

YOUNG PEOPLE IN SERBIA 2015

SITUATION, PERCEPTIONS, BELIEFS AND ASPIRATIONS

briefing



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Situation, perceptions, beliefs and aspirations

BRIEFING

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ABOUT RESEARCH

The study ***Young people in Serbia 2015 - Situation, perceptions, beliefs and aspirations*** is part of an international project sponsored by Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Shell Youth Study, which has been carried out since 1953, and in the region of Southeast Europe since 2011. The research was conducted during 2015 in Serbia by SeConS, the Development Initiative Group. The authors of the research and study, Smiljka Tomanović and Dragan Stanojević, in consultation with Professor Klaus Hurrelmann, adjusted the original survey methodology to the Serbian national context, keeping in mind data comparability. They combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey data was collected from a national representative sample of 1186 respondents aged between 15 and 29, of which 751 in urban and 435 in rural areas, while in-depth interviews were made with 10 young people.



THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

- ▶ **Young people are financially dependent on parents, but those with higher education qualifications are financially more independent.** The data shows that the degree of financial dependency of young people in Serbia is high, even after graduation (Figure 1). Young university graduates are more likely to be financially independent of their parents or partners than young people with secondary or elementary school diploma.

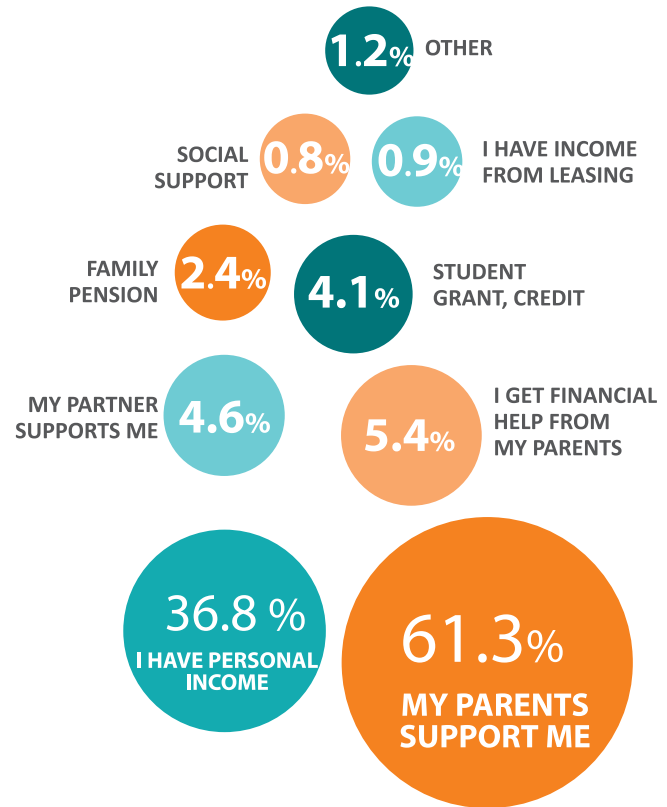


Figure 1: The income and financial (non) autonomy of young people (in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

► **Young people become independent late.** Serbia belongs to the so-called slow transition to adulthood countries, where young people stay longer in the parental home (Figure 2). As many as four out of five young people aged between 16 and 29 live with their parents. The causes of high level of residential

dependency are insufficient personal or family material resources, lack of institutional support to young people, but also the culture of living together, very typical for Mediterranean societies.

