THEMATIC REPORT

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) held the first national deliberative polling[1] 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 group[2] survey with 110 respondents, and a control group[3] survey with another 110 respondents. These thematic report findings are based on the data of the national survey[4], as well as from the small discussion groups 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.

Survey respondents and participants at "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim" show high sensitivity towards global climate challenges and local environmental concerns. More than 2/3 of the survey sample regard global warming and local air pollution as serious. Respondents support in principle the implementation of measures that aim to curb climate change and mitigate environmental impacts. However, despite the declared support, findings suggest that respondents are not willing to pay higher taxes for environmental protection. Respondents with a high level of education and high monthly income appear to be more in favor of environmental measures, whereas respondents of the 55-64 age group and respondents with no or little income show reluctance.

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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. They and 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 that did not participate at the event.

4   IDM administered the national survey from 8th to 18th October 2021.

'Shqipëria n'Kuvendim'

INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges are finding more prominence in the public debate in Albania, particularly in response to the wider international developments on climate change. Albania is joining the efforts to address global warming and prevent future environmental disasters. Consequently, citizens are nowadays more aware and sensitive toward environmental issues and their impact on the community and quality of life.

Traditionally, the environmental debate in Albania has revolved around issues related to waste management. Lately, the attention has shifted towards issues such as climate change, sustainable transport sector, illegal logging and hunting, and animal welfare. Moreover, poor air quality in Albania generates troubling health concerns for the population, as evidenced by reports by the European Environment Agency[5]. The steady increase in the number of road vehicles and the decline of public transport passengers has translated into significant air pollution. A notable source of greenhouse emissions is the consumption of fuels, mainly diesel and gasoline, as a consequence of an increase in transport activity.

In the transport sector, the emission reduction can be approached by promoting zero or low-emission vehicles. However, based on the 2020 statistics, only 0.5% of the cars registered in Albania currently meet this standard (full electric or hybrid). The only sector that has advanced in this direction is the taxi service in Tirana, while for trucks the standard is very far.

5   https://www.eionet.europa.eu/etcs/etc-atni/products/etc-atni-reports/etc-atni-report-10-2021-health-risk-assessments-of-air-pollution-estimations-of-the-2019-hra-benefit-analysis-of-reaching-specific-air-quality-standards-and-more

ALBANIANS' PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE[6]

Survey data show that respondents are not well-informed on whether Albania has a law on climate change. A majority of respondents (59.4%) say that they do not know if there is such a law. Only 20.1% of the sample say that they have heard that there is such a law (*see figure 1*). Respondents with little or no formal education are more unaware.

FIGURE 1: DOES ALBANIA HAVE A LAW ON CLIMATE CHANGE?

