

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS



INITIAL FINDINGS ON THE 2024 ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje,
Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research

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Initial Findings on the 2024 Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia

Authors: Asst. prof. d-r Jovan Bliznakovski, Prof. d-r Aneta Cekikj

Research team: Asst. prof. d-r Jovan Bliznakovski, Prof. d-r Aneta Cekikj, MSc. Luan Imeri, Safet Balazhi

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Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (ISPJR-UKIM)
Bul. Partizanski Odredi NN, 1020 Skopje, P. Fax 68, Republic of
North Macedonia

contact@ispji.ukim.edu.mk | <http://www.ispji.ukim.edu.mk>

Partners:



Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" - Skopje (IDSCS)
Miroslav Kroleža 52/2, 1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

contact@idscs.org.mk | www.idscs.org.mk



The Swiss Electoral Support Programme in North
Macedonia*

Franklin Roosevelt, 19/1-5, 1000 Skopje, Republic of North
Macedonia

ifes.mk@ifes.org | <https://electoralsupportprogramme.mk/>



International Foundation
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Introduction

The elections in May and June 2024 resulted in significant changes in the political landscape of the Republic of North Macedonia. The political party and personnel composition in the legislative and executive institutions was comprehensively changed. The party system was also transformed, with strengthened significance of the smaller political options. The former ruling parties concluded the elections with one of them facing significantly reduced public support and leadership changes, while the other one going to opposition after more than fifteen years in power. Overall, the 2024 elections demonstrated a strong disapproval of the previous government's performance, as well as an increased willingness on the part of the citizens to support political parties, coalitions, and candidates that do not belong to the historically dominant political parties in the country. This dynamic emphasizes citizens' electoral behavior as an essential factor that determines the electoral and political outcomes.

However, the electoral behavior of citizens in North Macedonia has been systematically examined only to a limited extent. Although surveys are regularly conducted in the country aimed at reporting the ratings of parties and candidates in the pre-election period, and also "omnibus" surveys on specific issues that partially touch upon electoral behavior, in recent years, there has been no available survey data that exclusively focuses on the behavior of citizens in the election period. This report is an attempt to present that kind of data to the public, with two general objectives: 1) to inform key stakeholders in the field of electoral policies about trends in electoral behavior and 2) to familiarize the expert public with the opportunities for the reuse of the presented data which will be made available under open access in the near future. This report aims to provide insights into why citizens voted the way they did in April and May 2024, presenting a range of electoral behavior indicators that may be of interest to both the aforementioned groups and the general public.

The data and the report stem from the collaboration of the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (ISPJR-UKIM), the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" from Skopje (IDSCS), and the Swiss Electoral Support Programme in North Macedonia, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). These three organizations, one of which comes from the public research and higher education sector and the other two from the national, and international civil society sectors, at the beginning of 2024 established a cooperation to implement the sixth module of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, CSES, <https://cses.org/>). The U. S. National Science Foundation also supported the research under the CSES Seed Grants Program. The survey fieldwork was conducted in late 2024.

CSES is an international survey coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies at the University of Michigan, USA, and GESIS – Leibniz Institute of Social Sciences, Germany, which focuses on citizens' electoral behavior. So far, it has been implemented in 60 countries around the world in five different waves, starting in 1996. With the implementation of CSES, the country gains access to survey data exclusively focused on citizens' electoral behavior, along with the opportunity to compare its findings with those from other democracies worldwide. The database created after the survey in North Macedonia will be deposited in CSES during 2025 and will be made available under open access together with data from the other countries participating in the sixth module.

What do we conclude after the initial analysis of the data? The general dissatisfaction with the ruling political parties during the 2020–2024 period is clearly reflected in electoral results, perceptions of the country's overall situation and party performance, as well as in citizens' affective ties to political parties. Large number of citizens vote consistently, both in terms of turnout and in terms of their specific electoral decisions. However, a significant portion of them decide whom to vote for during the election campaign. Citizens are divided in their reasons for voting: some support a political party based on its program and brand, while others

prioritize the personal characteristics of candidates and the views they represent. Ethnic identification with parties and candidates plays a significant role, though instances of crossing ethnic barriers exist. Additionally, notable regional variations and generational differences influence these voting patterns across all these aspects.

A comparatively large number of citizens participate in political life through party membership and, consequently, party activities. A significant number of citizens also participated in election campaign activities, and a significant number showed interest in the electoral campaign, following news about parties and candidates.

Citizens are strongly critical of the implementation of democracy in the country and, as often shown in other surveys, have low trust in political institutions and political actors. However, citizens generally demonstrate support for democratic principles and predominantly view elections as an essential tool for political influence.

Our initial analysis of the data reveals deep societal divisions that shape electoral behavior. One of the most striking divisions is the ethnic split, which strongly influences voter choice, particularly among Macedonians and Albanians. This divide is also reflected in the lower participation rates of members of other ethnic communities in certain indicators of political engagement. Additionally, our findings indicate significantly low participation among the youngest age group (18–24 years) in democratic processes, as well as the predominance of men in political life. Women and young people show lower political interest, have less confidence in their ability to participate in politics, and are less engaged in party and campaign activities. This pattern suggests a systematic underrepresentation of these groups in the political process.

This report provides only an initial analysis of the data. During 2025, a follow-up research report will be prepared, presenting comparative data from North Macedonia and other countries participating in CSES to the public.

The report is structured as follows: First, we provide technical information about the survey. Next, we present the initial findings, organized into the following topics: voter turnout and electoral decisions; the formation of electoral choices; the election campaign; relationships between parties and citizens; (dis)satisfaction with democracy and institutions; citizens' ideological and value preferences; and civic predispositions for political participation. For each of these topics, we present key findings and relevant indicators.

Technical information about the survey and the sample

The fieldwork for the survey was conducted in the period October 25 – December 4, 2024, starting no later than six months after the conducted elections, in accordance with the standards of CSES. The questionnaire was composed of the CSES sixth module (approximately one-third of the questionnaire) and additional questions of interest to the three organizations that conducted the survey (about half of the questionnaire), as well as a demographic module (10% of the questionnaire). The average duration of implementation of the entire questionnaire is approximately 30 minutes. The fieldwork was conducted by "Indago" – Skopje through computer-assisted personal interviews in Macedonian and Albanian. This report presents the results of the questions within the CSES module, as well as the questions posed by the ISPJR-UKIM researchers.

The survey was implemented on the basis of a multi-phase stratified sample based on addresses and prepared by the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (SSO) using data from the latest Census of Population, Households and Dwellings (2021). During the stratification, population distributions by planning regions and by urban and rural subdivisions were taken into account, after which a total of 188 census enumeration areas (CEA) (primary sampling units) were randomly drawn. In the second selection phase, 10 addresses were randomly selected within the CEAs, creating a sample of 1880 dwellings (secondary sampling units). The interviewers contacted each of these addresses with a survey offer, with a total of 1056 surveys conducted (or a response rate of 56.2%). In the third selection phase, household respondents were also selected randomly, following the principle of "first next birthday." The structure of the sample by region, place of residence, gender, age, and ethnic background is available in Table 1.

The findings are based on descriptive statistics, presenting the frequencies and averages of survey responses while summarizing key trends. The presented data are weighted with a post-stratification weighting designed to correct possible discrepancies between the population structure and the conducted sample. Everywhere along the report where differences between specific groups are presented and commented on, we present only differences that, through appropriate procedures, were confirmed as statistically significant, i.e., differences between those groups can be considered systematic. We combine graphical and narrative presentations of the initial findings.

The report contains findings from Module 6 of the CSES questionnaire and additional questions formulated by ISPJR-UKIM (marked with an asterisk - *) along the report.

Table 1. Structure of the realized sample

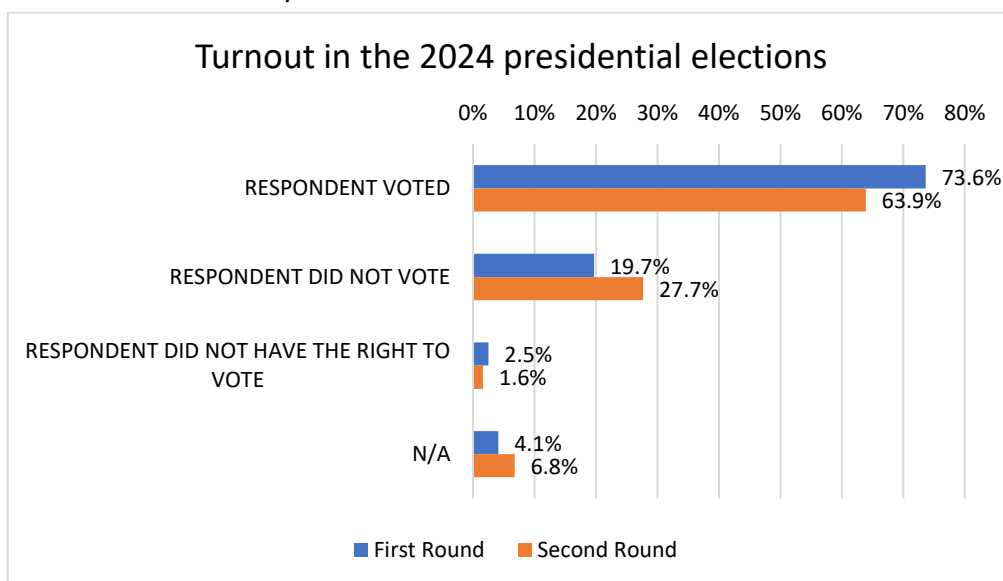
		Number	Percentage
Total		1056	100/0
Region	Skopje	300	28.4%
	Eastern	74	7.0
	Southeast	112	10.6%
	Northeast	69	6.5%
	Pelagonia	139	13.2%
	Vardar	89	8.4%
	Southwest	109	10.3%
	Polog	164	15.5%
Place of residence	Urban area (City)	566	53.6%
	Rural area (Village)	490	46.4%
Gender	Male	544	51.5%
	Female	512	48.5%
Age	18-24	63	6.0%
	25-34	142	13.4%
	35 - 44	206	19.5%
	45-54	229	21.7%
	55-64	163	15.4%
	65+	253	24.0%
Ethnic background	Macedonian	682	64.6%
	Albanian	294	27.8%
	Other	80	7.6%

Voter turnout and electoral decision

Voter turnout in the 2024 presidential elections

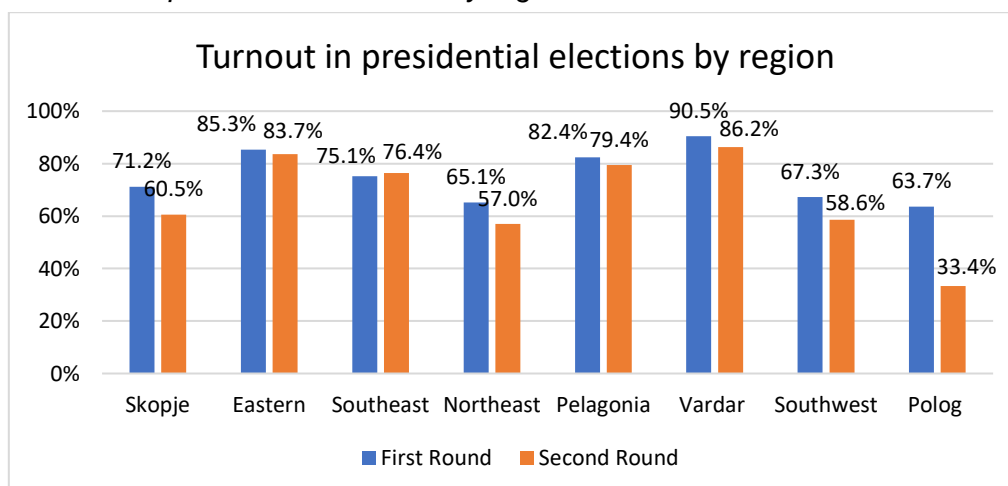
Voter turnout is an essential component of the electoral process that can vary depending on the type of election. According to the results of this survey, 74% of the respondents in our sample voted in the first round of presidential elections, while in the second round, the turnout decreased by about 10% to 64% (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Turnout in the 2024 presidential election



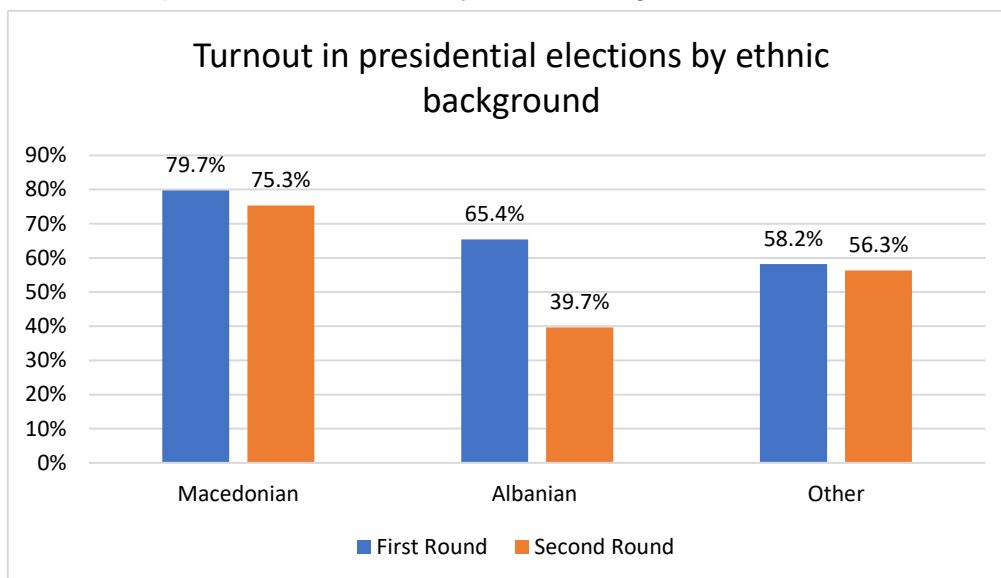
There are significant differences in the voter turnout in the first and second round of presidential elections in terms of regions and ethnic background, which in the case of North Macedonia partially overlap, as well as by place of residence and gender. In the first round of presidential elections, a higher percentage of citizens from the Vardar (90%), Eastern (85%), and Pelagonija region (82%) voted, while the lowest turnout was in the Polog region (64%) and the Northeastern region (65%) (Chart 2). In the second round of presidential elections, citizens from the Polog region (33%), the Northeast region (57%), and the Southwest region (59%) voted significantly less.

Chart 2. Turnout in presidential elections by region



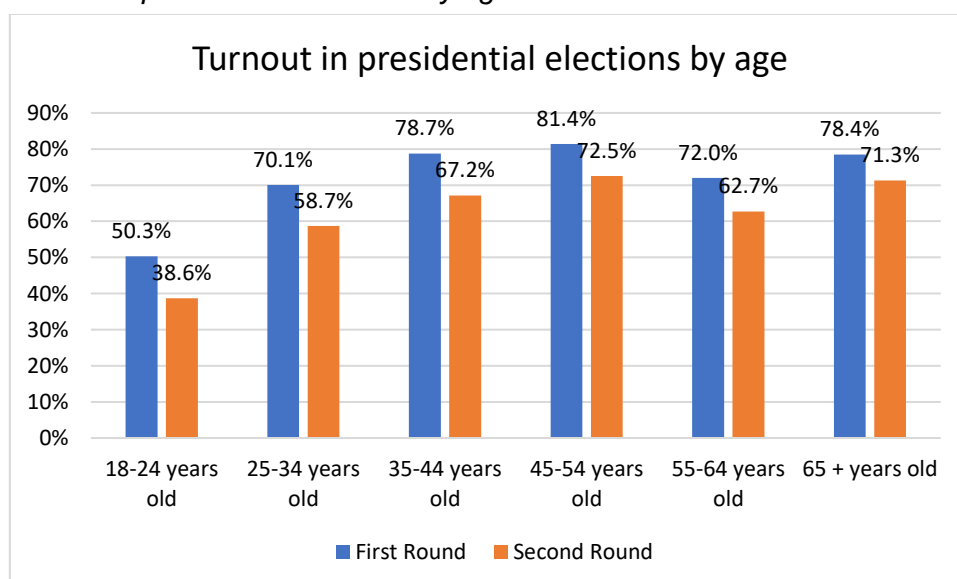
According to ethnic background, the largest in both election rounds is the turnout of Macedonians (80% and 75%), followed by Albanians, whose turnout between the first and second rounds drops by 25% percent, i.e., from 65% to 40%. In the group composed of respondents from other ethnic communities, the turnout is 58% and 56%, for the first and second rounds respectively (Chart 3).

Chart 3. Turnout in presidential elections by ethnic background



In the first round of presidential elections, a higher percentage of men (77%) voted compared to women (71%), while there were no such differences in the second round. There are also differences according to the age of the respondents (Chart 4). Voter turnout in the first round of elections is highest among the 45-54 age group (81%), while the youngest respondents (18-24 years) show the lowest turnout (50%). In the second round of presidential elections, the turnout of the youngest respondents was even lower, amounting to only 39%. In the second round, the turnout is highest again in the age group 45-54 years (72%) and the oldest respondents – those over 65 years (71%). In the second round of presidential elections, the percentage of voters among the rural population (58%) is also lower compared to the urban population (68%).

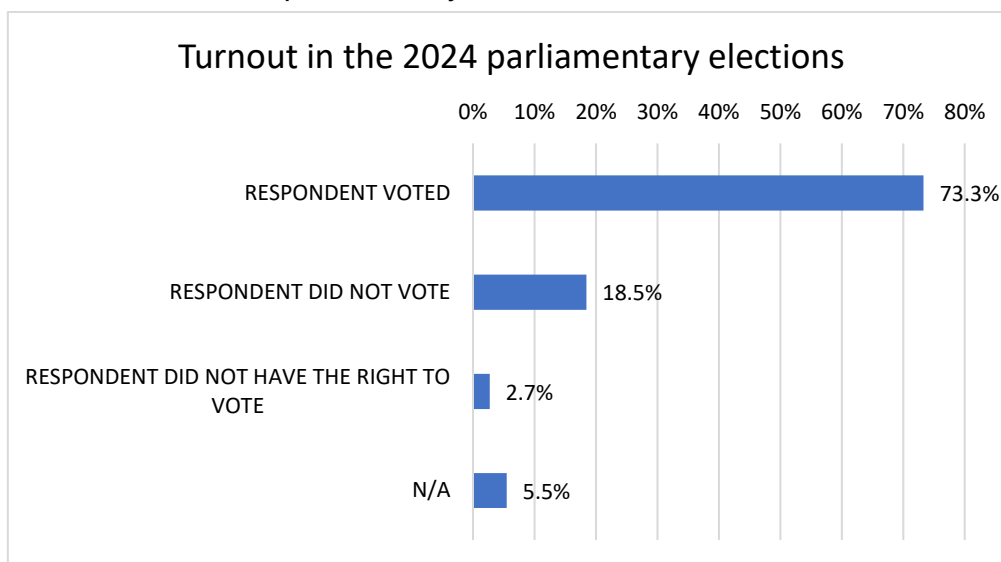
Chart 4. Turnout in presidential elections by age



Turnout at the 2024 parliamentary elections

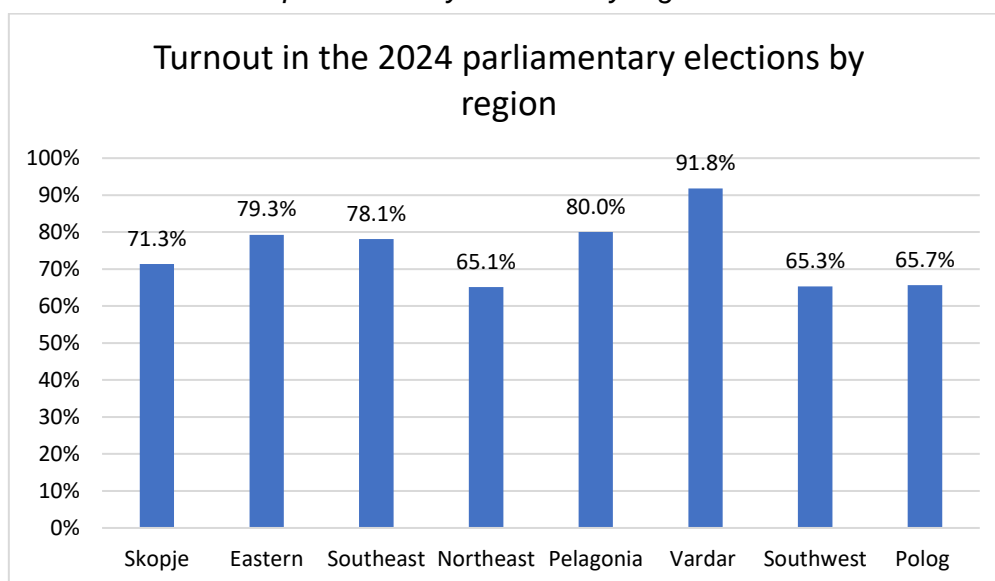
The turnout in the 2024 parliamentary elections of the respondents from this sample was 73% (Chart 5). As per the official election results, the turnout in the 2024 parliamentary elections is higher than the turnout in the second round of presidential elections, although both elections took place on the same day.

Chart 5. Turnout in the 2024 parliamentary elections



The lowest turnout is registered among the citizens of the Northeast (65%), the Southwest (65%), and the Polog region (66%), while the largest is in the Vardar region (92%), as well as in the Pelagonija region (80%), the East (79%) and the South-East region (78%) (Chart 6). Macedonians (78%) have a higher turnout than Albanians (67%), and the group composed of other ethnic communities (59%).

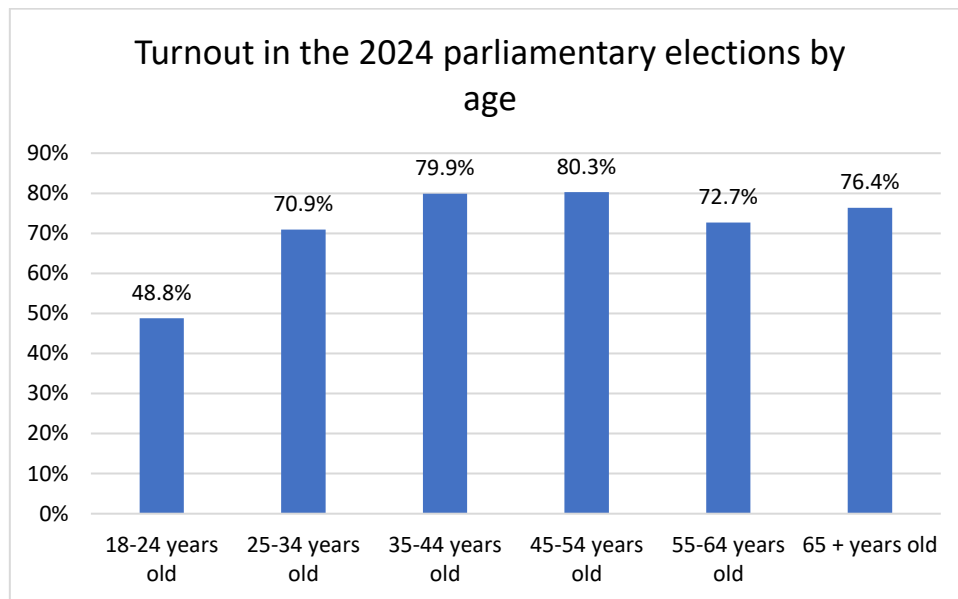
Chart 6. Turnout in the 2024 parliamentary elections by region



The relatively low turnout of the youngest age group is also a feature of the parliamentary elections. Only 49% of respondents aged 18-24 voted in the 2024 parliamentary

elections, compared to over 70% in other age groups (Chart 7). The highest turnout is in the age groups 35-44 years and 45-54 years and is about 80%.

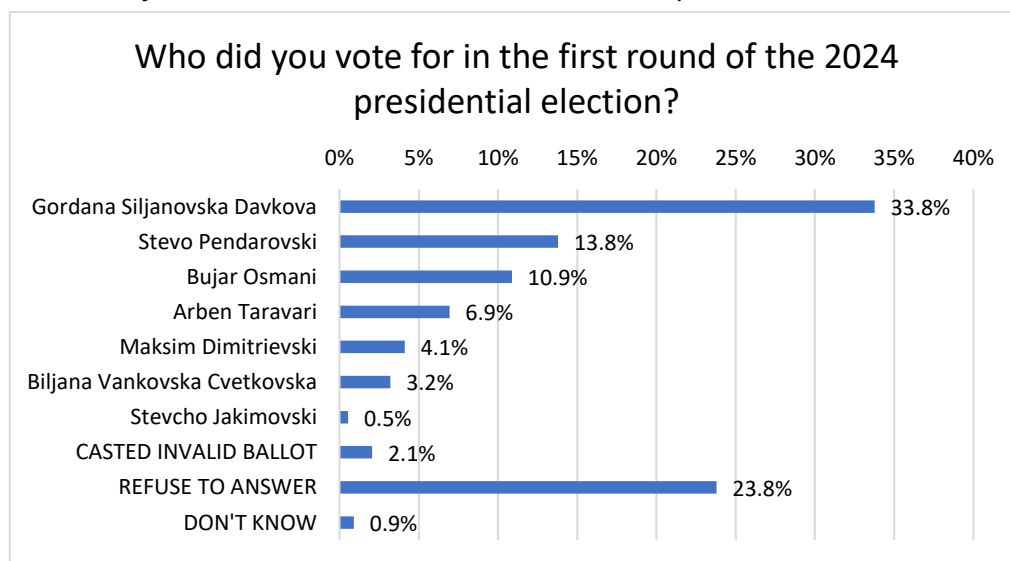
Chart 7. Turnout in the 2024 parliamentary elections by age



Electoral Decisions in the 2024 Presidential Elections – First Round

A notable 24% of respondents in this sample did not answer who they voted for in the first round of the presidential elections (Chart 8). The biggest share, a third (34%), voted for Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, 14% for Stevo Pendarovski, 11% for Bujar Osmani, 7% for Arben Taravari, 4% for Maksim Dimitrievski, 3% for Biljana Vankovska-Cvetkovska and less than 1% for Stevcho Jakimovski. Just over 2% casted an invalid ballot.

Chart 8. Who did you vote for in the first round of the 2024 presidential election?

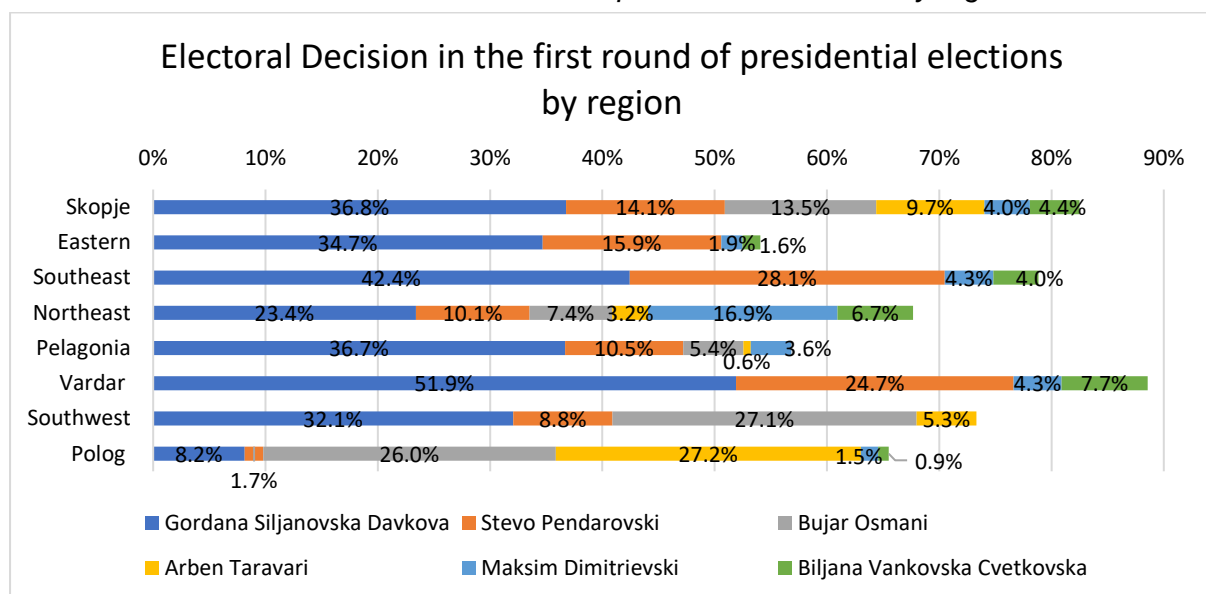


Siljanovska-Davkova and Pendarovski won the most significant percentage of votes by region in the Vardar region (52% and 25%, respectively) and the Southeast region (42% and 28%, respectively), while Siljanovska-Davkova had significant support in the Pelagonija

region (37%), the Skopje region (37%), and the Eastern region (35%) (Chart 9). Osmani had more support in the Southwest (27%) and the Polog region (26%), while Taravari in the Polog region (27%). On the other hand, the support for Taravari in the South-West region is much lower (only 4%). Osmani and Taravari had the support of 13% and 10%, respectively, in the Skopje region. Dimitrievski had the most support in the Northeast region (17%), while Vankovska-Cvetkovska had the most support in the Vardar region (8%).