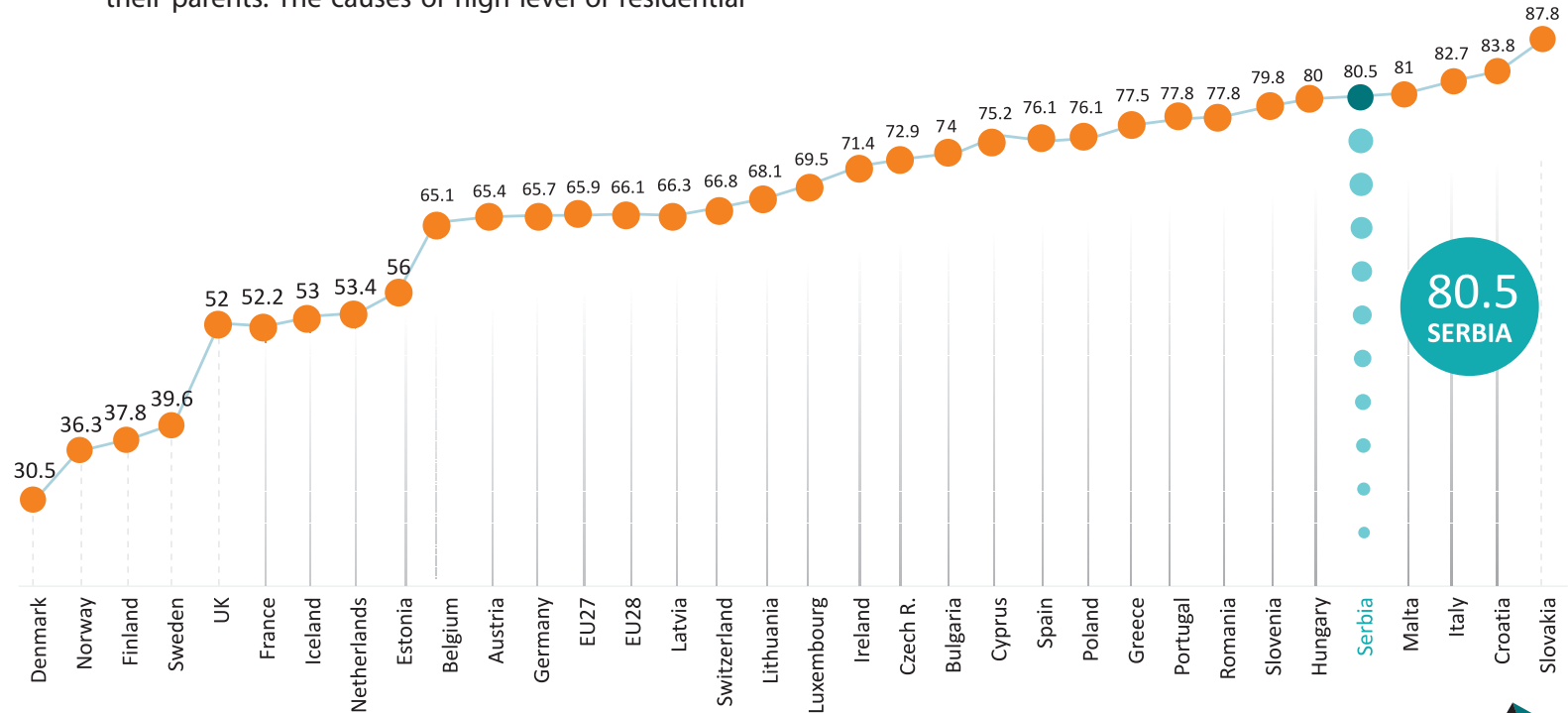


Figure 2: The share of young people 16 – 29 years old living with parents (in %)

Source: Eurostat, 2013.

- ▶ **The life chances of young people are significantly determined by the position of their parents.** The socio-economic position of young people is significantly conditioned by the resources of the family of origin. The material status, education and contacts of the parents determine the possibilities of a young person for acquiring education, and indirectly his/her position in the labour market, or in other words his/her working and professional status. In this way, the social inequalities of parent families reproduce from generation into generation.



I currently live with my parents, they sometimes support me, and I sometimes help. In fact, we all help in the house. We eat healthy. ... We've always been fine. If we don't have something today, we'll have it tomorrow. That's the way it is with us. Families should get on well with each other and not quarrel.

(female, 20, Belgrade, secondary school, employed as a shop assistant in a Chinese store)

Interviewer: How would you describe your financial situation?

Respondent: Well, in the middle. It isn't so good nor so bad. Average. Dad works at a school, he's a janitor. In fact, he does a little agricultural work at home and I think it's really difficult for him. He works very hard and doesn't earn as much as he should because he does one job in the morning and another in the afternoon. It's too much. And he does it for me and my sisters. So I don't know ... I could work and I suppose I should, but because of my university and my obligations, it's simply not possible. It's a huge problem because of the transport-having to travel from the village to the town.

Interviewer: What about your mum?

Respondent: She works in a factory. She works and at home she helps my dad, but it's not enough.

(female, student, 22, a medium-sized town)



YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

- ▶ **Young people do not have equal access to education.** A young person whose parents completed only primary school are 4.2 times less likely to graduate from secondary school than a young person whose parents completed secondary school, and 69 times less likely to complete college or university compared to a child with higher educated parents. Young people whose parents completed secondary school are 3.5 times less likely to complete school or university, compared to young people whose parents have higher education.
- ▶ **Young people do not have the opportunity to combine education and work.** The Serbian education system is inflexible in as much as it does not allow to combine education with other life spheres – work, parenting, etc, which hinders the individualisation of the life trajectories of young people and makes them largely dependent on their parents. Only 7 per cent of young people study and work; 12 per cent of young parents study, but with postponements (all aged over 25-years).

The biggest complaint about the education system made by young people is the lack of coordination between the education and work system, i.e. acquiring professional qualifications and practical skills.

Interviewer: Do you think school prepares you sufficiently well for work?

Respondent: Essentially, yes. Especially when it comes to law only practical work is missing, because we learn a lot of theory and there is little practical work. I think much more practical training could be introduced. I heard a lot of universities, especially those with natural sciences, have a lot of practical work.

(Male, legal intern, 24, small town)



WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

► **Every second active young person does not have a job.** Due to high employment and temporary (often illegal) employment, the working status of young people in Serbia is very risky. (Figure 3 and 5).

