YOUTH 2020

The position of young people in Slovenia

Tomaž Deželan
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DOLORES KORES

Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)*

After ten years, we have before us a new study on the position of young people in Slovenia, Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)*. The national study, which concerns itself with the young generation, specifically 15- to 29-year olds, is of paramount importance for the client (Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth), as well as for young people and society as a whole. With the aid of the Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)* study and the recommendations that researchers offered as part of the final report, the Office's goal is primarily to formulate evidence-based public policies that have an impact on young people's lives. These should create better conditions for young people's transition to adulthood and give mature generations peace of mind, knowing that the young generation is empowered and well prepared to face all life circumstances. However, is this true? So what are young people like at this moment in time?

Regardless of the results of the study, which may be interpreted in many ways, we can observe many deviations compared to a decade ago. Fortunately, these are not negative changes. At the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, we are committed to the efforts to integrate the interests of young people into national strategies and programs. At the same time, with great satisfaction and pride, we offer this much-needed "professional basis", which reveals issues of in-depth long-term monitoring of young people and youth issues. Our expectations are high!

Europe's demographic picture is changing. It is dominated by the elderly, while the number of young people has in recent times been declining significantly. Slovenia is no exception. In the past 30 years, the number of young people has fallen by 30 percent. This data alone clearly shows the vulnerability of young people, who are already facing many challenges projected for the future. This makes it all the more important to know who young people are in Slovenia, what young Slovenians are like and, based on that, create public policies that will enable young people to grow into independent, creative and socially responsible individuals.

Important steps towards formulating policies that address the needs of young people include determining their actual position in society at various levels and acquiring professional groundwork, on which the condition of youth can be monitored in depth and over a long period. Such an approach enables systematic monitoring of the social position of young people and, consequently, an integrated approach in the development of youth policies and in the implementation of activities carried out for young people by the youth sector. The formulation and implementation of modern policies is evidence-based and the field of youth is not and should not be an exception.

Due to the above, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth determined more than a decade ago that a comprehensive study on young people in Slovenia would be central to this effort. After the years 2000 and 2010, we have now acquired a new important study, Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)*.

Researchers from the University of Maribor and the University of Ljubljana carried out the Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)* study, which we eagerly awaited, in unprecedented circumstances and on the basis of previous comprehensive studies Mladina 2000 *(Youth 2020)* and Mladina 2010 *(Youth 2020)*. On one hand, it is about obtaining new data and analyses that will serve as a basis for the creation of future policies. On the other hand, it is about looking at the past and finding out, with which previously implemented measures, based on previous studies, we actually helped improve young people's situation and how successful we have been in this.

The research is an important starting point for the preparation of new measures, which will primarily be reflected in the new National Youth Program for the next nine years, and the research is certainly a good basis for creating other policies related to youth.

Some data in the study is not surprising; for example, demographic trends are clear and worrying, as they raise many issues that are important not only for young people but for society as a whole. The trends are in dire need of change, hopefully through appropriate measures, which ensure a decent life for all. Solutions should not end with providing a pension fund and long-term care. We need to monitor the situation of young people, who will bear the burden of demographic change.

Therefore, the findings of the study concerning loneliness, anxiety, increased stress, and a significant decline in young people's general satisfaction with life are extremely worrying. Mental health is extremely important for individual and societal health. The fact that young people in Slovenia have significantly changed their expectations in the last decade and increasingly agree to insecure employment, which makes it increasingly difficult to find appropriate housing, continues to degrade mental health as well as affect the economy, education, and values that build our Western European civilization.

The study also shows that positive effects of previous measures, based on earlier studies. Young people are increasingly taking care of their health, are more active in sports, culture, and politics, and are seeking out further education in non-formal and informal forms. There are many challenges ahead of us that we must and can address and solve with appropriate youth policies. This must be done with young people for young people and for all of society.

In the future, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth will strive to address the results of the study and support them with measures and appropriate financial support. The first step towards this is certainly the establishment of the National Youth Program, which will be designed together with decision-makers and representatives of young people based on of the Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)* study. Our task is also to monitor the implementation of the National Program as well as appropriate

support for the youth sector, which we will direct to the design of programs through which young people acquire skills that are important for their quality of life.

In the Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)* study, researchers led by Dr Miran Lavrič from the University of Maribor and Dr Tomaž Deželan from the University of Ljubljana produced an excellent outcome, which is also reflected in the cooperation of two largest Slovenian universities in this unique project. The study, which was published as a scientific monograph, is equipped with a collection of quantitative and qualitative data, qualitative analyses, and recommendations with regards to where the work of decision-makers should be directed on the basis of the obtained data.

Despite demographic changes and the declining percentage of young people, it is high time to reach out to young people and work together to develop paths and policies that will lead to healthy, successful, and satisfied individuals and thus to a sustainable society in which there is room for all of us and for future generations.

The data from Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)* tell a story; however, it is up to us to decide and act in accordance with the predictions therein and to ensure a good and dignified life for young people and other generations, including those who are still to come.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed their share to the research that is now ahead of us. We are optimistic for Mladina 2020 *(Youth 2020)*, although not everything is up to us.

The journey is over and the path begins. Due to this, I would like to invite all stakeholders to work together on the project. For young people. For our entire society. For Slovenia and for its future generations.

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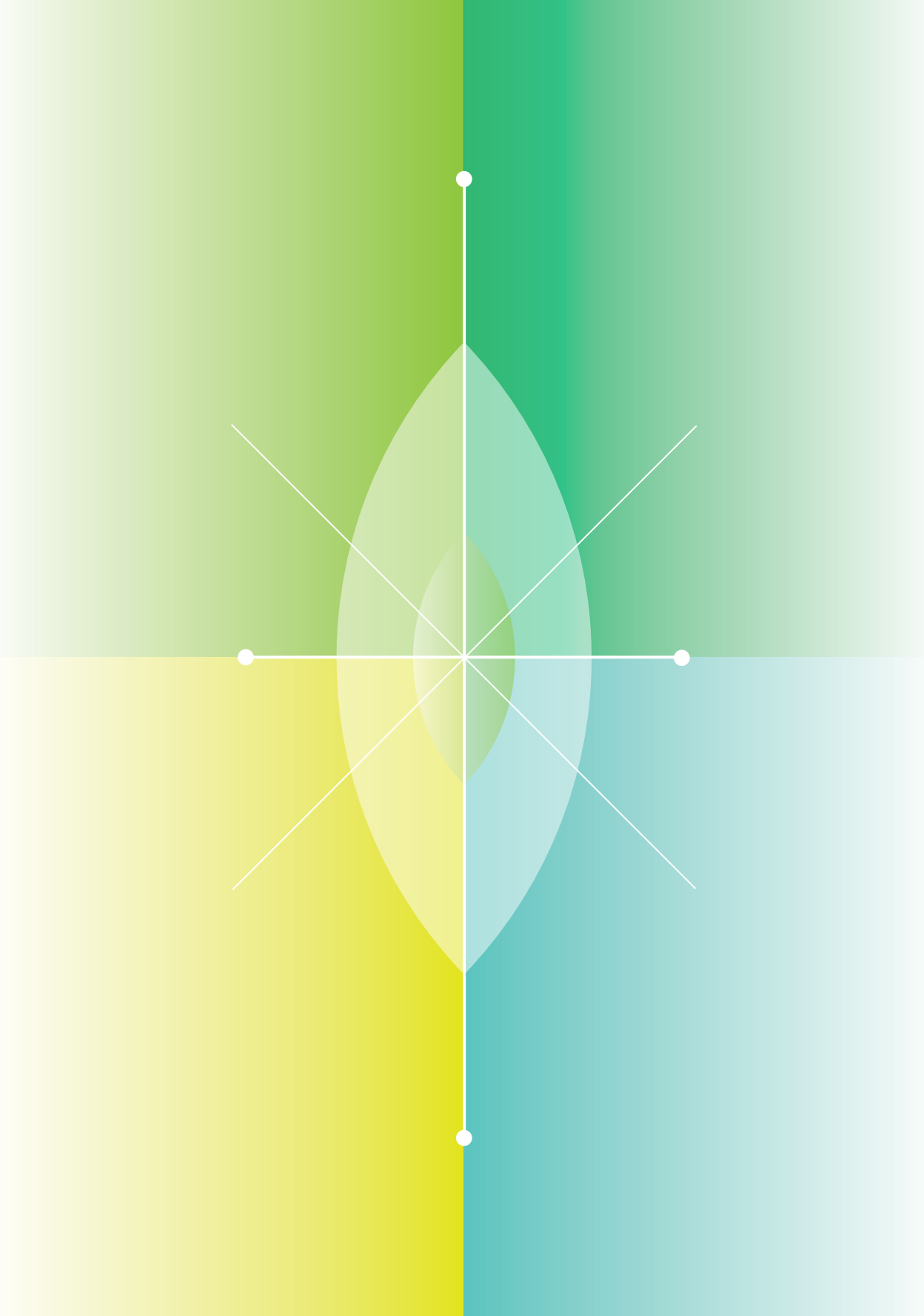
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TOMAŽ DEŽELAN AND MIRAN LAVRIČ

INTRODUCTION

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE YOUTH 2020 STUDY

The Mladina 2020 study was created on the basis of a public tender by the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth with the aim of conducting a study that would offer insights into changes in the social profile of Slovenian young people, maintain comparability with previous research in this field (Mladina 2000 and Mladina 2010), and ensure adherence to the principles of evidence-based public policies. The study was carried out by a consortium of two public higher education institutions, namely the University of Maribor (Faculty of Arts) and the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Social Sciences), under the coordination of Prof. Miran Lavrič and Prof. Tomaž Deželan. The study's field implementation was supported by the Slovenian market research agency Aragon d. o. o.

The current study is a continuation of widely recognised, long-running, and high-quality ongoing research on young people in Slovenia, which is based mainly on periodic empirical youth research supported by the government. In this context, it is worth mentioning the study Mladina 2000 headed by Prof. Vlado Miheljak and Mladina 2010, led by Prof. Miran Lavrič. In addition to the aforementioned studies, the reference framework of the Mladina 2020 survey includes previous research on young people and youth in this field, which has traditionally come from the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Social Sciences (e.g. Youth and Ideology (Ule, 1988), Future of Youth (Ule and Miheljak, 1995), Youth in the 1990s: Analysis of the Situation in Slovenia (Ule, 1996a)), as well as a wave of new studies conducted by the coordinators of this research group in the last decade (e.g. Youth in South Eastern Europe, Substantive Youth Representation, Youth Progress Index, Research-based analysis of Youth in Action, etc.).

The present study introduces a partnership approach that seeks to transcend traditional institutional or personal rivalries in a research-malnourished field such as youth studies. Namely, the University of Maribor and the University of Ljubljana have recognized their role as a research pillar based on evidence-based public policy in this field and have strategically approached the implementation of this study, which should serve as the basis for future joint endeavours in this field.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to a clear commitment to research principles for evidence-based policy-making, to which we will devote a few more words below, the current study maintains the methodological robustness of past research in this field both domestic (Jule and Vrcan, 1986) and foreign (e.g. Hurrelmann et al., 2002; 2006), while introducing conceptual and methodological innovations, which are manifested as the opening of new topics (e.g. civic spaces for young people) and the exploration of new approaches to existing topics (e.g. participation), and are derived from the latest German and British paradigms. Mladina 2020 continues the approach of Mladina 2010 and explains the findings by referring to contemporary interpretive and theoretical concepts of European and global social sciences. Therefore, it was necessary to acquaint the authors of individual chapters with the established theoretical bases and already conducted studies elsewhere in the world, and, as a rule, the authors of individual chapters are also experts in the fields they cover and explore these areas in their field research. This ensured that the highly internationalized research efforts on the topic of Slovenian youth also gained insight into the current state of ideas and concepts that are discussed by the academic and professional community at home and abroad.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the research team systematically ensured that the study retains its informative value for the client and that is realizes its fundamental purpose, i.e. creating a stock of evidence-based support for shaping youth policy. Although the idea of evidence-based policy-making and implementation is not new, it has only

flourished in the last two decades. It is the idea that a range of skills and expertise must inform the process of policy adoption and implementation, usually in the form of blending scientific, pragmatic, and value-driven knowledge. It is one of the preconditions of modern corporate governance, which rejects ideological solutions and replaces them with rational decision-making, which is focused on causes and not on symptoms. Evidence-based policy-making and implementation help policy-makers make informed decisions about policies, programs, and projects, and our research results are placed at the core of policy-making and implementation.

Such policy-making and implementation requires a higher degree of rationality, a more rigorous and systematic approach to policy-making, and represents an integration of experience, judgment, and expertise, combined with the best possible external evidence stemming from the systematic monitoring of a given field. At the same time, the role of research in this process gains new dimensions of social responsibility, as research is no longer based on identifying conclusions of interest for scientific publication, but on supporting processes that will mostly address the real challenges of the target group. Good research results are therefore important for evidence-based policy-making and implementation, at least in terms of: (a) a good understanding of the public policy environment and the way in which that environment is changing; (b) predicting the likely effects of policy changes, allowing for the selection of different alternative policies as well as the assessment of their effects; (c) indicating links between strategic orientations, planned outcomes, and policy objectives, allowing a clear demonstration of the link between the planned and the implemented; (d) defining the measures and public policies necessary to achieve the strategic and medium-term objectives; (e) influencing other stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of public policy objectives; and (f) communicating and publicising robust research results, enabling informed action by organizations representing the interests of young people.

The Mladina 2020 research group is aware that today's efforts to integrate youth interests into national strategies and programs are uncoordinated, and at the same time they often lack the necessary professional

bases, especially when it comes to in-depth long-term monitoring of youth areas. Therefore, in preparing the survey, we also took into account the Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, adopted by the EU Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport – DG EAC) at its meeting on 26 and 27 November 2018, the EU Youth Report (EC 2015), European youth report, Flash Eurobarometer 455 (EC 2018), Situation of young people in the European Union: Commission staff working document (EC 2018), partnership documents on youth between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, the Child Welfare Index (IRSSV) and the Youth Progress Index (EYF), and other relevant sources. We are also following the recommendations of the European Commission from the EU Youth Strategy, which already in 2009 emphasized the importance of evidence-based policy-making and partly manifested itself in the use of the conclusions of the Mladina 2010 survey to draft a Resolution on the National Youth Program 2013-2022, which among other things emphasizes the importance of evidence-based policy-making.

Slovenia belongs to the group of countries that does not have systemically regulated monitoring of young people's social situation established at the national level (ReNPM13-22), even though "the establishment of such a monitoring system also makes sense due to the needs of reporting to the European Commission" (ibid.). In view of this, the Mladina 2020 survey and the strategic research partnership between the University of Maribor and the University of Ljubljana are also understood as good foundations for the development of much-needed long-term research and analytical infrastructure that will lead to the implementation of the goal set in the National Youth Program 2013–2022.

Taking into account the above principles and methodological characteristics of the study, the Mladina 2020 research is thus oriented towards the greatest possible support for the process of "evidence-based public policy". This is reflected in focused analyses with clearly derived research conclusions and has a visible emphasis on longitudinal and international comparisons, especially with European countries, as well as special attention to combining the quantitative and qualitative part of the research or data into one comprehensive unit.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The Mladina 2020 study is based on a combination of three methods of social science data collection. The most important and extensive part of the research was based on a survey of young people in Slovenia, as well as the methods of qualitative interview and secondary data analysis. All permanent residents in the Republic of Slovenia, who were between 15 and 29 years old on 5 August 2020, comprise the target population of the Mladina 2020 study. Sampling was based on data from the Central Population Register of Slovenia, and the target population was previously stratified according to 12 statistical regions and 6 types of settlements. People or sampling units were selected by means of two-stage sampling. In the first stage, 240 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were selected based on the Cluster of Enumeration Areas (CEA) or sample points, which are available at the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS) for the purpose of making samples. Primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected at random, proportional to the size of the CEA according to the definition of the target population and previously stratified by regions and settlement types. In the second stage of the study, 15 people were selected within each of the selected primary sampling units (PSUs) by simple random sampling. The planned sample thus consisted of 3600 people (240 PSU x 15 = 3600 people), which we assessed as sufficient in terms of providing at least 1,200 completed surveys under the relatively unfavourable conditions for surveys created by the epidemic. For everyone in the sample we obtained the following data: name and surname, street and house number, code and name of settlement, postal code and name of post office, code and name of municipality, code and name of settlement type, code and name of statistical region, and age (15–18 years, 19–24 years, 25–29 years).

The field survey began on 19 August 2020. In the first phase, i.e., until 15 October 2020, the survey was conducted in person in the field, with the help of tablets. For the needs of the survey, 78 interviewers from all over Slovenia were hired. When planning the study in the period after the end of the first wave of the coronavirus epidemic, a response rate of at least 50% was predicted. No major problems were observed in the initial phase of the survey. In mid-September 2020, when the situation in the country

began to deteriorate due to the coronavirus, conditions changed daily as the number of infected people increased. The state was taking new measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus, which made personal field interviews more difficult every day. At the contractor's request, the contracting authority approved the remote survey in mid-October using video communication applications (Zoom). From the originally planned SORS sample, 753 surveys were included in the final database after quality control. The rest of the sample was realized by remote survey and based on quota sampling using an online panel. With this approach, an additional 447 surveys were included in the final database after performing the quality control. The survey was completed on 10 November 2020. Following the quality control, the final realized sample amounted to exactly 1,200 surveys, and the final response rate was 42%.

Since people were selected with different probabilities, as well as due to non-participation, rejections, and other deviations, the demographic characteristics of the realized sample deviates slightly from the characteristics of the target population. In order to improve the sample's representativeness, it is therefore necessary to weigh the data and extrapolate to the entire target population. Weighting gives some elements in the pattern more significance than others and vice versa. Weighting was performed using the "raking" method according to all four key sampling criteria (gender, age group, type of settlement and statistical region).

The in-depth interviews, which were the basic method of qualitative data collection, were based on two approaches, namely biographical and partially structured (Flick, 2014). The biographical approach was applied in the first part of the meeting with the interviewees, and its main purpose was to collect narratives that enabled the creation of individual portraits. Biographical interviews included three basic elements, namely (1) the interviewee's chronological history according to his profile placement, (2) focusing the interview on the specific situations that the interviewees had faced, and (3) identifying patterns that are relevant to the present study. A partially structured approach was applied in the second part of the meeting with the interviewees, and its main purpose was to gather narratives to address the topics that comprise the core of the present

study, namely: (1) social support networks and intergenerational cooperation, (2) education, training, and lifelong learning, (3) employment and entrepreneurship, (4) living and housing conditions, and living environment, (5) health and well-being, (6) participation and social engagement, (7) creativity and culture, (8) mobility among young people, (9) the use of ICT and online environments, (10) consumption and shopping patterns, and (11) sustainable behaviour and values.

The qualitative sample included 20 selected specific profiles of young people. It was designed based on specified socio-economic characteristics of young people, and special attention was paid to the fact that interviews were conducted mainly with specific groups of young people who, due to their small size, could not be satisfactorily analysed by the survey method. When designing the sample, attention was also given to appropriate age, gender, and geographical heterogeneity, as well as the distinctiveness of the young people's profiles.

Due to the social distancing requirements associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were mostly conducted using online remote communication tools. The interviews usually lasted between 90 and 160 minutes and each interviewee signed a consent form concerning their participation and data retention. Each interview was recorded and a transcript was produced. Based on the transcripts, portraits of young people were sketched, which are presented in the appendix to this report, and the most relevant excerpts from them were also included in the report itself. Each interviewee provided a personal photograph of their choice that was used as accompanying visual material in the publication of their portrait profile.

The third source of data came from databases previously created by other researchers or institutions. In this context, we relied mainly on the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS), which were mostly obtained via the SI-STAT web portal, EUROSTAT data obtained through its web portal, databases of various relevant surveys (Miheljak et al., 2000; Lavrič et al., 2011; Slovenian Public Opinion Surveys (SJM); World (and European) Values Surveys (WVS / EVS; European Social Research (ESS)), and other relevant official statistics, summary reports, and relevant surveys.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The volume is structured in line with thematic sections addressed by the commissioned Mladina 2020 study and covers a wide span of topics traditionally addressed by decennial studies on Slovenian youth, as well as topics currently very high on the priority list of public authorities and various other actors (e.g. digitalisation). We start with the chapter on general trends in young people's values and attitudes, where we discuss the problems young people are facing and their vision of the future, their values and attitudes towards the family, gender identities, migration and minorities, hate speech, and religiosity. This is followed by the chapter on education, training, and learning mobility, where we discuss public education in a contemporary and plural society, higher education, well-being at school, parent's expectations regarding their children's scholastic performance, non-formal forms of education, casual learning, and learning abroad. Additionally, we discuss the importance of mobility for the individual, promoting young people's learning mobility, and monitoring mobility patterns in the context of both the temporary and permanent migration of young people.

In the third chapter, we examine employment and (social) entrepreneurship of young people in Slovenia by tackling young people's prospects and experiences in the labour market, their fear of unemployment and attitudes towards work and workload, the nature of work, and youth entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. The fourth chapter focuses on the increasingly relevant topic of health and wellbeing of youth, and we address the most important aspects of health satisfaction, young people's perception of health, lifestyles and habits, and mental health. Housing and a sustainable environment have created many frustrations for young people and are examined in the fifth chapter, where we discuss the crucial changes in these fields, focusing mostly on the perception of the housing problem, young people's accommodation preferences, and the characteristics of youth housing.

Two following chapters address various aspects of sustainability of young people. Chapter Six thus covers young people's familial and intergenerational

mindset, where we cover transitions to adulthood, social support networks, and young people's attitudes to the ageing of the population and intergenerational cooperation. Chapter Seven, on the other hand, directly addresses the topic of sustainable development in relation to young people, primarily through the meaning of sustainable development and encouragement of sustainable behaviour, awareness, orientation, and action.

The last set of chapters covers more behavioural dimension aspects. In Chapter Eight, we examine the political participation, social engagement, and extremism of Slovenian young people by dealing with the challenges of political participation today, the factors of political participation, the level of political participation, and radicalization and violent extremism. In Chapter Nine, consumer behaviour and consumer activism are examined through an analysis of youth consumption, youth values, and attitudes towards consumption, as well as young people's social engagement as shown through their shopping patterns. Chapter Ten covers young people's creativity and culture by discussing their interest in creativity and culture, and their participation in creative and cultural activities, and further assesses young people's opportunities for cultural participation both online and in the real world. Finally, perhaps also as a sign of a future focus for examining Slovenian youth, Chapter Eleven opens up a discussion on young people's digital competencies and their networked citizenship, where we deal with the aspect of networked young citizens, internet access, and digital literacy. This volume is concluded with a short and concise recap of concluding observations that should form the key ideas behind the future youth policy.

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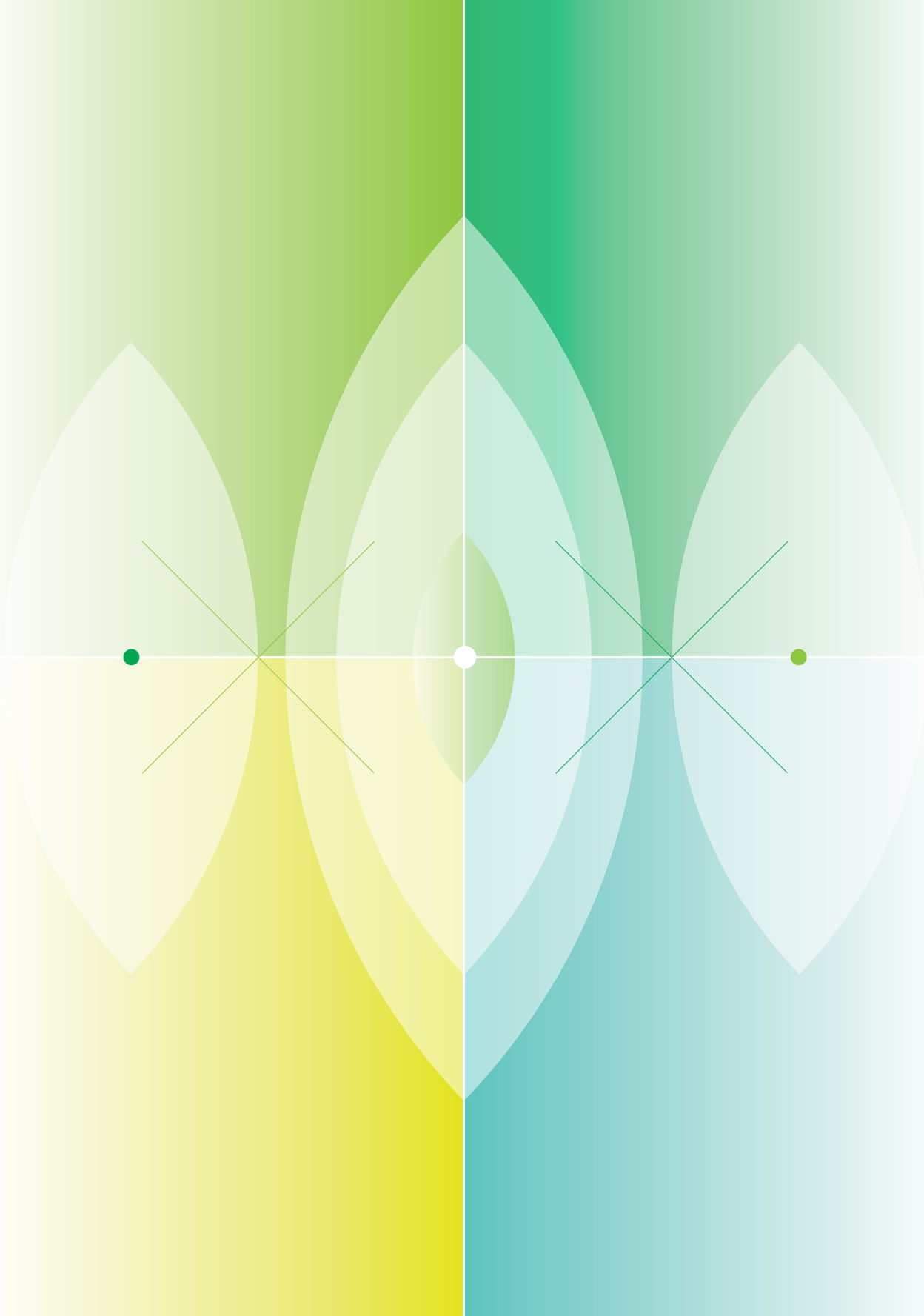
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MIRAN LAVRIČ AND TIBOR RUTAR

1. GENERAL TRENDS IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S VALUES AND ATTITUDES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

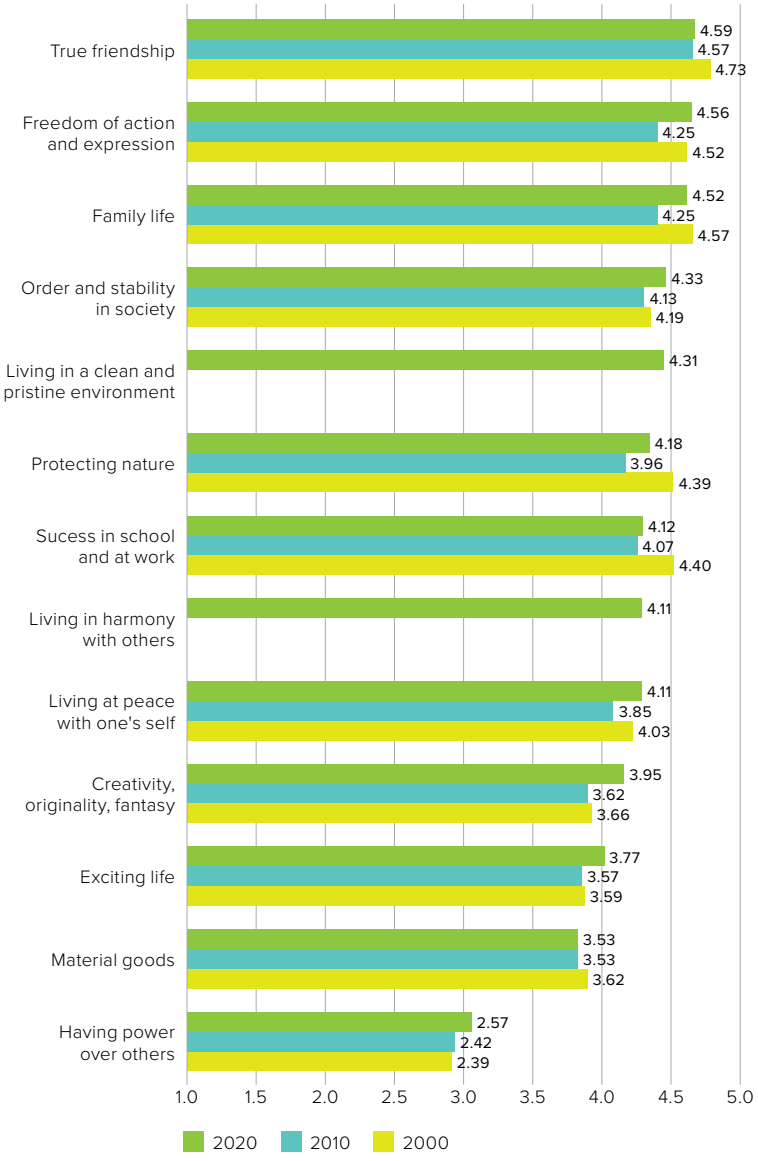
Ever since the first systematic youth research appeared in independent Slovenia, an investigation into their values, preferences, and beliefs has been one of its core parts (cf. Ule, 1996a, 2008; Ule, Miheljak, 1995; Ule, Rener, 1998; Miheljak, 2002). The main trend uncovered by these older studies is young people's general reorientation from societal concerns to an inward looking concern with their personal selves (Ule, 1996b: 23). Quite some time ago, Slovenia witnessed a shift from more abstract, ideologically grounded, and coherent value systems to more particular and concrete values, among which the importance of interpersonal relationships and the quality of everyday life have increased (Ule, 1996c: 241). Interest in politics, military, and religion declined sharply (Ule, 1996c: 257; Miheljak, 2002: 243).

How has this value hierarchy changed in the new millennium, between the year 2000 and 2020? Figure 1.1 clearly shows there were no significant structural changes in the 20-year period.

Figure 1.1:

The importance of specific values of young Slovenians in the period 2000–2020.

How important are the following values in your life?



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: The importance was measured on a 5-degree scale (1 – not important at all; 5 – very important).

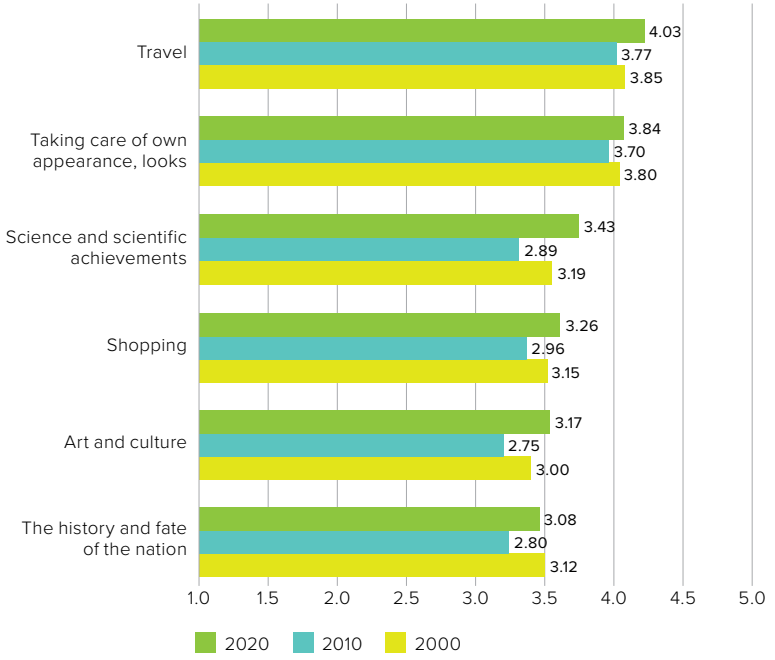
The values of young Slovenians are mutually complementary, not contradictory. On a more societal level we see that young people are primarily interested in stability and a clean environment, while family life, friendship, success in professional and scholarly pursuits, and a high degree of personal freedom dominate on a personal level. These values taken together constitute the so-called "traditionalist" and "private" value cluster. Interestingly, the value of order and stability, which is prominent in the Slovenian case, can take one of two different forms. It can either lean in a more conservative and authoritarian direction, or it can point towards a freer and more liberal orientation. The additional analyses we performed show that young Slovenians favour a liberal, not authoritarian, order. There is a strong correlation between the value of order and stability, and the (liberal) value of free expression ($r = 0.54$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, there is no statistically significant connection in our case between valuing order and being politically authoritarian. This leads us to conclude that young people in Slovenia are not in favour of the kind of order and stability that is promised by certain representatives of the right-wing political establishment.

A remarkable structural stability is also evinced by the young people's interests. Comparing the scores that were assigned to different interests across the three main youth studies since 2000 – especially the one from 2000 and the present study – we find that the hierarchy of interests remains the same. Travel and appearance are the most important to young people. Interest in science, although significantly increasing since 2010, is lower on the hierarchy. Shopping, art and culture, and national history are even lower. Here, as before, one is struck by the general trend towards the increasing dominance of personal interests tied to people's everyday lives over the more public or societal interests in science, art, and the nation's history.

Figure 1.2:

Youth interests in specific areas in the period 2010–2020.

How interested are you in the following categories?



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: The interests were measured on a 5-degree scale (1 – not interested at all; 5 – very interested).

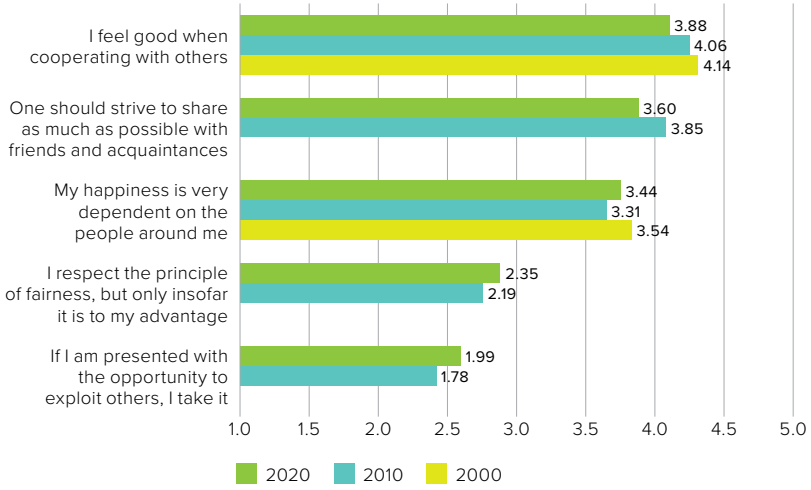
For at least 20 years, young people are primarily concerned with private issues such as friendship, family, and freedom of expression, while broader social issues, such as the fate of the nation, are of much lesser importance. Young people are also not given to values of materialism and power.

Nevertheless, relative shifts are not wholly negligible. Additional analyses reveal that the creativity value ("creativity, originality, fantasy") and domination value ("having power over others") have increased the most. At the same time, the individual success value ("success in school, career") and the environment protection value have contracted the most. This is somewhat puzzling in light of the significant economic development Slovenia has achieved in the past two decades. One would expect modernization to increasingly drive young Slovenians towards post-materialist values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), and indeed that has mostly been the case. But, as the somewhat increasing value of power and a somewhat decreasing interest in protecting the environment reveal, there have been movements in the other direction as well.

The general trend towards individuality and the importance of the private sphere can be further probed and analysed. We can, for example, compare the shifts in mean scores that young people assign to various claims having to do with individualism ("I respect the principle of fairness, but only when it benefits me" and "if I have the chance to exploit others, I take it without significant feelings of guilt") and collectivism ("I feel good when cooperating with others" and "my happiness is very dependent on the people around me"). Figure 1.3 clearly shows that today collectivist values are still stronger in comparison to individualism. Moreover, one of the items has been scored higher than in 2010 (see the mean score for "my happiness is very dependent on the people around me").

Figure 1.3:

Mean agreement values with measures of individualist and collectivist dispositions, 2000–2020.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

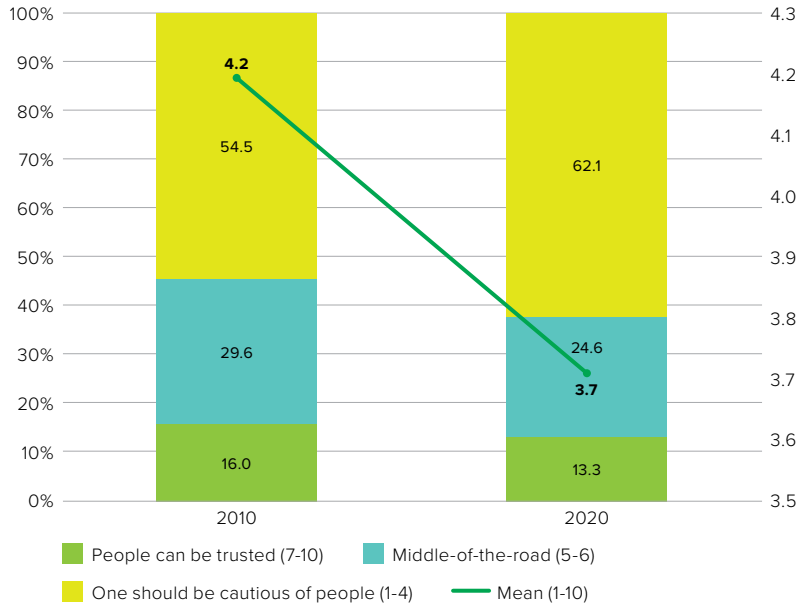
Note: The agreement with the claims was measured on a 5-degree scale (1 – highly disagree; 5 – highly agree).

However, importantly, youth collectivism today has diminished somewhat in comparison to the year 2000 and 2010 (see the mean score for "I feel good when cooperating with others"). Relatedly, both individualist claims have scored higher since 2010. This relative shift towards individualism is consistent with certain conclusions later on in the chapter, e.g. the increased feeling of loneliness among young people.

Also interesting and important is that generalized trust among young people in Slovenia has declined in the last 10 years (see Figure 1.4). Additional analyses reveal that generalized trust is only mildly and inconsistently correlated to indicators of individualism. This means we cannot tie diminishing trust to the increasing individualisation of Slovenian youth, which is also consistent with Inglehart's modernization theory that predicts the shift to post-materialist values to be connected to increased, not decreased, trust.

Figure 1.4:

Relative changes in generalized trust of youth in the period 2010–2020. Thinking generally, would you say one should be cautious of people, or can we be trusting of the majority? (1-10)



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Nevertheless, the decline in trust can be explained. A part of the explanation is likely provided by the vanishing of traditional wellsprings of trust such as religion. We found that higher levels of generalized trust correlate with more frequent participation in religious ceremonies and practices ($r = 0.10$; $p < 0.01$), but – as we shall demonstrate later – such participation is continuously declining among young Slovenians. This leads us to conclude that, until traditional sources of trust are replaced by modern ones, trust will likely stagnate. In other words, existential insecurity will have to be significantly reduced until trust can rise. Our data show that lower generalized trust is correlated with monetary worries ($r = -0.12$; $p < 0.01$) and housing issues ($r = -0.06$; $p < 0.05$). Moreover, the more young people are stressed, the less trusting they are ($r = -0.01$; $p < 0.01$). If Slovenia manages to increase economic security for its young, trust should recover and increase, which should then create a positive feedback loop vis-a-vis long-term social development.

Xenophobia is the last important correlate of generalized social trust worth mentioning. Our data show that higher trust is tied to significantly warmer attitudes towards migrants ($r = 0.29$; $p < 0.01$), refugees ($r = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$) and the Roma ($r = 0.10$; $p < 0.01$). Even though the relationship between trust and xenophobia is undoubtedly complex, our data suggest that spreading xenophobia reduces generalized trust among the young.

The last decade evinces an individualising trend in young people's values and beliefs, and a decrease in how trusting they are towards other people. The latter is connected to xenophobia and monetary, career, and housing worries that pervade among young Slovenians.

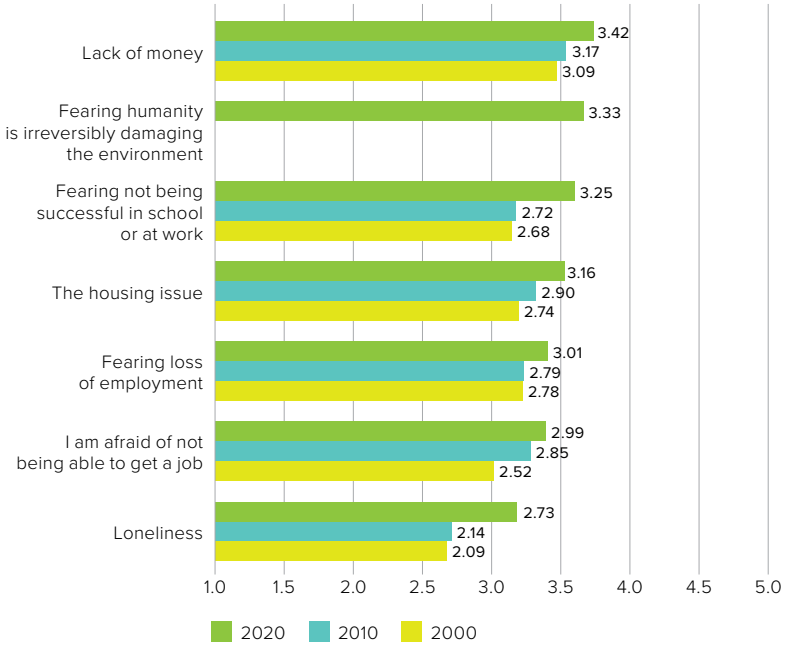
1.2 YOUTH ISSUES AND THEIR (PERSONAL/SOCIAL) VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Exploring some of the typical fears and problems young people have been facing for the past two decades, we have uncovered a few very interesting patterns. First, in 2010 as compared to 2000, young people were no more worried about being unsuccessful in school or at work, or of losing their jobs, nor were they feeling any increased loneliness. In 2010, after the economic recession, they were primarily worried about not being able to find a job and – unsurprisingly – they were somewhat more concerned about money and accessible housing. Second, in 2020 all of these fears increased – and most of them significantly so, as will be further analysed below. Third, in 2010 and 2000, the relative score assigned to loneliness was outstanding due to how low it was in comparison to all the other worries. In 2020 this is no longer so as loneliness significantly increased and is now almost in line with several of the other youth issues.

Figure 1.5:

Youth issues and fears, 2000-2020.

Here are some issues facing youth. Rate each issue on how much it is true for you, personally. Is it not true at all for you, not true, neither true nor false, true, or very true.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: The perceived importance of an individual youth issue was measured with a 5-degree scale (1 – highly disagree; 5 – highly agree).

How can these salient and negative shifts be explained? On the one hand, it is highly unusual and worrying that, even after almost half a decade of robust economic growth, today's young people are even more worried about being employed, job loss, a lack of money, and housing access. Economic growth created many new economic opportunities. This can be seen in how low current youth unemployment in Slovenia is. In recent years, it has been hovering under 10% (8.8% in 2018, 9.1% in 2019), which is lower than it has ever been since the establishment of independent Slovenia (World Bank data). But on the other hand, increasing youth worries are really not all that surprising. There are at least three reasons for this.

First, the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic forced most countries, including Slovenia, to enact long-lasting lockdown measures. Because the economy was shut down, unemployment – especially among young people – increased sharply. This would partly explain why this demographic has increasing economic anxiety. Moreover, the same lockdowns severely reduced normal everyday interactions, public gatherings, familial and friendly visits, etc. Schools were shut down for months on end. It is not surprising that feelings of loneliness concomitantly increased.

Second, despite significant economic growth, governmental social policies intended to redress youth issues did not manage to accomplish their goals. The main issues that were not resolved due to a lack of political will were those related to housing access and flexible markets. Even though the share of part-time employment among young Slovenians fell between 2015 and 2019 by more than 10 percentage points (to 62%), it nevertheless remains significantly higher than it was in 2000 or 1996.

Third, the last decade has seen an enormous increase of young people joining online social media, which many researchers (see, e.g. Vannucci et al., 2017; Haidt and Lukianoff, 2018) tie to increased levels of anxiety and worriedness. We performed additional analyses on our own data, which revealed a correlation between spending more time on social media and being more worried; especially prominent were worries about school and job failure ($r = 0.12$; $p < 0.01$) and money worries ($r = 0.10$; $p < 0.01$).

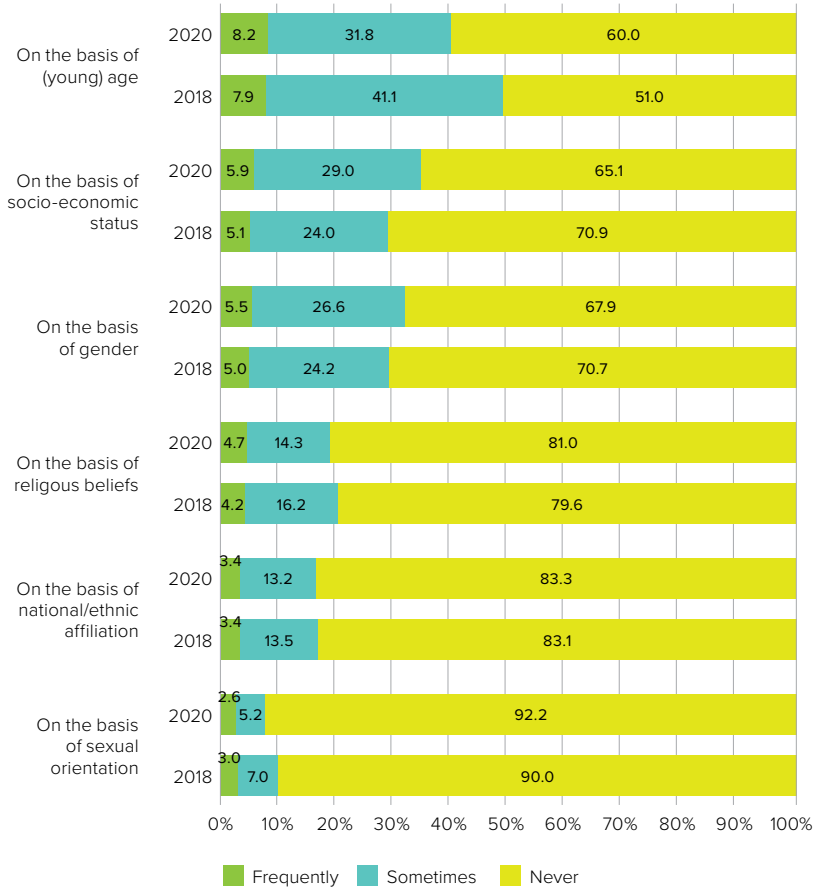
Today's young people are experiencing much more unease with regards to their future. There are more worries about a lack of money, irreversible damage to the environment, and success in school and at work. These are primarily the worries that have significantly increased in the past decade. Loneliness accounts for the single largest increase, which is undoubtedly the result of specific pandemic conditions in 2020.

Feelings of discrimination can also be thought of as an important youth issue.

Figure 1.6:

Perception of youth discrimination along different key characteristics, 2018–2020

Were you ever a victim of any of the following forms of discrimination?



Sources: Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019, Mladina 2020.

Three important facts can be gleaned from Figure 1.6. First, in 2020 the largest share to report feeling discriminated against did so on the basis of age (40%). Contrary to the typical stereotype that modern societies aesthetically and culturally glorify youth (in music, movies, novels, beauty magazines, etc.), the data show that, at least in Slovenia, young people do not feel glorified but looked down on. Additional analyses reveal that ageism is felt more by that youth subgroup which is less successful in school, at work, and in life

overall, and which does not get along with its parents, has worse health, and dabbles in drugs. More ageism is also felt by young social activists.

Second, the figure shows that ageism has shrunk somewhat in the last two years; almost 50% of young people felt discriminated against based on their age in 2018, which is almost 10 percentage points more than in 2020.

Third, other forms of discrimination are much less present among Slovenia's youth, some almost vanishingly so (e.g. gender discrimination is felt by only 7.8% in 2020).

It goes without saying that even low levels of certain forms of discrimination can be quite painful and are not less important. It is completely plausible that the less statistically common forms of discrimination can have even worse consequences for the victimized minority. This is, for example, how one of our interviewees put it.

> *"A month ago, my mom and I were at the bank, opening a new account for her. We took our place in the line behind an older man at a safe distance of a meter and a half. He looked at us and said that Hitler should still be with us so as to kill people like me and my mom. I got this feeling … I could not believe someone can behave as badly. We did not do anything to this man, and he did not even know us, but still said what he said."*
>
> (Brendon, 18 years old, young rapper and immigrant from Priština)

Nevertheless, a different interviewee with Roma background opines that the living conditions for Roma people in Slovenia are quite good.

> *"Discrimination against the Roma is definitely present, as it is in foreign countries, but such discrimination is much more prevalent abroad. Roma are oppressed everywhere. Still, of all the places I have been to, Slovenia is the best! Even though there is some discrimination here, people accept you as their own. If you show them what your character is, and if you are a lovely person, they will be even kinder to you."*
>
> (Benjamin, 22 years old, Roma)

Brendon adds the following important observation.

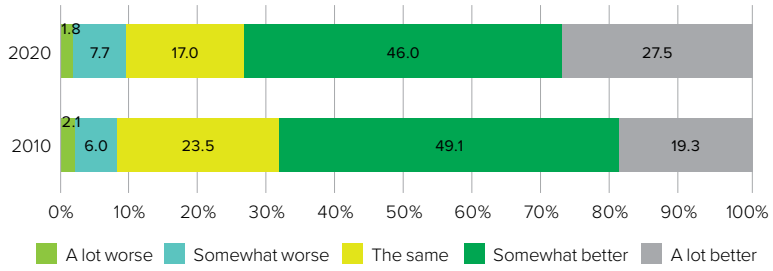
> *"This is more the domain of racists. When I go to town, I do not feel [discrimination] among young people. […] For example, I am strolling through the town and an older lady sees I am walking in her direction. As soon as she sees me walking on the right side, she switches her bag from her right arm to the left. What is she afraid of – that I am going to rob her?"*

Indeed, recent research shows that young people, especially contemporary ones, are less and less discriminatory, while having ever more liberalizing attitudes especially with regards to social and migrant issues (Caughey et al., 2019). Moreover, we should not jump to the conclusion that, because the youth reports having many fears about various issues, they are basically pessimistic about their future. In fact, the reverse is true. A large majority of young people in 2010 and 2020 estimates that their personal situation will either significantly or somewhat improve in the future. Ten years ago, 68% thought so, while today 76% thinks so.

Figure 1.7:

Youth visions of personal future, 2010–2020.

What do you think the future of our society will be?



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

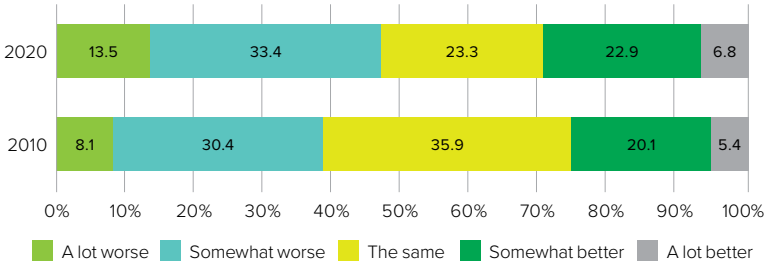
Interestingly, the share of young people that think their future personal situation will remain the same has significantly shrunk. This suggests viewpoint polarization: in 2020 there are more optimists and more pessimist. This polarization, however, is asymmetric. The share of optimists

has increased by 6 percentage points, while the share of pessimists has grown only by 2 percentage points. The asymmetry is even stronger when we consider the extreme optimists ("the future will be much better") and extreme pessimists ("the future will be much worse"). We can conclude that personal optimism has increased in the last decade, which is further corroborated by the following data. The mean has statistically significantly ($p < 0.01$) increased from 3.77 (SD = 0.90) in 2010 to 3.90 (SD = 0.95) in 2020.

Figure 1.8:

Youth visions of societal future, 2010–2020.

What do you think the future of our society will be?



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Figure 1.8 reveals two additional interesting facts. First, both in 2010 and 2020, young people were significantly more optimistic with regards to their personal future than with regards to the future of their society. This is a well-known phenomenon that also happens in other countries and different demographic groups (McNaughton-Cassil and Smith, 2002). Second, here as before a polarization trend can be observed. In the past decade, both optimism and pessimism increased, while the neutral middle shrunk. Moreover, while optimism at the personal level increased, the increase in pessimism was somewhat more pronounced on the societal level.

Visions of the future are mainly undergoing polarization. In contrast to 2010, today's share of young people that expects stability in the future, both personally and societally, has shrunk. The increasing share of young societal pessimists is especially worrying. Their pessimism is the result, primarily, of demographic aging fears and environmental concerns.

The significant increase of young people that see society worsening in the future as compared to today (from 38% to 47%) is striking. What fuels this pessimism? Data analysis suggests that two broader social issues are at play: aging demographics and environmental issues. Those that perceive aging demographics as a bigger problem are significantly more pessimistic ($r = -0.12$; $p < 0.01$), as are those that see environmental pollution as more problematic and irreversible ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.01$).

1.3 VALUES AND YOUTH BELIEFS ABOUT THE FAMILY

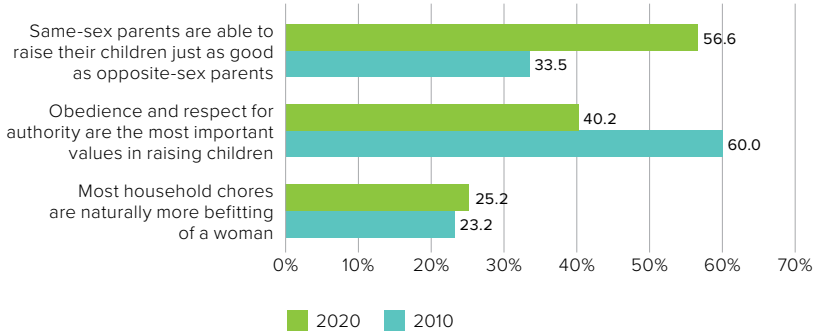
The "family life" value has been one of the most important values among young people since at least the year 2000. 64% of young people assign the highest score (5, on a scale from 1 to 5) to this value. Women perceive it as significantly more important ($t(1197) = -6.21$; $p < 0.01$; $M = 4.66$; $SD = 0.68$) than men ($M = 4.39$; $SD = 0.79$), which suggests people still think of family as more in the domain of women. In this respect, gender differences have not been narrowing in the past two decades. Quite the contrary, in 2000 the mean difference between men and women was tilted by 4% in favour of women, while in 2020 this has increased to 6%.

The same somewhat re-traditionalizing trend of gender roles can be seen in a mild, yet statistically significant ($t(1198) = 3.490$; $p < 0.01$), trend of increased agreement with the claim that most household chores naturally befit women more than men (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9:

Youth beliefs regarding three aspects of family life, 2010–2020.

How strongly do you agree with the following claims? (% of those agreeing somewhat or wholly)



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Nevertheless, this should not lead us to conclude gender roles are re-traditionalizing in all aspects. In fact, the share of young people that think same-sex partners can raise children just as well as partners of opposite sexes has almost doubled in the past decade. This is a significant jump away from traditional views on the family. Moreover, today the share of young people that thinks children should, first and foremost, learn to be obedient and respect authority is much lower than it had been. This is especially important in light of the fact that obedience and respect for authority are two elements on the authoritarian measurement scale (Lane, 1955), which implies that young Slovenians is moving away from authoritarianism – at least within family life.

In the 2020 study, we asked respondents how they feel about balancing family life with their work. It turned out that 64% agree with the claim that finding a balance is very hard. Unsurprisingly, the share is significantly higher (72%) among those young people that live with their own children. Similarly, women (67%) feel a balance is somewhat harder to achieve than men (62 %), which is understandable given that they are assigned a larger share of household chores.

We also asked our respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement that men are, in general, worse parents than women. Only a minority agree with the claim (6.3% agree somewhat or fully), but in relative terms men agree with the statement much more (9.2%) than women (2.8%). Similarly, men (29.4%) are much more likely than women (20.6%) to agree with the statement that the majority of household chores is naturally more befitting of a woman. This suggests a clear pattern of male bias towards traditional household gender roles. Interestingly, however, women today have seen a bigger relative increase in agreement with the statement (from 17.4% to 20.6%) than have men (from 28.8% to 29.4%).

Attitudinal trends regarding family life are divergent. On the one hand, we have been witnessing a strong liberalizing current. Young people today reject obedience as a value when raising children much more than they did in 2010, and they are much more accepting of same-sex parenting. On the other hand, we have seen a slight uptick in the re-traditionalization of the gendered division of labour within the family.

1.4 VALUES AND BELIEFS REGARDING GENDER IDENTITY

Contemporary debates about young people's gender identities typically have to do with the various identities that transcend the simple binary division "man/woman". Gender identity – the feelings and personal beliefs an individual has about their own gender – is not a direct expression of the male or female biological sex, which means that gender identities are fluid and multiple. That is why we offered respondents in our study the possibility of choosing "Other" when answering even our most basic question regarding gender. Among the 1200 respondents, nobody picked "Other". This is a fascinating finding, which suggests that in a representative sample of Slovenian youth there is no subgroup of

people who would want to explicitly emphasize their alternative gender identities. It must be said that our gender question was posed verbally and in a standard way, meaning that the questioner did not specifically emphasize the possibility of choosing "Other". Moreover, transcending binary gender divisions is still socially stigmatized, which might account for why at least a few of our respondents who probably would have chosen "Other" in ideal conditions did not do so presently.

That non-binary gender identities definitely exist is clearly articulated by our interviewee Nika.

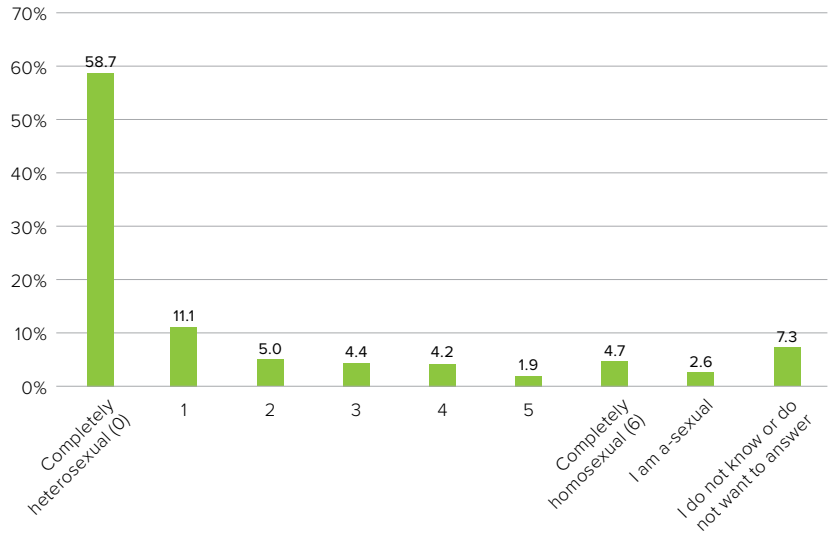
> *"I am right in the process of thinking about my identities, and I have chosen to stick with the pronoun 'she' in Slovene, but have already asked a few people if they can use the pronoun 'they' when addressing me in English /.../ This is related to my non-heterosexual orientation, which is also a big part of me, or is something that is easier for me to identify with in the negative form. I have this problem that I cannot really explain what my gender identity is, and because I do not accept a binary concept of gender I have trouble articulating what my gender identity is in the positive.*
>
> (Nika, 27 years old, doctoral student, currently residing in London)

When investing youth gender identities, we cannot skip over the thematically related issue of sexual orientation. In our study, we measured sexual orientation using the standard Kinsey scale (Kinsey, 1948).

Figure 1.10:

Self-reported sexual orientation of Slovenian youth.

Try to categorize your sexual orientation:



Source: Mladina 2020.

As expected, a majority (58.7%) of young Slovenes thinks of themselves as completely heterosexual. Nevertheless, more than 4 out of 10 young people in Slovenia fall elsewhere on the spectrum. Slightly less than 5% claim to be completely homosexual. Public polling in Western European countries reveals similar patterns (Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013). The share of completely homosexual orientations in the adult population typically hovers between 1% and 9% (Ibid.). Focusing specifically on young people, a study by Yougov in 2015 on the British population (Dahlgreen, 2015) shows that 46% of Brits aged 18–24 think of themselves as completely heterosexual. In Slovenia, the share of completely heterosexual people in the same youth subgroup stands at 58%. The share of completely homosexual Brits in the subgroup is 6%, while in Slovenia it stands at 5.3%. Important to note is also that a significant share of young Slovenes (6.7%) did not want to answer the question, while in Britain only 3% are non-responders. These data might suggest that youth in Slovenia are slightly more anxious about revealing sexual orientation

that goes against the prevailing complete heterosexuality. Nevertheless, today's young generations (generation Z and Y) in the West are much more likely to come out as not completely heterosexual in comparison to older generations (YouGov, 2019), which demonstrates a clear pattern of sexual liberalization in this part of the world, including Slovenia.

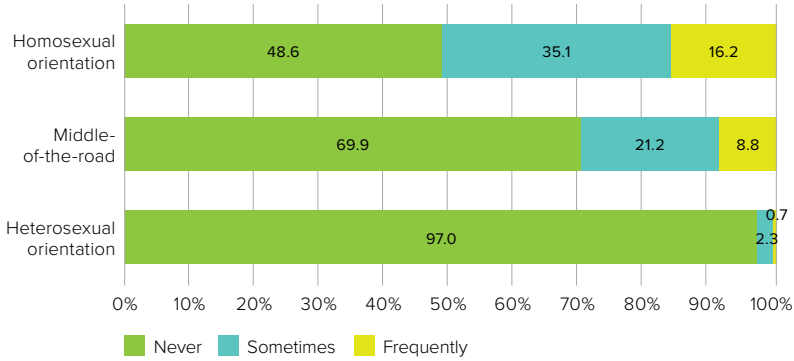
Going back to our data for the whole youth group in Slovenia (ages 15–29), there are interesting differences between the sexes: significantly more men (62.8%) are completely heterosexual in comparison to women (54%). There are no significant differences in the shares of completely homosexual or asexual individuals. This means that a significantly larger share of women (30.8%) in comparison to men (23%) are somewhere between the two extremes. An even more interesting correlation comes up when looking at sexual orientation and the family's material standing. There are more homosexual individuals who live in poorer families ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.01$). This means we cannot explain homosexual orientation as something that can only be "afforded" by kids of wealthy families. To the contrary, only 3.6% of youth with above-average material standing of the family declared themselves to be homosexual, while a surprising 8.6% of youth with below-average family wealth did so.

The most important question with regards to gender identities and sexual orientation has to do with feelings of discrimination. For ease of demonstration, we compiled the following figure by grouping the six categories from the Kinsey scale into three categories: heterosexual orientation (categories 1 and 2), middle-of-the-road (categories 3 and 4), and homosexual orientation (categories 5 and 6).

