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Opinion Poll 2022: Trust in Governance

10th Edition

A Decade in Review

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TRUST IN GOVERNANCE: INSIGHTS ACROSS THE YEARS

The Trust in Governance Opinion Poll presents its milestone tenth edition, which encapsulates an overview of significant trends that have emerged between 2013 and 2022 and examines data from 2022. Through the analysis of aggregated data spanning this period, our objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic evolution across various aspects of governance in Albania.

Public perceptions and attitudes on the relevant issues targeted by the 2022 Opinion Poll findings may have been influenced by various contextual factors. Notably, the government's decision to move all public services online starting from 1 May 2022, would have had a major influence on citizens' views of service accessibility and digitalization. Additionally, the instances of cyber-attacks to government institutions may have had an impact. The prosecution of cases involving abuse of power, corruption, and money laundering charges against high-ranking state officials could have also played a role. However, the opening of EU accession negotiations with Albania may have influenced perspectives on governance, accountability, and other relevant issues.

The key findings are grouped into eight sections:

SECTION I – TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS 2022

- International organizations, such as NATO (74.2%), the UN (71.3%) and the EU (70.9%), maintained their ranking as the most trusted institutions in Albania.
- Religious institutions (64.2%) continued to be the most trusted domestic institutions, followed by the armed forces (59.5%), educational institutions (54.5%) and civil society organizations (53.6%).
- Political parties (29.5%), parliament (33.8%), prosecution (35.2%) and the courts (36.2%) and ranked as the least trusted institutions in 2022, though there has been upward trend compared to 2021. Public trust in the courts has increased by eight percentage points (pp) compared to 2021 (28%).
- In 2022, public trust in the president has seen a significant increase – 41%, compared to figures between 24–28% during 2019 to 2021.
- 50% of Albanians trusted the Special Prosecution Office against Organized Crime and Corruption (SPAK), which was added to the list of surveyed institutions in 2022. This percentage is higher compared to the trust levels reported for the prosecution and courts.
- In 2022, 35% of Albanians believed that justice reform is being implemented properly, the same as in 2021 (35%). However, the public belief that it will positively influence the development of the country

has significantly decreased in the last year to 47%, a drop of -10 pp compared to 2021 (57%).

- Half of Albanians surveyed (51.3%) saw television as the most popular media outlet, compared to social media (30.6%) and online portals (11.6%), cementing its upward trend as the primary source for news on current affairs over the last two years.
- 38.6% of Albanians believed that the information provided by Albanian media was accurate/true, similar to 2021 (38.8%).
- Slightly more than half of Albanians (51.1%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the impact of foreign assistance (donors) in Albania, during 2022.

PREVIOUS YEARS

- Religious institutions have consistently been perceived as the most trusted domestic institutions for respondents in 2015-2022, though there has been a downward trend overall.
- Political parties, courts, prosecution, and parliament have ranked among the least trusted institutions over the years.
- International organizations have been the most trusted institutions overall, consistently above 70%, though figures have witnessed a decrease during 2019 to 2022.
- Public trust in the proper implementation of justice reform slightly decreased in 2017, and declined even further between 2018 and 2020. However, 2021 marked a turning point, with an increase of 6 pp, which continued at the same level in 2022.

SECTION II – TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY 2022

- More than half of surveyed Albanians perceived the central government (59.4%) and the municipality (60.2%) as non-transparent. The majority of the population (65.3%) was aware that the Albanian law guarantees the right to information, reflecting a slight increase from 2021 (62%).
- A sizeable majority of Albanians felt that neither the central nor local governments were accountable. The perception of accountability of the central and local government was similar to 2021, with 36% and 37.8% of the surveyed Albanians considering them accountable, respectively.
- International organisations (70.4%) were thought to hold the government to account more than the listed domestic institutions, indicating a 7 pp decrease from 2021.
- The State Supreme Audit Institution (SSAI) was seen as the most effective domestic institution in holding the government to account (63.4%), followed by parliament (58.4%) and the media (55%), albeit with notable decreases – SSAI (-8 pp), parliament (-6 pp) and the media (-6.5 pp) – compared with 2021.

PREVIOUS YEARS

- Less than half of respondents between 2016 and 2022 have seen central and local government as transparent or accountable. Public perception of both transparency and accountability has fluctuated in a similar pattern.
- Since 2016, local government has consistently been rated slightly more accountable than the central government, with an average of 38% compared to 35%. However, a significant decrease of 7 pp was observed in 2019 for local government. On the other hand, central government is perceived as more transparent, with an average rating of 40% compared to 37% for local government. Albeit ratings remain below 45%, at best.
- The Albanian State Supreme Audit Institution has consistently been identified as the most effective domestic accountability mechanism (horizontal accountability) by over half of the respondents, with an average of 64% from 2016 to 2022. Parliament follows closely behind with an average of 56%.
- International organizations have consistently been seen by most respondents (with an average of 73%) to hold the government to account better than domestic organizations across 2016-2022. The media has consistently been recognized as the most effective domestic vertical accountability mechanism by over half of the respondents, with an average rating of 59% in this period.

