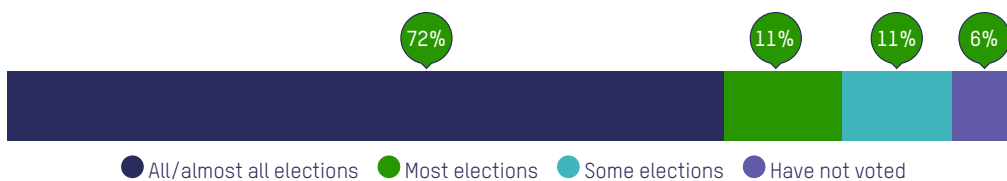
available channels of communication with municipal authorities).

Conventional civic engagement

As regards conventional civic engagement, majority of citizens (72%) said they have voted on all or almost all elections after being entitled to universal suffrage, while 6% said they have never voted. Four out of five citizens from remaining 22% of respondents who have voted on some elections said they do not differentiate the type of elections underway, but vote whenever they are able to do that.

Chart 19. Q:

After being entitled to universal suffrage, how often have you voted on elections?



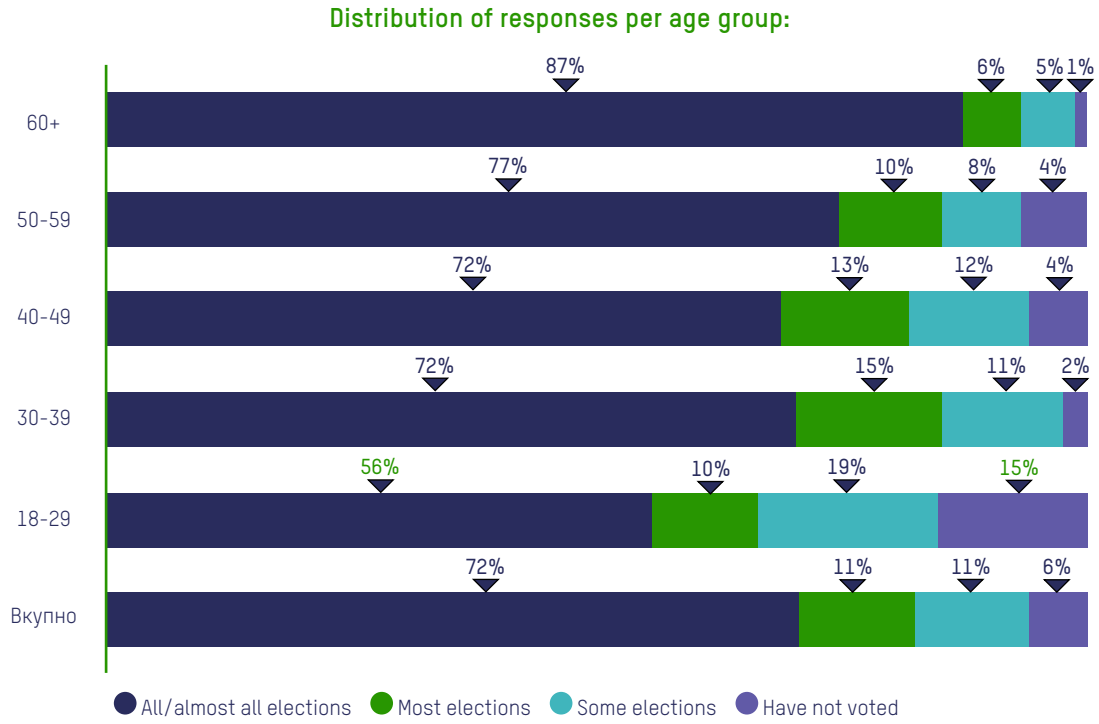
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)



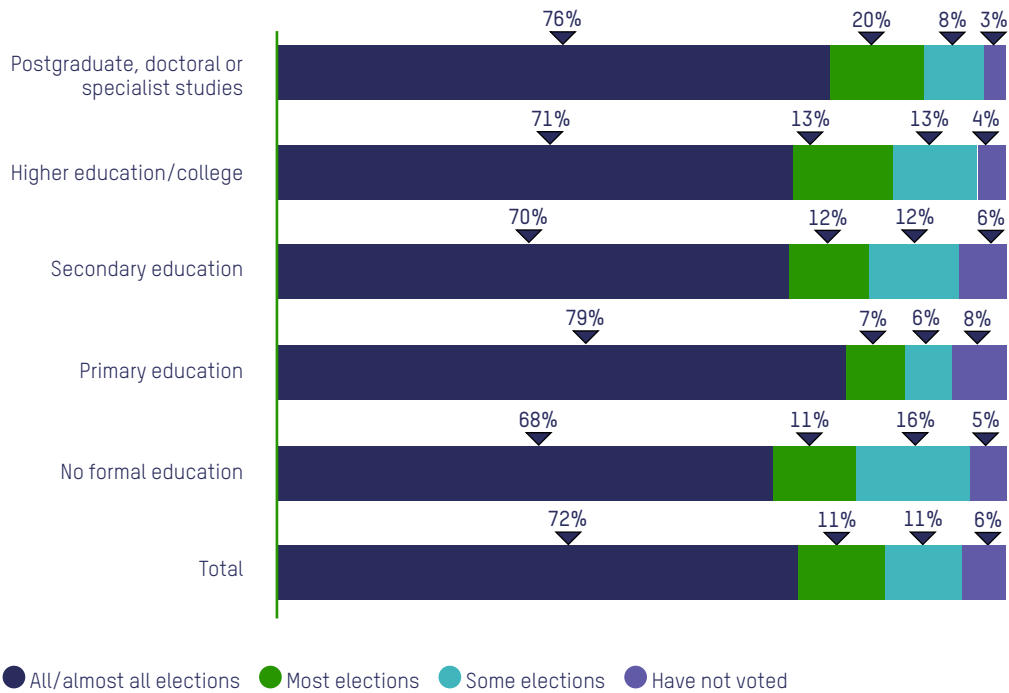
Database: general population survey, responses "most or some elections" (n=277) (22% of all respondents)

Chart 19.1 Q:

After being entitled to universal suffrage, how often have you voted on elections?



Distribution of responses per education background:

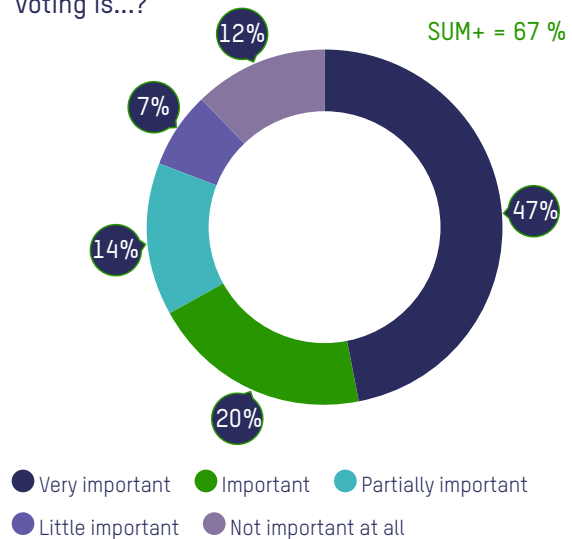


Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

No significant differences are observed in regard to conventional civic engagement based on various socio-demographic profiles of respondents, except for expected variations in behaviour that are closely linked to their age group. Notably, the share of respondents who have never voted is highest among young populations (aged 18 to 29 years) as indicated by 15% of this cohort. At the same time, this population rarely turns out at elections compared to other citizens (56%), unlike the eldest cohort of citizens (aged 60+ years) which is marked by highest regularity in voting on elections – 87% of them reported they have turned out to vote on all elections. Differences in responses according to respondents' education background do not show significant distortions.¹³

For nearly two-thirds of citizens (67%) voting is important or very important and there are no significant changes in respondents' attitudes compared to survey findings in the period 2012-2016 (under previous surveys, on average, around 68% indicated this response).

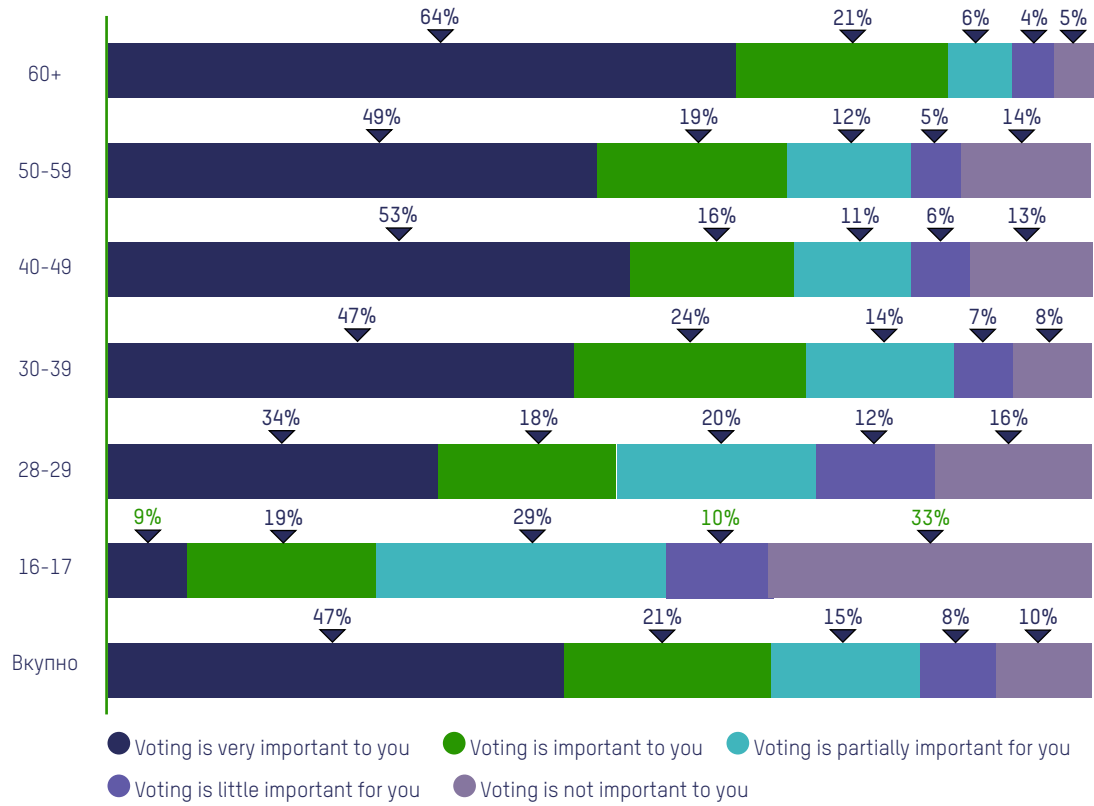
Chart 20. Q:
For YOU PERSONALLY, how important is voting on elections (irrespective of the fact whether you are entitled to universal suffrage)? Would you say that voting is...?



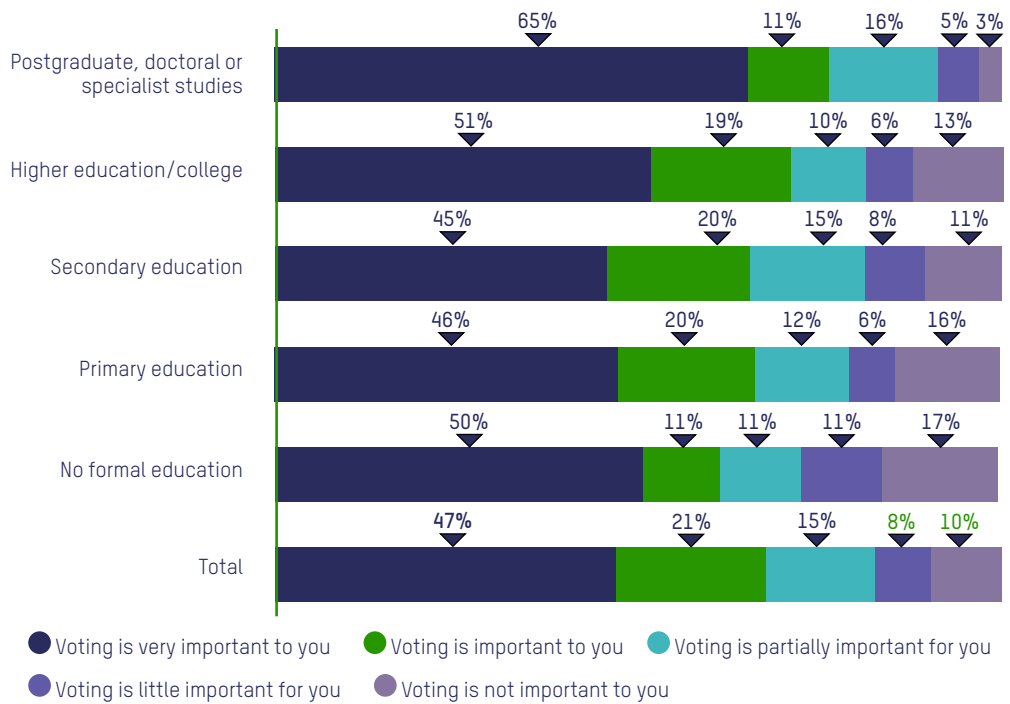
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

¹³ Some shares presented here are based on very small number of responses and imply a greater likelihood for statistical errors, whereby they should not be taken as precise (this concerns two cohorts of citizens: without formal education (n=19) and with completed postgraduate studies (n=37)).

Distribution of responses per age group

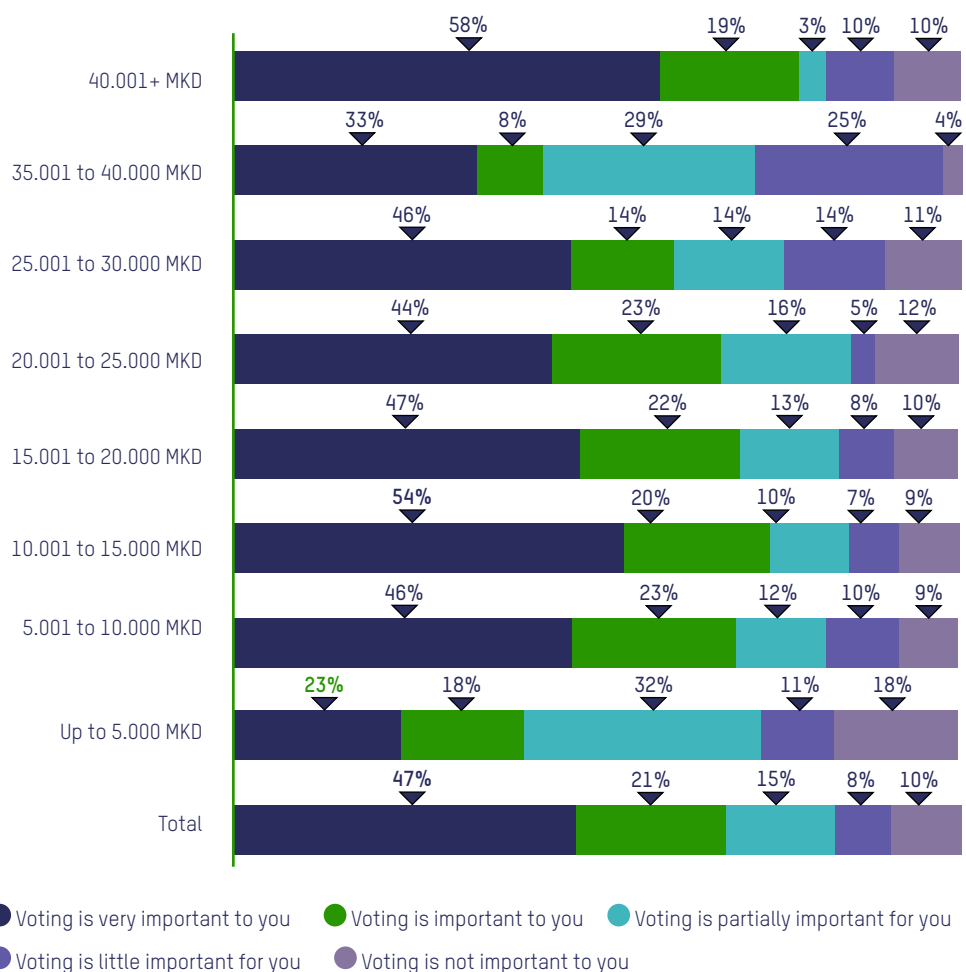


Distribution of responses per education background



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Distribution of responses per monthly income



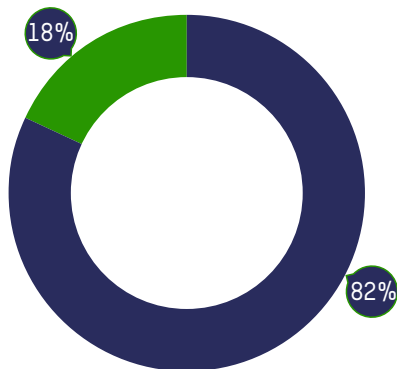
Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

4. EU AND THE CITIZENS

Vast majority of citizens (82%) believe they are informed about the EU accession negotiations process, but the level of information is significantly lower among young people aged 16 to 19 years (62%).

Chart 21. Q:

Do you know whether our country has started accession negotiations with the EU?



