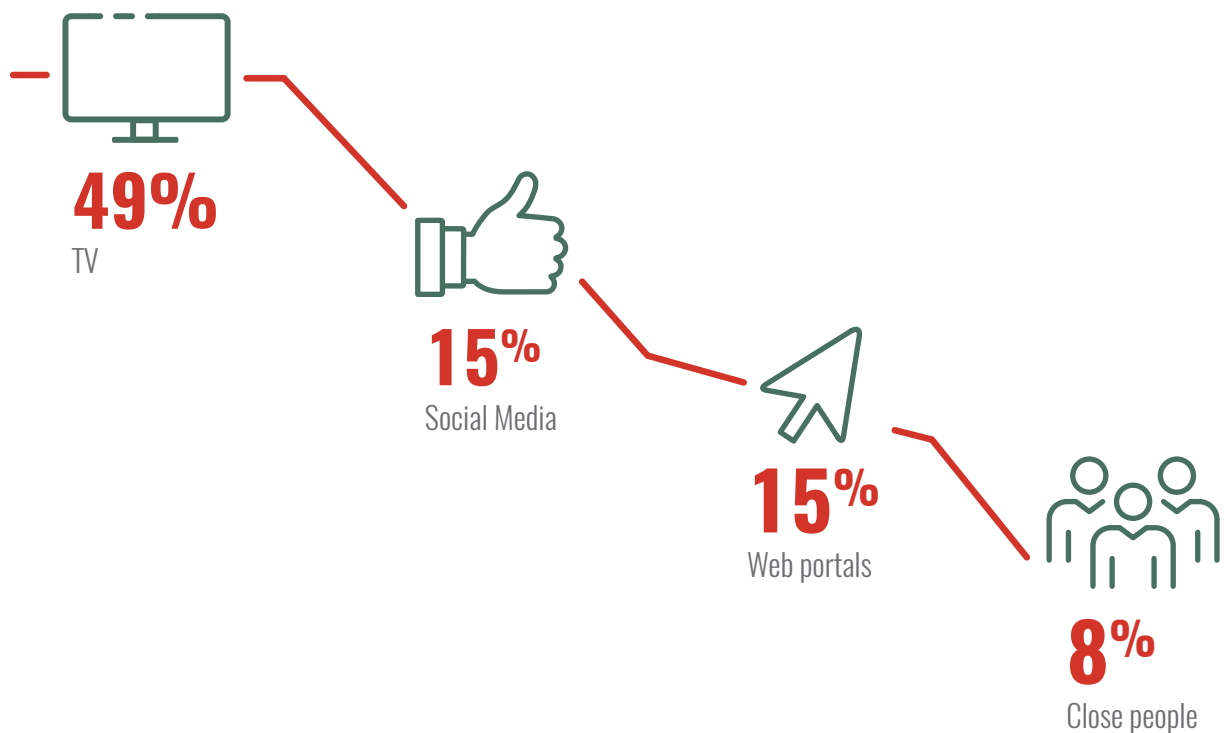


COMMUNICATION
WITH CANDIDATES
AND PARTIES

URBAN POPULATION

The predominant sources of information about elections are TV (49%), social media (15%), web portals (15%), friends and family members (8%).



Fewer people living in urban areas use TV as a source of information about elections compared to the rural population (56%), whereas more of them use social media (12%).

News (46%) and TV debates (33%) are the most useful ways of sourcing election information for the survey participants.

With regards to the type of communication with the candidates (both before and in the period between elections), this group prefers continued information about the political achievements and results of the candidates to information broadcasted on traditional media or in-person communication (door-to-door or in smaller groups).

Only 4% of the respondents prefer to receive election information through political programs **before elections.**

The expectations of this demographic group from the political parties are to:

- ♦ Keep the promises made in the election party programs.
- ♦ Improve the communication with the citizens in order to understand citizens' concerns, rather than to market themselves and promote the party.
- ♦ Work for the country, not for personal and party interests.
- ♦ Free the judiciary from political influences to ensure a good basis for democracy and good governance.

RURAL POPULATION

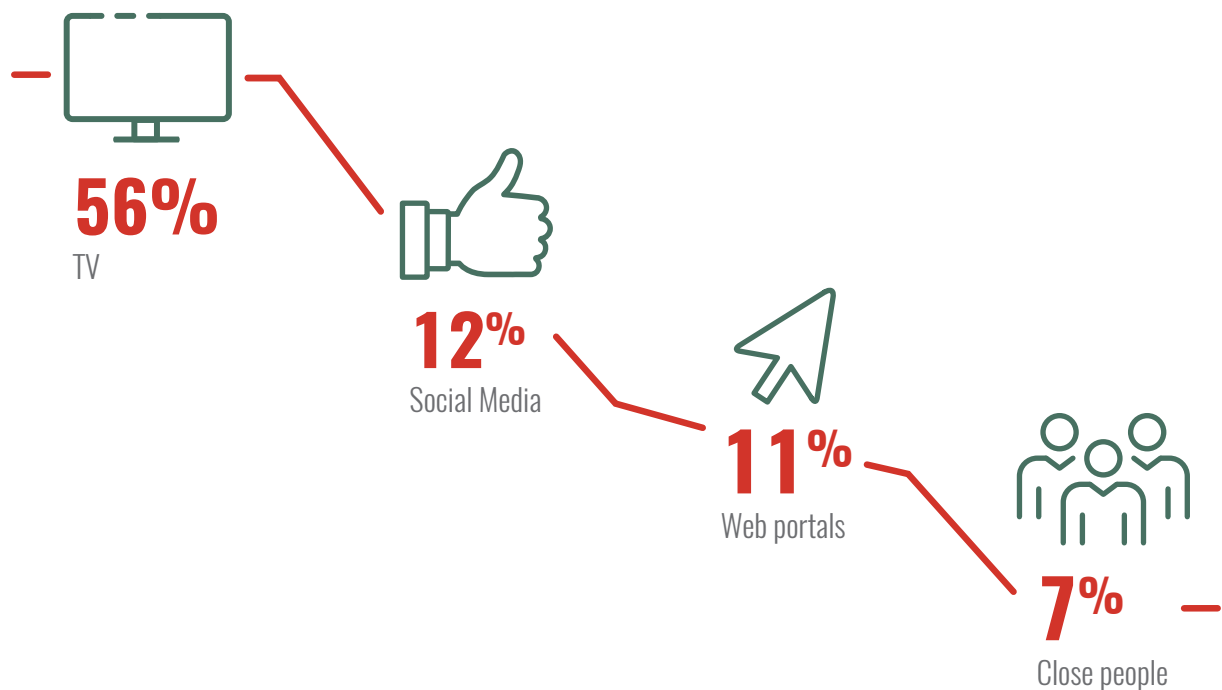
Television (56%), social media (12%), web portals (11%), friends and family members (7%) are the predominant sources of election information.

