

# AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Endline Survey:  
Summary Report  
on Findings in  
Three Local Self-  
Government Units  
in South Serbia

# **Amplifying Local Voices for Equitable Development**

## Endline Survey: Summary Report on Findings in Three Local Self-Government Units in South Serbia

This study was conducted for People in Need by:



People in Need  
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# CONTENTS

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Background . . . . .              | 5  |
| 2. Key findings . . . . .            | 7  |
| 3. Local Services . . . . .          | 9  |
| 4. Inter-ethnic Relations . . . . .  | 19 |
| 5. Youth and Civil Society . . . . . | 23 |

# 1. BACKGROUND

## The ALVED Project

“Amplifying Local Voices for Equitable Development” (ALVED) is a UK-funded project implemented in South Serbia and Kosovo by a consortium made up of Peaceful Change initiative (PCi), a UK-registered charity, People in Need (PIN), a Czech-based international civil society organization (CSO), and three local partners: Gradjanske Inicijative (Citizens’ Initiatives) from Serbia and NGO Aktiv and Peer Educators Network (PEN) from Kosovo.

In South Serbia, the project provided support to civil society, youth, and local institutions in three local self-government units (LSGUs) – Bujanovac, Lebane, and Vranje – from September 2020 through March 2023. The envisioned impact of the ALVED project is that citizens in South Serbia are better able to empathize with one another’s perspectives, play active civic roles in society, and celebrate diversity.

More specifically, PIN and Citizens’ Initiatives’ efforts focused on integrating all residents into civic life using participatory community problem-solving approaches. This outcome was realized through the implementation of the project’s three core components:

First, through the participatory social service planning (PSSP) program, the ALVED project facilitated an inclusive process that gathered all relevant local stakeholders together – including social service users, NGOs, local authorities, social service providers, and the general public – to ensure that high-quality social services are available to all.

Second, the project’s civil society development component offered grassroots civil society actors capacity-building opportunities as well as funding for local initiatives that aim to improve the lives of residents in their communities.

Finally, the ALVED project paid special attention to the needs and concerns of young people, focusing on harnessing the potential of this vital demographic by investing in development of their knowledge and skills so that they can effectively engage with their communities.

## Scope of the study

In order to be able to collect data on public perceptions and behavior in three key thematic areas – local services, inter-ethnic relations, and youth and civil society – to enable monitoring and evaluation of project impact over the course of three years, PIN commissioned the conducting of three studies over the lifetime of the project:

1. Baseline study – survey conducted in December 2020
2. Midline study – survey conducted in December 2021
3. Endline study – survey conducted in December 2022

In Bujanovac, Lebane, and Vranje, the household surveys and resulting analyses were conducted by Ninamedia Kliping LTD. The same set of questions was used for each of the three surveys. Questions focused on three main areas: use of and satisfaction with municipal services; perceptions of inter-ethnic relations; and the role and involvement of youth and civil society in the LSGUs.

This summary report presents selected findings from Ninamedia Kliping LTD's endline study. Where statistically significant, comparisons between the three research waves are also provided. Selected findings are also cross-tabulated by LSGU and ethnic group to explore any differences in perceptions among these groups.

## Survey Methodology

International professional standards for quantitative survey research were strictly followed. The primary tool for carrying out the research was a standardized questionnaire. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews, and by using pen and paper technique (PAPI).

The target population was defined as follows: individuals aged 18 or over (without maximum age) who have permanent residence in Vranje, Lebane, or Bujanovac on the date of the beginning of field work. Sampling was performed using a stratified systematic random sampling technique. The sample size was set as the effective sample size: 1,200 for all three LSGUs (n = 400 per LSGU).

Data analysis for the survey was done using SPSS software. The data validation team made sure that the data was free of errors by addressing inconsistencies or missing information. Cross-tabulations were performed to identify relationships between variables and patterns in the data. Additionally, a comparative analysis was conducted to compare the results of the baseline, midline, and endline studies and highlight differences and similarities.

The results presented, when all LSGUs are merged, fall under  $\pm 3\%$  margin of error, at confidence interval 95%. When data is disaggregated into LSGUs, the margin of error increases to approximately  $\pm 5\%$ .

# 2. KEY FINDINGS

Below are presented the key findings from the endline survey:

- Approximately 10% of respondents stated that they have requested social services from their local government in the past three years. Approximately 7.6% of respondents have requested the services directly from the local Center for Social Work (CSW) in the last three years, most frequently in Bujanovac.
- One-third of the respondents (32.3%) believe that they have opportunities to contribute to the planning of social services in their LSGU.
- 43.4% of citizens believe that municipal authorities work sufficiently or to some extent to fulfill their needs as citizens. Citizens of the Roma ethnic group to a greater extent than Serbian or Albanian ethnic groups believe that the efforts of the municipal authorities are not sufficient.
- During the last three years, only 3.1% of surveyed citizens participated in public meetings. Respondents who did not attend meetings stated that it was mostly due to a lack of information about those meetings.
- About two-thirds of respondents believe that it is possible for individuals from different ethnic groups to work together to solve a local problem. This percentage has progressively increased from 36% (baseline) to 58.2% (endline).
- In general, members of all ethnicities are ready for coexistence: Albanians are generally more open to cooperation with other ethnic groups, while Serbs are less open to cooperation with other ethnicities.
- The percentage of youth (18-30) that believe they can influence the political and economic life of their LSGU has increased from 17% in the baseline study to 22% in the endline study.
- About a third of the respondents (29.2%) believe that the opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making or contribute to the local economy at the municipal level are medium.
- When it comes to emigration, the majority of respondents do not consider emigrating out of Serbia (59.8%) or within it (59.6%).
- Regarding the work of CSO support for certain groups of citizens, between approximately one-quarter and one-third believe that CSOs are doing enough/ to some extent to support the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, youth, and ethnic minorities (in ascending order).

- When it comes to the effectiveness of citizens and CSOs in monitoring the government to make it more accountable, the respondents' opinions are equally divided: 37.4% of citizens agree that this can be effective, while 37% disagree.



# 3

## LOCAL SERVICES

The first section of the survey contained questions related to the use or non-use of local services by citizens, and the overall satisfaction of citizens with their LSGU. Selected findings are presented below.