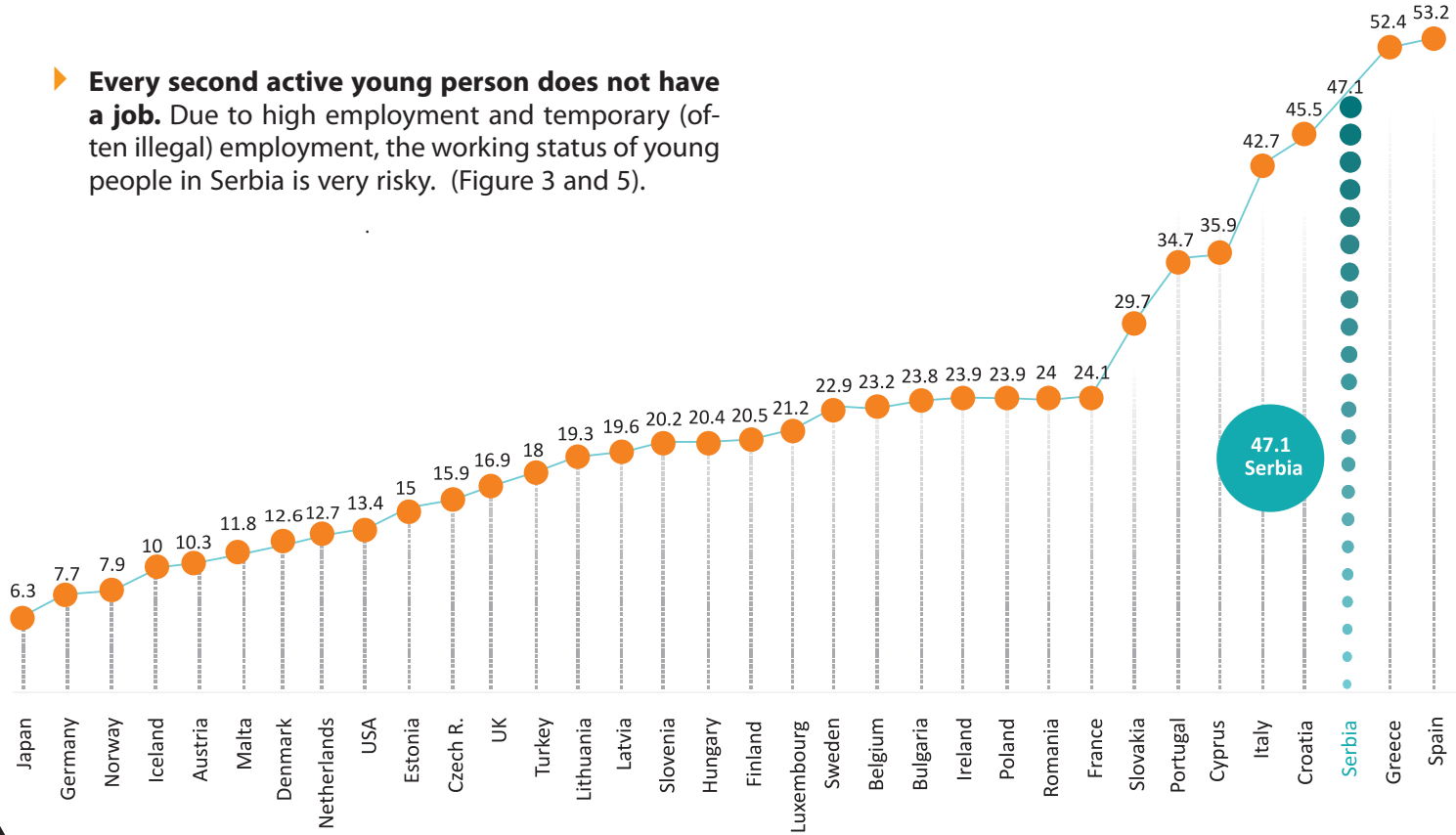
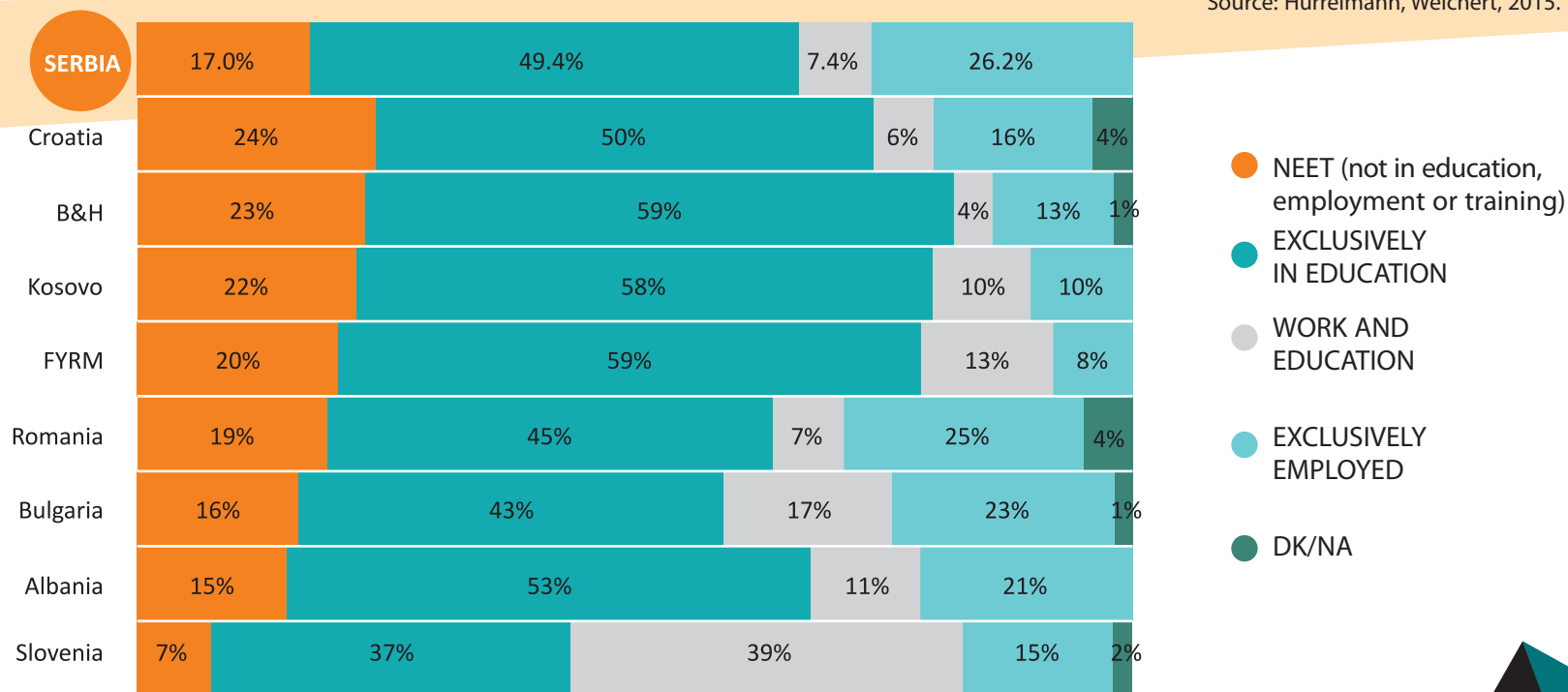


