

# **FREEDOM OF VOTE** and **FAMILY VOTING** in **ALBANIA**

**National Study  
2014**



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UN Women acts under the fundamental conviction that women and girls everywhere in the world are entitled to a life free from discrimination, violence and poverty and that gender equality is at the focus of development.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but its achievement also empowers women in the developing countries, promotes productivity and brings about economic growth.

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**DISCLAIMER**

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**The opinions and views expressed in this study are of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of UN Women or United Nations Agencies.**

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## List of Acronyms

<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Development in Europe
<b>ACER</b>	Albanian Center for Economic Research
<b>ASET</b>	Albanian Socio Economic Think Tank
<b>CEC</b>	Central Election Commission
<b>VC</b>	Voting Center
<b>ODIHR</b>	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>FG</b>	Focus Group
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>IDRA</b>	Institute for Development Research & Alternatives
<b>HU</b>	Household Unit
<b>PSU</b>	Primary Sampling Unit
<b>CEAZ</b>	Commissions of Electoral Administration Zone
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organization
<b>BCC</b>	Ballot Casting Center

## 1. Executive Summary

### *Interest in Politics and Civic Engagement*

- The majority of the population, especially women, takes very low interest in politics. One in three respondents (34%) is “not at all interested in politics”, while an additional 18% show very low levels of interest towards these matters (“not too interested”). Only 18% of respondents declare to be “very interested” in matters of politics and government. The breakdown by gender clearly shows that women are particularly less interested in politics (38% of women vs. 29% of men declaring to be “not at all interested”).
- Civic engagement, measured by respondent-declared membership levels in different political and civil society organizations, is weak overall. Only 1 in 10 respondents declares to be a member of a political party, 1 in 30 respondents declares to be part of a religious group and negligible numbers declare to be part of civil society organizations/NGOs. Women’s level of participation in these organizations is even lower. Almost 9 in 10 adult women declare to have never been a political party member, compared to 7 out of 10 men declaring the same. 93% of women have never been part of any women organization and 95% have never been part of any other NGOs or community organized groups
- Women show much lower levels of civic activism even in terms of using various instruments/ways to express their opinions on political or social issues. Only 12% of women declare to have contacted a public official in the last 12 months to express their concerns. Such figure is two times lower than the percentage of males who declare the same (25% of male respondents have contacted a public official during the last 12 months). An even more concerning issue is that 41% of women declare that they would never contact or visit a public official in order to express their opinion on political or social matters, far more than the number of males who declare the same (25%). The use of social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc.) to express opinions on political or social issues is also very low (8% of males and 6% of females declare to have used them for this purpose). Petitions, protests/demonstrations or media are also among the least used instruments to express one’s opinion on political or social matters
- Findings from the survey deliver an optimistic message in terms of support for participation of women in the decision making process: About 93% of the respondents would support women participation in politics as “candidates for public office”.
- While the majority of Albanians would support a greater participation of women in politics, there is a considerable part of the population, even among women, that thinks “men make better political leaders than women”. 58% of male and 38% of female respondents agree that “men make better political leaders than women”. Such findings may suggest that while “higher participation of women in politics” may be the correct political stance, it is not a widespread and fully acceptable belief. It resembles more to “talking the talk but not walking the walk”.
- The perception on the inability of women to make decisions of a political nature is more visible in respondents with no proper education, or with a relatively low education.

### *Family Voting and Voting Behavior*

- Overall, there is a high level of voter participation among Albanian residential population. About 88% of respondents declare to have participated in the 2013 elections, without any gender-based differences.
- The vast majority of respondents declare that they felt “completely free” when making their decision on whom to vote on 2013 elections (95%). No differences were noted between men and women respondents. Such findings suggest that direct, obvious or violent pressure on voters to vote against

their will, has not been highly present. It does not however rule out the possibility that votes were promised in return for various favors. Indeed, about 43% of respondents declare to know cases in which votes were promised in return for favors. Particularly, voting to “keep the current job” or “get a job after elections”, and voting in return “for money or for gifts” are mentioned as frequent phenomena encountered by more than one third of the respondents.

- Family voting starts at home and is often perceived as an act of representing the family's interests and/or status (if a woman's family does not go out to vote on the election day, then it is very likely that she will not do so either). The results of this study show that the phenomenon of family voting is currently present in less direct forms compared to the classic examples reported in the *Public Perception Survey on women's and girls' participation in politics (2008)*, *Albania's 2009 Parliamentary Election: Monitoring the Implementation of Gender Quota and Women's Participation (2009)*, and *The Situation of Women Leaders at the Local Level in Albania, A Baseline Analysis (2010)*, and *Women and girls in Local Elections, Forum of Local Observers for monitoring the participation of women and girls in election (2011)*. In most of these studies, it has been reported that a family member has accompanied a woman into the voting booth and has voted on her behalf. Currently, however, family voting starts at home, where family members discuss their voting tendencies and political beliefs, and eventually women give in to pressure from different family members to vote for a specific party or candidate.
- Only 5% of the respondents claimed the VC commissions allowed more than one person to walk in the voting booths simultaneously on voting day in 2013. Despite being just a proxy for “family voting”, (as there are cases allowable by law when somebody can be accompanied in the voting booth) this figure appears to be lower than the figures reported in

different election monitoring reports of the past elections (2009, 2011 or 2013). The 2013 OSCE Election Observation Report on the General Elections in 2013 claimed “*instances of group/family voting were observed in 13% of VCs and more frequently in rural areas*” while in the 2011 OSCE/ODHIR Report this figure was “*26% of the visited VCs*”. The comparison is however not fully compatible. The figure reported by the IDRA National Survey of 2013 indicates the cases where citizens have encountered this phenomenon during their voting process, whereas figures reported by the monitoring missions are based on observations of the visited voting centers.

- Survey results show that there is a slightly decreasing rate of women “being assisted” at the voting booths on Election Day, in a manner which goes beyond voter assistance provided for by the electoral law in Albania. In 93% of cases during the 2013 parliamentary elections, women went into the voting booth unaccompanied by any family members. Only 7% of women interviewed claimed they were not alone in the voting booth. There is a slight improvement compared to a 2009 survey, where in 9% of cases “Women voted in the presence of another person in the voting booth” (Monitoring of the *Implementation of Gender Quota, ACER & ASET, 2009*).
- Focus Group discussions revealed that the perception about family voting practices being a concern on Election Day is still present among general public. According to them the phenomenon is mostly observed in remote, rural areas of the country. The reasons such practices still prevail in these areas vary from the low level of education, to poverty, high unemployment, the inability of women to oppose family pressure (mostly due to financial dependency and lack of awareness) and family structures (the head, usually the elder, takes decisions on behalf of the entire family). However, there is a common belief among citizens that the phenomenon occur-

rence has been decreasing in recent years. When compared to findings from the *"Monitoring Report on the Implementation of Gender Quota and Women's Participation"* in 2009, and those from the *"Women and girls in Local Elections, Forum of Local Observers for monitoring the participation of women and girls in elections"* (2011), as well as according to focus group participants, the phenomenon of "family voting", manifested through direct forms inside the voting center, appears to have been less present in the 2013 parliamentary elections.

- Only 7% of female respondents said they have been pressured by a male family member to vote for a specific party or candidate. However, even if the survey findings does not show personal experience of the family voting phenomenon, the majority of respondents think that the vote for women in Albania does not always reflect their own will, but rather the will of their male family members instead. A series of findings shows that awareness on the existence of the phenomenon usually depends on the socio-demographic background of the person interviewed.
  - o A gender breakdown shows that more female respondents (60%) claim women in Albania are often under pressure from a male family member to vote for a specific party or candidate( 55% of male respondents believe the same).
  - o Respondents with a high education, or in the process of finishing one in Albania, are often more aware of the fact that the votes of women in Albania do not always reflect their will. Respondents without any proper education or with elementary education deny the claim according to which male members pressure women in the family to vote for a specific candidate or party.
  - o Respondents of an older age are the ones who mostly ignore the existence of such a phenomenon in the

families. Similar to previous years, the groups which are more prone to accept the existences of such a phenomenon are women/men under the age of 30. Consequently, this group is still less likely to be influenced in their voting decision by family members.

- o Respondents from rural areas are the ones who mostly deny the pressure exerted on women/girls from the male family members. The denial of the existence of the phenomenon of family voting seems to be higher especially in the regions of Lezha, Kukes, Durrës, and Shkodra.

### **Women Participation and Decision-making**

- The vast majority of respondents think that women do possess the capacities to decide on political issues (87%). However, still 1 in 6 men believes that women do not have these capacities and it is the man who should make decisions on behalf of the women when it comes to political issues. 1 in 3 men and 1 in 5 women do not think that "man and women have the same capabilities for decision making".
- Respondents from rural areas are also more prone to think that women are not capable of making political decisions, and that in general, men are better political leaders than women.
- Similar to research figures in the 2012 report on *"Women's participation in politics and decision making in Albania"*, there is a positive perception about women involved in politics and decision making. The majority of respondents (84% of females, 81% of males) and FG participants show appreciation for their abilities and contribution in the progress of Albanian society in different areas. Women's contribution in the areas of human rights protection, education, health policies and social issues, is especially valued by participants in



focus group discussions. Generally, female respondents are more supportive of participation of women in politics compared to male respondents. 95% of female respondents would support participation of women in politics, compared to 90% of men who would do the same.

- o Respondents with a higher level of education tend to be more supportive towards participation of women in politics when compared to respondents with a lower grade of education.
- o Support for the participation of women in politics is lower among respondents living in rural areas.
- o The number of women who do not support an increased participation of women/girls in politics is very small (5%). However, a more careful analysis of this sample would reveal that women with a lower education, those who have attended a vocational school, those who are currently unemployed, housewives, as well as female respondents who are currently retired, seem to be more skeptical on the involvement of women in politics.
- There is however progress, compared to previous years, (2010, 2012) in terms of women behavior towards females running for important public positions. Respondents and focus group participants are convinced that an increased number of females in charge of decision making institutions will offer more solutions about women and community problems.

#### **Gender Quotas Awareness and Support**

- Albanians are not properly informed on the purpose of gender quotas in politics, or how they are to be implemented. Only 1 in 2 respondents knows that it is a requirement for political parties to reserve at least 30% of their candidates' list

for women. The others either do not know or they wrongly nominate the quota. Similar to the report on *"The Situation of Women Leaders at the Local Level in Albania"* in 2010, there is a general awareness about the existence of a gender quota law, but few participants can provide details on what these quotas actually mean, and how they are supposed to be implemented.

- Even more disappointing is the fact that women/girls are generally less informed on the specific purpose of these quotas. Gender breakdown shows that there are less female respondents (41%) who are aware of the gender quotas requirements, compared to men (53%).
  - o Respondents with a higher education are generally more aware of the purpose of gender quotas compared to those with a lower education.
  - o Respondents falling within the 41-50 age groups also seem to be better informed on gender quotas.
  - o Respondents living in urban areas are generally better informed on gender quotas and their purpose compared to those who live in rural areas.
- Respondents who are informed on gender quotas are more supportive of the implementation of such requirements compared to those who do not have the proper information.
- There is however, a generally high support about the introduction of gender quota in politics or elected bodies. About 83% of respondents would support such quota with 45% "strongly supporting" and 38% "somewhat supporting" it. Only 9% of respondents would oppose such quota. Men are generally less supportive of the gender quotas, and many of them think of quotas as artificial means for increasing participation of women in politics. Generally, male respondents believe quotas often disregard women's qualifications and skills.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Study objectives

The overall objective of this study is to elicit citizen opinions on different practices that might intervene with the freedom of voting as well as understand and identify the current systemic flaws behind the high occurrence of such practices. The study also aims at describing the practice of family voting<sup>1</sup> in Albania while providing recommendations on how to tackle it.

Other objectives of the study are to (i) compare the progress (or regress) with the previous monitoring reports supported by UN Women and (ii) establish a baseline of comparison including the legal reference to the family voting and other malicious practices. Through desk research a comparison baseline with all the previous (2009-2013) publications, statistics, information and other reports supported by UN Women about Gender sensitive issues related to the freedom of voting, family voting and other voting malpractices, was conducted.

Upon this analysis, the study provides concrete recommendations on future interventions to improve women access in the electoral processes and to tackle family voting practices both institutionally and culturally.

The high frequency of “family voting” is an indicator used for the assessment on the level of accomplishment of democratic standards in electoral processes. This report therefore aims at presenting a multidimensional picture of the situation of women in Albania in regards to their voting behavior, their level of civic engagement in society, their involvement in the decision making process in im-

portant public positions, as well as the public support for participation of women in Albania in various areas.

The main results and recommendations of the study will also contribute to define the main issues to be addressed through UN Women Programme, on women participation in decision making and to better understand and explain perceptions of the electoral process, voter information needs, as well as voter behavior in Albania.

### 2.2 Research Context

#### *Women’s Political Representation and Participation*

Women’s participation in politics and decision-making is a continuous challenge that Albania is facing throughout these democracy-building years. Despite a perceived relative increase in the awareness on gender issues in Albania, the situation of women in the country still needs improving. Several studies and reports claim that women’s participation in politics and decision making continues to be restricted due to several reasons, mostly related to gender stereotypes on the ability of women to engage in the field<sup>2</sup>.

Low political representation in elected bodies is a challenge, among others, that women currently have to face in Albania. Gender legal provisions introduced in 2008 and 2009, with the aim of guaranteeing proper representation for women, have not been fully implemented and observed by responsible institutions so far. As a result there is limited representation of women both at the local and central level of the government. Based on CEC results for the 2011 local elections in Albania, only 3 out of 65 Heads of Municipalities

1. Family voting is a practice where a family member casts votes on behalf of the entire family or where one member of the family pressures other members to vote for a certain candidate

2. See article on “WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING IN ALBANIA: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS”; Elona Dhembo; The Journal of International Social Research, 2010. See also study on : MAPPING WOMEN’S ECONOMIC SITUATION in Tirana, Vlora , Shkodra and Elbasan; by Milva Ekonomi, Mirela Arqimandriti; Gender Alliance for Development Center ; supported by UN Women.

3. Open Data, “Gender relations in the list of mayors 2000-2015”. Available at [open.data.al](http://open.data.al)

in Albania are currently females<sup>3</sup>. In 2011, 24.3% of civil servants in senior management and 39.2% of civil servants in middle management were females<sup>4</sup>.

Representation of women in elected bodies has seen a slight improvement after the last electoral process in June 2013. Women earned 18, 6 % of seats in the latest parliamentary elections on June 2013 in Albania, compared to 16, 4 % in 2009. Additionally, 5 out of 19 (26%) cabinet ministers and 8 out of 23 (34%) vice ministers in the current government are women. Other women have been appointed as heads of highly important government departments such as the General Directorate of Taxation, Customs, etc).

In January 2014, Albania ranked 74th (out of 145 countries) in the UN Women World Ranking, based on the percentage of women in unicameral parliaments or the lower house of the parliament. The country saw an improvement in its ranking compared to January 2011, when it ranked in the 82nd position.

While political representation of women in elected bodies is still low, their participation in voting is generally high. The data from CEC collected for the first time during 2011 local elections show that women/girls represented 50.2% of all voters from the reported voting centers. There is no available data on women participation in 2013 general election, but it is generally believed that the level of participation is approximately the same. It is worth noting that these elections saw the highest percentage of voter turnout (53, 47%) in democratic times in Albania.

However, high level of participation in voting does not necessarily mean high level of participation in political activities. A 2011 report by the Albanian Institute for the Development of Election Systems (AIDEC) stated that “although the level of participation in voting

was high amongst women, the participation of women/girls in local elections campaign activities was low”<sup>5</sup>. According to this report: “In 99 electoral activities which were monitored in different regions<sup>6</sup>, only 33% of the participants were women/girls”

### **Family Voting: Definitions and Current situation**

Several election monitoring reports cited herein, both from local and international observers, claim that one of the major challenges for the participation of women in electoral processes in Albania is the phenomenon of “Family Voting”. According to these reports, women in Albania are either subject to pressure in order to vote for a candidate who they do not necessarily support, or pressured not to vote at all.

