

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA



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Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim



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Resilient nations.*

Religious tolerance in Albania

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALBANIANS consider religious tolerance to be a fundamental value, one more deeply rooted in the Albanian tradition and its civic and moral values than experienced as a social practice, conviction or policy, that relies upon knowledge of different religions and acceptance of religious differences. Tradition, civic education and moral values serve therefore as a common ground for the majority of (non-religious) Albanians who believe that a more religious society would likely be less religiously tolerant on the one hand, but with devoted religious believers who do not perceive religiosity and tolerance as mutually exclusive on the other.

The majority of Albanians lead a secular life: they have little information on or knowledge of religion and reject religious considerations to shape or condition their way of life. While more than one third (37%) consider themselves as someone who practises religion, only slightly more than a quarter (28%) claim that their friends and co-workers identify them as persons practising religion. These percentages are lower among those who practise religion, with fewer than two out of ten Albanians practising regularly religious rituals and guided in their everyday life by religious norms.

Such a finding is likely given that the prevailing perception among Albanians about practising religion is linked to their conviction that practising religion is about believing in God rather than practising religious rituals. In this sense, prayer as a religious ritual or custom is not necessarily indicative of a person practising religion. Only about half of Albanians who pray regularly, every day or weekly, declare that they regularly practise all religious rituals. However, attitudes that attach greater importance to the practice of religious rituals have some strongholds in Albanian society, especially in rural communities and to a certain extent among Albanians older than 45 years. These individuals show greater awareness of their religious beliefs and also see the practice of religious rituals as an essential part of life as a religious believer practising their religion.

The majority of Albanians lead a secular life: they have little information on or knowledge of religion and reject religious considerations to shape or condition their way of life

Albanians welcome the religious diversity that is present in the country and strongly reject the idea of the supremacy of a given religion, irrelevant of the size of the religious community. They show little support to statements such as *Only one religion is true, other religions are false* and feel closer to opinions and attitudes that find and bring to the fore a common ground between various religions and the moral and divine values they all promote in society. Additionally, Albanians vigorously confront negative stereotypes about religious groups or individuals based on their religious background. Accordingly religious affiliation is not a determinant to characterise people by qualities such as hard-working, friendly, intelligent, violent or lazy. The majority of Albanians have the same opinion about feeling threatened or distressed when thinking of members of other religious groups.

The above situation with regard to the religiosity and religious awareness of Albanians shapes their perceptions of religious tolerance in Albania, how it is manifested, the factors that enable it and the threats to it.

Secularism and state non-interference with an individual's religious beliefs is confirmed by more than 90 percent of Albanians. While the national identity has been the ideological support behind the secularism of the Albanian state since its establishment, present-day Albanian society still values greatly the famous slogan of the Albanian Renaissance: *The religion of the Albanians is Albanianism* (Vaso Pasha, 1880). It is in such a context that 'lack of information on religions as the most frequently reported enabling factor for religious tolerance in Albania' is observed. This conclusion finds support in the fact that the second most frequently reported enabling factor of religious tolerance in the country according to this study is the 'dominance of national traditions and culture over religious ones.'

Although Albanians value highly the role of religious community leaders and local clerics in promoting religious tolerance, the key instruments that enable such tolerance are fundamentally secular and related to values of respect for individual freedoms and the dominance of the national tradition and awareness over religious ones. Together, these factors are the three most frequently reported by the Albanians themselves as enabling religious tolerance, and are a constituting part of the fourth most frequently reported factor: secularism. A fifth factor—communist legacy of atheism—splits this study's respondents in terms of their opinions on this as an enabling factor, with diverging views between the younger and older generations. Namely, those Albanians who have experienced and have a memory of the communist past consider the legacy of atheism as a factor that has contributed to religious tolerance at a much higher percentage than do younger generations. Nevertheless, as further analysis undertaken by the present study has shown (focus group discussions), the legacy is not perceived as a factor that promotes religious tolerance but rather as a circumstance in Albanian history that misinterpreted the slogan of Albanian renaissance—*The religion of the Albanians is Albanianism*—to legitimise the communist regime's hostility towards religion.

Religious extremism, terrorism, politicisation of religion, external threats and propaganda, or conflicts taking place abroad represent the most frequently reported threats to religious tolerance in the country. Accordingly, the Albanians' perceptions of possible threats to religious tolerance in Albania are more linked to the global picture than they are to local or community-based factors. Along the same line, Albanians tend to have a higher opinion of religious tolerance at the level of Albanian society than at the level of the community in which they live. Namely, on a scale from 1 (total religious indifference) to 5 (fully know and accept others' religious belief), nearly 52 percent of Albanians rate their society as a whole as moderately religiously aware and tolerant (scores of 4 and 5) compared with 43 percent when asked to rate the community in which they live. The difference between the percentage who consider Albanian society, and those who consider their own community, as religiously indifferent is much smaller.

Albanians are not completely immune to prejudices towards others and neither to religious-based discrimination or exclusion. Whereas 90 percent of Albanians confront the habit of blaming people of other religions for the economic situation, crime, fewer jobs and corruption among societal values, nearly fourteen percent blame people from other religions for much of the trouble in this world. Fewer than ten percent of Albanians consider religious affiliation when establishing close personal relations (among close friends, 4%, and relative by marriage, 9%). The present study finds that respondents who consider themselves as someone who actively practises religion are inclined to be less open to accepting as in-laws members of other religious groups.

The present study finds that the foundations of religious tolerance in Albania are deeply rooted in the societal traditions and culture rather than from religious awareness, knowledge or practice

More than 95 percent of Albanians confirm that they, or their family members, have never been discriminated against or excluded due to religious background. About eleven percent say that they have witnessed at least once an occasion of religious discrimination or exclusion in their communities. The majority of this group are women, live in urban areas and have completed undergraduate or post-graduate education. Examples mostly involve discrimination and exclusion of people practising religion (especially Muslims) such as discrimination or exclusion in the public and private sectors, societal prejudices and exclusion, and discrimination in close relationships (e.g. refused marriage due to religious background).

Despite these concerning attitudes towards others, present among just less than one in ten Albanians, it is these phenomena that the vast majority of Albanians raise as an example of religious tolerance. Namely, 'religiously mixed marriages', 'celebration of religious festivals of other groups' and 'peaceful coexistence of Albanians from different religious backgrounds' are the examples the majority of Albanians most frequent use to illustrate religious tolerance.

The present study finds that the foundations of religious tolerance in Albania are deeply rooted in the societal traditions and culture rather than from religious awareness, knowledge or practice. While recognising the role of religious leaders in promoting religious tolerance at the present, as well as throughout history, Albanians attach significant importance to the legal and practical separation between the state and religion, respect for human rights and freedom, secularism as a trait of the society, and national feelings as key factors that enable religious tolerance. As a fundamental value of Albanian society, religious tolerance represents a unifying element for citizens from diverse religious backgrounds in the country.

II. FOREWORD



MANAGING diversity is the challenge of our times. Ideas and dreams zip across borders with a tap on a screen, influencing individuals' and communities' views on the past and expectations for the future. That we all manage multiple identities – ethnic, religious, generational, sexual, historical, political – is increasingly acknowledged as the norm, and there are many, many organizations and apps out there that implore us to use those identities in one way or another.

States that can manage this diversity in ways which empower citizens and organizations, respect human rights and build inclusive sustainable peace will be those on the fastest path towards Agenda2030.

In the area of religious diversity, Albania offers a compelling case to study. The 2016 Human Development Report for Albania stated that *“religious coexistence constitutes the most important achievement that has been made in political and intellectual life in Albania over the last hundred years of existence of the Albanian state”*. Albania is widely known for the peaceful co-existence of active religions. Oppressed during communism and only revived during the early 90's, Albania's religious bodies have demonstrated a great sense of community and mutual respect. This goes back to the early years prior to and immediately after Albania's independence in 1912. And last year, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council on Religious Freedom visited Albania. His report reaffirmed the remarkable tolerance that prevails in Albania, though not without noting some areas for improvement¹.

Religious *intolerance*, meanwhile, has - over millennia - been tied to violence, more often than not with tragic human consequences. In our contemporary world, a particular evil is recruitment into organizations undertaking extremist violence.

And so when a hopeful case – such as Albania – arises, we are well advised to study it carefully.

1. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21627&LangID=E>

Whereas previous work in Albania has looked into violent extremism, its causes and manifestations, this research commissioned by UNDP, and supported by the Istanbul Regional Hub, investigates the positive phenomena of tolerance.

Albania's peaceful religious co-existence should be rightly celebrated, but not taken for granted. Understanding Albania's social fabric, and how religious affiliation and practice weaves through it, is necessary if Albania is to continue to invest in - and benefit from - its renowned tolerance.

And with the humility that is required in any such inquiry, perhaps the rest of us can learn something as well. Can a culture of religious respect and harmony contribute to an environment that protects youth from a sense of alienation in the midst of rapidly evolving societies? Or at least inoculate a society from the radicalizing weapons of actors that seek to instrumentalize difference?

We hope that this empirical assessment will inform policy debate so that efforts to prevent violence extremism can become more nuanced and effective. We believe there is room to move well beyond first generation programmes that target the phenomena of recruitment. Programmes could focus more deeply on values, democratic practice, increased opportunity for youth to be productive in society over the course of their lifetime (it means much more than a job), community dialogue, and of course tolerance across a range of evolving identities, including religion.

As Pope Francis stated during his visit in 2014, Albania's experience shows that peaceful and fruitful coexistence between persons and communities of believers of different religions was not only desirable, but possible and realistic.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting - and deepening - such a vision of human solidarity.

Brian J. Williams

United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

[#standup4humanrights](#)

III. METHODOLOGY

ALTHOUGH religious tolerance and harmony have been widely used in public discourse as a core value of Albanian society, there is little evidence and analysis of the reality or its elements, and even on the construct itself or its current definition. While some studies have tried to analyse the concept through examples from Albanian history (e.g. the protection of Jews during WWII), for others it has been a peripheral issue. Most importantly, both the public and the academic discourse use different terms and definitions to describe this value, such as religious harmony, tolerance or simply coexistence.

To approach the examination of this concept, a research team from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) carried out a literature review and analysis of the definition of religious tolerance. As elaborated below in the literature review section, this study employs the term as both academically based and relevant for the Albanian context.

For examination of religious tolerance as a concept and a practice, its enabling factors, foundations and dimensions in Albania the research team consulted various applied research studies and their methodologies on the same or similar and comparable topics, such as the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index methodology,² and *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report* (FES 2011),³ as well as other reports. The conclusion of this procedure was that “in order to arrive at relevant evidence and understanding on religious tolerance in Albania it is necessary to develop a context-specific methodology.”⁴

A context specific methodology was designed in order to elaborate a baseline analysis of religious tolerance in the country through germane evidence and data that allow us to go beyond a discourse on religious tolerance that employs out-dated examples.

2. The Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index was developed through a partnership between UNDP–ACT and the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), with USAID funding. The SCORE Index is a tool designed to measure social cohesion and reconciliation as two indicators of peace in multi-ethnic societies around the world. The scope of the Index enables examination of relationships within and between ethnic, religious and other social groups in contexts where peaceful coexistence between these groups has been or still is at stake. Since 2013, SCORE has been applied in five countries: Cyprus, Nepal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine. For more information, please visit <http://www.scoreforpeace.org/methodology>. Date accessed 31 August 2017.

3. Beate Küpper, Andreas Zick and Andreas Hövermann (2011) whose report offers comprehensive and comparable data on the extent of prejudice and discrimination against the main target groups in eight selected European countries, based on survey data collected in a research project at the University of Bielefeld. Report available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf>. Date accessed 31 August 2017.

4. Although the reports and methodologies consulted offer a comprehensive approach for their research focus in a given context, the validation process conducted by the IDM team suggests that the Albanian context is very different from the historical, socio-political and economic context in which these studies were applied.

III.1. Research instruments

The following research instruments and procedures were carried out between April and September 2017:

1. LITERATURE REVIEW ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The purpose of this review was two-fold: first to explore the possible research and methodological alternatives in investigating religious tolerance in Albania, and second, to establish a working definition and identify key assumptions, the main elements, foundations, enabling factors and possible threats concerning religious tolerance in the country.

2. INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS WITH INFORMED PLAYERS

A focus group discussion with selected university professors and researchers investigating religious relations and public perceptions in Albania was organised in order to validate:

- the methodological approach
- a working definition of religious tolerance
- differences between that definition and the perceptions of ordinary citizens (how they define it and what they imply)
- key assumptions to be tested through a public survey.

The validated information and approach was discussed in separate interviews with officials and theologians from the religious communities in Albania and with a representative of the State Committee of Cults.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE AND PUBLIC SURVEY

Based on the findings of the qualitative research (interviews and literature review) a survey instrument (questionnaire) was designed and tested with 200 respondents of a diverse demography at the beginning of July 2017. Comments and suggestions were gathered by relevant stakeholders and experts prior to and following the pilot phase, including from the UNDP expert team.

The questionnaire was finalised by 14 July and, in addition to the demography section, included three parts, each of which aimed at gathering specific information relevant to the study analysis, as follows:

A. The individual and the Divine

This section aimed to explore the level of religiousness of the respondents, their attitudes towards religious and moral values, and whether and how they affect the respondents'

Research instruments



lives. In line with the qualitative research findings the information gathered from this part was particularly relevant for assessing how an individual's religiosity affects his or her perceptions, attitudes and experiences with religious tolerance that are elaborated in the subsequent parts of the questionnaire.

B. Perceptions of religious tolerance

The second part of the questionnaire explored perceptions of respondents of religious tolerance in Albania, threats and enabling factors, and local and societal attitudes towards religious coexistence.

C. Attitudes and experiences of religious tolerance

The final section of the questionnaire explored practical experiences of respondents with religious tolerance and intolerance, and their attitudes and perceptions towards or relations with other religious groups.

Following the survey team briefing, field work commenced on 16 July, 2017, based upon sample selection carried out following strict procedures described in the next sub-section, in order to enable an accurate representation of the perceptions of Albanian residents.

Field work was conducted by trained interviewers at the end of July 2017, in compliance with monitoring and quality assurance procedures. Data entry and cleaning was completed during the first week of August. Survey data were analysed using SPSS. Univariate analysis was conducted to obtain a general understanding of the sample.

Preliminary survey findings were analysed in order to investigate initial assumptions and design the next stage of the research (see below). Bivariate analysis was conducted to look at two



variables simultaneously, and chi-square tests were conducted to test for statistical significance of the results.⁵ The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

4. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In order to respond to the needs for further analysis and understanding of the public survey data, a total of six focus group discussions (FGDs) with ordinary citizens from specific demographic categories was conducted in late August and early September 2017. As described in the focus group methodology (see sub-section below), the selected profiles for FGDs included the following:

- a. Focus group 1: young men and women (18–30 years old) from rural and urban areas, with diverse education backgrounds, employment status, religious affiliation and other demographic characteristics;
- b. Focus group 2: women from diverse age groups, areas, education backgrounds, employment status, religious affiliation and other demographic characteristics;
- c. Focus group 3: mixed group of men and women from urban areas and the periphery of urban centres from diverse demographic backgrounds;
- d. Focus group 4: mixed group of Muslims who practise their religion from diverse demographic backgrounds;
- e. Focus group 5: mixed group of Christians who practise their religion from diverse demographic backgrounds;
- f. Focus group 6: mixed group of men and women from rural areas and diverse demographic backgrounds.

A first draft of the report was concluded by mid-September 2017 and discussed with selected experts in Albania and the UNDP expert team (peer review).

5. For a description of these tests see Drake, Brett. and Jonson-Reid, Melissa (2007) *Social Work Research Methods. From Conceptualization to Dissemination*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

III.2. Public survey on religious tolerance: statistical sampling

Statistical sampling for the public survey was achieved through following some important steps in calculating statistical estimates. This is an important point because there is still in Albania no regularly updated statistical or administrative information regarding the number of residents and their distribution among the different municipalities and administrative units, while the statistical sampling should be designed based upon the number of Albanian residents. The distribution of number of residents comes only from the Census conducted by INSTAT (National Institute of Statistics) and carried out once every ten years. The most recent census is from 2011,⁶ and is already out-dated given the various media reports of a dynamic demographic movement from Albania.⁷

The study considers Albanian residents currently living in Albania. The difficulty with calculating the statistical estimates is compounded by the administrative restructuring of the municipalities in 2015. In order to obtain the estimates, we followed the following steps:

1. The population of Albanian residents and their distribution among the different local government units from the Census of 2011 was employed as base information.
2. The population according to the civil registry of 2015 (Albanian citizens) and their distribution throughout the different municipalities was also taken into account.

We employed these two most recent sources of information to determine the proportion of emigrants among Albanian citizens, and to estimate the number of residents in each new municipal unit we defined the Quantitative Residence Coefficient as follows:

$$W_M = N_{M_C2011} / N_{M_CR2015}$$

where:

- W_M is the Quantitative Residence Coefficient for each municipality.
- N_{M_C2011} is the number of Albanian residents in the municipality based on the 2011 Census.
- N_{M_CR2015} is the number of Albanian citizens registered in the municipality based on the civil registry 2015.

W_M is the best estimate of the proportion of the number of Albanian citizens that are resident in the country, by municipality. According to the 2011 Census the size of the Albanian resident population was 2,804,751, while the civil registry of 2015 reports the total number of Albanian citizens as 4,346,121, a ratio of about 0.65, and indicating the large emigration of the Albanian population. Clearly the statistical sampling cannot be based upon the numbers from the civil registry, which is easily accessed and considered to be accurate. Statistical parameters for W_M , calculated across the 61 municipalities, are reported in Table 1.

6. For more details, please refer to: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/census.aspx>

7. Over the past few years there have been a number of media and official reports, especially from EU countries, on increasing numbers of Albanians leaving the country.

Forty of the 61 municipalities across the country were selected, taking in consideration the largest municipality and replacing some small municipalities with others to provide the broadest geographical coverage

The mean of the 61 Quantitative Residence Coefficients was 0.612, even less than the country-level figure mentioned above of 0.65, with a minimum of 0.15 (Dropull Municipality), and maximum of 0.83. Using the figure of 0.65 and the total number of citizens from the civil registry (2017; 4,430,415) the number of Albanian residents is estimated as 2,859,598.

TABLE 1. ESTIMATES OF W_M PARAMETERS (61 MUNICIPALITIES)

Parameter	Value
Mean	0.61205
Variance	0.01733
Minimum	0.15144
Maximum	0.82933

To estimate the actual number of residents by municipalities and their subunits, the data from the civil registry 2017 was used, weighted by the Quantitative Residence Coefficients for each of the municipalities. In particular, for all administrative units the Quantitative Residence Coefficient of the corresponding municipality was used as the weight of estimation of number of residents, assuming that emigration across the municipality has a uniform distribution.

Forty of the 61 municipalities across the country were selected, taking in consideration the largest municipality and replacing some small municipalities with others to provide the broadest geographical coverage.⁸

The statistical sample comprised 1,100 respondents. At the 95 percent confidence level, with a population size of 2,859,598, the confidence interval of the estimates was ± 2.95 . At the 99 percent confidence level, for the same population size, the confidence interval was ± 3.89 .

III.3. Focus group discussions on the survey findings

As one of the methods of data collection used in qualitative research FGDs aim “to provide researchers with means for collecting data that can be used to construct a descriptive account of the phenomena being investigated” (Dollar & Merrigan, 2002). FGDs are particularly useful when the aim is to explore individual subjective attitudes and experiences that are normally inaccessible through other means of research (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Furthermore, when used in complementarity with surveys, they can corroborate findings or explore more deeply the relationships suggested by quantitative analysis (Brent et al., 1991). In this context, FGDs were used in the present research as a means to explore in-depth the personal nuances of the participants’ opinions regarding various aspects of religious tolerance in Albania, and to validate the findings of the public survey.

Following analysis of the preliminary results of the survey, six FGDs (6–12 participants each) were conducted during August and September 2017. Each discussion lasted from 60–90 minutes. A total of 54 individuals participated in the focus groups, and were recruited using snowball sampling.

There were both homogenous and heterogeneous focus groups. Homogeneity, or having similar characteristics across different socio-demographic vectors, was used methodologically to encourage participation and discussion, and to limit the number of focus groups conducted.

The demographics represented in the focus groups (Table 2) included one group with participants from urban areas and the periphery of urban centres, one women-only focus group, one youth focus group, one rural focus group, and two focus groups with religious practitioners (1 with practising Muslims and 1 with Christian practitioners). Focus groups were designed to cover a range of religious tolerance issues and address specific questions and issues raised during the initial survey results.

