

ELECTION PROCESS

URBAN POPULATION

The urban demographic group associates elections with phrases such as: “demagoguery”, “fake promises”, “soap opera” and “complete madness”.

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

74%
Yes

20%
No

1%
Refuses to answer

5%
Does not know

Similarly to the rural population, almost three quarters of the survey participants who live in urban areas think that every vote is important and can impact election results (74%), while one fifth (20%) do not share the same opinion.

Seven out of ten respondents living in urban areas (68%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to motivate citizens to change or influence policies, which is 10% more compared to the rural population (58%). Two out of ten (22%) believe that voting is sufficient, while one out of ten is ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

77% regularly or often

11% sometimes

6% usually not

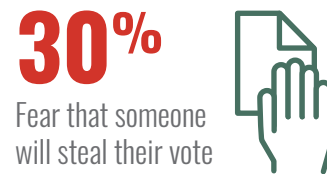
4% never

The research shows that 77% vote almost regularly or often, 11% sometimes, 6% usually do not vote and 4% never vote.

In addition, 38% state they always vote for the same political party, while 44% vote for different parties. This indicates that they are likely to abandon loyalty to a given political party should other political opportunities arise.

Factors that influence their decision to vote:

Similarly to the rural population, the top three factors that influence the urban population to go out and vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (57%), better prospects for the future (45%), and fear that someone would misuse their vote (30%).



More than half of the respondents (57%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families (7% less than the rural population), while 41% vote differently than their families.

Six out of ten respondents' decision to vote is not influenced by their friends.

Similarly to the other profile groups, this group would like to see more familiar and local people, as well as youth as candidates on the party lists for elections or as elected officials (e.g. in municipal councils).

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

Young people



People they know



More likely 

No impact 

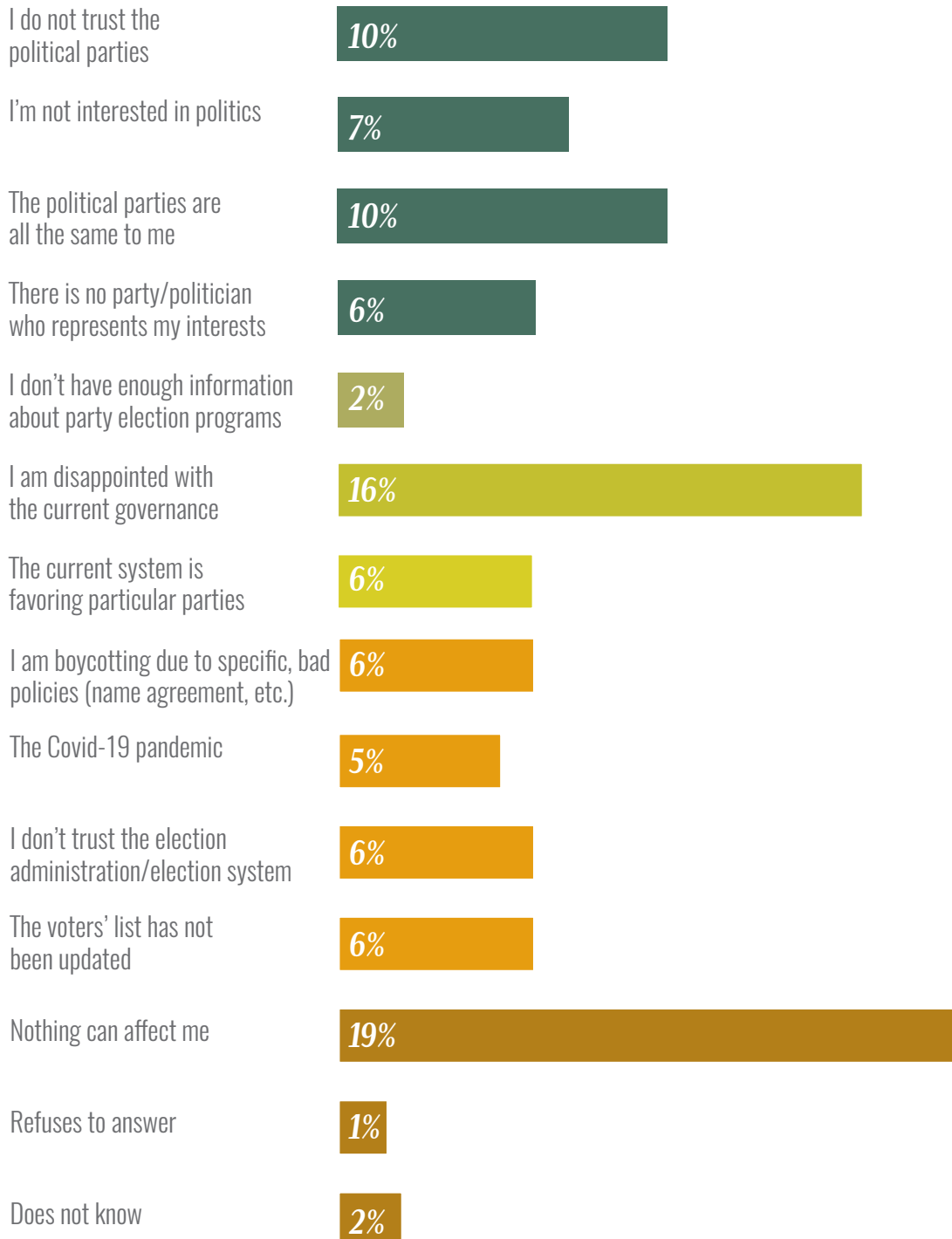
Less likely 

Do not know 

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties demotivates people from remote communities to go out and vote.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



In addition, focus group participants noted that an increasing number of citizens decide not to vote due to dissatisfaction with the political parties in the country. Although the prevailing opinion is that voting is a civic duty, many participants believe that abstention from voting due to dissatisfaction is not an irresponsible behavior, but rather an expression of revolt and sending a clear message to all political parties.

Although in smaller percentage (52%), the respondents share the perception of the rural population (64%) that the interests of the rural population are not equally addressed by the political parties in terms of their inclusion in the party programs, on candidates lists, etc).

<i>Do you think that political parties equally address the interests of the rural and the urban population?</i>	20%	31%	1%
	Yes	No	Refuses to answer
	18%	21%	9%
	Most often yes	Most often no	Does not know

RURAL POPULATION

The focus group participants perceive elections as “unnecessary”, “waste of state budget”, and “too frequent”.

The qualitative research shows that this demographic group is suspicious of the legitimacy of all elections in the country, believing that everything has been pre-arranged and that “the international factor” is predominant in determining the election outcome.

Do you believe every vote is important and can impact the election results?

75%
Yes

17%
No

14%
Refuses to answer

Almost three quarters of the respondents are of the opinion that every vote is important and can impact the election results (75%), whereas 17% do not believe so.

Six out of ten respondents indicated that voting per se is not sufficient to effectuate change or influence policies; three out of ten believe that voting can effectuate change or influence policies, whereas one out of ten claimed ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

75% always or often

14% sometimes

5% usually not

3% never

The research shows that 75% of the respondents vote almost always or often, 14% sometimes, 5% usually abstain, and 3% regularly abstain from voting.

Forty-one per cent (41%) of the respondents regularly vote for the same party, and an equal percentage vote for different political parties. This indicates that they would vote for another party if the policies of the party they support prove to be unsuccessful.

“ I always say - if this person or party has not been good so far, they should be punished. ”
Male, 44, Miletino

Factors that influence the decision to vote

The top three factors that influence the respondent's decision to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (56%), prospects for better future (39%), and fear that their vote would be stolen (27%).

56%

Civic right and duty



39%

Better future



27%

Fear that someone will vote instead of them



Whereas the percentage of reported difficulties during voting is small, most cases in this category concern non-possession of valid personal documents (7%).

Almost two thirds of the respondents (64%) stated that their decision to vote regularly or most often, overlaps with that of their families, whereas one third (33%) claimed that it differs from their families.

Six out of ten respondents' decision to vote is not influenced by their friends.

Nevertheless, this demographic group points out the “pressure by their friends” to vote for a particular political party in order to improve their friends' employment prospects.

“ I used to go out and vote because my friends asked me to and I did so to do them a favour. I am glad I could help, they are struggling to get an employment either in REK Bitola or in education. ”
Female, 37, Krklino

People living in rural areas would like to see more people from their local community, and familiar people as candidates on the party lists for elections or as elected officials, e.g. in municipal councils.

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

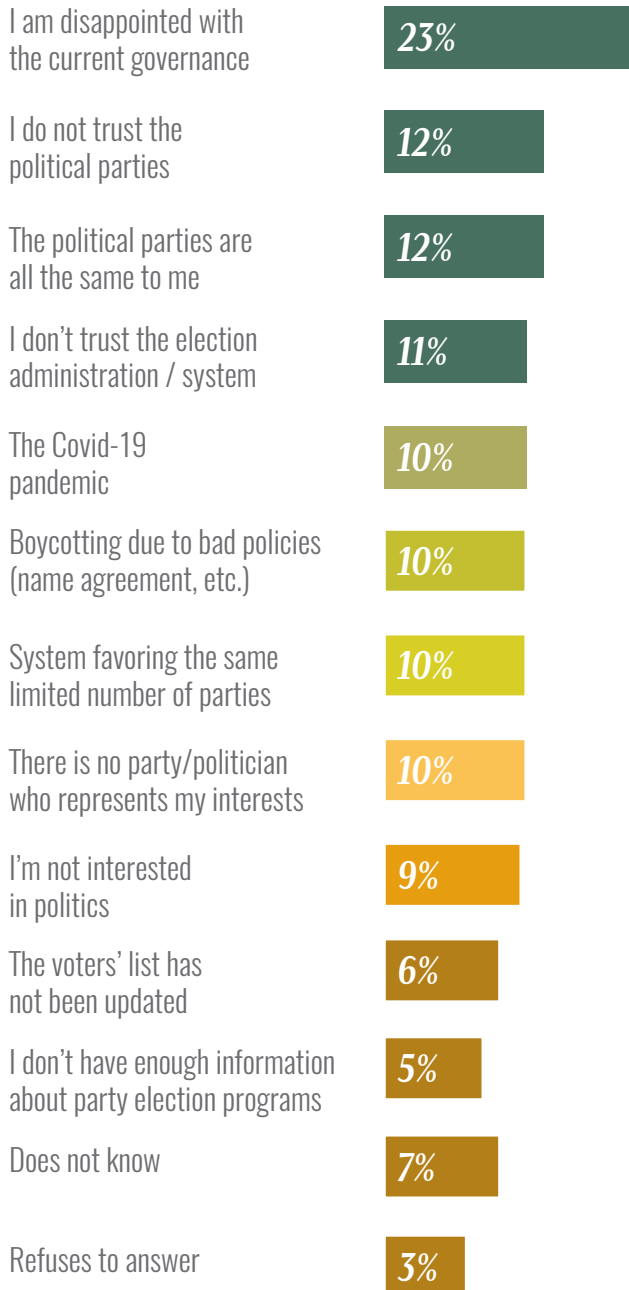


More likely No impact Less likely Do not know

Demotivation to vote

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

What can influence your decision not to vote?



Slightly over half of the responses (57%) concern dissatisfaction with the governance and the political parties in general (disappointment, perception that all the parties are the same, that there is no party or politician representing their interests and values, and distrust).

The vast majority of people living in rural settlements (64%) believe that the interests of the rural population are not considered equally by the political parties in comparison to the urban population.

<i>Do you think that the interest of the rural population are considered equally by the political parties</i>	15%	13%	21%
	Yes	Most often yes	Most often no
	43%	2%	6%
	No	Refuses to answer	Do not know

The belief is that there is a strong discrimination of the rural areas in the country across political programs and political parties. As inhabitants in the rural areas, they feel rejected and unacknowledged at local and central level.

“ In rural areas nobody is interested to do something for us, for the citizens. We live in a divided society, as if we are not there or as if we are some other part of the country. We feel discriminated and rejected. We are only a leftover of the city. ”
Female, 37, Krklino

YOUTH

Focus group participants tend to perceive elections in the country as “frequent”, “not legitimate”, “decided by the USA”, “fake democracy”, “strong political pressures” and “fear of loss of employment”.



More than two thirds of the respondents believe that every vote counts and can impact election results (67%), while 26% do not believe in the importance of every vote.

Half of the respondents indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens to effectuate changes in policies, three out of ten believe voting is sufficient, while one out of ten claimed ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

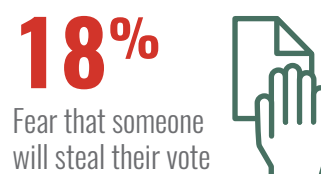
According to the research, 44% of the respondents indicate they vote almost regularly, 16% often, 17% sometimes, 10% usually do not vote and 7% never vote.



In addition, 43% of the respondents state they regularly vote for the same party and 26% vote for different political parties.

