



Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim

THEMATIC REPORT

ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION TO ALBANIA

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DELIBERATIVE
POLLING
'SHQIPËRIA
N'KUVENDIM'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) held the first national deliberative polling¹ exercise entitled ‘Shqipëria n’Kuvendim’ on 18-21 November 2021, in Tirana. Deliberative Polling relies on three surveys – a nationally representative survey with 1200 respondents, a treatment group² survey with 110 respondents, and a control group³ survey with another 110 participants. These thematic report findings are based on the data of the national survey⁴, as well as insights from the small discussion groups⁵ of “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”. The national survey aimed to capture the public perceptions on a set of questions related to parliamentary oversight, citizen participation in the parliamentary activity, internal party democracy, electoral system, diaspora vote, climate change; and economic immigration and tested their attitude on possible alternatives for solutions.

About 38% of the respondents were supportive of the statement that ‘Albania should remain open to the immigration of foreign labour’. Participants in the deliberative polling “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” were conscious that many economic sectors are having difficulties securing workers, but they argued that efforts should go toward incentivising Albanian workers to stay and work in Albania, instead of striving for the accommodation of immigrant workers. Moreover, 37% of the national survey respondents and participants in “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” were sceptical of the effects that the introduction of foreign cultures would have on Albanian society, suggesting that integration programs would be needed to reduce the gap between cultures.



- 1 Deliberative Polling is a unique form of political consultation that combines techniques of public opinion research and public deliberation to reveal what public opinion would be on a particular issue if citizens were given a chance to become more informed. The Deliberative Poll seeks to account for the preferences and opinions of citizens both before and after they have had an opportunity to arrive at considerate judgments based on balanced information and discussion with fellow citizens. For more information see: <http://cdd.stanford.edu>.
- 2 The treatment group included randomly selected citizens from the national survey sample that had the opportunity to deliberate on the topics and access further information through briefing materials and panels of independent experts during the four-day “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” event.
- 3 The control group included randomly selected citizens from the national survey sample who did not participate at the event.
- 4 IDM administered the national survey from 8th to 18th October 2021.
- 5 The topic was the subject of a 60-minute discussion in eight small discussion groups and a plenary session with experts of a similar length.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of migration is no stranger to Albanian society as, over the last three decades, more than 1/3 of the Albanian population has emigrated abroad. With the emigration rates expected to continue at approximately the same pace in the upcoming years, vacuums in the domestic workforce are predicted. These vacuums will need addressing, be it through motivating and incentivising the local population to stay and perform their economic activities in Albania or by attracting a foreign workforce that would be willing to fill these gaps.

Currently, most foreigners working in Albania are invested in high-profile jobs. However, over the last few years, there have also been cases of immigration involving unskilled workers. They have predominantly focused their efforts on the in-home services and construction sector. The latter could be potentially joined by others, mainly in the sectors of the made-to-order industry (fason/apparel), construction, agriculture, and in-home services.

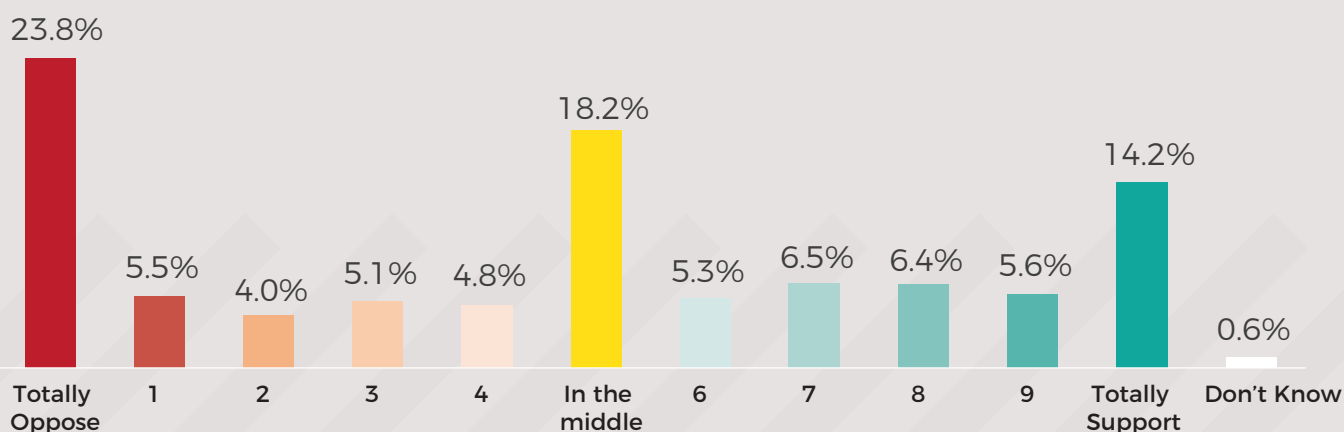
Discussions on immigration policies are just initiating in the Albanian realm, with the citizens being wary of significant changes in the Albanian society and culture. While the general opinions strive toward creating an enabling environment for Albanians to work and live comfortably inside the country, there are also realisations that the process may take time. Therefore, the immigration of a foreign workforce is seen as an inevitable necessity in the framework of fulfilling the current workforce vacuum that is currently damaging the domestic economy.

