



Institute for Democracy and Mediation  
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim

THEMATIC REPORT

# INTERNAL DEMOCRACY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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DELIBERATIVE  
POLLING  
'SHOIPËRIA  
N'KU VENDIM'

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) held the first national deliberative polling<sup>1</sup> exercise entitled ‘Shqipëria n’Kuvendim’ on 18-21 November 2021, in Tirana. The Deliberative Polling relies on three surveys – a nationally representative survey with 1200 respondents, a treatment group<sup>2</sup> survey with 110 respondents, and a control group<sup>3</sup> survey with another 110 respondents. These thematic report findings are based on the data of the national survey<sup>4</sup>, as well as insights from the small discussion groups<sup>5</sup> 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 two-thirds of the respondents consider political parties important for the quality of governance. The introduction of competitive mechanisms for the internal election system of political parties is perceived as a very important process by almost three out of four national survey respondents, this was also supported by participants of the “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”

four-day event (November 2021). The dominant expectation is that this process would ensure that fresh faces are introduced to the party ranks, while also limiting the party leaders’ powers.

The proposal to increase public funding for political parties as a measure to improve political parties’ accountability and internal democracy is not supported by 43% of national survey respondents. Some participants justified this scepticism, by referring to the current mismanagement of funds and the lack of transparency shown by political parties. 58% of the respondents and deliberative polling participants considered the certification of political party finances by international audit companies as important. .



- 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 and did not participate in 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

Albania's lack of democratic tradition has led to political parties with poor internal democracy. These organisations do not usually exercise functional democracy inside their structures, which makes the public sceptic about how capable they are of projecting democratic values and reforms.<sup>6</sup>

Political parties in Albania are often identified based on their leaders, with the latter also having extensive influence and power inside these organisations. Throughout the years, a lot of fragmentations have occurred, with many new parties stemming from the established ones. These fragmentations have primarily happened due to ambitions and personal disagreements between party leaders and their competitors within the party. Observations show that these offshoots do not differ much from the original parties, strengthening the impression that these fragmentations do not happen due to differences in political and organisational views. Additionally, the lack of pluralism inside both old and new political parties is also displayed in the public discourse and political behaviour of the leaders.



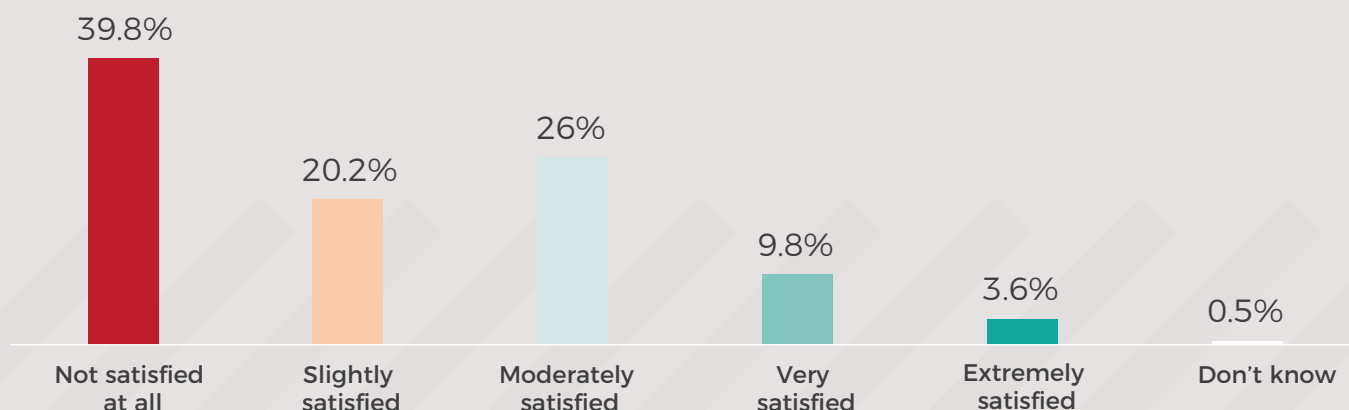
6 See the IDM's annual 'Trust in Governance' survey reports (2015–2020). Available at: <https://idmalbania.org/trust-in-governance/>

# ALBANIANS' PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES ON INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA<sup>7</sup>

Respondents are generally not very satisfied with the way democracy works in Albania. 39.8% of the respondents stated that they were not satisfied at all, while 20.2% stated that they were slightly satisfied. Moreover, 26% of the respondents expressed that they were moderately satisfied, with 9.8% choosing the option "very satisfied" and 3.6% choosing

"extremely satisfied" (see Fig. 1). Respondents who were retired at the time of the survey were more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works in Albania. Similarly, respondents who were employed in the public sector were also more likely to be satisfied, as compared to respondents who were employed in the private sector.

FIGURE 1: ON THE WHOLE, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE WAY DEMOCRACY WORKS IN ALBANIA?



Concerning the respondents' interest in politics, 15.8% of them stated that they had no interest at all, while 31.9% stated that they are slightly interested in politics. 39% chose the "moderately interested" option, with 10.8% choosing "very interested" and 2.2% stating that they were extremely interested (see Fig.2). Male respondents were more likely to be interested in politics, as compared to female respondents.

Although the majority of the respondents had low to moderate interest in politics, three out of four of them had voted in the last parliamentary elections. 75.9% of the survey sample stated that they had voted in the last parliamentary elections, while 13.7% did not, and 10.4% refused to answer (see Fig.3).



7 Në këtë seksion, në analizë shkalla nga 1-10 është grupuar në tre kategori: 0-3 e parëndësishme, 4-6 neutral, dhe 7-10 e rëndësishme.

FIGURE 2: OVERALL, HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN POLITICS?

