



Institute for Democracy and Mediation

Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim

THEMATIC REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Author: **Megi Reçi**



DELIBERATIVE
POLLING
'SHQIPËRIA
N'KU VENDIM'

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 respondents. These thematic report findings are based on the data of the national survey⁴, as well as insights from the small discussion group⁵ 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.

The national survey showed a low level of public trust in the institution of the Parliament with 40% of respondents reporting they do not trust it at all. The data also reveals a common perception amongst Albanians regarding the ineffectiveness of the oversight role of the Parliament over the work of the government and the need for strengthening

it. The proposals for strengthening the role of the opposition by enabling it to preside over the work of at least 1/3 of parliamentary committees and providing it with additional human resources, received moderate (48.4%) support from the respondents. In contrast, the respondents were highly (81.9%) supportive of the proposal to strengthen the competencies of the independent institutions in scrutinizing the government. Furthermore, the national survey and the small discussion groups of “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” evidenced a scarce understanding of the oversight role of the Parliament and the overall political developments in the country. Regarding the oversight role of the Parliament, 35.7% of the respondents were a little familiar, whilst only 1.1% said they know a great deal about it. On the other hand, 40.7% of the respondents had a moderate understanding of what is going on in politics and Parliament.



- 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 event “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”.
- 3 The control group included randomly selected citizens from the national survey sample who 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

The parliamentary oversight function is of paramount importance to ensure accountability and transparency of the activity of the government. If implemented effectively, parliamentary oversight enables a balance of power and is an indicator of good governance. Parliamentary oversight is one of the most pressing aspects of improving the performance of the Parliament of Albania and its strengthening must become a priority for the new legislature. Moreover, the other check and balance mechanisms in place, such as the independent institutions⁶, enjoy limited competencies and as a result, their recommendations are more often than not, not implemented.⁷



6 High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest; Supreme State Audit; Ombudsperson; Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection; Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination.

7 See European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Albania Report, 19 October 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/albania-report-2021_en.

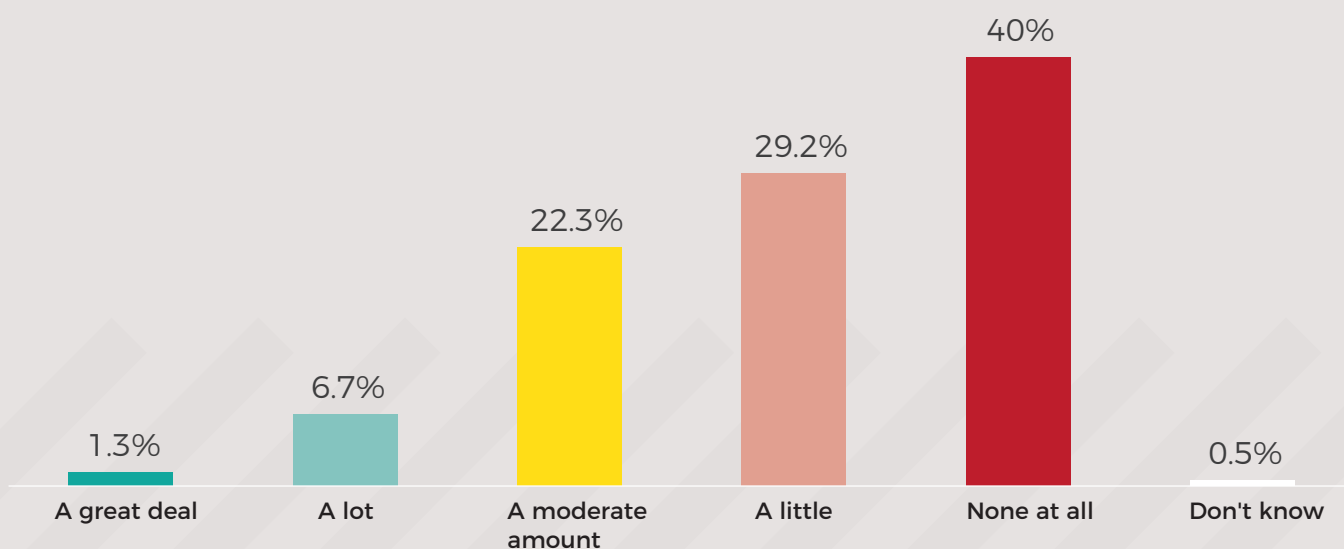
ALBANIANS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT⁸

The national survey and the small discussion groups during the deliberative polling exercise navigate citizens' perceptions and level of information regarding parliamentary oversight, the role of the opposition and independent institutions, as well citizens' take on some proposals for strengthening oversight.

The national survey findings show a low level of public trust in the Parliament. When asked how

much they trusted the Parliament in doing what is right, 40% of the respondents said they do not trust it at all, 29.2% said they trust it a little, whilst 22.3% said they trust the Parliament to a moderate extent. Students and the unemployed respondents were more likely to report no trust at all. Only 6.7% of the respondents said they trust the Parliament a lot, whilst 1.3% said they trust it a great deal and 0.5% said they "did not know". See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE PARLIAMENT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT?