Based on a report on “*Consolidated Response on the Prevention of Family Voting*” by the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2009), “Family Voting” might include cases in which:

- a) A male family member accompanies one or more female relatives into a polling booth
- b) Family groups vote together in the open
- c) A male family member obtains ballot papers on behalf of other family members and marks them as he sees fit

Despite challenges related to the proper definition of “Family Voting”, both local and international observers generally agree on what are the basic questions which need to be asked in order to identify cases of such a phenomenon. Most research in the area focuses on *whether women are accompanied in the voting booth by other family members on Election Day*.

4. Idem

5. WOMEN AND GIRLS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS”, May, 2011; Albanian Institute for the Development of Election Systems (AIDEC) & Klea Faniko; (Supported by UN Women).

6. The report monitored the regions of Gjirokastra, Vlora, Korca, Tirana, Shkodra and Kukes.

As mentioned above, several election monitoring reports show that there is a high rate of women being assisted in the voting booths on Election Day in Albania, in a manner which goes beyond voter assistance allowable by law<sup>7</sup>.

More specifically, the OSCE Election Observation Mission Report (2009) stated that; *"Influencing the wife/daughter's will to vote for the candidate/subject voted by the husband/father is a recurring phenomenon in Albanian electoral practice"*. The "concern" demonstrated by the husband/ father that the wife/daughter "makes no mistake", or the trend "to give an orientation" to the wife/ daughter when she enters or when she is inside the secret room, with the intention that "the vote does not become invalid", are only some of the manifestations of the family voting phenomenon<sup>8</sup>.

The Final Report on the Monitoring of the Parliamentary Elections in 28 June 2009, by the Body of International Observers from OSCE/ODIHR referred to the family voting phenomenon as a serious problem and claimed *"a violation of secret voting was reported in 19 percent of the visited voting centers"* (OSCE & ODIHR, 2009, p. 24).

In 2011, OSCE & ODIHR in its Final Report again stated that, *"The ability of many women voters to exercise their right to vote freely was affected by the continued high instance of family and proxy voting, which was observed in 26 per cent of VCs visited"* (OSCE & ODIHR, 2011, pg.22).

Even more recently, the OSCE Election Observation Report on the General Elections in 2013, claimed *"instances of group/family voting were observed in 13 per cent of VCs, and more frequently in rural areas"* (OSCE & ODIHR, 2013, p. 23).

Research on the phenomenon of Family voting throughout the electoral processes in Albania has also been done by local observers. In 2008, a survey on the "Public Perception of Women's Participation in Elections in Albania", reported a *"higher rate of women being assisted in voting booths in a manner which goes beyond voter assistance allowable by law"* (ACER, ASET, UNDP, 2008). According to this report, it is most likely that "family voting" was the reason behind the increasing number of females which were assisted in the voting booths.

In 2009, a report on "Monitoring of the Implementation of Gender Quotas and Participation of Women", prepared by local observers, claimed family voting was an issue during the electoral process. The report at the time however, noted a "slight decrease in the occurrence of the phenomenon of Family Voting compared to previous elections" (ACER & ASET, 2009). The study also emphasized the fact that among the 4 regions which were observed on Election Day<sup>9</sup>, Family Voting cases were more often reported in the northern areas of the country. Likewise, a national study on the "Situation of Women Leaders at the Local Level" in Albania, which was published in 2010, also claimed that *"active discrimination against women participating freely in elections" was "practiced in the form of family voting"* (ACER, ASET, 2010). The report also said the phenomenon was *"especially problematic in rural areas"*.

### **Family Voting: International Legal Framework**

International standards hold that the practice of family voting, in which one family member (typically male) casts ballots on behalf of the entire family, or in which a husband and wife enter the voting booth together, is not an acceptable practice in democratic elections<sup>10</sup>.

7. "Article 108" of the Albanian Electoral Code.

8. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report Albania <http://www.osce.org/sq/odihr/elections/albania/38598>.

9. Regions monitored by the report in 2009: Kukes, Elbasan, Gjirokaster, Vlora.

10. Women & Elections: Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections. Available at: (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm>).

Based on these standards, family voting not only violates women's rights to freely express their opinion, but also the principle of secret voting which is one of the most basic political rights, protected in numerous international legal documents. Article 21, Paragraph 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will, shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

Similarly, other international legal documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25, Paragraph 2), the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, OSCE "Copenhagen Document", First Protocol of the European Convention of Human Rights emphasizes the importance of the right to exercise one's vote freely and complete vote secrecy. Albania participates in and abides by these international documents.

Furthermore, gender equality is at the same time an obligation which stems from the EU *Stabilization and Association Agreement*, signed by Albania in 2006. The agreement requires an adaptation of the Albanian legislative framework to the *acquis communautaire*. The European integration process therefore requires an adaptation of Albanian gender laws with the best European practices

### **Family Voting and Women Representation: National Legal Framework**

In 2008, several legislative changes took place in Albania, for the purpose of encouraging gender equality in elected institutions. One of the changes introduced was the inclusion of gender quotas on elected and nominated posts in the Law "On Gender Equality in Society" (July 2008). The law required a representation of at least 30% for each gender in all elected bodies and public institutions.

According to the **Law No. 9970** (date 24.07.2008), "**On Gender Equality in Society**" (LBGJ12), **Article 15**, on the participation in the process of decision-making:

1. The equal gender representation in all organs of the legislative, executive and judicial power and in other public institutions is achieved when is ensured:
  - a) The representation at a level over 30 per cent for each gender, including the executive bodies of these organs;
  - b) The equal acknowledgement from each gender of the procedures and criteria of fair competition, during the nominations in these organs;
  - c) The inclusion at a level over 30 per cent from each gender in the list of candidates for the elections in the local government bodies;
  - ç) The inclusion of no less than 30 per cent of members from each gender in the list of candidates put forward by political parties for the proportional system in the elections of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania;
  - d) The inclusion at a level over 30 per cent from each gender in the administrative bodies of the process for the national and local elections.
2. Political parties define the means and measures necessary for fulfilling the demands envisaged in item 1 of this article.
3. Political parties pay a financial penalty amounting up to 10% of the state fund for the budgeting of the party's electoral campaign, in case the political parties violate the provisions of this article, until the violation is remedied.

Additional amendments were also introduced to the Albanian Electoral Code, with the inclusion of the legal requirement according to which: "*For each electoral zone, at least 30% of the multi name list and one of the first three names on the multi name list shall belong to each gender.*" The amendment also included penalties and fines for subjects who did not fulfill these criteria.

In 2012, the Albanian Electoral Code was again amended, when more severe penalties and fines were included for those political subjects whose candidate lists did not fulfill the Code's gender requirements. As a result, for political parties whose list does not meet gender quota requirements, the Electoral Code fines were included of<sup>11</sup> "1 million Lek for the General Elections, and 50 000 Lek for Local Elections".

Other changes introduced in the Electoral Code in 2012, focused on the replacement of an MP in the parliament when he/she decides to interrupt their mandate, or whose mandate is interrupted based on provisions of Article 71 of the Albanian Constitution. According to the changes introduced, when the vacancy arises from an interrupted mandate won in accordance with point 6 of article 67, it is filled with the first candidate in the list belonging to the respective gender, regardless of the ranking in the list.

The changes which have been introduced both in the Law on Gender Equality in 2009, as well as to the Electoral Code since 2008, have created a favorable context for the increase of participation of Albanian women and girls in politics at the national level. For instance, in the general elections of July 2009, the number of women Members of Parliament more than doubled, from 7% in the year 2006, to 16.4% (ACER & ASET, 2010).

The introduction of legal penalties and amendments in the Albanian legal framework has also had a positive effect on reducing the occurrence of Family Voting on Election Day.

National legislation considers Family voting a fundamental violation of the individual's rights, as per Article 45/3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania. According to this article, the vote of each citizen should be "Free, secret and individual".

For the purpose of guaranteeing this constitutional right, Election administration institutions rely on legal penalties for those who engage in such practices, as well as those who allow them on Election Day. The penalty provisions included in Article 106.5: of the Electoral Code, define "VCC members, who have allowed a voter to vote more than once or on behalf of other voters" as subject to criminal liability in accordance with Article 248 of the Criminal Code<sup>13</sup>. The punishment for these acts, according to the above mentioned article, is "*imprisonment from 6 months up to five years and a fine of 300,000 Leke to 1 Million Lek.*"

11. Law No. 74/2012, dated 19.07.2012 "On some additions and amendments in Law No. 10019 dated 29.12.2008; "Electoral Code of Republic of Albania".

12. Article 164/2: As amended by Electoral Law No.74/2012.

13. See Albanian Criminal Code: based on Article 248.



2.3 Research Methodology

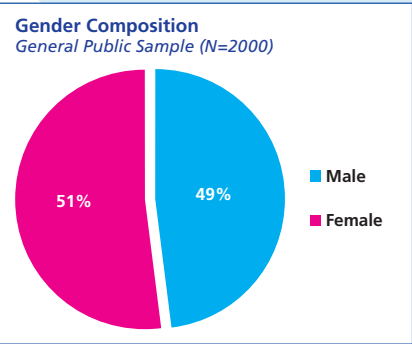
This study went through a series of implementation phases in terms of methodology:

- 1. **Desk research** - The process started with a baseline derived from the study of previous “UN women” publications and other relevant reports which provided comparative statistics and information about freedom of voting, family voting and other voting malpractices in Albania.
- 2. **Quantitative research** - A national representative survey of adult population (18+ y.o) was conducted. In total 2200 questionnaires were filled (out of which 200 targeting the Roma community).
- 3. **Qualitative research** - Six (6) focus groups discussions were organized based on a structured moderation guide, with the purpose of studying in-depth certain aspects not fully explored through the questionnaires.

Quantitative survey

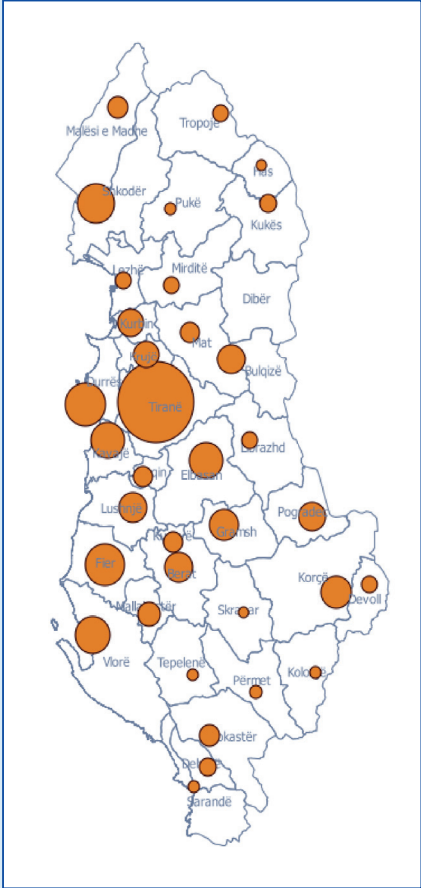
General Public sample

The general public survey was based on a multi-stage random probability sampling, drawn from a list of voting centers from the last general elections of 2013. Voting centers, for sampling purposes represent the Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). There were 196 primary sampling units selected, using a formula that randomly generated numbers, taking into account the number of voters for each voting center and urban versus rural dimension. Within the



geographical area designated by these units, the respondents were selected based on a random-route method (every third door on the right was selected and the person 18+ years old with the latest birthday in that household was then interviewed).

Geographic distribution of the sample



Sample size

N=2000 respondents

Timing of survey

November - December 2013

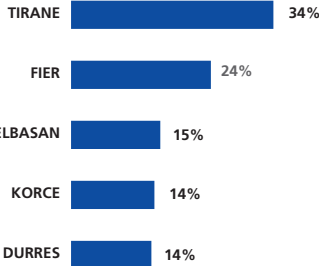
Method of survey

Face-to-face interview

Roma Booster Sample

A booster sample of N=200, targeting only Roma people was conducted. The sample was drawn from maps of Roma inhabited areas created from previous surveys of IDRA on the matter. From these maps, Primary Sampling Units were defined and randomly selected. The method of selecting the household and the respondent is similar to that of the general public survey (Right hand rule, every third door, respondents with the latest birthday).

Roma Sample distribution



Qualitative component

A qualitative component of the study was designed in order to explore in depth reasons of family voting and perceptions on freedom to vote. The qualitative information would complement the quantitative information acquired from the national survey. In order to account for nuances deriving from age, social status or geographical location of participants, a careful distribution of focus groups along those lines was prepared.

The table below presents the distribution of Focus Groups along these parameters.

Composition and distribution of Focus Groups

Nr.	Age	Gender	U/R	Location
1	18-65	F	Urban	Tirana
2	18-65	F	Rural	Tirana
3	18-65	F	Urban	Korca
4	18-65	F	Rural	Korca
5	18-65	F	Urban	Fier
6	18-65	F	Rural	Fier

Margin of Error

The margin of error for the General Public Sample is  $\pm 2.2\%$  with a confidence interval of 95%. Technically speaking, a sampling error of  $\pm 2.2\%$  means that, if repeated samples of this size were conducted, 95% of them would reflect views of the population with no greater inaccuracy than  $\pm 2.2\%$ . The testing of statistical significance which takes into account the margin of error is important especially when presenting subgroup analysis of the results. These statistical tests are applied to the results presented throughout this report.

The margin of error for Roma Booster sample is  $\pm 6.9\%$ . This margin of error is taken into account when comparing results of Roma Booster sample with General Public sample.

Focus group in Korça



Focus group in Tirana





### 3. Main Findings - General Population

#### 3.1 Interest in Politics and Civic Engagement

*The majority of the population, especially women, takes very low interest in politics. The younger the person, the lower its interest in matters of politics and government. Civic engagement, measured by respondent-declared membership levels in different political and civil society organizations, is also weak in overall.*

Almost 1 in 3 respondents (34%) is “not at all interested in matters of politics and government” (Fig.1). An additional 18% are “not too interested” while 30% declare to be “somewhat interested”. Only 18% of respondents say they are “very interested” in politics.

The breakdown per gender clearly shows that the lack of interest for politics is greater among women (38% of female respondents vs. 29% of male declaring to be “not at all interested”). There are 25% of male respondents who declare to be “very interested” in matters of politics and government compared to only 12% of females who state alike.

Based on Focus Group discussions, most women refuse to engage in politics because of the fear of losing their jobs, lack of self-confidence as well as a general lack of trust in politics as an instrument to improve their socio economic situation.

Looking at the age-group breakdown, it is obvious that the younger the person, the lower its interest in matters of politics or government. There are only 10% of 18-24 y.o. respondents who declare to be “very interested in these matters” while this number increases with age group reaching up to 31% of respondents who are 65 y.o or more (Fig.2).