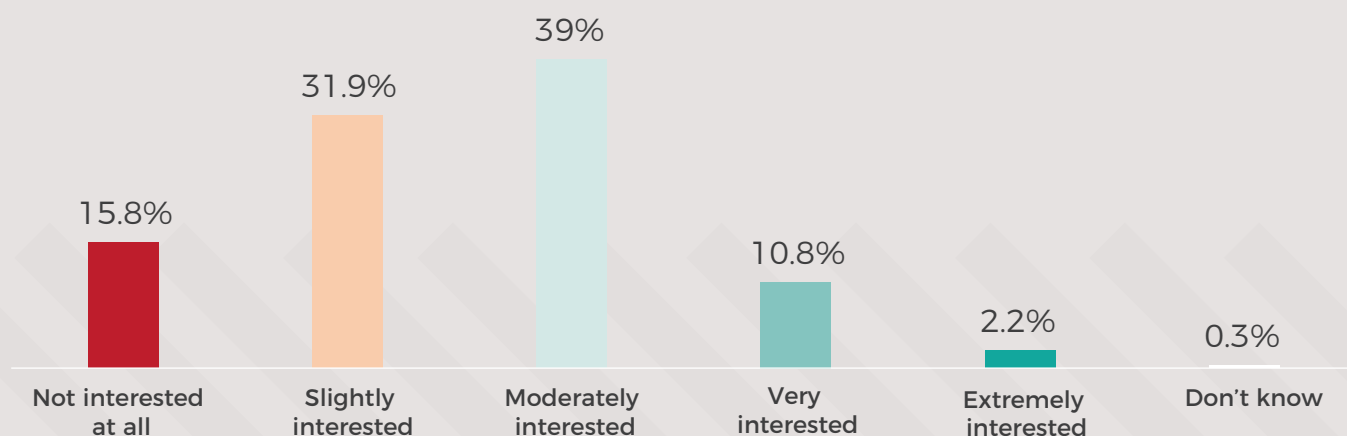
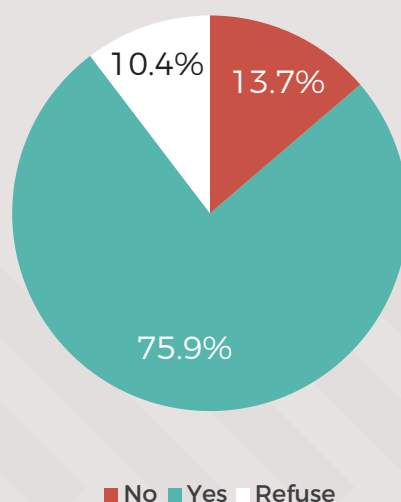
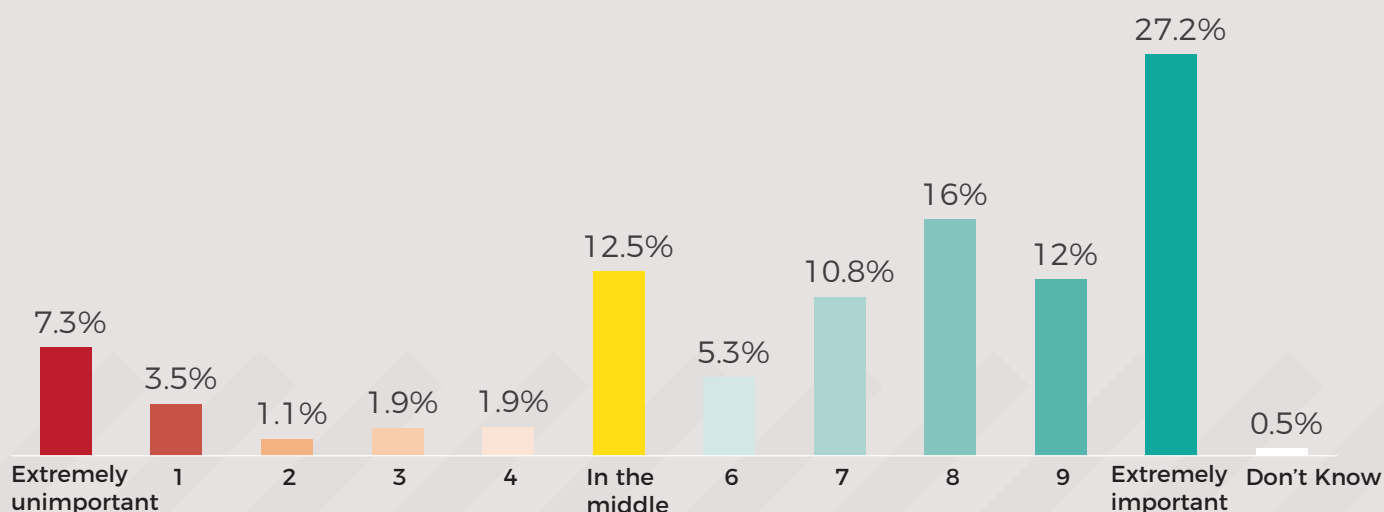


FIGURE 3: DID YOU VOTE IN THE LAST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS?



Respondents were asked about how important they considered political parties for the quality of governance. 66% of the respondents considered political parties as important for the quality of governance while 13.9% claimed them as unimportant and about 19.7% of the respondents were in the middle (see Fig.4). Respondents who had received more formal education were more prone to consider parties important, as compared to respondents with lower education levels. Moreover, respondents who were employed in the public sector were more likely to see parties as important, compared to those employed in the private sector.