Figure 3: The unemployment rate in the age group (in %)

Source: Eurostat 2014.

According to the schedule of activity options, Serbia is most similar to the countries in the region, where a small number of young people combine school and work, more are employed than unemployed (NEET), and most respondents are in education (secondary and university) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Comparison of activity status in countries in the region (age 16-25, in %)
 Source: Hurrelmann, Weichert, 2015.



► **Among employed respondents there is a trend of over exploitation at work.** A large number of young people said that the number of working hours per week, whether they are stable or temporarily employed, or work and attend school, is more than 40, even 50. It is particularly complex and unfavourably working situation for young people who work and attend school, because less than half of them work less hours than the full-time hours (Figure 5).

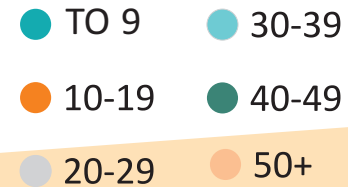


Figure 5: The number of working hours per week by category of employees (in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

Respondent: I started to work and had clients just like the other beautician. I worked three months, a little more than three months. And she called me and said that an inspector was coming and that the following day I was out of a job and she couldn't pay me, she didn't have the funds.

Interviewer: You weren't legally on the payroll?

Respondent: No, I wasn't and I didn't get a single penny.

Interviewer: You weren't paid for three months?

Respondent: No, No. She called me one evening to tell me that an inspector was coming and that she had no money to pay me. Surely she knew three months earlier whether or not she was in a position to pay a worker. Today, that's the way it is when it comes to certain jobs like a hairdresser, beautician, manicurist, they are the worst paid because there are so many. Wherever you go you see hair salons or beauty salons.

(female, 22, hairdresser and beautician, unemployed, works unregistered from home, large town)

Interviewer: Generally speaking, how do people get jobs in Serbia?

Respondent: Well, with difficulty. It's about connections, who know who. The chances are small of getting a job because of your expertise or knowledge. And those who are truly expert and stand out at university, they are immediately grabbed by foreign universities or by foreign companies, so they are guaranteed employment.

(male, 24, university education, intern in his father's law firm, small town)



LEISURE TIME

- ▶ **Young people spend most of their free time listening to music.** Like their peers in the region, young people in Serbia spend most of their free time socializing with friends, watching movies and doing sports activities, while reading is the least practiced.
- ▶ **Reality shows have become less popular.** The most watched content is the news, series, sports, quizzes, foreign music, very rarely interested in shows with religious content or political debates.
- ▶ **Almost half of young people consume alcohol.** Only one in six of young people do not consume alcohol at all. The analysis also confirmed connection between all forms of risky behaviour.



YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY

- ▶ **Parental family is a very important source of emotional – psychological support to respondents.** The analysis shows that in families where parents have lower levels of education, fathers are the most influential persons, while in those with higher educational level – the most prominent persons for young people are the mothers.
- ▶ **Young people are independent in making decisions, especially if they are residentially independent.**
- ▶ **Young people expressed traditionalism in their comprehension of family life.** They see themselves in the future almost exclusively as married and with children, while cohabitations and living alone are significantly less accepted.

Interviewer: Who do you live with?

Respondent: With my parents, grandmother and grandfather and my older sister.

Interviewer: Why are you still living with your parents?

Respondent: Well, it's all about finances. I don't know...

Interviewer: You think that if you had more money...?

Respondent: Well, probably if I was working, but I still haven't finished university, but I would prefer to be independent, to have my own flat, to have peace and quiet, I mean I do, but there are always conflicts, different generations and everybody has their own opinion, but it's ok.

Interviewer: Do you feel independent regarding them?

Respondent: Yes and no. I mean, they still provide for me and I'm dependent on them, but I make my own decisions about many things.

