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Impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Western Balkans
Democracy Initiative

 Funded by
UK Government

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Introduction and research objectives

■ Introduction

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is a British organization funded by the UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy is currently implementing a three-year program funded by CSSF (Conflict, Security and Stability Fund) in the Western Balkans, titled the Western Balkans Democracy Initiative. As part of this regional initiative, the program in Bosnia and Herzegovina is working on building responses of political actors to youth issues. Its aim is to improve the awareness, capacities and actions of political actors dealing with the issue of youth unemployment, by actively involving groups directly affected by this issue.

Young people make up about 20% of the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the Youth Study (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2018/2019), more than half of young people live in urban areas and cities (57.2%). There is also an obvious trend of relocation from rural areas to more developed cities to take advantage of greater opportunities.



■ Research objectives

The research objective is to examine how the COVID-19 crisis has affected the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The specific aim of this research is to map the main challenges that young people have faced during the pandemic, such as: access to health care, access to education, opportunities for employment and for self-employment support programs, family life, social engagement, volunteering activities, etc. In addition, this research seeks to identify the attitudes (or changes in attitudes) of young people about emigrating to another country after the lifting of travel restrictions.

A professional public opinion polling agency - Prism Research & Consulting, specialized in social research, was hired to implement this project.

Summary

■ Impact of the crisis on everyday life and responsibilities

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus pandemic has had a significant impact on the everyday lives and responsibilities of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 60% of young people were noticeably affected by the initial measures during the first few months of crisis. Moreover, the introduced measures had a particular impact on young women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (65%).

The measures had the greatest impact on the employment sector; 36% of young people stated that their work was affected the most. This was more pronounced among older youth to a certain degree, whereas the education of the youngest respondents was also significantly affected by the measures (31%).

In terms of everyday activities, negative consequences of the initial measures imposed due to the crisis affected the social life of youth in BiH - 24% of them stated that the measures affected their lives in

general, and 26% stated that the Covid-19 crisis affected their social life.

However, young people in BiH also recognize certain opportunities created by the crisis (12%), mainly in the form of opportunities for distance learning, working from home and changing their jobs.

Due to the crisis, the education system has changed significantly and the usual schooling system has been completely transformed into online schooling via online platforms, television, and communication by telephone or internet. The impacts of the crisis on education are mostly perceived negatively by youth in BiH - 70% of respondents who were attending school/education at the time of the research believed that the impact was negative, mainly due to the inability to maintain direct contact with teachers/professors, but also generally because of online schooling (21%) and the inability to socialize with friends at school (20%).

The crisis has had a significant negative impact on the employment sector. The sector most affected by the initial measures was service and tourism (72%), and the most affected employees were the self-employed (owners and co-owners of companies/small businesses) (71%).

As a result of the crisis and the initial measures, 31% of young people

who were employed before the crisis lost their jobs, more often the self-employed (52%) and those who worked without an employment contract (40%). By sector, the least affected were those working in agriculture (2%), construction (5%) and the public sector (8%), and the most affected were those working in the sectors of service and tourism (23%) and services (21%).

Most young men (61%) did not have any additional responsibilities during the first few months of the crisis, while a large number of young women were involved in additional activities (50%), especially in terms of household responsibilities

(26%) and caring for the family (25%).

In terms of health care, most young people receiving therapy did not have access to regular health services, therapy and check-ups.

During the first phase of the Covid-19 crisis, even though a small number of young people had symptoms (5.7%), only half of them felt that they had received appropriate treatment.



■ Involvement of youth in decision-making

Half of young people (51.5%) believe that their position was not taken into account during decision-making, and the majority (61%) do not trust decision-makers to take the position of young people into consideration.

The majority of youth (82%) believe that it is important to be more involved in decision-making in aspects and measures concerning the position of young people and in decision-making itself. Only 12% of young people were consulted on decision-making through consultations organized within an organization, citizens' association, workplace or through a survey. However, close to 1/4 of young people (23%) wished to be consulted.

■ Attitudes and opinions on living conditions after the end of the pandemic

The majority of young people have a negative perception of life after the pandemic ends. 59% of them stated that their lives will be worse than before the crisis – of those, most were women (65%).

Two-thirds of young people (66%) still in school believe that schooling will continue normally after the crisis, while 1/3 of young people believe the opposite and expect negative consequences for the education sector.



Executive summary

■ Attitudes and opinions on living conditions after the end of the pandemic

Prior to the crisis, half of young people considered leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina - 53% wanted to relocate. Those who were most interested in leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina were employees with fixed-term employment contracts, while public sector employees and employees with open-ended contracts were less interested in leaving BiH.

The percentage of young people considering the possibility of and wanting to leave BiH after the pandemic ends is still high, but slightly lower than before the crisis - 46% of young people are considering this possibility and 45% want to leave BiH. Young people from FBiH are more willing to leave BiH.

The main reason for wanting to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina is to

earn a better salary (56%), but also for an improved quality of life (47%), better employment opportunities (45%), greater job security (41%) etc.

The most desirable country to relocate to is Germany (48%), mostly due to employment opportunities (59%), family (48%), a better life (43%), and education (32%). Other preferred countries are Austria (14%), Switzerland (6%), Sweden (6%) and Slovenia (5%).

The main reason for staying in BiH given by young people who do not want to leave or do not consider the possibility of leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina is family (38%), which is more pronounced among women, followed by patriotism (15%) and keeping a current job (15%).

Methodology

■ Methodology

The research was conducted per the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) method on a representative sample of the BiH youth population, with a total sample of N=1005 respondents aged 18 to 30.

The research was conducted on the 3CX VoIP platform for making calls and providing real-time control during the research.

A team of 20 interviewers, with at least a year of experience working on similar projects, worked on this project.

The project was implemented in the period from July 17 to August 3, 2020.



■ Quality control

A team of three experienced supervisors participated in the quality control of project implementation.

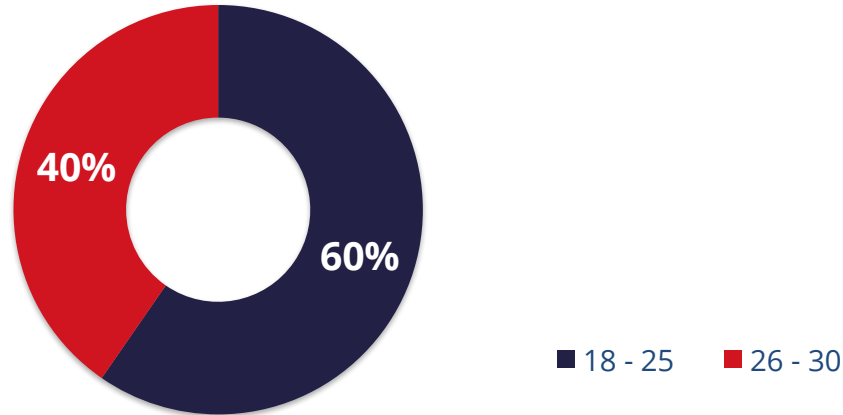
Through the 3CX platform, the supervisors were able to listen (control and evaluate the quality of the interview), whisper (in case of any mistakes made by the interviewer) or completely take over the conversation in case of any deviations from the defined survey rules, quality or methodology.

If the quality of work was determined to be poor or unsatisfactory, the interviewer was removed from the data collection process and the interview was completed by the supervisor.

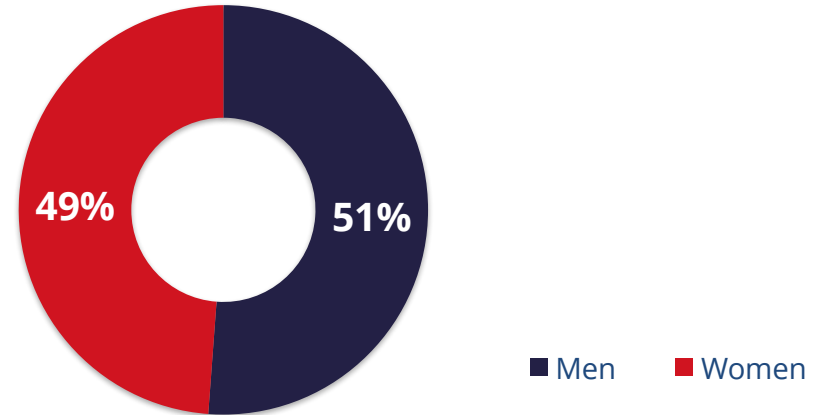
During data collection, 130 interviews were checked, which is 12.9% of the total number of interviews conducted.