Newscasts (50%) and debates (32%) are the most practiced methods of sourcing election information by this group.

With regards to the type of communication with the candidates, this group prefers in-person and door-to-door communication (18%) and communication in smaller groups (17%), and relies on the candidates' track record in making an informed political decision.

A preference for in-person receipt of election-related information or via TV programmes can be observed, whereas only 6% of the respondents favour political programs and 2% political rallies.

Where do you get information about election?



“ I would ask them to listen to us. To come to our village, ask about our opinion, meet with us at least 3 times a year, so that we can express our ideas. ”
Female, 23, Tearce

The focus group findings indicate strong dissatisfaction with all political parties in the country. Respondents feel strongly about the unfulfilled promises made by the parties and the conditioned employment or institutional services with party membership. These are cited as the main reason for the low level of interest in the political parties' pre-election programs.

“ They oversell their lies and promises, people are disappointed and dissatisfied. We only see lies, they promise and then they do not deliver. ”
Male, 46, Volkovo

Furthermore, this demographic group points out that the parties visit the rural areas and contact the citizens only in the pre-election period. A prevalent concern among the respondents is the parties' tendency to cater to their own needs and interests instead to those of the citizens and to gather more votes for the next elections.

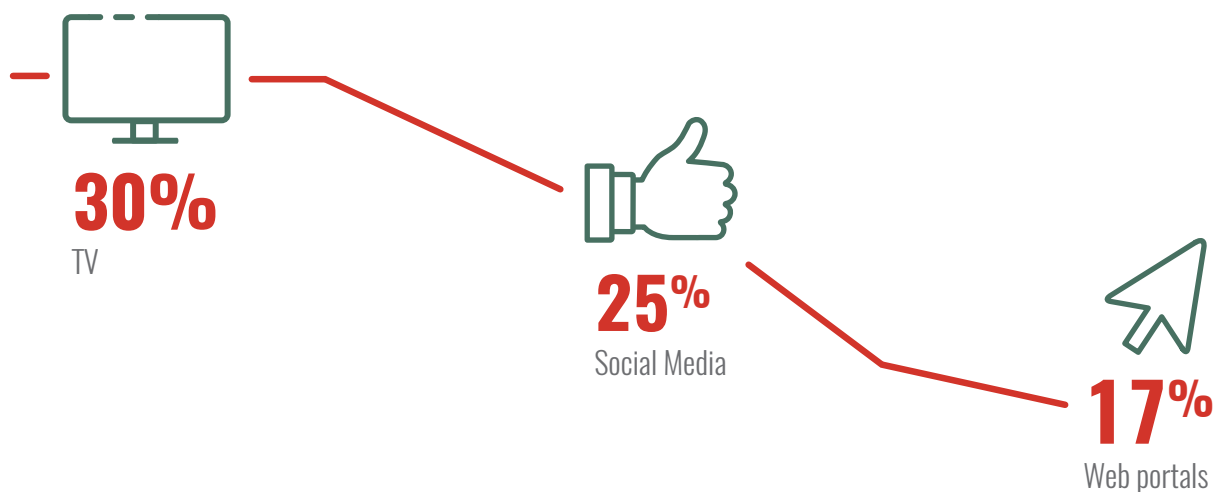
The polled group of people in rural settlements has the following expectations from the political parties:

- ♦ To promote and support frequent communication and exchange of opinions with the citizens;
- ♦ To be open for the citizens and interested in solving the common problems in the municipality;
- ♦ To take agriculture into consideration, provide the farmers with irrigation water system for their land;
- ♦ To propose a strategy on improving the living standards in the rural areas, revive trade and stop migration;
- ♦ To consult with the young people from the municipality, offer prospects for their future in order to keep them in the villages;
- ♦ To address the problems with stray dogs.

YOUTH

Predominant sources of election information are TV (30%), social media (25%) and web portals (17%).

Election-related information is mostly sourced via newscasts (cited by 43% of the respondents) and debates (cited by 24%). Almost one in five youngsters (21%) indicates that they do not get informed about elections at all.



Social media and traditional media are **the most preferable types of communication with candidates and elected representatives between elections** and young people mostly rely on the candidates' political track record in making an informed decision.

“ I personally read the election programs to see what they have invented this time, but I do not believe anything that is written. Our experience shows that they do not follow what they write in the programs. ”

Female, 26, Strumica

In addition, young people demand political parties to focus on:

- ♦ Improving the standards of living.
- ♦ Increasing youth employment opportunities.
- ♦ Keeping young people in the country.
- ♦ Rule of law, independence of the judiciary and equal laws for all citizens.
- ♦ Reducing corruption.
- ♦ Protecting national history and values.