By place of residence, statistically significant differences indicate that Pendarovski and Dimitrievski have greater support in urban areas (16% and 5%) compared to rural areas (11% and 2%). Osmani and Taravari have more support in the rural areas (20% and 11%) compared to the cities (6% and 4%). The support for the other candidates is more evenly distributed. Regarding gender, there are differences between men and women only in relation to the candidate Dimitrievski, for whom more women voted: 6%, compared to 2% men.

Chart 9. Electoral Decision in the first round of presidential elections by region



Electoral Decisions in the 2024 Presidential Elections – Second Round

In the second round of presidential elections, 47% of the respondents in this sample voted for Siljanovska-Davkova and 23% for Pendarovski (Chart 10). About 4% casted an invalid ballot, and 25% refused to answer this question.

Siljanovska-Davkova had the greatest support in the Vardar (60%) and Skopje regions (53%) and Pendarovski in the Skopje (29%) and Southeast regions (29%), compared to other regions. Siljanovska-Davkova has the greatest support within the oldest group of citizens (65+) - 59% (Chart 11). Most of the respondents from the youngest age group (18-24) casted an invalid ballot (14%). No statistically significant differences exist between men and women when selecting a candidate.

More members of the Albanian ethnic community voted for Pendarovski (42%) than Macedonians (20%) and members of other ethnic communities (19%) (Chart 12). Macedonians (54%) and other ethnic communities (44%) supported Siljanovska-Davkova significantly more compared to Albanians (17%). Albanians recorded the highest percentage of invalid ballots among all ethnic groups in the second round of the presidential elections (9%).

Chart 10. Who did you vote for in the second round of the 2024 presidential election?

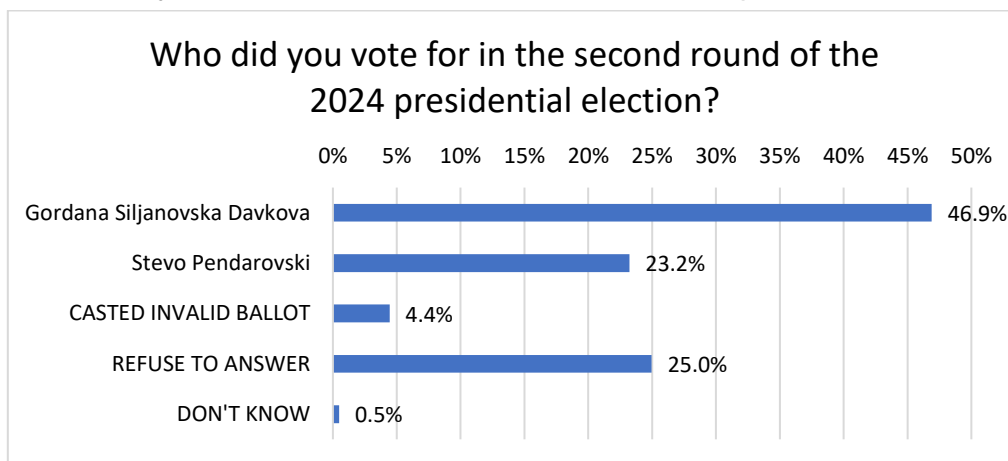


Chart 11. Electoral Decision in the second round of presidential elections by age

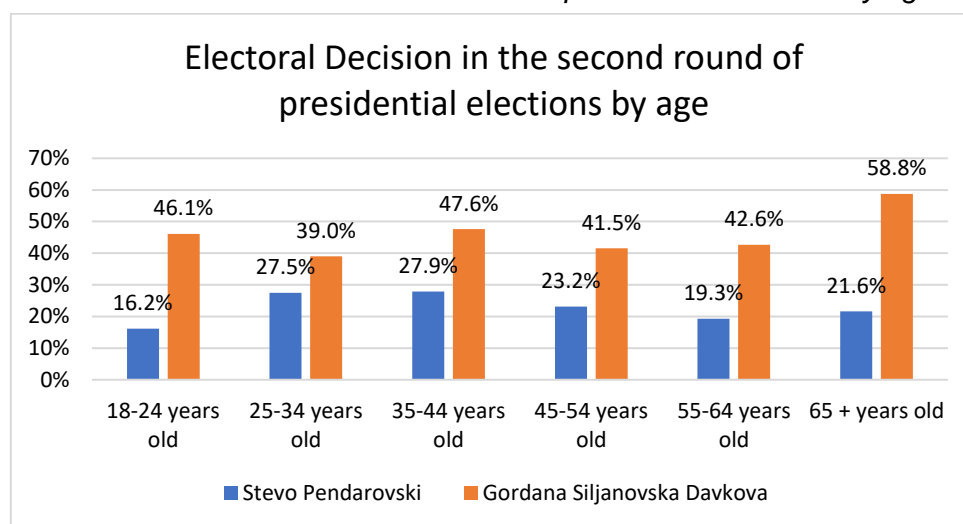
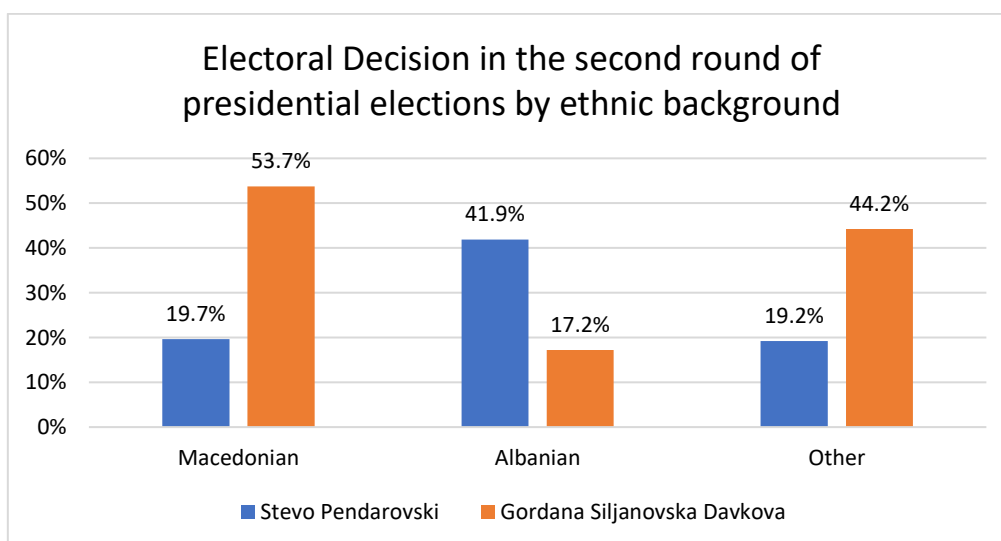


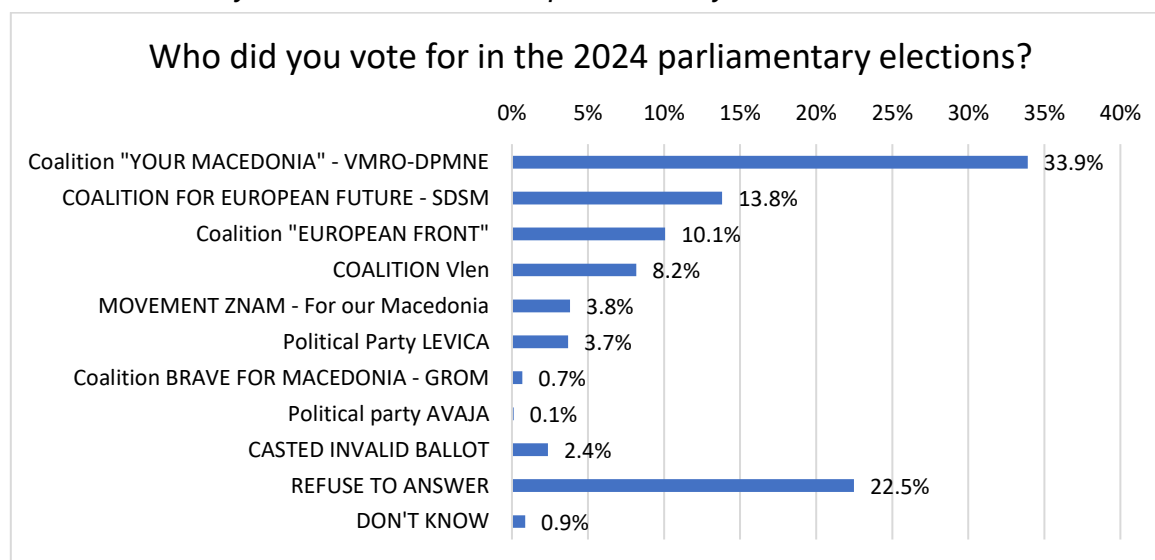
Chart 12. Electoral Decision in the second round of presidential elections by ethnic background



Electoral Decisions in the 2024 parliamentary elections

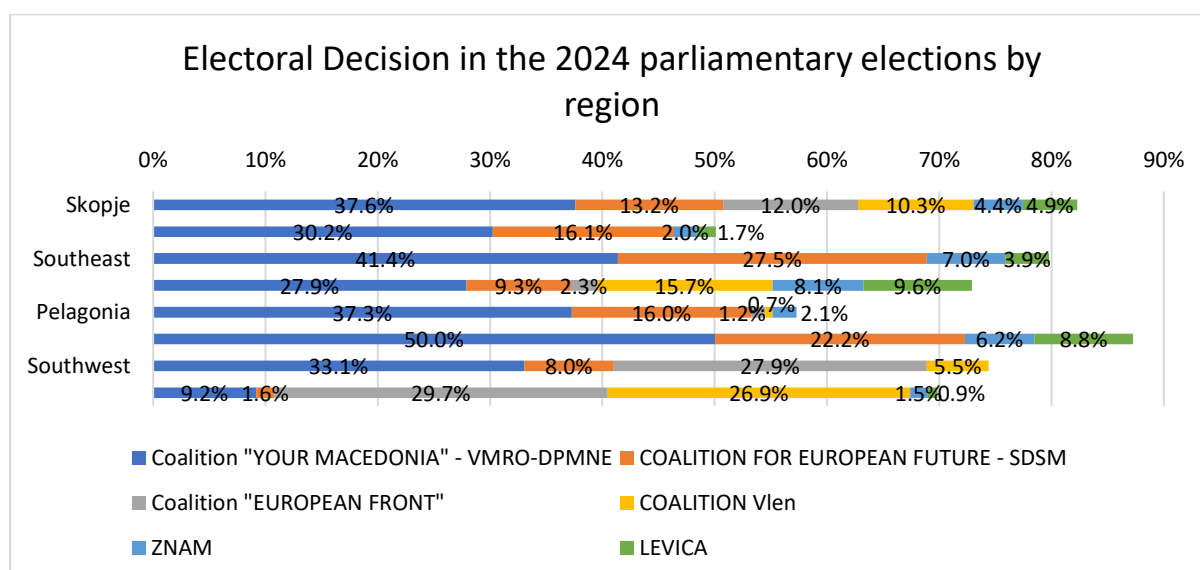
A third (34%) of the respondents in this sample in the 2024 parliamentary elections voted for the coalition "Your Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE, and almost 12% voted for the coalition "For European Future" led by SDSM (Chart 13). Every tenth respondent (10%) voted for the "European Front" coalition led by DUI, and 8% for the "Vlen" Coalition. A similar number of respondents voted for Levica and ZNAM: just under 4%.

Chart 13. Who did you vote for in the 2024 parliamentary elections?



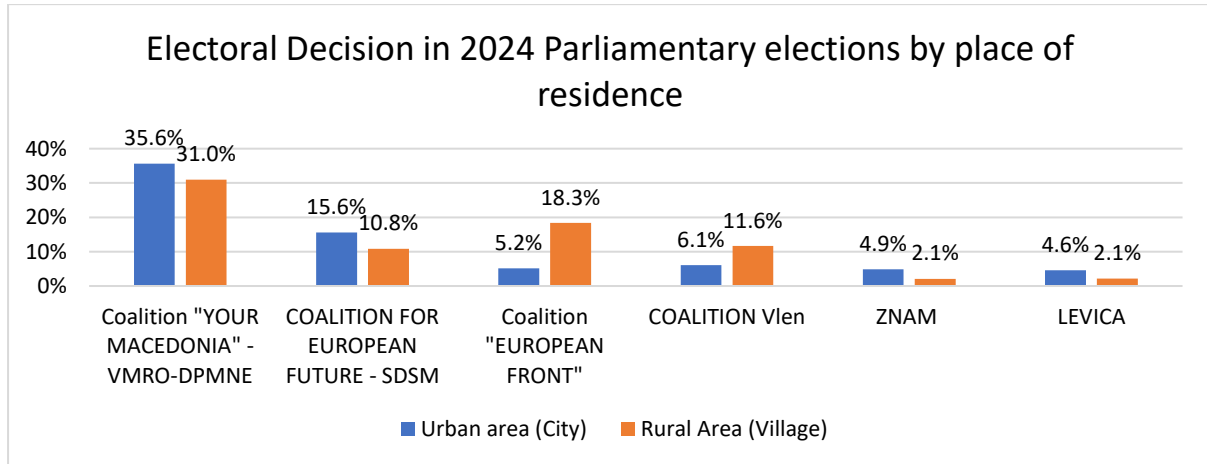
The most significant support for the coalition "Your Macedonia" is registered in the Vardar (50%) and the Southeast region (41%), and the same is the case with the coalition "For European Future" (22% and 28% respectively) (Chart 14). The Coalition "Your Macedonia" has high support in the Skopje (38%) and Pelagonija region (37%). The European Front coalition has the most significant support in the Polog region (30%) and the South-West region (30%). "Vlen" has the most significant support in the Polog region (27%) and the Northeast region (16%). The largest coalitions of Albanian parties had support in 10-12% of the votes in the Skopje region. Levica has the greatest support in the Northeast (10%) and Vardar regions (9%), while ZNAM in the Northeast region (8%) and the Southeast region (8%).

Chart 14. Electoral Decision in the 2024 parliamentary elections by region



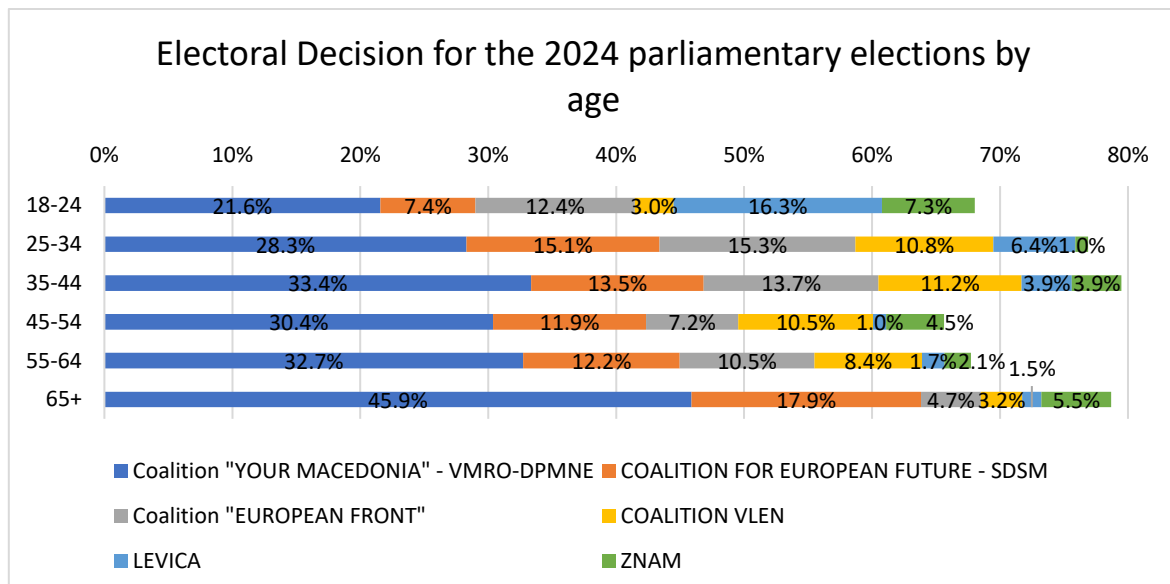
Coalitions "European Front" and "Vlen" have more significant support among citizens living in rural areas (18% and 12%) compared to urban areas (5% and 6%) (Chart 15). ZNAM has more support among citizens living in urban areas (5%) than in rural areas (2%). There were no statistically significant differences between men and women.

Chart 15. Electoral Decision in 2024 Parliamentary elections by place of residence



The Coalition "Your Macedonia" has the most significant support among the oldest group of respondents (65+) - 64% (Chart 16). The "European Front" coalition has more support among the three younger age groups (18-44 years) and ranges between 12% and 15%. In contrast, support for "Vlen" is distributed more evenly among the groups of respondents from 18 to 64 years (mostly about 11%), among which it is higher. ZNAM has more support among the youngest (18-24 years old) and the oldest group of respondents (65+): 7% and 5%, respectively. The differences of support for the coalition "For European Future" by the age of respondents are not statistically significant.

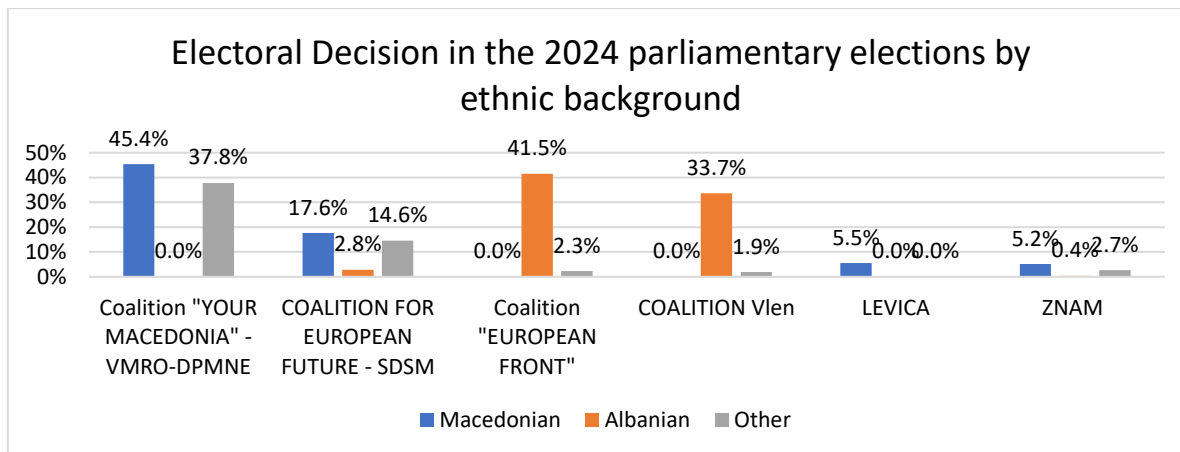
Chart 16. Electoral Decision for the 2024 parliamentary elections by age



Regarding ethnic background, ZNAM has the predominant support of Macedonians (5%) compared to Albanians (less than 1%). These differences are statistically significant in the support of Macedonians (18%) and other ethnic communities (15%) compared to Albanians (3%) for the Coalition "For European Future" (Chart 17). The coalition "Your Macedonia" has no support among the Albanian population, but a relatively high 38% of

respondents from other ethnic communities voted for this coalition. Levica has support only among Macedonians in our sample (6%). The “Vlen” and “European Front” coalitions have support primarily from the Albanian population, 34% and 42%, respectively, with a minimum support of 2% among the other ethnic communities in this sample.

Chart 17. Electoral Decision in the 2024 parliamentary elections by ethnic background



Changes in voting decisions between 2020 and 2024

The CSES module also contains questions dedicated to citizens' past voting. In the conducted sample, 72% of the respondents voted in the 2020 parliamentary elections, almost the same percentage as in 2024. In addition, 88% (N=680) of the respondents who voted in the 2024 parliamentary elections also voted in the 2020 elections. This extremely high percentage indicates that a significant segment of citizens is highly active in the most common form of political participation – voting at elections.

What changes are evident in the support for political parties and coalitions? The results indicate a degree of stability within the electorate, marked by a significant number of loyal, long-term supporters of specific parties and coalitions. However, there is also a noticeable proportion of "swing" voters—individuals who shift their political preferences. In the case of the new entities that appeared in these elections, such as Coalition “Vlen” and ZNAM, most of the voters come from the political actors from which these options have splintered (the 2020 Coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and Alternative, and SDSM, respectively).

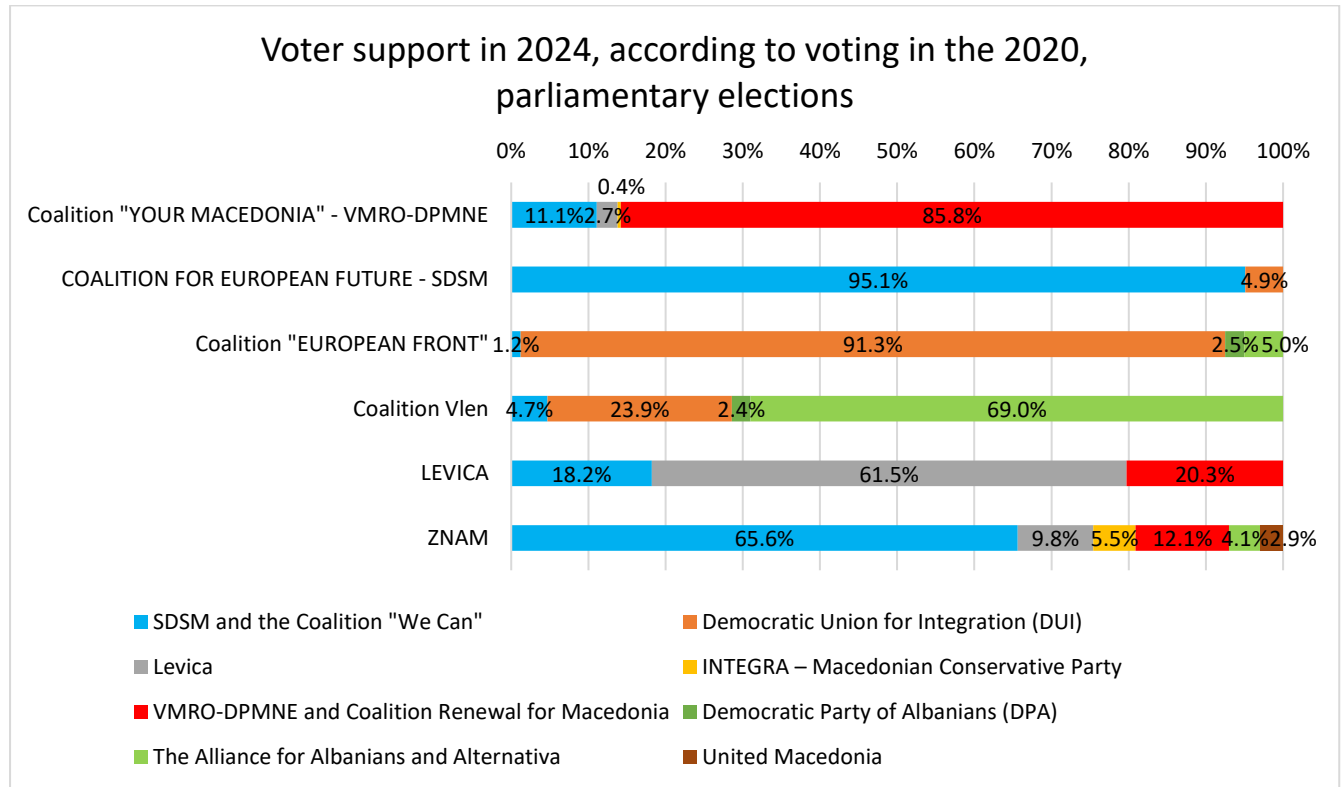
More detailed views of the voting in 2024 through the prism of the given vote in 2020 are available in Chart 18. Eleven percent of the respondents who voted for VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition in the 2024 elections, voted for SDSM and the coalition in 2020. VMRO-DPMNE also attracted 3% voters of Levica, as well as less than 1% voters of the Integra-Macedonian Conservative Party. SDSM, on the other hand, attracted previous DUI voters (almost 5% of the total number of votes for SDSM). The European Front of DUI, meanwhile, attracted a small number of former voters of the Alliance of Albanians (5%), the Democratic Party of Albanians (2%) and the SDSM coalition (1%).

Apart from the support that, for the most part comes from the citizens who voted for the coalition between the Alliance for Albanians and Alternative in the 2020 elections (69%), “Vlen” has also attracted voters of DUI (24% within its voters), SDSM (5%) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (2%).

Levica, meanwhile, managed to attract votes from both the VMRO-DPMNE coalition (20% of the votes for Levica in 2024) and SDSM (18%). The newly formed ZNAM, in its corps of votes, attracted citizens who, in the previous 2020 elections, voted for several Macedonian ethnic parties, as well as from one party of Albanians. Thus, 66% of the voters voted for the

SDSM coalition in the previous elections, and 12% voted for the VMRO-DPMNE coalition. ZNAM attracted voters of Levica (10%), the right-wing parties Integra (5%) and United Macedonia (3%), as well as the Alliance for Albanians (4%).

Chart 18. Voter support in 2024 according to voting in 2020, parliamentary elections

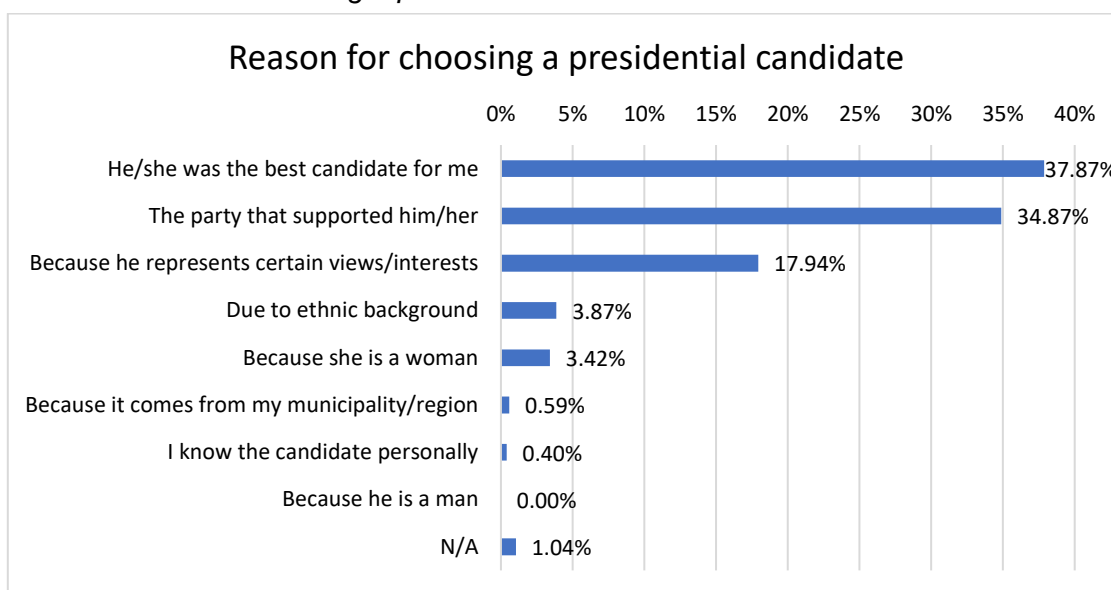


Formation of electoral decisions

Reasons for the voting choice

Respondents were asked several questions related to the reasons why they voted for a particular party, list or candidate, taking into account the diversity of candidates from an ethnic, gender, and party perspective. According to the statements of the respondents (Chart 19), when deciding for whom to cast their vote in the first round of presidential elections, for most of the citizens of North Macedonia, the most important thing is the quality of the nominated candidate ("He/she was the best candidate for me"), 38%, while for a slightly smaller number, it is the party that has nominated the candidate (35%). The perception of the views and interests represented by the nominated candidate (18%) is also somewhat important. Cumulatively, these findings indicate that respondents carefully evaluate the characteristics of nominated candidates. This is also reinforced by the views that ethnic background (4%) and gender of candidates (3% for female gender), which are related to the group identities of candidates, are less important than their personal characteristics. However, it should be noted that, according to the other data, voting based on ethnic background was certainly a reality in the first round of elections. Finally, while a candidate's region of origin is a key factor influencing electoral behavior in some countries, it held no significance in North Macedonia's 2024 Presidential Elections.