Factors that influence their decision to vote:

The research shows that the top three factors that influence young people's decision to vote are: belief that voting is a civic right and duty (48%), better prospects (38%), and fear that someone would steal their vote (18%).



The group further underlines the importance of voting in terms of ensuring accountability and fulfilment of promises made by the elected officials.

“ If you don't vote today, you don't have the right to complain tomorrow or ask for responsibility. ”
Male, 18, Gostivar

Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while almost the same percentage (47%) state their decision is not the same or most often not the same as that of their families.

With regards to their friends' influence on voting, two thirds of the young people point out that their decision to vote is not the same or most often not the same as that of their friends.

Young people prefer youth representatives, local and familiar people on the candidate lists.

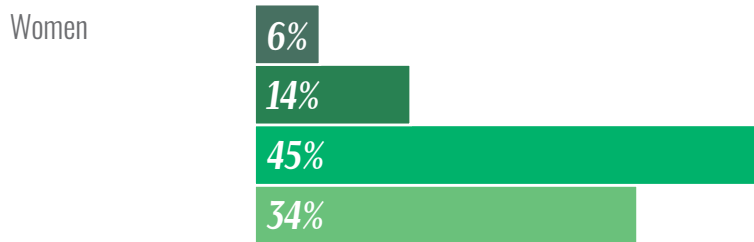
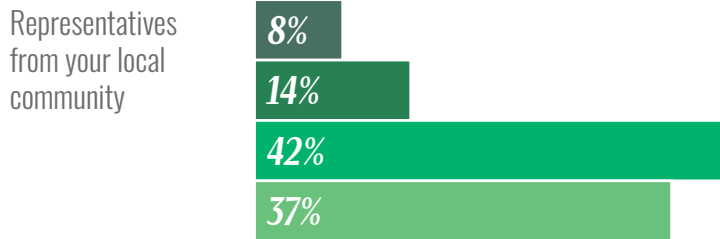
If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?

Young people



People you know



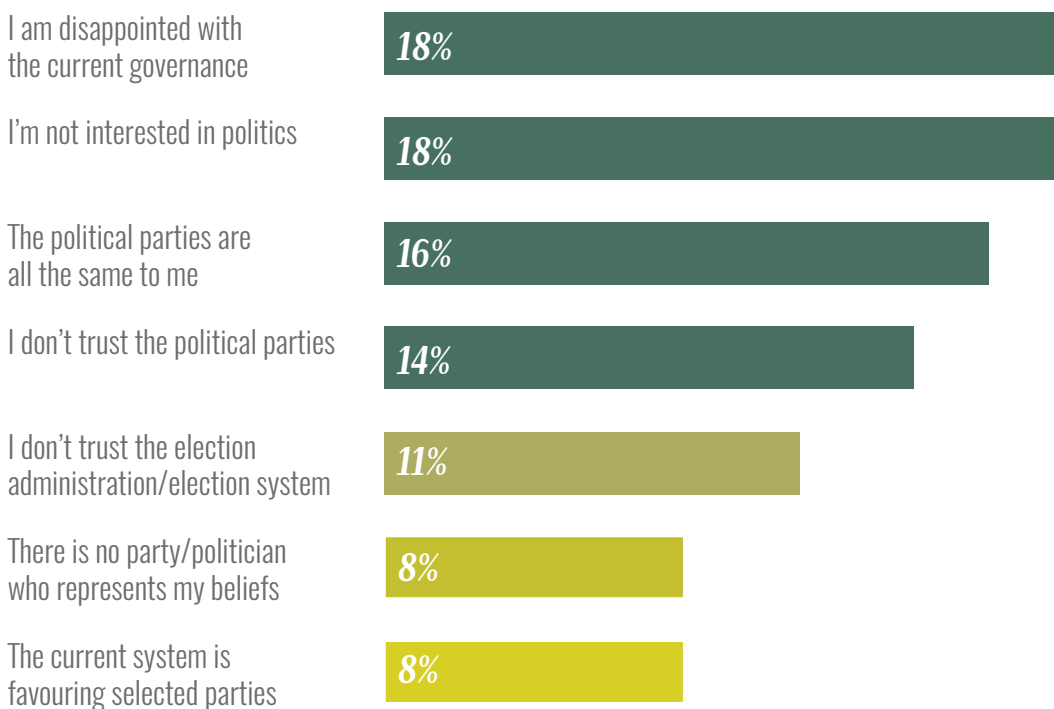


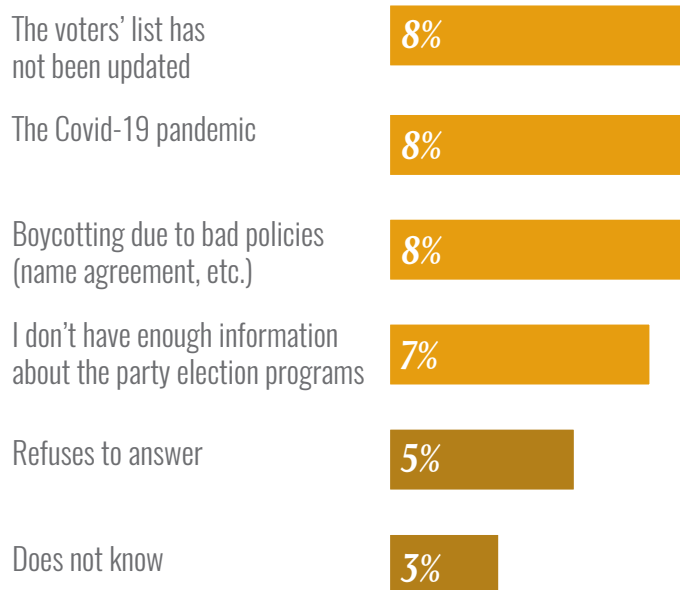
More likely  No impact  Less likely  Do not know 

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with political parties, lack of interest in politics and lack of trust in the election system/election administration are the key factors that influence first time voters' decision to abstain from voting.

What can influence your decision not to vote?





Focus group findings show that women from rural areas state that pressures from the parties were particularly strong in rural areas and that political party membership is often the most important condition for employment.

“ Only if there is a massive boycott of the elections, a message will be sent to the political parties, a message of dissatisfaction and revolt about their work. ”
Female, 26, Strumica

FIRST TIME VOTERS

A broad negative perception about voting is prevalent among first time voters.

“Fictional”, “in vain”, “stagnation”, “no real choice”, “low turnout”, “invalid ballots”, “political pressure and blackmailing”, “fear among the citizens” are the most common associations for elections in the country among the participants in the focus group discussion.

*Do you think that every
vote counts and can
impact election results?*

49%
Yes

36%
No

15%
Does not know

A significant portion of respondents doubt the importance of citizens’ vote and its impact on election results. The research shows that almost half of the respondents believe that every vote is important and can impact election results (49%), more than one third do not believe so (36%), while 15% claimed ignorant on the issue.

Half of the first time voters indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy making, three out of ten believe voting is sufficient, while two out of ten claimed ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

Curiosity to experience the voting process for the first time is the dominant motivation for this group to go out and vote.

Nevertheless, the enthusiasm for voting, decision-making, and active participation in policy making is not high. The respondents indicated indifference, including belief that the citizen’s vote does not have a significant impact and that election results are not reflective of the will of the people. The respondents indicate that young people are generally not interested in voting and that the initial enthusiasm diminishes over time.

“ I think that the family also has a great impact. If your parents don't vote on elections, that issue is no longer debatable at home. Politics is completely ignored because many parents are not satisfied with it. There seems to be a great division. Some families are helped by the party and all family members are employed, whereas some families survive on one salary. ”

Male, 17, Bitola

Furthermore, the research shows that the top three factors that influence first time voters' decision to vote are: prospects for better future (36%), fear that someone would steal their vote, i.e. vote instead of them (28%), and perception that voting is a civic right and duty (23%).

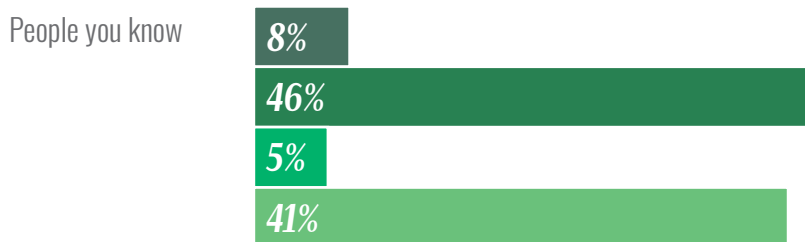
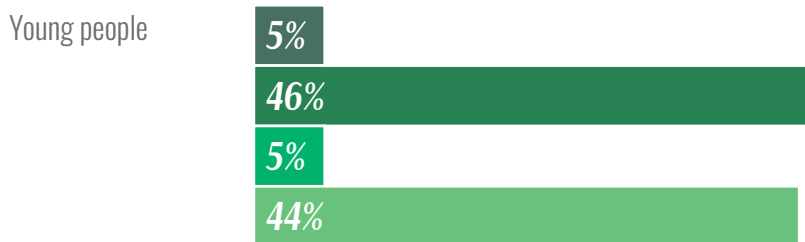
Family is another significant factor that affects the first time voters' turnout.

Half of the respondents indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families.



First time voters would like to see more youth representatives and people they know on the candidate lists.

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



More likely  No impact  Less likely  Do not know 

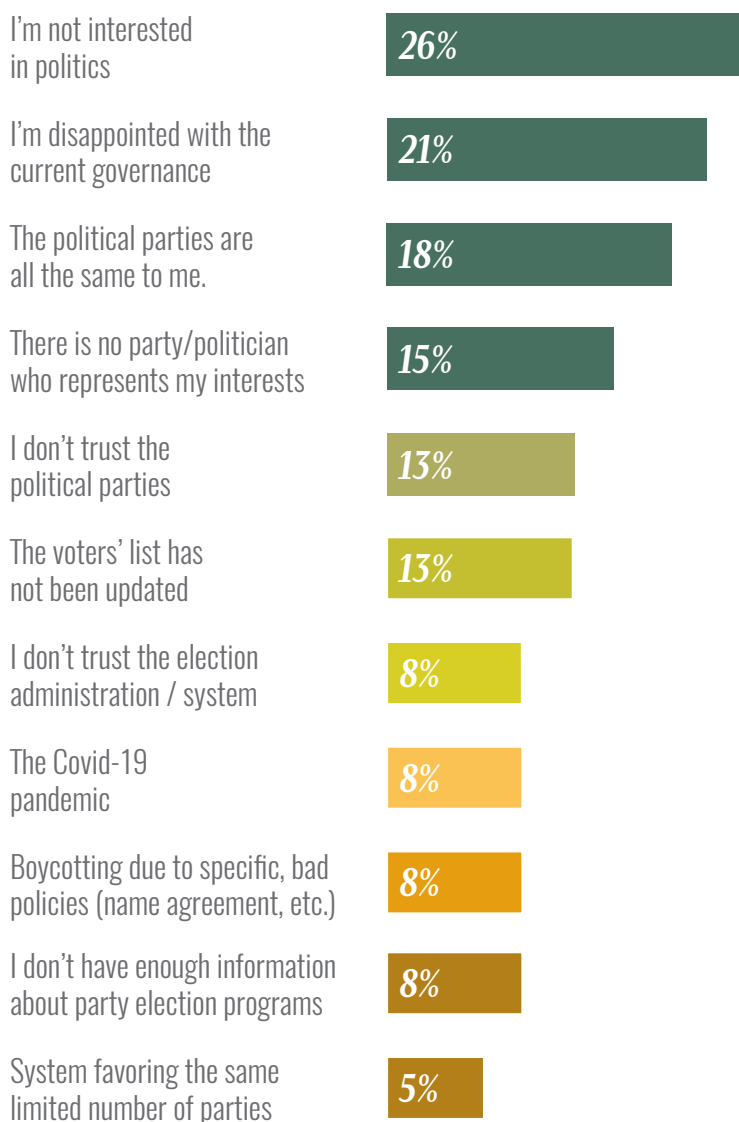
These findings are confirmed by the focus groups.

“ I think that if young people were into politics, political parties would definitely target us as voters instead of the pensioners. ”
Female, 18, Kumanovo

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties, lack of interest in politics and lack of trust in the voter list are the key factors that influence first time voters' decision to abstain from voting.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



*“ There’s no one to vote for on elections.
I don’t like any of the candidates. ”*
Female, 19, Prilep

*“ Young people are not interested in politics. There is
no party we would vote for. We don’t plan to stay and
live in this country. We do not see a future here. ”*
Female, 18, Skopje

*“ These elections were hilarious. The party
campaigns were comical. They go to such an
extreme that they could not be more unrealistic. ”*
Female, 19, Strumica

Low level of information and interest about the election process is prevalent among the first time voters.

Three out of ten first time voters know how to check their data on the voter list, while seven out of ten do not have this information.

RURAL YOUTH

Young people from rural areas associate elections with phrases such as: “disaster”, “unnecessary waste of money”, “unnecessary expense of the state budget”, “irregular”, “framed results”. Compared to first time voters and youth in general, rural youth believe more in the importance of citizens’ vote and its impact on election results.

