



## **Research Report**

# **Perceptions, attitudes and values of the population from the left bank of Dniester river**

**Survey undertaken for the Black Sea University Foundation (FUNM)  
by  
CBS - AXA Sociological Investigation and Marketing Centre**

**Part I**

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*Note: The use of terminology such as "legislation", "law", "institutions", "authorities", "governing bodies", "the Moldovan Dniester Republic" and other similar terms in this study is not the recognition by the authors of these regulatory acts, or de facto authorities and institutions mentioned in the text.*



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## Introduction

### 1.1. Overview of the study

The research report is undertaken in the project *A Demystified Transnistria. Giving the Public Opinion a Voice* implemented by the **Black Sea University Foundation** with the financial support of the **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation**. The collection and processing of the data was conducted by the CBS - AXA Sociological Investigation and Marketing Centre. The deep analysis and interpretation of the data was carried out by the Black Sea University Foundation's team of experts based on the data processed and made available by CBS-AXA. All opinions expressed in this report belong to the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Black Sea University Foundation, the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation or CBS-AXA.

The **general objective** of the project was "enhancing the mutual understanding of the population on the two banks of the Dniester River for positive changes and social cooperation based on the real and actual needs of the population in the studied regions".

The **specific objective** pivots around "creating a social radiography of the actual state of the Transnistrian region by measuring the local public opinion and generating data and research studies that could be used both in the analysis of the Transnistrian issue in particular, as well as in a comparative perspective with the data of the Public Opinion Barometer in the Republic of Moldova and other surveys of interest for researchers".

The results of the survey are foreseen to have a direct impact on the future social and political processes due to the Transnistrian issue, and contribute to:

- reducing the scientific knowledge deficit of the Transnistrian public opinion by providing quantitative and qualitative data for different groups of experts, analysts and decision makers to assess the current situation of the Transnistrian region;
- the demystification of social constructs created once the Transnistrian conflict took place, that have been deliberately maintained and fuelled over time by certain public actors in both regions and conflict manipulation speeches by providing verifiable and scientifically credible data;
- co-interest and stimulation of young people from both sides of the Dniester to engage more actively in dialogue and public debates in order to produce new ideas and approaches regarding the peaceful and prosperous coexistence of the two banks of the Dniester.

Also, the project aims indirectly towards:

- increasing the quality and sustainability of public projects and policies directed to the inhabitants of the left bank of the Dniester River and encouraging the public institutions with attributions in solving the Transnistrian conflict to produce and



publish periodical studies and reports informing the public about the social, cultural and economic realities of the Transnistrian region;

- solidification of the academic and expertise framework dedicated to the analysis of the Transnistrian problem in the Romanian public area;

## 1.2. Context

The term "Transnistria" or "localities on the left bank of the Dniester", according to the official name of this territory in the governmental documents of the Republic of Moldova, refers to the territory established in 1990 as an internationally unrecognized region with administrative headquarters in the capital city of Tiraspol. Transnistria is not recognized by any other state, and the Republic of Moldova continues to claim its sovereignty over this territory. In fact, the control held in the region by the institutions of the Republic of Moldova is little to none, as well as its political presence in the public life of Transnistria.

The surface of this territory, according to the legislative framework of the Republic of Moldova, is about 3 363 km<sup>2</sup> and includes settlements on the left bank of the Dniester River as well as on its right: Tighina (Bender), including Proteagailova village, Gîsca and Ghițcani communes (located West of the Dniester), Camenca, Dubăsari, Grigoriopol, Rîbnița, Slobozia and the town of Tiraspol. In total, according to Law no 764/2001 (Annex 5) in the Republic of Moldova which refers to the administrative and territorial Units left of the Dniester which can be assigned special autonomy form and conditions, Transnistria is formed by 1 city, 9 towns, 69 villages (communes), 135 localities in the structure of the villages (communes), a total of 147 localities. In turn, the authorities in the Republic of Moldova have control over six communes beyond the Dniester: Cocieri, Moldovata Nouă, Corjova, Coșnița, Pârâta and Dorotcaia (Filip, 2011). The official administrative-territorial delimitation does not correspond to the division which is found in the official documents of the self-proclaimed Transnistrian Moldovan Republic; according to the 2003 statistical yearbook, they stated that Transnistria comprises 151 localities and about 4 160 km<sup>2</sup>, the number of localities gradually increasing year by year.

According to the preliminary data of the Transnistrian population census carried out by the unrecognized authorities in Transnistria in 2015, the total population of Transnistria is 475,373 people and the total population at the end of 2017 would be 469,000 after estimates made according to the latest Census of 2015 (the Statistical Yearbook of the MMR Statistics Service, 2017). But these data are purely estimative and indicative; in fact, the latest population census data is not available at the moment.

Today, one year before the unrecognized authorities of the Transnistrian region are preparing for the 30th anniversary of the formation of the "Transnistrian Moldovan Republic", the Transnistrian issue has become, on the public agenda of the Republic of Moldova, rather a



political issue than one of national and societal interest. According to the surveys conducted in the Republic of Moldova, the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict positions itself at the end of the priority needs of the population with only 4.4% of the respondents of the most recent Public Opinion Barometer considering that the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict is one of the most important problems of the state (BOP, 2019).

What are the priorities of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region, however, is harder to gauge; the lack of research data on the preferences of the inhabitants on the left bank of the Dniester allows us only to vaguely intuit or assume that things are in one way or another beyond the Dniester.

This topic is not touched in studies or researches that reflect more clearly the opinion and the current state of affairs on the other bank of the Dniester, most of the existing studies focusing mainly on the external geopolitical dimension of the conflict, on the possible conflict resolution scenarios and on their impact on the region. Most of the debates within the Moldovan political sphere concerning the Transnistrian issue omit partially or totally the human factor, the public opinion of the inhabitants of Transnistria, their attitudes and perspectives, not representing a starting point in these discussions. The few debates which approach this aspect contain opinions based on segmented data or indirect researches.

The lack of data on important topics such as education, the institutional framework, the social dimension, creates difficulties in understanding the phenomena of the left bank of the Dniester. Moreover, as Transnistria is not a recognized state, current, valid and accurate data should represent the base of any discussion and conflict regulation process.

According to our records and documentation, no opinion poll in the Transnistrian region was performed in the last 5-7 years which is accessible to the general public and provides current data on the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of Transnistria. In the current context, when we witness intensified discussions in the regional and international political space about a potential solution regarding the settlement of the conflict by reintegrating the Transnistrian region into the administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Moldova, it is all the more essential to have data to support and to provide feasibility of the proposed solutions.

This research study aims to cover precisely this need of scientific knowledge of the society on the left bank of the Dniester River, being designed to allow a comparative analysis of the two societies on the opposite banks of the Dniester River. We are convinced that this report, besides its role of knowledge of the Transnistrian region, will be a useful tool for the experts, analysts and political decision-makers in defining the future public policies dedicated to increasing people's quality of life and the feasibility of Transnistrian conflict settlement solutions.





The study is structured on a few major themes:

- Identification of the priority needs of the inhabitants on the left of the Dniester;
- Outlining the general perception regarding the closeness and cooperation of the two banks of the Dniester;
- The analysis of the issues related to the personal and collective identification of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region and the values considered representative for society;
- The public attitude towards certain internal and external processes of the Transnistria region.

### 1.3. Methodological aspects

The present study consists of analyzing and presenting data from a complex research approach through a multilateral one, carried out at the initiative of the Black Sea University Foundation, between October 2018 and February 2019. The research includes a quantitative component (representative opinion poll) and a qualitative one (in-depth interviews with experts and group discussions with people living on the left bank of the Dniester River). The quantitative data and some of the qualitative data (3 Focus Groups) were collected by CBS-AXA, and the tools (questionnaire and interview guides) were designed by a team of project researchers: Tatiana Cojocari, Radu Cupcea and prof. Dan Dungaciu and are adapted to the specific context of the Transnistria region together with the CBS-AXA researcher. All research instruments were translated in Russian.

The main purpose of the research was to measure the opinion and perceptions of the population in the Transnistrian region regarding certain aspects related to the social, economic, cultural, institutional and external dimensions. For this purpose, we used the method of asking the population through a representative opinion poll, the interview technique through a group discussion guide and semi-structured interviews with experts from the two banks of the Dniester. After the presentation of the methodology, the report is organized in two sections built around the tools used, namely the analysis of the results of the opinion poll and the interpretation of the group discussions and the analysis of the interviews with experts from both sides of the Dniester submitted in a separate chapter.

The two research methods used in this study are mutually supplemented and checked, ensuring a higher degree of data fidelity and validity. If the opinion polls help shape a general picture valid for the entire population, then participatory methods improve the quality and reliability of this information, with participants contextualizing the data by including specific factors such as cultural and social ones that cannot be fully captured by the standardized questionnaire.

The quality data provided valuable, extensive information to provide a thorough understanding of the results of the survey and were additional indicators that allowed checking the data accuracy.



We draw attention to the fact that some of the responses from the representative survey of the Transnistrian region may differ from those found in the existing local statistics, especially with regard to questions concerning the individual and collective identity of the respondents; the answer to these sensitive and complex questions, cannot be surmised in its whole complexity, neither in other surveys or censuses, as it depends a lot on the context and on the manner in which the question is phrased. We also recommend using poll data based on the error margin assigned to it and the variations that may result from the repeated applying of the poll.



### 1.3.1. Quantitative research methodology

**Sample:** probability standard, multi-stage.

**Population of the poll:** The population of the poll is the population aged 18 or above, different nationalities and environment of residence.

**Size of the sample:** 499 interviews

**Stratification criteria:** 5 districts, residential environment (urban - rural), size of the rural localities (2 types).

**Sampling:** The volume of the urban layer and the total per regions and the volume of the rural layer were calculated pro rata to the number of populations estimated by the Census made in the region in 2015.

#### **Randomization stages:**

I. The locality of the stratified adjustments, the selected localities were established in a random manner.

II. Family: the maximum number of interviews performed in a sampling point was 5. The families where the interviews were conducted were selected by the random route method, with a predetermined statistical step.

III. The person: If there were several adult people in the selected families, the interviewed person was determined by choosing the one with the nearest birthday.

**Representativeness:** The sample is representative of the 18+ year old population of the Transnistrian region with a maximum error of  $\pm 4.4\%$ . Period of collection of the quantity data: October 30 - November 13, 2018. The interviews took place at the residence of the respondents.

#### **Social and demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The research targeted the urban and rural population in Transnistria. A total of 499 people over 18 were interviewed, among them 37,3% males and 62,7% females.

The analysis of the research data is submitted according to a series of socio-demographic characteristics, for certain statistical representations.

Thus, **the age groups** used for the analysis of the data are the following: 18-29 years, 30-44 years, 45-59 years, 60 and beyond.

**The education level** of the respondents is analysed in relation to three groups:

- Low level: *No education, primary education not completed (up to 4 grades), Primary (4 grades), Incomplete secondary education (9 grades),*
- Medium level: *Secondary education (11-12 grades), vocational secondary education*
- High level: *College (2-5 academic years), superior education.*



According to the *Employment situations of the respondents*, two groups were created, as following:

- Economically active,
- Economically inactive.

The respondents were grouped also according to their welfare (*socio-economic level*), in three groups, respectively:

- low level,
- medium level,
- high socio-economic level.

The distribution of the respondents according to the socio-demographic characteristics is submitted in Table 1.

**Table 1 - The distribution of the sample performed according to the social and demographic characteristics of the respondents**

		Number	%
Age of the respondent:	18-29 years old	125	25,1%
	30-44 years old	121	24,2%
	45-59 years old	109	21,8%
	60+ years old	144	28,9%
Gender of the respondent:	Male	186	37,3%
	Female	313	62,7%
Education of the respondent:	Low level:	52	10,4%
	Medium level:	259	51,9%
	High level	188	37,7%
Employment situation	Economically active	220	44,1%
	Economically inactive	279	55,9%
Ethnicity of the respondent:	Russian	172	34,5%
	Ukrainian	122	24,4%
	Moldovan	164	32,9%
	Other	41	8,2%
Socio-economic level:	Low level:	158	31,7%
	Medium level:	174	34,9%
	High level	167	33,5%
Environment of residence:	Urban	343	68,7%
	Rural	156	31,3%



### 1.3.2. Qualitative research methodology

The qualitative methods emphasize the subjective perceptions and individual motivations of the participant in the discussion or interview. Although considered subjective data, combined with the quantitative data of the survey applied at a representative level, they can be interpreted as representing general trends of the population in the Transnistrian region. In total, in the two quality stages, 49 persons were interviewed, including 35 participants in group discussions, 7 experts from the Transnistrian region (2 female representatives, 5 male representatives) and 7 experts from the Republic of Moldova (2 representatives female, 5 male representatives).

The first stage of qualitative research took place through 4 group discussions. The theoretical sample of the study was drafted according the purpose of the research, the selection of the participants for the group discussions was done through the "snowball" method.

35 persons were interviewed in the group discussions (see Table 2).

**Table 2 - Group discussions design**

Group code	Characteristics	No. of respondents
1 FG	Gender 3 women, 5 men Education: superior education - 5, secondary - 1, vocational environments - 2 Age: under 30 - 3, 30-50 years old - 4, 60+ years old - 1 Ethnicity: Russians - 2, Ukrainians -4, Moldovans - 1, Tatar - 1	8
2 FG	Gender 6 women, 4 men Education: superior education - 8, secondary - 2 Age: under 30 - 5, 30-50 years old - 5, Ethnicity: Russians - 4, Ukrainians -4, Moldovans - 2	10
3 FG	Gender 6 women, 4 men Education: superior education - 5, vocational environments - 2, secondary - 3 Age: under 30 - 4, 30-50 years old - 2, 60+ years old - 4 Ethnicity: Russians - 3, Ukrainians -4, Moldovans - 2, Bulgarian - 2, Greek - 1	10
4 FG	Gender 3 women, 4 men Education: superior education - 3, secondary -3; vocational education - 1 Age: under 30 - -5, 30-50 years old - -2, Ethnicity: Russians-2, Moldovans-4, Ukrainians - 1	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

The qualitative data was collected in November 2018 and February 2019. The discussions with the participants in the Focus Group took place in Tiraspol (3) and in the City of Chișinău



(1). The working language was Russian for the group discussions and Russian and Romanian for the in-depth interviews.

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was carried out, based on the assistant's notes during the focus groups, transcripts of the group discussions and the audio recordings of the discussions.



### Aspects noticed during the qualitative research

During the process of preparing the qualitative research, researchers have faced a series of refusals or non-response to taking part in the study, especially from Moldovan experts who did not want to accept the invitation to give an interview on the issue of Transnistria, motivating that the subject may become or is "somewhat sensitive" or that there is no need to talk about it before the electoral campaign in the Republic of Moldova.

We also mention that some of the experts in Transnistria have decided to keep their anonymity and said they would prefer that some of the statements made not to be recorded.

While participating in group discussions, some participants preferred to appear under a different name, and some of the topics were discussed with some reticence and more briefly than others, such as the subject of exploring the participants' opinion of the withdrawal of the Russian army or the role of peacekeepers. Also, one of the Focus Groups was rescheduled for a different day than the initial date, because it was not possible to start the discussion due to the small number of participants.



## II. Quantitative Study Results

### 2.1. Social and economic aspects and the quality of life

The measurement of the public perception in relation to the social, economic and the quality-of-life aspects is the broadest part of the study. Given the context of the region, we believe that through this section and through the phrasing of questions that explore the daily activity of the respondents, the problems they face, their satisfaction and dissatisfaction, one can extract valuable answers that help obtain an objective outline of social radiography of Transnistria.

The chapter investigates the opinion of the respondents regarding certain social and economic aspects such as: the development direction, the satisfaction in relation to the quality of life, the business environment and the economic state of the region, migration, degree of social involvement and the population's information sources.

#### 2.1.1. Quality of life: general aspects

Knowing the general perception of the population about the country's development trends is particularly important in understanding the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the citizens of a state with the positive or negative course of that state and its internal situation.

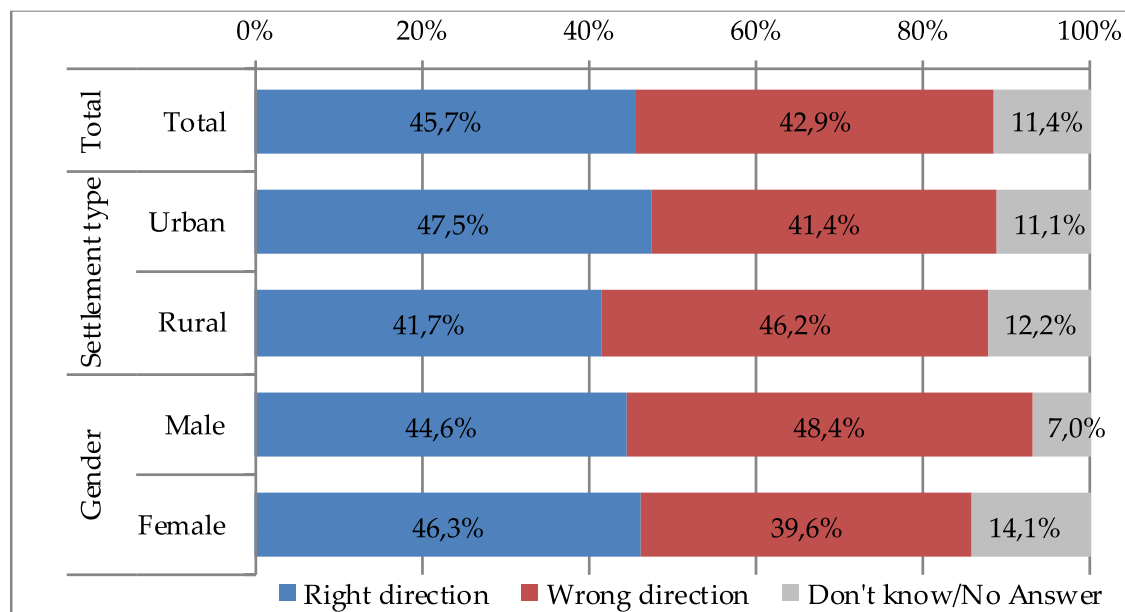
The inhabitants of the Transnistrian region being asked if they consider that things are going in a good or wrong direction in Transnistria, had divided opinions, about 45.7% opted for the answer *The direction is good* and 42.9% consider the opposite. We must mention that one in ten respondents is not decided in relation to his/her opinion.

More pessimists in the assessment of the situation are the inhabitants from the rural environment (41,7% answers *the direction is good*) in relation to those of the urban environment (47,5%), men (44,6%) compared to women (46,3%) (Figure 1).





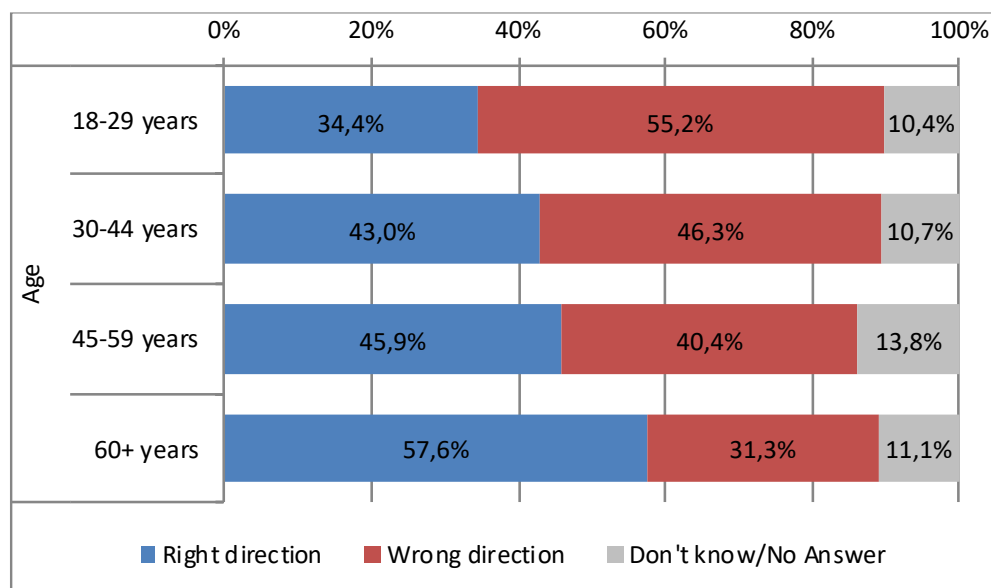
Figure 1 - Do you think that in Transnistria things are going in a good direction or in wrong one



It is interesting that if we connect the answers of respondents with their age, we notice a significant difference between the young people in Transnistria who show a higher degree of dissatisfaction with the elderly category, who have a more optimistic attitude towards the evolution of things in the right direction.

Young people aged 18-29 have the lowest share of positive responses, 34.4%, and the highest share of about 57.6% of these responses is recorded among people aged 60+. (Figure 2)

Figure 2 - Do you think that in Transnistria things are going in a good direction or in wrong one (age groups)?



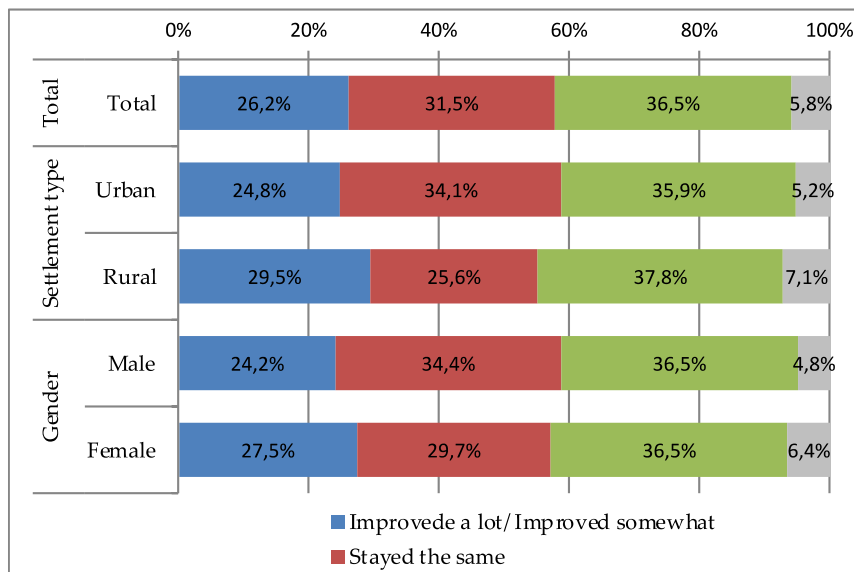
A little over one quarter of the respondents think that people in Transnistria are now living *much better or better* than 5 years ago, and more than a third believe that they are living



worse or much worse. Positive opinions are supported by a bigger share of rural residents (29.5%) compared to urban (24.8%) and women (27.5%) than men (24.2%).