The participants in "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim" questioned the integrity of MPs as well as pointed out the lack of transparency of the Parliament, which can explain the low levels of trust. Moreover, one of the participants expressed they felt unrepresented "MPs are

imported, not elected by us because the electoral lists are closed", said one of the participants."

On the question of how much they felt they could understand what is going on in politics and Parliament, 40.7% of respondents

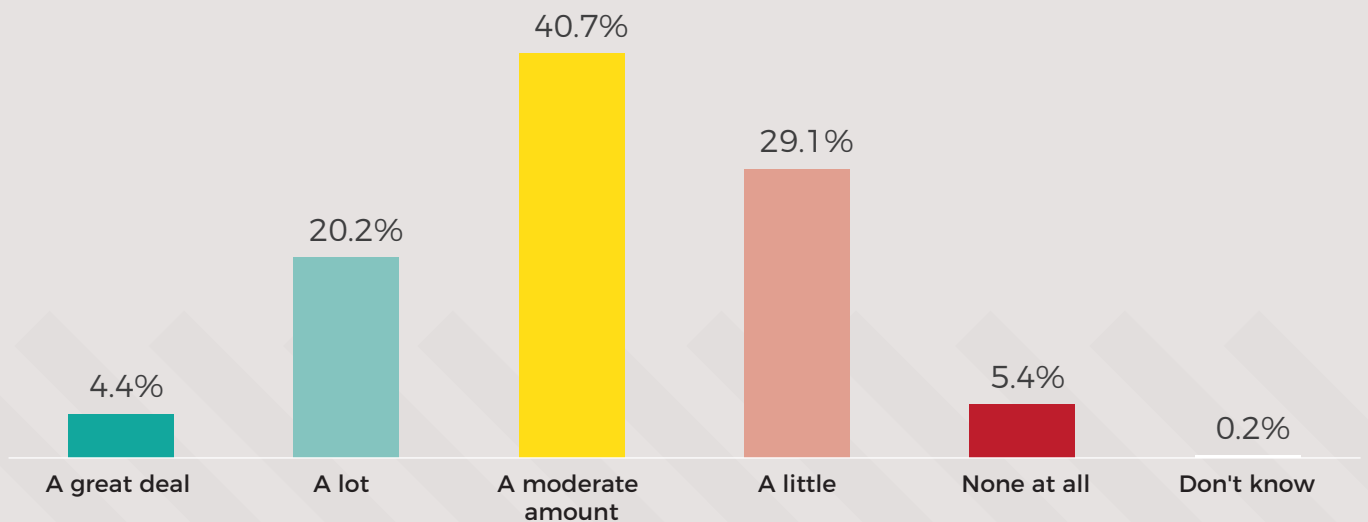


8 In the narrative, from Figure 4 to Figure 9, the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 opposed, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 support the statement.

answered “to a moderate amount”. The rest of the responses were split amongst “a great deal” (4.4%); “a lot” (20.2%); “a little” (29.1%); “none at all” (5.4%) and “I don’t know” (0.2%). See Figure 2. Across the demographics of the survey

respondents, women and those with a lower level of education were more likely to report they had no understanding at all of what is going on in politics and Parliament.

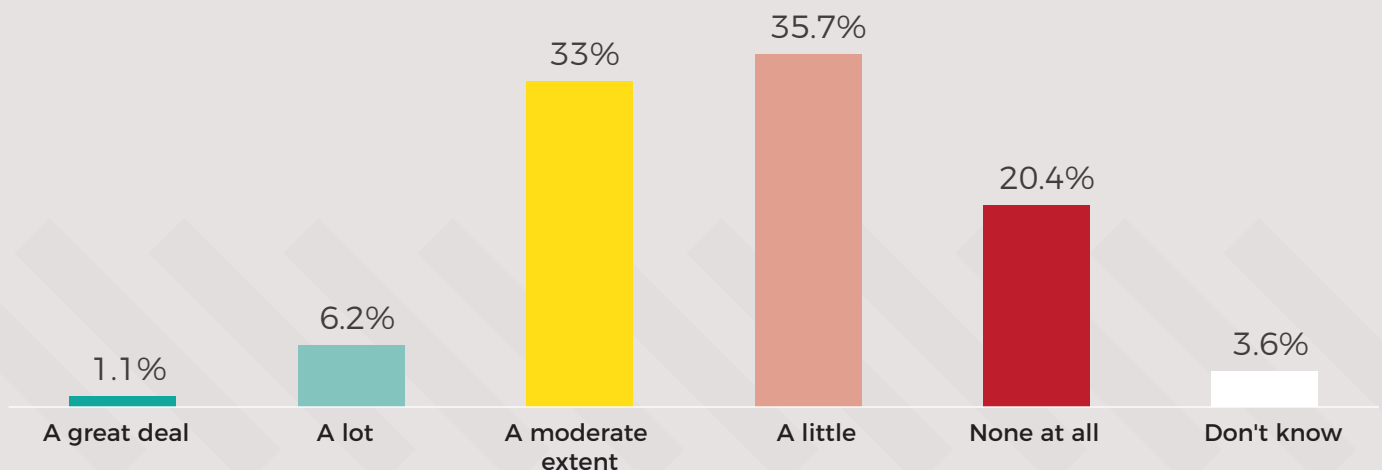
FIGURE 2. HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON IN POLITICS AND PARLIAMENT?