Demographic overview

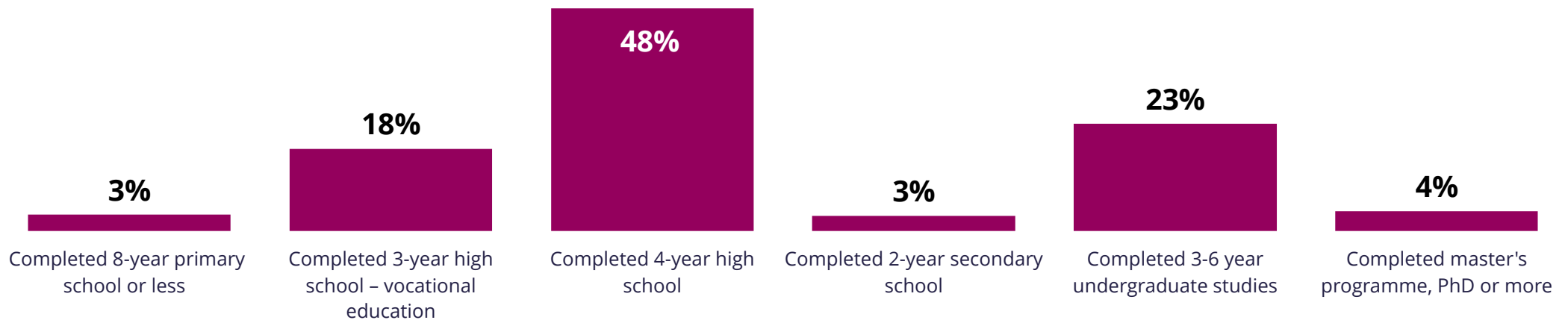
Age category



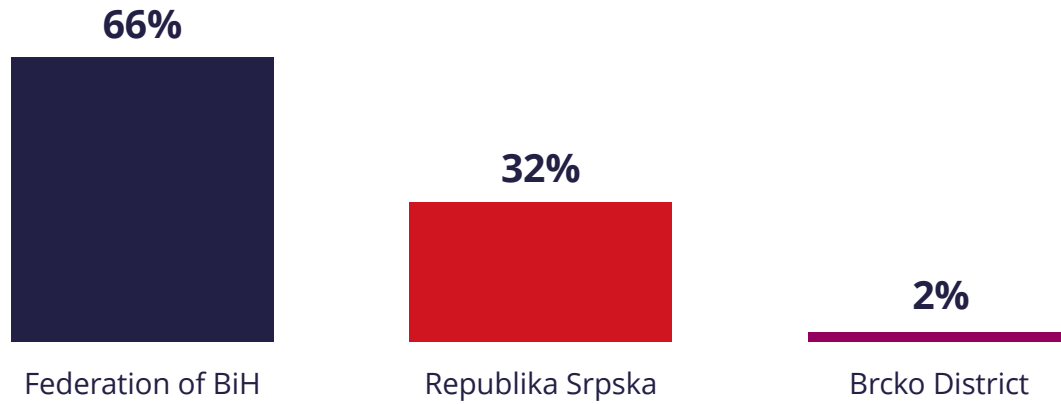
Sex



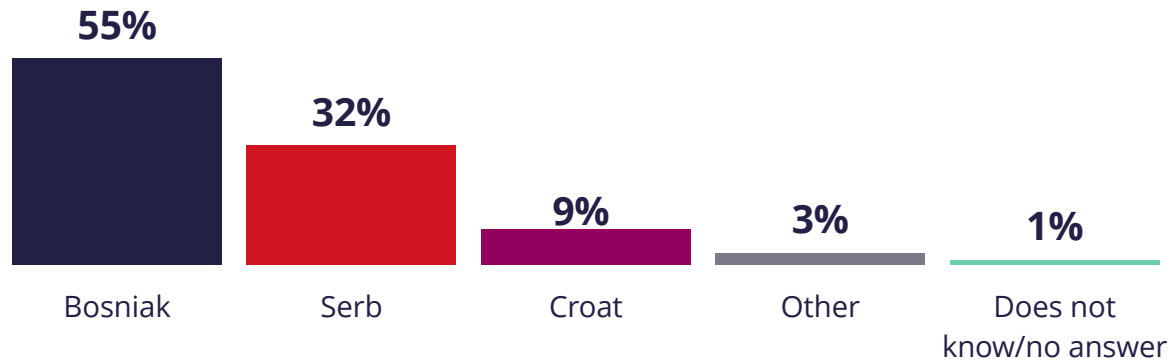
Education



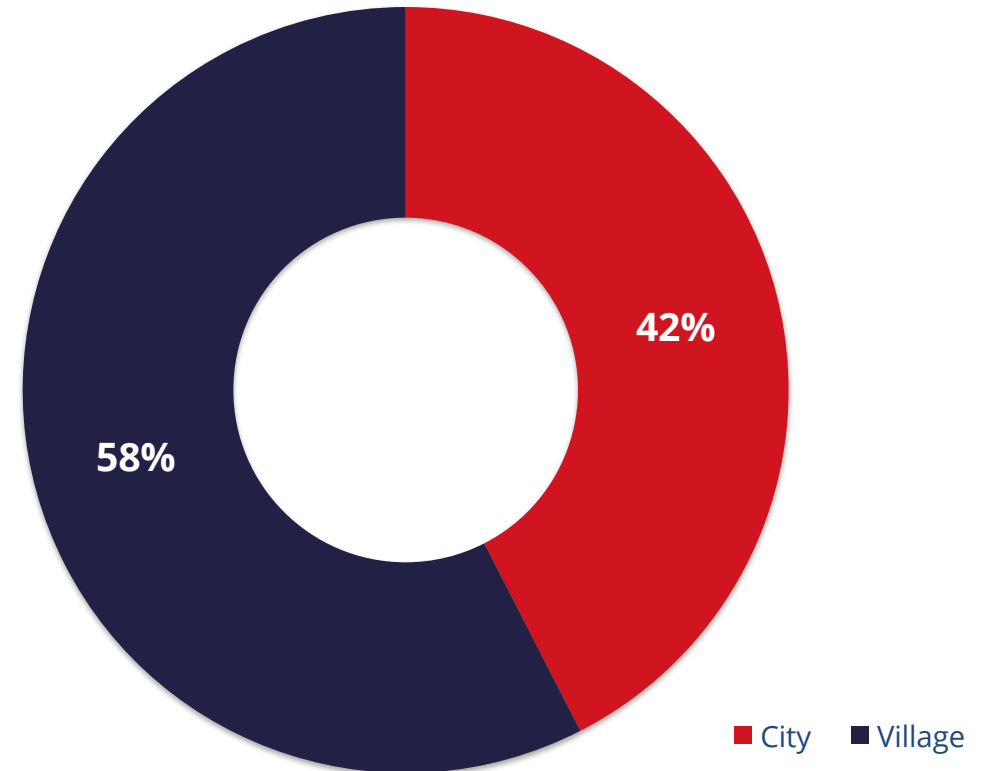
Entity



Nationality

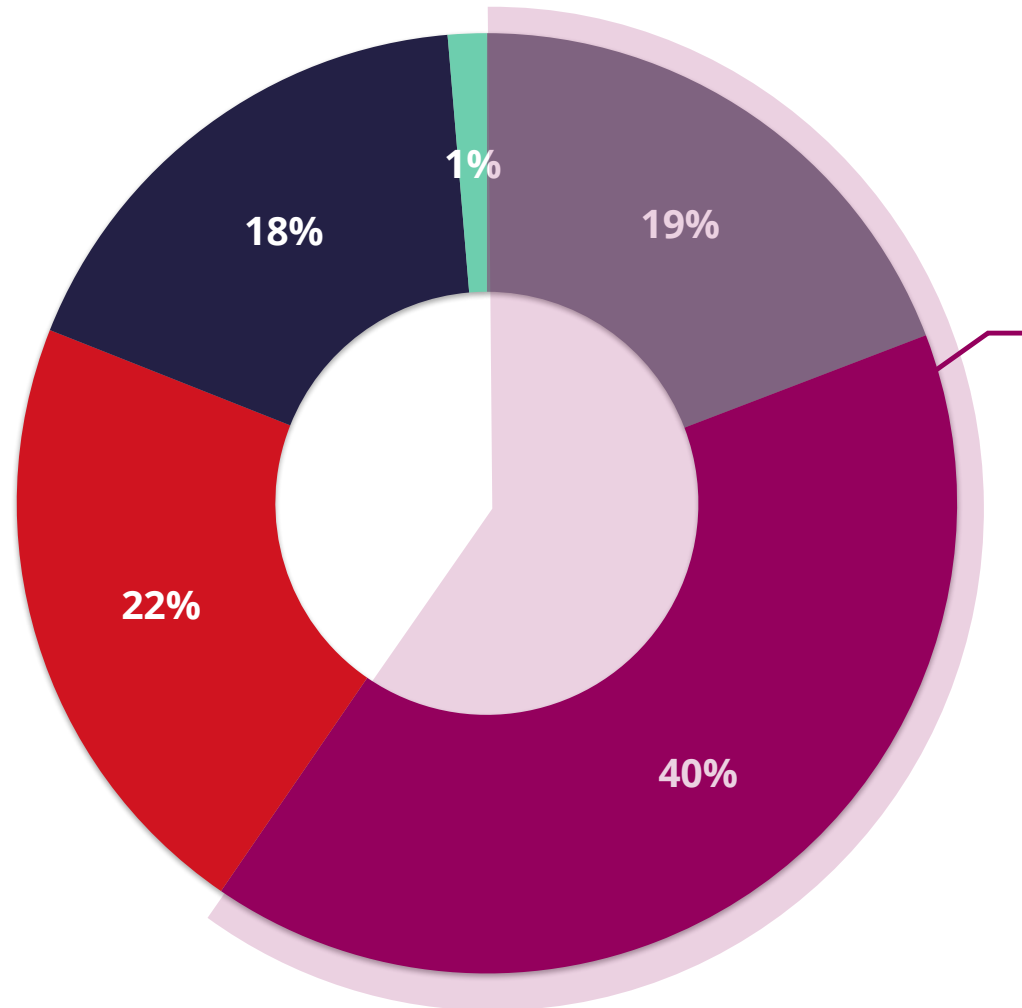


Settlement type



Impacts of the crisis on the daily lives and responsibilities of youth

- **The impact of initial measures imposed during the Covid-19 crisis on youth in BiH**

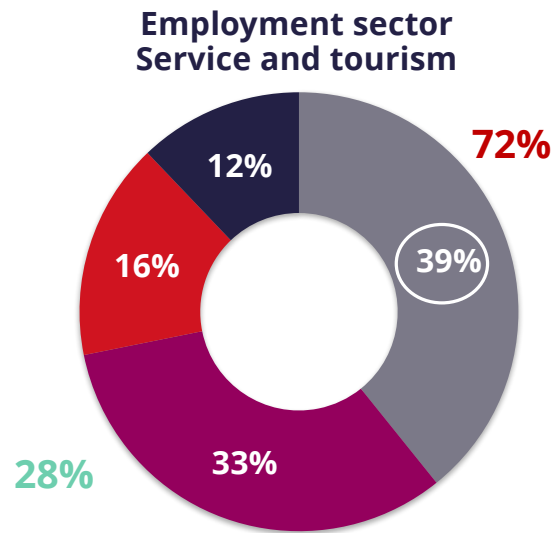
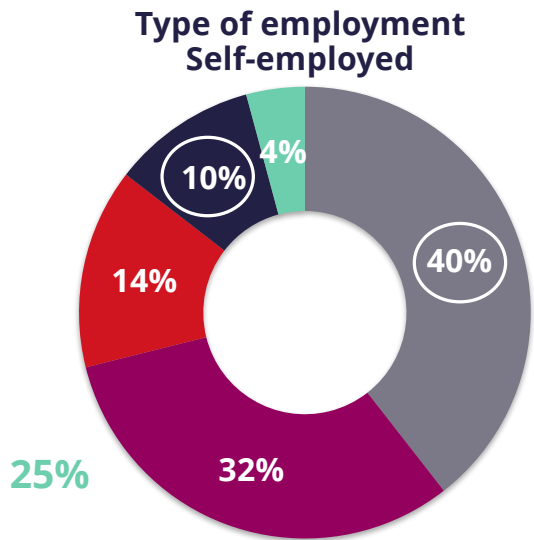
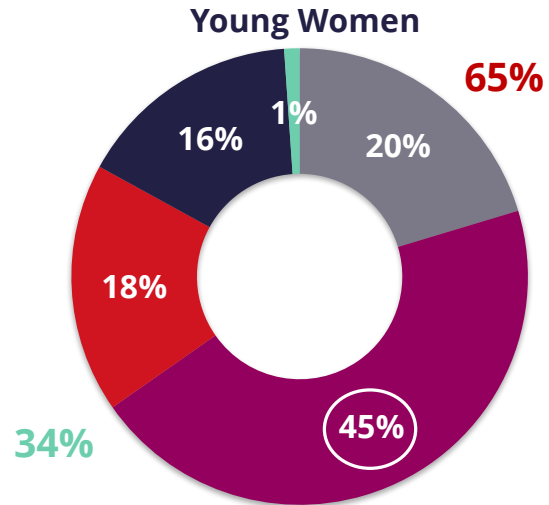
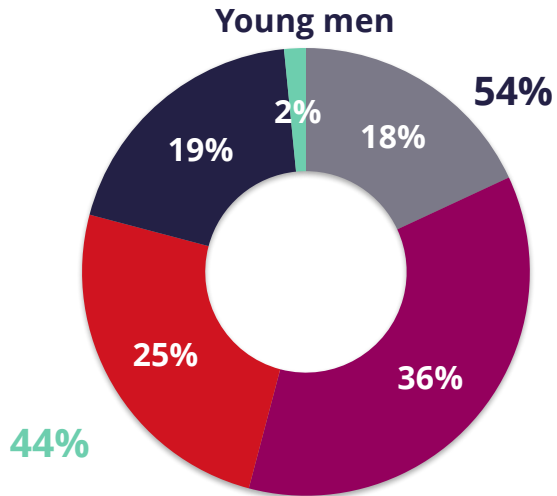


Measures imposed during the first phase of the Covid-19 crisis noticeably affected **59.6%** of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Great impact
- Some impact
- Minor impact
- No impact
- Does not know/no answer

This noticeable impact was as follows in each entity:

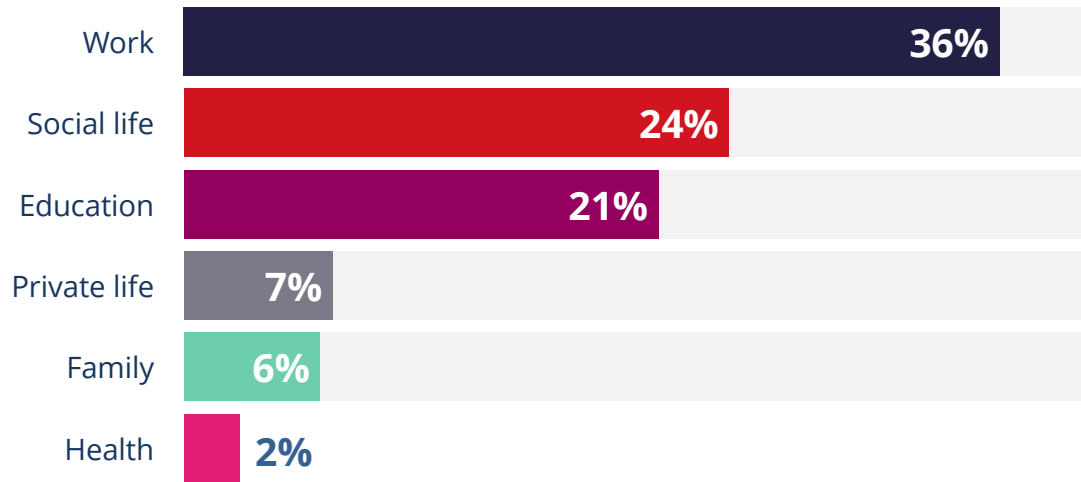
- FBiH 58.4%
- RS 61.1%
- DB 68.2%



Measures imposed during the first few months of the Covid-19 crisis had a significantly greater impact on young women (**65%**), more so in urban areas (**65%**, for almost 1/4 of them to a large extent).

The most affected people per type of employment were the self-employed (owners and co-owners of companies and small businesses) (71%), and the most affected per sector were employees in service and tourism (72%).

■ Segments of life affected the most by the Covid-19 crisis



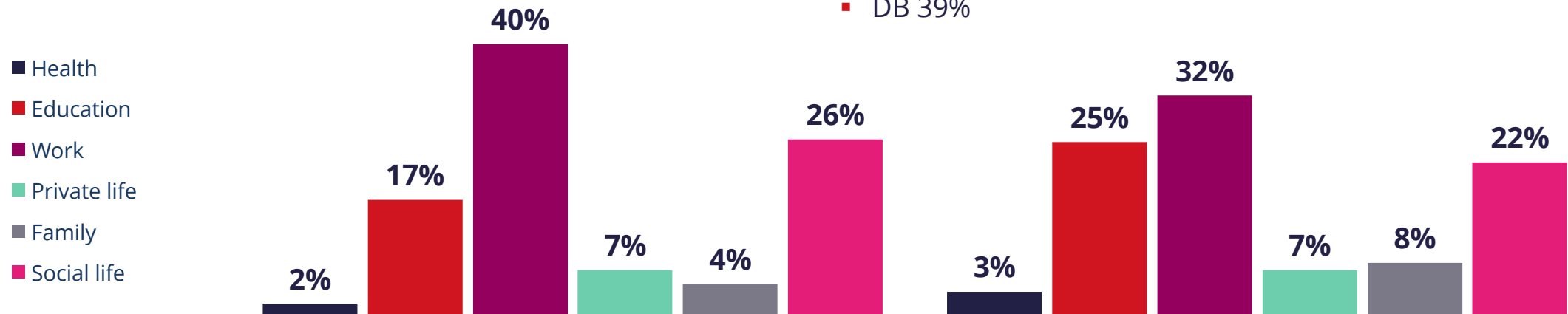
The three key areas affected by the first phase of the crisis were: work (36%), social life (24%) and education (21%).

Among young men, the crisis mostly affected work (40%) and social life (26%), while among young women it mostly affected work (32%) and education (25%).