According to the employment situation, there are differences in appreciation, about 28.2% of the economically active respondents consider that people in Transnistria live *much better* / *better* than 5 years ago compared to 24.7% those inactive; more positive in the assessments are respondents from the Russian ethnic group, with 28.2% positive responses, compared to other ethnic groups that have cumulated about 25% of such answers (Figure 3 and Table 3).

**Figure 3 - According to your opinion, how do people in Transnistria live compared to 5 years ago?**



**Table 3 In your opinion, how is the quality of life in Transnistria now compared to 5 years ago?**

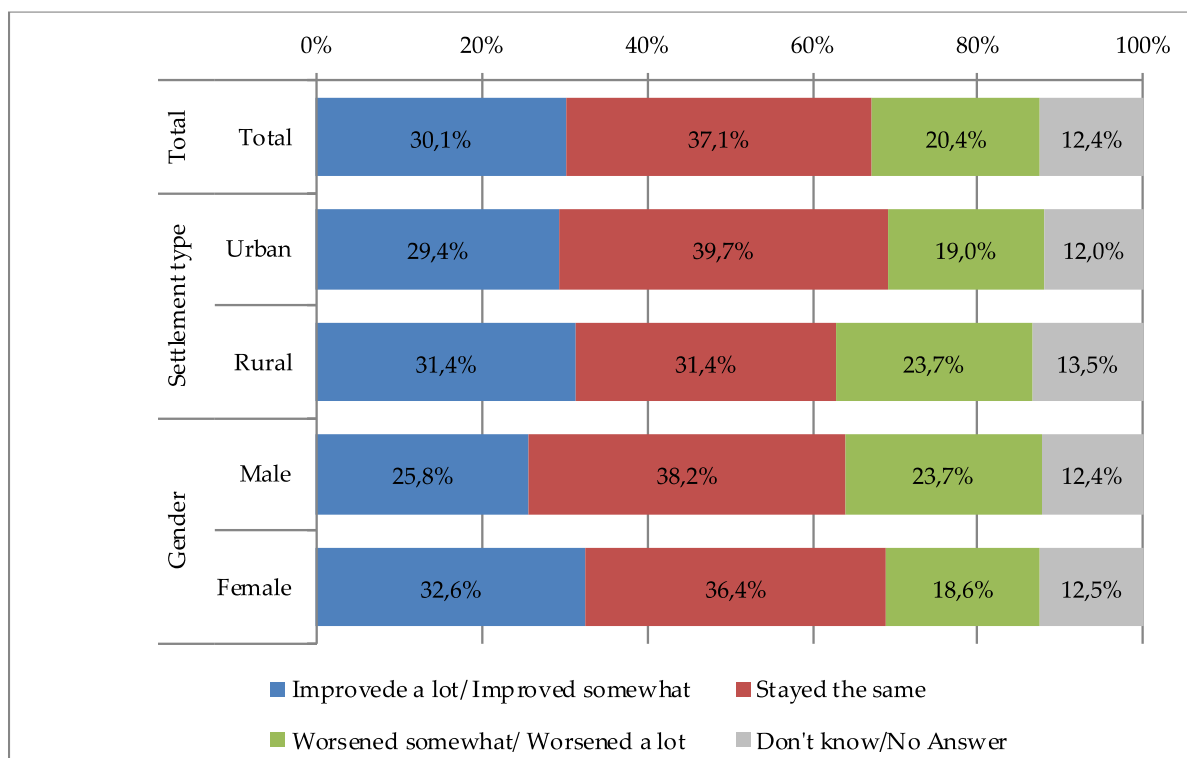
		Much better	Better	The same	Worse	Much worse	Don't know/No Answer
<b>Total</b>		2,8%	23,4%	31,5%	32,7%	3,8%	5,8%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	4,8%	25,6%	30,4%	29,6%	3,2%	6,4%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	2,5%	24,8%	34,7%	29,8%	4,1%	4,1%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	0,9%	21,1%	27,5%	39,4%	3,7%	7,3%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	2,8%	22,2%	32,6%	32,6%	4,2%	5,6%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	2,2%	22,0%	34,4%	30,6%	5,9%	4,8%
	<b>Female</b>	3,2%	24,3%	29,7%	33,9%	2,6%	6,4%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	7,7%	25,0%	38,5%	25,0%	0,0%	3,8%
	<b>Secondary</b>	2,7%	23,6%	27,0%	35,9%	4,6%	6,2%
	<b>Higher</b>	1,6%	22,9%	35,6%	30,3%	3,7%	5,9%
<b>Occupational state</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	4,1%	24,1%	31,4%	32,7%	5,0%	2,7%



	<b>Economically inactive</b>	1,8%	22,9%	31,5%	32,6%	2,9%	8,2%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	1,7%	26,7%	34,3%	29,1%	2,9%	5,2%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	1,6%	23,8%	32,8%	30,3%	5,7%	5,7%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	4,9%	20,1%	28,0%	36,0%	3,0%	7,9%
	<b>Other</b>	2,4%	22,0%	29,3%	41,5%	4,9%	0,0%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	3,8%	23,4%	29,1%	32,9%	5,7%	5,1%
	<b>Medium</b>	1,1%	23,6%	29,9%	35,1%	4,6%	5,7%
	<b>High</b>	3,6%	23,4%	35,3%	29,9%	1,2%	6,6%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	2,6%	22,2%	34,1%	32,4%	3,5%	5,2%
	<b>Rural</b>	3,2%	26,3%	25,6%	33,3%	4,5%	7,1%

In relation to the opinions regarding the perspectives of the quality of life in one year, these are more optimistic only for 30,1% of the respondents, which mentioned that in one year they will live *much better/better*. Most optimistic are the inhabitants of the villages, about 31.4% much better / better answers (29.4% urban), and women with about 32.6% (25.8% men) (Figure 4)

Figure 4 - How do you think you will live in one year?



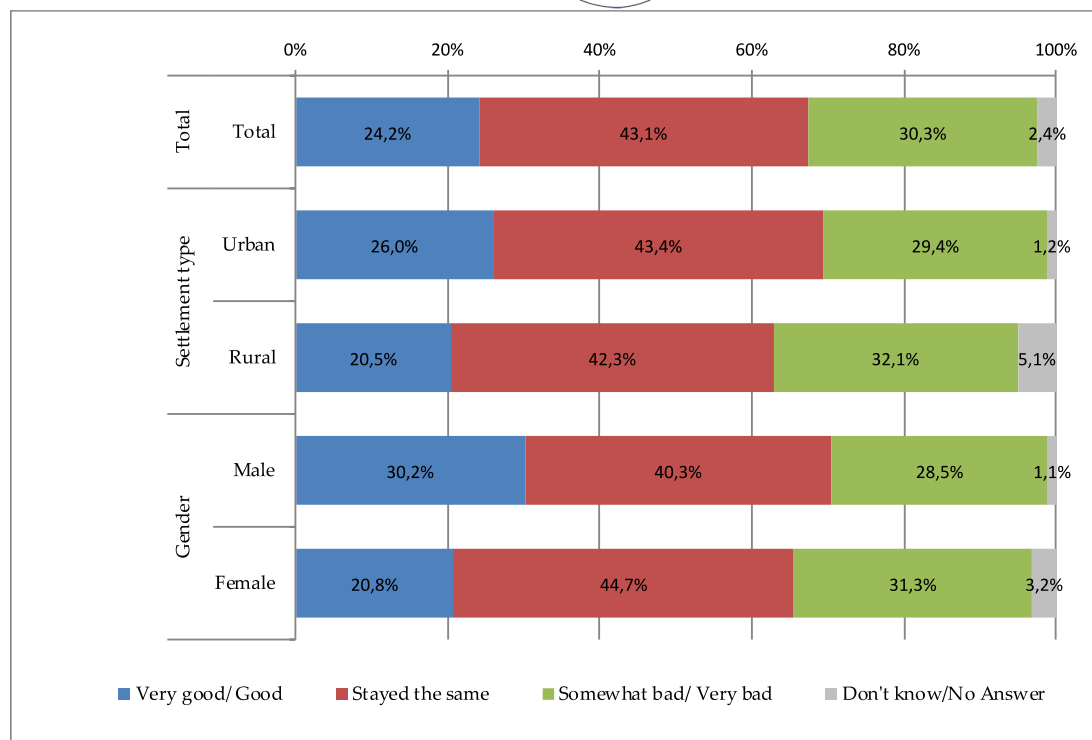


### 2.1.2. Economic situation

Less than a quarter of surveyed respondents consider that current year income versus 2017 is *much better or better*, and 43.1% think they are the same. At the same time, a fairly large percentage of 30.3% are dissatisfied with their income this year compared to a year ago. Urban respondents and men are the ones who consider the amount of revenue more positive than in the previous year (Figure 5).

Figure 5 - How were your revenues this year compared to 2017?

		Very good (income increased considerably)	Good (income increased somewhat)	Stayed the same	Somewhat bad (income decreased)	Very bad (No income)	Don't know/ No Answer
<b>Total</b>		4,6%	19,6%	43,1%	27,7%	2,6%	2,4%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	10,4%	30,4%	33,6%	20,0%	2,4%	3,2%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	5,0%	24,8%	41,3%	24,0%	3,3%	1,7%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	2,8%	11,0%	41,3%	38,5%	3,7%	2,8%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	0,7%	12,5%	54,2%	29,2%	1,4%	2,1%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	6,5%	23,7%	40,3%	24,7%	3,8%	1,1%
	<b>Female</b>	3,5%	17,3%	44,7%	29,4%	1,9%	3,2%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	3,8%	15,4%	50,0%	26,9%	0,0%	3,8%
	<b>Secondary</b>	2,7%	13,1%	44,0%	33,2%	3,9%	3,1%
	<b>Higher</b>	7,4%	29,8%	39,9%	20,2%	1,6%	1,1%
<b>Occupational state</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	5,0%	20,0%	42,3%	28,2%	2,7%	1,8%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	4,3%	19,4%	43,7%	27,2%	2,5%	2,9%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	5,8%	19,2%	45,9%	25,0%	1,7%	2,3%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	3,3%	20,5%	39,3%	32,8%	4,1%	0,0%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	3,7%	20,7%	40,9%	28,0%	2,4%	4,3%
	<b>Other</b>	7,3%	14,6%	51,2%	22,0%	2,4%	2,4%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	4,4%	13,3%	46,2%	29,7%	1,9%	4,4%
	<b>Medium</b>	2,9%	17,2%	45,4%	27,6%	4,6%	2,3%
	<b>High</b>	6,6%	28,1%	37,7%	25,7%	1,2%	0,6%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	4,4%	21,6%	43,4%	26,2%	3,2%	1,2%
	<b>Rural</b>	5,1%	15,4%	42,3%	30,8%	1,3%	5,1%



Revenues in the current year are considered very good / good for younger respondents, especially for those aged 18-29 (40.8%), followed by those aged 30-44 (29.8%), 45 years and above have positively rated revenues in a share of about 13%. Also, individual revenue is considered better by people with a higher level of education and better social and economic situation (Table 4).

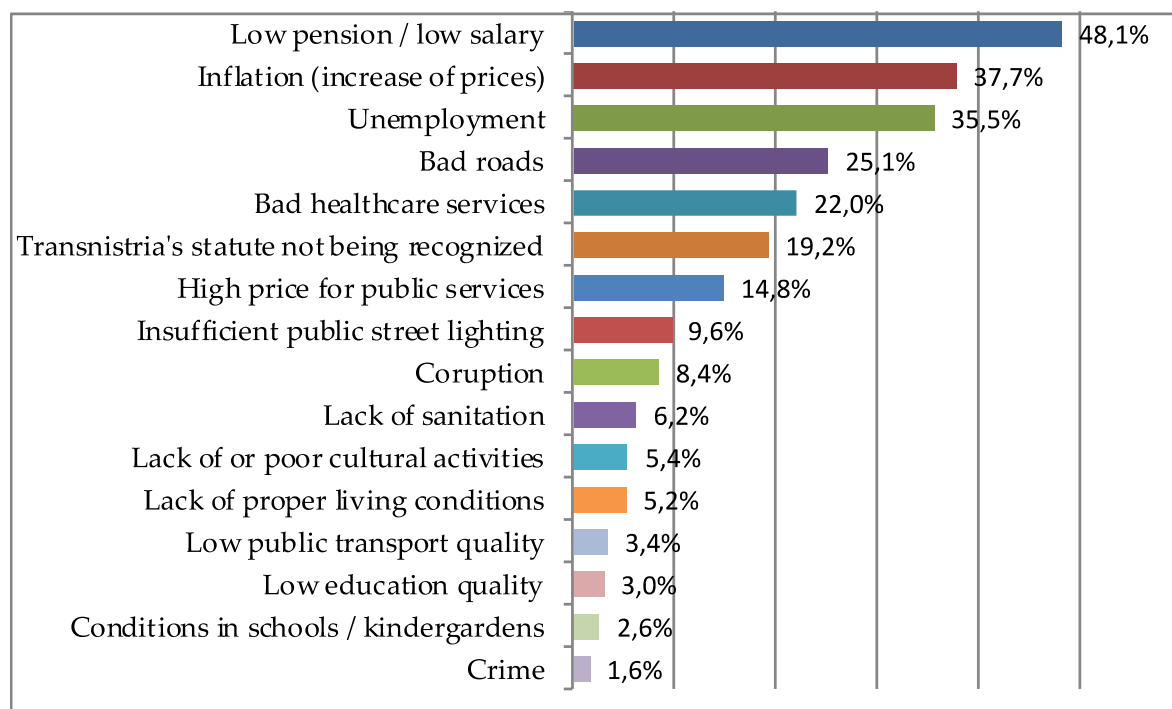
**Table 4 Thinking of your incomes, how were they this year compared to 2017?**

Among the major problems faced by respondents and their family members with the 48.1% mention are the low pension / low wage, the second place is the price increase with 37.7% answers, the third place - unemployment, which was mentioned by 35.5% interviewed. The following group of problems mentioned by a considerable percentage of respondents were the poor quality of the roads (bad roads) (25.1% responses), low quality of the medical services (22.0%).



The non-recognition of the status of Transnistria is considered a problem that affects the lives of people in the Transnistrian region by less than a quarter of the respondents (19.2%) occupying the sixth position in the list of problems mentioned, followed by the high costs for maintenance / communal services (14.8 %). Other response options were mentioned by less than 10% respondents to the study (Figure 6).

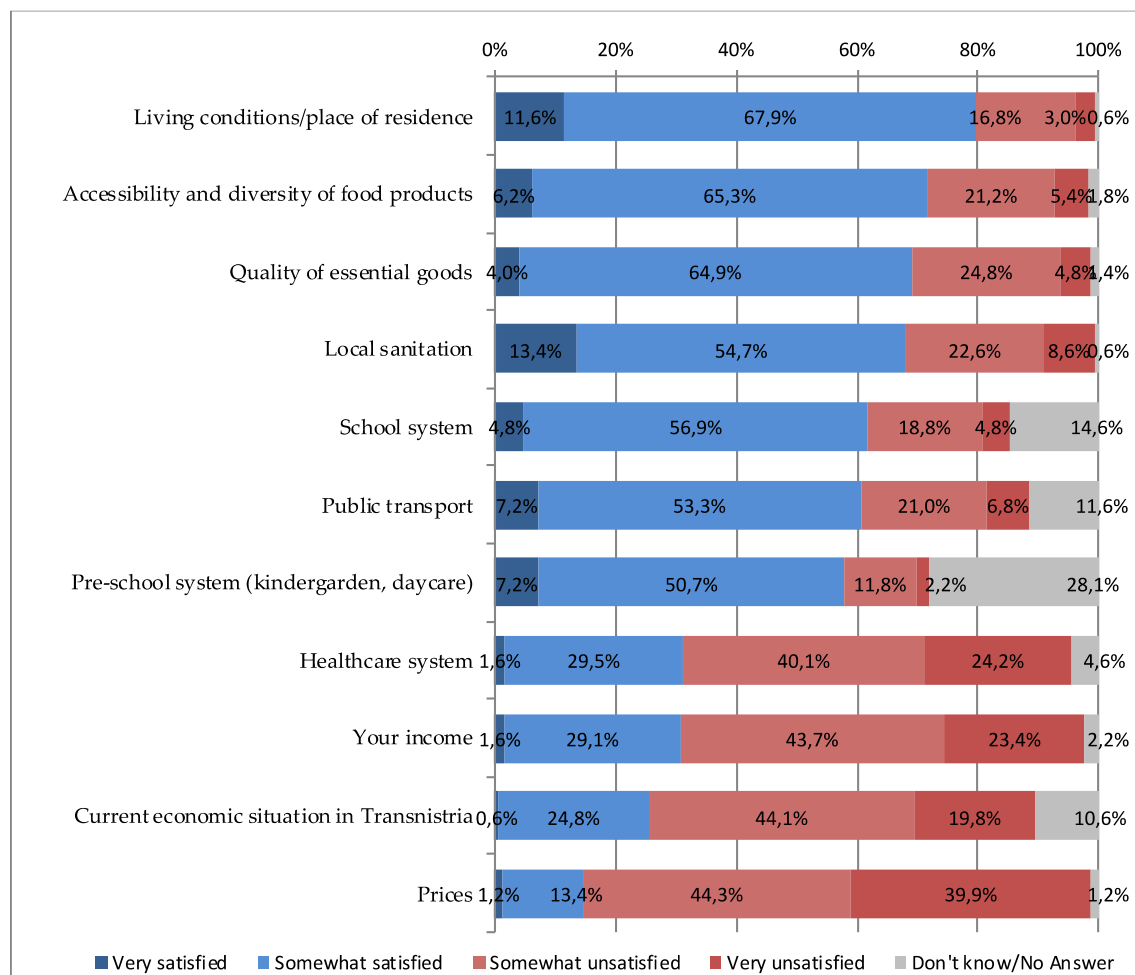
**Figure 6 - Which are the problems in Transnistria that you and your family members currently deal with? Multiple answer.**





Asked how satisfied or dissatisfied are the respondents about certain aspects that affect their daily life, on the first place was the satisfaction with the individual living space and its conditions, about 79.5% answers, followed by the accessibility and diversified offer of the food products, which accounted for 71.5% of responses. These are followed by the quality of the consumer goods and the cleanliness and care of the locality, mentioned positively by about 68% of the respondents. Around 60% of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the *education system, public transport and care of pre-school children in kindergartens / nurseries*. On the opposite side are the *prices, the current economic situation in Transnistria, the personal income and the health system in Transnistria, which is considered unsatisfactory by more than half of the respondents*. (Figure 7).

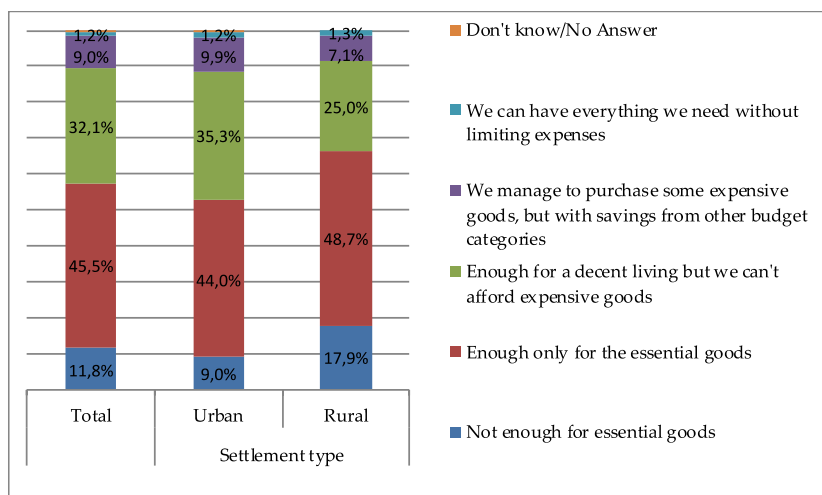
Figure 7 - How satisfied are you of ...?





About 12% of the respondents declared that the family income is not enough even for the bare minimum, in the rural environment these are 17,9% of the persons interviewed. Approximately 45.5% of the total respondents consider that their income is enough only for the bare minimum, with even higher percentages among the rural residents - 48.7% mentioned this situation. Only one in 100 respondents said they had no income restrictions, and 1 out of 10 said they managed to buy some more expensive goods but with restrictions in other areas (Figure 8).

**Figure 8 - How do you assess your family's current income?**

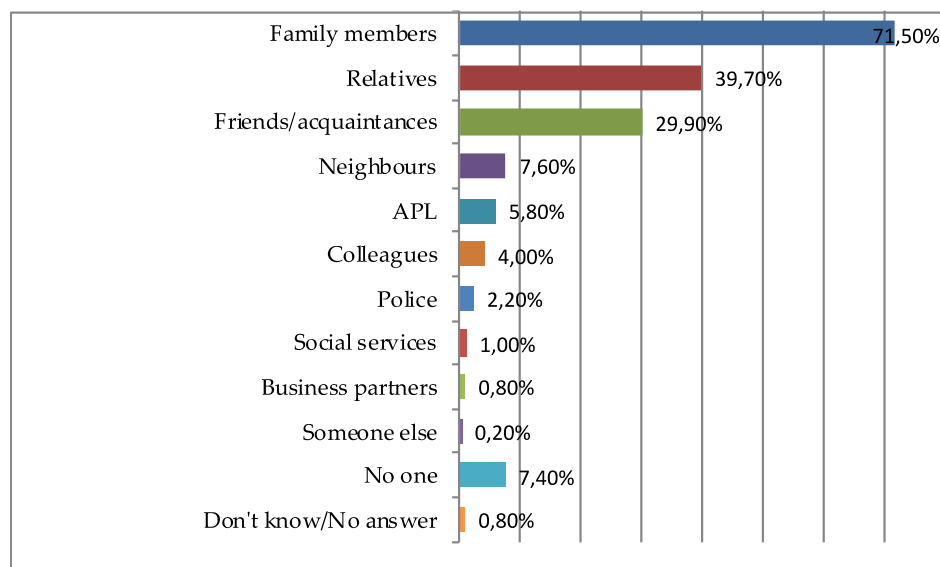


When they are in need of assistance, 71.5% of the respondent inhabitants of the Transnistrian region turn to family members or usually turn to the close social circle of relatives, friends, acquaintances or even neighbours. It is relevant that the state institutions represented by the Local Public Administration and the Police are considered helpful only in the case of 5,8% and 2,2% of the respondents, respectively, and that a considerable share of respondents of 7,4% mentioned that they do not usually call on anyone when they need help. (Figure 9). We must mention that the same tendencies are noticed by socio-demographic groups.