ALBANIANS' PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES ON ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION TO ALBANIA⁶

When asked whether “Albania should remain open to the immigration of foreign labour”, 38.5% of the respondents tended to be opposed to this policy, about a third of the sample supported the statement (32.7%) and another 28.3% chose scores (4 to 6) in the evaluation axis of 0 - strongly oppose, to 10 - strongly support (see Fig.1). Respondents who

pertained to older age groups, were more likely to oppose, compared to respondents of younger age groups. At the same time, the respondents who had completed more levels of formal education were more likely to be supportive of Albania remaining open to the immigration of foreign labour.

FIGURE 1: ALBANIA SHOULD REMAIN OPEN TO THE IMMIGRATION OF FOREIGN LABOUR.



The same tendency was observed throughout the deliberative polling event (November 2021), in which citizens coming from different geographical areas and economic backgrounds, were split concerning the topic of welcoming foreign labour force. On one hand, many participants who were in favour of the policy acknowledged the difficulties that many businesses face in finding willing and productive workers. Moreover, some stated that the Albanian society has a moral duty “to welcome immigrants” just as more developed

countries have done with Albanian citizens over the last three decades. On the other side of the spectrum, some participants were wary of the effects that waves of immigration would have on the Albanian economy, society and culture. Nonetheless, all participants were very cautious when articulating their positions, with the majority agreeing that any form of legal immigration should be regulated and permitted under certain conditions, for the immigration process to be viable.

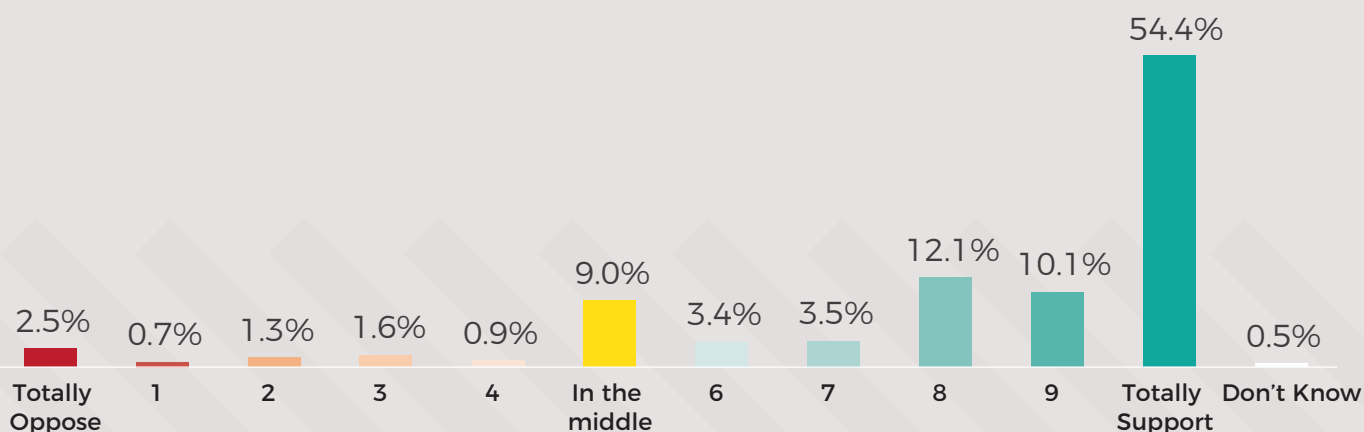


6 In this section, in the narrative the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 oppose, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 supportive of the statement.