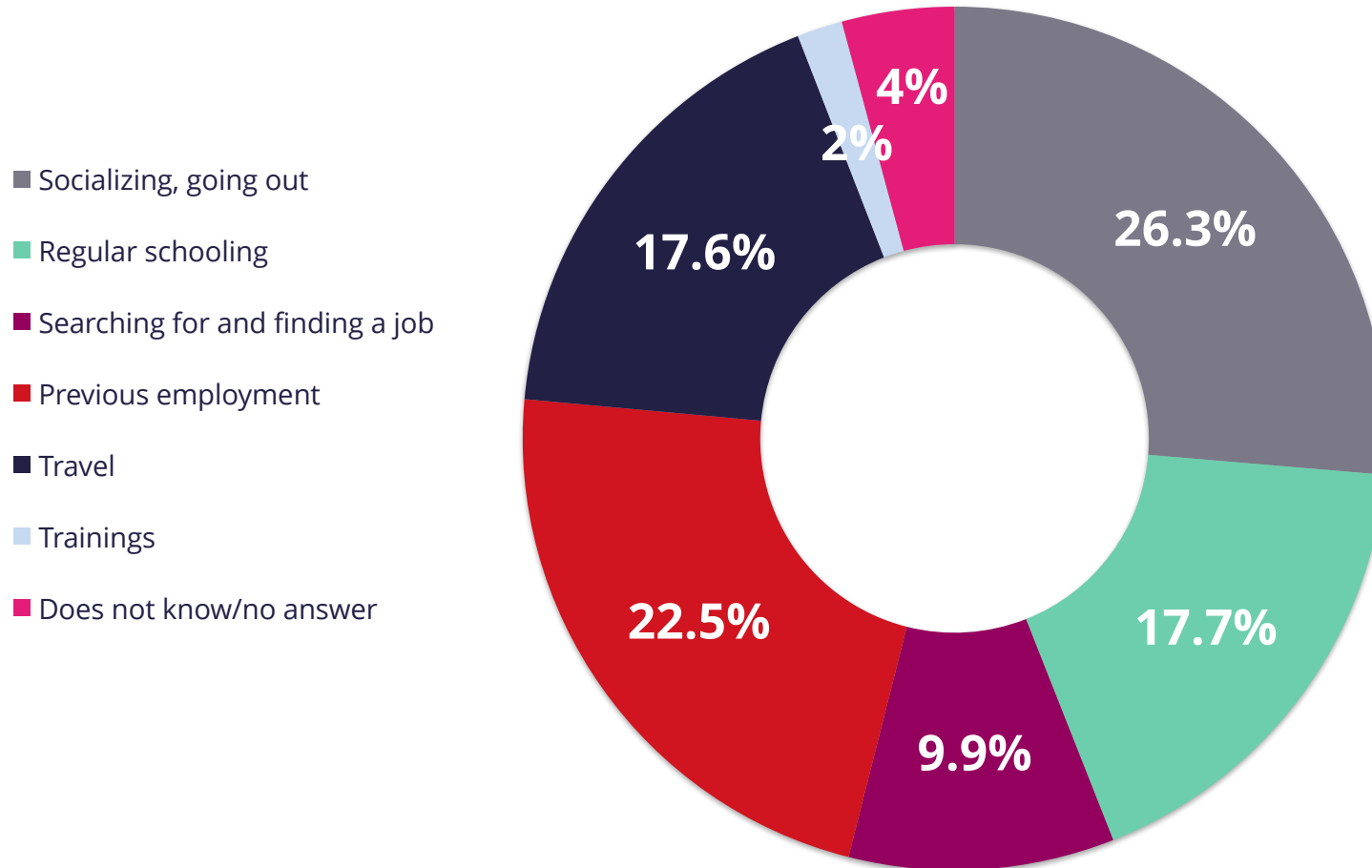
The first phase of the crisis significantly affected the work of older youth – 41%.

The most affected key area (work), per entity:

- FBiH 37%
- RS 34%
- DB 39%



■ What young people believe they were not able to do during the initial crisis

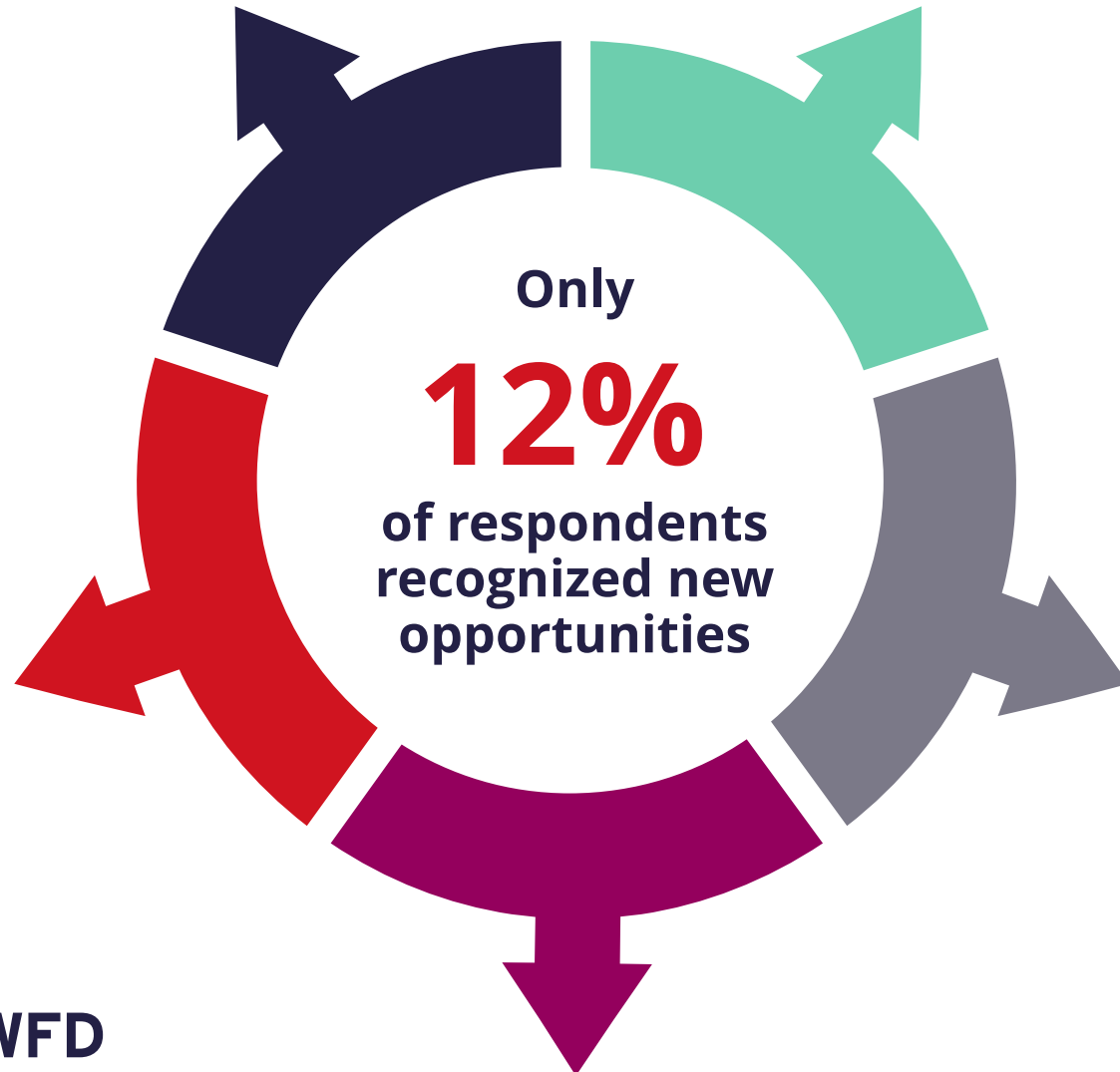


Young people considered that the first phase of the crisis mostly affected their ability to work (previous employment – 23%, and searching for a new job – 10%), followed by ability to socialize (26%), receive education (18%) and travel (18%).

Percentage of youth who were unable to socialize and go out, per entity:

- FBiH 25%
- RS 29%
- DB 34%

- **New opportunities as a consequence of the crisis**

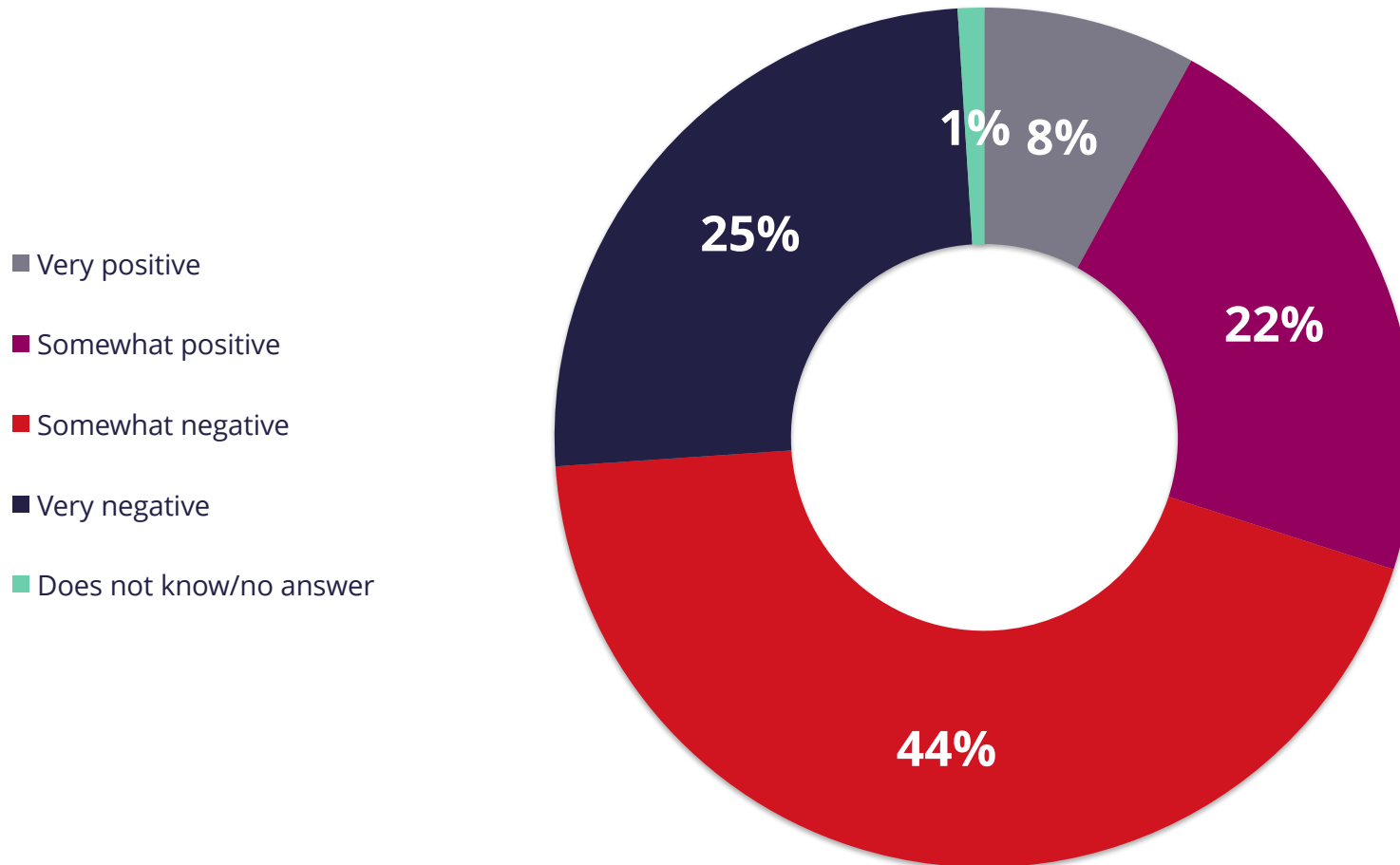


- Distance learning opportunities (28%)
- Change of previous work (26%)
- Opportunities for working from home (24%)

Percentage of respondents recognizing new opportunities, per entity:

- FBiH 14%
- RS 8%
- DB 10%

■ Impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on education

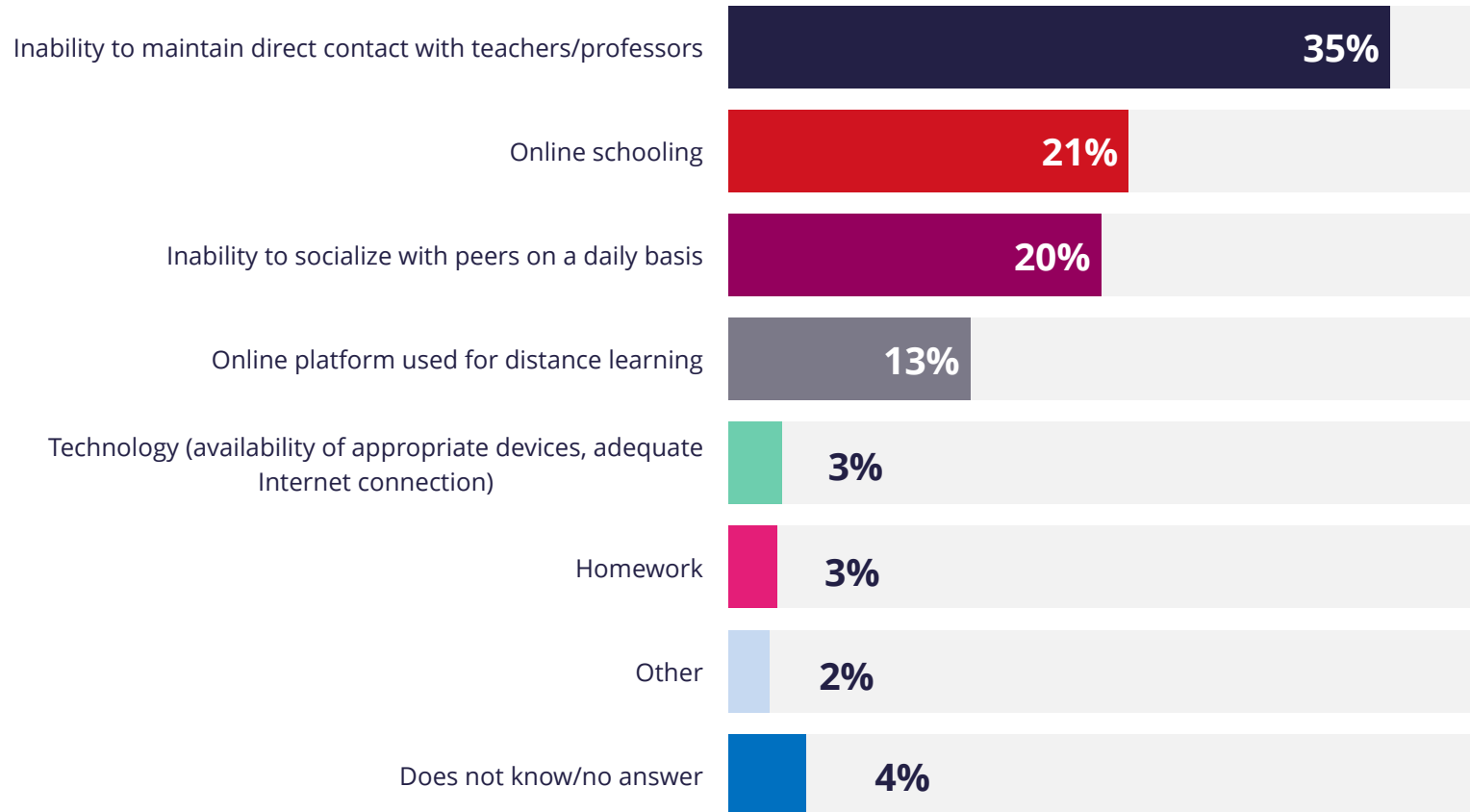


Out of all respondents, 39% were being schooled during the first months of the Covid-19 crisis. Of those, **70%** believed that the crisis negatively affected education ('very negatively' for 25%).

