



Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim

THEMATIC REPORT

ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFORM

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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 participants of the deliberative polling event during 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.

On the topic of electoral reform, almost half of the respondents think that the current electoral system does not reflect the will of the people. Regarding a potential transition to another system, survey data show a 67.8% support for the pure majority system. On this note, participants at “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” argued in favour of the majority system because it creates a consolidated relationship between the representative and the local electorate. However, participants were often unclear on how specific electoral systems work. Well-educated respondents and older respondents appear to be better informed than younger respondents and respondents with less formal education. One in three respondents maintains that Members of Parliament are not in touch at all with the concerns and priorities of citizens. While almost two-thirds say that they are willing to contact their representatives.



- 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 that 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 electoral system is at the center of the political setup of a country. Through periodic electoral processes, the political preferences of the citizens are translated into representatives on the local and central levels of governance. An electoral system determines fundamental issues, such as representation criteria, size of parliament, size of electoral zones, voting system, election eligibility, and other rules of political competition. For this purpose, electoral reforms need to be cautiously designed and carried out.

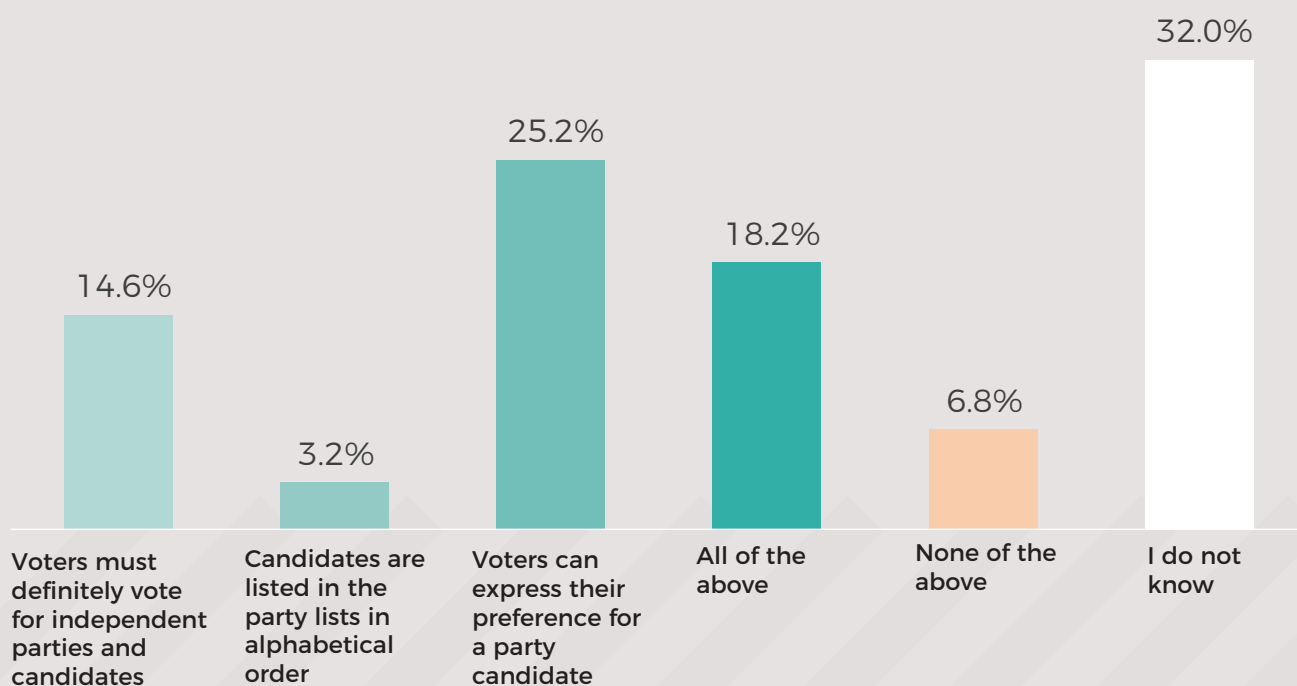
Albania has experimented with eight electoral reforms in the post-communist period and has tried all three main types of electoral systems, namely, majoritarian, proportional, and mixed. Presently, Albania implements the regional proportional system. Election monitoring reports, in particular the reports of OSCE/ODIHR, have regularly provided valuable recommendations for improving the electoral system and guaranteeing the fairness and integrity of the electoral process.

ALBANIANS' PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES ON ELECTORAL REFORM⁶

Respondents in the national survey were inquired about their knowledge on how candidate MPs are elected and included in the voting lists based on the current electoral system. The results show that a considerable 32% say that they do not have information, while only 25.2% are aware that they can

express their preference for a party candidate (see figure 1)⁷. Respondents with no formal education, low income, or retired respondents tend to be more unaware. While respondents with higher education appear to be better informed.

FIGURE 1: WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE OF THE SYSTEM CURRENTLY USED TO ELECT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT?