When confronted with the statement ‘Albania should push businesses to pay higher salaries for Albanians instead of “importing” foreign immigrants’, most of the survey’s respondents supported the argument (80.1%), while only a small part opposed it (6.1%) (see Fig.2). A similar tendency was also shared by the participants of the deliberative polling in November 2021, who were generally of the opinion that the government should first exhaust its efforts on

accommodating the needs of Albanian workers, before initiating policies on attracting foreign immigrants. Aside from increasing wages, the participants suggested other initiatives for keeping Albanian workers in the country, such as “motivating businesses to invest in improving their workers’ capacities”, the developing of “career orientation programs”, and the “revitalisation of rural communities”.

FIGURE 2: ALBANIA SHOULD PUSH BUSINESSES TO PAY HIGHER SALARIES FOR ALBANIANS AND NOT IMPORT FOREIGN IMMIGRANTS.

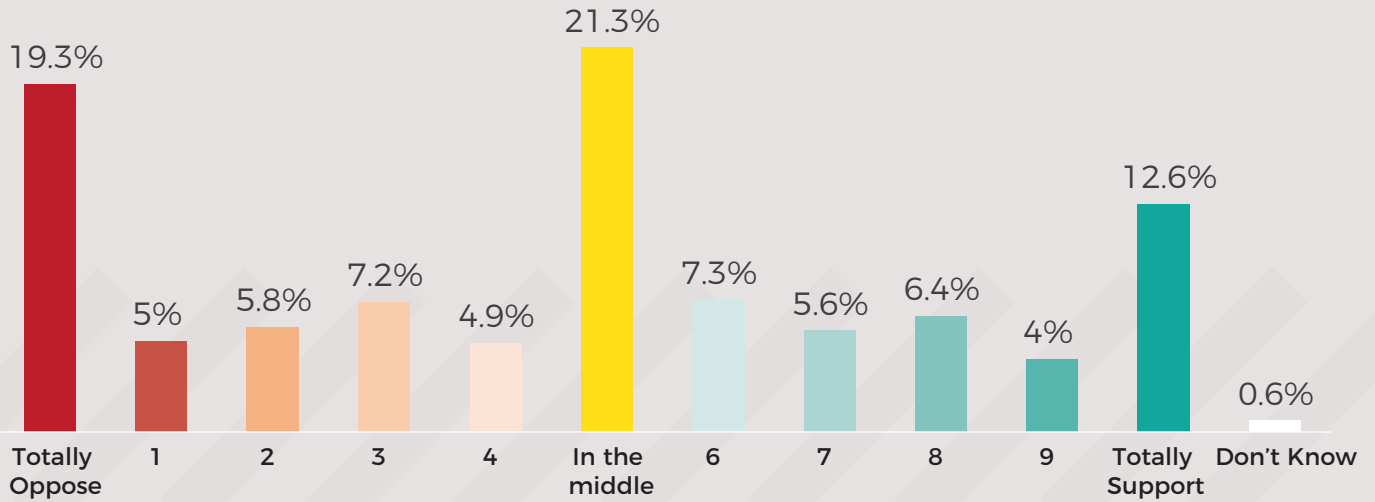


Albanians are at odds regarding the statement ‘Immigrants improve our society by bringing in new ideas and cultures’ with 37.3% of them opposing the assumption, 28.6% approving it, and about a third of national survey respondents being undecided (see Fig.3). Respondents who received more monthly income at the time were more likely to agree with the statement as compared to those who received less monthly income.

Participants in the deliberative polling event “Shqiperia n’Kuvendim” were divided on whether the arrival of new cultures would be an added value to society. On one side laid the opinions that the incoming cultures would be a positive addition to the country’s cultural life. Someone was even careful to add that ‘foreign immigrants could also bring different work cultures, which could improve the way Albanians approach their work

processes’. However, a considerable part of deliberative poll participants was sceptical and at times unfavourable of the argument that introducing foreign cultures would be positive for Albanian society. Some participants suggested integration programs for foreign immigrants which “should include the learning of the Albanian language, while also providing immigrants with insights to the Albanian culture and traditions”.