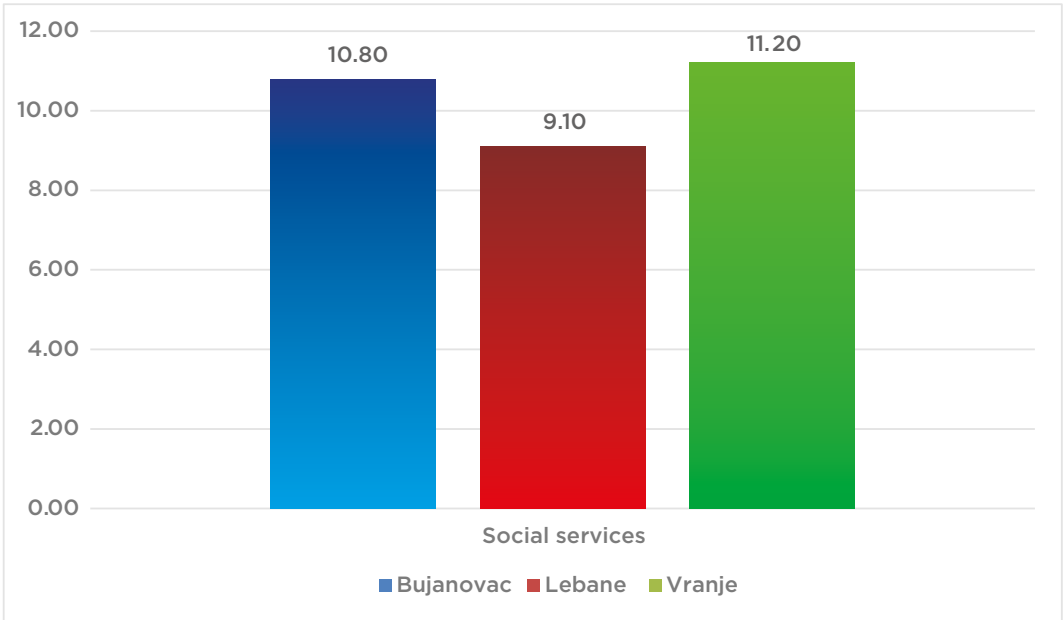
### Local Social Services

Through the aforementioned PSSP program, the ALVED project supported the development and adoption of local action plans to improve social service delivery in the three LSGUs and also provided grant funding for the implementation of selected elements of those action plans. As such, data pertaining to social service requests were of particular interest for the ALVED project team.

Approximately 10% of respondents in the three LSGUs have requested social services within the past three years. This percentage did not change from the baseline to the endline study.

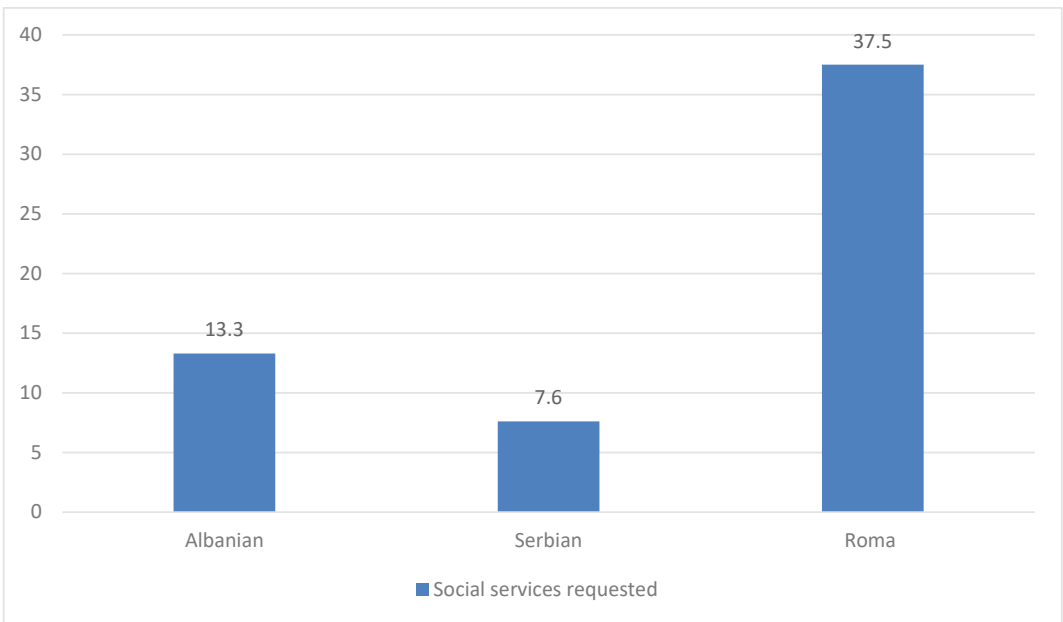
Respondents were also asked if they had requested services specifically from the local CSW over the past three years. 7.6% indicated that they had requested such services from their local CSW.

Graph 1 shows the percentage of respondents who have requested social services, by LSGU, in the last three years. It is noted that the residents of Lebane generally demanded fewer social services from their local government in comparison with residents of Bujanovac and Vranje.



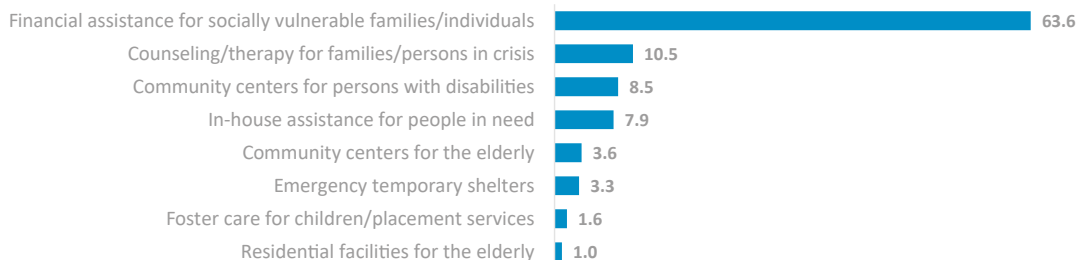
Graph 1 In the last three years, have you requested any of the following types of services from the LSGU? (Positive responses by LSGU, %)

In all three LSGUs, Roma respondents more frequently requested social services, followed by Albanians and then Serbs, as illustrated in Graph 2.



Graph 2 In the last three years, have you requested any of the following types of services from the LSGU? (Positive responses by ethnicity, %)

Of those who requested services, financial support for socially vulnerable families/individuals was by far the most requested service from the local CSW, as illustrated in Graph 3. This is followed by counseling/therapy for families or individuals in crisis, community centers for persons with disabilities, and in-house assistance for people in need.



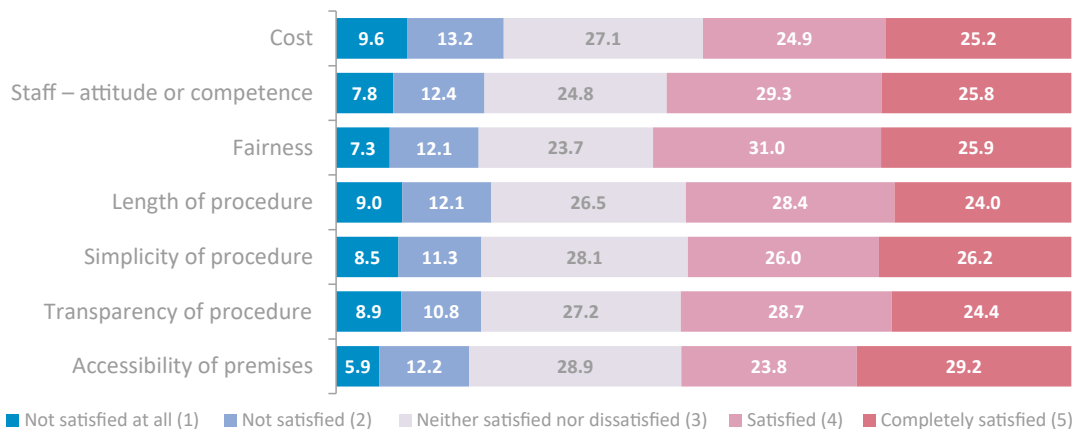
Graph 3 If have you requested any services from the local CSW for any services, which services? (%)

Compared to the first two research waves, for the endline study, the respondents indicated less need for financial assistance for socially vulnerable families/individuals. There is a slight increase in the number of citizens in need of therapy for families in crisis situations, as well as centers for people with disabilities and centers for the elderly.