No, there is no such law. — 20.5%

No, I do not know if there is such a law. — 59.4%

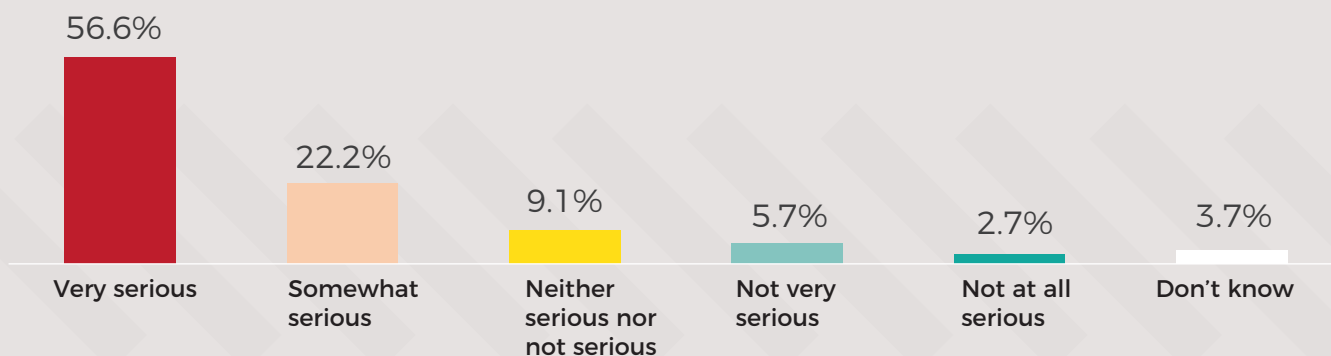Yes, I have heard that there is such a law. — 20.1%
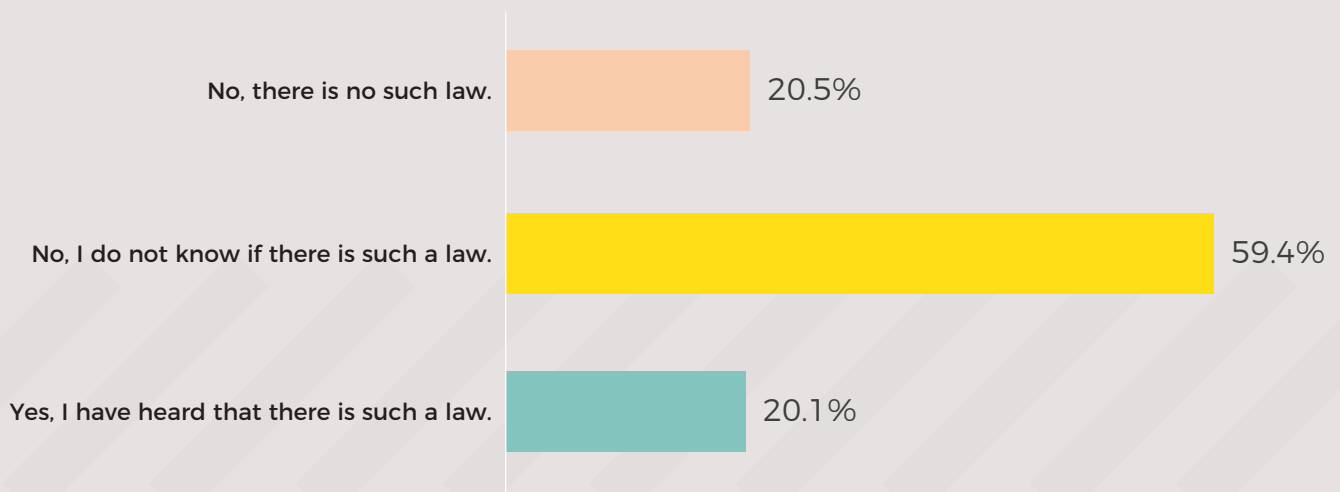
Respondents clearly acknowledge global warming as a threat, with 78.8% of the sample regarding it as serious and only 8.4% believing that the threat of global warming is not serious (*see figure 2*). Younger respondents (up to 34 years old) and those with medium to high monthly income tend to share the predominant opinion that global warming is a serious threat. Whereas, citizens with little or no formal education and retired citizens tend to share the opinion that global warming is not a serious threat.

When asked about the seriousness of air pollution in their areas, 65.9% of the respondents labeled it as serious, whereas only one in five disregarded it as not serious (*see figure 3*). Younger respondents (25-34 years old), respondents employed in the private sector, and those who receive high monthly income tend to think that air pollution in their area is serious. On the other hand, respondents with less education and no or little monthly income appear to be more likely to think that air pollution is not serious.

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6   In this section, in the narrative the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 opposed, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 supportive of the statement.
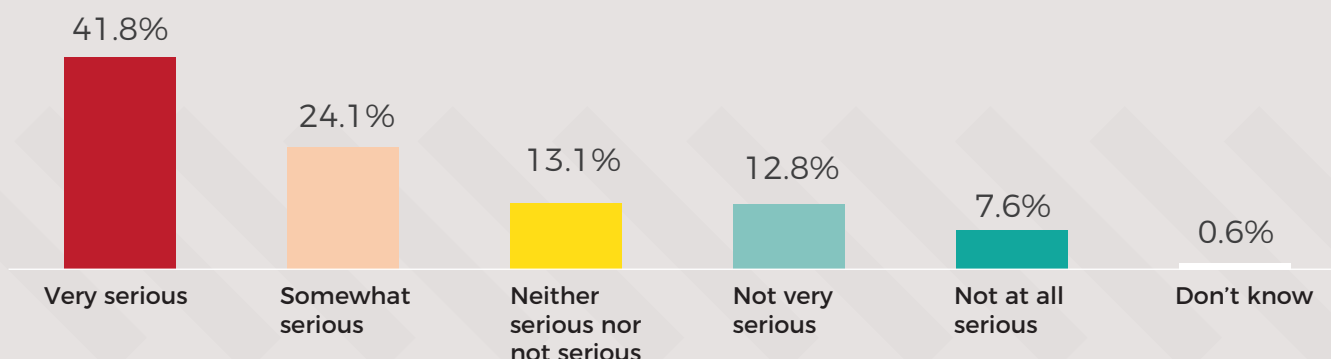
THEMATIC REPORT
FEBRUARY 2022

'Shqipëria n'Kuvendim'

FIGURE 2: IN YOUR OPINION, HOW SERIOUS IS THE THREAT OF GLOBAL WARMING?

