

INFORMATION SOURCES

URBAN POPULATION

Low level of trust in the media is common across all participants in the focus group as well as across all profile groups. The media is generally perceived as politically inclined and biased as a result of which people tend to source information from various media to be able to form a personal understanding of the social and political developments in the country.

“ I follow different media and I always make comparisons. The information presented in different TV channels is so drastically different as if they report from different countries. ”
Female, 54, Prilep

Almost half of the participants (46%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information and 28% learn about current socio-political developments via social networks.



TV 46%

RURAL POPULATION

Predominant users of television as a primary source of information about current socio-political developments are people over the age of 55, with primary education and monthly household income below 12,000 denars.

Television is the predominant source of information for people living in rural settlements, as indicated by 51% of the respondents, followed by social networks (26%) and web portals (7%).



TV 51%

YOUTH

Almost half of the young people (47%) indicated that social media (Facebook and Instagram) are the predominant sources of information.

Two out of ten young people are typically informed about the current socio-political developments via television.

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A graphic element consisting of a dark green rectangular box with a white border. Inside the box, on the left, is a white lowercase 'f' representing the Facebook logo. To the right of the 'f' is the text '47%' in a dark green font.

f 47%

Although social media is the most frequently used source of information by young people across all ethnic groups, the ethnic Albanian youth are more informed through television, family, friends and relatives.

“ I am mainly interested in sports. As far as political topics are concerned, I follow the latest news and my social media feeds. If I get information - it's OK, if don't get it - I don't actively search for it... ”
Male, 21, Kumanovo

FIRST TIME VOTERS

Social media (Facebook and Instagram) are the predominant sources of information among the first time voters (54%). Three out of ten respondents state that they do not get informed about socio-political developments.



54%

There is no significant difference with regards to the interest and use of various sources of information across gender, ethnicity, and place of residence for this group.

Furthermore, the group indicated sporadic search for specific information and incidental consumption of information.

“ I am not really interested in politics. I sometimes read posts on Facebook, but in general, I don’t consume such information. ”
Male, 18, Stip

“ I sometimes get updated on political issues in the country, but I’m not genuinely interested in it. I source information only from the social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram. I don’t watch TV at all. ”
Female, 19, Prilep

RURAL YOUTH

Young people in rural settlements are interested in information concerning sports, entertainment, science, and culture.

Similarly to the young people in general and first time voters, social media (Facebook and Instagram) are the predominant sources of information for rural youth, as indicated by 53% of the survey participants. Despite the popularity of the social media as a source of information, rural youth are concerned about the proliferation of fake news and lack of control over online media.

Two out of ten respondents source information about the current socio-political developments via television, while one out of ten obtains information online.

Social media (Facebook and Instagram) are the predominant sources of information for rural youth, as indicated by 53% of the survey participants.



f 53%

There is no significant difference with regards to the use of various sources of information across gender, ethnicity, and education profile in this group.

Furthermore, this demographic group is sceptical about the objectivity, independence, and political impartiality of the media in the country, which leads to very low trust in the media.

“ I think the media is inclined towards one or another political party. As if everyone is reporting what is in their favour, everyone is telling their own perspectives of the events, their own version of the truth. ”

Male, 18, Mogila

WOMEN

Women participants in focus groups (with rural and urban women) are mostly interested in information concerning COVID-19 and its effects on education, education process, kindergartens, unemployment, youth problems, as well as the current political situation and formation of the new government.

“ I am interested in information concerning everything that affects me in my everyday life, from education to health and economics. For example, it is very important whether schools will resume in September [with physical presence of the children] ”

Woman, 39, Skopje

More than half of the women respondents (52%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information, a slightly higher percentage compared to men (45%).

Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the respondents point out they learn about socio-political developments via social networks, 7% via web portals, 4% through their family and friends, while 9% are not informed at all.

Similarly to the trends in the general population, social media is more frequently used by younger women aged up to 24 (54%), students (46%), and those with higher education (39%).

Focus group findings show a low level of trust in the media among the female participants, mostly due to fake news and perceived media bias. Therefore, there is a tendency to follow information from several different media to compare and analyse the information.

“ I do not have a specific media I trust because in my opinion all news is censored and 90% of the information is false and meaningless. ”

Woman, 35, Skopje

More than half of the women respondents (52%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information, a slightly higher percentage compared to men (45%).