Figure 1.11:

Perception of discrimination based on sexual orientation, broken down by sexual orientation.

Were you ever discriminated against on the basis of your sexual orientation?



Source: Mladina 2020.

Figure 1.11 very clearly shows a strong correlation between the two variables. Among those leaning towards heterosexuality, only 3% report feeling discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, while among those leaning towards homosexuality a whopping 51% face discrimination. Put differently, a majority of homosexual youth has already faced discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Additional analyses showed a partial, but not significant, difference between the sexes: homosexual women report less discrimination (47.1%) than homosexual men (53.9%).

More than 40% of young people claim not to be completely heterosexual, while almost 5% say they are completely homosexual.

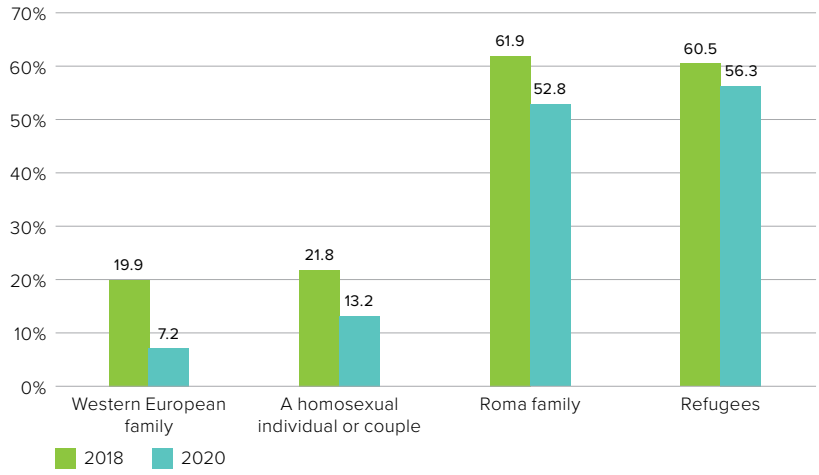
A majority (51%) of homosexual young people report feeling victimized by discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Our data show that discrimination based on gender is also present.

Figure 1.12:

Perception of discrimination based on sex, broken down by sex.

How would you feel if any of the following families or persons moved into your neighbourhood? (Combined »Bad« and »Very bad« answers)



Source: YSEE 2018/2019, Mladina 2020

Here, however, gender differences in perception of discrimination are substantially larger. Only 19% of men felt discriminated against based on of their gender, while among women the share is 41%. Contrary to what we expected, additional analyses do not demonstrate women feeling more discriminated against based on their gender if they visit social media more often. Nevertheless, we did find a strong correlation between feeling discriminated against and time spent writing personal opinions on blogs and social media for both genders (the correlation is even stronger with men than women). We suspect a selection effect might be at work here: those individuals that take the time to comment online are also more sensitive to discrimination and thus perceive it more than the others.

1.5 VALUES AND BELIEFS ABOUT MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

We begin this section by considering data on the amount of social distance young people have towards different groups, including refugees. Figure 1.12 shows that young Slovenes have become less distant in the past two years. The share of those feeling (very) bad about a different demographic group moving into their neighbourhoods has shrunk.

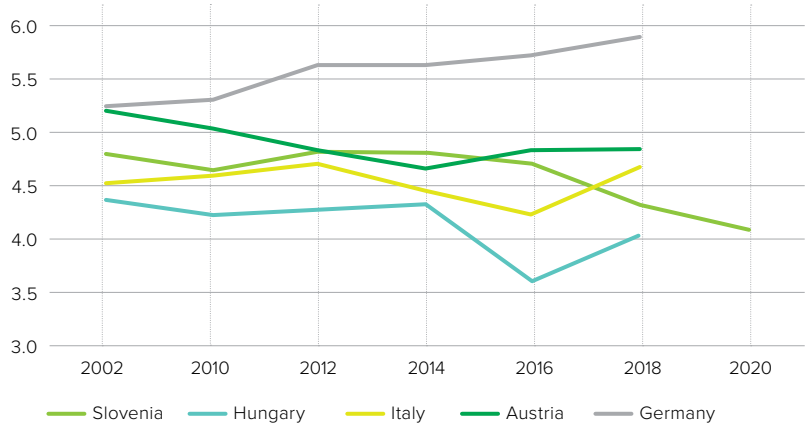
The sharp reduction of felt social distance towards Western European families is particularly interesting. We must note, though, that the mean answer on a scale from 1 to 5 has not significantly changed (it has moved from 2.30 to 2.27). This is due to a reduction in the share of those answering the question with a 4 or a 5. The middle has increased considerably (those answering with a 3 have gone from 38% to 63%). The reduction in social distance is to be explained primarily with the increased tolerance of young Slovenians towards "new neighbours" in general, which is tied to the aforementioned trend of increasing tolerance among young people.

We included the "Western European family" case in our questionnaire so as to measure how respondents react to those migrating from a culturally familiar environment, which then allowed us to compare this baseline with reactions towards other, less familiar "new neighbours".

Figure 1.13:

Social distance felt towards different social groups, 2018 and 2020.

Do you think immigrants from abroad made slovenia a worse or a better place to live in? (0 = »a lot worse«; 10 = »A lot better«)



Source: Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019, Mladina 2020.

Looking at the data in this light, we can see that such a "relative social distance" felt towards refugees is high. In 2020, only 7% of young people had misgivings about new neighbours from Western Europe, while the share of those expressing worries about refugees stood at 56%. The difference is a whopping 49 percentage points. This difference – what we call "relative social distance" – was higher in 2020 than in 2018, when it stood at 40.6 percentage points. It is true that, in 2020, the intolerance of Slovenian young people towards both the Roma and refugees in general was lower than in 2018; the intolerance towards Roma was 9 percentage points lower. Still, the more indicative "relative social distance" was higher in 2020 than in 2018.

Even though the last two years have seen a fall in social distance felt by youth towards all of the measured groups, this measure remains high in the case of the Roma and refugees. Only 7% of young Slovenes would feel uneasy about a Western European family moving into their neighbourhood, but a whole 56% would feel similar unease in the case of refugees moving in.

That young Slovenians have misgivings about refugees is also attested by the high share of those that agree with the claim that our government should be more restrictive towards illegal immigrants; 30% of respondents somewhat agree with the statement, while a further 34% completely agree with the statement.

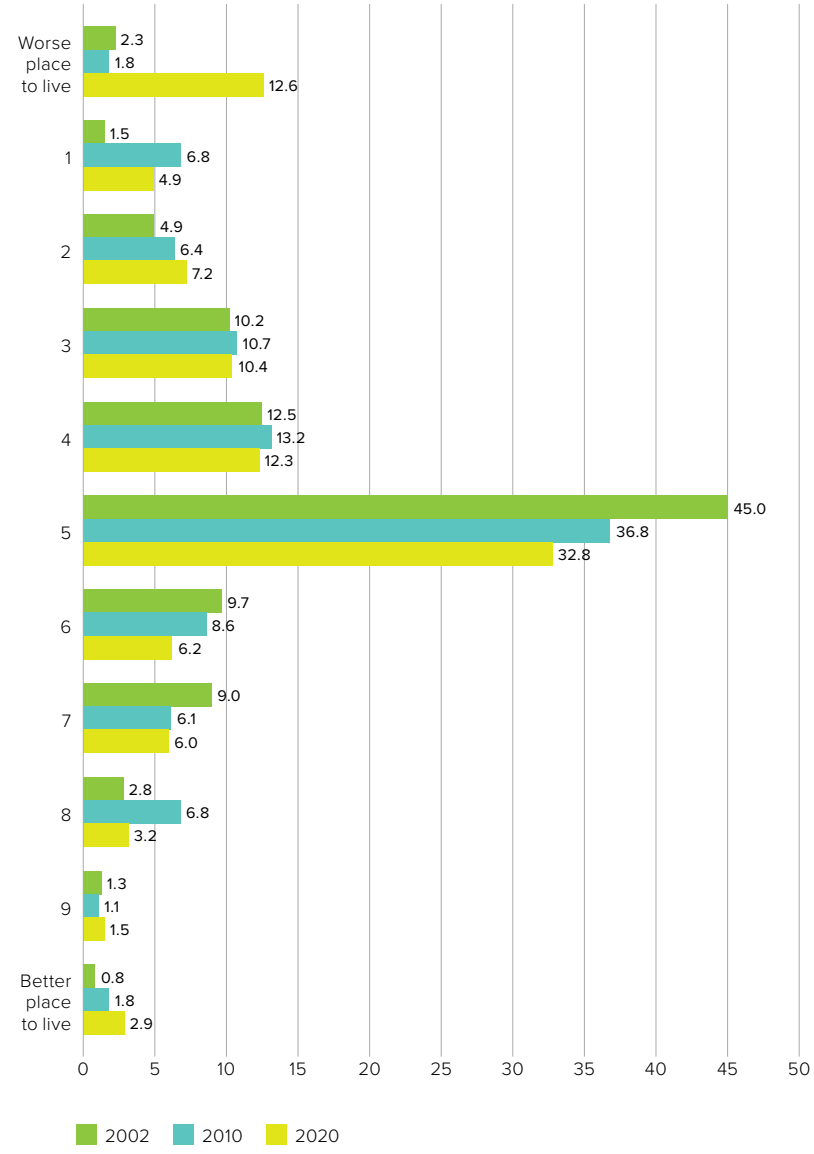
Additional analyses show a strong correlation between agreeing with this statement and feeling social distance towards refugees ($r = 0.52$; $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, 46% of all respondents both say that they would like the government to increase border restrictions and control, and feel social distance towards refugees. This leads us to conclude that almost half of young Slovenians do not think fondly of accepting refugees coming to Slovenia.

That those wanting stricter border control actually have negative attitudes towards refugees themselves is corroborated by other correlations. Respondents agreeing with the statement about border control feel significantly higher social distance towards the Roma ($r = 0.39$; $p < 0.01$) also agree much more that employers should favour Slovenes when considering job applicants ($r = 0.59$; $p < 0.01$), and are much more convinced that Slovenia has become a worse country to live in due to immigrants coming here from other countries ($r = 0.51$; $p < 0.01$).

Figure 1.14:

Perceived social effect of migration, Slovenia and selected countries, 2002–2020.

Immigrants make country worse or better place to live



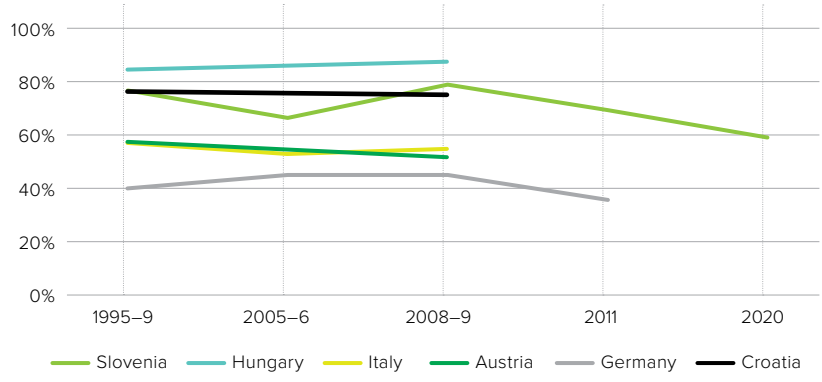
Source: ESS 2002–2018, Mladina 2020.

Figure 1.14 clearly shows the following. First, immediately after the "European migrant crisis" began, peaking between 2014 and 2016, young people from all four countries (with the exception of Germany) increasingly started thinking their countries became somewhat (in Slovenia and Austria) or significantly (in Italy and Hungary) worse to live in. Second, in the years following the peak, in 2017 and 2018, this opinion began reversing in all countries except for Slovenia. Moreover, in Slovenia, the negative trend continued up till 2020. Also worth mentioning is that young Slovenians are becoming more polarized on this issue. The share of young people expressing a middling position on the topic, answering with a score of five on a 0–10 scale, has shrunk from 45% to just 37%. The share of those assigning the highest score (10) has increased from 2% to 3%, while those answering with the lowest score (0) has jumped from 2% to a high of 13%.

Figure 1.15:

Agreement with the claim that employers should prioritize natives instead of migrants when offering employment, Slovenia and selected countries, 1995–2020.

When there are few opportunities for employment, should employers prioritize slovene applicants? (% of youth agreeing)



Source: World Value Survey (Inglehart et al., 2018), Mladina 2020.

Note: The analysis is limited to the 18–29 year-old youth subgroup to insure proper comparison.

Here, we are comparing youth shares agreeing with the statement that employers should be favourably disposed to giving jobs to the native-born population instead of immigrants. From Figure 1.15 we can glean significant differences between the selected countries. As before, Hungary and Germany are the furthest apart. Almost all young Hungarians (90%) thinks employers should be favourably disposed to the natively born. In Germany, only 34% think the same. Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and Italy are somewhere between these two extremes. Second, the differences are stable across time. A cosmopolitan youth outlook has been dominating in Germany since the mid-nineties. The reverse is true for Hungary. In Slovenia, the share of young people agreeing with the statement has been consistently hovering between 80% and 60% since the nineties. However, third, we can observe a persistent negative trend that has been going on in Slovenia for the past 12 years. Today, more than 40% of young Slovenes have a more cosmopolitan outlook. This is comparable to the Italian and Austrian case in 2008–2009. Once again, we suspect that economic development is an important driver of increasing cosmopolitanism in Slovenia, eclipsing as it does the importance of survival values and highlighting self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The economic recession of 2008–2009 temporarily, and expectedly (Hainmueller and Hopkisn, 2014), paused the process but did not stop or reverse it.

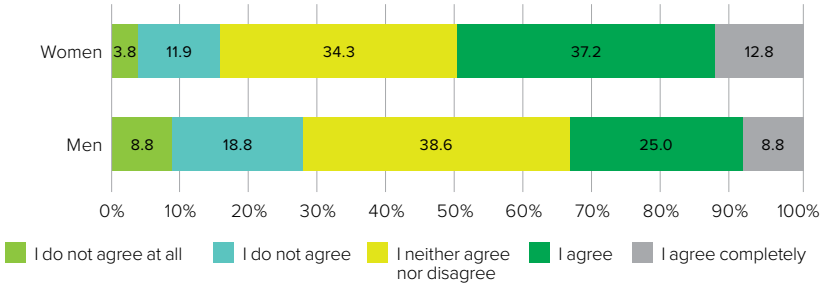
The topic of immigration is very much related to how young people perceive ethnic and other minorities. In our complete sample, the share of those fully agreeing with the statement that the government should do more for national and ethnic minorities stands at 10.5%, while a further 30.7% somewhat agree. Taking these two groups together, we can say that 41.2% of respondents support the statement, while those either fully or partially disagreeing represent a much smaller share (22.1%).

Unsurprisingly, the youth subgroup expressing a higher affinity to refugees moving in is also more likely to agree with the aforementioned statement ($r = 0.28$; $p < 0.01$). The same goes for those more inclined towards the Roma moving in ($r = 0.26$; $p < 0.01$), as well as those opining that immigration in general is a positive development for Slovenia ($r = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$). We are led to conclude that all of this is part of a broader dimension of a

worldview reflecting a weaker or stronger youth affinity towards minorities and other marginalized communities. Our conclusion is further buttressed by the presence of positive correlations with expressing support for same-sex parenting ($r = 0.28$; $p < 0.01$) and accepting a homosexual person (or a homosexual couple) as a new neighbour ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, left-leaning people are more likely to agree with the mentioned statement ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$). We can safely infer that young Slovenians becoming more and more liberally minded throughout the years.

Figure 1.16:

An evaluation of governmental relations with national and ethnic minorities, broken down by sex.



Source: Mladina 2020.

Although demographic variables such as age and education turn out not to be significantly correlated with the statement under discussion, gender is a surprisingly strong predictor (Figure 1.16). Our surprise should be somewhat toned down in light of studies examining the distribution of ethno-cultural empathy, which show women to be more empathetic than men (Wang et al, 2003). Gender has a strong predictive power both in the case of ethno-cultural and basic empathy (Rasoal et al., 2011). Women also self-report to be more accepting of cultural differences in comparison to men (Miville et al., 1999).

Since 2014, young people are increasingly of the opinion that immigration negatively affects life in Slovenia. However, young people today agree much more than 10 years ago that employers should prioritize native-born Slovenes when searching for new workers.

1.6 YOUTH BELIEFS ABOUT HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is a varied, even mercurial concept with narrower and broader definitions. The Slovenian criminal code does not mention free speech, but Article 297 does stipulate punishment of up to two years in prison for offenders who "publicly incite hatred, violence, and intolerance" on the basis of "national, racial, religious or ethnic affiliation, gender" etc. (KZ-1). The Slovenian online platform *Spletno oko* (2020), designed to report internet hate speech, defines the concept as "the expression of opinions and ideas which are discriminatory in nature and typically target vulnerable groups (ethnic, national, religious, cultural, gender, etc.)."

A whopping 70% of youth think there is too much hate speech in our society. Only 12.3% are of the opinion that hate speech is not excessive, while 20% are undecided. None of the usual demographic predictors (gender, age, education, etc.) are tied to the perception of hate speech in a statistically significant way. This means that the perception of hate speech is demographically normally distributed across the population of young people.

A whopping 70% of young people think that there is too much hate speech in Slovenia. More than 80% report encountering hate speech at least once a month. Left-leaning (especially far-left) young people perceive more hate speech than centre- or right-leaning (especially far-right) ones.

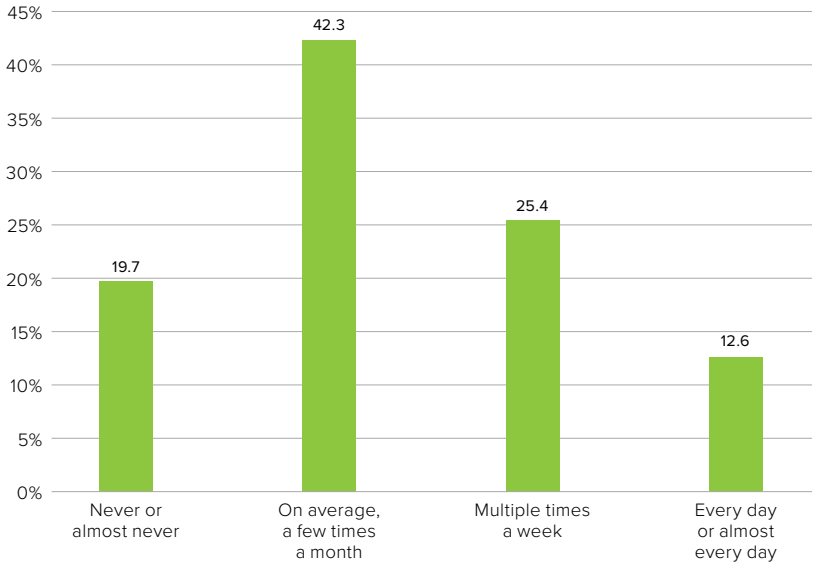
Nevertheless, there are differences if we take into account the political diversity among young people. The largest share, 76.2%, belongs to the far-left (on scale from 0 to 10), while there are only 58.3% of those on the far right who think there is too much hate speech. Other correlations indicate that left-leaning respondents perceive more hate speech than right-leaning ones. Those who are more approving of same-sex parenting are more perceptive of hate speech ($r = 0.24$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, those who are more likely to disapprove of the idea that the majority of household chores naturally befit women more than men are also more perceptive of hate speech ($r = -0.14$; $p < 0.01$). The same goes for young people who are more approving of homosexuals moving in as neighbours ($r = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$), or of refugees ($r = 0.09$; $p < 0.01$) and Roma ($r = 0.08$; $p < 0.01$) as new neighbours.

> *"I definitely encounter cases of hate speech. But we should distinguish between powerful people who rile up working people into hating foreigners, for example, and ordinary working people who succumb to such well-targeted campaigns. Hate speech today is more salient, but its quantity is actually the same as decades ago. I do not favour policies designed to limit free speech."*
>
> (Gregor, 26 years old, socialist and labour organizer)

As we have intimated in the beginning of this section, hate speech is an especially acute problem online, where the comfort provided by anonymity fans the flames of hatred. That is why we asked young people whether they have encountered hate speech on the internet.

Figure 1.17:

The frequency with which young people encounter hate speech online.
How frequently in the past 12 months have you encountered online content which explicitly promoted hatred, violence, or offense?



Source: Mladina 2020.

Figure 1.17 clearly shows that young people are basically surrounded by hate speech online. More than 80% say they encounter explicit hate speech on the internet several times per month. More than a third (38%) confronts hate speech several times a week or more frequently.

Expectedly, those who encounter such content more frequently are also more likely to agree with the statement that there is too much hate speech in our society ($r = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$). Additional analyses reveal the same pattern as before. More hate speech is perceived by those who feel more affinity towards refugees ($r = 0.91$; $p < 0.01$), Roma ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$), and homosexuals ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$). Correlations with perceived discrimination on the basis of age ($r = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$), gender ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.01$), economic conditions ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$), ethnic membership ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$), religious convictions ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.01$). The positive correlation between

perceiving hate speech and having a homosexual orientation ($r = 0.10$; $p < 0.01$) is also telling.

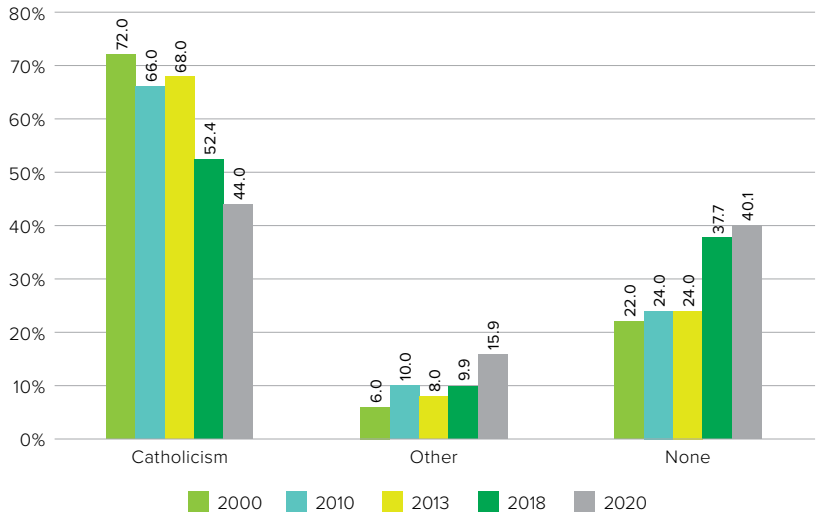
1.7 YOUTH RELIGIOSITY

Figure 1.18 clearly demonstrates that Catholicism has been losing favour among young Slovenes at least since the beginning of the 21st century. In a broader perspective, this means that religion is losing its potential to be a source of youth identity – the share of those who do not identify with any religion has increased from 24% in 2010 to 40%.

Figure 1.18:

Self-reported religious affiliation of young people (16–27) in Slovenia, 2000–2020.

What is your religious affiliation?



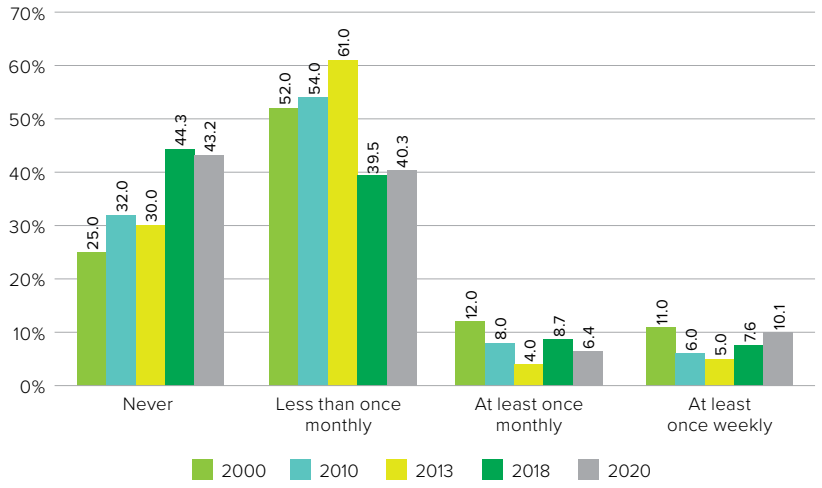
Sources: Lavrič and Boroja, 2014 (for the 2000–2013 period), Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019, Mladina 2020.

Note: to ensure the validity of longitudinal comparison we have restricted the age group to those between the ages of 16 and 27.

Secularization trends are also present with regards to church visitation. Since 2013, we have been witnessing a significant increase (from 30% to 43%) in the share of those who never go to church. We should note, however, that the falling trend of those who regularly visit church every week has, at the same time, reversed, so that the level in 2020 was the same as in 2000. This means that, since 2013, the fall in the share of young people who visit church only on special occasions has been very significant. Put differently, we are witnessing a mild polarizing trend among young people as regards religion (see Lavrič, 2019).

Figure 1.19:

Frequency of church visitations, youth (16–27) in Slovenia, 2000–2018.
Do you go to church (and how often)?



Sources: Lavrič and Boroja, 2014 (for the 2000–2013 period), Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019, Mladina 2020.

Note: to ensure the validity of longitudinal comparison we have restricted the age group to those between the ages of 16 and 27.

One of our interviewees put into sharp relief how strongly religious some young people are even today.

> *"Young people should be more religious. To me, religion serves as a moral foundation. Because people are not religious, bad things are happening; conflicts, lies, and all the rest of it. People are improved by believing, they are made better by it, everyone needs it and searches for it – especially young people. Everyone would be happier if they became religious. Nothing bad is born of it, only the good things."*
>
> (Špela, 16 years old, high school student and young religious person)

Somewhat surprisingly, additional analyses revealed that, after 2013, the mean value of answers regarding the importance of god increased. Between 2005 and 2013 the value fell from 5.42 to 3.57, but then it increased to 4.19 in 2020. This might seem contradictory in light of previous data, but it is actually quite compatible with the thesis on the privatization of religion (see Luckmann, 1967; Davie, 2000; Pollack and Müller, 2006; Lavrič 2013). According to the thesis, a relatively stronger presence of private forms of religiosity (e.g. the importance of god in everyday life) is characteristic of late modernity, while the so-called institutional aspects of religiosity (e.g. the identification of people with the church or going to the church) are less salient. The thesis of privatized religiosity among young people is nicely illustrated by the following excerpt from the interview with the aforementioned respondent.

> *"I, myself, prefer to talk to God, which primarily means that you have to listen to him. And you are able to hear him only if you are quiet! /.../ Many people are traditionally religious, which is okay, but I think an authentic and personal relationship with God is the most important."*

Since the beginning of the 21st century, young Slovenians have been rapidly moving away from the Catholic Church, so much so that, in 2020, only 44% identified with Catholicism. At the same time, the share of those attending church on a weekly basis has doubled since 2013, which reveals a polarizing process in the sphere of religiosity.

1.8 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key conclusions of this chapter can be summarized in the following points:

1. At least for the past 20 years, elements of the private sphere such as friendship, family, and freedom of expression have been much more important to young people than broader social themes such as, for example, the fate of the nation. Young people also do not care as much, at least declaratively, about the values of materialism and having power.

2. Recent decades have been evincing an individualizing trend with regards to youth values and beliefs, a trend closely followed by a decrease in generalized trust. The following is tied to various aspects of xenophobia and youth worries about money, job prospects, and access to housing.

3. Young people are most worried about a lack of money, environmental problems, and success in school or at work. These fears have significantly increased in the past decade. Loneliness has increased the most, which is tied to the specific conditions of the pandemic in 2020.

4. Visions of the future are mostly becoming polarized. In comparison to 2010, today's share of young people who think both their personal future and societal future will not change much has shrunk. The rising share of pessimism about the future of society is especially worrying. Such pessimism is mostly the result of worries about aging demographics and environmental degradation.

5. Attitudinal trends having to do with family life are divergent. On the one hand, attitudes are undergoing a strong process of liberalization as young people are rejecting obedience as a value in raising children much more than a decade ago. They are also much more accepting of same-sex parenting. On the other hand, attitudes about the gendered division of labour are experiencing a mild process of re-traditionalization.

6. More than 40% of young people do not think of their sexuality as completely heterosexual, while almost 5% are completely homosexually oriented. Most young homosexuals (51%) report feeling victimized by discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

7. Even though social distance felt towards all the selected social groups has shrunk in the past two years, it remains high in the case of the Roma and refugees. Only 7% of young people in Slovenia report feeling uneasy about a Western European family moving into their neighbourhood, while 56% report the same about refugees moving in.

8. Since 2014, young people are more and more of the opinion that immigration from abroad has a negative influence on life in Slovenia. Nevertheless, today they agree much less than 10 years ago that employers should prioritize offering jobs to Slovenes instead of immigrants.

9. A whopping 70% of young people think that there is too much hate speech in Slovenia. More than 80% say they encounter hate speech on the internet more frequently than once a month. Left-leaning young people (especially the far-left) report a higher presence of hate speech than political centrists and right-leaning (especially far-right) ones.

10. From the beginning of the 21st century, young Slovenians have been rapidly moving away from the Catholic Church. In 2020, only 44% identified with Catholicism. At the same time, the share of weekly churchgoers has doubled since 2013, which indicates a process of youth polarization in the sphere of religiosity.

Following the data, we have derived the following youth policy recommendations:

1. Young people should be encouraged to become more interested and active in the public sphere, as the current locus of their values and interests remains firmly fixed to the private sphere.

2. More should be done to ensure greater existential safety for youth. Feelings of economic and broader existential insecurity are tied to the decline in generalized trust among young people, which is to be interpreted as a serious social problem. The need to address the existential woes of youth is also reflected in the increase of pessimism about the future of society. Most sensibly, reforms should target employment opportunities, housing access, and environmental concerns.

3. Autonomy in gender identity and sexual orientation is very important to young people, which implies that youth policy tied to this sphere should be led in the spirit of liberal values.

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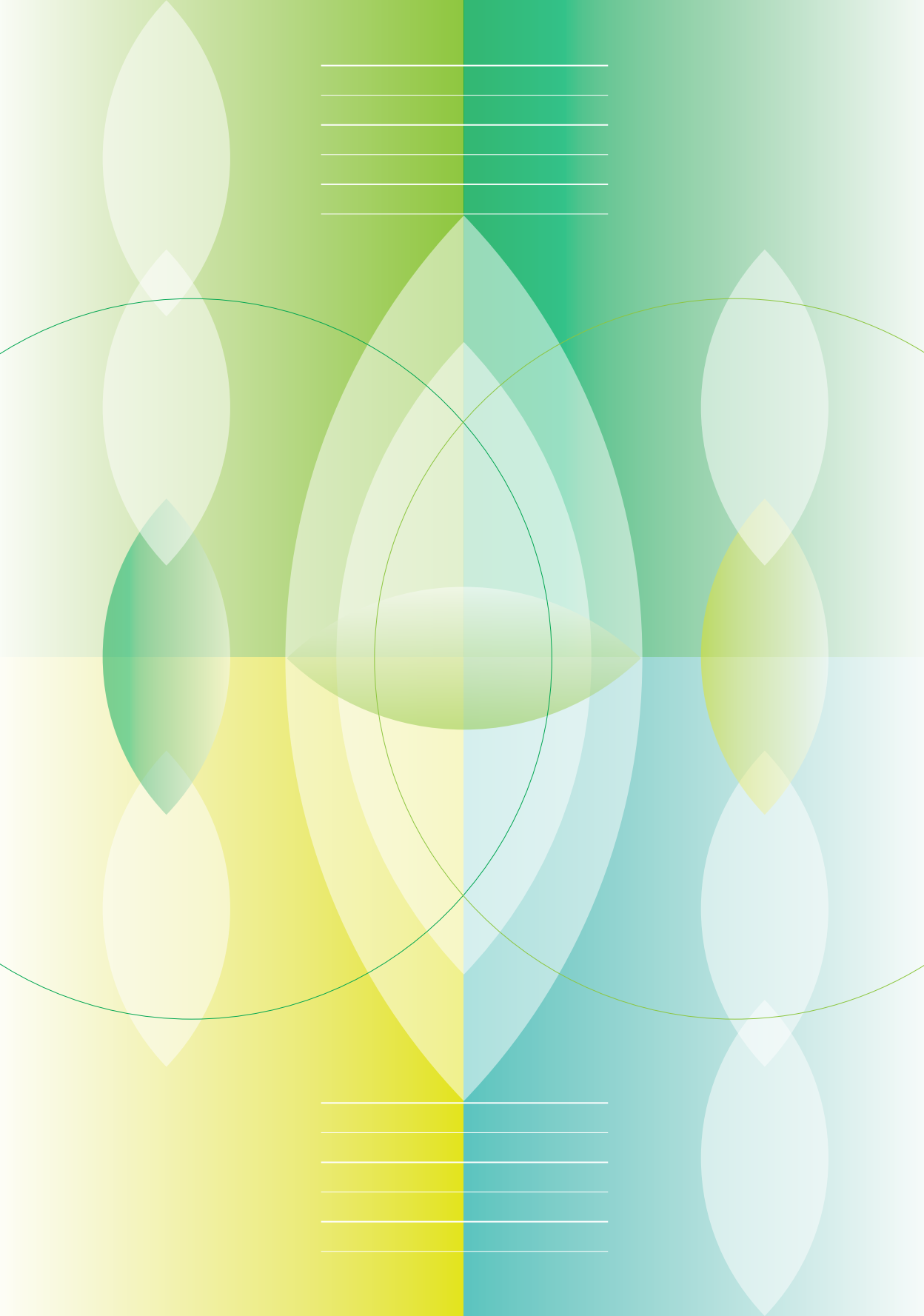
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MARKO RADOVAN, MITJA SARDOČ, TOMAŽ DEŽELAN AND KATJA NACEVSKI

2. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LEARNING MOBILITY

2.1 PUBLIC EDUCATION IN A MODERN PLURAL SOCIETY

Modern societies (including Slovenia and the EU) have faced many changes and related challenges and problems in the last few years. Terrorist attacks in many European capitals, the problem of radicalisation and violent extremism or security in general [also concerning the so-called "refugee crisis"], the broader socio-political situation, e.g. the rise of populist movements and nationalism [especially in the individual EU Member States and their immediate neighbourhood], the role of the media in transmitting [as well as "generating"] information, e.g. the phenomenon of "fake news", and the rise of digital media and social networks are just some of the changes that are in the focus of attention of the academic and research communities, policymakers, as well as the media and the public at large. Particularly noteworthy are global economic trends, such as the 'Great Recession', and the associated changes in the very notion of public schooling and the education process in general.

In addition to providing knowledge, education, and socialisation, public education in modern plural societies also has the role of the so-called "great equaliser". The provision of equal educational opportunities is considered one of the cornerstones of public education and one of the primary mechanisms for ensuring equity in the distribution of certain social positions. As the authors of White Paper on education in the Republic of Slovenia pointed out, it is "*a necessary condition for all citizens to have equal opportunities to succeed in life in modern societies based on liberal and democratic*

principles" (Krek, 2011, p. 14). Finally, an individual's social status or social mobility depends mainly on their educational success or performance.

Thus, the central measure of a person's social status is no longer their "background," e.g. the socioeconomic status of their parents, race, gender, religion, etc., but primarily said person's merit, which Michael Young, in The Rise of Meritocracy, summarises in the formula "merit = IQ + effort" (Young, 1958). What matters, then, or what confers social status, is no longer circumstances beyond the individual's control, but their [apparently (un)measurable] performance in the educational process as the sum or result of several factors, including individual effort, talents, etc. "*Both practically and ethically,"* Young argues, "*meritocratic education is the basis for a meritocratic society.*" Finally, *"the growth of mass educational systems in all industrial societies"* was one of the most important phenomena of the 20th century (ibid.).

> *"School is essential. If you do not have an education, you will find it hard to get a job. For us Roma, this is even more of a problem. Many of our own have not finished school and cannot get a job because of this."*
>
> (Benjamin, 22, young Roma)

Nonetheless, the provision of equal opportunities in education has changed significantly in recent decades. Paradoxically, meritocratic education has become one of the main obstacles in the fight against growing social inequalities and the related distributive (in)justice. Three [at least] of the related problems are worth highlighting as particularly salient, namely the "meritocracy trap" (Markovits, 2019), the "opportunity gap" (Putnam, 2015), and the "meritocratic fallacy" (Sandel, 2020).

At the same time, education remains at the heart of public policy as one of the most important indicators of future economic growth and individual well-being. As Stephen Ball points out, education has become "a key factor in ensuring economic productivity and competitiveness in the context of information capitalism" (Ball, 2008, p. 1). His vision of education as investment – dystopian for many researchers – is based on the

[deterministic] assumption that "better educational outcomes are a strong predictor of economic growth" (OECD, 2010, p. 3). This assumption of the translatability of learning performance into economic performance is most evident in international surveys that measure educational performance in science, mathematics, reading, computer literacy, and civic literacy. The number of countries participating, and the number of resources invested, as well as the media and political attention given to the results of these surveys, are irrefutable evidence that they provide [at least for their proponents] a prime global benchmark for assessing the quality, efficiency, and equity of school systems.

The global testing culture has become a kind of "new normal," leading to the "datafication" (Williamson et al., 2020) or even "scandalization" of education (Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow, 2018). In this way, quantitative data has become an important means of lending "legitimacy" (Ringarp, 2016) to updates and other changes in public education. So-called "management by numbers" (Grek, 2009) has created a complex relationship between science, "Big Data", and policy (Prutsch, 2019).

The matter is further complicated by the fact that the process of 'corporatisation of education' has begun to significantly undermine the egalitarian ethos of public education. This has been accompanied by a shift in emphasis in the discourse of the neoliberal agenda in education and its conceptual appeal, which now includes concepts that until recently were the [exclusive] domain of egalitarianism, e.g. equality, welfare, equal opportunity, fairness, etc. These and other changes in the broader substantive domain of education, e.g. the phenomenon of pre-school education, education as the delayed entry of young people into the labour market, etc., confirm that education and training remain at the centre of public policy.

> *"Education is definitely important. Of course it is, I do not even know how to answer, it's so obvious. I don't know how important it is for a job, but it is important for being outspoken, even if it is not logically connected."*
>
> (Maša, 26 years old, self-employed but precariously employed)

Despite the global changes associated with the process of "corporatization of education", the closure of schools in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic has refocused the attention of the public, as well as of policymakers and politicians, on the fundamental socialising role of the public school and the educational process in general.

In addition to ensuring equal opportunity for individuals and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, public schools remain a key institution for young people's secondary socialisation in a modern plural society. This is confirmed by the reaction of young people and their parents, as well as educational staff and school management, to the closure of schools in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

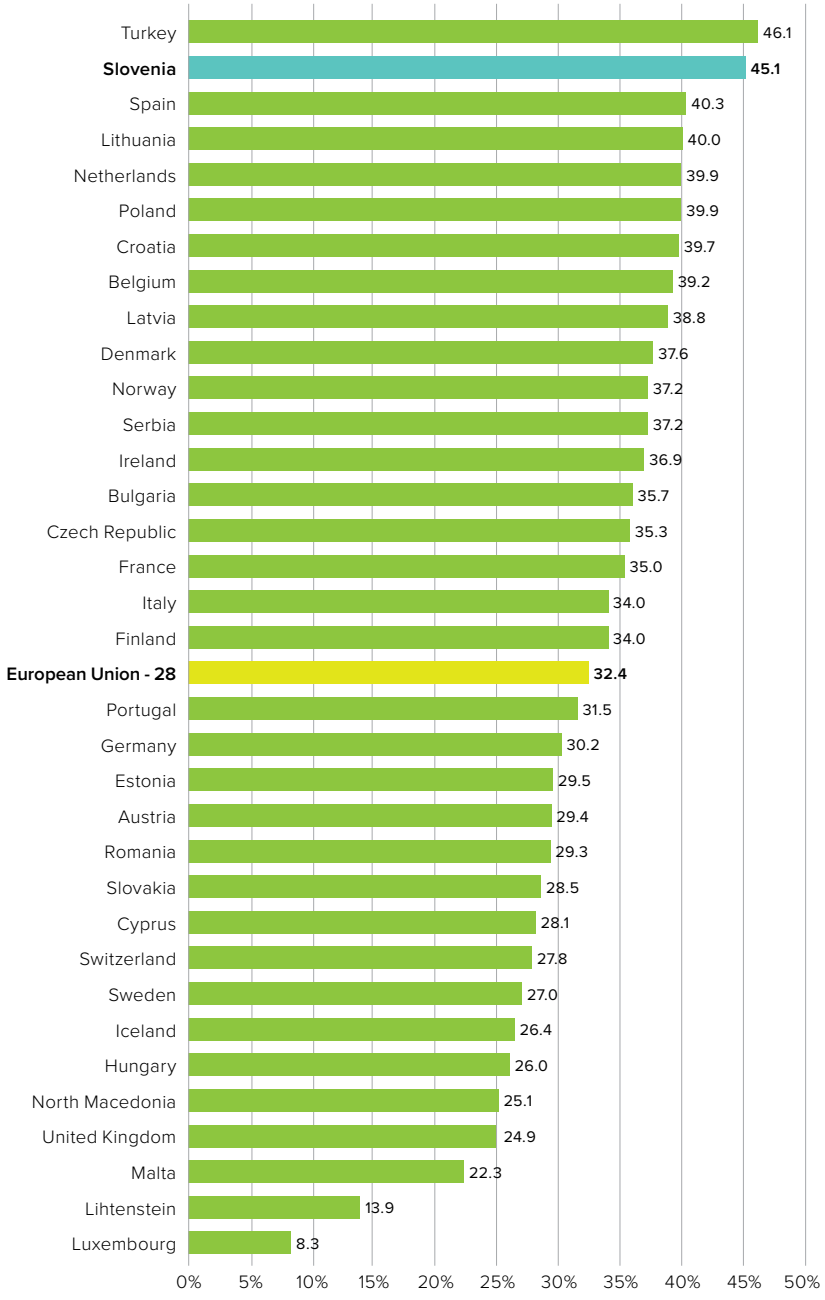
2.2 **FORMAL EDUCATION**

2.2.1 HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the expressions of increasing educational opportunities is also the accessibility of higher education. As shown in Figure 3.1, the participation rate of young Slovenians aged 20-24 in tertiary education is extremely high and among the highest in the EU. At 45.1%, Slovenia is almost 13 percentage points above the average of the 28 European countries included in the Eurostat analyses.

Figure 2.1:

Tertiary enrolment of the 20-24 age group, EU-28 Member States, 2018.



Source: Eurostat

This share has been declining slightly in recent years, reaching a peak in 2014, when almost 49% of the 20-24 age group was enrolled in tertiary education. However, despite this decline, tertiary enrolment remains very high. What are the reasons for this? Increasing access to higher education was an essential objective in the Resolution on the National Programme for Higher Education 2011-2020 (ReNŠVŠ), adopted by the National Assembly in 2011. According to this Resolution, by 2020, the participation rate of the 19-24 demographic in tertiary education should have already been 75%. While the age range used in the ReNŠVŠ does not perfectly match the Eurostat age categories, it is safe to conclude that Slovenia did not reach these targets in 2020. More broadly, the reasons for high participation in tertiary education can also be traced to the role of higher education as a social corrective, which is linked to the relatively challenging labour market situation that young people are facing, the possibility of student work, and the free-of-charge nature of studies, etc.

The share of 20-24-year-olds enrolled in tertiary education in Slovenia is the highest among the EU-28.

Unfortunately, tertiary enrolment rates are not directly related to a country's economic and technological development level. The data in the Figure above show, for example, that the share of Slovenian students enrolled in tertiary education is (almost) 100% higher than the share of students in Sweden, Switzerland, or Austria – countries with a much higher GDP than Slovenia (OECD, 2021). Despite the high enrolment rates, some research suggests that the supply of skills is not sufficiently aligned with the needs of the economy and society (OECD, 2016).

2.2.2 SCHOOL WELL-BEING (SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLING)

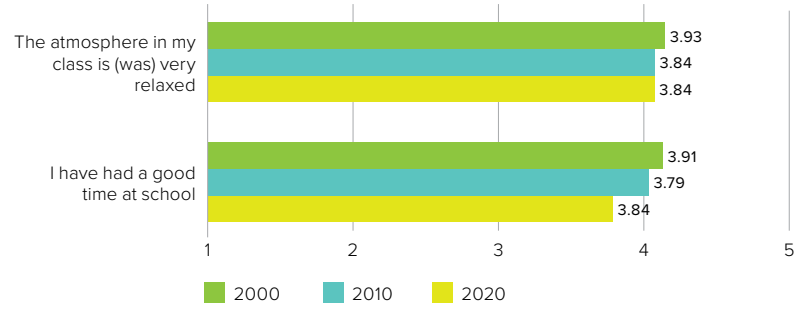
School climate and the related issue of providing a safe and supportive learning environment are essential indicators of students' overall well-being in the educational process (Japelj Pavešić et al., 2012; OECD,

2020, p. 120-125). In addition to theorists, policymakers, educators, and parents, the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment has also received special attention from some of the most crucial global think tanks (e.g., Brookings) and fact tank organisations (e.g., Pew Research Centre). In Slovenia, providing a safe and stimulating learning environment has been a priority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport for several years. This is confirmed by the results of international surveys measuring educational achievement, as pupils in schools where the school climate is perceived as positive tend to achieve higher results. At the same time, a positive school climate has a significant impact on reducing the gap between students' socio-economic status and their achievement (Japelj Pavešić et al., 2012). For example, the results of the TIMSS 2007 and 2008 surveys show a positive correlation between a positive school climate and students' mathematics and science achievement (Japelj Pavešić et al., 2012).

In the Mladina 2020 survey, respondents' well-being at school was measured by two statements, namely 'I have/had a very good time at school' and 'The atmosphere in my school is (was) very relaxed'. Both statements were measured on a 5-point scale (1 – not at all true, ... 5 – very true).

Figure 2.2:

Classroom/school climate and well-being for 2000, 2010, 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020

As the Figure above shows, young people's well-being at school is very positive and does not change much between 2000 and 2020. However, we note that respondents' well-being and climate were slightly higher in 2000 and slightly lower (although still above average) afterward.

A comparison of the sense of relaxation during education showed no statistically significant differences according to the respondents' educational attainment. The results were also generally positive when respondents answered the question 'The atmosphere in my classroom is (was) very relaxed'. The general well-being in the classroom of the respondents also shows no significant differences according to their educational level.

While the analysis of differences in school well-being according to the educational level of the young people surveyed showed statistically significant differences for the question 'I have/had a very good time at school' ($p < 0.01$), no clear trend can be reported. It is certainly true that respondents with a higher level of education responded more positively to these two statements, but this trend is not linear.

2.2.3 PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

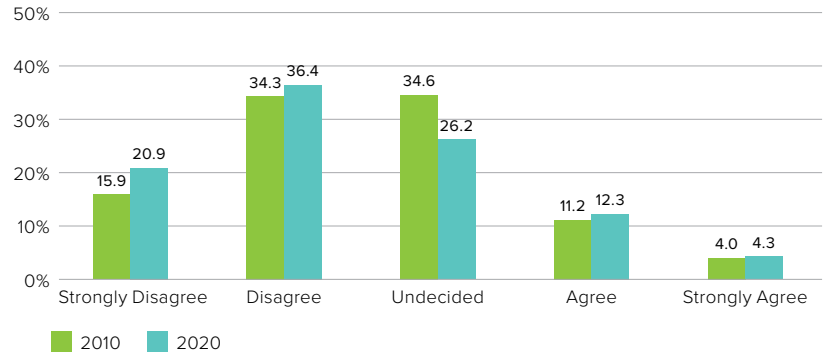
International comparative research on measuring educational achievement shows that the home environment is an essential supporting factor for education (Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas, 2009). As highlighted in the TIMSS 2011 report, higher parental educational attainment is 'associated with higher student achievement, as well as higher parental expectations of their children's education' (Japelj Pavešić et al., 2012, p. 351).

Both the Youth 2020 and Youth 2010 questionnaires also asked questions about parents' expectations of the school. The first prompt was 'My parents demand too much from me in relation to school' (Figure 3.3 and 3.4), while the second was 'The school certificate is (was) very important to my parents' (Figure 3.5).

Figure 2.3:

Parents' expectations of their children's school performance.

My parents demand too much from me in relation to education



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

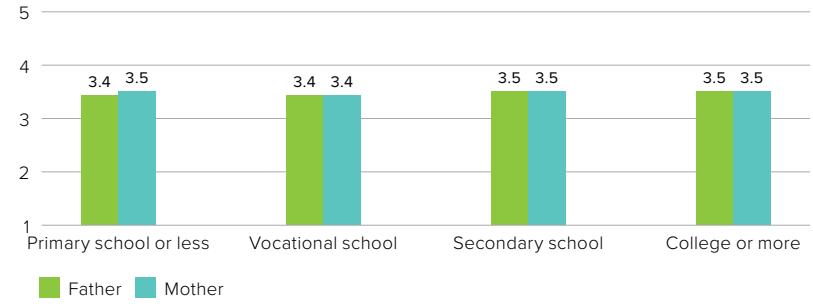
Judging by the respondents' perceptions in the above Figure, young people did not perceive their parents as demanding. Only a tiny proportion – both in 2010 and in 2020 – perceived that their parents demanded too much from them concerning school (answer 'true' or 'very true'). Comparing young people's responses between 2010 and 2020 shows slightly higher expectations from parents in 2020.

The following Figure compares parents' educational attainment and their children's (respondents') school performance expectations. The survey results show that young people do not feel much pressure from their parents regarding their school performance. Responses to the prompt 'Parents demand too much of me/they demand too much of me in relation to school' are below the average score. The analysis showed that respondents with lower educational attainment felt more pressure from their parents regarding their school performance. The differences are statistically significant mainly according to the educational level of the respondents themselves ($p < 0.05$) and show that respondents with a low secondary level of education (two- or three-year vocational school completed) perceive the most significant parental pressure on their school performance.

Figure 2.4:

Parents' expectations of their children's school performance by parental education.

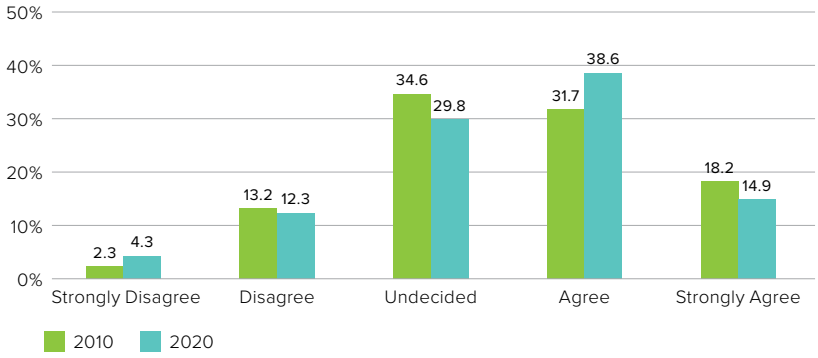
Relevance of certificate X Parental education 2020



Source: Mladina 2020.

Figure 2.5:

Importance of school certificates for parents.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

According to respondents' perceptions, parents assigned greater importance to their child's school certificate, compared to how demanding parents are regarding education in general (Figure 3.5). A comparison of responses between 2010 and 2020 shows that the school certificate (and related school performance) is on average becoming increasingly important to parents.

As the results suggest, the home environment has a significant predictive value for students' educational achievement. Although parental levels of education are a significant predictor of their children's academic achievement, the results of the Youth 2020 survey show that the differences in the perceived importance of a child's certificate for parents and their education are not significant. This is also why the role of public schooling as the 'great equaliser' remains essential.

Even though public schooling plays a vital role in levelling the playing field for individuals, the home environment is a critical incentive in supporting young people's educational achievement and related social mobility.

2.3 NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

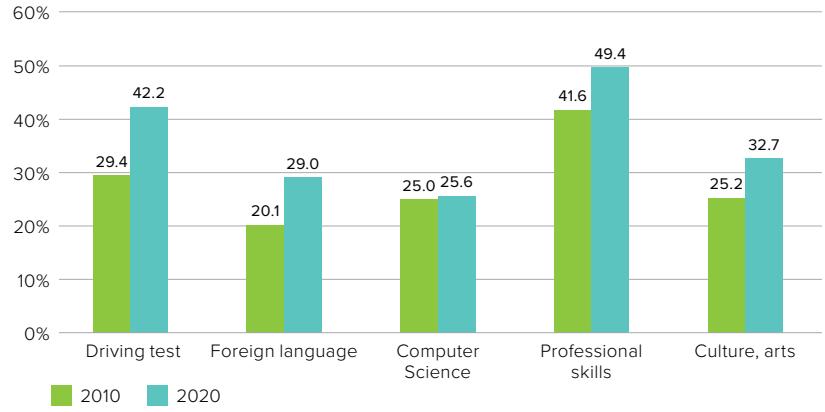
2.3.1 NON-FORMAL FORMS OF EDUCATION

Non-formal education is defined as all organised educational activities that a person has taken part in outside the established formal system. Non-formal education is characterised by the fact that it can also be provided by institutions that are not educational in nature, and that the results of non-formal education can be evaluated and lead to recognition (certification). Non-formal education is also sometimes referred to as 'semi-structured learning', but it does not lead to publicly valid (formal) education (Muršak, 2012).

Respondents were asked about the forms of non-formal education they had received in the last 12 months. The Figure below compares the responses from the 2010 and 2020 surveys.

Figure 2.6:

Participation in non-formal education (comparison 2010 and 2020).



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The respondents' answers show that non-formal education is an increasingly important form of acquiring new skills and competencies, as participation in various courses, training, and workshops is rising.

Non-formal education – especially when linked to specific skills in the field in which young people are professionally engaged – is becoming an increasingly important form of acquiring skills and qualifications.

The order of the types of non-formal education that respondents have received in the last 12 months is also completely different compared to 2010. In 2010, the most common form of non-formal education was – quite expectedly – 'preparing for the driving test'. This was taken by 29.4% of respondents in 2010 and 42.2% in 2020, about a quarter more than young people in 2010.

The most common type of non-formal education identified by respondents in the Youth 2020 survey was 'specific knowledge in the field in which I am or will be professionally involved'. 49.4% of respondents indicated this option (compared to 41.8% in 2010). This is followed by participation

in cultural or artistic courses. Again, participation is very different from the 2010 results, with 32.7% of respondents taking part in this year's survey (25.2% in 2010).

The most significant changes in participation in non-formal education programmes are recorded in computer courses and foreign language courses. These were the two most frequently taken elective subjects among pupils by introducing the 9-year primary school curriculum (in the last three years) (Sardoč, 2005). Both forms of non-formal education show an increase in participation compared to the 2010 results. Foreign language courses were attended (at least once) by 29% of respondents in 2020 (20.3% of respondents attended at least once in 2010). Computer science courses are attended by 25.6% of respondents in 2020 (at least once) (16.8% of respondents in 2010).

Respondents also said that they had attended other forms of non-formal education. 54.9% of respondents had attended more than 3 times (54.1% in 2010). This is where the results of the 2020 survey differed least from the 2010 survey.

The results presented above show that acquiring additional skills through various programmes, courses and other forms of non-formal education is becoming increasingly important. The trend in participation in non-formal education programmes points to the growing importance of lifelong learning, as confirmed by the individual responses of respondents in the Youth 2020 interviews.

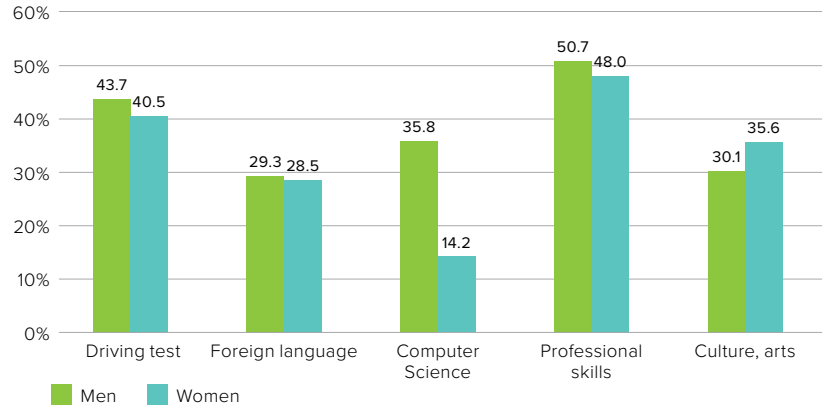
The increasing role and importance of acquiring additional skills through various forms of non-formal education confirm that these forms of education and training are an essential complement to the formal process of education and training and lifelong learning in general.

The following Figure shows the gender differences in participation in non-formal education. As can be seen from the Figure, there are no major differences. Differences can be highlighted in two areas of non-formal

education in particular: women are slightly more likely to participate in culture and the arts, while men have a strong lead in computer science. In these two areas, the differences are also statistically significant.

Figure 2.7:

Participation in non-formal education by gender (%).

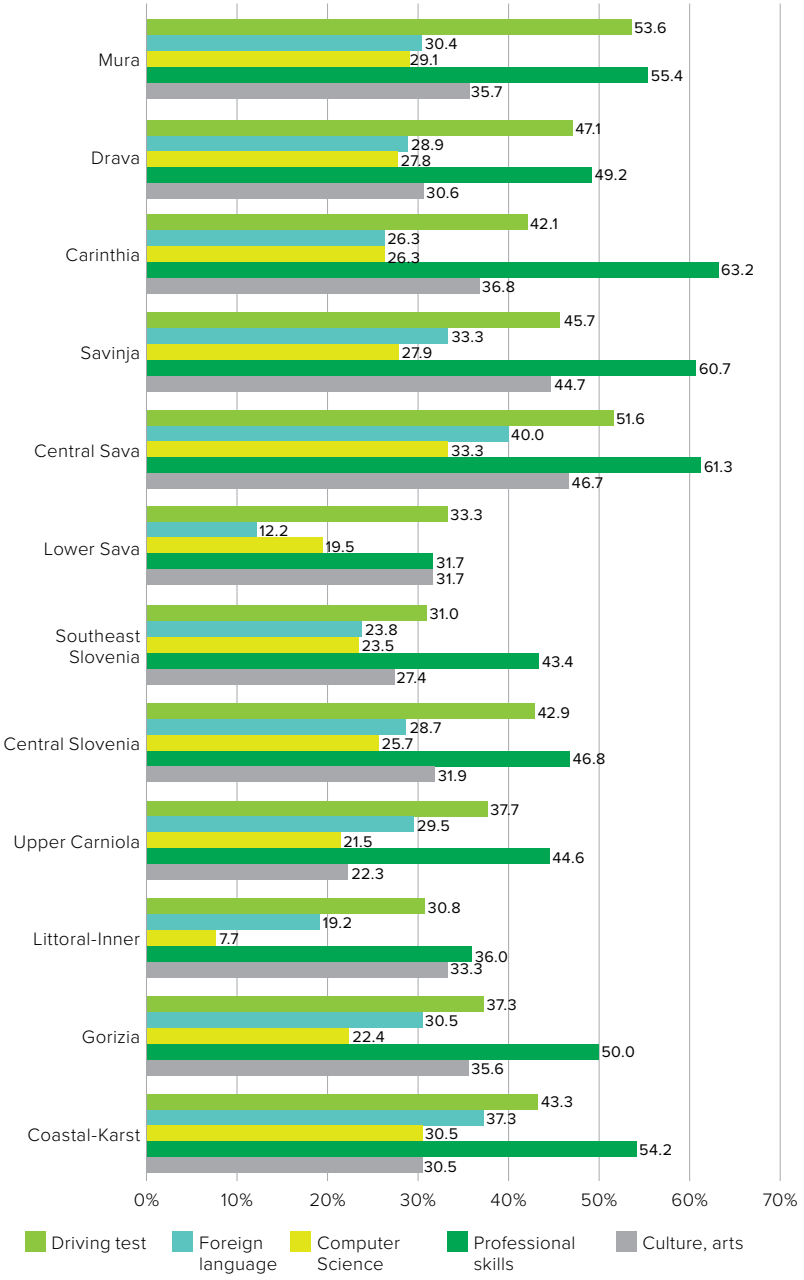


Source: Mladina 2020.

The regional differences in participation by type of non-formal education show that the relationship is similar across all observed areas of non-formal education: the largest share of participation can be attributed to the acquisition of vocational skills, followed by training for driving licences, and arts and culture.

Figure 2.8:

Participation in non-formal education by statistical region (%).



Source: Mladina 2020.

However, there are clear differences in the participation rates of young people across regions. The survey results show that in 2019/2020, on average, the regions with the highest participation in non-formal education were Carinthia, Savinja, Central Sava, and Mura.

> *"For me, there was no other choice. I knew immediately that I wanted to become a farmer, so I enrolled at the biotechnical school in Rakičan. I do not know yet how important this education is going to be for me. I will learn a lot and I will get some experience, and if I finish school, I will be able to apply for grants to rent land. We have horticulture, arable farming, viticulture, and we also have computer science. My favourite subject is vegetable gardening because I love working in the garden, and I especially like digging and tilling the soil."*
>
> (Timotej, 24 years old, young Hungarian minority citizen and future farmer)

2.3.2 INFORMAL LEARNING

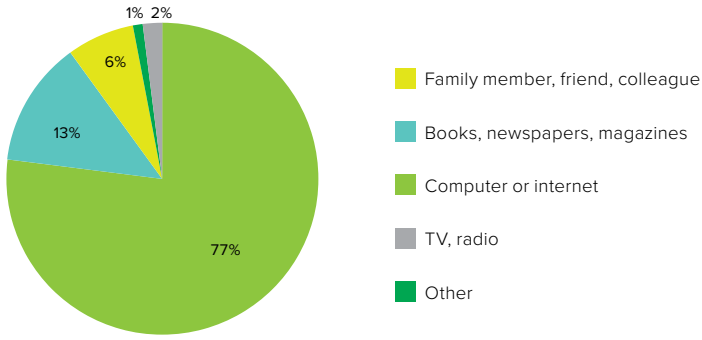
In addition to formal and non-formal learning, informal learning also plays an essential role in acquiring, updating, deepening, and disseminating knowledge and related skills and competencies. The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) defines informal learning as 'a natural companion to everyday life'. Unlike formal and non-formal education, this learning does not have to be organised or even intentional. Therefore, it is often not even recognised by individuals as learning that contributes to their knowledge and skills (ibid.). One of the fundamental roles in the development and promotion of informal learning is played by UNESCO (2012), which defines informal learning as learning that takes place outside educational institutions: in the family, at work, or in the community, and is primarily a reflection of an individual's own interests and activities.

Respondents were asked whether they had acquired knowledge in any other purposeful way in the last 12 months (reading professional literature, surfing the web) in addition to specific forms of non-formal education.

68.4% of respondents answered yes to this question. At the same time, 54.6% of respondents answered that they track the progress of their knowledge, competences, skills, or experience they acquire outside school or studies.

Figure 2.9:

Forms of informal learning (%).



Source: Mladina 2020.

Note: This question was only answered by those respondents who answered yes to the question about having acquired knowledge in other ways on purpose.

The responses in the Figure above show that computers and the internet are the most common form of informal learning for young people. More than three quarters of the respondents answered that they had used a computer or the internet for informal learning. These responses confirm young people's recognition of the importance of technology for their informal learning (Zheng, Zhang, & Gyasi, 2019). Only a smaller proportion of respondents agreed that they acquired knowledge, competences, skills or experience through books, newspapers, and magazines (13.2%), through a family member, friend or colleague (6.4%), or by watching TV or listening to the radio (2.2%). Perhaps the most surprising finding is that none of the respondents mentioned youth organisations or organisations for young people as a source of informal learning.