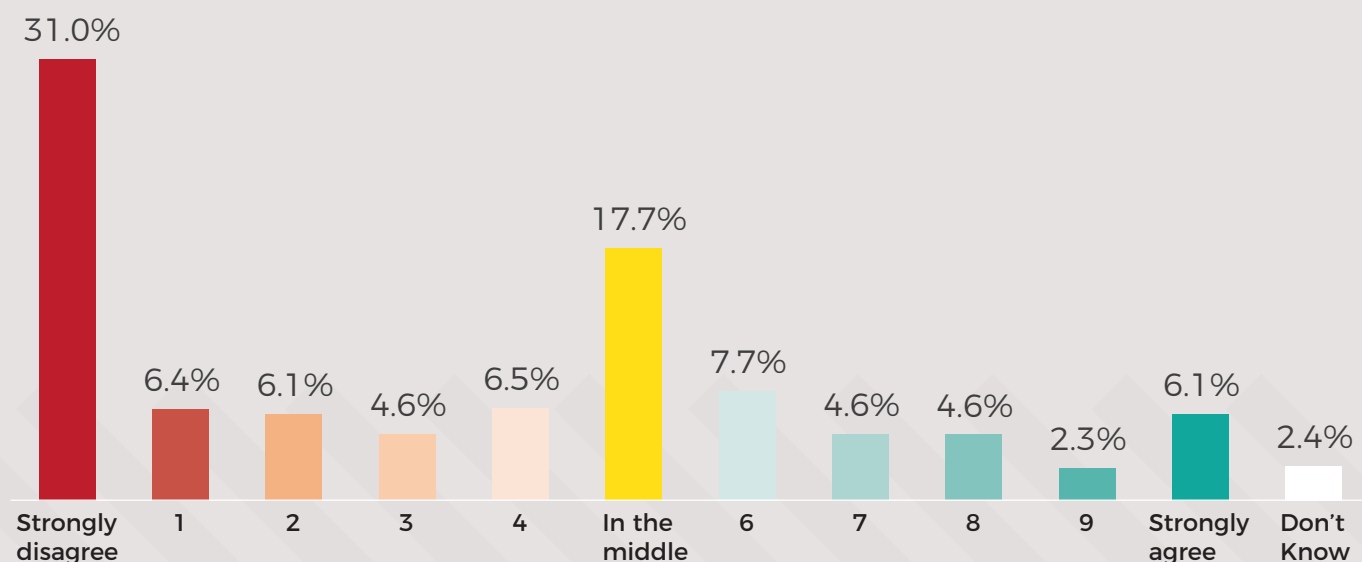
6 In this section, in the narrative the 10 points scale is grouped into three categories: 0-3 disagree, 4-6 neutral, and 7-10 agree with the statement.

7 This is a multiple choice question.

Among the respondents, 48.1% maintain that the current electoral system for the Albanian parliament does not reflect the will of the people. Only 17.6% feel that the current system properly reflects their will, while 31.9% are in the middle (*see figure 2*). Respondents of

young or middle age groups tend to disagree with the statement. The same holds true for unemployed respondents and the ones with no or little formal education. On the other hand, respondents employed in the public sector tend to agree more than others.

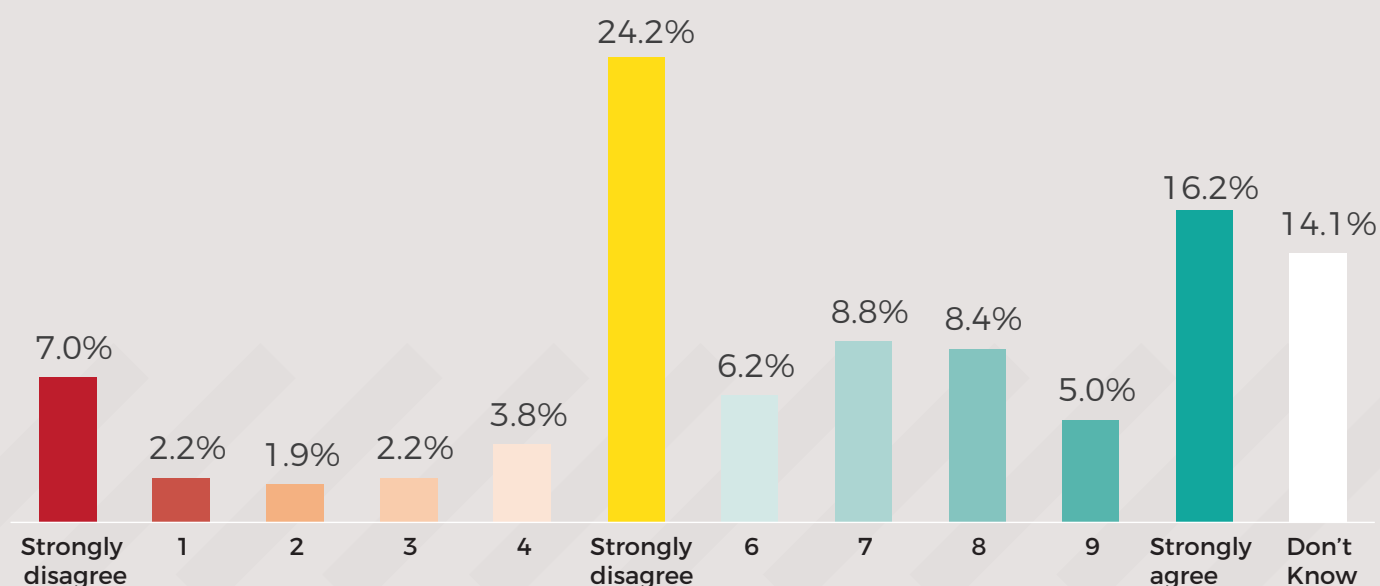
FIGURE 2: THE CURRENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ALBANIA FULLY REFLECTS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.



Citizens were asked about potential transitions from the current electoral system to other proposed systems such as the national proportional system, the purely majoritarian system, or the previous hybrid system. Regarding the suggestion to transition to a national proportional system, 38.4% agree with the suggestion, while 34.2% are in the middle. Interestingly, 14.1% stated that they do not have a stance (*see figure 3*). Findings show that men and older respondents are more in favour of the transition. Whereas, women and young respondents choose more often 'don't know'.

During the small discussion groups of the deliberative polling event "Shqipëria n'Kuvendim", participants argued that the national proportional system is more resilient towards vote-buying, and avoids the overburdening of electoral lists with unqualified candidates, and prevents corruption at the local level. Others pointed out that a national proportional system would produce candidates that are not familiar with the issues of the community. Whereas, young participants valued the current system. However, the difference between systems was not always clear to participants.

