

OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Key findings from the qualitative
and quantitative research

Other Ethnic Communities – Definition and Size

According to the 2002 census, ethnic Albanians are the largest ethnic community in the country, accounting for 25.1% of the total population, whereas other non-majority communities make up 10% of the total population. These include: ethnic Turks (e-Turks) 3.85%, Roma 2.66%, ethnic Serbs (e-Serbs) 1.78%, ethnic Bosniaks (e-Bosniaks) 0.84% and Vlachs 0.48%. The other ethnic communities (Croatian, Montenegrin, Slovenian, Russian and others) are represented by about 1%.

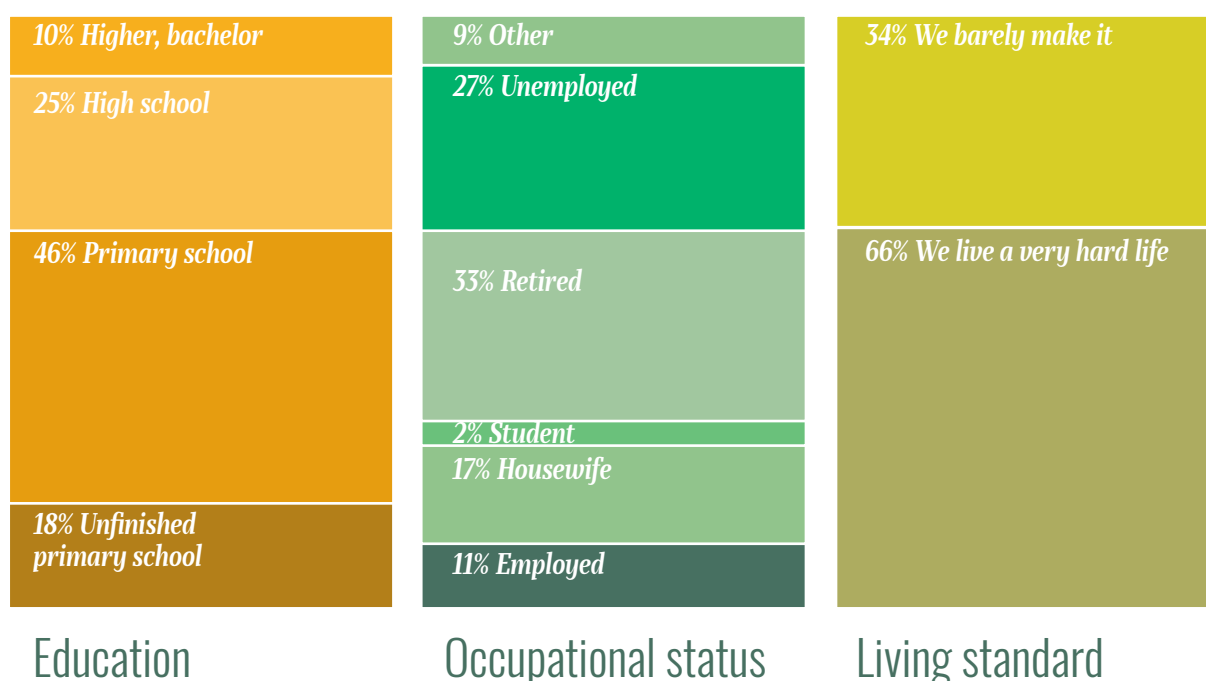
The ethnic demographic structure in North Macedonia comprises the ethnic Macedonian majority community (in some regions a non-majority community), the ethnic Albanian non-majority community (in some regions a majority community), and Roma, e-Turks, e-Serbian, Vlach and other non-majority groups.

The other ethnic communities are governed by the Law on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Ethnic Communities that make up less than 20% of the population of North Macedonia.

Demographic Profile

A total of 119 citizens from the other ethnic communities took part in the quantitative face-to-face survey.

To gain an in-depth insight into the background, perceptions, and opinions of this group, the quantitative survey was complemented by one focus group.



TOPICS OF INTEREST

Interest in the socio-political developments in the country

How interested are you in the current socio-political developments in the country and in the world?