## Satisfaction with local services

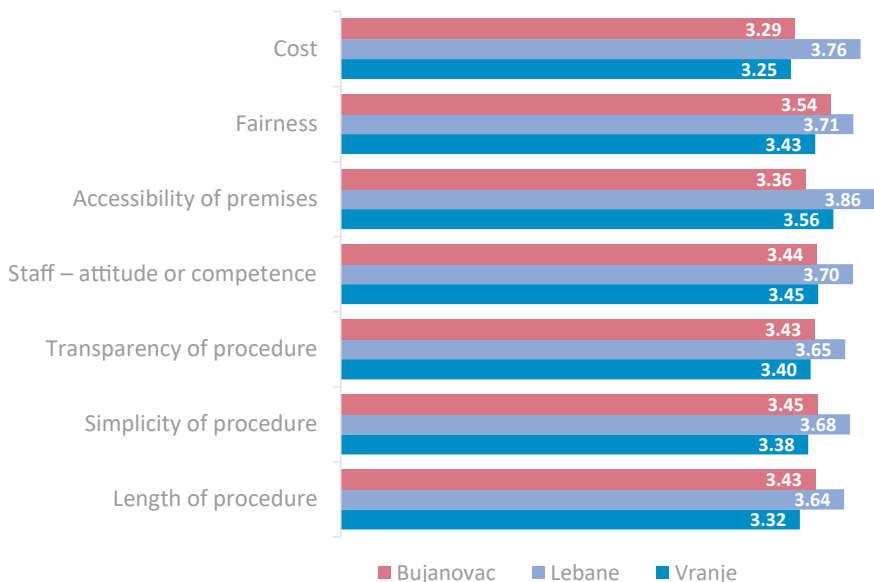
Respondents who requested services (not only social services, but also services related to registry, property, utilities, education, and healthcare) from their LSGUs were asked to evaluate those services in accordance with a selected set of criteria. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “completely dissatisfied” and 5 “completely satisfied”, the citizens rated their satisfaction with local services mostly above average.

Graph 4 shows that 50.1% of respondents were overall satisfied with local services in terms of cost, followed by (in ascending order) 52.2% in terms of simplicity of procedure, 52.4% in terms of length of procedure, 53% in terms of accessibility of premises, 55.1% in terms of staff attitude or competence, and finally, nearly 57% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the fairness of local services.



Graph 4 If you accessed local services, how would you evaluate those local services, according to the following categories? (%)

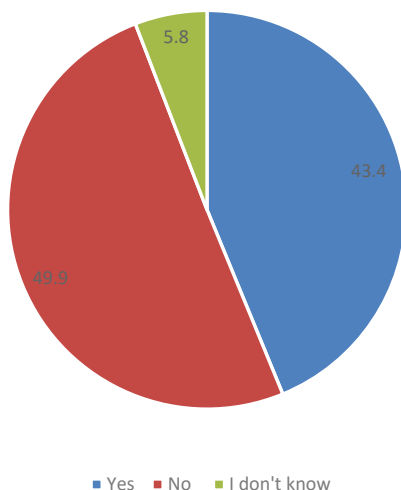
Analysis revealed significant differences between LSGUs in all categories of evaluation of local services. It can be seen in Graph 5 that respondents from Lebane generally rated all categories higher than respondents from Vranje or Bujanovac, with the highest level of satisfaction being with access to premises (3.86).



Graph 5 If you accessed local services, how would you evaluate those municipal services, according to the following categories? (average score by LSGU)

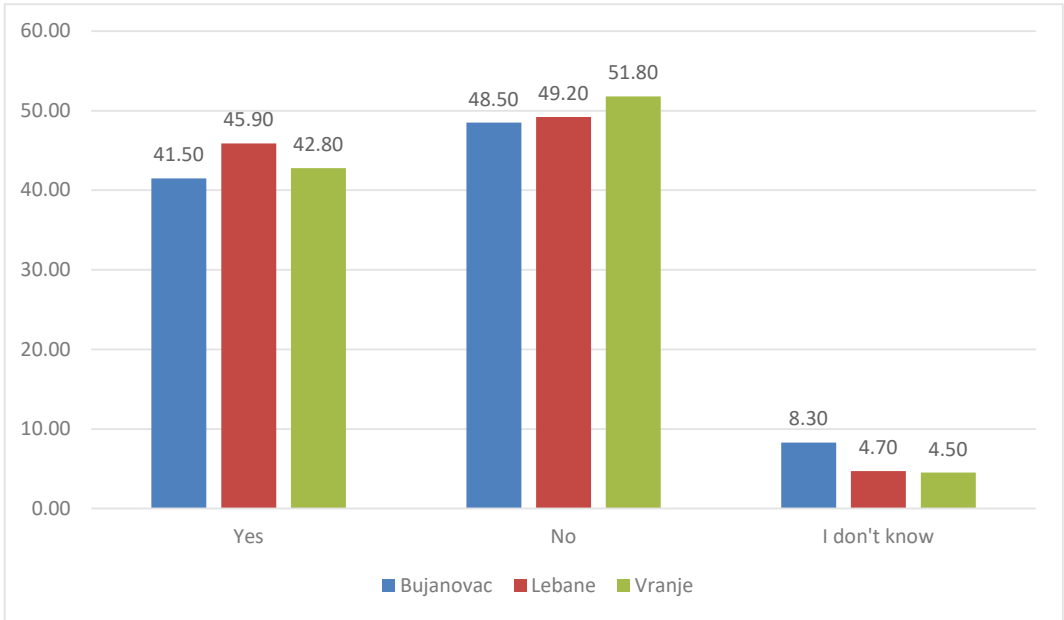
## Efforts to meet the needs of citizens

As shown in Graph 6, less than half (43.4%) of respondents believe that their local authorities make efforts to fulfill their needs as citizens, while half believe these efforts are not sufficient.