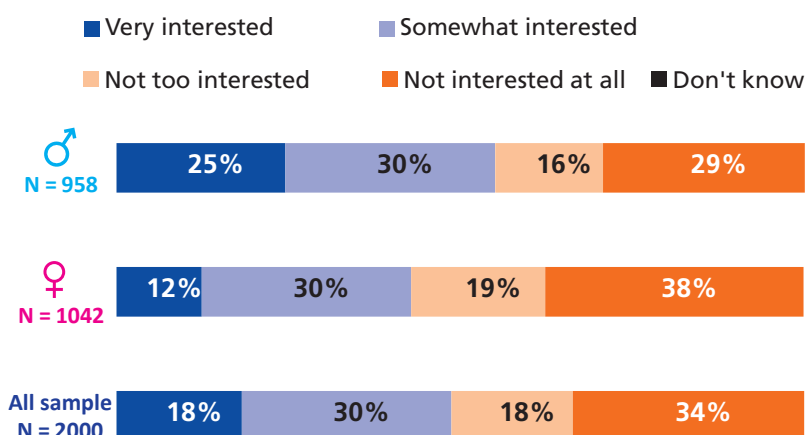
#### Focus Group Quotes:

*“Our politics is bad. I have the impression that people are very tired and disappointed from everything happening. They are tired despite their ideals and despite their responsibility as voters.” (Female, Tirana, Urban)*

*“Men are more interested in politics than women. The only women who are interested in politics are the ones who have a job. So they are interested in preserving their job” (Female, Fier, Urban).*

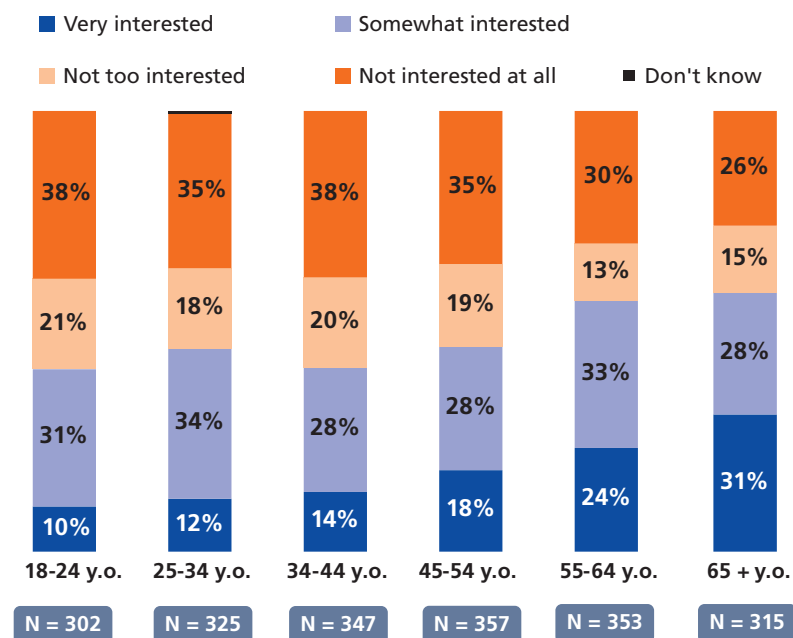
**Fig. 1 How interested are you in matters of politics and government?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 2 How interested are you in matters of politics and government?**

Breakdown by age



Civic engagement, measured by respondent-declared membership levels in different political and civil society organizations, is weak in overall. Only 1 in 10 people declares to currently be a member of political parties, 1 in 30 people declares to be part of a religious group and negligible numbers declare to be part of civil society organizations/NGOs (Tab. 1).

The women participation in these organizations is even lower. Almost 9 in 10 adult women declare to have never been a member of political parties, compared to 7 out of 10 men declaring the same. 93% of women declare to have never been part of any women organization and 95% have never been part of any other NGOs or community organized groups (Tab. 2).

Focus group discussion revealed that the main reason for such low engagement is the general disappointment with politics and a rooted belief that their voices will not be heard within these political organizations. There is a certain feeling among participants that they would have to sacrifice their morals and principles in order to be part of a political party. Another reason, more present among female participants employed in public sector, is the fear of losing their job if they become members of political parties.

Non-government organizations also suffer from the lack of public trust. There is a widespread perception among focus group participants that NGOs are politically influenced and this influence is reflected in their work. Their campaigns or results are not very visible according to participants, raising suspicions they get donor's money for fictitious work.

#### Focus Group Quotes:

*Getting politically engaged? I have thought about it but politics is a matter of 4 years only. After the elections things may change and you end up unemployed again. I keep saying to my children that they shouldn't speak too much about politics. These are hard times to live. I might have thought to get involved in politics but the truth is that I don't live for 4 years, I live for a life" (Female, Tirana, Urban)*

*Women who are engaged in politics are women who like career and neglect family that is why women rarely get involved in politics" (Female, Tirane, Rural)*

*"We have heard of them [NGO's]....they are not very visible or efficient," (Female Fier, Urban)*

**Tab.1 Are you a member or have you been a member of any of the different types of organizations listed?**

All Sample	Currently a member	Been a member	Never been a member	DK/ Refused
Political party	10.8%	8.5%	78.4%	2.4%
Religious Group	3.0%	1.9%	92.3%	2.9%
Charity Organization	0.5%	1.2%	95.4%	3.0%
Women's Organization	0.5%	2.4%	93.7%	3.5%
NGO	0.4%	1.3%	95.2%	3.2%

**Tab. 2 Are you a member or have you been a member of any of the different types of organizations listed?**

Gender breakdown	Currently a member of		Never been a member of	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Political party	16.2%	5.8%	69.7%	86.4%
Religious Group	3.5%	2.4%	91.9%	92.6%
Charity Organization	0.4%	0.6%	95.3%	95.5%
Women's Organization	0.0%	0.9%	94.9%	92.6%
NGO	0.4%	0.3%	94.9%	95.4%

Women show much lower levels of civic activism even in terms of using different instruments/ways to express their opinions on political or social issues. Only 12% of women declare to have contacted a public official in the last 12 months, in order to express their opinions (Fig. 4). This is two times lower than the percentage of males who declare the same (25% have contacted a public official during the last 12 months) (Fig. 3 & 4).

Even more worrying is that 41% of women declare that they would never do such a thing as to contact or visit a public official in order to express their opinion on political or social issues, far more than the number of males who declare the same thing (25%).

Participants in focus groups show a distrustful attitude towards public officials in general. Expressing an opinion about a social or political issue may negatively affect one's chances to get solutions from public officials when facing a personal or community problem. On the other hand, participants claim that it is very difficult to contact with Members of Parliament, who theoretically should be "more accessible" in receiving opinions from their voters. This is especially true for rural residents. First, it is not known to people who would be "their member of parliament" given the current system of party list for each geographical district and second there is little or no on-the-ground presence from MPs in the areas where they have received their votes.

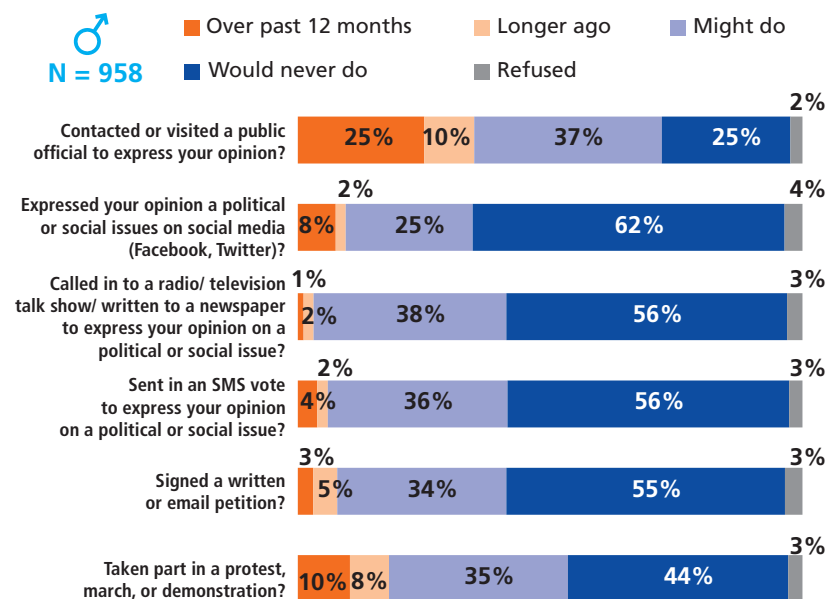
The use of social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc) to express opinions on political or social issues is very low (8% of males and 6% of females declare to have used them for this purpose). The use of "petitions" (3% of males and 2% of females), "protests/demonstrations" (10% of males and 5% of females) or "media" (1% of males and 2% of females) for these purposes is also very low.

#### Focus Group Quotes:

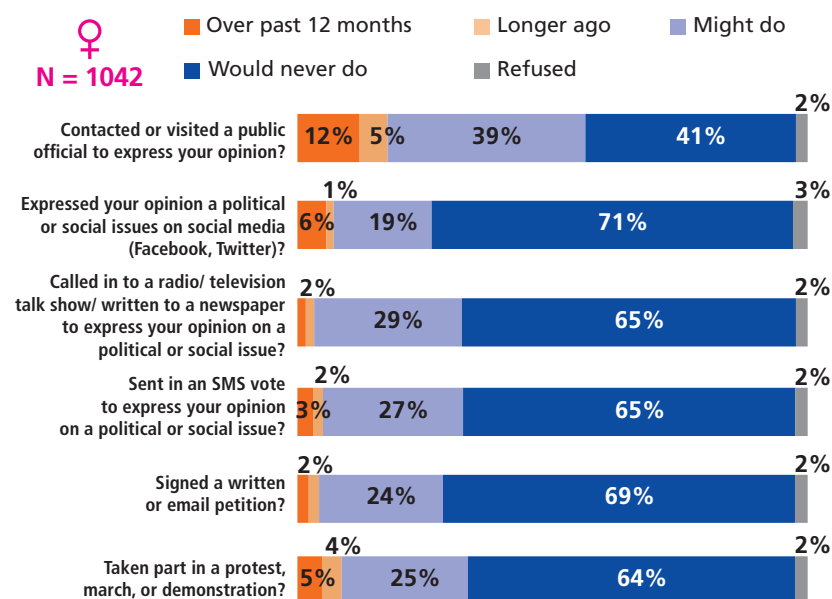
*"What if I want to meet a Member of Parliament now, after the elections? You can't find him. You can find maybe the chairman of the party but we don't know where we can find our MPs. (Female, Fier, Rural).*

*"We know MPs, but we don't know any offices. They have offices only in election time" (Korca, Urban)*

**Fig. 3 Have you done any of the following activities to express your opinion on political or social issues?**  
Male respondents



**Fig. 4 Have you done any of the following activities to express your opinion on political or social issues?**  
Female respondents



### 3.2 FAMILY VOTING AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR

*Traditionally, Albanian families head to voting centers together. However, "Family Voting" does not appear to happen frequently inside the Voting Center. Pressure to vote for a certain political party or candidate might occur in the family, prior to vote casting.*

According to CEC figures, the general elections of 2013, officially registered the highest turnout in the history of Albanian elections, 53, 47%. Such a high turnout is confirmed by the survey results. About 88% of the respondents had voted in 2013 elections (Fig.5) Even among those that did not vote (12%), about half of them did not vote because they realistically could not (Out of country, not eligible for voting at the time, sickness etc) rather than did not want to vote. There are no differences on gender in this regard.

When asked about how free they felt when making the decision on who to vote, the vast majority of respondents declared that they "felt completely free" (95%). There is no difference on this feeling between males and females. Such a result, suggests that direct and obvious pressure, against the will of the voters, may not have been highly present. It does not suggest though, that votes were not promised in return for different favors. Indeed, the results of other questions in the survey, presented latter on this report, suggest that such a phenomenon of vote promising in return for favors is highly present.

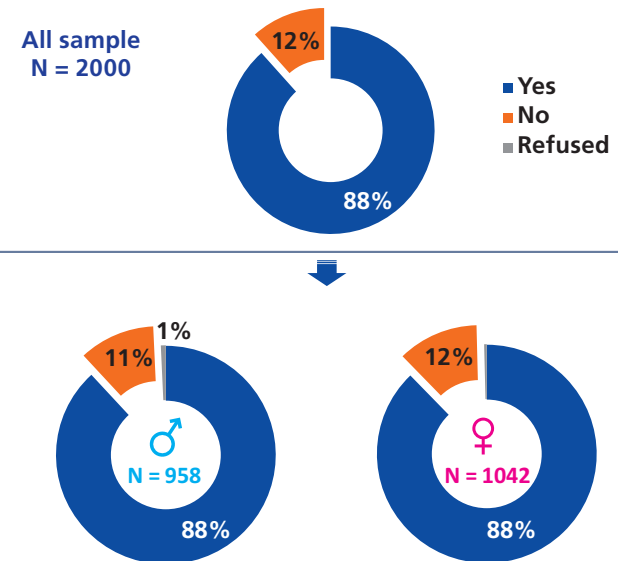
#### Focus Group Quotes:

*I think that a family has common interests and if they have common interests their vote will go almost to the same party or person. I don't think there should have a big difference between a couple as far as they have the same interests. I just can't think it differently. In my family, this is the way things function. (Female, Tirana, Rural)*

Most of the participants in Focus Group discussions also said that they felt free to vote whomever they wanted to vote and did not feel any kind of pressure. While they claim that there are cases when women are pressured in certain ways by the male members of the family, it is a prerequisite that the female should have a different political opinion than the male member in order to feel the pressure. According to them however, usually, the females either have the same political opinion as the male members of the family, or they do not have a political opinion at all, making them an easy subject to be persuaded without feeling any "pressure".

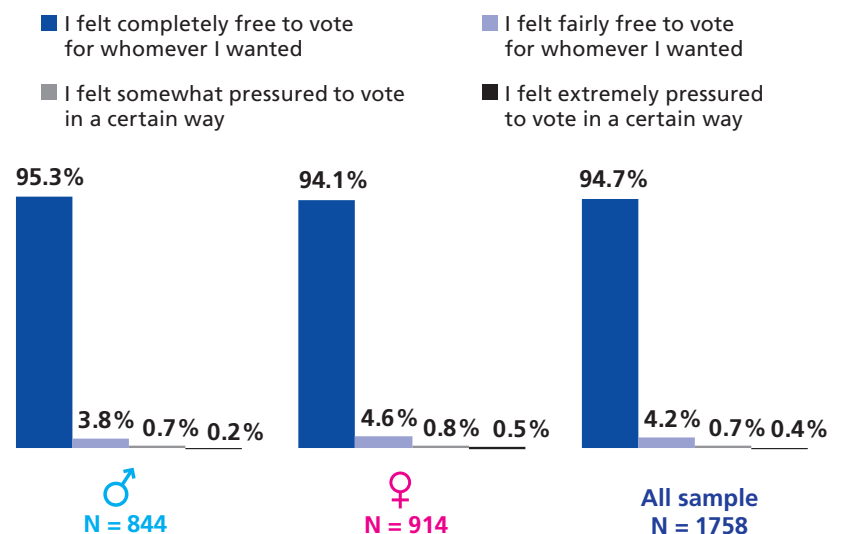
**Fig. 5 Did you vote on 2013 General elections?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig.6 Would you say you were asked to vote in a certain way or did you feel free to vote for whomever?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



There is a certain confusion among the respondents about the understanding of the “family voting” terminology. From the discussions in the Focus groups there are three different understandings of the term.

- a) Family voting is a negative phenomenon in which a person (usually the head of the family) votes for the entire family or orders/obliges his family to vote for a specific political preference;
- b) Family voting occurs when a family discusses and decides to vote for a specific candidate or party, (often based on the belief that this will lead to a financial as well as social improvement for the family). There is a family consensus and nothing againsts the law happens in the Voting Center.
- c) Family voting occurs when the whole family goes to the voting center together but they vote all on their/own.

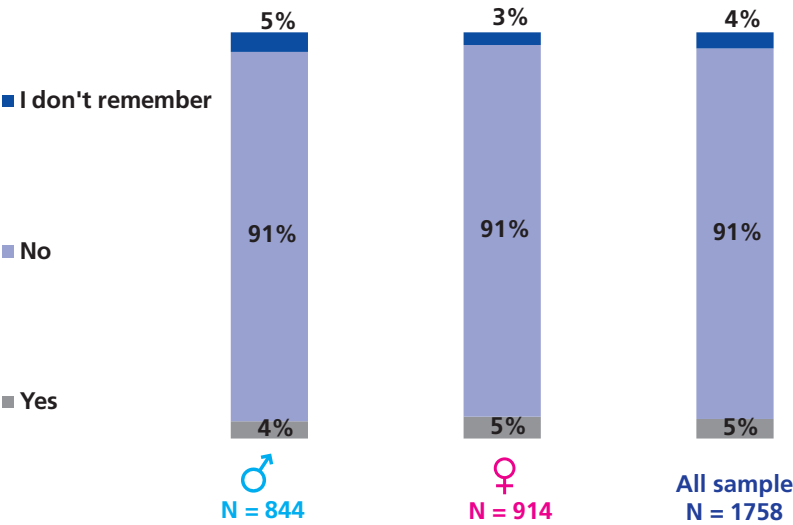
Only the first understanding (a) is the right one. Based on this “definition”, the survey tried to create a proxy indicator of “family voting” by asking respondents whether they had noticed cases in which Voting Commissions had allowed more than one person in the voting booth during 2013 elections.

Only 5% of the respondents indicate that the commission in their Voting Center allowed more than one person in the voting room during the 2013 elections. (Fig. 7) 91% said these practices were not allowed while 4 % of the respondents said that they did not remember. It has to be mentioned that “accompanying a person” in the voting booth may have been for reasons allowable by law. The figure suggests that the phenomenon of “Family Voting” through such direct methods as “accompanying the person in the voting booth and voting on their behalf” is rather low. Focus Group participants also confirmed that in general, people were not allowed together in the voting booths.