TABLE 2. COMPOSITION OF FGDs

Focus group participants	Date, Place	No. of participants	Gender composition	Geographical focus
Youth	30.08.17, Tirana	10	mixed	Tirana, Vore, Elbasan, Shijak, Lushnje, Mirdite
Women	31.08.17, Tirana	9	female only	Tirana, Elbasan, Vore, Durres
Individuals with a memory of the communist past; urban areas	04.09.17, Tirana	10	mixed	Tirana, Elbasan
Practising Muslims	07.09.17	8	mixed	Tirana
Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) practitioners	07.09.17	11	mixed	Tirana, Durres
Individuals with a memory of the communist past; rural areas	08.09.17, Katund i Ri	6	mixed	Katund i Ri (Durres)

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Data from all focus groups were analysed for major themes, while data from each participant group were also analysed separately to outline trends limited to each group. Quotes from participants during FGDs were included in the narrative (see Section VI) to provide a better understanding and comprehension of the ways in which different perceptions and notions were talked about and understood by participants.⁹

9. Quotes representing the views expressed by a majority of the participants were selected.

IV. WHAT IS RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND WHAT ARE ALBANIA'S ENABLING FACTORS?

A LITERATURE REVIEW

ALBANIANS take pride in their tradition of religious tolerance. It is believed to be a national trait, in the sense that most people think that it harks back to a time immemorial. Common explanations for religious tolerance include the proposition that the Albanians value their nationality above the various religious persuasions, or the claim that Albanians have always been indifferent in matters of religion. These explanations are part of the *doxa* (common belief or popular opinion), as Pierre Bourdieu uses the term, because there is a long history of religious tolerance in Albania. From a *longue durée* perspective, during the last two hundred years, religious tolerance has been positioned in a complicated cultural and political milieu, formed by the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of Albanian nationalism, the creation of the Albanian secular state, the changes and dislocations brought by the processes of modernisation, the imposition of isolation and atheism by the communist regime, among others. Given the religious diversity of Albanian society, the maintenance of social cohesion and the preservation of religious tolerance and harmony, even in turbulent times, has been a remarkable achievement. Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether the religious tolerance evident in Albania will continue to thrive in a globalised world, which is characterised by growing exchanges and interactions between religions, increased cultural diversity and new challenges posed by religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

Another issue is whether religious tolerance is an Albanian peculiarity, or a social and cultural model that can be 'exported' to other national and cultural contexts. Albanian politicians are keen to use religious tolerance as nation branding, at a time when other countries are experiencing serious troubles from religious extremism, sectarian violence and terrorism inspired by religion. One such instance of nation branding was the marching side by side of four Albanian clerics—one for each of the traditional religions—in the solidarity demonstration that took place in Paris in January 2015, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack against the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. To better understand the social factors that sustain religious tolerance in Albania and to assess it as

Given the religious diversity of Albanian society, the maintenance of social cohesion and the preservation of religious tolerance and harmony, even in turbulent times, has been a remarkable achievement

a role model for other societies, one needs to probe into the meaning of tolerance, and to pose the question of in which social, cultural and political conditions is religious tolerance possible in religiously diverse societies. In the following literature review we will attempt to answer these questions.

IV.1. Definition of tolerance

Tolerance is a disposition to endure or bear other people's beliefs and practices with which one disagrees, because he or she deems them to be false or wrong. As one author put it, "tolerance involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition" (Scanlon, 1996: 226). For an individual to be tolerant, first of all he or she must have a conception of what is the matter in question, in order to disagree with the positions of others on the same matter, in order to display an attitude of tolerance towards them. A religious individual knows that the true path to salvation belong to his or her religion or cult and that those who believe in other religions and cults are wrong and misled, but nevertheless chooses to be tolerant of other peoples' beliefs. Thus, tolerance is not synonymous with a lack of prejudice. A common assumption is that a person without prejudice is tolerant, while those who are prejudiced are intolerant. But this need not be true always, because a prejudiced person may be tolerant when he or she is willing to permit the expression of those things against which he or she is prejudiced (Eisenstein, 2008: 18–19). Tolerance does not equate to indifference, either. To be tolerant of another's views or actions is to care about them and their consequences. A person that is indifferent to religion in general is not a good example of a tolerant person: tolerant persons are those religious peoples and atheists who disagree on the nature of God and religion and nevertheless accept the public display of different forms of religiousness in their society.

Why tolerance? Tolerance is not resignation and non-interference in the face of a situation one can do nothing about. On the contrary, "toleration is something we must do for the right reasons... one tolerates what one (believes one) should" (Cohen, 2004: 72–73). In other words, we must not interfere with the beliefs, worldviews or actions of others because of a principle. Tolerance is taken to be a public virtue or moral attitude in culturally diverse and complex societies, because it is a recognition that common membership in society is more valuable than the disagreements and conflicts that may arise about the nature and direction of the society. Tolerance is the acceptance of the fact that the other members, despite the differences, are entitled to contribute to a definition of our society. Tolerance of others' worldviews and opinions, including religious identifications, is a risky and difficult business, because it entails the possibility that worldviews and opinions with which one disagrees circulate freely in society and even become dominant, but nevertheless it is worth taking the risk of tolerance insofar it is better than an alternative society of antagonisms and quarrels that jeopardises the freedoms of the individuals and communities. The perpetuation of tolerance in a democratic state requires that minorities, or those that hold the 'wrong' side of difference should not be denied legal and political rights, that they continue to benefit from public goods that are open to all, and requires that the state does not give preference to one group over another in distribution of benefits (Scanlon, 1996: 231). Religious tolerance provides the starting point for inter-religious dialogue and the latter strengthens the culture of tolerance in society.

In the West the virtue of tolerance is linked to liberalism, and religious tolerance was one of the historical roots of liberalism. Meanwhile, liberals have extended the principle of religious tolerance to other controversial issues on the meaning and purpose of human life. In this way, the Western tradition of religious tolerance has at its centre the idea of individual freedom of conscience. To impose one's religion on others, or to restrict the right of the individual to choose what to worship, is seen as a violation of a fundamental human right. But there have been other traditions of religious tolerance that are based on the idea that each religious community should be autonomous in matters of doctrine and internal organisation. An example is the 'millet system' of the Ottoman Empire, according to which Muslims, Christians and Jews were recognised as self-governing units, forming a 'federation of theocracies'. In this model, tolerance was granted to a community of believers, but individual believers enjoyed no rights outside their community. Each religious community, while tolerating the other communities inhabiting the same geographical and social space, could restrict the freedom of conscience to its own members (Kymlicka, 1995: 155–158). Therefore, we need to emphasise that whatever the historical roots of religious tolerance among Albanians, this valuable habit of heart has now become blended with the liberal and individualistic understanding of religious tolerance that has developed in the West. As Albanians are integrating to the democratic culture and norms of the West, their tradition of religious tolerance should become a culture of tolerance centred into the choices that individual citizens make in other spheres of life and not only in religious matters.

Ideally, in a democratic society tolerance should be motivated not only by ethnic solidarity, but also by respect for human rights and the rule of law, which is why, in the present study, we prefer the term 'religious tolerance' to one of 'religious harmony'. The latter may be related more to the

The general situation of religious tolerance in Albania has remained solid, because religious leaders have called upon believers to abstain from conflict and have called for mutual understanding and dialogue

historical religions and philosophies of life in Eastern Asia (varieties of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, etc.). At the centre of religious harmony lies the principle of collectivism, as opposed to individualism in the West (Clobert et al., 2014; Tan, 2008). Religious harmony is also related to authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes in Eastern Asia and to communitarian arrangements between the state and religious communities, while the main political trend in the post-communist Balkan countries has been towards liberalisation and legal protection of human rights.

In contemporary democracies, one can distinguish between social and political tolerance. Political tolerance is where citizens defend the rights of groups of co-citizens to participate fully in political social and economic life, even when it happens that they do not agree in outlooks or aims. A common means of measuring political tolerance is the use of questions of, e.g., whether the most disliked group should be allowed to hold public demonstrations. Social tolerance refers to the acceptance of culturally diverse groups as equals. A common way to measure this is through the 'neighbour question': people are asked whether they would object to having people of different race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., as neighbours (Widmalm & Oskarsson, 2008: 14–17). When adapted to the religious sphere and identities, political tolerance is evident when citizens recognise that all members of a political community, regardless of the faith they profess in public, enjoy the same political rights, and that religion should not be related to recruitment into the public administration. Arguably a secular state and a secular public law are prerequisites for political and religious tolerance. Whereas a tolerant political culture impacts religious tolerance in society, on the other hand it is obvious that political tolerance is stronger when supported by the tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity in different social settings, whether local or national.

We have to keep in mind that, unfortunately, tolerance alone is no guarantee against “competition” among religious institutions and communities sharing the same locality. Robert Hayden and his associates have coined the term *antagonistic tolerance* to describe religious communities that are tolerant and live in peace for generations, but that nevertheless define themselves as separate

communities with competing interests. It seems that in these situations, religious tolerance is close to endurance of the other. When the long-term social and political status quo is broken, or when outside factors intervene to cause a conjuncture that is interpreted to be advantageous to one of the religious communities, then open competition, or even violence, can terminate the tolerance. Although religion is not inherently linked to violence, religion may turn out to be the boundary that defines one group as opposed to others. A case in point of antagonistic tolerance is that of Bosnia in the last century. There, for centuries, different religions shared a common physical and social space. However, religious communities became antagonist at a time when markers of religion—rituals, apparel, places of worship—gradually became markers of ethnicity and nationality. As a consequence, in times of ethnic conflict, warring sides deem it legitimate to attack religious places and symbols of the adversary (Hayden et al., 2016). Is the term antagonist tolerance useful to describe relations between religious communities in Albania? There have been instances of inter-religious frictions in post-communist Albania, including, for instance, the debate over the erection of large crosses on top of mountains and hills in several places across the country, or the issue of the restoration of the church–mosque in Rozafa Castle in Shkodra. In such examples there has been competition among believers to claim exclusivity over a certain territory or building that has been traditionally shared with members of other religious communities. Despite these frictions at the local level, the general situation of religious tolerance has remained solid, because religious leaders have called upon believers to abstain from conflict and have called for mutual understanding and dialogue.

IV.2. Factors that sustain religious tolerance

Arguably the most important factor that sustains religious tolerance in Albania is the common culture that unites Muslims, Christians and non-believers. Insofar as traditional religions are considered parts of the common culture, they are not seen as insurmountable obstacles for mutual understanding and cooperation across religious divides. The challenge that the fundamentalist trends in religion presents to religious tolerance is precisely the separation between religion and culture. According to Olivier Roy (2010), within major world religions are new movements that aim to break religion away from the cultural roots and to format them as ‘pure religion’ and then proselytise people, both in their original culture and in foreign cultures. Fundamentalism is a deculturalised and deterritorialised form of religion that is suited to globalisation. For the fundamentalist, the only worthy community is that of faith; both non-believers and ‘traditional’ believers are considered akin to pagans, in need of conversion. Accommodationism is the embodiment of religion in a culture that is shared by both believers and non-believers. As Roy argues:

The deculturation of religion... transforms the gap between the believer and the non-believer into a barrier, since now they no longer share either religious practice or common values. So all the intermediary spaces of non-practising believers, nominal followers, culturally religious non-believers are vanishing. In the eyes of the believers, the lukewarm, the cool or those who have not been born again belong to the secular—or even pagan—world. Conversely, to the non-believer, the believer appears incongruous, even fanatical. Deculturation is the loss of the social expression of religion (ibid.: 8).

The brutal repression of religion in society, during the atheistic period from 1967 to the late 1980s, meant that most of the young generation that grew up at that time did not experience public visibility of a religion, nor did they develop a strong attachment to religious symbols and rituals

It goes without saying that accommodationist versions of religion are compatible with religious tolerance, while fundamentalist believers experience more difficulty in finding common ground with other religious persons and secularists. Nevertheless, subsequent generations of fundamentalists and born-again devotees find a new accommodation with the surrounding mainstream culture. In a study of Islamic discourses in contemporary Albania, Cecile Endresen (2015) observed that the Albanian Muslim Community (AMC), the main Islamic organisation in the country, represents the accommodationist version of the faith. The AMC describes itself as the promoter of a local, moderate, modern and European Islam that combines the highest moral code with patriotic values. It holds in high esteem the religious tolerance and diversity in the country. On the other hand, according to Endresen, another organisation—the League of Imams (LI; *Lidhja e Hoxhallarëve*)—aims at restoring Islamic values in individuals through strict observance of rituals and faith-based conduct. While accepting the religious diversity of Albania, the preachers of LI pay less attention to other religions and, rather, are more concerned with the ‘incorrect’ practices of other Islamic branches and sects that have deviated from ‘true’ Islam. But there are indicators, according to the author, that LI is adapting a more lax attitude toward religious differences and is becoming accommodating to mainstream Albanian culture.

Another factor that contributes to religious tolerance is secularisation. In modern states secularisation means that laws, governance, science, education, ethics, etc., are detached from religion. The latter remains important as a source of self-identity and morality, but becomes less important in the public sphere, as more and more non-religious choices are available to individuals. In a secular society there is a variety of positions between the atheist and the pious, for instance one can be a believer in God without identifying with any religion, while another can have cultural affinity with a given religion without observing the rituals. The individualisation and privatisation of religious experience means that religion is not an important vector in public dealings and social relations; it becomes ‘invisible’, and many people are simply indifferent to

religion in everyday life. "Survey data shows that contemporary citizens of Albania follow a pick and choose behaviour towards religion: only five percent attend religious services weekly, 50 percent attend religious ceremonies only at key moments in life, such as a birth, marriage or funeral, and the majority support secular arrangements that confine religion within the private sphere" (Elbasani and Puto 2016; p. 64). This is confirmed by the present survey, which reveals a larger figure (14%) for those regularly attending religious rituals, but which remains a minority compared to the others that do not attend. While a lax attitude towards religion, or even indifference, does not equate to tolerance, it, nevertheless, facilitates it, because believers are reminded of many means of religiosity or non-religiosity, and learn to respect the choices of others.

A distinction can be drawn between political secularisation and social secularisation. The former refers to public institutions and the political field in general, while the latter has to do with questions about values and attitudes. Political secularisation is formal, whereas social secularisation is informal and part of everyday life (Turner, 2010: 651–653). The experience of political secularisation in Western Europe is not that of a wall of separation between church and state, but in the continuous reconstruction of a twin toleration. Most democratic states have negotiated the freedom of religion from state interference, while allowing religious communities not simply the freedom of worship but also the freedom to organise in civil society and political society (Stepan, 2000). Secularisation has been an important component of the political culture in Albania since the foundation of the state in 1912, but a strong impact was exerted by the atheistic period from 1967 to the late 1980s. The brutal repression of religion in society meant that most of the young generation that grew up at that time did not experience public visibility of a religion, nor did they develop a strong attachment to religious symbols and rituals. Whereas some may lament this religious ignorance, it did lay down a firm foundation for secularism in the public sphere and politics since the re-establishment of freedom of worship in Albania. It suffices to look at the frequency of inter-faith marriages and families, in order to assess the deep penetration of secularisation in the social life of contemporary Albanians. The distinction between political and social components of secularisation means that the greater public visibility of religion in the public sphere does not necessarily imply greater religiosity in the social sphere. It may even be antithetical, as in the example of Shkodra, where a shared understanding of urbanites across the religious divide as 'calm' people contributes to tolerance and mitigates against competition in the public display of religious institutions (Tosic, 2015).

Albanian nationalism is another political and moral factor that has contributed to religious tolerance. Since its beginning in the second half of the 19th century, the discourse of Albanian nationalism has emphasised ethnicity and language as the foundation of the Albanian nation and unity. It has tried to put the nation at the centre of a civil religion, under which both Muslim and Christian believers will unite. This can be observed in one of the famous slogans of the national renaissance—*The religion of the Albanians is Albanianism*—by Vaso Pasha (Sulstarova, 2017). National identity and nationalism have been the ideological support behind the secularism of the Albanian state since 1912. Today, the civil religion of nationalism has become part of the collective imagination of the Albanians. An interesting study conducted with several clerics from

each of the traditional religions in the country found that they essentially shared the same views about the nation and thought that religious tolerance was valuable both from a national and a religious perspective. All expressed the view that religious tolerance was a national marker of the Albanians, 'it is in their blood'. For them the ideal Albanian was a patriot, a believer and a champion of religious tolerance at the same time. They approved of the religious plurality in the country and judged that disturbances to religious harmony in Albania were caused by external non-Albanian factors. For each religious community the problem did not lie in the other communities, because they trusted them as Albanians, but in the connections of other communities with foreign religious networks, because they could provide an opening for harmful influences from outside (Endresen, 2010). The perception that national identity has a positive influence over religious tolerance is widespread in Albania and was confirmed in the present survey, where more than 83 percent of the representative sample agreed with the statement that 'national feelings nourish religious tolerance'.

V. PUBLIC SURVEY

V.1. Sample description

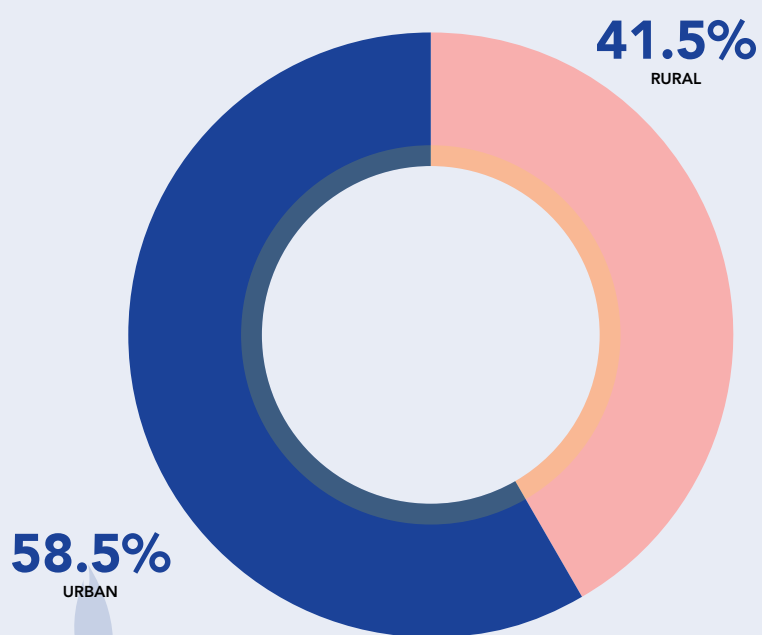
A public opinion survey was implemented during the second half of July 2017 and included a national representative sample of 1,100 respondents. As explained in the Methodology the sample was distributed across 40 municipalities, with 21 excluded due to the fact that their representative sample numbered fewer than ten respondents each. Three municipalities where the representative sample was smaller than ten respondents were intentionally omitted from this rule—Finiq, Konispol and Skrapar—in order to gather views of municipalities dominated by the Greek minority (Finiq and Konispol) or the Bektashi religious community (Skrapar).¹⁰



10. Census 2011 data

The majority of respondents, 58.5 percent, came from urban areas, and 41.5 percent from rural areas (Figure 1), with a ratio slightly higher than that in the 2011 Census (53.5%:46.5%, respectively).¹¹

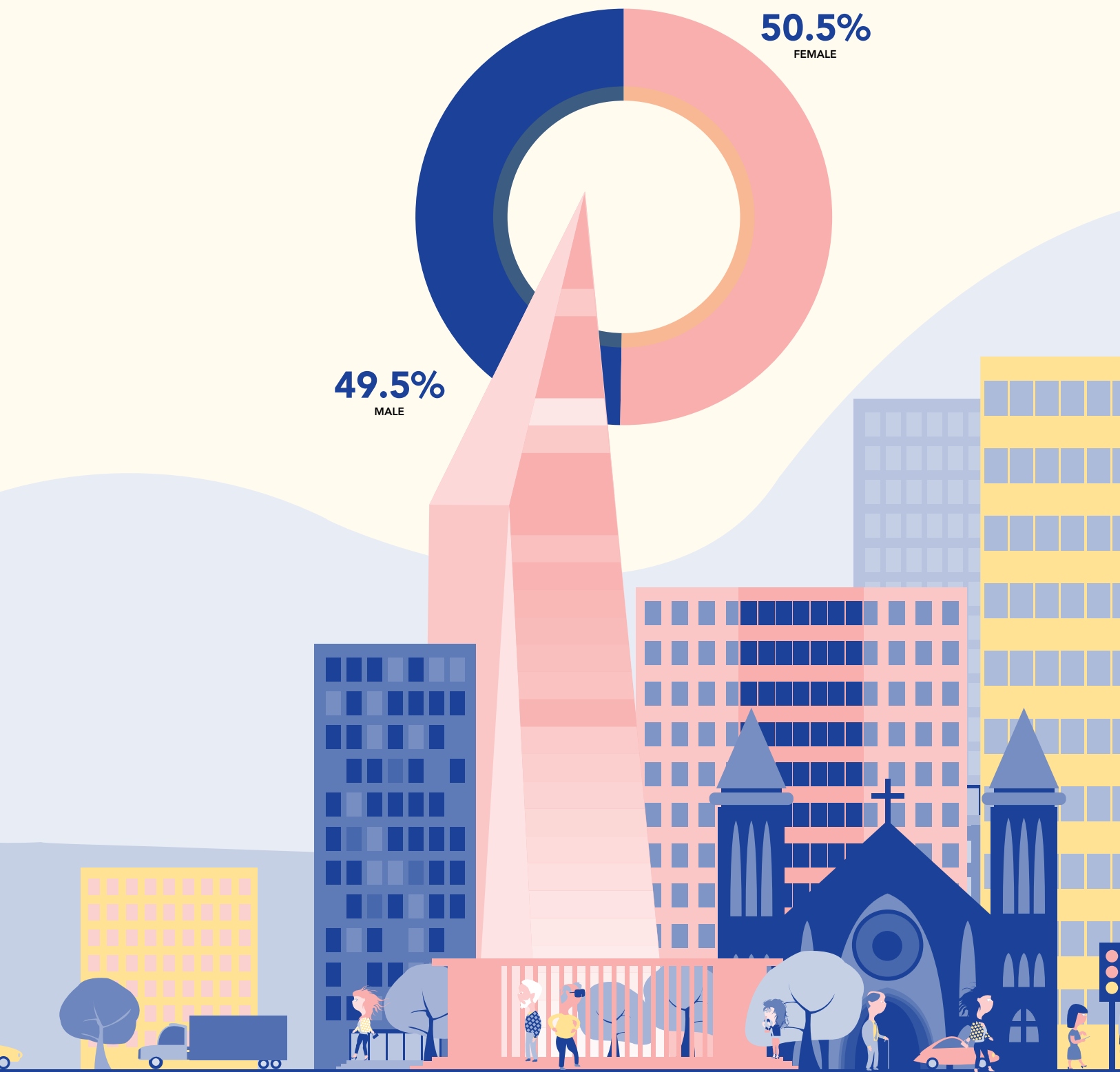
FIGURE 1 URBAN-RURAL COMPOSITION



11. The difference reflects the internal and external migration waves over the past 6–7 years since the Census of the population. For more information see sampling method in the Methodology section.