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Neither serious nor not serious	Not very serious	Not at all serious	Don't know
56.6%	22.2%	9.1%	5.7%	2.7%	3.7%

During the small discussion group "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim", participants noted that Albania suffers from significant air pollution, therefore resulting in a high volume of pollution-related chronic diseases. In terms of overall environmental impact, participants argued that Albania is not a big polluter, considering its underdeveloped industry. However, they emphasized the necessity to implement measures aiming to address environmental concerns and climate change.
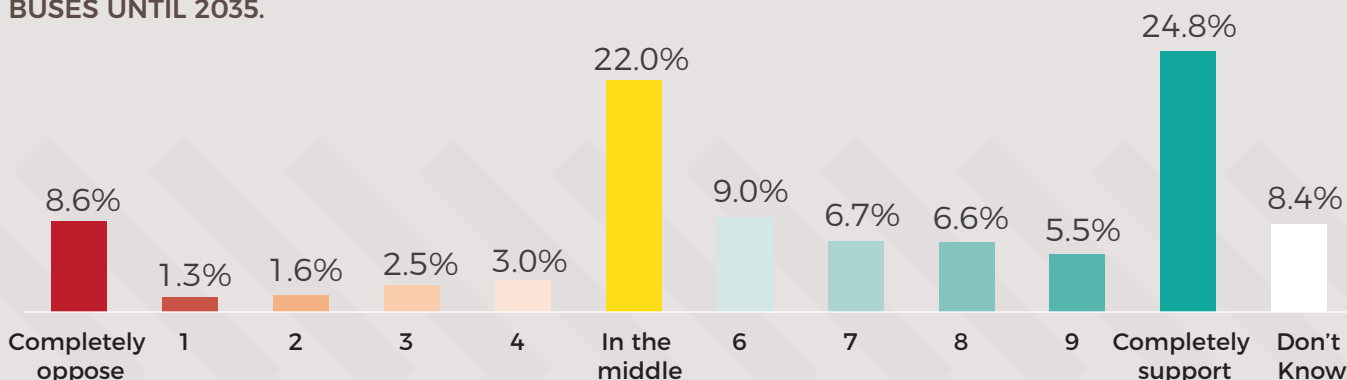
FIGURE 3: IN YOUR OPINION, HOW SERIOUS IS THE AIR POLLUTION IN YOUR AREA?

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Neither serious nor not serious	Not very serious	Not at all serious	Don't know
41.8%	24.1%	13.1%	12.8%	7.6%	0.6%

Citizens were asked whether they support or oppose the measure to mandate zero carbon emissions for cars, trucks, and buses until 2035. Survey data show that 43.6% of the respondents tend to support the measure, 34% are in the middle, while only 14% tend to oppose it (*see figure 4*). Respondents with higher levels of education are more likely to agree with the statement compared to respondents with little or no formal education.

**FIGURE 4: ALBANIA SHOULD MANDATE ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS FOR CARS, TRUCKS, AND BUSES UNTIL 2035.**

Completely oppose	1	2	3	4	In the middle	6	7	8	9	Completely support	Don't Know
8.6%	1.3%	1.6%	2.5%	3.0%	22.0%	9.0%	6.7%	6.6%	5.5%	24.8%	8.4%

However, during the small discussion groups of "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim", many participants argued that Albania is not ready to move towards zero carbon emission vehicles and that the 2035 objective is unattainable. They pointed out that the electric public transport network requires considerable investment in infrastructure, which is not feasible due to limited state resources. Moreover, the purchase of electric cars is costly. Therefore, they argue that there should be economic incentives to purchase electric cars. On the other hand, participants also noted that by promoting the use of electric cars and consequently reducing the consumption of fuel or gas, the state budget would take a significant hit, considering the taxes included in the price of fuel or gas.