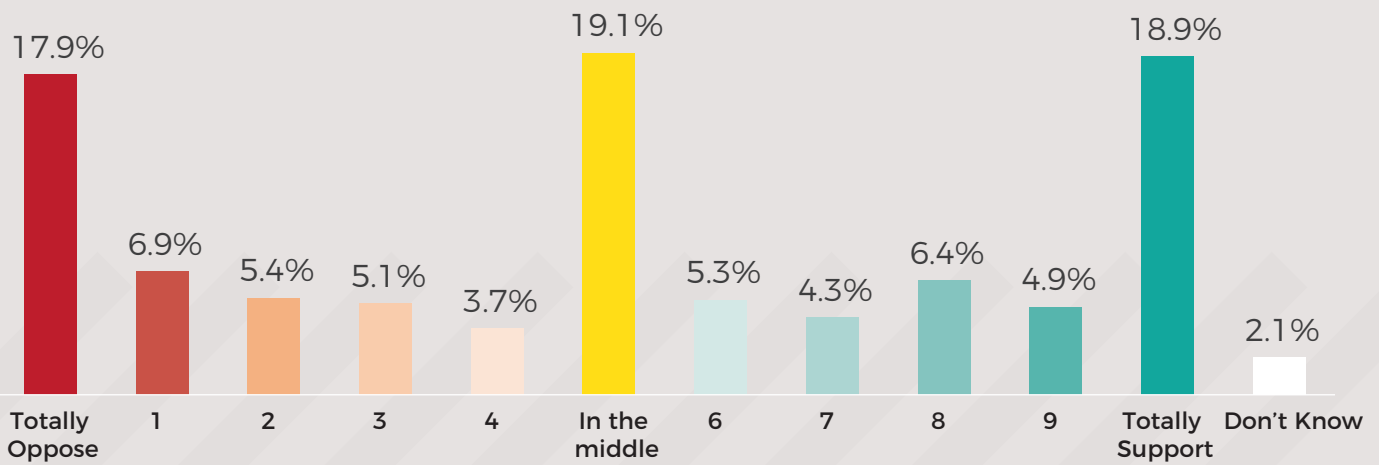
FIGURE 3: IMMIGRANTS IMPROVE OUR SOCIETY BY BRINGING IN NEW IDEAS AND CULTURES.



When questioned on whether 'Regular immigrants should be granted the right to vote in local elections', the opinions of the respondents were relatively balanced with

35.3% of the latter being opposed, 34.5% being in support of the statement and 28.1% being neutral (see Fig.4).

FIGURE 4: REGULAR IMMIGRANTS SHOULD BE GRANTED THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS.



Overall, during the small discussion groups of "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim", the participants argued that in case the Albanian government decides to open its doors to foreign immigrants, the immigration process should be regulated in terms of the numbers and categories of workers that will arrive. Being sceptic of a completely open-door policy, the participants highlighted that the country should only take

immigrant workers who are willing to work only in jobs not occupied by the Albanian workforce, be it for lack of will or specialisation. One participant argued that he 'would support the attraction of foreign workers, as long as they do not endanger the already occupied jobs.' Participants expressed their fear, that in case the latter condition is not met, the immigration of foreign workers would lead to wages being

kept low and more Albanians emigrating, as a result of their jobs now being occupied by foreign immigrants.

Lastly, the national survey findings indicate a low level of information on the unemployment rates and the new law on foreigners in Albania. Only 14.7% of the survey respondents were correct in guessing the right unemployment rate in Albania for 2020, which stood between 10% and 20%. More than half (51.2%) of the respondents guessed that the unemployment

rate in Albania for 2020 was higher than 20%, while 31.5% stated that they did not know. (see Fig.5). Moreover, only 12.8% of the respondents correctly guessed that the new law on foreigners (of the year 2021), facilitates the procedures of work for all types of employment and labour force. About a third of the respondents (32.1%) chose one of the three elements and about half of them (47.2%) stated that they did not know (see Fig.6).

FIGURE 5: IN 2020, WHAT WAS THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN ALBANIA?