We were also interested in the differences in informal learning according to respondents' educational level and social status. The Figure below

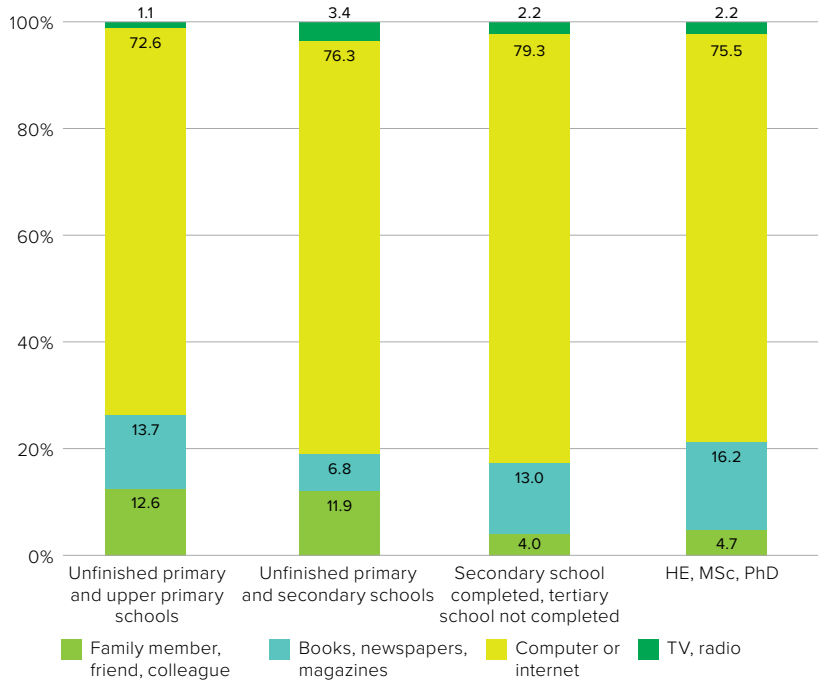
shows the responses to the question of whether young people had engaged in any form of informal learning at all in the last 12 months. The analysis compared respondents who had already completed formal education and thus did not have full-time or part-time status (N = 501) and those who still had student status (N = 693) by level of education.

The differences measured by the chi-square test are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The results are somewhat surprising and, in a way, confirm the importance of informal learning for young people with lower educational levels. Looking first at the Figure in terms of educational attainment, we find that, on average, informal learning is most frequently used (or perceived) by young people with a primary school education or less and by those with a university degree, a master's degree or a Ph.D. Both other educational categories have a lower share than the above. The relatively even distribution of shares by educational attainment certainly shows that informal learning is a form of learning that does not differ according to an individual's educational level, social status, or employment status, but is evenly distributed across all population groups (Jeff, & Smith, 2005).

However, when this form of learning is further compared according to the respondents' status, significant differences are found, especially among young people with 2 or 3 years of vocational or technical education and secondary education. In both cases, those enrolled in secondary education and who have regular student status are more likely to report having completed a form of informal learning.

Figure 2.10:

Opportunity learning by respondents' education level and social status (%).



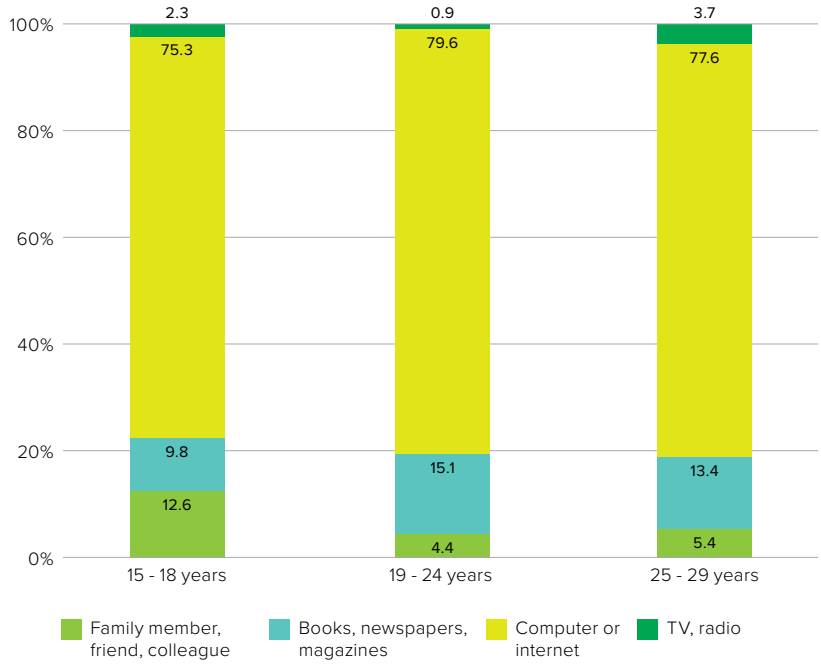
Source: Mladina 2020.

We also wanted to know whether this learning took place varied according to respondents' age. The differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.005$) but mainly reflect the fact that technology (computer and internet) is significant for informal learning, regardless of the age of the respondents. The differences are minimal, with the highest proportion (80%) in the 19-24 age group. As our survey shows, young people are virtually no longer using the TV or radio for informal learning, with the highest proportion being 4% among 25-29-year-olds. For the other two age categories, this share is negligible. The differences that can be observed between young people of different ages are in the category of the use of books, magazines, or newspapers for informal learning purposes – in this case, 15-18-year-olds are slightly less likely to use print media (10%) compared to older demographics. However, the most significant differences can be observed when referring to informal learning sources

such as talking to family members or friends. This "basic form of informal learning" (as Zeldin, 2000, calls it) is mainly popular among the 15-18 age group, which is likely due to the developmental stage, in which they find themselves, and their greater involvement in the primary family environment (living at home).

Figure 2.11:

Types of informal learning by age.



Source: Mladina 2020.

As the results of the Youth 2020 survey show, traditional forms of informal learning for young people have been replaced by modern technology (computer and internet).

2.4 LEARNING MOBILITY

2.4.1 THE RELEVANCE OF YOUTH LEARNING MOBILITY

Mobility has become a fundamental part of global social reality, especially when it comes to younger populations who are either still in education or making a more concrete transition into the labour market. At the societal level, mobility is at once an expression, an outcome, and a catalyst. In this context, human mobility is often seen in terms of the positive effects it is supposed to have on the well-being of individuals and society, but often also as something negative. Mobility is mostly perceived by young Slovenians as an activity with good effects on the well-being of individuals and society, as highlighted in the last decade by Slovenian Youth Survey 2013 (Flere et al., 2013), a supplement to Slovenia Youth Survey 2010. The impact of mobility on society's well-being has been discussed in various reports by both European and Slovenian institutions. For example, the resolution National Programme for youth (2013-2022) states that "*In today's world of intense globalisation processes, mobility becomes one of the areas strongly supported by the European Union.*"

These mobilities are mainly linked to the global (economic) competitiveness of Europe as a whole (CEC, 2009), but their broader importance is best illustrated by the introductory part of the European Commission's Youth on the Move report (2010: 3), which states that "*one of the main objectives of European Union is smart, & inclusive and sustainable growth, and the achievement of this objective depends on young people, whose potential can only be unlocked through quality education, an inclusive labour market and their increased mobility.*" This is also linked to the conclusions of the EU Summit in Rome, where, in a declaration of March 2017, Member States committed to directing the work of the European Union towards "*a Union where young people can get the best education and training, study and find work across the continent*" (European Council, 2017).

Learning mobility is a central topic in conversations about mobility, as education offers young Europeans the most such opportunities. The 2009 Green Paper on promoting learning mobility for young people defines learning mobility as (transnational) mobility for acquiring new skills and as one of the main ways in which people, especially young people, can improve their employability and strengthen their personal development (European Commission, 2009). At the same time, Europeans who are more (educationally) mobile in their youth are expected to be more mobile in the future when they participate in the labour market. Thus, using the example of young people, Bertocini et al. (2008) find that youth mobility contributes to their overall adaptability; more specifically, to their (re)integration into the (supra)national labour market (see also Findlay et al., 2006). Mobility should enable people to acquire the knowledge and skills required in today's global economy and labour market, e.g. foreign language skills, open-mindedness, tolerance of differences, willingness to engage in intercultural dialogue, and the ability to work across borders (Klanjšek, 2011: 401). In line with the above, using student mobility as an example, King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) found that mobile students are more likely to hold better-paid jobs after graduation, are more likely to apply for jobs abroad and are more likely to see their careers in an international environment.

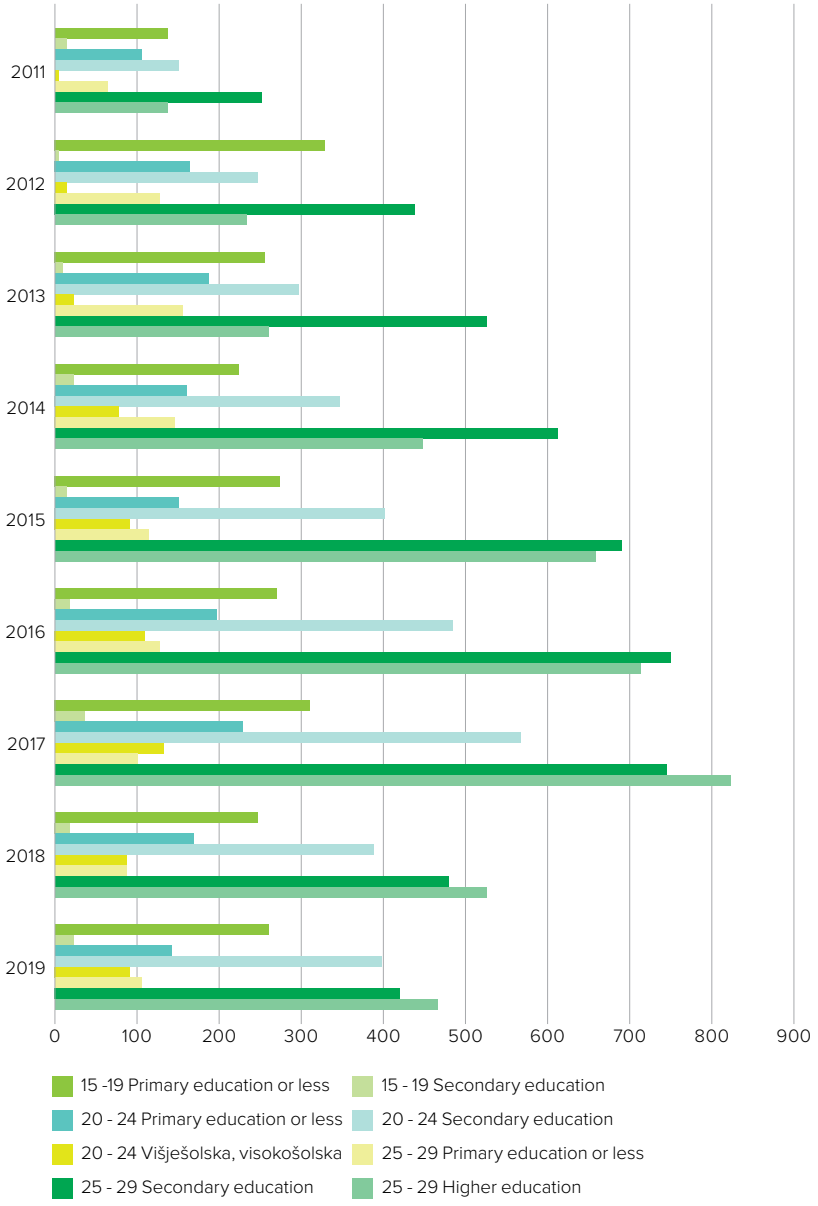
However, mobility can also have negative consequences for both individuals and the country at large. Changes in the labour market, such as an ageing workforce, longer working lives, lower birth rates, and economic trends such as the so-called 'global war for talent' (Brown, & Tannock, 2009), also have a significant impact on young people's mobility. It is the 'global war for talent' and the associated 'brain drain' (cleverly packaged in the rhetoric of mobility) that is seen as a battleground of sorts for the so-called 'global meritocracy' (Beechler, & Woodward, 2009). The 'battle for talent' and the related phenomenon of the so-called 'corporatisation of talent' is a policy problem par excellence: changes in migration policies and labour market adjustments in many countries that encourage immigration of the best qualified (the 'best and brightest'). Young people (especially those with tertiary education) have the highest emigration

rates, as they tend to avoid various 'local' labour market problems or constraints.

In Slovenia, the post-2010 period was marked by economic recession. As elsewhere in Europe, this period in Slovenia was characterised by a high unemployment rate and an 'exodus', especially of young people. In the period between 2011 and 2018, emigration increased steadily and consisted mainly of secondary school graduates in the 20-24 age group and post-secondary and higher education graduates in the 25-29 group (SORS, 2021). Thus, in 2017 – when emigration was most intense – almost 3,000 people emigrated from Slovenia, 56% of whom had tertiary education (ibid.).

Figure 2.12:

Dynamics of emigration of young people by age groups and education.



Source: SSO, 2021.

To stop this trend, which is dangerous for the economy, the state has also created a reintegration programme. One of the most successful is the so-called reintegration programme – the Aleš Debeljak Programme, implemented by the Public Agency for Research (ARRS) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MESS), which aims to bring back to Slovenia as many as possible of the young researchers who are working abroad or have recently completed their doctoral studies there.

2.4.2 PROMOTION OF LEARNING MOBILITY

Research on (international) learning mobility is a constant feature of the European education landscape. The European Education Area (EEA) report and Flash Eurobarometer 466 found that 90% of young Europeans want and consider experiences abroad to be important for them (European Commission, 2018: 5). In line with this, the European Union has also launched Erasmus+, a programme largely dedicated to learning mobility for young people. Erasmus was originally launched in 1987 as a mobility programme for higher education students. The fact that learning mobility is a permanent feature of the EU is reflected in the establishment of networks of young people from different parts of Europe, the virtual exchanges in Erasmus+, and the trend towards increased participation in cross-border learning mobility under Erasmus+ programmes. The mobility of pupils, students, and young people in Slovenia is therefore mainly facilitated by the European Erasmus+ programme, coordinated and implemented by the national Erasmus+ agencies CMEPIUS and MOVIT. The programme framework coordinates pupils and students in the various activities of the sub-programme, including the Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci initiatives. The European Erasmus+ programme offers financial support for non-formal learning and mobility for young people (13 to 30 years), contributing to the objectives of European cooperation in the youth field. The Erasmus+ programme has recently added the European Solidarity Corps as an important instrument, under the supervision of MOVIT.

Increasing young people's international mobility is also one of the objectives of the Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022. In addition to supporting other programmes, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport aims to encourage Slovenian students to be mobile by implementing the project Mobility of Students from Socially Weaker Backgrounds (see Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022). At the same time, Slovenia is a founding member of the CEEPUS programme, which enables equal partnerships between Member States and their university networks, and whose scholarships contribute to the EU's objective of increasing mobility. For young people seeking to benefit from cross-border mobility opportunities in formal education, there are also the Ad Futura international mobility programmes (Ad Futura Education Scholarships) and the Learning Network for transnational mobility actions for disadvantaged young people and young adults (TLN Mobility). In the context of non-formal learning, there are no incentives or actions by top-level bodies to promote cross-border mobility. However, the Implementation Plan of the Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022 for 2016 and 2017 in the field of youth work has as a specific objective to promote and strengthen the involvement in international youth work and learning mobility in youth work. Two actions are available to achieve this objective: Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (Mobility projects for young people and young workers) and Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices). Both actions are funded by Erasmus+.

According to the Slovenian Statistical Office (2014), which also carried out a pilot project on youth learning mobility as part of its regular labour force survey, 22% of people aged 18-34 were learning mobile (formal or informal) in 2014. As expected, the majority (86%) of these had short-term learning mobility; in fact, around 10% of respondents stated that they had been on a short-term study exchange or internship abroad as part of their home studies (so-called credit mobility), and close to 2% had followed a full study programme abroad. It should be stressed that learning mobility within the formal education system is usually for tertiary students and rarely for secondary students. On the other hand, the

Eurostat survey also showed that 18% of those surveyed had a mobility experience outside formal education.

The Eurostudent VI survey, conducted by the national agency CMEPIUS, the Student Organisation of Slovenia and the Educational Research Institute between 2016 and 2018, found that less than one in ten (7.9%) of the participating students in Slovenia had experience of studying abroad, which is lower than the SURS survey and higher than the Youth 2010 survey. On the other hand, Eurostudent survey identified an increase in the proportion of students planning to participate in mobility programmes in the future, with 31.5% planning to do so. Among those who had already studied abroad, this survey also found that education abroad had taken place for up to 7 days and between one week and one month.

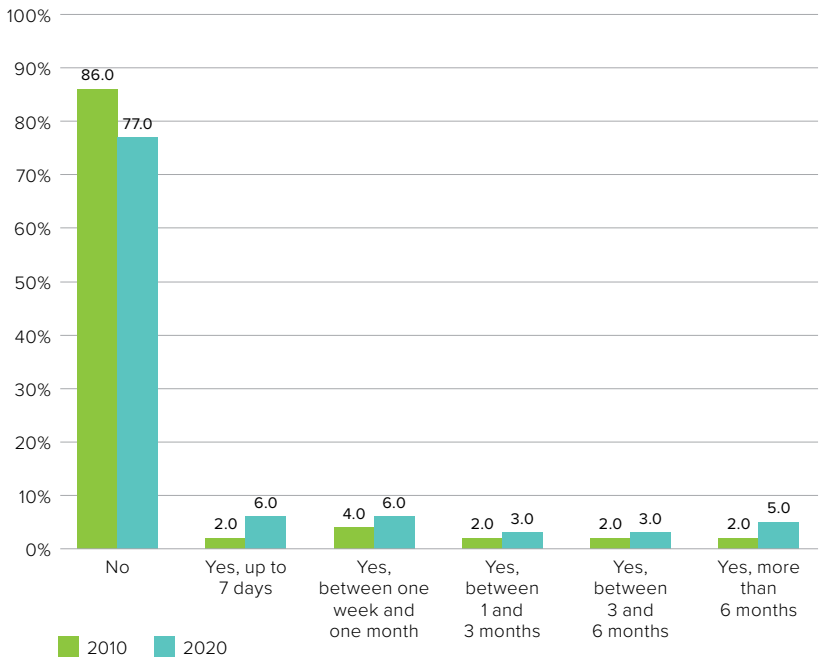
2.4.3 MOBILITY PATTERNS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people's learning mobility, especially in formal education, is still relatively low. Only 23% of young people say they have already completed part of their education abroad. This is an increase of around 9% compared to Youth 2010, when just under 14% of young people did so. Looking in more detail, the most common forms of mobility are short-term mobility of up to one week, and of one week to one month in total (around a quarter of both, and 51% of all mobility undertaken). Mobility lasting at least one semester or more accounts for 33% of all mobility. The proportions have not changed much compared to Youth 2010, as short-term mobility was again the predominant type of mobility.

Figure 2.13:

Joint education abroad, 2020.

Up to now, have you completed part of your education abroad?



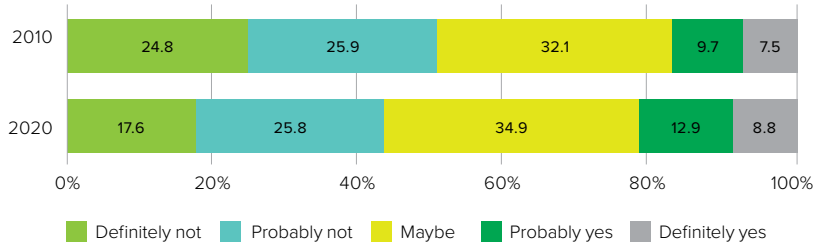
Source: Mladina 2020.

In the introduction, the Flash Eurobarometer data mentioned that nine out of ten Europeans want experience abroad. When it comes to education abroad, more than half of the surveyed young people answered that they would like to complete part of their education abroad possibly, probably, or definitely in the future (54.1%). Compared to Youth 2010, this is a 7.3% increase, which is an important shift towards increasing awareness about the importance of learning mobility. On the other hand, the share of those who will definitely (8.8%) and probably (12.9%) engage in education abroad is still relatively low compared to the goals of internationalization strategies.

Figure 2.14:

Desire to study abroad in the future.

Do you intend to complete part of your education abroad in the future?



Source: Mladina 2020.

According to the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2018 (released in January 2020), and 2018, out of the 2189 Slovenian students who participated in study mobility programmes, the largest number of Slovenian students taking part in exchanges did so in Germany (327), Austria, (238) and the Czech Republic (147).

The young people who took part in the qualitative part of the study also recognised the importance of mobility and expressed either a desire to participate in international learning mobility or bitterness at not having taken advantage of this opportunity, whether they described mobility as an extremely positive experience.

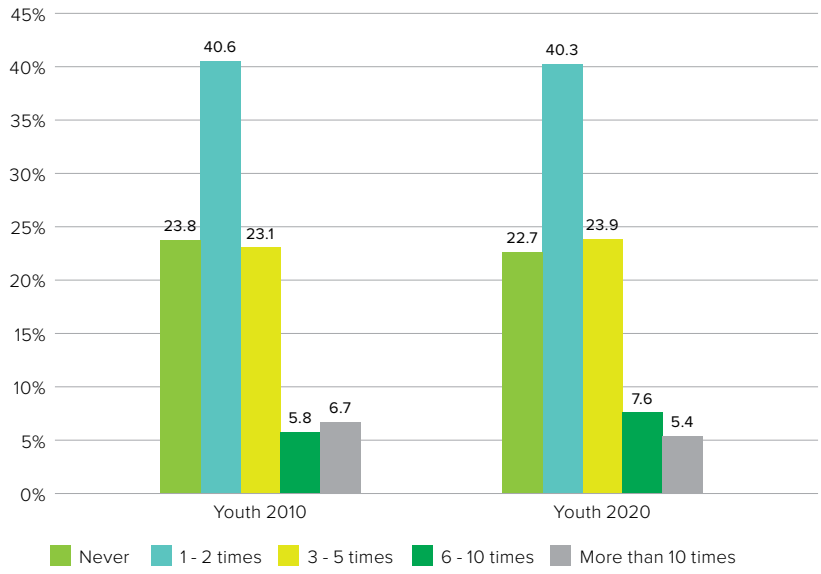
> *"I haven't done (an Erasmus exchange) yet, but I plan to in the future. I am just getting ready to leave, I am supposed to go to Lithuania next semester for an exchange. I thought about it at the first stage, but then I didn't go."*
>
> (Aleš, 25, student of Sustainable Development Management)

> *"I didn't go. This is my biggest mistake during my studies. I kind of decided to go in the second part, so in the third or fourth year, and then what happened was that I got an opportunity to get a job afterwards (here) and I decided to do that and then I did not (have the opportunity) anymore. But definitely that's the biggest mistake I made."*
>
> (Nejc, 27, young politician)

Otherwise, young people travelled abroad relatively frequently in 2019, excluding holidays on the Croatian coast and shopping near national borders. The largest share of respondents travelled abroad once or twice (40%), while another 23% travelled three to five times. Just under a quarter had not travelled abroad in the year, and a good tenth had travelled six or more times.

Figure 2.15:

How many times did you travel abroad in 2019?



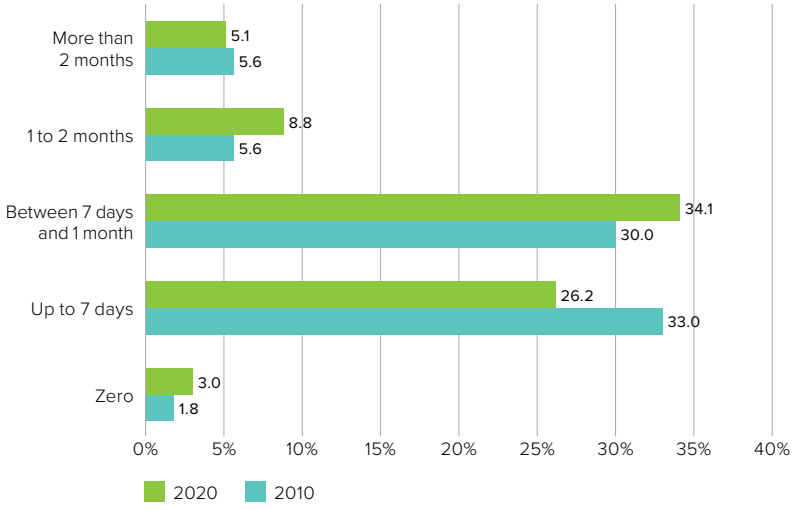
Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: The 2010 Youth Survey asked the question "How many times have you travelled abroad in the last 12 months?" Due to the current situation, it was decided to ask respondents about trips/activities in 2019.

Looking at the length of time spent abroad, 33% of young people spent up to 7 days abroad. Slightly fewer (30%) stayed between 7 days and a month, while only around 10% stayed longer than a month. Compared to Youth 2010, the results are very similar, with the average visit lasting slightly longer in 2010 (Figure 9.5).

Figure 2.16:

Length of stay abroad in 2019.



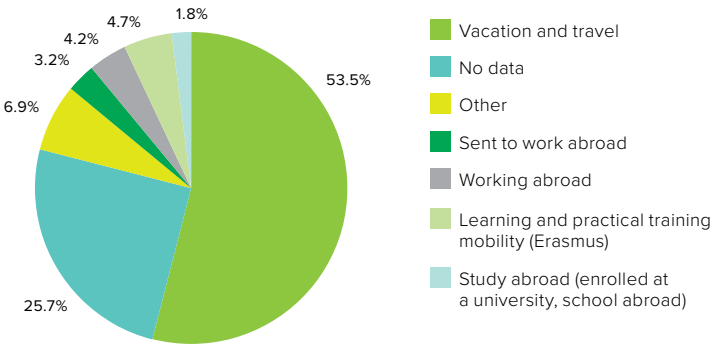
Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: The 2010 Youth Survey asked the question "How many times have you travelled abroad in the last 12 months?" Due to the current situation, it was decided to ask respondents about trips/activities in 2019.

Among the main reasons for staying abroad, holidays and travelling dominate. This was the reason given by just over half of the respondents (53.5%). Study mobility and mobility for practical training (Erasmus+, etc.) accounted for only 4.7% of respondents, while studying abroad accounted for a further 1.8%. Working abroad and secondments abroad were cited by a total of 7.4% of young people.

Figure 2.17:

Young people's reasons for living abroad.



Source: ????

When it comes to the more permanent aspects of mobility, which are more salient in terms of the brain drain and the global battle for talent mentioned earlier, we can see that the situation has indeed changed a lot in ten years. A decade of crises has changed the level of young people's willingness to move to another European country, with 73.5% of young people willing to move in 2020, compared to only 55.9% in 2010, or a 17.6% increase in willingness to move to another European country. The fact that proximity to what is likely to be a more favourable labour market is a key factor in this increase can be seen by looking at young people's willingness to move to another continent. In this case, just under half (48.7%) would be willing to do so.

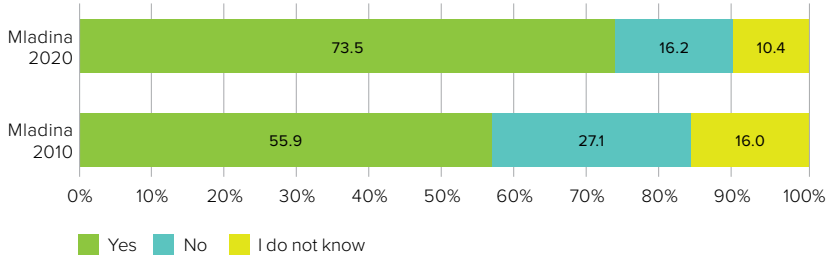
When it comes to the more permanent aspects of mobility, which are more salient in terms of the brain drain and the global battle for talent mentioned earlier, we can see that the situation has indeed changed a lot in ten years. A decade of crises has changed the level of young people's willingness to move to another European country, with 73.5% of young people willing to move in 2020, compared to only 55.9% in 2010.

The overall willingness of young people to move to another continent has also increased significantly compared to Youth 2010 survey (by 13.2%). The fact that this is mainly due to an increase in young people's international mobility is confirmed by their willingness to move to another place within the same country, where the proportion of those who would be willing to do so increased from 67.6% to 73%, i.e., by only 5.4%. However, it should be borne in mind that the willingness to move within the same country was already at a relatively high level in 2010. With a relatively higher increase in the willingness to move to another European country, the willingness to move within Europe is thus on a par with the willingness to move within Europe in 2020.

In this context, it is worth underlining the fact that the mass exodus of young people – especially the most educated, to which we bore witness until 2017 – is gradually slowing down. However, it will take more time for this to start to be reflected in a willingness to move abroad, as well as a positive trend in some other indicators of young people's well-being on the labour market and in society at large.

Figure 2.18:

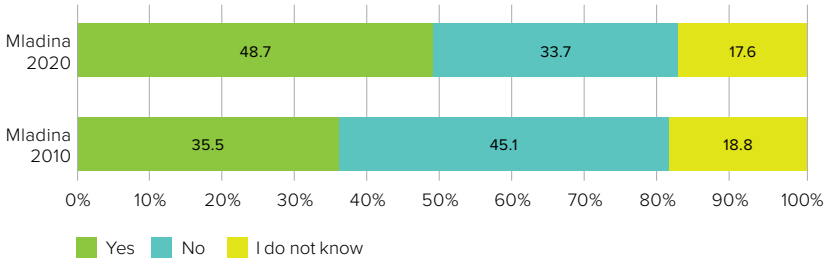
Willingness to move to another European country.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Figure 2.19:

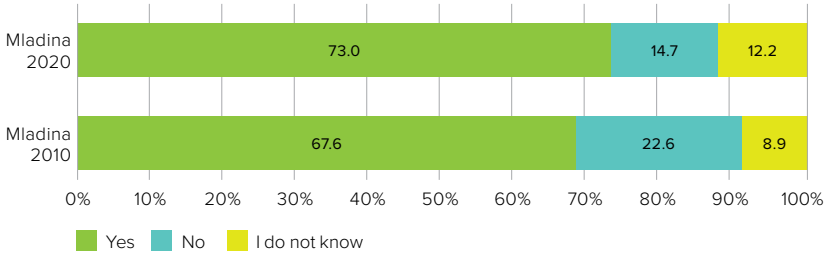
Willingness to move to another continent between 2010 and 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Figure 2.20:

Willingness to move to another place in own country between 2010 and 2020.

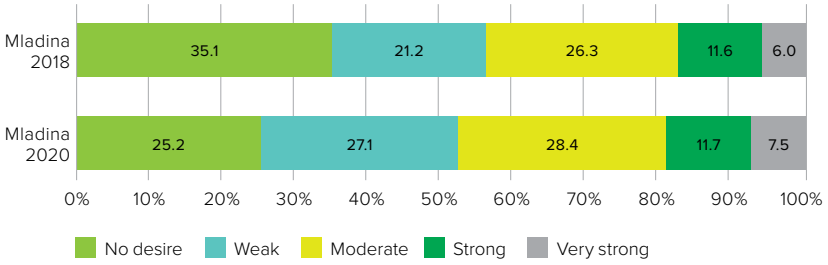


Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

In line with the above, the desire to leave Slovenia for more than six months has been increasing over the years. While 58% of young people in 2013 expressed at least some desire to move out (see Flere et al., 2014), this figure rises to 65% in 2018 (see Lavrič et al., 2019) and to 75% in 2020. The steady increase, although no longer coinciding with emigration trends, is thus not surprising for the time being, as the number of people with no desire to emigrate abroad fell drastically from 35.1% to 25.2% between 2018 and 2020, when a visible decline in youth emigration had already started to be recorded.

Figure 2.21:

Desire to leave Slovenia for more than six months.



Sources: Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/2019, Mladina 2020.

2.5 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above analyses, the following key findings can be drawn on the topic of education and training:

1. Slovenia has the highest share of young people enrolled in tertiary education among the EU-28.
2. The performance of Slovenian pupils in international surveys measuring educational achievement in different content areas and at different levels of the education system shows a high level of quality compared to the OECD average. Data from the PISA 2018 survey show that Slovenian pupils scored statistically significantly higher than the OECD average in reading, science, and mathematics literacy scales.
3. Young people's feelings about school are on average very positive and did not change much between 2010 and 2020, but the share of young people for whom the school experience was very positive increased in 2020.
4. Most young people – both in 2010 and 2020 – do not perceive their parents as very demanding. A comparison of young people's answers between 2010 and 2020 shows slightly higher expectations of parents in 2020.
5. Non-formal education is an increasingly important way of acquiring new skills and competences, with participation in various courses, training, and workshops on the rise. The trend in participation in non-formal education programmes points to the growing importance of lifelong learning.
6. Informal learning is also becoming increasingly important, but with age differences. Younger people consider their family, peers, or colleagues to be important sources of informal learning, while older people in particular use printed sources (e.g., books, magazines, etc.) as their main source.

7. The influence of factors such as parental education, upbringing style, etc. on education points to the importance of young people's socio-economic background or home environment in general and, consequently, to the role of public schooling in ensuring equal educational opportunities.

8. Young people's experience with learning mobility is still relatively uncommon, with only 23% of young people saying they have already completed part of their education abroad. On the other hand, there has been a 9% increase in this indicator compared to Youth 2010, which represents a significant shift towards strengthening learning mobility.

9. The predominant type of learning mobility is short-term (51%). On the other hand, 7.7% of young people have had a part of their education abroad lasting more than three months.

10. More than half of the young people surveyed would like to participate in education abroad possibly, probably, or definitely in the future (54.1%). This is an increase of 7.3% compared to Youth 2010, which is a significant shift towards a growing awareness of the importance of learning mobility.

11. Just under two-thirds of trips abroad last up to one month, with holidays and travelling being the main reasons for going abroad (53.5%).

12. The level of young people's willingness to move to another European country and to move to another continent has increased significantly. The willingness to move to another municipality within the same country has also increased to a lesser extent.

13. The willingness to move out of Slovenia for more than six months is increasing and is already at 75% in 2020. The biggest increase is recorded in the period when the trend of young people moving abroad started to fall sharply (from 2018 to 2020).

From these findings, the following recommendations can be drawn for the implementation of youth policy:

- Given the success of Slovenian adolescents in the process of education and training – as confirmed by international comparative research in this field – it would make sense to strengthen the positive role of education and training among young people and in society in general. At the same time, it would be necessary – especially in light of the experience with distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic – to draw attention to the role and importance of public education in Slovenia, both in ensuring equal educational opportunities and in the importance of formal education as a key institution of secondary socialisation.
- The provision of a safe and supportive learning environment for young people should be strengthened, as this improves their chances of success (both in the education process and later in the working environment). At the same time, this has an important or positive multiplier effect on society at large.
- Learning mobility should continue to be systematically promoted at all levels of education, both formal and non-formal. Learning mobility should be targeted at the most vulnerable groups of young people, who are often excluded from the experience of living abroad.
- There is an urgent need to address the radical change in young people's willingness to go abroad, towards promoting learning mobility supported by strong reintegration programmes.

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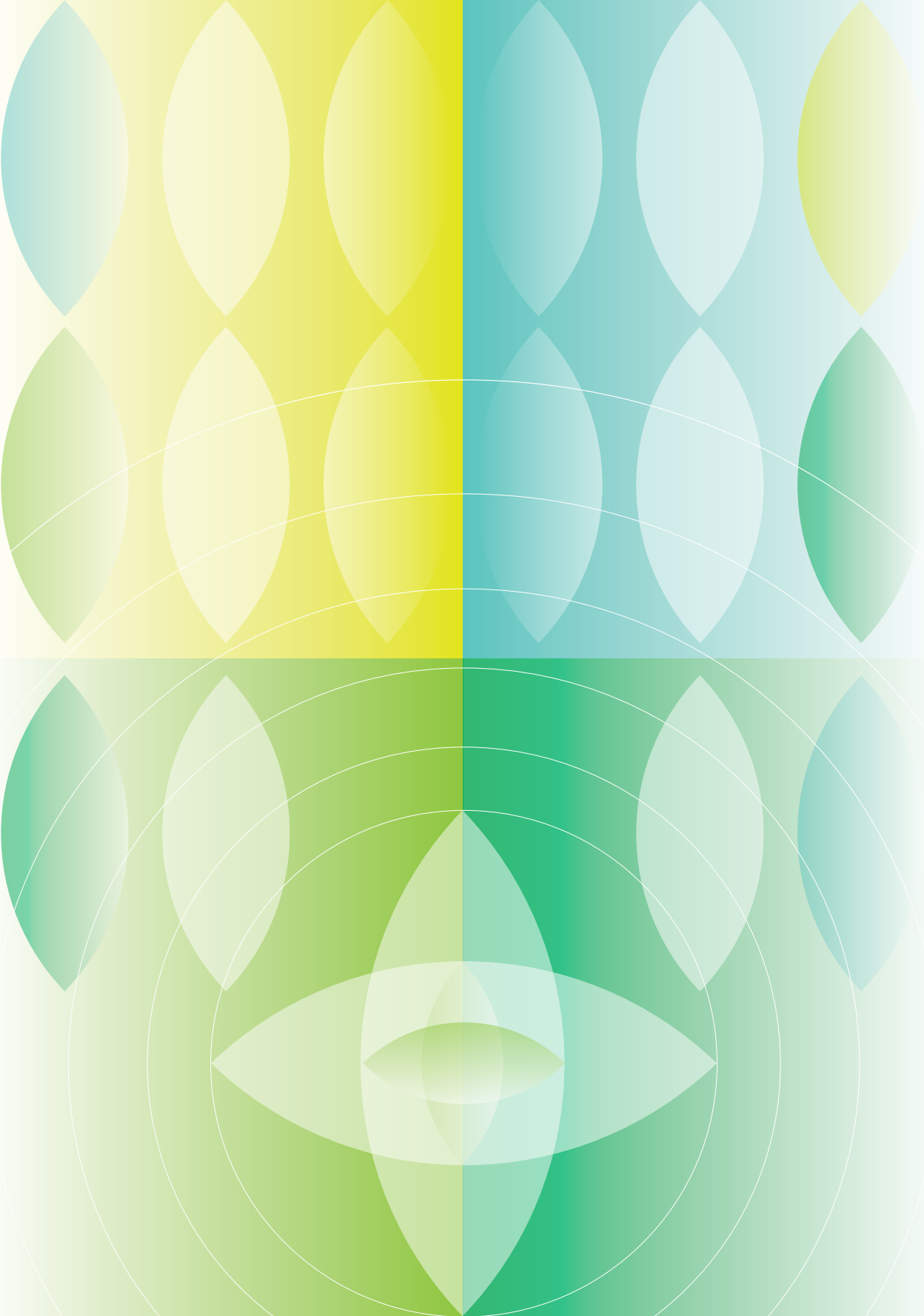
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RUDI KLANJŠEK, TOMAŽ DEŽELAN AND NINA VOMBERGAR

3. EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

3.1 LABOUR MARKET AND YOUNG PEOPLE

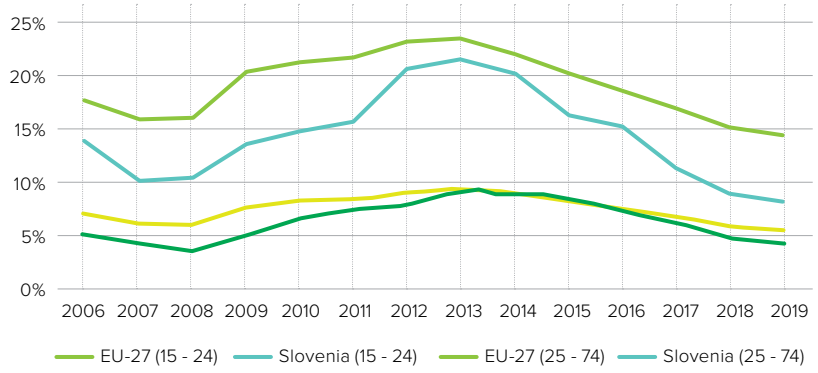
Europe in general and Slovenia in particular, in a time of global competition, automation, unfavourable demographic processes, and the global epidemic of the Covid-19 virus, are confronted with forces that are significantly reshaping the labour market and the nature of work itself. Traditional forms of permanent employment are increasingly being replaced by less secure, flexible forms (Grimshaw et al., 2016; Kalleberg, 2011; Klanjšek, 2018; Mortimer and Moen, 2016; Standing, 2014), new technologies are obviating old jobs and changing the nature of work (Ford, 2016; Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2016), and new jobs require on average new skills and more knowledge than previously held. That last point partly explains why the age of people's first employment is rising and why the transition itself is taking longer and is more precarious (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001; Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Vertot, 2009).

The Covid-19 epidemic adds to this uncertainty, firstly because restrictive measures are putting many jobs at risk, and secondly because of the adjustments that are upending the traditional concept of work or workplace. The aspect of social isolation due to work from home is particularly noteworthy here because it further reinforces the process of labour market fragmentation, which is, alongside deinstitutionalisation (i.e., deregulation), one of the important factors behind the declining bargaining power of labour (Bental and Demougin, 2010; Guschanski and Ozlem, 2020). Furthermore, studies show that working from home increases workload and makes it more difficult to 'disconnect' from work (Felstead and Henseke, 2017), while reinforcing feelings of loneliness and poor mental health (Killgore et al., 2020).

The trends and changes described above affect young people (Klanjšek and Kobše, 2019), whose relatively weaker position in the labour market has been a fact since the recession of the early 1980s in the US and Western Europe (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007: 36-37). Some authors (cf. Ignjatović and Trbanc, 2009) refer to this as the 'age segregation of the labour market', which, as can be seen from Figure 1, is also still part of the Slovenian labour market. More specifically, despite the encouraging trends of the last few years, which have brought the survey unemployment rate among young people down to a record low (2019: 8.1%), it is still significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate (4.2%). The current situation suggests that official unemployment figures for 2020 are likely to be significantly worse than they were for 2019.

Figure 3.1:

Unemployment rate by age group (15-25 and 25-74) and country (EU-27 and Slovenia) 2006-2019.



Source: Eurostat – Population and social conditions/Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey).

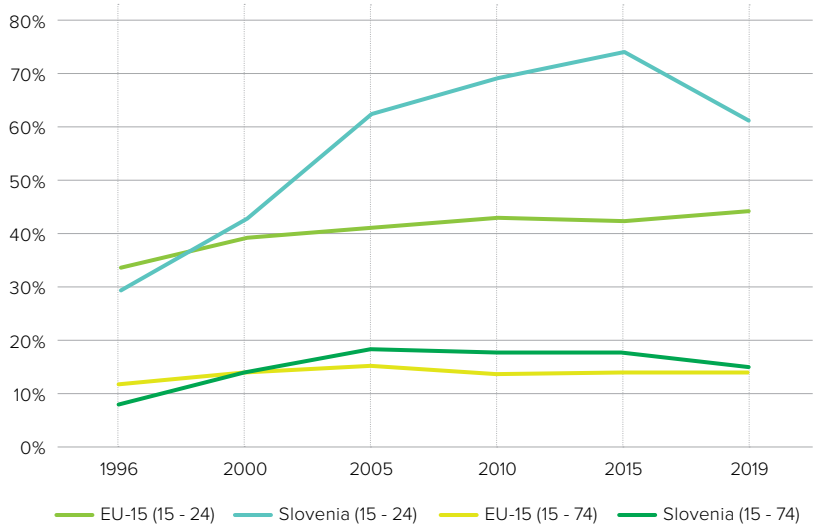
Figure 3.1 also shows the cyclical nature of the labour market, in which young people are hit relatively harder by economic crises (they also find jobs more quickly during economic recoveries; Makeham, 1980; O'Higgins, 2001), and that youth unemployment in Slovenia has consistently been below the European (EU-27) average.

In 2018-2020, survey unemployment among young people (15-24) in Slovenia reached its lowest level in 25 years (2019: 8.1%), but is still significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate (4.2%). This reflects the age segmentation of the labour market.

The relatively less favourable position of young people in the market can also be inferred from the data on the forms of work themselves. Not only are young people outperforming in terms of atypical jobs, but it can be argued that part of the improvement in the post-financial crisis period 2008/2009 is linked to the increase in non-standard/atypical jobs (e.g. part-time, temporary, shift work, Sunday work, agency work), which are becoming an increasingly common form of work. For example, the share of temporary (i.e. fixed-term) employment in Slovenia reached a record high of 75.5% in 2015. And while it is encouraging that this share has fallen to 62% in 2019, this is still twice as high as in 1996, when the first comparable measurement was made (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2:

Share of temporary workers, EU-15 and Slovenia, by age group and selected years.



Source: EUROSTAT – Population and social conditions/Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey).

Moreover, although this age segregation of the labour market is something that is common in most EU countries, Slovenia is consistently at the top of the EU in its prevalence of temporary jobs among young people (despite a recent decline), with a 62% share (the rate is even higher for young women: 74.3%; young men: 52%).

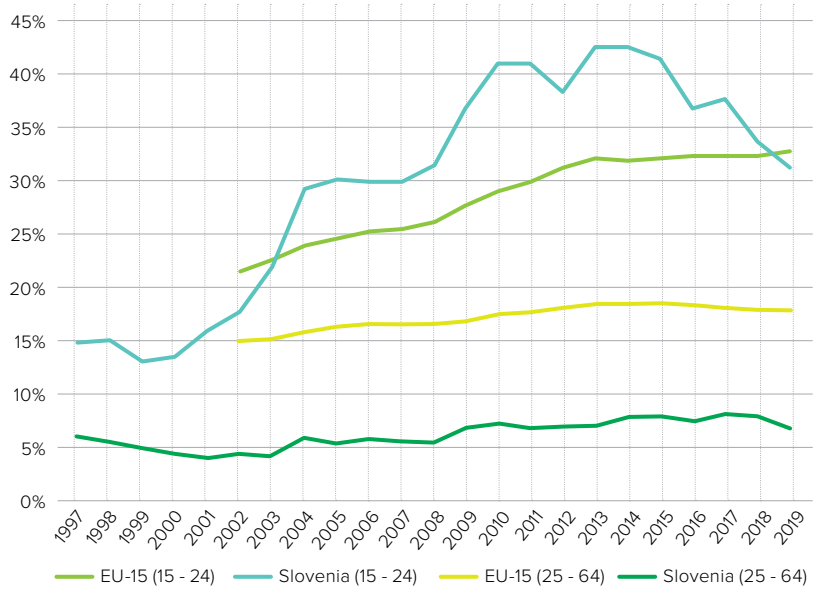
Although youth unemployment in Slovenia has consistently been below the EU average, Slovenia has the highest prevalence of temporary employment among young people in the EU.

In the longer term, there is also an upward trend in the share of young people with part-time contracts – the share of part-time contracts among young people increased by around 240% between 1999 and 2014. The trend reversed after 2015, practically matching the otherwise rising EU-15 average (Figure 3.3).

This trend reversal is due to measures taken in 2014 and 2015, which brought student work (as one of the most precarious forms of work) closer to other forms of work (in terms of rights and obligations arising from work). In fact, the majority of young people in such employment (2019: 81.2%) are invariably those who cite 'participation in an apprenticeship or training' as the main reason for such employment (i.e. 'workers on student assignment').

Figure 3.3:

Share of part-time employees (%) (of total employees), EU and Slovenia, by age group and selected years.



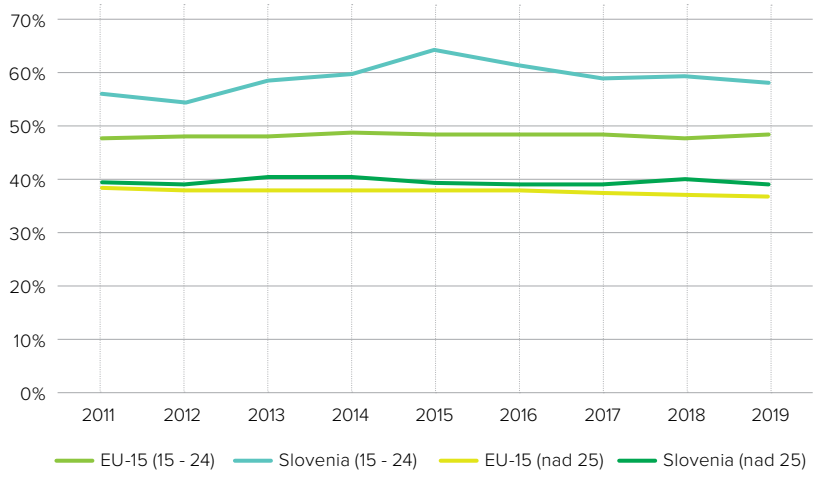
Source: EUROSTAT – Population and social conditions/Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey)

A slightly different indicator of age segregation and labour market flexibility is work in "atypical working time" (working during weekends, at night, outside working hours). As shown in the Figure below, young people in Slovenia and in the most developed EU member states are more likely to work outside "regular hours", with the difference between the

two age groups being larger in Slovenia than in the EU-15. Slovenian young people are also more atypical than their European counterparts in this respect – while half of European young people work atypical hours, almost 60% of Slovenian young people do so (which slightly decreased from a peak of 64% in 2015).

Figure 3.4:

Share of employees working atypical hours (shift work, evening work, work on Saturdays and Sundays) among all employees, EU and Slovenia, by age group and selected years.



Source: EUROSTAT – Population and social conditions/Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey).

Based on the data presented, it can be concluded that the labour market in Slovenia is above average flexible, especially for the young population, but that there has been a certain decrease in this flexibility since 2015, in terms of a relative decrease in fixed-term, part-time, and "atypical time" work.

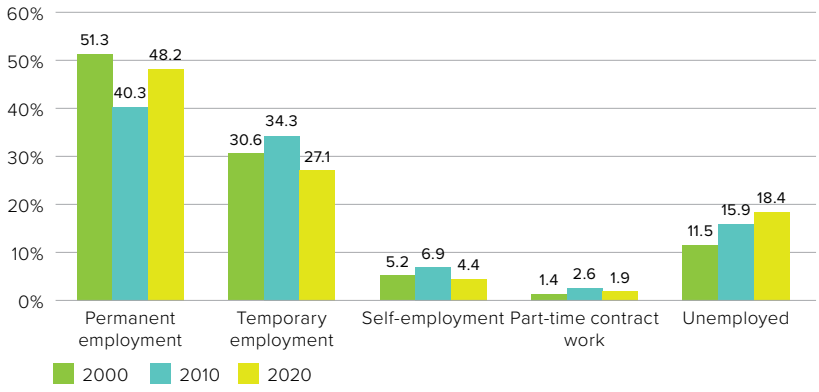
Young people continue to participate in the labour market mainly through flexible forms of employment, which include part-time and atypical jobs in addition to temporary employment. Since 2015, the share of young people in such forms of employment has decreased significantly. However, Slovenia remains well above the European average in its share of young people in temporary employment and the share of young people working atypical hours.

The age segmentation of the labour market in terms of greater flexibility for young people is linked to lower job stability, which in turn affects young people's ability to make "full economic and social independence" (Ignjatović and Trbanc, 2009: 40), and to make important life choices, including family formation (IMAD, 2008: 42). Temporary employment also increases the risk of poverty (IMAD, 2010: 138).

In addition to the above-mentioned analysis of the labour market situation in Slovenia, something else bears mentioning as well; the improvement in the labour market situation is much less distinct when taking into account the data obtained in the framework of the national youth studies. More specifically, if young people who are enrolled in education are excluded, the results of the analyses based on data from the Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, and Mladina 2020 surveys show that the percentage of those who claim to be unemployed is not only much higher than the official statistics (between 18.4% and 21.5%), but that it is still slightly higher than the one that was measured in the immediate aftermath of the 2008/2009 financial crisis (when the unemployment rate measured in this way was between 15.9% and 17.5%), and noticeably higher than the one measured in 2000 (unemployment rate measured between 11.5% and 11.8%). In Figures 4.5 and 4.6, we show the measured unemployment rate in two contexts in terms of young people's labour market participation. As the answers provided for the two related survey questions were largely different, the percentages for the individual, otherwise comparable categories also differ slightly. However, these variations are so small that they do not affect the main research findings in any way.

Figure 3.5:

Employment status of young people in employment in terms of fixed and permanent employment, and related categories (15-29 years old), 2000-2020.

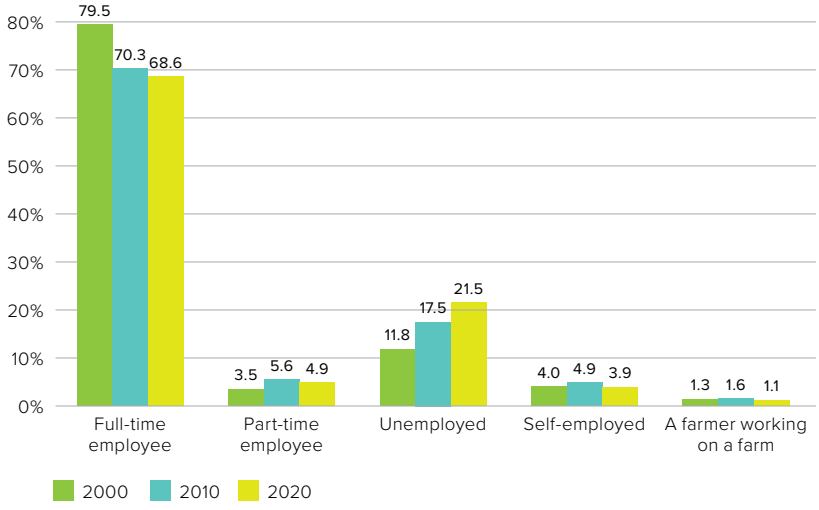


Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: Only those not in the education process are included.

Figure 3.6:

Employment status of young people in employment in terms of full-time, part-time employment, and related categories (15-29 years old), 2000-2020.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

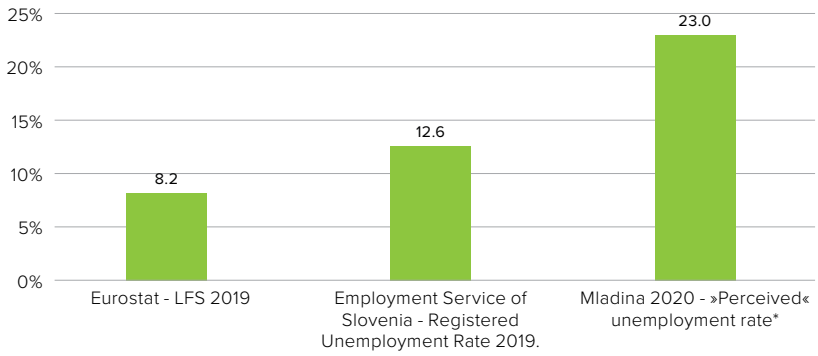
Note: Only those not in the education process are included.

The data show some improvement in terms of the structure of the workforce itself, with a slight increase in the share of permanent employees, on account of a decline in precarious employment situations. This is in line with the trends shown above, which show that there has been a decline in temporary and part-time employment since 2015.

A look at the identified shares of unemployed young people provides interesting comparisons. If we restrict ourselves to the 15-24 age group, we can compare our data on 'perceived unemployment' with official data on survey and registered unemployment. It turns out that the unemployment rate based on our indicator of the respondent's self-definition as unemployed is significantly higher compared to both official unemployment rate indicators (Figure 3.7). These findings suggest the existence of so-called 'invisible unemployment' (Walden, 2018).

Figure 3.7:

Youth unemployment rate (%), 15-24 years old, 2019/2020, according to various methodologies.



Sources: Employment Service of Slovenia; Eurostat – Population and social conditions/Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey); Mladina 2020.

Note: The rate is calculated by dividing the number of those out of work by all those not in education or training.

Otherwise, although official data for Slovenia show a decline in youth unemployment, the self-reported unemployment rate does not follow this data and is at the same time more than 180% higher than the Labour Force Survey (LFS)-based unemployment rate.

Although official data for Slovenia show a decline in youth unemployment, the self-reported unemployment rate does not follow this data and is almost three times higher than the officially recorded unemployment rate. In this respect, the existence of so-called "invisible unemployment" is evident.

And while it is to be expected that the use of different methodological approaches leads to different results, it is nevertheless relevant to say that the LFS methodology contradicts the common understanding of unemployment, as it defines an unemployed person as someone "who has not done any work for pay (in money or goods), profit or family welfare in the week (Monday to Sunday) preceding the interview, but who has been actively looking for work in the last four weeks and is willing to be employed within two weeks. Those who have already found a job and will start working after the survey are also considered as unemployed." Registered unemployment is therefore slightly more meaningful, although it still does not take into account the fact that many unemployed people do not register at all (or simply opt out).

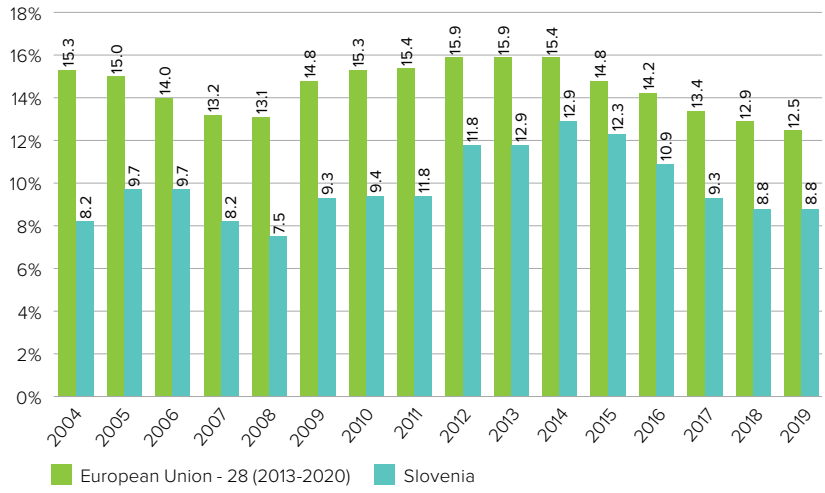
It can therefore be concluded that the unemployment rate as defined by the present survey is probably closer to "reality", as it is based on self-perception, namely those who see themselves as unemployed are unemployed. This means that only a good third of young people aged 15-24 who are not in an educational or training programme have a stable job. All the rest are either unemployed or in unstable employment. It is not insignificant that analyses show that unemployed or precarious workers tend to feel less healthy, to be less satisfied with their lives and with democracy, to be more willing to emigrate and to choose parenthood later in life (Klanjšek, 2018; see also Srnicek and Williams, 2015).

In addition to these findings, the high participation rate of young people in the education system has a significant impact on the official unemployment rate among Slovenian young people. According to Eurostat, 75.5% of the young population (15-24) in Slovenia was enrolled in formal, full-time education at the secondary and tertiary level in 2018, compared to an EU-27 average of around 64%.

Eurostat statistics confirm that Slovenia is also doing quite well in tackling early school leaving or complete inactivity of young people in education or employment. In 2019, 4.6% of young people (18-24) in Slovenia left school early, thus (almost) reaching the national target for this indicator (5%) set in the Europe 2020 strategy. Slovenia is performing similarly well in terms of the share of young people (15-29) who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET). In Slovenia, the share is around 9% (2019) and has been consistently below the EU-28 average for the last 15 years.

Figure 3.8:

Proportions of young people who are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational and training (NEET) programme.



Source: EUROSTAT – Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates – yth_empl_150).

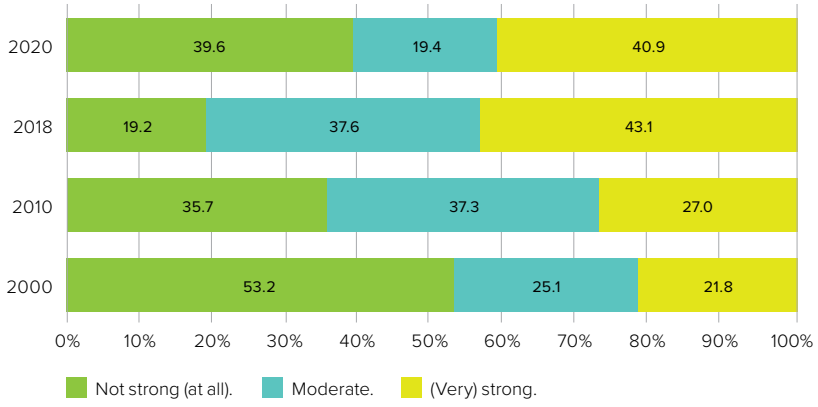
As in previous years, the share of NEETs among women was higher in 2019 (11.2%) than among men (6.6%). In the total population of NEETs, 60% want to work and 40% do not want to work.

3.2 FEAR OF UNEMPLOYMENT, ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK, AND DETERMINANTS OF JOB SEARCH AND JOB CHOICE

In the context of the relatively encouraging labour market data in 2015-2019, it is worth looking at how young people assess these trends in terms of their concerns about not being able to find a job or employment after completing their education. Indeed, past youth studies (Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010) have shown that young people are increasingly worried about their employment. For example, the proportion of young people (15-29 years) who were afraid of not finding a job increased from 22% in 2000 to 43% in 2018.

Figure 3.9:

Fear of unemployment as a perceived youth problem.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, YSEE 2018, Mladina 2020.

Data from 2020 show that concerns about unemployment have slightly decreased compared to 2018 – the share of young people who are not concerned about employment has increased significantly (from 19.2% to 39.6%), with the increase in optimism coming from those that were previously undecided. In other words, young people seem to be polarised in terms of their perception of 'winners' and 'losers' when it comes to the fear of unemployment. This reflects their relatively good understanding of the situation and changes in the labour market. While new economies/technologies are opening up unprecedented opportunities for some, competition, and insecurity are intensifying for others, who are facing an erosion of economic, social, and legal security. Fear of unemployment is higher ($p < 0.01$) among young women (54% of women report moderate to strong fear of unemployment, while "only" 29.3% of men feel alike). The Covid-19 epidemic is likely to reinforce this aspect of insecurity.

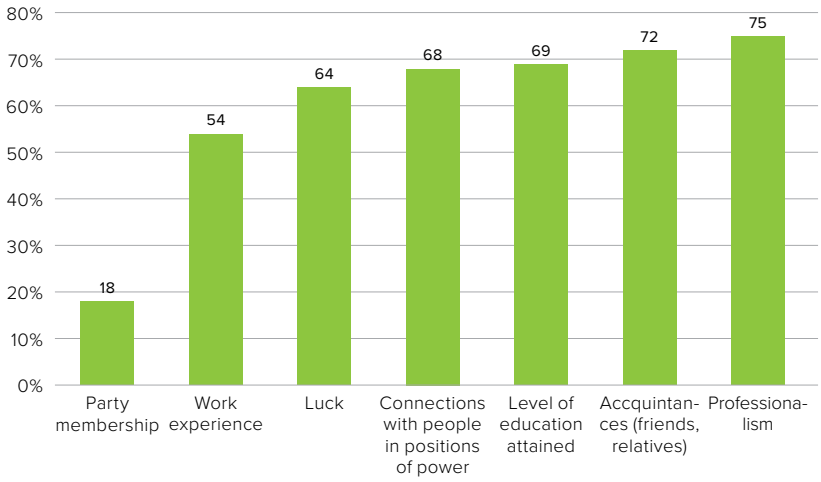
Fear of unemployment has stabilised, but is still significantly higher than in 2010, when labour market conditions were much worse. In addition, there is a peculiar polarisation, reflecting the segregation of the labour market into "winners" and "losers". Fear of unemployment is higher among young women (54% of women report a moderate to strong fear of unemployment, while "only" 29.3% of men feel the same).