17%

Very

35%

Somewhat

31%

Not much

17%

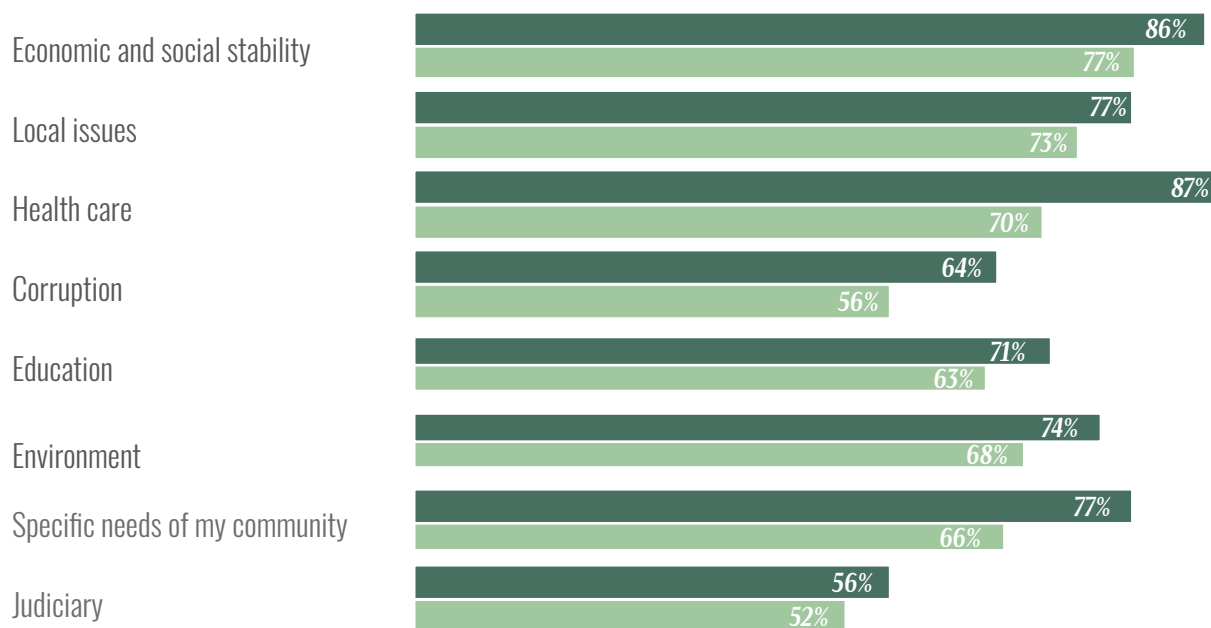
Not at all

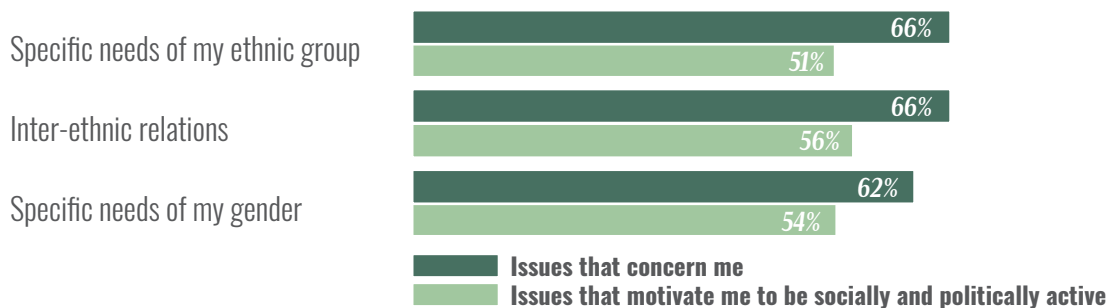
Nearly half of the respondents (48%) are “not at all” or “not very interested” in the current socio-political developments in the country and in the world, while 52% are “very” or “somewhat interested”. The research shows that there is no significant departure in the interest for socio-political developments compared to the general population. Half of the survey participants rarely or never discuss these issues with other people, six per cent more compared to the general population (44%).

Concerns

How much would you say the following information/issues/topics concern you?

How much would you say the following issues/topics motivate you to be socially and politically active?