(Female student, 22, medium-sized town)

Respondent: Cohabitation without children is maybe, emm, let's say, preparation or training for future marriage... Living with someone and functioning together is very important, but if I have, if they have children and live outside of wedlock, maybe... The question is, how healthy an environment it is for children, again, I don't know...

Interviewer: What do mean by healthy, unhealthy?

Respondent: In the way that it will always be in the back of the children's minds that their parents are married, let's say they are independent... I don't know how much the family is a unit, a team. If there is a split, I mean...I'm more for marriage, for marriage as a partnership... That's what I wanted to say...

Interviewer: You think that when it's legalised and when the children arrive, then...

Respondent: Yes, it has more strength than if it isn't legalized, that's more from a psychological point of view...

(male, student of economy at a private university, 24, Belgrade)

YOUNG PEOPLE AND RELIGION

- ▶ **Almost all respondents belong to a religion.** Only 6 per cent of young people declare themselves atheist and agnostic. Strong religious identification is primarily associated with ethnic identity, which, however, is not accompanied by the adoption of religious dogmas and practices.

Interviewer: Would you describe yourself as a religious person?

Respondent: Well, I am. I mean, nothing too excessive.

Interviewer: Why?

I don't know. I can't say I don't believe in God. But then, I'm not the kind to visit churches and monasteries all the time. I'm somewhere in the middle. (female, 27, college, employed on contract, middle-sized town)

Well, I believe in God. I can't say I go to church every day and that nonsense, no one does that. There is some higher power. I'm not competent to talk about it.

(male, 24, secondary school, unemployed, from a large town)

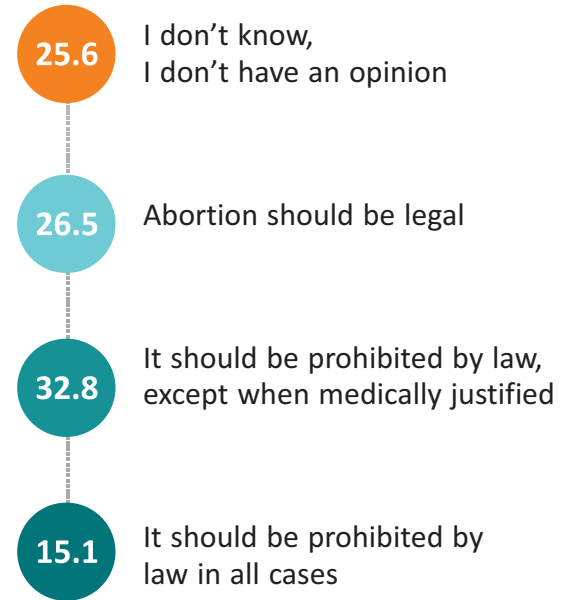


ATTITUDES AND VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- ▶ **A half of young people believe abortion should be banned.** A quarter of young people do not have a formed opinion on this subject. The attitude towards abortion indicates rather traditional values of respondents. (Figure 6). More conservative are young people from rural areas, in central Serbia, with lower levels of educational attainment, those who identify with one of the religions, as well as younger respondents.

Figure 6: Attitudes towards abortion (in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“



- ▶ **Young people emphasize individualistic values.** They mainly emphasize personal dignity, but also highly appreciate tolerance (Figure 7).

- ▶ **Young people show a high degree of intolerance.** The largest social distance, expressed through the level of acceptance if certain category of people moved into their neighbourhood, is shown towards homosexuals, then asylum seekers, people from Croatia and Roma. Every sixth young person would not be happy if a family from the USA or China moved into their neighbourhood, and two out of five young persons would not be happy if a homosexual couple moved into their neighbourhood.

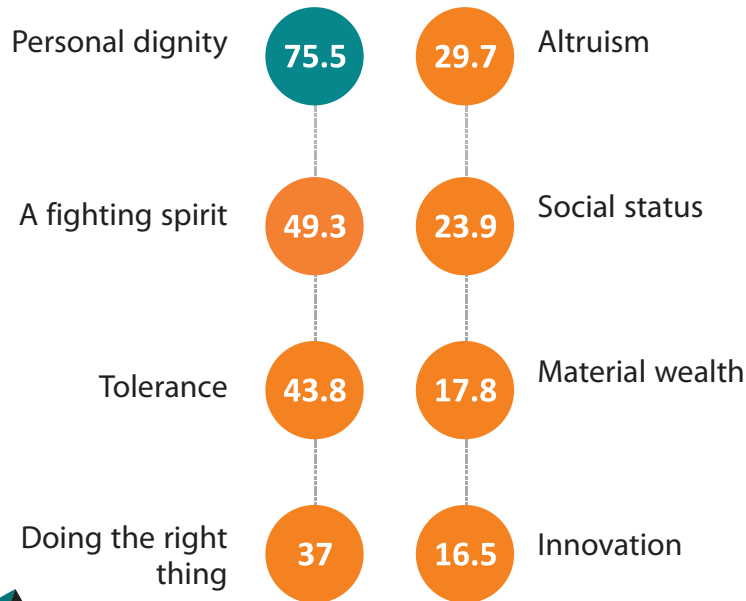


Figure 7: Desired personal traits (in %)
Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

Interviewer: And would you mind gay people, the LGBT population?