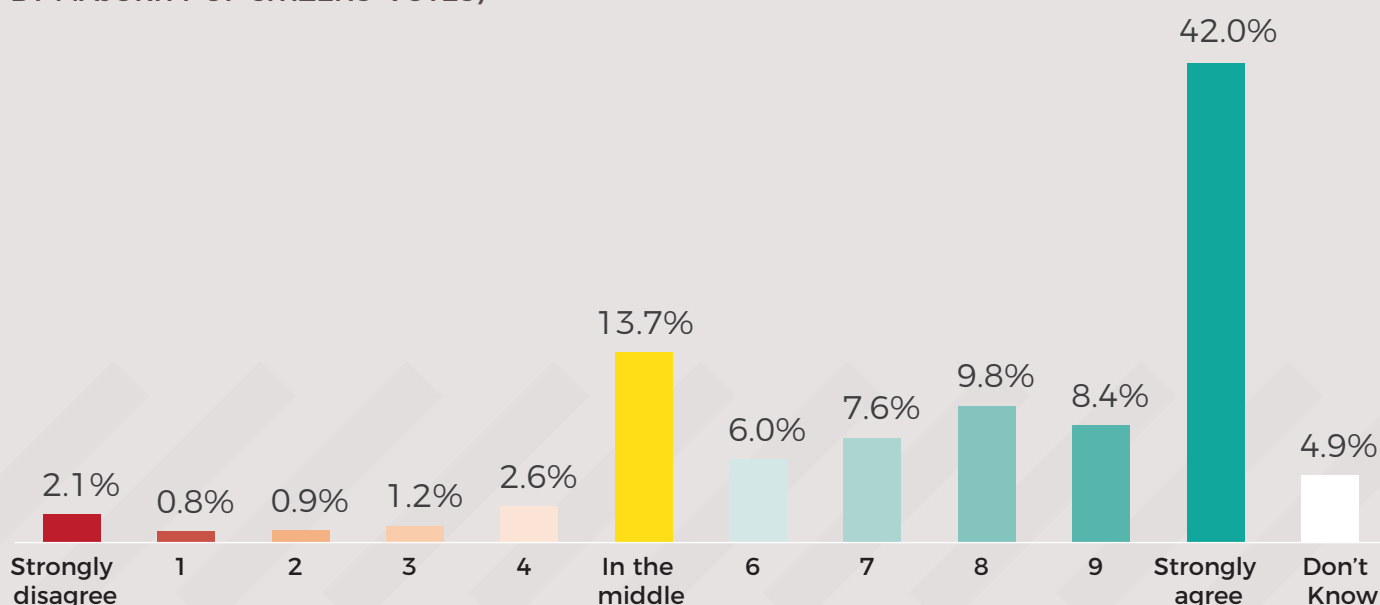
FIGURE 3: TRANSITION FROM THE CURRENT REGIONAL PROPORTIONAL TO A NATIONAL PROPORTIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM (WITH ONE NATIONAL LIST)



When presented with the suggestion to transition to a pure majority system, survey data show significant support, with 67.8% leaning towards agreeing and only 5% leaning towards disagreeing (see figure 4). Respondents of the 65-74 and 75-84 age groups tend to agree more. On the other hand, respondents who have completed high school appear to be more skeptical. During “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”, participants emphasized that the relationship a system creates between the candidate and the

electorate is essential in assessing the merits of an electoral system. In this context, they expressed considerable support to implement the majority system as they believe it allows candidates to relate better with the community they would represent. Additionally, participants argued that the majority system contributes to the democratization of political parties. However, they also noted that the system would not reflect a fair representation of the political parties’ popular vote.

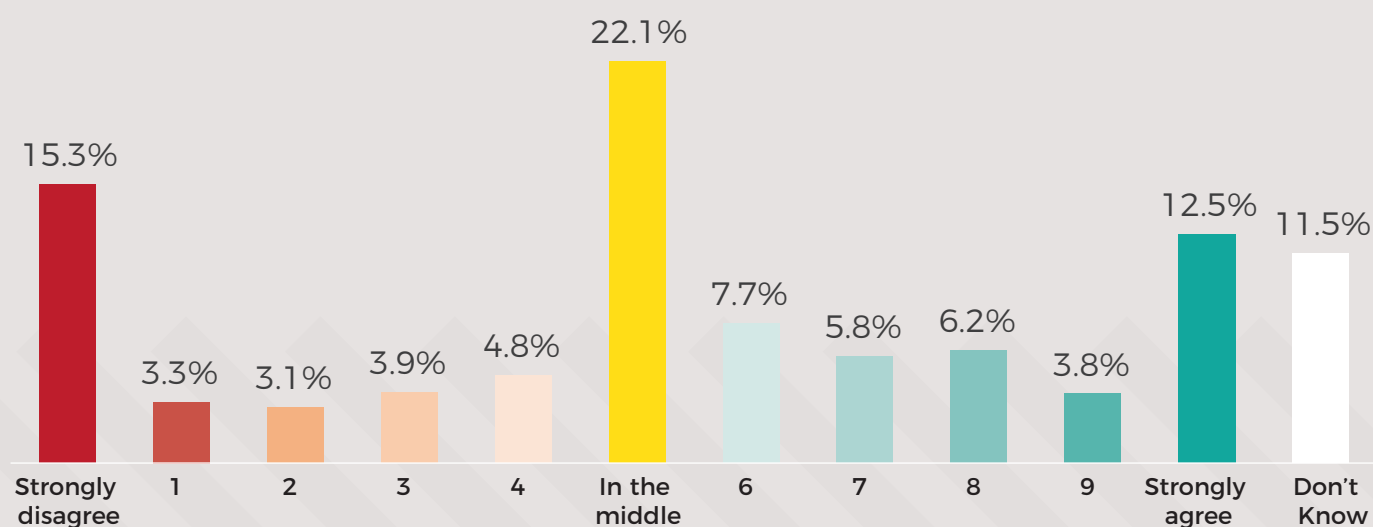
FIGURE 4: TRANSITION TO A PURE MAJORITY SYSTEM (MP OF EACH CONSTITUENCY IS ELECTED BY MAJORITY OF CITIZENS’ VOTES)



Citizens were divided concerning the proposal to return to the previous hybrid electoral system, with 34.6% being in the middle (see *figure 5*). Older respondents (55-64 years old) tend to agree more in comparison to younger respondents (25-34 years old). During the small discussion groups of “Shqipëria

n’Kuvendim”, participants expressed that they are disappointed by the electoral systems implemented so far. They argued that there is a need for consistency and to avoid the practice of each government largely ignoring previous developments and starting over by suggesting and implementing its own ideas.