More than three quarters of the survey respondents indicated that health care (87%), economic and social stability (86%) and local issues (77%) are their primary issues of concern. The same issues are the key motivators for them to be more socially and politically active.

The survey participants are the least concerned with the judiciary, specific needs related to their gender and corruption.

INFORMATION SOURCES

The participants in the focus group discussion indicated they follow different media to source a variety of information. They predominantly follow national developments and, unlike the other profile groups, are also interested in global and regional developments. The respondents perceive the media as biased and strongly politicized and tend to avoid political news.

More than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information.

TV 55%

Almost all participants state they distrust the media due to lack of impartiality: “presenting information to suit a particular party”. To counter this phenomenon, the respondents source and compare information from a variety of media.

Concerning national developments, the focus group participants are generally interested about the formation of the new government, COVID-19 pandemics, healthcare, resumption of school attendance and education in general.

More than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information and two out of ten claim they learn about socio-political developments via the social networks. A significant portion of the respondents (34.8%) use web portals as a source of information and 8% their family and friends. Similarly to the general population, 7% of the respondents from other ethnic communities state they are not informed at all.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of the respondents are not interested to be more civically engaged.

Have you been involved in any event, activity, or process that could have effected change in the community or the place where you live?



Are you interested in a more active civic involvement?



Furthermore, the survey participants outlined the following factors that contribute to their low civic participation:

- ♦ Passive and indifferent mindset, culture, and education which does not recognize, stimulate or award active behavior.
- ♦ Division of the people, lack of solidarity.
- ♦ Strong political influence in the civic society sector.
- ♦ Fear from sanctions.

“ Bring the people to the verge of existence, intimidate them and their mindset will no longer be a problem. ”
Male, 46, ethnic Turk, Bitola

Factors that promote involvement

Responsiveness of the system (24%) and personal or family benefits (23%) are the key motivators for the majority of the respondents to become more civically engaged and to effectuate change in the community, as noted by a quarter of the respondents. Other motivating factors concern representation of their interests (14%).

Six out of ten respondents (57%) do not believe they can make a civic impact, comprising a 5% increase compared to the general population (52%). More than one quarter (27%) believe they can make a meaningful impact in their municipality.

The bulk of the respondents believe that they cannot impact the work of the parliament despite the direct representation model. In line with the trend across all demographic groups, the respondents believe they cannot make a meaningful impact to any other institution except to their municipality.

Willingness and ability to participate in civic activities

Concerning participation in public life, the survey respondents are most willing to respond to a questionnaire (52%), meet colleagues or friends to discuss an issue of personal or family concern (46%), and read brochures or leaflets (40%).

In which of the civic activities are you willing to participate?

52%

Respond a questionnaire



40%

Read a brochure or a leaflet



46%

Meet colleagues, friends to discuss



ELECTION PROCESS

Survey participants tend to associate elections in the country with phrases such as “irregular”, “waste of money”, “false promises”, “election forgery” and “corruption”.

Do you think that every vote is important and can affect the election results?

73%

Yes

13%

No

3%

Refuses to answer

10%

Does not know

A portion of the respondents believes that the Election Day proceeds peacefully, with no significant irregularities compared to polling days in the early 2000s which were marred by incidents, gun fires, and stuffing of ballot boxes; however, pressure, intimidation, political employments and bribery persist.

A significant proportion of the respondents believe in the importance of each vote. Some three quarters of the respondents believe that every vote counts and can impact election results (73%), against 13% who do not believe so. The latter percentage is significantly lower compared to the general population (18,5%).

More than half of the respondents (53%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy changes, three out of ten respondents (29%) believe voting is sufficient, while 11% do not have an opinion on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

53% regularly

25% often

12% sometimes

3% usually not

3% never

Fifty-three per cent (53%) of the survey participants vote almost regularly, 25% vote often, 12% sometimes, 3% usually do not vote and 3% never vote.

The respondents tend to change their electoral choice more often than other profile groups. More than half vote for different political parties, while 30% regularly vote for the same party, which is a ten per cent decrease compared to the general population.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

In line with the trend observed with the general population, the top three factors that influence the respondents' decision to go out and vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (48%), better prospects (44%) and fear that their vote would be misused (34%).