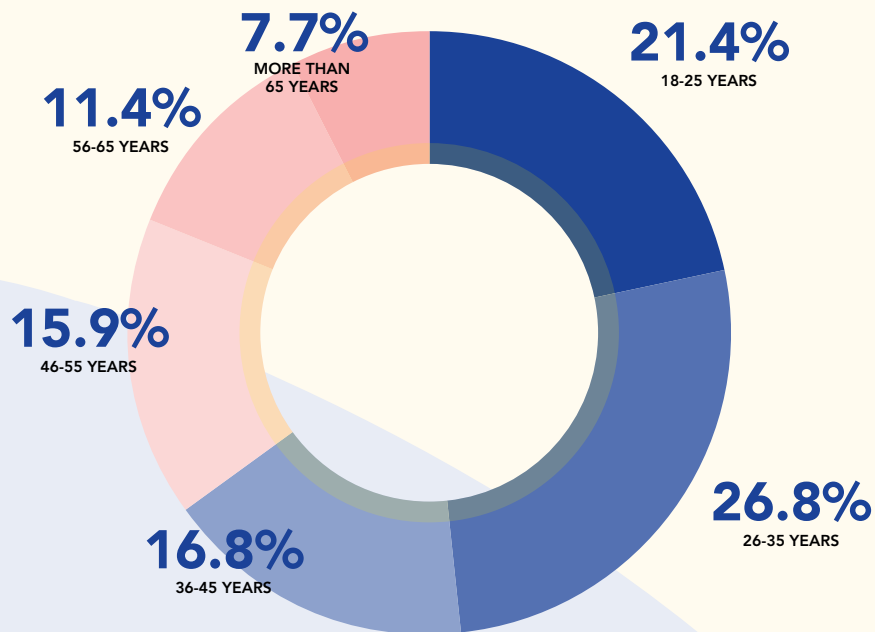
The survey sample displayed an almost equal gender representation (49.5% men: 50.5% women; Figure 2) in the interviews.

FIGURE 2 GENDER COMPOSITION



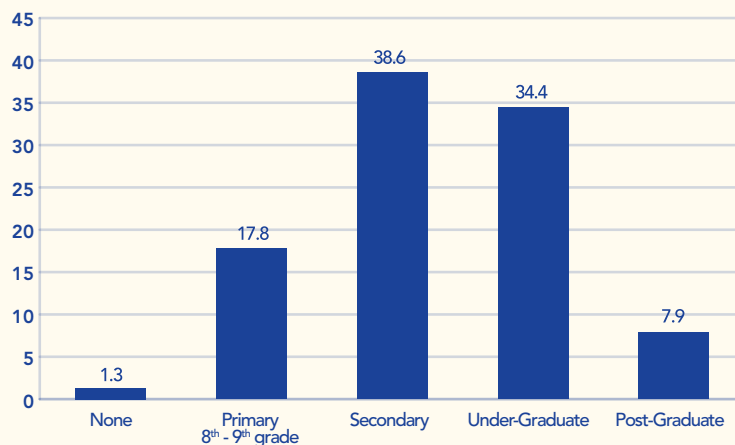
The average age of respondents was 39.7 years, and the age-group representation was 21.4 percent, 18–25 years; 26.8 percent, 26–35 years; 16.8 percent, 36–45 years; 15.9 percent, 46–55 years; 11.4 percent, 56–65 years; and 7.7 percent, more than 65 years (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 AGE GROUP COMPOSITION



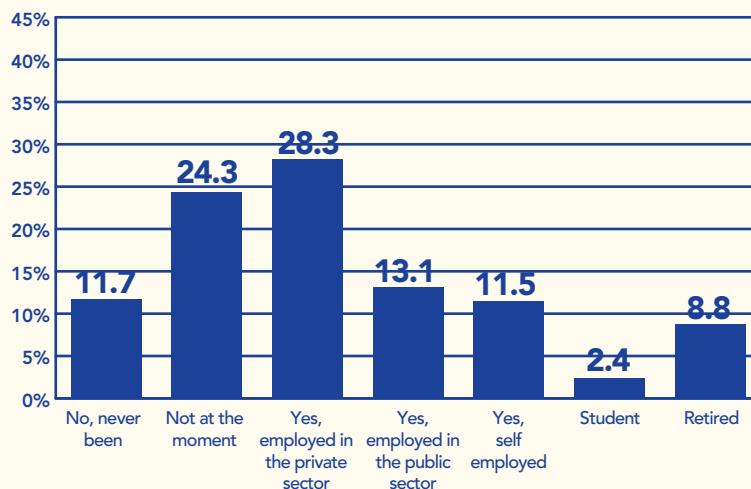
Given the dominance of an urban and relatively young (up to 45 years of age) population the survey sample displayed a background of a relatively high level of education (Figure 4): 38.6 percent had completed secondary education, while another 34.4 percent had completed undergraduate and 7.9 percent, post-graduate studies. The highest level of education completed by less than one fifth of the interviewees was primary (17.8%) and none (1.3%).

FIGURE 4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (%)



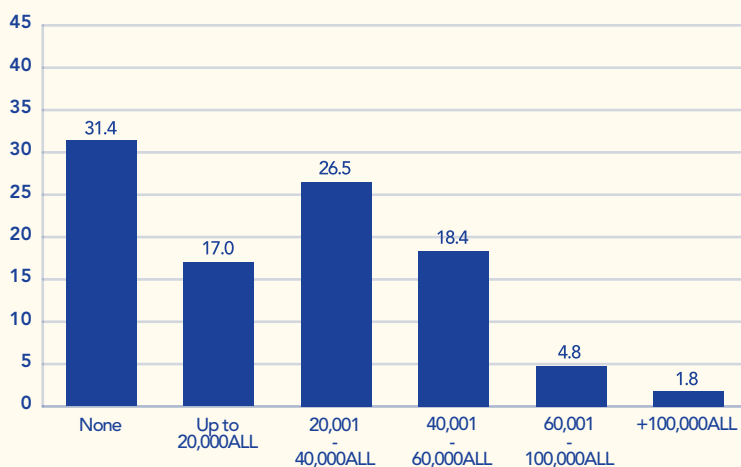
More than half of respondents declared that they were employed, with 36 percent unemployed (Figure 5). The majority (28.3%) of respondents were employed in the private sector, 13.1 percent in the public sector and 11.5 percent were self-employed. Nearly a quarter (24.3%) were not employed at the moment and 11.7 percent declared that they have never been employed. The remaining respondents stated they were students (2.4%) or retired (8.8%).

FIGURE 5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS (%)



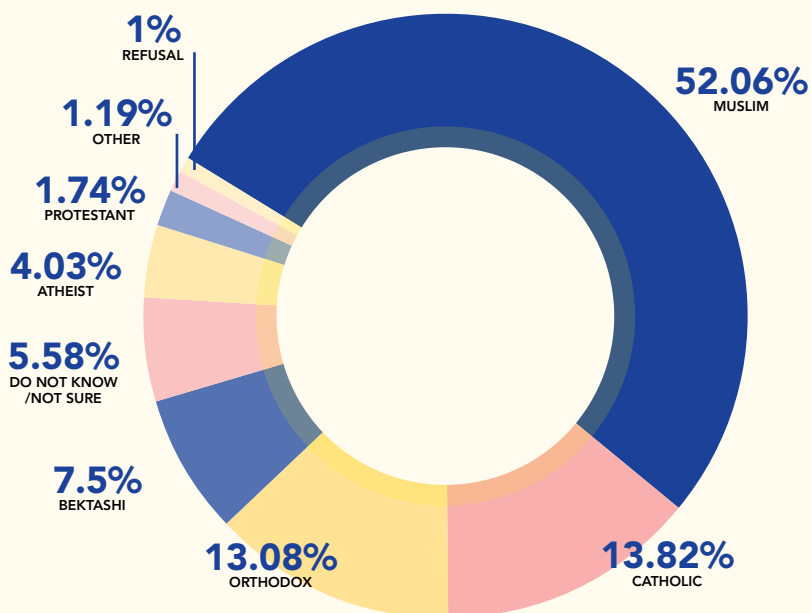
Employment status was naturally reflected in the respondents' declared monthly income, with 31.4 percent stating that they had no personal monthly income and 17 percent, up to 20,000 ALL (approximately 175 USD) per month. Some 4.8 percent had a monthly income from 60,000–100,000 ALL (525–870 USD), while less than 2 percent had an income of above 100,000 ALL (Figure 6), with 26.5 percent receiving from 20,001–40,000 ALL and 18.4 percent from 40,001–60,000 ALL.

FIGURE 6 PERSONAL INCOME (ALL; %)



Among respondents, 87 percent stated that they belong to the same religion as their family. The religious composition of the survey sample is shown in Figure 7. More than 50 percent were Muslim, less than fourteen percent were Catholic, thirteen percent were Orthodox, with slightly more than one-fifth comprising the other groups (Bektashi, unsure, atheist, Protestant, other).

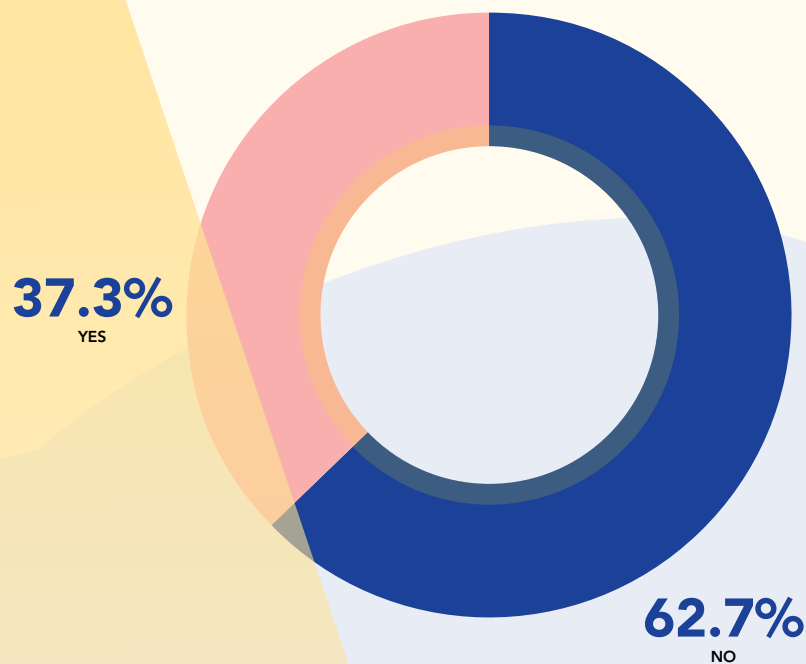
FIGURE 7 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (%)



Less than ten percent of the survey sample declined to answer the question of whether they *Consider themselves to be a person actively practising religion*. Of those who responded, 62.7 percent declared that they do not practise religion, while 37.3 percent state that they do (Figure 8).

The percentage of respondents who declared that they actively practise religion seems relatively high when compared with the findings on the level of knowledge of religion or the frequency with which they practise religious rituals (see below), which do not reflect the behaviours of a typically religious person who practises their faith. The demography of this group of respondents is interesting. The majority were women (53.1%), urban (60.4%) and up to 45 years of age (57%), with the last two variables similar to the overall sample demography.

FIGURE 8 PRACTISING RELIGION



The tables below report the level of education (Table 3), employment status (Table 4) and monthly income (Table 5) of the 37.3 percent of respondents who declared that they actively practise religion.

TABLE 3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO ACTIVELY PRACTISE RELIGION

Highest level of education completed	%
None	1.3
Primary (8th–9th grade)	21.6
Secondary	43.4
Undergraduate	25.9
Post-graduate	7.8
Total	100.0

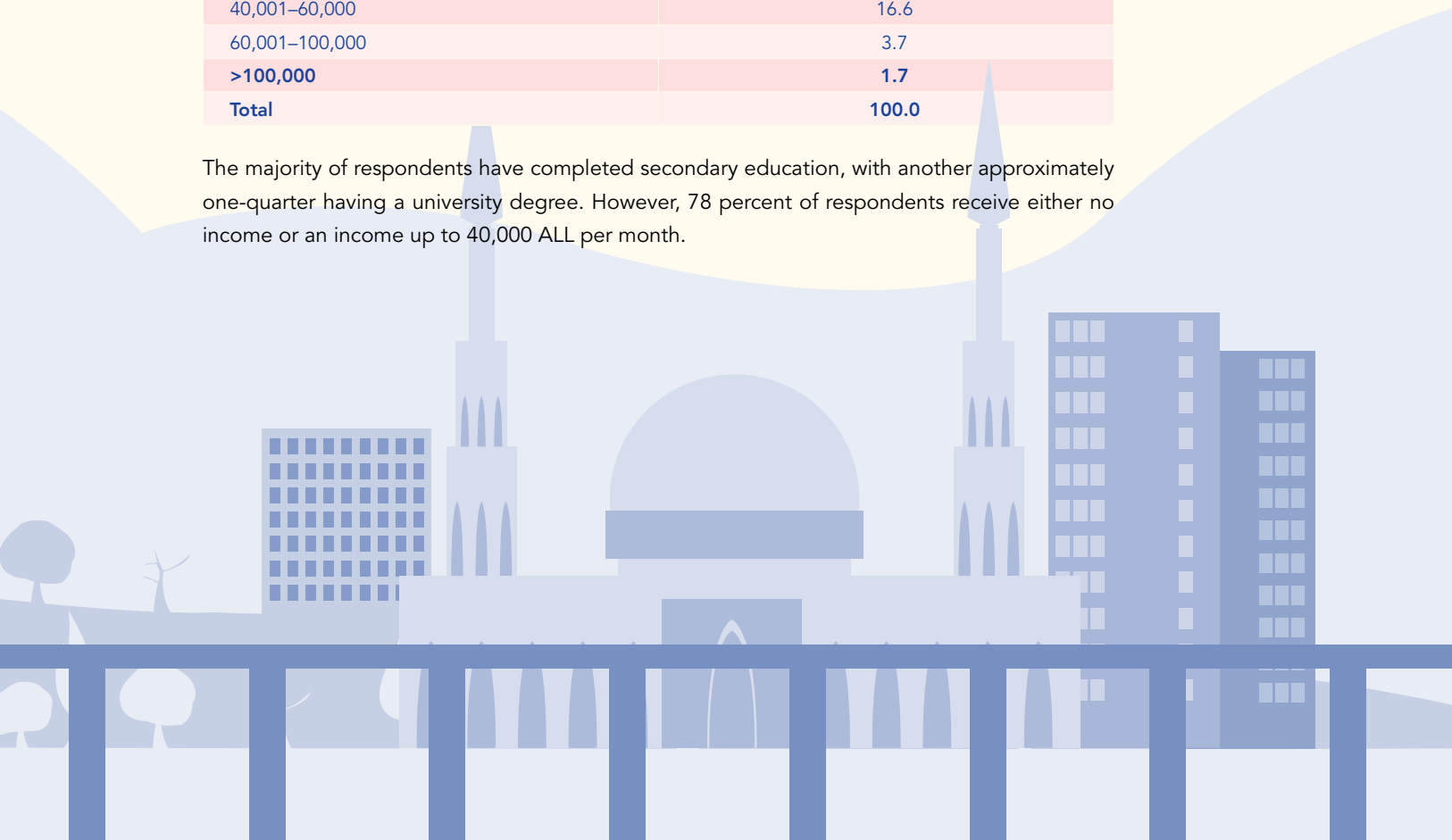
TABLE 4 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS WHO ACTIVELY PRACTISE RELIGION

Employment level	%
No, never been	13.2
Not at the moment	22.4
Yes, in the private sector	25.3
Yes, in the public sector	12.1
Yes, self-employed	14.3
Student	0.5
Retired	12.1
Total	100.0

TABLE 5 MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS WHO ACTIVELY PRACTISE RELIGION

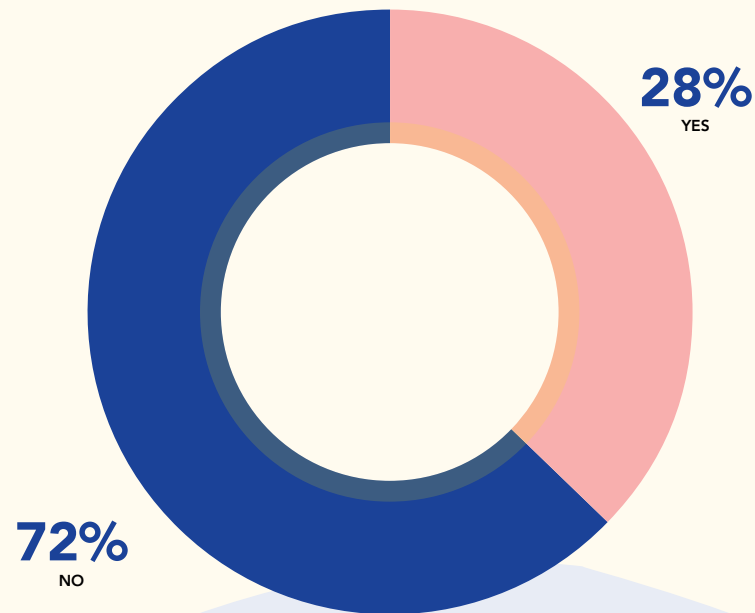
Individual net monthly income (ALL)	%
None	29.1
Up to 20,000	22.6
20,001–40,000	26.3
40,001–60,000	16.6
60,001–100,000	3.7
>100,000	1.7
Total	100.0

The majority of respondents have completed secondary education, with another approximately one-quarter having a university degree. However, 78 percent of respondents receive either no income or an income up to 40,000 ALL per month.