FIGURE 5: RETURN TO THE PREVIOUS ELECTORAL SYSTEM WITH THE ELECTION OF 100 MPS ON A MAJORITY SYSTEM AND 40 MPS ON A PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM



Survey data reveal substantial support for the introduction of fully open lists in the current electoral system. Among the sample, 49.8% tend to agree and only 9.5% tend to disagree with the proposal (see *figure 6*). Respondents with higher education and those pertaining to the 45-74 age group lean more towards agreeing. Retired respondents were less in favour, whereas students choose more often ‘don’t know’. On the issue of open/closed lists, participants at “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” argued that an open-list proportional system increases internal party competition, consolidates the principle of meritocracy, and weakens the standing of the leader of the party. Furthermore, participants regarded the open list system as a tool for the application of direct democracy. However, others pointed out that fierce internal competition would not allow the political party to act and behave as a unified group.

When asked how in touch are Members of Parliament with the concerns of citizens, 27.7% of the surveyed sample stated that they are a little in touch, while a considerable 35.4% replied that Members of Parliament are not in touch at all with the concerns of citizens (see *figure 7*). Among the sample, women, younger respondents, respondents with no formal education, and the ones with no or little monthly income feel the most that MPs are not in touch with the concerns of citizens. In comparison, retired respondents and respondents with high monthly incomes maintain that MPs are somehow concerned. Participants at “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim” were skeptical of the impact that a change of the electoral system would have on the performance of the Members of Parliament. A participant held that “Members of Parliament are not addressing any concern. National or local!”.

FIGURE 6: INTRODUCE FULLY OPEN LISTS IN THE CURRENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM

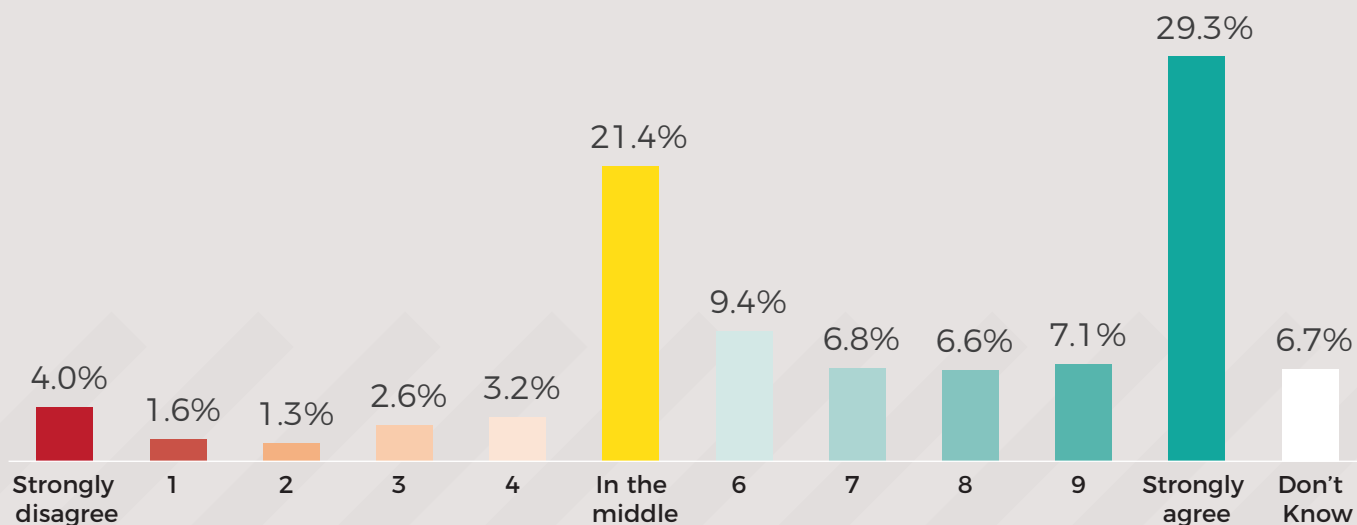
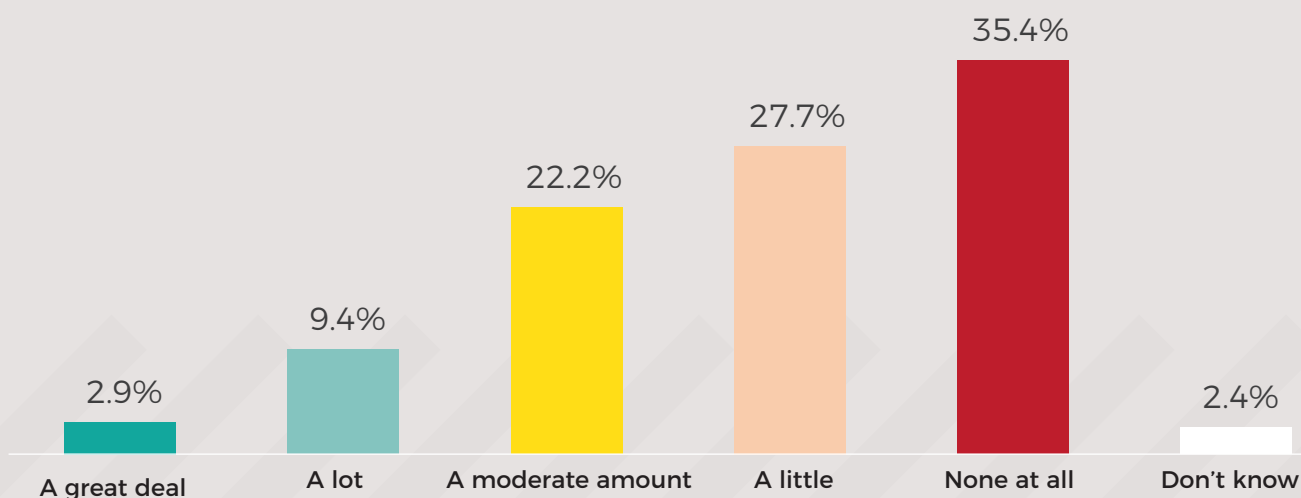