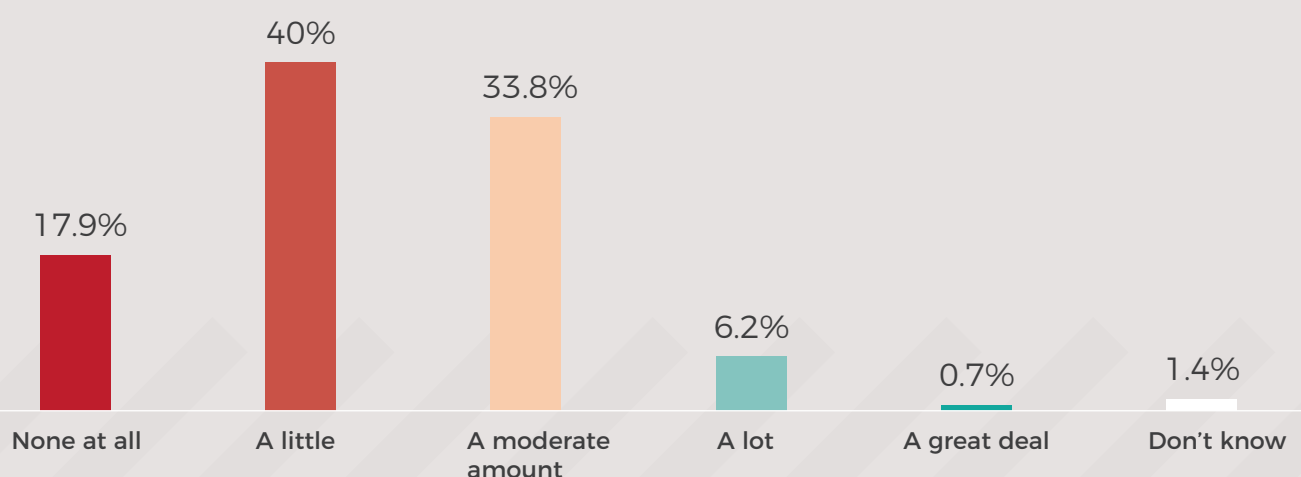
**FIGURE 4: IN GENERAL, HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU CONSIDER POLITICAL PARTIES FOR THE QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE?**



Respondents were also asked about to what extent they were familiar with the Albanian political parties' internal governance, in general. Most of the respondents were either 'not at all' (17.9%) or just 'a little' familiar (40%). Moreover, 33.8% of the respondents stated that they were moderately familiar with the parties' internal governance, and only 6.8% of the overall

sample expressed that they are either a lot (6.2%) or "a great deal" familiar (0.7%) (see Fig.5). Respondents who were working in the public sector at the time of the survey were more likely to be informed about political parties' internal governance, as compared to respondents working in the private sector.

**FIGURE 5: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH POLITICAL PARTIES' INTERNAL GOVERNANCE IN GENERAL IN ALBANIA?**

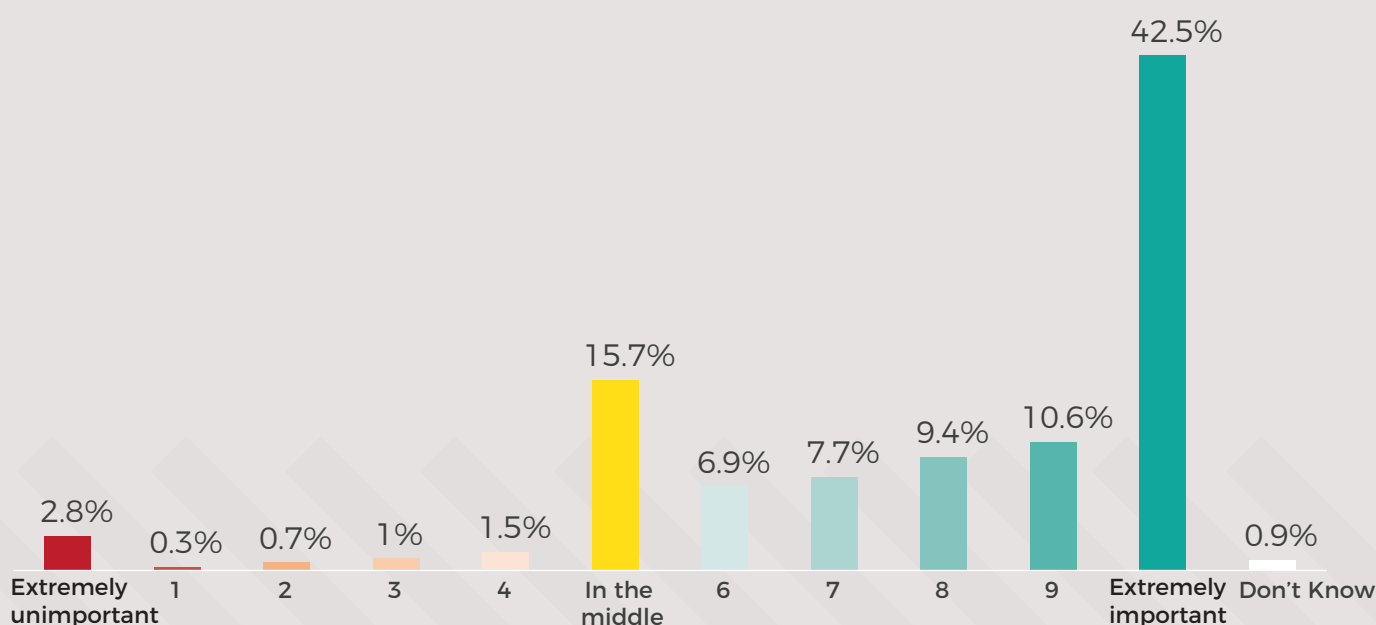


The national survey has asked respondents whether and to what extent (on a scale from 0 to 10) a set of specific proposals could improve political parties' accountability and internal democracy. The data shows that for some of them, respondents are quite optimistic that they might potentially improve internal democracy and accountability in political parties. Similar expectations were shared also by the participants attending "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim". However, such optimism was less present in some other statements articulating

proposals for improving the accountability and democracy of political parties.