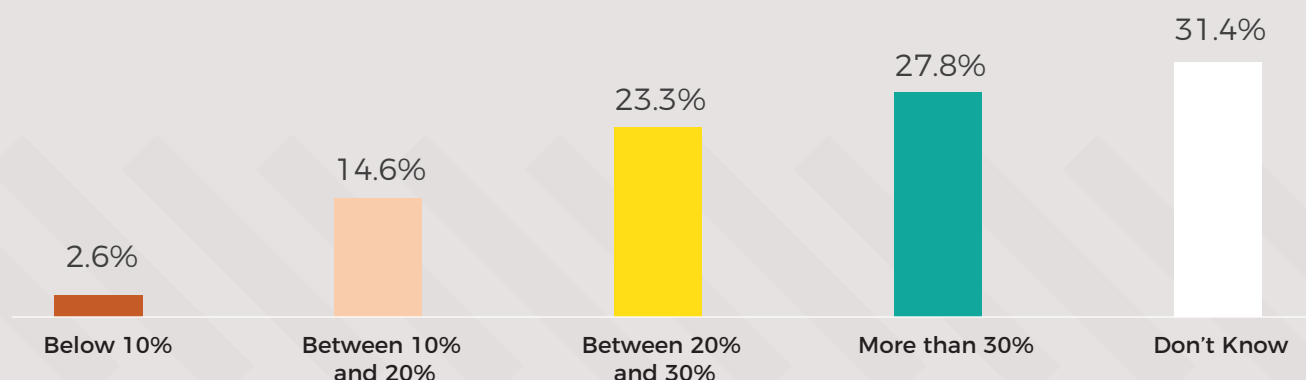
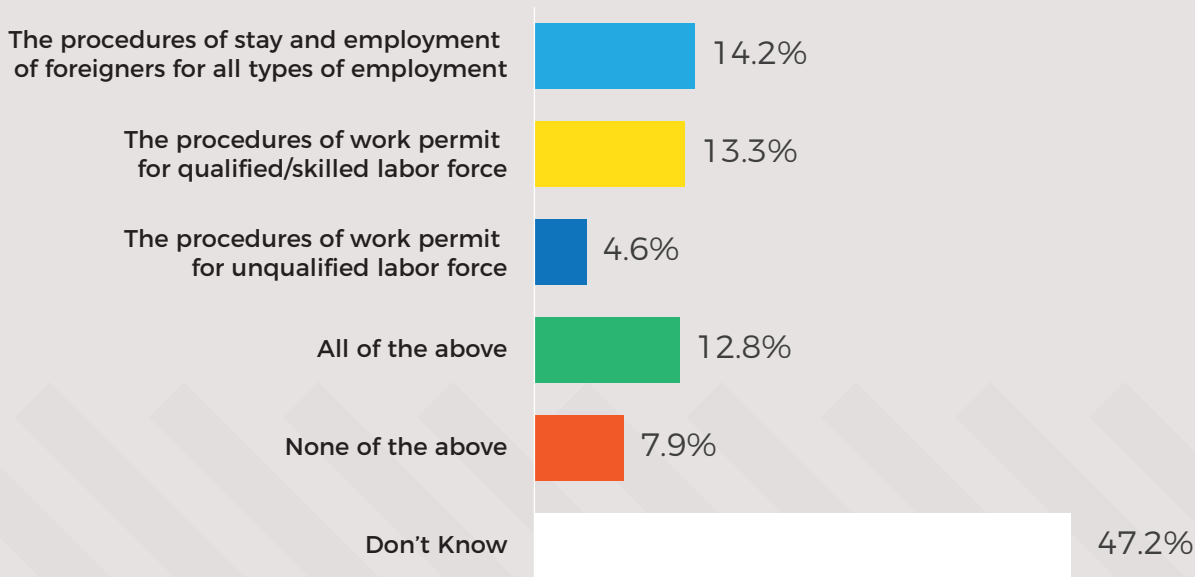


FIGURE 6: IN YOUR OPINION, THE NEW LAW ON FOREIGNERS (OF THE YEAR 2021) IN ALBANIA FACILITATES?



METHODOLOGY

The national survey employed a representative sample of the Albanian population in which respondents were selected across the country's municipalities and their administrative units. Employing a weighted, nationally representative sample allows us to extrapolate from the national survey findings for the Albanian population as a whole. Consequently, the statistical significance level of the sample is described as follows: for an adult resident Albanian citizen population of 2,220,569, with a sample size of 1,200 respondents, for a confidence level of 95%, the confidence interval is ± 2.83 ; and for a confidence level of 99%, the confidence interval is ± 3.72 .

