ALBANIA
Political Engagement 2020
IDM - Institute for Democracy and Mediation
and
NDI - National Democratic Institute in Albania
Objective

- The National Democratic Institute (NDI) commissioned the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) to conduct the second survey of Political Engagement in Albania. The first survey was conducted in 2016.

- The survey assessed the level of citizen engagement in democratic processes – from voting to civic campaigns--and measured changes in the degree of participation since 2016.

- The survey is modelled on the Audit of Political Engagement designed by the United Kingdom’s Hansard Society to measure level of political engagement.

- The survey is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The views expressed in the survey do not necessarily reflect those of NDI or NED.
Core indicators of engagement

- **Knowledge and interest** – How much citizens feel they know about politics and political institutions, and how much they are interested in the issues/institutions.

- **Engagement and participation** – The extent to which citizens are participating in a broad range of political and civic activities/initiatives.

- **Efficacy and satisfaction** – The extent to which citizens believe that political engagement can bring change, and their level of satisfaction with political institutions.

- **Perceptions of parliament, political parties and political processes** – Citizen attitudes toward parliament performance, MP accountability, political party funding, and voter participation.
Methodology

DATA COLLECTION
• June 14 – July 15

METHOD
• Face to face interview and focus groups (4)

POPULATION
• Albanian population aged 18+

SAMPLE FRAME
• Most recent population data from INSTAT (January 2020)

SAMPLE SIZE
• N= 1,536 distributed in 12 regions, based on the ‘Proportional to Size’-method

SAMPLING ERROR
• ±2.5% confidence interval in a 95% confidence level

SAMPLE TYPE
• National representative survey with a stratified sample

STRATIFICATION
• Within each entity the sample was stratified by region and administrative unit
## Demographics of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shkodër</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kukës</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lezhë</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dibër</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiranë</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durrës</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Elbasan</td>
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<td>Fier</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berat</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korçë</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vlorë</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gjirokastër</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
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### 1. Survey Distribution by Gender

- Male: 47%
- Female: 53%

### 2. Survey Distribution by Age Groups

- 18-30: 33%
- 31-45: 30%
- 46-60: 25%
- 61-75: 12%
- Over 76: 1%

### 3. Survey Distribution by Settlement

- Urban: 64%
- Rural: 36%

### 4. Survey Distribution by Education

- Up to Elementary: 23%
- High School: 44%
- Higher Education: 33%

### 5. Survey Distribution by Region

- Shkodër: 7%
- Kukës: 3%
- Lezhë: 5%
- Dibër: 4%
- Tiranë: 31%
- Durrës: 10%
- Elbasan: 10%
- Fier: 10%
- Berat: 4%
- Korçë: 7%
- Vlorë: 7%
- Gjirokastër: 2%
• Albanians feel disconnected from government and politics, with two-thirds expressing dissatisfaction with the work of governing institutions and opposition bodies.

• More than two-thirds say that access to public information is important to them. Citizens want to know who funds electoral campaigns of political parties and candidates and how such funds are spent. Focus group participants believe that such information is kept away from them.

• Compared to 2016, citizens see more opportunities for engagement with civic initiatives than with political parties.

• Among undecided voters or those unlikely to vote (comprising 52% of the sample, 44% say that they are not represented by the political parties, followed by 27% who say that parties would not deliver on their campaign promises.
2020
Key Findings

- Likelihood of voting declined by 21 percent when compared to the 2016 survey, reflecting disillusionment with governing institutions and opposition bodies. Citizens overwhelmingly feel un-represented by political parties.

- While citizen engagement has decreased since 2016, Albanians show more readiness to take action on issues that matter to them.

- Albanians are highly critical of parliamentary transparency in general; 3 out of 10 say that parliament has operated transparently during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Respondents overwhelmingly favor voting for individual MP candidates directly, instead of closed party lists, as a mechanism to diminish party leadership influence and improve parliamentary accountability.
Knowledge and Interest

Core indicator
Knowledge and Interest

- Albanians’ perceived knowledge and interest in politics dropped by 8% since 2016; however, respondents report increased knowledge of and interest in the role of the presidency.

- Youth (18-30 years) report the lowest level of knowledge about politics and, together with female respondents, are least interested in politics.