Percentage of respondents believing that the crisis very negatively or somewhat negatively affected education, per entity:

- FBiH 27% of youth
- RS 27% of youth
- DB 31% of youth

■ Impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on education

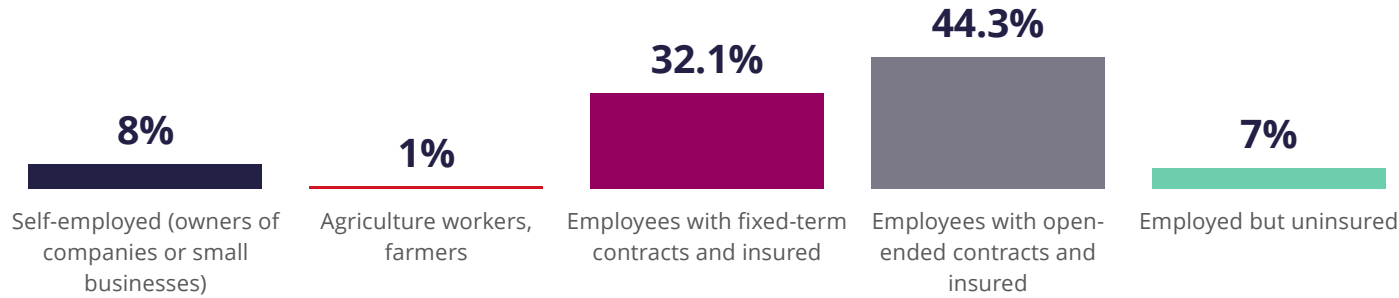


In terms of education during the crisis, the younger population was mostly affected by the inability to maintain direct contact with teachers/professors (35%), followed by online schooling (21%) and the inability to socialize with peers (20%).

Percentage of youth unable to maintain direct contact with teachers/professors during the crisis per entity was as follows:

- FBiH 35% of youth
- RS 33% of youth
- DB 67% of youth

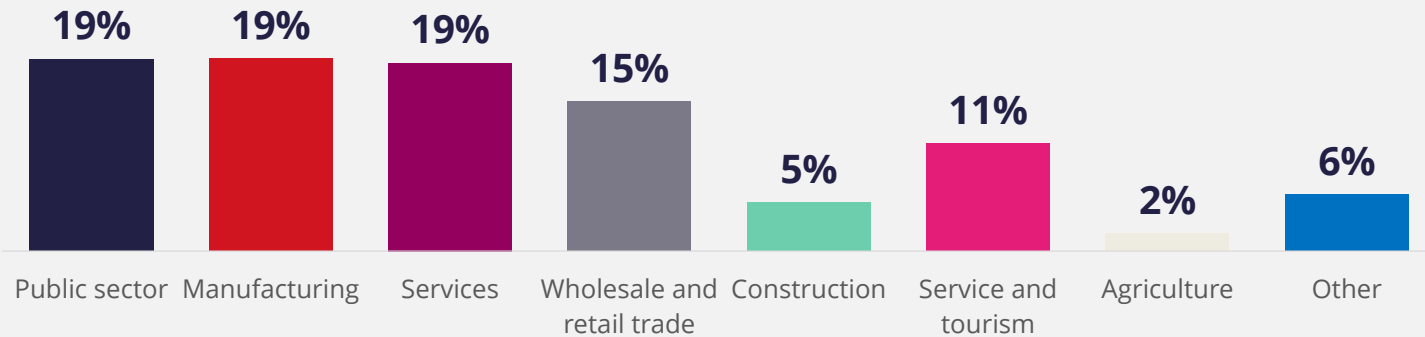
Overview of youth employment prior to the COVID-19 crisis



Among young people employed prior to the crisis, almost 40% had no stable employment - fixed-term contracts (32%) and uninsured (7%).

Percentage of young employees with open-ended contracts and insured (44%), per entity:

- FBiH 41%
- RS 50%
- DB 46%



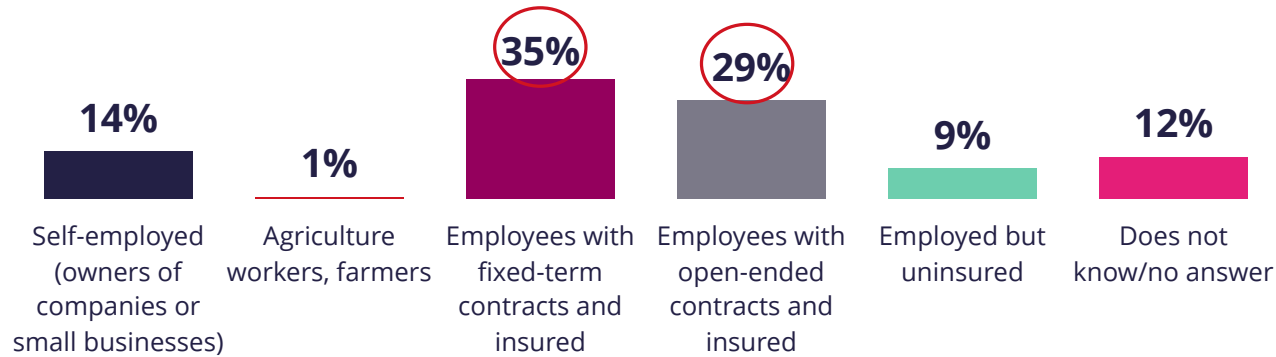
Almost half of young people who were employed before the crisis (44.3%) worked in service/tourism, trade and services.

A significant difference between entities was noted in the service industry (19%):

- FBiH 17%
- RS 24%
- DB 7%

Overview of youth employment prior to the COVID-19 crisis

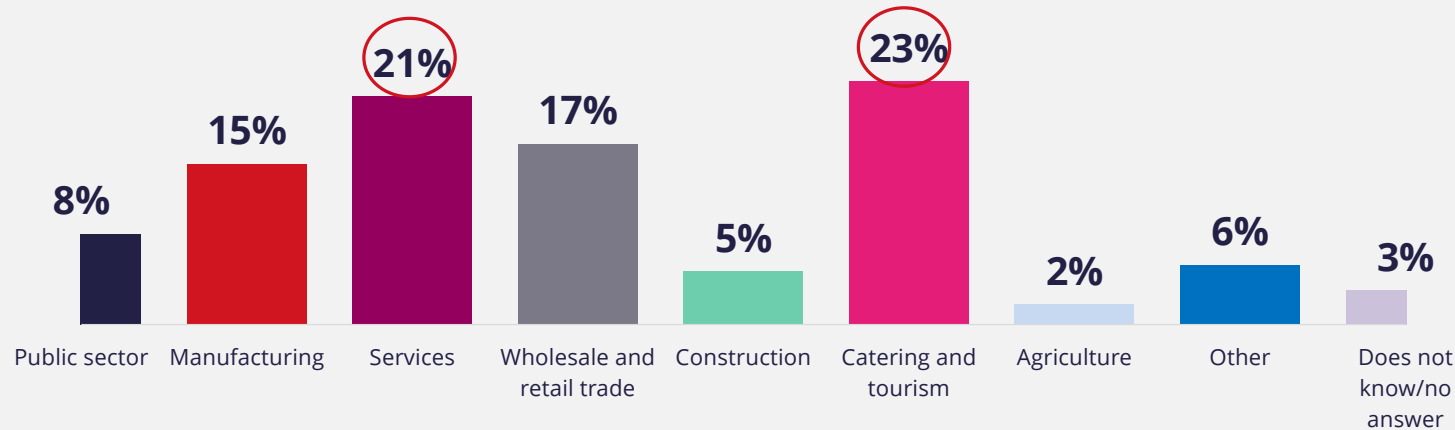
Young people who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 crisis



31% of respondents stated that they lost their jobs during the first phase of the crisis.

Among young people who lost their jobs, most had no stable employment – 35% employees with fixed-term contracts, 29% employees with open-ended contracts.

The analysis of individual groups in the category of self-employed shows that as many as 52% of youth lost their jobs, 40% of whom worked without an employment contract.

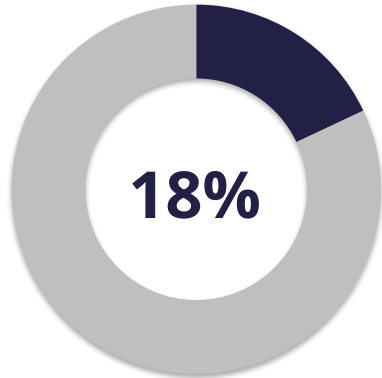


Per sector, those least affected by job loss were employees in agriculture (2%), construction (5%) and the public sector (8%), and those most affected in service and tourism (23%) and the service industry (21%).

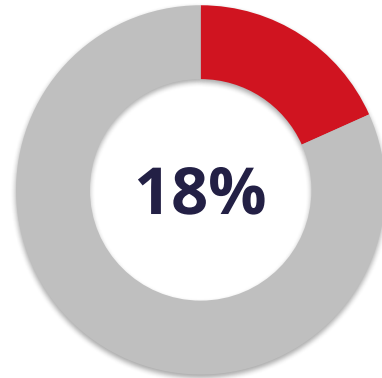
Percentage of young people who lost their jobs during the crisis, per entity :

- FBiH 33%
- RS 27%
- DB 36%

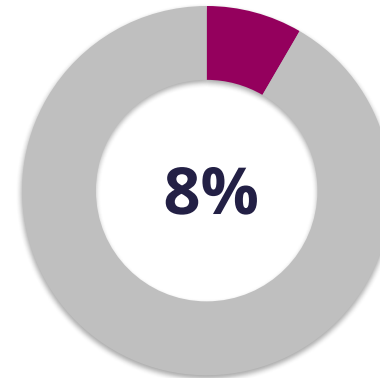
■ Responsibilities and obligations during the crisis



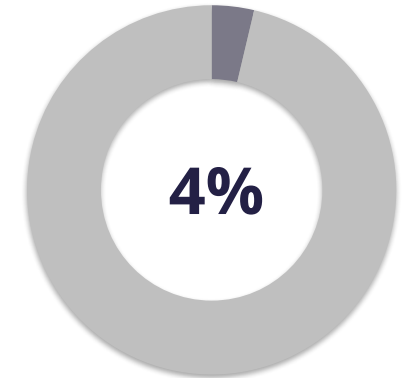
More household responsibilities



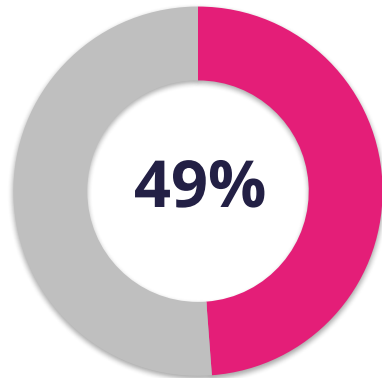
Caring for family members



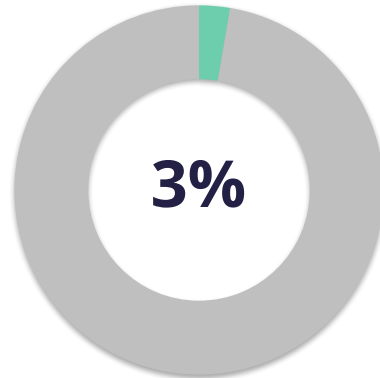
Greater involvement in their community



Volunteering



The respondent had no additional responsibilities

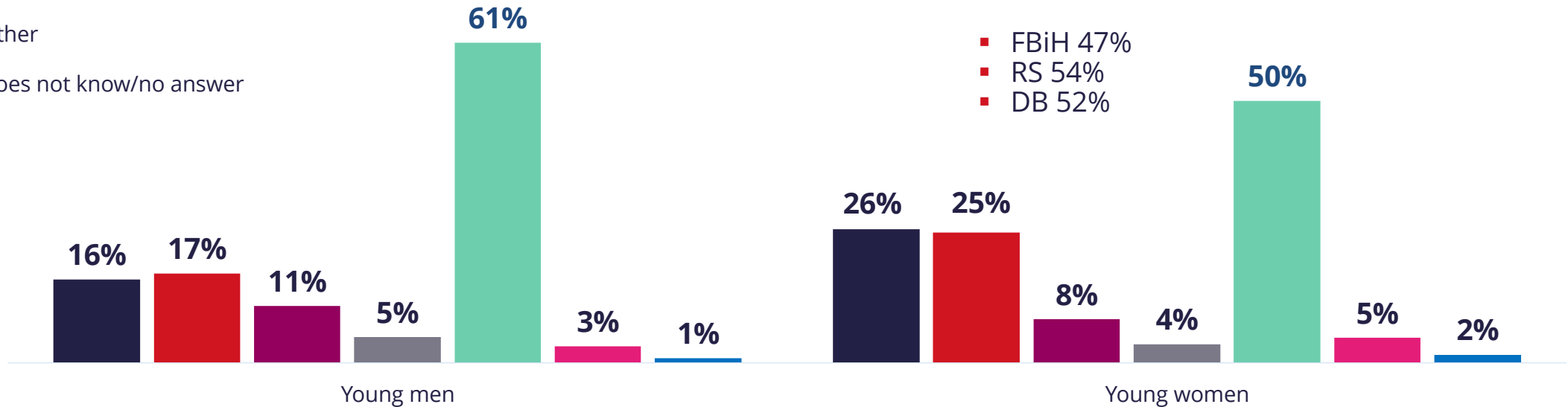


Other/does not know

The Covid-19 crisis has encouraged young people to help by being more involved in their communities through volunteering and greater participation, as well as being more involved in their own households – taking on more responsibilities and caring for family members.