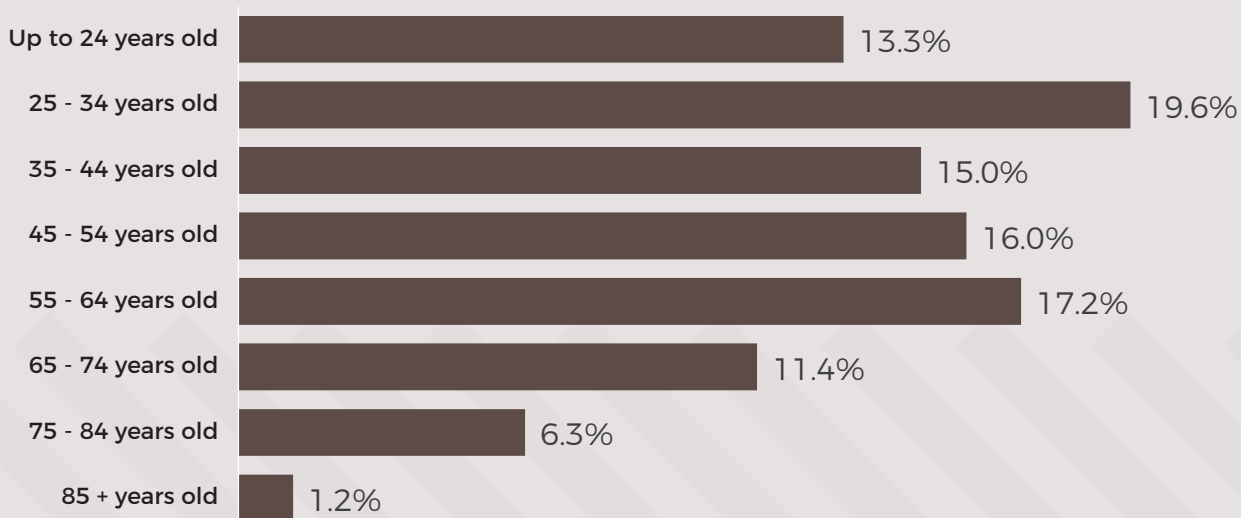
To determine the quota size of each of the counties, the population of Albania was retrieved from the civil registry, and the number of residents of each of the counties on 1 January 2021 was retrieved from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Since the number of residents in the territory of Albania from 2019 to 2021 for the population over 18 years has changed by about 0.31%, it did not statistically affect the sample size by county and the confidence interval mentioned above. The sample of 1,200 respondents was distributed across all 61 municipalities of the 12 counties. Subsequently, distribution by county was adjusted to select only the adult population (aged 18 years and older) and to employ quota controls for gender. As INSTAT does not define age groups as either under 18 years old or over 18 years old, a linear interpolation technique was used. The selection was then weighted according to the most recent age groups published by INSTAT (at the time the lot was drawn) which were the data for 2020. The results calculated and published in this analysis are therefore weighted according to two dimensions: geographical distribution of the population and age groups.

DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

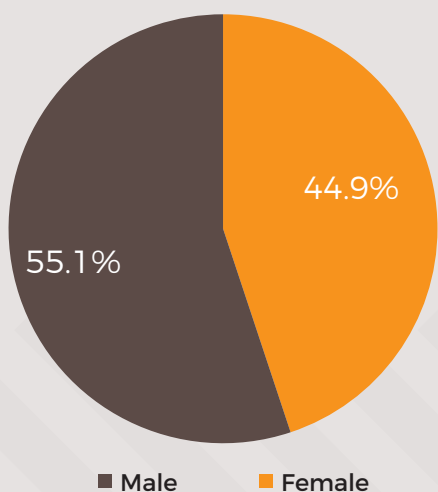
A total of 1200 Albanian citizens, 18 years old and over, from all the municipalities of the Republic of Albania, participated in the national survey. Of all the respondents, 55.1% were male while 44.9% were female. The majority of respondents pertained to age groups ranging

from 18 years old to 54 years old (63.9%). Respondents aged between 55 years old and over, made up only 36.1% of the overall sample. For more detailed information on the sample's age distribution, please refer to the graph below.