The survey also investigated respondents' perceptions on their immediate external environment and how they think they are perceived by their friends or work colleagues when it comes to practising religion. In all, 82.4 percent of the survey sample agreed to answer the question Do you think you are identified as a person practising religion by your friends or workplace colleagues? As shown in Figure 9, 28 percent of respondents believe their friends or colleagues identify them as practising religion.

FIGURE 9 IDENTIFICATION AS RELIGIOUS PRACTICANT BY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES (%)



Of those respondents who considered themselves as a person actively practising religion (37.3% of the sample), nearly 80 percent believed their immediate environment identifies them as a religious practicant while 20 percent did not believe so. Meanwhile, another 1.2 percent of respondents who do not practise religion actively, believed their friends or colleagues regard them as a religious practicant (Table 6).

TABLE 6 CROSS TABULATION DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PERSON ACTIVELY PRACTISING RELIGION? VS. DO YOU THINK YOU ARE IDENTIFIED AS A RELIGIOUS PRACTICANT BY YOUR FRIENDS AND WORKPLACE COLLEAGUES?

			Do you think you are identified as a religious practicant by your friends and workplace colleagues?		Total
			Yes	No	
Do you consider yourself a person actively practising religion?	Yes	count	242	61	303
		%	79.9	20.1	100.0
	No	count	7	557	564
		%	1.2	98.8	100.0
Total		count	249	618	867
		%	28.7	71.3	100.0

One of the findings from the literature review and the process of design of the survey instrument was that Albanians have a generally low level of information or knowledge on different religions. To test this finding, the survey explored the level of knowledge of respondents through their declarations on the five main religious communities in Albania: Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, Bektashi and Protestant. Table 7 reports the survey results on this question.

With the exception of the Muslim community, more than half of survey respondents declared they have little or no knowledge of the religion of the Orthodox (54%), Catholic (55%), Bektashi (60%) and Protestant (78%) communities, while more than one-third (36.4%) declared they have a moderate or large knowledge of Islam. Given the predominance of the Muslim community in Albania these findings are understandable.

TABLE 7 PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT HOW MUCH KNOWLEDGE DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE ON THE RELIGION OF THE FOLLOWING RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES?

	None at all	Little	To some extent	Moderate	To a large extent	Total
Muslim	8.8	26.5	28.3	25.7	10.7	100
Orthodox	21.3	32.7	23.7	17.5	4.9	100
Catholic	20.7	35.5	23.0	15.9	4.9	100
Bektashi	31.3	28.9	23.5	12.9	3.4	100
Protestant	49.0	28.2	15.5	5.5	1.7	100

V.2. Survey findings

The survey instrument (Appendix IX.1) was divided into three main parts, as follows:

- A. The individual and the Divine
- B. Perceptions on religious tolerance
- C. Attitudes and experiences of religious tolerance.

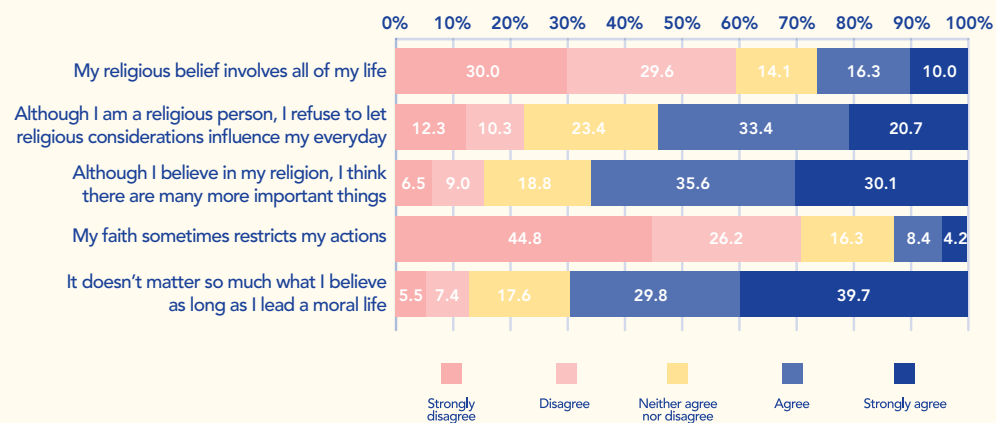
As explained in the Methodology, the questionnaire was designed to test and explore various assumptions identified as key to understanding religious coexistence in Albania. The following part of this report analyses the findings on each of the three main sections of the survey instrument.

V.2.1. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE DIVINE

This section of the survey aimed to explore respondents' level of religiousness, their attitudes towards religious and moral values, and whether it affects their lives and, if so, how. In addition to identifying the demography of the communities, this information helps us better understand the respondents' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of religious tolerance that are elaborated in the subsequent sections.

The survey asked respondents to what extent they disagreed or agreed with a number of statements in order to understand whether, and how much, religion influences their lives.

FIGURE 10 AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ON THE IMPACT OF THEIR RELIGION ON THEIR LIFE



The daily life of the majority of Albanians is largely secular. Figure 10 shows that more than half of respondents stated that religion does not completely affect or shape their way of living: only 26.3 percent stated that religion involves all aspects of their lives while nearly 60 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 54.1 percent of respondents stated that religious considerations do not influence their everyday activities. When it comes to not being restricted by religion, this percentage reaches 71 percent, while 65.6 percent of the surveyed population find that there are many other more important things in life. Although religion does

not influence respondents' lives, the majority of them (nearly 70%) stated that leading a moral life is important. A relatively small group of respondents (nearly 13%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *My faith sometimes restricts my actions* in comparison with the 37.3 percent of respondents who declared they actively practise religion (see above).

Out of the five statements, the first two were each statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) across two types of demographic groups: age group and area of residence (rural–urban). For the first statement—*My religious belief involves all my life*—respondents younger than 55 years were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree than those older than 55 years (Table 8).

TABLE 8 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT MY RELIGIOUS BELIEF INVOLVES ALL MY LIFE, BY AGE GROUP

			Age group (years)						Total
			18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	> 65	
My religious belief involves all of my life	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	142	182	109	111	58	37	639
		%	62.3	63.6	60.6	64.5	47.5	44.0	59.6
	Neutral	count	34	33	32	21	19	12	151
		%	14.9	11.5	17.8	12.2	15.6	14.3	14.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	52	71	39	40	45	35	282
		%	22.8	24.8	21.7	23.3	36.9	41.7	26.3
Total		count	228	286	180	172	122	84	1,072
		%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

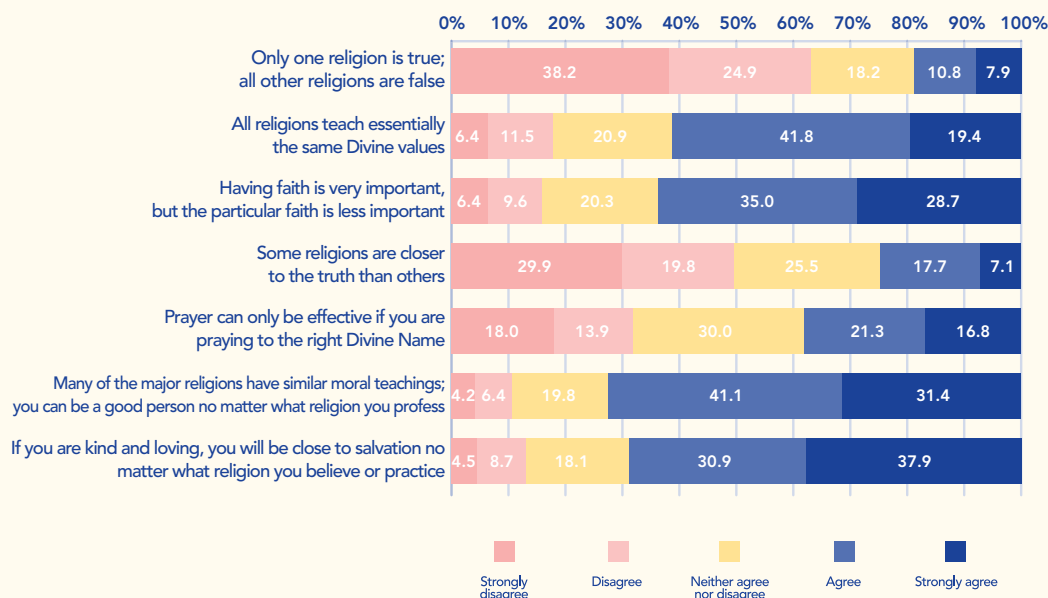
Meanwhile, statistically significant differences were evident between rural and urban respondents in relation to the second statement—*Although I'm a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday activities*—with respondents from rural areas more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement than urban areas respondents (Table 9).

TABLE 9 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT ALTHOUGH I AM A RELIGIOUS PERSON, I REFUSE TO LET RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCE MY EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday activities.	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	89	148	237
		%	20.4	24.0	22.5
	Neutral	count	88	158	246
		%	20.2	25.6	23.4
	Strongly agree or agree	count	259	311	570
		%	59.4	50.4	54.1
Total		count	436	617	1,053
		%	100	100	100

Relatively solid percentages of liberal or tolerant respondents were confirmed in many of the following set of statements shown in Figure 11, with the exception of one statement, where respondents were at odds in relation to the statement Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the correct Divine Name. The majority (30%) were neutral, the highest percentage of respondents who 'neither agree nor disagree' with any of the other statements. Respondents tended to disagree with opinions supporting the supremacy of a given religion, as in the following statements: Only one religion is true, other religions are false, or Some religions are closer to the truth than others.

FIGURE 11 AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ON RESPONDENTS' BELIEF IN THEIR RELIGION



Additionally, respondents overwhelmingly agreed with statements that recognise or emphasise positive values, such as the following:

- *All religions teach essentially the same Divine values* (61.2% strongly agree or agree)
- *Many of the major religions have similar moral teachings; you can be a good person no matter what religion you profess* (72.5% strongly agree or agree).

Statistically significant differences were observed among various demographic groups in three of the seven statements concerning this issue, with differences present across age groups and residential area.

In the first statement, *Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the correct Divine Name*, statistically significant differences are observed among categories of respondents from different age groups. As reported in Table 10, respondents in the 36–45 years old group had a lower percentage of 'strongly agree or agree' answers (27.6%) and the highest percentage (37.1%) of neutral answers. Additionally, respondents older than 46 years had a higher percentage of 'agree or strongly agree' answers than younger respondents.

TABLE 10 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT PRAYER CAN ONLY BE EFFECTIVE IF YOU ARE PRAYING TO THE CORRECT DIVINE NAME, BY AGE GROUP

			Age group (years)						Total
			18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	> 65	
Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the right Divine Name	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	65	92	60	52	33	27	329
		%	29.4	33.9	35.3	31.5	27.3	32.5	31.9
	Neutral	count	74	84	63	42	30	16	309
		%	33.5	31.0	37.1	25.5	24.8	19.3	30.0
	Strongly agree or agree	count	82	95	47	71	58	40	393
		%	37.1	35.1	27.6	43.0	47.9	48.2	38.1
	Total %	count	221	271	170	165	121	83	1,031
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Statistically significant differences were observed between urban and rural respondents in relation to two statements. Firstly, 76.5 percent of all rural respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement Many of the major religions have similar moral teachings; you can be a good person no matter what religion you profess. The percentage for respondents from urban areas was less than 70 percent, with this group having a higher percentage of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement than did rural respondents (Table 11).

TABLE 11 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT MANY OF THE MAJOR RELIGIONS HAVE SIMILAR MORAL TEACHINGS; YOU CAN BE A GOOD PERSON NO MATTER WHAT RELIGION YOU PROFESS, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Many of the major religions have similar moral teachings	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	35	77	112
		%	8.0	12.4	10.6
	Neutral	count	68	111	179
		%	15.5	17.8	16.9
	Strongly agree or agree	count	335	434	769
		%	76.5	69.8	72.5
	Total %	count	438	622	1,060
		100	100	100	100

Secondly, the statement If you are kind and loving, you will be close to salvation no matter what religion you believe or practise reveals again differences between rural and urban respondents. Although the majority of respondents from both areas agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, those from rural areas did so at a higher percentage than did urban respondents. Additionally, the difference between the 'strongly disagree or disagree' percentages of the two groups (Table 12) was significant.

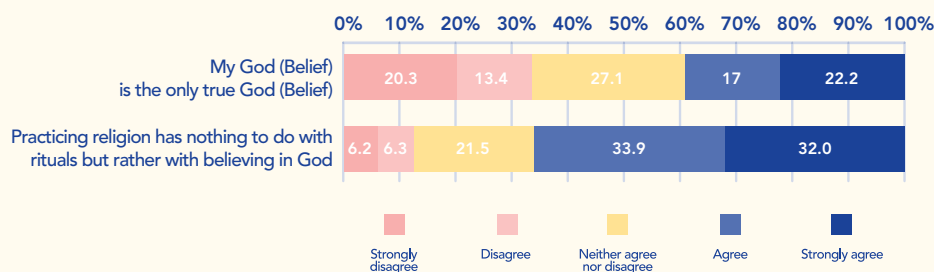
TABLE 12 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT IF YOU ARE KIND AND LOVING, YOU WILL BE CLOSE TO SALVATION NO MATTER WHAT RELIGION YOU BELIEVE OR PRACTISE, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
If you are kind and loving, you will be close to salvation no matter what religion you believe or practice.	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	43	95	138
		%	9.9	15.5	13.2
	Neutral	count	69	120	189
		%	15.9	19.5	18.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	321	399	720
		%	74.1	65.0	68.8
Total %		count	433	614	1,047
		100	100	100	100

A group of religious liberal respondents was confirmed through the relatively high percentage of those who agree that Having faith is important, but the particular faith is less important (63.7%), and nearly 69 percent of those who believe that Being kind and loving brings people closer to salvation no matter what religion they believe or practise.

When asked on a personal level about the exclusivity of their own belief or God, a higher percentage of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *My God or belief is the only true one*, 39.2 percent, more than the 18.7% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *Only one religion is true, the other ones are false* (Figure 11). Yet, as Figure 12 shows, the majority of respondents in general confirm that practising religion is about believing in God rather than practising rituals.

FIGURE 12 LEVELS OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ON RESPONDENTS' BELIEF IN THEIR RELIGION



There were significant differences between age groups and between area of residence in the responses to the first statement: *My God (Belief) is the only true God (Belief)*. More respondents older than 45 years agreed or strongly agreed with the statement than did younger respondents, though this does not mean that younger respondents tended to disagree more than others: the difference is that those of 18–45 years of age tended to be more neutral (Table 13).

TABLE 13 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT MY GOD (BELIEF) IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD (BELIEF), BY AGE GROUP

			Age group (years)						Total
			18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	> 65	
My God (Belief is the only true God (Belief)	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	70	99	59	54	38	20	340
		%	31.8	36.9	35.1	34.2	32.8	25.0	33.7
	Neutral	count	80	74	46	34	21	19	274
		%	36.4	27.6	27.4	21.5	18.1	23.8	27.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	70	95	63	70	57	41	396
		%	31.8	35.4	37.5	44.3	49.1	51.3	39.2
Total		count	220	268	168	158	116	80	1,010
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Differences are evident also when answers from rural and urban respondents are compared (Table 14), where 46.4 percent of rural respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In fact, the answers of urban respondents are almost equally divided among those who strongly disagreed or disagreed (34.8%), strongly agreed or agreed (34.1%), or who were neutral (31.1%).

TABLE 14 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT MY GOD (BELIEF) IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD (BELIEF), BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
My God (Belief) is the only true God (Belief)	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	134	206	340
		%	32.1	34.8	33.7
	Neutral	count	90	184	274
		%	21.5	31.1	27.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	194	202	396
		%	46.4	34.1	39.2
Total		count	418	592	1,010
		100	100	100	100

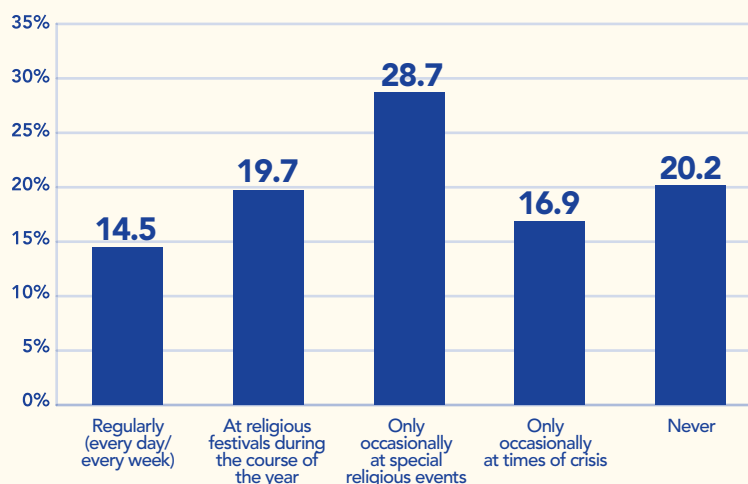
Analysis of responses to the second statement—Practising religion has nothing to do with rituals but rather with believing in God—shows significant differences between attitudes of rural and urban respondents. Although similar percentages of urban and rural respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, differences are evident in the percentage of those who strongly disagreed or disagreed, or who were neutral. As Table 15 reports, 15 percent of rural respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, with the proportion among urban respondents, 10.8 percent. Meanwhile, almost a quarter of urban respondents were neutral while the proportion among rural respondents was 17.7 percent.

TABLE 15 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT PRACTISING RELIGION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RITUALS BUT RATHER WITH BELIEVING IN GOD, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL-URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Practicing religion has nothing to do with rituals but rather with believing in God	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	66	67	133
		%	15.0	10.8	12.6
	Neutral	count	78	150	228
		%	17.7	24.2	21.5
	Strongly agree or agree	count	296	402	698
		%	67.3	64.9	65.9
Total %		count	440	619	1,059
		100	100	100	100

The survey also asked respondents various questions exploring whether, and to what extent, they practise their religion and its rituals. Figure 13 shows that 14.5 percent of respondents declared that they pray regularly (daily or weekly), 19.7 percent attend religious festivals during the course of a normal year, while 20.2 percent never pray and the remainder do so only occasionally, at special religious events, 28.7%, or at times of crisis, 16.9%.

FIGURE 13 HOW OFTEN RESPONDENTS PRAY (%)



The next question in the questionnaire provided a number of options for respondents to reveal which statement best describes them personally. The results are reported in Table 16. *I believe in God and I occasionally practise rituals of my religion* described the majority of respondents (42.3%), while another 26.8 percent described themselves as someone who *believes in God but does not practise rituals of his or her religion*. Only 9.6 percent of respondents described themselves as someone who believes in God and practises all religious rituals, though another 16.9 percent declared that they practise most rituals of their religion, while 3.6 percent described themselves as someone who does not believe in God (Table 16).

TABLE 16 HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

	Percent
I believe in God and regularly practise all rituals of my religion	9.6
I believe in God and regularly practise most rituals of my religion	16.9
I believe in God and I occasionally practise rituals of my religion	42.3
I believe in God but I do not practise rituals of my religion	26.8
I do not believe in God	3.6
Other	0.8

Statistically significant differences were observed between respondents from rural and urban areas in relation to the question Which of the following statements best describes you? Table 17 reports that almost 30 percent of respondents from rural areas declared that they regularly practise all or most of the rituals of their religion, while fewer than a quarter of respondents from urban areas declared they do so.