Figure 9 - When you usually need help, who do you call? Multiple answer.



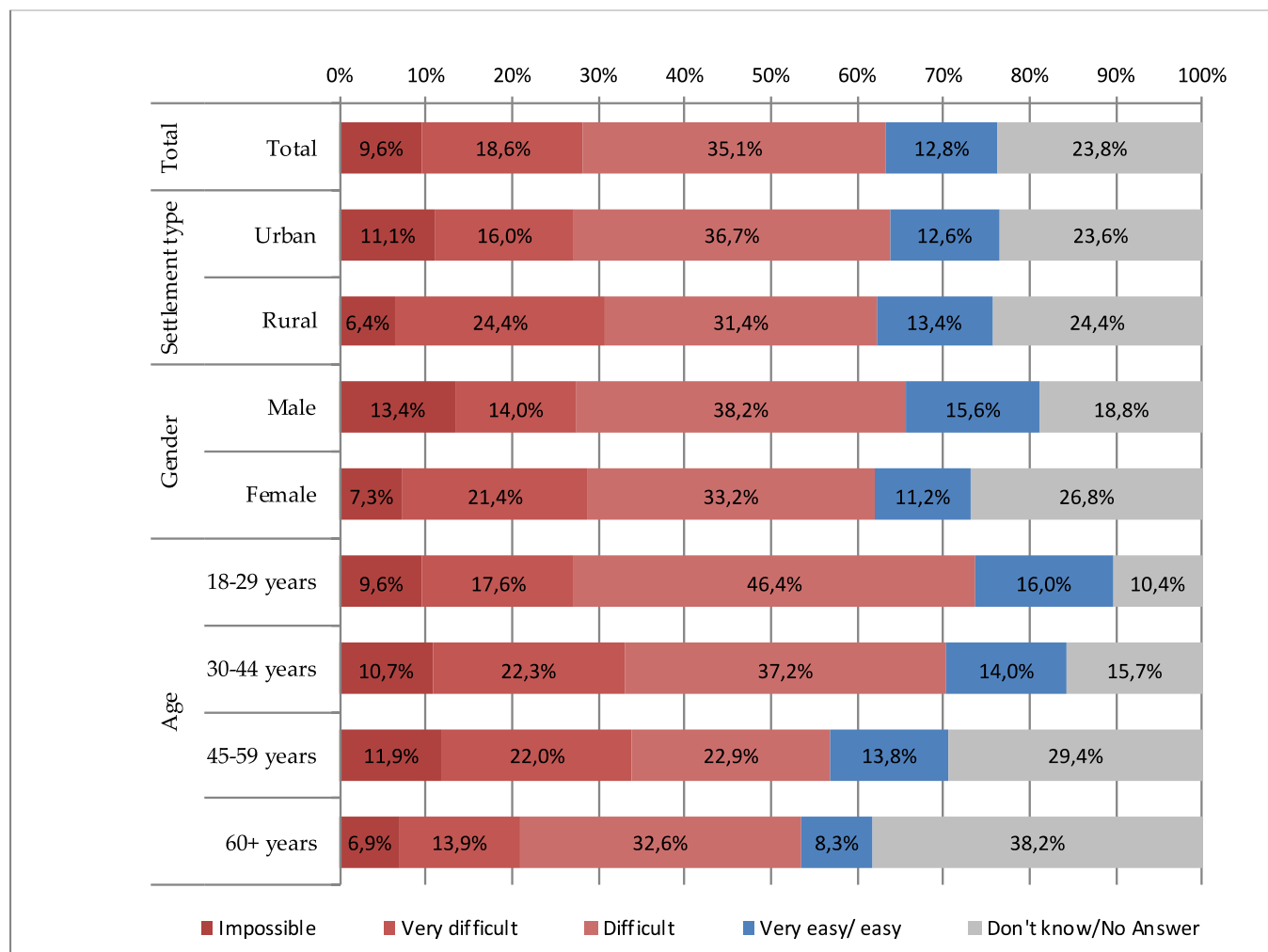
### 2.1.3. The business environment

The regulatory and institutional framework in Transnistria does not seem to be favourable for business and entrepreneurship, only 12.8% of respondents think it is *very easy or easy* to start a business in Transnistria, more than half think it is *difficult or very difficult*, and one in 10 study participants think it's *impossible*. No major gaps are noticed between the opinions of the respondents according to the residence environments.

Certain differences of opinion are recorded by gender and age groups. It can be noticed that among the women the percentage of those who selected the do not know or did not want to answer response is over ¼, among men - under 1/5, which leads to the assumption that men are the most initiated in starting a business. Among men, the percentage of the answer *impossible* is double compared to women (13,4% men and 7,3% women). The degree of ignorance is dependent on the respondents' age, being higher among the elderly and lower among young people. At the same time the opinion that businesses are hard to initiate is reversely opposite to the age. More than 70% of young people up to 44 years of age think that businesses are difficult to initiate, among the elderly - just over half the respondents opted for the same answers (Figure 10 and Table 16 in the appendix).



Figure 10 - In your opinion, how easy is to open a business in Transnistria?

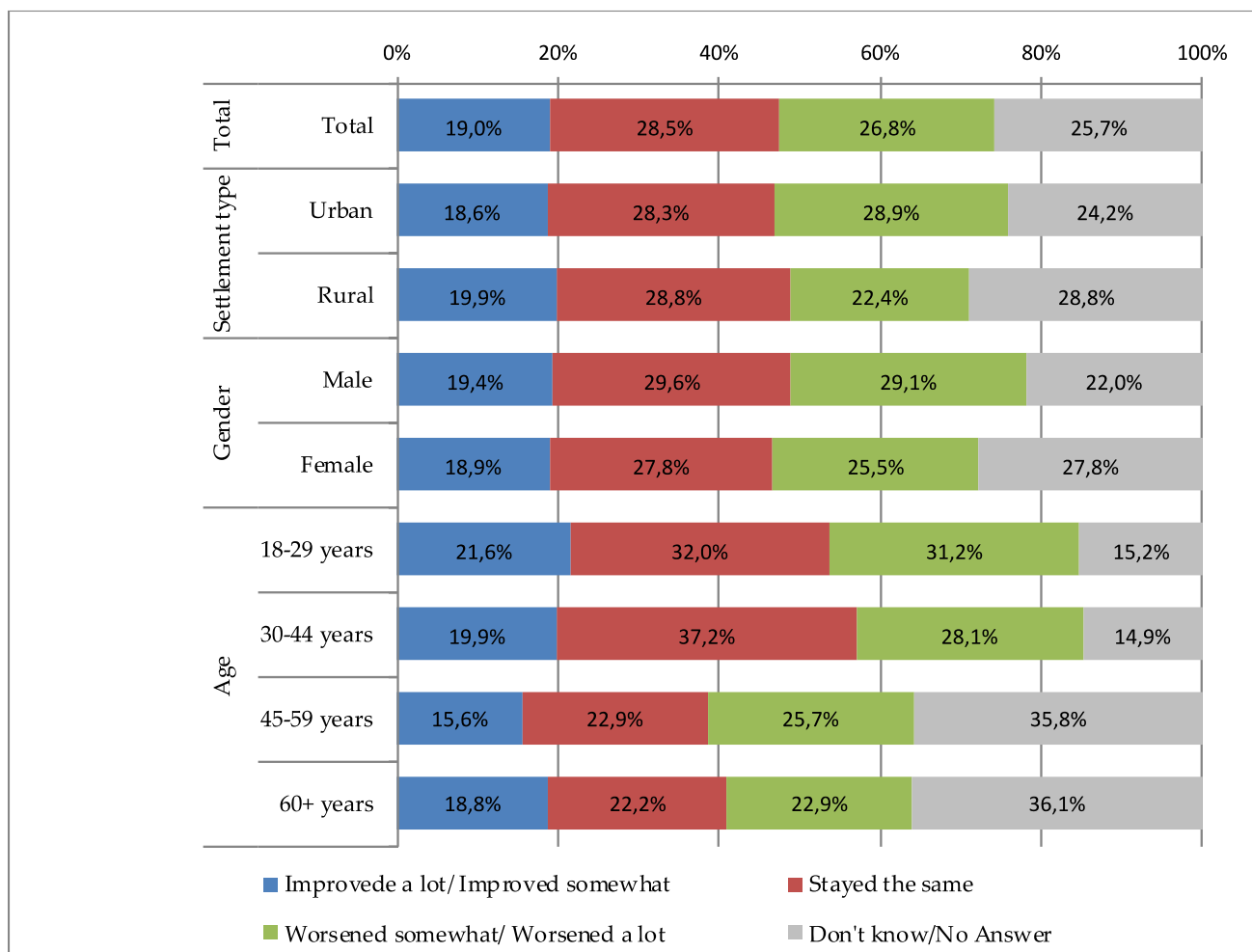




According to the answers, it can be concluded that the trends regarding the business environment are not positive, the share of answers *worse / far worse* exceeds by 8.7 percentage points (p.p.) the share of those who have the opinion *much better / better*.

Thus, about ¼ respondents believe that businesses are doing *much better / better* in Transnistria than 5 years ago, 28.5% - consider that the situation has not changed, and about 26.8% choose the answer *worse / much worse* considering that there is a regress. Opinions differ significantly depending on the respondent's gender and age (Figure 11).

**Figure 11 - In your opinion, do you think that currently in Transnistria businesses are doing better or worse compared to the last 5 years?**



At the same time, these answers must also be related to the fact that about 72% of the respondents mentioned that they did not try and do not know someone who has tried to open a business in Transnistria in the past years and about 86.4% declared the same situation with reference Moldova.

Business start-up experiences are more pronounced in the urban area, about 23.9% of respondents or the close social circle tried to open a business in Transnistria, compared with only 14.1% in rural areas, 25.3% among men and 18.3% of women mentioned the same thing. Attempts to start a business are more often seen among young people, for example among

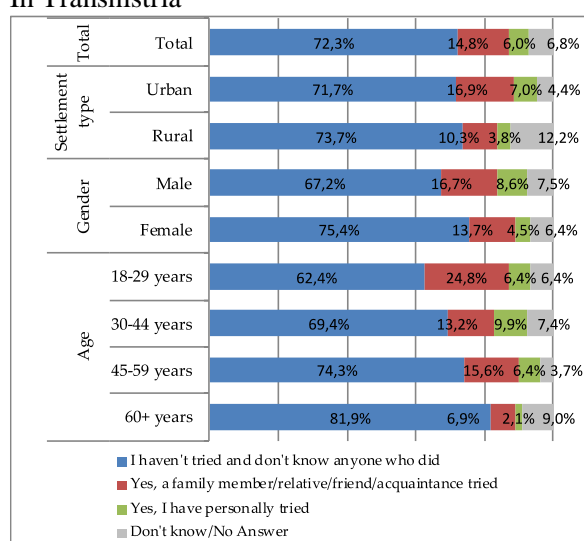


those aged 18-29, about one-third of those interviewed, and between 30-44 years - 23.1%, compared to just 9% observed for those aged 60 and over.

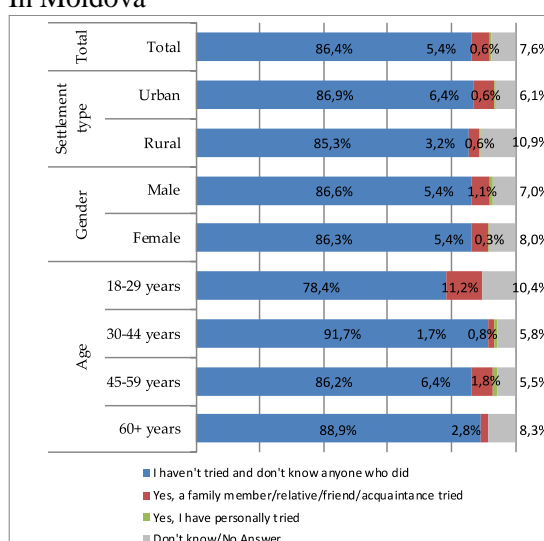
The same pattern of trends regarding the business opening experiences is also noticed for Moldova (urban respondents, men and young people being those who said they personally tried or someone in the close social circle tried to start a business), but the share of these opinions are almost half as low as in the case of Transnistria (Figure 12).

**Figure 12 - Did you personally try, or do you know someone - family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances which tried to open a business in the last 2-5 years?**

#### In Transnistria



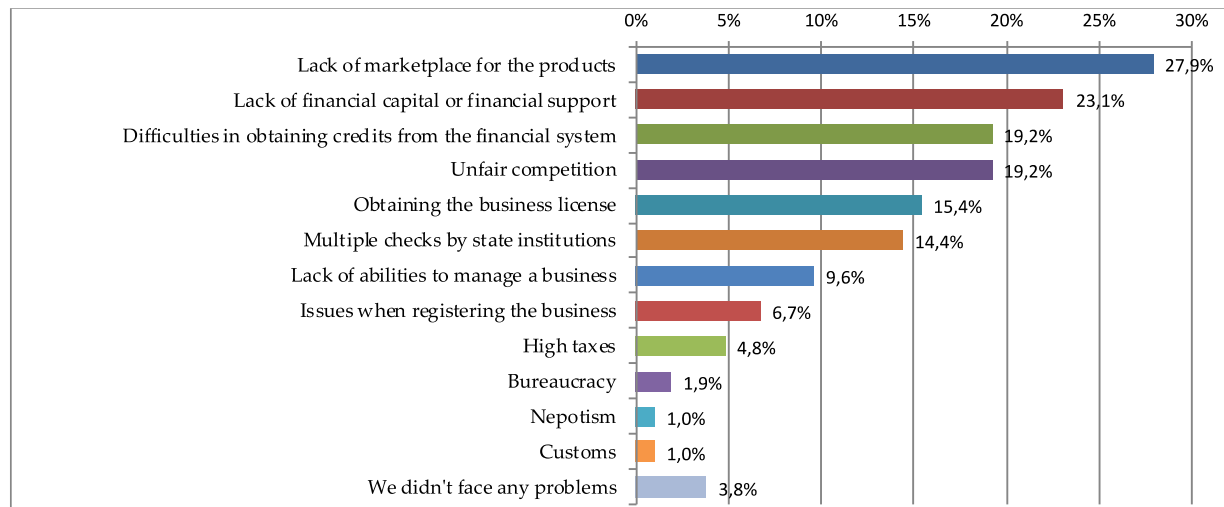
#### In Moldova



The main problems faced by those who attempted to open a business were the *absence of a product market (27.9%), lack of financial capital or financial support (23.1%), difficulties in obtaining loans of the financial system and unfair competition of other enterprises (19.2% of affirmative answers)*, but also issues related to *obtaining the license, activity permit (15.4%), multiple verifications by the state institutions (14.4% %)* (Figure 13).



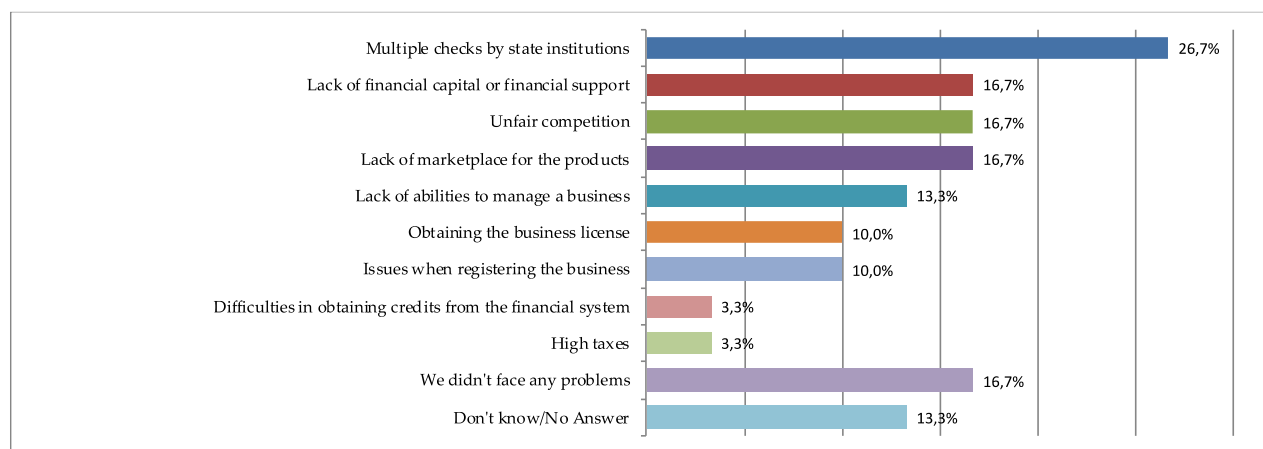
**Figure 13 - Which problems did you or your family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances which tried to open a business in Transnistria faced? Multiple answer.**





In the case of Moldova, the main problems are: *multiple checks by state institutions* (26.7% affirmative answers), *lack of financial capital or financial support*, *unfair competition of other enterprises*, *lack of a market for products* (mentioned by about 16,7% affirmative answers), but also the *lack of business management skills* (13.3%). An aspect which can be analysed in comparison and is significantly different in Transnistria compared to Moldova is the fact that only 3,8% of the respondents did not face problems when opening businesses in the Transnistrian region compared to 16,7% in the Republic of Moldova. Other options gathered 10% or less mentions from the people interviewed (Figure 14).

**Figure 14 - Which problems did you or your family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances which tried to open a business in the Republic of Moldova faced? Multiple answer.**





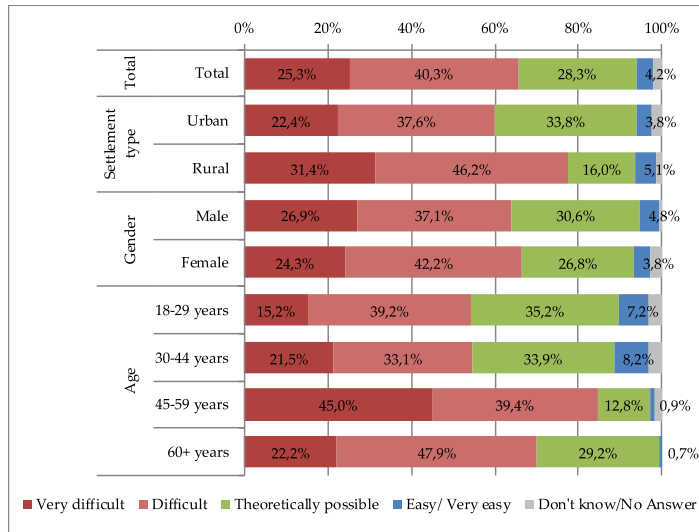
### 2.1.4 Employment and migration

More than half (65.6%) of the participants in the quantitative study are of the opinion that it is difficult to find a job in Transnistria (25.3% consider it *very hard* and 40.3% - *hard*), only 28,3% consider that it is basically possible and only 4.2% opted for easy or very easy responses. *This percentage is even higher if we only analyse respondents from rural areas (77.6% very hard or hard answers) than urban respondents (60%).* No major gender gaps are observed, but major age-related discrepancies are encountered, with bigger employment problems among the pre-retirement older people, 84.4% of respondents said it is *very difficult or difficult* to find a job in Transnistria.

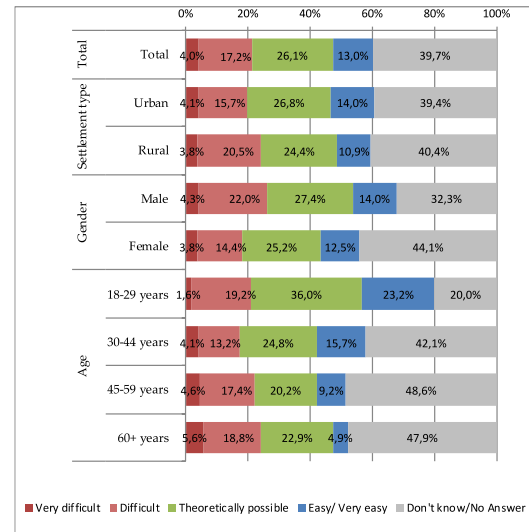
Referring to Moldova, respondents from Transnistria generally do not know the employment opportunities available on the other bank of the Dniester, 39.7% opted for the Don't know or No Answer response, and so many respondents think it is, in principle, possible and easier to find a job in the Republic of Moldova than in Transnistria. It is worth mentioning that young people appear to be more informed in this context, only 20% mentioned Don't know or No Answer, another 20.8% consider it very difficult or difficult, while a considerable share of 59.2% consider that it's possible to find a job (36%) or it is even slightly easy or very easy (23.2%) (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - How easy is to find a job in your opinion?

#### In Transnistria



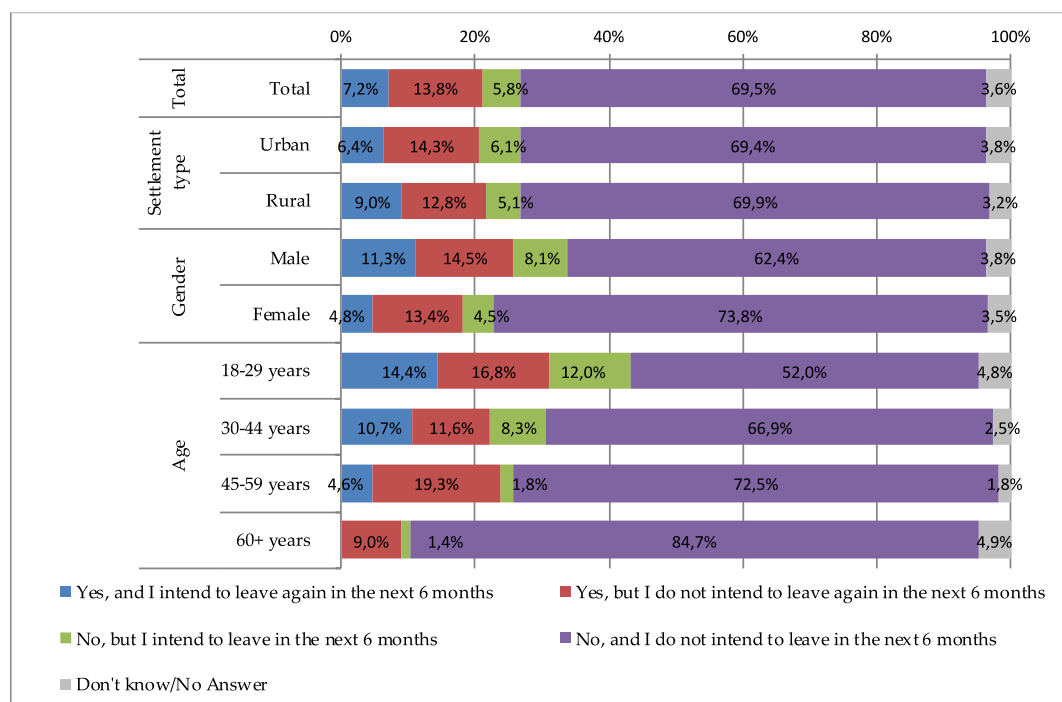
#### In Moldova





If they had a choice, the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region would prefer not to leave Transnistria in the short term, 13.8% saying they were gone and no longer intend to leave, and 69.5% did not want to and would prefer not to leave at all. Those with a migrant experience who intend to leave are 7.2%; also, about 5.8% did not work abroad but intend to leave. Men are the ones with a higher migration experience beyond borders compared to women. Migration is also directly dependent on the respondents' age and the residence environment: the most willing to migrate are young people, especially 18-29, almost half of them have migration experience or intend to leave in the next 6 months and the people living in rural areas (Figure 16).