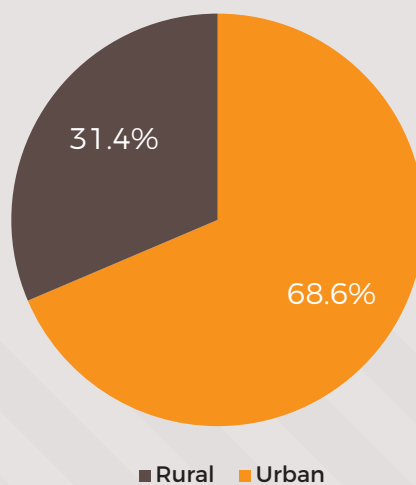
AGE



GENDER



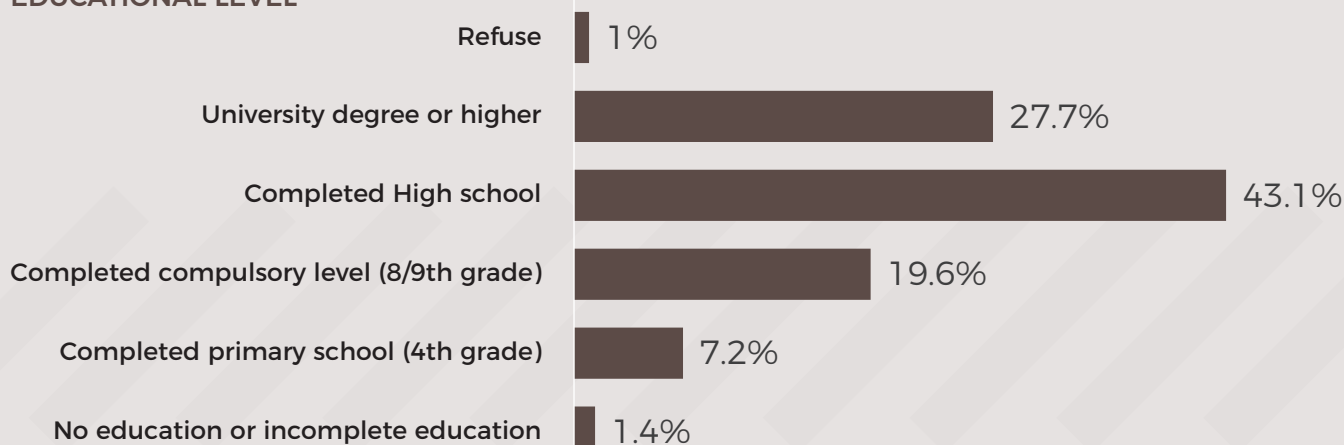
GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION



The geographical distribution was 68.6% urban and 31.4% rural. In comparison, data from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) says that in 2011, 58.2% of the Albanian resident population was located in an urban area.¹ However, over the past ten years this number has increased. The majority of the respondents (70.8%) had received a high school diploma or held a university or postgraduate degree, with 43.1% of them having completed their

education up to the upper secondary level (i.e. high school diploma) whilst 27.7% had received a university or postgraduate degree. 28.2% of the respondents had up to lower secondary education, with 19.6% of the respondents having completed the compulsory 8/9-year programme, while 8.6% had received no education or finished only primary education (4/5-year programme).

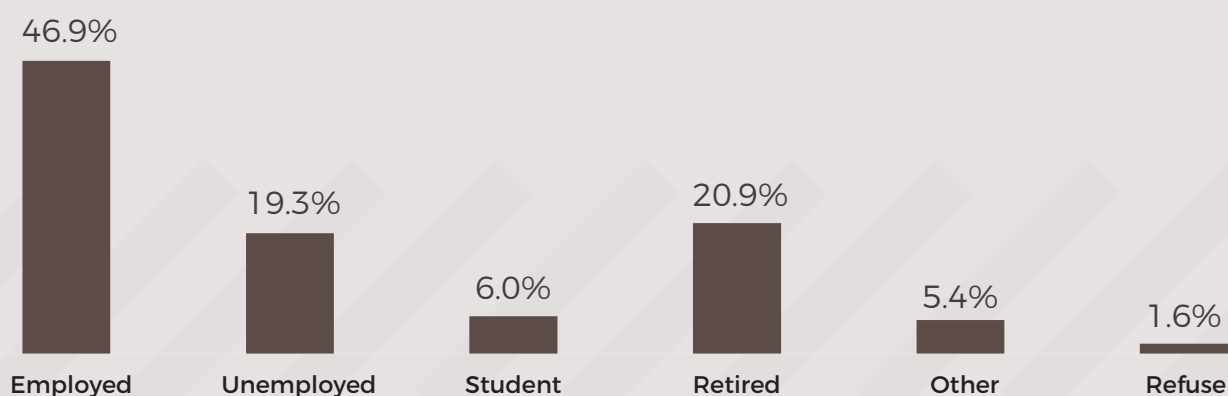
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



About 46.9% of the respondents were employed at the time of the survey, with 72.4% of them working in the private sector and 27.6% employed in the public sector. About a fifth