When asked about making the statutes and internal structures of political parties public and easily accessible online, about 70.1% of the respondents deemed it important, with only 4.8% considering it unimportant and 24.2% being in the middle (see Fig.6). Respondents who were students at the time of the survey were more likely to consider the proposal as important.

**FIGURE 6: MAKE POLITICAL PARTIES' STATUTES AND INTERNAL STRUCTURES PUBLIC AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE ONLINE.**



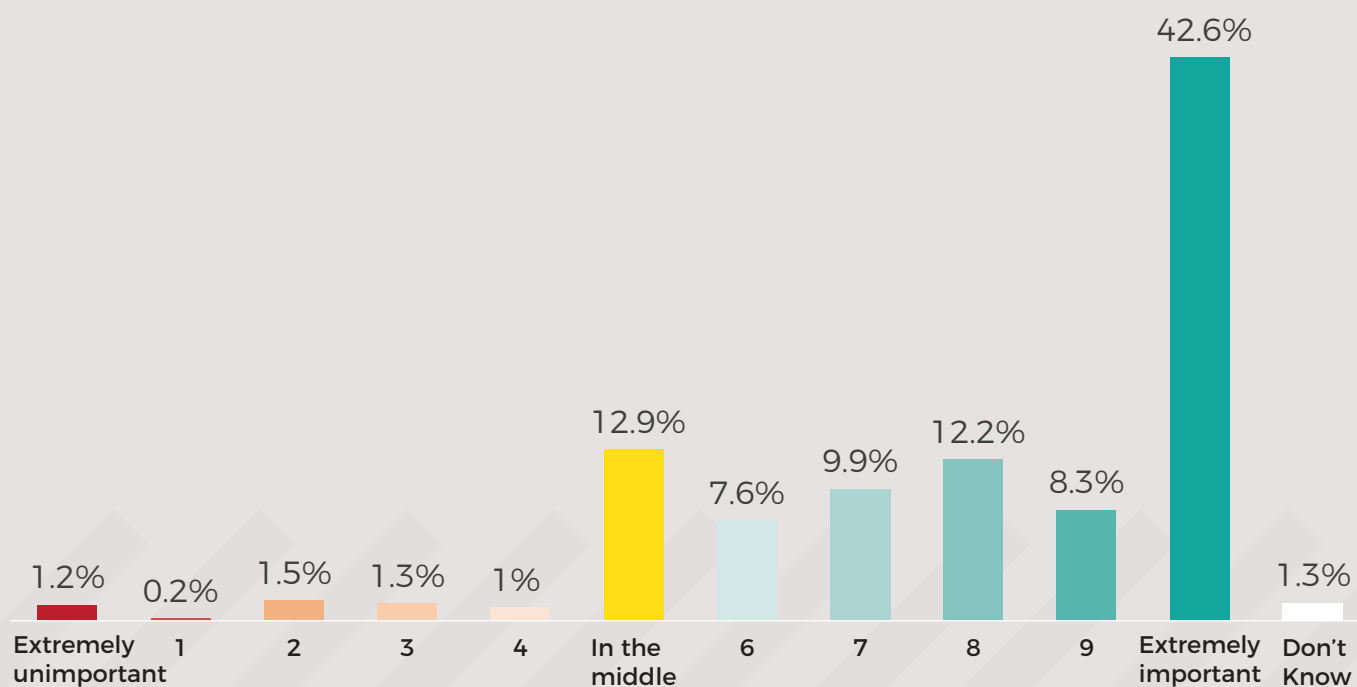
The proposal of 'introducing competitive mechanisms for the internal election system of political parties was considered important by 73% of the respondents, while 4.1% referred to it as an unimportant process and 21.5% were in the middle (see Fig.7). Some participants in the deliberative polling event (November 2021) suggested that the establishment of competitive mechanisms in the internal election system would ensure two main positive outcomes. Firstly, introducing such mechanisms would allow for new candidates to enter the parties'

realms, thus refreshing the existing structures, dominated by individuals who have been active for a long time. To quote one participant: *'In the most recent elections, there were new candidates who received more support than the older party figures, sometimes even breaking the regulative thresholds that disadvantaged them in the competition'*. Secondly, the introduction of competitive mechanisms would limit the already high power of party leaders, by distributing the power to select candidates to a broader number of party members. However,

the participants claim that it would be very difficult to ensure a transparent and high integrity process free of the strong influences of

the party leaders. As one participant put it, *'the costs of implementing this system are irrelevant, it is only a discussion of political will'*.

**FIGURE 7: INTRODUCE COMPETITIVE MECHANISMS FOR INTERNAL ELECTION SYSTEM OF POLITICAL PARTIES (E.G., PRIMARIES FOR THEIR CANDIDATES IN LOCAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS).**