TV 52%

RURAL WOMEN

The research, and in particular the discussions in the focus groups, show that rural women are mostly interested in information concerning COVID-19, education, unemployment, youth problems, as well as the current political situation and formation of the new government.¹¹

Their principal concerns are related to local issues and problems including:

- ♦ Lack of clean drinking water
- ♦ Lack of sewerage and wastewater systems
- ♦ Poor infrastructure, unpaved streets, flooded streets due to heavy rainfall
- ♦ Stray dogs
- ♦ Lack of kindergartens
- ♦ Poor electrical power supply system resulting in frequent power outages

“ I am together with my children at the moment... but I will try to share my opinion. As the other participants, I am also concerned about this pandemic and the health care in our country. I used to be interested in politics, but lately I am not. I stand aside. ”

Female, 38, Tearce

¹¹ The field work (interviews and focus groups) of the research coincided with the consolidation of the government following the June, 2020 Parliamentary Elections.

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



TV 55%

More than half of the rural women respondents (55%) compared to 52% women in general or 49% women from urban settlements, indicated that television is their predominant source of information, 24% of the respondents point out they learn about current socio-political developments via social networks, 7% most usually get informed via web portals, 5% through their family and friends, while 7% are not informed at all.

As is the case with women from urban settlements, focus group findings with rural women show low level of trust in the media and a tendency to follow information from several different media in order to compare the information and form their own opinion.

At the same time, some respondents stated they choose not to get informed at all by the websites of the institutions and municipalities because in their opinion all the information on these websites was outdated and incomplete.

“ I do not use the social networks but I follow different TV channels, Alsat, TV 21, Telma ... I listen, I read the news, but I don't trust them. They report the news, but who knows if it's true. ”
Female, 38, Tearce

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Similarly to the other groups, almost all participants in the focus group expressed a lack of trust in the media and a tendency to follow different media to compare and analyse information.

Many of them expressed revolt against the political bias of the media in the country, stating that the partial and biased reporting of the media deepens the division among the citizens. This is cited as the primary reason for the lack of interest about social and political events in the country. The vast majority of the respondents prefer to watch TV programs about culture, nature and healthy life, as well as documentaries, content which is rarely broadcasted in the media.

Six out of ten survey respondents (58%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information and 15% indicated that they learn also about the socio-political developments via social networks. Seven per cent (7%) of the respondents obtain information via web portals, eleven (11%) through their family and friends and nine per cent (9%) state that they are not informed at all.

Six out of ten survey respondents (58%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information



TV 58%

ROMA

The survey participants indicated that they are most interested in obtaining information about health care, education, employment, measures for socially vulnerable groups, as well as infrastructure, water supply, and sewerage. With regards to local issues and concerns, the focus groups participants were interested in the organisation of events and activities, as well as in obtaining related information.

“ I am mostly interested in the daily developments at the local level, with regards to the economy, investments, healthcare and most importantly - employment. I am the least interested in the current events in the world. ”
Male, 29, Prilep

Almost half of the participants (49%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information and two out of ten survey participants (predominantly of up to 34 years of age) indicated that they source information about socio-political developments via social networks. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of 21% are not informed at all.

Television is the predominant source of information, indicated by almost half of the respondents 49%

TV 49%



REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Similarly to the general population, television is the predominant source of information for people living in remote communities, as indicated by 57% of the survey participants. Two out of ten people living in remote communities source information about current socio-political developments largely via social networks, while 8% obtain information through friends and family.

Television is the predominant source of information for people living in remote communities, as indicated by 57% of the survey participants.



TV 57%

Furthermore, due to lack of trust in the presented information and the widespread perception of news as fake, this group demonstrates very low trust in media.

VERY POOR

Television is the predominant source of information for the very poor people, as indicated by 69% of the survey participants (20% more compared to the general population). Fifteen per cent (15%) of this group are informed about the socio-political developments mostly via social networks, while 4% obtain information through friends and family and 3% via web portals.

Television is the predominant source of information for the very poor people, as indicated by 69% of the survey participants (20% more compared to the general population).



TV 69%

Of note is that this demographic group uses social networks less often compared to the general population (27%) as well as web portals (10%), likely due to limited technical resources.

Similarly to the general population and the other demographic groups, very poor people believe the media is biased and have low trust in the media.

CHRONICALLY UNEMPLOYED

Almost half of the participants (48%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information and nearly one quarter (23%) indicated that they learn about current socio-political developments via social networks. Nevertheless, every tenth respondent receives no information.

Almost half of the participants (48%) indicated that television is their predominant source of information.



TV 48%

Similarly to the general population and other demographic groups, the chronically unemployed persons perceive the media as biased and partisan - presenting the information from the point of view of the political party that finances the media outlet. This leads to very low trust in the media due to which respondents tend to follow information on various media and compare and analyse. The proliferation of fake news presented in the media causes additional confusion and concerns for this group.

“ I do not rely on social media at all, because they are very biased. They write what their party tells them to write. I believe that many have already seen through their lies and do not believe them anymore. ”
Male, 51, Strumica

OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

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.