When asked how familiar they were with the parliamentary control and its oversight role of the government, only 1.1% of the respondents answered “a great deal”, 6.2% answered “a lot”, and 33% said they are familiar with a moderate extent. The majority of the respondents

(35.7%) were a little familiar, and the rest were not familiar at all (20.4%) or did not know (3.6%). See Figure 3. The data indicate a limited level of information and familiarity amongst the respondents regarding one of the main functions of the Parliament.

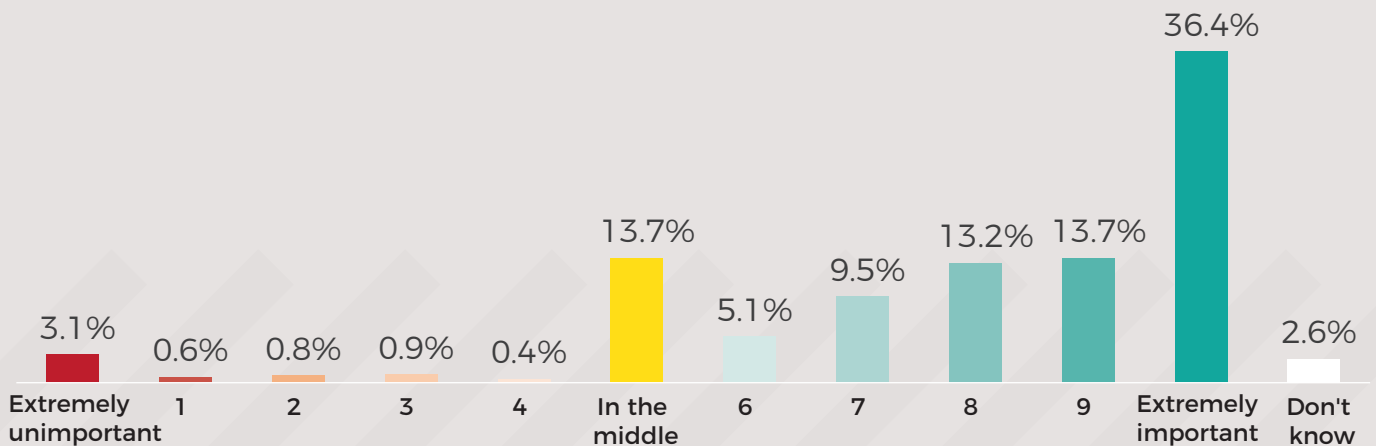
FIGURA 3. SA NJOHURI KENI PËR ROLIN KONTROLLUES DHE MBIKËQYRËS TË PARLAMENTIT MBI QEVERINË?



The majority of the respondents (72.8%) agreed on the importance of parliamentary control and oversight over the government, 19.2% leaned towards the middle, 5.4% consider it as

unimportant and 2.6% said they did not know. See Figure 4.⁹ Well-educated respondents were more likely to consider the oversight function of the Parliament as important.

FIGURA 4. NË PARIM, SA TË RËNDËSISHËM E KONSIDERONI KONTROLLIN DHE MBIKËQYRJEN E QEVERISË NGA PARLAMENTI?



Regarding the effectiveness of the parliamentary control and oversight over the government, only 18.6% of the respondents were supportive, whilst 41.1% considered it ineffective, 35.1% tend to be neutral and 5.2% said they did not know. See Figure 5.¹⁰ This suggests that despite a general acknowledgment of the importance of parliamentary oversight, as shown in Figure 4, very few consider this to be effective in reality.

During the small discussion groups of “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”, participants were split on this proposal. On one hand, some participants argued that strengthening the role of the opposition would increase government accountability. On the other hand, some participants stated that the composition of the parliament should represent the will of the voters, and such measures would interfere with the latter.

The results of the national survey show that the majority of the respondents (48.4%) were supportive of the proposal of enabling the opposition to preside over the work of at least 1/3 of parliamentary committees, whilst 32.1% gravitated towards the middle, 13.7% were opposed and 5.8% said they did not know. See Figure 6.



- 9 In the narrative, the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 unimportant, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 important.
- 10 In the narrative, the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 not effective, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 effective.

FIGURA 5. NË SHQIPËRI SA EFEKTIV ËSHTË KONTROLLI DHE MBIKËQYRJA E QEVERISË NGA PARLAMENTI?