Chart 19. Reason for choosing a presidential candidate*



Respondents from the Polog region (51%) and the Skopje region (39%) casted their vote in the largest percentage in the first round of presidential elections due to the support that the candidate received from the respective party, while for the residents of the Northeast (59%), the East (40%), the Vardar (49%) and the Pelagonija region (46%) the quality of the proposed candidate is more important. For residents of the Southwest region (17%), the ethnic background of the candidate is more important compared to all other regions.

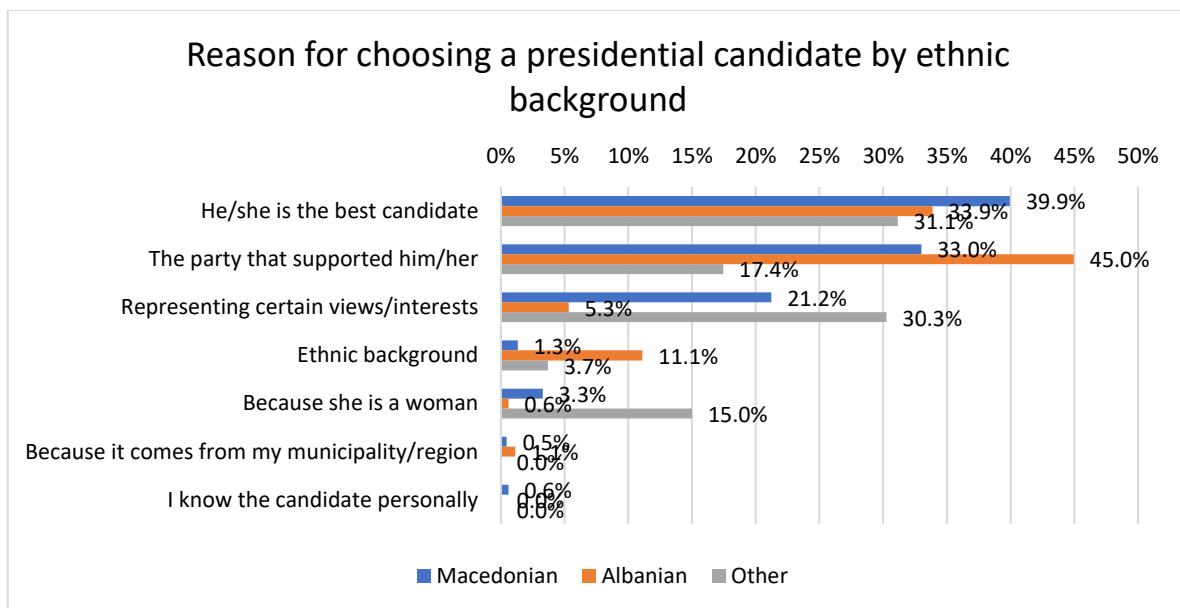
For respondents living in the rural areas, the party nominating the candidate (41% vs. 31% of urban residents) or ethnic background (6% vs. 2% of urban residents) is more important. In contrast, the candidate (41% vs. 31% of rural area residents) is more important for respondents living in urban areas.

A higher percentage of women (6%) responded that they cast their vote because of the female gender of the candidate compared to men (1%). The youngest group of

respondents (18-24 years old) in the most significant percentage (30%) decided to give their vote to a particular candidate because he/she represents certain views/interests, but also because of the ethnic background (10%).

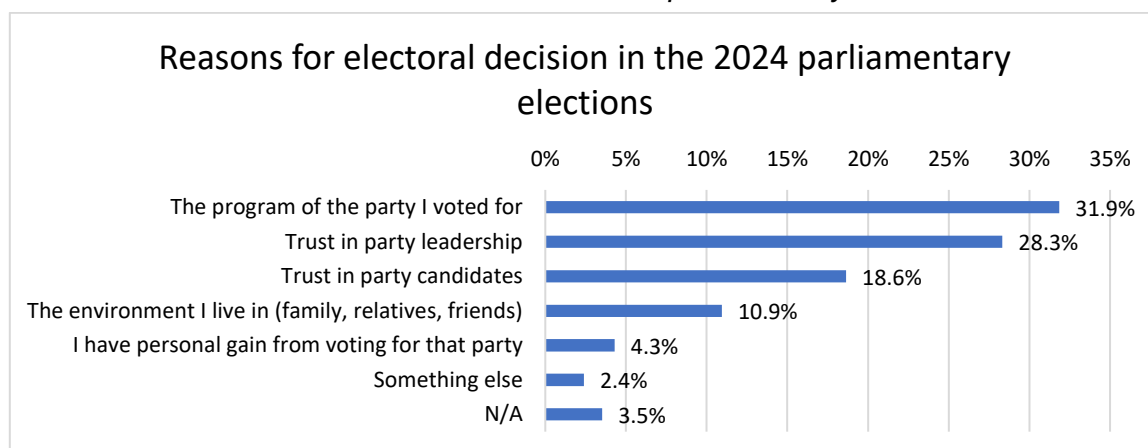
Among ethnic groups, voting for a candidate based on party support is most common among Albanians (45%), followed by Macedonians (33%), and respondents from other ethnic communities (17%) (Chart 20). For Albanians (11%), ethnic background is more important compared to Macedonians (1%). Other ethnic communities voted the most out of all demographic groups because the candidate was a woman (as much as 15%, well above the general average). For them (30%), as well as for the Macedonians (20%), it is more important what views/interests the candidate represents, compared to the Albanians (5%).

Chart 20. Reason for choosing a presidential candidate by ethnic background*



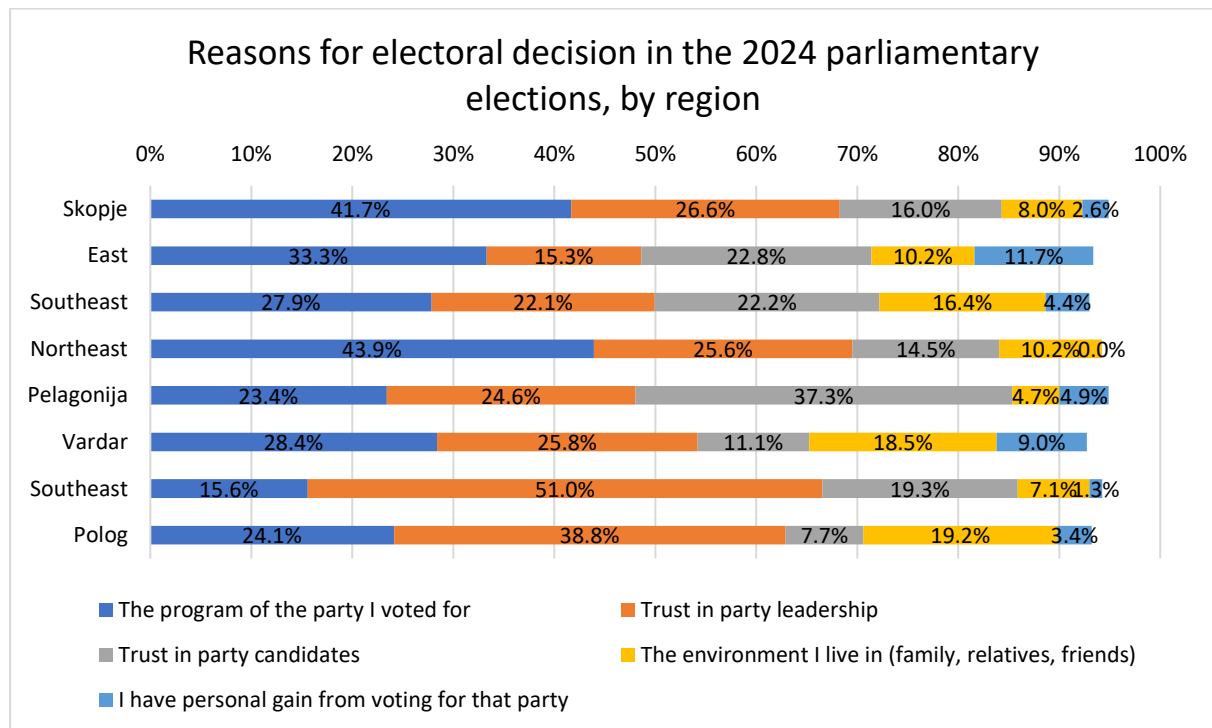
What influences electoral decisions when it comes to parliamentary elections? For almost a third of the respondents (32%), it is the program of the party they voted for (Chart 21). The percentage of citizens for whom trust in the parties' leadership is the most important reason for voting (28%) is also close to this percentage. Trust in the nominated candidates is the following reason, shared by almost one-fifth of the respondents (19%). The social environment of the respondents has less influence on voting decisions (11%). Only 4% of respondents declare that they decide who they will vote for because of some self-interest/gain.

Chart 21. Reasons for electoral decision in the 2024 parliamentary elections*



The program is the most important reason for respondents living in Skopje (42%), Northeast (44%), and Eastern regions (33%). In comparison, trust in party leadership is more important for residents of the Southwest (51%) and Polog regions (39%). Trust in the candidates is most important for the respondents from the Pelagonija region (37%). The surroundings of respondents are well above the general average among respondents from the Vardar (19%), Polog (19%), and Southeast region (16%). Personal gain as a motive for voting is most prominent among respondents from the Eastern region (12%) and the Vardar region (9%). For rural respondents (35%), trust in party leadership is more important compared to urban respondents (25%), while for women (25%), trust in candidates is more important compared to men (15%).

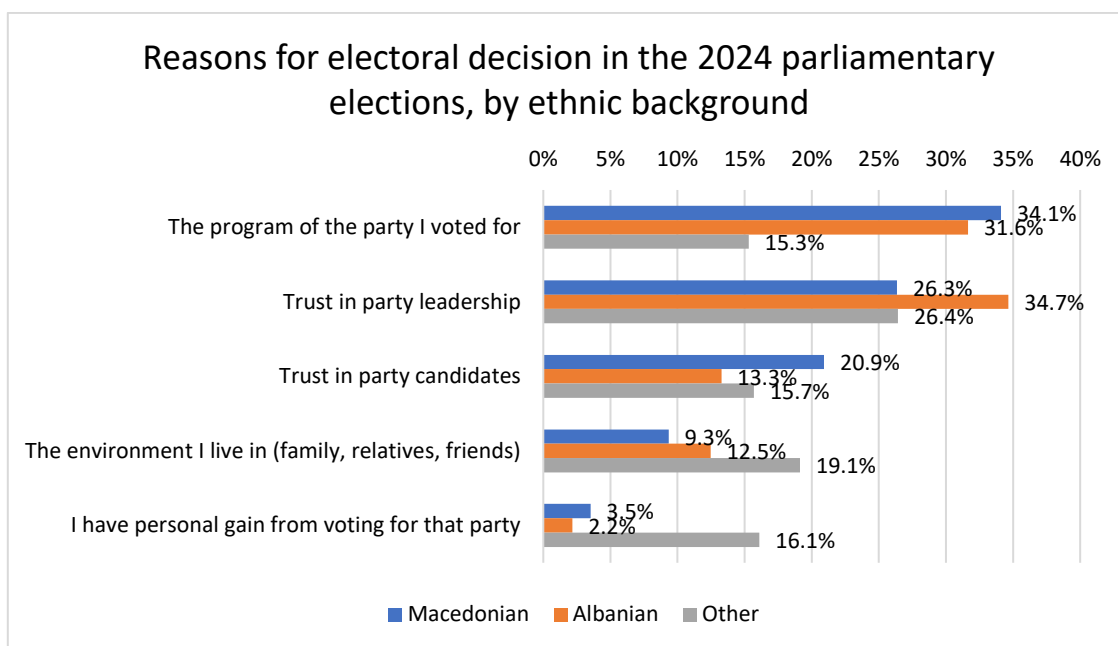
Chart 22. Reasons for electoral decision in the 2024 parliamentary elections, by region*



The program of the parties is the most important for the age group 35-44 years (33%), as well as for the respondents 55-64 and 65+ years (33% and 36%, respectively), while for as many as 40% of the youngest respondents (18-24 years), the most important is the trust in the leadership of the parties. Respondents from the first three age groups, 18-44, also more often highlight the personal gain from voting, and it grows with age within those three groups (6% -9%). Trust in candidates is most characteristic for respondents from the age group 55-64 years (24%).

Viewed through the ethnic background, voting based on the program is more characteristic for Macedonians (34%) and Albanians (32%) compared to members of smaller ethnic communities (15%) (Chart 23). At the same time, a significant proportion of Albanian respondents (35%) chose trust in party leadership, compared to 26% of Macedonians and smaller ethnic communities (26%). Trust in party candidates is more important for Macedonians (21%), compared to Albanians (13%) and other ethnic communities (16%). For smaller ethnic communities, the above-average important reasons for voting are the environment in which they live (19%) and the personal gain (16%).

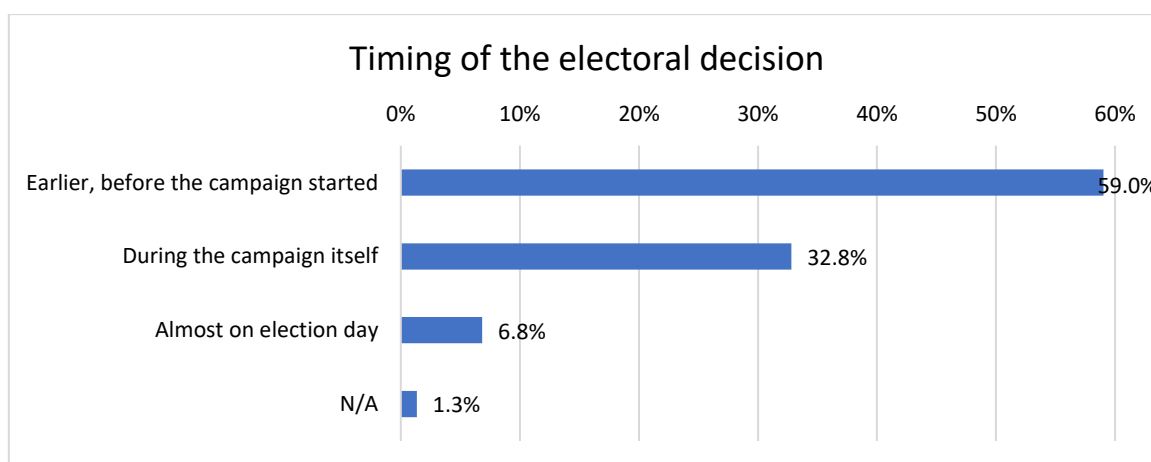
Chart 23. Reasons for electoral decision in Parliamentary Elections 2024, by ethnic background*



Timing of the Electoral Decision

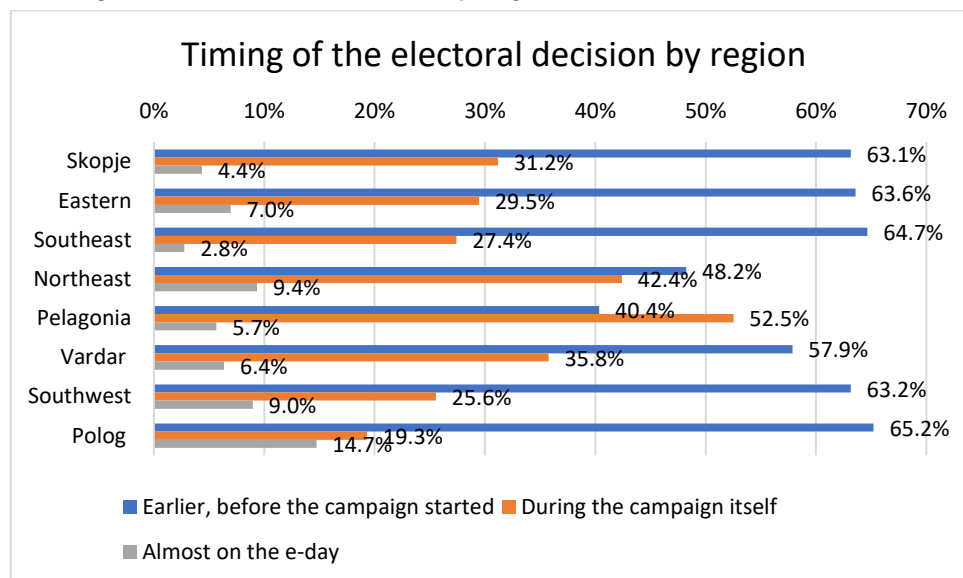
Even before the election campaign began, the majority (59%) of citizens who voted in the 2024 parliamentary elections knew who they would vote for (Chart 24). For one-third of the respondents, the electoral decision was made during the campaign, and nearly 7% of the respondents decided who they would vote for on the very day of voting. This means that political parties have the opportunity to influence the electoral behavior of a high 40% of voters during the election campaign.

Chart 24. Timing of the electoral decision*



The potential for influence during the election campaign is bigger among the respondents from the Pelagonija (53%), Northeast (48%), Vardar (36%), and Skopje region (31%), who make the election decision during the campaign (Chart 25). As many as 15% of the respondents from the Polog region decide on the day of voting, as well as 9% of the respondents from the Southwestern and Northeastern regions and 6% of the respondents from the Pelagonija region. The potential for influence is most significant in the Northeast and Pelagonija regions.

Chart 25. Timing of the electoral decision, by region*



Other differences occur only in relation to the age of the respondents and in relation to the decision-making on the day of voting. This is more often the case with young people 18-24 years (15%), as well as with respondents aged 55-64 years (9%).

Reasons for abstention

The reasons for abstention from the parliamentary elections in 2024 are primarily related to the lack of interest in politics (36%), but also the disappointment with the parties (30%) (Chart 26). For about 8% of the respondents, the reasons are insufficient information or the inability to identify a party close to their views. Exactly 13% of respondents responded that they abstained because they were prevented from voting (due to various personal reasons).

Respondents who abstained from the elections (N=174) from the Eastern (56%) and Pelagonija regions (55%) emphasized the lack of interest in politics. In comparison, respondents from the Vardar region were mainly disappointed with the parties (as much as 75%). Failure to have a party close to the respondents' views is the most important reason for the residents of the Northeast region's abstention (21%). The same applies to respondents living in the rural area (15%) compared to respondents living in the urban area (only 3%). Sixteen percent of the respondents from the youngest age group (18-24 years) share the same view, while the respondents from the three age categories between 25-54 years are more disappointed with the parties (42%-51%) compared to the youngest group (10%) (Chart 27). 45% of respondents up to 35 years of age and 47% from 55-64 years of age highlight the (lack of) interest in politics as a reason for abstention.

Lack of interest in politics as a reason for abstention is more prevalent among members of other ethnic communities (53%). In comparison, insufficient information is more often a reason for abstention among Albanians (24%) (Chart 28). A bigger percentage of Albanians also noted that the lack of closeness to the parties' views is a reason for abstention (18%). It can be concluded that citizens of Albanian ethnic background are less informed about the political offer or feel that political parties are not close to their views.

Chart 26. Reasons for abstention from voting*

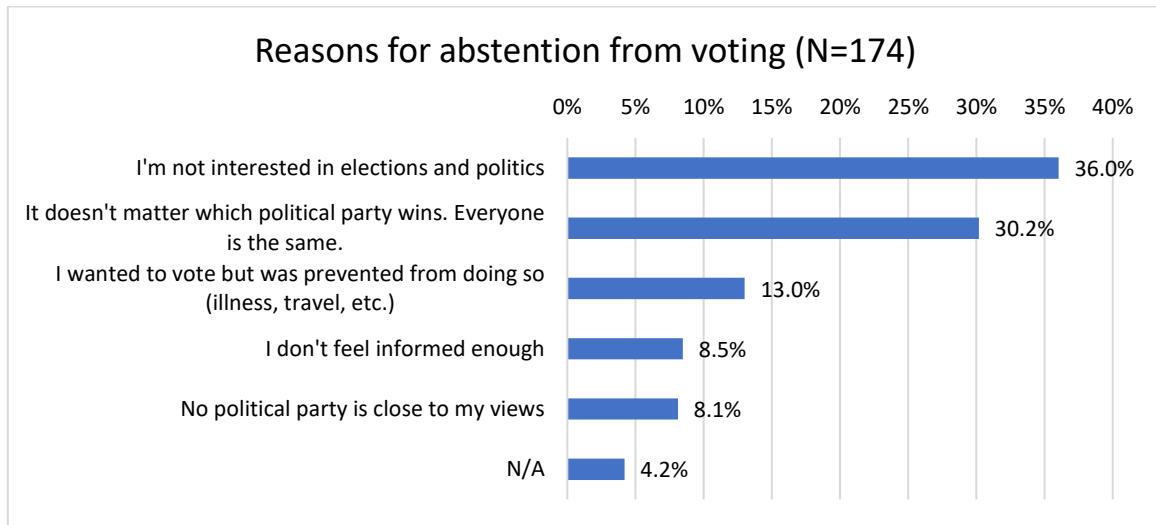


Chart 24. Reasons for abstention in the 2024 parliamentary elections by age*

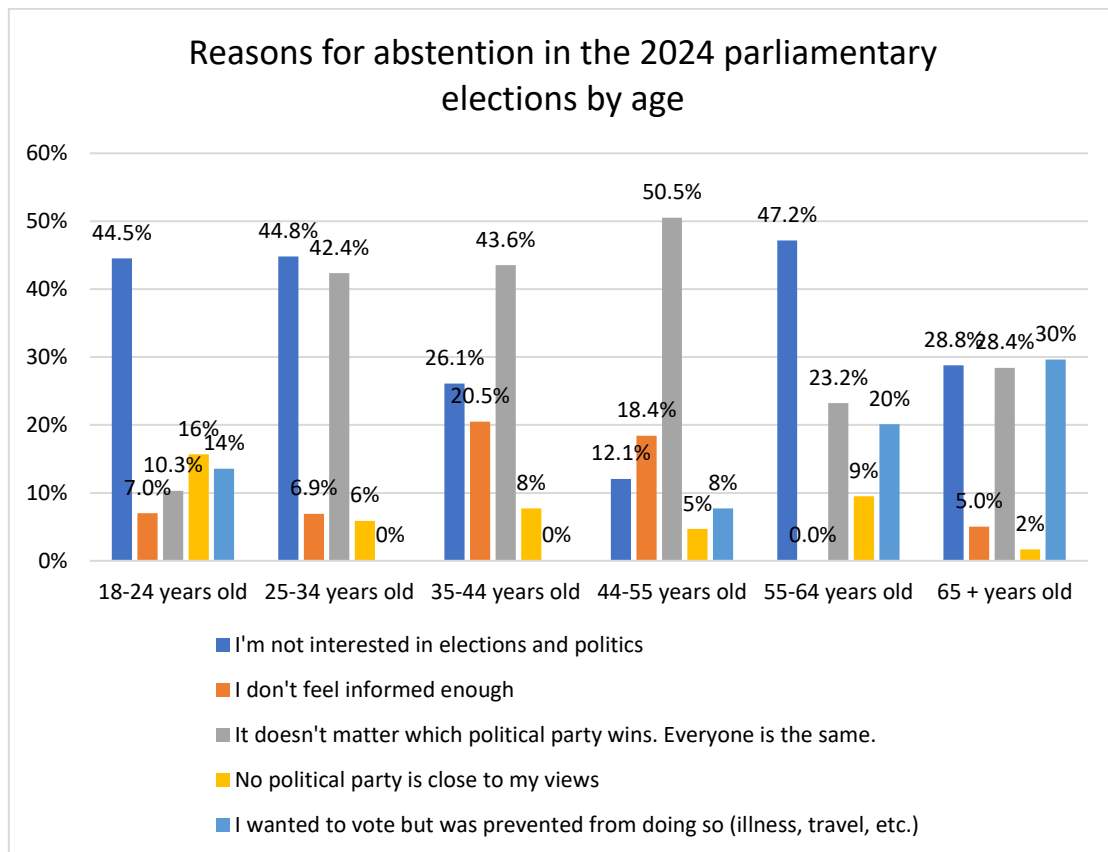
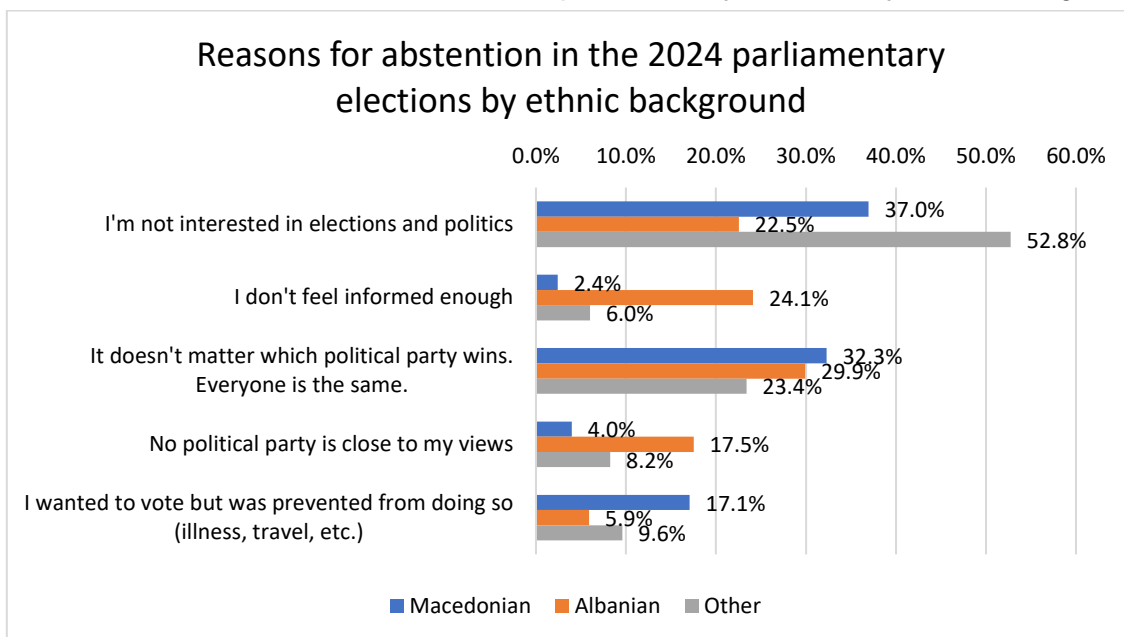


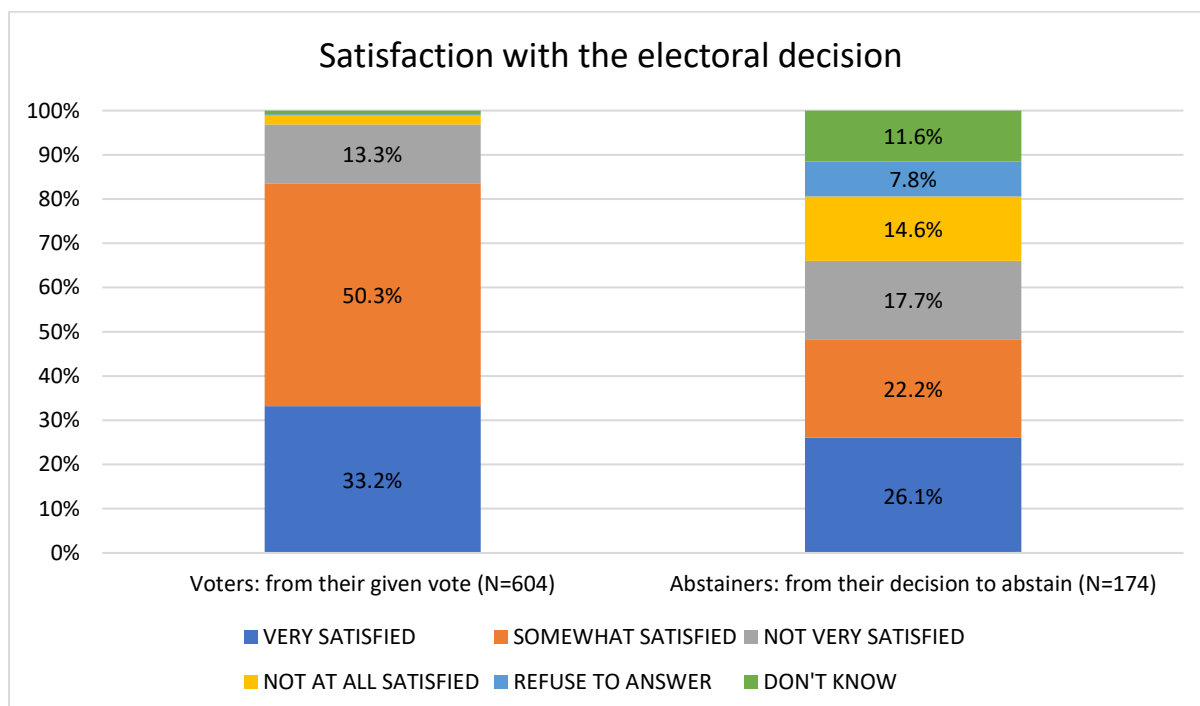
Chart 25. Reasons for abstention in the 2024 parliamentary elections by ethnic background*



Perceptions on the personal electoral decision

Citizens are generally satisfied with their personal choice when voting in April and May 2024 (Chart 29). A large majority of those who voted reported being satisfied with their voting decision: 33% "very" and 50% "somewhat". Those who abstained from voting are satisfied to a lesser extent, but still in significant numbers: 26% "very" and 22% "somewhat". One in ten abstainers responded with "I don't know" when asked to assess their level of satisfaction.