**Figure 16 - Did you personally work/lived outside the country in the last 5 years?**



This is not the case, if we refer to the children of respondents who are over 16 years old: almost 20% of the respondents claiming that their children are not in Transnistria, having left to work abroad - 16.0% or to study abroad - 3.6%. Also, only 1.8% of the children of the persons participating in the study were in the Republic of Moldova for work or studies. A significant percentage of young people over 16 years of age, according to the respondents, are in Transnistria, followed by about the same number of respondents who mentioned that they do not have children older than 16. If we analyse the number of responses per area of residence, we can notice that in the urban area there is a lower tendency for 16+ people to work abroad than in rural areas, with a difference of almost 5% (Figure 17).

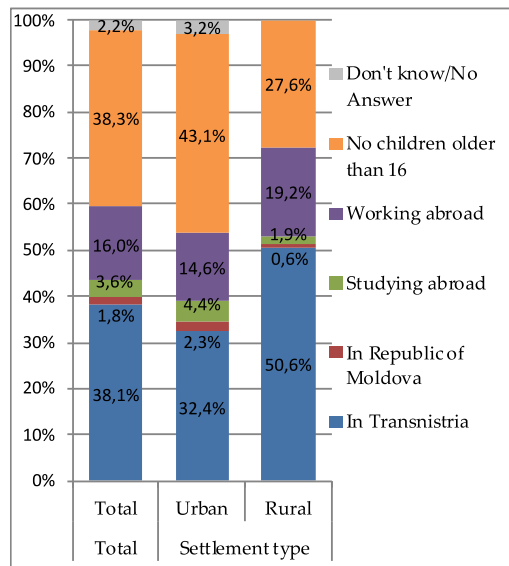
What is relevant is that a significant percentage of respondents do not see the future of their children in Transnistria. The majority of respondents, 72.5%, consider that children can do better abroad and only 16.6% think this is possible in Transnistria or Moldova. Men are more pessimistic than women, the share of male respondents who consider that children can be better off outside of the country exceeds by 5.2 pp. the share of women who consider the



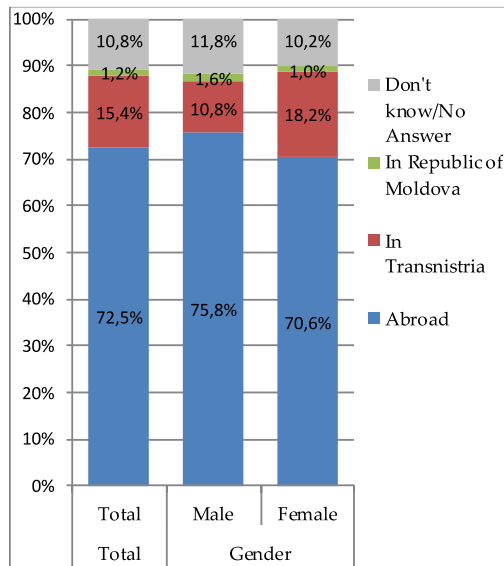


same thing. Women are more likely to think that children can make it at home, and almost 1 in five women support this opinion, possibly guided by maternal feelings (Figure 18).

**Figure 17 - Please tell me, your grown children, over 16 years old, are in Transnistria or they went abroad?**



**Figure 18 - What is your opinion, where do you think your children have more opportunities?**



Over 20% of the survey respondents intend to leave Transnistria within the next 1-2 years (10.4% - they will leave forever and 11.8% for a limited period), most respondents saying they have no plans to leave in the next 1-2 years

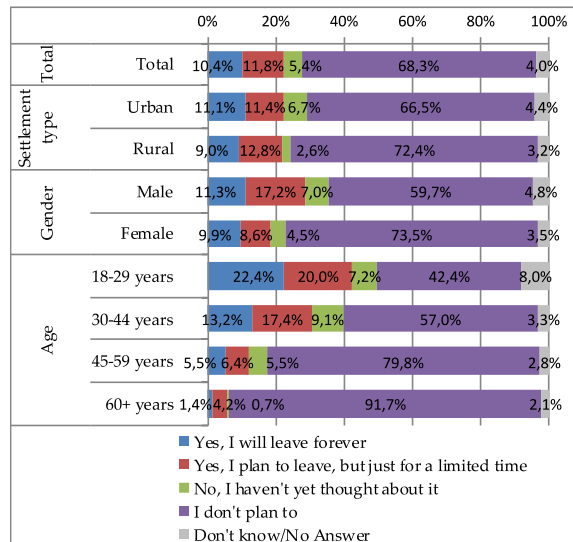
More men intend to leave, about 28,5% (11,3% - forever, 17,2% - for a limited period).

As in the previous question, young people are the category of respondents with considerably more than 40% of respondents who said they wanted to leave and about 7% were not decided (22.4% - would like to 20.0% - would like to leave for a certain period (Figure 19).

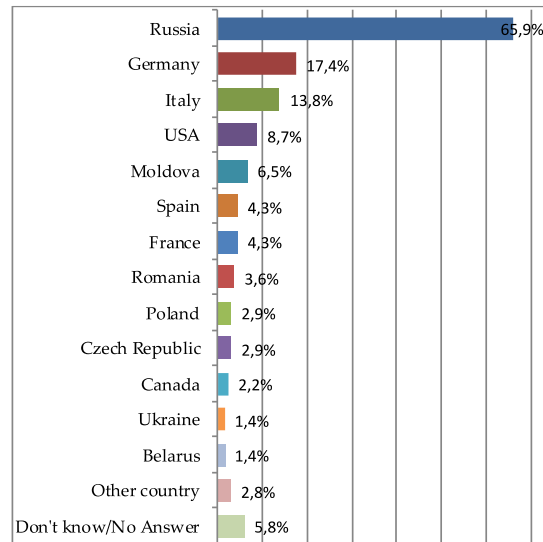
Russia is the top destination, with 65.9%, followed by Germany, about 17.4%, Italy 13.8%, the United States 8.7%, Moldova 6.5%. Other destinations gathered under 5% of the answers (Figure 20).



**Figure 19 - Do you personally think about leaving Transnistria in the next 1-2 years?**



**Figure 20 - Which would the first destination in the top of your preferences be if you thought about leaving? Answer with maximum 3 choices**



## 2.2 Participation and information

The population in the Transnistrian region is not particularly involved in the social and political life of the region compared to the general tendencies in the East European area, the participation in the social life being particularly low. Only a little over 1/5 (21.4%) of respondents mentioned that they attended *meetings* with public representatives, with a higher participation among rural respondents (24.4%), women (22.7%), elderly 60 years and older (31.3%). Only 13.3% of respondents participate in the activities of the *professional, cultural, sports or educational associations or unions*, the participation in this category being more active in the urban environment (14.3%). About 12,0% of the people mentioned they *communicate or refer to public representatives*, and almost one out of ten *attends public meetings*, these activities are attended in higher percentages also by people age 60 or higher (Table 5 below).

**Table 5 - You personally or your family are involved/ take part in activities such as:**

	Total	Environment of residence:		Gender of the respondent:		Age of the respondent:			
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female	18-29 years old	30-44 years old	45-59 years old	60+ years old
Meetings with public representatives	21,4%	20.1%	24,4%	19.4%	22.7%	15.2%	13.2%	24.8%	31.3%
Professional, cultural, sports or educational associations/unions	13.2%	14.3%	10.9%	18.3%	10.2%	22.4%	16.5%	11.9%	3.5%
Communication/ referring to public representatives	12.0%	11.4%	13.5%	9.7%	13.4%	9.6%	9.1%	10.1%	18.1%
Public meetings	9.8%	9.3%	10.9%	10.8%	9.3%	8.8%	11.6%	4.6%	13.2%
Charity funds/ Organizations	8.4%	9.3%	6.4%	9.1%	8.0%	12.0%	9.1%	5.5%	6.9%



	Total	Environment of residence:		Gender of the respondent:		Age of the respondent:			
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female	18-29 years old	30-44 years old	45-59 years old	60+ years old
Signing petitions	6.0%	6.1%	5.8%	4.3%	7.0%	3.2%	7.4%	5.5%	7.6%
Social movements and local non-governmental organizations	5.0%	4.7%	5.8%	4.8%	5.1%	3.2%	6.6%	8.3%	2.8%
Initiatives of the political parties/gatherings	3.8%	3.2%	5.1%	3.2%	4.2%	4.0%	2.5%	6.4%	2.8%
Commenting the social and political matters in the online environment.	3.4%	4.1%	1.9%	4.3%	2.9%	7.2%	5.0%	0.9%	0.7%

Informing the inhabitants of the left bank of Dniester and their favorite media sources is another aspect that needs to be explored to understand the existing preferences and trends in the region. The respondents were asked to express their opinion in relation to information and the sources accessed for this.

The data shows that 74.1% of respondents watch TV shows on a daily basis, use the internet 67.9%, listen to the radio 37.5%, read books 19% and newspapers 10.8% (Figure 21). Differences are observed across residence environments, with a more pronounced share of those who read newspapers daily (14.1% rural, 9.3% urban), listen to the radio (50.6% rural, 31, 5% urban), watch TV (79.5% rural, 71.7% urban).

On the other hand, we have more respondents in the urban area who read books (19.5% urban, 17.9% rural) and use the internet (72.9% urban, 57.1% rural), a trend that is explained by taking into account the specific differences in work and leisure time existing in the two environments. Men read more often than women newspapers daily (12.4% men, 9.9% women), listen to radio (38.7% men, 36.7% women), use the internet (73.1% men, 64.9% % women). Women prefer, more than men, to watch TV daily (80.2% women, 64.0% men) and read books (22.4% women, 13.4% men). Also, older people have a greater interest in newspapers, radio and television. Young people are the fiercest Internet users, registering much higher percentages than the rest of the age categories (Tables 6-8).



Figure 21 - How often do you ...?

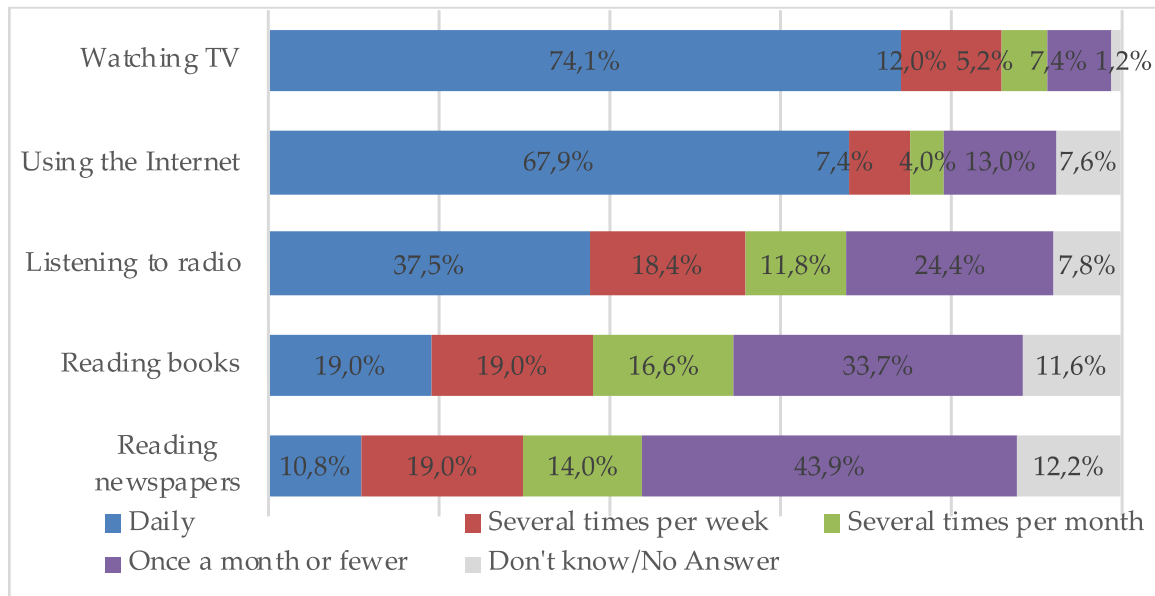


Table 6 How often do you ...?

		Read newspapers					Listen to radio				
		Daily	Several times week	Several times month	Once a month or less	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER	Daily	Several times week	Several times month	Once a month or less	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER
<b>Total</b>		10,8%	19,0%	14,0%	43,9%	12,2%	37,5%	18,4%	11,8%	24,4%	7,8%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	1,6%	7,2%	10,4%	55,2%	25,6%	15,2%	15,2%	16,0%	39,2%	14,4%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	9,1%	9,1%	16,5%	57,0%	8,3%	38,0%	23,1%	8,3%	24,0%	6,6%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	11,0%	30,3%	20,2%	32,1%	6,4%	49,5%	16,5%	12,8%	14,7%	6,4%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	20,1%	29,2%	10,4%	31,9%	8,3%	47,2%	18,8%	10,4%	19,4%	4,2%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	12,4%	16,1%	15,6%	45,7%	10,2%	38,7%	22,0%	8,6%	26,3%	4,3%
	<b>Female</b>	9,9%	20,8%	13,1%	42,8%	13,4%	36,7%	16,3%	13,7%	23,3%	9,9%
<b>Educational level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	17,3%	11,5%	13,5%	40,4%	17,3%	48,1%	21,2%	5,8%	13,5%	11,5%
	<b>Secondary</b>	12,7%	22,0%	12,4%	42,9%	10,0%	41,7%	17,4%	12,4%	22,8%	5,8%
	<b>Higher</b>	6,4%	17,0%	16,5%	46,3%	13,8%	28,7%	19,1%	12,8%	29,8%	9,6%
<b>Occupational state:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	10,5%	15,0%	18,2%	47,3%	9,1%	36,8%	20,0%	14,1%	21,4%	7,7%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	11,1%	22,2%	10,8%	41,2%	14,7%	38,0%	17,2%	10,0%	26,9%	7,9%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	9,9%	19,8%	9,9%	48,3%	12,2%	33,7%	16,9%	13,4%	30,2%	5,8%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	11,5%	22,1%	14,8%	40,2%	11,5%	41,8%	20,5%	10,7%	17,2%	9,8%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	11,0%	17,1%	18,9%	39,6%	13,4%	37,2%	19,5%	11,6%	22,0%	9,8%
	<b>Other</b>	12,2%	14,6%	9,8%	53,7%	9,8%	41,5%	14,6%	9,8%	31,7%	2,4%



<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	16,5%	26,6%	13,9%	34,2%	8,9%	46,8%	17,1%	13,3%	17,7%	5,1%
	<b>Medium</b>	6,3%	18,4%	12,6%	51,7%	10,9%	35,6%	16,1%	8,0%	31,0%	9,2%
	<b>High</b>	10,2%	12,6%	15,6%	44,9%	16,8%	30,5%	22,2%	14,4%	24,0%	9,0%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	9,3%	16,6%	14,3%	48,1%	11,7%	31,5%	20,1%	14,0%	28,9%	5,5%
	<b>Rural</b>	14,1%	24,4%	13,5%	34,6%	13,5%	50,6%	14,7%	7,1%	14,7%	12,8%

Table 7 How often do you ...?

		Watch TV					Read books				
		Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Once a month or less	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER	Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Once a month or less	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER
<b>Total</b>		74,1%	12,0%	5,2%	7,4%	1,2%	19,0%	19,0%	16,6%	33,7%	11,6%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	40,0%	27,2%	15,2%	16,0%	1,6%	14,4%	26,4%	22,4%	22,4%	14,4%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	67,8%	16,5%	5,0%	9,1%	1,7%	20,7%	14,0%	16,5%	38,8%	9,9%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	92,7%	2,8%	0,9%	2,8%	0,9%	19,3%	19,3%	11,9%	42,2%	7,3%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	95,1%	2,1%	0,0%	2,1%	0,7%	21,5%	16,7%	15,3%	32,6%	13,9%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	64,0%	16,1%	7,5%	11,3%	1,1%	13,4%	21,0%	12,4%	39,2%	14,0%
	<b>Female</b>	80,2%	9,6%	3,8%	5,1%	1,3%	22,4%	17,9%	19,2%	30,4%	10,2%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	78,8%	11,5%	0,0%	9,6%	0,0%	19,2%	9,6%	13,5%	36,5%	21,2%
	<b>Secondary</b>	84,9%	6,6%	2,7%	5,4%	0,4%	15,8%	15,8%	13,9%	42,5%	12,0%
	<b>Higher</b>	58,0%	19,7%	10,1%	9,6%	2,7%	23,4%	26,1%	21,3%	20,7%	8,5%
<b>Occupational state:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	75,5%	11,8%	4,1%	7,7%	0,9%	18,6%	18,2%	16,4%	34,1%	12,7%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	73,1%	12,2%	6,1%	7,2%	1,4%	19,4%	19,7%	16,8%	33,3%	10,8%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	72,1%	12,8%	7,6%	7,6%	0,0%	24,4%	21,5%	15,7%	27,9%	10,5%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	71,3%	11,5%	5,7%	8,2%	3,3%	19,7%	22,1%	18,0%	32,8%	7,4%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	78,7%	9,1%	3,0%	7,9%	1,2%	15,2%	16,5%	15,2%	34,8%	18,3%
	<b>Other</b>	73,2%	22,0%	2,4%	2,4%	0,0%	9,8%	9,8%	22,0%	56,1%	2,4%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	84,8%	7,0%	0,6%	7,0%	0,6%	15,8%	18,4%	17,1%	35,4%	13,3%
	<b>Medium</b>	70,7%	12,6%	5,2%	9,8%	1,7%	19,5%	19,5%	16,1%	37,4%	7,5%
	<b>High</b>	67,7%	16,2%	9,6%	5,4%	1,2%	21,6%	19,2%	16,8%	28,1%	14,4%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	71,7%	13,4%	5,5%	8,5%	0,9%	19,5%	23,3%	15,2%	33,5%	8,5%
	<b>Rural</b>	79,5%	9,0%	4,5%	5,1%	1,9%	17,9%	9,6%	19,9%	34,0%	18,6%

Table 8 How often do you ...?

		Use the internet				
		Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Once a month or less	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER



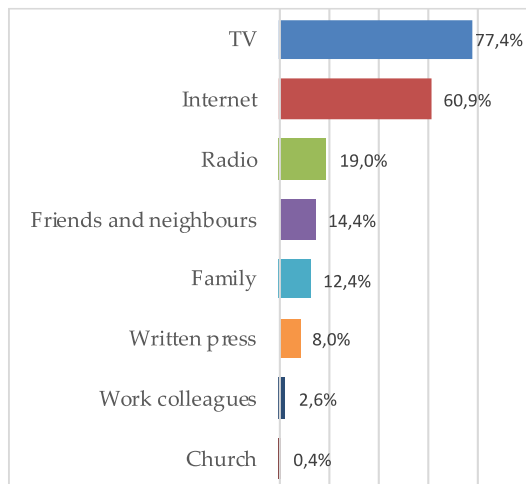
<b>Total</b>		67,9%	7,4%	4,0%	13,0%	7,6%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	94,4%	2,4%	1,6%	1,6%	0,0%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	86,8%	5,0%	1,7%	4,1%	2,5%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	57,8%	11,0%	10,1%	12,8%	8,3%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	36,8%	11,1%	3,5%	30,6%	18,1%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	73,1%	7,0%	3,8%	8,1%	8,1%
	<b>Female</b>	64,9%	7,7%	4,2%	16,0%	7,3%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	50,0%	1,9%	3,8%	21,2%	23,1%
	<b>Secondary</b>	60,6%	9,3%	5,8%	16,6%	7,7%
	<b>Higher</b>	83,0%	6,4%	1,6%	5,9%	3,2%
<b>Occupational state:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	79,5%	7,3%	2,3%	6,4%	4,5%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	58,8%	7,5%	5,4%	18,3%	10,0%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	70,3%	7,6%	3,5%	10,5%	8,1%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	69,7%	5,7%	4,9%	14,8%	4,9%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	62,8%	9,8%	3,7%	14,0%	9,8%
	<b>Other</b>	73,2%	2,4%	4,9%	14,6%	4,9%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	31,6%	9,5%	5,7%	34,8%	18,4%
	<b>Medium</b>	85,1%	6,9%	2,9%	2,9%	2,3%
	<b>High</b>	84,4%	6,0%	3,6%	3,0%	3,0%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	72,9%	5,8%	3,5%	11,4%	6,4%
	<b>Rural</b>	57,1%	10,9%	5,1%	16,7%	10,3%

The main source of information, mentioned by 77.4% of respondents, is television, followed by the internet with 60.9% of respondents; they are also the ones who enjoy the highest confidence, 37.7% television and 32.9% internet. It is worth mentioning that although these are the main sources of information, the degree of trust in them is rather low.

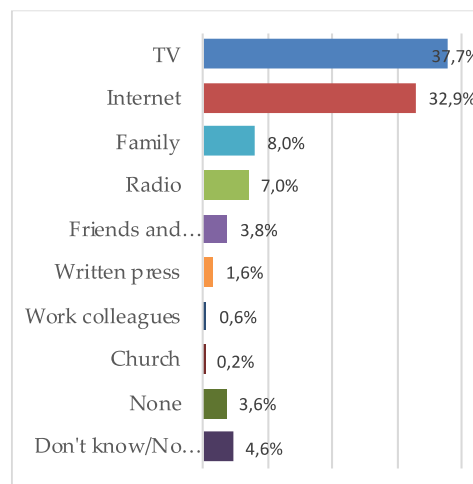
The radio and close social circle (*friends, acquaintances, colleagues as well as family / parents*) is also a source of information in this respect, but the degree of trust is rather low, obtaining less than 10% affirmative answers (Figures 22, 23).