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

74%

Yes

21%

No

4%

Refuses to answer

1%

Does not know

Almost three quarters of the survey participants think that every vote is important and can impact election results (74%), while only 21% do not believe so.

More than half of the respondents (57%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in activities that can influence policies, three out of ten believe that voting is sufficient, while one out of ten is ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

65% regularly or often

19% sometimes

8% usually not

4% never

Similarly to the youth in general and first time voters, also included in this research, youth is motivated by actions rather than words. This type of reasoning underlies both their motivation to vote as well as to be politically active and civically engaged.

The research shows that 65% vote almost regularly or often, 19% sometimes, 8% usually do not vote, and 4% never vote.

In addition, 48% of the respondents regularly vote for the same party, while 31% vote for different political parties. This indicates that their support for a particular political party may change if other political options arise.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

Similarly to the general population, the top three factors that influence young people's decision to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (55%), prospects for better future (37%), and fear that someone would steal their vote (21%).

55%

Civic right and duty



37%

Better future



21%

Fear that someone will steal their vote



In addition, this group emphasises the political pressure to vote because in small villages “everybody knows everything about everyone”

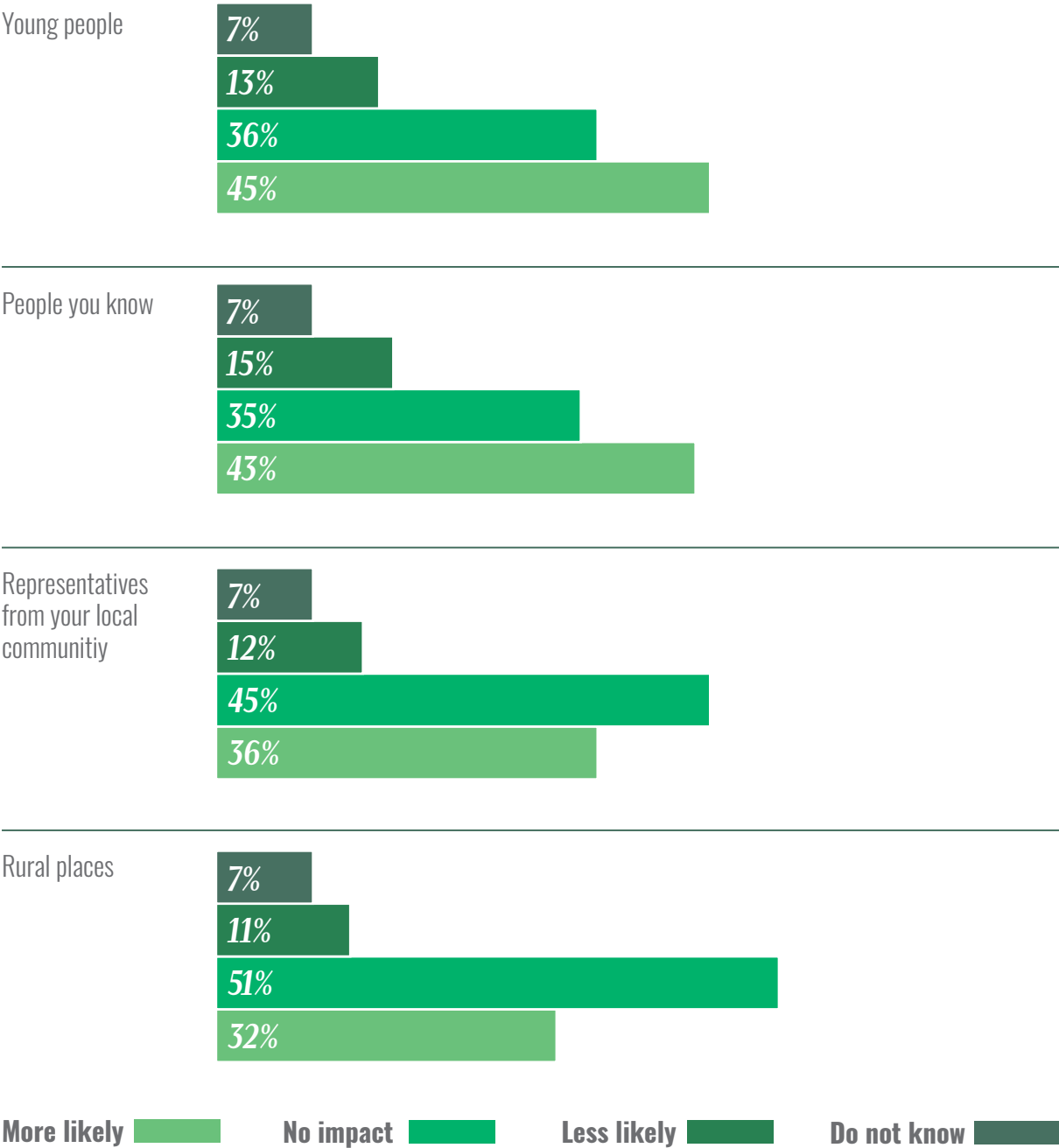
The survey participants would like to see more representatives of Roma people, youth, and familiar people on the candidate or council lists. More than half of the respondents (53%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while for 43% this differs from their families.

Six out of ten respondents' decisions to vote is not influenced by their friends.

“ If you don't vote, you're afraid someone might say you haven't voted. We don't know whether people vote for a certain political party or if they invalidate their ballot, but we know that there is political influence in everything. I think people are too frightened to stay at home. ”

Male, 24, Kalaslari

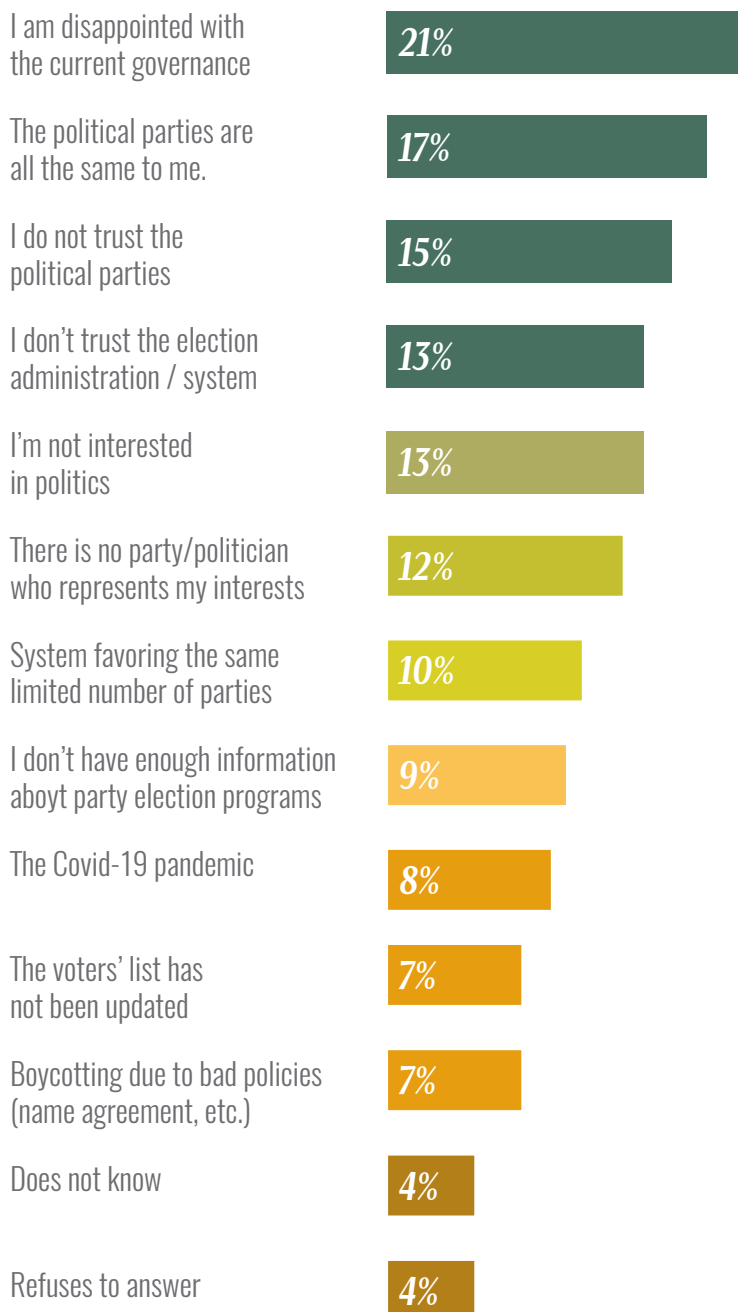
If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?



Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties is the key factor that influences the rural youth to abstain from voting.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



“ I think there are two types of people who do not vote. The first are those who are disappointed with the political parties, and the second are people who do not depend on political parties, therefore the election results do not have a significant effect on the quality of their life. ”

Female, 26, Prshovce

The majority believe that the interests of the rural population are not addressed equally by the political parties



“ I think the rural areas are neglected. It happens to see road repair two days before the elections, they only start working then. You can understand their strategy very easily. ”

Male, 24, Kalaslari

WOMEN

Focus group participants tend to associate elections in the country with the following phrases: “too frequent”, “huge expense for the country’s budget”, “expensive pre-election campaigns”, “monotony”, “false promises” and “attacks between the political opponents”.



Seven out of ten respondents believe that every vote is important and can impact election results, while two out of ten do not believe so.

More women (22%) than men (15%) do not believe in the importance of every vote and the reason for the scepticism may be due to women’s lower degree of confidence and trust in the institutions of the system, including those responsible for election administration.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy changes, 23% believe that voting can effectuate change or influence policies, while 11% claimed ignorant on the issue.

The generally accepted opinion that women shy away from public participation is also applicable here. Namely, while the majority of women believe that voting is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy changes, they are also hesitant to engage more. Therefore, the lack of engagement is a complex issue, not dependant solely on the lack of political awareness and as such requires further analyses and interpretation.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?



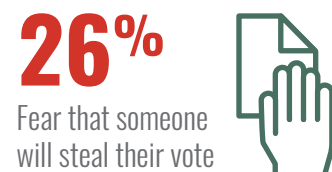
Fifty-two per cent (52%) of the survey respondents indicate that they vote almost regularly, 21% often, 13% sometimes, 6% usually abstain, and 5% regularly abstain from voting.

Forty-two per cent (42%) of the survey respondents vote for different political parties during different election cycles, while 39% regularly vote for the same party.

Factors that influence the decision to vote

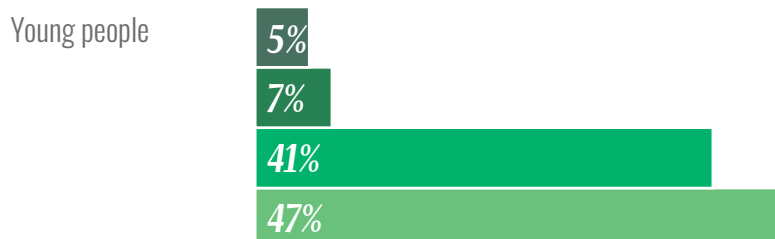
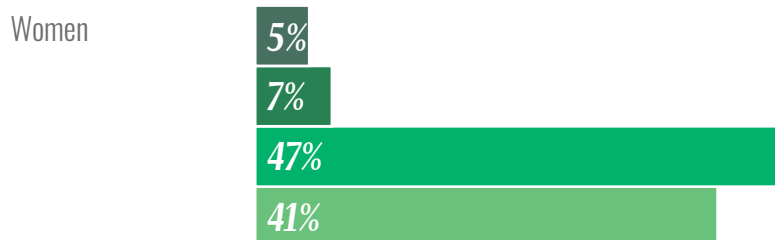
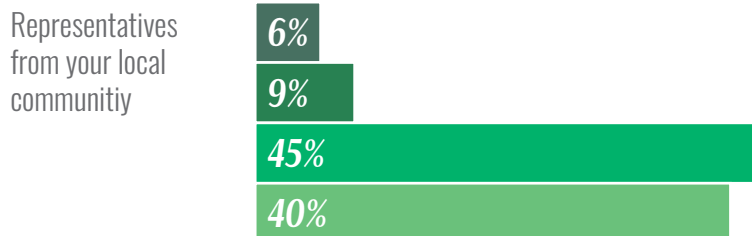
The top three factors that positively influence respondents' turnout are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (53%), prospects for a better future (41%), and fear that their vote would be stolen (26%).