Chart 26. Satisfaction with the electoral decision



Perceptions on the election offer

A majority of citizens are satisfied with the diversity of the electoral offer (Chart 30): 42% are satisfied "partially," and an additional 14% are satisfied "very much." Just over a third are dissatisfied, and only 10% are "not satisfied at all." Citizens in the Southwest region outperform the rest of the regions regarding their satisfaction. A substantial 39% reported being "very satisfied," in contrast to just 2% to 16% in other regions (Chart 31).

Chart 30. Satisfaction with the electoral offer

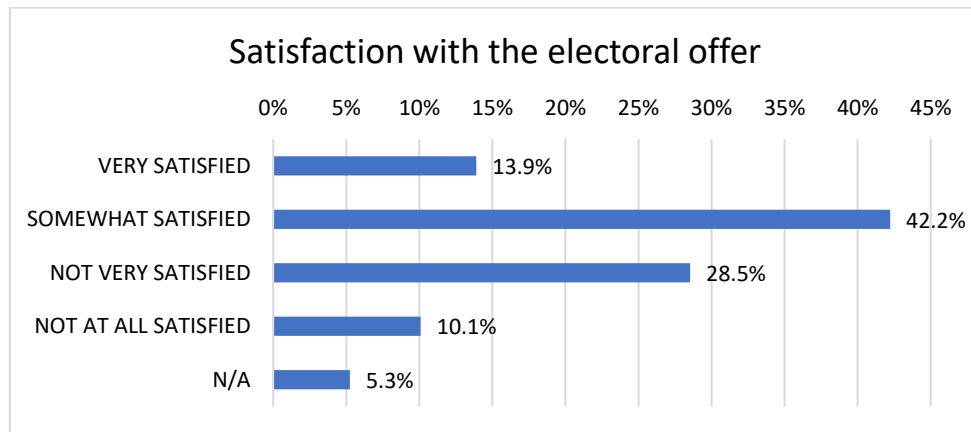
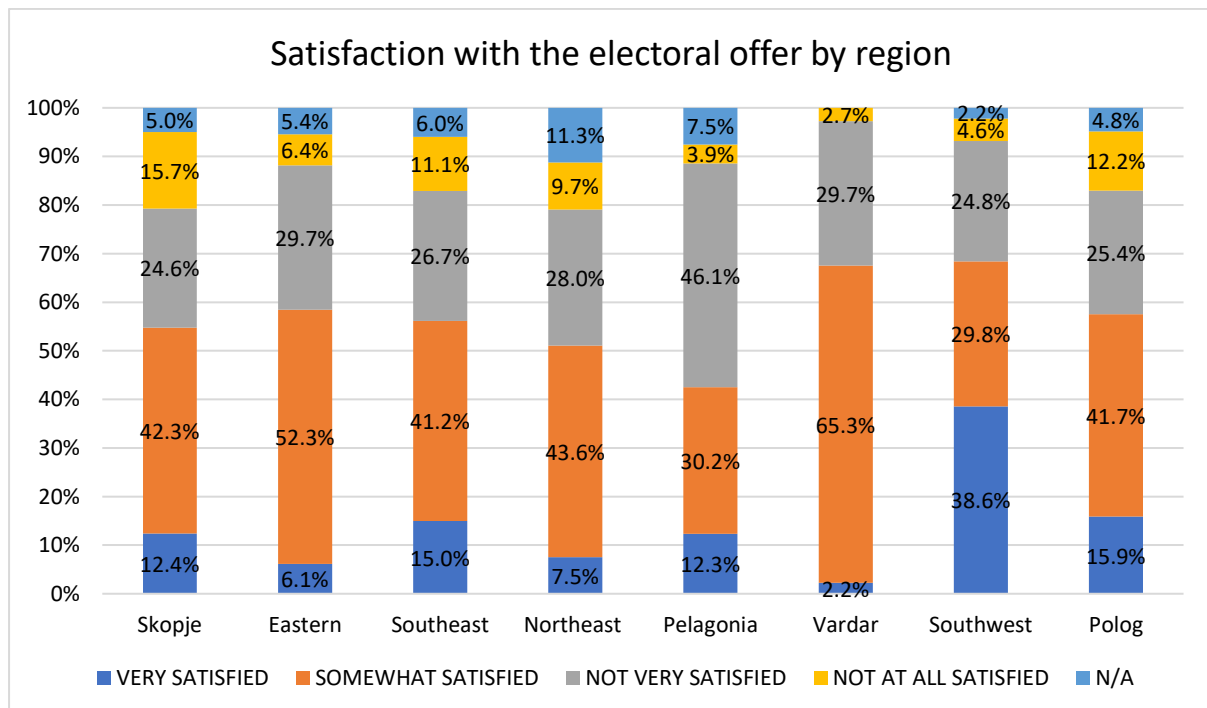


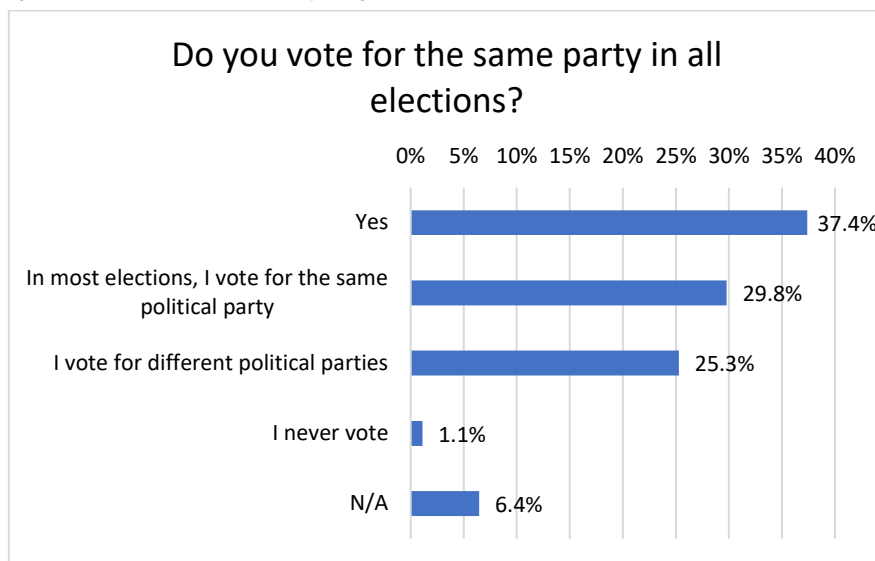
Chart 27. Satisfaction with the electoral offer by region



Voting frequency for the same political option

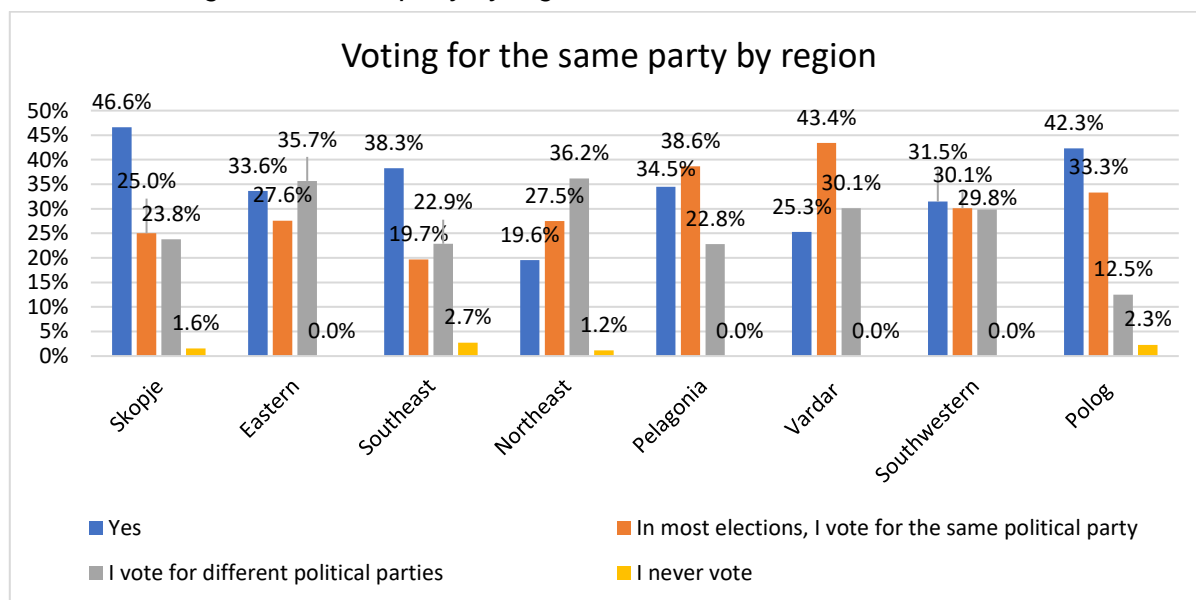
Most respondents reported that they mostly vote for the same political option: 37% that in all elections they vote for the same party, while nearly 30% that in most elections vote for the same party (Chart 32). Approximately 25% of respondents vote for different parties, whereas only 1% report never voting.

Chart 28. Do you vote for the same party in all elections?*



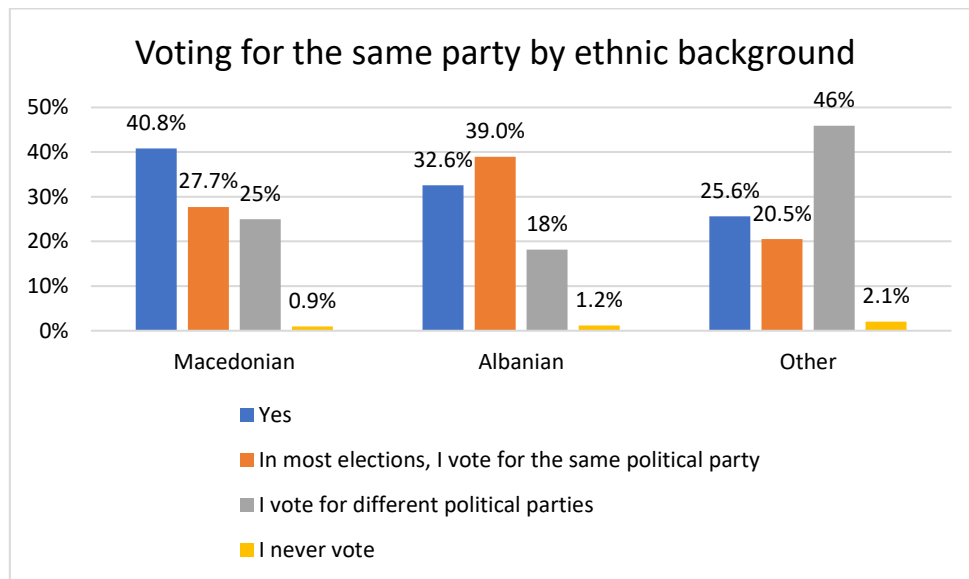
The most stable voters, who always vote for the same party, are in the most significant percentage from the Skopje (47%) and the Polog region (42%), followed by the respondents from the Southeast (38%) and the Pelagonija region (35%) (Chart 33). Almost half (43%) of respondents from the Vardar region vote for the same party in most elections. Citizens from the Eastern (36%), Northeastern (36%), and Vardar regions (30%) most often across regions vote for different parties. Urban respondents, compared to rural respondents, more often vote for different parties: 28% vs. 20%.

Chart 29. Voting for the same party by region*



Macedonians, in the largest percentage always vote for the same party (41%), while the biggest percentage from the Albanians (39%), vote in most elections for the same party (Chart 34). Members of other ethnic communities most often vote for different parties (46%), and this percentage is also higher among Macedonians (25%) compared to Albanians (18%).

Chart 30. Voting for the same party by ethnic background*

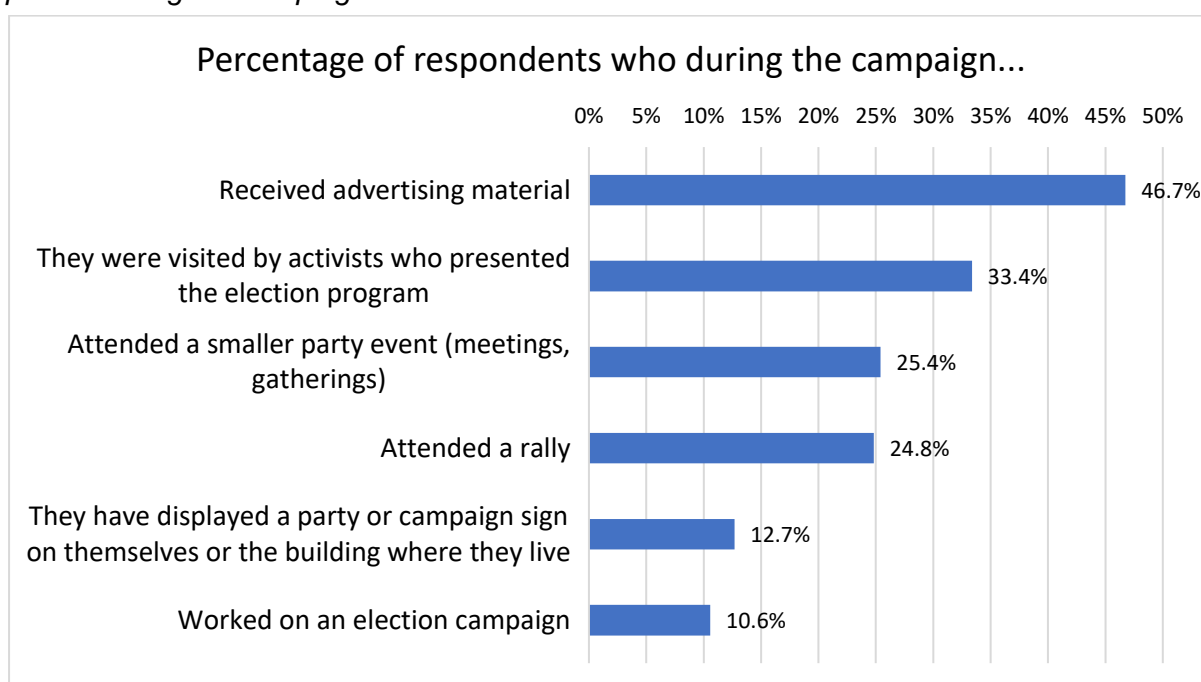


Electoral Campaign

Civic participation in the electoral campaign

Citizens were a significant part in the mobilization activities of political parties during the electoral campaign (Chart 35): One-quarter of respondents attended a rally or a smaller campaign event, such as a meeting with citizens; one-third were visited at home by political party activists presenting the election program to them; and almost half received advertising material from political parties. Additionally, one in eight respondents displayed a party or campaign symbol on themselves or their residence, while one in ten were directly involved by working on an election campaign for a party or candidate.

Chart 31. Percentage of respondents who participated in the mobilization activities of the parties during the campaign*



However, there are significant gender, age, and ethnic differences in terms of campaign participation. Men were more likely to participate in all of these activities than women (Chart 36). Likewise, participants from the youngest age group are represented significantly less than other groups and consistently fall below the average across all offered activities. Similarly, the oldest age group shows lower participation in all activities, except for being involved in distributing advertising materials and making visits to present the program.

Lastly, more often than Albanians, Macedonians were visited by activists who shared the program and received advertising material, while, on the contrary, Albanians worked more often than Macedonians on an election campaign (Chart 37).

Mobilization activities organized by parties and campaign headquarters, consequently, more often involve men and middle-aged groups, and there are different dynamics in terms of ethnic groups, specifically in terms of door-to-door mobilization and direct participation in campaign activities.

Chart 32. Percentage of respondents who participated in mobilization activities by gender*

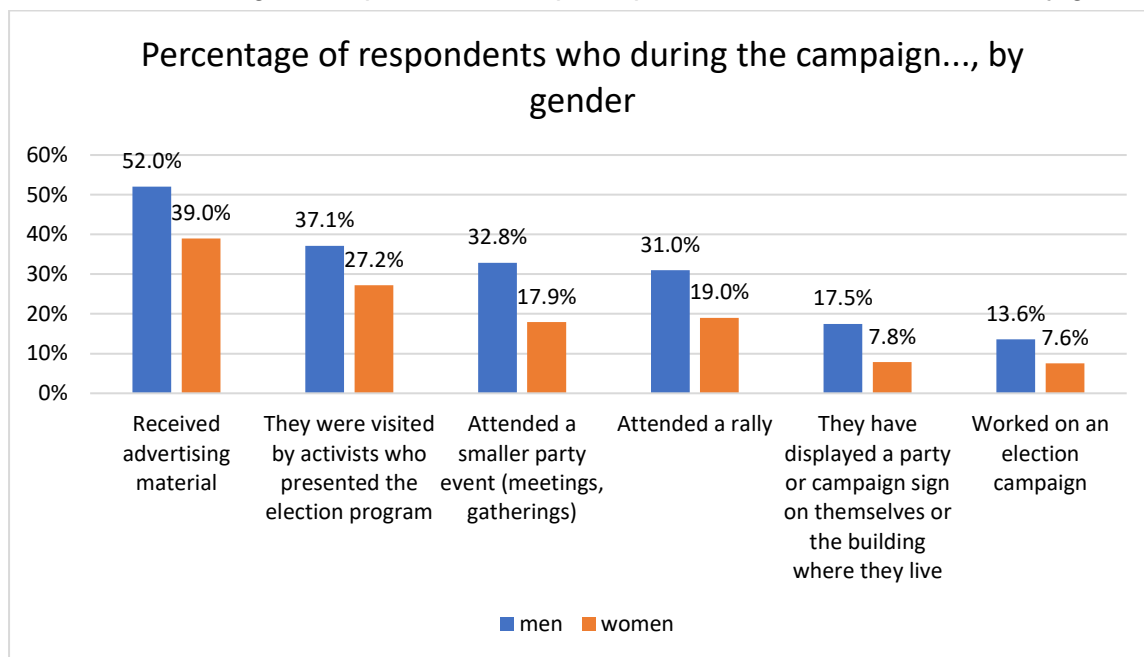
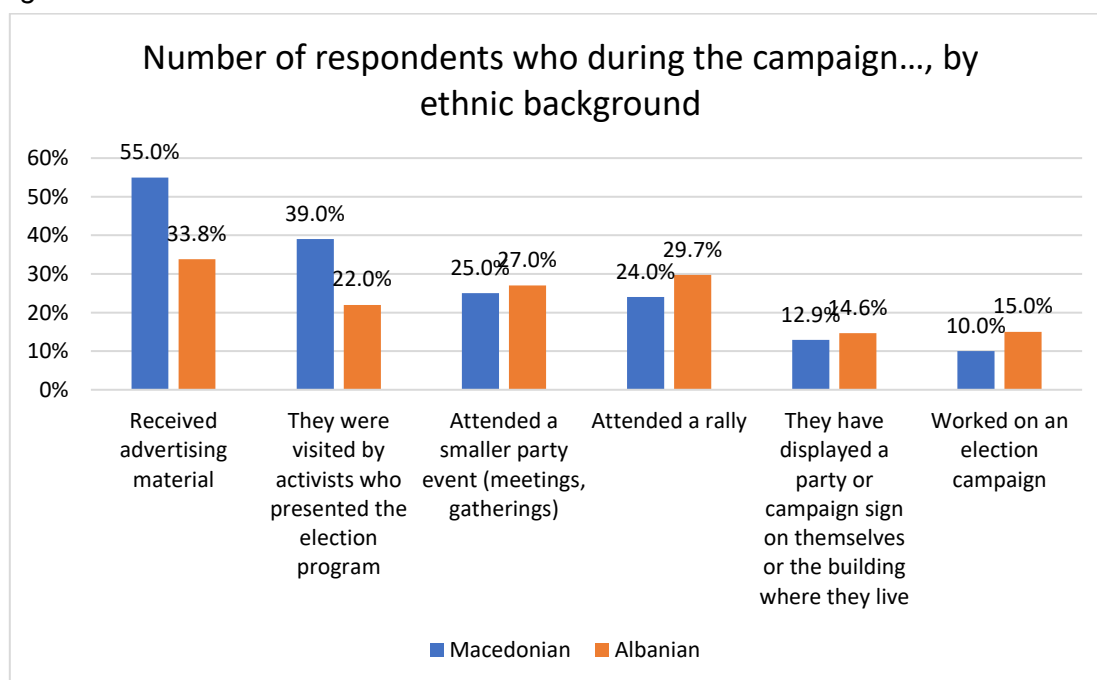


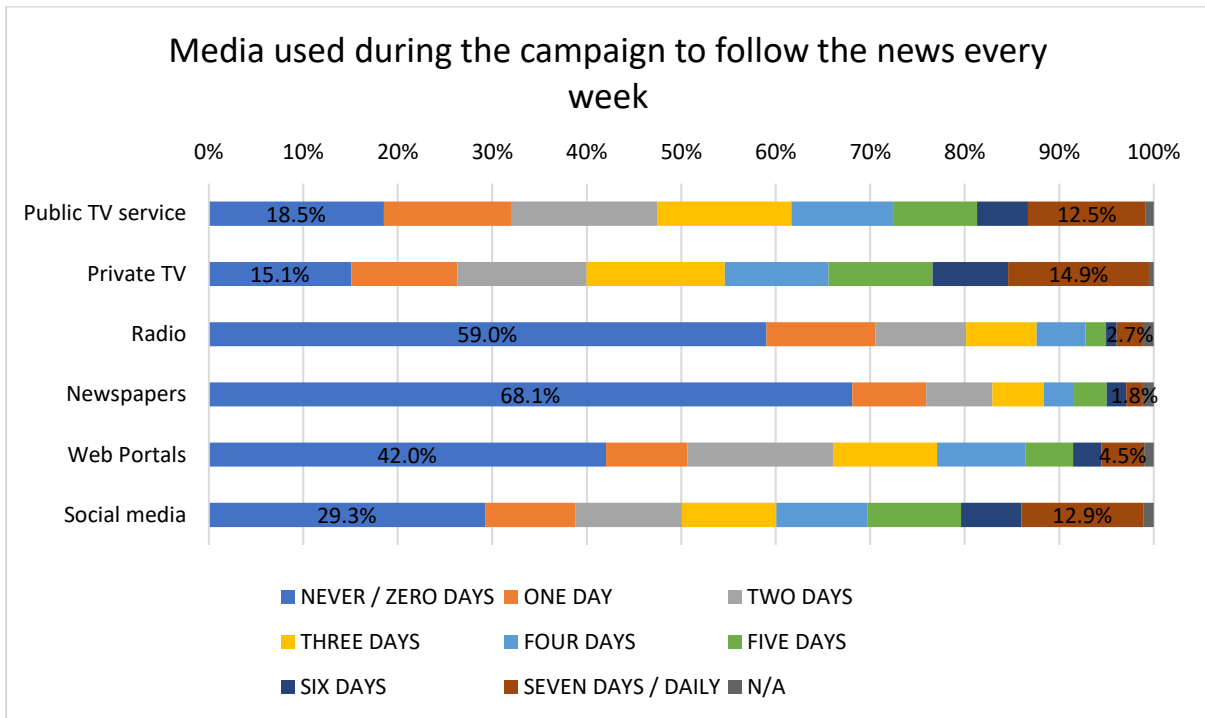
Chart 33. Percentage of respondents who participated in mobilization activities by ethnic background*



Sources of information during the campaign

Citizens used different sources of information during the election campaign (Chart 38). The most commonly used sources are TV channels (private TV stations and public service), followed by social media (such as Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok) and web portals specializing in news. Radio and print media are comparatively much less frequently used.

Chart 34. Media used during the campaign to follow news every week



All age groups do not share this general picture. While the oldest age group (65+) overwhelmingly watches television on a daily basis, almost half of the youngest group (18-25) does not watch news at all either on private television or public service (Charts 39 and 40). On the other hand, the oldest group mostly did not use web portals to follow news and social networks during the campaign. The youngest group stands out in terms of non-information from the rest: significant groups of respondents aged 18-25 said that they “never” followed the news on the offered sources during the campaign.