Young people aged 16 to 19 years:

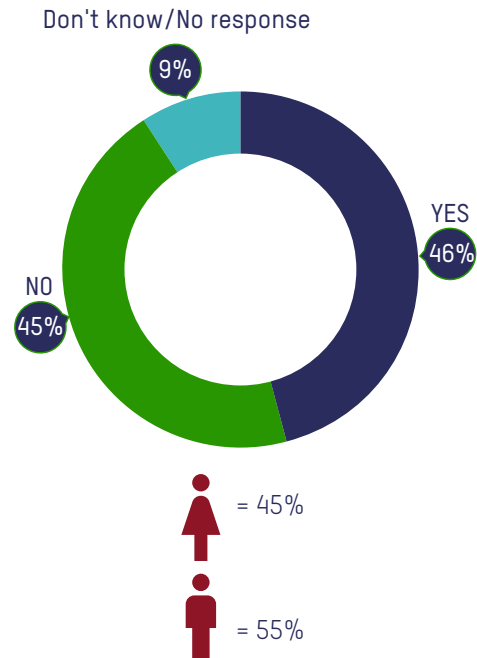
YES = 62%
NO = 32%

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Half of citizens indicated ability to make own contribution in the EU negotiations and accession process and would join these processes. Willingness for involvement in these processes increases in proportion to respondents' higher level of education (78% among respondents with completed higher education, 29% among those without formal education), with the share of respondents who would join these processes being slightly higher among men.

Chart 22. Q:

Would you personally join and would you make own contribution to the EU negotiations and accession process?

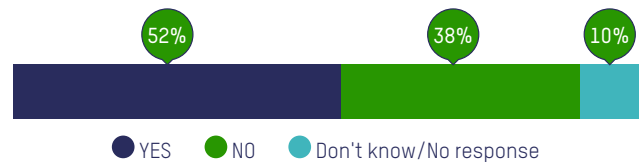


(Distribution of affirmative responses per gender)

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Chart 23. Q:

(...) do you believe citizens are able to make own contribution in the EU negotiations and accession process?

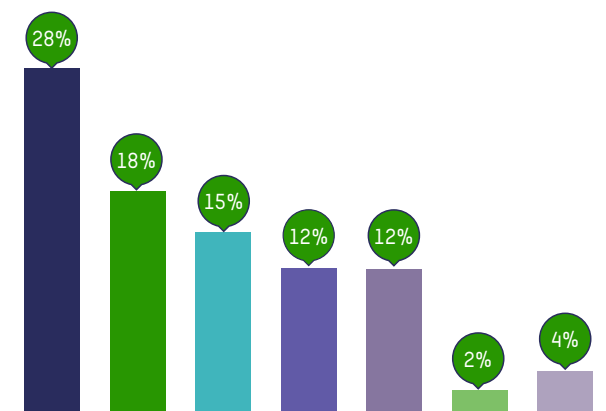


Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

According to respondents who believe that citizens are able to make own contribution in the EU negotiations and accession process (52% of all respondents), individual citizens could join these processes through participation in public debates on topics related to EU negotiations

(as indicated by 28% of this cohort) or through communication with Members of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia (18%). A smaller share of this cohort believes involvement could be pursued through direct communication with political parties (15%), non-governmental organizations or electronic communication with institutions (each accounting for 11% of responses).

Chart 24. Q:
In your opinion, how could citizens join these processes?

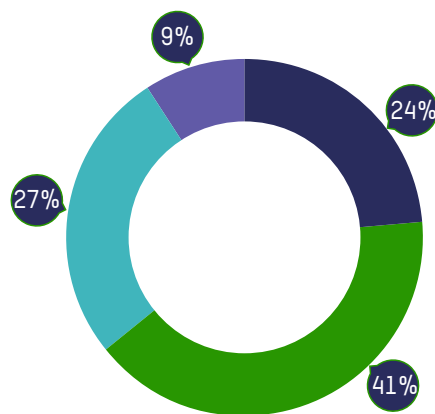


- Participation in public debates on topics related to the EU negotiations
- Communication with Members of the Parliament of RNM
- Direct communication with political parties
- Non-governmental organizations
- Making own contribution via electronic communication with institutions
- Other
- Don't know/No response

Database: general population survey, affirmative responses (n=672) (52% of all responses)

Every fourth citizen believes that the EU negotiations process would significantly improve life of citizens in our country, while around 41% indicated it would somewhat improve life. Remaining respondents are sceptical that this could happen (27%) or have not formed an opinion on this matter (9%).

Chart 25. Q:
Do you believe that the EU negotiation process will improve life of citizens in our country?



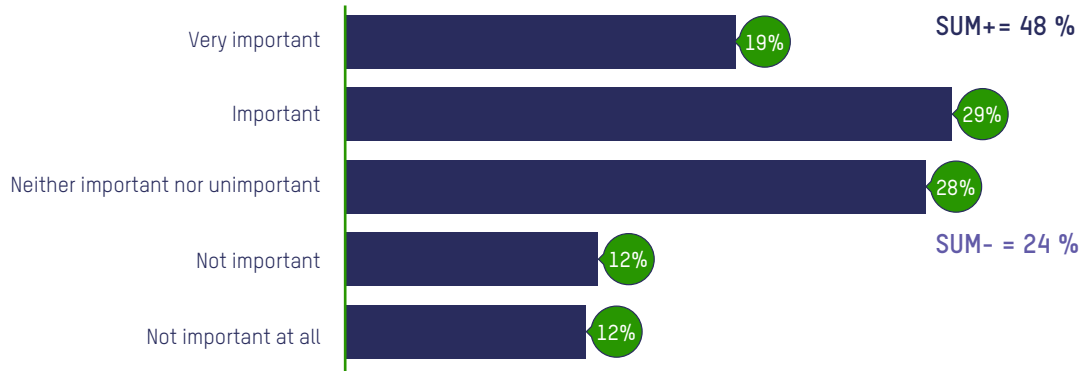
- Yes. It would significantly improve life
- Yes. It would somewhat improve life
- No. It would not improve life
- Don't know/No response

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

The share of citizens who indicated that EU membership is important or very important to them (48%) is higher than the share of those who indicated no importance or no importance at all (24%). Less than one-third of citizens (28%) have not formed an opinion on this matter. In that, it could be noted that lowest importance to EU membership (chart with mean values/scores) was most commonly reported by the youngest group of respondents (aged 16 to 19 years). Compared against responses obtained on previous questions, it could be noted that the youngest group of respondents is also the least informed about the EU and the country's accession negotiations process, and therefore this could also imply the need to work on education and raising awareness among this population.

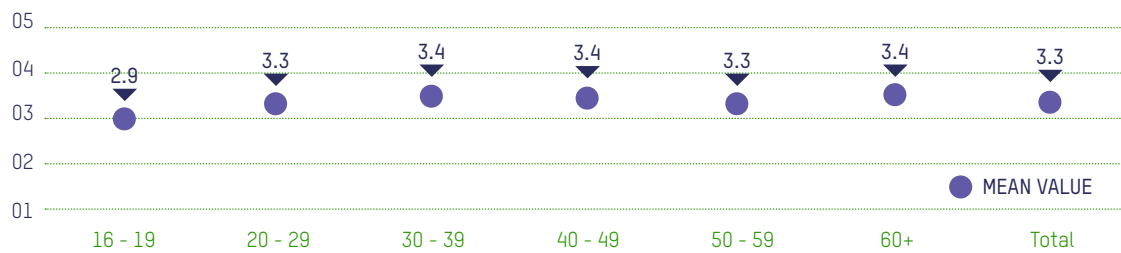
Chart 26. Q:

How important is EU membership for you personally, indicate a score on the scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not important at all and 5 means very important?



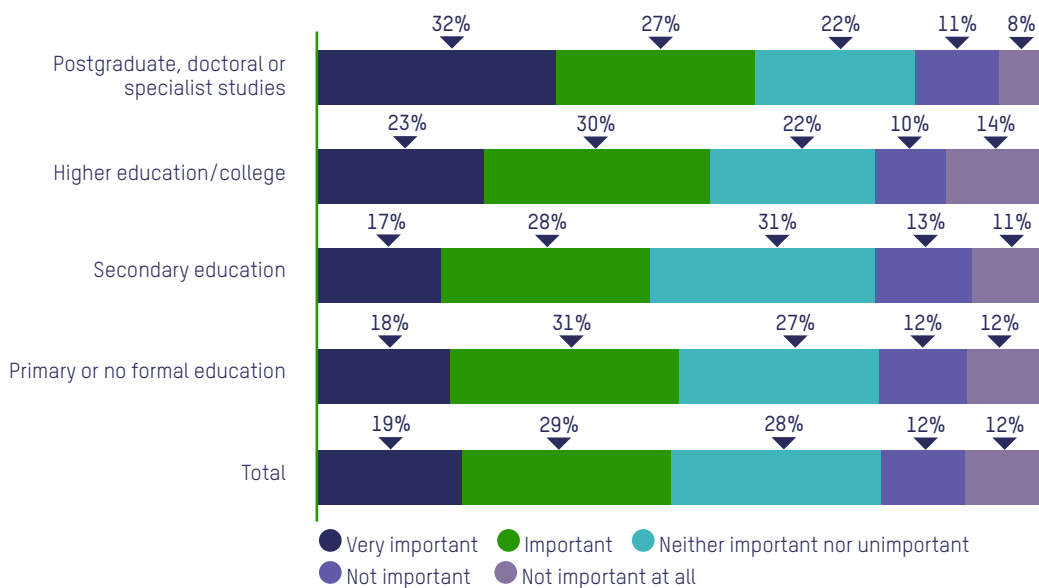
Database: general population survey, all responses (n =1300)

Importance of EU membership, distribution of responses per age group
(mean value of scores assigned)

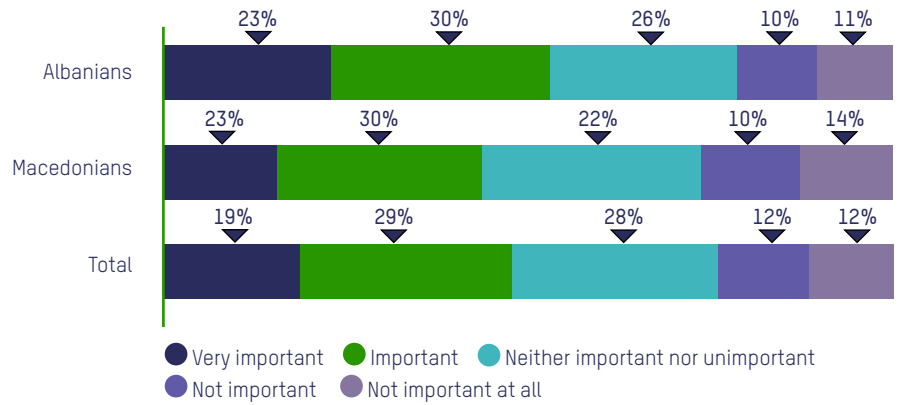


Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

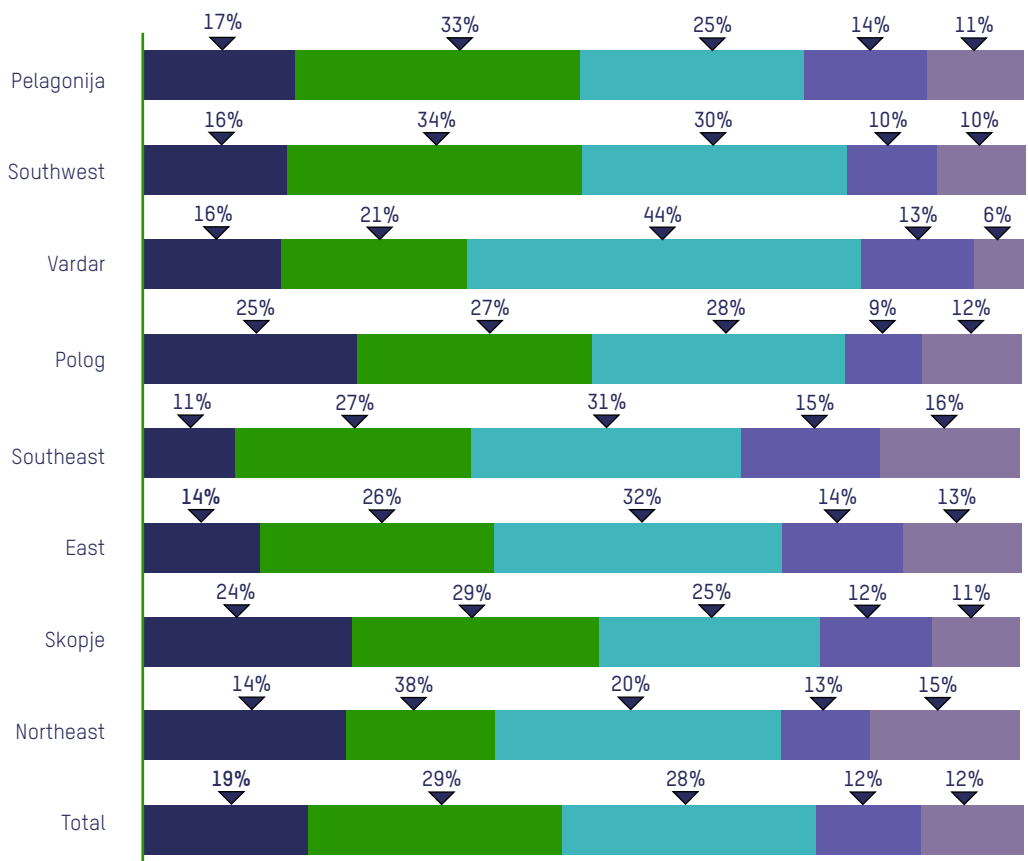
Importance of EU membership, distribution of responses per education background



Importance of EU membership, distribution of responses per ethnicity



Importance of EU membership, distribution of responses per region



Analysis of responses against basic demographic variables, as shown in the charts above, provides the conclusion that EU membership is slightly more important to citizens with completed higher education and to ethnic Albanians. Additionally, it could be also inferred that citizens from the East and Vardar regions are slightly less interested in EU membership unlike other respondents who indicated more positive views in this regard and more frequently reported that EU membership is important to them.

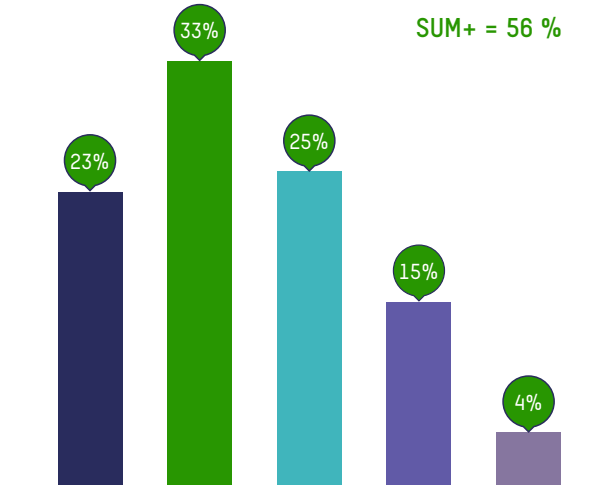
As regards basic demographic characteristics of survey respondents, the entire block of questions related to the European Union is marked by trends similar to those presented above, i.e. there is a mild curve indicating slightly higher disposition towards the EU among ethnic Albanians, citizens with completed higher education and residents in the Skopje and Polog regions. Nevertheless, trends observed in regard to these responses are not characterized by any significant deviations in terms of various demographic or socio-economic characteristics in order to be individually shown for other questions in this section.¹⁴

Attitudes vary in respect to the question whether EU membership could affect quality of life in the Republic of North Macedonia, but it could be said that positive trends are more prominent in this regard. Notably, more than half of respondents (56%) believe the country would become a better place for living after it joins the European Union, while 26% are not sure that something would change, and 15% are convinced that EU membership would not improve the country as place for living.

¹⁴ In the case of all other demographic characteristics, differences are even smaller and fall within the margins of statistical error, or simply do not produce deviations from distribution of responses calculated for the total survey population.

Chart 27. Q:

Do you believe that the country would become a better place for living after it joins the European Union?