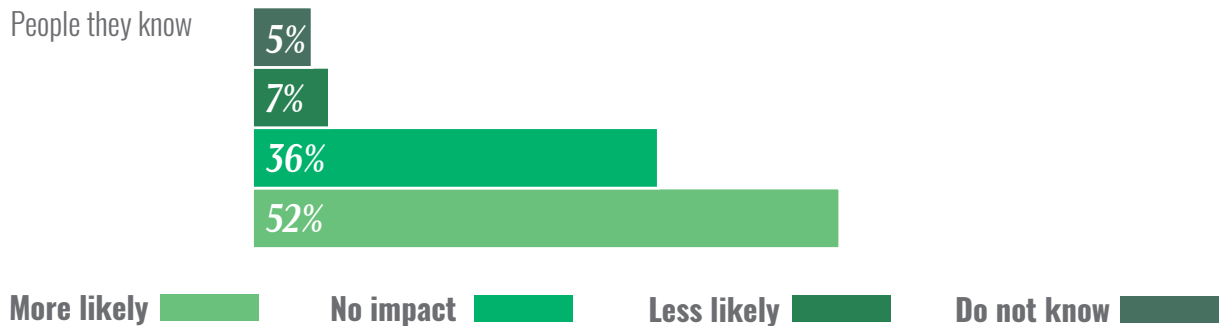
Sixty-two per cent (62%) of the women respondents indicate that their decision to vote regularly or most often overlaps with that of their families, while 26% claimed that their decision is the same or most often the same as that of their friends.



The survey respondents would like to see more familiar people, and young people on the candidate lists.

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





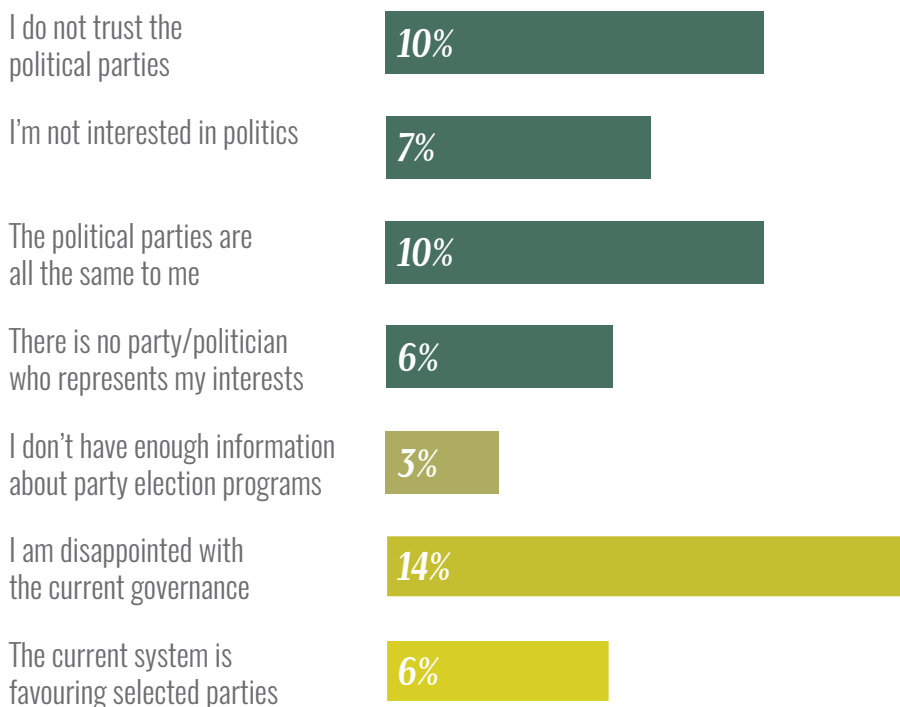
Interestingly, while women are not concerned with the specific needs of their gender or with equal gender representation, they tend to express satisfaction when women are active in politics and prefer to vote for women.

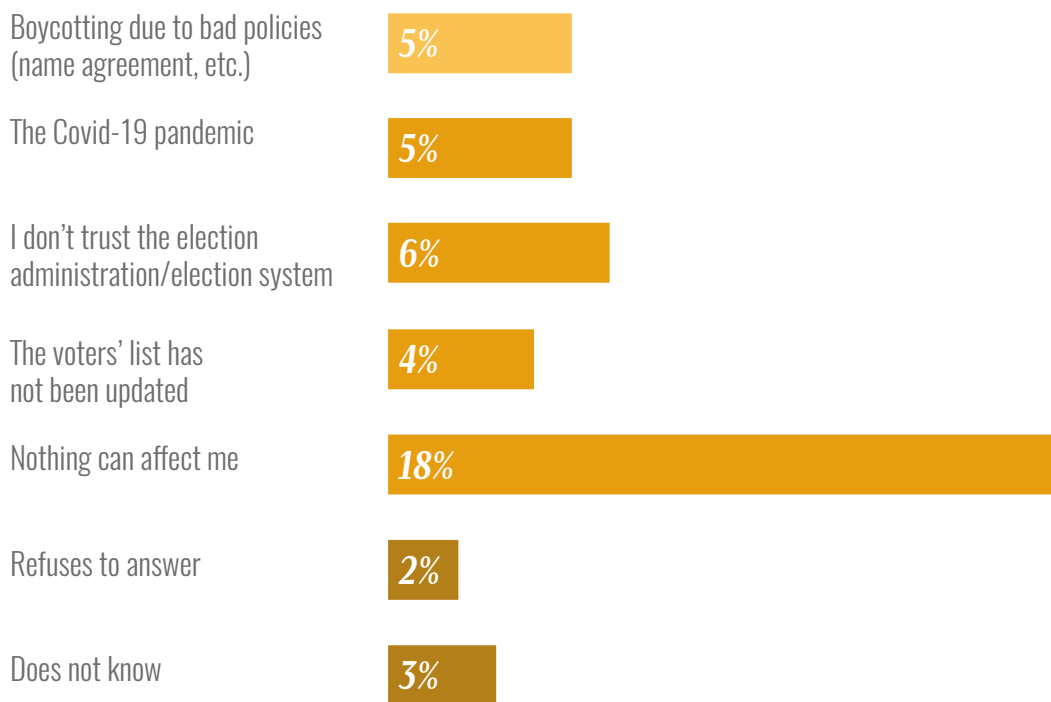
Thus, there is a discrepancy between the understanding of gender equality and its practical implementation (e.g. women running for political office). This discrepancy may be a result of the insufficient efforts of the education institutions, civil society, media to raise public awareness on the importance of gender equality and deflect stigmatization of the word “feminism”.

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties is the key factor that influences the respondents’ decision to abstain from voting.

What can influence your decision not to vote?





The high percentage of women (7 out of 10) who believe that every vote is important overlaps with the focus group findings that one part of the dissatisfied female voters contemplate boycotting elections as a way of expressing disappointment and revolt against the political parties and seek punishment for their unfulfilled promises.

“ Maybe it would be better if the majority of the people did not go out to vote. If there is a large number of dissatisfied voters who do not turn out to vote, then the political parties may be alarmed that something is really wrong. I think that would be a good message for them to start thinking about this country and these people. ”

Woman, 39, Skopje

RURAL WOMEN

Focus group participants tend to associate elections in the country with the following phrases: “lies”, “unfulfilled promises”, “people and politicians live in parallel universes”, “attacks and slander instead of good party programs”.

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

68%

Yes

23%

No

1%

Refuses to answer

8%

Does not know

Seven out of ten female respondents living in rural areas (68%) believe every vote is important and can impact election results, whereas two out of ten (23%) do not believe so.

Sixty per cent (60%) of the respondents indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to effect policy change, 25% believe that voting can effectuate change, whereas 13% claimed ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

50% regularly

22% often

16% sometimes

6% usually not

4% never

Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents indicate they vote regularly, 22% often, 16% sometimes, 6% usually abstain, and 4% regularly abstain from voting.

Forty-three per cent (43%) of the respondents vote for different political parties during different election cycles, whereas 40% regularly vote for the same party.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

The top three factors that positively influence respondents' turnout are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (52%), prospects for a better future (40%) and fear that their vote would be misused (27%).

52%

Civic right and duty



40%

Better future



27%

Fear that someone will steal their vote



Sixty-six per cent (66%) of the respondents indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while 28% state their decision is the same or most often the same as that of their friends.

The survey respondents would like to see more familiar people, young people and women as representatives on the candidate lists.

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

Rural places

7%

7%

47%

40%

Representatives from your local community

7%

7%

44%

42%

Women

7%

7%

43%

44%

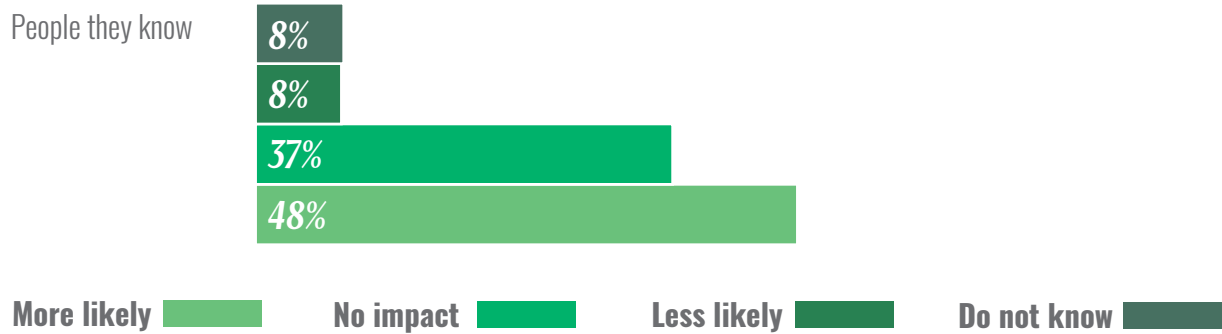
Young people

7%

8%

39%

46%



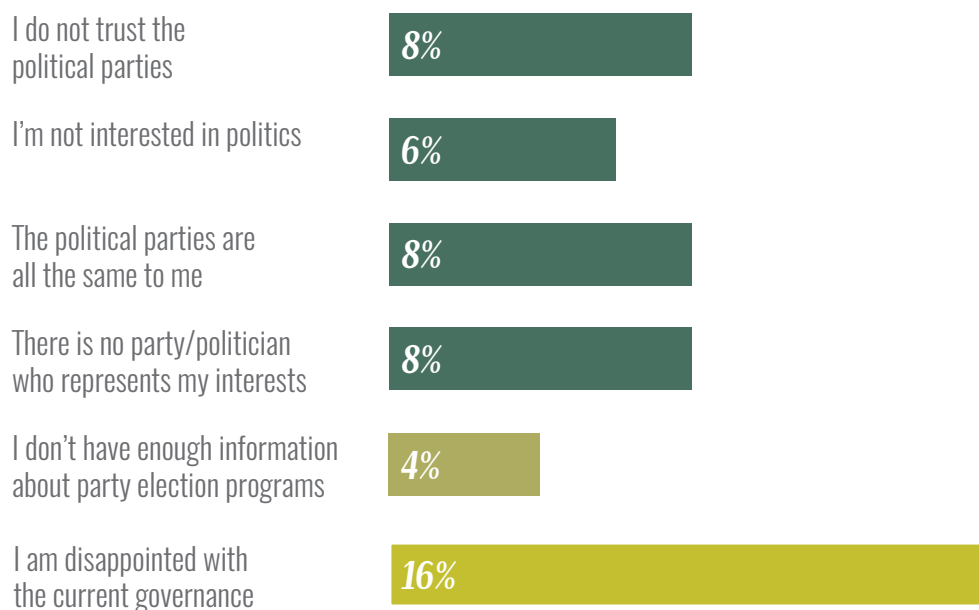
“ We have to fight alone and not underestimate our abilities, because, let’s be honest, we are smarter than men. We are persistent, if we set a goal, we do not give up and go to the end. That is why we must not allow ourselves to be second-class citizens and we should be more involved in politics. ”

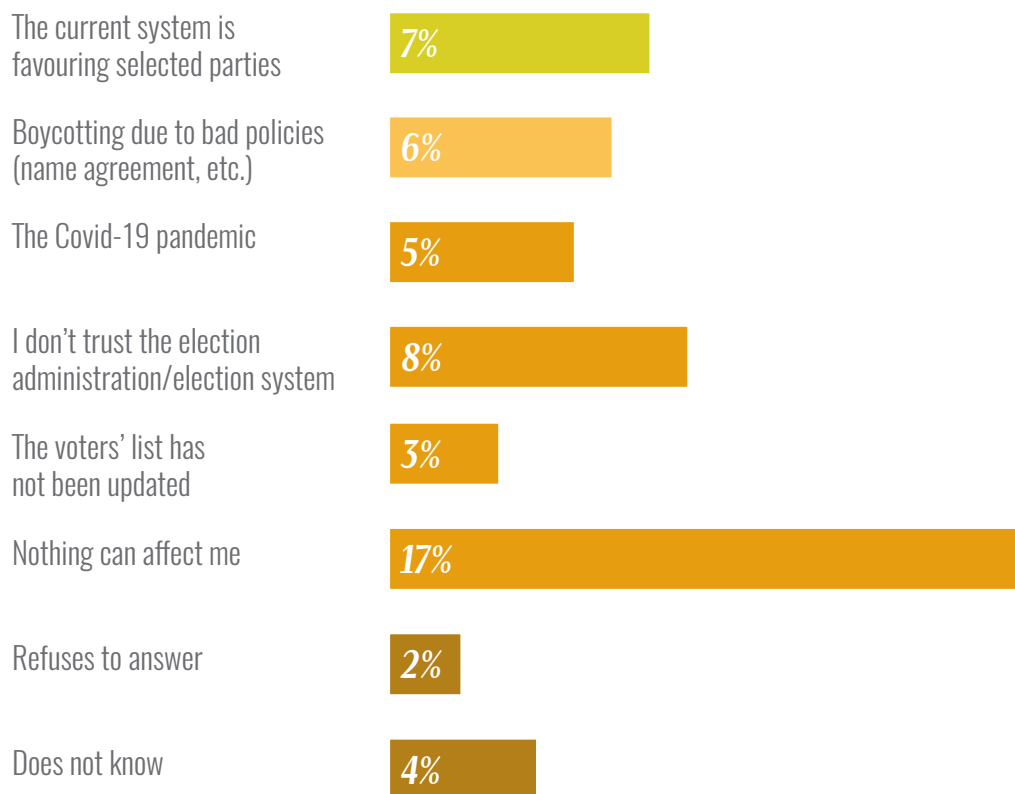
Female, 38, Tearce

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?