About 7% of the female respondents said they were accompanied by a family member to the voting room during the last elections (Fig. 8). While this may not sound like a high number, it is still an indication that such a phenomenon exists. In 82% of the cases of those who were accompanied, the company was a male member of the family (Husband or Father). When comparing the results of female respondents accepting to have been accompanied by somebody else in the voting booth, with the results of other survey questions on the “ways of family voting”, it becomes obvious that “family voting”, does not necessarily have to be “entering the voting booth accompanied by a male person”. It is a phenomenon that happens during their family discussions before the families get to actually cast their votes.

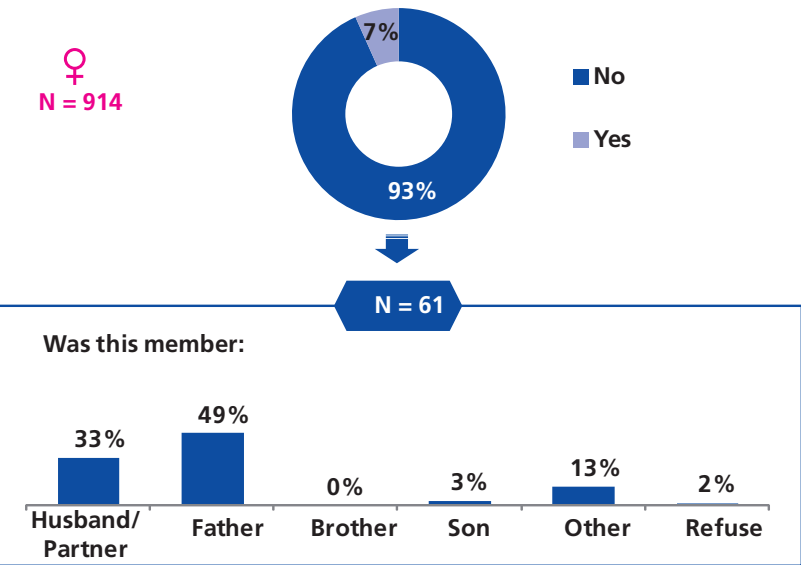
**Fig. 7 Did the voting commission in your VC (Voting Center) allow more than one person in the voting room during the 2013 elections?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 8 Did any of your family members accompany you to the voting room during the last elections, and who?**

Female respondents





Indeed, when asked for their opinion to what extent are women in Albania pressured by their male family members to vote for a specific party or candidate, about 27% of respondents said that this happens “Often” to “Very Often” and another 31% said it happens “Sometimes”. The opinion of female respondents in this regard is even more problematic. About 1 in 3 female respondents (32%) said that such pressure happens “Often” or “Very Often” (Fig. 9).

Urban residents, are more aware of the “pressure” phenomenon towards women by male members of the family (30% said “Often” or “Very often” vs 24% of rural respondents who said that same) (Fig. 10).

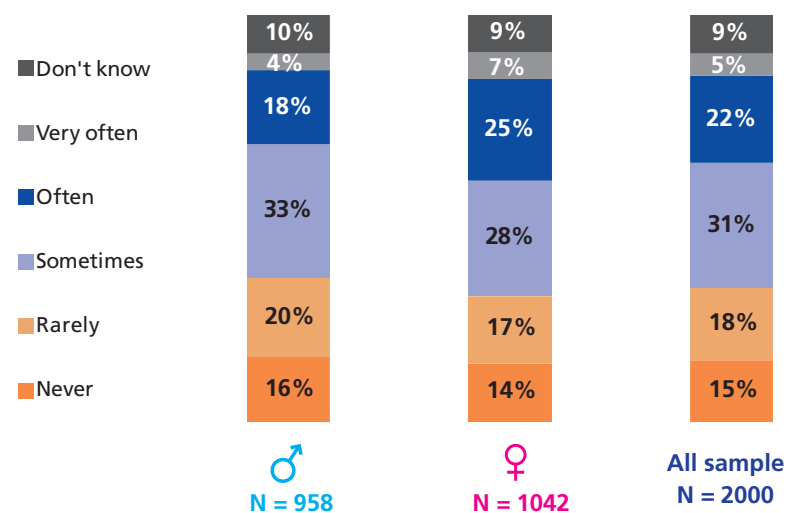
Participants in Focus group discussions said they have heard about or seen actual cases when women have felt pressured to vote in a certain way. They believe that usually women, especially those in rural areas will give in to pressure from male members to vote for a certain political party or candidate.

According to results both from quantitative survey and focus groups it appears that there is a high awareness on the phenomenon of “pressuring a female to vote a certain way” being present in Albania. On the other hand, when asked for direct experience, about 95% of the female respondents said that they “felt completely free” to vote whomever they wanted.

Such a contradiction might be explained either by the fact that female respondents do not want to admit that they personally felt any pressure from male family members (protecting the family from any negative image this might instill) or the “pressure” is not personally felt because there is no political opinion that contradicts that of male family members. From the discussions in the focus groups, the most probable case is the latter.

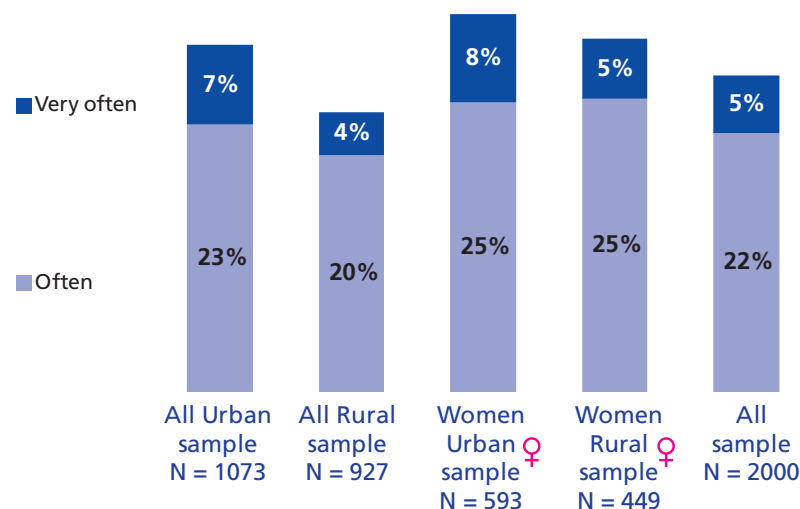
**Fig. 9 To the best of your knowledge, to what extent are women in Albania generally pressured by their male family?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 10 To the best of your knowledge, to what extent are women in Albania generally pressured by their male family? – Only those that answered “Often” and “Very often”.**

Breakdown by Urban/Rural, Gender



*“Party leader charisma” tops the list of the factors that influence the voters’ choice. “Services that political parties offer to voters’ own family” is the second most important factor that influences the vote, suggesting a very pragmatic personal-benefit-focused approach of voters.*

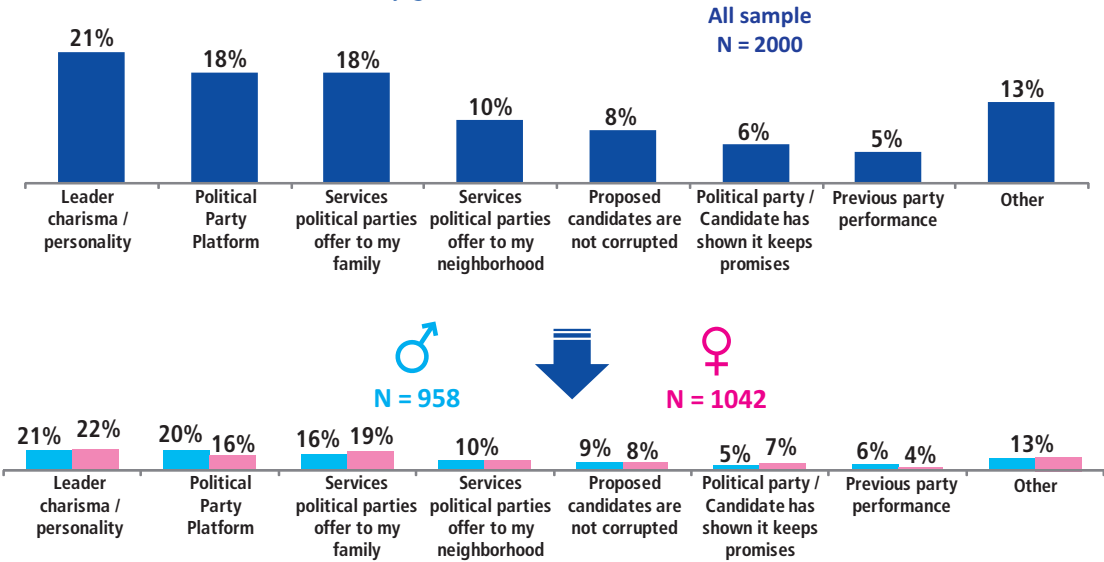
Respondents were asked about factors that influence their voting choice about political parties. They could select three most important ones among a list of factors presented.

The first most important factor influencing voters’ choice for political party is “Party leader personality/charisma” (chosen by 21% of respondents) (Fig. 11). About 18% of respondents have mentioned “Political parties’ platforms”, a more politically correct alternative, as the first most important factor. Another 18% have said that “services that political parties provide to my family” is the most important factor influencing the vote choice. This figure is especially important, as it suggests a very pragmatic, personal benefit focused approach for a considerable number of Albanian voters.

The results show that for rural residents, “Services that Political parties provide to my family”, is the first most important factor that influences their vote with 20% of them claiming so (Fig.12). Even more so, there are 24% of rural women respondents that claim this factor as the first most important one. These findings are a clear proxy of “vote promising in return for personal or family benefits” and they show that such phenomenon has happened mostly in rural areas.

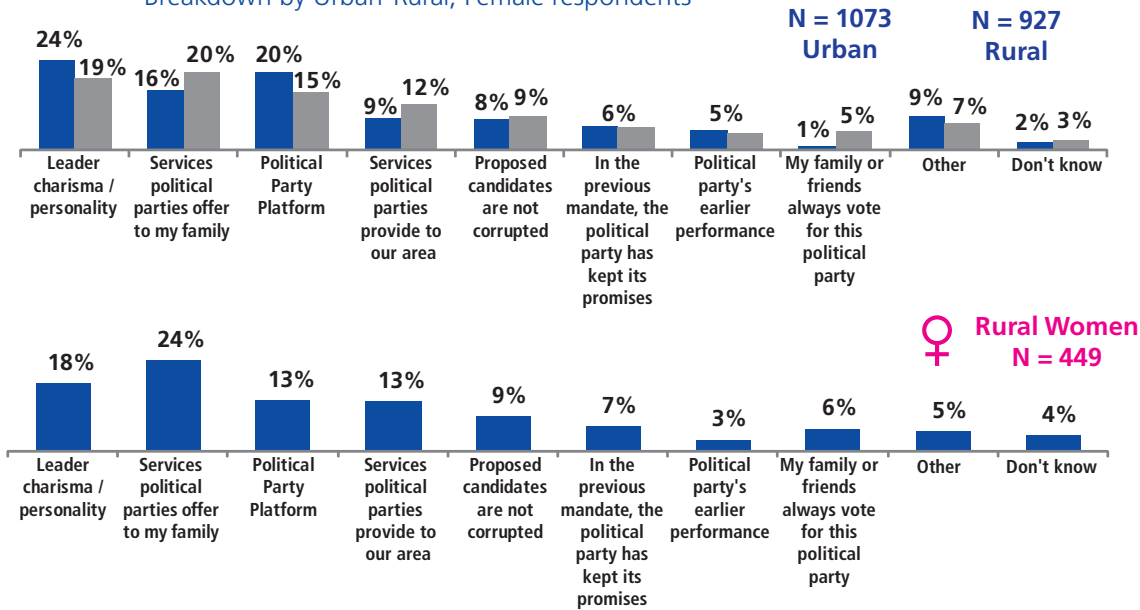
**Fig. 11 What is the most important factor that influences your voting choice for political parties? First Choice**

Overall & Breakdown by gender



**Fig. 12 What is the most important factor that influences your voting choice for political parties? First Choice**

Breakdown by Urban-Rural, Female respondents





*Albanians claim that votes are still being promised in return for different favors during electoral campaigns. In the majority of cases, according to respondents, votes have been promised to people in return for employment and money. The perception among respondents is that this is a spread and known phenomenon, especially in rural areas.*

About 43% of the respondents declare that they are aware of cases when votes were promised in return of a gift/money/employment or favor (Fig.13). There are no differences among male and female respondents in this regard.

The most frequent cases of "vote promising" are in exchange for "money", "keeping the current job" or "promising employment after elections". Almost 1 in 3 respondents say that such vote promise has happened frequently during the last elections (Fig. 14).

Many participants in focus group discussions have also admitted to have been proposed directly money/a new job or a better one in exchange for votes. In case they were not personally offered favors, they have heard at least about similar stories from friends and relatives.

Focus groups participants mention concrete examples of;

- People engaged in parties/political candidates, visiting them in the city, village center or home to promise them money and jobs in return for votes
- People engaged politically, staying outside the voting centers, persuade voters by asking them to vote in a certain way in exchange of different favors/money.
- People working in the public administration are often pressured to vote for a certain party in order to keep their job
- People ensuring transportation plus money/favors to persuade voters to vote in a certain way (especially in rural parts where elderly people have limited mobility to go and vote).

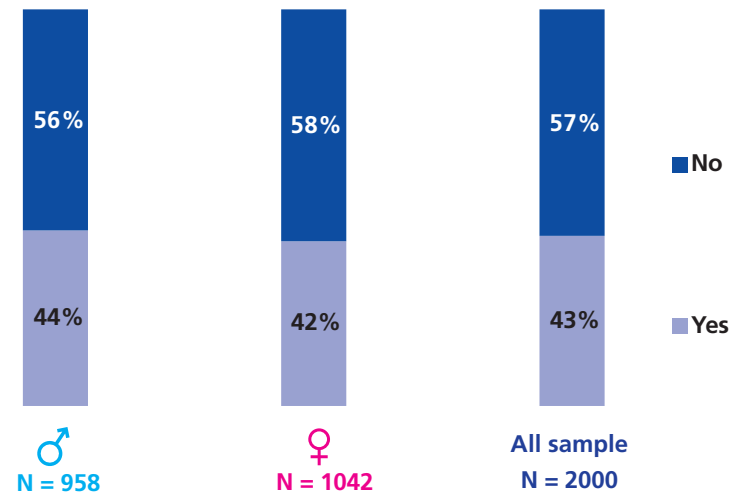
#### Focus Group Quotes:

*They came at us and promised us things. They told me they would employ my child. I told them yes, I would vote for them. They told me that after the elections my daughter would have a job..." (Tirane, Urban)*

*Yes, it happened to my sons but they refused to accept. They offered them money. My sons refused though" (Tirane, Rural)*