Graph 6 Do you believe that local authorities make efforts to meet your needs as a citizen? (%)

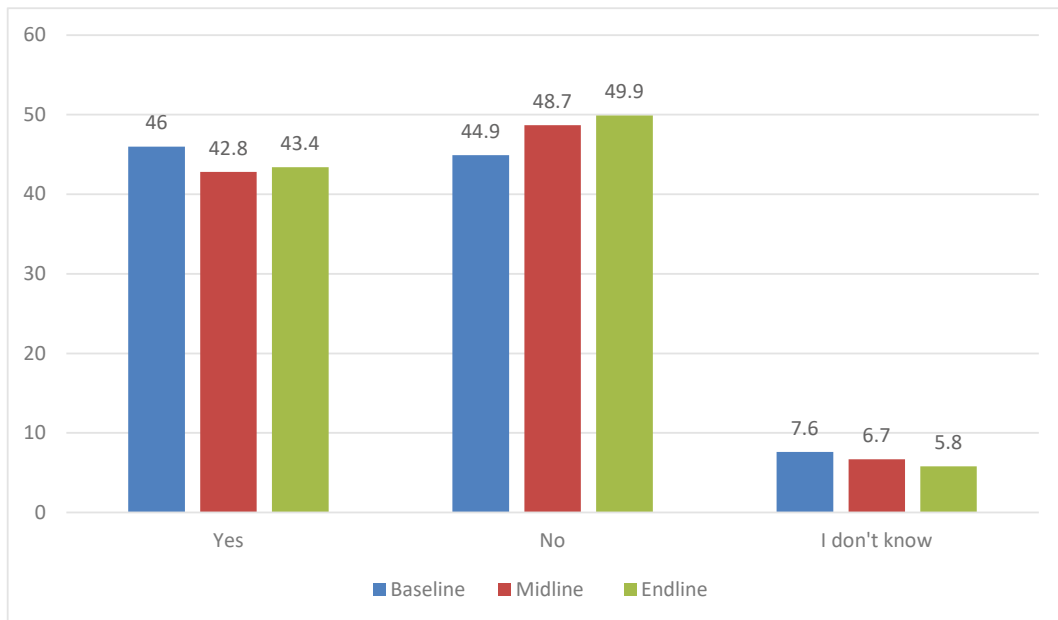
When examined by LSGU, results show that the citizens of Lebane rate the efforts of their local authorities to meet their needs more positively than the citizens of the other two LSGUs. The residents of Vranje, to a greater extent than the residents of Lebane and Bujanovac, believe that the efforts of the municipal authorities are not sufficient in this matter, as illustrated in Graph 7.



Graph 7 Do you believe that local authorities make efforts to meet your needs as a citizen? (By LSGU, %)

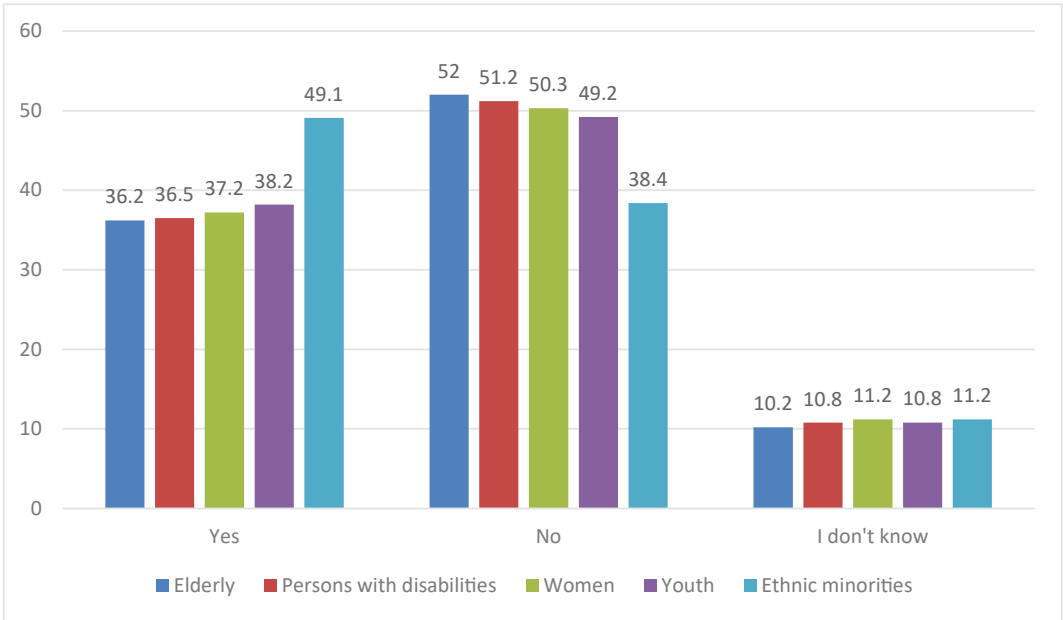
Furthermore, differences in opinions between the ethnic groups living in the three target LSGUs were examined. To a greater extent than the other two groups, Albanians believe that the efforts of the municipal authorities are sufficient: 61.9% of Albanians, followed by 42.8% of Serbs, and 29.5% of Roma.

When compared to the first two research waves, Graph 8 shows a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents who believe that municipal authorities' efforts to meet their needs suffice: from 46% (baseline) to 43.4% (endline).



Graph 8 Do you believe that local authorities make efforts to meet your needs as a citizen (%)?

When it comes to the specific needs and concerns of different groups, slightly more than one-third believe that municipal authorities are doing enough for the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, and youth. That percentage increases to 50% when it comes to ethnic minorities, as Graph 9 illustrates.



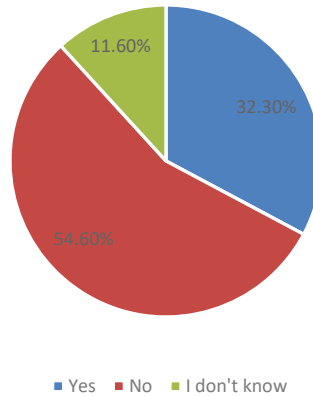
Graph 9 Do you think that local authorities are doing enough to support the specific needs and concerns of the following groups? (%)

Comparing results in the three LSGUs, respondents from Lebane believe that their LSGU does enough/to some extent for all the abovementioned groups, more often than people from Vranje or Bujanovac do. Differences were also observed between ethnic groups. Albanians are more likely to believe that local authorities do enough/to some extent to support the special needs and concerns of all the mentioned groups, compared to citizens belonging to other ethnic groups.

## Participation in local planning

The PSSP program has been designed as a collaborative process, wherein opportunities for civil society actors, members of vulnerable groups, and more generally members of the public to contribute to social service policy-planning are provided. As shown in Graph 10, one-third of the respondents (32.3%) believe that they have opportunities to contribute to the planning of social services in their LSGU.