Women in the focus group from rural areas state that pressures from the parties were particularly strong in their communities and that political party membership is often the most important condition for employment.

“ Yes, I was under pressure and so was my husband. That was in 2016 before the elections, my husband was threatened that I would get fired if he did not vote for a certain political party. I can not forget how stressful that was. I do not want anyone to experience it. ”
Female, 38, Tearce

“ I do not know whether to call it a pressure, but they told me that if I want to get a job I have to vote for them. In the end, I did not get the job. I have not trusted any party since then. ”
Female, 26, Prshove

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Survey participants most often associate elections in the country with phrases such as “corruption” “green market”, “irregularities”, “bribing votes” and “charade”.

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

75%

Yes

14%

No

2%

Refuses to answer

9%

Does not know

Persons with disabilities believe that elections are marred by irregularities. They cite strong political influence and vote-buying in the period **before elections**, pressure and intimidation of citizens, photographing of ballots, etc.

The group further cites a pronounced non-compliance with the requirements concerning voting of persons with disabilities, including:

- ♦ Limited access to polling stations (most of the polling stations are located in schools and there are very few schools with access for persons with disabilities.
- ♦ Lack of ballot frames for the visually impaired persons or failure to provide them to the those in need- “they stay packed in a bag”.

“ If you do not have access ramps for people in wheelchairs, if you do not display the ballot guides for the blind on the tables, it’s a disaster. We have printed for everyone in the polling station an illustrative display of the needs of the persons with disabilities... but they were not displayed in any of the three polling stations I visited during the presidential election. ”

Male, 51, Kumanovo

Most of the respondents remarked that despite training the election board members on voting rights and raising their awareness on the needs of the persons with disabilities, these are not implemented on Election Day. A general observation is that the legal requirements have been put in place; however, there is no effective implementation. A portion of the participants indicates that persons with disabilities from rural areas are particularly discriminated in this regard, leading to their strong disappointment with the work of the State Election Commission and the election administration.

Data from the survey shows that a significant percentage of persons with disabilities experience difficulties during the voting process due to lack of understanding of the voting procedures (20%). Fourteen per cent (14%) of the survey participants point out that they lack adequate access to the polling stations and 13% lack adequate transportation. However, in general, there are no major difficulties reported by the respondents with regard to voting.

Similarly to the general population, around three quarters of the respondents believe that every vote is important and can impact election results (74%), while 14% do not believe in the importance of every vote.

Compared to the general population, people with disabilities are less inclined to believe that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy changes (53% or 11% less than the general population), a quarter (24%) believes that voting is sufficient, while 20% (11% more) claim ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

34% regularly

20% often

22% sometimes

14% usually not

4% never

Thirty-four per cent (34%) of the survey respondents indicate that they vote almost regularly, 20% often, 22% sometimes, 14% usually do not vote and 4% never vote. This is indicative of the fact that there are fewer regular voters among persons with disabilities compared to the general population (76% always or often vote).

Nearly half of the survey respondents (51%) vote for different political parties, while 33% regularly vote for the same party, which is seven per cent lower than the general population (40% vote regularly for the same party).

Factors that influence their decision to vote

The top three factors that influence the respondents' decision to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (44%), better prospects (38%) and fear that someone would misuse their vote (29%).

People living in remote communities would like to see more representatives of people they know and young people as candidates on the party lists for elections (or as elected officials, for example in municipal councils).

Six out of ten respondents (60%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while three out of ten (29%) state their decision is the same or most often the same as that of their friends.

44%

Civic right and duty



38%

Better future



29%

Fear that someone will steal their vote



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

People you know

15%

7%

33%

45%

Young people

16%

5%

36%

42%

Representatives from their local community

13%

2%

55%

31%

More likely



No impact



Less likely



Do not know

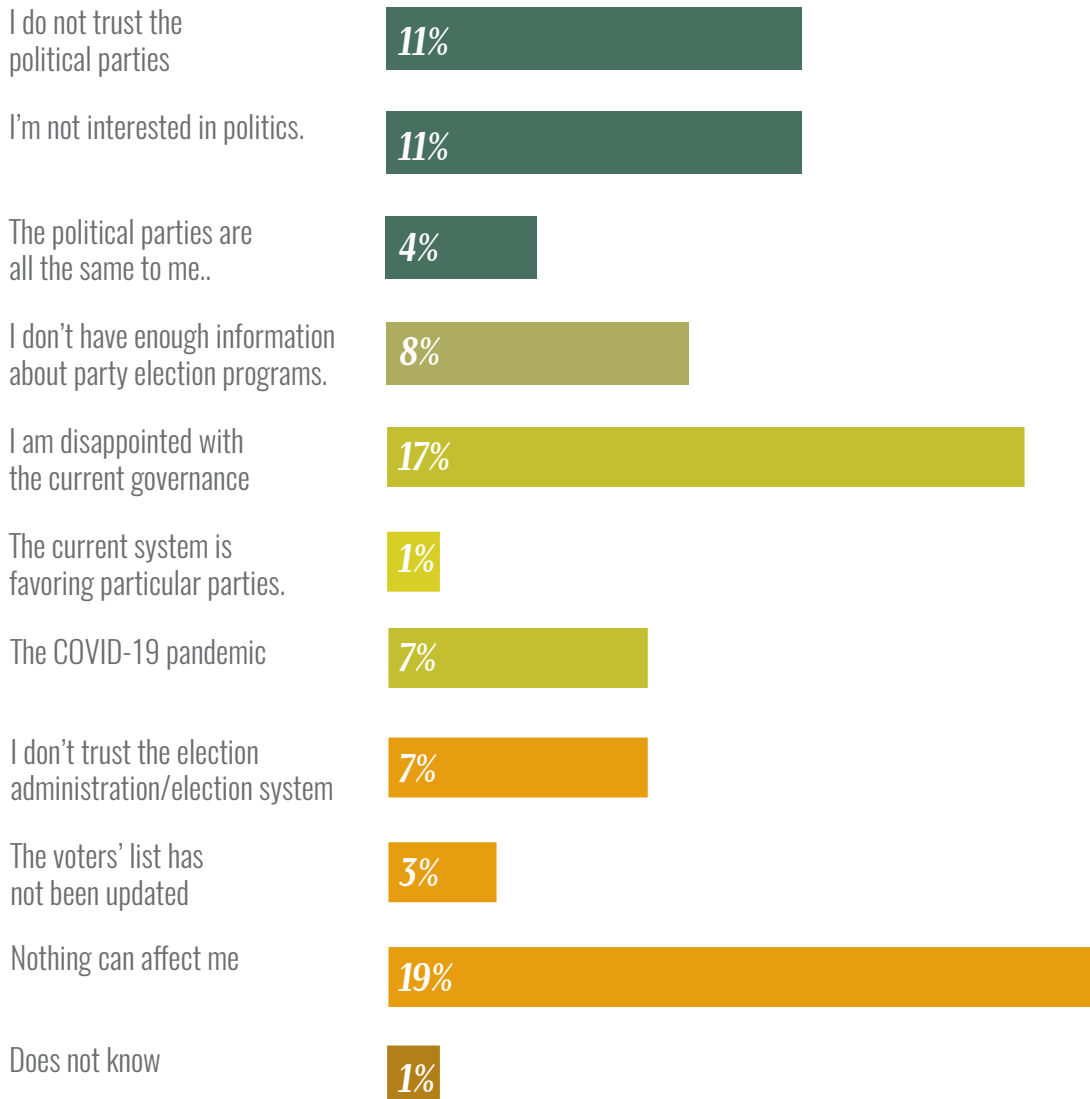


The survey participants would like to see more representatives of people they know, young people and representatives from their local community on the candidate lists for local and parliamentary elections.

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties demotivates people from remote communities to go out and vote.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



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

According to this group, abstention from voting is a legitimate right of every citizen and as such sends a significant message to the political parties. Nevertheless, the respondents believe that the political parties are not responsive to or interested in the needs of this category of people.

ROMA

Survey participants most often associate elections in the country with phrases such as “stealing again,” “good acting,” “empty promises,” “asphalting” and “salary and pension raise.”

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

56%
Yes

33%
No

11%
Refuses to answer

More than half of the respondents believe every vote is important and can impact election results (56%), while one third (33%) do not believe so, a percentage which is significantly higher compared to the general population (18%). Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in policy changes, one third believe that voting is sufficient, while 17% claim ignorant on the issue. Overall, the survey data indicates a marginalization and distrust in mainstream politics among the Roma population.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

44% regularly

19% often

19% sometimes

5% usually not

13% never

Forty-four per cent (44%) of survey participants indicate they almost regularly vote, 19% often, 19% sometimes, 5% usually do not vote and 13% never vote.

Half of the survey participants (50%) vote for different political parties during different election cycles, while 27% regularly vote for the same party. This percentage is higher compared to all other demographic groups which shows that the Roma community can be vulnerable to manipulation.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

The top three factors that influence Roma people's decision to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (48%), personal interests and benefits (35%), and prospects for better future (31%).

48%

Civic right and duty



35%

Personal interests and benefits



31%

Better future



The focus group participants note that election irregularities are much more pronounced in their community compared to the other ethnic communities. These range from bribery, vote buying, sale of IDs for money, organized transport of voters to polling places with vehicles of the political parties and local police forces.

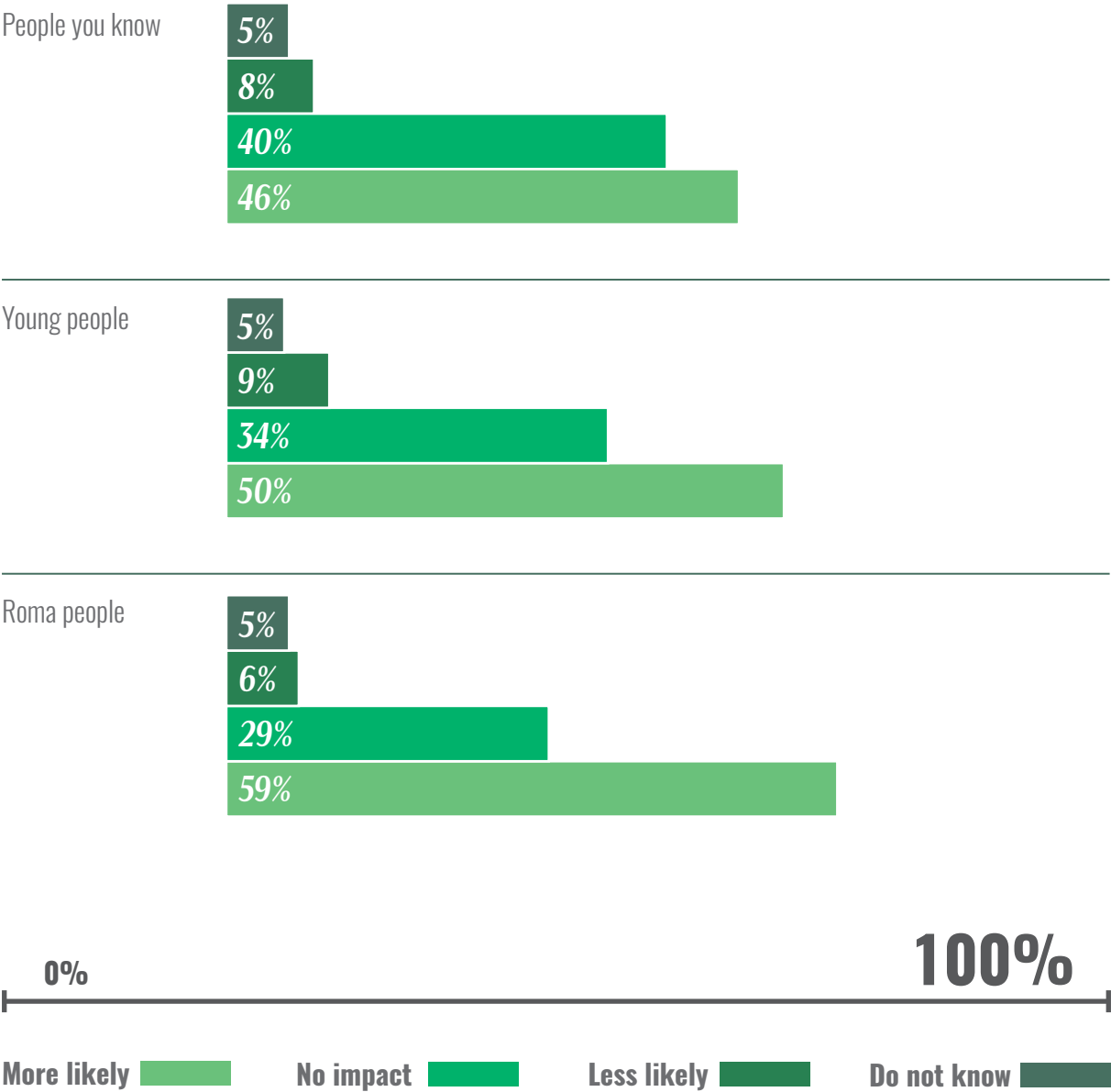
“ The gravest manipulations, bribery and pressures occur among the uneducated citizens who are most exposed to manipulation. ”

Male, 40, Bitola

Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while almost a quarter (24%) state that their decision is the same or most often the same as that of their friends.