The fear of some (especially women) is quite justified in light of the polarisation of the labour market and the fact that the OECD report shows that Slovenia has the second-highest share of jobs that could become fully automated among the 32 OECD member states. Moreover, the reasons for this fear are also to be found in the fact that employment is significantly tied to networks of strong and (mainly) weak connections (Granovetter, 1973). Young people are apparently well aware of the fact that these connections (and access to them) are unevenly distributed.

Figure 3.10:

Perceived importance of individual factors in finding a job.

Very Important/Important when finding a job (%)

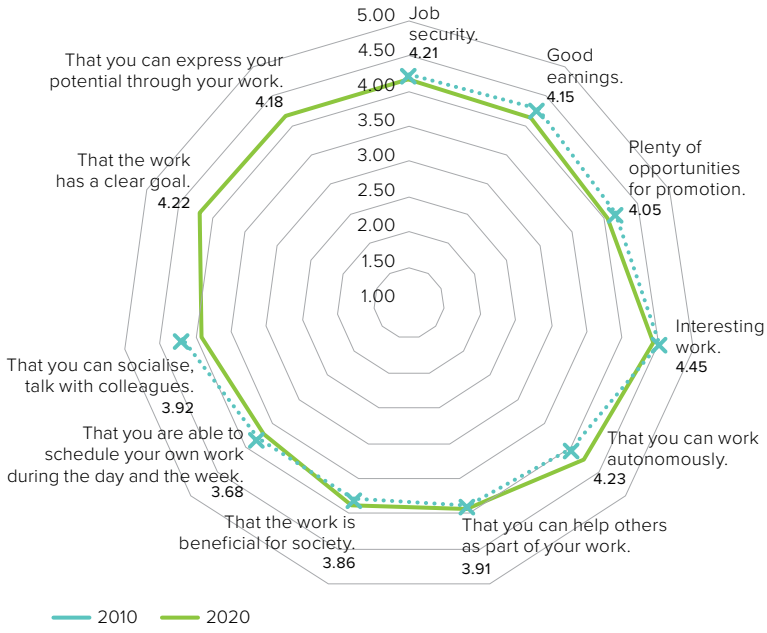


Source: YSEE 2018.

In the light of fear, insecurity, and employment factors, it seems important to look at how much job security matters to young people compared to other elements of work. The Figure below, which shows nine (2010) and eleven (2020) elements of work and employment respectively, provides an answer to this question.

Figure 3.11:

The importance of specific characteristics of work among young people.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The data show that what matters most to Slovenian young people at work is that their job is interesting, that they are autonomous, that their work has a clear goal, and that their job is secure. Comparing data from 2010 and 2020, job security has dropped from third to fourth place, but it should be pointed out that the value itself has not changed significantly (2010: 4,27, 2020: 4,21).

What matters most to Slovenian young people at work is that their job is interesting, that they are autonomous, that their work has a clear goal, and that their job is secure. In this respect, a shift can be identified (comparing to the year 2010) in the direction of a "post-materialist" value orientation among Slovenian young people.

The 'good earnings' category is slightly different. In 2010, it ranked highest with a value of 4.31, but in 2020, the importance of earnings dropped to sixth place with a value of 4.15. In this respect, a certain shift among young Slovenians towards greater 'postmaterialism' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000) can be observed, seen along the line of the value shift from 'survival to self-expression'. The qualitative data collected also support these findings. The interviews with young people point to perceptions in which employment is not only a means of survival, but also one of the keys to self-realisation and development.

> *"For me, work is the meaning of life. We spend most of our time at work, so it seems to me of utmost importance to do what makes us happy and fulfilled. If we are unhappy at work, I think it is difficult to be happy in life. In my opinion, work should never be seen as 'something necessary to make money', but as a way of life."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

> *"Yes, employment is very important. Partly for the money, partly for the promotion. For myself, if I had enough money, I would still go to work. I would get new experience and I would get promoted. You get new knowledge and you develop."*
>
> (Ahac, 15 years old, high school student, athlete and model-maker)

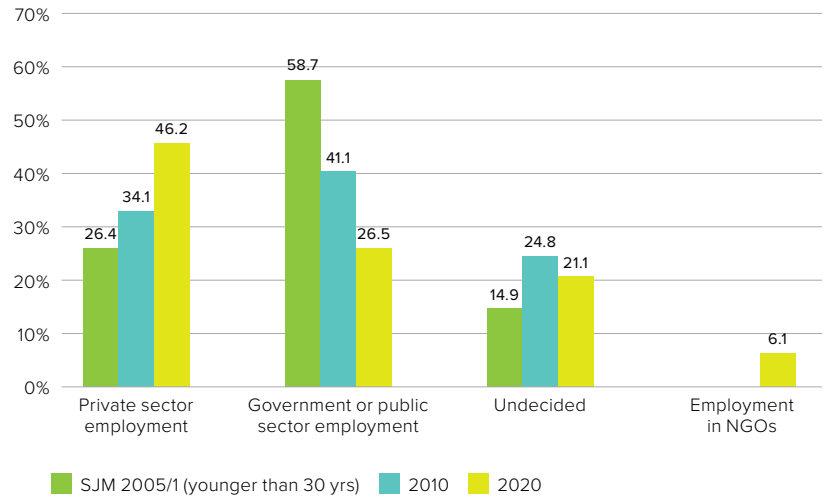
> *"Yes, having employment is important. You just have to make sure you're doing what you enjoy."*
>
> (Benjamin, 17 years old, young musician)

However, there are also gender differences in the elements of work. Job security is significantly more important to young women ($p < 0.01$) than to young men (4.41 vs. 4.03). Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$) at the level of gender also emerge in terms of the "pro-social components of work" – young women thus care more about being able to help others in their work, being able to socialise and talk to colleagues, and that their work is beneficial for society.

When it comes to attitudes and preferences towards work, there is also a trend towards a greater preference for private sector employment and a decline in the attractiveness of public sector employment.

Figure 3.12:

Young people's employment sector preferences (15-29).



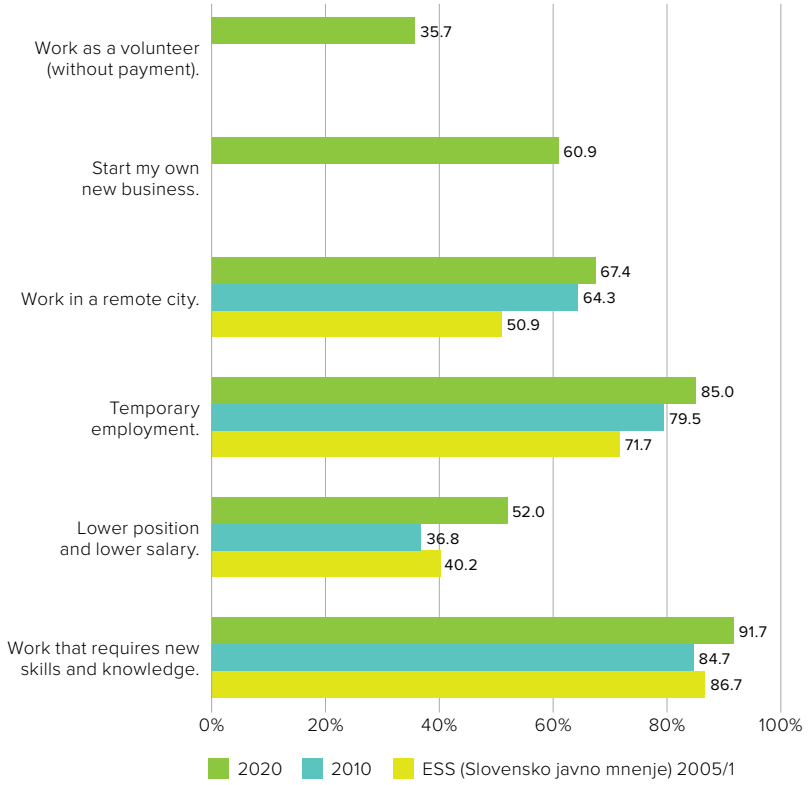
Sources: European Social Survey (Slovensko javno mnenje) 2005, Mladina 2010 and Mladina 2020.

At this point, it is also important to look at what young people would be willing to do to avoid the risk of unemployment. For this purpose, four statements were used, which have been previously used in the framework of the international Employee Attitudes Survey (Stališča o delu – Slovensko javno mnenje 2005/1) (Malnar et al., 2005).

Figure 3.13:

Young people's (15-29) willingness to take actions that could reduce their risk of unemployment.

To avoid unemployment i would be willing to accept:

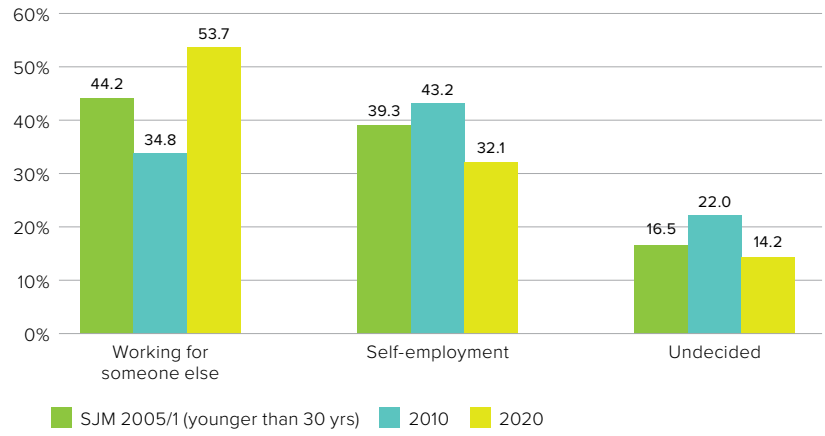


Sources: ESS 2005 (Slovensko javno mnenje 2005), Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Comparing data from 2005, 2010, and 2020, young people are now significantly more willing to be geographically mobile, to further educate themselves, to take temporary jobs and to accept lower pay in order to increase their job prospects. Moreover, one-third of them are willing to work voluntarily (without payment) and just under two-thirds of young people are willing to embark on a path of self-employment, even though the data show that only less than one-third of young people volunteer to do so (which is lower than in 2005 or 2010).

Figure 3.14:

Young people's preferences regarding place/type of employment, ESS (SJM) 2005/1, Mladina 2010 and Mladina 2020.



Sources: ESS (SJM) 2005/1, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

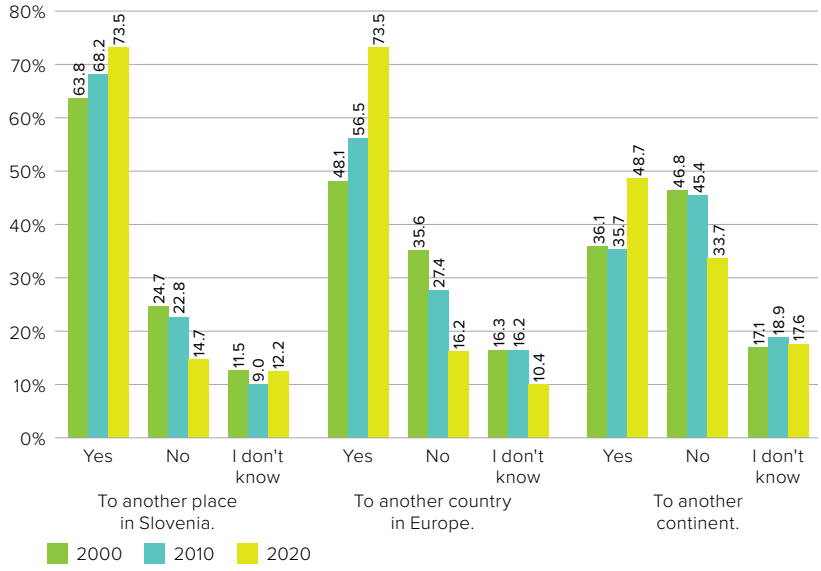
All this shows that young people are adapting quickly to a flexible labour market. Moreover, the "sacrifice for employment" measured in this way shows that the latter is positively related to education ($r = 0.12$; $p < 0.01$). More highly educated young people are therefore more willing to make various adjustments in order to improve their employment opportunities. This readiness is also significantly influenced by gender ($p < 0.05$) in terms of greater sacrifices among young women.

In light of young people's indicated awareness of the "nature of the labour market", and of the fears, preferences, and sacrifices they expressed, it was also examined what young people are willing to do to improve their creative and life chances in general.

Figure 3.15:

Young people's readiness to move.

If it offered you better creative and overall life opportunities, would you be willing to move for a longer period of time or permanently:



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

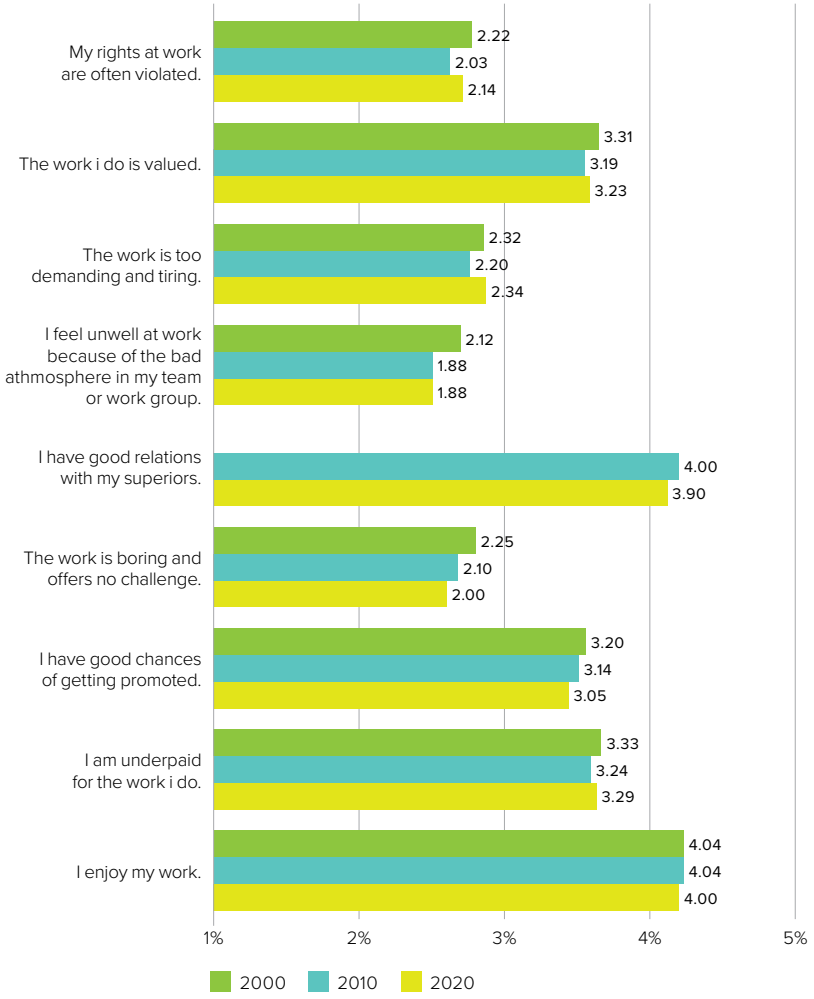
Once again, young people are showing increased (geographic) flexibility, with a particular willingness to move to another European country.

3.3 NATURE OF WORK, HOURLY WORKLOAD, AND MATCHING SKILLS OF YOUNG EMPLOYEES

Next, we asked employed young people how they would rate their work, how many hours they spend for work, and whether they are working within their professional qualifications.

Figure 3.16:

Average values of agreement with job satisfaction statements 2000–2020.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The Figure above shows that there have been no significant changes in job satisfaction over the last two decades, with the exception of a few categories. For example, in 2020 (compared to 2010), there is an increase in the share of young people who consider their work to be underpaid boring, and their working climate to be poor. The level of agreement with the statement that young people's rights are violated at work has also increased compared to 2010. Positive changes were therefore only observed in the element of valuing the work that young people do and the opportunities for promotion at work.

Those young people, who do work, report an average weekly workload of 36.4 hours per week, which is close to that of full-time employment (40 hours per week). Of particular interest here is the relatively high hourly workload reported by the unemployed (33.3 hours per week) and those still actively engaged in education (cf. the information on self-reported unemployment and involvement in education in Table 3.1). This shows that 'student work' is still 'abused', as the hourly workload of this group exceeds that of part-time workers.

Table 3.1:

Weekly hourly workload by basic status. How many hours a week on average do you work for payment?

	N	M	SD	SE	95 % IZ for M		Min	Max
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
Full-time employee.	333	42.13	12.374	0.678	40.80	43.46	6	168
Part-time employee.	22	31.69	11.759	2.504	26.48	36.89	13	50
Unemployed.	19	33.30	20.356	4.655	23.53	43.08	0	70
Self-employed.	17	38.67	12.381	3.017	32.27	45.07	2	60
Student at a two-and-a-half-year lower vocational school.	2	27.77	14.913	11.204	–265.41	320.95	16	36
Student at a three-year vocational secondary school.	7	22.78	14.198	5.242	10.12	35.44	6	40
Student at a four-year vocational or technical school.	19	27.65	20.124	4.655	17.85	37.44	0	54
Student at a general or vocational grammar school.	17	14.03	15.089	3.705	6.16	21.90	0	40
Student taking a gap year.	20	38.27	28.209	6.327	25.02	51.52	4	120
Part-time student (only students who are not in employment).	9	29.71	10.677	3.598	21.38	38.04	10	48
Full-time student (including graduates with student status).	96	25.01	15.451	1.575	21.89	28.14	0	100
A farmer working on a farm.	4	29.34	12.538	6.036	11.13	47.56	12	40
Another answer (fill in).	5	41.86	4.470	1.956	36.54	47.18	38	50
Total	**570**	**36.42**	**16.311**	**.683**	**35.08**	**37.76**	**0**	**168**

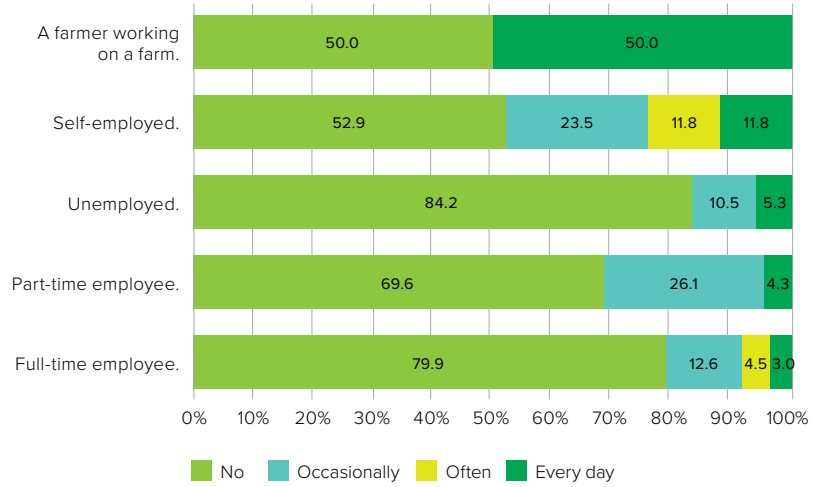
Source: Mladina 2020.

Given the current situation, which is forcing many people to work from home, we were also interested to know what proportion of employees worked from home before the Covid-19 epidemic.

Figure 3.17:

Frequency of working from home before Covid-19.

Did you work from home (before covid-19)?



Source: Mladina 2020

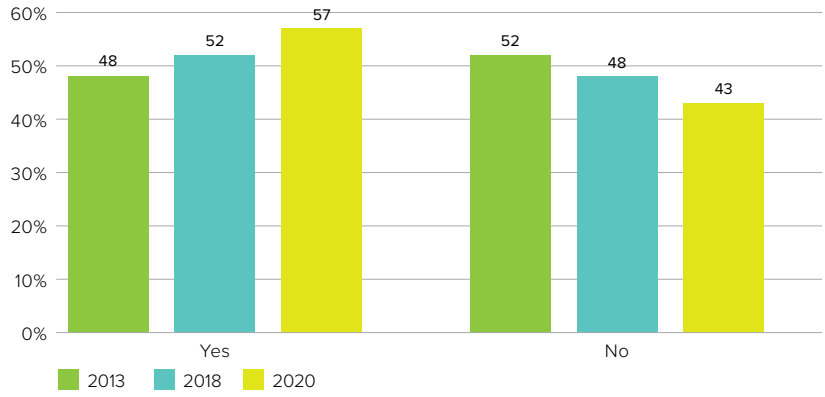
As can be observed, only a minority of young people work from home, with the exception of farmers and the self-employed, which is to be expected. However, this proportion can be expected to increase in the future, as working from home is more cost-effective for many employers, and the epidemic of Covid-19 has facilitated a mass test of teleworking logistics.

While it is relatively common for those young people who are in employment to work outside their profession, there has been some improvement in this area since 2013.

Figure 3.18:

Skills-job mismatch.

Do you currently work on a job within your profession?



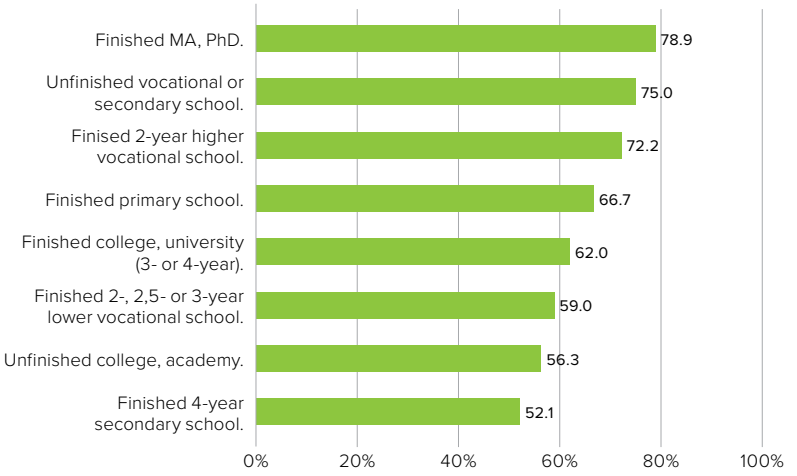
Sources: Slovenian Youth 2013, YSEE 2018, Mladina 2020.

The mismatch between skills and job requirements starts to diminish the moment young people leave the education process. More specifically, the share of those who say they are not in a job in their profession drops from 43% to 38% when looking data of only those who are no longer in education or training. Moreover, and contrary to popular belief, the largest gap between skills and job requirements is found between those who have completed secondary education and those who have not completed their studies. On the other hand, the highest proportion of people working in their profession can be found among those whose education exceeds the level of a first-level Bologna degree (79%; all percentages refer to those who are not in an educational or training programme).

Figure 3.19:

Skills-job matching of those who have completed formal education (%) and are not in education or training.

Is the work you do for payment relevant to your field of education or training (e.g. a shop technician working as a shop assistant)?



Source: Mladina 2020.

The gap between the competences acquired by young people and the demands of the workplace is narrower than in 2013. Moreover, this gap becomes less distinct when analysing only those who are no longer in formal education. In this group, the mismatch between competences and job requirements decreases markedly with higher levels of educational attainment.

Furthermore, the results show that the jobs young people undertake often require a lower level of formal education. More than a third (35%) of respondents said that their job required a lower level of formal education (only 9% said their job required a higher level of formal education). This can be attributed to the fact that many young people (students) are doing occasional work (student work), which means work that often does not require a high level of education. The greatest mismatch between the

education required and the education obtained can be found among those who have completed secondary school and are still in the education process (i.e. students; 59% of them have jobs that require lower education). This is further confirmed by the fact that the proportion of those who are not in an educational or training programme and at the same time claim that their employment to be in line with the formal level of education attained is quite similar, irrespective of the formal level of education – 67% of vocational secondary schools (2, 3 year programme), 56% for 4-year secondary school programmes, 68% of those who have not completed a first Bologna degree, 63% of those who have completed a BA degree and 67% of those who have completed a MA or more. In other words, as education or training is completed, the mismatch between the education required and the education obtained decreases.

It is also worth noting that almost a third of respondents (28%) do not consider that the knowledge and skills they have acquired at school help them in their job. Among them, there is a significant proportion (46%) of those who are working outside their vocational qualifications. By comparison, among those who work within their vocational qualifications, only 14% consider that the knowledge and skills they acquired during their education do not help them in their work.

3.4 YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Youth entrepreneurship and the term "young entrepreneur" began to take on a special meaning in Slovenia at the beginning of the new millennium. This was a consequence of the general emphasis placed on the value of private property and the general entrepreneurial initiative in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the European Union's awareness of the declining global competitiveness of European economies, and the global trend of attaching great importance to entrepreneurship. In fact, the European Commission noted in 2003 that technological change, increased globalisation, the changing structure of the workforce, the proliferation of consumer preferences, and the increasing deregulation and privatisation of economies were also forcing

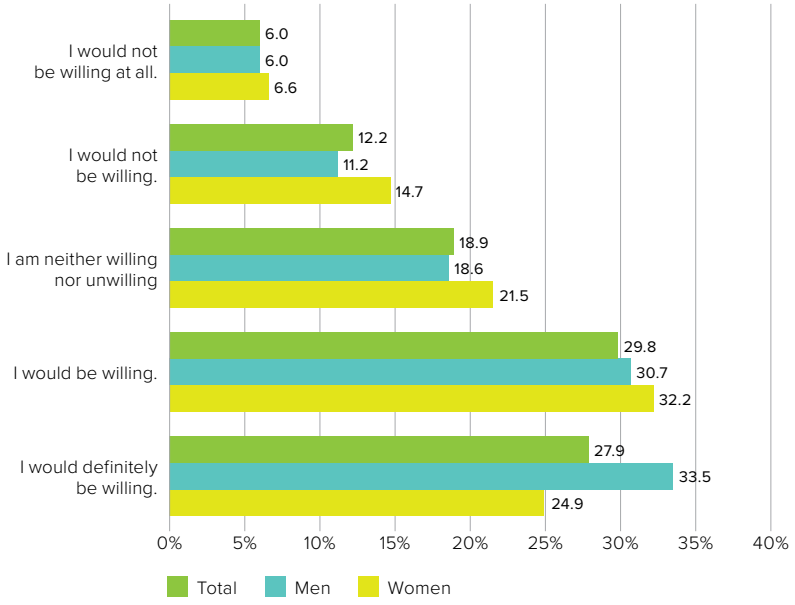
them to promote entrepreneurship in order to strengthen their innovation potential and growth (Audretsch, 2003). Together with the influences and incentives of the European Union, the clubs of the most economically advanced countries (e.g. OECD) and Western countries in general, organisations, and programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship have also started to emerge in Slovenia (for example the Venture Factory – Entrepreneurship Incubator at the University of Maribor (Tovarna podjemov – Podjetniški inkubator Univerze v Mariboru, established in 2001), the Ljubljana University Incubator (Ljubljanski podjetniški incubator, established in 2004), the University Development Center and University Incubator of Primorska (Univerzitetni razvojni center in inkubator Primorske, established in 2005) etc.). "The idea of youth entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship of a specific age group with its own behavioural and business patterns has therefore started to gain momentum" (Kozorog, 2019: 22).

At the same time, the entry of young people into the labour market in Slovenia has been uncertain and difficult for a long time, which is also recognised in the current Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022. The Employment Service of Slovenia's data show that while the youth employment situation in Slovenia is slowly improving – i.e. youth unemployment is gradually decreasing – youth unemployment in 2020 has slightly increased again and is now comparable to the percentage of unemployed young people in 2017 (ZRSZ, 2020). Overall, young people remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market, as this age group is largely exposed to precarious forms of employment, such as part-time work, occasional work and student employment, employment through different types of contract work, etc. Self-employment or creating one's own entrepreneurial path is also one of the solutions proposed for reducing youth unemployment in the National Youth Programme in its Action Plan for 2018 and 2019. This includes a number of measures to promote youth entrepreneurship, including the measure "Promoting entrepreneurship among young people" in the Implementation Plan of Active Labour Market Policy for the year 2020.

It should be noted that for young entrepreneurs at the beginning of their career, setting up their own business and becoming an independent entrepreneur often does not address the challenges related to the social and financial security of young people. Nevertheless, young people are often willing to consider such "fall-backs", even though it is clear that addressing employment challenges in this way is not the first choice on their priority list. To avoid unemployment, setting up their own businesses or SMEs still seems to be a quite viable option for young people. In fact, more than half of them would be willing to open their own business or obtain a status of autonomous entrepreneur in order to tackle their employment situation (see Figure 3.20). However, there are gender differences in willingness, with young women slightly less likely to take this step. In particular, a smaller proportion of women compared to their male peers would definitely be willing to do so.

Figure 3.20:

Willingness to set up your own business to avoid unemployment.



Source: Mladina 2020.

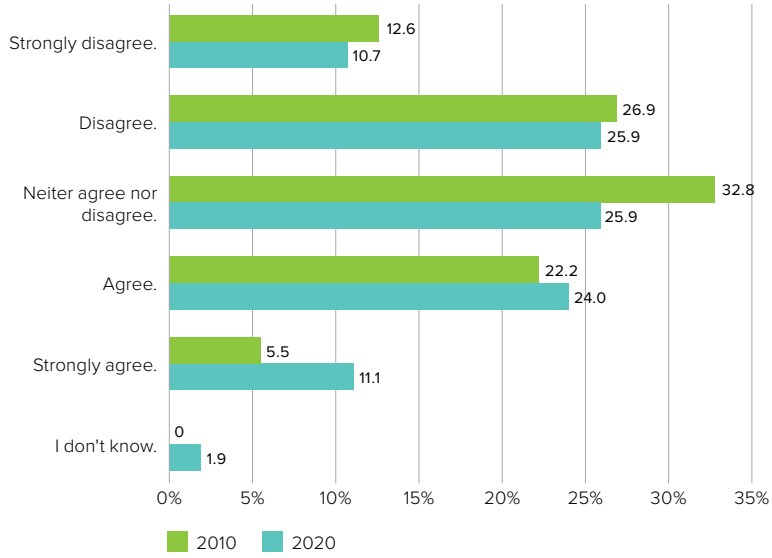
But in order to be successful entrepreneurs, young people need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed. Thus, the orientation towards creating one's own job opportunities is gradually being mainstreamed into the education system, and young people are being encouraged to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and to engage in related education and training in different ways and through different channels. Thus, one interviewee perceives the promotion of entrepreneurship in light of the prioritisation of the monetisation of knowledge over the acquisition of knowledge itself.

> *"/.../ I saw on the 'newsletter' of the University of Ljubljana... When I see what kind of workshops and events they promote, it seems to me that the focus is much less on knowledge or on science, and much more on how I can monetize my knowledge."*
>
> (Nika, 27 years old, doctoral student, currently residing in London)

The emphasis on promoting and introducing entrepreneurship can also be seen in the results of the 2010 and 2020 surveys, as young people in 2010 were much less likely than their 2020 peers to believe that their education to date had sparked their interest in becoming an entrepreneur. In 2010, a good quarter of young people (27.7%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to a good third (35.1%) in 2020 (see Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.21:

My schooling or education so far has sparked my interest in becoming an entrepreneur.

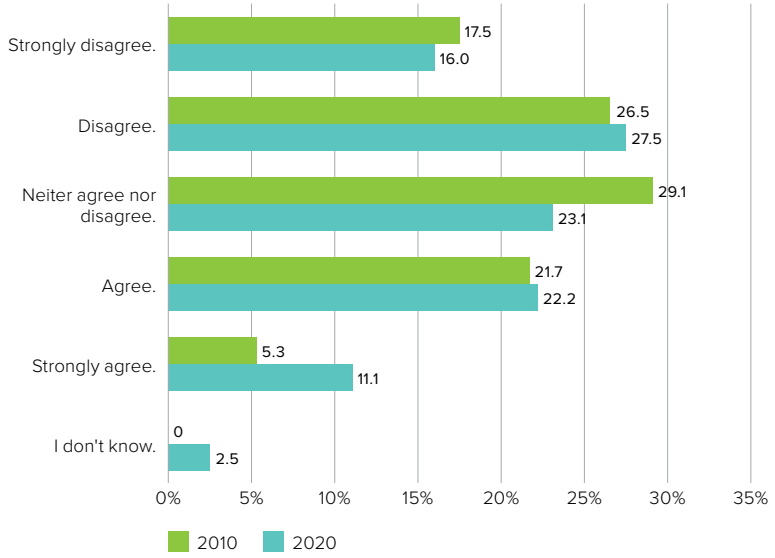


Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

This is supported by data showing that young people today are more confident that their education has given them the skills to start and run their own business. In fact, 31.0% of young people agree or strongly agree with this statement. In 2010, 27.0% did so.

Figure 3.22:

My schooling has given me the skills to start and run a business.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The rather high level of young people's knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship is also reflected in their self-perception of their ability to identify business opportunities. In fact, 50.9% of young people agree or strongly agree with the statement that they have enough knowledge to identify a good business opportunity. On the other hand, the uncertain socio-economic situation in 2020, linked to the public health crisis and the epidemic of Covid-19 disease, has undoubtedly had an impact on the attractiveness of certain forms of employment, especially when it comes to self-employment and setting up one's own business. However, this general perception of the challenges of these forms of employment, especially when it comes to the issue of job security, is also strongly conditioned by the experience of young people, who have often been forced into this form of self-employment, either by government policies or by employers' desire for a more 'flexible' workforce. Schools and the media also contribute significantly to the popularity of self-employment through their programmes and campaigns, which often present this career path as too idyllic (Kozorog, 2019) and do not prepare people for the real challenges

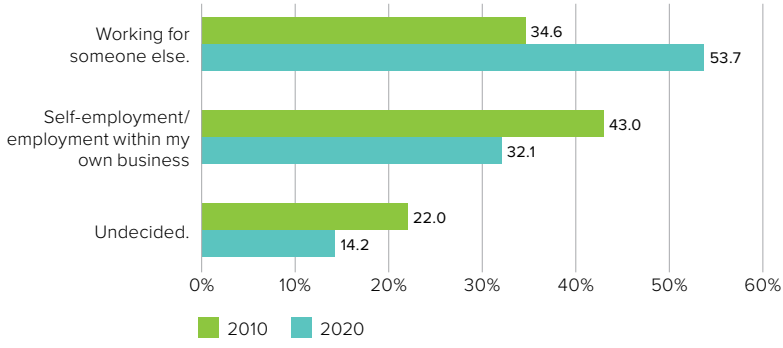
that young entrepreneurs face in the first steps of their self-employment journey. This is also what our interviewee points out in his statement:

> *"Entrepreneurship among young people is extremely popular until it is implemented, but then there is the problem of bureaucracy and the rigidity of the system. The system should allow students to start their own business without losing other benefits. Today our system literally encourages laziness and suppresses entrepreneurship among young people."*
>
> (Luka, 21 years old, student, athlete, and ring-wing politician)

As a result, young people's opinion on the favoured form of employment – i.e. working for someone else or in self-employment/owning their own business – is divided in favour of "traditional" employment with another employer, as job security in particular is on a completely different level in these forms of employment. Thus, in 2010, despite the then raging economic and financial crisis, a good third (34.6%) of young people would have preferred to work for someone else, with a significant number also undecided (22%), while in 2020, a good half (53.7%) would have chosen to work for someone else (see Figure 3.23).

Figure 3.23:

Imagine you are looking for a job and you could choose between different types of jobs. Which of the following would you choose?



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

In line with this, respondents identified job security as a very important factor, with 81.2% of young people rating this aspect of employment as fairly important (35.5%) or very important (45.7%). As a result, the desire to become self-employed is becoming less and less important for young people, as indicated by the following statement from one of the interviewees.

> *"In my peer group, no one has ever seriously considered becoming an entrepreneur, because they usually think that you need a lot of start-up capital. I have often been labelled as brave."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

Despite the growing belief among young people that school equips them with the right amount of knowledge and motivation to start their own business, young people are less and less likely to prefer self-employment within their own business as their preferred form of employment.

3.5 YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social entrepreneurship, i.e. entrepreneurship aimed at social well-being, is generally speaking an entrepreneurial activity with the ultimate goal of creating social value (Abu-Saifan, 2012). Social entrepreneurs are people with innovative solutions to major social, cultural, and environmental challenges (Ashoka, n.d.). A key characteristic of social entrepreneurs is therefore that they combine an entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial skills with a socially beneficial and sustainable way of thinking and acting (Yokoyama and Birchley, 2018). The characteristics of an entrepreneurial mindset, such as creativity, courage, the ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, ambition, innovation, determination, growth orientation, efficiency, optimism, and proactivity (Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon, 2003; Singh and Sharma, 2018; Yokoyama and Birchley, 2018), are therefore combined with a sustainable and socially responsible mindset in social entrepreneurship. A mindset of sustainability refers to the desire to improve the quality of life in general

and also encompasses the pursuit of social justice, democracy, and collaboration between individuals and organisations (Yokoyama and Birchley, 2018: 75), while a mindset of social responsibility in the context of social entrepreneurship encompasses the desire to solve societal problems and establish just social relations (Bornstein in Yokoyama and Birchley, 2018: 75) and empathy (Singh and Sharma, 2018: 214). This type of social change is grounded in social and sustainable values, which social entrepreneurs must also possess (Chatterjee, Cornelissen, and Wincent, 2021).

A plethora of different definitions of social entrepreneurs and the social entrepreneurship mindset are available in both academic literature and practice. These are disciplinarily, culturally, historically, and ideologically driven, but they all have some common points. They most often centre around the observation that the social entrepreneur is: (1) an agent of change with a clear goal and vision, (2) addressing societal problems, (3) seeking to create social value and foster sustainability, (4) more focused on helping and caring for others than on making a profit, (5) a person with entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial qualities, (6) able to identify new opportunities in social problems, and (7) innovative and proactive (Brouard and Larivet, 2010).

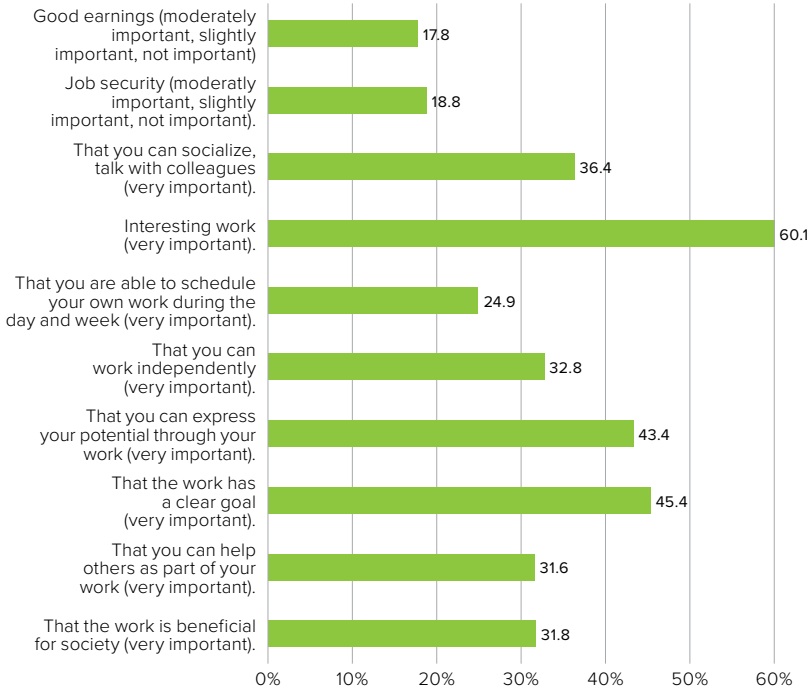
When we look at these characteristics among the young people surveyed, we can come to some interesting conclusions. Having a clear goal for the work, which indicates the presence of a vision that the person wants to realise, is very important to 45.4% of young people (see Figure 3.24). This aspect of the social entrepreneurial mindset in relation to social utility fundamentally determines social entrepreneurship and also distinguishes it from traditional entrepreneurship (see Dees, 2001). The social benefit of the work that people do is very important to 31.8% of young people in Slovenia, which is slightly less important than having a clear vision, but this is still a large group of young people who strongly prefer a clear vision of work with a social benefit. The social component of helping others is also very important in social entrepreneurship, and here again a similar proportion of young people consider helping others to be a very important feature of work (31.6%).

Young people thus recognise the opportunity to do work that is guided by values of social justice and sustainability. This is also reflected in the following quote from an interviewee who highlights the ethical aspect of social entrepreneurship.

> *"I think you can be a good or an ethical entrepreneur. I don't find it so impossible that your services or the products you have are affordable. I don't think it is really that hard. But I also see all these trends now, eco, vegan, this and that, and they inflate the price. I mean, don't tell me that rice milk, for which you need one handful of rice and water to produce it, is more expensive than cow's milk /.../."*
>
> (Edi, 25 years old, married bisexual trans man, vegan)

Figure 3.24:

How important are each of the following to you, when you think of a job?



Source: Mladina 2020.

In the context of social value creation and sustainable actions, various aspects of job satisfaction and the promotion of individual potential and creativity are also relevant to social entrepreneurship. Young people value these aspects of employment very highly and clearly understand their work more broadly, not just as a contractual relationship to earn an income, but as an opportunity for self-fulfilment, career and personal growth, well-being, and the creation of social value that benefits the immediate and wider community. For example, more than 60% of respondents consider it very important that their work is interesting. The ability to express one's potential is also high on the priority list, with 43.4% of respondents considering it very important. Autonomy at work, which is closely linked to self-fulfilment and to the interesting nature of the work, is very important to 32.8% of young people, while being able of scheduling one's work throughout the day and week is an aspect of work that young people do not consider to be so important (24.9%). On the other hand, the community moment, which is linked to the importance of creating a team and a pleasant working climate, again appears to be more important, with 36.4% of young people considering the opportunity to socialise and talk with colleagues to be a very important aspect of work. In social entrepreneurship, there is a positive interpersonal interaction that contributes to the dissemination of information among employees, but at the same time it is not limited to work tasks and purely financial aspect of the job.

The aspect of creating a positive climate and cohesion, which is the basis for creating social value and sustainable action, is very important. The importance of the team and the overall social climate is also indicated in the statement below.

> *"My desire is basically to create a cooperative, a kind of 'community centre', that would combine many aspects of the community. Through my life and experience I want to build up a team of people that I really trust and that I really want to do this with. It has to be something that's really sustainable."*
>
> (Edi, 25 years old, married bisexual trans man, vegan)

However, the social benefit side must be balanced against the two basic motives of employment, i.e. being paid for the work done and the security of the employment relationship. An important characteristic of social entrepreneurs is the prioritisation of social benefit over earnings and the search for new aspects of social value creation, which also entail considerable risks. In terms of earnings, it is immediately clear that very few young people consider that salary is not a very important aspect of work. More specifically, only 17.8% of young people consider good earnings to be medium, low, or entirely unimportant. Similarly, job security is high on the priority list of individuals, with only 18.8% of young people considering job security itself to be of medium, low or no importance. For all others, it is perceived as very important. Both individual (good earnings) and systemic (job security) aspects have a dampening effect on the potential of social entrepreneurship among young people and are very present in the case of young Slovenians. Although this age group is traditionally expected to have more "utopian" expectations of society and its regulation, and a greater propensity to take risks, it can be seen that the provision of financial independence and job security strongly influence individual choices. These are not in favour of youth social entrepreneurship.

In the precarious social situation in which young people find themselves nowadays, they are more motivated by the factors of job security and good earnings, rather than social benefits of work.

Young people can be said to possess the necessary mindset of social-entrepreneurship and consider that they have sufficient entrepreneurial skills and abilities (see Figure 3.22), and further that they are able to identify a business opportunity in social problems. 48.1% of young people agree with this last statement. However, this is not enough for most of them to embark on an independent path of social-entrepreneurship. The fact that social entrepreneurs are a 'rare breed' has been proverbially described by Gees (2001) in his widely cited article on social entrepreneurship, as they combine qualities that can often be seen as opposites in a capitalist economy. This is also reflected in the young people

surveyed in Slovenia, where only 7% of all young people think that helping others is of medium or high importance, that work is of medium or high importance for society, that vision is of medium or high importance, and that earning a good salary is of medium, low, or no importance, with gender, age, and education not playing a statistically significant role. This suggests that social entrepreneurship cannot represent a meaningful public policy alternative to the employment challenges of young people, but is rather a matter of individual life philosophy.

3.6 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key findings of this chapter, together with recommendations for the implementation of youth policy, can be summarised as follows:

1. Young people continue to participate in the labour market mainly through flexible forms of employment, which include part-time and atypical jobs in addition to temporary employment. While the share of young people in such forms of employment has declined significantly since 2015, Slovenia remains well above the European average in terms of the share of young people in temporary employment and the share of young people in part-time work.

2. Although official data for Slovenia show a decline in youth unemployment, the self-reported unemployment rate does not follow this and is almost three times higher than the officially recorded survey unemployment rate. In this respect, the existence of so-called 'invisible unemployment' is evident.

3. Fear of unemployment has stabilised, but is still high among young people (especially women) – it is still around twice as high as in 2000.

4. Compared to 2005 and 2010, young people are significantly more willing to be geographically mobile, to undertake further education, to accept temporary jobs, and to accept lower pay in order to increase their job prospects. Moreover, one-third of young people are willing to work for free, and just under two-thirds are willing to embark on a self-employment path to avoid unemployment. Young people's preference for private sector employment has also increased significantly.

5. The entrepreneurial mindset and incentives for self-employment (or creating their own jobs) that are gradually being introduced in the education system are also showing results – in 2020, young people are more likely to believe that education has given them the interest to become entrepreneurs, with a third reporting that their education has given them the skills to start and run a business.

6. The gap between skills and workplace requirements is narrower compared to 2013 and 2018. This gap is even less distinct when those who have not been involved in an education or training process are excluded from the analysis.

7. There is a trend towards an increasing preference for private sector employment and decreasing attractiveness of public sector employment, but the interest in working for someone else (at the expense of self-employment) is likely to be increasing due to growing insecurity.

8. What matters most to young people in Slovenia is that their work is interesting, that they are autonomous at work, that their work has a clear goal, and that their job is secure. This is especially true for young women.

9. In 2020, the proportion of young people who consider their work underpaid, the work they do boring, and their work climate poor has increased compared to 2010. The level of agreement with the statement that young people's rights are violated at work has also increased compared to 2010.

10. Those young people who are employed report an average workload of 36.4 hours per week, which is close to that of a full-time job (40 hours per week). It is particularly interesting to note that relatively high hourly workloads are reported by the unemployed (33.3 hours per week) and those who are still actively engaged in education. This points to the problem of 'undeclared work' and to the fact that 'student work' is still 'abused' (the weekly workload shows that the hourly workload for this group exceeds that of part-time work).

11. Young people recognise the incentives for self-employment in the education system, but the desire for this form of employment is still not one of their preferred forms of work, as it is perceived as risky.

12. Young people's employment choices favour job security and good earnings over social benefits and job sustainability.

13. Young people show significant levels of each dimension of the social-entrepreneurial mindset, which is counteracted by their attaching high importance to good earnings and job security.

The following recommendations for the implementation of youth policy can be drawn from these findings:

1. Labour market measures to curb the abuse of atypical forms of employment, including student work, should be pursued. Past efforts in terms of setting an annual maximum on hours worked are proving necessary.

2. In view of the deteriorated situation in terms of breaches of workers' rights, it seems necessary to step up inspections.

3. Actions to reduce precarisation among young people must be clearly justified by the fact that the increase in economic, social, legal, and broader existential insecurity means a decline in young people's general confidence, which constitutes a serious social problem (social instability, polarisation).

4. Youth entrepreneurship is an employment form that is in line with young people's employment preferences, provided that the pitfalls of job security and the trend of forced self-employment, which only leads to further precarisation, are properly addressed.

5. Social entrepreneurship is a mission that should be promoted among young people in order to achieve higher levels of social benefit. However, its promotion in order to address the employment challenges of young people is not promising.

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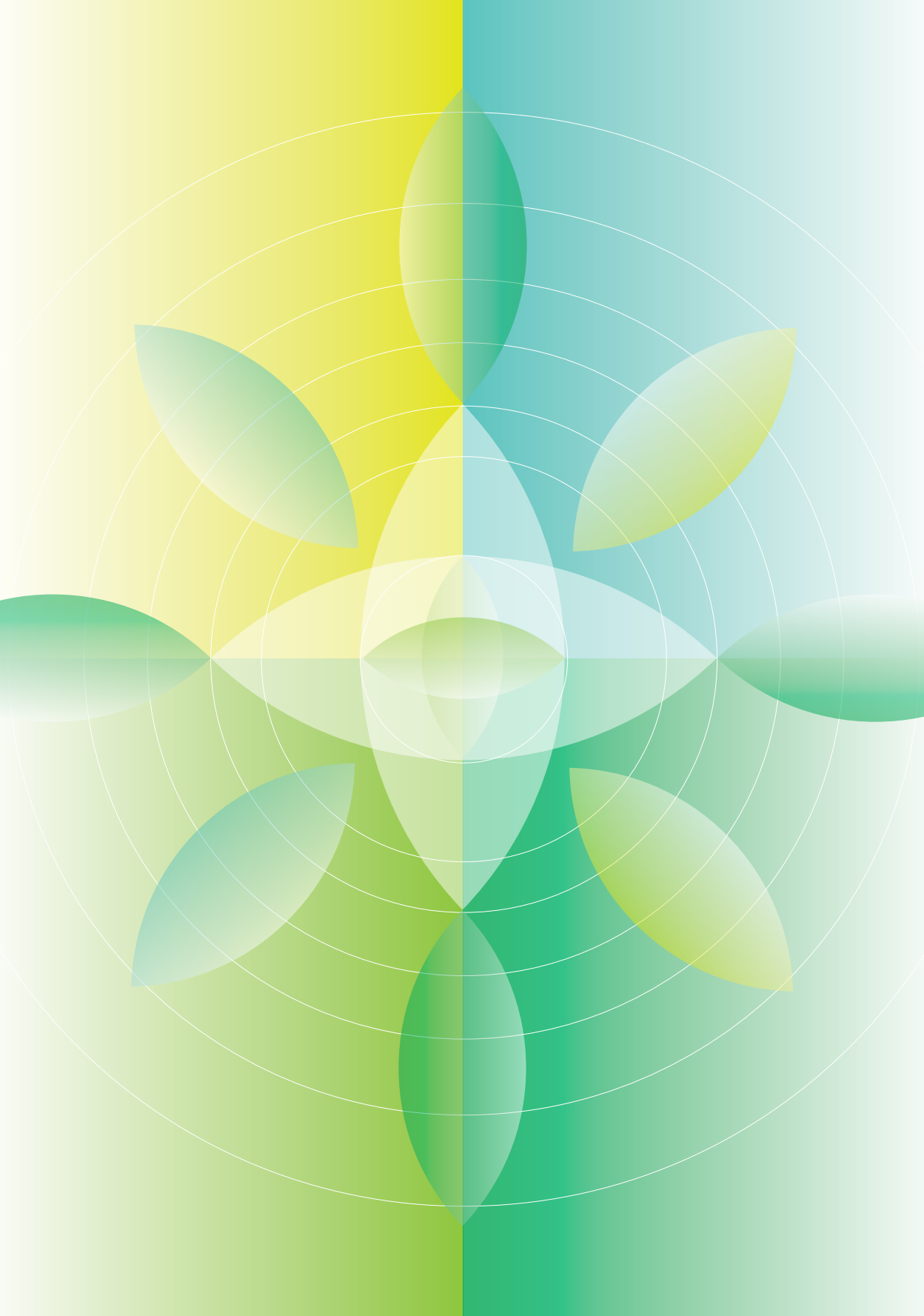
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TOMAŽ DEŽELAN, MITJA SARDOČ, AND KATJA NACEVSKI

4. YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT, AND EXTREMISM

4.1 THE CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

With regards to young people in today's society, it is no longer possible to talk about the traditional separation between conventional and unconventional political cooperation. This has been particularly prevalent in recent decades (cf., e.g., Barnes et al., 1979) and has been replaced by a widespread repertoire of political actions ranging from institutional political participation to various forms of individual and collective social engagement in both physical and virtual spaces (see, e.g., Dalton 2009; Norris 2001; Loader et al. 2014; Marsh et al. 2007). Today, however, it is difficult to distinguish between the concepts of political cooperation and social engagement, since young people use both concepts in their political action and the two concepts together offer a broader conceptual field of young people's socio-political participation. Strict separation would pose serious limitations in research and at the same time would not present a realistic picture of youth politics, which is a truly methodological limitation of many studies on youth political activities (see Marsh et al. 2007; Soler-i-Martí 2014). Past research in this context has also shown how wrong it can be to conclude that young people are "uninterested" in participating. The problem of low participation does exist; however, it is complex and, above all, it is linked to participation in institutional policy. Namely, young people's engagement comes from "outside" the usual boundaries of the political space and represents the emergence of individualised, direct and unrepresentative styles of politics (Deželan 2015).

> *"We're a group of young people, young Istrians and we want to do the same as some of the members of the older generation from the Italian minority. They have and organise things, but if you think about it young people have slightly different tastes than they do. So we're going to start being more active, because we want to do something for us."*
>
> (Alex, aged 22, member of the Italian minority)

The problem of low participation does exist, but it is complex and is above all tied to the issues of institutionalised politics.

The generally indisputable definition of political participation is defined as "an individual's involvement in the political system at various levels of activity, ranging from complete lack of interest to holding political office" (Rush 1992; Della Porta, 2003: 64; Deželan 2015). Both political participation and interest in politics can be seen as spectral phenomena that are not constant within an individual. It depends on the person whether both factors increase or decrease during their lifetime or change in some alternative way. This is due to several factors, such as life experiences, social contacts, and the environment. The basics of research on political participation are based on the level of participation (high, medium, low, non-existent), and researchers introduce basic questions such as: who participates, how they participate, and why they participate (Della Porta, 2003: 66).

In the last few decades, modern societies have faced a number of problems and related challenges that seriously undermine the basic foundations of democratic plural societies (rule of law, democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms). Some of the most important "challenges" include the growing socio-economic inequality, the rise of "illiberal" democracies, shrinking civic space and related rights and freedoms), radicalisation and violent extremism (terrorist attacks), lack of trust in democratic processes and institutions, declining participation in democratic decision-making processes, hate speech and xenophobia (so-called "hate culture"), populism, fake news, cyberbullying, etc. Although each of these problems calls into question the individual foundations of

modern plural societies, they all have in common the shrinking of civic space and the related process of the so-called "regressive transitions" marked by social and political changes, in which democracies transition to more authoritarian forms of government. Shrinkage, or the narrowing of the space for citizens to act, is a symptom of much larger and more important changes in democratic global governance and the associated "responsibility gap" (Scholte, 2013). The latter is largely due to the so-called "neoliberal revolution" and its technocratic way of governing (Duggan, 2003). This is marked by a shift in governance with a simplified understanding of the relationship between government, civil society, and other social spheres (e.g. the market), with a purely instrumentalist view of civil society and its role in a democratic society, with a minimalist conception of democracy and its institutional framework, with a reductionist understanding of civic equality, and a distorted image of success as a central criterion of neoliberal global governance. All these processes are intertwined with declining participation in institutionalized democratic decision-making processes. This, combined with the above shifts in the democratic rule of modern civil systems, poses a serious threat to the stability of modern plural societies and the legitimacy of democratic processes.

In traditional research, political participation is divided into conventional and unconventional, and social engagement encompasses participation in civil society (see Deželan 2015; Barnes 1979; Moyser 2003). Conventional political participation refers mainly to activities directly related to formal political institutions and processes, while unconventional refers to various protest and other forms that are less institutionalized and test the boundaries or are beyond the boundaries of institutional policy. In doing so, the term protest politics often appears, suggesting various forms of political action by active citizens (see Dalton 2009) both offline and online. It should be noted that political participation has also become strongly subject to individual identities and experiences (see Marsh et al., 2007), and it is furthermore important to emphasize that in modern protest politics the actors, targets, and repertoires of political action have changed (see Norris, 2001).

Political participation has become subject to individual identities and experiences; furthermore, it is important to emphasise that in modern protest politics the actors, targets, and repertoires of political action have all changed.

Popular participation in the joint management of a political entity depends to some extent on the individual, but at the same time the importance of the political structure in which they participate must not be forgotten. Thus, the final participation is influenced by a number of individual and structural factors, from the political culture of citizens and political elites, the inclusiveness of the political system, political knowledge of the individual, his socio-economic abilities, personal experience, gender, ethnicity and national belonging, etc. Our study examined the respondents' participation through a range of different forms of political activity that are available to young people.

4.2 CRUCIAL FACTORS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In general, there is a theoretical and empirical lack of coherence in the causal mechanisms associated with political participation. A multitude of empirical studies on various factors influencing political participation reveal the problem of speculation regarding citizens' political behaviour (Macedo et al., 2005). Various valid and relevant empirical results, on the other hand, reveal that certain factors have different effects on different groups in different contexts (see Smets and Van Ham, 2013). With this in mind, certain robust variables ("usual suspects") repeatedly prove to be important for political participation. Actor-centred explanations of political participation — which is also true of our study — emphasize the level of the actor and their consequent level of political effectiveness, which applies to both individuals and groups (Axford and Rosamond, 1997: 102).

Macedo et al. (2005: 32) emphasize that political participation and the improvement of democratic processes concern not only issues of the quantity and quality of political participation, but also of equality. This diverts attention to the question of who is involved, as people may be more or less inclined to participate in the political process due to certain personality traits. Verba et al. (1995) raise very important questions that help us understand why people do not participate: because they cannot (lack of resources), because they do not want to (lack of psychological engagement), or because no one has told them to participate (lack of networks to gain members). These issues can be addressed from various perspectives of socio-economics, socialization, and psychology. We will focus primarily on the psychological aspects of participation.

Political knowledge is inextricably linked to the quality of participation, but it also affects quantity. Those who know more about politics are also more involved, be it in electoral politics or other types of political activity (Smets and Van Ham, 2013: 355; Macedo et al., 2005: 32). Those who have more political knowledge have more consistent political views, and obtain and process information better, and furthermore their individual interests are more related to the proposed political solutions (Popkin et al., 2007). Politically savvy citizens are also less likely to rely on simple slogans, when making decisions (Macedo et al., 2005: 35). Political knowledge is very unevenly distributed among the population, with the socio-economic differences among adults quickly becoming apparent among children as well. These gaps in knowledge point to consequent inequality in political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1997).

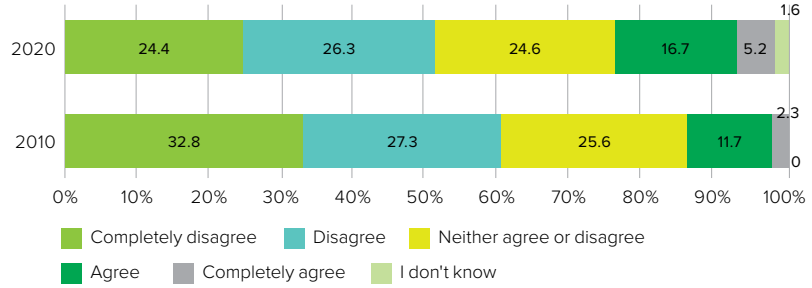
In general, young people report that they do not understand politics very well, which of course has a negative effect on their political participation. Over 50% of them disagreed or completely disagreed with the claim "I understand politics". This is supported by the finding that less than a quarter of young people report an understanding of politics. It is nonetheless gratifying that the level of understanding increased significantly between 2010 and 2020; however, it remains very low.

> *"I try to be as socially engaged as I can, I participate at the university, in a political party, charities and so on. I think we have to get more young people involved and I think that young people in general want to be involved in society, but they don't know how to be. Then they face, or we, face issues."*
>
> (Luka, 21 years old, student, athlete and right-wing politician)

In general, young people report that they do not understand politics very well, which of course has a negative effect on their political participation.

Figure 4.1:

I understand politics.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020

In addition to political knowledge, which is an important determinant of political participation (Smets and Van Ham, 2013: 355; Macedo et al., 2005: 32), this includes an interest in politics. Verba et al. (1995) cite political interest as one of the main factors guiding individuals to engage in politics. Macedo et al. (2005: 34) argue that political interest in a campaign in terms of political participation lags only behind the habit of previous participation in voting. The degree to which citizens are interested in politics is a legacy of pre-adult experiences, including political debates at home and participation in school activities, in which parents have relatively little influence. At the same time, it should be pointed out that political interest is triggered by stimulation from the political environment (ibid.). According to the OECD (2019), the comparative interest

in politics in Slovenia is extremely low. This is much lower among young people than the OECD average and almost 50% lower than the rest of the population.

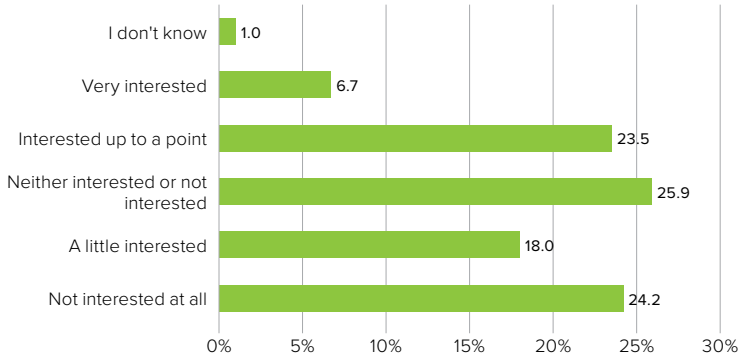
The results of the survey among young people show that their interest in politics is low. Only 6.7% of young people say that they are very interested in politics, while 23.5% are interested in politics to some extent. Consequently, this means that only about a third of young people in Slovenia demonstrate circumstances that create good preconditions for political participation. Therefore, we can say that interest in politics among young people in Slovenia is low.

> *"Actually really bad. I volunteer only with the SAFY (Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth) by taking care of kids at summer camp VIRC in Poreč (Croatia). Politically I'm not active at all, because politics doesn't interest me at all. I don't have any desire to ever be politically active in any way, so I accept things as they are and I am grateful for the country I live in."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

Only approximately a third of young people in Slovenia demonstrate good circumstances, which create good preconditions for political participation, as their interest in politics is low.

Figure 4.2:

I am interested in politics.



Source: Mladina 2020

Another important factor in the psychological participation of young people is a sense of political power – the extent to which an individual believes that their participation can influence politics (Axford and Rosamond, 1997: 102). A sense of political power brings together different emotions, feelings, and aspects of human psychology that point to the extent of an individual's belief that they can bring about change (ibid.). In essence, political efficacy is a dual concept, in which the internal sense of political power refers to the belief that an individual can influence politics, while the external sense of power refers to the belief that politicians actually care about popular opinion (Nygård and Jakobsson, 2013 : 70). Smets and Van Ham (2013: 355) find that a sense of political efficacy, both internal and external, is positively associated with voter turnout.