FIRST TIME VOTERS

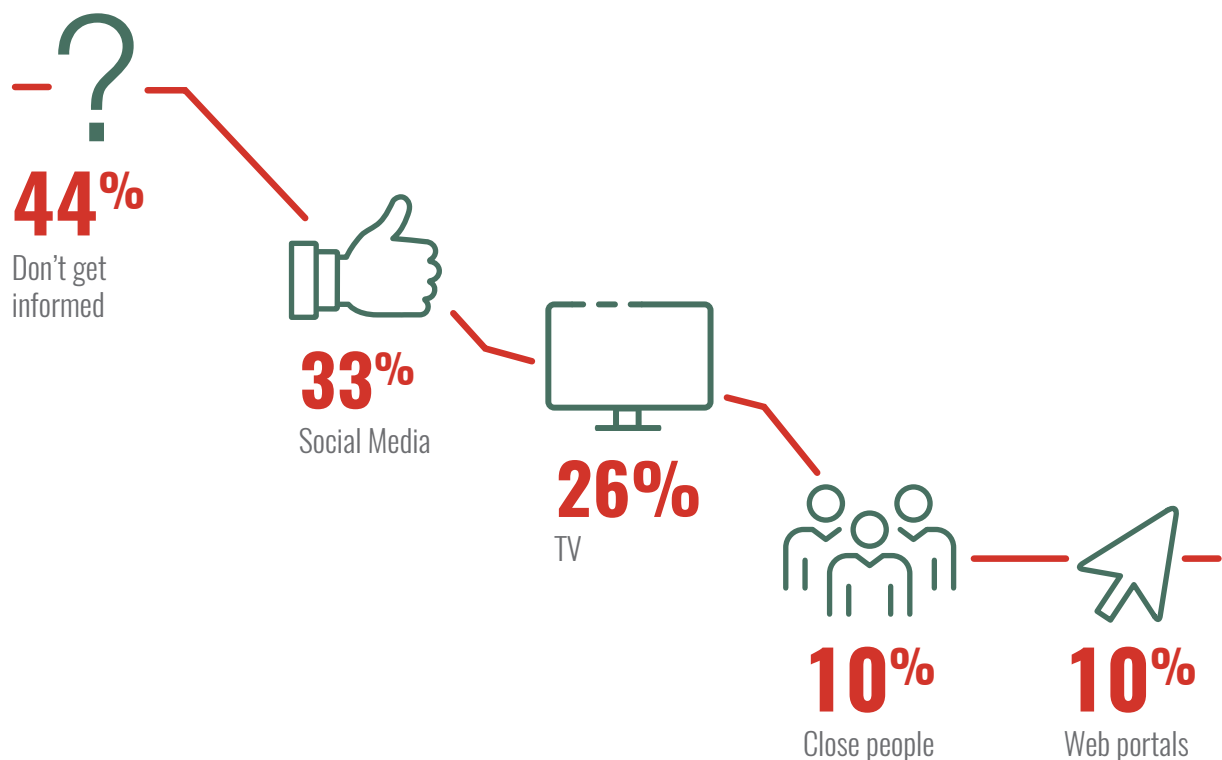
Social media (33%), TV (26%), web portals (10%), friends and family members (10%) are the predominant sources of election information.

Newscasts, adverts, and debates are the most cited ways of consumption of election information among the survey respondents. A significant part of them (44%) indicates that they do not follow elections.

The focus group findings show that first time voters are interested in voter education campaigns conducted via the social media, which is widely used by this category of people.

Social media and personal interaction are the preferable types of communication with candidates and elected representatives **between elections** and first time voters mostly rely on the candidates' political track record in making an informed decision.

Where do you get information about election?

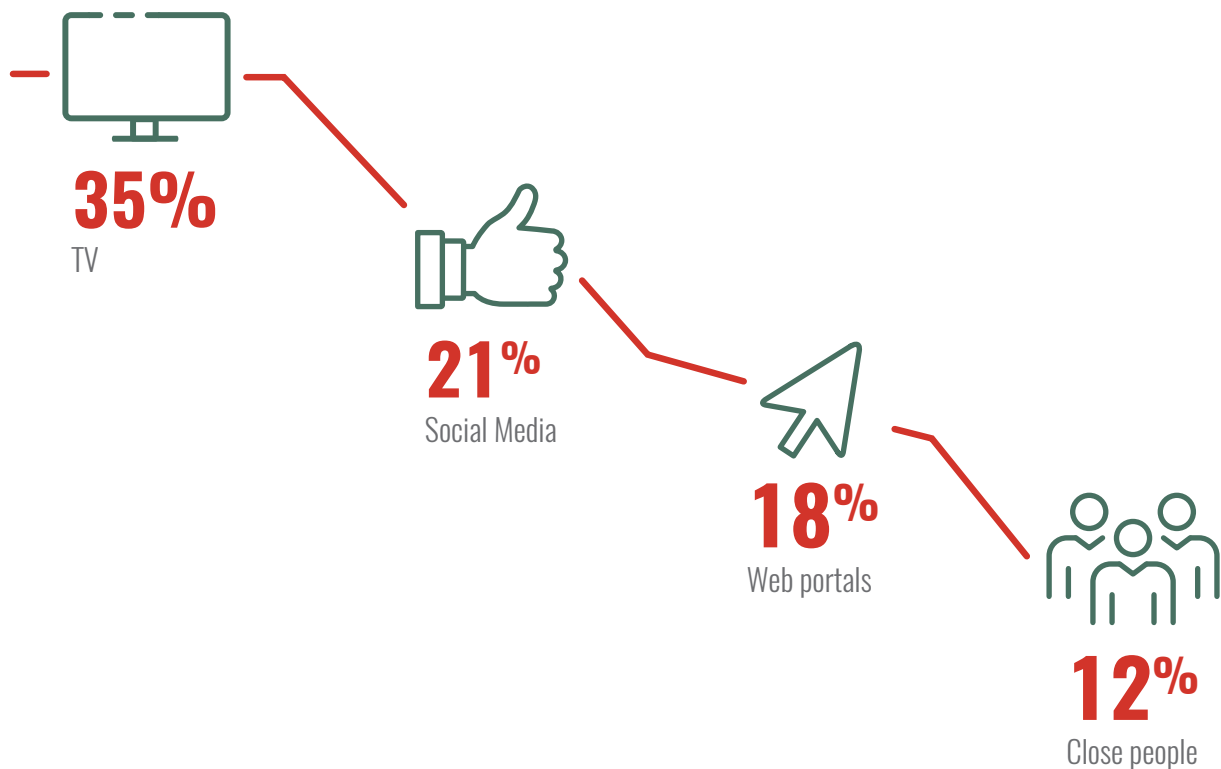


RURAL YOUTH

The predominant sources of election-related information are TV (35%), social media (21%), web portals (18%), friends and family members (12%).