SECTION III – CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS 2022

- The majority of Albanians (76.5%) saw petty corruption as widespread or very widespread, compared with 79.1% for grand or high-level corruption. Both have decreased since 2021, with a sizeable drop for petty corruption in 2022 (6 pp from 2021 and 10 pp from 2019 and 2020).
- 65.8% of Albanians had no confidence in the prosecution of grand corruption cases, while 56.9% had no confidence in the effective prosecution of petty corruption. Both figures have improved compared to 2021 (68.4% and 59.3%).
- 15.4% of Albanians reported having witnessed cases of corruption at the central government level and 21.6% at the local government.
- 32.7% of citizens that received local government services in 2022, reported paying a bribe to public officials at this level.
- 30.9% of citizens reported paying bribes to receive central government services in 2022, reported having paid a bribe to officials at this level.
- Regarding the reasons behind bribe paying, 50.3% reported being asked for it, 24.4% said they paid to receive better services next time, while 14.1% paid as gratitude for the received services.
- Among surveyed citizens who paid a bribe, only 11.2% (N=564) reported it to the authorities, meaning 88.8% (N=508) did not. The most frequently cited reasons for non-reporting, 37.4% were seeing bribes as a common practice, seeing reporting as useless (32.1%) and fear of reprisal (12.3%).

PREVIOUS YEARS

Prevalence of corruption

- In the period 2019-2022, the vast majority of respondents saw both grand and petty corruption as either ‘widespread or very widespread’, with ratings above 75%.
- There was a notable decrease in the perception of petty corruption in 2022 (-6 pp from 2021 and -10 pp from 2019 and 2020).

Confidence in the prosecution of corruption

- Less than one-third of respondents were confident in the prosecution of grand corruption cases in 2017 – 2022 (ratings of 25%-32%).
- However, respondents consistently reported greater confidence in the prosecution of petty corruption cases (41%) compared with grand corruption (34%) in the same period. Despite fluctuations across the years, respondents’ confidence in the prosecution of both grand and petty corruption has improved overall, though by small margin.

SECTION IV – INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL INTERESTS 2022

- The courts (41.8%) were seen as the most politically influenced institutions, even though less so compared to in 2021 (49%).
- 37.9% perceived SPAK as ‘slightly or not at all influenced’ by political interests, while 31.8% of Albanians viewed it as ‘highly influenced or extremely influenced’.
- Religious institutions (with only 12.4% of citizens indicating them as ‘highly or extremely influenced’) were seen as the least politically influenced institutions, similar to 2021 (11%).

PREVIOUS YEARS

The public perception of institutions typically seen as being ‘highly or extremely influenced’ by politics, has improved over time – especially the courts and prosecution.

SECTION V – CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT 2022

- The percentage of the Albanian population interested to participate in decision-making in 2022 did not change substantially from 2021 (45.3% vs. 43.5%).
- In 2022, fewer Albanian citizens reported having sufficient opportunities to participate in local decision-making (37.8%) than at central government level (27.4%).
- A relatively small proportion of the public (18.1%) reported that they have used the portal www.konsultimipublik.gov.al.
- The vast majority of Albanian citizens (73%) agreed that citizens have sufficient knowledge to understand whether government decisions are good or bad.
- More than half of Albanians surveyed (60.9%) believed that local public hearings are formal events that have limited influence on municipal decisions, and only 39.2% believed that the suggestions of civil society organizations and interest groups are taken into consideration.
- 37.6% agreed that municipal councils represent local communities, and 36.6% agreed that the budget of the municipality reflects citizens' priorities.
- The percentage of the Albanian population attending a demonstration/rally or signing a petition increased from 27.1% in 2021 to 32.2% in 2022.
- 61.5% of Albanian citizens were willing to engage in voluntary work.
- 38.3% of the Albanian population wanted to move to another country in 2022—slightly lower than in 2021 (41%).

PREVIOUS YEARS

- In the period 2016-2022, the proportion of citizens who reported not having sufficient opportunities to participate in central and local government decision-making processes is below 40%. Since 2019, there has been a stagnation in the trends regarding the perceived opportunities for participation in decision-making at both levels of governance.
- Opportunities to participate in local decision-making scored higher, with an average of 37%, compared to the central level, which had an average of 27% throughout 2016-2022.
- Actual participation in public consultation meetings scored lower, below 25%, compared to the perceived opportunities throughout the period.
- The main reasons Albanians gave for not participating in consultation processes in 2016-2022 were the lack of trust that participation would have an impact, the expectation that others should participate, and the belief that there are no consultation mechanisms or processes in place.
- Recent years have seen greater participation in civic activism. The percentage of Albanians who reported that they participated in rallies/demonstrations or signed petitions increased after 2020 and in 2022, figures were 10 pp higher than in 2016 (32% vs. 22%). The main reasons given were personal interest and the shared interests of their community.

- 46% of Albanians wanted to move to another country in 2019, that figure has decreased by 8 pp in 2022 to 38%. The main reasons given for moving to another country are better life opportunities, economic factors, and professional development.