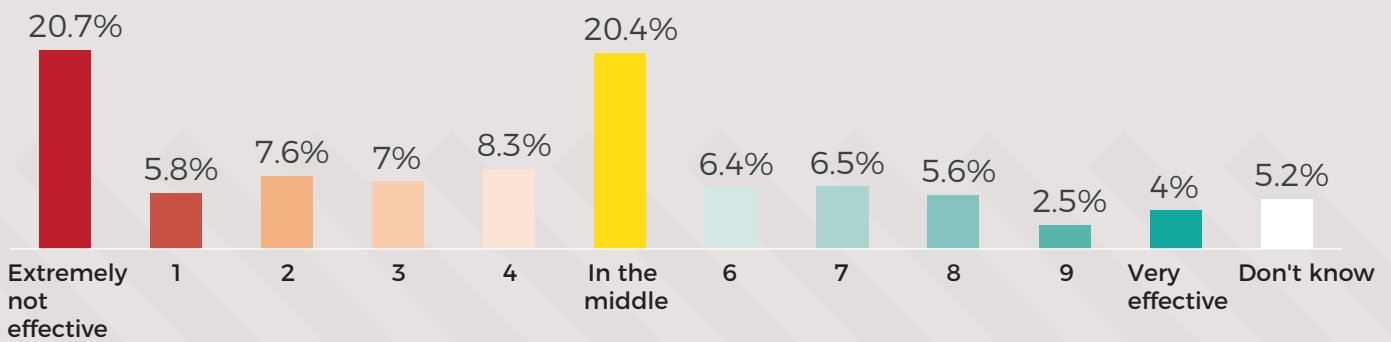
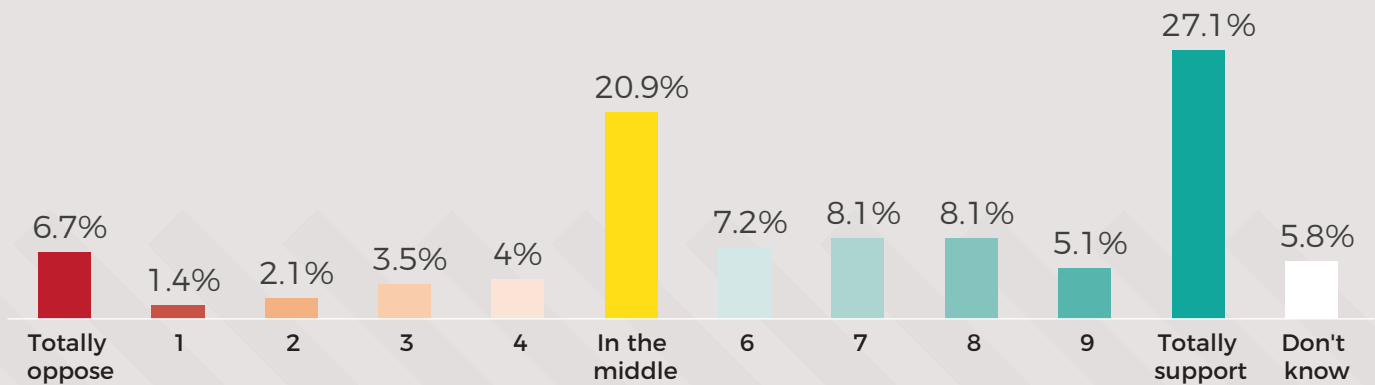


FIGURA 6. T'I MUNDËSOHET OPOZITËS QË TË KRYESOJË TË PAKTËN 1/3 E KOMISIONEVE PARLAMENTARE.



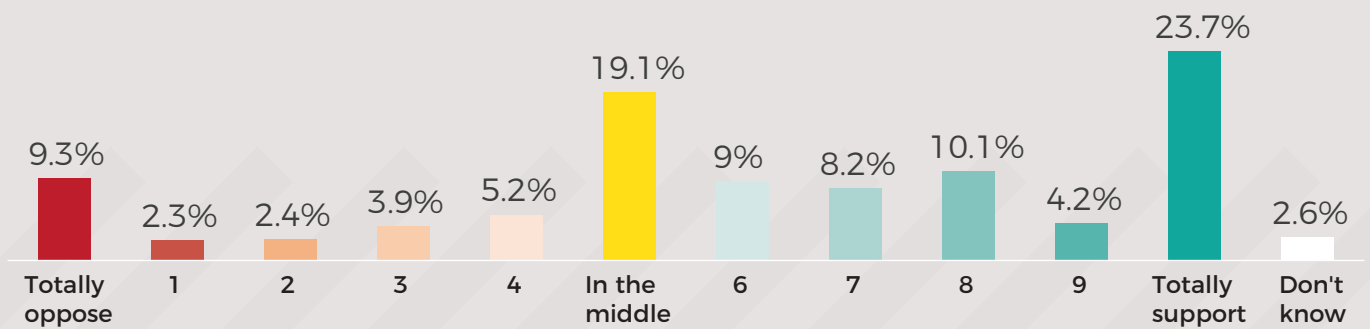
When the respondents were asked to rate the proposal of providing the opposition with more human resources to exercise control and oversight of the government, 46.2% were supportive, 33.3% were neutral, 17.9% were opposed and 2.6% said they did not know. See *Figure 7*.

During the small discussion groups of “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”, some of the participants expressed skepticism towards this idea, arguing that the provision of additional human resources does not necessarily guarantee quality or effectiveness and can be costly. Alternatively, some suggested that increasing the existent capacities instead of providing additional human resources could be more feasible. Nevertheless, in general,

the participants acknowledged the need to empower the opposition as well as other non-political actors who play a key role in monitoring the activity of the government, such as media and civil society organizations.