The survey asked citizens about the ban on the import of vehicles used for more than five years. The findings show that respondents are on the fence about this measure, with almost one-third respectively supporting or opposing the measure (*see figure 5*). Findings show that respondents with no education (55.1%) or little income tend to oppose the measure. Interestingly, students appear to not support the statement too. Respondents who have completed higher levels of education and those with high monthly income tend to be more supportive.
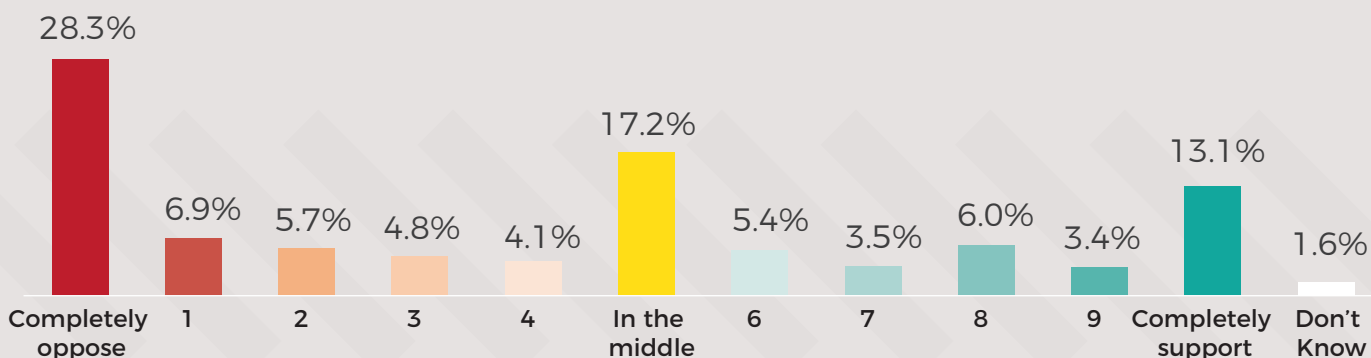
Participants at "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim" supported the proposal in principle but they suggested coming up with policies to cover any economic loss for citizens. Otherwise, the proposal would not enjoy support. Instead, participants recommended phasing out older cars on a yearly basis (a certain percentage each year) in order to avoid inflicting a heavy cost on citizens and to provide for sufficient time to adjust.

FIGURE 5: ALBANIA SHOULD STOP THE IMPORT OF VEHICLES USED FOR MORE THAN 5 YEARS.
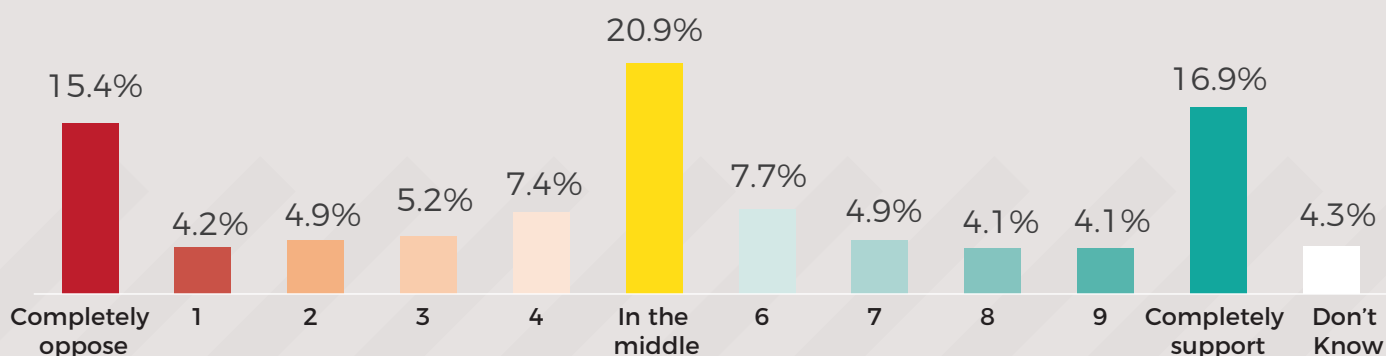
Despite the high degree of declaratory support, respondents are not willing to pay higher taxes to protect the environment. Survey data show that 45.7% oppose higher taxes to protect the environment, whereas only 26% agree (*see figure 6*). Students and respondents of the 55-64 age group tend to oppose it. Whereas, respondents with medium monthly income tend to be more supportive.