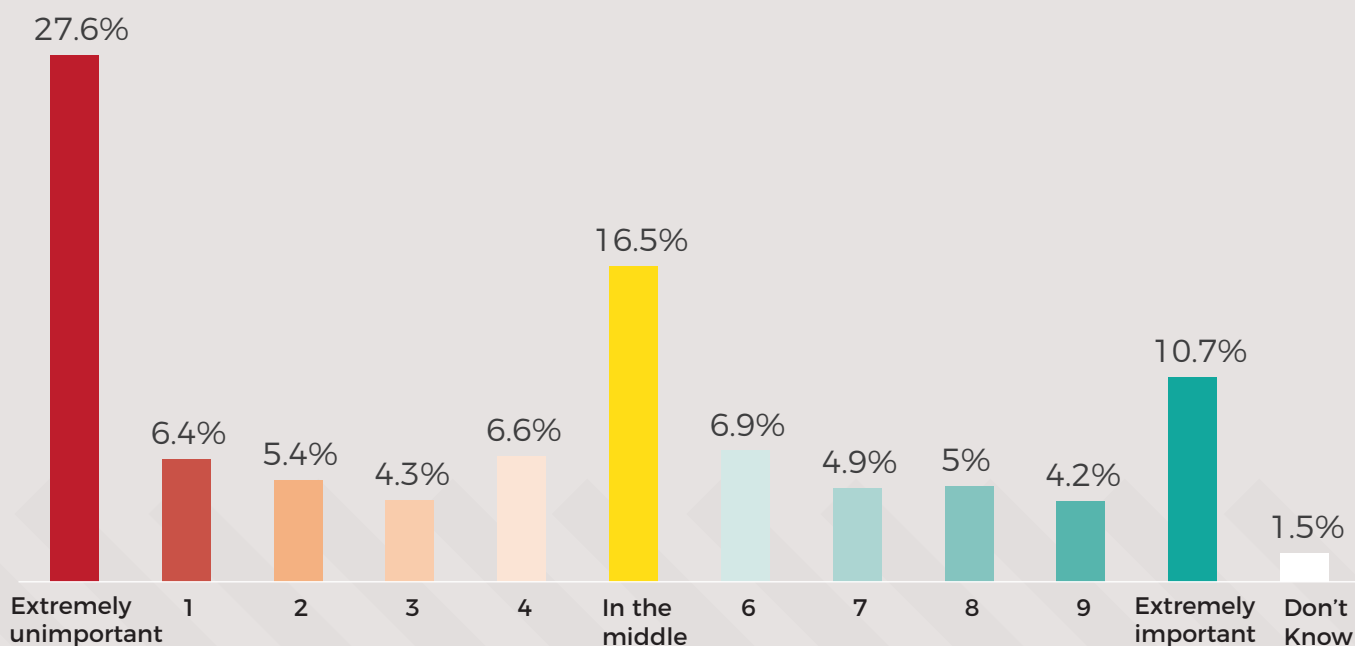


Respondents were asked whether public funding for political parties and candidates should be increased. 43.7% of the respondents considered the initiative unimportant, while 30% were in the middle and 24.9% of the sample deemed it important (see Fig.8). Respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey were more likely to consider the proposal unimportant. Participants in the deliberative poll “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” were sceptical of increasing public funding for parties and candidates, since they felt that public funds are not currently being used efficiently by political parties. Moreover, some participants felt that the lack of transparency displayed by parties, concerning their usage of public funds, does not provide the right environment for increasing public funding. On the other hand, participants acknowledged that

an increase in public funding would help new parties and candidates, who do not possess the finances that are needed for level competition. Participants also mentioned that such an initiative would make parties and candidates less dependent on lobbyists, leading to a government that would owe less to businesses or individuals who would have alternatively provided financial support.



FIGURE 8: INCREASING PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PARTIES AND CANDIDATES.



As for whether the ‘political parties’ financial transparency must be certified by international auditing companies, 57.9% of national survey respondents considered the process important, while 13% considered it unimportant and 26% were in the middle (see Fig.9). Respondents who were working in the public sector at the time of the survey were more likely to see the proposal as important, as compared to those working in the private sector.

Yet, participants attending the “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” event (November 2021) were at odds on whether political parties’ finances should be audited by rather national or international auditing companies. One side of the participants stated that international auditing companies provide more credibility, since they are less susceptible to the influence of the subject parties, while also having a great amount of experience in conducting these procedures. On the other side, some participants preferred the involvement of Albanian companies, expressing that the latter would be the cheaper version, for the same service received. However, there was almost a

consensus that domestic enterprises would be more vulnerable to political parties’ influence during the procedure, and the participants suggested that there should be measures in place, which would ensure that it does not happen.

Interestingly, despite the very strong opinions on political parties’ financial transparency, the national survey found that the majority of Albanians do not know which body is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the political parties’ financing, according to the Law on Political Parties. Namely, respondents chose as following: 35.8% of the respondents were correct in selecting the Central Election Committee, while 18.7% chose the Supreme State Audit, and 5.8% the parliament. Moreover, 11.2% of the respondents chose “all of the above”, 1.9% chose “none of the above”, with the remaining 26.7% claiming that they did not know (see Fig.10).

FIGURE 9: POLITICAL PARTIES' FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY MUST BE CERTIFIED BY INTERNATIONAL AUDITING COMPANIES