**Figure 22 - Which is your most important source of information? Maximum two options in the order of preference.**



**Figure 23 - Which is the information source you most trust?**



When they want to obtain information about the local and international events, most respondents turn to the Russian television and radio, immediately followed by local television and radio. However, we note that respondents using the Internet to get informed about local and international events prefer sources in the Republic of Moldova - 23.6% and then in Transnistria - 10.2%, sites in the Russian Federation being used for this by less than 1% of the respondents. (Table 9 below).

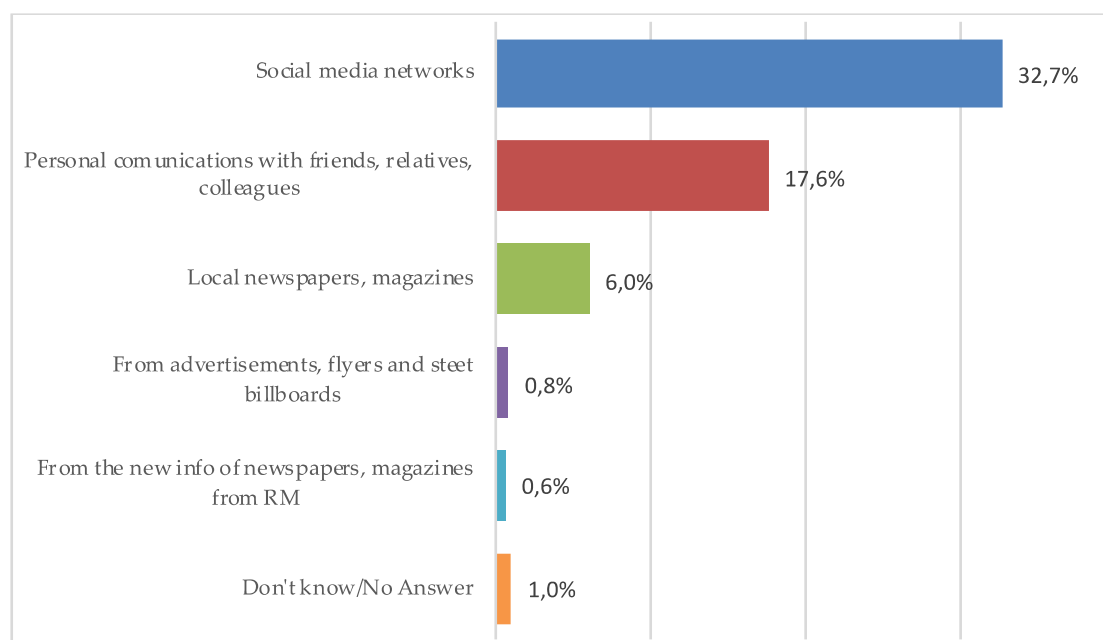
Also, 32,7% obtain information from social networks, 17,6 - through the close social circle and 6% - local newspapers and magazines (Figure 24).

**Table 9 - From which sources do you usually receive information about the events which take place in the country and in the whole world? Multiple answer**

	Transnistria	Moldova	Russia	Europe	Ukraine
From TV, radio shows from:	59.7%	4.0%	60.5%	1.0%	2.0%
From the Internet, information websites from:	10.2%	23.6%	0.6%	2.2%	0.2%



**Figure 24 - From which sources do you usually receive information about the events which take place in the country and in the whole world? Multiple answer**

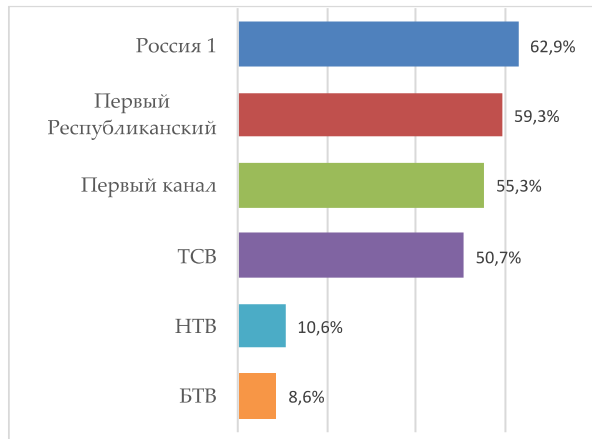


The main TV channel from which the respondents obtain information is Россия 1, mentioned by 62,9% respondents, Первый Республиканский (the local television in Transnistria) with 59,3% mentions, Первый канал - 55,3% answers, TCB (local television in Transnistria) – 50,7%. The highest confidence was given to Russian media (27.9% a lot of trust, 53.7% some trust), Transnistria (19.2% a lot of trust, 52.1% some trust), and compared to those in Moldova, only 18% of respondents showed some trust. Also, about half of the respondents did not want to answer or said they cannot assess the media in Romania, USA and Europe, indicating that the Western media has limited distribution in the Transnistrian region (Figures 25, 26).

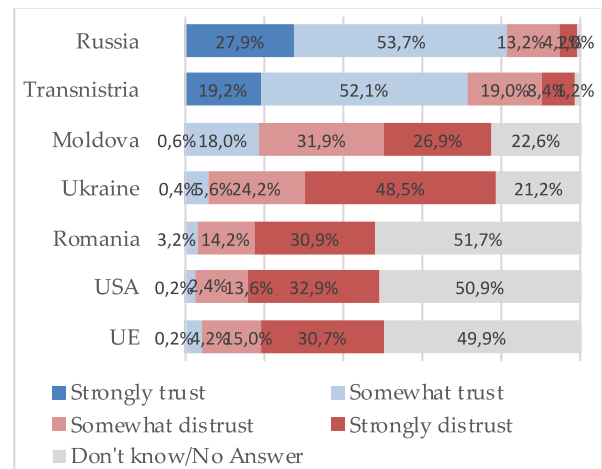




**Figure 25 - Which are the main 3 TV channels from where you receive/obtain information? Multiple answer according to the order of preference, maximum 3 answers.**



**Figure 26 - How much trust do you have in the mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, internet) of:**

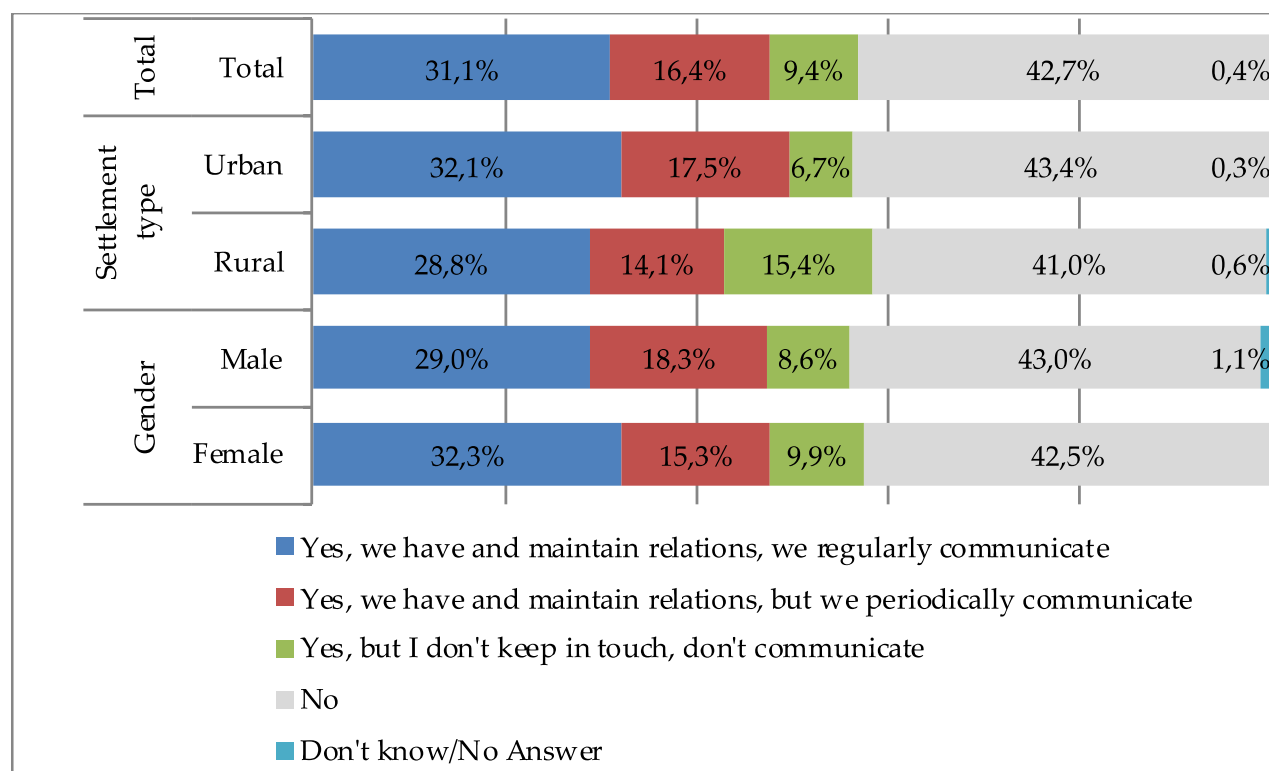




## 2.3 Relationship of the Transnistria region with the Republic of Moldova

About half of the respondents in Transnistria have no relatives, friends, acquaintances living in Moldova, a few more than half mention that they have relatives and acquaintances in the Republic of Moldova with whom they communicate regularly and periodically, and about 10% of respondents mention that they have relatives and acquaintances but they do not maintain relationships. The inhabitants of the Transnistrian region in the urban area, although having fewer family or friendship relationships in the Republic of Moldova, maintain more frequent relations with them than the respondents from the rural areas who have a higher percentage of no relations and periodic communication. The women compared to men communicate more frequently with their relatives in Moldova (Figure 27).

**Figure 27 - Do you personally have relatives, friends, acquaintances in the Republic of Moldova with which you maintain the relationship?**

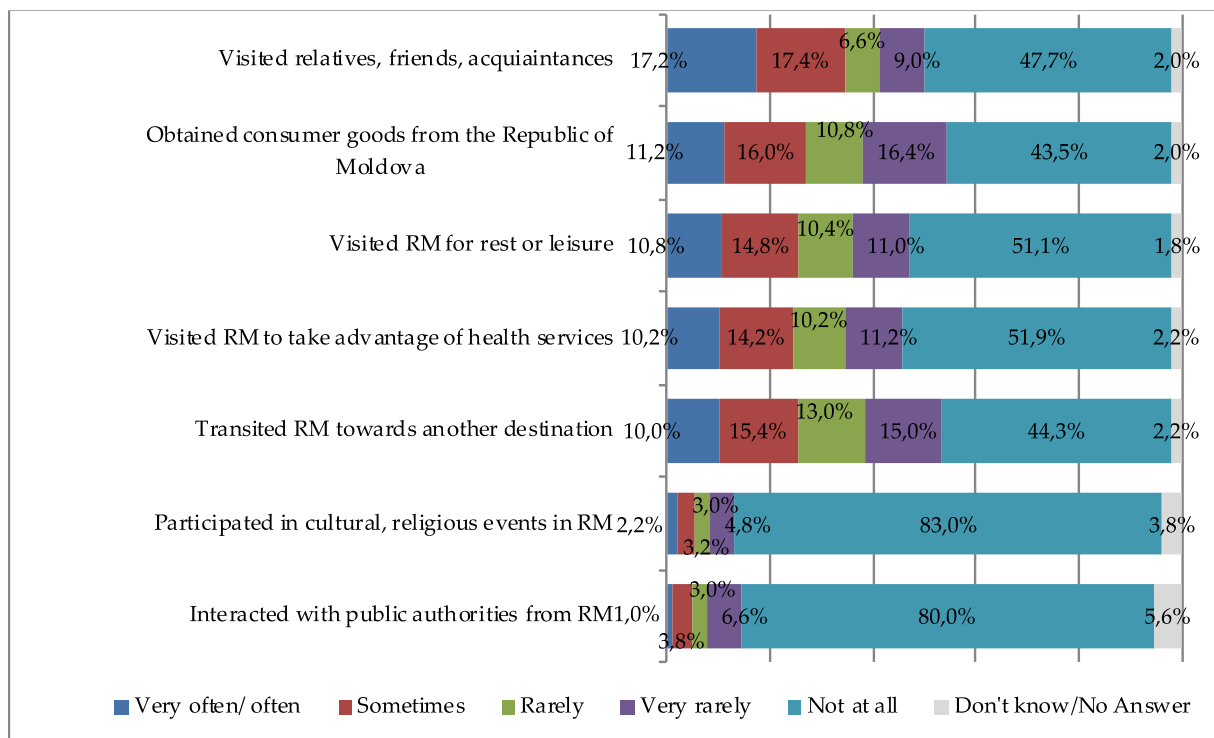


The interactions between the two banks at societal, cultural and institutional level are pretty limited. About half of the survey respondents said they had no connection with the Republic of Moldova, while the other half is connected to a greater or lesser extent with the other bank of the Dniester through: visits to relatives and acquaintances (17.2 % visit very often or often, and about the same number less often 17.4%), procurement of goods (11.2% very often / often, 16.0% sometimes purchased consumer goods) or services used and leisure (about a quarter of the respondents used the medical services in the Republic of Moldova more often or sometimes and they crossed the Dniester for rest and leisure).



An overwhelming majority of 83.0% did not participate in cultural or religious events in the Republic of Moldova during the last 5 years and 80.0% did not interact with the public authorities of the Republic of Moldova in the last 5 years. (Figure 28).

Figure 28 - How often in the last 5 years did you:



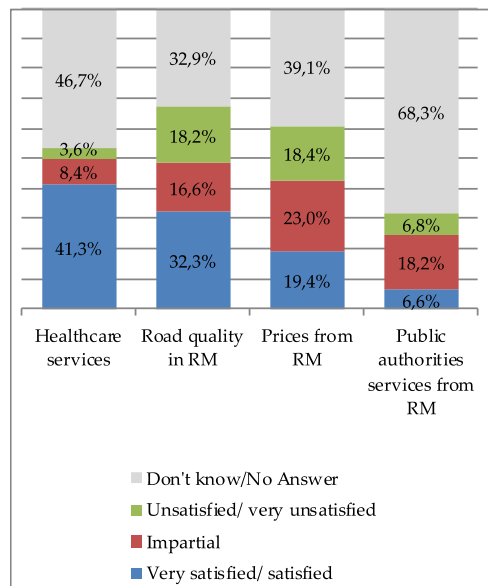
The most appreciated aspects in the Republic of Moldova by the survey respondents are medical services - 41.3% respondents were *very satisfied or satisfied* with the health services and to a lesser extent the quality of the roads 32.3%. But with regard to road quality, 18.2% of study participants who travelled to the Republic of Moldova say they are not at all satisfied with them. Prices on the other bank of the Dniester remain a disputed aspect, given that 19.4% say they are satisfied with them, and almost the same (18.4) say they are not satisfied with the prices in the Republic of Moldova. The most unknown are the quality of the services of public authorities in the Republic of Moldova, given that, as stated in the previous question, too few respondents from Transnistria have had contacts with the services and public authorities over the Dniester (Figure 29).

Asked in general about their views on certain issues on the other bank of the Dniester, the inhabitants of Transnistria also assessed the health services as the best thing in the Republic of Moldova (59.5%); The opposite is the economic development of the Republic of Moldova which was evaluated by 23.6% of respondents as good, 33.9% neither bad nor good and 19.6% considered that the economic state on the right bank of the Dniester is bad and very bad.

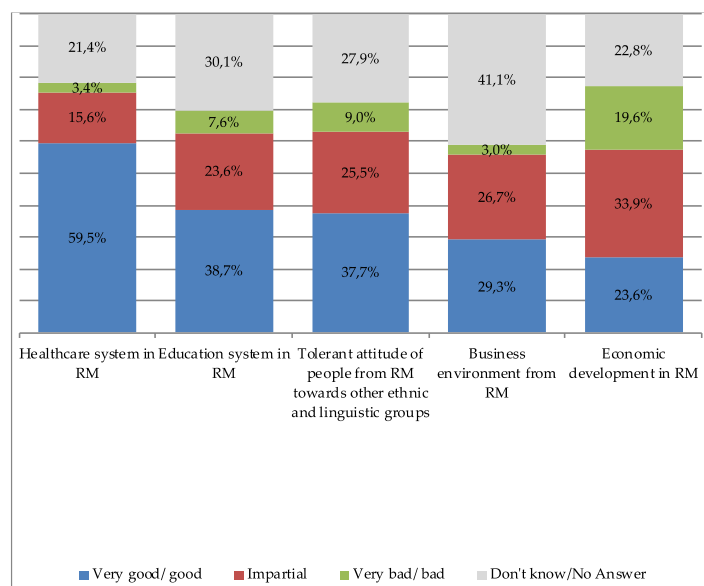


The respondents also expressed their opinion on the tolerant attitude of the population of the Republic of Moldova towards the ethnic and linguistic groups - 37.7% saying that the attitude is generally good, 25.5% being neutral and 9.0% stating that there is no tolerant attitude towards the other ethnic and linguistic groups in the Republic of Moldova (Figure 30).

**Figure 29 - How satisfied are you in general of: (only the respondents which answered yes at the above question)**

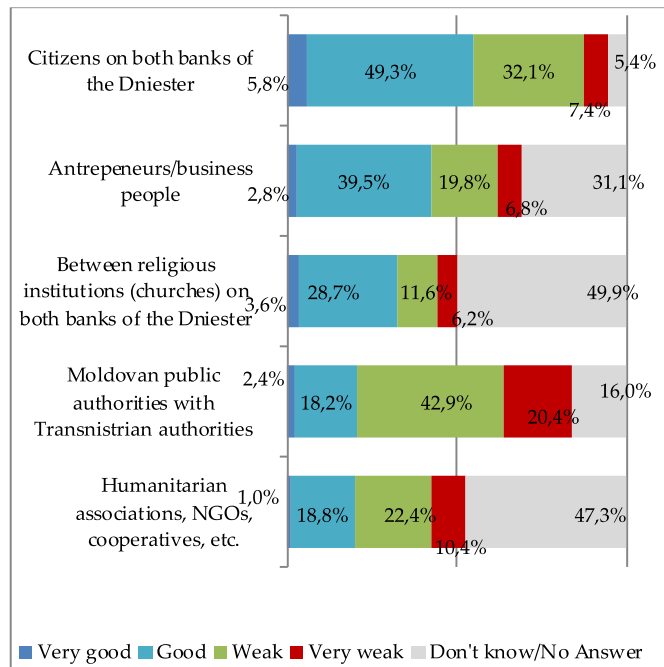


**Figure 30 - How do you consider the following aspects related to the Republic of Moldova:**

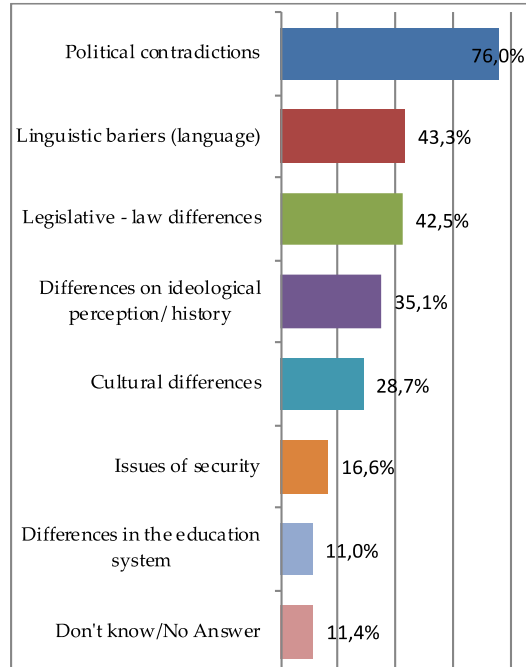




**Figure 31 - How do you generally consider the cooperation between:**



**Figure 32 - Which are, in your opinion, the cooperation reasons/barriers between the two banks of the Dniester:**



The cooperation between the citizens on both banks of the Dniester is considered *very good or good* by 55.1% of the respondents, while 39.5% consider that there is no cooperation between the inhabitants, or this is a poor one. Things are even worse in respondents' opinion if we refer to the cooperation between the authorities on the two banks of the Dniester - 63.3%, assessed negatively the political and administrative relations between the Transnistrian region and the Republic of Moldova.

Virtually half of the respondents are not informed about the cooperation at the level of the religious institutions between Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova, despite the fact that the Diocese of Tiraspol and Dubasari is part of the Metropolitan Church of Chișinău and of the Whole Moldova, also being the church that dominates the religious landscape in Transnistria (Figure 31).

The main barriers that prevent the cooperation between the two banks of the Dniester River are, in the opinion of the respondents, caused by the political contradictions mentioned by 76% of the respondents, the linguistic barriers - 43.3%, the legislative differences - 42.5%, but also the differences in ideological perceptions or history - 35.1%, cultural differences - 28.7%, security issues - 16.6%. Also, one in ten respondents considers that the differences in the education system are a barrier (Figure 32).



## 2.4 Neighborhood relationships

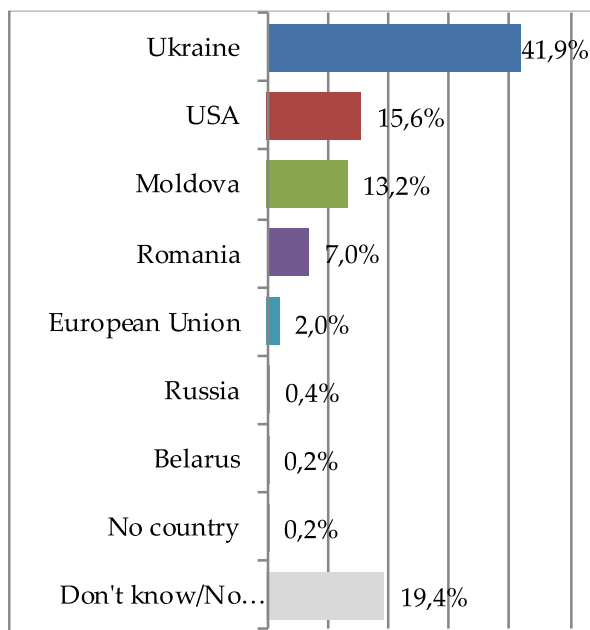
The neighborhood relationships are assessed very poorly, being almost non-existent or quite problematic, particularly with reference to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The best economic and political partner for Transnistria remains until today the Russian Federation, with an overwhelming majority of the participants in the study, 92.2% of the respondents. The other neighboring or region countries are not perceived as development partners, or they have a relatively small percentage, for example, only 2.2% of the respondents consider the Republic of Moldova to be a good economic and political partner. (Figure 33).