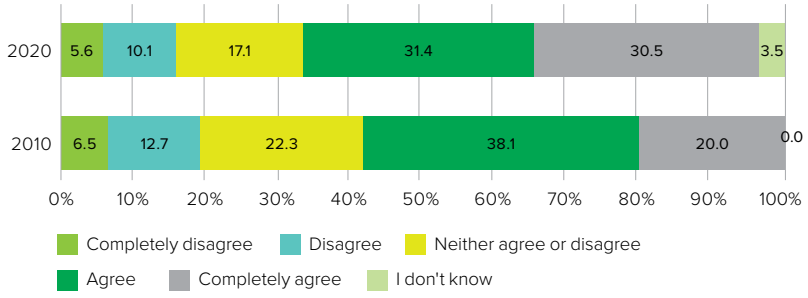
Young people in Slovenia believe that, in general, politicians do not concern themselves with the opinion of individuals, which means that consequently popular political effectiveness in such a system is limited. Over 60% of them believe that politicians do not deal with individual opinions. It is also worrying that only approximately 15% of them disagree with such a statement and that politicians consider the opinions of individuals. The following indicator of political effectiveness addresses the influence of the individual who votes. Similar to the above variable, this case also shows that over 55% of respondents agree or completely

agree with the statement about an individual's influence on the authorities' actions. Also, only about 15% of them disagree with the statement about the lack of citizens' influence of citizens thereon. We can conclude that the feeling of personal political effectiveness among young people is low.

Young people in Slovenia believe that politicians in general do not concern themselves with popular opinions and that a regular individual does not have any influence on the work of the authorities.

Figure 4.3:

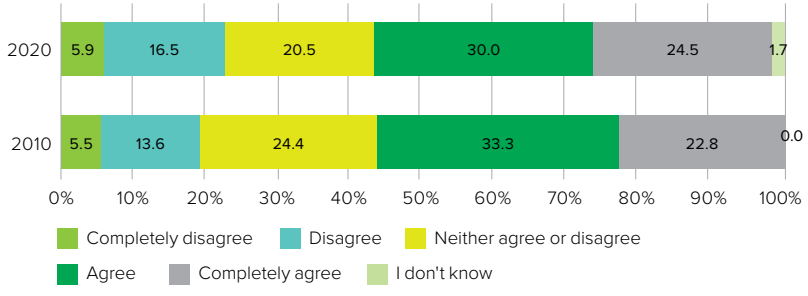
Politicians do not concern themselves with the opinions of individuals.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020

Figure 4.4:

An individual like me has no influence on the work of the authorities.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020

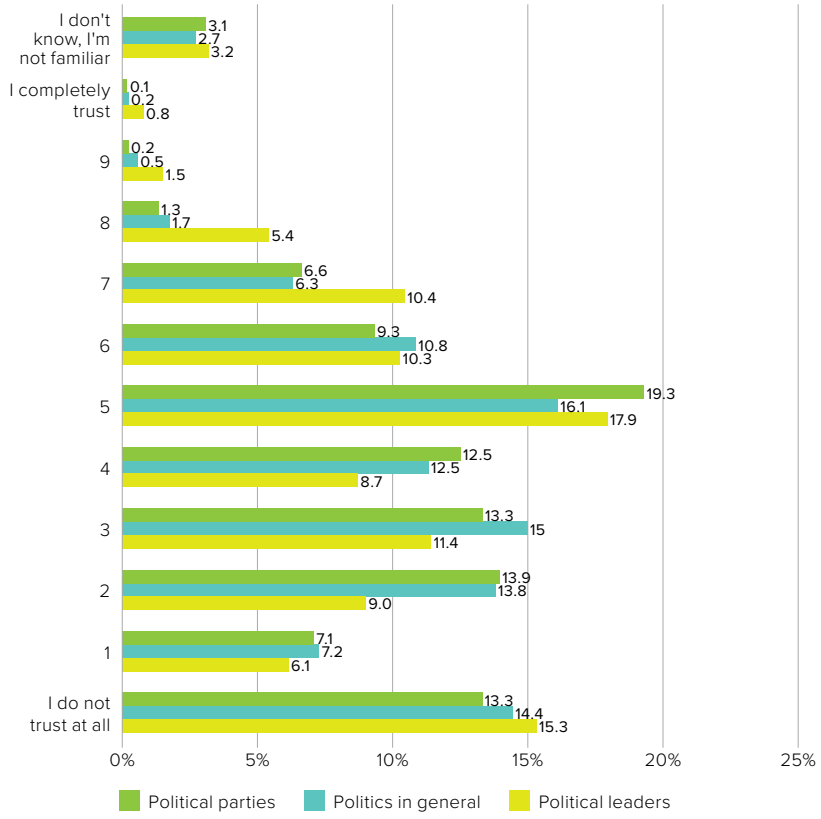
Political trust (including institutional trust or political support) is also associated with psychological participation. This concept shows the level of trust a person has in a political system, policy, or political institution (Nygård and Jakobsson, 2013, 70). Although electoral confidence was said not to have an effect political participation, Hetherington (1999) showed that declining political confidence affects choices in elections, as voters with low political confidence support candidates who are not currently in office. Bélanger and Nadeau (2005) further demonstrate that declining trust acts more as a motivation for voters to support third, alternative parties, while mistrust significantly affects voter turnout.

The results of the Mladina survey show that trust among young people towards various political institutions and politics in general is very low. Thus, e.g., holders of political power (i.e. the President of the State, the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly) enjoy slightly higher levels of trust, but still this trust is low and distributed in the direction of distrust. The situation is even worse in the case of politics in general and political parties in particular, where it is noticeable that mistrust is very high and that only a handful of people show at least slightly higher levels of trust in political parties and politicians in general. On this basis, we can conclude that trust in politics is also a very poor precondition for an appropriate level of young people's political participation.

Survey among young people show that trust towards various political institutions and politics in general is very low.

Figure 4.5:

I trust...



Source: Mladina 2020

4.3 THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SLOVENIA

Within political theory, political participation overlaps and intertwines with other recognizable concepts such as democracy, electoral participation, models of representation, and so on. Above all, voter participation originates from political participation and is described as one of the most conventional forms thereof. The purpose or consequence of such an activity is to influence public decisions or measures directly by influencing the

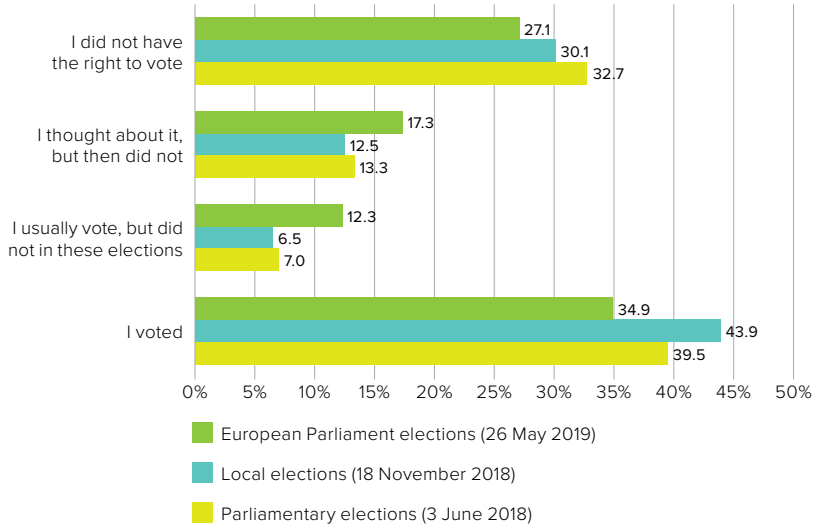
formulation or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the choice of those who shape public policy (Verba et al., 1995; see also Kaase and Marsh, 1979: 42; Parry et al., 1992). Despite differences in democratic tradition, socio-economic development and systems, as well as the political context of individual countries, voter turnout has been declining in recent decades, not only with regards to young people (see OECD 2019; Provincial 2015; International IDEA 1999). In Slovenia, turnout in the early 1990s was well above the average of most OECD member states. This is also why it is surprising that in the second decade of the 21st century the decline in voter turnout in Slovenia has been so considerable. Although this trend is typical of most OECD member states, the gap in voter turnout between the two intervals is one of the largest in Slovenia (see OECD 2019). It is therefore a phenomenon that must be considered along with other factors governing the political system, trust in democratic institutions, general social engagement, and so on.

Graph 6 below shows the participation of young respondents in Slovenia's last parliamentary, local, and European Parliament elections. The results show that most young people took part in local elections and the least in European elections. In the case of voter turnout, the results can be compared with official data from the National Electoral Commission (DVK). According to published data, 40.54% of young people participated in the 2018 parliamentary elections, which is a comparable or slightly higher percentage than that measured in our survey. According to DVK data, 17.57% of young people took part in the European Parliament elections in 2019, and not 34.9%, as the respondents in our survey answered. We are therefore witnessing the practice of changing answers in terms of self-registration or self-reporting among young people, related to the awareness that participation in elections is a socially desirable act or practice, despite the fact that altering the truth in this case did not lead to positive consequences. The latter is also clearly seen in the share of young people who, in all three cases, opted for answers that indicate a general preference for participation in elections. The percentages of young people who thought about voting or usually voted but did not vote in the given elections were the highest in the case of elections to the European Parliament (17.3% and 12.3%). A comparison of data between Mladina 2010 and Mlad-

ina 2020 shows that about 3% more young people participated in the 2008 parliamentary elections compared to 2018. At the same time, it should be noted that respondents had different answers to choose from, which means that the data are not completely comparable.

Figure 4.6:

Youth turnout at national, local, and European Parliament elections.



Source: Mladina 2020

"Yeah, I vote...in the next (election) I'm going to educate myself a bit more, I didn't in the last elections and I wasn't actually happy with my choice. But not really more than that. Up until, I don't know, maybe four years ago, I wouldn't say that I had really formed political beliefs. Ok maybe not exactly, because I definitely had some values, which are compatible with certain political parties or directions and aren't with others. So maybe that's already a political opinion, even if I don't call it that."

(Tina, 29 years old, radiology specialist, interrupted her specialisation to work with Covid-19 patients)

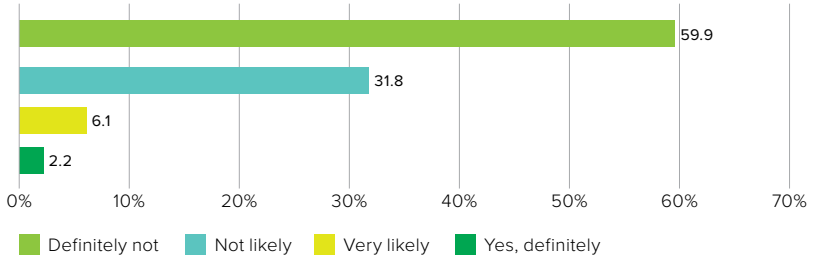
If we look at the other side of participation in elections, i.e., passive use of the right to vote in the forms of candidacy for political office, we can see that this aspect of institutional policy is even more problematic than the turnout itself. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (59.9%) answered that they do not intend to run for political office in the future, and a further 32% said that such a thing is unlikely. This result indicates the serious problems that institutional policy will face in the future, as it actually implies that the pool of candidates for important political positions will be very impoverished. Low interest in political functions means that political parties will face major personnel challenges and the problem of a lack of high-quality staff. The percentage of those who answered that they will definitely run for political office in the future is not higher than the percentage of young people who are already members of political parties (around 2%) (see Deželan 2015).

> *"I decided to do it and I went to the party's founding congress, without any expectations, I basically didn't know anyone. I became a founding member of the party. I wanted to see what this looked like, because I wasn't very well acquainted with how parties work. But I said that I wanted to see if anyone was going to listen to use, give the young ones a shot. I was 20, 21 (years-old) at the time. /.../ And since some of us were there from the beginning, I got quite a high place on the list for municipality council, and I ended up being elected as councillor. At the time I think I was among the three youngest councillors in Slovenia. "*
>
> (Nejc, 27 years old, young politician)

Low interest in taking on the responsibility of a political function indicates major challenges that institutional politics will have to face in the future, since this means that they will have a much smaller pool of candidates at their disposal.

Figure 4.7:

Candidacy for political functions in the future (and in the past).



Source: Mladina 2020

Other forms of political participation show quite similar patterns. When it comes to participating in the activities of political parties, which can take place in person or online, there is an obvious relative lack of young people's interest in political parties. Only 27.1% of young people have already or would probably participate in the activities of political parties, and it should be noted that only 4% of young people have actually done so.

The same can be seen in contacting politicians, which is considered to be one of the most conventional forms of political participation, which has never really been established in Slovenia. The percentage of young people who have already or would probably be politically active in this way is 31.8%. On the other hand, again, just over 4% of those have actually already done so.

Signing petitions is another of the most conventional forms of political participation, which is also widespread among young people in Slovenia today. As many as 83.6% of respondents from the Mladina 2020 survey stated that they are either already or likely to sign the petition. There are as many as 43.6% of those who have already signed a petition, either online or in person, which indicates that it is one of the most established forms of participation. This form of participation is also quantitatively comparable to the measurement in 2010, when there were only a few percent fewer respondents, who had signed a petition or were likely to do so.

Signing petitions is one of the most conventional forms of political participation, which is also widespread among today's youth. There are as many as 43.6% of those who have already signed a petition, either online or in person.

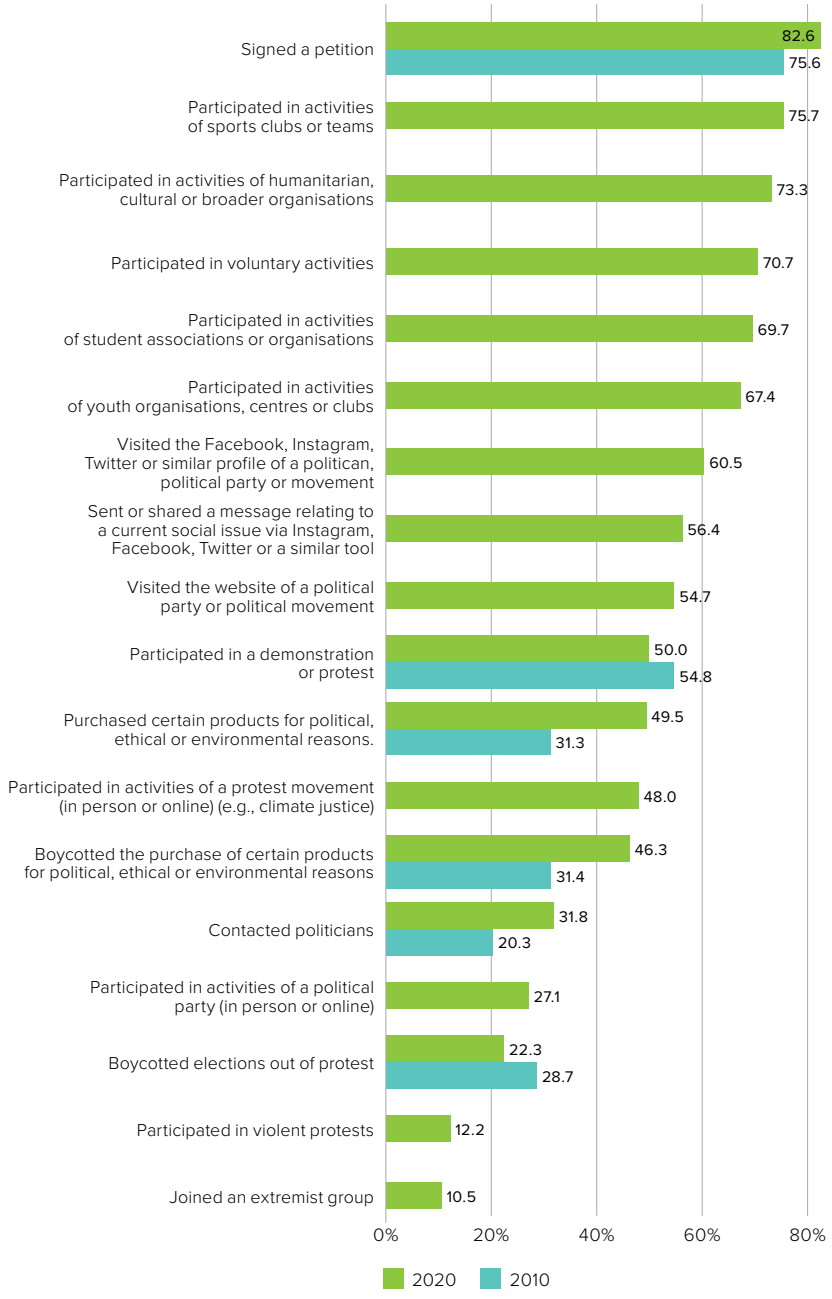
We can see that young people understand protest policy, due to the popularity of demonstrations and protests among their demographic. More than half of them believe that they would or have already participated in non-violent demonstrations or protests. Compared to the other forms mentioned above, protests are also significantly more numerous, as more than 13% of young people report their experience of participating therein. Similarly, there is a high willingness to participate in the activities of protest movements, either in person or online. Namely, as many as 48% of young people show such readiness, and more than 8% of them have already participated in these activities.

An interesting form of protest activity is boycotting elections, which is not the result of apathy or other barriers to voter participation, but a form of protest against a political class running for vacant political offices. Boycotting elections is quite widespread among young people and more than a fifth of young people report that the elections are likely to be boycotted or have already been. In fact, 3.2% of those polled voted to boycott the elections.

A much more popular form of boycott, which is a reflection of political disagreement and often an expression of a do-it-yourself identity policy, is boycotting products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. This is additionally a matter of self-expressively buying (and not buying) certain products for the same reasons. In both cases, about half of the respondents have already done or would probably do so, and it is surprising that there is a large increase in those who think so compared to 2010. Even the percentage of young people who have already done so (i.e., politically engaged) with their wallets), is still not negligible (11.1% and 13.5%).

Figure 4.8:

Political and social engagement of young people ('I probably would' and 'I already have').



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

It should be emphasized that institutional policy is also increasingly adapting to various individual lifestyles and allows for more and more atypical civic practices that have developed through the introduction of new technologies. When it comes to monitoring political actors, a visit to a website or a social media profile is quite a popular form for young people in Slovenia, as more than 60% of respondents have already or would probably look at the profile of a politician or party/movement. Approximately 30% of respondents had already done so. The same applies to visiting the website of a political party or movement, which approx. 55% of respondents would or already have done (a fifth have already done so). However, about three-fifths of the respondents said that they already have or probably would share or send a message related to a current social problem via one of their social media profiles (Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram). Approximately a fifth of those have already done so. An overview of readiness for and actual past engagement online shows the prevalence of many forms of political participation, when it comes to the web. At the same time, in the case of the internet, it is necessary to maintain awareness that the rapid development of ICT and online platforms, as well as the rapid adaptation of young people to them, constantly create the conditions for delayed or even "out of date" measurements of what young people do online.

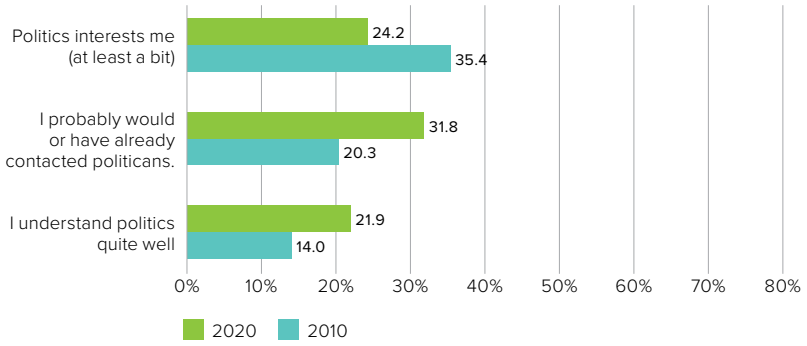
A further look at young people's participation in various forms of activities within civil society organizations shows that their willingness to cooperate with most non-profit-voluntary organizations is at a very high level. Thus, e.g., three-quarters of young people would probably or have already participated in the activities of sports clubs and teams, which is traditionally the most common form of youth participation, 73% in activities of humanitarian, cultural, or wider social organizations and just under 70% in activities of high school and student organizations youth organizations or youth centres and clubs. Even the number of those who have already done so is relatively high (20% to 30%), so this form of socio-political engagement (in civil society organizations) is one of the strongest foundations for the democratic functioning of society.

Young people's readiness for and actual participation in various activities within civil society organisations is at a very high level.

It is worth to add that the trends young people's political participation have recently been relatively favourable.

Figure 4.9:

Proportions of young people according to three aspects of political participation.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020

Young people feel more politically competent than they did a decade ago; they are more inclined to communicate with politicians, show greater general interest in politics, and somewhat more often sign different petitions.

Although these trends are promising, they do not mean that young people's political participation is at a level that would be sufficient for society's good democratic decision-making. Undoubtedly, there are still many challenges and open opportunities for youth policy in this area. However, it is true that tackling the challenges of persistently low political participation may be more successful given the trend shown.

4.4 RADICALISATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Despite the fact that general political participation in Slovenia is low, as is interest in politics and the level of trust in politics and political institu-

tions in general, young people in Slovenia are not in favour of violent extremism. Among the claims of their social engagement, the allegations of 'joining an extremist group' and 'presence at violent protests' stood out. In a statement about 'joining an extremist group', only 10.5% of young people stated that they 'probably would' or that they had already participated in such a way. For 'presence at violent protests', 11.2% of young people stated that they probably would or that they already had been present at violent protests. The share of "positive" responses to both claims is markedly low compared to all other claims relating to political and social participation. These data on the low presence of violent extremism among young people in Slovenia are extremely important, as other indicators related to political culture and political activity in Slovenia are far from encouraging.

Despite lower and lower electoral turnout, general disinterest in politics, and low level of trust in the political process, young people in Slovenia do not favour violent extremism.

This is one of the reasons why the phenomenon of radicalisation and violent extremism must be noted, as this has changed the relationship between security and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms over the last decade. The phenomenon of radicalisation and violent extremism is only part of the problems associated with the polarization of modern societies, as hate speech and xenophobia (and other manifestations of dystopian narratives) generally contribute significantly to social fragmentation and conflict diversity and the related phenomenon of "hate culture". Xenophobia, Islamophobia, and a host of other manifestations of discrimination, intolerance, and hatred are associated with attacks in many European cities, e.g. Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, Nice, London, Manchester, Munich, Brussels, Amsterdam, and have received fresh "drive".

This is also why radicalisation and violent extremism must be thought of (and understood) in a geopolitical context. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the concepts of "cold war" and "class struggle" landed in the dustbin of history or in its container of mixed waste. However, it seems that this is only temporary. But proponents of the "neoliberal" thesis of the "end of history"

overlooked two other "affair" from 1989. The headscarf affair in France and the affair related to the publication of Rushdie's novel Satanic Verses, which lasted until 11 September 2001, remained somewhat overshadowed – at least seemingly – by the triumphant march of free market ideology.

Last but not least, various global crises – time and time again – have served as an excuse to shrink civic space. For example, the "security crisis" that followed the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York, and the related "war on terror," allowed the U.S. government to enact legislation, the so-called Patriot Act, which, in the name of security and national interest, allows for violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. Despite the fact that 11 September 2001 became a kind of beginning of the "counting" of the calendrical era of the war on terror, it marks a security paradigm in which the debate on radicalisation and violent extremism is trapped, a series of missed meetings and missed opportunities. Last but not least, this is confirmed by individual slogans ("for one a terrorist, for another a freedom fighter"), metaphors (the battle for "hearts and souls"), and other clichés (e.g. "what happens before the bomb"): rhetorical "arsenal" The "intelligence-security" industry is hit by the problem, but the very essence is actually overlooked (Lockley-Scott, 2019).

"Terror," as U.S. President John F. Kennedy emphasized in his address to the UN General Assembly on September 25, 1961, "is not a new weapon. Throughout history it has been used by those who could not prevail, either by persuasion or by example."

Radicalisation and violent extremism are therefore anything but a security phenomenon. How else to understand a series of "collateral" problems that the security paradigm and the associated standard notion of radicalisation and violent extremism largely bypass, e.g. moral panic, populism, conflict diversity, intolerance, xenophobia, cultural distance, the integration gap, etc.? Their perception opens up at least two sets of negative consequences exclusively through the security perspective. On one hand, this includes the social marginalization or exclusion of those who have been exposed to extremist ideas and general discomfort. On

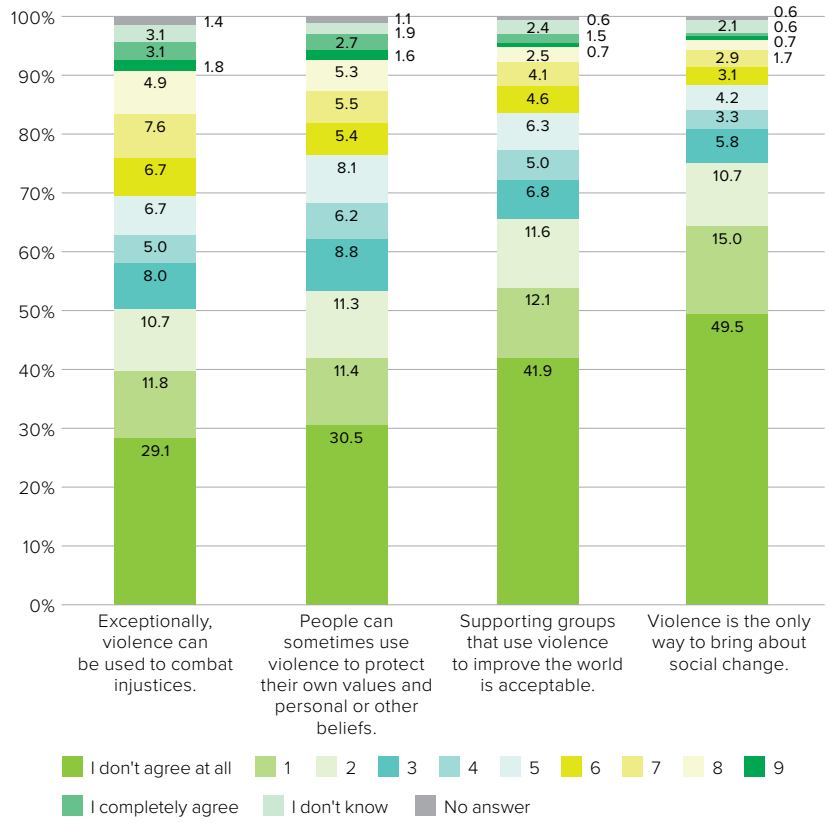
the other hand, there are xenophobia, discrimination, Islamophobia, "moral panic", mistrust, and the associated polarization of society.

In the Mladina 2020 survey, in addition to readiness for or actual participation in violent protests and extremist groups (see the graph on the repertoire of youth participation), we also looked at extremist and radicalist tendencies among young people. The most extremist claim, coinciding with the views of right-wing violent extremism (see Botticher, 2017), that violence is the only way to introduce social change, was categorically rejected by respondents for the most part (49.5%). It should also be pointed out that this statement was approved by less than 5% of respondents. Similarly, but to a somewhat lesser extent, they were reluctant to the somewhat less explicit claim that violence is the path to a better world, which is still very close to right-wing violent extremism (ibid.). Until the claim that supporting groups that use violence to improve the world is acceptable, a good 40% were absolutely negative, and at least a partial degree of agreement with this statement was perceived in a good tenth of respondents. The occasional use of violence to protect their values and personal and religious beliefs, which still encroaches on the field of (right-wing) violent extremism, is categorically rejected by just under a third of respondents, with at least some showing approval of this claim. already about a fifth of respondents. The highest level of approval for the use of violence, however, is reflected in the claim that violence, which is closest to the notion of left-wing (violent) radicalism, can exceptionally be used to combat things that are unjust. This is somehow also the softest in the use of violence and he also understands violence as an extraordinary means, which is otherwise unacceptable (right there). Just under 30% of respondents absolutely reject this view, while, on the other hand, a quarter already at least partially approve of such a way of radical action.

Based on the above, we could conclude that there a belief about the legitimacy of the use of violence is present among young people, which for the time being is mostly justified by higher, more just goals. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a negative political climate permeated by mistrust, lack of interest in politics, young people's low political efficac, and unacceptable styles among politicians can lead to the further poisoning of politics for young people and the activation of their extremist tendencies.

Figure 4.10:

Use of violence and right to use of violence.



Source: Mladina 2020

4.5 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- In general, young people report a lack of understanding of politics (only a quarter responded that they have some understanding). The level of policy understanding increased between 2010 and 2020.
- Interest in politics among young people is low, with only 6.7% saying they are very interested in politics. When it comes to interest in politics, only about a third of young people in Slovenia

demonstrate circumstances that create good preconditions for political participation.

- Young people in Slovenia believe that, in general, politicians do not concern themselves with popular opinions and that an ordinary individual has no influence on the authorities' actions. This means that, as a result, people's political effectiveness in such a system is limited, which also negatively affects their political participation.
- The results of the youth survey show that distrust among young people towards various political institutions and politics in general is very low both when it comes to key holders of political power (i.e., the President, the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly) and ordinary politicians. In the case of political parties, the level of mistrust is even lower.
- Turnout is low among young people, especially when it comes to European Parliament elections. Of particular concern is the fact that other forms of participation in institutional policy are extremely low (e.g. running for political office, participation in party activities, etc.).
- Petitions are one of the most conventional forms of political participation, also widespread among today's youth. As many as 43.6% of respondents have already signed a petition either physically or online.
- More than half of young people believe that they have or have already participated in non-violent demonstrations or protests. They are similarly willing to participate in the activities of protest movements either in person or online.
- Young people's readiness for and actual participation in various activities within civil society organizations is at a very high level.
- Ten years after the last survey, young people feel politically competent, are more inclined to communicate with politicians, show a greater general interest in politics, and also sign various petitions more often.

- As many as a quarter of young people believe in the legitimacy of the use of violence when it comes to higher goals that address injustices. A more systematic and unrestricted use of violence to achieve political goals is approved only by a handful of young people.

Recommendations:

- Mechanisms of trust in politics must be strengthened, building on positive examples.
- It is necessary to stimulate interest in politics through various projects and programs that would at the same time stimulate an increase in young people's knowledge about politics and political processes.
- It is necessary to encourage citizens' participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies at all stages, while being very transparent and also providing information on the effects of such participation.
- It is necessary to strengthen the premises of civil society, in which young individuals want to participate and thus strengthen their democratic citizenship.
- There is a need for finding ways to introduce online forms of consultation, cooperation, monitoring, and decision-making that enable young people to participate in the political process on an equal footing.
- The relationship between ensuring security on the one hand and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms on the other must be redefined. The so-called "war on terror" creates a climate for legitimizing violence.
- It is necessary to invest in prevention programs against radicalism and violent extremism, so that the circumstances leading to such practices are addressed before the onset of violence.

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MATJAŽ URŠIČ

5. YOUNG PEOPLE, HOUSING, AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION – KEY CHANGES IN YOUNG SLOVENIANS' LIVING AND HOUSING CONDITIONS

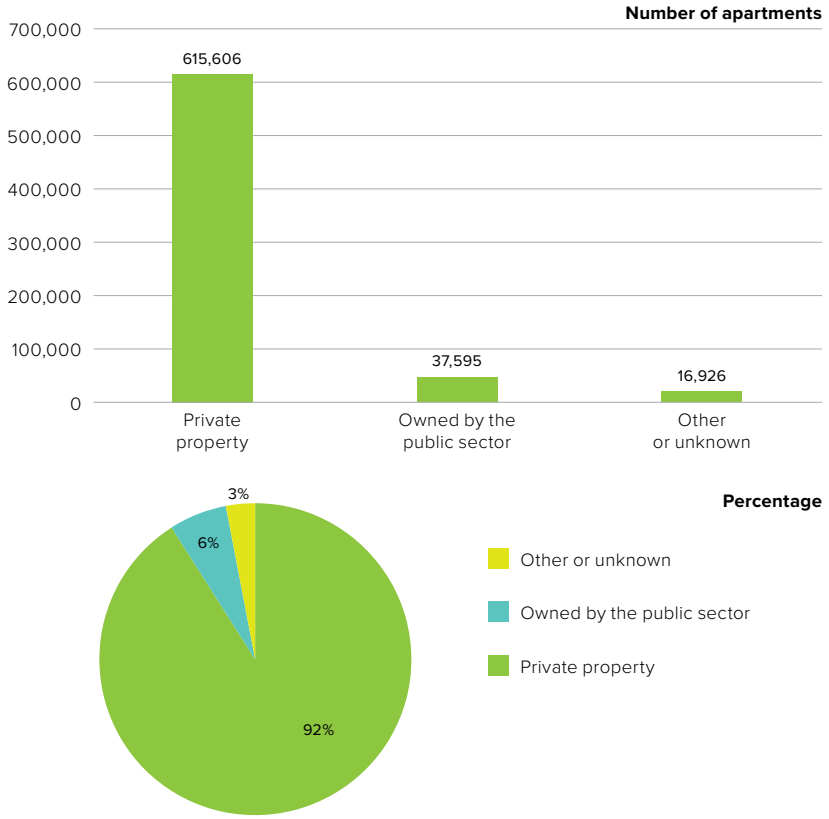
The analysis of living and housing conditions is one of the key areas that can explain changes in young people's value orientations. From this point of view, many changes in young people's daily life practices are often perceived as a consequence of the social and physical "production of space" (Lefebvre, 1991), i.e. as an interweaving of the socio-spatial circumstances (context) in which younger population groups are involved. The context of housing and living sets the conditions not only for youth socialization, but also processes of personal growth, independence, and demographic reproduction (Mandič, 2009; Lavrič, Klanjšek, 2010; Iacovou, 2010; Kins et al., 2013).

In the Slovenian context, due to the populations' relatively low housing mobility (cf., e.g., Hočevar et al., 2004, 2018), the influence of primary living and housing conditions, in relation to other EU countries, is even greater. A person's living quarters and their immediate surroundings form the basic axis of their activity, and are further closely correlated with their life course and with their involvement in many social networks (familial, professional [work], recreational, etc.). An important feature of Slovenian social networks is their strong integration within their local environments (cf., e.g., Filipović et al., 2005; Filipović, 2007, 2016), which is directly related to their place of long-term residence or original (birth) residence. Low housing mobility is complemented by an extremely high share of owner-occupied housing in Slovenia compared to other

EU countries (SURS, 2011; Dolenc et al., 2013; Eurostat, 2018), which also indicates how important basic housing is in the Slovenian context.

Figure 5.1:

Occupied dwellings by ownership, Slovenia.



Source: SURS, 2011.

Private housing is an important basis for independence and development for a large proportion of the young people in the Mladina 2020 survey. At the same time, it indicates not only the generational transfer of existing ownership practices but are complementary to the very specific forms of living associated with the desire for longer or long-term presence in a particular local environment. One of the often-mentioned problems, where housing and living dimensions are intertwined with existing social

and economic conditions, is young Slovenians' late separation from their parents. The so-called LAT phase (Living Apart Together), which marks young people's extended stay with their parents (Rener, Švab, 1996; Ule, 2009; Mulder, 2009), results from a mixture of changes in socialisation (changes in the relationship between young people and their parents), economic conditions (real estate prices), specific spatial policies (small number of non-profit and rental housing), and historical bases (dispersed and relatively low urbanisation) of the Slovenian settlement system (Uršič, Hočevar, 2007). The consequences of this shift towards the later onset of independence for young people have already been registered in the Youth 1995 and 2010 surveys and continue with similar characteristics in the Youth 2020 survey. The long-term financial, social and emotional dependence of young people on their parents is observed (Mitchell, 2000; Lavrič and Klanjšek, 2010), and only extraordinary (financial, partner, work) circumstances influence a faster shift in youth independence (De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991). Despite the still strongly noticeable LAT phase in Slovenia, from the point of view of housing and housing preferences, some changes have occurred in young people's value orientations, which in the long run may indicate a gradual change in this trend, where young people are more integrated into global trends alongside the growing need for a greater degree of internationalisation. These slight changes in living and housing conditions indicate the multifaceted nature of the issue of young people's late independence and are analysed in the following chapters through a number of dimensions of the Mladina 2020 survey.

Despite the still strongly noticeable LAT phase in Slovenia, from the point of view of housing and housing preferences, some changes have occurred in young people's value orientations, which in the long run may indicate a gradual change in this trend, where young people are more integrated into global trends alongside the growing need for a greater degree of internationalization.

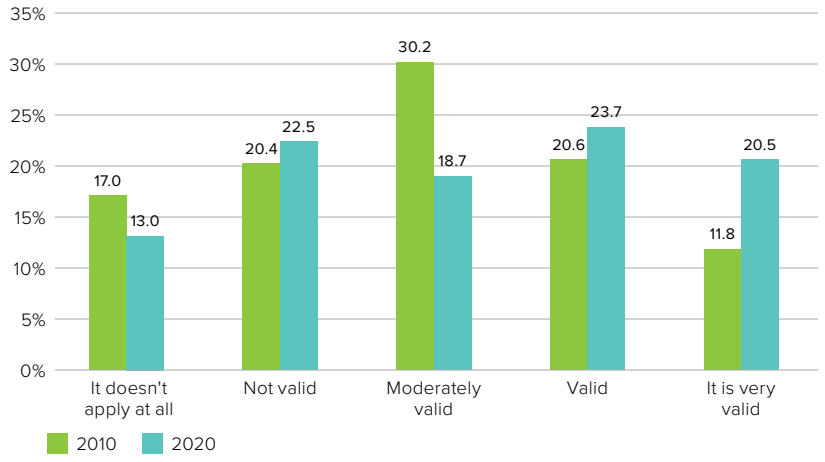
5.2 ANALYSIS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HOUSING, LIVING CONDITIONS, AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1 ANALYSING PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSING ISSUES

Data from the Mladina 2020 survey show that the importance of housing issues among young people is growing. A comparison of data between the 2010 and 2020 survey shows a strong increase in the share of young people describing this issue as a very important personal problem.

Figure 5.2:

Young people's perception of the housing problem



Source of data: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The extraordinary increase in the importance of housing issues among young people can be explained from two aspects – social and psychological. In the descriptive question 'What is the biggest obstacle in solving your personal housing issues?', the majority of young people in the Mladina 2020 survey highlighted various problems related to financial resources when buying or renting an apartment. These range from the inability to purchase an apartment with an average salary and the inability

to obtain an adequate mortgage, to the inability to secure a suitable type of housing or to obtain the desired living style both in terms of furnishing and location of the home.

These points can also be seen from the interviews, which supplement the quantitative data from the Mladina 2020 survey. The interviewees state the following views, among others:

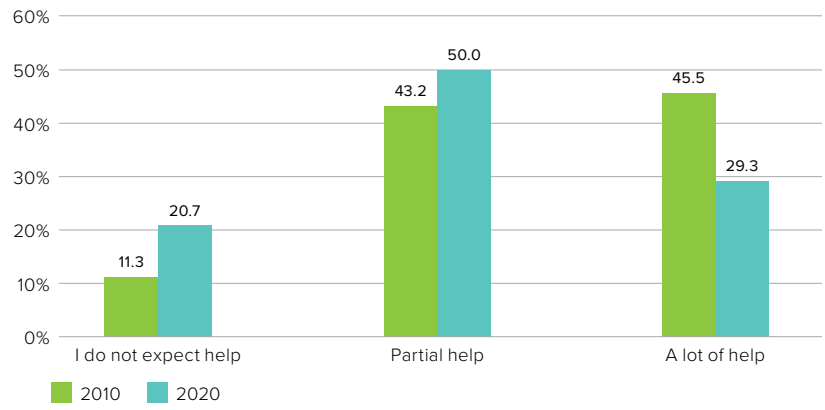
> *"Here's the thing, an ordinary apartment in a block of flats, I think is 90 or 70 square meters and it's at least 200,000 Euros. And for that I should save twenty, twenty-five years all together, for an apartment? I find this really stupid… at least it seems to me if I think that my grandparents or parents, who didn't study and I'm not saying they didn't work, they worked, but it took them far fewer years to buy an apartment… "*
>
> (Alex, 22 years old, member of the Italian minority)

> *"It's hard to get loans with periodic jobs and at 25 you can't just save 100 thousand euros to make something easier or invest in something. But I'll see what I achieve in the next five years. "*
>
> (Ester, 25 years old, researcher)

The growth in housing prices recorded in the last two decades (see SURS, 2020; Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia, 2019) is thus related to the construction of a specific perception of social instability that is related to their employment concerns and amount of financial resources, and are consequently also reflected in the issue of extended stay with parents. About 63% of young people still live permanently with their parents. Despite the slight decline in young people who rely on their parents' help, the strong trend of relying on partial or greater help from parents in solving the housing problem is still noticeable. Almost 80% of young people from the 2020 survey and about 89% from the 2010 survey expect partial or greater help from their parents in solving their housing problems.

Figure 5.3:

Help from parents – in solving housing issues



Source: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

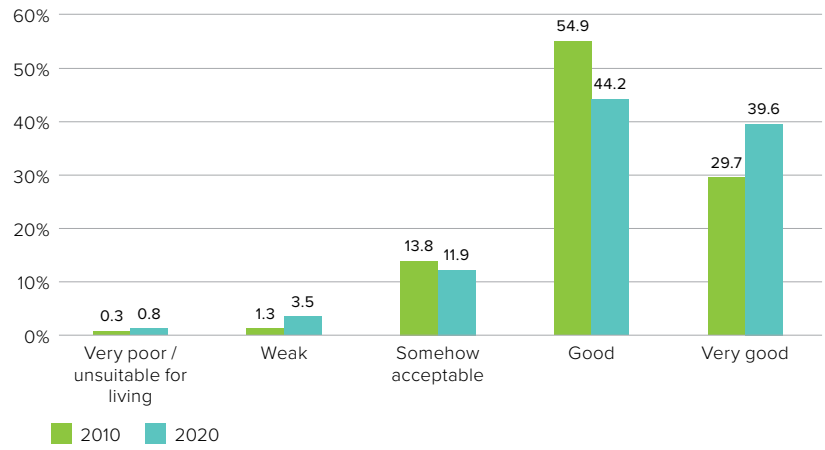
A comparison of data between 2010 and 2020 shows a strong increase in the share of young people who describe housing as a very important personal problem. The data show a strong emphasis is put on the issue of the financial capability to buy or rent an apartment.

Another aspect of the housing problem can be identified in young people's increased sensitivity to this problem. The growth in housing prices over the last two decades contributed to young people's increased sensitivity to this issue. This has also resulted in a somewhat paradoxical increase in satisfaction with existing living conditions.

Young people are generally very satisfied with their housing conditions. Thus, compared to 2010, in 2020 there was an increase in the share of young people who rated their housing conditions as very good. In the period 2010–2020, only between 1.6% and 4.3% of young people rated housing conditions as poor or very poor.

Figure 5.4:

Assessment of housing conditions of young people.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The large proportion of owner-occupied housing in Slovenia acts as a buffer for the housing problems of young people, who mostly rely on the existing structure of private housing (mostly owned by their parents). Approximately 54% of young people state that they would first turn to their parents in the event of a need for housing, with all other answers being less frequent. In accordance with strong parental support, specific forms or modifications of young people's housing expectations have developed over time that affect their perception of independence, personal development and lifestyle orientations. For example, about half of the young people (approx. 47%), who rate their living conditions as good and the significant amount (37.9%) who rate them as very good, at the same time state that they have a housing problem. It is worth mentioning that almost 88% of young people living with their parents rate their living conditions as good or very good. At the same time, almost half of young people (approximately 46%) who live with their parents permanently, state that they also have a housing problem. The importance of this problem among young people also increases with age, i.e. older groups of young people are more likely to notice a housing problem compared to younger groups. For example, 40% of young people in the 15-18 age group recognise this problem as important or very important, while in the 19-24 age group this share is

45.6% and in the 25-29 age group it is 47%. Despite the fact that young people assess their living conditions as good, they also perceive that there is a housing problem, which is caused by a variety of reasons. The main one is undoubtedly the difficulty of obtaining one's own apartment.

To the question 'Do you expect your parents to help you solve your housing problem?' most young people answered in the affirmative. In the analysis of expectations regarding parental assistance, it is interesting that expectations regarding parental assistance for buying a home decline with age (89.9% in the age group 15–18 expect parents to help buy a home, in the 19–24 group this share is 81.4%, and in the group of 25–29 years 70.3%). This can be explained by the greater maturity of this age group and the harmonization of their expectations with socio-economic trends in the real estate sector.

The increase in young people's satisfaction with their housing conditions can therefore be explained as an expression of their satisfaction with the existing housing supply, which is based on coexistence or financial dependence (support) in relation to parents. Parents provide an adequate standard of living for a relatively large proportion of young people, who are at least partially aware of their position of relatively good housing in relation to other social groups that have potentially poorer material bases for adequate housing. This is also nicely reflected in the interviews. Interviewees state, inter alia, the following views:

> *"My living conditions are much better than my needs. We live in a very big house that is nicely decorated. I have my own room, garden, and large garden. In addition, we have a house in a very quiet location, but I still have only about 15 minutes to the city centre."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

> *"My living conditions are perfectly adequate to my needs. I have a three-room apartment; I have two computers, a television, my violin. I would like a bigger private kitchen, but for now I have everything I need, anything else would be superfluous."*
>
> (Maša, 26 years old, precariously employed)

This is also consistent with the data that show that a large proportion of young people who rated their housing conditions as good or very good mostly notice that both young people and the elderly are disadvantaged when it comes to prosperity (about 64.2 % of young people who are satisfied and as many as 66.7% who are very satisfied with their living conditions think so). The stated position of satisfaction with existing housing conditions with regard to initially limited living capacity is complemented by data that show an increase in the lack of private space in the real estate where the individual young person lives. It should also be noted that about 51% of those who stated that they feel a lack of private space live permanently with their parents. This data is in line with the hypothesis of hidden collateral effects of "relative satisfaction" with existing housing conditions, as a large proportion of young people (64.9%) state that they feel cramped despite the good or very good housing conditions in which they live.

Young people's satisfaction with their existing living conditions is only seemingly high. Young people are satisfied with the material aspects of their existing living conditions in relation to the context of the inability to implement their own housing aspirations. The data reveal a simultaneous feeling of a lack of space and problems securing financial resources to buy a home.

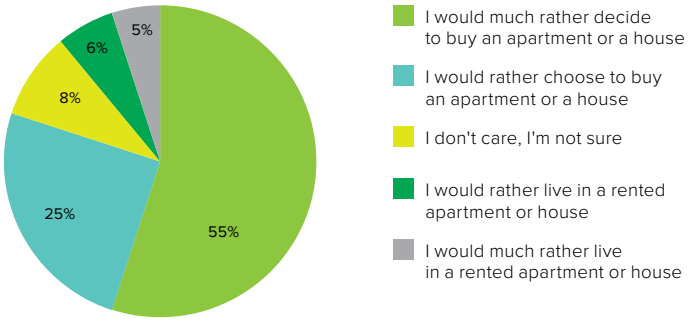
These data are in line with the data on young people's housing preferences, which are presented in the next section. Namely, the data strongly emphasize the importance of having their own housing as opposed to rented housing, which indicates that young people place their current housing satisfaction within the context of problems marked by the inability to gain quick (short-term) access to their own property.

5.2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING PREFERENCES

When they have the ability to choose, young people strongly emphasize the need to live in their own apartment or house (81%). The share of young people who would prefer to rent an apartment is negligible (11.3%). This raises the important question of what kind of living orientations are actually tied to their extremely strong need to own an apartment. Is it possible to identify any other elements of this complex position in addition to the financial element (rising real estate prices, social factors, inability to obtain mortgage etc.)? For example, if we connect the stated data on the purchase of an apartment/house with the data on young people's (educational, leisure, work) mobility, we get an insight into slightly different elements and a different point of view regarding these issues.

Figure 5.5:

Decision on the purchase or lease of real estate.



Source: Mladina 2020.

The data show that certain segments of the younger population also associate the notion of having their own apartment with elements of certain lifestyle orientations, which are related to "housing sedentarity"[1] (Kesselring, 2008; Hočevar, 2017), i.e., low domestic and international.

1 Sedentarity attributes toa type of lifestle that involves low levels of physical mobility and social consequences that this brings with it (e.g. potential low fluctuation of ideas, exchange of information and social engagement). Housing sedentarity is in this relation a derivative of specific forms of sedentary lifestyles and effects that it relates to housing mobility. See also sub-meaning in "sedentism" in cultural anthropology, etc.

low domestic and international mobility (Kesselring, 2008; Hočevar, 2017). In the Slovene context, this is based on the proverbially rigid (local-autarkic) territorial organization, a dispersed settlement pattern, and a markedly low share of rented and spatially compact multi-dwellings (Uršič, Hočevar, 2007). For example, in a survey, a large proportion of young people state that they would be willing to move to another European country (73.5%) or another place in the country (73%) if offered suitable living and working conditions. At the same time, this group of young people have little experience with studying, living, or working conditions in other countries. The vast majority of young people stated that they only had vacationed in or travelled to other countries.

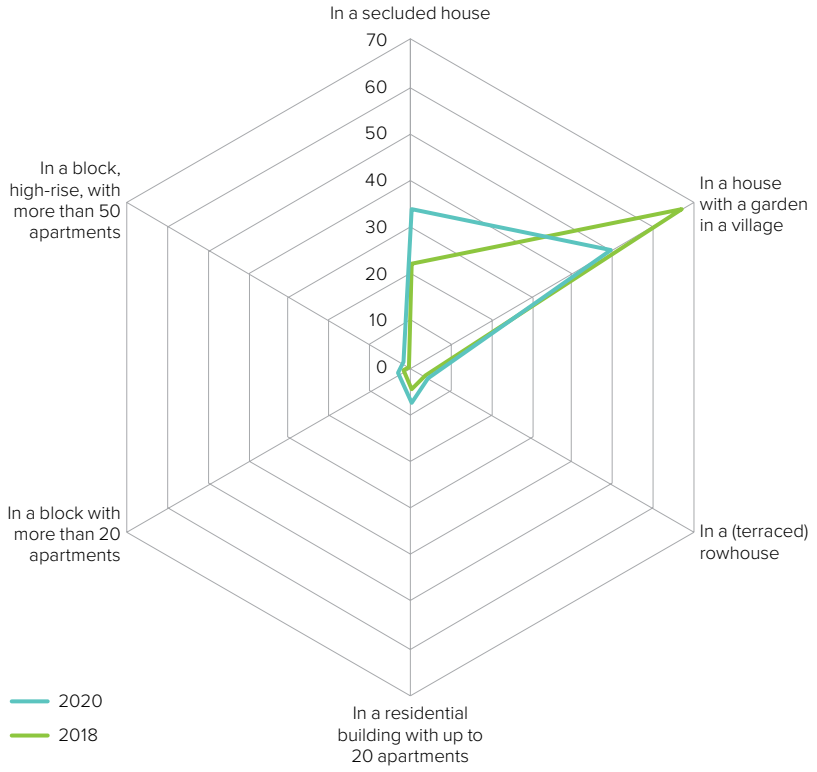
Young people's relatively low practical (in terms of study, work, life), national, and international mobility indicates a specific perception of their declarative readiness to move abroad, which is also reflected in the data on their "desire to emigrate from Slovenia for more than six months", where most young (52.3%) at the same time state that they do not have an excessive desire to move out of the country for a long period of time. The mentioned specifics of young people's housing and mobility preferences, described in this chapter, indicate the adoption of living patterns according to the principles of strong attachment to the local environment and locally acceptable social living practices, which presuppose the acquisition of their own housing as a basic platform for further independence (according to a Slovenian proverb – "First the stable, then the cow"). The notions of a suitable way of living are thus reproduced in young people to a somewhat lesser extent than in the older population (Uršič, Hočevar, 2007; Hočevar et al., 2004–2018) through established living patterns, and are associated with the need to live in one's own, larger apartment or house outside larger (compact) settlements with higher settlement densities.

Owning apartment or house is an extremely strong value orientation among young people, which is associated with reproduction and with the transfer of long-term housing patterns in Slovenia, which in turn are based on a specific dispersed settlement pattern, a low share of rental housing, and a pronounced local-territorial organization.

Data on the desired type and location of real estate in the Mladina 2020 survey reflect the context of Slovenia, where the desire for a specific way of living in a detached house or a house with a garden in a settlement prevails. It is not surprising that a high percentage of young people imagine a house with a garden alone or in a small settlement as the primary type and location of their property. It is a reproduction of established patterns of living, which are linked to specific contextual physical and socio-historical characteristics of the Slovenian settlement system. This is also shown by a comparison of data from the Mladina 2020 survey and Spatial and Environmental Values (Hočevar et al., 2018), where the general sample of the Slovenian population is compared with the youth population.

Figure 5.6:

Real estate preferences of the population.



Sources: Hočevar et al 2018; Mladina 2020.

Similar to the general sample of the Slovenian population, the same living preferences are noticeable also among young people. In order to analyse potential changes in broader social trends, we tried to identify individual segments of the youth population that prefer specific forms of living over others. It is interesting that the further analysis of young people that are currently living in the city also confirmed the assumption of transfer or presence of specific housing preferences linked to less dense urban settlements. The group of young people currently living in cities, like other groups of young people living outside major cities, expressed a strong desire to stay 'in a secluded house' (27.5%) or 'in a house with a garden in a settlement' (45.7%).

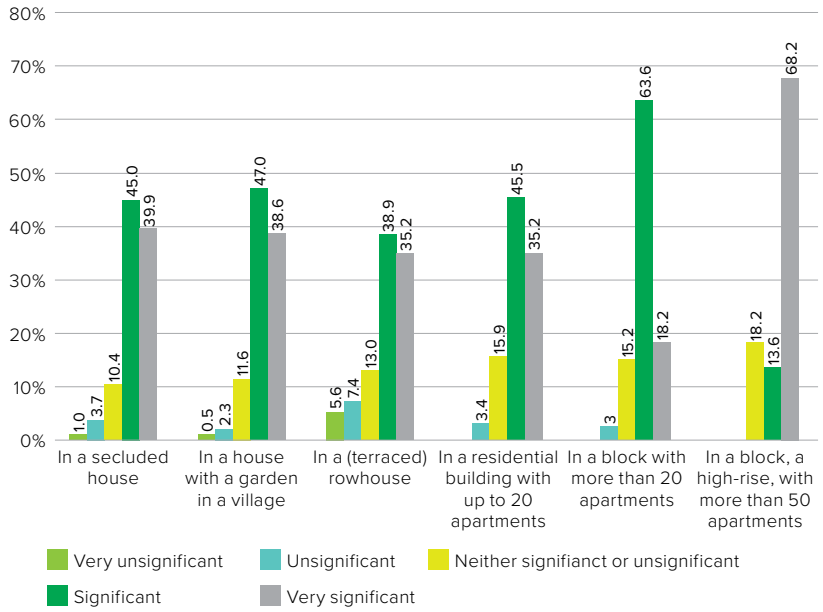
Enthusiasm about specific forms of living among young people is associated with current practices of spatial development leading to the suburbanization of Slovenia and dispersed settlements, which is not in accordance with the principles of sustainable development that reject such forms of spatial development. Despite the frequent mention of value orientations that are in line with the orientations of sustainable development, there are also strong deviant orientations, which indicates that the principles of sustainable development among young people is present, but not sufficiently integrated into their value structure so as to lead to reorientations towards more sustainable housing preferences. In the context of living, the principles of sustainable development among young people are present only at a declarative level or only as an adjunct to the quality of living, reflected in emphasizing the importance of green spaces and nature.

These data are complemented by the responses of young people, which relate to the most important characteristics of the place of residence. When asked if they could list the three characteristics of a living place that they consider most important for quality of life, living near 'access to natural environments and natural resources' stood out strongly, followed by 'access to various services'. The extremely high evaluation of and linking of quality of life to access to natural resources are covered by the aforementioned characteristics of the "Slovenian way of living", which is characterized by low densities, low concentration of settlements, a strong emphasis on local identities, and good access to services. There are cross-links between the desire to protect nature and living in detached houses or houses with a garden in a village. As many as 84.9% of young people men-

tion that they would like to live in a house alone and that environmental protection is important or very important to them. Additionally, 85.6% of young people would like to live in a house with a garden in a settlement and environmental protection is important or very important to them.

Figure 5.7:

The importance of environmental protection according to the type of real estate in which young people want to live.



Source: Mladina 2020.

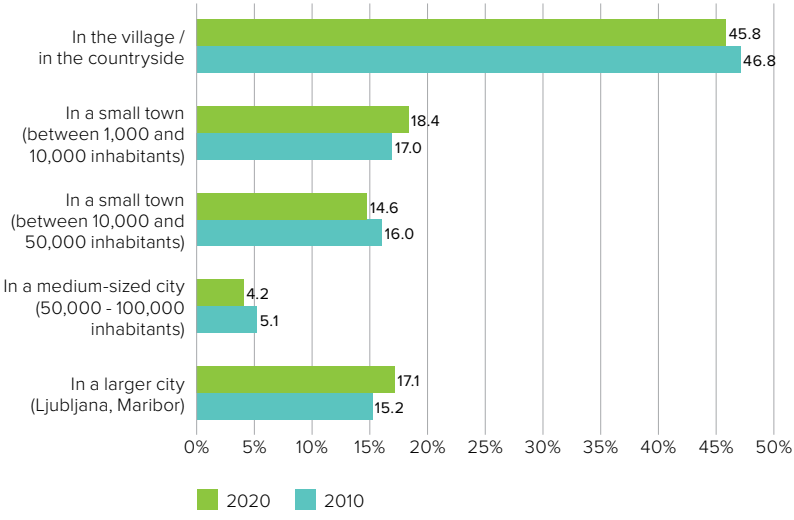
Enthusiasm about specific forms of living among young people is associated with current practices of spatial development and suburbanization of Slovenia where dispersed settlement principles are not in line with sustainable development. Despite the frequent citation of value orientations that are in line with sustainable development, there are also strong deviant orientations, which indicates that the principles of sustainable development among young people are present, but not deeply integrated into their value structure.

5.2.3 KEY FEATURES OF YOUTH HOUSING SUPPLY

Young people are strongly attached to the living environment from which they come. They maintain a strong level of attachment to their first place of residence even after the transition to the next age group or period of schooling (e.g. transition from high school to college). Statistically, there are no major differences according to age group and place of residence. Older groups of young people aged 19 to 24 and 25 to 29 include a slightly higher proportion of young people now living in a larger city, but the differences are not distinguishable enough.

Figure 5.8:

Where do you live now?



Source: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Most young people remain in the original living environment where they have spent most of their time, with only minor corrections in the transition to the next period of life, such as the transition from high school to college (a smaller proportion [approx. 4%] moved to a larger city). Data on young people's strong attachment to the "domestic" living environment are supplemented with data on the low readiness of older groups of young people for domestic and international mobility. The fact that

young people's readiness to move decreases with age is particularly surprising. For example, when asked about the readiness to move permanently to another European country under favourable conditions, 86.1% of young people in the 15-18 age group indicated readiness to move, while in the 19-24 age group this share is 85.7% and in the 25-29 age group 74.7%. Even more significant is the data on the desire to move abroad for a longer period, where 23.7% of young people in the 15-18 age group gave an affirmative answer, in the 19-24 age group this share is 21.4% and in the 25-29 age group only 13.9%. A similar decline in young people's readiness to move is also observed in the case of moving to another place in Slovenia and readiness to complete part of their education abroad. Younger age groups seem to have higher expectations regarding relocation, work, and education abroad, as older groups of young people have a declining willingness to engage in such activities abroad.

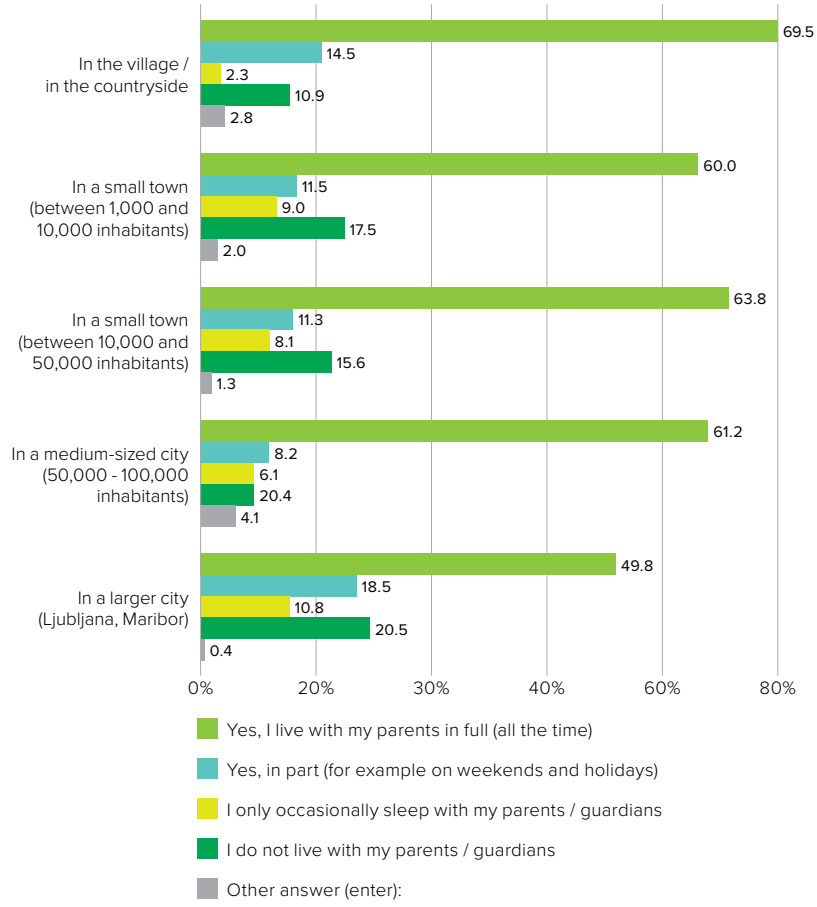
It is worth noting that, compared to previous periods, there have been small changes towards greater migration mobility towards larger cities, but these shares are not so noticeable as to identify a clear trend of young people's changing living patterns. Strong attachment to the family environment and the gradual – given the growing age – decline in the desire to move abroad or to another place in Slovenia are still strongly associated with the phenomenon of the LAT phase, i.e. the late transition from the first family environment to living independently from parents. As age increases, there is a decline in permanent residence with parents, which indicates a gradual trend of young people's independence (85.3% of young people in the age group 15-18 state that they live permanently with their parents, while in the group 19-24 years this share is 65, 4% and 44.5% in the 25–29 age group), but the involvement of young people in family support systems (e.g. expected parental help in solving various problems) is still so obvious that a radical decline in this trend must not be expected. Despite the gradual independence, we can confirm that the LAT phase is still strongly present due to various factors and is the predominant social phenomenon among young people that has a significant impact on the processes of personal and social development in Slovenia.

Data on young people's strong attachment to their "domestic" living environment are supplemented with data on the low readiness of older groups of young people for domestic and transnational mobility. It is particularly surprising that young people's willingness to move decreases with age.