News (42%) and TV debates (30%) are the most practiced ways of sourcing election information by the survey participants.

Where do you get information about election?



With regards to the communication with candidates, this group prefers personal or door-to-door communication (18%) and communication in smaller groups (17%). The tendency is to rely on the previous track record of the politicians when making an informed decision. With regards to **obtaining information about the candidates in the election period**, rural youth also rely on the candidates' track record and the social media.

Of note is that only one in ten respondents **both before and in-between elections** prefer to receive information through political programs. They would like to be informed about previous achievements and results of the candidate rather than be introduced with political programs in the election period.

Nevertheless, the survey participants point out that the political parties visit their villages **only during the pre-election period**. With bitterness, they state that these visits have only one goal - promoting the party and winning votes.

“ We have only one road that we use in order to reach another regional road and the biggest promise before every election is that the road will be constructed. Many years have passed, but the road was not asphalted until the village decided to boycott the elections. After we did this, they finally asphalted the road. ”
Male, 24, Kalaslari

This demographic group has the following expectations from the political parties and government:

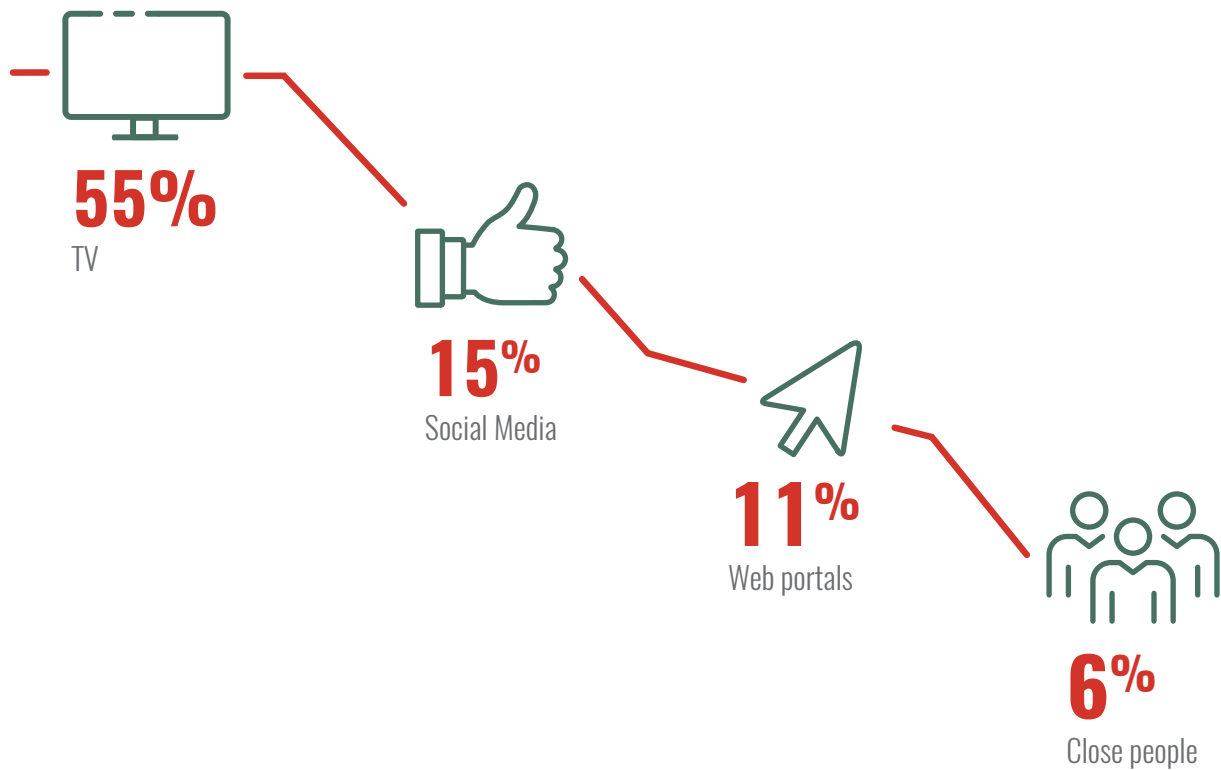
- ♦ Economic development and stability
- ♦ Creating opportunities for youth employment
- ♦ Improving the educational system
- ♦ Improving basic conditions of the rural population such as sewerage and water supply

WOMEN

Television (55%), social media (15%), web portals (11%), friends and family members (6%) are the predominant sources of election information for the respondents.

Survey participants noted that news (51%) and debates (26%) are the most practiced ways of obtaining election information, whereas one in ten respondents (13%) indicates that they do not seek out election information at all.

Where do you get information about election?



Media (19%), door-to-door communication (14%), and in-person communication in smaller groups (14%) are the **most preferred types of communication with party candidates and elected representatives between elections**. Twenty-two per cent (22%) of the respondents rely on the candidates' political track record in making an informed decision.