Respondent: I think I wouldn't, because...well this is Serbia... I mean, there would always be problems with them, they would always have some people coming over, there would always be problems, it would be chaotic. At least I think so. This environment would simply never accept them. I honestly don't mind, they can do what they want in the privacy of their own home. But I think they wouldn't be accepted in this area and that it would be a serious problem. People would mistreat them. And yet here we all are in the same neighbourhood.

(female, secondary school student,
17, suburb of Belgrade)

- ▶ **Most of young people never felt discriminated, while the most common grounds for discrimination are material status, gender and place of origin.** Young people from households with the lowest material standard are particularly at risk of discrimination. They feel the most discriminated on several grounds, including education and religion.

- ▶ **Subjective reality with young people is positive.** Despite unfavourable objective position, it is recognized through the perception of a future, satisfaction with life, a sense of control and achievement.



YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICS

- ▶ **Unemployment and increasing poverty are recognized as the most serious problems in Serbian society** (Figure 8).

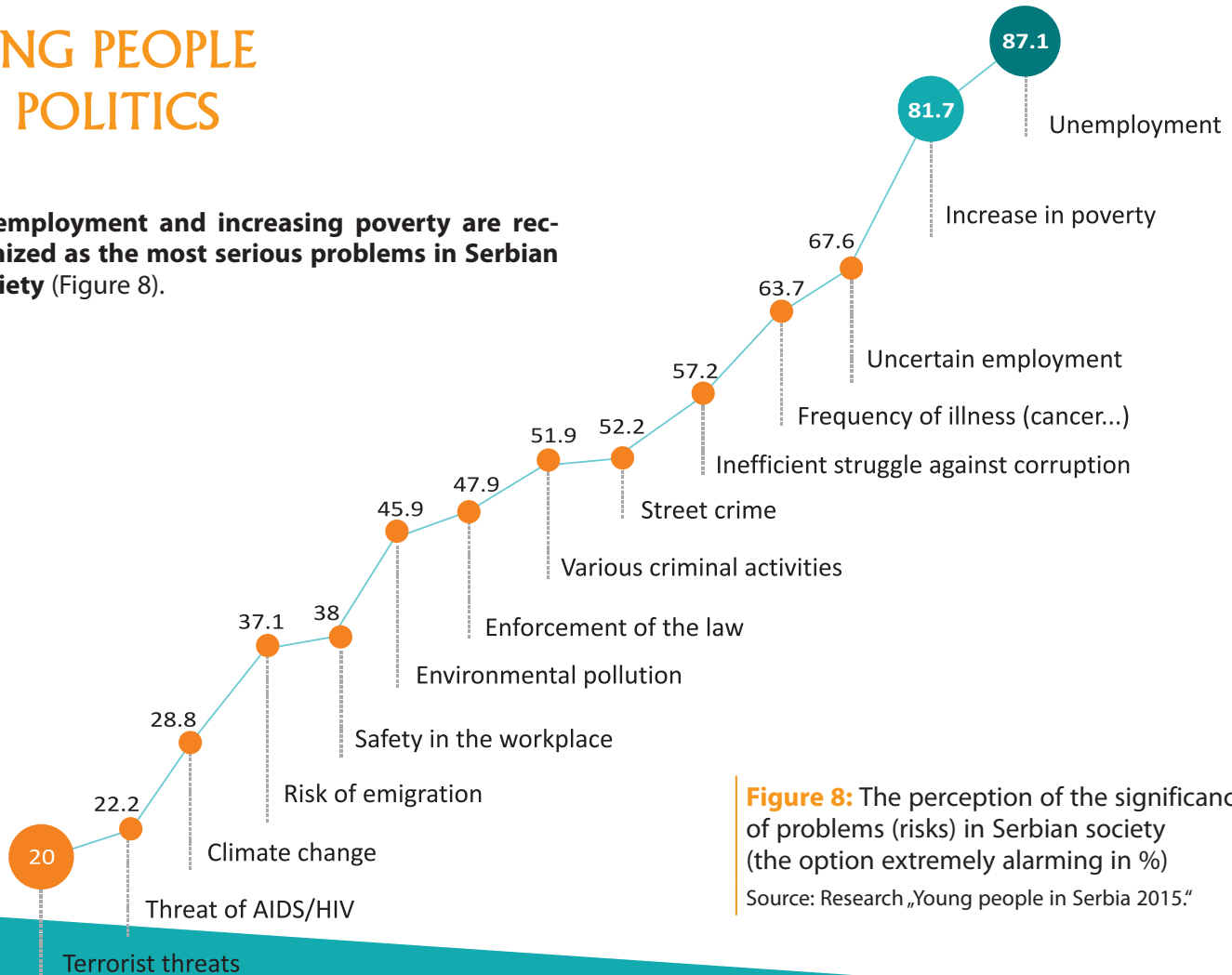


Figure 8: The perception of the significance of problems (risks) in Serbian society (the option extremely alarming in %)
Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

► **Low level of trust in institutions.** Young people trust most the institution of force and religious organisations, and the least, the institutions and organisations that are directly involved in the execution of power – parliament, government and political parties. From this comes their withdrawal from and even resistance to the politics. (Figure 9).