Chart 35. Percentage of respondents who followed news daily throughout the campaign, by age group and media

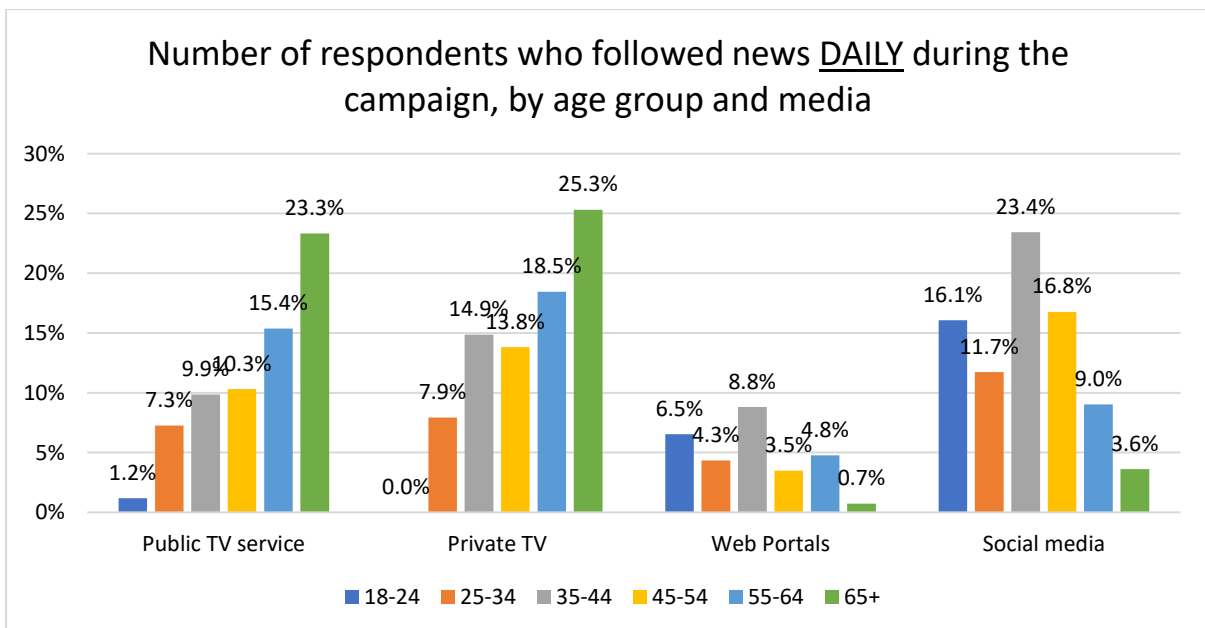
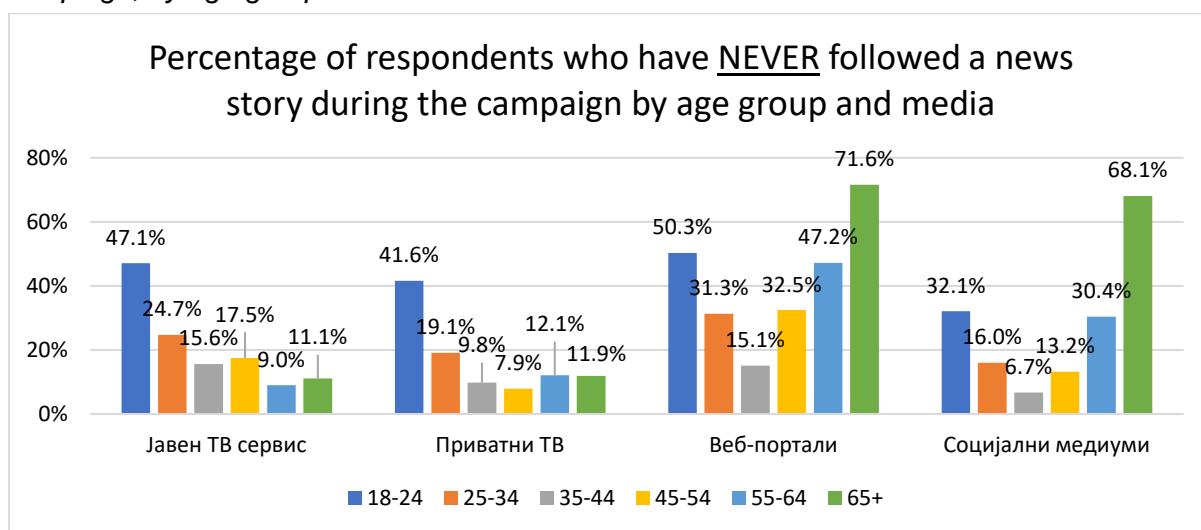


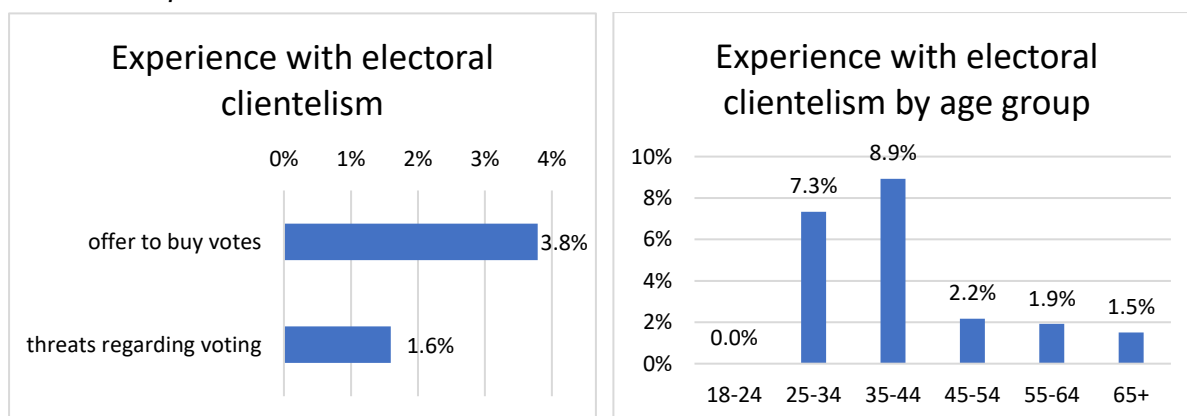
Chart 40. Percentage of respondents who have never followed a news story during the campaign, by age group and media



Electoral clientelism

Less than 4% of respondents reported that in the period before the elections, they received an offer from a party or candidate to sell their vote (Chart 40). The rate is higher in the group composed of different ethnicities other than Macedonian and Albanian (9% compared to 3% among Macedonians and Albanians). The rate is also higher in the age groups 25-34 (7%) and 35-44 (9%) compared to the others (0%-2%). Offers were mostly made up of promises of employment (almost a third of those who received an offer) and promises of services in performing activities with institutions (almost 19%). They were less often made up of money (11%) and other types of material gifts of less value, such as food products, clothing, household appliances, etc. (10%). Less than 2% of respondents reported being threatened about how to vote in the period leading up to the elections.

Chart 36. Experience with electoral clientelism*



Connections between parties and citizens

Closeness to political parties

Nearly a third of citizens feel very close to a particular political party, and an additional 10% are slightly closer to one party than another (Chart 42). Of this number of respondents who reported feeling some closeness, the largest percent feels close to VMRO-DPMNE (40%), followed by SDSM (19%), DUI (13%), Levica (7%), Taravari's Alliance for Albanians (4%) and ZNAM (4%) (Chart 43).

Chart 37. Perception of own closeness to a particular political party

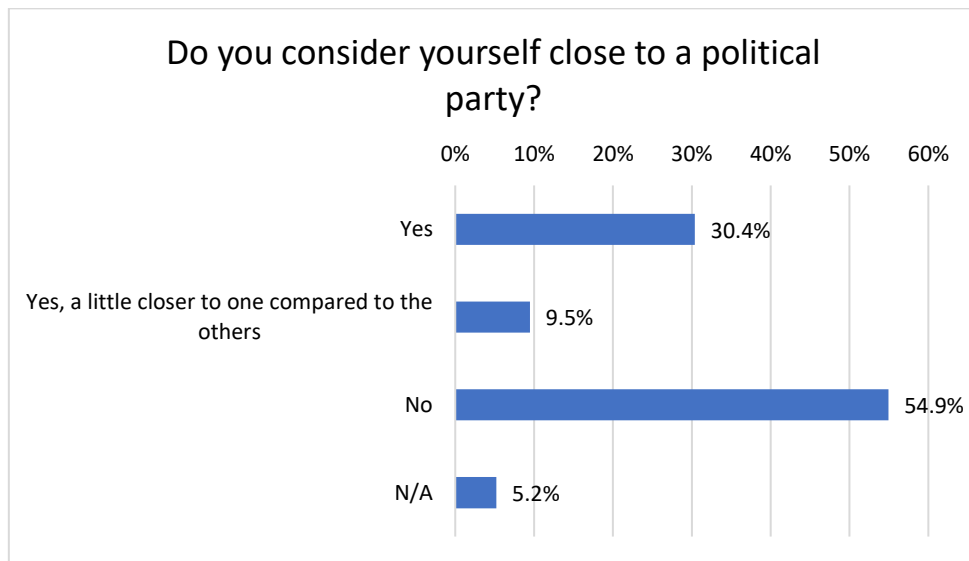
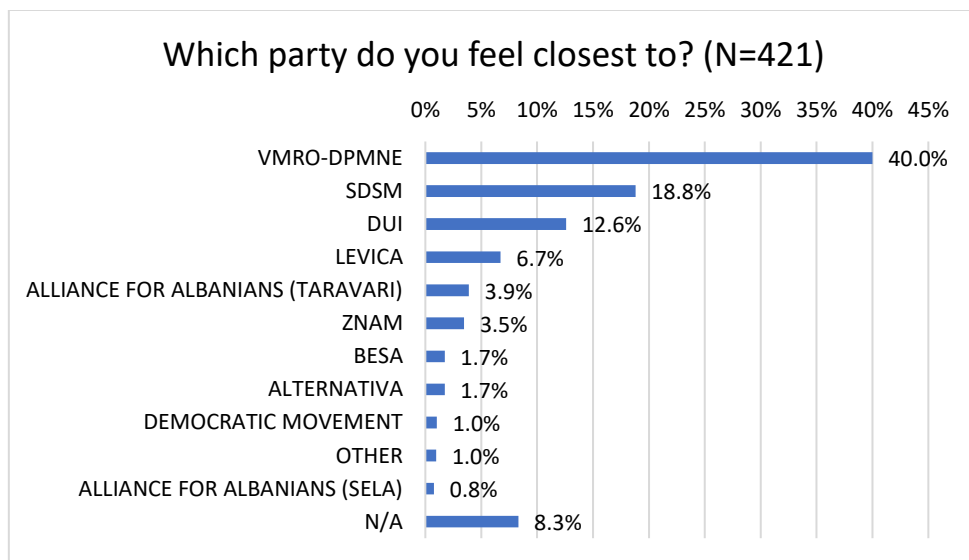
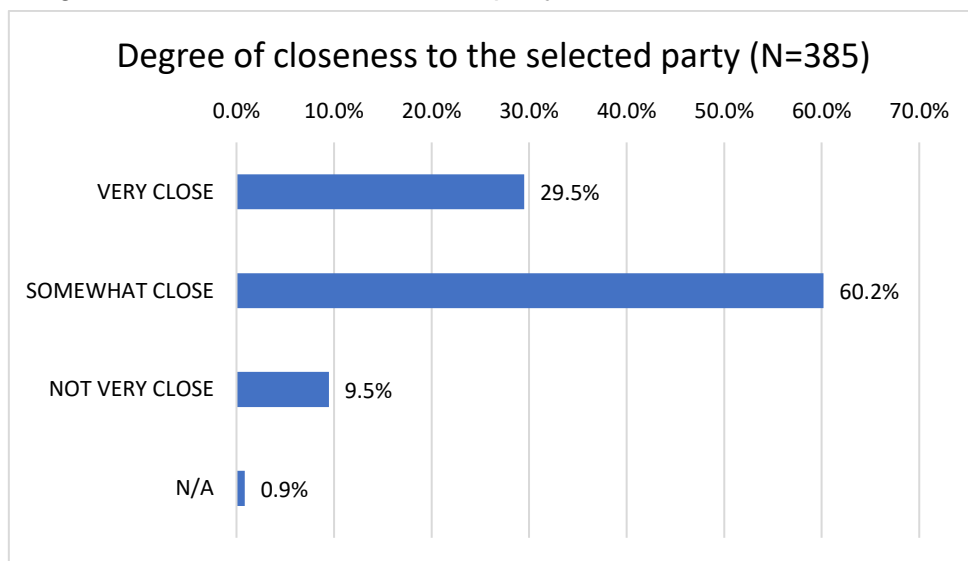


Chart 38. Which party do you feel closest to?



Of those who have opted for any of the listed parties, less than a third (30%) characterize their closeness to the selected party as "very close," while a majority (60%) describe it as "somewhat close" (Chart 44). Men significantly more often than women reported great closeness to the selected party (37% vs. 19%), as well as Macedonians compared to Albanians (32% vs. 26%).

Chart 39. Degree of closeness to the selected party



Party membership

Every seventh citizen (13%) of North Macedonia is formally a political party member. The degree of membership, however, differs by region, gender, age, and ethnic background. Regionally, the membership rate is highest in Skopje (17%), Polog (16%), and the Southeast region (15%), while lowest in the Eastern region (6%) (Chart 45). Men are more often members than women (17% vs. 8%), and the same applies to the middle age groups, 25-34 (16%), 35-44 (19%), and 45-54 (21%) compared to the youngest group 18-24 (7%) and the oldest, 55-64 (8%) and 65+ (7%) (Chart 46). Macedonians and Albanians (14% and 16% respectively) are more often members of parties compared to the group composed of other ethnicities (4%).

Chart 40. Party membership by region*

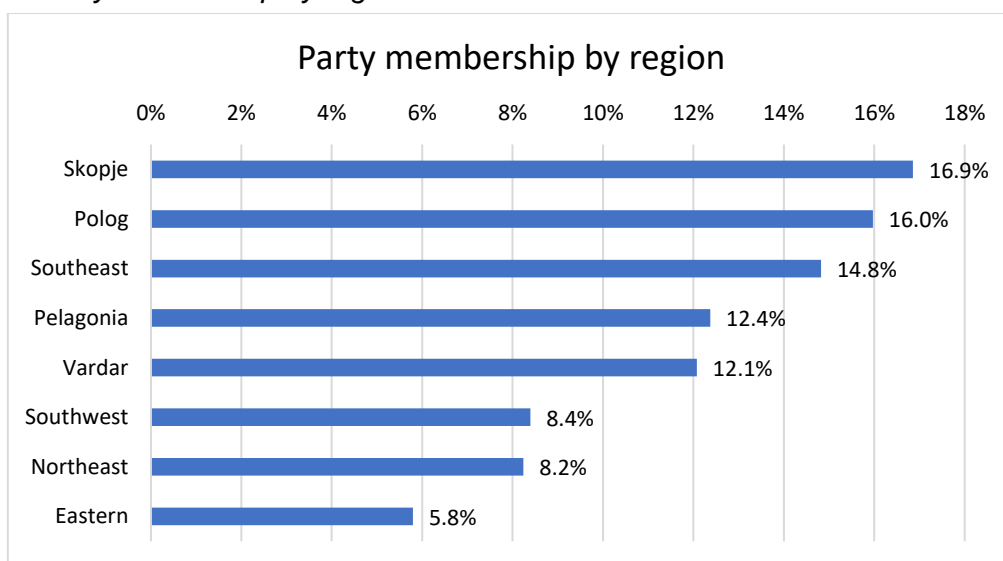
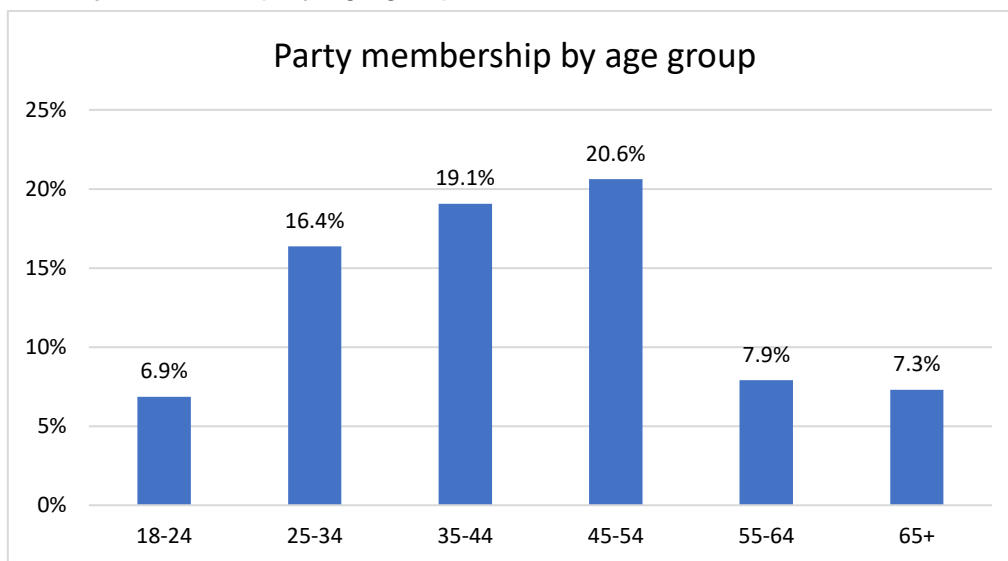
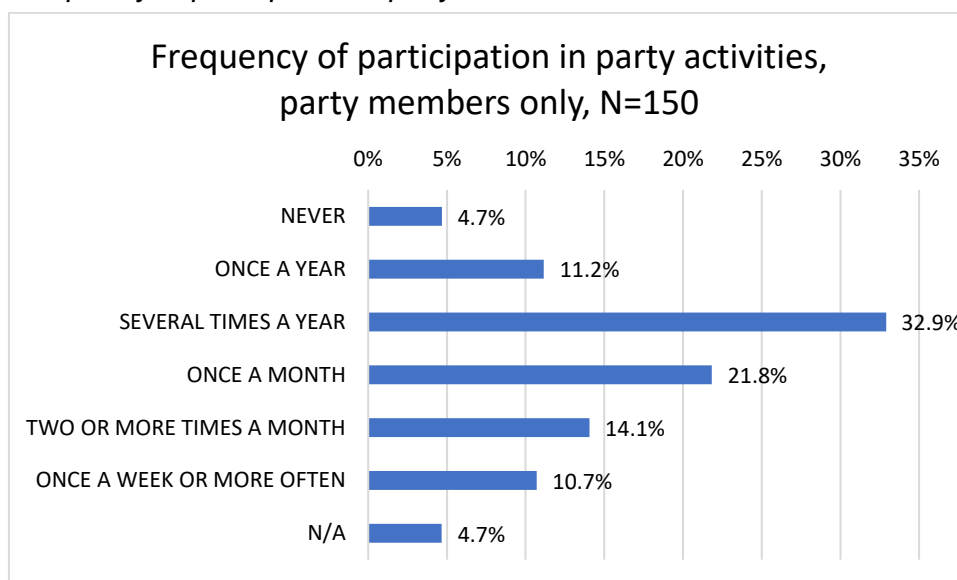


Chart 41. Party membership by age group*



Party membership requires a significant level of activity by members (Chart 47): nearly half of those who declared themselves to be members (47%) reported that they participate in party activities at least once a month or more frequently, and a third (33%) reported that such activities occur several times a year. Only one in ten members (11%) engages in party activities once a year, while a small minority of less than 5% never participates. Most members of political parties, therefore, have significant party engagements over the course of a year, a finding that points to significant socialization of citizens through party infrastructures.

Chart 42. Frequency of participation in party activities*



Affects towards political parties and leaders

Although citizens in large numbers report closeness to party organizations and comparatively high party membership, negative affection towards political parties/coalitions (Chart 48) and key political leaders (Chart 49) prevail in the country. More than a quarter of the population expresses general dislike for VMRO-DPMNE and its leader Hristijan Mickoski,

while small minorities report a full positive affect. Overall, this low level of affection is still highest among all parties and leaders included in the survey. Among the parties, the percentage of total dislike ranges from almost 34% among ZNAM to as much as 61% among DUI, while among the party leaders from 29% for Maksim Dimitrievski to nearly 62% in the case of Ali Ahmeti. Among the two most popular presidential candidates - Gordana Siljanovska Davkova stands better than Stevo Pendarovski: 8% reported that they "like very much" Siljanovska-Davkova compared to 3% for Pendarovski, as well as 24% saying that they "do not like at all" Siljanovska-Davkova compared to 34% for Pendarovski. Citizens who look completely positively at any of the political entities or leaders are counted in a single-digit percentage.

The ethnic background of the citizens largely determines the degree of liking for parties and leaders. Albanians view VMRO-DPMNE significantly more negatively (42% reported that they "do not like it at all") compared to Macedonians (22%). Macedonians, on the other hand, see VMRO-DPMNE expressly more positively compared to Albanians - 13% Macedonians like VMRO-DPMNE "very much" compared to 1% of Albanians. In SDSM, the picture is partly the opposite: 43% of Macedonians do not like this party "at all" compared to 25% of Albanians who hold the same view for SDSM. On the other hand, ZNAM and Levica are perceived more negatively by the Albanians than by the Macedonians. DUI and Coalition "Vlen" have a more negative image among the Macedonians than among the Albanians. The picture in terms of political leaders coming from the same political entities is almost identical and replicates/follows the ethnic cleavage.

Chart 43. Affects towards political parties and coalitions

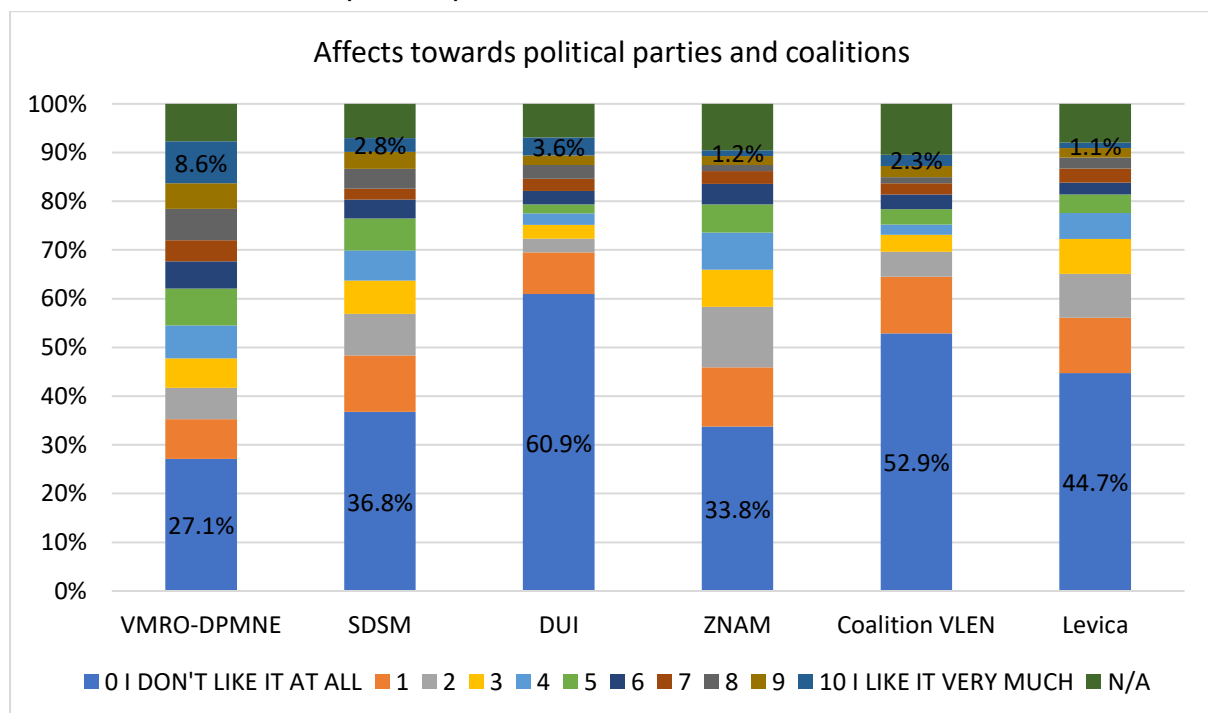
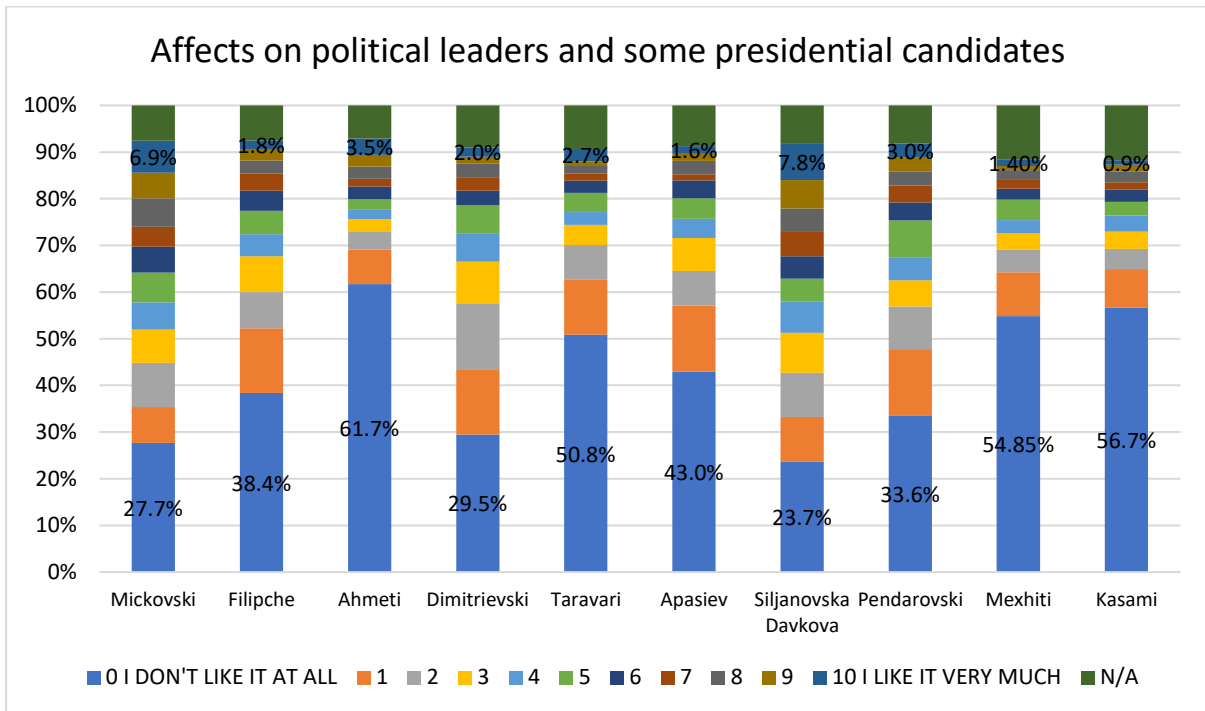


Chart 44. Affects towards political leaders and some presidential candidates



Perceptions of the values represented by parties

Respondents were asked to select up to three of the most significant values for the party they voted for in the 2024 parliamentary elections. Fairness (equity in justice??), European orientation, and honest work are the three most commonly chosen values. Nearly a third of the citizens chose one of these values as their first, second, or third choice of value from the offered list of fifteen values (Chart 50).

In the next step, we determine whether there are differences among party supporters regarding their perception of the values represented by those same parties (Table 2). Thus, for the supporters of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition, the most essential values characteristic of this party are love for the homeland, honest work, and fairness. Honest work and fairness are values that voters attribute to Levica, “Vlen”, and ZNAM, for which additionally the following values are important: the European orientation for “Vlen”, the orientation towards other countries such as Russia and China for the voters of Levica, and individualism/individual freedom for the voters of ZNAM. European orientation is the value according to which DUI voters perceive this party; fairness and love for the ethnic group that the party represents are also essential. SDSM is viewed differently by its voters and shares the fewest common values with voters from other parties, as social security and individualism/individual freedom are not among the top three priorities for supporters of other parties or coalitions. The exception is individualism, which is the rank high among ZNAM voters.