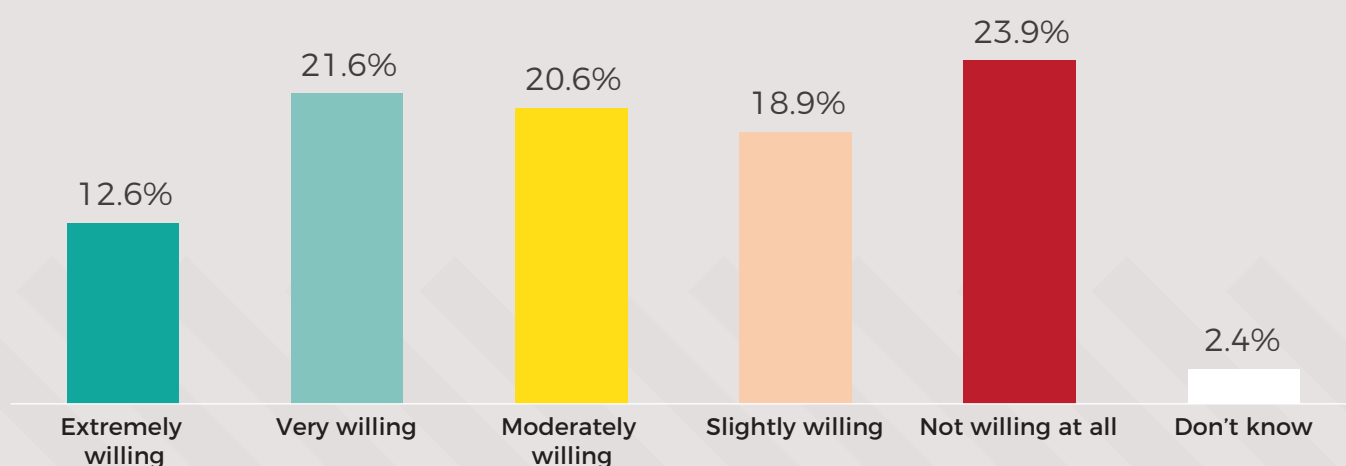
FIGURE 7: HOW IN TOUCH ARE MPS WITH PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS OF CITIZENS IN THE COUNTRY?



Survey data show that two-thirds say that they are willing, in various degrees, to contact their representatives, while 23.9% are not willing at all (see figure 8). Men and respondents with high monthly incomes seem to be more willing

to contact politicians. While on the contrary, women, respondents of the 75-85+ age group, and respondents with less formal education appear to be more reluctant.

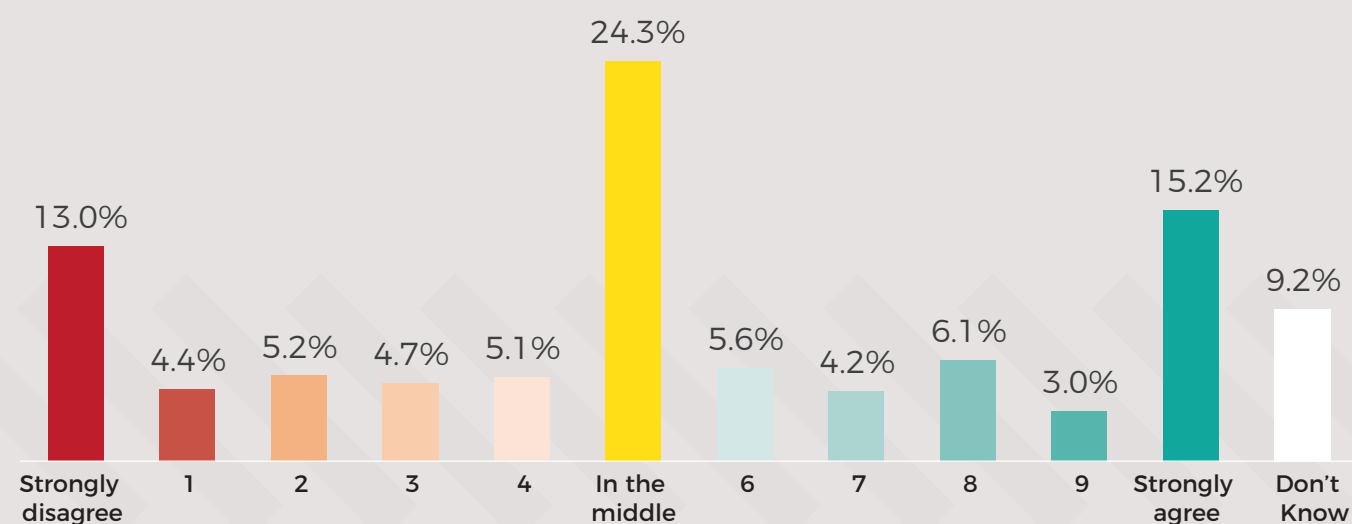
FIGURE 8: HOW WILLING WOULD YOU BE TO CONTACT POLITICIANS OR MPS EITHER IN PERSON, OR IN WRITING, OR IN SOME OTHER WAY?