In contrast, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are among the top states considered by most residents of the Transnistrian region as a threat to Transnistria, along with the United States and Romania. The following are considered threats: Ukraine - 41.9% respondents, US - 15.6%, Republic of Moldova - 13.2%, Romania - 7% (Figure 34).

**Figure 33 - Which is the country you consider to be the best economic and political partner for Transnistria?**



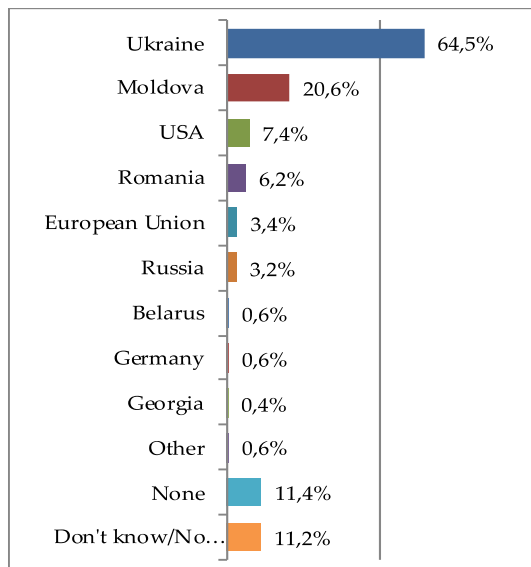
**Figure 34 - Which of the below countries do you consider a threat for Transnistria?**



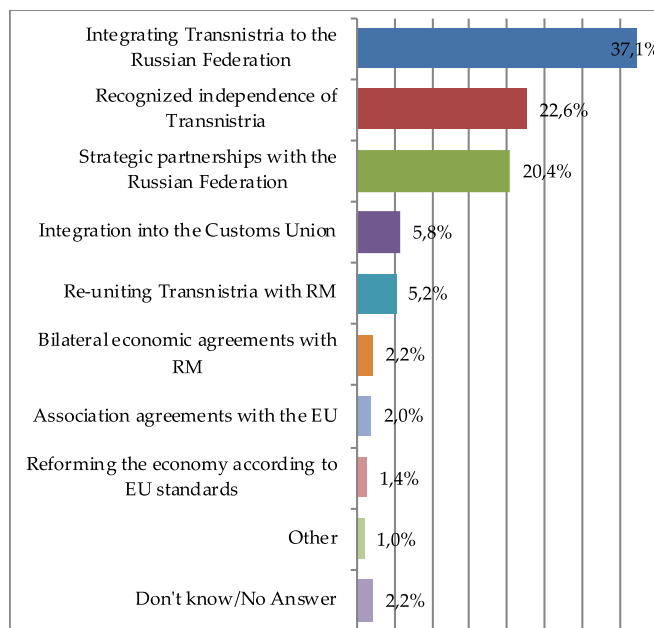


Ukraine is also the external partner which disappointed Transnistria in the last years. About 64.5% of respondents said they were disappointed with Transnistria's relationship with Ukraine, and 20.6% with Moldova, 7.4% with the USA, 6.2% with Romania (Figure 35).

**Figure 35 - In your opinion, the relationship of Transnistria with which external partner disappointed you the most in the last 5 years? Multiple random answer, maximum 3 choices**



**Figure 36 - Which of the following do you think would lead to a faster development of Transnistria?**



Asked what would contribute, in the opinion of the respondents, to a more accelerated development of Transnistria, 37.1% of respondents believe that this would be the *integration of Transnistria into the Russian Federation or the recognized independence of Transnistria*, which has accumulated 22.6% of affirmative answers. Almost the same number are of the opinion that Transnistria needs *strategic partnerships with the Russian Federation to thrive*, an opinion supported by 20.4% of the respondents and only 5.2% of the respondents believe that Transnistria would thrive in the Republic of Moldova by reintegration (Figure 36).



## 2.5 The identity of the Transnistrians, attitudes and values

The individual and collective identity of the inhabitants in the Transnistrian region was another aspect measured in this study.

Asking how they identify themselves personally, irrespective of their ethnic origin, 37.3% said they were Transnistrians, while others 35.7% were Russians and only 14% felt Moldovan (Figure 37). These tendencies are more pronounced among urban respondents, where 40.2% identify as Transnistrian, 30.8% in rural areas, and Russians 37.0% in the urban and 32.7% in rural areas. Depending on the age group, a higher number of those identified as Transnistrian (35.2% among those aged 18-29 years and 42.4% among those which are 60 and older) is noticed, and those identifying as Russians is reduced (48.0% among those aged 18-29 and 28.5% age 60 or older). (Table 10).

At the same time, most of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region consider that the closest identity for the entire population in Transnistria is the Russian identity, 42.3% of answers, followed by Transnistrian 35.7% and only 12.0% consider that the Moldovan identity is appropriate for the entire region. (Figure 38). The same tendencies are observed according to residence environments, Transnistrian chosen by 36.7% of the urban and 33.3% of the rural environment, Russian by 44.0% of the urban and 38.5% of the rural environment, Moldovan by 8.7% of the urban and 19.2% of the rural environment. Also according to age groups, Transnistrian is chosen more by older people (31,2% of the people between 18-29 and 42,4% of those age 60 and older), Russian by the younger ones (52,8% of the people between 18-29 and 35,4% of those age 60 and older) (Table 11).

Figure 37 - Regardless of your ethnic origin, you personally feel...?

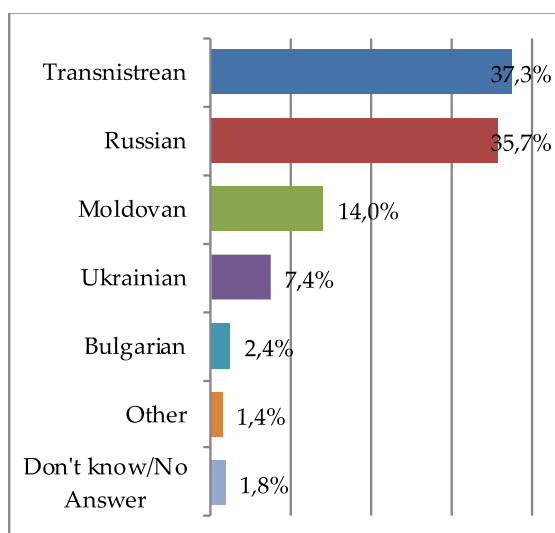
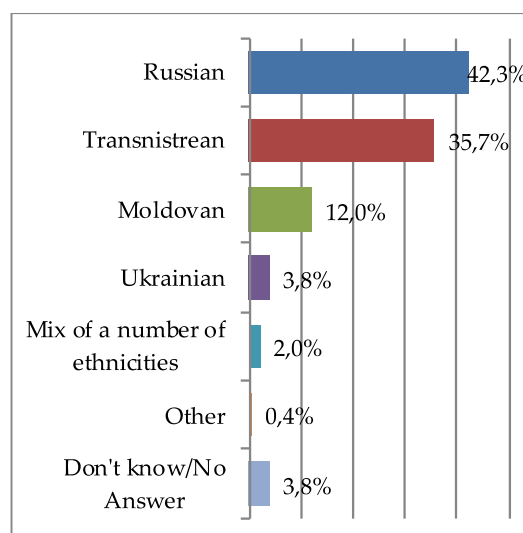


Figure 38 - But what identity do you think is the most fit for the whole population in Transnistria?



The most famous person in Transnistria, considered by 66,7% of the people interviewed as hero of the people is Alexandr Suvorov. About 16.4% nominated Catherine II, 14.2% consider Alexandru Pushkin as a hero of the people. Approximately 10% of the mentions have been obtained by people such as Gheorghii Jukov, Vladimir Lenin, Grigorii Kotovski,





Iosif Stalin. At the opposite pole is Stefan cel Mare, who has not obtained more than 2.4% of the votes, Zoia Cosmodemianscaia (the first woman declared hero of the Soviet Union during the Second World War), but also Mihai Eminescu, considered hero of Transnistria by 2.8% of respondents. More important weights are assigned by the respondents in the urban environment to the related persons in relation to those in the rural environment (Figure39).

**Table 10 No matter your ethnic origin, you personally consider yourself... ?**

		Transnistrian	Moldovan	Russian	Ukrainian	Bulgarian	Other	DON'T KNOW/ NO ANSWER
<b>Total</b>		37,3%	14,0%	35,7%	7,4%	2,4%	1,4%	1,8%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	35,2%	7,2%	48,0%	4,8%	1,6%	1,6%	1,6%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	35,5%	15,7%	31,4%	11,6%	2,5%	0,8%	2,5%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	34,9%	17,4%	35,8%	9,2%	1,8%	0,0%	0,9%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	42,4%	16,0%	28,5%	4,9%	3,5%	2,8%	2,1%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	33,9%	13,4%	42,5%	4,3%	2,7%	2,0%	1,1%
	<b>Female</b>	39,3%	14,4%	31,6%	9,3%	2,2%	0,9%	2,2%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	40,4%	23,1%	23,1%	5,8%	1,9%	0,0%	5,8%
	<b>Secondary</b>	34,4%	15,8%	35,9%	8,5%	2,3%	2,0%	1,2%
	<b>Higher</b>	40,4%	9,0%	38,8%	6,4%	2,7%	1,0%	1,6%
<b>Occupational state:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	33,6%	13,6%	36,8%	10,5%	2,7%	1,0%	1,8%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	40,1%	14,3%	34,8%	5,0%	2,2%	1,9%	1,8%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	39,0%	1,2%	56,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,2%	1,2%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	34,4%	1,6%	30,3%	28,7%	0,8%	0,8%	3,3%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	40,2%	38,4%	18,9%	0,6%	0,0%	0,6%	1,2%
	<b>Other</b>	26,8%	7,3%	31,7%	0,0%	24,4%	7,2%	2,4%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	37,3%	19,6%	28,5%	4,4%	6,3%	1,2%	2,5%
	<b>Medium</b>	36,8%	13,2%	36,8%	9,2%	0,6%	2,4%	1,1%
	<b>High</b>	37,7%	9,6%	41,3%	8,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,8%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	40,2%	11,7%	37,0%	5,8%	1,2%	1,8%	2,3%
	<b>Rural</b>	30,8%	19,2%	32,7%	10,9%	5,1%	0,6%	0,6%

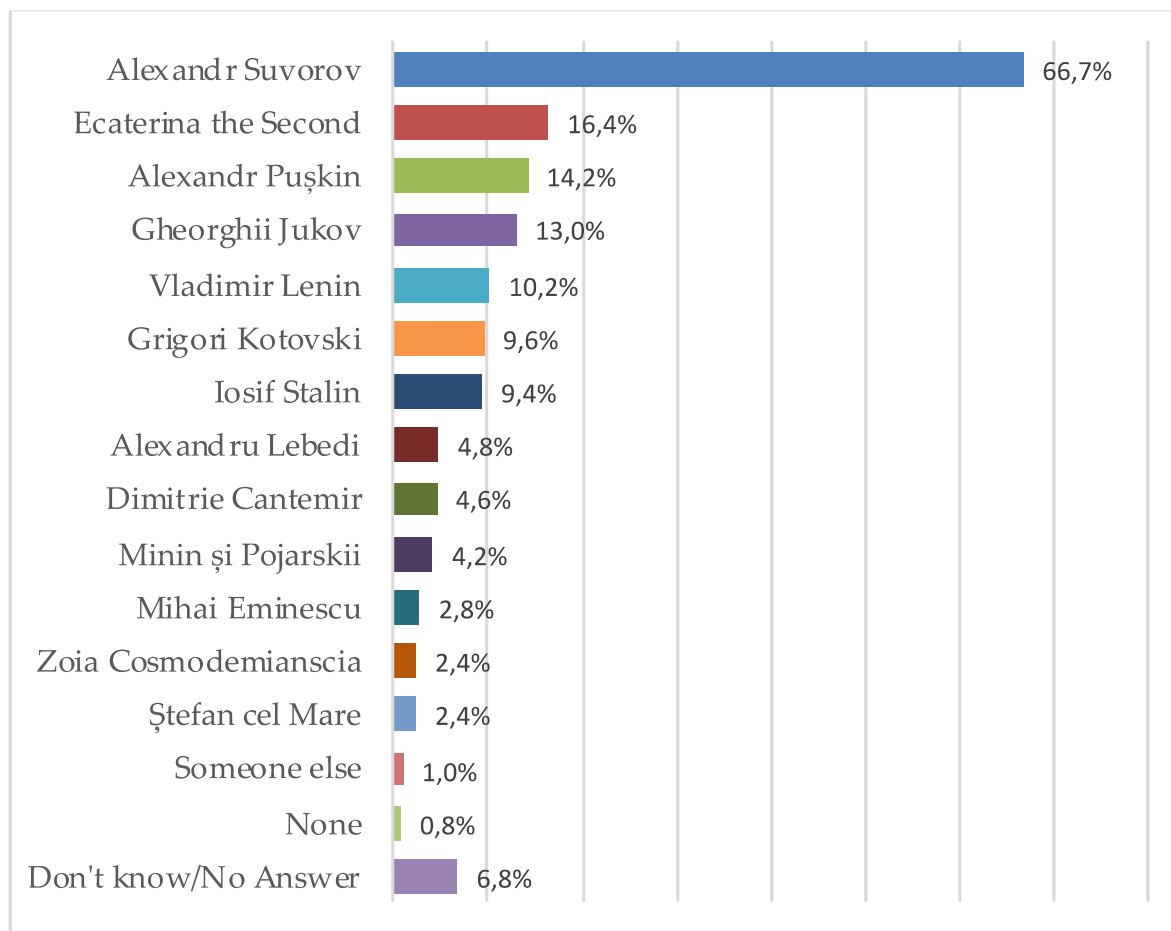


Table 11 But what identity do you think is the best suited for the entire population of Transnistria?

		Transnistrian	Moldovan	Russian	Ukrainian	Mix of a number of ethnicities	Other	DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER
<b>Total</b>		35,7%	12,0%	42,3%	3,8%	2,0%	0,4%	3,8%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	31,2%	10,4%	52,8%	1,6%	0,8%	0,0%	3,2%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	34,7%	14,9%	40,5%	3,3%	1,7%	0,0%	5,0%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	33,0%	12,8%	41,3%	5,5%	1,8%	0,9%	4,6%
	<b>60+ years old</b>	42,4%	10,4%	35,4%	4,9%	3,5%	0,7%	2,8%
<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	37,1%	9,7%	47,8%	2,2%	1,1%	0,0%	2,2%
	<b>Female</b>	34,8%	13,4%	39,0%	4,8%	2,6%	0,6%	4,8%
<b>Education level:</b>	<b>Primary</b>	36,5%	21,2%	30,8%	5,8%	0,0%	0,0%	5,8%
	<b>Secondary</b>	34,0%	13,9%	43,2%	3,9%	2,7%	0,4%	1,9%
	<b>Higher</b>	37,8%	6,9%	44,1%	3,2%	1,6%	0,5%	5,9%
<b>Occupational state:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	34,5%	11,8%	44,1%	5,0%	1,4%	0,0%	3,2%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	36,6%	12,2%	40,9%	2,9%	2,5%	0,8%	4,3%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Russian</b>	32,6%	2,3%	58,1%	1,2%	2,9%	0,6%	2,3%
	<b>Ukrainian</b>	31,1%	9,8%	37,7%	11,5%	3,3%	0,8%	5,7%
	<b>Moldovan</b>	38,4%	24,4%	31,1%	1,8%	0,6%	0,0%	3,7%
	<b>Other</b>	51,2%	9,8%	34,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	4,9%
<b>Socio-economic level:</b>	<b>Low</b>	40,5%	15,2%	34,8%	3,8%	0,6%	0,0%	5,1%
	<b>Medium</b>	32,8%	13,2%	44,8%	2,9%	2,9%	1,2%	2,3%
	<b>High</b>	34,1%	7,8%	46,7%	4,8%	2,4%	0,0%	4,2%
<b>Settlement type:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	36,7%	8,7%	44,0%	2,6%	2,6%	0,3%	5,0%
	<b>Rural</b>	33,3%	19,2%	38,5%	6,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,3%



**Figure 39 - Which of the following characters can be considered heroes of the Transnistrian people? Multiple answer, maximum 3 choices**



Being asked to comment on their personal attitude towards a range of social categories, respondents in the Transnistrian region had divided opinions. A major share of 88.6% of respondents expressed a very positive attitude (37.5%) or positive (51.1%) compared to the elderly, 58.3% - in relation to the socially vulnerable- (10.0% - very positive, 48.3% - positive), 47.9% - toward businessmen (4.0% - very positive, 43.9% - positive) and 42.5% - have a favorable attitude towards ethnic minorities (8.4% - very positive, 34.1% - positive)

Negative or very negative attitudes were expressed in relation to the sexual minorities by 47.2% of respondents, and 34.1% - against civil servants, followed by religious minorities with 20.2% negative or very negative answers. (Table 12).



**Table 12 - What is your attitude towards the following social categories:**

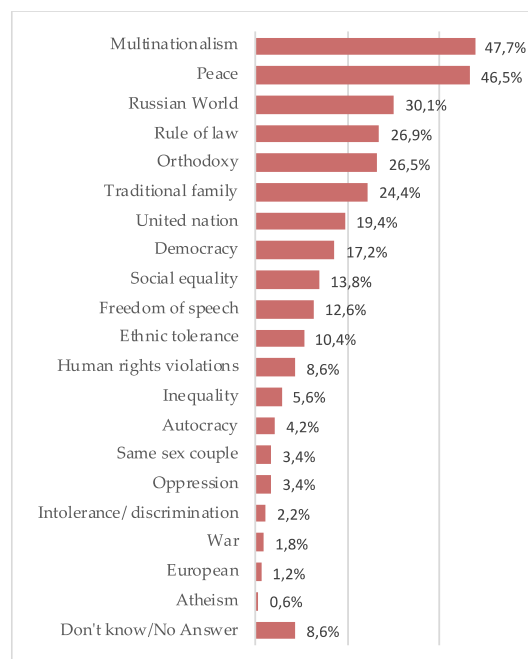
	Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative	Don't know/No answer
<b>Older people</b>	37.5%	51.1%	10.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
<b>Socially vulnerable persons</b>	10.0%	48.3%	33.3%	5.2%	0.6%	2.6%
<b>Businessmen/ Entrepreneurs</b>	4.0%	43.9%	42.7%	6.4%	1.2%	1.8%
<b>Ethnic minorities</b>	8.4%	34.1%	48.5%	5.0%	1.0%	3.0%
<b>Religious minorities</b>	2.0%	22.2%	51.9%	15.4%	4.8%	3.6%
<b>Public servants</b>	0.4%	16.2%	46.9%	28.5%	5.6%	2.4%
<b>Sexual minorities</b>	0.2%	10.0%	36.1%	23.4%	23.8%	6.4%

The respondents were also asked to choose, from a range of values, the ones they deem appropriate for Transnistria and Moldova respectively. Thus, Transnistria is associated by about 47% respondents with multinationalism, 46.5% with peace, and by 30.1% with the Russian world. About 25% of respondents consider that other values characteristic of Transnistria and its inhabitants are the *rule of law*, *orthodoxy*, *traditional family*.

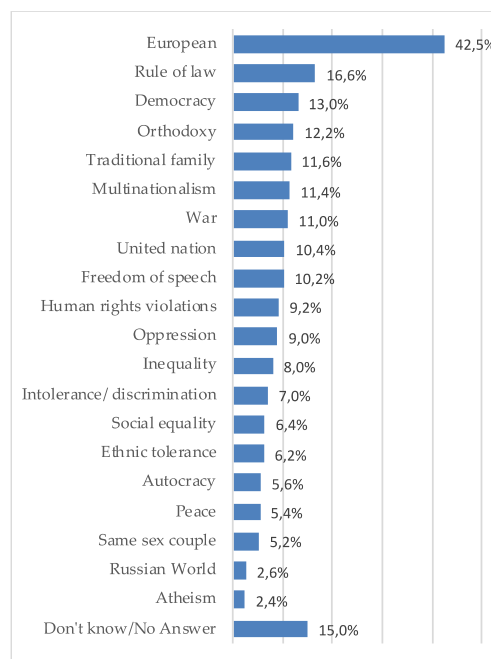
In the case of the Republic of Moldova, most of the respondents consider that it can be associated with Europe and Europeanism 42,5% mentions, the remaining options obtaining less than 20% of the answers, including the rule of law, democracy, orthodoxy and also the traditional family. The Russian world and peace are not typical for Moldova, with between 2% and 5.6% answers. (Figure 40).

**Figure 40 - Which of the following values do you associate with...? Multiple answer.**

#### Transnistria



#### Republic of Moldova





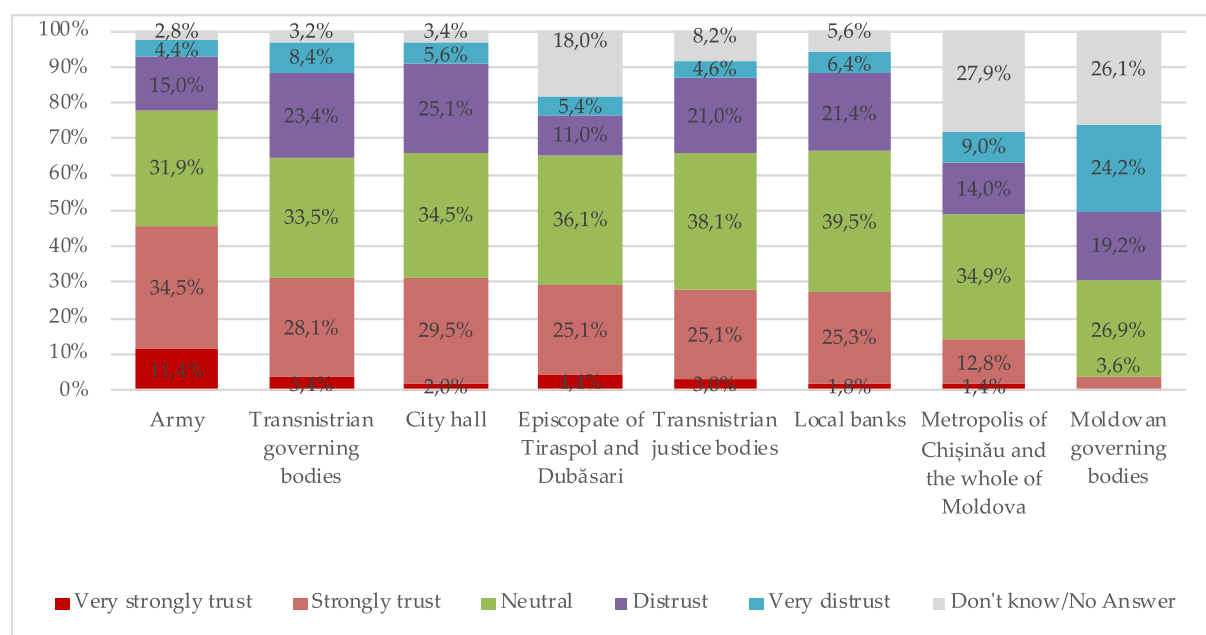
## 2.6 Trust in the institutions

Another aspect addressed in this study was to investigate the degree of trust in the state institutions. So, the inhabitants of the Transnistria region have the biggest trust in the army - 45,9% opinions (11,4% have a very high trust, 34,5% high trust).