The survey participants would like to see more representatives of Roma people, young people, and familiar people on the candidate or council lists.

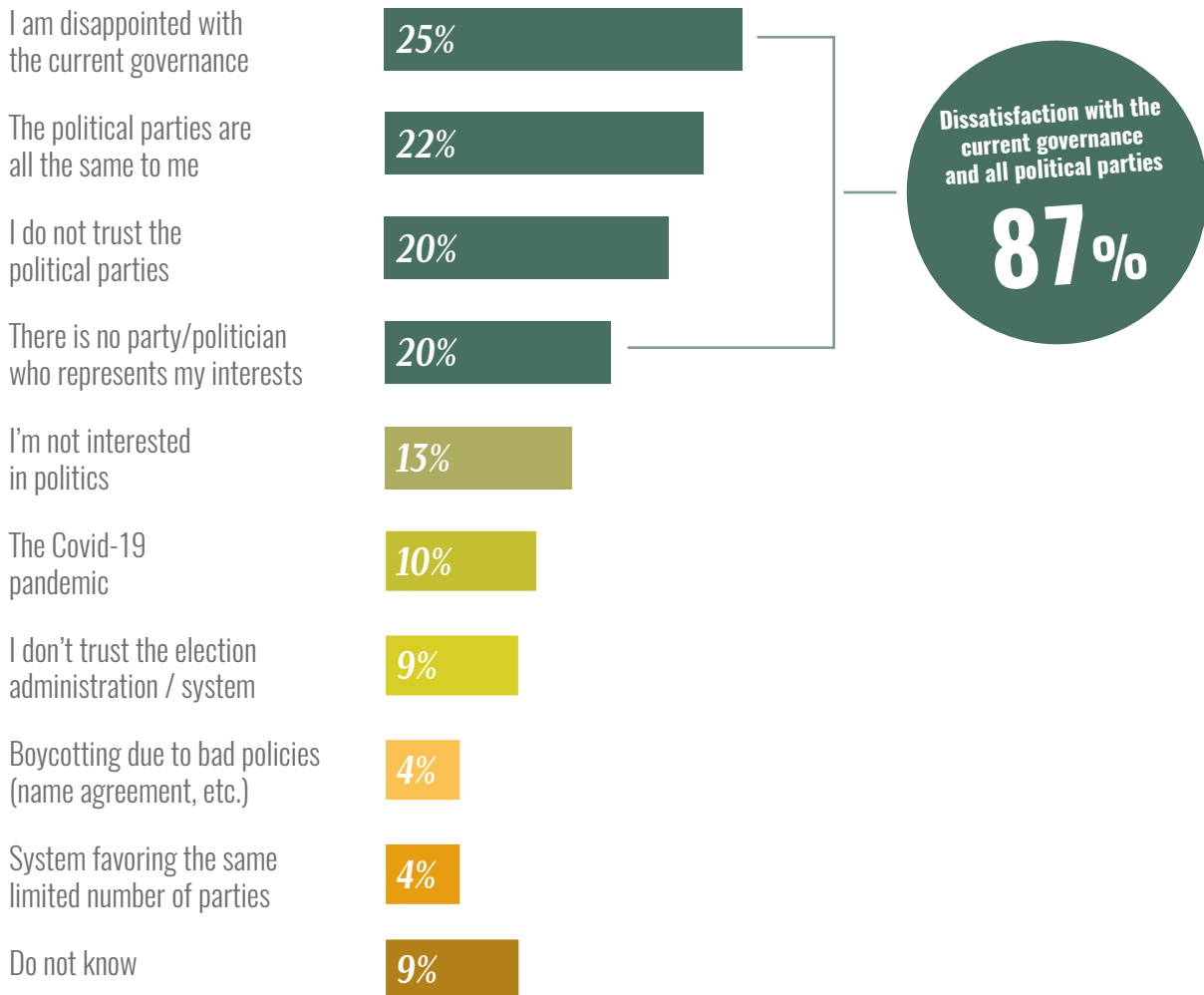
If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?



Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the governance 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 survey results demonstrate that Roma people are faced with increased difficulties during the electoral process in comparison to other groups. They scored highest with regards to: voter list errors, voting under pressure, and lack of knowledge of voting procedures. These challenges make the Roma community the most vulnerable population with regards to election-related irregularities. A challenge which is specific to the Roma community concerns the issue of undocumented children and citizens. This issue requires systematic approach to stimulate and enable the voting process.

Another burning issue for this group is the lack of voter education and limited access to basic election information. For example, among others, they do not know how to check if their personal information is included in the voter lists.

REMOTE COMMUNITIES

People living in remote communities associate elections with phrases such as: “completely unnecessary”, “does not reflect people’s will”, “USA and EU make the final decision about the outcome of the elections”.



Similar to the groups polled under the general and rural categories, a positive observation is that the vast majority of the respondents believe that they can influence election results i.e. think that every vote is important (75%), while 17% do not believe so.

More than half of the respondents (59%) indicate that voting per se is not sufficient to engage citizens in order to change or influence policies, whereas three out of ten believe so.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?



The research shows that people from remote communities are regular voters: 79% vote almost regularly or often, 12% sometimes, 4% usually do not vote and 2% state that they never vote. There are more regular voters among people from remote communities, compared to rural women (72% almost regularly or often vote) and rural youth (65% almost regularly or often vote).

In addition, 39% state they always vote for the same party while 43% vote for different political parties. This indicates that their support for a particular political party may change if other political options arise.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

Similarly to the general population, the top three factors that influence the decision of the people from remote communities to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty

(46%), prospects for better future (32%) and fear that someone would steal their vote (32%), i.e. fraudulently vote instead of them.



Two thirds of the respondents (66%) indicate that their voting preference is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while almost one third (32%) indicated different voting preference.

Six out of 10 respondents' decision to vote is not influenced by their friends.

People living in remote communities would like to see more representatives of people they know and young people as candidates on the party lists for elections (or as elected officials, for example in municipal councils).

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

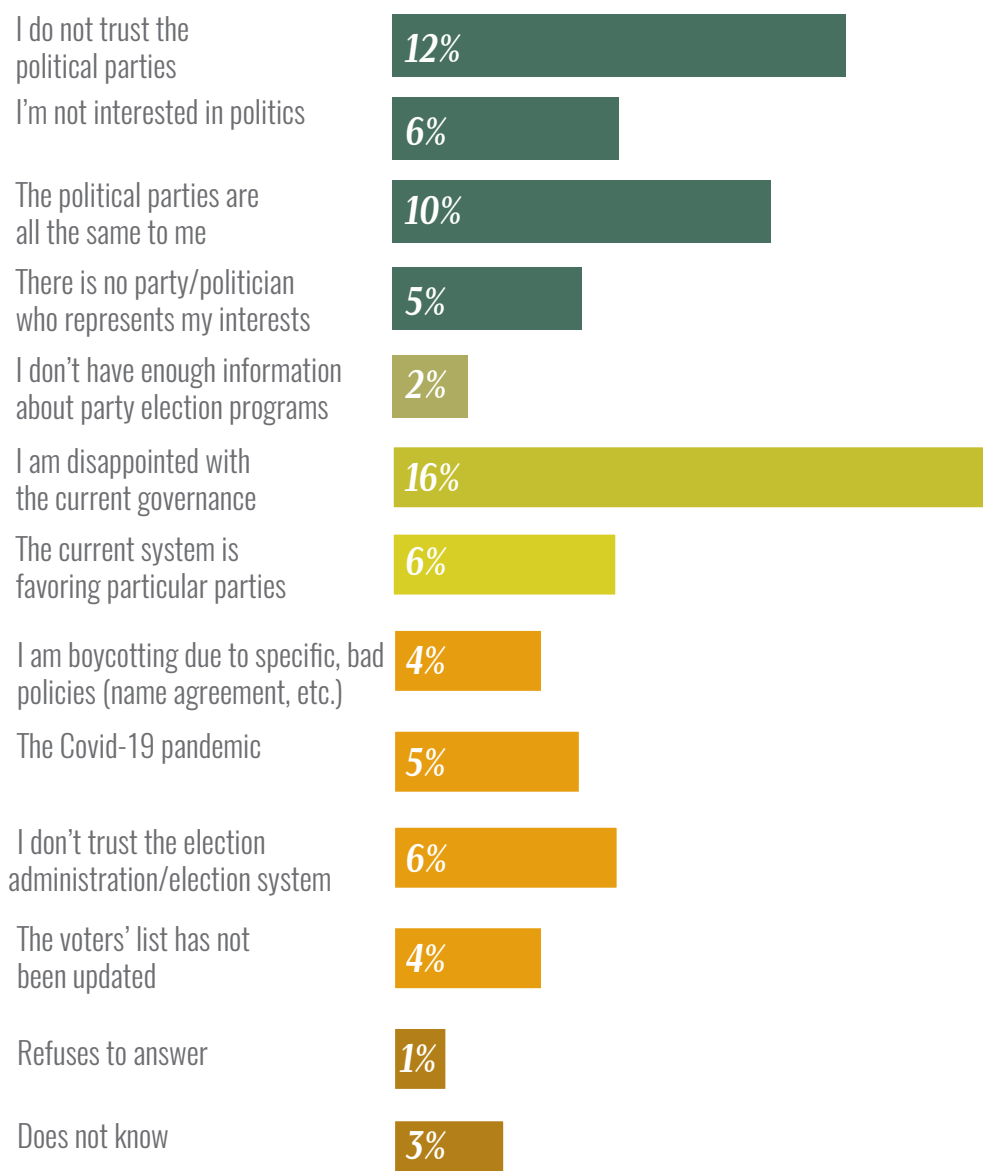


More likely No impact Less likely Do not know

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties demotivates people from remote communities to go out and vote.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



This demographic group believes the mass immigration of the citizens from remote communities is sufficient evidence that the political parties do not have successful developmental plans and strategies for the remote communities and the rural areas. They believe that the focus of the political parties is mainly on the urban areas and big cities.

“ The discrimination is not only urban versus rural, but also big towns versus small towns. ”
Female, 49, Kriva Palanka

VERY POOR

Very poor people associate elections with phrases such as: “forgery”, “framed”, “frustrating”, “partially democratic”, “the local sheriffs of the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political parties put pressure, manipulate and bribe the citizens to win votes”.

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

72%

Yes

20%

No

1%

Refuses to answer

7%

Does not know

Similarly to the general population, almost three-quarters of the survey participants think that every vote is important and can affect election results, while 20% do not believe that every vote counts.

Around half of the respondents (51%) indicate that only voting is not sufficient to engage citizens to change or influence policies, one third think voting is sufficient, while 11% claim ignorant on the issue.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

75% regularly or often

16% sometimes

6% usually not

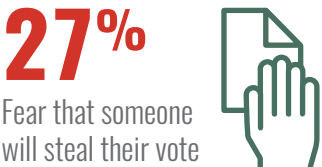
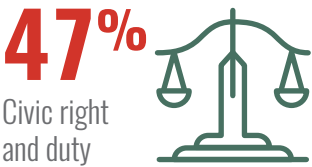
2% never

The research shows that similarly to the general population, very poor people are regular voters.