- Two-thirds of citizens say that access to government information is important to them.

- Two-thirds say it is important to know where political parties get their money, and how they spend it. Focus group respondents believe that lack of transparency on political finance fuels corruption.
Perceived level of knowledge, 2016 vs. 2020

In general, how much do you feel you know about?

‘I know a lot’ or ‘know fairly enough’

Politics in Albania
Local self-government in your municipality/town
Government
Parliament
Role of MPs
Role of the President

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2016 | 2020
---|---
Politics in Albania | 42% | 50%
Local self-government in your municipality/town | 46% | 51%
Government | 39% | 41%
Parliament | 37% | 35%
Role of MPs | 32% | 34%
Role of the President | 28% | 34%
Interest in politics, governing and opposition bodies

How interested are you to know about?
‘very interested’ and ‘fairly interested’

- Local self-government in your municipality/town: 60% (2020), 53% (2016)
- Politics in Albania: 51% (2020), 42% (2016)
- Parliament: 40% (2020), 40% (2016)
- Role of the President: 37% (2020), 31% (2016)
- Role of MPs: 36% (2020), 35% (2016)

NDI | National Democratic Institute
Perceived level of knowledge by age group

Youth (18-30 years) report lowest levels of knowledge about political party programs, parliament, and MPs.
Interest in politics, governing and opposition bodies by age

Youth (18-30 years) report lowest level of interest in political parties and role of MPs

“Politics is governed by a small number of people and there is no space for talented individuals with integrity.” Man, 24, Tirana
Interest in politics, government and political bodies by gender

Women respondents have lower level of interest across all the issues compared to men.
Importance of free access to information in possession of public authorities

“There is a lack of information and transparency. If there was more transparency people would be more interested and involved in politics.”
Woman, 24, Fier
Interest in where political parties get their funding and how they spend it

“The problem is that party funding is huge and hidden. Part of it is done through big public procurement” – Woman, 43, Korca.

“Lack of transparency leaves space for corruption” – Man, 18, Fier.

How important it is for you to know who is funding election campaigns of the political parties and their candidates?

- Very important: 37%
- Important: 30%
- Neutral: 12%
- Slightly important: 8%
- Not important: 13%

How important it is for you to know how political parties and their candidates are spending their money during election campaigns?

- Very important: 35%
- Important: 32%
- Neutral: 11%
- Slightly important: 8%
- Not important: 12%
Political Engagement and Participation

Core indicator
Citizens increasingly look beyond political party avenues to influence government decision-making, such as through CSOs.

There is a consistent decline in party membership since 2016. NGO membership remains low, but stable since 2016.

There is a significant decrease in likelihood to vote since 2016, fueled by distrust in political parties and disconnection from elected representatives.

Citizens employed in the public sector are the only group expressing strong likelihood to vote.

Civic duty comes up as the most common reason for those likely to vote. Lack of representation by the existing parties and distrust in party ability to deliver on promises are main reasons for not voting.

Donating money to a political party is unthinkable for most, driven by a strong belief that parties and the political system are corrupt and unrepresentative.
A 12% drop in political party membership since 2016
If parliamentary election were to be held this week, how likely is it that you would vote? (July 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would vote for sure</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would probably vote</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I probably wouldn’t vote</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t vote, for sure</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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Vote likelihood by employment status – 2020

“I will vote because I consider it a moral obligation and a constitutional right. It is a way to ask for accountability from the person you have voted”. Male, 43 years old, Durres
"I have voted because I believe that my vote could bring change. I believe that protests cannot bring change if they are not accompanied with voting. I don’t believe that involvement in politics can be done only through political parties. There are other ways to be involved, like voluntary work for example." Woman, 21, Berat

Reasons for voting / not voting

I have voted because I believe that my vote could bring change. I believe that protests cannot bring change if they are not accompanied with voting. I don’t believe that involvement in politics can be done only through political parties. There are other ways to be involved, like voluntary work for example.” Woman, 21, Berat

In case you would vote for sure, what is the main reason? (892 respondents out of total sample 1536)

- It is my civic duty to raise my voice by voting in election: 49%
- I trust that elections make difference: 24%
- As a member/volunteer of a political party I have to vote: 11%
- It’s an opportunity for material gains/potential employment: 6%
- Most likely I will be pressured to go and vote by my employer: 3%

In case you wouldn’t vote or undecided, what is the main reason? (856 respondents out of total sample 1536)

- I feel that I am not represented by any of the existing parties: 44%
- I don’t trust any party will fulfil its promises: 27%
- My vote will not bring any difference: 14%
- Parties don’t offer viable programs and policy alternatives: 8%
- Other: 5%
Political/Civic engagement over the past 12 months

A significant drop in most forms of engagement since 2016

Have you done any of the following over the last 12 months?