■ Responsibilities and obligations during the crisis


- More household responsibilities
- Caring for family members
- Greater involvement in their community
- Volunteering
- No additional responsibilities
- Other
- Does not know/no answer



Most young men (**61%**) had no additional responsibilities during first months of the crisis, whereas a large proportion of young women (**50%**) participated in additional activities, particularly in household responsibilities (**26%**) and taking care of their family (**25%**).

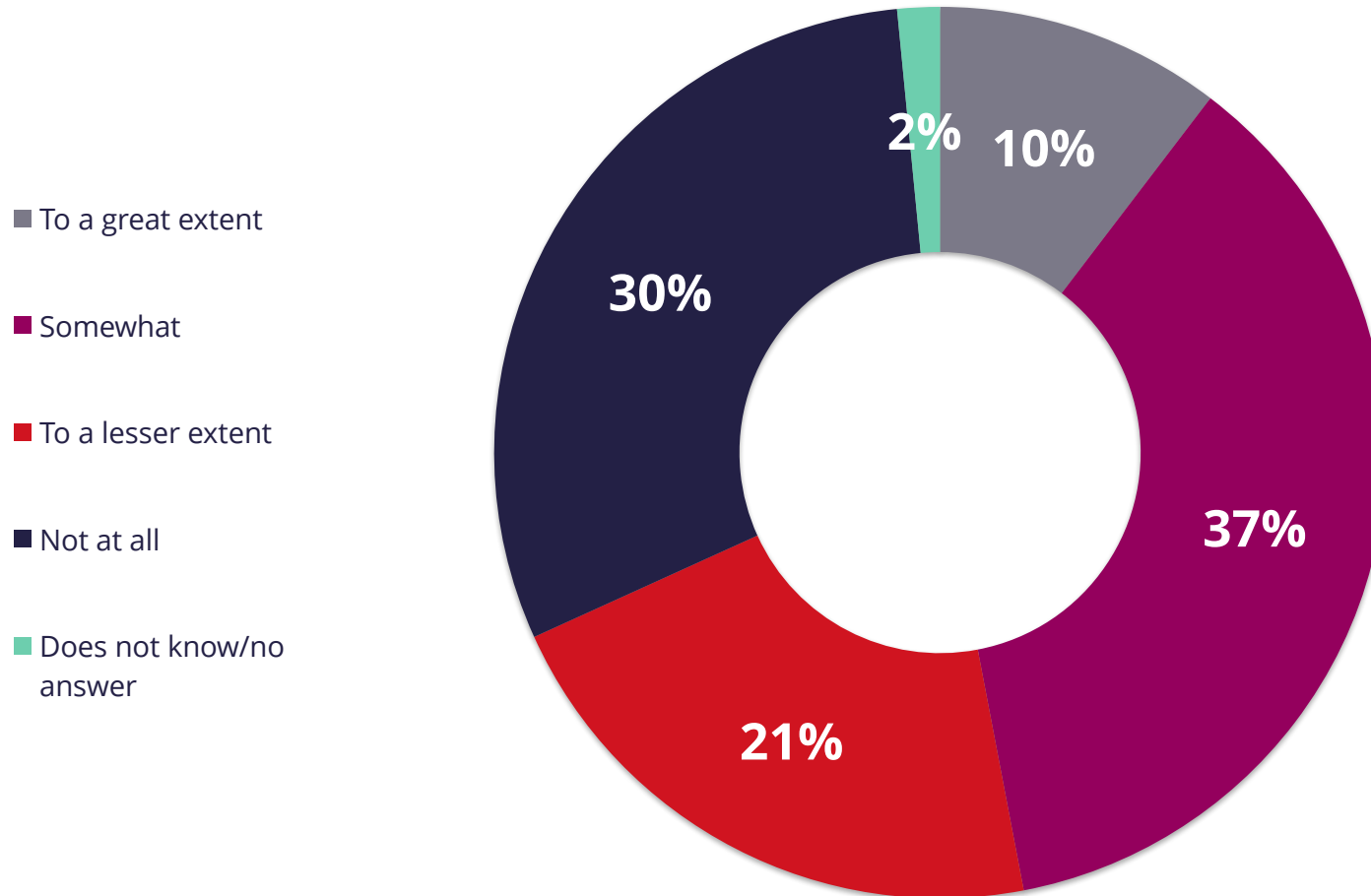
Percentage of respondents who had no additional responsibilities, per entity:

- FBiH 47%
- RS 54%
- DB 52%



Involvement of youth in the decision-making process during the pandemic

- **The extent to which the position of youth was taken into account during decision-making during the pandemic**

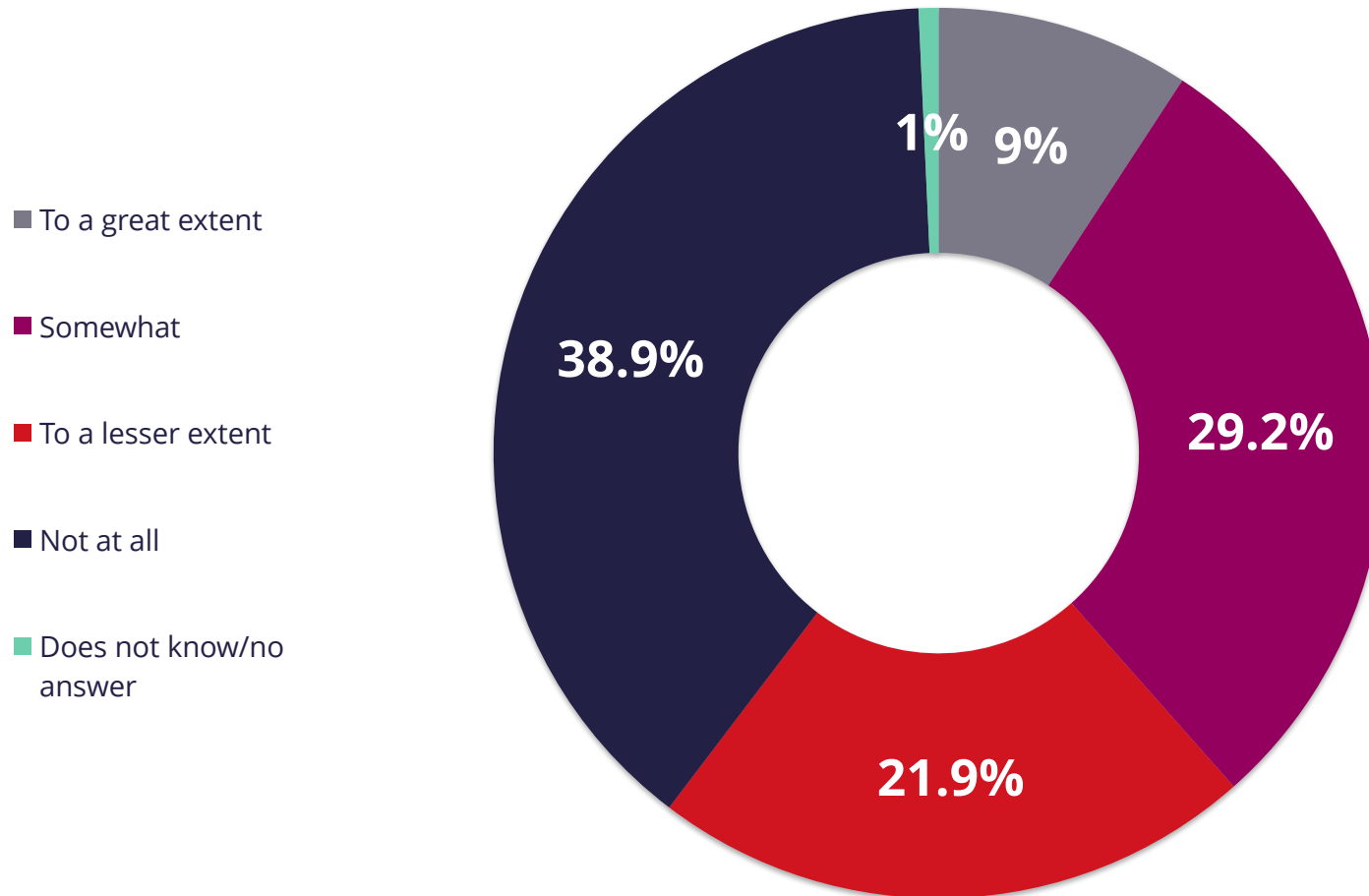


More than half of youth (**51.5%**) believe that their position was not taken into consideration during decision-making, whereas 30% think that it was not considered at all.

Percentage of young people who believe that their position was not taken into account during decision-making, per entity:

- FBiH 55%
- RS 45%
- DB 46%

- **The extent to which young people trust that decision-makers consider the position of youth in decision-making**

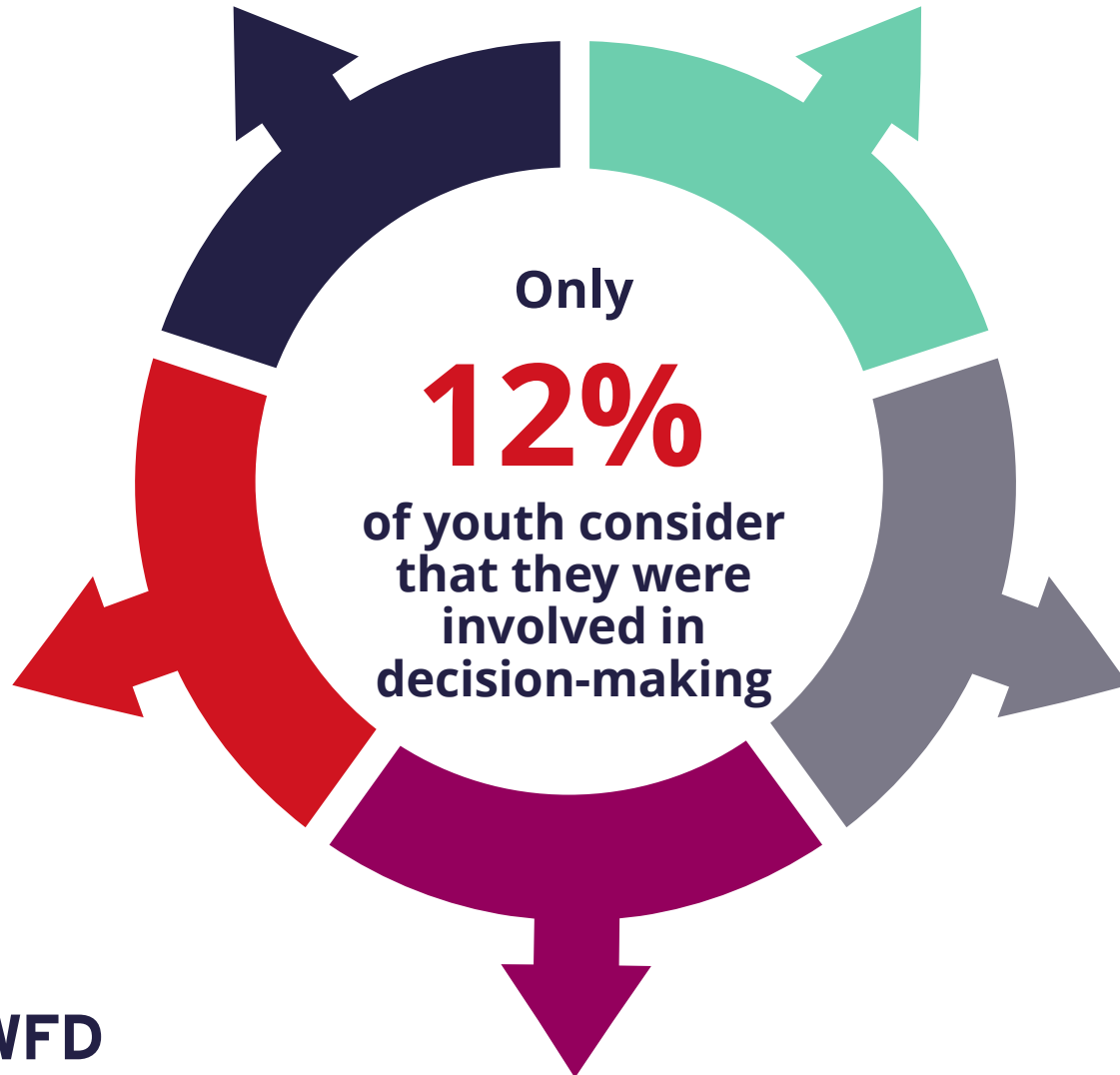


The majority of youth (61%) do not trust decision-makers to consider their position, whereas 39% of youth do not trust decision-makers at all.

Respondents who do not trust decision-makers, per entity:

- FFBiH 65%
- RS 54%
- DB 50%

■ Consultations with youth on decision-making



30%

Consulted by means of certain consultation methods by an organization, citizens' association, employer, etc.

27%

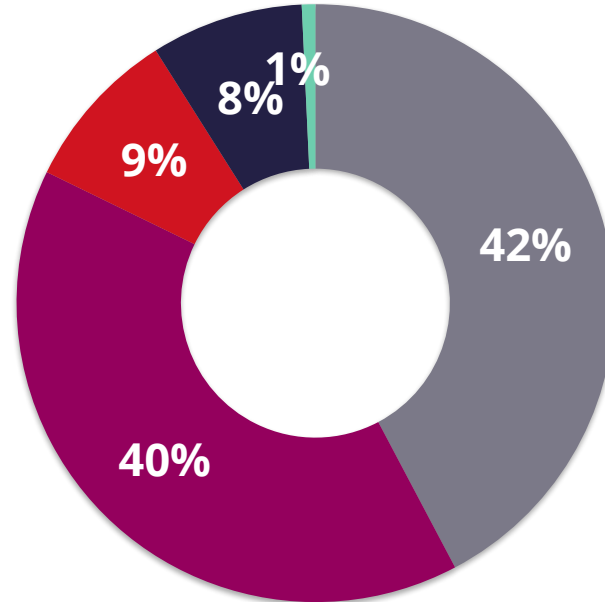
Consulted by means of a special survey, enquiry, public meeting

25%

Consulted as a member of a working group, committee, working body within government authorities or the employer's organization

There is no significant difference between entities in the number of young people who believe that they were involved in decision-making.