48%

Civic right and duty



44%

Better future



34%

Fear that someone will steal their vote



Nearly two thirds of the respondents (65%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while a third (34%) state their decision is the same or most often the same as that of their friends.

This demographic group is more likely to vote for a political party if women are included on the candidate lists for parliamentary or local elections.

If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists for parliamentary or local elections, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?

Representatives from your local community



People you know




People from other ethnic community



Women

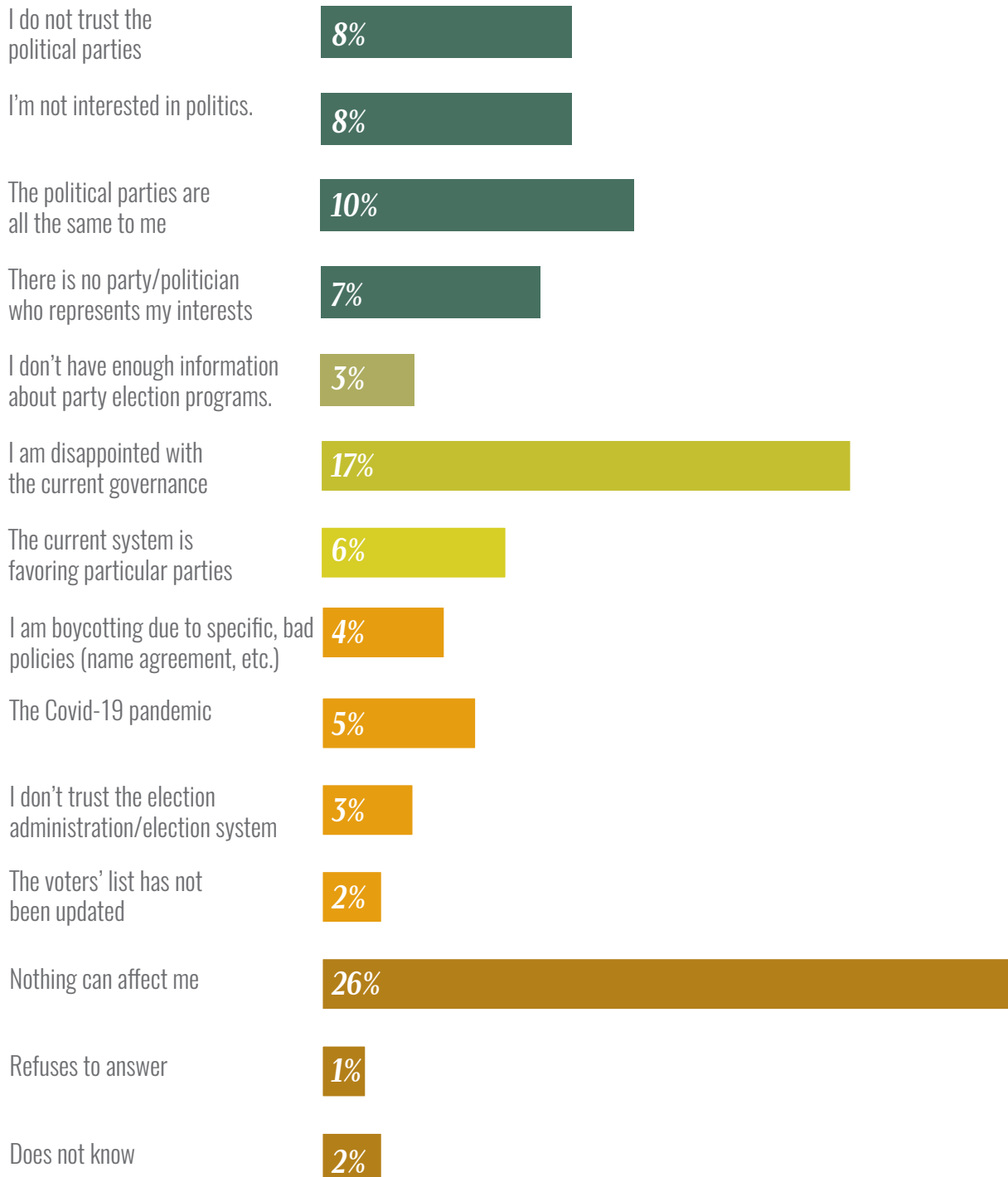


More likely  No impact  Less likely  Do not know 

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties is the key factor that influences the survey participants' decision to abstain from voting.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



The focus group confirms the findings from the quantitative survey. Most of the discussion participants express their dissatisfaction and disappointment with the work of the political parties.