**Fig. 13** Are you aware of any cases which votes were promised in return for a gift, money, employment or favor?

Overall & Breakdown by Gender

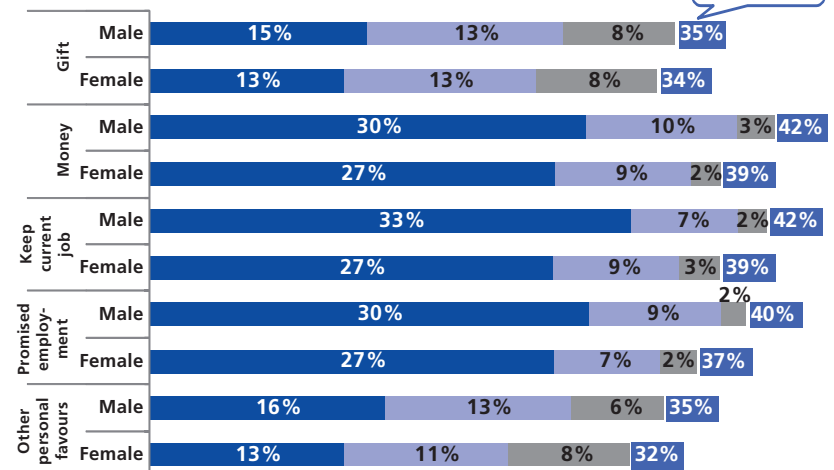


**Fig. 14** What was the vote promised in return for...?

All sample  
N = 2000

Frequently Occasionally Rarely

Percentage  
of the whole  
sample



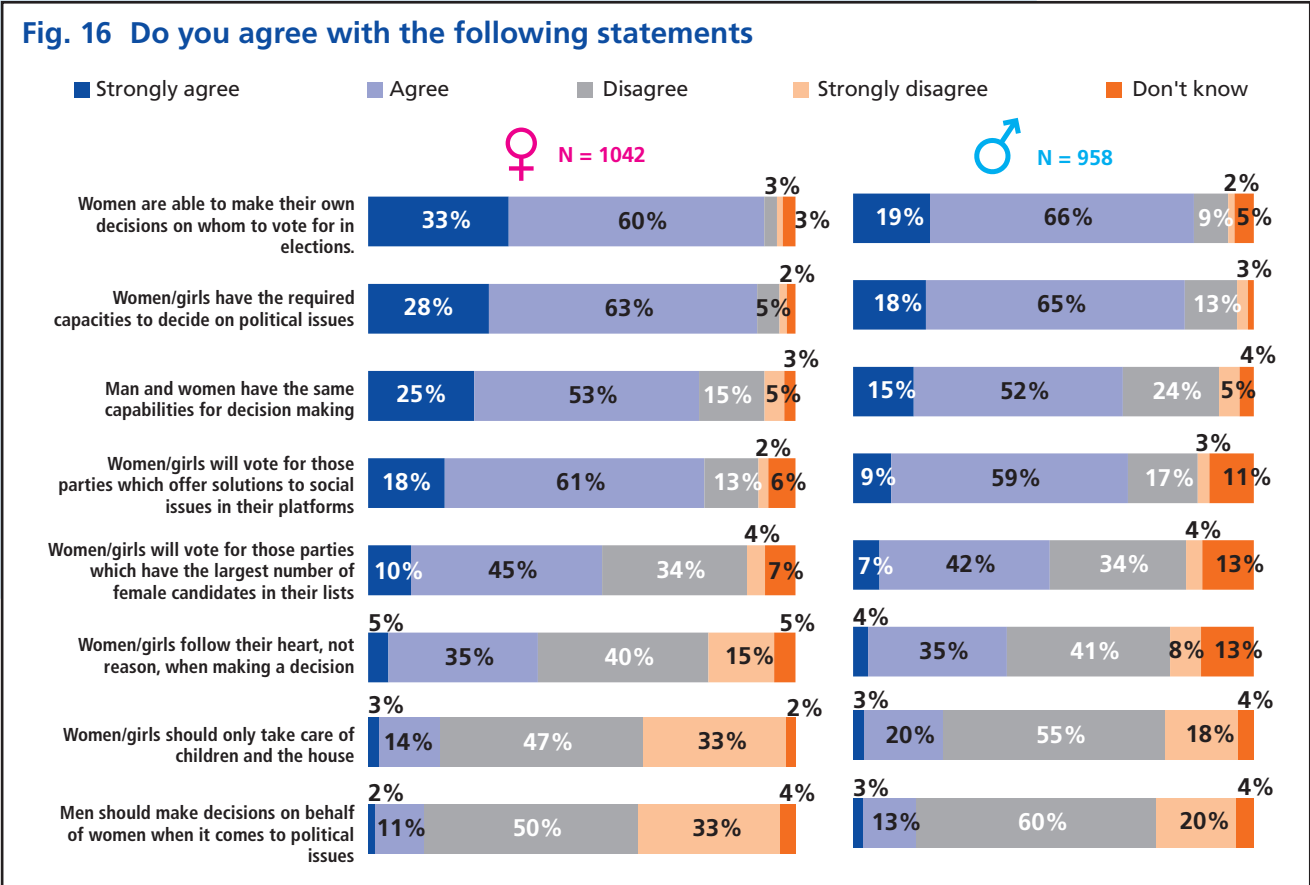
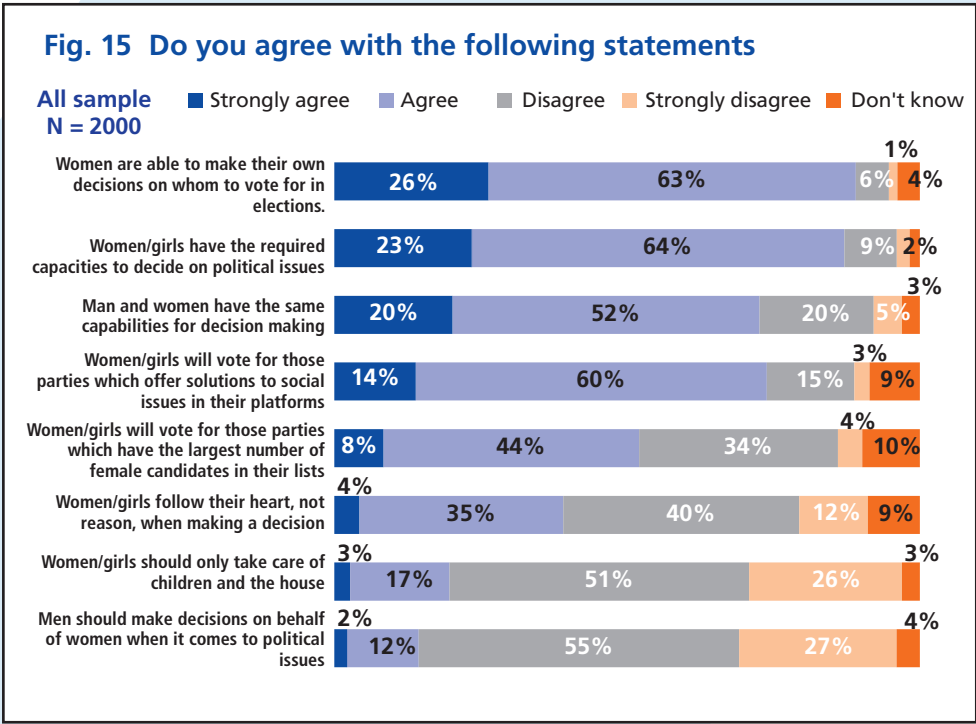
3.3 WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

*Do women have the required capacities to decide on political issues? The vast majority of respondents have responded positively. However, still 1 in 6 men believes that women do not have these capacities and it is the man who should take decisions on behalf of the women when it comes to political issues. 1 in 3 men and 1 in 5 women do not think that “man and women have the same capabilities for decision making”.*

About 87% of the respondents believe that women do possess the required capacities to decide on political issues. When disaggregated by gender, still 16% of male respondents believe that women do not have these capacities. Female respondents answer positively on this regard in big numbers (91% agreeing that the women have the required capacities to decide). It is however interesting to notice that even among women 7% do not agree with this statement (Fig.15).

When asked again whether women are able to “make their own decision on who to vote for”, still 11% of male respondents disagree, while another 5% say that they “don’t know”. The situation is different among women. About 93% of female respondent agree with this statement and only 4% disagree (Fig.16).

A striking 29% of male respondents do not think that “Men and women have the same capabilities for decision-making”. There are also 20% of female respondents who do not have confidence in their own gender, when it comes to decision making capabilities.



**The majority of Albanians would support a more intense involvement of women in politics and decision making. Generally, female respondents believe an increased number of women in politics would improve their socio-economic position in the country.**

Respondents were asked about the extent they would support/oppose the involvement of women in politics. About 64% of them said they would strongly support it, (Fig. 17) while 28% said they would somewhat support it. Only a minority of 7% would oppose their involvement.

The percentage of female respondents that “strongly support” the involvement of women in politics is about 70%, while such figure for males is at the level of 58%. The difference in intensity of the support scale, suggests that while there is a general support among the public about women involvement in politics, it is a not a clear cut case of “strong support” among the male population base.

When faced with the hypothetical scenario of “having a daughter running for municipal or parliamentary elections” about 64% of respondents declared that they would “strongly support it” (Fig.18). More females (68%) would support their daughter than males would (59%).

The majority of participants in the focus groups claimed they would strongly support the involvement of one of their female relatives, friends or family in politics. They perceive this role as very positive and see it as opportunity to be better represented. In general, participants believe more women should be part of politics and decision making institutions. There is a tendency to think that women in power are more approachable than men, in terms of communication, and their ability to deal with specific issues.

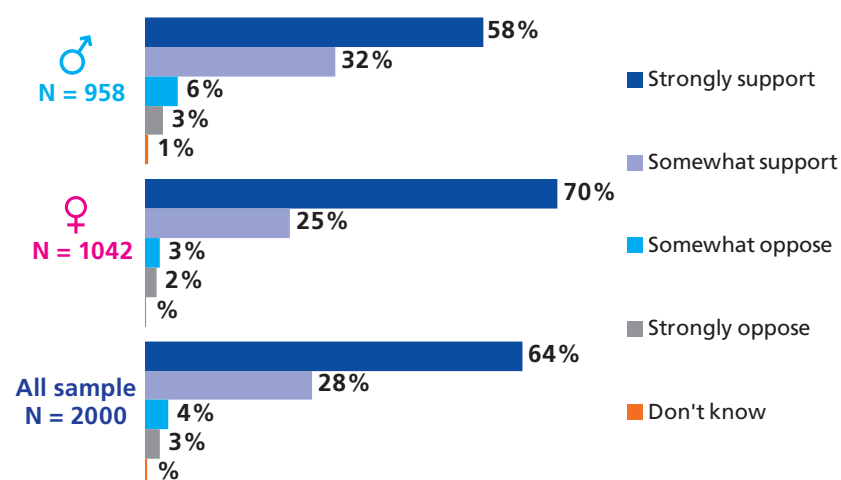
#### Focus Group Quotes:

*I think we should have more women involved in politics than males. Women are pure and sincere. They are closer to our problems and understand family better” (Female, Tirana, Urban)*

*(There should be more women involved in politics) , because they will take our problems in consideration more often. (Female, Fier, Urban).*

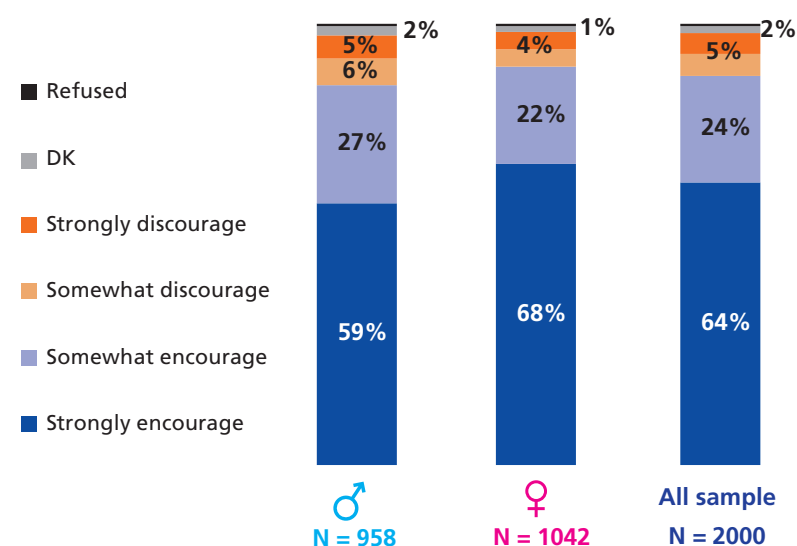
**Fig.17 To what extent do you support or oppose involvement of women in politics?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig.18 Would you encourage your own daughter to become involved in politics as a candidate in a Municipality / Parliamentary elections if she so chooses?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender

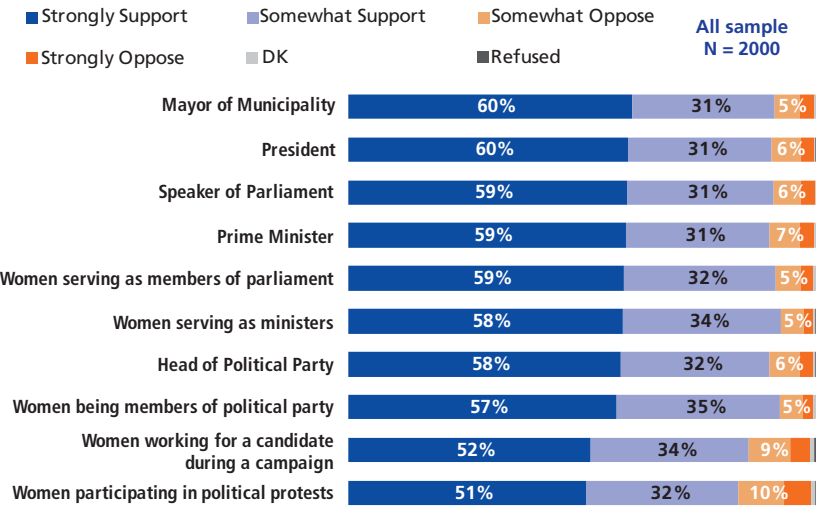


*While the majority of Albanians would support women in different important public positions such as Mayor or Prime Minister, there is still a considerable part of population that thinks “men make better political leaders than women”.*

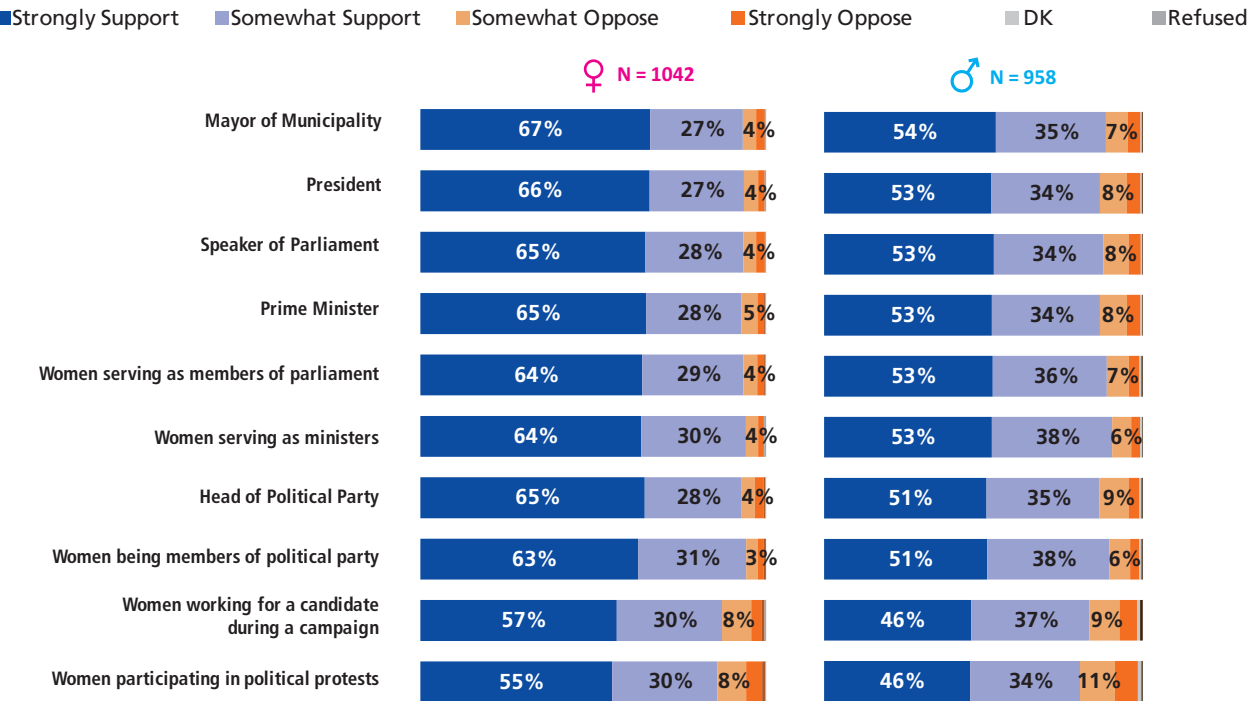
Overall, there is a strong support among respondents for women participating or heading different important public positions. Approximately 60% of the respondents would “strongly support” a woman as a Mayor of municipality, as a President, a Speaker of Parliament or even a Prime Minister (Fig.19). There is a similar level of support for women as Members of Parliament, Ministers or Heads of Political Parties. Slightly less support is shown for women “working for a candidate during a campaign” (only 52% “strongly support” it) and women “participating in political protests” (only 51% “strongly support” it).