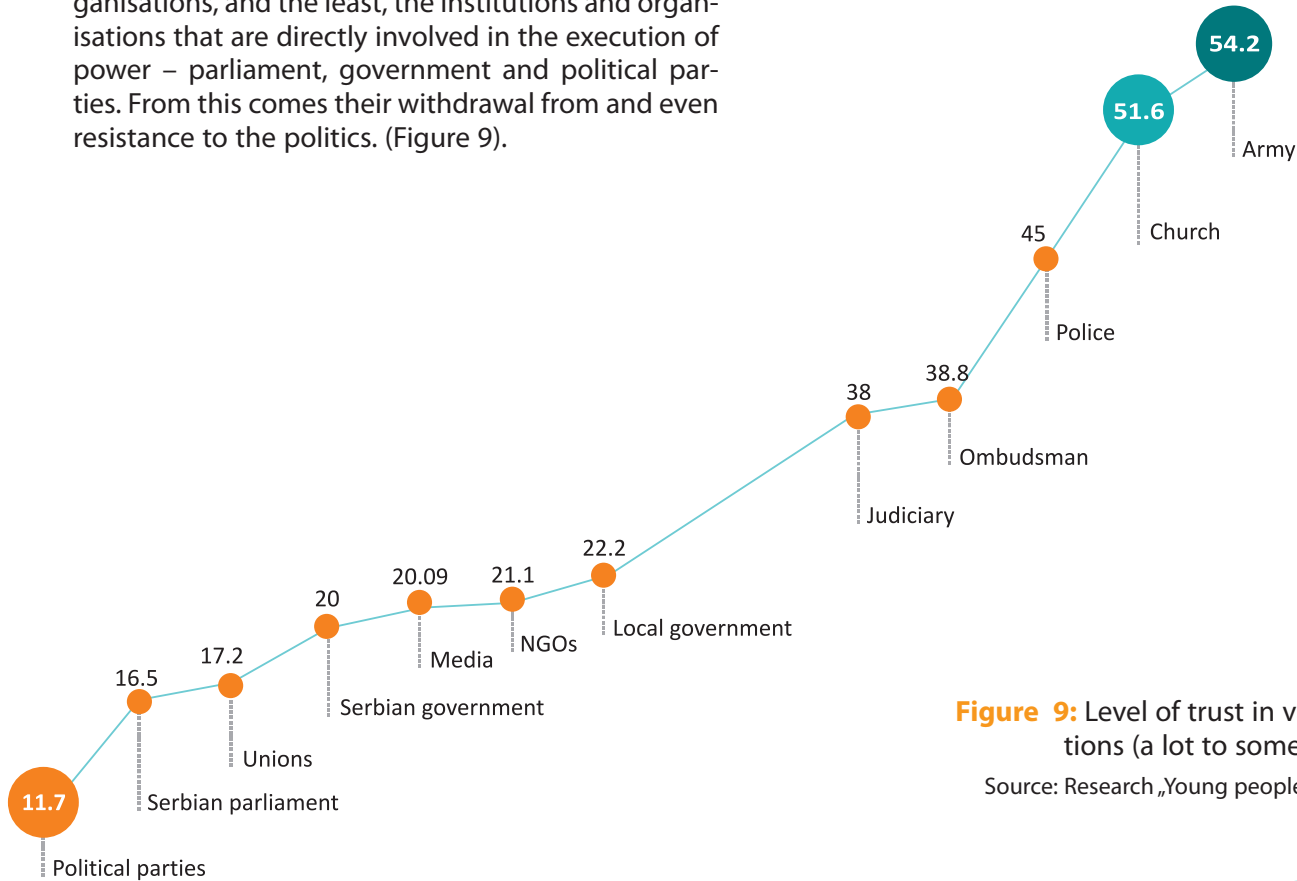


Figure 9: Level of trust in various institutions (a lot to some extent, in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

Interviewer: Why do people join a party in Serbia?

Respondent: Well, only to line their own pockets.

Interviewer: Do you think that t any ideologies exist that they agree about?

Respondent: No, no, they don't care about Serbia and whether it progresses.

(male, 24, secondary school, unemployed, large town)

▶ **Young people trust the most family and friends**

Honestly, I have a certain circle of people whom I trust, and I don't trust the others. Basically, there are a lot more people whom I don't trust.

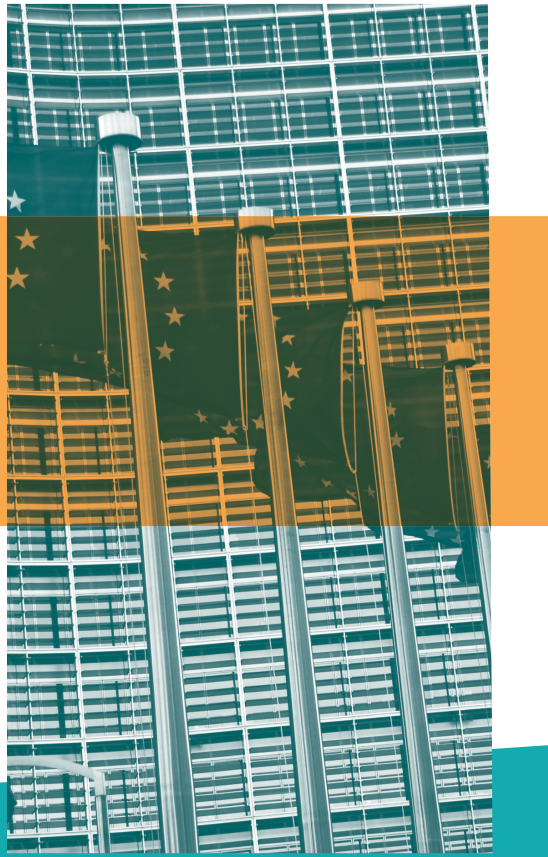
(male awyer, 24, intern in a law firm, small town)

- ▶ **Personal trust and mistrust in institutions limit social cohesion.** Young people in Serbia show potential for solidarity and civic engagement, which was expressed in practice during the flooding in 2014. However, personal trust without trust in institution atomizes young people or connects them in informal groups and networks.