Chart 50. The most important values for the party voted for in the 2024 parliamentary elections*

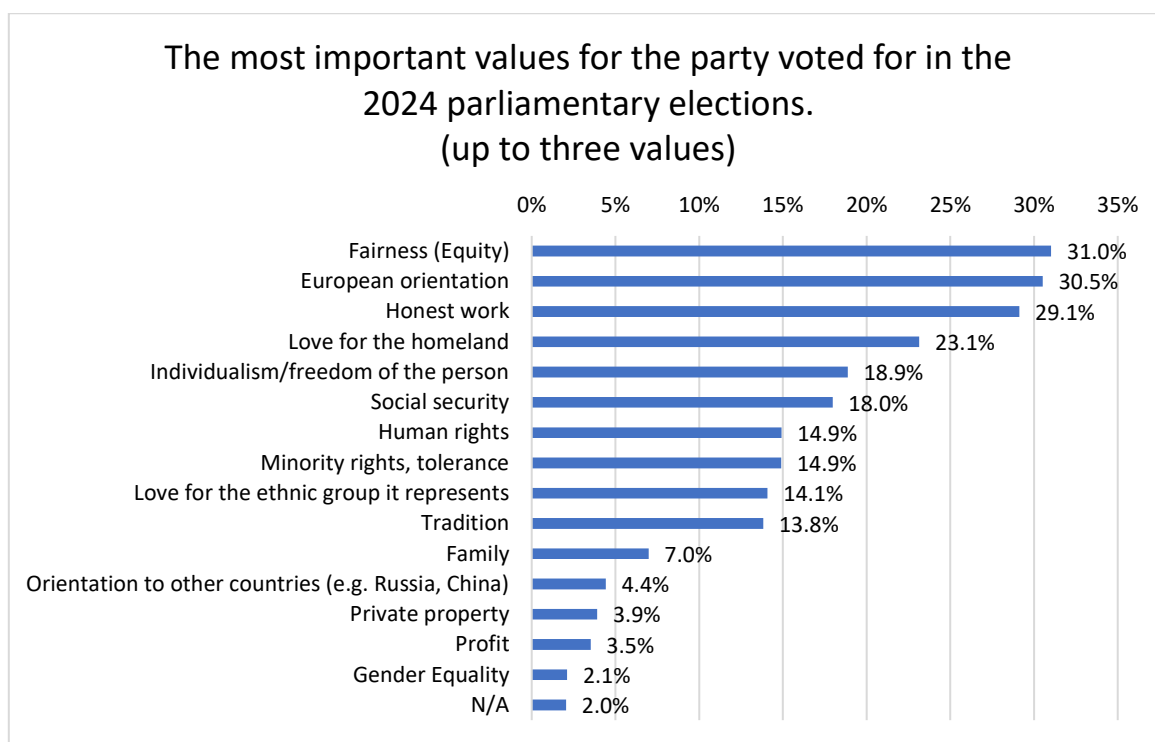


Table 2. Most significant values of parties/coalitions (voter attitudes)

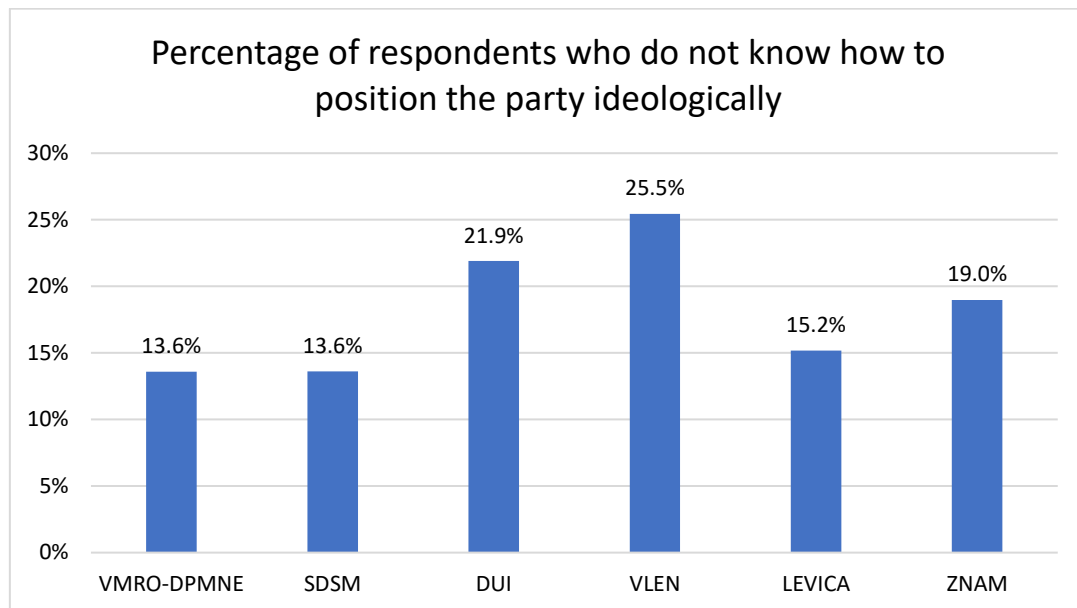
SDSM and coalition	VMRO-DPMNE and coalition	European Front - DUI	Coalition Vlen	Levica	ZNAM
European orientation (68.5%)	Love for the homeland (57.7%)	European orientation (79.9%)	European orientation (51.1%)	Fairness (43.2%)	Fairness (49%)
Social security (40.1%)	Honest work (45.2%)	Fairness (30.4%)	Fairness (48.2%)	Honest work (40.3%)	Individualism/freedom of the person (46.2%)
Individualism/freedom of the person (32.9%)	Fairness (38.1%)	Love for the ethnic group it represents (27.9%)	Honest work (43.5%)	Orientation towards other countries (Russia, China) (33.5%)	Honest work (42.9%)

Perceptions of the ideological profile of parties

Using the standard left-right scale, where 0 means “left” and 10 means “right,” respondents were asked to position the parties on the ideological axis (Chart 51). Some respondents did not know how to position a significant part of the parties, with that percentage being higher in the case of Albanian political parties and new political entities. Thus, currently respondents have the most significant difficulty ideologically positioning the new coalition of Albanian parties – “Vlen”: 25% of respondents gave such a response. After “Vlen”, the most difficult to position is DUI (22%), which, although an established political party, does not seem to stand out with a stable ideological profile in the eyes of voters. The new political party on the political scene, ZNAM, is ideologically unrecognizable for 19% of the respondents. Of the

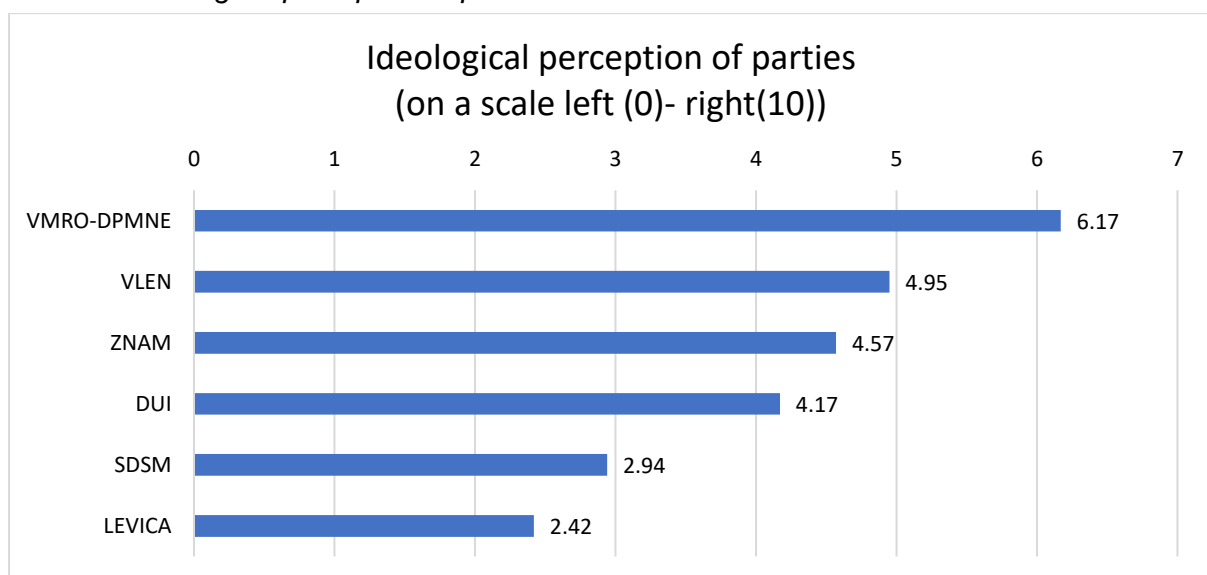
other parties, Levica could not be positioned by 15% of the respondents, while the percentage of respondents in SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE is the same (14%).

Chart 45. Percentage of respondents who do not know how to ideologically position the party



From the respondents who answered this question, we obtained an ideological profile of the parties according to the respondents' perceptions (Chart 52). Thus, the respondents position VMRO-DPMNE (M=6.17; N=757) on the ideological left-right axis most to the right, while Levica (M=2.42; N=772) is positioned most to the left. SDSM leans significantly towards the left pole (M=2.94; N=778), while DUI leans moderately to the left pole (M=4.17; N=679). ZNAM gravitates around the center with a slight inclination to the left (M=4.57; N=715), while "Vlen" is almost ideal in the center (M=4.95; N=633).

Chart 46. Ideological perception of parties



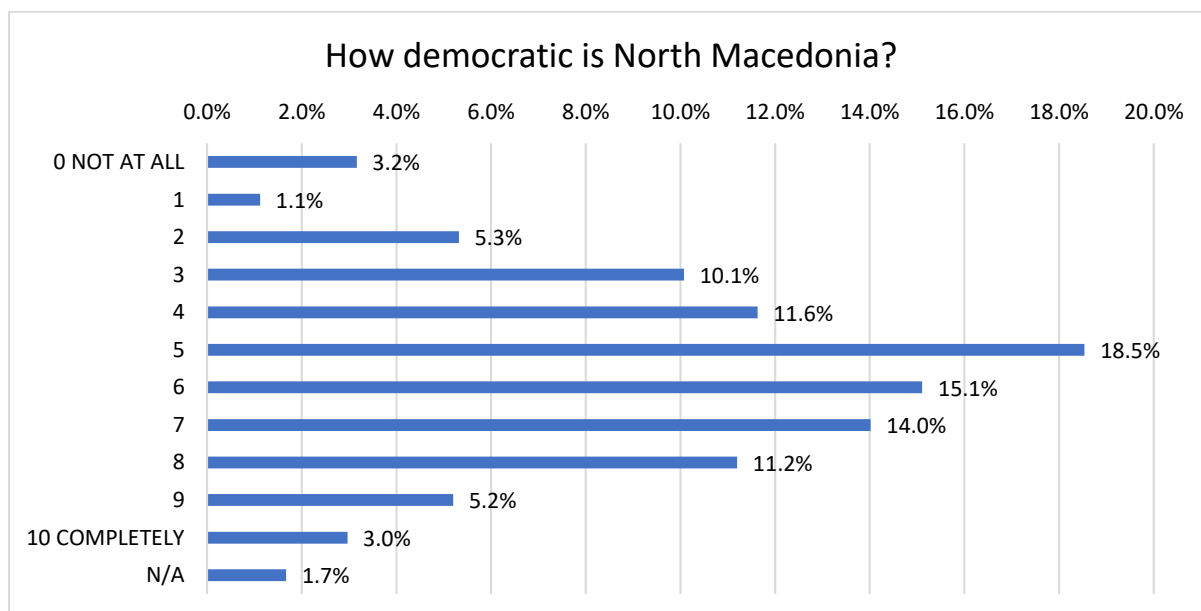
(Dis)satisfaction with democracy and political institutions

Perceptions on the functioning of democracy

As noted in other similar surveys, citizens of North Macedonia are strongly critical of the functioning of the political system, generally poorly evaluate the democratic development of the country, and express low trust in institutions.

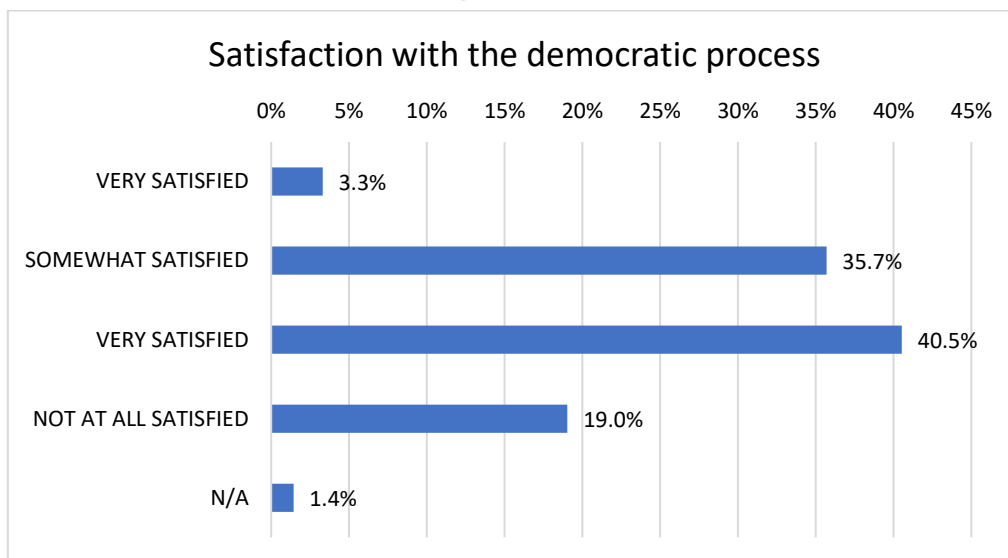
Citizens are divided regarding how democratic North Macedonia is (Chart 53). On a scale from 0 ("not democratic at all") to 10 ("fully democratic"), largest number of respondents (19%) responded with the medium score on the scale - 5. Almost half (49%) responded with grades from 6 to 10, and nearly a third (31%) with grades from 0 to 4. For very small percentages (about 3%), North Macedonia is entirely or not entirely democratic (the extreme degrees on the scale). As expressed in the average value, the citizens think North Macedonia is democratic at a level of 5.8 on the 0-10 scale.

Chart 47. How democratic is North Macedonia?



Additionally, a majority of citizens express dissatisfaction with the democratic process - 40% are not very satisfied, and an additional 19% are not satisfied at all (Chart 54). A smaller but still significant number expressed some satisfaction - over a third were "somewhat satisfied" (36%), and an additional 3% were "very satisfied."

Chart 48. Satisfaction with the democratic process



Perceptions on the effectiveness of the democratic order

Dissatisfaction with the functioning of the system is also reflected in other survey items.

A large majority of citizens believe that the system does not provide adequate health care for all citizens (Chart 55): 43% believe that the system does it "not very good," and an additional 36% believe that the provision of health care is not implemented "good at all." The negative assessment of the health system is highest in the Eastern region (63%) (Chart 56). It is higher among those living in the urban areas than those living in the rural areas (38% vs. 31%), and substantially higher among Macedonians (42%) than among Albanians (15%) (Chart 57).

Chart 49. How good does the political system guarantee health care?

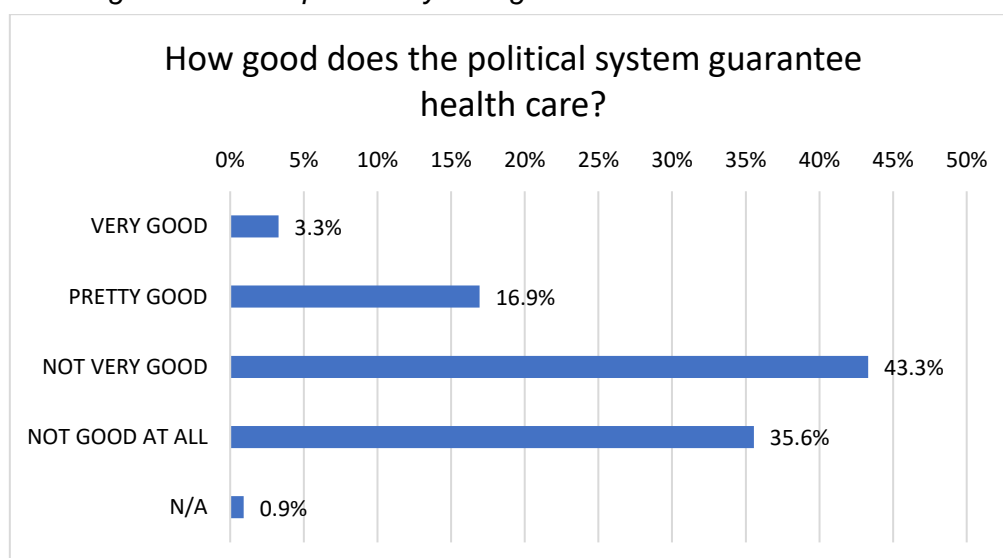


Chart 50. How good does the political system guarantee health care? (by region)

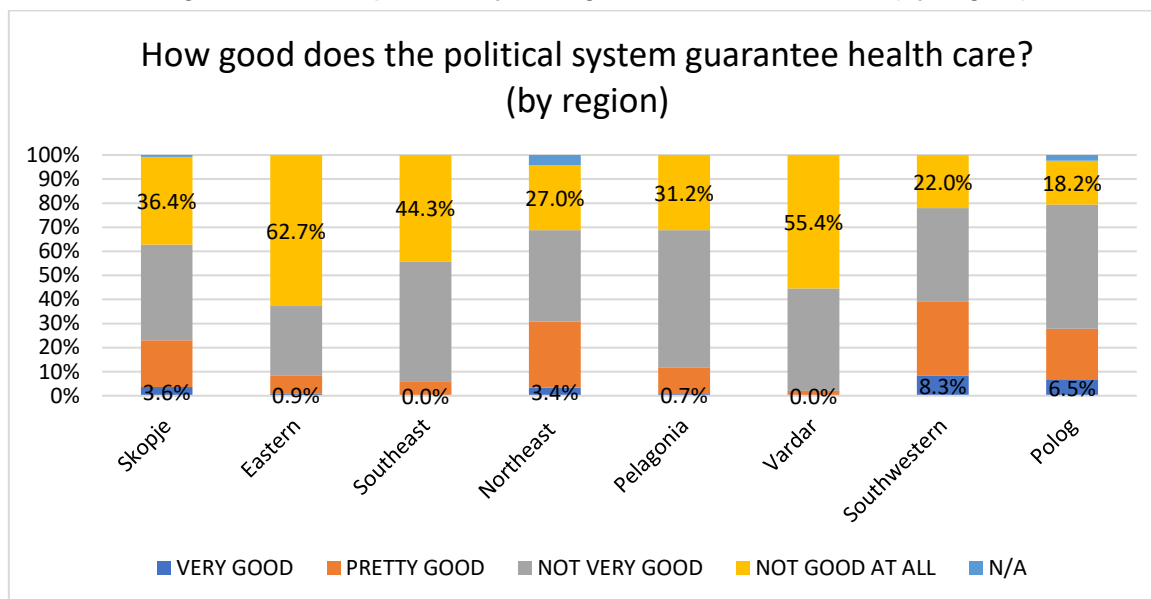
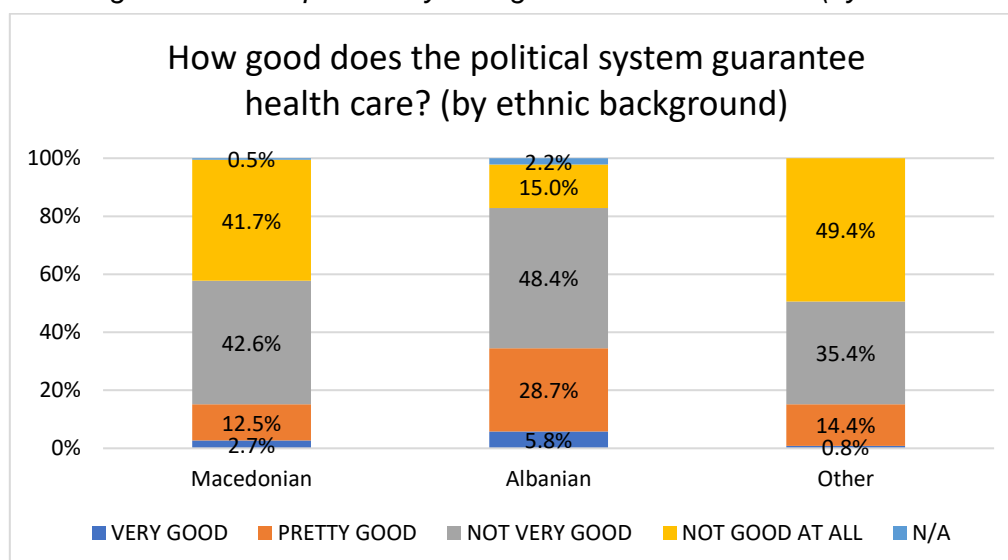


Chart 51. How good does the political system guarantee health care? (by ethnic background)



A majority of citizens also believe that different groups are generally treated unfairly in the country (Chart 58): almost 40% believe that the treatment "is not very fair," and an additional 16% believe that it is "very unfair." A third perceives some fairness and only less than 6% great fairness. The percentage of citizens of the Skopje region remains high in the view that the level is "very fair" - 12% versus 0%-7% in other regions, as well as the Macedonians in relation to the Albanians (9% versus 1%). On the other hand, citizens in the Southwest (36%) and Southeast regions (28%), to a greater extent than the rest of the regions, perceive a significant unfairness, especially compared to the East (3%), the Northeast (9%) and the Vardar region (9%). Albanians (19%) and the group composed of other ethnicities (29%) in a higher frequency than Macedonians (13%) perceive a significant unfairness (Chart 59).

Chart 52. How fairly are different social groups treated?

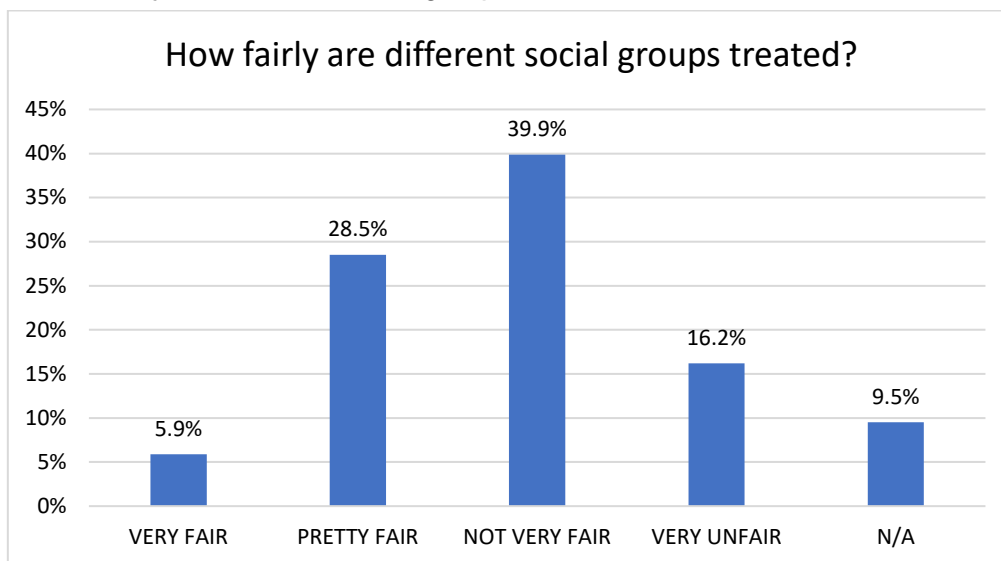
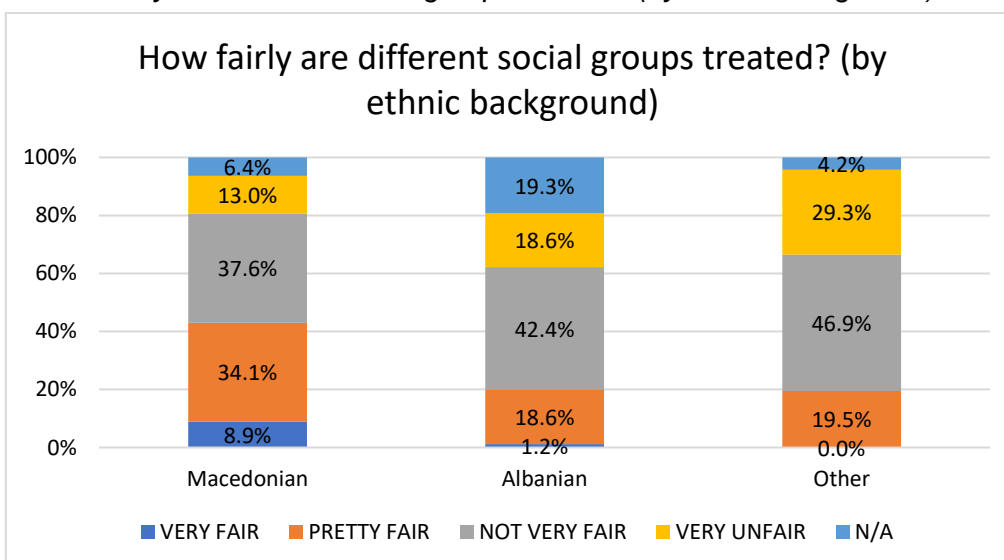


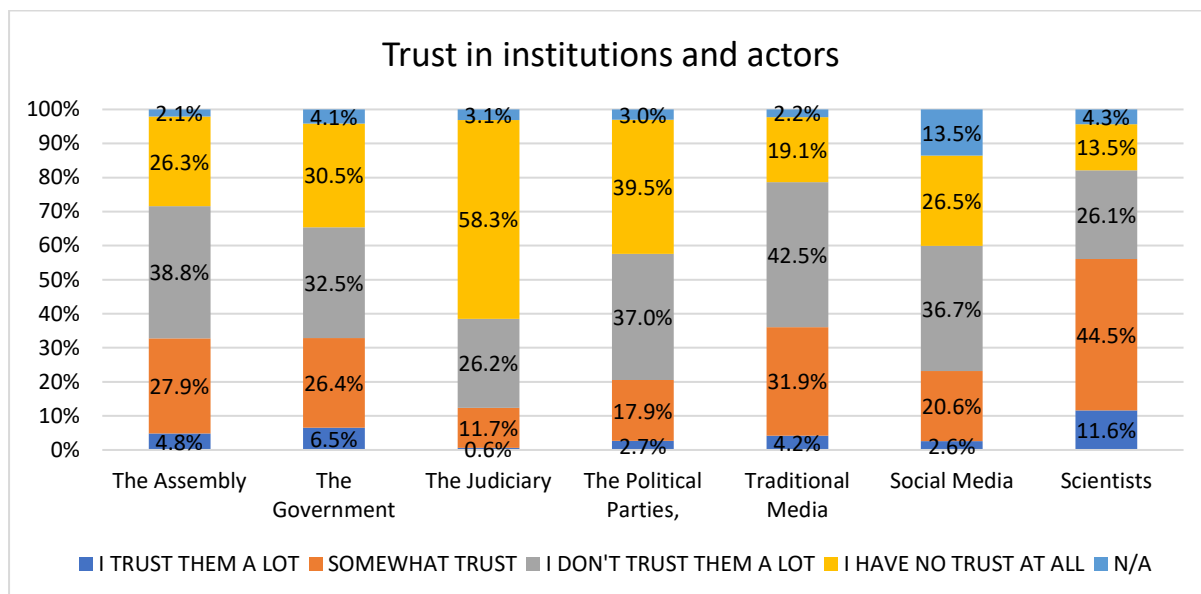
Chart 53. How fairly are different social groups treated? (by ethnic background)



Trust in institutions and key social actors

Finally, dissatisfaction with the system's functioning is also reflected in the low trust in institutions and significant social actors (Chart 60), which other similar surveys have repeatedly found. Distrust is highest towards the judiciary (85%) and political parties (76%), followed by the Parliament (65%), the Government (63%), social media (63%) and traditional media (62%). Scientists are the only group surveyed in which citizens show more trust than distrust, with the majority expressing confidence in them.

Chart 60. Trust in institutions and actors

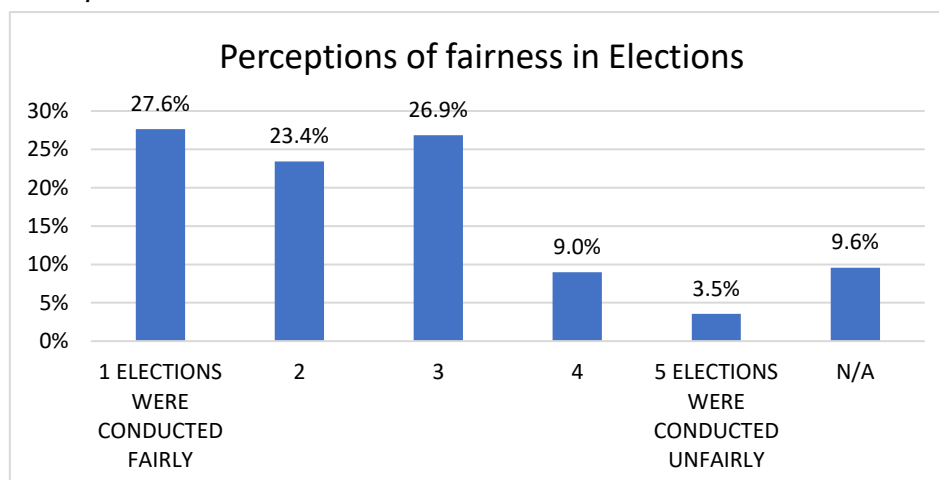


Overall, men tend to distrust the Parliament (30% vs. 23%) and the judiciary (63% vs. 54%) more than women, but they exhibit slightly higher trust in the Government (8% vs. 5%). Macedonians, more than Albanians and the respondents from other ethnic groups have high trust in the Government (9% vs. 2% and 1%, respectively). In comparison, the respondents from the other ethnic groups have a significantly higher rate of complete distrust of the Government (53%) than Macedonians (28%) and Albanians (27%). Macedonians, meanwhile, have a significantly higher distrust in the judiciary (63%) compared to Albanians (44%), as well as a significantly higher distrust of political parties (41% vs. 32%).

Perceptions on the electoral process

Citizens perceive the electoral process more favorably than the institutions and key actors within the system. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "Elections were conducted fairly" and 5 means "Elections were conducted unfairly", a majority (51%) responded with grades "1" and "2", more than a quarter with grades "3" and 12.5% with grades "4" and "5" (Chart 61).