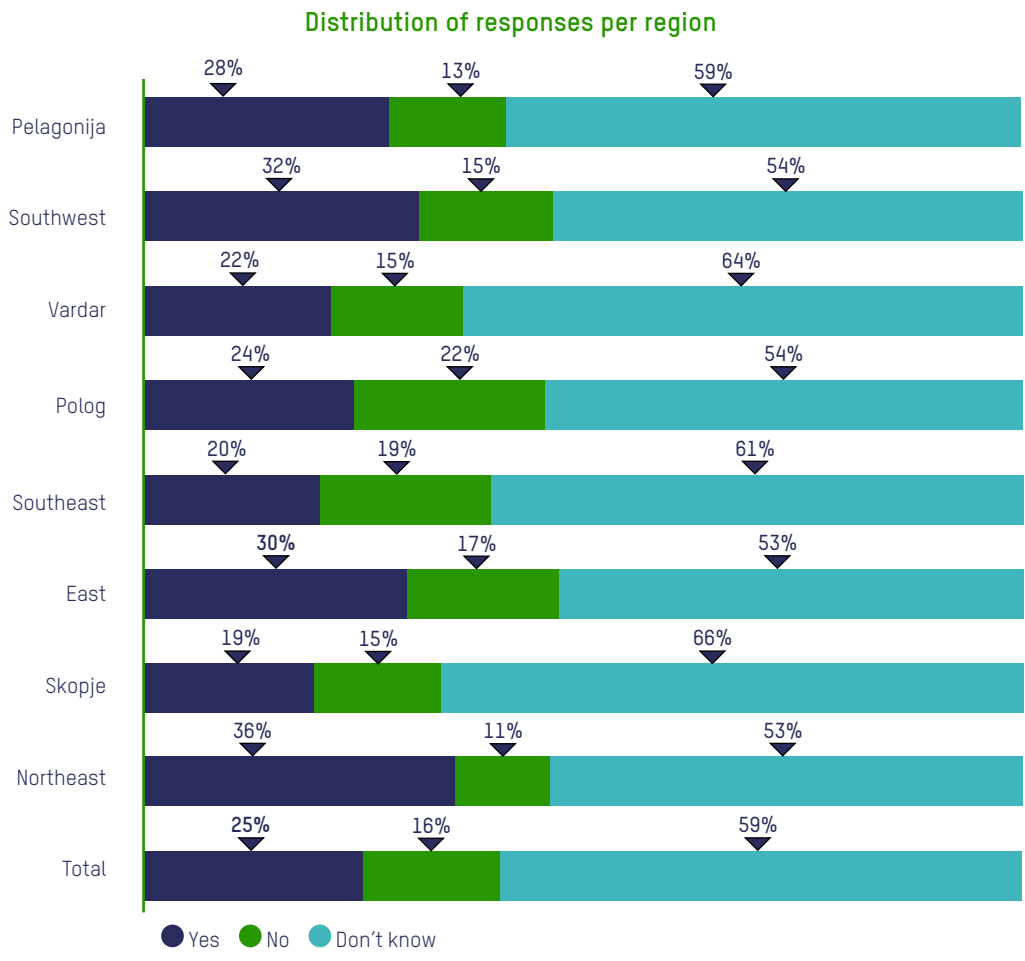


- Yes. It would certainly become better place for living
- Yes. It would probably become better place for living
- Not sure. Probably it won't become better place for living
- No. It won't become better place for living
- Don't know/No response

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Large portion of respondents (59%) do not know whether EU-financed projects are implemented in their municipality, while every fourth citizen affirmed that such projects are implemented in their municipality. These responses show a similar trend in all eight regions, with minor variations in terms of citizens' level of information (Chart 28). In that, men more often claim they are informed compared to women (affirmative responses by 30% of men versus 20% of women).

Chart 28. Q:
Are there EU-financed projects in your municipality?

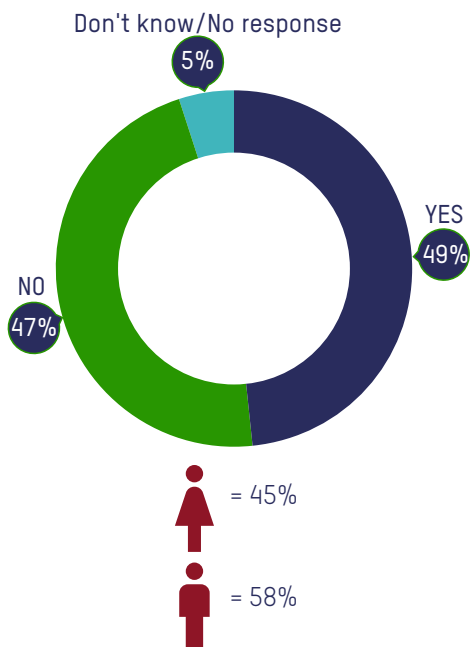


Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Moreover, the share of informed respondents is proportionally increasing with their age group, i.e. younger respondents are rarely informed about EU-financed projects and similar issues of interests, accounting for the highest share of “don't know” responses (66%). Similar trend is observed in terms of respondents' educa-

tion background, whereby those with completed higher education are more informed, accounting for the lowest share of “don't know” responses (around 50%). However, these variations are minor and generally it could be concluded that around half of citizens are not informed about this type of events in their municipalities.

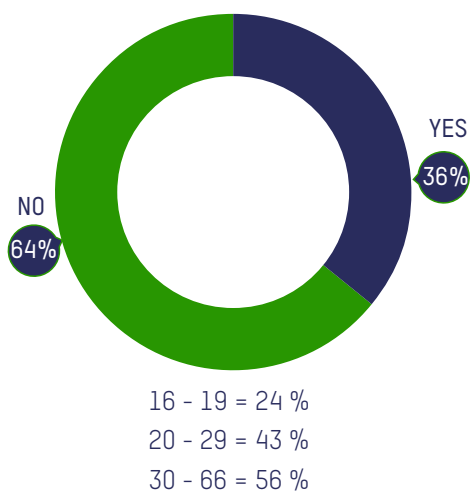
Chart 29. Q:
Have you heard about the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)?



(distribution of affirmative responses per gender)

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Chart 30. Q:
Do you know that the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) allows funding opportunities for priorities in your local community?



(distribution of affirmative responses per age group)

Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

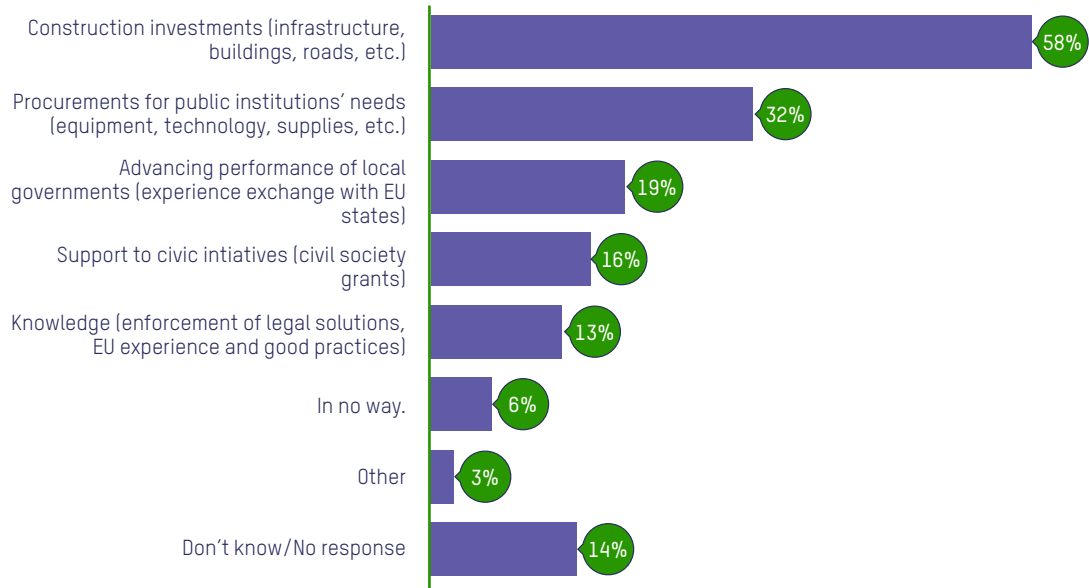
More than half of citizens (57%) have heard of the European Union's financial support mechanisms and the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance popularly known as IPA (51%), but much lower share of them (36%) also know that the EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance allows funding opportunities for priorities in their local communities. Women and young people (aged 16 to 19 years) are less informed about IPA and IPA opportunities for local communities unlike other respondents.

More than half of citizens (58%) believe that EU funds could assist their municipality in terms of construction investments (infrastructure, buildings, roads, etc.), while around one-third (31%) believe these funds could advance their municipality through procurements to address needs of local public institutions (equipment, technology, supplies, etc.). Almost every fifth citizens said that EU funds could improve performance of local governments by means of experience exchanges with European states.

Citizens' assumptions about the date when our country will join the European Union are variable – great portion of them expect the Republic of North Macedonia to become member of the EU in 2030 (19%), while every seventh citizen (14%) expects this to happen in 2025. Around one-third of citizens (30%) does not know or refused to answer this question. Remaining respondents either answered this question by indicating a date in the period from 2026 to 2029 or shared pessimistic attitudes and do not expect such event to happen before 2031, and 11% of them believe that this would never happen. A small portion of citizens (8%) are very optimistic and expect the Republic of North Macedonia to become member of the EU by 2025. (The mean value from all responses obtained is the year 2031.)

Chart 31. Q:

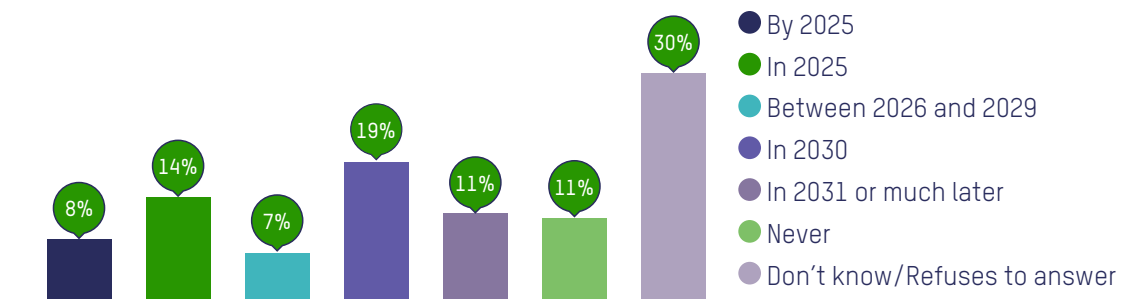
How can EU funds assist to improve your municipality?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

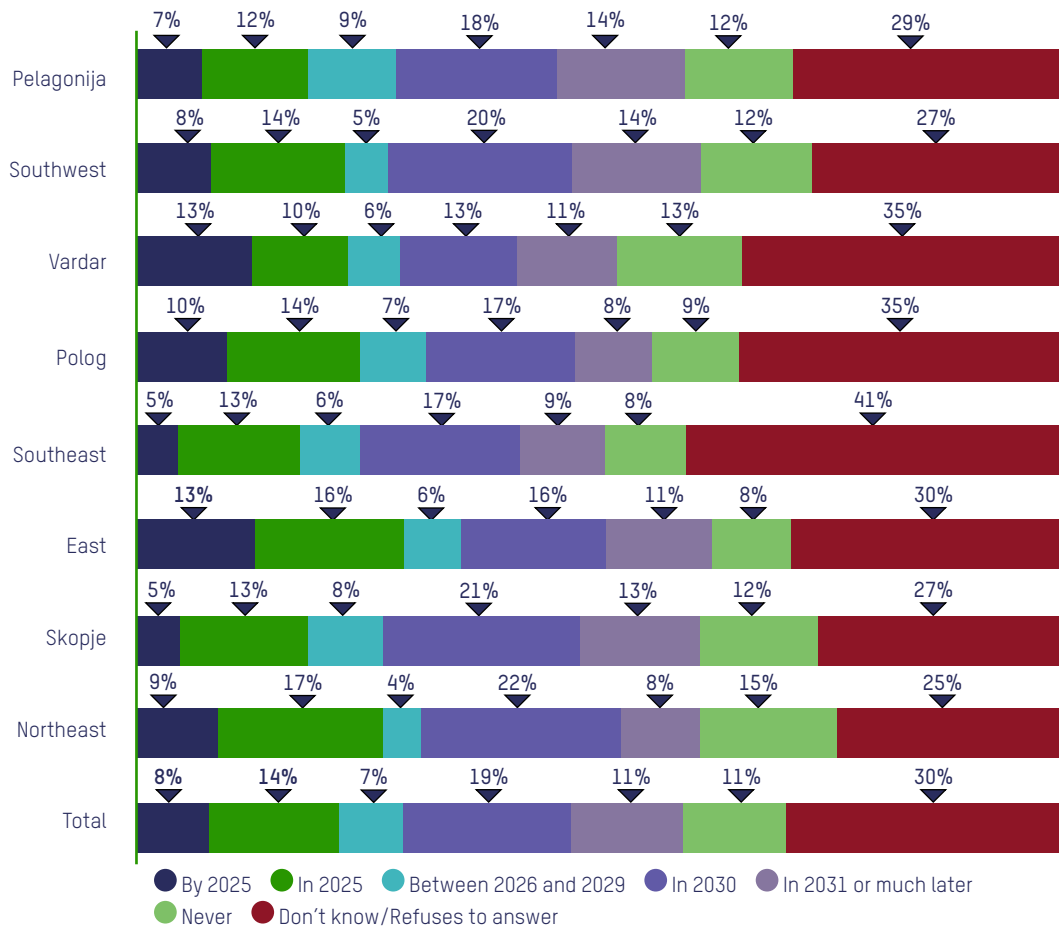
Chart 32. Q:

In your opinion, when will our country become member of the European Union?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Distribution of responses per region



4.1. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EU PERSPECTIVES

Citizens who expressed greater satisfaction with their place of residence and with the Republic of North Macedonia as country also shared more positive attitudes in respect to the EU negotiations process and expectations therefrom. In particular, those who are very

satisfied with their place or country of residence often have great expectations from the EU negotiations process, i.e. more frequently indicated that this process would significantly improve life in our country (44% versus 26% at the level of the total survey population).

Chart 33.1.

Cross-tabulation of responses on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with North Macedonia as country of residence and whether the EU negotiations process would improve their life and life of citizens in the country

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE EU VERSUS SATISFACTION WITH THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE		How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with North Macedonia as country of residence?				Total population
		Very satisfied	Partially satisfied	Little satisfied	Not satisfied at all	
In your opinion, will the EU negotiations process improve your life and life of citizens in our country?	No, it would not improve life	20 %	23 %	32 %	45 %	30 %
	Yes, it would somewhat improve life	36 %	52 %	46 %	38 %	44 %
	Yes, it will significantly improve life	44 %	25 %	22 %	17 %	26 %
N =		219	406	310	249	1.184
		100 %				

A similar trend is observed among citizens who have reported participation in organized initiatives for improving their town/village or the Republic of North Macedonia, whereby higher

share of them indicated positive expectations from the EU negotiations process unlike citizens who have not participated in any initiative (40% versus 26% at the level of the total survey population).

Chart 33.2

Cross-tabulation of responses on participation in organized initiatives for improving their town/village or RNM in the period Jan. 2019-Jan. 2020 and whether the EU negotiations process would improve their life and life of citizens in the country.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE EU VERSUS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:		In the period January 2019 – January 2020, have you participated in any organized initiative for improving your town/village or RNM?		Total population
		Yes	No	
In your opinion, will the EU negotiations process improve your life and life of citizens in our country?	No, it would not improve life	20 %	32 %	30 %
	Yes, it would somewhat improve life	40 %	46 %	44 %
	Yes, it would significantly improve life	40 %	22 %	26 %
N =		244	938	1.182
		100 %		

No significant connections are noted in respect to other correlations which could be interpreted as important for formation of citizens' attitudes about the country's EU perspectives, except for already elaborated socio-economic and demographic characteristics and differences related thereto.

Small variations are noted in responses to questions, for example, inquiring where do citizens see themselves in five years (chart below), but they are not sufficiently significant to be confirmed as such, while in the case of many subgroups the total number of responses/incidences per unit is insufficient to allow statistically meaningful conclusions (i.e. greater possibility for statistical errors in calculated shares on the basis of small number of responses/incidences).

Chart 33.3

Cross-tabulation of responses about where do citizens see themselves in five years and whether the EU negotiations process would improve their life and life of citizens in the country.

		Where do you see yourself after five years?					Total population
		Current place of residence	Emigrated to rural environment within the state (village)	Emigrated to another town different from Skopje	Emigrated to Skopje	Emigrated abroad	
In your opinion, will the EU negotiations process improve your life and life of citizens in our country?	No, it would not improve life	28 %	33 %	25 %	22 %	39 %	30 %
	Yes, it would somewhat improve life	44 %	30 %	41 %	60 %	43 %	44 %
	Yes, it would significantly improve life	28 %	37 %	34 %	17 %	18 %	26 %
	N =	817	30	44	63	196	1.150
		100 %					

5. COVID-19 AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

5.1. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS-GENERAL POPULATION

Almost all citizens claim they are in line with current developments caused by the Covid-19 crisis, i.e. high 99% said they are familiar with health protection measures, and almost same share of citizens (98%) indicated compliance with such measures. No significant differences are observed in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics in responses obtained on this question.

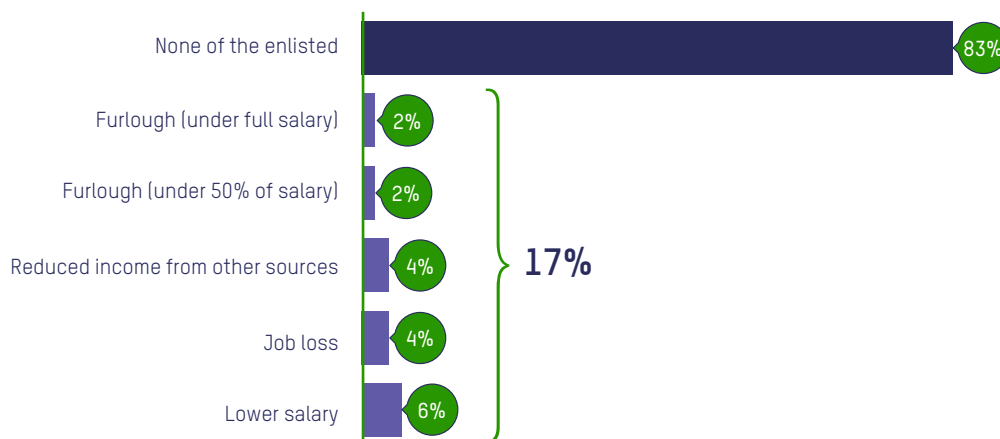
Slightly less than half of respondents (45%) know somebody who was infected with the coronavirus (most often these include close friends and acquaintances). In that, the share of those who know somebody that was infected with the coronavirus is lower among the eldest population, i.e. respondents aged above 60 years (29%) and among respondents who live in rural areas (37% versus 50% among urban residents).

