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VOTER AND CIVIC EDUCATION REPORT IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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SUPPORT TO ELECTORAL REFORMS PROJECT

Overall Objectives and Beneficiaries

- *Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia* is a project of the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The project aims at supporting democratic and credible election processes that facilitate political participation and social integration by enabling voters to freely select their representatives and hold them accountable.
- The **project activities** are designed to support the achievement of three outcomes:
 - Outcome 1: Strengthened institutions conduct fair and efficient election processes
 - Outcome 2: Internally democratized political parties present citizen-oriented policies and election programs
 - Outcome 3: Empowered citizens hold political parties and elected officials accountable
- **Project beneficiaries** are election management bodies at all levels; government agencies such as Ministry of Information, Society and Administration, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, State Statistical Office, Ombudsperson Institution, State Audit Office, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice; political parties, civil society organizations, voters and citizens.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders

15 Key informant interviews with representatives from: Ministry of Education and Science – Bureau for development of education, SEC, Political parties, NGO's/Civil society, Media, Academia/Political science



Face to face nationally representative CAPI survey

Nationally representative, multistage stratified sample of 1,114 respondents aged 18+, citizens of North Macedonia.

Margin of error $\pm 2.94\%$ on confidence interval level of 95%

Time frame: 15 - 26 June 2023



Focus groups with citizens in six electoral units

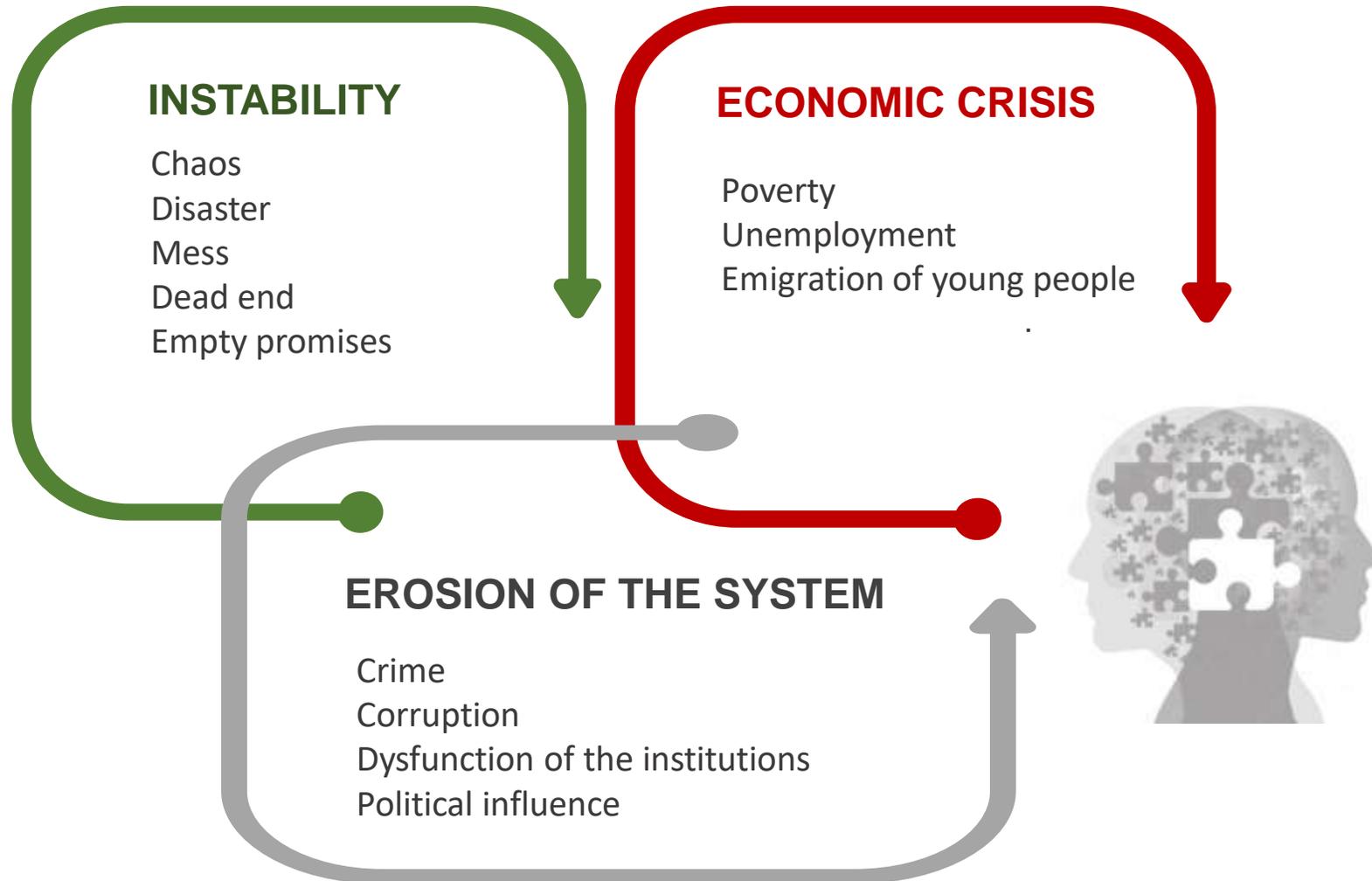
6 focus groups with citizens aged 18+, in 6 electoral units, balanced in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and working status

GENERAL OUTLOOK

GENERAL OUTLOOK

If you have to describe the current situation in our country in **three words**, what would they be?

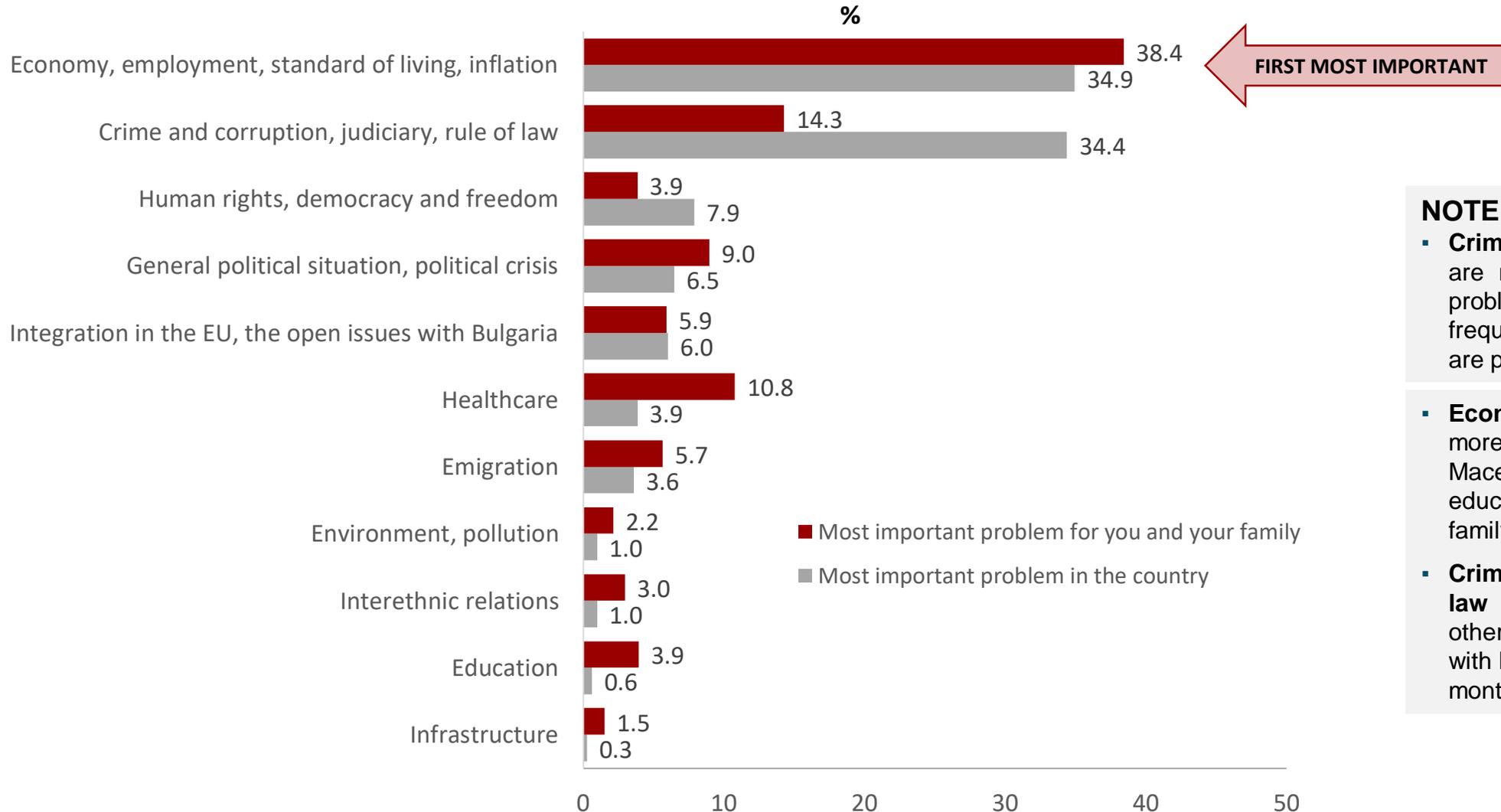
- **STRONG NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY**



MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

What is the FIRST most important problem our country is facing today?

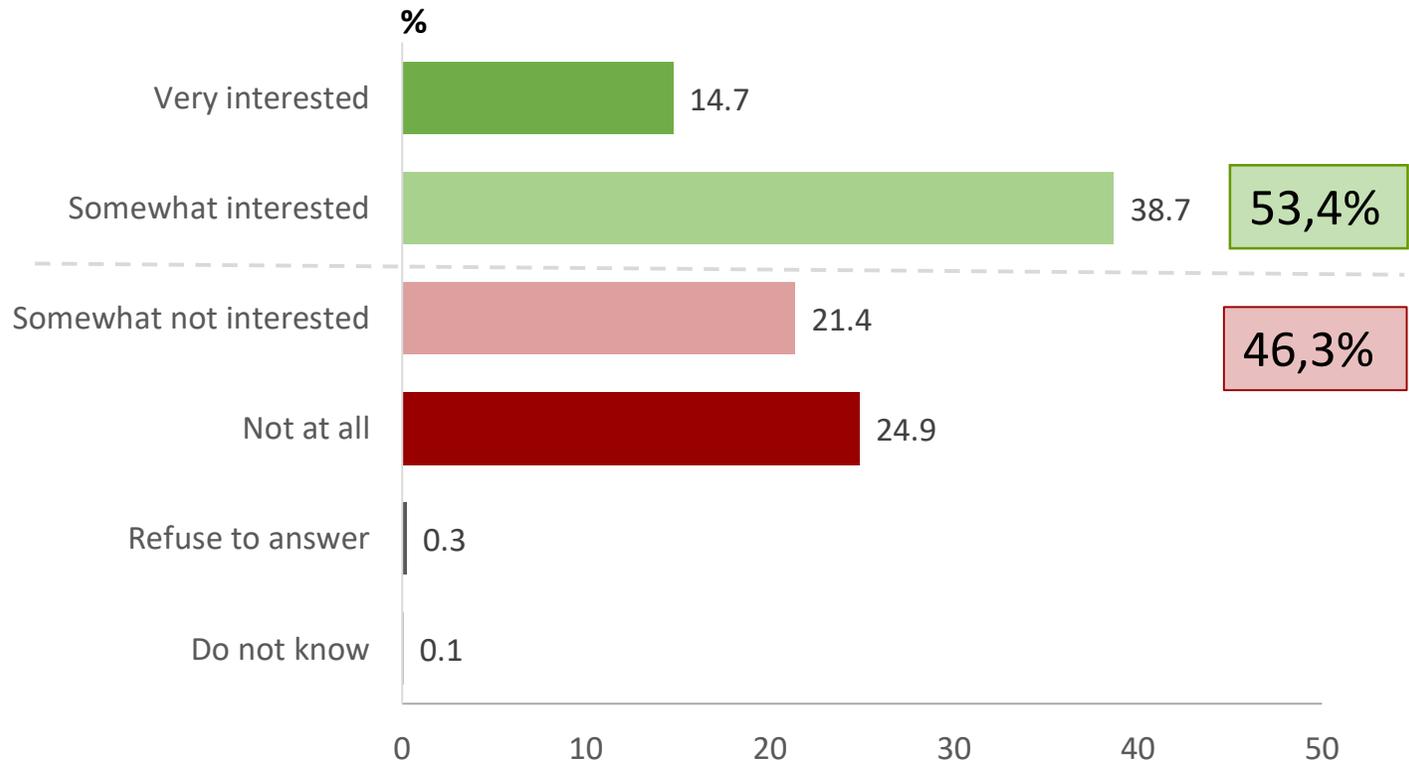
What is the FIRST most important problem you and your family are facing today?



- NOTE**
- **Crime, corruption and rule of law** are more frequently mentioned as a problem our country is facing and less frequently as a problem the citizens are personally facing
 - **Economy and standard of living** is more frequently mentioned by ethnic Macedonians, respondents with lower education and respondents with lower family income
 - **Crime and corruption and rule of law** is more frequently reported by other ethnic communities, respondents with higher education and higher family monthly income

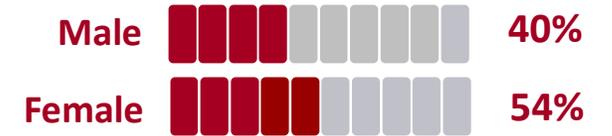
INTEREST IN SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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

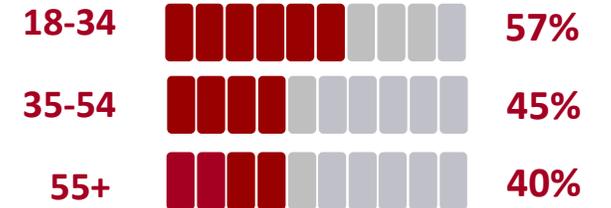


Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

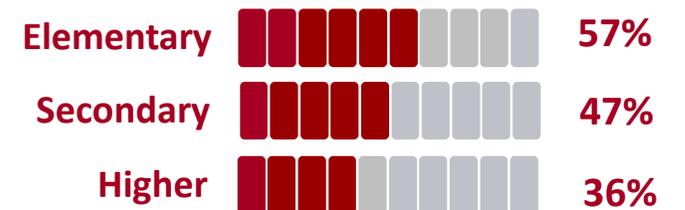
Percentage of respondents who **are not interested** in the current socio-political developments, by sex



Percentage of respondents who **are not interested** in the current socio-political developments, by age groups

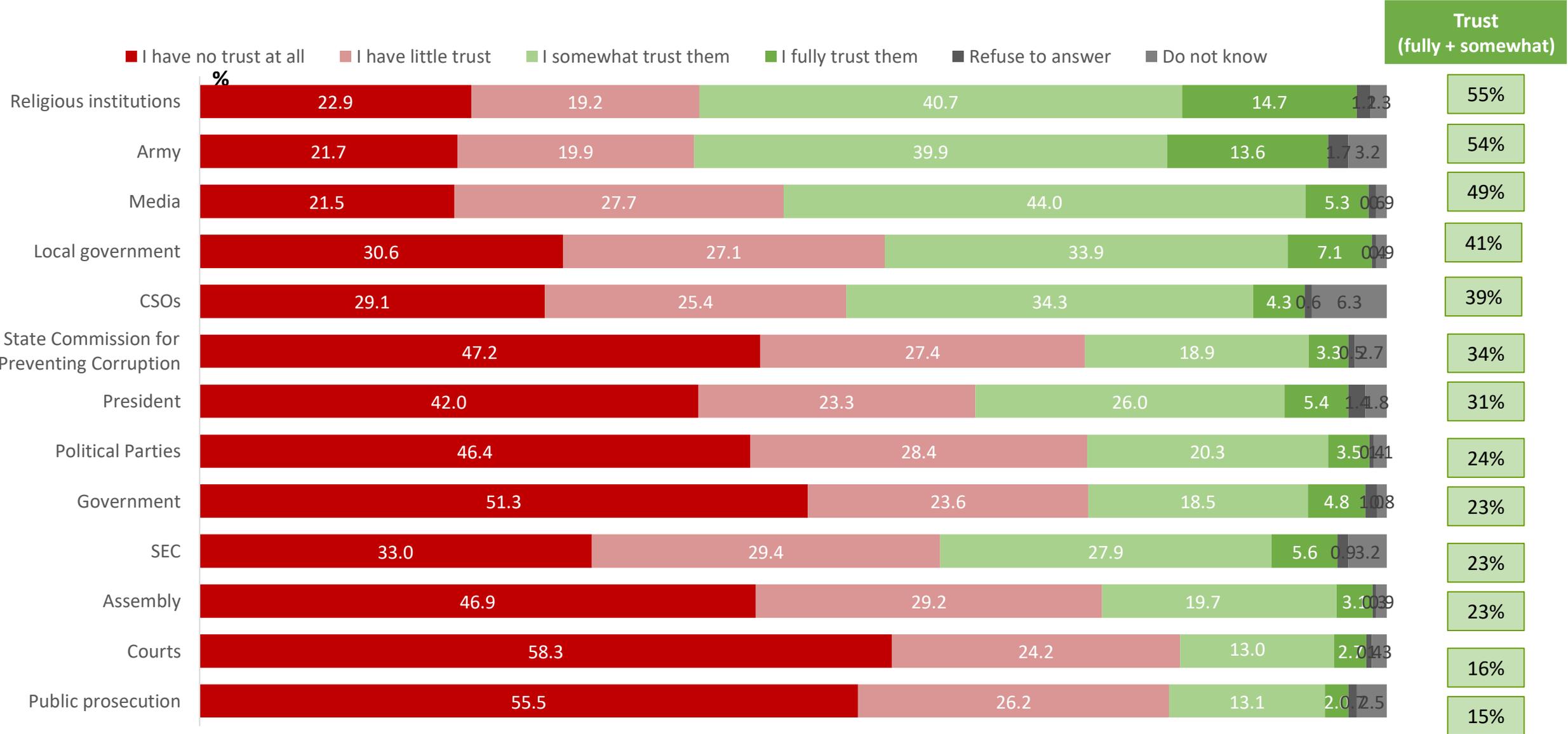


Percentage of respondents who **are not interested** in the current socio-political developments, by education



TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

To what degree do you trust or do not trust the following?



Trust (fully + somewhat)

55%

54%

49%

41%

39%

34%

31%

24%

23%

23%

23%

16%

15%

Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error ± 2.94

KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST IN CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

ASSOCIATIONS

When you hear the word CIVIC EDUCATION what comes to your mind?

When you hear the word VOTER EDUCATION what comes to your mind?