Comparison 2016 vs. 2020

- Contacted a local councilor or local municipal officer, or the Mayor of your area: 36% in 2016, 25% in 2020
- Participated, as a volunteer, in an activity in your local community: 32% in 2016, 26% in 2020
- Contacted an MP, a Minister or other high-level public official, a high-level political party member: 25% in 2016, 23% in 2020
- Taken an active part in a campaign, demonstration or march organized by political parties: 23% in 2016, 23% in 2020
- Participated in a meeting of the municipality council, taken part in a public consultation: 18% in 2016, 17% in 2020
- Expressed opinion or discussed politics on the Internet and/or social networks: 17% in 2016, 13% in 2020
- Sought information from state organs according to the Law on Free Access to Information: 13% in 2016, 12% in 2020
- Taken an active part in a citizen led campaign, demonstration or march (not organized by a political party): 8% in 2016, 10% in 2020
- Created or signed a petition online or offline: 12% in 2016, 16% in 2020
- Alerted the media (newspaper, radio or TV) about the existence of a problem: 11% in 2016, 16% in 2020
- None of the above: 44% in both 2016 and 2020
Actual engagement vs. willingness to engage - 2020

Over the last 12 months have you done any of the following? Which are the 3 MAIN ACTIONS you would be ready to do if you felt strongly enough about an issue?

- Contacted a local councilor or local municipal officer, or the Mayor of your area
- Expressed opinion or discussed politics on the Internet and/or social networks
- Participated, as a volunteer, in an activity in your local community
- Taken an active part in a citizen led campaign, demonstration or march (not organized by a political party)
- Created or signed a petition online or offline
- Participated in a meeting of the municipality council, taken part in a public consultation
- Contacted an MP, a Minister or other high-level public official, a high-level political party member
- Sought information from state organs according to the Law on Free Access to Information
- Taken an active part in a campaign, demonstration or march organized by political parties
- Alerted the media (newspaper, radio or TV) about the existence of a problem
- None of the above

Real engagement
Potential engagement
Reasons for lack of engagement over the past 12 months

“**What does not motivate me is that the voice of the citizens is not being heard at all.**” Female, 35 years old, Korca

What is the main reason for you not to participate or take action?

- Politicians are just out for themselves: 40%
- I’m not given the opportunity to have an influence: 22%
- Nobody listens to what I have to say: 21%
- I’m not interested in influencing decision making: 9%
- I don’t have enough information: 7%
The less personal the cause, the lower the likelihood to engage.

To what extent, if at all, would you be willing to engage:

- For a cause you believe in but does not relate to you personally
  - To a Great Extent: 37%
  - Somewhat: 35%
  - Very Little: 18%
  - Not at All: 8%

- For an interest you share together with other citizens/your community
  - To a Great Extent: 52%
  - Somewhat: 31%
  - Very Little: 13%
  - Not at All: 4%

- To support family and friends
  - To a Great Extent: 68%
  - Somewhat: 21%
  - Very Little: 7%
  - Not at All: 3%

- Your own personal interest/benefits
  - To a Great Extent: 68%
  - Somewhat: 21%
  - Very Little: 7%
  - Not at All: 4%
Compared to 2016, Albanians are more likely to engage with civil society initiatives through social media and online petitions and less likely to join a party.