SECTION VI – PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY 2022

- On average, less than half of respondents (39.1%) were ‘satisfied or very satisfied’ with the delivery of core public services, similar to levels in 2021.
- Overall, satisfaction rates for public service delivery decreased for most of the core and administrative public services measured by the survey, compared to 2021.
- Education (46.4%), water supply (46.4%), cleaning services (46.2%) and public health services (43.4%) were reported as satisfactory more often than police services (35.9%), public transport (31.8%), and judicial services (25.8%), though figures have witnessed a decrease. Specifically, public satisfaction with the provision of educational services and emergency services has recorded a significant decrease, - 7 pp for education, -7 pp for emergency medical service and – 9 pp for firefighters, compared to the 2021 figures.
- 56% of Albanian citizens who had used an administrative service in 2022 were satisfied or very satisfied, particularly when it came to the civil registry (52%), social insurance (39.4%), and road transport (38.5%). Nonetheless, figures for civil registry services have decreased significantly, by 8 pp compared to 2021.
- Only 13.4% of surveyed respondents submitted a complaint to public service providers, similar to those reported in the 2021 study (15.1%).
- Only 9.5% of Albanian citizens used the co-governance online platform www.shqiperiaqeduam.al to file a complaint in 2022. 31.8% of those who submitted a complaint at ‘shqiperiaqeduam.al’, said it was addressed.
- 24.9% of citizens believed that institutions properly address citizens’ complaints.
- 59.3% of surveyed citizens did not feel safe in everyday life, witnessing a significant decrease of 12 pp, compared to 71.6% in 2021. The three main drivers of feelings of insecurity included crime, health issues and employment insecurity.

PREVIOUS YEARS

- On average, less than half of respondents have been ‘satisfied or very satisfied’ with the service delivery of core public services across the 2016-2022 period, remaining within a similar range in the last four years (2019-2022), with ratings of 38%-42%.
- In the period 2019 – 2022, the users of administrative public services have reported substantially higher figures than the overall satisfaction rate reported by all surveyed citizens, reaching a satisfaction rate of 56% in 2022.

SECTION VII – USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) 2022

- Most of the public (64.9%) were informed that their municipality has a website, a percentage significantly higher than in 2021 (59.7%), indicating a sustained trend of improvement in this indicator. 45.9% of citizens reported using the municipality's website, a higher percentage compared to 2021 (40.7%).
- The vast majority of Albanians (90.7%) reported being aware that the government administration offers electronic services through the e-Albania portal. Among them, 82.9% reported receiving electronic services through the e-Albania portal in 2022.
- Less than half of citizens (47.9%) reported that they accessed the e-Albania portal without the help of others.
- The percentage of citizens who characterized services as functional (-6.2 pp), easy to use (-9.7 pp), and time efficient (-4.2 pp) was lower in 2022 than in 2021. 52.6% of survey respondents agreed that e-services allow citizens to express comments/suggestions.
- For the vast majority of Albanians (90.3%) the protection of personal data was important. However, more than half (59.8%) did not trust that their personal data was properly administered by public actors. A similar percentage, 58.8% did not trust that their personal data was properly administered by the private sector.

PREVIOUS YEARS

- The proportion of citizens who are aware of the website of the municipality where they live, has significantly trended upwardly from 2014 to 2022. However, the use of the municipality's website has not increased at the same pace as the awareness about it.
- The share of respondents informed about the e-Albania portal has substantially increased since 2018 (54%), with figures reaching 91% in 2022.
- Similarly, the proportion of citizens who have received electronic services through the e-Albania portal has significantly increased from 38% in 2019 to 75% in 2022.

SECTION VIII – GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION 2022

- 61.5% of the Albanian population agreed that there is equality between men and women—a percentage similar to 2021.
- Over three-quarters of Albanians (77.1%) believed that men and women have the same access to public services, which is slightly higher than last year.
- Most citizens in 2022 (72.4%) believe that public servants served with the same devotion and ethics to women and men—a percentage lower than in 2021.
- A vast majority of the Albanian population (77.5%) thought that women and men are equally capable of holding any public position—a percentage lower than in 2021.
- In 2022, 14.6% of the Albanian population reported being treated differently by an institution or public official based on gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or something else—a percentage slightly higher than in 2021 (11.8%).
- Almost three in five people (58%) believed that an increased number of women in local councils has a positive impact on local governance—a percentage significantly lower than in 2021 (64%).

PREVIOUS YEARS

- Data over the years (2016-2022) shows that generally more than half of the Albanians agree that there is equality between men and women in society. Men were more likely than women to agree that there is gender equality, with an average of 61%, compared to 50% for women.
- Across this period, the majority of the Albanians believes that men and women have the same access to public services, without substantial differences in the perceptions of women and men.
- During 2016-2022, the percentage of Albanians who reported that they were treated differently by an institution or public official on the basis of disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, gender, or for other reasons did not change substantially. Values varied between 12% and 16%.
- The proportion of Albanians who agreed that women and men are equally capable of holding public office has remained notably high – with an average of 80% - since this question was first asked in 2016. The lowest rating was 77% in 2019.