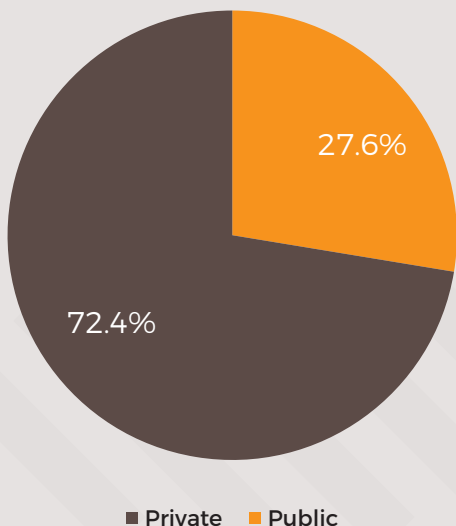
of the respondents declared that they were unemployed (19.3%), while 6% were students, 20.9% retired and 5.4% chose the 'other' option.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



1 http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a_new_urban-rural_classification_of_albanian_population.pdf

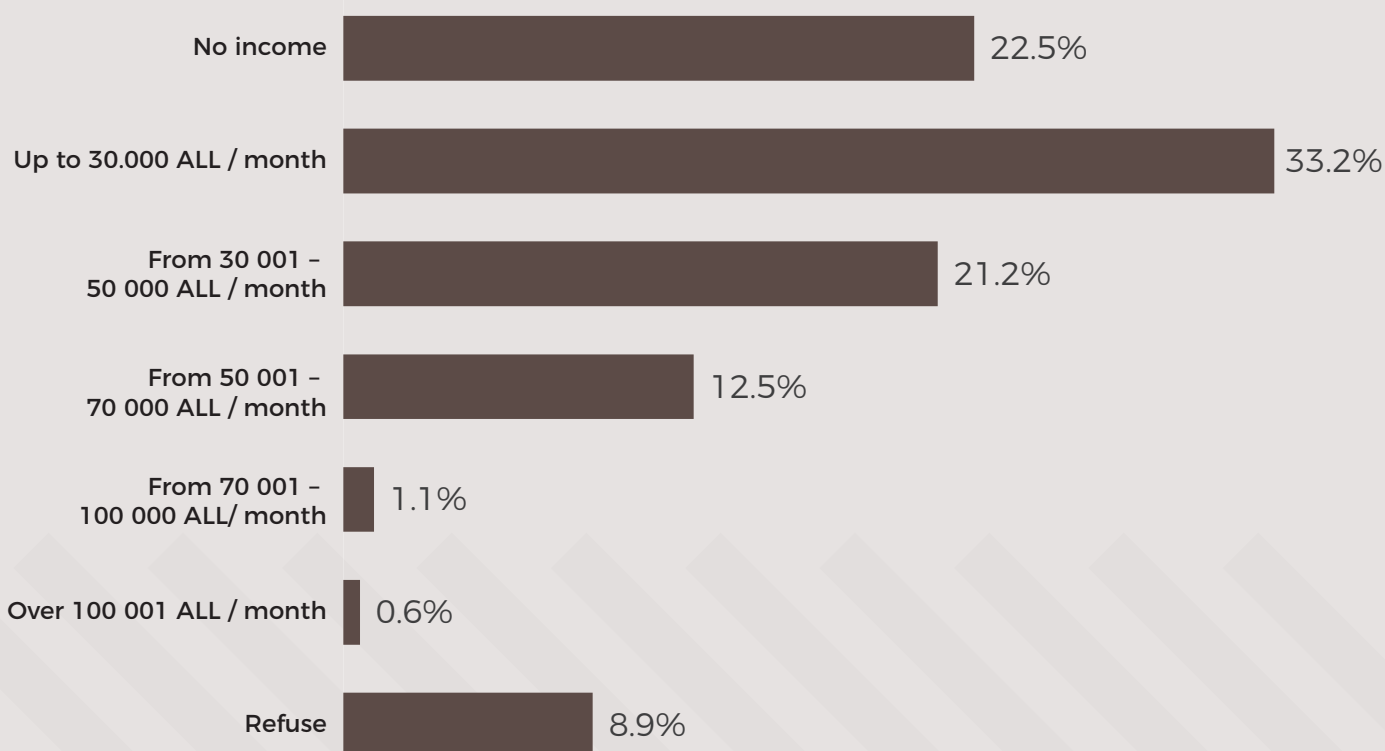
EMPLOYMENT STATUS



With regards to the respondents' regular individual monthly incomes, 22.5% of the respondents stated that they did not receive any regular income at the time of the survey. 33.2% earned up to 30,000 ALL/month, whilst

21.2% reported that they received regular monthly incomes falling between 30,001 ALL and 50,000 ALL. Only 14.2% of the respondents stated that they received individual monthly incomes of over 50,000 ALL.

REGULAR INDIVIDUAL MONTHLY INCOME



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