Consequences of the crisis (job loss, lower salary, and furlough) were felt by 17% of citizens and generally the most affected cohort are citizens aged 20 to 29 years, where almost every fourth respondent (24%) was affected by the crisis.

It should be noted that 65% of citizens reported their civic engagement has remained the

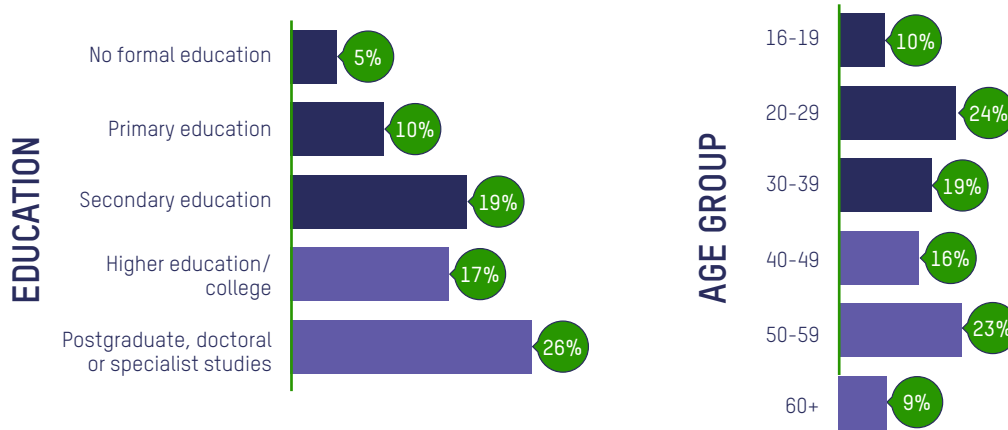
Chart 34 Q:

Has any of the below-enlisted happened to you since the start of the COVID-19 crisis?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Distribution of responses per education background and per age group (sum of those who indicated that something had happened to them)

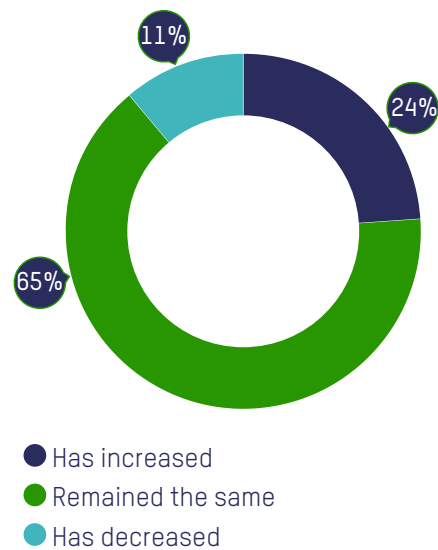


Database: general population survey, responses that something has happened (n=373) (17% of all respondents)

same during the COVID-19 crisis, while every fourth citizen believes their engagement has increased. Reported behaviours do not show any significant differences in terms of basic socio-economic or demographic characteristics, except for some minor variations. For example, 27% of women reported increased engagement during the COVID-19 crisis compared to 22% of men (however, this difference has no statistical significance). Moreover, greater differences are observed according to respondents' personal income, i.e. those who reported monthly income in the amount above 40,000 MKD more often indicated greater engagement (70% of this cohort), but the share of these respondents in the total survey population is very low for this statement to be confirmed as general finding (n=20). Another difference is noted in terms of respondents' education background, i.e. citizens with higher level of education more often indicated greater civic engagement during the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁵ Almost every fifth respondent (19%) has joined efforts to help in dealing with the crisis beyond

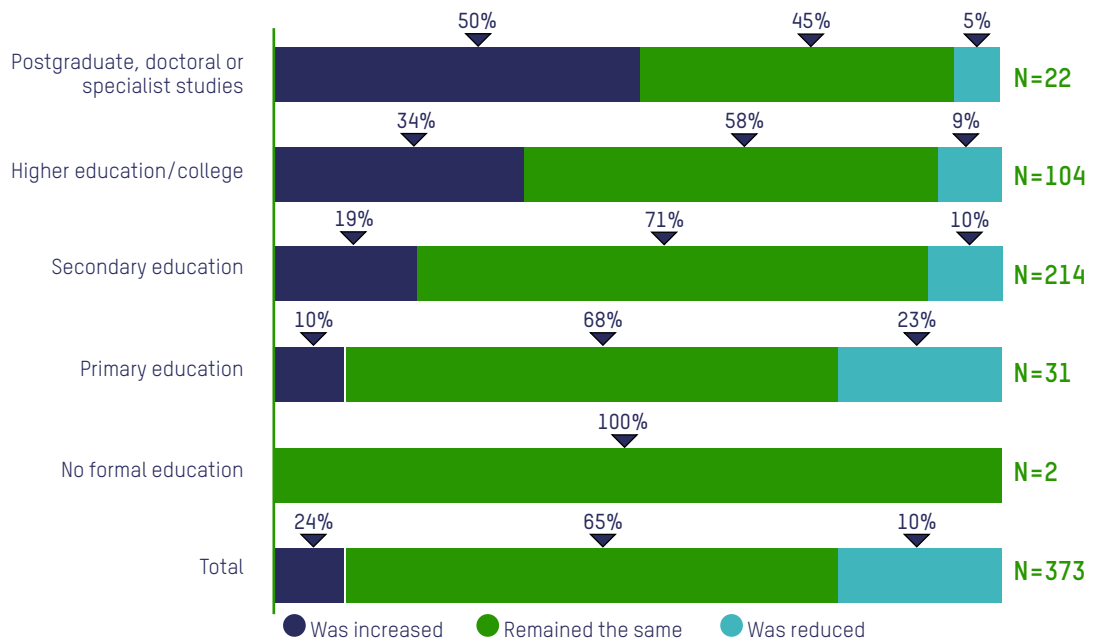
¹⁵ However, these shares are based on small number of responses (n=373) from the total number of respondents who previously reported civic engagement.

Chart 35. Q: During the COVID-19 crisis, your civic engagement:



their regular jobs. In that, young citizens more often offered help in dealing with the crisis compared to other respondents, i.e. assistance was most often provided by the youngest population aged 16 to 19 years (45%), followed by those aged 20 to 29 years (29%).

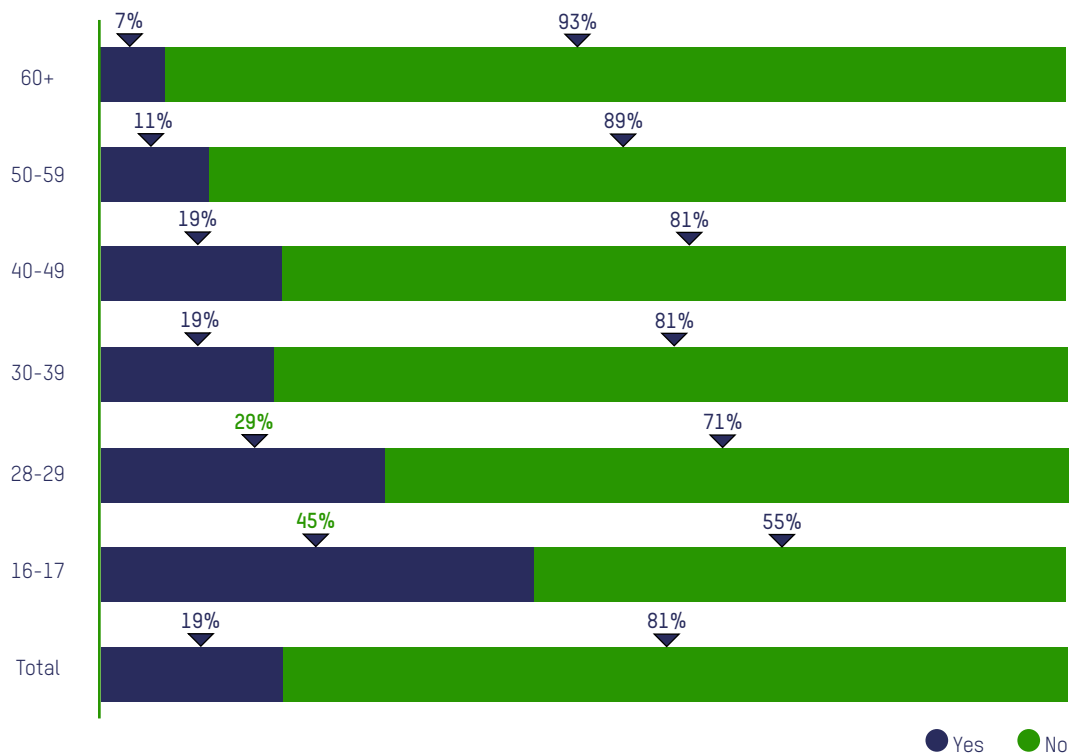
Distribution of responses per education background



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Chart 36 Q:

Have you offered any help in dealing with the crisis, beyond your regular job or helped any members of your family?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

Most frequently indicated form of help concerns purchase of supplies for neighbours and other people infected with the coronavirus or support to persons who are unable to leave their homes.

Main reasons indicated by respondents who did not offer help overlap with reasons indicated

for non-involvement in civic initiatives in general (lack of time, lack of opportunities, etc.), while the only difference in this case concerns additional reference to fear from infection as relevant concern for non-engagement (indicated by 13% of respondents).

Chart 37. Q:

How did you help during the COVID-19 crisis?

HOW DID YOU HELP?*	Count (N)	Total %
Purchase of supplies for neighbours and other persons infected with the coronavirus	84	34 %
Support to people who are unable to leave their homes	78	31 %
Local humanitarian actions	46	18 %
Participation/support to actions organized by the Scouts/the Red Cross or other CSOs	33	13 %
Coordination of donor actions with other citizens	24	10 %
Participation in municipal working bodies tasked to deal with the pandemic	17	7%
Donation of funds to the government's account designated for managing the crisis caused by the pandemic	8	3 %
Donations to other initiatives by institutions (e.g., food packages organized by the President of State)	8	3%
Individual actions (e.g. sewing protective masks)	6	2%
Refuses to answer	5	2%

**these shares concern citizens who have reported civic engagement (n=249) (19% of the total survey population)*

As regards crisis relief measures, the most utilized relief measure concerns payment card for purchase of domestic goods, as indicated by every fifth respondent. However, vast majority of citizens **(72%) reported they have not personally benefited from relief measures adopted by the Government of RNM.**

Only 3% confirmed they have received support or assistance from civil society organizations, and here **it should be noted that the share of young people aged 16 to 19 years benefiting from support by CSOs has increased to 13%.** In that, some variations are noted in respect to the type of assistance, but due to the small number of responses these differences cannot be taken into account as significant.

How do citizens assess performance of competent institutions during the covid-19 crisis

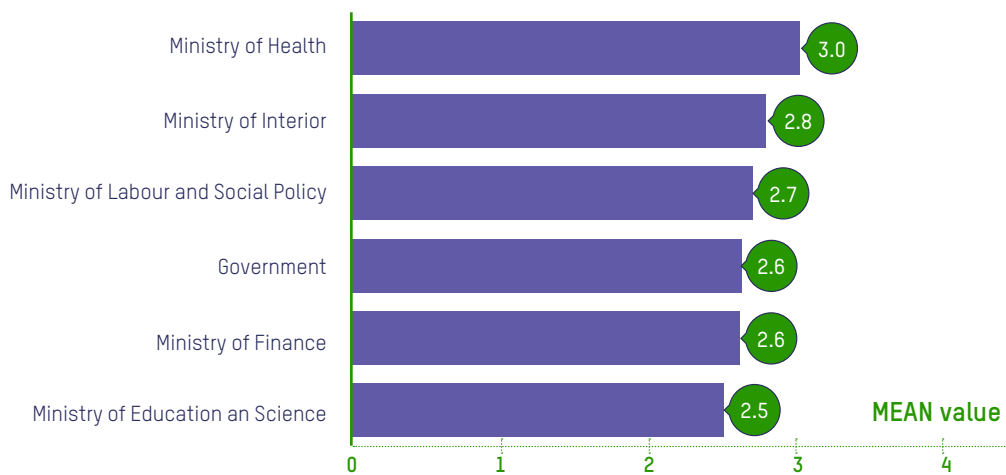
In the end, citizens were asked to assign an overall score to performance by competent institutions in managing the crisis caused by COVID-19, on the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means poor and 5 means excellent. Almost all line ministries subject to performance assessment and the government were assigned different average scores (mean values) with minor variations in respect to individual ministries. In particular, the Ministry of Health was assigned the highest average score (3), while the Ministry of Education and Science was given the lowest average score (2.5).¹⁶

5.2. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – CIVIL SOCIETY (BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19)

The civil society questionnaire aims at measuring perceptions of civil society organizations, including chambers of commerce and trade unions in the country, in respect to their participation in policy-making before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having in mind that the COVID-19 crisis was already underway at the time of data collection, key methodology limitation concerned recollection of events before the crisis. In particular, organizations had to recollect their activities in the course of 2019, which could have affected precision and comprehensiveness of their responses.

Chart 38 Q:

How would you assess performance of state institutions in managing problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?



Database: general population survey, all responses (n=1300)

¹⁶ In the case of comparisons among mean values (scores), even the smallest differences that appear at the level of decimals are significant.

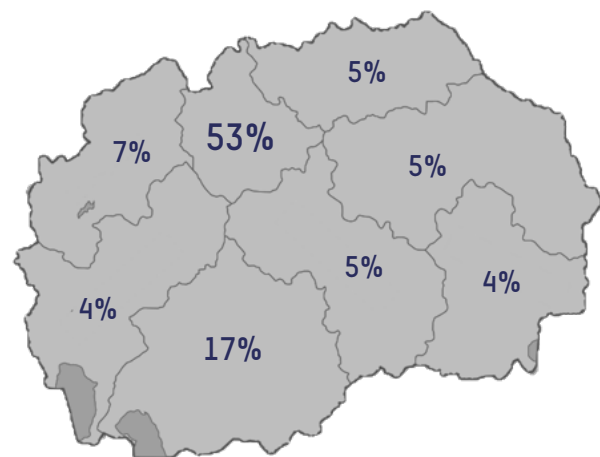
5.2.1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE CIVIL SOCIETY SURVEY SAMPLE

As regards this survey sample, 85% of responses were provided by citizens' associations. Next in frequency are foundations, accounting for 5%, followed by civil society coalitions (3%), alliances (3%), and finally chambers and trade unions, each accounting for 2% in the survey sample.

On the question inquiring about their primary office, which allowed establishment of regional distribution among surveyed organizations, the highest share responded they are based in the Skopje region (53%), followed by organizations based in Pelagonija (17%), Polog (7%), Vardar and East regions (each accounting for 5%), and finally Northeast, Southwest and Southeast regions, each represented with 4%. This shows a certain domination of organizations whose primary office is located in Skopje. However, in the absence of official information on all forms of registered associations, it remains unclear whether this distribution reflects the actual situation and whether it is representative of different forms of organizations in all regions across the country.¹⁷

Chart 39. Q:
What is the location of your organization's primary office?

Distribution of surveyed organizations per region



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Almost half of surveyed organizations reported activity at national level, i.e. their activities are implemented everywhere in the state. The lowest share of organizations reported activity at broader regional level, i.e. the Balkan, accounting for only 8% of the survey sample. Moreover, around 14% operate at international level, i.e. within the European continent and/or beyond. This shows that the survey sample, and thereby the civil society in our country, is mainly focused on work within the country, region or local municipality. Nearly 20% of organizations reported operation at the level of their narrow geographical region, while 11% are active at the level of their municipality.

¹⁷ "2016 CSO Sustainability Index - Macedonia", USAID, available at: https://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/11-2b-USAID-CSOSI-2016-Macedonia_mk_FINAL.pdf, where it is indicated that, as of December 2015, there are 14,245 registered CSOs, but only 4,148 of these have submitted annual accounts or financial statements.

Chart 40. Q:
At which level does your organization operate?