ACCESSION TO THE EU

► **Most young people express reservations towards Serbia's accession process to the EU.** Data shows pragmatic understanding of the necessity to join (Figure 10).



- I AGREE COMPLETELY
- I MOSTLY AGREE
- I MOSTLY DON'T AGREE
- I DON'T AGREE AT ALL
- I DON'T KNOW

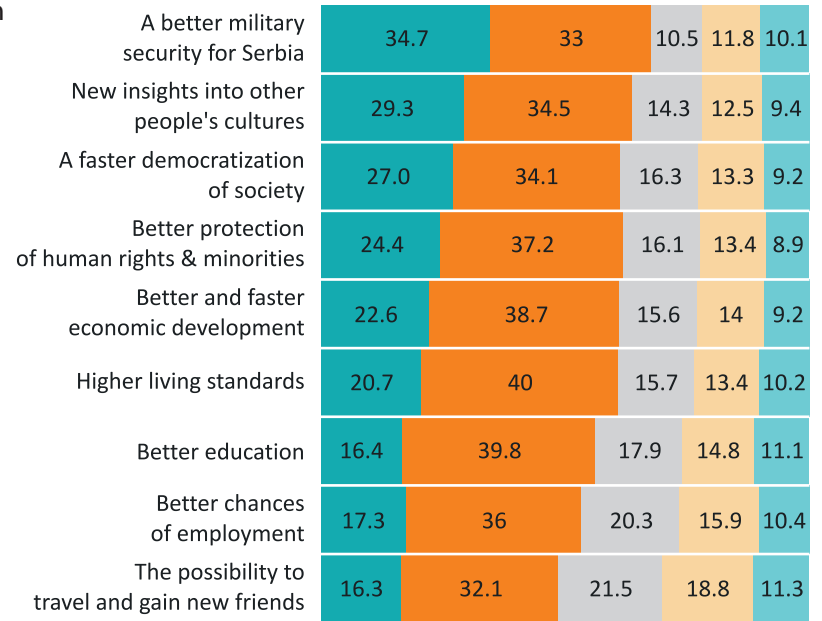


Figure 10: Why and to what extent is entry into the EU welcomed? (in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

It would be great if the borders were open so that we could go and work abroad and not need visas and such like. (male, unemployed, secondary school, 20, small town)

Ok, the European Union gives us certain standards, but then again they ask for things that we aren't ready to do, for example, they raise prices in Serbia...Then they impose their own standards that we have to accept, for instance, gay marriage and that's meant to be normal for us. But you can't because people aren't used to that, we need a lot more time for people to accept it. There needs to be more people who will talk to us about the European Union and tell us that what they offer is good, and to listen to the things that aren't so good, to find some kind of compromise with the European Union. But, you can't. It doesn't function like that. It's too quick, they do things too quickly, too quickly they impose some standards that we can't fulfil.

(female secondary school student, 17,
a suburb of Belgrade)



LEAVE OR STAY?

- ▶ **The number of young people who want to leave the country has decreased.** (Figure 11). The motivation of young people from Serbia to leave the country is significantly weaker than the motivation of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, somewhat stronger than young people from Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Croatia. (Hurrelmann, Weichert, 2015: 118). This shows declining desire to emigrate as approaching the EU.

Of the total number of young people, only around a fifth took concrete action towards potential emigration - contacted friends/relatives, universities, potential employers, the embassy – because emigration requires resources. Analysis of the characteristics of those young people who have taken some steps to prepare for potential emigration shows differences in relation to those young people who have only expressed a desire to leave: they are predominantly from towns and mostly from the Belgrade region, aged between 20 and 24, are not married or in cohabitation, come from families in which parents have higher education, and they themselves have high personal income.

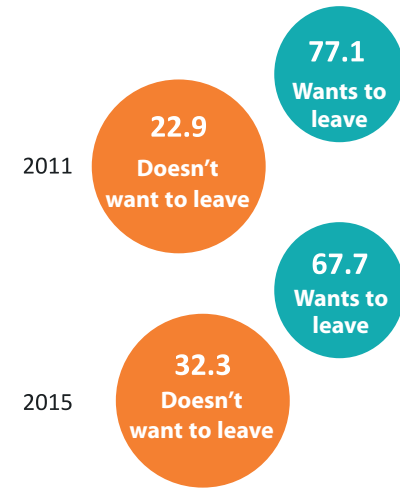


Figure 11: The desire of young people to leave the country – compared with studies from 2015 and 2011 (in %)

Source: Research „Young people in Serbia 2015.“

SeConS

development initiative group

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