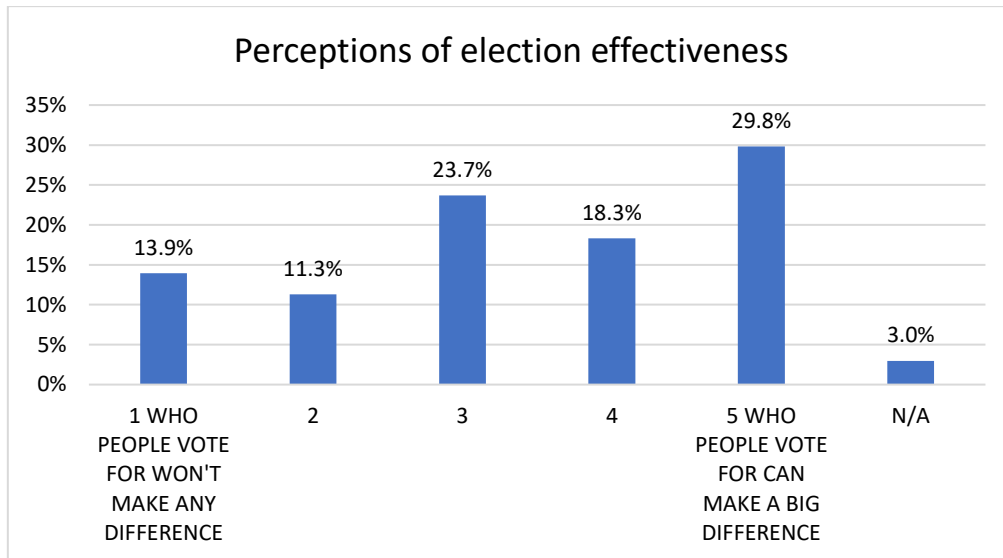
Chart 54. Perceptions of fairness in Elections



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "For whom people vote will not make any difference," and 5 means "For whom people vote can make a big difference," nearly half

responded with the grades "4" and "5", and almost a quarter with the grade "3" (Chart 62). On the other hand, almost a quarter responded with "1" and "2" grades. Macedonians, to a greater extent (34%), believe that voting can make a big difference, compared to Albanians (25%) and the group composed of other ethnicities (17%).

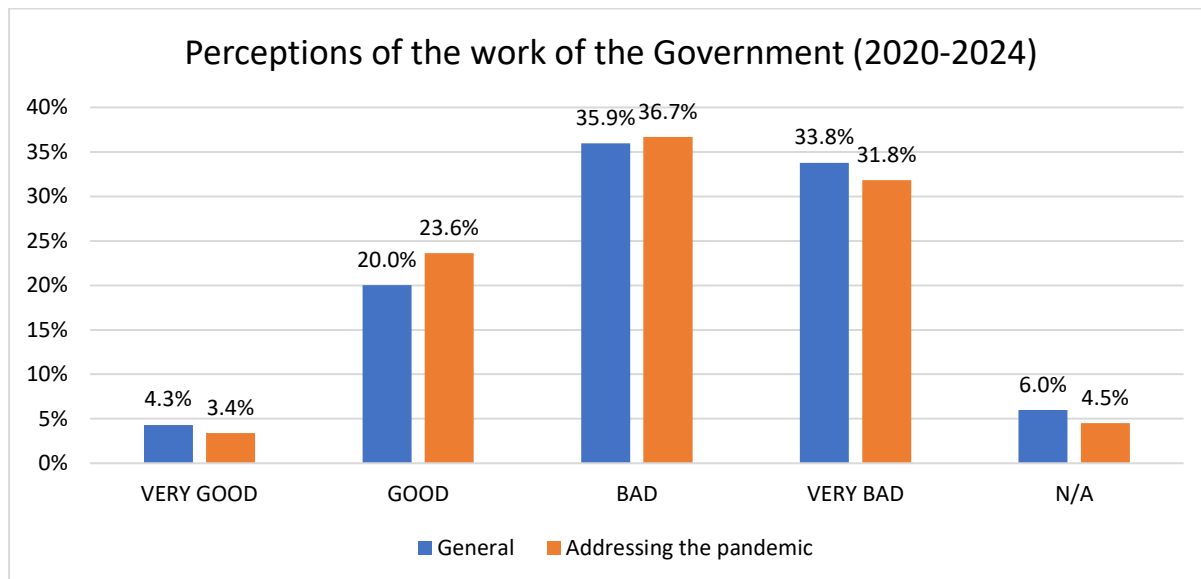
Chart 55. Perceptions of Election Effectiveness



(Dis)satisfaction with the government's performance (2020-2024) and the current issues in the eyes of the elections

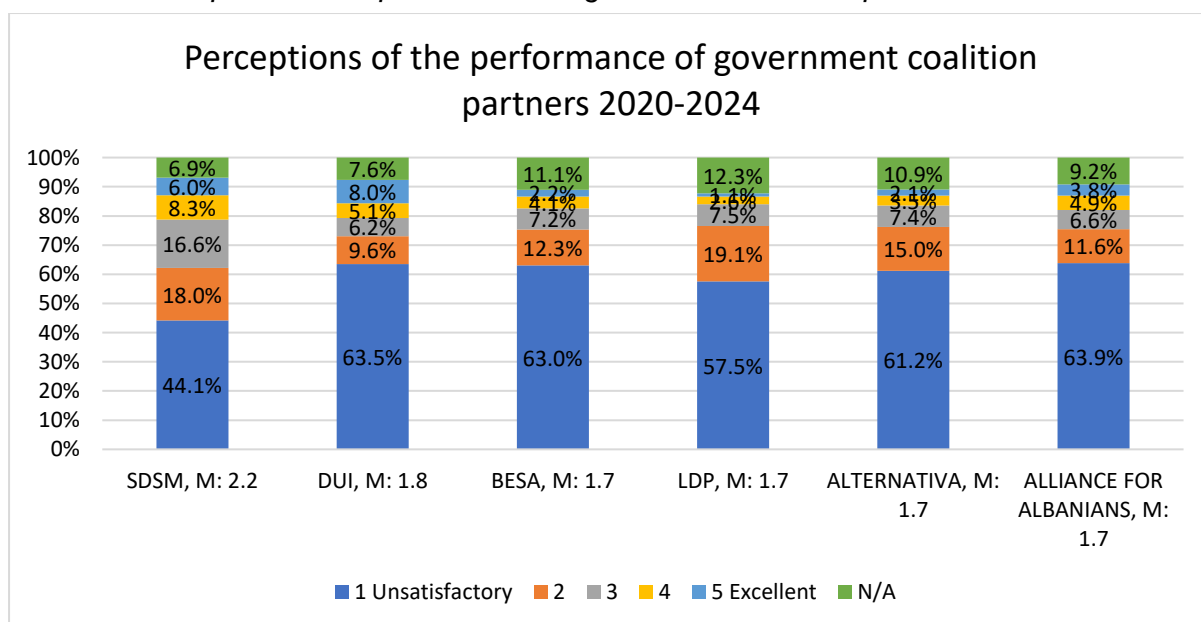
For the majority of citizens, the work of the government coalition that was in power before the elections (2020-2024) was bad, with 34% saying it was "very bad" and 36% "bad" (only a quarter of respondents said that the work was "good") (Chart 63). Respondents from the Southwest region rated the previous government's work as "very good" (14%) to a biggest extent. The same was true for those living in rural areas (7%) compared to those living in urban areas (3%), as well as among Albanians (9%) compared to Macedonians (3%) and others (1%). On the other hand, Macedonians (39%) and others (32%) more often than Albanians (23%) assessed the government's work as "very bad". The latter is also true for the age group 65+ (43%), as well as for men (37%) compared to women (30%). Similar results were obtained in terms of assessments of the government's work in dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, with similar differences deriving from the region and place of residence, age and ethnic background.

Chart 56. Perceptions of the work of the Government (2020-2024)



Respondents were asked to evaluate the performance of each political party that was part of the Government during 2020-2024 (Chart 64). For the majority, the work of DUI (64%), Besa (63%), Alliance for Albanians (64%), Alternative (61%), and LDP (57%) was assessed as "unsatisfactory" in their capacity as entities that form the Government. Only for the main holder of the government coalition – SDSM –, this dissatisfaction is significantly lower - 44% rated the work of the former ruling party as "unsatisfactory." Dissatisfaction with government entities is, as a rule, significantly higher among Macedonians than among Albanians, as well as in the age group 65+ compared to others (this dynamic applies to all parties surveyed). For example, a majority of Macedonians are completely dissatisfied with the work of SDSM (52%) in the Government, compared to a minority of Albanians (24%), as well as a majority of the age group 65+ (54%) compared to minorities from other groups (40%-43%). Regarding DUI, these differences are also more substantial: 82% of Macedonians versus 21% of Albanians are completely dissatisfied, as well as 78% of the 65+ group compared to 53% -68% of other age groups.

Chart 57. Perceptions of the performance of government coalition partners 2020-2024*



Perceptions of the state of the economy are generally negative (Chart 65). For almost half of the citizens, the situation with the economy has aggravated in the last year (by 29% "somewhat" and by 15% "a lot"), while for a slightly smaller portion (41%), it remains the same. For only a small minority of respondents- 14%, the economic situation has improved. Perceptions of "very" aggravated condition are highest in the Skopje (25%) and Polog regions (26%), as well as among the age group 18-24 (23%) (Chart 66).

Chart 58. Perceptions of the economic situation in the past 12 months

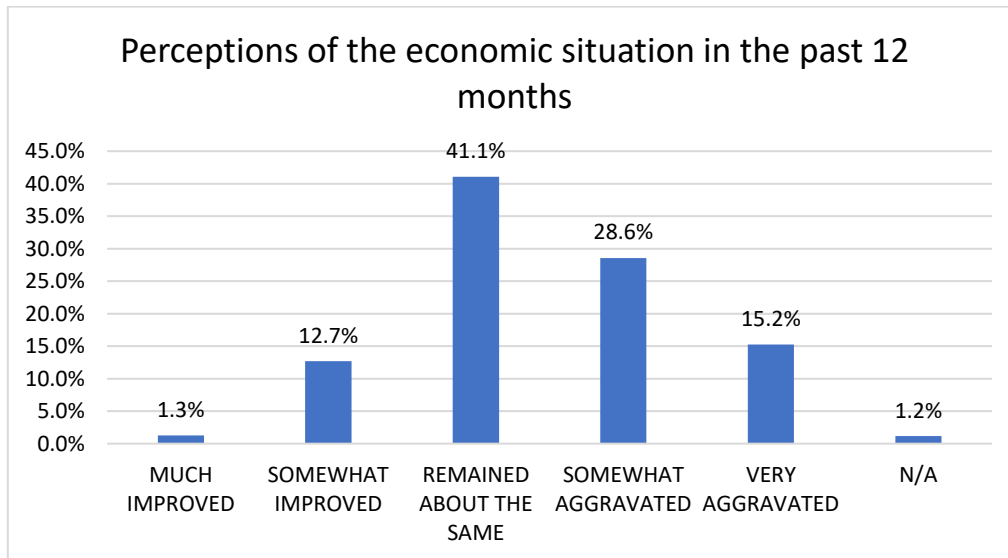
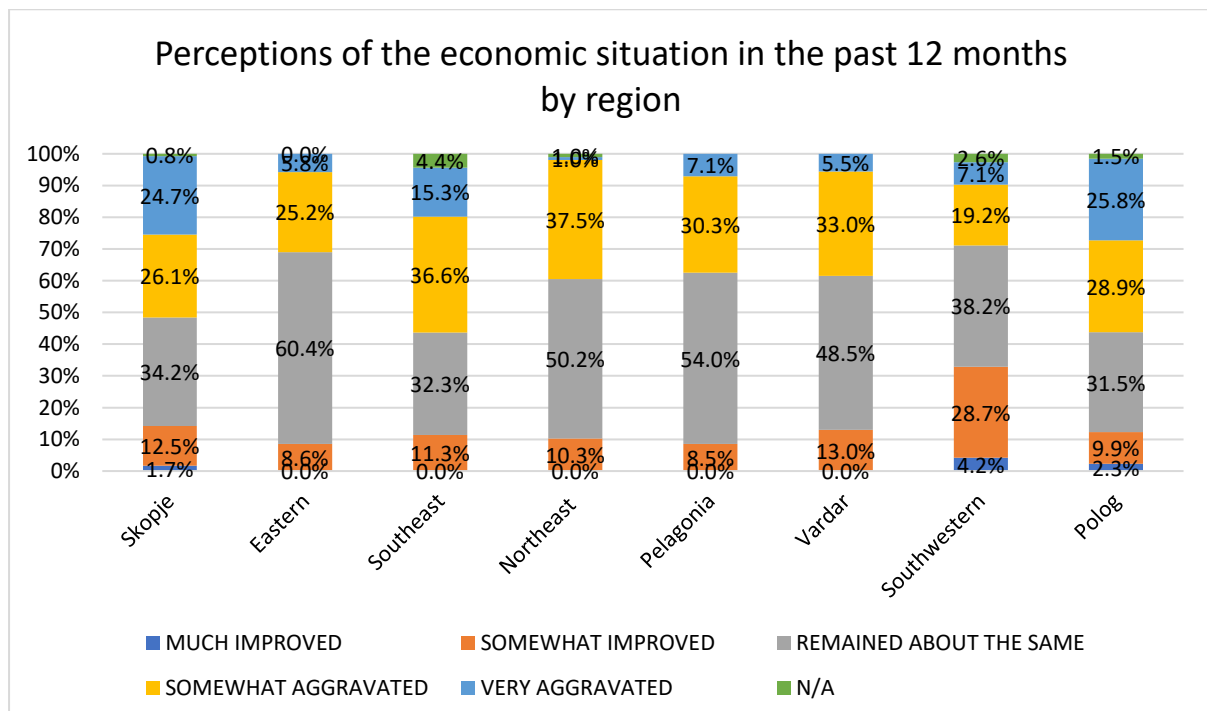


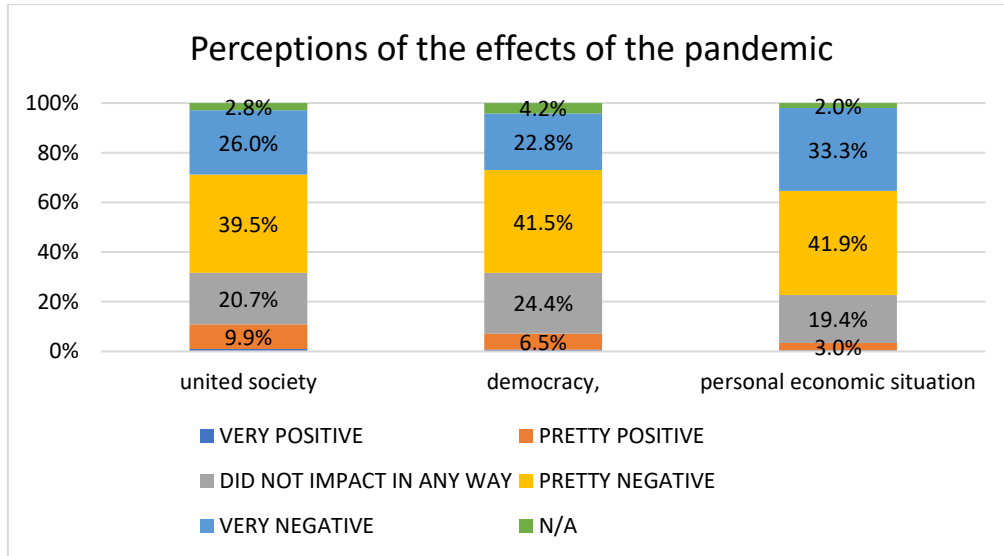
Chart 59. Perceptions of the economic situation in the past 12 months by region



Citizens also predominantly perceive strong negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chart 67). For the majority, the pandemic negatively affected social cohesion (66%) and the functioning of democracy (64%), as well as the personal economic situation (75%). The negative effects of the pandemic on social cohesion and democracy are most strongly perceived by citizens living in the Skopje, Southeast, and Pelagonija regions, as well as among

the age group 18-24. Regarding the personal economic situation, the effects of the pandemic are most often perceived as very negative by age groups 18-24 (42%) and 55-64 (42%), as well as among members of other ethnic communities (56%) compared to Macedonians (32%) and Albanians (27%).

Chart 60. Perceptions of the effects of the pandemic

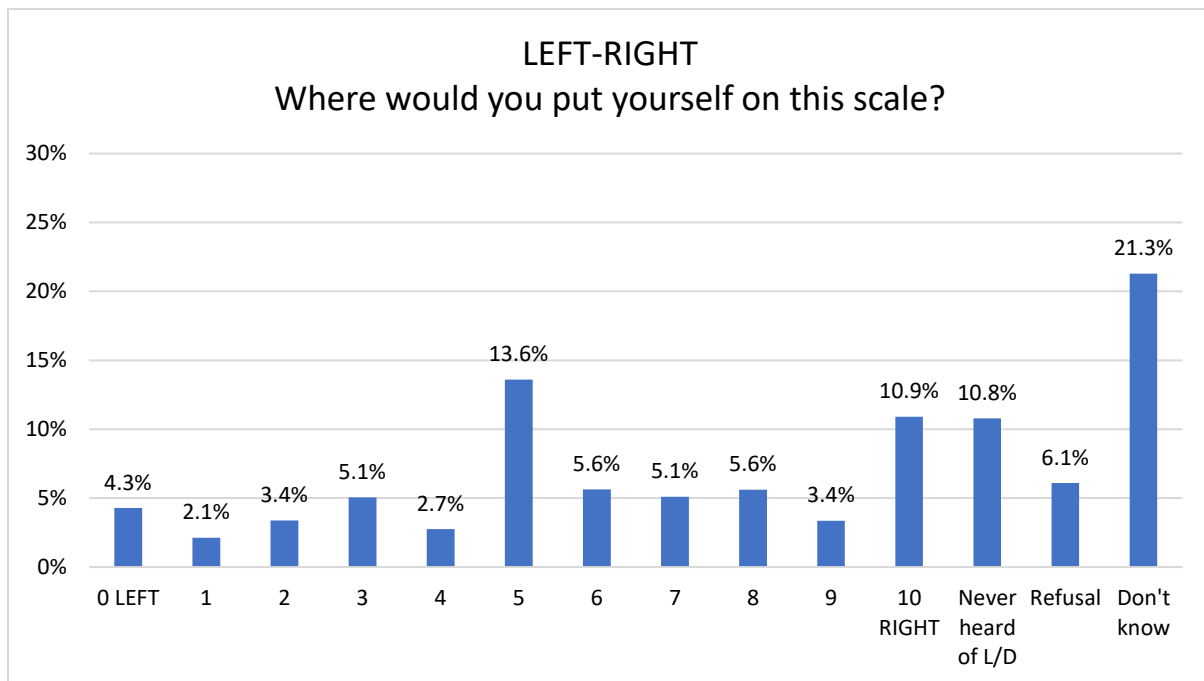


Ideological and value preferences of citizens

Self-positioning left vs. right

Citizens were asked to place themselves on the ideological spectrum using the same scale as before, where 0 represents "left" and 10 represents "right." Nearly a third (32%) of respondents have either not heard of the ideological divide from left to right (11%) or do not know where to place themselves on the scale (21%) (Chart 68). Of those who knew how to position themselves (N=653), the sample bent slightly to the right (M=5.9).

Chart 61. Self-positioning on a left-right scale

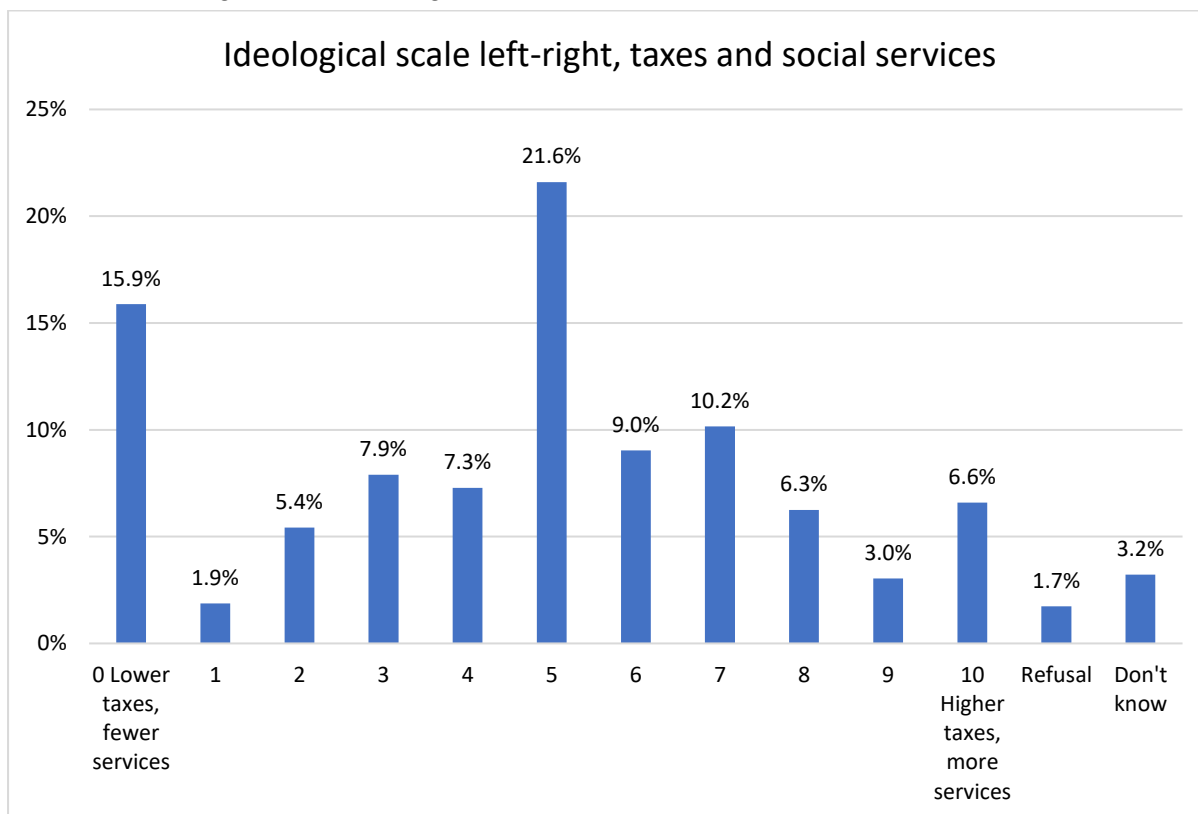


In more detail, of those respondents who knew how to position themselves, 22% chose the center, 28% chose the left (chose values from 0 to 4 on the scale), and 50% chose the right (values 6-10 on the scale). It can be concluded that the citizens of North Macedonia are positioning themselves more towards the "right".

Citizens were also asked to express their position on the ideological debate between the left and the right regarding the role of the welfare state, i.e., the left's position that higher taxes and more social services are needed, as opposed to that of the traditional right that advocates lower taxes, at the cost of fewer social services.

On this scale, the average response from participants (N=1004) is M=4.6 (Chart 69). Specifically, 22% positioned themselves in the center, 40% aligned with the right side of the scale—favoring lower taxes and fewer social services—while 37% preferred higher taxes and expanded social services. Overall, this indicates a slight ideological lean towards the right across the sample.

Chart 62. Ideological scale left-right, taxes and social services*

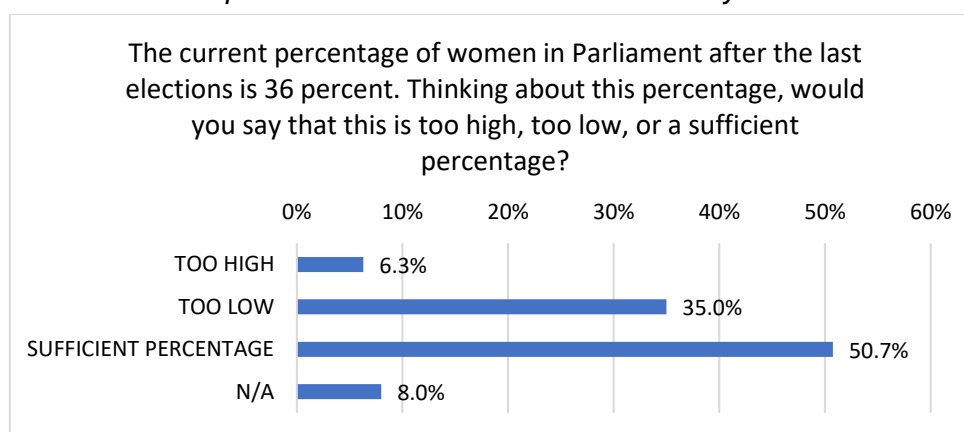


The correlation of respondents' responses to these two questions for ideological self-positioning is positive and statistically significant but small ($r=0.12$; $p<0.01$). According to these results, there is inconsistency between the respondents' attitudes. In the small number of cases where ideological self-positioning is a predictor of the attitude of the respondents regarding taxes, the prediction is in the direction that the left-oriented support a right-wing position regarding taxes, and vice versa.

Views on gender equality

Half of Macedonian citizens believe that women are represented in the Parliament in a sufficient percentage. Just over a third of respondents feel that the current representation rate is still too low (Chart 69).

Chart 70. Views on the representation of women in the Assembly



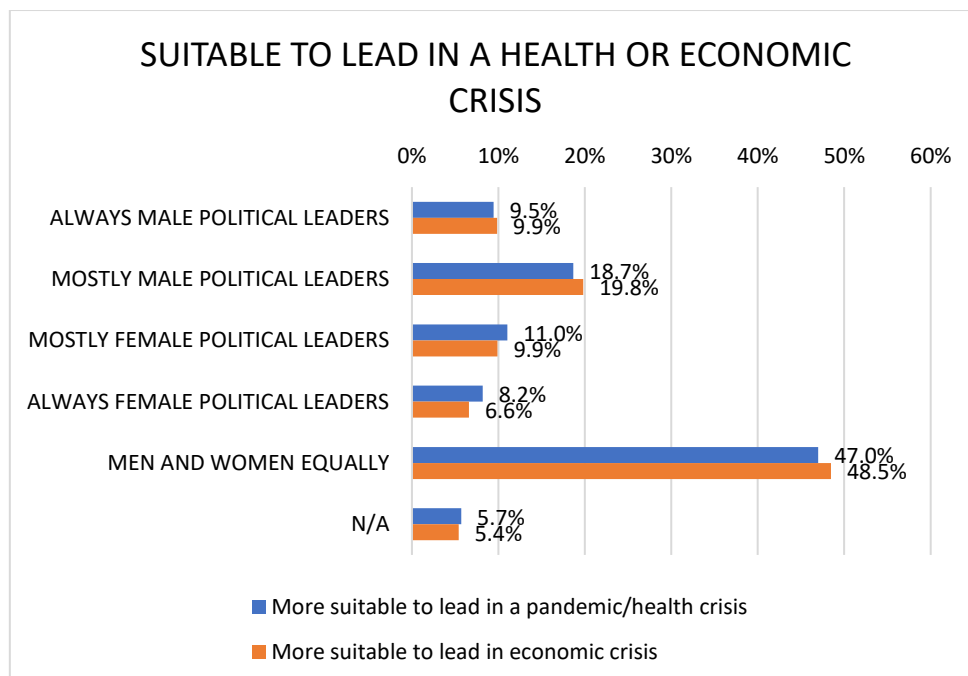
Gender differences play a significant role in shaping this perspective. While a majority of men (61%) believe the percentage is sufficient, a much smaller proportion of women (41%) share this view. Men in a higher percentage believe that the percentage is too high (11%) compared to women (2%), and women, conversely, feel that the percentage is too low (almost half, 49% women, versus 22% men).

Respondents from the Southwest region are the most prominent according to the answer that the current percentage is too high. A notable 17% of them responded this way, compared to just 2% to 8% in other regions. The same region stands out by the percentage of respondents who gave the opposite answer – that the percentage is too low: 47%, followed by the respondents in the Southeast (43%), Polog (39%), and Skopje region (37%). Most citizens in the Eastern region (72%), Pelagonija (65%), and Vardar regions (62%) think that the percentage is sufficient. Compared to urban respondents, rural respondents more often consider the current percentage too high (9% vs. 5%).