CIVIC EDUCATION

- Citizens know their rights and responsibilities
- Citizens demand their rights and freedoms
- Obligations and responsibilities of the government
- Citizens know where to ask for help
- Acceptable ways of behavior, morals and ethics
- Mutual cooperation among citizens
- Environmental awareness
- Subject in primary education
- Foundations of democracy



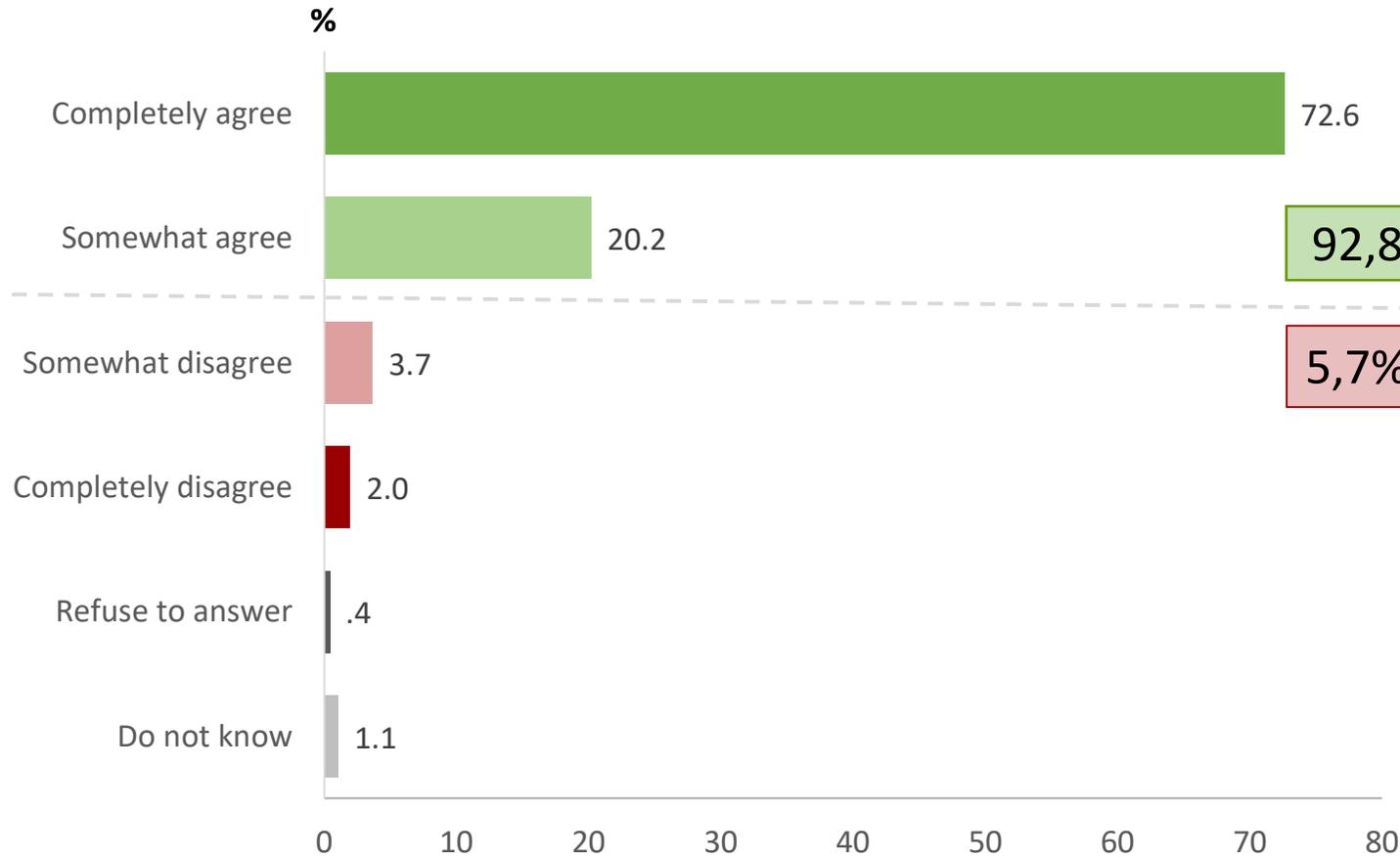
VOTER EDUCATION

- Awareness about the rules of voting on election day
- Method of voting
- Awareness where to vote (polling station)
- Awareness where to report irregularities
- Electoral process
- Familiarity with the programs of the political parties
- Familiarity with the candidates of the political parties
- Providing important information for the young people about voting



CITIZENS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

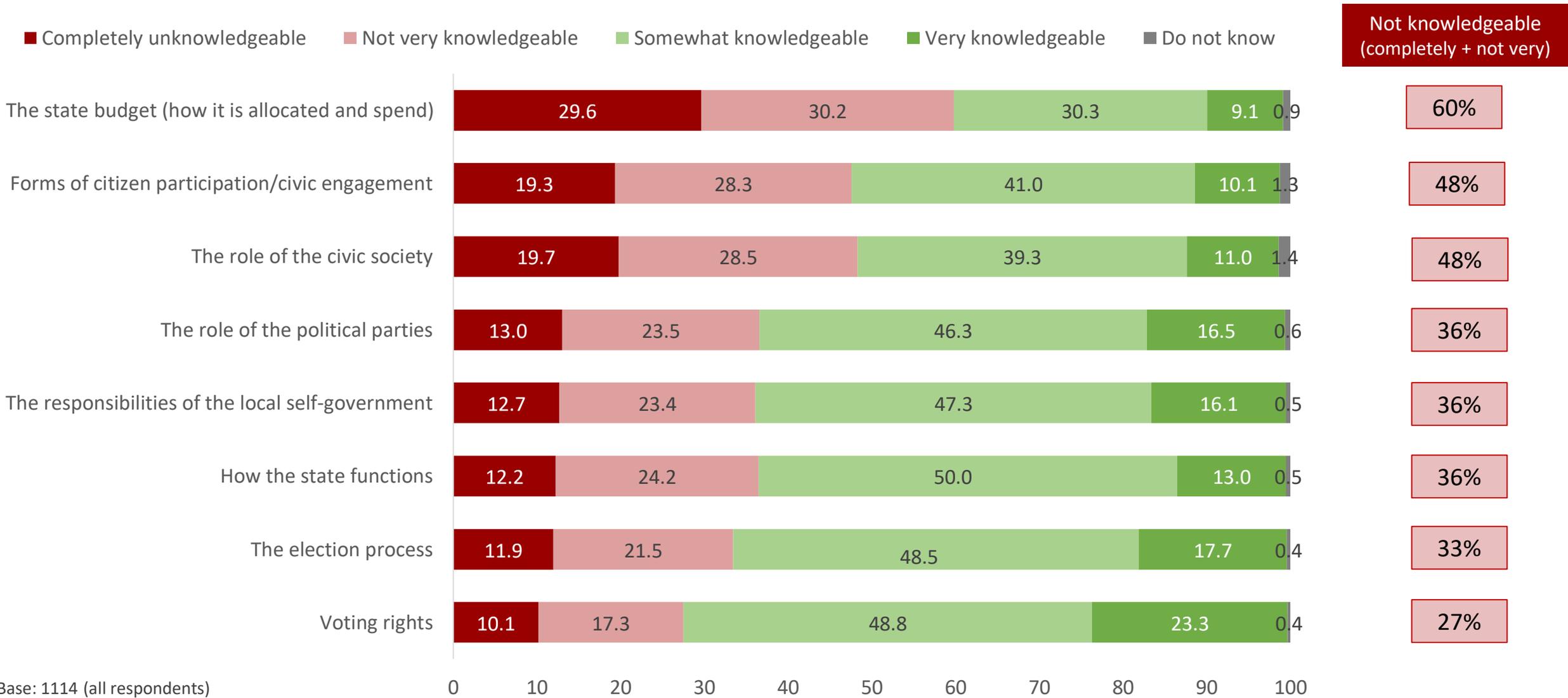
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: "It is important for citizens to know their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society"?



I think that if we do not have enough Civic Education in general, we will not be able to realize some of our rights, nor will we know that we have the opportunity to realize them.
FG participant, Tetovo

REPORTED KNOWLEDGE

How knowledgeable do you think you are about...:



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error ± 2.94

CITIZENS' KNOWLEDGE ON ISSUES RELATED TO CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION



KIIs

- All interviewed stakeholders believe that the citizens are uninformed or little informed and do not understand the concepts and topics that are part of civic and voters' education.

Although our society is strongly politicized, the citizens generally don't understand the concept of civic education.
KII Political party

The public poorly understands the terms Civic society, civic organizations, their roles, how they are financed etc. I suppose there are often associated, even with parties... So, in that direction, I think there is a big misunderstanding of who is who in the society.
KII Medium

FGDs

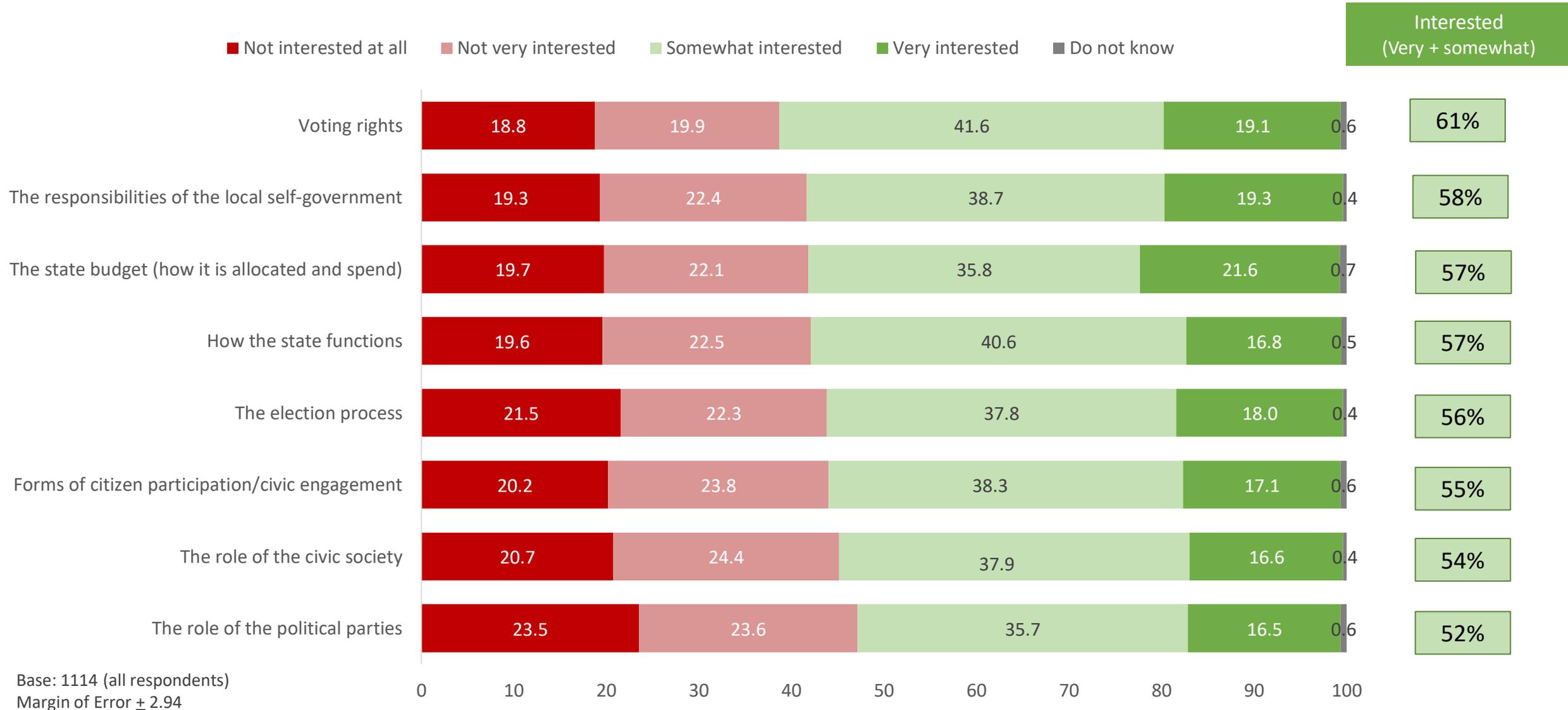
- On a school scale (from 1 to 5) participants in the focus groups evaluate the citizens' knowledge about civic education with an average score 2-3.
- As the most common consequences of the low knowledge of the citizens about civic education they pointed out the following:
 - Vulnerability to manipulation by the system and institutions
 - A sense of hopelessness and apathy, leading to civic passivity
 - Decline of the system of moral values in the country
 - Stagnation, poverty
 - Emigration of young people from the country

The less information we have, the more exposed to manipulations we are. It's not our duty everyone to know everything, but it's for our own sake to know as much as possible how the system functions so that we would avoid being tricked by someone.
FG participant, Bitola



REPORTED INTEREST

How interested are you to learn about ...?



CITIZENS' INTEREST ON ISSUES RELATED TO CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

KIIs

- Representatives of Non-Government Organizations and the Media agree that citizens are not very interested in topics related to Civic and Voter Education, that these topics are not very attractive to citizens, primarily due to the feeling of apathy and powerlessness to change something in society.

The citizens are not interested because they think they cannot change anything.
KII NGO

FGDs

- The most frequent reasons why the participants in the focus groups are not interested in these topics are the following:
 - Associating civics and voter education with political topics that creates strong resistance and a need to avoid them
 - Transferring the responsibility to the system and institutions and not accepting their own share of responsibility (being informed and engaging civically)
 - Disappointment and distrust in institutions and in the state
 - Perception that education is for young people and should remain within the framework of the school system (obligatory in primary education, as an optional subject in secondary education)

I'm simply not interested. We are attacked from the news on TV, we are fed up with all this information.
FG participant, Bitola



CITIZENS' INTEREST ON ISSUES RELATED TO CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

FGDs

In what way do the citizens want to be informed?

- Organized campaigns by the state in cooperation with the non-government sector to increase citizens' awareness
- Short brochures / manuals in print or online version that will be distributed through various channels and to which citizens will have quick access
- Short, interesting and informative videos in prime time on television, as well as on social networks
- Including citizens in debates, public forums and discussions when making decisions at the local level and through the non-governmental sector

What should the institutions do to stimulate the citizens' interest?

- To restore citizens' trust in their work - for citizens to have positive experiences from dealing with institutions
- To employ professional and competent people
- To be transparent in their work

What will motivate the citizens? If they have a positive outcome from time to time. If you see that the other party listens to you and knows how to help you.
FG Participant, Strumica



FORMAL AND INFORMAL CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

FORMAL EDUCATION

- Compulsory civic education in the 8th and 9th grade in primary schools
- Compulsory civic education in the 1st year of secondary vocational education; sociology in high school education
- The subject civic culture was introduced in 2002, in 2005 it was renamed to civic education
- In 2020 MOES adopted a Concept and implementation guidelines for Civic Education in primary education prepared by BDE.
- The Concept and guidelines aim to further emphasize the importance of Civic Education integration in educational system and that a democratic culture is the responsibility of the entire school. Civic Education is implemented through: dedicated curriculum for the subject of Civic Education; extracurricular activities; democratic school management; cooperation with the community; relevant teaching methods and similar.



<https://www.bro.gov.mk/%d0%b3%d1%80%d0%b0%d1%93%d0%b0%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%be-d0%be%d0%b1%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%b7%d0%be%d0%b2%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b8%d0%b5/>

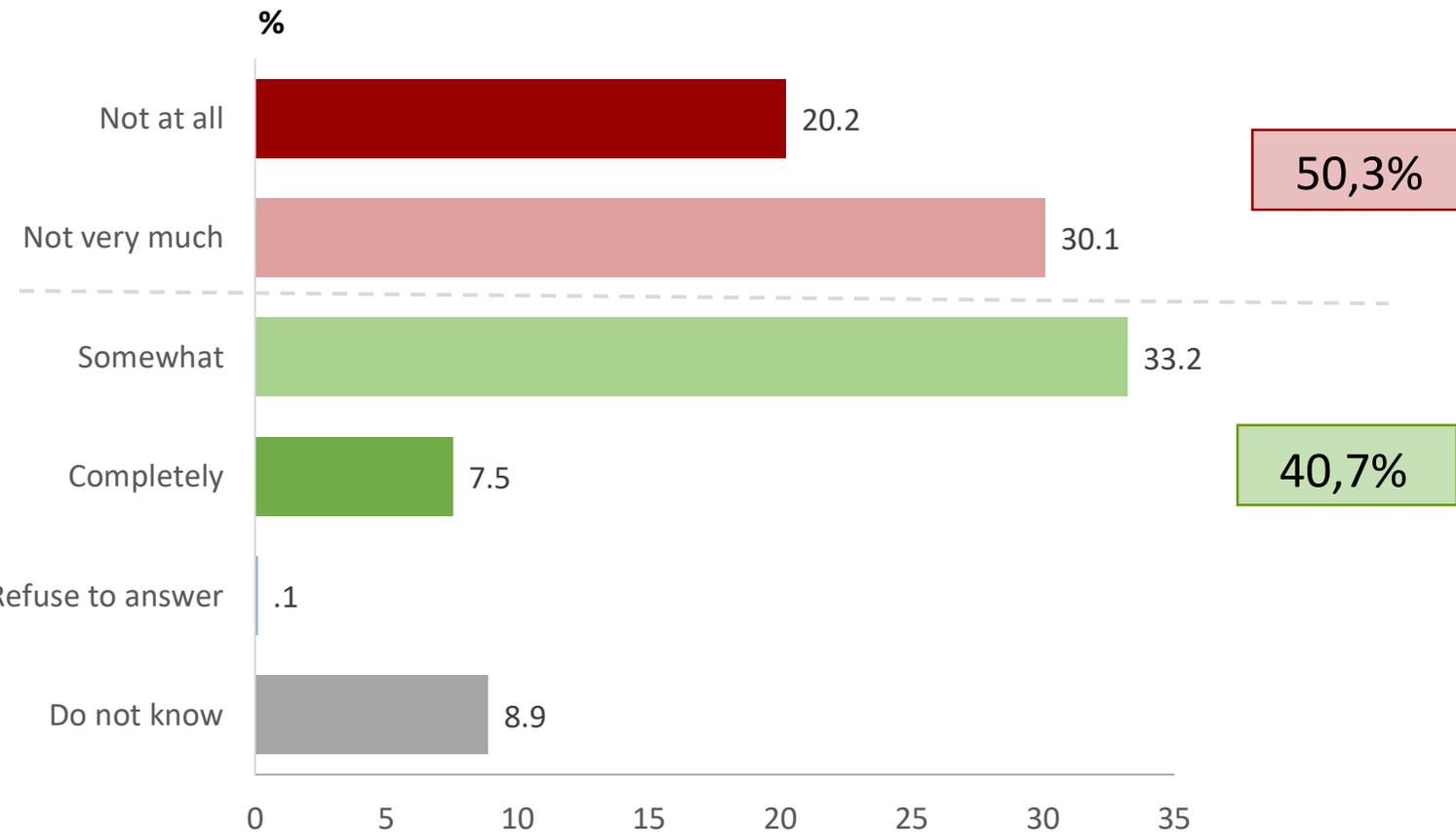
INFORMAL EDUCATION

The informal civic and voter education is implemented by:

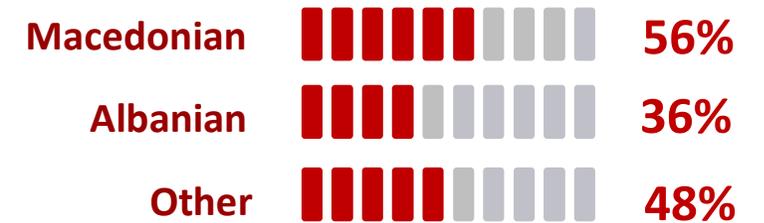
- NGOs
- Political parties
- State Election Commission
- International organizations

CIVIC EDUCATION

In democratic societies, civic education encourages students to be active, informed and responsible citizens, who have the desire and ability to take responsibility for themselves and their communities at local, regional, national and international levels. To what degree do you believe our education is successful in this regard?



Percentage of respondents reporting *our education is not successful* by ethnicity



Percentage of respondents reporting *our education is not successful* by settlement



Urban
54%



Rural
45%

Base: 1114 (all respondents)

Margin of Error \pm 2.94

CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

KIIs

All key stakeholders agree that Civic and Voter education are not sufficiently included in the education process and that education does not achieve the effects and goals.

KIIs identifies the following factors that have impact on the effectiveness of the civic education:

- The subject is abstract, theoretical, complex, the topics are incomprehensible, there is a lack of practice
- Young people perceive it as inappropriate and are not motivated to study the subject, especially because they consider it inapplicable in the reality in which they live
- The subject does not receive adequate importance, it is represented by one lesson a week and it is used to fill the lack for some teachers who do not have enough classes
- The teaching staff is with varying educational background and there are frequent staff turnovers
- There is no appointed advisor for Civic Education in the Education Development Bureau, there is a lack of supervision of the teachers who teach the subject

I think that Civic Education is not enough efficient, too complex concepts are learned at a very young age, while the basic issues of activism and entrepreneurship are not covered, i.e. of civic participation. It is on a level that is not adequate for the young generation and I think it is repulsive for them.

KII Political Party

The students immediately notice that what they learn and what is written, in textbooks and programs, does not correspond with what they see in reality. For example, they see corruption around them, discrimination, and it's contradictory.

KII NGO



CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

KIIs

A large number of NGOs work in the field of civic and voter education, one part in schools, and one part in educating different target groups of citizens, political parties and media (e.g. Macedonian Civic Education Center, Most, Civil, Inkluziva, Youth Educational Forum, Youth Can, Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, European Policy Institute, Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis, Center for Change Managements, Macedonian Women's Lobby, etc. supported by international organizations (IFES, NDI, IRI, OSCE etc.)

- There is an impression that NGOs and civic society organizations work ad hoc, unsystematically and are dependent on donors' grants and programs.
- They work isolated, uncoordinated, and they do not use the experience from previously successful projects; there is no hub or a register with information on “*who does what*”
- The projects lack continuity and consistency
- Not enough work is done on preparing the institutions for the introduction of change, nor on the motivation of each included stakeholder. Therefore, even successful projects become unsustainable from the moment institutions are left on their own, without control and monitoring.