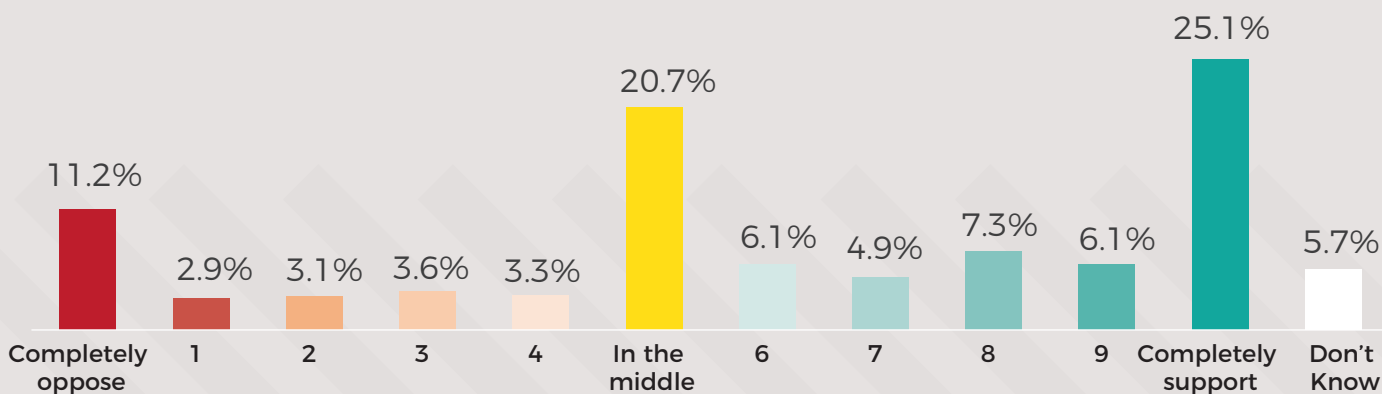**FIGURE 6: I WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY HIGHER TAXES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.**

Completely oppose: 28.3%
1: 6.9%
2: 5.7%
3: 4.8%
4: 4.1%
In the middle: 17.2%
6: 5.4%
7: 3.5%
8: 6.0%
9: 3.4%
Completely support: 13.1%
Don't Know: 1.6%

During the small discussion groups of "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim", participants argued that the current tax collection is inefficient. They noted that there is a need to strengthen the implementation of current regulations. Additionally, participants argued that competent agencies should carry out studies to determine the correlation between environmental protection and national economic growth.

Lastly, the citizens were asked whether they support the creation of low-carbon emission zones in their town or city. To illustrate, this measure could mean that only electric cars would be allowed to circulate in the city center. Survey data show relative support for the measure, with 43.4% saying that they would support the measure, 30.1% in the middle, and 20.8% opposing the statement (*see figure 7*). Respondents with higher levels of education and high monthly income tend to be more in favour. Also, respondents employed in the public sector tend to be supportive. On the other hand, respondents with no or little education tend to oppose the proposal.

FIGURE 7: I SUPPORT THE CREATION OF LOW-CARBON EMISSION ZONES IN BIG CITIES (SUCH AS ONLY ELECTRIC CARS ARE ALLOWED TO CIRCULATE IN CITY CENTER).

Completely oppose: 11.2%
1: 2.9%
2: 3.1%
3: 3.6%
4: 3.3%
In the middle: 20.7%
6: 6.1%
7: 4.9%
8: 7.3%
9: 6.1%
Completely support: 25.1%
Don't Know: 5.7%

Participants at "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim" expressed support for the creation of low-carbon emission zones in big cities and the promotion of electric or other environmentally-friendly vehicles. However, they argued that it should not include additional taxes on travel. On the other hand, participants argued that this measure would increase traffic and pollution in other areas of the city. Therefore, authorities should lower the overall amount of pollution, not just redirect it to other areas. Moreover, there is considerable support for the development of other forms of public transport (e.g. metro, underground trains, trams) in order to reduce the use of personal vehicles.