The focus group findings show a shared perception that political parties abuse their powers when in public office and the state fails to hold them accountable. This creates frustration and distrust among the citizens, resulting in apathy and indifference to politics.

In summary, the factors that prevent citizens to go out and vote are:

- ♦ Perception that their vote will not change anything, since arrangements have already been made.
- ♦ Opinion that political parties calculate, make agreements, “play together”.
- ♦ Indifference about the election outcome due to a widespread opinion that “nothing will change”.
- ♦ Lack of accountability mechanisms for holders of public office.
- ♦ People have lost faith, “everything goes round in a circle, only the people lose constantly”.
- ♦ USA is the deciding factor in the formation of the government coalition. “They fill in the last ballot”.

COMMUNICATION WITH CANDIDATES AND PARTIES

TV (62%), social media (9%), web portals (7%), friends and family members (8%) are the predominant sources of information about elections.

Survey participants noted that news (59%) and debates (18%) are the most useful ways of sourcing election information whereas every tenth respondent (13%) does not follow elections at all.

Personal door-to-door communication (18%) and traditional media (18%) are the preferred types of communication with party candidates and elected representatives in the period between elections and respondents rely largely on the political track record of candidates (17%).

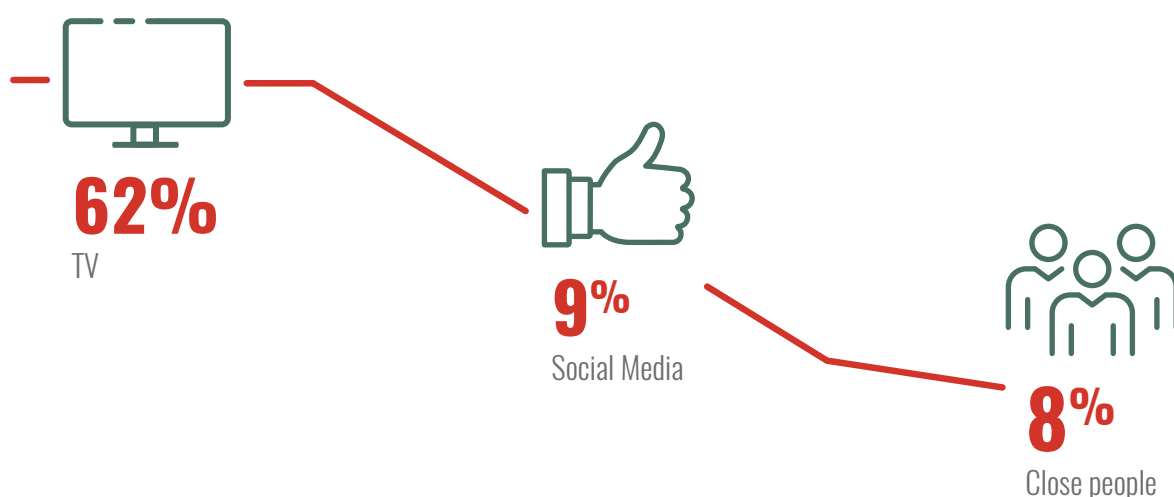
Focus group findings show that the respondents perceive the parties’ pre-election contacts with the citizens as a marketing stunt. The respondents feel that political parties meet with people in **the pre-election period** to “beg for votes” and this is the only time when they are interested to learn about the needs of the people.

The focus group respondents express a high level of indifference concerning party programs, a finding which is consistent across all other demographic groups. Respondents tend to think the programs tackle the same issues (“about 80% copy-paste”) and make unrealistic promises

which incites reluctance to read the lengthy programs.

In addition, the survey participants would like the political parties to:

- ♦ Make promises that they can keep.
- ♦ Effectuate change.
- ♦ Use the state funds for the public well-being.
- ♦ Be fair and honest.