There should be some kind of a hub, website or a register, to see which organization is working on which project and which issue. This hub would prevent overlapping...
KII Academia

It is easy to derogate a system that is fragile! There must be previously included mechanisms in the institutions. It mustn't be left to the individual actors (schools, teachers). We don't have institutional memory. The system destroys even the successful stories, when the institutions are left on their own.

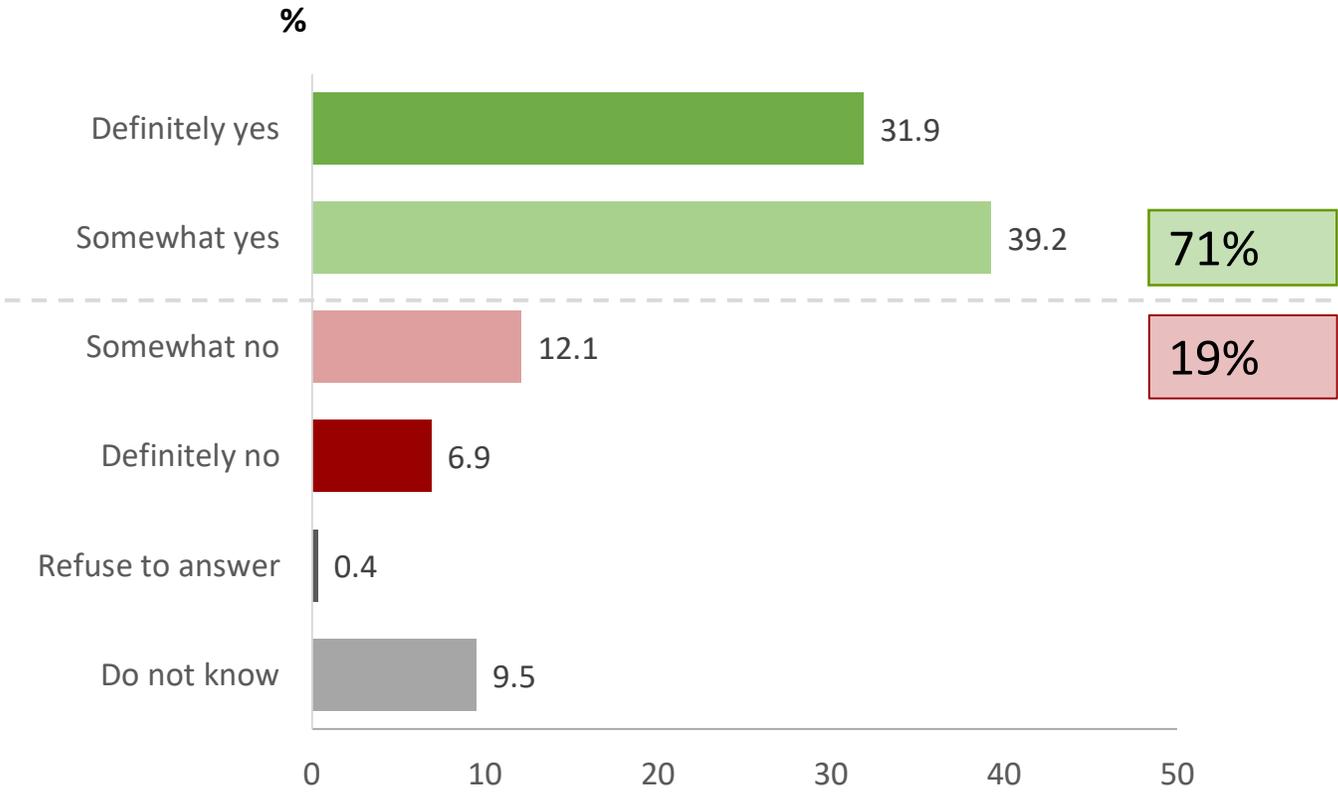
KII NGO

The feeling is that we do our job separately, everyone works on his/her projects and we may not know about other organizations. If we all share the same interest, we can put pressure to the authorities so that this would be more systematically covered, as “coalition for Civic Education”.
KII NGO

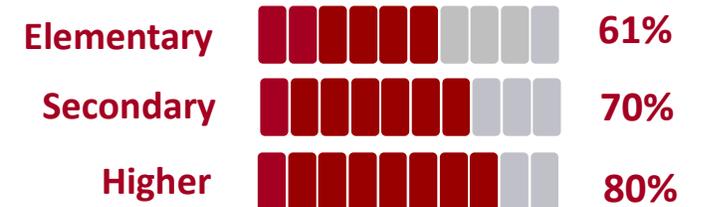


CIVIC EDUCATION

Given there is a dedicated Civic Education subject in primary schools, do you believe it should be expanded in all secondary schools?



Percentage of respondents who believe *civic education should be expanded in all secondary schools, by education*



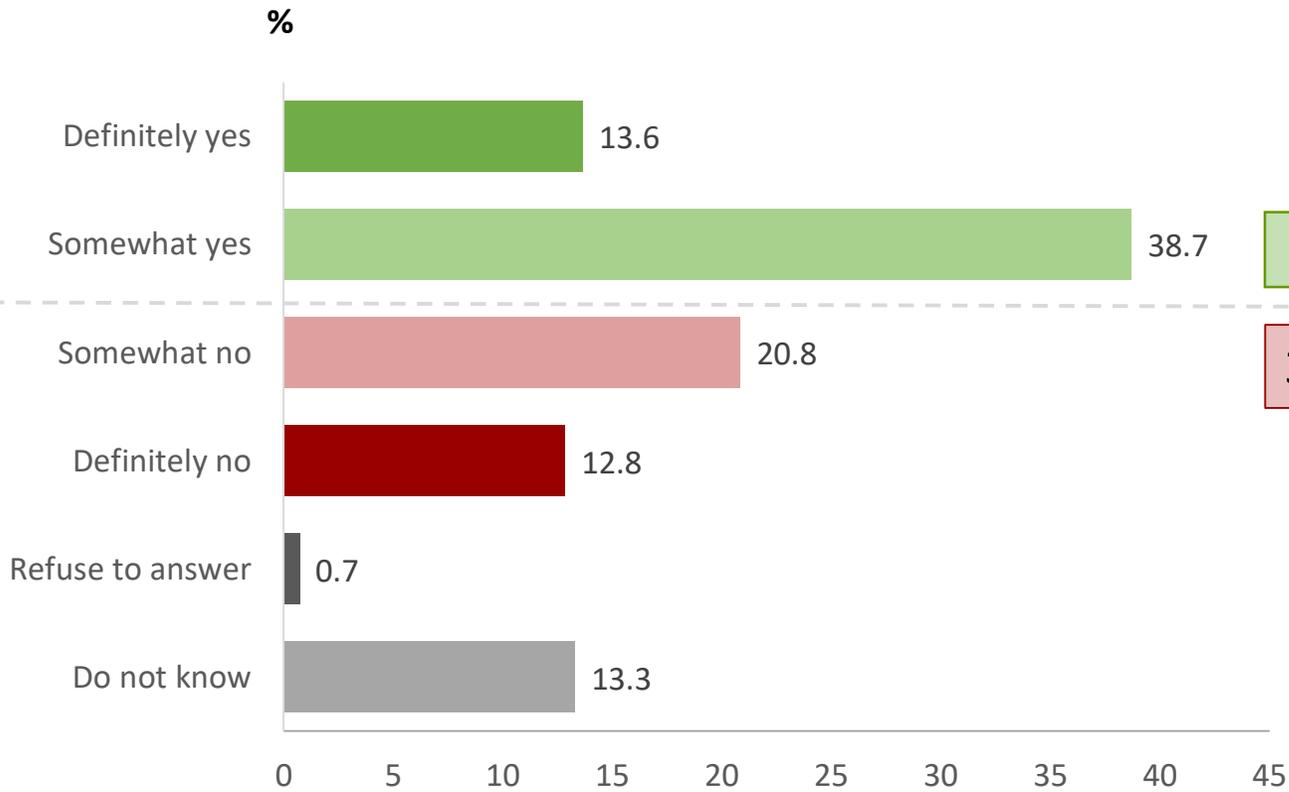
I don't know which subject covers this material for 4 years in secondary school. Can the kids vote in 8th grade? They have no idea what to do at the age of 18 when they are third year in secondary school.
KII Political Party

It would be a good thing to have the subject during the whole education so that the children won't forget it. If we want to live in a civic state, they should be educated enough, to know how to behave, as well as what to expect from themselves and from the institutions.
FG participant, Bitola

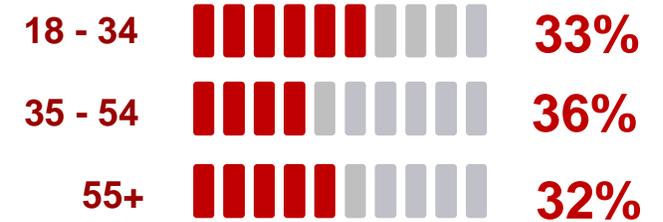
Base: 1114 (all respondents)
 Margin of Error ± 2.94

CIVIC EDUCATION

As far as you know, are the teachers and the education system sufficiently prepared to teach and promote (apply in extracurricular activities) civic/ voter education?



Percentage of respondents reporting *the teachers are not sufficiently prepared to teach and promote* by age groups



* 20% of the respondents aged 55+ do not know whether teachers are sufficiently prepared

There are sometimes history teachers that teach, some are philosophers who teach ethics, religions and similar subjects. And there is no continuity of staff, we will train teachers and the next year 30% of them have already changed. And that's a big problem. Sometimes completely inadequate teachers teach the subject...
KII NGO

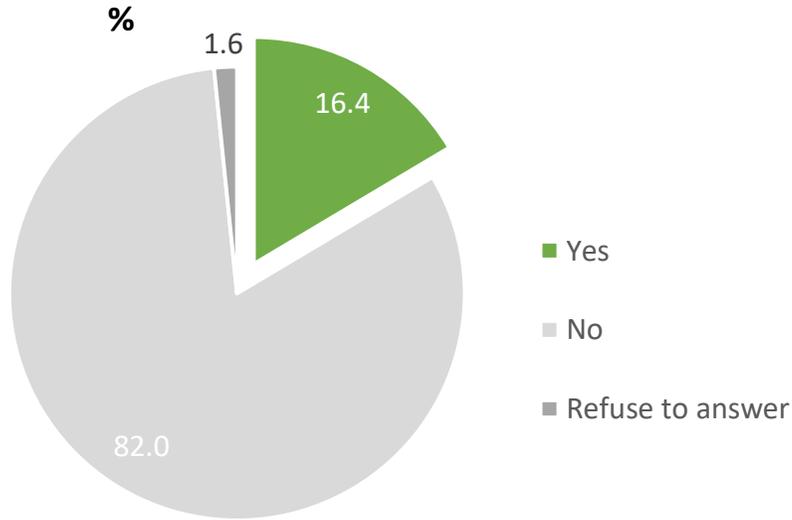
It depends on the teacher how he/she will present the subject and how serious he/she is, which results in how the students will accept the subject. I think the most important thing is who teaches the subject.

KII NGO

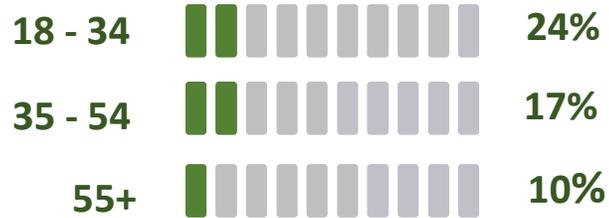


CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

Have you personally received any education or training on civic and voter education?

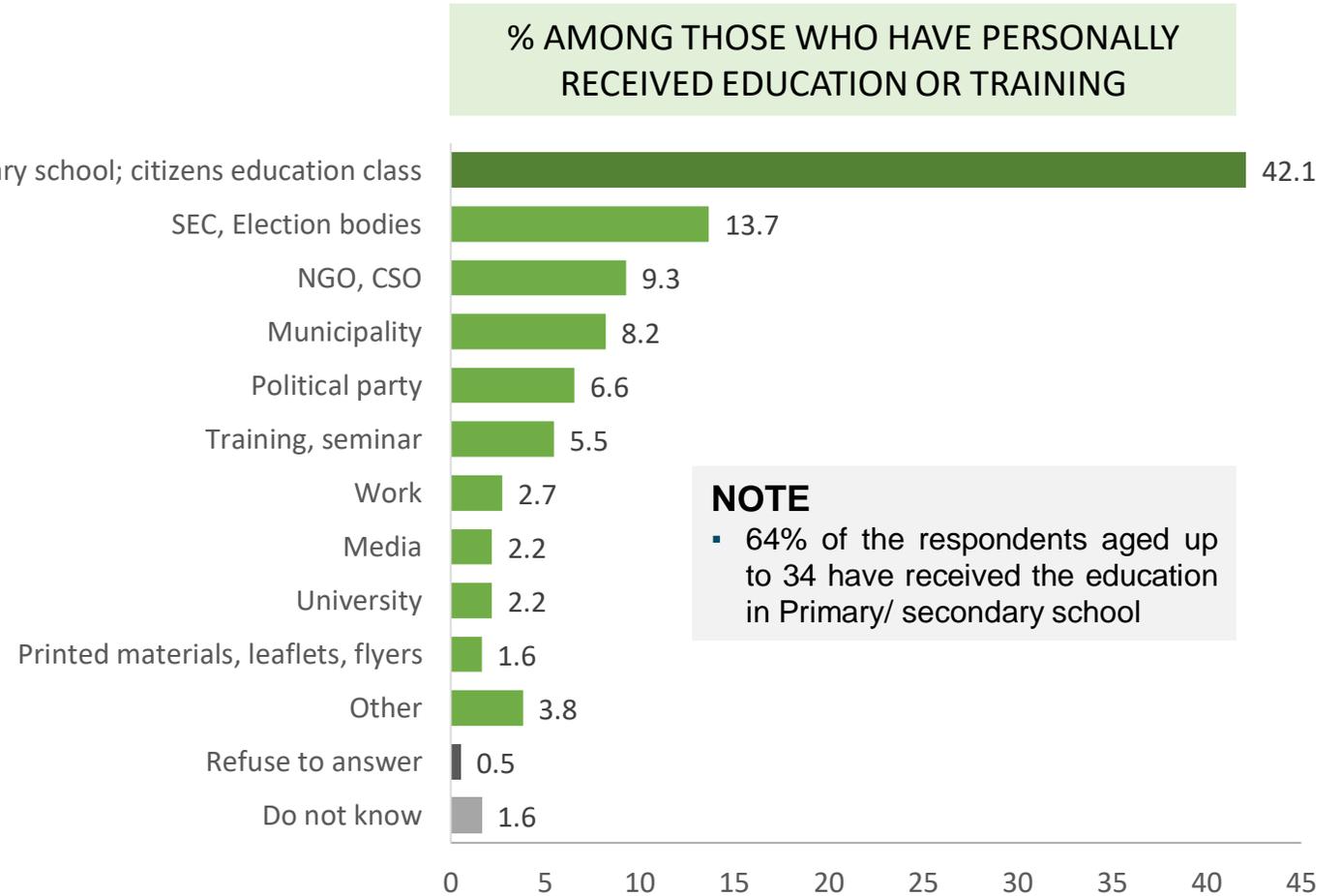


Percentage of respondents reporting they have personally received education or training on civic and voter education by age groups



Base: 1114 (all respondents)

Margin of Error \pm 2.94

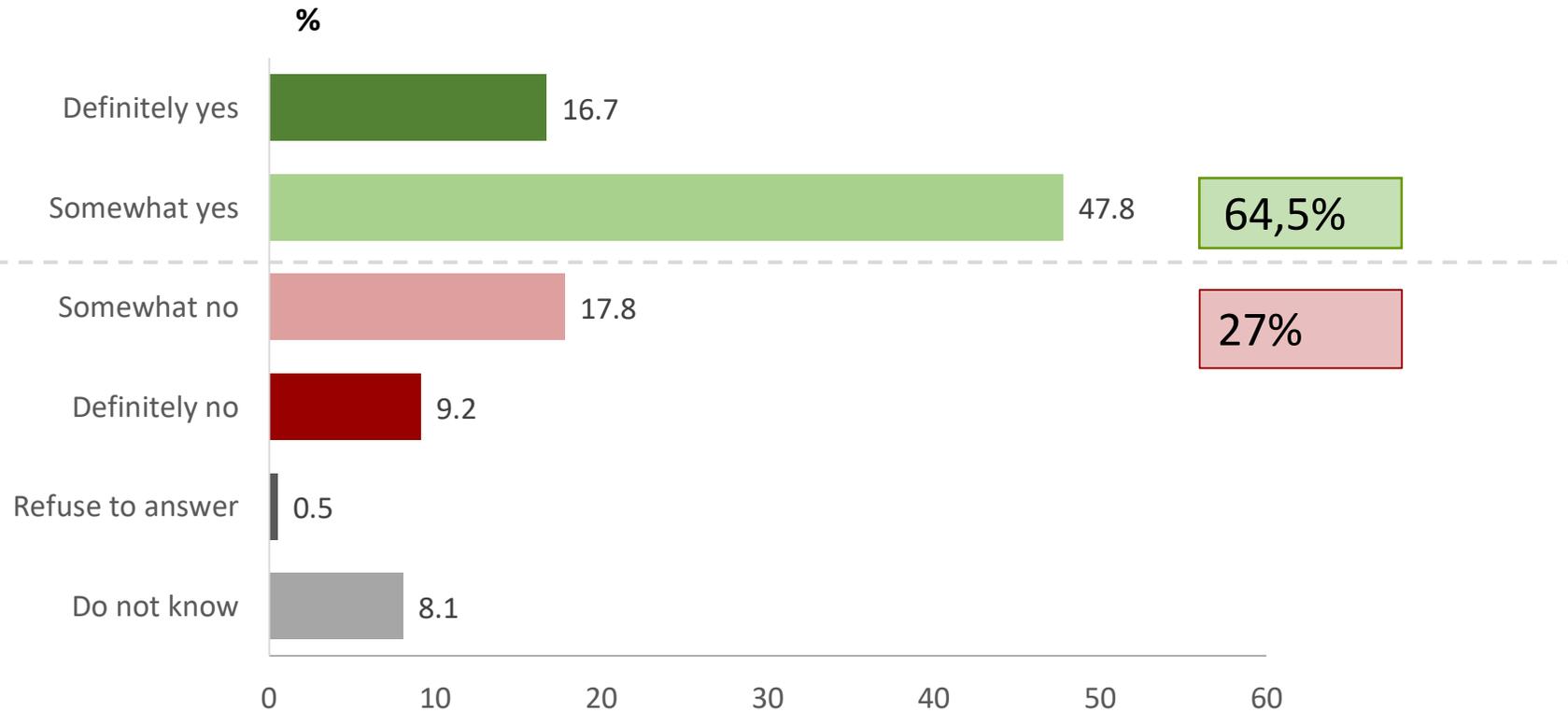


NOTE

- 64% of the respondents aged up to 34 have received the education in Primary/ secondary school

CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

Do you believe that civic and voter education contributes to a more active involvement of citizens?



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

Which topics should be highlighted?

- Democracy, authoritarianism, ideology, political culture
- Discrimination, respecting the differences, inclusion, social cohesion, conflicts
- Role of NGOs and civic organizations, their financing, civic activism
- Functioning of the state and institutions, political system, division of power
- Elections and electoral system (state, electoral process, campaigns, political parties)
- Corruption, recognition and ways to fight corruption
- Accountability and transparency

In 8th and 9th grades, civic education should be done with small steps and students should volunteer for a short time, by the time they reach secondary school they would be able to make a project together or on their own. During those years, they should be involved in some civic or charity organization where they would be able to do something and experience it. When it's only concepts, they don't really get it.

KII NGO

How can civic and voter education improve?

- Practice and practical approach to concepts
- Volunteering, involvement in civic organizations
- Involvement of the local government in specific projects in the community
- Simple, concrete information, related to skills that young people can immediately apply and use
- Analyzing information and making informed decisions
- Cooperation between different parties (education, business sector, institutions)

What does our election model mean? How are coalitions made? What should you know when you go to vote for the first time? Do you know about political party programs? Do you read them? When you read them, what does they mean to you? They should know how to analyze the information they receive so that they are more informed and make more informed decisions.

KII NGO



CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

Which target groups need education the most?