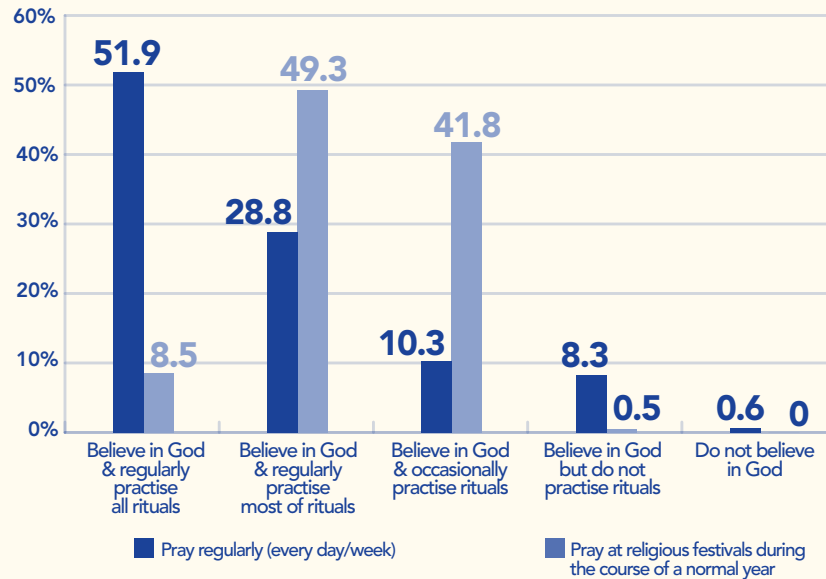
TABLE 17 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOU? BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

		Rural	Urban	Total
I believe in God and regularly practise all rituals of my religion	count	59	45	104
	%	13.1	7.1	9.6
I believe in God and regularly practise most of the rituals of my religion	count	74	110	184
	%	16.4	17.3	16.9
I believe in God and I occasionally practise rituals of my religion	count	183	277	460
	%	40.6	43.5	42.3
I believe in God but I do not practise rituals of my religion	count	121	171	292
	%	26.8	26.8	26.8
I do not believe in God	count	11	28	39
	%	2.4	4.4	3.6
Other	count	3	6	9
	%	0.7	0.9	0.8
Total		count	451	637
%		100	100	100

Findings to the last two questions (Figure 13—How often do you pray?—and Tables 16 and 17—Which of the following statements best describes you?), as well as a number of other survey findings (e.g. percentage of respondents who state that their ‘faith restricts their actions’, or who ‘pray regularly’), suggest that although a large proportion (37.3%) declared that they practise their religion, the number who actively practise religious rituals as part of their own faith is at a much lower level.

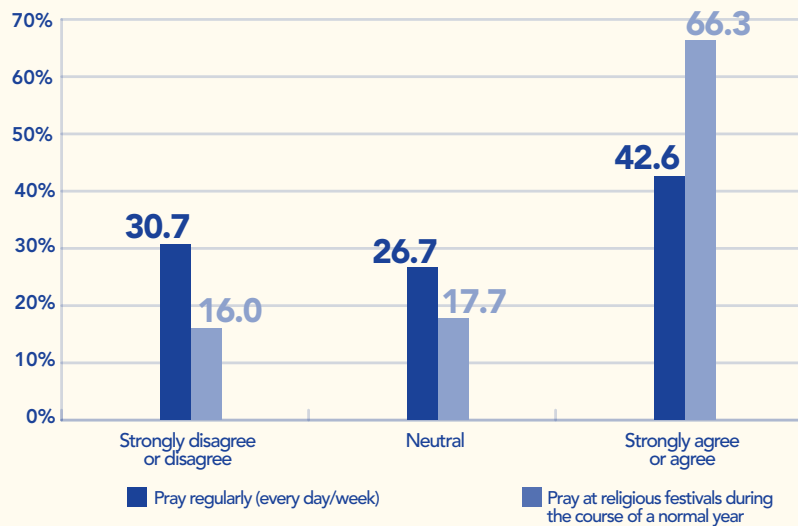
The individual approach of different believers differs between those who pray regularly and those who pray at festivals. Only about half of respondents who stated that they pray each day or weekly state that they ‘regularly practise all religious rituals’ (Figure 14).

FIGURE 14 LEVEL OF BELIEF AND FREQUENCY OF PRAYER AMONG RESPONDENTS



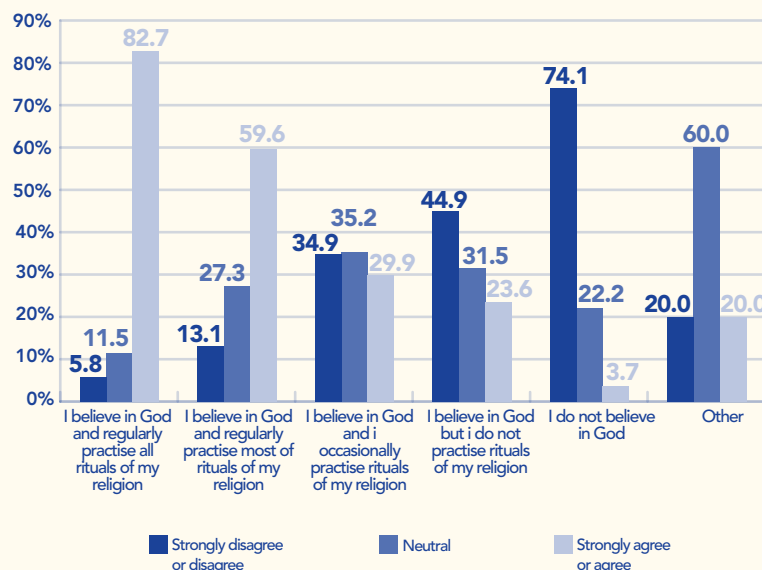
The majority of religious believers who pray regularly (daily or weekly) or at religious festivals during the course of a normal year believe that 'it doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life' (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15 RESPONSES TO STATEMENT IT DOESN'T MATTER SO MUCH WHAT I BELIEVE AS LONG AS I LEAD A MORAL LIFE AMONG THOSE WHO PRAY REGULARLY AND THOSE WHO PRAY OCCASIONALLY



Lastly, analysis of answers to statements concerning frequency of prayer gives a clearer picture of the perceptions and attitudes of individuals to the Divine. The vast majority of those who regularly practise all religious rituals tend to agree or strongly agree (82.7%) with the statement *Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the right Divine Name*. This percentage is lower in groups who practise religious rituals less often or not at all (Figure 16).

FIGURE 16 RESPONSES TO STATEMENT PRAYER CAN ONLY BE EFFECTIVE IF YOU ARE PRAYING TO THE RIGHT DIVINE NAME AMONG DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PRACTISE OF RELIGIOUS RITUALS



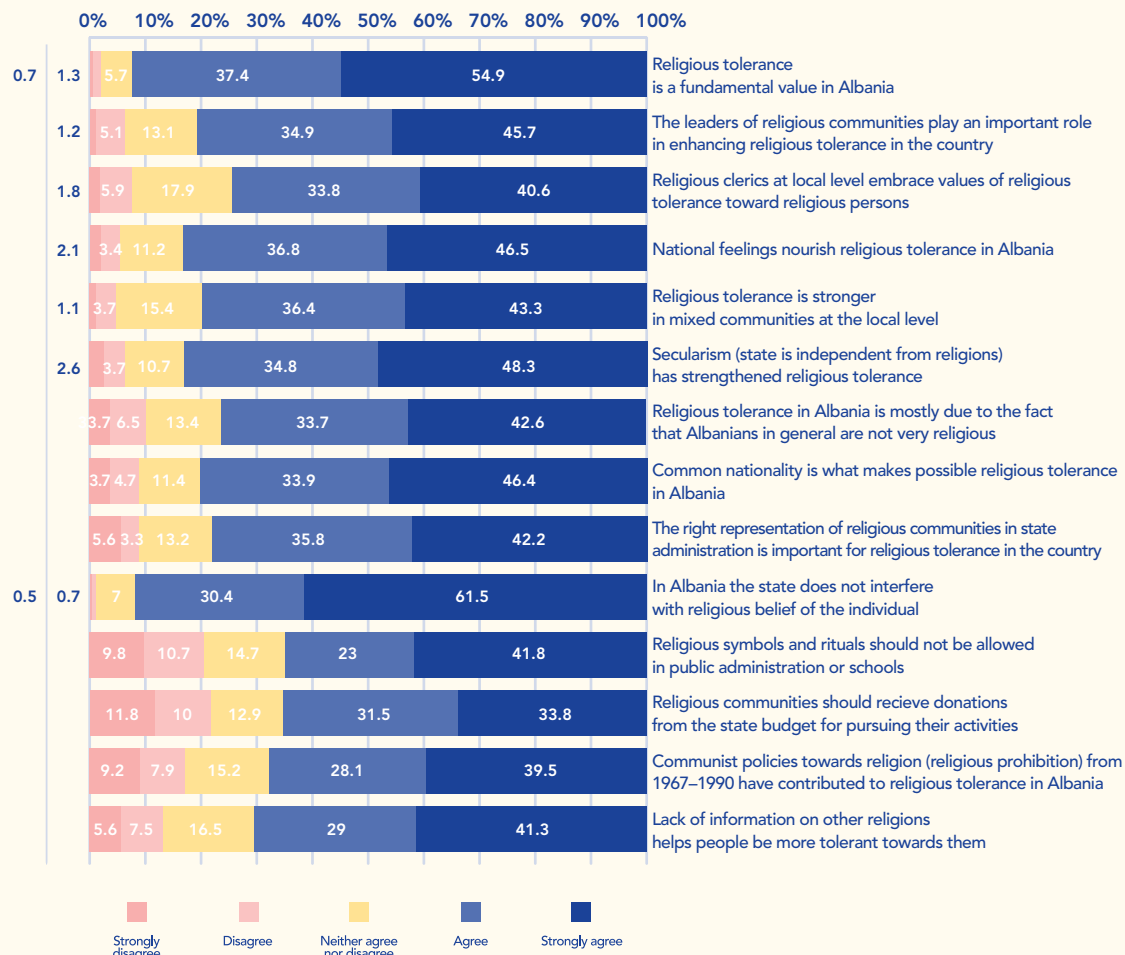
V.2.2. PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The second part of the questionnaire explored respondents' perceptions of religious tolerance in Albania, threats and enabling factors, and local and societal attitudes towards religious coexistence. In order to explore the milieu of widespread assumptions of religious tolerance, respondents were asked whether and to what extent, they agree with a number of statements that describe various factors or variables related to religious tolerance.

As expected, the majority (>60%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements concerning this issue (Figure 17). The vast majority believe that *Religious tolerance is a fundamental value in Albania* (92.3%) and that *The state does not interfere with religious belief of the individual* (91.9%), while approximately 80 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the relevance of some factors of religious tolerance, such as:

- *National feelings nourish religious tolerance* (83.3%).
- *Secularism has strengthened religious tolerance* (83.1%).
- *Leaders of religious communities play an important role in enhancing religious tolerance* (80.6%).
- *Common nationality is what makes possible religious tolerance in Albania* (80.3%).

FIGURE 17 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE



Other statements received more than 70 percent support from respondents, as follows:

- *Religious tolerance is stronger in mixed communities at the local level*; 79.7 percent strongly agreed or agreed.
- *The right representation of religious communities in the state administration is important for religious tolerance*; 78 percent strongly agreed or agreed.
- *Religious tolerance in Albania is mostly due to the fact that Albanians in general are not very religious*; 76.3 percent strongly agreed or agreed.
- *Religious clerics at the local level embrace values of religious tolerance*; 74.4 percent strongly agreed or agreed.
- *Lack of information on other religions helps people be more tolerant towards them*; 70.3 percent strongly agreed or agreed.

More than 60 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with other statements. However, for a number of statements some 14–18 percent of respondents were neutral:

- *Religious symbols and rituals should not be allowed in the public administration or schools (14.7%).*
- *Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania (15.2%).*
- *Religious tolerance is stronger in mixed communities at the local level (15.4%).*
- *Lack of information on other religions helps people be more tolerant towards them (16.5%).*
- *Religious clerics at the local level embrace values of religious tolerance (17.9%).*

Despite the high levels of approval, approximately 20 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following three statements:

- Religious communities should receive donations from the state budget for pursuing their activities (21.8%).
- Religious symbols and rituals should not be allowed in the public administration or schools (20.5%).
- Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania (17.1%).

Four out of fourteen statements concerning this issue reveal statistically significant differences among demographic groups. Interestingly, the main differences are between respondents from urban and rural areas. Urban areas had a higher percentage (Table 18) of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *Secularism has strengthened religious tolerance* (85.8%) than did those from rural areas (79.2%). However, the difference between rural and urban communities in the level of strong disagreement or disagreement was only slight, at 2.4 percent, while rural respondents tended to be more neutral than were urban respondents (13.1% and 8.9%, respectively).

TABLE 18 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT SECULARISM HAS STRENGTHENED RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Secularism (state is independent from religions) has strengthened religious tolerance	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	34	33	67
		%	7.7	5.3	6.3
	Neutral	count	58	55	113
		%	13.1	8.9	10.7
	Strongly agree or agree	count	350	531	881
		%	79.2	85.8	83.0
Total		count	442	619	1,061
		100	100	100	100

The differences between respondents from urban and rural areas are more pronounced with regard to the statement Religious tolerance in Albania is mostly a result of the fact that Albanians

are, in general, not very religious. Whereas respondents from urban areas tended to agree or strongly agree (79.4%) with this statement, fewer of those from rural areas did so (71.9%), and had a higher percentage of neutral or 'strongly disagree or disagree' responses (Table 19).

TABLE 19 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA IS MOSTLY A RESULT OF THE FACT THAT ALBANIANS ARE, IN GENERAL, NOT VERY RELIGIOUS, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Religious tolerance in Albania is mostly owed to the fact that Albanians in general are not very religious	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	54	56	110
		%	12.2	8.9	10.3
	Neutral	count	70	74	144
		%	15.8	11.7	13.4
	Strongly agree or agree	count	318	500	818
		%	71.9	79.4	76.3
Total		count	442	630	1,072
		%	100.0	100.0	

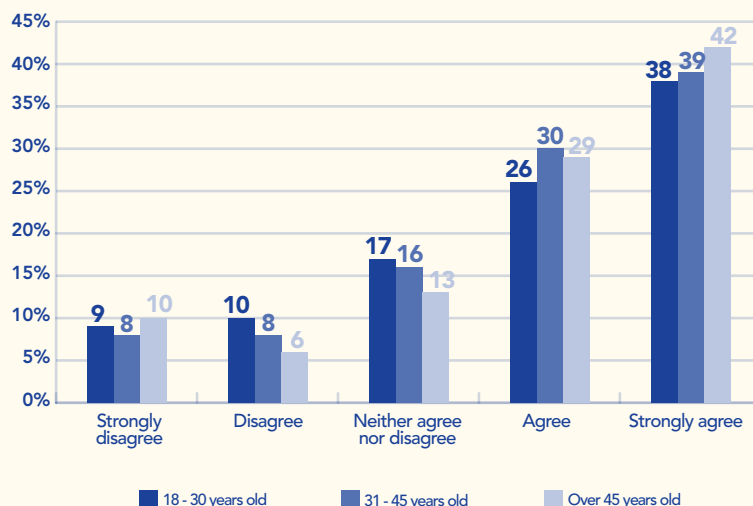
Urban versus rural differences appear also in responses to the statement Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania. However, the differences are for the percentages of those who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement (20.3% rural areas and 14.9% urban), as reported in Table 20.

TABLE 20 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT COMMUNIST POLICIES TOWARDS RELIGION (RELIGIOUS PROHIBITION) FROM 1967–1990 HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	85	89	174
		%	20.3	14.9	17.1
	Neutral	count	54	101	155
		%	12.9	16.9	15.2
	Strongly agree or agree	count	279	409	688
		%	66.7	68.3	67.6
Total		count	418	599	1,017
		%	100	100	100

In order to test whether there are differences between respondents with experience of having lived under the communist regime and who remember that lifestyle and those with no such experience additional demographic analysis was carried out. The analysis shows that respondents older than 45 years tended to agree or strongly agree with this statement, while a higher percentage of 18–30 year-olds tended to strongly disagree or disagree with the statement (Figure 18).

FIGURE 18 RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT COMMUNIST POLICIES TOWARDS RELIGION (RELIGIOUS PROHIBITION) FROM 1967–1990 HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA



The last statement—*Lack of information on other religions helps people be more tolerant towards them*—found differences between urban and rural respondents. Those from urban areas tended to agree more and disagree less with the statement than those from rural areas, while the percentage of neutral answers was similar in the two demographic groups (Table 21).

TABLE 21 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT LACK OF INFORMATION ON OTHER RELIGIONS HELPS PEOPLE BE MORE TOLERANT TOWARDS THEM, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
Lack of information on other religions helps people be more tolerant towards them	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	74	66	140
		%	16.7	10.6	13.2
	Neutral	count	72	103	175
		%	16.3	16.6	16.5
	Strongly agree or agree	count	296	451	747
		%	67.0	72.7	70.3
Total		count	442	620	1,062
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

In order to further assess the relevance of various factors and circumstances to religious tolerance in Albania the survey asked respondents the following open-ended question What is the most important factor enabling religious tolerance in Albania? The top five most frequently reported factors (970 out of 1,100) were the following:

1. Religious indifference, or lack of religious knowledge, 304 respondents
2. Local (national) culture and the dominance of national traditions over religious ones, 254

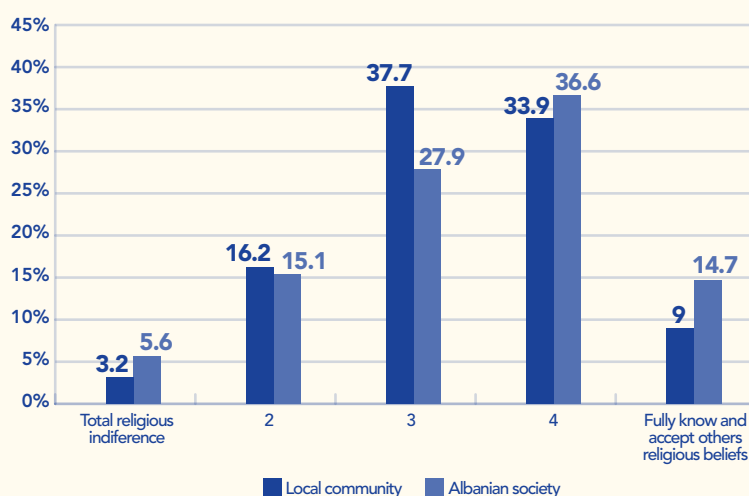
respondents

3. Mutual respect and respect for individual freedoms, 99 respondents
4. Secularism, 72 respondents
5. The communist period, 68 respondents.

Although the above-mentioned factors indicate that lack of religious knowledge or religious indifference in general is a dominant feature of the Albanian public, respondents still tended to rate highly society in general or the community in which they live when asked about the level of religious awareness.

Figure 19 reveals perceptions on religious tolerance in Albania through responses to the question Where would you rate Albanian society or the community you live in, on a scale from 1 (religious indifference) to 5 (fully knowledgeable and accept the religious beliefs of others)?

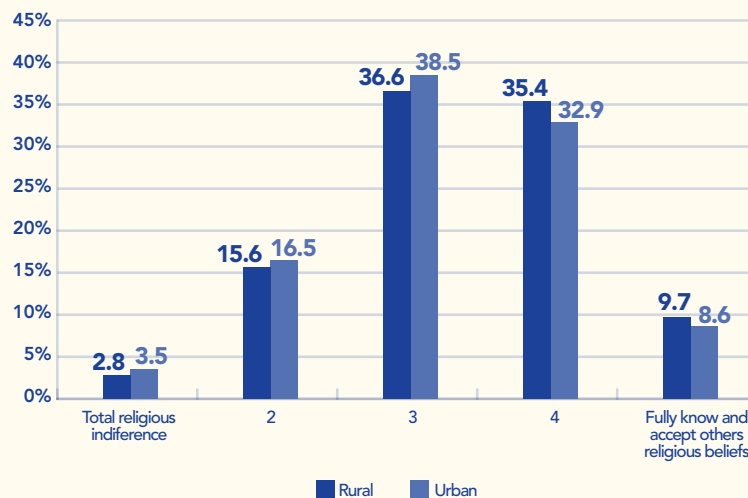
FIGURE 19 RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION WHERE WOULD YOU RATE ALBANIAN SOCIETY OR THE COMMUNITY YOU LIVE IN, ON A SCALE FROM 1 (RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE) TO 5 (FULLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND ACCEPT THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF OTHERS)? (%)



Fewer than 15 percent of respondents tended to characterise either Albanian society (14.7%) or their community (9%) as 'fully knowledgeable and accept the religious beliefs of others'. Interestingly there was a higher opinion of Albanian society had than of people in their immediate environment.

Although the general sample was mostly composed of urban respondents (58.5%), the majority of respondents who scored their community with a 4 or 5 were from rural areas, while a larger percentage of urban respondents saw their communities as religiously indifferent (scores 1 or 2; Figure 20).

FIGURE 20 RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE COMMUNITY YOU LIVE IN, ON A SCALE FROM 1 (RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE) TO 5 (FULLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND ACCEPT THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF OTHERS)? BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)



Lastly, the survey asked respondents what they saw as the most important threat to religious tolerance in Albania. A total of 838 respondents answered this open question and the top three most frequently reported threats were the following:

1. Terrorism, religious extremism and inciting of religious hatred, 324 respondents
2. Politicisation of religion (religious discrimination by the state, or religious interference in state affairs), 70 respondents
3. External threats and propaganda or conflicts abroad, 41 respondents.