Data on real estate ownership confirm the data related to the high share of private dwellings in Slovenia (see also SURS, 2011–2020), as 80.9% of young people state that their parents live in their own real estate. The picture of this specific living and housing situation is supplemented by data regarding the location of young people's residences. When asked 'Do you live in the household of your parents or guardians?', about 21% of respondents revealed that they do not live or occasionally sleep in the house/apartment of their parents/guardians, and about 14% live with their parents only on weekends or holidays. Despite the fact that a certain share (approximately 35%) of young people spend most of their time in another place or other location due to a different life situation (e.g. schooling), the data still show a strong attachment to their original (local) living environment. Simply put, it seems that young people, despite the potential move to a different living environment, dwelling, house, or place of residence, maintain close connection with premises that have similar living characteristics both at the level of identification in regard to local (territorial) frameworks (e.g. place of residence is still located in the home environment despite the change of living environment) and in regard to maintaining living preferences based on the characteristics of the home environment (e.g. popularity of house life, low density etc.). This assumption is also partially confirmed by the data on the forms of household in which young people live in larger cities and in suburban areas.

Figure 5.9:

Place of residence according to life with parents or guardians.



Source: Mladina 2020.

The data showing that young people in larger cities (Ljubljana, Maribor) live to a lesser extent in their parents' household than their peers outside larger cities is particularly surprising; 49.8% of young people living in larger cities state that they live permanently with their parents – in all other groups this share exceeds 60%. Due to rising real estate prices, young people in larger cities would be expected to rely more on parental support and "family property" than their peers from smaller towns or rural areas. In this context, there is a higher degree of youth independence in larger cities compared to their peers living outside larger cities.

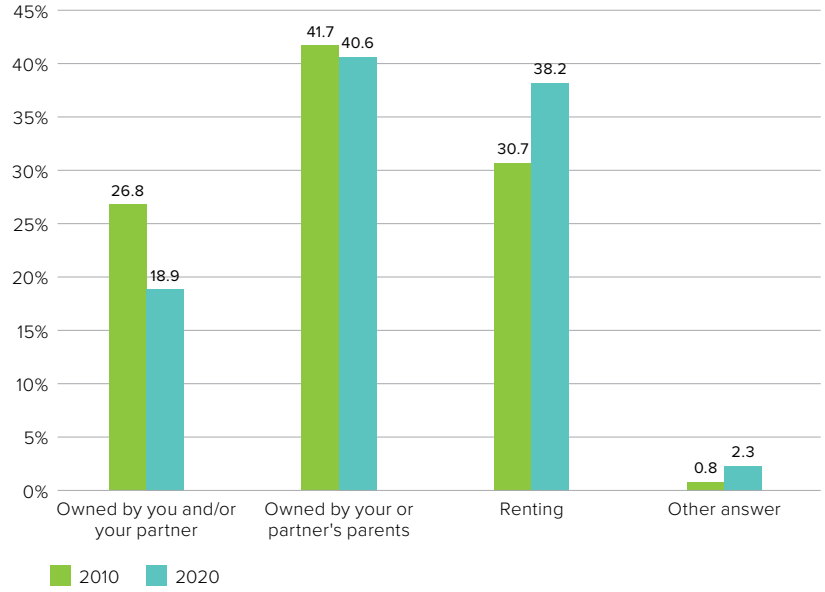
This figure complements data showing that young people living in cities also expect less help from their parents in solving their housing issues compared to their peers outside larger cities. 75.1% of young people living in larger cities expect help from their parents in solving the housing problem, while in all other groups this share is higher and hovers around 80%.

Young people in larger cities (Ljubljana, Maribor) live in their parents' households to a lesser extent than their peers outside larger cities. Due to rising real estate prices, young people in larger cities would be expected to live with their parents or rely on "family property" more than their peers from smaller cities or rural areas. In this context, we could talk about a higher degree of youth independence in larger cities, which is complemented by the fact that young people from larger cities also expect less help from their parents when solving the housing problem.

Data that show the structure of real estate ownership in which young people who no longer live in their parents' households are also significant. The data indicate changes or a shift in the structure of real estate ownership, which is associated with difficult access of young people to own real estate.

Figure 5.10:

Ownership structure of real estate inhabited by young people.



Source: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Comparing the data between 2010 and 2020, in 2020 there is a noticeable increase in the number of tenants in relation to the larger "family ownership of real estate" in 2010, when the ownership or the purchase of real estate took place through the participation of individual family members (real estate owners account for about 4% of young people). The shift to higher real estate rental, despite young people's different living preferences, can be explained by the difficulties young people and their families or parents have in accessing financial resources for the purchase of real estate (e.g. the effects of rising real estate prices in recent times, difficult mortgage conditions, deteriorating social situation, etc.).

Comparing the data between 2010 and 2020, there is a noticeable increase in the number of tenants compared to higher "family property ownership" in 2010. The shift towards more frequent rental of real estate despite young people's different housing preferences can be explained by the difficulties young people and their families have in accessing financial resources for the purchase of real estate.

5.3 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key findings of this chapter can be summarized in the following points:

1. Despite the still strongly noticeable LAT phase in the context of Slovenia, from the point of view of housing and housing preferences there have been some changes in young people's value orientations, which indicate a gradual change in this trend and a transition to other forms of youth independence and the growing need for a greater degree of internationalization.
2. A comparison of data between 2010 and 2020 shows a strong increase in the share of young people who describe housing as a very important personal problem. The data show that a strong emphasis is put on the issue of the financial capability for buying or renting an apartment.
3. Young people's satisfaction with their existing living conditions is only seemingly high. Young people are satisfied with the material aspects of the existing living conditions in relation to the context of the inability to implement their own housing aspirations. The data reveal a simultaneous feeling of lack of space and housing neglect.
4. Owning apartment or house is an extremely strong value orientation among young people, which is associated with reproduction and with the transfer of long-term housing patterns of Slovenia, which are based on a specific dispersed settlement pattern, a low share of rental housing, and a pronounced local-territorial organization.

5. Enthusiasm about specific forms of living among young people is associated with current practices of spatial development and suburbanization of Slovenia, where dispersed settlement principles are not in line with sustainable development. Despite the frequent citation of value orientations that are in line with the orientations of sustainable development, there are also strong deviant orientations, which indicates that the principles of sustainable development among young people are present, but not deeply integrated into their value structure.

6. Data on the strong attachment of young people to the "domestic" living environment are supplemented with data on the low readiness of older groups of young people for internal and transnational mobility. It is particularly surprising that young people's willingness to move decreases with age.

7. Young people in larger cities (Ljubljana, Maribor) live in their parents' households to a lesser extent than their peers outside larger cities. Due to rising real estate prices, young people in larger cities would be expected to live with their parents or rely on "family property" more than their peers from smaller cities or rural areas. In this context, we could talk about a higher degree of independence among young people in larger cities, which is complemented by the fact that young people from larger cities also expect less help from their parents when solving the housing problem.

8. Comparing the data between 2010 and 2020, there is a noticeable increase in the number of tenants compared to higher "family property ownership" in 2010. The shift towards more frequent rental of real estate despite different housing preferences of young people can be explained by difficult access of young people and their families to financial resources for the purchase of real estate.

Based on the above findings, we can make three basic recommendations for policy making:

1. It is necessary to formulate policies that will support to a much greater extent the "practical" implementation of sustainable living forms and lifestyles. For the time being, young people only support the transition to sustainable ways of living on a "declarative level", but on a practical level their realization does not take place for various reasons.

2. It is necessary to create progressive housing policies aimed at mitigating growing social inequalities, and even more so at mitigating trends of the degradation of developmental (socio-economic) ecosystems in individual areas of the country. This is more than just a problem of providing sufficient housing capacity, as it addresses complex solutions of how to create the right relations between stakeholders in certain areas with the help of housing and housing policies that will promote both economic development and support a high quality of life for a wide range of the population and prevent gentrification processes.

3. The data show that young people's readiness for international mobility decreases with age, which can be both positive and negative. The negative effects of de-internationalization need to be mitigated by formulating policies that will encourage and support the transfer of knowledge, experience, and information from the international environment to the local space. It is about creating policies of a "new localism" adapted to Slovenia (Mlinar, 2012).

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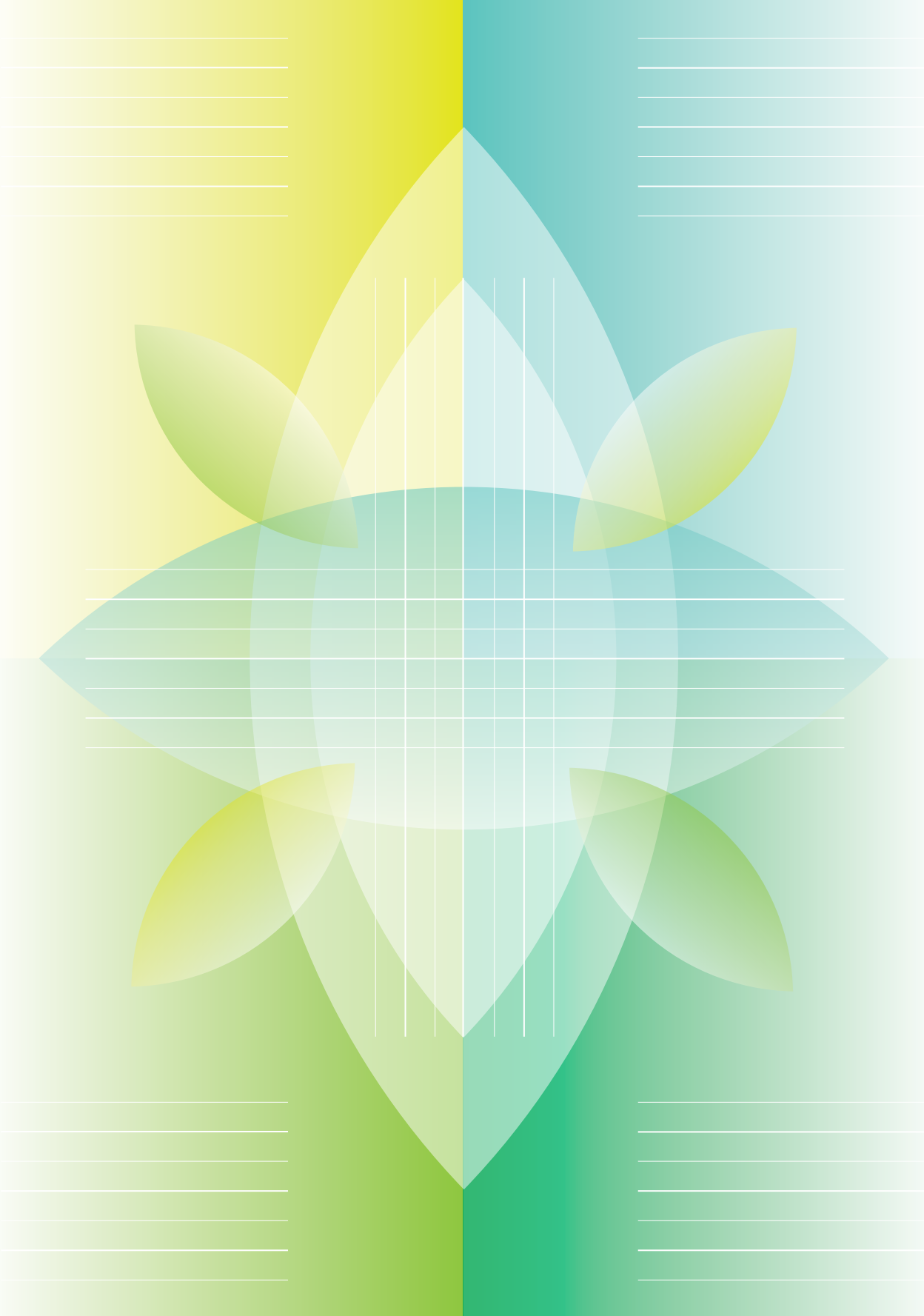
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RUDI KLANJŠEK AND ANDREJ NATERER

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Good health affects people's quality of life and life expectancy, but also contributes to personal (physical/mental/emotional) well-being and self-esteem. Healthy young people are more successful in education and the workplace, so investing in and maintaining young people's health significantly reduce pressure on national health systems and the budget, and make a positive contribution to the labour market (EU Youth Report, 2015).

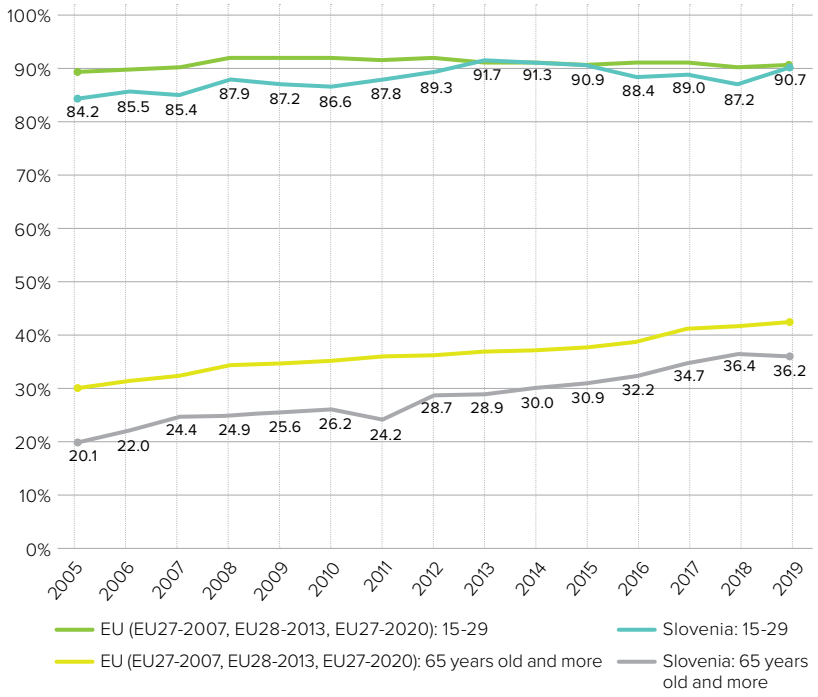
Not surprisingly, health as a comprehensive state of physical, mental, and social well-being (Musil, 2010) is consequently defined as one of the eleven key areas of the European Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (Csuday, 2019), which seeks to "promote mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, and the prevention and treatment of injuries, eating disorders, addiction and substance abuse" (Publications Office of the European Union, 2018: 61).

Of course, health is also crucially important for young people. In the study Youth 2010 (Lavrič et al., 2010), health was shown to be the most important among fourteen values – 95% of young people said that health for them was important or very important. Data from the European Statistical Office show that European young people (15-29) largely assess their health as (very) good – about 90% of young people share that assessment. Data also show that the mentioned assessment within the group of young people appears as relatively stable in a longitudinal perspective (the assessment has been around 90% since the year of the first measurement, i.e. 2005); however, it decreases with the age of the respondents. Among those who are, for example, 65 years of age or older, only 40% still rate their health as good or very good. Nevertheless, it is certainly encouraging that the trend for this age group is positive (more and more older people are feeling healthy). This also applies to Slovenia, which lags slightly behind the EU average in the overall health assessment (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1:

Health perception, EU and Slovenia.

A share of young people that rates their health as good or very good



Source: Eurostat, Self-perceived health [hlth_silc_10].

As a result, Slovenian young people are mostly satisfied with their health, with the share of (very) satisfied being slightly lower than the share of young people who rate their health as (very) good. It is also important that the satisfaction with health among young people has slightly decreased in the last decade – if in 2010 about 80% of young people were (very) satisfied with their health, in 2020 "only" about 70% were. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that health self-assessment, as shown in the Figure above, has improved slightly over the last decade. At the same time, as can be seen below, young people have even strengthened their healthy living habits. This could mean that their expectations of health in particular increased, and that they are therefore less satisfied with their health today than they would have been a decade ago.

Health satisfaction is strongly associated with general life satisfaction ($r = 0.38$; $p < 0.01$). It is therefore unsurprising that young people in 2020 were on average significantly less satisfied with life when compared to the data from a decade before (2010: M = 7.24; SO = 1.77; 2020: M = 6.98, SO = 2.08). Even in this case, it would be difficult to find reasons in the objectively lower standard of living, as young people's economic situation has not deteriorated in the last decade, rather the opposite (e.g., the average income of young people has increased by about 20% in real terms over the last 10 years). So again, an explanation of higher expectations is offered, this time toward one's life as a whole, or an explanation related to other psychosocial factors, such as stress, feelings of insecurity, interpersonal relationships, and similar.

The proportion of young people who are predominantly or very satisfied with their health has fallen from about 80% to about 70% in the last decade, and the general satisfaction of young people with life has also declined significantly. This decline in satisfaction occurred despite the simultaneous improvement of some aspects of young people's health and living standards.

Although young people mostly feel healthy and are in fact on average healthier than older age groups, it should be noted that they are also more prone to "risky behaviour" (WHO, 2000). This is partly related to the general changes that young people experience in physiological and social development, and partly to the difficulties they face in the transition to adulthood and independence (Shedler and Block, 1990). Vulnerable groups of young people, for example those facing unemployment, poverty, or social exclusion, may be particularly prone to more serious physical and mental health problems (Publications Office of the European Union, 2018). In this respect, risk factors for young people's health can be divided into factors of unhealthy lifestyle (lack of exercise/physical activity, use of substances, unhealthy food, body mass index) and factors related to the environment or external circumstances, such as the level of stress and conflict in the environment (at school, in

the family, at work), material living conditions, employment opportunities, etc.

Analyses of the relationship between health satisfaction and elements from the first set of factors confirm the results of comparable research. Those young people who are (expectedly) more satisfied with their health:

- Are actively engaged in sports ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$)
- Often eat fresh fruit and vegetables ($r = 0.11$; $p < 0.01$)
- Do not smoke tobacco ($r = 0.11$; $p < 0.01$)/ marijuana ($r = 0.13$; $p < 0.01$)
- Do not consume hard drugs ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.01$)
- Have a normal (18.5–25) body mass index ($r = 0.06$; $p < 0.05$)

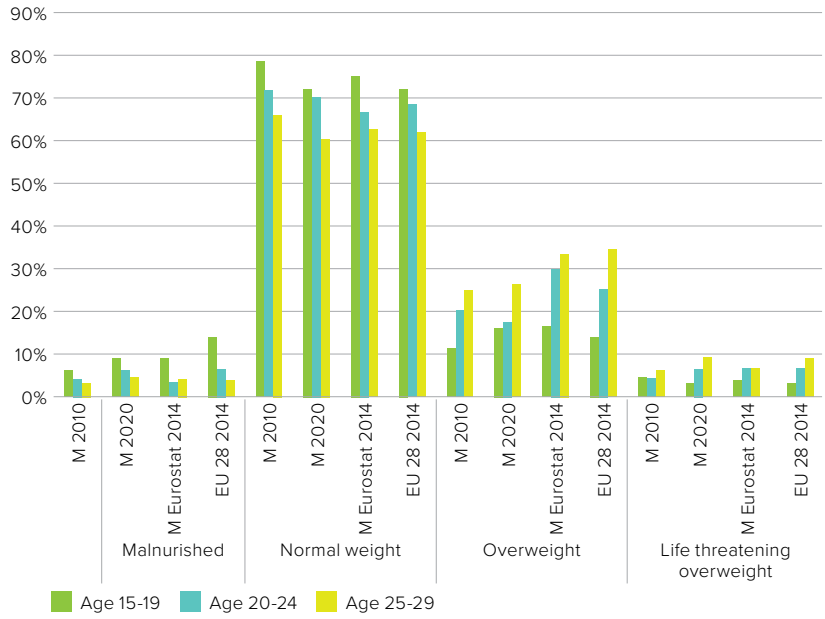
As expected, young people who are satisfied with their health are those who engage in sports, often eat fresh fruit and vegetables, do not smoke tobacco or marijuana, do not use “hard drugs”, and have a “normal” body mass index.

Interestingly, there is no connection between the frequency of alcohol consumption and health satisfaction, which could probably be attributed to the absence of directly noticeable effects of alcohol consumption on young people’s health (effects appear only later) and the high level of societal tolerance for alcohol.

Among Slovenian young people, 27% are overweight (BMI> 25; CDC, 2020), and for about 7% their weight poses a threat to their health (BMI> 30; CDC, 2020). Compared to 2010, the share of the latter increased by approx. 35%. There is also a share, namely 7%, who fall into the category of malnourished (BMI <18.5). Compared to 2010, there are also more of these (+46%). Malnutrition is higher among women (9%, men 4%) and being overweight among men (31%, women 22%); the former decreases with age, the latter increases with age.

Figure 6.2:

Body mass index, EU and Slovenia, in age groups.



Source: Eurostat (Body mass index (BMI) by sex, age, and income quintile [hlth_ehis_bm1i]), Mladina 2020.

About one-tenth of young people (in Slovenia and the EU) aged between 25 and 29 have such a high body mass index that it endangers their health, and, compared to 2010, this share has increased by 50%. The situation among young people in Slovenia is otherwise quite similar to that measured at the level of the European Union in 2014.

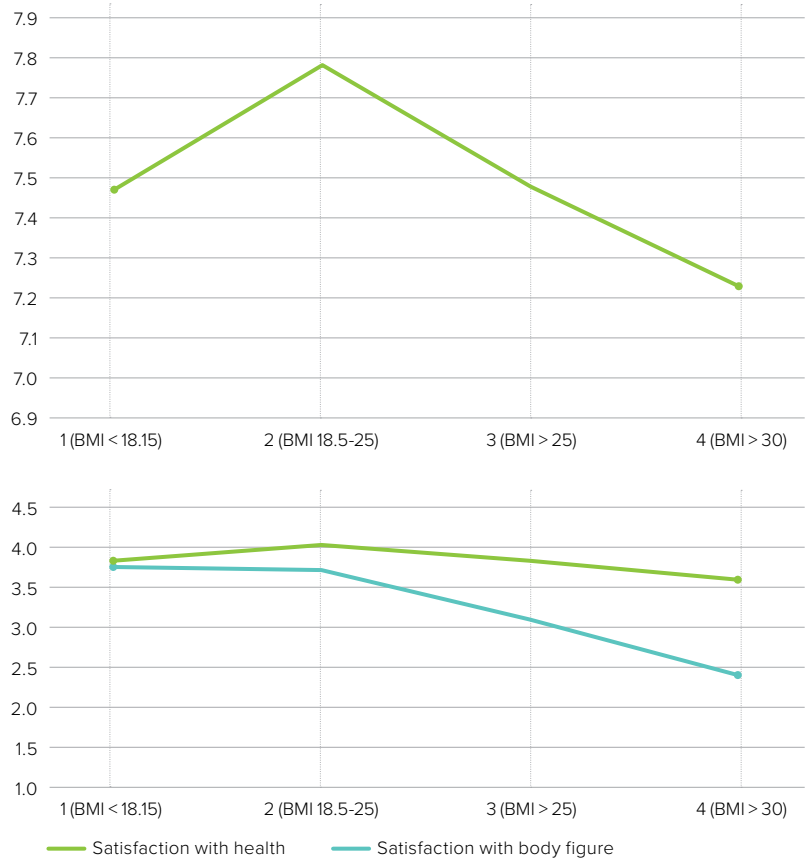
About one-tenth of young people (in Slovenia and the EU) aged between 25 and 29 have such a high body mass index that it endangers their health. Compared to 2010, the share of young people with a BMI index greater than 30 in this group has increased by 50%, and at the level of the entire population by about 35%. There are also more malnourished young people (+46%), with young women leading the way.

Thus, there are fewer and fewer young people with “normal weight” where it is important to note that this situation deteriorates with age (i.e., older age groups exhibit more deviation from the norm).

BMI is significantly (negatively) associated with satisfaction with one’s physique ($r = -0.35$; $p < 0.01$; on average, women show slightly lower satisfaction, $t = 2.44$; $p < 0.05$), a sentiment significantly associated with life satisfaction in general ($r = 0.34$; $p < 0.01$).

Figure 6.3:

BMI and satisfaction with life, body figure and health.

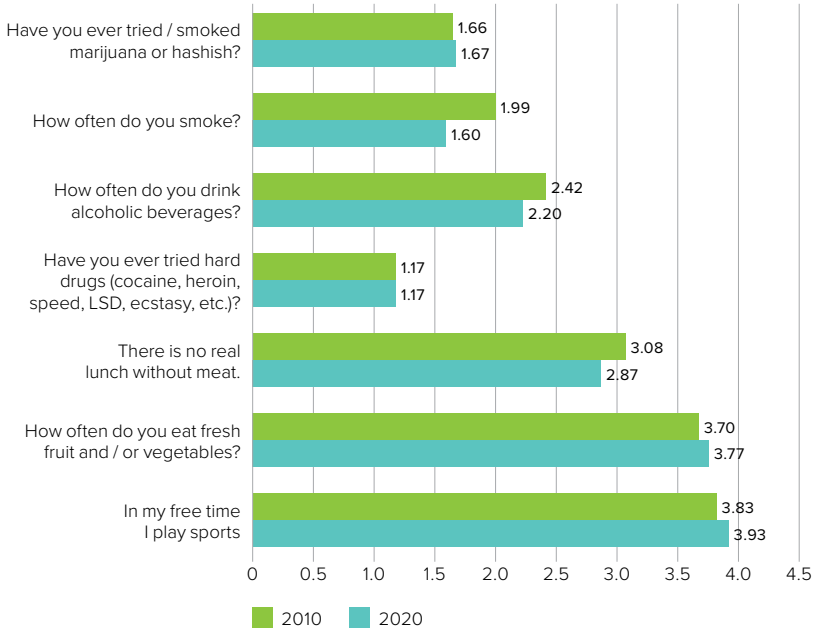


Source: Mladina 2020.

In the longitudinal perspective, young people in 2020 are living on average a healthier life on average than in 2010 – drinking and smoking less tobacco (marijuana and hard drug use remained at 2010 levels), while eating healthier and playing more sports.

Figure 6.4:

Lifestyles and habits of young people 2010 and 2020.



Source: Mladina 2020.

We can therefore conclude that the more negative picture of health and BMI assessment in 2020 as compared to 2010 stems from the effect of young people's healthier lifestyles failing to compensate for the effects of other health and BMI factors (e.g. increased sitting time "in front of screens", which are usually negatively associated with life satisfaction and physique: r (both) = –0.11; p <0.01).

The connection between lifestyle and health can be illustrated by the following excerpts from interviews with young study participants:

> *"I take care of my health above all with my diet. I also try to buy locally produced goods. Twice a month, a family friend brings us fresh vegetables from his own farm. When I was working in Murska Sobota, I stumbled upon a farm where I now regularly buy buckwheat and millet, and I also buy a lot at the local market. I also try to go hiking on Pohorje at least 3 times a week."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

> *"I take care of my health through recreation, I try to be outside as much as possible, I also try to eat healthily if there is time."*
>
> (Maša, 26 years old, precariously employed)

> *"My health is pretty good, compared to my peers I'm in good shape, which I maintain by exercising, running, doing strength exercises, going for walks, etc.... And I also strive to keep variety in my diet, which I think is very important. You feel good if you are active and eat properly. This way of life also helps me stay productive throughout the day. "*
>
> (Špela, 16 years old, high school student and young religious person)

> *"On a scale from 1 to 10, I would pin my health at a solid seven. My physical health is much better than my mental health. Recreation and a healthy lifestyle, whatever that means, have a positive effect primarily on the physical aspect of health, while mental health is almost entirely dependent on the objective circumstances in which we live. That is why there is a considerable discrepancy between the two."*
>
> (Gregor, 26 years old, young activist and extreme leftist)

Otherwise, young people today (2020) are less satisfied with their health than in 2010. This underlines the importance of components of the "second set of factors" (e.g. environmental factors, mental health factors). As indicated – the health of young people can be significantly affected by unfavourable conditions at school, at work, in the family (stress, conflict, unfavourable climate, lack of support in situations of emotional stress, marginalization, poor financial conditions, etc.). The significance of these factors is shown in the following table.

In a longitudinal perspective, young people in 2020 are living on average healthier than in 2010 – drinking less alcohol and less smoking tobacco, while at the same time eating healthier and engaging in more sports. Nevertheless, when compared to 2010, young people in 2020 are less satisfied with their health, showing that other factors, such as feelings of parental love, stress, or loneliness, also have a significant impact on young people's health. The share of young people that perceive loneliness as a problem has increased by 76% in ten years, as well as the share of young people who feel stress a few or most days a week (by 110%). These findings, together with the average increase in body weight, indicate a general deterioration in young people's psychophysical health, which is not offset by the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

Table 6.1:

The most important factors of health satisfaction among young people.

HEALTH SATISFACTION	
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PARENTS – I have the feeling that my parents love me very much.	.242**
HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL STRESS?	–.229**
I enjoy doing my job.	.223**
HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE SPACE WHERE YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME?	.210**
I have/had a very nice time at school.	.200**
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PARENTS – I get along with my mother.	.194**
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PARENTS – I get along with my father.	.186**
There is (was) a very relaxed atmosphere in my class.	.182**
The work is too demanding and exhausting.	–.158**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – lack of money.	–.153**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – loneliness.	–.137**
HOW DO YOU ASSESS YOUR FAMILY'S MATERIAL POSITION IN RELATION TO THE SLOVENIAN AVERAGE?	.131**
My rights in the workplace are often violated.	–.127**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – Fear of failure in school, work, profession.	–.124**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – I'm afraid I won't be able to find employment.	–.106**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – Fear of being unemployed.	–.096**
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS – Housing problem.	–.094**
IS THE PLACE WHERE YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME (APT., ROOM, etc.) TOO SMALL?	.087**

Source: Mladina 2020.

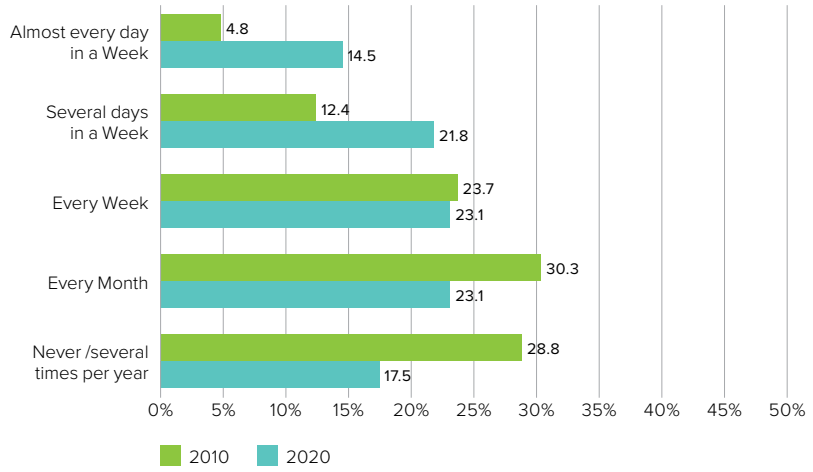
At the top of the eighteen factors or statistically significant correlates of health satisfaction are the feeling of parental love and stress. And although causality cannot be inferred from the connections found, it is nevertheless evident in some cases. For example, it can be said with considerable certainty that a lack of parental love and a poor relationship with parents (lack of understanding) cause "emotional discomfort" such as stress – all three measures of the relationship between young people and their parents are statistically significantly ($p < 0.01$) associated with feelings of stress. The absence of love is also statistically associated with feelings of fear of unemployment and failure, including loneliness, which is also identified as an important factor in mental health. The opposite explanation seems relatively unlikely in this respect (i.e., that parents, for example, would love a less healthy child less).

Furthermore, all elements of the relationship with parents are significantly related to the third factor of health – 'joy at work' ($0.16 < r < 0.23$; $p < 0.01$) and to factor no. 5 – 'I have/had a good time at school' ($0.15 < r < 0.21$; $p < 0.01$). These relationships are also significantly associated with the use of all substances except alcohol ($0.09 < r < 0.26$; $p < 0.01$). These findings allow us to conclude that health satisfaction is crucially related to the family, not only in terms of what the family does (relationships), but also in terms of what the family has. As can be seen in Table 6.1, health satisfaction is also significantly related to the family's financial situation and living conditions.

A longitudinal analysis of the data (2010–2020) does not reveal major shifts in family relationships. The same applies to the subjective and objective assessment of the material condition. However, contrary goes for factors of mental health, namely 'loneliness' and 'stress'. The share of young people who perceive loneliness as a problem increased by 76% in ten years, and the share of young people who feel stress a few or most days a week by 110%.

Figure 6.5:

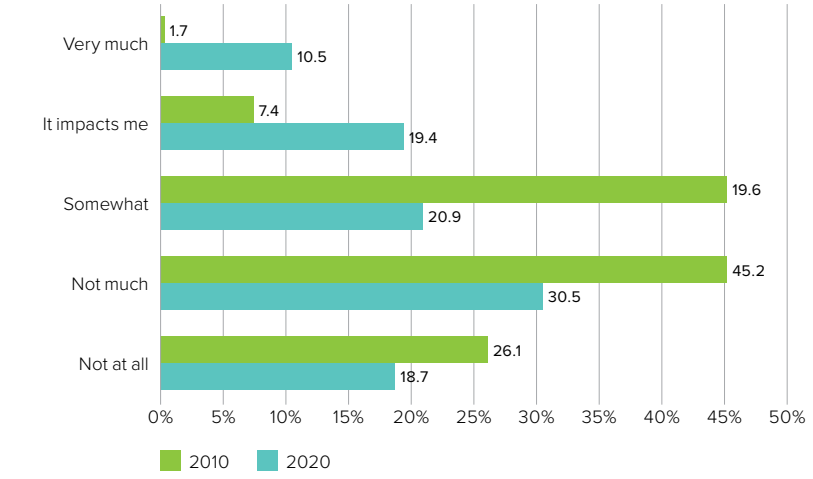
Stress among young people, 2010 and 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Figure 6.6:

Loneliness among young people, 2010 and 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Based on these analyses we can conclude that young people's relatively lower health satisfaction in 2020 as compared to 2010 is primarily related to mental health factors, which was certainly also affected by the Covid-19 epidemic (especially the aspect of loneliness).

> *"I feel healthy. Given that I go to the gym, I should be like that. But I'm annoyed by stress. And stress is huge – it's my biggest enemy.*
>
> (Benjamin, 17 years old, young musician)

> *"Mentally, at the moment, I am just fine. However, it wasn't like that when I was in the eighth or ninth grade, for there was a lot of stress and I felt somewhat lonely. More so in times of isolation due to Covid-19, when we are separated from friends and we don't hang out, and that has a negative impact on everyone. During the first lockdown, I lost all willpower for my training. If you're not physically active, you quickly get depressed."*
>
> (Ahac, 15 years old, high school student, athlete and model maker)

> *"I would rate my health as good. Mental health, however, fluctuates a little bit depending on several things. Especially this year (2020) or maybe even before, it didn't fluctuate so much. I was actually able to do what all the things that suited me, I was able to go where I wanted. This year, however, it seems to me that I have often felt totally sad and imprisoned with all these rules. I was troubled about how it was going to be. I felt a bit lost. I lost hope that things will get better. "*
>
> (Ester, 25 years old, researcher)

The importance of factors affecting mental health can be inferred from the fact that the U.S. National Health Service (CDC), which published the results of analysis, showing that stress causes cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes. This is supported by numerous other studies showing, in addition to the above, links between stress and weakened immune systems, digestive disorders and mental health problems, including depression, anger, anxiety, and self-harming behavior. The latter can also lead to suicide in the final stage (Gould et al., 2003).

The seriousness of the stress negatively impacting the youth is also shared by USA where authorities categorized it as epidemic, resulting in both economic and non-economic costs. Keating (2017) regarded stress as one of the main factors of premature mortality, a finding reported to be found among the working active population apso by Case and Deaton (2015). The fact that "something" is happening in Slovenia, which is increasingly reminiscent of an epidemic, is shown by official data from several institutions, which show that in the last 25 years the onset of mental illness by the age of 18 has increased by 64% (NIJZ, 2018). According to Hojka Gregorič Kumperščak, president of the Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of Slovenia and child psychiatrist at the University Medical Center Maribor, the onset of serious illnesses is moving to an earlier age. Thus, depression is already evident among primary school children, and there is an increasing number of self-injurious behaviours. Early forms of morbidity, such as personality disorders and psychoses, also occur earlier (in Zupanič, 2016: "More and more mental problems of children and adolescents", Delo, 24 April 2016).

A similar picture could also be found in data reported by the National Public Health Office (NIJZ). In the publication Mental Health of Children and Adolescents, authors state that in 2015 there were 73% more prescriptions for drugs to treat mental disorders in adolescents aged from 15 to 19 than in 2008 (NIJZ, 2018).

Gregorič Krumperščak, similar to Keating, believes that the increase of these disorders could be attributed to "changes in society that are causing more and more stress", in particular due to a decrease in space and resources for partner and family relationships. Parents are increasingly unavailable, also because in the name of greater competitiveness, the working day has become more flexible or destabilized. More and more parents are exhausted, scared, and dissatisfied due to greater workloads, competition, and insecurity, which makes it difficult for them to be "good" parents. Dr. Anica Mikuš Kos from Slovenian Philanthropy stated that we strive to "correct" children to be more efficient, but neglect the human dimension of caring for children, including the importance of free play outdoors (in Ivelja, 2017: "Children's mental health: more and

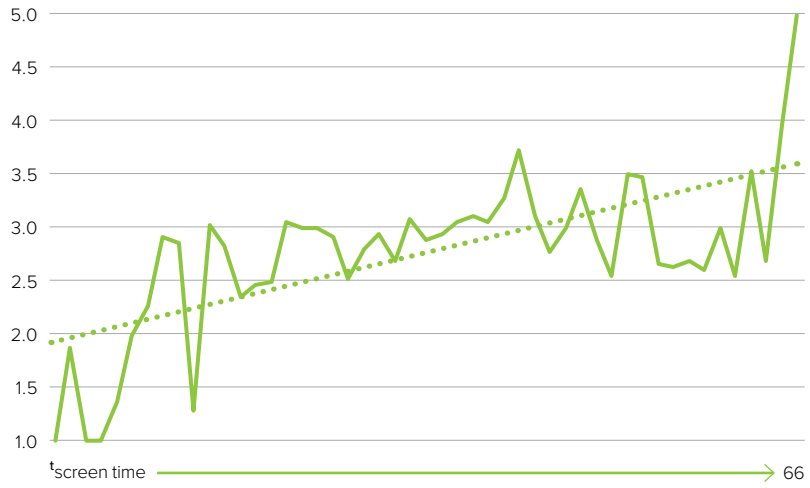
more young people taking psychiatric medications ", Dnevnik, 8 April 2017). Adults are increasingly depriving children of their freedom to manage their free time because they believe that unstructured free time is a lost time. Parents today increasingly exert control over their children, they are increasingly interested in what the child thinks and does, and less in what he feels (Maličev, 2018: "We talk too much about failures in our culture", Delo, 18 August 2018). Loneliness is also seen as a special problem in this light (Gil, 2017: Loneliness: "A Silent Plague That Is Hurting Young People Most," The Guardian).

Our data also confirm the connection between stress and family relationships. The feeling that the adolescent is loved by the parents is thus negatively ($r = \neg - 0.12$; $p < 0.01$) correlated with the feeling of stress. In addition to the relationship between young people and their parents, the interesting correlates of stress also include gender (women feel more stress; $r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$), lower material status of the family ($r = \neg - 0.06$; $p < 0.05$), negative climate in school/workplace (both; $r = 0.11$; $p < 0.01$), and the amount of time young people spend in front of computer screens and smart devices ($r = 0.14$; $p < 0, 01$).

Figure 6.7:

Stress and time young people spend in front of computer screens and smart devices.

Stress and the time spent online



Source: Mladina 2020.

Note: The time young people spend in front of computer screens and smart devices (t_{screen}) represents the sum of time categories (1 = less than 15 minutes per day, 6 = more than three hours per day) of eleven activities (max. 66), performed by young people on computers/smart devices (shopping, playing games, listening to music, school obligations, etc.).

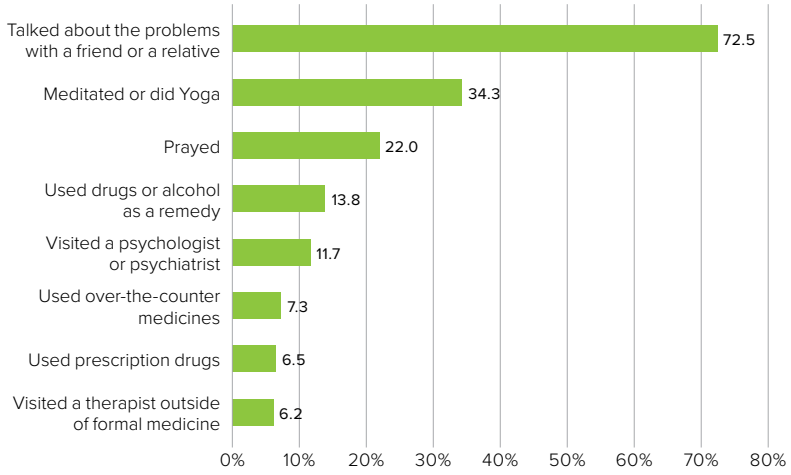
The main predictors of higher levels of stress include being female, poorer relationships with parents, the amount of time young people spend in front of smartphones and computers, a negative climate at school or at work, and the family having a lower financial status.

Elements of mental health problems can also be inferred from the context of adjustment strategies that young people adopt when facing problems. It is worrying that as many as 14% of them turned to alcohol or drugs due to the aforementioned problems.

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Figure 6.8:

Youth activities for improvement of mental health.



Source: Mladina 2020.

6.1 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on what has been written, the following should be highlighted:

1. The proportion of young people who are predominantly or very satisfied with their health has fallen from around 80% to around 70% in the last decade, and young people's overall satisfaction with life has also declined significantly. This decline in satisfaction occurred despite the simultaneous improvement of some aspects of young people's health and living standards;

2. Young people that engage in sports, often eat fresh fruit and vegetables, do not smoke tobacco or marijuana, do not use "hard drugs", and that have a "normal" body mass index mass are more satisfied with their health;

3. Among young people aged between 25 and 29, there are almost a tenth in Slovenia (and the EU) who have health-threatening body mass index (BMI). Compared to 2010, the share of young people with a BMI index greater than 30 in this group increased by 50%, and at the level of the entire population by about 35%. There are also more malnourished young people (+46%), with young women leading the way. Thus, there are fewer and fewer young people with "normal weight", and important to note that this situation deteriorates with age.

4. In a longitudinal perspective, young people in 2020 appear to be living a healthier life on average than in 2010 – there is a decline in drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco, while eating healthier and playing sports increased. The fact that young people are still less satisfied with their health in 2020 than they were in 2010 shows that other factors, such as feelings of parental love, stress, or loneliness, also have a significant impact on young people's health;

5. The share of young people who feel loneliness as a problem has increased by 76% in ten years, and the share of young people who feel stress a few or most days a week by 110%. This, together with the deterioration in weight, indicates a general deterioration in

the young people's psychophysical health, which is not offset by healthier lifestyles or better objective living factors (e.g. relatively lower unemployment rate, higher disposable income);

6. The main predictors of higher levels of stress include being a woman, the amount of time young people spend in front of smartphones and computers, a negative climate at school or at work, and the family having a lower financial status.;

7. The elements of mental health problems can also be inferred in the context of the adaptation strategies that young people adopt when they face problems. It is worrying that as many as 14% of them turned to alcohol or drugs due to the aforementioned problems.

What appears as crucial for the implementation of youth policies is the realization that the Slovenian youth increasingly faces the problem of mental health as a cost of a performance-oriented society. Changes in the labour market and the glorification of competition on the one hand, and increased uncertainty and demands on the other also affect socialization patterns or the functioning of families and the broader environment. In this respect, it is necessary to boost efforts to strengthen young people's adaptive capacities (e.g., introducing mental health training in the workplace and education) and to popularize methods that strengthen this ability (e.g., introducing meditation in education). It is also necessary to strengthen the public debate or reflection on the costs and benefits of a performance society or on the current model of development, which is clearly not in favour of young people's mental health.

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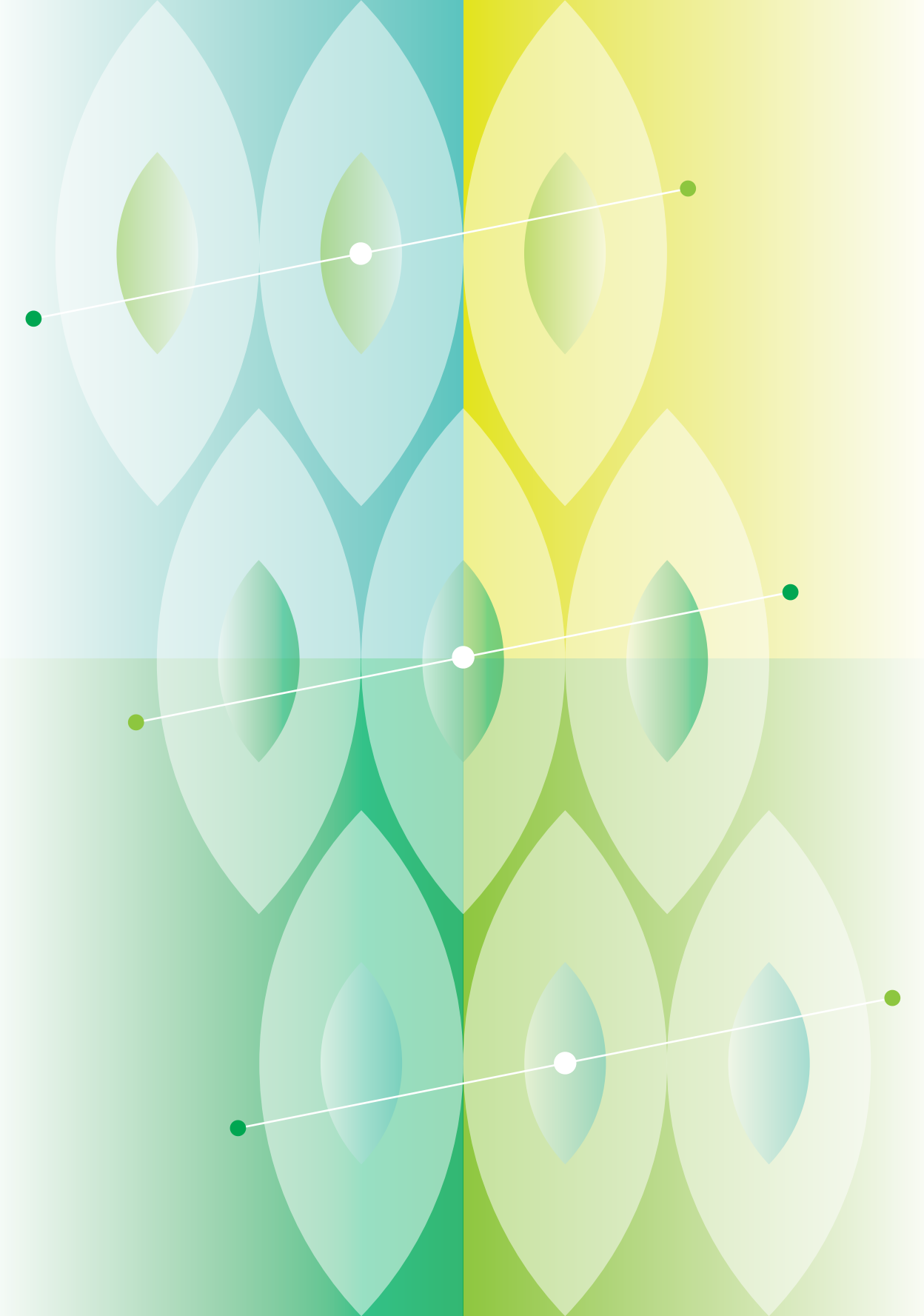
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DANIJELA LAHE, TINA CUPAR, TOMAŽ DEŽELAN,
AND NINA VOMBERGAR

7. YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILY, AND INTERGENERATIONAL MINDSETS

7.1 TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD

In recent decades, young people's life courses have been characterized by important changes in their transitions to adulthood. Since the 1990s, there has been a general trend of delayed transitions, such as from education to the labour market and full-time employment, from dependence and co-residence with parents to independence and formation of their own (family) life, from teenage years and early twenties to late twenties or to adulthood. Additionally, attainment of certain transitions has also become less linear and less predictable than they used to be (Švab, 2001; Eurostat, 2015, Furlong, 2017). Thus nowadays young people frequently attain specific transitions in different and less "traditional" order (meaning that the order is not always in the direction of finishing education first, then getting a job, getting married, and only then forming a family), and transitions are also less often "completely finished" (it is more frequent to return to living with parents or to an educational process in later years; Mandič, 2008; Buchmann and Kriesi, 2011). With regards to family life organization, some researchers understand these changes as a process of de-standardisation of family life-courses (Beck, 1992; Brückner and Mayer, 2005; Shanahan, 2000; Ule, 2014); however, it must be noted that these trends might vary between different European countries (Widmer and Ritschard, 2009; Bürgin et al., 2014; Nico, 2014).

The last national youth research in Slovenia (*Mladina 2010*) consistently confirmed this trend of delaying most youth transitions to adulthood for

young Slovenians, such as leaving the parental household, and creating a stable partnership and family (see Lavrič and Flere, 2011). The following chapters focus on these family-related trends of transitions after the year 2010.

7.1.1 LEAVING THE PARENTAL HOUSEHOLD

One of key transitions to adulthood is leaving the parental household, since this is usually closely related to gaining more independence and taking on responsibilities with less parental supervision, e.g. in decision making, managing their own household, financial decision making etc.

Data from 2020 show that many young people in Slovenia remain quite attached to their parental home – most of them live with their parents all the time (62.7%) or at least partially or occasionally (20.4%), while only 15.1% live completely on their own. These household living arrangements are also significantly associated with some sociodemographic factors. Similar to some previous youth research, women tend to leave their parental home earlier than men. With regards to age ($C = 0.37$; $p < 0.01$), a considerably higher proportion (30.9%) of older young people (25-29 year old) live on their own, while the majority of 15-18 year olds (85.3%) and 19-24 (65.4%) live with their parents all the time. Stable finances also play an important role – since living independently is more frequent among those who are either employed, self-employed, or live on their partner's income.

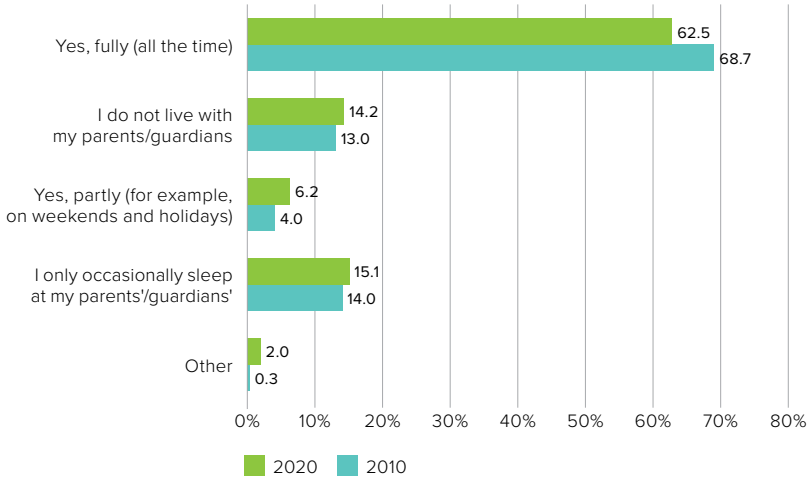
Despite a relatively high proportion of young people fully or partially attached to their parental household, there have been some important changes in their living arrangements in the last decade. Compared to 2010, fewer young people live with their parents all the time, while more live with them only partially, occasionally, or not at all (Figure 7.1). Such change is not surprising in the light of various recent studies (Billari et al., 2008; Kuhar, 2002; Kuhar and Švab, 2018) implying that in the last three decades more and more young people live their extended youth with parents both apart and together (i.e. LAT phase)[1]. This includes

their social independence on one hand and partial or total economic dependency form their parents on the other. The LAT phase is a typical living arrangement, especially for those who are studying at university, a fact that was also confirmed by this study.

Figure 7.1:

Share of young people living in their parents' household, 2010 and 2020.

Do you live in your parents'/guardians' household?

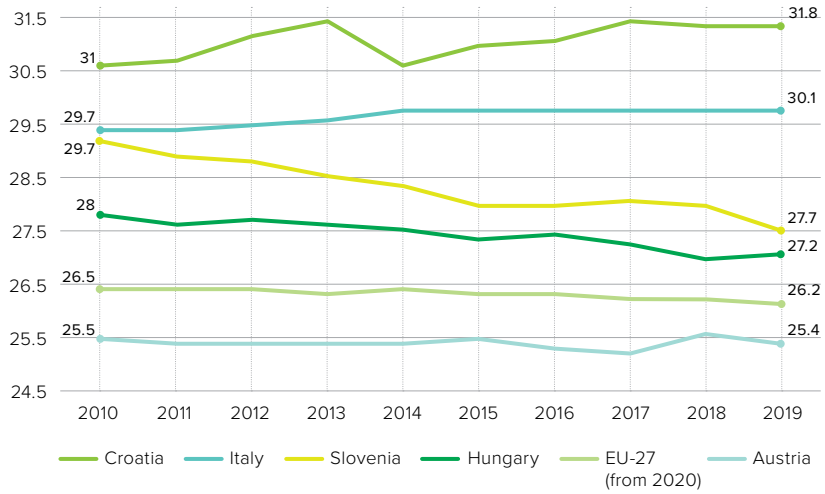


Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Evident changes in young Slovenians' decision to leave their parental household in the last decade are obvious also in comparison with some other EU countries. Although in 2019 the estimated age of leaving the parental household in Slovenia (27.7 years old) was still above the European average (26.2 years old), it has declined for almost two years in the period between 2010-2019. As depicted in Figure 7.2, this implies that Slovenia is gradually distancing itself from the pattern in other Mediterranean countries, where the estimated age has even grown (Croatia and Italy), and is drawing closer to some continental countries and the EU average.

Figure 7.2:

Estimated age of leaving the parental household, 2010-2019.



Source: Eurostat, 2020.

Compared to 2010, Slovenian young people leave their parental home much earlier. In the period 2010-2019, the average age of leaving parental home declined from 29.5 to 27.7, and is thus much closer to the EU average (26.2).

The decision or the ability to leave the parental household depends on various circumstances, which are related, for example, to enrolment in education, labour market insecurities, financial (in)dependence and costs of living. Other very important aspects are young people' personal relations to their family or close relatives, as well as their personal values. In this respect, leaving the parental household earlier can be associated with young people's individualization, which is evident in their values and attitudes. However, it is also important to bear in mind the factor of improvements in economic conditions and the consequent trend of lower youth unemployment rates (in a 2010 youth survey the unemployment rate was 14.7%, while in 2019 it was only 8.1%).

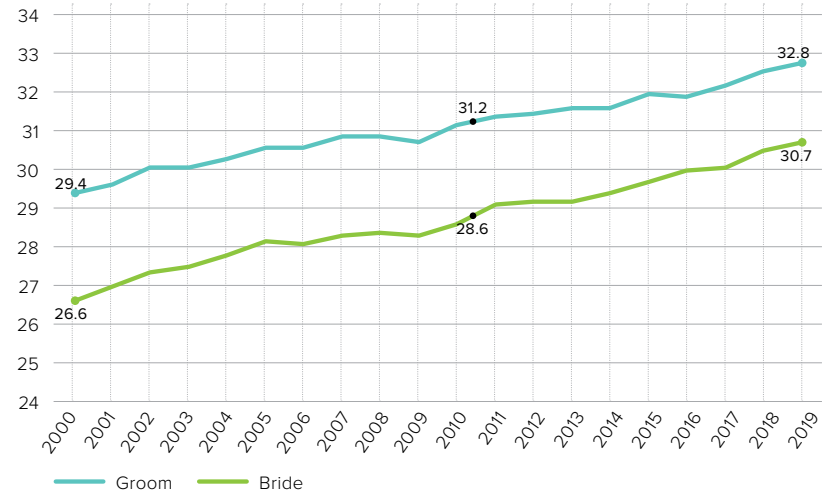
7.1.2 PARTNERSHIP AND MARRIAGE

The share of young people who decide to live with their partners has not drastically changed in the last ten years – from 20.8% in 2010 it has slightly increased to 21.9% in 2020. Factors that contribute to the decision to live with partners are similar to those related to leaving the parental household, mainly because both transitions are associated and often coincide. The decision to live with a partner is more frequent among women than men, and increases with age. The majority of young people living in a partnership are those above 25 years old (74.4%), followed by a quarter of 19-24 year olds (25.2%), while this is very rare decision for those under 18 years old (0.4%).

In line with the late formation of their own household with their partners, also the decision for marriage is being delayed to a later age. In the last 20 years, the average age at first marriage has risen among men by about three years to 32.8, and among women by four years to about 30.7 years old (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3:

Average age at first marriage, 2010-2019.



Source: SURS, 2020.

Statistical data also show that in the last two decades the decision to get married has become less common among young people. Although the decline in marriage rates and at the same time the rise of cohabitations is a general trend also in the general population, it is especially evident among young people. For example, marriage rates in last 20 years have declined in all age groups by almost half, with the exception of 25-29-year-old women, where the decline is only 13%. This smaller share can be explained mainly by more drastic changes in lower age groups (15-24 years old) and postponement of marriage to later years. It is also important to note that the most evident decline in all age groups was between 2000 and 2005, while in the last 15 years the decline has been much more gradual.

Our findings are consistent with general trends that show the typical postponement of marriage or the less frequent decision to get married, while marriage as an institution is losing its importance (Beck and Beck-Ghernsheim, 2002; Furlong, 2013). The decline in importance and number of marriages, along with the higher inclination towards cohabitation and LAT relationships, indicate the process of the "deinstitutionalization of the family"; however, this does not imply the disappearance of the family. Deinstitutionalization of the family creates more freedom of

choice and autonomy for young people to decide about their partner relationships, or, as pointed out by Ule and Kuhar (2003), it implies the greater individualization of life courses.

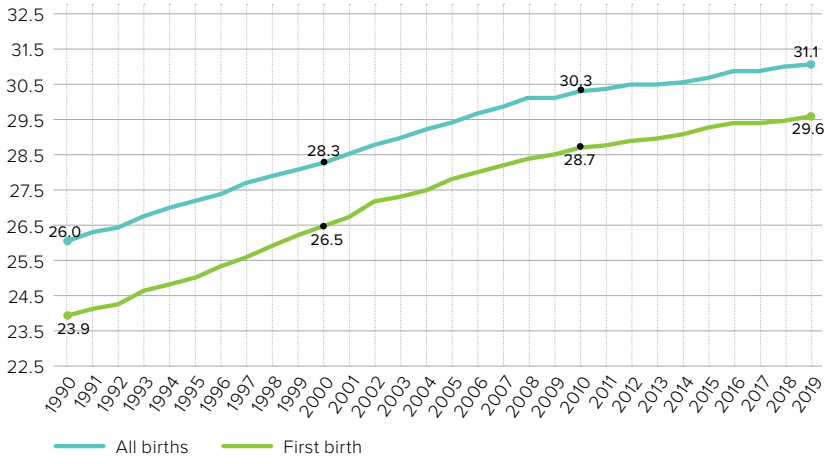
7.1.3 FAMILY FORMATION

In recent decades, developed western countries have been characterized by a trend of delayed parenthood (Eurostat, 2015), which is related to various circumstances, such as massive enrolment to tertiary education, prolonged education, and consequently a later entry to the labour market. Before having a child, young people often want to ensure financial stability and security, find permanent housing, and fulfil their vision of a family life. Since they attain many of these goals later than they used to, they also postpone their decision to become parents.

As in the European Union in general, also in Slovenia the average age at first childbirth is gradually increasing, although compared to the 1990s this growth has been slightly slower in the last 15 years (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4:

Average age of mothers at first childbirth in Slovenia, 1990-2019.



Source: SURS, 2020.

Additionally, in the past two decades Slovenia has also been facing a decline in fertility rates, especially among younger populations (15-24 years old). Unlike in the European Union in general, where this decline is evident also among 25-29 year-olds, in Slovenia the fertility rate in this age group has been relatively stable since 2008 (0.11)[2] and also above the EU-27[3] average, which was 0.09 in 2018 (Eurostat, 2002b).

In line with the declining trend of marriage rates among young people, it is also not surprising that the number of unmarried families with children is on the rise (Figure 7.5). While in 2000 the number of children born outside of marriage (outside of wedlock) was only 2.5% higher than the number of those born in a marriage (in wedlock), by 2019 the number of births outside of marriage had almost doubled to that of births in a marriage.

Figure 7.5:

Number of children born to young mothers (15-29 years old) by marital status (first child), 2000-2019.



Source: SURS 2020.

Similar to many European countries, also in Slovenia more and more young people are deciding to become parents without getting married (Eurostat, 2015) or they get married only after becoming parents. The decision to marry after or around the time they become parents is also evident from the previous data presented in Figure 7.4 and Figure 7.5.

In recent decades, the trend of delayed marriage and the decision to form a family continued. Similar to leaving the parental home earlier, these trends can also be understood as a sign of global individualisation among young people.

7.2 SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

In the process of growing up, when young people start making their own and responsible decisions, social support networks are an indispensable resource for them. Young people usually need someone from their social network in their life decisions and stressful situations, whom they trust and who will offer them support.

Social support is a multidimensional concept. Historically, earlier definitions of social support emphasized its emotional dimension (e.g. Weiss, 1974; Cobb, 1976; Thoits, 1982), i.e. as a sense of belonging and of being accepted and cared for by important others. More recent definitions (cf. Burleson, Albrecht, and Sarason, 1994) emphasize that social support is also an interaction and communication process. How young people understand social support can be seen from interview excerpts. Young people's perception of social support is evident from the interview extracts:

> *"As a network or individuals who provide a sense of security, whom you can trust, who support you in the things you do. To feel good with them. That they help you solve problems you have but can't solve on your own. Just to be available for a conversation, for some emotional support, maybe even financial support if something unexpected happens, and you know that you can ask, that maybe they'll lend you money, and you know that it'll be okay. "*
>
> (Ester, 25 years old, researcher)

> *"I understand this social support as someone with whom you can share all your hardships and doubts, maybe problems, whatever is going on in your life. And that person is willing to listen to you and, above all, accepts what you tell them. And that seems crucial to me."*
>
> (Aleš, 25 years old, student of Sustainable Development Management)

According to Vaux (1988), social support is divided into three basic dimensions: the sources or actors of social support (part of the social network to which the individual turns for help and support), types of social support (individual life situations), and the individual's subjective assessment of the sources and types of social support.