- All interviewed stakeholders agree that the citizens in our country need Civic and Voter Education
- The young people and those who vote for the first time are the most important target groups according to all stakeholders
- Civic Education is also necessary to:
 - The vulnerable groups of citizens (people with low level of education, older, people with disabilities)
 - Political parties
 - Employees in institutions
 - Media

I would work the most with so-called First time voters. There is a great possibility if the young person votes once, he/she will vote further on.

This has been a sociological phenomenon which is true. It's like adopting a habit, obligation, responsibility...

KII Political Party

The most important thing for young people is to know what democracy is, the way elections are conducted, types of ideology in order to see if they want to engage politically through parties, because politically they can also be active in other ways...

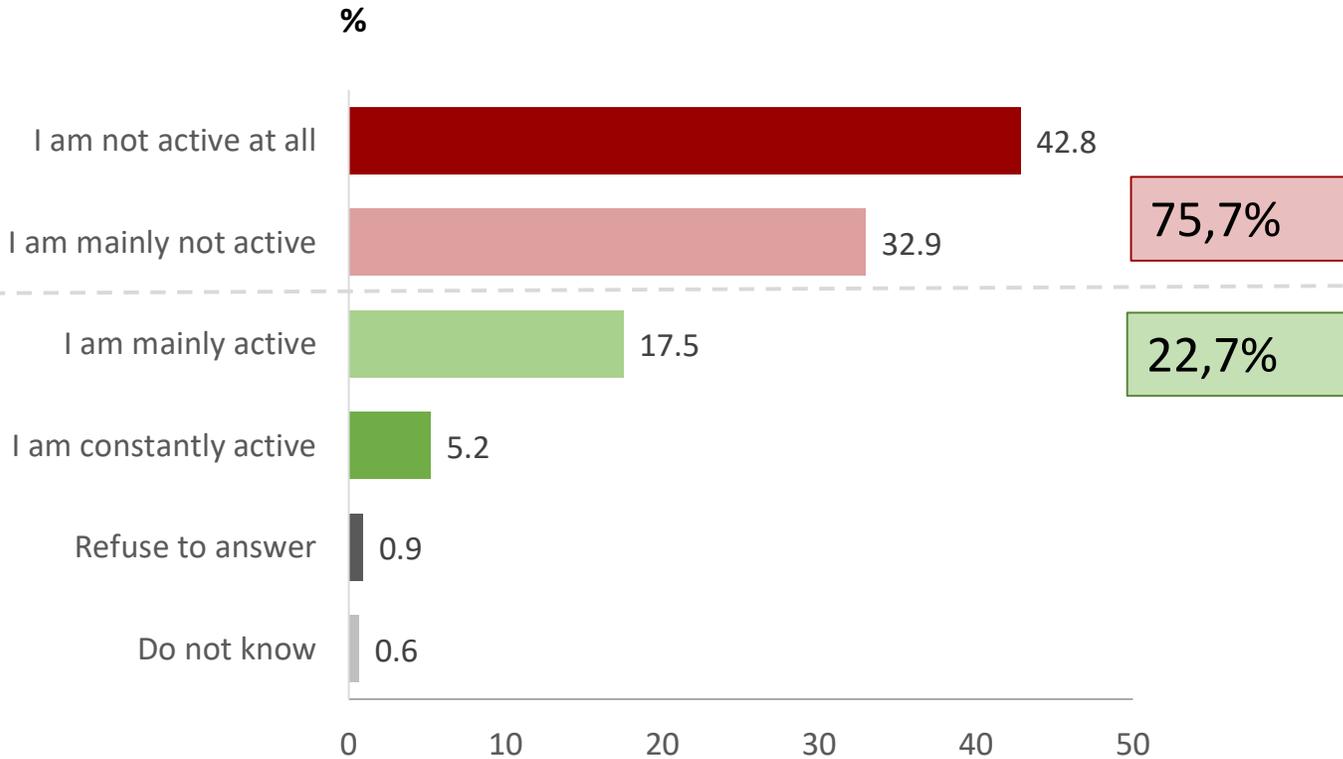
KII NGO



CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

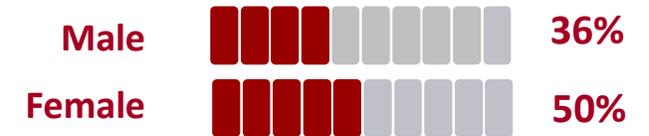
CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

Would You describe Yourself as active citizen (civically engaged)?

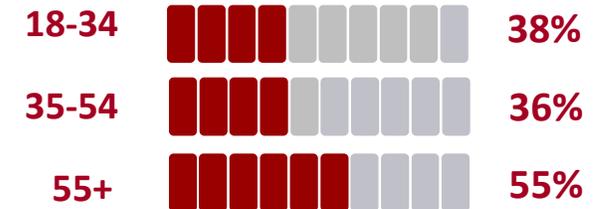


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Margin of Error ± 2.94

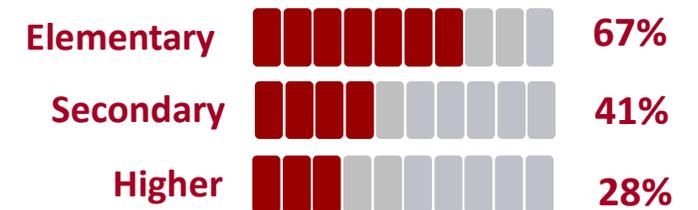
Percentage of respondents who are not active at all, by sex



Percentage of respondents who are not active at all, by age groups

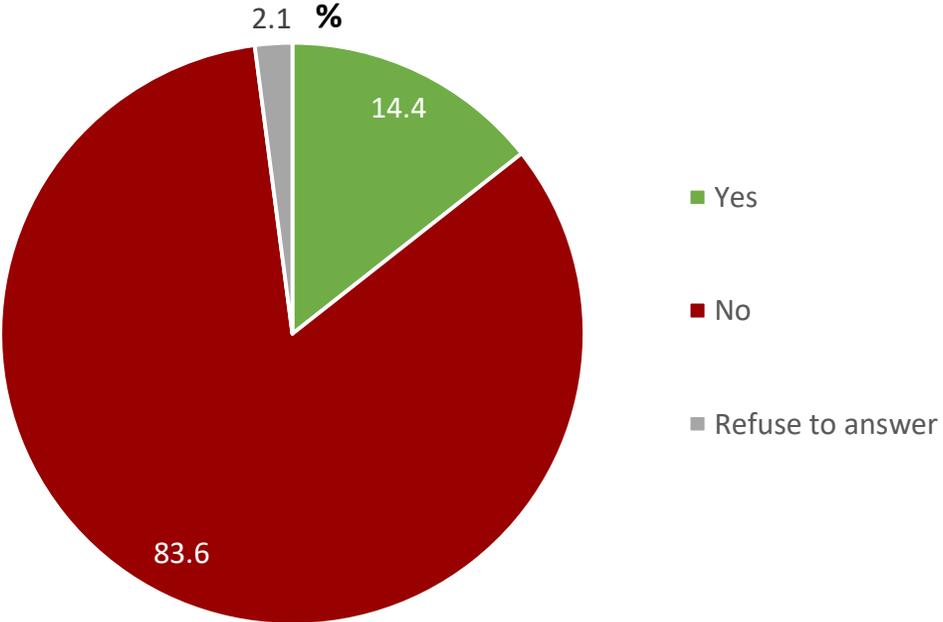


Percentage of respondents who are not active at all, by education



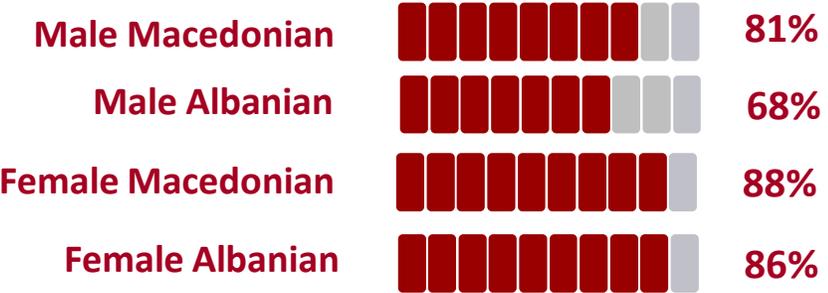
CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

Have you engaged in activities to address a certain issue during the last 12 months? (e.g., participated in a protest, filed a complaint, initiated or supported an online petition etc.)

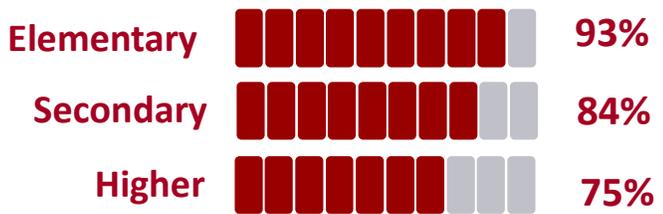


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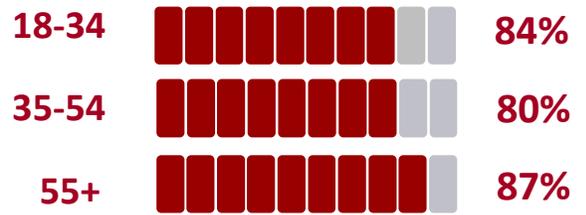
Percentage of respondents who *have not engaged civically in the last 12 months, by sex*



Percentage of respondents who *have not engaged civically in the last 12 months, by education*

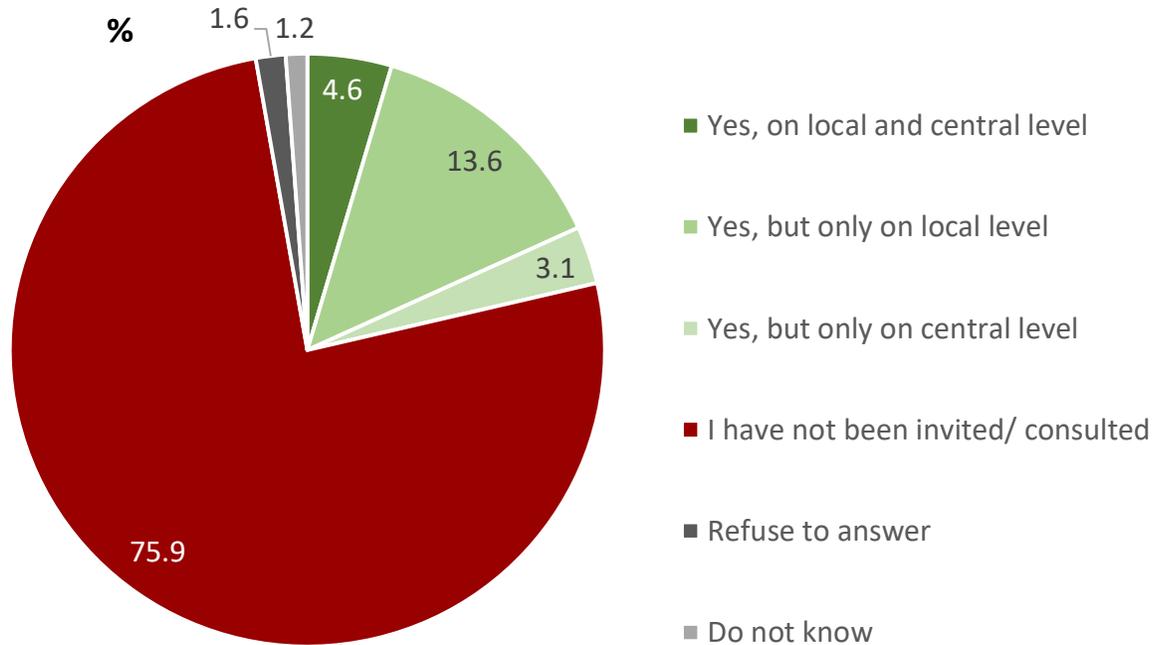


Percentage of respondents who *have not engaged civically in the last 12 months, by age groups*



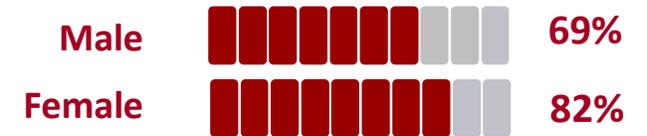
CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT

Have you been asked or invited for consultation or information by any institution when making decisions?

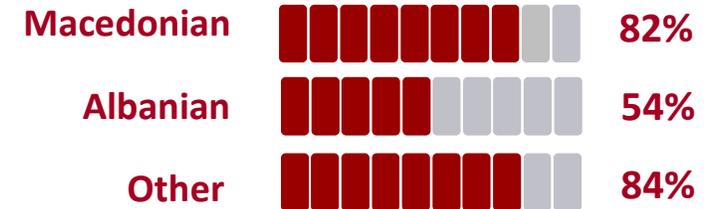


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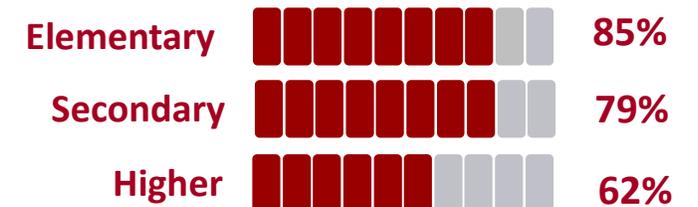
Percentage of respondents who *have not been invited or consulted by any institution, by sex*



Percentage of respondents who *have not been invited or consulted by any institution, by age groups*

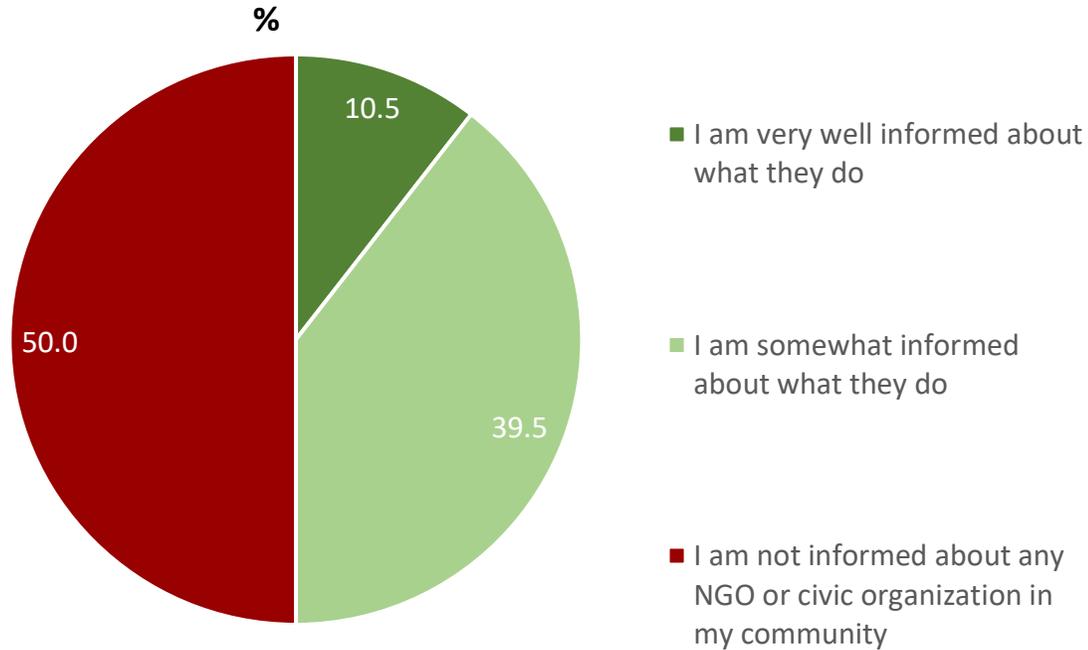


Percentage of respondents who *have not been invited or consulted by any institution, by education*



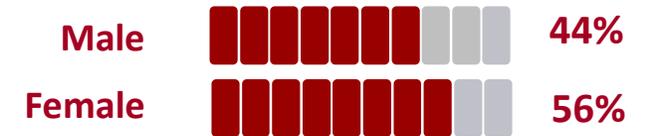
AWARENESS ABOUT NGOS AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Which of the following statements best describes your knowledge about NGO/ Civic Organization in your community?

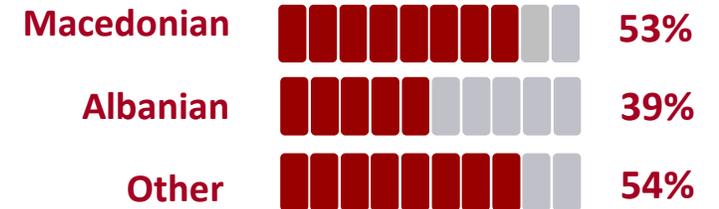


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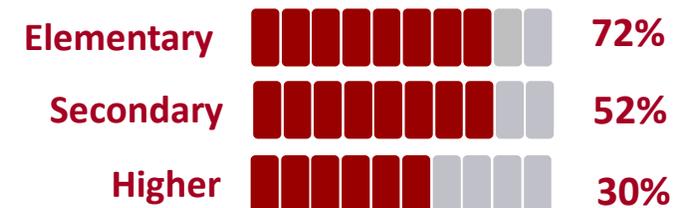
Percentage of respondents who are not informed about any NGO or civic organization in their community, by sex



Percentage of respondents who are not informed about any NGO or civic organization in their community, by age groups

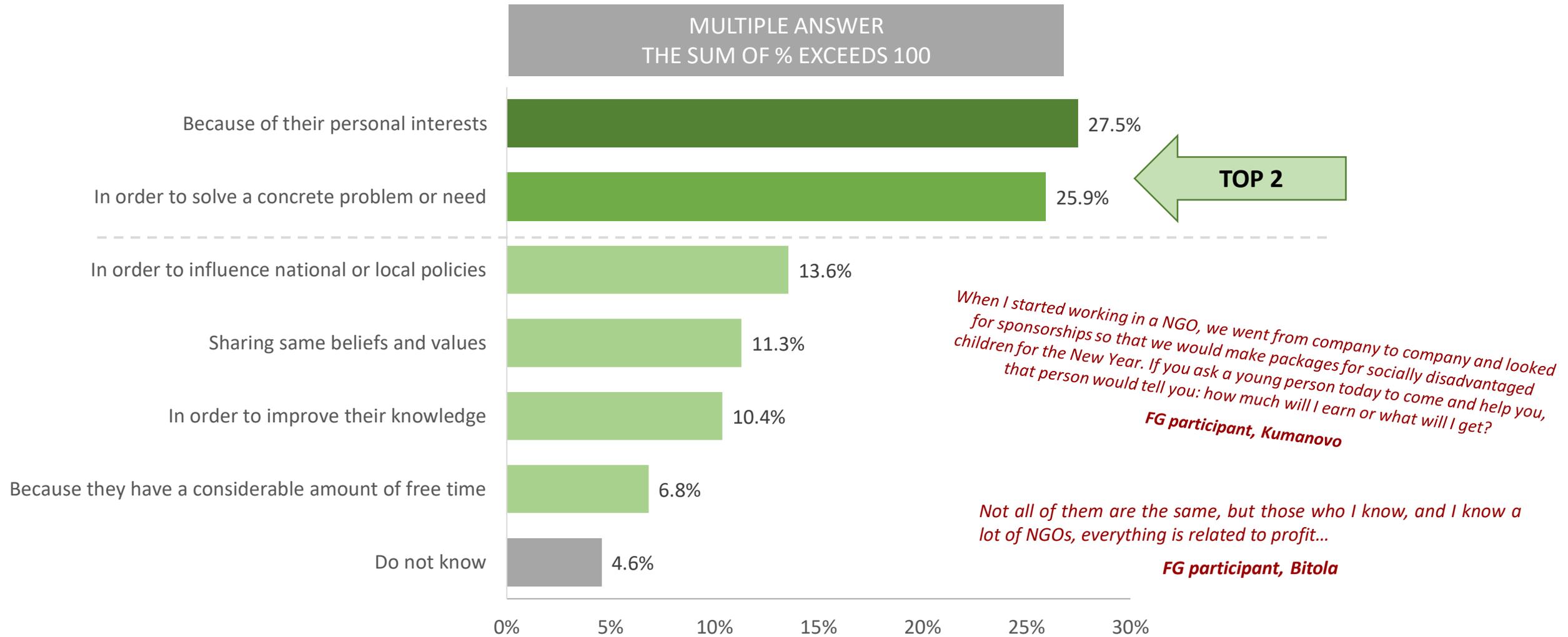


Percentage of respondents who are not informed about any NGO or civic organization in their community, by education