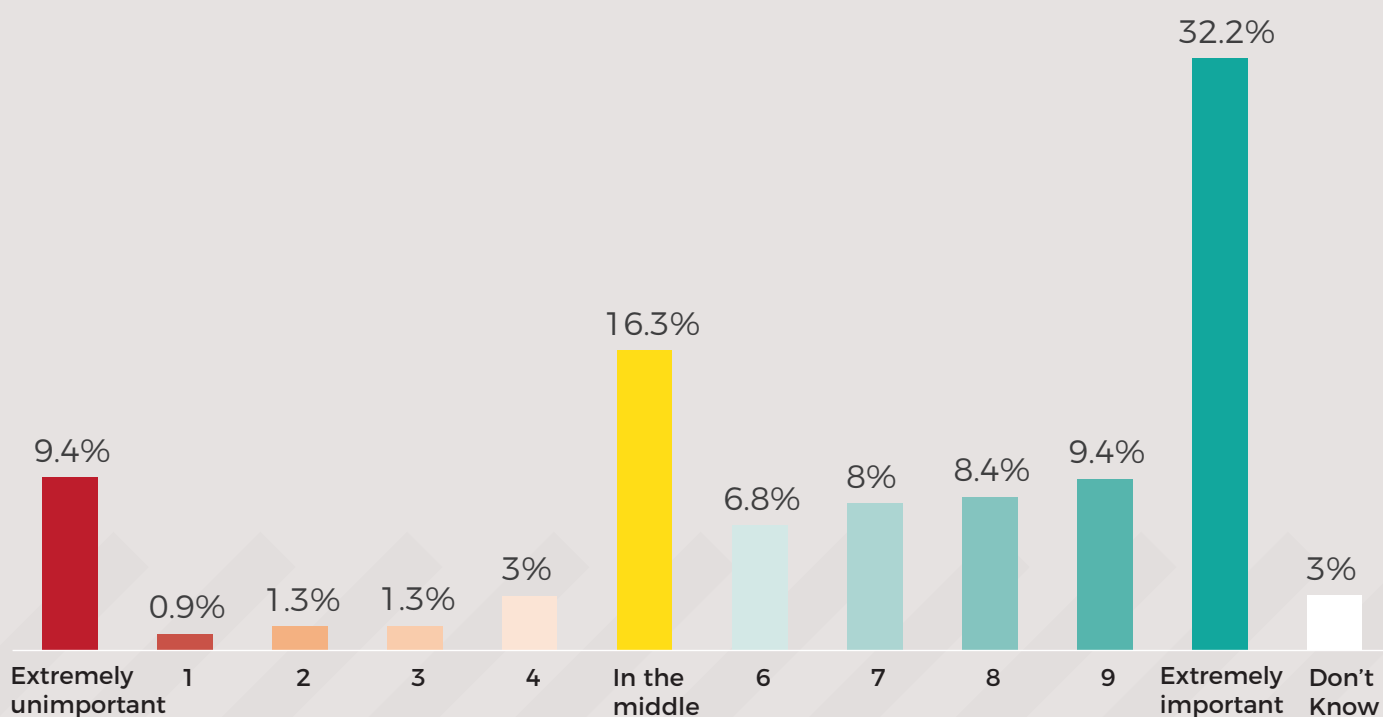
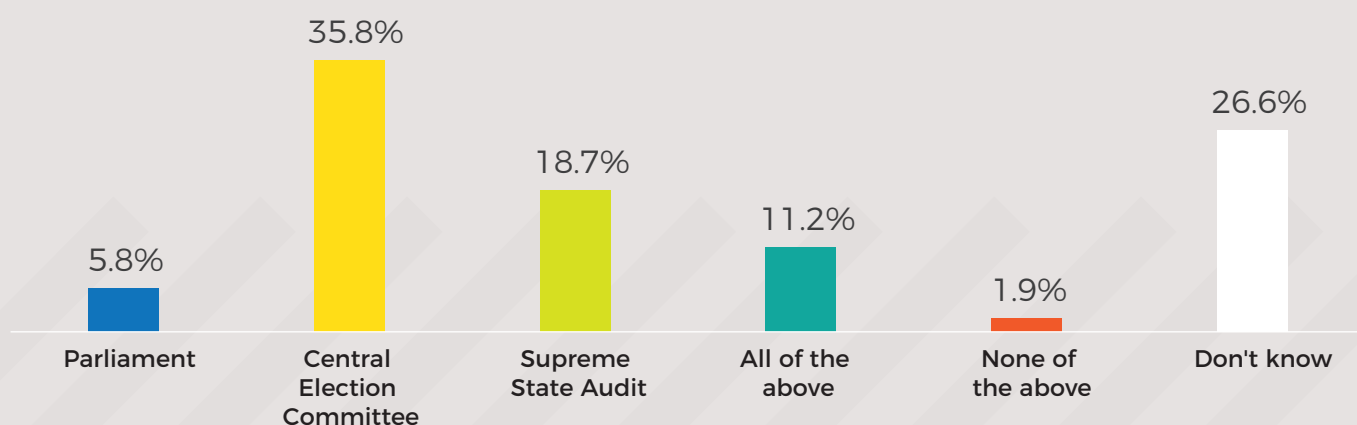


FIGURE 10: ACCORDING TO THE LAW ON POLITICAL PARTIES, WHICH BODY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING AND OVERSEEING THE POLITICAL PARTIES' FINANCING?



## 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  $\pm 2.83$ ; and for a confidence level of 99%, the confidence interval is  $\pm 3.72$ .

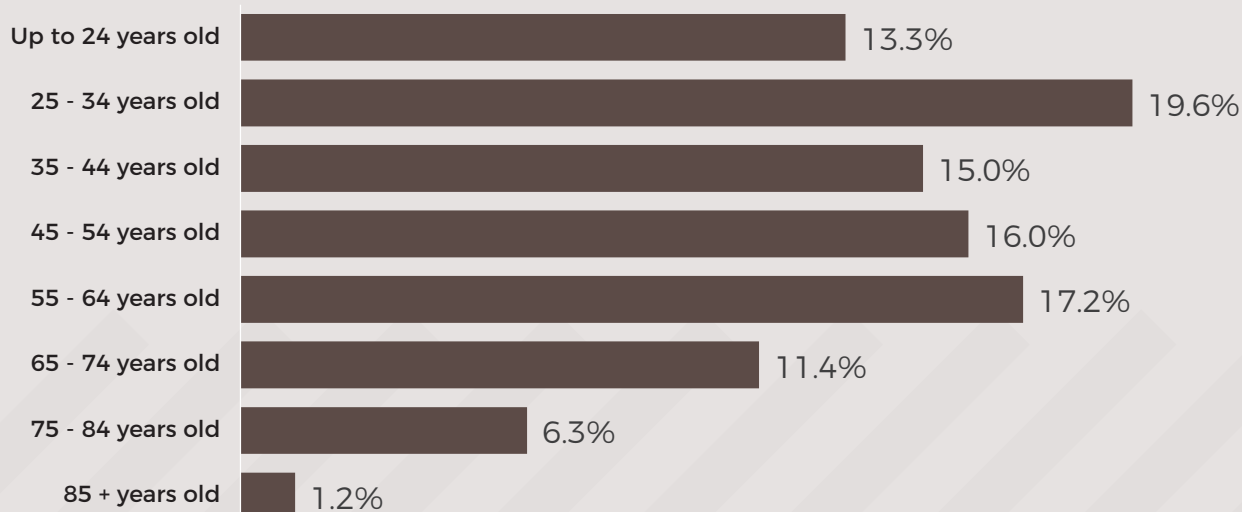
To determine the quota size of each of the counties, the population of Albania was retrieved from the civil registry, and the number of residents of each of the counties on 1 January 2021 was retrieved from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Since the number of residents in the territory of Albania 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