When disaggregating by gender, the level of support expressed by female respondents is quite stronger than that expressed by male respondents (Fig.20). About 1 in 5 males would oppose “women participating in political protests” and 1 in 7 males would oppose “women working for a candidate during a campaign”. Overall the support of male respondents for different positions occupied by women is 10%-11% less than the support shown by female respondents.

**Fig. 19** How strong would you support or oppose the role of women in the following positions?  
All Respondents



**Fig. 20** How strong would you support or oppose the role of women in the following positions?  
Gender breakdown



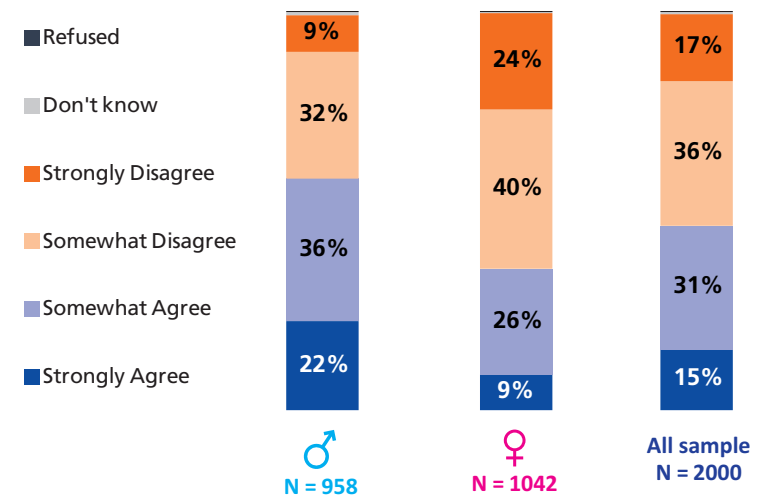
Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with some specific statements related to the leadership abilities of women versus those of men. Overall, the results show that there is a deep rooted belief in almost half of the population that women cannot compare to men when it comes to leadership qualities. About 46% of respondents (Fig. 21) think that “men make better political leaders than women”.

About 58% of male respondents agree that “on the whole, men make better political leaders than women” while 41% of them do not agree with it. A considerable part of female respondents (31%) also agrees with such a statement with 64% disagreeing.

The agreement that “men are better than women” is even stronger when asked in relation to business executives’ positions. Almost 2 in 3 males (65%) think that “men make better business executives than women do” (Fig. 22). A considerable part of female respondents also think the same (43%).

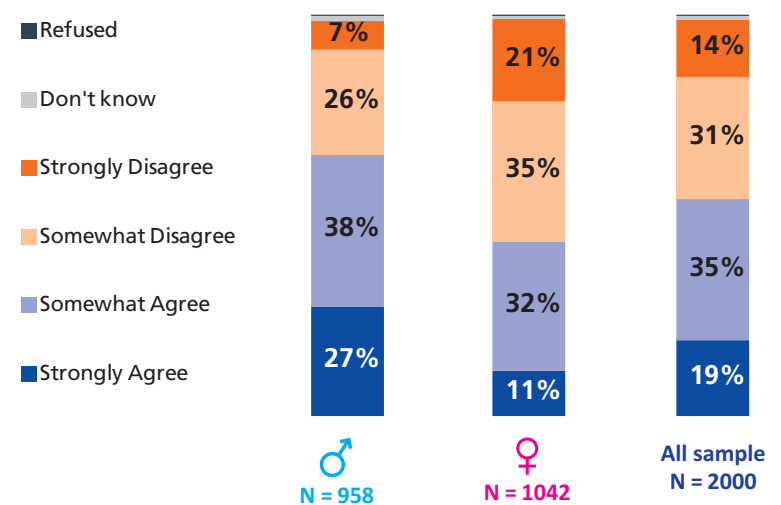
**Fig.21 To what extent do you agree with the statement “men make better political leaders than women”**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 22 To what extent do you agree with the statement “men make better business executives than women”?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



*Albanians are not properly informed on the purpose of gender quotas in politics or how they are to be implemented. Only 1 in 2 persons knows that it is a requirement for political parties to reserve at least 30% of their candidates' list for women. The others either do not know or they wrongly nominate the quota.*

The Albanian Electoral Code requires that political parties should reserve at least 30% of candidates' list for women. The survey asked questions to explore whether such legal obligation is known among the public at large. About 47% of the respondents were able to rightly point out that the legal obligation for political parties is to reserve 30% of the candidates list for women (Fig. 23). About 27% declared that they do not know about any gender quota. Another 11% said that according to the law there are no gender based restriction. There is also a part of respondents (15%) who think that the gender quota required by the law is 50% of the candidates' list.

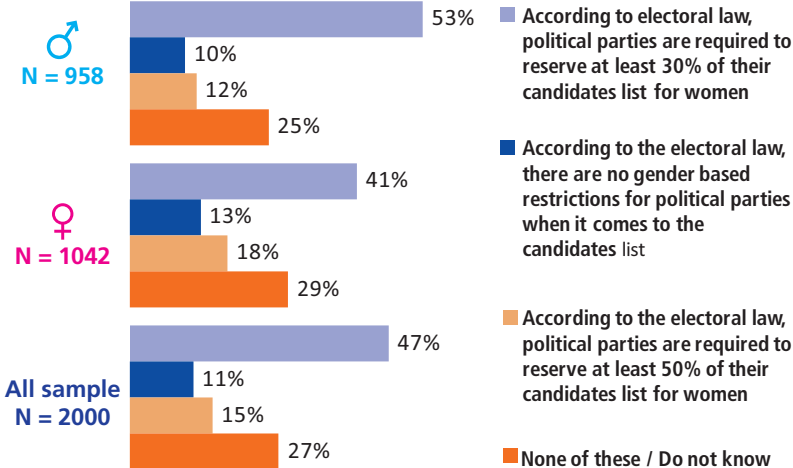
Interestingly, men know more about the legal requirement of gender quota than women do. About 53% of male respondents correctly mentioned the 30% gender quota requirement while only 41% of female respondents were able to do so (Fig. 24). Almost 1 in 3 females does not know about any gender quota imposed by law.

Residents in urban areas are more aware of the gender quota (50% correctly mentioning it) than those in rural areas (43% correctly mentioning it).

There is generally high support about the introduction of gender quota in politics or elected bodies despite the gender of the respondents. About 83% of respondents would support such quota with 45% "strongly supporting" it and 38% "somewhat supporting it". Only 9% of respondents would oppose such quota.

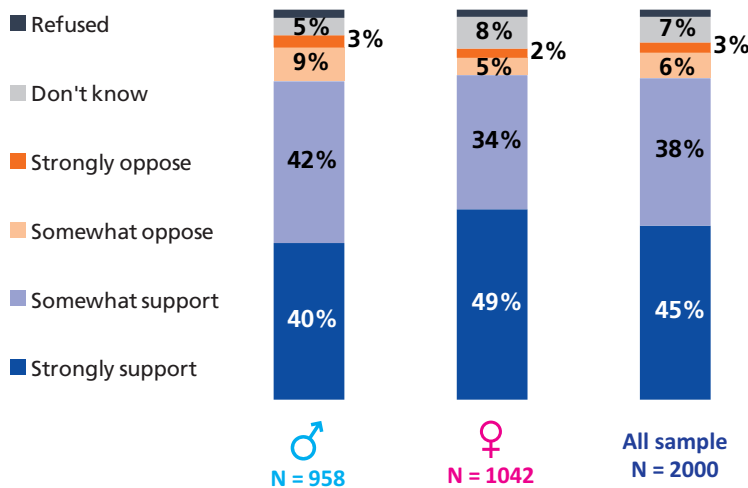
**Fig.23 Based on the information you have, which of the following statements is true?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 24 To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of gender quotas in elected bodies in Albania?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender





Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding gender quotas. A list of statement was given to them to explore whether they agree or disagree with these statements (Fig. 25).

It is worth noting that a substantial number of respondents still think that “Gender quotas are an artificial mean to increase women participation in politics”. About 30% of respondents “agree” with such statement and an additional 4% “strongly agrees” with it. Interestingly enough, even 31% of women agree with such a statement. Such a figure is a suggestion that while there is generally high support for the introduction of gender quota in Albanian politics, for a considerable part of population this is more an issue of “being politically correct” rather than an issue they believe in. Even in Focus Groups, there was a certain resistance felt against the introduction of quota. There were arguments among participants that were stating that “artificial increase of women in politics does not necessarily lead to a better performance of elected institutions”.

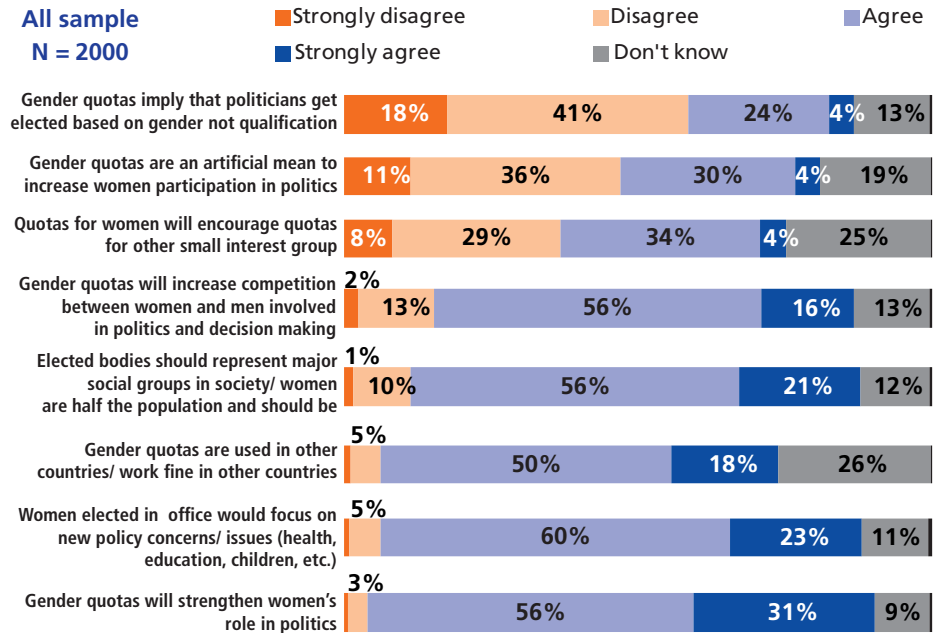
For about 28% of the respondents “gender quotas imply that politicians get elected based on gender and not on qualification”. Such an opinion, with a slightly stronger sentiment between males (31%) than females (26%, is another “block on the road” to get the public opinion to fully accept and pressure political parties to implement gender quota. It is an issue to focus on, during the education and information activities to promote women participation in politics.

Respondents agree in massive numbers that “Gender quotas will strengthen women’s role in politics” (87%) and “Women elected in office would focus on new policies/issues such as health, education children etc)” (83%).

Only 38% of respondents agree that “Quotas for women will encourage quotas for other smaller, vulnerable groups”. A similar number, 37% disagrees with such statement while 25% “do not know”.

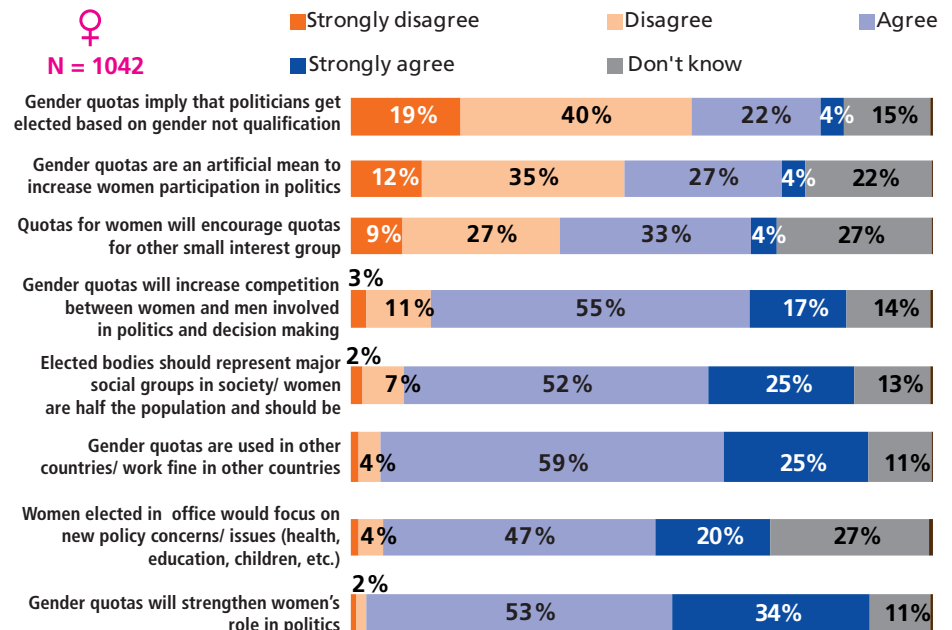
**Fig. 25 To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements about quotas?**

Overall & Breakdown by Gender



**Fig. 26 To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements about quotas?**

Female sample





3.4 Women’s Perception of Freedom

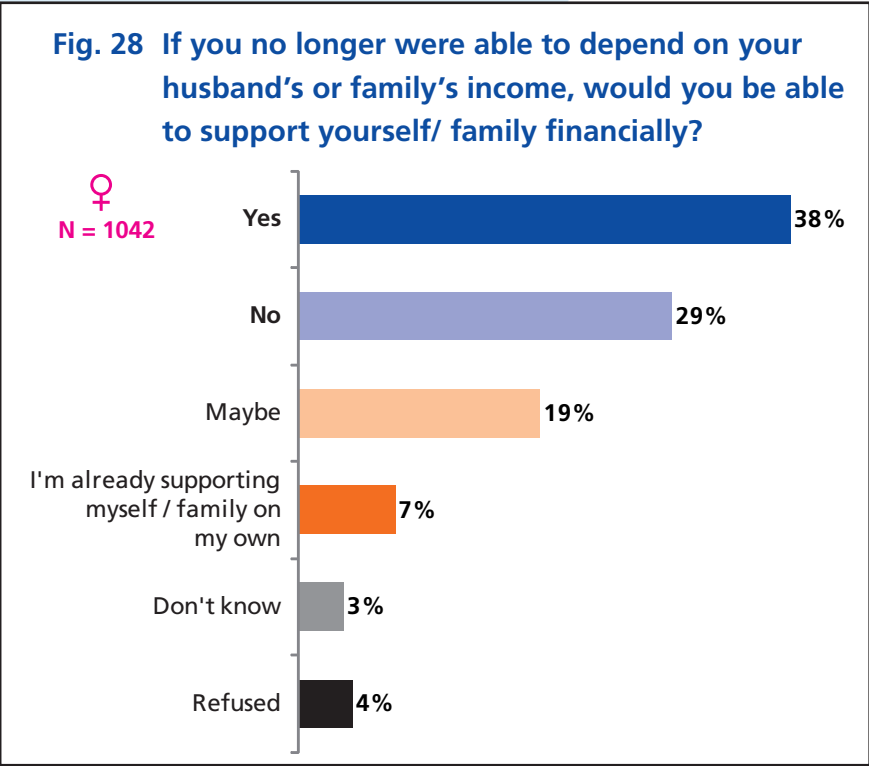
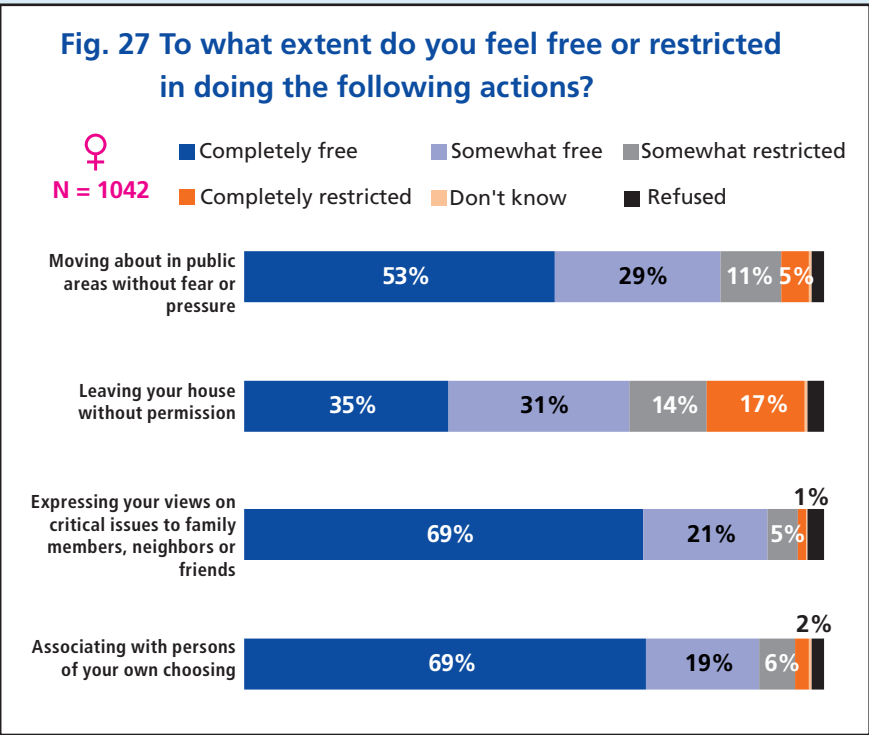
*Most women in Albania feel free to associate with people of their choosing, expressing views on critical issues to family member and to a certain extent walking in public areas without fear or pressure. They feel less free to leave home without permission. A considerable number of women are still financially dependent on their family/partner’s income.*

A series of questions were posed during the survey to explore different dimensions of freedom felt by women.