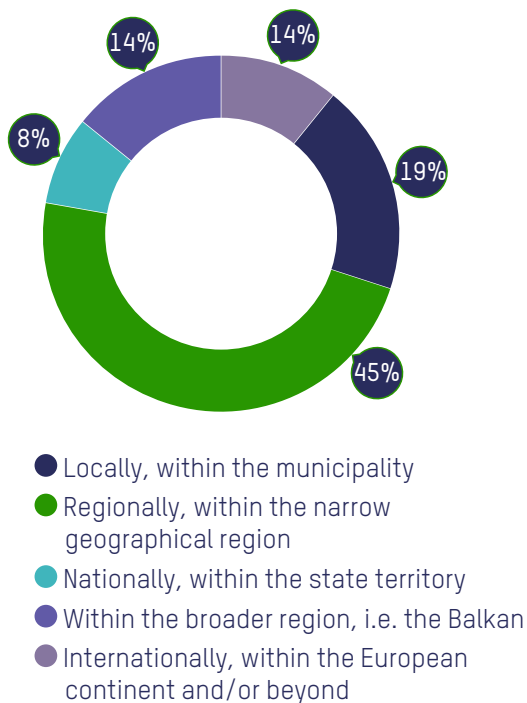
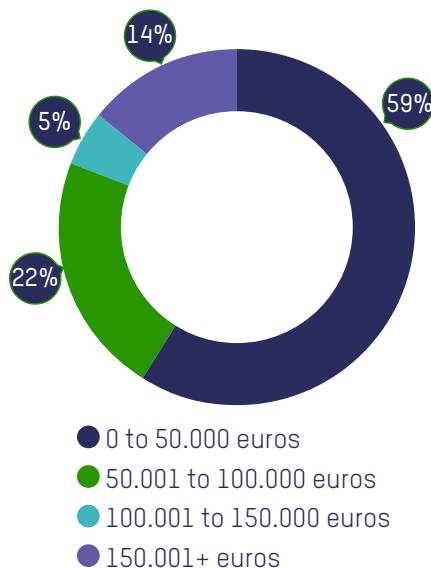


Chart 41. Q:
In approximate amount, what was your organization's 2019 budget?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Having in mind that data collection took place before the end of 2020, surveyed forms of civil organizations were asked to indicate their 2019 budget as the reference budget year. Slightly more than half reported 2019 budget funds in the range from 0 to 50,000 euros. One-quarter of them reported annual budget in the amount of 50,001 to 100,000 euros. Such distribution of responses shows significant difference in finances of civil society organizations and, consequently, significant difference in their operational capacity.

Moreover, organizations were asked to indicate the number of projects implemented on annual level in the last five years. Slightly less than half of organizations reported they have 0 to 3 projects on annual level, while most of them (31%) have 4 to 6 projects, and 21% reported 7 to 10+ projects implemented on annual level. Such distribution of responses does not surprise, primarily having in mind their responses shown on the previous chart and related to their 2019 budget. Increased number of annual projects implies higher budgets, as shown by correlation analysis of responses provided to these two questions. Notably, the analysis shows that this correlation accounts for $\alpha = .574$, i.e. increased number of projects also means increased funds under their 2019 budgets. This is important to be noted because current distribution of projects/budgets shows that organizations are engaged in project-based operation, i.e. do not raise additional funds for program-based work or do not raise funds from the private sector. On average, civil society organizations covered

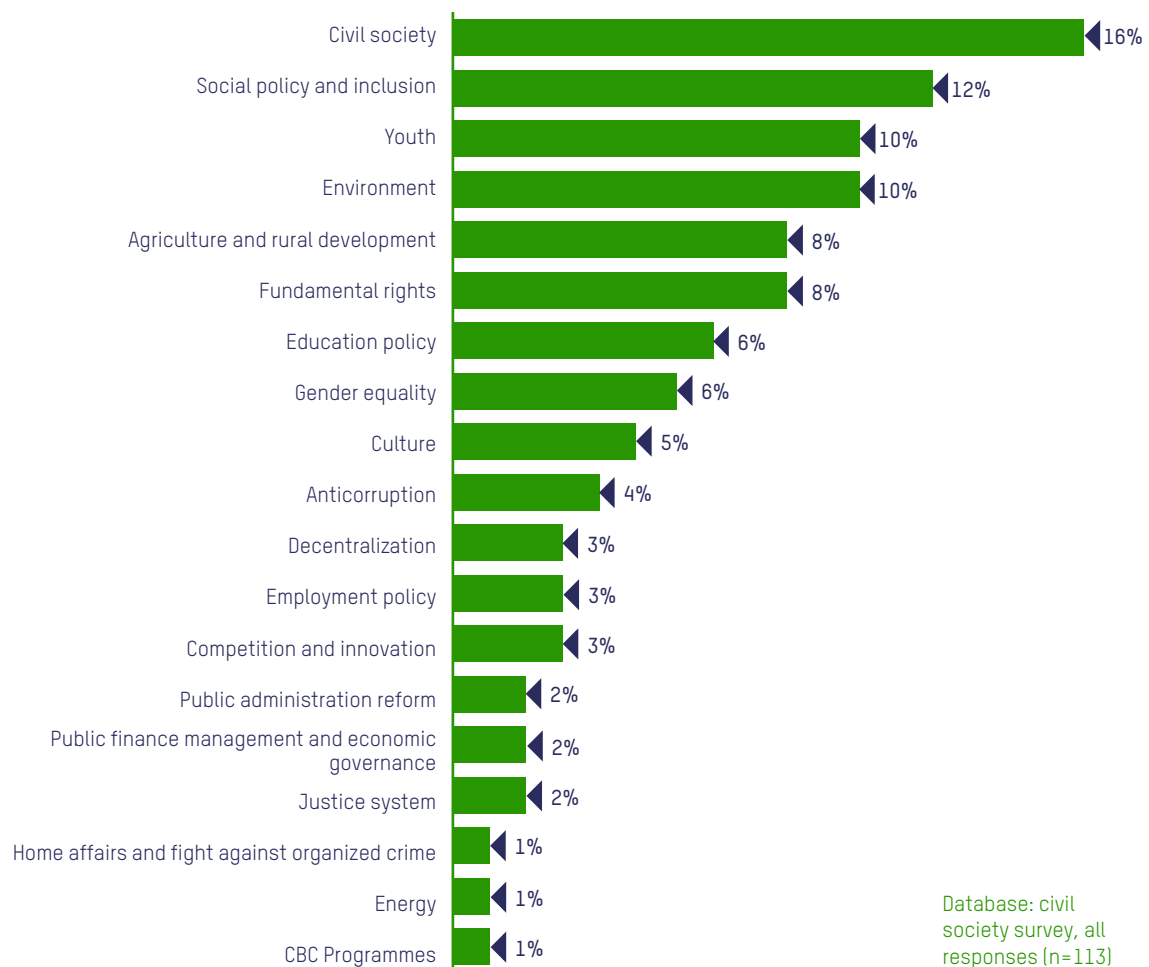
with the survey have 14.2 employees, but 36% of them reported 0 employees under full-time work contracts. Detailed review of data allowed the conclusion that one organization reported as many as 1200 full-time employees, which the research team assessed as error in data input, having in mind that there are no civil society organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia with 1200 employees. When this response is subtracted, the average number of full-time employees is calculated at 3.6 employees per organization.

An additional factor covered under this survey concerns primary activity of organizations that have completed the survey questionnaire and

their membership in networks. This was important primarily for the purpose of establishing the most frequent areas of operation among organizations, and whether networking has positive effect on their participation in policy-making and advocacy for citizens' interests.

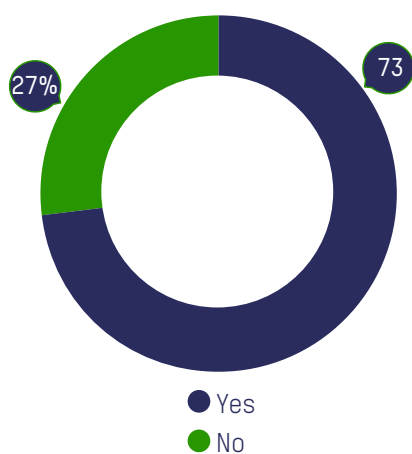
The highest number of organizations covered under this survey primarily work on topics related to the civil society, followed by topics related to social policy and inclusion, environmental protection and youth. Least represented are civil society organizations that work in the field of energy, cross-border cooperation programmes, and topics related to home affairs and fight against organized crime.

Chart 42. Q:
What is your organization's primary activity?



Most often, organizations covered under this survey are members of national networks, as reported by 49.6%. Moreover, 30.1% indicated membership in international networks on the European continent and/or beyond, followed by participation in regional networks at the level of the Balkan, accounting for 22.1%. Significantly lower share of responses indicated

Chart 43. Q: Is your organization member of any network?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

membership in networks at local and regional level, i.e. within their narrow geographic region. In sum, only 13.2% of surveyed organizations participate in this type of networks. As regards regions in which organizations base their work and network participation, there are no significant differences between organizations based in Skopje and those registered in other regions across the country, except for network membership at regional level (the Balkan) and international level. CSOs based outside Skopje more frequently participate in this type of networks, i.e. they account for 10 percentile points more compared to organizations based in the Skopje region.

Having in mind that there is no centralized database on forms of civic organization, it is difficult to confirm whether stratification of organizations in our survey's database reflects

the actual situation. While our survey sample is diverse, it does not guarantee representativeness in terms of all forms of civic organization, and therefore it should be taken only as indicator, and not as rigid fact applicable to all organizations.

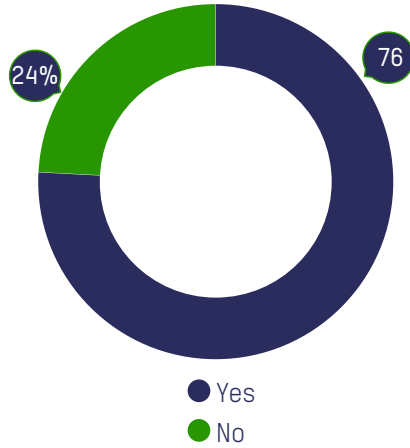
5.2.2. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS BEFORE COVID-19

This section of the survey is focused on the manner in which civil society organizations create and advocate for their policy proposals before state institutions. The segment on policy participation is further divided into several aspects. First, it inquires whether organizations develop own policy proposals and activities for competent state bodies. Second, it attempts to analyse their methods on policy development and whether such action has been a shared effort with other organizations. Third, it establishes advocacy methods used before state bodies, and fourth, it inquires about perceptions and utilization of already established civil society participation mechanisms. Time period taken into consideration as baseline for measuring advocacy efforts includes 2018 and 2019. This allowed the research team to measure whether the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 had impacted advocacy efforts of civil society entities.

The first question inquired whether civil society organizations have developed policy proposals and activities in the period 2018-2019. More than three-quarters of them reported they have developed policy proposals and activities in the analysed period. Equal share of organizations also reported direct advocacy for their proposals. **It is interesting to note that there is a positive correlation between development of policy activities and membership in civil society networks (.274). More specifically, network membership and participation have a significant impact in terms of organizations' work on developing policy proposals and activities.**

Chart 44. Q:

In the period 2018-2019, has your organization developed policy proposals and activities?

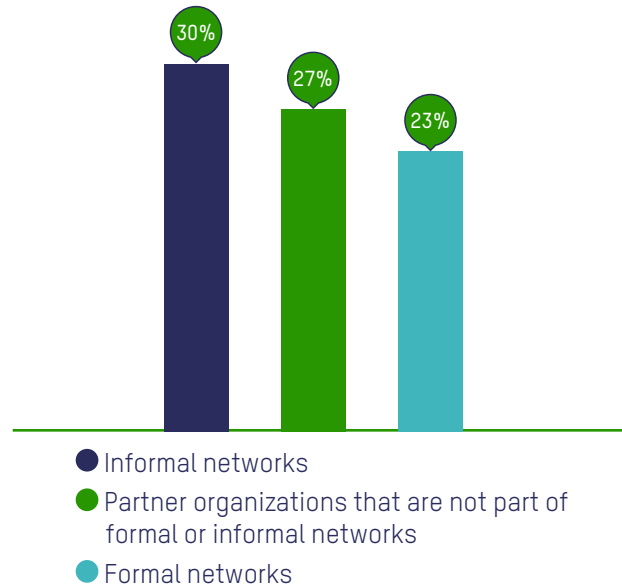


Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Next, civil society organizations were asked whether they coordinate their advocacy activities with other organizations profiled in their field of operation. More than half of surveyed organizations (50.4% of the total survey sample, i.e. 79.2% of those who reported work on developing policy proposals and activities) coordinate their activities with other organizations. Furthermore, 87.7% of organizations who have developed proposals also worked on developing joint objectives and additional ideas with other organizations profiled in their field of operation. Most often, such coordination happens within informal networks (30%), followed by partner organizations in previous activities that are not part of any formal or informal networks (26%), and formal networks (23%). These data show increased networking among organizations, especially in respect to developing policy proposals and activities that are later advocated.

Chart 45. Q:

Under which type of networks did you coordinate your proposals for state authorities?



Database: civil society survey, (n=53)

In addition, organizations were asked whether, in the period 2018-2019, they have been invited by local, municipal or national authorities to present their policy proposals and activities. Significantly higher share of surveyed organizations (62%) have been invited to present their proposals directly before relevant institutions. 38% of them indicated they have not been invited. This question shows a positive correlation with networking of organizations, meaning that **the more organizations are networked, higher is the share of those who have been invited to present their policy proposals.**

As regards organization of direct meetings with competent institutions, three-quarters of surveyed organizations who have developed proposals also indicated organization of direct meetings with competent institutions to present and advocate for their policy proposals (76%). In terms of regional distribution,

significantly lower share of organizations based in other regions outside Skopje (66%) reported development of policy proposals and activities compared to those based in the Skopje region (85%). Consequently, significantly lower share of organizations from other regions across the state indicated organization of meetings with competent institutions (66%) and advocacy for their proposals (67%) compared to those based in Skopje (82% of which have presented their policy proposals before state institutions at direct meetings, while 84% have organized another type of advocacy activities).

After having established basic information in terms of organizations developing policy proposals, they were asked to identify institutions before which they presented their policy proposals in the period 2018-2019. Most often, surveyed organizations have presented their policy proposals and activities before relevant line ministries (44%) and directly before mayors (47%). It should be noted that the smallest share of organizations have presented and advocated for their proposals before the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia,

i.e. this segment of the legislative branch of government is the least present among organizations that worked on attaining particular goals by engaging in advocacy before competent authorities. This could be an indicator that the parliament's role is insufficiently clear or that organizations might have negative perceptions about this body. Additional factor in that regard could be the fact that the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia does not have clear acts and procedures in place in respect to civil society participation in legislative and other processes within the Parliament.¹⁸

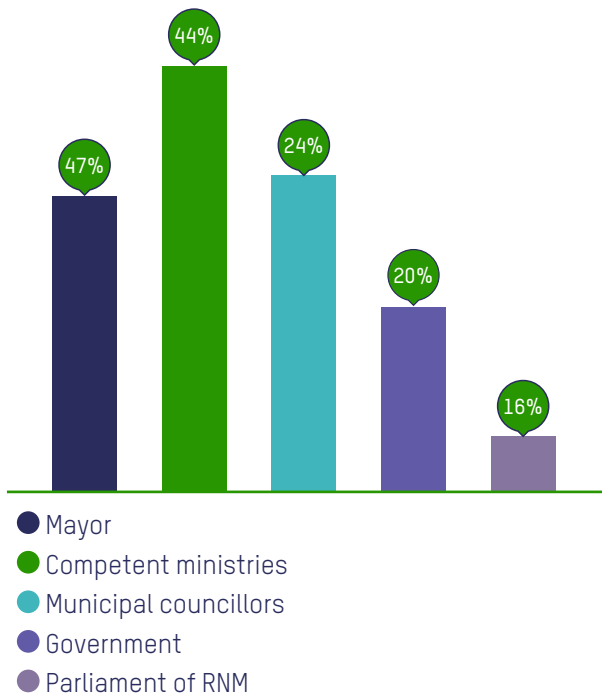
Furthermore, surveyed organizations were asked to identify line ministries they have addressed with policy proposals and advocacy. Having in mind their distribution per primary activity (Chart 42), it does not surprise that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the most represented state institution in responses provided by organizations about their advocacy activities (21%), followed by the Ministry of Education and Science (12%) and the Ministry of Justice (10%). All other line ministries account for significantly lower shares of responses (below 10%).

18 "Parliament Openness in the Region and Macedonia", Nada Naumovska/Danche Danilovska, Action SEE. Published in April 2017, available at: <https://resource.actionsee.org/app/uploads/2018/07/%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%9F%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%9C%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8.pdf>

Chart 46. Q:

Which entities did you address with advocacy for policy proposals? (This question concerned the period 2018-2019 and different types of state authorities.)

ADVOCACY (2018 AND 2019)



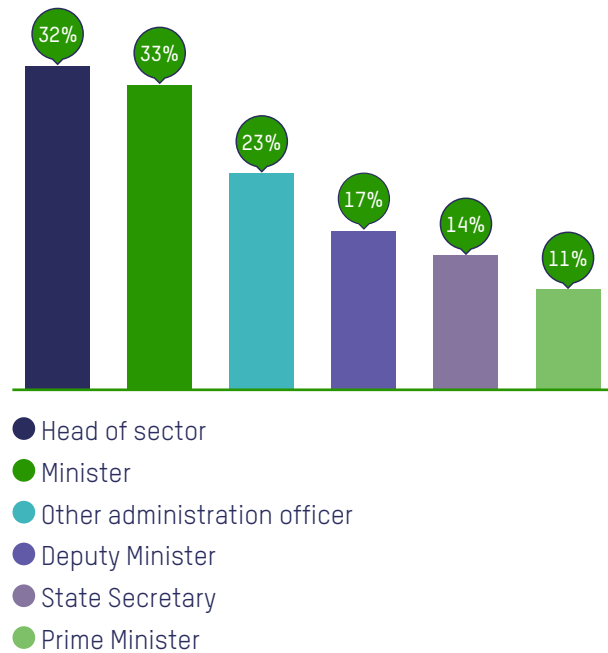
Database: civil society survey, n=73

In terms of specific representatives from competent institutions, i.e. public officials and public offices within the executive branch of government which organizations addressed with their policy proposals, majority of them referred to ministers (33%) and heads of sectors within ministries (34%). The lowest share of organizations has advocated for their proposals directly before the Prime Minister (11%), followed by State Secretaries (14%) and Deputy Ministers (17%).