Interestingly, 106 respondents thought that there are no threats to religious tolerance in Albania, while another 52 respondents said that they did not know.

V.2.3. ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The final section of the questionnaire explored experiences of religious intolerance, and subsequent attitudes and perceptions towards, or relations with, other religious groups. The survey asked respondents about their experiences with discrimination or exclusion based on religious grounds. Table 22 reports the findings on this issue.

TABLE 22 PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS?

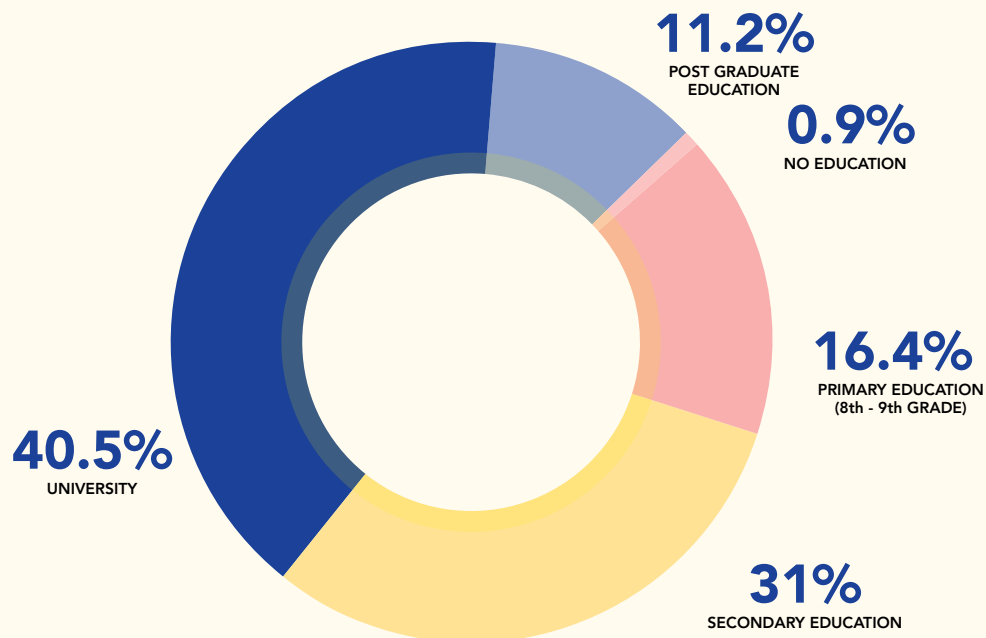
	Never	Rarely	Often	Regularly	Total
I have personally been discriminated against or excluded due to my religious belongingness	95.3	3.8	0.6	0.3	100
A member of my family has personally been discriminated against or excluded due to religious belongingness	96.7	2.8	0.4	0.2	100
I have witnessed religion-based discrimination or exclusion of other people in the community where I live	89.3	8.5	1.6	0.6	100

More than 95 percent of respondents stated that they personally (95.3%) or members of their family (96.7%) have never been discriminated against or excluded as a result of their religious belonging. Meanwhile, 3.8 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively, reported that such incidents have happened but only rarely, and less than one percent reported discrimination or exclusion on religious grounds to have happened regularly or often.

The figures are slightly different for those who have witnessed religion-based discrimination or exclusion of other people in their communities, with 2.2 percent stating they have witnessed such incidents regularly or often, and another 8.5 percent that they have witnessed such incidents rarely. The proportion declaring that they have never witnessed such incidents was 89.3 percent.

The group of respondents who have witnessed (rarely, often or regularly) religion-based discrimination or exclusion of other people in the community in which they live has interesting demographic characteristics: 55 percent were from urban areas, and nearly 53 percent were women. Figure 21 reports that the majority of this group of respondents (51.7%) have a university bachelor's or post-graduate degree.

FIGURE 21 HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY THOSE WHO HAVE WITNESSED RELIGION-BASED DISCRIMINATION OR EXCLUSION OF OTHER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH THEY LIVE (%)



Respondents were asked to briefly describe incidents of religion-based discrimination or exclusion that they have experienced or witnessed. A total of 129 respondents offered such examples, with the majority referring to Muslims (Table 23).

TABLE 23 TYPE OF RELIGION-BASED DISCRIMINATION OR EXCLUSION WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED BY RESPONDENTS

	No. of respondents
Discrimination or exclusion by public or private institutions: Social exclusion or exclusion in schools or refusal of employment in public or private institutions of women wearing headscarf or men with beards, or persons of other religions	59
Societal discrimination or exclusion: Religious believers who practise their religion, especially Muslims or Jehovah Witnesses, are perceived differently	31
Discrimination or exclusion in close relationships Refused marriages due to different religious background, and social differentiation on religious basis	20
Prejudice by religious representatives	13
Other	6

Discrimination of various religious or other groups in the society is often fuelled by prejudices and negative stereotypes. Accordingly, the survey probed possible stereotypes or prejudices towards members of all five main religious communities in Albania: Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Bektashi. Respondents were asked 'in the community in which they live, how they would rate members of these religious communities' in regard to the following qualities: hard-working, friendly, intelligent, violent or lazy. Between 60 percent and 79 percent of respondents declared that religion is not a determinant for rating individuals with regard to these values or qualities. However, while they confront negative stereotypes, respondents stated that they are more open to accepting positive qualities (Table 24).

TABLE 24 LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT OF VARIOUS VALUES IN THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, THROUGH RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE YOU LIVE, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN REGARD TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES OR QUALITIES?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Religion is not determinant	TOTAL
a) Hard working	a.Muslim	0.5	2.2	7.8	9.2	14.6	65.7	100
	b.Orthodox	0.2	3.1	7.1	10.0	12.3	67.3	100
	c.Catholic	0.0	2.0	7.9	10.3	12.2	67.6	100
	d.Bektashi	0.0	3.4	8.6	8.7	10.3	69.1	100
	e.Protestant	0.7	1.8	7.2	4.7	9.6	76.0	100
b) Friendly	a.Muslim	0.3	1.3	7.4	9.1	21.3	60.6	100
	b.Orthodox	0.0	2.0	4.5	10.1	21.1	62.2	100
	c.Catholic	0.1	1.7	4.1	10.1	21.7	62.3	100
	d.Bektashi	0.6	1.1	4.3	9.6	19.1	65.3	100
	e.Protestant	1.2	1.8	4.9	7.8	14.3	70.0	100
c) Intelligent	a.Muslim	0.6	1.0	7.5	7.1	12.8	71.0	100
	b.Orthodox	0.1	0.7	6.3	8.1	12.4	72.4	100
	c.Catholic	0.5	0.3	6.1	8.9	12.0	72.2	100
	d.Bektashi	0.4	0.5	8.5	6.8	9.6	74.2	100
	e.Protestant	1.3	1.1	4.3	5.4	9.0	78.9	100
d) Violent	a.Muslim	17.3	6.4	5.5	1.9	3.6	65.4	100
	b.Orthodox	20.5	5.3	4.2	1.7	0.7	67.6	100
	c.Catholic	21.4	6.3	3.0	1.2	0.9	67.2	100
	d.Bektashi	19.5	6.2	3.4	0.3	0.7	69.9	100
	e.Protestant	16.1	4.9	3.6	0.3	0.7	74.3	100
e) Lazy	a.Muslim	12.9	7.4	5.6	2.2	1.9	70.2	100
	b.Orthodox	12.0	8.5	5.2	2.2	0.9	71.2	100
	c.Catholic	12.4	8.6	5.3	2.1	0.9	70.7	100
	d.Bektashi	11.6	6.9	4.8	3.1	1.2	72.4	100
	e.Protestant	11.9	5.9	4.1	0.5	0.6	76.9	100

Survey respondents were also asked How do you feel when you think of members of other religious groups? About half of respondents thought that religion is not a determinant (Table 25). The majority of the other respondents strongly disagreed that they would feel threatened or distressed when they think of members of other religious groups, while nearly 39 to 42 percent said they would feel calm.

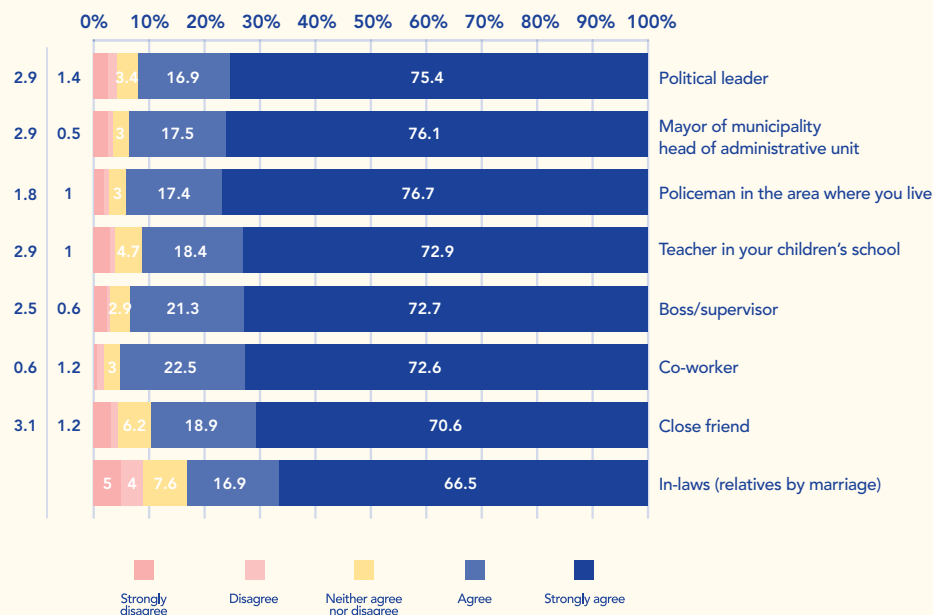
TABLE 25 PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU THINK OF MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Religion is not determinant	TOTAL
a) Threatened	a.Muslim	47.1	5.8	1.3	0.4	1.5	43.9	100
	b.Orthodox	52.1	2.2	0.7	0.2	0.3	44.6	100
	c.Catholic	51.9	1.8	0.8	0.0	0.7	44.9	100
	d.Bektashi	50.7	2.0	0.9	0.1	0.7	45.7	100
	e.Protestant	48.1	3.4	1.1	0.2	0.9	46.3	100
b) Calm	a.Muslim	1.9	2.8	5.0	5.6	36.3	48.3	100
	b.Orthodox	2.0	0.5	6.4	3.8	38.5	48.9	100
	c.Catholic	2.1	0.5	5.7	4.7	37.5	49.4	100
	d.Bektashi	2.0	1.9	6.1	3.3	36.5	50.3	100
	e.Protestant	2.7	1.2	5.4	4.0	35.1	51.6	100
c) Distressed	a.Muslim	37.5	5.0	1.1	1.1	2.4	52.9	100
	b.Orthodox	41.1	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.9	52.6	100
	c.Catholic	40.0	3.2	1.2	0.9	2.1	52.6	100
	d.Bektashi	38.6	2.6	1.8	0.9	2.4	53.8	100
	e.Protestant	36.9	2.9	1.9	1.3	2.6	54.4	100

The subsequent question in the survey asked respondents about their level of acceptance of members of other religious groups in a number of positions or situations, such as supervisor, political leader or colleague.

Figure 22 shows how likely respondents would accept a member of other religious groups to different positions. Although the percentage of respondents who would very likely accept them to a range of positions is high (>70%), the percentage drops to 66.5 percent for acceptance as in-laws, with nine percent saying it would be completely unlikely or unlikely. Nevertheless, the percentage that thought it likely or very likely was 89.5 percent (though still less than for other positions: 91–95%).

FIGURE 22 HOW LIKELY RESPONDENTS WOULD BE TO ACCEPTING A MEMBER OF OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO DIFFERENT POSITIONS

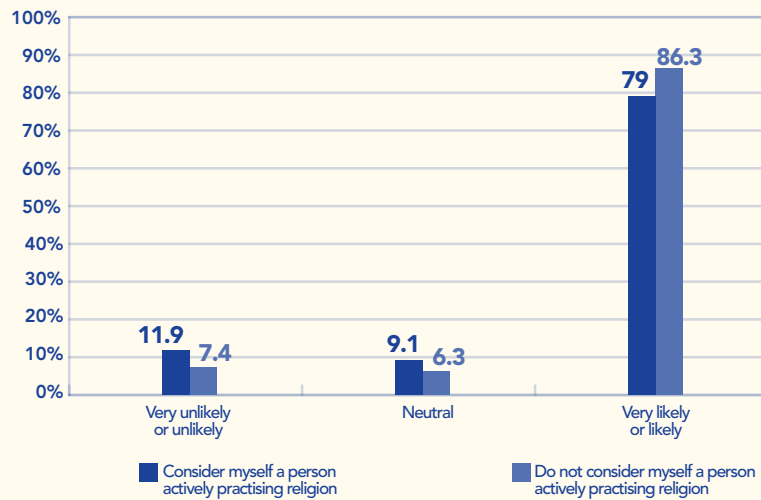


Although nearly three-quarters (70.6%) of respondents said they would very likely accept members of other religious groups as a close friend, for the last two options (close friend and in-laws) the percentage who would likely or very likely accept members of other religious groups dropped below 90 percent.

These data show that some respondents do consider religious affiliation when it comes to close personal relationships but do not think it a relevant factor with regard to positions such as political leader, mayor, policeman, teacher, or someone in their direct working relationships (supervisor or co-worker).

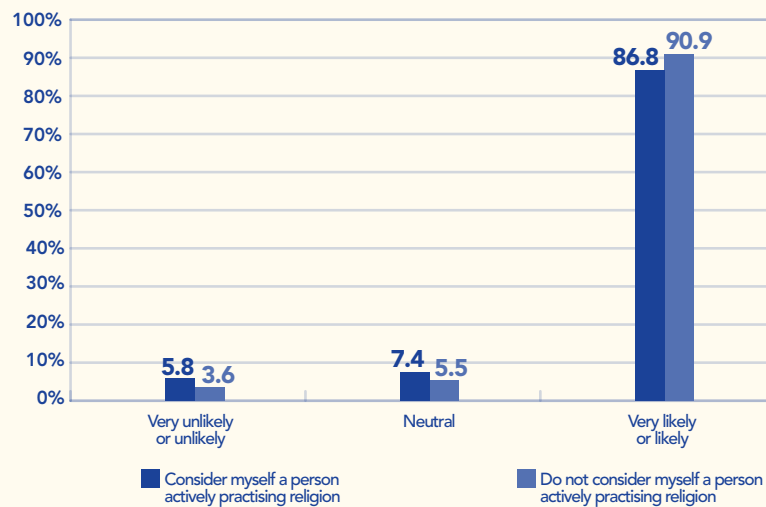
The analysis examined whether practising religion plays a role in the acceptance of respondents to people of other religions as close friends or in-laws. A statistically significant difference was observed for the latter, with those who consider themselves as a person who actively practises religion tending to be less open to accepting members of other religious groups (Figure 23).

FIGURE 23 HOW LIKELY IT WOULD BE FOR RESPONDENTS TO ACCEPT A MEMBER OF OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS AN IN-LAW, BY LEVEL OF PRACTICE OF RELIGION



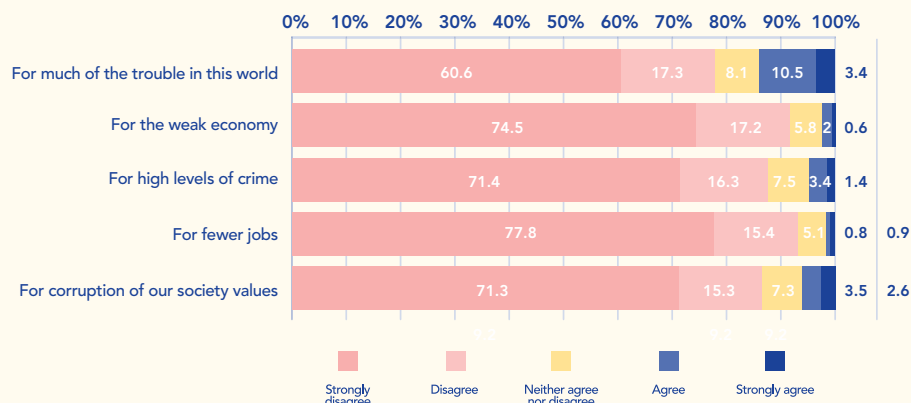
This trend is less obvious with regard to acceptance of people from other religious groups as close friends, with non-significant differences between those who consider themselves as practising religion and those who do not (Figure 24).

FIGURE 24 HOW LIKELY IT WOULD BE FOR RESPONDENTS TO ACCEPT A MEMBER OF OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS A CLOSE FRIEND, BY LEVEL OF PRACTICE OF RELIGION



Lastly, respondents were asked whether they blame people of other religions for various negative phenomena (Figure 25). In general, respondents did not confirm negative attitudes as theirs, though nearly fourteen percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *I blame people of other religions for much of the trouble in this world*.

FIGURE 25 EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS BLAME MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR VARIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEMS



There were significant differences among various demographic groups (women–men, rural–urban, different age-groups) with regard to four of the five statements shown in Figure 25.

Responses to the first statement—*I blame people of other religions for much of the trouble in this world*—differed by age group (Table 26), with those 36–45 years of age with the highest percentage (84%) of those who strongly disagreed or disagreed, and the lower percentage among respondents of older than 56 years. This latter age group agreed or strongly agreed at a significantly higher percentage than did other age groups.

TABLE 26 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR MUCH OF THE TROUBLE IN THIS WORLD, BY AGE GROUP

			Age group (years)						Total
			18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	> 65	
I blame people of other religions for much of the trouble in this world	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	180	230	152	133	88	54	837
		%	78.3	79.6	84.0	77.8	73.3	65.1	77.9
	Neutral	count	15	23	13	16	8	12	87
		%	6.5	8.0	7.2	9.4	6.7	14.5	8.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	35	36	16	22	24	17	150
		%	15.2	12.5	8.8	12.9	20.0	20.5	14.0
Total %		count	230	289	181	171	120	83	1,074
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Responses to the second statement—I blame people of other religions for the weak economy—differed by gender and by area of residence. Although only slight, the differences in the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement were statistically significant. As Table 27 reports more male respondents supported this statement (3.8%) than did women (1.3%).

TABLE 27 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR THE WEAK ECONOMY, BY GENDER

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
I blame people of other religions for the weak economy	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	479	499	978
		%	90.5	92.8	91.7
	Neutral	count	30	32	62
		%	5.7	5.9	5.8
	Strongly agree or agree	count	20	7	27
		%	3.8	1.3	2.5
Total %		count	529	538	1,067
		100	100	100	100

As Table 28 reports, more respondents from rural areas (3.9) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement than did those from urban areas (1.6%).

TABLE 28 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR THE WEAK ECONOMY, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)

			Rural	Urban	Total
I blame people of other religions for the weak economy	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	401	577	978
		%	91.1	92.0	91.7
	Neutral	count	22	40	62
		%	5.0	6.4	5.8
	Strongly agree or agree	count	17	10	27
		%	3.9	1.6	2.5
Total		count	440	627	1,067
		100	100	100	100

Residence and gender also have an effect upon the responses to the statement I blame people of other religions for high levels of crime. More respondents from urban areas strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement than did those from rural areas, who also had a higher percentage that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Table 29).

TABLE 29 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT *I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR HIGH LEVELS OF CRIME, BY RESIDENCE (RURAL–URBAN)*

			Rural	Urban	Total
I blame people of other religions for high criminal rates	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	413	600	1,013
		%	91.8	94.2	93.2
	Neutral	count	24	31	55
		%	5.3	4.9	5.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	13	6	19
		%	2.9	0.9	1.7
Total		count	450	637	1,087
		100	100	100	100

Meanwhile, more male respondents strongly agreed or agreed, and fewer strongly disagreed or disagreed, with the statement than did women (Table 30).

TABLE 30 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT *I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR HIGH LEVELS OF CRIME, BY GENDER*

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
I blame people of other religions for High criminal rates	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	498	515	1,013
		%	92.2	94.1	93.2
	Neutral	count	27	28	55
		%	5.0	5.1	5.1
	Strongly agree or agree	count	15	4	19
		%	2.8	0.7	1.7
Total		count	540	547	1,087
		%	100.0	100.0	

Lastly, there were differences among age groups in relation to the statement *I blame people of other religions for corruption of our society values*. Respondents of age 26–35 years and those older than 56 years had a higher percentage that agreed or strongly agreed with this statement than did other age groups. Those of age 18–25 years had the highest percentage of neutral answers, while the lowest percentage that strongly disagreed or disagreed was found among 56–65 year-olds, with the highest level among 46–55 year-olds (Table 31).