The survey reveals that the vast majority of the respondents (70.1%) are supportive of the proposal of electing the heads of independent institutions by a qualified majority of votes in the Parliament. Men and respondents employed in the public sector were more likely to support this statement. On the other hand, 20.8% of the respondents were neutral, 5% were opposed to such a proposal and 4.1% said they did not know. See *Figure 8*.

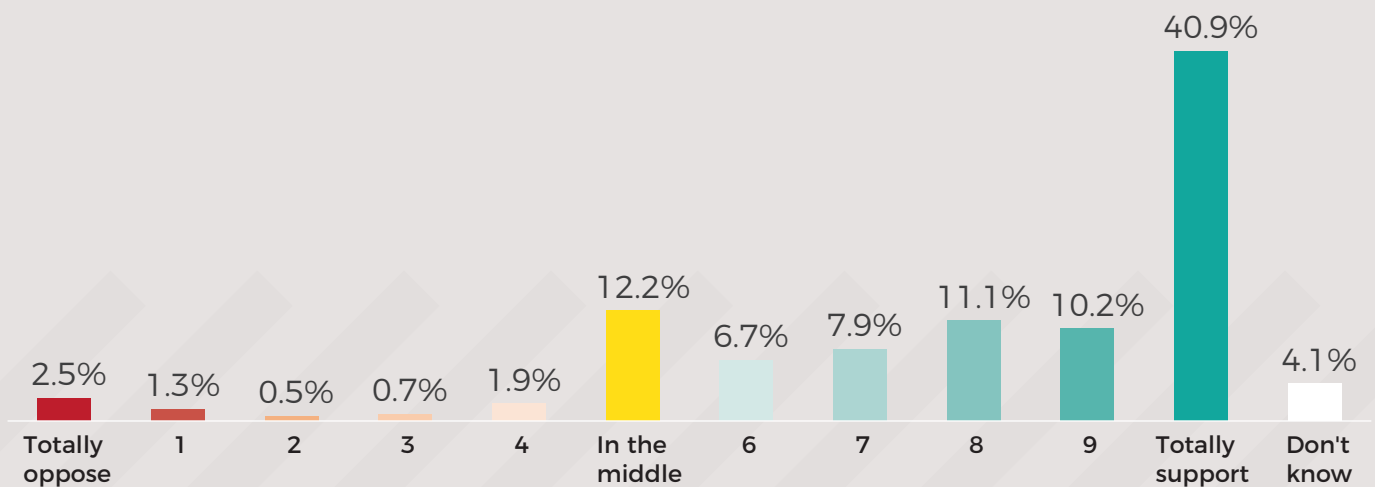
FIGURA 7. T'I MUNDËSOHEN OPOZITËS MË SHUMË BURIME NJERËZORE PËR TË USHTRUAR KONTROLLIN DHE MBIKËQYRJEN E QEVERISË.



Participants in “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” expressed an overall agreement that a requirement for a qualified majority would provide more guarantees for the independence of these institutions. Nevertheless, some

participants noted that there is a risk for the ruling party and opposition to fail in reaching a consensus, producing a political crisis, as has happened in the recent past.

FIGURA 8. KRERËT E INSTITUCIONEVE TË PAVARURA TË ZGJIDHEN ME SHUMICË TË CILËSUAR (2/3) E VOTAVE NË PARLAMENT.

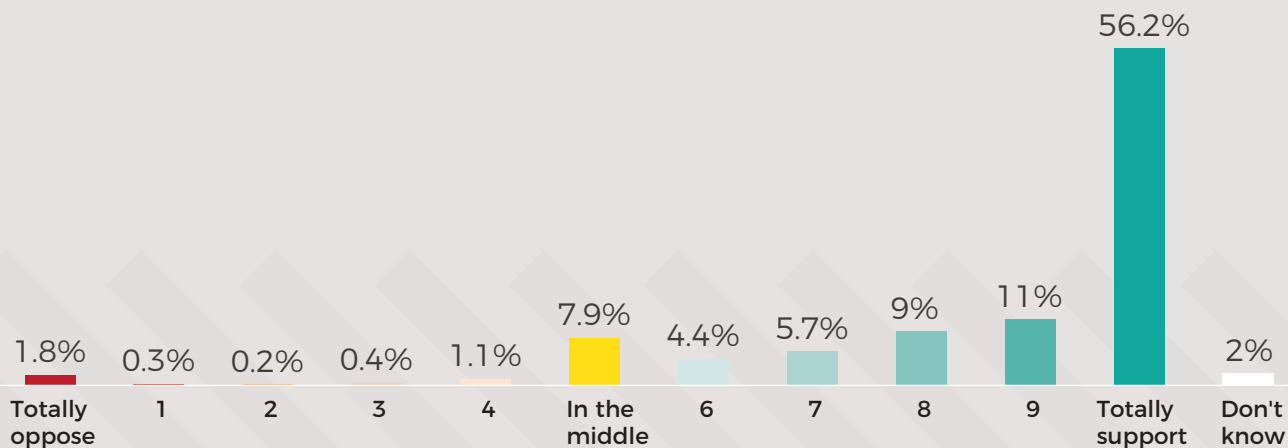


Moreover, 81.9% of the respondents were highly supportive of the proposal to increase and strengthen the competencies of the independent institutions (Supreme State Audit, Ombudsperson, etc.) in controlling the government, including punitive measures. Respondents employed in the public sector were more in favor of this proposal. On the other hand, 13.4% of the respondents were

neutral, 2.7% did not support the statement and 2% said they did not know. See Figure 9.