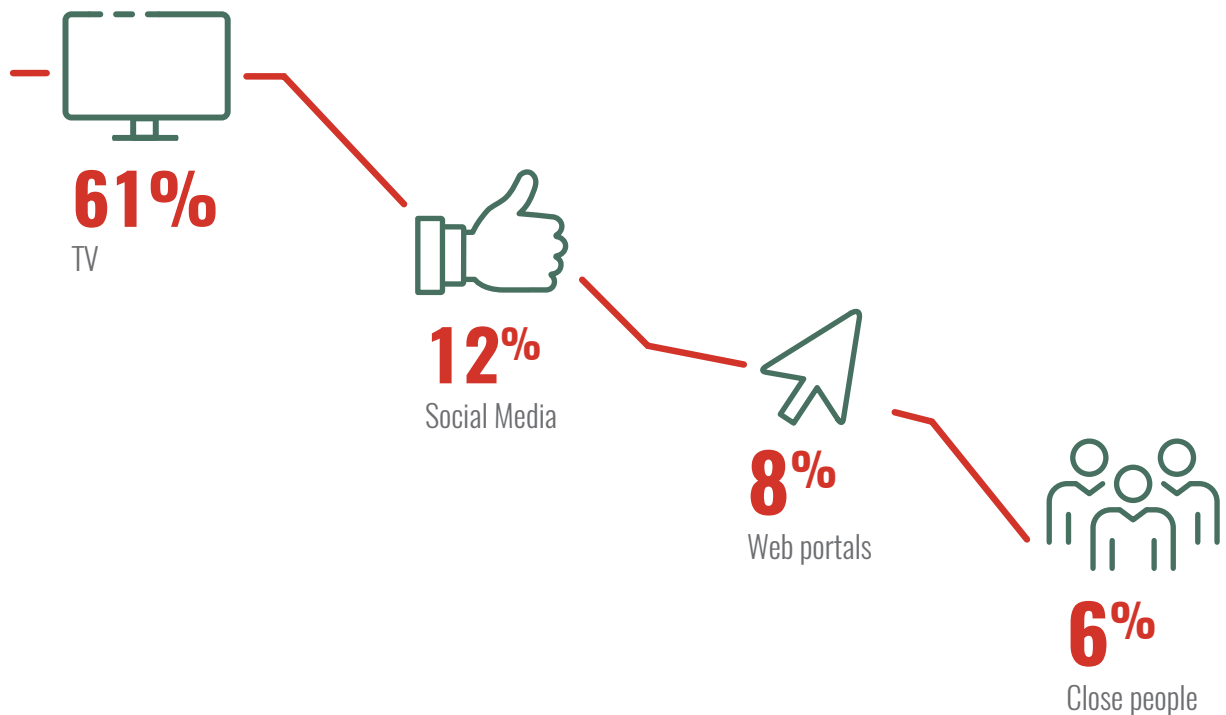
The same types of communication with the candidates are preferred before elections: media (30%), door-to-door communication (22%), and in-person communication in smaller groups (22%), whereas 32% of the respondents rely on the candidates' political track record in making an informed decision.

The survey participants expect political parties to:

- ♦ Foster open discussions with the citizens concerning local issues and suggest solutions.
- ♦ Familiarize with the municipality, the local concerns and problems.
- ♦ Take measures to improve child safety in schoolyards.
- ♦ Emphasize the need for centres for children with autism, support and protection programs for socially vulnerable categories, including single parents.
- ♦ Reduce corruption in state institutions.
- ♦ Respect human rights and freedoms.

RURAL WOMEN

Television (61%), social media (12%), web portals (8%), friends and family members (6%) are the predominant sources of election information.



Survey participants noted that news (52%) and debates (26%) are the most useful methods for obtaining election information. One in ten respondents (11%) indicates that they do not get informed about elections at all.

Eighteen per cent (18%) of the respondents rely on the candidate's track record in making an informed decision whereas media (16%), door-to-door communication (15%), and in-person communication in smaller groups (19%) are **the most preferable type of communication with party candidates and elected representatives between elections.**

The respondents prefer **the same type of communication with the candidates before elections.** Namely, 33% rely on the candidate's political track record, whereas concerning forms and types of communication they prefer the media (28%), door-to-door (22%) and in-person communication in smaller groups (26%). With regards to priority areas, rural women prefer political parties to focus on:

- ♦ Improving health care.
- ♦ Stimulating young people to stay in the villages.
- ♦ Reducing corruption in state institutions.
- ♦ Ensuring respect of human rights and freedoms.
- ♦ Improving media freedom and freedom of speech.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

TV (58%), friends and family members (13%), and web portals (11%) are the predominant sources of information about elections.



Survey participants indicated that newscasts (69%) and debates (13%) are the most useful ways of sourcing information about elections. Six per cent (6%) indicate that they do not source information about elections at all, whereas 48% find newscasts a more useful method of obtaining election information compared to the general population.

Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the respondents rely on traditional media as a source of information on elections, whereas 22% rely on the track record of the party candidates and elected representatives when making an informed decision **in the period between elections**.

The focus group findings show that communication with political parties and institutions usually takes place through associations for persons with disabilities or non-governmental organizations that represent their interests.

All participants in the discussion show extreme dissatisfaction with the situation of persons with disabilities and the attitude of the country towards this category of citizens.

They believe that the political parties are interested in persons with disabilities **only before elections** when they make many promises in order to win votes, but once they assume power, they abandon them.

Most of the participants express interest in the political programs of the political parties, mainly out of curiosity, to see to what extent they cater to the needs of the persons with disabilities.

“ No party program includes a single line to address the needs of persons with disabilities. I live in a building and in the mailbox I receive party programs from almost all political parties. None of them mentions us. So, how can we expect anything when they behave as if we do not exist? In their programs, our problems do not exist. ”

Male, 37, Gostivar

Survey participants would like political parties to focus on:

- ♦ Equal representation of all citizens.
- ♦ Equal rights for all citizens in the country.
- ♦ Making realistic and objective promises that they can keep.
- ♦ Improving the rights of the persons with disabilities.
- ♦ Inclusion of the persons with disabilities.