TABLE 31 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT I BLAME PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS FOR CORRUPTION OF OUR SOCIETY VALUES, BY AGE GROUP

			Age group (years)						Total
			18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	> 65	
I blame people of other religions for corruption of our society values	Strongly disagree or disagree	count	199	251	163	153	104	74	944
		%	85.8	85.7	88.1	90.0	83.2	88.1	86.7
	Neutral	count	23	20	17	9	5	5	79
		%	9.9	6.8	9.2	5.3	4.0	6.0	7.3
	Strongly agree or agree	count	10	22	5	8	16	5	66
		%	4.3	7.5	2.7	4.7	12.8	6.0	6.1
Total %		count	232	293	185	170	125	84	1,089
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In the final part of the survey respondents were asked to describe examples of religious tolerance in their community, and their personal experience of religious tolerance.

Of the total of 1,100 respondents, 773 gave examples of religious tolerance in their community, the vast majority (690) of which referred to mixed religion marriages, celebration of religious festivals of other religious groups, and coexistence and tolerance among citizens. Twenty-three respondents referred to a lack of discrimination of state institutions and secularism, or relations between the various religious institutions. Another 55 respondents declared that they live in homogenous religious communities and had no relevant examples, while five respondents declared “There is no religious tolerance in Albania.”

When asked about personal experiences of religious tolerance 578 respondents responded to the situations reported in Table 32, which also reports the number of responses to those situations.

TABLE 32 NUMBER OF RESPONSES TO DIFFERENT SITUATIONS RESPONDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED

Personal experiences with religious tolerance	No. of respondents
Individuals of other religious groups are part of my social circle (at work, school, community)	264
Marriages and family relations with individuals of other religious backgrounds	196
Celebrating religious festivals of other religious groups (with family or friends)	100
Religion is not a determinant / not important / I respect all religions equally	9
Giving children names of other religions	3
I have changed my religious belief and I had no negative consequences	1
We have never had conflicts despite the differences in religious beliefs	1
We have never discriminated against anyone based on religion	1
Sometimes people are less open when I talk about my religion, and sometimes they want to know more. The latter is tolerance.	1
Me, living in a mostly Catholic community	1
My family and my faith	1

VI. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON SURVEY FINDINGS

REPORT PREPARED BY ALEKA PAPA

In order to better understand and explore more deeply some of the key findings of the public survey, a total of six focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with ordinary citizens from specific demographic categories, in late August and early September 2017. (Please refer to the Methodology for details on the sampling and the demographic composition of focus groups.) An extensive description of the key findings of the FGDs, organised by the thematic questions explored, follows.

A. The individual and the Divine

The attitudes of focus group participants towards religious and moral values and how these affect their lives were explored. Participants were probed through questions concerning their level of religiosity and their perceived level of religiosity by their close family and immediate surroundings, and its interaction and impact on their moral and ethical values. The diverse demography of the focus group participants and their different approaches to religion (practising and non-practising) provides a deeper investigation and understanding of the survey findings on *The individual and the Divine*.

FOR NON-PRACTITIONERS: SPIRITUALITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A MEMORY OF THE COMMUNIST PAST COMPARED WITH THAT OF MORE RELIGION-INTERESTED YOUTH

Across all FGDs, when asked about *The individual and the Divine*, participants who had a memory of the communist past and were non-practising believers (irrespective of gender, residence or religion of family) revealed themselves as being spiritual rather than being attached to a specific God. Typical remarks included *I believe there is one God for everybody, Christian or Muslim* [referring to their religion by family] and *We all have the same God*. One woman residing in a rural area remarked *I have both the Quran and the Bible in my home. I feel very relieved when I go to church and light a candle, even though I am a Muslim*. For this group of people, morality cannot be equated with religion; leading a moral and ethical life boils down to a person's character (irrelevant of religious guidance).



“Christians or Muslims, we all have the same God”

FGD participant (woman, mid-fifties, living in a rural area)

Against this backdrop, young participants¹² appeared to have a more diverse or fluid spirituality, asserting that they had switched religions or at least been exposed to more than one religion during their lifetime. One young person, a former practising Muslim (now only a non-practising believer), noted *I could even change my current religion the day after this*. Nevertheless, even for this group, morality exists independently of religion. Surprisingly, also for practitioners, religion can play a supporting role by reinforcing human nature towards a moral or ethical life. But the ultimate basis rests in a person’s character.



“When I was a child I was a practising Muslim. Later I became a Protestant. Now I don’t practise any specific religion”

FGD participant (youth, living in an urban area)

These findings from the focus groups corroborate the findings of the survey. For instance, survey data showed that approximately 70 percent¹³ of respondents acknowledged that it did not matter very much what they believed in as long as they led a moral life. Surprisingly, this finding applied to practitioners as well; the majority of religious believers who declared that they pray regularly or at religious festivities also believed that morality existed outside of religion, corroborated by focus group discussions.

For practitioners: Differences in issues of religiosity exist between generations

Across FGDs, differences in parenting styles with regard to influence on children’s religious pursuits were observed among practising and non-practising parents. For instance, when parents were practitioners of a particular religion, they tended to transmit their family religion to their children, and would perceive it as problematic or defiant if their children were not to practise their religion.

One practising Muslim woman residing in a rural area narrated a story that she took her child to the mosque from his first grade, and now that he is 18 years old and a practising Muslim she feels very proud and even “secure as a parent.” On the other hand, some youths from practising families in rural areas related their parents’ instructions and discouragement from socialising with

12. 18–35 year olds

13. Percentages have been rounded. Please refer to the Public Survey section for details on the survey data cited in this section of the report.

friends from other religious backgrounds. In one instance, a youth shared a story that when his parents heard him speaking of the Red Cross (while he was taking driving lessons), they panicked immediately and asked him if he had become involved or socialised with any Christians.

"If I had listened to my family, I would not speak to any person from a different religious background"



FGD participant (youth, practising Muslim, living in a rural area)

At the other end of the spectrum, parents that were themselves non-practitioners tended to describe their children as *being more religious* and especially influenced by their social circle to follow a religion. In addition, non-practising parents residing in urban areas acknowledged during discussions that they would not prefer or encourage their children to be practitioners. One parent went so far as calling practising religion a *blindness*. He remarked that *if his son took time off work and went praying ... I would call it religious blindness*. They perceived practising religion as potential interference with their everyday life or a reduction in their work opportunities.

"My daughter wanted to wear a veil but I did not let her"



FGD participant (woman, employed, non-practitioner, living in an urban area)

A woman residing in a rural area, a widow with five children (including minors), maintained that her household's poor economic conditions have oriented her children towards religion, despite the fact that she was not a religious person herself. Given her unfortunate economic conditions and inadequate state assistance, a friend recommended that she contact and seek help from an Arab foundation, after which she now receives food supplies and clothing every quarter, while her children take Arabic lessons, go on daytrips to Muslim meetings, and have become religiously oriented.

"The state does not provide me with appropriate food and shelter; they [referring to religious foundations] do"



FGD participant (woman, non-practitioner, living in a rural area)

B. Perceptions of religious tolerance

Focus group participant perceptions of religious tolerance in Albania, threats and enabling factors, and local and societal attitudes towards religious coexistence were explored. Participants were asked about their own definition of religious tolerance and to list fundamental factors that had contributed to religious harmony in Albania, and of possible threat factors, if any.

In Albania, is there religious tolerance, co-habitation, harmony or indifference?

Across all FGDs, individuals from various demographic backgrounds would dwell upon different concepts to better encapsulate or portray what characterises Albania with regard to religion. For instance, to some the concept of tolerance did not condense the real meaning of the phenomenon, since tolerance means to tolerate opinions or behaviours that one dislikes or disagrees with. To them, it would be better portrayed as religious harmony. In addition, some participants could not differentiate between the concepts of co-habitation and tolerance; to them co-habitation and tolerance were one and the same.



“Albania is the motherland of religious tolerance”

FGD participant (man, employed, Orthodox practitioner, living in an urban area)

Notwithstanding the arguments on defining the phenomenon conceptually, the majority of participants would initially acknowledge that some kind of religious harmony was a trait of Albanian society. However, for participants from rural areas the observation was that there is much work to be done towards achieving religious harmony in comparison to what is commonly branded. These findings also corroborate survey data that show that respondents tend to have a rosier opinion of religious harmony in Albanian society at the macro level compared to their immediate environment: fewer than 15 percent of survey respondents characterised Albanian society as fully accepting the religious beliefs of others, while even fewer (9%) thought this of the community in which they live. Practitioner participants, on the other hand, defined religious tolerance as the freedom to fulfil religious obligations, which they perceived to not be fully guaranteed (especially with regard to practising Muslims).

Nevertheless, some youth participants contemplated that for the case of Albania it could not be framed as either religious tolerance or harmony, but rather ‘not knowing different religions’ or ‘religious illiteracy’. This argument tends to fall along the same lines as the survey data, which revealed that around seven in ten respondents believed that a lack of information on other religions makes people more tolerant.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IS STRONGER IN MIXED-RELIGION COMMUNITIES

Across all FGDs, participants acknowledged that the perception of religious tolerance was undoubtedly stronger in mixed-religion communities, given their legacy of co-habitation and of socialising together. This corroborates also the findings from the public survey, which shows that around 80 percent of respondents believed religious tolerance was stronger in mixed-religion communities.

Next, focus group participants were asked about and led into elaborating key factors that have enabled and continue to enable religious tolerance in Albania. The most cited drivers are discussed below.

NATIONAL FEELINGS PERCEIVED AS A TOP ENABLER OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY ACROSS NON-PRACTITIONERS

Many youth participants viewed a common nationality as the primary factor enabling religious tolerance in Albania. One participant was quick to acknowledge that, throughout history, Albanians have not attached nationalism to any specific religion and that this has brought about religious harmony in the country. Other participants traced this phenomenon back to the historical legacy of Albania, contrasting this with, for example, the case of some neighbouring countries where Orthodoxy became synonymous with the respective national affiliation. Furthermore, this finding goes in line with the survey data that show that around 83 percent of respondents agreed that national feelings nourish religious tolerance, while 80 percent perceived that a common nationality is what makes possible religious tolerance in Albania.

“We have not nationalised any religion”



FGD participant (man, practising Christian, living in an urban area)

Likewise, some participants with a memory of the communist past commonly cited the adage of Albanian nationalists of the 19th century that *The religion of the Albanians is Albanianism*, and their discourse commonly focused on its veracity for the case of Albania, and its repercussions for religious tolerance in the country. Other participants tended to support the opinion that the communist legacy of atheism is not perceived as a factor that promotes religious tolerance but rather as a circumstance in Albanian history that has misinterpreted the old adage.

THE ROLE OF SECULARISM UPON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE ACCORDING TO NON-PRACTITIONERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Across FGDs, non-practising participants generally acknowledged the positive role secularism has played in strengthening religious tolerance in the country, corroborating in this way the survey data, which revealed that 83 percent of respondents held the view that secularism had strengthened religious tolerance. However, some religious practitioners questioned whether Albania was indeed a secular state: *Secularity is constantly abused by the state, in their own interest.*

THE GAP IN PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES VERSUS THAT OF LOCAL RELIGIOUS CLERICS

Across nearly all FGDs, including practitioner and non-practitioner focus groups, the role of leaders of religious communities (at the national level) was acknowledged to have played a fundamental role in enabling and promoting religious tolerance in the country.

“The leaders of religious communities have played an important role towards religious tolerance in Albania”



FGD participant (man, practitioner, living in an urban area)

However, regarding the impact and role of local religious clerics, there was an observed discrepancy in perceptions of practitioners and non-practitioners. For instance, non-practitioners (especially residing in rural areas) usually perceived local clerics as being trustworthy and promoting tolerance, in contrast to non-religious participants who occasionally showed uncertainty about their activity and role in the community. Some claimed that individuals without adequate religious education attempted to impose their ideology at their local mosques. However, this perception was generated mostly from media reporting rather than from direct information from the Muslim community.

Concerning practitioners, participants from the Muslim community showed more affinity with their local clerics than did participants from Christian communities. From the aggregated survey data, around 81 percent of respondents acknowledged that leaders of religious communities play an important role in enhancing religious tolerance, compared to 74 percent who acknowledged this role in religious clerics at the local level.

THE COMMUNIST LEGACY AND ITS ROLE IN RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Nearly all participants, though to different degrees, acknowledged some role of the communist legacy in this direction. Some of the most cited channels included diminishing religiosity among the population as a result of forced atheism, and fostering of co-habitation due to ensuing poor economic conditions, making religious characteristics irrelevant. For instance, individuals with a memory of the communist past identified their own upbringing (since they were in most cases primarily raised in non-religious households and had experienced *incognito* religious celebrations at best) as a factor in their non-religiosity, ultimately feeding into religious tolerance. However, the youth—with no memory or direct experience of the communist past—was not very certain of the specific role of the communist legacy in this regard. Survey data also showed that youths tended to agree in a smaller proportion than the others over the role of the communist period in current religious tolerance.

LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY AND PERCEIVED RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: POSITIVELY CORRELATED FOR PRACTITIONERS BUT VAGUELY RELATED FOR NON-PRACTITIONERS

Non-practising participants generally held the view that *If there had been more religious practitioners in Albania, the country would not have this level of tolerance*, attributing religious

indifference to religious tolerance. This line of logic tends to corroborate the survey data, where around 76 percent of respondents put down religious tolerance in Albania to the Albanians not being very religious.

"If there had been more religious practitioners in Albania, the country would not have this level of tolerance "



FGD participant (woman, housewife, living in an urban area)

Against this point of view of non-practitioners, the discourse of Muslim and Christian practitioners revolved around the logic that religiosity and tolerance are, in fact, positively correlated: that religious individuals are more tolerant of other people's religious beliefs.

"If you don't respect the religion of other people, you don't know your religion"



FGD participant (woman, employed, practitioner, living in an urban area)

FOR PRACTITIONERS, TOLERANCE IS INTRINSIC TO THEIR OWN RELIGION

Across FGDs, practitioners tended to perceive their own religion as the main promoter of religious harmony in the country. Moreover, they asserted that they accept each other's faith, despite wanting everybody to convert to their religion. For instance, almost all practising Muslims attributed religious tolerance in Albania as coming from the Muslim community since for them it is "the majority that dictates the rules." Consistent with this view, Christian practitioners also deemed that they "are very tolerant."

Focus group participants were then asked about possible threats that could peril religious tolerance in Albania.

POSSIBLE THREATS TO RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE RANGE FROM POLITICS TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM. HOWEVER THESE ARE DEEMED NEGLIGIBLE

First of all, across all FGDs participants appeared to be generally optimistic with regard to the resilience of religious tolerance in Albania, and perceived threats to tolerance as rather remote. Nevertheless, some of the most frequently cited threats to religious harmony are summarised below.

Perceived as one of the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism, poor economic conditions were commonly identified across all focus groups as a pervasive possible threat to religious tolerance. This corroborates the survey findings, where the majority of respondents placed religious extremism as one of the main threats of religious tolerance. Examples were given of economically marginalised individuals, including minors, being recruited into a religion through monetary incentives. *Of course this will happen; there are no available jobs* was a response from

one woman living in an urban area. This recruitment into religion was largely perceived as a precursor to radicalisation.

Regarding the issue of radicalisation and religious extremism, Muslim believers appeared preoccupied with the activities of ISIS around the world, being *very damaging to the image of the average Muslim*. One woman from a rural area gave an example of one of her acquaintances who, during a commute by bus, was verbally insulted by a Christian (wearing a cross) who screamed in his direction *These Muslim people... they kill even their brothers...*

"Hatred is not a problem of the religion [it is not caused by religion]; it is rather a problem of the individual"



FGD participant (man, employed, practitioner, living in an urban area)

Across practitioner groups, the role of politics and politicians and their hidden agenda was identified as a possible threat to religious tolerance. Participants from the practising Christian focus group emphasised the importance of keeping in equilibrium the relationship of the state with all religions in the country with regard to the intactness of their religious buildings, or else there would be friction and intolerance. Christian practitioners appeared to be more cautious on this issue given instances in recent years where the state authorities and religious Orthodox community had been at the centre of public discourse following the demolition in 2015 of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Athanasios, to the dismay of local Orthodox Christians.

From the discussions with practitioners, the religious communities disapproved of the stance of the government with regard to the long-running issue of property restitution to the country's religious communities. Practising Muslims were concerned that properties had still not been restituted to the Muslim Community of Albania (MCA). However, Christian participants perceived that the state held a more positive stance towards the properties of the Muslim community.

Furthermore, participants in the practitioners' focus groups held the opinion that there is no appropriate political representation of the religious communities in Albania, and that if there were more political representation, policy making would be better. This was emphasised as a problem by the Catholic and Muslim communities, in contrast to the Orthodox community. The example was brought up of the discussions on amending the Family Code to which the religious communities were not invited to participate despite their views on this important issue.

"If there had been political representation from the religious communities, policy making in Albania would be better"



FGD participant (man, employed, practising Christian, living in an urban area)

Participants from the practising Muslim community pointed to the negative role of media in reporting on this issue. In their opinion, media outlets tended to feature headline news ripped of any religious sensitivity, while Muslim communities introspectively attributed the perceived lack of a good or cohesive community organisation to a deformity in the messages transmitted to the public and that ultimately created a threat to tolerance.

*"A possible threat comes from ourselves...
from not being well-organised"*



FGD participant (man, employed, practitioner, living in an urban area)

In general, participants agreed that when practitioners do not properly understand religion this fosters intolerance.

C. Attitudes and experiences of religious tolerance

In the final section of the questionnaire, participants' practical and personal experiences of religious tolerance and their attitudes and perceptions towards other religious groups were explored. Participants were asked to give personal examples of religious tolerance, or examples from their close family and immediate surroundings, including their stand on interfaith marriages and personal experience or exposure to religion-based prejudice or discrimination.

IS TOLERANCE FOR NON-PRACTITIONERS LIMITED TO GREETINGS AND SHARED CELEBRATIONS OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS?

When asked to translate the perceived level of tolerance in Albania with examples from everyday life, the typical examples raised by individuals with a memory of the communist past include the exchange of greetings and visits during religious celebrations and religious holidays. Examples of interfaith marriages were commonly mentioned, with some respondents themselves participant in mixed marriage arrangements.

"I have a Greek neighbour; he always calls me to say Happy Eid...this is religious harmony"



FGD participant (man, employed, non-practitioner, living in an urban area)

One participant from the women-only focus group cited her household as an example of religious tolerance: her daughter would go to church regularly, whilst her son was a practising Muslim. One youth participant gave an example of religious tolerance when her friends of different religious backgrounds would accompany her during prayer times at university.

"I have religious harmony in my own household; my daughter goes to church; my son is a devoted practising Muslim"



FGD participant (woman, employed, non-practitioner, living in an urban area)

However, when asked about their socialising or when dealing with practitioners in the civil service or educational institutions, participants would contradict themselves with regard to their stated level of tolerance. For instance, when socialising with practitioners, non-religious participants tended to perceive them as too imposing in delivering the words of God and considered them as intolerant towards non-practitioners and their life style. Mixed-group participants would not show themselves as tolerant if practising Muslim women were teaching at the local school or serving them in the local public administration. Also survey data showed that only around nine percent of respondents believe that representation of religious communities in the state administration is important for religious tolerance in the country. Moreover, participants held the view that when discussing tolerance, it should concern only the practising part of the population.

"If a teacher were to wear a veil in the classroom, the children would be scared"



FGD participant (woman, employed, non-practitioner, living in an urban area)

Given the survey finding that the population generally tends to have a low level of information or knowledge of religions, the focus group participants were asked if they deemed as appropriate the possibility of including religious education in the school curriculum. Almost all focus group participants agreed that general religious literacy was important, though they were doubtful about how this might be implemented, including which teachers with which religious background would be responsible for teaching the subject. Practising Orthodox Christians were more hesitant over this issue, perceiving it as a detachment from faith. Thus, among believers, it is still unclear how such a pilot project would be implemented. Practitioners think that the leaders of all the communities in Albania should be consulted over the curriculum, in order to maintain a balance of information and for reasons of transparency. A teacher practising any religion might find it difficult to be objective during his or her teaching.