MOTIVATION TO BE CIVICALLY ENGAGED

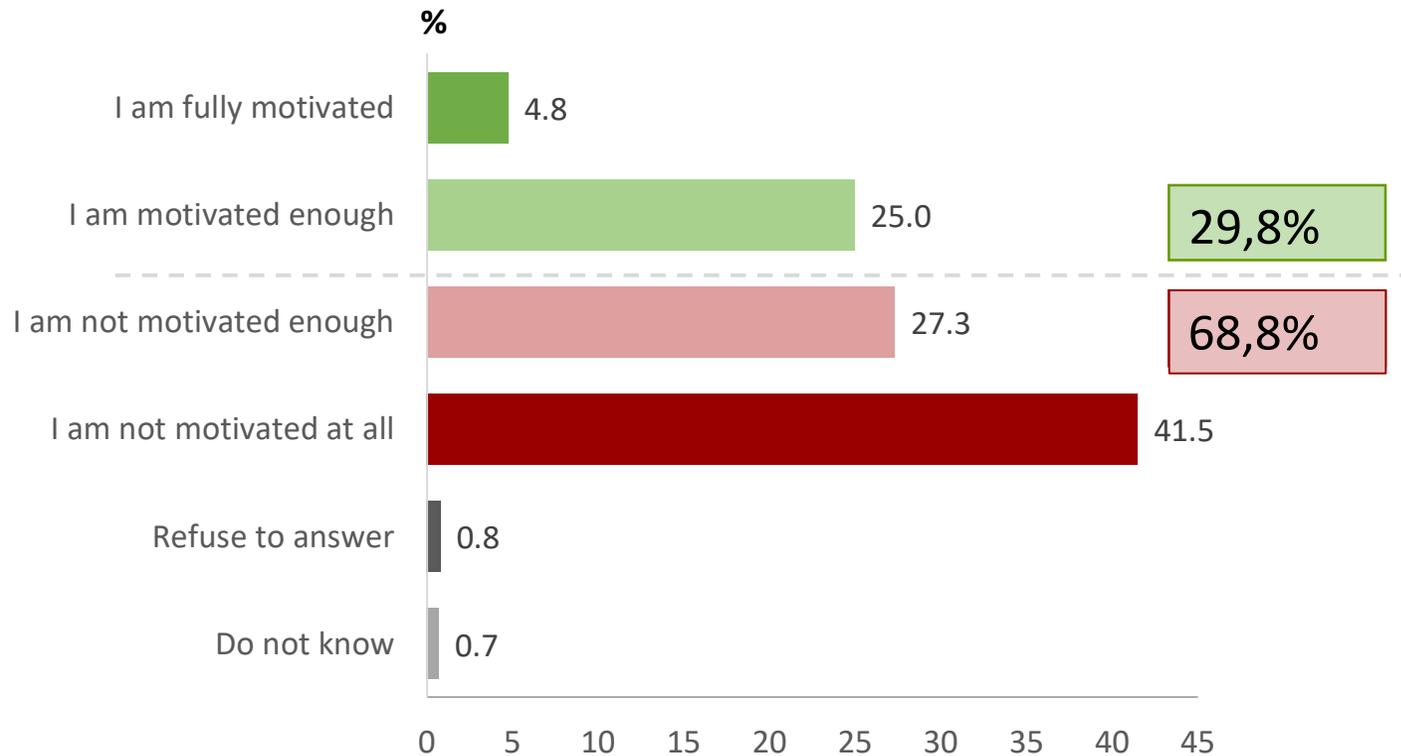
According to you, what are the main reasons for citizens to be engaged in NGOs/ Civic Organizations?



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

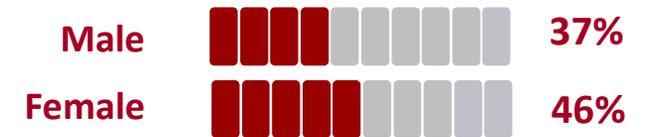
MOTIVATION TO BE CIVICALLY ENGAGED

To what degree are you motivated to civically engage on issues you consider to be of importance to you?

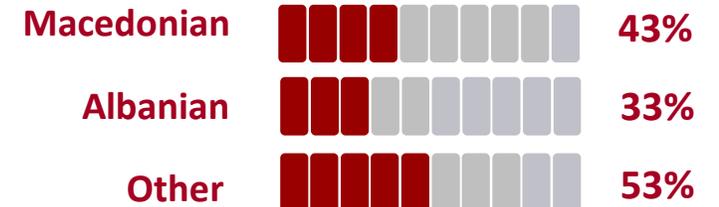


Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error ± 2.94

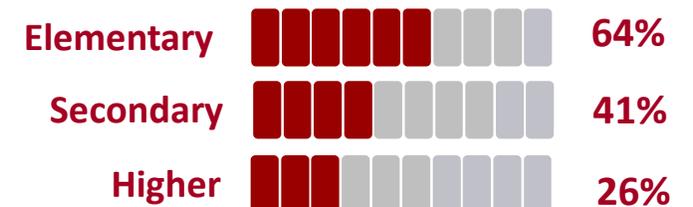
Percentage of respondents who are not motivated at all to civically engage, by sex



Percentage of respondents who are not motivated at all to civically engage, by age groups

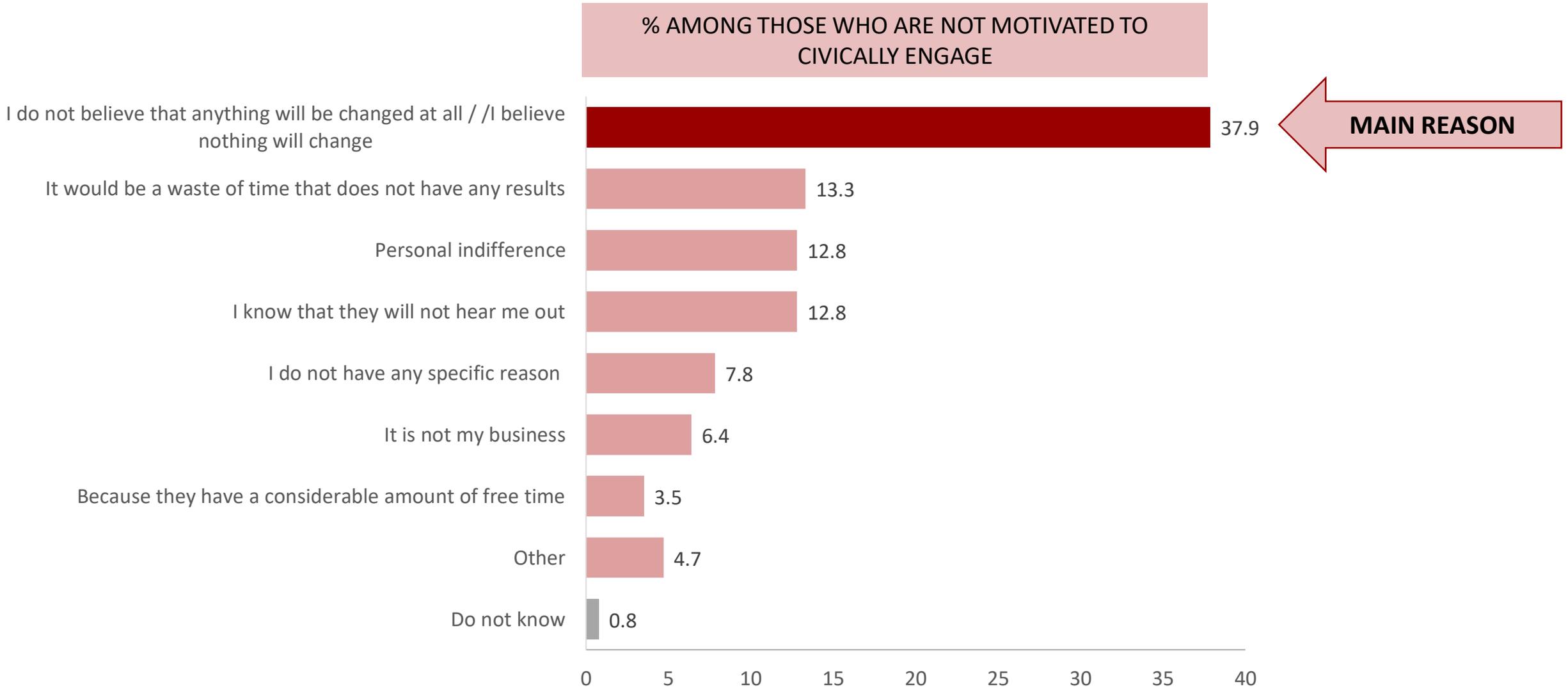


Percentage of respondents who are not motivated at all to civically engage, by education



REASONS BEHIND CITIZENS' APATHY

What is the main reason that discourages you from engaging civically?



REASONS BEHIND CITIZENS' APATHY

What is the main reason that discourages you from engaging civically?

FGDs

- Fear for one's financial security, fear of revenge and losing a job (one's own or of a family member)
- Conviction that everything is in vain and that the citizens do not have power to change anything in the society
- Political influence in civic activism and its use for political interests
- In conditions of poverty and bad economic situation in the country, citizens' interest in civil activism is distant

I want to say that life is a struggle, but our people are afraid to be pointed at, they are afraid of going to prison and of being humiliated. I think fear prevails over ignorance...

FG participant, Skopje

I think people would be more active in the society when they have a strong motive and faith that something would get better, that their engagement would be for better life for everyone. This faith among people is very low...

FG participant, Bitola

The point for the civic sector is to do something that would be useful for the society. But in reality, whatever you say, people would always put it in a political context and they would immediately think you belong to a political party...

FG participant, Kumanovo

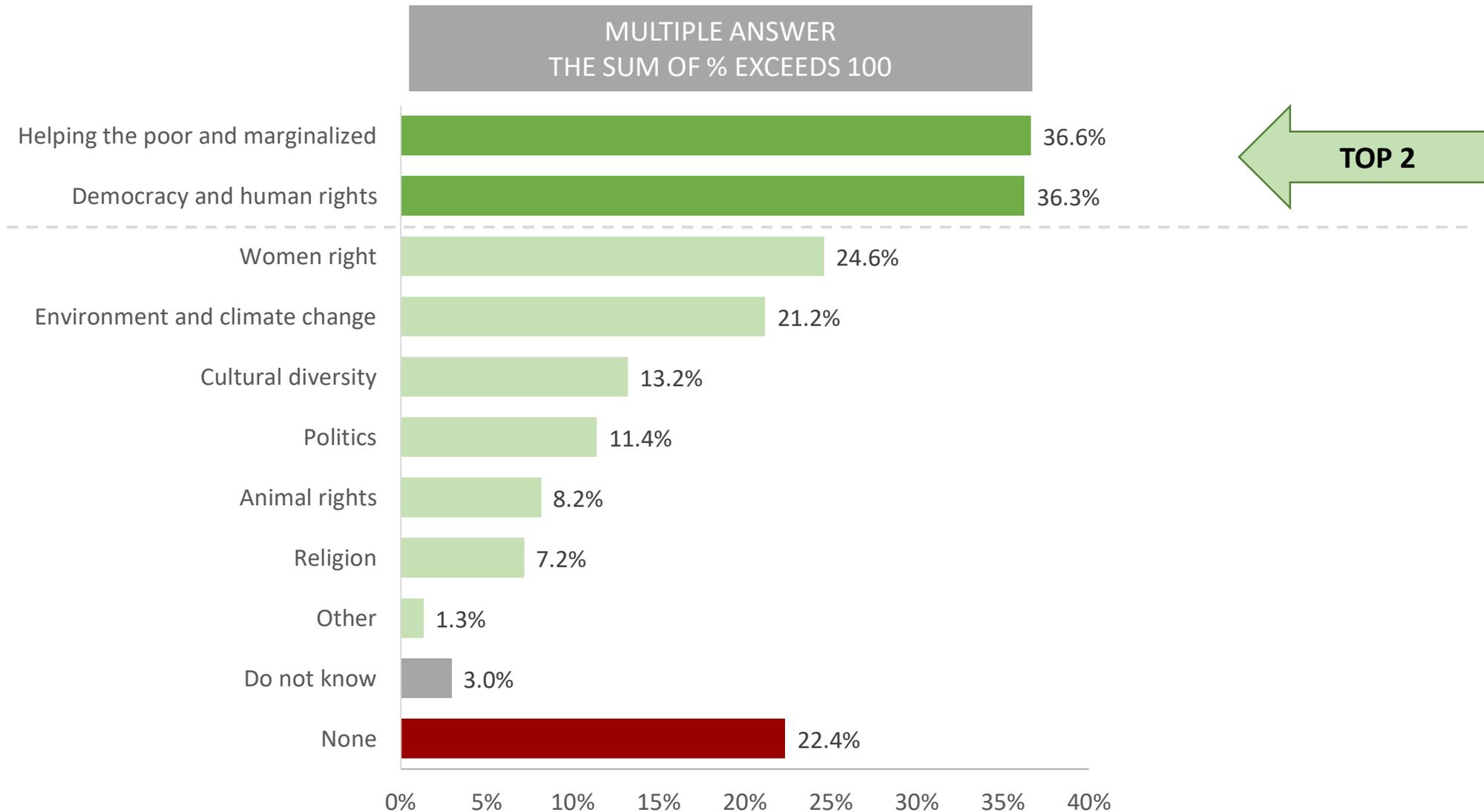
The people are not active because they think they cannot change anything and that they will have consequences for themselves and their close ones.

FG participant Kumanovo



AREAS FOR CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT

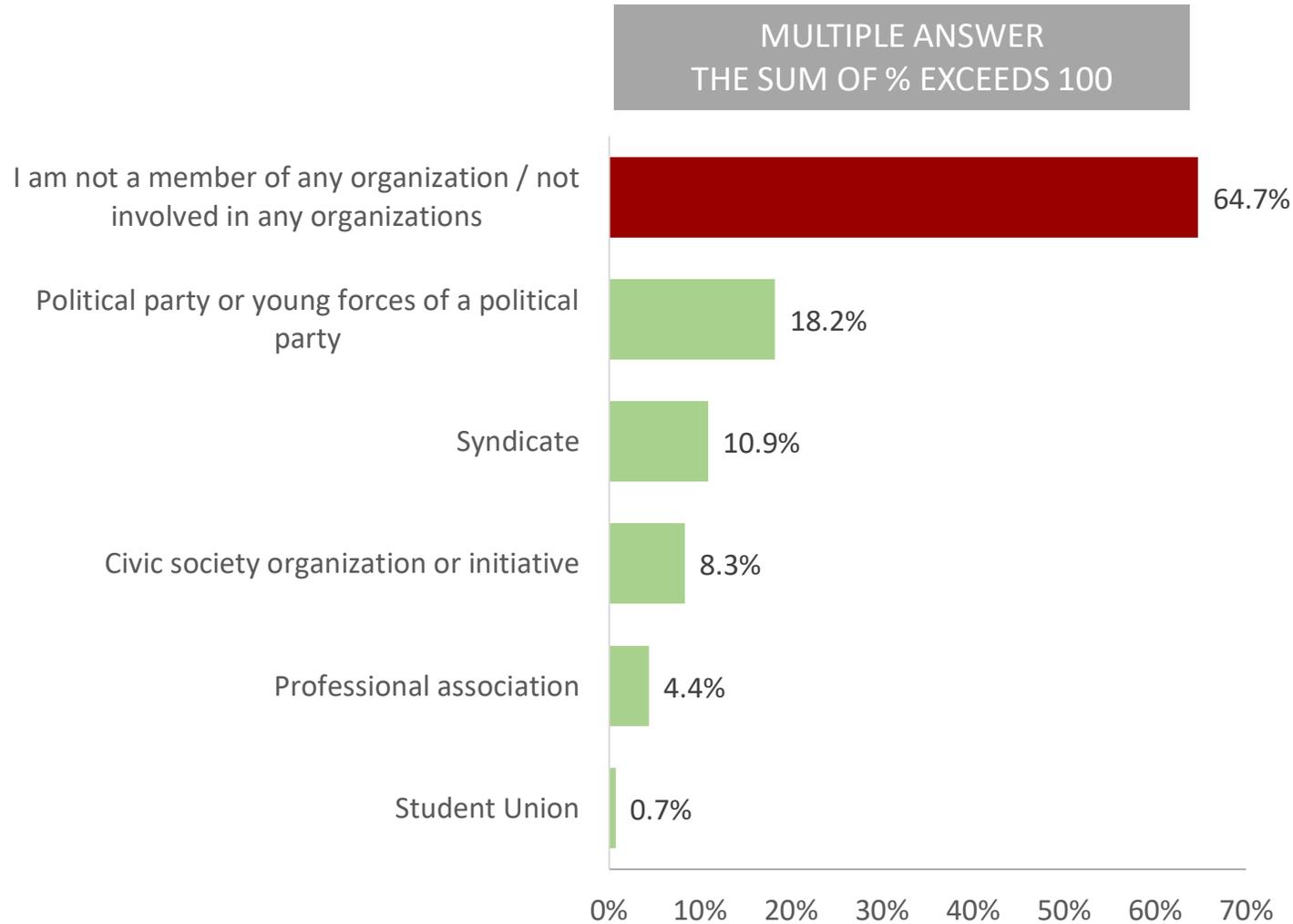
Which of the following areas of civic engagement could be of interest for you to participate in?



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

Are you a member of or have you been involved in any of the following organizations?



NOTE

- **Not interested, do not have time and do not have trust in the impact** are the most frequently mentioned reasons for not being involved in any organization

I am personally very disappointed with the country, because whenever we needed help, not only me but also my family, we have never received that help. And that's why I avoid, frankly, investing myself in any NGOs or students' organizations.
FG participant, Skopje

ELECTIONS

ASSOCIATIONS FOR ELECTIONS

If you had to describe the elections in our country in **3 words** in general, what would they be?

FGDs

- Free, peaceful
- Framed, incorrect, unrealistic
- Carnival, clowns
- Chaos
- Corruption
- Empty promises
- Elections without a choice, the people's will does not decide, "other forces" decide
- Everyone is a winner, all parties celebrate victory on the day of the elections

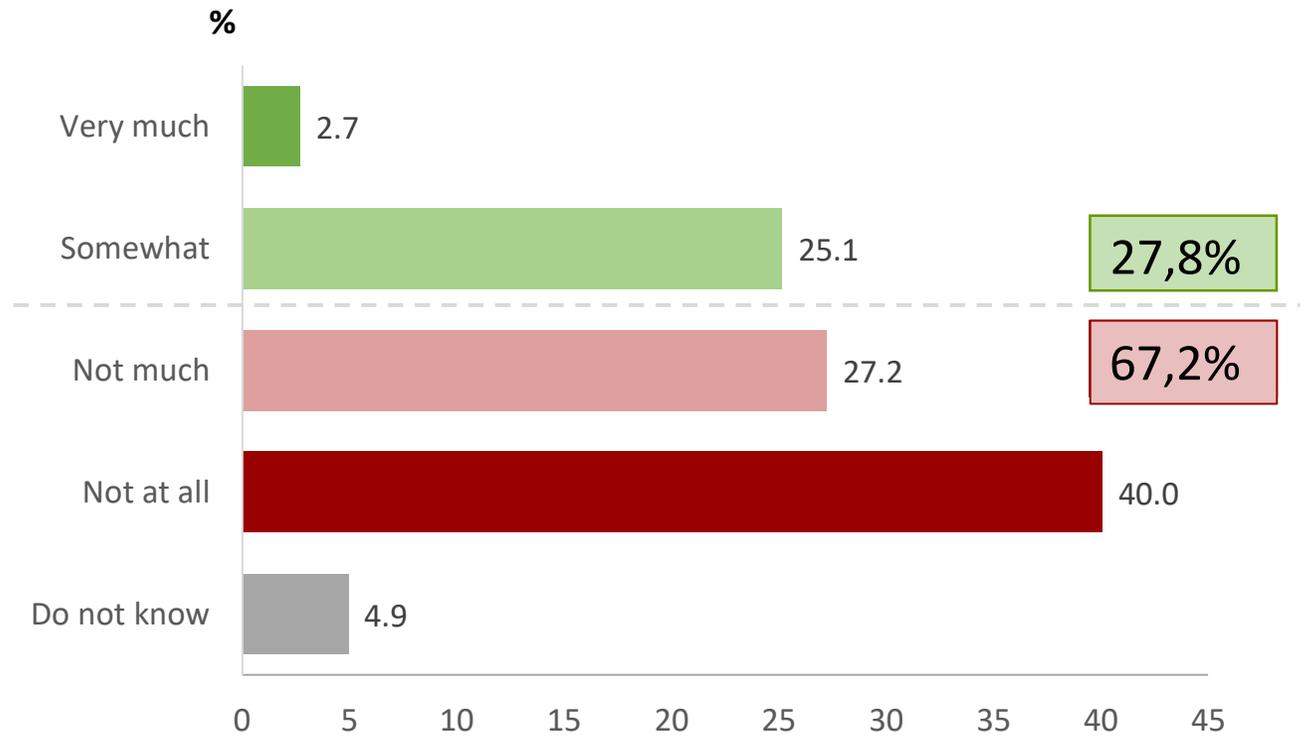


The elections are free for a bigger part of the population, but we know a part who has problems. Maybe they are free for me, but they aren't for somebody else...