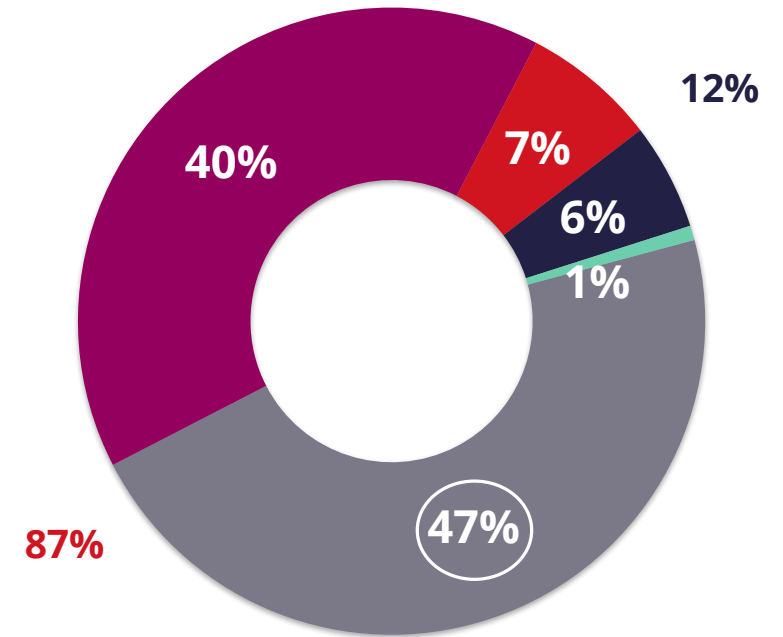
■ **The significance of involving youth in making decisions on aspects and measures concerning their position**



Percentage of young people who believe they should be involved in decisions on aspects and measures concerning their position, per entity:

- FBiH 85%
- RS 76%
- DB 78%

Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe that they should be involved in decision-making on aspects and measures concerning their position – **82%**, which is more pronounced among young women (**87%**)

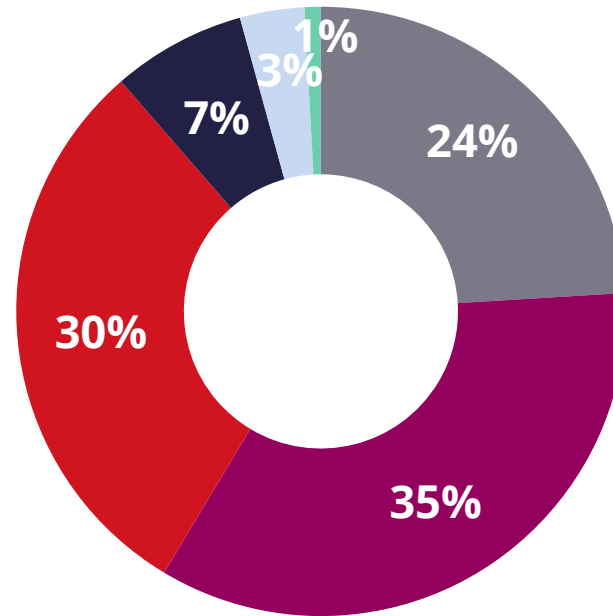


Young women

Attitudes and opinions of youth on living conditions after the end of the pandemic

■ Perception of life after the pandemic and how it will change

- It will be much worse than before the crisis
- It will be somewhat worse than before the crisis
- It will be almost the same as before the crisis
- It will be somewhat better than before the crisis
- It will be much better than before the crisis
- Does not know/no answer



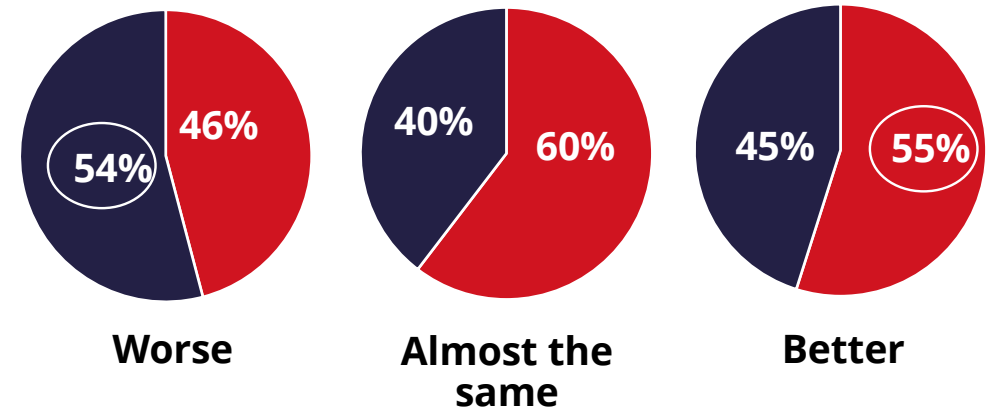
More than half of young people (**59%**) have a negative perception of life after the crisis caused by the pandemic. Almost 1/4 believe that life will be significantly worse.

A negative perception of life after the crisis is more prevalent in young women – more than half of those who believe life will be worse are women (**54%**).

Negative perceptions of life after the crisis per entity:

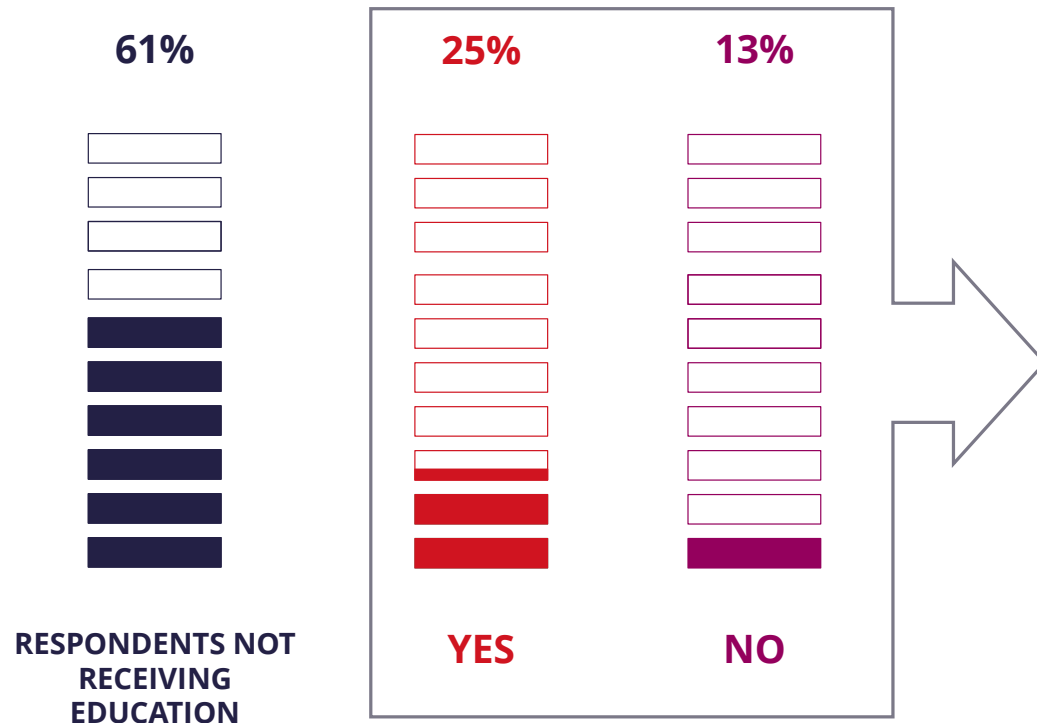
- FBiH 59%
- RS 56%
- DB 72%

- Young men
- Young women



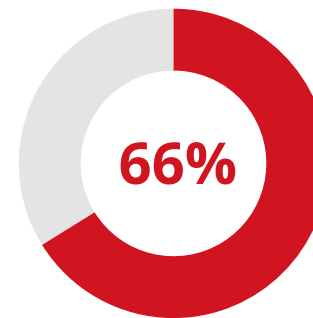
▪ Schooling/education after the measures are lifted

THOSE WHO EXPERIENCED NO CHANGES IN EDUCATION/SCHOOLING



1/4 of the total number of respondents stated that they were able to continue their education normally after the initial measures were lifted (64% of young people receiving education).

More than half of young people who are currently receiving education (66%) consider that educational activities will continue normally.



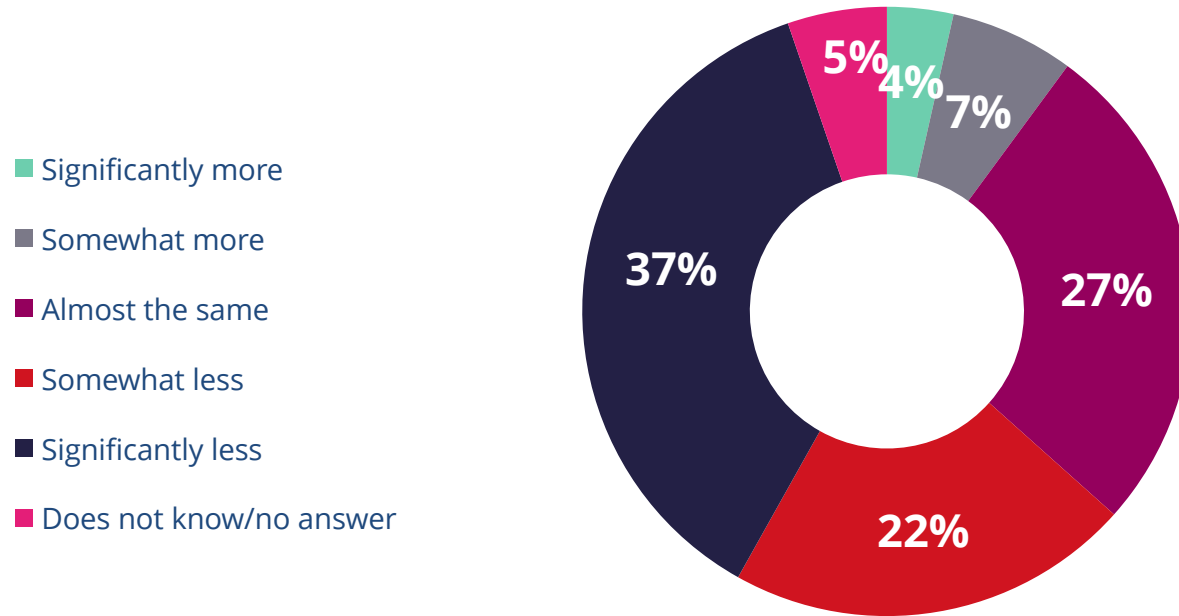
OF YOUTH RECEIVING EDUCATION BELIEVE THAT SCHOOLING WILL CONTINUE NORMALLY

Base N=392; Being schooled/receiving education

Young people who believe that schooling will continue normally, per entity:

- FBiH 61%
- RS 76%
- DB 60%

■ Employment opportunities compared to the pre-crisis period



The majority of young people have a negative attitude towards future employment opportunities – **59%** believe there will be fewer opportunities, and 37% believe there will be significantly fewer opportunities.

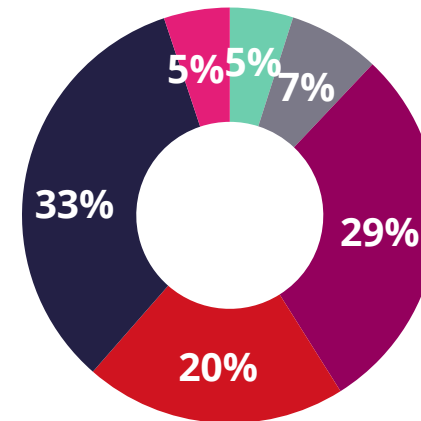
The majority of women (**63%**) believe that there will be fewer employment opportunities.

Only **11%** believe that there will be more opportunities for employment.

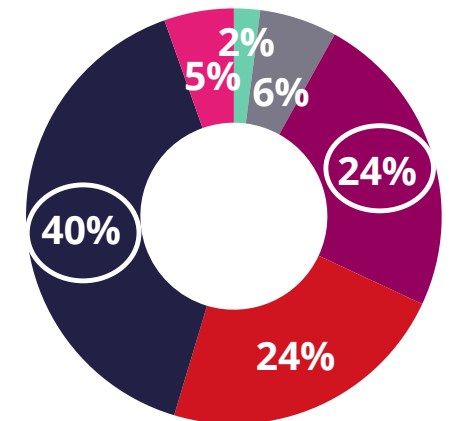
Negative perception on future employment opportunities, per entity:

- FBiH 57%
- RS 60%
- DB 52%

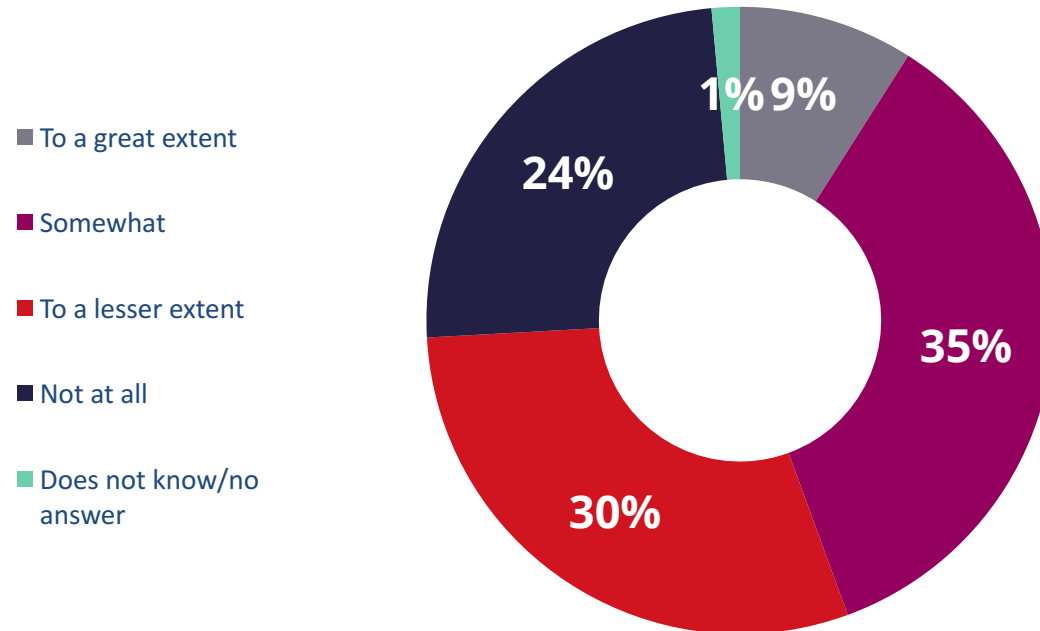
Young men



Young women



- **The extent to which young people consider there will be support programmes for self-employment**