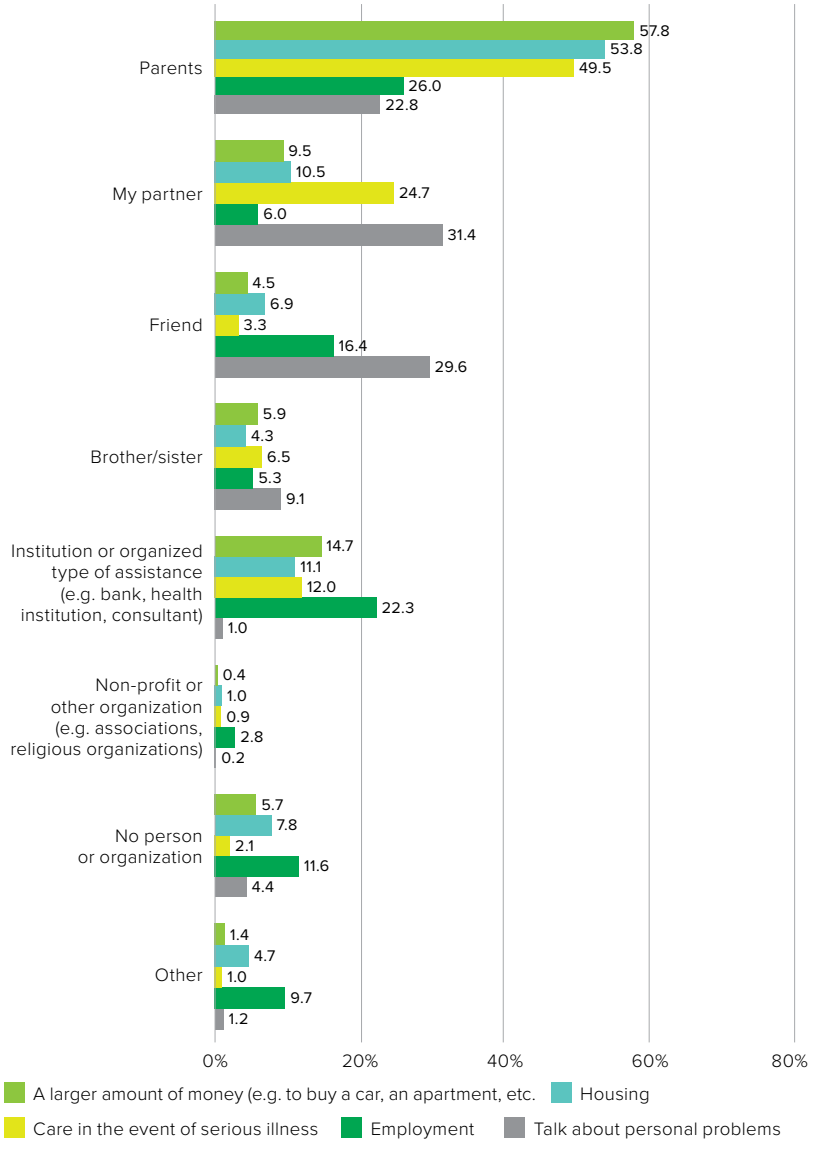
Furthermore, social support comes from formal or informal sources (Rausa, 2008). Formal sources of assistance can include institutions (e.g. banks, health institutions), non-profit organizations, or other organizations (e.g. associations, religious organizations) and other organized assistance that provides specific services. Informal sources are people who are close to the individual (e.g. family, partner, friends, peers, neighbours, and other close people). Formal sources of support establish a professional relationship with the person seeking social support, while informal sources of support are based on emotional ties (Hogan, Linden, and Najarian, 2002).

In this study we analysed only two dimensions: the sources and types of social support. Although there are various conceptualizations of types of social support in the literature (see, for example, Vaux, 1988; Wills, 1991), for the purposes of our research we examined the following specific supports relevant for young people: emotional support ('if you want to talk about personal problems'), financial support ('if you need more money'), support in case of illness ('if you need care if you are seriously ill'), and support when looking for a job ('if you need a job').

Figure 7.6:

Sources of social support in different situations.

Who would I turn to if I needed help?



Source: Mladina 2020.

Figure 7.6 shows that young people most often turn to informal networks, i.e. parents, partners, and friends, for all types of social support. Parents are by far the most important sources in providing social support to young people, providing them with the most material and financial support, as well as support in the event of serious illness and when looking for a job. Unlike parents, partners and friends are the greatest emotional support for young people.

Formal networks (institutional or organized type of assistance) are only the fourth-most important form of social support. They offer young people the most help in finding a job right after their parents. Non-profit institutions and organizations are among the least likely sources of any form of support. On the other hand, we should not ignore the share of those young people (especially men) who would not seek help in given situations or do not have anyone to turn to. However, it is encouraging that at least 89.4% of young people do have someone they can turn to for help. A similar situation was shown for the entire population by the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (Hafner Fink, et al., 2018).

The age and gender of young people also play an important role in some types of supports. As young people get older, reliance on parents for all forms of support decreases and reliance on siblings, partners, and friends, as well as on formal sources of support, slightly increases. A comparison by gender shows some differences in frequency of use of sources of support for each type of support. For example, more men (63.9%) than women (36.1%) would choose parents for emotional support, while more women (55.3%) than men (44.7%) would choose a friend. Men mostly turn to their parents and formal institutions for financial help. It is similar with women, but they also see partners as another important source. For material support, almost twice as many women (64.3%) compared to men (35.7%) would turn to a partner, while almost twice as many men (62.2%) than women (37.8%) would turn to a friend. In the event of illness, men would be more likely than women to seek support from siblings, friends, and formal sources of support. Only support in finding a job does not show statistically significant differences according to gender.

Our findings show that social contacts in the family and among friends are crucial for young people, as they represent a strong and multidimensional source of social support for them. The fact that the family has an important place in the lives of young Slovenians is also reflected in the ranking of family life at the top of the hierarchical scale in terms of the importance of young people's individual values in the period from 2000 to 2020. The importance of the family as the primary source of social support for young people is also recognized by young people themselves:

> *"I am primarily supported by my parents. I have always been supported, since elementary school when I wanted a violin in every way. /... / My sister is also supporting me. My sister supports me mostly morally. And of course, my boyfriend, who has supported me financially and now morally as well."*
>
> (Maša, 26 years old, precariously employed)

> *"The main help, of course, was provided by my parents, as I was able to live at home without paying any expenses. /... / In my network of social support, of course, my parents are the first who support me financially and morally."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

For all forms of social support, young people most often turn to their informal networks, i.e. parents, partners and friends. Parents are by far the most important actors in providing social support to young people, providing the most material and financial support, and providing support in the event of illness and when looking for a job.

7.2.1 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARENTAL SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE

Parents are a key source of support in young people's lives, even during the transition to adulthood. While young people are prolonging some life courses, they are also prolonging their period of dependence on their par-

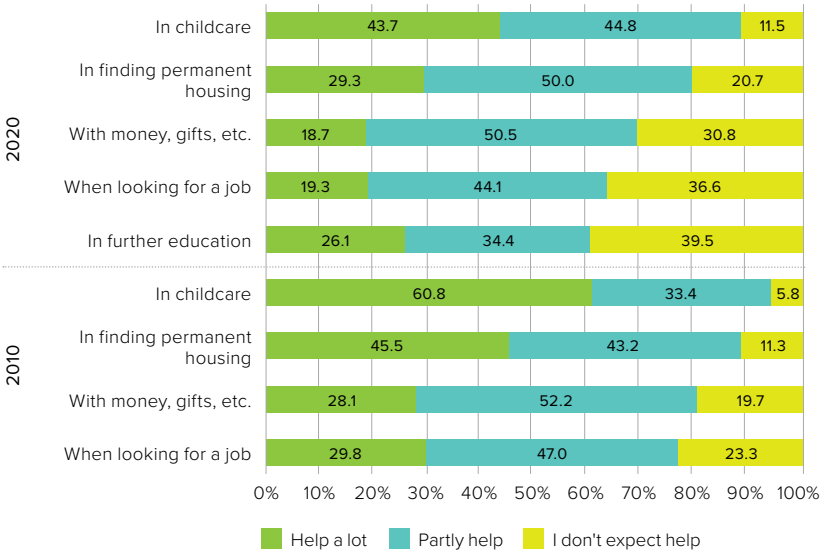
ents. Parents are even extending their role in young people's lives, as they continue to have a strong impact on their children's life opportunities and outcomes (e.g. by providing social and employment links, paying for education, and providing direct material support in the form of money, services, and shared housing).

Figure 7.7 illustrates parental support in different areas of life, which are among young people's main concerns when planning their future. In 2020, young people expect the most help from parents in childcare (88.5%) and finding permanent housing (79.3%). At least two-thirds of young people expect help with money and gifts (69.2%), and help in finding a job (63.4%) and in further education (60.5%).

Figure 7.7:

Young people's expectations regarding parental support in various life situations, 2010-2020.

Do you expect that your parents will help you in the future?



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: As support in 'further education' was not included in Youth 2010, a longitudinal comparison for that variable is not depicted.

In the period from 2010 to 2020, young people's expectations regarding parental support significantly declined in all life situations. These trends are also consistent with the broader trend of young people's individualisation that has already been identified in other spheres of their life. Young people express a higher degree of autonomy, and this can be related to the significant deterioration in their understanding with parents over the last decade.

From the point of view of life courses, parents are the most important source of support in childcare, suggesting parental support even after young people have started their own families. This indicates a strong intergenerational connection, as young people still maintain close contact with their parents, visit them, and use their services. In particular, more women expect childcare assistance, and this is also the only form of assistance in which expectations do not decrease with age. Among all important life situations studied, the share of further education assistance is in last place, but this does not mean that it is small. In fact, most young people expect help from their parents in further education.

Young people's expectations that their parents will help them in the future increase with the family's self-assessed financial situation, suggesting that not all families are equally able to provide help. Correlations are found at all levels of help considered: in finding permanent housing (rho = 0.14; $p < 0.01$), in further education (rho = 0. 13; $p < 0.01$), with money and gifts (rho = 0. 10; $p < 0.01$), in finding a job (rho = 0.09; $p < 0.01$), and in childcare (rho = 0.06; $p < 0.05$). Given that the family is an important supportive community, it is understandable that unequal support from the family increases inequalities among young people (Furlong, 2009: 217). Parents' support for young people during their transition to adulthood has been called a "hidden source of inequality" (Swartz, 2008) because the value of the resources that parents transfer is conditioned by the financial, human, and social capital of said parents (Schoeni and Ross, 2005; Swartz et al., 2011).

Another important factor in the expected help for young people is their relationship with their parents. In the survey, this was measured by three statements regarding their understanding and communication

with each other and young people's feelings of being loved by their parents.[4] Better relationships with parents tend to increase the chances of parental support, which was confirmed also in our research. Young people who have better relationship with their parents tend to expect more help from their parents in all the areas studied: in finding permanent housing (rho = 0.28; $p < 0.01$), in childcare (rho = 0.28; $p < 0.01$), in finding a job (rho = 0.18; $p < 0.01$), in further education (rho = 0.18; $p < 0.01$), and with money or gifts (rho = 0.16; $p < 0.01$).

Although the vast majority of young people still count on the parental support in all key life situations, these expectations have dropped significantly since 2010. For example, in 2010, 46% of young people expressed a high level of parental assistance in finding permanent housing, while in 2020 this share was only 29%.

7.2.2 UNDERSTANDING WITH PARENTS

Understanding or communication with parents is closely related to interpersonal relationships, so poorer understanding can increase conflictive relationships between young people and their parents.

In general, young people in Slovenia get along well with their parents, with a slightly better understanding with their mother (M = 4.27; SD = 0.91; on a 5-point scale) than with their father (M = 4.06; SD = 1.00). Compared to 2010, there were no major changes in the average responses.

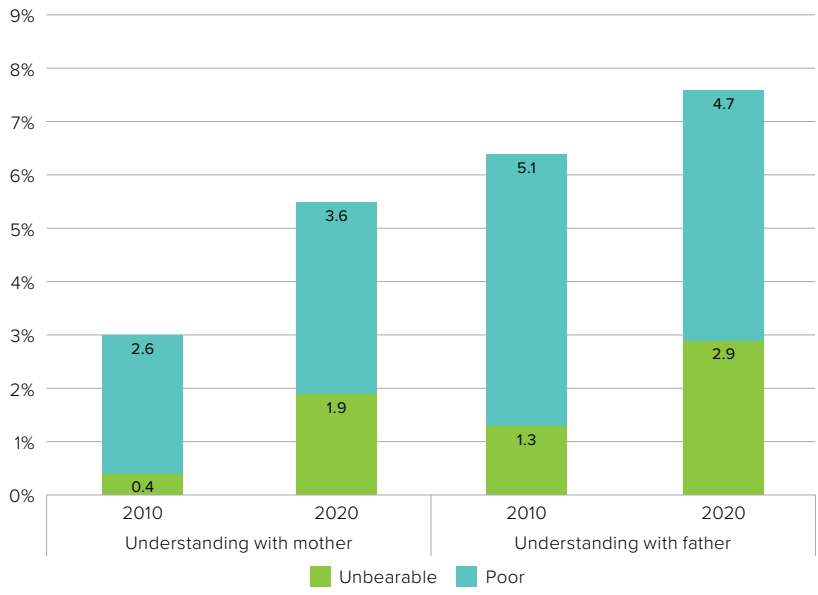
However, the averages are somewhat misleading. As Figure 7.8 shows, the share of young people who have a poor or unbearable relationship with their parents has increased significantly between 2010 and 2020. The averages remained unchanged because at the same time the share of young people who reported very good relationship with their mother (from 41% to 49%) and their father (from 36% to 40%) also increased significantly. We can therefore speak of a kind of polarization; on the one

hand, the group of young people with very good relations with their parents is strengthening, and at the same time the group of young people with very bad relations with their parents is strengthening. If in some previous Mladina (Youth) studies in Slovenia it was possible to talk about the disappearance of intergenerational conflict (Ule and Miheljak, 1995), based on our data, as well as on the data of the Slovenian Youth Survey 2018/2019 (Kuhar and Hlebec, 2019), it is possible to talk about the end of this trend and in a certain segment even about increasingly conflictive relationships with parents.

Figure 7.8:

Proportion of young people, who have poor or unbearable relationship with their parents, 2010-2020.

Understanding with parents



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The vast majority of young people report a good or very good relationship with their parents (77% with father and 85% with mother). After 2010, the share of young people who get along very well with their parents increased significantly, but at the same time the share of young people who described their understanding with their parents as poor or unbearable also increased approximately equally sharply.

Findings regarding the growing group of young people with conflictive relationships with their parents are in line with a wider individualisation thesis of young people (this time in terms of communication and emotional deviations from the primary family), and at the same time coincide also with the findings on young people's increased levels of stress (see the chapter on health).

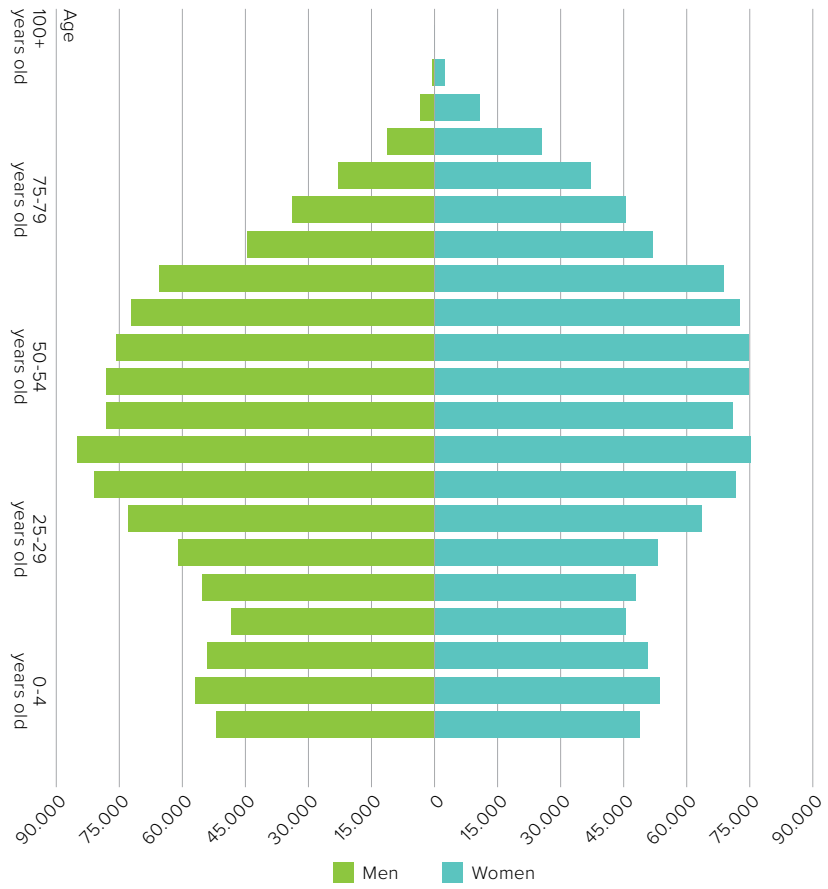
7.3 YOUTH AND INTERGENERATIONAL COOPERATION

The demographic structure of the population in Slovenia is changing in a similar way to that in other developed countries. Declining fertility rates and longer life expectancy that result from improved health and social protection are both contributing to the increased number of old people and (relatively) reduced number of young people. In developed countries of the Western European type, intergenerational cooperation consists, among other things, of a considerable amount of long-term financial support from parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren. This flow of support is a consequence of the long education process of young people who form the most educated population group in human history (see Deželan, 2017), and their increasingly difficult entry into the labour market. The traditional flow of resources from the older generation to the younger generation, which has been the norm throughout human history, is increasingly being challenged, with older generations now receiving more financial support than younger generations in some highly developed industrial societies with low fertility rates (e.g. Germany, Japan, Slovenia, Hungary) (Furstenberg, Hartnett, Kohli and Zissimopoulos, 2015: 33). A relatively benevolent welfare state with relatively good-quality

health and social care thus diverts the flow of resources from younger to older citizens, causing tectonic changes in intergenerational relations (Lee and Mason, 2014). A systemic prioritisation of pensions, long-term care, and active ageing over the education of younger generations can in turn lead to a battle for scarce public resources. Although resources at the familial level still predominantly flow from grandparents and parents towards (grand)children (ibid.), such a systemic shift is an important turning point in the treatment of different age groups of the population.

Figure 7.9:

Age pyramid of the population of Slovenia (on 1st January 2020).



Source: SURS, 2021.

Many believe that we are on the verge of a generational conflict (e.g. Bengtson, 1993; Kohli, 2010), as the institutionalisation of pensions and social and health care for the elderly has made old age a key element of eligibility for certain resources. Their scarcity has created the risk that the need for public resources becomes a zero-sum game in politics, with important implications for political competition and the perception of different age groups by political actors. The elderly are numerically much stronger than the younger generations, which are demographically weaker but also less active in the electoral processes. As a consequence, politicians are pandering to the older generations and public policies are becoming friendlier and friendlier towards the elderly and more, and more neglectful towards the young. As these processes are taking place in the context of structural changes that justify the "discrimination" of particular age groups (i.e. an elderly person of the "baby boomer" generation will be entitled to completely different social transfers than an elderly person of the "Y" generation, even though both have paid the same or even more), such differential treatment of individuals no longer has a justifiable basis, and such political prioritisation of one generation may lead to a clash between them.

In addition to the political implications, the way in which social values are redistributed in modern welfare states, based on clear and institutionalised age periods in an individual's life (Kohli, 2010), also limits contact between generations and thus reinforces prejudices about age groups, which also leads to the formation of negative stereotypes. The following quote clearly shows the challenges of being informed about other age groups that all members of society experience.

> *"We put more emphasis on the fact that you do things because you want to do them, which older generations might see more as selfishness, because they were brought up very differently – in a way that you have to work all your life. This was probably not even achievable for them at the time. And then there are also different views and ideas about upbringing, which I can also observe in my family circle. At some point there is always a debate about children – how they should be brought up, and then one person is smarter than the other /.../ But it seems to me that we can always learn a lot from each other."*
>
> (Tina, 29 years old, radiology specialist, interrupted her specialisation to work with Covid-19 patients)

Increasing individualisation is also reducing the importance of community, which in turn reduces the importance and presence of intergenerational cooperation. Intergenerational conflict is latently reinforced in the absence of such cooperation. Such conditions, accompanied by competition for scarce social resources, create a belief in the inequitable distribution of wealth between generations, which in the long term means the inevitability of intergenerational conflict (Deželan, 2017). Aware of the challenges related to this, the National Youth Programme 2013-2022 also follows the "principles of intergenerational cooperation" and ensures "greater intergenerational solidarity" with one of its fundamental orientations (Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022, 2013). Many measures are needed to avoid intergenerational conflict, especially on the part of political decision-makers (see Deželan, 2017), but beliefs within particular age groups are also an important aspect. These are a very important determinant of the success of political strategies and the rhetoric of zero-sum games, and they also provide clear insights into understanding complex social processes. Below we present the level of awareness of intergenerational conflict and solidarity among young people in 2020.

7.3.1 YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TO THE AGEING POPULATION

In modern society, both the young and the old are subject to negative stereotypes and prejudices related to their age, which is also largely due to the lack of contact between generations and institutionalised transitions between different age groups. The changing numerical ratios between population groups and, consequently, their social power, are challenges of which EU institutions are also aware, having long been aware of the consequences of demographic change, such as the increase in life expectancy and the number of people over 60 in the working age population, the low birth rate, and the associated decline in the number of young people, etc. In order for countries that face such changes to be able to maintain and strengthen intergenerational cooperation in an appropriate way, their public policies need to be systematically adapted in the light of these changes (EC, 2005).

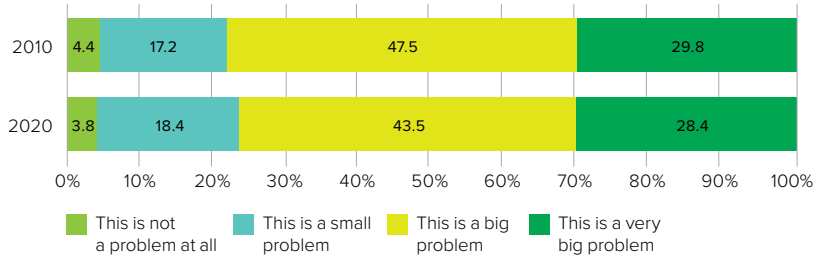
As young people are numerically weaker and less willing to participate in institutional politics (e.g. voting in elections, campaigning for political positions, taking part in political party activities, etc.), it is necessary to create mechanisms that are attractive to them, through which their voices can be heard and taken into account, while at the same time strengthening mechanisms that allow direct contact between members of different age groups. The year 2020 caused an additional challenge to intergenerational contact and cooperation between the younger and older generations due to the risk of transmitting Covid-19 (Thang and Engel, 2020), as limiting physical contact – one of the primary ways of overcoming the challenges of intergenerational dialogue – is at the heart of public policies to combat the disease. It is even more important in this context to know the situation and the beliefs that young people have in relation to an ageing society and their role in it.

It should be emphasized that the research findings of *Mladina 2010* already showed that the situation in this area is not very optimistic. If we look at young people's perceptions of the growing number of older people and the declining number of young people (see Figure 2.9), young people's concern is

clearly evident. In 2010, almost 80% of young people said that this was a big or very big problem. Unfortunately, the decade has not brought much change. In 2020, only a few percent less young people think this is not a (very) big problem (71.9%). This is even more telling given that the percentage of young people who think that this is not a problem at all has even fallen.

Figure 7.10:

The amount of young people, who consider the growing number of older people as a problem.

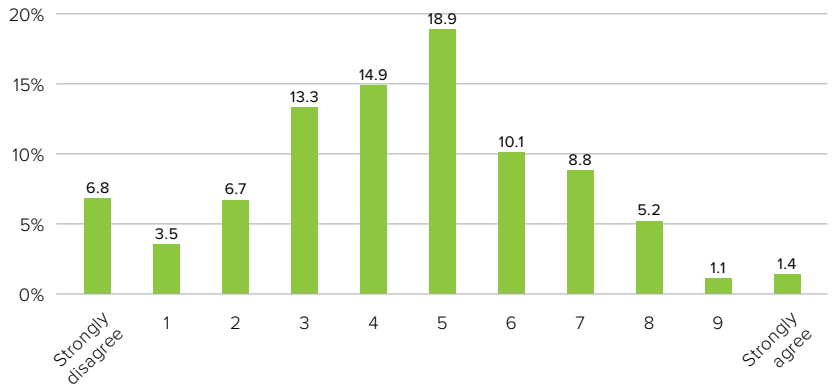


Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

When considering awareness about the ageing population as a demographic and general societal problem, it is important to stress that this awareness is linked to education, with the more highly educated perceiving this situation as much more problematic than the less educated. Interestingly, this is also true for women, who perceive the situation described as much more serious than their male peers. It is quite clear that concerns about an ageing population are linked to the distribution of wealth between generations and to changes that are promised for the future on the basis of the demographic trends presented. Very few young people believe that prosperity is fairly distributed between the young and the old. To be precise, only a small proportion of young people believe this to be the case (see Figure 2.11). This means that young people very clearly associate demographic trends with redistributive policies and with the redistribution ratio between the older and younger parts of the population. Again, women are much more concerned than their male counterparts, and those with higher levels of educational attainment are also more likely to think that there is an unfair distribution of wealth between generations.

Figure 7.11:

Fairness in the distribution of wealth between young and old.

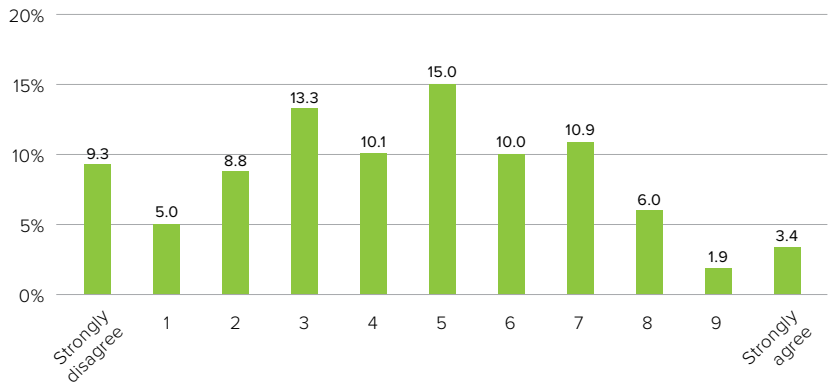


Source: Mladina 2020.

However, there is no reason to be completely pessimistic. In addition to a clear understanding of the challenges of an ageing society, young people also understand that the problem does not lie within the older people themselves, nor is it up to them to solve it. Relatively few of them are inclined to the view that older people should reduce their demands in favour of the well-being of young people. In this way, they also clearly show a shift away from the seeming inevitability of conflict between the generations, which is often encouraged by the marketing moves of political actors who feed their support from the large voting pool of retirees.

Figure 7.12:

Reducing the demands of older people in favour of young people.

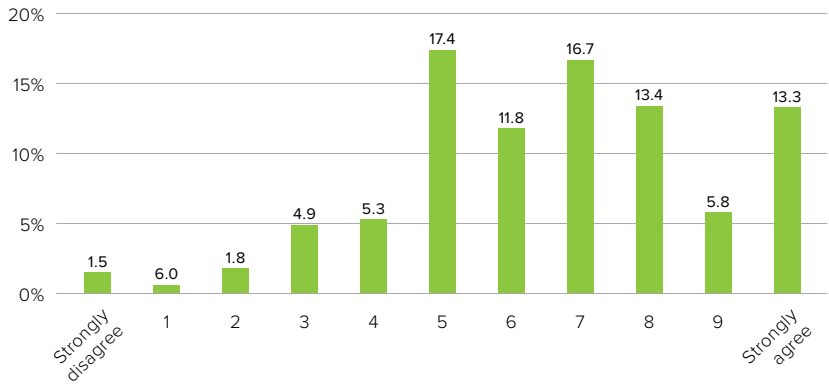


Source: Mladina 2020.

On the contrary, the results show that, rather than a simmering conflict between generations, young people also have a great deal of empathy for those who are often unjustly held up as the "culprits" for the lack of resources in the area of youth social transfers. That young people do not fall for the rhetoric of the zero-sum game and the inevitability of intergenerational conflict is shown by the fact that a very large number of young people believe that older people are just as disadvantaged as young people when it comes to welfare and the public policies of the state that is supposed to deliver it. The high level of agreement with the claim that both the young and the older people are disadvantaged in terms of welfare, in addition to solidarity with other age groups, also indicates a considerable level of understanding of the functioning of the welfare state and of the role of the state in a welfare society.

Figure 7.13:

Disadvantages of young and elderly people, when it comes to welfare.



Source: Mladina 2020.

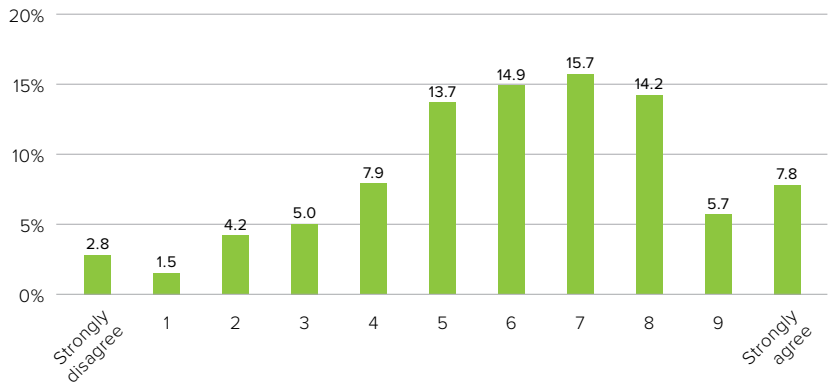
Here again, there is a tendency for women to agree with this statement to a greater extent than men. Also, individuals with higher levels of education show greater solidarity in this sense. It could be argued that the hypothesis of (excessive) individualism among the young loses its relevance here, but what is particularly promising is the fact that individuals with the highest prospects of occupying higher positions in the social hierarchy show the highest degree of empathy towards the position of the elderly. Such an assessment is also in line with the thinking of some relevant authors who stress that the elderly are not better placed than the young when it comes to economic well-being, but that both are disadvantaged compared to the middle-aged population (Kohli, 2009: 66).

Young people are reluctant to believe that older people are privileged compared to the young, or that the (current) older people should give up their jobs for the sake of the young. Instead, they are more inclined to believe that the issue of welfare is a systemic problem, and that both young and older people are disadvantaged.

However, young people's empathy also has its limits. The agreement with the statement that current generations should balance their demands in favour of the generations yet unborn is somewhat lower and also indicates a certain degree of self-protection and, of course, the effect of the so-called delayed gratification, which is typical for issues related to sustainable development. Something very distant and abstract, such as generations yet unborn, makes it difficult for people to act towards something that will have tangible effects only after their death. However, one cannot ignore the still quite high level of agreement with the argument of rebalancing or restraining welfare in favour of future generations, which creates a good foundation for a more socially responsible and sustainable society in the future.

Figure 7.14:

Balancing the demands of current generations for the benefit of generations yet unborn.



Source: Mladina 2020.

Based on the examined, it could be said that young people do not fall for the discourse of inevitable intergenerational conflict, and that they demonstrate values and attitudes that are in favour of intergenerational solidarity and dialogue between young and older people. Despite their limited contact with representatives of other age groups, which is a consequence of the institutionalisation of old age in modern welfare societies, young people also have a clear understanding of the contribution

that older people make both to themselves and to broader society. An example from the female entrepreneur interviewed shows that age is not necessarily a burden, but is rather a wisdom that complements the motivation and freshness of younger individuals.

> *"Intergenerational cooperation was very important for me, because at the beginning of my business career I was particularly lacking in knowledge, and it was mainly older and experienced entrepreneurs who helped me. /.../ So the most important thing for me is to share various skills. Everyone is good in their own field. One man and I complemented each other very well, because I had fresh ideas and he had the money and necessary knowledge to implement them."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

Thus, it can be said that concerns about an ageing society is not a negative attitude towards older people for their increasing participation in social transfers, which they desperately need, but a concern about how to tackle this very important issue for the future of our society. It is therefore a warning to politicians that young people are concerned about these issues, knowing that it will largely determine their future lives.

On the other hand, with regard to dialogue between the generations, it is worth stressing that, alongside young people's responsible attitude of to the problem of an ageing society, it is also necessary to foster a very empathetic attitude among young people towards the elderly and other generations, including towards those who have not yet been born.

7.4 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this chapter can be summarised by the following key findings:

1. After a decline in the youth population over the last three decades, the proportion of young people in the population is stabilising and is projected to remain at a similar level in the future. On the other hand, the increasing number of older people deepens the importance of issues regarding intergenerational relations.

2. Compared to 2010, young Slovenians leave their parental home much earlier. In the period 2010-2019 the average age of leaving the parental home declined by almost 2 years and is thus much closer to the EU average.

3. In recent decades, the trend of delayed marriage and of the decision to form a family continued. Similar to leaving the parental home earlier and the increased share of young people opting for parenthood without getting married, these trends can also be understood as a sign of global individualisation among young people.

4. For all forms of social support, young people most often turn to their informal networks, i.e. parents, partners, and friends. Parents are by far the most important actors in the provision of social support to young people, the most material and financial support, as well as support in the event of illness and when looking for a job.

5. Although the vast majority of young people still count on parental support in all key life situations, these expectations have dropped significantly since 2010. For example, in 2010, 46% of young people expressed a high level of parental assistance in solving housing problems, while in 2020 this share was only 29%.

6. Young people's expectations that their parents will help them in the future increase with the family's self-assessed financial situation and better relationships with parents. Furthermore, unequal family support can increase inequalities among young people.

7. The vast majority of young people report a good or very good understanding with their parents (77% with father and 85% with mother). After 2010, the share of young people who get along very well with their parents increased significantly, but at the same time the share of young people who described their understanding with their parents as poor or unbearable also increased approximately equally sharply.

8. Young people are reluctant to believe that older people are privileged compared to younger people, or that (current) older people should give up their (current) advantages for the sake of younger people. Instead, they are more inclined to believe that the issue of welfare is a systemic problem and to perceive both the young and the older people as disadvantaged.

On the basis of these findings, the following key orientations for youth policy appear to be relevant:

1. Since young people are becoming more and more distanced from the support of their primary families (although this support still remains crucial), state policies should focus on increasing support in youth transitions to adulthood. This should include mainly measures that focus on strengthening finances and access to education, helping young people to get stable employment, and improving young people's access to housing.

2. Institutionalised contacts between young and older people should be promoted by integrating the principles of intergenerational cooperation in the design and implementation of public policies at all levels (local, national, transnational) (e.g. minister responsible for intergenerational dialogue, intergenerational coordinators, intergenerational councils, ombudsman for future generations, etc.).

3. The intergenerational perspective needs to be nurtured through various measures to inform and educate society as a whole about the meaning, message, and logic behind an intergenerational approach to social affairs (e.g. awareness-raising programmes and projects on the importance of intergenerational dialogue).

4. Citizen and community participation should be promoted through the development or construction of infrastructure for intergenerational activities (e.g. intergenerational centres, etc.).

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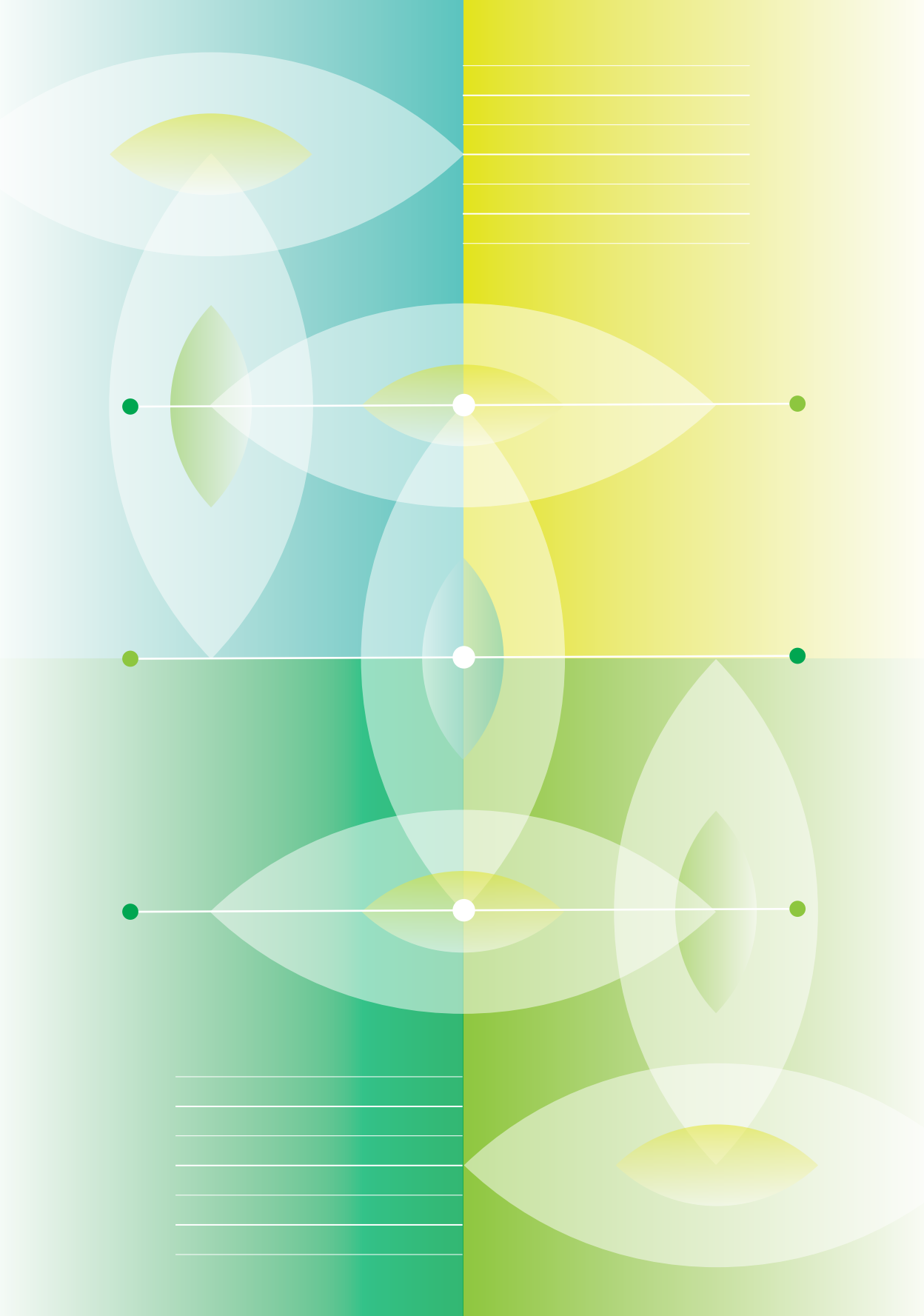
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8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

Participation in cultural and arts activities is essential for young people as a basis for the development of their future personal, social, and cultural skills. In addition to providing opportunities to enjoy and foster creativity, cultural participation can also offer opportunities to acquire competencies, help young people develop their thinking skills, and boost their self-esteem. It also improves the quality of their lives and boosts their overall well-being.

Nowadays, information and communication technology also plays an important role in this process, as it is becoming an increasingly important instrument for participation in cultural life. The Internet enables young people to participate in cultural activities in ways that were once unimaginable, such as downloading and watching movies, watching live TV, videos and concerts, shopping for cultural goods and services, and other forms of cultural expression (e.g. blogging and writing e-journals). Young people can thus also use the internet to enhance their creativity and imagination, relax and spend their free time creatively.

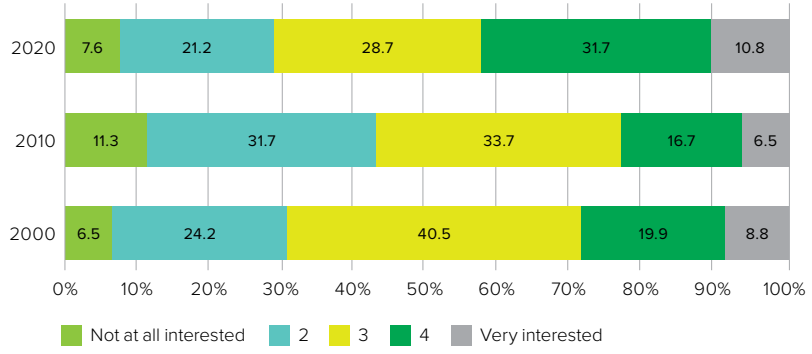
The importance of creativity and culture for young people is also highlighted in the *European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027*. Its objectives are primarily aimed at stimulating young people's interest in cultural activities and encouraging their active participation in cultural organizations (Council of the European Union, 2018). In the following subchapters we present data for all three key areas, namely young people's interest in creativity and culture, the forms of their (live) cultural participation, and their online cultural participation.

8.1 INTEREST IN ARTS AND CULTURE

Young people's interest in arts and culture has been on the rise for the past 20 years. With a slight decline ten years ago, in 2020 young people show increased interest, the highest in the last 20 years, with 42.5% being interested or very interested (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1:

Young people's interest in arts and culture, 2000-2020.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Interest in arts and culture is related to various factors in young people's lives. Socio-demographically speaking, education and gender play important role, with significantly higher interest among more educated young people ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$)[1] and women ($M = 3.46$; $SD = 1.03$) than among men ($M = 2.92$; $SD = 1.13$). Other factors that often contribute to young people's interest in arts and culture are related to some characteristics of the immediate environment in which they grow up, for example to their cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1979; 1986), a person's cultural capital is a multi-dimensional concept that can be operationalized in various ways. Measures of young people's cultural capital usually include specific aspects of parental cultural capital (e.g. their educational level and their degree of cultural participation), as well as some environmental characteristics and cultural practices of young people (see, for example Willekens and Lievens, 2014; Sieben and Lechner, 2019). In the study we measured cultural capital with two dimensions – institu-

tionalised and objectified cultural capital.[2] The third dimension, i.e. embodied cultural capital, is usually related to cultural participation (e.g. reading books, writing etc.), which will be analysed separately in the next subchapter and is therefore not a part of our measure of cultural capital.

Furthermore, the results of our study confirm the general importance of young people's cultural capital in their interest in arts and culture. Higher interest is related to higher cultural capital ($r = 0.13$; $p < 0.01$)[3] and to higher participation (i.e. embodied cultural capital) in all cultural and arts activities, both in typical (live) form as well as online (both is presented more in detail in the following subchapters).

8.2 PARTICIPATION IN CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

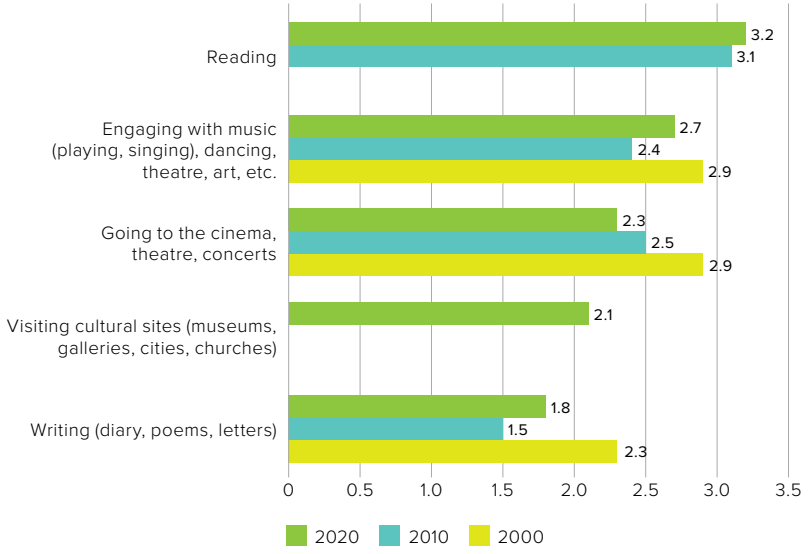
Cultural participation includes various cultural activities, such as visiting cultural events or institutions (e.g. cinemas, theatres, concerts, museums), one's active participation cultural pursuits (e.g. reading, writing, engagement with music, theatre), as well as being included in various cultural organizations (European Commission, 2015; Eurobarometer 455, 2018). These diverse activities are usually classified into two distinctive forms of cultural participation, that is *cultural engagement* (e.g. actively taking part in cultural activities or arts) and *cultural consumption* (e.g. shopping cultural goods, visiting cultural events and institutions).

Figure 8.2 presents trends of young people's cultural participation in various activities over the last twenty years. Compared to 2010, in 2020 young people participated more frequently in all three forms of *cultural engagement*, i.e. in reading, engagement with music, dancing, theatre and arts, and in writing in the forms of diaries, poems, and letters. On the other hand, *cultural consumption*, i.e. visiting cinemas, theatres, or concerts, has been declining over the last 20 years. Although the decline in 2020 only confirms the continuation of the trend that started in 2010, it must be noted that the study in 2020 was conducted during strict

measures for preventing epidemics, which could have contributed to the results.[4] Even slightly less frequently young people visited cultural sites. Unfortunately, due to lack of information from previous years, longitudinal comparison of this variable was not possible. However, we can assume that this is a continuation of some previous trend, since also the latest research of cultural participation of young people in the European Union shows that visiting cultural sites is less popular that visiting cultural events, both in Slovenia as well as in the European Union in general (European Commission, 2015).

Figure 8.2:

Frequency of young people's cultural participation by specific activities, 2000, 2010 and 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Note: Only the available data in specific time periods are shown.

In general, most cultural and arts activities are less popular than some other leisure time activities. On a 6-point scale (1 – never; 6 – every day) young people generally participate in cultural or arts activities between "less than once a month" (e.g. writing) and "1-3 times a month" to "1-3 times a week" (e.g. reading). Especially engagement in sport activities (M = 3.93; SD = 1.45)

is more frequent than cultural participation. This is consistent with some previous trends found in Slovenian studies on young people that have implied a higher popularity of sports activities to cultural and other activities in the past (see Kirbiš, 2011), as well as higher enrolment in sports organizations compared to cultural organizations in Slovenia and other EU countries (European Commission, 2015). Very frequent leisure time activities are "listening to music" ($M = 5.27$; $SD = 1.17$) and "reading" ($M = 3.2$; $SD = 1.48$); however, it must be taken into account that these activities are not necessarily related solely to cultural activities (for example, reading can include reading for educational or other purposes, and listening to music can include daily radio programmes).

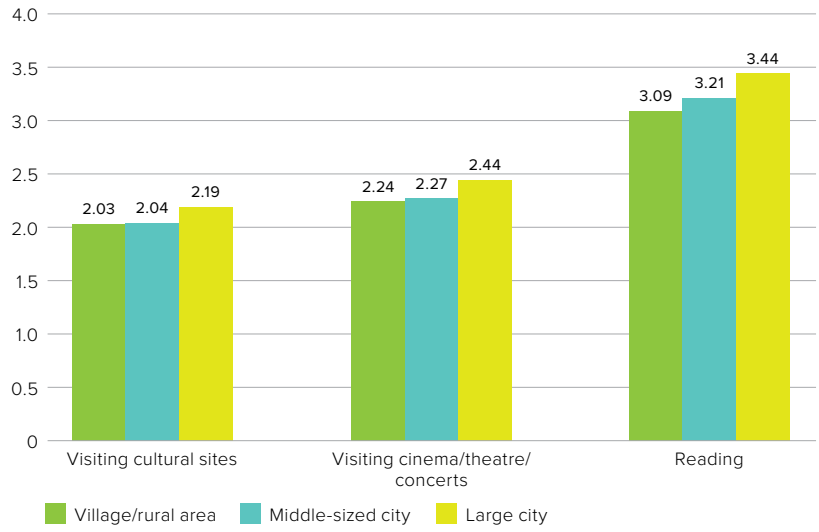
The frequency of cultural participation in different types of activities is significantly related to some sociodemographic factors. Women are more frequently culturally engaged in all three activities studied (reading, engagement with music, writing) and more frequently visit cultural events than men, while for visiting cultural sites there were no statistically significant differences with regards to gender. The youngest people tend to engage in arts and creative activities more frequently ($r = -0.10$; $p < 0.01$), while older young people like to read slightly more often ($r = 0.08$; $p < 0.01$). Young people from families with better economic situation more frequently visit cinemas, theatres, or concerts ($r = 0.08$; $p < 0.01$), which might be related to the fact that these activities are usually not free of charge. People with lower economic status often see cost as an obstacle to cultural participation (UNESCO, 2009), and according to Eurobarometer 399 (2013) young people even listed lack of money as their main obstacle in visiting concerts or cinema.

Another important factor of cultural participation is place of residence, since all cultural activities studied except engagement with music are statistically more frequent in more urban settings. Especially important differences occur in both types of cultural consumption and in reading (Figure 8.3). Young people in large cities significantly more often visit cultural sites, events/institutions, and read than those in villages or rural areas. At the same time, visiting cultural events is significantly lower in middle-sized cities than it is large cities. One of the reasons for such dif-

ferences especially in cultural consumption could be related to the fact that large cities offer more opportunities to visit cultural events and sites, inter alia due to better infrastructure (e.g. more cinemas, theatres), which is more accessible to young people (e.g. good transportation options).

Figure 8.3:

Young people's cultural participation by type of settlement.



Source: Mladina 2020.

Furthermore, cultural participation is significantly associated with young people's educational level and their cultural capital. Those with higher education tend to read ($r = 0.18$; $p < 0.01$) and visit cultural sites more frequently ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.01$), while cultural capital shows a positive correlation with all types of cultural participation. Thus young people with higher cultural capital more frequently participate actively in creative activities ($r = 0.21$; $p < 0.01$), read ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$), visit cultural sites ($r = 0.14$; $p < 0.01$), and visit the cinema/theatre/concerts ($r = 0.09$; $p < 0.01$) and write ($r = 0.08$; $p < 0.01$). These findings confirm the importance of the so-called "cultural socialization" (Bourdieu, 1986; Holden, 2006; Nagel, 2010) that primarily takes place in school and in young people's families. Through their school curriculum, as well as with interaction

with teachers and parents, young people get to know culture and are educated about it, which can contribute to their greater interest in culture in general and consequently to their higher cultural and arts participation.

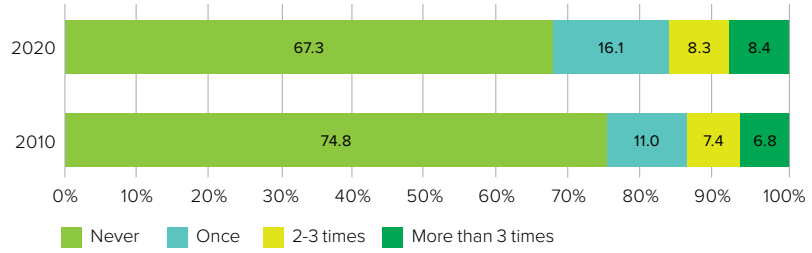
Several studies suggest that lack of interest for specific cultural activities is one of the most common obstacles for young people's cultural participation (Scherger, 2009; Eurobarometer 399, 2013; Milošević Đorđević and Pavlović, 2017). According to Eurobarometer 399 (2013), in Slovenia this was especially true for visiting theatres and museums. As noted by Keaney (2008), lack of interest is often related to understanding of such activities – because they are not familiar with them, it seems "risky", which lowers their motivation to participate.

Also in our study interest in arts and culture is significantly correlated to all cultural and arts activities. Thus those young people who are more interested in arts and culture also more frequently participate in the following cultural activities: engaging with music ($r = 0.42$; $p < 0.01$), attending arts classes ($r = 0.36$; $p < 0.01$), visiting cultural sites ($r = 0.34$; $p < 0.01$), reading ($r = 0.29$; $p < 0.01$), writing ($r = 0.28$; $p < 0.01$), visiting cinema, theatre, concerts ($r = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$), and listening to music ($r = 0.12$; $p < 0.01$).

Besides higher interest in culture and more frequent cultural engagement, some other indicators also show positive change in cultural participation of young people in the last decade. For example, in the period between 2014 to 2017 Slovenia's share of young people enrolled in cultural organizations rose by 9% (Eurobarometer 455, 2018:11). Thus in 2017, 18% of young people in Slovenia were enrolled in cultural organizations, which is even slightly above the EU average (15%). Additionally, as depicted in Figure 8.4, attendance at arts classes outside of formal education has similarly risen in the last 10 years. Although the majority of young people in 2020 still were not participating in such classes (67.3%), interest in them has risen considerably compared to 2010.

Figure 8.4:

Frequency of attending art and cultural classes, 2010 and 2020.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

These findings suggest a clear trend of young people's increased cultural participation, especially in their cultural engagement, while their participation is slightly lower in typical cultural consumption.

In the last ten years, there has been an increase in young people's participation in arts classes, as well as in their active engagement in activities such as music, dancing, and arts. Official data also show that enrolment in cultural organisations is on the rise.

Increased cultural participation and interest in culture show that the development of young people's cultural participation is in line with the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (Council of the European Union, 2018).

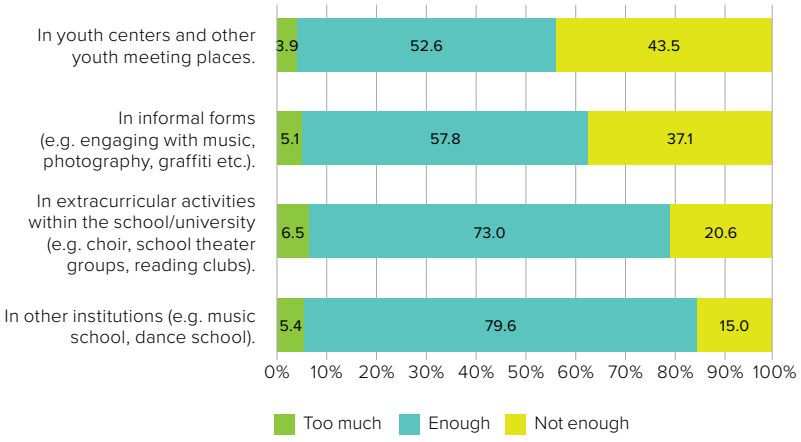
8.3 ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Slovenian young people have opportunities for cultural participation in various fields, such as music, art, literature, theatre, puppetry, folklore, film, and cultural heritage. Thus, they can participate culturally in extracurricular activities at all three levels of education, as well as at music and dance schools. They can also engage with culture in youth centres and youth organizations, or in other informal forms.

In general, most young people think that there are enough or even too many opportunities for cultural participation. The most opportunities for engaging in culture are within formal institutions (in extracurricular activities within schools/faculties: 79.5%; within other institutions: 85%), and slightly less in informal forms (62.9%), and in youth centres and other meeting places for youth (56.5%) (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.5:

Young people's assessment of opportunities for cultural participation.



Source: Mladina 2020.

Men (M = 1.69; SD = 0.56) recognize more opportunities for participation in youth centres compared to women (M = 1.5; SD = 0.54), also in informal forms (men: M = 1.75; SD = 0.57; women: M = 1.61; SD = 0.55). There are no statistically significant differences by gender in other institutions and extracurricular activities.

Another important factor is the type of settlement, which is significantly associated with the assessment of possibilities for cultural participation in youth centres and youth meeting places ($C = 0.176$; $p < 0.01$), in extracurricular activities within the school/faculty ($C = 0.097$; $p < 0.05$), and in informal forms ($C = 0.135$; $p < 0.01$). Young people see the fewest opportunities for cultural participation in villages or rural areas, and in medium-sized cities, while somehow expectedly they see the most opportunities in larger

cities. Particularly the poor assessment of the opportunities that youth centres provide for cultural participation in rural areas stands out, as more than half of young people from these areas (51.4%) consider that there are not enough options. On the other hand, a much lower proportion of young people from large cities (29.4%) say there are not enough opportunities for cultural participation in youth centres. This can also be related to the geographical distribution of youth centres in Slovenia, which indicates a higher concentration of youth centres in (large) cities, especially in Central and Eastern Slovenia (Resolucija o Nacionalnem programu za mladino 2013–2022, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the expansion of youth centres in more rural parts of Slovenia, and especially the increase of opportunities for cultural activities in youth centres.

Despite young people's assessment of slightly fewer opportunities to cultural participation in youth centres, it should be noted that 19% of young people in our study have already participated in activities of youth organizations or youth centres and clubs. According to the *Eurobarometer 455 Survey* (2018: 11), in 2017 a similar share of young people in Slovenia was included in youth centres and youth organizations (21%), which is even slightly above the average of European Union countries (20%).

Youth participation in youth centres and organizations is relatively high (21%), even slightly higher than the EU average. A large proportion of young people (45%) consider that youth centres lack cultural opportunities. In general, the problem of limited opportunities for cultural participation of young people is much more pronounced in more rural areas.

8.4 YOUTH CULTURAL PARTICIPATION ONLINE

The use of information and communication technology among young people has been growing over the last few decades and is an inextricable part of everyday activities, including cultural activities. Online cultural activities generally include reading news sites (newspapers or magazines), playing or downloading games, pictures, movies, or music, listening to online radio, shopping for cultural goods (movies, music, books, magazines) and services (tickets for cultural events, museums, theatres), and the creation of websites or blogs (European Commission, 2013).

Online cultural participation is a completely new form of cultural participation, which is associated with increasing access to the Internet (both from home and on the go). According to Eurostat data (2020), the share of households in the EU with internet access increased from 79% to 90% between 2013 and 2019. This has certainly contributed to the increase in young people's online cultural participation and consumption.

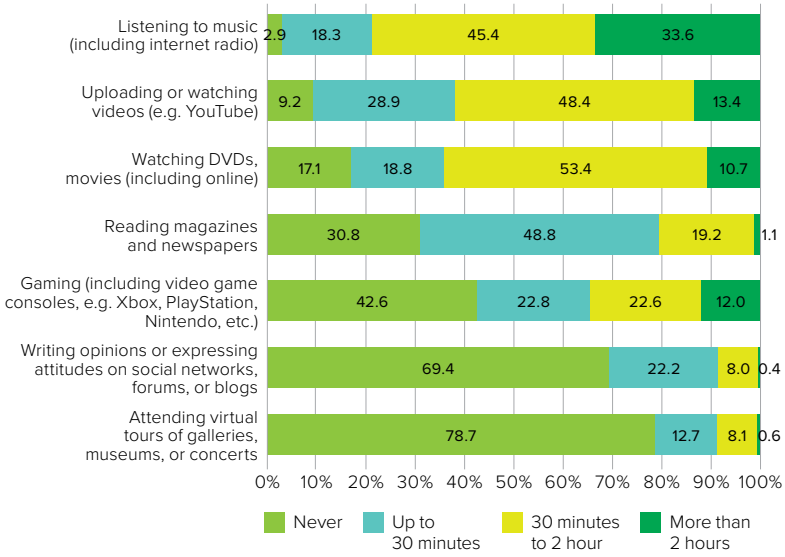
According to Eurostat (2020), young online users (16-24 years old)[5] in the EU-27 are most likely to watch TV or videos online (88%) and listen to music (87%) for cultural purposes. Less often they read online magazines and newspapers (68%), and play video games (58%). A minority of young people buy tickets to events (28%), films and music (23%), and books and magazines (19%). Compared to older age groups, young people are slightly more active in all forms of online cultural participation, except for reading magazines and newspapers, and buying books, magazines, and newspapers.

The results of our research show that Slovenian youth spend most of their time online on activities related to entertainment and relaxation. On average, 79% of young people listen to music for at least half an hour a day, 62% watch or upload videos, 64% watch DVDs or movies, and 35% play games. They spend much less time reading (20% read at least half an hour a day) and expressing their views online, e.g. in the form of blogs (8% express their views at least half an hour a day). Around 9% of young people spend on average at least half an hour a day virtually vis-

iting galleries, museums, and concerts. If we add to this those who spend up to 30 minutes a day on these activities, we find that around one-fifth (21%) of young people engage in virtual tours of galleries, museums, and concerts.

Figure 8.6:

Frequency of specific forms of cultural participation online, daily.



Source: Mladina 2020.

The frequency of youth online cultural participation is significantly associated with some sociodemographic factors. Men spend more time watching or uploading video content, playing video games, and writing their own opinions or views on social media. Similar to some previous youth research, younger respondents are more likely to play video games ($r = -0.23$; $p < 0.01$), watch or upload video content ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$), listen to music ($r = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$), and watch DVDs ($r = -0.88$; $p < 0.01$), while older young people read more often ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$).

Furthermore, all online forms of cultural participation, except playing video games, are positively correlated with an interest in arts and culture, with the strongest correlation with virtual visits to galleries, muse-

ums, and concerts ($r = 0.13$; $p < 0.01$). Virtual visits to galleries, museums, and concerts are also significantly related to two forms of "live" cultural consumption, i.e. visiting cultural sites ($r = 0.31$; $p < 0.01$) and visiting cinemas, theatres and concerts ($r = 0, 24$; $p < 0.01$). The more often young people attend virtual tours of galleries, museums, and concerts, the more often they also attend cultural sites and events in live form. Mihelj et al. (2019) state similarly and point out that online cultural consumption (virtual tours of galleries and museums) acts as a supplement to live visits and not as a substitute for them.

Encouragingly, our survey data shows that online visits to galleries, museums, and concerts, as opposed to the usual (live) cultural consumption, is not associated with young people's cultural capital or the education. In this sense, online cultural programmes do not increase social inequalities between online users. On the other hand, it equally enables access and participation in cultural life for those young people who would not otherwise participate in live forms for various reasons.

Young people who are more involved in online consumption are also more likely to visit cultural sites and events in live form. Online cultural participation is emerging as a potentially effective mechanism for reducing social inequalities among young people, as, unlike live cultural participation, it is not associated with the cultural capital of the young person's primary family.

8.5. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this chapter can be summarised by the following key finding:

1. From 2010 to 2020, young people's interest in arts and culture increased heavily, from 23.2% to 42.5% being interested or very interested.

2. In last ten years, there has been an increase in young people's participation in arts classes, as well as in their active engagement in activities such as music, dancing and arts. Official data show that also enrolment in cultural organisations is on the rise. However, they are slightly less active in classical cultural consumption, which has also declined in the last ten years.

3. Youth participation in youth centres and organizations is relatively high (21%), even slightly higher than the EU average. A large proportion of young people (45%) report that youth centres lack cultural opportunities. In general, the problem of limited opportunities for young people's cultural participation is much more pronounced in more rural areas.

4. Young people who are more involved in online consumption and are also more likely to visit cultural sites and events in live form. Online cultural participation is emerging as a potentially effective mechanism for reducing social inequalities among young people, as, unlike live cultural participation, it is not associated to the cultural capital of the young person's primary family.

Based on these findings, the following key orientations for youth policy appear to be relevant:

1. Since online cultural consumption is equally attractive to young people of all social classes (with regards to cultural capital), the production of excellent online arts and cultural content should be encouraged, especially if such production includes young people.

2. Since young people from less urban settlements report having considerably fewer opportunities for cultural participation, infrastructure, and other institutional conditions for young people's cultural participation in rural areas and small cities should be developed.