Chart 46. Q:

Which entities did you address with advocacy for policy proposals? (This question concerns the period 2018-2019 and different types of public offices within the executive government.)

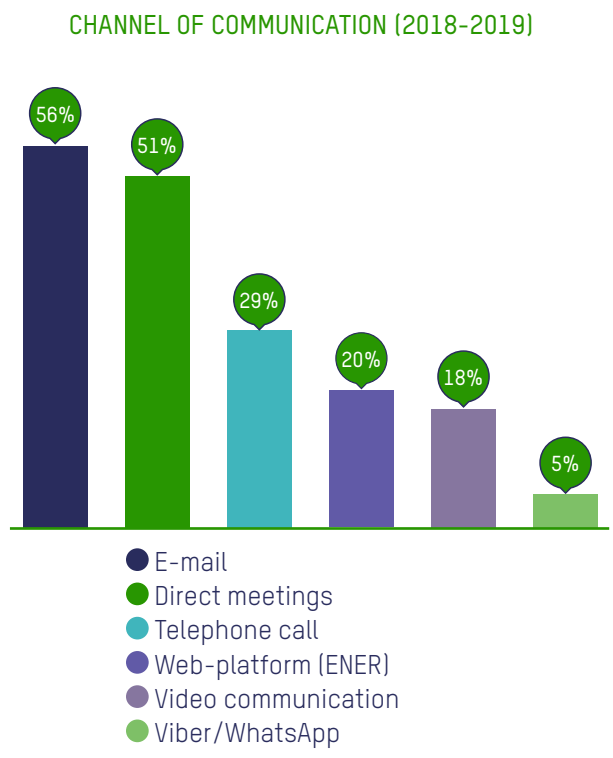
ADVOCACY (2018 AND 2019)



Database: civil society survey, n=73

Moreover, surveyed organizations were asked to assess their satisfaction with these processes on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied. The mean values (scores) in terms of satisfaction with authorities' attitude to coordination and communication with organizations (2.96) and satisfaction with implementation of their policy proposals (mean=2.85) range around 3, which shows there is significant space for improving communication channels between authorities and the civil society, especially in respect to better integration and implementation of policy proposals put forward by civil society organizations.

Chart 47. Q:
How did you contact state institutions? (This question concerns the period 2018-2019.)

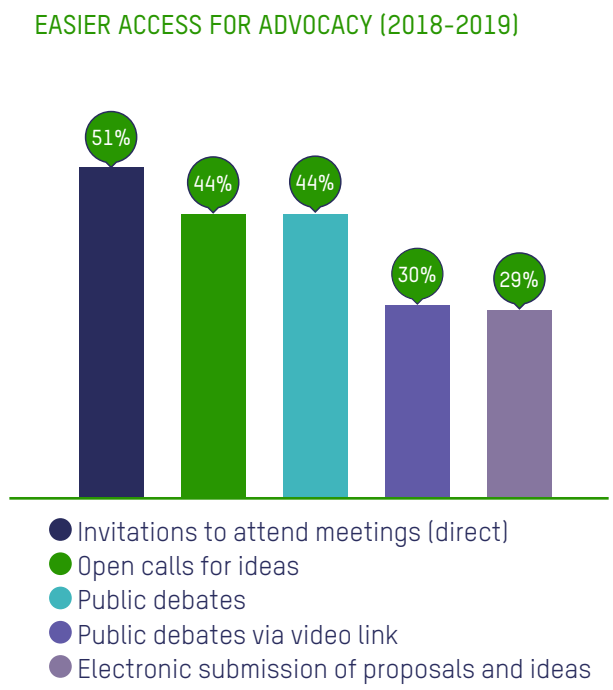


Database: civil society survey, n=73

The most frequently used channel of communication among surveyed organizations concerns electronic communication, i.e. e-mail, as indicated by more than half of them (56%) as method to approach relevant institutions. Direct meetings are another frequently used form of communication, as indicated by 51% of surveyed organizations as approach for presentation of their policy proposals and opening a line of communication with institutions. Other channels of communications are represented with very low shares, as follows: video communication (18%) and direct communication tools such as Viber/WhatsApp (5%). Having in mind that data concern the period 2018-2019, it could be concluded that traditional channels of communications were still dominant, while electronic video communication, although indicated, was not fully utilized in that period.

Although organizations that have not reported advocacy activities were asked about reasons thereof, the number of responses is too small for any conclusions to be inferred. On the other hand, organizations were asked what could facilitate their access to institutions in order to advocate for their proposals, whereby more than half of them responded they would like to be directly invited by institutions (51%). Next in frequency are open calls for ideas and public debates (44% each) as preferred method of facilitated access to institutions. Least popular is electronic communication (29%), although data presented in the chart above allowed the conclusion that e-mail is the most represented channel of communication with institutions, and public discussions via video links (30%).

Chart 48. Q:
What would have afforded you easier access to advocate for your policy proposals and activities? (This question concerns the period 2018-2019.)



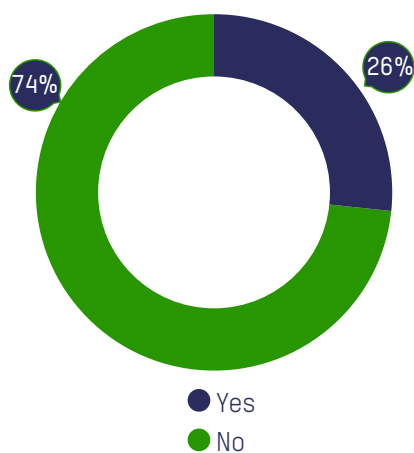
Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

In addition to classic methods of direct advocacy and communication with government institutions, civil society organizations were asked whether they use other tools for presentation of their policy proposals. Based on practices, it could be established that two key methods are used in this regard: (1) organization and participation in civic protests and public gatherings; and (2) civil society participation mechanisms that are already in place. Hence, these methods were transformed into questions for organizations covered under this survey.

Survey data show that, in the period 2018–2019, 26% of organizations have organized and/or have participated in protests against/for certain policies. Moreover, the survey inquired whether they consider public gatherings and protests as important factor in preventing or supporting adoption of certain policies. Although covered in small number of responses (only organizations that reported participation

Chart 49. Q:

In the period 2018–2019, has your organization organized or participated in any protest against/for certain policies?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

in public gatherings or organization of protests), it should still be noted that 60% of this cohort believe that protests and public gatherings help advocacy for their interests.

Formal participation mechanisms are the third tool used for advocacy by civil society organizations. Here, we primarily refer to:

- ▶ Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society;
- ▶ sector working groups within competent ministries responsible for programming EU assistance;
- ▶ working groups established by state institutions.

Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society

The Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society is an advisory body to the Government and is responsible for advancing cooperation, dialogue and civil society development in the Republic of North Macedonia.¹⁹ In the capacity of governmental body, this civil society participation mechanism holds competences such as:

- ▶ to monitor and analyse policies related to and/or affecting the civil society,
- ▶ to initiate adoption of new regulations and amendments to existing regulations aimed at improving the institutional framework for civil society operation;
- ▶ to issue opinions on proposed laws, strategies, programs and other legal acts that affect civil society development and operation;

¹⁹ Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society. Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. For more information, visit: <https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/?q=node/99>

- ▶ to support promotion of cooperation and development of partnership relations between the government and state administration bodies, on one side, and the civil society, on the other side;
- ▶ to participate in development and to monitor implementation of the Government's Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Society and the Action Plan on Strategy Implementation;
- ▶ to issue opinions on annual implementation track record of the Government's Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Society;
- ▶ to monitor and analyse civil society participation in policy-making, by means of reports on consultations organized by state administration bodies, and to make recommendations for improvements;
- ▶ to propose programming areas and specific funding priorities for civil society activities from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- ▶ to review annual reports of the government and state administration bodies on financed civil society programs and projects, and to make recommendations;
- ▶ to review proposals from civil society organizations and to present views on issues falling under its competences.²⁰

This Council is comprised of 31 members, of which 16 are selected from the ranks of civil society members, and 15 council members come from executive government institutions.²¹ In other words, representatives from civil society organizations and executive government

²⁰ Decision of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. "Decision on amending the decision on establishing the Government's Council for Cooperation with the Civil Society", available at: https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/Odluka_za_izmenuvanje_i_dopolnuvanje_naOdlukata_zaSovetot.pdf

²¹ Ibid.

institutions (ministries and agencies within the government) are seated on the same table and make joint decisions on topics and policies of importance for civil society development, which confirms the significance of this participation mechanism.

Based on the above elaborated, **this mechanism is important for civil society organizations, but it requires organizations to be informed about its existence and operation.** Therefore, civil society organization covered under this survey were asked whether they have heard of this body. More than three-quarters (78%) indicated knowledge about the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society. However, only 45% of this cohort (have heard of) also indicated knowledge about civil society representatives that cover their respective area of operation within the Council. This could be one of reasons why high 77% of organizations that indicated knowledge about the Council also responded that they have never proposed any measures or activities to council members.

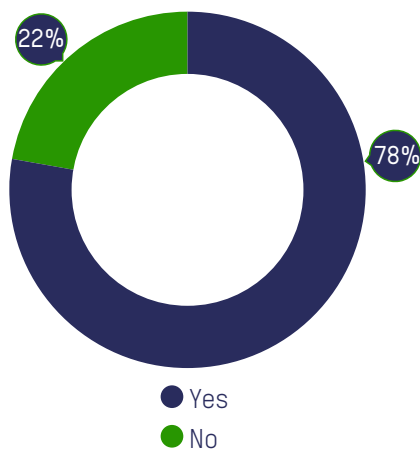
Moreover, organizations that have made proposals to civil society members within the Council were asked to assess their satisfaction with implementation of their proposals. The average score reflecting their satisfaction accounts for 3.05 (obtained on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means proposals were not reviewed at all and were not implemented and 5 means proposals were fully reviewed and implemented). However, interpretation of this survey finding should take into consideration the fact that only 20 civil society organizations have presented the Council with their proposals and therefore this figure cannot be perceived as fully reliable or sufficiently precise.

As regards satisfaction with the Council's performance, organizations that indicated knowledge thereof were asked to share their perceptions. The average score for their satisfaction accounts for 2.65 on the scale from 1 to 5,

where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied. These data are indicative of the need for greater visibility of council members and greater communication with the civil society around opportunities offered by the Council as civil society participation mechanism.

Chart 50. Q:

Have you heard and are you familiar with the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Sector working groups

Sector working groups (SWGs) are interdepartmental bodies tasked to provide advice and ensure the necessary consensus among all main stakeholders within a given sector under IPA II. Moreover, SWGs represent a sector-wide coordination mechanism, forming part of the broader framework on national strategy coordination and dialogue and are established by competent ministries.²² There are a total of

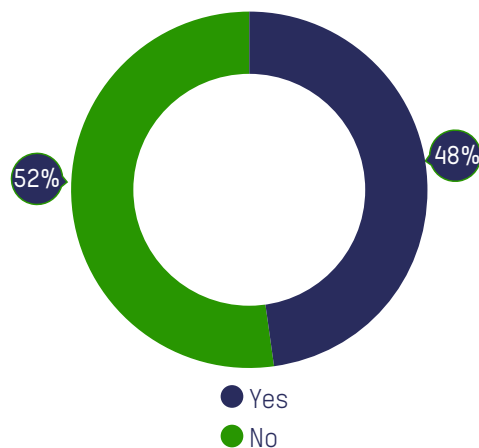
²² Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups in the Period January 2019 – February 2020, EU Dialogue, publisher: FOSM, Bozhovikj Stojkoska Sanja et al., available at: <https://dijalogkoneu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FOOM-Izvestaj-vo-senka-CELOSEN.-SITE-SRG.pdf>

12 SWGs, each focused on different topic.²³ In essence, this mechanism should ensure cohesion among various actors, such as state institutions and the civil society, in respect to national policies proposed and implemented by competent ministries. On that account, this mechanism is of interest for this survey, primarily because it anticipates participation by the civil society.

The first question around SWGs intended for civil society organizations covered under this survey inquires about their knowledge and familiarity with this mechanism. **More than half of surveyed organizations have not heard of and are not familiar with SWGs as civil society participation mechanism.** Moreover, only 13% of them have own representatives in SWGs, while 17% have participated in the process for selection of civil society representatives.

Chart 51. Q:

Have you heard of and are you familiar with SWGs as civil society participation mechanism?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Having in mind the small number of organizations with own representatives in SWGs, there is no possibility to analyse data about different sector working groups. More specifically, given the small number of responses to

²³ EU Dialogue, sector working groups, available at: <https://bit.ly/3dj1BhC>

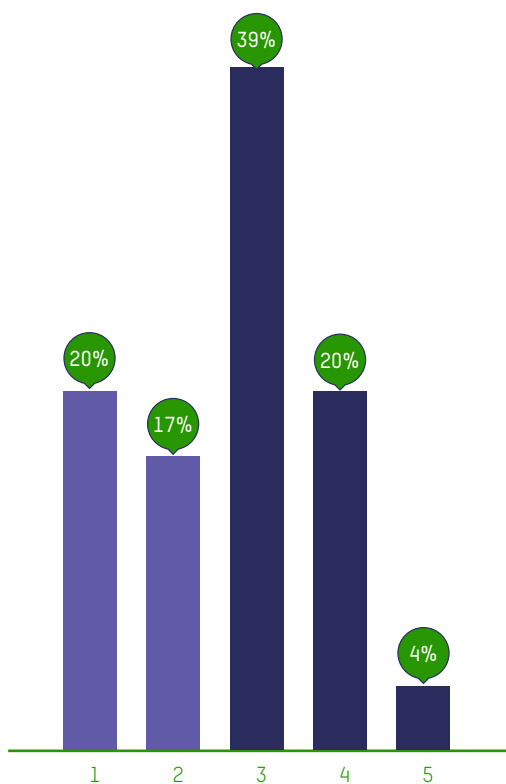
these questions, we are unable to infer any significant conclusions. However, civil society organizations familiar with SWGs as civil society participation mechanism (48% of the survey sample) were asked to indicate their satisfaction with performance of these sector groups on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied. The average score calculated from their responses accounts for 2.7, and is below the mean value,

having in mind that the score of 3 on this scale implies the statement “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”.

In general, it could be concluded that civil society’s familiarity and knowledge of SWGs is very low. This contributes to lower participation and low level of satisfaction with SWGs as civil society participation mechanism. However, survey results show the need for more activities related to dissemination of information and motivating civil society organizations to use this mechanism for participation in policy-making.

Chart 52. Q:

On the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied, how would you assess the performance of sector working groups? (This question was asked only to organizations familiar with these sector groups.)



Database: civil society survey, n=54

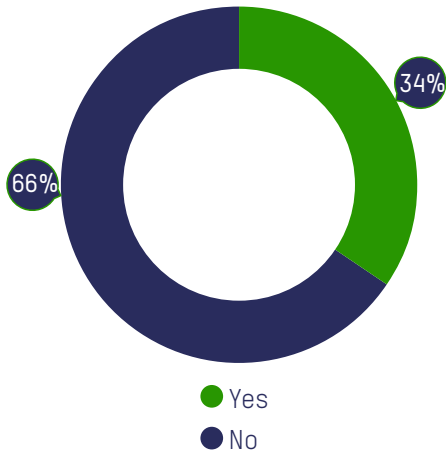
Thematic working groups

Working groups established around specific topics by executive state institutions are the last civil society participation mechanism analysed under this survey. These participation mechanisms are mainly organized on ad-hoc basis (when needed), by the government, competent ministries, the Parliament of RNM, or at local level, by municipalities. An example thereof is the working group tasked with drafting the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, which included representatives from civil society organizations, and was formed by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia.²⁴ Notably, around one-third of surveyed organizations (34%) said they have own representatives in working groups established for specific activities and policies. Great portion of organizations involved in this participation mechanism have been included in 1 to 3 working groups.

²⁴ Working group tasked with drafting the Law on Youth, formed by the Parliament in March 2018. For more information, visit: <http://www.zakonza mladi.ams.gov.mk/zakon-za-mladi/rabotna-grupa-za-zakon-za-mladi/>. This working group formed by the Parliament completed its mandate in January 2020 when the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy was adopted.