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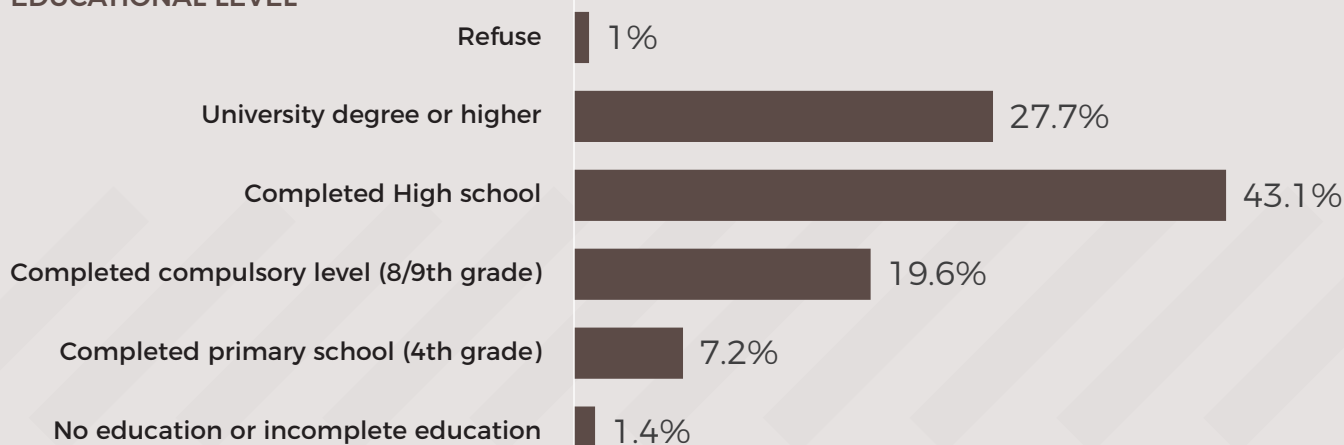The majority of respondents pertained to age groups ranging from 18 years old to 54 years old (63.9%). Respondents aged between 55 years old and over, made up only 36.1% of the overall sample. For more detailed information on the sample's age distribution, please refer to the graph below.

AGE

Age group	Percentage
Up to 24 years old	13.3%
25 - 34 years old	19.6%
35 - 44 years old	15.0%
45 - 54 years old	16.0%
55 - 64 years old	17.2%
65 - 74 years old	11.4%
75 - 84 years old	6.3%
85 + years old	1.2%

GENDER

- Male 55.1%
- Female 44.9%

GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

- Rural 31.4%
- Urban 68.6%
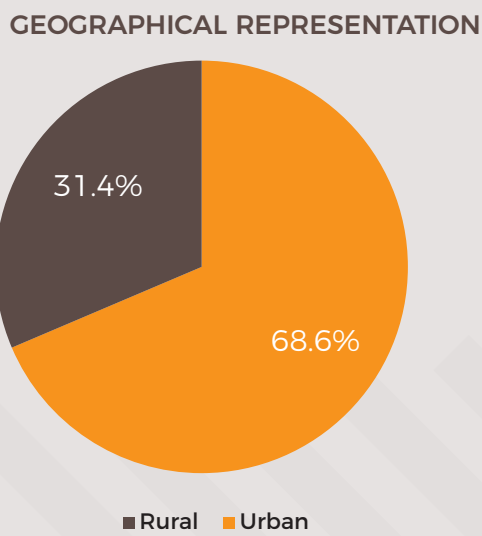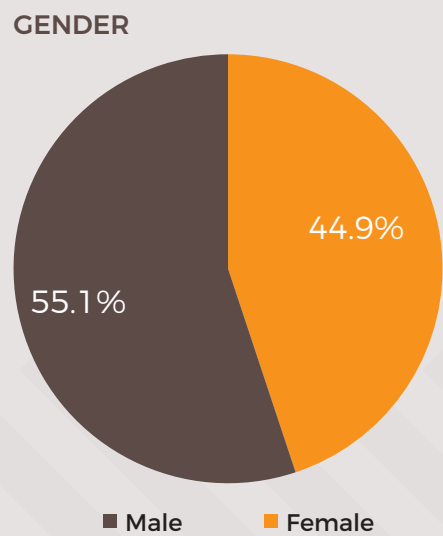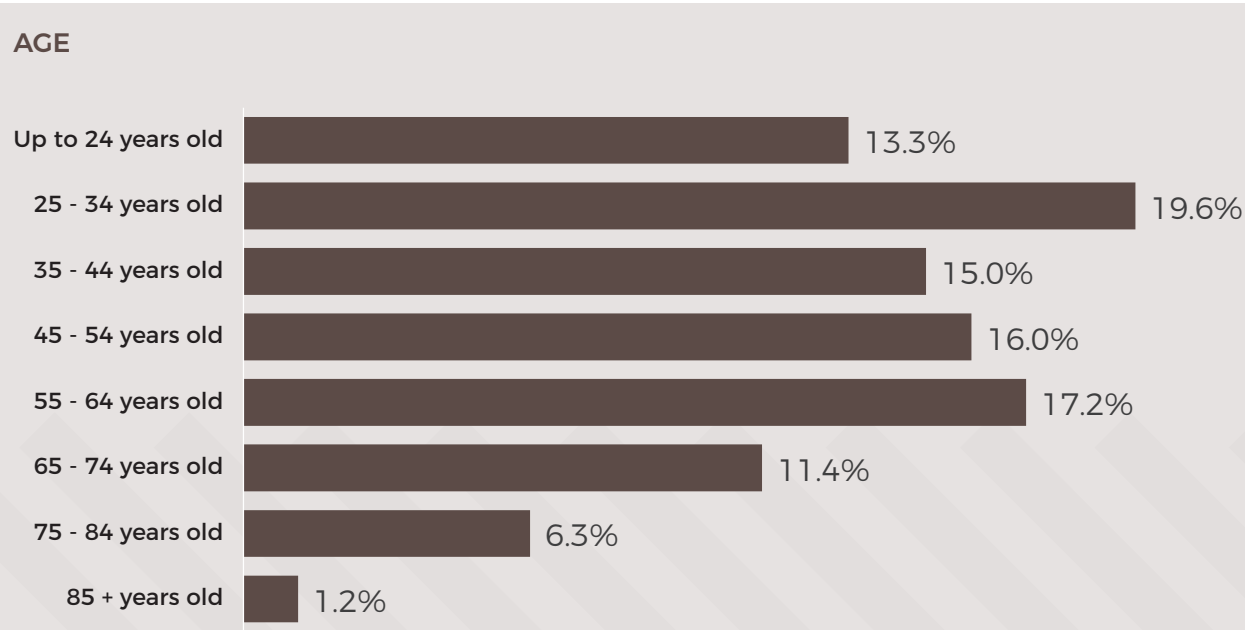
The geographical distribution was 68.6% urban and 31.4% rural. In comparison, data from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) says that in 2011, 58.2% of the Albanian resident population was located in an urban area.[1] However, over the past ten years this number has increased. The majority of the respondents (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