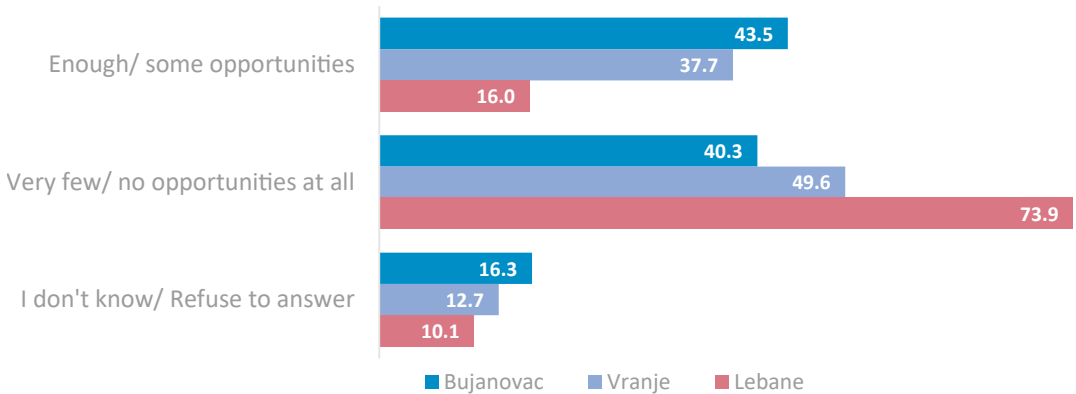




Graph 10 When it comes to planning social services in the LSGU, do you have opportunities to contribute to such planning? (%)

Notably, the represents an increase from the baseline study, when that figure stood at 12%.

Graph 11 presents these results according to LSGU. Respondents from Bujanovac perceive their opportunities to contribute to social service planning the most favorably, with slightly less than half (43.5%) reporting that there are such opportunities. Respondents from Lebane view these opportunities less favorably.

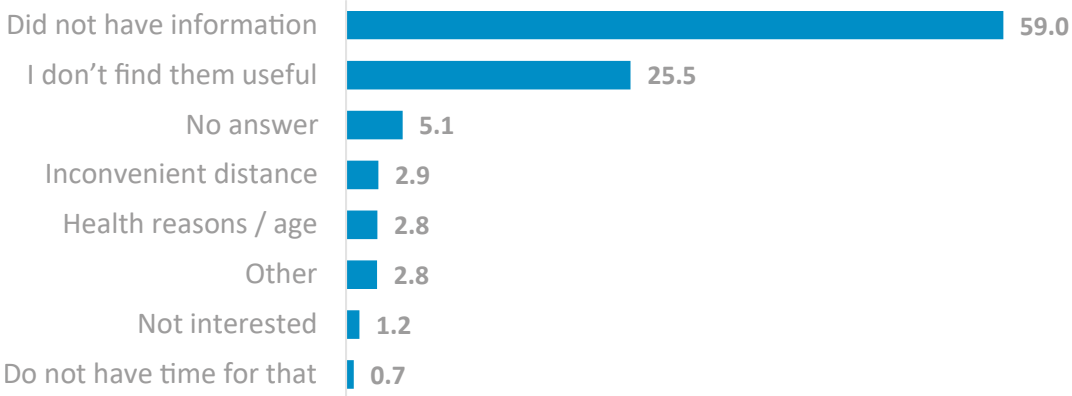


Graph 11 When it comes to planning social services in the LSGU, how would you rate your opportunities to contribute to such planning? (By LSGU, %)

Concerning the question of participation in local public meetings on the topics of planning or budget, only around 3% of respondents stated that they had participated in such meetings in the past three years. There are no significant differences between LSGUs nor between research waves.

When respondents were asked why they do not participate in such public meetings organized by their LSGU, 59% of respondents stated that they had no information

about such meetings, while about one-quarter of respondents (25.5%) stated that they did not consider these meetings useful, as shown in Graph 12.



Graph 12 If you have not attended local public meetings on planning or budget, why not? (%)

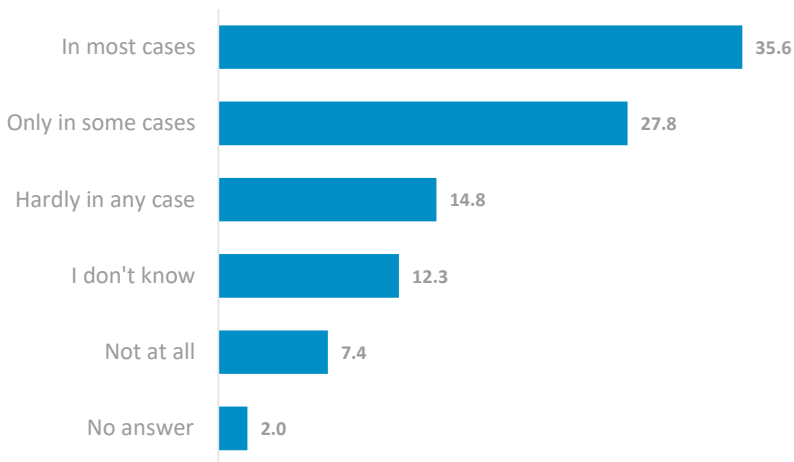
# 4.

## INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS

The second section of the survey contained questions related to inter-ethnic relations in the three target LSGUs. Respondents were asked about their relationships with different ethnic groups and their views on working with someone of a different ethnicity. Selected findings are presented below.

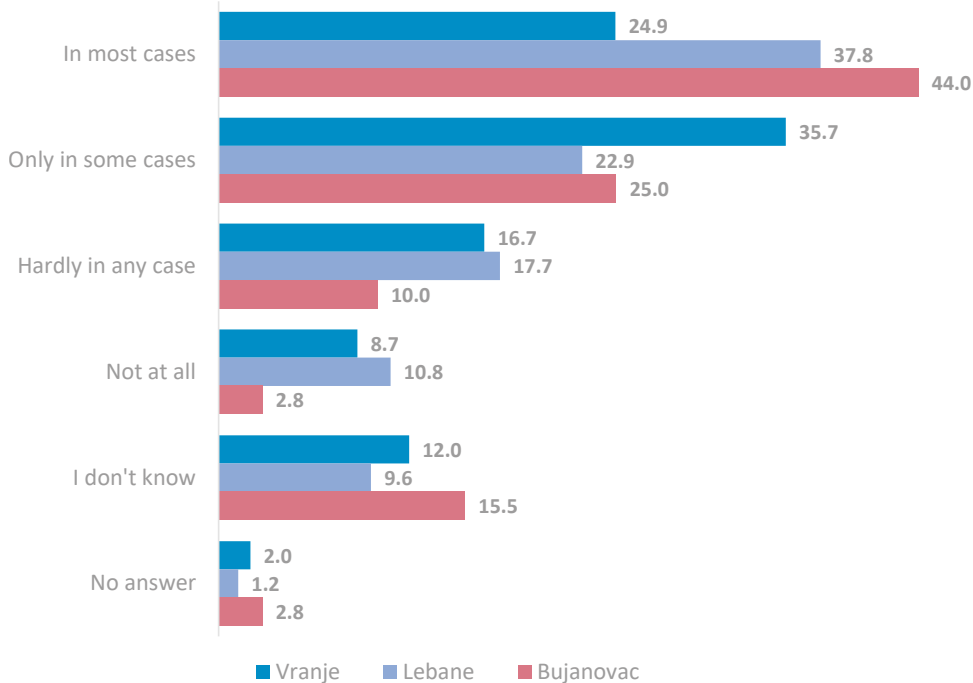
All ALVED activities – whether as part of the PSSP program, CSO support, or youth empowerment – sought to provide opportunities for cross-ethnic collaboration and cooperation.