Chart 53. Q:

Do you have own representatives in working groups?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

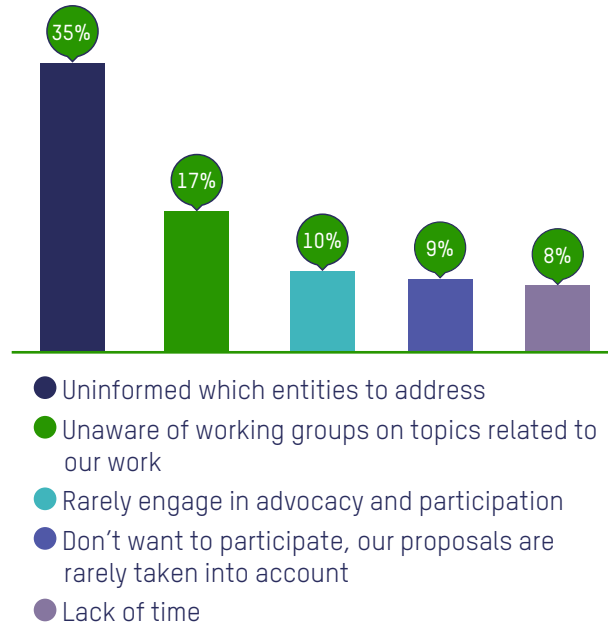
Although a very small number of organizations have experience with this form of civil society participation, they were still asked to assess this approach to participatory policy-making on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied.

The average score calculated for performance of working groups as participation mechanism accounts for 3.18 and is the highest score compared to other civil society participation mechanisms covered under this survey.

At the end of this section, civil society organizations were asked to indicate reasons for non-participation in working groups.

Chart 54. Q:

What are the reasons for non-participation in working groups?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Most frequently indicated reasons concern lack of information, i.e. lack of knowledge which entities to address for this type of participation (35%) and lack of knowledge on existence of working groups around topics and issues related to their field of operation (17%). Hence, in the case of ad-hoc working groups, which imply difficulty in monitoring their performance due to lack of systemic work schedule, one exceptionally important aspect concerns timely dissemination of information to civil society organizations that are profiled in specific topics covered by such groups. Insufficient or untimely information could be one of main reasons for low participation of civil society organizations in this type of advocacy, while another important factor is seen in the fact that information on formation of said working groups is not made publicly available.

5.2.3. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

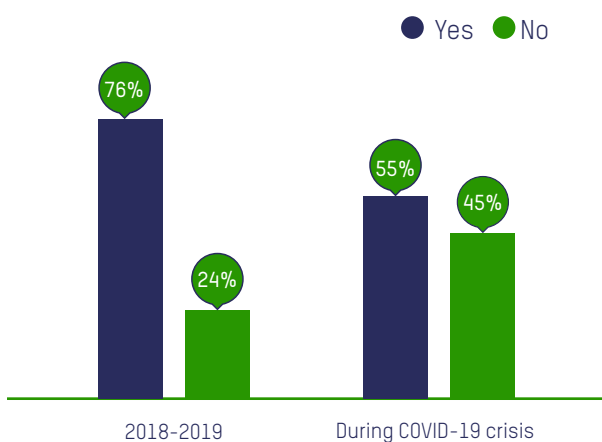
This section of the survey focused on civil society participation and forms of organization during the COVID-19 pandemic. A key aspect of analysis in this section concerns the question whether and in what ways have civil society organizations participated in development of policies and measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. For that purpose, we also referred to baseline data obtained for the period 2018-2019, i.e. responses from surveyed organizations concerning that period, and attempt to infer conclusions by means of direct comparisons whether civil society participation remained the same, has increased or has decreased during the crisis.

Starting point for such analysis is activity of civil society organizations, i.e. whether they have developed policy proposals and activities during the COVID-19 crisis. Survey results (Chart 55) allow the conclusion on significant

decrease related to civil society’s involvement in developing proposals and measures compared to their level of activity in the period 2018-2019, whereby the share of organizations that have developed policy proposals and activities is decreased by 21%.

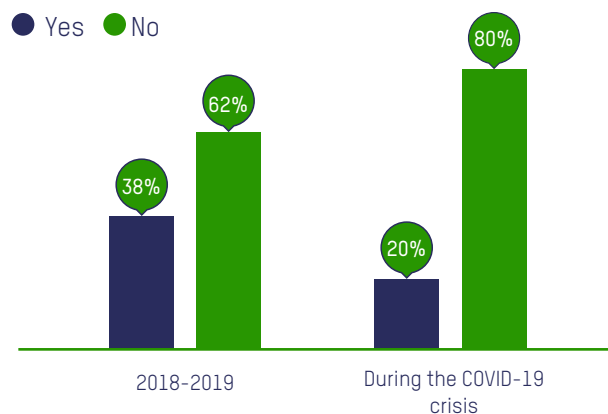
Furthermore, surveyed organizations were again asked the question about being invited by state institutions (both at national and local level) to participate in development of policies and measures during the crisis. Unlike the situation observed in the period 2018-2019, a significant decrease is noted in terms of the share of organizations invited to take part in policy making during the crisis. While in the period 2018-2019, 62% of surveyed organizations have been invited to present their proposals directly before relevant institutions, their share has dropped to 20% during the crisis. This is indicative of a major difference in approach on the part of state institutions and on the part of the civil society, and seriously downsized participation of civil society organizations in developing crisis relief policies and measures.

Chart 55. Q:
Has your organization developed policy proposals in the period 2018-2019/during the COVID-19 crisis?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Chart 56. Q:
Was your organization invited by state institutions to present its policy proposals and activities (in the period 2018-2019 and during COVID-19 crisis in 2020)?

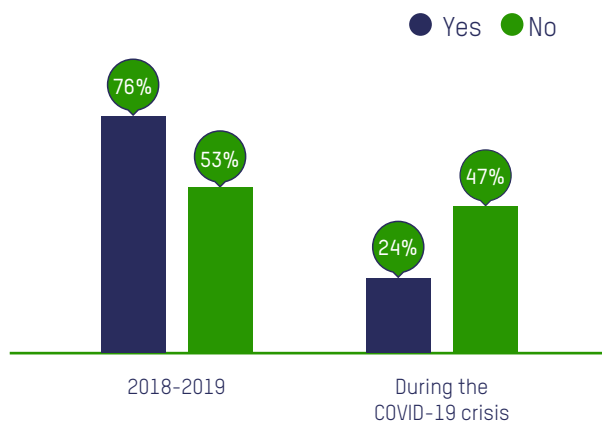


Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

In addition, surveyed organizations were also asked whether they have organized meetings with state institutions during the COVID-19 crisis in order to present their proposed measures. In the period 2018-2019, 76% of organizations that developed policy proposals and measures have organized meetings with competent institutions on own initiative. In the crisis period, their share has dropped to 53%.

Chart 57. Q:

Have you organized meetings with competent institutions on own initiative, in order to present policy measures and activities (in the period 2018-2019 / during the COVID-19 crisis)?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Such development of events is indicative of two possible, but not mutually-excluding theories about declined numbers. First, civil society organizations lacked sufficient capacity during the crisis and were affected by the crisis, preventing them to develop policy proposals and activities. Second, state institutions do not have open channels of communication with civil society organizations. Here it is important to stress that decreased civil society participation is not only a result of failure on the part of institutions to invite them to participate, but also a result of lower proactivity on the part of civil society organizations, as shown by data collected (Charts 56 and 57), which most certainly could have been conditioned by the COVID-

19 crisis and two directly-linked conditions: (1) civil society organizations are more inclined to trust direct meetings than electronic communication when it comes to successful advocacy, while the crisis and health protection measures related thereto do not allow direct meetings; (2) civil society organizations are directly affected by the crisis and are unable to properly organize themselves during the pandemic.

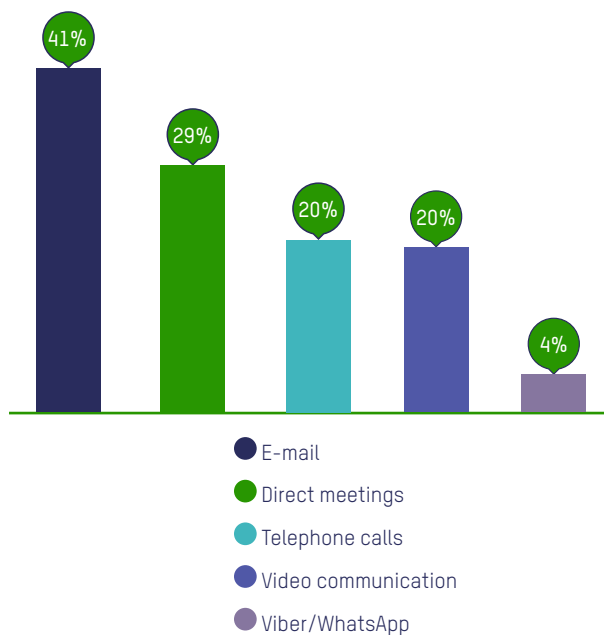
As observed for the period 2018-2019, during the COVID-19 crisis as well, surveyed organizations that have proposed policies and activities most often pursued that in coordination with other organizations profiled in their field of operation (83% during the COVID-19 crisis and 79% in the period 2018-2019). Moreover, 85% of surveyed organizations that developed policy proposals have also developed joint goals and ideas in cooperation with other organizations profiled in their field of operation (their share accounted for 88% in the period 2018-2019). Again, the most frequently indicated form of coordination implies informal networks (31%), followed by partner organizations from previous activities that are not part of formal or informal networks (26%) and formal networks (24%).

These data show that **networking among organizations is of great importance, especially in developing policy proposals and activities that will be later advocated before executive authorities.**

Having in mind the significantly smaller number of organizations that developed policy proposals and activities, the number of organizations engaged in advocacy is also decreased, and

therefore, low level of communication during the COVID-19 crisis (in particular, direct meetings), except for video communication, should not come as surprise.²⁵

Chart 58. Q:
What channels did you use to communicate with state institutions? (This question concerns 2020, i.e. the period during the COVID-19 crisis.)



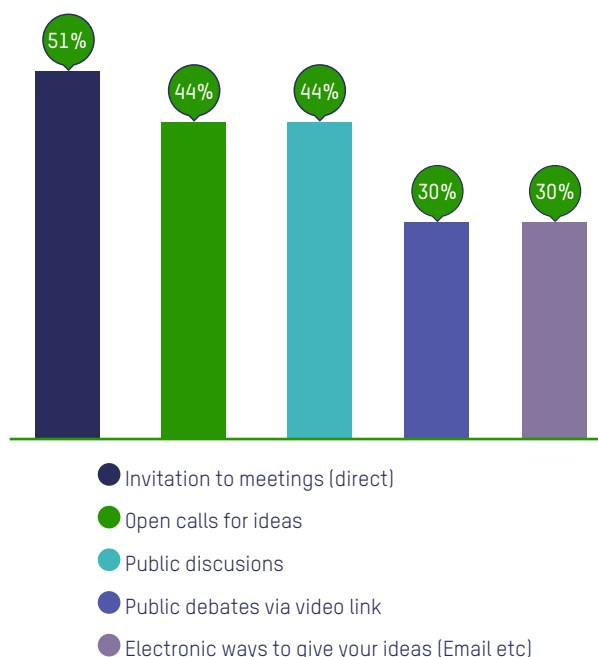
Database: civil society survey, n=85

Changes are observed also in respect to responses obtained on the question about what would facilitate access to institutions for organization to engage in advocacy for their ideas. More specifically, surveyed organizations believe that, during the crisis, their advocacy would have been made easier by announcement of open calls for ideas (increase in responses by 14% compared to the period 2018-2019), direct invitations to meetings, and possibility for electronic submission of their contributions and ideas (increase in responses by 12% compared to the period 2018-2019). Also, the pandemic had affected public debates

²⁵ In respect to the COVID-19 period, possible answers on the question about communication tools did not include web-platforms because the government was given powers to directly change laws during the period covered by the declared state of emergency.

as possible mechanism that facilitates civil society advocacy, i.e. the survey observed a decrease in terms of public debates, accompanied by increase in use of video communication tools.

Chart 59. Q:
What would have facilitated your advocacy for proposed activities? (This question concerns the year 2020, i.e. the COVID-19 crisis?)



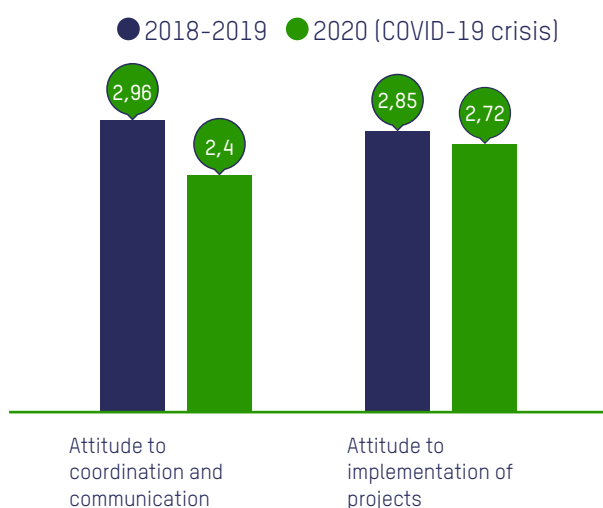
Database: civil society survey (n=113)

Having in mind that significantly smaller number of organizations have advocated for their policy proposals during the COVID-19 crisis, responses obtained in respect to individual ministries, public offices and channels of communication with institutions are incomparable to those reported for the period 2018-2019. Moreover, very small number of surveyed organizations have actively advocated during the crisis and therefore we are unable to infer statistically meaningful conclusions on the basis of data collected. On that account, data on advocacy during the crisis are not presented here. However, contrary to the score

designated for the period 2018-2019 (2.96), surveyed organizations assigned a significantly lower score to authorities in respect to coordination and communication with the civil society during the crisis (2.40) and in respect to implementation of proposals they have submitted (2.72 during the crisis versus 2.85 in the period 2018-2019). This shows that civil society organizations are not satisfied with authorities in respect to civil society involvement in development of policy measures during the crisis. Moreover, such decrease in satisfaction should be further monitored and relevant mechanisms should be designed to ensure participation of the civil society in development of crisis relief policies and measures.

Chart 60. Q:

How would you assess authorities' attitude to coordination and communication with your organization and how would you assess their attitude to implementation of proposals that you have submitted (concerns the period 2018-2019 and the COVID-19 crisis in 2020)?



Database: civil society survey, n=72 and n=113 for COVID-19 related questions

The share of organizations that have organized or participated in public gatherings or protests is also marked by decrease during the crisis period and accounts for 11% of the survey sample (26% in the period 2018-2019).

The trend of decrease noted in respect to this mechanism for advocacy and pressure does not surprise, primarily because main health protection recommendations issued by the authorities included advice on avoiding mass gatherings, and this type of activities were even fully prohibited in some months.²⁶

On the other hand, mechanisms for direct participation of civil society organizations continued their operation. In the crisis period, the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society held a total of 10 epistolary sessions.²⁷ Moreover, the share of organizations that have not been in contact with and/or have not proposed any measures in their field of operation has increased from 77% in the period 2018-2019 to 83% during the COVID-19 crisis. More specifically, only 17% of surveyed organizations have contacted the Council or have proposed measures in their field of operation.

Additional decrease is noted in respect to civil society participation in ad-hoc working groups. Notably, only 17% of surveyed organizations have participated in working groups during the COVID-19 crisis. One possible reason for such drop in numbers could be identified in the political crisis, i.e. the Government of RNM having assumed legislative powers²⁸ in the absence of active legislative branch of government due to the Parliament's disbandment. Second possible reason is the fact that institutions had turned

26 "All public gatherings are prohibited, restaurants and coffees shops should close at 6 p.m.", 360 Degrees, March 2020. Available at: <https://360stepeni.mk/novi-merki-zabrana-zasekakvi-javni-sobiri-restoranite-i-kafulinata-darabotat-do-18-chasot/>

27 Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society, news-reel for the entire 2020, available at: <https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/?q=node/99s>

28 Article 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia stipulates that: "In the case of state of war or state of emergency, the Government, in compliance with the Constitution and the law, shall adopt decrees with the effect of law." The state of emergency was declared on 18 March 2020.

to addressing effects of the COVID-19 crisis, focusing all resources to those processes.²⁹

All in all, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic seriously affected civil society participation in decision-making. On one hand, civil society organizations have produced significantly less policy proposals and activities, while on the other hand, state authorities have failed in finding ways to ensure civil society participation in processes focused on addressing damages caused by the crisis. This trend could have a long-standing impact on the civil society's confidence in their participation in the long run, and this aspect needs to be further monitored and observed in the coming years.

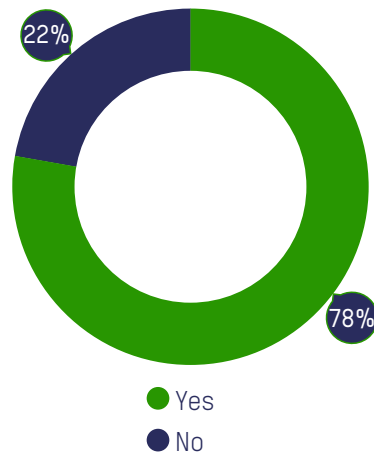
5.2.4. IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY

Previous segments of this survey research were focused on analysing effects of the COVID-19 crisis on advocacy and development of policy proposals and activities by civil society organizations. While significant decrease in civil society participation could be observed, the survey did not address the issue related to the crisis' impact on civil society organizations and their capacity. Hence, this section of the survey analyses data obtained from organizations on how the crisis has impacted their respective capacity.