When asked whether the 2014 administrative-territorial division imposes electoral zones which distort the will of the voters when voting for local or parliamentary elections, citizens are mostly undecided, with more than one-third being in the middle (*see figure 9*). Respondents employed in the public sector tend to disagree

more with the statement compared to the ones employed in the private sector. Moreover, respondents with low or middle monthly income also seem to disagree. Whereas, men and older respondents tend to agree with the statement.

FIGURE 9: THE 2014 ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL DIVISION IMPOSES ELECTORAL ZONES WHICH DISTORT THE WILL OF THE VOTERS WHEN VOTING FOR LOCAL OR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.



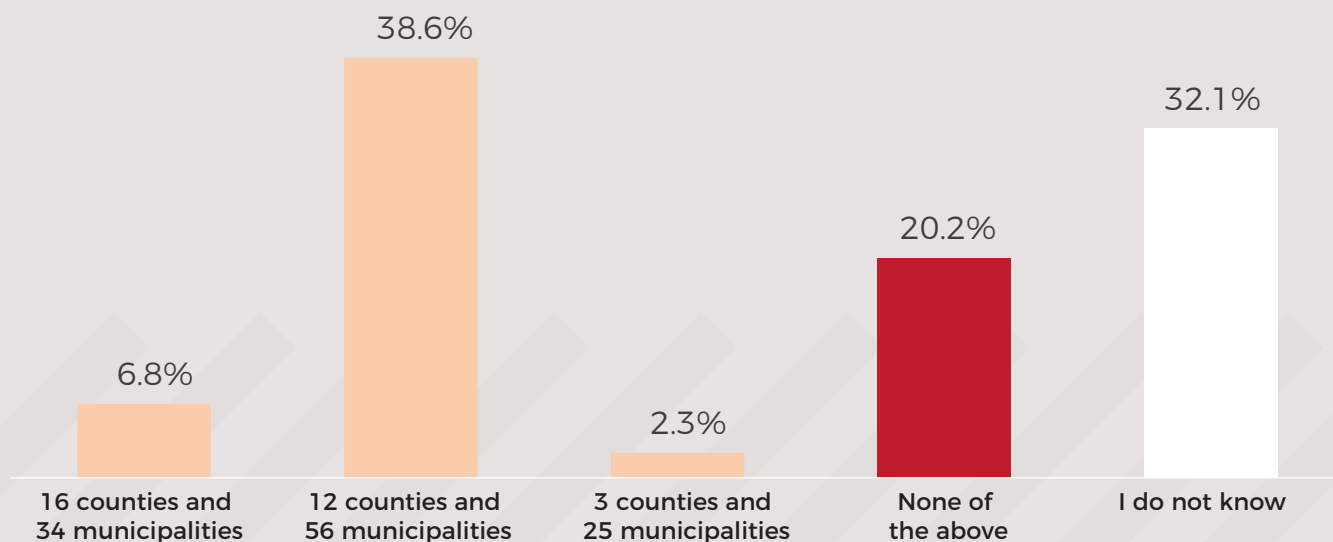
In line with the above findings, the survey shows that citizens are not well-informed on the administrative-territorial division. As reflected in the results, 32.1% state that they

do not know what Albania consists of according to the administrative-territorial division of 2014 (*see figure 10*). Respondents with low income or no formal education are the most

unaware of the territorial division. Whereas, younger respondents and respondents with high monthly income or with university degrees appear to have more accurate knowledge.

During the small discussion groups of “Shqipëria n’Kuvendim”, participants did not regard the administrative-territorial division as adequate. They ultimately argued that any subsequent electoral reform must be connected to a new administrative-territorial reform.

FIGURE 10: ACCORDING TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL DIVISION OF 2014, ALBANIA CONSISTS OF:



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 .

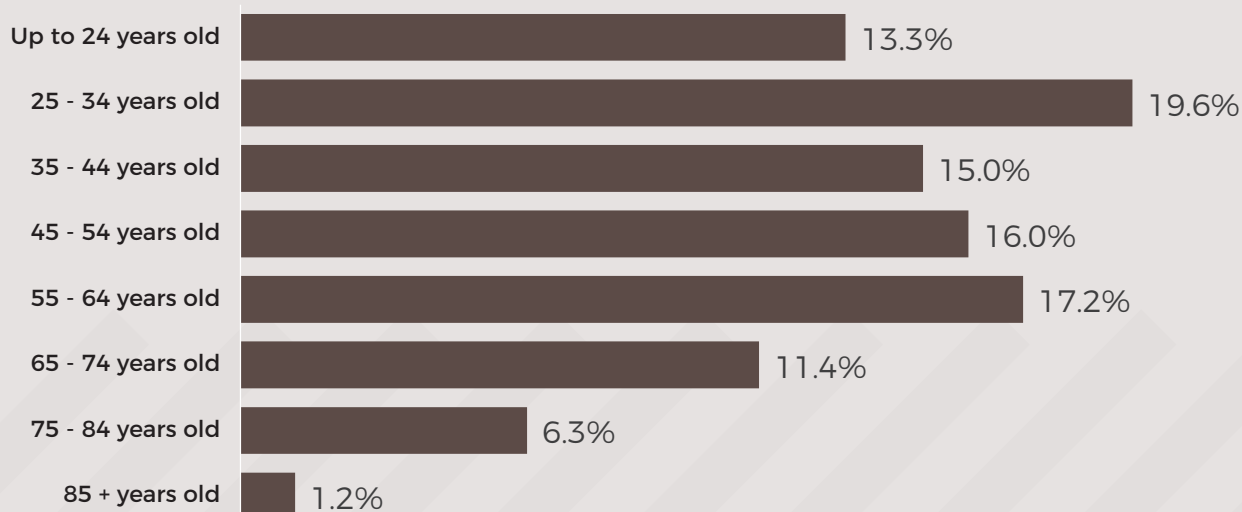
To determine the quota size of each of the counties, the population of Albania was retrieved from the civil registry, and the number of residents of each of the counties on 1 January 2021 was retrieved from the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Since the number of residents in the territory of Albania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