To begin with, Graph 13 illustrates that slightly more than one-third of respondents surveyed (35.6%) believe that in most cases it is possible for individuals from different ethnic groups to work together to solve a local problem. Less than one-third (27.8%) believe that only in some cases is it possible for individuals of different ethnicities to cooperate when solving problems.



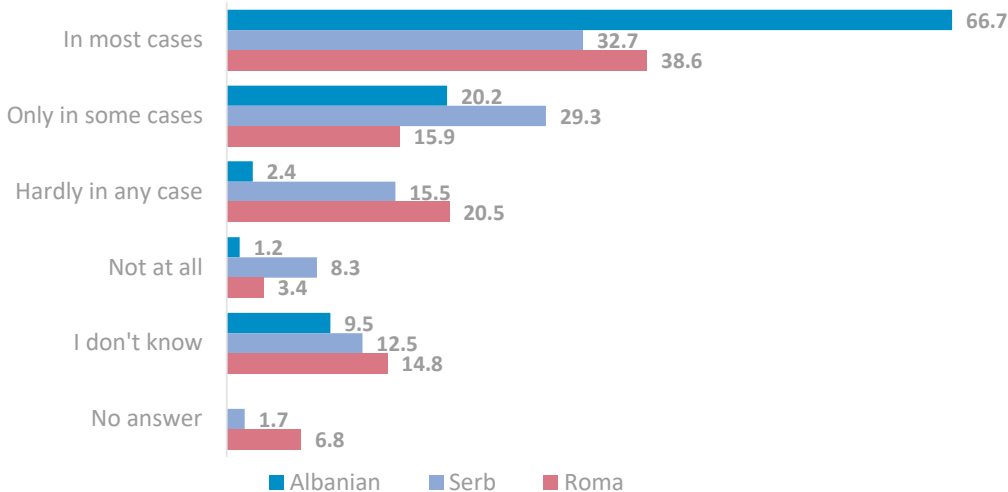
Graph 13 Do you believe that it is possible for individuals (in your LSGU) from different ethnicities to work together to solve a local issue? (%)

When observed by LSGU, the results in Graph 14 show that respondents of Bujanovac more often than those of other LSGUs believe that in most cases (44%) it is possible for people of different ethnic groups to work together to solve a problem.



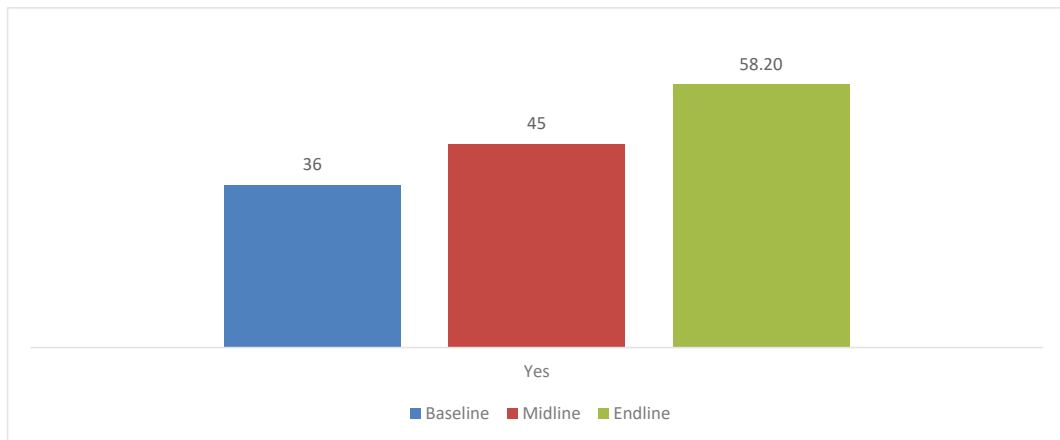
Graph 14 Do you believe that it is possible for individuals (in your LSGU) from different ethnicities to work together to solve a local issue? (By LSGU, %)

**Two-thirds of citizens of the Albanian ethnic group (66.7%) believe that it is possible for individuals of different ethnicities to work together to solve local issues, while this opinion is shared by 38.6% of Roma and 32.7% of Serbs, as shown in Graph 15.**



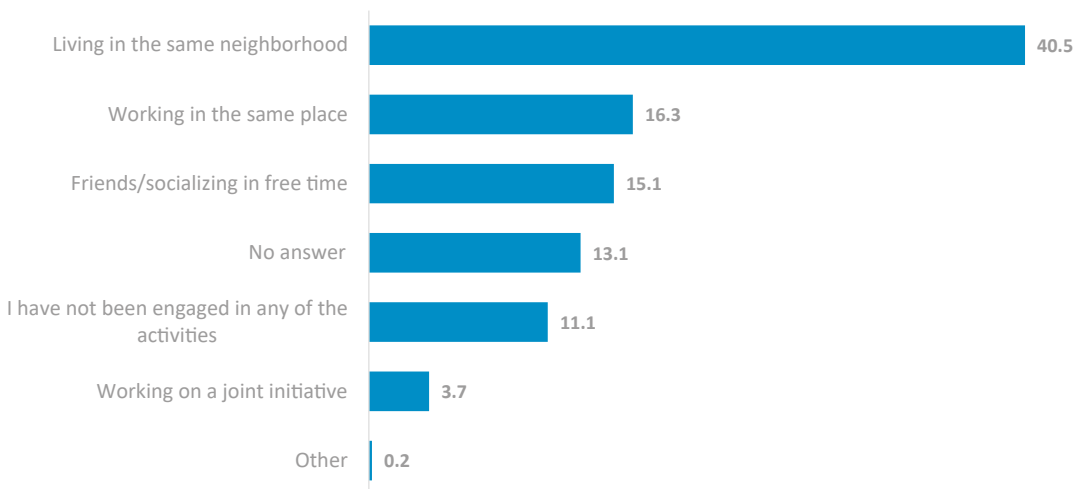
Graph 15 Do you believe that it is possible for individuals (in your LSGU) from different ethnicities to work together to solve a local issue? (By ethnicity, %)

As shown in Graph 16, the percentage of respondents that believe it is possible to work across ethnic divisions to solve community-level issues increased from 36% in the baseline study, to 45% in the midline, and finally to 58.2% in the endline study.



Graph 16 Do you believe that it is possible for individuals from different ethnicities to work together to solve a local issue? (%)

When it comes to experiences with people of other ethnicities in the last three years, living in the same neighborhood stands out as the most frequent answer (40.5%), followed by working in the same place (16.3%), and having friends or socializing with those of another ethnicity (15.1%). See Graph 17:



Graph 17 In the last three years, have you been involved in any of the following activities with people of other ethnicities (%)?