FG participant, Tetovo

FEELING REPRESENTED

In your opinion, do you believe that the MPs or Municipal councilors represent you as a citizen once elected?



NOTE

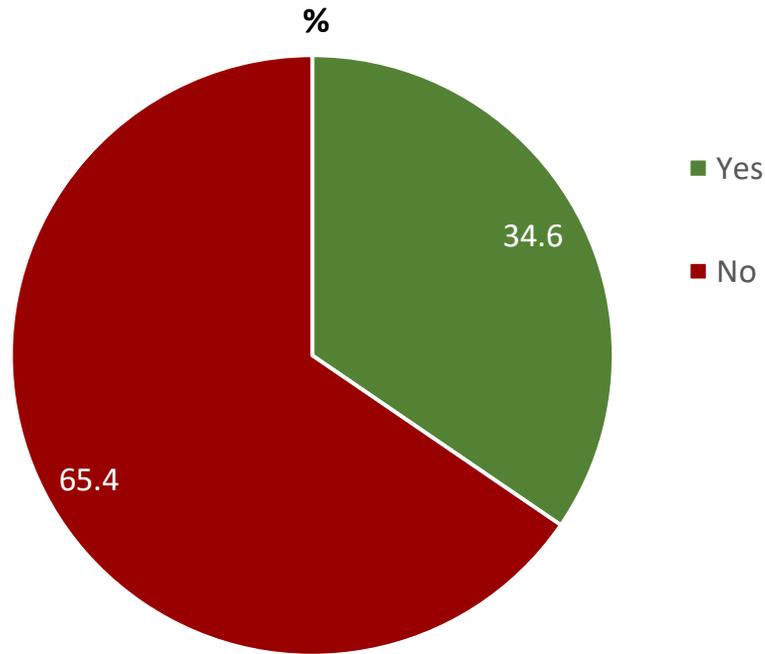
- Citizens who do not believe that the MPs or Municipal councilors represent them at all more frequently include:
 - Other ethnic communities
 - Citizens with elementary education
 - Age group 55 +
 - Living in urban area

Before being elected, they are available on the phone the whole time and are in contact with us. But if you try to contact that person after his/her election, it's interesting that the person doesn't hear the phone anymore, or the phone doesn't function anymore... They literally don't remember us anymore. I haven't seen any representative from any political party that has really represented me.

FG participant, Kumanovo

INTEREST IN ELECTIONS

Are you interested to learn about elections?



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

Percentage of respondents who *are interested to learn about elections, by settlement*

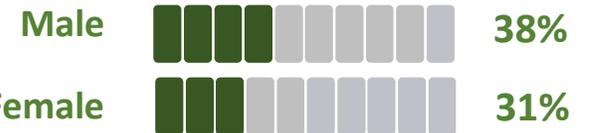


Urban
32%

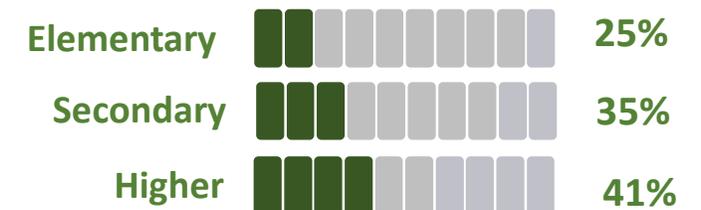


Rural
38%

Percentage of respondents who *are interested to learn about elections, by sex*

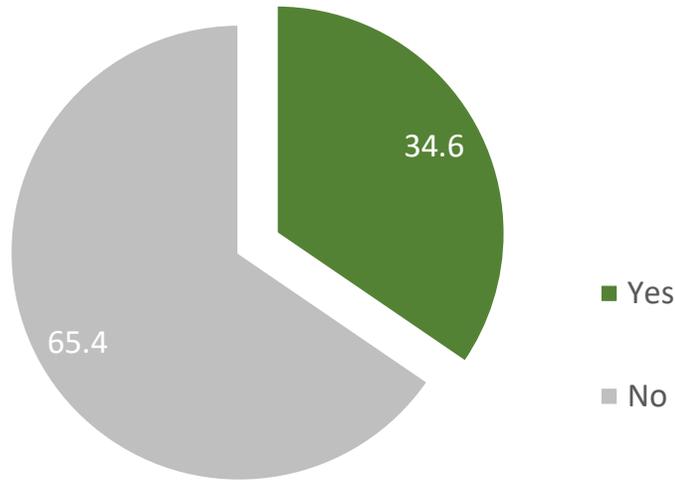


Percentage of respondents who *are interested to learn about elections, by education*



INTEREST IN ELECTIONS

What are you most interested to learn about?

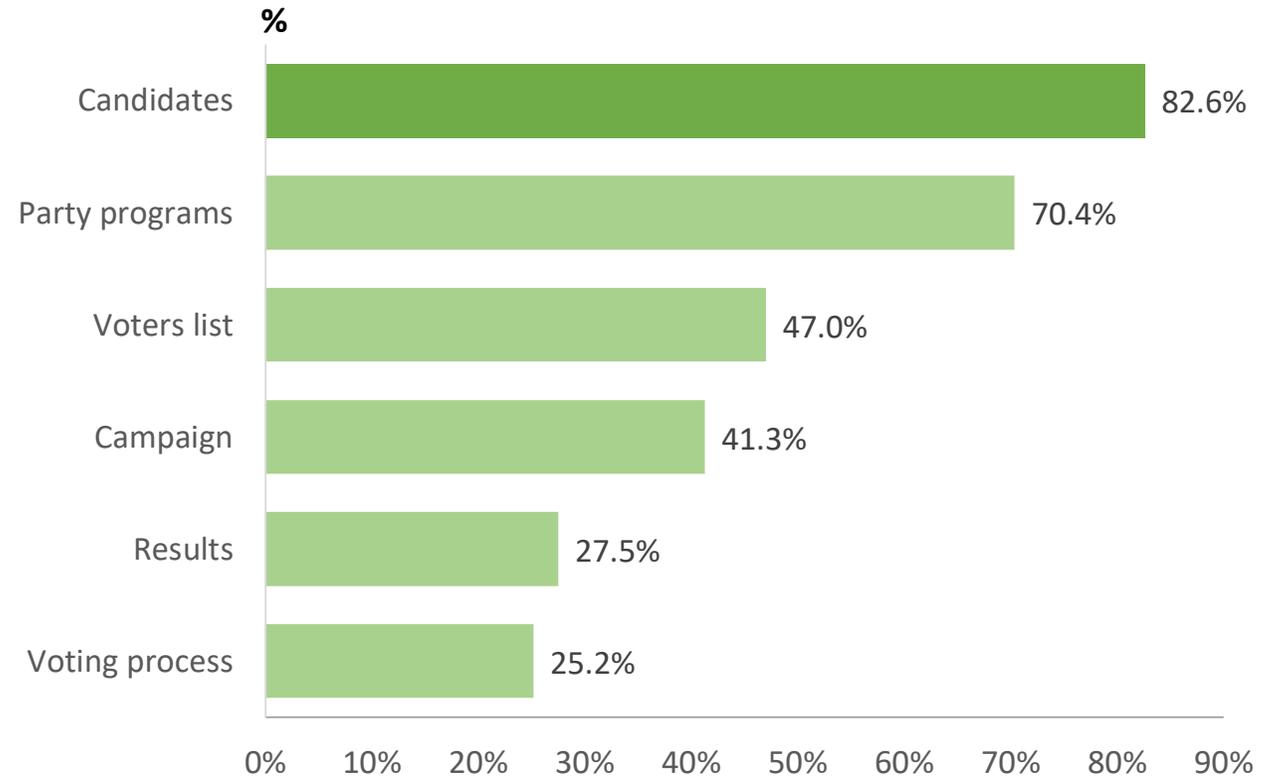


Citizens are only interested in the candidates, what kind of people they are, what views they have on issues that are important to them and how they present themselves.

KII NGO

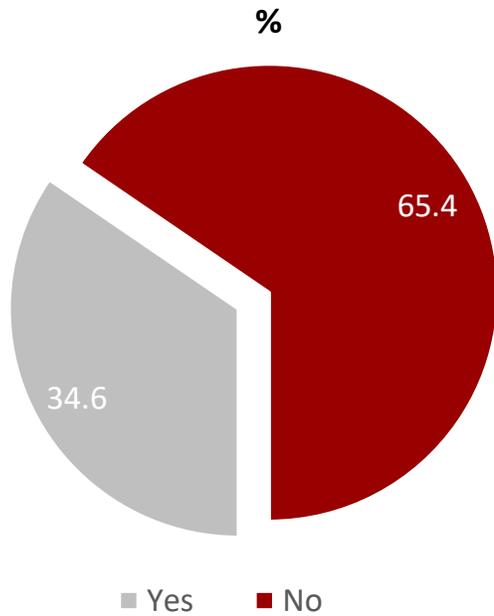
% AMONG THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED TO LEARN ABOUT ELECTIONS

MULTIPLE ANSWER
THE SUM OF % EXCEEDS 100

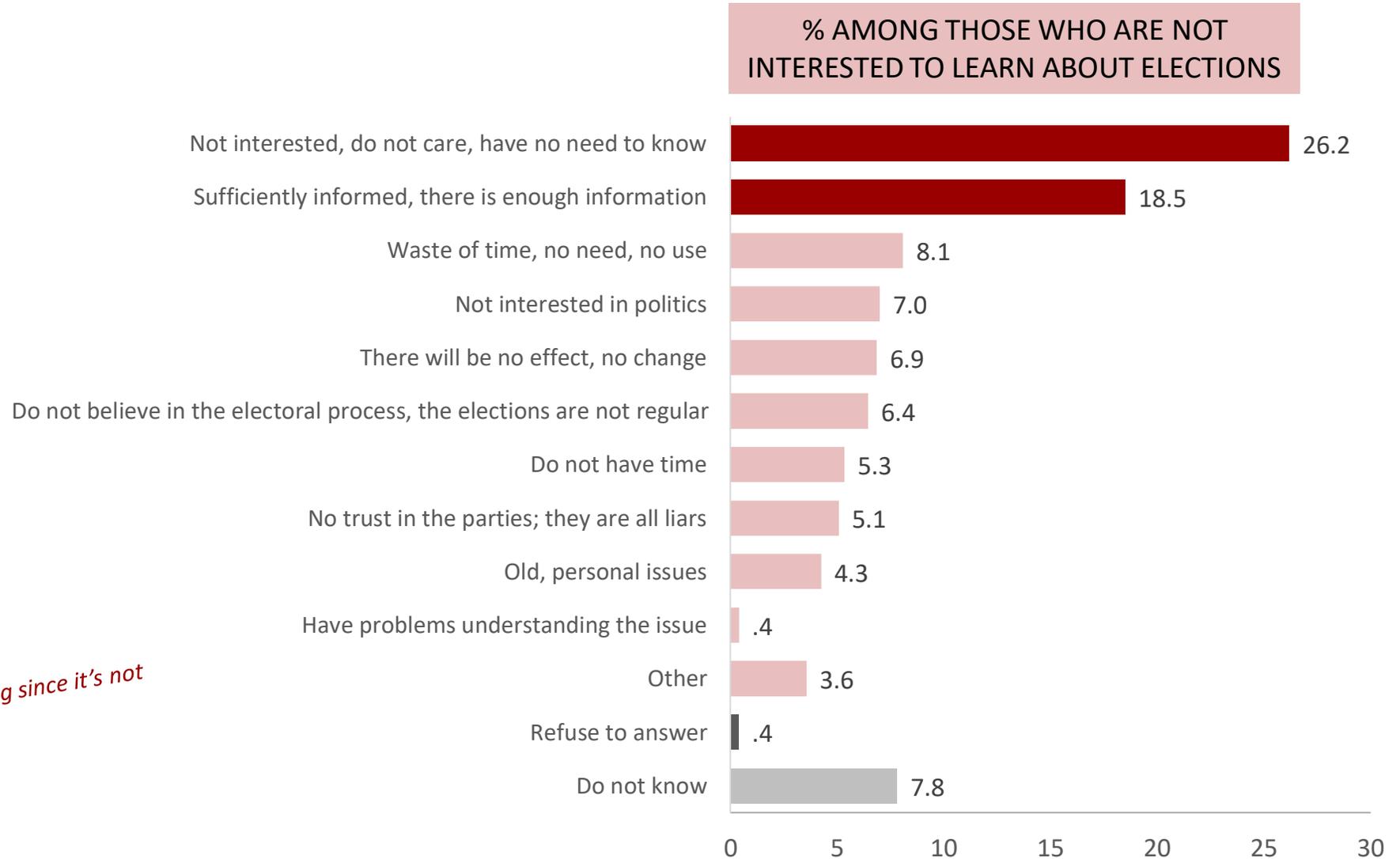


INTEREST IN ELECTIONS

Why you are not interested to learn about elections?



What if we know more? You cannot change a thing since it's not you that decides.
FG participant, Shtip

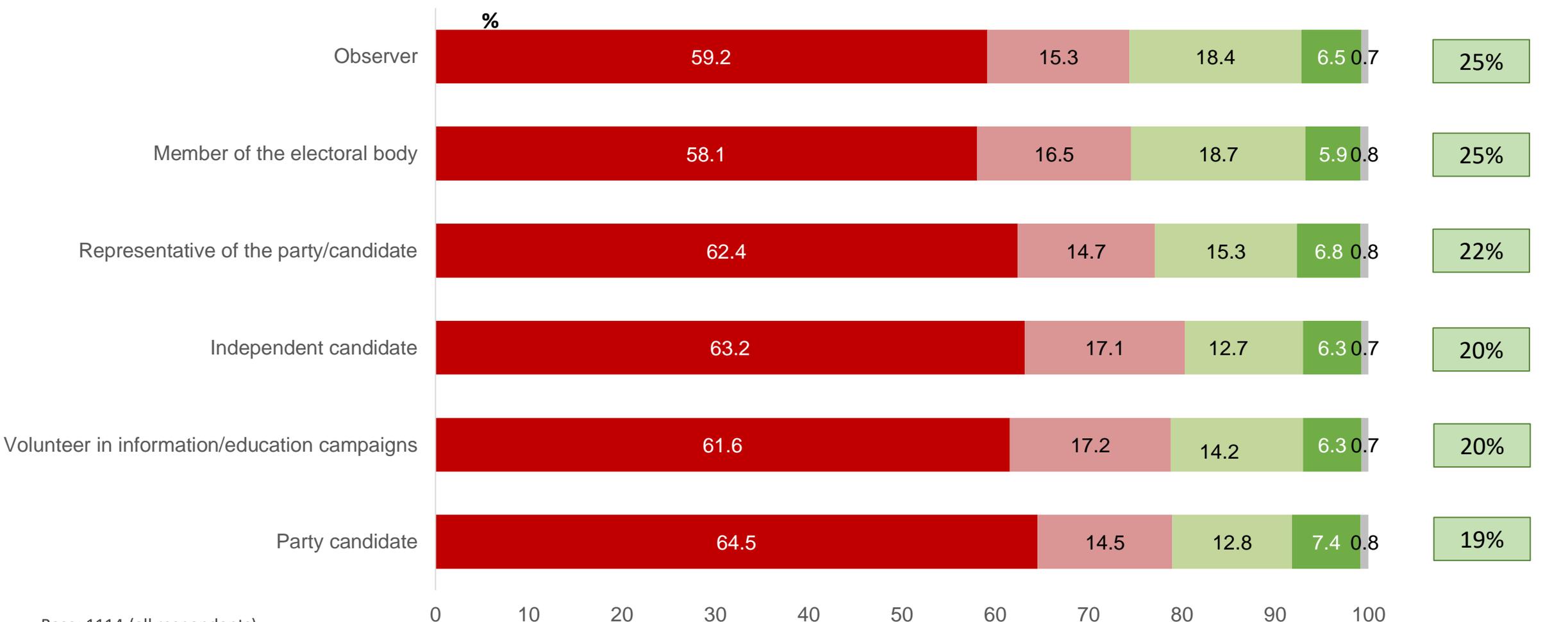


INTEREST IN GETTING INVOLVED IN ELECTORAL PROCESS

Would you be personally interested in getting more involved in the electoral process as...?

■ Not interested at all
 ■ Somewhat not interested
 ■ Somewhat interested
 ■ Very interested
 ■ Do not know

Interested
(Very + somewhat)



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error ± 2.94

INTEREST IN GETTING INVOLVED IN ELECTORAL PROCESS

Would you be personally interested in getting more involved in the electoral process as...?

- Most of the participants in the focus groups are not at all interested in getting involved in the election process in any way.
 - Public administration employees get involved in election processes as members or presidents of election commissions only because they are obliged to, but there is great resistance among most of them. They evaluate the process as distressing, difficult and very responsible. In addition, there are also fears of possible conflicts and irregularities.
 - A small part (especially the employees in education) shows an interest in getting involved in the processes of education of voters, especially young people and those who vote for the first time.
-



I wouldn't apply voluntarily, the process is distressing and the responsibility is huge.

FG participant, Bitola

We have to do it if they put us in commission, we can't reject.

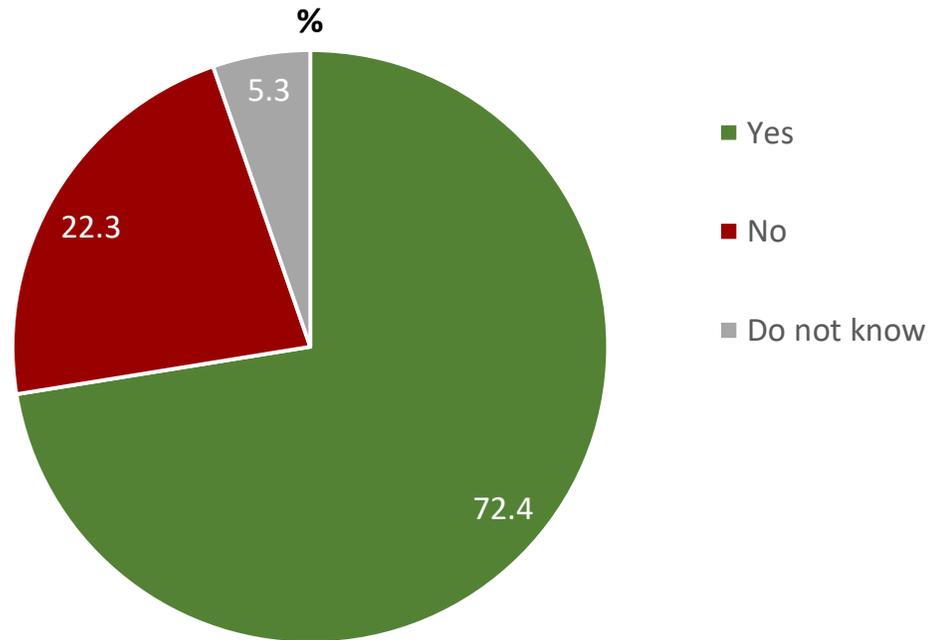
FG participant, Skopje

I wouldn't get involved, not even as an observer because you cannot know what can happen at that moment. I don't want to go due to conflicts and irregularities.

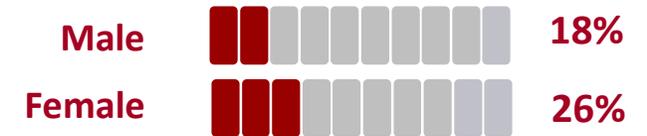
FG participant, Kumanovo

INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTIONS

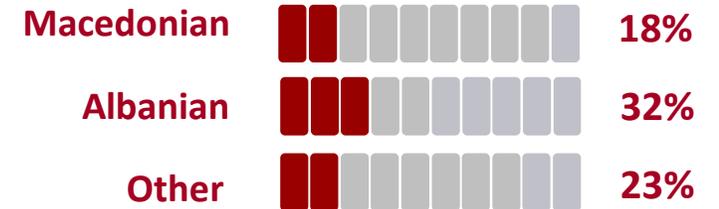
Do you feel you have enough information to make an informed choice when voting?