ROMA

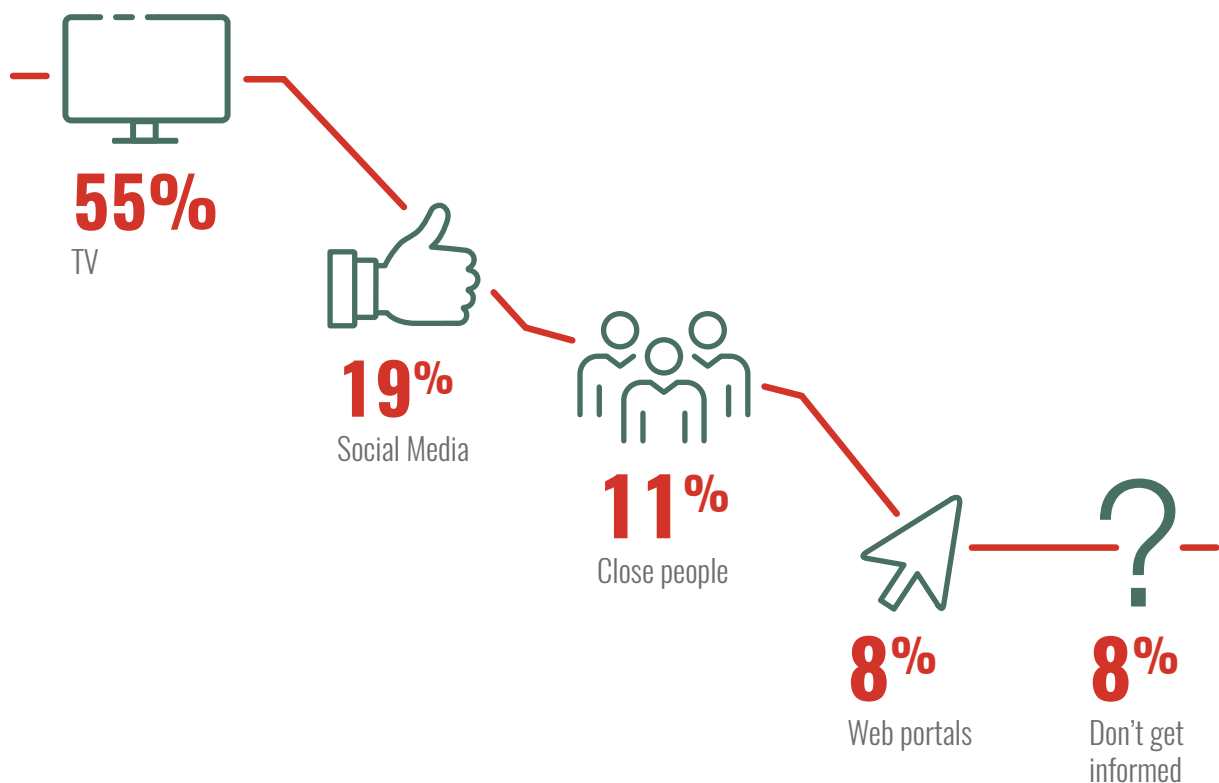
Survey participants noted that newscasts (62%) and debates (16%) are the most practiced ways of finding information about elections.

Similarly to the other polled groups, Roma voters tend to rely on the previous track record of the politicians to make an informed decision in **the period between elections**. Other preferred methods of obtaining election information are in-person communication with party candidates and elected representatives as well as traditional media.

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

- Fulfil pre-election promises - “at least 50% of them”.
- Develop realistic party programs that are context-specific and responsive to the needs of the citizens.
- Unite around the most important national interests and overcome the COVID-19 crisis.

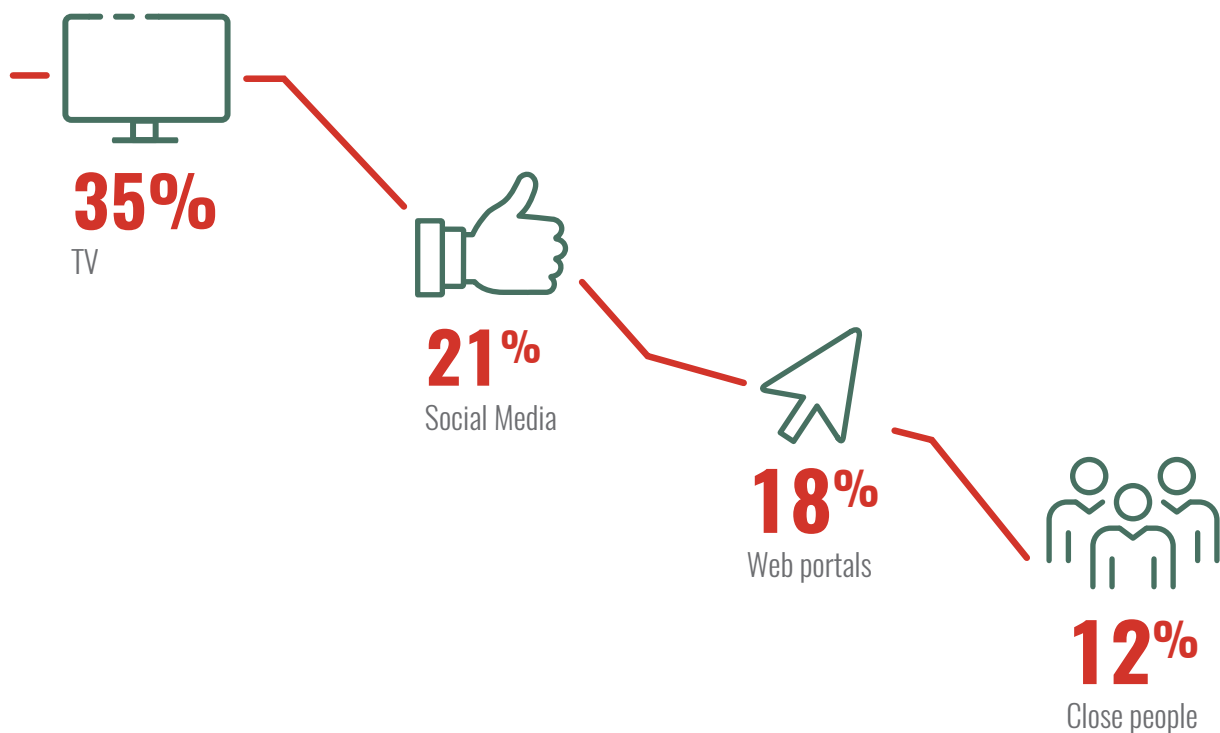
Where do you get information about election?



REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The predominant sources of election information are TV (35%), social media (21%), web portals (18%), friends and family members (12%).

Newscasts (42%) and TV debates (30%) are the most practiced ways of sourcing information about elections by the survey participants.