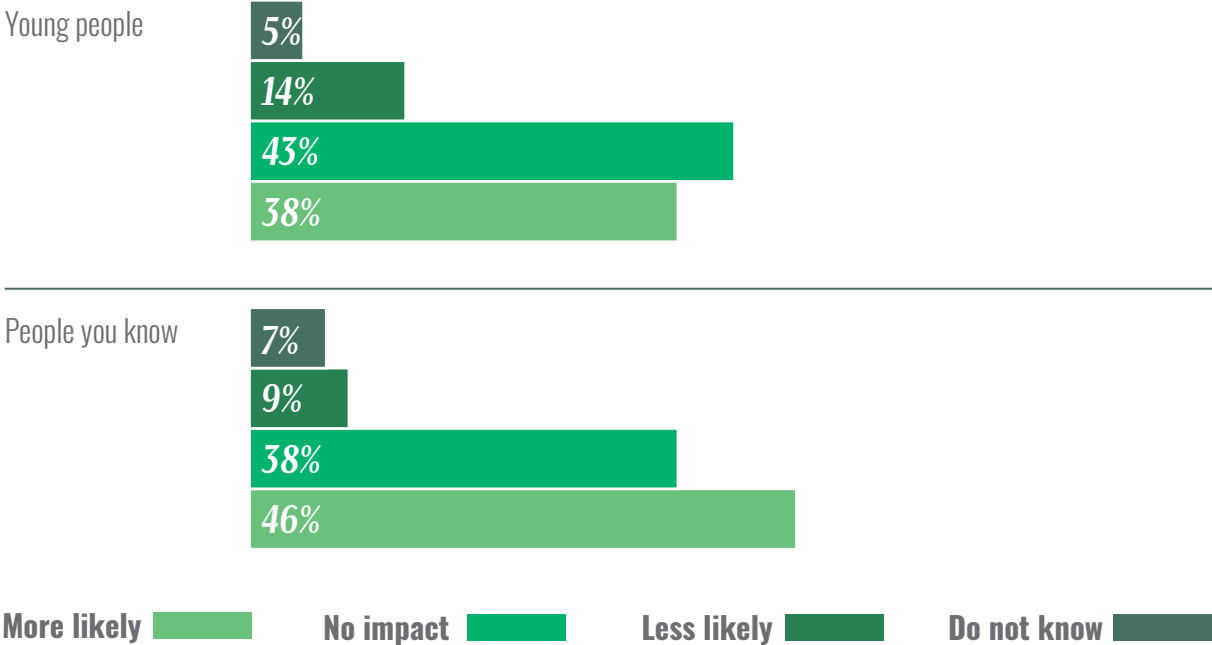
In addition, 34% state they vote for the same party, while 48% vote for different political parties. This indicates that their support for a political party may change if other political opportunities arise.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

Similarly to the general population, the top three factors that influence the decision to vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (47%), better prospects for the future (34%) and fear that someone would misuse their vote (27%).



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



Similarly to the general population, more than half of the respondents (56%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while 38% state that their decision differs from their families.

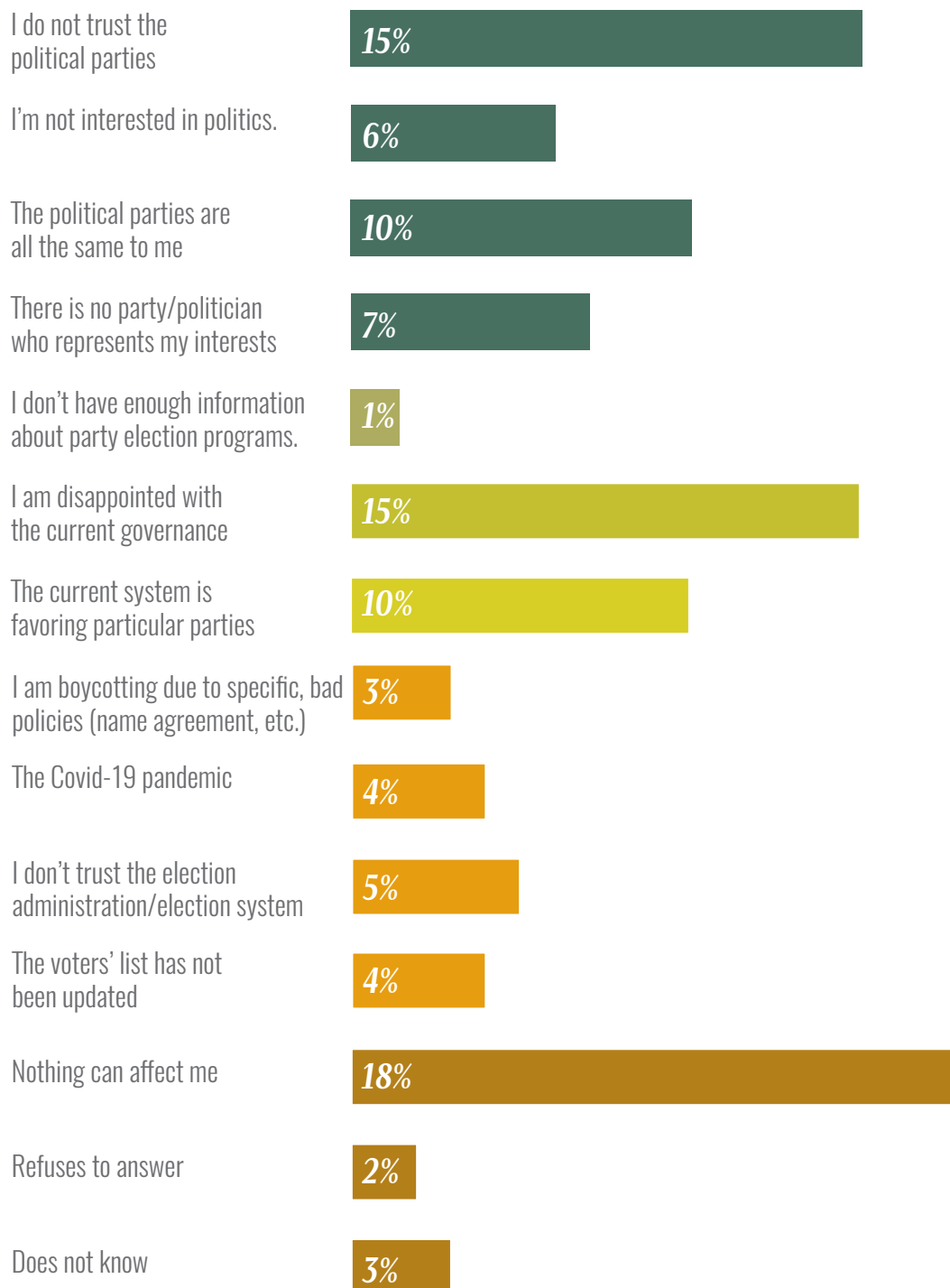
Six out of ten respondents' decision to vote is not influenced by their friends.

Very poor people would like to see more familiar people as candidates on the party lists for elections or as elected officials (e.g. in municipal councils).

Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties demotivates people from remote communities to go out and vote.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



This group believes that citizens are manipulated by the political parties and do not believe in positive changes and in the legitimacy of the election results; however, they are against boycotting elections.

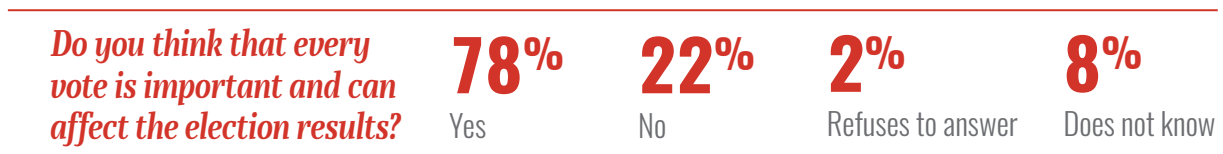
“ More damage is done by not voting compared to the benefits of sending a message of dissatisfaction to the political parties with boycotting. ”

Male, 62, Skopje

Furthermore, they believe that abstention from voting benefits the incumbent government and helps them win votes.

CHRONICALLY UNEMPLOYED

Chronically unemployed citizens associate elections with phrases such as: “disaster”, “chaotic”, “manipulative”, “forgery”, “pressures”, “empty promises”, “no changes, the same people”, “people are powerless”.



Compared to the general population, chronically unemployed persons believe less in the importance of the citizens’ vote and its impact on election results.

More than two-thirds of the respondents believe that every vote is important and can affect election results (78%) compared to 74% of the general population who believe in the importance of the citizens’ vote.

In addition, focus group findings show that this group believes the elections are regular and peaceful on Election Day, but that the pre-election campaigns are brutal and vulgar.

More than half of the respondents (56%) indicate that voting is not sufficient to engage citizens to change or influence policies, more than one quarter (26%) believe voting is sufficient, while 16% have no opinion.

Motivation to vote

How regularly do you vote?

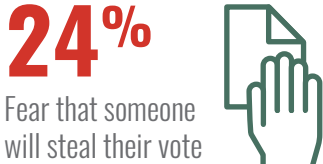
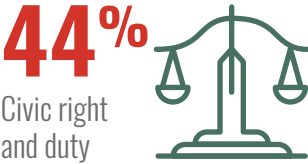


The research shows that 68% vote almost regularly or often, 16% sometimes, 9% usually do not vote and 4% never vote.

Similarly to the general population, 38% of this group state they always vote for the same party, while 44% vote for different political parties.

Factors that influence their decision to vote

Similarly to the general population, the top three factors that influence the respondents in this group to go out and vote are: the perception that voting is a civic right and duty (44%), better prospects (28%) and fear that someone would misuse their vote (24%).

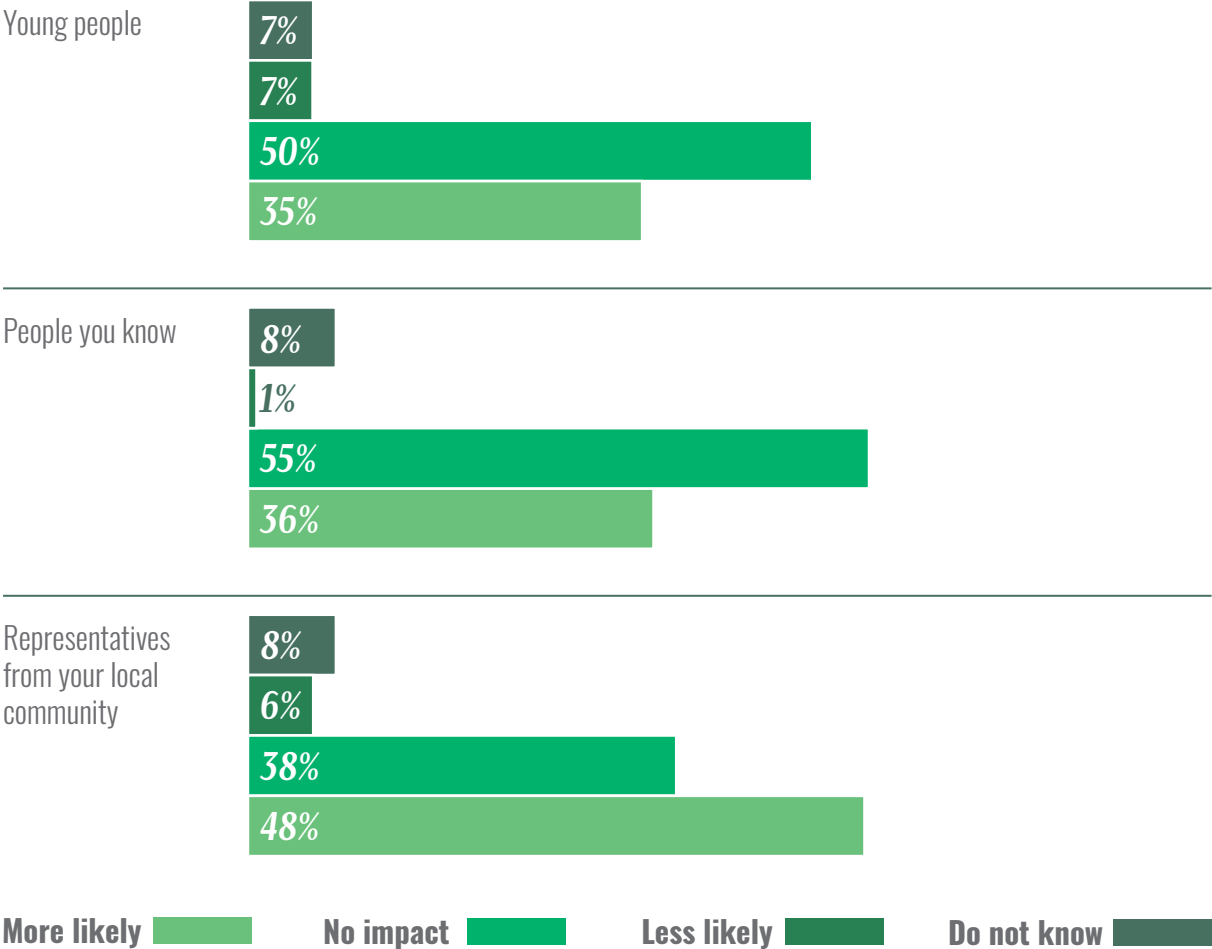


More than half of the respondents (56%) indicate that their decision to vote is the same or most often the same as that of their families, while 38% vote differently.