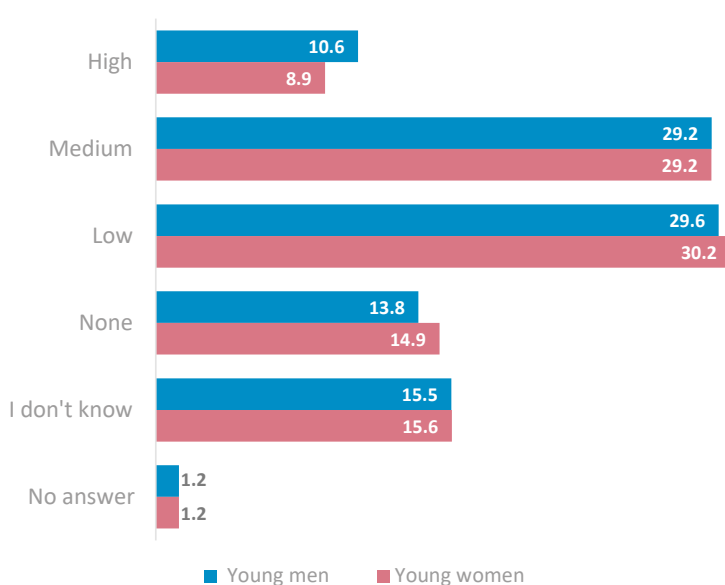
# 5

## YOUTH AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The final section of the study focused on youth and civil society. The ALVED project provided opportunities, such as capacity building, internships, grants, and other forms of support, to empower young people to get involved in their communities. The project also had a strong CSO development component in which capacity building, networking opportunities, and grant funding were provided to local, grassroots CSOs in the three LSGUs.

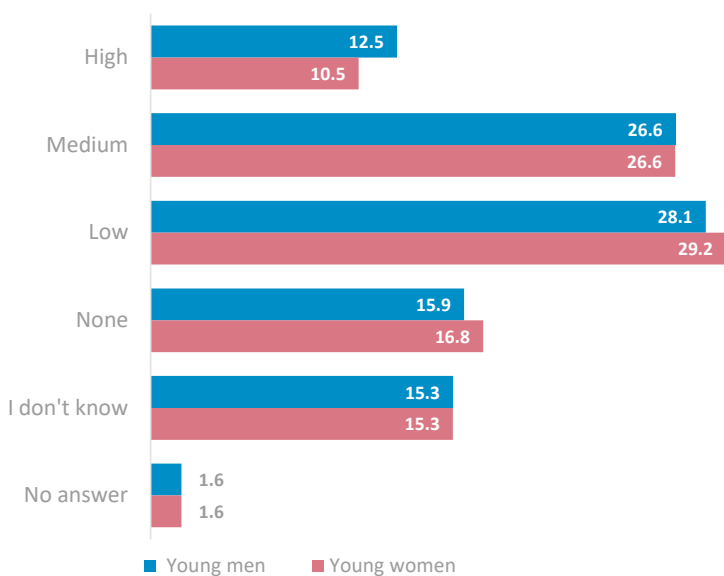
### Perceptions of youth participation

When it comes to opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making at the local level, the opinion of respondents is relatively divided - namely, slightly less than one-third of them believe that these opportunities are at a low level, while around 30% rate them as average, as shown in Graph 18.



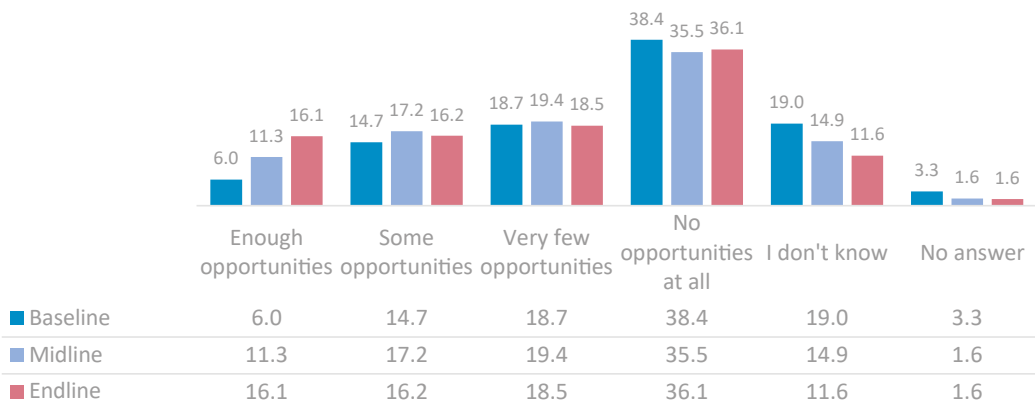
Graph 18 How would you rate the ability/opportunities of young people to participate in local-level decision-making? (%)

Opportunities for young people to contribute to the economy of the LSGU are similarly assessed. Less than a third believe that the opportunities for this are at a low level, while about a quarter of citizens (26.6%) assess the chances of participating in the development of the LSGU’s economy as medium. See Graph 19:



Graph 19 How would you rate the ability/opportunities of young people to contribute to the economy in the LSGU? (%)

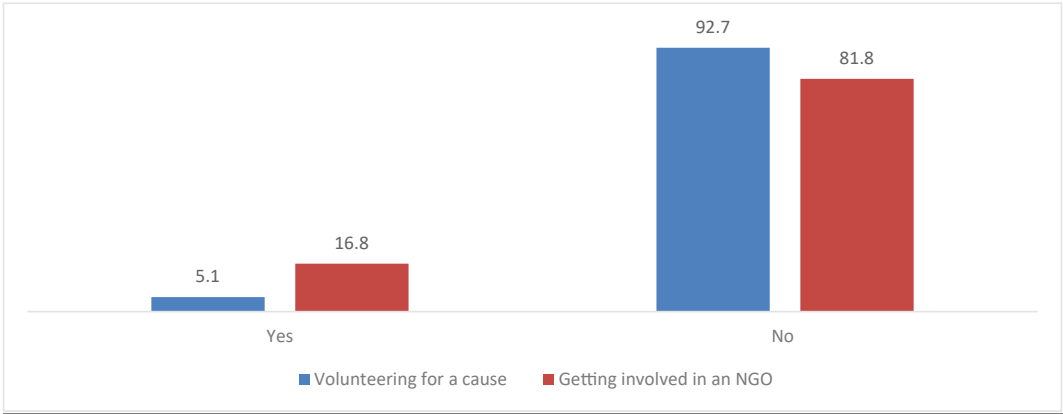
From the baseline study to the endline study, Graph 20 shows an increase in the percentage of respondents who believe that there are opportunities (enough/some) for young people to contribute to the planning of social services in the LSGU.