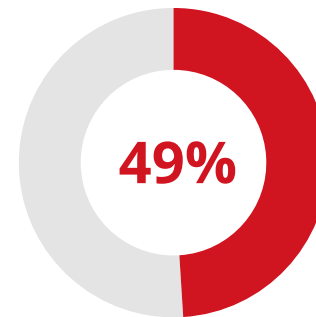
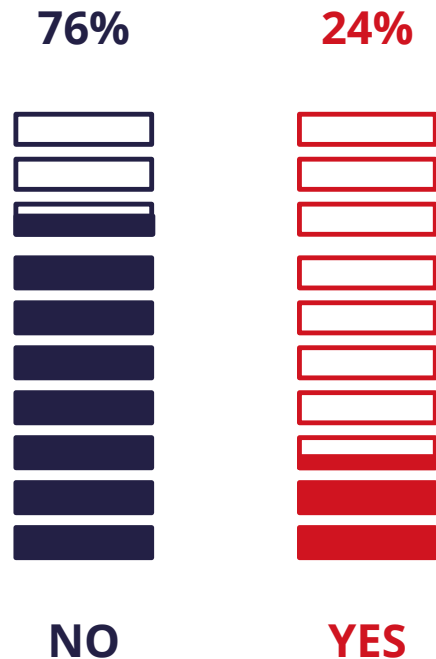
The majority of young people (**54%**) do not believe there will be sufficient or any support programmes for self-employment (almost 1/4 of them believe there will be no such programmes).

Percentage of respondents who do not believe there will be sufficient or any support programmes for self-employment, per entity:

- FBiH 55%
- RS 53%
- DB 44%

Education – change of professional orientation

Almost 1/4 of young people (24%) have considered changing their professional orientation, of which almost half (49%) have considered this due to the pandemic.



THE PANDEMIC AS THE CAUSE OF THIS ATTITUDE

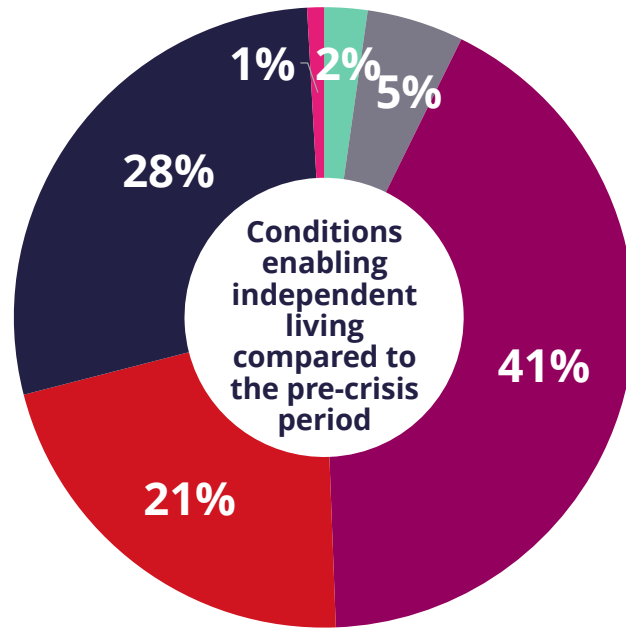
Base N=244; Those who considered changing their professional orientation

Percentage of respondents who considered changing their professional orientation, per entity:

- FBiH 26%
- RS 22%
- DB 11%

Changes to conditions for independent living

- Significantly greater opportunities
- Somewhat greater opportunities
- Almost the same opportunities
- Somewhat fewer opportunities
- Significantly fewer opportunities
- Does not know/no answer

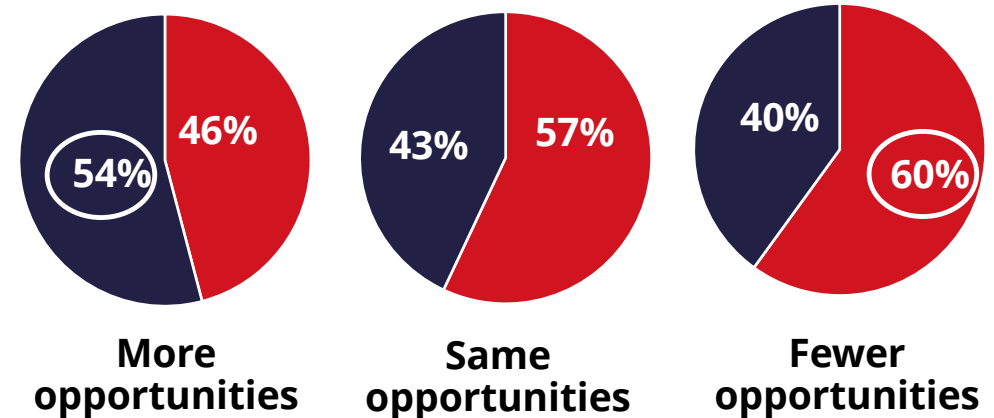


Almost half of young people (**49%**) believe that there will be fewer opportunities for independent living compared to the period before the Covid-19 crisis. More than half of these youth are young women – **54%**.

Fewer opportunities for independent living, per entity:

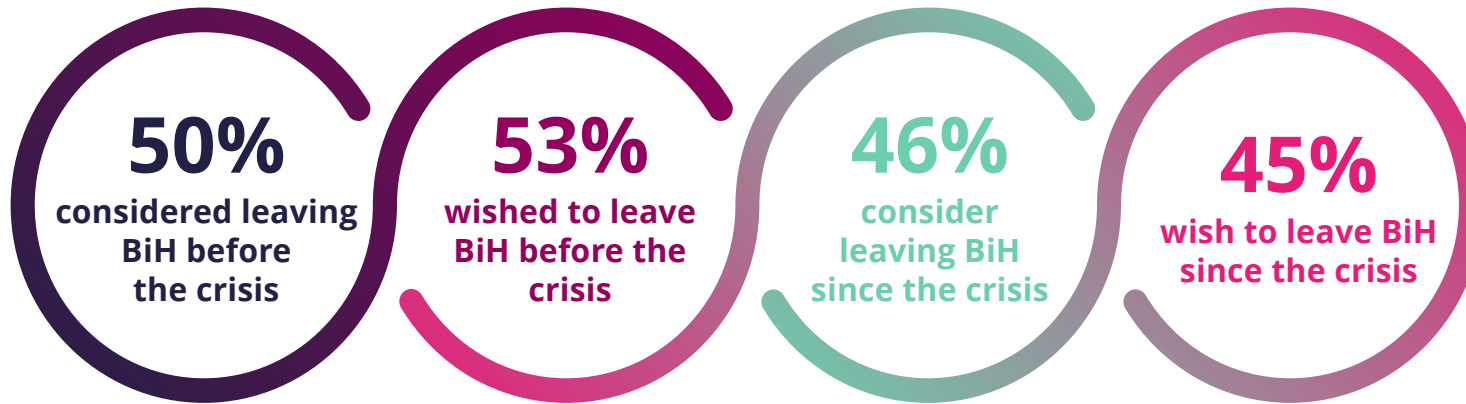
- FBiH 47%
- RS 52%
- DB 51%

- Young men
- Young women



Attitudes and opinions of youth on leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina

Attitudes and opinions of youth on leaving BiH

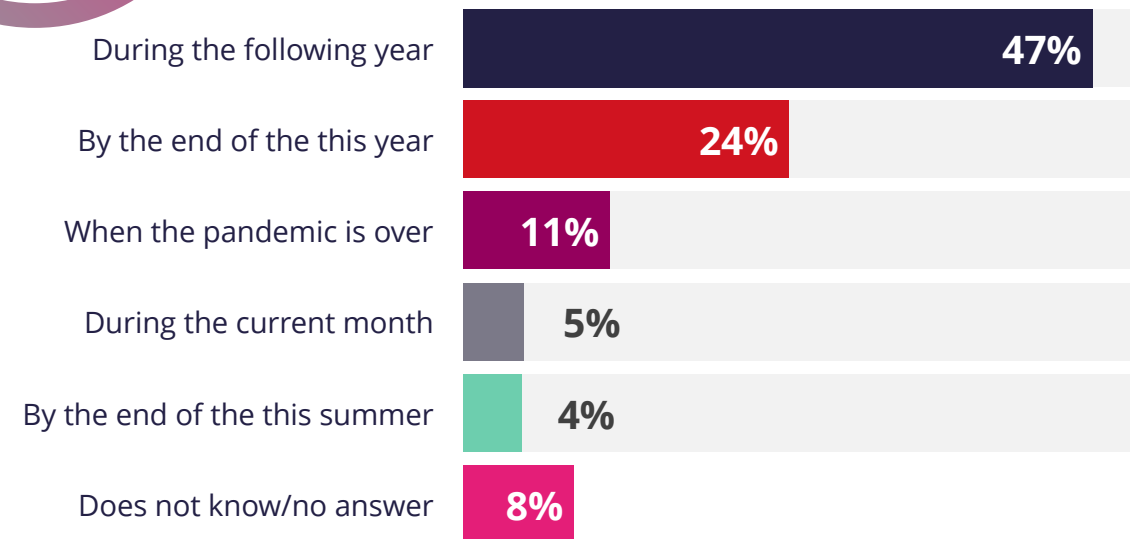


The percentage of youth considering leaving BiH has been almost constant (50% before the crisis, 46% since the crisis), whereas the percentage of youth wishing to leave BiH somewhat decreased due to the circumstances and the imposed measures.

The majority of youth who wish to leave BiH stated that they wanted to leave immediately – by the end of the year or the following year, i.e. as soon as they were able to.

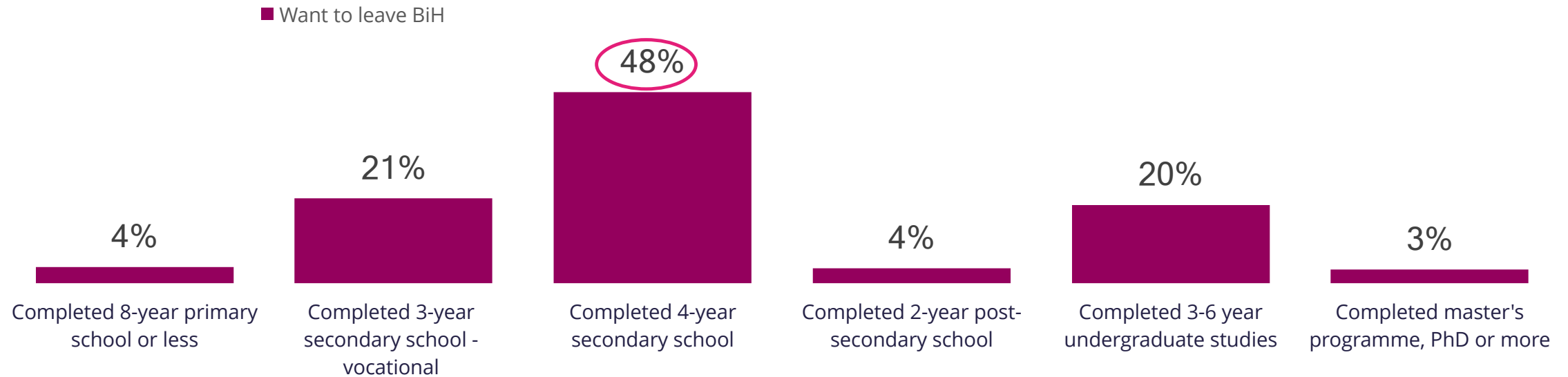
Those who wish to leave, per entity::

- FBiH 48%
- RS 41%
- DB 44%



Base N=455; Young people who wish to leave BiH

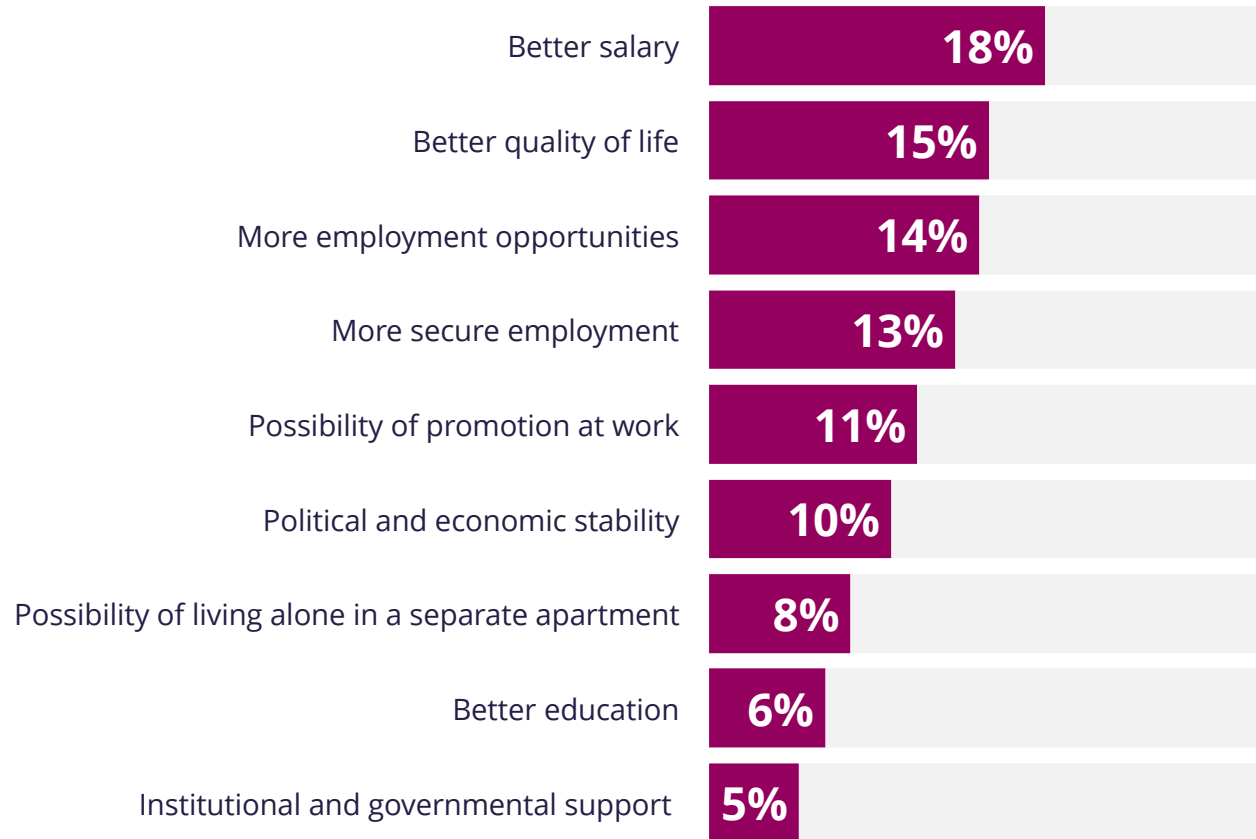
■ Attitudes and opinions of youth on leaving BiH



Among young people who intend to leave BiH, the majority are those who have completed secondary education (four years) – **48%**, followed by those who have graduated from university (20%) and completed vocational secondary education (21%).