On the other hand, trust in the Tiraspol governing bodies and local public authorities is disputed in the Transnistrian society, with 31.5% of the respondents having a positive opinion, and a whole range of negative attitudes through lack of trust. (31,8% for governing bodies and 30.7% for APLs).

The lowest trust, 3.6%, was declared towards the *Moldovan leadership authorities*, as well as towards the *Metropolitan Church of Chisinau and the Whole Moldova*, with about 14.2% *very strong trust or strong trust*. However, here we also had the highest degree of no answers, again pointing to the lack of knowledge or interaction at the institutional level between the two banks (Figure 41).

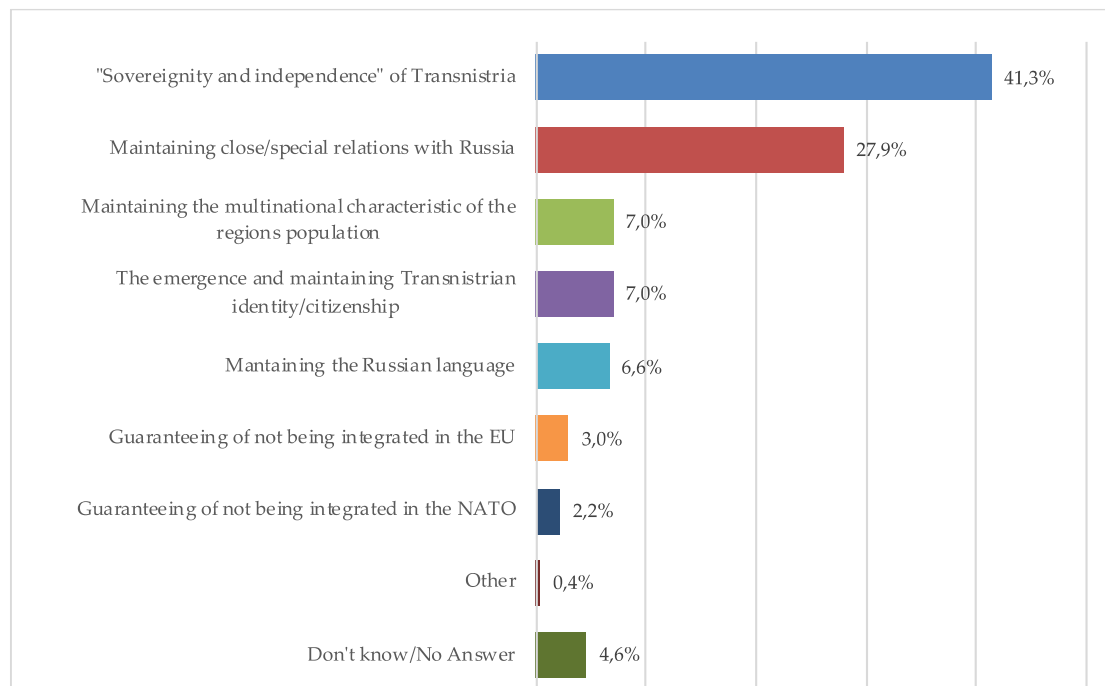
Figure 41 - What trust do you have in the following institutions?





The respondents of the study consider that the most important positive consequence of the separation of Transnistria from the Republic of Moldova was the "sovereignty and independence of Transnistria" - 41.3% of responses, as well as *keeping close or special relations with Russia*, mentioned by 27.9% of the respondents. Other options that have accounted for about 7% of the mentions are *preserving the multinational nature of the population in the region, the emergence and preservation of Transnistrian identity or citizenship and the preservation of Russian language* (Figure 42).

**Figure 42 - In your opinion, which of the following can be considered the most important positive consequence of the separation of Transnistria from the Republic of Moldova?**





### III. Qualitative study results

#### 3.1. The general perception of the group discussions participants about the socio-economic life of Transnistria

The first set of questions in the Group discussions was dedicated to exploring the opinion of the respondents in relation to the current situation of the Transnistria region, the satisfaction towards the quality of life and the future perspectives of the population. The participants were asked to describe the current situation of Transnistria from a social, cultural, economic and political point of view, the changes which appeared in the last five years, the economic perspectives of the region, identify the biggest problems they face in their day to day life, as well as the personal and professional development perspectives in the region.

*“Transnistria - a ship that is sinking, already under water”*

Most opinions have emphasized that the population of the Transnistrian region is currently *in a state of expectation* and feels an uncertainty towards the future, which to some extent turns into insecurity about tomorrow. Generally, the social and economic situation is perceived by most participants as a difficult one, where they can survive from one day to the other, but not live a decent life. Sometimes, even though we see some more optimistic attitudes about the positive changes that took place lately, they are limited to the examples regarding the external appearance of the big cities and the improvement of their internal infrastructure. Some agree that the situation is satisfactory, so far bearable compared to the neighboring countries, but there is always room for improvement.



“we are in a state of expectation, but nobody knows what we are waiting for. We don’t know what will happen, it seems like everybody hid and is waiting for something.” (M, 50 years old, urban, 1FG)

“we are all waiting, you don’t know what to expect, what to do about the children, send them away from here as soon as possible or wait a little more, maybe things will calm down” (M, 50 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

“I think we are on the edge of the abyss, we balance... it is very hard not to fall deeper in the abyss or that something will get better, with this state of not-recognition we just balance” (F, 28 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

“we can notice that the leaders started to take care of the city, of the infrastructure, of the lighting, of roads” (F, 60 years old, urban, 2 FG)

“maybe the leaders started to do something in the cities, but I live in a village, and we don’t even have a cultural hall, nothing” (F, 36 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

“compared to other cities or countries, here it is still not that bad, but we wish it were better” (F, 60 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG).

“yes, we no longer have military hostilities, we live in peace, at least we have work, but the middle class is now barely making ends meet” (F, 40 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

In the last few years, in the opinion of the participants in the discussion, nothing has changed for the better, or the social and economic situation worsened, some of them even comparing the current situation in Transnistria with “a ship that is sinking, already under water ”(M, 22 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG) or a swing that goes from one side to another, from a point of view it seems that everything is good and then suddenly everything is bad, there is no related positive tendency "(M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG).

There were also opinions that said that nothing depends now on Transnistria and everything that the political leaders in Tiraspol can do is “open bridges over the Dniester” (M, 24 years old, 1FG). But the prevalent opinions are those emphasizing that the people in Transnistria lead their life from one election cycle to the other and, if at first, they had hopes, dreams, now they are all crushed:

“we essentially live here in electoral cycles... the political change we expected did not take place” (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

“they promised a lot, especially before the elections, but nothing happened; the attention of the leadership is directed only towards the pensioners (F, 26 years old, rural, 4FG)





“In the rural localities there is a total stagnation, the villages are emptier and emptier”.

Also, most of the participants consider that there has been a negative evolution in the recent years regarding migration, unemployment, the balance between expenses and income, the political control shown in the economic and media field, and the poor quality of social services. The participants are concerned both with the economic stability of the region and with the political one which, in the opinion of some, directly influences other economic and social processes. Also, the people interviewed are worried about the exchange rate fluctuations, citing economic instability as one of their worries, which affects their confidence in the future. The emigration flows have intensified, leaving behind nearly deserted localities, and even affecting the population's density in the big cities, "if you go out after 22:00 outside in the city center, you can count people on your fingers" (F, 40 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG). In relation to social services, people complain about their lack of quality and about the exaggerated costs, the most problematic issues being the low amount of social allowances or the lack of quality medical services.

“there is no financial stability because of the exchange rate fluctuations. It is clear that the prices are guided by it, if before the exchange rate was somewhat stable, now you don't know what to expect, what will happen tomorrow...” (F, 22 years old, urban, 2FG)

“if we talk about changes, 5 years ago elite houses were being built, 5 years ago the ones who still had economic security, now they lost it, not to speak about the rest of us” (M, 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

“there is no social protection for the elderly or the children, if you go to give birth, you need to prepare a certain amount of money, if you need surgery, you need another amount of money ...” (F, 63 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

“I have an allowance for people with disabilities, but now I don't even receive this amount regularly, sometimes it is withheld even half a year; (F, 26 years old, rural, 4FG)

"the changes that have taken place are related to control of power, control has increased, and this is both good and bad" (M, 42 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 2FG)

“about 5 years ago the flow of population leaving was not so big... people see no growing perspective here and leave” (F, 40 YEARS OLD, 3FG)

"for me, unemployment is the biggest change, meaning that now there is a very high level of lack of jobs in the rural areas ... if in Tiraspol and Bender it is more acceptable, then in the villages there is a total stagnation, the villages are becoming emptier and emptier" F, 24 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

In the view of the participants in the group talks, the wage situation in Transnistria has worsened in the last 10 years, and people have to work more jobs to earn their living. Also in



the qualitative study, the respondents mentioned that it is hard to find a well-paid job. A big part of the people employed do not have an official job, so they don't pay income tax.

“very small salaries, you work 3-4 jobs, you think where you can make more money” (M, 66 years old, urban, 1FG)

“the average wage has decreased, if in 2003 people were thinking twice if to work for 300 dollars a month, now they are ready to work even for 200”. (M, 37 years old, urban, 1FG)

“it is hard to find a job with a decent salary. Many choose to get unofficial jobs, do not pay taxes, or emigrate and leave their families here. Mostly men are the ones leaving, families are destroyed...” (F, 22 years old, urban, 2FG)

Other changes observed by the participants to the discussion which are not related to the economic and social area refer to the regional and international context, with some considering that Russia's influence in the area has started to decline in the last few years or others who believe that the cooperation relationship between Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova lately has seen progress:

“in the external policy there are positive steps from Moldova, Chișinău and Tiraspol are working together” (F, 23 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

“in the last period we can see a tendency of recognizing that also the ideas that do not come from the Russian Federation are positive, there is a progress in this respect” (F, 54 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG).

### 3.2. The Business Environment

“in the past there was more freedom from an economical point of view”

On this topic we performed a radiography of the business environment in Transnistria, exploring the opinions and personal experiences of the participants. The landscape that emerged during the talks indicates that businesses in Transnistria have major disproportions: business goes well for those who hold the monopoly and the others - the rest of the entrepreneurs, are struggling to survive the unfavorable conditions of domestic and foreign business. The discussions were dominated by views that consider that both the regulatory framework and the current political context are not conducive to business start-ups and entrepreneurial development, and that "there was more freedom in the past" (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)



"if we are to refer to the real sector of the economy and not to the services area, then I think that this sector practically does not exist in Transnistria, even the small entrepreneurs don't exist ... even compared to Moldova ... we have nothing "(F, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

There were also voices stating that there are still some positive moments, international projects for farmers, some niches that allow business start-up in areas such as Technology and Information or Call Centre services, but these views were generally singular, being dominated by pessimism.

The most affected nowadays in Transnistria are small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the sales field, and the most noticed problems are the monopoly of the company Șerif, high taxes and charges, excessive bureaucracy and, last but not least, the lack of competition and foreign investment. An important aspect mentioned by some of the participants in the regulatory framework is the difficulty faced by entrepreneurs for the certification of products going for export: "only certified products are accepted for export, and for obtaining certification you must address the institutions of the Republic Moldova, which will lead to a double customs clearance"(M, 33 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG) but also local barriers for some companies and banks that generate a refusal to operate with foreign currency, which, in the opinion of some participants, diminishes the potential of investment and external projects.

"I personally look with fear towards the changes in the tax policy that are promised to be implemented next year, some draconian measures ... in our country even the small business struggles to survive, they will close everything" (F, 60 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"in Transnistria, businesses are suffocated through all possible methods, practically nobody uses clean (legal) accounting practices for their business. The problem is not that they don't want to, but that we have an incorrect fiscal policy. For us, everything revolves around Șerif, you work under them or not at all..." (M, 38 years old, urban, 3FG)

"there is also the problem of investments, foreign investors are not attracted to the factories and the factories are collapsing, why foreign investors are not allowed to access our market like Moldova, build factories, produce cables." (F, 36 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

"a few years ago, a Russian investor came, they presented him the business plan, and at the end when he saw his profit according to this business plan, he did not want to open anything here anymore" (F, 20 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

Also, the participants were asked to express their opinion on the state of the business environment in the Republic of Moldova as compared to the situation in Transnistria, on the conditions and the market on the other bank of the Dniester. Almost unanimously, they said that there is a healthier business environment in the Republic of Moldova, where there is competition and the appropriate legislation which everybody can understand, there are foreign investors and a positive development tendency in this respect. In principle, the stability and the positive tendency are due to the fact that the entrepreneurs in the Republic of Moldova can



freely export to any country and there is no legislative barrier like the one Transnistria has, in their opinion.

"it is clear that the economic development in the Republic of Moldova is much more visible than it is here. You can observe from one day to the other how new buildings and businesses appear, regarding Transnistria, there is also some economic development here, just not at a rate comparable to that in Moldova ... (M, 33 years old, urban, 4FG)

"in Moldova, the business feels safer, more stable, they can have economic exchanges with any state without being subject to double customs clearance, and all that a state needs is to have access to export and import" (F, 22 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"I think that the conditions in Moldova are much clearer, of course there are many problems also there, but it is easier to understand what you need or what you cannot do" (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"if we were to compare the business here with the one in Moldova, I can give the example of my colleague which is doing landscape design, he opened a branch in Chisinau and originally had 10% in Moldova and 90% in Transnistria, now 90% of his activity and profit are in Moldova and 10% in Tiraspol "(M, 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

### 3.3. Migration

“I have been thinking to emigrate for 2 years, I have to choose between Russia and Europe”

Already mentioned above as one of the profound social problems faced by the Transnistrian region, migration in this section is treated from an exploratory perspective in order to understand the causes and effects of the phenomenon, as perceived by the participants in the study. As it results from the group discussions, migration is not a new phenomenon for Transnistria, it was always there. What is new in the last period is the intensification of the emigration flow that leads to the depopulation of some localities and at the same time to the shortage of qualified staff. People are almost overwhelmed by the extent of the phenomenon, speaking with emotion about relatives and acquaintances who have left (each participant knowing somebody who left), correlated with the aging of the society around them and the future prospects for themselves and their children. Thus, on the one hand, we have an economic situation that causes people to go looking for a better future, and on the other hand we have the shortage of young professionals and qualified staff.



“all the people I know have left ... I would like to stay here, I like Tiraspol, everything is very compact, I'm driving and 5 minutes later I'm fishing, another 5 minutes to get to work, but to live here, from a financial point of view, is impossible; I would like to do something to change things, but I cannot, so we have to leave" (M, 27, urban, 4FG)

“all noticed that the population has decreased, especially the young population, and there are more and more old people. Consequently, the most global problem is the absence of the human resource in all areas and all directions. Young people are leaving” (M, 66 years old, urban, 1FG)

Thus, roughly speaking, we have outlined three large profiles of the Transnistrian inhabitants, those who will not leave no matter how things will evolve in the region, because they were born here, here are their roots, their relatives; those who do not want to leave, but are waiting to see how things are going to evolve economically and politically to make a decision, some of them have already left and came back; and those who do not see here enough opportunities for their future and their children and want to leave no matter what the social-political developments will be in the future.

“I could be forced to leave by the political instability, otherwise I had enough, I have travelled enough” (M, 38 YEARS OLD, 3FG)

"we must agree that many of those who complete their higher education cannot make it here and they leave, not because they want to but because of the context that causes people to leave" (F, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

"all rich people have left a long time ago, only the ones that survive form one salary to another are left" (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"my daughter is 25 years old, and in the last 5 years she went everywhere because she is not satisfied with the salary or anything here." (F, 43 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 1FG)

"I personally think here it is not that bad for small children, for schoolchildren, but if you want to build a career then you cannot" (F, 26 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

The participants to the study were also asked about the emigration destinations they consider appropriate for their future and their children. The results of their answers lead to a conclusion that people are both open towards the East and the West, the inhabitants on the left bank of the Dniester mentioning Russia, Ukraine, Europe as well as the US.



"my eldest son is in New York, he lives there, my middle daughter is in Moscow, my youngest is with me for the time being, she would have what to inherit ..." (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"my daughter is 20 years old and she has already visited many countries, now she is studying in Moscow and I hope she will not come back here ... for now Moscow, afterwards we will see where" (M, 42 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 2FG)

"if I were to leave I would go to Europe, Portugal... why Portugal, because I already know people there" (F, 26 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"I have two sons, one is with me, the other in Germany, and he keeps saying he wants to bring us to him. He says that we live almost in hunger here, and he is right, you pay for the communal services and you have no money left" (F, 28 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

Speaking about the future perspectives of children and their education, most participants believe that the education system must offer opportunities for international development and recognition and, locally, these needs cannot be fully satisfied, "the development scale here is very small" (F, 22 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG). Regarding the recognized education, it is clear that almost 29 years of non-recognition of the Transnistrian region have left their mark on the young generation, without the possibility to continue their education in the international system due to the non-recognition of the diplomas, which made them to often go towards the Russian Federation in order to be able to continue their studies at a higher education institution other than the local ones:

"I would send my children where their degrees are recognized, then they can decide for themselves where it is more comfortable for them." (M, 22 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"my daughter is still young so we will see, if the situation does not improve here, then we are thinking of sending her to school in Europe or North America" (M, 37 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

Thus, an essential idea enforced in these discussions is that the emigration of the inhabitants of the Transnistria region is not an ideological matter, but a purely pragmatic and rational one. If often going to work in Russia is considered a more comfortable, "*easier*" choice as there is no linguistic barrier, people are aware that the Eastern economic situation is currently not as satisfactory as they wished. While Europe, seen by some as a destination more difficult to reach - "*harder to bear*" offers better work conditions, salaries and more opportunities for the future.

"I have been thinking to emigrate for 2 years, I have to choose between Russia and Europe". There are many problems in Russia, that is why I am looking to go West. I am aware that the language would be a problem, but one that can be solved". (M, 22 years old, urban, 1 FG)





### 3.4. Mass Media

The sources from which the inhabitants of the Transnistria region obtain their information is another subject discussed in the four group discussions. Participants were invited to share their opinion on the quality and their trust in the local media, the sources used to obtain information regarding international news, the use of social networks and, last but not least, the sources of information about events from the Republic of Moldova.

Most of the participants consider that there is no media market in Transnistria and local sources of information are politically dependent and serve the interests of certain parties or leaders. In their opinion, Transnistria lacks information transparency, alternative sources of media, the situation becoming worse after the change of leadership in the region. Even if they watch local TV channels, such as TCB or TV PMR or the news websites Novosti PMR, most do it only for information, without having full trust in what they are transmitting, the participants say. Usually, in order to form their own opinion, they use alternative sources of information or diversified media channels, blogs, discuss news with friends and family, or follow other people's opinions in the social media.

"there is no alternative media, all the information comes from a single source ... you can get information only on the internet, although even there you need to be careful" (M, 42, rural, 2FG)

"a source of information can be reliable only if it is independent, but all of our sources of information are funded by someone. It is important to know by whom and not get wrong information" (M, 66 years old, urban, 1FG)

"after the change of power in Transnistria, there is no competition among the information sources. If before you heard different opinions and could compare, now the poor pensioners cannot understand what is really happening. I trust the internet, social networks more..." (M, 38 years old, urban, 3FG)

"I can say I don't trust any media source, no matter if it is independent or dependent" (M, 28 years old, urban, 4FG)

"I would rather isolate myself from our local news ... nothing changes ... the same thing always, why should I listen to that?" (M, 33 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"our media is affiliated with the Șerif monopoly and the state, they provide some trustful information, but they do not enjoy the trust of the population because they always show only the positive parts of Transnistria - how good and beautiful we are; there is also independent media, such as Dnester TV, but they have a small audience because they do not have enough funding to create powerful media channels" (M, 27 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 4FG)



When they want to consult international news, study participants said they are using the Lenta.ru, ITARTASS.ru, Vesti.ru, or TV channels such as Russia Today or Prime, and are subscribed to news on mail.ru or Yandex.

Also, there were opinions that said they preferred to consult the media both in the Russian Federation and in Ukraine, but after the events in Ukraine, the press there became manipulative and no longer meets their requirements.

„if we were to compare the mass media in Russia with the one in Ukraine, the mass media in Ukraine is shamelessly lying” (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

But there were also some opinions that were dissatisfied with the quality of the news watched on the Russian channels. In their perception, news is always negative and bring fear among the viewers - *“Russian television - you watch the news, there's only politics there. You could shoot yourself, they are so scary...”*

The most popular social networks were Facebook, VKontakte, Instagram, Odnoklassniki and Telegram, the latter being especially appreciated for informing about local events and news. There were opinions that VKontakte is beginning to lose its strength and popularity:

“I use Facebook, Telegram ... VKontakte is slowly dying...” (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

“I also use VKontakte, but lately I try to turn to Telegram, because VKontakte became more dangerous ... I am trying to stop using it, the reason being the lack of freedom of speech” (M, 33 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

A special section within this theme was dedicated to the sources of information of the participants in the study about the events and news from Moldova, the frequency of the information and the media used. We sought to understand how well the two banks of the Dniester are connected, how present is the information space in the Republic of Moldova in Transnistria, but also how interested are the inhabitants of Transnistria to know what is happening in the Republic of Moldova.

One aspect perceived by the participants is the lack of Russian language TV channels and broadcasts from the Republic of Moldova and, in general, the insufficiency of Moldovan media in Transnistria, there were people stating that they have access to media sources in Moldova only that they are in Romanian and others saying that there are no TV channels from the Republic of Moldova included in the TV package for the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region:

“I am watching various Russian, Ukrainian TV channels. Moldovan channels are fewer, there are no channels in Russian about the situation in Moldova. I watch all of them and then I form an opinion.” (M, 50 years old, urban, 1FG)

“we have no Moldovan television, at some point there was, it was included in the channel





pack, but then it was excluded, most probably for political reason, now practically people on both banks of the Dniester can have access to the media market in Moldova and vice versa only via Internet "(M, 27 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 4FG)

The study found that some respondents felt the lack of informational coverage from the Republic of Moldova, but others are not necessarily interested in being aware of what is happening on the other bank of the Dniester, they are less interested or show interest only when there are some important events such as presidential elections. The younger category of participants mentioned that when they want to consult the news from the Republic of Moldova, they turn to the online media, with Newsmaker.md or Point.Md being among the preferences. Also, they watch YouTube channels or read blogs.