With regards to the type of communication with candidates in the election period, this group prefers in-person communication in smaller groups (in the neighbourhood) and personal, door-to-door communication and relies on the candidates' political track record in making an informed decision. Nine per cent (9%) of the respondents are interested in political party programs.

With regards to communication with candidates or representatives from political parties between elections, people from remote communities prefer to be informed about previous achievements and results of the candidates (33%), have in-person communication in smaller groups (30%) and receive information via traditional media (28%).

The survey participants point out that the political parties visit their communities and have contacts with the citizens only during the pre-election period. In this regard, they underline that the political parties are not interested in the needs of the citizens and their visits have only one goal - political marketing and winning people's votes.

“ When they visit us before elections, they come only for party promotion and not to hear what our needs and problems are. I do not think that any politician would come to Makedonski Brod and listen to our local issues, urbanization, sewerage, etc. ”
Female, 24, Makedonski Brod

The expectations of this demographic group from the political parties are to:

- ♦ Fulfil their promises.
- ♦ Improve basic conditions of the rural areas and remote communities.

VERY POOR

The predominant sources of election information are TV (68%), social media (7%), web portals (8%), friends and family members (7%).

Of note is that this demographic group more often gets informed about elections via TV (68%) compared to the general population (52%) and uses social media twice less often (7%).

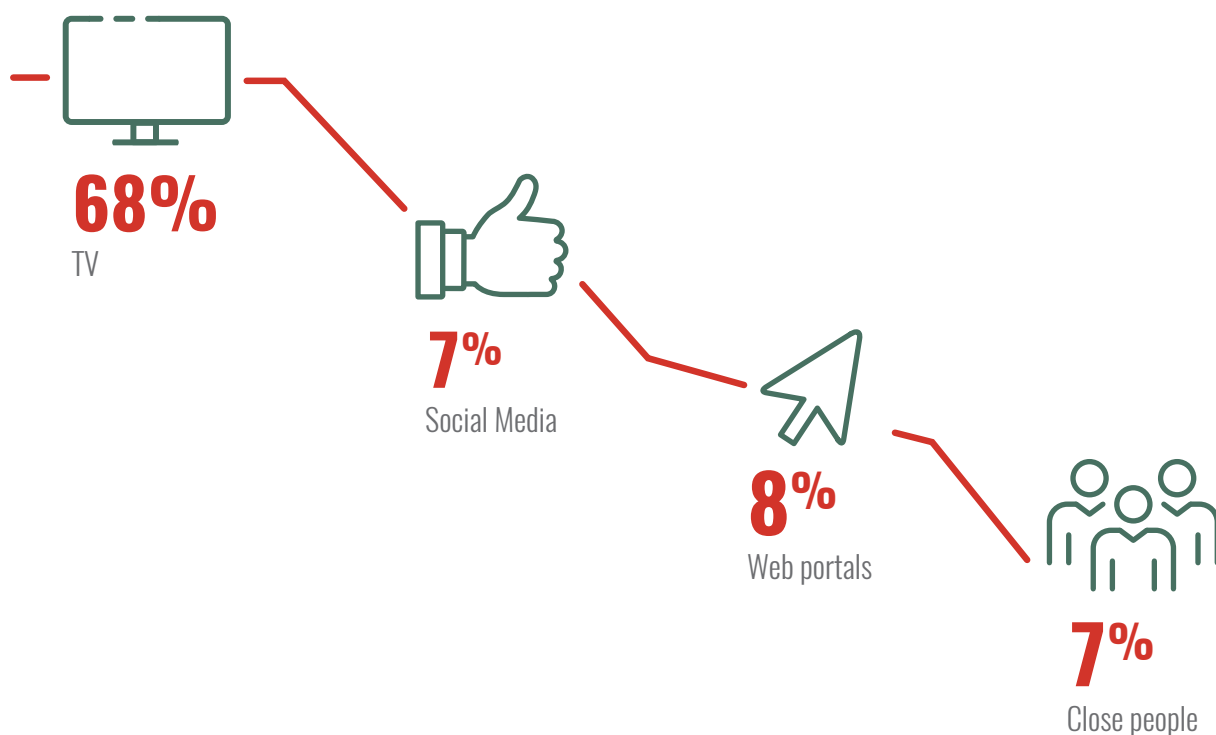
Newscasts (66%) and TV debates (17%) are the most useful ways of sourcing election information for the survey participants.

With regards to the type of communication with candidates in the election period, this group prefers personal communication i.e. door-to-door or in-person communication in smaller groups (small neighborhood gatherings) and sourcing information via traditional media.

Concerning communication with candidates or representatives from political parties in the period between elections, in addition to personal communication and communication in smaller groups, very poor people prefer to be continually informed about previous political achievements and results of the candidates.

The respondents claim they are interested in election political party programs to find out whether parties' promises are tangible and feasible.

The general impression of this profile group is that the political parties are not interested in addressing the needs of the very poor citizens.



These citizens are especially sensitive to party - political manipulation and promises with regard to employment in the public sector.

“ The very poor citizens are not mentioned anywhere. Single-parent families are not mentioned either. This is absolute discrimination. ”
Female, 42, Kumanovo

“ It is utopia to believe that any party has a strategy to help the people. ”
Male, 45, Tetovo

The expectations of this demographic group from the political parties are to:

- ♦ Reduce unemployment and open new jobs.
- ♦ Help single parents and parents of children with disabilities.
- ♦ Increase social aid.
- ♦ Stop citizen manipulation to win votes.
- ♦ Stop dividing the citizens based on their party affiliation.