The participants in “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” acknowledged the need to strengthen these institutions to address the existing imbalance of power.

FIGURA 9.TË RRITEN DHE FORCOHEN KOMPETENCAT E INSTITUCIONEVE TË PAVARURA (P.SH. KLSH, AVOKATI I POPULLIT ETJ.) NË KONTROLLIN NDAJ QEVERISË, PËRFSHIRË EDHE KOMPETENCA NDËSHKUESE (P.SH GJOBA).



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 .

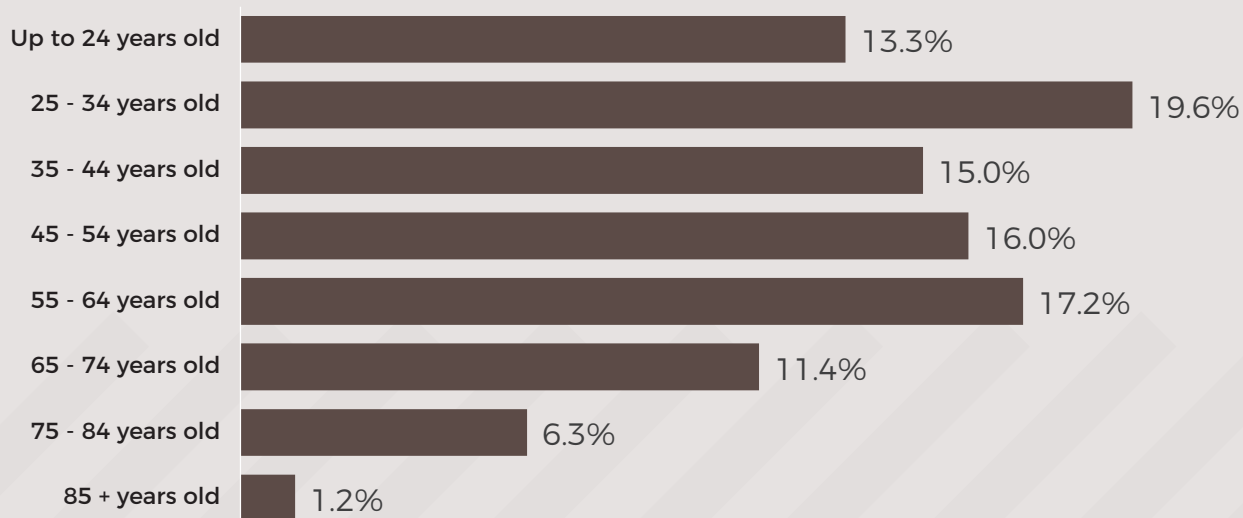
To determine the quota size of each of the counties, the population of Albania was retrieved from the civil registry, and the number of residents of each of the counties on 1 January 2021 was retrieved from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Since the number of residents in the territory of Albania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

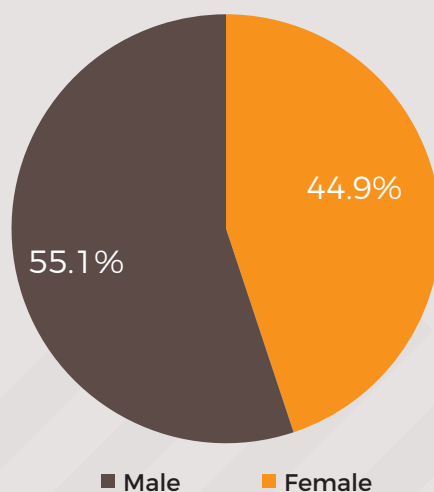
A total of 1200 Albanian citizens, 18 years old and over, from all the municipalities of the Republic of Albania, participated in the national survey. Of all the respondents, 55.1% were male while 44.9% were female. The majority of respondents pertained to age groups ranging

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



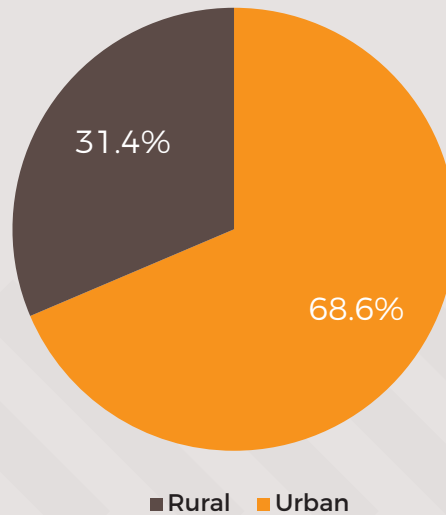
GENDER



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.