Six out of ten respondents' decision to vote is not influenced by their friends.

Similarly to the other demographic groups, the respondents of this group would like to see people from their local community as representatives on candidate lists or as elected representatives in the parliament or the municipal councils.

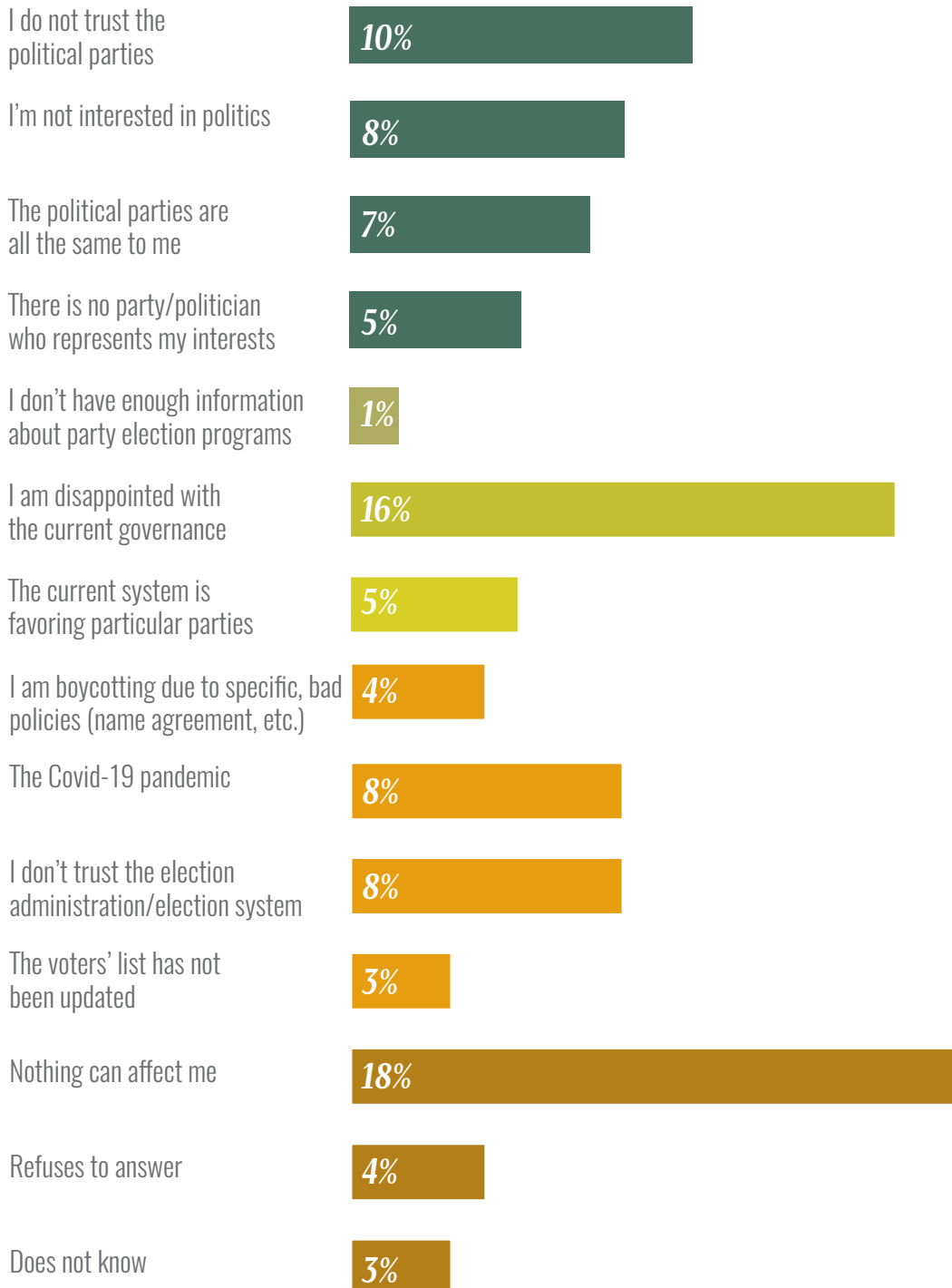
If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?



Demotivation to vote

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent government and the political parties demotivates people from remote communities to go out and vote.

What can influence your decision not to vote?



Similarly to the other groups, this demographic group believes that the strongest discrimination is based on political party membership, i.e. being a member of a political party is the major precondition for employment.

Regardless of gender, ethnicity or place of living, members and active members of the ruling political parties are more likely to secure employment. Nepotism and family connections cause a great revolt among the respondents. As a consequence, apathy and dissatisfaction grow, as well as the motivation to leave the country and seek employment abroad.

OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

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

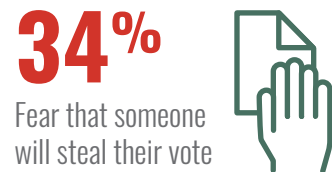
3% never

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

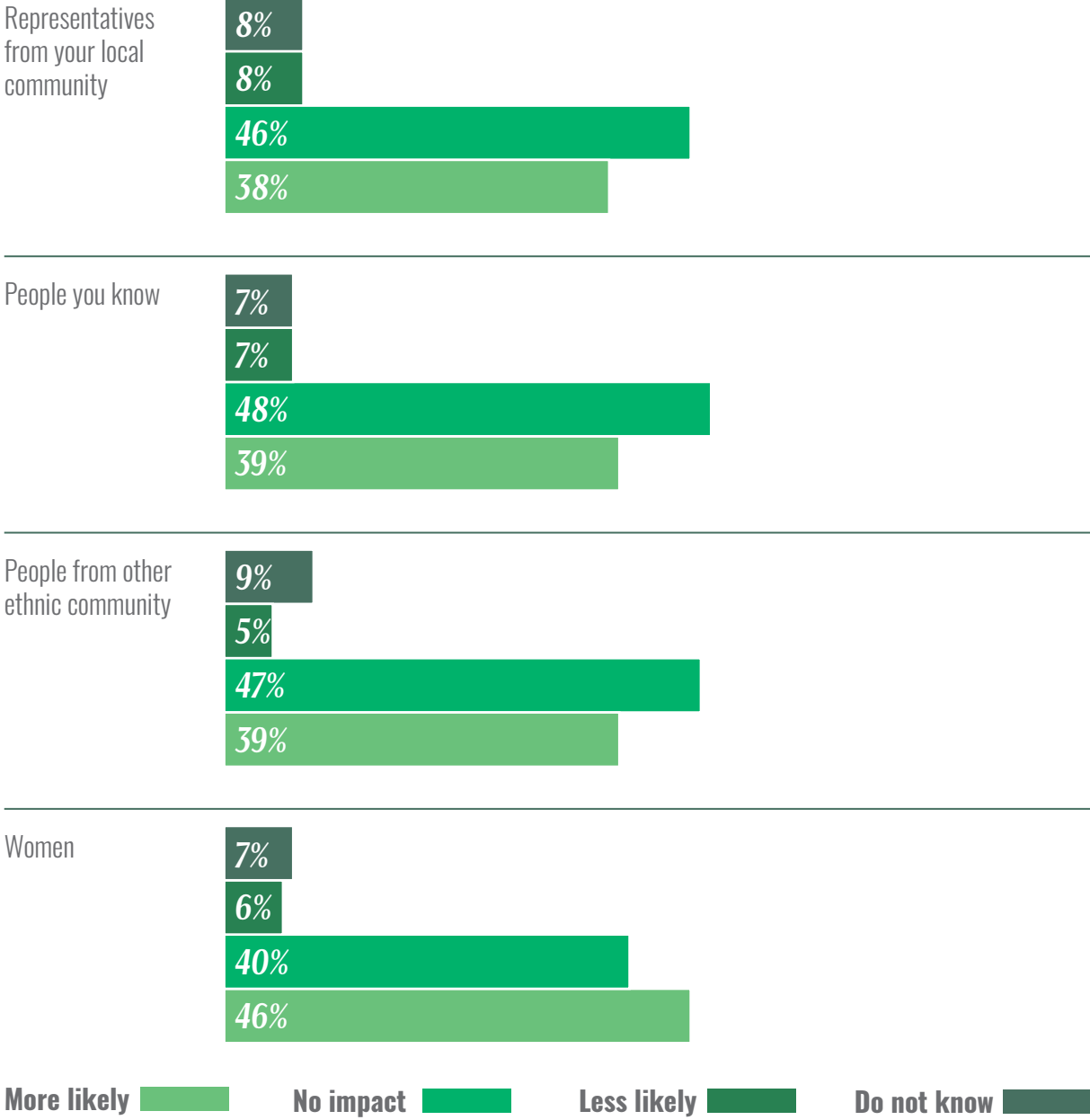
In line with the trend observed with the general population, the top three factors that influence the respondents' decision to go out and vote are: perception that voting is a civic right and duty (48%), better prospects (44%) and fear that their vote would be misused (34%).



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.

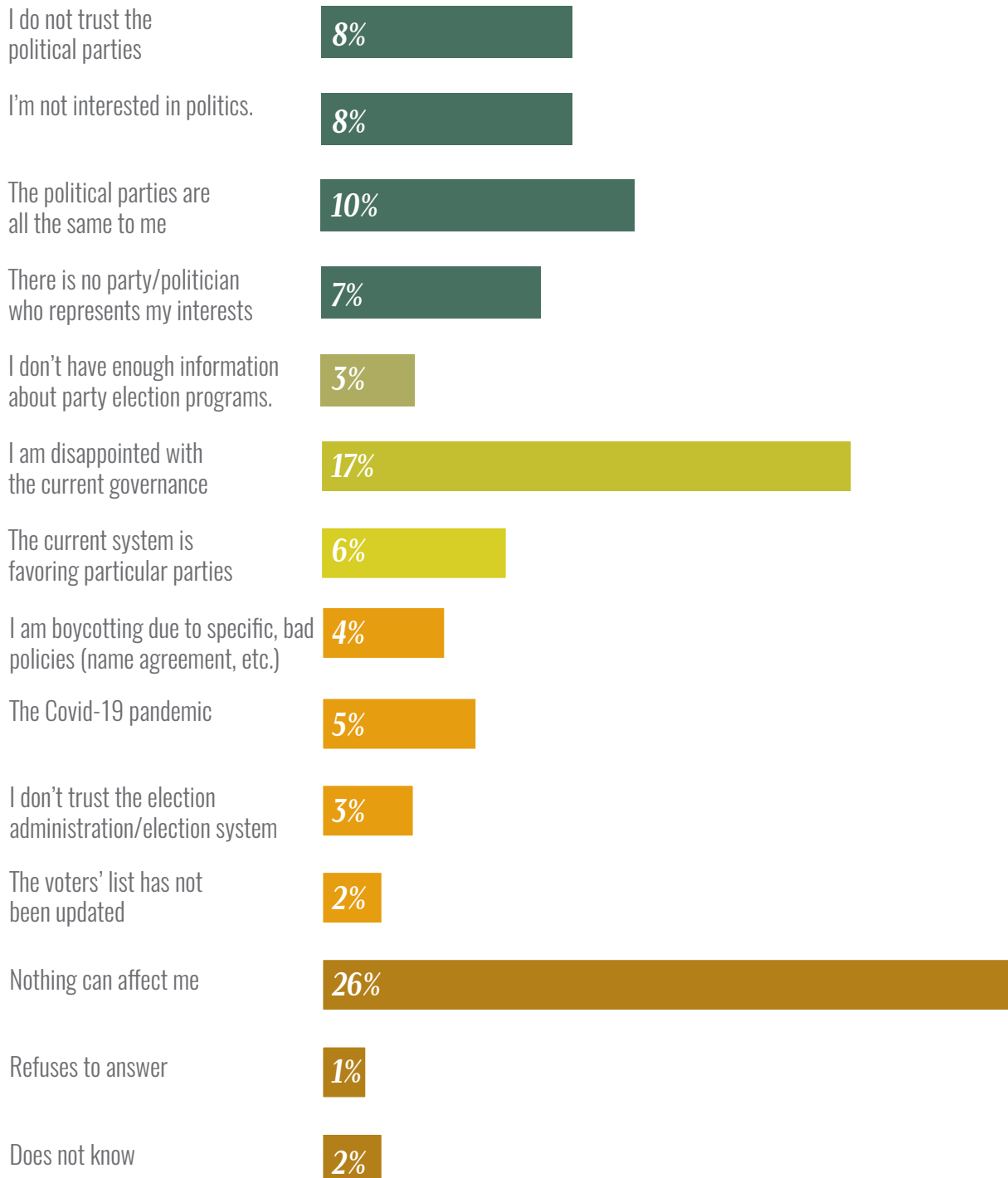
If there are representatives of the following groups on the candidate lists for parliamentary or local elections, how likely is it that you would vote for that political party?



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”.