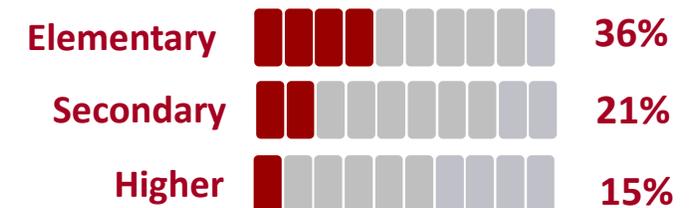
Percentage of respondents who report not having enough information to make an informed choice when voting, by sex



Percentage of respondents who report not having enough information to make an informed choice when voting, by age groups



Percentage of respondents who report not having enough information to make an informed choice when voting, by education



INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTIONS

Do you feel you have enough information to make an informed choice when voting?

KIIs Media

- Media representatives note that the media space lacks information that would help citizens make informed choices and decisions
- The information in the media is usually not analytical, not elaborated in details, does not make critical observations and comparison of the performances and election programs of politicians and political parties
- In addition, there is a lack of education dimension about the electoral system in our country, voting procedures, electoral rights and obligations

The problem is that the citizens have been continuously exposed... to the same type of information for years which does not help them make informed choices and decisions.

KII Media

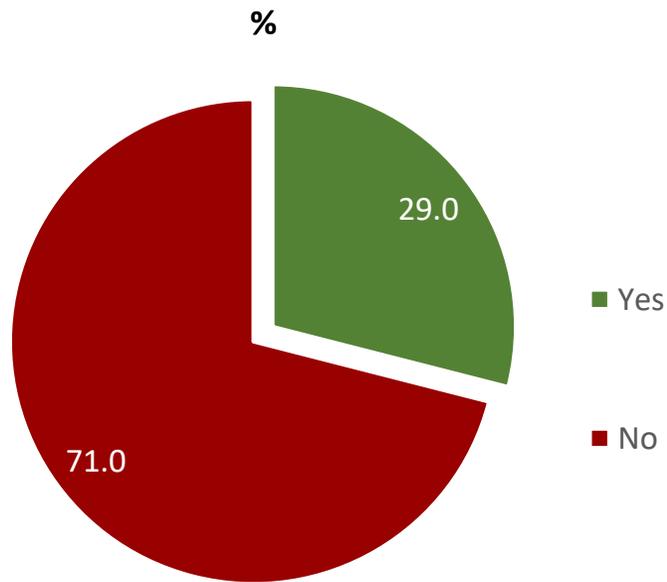
The education dimension does not exist – about our election system, process, steps, comparison to various platforms, action programs, election promises... to enable the voters to remind themselves whether the promises have been fulfilled. There are people who are not informed at all about these matters, but they have to know these things.

KII Media



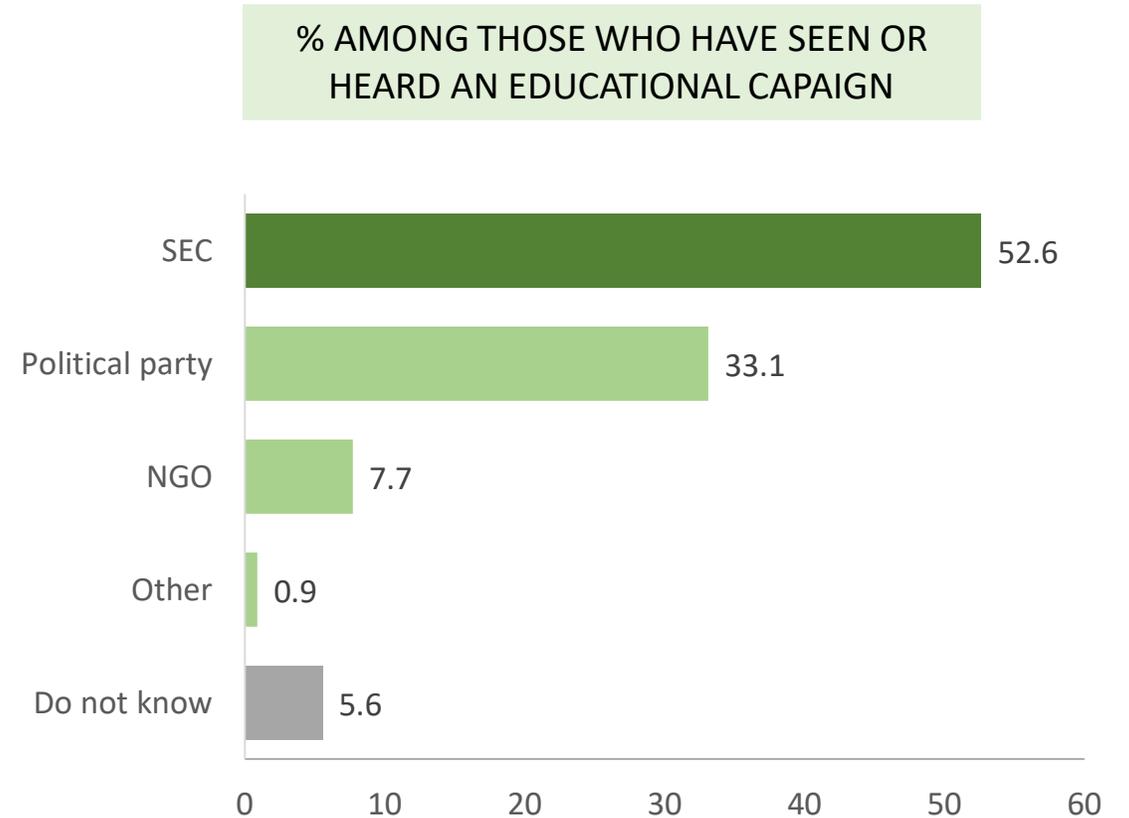
INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTIONS

Thinking about the last elections (local elections in 2021), have you seen or heard any educational campaign related to the elections?



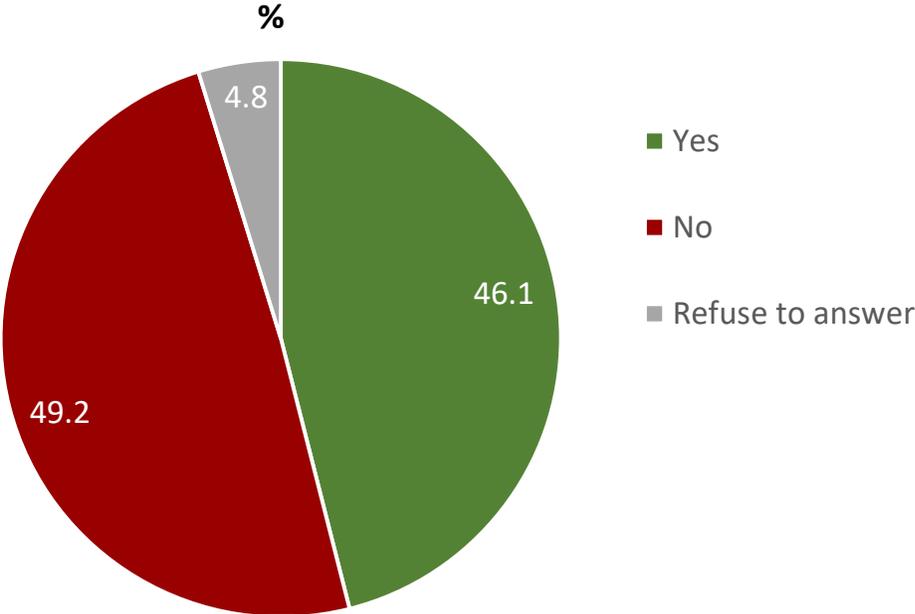
Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

*There was a TV commercial before the elections about the rights of voters.
It was animated and short, well-packed, it makes you remember it. I think
it was done by SEC.*
FG participant, Bitola

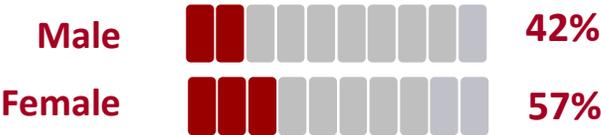


REPORTING IRREGULARITIES

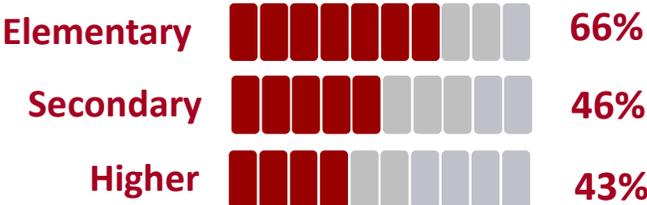
If you were subjected to pressure such as force, threats, vote-buying or other illegal means, to vote in a particular way, are you informed enough where to report?



Percentage of respondents who are not informed where to report, by sex



Percentage of respondents who are not informed where to report, by education

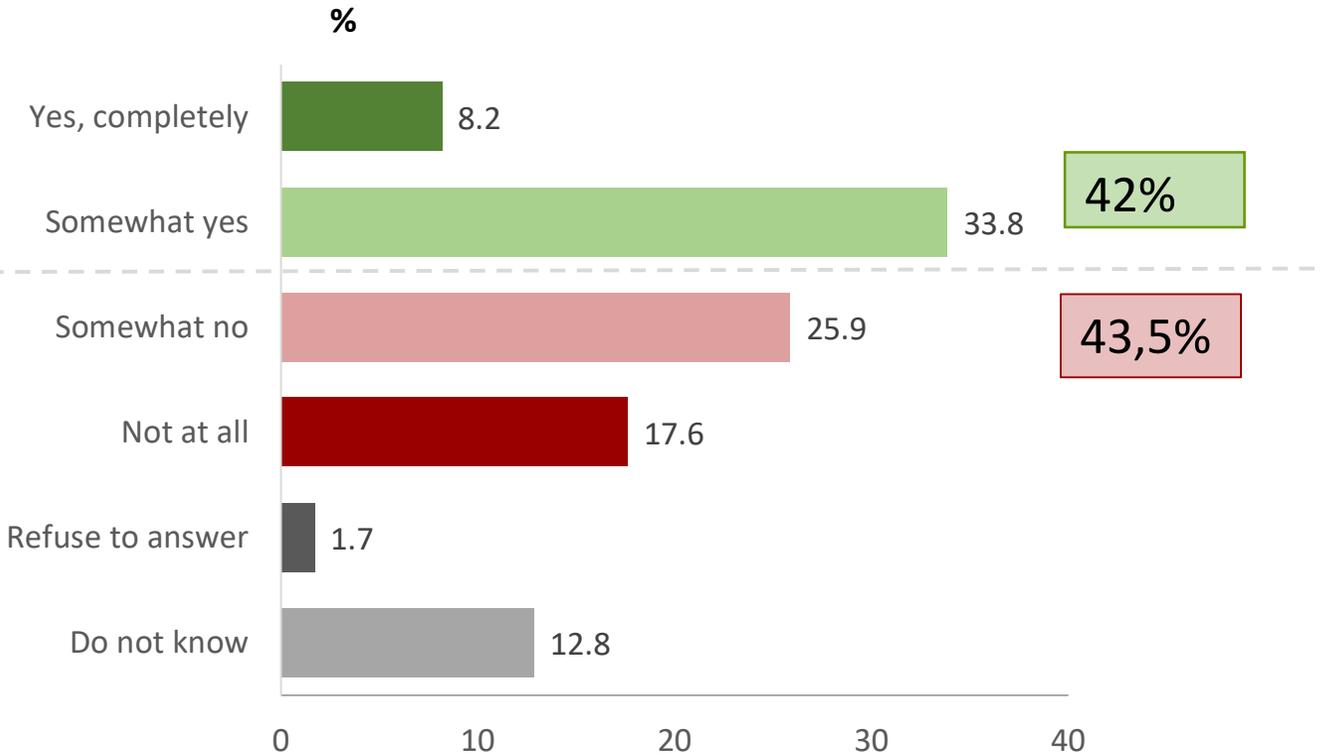


Base: 1114 (all respondents)
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PERCEPTION OF SEC

PERCEPTION OF SEC

Do you believe SEC is a professional and independent institution?



Percentage of respondents who believe SEC is a professional and independent institution, by settlement

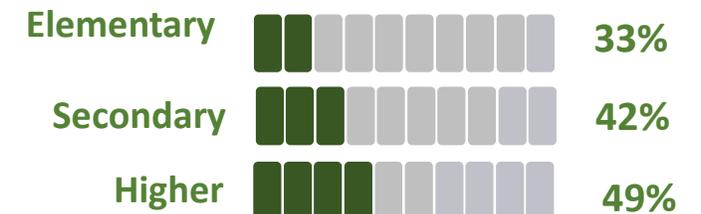


Urban
39%



Rural
47%

Percentage of respondents who believe SEC is a professional and independent institution, by education

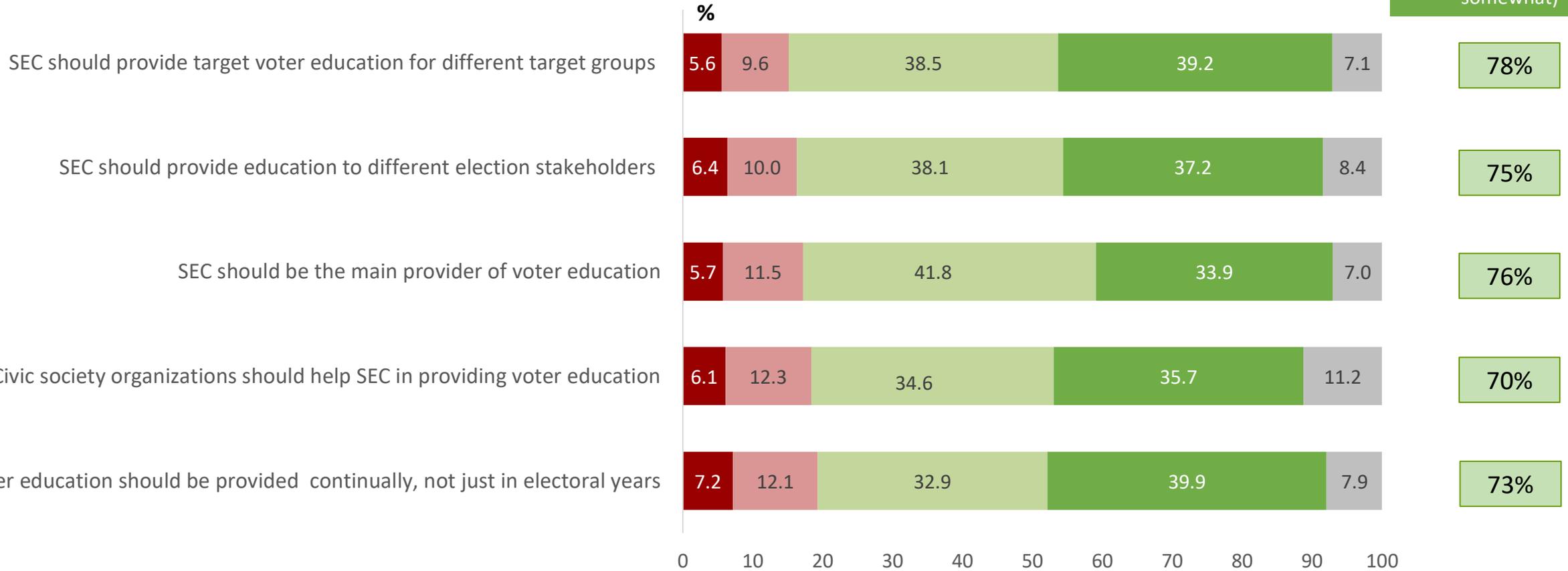


PERCEPTION OF SEC

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Completely disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Completely agree ■ Do not know

Agree
(completely +
somewhat)



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

SYSTEMATIC EDUCATION BY A STATE INSTITUTION

Which state institution should provide systematic education?

- SEC is indicated by all stakeholders as a state institution that is the most suitable to provide better services for voters and other election actors
 - SEC should be the bearer (play the main role) of a more comprehensive project that will include many other stakeholders such as international donors, non-governmental organizations, media and political parties
-

Perception of the efficiency and capacity of SEC

- In general, there is doubt in the capacities and possibilities of SEC to conduct systematic education outside the campaigns for the elections
 - Some doubt the credibility of the institution and the trust it has among the citizens, i.e. its professional and politically independent engagement
-

Ways to improve

- Functional analysis, improving the policies for work
 - Partnership with the civic sector, media and international donors
 - Increasing the integrity, trust and transparency of the institution, professionalization
 - Creating election institute, with its own annual budget, connected to a professional service, independent of political representatives
 - Expanding the team with experts, academics and researchers
-

SYSTEMATIC EDUCATION BY A STATE INSTITUTION

KIIs: SEC as an educational training center

- SEC training center should be as a separate part of SEC, with its own employees, own budget that will be working continuously and not only in election years; the budget also has to be independent from donors' means.
- The training center should have 2 parts (functions): an educational part and a part for research and analysis.
- The trainings and education that SEC will conduct should be aimed for everyone:
 - citizens (different target groups, pupils, students, women, vulnerable citizens, citizens with special needs, etc.)
 - political parties
 - media
 - employees in institutions
- The training center should conduct an educational campaign continuously and not only in election years
- On its website, SEC should continue to have an educational platform with online courses for voter education, civic education topics, but this platform should be promoted more so that it would be visited by as many citizens as possible.

In order this to function, it is necessary to have the following:

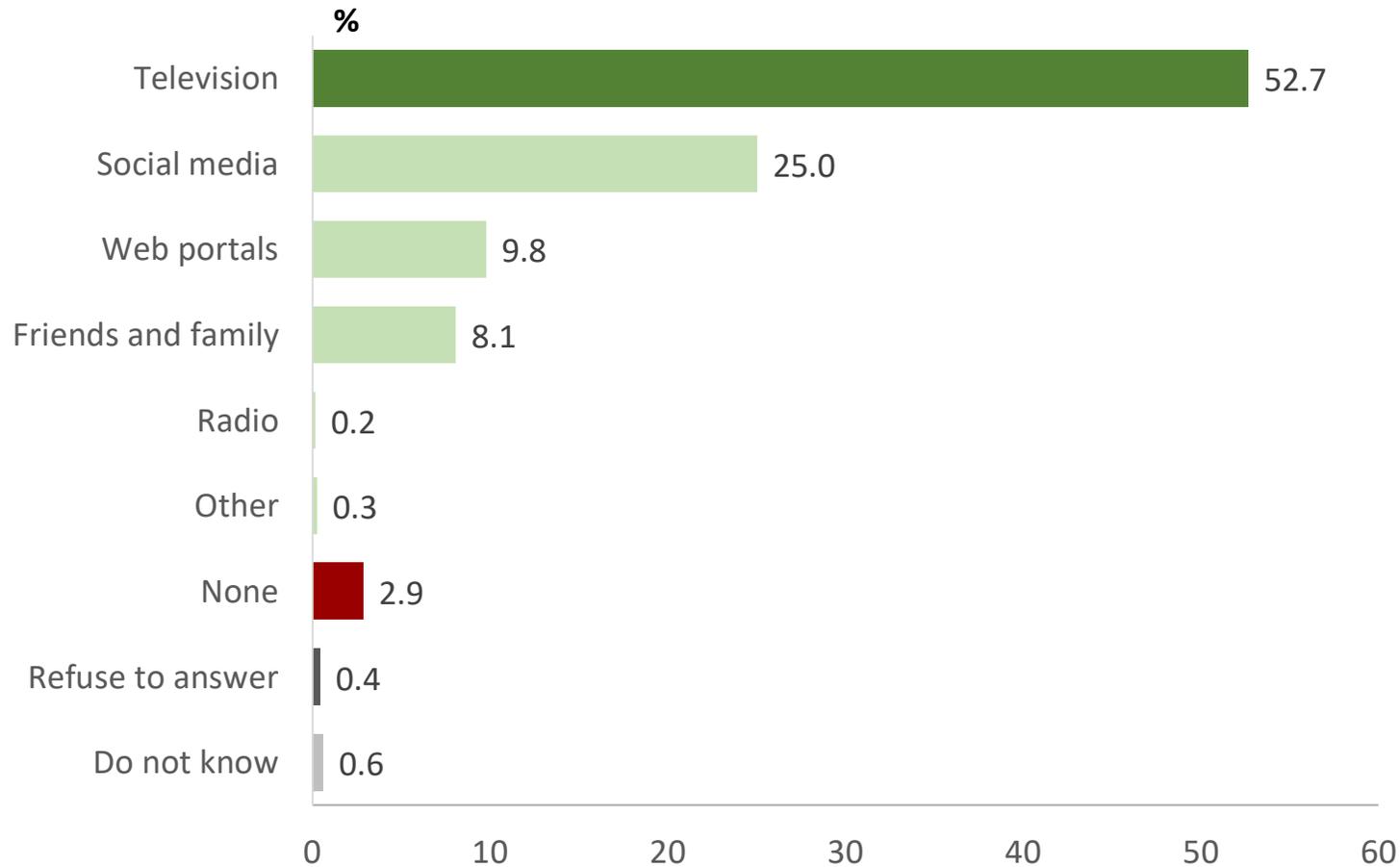
- Amendment of the legislation
- Provision of adequate space
- Finances
- Human resources



IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA FOR CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

What is your primary source about the current socio-political developments?



Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

More likely to get information from social networks are:

- Younger (aged 18-34)
- Macedonian
- Higher education
- Urban
- Higher family income (51.000+ den.)
- Assess their household as well-off



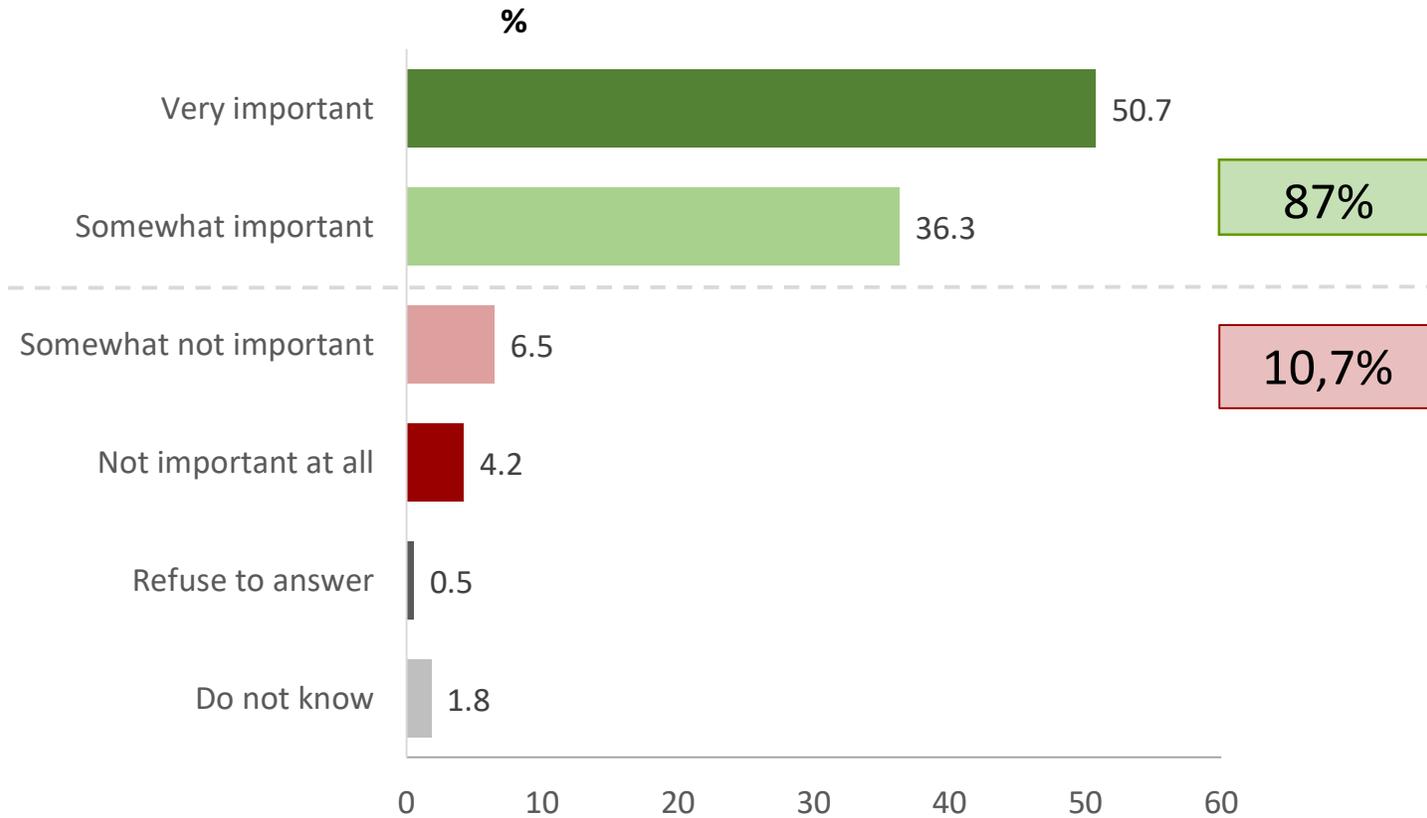
More likely to get information from TV are:

- Female
- Older (aged 55+)
- Other ethnic minorities
- Primary education
- Rural
- Lower family income (less than 31.000 den.)
- Assess their household as poor



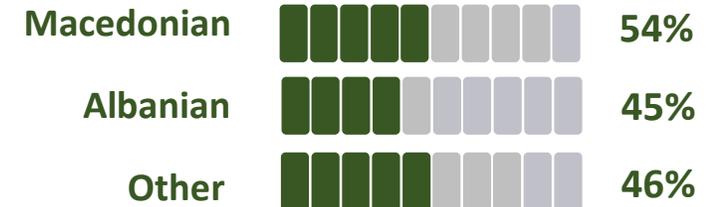
MEDIA AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How important do you believe media is in informing people about the issues affecting their communities and encouraging them to get involved?

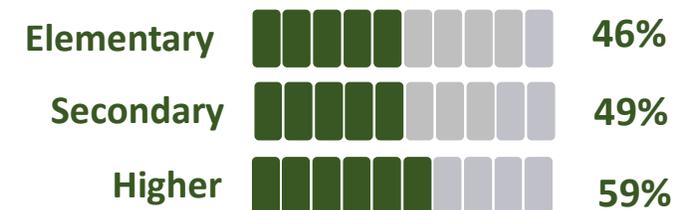


Base: 1114 (all respondents)
Margin of Error \pm 2.94

Percentage of respondents who believe media is very important in informing people about the issues affecting their communities and encouraging them to get involved, by ethnicity

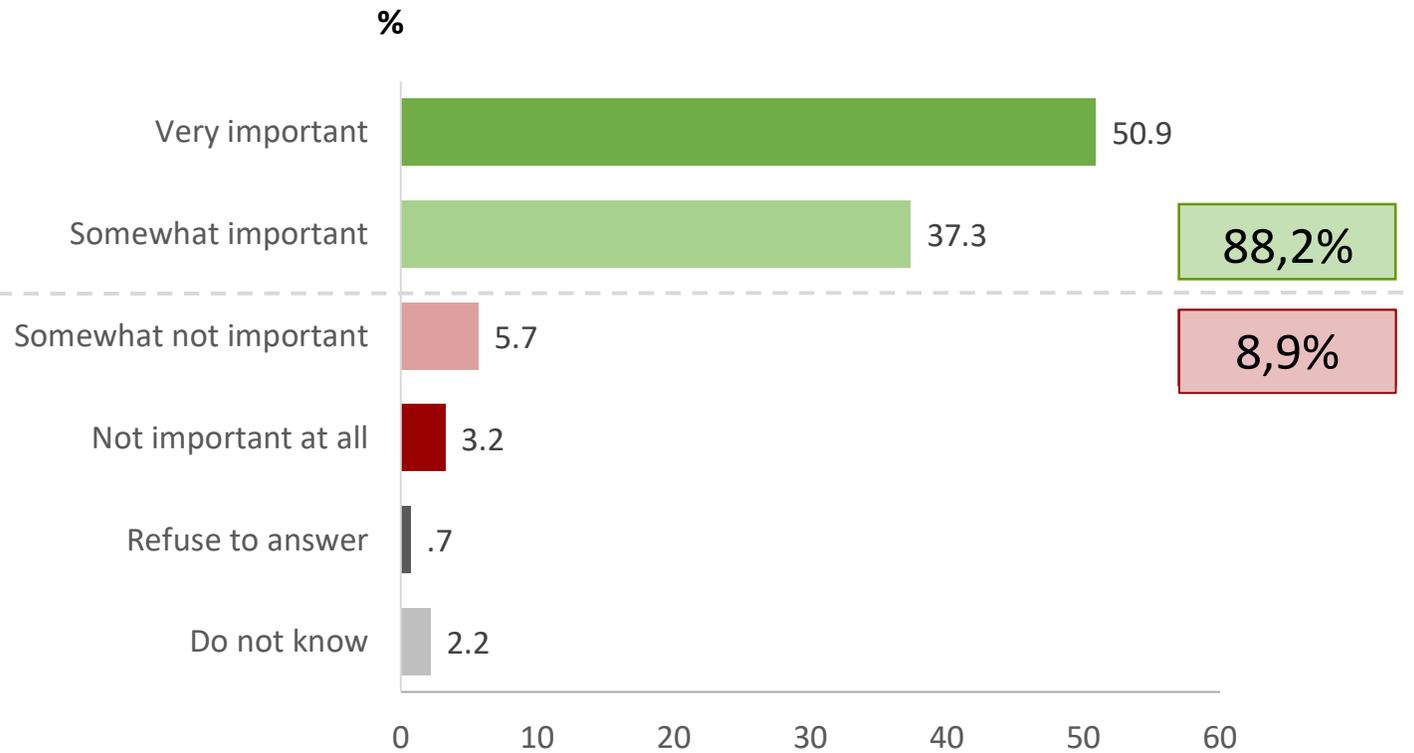


Percentage of respondents who believe media is very important in informing people about the issues affecting their communities and encouraging them to get involved, by education

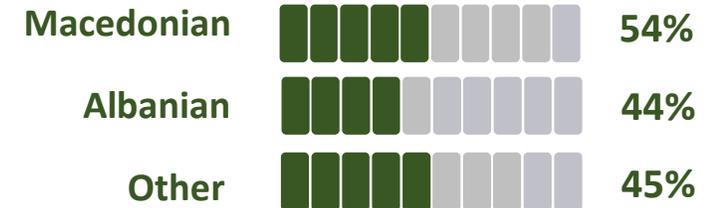


MEDIA AND ELECTIONS

How important do you believe media is in raising awareness and informing the citizens about elections?



Percentage of respondents who believe media is very important in raising awareness and informing the citizens about elections, by ethnicity



If the media does not provide the information that the citizens need to get a more comprehensive picture, then they will wander in an attempt to get more information. Here they may come across information that is often published on social networks, which does not mean that it is true and correct, checked, balanced, etc. The media has a big role and importance in these processes, providing the information that is necessary and giving the context and representing different views...

KII Media

PERCEPTION OF MEDIA

To what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements?

Agree
(Completely + somewhat)

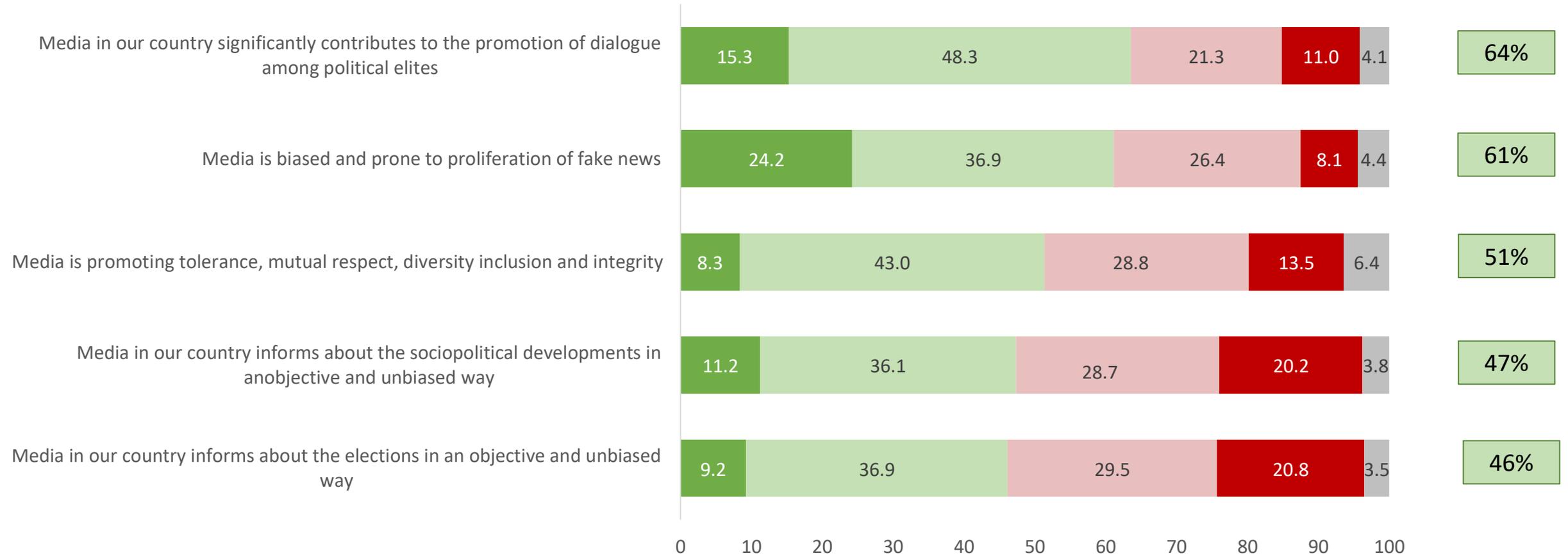
■ Completely agree

■ Somewhat agree

■ Somewhat disagree

■ Completely disagree

■ Do not know



Base: 1114 (all respondents)

Margin of Error \pm 2.94

PERCEPTION OF MEDIA

FGs

- ✓ There is generally low level of trust in terms of independent and objective reporting by the media, which is why the citizens follow different media in order to make a decision on their own.
- ✓ They recognize disinformation and fake news in the media, especially on web portals and social networks, which further reduces trust in the presented information.
- ✓ A smaller part (especially employees in the education sector) had education about media literacy, but the need for more massive campaigns to the general public regarding this topic is emphasized.

The media reporting is are like a paid political program. We are witnessing a lot of misinformation or distorted information, so those who are responsible should deal with this matter.

FG participant, Tetovo

KIIs with Media representatives

- ✓ There is concern about the increased presence of misinformation, especially on social media and web portals. They are especially concentrated when critical events in a society occur (pandemic, war, etc.), which is why they are extremely dangerous.
- ✓ The civic sector, professional media associations, fact-checking services, and especially the media themselves have an important role to play in dealing with disinformation.

There was a huge campaign about media literacy and for a while a lot of attention was concentrated on media literacy in the society.

FG participant, Skopje

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS: GENERAL OUTLOOK AND AWARENESS

Economy and standard of living are the biggest problems the country is facing. Institutions suffer from low trust.

- Citizens are mostly concerned about the economic issues and the standard of living. Crime, corruption and rule of law are more frequently mentioned as problems our country is facing and less frequently as a problem the citizens are personally affected by.
- The Religious institutions and the Army are the most trusted institutions. The least trusted institutions are the Courts and the Public prosecution with more than 80% of the citizens expressing distrust.

High awareness about the importance of knowledge regarding civic and voters' education concepts and topics is noted. There is a consensus among all target groups that citizens are not sufficiently informed about civic education in general.

- High majority (92.8%) agree that it is important for citizens to know their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and identify important consequences when there is lack of civic education – vulnerability to manipulation, apathy and passivity.
- Citizens report being least knowledgeable regarding the state budget (60% completely or not very knowledgeable) and the forms of citizen participation and civic engagement (48% completely or not very knowledgeable). Greater knowledge is reported regarding the election process and the voting rights.
- Citizens perceive minority rights and freedom of speech as democratic values which in higher extent exist in the country; condemning corruption behavior and accountability are insufficiently present.

KEY FINDINGS: CIVIC EDUCATION AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Formal and informal civic education lacks effectiveness.

- Half of the citizens consider our education not successful in encouraging students to be active, informed and responsible citizens, with a desire and ability to take responsibility for themselves and their communities (50.3%). One third (33.6%) believe the teachers and the education system is not sufficiently prepared to teach and promote civic education.
- Practical approach to concepts (volunteering, involvement in civic organizations and projects), simplification of the provided information and cooperation between education, business sector and institutions is needed for improving formal civic education.
- The efforts of different NGOs and civic organizations are isolated, not coordinated, unsystematic and dependent on donors' grants and programs. The unpreparedness of the institutions to implement the changes, the lack of institutional memory and the lack of control and monitoring have the biggest impact on the sustainability and continuity of any project efforts.

Young people and first time voters need civic and voter education the most, according to all relevant stakeholders.

- Still, 6 out of 10 young people (aged 18-34) are not interested in civic activities, while two thirds believe it will not make any difference if they engage civically.

Low civic participation and membership in organizations.

- Only 22.7% describe themselves as mainly or constantly active and civically engaged citizens, 14.4% have engaged in activities to address a certain issue during the last 12 months whereas half of the citizens are not informed about any NGOs or civic organizations in their community.
- 60% of the citizens report not being motivated to civically engage on issues of importance, mostly because they do not believe it will change anything.
- Almost two thirds of the citizens are not members of any organization, 18.2% are involved in a political party.

KEY FINDINGS: ELECTIONS AND THE WORK OF SEC

Citizens have negative associations for the elections and do not feel represented by the elected officials.

- Majority (67.2%) do not feel represented by the MPs or Municipal candidates once elected.
- One third (34.6%) are interested to learn about elections, mostly about the candidates and the party programs. Low interest in getting involved in the electoral process as a candidate, volunteer, observer and member of an electoral body is noted. Half of the citizens do not know where to report if subjected to pressure to vote in a particular way.
- Broadcast on TV and social networks are most frequently used sources of information about elections.
- Majority of the citizens (72.4%) feel they have enough information to make an informed choice when voting. Nevertheless, media representatives emphasize that media lacks an educational information on the electoral system in the country and does not provide analytical information as well as comparison of the election programs of political parties.

Consensus that SEC should be the main provider of systematic education for voters and other election actors. Doubts regarding the capacity, professionalism and independency of SEC should be overcome.

- Around three quarters of the citizens agree SEC should provide voter education, for different target groups and different election stakeholders, continually, not just in electoral years.
- Almost 44% of the citizens do not believe SEC is a professional and independent institution. In addition, doubts in the capacity, credibility and politically independent engagement of SEC are articulated by different relevant stakeholders (NGOs, Media, Political Party representatives).
- The relevant stakeholders would like to see the future SEC training center as a separate part of SEC, independent politically, with its own employees, own budget; working in partnership with the civic sector, media and international donors.

KEY FINDINGS: MEDIA

Media is very important in raising awareness and informing citizens on civic engagement topics; still it lacks information related to civic activism and ways of civic involvement. Disinformation and proliferation of fake news are a concern of majority of citizens and media representatives

- Almost 9 out of 10 citizens (87%) believe media is very or somewhat important in informing people about the issues affecting their communities and encouraging them to get involved. Media representatives suggest consistent and continuous information on these topics, systematized, coordinated and planned initiatives to improve the capacity and knowledge of journalists between civic society organizations, media associations and donors.
- 6 out of 10 citizens agree media is biased and prone to proliferation of fake news. Media representatives share this concern, especially for social media and web portals. They ask the civic sector, professional media associations and fact-checking services to play a more active role in dealing with disinformation.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

AWARENESS

93% are aware that it is important for citizens to know their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.

Lack of civic education leads to vulnerability to manipulation, apathy and passivity



CIVIC EDUCATION

50% of the citizens consider our education not successful in encouraging students to be active, informed and responsible citizens.



CIVIC PARTICIPATION

30% of the citizens report being motivated, while **60%** report not being motivated to civically engage, mostly because they do not believe it will change anything



SEC TRAINING CENTRE

76% believe SEC should be the main provider of voter education

Citizens and relevant stakeholders share concerns regarding the professionalism, capacity and politically independent engagement of SEC as provider of systematic education for different target groups



MEDIA

TV (53%), Social media (25%) and Web Portals (10%) are the predominant sources of information about socio-political developments

There is a general lack of information related to civic activism and ways of civic involvement in the media



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



This presentation was developed within the *Support to Electoral Reforms* project financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The views, opinions and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect those of the donor, the project or the implementer.