Reasons for leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina

Base N=455; Young persons wishing to leave BiH



56% of respondents stated that the reasons for wishing to leave the country were related to **employment** (better salary, more employment opportunities, more secure employment and possibility of promotion at work), followed by better quality of life (15%).

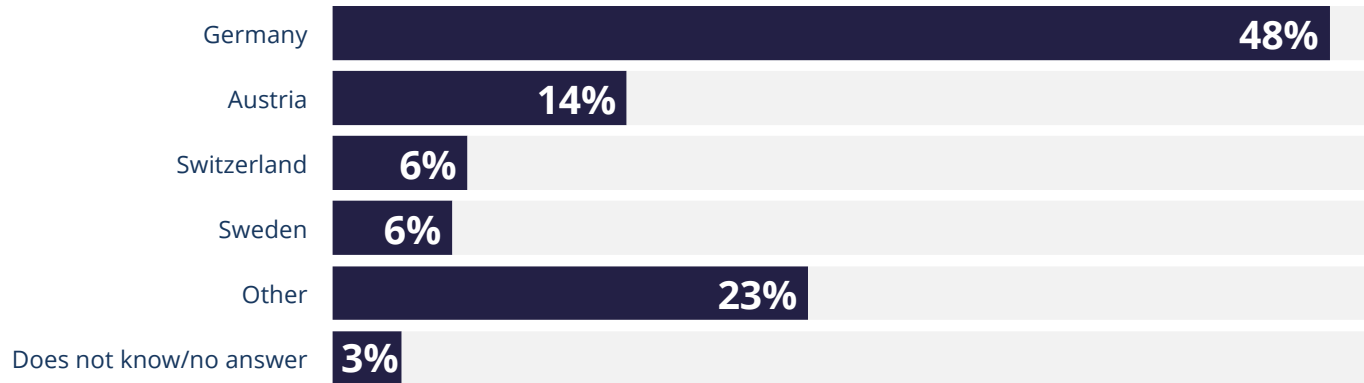
Reasons related to employment, per entity:

- FBiH 58%
- RS 52%
- DB 64%

■ Plans to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina

Base N=455; Young persons wishing to leave BiH

WHICH COUNTRY WOULD YOU PREFER TO RELOCATE TO?

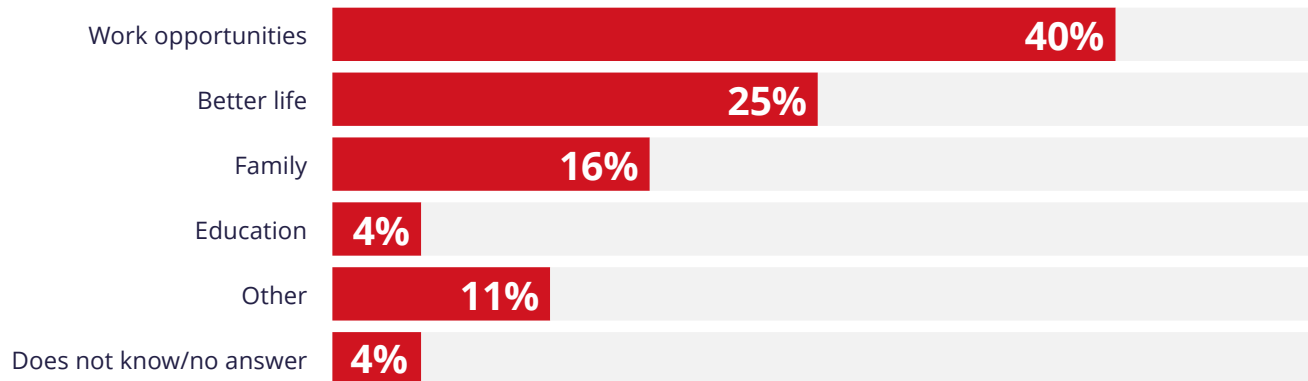


The country most preferred by young people was **Germany (48%)**, followed by **Austria (14%)**, Switzerland (6%) and **Sweden (6%)**.

The most preferred country (Germany), per entity:

- FBiH 51%
- RS 43%
- DB 16%

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON?



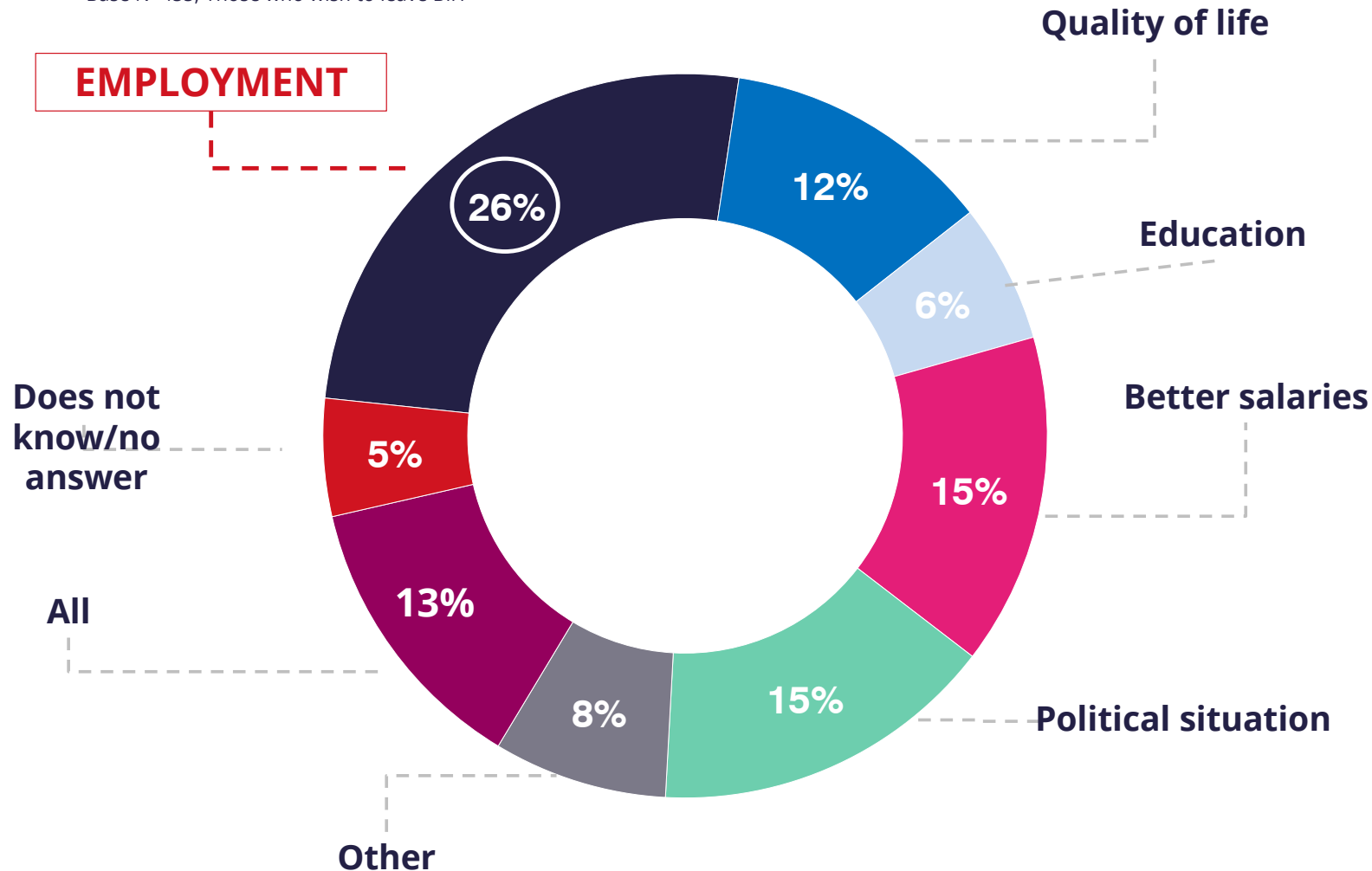
The main reasons for choosing the preferred country to relocate to: work opportunities (40%), better life (25%) and family (16%).

The main reason for choosing the preferred country (work opportunities), per entity:

- FBiH 39%
- RS 41%
- DB 52%

Changes needed for young people to prefer staying in BiH

Base N=455; Those who wish to leave BiH



Out of the total number of respondents, 1/4 of young people believe that changes in employment are needed for young people to prefer staying in Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than leaving it.

In addition, the changes needed to prevent young people from leaving BiH concern the political situation (15.4%), higher salaries (14.8%) and better quality of life (12%).

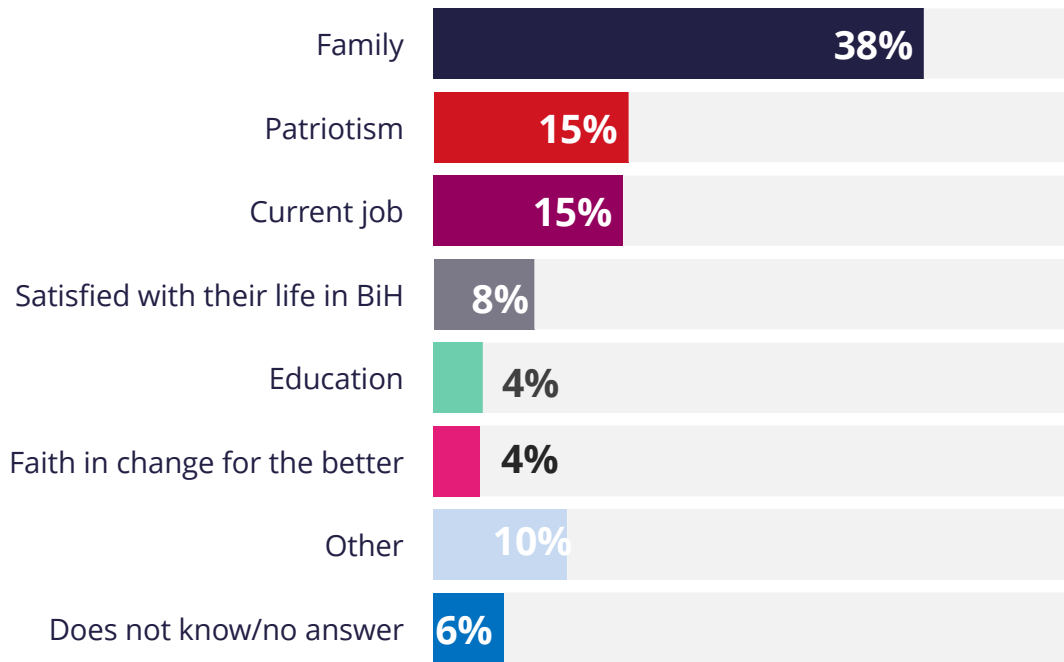
The need for changes in employment, per entity:

- FBiH 25%
- RS 29%
- DB 12%

Reasons for staying in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Base N=548; Young people who do not wish to leave BiH

MAIN REASONS FOR STAYING



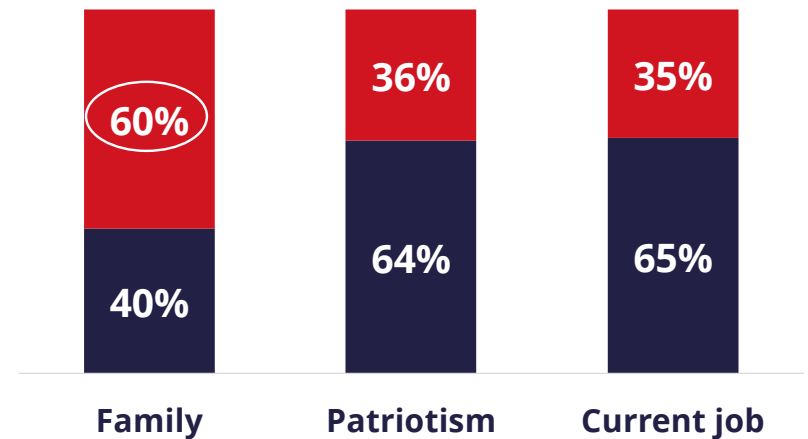
The main reasons given by young people who do not want to leave BiH are **family (38.4%)** followed to a lesser extent by patriotism (15.3%), and keeping their current job (14.9%).

The majority of young people who want to stay because of their families (**60%**) are young women.

The main reason for staying (family), per entity:

- FBiH 35%
- RS 46%
- DB 30%

■ Young women
■ Young men





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