Asked how free they felt “to associate with persons of their own choosing”, about 69% of them responded that they feel “completely free”. Another 19% said that they feel “somewhat free” with only 8% feeling restricted. There is a similar situation when they are asked about “expressing their critical views to family members, neighbors or friends”. 69% said they feel “completely free” and 21% “somewhat free”. Only about 6% said they feel “restricted” in this regard.

In regard to “walking in public areas without fear or pressure”, about 53% of female respondents said that they fell “completely free” while an additional 29% declared to feel “Somewhat free”. About 16% of female respondents feel restricted in this regard. The situation is even worse when analyzing the responses for the question “Leaving your house without permission”. About one third of female respondents (31%) feel restricted in this regard. Only 35% of them feel “completely free” and another 31% feel “somewhat free”.

The survey also asked female respondents whether they were able to support themselves/their family if they were no longer able to depend on husbands or family income. About 38% said “yes”, they would be able to support themselves or their family. Another 7% said that they already support their family on their own. The rest, 55% of female respondents either declare to not be able to support or that they are not sure about it.



## 4. Roma subsample results

### 4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

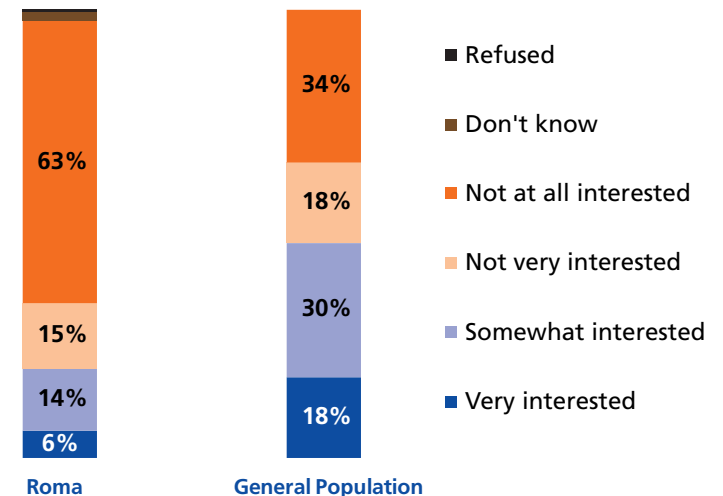
*The Roma community exhibits a very weak interest in politics, much weaker than that of the general population. Similar to the rest of the population, but with a higher intensity, poverty, economy, and unemployment are among the top concerns for the Roma community.*

Roma population shows a very weak interest in political and government matters. Only about 20% show some interest (6% "Very interested" and 14% "Somewhat interested"). A large percentage of them (78%), said that they are not interested in politics. Roma population interest in politics is much lower compared to the general population results. About 48% of general population respondents declare to have some interest compared to only 20% in the Roma case.

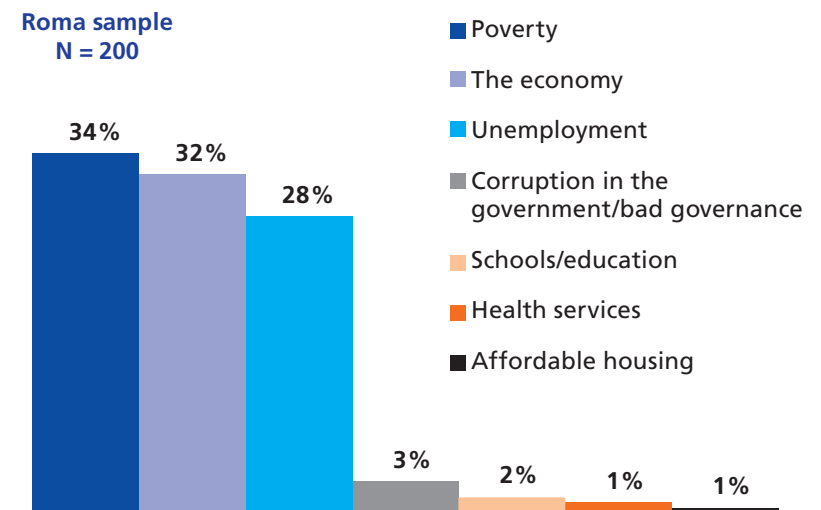
Poverty, according to Roma population, is the most difficult problem the country is facing. It is an expected result, since they apparently project their own difficulty/problem into the "problem of the country".

Economic problems and Unemployment were also mentioned by general population respondents as the most difficult problems of the country, but the difference with Roma population is in the ranking of these problems. Poverty is the most difficult problem the country is facing, for 34% of the Roma respondents compared to 9% of the general population who think alike.

**Fig. 29 How interested you are in matters of politics and government?**



**Fig. 30 What is the most difficult problem that the country is facing?**



The Roma community shows a weak sense of civic involvement. Very few citizens from this community are members of political parties or civil society organizations. A large number of Roma declare not using any means to express their views on political or social issues.

Only about 2% of the Roma respondents admitted being currently members of a political party. This is a much lower number than that of general population (11%). Interestingly, although still in low proportions, there is a higher number of Roma claiming to be part of Religious groups than the number of respondents from general population (8% of Roma compared to 3% of the general population). Similarly, about 6% of Roma declare to be currently members or engaged to NGOs, while the percentage of respondents from general population is close to zero. Although still low, these figures suggest that there are efforts to organize Roma population on the ground.

Roma were also asked whether they have done any specific activities to express their views. Looking at all listed activities, the percentage of Roma that have conducted or might conduct these activities is much lower than the general population. About 12% of Roma respondents have said that they have contacted or visited a public official during the last 12 months compared to 18% of the general population. Additionally, 54% of Roma respondents say that they would never contact public officials to express their opinion compared to 34% of the general population sample.

The use of social media to express political or social opinions among Roma is very low. Only 2% admit to have used it during the past 12 months (compared to 7% of the General population).

Similarly, Roma persons do not call in TV shows, or use any petitions at all.

Fig. 31 Are you currently a member or have you been a member of the following organizations:

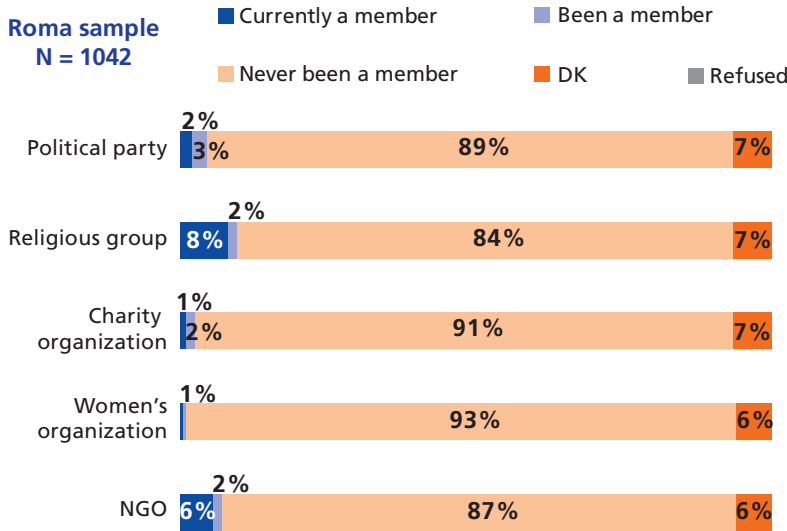
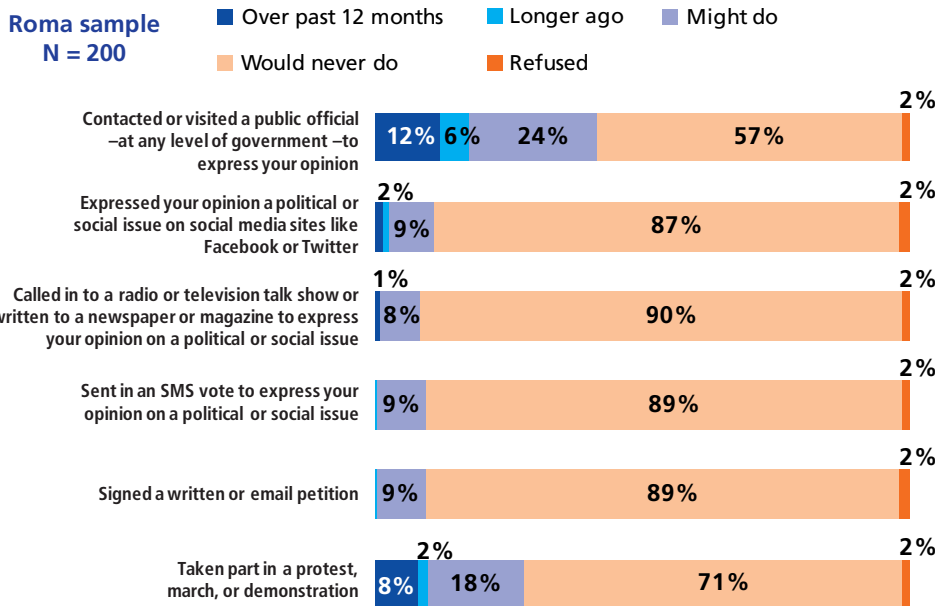


Fig. 32 Have you done any of these activities to express your views?



## 4.2 FAMILY VOTING AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR

*“Personality/charisma of the leader” is the most important factor that influences on the choice of Roma population during Election Day. They declare that they did not feel any obvious pressure to vote a certain way. Family voting proxy indicator of “being accompanied by somebody in the voting booth” is higher among Roma females than that of females from General Population.*

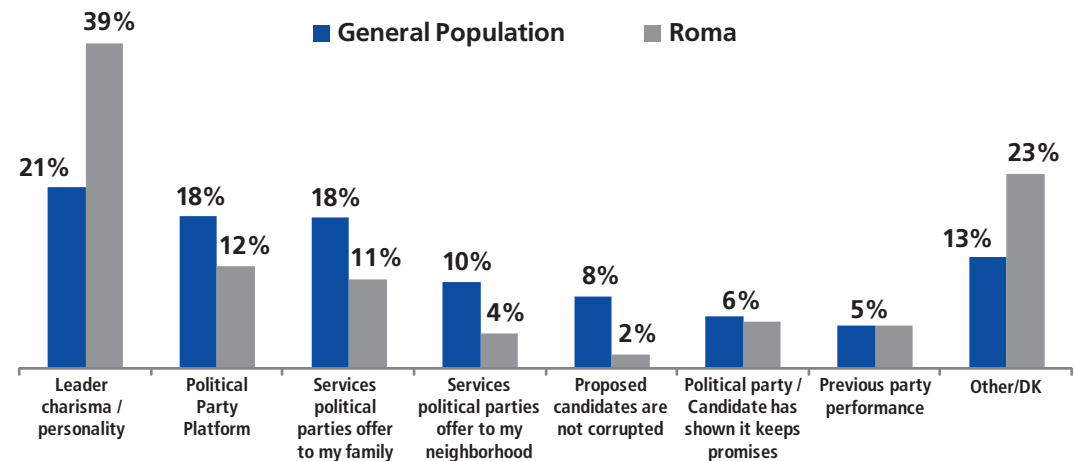
About 40% of Roma population declares that “Political leader charisma/personality” is the most important factor that influences their voters choice. It is much higher compared to other factors such as “Political party platform” (12%), “Services that the political parties offer to my family” (11%) or “Services that the political parties offer to my neighborhood”.

Comparing this result with that of the General Population samples, it comes out that “Political leader charisma” is much more important for Roma population (39% versus 21% of the general population sample). It potentially shows a higher probability for this segment of the population, to be manipulated by charismatic leaders.

About 78% of the Roma respondents said that they did vote on 2013 Elections while 23% did not (Fig. 34). The number of those that did not vote is higher than that of the general population (12%) which is another indicator of higher lack of interest in politics from the Roma people.

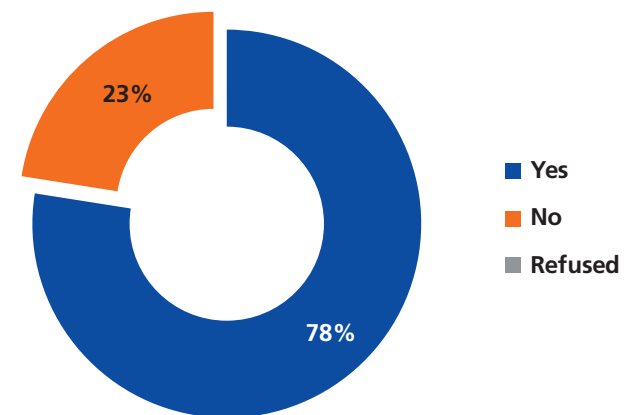
Even in the case of Roma subsample, it is clear that there has been no direct and obvious pressure on how to vote. About 87% of the Roma respondents said that they felt completely free to vote whomever they wanted to and another 6% felt fairly free. Only a small number of 3% declared that they felt some pressure to vote in a certain way.

**Fig. 33 Which of the following are the most important factors that influence your choice?**  
First Mentioned



**Fig. 34 Did you vote on 2013 General elections?**

Roma sample  
N = 200

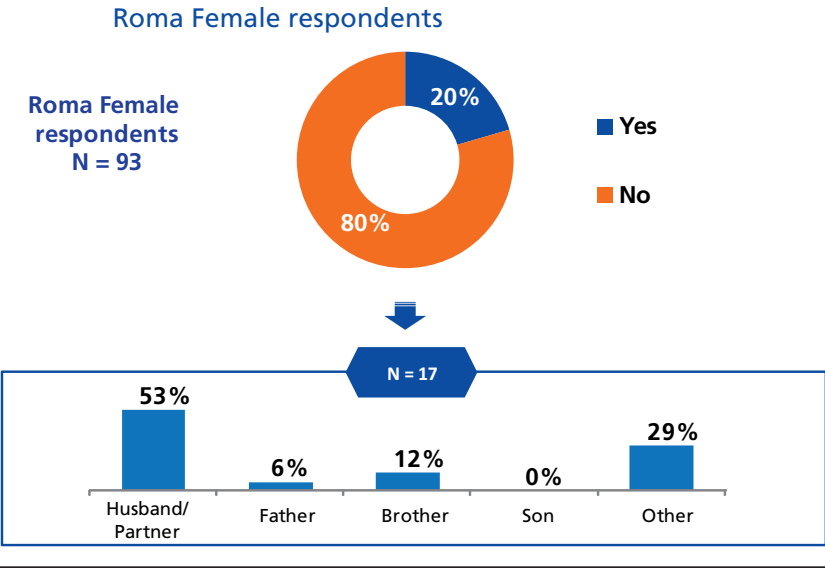


Almost 1 in 5 female Roma respondents declared that she was accompanied by somebody in the voting booth for the 2013 Elections. This is higher than what the female respondents from the General Population sample declared (7%). In 71% of cases, there has been a male member of the family that has accompanied Roma women to the voting booth.