Category	Percentage
Refuse	1%
University degree or higher	27.7%
Completed High school	43.1%
Completed compulsory level (8/9th grade)	19.6%
Completed primary school (4th grade)	7.2%
No education or incomplete education	1.4%

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

Category	Percentage
Employed	46.9%
Unemployed	19.3%
Student	6.0%
Retired	20.9%
Other	5.4%
Refuse	1.6%
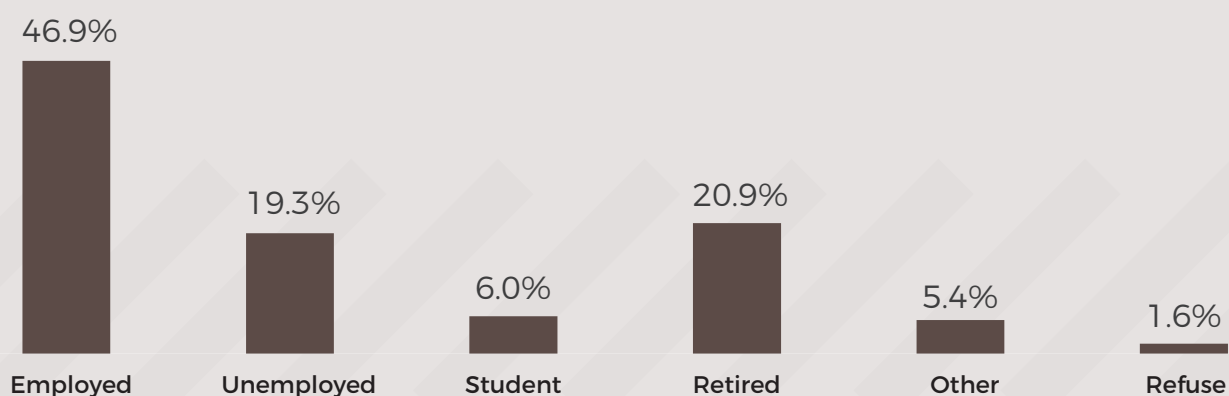
1   http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a_new_urban-rural_classification_of_albanian_population.pdf