"if I wish to find out something about Moldova, I check the internet news sites: Newsmaker, Point, YouTube with reference to the news in the Republic of Moldavia" (M, 27 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 4FG)

"I do not particularly and seriously watch the news in Moldova, maybe only when something is catching my eye when I open mail.ru or yandex ... when their president changed, I watched the news, but when I realized nothing spectacular would happen, I stopped following them " (M, 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

"I'm no longer following the Moldovan news, when I lived there, I was aware, now living here I hear nothing" (F, 22 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

### 3.5. The comparative view of the Transnistrian region and of the Republic of Moldova by the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region

A central theme of group discussions was to identify the participants' attitudes regarding different aspects of cooperation between the two banks. Issues such as the attractiveness of the Republic of Moldova for the inhabitants of the left bank of the Dniester River, the existing problems on the two banks of the Dniester, but also an evaluation of the current cooperation relations and potential perspectives for the future were discussed.

According to the participants, the two banks of the Dniester are similar in terms of the problems they face: the extent of the migration phenomenon, unemployment, low wages, but also even here there are some differences, related to the intensity of abovementioned problems and from a geographical point of view. For example, if in the capital of the Republic of Moldova there are more development and employment opportunities, the wages being higher, as some study participants think, the rest of the country is assessed much more negatively than the Transnistrian region by the participants to the discussion.



"I personally think that the migration phenomenon exists both here and there (Republic of Moldova), especially among young people, only its scale is different" (F, 23 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"if we are talking about Chisinau, yes, there may be bigger salaries, but 100 km away from Chisinau the people are barely surviving, it depends who you compare yourself with ... then even if it is simpler to get a job there and the salary is bigger, all those aspects that an emigrant deals with make the difference ... the price of the house ... the more expensive a city is, the more expensive everything is ..." (M, 33 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"it's good to live in Transnistria, it's comfortable, it's much cleaner than Moldova, more quiet, everyone knows each other, but if you want to earn money, develop and look for profit opportunities, then it's simpler in Ukraine or Moldova" (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

Among the services in the Republic of Moldova appreciated by the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region there is the health system, which is assessed much more positively than the one in Transnistria, especially by adults. And as positive parts generally highlighted on the right bank of the Dniester compared to the left bank, the following were mentioned: the more permissive and more developed business environment due to the larger market and the freedom of opinion, expression and assembly.

"in my opinion as the eldest person in the group, I want to mention that if something happens to me seriously, I get sick, then we go to Chisinau ... I recently had surgery there" (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

However, most of the opinions still consider that the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region have a better quality of life than those on the opposite side, and that the Republic of Moldova does not distinguish itself with anything more attractive, maybe even on the contrary, given that a part of the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova, especially those in Gagauzia, come to Transnistria. The study participants have also stressed that despite the better wage prospects on the right bank of the Dniester, people in Transnistria enjoy lower maintenance costs, cheaper products, a more welcoming environment, and they feel privileged.

"it is not better in Moldova nor in Ukraine, people from Moldova come to us, even from Gagauzia, it means that there is something that attracts them here if they come, we cannot say we live worse than our neighbors" (F, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)



"because of Russia's energy support, we have a great advantage, despite what has been said about the low average salary here, I think we are privileged" (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"migration is high also for the neighbors, it was better in Ukraine before, but now everything has fallen, what to say about Moldova which occupies the last place in Europe in terms of economic indicators, there is nothing better there" (M, 38 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

Also, in terms of political stability, Transnistria has a better position, is the opinion of some of the participants, comparing the current state of facts in the region with that of the neighboring regions:

"if we are to compare the political situation in Ukraine and Moldova, it is much more stable in our country, which is best for society" (F, 23 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"here we have a clear sky over our heads, we have survived the 90's, here nobody tells you who to love and who not to love and from this perspective it is much better than for our neighbors" (M, 22 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

"if we are talking about our neighbor Moldova, I know people from there which live in the village ... there is an acute shortage of jobs ... there the woman, regardless of the outside weather, goes to the field ... In Ukraine the situation is also terrible, on one side war, and on the other a sinister policy of leadership and discrimination on nationalistic criteria ... I like it in Transnistria, it does not matter what nationality you have, they will always listen to you, they will not ignore you regardless of the language you speak, but in Moldova everything must be in Romanian with Latin letters" (F, 36 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

"...if we do not become part of something we will die"

In the discussions on the negative and positive aspects of the Republic of Moldova, but also on the evaluation of the level of cooperation on both sides, the linguistic barriers were invoked by several participants, saying that a potential barrier to current and future cooperation between the two banks is also the fact that the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region do not speak Romanian and face or would face difficulties in communicating, socializing on the territory of Moldova. Although some respondents are open to studying Romanian, they believe that this should be done from a young age and should target the new generations. And towards the adult population which speaks Russian, the attitude should be a tolerant one towards the communication in Romanian.

"we are afraid of the language, because we do not speak it. They do not need now to terrorize us because of the language, it must start from kindergartens, to include language studies in kindergartens. In 10 years, everybody will speak the Moldovan language. I don't speak Moldovan, although I've been living here since 1972. The first thing that must be done is



study the language in kindergarten” (F, 65 years old, urban, 2FG)

"I do not come too often to Moldova and it's harder to say how it is, but when I go I notice that there is much more animated, more noise, and the second thing is related to my status as a Russian speaker: I was born in Tiraspol, but I am originally from Russia, all my relatives are from Russia, and I noticed that people in Moldova have begun to show reluctance to Russian speakers, do not answer immediately if you ask them something and look strangely at you; I do not speak Romanian and honestly, I don't even intend to learn it, what for? ..."

(M, 27 years old, urban, 4FG)

In terms of foreign policy, several respondents pointed out that there are positive trends in the cooperation between Moldova and Transnistria. Some interviewees are of the opinion that the “leaders” from the left bank of the Dniester are oriented towards the east more, which delays the relationship with Moldova. Others consider that progress has been made at the political level, although it cannot be ignored that the Moldovan authorities want to impose, hamper the negotiation process and do not want to dialogue from an equal position with the political representatives of the Transnistrian region. Another barrier in the negotiation of the two banks is perceived as Western external influence over the Republic of Moldova and, respectively, the influence and affiliation of Transnistria to the Eastern area.

“we have the feeling that Moldova is trying to greet us, but we are looking in the direction of Russia ... we have to look in another direction.” (M, 22, urban, 3FG)

„there are some improvements noticed in the external policy, positive steps in the collaboration of Moldova, of Chișinău with Tiraspol.” (F, 23 years old, urban, 1FG)

“now the document issuance process has become easier, now an inhabitant of Transnistria can go faster to Moldova and get a passport, a birth certificate, everything moves much faster.” (F, 28 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"on the one hand, we have an improvement in relations and on the other hand we have the Moldovan parliament that ignores us and believes that we do not exist and should not give us explanations ... and this is a bad part ... and obviously there is also the European pressure that they do not ignore" (F, 36 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

"Transnistria represents the Russian cultural space, and Moldova declared war on the Russian cultural space, what I mean is that Moldovans here and Moldovans in Moldova are becoming more and more distant from one another within the same nation" (M 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

Asked how the participants see the future prospects of Transnistria, several times there was the idea that it is becoming increasingly clear that if Transnistria "will not become part of something, it will die" (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG). There have been opinions that have oscillated both towards Russia and its reintegration into the Republic of Moldova. Although not necessarily a desired aspect, the participants are of the opinion that in 10-15 years this will most likely be the scenario that is prepared for the future of Transnistria.



The opinions about the reintegration of the two banks were also shared, some of the participants being of the opinion that the reintegration is in the interest of the inhabitants of the left bank of the Dniester, because the Moldovans are more interested in the cooperation with the European states. Others, however, believe that the Transnistrian will not be able to integrate into the Moldovan society and will be marginalized, as in other countries, like Germany, as they said. The most acceptable form of reintegration of the two banks can be achieved only in the form of a federalization with certain advantages for Transnistria and Gagauzia, a wider autonomy and only after the linguistic problem has been solved, according to the persons interviewed.

"I wish we were recognized, that we were neither Moldova nor Russia" (F, 60 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

But there have also been many opinions that consider Transnistria will thrive only if it is independent and will not be constrained by Moldova, Ukraine or the external factor.

"in five years, we will be in the same situation as we are now, but in 10 years we think the balance will shift towards Moldova." (F, 54, rural, 1FG)

"Transnistria needs reintegration more because Moldova has other interests than solving the Transnistrian problem." (M, 37, urban, 1FG)

"if we unite, it will be like in Germany. One part is prosperous and is developing, the other part does not live well and wants back in the USSR. Why unite?! We will be servants in Moldova!" (F, 57 years old, urban, 2FG)

"I don't think there will be weak points as a result of a reintegration, more strong point, if we were to talk in a more concrete manner, people are similar" (F, 28 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"I can imagine Transnistria as part of Moldova only with a special status, language and so on, and that will allow Transnistria to develop normally" (M, 37 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"If we reintegrate, we can say we will certainly be considered second-hand people" (M, 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

### 3.6. Neighborhood relationships

In this section, we would wish to explore the views of the participants on the external orientation of Transnistria and to explore their attitude towards the European development prospects of the region. Being asked to give their opinion on the most appropriate economic and political partner of Transnistria, almost unanimously, the participants were of the opinion



that the Russian Federation is the right partner for development. The contribution of the Republic of Moldova to the region was also discussed, but these opinions were not unanimous. However, some of the participants said that it would be better to develop better relations with the neighbors - Moldova and Ukraine and why not with the EU member states because maintaining positive relations is beneficial for the economic situation of Transnistria.

"without taking into account the complicated situation of Ukraine, it would not be bad to develop a partnership relation with them, as well as with Moldova, because it is very difficult to make it on our own here" (F, 60 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

"We used to export more to Russia, now more to Europe, not because we have no relations, but for economic reasons. The problem is not what we have, but what they are requesting. There are other standards and conditions in Europe" (M, 24 years old, urban, 1FG)

Also, during the group talks, participants were asked to express their views on the states they consider to be the hostile to Transnistria or they were the most disappointed of in recent years. Some opinions believe that the US is an enemy for the Transnistrian region as it actively engages in the political situation in Moldova and influences the processes in the region. However, most of the participants in the discussions said that the neighboring states - Ukraine and Moldova are the ones who most disappointed the population of the Transnistrian region and are perceived as hostile to the development of Transnistria. Among the states that have disappointed Transnistria, the Russian Federation can also be found according to the opinion of several participants, because in recent years this state has ceased to be the main outlet for the Transnistrian region.

"once America will be weaker and leave Moldova alone, we will also be able to live in peace..." (F, 57 years old, urban, 2FG)

"we are disappointed by Ukraine and Russia, as the export in Russia decreased compared to the one in Europe" (F, 23 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"Moldova disappointed us because we export through it, but now it has imposed a double export tariff" (M, 23 years old, urban, 2FG)

"I also think that Moldova disappointed us because if one of our companies wants to export it has to register in Moldova and there is a double taxation ... it's a political situation" (F, 60 years old, urban, 2FG)

"Ukraine as a neighbor disappointed us greatly" (M, 30 years old, urban, 3FG)

On the other hand, there were also people thinking that it was necessary to strengthen the relations with the Republic of Moldova, because the Transnistrian economic transactions are carried out through Moldova, and this should not be neglected.





"I maintain my view that it is not really about Moldova, everything comes from the outside, it is a pressure from Europe and Moldova has signed a paper becoming the partner of Europe and now Moldova only honours its obligations" (M, 33 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 2FG)

Also, during the discussions, the participants were asked about the benefits that the Eurasian Customs Union or the European Union could bring to Transnistria. The opinions were divided into two camps, on the one hand asserting that the economy of Transnistria is adapted to the East and that it is easier to export there, the European states having higher standards and no interest in the production of the Transnistrian region; on the other hand, mentioning that the European market is more free but also more competitive, and it is more difficult to access it, but both would only bring long-term benefits to the region's development.

"our economy is built on the Eastern, not the Western model, we have to keep in mind this, therefore the eastern market offers more chances for our products to be exported" (M, 50 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"once entrepreneurs are registered in Moldova, it is much easier to enter the European market than the Eurasian one" (M, 24 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"we do not have to fight with anybody, we have what to learn from all, but we have to keep in mind that not everything is right for Transnistria, we need a filter and to take into account our specificity, culture, spirituality ... we are oriented towards the East but because we have no direct connection with the Russian Federation it is impossible to develop economic relations with them" (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

### 3.7. Identity and Values

In the qualitative study, the participants of the research were invited to list some specific features or values of the population on the left bank of the Dniester River, as well as some that they consider appropriate for the inhabitants of the right bank of the Dniester River. They have also been asked about their reasons to be proud as inhabitants of the Transnistrian region. Most respondents used terms such as *"vitality and resistance"*, *"hospitality"*, *"internationalism"*, *"survival"*, *"sincerity"*, *"generosity"*, or *"solidarity"*. Some respondents believe that the inhabitants on the left bank of the Dniester are patient, sarcastically mentioning that they tolerate the poor social-political situation in which they live - *"patient, we are able to endure the current situation for another 20 years."* Several opinions also referred to the uniqueness of the region, of the people, the descendants of the Russian Empire.

Among the reasons of pride for the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region are: educated people, the history of Transnistria, monuments and the products that are being processed



locally. But there were opinions that said they have no reasons to be proud: they "boasted" the developmental delay of the region or did not yet have an affinity with Transnistria.

"we are independent, strong, we support each other, patriots, we have good people, we are not bandits." (F, 40, urban, 3FG)

"we are proud of our history, proud of the monuments we have. People are very open and hospitable." (F, 24 years old, urban, 3FG)

"I was born in Russia and I feel proud of Russia, in relation to Transnistria I have nothing to be proud of yet" (M, 38 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

The inhabitants on the right bank of the Dniester are perceived by the participants to the discussions as "more open minded", more individualistic, tougher in comparison with the inhabitants of Transnistria or between the two banks there is a different mentality - the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region "are more oriented towards the Russian Federation, towards Orthodoxy, there is a more conservative influence" (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG) while the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova are closer to the "European values" (M, 59 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG). Many of the participants said that the European influence can be felt in the Republic of Moldova, and this has a direct effect on the population, not necessarily a good one, referring to the events in the Republic of Moldova dedicated to LGBT people.

"Of course, the European influence is felt in the Republic of Moldova, all these programs in different fields influence the youth ... there are good parts but also bad parts that indicate the breakdown of society ... tolerance turns into parody ... perversity." M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"in the cities you can feel the difference, they already have a more open mind, they are not afraid to express their own opinions" (M, 37 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

### 3.8. The institutional framework of the Transnistria region

The topic of the institutions and the level of trust granted to them by the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region was a little more difficult to explore, given that some respondents were not familiar with the definition of social institutions and needed a few clues and examples to help them. So, being asked, "please tell us which Transnistrian institutions you trust more?" A participant asked us to explain what institutions we have in mind saying, "list them please." (M, 66 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

However, it was easy to identify the fact that the participants had rather reserved opinions and low trust or even none at all in the most important "governing bodies" of the Transnistrian region. Some of the respondents mentioned that they have the most trust in the educational institutions, in "the peace makers" or in the church or, even more interestingly, in the Șerif





company, because there is certainty that the products in the store are not expired." (M, 30 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 3FG)

But most respondents declared that they only rely on themselves and on the support of their family and they cannot trust the institutions of the state. Some study participants believe that in case of need, nobody can defend them, but on the contrary, they could be threatened by the law enforcement bodies.

"I can only trust myself, I cannot rely on anybody" (F, 65 years old, urban, 2FG)

"I only trust my family, that is all" (F, 40 years old, urban, 3FG)

"there is nobody to defend us, the police, nobody... For now here they just shut your mouth..." (F, 60 years old, urban, 3FG)

"the peace-makers and the church do not change their tradition, they are stable" (F, 36 YEARS OLD, RURAL, 3FG)

Also, a part of the respondents said that the Transnistrian leadership institutions have intensified their political and social control, there is no political opposition and there is a monopoly of the public opinion held by the "governing bodies".

"there are no alternative public opinions, and this is a problem, when we had Șevciuk we heard all opinions" (F, 54 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 1FG)

"now we have a crisis of the political institutions that influence the economy and the social sphere of people, I personally feel this, the lack of competition, the lack of opposition, the pressure on the opposition has impact on the rest of the social processes" (F, 32 YEARS OLD, URBAN, 4FG)

In the qualitative study, the respondents confirmed the results of the quantitative study, recognizing that very few inhabitants of Transnistria are socially active - *"the social involvement of the people is almost completely absent, the maximum they can do is like a more courageous post on Facebook."* Most participants in group discussions rely on young people when discussing the social involvement of the population and, under the current conditions, respondents say that young people are neither motivated, nor organized, nor interested in social-political life. According to some respondents, a solution in this respect would be the return to youth structures / associations as during the USSR.

"young people have no motivation, no initiative. If you want to involve them in some activity, they ask "What for?!" There are also young people which are involved, active, but very few..." (F, 40 years old, urban, 3FG)

"a few years ago, there were political youth organizations, not anymore. Before they went out, did something, now nothing...." (F, 20 years old, urban, 3FG)



#### IV. Conclusions

The socio-economic radiography of the Transnistrian region shows that generally, the local population isn't satisfied with their quality of life, facing issues such as low pensions and salaries – 48.1%, inflation – 37.7% and high unemployment – 35.5%. Also, a significant part of the population consider that they don't have access to good infrastructure or adequate medical services, and another thinks that the lack of recognition of Transnistria's statute is a problem which affects their quality of life. The dissatisfaction towards the current economic situation of the region is present in more than 70% of respondents to the study, and over half of those who were part in the quantitative research (65.5%) consider that finding employment in Transnistria is difficult, with people from the rural environment being the most affected socio-economically.

The given socio-economic context reflects on the migration stream and future prospects, especially for the young generation which is more willing to leave the region in the near future. Also, over 72.5% of participants consider that neither Transnistria, nor Republic of Moldova is fit for the prosperous development of their children.

The Russian Federation is in the top of favorite emigration destinations, with 65.9% of respondents. But countries such as Germany, Italy or even the USA are no less attractive for people from Transnistria, the choice of destination being purely pragmatical.

The current economic and political context is also not favorable towards the business environment, where small and medium-sized entrepreneurs are discouraged by the double taxation policy on EU destinations, by the internal monopoly, the unfavorable legislative framework and exaggerated control from the „authorities”. By comparison, Republic of Moldova looks more promising from this point of view, with a clearer legislation, better overall conditions and unrestricted access to external markets.

Television is the main source of information for the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region – 77.4%, followed by a small distance by the Internet with 60.9%. Despite being the main sources of information, the trust level towards them is pretty low – 37.7% for TV and 32.9% for the web. Speaking of trustworthiness of information sources, it can be noticed that the Russian mass media scored the best in this metric (27.9% trust highly, 53.7% trust somewhat), followed by local sources (19.2% highly trust, 52.1% somewhat trust), and towards sources from Republic of Moldova just 18% of participants being somewhat trusting. The main TV channels followed by Transnistrians are: Россия 1 (Rossia 1), mentioned by 62.9% respondents, Первый Республиканский (Pervii Respublicanskii – Transnistrian local TV) with 59.3%, Первый канал (Pervii Canal) - 55,3% and TCB (TSV – local Transnistrian channel) – 50,7%.

Republic of Moldova has little to no presence in the socio-political and cultural lives of the people in Transnistria, positioning itself somewhat better on the topic of cooperation between the people from the two banks, and scoring very bad in regard to its institutional presence on the left bank of the Dniester, with people generally facing difficulties evaluating certain punctual aspects related to the institutional framework of the Republic of Moldova.



At the same time, Republic of Moldova isn't attractive to people from the left bank either when thinking of the economic situation, which is evaluated by 23.6% of participants as being good and only by around 1 out of 100 people as being fit for the future of their children.

The main barriers between the cooperation of the two banks of the Dniester are: political contradictions, mentioned by 76% of respondents, linguistic barriers – 43.3%, legislative barriers – 42.5% but also perception differences around ideology / history – 35.1%, cultural differences – 28.7% and security issues – 16.6%. Also, one in ten respondents considers the differences between the education systems as a barrier.

Respondents to the study consider that the most important positive consequence of the separation of Transnistria from the Republic of Moldova was the „*sovereignty and independence of Transnistria*” – 41.3% of answers, as well as *maintaining close/special relations with Russia*, mentioned by 27.9% of participants.

The best economic and political partner to Transnistria remains even today the Russian Federation, gaining an overwhelming majority of answers – 92.2% of respondents. The other states in the region aren't perceived as development partners or have an almost insignificant response rate: for example, Republic of Moldova is considered a good political and economic partner by 2.2% of participants.

Conversely, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova are in the top of states considered by the majority of people in the Transnistria region as a threat to Transnistria or countries which disappointed Transnistria, alongside the United States and Romania.

Even if they desire the recognized independence of Transnistria, people participating in the study are pessimistic towards this scenario taking place in the near future, most of respondents from the qualitative research considering that in the next 10-15 years the current situation will be maintained or that Transnistria „will become part of something”. Answering to the survey question asking what would contribute to an accelerated development of Transnistria, more than one quarter of respondents opted for *integrating Transnistria in the Russian Federation* and less than 25% for the *recognized independence of Transnistria* or *strategic partnerships with the Russian Federation*. Only 5.2% of people are of the opinion that Transnistria would thrive as part of Republic of Moldova through reintegration.

The Transnistrian region is, from a cultural standpoint, part of the Russian civilizational space, the population in the region identifying themselves as Transnistrian or Russian, with certain specific tendencies: the young – mostly Russian, the older adults – Transnistrian, having common historic heroes with the Russian Federation and associating Transnistria mostly with values such as: *multinationalism, peace, Russian World* or *orthodoxy*. On the other hand, talking about the Republic of Moldova, people of the left bank associate it mainly with *European development* and occidental mentality.

When speaking of public institutions, the only one with a higher ratio of people trusting it than those that don't is the army – 45.9% (11.4% trust very highly, 34.5% trust highly). Trust in the “governing bodies” from Tiraspol and the local public authorities is split in



Transnistrian society, 31.5% of respondents having a positive attitude and a similar percentage manifesting a negative attitude through a lack of trust. Participants in the study have mentioned in large part that they don't trust anyone and can only count on themselves and family members when they face difficulties or need help.