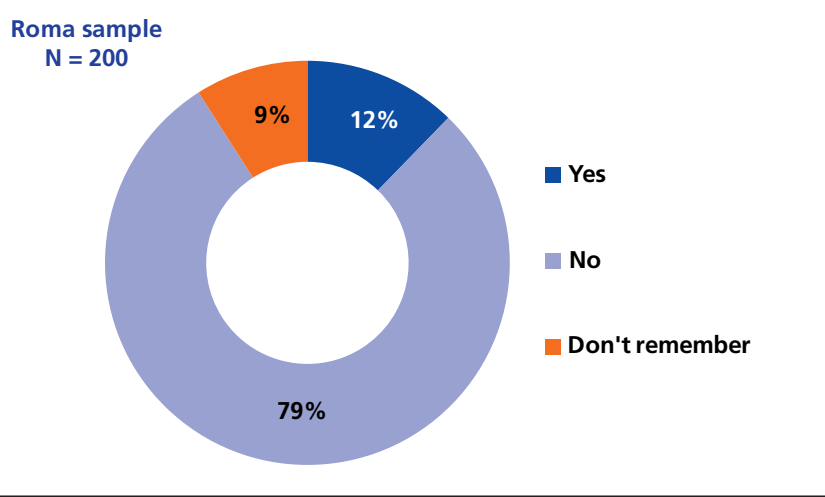
The results indicate that potentially, “family voting” phenomenon through such a direct method as “accompanying the wife/daughter/sister to the voting booth” and voting on their behalf, might be bigger among Roma population than among the general population. However, it has to be kept in mind that also illiteracy among Roma population, one of the allowable cases when somebody can be accompanied to the voting booth, is higher compared to general population.

About 12% of Roma respondents said that they had noticed that the Voting Commission in their Voting Center allowed more than one person in the voting booth during 2013 elections. It is more than twice the number declared by respondents of the General Population sample (5%). It has to be kept in mind though that geographically the Roma sample refers only to the areas inhabited by Roma<sup>14</sup>, and as such does not represent all the areas of the country and their VCs.

**Fig. 35 Did any of your family members accompany you to the voting booth during the last elections, and who?**



**Fig. 36 Did the voting commission in your VC (Voting Center) allow more than one person in the voting booth during the 2013 elections?**



14. As explained in the methodology note about Roma Booster sample.

Roma female respondents, in general, feel less free than females of the General Population sample. About 24% of Roma females declare that they feel restricted to “associate with persons of their own choice” (Fig.37) compared to only 8% of the female respondents from the general population sample<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, more Roma females feel restricted to express their own views to family members, neighbors or friends (20% feel restricted compared to 6% from general population sample).

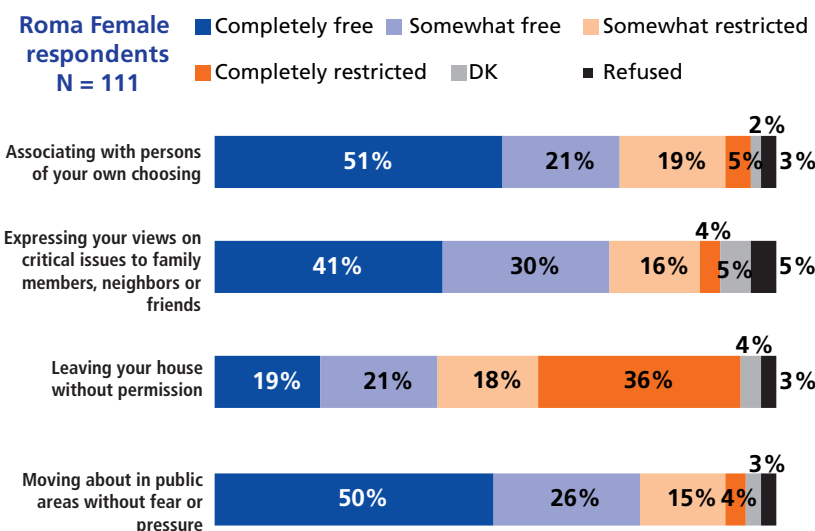
The highest restriction Roma females feel when they would “leave the house without permission”. About 54% of them declare that they feel restricted in this case compared to 31% of the female respondents from the General population.

There is a higher number of Roma people, compared to general population sample, that do not trust that:

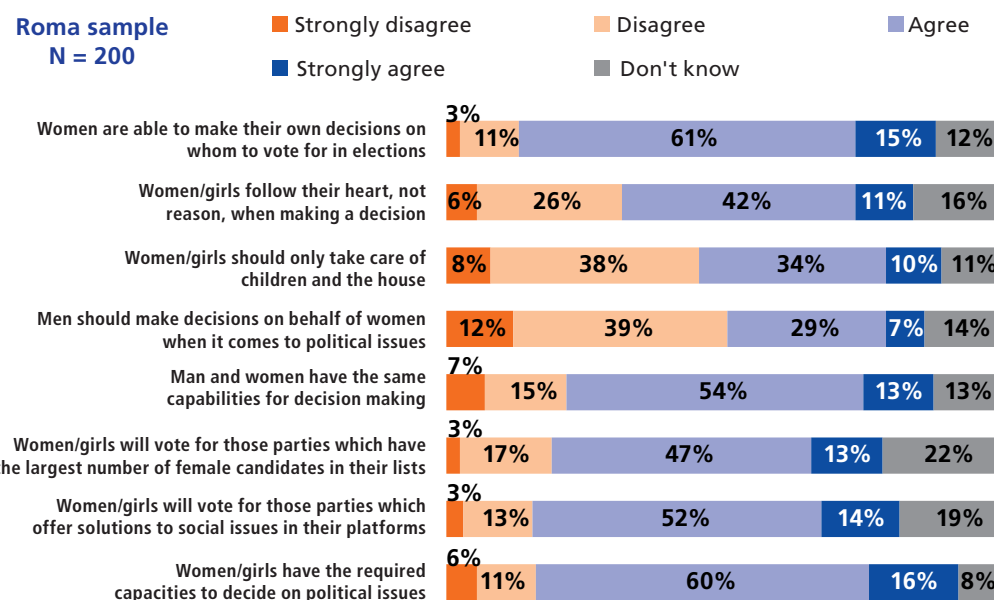
- i) women are able to make their own decision on who to vote for (14% of Roma respondents vs. 4% of General population sample)<sup>16</sup>,
- ii) women have the required capabilities to decide on political issues (17% of Roma respondents vs. 6% of General population sample).

A higher number of Roma respondents also think that men should make decision on behalf of women when it comes to political issues (36% of Roma respondents vs. 13% of General population sample).

**Fig. 37 To what extent do you feel free or restricted in doing the following actions?**



**Fig. 38 To what extent do you agree with the following statements**



15. See graph.....for comparison

16. See graph.....for comparison



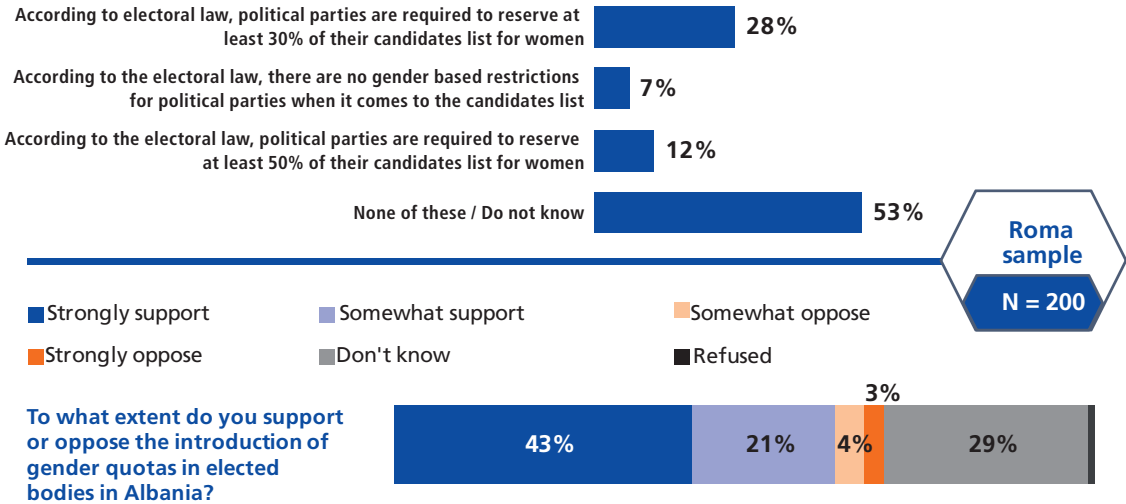
*The vast majority of Roma people either do not know about gender quota requirements or they are not able to correctly nominate those. The lack of awareness among Roma people for this issue is clearly higher than among General Population sample.*

About 53% of Roma respondents do not know about the gender quota set by electoral law in regard to their candidates' list (Fig.39). An additional 7% think that there are no gender based restrictions in the electoral law, while 12% think that the gender quota requirement is at the level of 50% of the political parties' list of candidates.

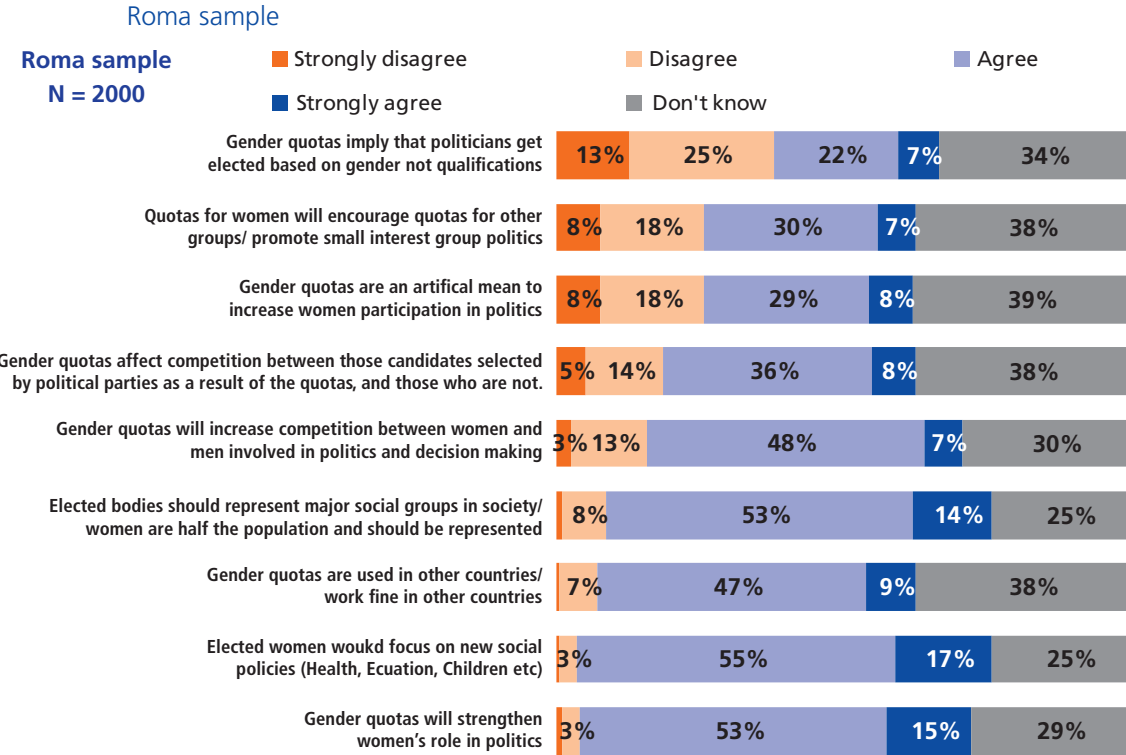
When asked about the support they would give to the introduction of gender quota in elected bodies, about 63% of Roma respondents support it while about one third of them did not know what answer to give (29%).

The intensity of "Don't know" answers even for a series of statements related to gender quota is much higher than that of general population. There is approximately one third of Roma respondents that when asked whether they agreed or disagreed with these statements responded with "Don't know" (Fig.40).

**Fig. 39** Based on the information you have, which of the following statements is true?



**Fig. 40** To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements about quotas?





## Recommendations

*What could be suggested to counter family voting in Albania and enable women voters to freely exercise their right? How can women voters be empowered to make independent decisions?*

### Family Voting

- There is an evident necessity for the government to draft a national strategy aimed at addressing the phenomenon “family voting” at its roots. Although the strategy should be aimed at the national level, it should be more focused in areas where the phenomenon is more occurring (Remote rural).
- Priority should be given to the design and implementation of awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the phenomenon of family voting among all voters. However, awareness campaigns should take in consideration the fact that family voting as a phenomenon is mostly ignored in the rural areas in the country. To reduce the phenomenon of family voting, the campaigns should aim at fighting the causes that support this practice, with a special focus on the mentality according to which women and girls are unable to take political decisions. Study findings suggest that policies should be designed in order to emphasize on the capacities of women to take such decisions. These policies should target both men and women. On one hand, women need to trust their own ability to take decisions independently. On the other hand, men should not rely on stereotypical thinking but instead trust the decision making capacities of their partners, sisters and daughters.
- The policies should also consider differences between people with a different education level. Lack of trust in the capacities of women and girls is more common in rural areas, or among population with low/no education. Findings therefore suggest that the population falling under these categories should be the focus of awareness campaigns.
- Special focus should be devoted to Roma population in regard to the “family voting” phenomenon. Targeted awareness raising measures should be designed for this part of the population where the phenomenon is more ignored.
- Family voting as a phenomenon is a concern which should be addressed by a number of actors in the society. In this regard, the media should be more attentive and proactive in presenting the public with the disadvantages of family voting and its effects. Media outlets should intensify awareness campaign on voting procedures and electoral code requirements, in order to better inform voters on their rights and responsibilities (as well as legal penalties) on Election Day.
- Training provided by political parties to their commissions members in the voting centers, should devote more focus on how to better identify and consequently report the cases of family voting on Election Day.
- The adoption of technology for voting (electronic voting) in the future should take into account the phenomenon of “family voting”, in order to build standards in the system that will not allow it in the form presented during the Election Day (a person voting on behalf of others).
- One member in the election commission of each polling table should be designated with the responsibility to observe for and prevent family voting. The presence and active monitoring of international observers, nonpartisan domestic monitors and party agents can help discourage family voting and expose it when it occurs. The presence of observers in polling stations serve as deterrent not only to voters attempting to vote for multiple people, but also for the polling officials themselves in letting such a vote occur in the first place. Moreover, well-trained partisan agents can challenge votes that are cast illegally. (Brothers, J. Expert Opinion. 2009).

- An increase in legal penalties for those responsible for family voting as well as the proper implementation of these penalties/fines by the CEC and the judiciary, could lead to an increased awareness on voters on the legal consequences of such an act.

### Gender Quota

- Accepting gender quotas requires awareness from the population as a whole in terms of the importance of implementing such a practice. It especially requires the support of men, who according to our findings are less in favor. For the most part, decision making positions are occupied by men. The implementation as well as acceptance of representation quotas for women in important positions, therefore requires the support of men in key public offices.
- Policies aimed at raising awareness and public support for gender quotas should consider the fact that support of women for these quotas is also not unanimous. Not all women approve gender quotas. A specific profile should be taken into account, (unemployed women, retired, uneducated women etc)
- A necessary condition needed to increase the public support for gender quotas, is the depth and quality of information provided to the public on the purpose of the quotas. Voters should be informed about the implementation criteria for gender quotas, institutions and entities where they are applied and also the reasons why they are applied. Awareness campaigns should inform the public, especially the male public and population in the rural areas that the implementa-

tion of gender quotas does not mean that women/girls without the necessary qualifications are elected. In most cases, rejection of gender quotas is related to the fear that women/girls elected through quotas are incapable and their presence in power would create more problems than solutions.

- The Central Election Commission (CEC) should be more effective in applying fines and penalties to political parties whose candidate list do not meet the gender requirements as per electoral code. The increase of penalties and fines for parties who do not meet the criteria could also be seen as a possible option, due to the fact that current fines are minimal. CEC could at the same time, choose not to accept parties' candidate lists who do not meet the criteria making it impossible for these parties to run in elections. This would undoubtedly be seen as a drastic and extreme measure, but it would certainly serve the purpose of properly implementing gender quotas as by law.