The first question inquired whether organizations implemented any activities during the COVID-19 crisis. Although the highest number of them have organized activities in the indicated period (78%), less than one-quarter of civil society organizations have not organized any activities (22%).

Chart 61. Q:

Has your organization implemented activities during the COVID-19 crisis?



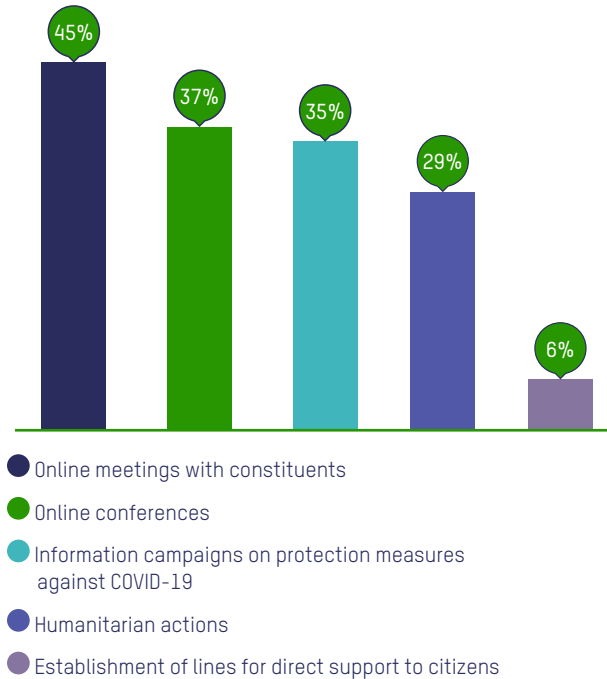
Database: civil society survey, all responses (n=113)

Based on responses from organizations that have implemented activities, it could be concluded that these activities were migrated towards utilization of digital tools. Namely, less than half of these organizations reported meetings with their constituents being organized via internet. Furthermore, civil society organizations have adapted their approach to organization of conferences, transforming them into online events. Around 35% of them have also implemented information campaigns for citizens focused on health protection measures against COVID-19.

²⁹ Information from the 52nd session of the Government or RNM concerning 2020 budget adjustment. Available at: <https://vlada.mk/node/21404>

Chart 62. Q:

What type of activities did you implement during the COVID-19 crisis (2020)?

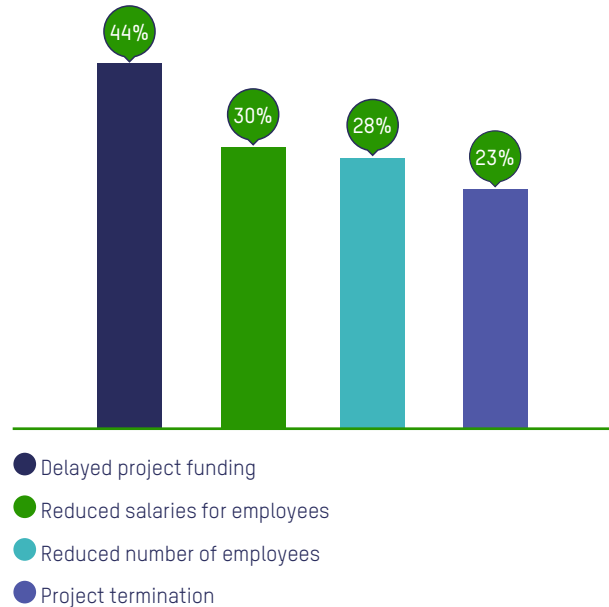


Database: civil society survey, n =88

Furthermore, surveyed organizations were asked about the crisis's impact on their financial operations, whereby 44% of them reported delays in project funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, 23% of them reported fully terminated/suspended project funding during the COVID-19 crisis. Given the absence of reference figures (baseline) on this question for the period before the crisis, we are unable to make comparisons and to determine whether project terminations or project delays are frequently observed phenomena, but alarming is the fact that vast number of organizations are facing such financial difficulties at times of crisis. This financial predicament has also affected the number of employees at surveyed organizations. Notably, 28% of them reported that the crisis has contributed to reduced number of employees, while 30% indicated they had to reduce salaries for their employees due to the crisis.

Chart 63. Q:

How has the COVID-19 crisis affected your organization?



Database: civil society survey, all responses (n =113)

Finally, surveyed organizations were asked whether they have sufficient technology and digital equipment for work at home, in order to comply with health protection measures against COVID-19. In that, 34% reported lack of sufficient equipment for work at home, while 66% indicated sufficient technology and digital equipment.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Analysing democracy as a form of state governance, many authors conclude that civic engagement and civil participation in all processes within the state are crucial for building and sustaining democratic societies. Hence, the Republic of North Macedonia, as relatively young democracy of only thirty years, still has space to master and promote civic engagement. On that account, this survey research observed several important aspects and correlations among different parameters that impact civic engagement, which should be taken into consideration in the future.

Based on findings from this survey and from previous surveys, citizens do not have confidence in opportunities for and benefits from their engagement, as evidenced by low level of civic engagement that is marked by further decrease compared to past years. Most certainly, the COVID-19 crisis has contributed to this situation, but on the other hand, it opened space for additional civic engagement in supporting fellow citizens from their narrow or broader community. Moreover, civic engagement also depends on feedback from competent authorities, whereby citizens' direct involvement in policy development and advocacy for changes is correlated to effectiveness demonstrated by competent bodies and responsible officers. While these data are indicative of certain disillusionment and depend on citizens' satisfaction with their place of residence, conventional methods of civic engagement, i.e. voting on elections, still hold great importance for citizens and are regularly used as the most frequent form of civic participation.

Furthermore, it could be concluded that civic engagement is more frequently practiced by citizens who have expressed sense of belonging to their community and by civil society

organizations that are networked with others. This shows the need for mechanisms that facilitate closer cooperation and civic engagement, including networking among organizations, but also the need for education and timely information on these mechanisms for both target groups, in order to promote civic engagement processes and improve quality of developed measures and policies by integrating the key component of their success - actual needs of citizens and communities.

Youth, unlike other age groups, are significantly more dissatisfied with their place of residence (locally, but also generally, i.e. with the country), demonstrate lower trust that they could impact decisions, and mainly see themselves emigrated abroad. This trend, also observed under previous surveys, is indicative of the greater need for active involvement of youth in democratic processes and for finding solutions to raise awareness among them in respect to benefits from engagement in decision-making at local and national level.

In the case of civil society organizations, which represent a bridge between citizens and participation processes, there is still significant space to improve opportunities for civil society participation in decision-making.

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly narrowed opportunities for civil society organizations to advocate and to engage in open discussion with state institutions, and has resulted in decreased civil society activity on developing new ideas for activities and policies for state institutions. CSOs are less inclined to use of electronic communication and e-mail compared to direct meetings, but the crisis did not allow such meetings in the course of 2020. Additionally, the crisis has downsized the already scarce funds available to civil society organizations, in particular for smaller organizations and those based outside Skopje. The crisis has brought to the surface all shortcomings in respect to capacity and resources, i.e.

equipment needed for organizations to engage in effective operation. This situation has further limited their opportunities for networking and coordinating advocacy efforts during the pandemic. Therefore, it is important to make due account of effects from and distortions to certain practices at state institutions related to civil society participation in policy- and decision-making, and to identify methods for additional support to civil society organizations.

On the account of its relatively short period of operation, the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society has still not managed to increase visibility of opportunities for this type of participation, but there are tendencies indicating that such mechanisms

are of good quality and importance for the civil society, and they need to be further developed and popularized among organizations, together with trust-building efforts that would result in more frequent use of these forms of advocacy.

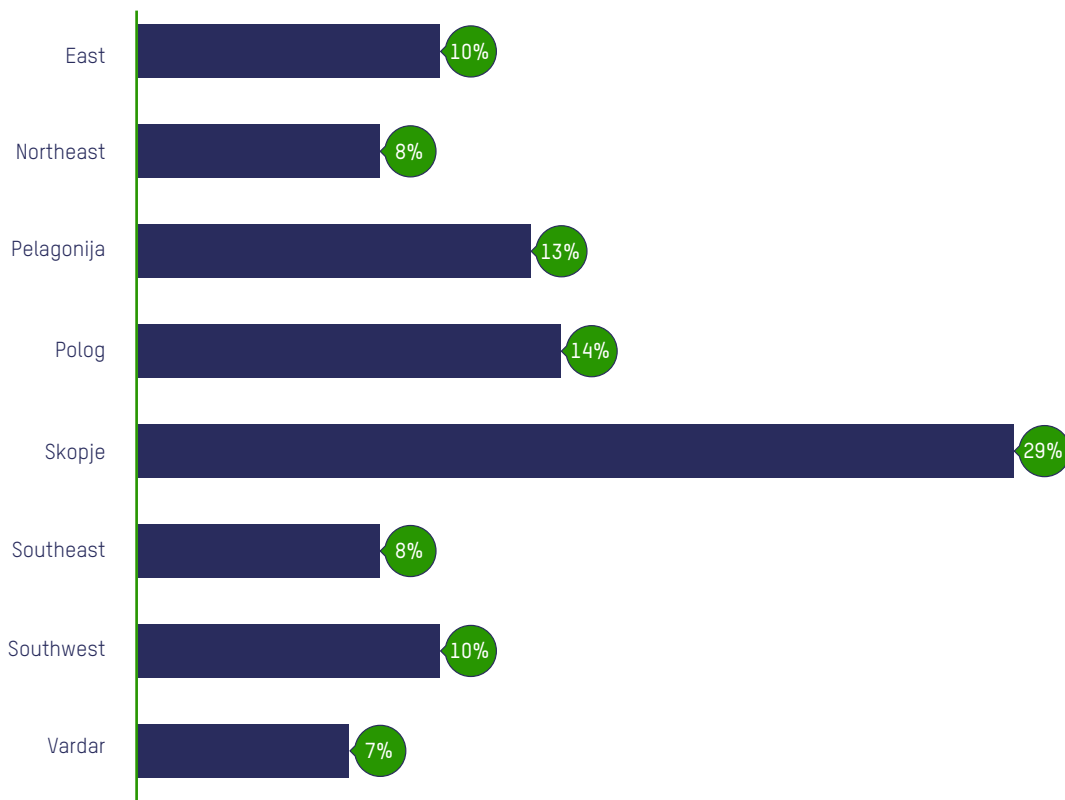
In general, formal civil society participation mechanisms are little known among civil society organizations. Therefore, efforts are needed to increase their visibility and to familiarize the civil society with various networking and participation opportunities. Moreover, efforts are needed to ensure greater availability of relevant documents and information that would allow monitoring in terms of consistency of offers to announced open calls for projects and annual programs, i.e. their compatibility with competent institutions' strategic documents.

III ANNEX

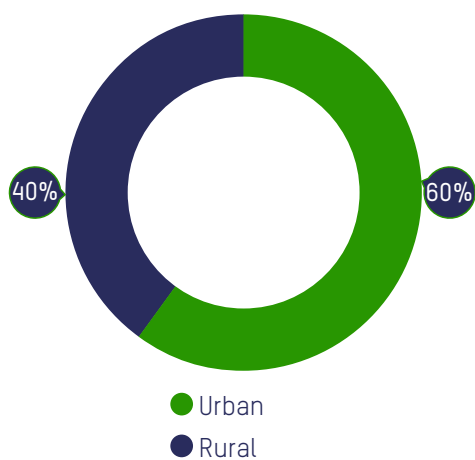


Socio-demographic characteristics of the general population sample

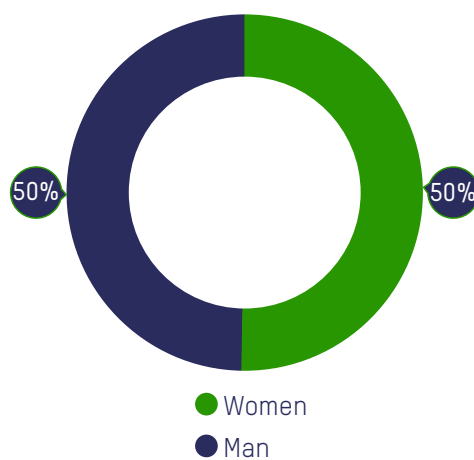
Distribution of respondents per region



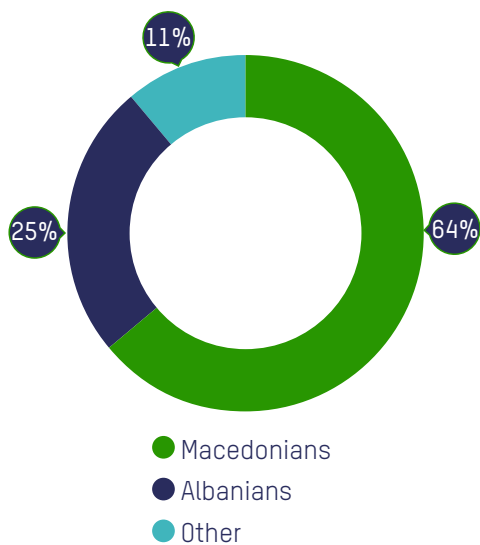
Place of residence (urban/rural)



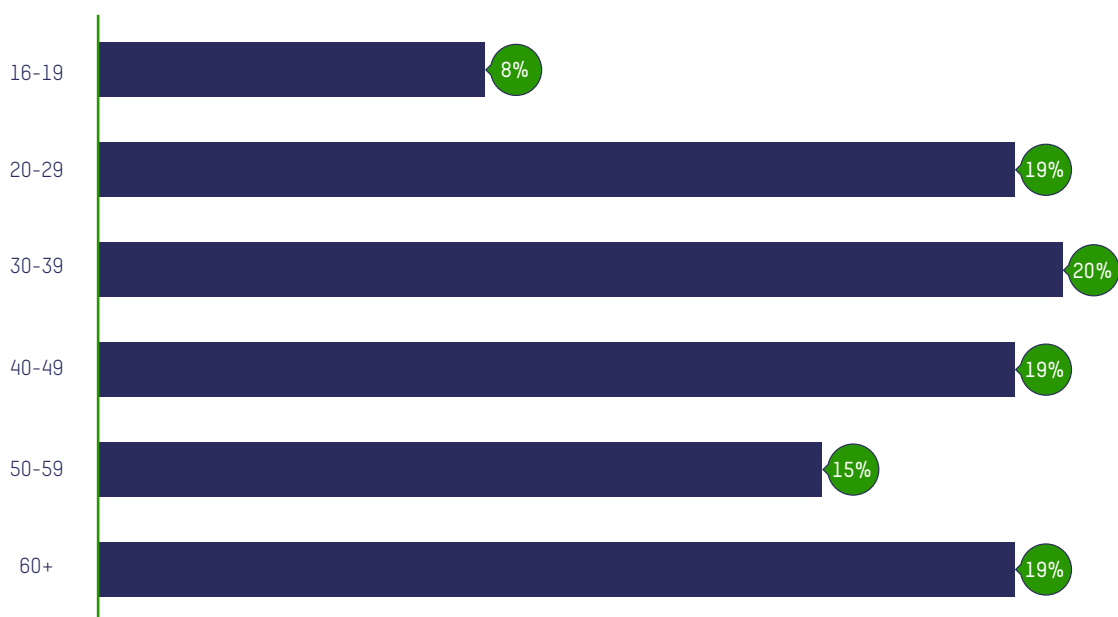
Distribution of respondents per gender



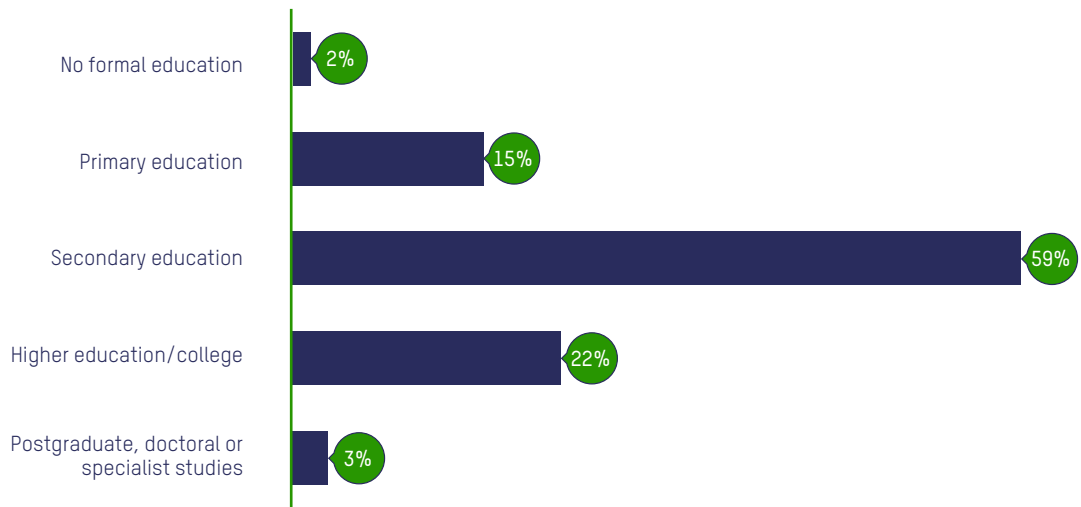
Distribution of respondents per ethnicity



Distribution of respondents per age group



Distribution of respondents per education background



Paid work, irrespective of the status as officially registered or not