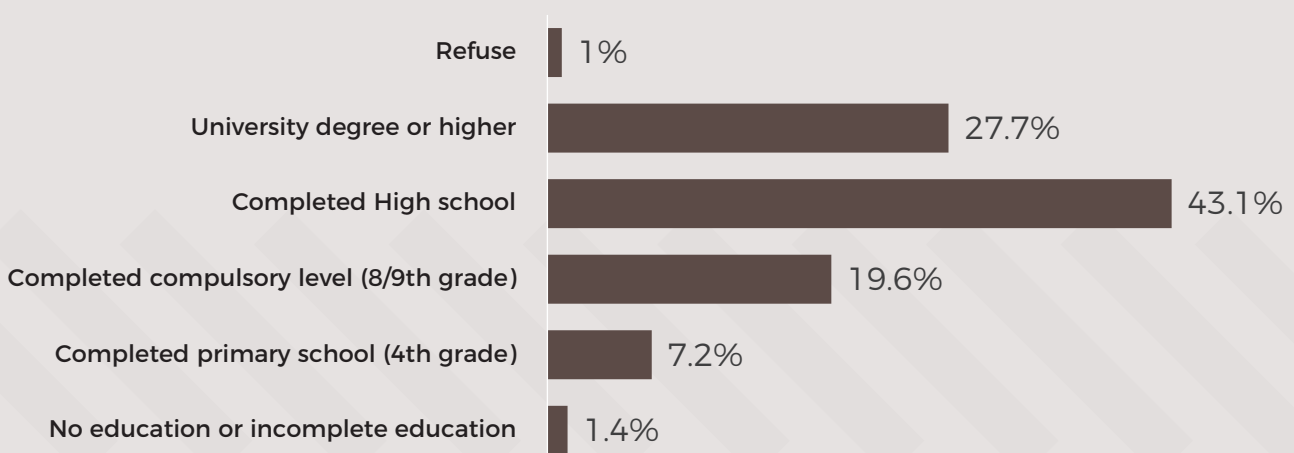
GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION



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

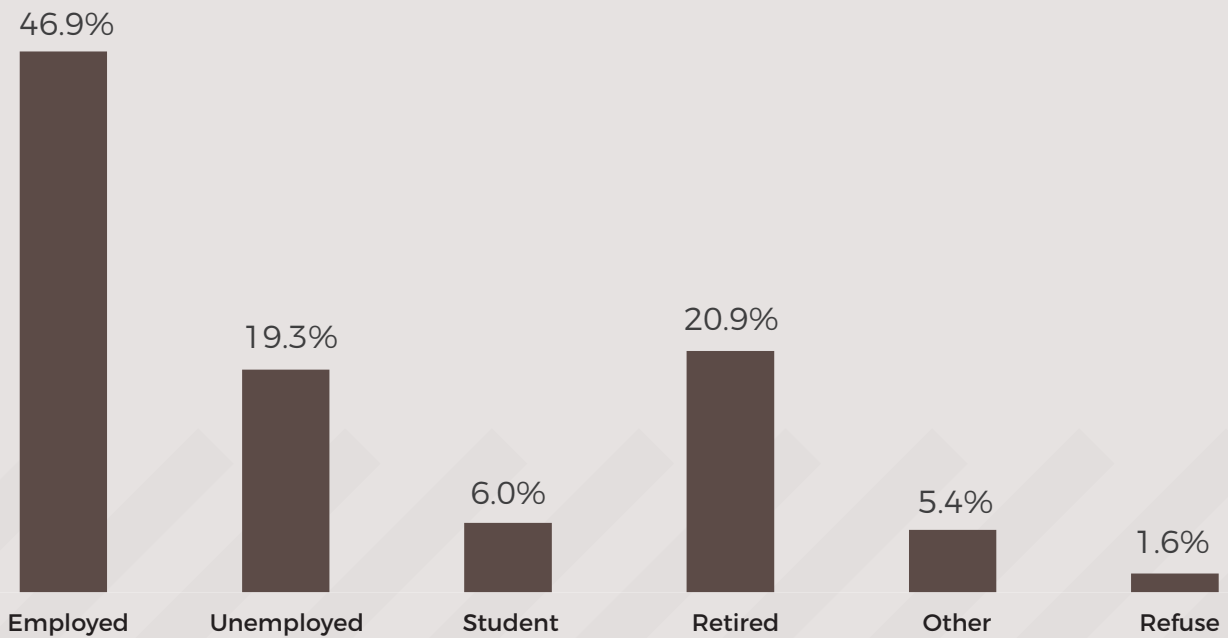


1 http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a_new_urban-rural_classification_of_albanian_population.pdf