LIKELIHOOD TO ACCEPT AS AN IN-LAW A PERSON OF A DIFFERENT RELIGION DEPENDS ON THAT PERSON'S LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

Even though participants in the youth focus group did not consider the religious belonging of a person as a factor determining their possibility of being a potential friend or spouse, some youths revealed that their parents were generally against mixed or interfaith marriages (irrespective of their level of practice). This finding agrees with the survey findings, where 83

percent of respondents stated that they would likely accept members of other religions as close friends but where this percentage fell to around 66 percent for in-laws.

"The last thing that I notice in an individual is their religious persuasion"



FGD participant (young, employed, living in an urban area)

"One of my friends wears a hijab, and I do not have a problem with that"



FGD participant (woman, employed, non-practitioner, living in an urban area)

Furthermore, consistent with the concerns expressed by the youths, when this question was posed to the mixed focus group, the parents corroborated this finding, stating that they would not wish it but that they would ultimately accept it. However, they were against accepting practitioners as in-laws, and were more resolute in the case of hijab-wearing women.

Respondents who were part of a mixed marriage were more tolerant, though practitioners were adamant in their belief against mixed marriage.

"I do not wish it for my children [interfaith marriage] but I would accept it if it were to happen"



FGD participant (man, employed, living in an urban area)

**PRACTISING MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS WERE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE PREJUDICE
AND SUBSEQUENT DISCRIMINATION THAN WERE OTHER PRACTITIONERS**

Echoing the above-mentioned statements on instances of discrimination, the most cited examples include hijab-wearing Muslim girls and women, who on their part declared they were passed over when applying for jobs, or being fired for not respecting attire requirements at work, leading them into the trap of exclusion. Such females became excluded from their circle of friends as a result of their different lifestyles, and excluded from the labour market, leading to yet more exclusion. Several such examples were reported also by the survey respondents.

“When I wore a veil, I became unemployed”



FGD participant (young, unemployed, living in an urban area)

One hijab-wearing practising Muslim participant recalled that her in-laws adamantly refused to accept her upon knowing that their son would marry a veiled Muslim (even though they were Muslims), though later they were compelled to accept it.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Although over the past two and a half decades religious tolerance has been promoted as an important feature of Albanian tradition and hospitality, little effort has been invested in understanding this value, the foundations it relies upon, the factors that sustain it, the challenges to religious tolerance and measures that should be taken in order to preserve and advance it. The present study offers a baseline review of current religious tolerance in Albania, the perceptions and experiences of citizens with this value, its enabling factors and key features, with the purpose of encouraging further actions, analysis and public debate on this important trait of Albanian culture.

The study finds that religious tolerance is valued and broadly supported by Albanian citizens. However, they tend to honour religious tolerance as a civic or moral value and national tradition rather than as a social practice that relies upon both knowledge of different religions and acceptance of religious differences.

More than half of Albanians have little or no knowledge of the various religions in Albania, with the exception of Islam, about which 36 percent of respondents declared they were moderately or largely knowledgeable. In fact, such a low level of religious knowledge was considered an enabling factor for religious tolerance by a significant majority of survey respondents and focus group participants.

Albanians' religiosity and religious awareness

Although 37 percent of Albanians considered themselves as actively practising religion and 28 percent claimed that their friends and colleagues identified them as practising religion, the survey found that the percentage of Albanians who regularly practise religion and are guided in their everyday life by religious norms and rituals is much smaller.

Whereas respondents from rural areas tended to be more traditional about certain aspects of their religion and practices, the majority of Albanians lead a non-religious life with fewer than ten percent describing themselves as someone who believes in God and practises all religious rituals, and less than 17 percent practising most religious rituals. Some thirteen percent of Albanians stated that their faith sometimes restricts their actions.

Such a low level of religious practice among Albanians is likely because the majority of survey

More than 90 percent of Albanians consider religious tolerance to be a fundamental value, and confirm that the state does not interfere with the religious belief of the individual.

respondents held that practising religion is about believing in God rather than practising religious rituals. Nearly seven out of ten Albanians believe that there are many more important things in life than religion and that *It doesn't matter what one believes as long as he or she leads a moral life*, confirming the priority of civic and moral values over religion. Such attitudes are present among the survey respondents who described themselves as *persons who practise religion*.

Albanians also tend to reject opinions that support the supremacy of one particular faith such as *Only one religion is true, other religions are false*, or *Some religions are closer to the truth than others*. Instead, they support more liberal views about religion and tend to focus more on the common ground of various religions, such as *All religions teach essentially the same Divine values*.

Nevertheless, there were some statistically significant differences in perceptions and attitudes towards religion and the Divine among respondents from urban and rural areas, from different age groups and from those who practise religion and those who do not. Appearing more traditional is to a certain extent understandable for the older generations but also for respondents from rural areas who remain compact as a community, unaffected by immigration. Respondents from rural areas were inclined in general to be more conservative about certain attitudes: e.g. they expressed greater support for statements such as *My God (Belief) is the only true God (Belief)*, and tended to disagree with statements such as *Practising religion has nothing to do with rituals but rather with believing in God*. Meanwhile, respondents older than 45 years tended to support statements such as *Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the right Divine Name*.

Respondents from rural areas are more likely to practise all or most religious rituals. Practising religious rituals differed between those who pray regularly and those who pray at festivals during the course of a normal year. Only about half of respondents who said they pray regularly—daily or weekly—stated that they regularly practise all religious rituals.

The majority of religious believers who pray regularly or at religious festivals believe that *It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I lead a moral life*. The vast majority (82.7%) of those who regularly practise all religious rituals agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the right Divine Name*. The percentage was smaller in groups who practise religious rituals less frequently or not at all.

Albanians' perceptions of religious tolerance

More than 90 percent of Albanians consider religious tolerance to be a fundamental value, and confirm that the state does not interfere with the religious belief of the individual. They also believe that national feelings, secularism and leaders of religious communities play an important role in upholding and strengthening religious tolerance.

Although at a slightly lower percentage, the majority of Albanians see a common nationality, lack of information on religion, and the non-religiosity of Albanians in general as enabling elements for religious tolerance in Albania. In fact, the top five factors that enable religious tolerance in Albania are seen to be the following:

- religious indifference or lack of religious knowledge
- local (and national) culture and the dominance of national traditions over religious ones
- mutual respect and respect for individual freedoms
- secularism
- the communist legacy of atheism

Nevertheless, there were differences among different groups of respondents over factors that enable religious tolerance. Those from urban areas were more sceptical with regard to the role of secularism or the assumption that the Albanians in general are not very religious. On the other hand, those from rural areas tended to strongly disagree or disagree more than those from urban areas with the statement that *Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania*.

The present study shows that differences exist in perceptions of the role of the communist past in current religious tolerance between respondents with experience and those with no experience or remembrance of religious prohibition. Albanians older than 45 years, representing those who have experienced and have a memory of the communist past, tended to agree or strongly agree more with this statement than 18–30 year-old respondents with no memory and no direct experience of the communist past. However, as the focus group analysis has shown, the communist legacy is not perceived as a factor that promotes religious tolerance but rather as a circumstance in Albanian history that has misinterpreted the slogan of the Albanian Renaissance—*The religion of the Albanians is Albanianism*—to legitimise the communist regime's hostility towards religion.

Whereas the majority of Albanians see non-religiosity and lack of information on religion as an enabling factor for religious tolerance, survey respondents and focus group participants who practise religion do not see religiosity and tolerance as mutually exclusive. Indeed, both categories of respondents find common ground in the position that civic and moral values uphold religious tolerance.

Albanians have a higher opinion of religious tolerance in society in general than of religious tolerance in their immediate environment, in the community in which they live. Nearly 52 percent

of Albanians rated their society as moderately religiously aware and tolerant. This opinion was particularly strong among respondents from rural areas, where about 43 percent had the same opinion of the community in which they live. However, respondents from urban areas tended to see their immediate community as religiously indifferent.

Approximately ten percent of respondents thought that there are no major threats to religious tolerance in Albania. The top three possible threats to religious tolerance include the following:

- terrorism, religious extremism and inciting of religious hatred
- politicisation of religion (religious discrimination by the state or religion's interference in state affairs)
- external threats and propaganda or conflicts happening abroad

While religious tolerance is considered key to prevent violent extremism on religious grounds, extremist religious ideology seriously undermines efforts for both, upholding religious tolerance and prevention of violent extremism.

Albanians' experiences of religious tolerance

Albanians illustrate religious tolerance with examples such as mixed religion marriages, the celebration of religious festivals of other groups and the centuries-long peaceful coexistence of Albanians of different religious backgrounds and the lack of religious conflict. The role of secularism and non-discrimination on religious grounds by the state is also valued and brought up as an example of religious tolerance in the country. In this study, the respondents' personal experiences of religious tolerance generally agreed with the above examples, with some survey respondents giving additional personal examples of religious tolerance.

"Sometimes people are less open when I talk about my religion and sometimes they want to know more. This is tolerance!"



Muslim respondent, living in a mostly Catholic community

Albanians are inclined to disregard religious background when assessing qualities such as hard-working, friendly, intelligent, violent or lazy. The majority of respondents stated that religion is not a determinant for the characterisation of people in relation to these qualities. This was also declared by the majority when asked whether they would feel threatened or distressed when thinking of members of other religious groups.

Although more than 95 percent of respondents stated that they personally, or their family members, have never been discriminated against or excluded due to religious belongingness, about eleven percent said that they have witnessed at least once such incident in the communities

in which they live. The majority of this group were women, respondents from urban areas, and had completed undergraduate or post-graduate education, indicative of the level of awareness of religious, and other forms of, discrimination and exclusion among Albanians.

Survey respondents gave various examples of discrimination mostly of discrimination and exclusion of people practising religion (especially Muslims) such as discrimination or exclusion in the public and private sectors (e.g. exclusion at school or refusal of employment by institutions and private companies), societal prejudices and exclusion, and discrimination in close relationships (e.g. refused marriages due to religious background), among others.

Between four percent and nine percent of Albanians do consider religious affiliation when it comes to closer personal relations. Although the vast majority of respondents (>90%) were very open to accepting members of other religious groups in positions of their working, governance and political environment (e.g. mayor, political leader, teacher, co-worker or supervisor), some tended to be less open when it came to accepting them as relatives by marriage or as close friends. Namely, 89.5 percent of respondents stated that they would likely or very likely accept members of other religions as close friends, and 83.4 percent as in-laws. This study finds that respondents who consider themselves as someone who actively practises religion are inclined to be less open to accepting members of other religious groups as in-laws.

A large majority (87–93%) of Albanians disagreed or strongly disagreed with attitudes that blame people of other religions for the economic performance, crime, fewer jobs and corruption of societal values. A significant majority (78%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with blaming people of other religions for much of the trouble in this world, though nearly 14 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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IX. APPENDIXES

IX.1. Survey Questionnaire

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA QUESTIONNAIRE

Letter of informed consent

My name is _____, I am working on behalf of IDM Albania, as part of a team that is surveying religious tolerance in Albania. The study is supported by UNDP Albania and its purpose is to examine religious tolerance in Albania, its context and enabling factors.

The study findings will inform policymaking in the country on how to reinforce factors that fuel or encourage religious tolerance and harmony in Albania and prevent or minimise those that might threaten it. There are no direct material benefits to individuals participating in this research.

I will ask you some questions about religion and beliefs, religious practices and attitudes, as well as perceptions on religious tolerance in Albania. You can decide not to participate in the interview, or you can tell me that you prefer not to answer a specific question, and I will skip the question. There is no need to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable and you should keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. If you like, you can finish the interview at any time and this will not affect your relationship with IDM or with the project funders.

We guarantee that all the information given during the completion of this questionnaire will be kept private and confidential. The only people who will have access to this information are the researchers for the study. When we write up or present the results of the study, we will not connect your name or personal data with anything that you have said.

If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact IDM at: info@idmalbania.org or tel. 04 2400241.

FOR THE INTERVIEWER:

Enter the interview data

Interviewer code	Interview no.	Municipality	Town	Village

Demographic data

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age_____ (in years)

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No education	1
Primary education (8 th –9 th grade)	2
Secondary education	3
Undergraduate	4
Post-graduate (MA, PhD)	5
Refusal	88

4. Are you currently employed?

No, never been	1
Not at the moment	2
Yes, employed in the private sector	3
Yes, employed in the public sector	4
Yes, self-employed	5
Other, please specify _____	6
Refusal	88

5. What is your individual monthly income (net)?

No personal income	1
Up to 20,000 ALL	2
20,001–40,000 ALL	3
40,001–60,000 ALL	4
60,001–100,000 ALL	5
>100,000 ALL	6
Refusal	88

6. Which is your family of origin's religious belongingness?

Muslim	1
Orthodox	2
Catholic	3
Bektashi	4
Protestant	5
Mixed	6
Other_____	7
Refusal	88
Don't Know / Not sure	99

7. Do you, as an individual, belong to the same religion as your family of origin?

Yes (GO TO QUESTION 9)	1
No	2
Refusal	88
Don't Know/ Not sure	99

8. If not, which religious affiliation is closest to your religious beliefs or practices?

Muslim	1
Orthodox	2
Catholic	3
Bektashi	4
Protestant	5
Other _____	6
I am an Atheist	7
Refusal	88
Don't Know / Not sure	99

9. Do you consider yourself a person actively practising religion?

Yes	1
No	2
Refusal	88
Don't Know / Not sure	99

10. Do you think you are identified as religious practitant by your friends and work colleagues?

Yes	1
No	2
Refusal	88
Don't Know / Not sure	99

11. How much knowledge do you think you have about the religion of the following religious communities:

	Not at all	Little knowledge	To some extent/ Somehow	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	Refusal
a) Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	88

A. The individual and the Divine

12. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Refuse / DK
a) My religious belief involves all of my life	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday activities	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) Although I believe in my religion, I think there are many more important things in life	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) My faith sometimes restricts my actions	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life	1	2	3	4	5	88

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	99 Refuse / DK
a) Only one religion is true; the other religions are false	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) All religions teach essentially the same Divine values	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) Having faith is very important, but the particular faith is less important	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) Some religions are closer to the truth than others	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) Prayer can only be effective if you are praying to the right Divine Name	1	2	3	4	5	88
f) Many of the major religions have similar moral teachings; you can be a good person no matter what religion you profess	1	2	3	4	5	88
g) If you are kind and loving, you will be close to salvation no matter what religion you believe or practise	1	2	3	4	5	88

14. Could you say how often you pray:

Regularly (daily, weekly) (1)	At religious festivals during the course of a normal year (2)	Only occasionally, at special religious events (3)	Only occasionally, at times of crisis (4)	Never (5)	Don't know / NA (88)
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15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Refuse / DK
a) My God (Belief) is the only true God (Belief)	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) Practising religion has nothing to do with rituals but rather with believing in God	1	2	3	4	5	88

16. Which of the following statements best describes you?
(ONLY ONE ANSWER)

I believe in God and regularly practise all rituals of my religion
 I believe in God and regularly practise most of rituals of my religion
 I believe in God and I occasionally practise rituals of my religion
 I believe in God but I do not practise rituals of my religion
 I do not believe in God
 Other (Specify): _____

88 Refuse
 99 Don't know

B. Perceptions of religious tolerance in Albania

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	99 Refuse / DK
a) Religious tolerance is a fundamental value in Albania	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) The leaders of religious communities play an important role in enhancing religious tolerance in the country	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) Local religious clerics embrace values of religious tolerance toward religious persons	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) National feelings nourish religious tolerance in Albania	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) Religious tolerance is stronger in mixed communities at the local level	1	2	3	4	5	88
f) Secularism (state is independent from religions) has strengthened religious tolerance	1	2	3	4	5	88
g) Religious tolerance in Albania is mostly due to the fact that Albanians in general are not very religious	1	2	3	4	5	88
h) Common nationality is what makes possible religious tolerance in Albania	1	2	3	4	5	88
i) The right representation of religious communities in state administration is important for religious tolerance in the country	1	2	3	4	5	88
j) In Albania the state does not interfere with religious belief of the individual	1	2	3	4	5	88
k) Religious symbols and rituals should not be allowed in the public administration or schools	1	2	3	4	5	88
l) Religious communities should receive donations from the state budget for pursuing their activities	1	2	3	4	5	88
m) Communist policies towards religion (religious prohibition) from 1967–1990 have contributed to religious tolerance in Albania	1	2	3	4	5	88
n) Lack of information on other religions helps people be more tolerant towards them	1	2	3	4	5	88

18. In your opinion, what is the most important factor enabling religious tolerance in Albania?

19. Where would you rate Albanian society, on a scale from 1 (religious indifference) to 5 (fully know and accept the religious beliefs of others)?

Total religious indifference		Neutral		Fully know and accept the other's religious beliefs	Don't know/ Refusal
1	2	3	4	5	88

20. Where would you rate the community you live in, on a scale from 1 (religious indifference) to 10 (fully know and accept the religious beliefs of others)?

Total religious indifference		Neutral		Fully know and accept the other's religious beliefs	Don't know/ Refusal
1	2	3	4	5	88

21. What is the most important threat to religious tolerance in Albania?

C. Attitudes and experiences of religious tolerance

22. How often have you experienced the following incidents:

	Never	Rarely	Often	Regularly	Refuse / NA (88)
a) I have personally been discriminated against or excluded due to my religious belongingness	1 Go to Q. 24	2	3	4	88 Go to Q. 24
b) A member of my family has personally been discriminated against or excluded due to religious belongingness	1 Go to Q. 24	2	3	4	88 Go to Q. 24
c) I have witnessed religion-based discrimination or exclusion of other people in the community where I live	1 Go to Q. 24	2	3	4	88 Go to Q. 24

23. Please describe briefly the incident(s) of religion-based discrimination or exclusion you have experienced or witnessed:

24. In the community where you live, how would you rate the members of other religious communities in regard to the following values or qualities:

		Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree	Religion is not determinant	Refusal/ don't know
a) Hard-working	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
b) Friendly	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
c) Intelligent	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88

d) Violent	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
e) Lazy	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88

25. How do you feel when you think of other religious groups members?

		Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree	Religion is not determinant	Refusal/ don't know
a) Threatened	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
b) Calm	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
c) Distressed	a. Muslim	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	b. Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	c. Catholic	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	d. Bektashi	1	2	3	4	5	6	88
	e. Protestant	1	2	3	4	5	6	88

26. How likely would it be for you to accept a member of other religious groups as:

	Completely unlikely		Neutral		Very likely	Refusal/ don't know
a) Political leader	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) Mayor of municipality, or head of administrative unit	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) Policeman in the area where you live	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) Teacher in your children's school	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) Boss or supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	88
f) Co-worker	1	2	3	4	5	88
g) Neighbours (next door)	1	2	3	4	5	88
h) Close friend	1	2	3	4	5	88
i) Relative	1	2	3	4	5	88

27. To what extent do the following statements comply with your attitudes?

	Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree	Refuse / DK
a) I blame people of other religions for much of the trouble in this world	1	2	3	4	5	88
b) I blame people of other religions for the weak economy	1	2	3	4	5	88
c) I blame people of other religions for high levels of crime	1	2	3	4	5	88
d) I blame people of other religions for fewer jobs	1	2	3	4	5	88
e) I blame people of other religions for corruption of our society values	1	2	3	4	5	88

28. GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

29. PLEASE DESCRIBE A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE:

THANK YOU!

IX.2. SURVEY SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

Municipality	No. of respondents from urban areas	No. of respondents from rural areas	Total no. of respondents
Berat	17	9	26
Bulqize	4	9	13
Cerrik	4	8	12
Devoll	3	9	12
Diber	6	20	26
Divjake	4	11	15
Durres	53	24	77
Elbasan	39	24	63
Fier	23	29	52
Finiq	-	5	5
Gjirokaster	7	4	11
Kamez	31	15	46
Kavaje	9	8	17
Konispol	1	3	4
Korce	22	11	33
Kruje	14	12	26
Kucove	7	7	14
Kukes	8	12	20
Kurbin	14	3	19
Lezhe	11	18	29
Librazhd	4	10	14
Lushnje	15	21	36
Malesi e Madhe	5	8	13
Maliq	2	15	17
Mallakaster	3	8	11
Mat	5	7	12
Mirdite	4	5	9
Peqin	3	9	12
Perrenjas	3	7	10
Pogradec	11	15	26
Rrogozhine	3	6	9
Sarande	8	2	10
Shijak	4	10	14
Shkoder	33	26	59
Skrapar	5	-	5
Tirane	207	37	244
Ura Vajgurore	4	8	12
Vau i Dejes	4	8	12
Vlore	33	13	46
Vore	6	5	11
Total	639	461	1,100



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