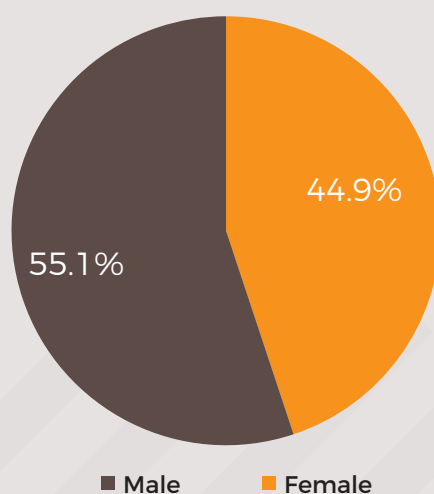
A total of 1200 Albanian citizens, 18 years old and over, from all the municipalities of the Republic of Albania, participated in the national survey. Of all the respondents, 55.1% were male while 44.9% were female. The majority of respondents pertained to age groups ranging

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



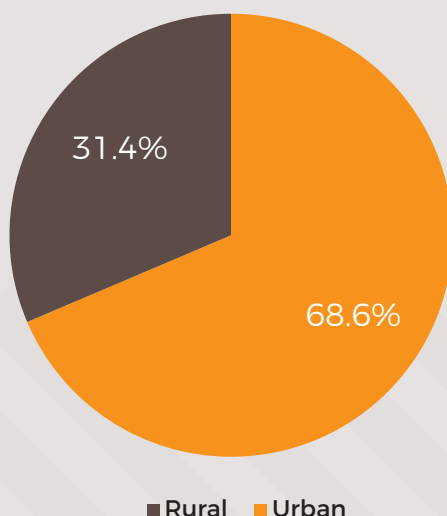
GENDER



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.

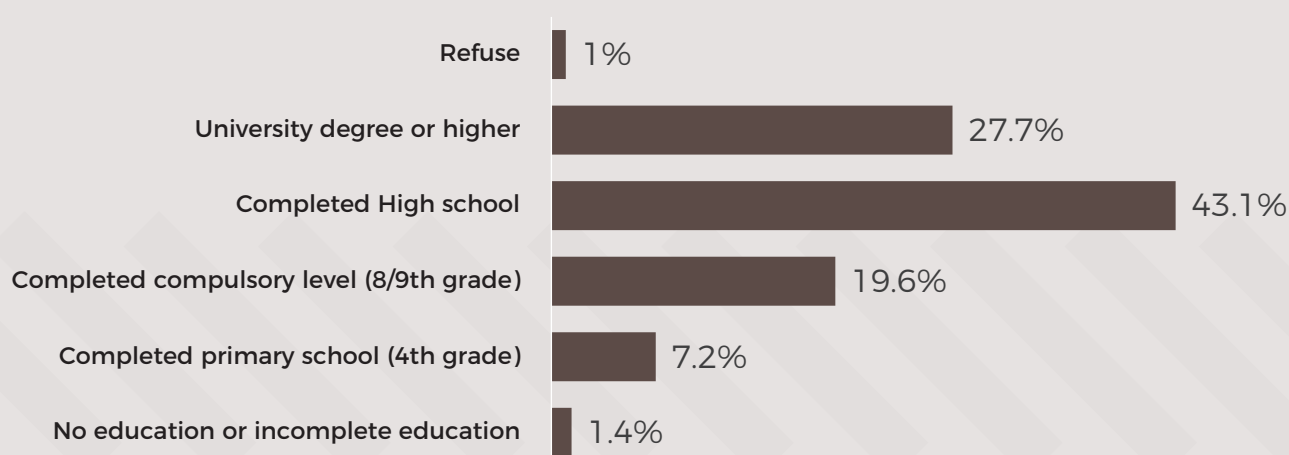
GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION