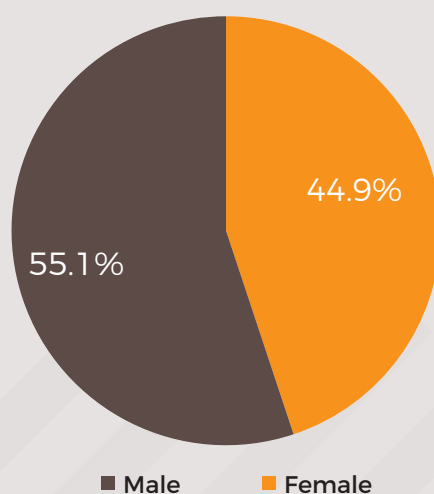
A total of 1200 Albanian citizens, 18 years old and over, from all the municipalities of the Republic of Albania, participated in the national survey. Of all the respondents, 55.1% were male while 44.9% were female. The majority of respondents pertained to age groups ranging

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



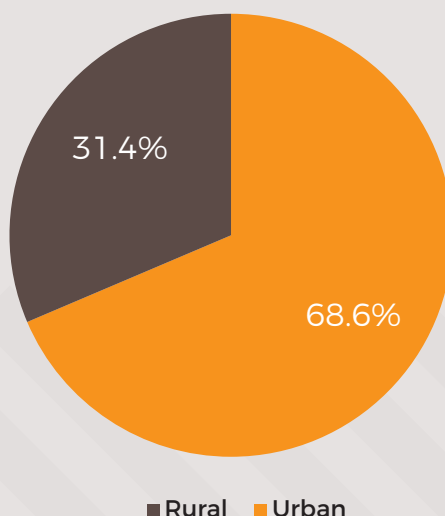
## GENDER



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.<sup>1</sup> However, over the past ten years, this number has increased.

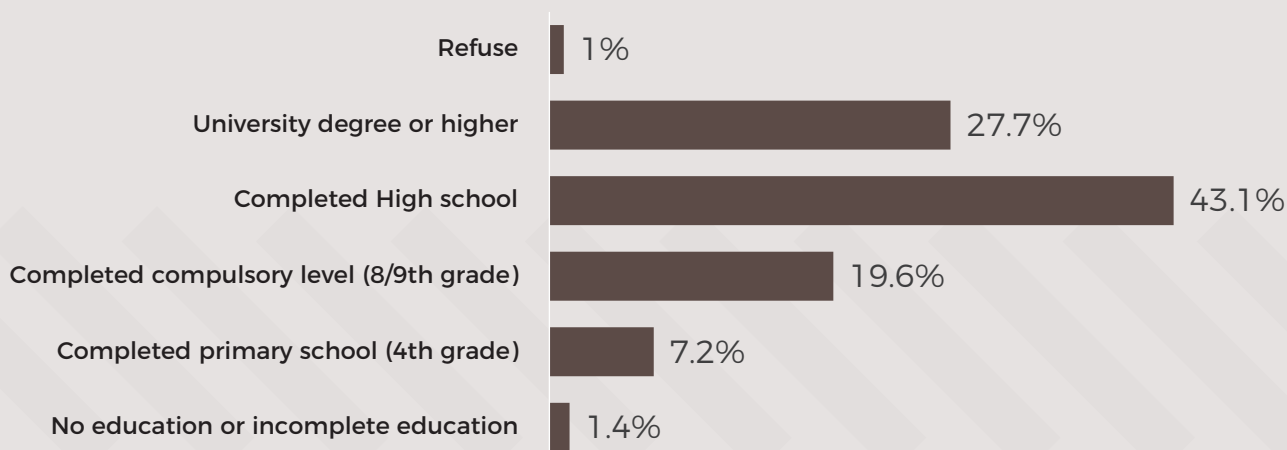
#### GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION



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

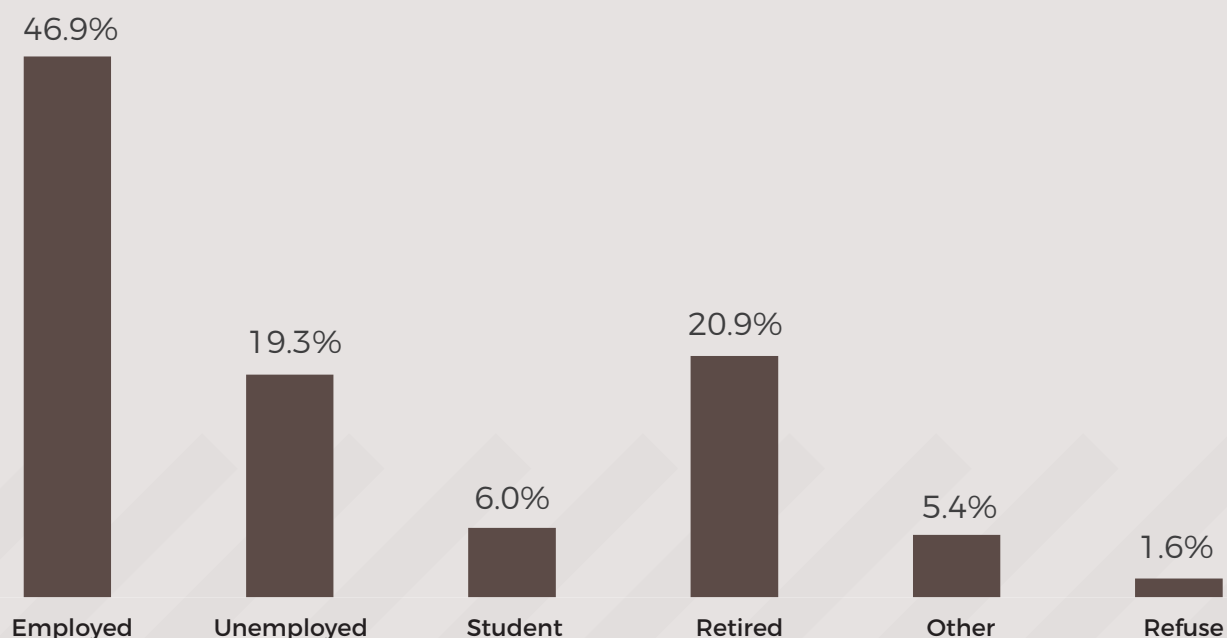


1 [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a\\_new\\_urban-rural\\_classification\\_of\\_albanian\\_population.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a_new_urban-rural_classification_of_albanian_population.pdf)

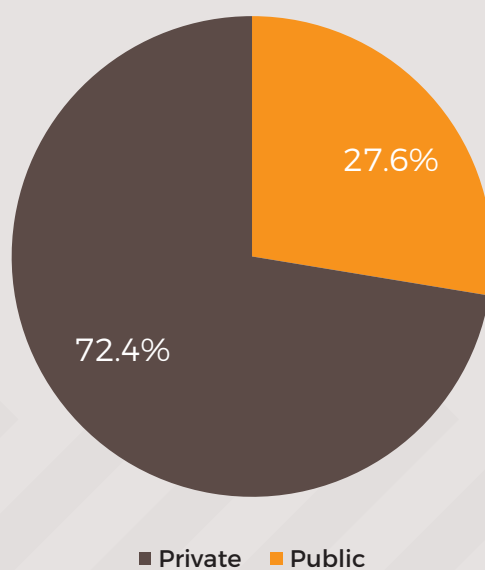
About 46.9% of the respondents were employed at the time of the survey, with 72.4% of them working in the private sector and 27.6% employed in the public sector. About a fifth

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 STATUS



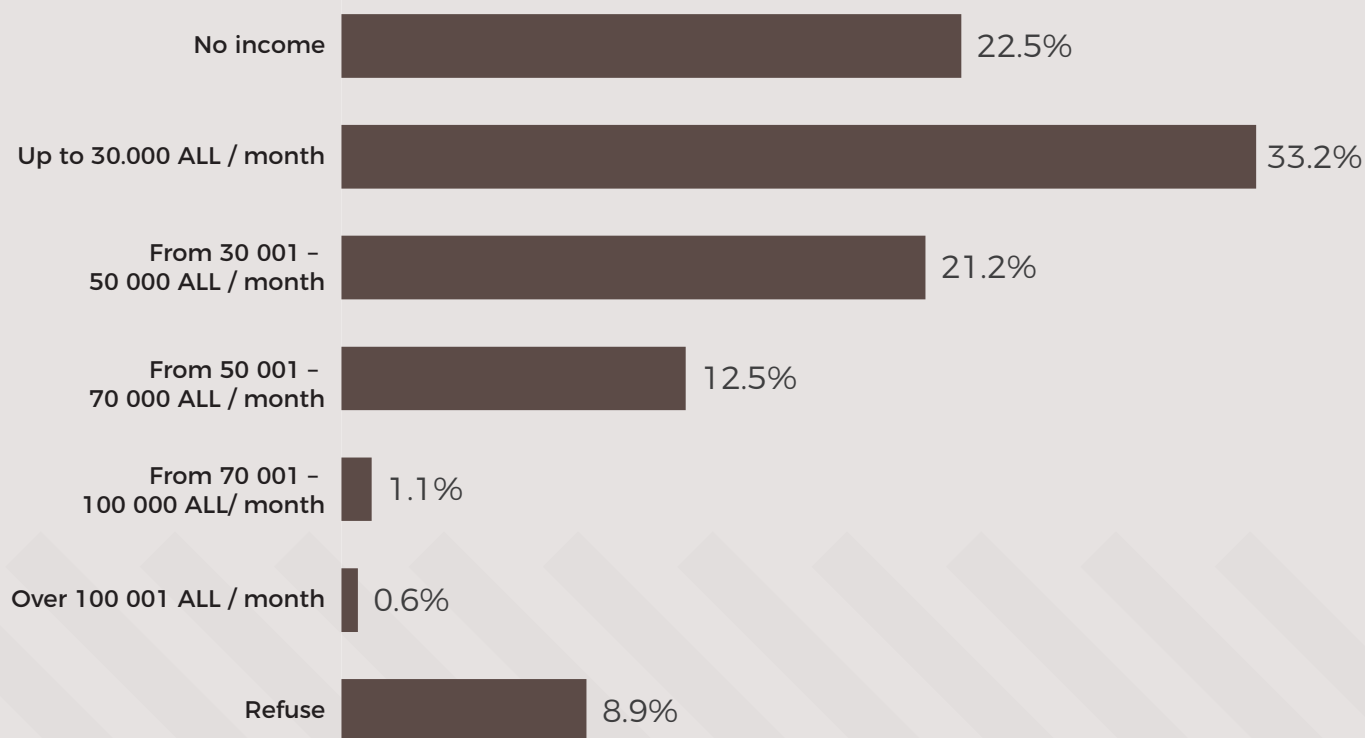
#### EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



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



**Tirana, February 2022**

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dhe Edukimin Qytetar në Shqipëri

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*"Support to Parliament and Civic Education in Albania" (PACEP)  
is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and  
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*This activity was held by IDM in the  
framework of PACEP project, in  
consultation with the Center for  
Deliberative Democracy (CDD) at  
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