**Which of the following actions can help changing the situation you are not happy with at a local or national level?**

- Drawing media attention to a problem: 54% (2020), 58% (2016)
- Taking part in organized citizens’ initiatives through signing petitions or participating in public debates: 48% (2020), 52% (2016)
- Voting in election (both parliamentary/local election): 50% (2020), 51% (2016)
- Engaging with NGOs dealing with politics, legislature, human rights, through internet/social media, online petitions, Facebook…: 22% (2020), 34% (2016)
- Contacting MPs/local councilors: 24% (2020), 31% (2016)
- Participating in parliamentary committee sessions or meetings of the municipal council: 16% (2020)
- Joining a political party: 14% (2020), 20% (2016)
- Taking part in rallies organized by political parties: 13% (2020)
Donating money to political parties

“Political parties spend their money in buying votes”
Man, 45, Dibër

“Funding of parties is directly linked to corrupt business practice. Business that donate have links with political parties and do so for benefiting from public contracts” – Man, 25, Tirana
Efficacy and Satisfaction

Core indicator
Efficacy and Satisfaction

- Sixty to seventy percent of Albanians are dissatisfied with the performance of state and political bodies.

- Citizens feel that they can exert slightly more influence on decision-making at the local rather than at the national level.

- The Electoral Reform Agreement of June 2020 is seen more as a party-protection measure than as a reform addressing the public interest.
Satisfaction with governance

To what extent you are satisfied with the current work of:

- Parliamentary opposition: 71% Satisfied, 19% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 7% Dissatisfied
- Opposition outside of parliament: 69% Satisfied, 20% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 10% Dissatisfied
- President: 61% Satisfied, 26% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 13% Dissatisfied
- Parliament: 60% Satisfied, 25% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 18% Dissatisfied
- Government: 59% Satisfied, 22% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 18% Dissatisfied
Perceived influence on decision making at local and national levels

How much power to influence, if any, do you feel you personally have over decision-making at:

- **At national governance level (government and/or parliament)**
  - No influence at all: 44%
  - Not very much influence: 31%
  - Some influence: 18%
  - A great deal of influence: 3%

- **At local governance level in your area (e.g. decisions of the local municipality council)**
  - No influence at all: 44%
  - Not very much influence: 24%
  - Some influence: 14%
  - A great deal of influence: 4%
Assessment of the June 5th electoral reform agreement

Younger respondents (18-30) were less likely to agree that ‘June 5th Agreement’ represents the interest of citizens and more likely to say that it represents the interest of political parties.

On June 5, 2020 political parties reached an agreement about the electoral reform. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the agreement?

- The agreement reflects only the interests of political parties
  - Agree: 48%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 22%
  - Disagree: 17%
  - Don’t know: 13%

- The agreement is reached to the best interest of Albanian citizens
  - Agree: 17%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 20%
  - Disagree: 49%
  - Don’t know: 13%
Parliament and Elected Representatives

Core indicator
Citizens are highly critical of parliament’s work over the past 12 months. Eighteen (18) percent of respondents consider parliament as “essential to our democracy” in 2020— a 35% drop as compared to 2016.

Citizens are, however, more divided on the performance of parliament during the Covid-19 pandemics.

MPs are seen as caring more about the interests of their parties than those of their constituents.

Albanians want their elected representatives to be educated, connected to their constituency, independent, and honest.

The opportunity to vote directly for individual MPs is overwhelmingly seen as the most effective accountability mechanism.
“In relation to the parliament, the way MPs are identified, elected and behave is not ethical. We cannot speak about integrity. Only rich people and people that have interest relations to politicians are elected. It is uncommon to see politicians with dignity that are involved in the parliament and that promote their values.”

Woman, 35, Korca
Views about the Albanian Parliament (percentage of “agree”) 2020 vs. 2016

- Parliament has held the government to account: 2020 - 38%, 2016 - 34%
- Parliament has debated and made decisions about issues that matter to me: 2020 - 53%, 2016 - 19%
- Parliament has been essential to our democracy: 2020 - 19%, 2016 - 17%
- MPs have represented the interest of ordinary citizens such as myself: 2020 - 14%, 2016 - 14%
- Parliament has been transparent to the public in its activities: 2020 - 17%, 2016 - 19%
- MPs cared more about the interest of political parties than that of citizens: 2020 - 63%, 2016 - 18%
- Parliament has been open to citizens to attend committee and/or plenary meetings: 2020 - 11%, 2016 - 28%
- Parliament is made up of representatives of the society that work in an ethical manner: 2020 - 12%, 2016 - 16%
- MPs have represented the interest of ordinary citizens such as myself: 2020 - 14%, 2016 - 14%
- Parliament has been essential to our democracy: 2020 - 18%, 2016 - 17%
- Parliament has debated and made decisions about issues that matter to me: 2020 - 19%, 2016 - 34%
- Parliament has held the government to account: 2020 - 26%, 2016 - 38%
Performance of parliament during Covid-19

Thirty (33) % of citizens believe that parliament was transparent during the pandemic, while only 17% claim so for normal times.