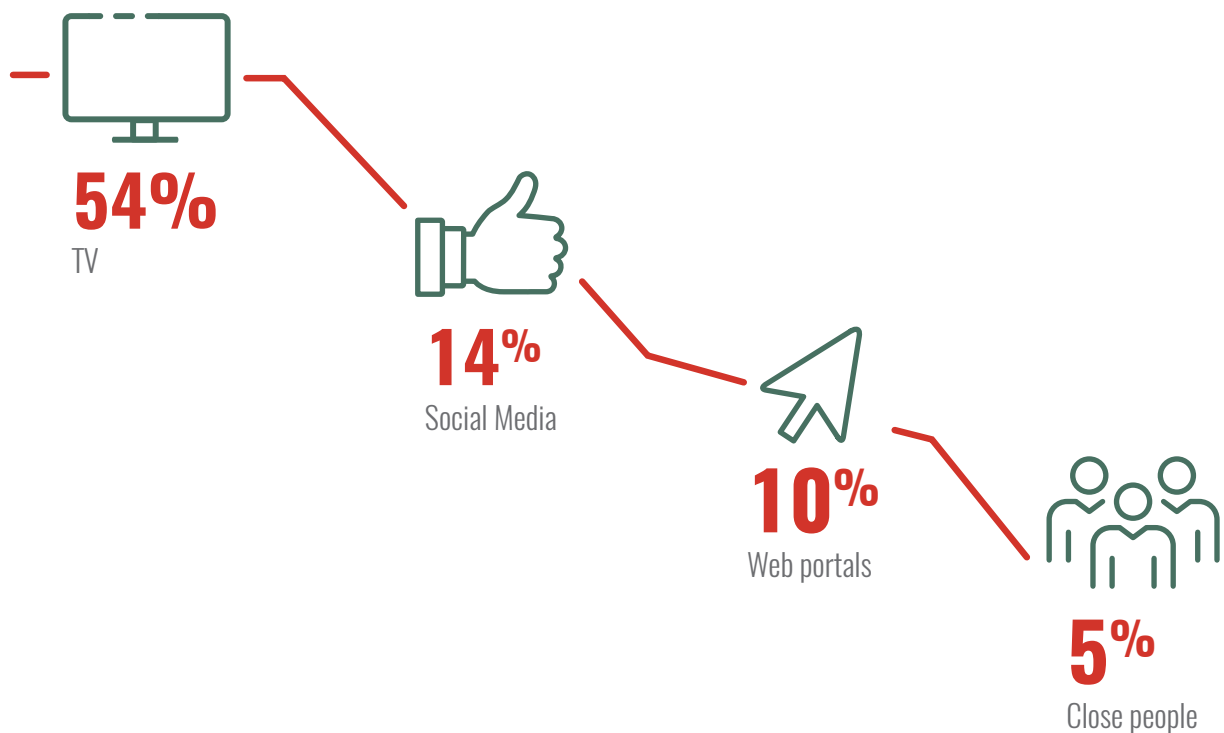
CHRONICALLY UNEMPLOYED

The predominant sources of information about elections are TV (54%), social media (14%), web portals (10%), friends and family members (5%).

Newscasts (46%) and TV debates (22%) are the most useful ways of finding information about the elections for the survey participants.

Regarding the type of communication with the candidates in the election period, this group prefers personal door-to-door communication (indicated by 19%) or in-person communication but in smaller groups (indicated by 20%).

Seventeen per cent (17%) of the respondents rely on the political track record of the candidates in making an informed decision.



With regards to communication with candidates or representatives from political parties in the period between elections, the respondents prefer to be informed in person (door-to-door or in smaller groups). Nevertheless, media is also an important source of information about candidates in-between elections, as indicated by a third of the respondents.

Political party programs and rallies are the least preferred form of communication for this group during the election period and in-between elections.

Only 5% of the respondents mention the political party programs as an important type of information about the candidates in the election period.

In this regard, the focus group participants pointed out that the pre-election programs are full of empty and unreal promises, often repeated before each election.

The participants state that the parties in their election programs offer employment solutions that are usually not applicable in practice. They make big promises in the pre-election period – big foreign investments, higher average salaries, improved employment rate, but after winning a mandate, they forget the unemployed, especially those who are not members of any political party.

The expectations of this demographic group from the political parties are related to:

- ♦ Promises that could be kept.
- ♦ No lies and thefts.
- ♦ Responsiveness to citizens' demands, in-person meetings to discuss citizens' needs and problems.
- ♦ Ending the employments and discriminations based on party affiliation.

OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

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%).

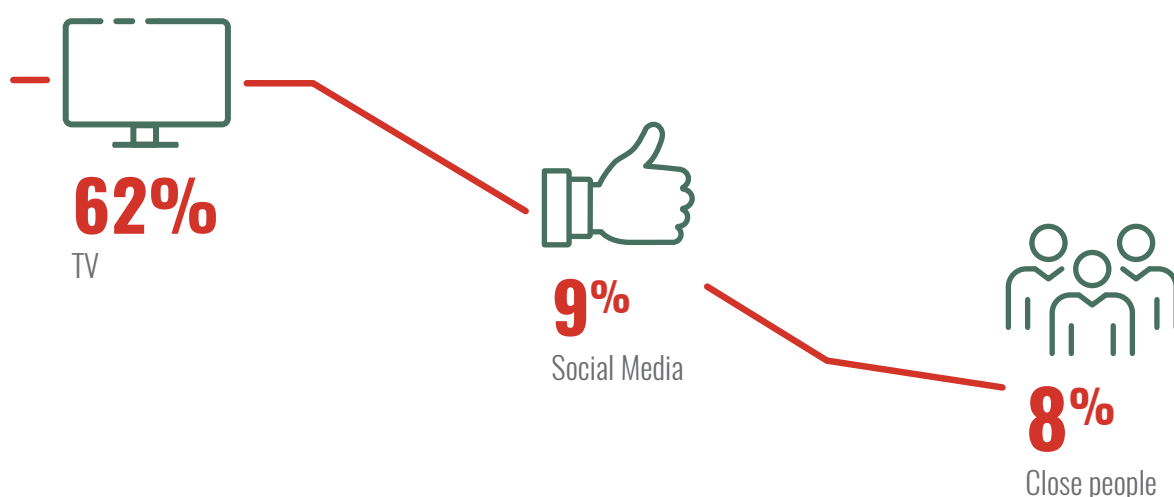
Focus group findings show that the respondents perceive the parties' pre-election contacts with the citizens as a marketing stunt. The respondents feel that political parties meet with people in **the pre-election period** to "beg for votes" and this is the only time when they are interested to learn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