Graph 20 When it comes to planning social services in the LSGU, how would you rate your opportunities to contribute to such planning? (%)

## Civic engagement

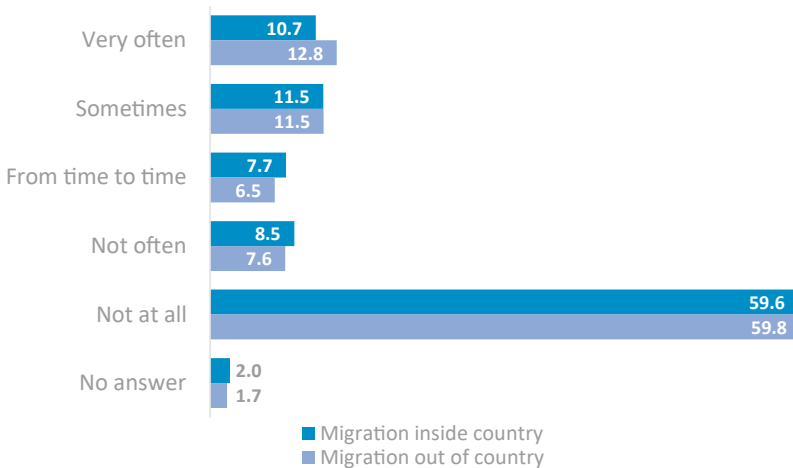
Graph 21 illustrates that over the last three years, 5.1% of respondents have volunteered for a cause, while 16.8% have gotten involved in an NGO. These percentages did not move significantly between research waves.



Graph 21 In the last three years, have you participated in any of the following types of activities? (%)

## Thoughts on emigration

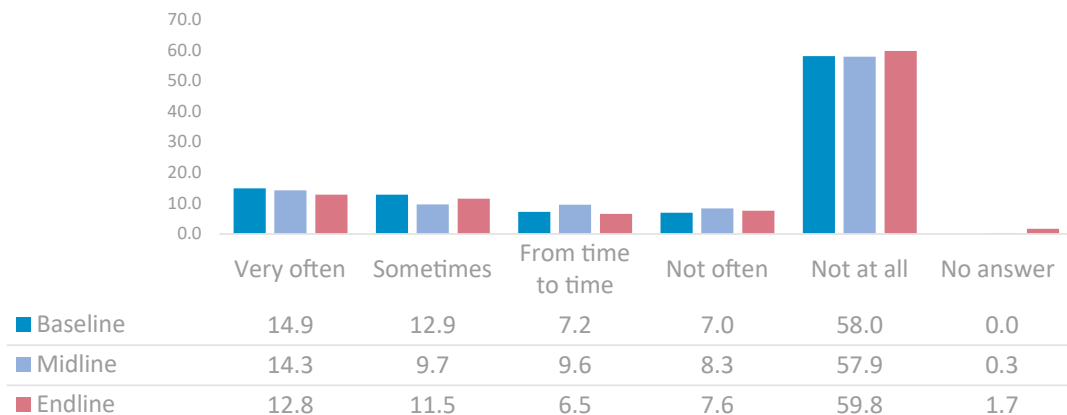
Respondents were asked whether they thought about moving within the country or emigrating abroad. Slightly less than 60% of respondents have not considered emigrating either abroad (59.8%) or moving within Serbia (59.6%), as Graph 22 illustrates.



Graph 22 Have you ever thought of migrating from your LSGU to another part of the country or another country? (%)



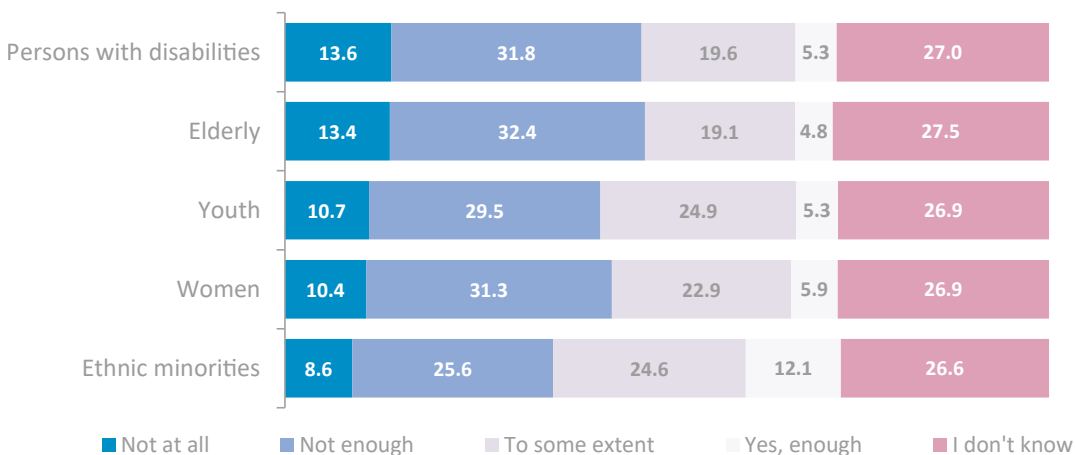
When it comes to emigrating abroad, Graph 23 illustrates that the percentage of respondents who consider this option (very often, sometimes, or from time to time) has dropped from 35% in the baseline study to 30.8% in the endline study.



Graph 23 Have you ever thought of migrating from your LSGU to another country? (%)

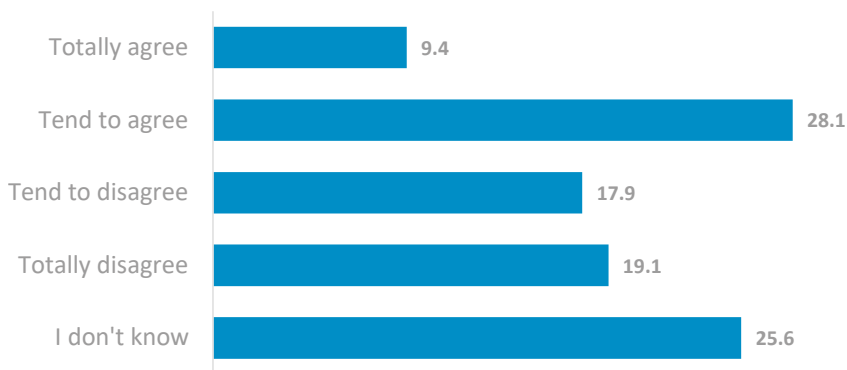
## Perception of CSO support for specific groups

Regarding citizens’ opinions on the support that civil society provides for specific groups of people, 36.7% of respondents believe that civil society actors support (enough/to some extent) ethnic minorities, followed by youth (30.2%) women (28.8%), persons with disabilities (24.9%), and finally the elderly (23.9%) in their LSGUs. See Graph 24.



Graph 24 Do you think CSOs are doing enough to support the following groups of people in your LSGU? (%)

In terms of the effectiveness of citizens and CSOs to monitor government in order to make it accountable to citizens, Graph 25 shows that respondents are relatively divided: 37% agree (totally agree or tend to agree) that this can be an effective way to make government accountable, while the same percentage disagree with this statement.



Graph 25 Do you agree that citizens and civil society organizations can effectively scrutinize the government and make it accountable to citizens? (%)