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

27.6%

72.4%

■ Private ■ Public
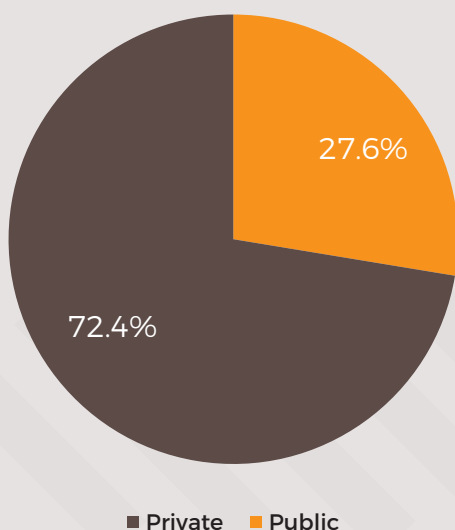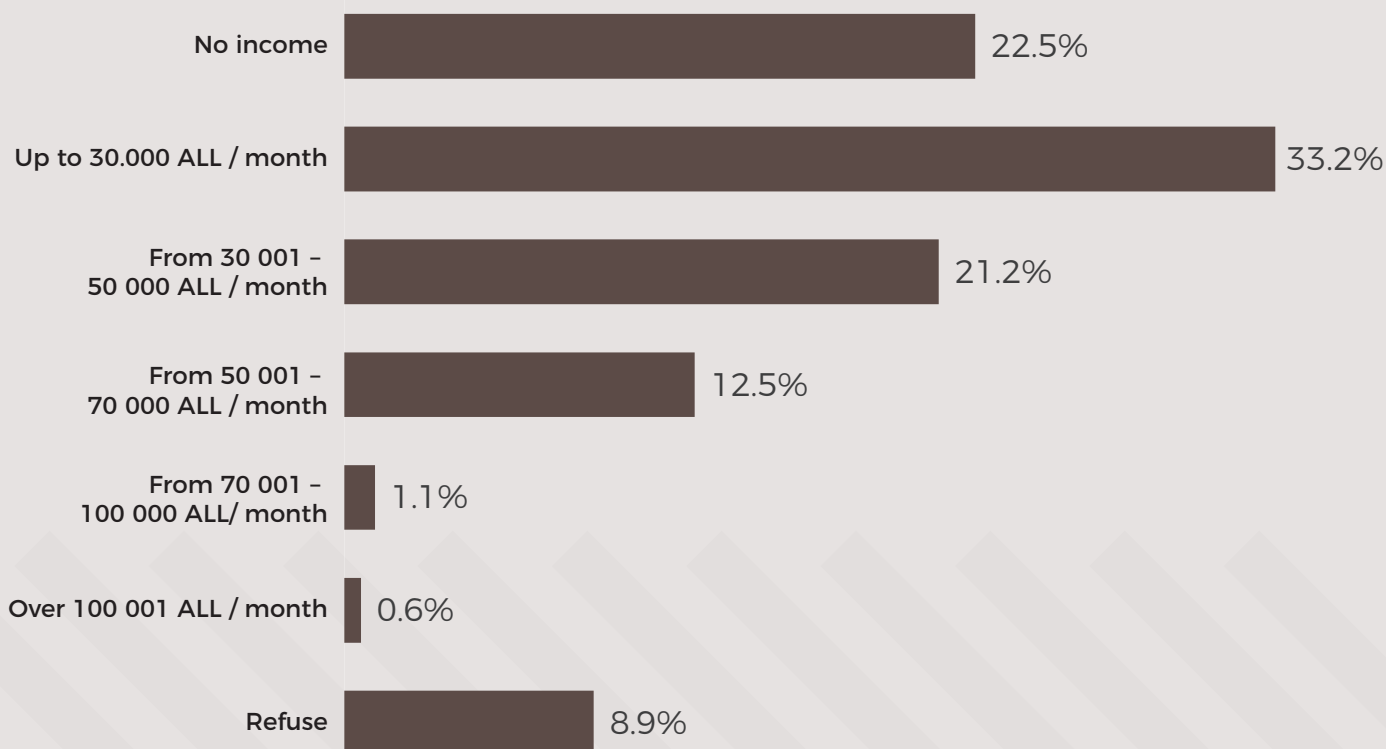
With regards to the respondents' regular individual monthly incomes, 22.5% of the respondents stated that they did not receive any regular income at the time of the survey. 33.2% earned up to 30,000 ALL/month, whilst 21.2% reported that they received regular monthly incomes falling between 30,001 ALL 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

No income	22.5%
Up to 30.000 ALL / month	33.2%
From 30 001 – 50 000 ALL / month	21.2%
From 50 001 – 70 000 ALL / month	12.5%
From 70 001 – 100 000 ALL/ month	1.1%
Over 100 001 ALL / month	0.6%
Refuse	8.9%

Tirana, February 2022

DISCLAIMER

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