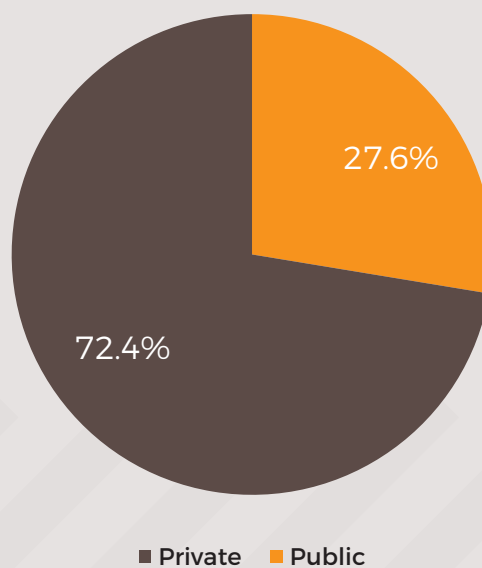
About 46.9% of the respondents were employed at the time of the survey, with 72.4% of them working in the private sector and 27.6% employed in the public sector. About a fifth

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



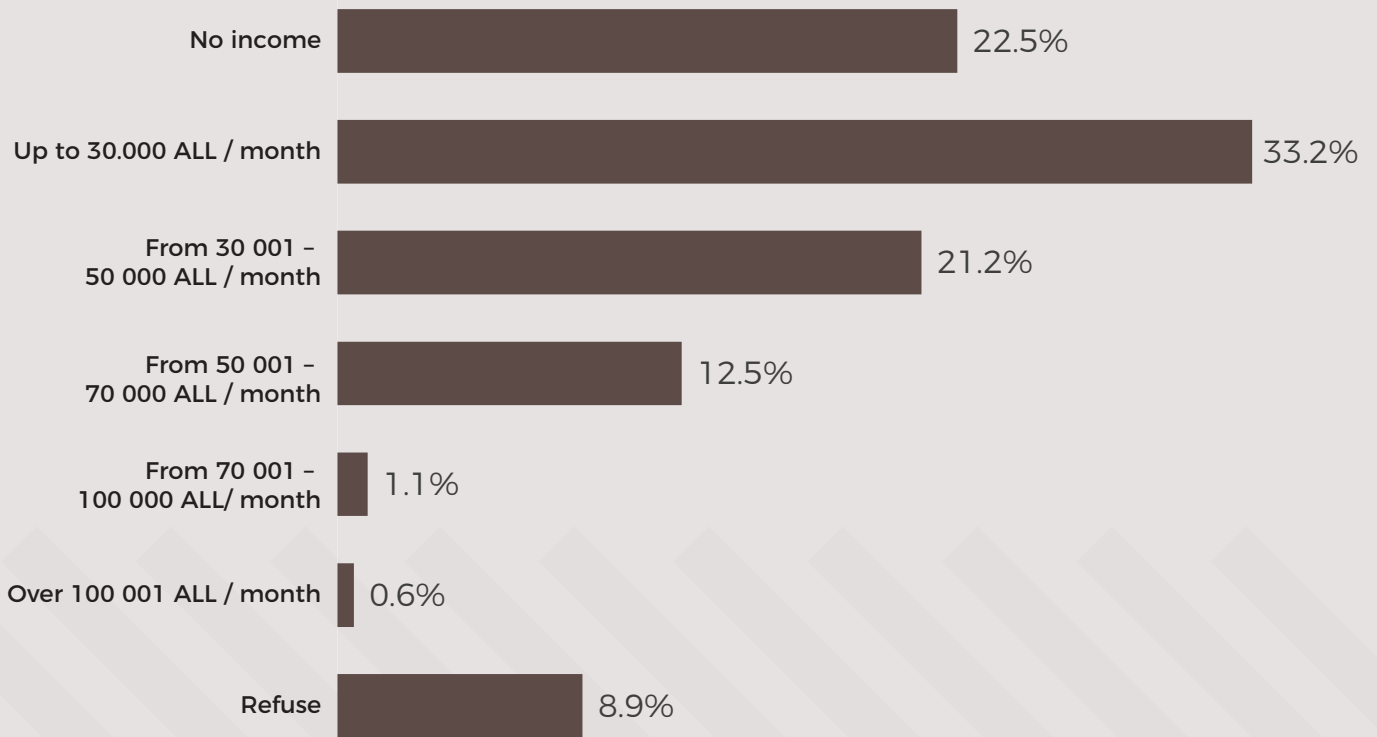
EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



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

© 2022 by Institute for Democracy and Mediation. All rights reserved.


Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)
Address: St. Shenasi Dishnica, Nd. 35, H.1
1017 Tirana, Albania
E-mail: info@idmalbania.org
Website: www.idmalbania.org

DISCLAIMER

This thematic report was produced by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM). The views and conclusions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Swiss Government or the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The sole authorship of this publication belongs to IDM. No part of this publication can be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.



PROJECT OF:

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

IMPLEMENTED BY:



IMPLEMENTING PARTNER:



"Support to Parliament and Civic Education in Albania" (PACEP) is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) implemented by the OSCE Presence in Albania and the National Democratic Institute (NDI)."

This activity was held by IDM in the framework of PACEP project, in consultation with the Center for Deliberative Democracy (CDD) at Stanford University (USA).