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

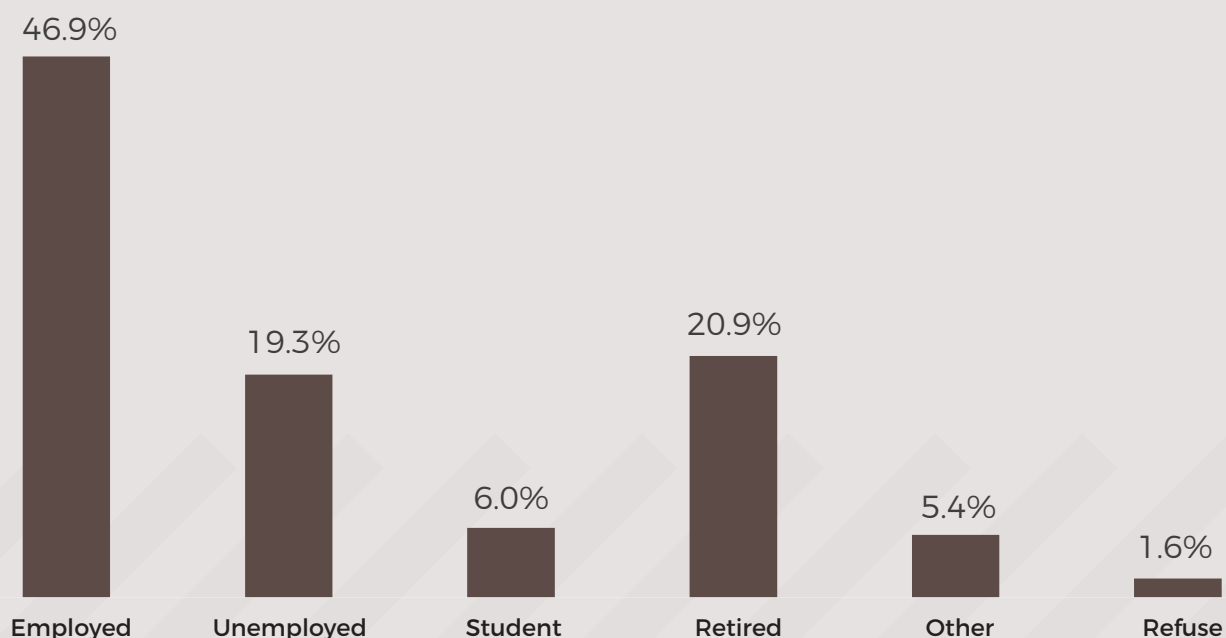


1 http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2919/a_new_urban-rural_classification_of_albanian_population.pdf

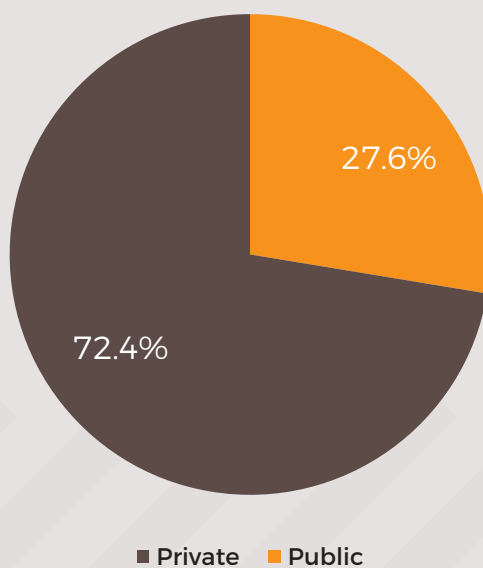
About 46.9% of the respondents were employed at the time of the survey, with 72.4% of them working in the private sector and 27.6% employed in the public sector. About a fifth

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



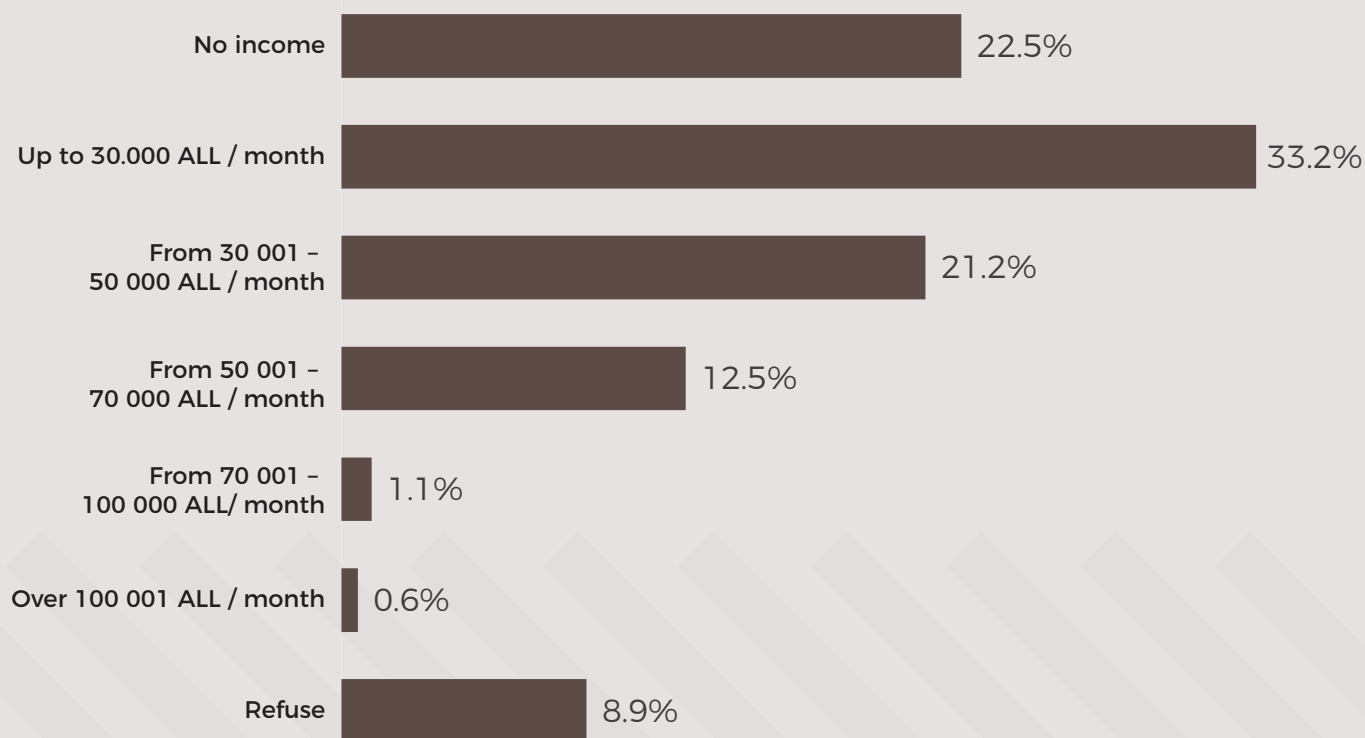
EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



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

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Mbështetje për Parlamentin
dhe Edukimin Qytetar në Shqipëri

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ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE
KOMITETI SHQIPTAR I HELSINKIT

*"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).*