In terms of age, only respondents aged 35-44 were more prominent in their view that the percentage was too low (42%), while 60% of the oldest respondents (65+) considered it sufficient. Macedonians (36%) and Albanians (36%), to a greater extent than others (24%), believe that the percentage is too low.

In the context of gender equality, respondents were also asked to assess who is more suitable to lead the country in times of economic or health crisis (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) (Chart 71). For the majority of respondents (almost half), men and women are equally suited to lead the country. For only one in ten respondents, it is always men; for a similar percentage, it is women. A certain difference is seen in the modality "mostly women/men," where men are given a somewhat more significant advantage over women in both types of crisis (difference of 8%-10%).

Chart 63. Views on whether men or women are better suited to lead in a crisis

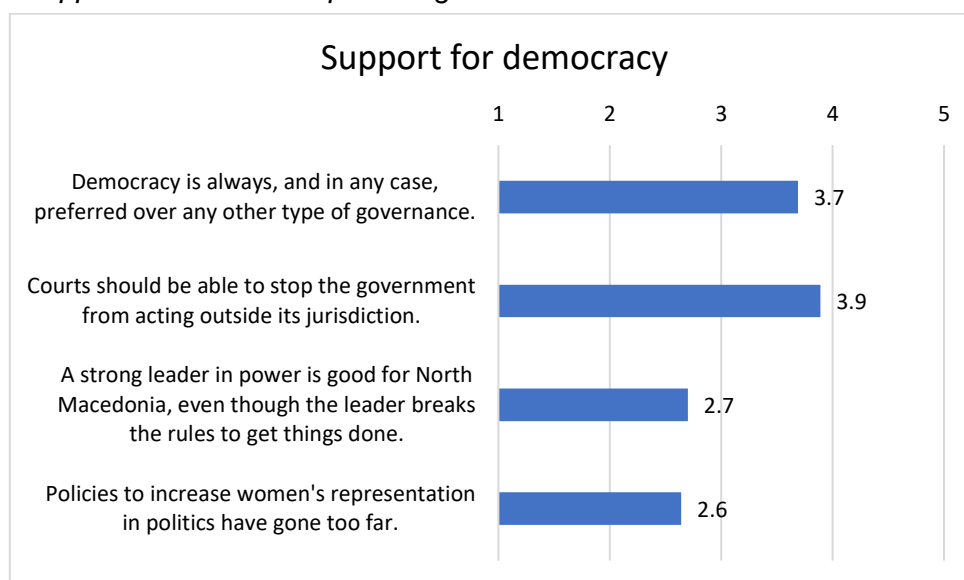


Support for democratic political governance

While citizens are generally critical of how the democratic system and its institutions function, they still show relatively strong support for two out of the four measures of trust and support for democracy as a form of political organization included in the survey. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "I do not agree at all" and 5 "I completely agree", citizens prefer democratic governance as the best, with average value of $M=3.7$, and even more agree, with $M=3.9$, that courts should be able to stop the government from acting outside its jurisdiction (Chart 72).

Support for democracy as the best form of governance is highest among respondents in the Vardar ($M=4.5$) and Pelagonija region ($M=4$) and lowest among respondents from the Skopje region ($M=3.4$) and the Polog region ($M=3.4$). Respondents living in cities (urban respondents) to a greater extent ($M=3.7$) agree with this statement, compared to rural respondents ($M=3.6$), as well as respondents in the three age groups between 25-54 years ($M= 3.8$) compared to others. Support for democracy is higher among Macedonians ($M=3.8$) compared to Albanians ($M=3.5$) and other ethnic communities ($M=3.6$).

Chart 64. Support for democratic political governance



The statement that courts should be able to stop the government from acting outside its jurisdiction has the most significant support in the Vardar, Southwest, and Pelagonija regions ($M=4.2$ up to 4.7), as well as among members of other ethnic communities ($M=4.1$), compared to Macedonians ($M=4$), and Albanians ($M=3.6$).

The other two statements reflect a contradiction to democratic principles, as agreement with them signifies opposition to democratic values. Citizens, however, exhibit a lower level of agreement with these statements. The statement that strong leaders in power are needed and at the cost of breaking the rules received an average score of 2.6, and the statement that policies to increase the representation of women in politics have gone too far received an average score of 2.7.

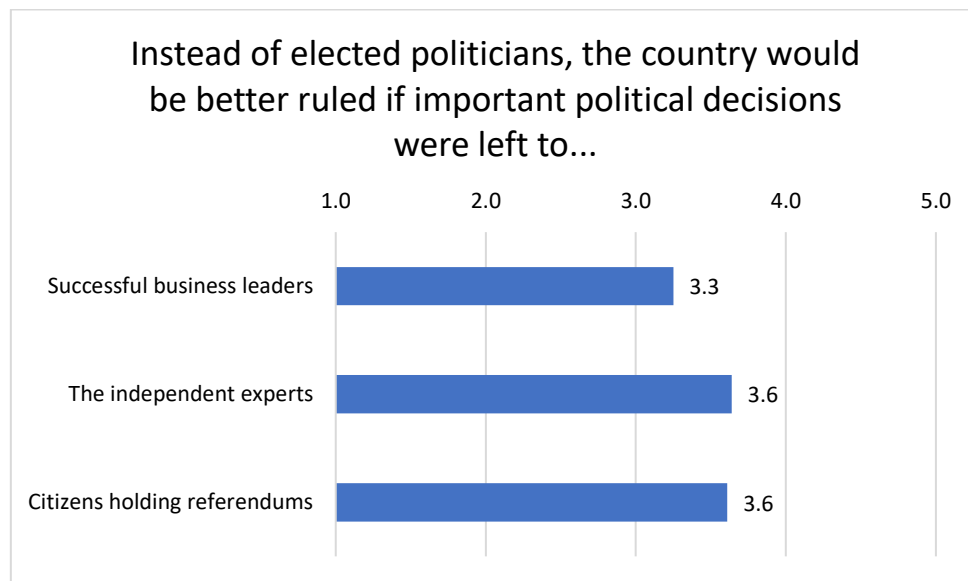
Support for a strong leader is highest in the South-West ($M=3.4$) and Southeast ($M=3$) regions and lowest in the Pelagonija region ($M=2.3$). Approval rate is higher in men ($M=2.8$) than in women ($M=2.6$). The agreement with the statement that policies to increase the representation of women have gone too far is the highest in the Southwest ($M=2.9$), Vardar ($M=2.8$), and Polog region ($M=2.8$). Men more than women agreed with the statement ($M=2.9$).

versus 2.4), as did respondents living in the village (rural respondents) compared to urban respondents (M=2.7 versus 2.6).

Who shall lead the country instead of elected politicians?

A positive attitude towards the possibility of other actors leading the country better than elected politicians prevails among citizens (Chart 73). On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "I do not agree at all" and 5 "I completely agree," the highest approval rate for the leading of the country was obtained by independent experts (M=3.6) and the citizens themselves in referendums (M=3.6). There is slightly less support for successful business leaders (M=3.2).

Chart 65. Who shall lead the country instead of elected politicians?



Respondents from the Eastern region have a high degree of approval for the three statements, the largest being the one with the citizens holding referendums. There is also a high approval rate with the last statement among the respondents from the Northeast region. Among the respondents from the Vardar region, there is a high approval for the possibility of independent experts and successful business leaders better leading the country. The lowest is the approval rate regarding successful business leaders in the Northeast (M=2.8) and Skopje region (M=3).

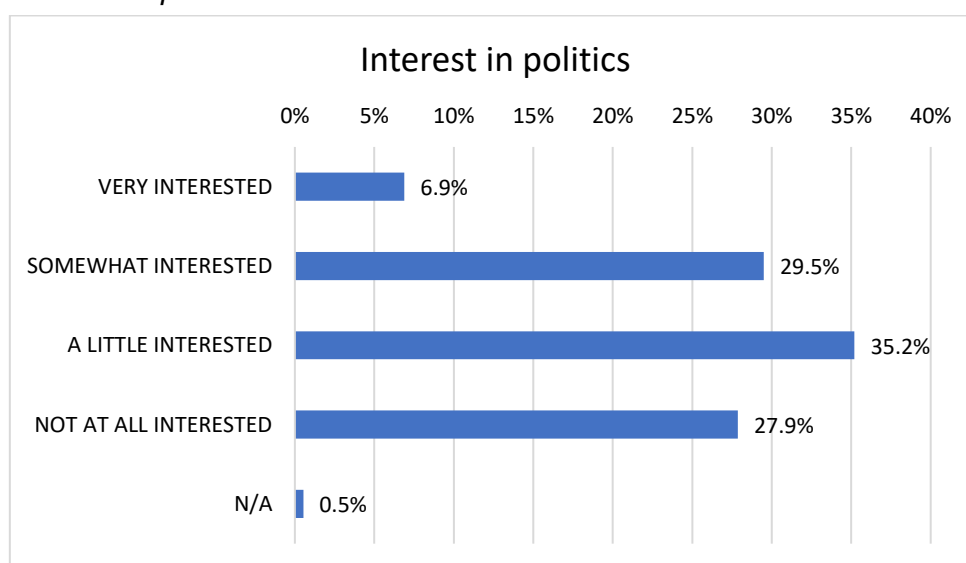
Urban respondents have a more favorable opinion of independent experts (M=3.8) compared to rural respondents (M=3.4). Conversely, men are more in favor of the possibility of direct democracy through referendums (M=3.7) compared to women (M=3.5). Macedonians show greater agreement with the idea of having independent experts in leadership roles (M=3.8), compared to Albanians (M=3.3) and other groups (M=3.6), as well as with the idea of leading the country through referendums (Macedonians give an average score of 3.7, compared to 3.2 among Albanians and 3.6 among others).

Civic predispositions for political participation

Interest in politics

Macedonian citizens are not particularly interested in politics (Chart 74). Only slightly over a third of respondents (36%) responded that they were very or somewhat interested in politics, and the rest said that they were little (35%) or not at all interested (28%). Interest was highest among respondents from the Southwest (11%) and Southeast (11%) regions, while disinterest (total disinterest) among respondents from the Northeast (42%) and East regions (36%).

Chart 66. Interest in politics



Women show more significant disinterest in politics than men: as many as a third of women are not at all interested in politics versus a quarter of men (Chart 75). Among age groups, the youngest (18-24 years old) showed the most significant disinterest: nearly half of the youngest respondents are not at all interested in politics (Chart 76). Macedonians and Albanians more often responded that they are more interested in politics than members of smaller ethnic communities (7%, 8%, and 1%, respectively). In comparison, almost half of the respondents from other ethnic communities are not interested in politics (43% compared to 26% Macedonians and 25% Albanians).

Chart 67. Interest in politics by gender

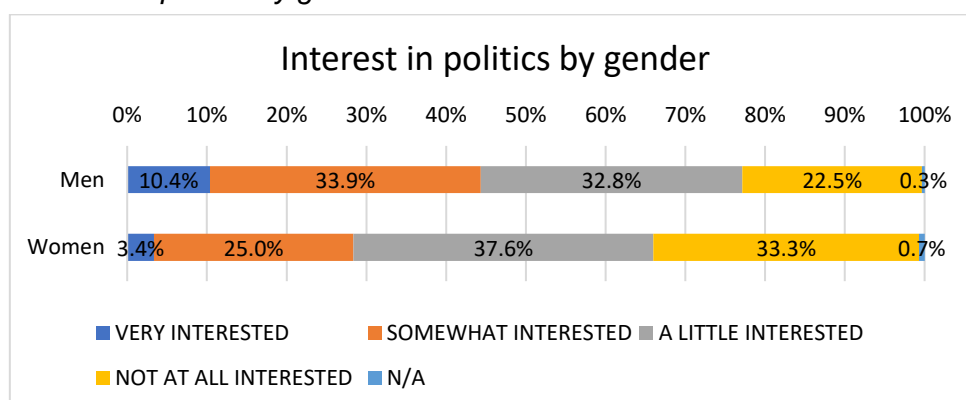
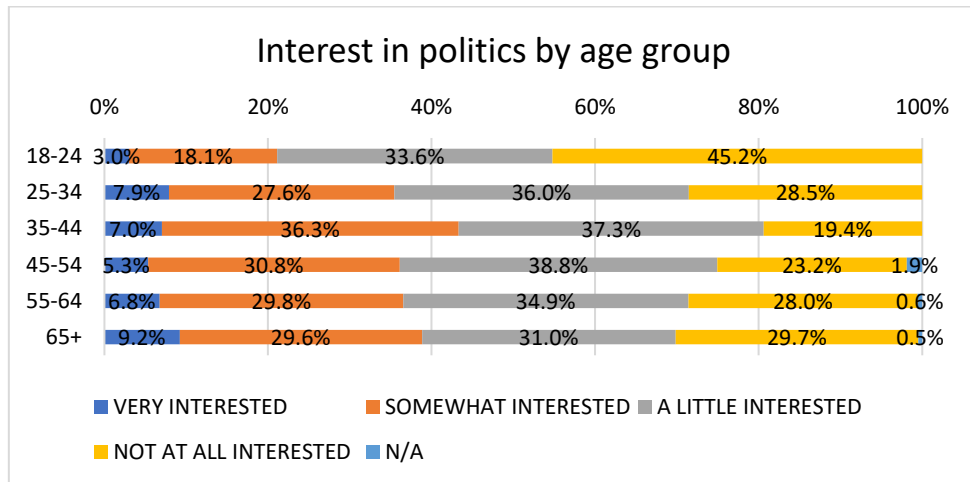


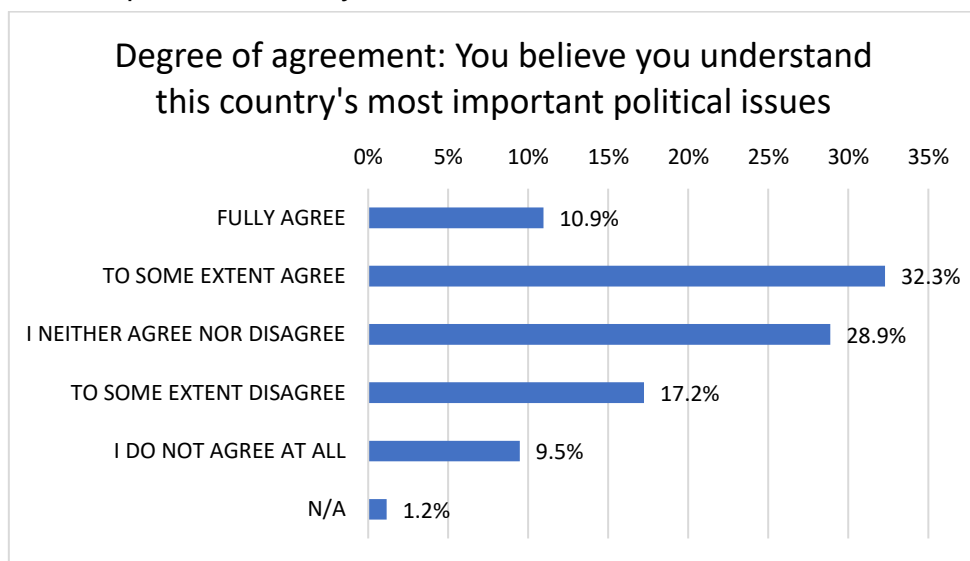
Chart 68. Interest in politics by age group



Perceptions of personal (internal) political efficacy

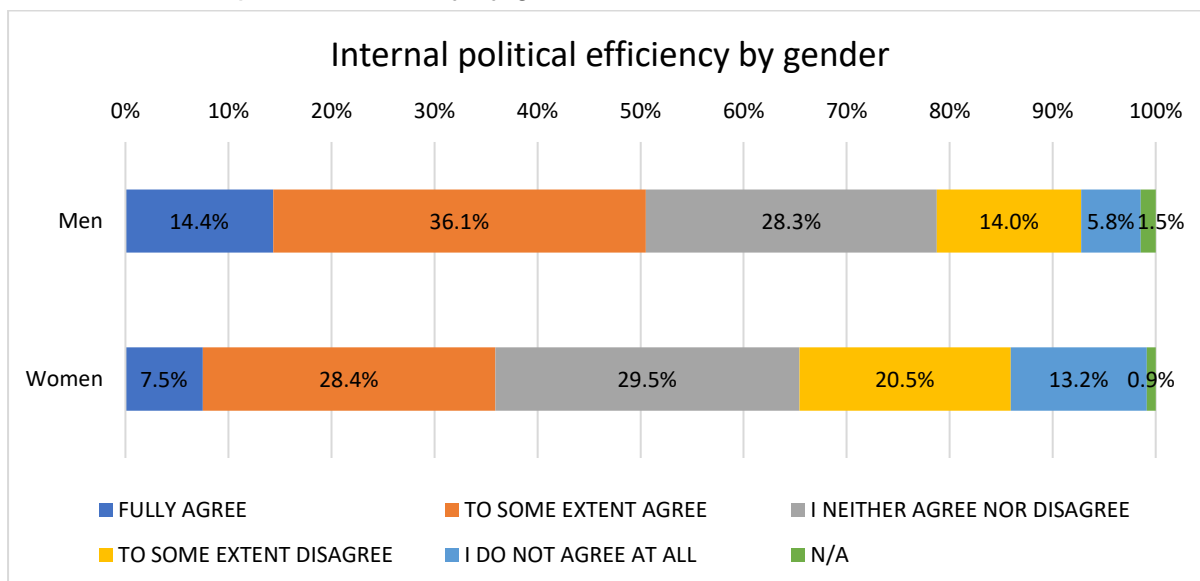
Nearly half of the respondents fully or somewhat agree with the statement that they understand the most important political issues in the country (43%), and more than one in four respondents disagree (27%) (Chart 77). Only one in ten respondents approximately fully agreed (11%) or disagreed (10%), and responses were predominantly grouped on the medium levels of the scale.

Chart 69. Internal political efficiency



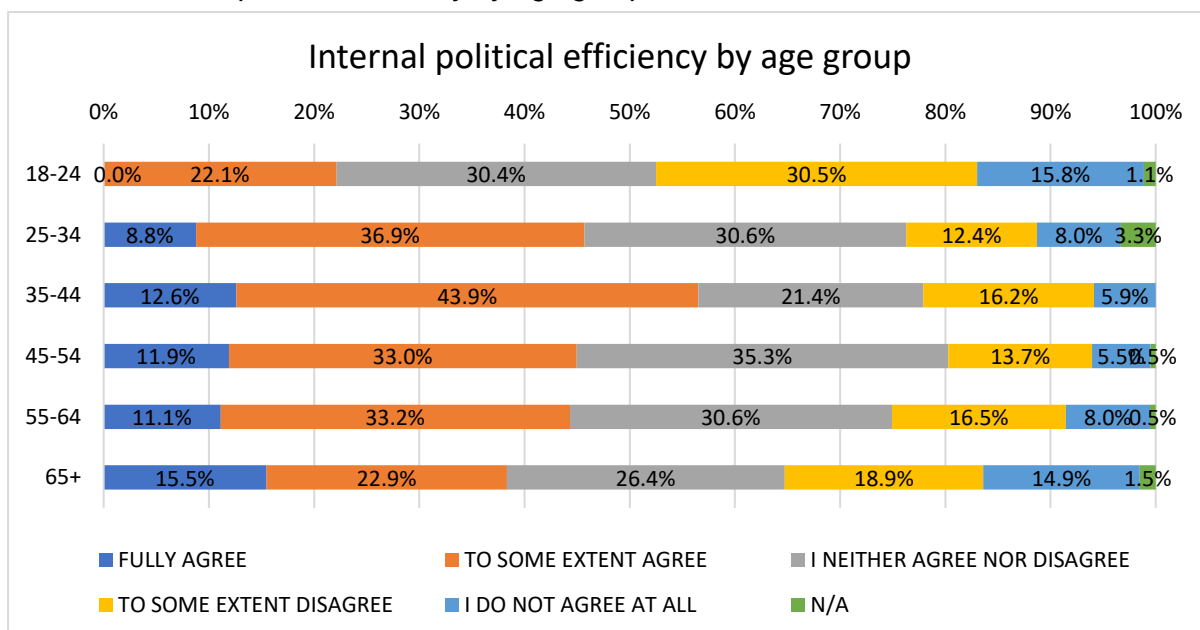
Perceptions of high internal political efficiency are higher in men than in women (Chart 77) and lower in the youngest age group (18-24) than in the rest (Chart 78). The percentage of men that completely agree with the statement is almost twice bigger (14% vs. 8% among women); a higher percentage partially agree (36% vs. 24%), and women in significantly higher percentages disagree (21% vs. 14% men – somewhat agree and 13% vs. 6% men do not agree at all).

Chart 70. Internal political efficiency by gender



Among age groups, no respondent from the youngest group (18-24) fully agreed with the statement, and the partial approval rate was significantly lower (22%) than all age groups (33%-44%), except the oldest (65+: 23%) (Chart 79). Also, the youngest (16%) and oldest groups (15%) largely disagreed with the statement (5.5%-8% in other groups).

Chart 71. Internal political efficiency by age group

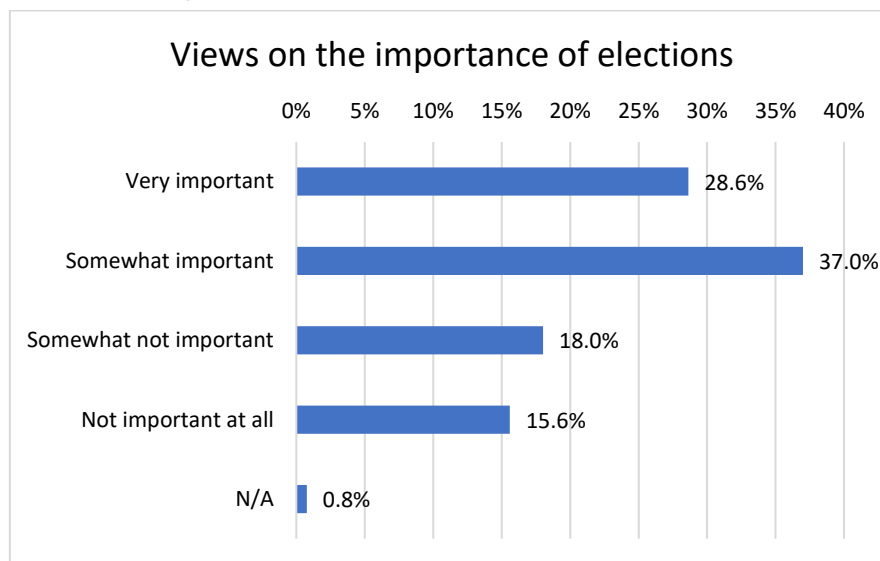


The rate of complete approval is also higher in the Southwest region (27%) compared to the others (0%-17%, no respondent in the Vardar region completely agreed with the statement), as well as in those who live in urban areas compared to rural ones (13% vs. 8%).

Views on the importance of elections

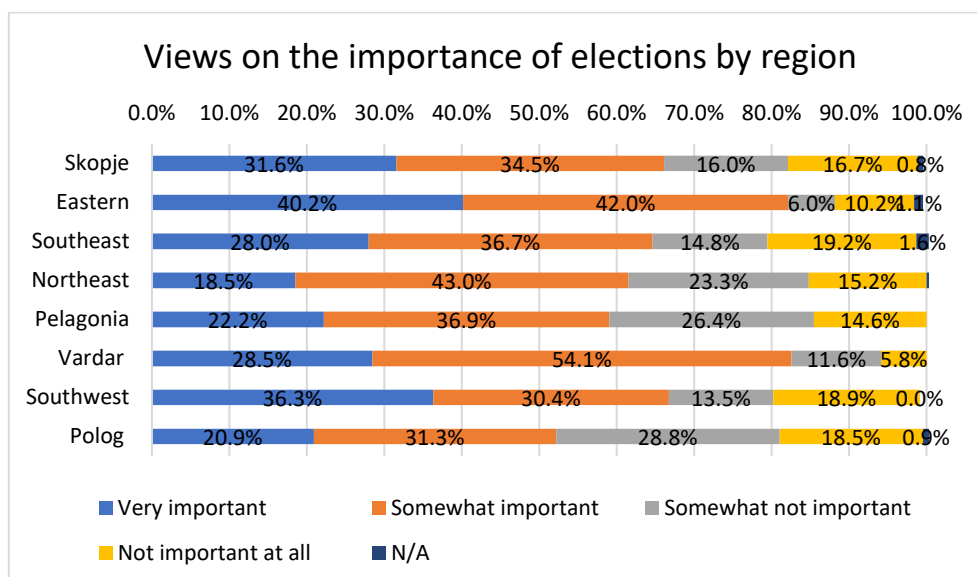
For two-thirds of the respondents, i.e., 66%, the elections in the country are very or somewhat important (Chart 80).

Chart 80. Views on the importance of elections*



The elections are most important for the respondents of the Eastern (82%), Southwestern (66%), and Skopje region (67%) (Chart 81). For 54% of the residents of the Vardar region, the elections are somewhat important. For another 28%, they are very important, which also puts them in the group of regions where the elections are important above the average. Respondents from the Polog (29%), Pelagonija (26%), and Northeast (23%) regions rated the elections to a greater extent as somewhat not important. The elections in the Southwest (19%), the Polog (19%), the Southeast region (19%), and the Skopje region (17%) are not at all important to the largest extent.

Chart 72. Views on the Importance of elections by region*



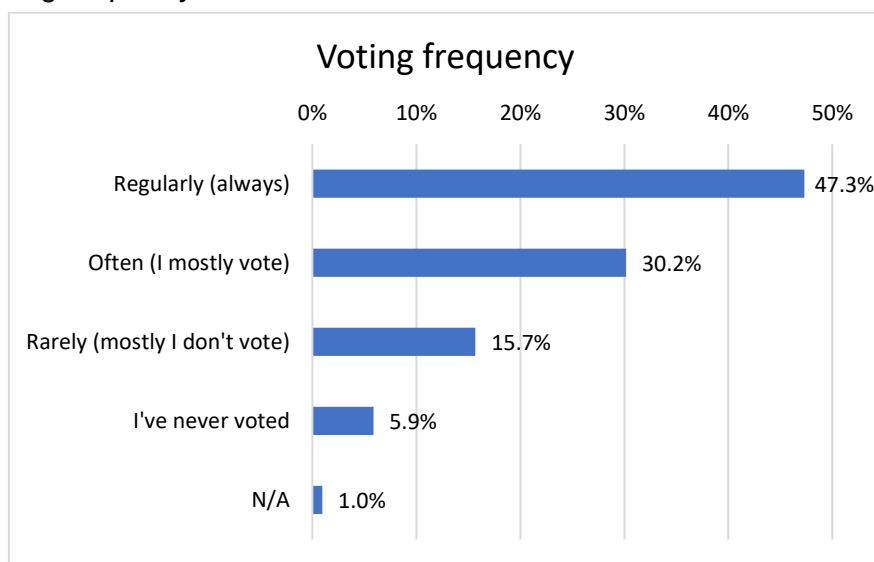
Elections are very important for a larger number of urban respondents (31%) compared to rural respondents (25%). A third (33%) of men also responded that the elections were significant compared to a quarter (24%) of women.

While for 33% of Macedonians and 24% of Albanians, the elections were very important, only 15% of the members of the smaller ethnic communities gave such an answer. Elections are very important for a larger number of respondents from the age groups 25-54 (27%-36%) and over 65 (32%). They are somewhat less important for the two other age groups: 18-24 (28%) and 55-64 (22%).

Voting frequency

47% of the respondents from this sample regularly/always vote at elections, while an additional 30% often vote at elections (Chart 82). Respondents from the Northeast region less regularly vote: 25% of them turn out rarely, and an additional 9% never. High inactivity is also noted by the respondents from the Polog region (21% vote rarely and 9% never). Every tenth respondent from the Skopje region never votes, and 13% rarely votes.

Chart 73. Voting frequency



While men reported a higher percentage of always voting (53% vs. 42%), women reported a higher percentage of often voting (34% vs. 26%). The most regular voters are voters of the age category 45-54 (56%), as well as Macedonians (52%) compared to Albanians (40%) and members of other ethnic communities (33%), who, in turn, are the least likely to vote.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

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Authors:

Asst. prof. d-r Jovan Bliznakovski

Prof. d-r Aneta Cekikj

Editor:

Asst. prof. d-r Jovan Bliznakovski

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