- ♦ Be more empathetic towards the citizens, instead of towards the elite.

Furthermore, the focus group findings show that the pronounced catering to the needs and the demands of different ethnic groups insults the members of other ethnic communities. Participants in the group discussion noted that ethnicity should not influence policy-making. The political parties' programs should not be based on the representation of the ethnic groups, but rather address all citizens' interests, regardless of their ethnicity. They perceive North Macedonia as a bi-national country where the other non-majority communities are neglected. They are frustrated with the ethnic Macedonian-Albanian dynamics and consider that the country should either embrace inclusivity or become ethnocentric. With regards to the question whether the political parties' programs equally address the needs of women and men and rural and urban population, the respondents believe that there is a pronounced division in the country. Party programs focus on the needs and demands of the members of the ruling party, while the interests of other citizens are neglected.

“ There has never been nor there will be “one society for all”. There is bilingualism in this country and all other ethnic groups except ethnic Albanians are excluded. That slogan was a bait to win over other smaller ethnic communities. ”

Male, 46, ethnic Turk, Bitola

BARRIERS

People from other ethnic communities share the same attitudes and behaviour as the general population in terms of their interest for civic and political participation. Barriers relevant for all demographic groups that affect the willingness and ability to be politically and civically active, are also relevant for the other ethnic communities:

- ♦ **Scepticism** about their power to influence politics and policies in the country.
- ♦ **Low level of trust** in the intentions and capacity of politicians to improve the quality of life.
- ♦ **Lack of channels** for active participation.
- ♦ **Fear of pressure and retaliation** for civic activism.

However, the civic and political behaviour of this demographic group is shaped by specific barriers:

- ♦ The perception that the society is shaped by ethnic rather than civic values.
- ♦ Perception that they live in a bi-ethnic society, where their interests are not represented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to these identified challenges and barriers, a set of interventions are recommended to effectively contribute to improving civic and political participation of the other ethnicities.

Raise awareness about the importance of participation in the socio-political life

- ♦ Focus on outlining the benefits of civic engagement for democracy and civic society.
- ♦ Identify role models and influencers and promote their activities and impact.

Focus on the promotion of civic and democratic values, instead of the needs of the ethnic groups

- ♦ Promote inclusive instead of an ethnocentric society.
- ♦ Promote education, human rights, health, prosperity, good quality of life, etc.
- ♦ Report on and discuss community issues.

Focus on creating diverse candidate lists

- ♦ Promote ethnic, gender, and age diversity.

Increase the belief in their power to make an impact in their community or society

- ♦ Promote positive examples that are recognized and respected by the community.
- ♦ Improve the responsiveness of state institutions and political parties to the needs of the citizens.

Promote channels and procedures to encourage participation in civic life

This group has a lack of awareness of the participation channels in the socio-political life.

Create alliances

With the media (digital and traditional)

- ♦ Promote narratives focused on the positive and successful examples of civic participation.
- ♦ Raise awareness about the benefits of civic participation.
- ♦ Promote channels and ways for civic participation.
- ♦ Include citizens in debates and talk shows to spark discussion on issues of interest.

With influencers/celebrities

Partner with influencers to promote civic participation and civic and democratic values. The narrative should focus on the society as a whole rather than on ethnicity.

Choose relevant communication channels and apply both traditional and non-conventional approaches

Use TV to reach the majority of this group.

The most recommended options are newscasts, debates, talk shows, open studios, etc.

Consider using other types of programs to reach this segment, due to the reluctance towards political programs. Consider lifestyle programs, health, cooking shows, etc.

This group tends to prefer regional and foreign TV stations when sourcing ethnically-related information. Combine TV with social media and web portals to ensure effective outreach to this community.

Use social media to reach the young, educated, and employed segment of the population.

Social media is the key information channel with great potential for engagement and participation of the younger portion of this demographic group.

Organize face-to-face meetings or other community events.

The format of these meetings should be informal (coffee gatherings, debates, joint community projects).

Pilot non-traditional channels

- ♦ Organize regional entertainment or sports events.
- ♦ Organize entertaining activities and events to trigger interest and attendance.