To which extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the role of Parliament during the Covid-19?

- Parliament’s response to gather online was swift and timely to respond to the decision-making situation: Agree 37%, Neither agree nor disagree 28%, Disagree 28%
- Was transparent about the decisions it made: Agree 37%, Neither agree nor disagree 33%, Disagree 27%
- Has effectively scrutinized the work of the government: Agree 39%, Neither agree nor disagree 33%, Disagree 23%
- Made it easier for me to access information on parliamentary work: Agree 42%, Neither agree nor disagree 29%, Disagree 24%
Most desirable qualities of an MP

Which are the 3 most important qualities you believe an MP should have?

- To be well educated: 60%
- To be close to the problems of people: 55%
- To come from the area where s/he is competing in elections: 50%
- To be independent-minded: 44%
- To be honest and responsible: 36%
- To be a ‘fresh face’ and have new vision/mentality: 24%
- To have the ability to compromise with the people he/she disagrees with for the sake of public interest: 12%
- To have experience in politics: 7%
- To be loyal to the party he or she represents: 6%
- To have business experience: 6%
Mechanisms to increase MPs accountability and quality

- Voting for individual MP candidates directly, rather than closed party lists, is overwhelmingly viewed as most likely mechanism to improve both the accountability and the overall quality of elected MPs.

- Younger respondents are particularly resistant to party headquarters controlling the selection of candidates for electoral lists and deciding how they are ranked on those lists.

- Citizens lack sufficient information on access to parliament and the possibility of participating in committee sessions.

- Survey respondents prefer to meet MPs in open public meetings rather than in their party offices or Parliament.
Improving MP accountability

In your opinion, to what extent would the following measures increase public accountability of MPs?

- Providing opportunity to voters to choose among the individual candidates on party lists, instead of voting for party closed-lists:
  - To a Great Extent: 36%
  - Somewhat: 32%
  - Very Little: 27%
  - Not at All: 24%
  - Don’t know: 6%

- Improving conditions for more regular meetings with MPs at their local areas:
  - To a Great Extent: 38%
  - Somewhat: 33%
  - Very Little: 27%
  - Not at All: 18%
  - Don’t know: 10%

- Publishing detailed information on Parliament’s website about the activities of each MP (e.g. amendments, voting, questions, discussion in plenary sessions, legislative initiatives, etc.):
  - To a Great Extent: 33%
  - Somewhat: 27%
  - Very Little: 22%
  - Not at All: 12%
  - Don’t know: 6%

- Publishing detailed profile of MPs on Parliament’s website:
  - To a Great Extent: 33%
  - Somewhat: 26%
  - Very Little: 12%
  - Not at All: 6%
  - Don’t know: 5%
Improving quality of MPs

“[I see open lists as a filter. I consider it a tight process, because both parties will try to “recruit” good candidates. People are tired and it is ever more difficult to approach the grey electorate]” Man, 45, Dibra

In your opinion, would the following measures improve the quality of profile of elected MPs?

- MPs are elected directly from citizens based on number of votes they receive and not based on ranking in the list
  - To a Great Extent: 11%
  - Somewhat: 12%
  - Very Little: 31%
  - Not at All: 32%
  - Don’t know: 26%

- Members of political parties through internal party elections
  - To a Great Extent: 8%
  - Somewhat: 11%
  - Very Little: 26%
  - Not at All: 23%
  - Don’t know: 32%

- Central structures of political parties based on a prior voting by their members
  - To a Great Extent: 9%
  - Somewhat: 11%
  - Very Little: 20%
  - Not at All: 30%
  - Don’t know: 30%

- Central structures of political parties (Chairman & Party Chairmanship or Presidency) independently (without consulting with the members)
  - To a Great Extent: 7%
  - Somewhat: 8%
  - Very Little: 20%
  - Not at All: 30%
  - Don’t know: 34%