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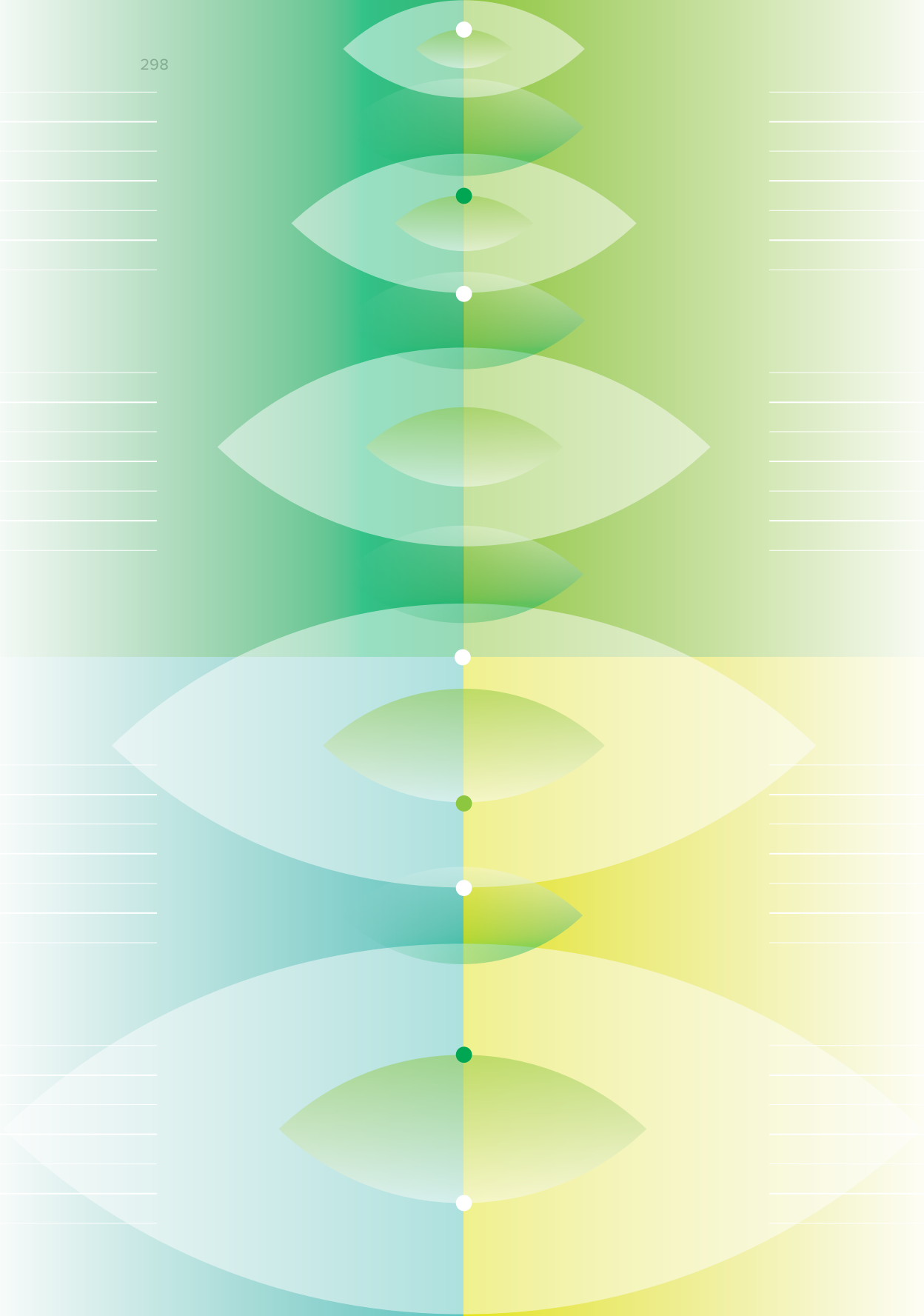
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RUDI KLANJŠEK, TOMAŽ DEŽELAN, MATJAŽ URŠIČ,
AND NINA VOMBERGAR

9. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMER ACTIVITIES

9.1 YOUTH CONSUMPTION

Some authors (cf. Batat, 2010) argue that today's young people have on average more money available to spend according to their "needs", which leads them to form their own purchasing habits at an earlier age. Shopping and consumption are therefore becoming part of their everyday lives. The rise of new technologies, which have made browsing and buying products extremely easy, together with tailored and aggressive advertising, is also contributing to extensive consumption.

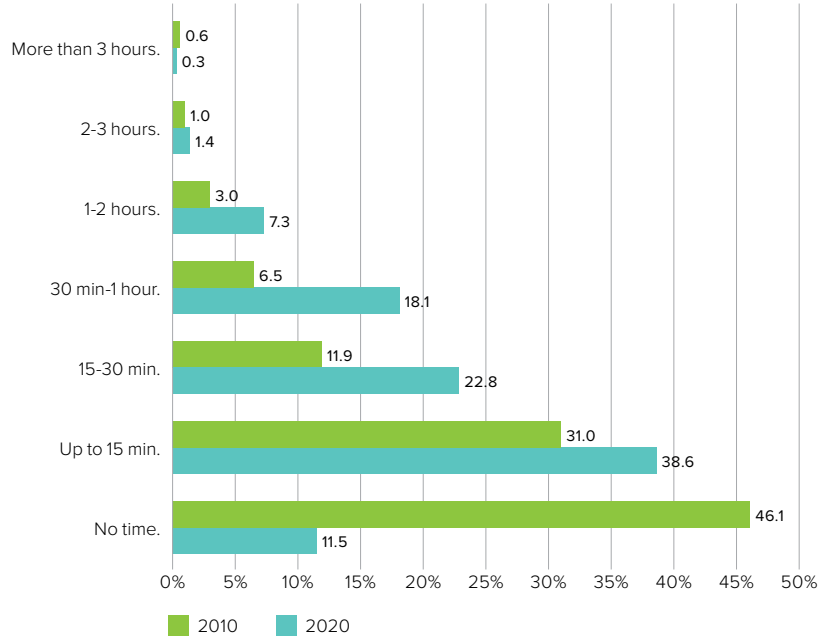
The fact that the location of this shopping is increasingly moving online is also confirmed by the data in this study. The results show that only 11.5% of young people do not shop online or are not informed a priori about the products they want to buy. There were almost half (46.1%) of such young people in 2010. Eurostat data covering a slightly different group in 2019 (young people aged 16-29) show a similar picture. In that study, 18% of respondents did not use the internet for shopping and product information in 2019, which is a slightly lower percentage than the EU-28 average (23%).

For the majority of Slovenian young people, the time spent shopping online ranges from 15 minutes to 1 hour per day (79.5%) and has increased compared to 2010. It bears mentioning that people tend to have a rather poor idea of the amount of time they spend in front of screens (cf. Andrews et al., 2015), which means that self-estimates are likely to be underestimates. On average, young women spend more time shopping online ($p < 0.05$) than their male counterparts.

Figure 9.1:

Time spent shopping and buying online, 2010-2020.

How much time do you spend shopping online or finding out about the products you want to buy?



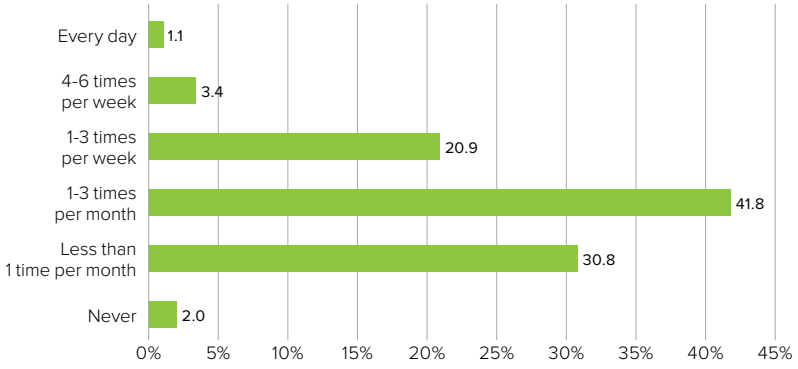
Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

The increase in online shopping shown above provides a better understanding of the relatively modest amount of visits to shopping centres, and it is interesting to note that in this case there are no statistically significant differences between the genders.

Figure 9.2:

Frequency of shopping centre visits.

How often do you visit shopping centres?

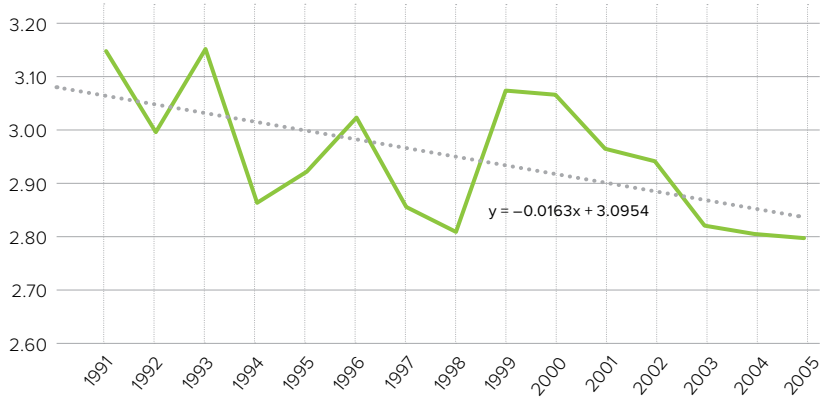


Source: Mladina 2020.

The "dying love affair" between young people and shopping centres is also shown by studies from abroad (cf. Veira, 2014), and the trend becomes even clearer when cross-analysing the frequency of visits to shopping centres and the year of the visitors' birth.

Figure 9.3:

Frequency of shopping centre visits by young people (15-29) by year of birth.

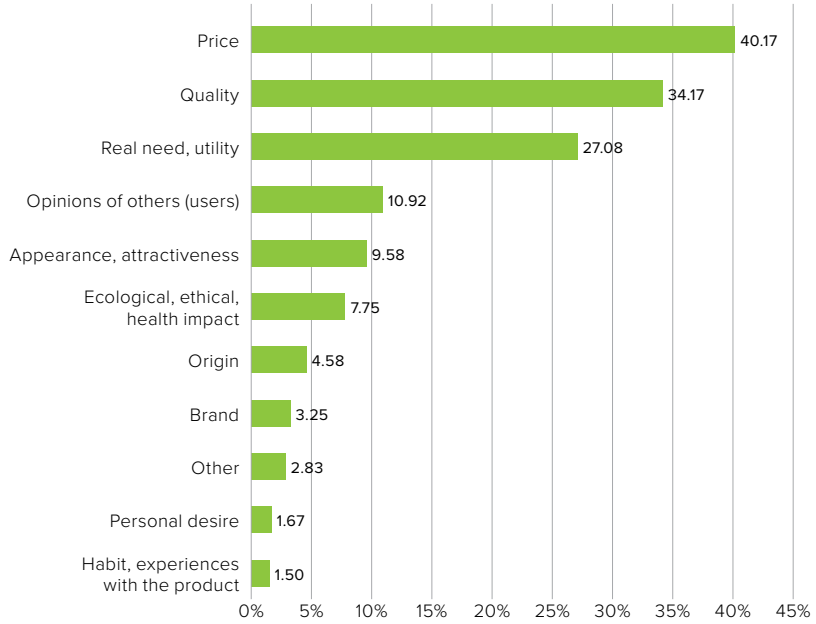


Source: Mladina 2020.

When it comes to factors regarding young people's purchasing choices, price is at the top, followed by quality and need/utility.

Figure 9.4:

Choice factors when buying products.



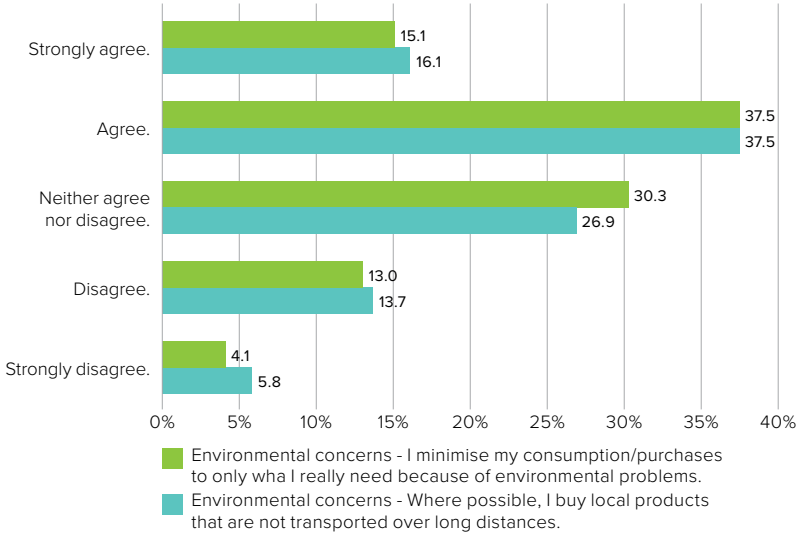
Source: Mladina 2020.

As can be seen, the factor of sustainability has a relatively low impact on young consumers, with just under 8% of young people citing this product aspect as a key factor in purchasing. This is particularly interesting regarding the fact that young people place a high value on protecting nature and living in a clean environment. In fact, 84% of young people say that protecting the environment is important or very important to them. Moreover, 89.1% of them want to live in a clean environment.

In this sense, there is a significant gap between values and actions. This gap is slightly narrower when young people are asked directly about their concern for the environment and their corresponding actions. Around half of them try to minimise or limit their consumption to local products.

Figure 9.5:

Environmental concerns and young people's consumption.



Source: Mladina 2020.

While the two pro-environmental components of shopping are statistically significantly associated with gender ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.01$) in terms of higher levels of pro-environmental behaviour among women, it is interesting to note the non-significant influence of the family's material situation (in the case of buying local), political orientation, or place of residence (size, region).

When analysing the value orientations associated with consumption among young people, it is therefore necessary to take into account the trend towards declarative beliefs, which often lead to contradictions in the respondents' views on how to explain the desired changes in consumption and living practices. We would like to stress here that, in the case of declared support and simultaneous rejection of the practical implementation of more sustainable consumption arrangements, there are only apparent contradictions in the respondents' answers, as the seeming incongruence can be explained by certain socio-theoretical concepts, such as 'passive activism' (Gladwell, 2010, 2011).

Passive activism is about apparent social engagement that does not materialise in practice. Passive activism is not expected to lead to much, as it is based only on a declarative desire to make a difference. In this sense, passive activism can be demarcated in relation to activism based on the principle that 'wishing to make a difference' is different from 'wanting to make a difference' and becoming actively involved in processes of change in one's local environment.

This difference in the level of social engagement is well illustrated by public opinion surveys, where expressed value orientations, ideas, and concepts are sometimes not in line with the realistic expectations of the respondents. It is sometimes difficult to recognize how much someone really wants to see change in their environment, as respondents do not fully express their opinions and attitudes on a particular topic for various reasons (mistrust, desire for anonymity, self-importance, local conditions, etc.).

Similar declarative attitudes can be observed when linking data on the importance of material goods and expressing the importance of protecting nature and living in a clean environment. In line with the principles of sustainable development and reducing resource consumption, which stem from attempts to reduce the effects of consumerism trends, giving importance to material goods, while at the same time supporting the importance of protecting and living in a clean environment can be perceived as a typical form of declarative attitudes without any real basis in practical implementation.

Table 9.1:

Gap between attitudes and interests in shopping among young people (15-29,%), 2010-2020.

	Protecting nature	To live in a clean environment	Material goods
Not at all important	0.9	0.4	1.2
Not important	3.1	1.8	9.9
Neither important nor unimportant	11.8	8.6	35.7
Important	45.6	44.5	41.3
Very important	38.5	44.6	11.8

Source: Mladina 2020.

There are many similar examples of declarative positions relating to consumption and other indirect forms of reducing consumption through the application of sustainable development principles. For example, the data show that the majority of young people who stated that 'due to environmental problems they minimise their consumption/purchases to only what they really need' also rate 'material goods' as important or very important. As many as 38.6% and 40.1% of young people who expressed concern for the environment by minimising their consumption/purchases also expressed the (high) importance of material goods in their lives. Similarly, 40.9% and 39.9% of young people who stated that they 'buy local products that are not transported over long distances whenever possible' also expressed the (high) importance of material goods in their lives. 56.3% of those who say they go to a shopping centre 1-3 times a week also say that, 'due to environmental problems, they minimise their consumption/purchases to only what they really need'. 58.3% of those who say they go to the shopping centre 1-3 times a week also say that 'if possible, they buy local products that are not transported over long distances'.

In line with the principles of sustainable development and reducing resource consumption, which stem from attempts to reduce the effects of consumerism trends, giving importance to material goods while at the same time supporting the importance of protecting and living in a clean and pristine environment can be seen as a typical form of "declarative attitudes" among young people.

Young people offered insights into the complexity of the problem at an individual level in their interviews.

> *"Well, I try to keep the environment clean, we separate waste regularly at home. But I am not giving up a commodity completely for the sake of a clean environment. I am pragmatic and I choose what is most practical. I would, however, regulate such things so that goods that harm the environment are taxed more heavily. Believe me, I would never buy a product again if it meant that I would have to pay for it too much, and I think that many people feel the same way. Online purchases during Covid-19 have increased a little, but not significantly, because I used to buy most things online before, since I'm not a person who would enjoy shopping for several hours."*
>
> (Luka, 21 years old, student, athlete, and right-wing politician)

> *"For example, in the store I usually look at where the product comes from. I usually buy Slovenian products. Certain things, of course, cannot be Slovenian. When we buy fish, for example, I look at where the salmon is from, and we try to eat more natural (organic) foods. I also look at the brand, whether it is more well known, because that means that the material is better and the product is more durable. I also search for cheaper products. Also I simply like certain things and buy them for that reason."*
>
> (Ahac, 15 years old, high school student, athlete and model maker)

> *"When it comes to consumption, my boyfriend and I try to focus on local products, even if they are hard to find. They are better, less processed, and healthier. Our health comes first and foremost."*
>
> (Maša, 26 years old, precariously employed)

> *"I make sure I don't spend more than I earn. I try to stay within my realistic limits. I would not take any loans right now, unless I were to buy a flat. I try to support Slovenian products, made also by my close friends or broader acquaintances. I know a lot of people who have startups or work for certain companies and I prefer to buy their products."*
>
> (Nejc, 27 years old, young politician)

9.2 CONSUMERISM AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In line with the phase they are in, young people are relatively more likely to question who they are, what they will do, what they want, what others think of them, etc. The youth phase is therefore characterised by searching and uncertainty, and young people are looking for forms of confirmation, definition, and identity.

One such form of searching and validation may be through consumption (of goods and services). The advertising industry understands this well, as demonstrated by the amount of money spent on advertising products and services for young people. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the volume of such funding increased by 250% between 1992 and 2002 alone (Kersting, 2004). The aim is clear – to portray consumption as something intrinsically linked to freedom, happiness, self-fulfilment, autonomy, individuality, and uniqueness. It is a meta-message, which says that all of life's problems can be solved by buying the right products, and young people are particularly vulnerable to this message (Kanner, 2003; Linn, 2004).

Advertising directly to young people started to gain momentum in the US in the 1980s, when research documented an increase in young people's purchasing power. This was reinforced by the increased permissiveness of parents and by the casual work that young people did in their spare time. The earnings from these jobs also allowed young people to use their parents' rising purchasing power to address their own 'individual needs'.

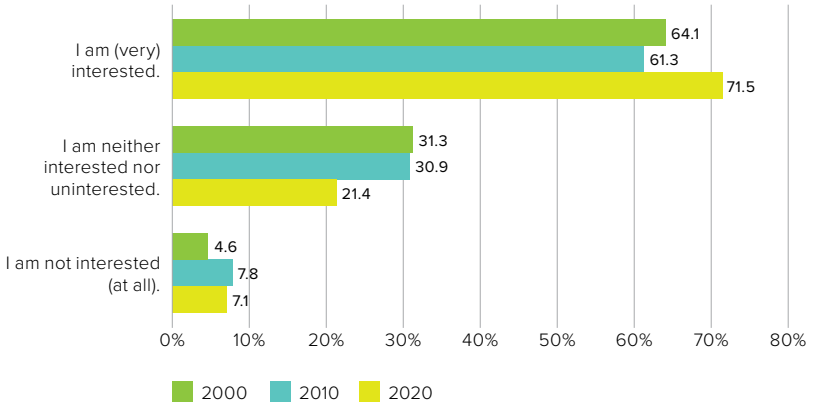
The culture of consumerism, which is problematic not only because it is environmentally unsustainable, but also because of the "glamorisation" of commodification and falsity (in terms of its redemptive role), is also present among Slovenian young people. Specifically, although the average importance of material goods compared to other aspects of life among young people is relatively low (and has even fallen slightly since 2000), material goods are important or very important to more than half of them (53%). This is particularly true for young boys, who show a statistically significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher level of 'materialism'. At least two more points should be made here. Firstly, modern societies are characterised by the 'demonisation' of materialism in attitudes (and the idealisation of family and friendship), which is not reflected in actions (e.g. the 'sacrifice' of friends, family, environment, creativity in the pursuit of a career or material success). Secondly, the mentality of consumerism is reflected in indicators that go beyond the importance of material goods. Moreover, the latter can include, among other things, the very essential "roof over one's head" and is thus not necessarily an indicator of either materialism or consumerism at all.

One of the better indicators of consumerism is the concern for the rather non-essential 'outward appearance', to which many industries (e.g. clothing, footwear, cosmetics, corrective/aesthetic surgery, etc.) are linked. If appearance was important or very important for 64% of young people in 2000, it is important for 71.5% of young people in 2020. Among that segment, more young women than men (80.8% women, 63.3% men) also enjoy shopping.

Figure 9.6:

Interest in/concern for outward appearance among young people (15-29 years), 2000-2020.

Taking care of your outward appearance



Sources: Mladina 2000, Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

More specifically, in addition to gender, concern for appearance and outward appearance is statistically significantly associated with an interest in shopping ($r = 0.44$; $p < 0.01$), the importance of material goods ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$), and success at school and work ($r = 0.26$); $p < 0.01$), with frequency of shopping centre visits ($r = 0.16$; $p < 0.01$), with the amount of time spent on social networks ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$), and with the desire to have power over others ($r = 0.14$; $p < 0.01$). Those who are more concerned about their appearance are slightly more likely to feel stressed ($r = 0.07$; $p < 0.05$), and also feel that their happiness is highly dependent on others ($r = 0.11$; $p < 0.01$).

Understanding the increasing importance of appearance can be built on the insight that outward appearance is a determinant of success in personality, relationship, and labour markets. Many people invest money in improving their appearance because they believe this is one way to occupy higher job positions (Wolgemuth, 2010). Studies show that those who look better (in line with fashion/corporate beauty standards) receive higher incomes (Wong and Penner, 2016).

Outward appearance was somewhat more important to young people in 2020 compared to 2010.

When asked about interest in specific areas of life, young people showed a significant shift towards an increasing interest in shopping. This increase (of around 15%) points to two aspects of this phenomenon; on the one hand, there is a shift away from so-called 'self-expressive value orientations' (Inglehart et al., 2004) towards more materialistic value orientations, due to the increasing range of shopping possibilities, the increased importance of advertising (Luthar, 2010), the range and great diversification of product availability, and the possibility of consuming products and services. On the other hand, the increased interest in shopping can be explained through social factors and the increase in access to information, which allows for greater comparability of products and optimisation of the shopping experience and product prices. These two aspects are intertwined and complement each other, and their periods of intensity are also intertwined.

Table 9.2:

Interest in shopping among young people (15-29 years, in %), 2010-2020.

	2010	2020
1 Not interested at all.	7.4	4.4
2 Not interested	26.6	18.5
3 Neither interested nor not interested.	37.2	33.7
4 Interested.	20.5	33.4
5 Very interested.	8.2	10.1

Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Inglehart and Welzel (2010, 2018) explain these periods in terms of intense periodic social changes resulting from various long-term (multi-year) trends of economic, political, and developmental fluctuations between growth and crises. In crisis periods, trends away from self-expressive values and shifts towards materialistic value orientations are observed, due to the emergence of fears about the potential loss of the material basis on which existing life-style or living practices are based.

Slovenia is no exception in this respect, with the paradoxical increase in interest in shopping coinciding with the current problematic period due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the socio-economic consequences that have resulted from it. Another aspect of the interpretation of the increase in young people's interest in shopping can be explained on similar grounds. The increase in materialistic value orientations through the awareness of the difficulty of accessing certain material goods that are highly ranked in the scale of needs and are out of reach (e.g. one's own real estate) paradoxically results in an increased interest in other material goods, according to the principle of the 'Invisible Ink Strategy' (Corrigan, 1997: 14). Simply put, by taking an interest in consumer goods that are interpreted as an important part of certain lifestyles and social groups, the individual attempts to create a bridge to a desired lifestyle (McCracken, 1998).

Comparing the data 2010-2020, there is a significant shift towards the increasing importance of shopping. The increase in the proportion of young people (by around 15%) expressing an increased interest in shopping shows a shift away from the so-called "self-expressive value" (Inglehart et al., 2004) towards more materialistic value orientations.

9.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND SHOPPING PATTERNS

Increasingly, socio-political engagement is taking place beyond institutional politics, led by electoral processes, largely as a result of disillusionment with the effectiveness of conventional political practices, through which young people feel they are not (sufficiently) heard. Practices outside institutional frameworks can be referred to as 'Do-It-Yourself' (DIY) politics, and its targets can be anyone from multinational corporations and political elites to local communities, friends and family (Pickard, 2019). In contemporary politics the targets and agents have changed, as well as the repertoires of political action (Norris, 2013). Through such engagement,

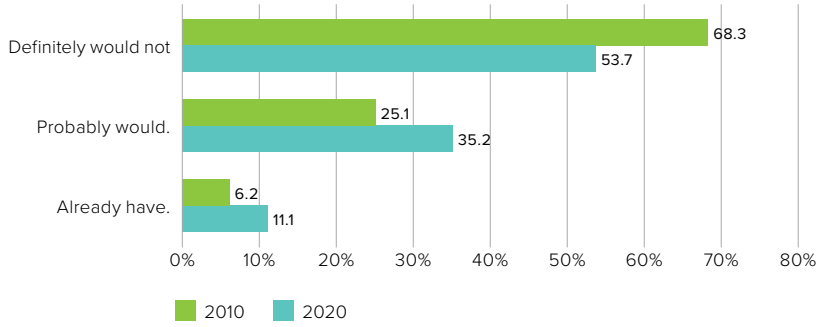
young people can experience a sense of belonging to like-minded groups and gain a sense of empowerment and the possibility of influencing social condition. Through activism that is in line with their values and attitudes they can create an 'ethical compass' (Micheletti and Stolle, 2010: 128), through which they make decisions about their actions and lifestyle choices. These choices are becoming increasingly important in the construction of (young) individuals' identities, which in turn influence their behaviour and consumption (Giddens, 1991: 5-6). Lifestyle choices are thus reflected in identity politics, i.e. the politicisation of everyday practices, including ethical, moral, and political choices (de Moor, 2014: 4).

In this context, we can also observe choices relating to decisions to boycott certain products for political, ethical, environmental reasons, or to purchase certain products for the same reasons. Both refer to the concept of 'political consumerism', which is situated within 'do-it-yourself' politics and encompasses practices and actions based on the awareness that what we buy affects not only the health and wealth of the individual, but also the local community, wider society and the planet (Pickard, 2019: 386). Such consumer behaviour is not individualistic consumer participation, concerned only with the consumer's own well-being, but rather is practiced on the basis of an awareness that everyone can contribute to broad social change (Pickard, 2019: 389).

If there is a shift towards more interest in shopping in 2020, it should also be noted that there is also a shift towards more active expression of political, ethical, environmental views related to certain products, compared to 2010. Although the majority of young people still do not make purchases or boycott certain products in relation to certain political, ethical, environmental attitudes, there is a strong increase (between 15-18%) of young people who are interested in or influenced by such product-related issues when shopping. Almost half (or 46.3%) of young people in Slovenia say they have or probably would boycott the purchase of certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. In 2010, 31.3% of individuals did so.

Figure 9.7:

Social engagement – boycotted the purchase of certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.



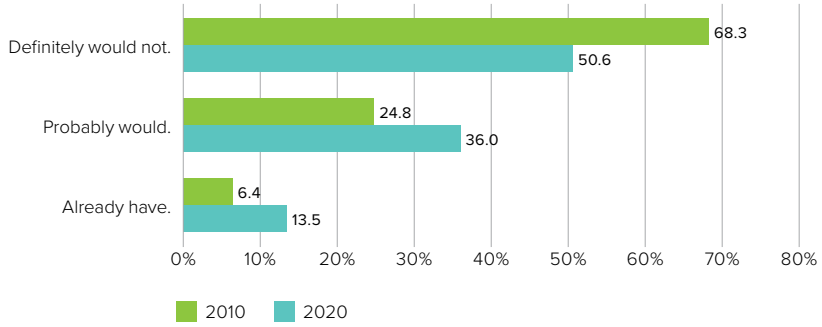
Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Almost half (46.3%) of young people in 2020 have or are likely to boycott certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. This proportion has increased by 15.3% since 2010.

The above finding of a strong presence of political consumerism as an element of do-it-yourself politics among Slovenian young people is also confirmed by the fact that about half of them (49.5%) would or have bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. This is mainly about showing active support and financing political, ethical, and environmental initiatives through various products and services supported by young people, and not so much about avoiding unsustainable practices. Both 'negative veto' (avoidance) and positive support for various practices through consumption behaviour are therefore modes of socio-political action that are quite widespread among young people and clearly show the depth and breadth of young people's politicisation.

Figure 9.8:

Social engagement – bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.



Sources: Mladina 2010, Mladina 2020.

Compared to 2010, there is a significant shift towards more active political, ethical and environmental views in 2020, related to shopping or boycotting certain products.

However, in addition to the importance of such initiatives, young people interviewed also presented a number of related problems, pointing out the pitfalls of political consumerism, which for the average young person is also limited by financial means. Interviewees also made observations about the range of alternative products and services available.

> *"I seem to live a pretty normal life in terms of consumption. My consumption patterns depend mainly on traditions, habits, and the thickness of my wallet. My consumption patterns are not much influenced by 'social justice' initiatives."*
>
> (Gregor, 26 years old, young activist and extreme leftist)

Young people's consumption habits revolve around an axis that is much stronger than so-called 'slacktivism' or 'liketivism'. This is also shown by the following statement, which suggests that political consumerism requires a great deal of renunciation and self-discipline, which goes well beyond the burden of a conventional form of political decision-making in

the context of elections, which could be compared to the burden of buying a packet of cigarettes or chewing gum (cf. Mueller and Stratmann, 1994).

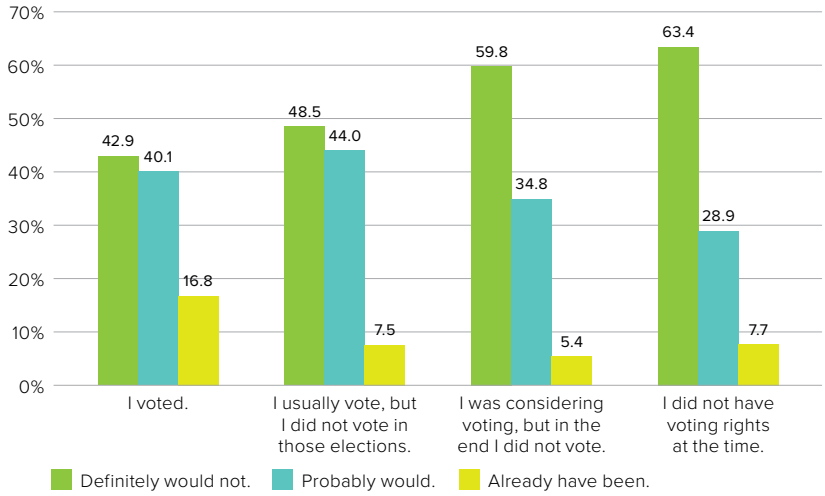
> *"/.../ I like these initiatives very much and I support them, but they require a very big change. It seems to me that in an established household, where my shopping patterns have been the same all my life, it is very difficult to change certain habits. And it seems to me that it is difficult to change parents' opinions or would at least take a lot of work to really change it."*
>
> (Aleš, 25 years old, student of Sustainable Development Management)

Further, it is clear that young people are genuinely trying to live in line with their values, and that this is not just a fad. This is also reflected in the very high proportion of young people who, for environmental reasons, self-limit and minimise their consumption and purchases to only what they really need. More than half (51.2%) are such consumers, and they are very dominant compared to those who do not (16.6%).

In political science, a one-dimensional view of political participation (see Milbrath, 1965) has been taken for decades as the basis for thinking about individual politicality. From the '*apathetic citizens*' to the '*gladiators*', this has defined understandings of political activity, locating the individual at one point on a continuum between zero and the highest possible political activity. That political participation is a multidimensional concept, however, soon became clear, as certain individuals are highly active through some forms of political participation, but are passive in others (Moyser, 2003: 177). This becomes particularly evident when it comes to individuals who, because of their powerlessness or distrust of conventional political arenas, seek alternative or even create new non-traditional spaces of political action (see Barnes, 1979). If we look at the link between conventional political participation (or electoral participation) and boycotting the purchase of certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons, we can see that the conventionally more politically active are also more oriented towards political consumerism. Indeed, the highest percentage (16.9%) of those who participated in the last elections for members of the National Assembly also boycotted the purchase of products (see Figure 9.9).

Figure 9.9:

Social engagement – boycotted the purchase of certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons. X Did you vote – in the last election for members of the National Assembly (3 August 2018)?

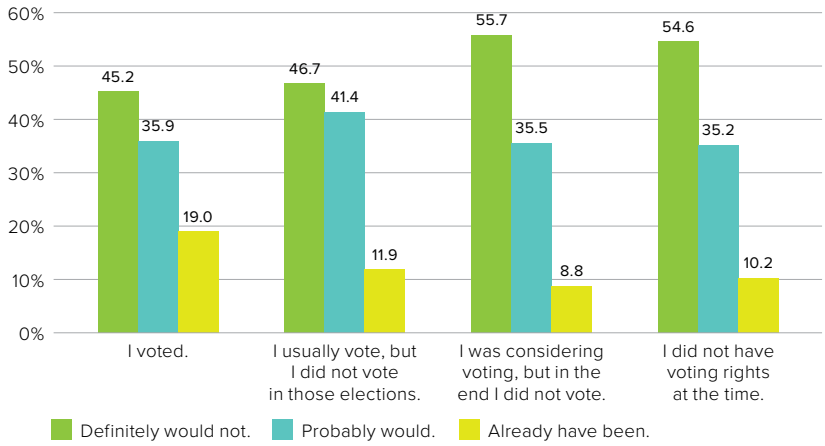


Source: Mladina 2020.

A very similar pattern emerges in boycotting products for political, ethical, and environmental reasons by participants in the European Parliament elections. If we take into account that these elections are also less well attended by young people, this further demonstrates the validity of a one-dimensional understanding of young people's political participation when it comes to political consumerism. A similar pattern emerges in the purchase of products, with 19% of those who have already voted and at the same time purchased certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (see Figure 9.10). The same finding applies to participants in the European Parliament elections.

Figure 9.10:

Social engagement – bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. X Did you vote – in the last election of members of the National Assembly (3 August 2018)?

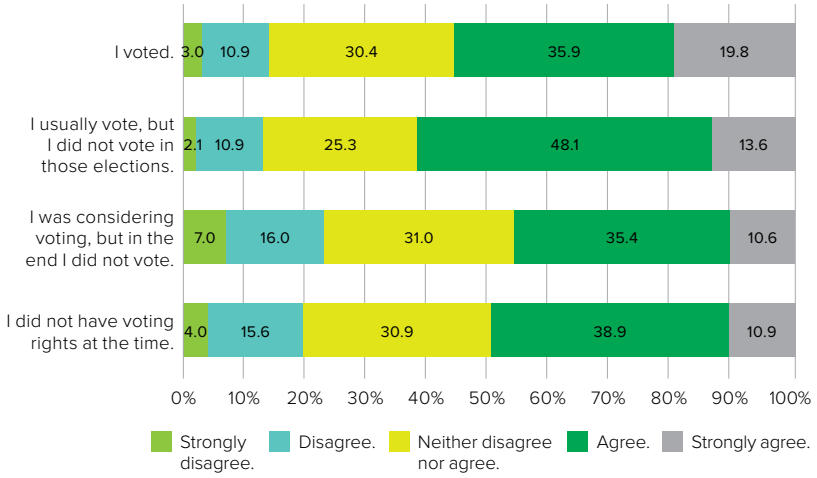


Source: Mladina 2020.

If we look at who limits their consumption or purchases with the environment in mind, we can see that in this case we can build a linear understanding of political activity to a lesser extent, but still. Voters in the National Assembly elections are more likely to show environmentally responsible consumption practices, and this is especially true for those who vote regularly (see Figure 9.11). The fact that the more institutionally politically active are also more likely to show environmental consumer awareness is also the case for voters in the European Parliament elections; 57.5% of those who voted agree or strongly agree that they minimise their consumption because of environmental concerns. Among those who did not vote, this share is 10% lower.

Figure 9.11:

Environmental concern – I minimise my consumption/purchases to only what I really need because of environmental problems. x Did you vote – in the last election of members of the National Assembly (3 August 2018)?



Source: Mladina 2020.

Based on the data presented, it could be said that Slovenian young people show linear rather than multidimensional patterns of political behaviour. This cannot be attributed to the "backwardness" of the Slovenian political sphere or to the obsolescence of young people's political imagination. Rather, it reflects that consumer activism and environmentally responsible consumerism have become conventional behaviours of young people, who, through these practices, express themselves, while also building a new image of the (young) good citizen that, to a much greater extent, displays patterns of active citizenship (see Dalton, 2009).

More voters are turning to consumer activism and environmentally responsible consumerism.

9.4 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings presented above, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Shopping is increasingly moving online – only 11.5% of young people do not shop online or get information about the products they want to buy. In 2010, there were almost half (46.1%) of such young people.

2. Price is a key factor in young people's choice of products to buy. The environmental or sustainability aspect is relatively unimportant – only 8% of young people indicated that this product aspect is crucial, although on the other hand they highly value environmental protection and living in a clean environment, and indicate that they have or would probably boycott the purchase of certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons. The data show a wide gap between attitudes and actions.

3. The 2010-2020 data show a significant shift towards an increasing importance of shopping.

4. Young people are increasingly concerned about appearance, which suggests that they are adapting to the mentality of an image-saturated culture that prioritises form over substance.

5. Political consumerism is widespread among young people, both in the context of rejecting particular products (boycotting) and in the context of shopping for political, ethical, and environmental reasons.

6. Environmentally responsible consumerism and consumer activism are becoming increasingly conventional practices of political self-expression among young people.

When considering the recommendations for youth policy implementation based on the above findings, the key issue that emerges is that of sustainable action or environmental pollution. The latter is closely linked to the environmentally unsustainable "buy and throw away" model and in fact poses the greatest threat to young people and future generations. In this respect, efforts should be made to bridge the gap between young people's attitudes and purchasing practices. In order to promote sustain-

able patterns of social action among young people, it would be useful to link education for sustainable development directly to everyday practices. The approach of "learning responsible citizenship through action" or so-called *action civics* can offer many answers in this case.

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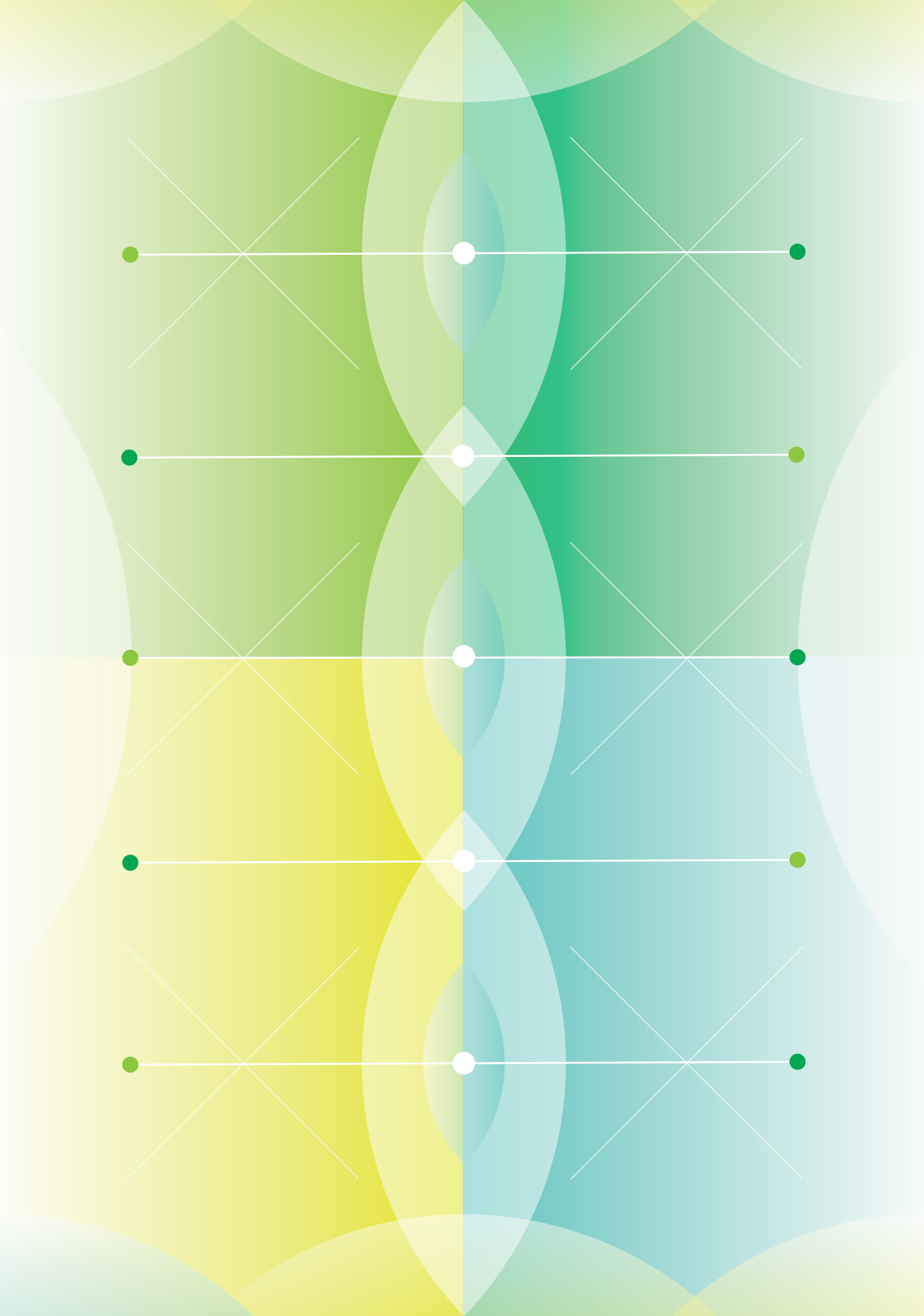
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TOMAŽ DEŽELAN, MARKO RADOVAN, MIHA MATJAŠIČ AND MARKO MAJCE

10. USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, AND THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

10.1 NETWORKED YOUNG CITIZENS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW SOCIAL SITUATIONS

In the decade since the Mladina 2010 survey was published, in which one chapter focused on the virtualization of everyday life and time young people spend on the internet, it has become clear that information and communications technology (ICT) has transcended its reach as just another area of human activity. ICT has fundamentally changed the established processes of life and work, regardless of industry or world region. From farmers, micro-enterprises, and the fast-growing ICT sector itself to doctors and health professionals, and teachers all the way to the impact on politics and its general social perception, we see tremendous changes everywhere, which of course bring with them great challenges and problems (Heeks, 2018). At the beginning of the new millennium, Castells (2001) recognized that the internet and related ICT changed today's society in the way in which Gutenberg's printing press altered society in the 15th century. The transition from Gutenberg's world to the internet world was achieved by the internet's constant growth in terms of both volume and reach across all spheres of social activity, its pivotal impact on socio-economic and political order, and the associated fundamental changes in human activity.

At the turn of the millennium, it became clear that the nascent era of the internet ended quickly, if it had ever existed. With the help of the normal-

isation thesis, Markolis and Resnick (2000) soon began to emphasise that the internet reflected and reinforced patterns of behaviour in the offline world. Hopes for a new socioeconomic order were balked as ordinary political and economic activity that took over cyberspace (ibid.: 2). An advanced political economy designed and run by online technology experts has replaced amateur and hobby users and dominated the realm of political, social, and economic life, including spending free time online (ibid.: 4). This is nicely summed up in a statement from one of the interviewees.

> *"I use the internet for everything: school, communication, entertainment, and music."*
>
> (Benjamin, 17 years old, young musician)

We have entered the age of the internet galaxy, in which the binary view – the separation of digital and analogue – of current social processes is outdated and reductionist, as it does not cover the full intertwining of physical and online activities or the emergence of individuals, state, economic actors, and other relevant social stakeholders that make up a highly networked society (Navarria, 2019: 34). It is crucial to connect individual network points to a networked society, which is done by simultaneously navigating (namely, activating or deactivating) virtual (in the web) or physical connection points. In doing so, two elements are very important; who is doing the connecting (the actor) and whether they have the appropriate resources to do so.

People who connect to a networked society in everyday life through digital communication, combined with the general social, political, and economic relevance of the social networks and corporations of which they are a part, become a new type of citizen – a networked citizen. Therefore, people's roles in society in relation to both the state and other stakeholders are being redefined. By nature, these networked citizens are much less involved in member organizations. They participate more in horizontal and non-hierarchical networks, are more project or problem-oriented, seek opportunities for self-realization, even in the form of reflective identity policy and reject traditional forms of involvement based on duties (Loader et al., 2014). Likewise, especially for current generations of young

people, the historical reference points of networked citizens are closer to global information network capitalism than welfare state capitalism, and their social contacts are increasingly managed through new communication network environments (ibid.). Current generations of young people belong to the group of citizens who, through their generational experience, are most exposed to these processes. A statement from one of the interviewees nicely indicates young people's acceptance of this fact.

> *"Technology is among us, it will remain among us; it will connect us more and more, and it will also be more and more present among us."*
>
> (Alex, 25 years old, member of the Italian minority)

It is indisputable that new conditions create new forms of inequality, as new forms of socio-political, economic, and also recreational integration take place in new environments, which require different infrastructural as well as intellectual capacities. Norris (2001: 13) notes that the internet and related processes will give a disproportionate advantage to the elite. This is due to the fact that they are in a better position both in terms of access to the infrastructure, needed for full inclusion, and in term of access to knowledge infrastructure or knowledge itself, which is necessary for the full use of accessible infrastructure. In addition to the individual level, it is necessary to emphasise the system level, which provides worse or better conditions for inclusion in the global capitalism of information networks both in terms of technology (5G, broadband, etc.) and in terms of pedagogy (establishment and promotion of connectivism as a pedagogical paradigm; see Langset et al., 2018).

The impact that individual and systemic differences have on the well-being of the citizenry and its society is remarkable. Namely, the level of technological progress dictates, in addition to the establishment of new systems, constant adjustments based on the individual's corpus of knowledge, competencies, and skills. An appropriate level of so-called digital skills and competencies opens up new – and often the only – opportunities for political, economic, and social engagement through social interaction with other people or interaction with other systems and services (Ecorys, 2016). In addition, digital competencies and skills also have a significant impact on a person's social mobility (ibid.). Various

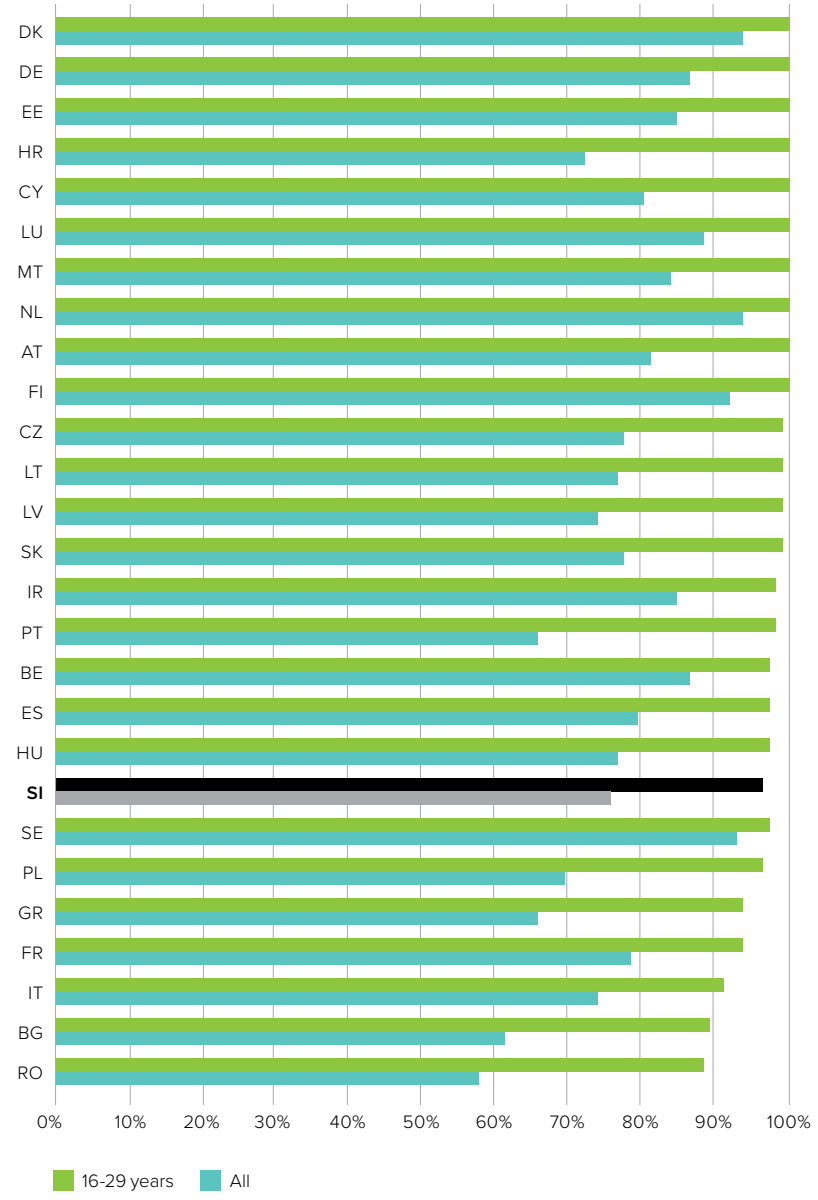
studies show that they significantly determine levels of involvement in the labour market and career success (European Commission, 2020), as well academic performance (Pagani et al., 2016). In this chapter, we discuss in more detail three areas that are crucial for young people's full involvement in the networked society of global capitalism. These are the digital divide, digital competencies, and young people's involvement in current social processes through new communication networks.

10.2 INTERNET ACCESS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

The digital divide has traditionally been shown and tested in the light of access to the internet, ICT, and in the context of associated knowledge (Heeks, 2018: 131). Thus, the literature has often featured discussion of so-called digital poverty, as well as important questions about access to the internet as a fundamental human right (ibid.: 134). With the development of the internet and the advancement of ICT, the analysis of the digital divide has increasingly highlighted several different dimensions of this phenomenon. These range from the mobility gap, which characterized access to mobile telephony, to the broadband gap associated with the technology of the same name. The gap, which is caused by various factors (e.g. income, gender, education, age, nationality, disability, settlement), has also begun to be analysed in more detail. Although young people are proverbially considered digital natives, these factors still have a significant impact on their access to the internet and further on the effects of its use. Nevertheless, based on available statistics from Eurostat, we can conclude that young people have relatively good access to the internet, both in terms of young people within the EU and in terms of the general population. In Slovenia, access to computers and the internet is high and is comparable to other EU countries (see Figure 15.3 in the appendix). On the other hand, the share of daily internet users among young people is at the bottom of the EU average, but at the same time it is evident that the share of young people in Slovenia does not lag significantly behind the most ranked countries, as namely youth access to the internet in Slovenia is well over 90%. Especially in comparison with the rest of the population, the difference in favour of young people in our country is among the largest (see Figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1:

Share of daily internet users 2019, EU.



Source: Eurostat (2020).

Digital literacy itself essentially includes three dimensions: access to information, its assessment and use. An individual must know where to

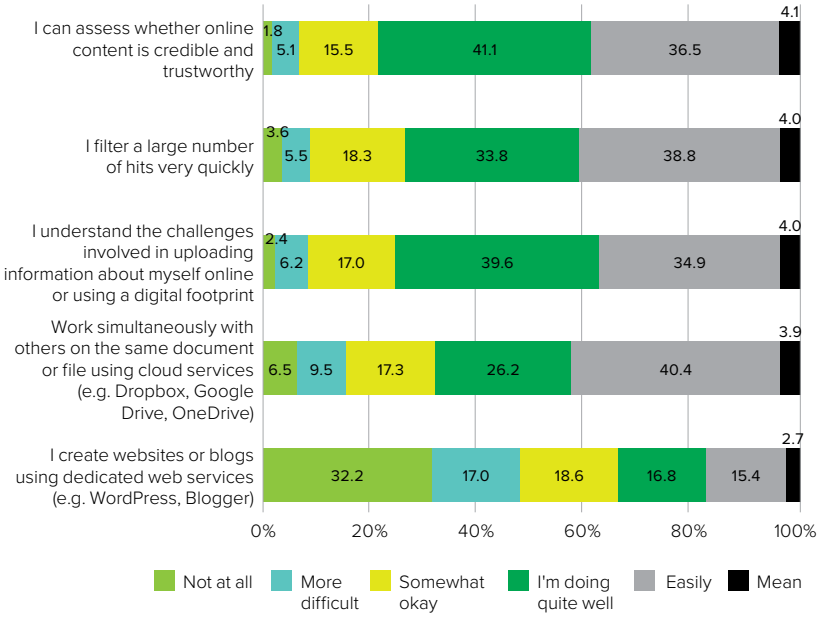
look for information and what is available, understand the information, know whether it is relevant to them and whether it is correct, and make a decision on further action based on the data (Heeks, 2018: 60-61). The EU Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (EU Council, 2018) include digital competence among the key eight competencies. According to this, digital competencies "includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation […], safety […], intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking" (ibid.).

In the case of the Mladina 2020 survey, we asked young people how independently they perform various ICT-related tasks that indicate their level of digital competencies. As regards the perception of the ability to assess whether online content is credible and trustworthy, we find that just over 40% of young people assess themselves as independent, i.e. able to assess the authenticity of online content (see Figure 10.2). Furthermore, a slightly higher proportion of respondents (42.8%) easily or fairly well filter a large number of hits very quickly. In addition to this ability, in a flood of information, the ability to manage a manageable amount of information is equally as important. Approximately the same share of young people can easily or fairly well co-create a product with others at the same time on the same document or file, which proves their ability to co-create with the help of ICT tools. A similar proportion of young people (38.9%) also very well or quite well understand the challenges associated with uploading information about themselves online. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the fact that, for around three-fifths of young people, the basic processes of autonomous and secure use of the internet pose a particular challenge that they do not meet well or easily. This is especially true for tasks that hide several production dimensions, such as creating websites or blogs using dedicated online tools. Less than a fifth of respondents are such users (18.1%), which means that the vast majority of young people online mainly consume available content. Examples of use and creation online, as indicated by the interviewee's statement below, are more the exception than the rule.

> *"I got my website half a year ago, so I also use WordPress."*
>
> (Tjaša, 26 years old, young professional athlete)

Figure 10.2:

Independence in performing tasks related to information and communication technology (in %).



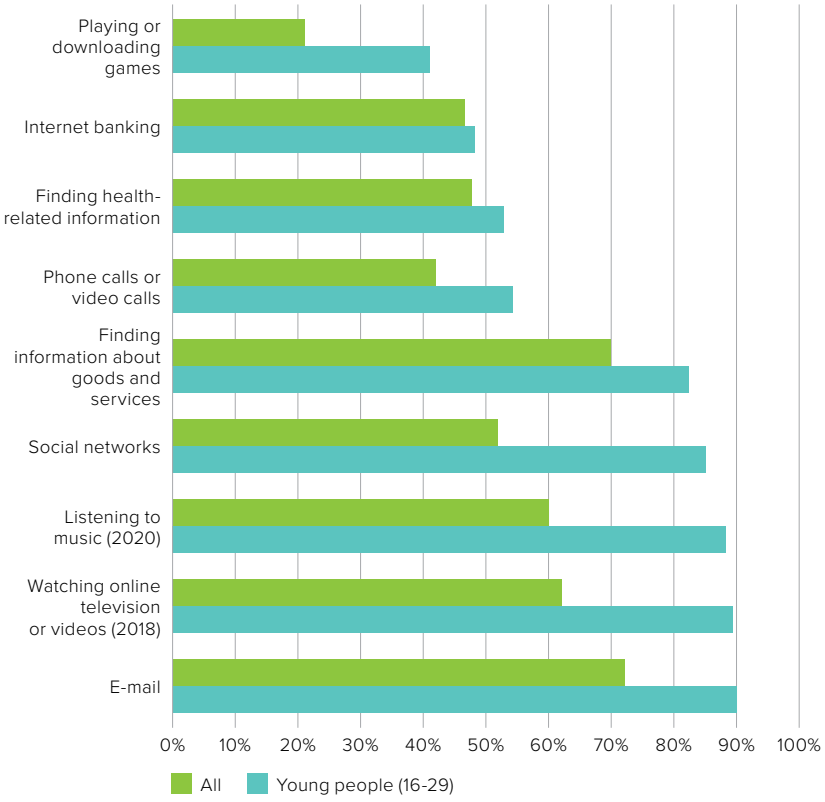
Source: Mladina 2020.

In accordance with the above, we can additionally interpret the data collected by the European Statistical Office (Eurostat, 2020) on the topic of performing various tasks online or in connection with ICT. It also shows that over 70% of young people perform basic computer tasks, which is about 20% more than the entire adult population. However, the use of presentation applications and working with spreadsheets, photos, and videos, has already changed considerably and only about half of young people still use them (see Figure 11.4 in the appendix). When it comes to any knowledge of coding and computer languages, the share is just over a tenth of all young people (see Figure 11.5 in the appendix). Slovenia does not rank high among EU countries in terms of the share of young people familiar with computer programming. Additionally, the fact that countries leading in this statistic (e.g. Denmark, Croatia) have twice the share of young people with such knowledge as Slovenia (see Figure 11.5 in the appendix) is particularly worrying. The

most common tasks listed and the degree of independence that young people show in performing tasks related to the internet and ICT coincide with the data on what young people do online. Figure 10.3 clearly shows that most young people (over 80%) use the internet to view e-mail, listen to music, watch videos and online television, and of course to view and share content and communicate on social networks. It should be noted that only about half of young people use the internet to play or download computer games.

Figure 10.3:

Proportion of young people who have already performed the following tasks online, 2019, Slovenia (in %).



Source: Eurostat (2020).

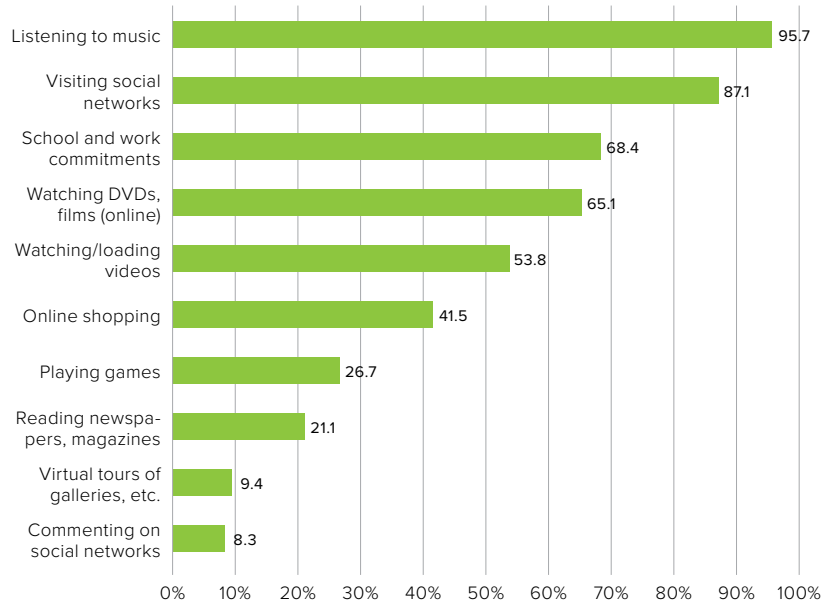
10.3 QUANTITY AND PURPOSE OF INTERNET USE

As concerns the amount of time that young people spend on different tasks, the findings confirm that consuming content is the primary reason for their use of the internet, followed by producing content. In a more detailed analysis of the time that young people spend on various online activities,[2] both listening to music and visiting social networks dominate. It is also not surprising that young people spend the least time a day visiting virtual galleries, museums, or concerts, as this concept only just began to develop in 2020. More surprising is the data on the "active" or "productive" use of social networks, which indicates the absence of deliberative potential of these tools for young people and the syndrome of "following" other influencers. The low amount of time young people spend reading newspapers and magazines is also surprising, which merely confirms the findings of many studies that social networks are the primary source of information for young people. It is worth noting the pre-Covid-19 pandemic finding of Eurostat (2019) that those young people who use the internet to search for information are mostly looking for information on goods and services, looking for news, looking for health-related information, and almost 40% of them are looking for educational content or content related to online education. On the other hand, it is encouraging to note that young people have spent a lot of time doing schoolwork, working online, and using online tools, but this information needs to be examined in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, when both education and work moved online.

2 We recalculated the survey scale by recoding all intervals into their mean: the frequency intervals of the activities chosen by the respondents were as follows (0 = zero / never engaged, 1 = up to 15 minutes [recoded in 7.5 minutes], 2 = 15-30 minutes [recoded in 22.5 minutes], 3 = 30 minutes to 1 hour [recoded in 45 minutes], 4 = 1-2 hours [recoded in 90 minutes], 5 = 2–3 hours [recoded in 150 minutes], 6 = more than 3 hours [recoded in 210 minutes]).

Figure 10.4:

Performing tasks related to the internet (in %).



Source: Mladina 2020

If we look at the amount of time young people spend on different tasks online, by gender and age, we also come to some interesting findings. Women spend much more time a day visiting social networks, while men spend more time watching and uploading videos and playing games. When it comes to age, we can also notice some differences. Those in younger age groups play more games, while those in older age groups read online newspapers and magazines more often. It is interesting to point out the fact that young men with (un)completed vocational or professional education predominate in the field of playing computer games. Younger people also spend more time visiting social networks and listening to music. The connection between age and online tasks is also nicely illustrated by the interviewees' statements below about consuming and creating content on social networks.

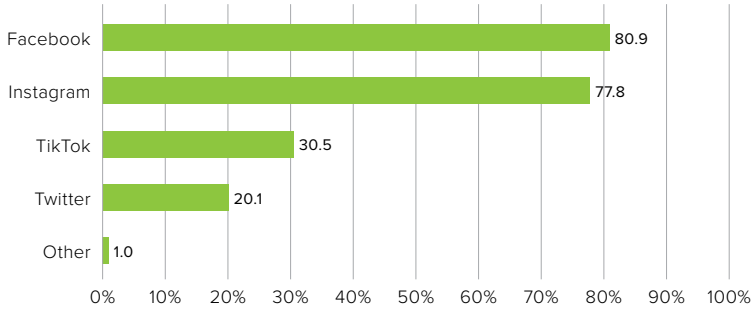
> *"I used Facebook myself, but I found it a waste of time, so I deleted my profile."*
>
> (Daša, 25 years old, young entrepreneur and student)

> *"I sometimes posted things when I was in high school, but now that's really rare. I don't know if I've posted something this year."*
>
> (Ester, 25 years old, researcher)

Given the high frequency of online tasks among young people and the amount of time they spend on them, we were interested in the frequency of use of individual online communities in the Mladina 2020 survey. It turned out that about two-thirds of young people visit online social networks such as Facebook every day, and just under three-fifths use video and photo communities daily. When it comes to the type of online communities and communication tools that young people use today, we find a mixture of "traditional" and new tools that are popular among young people in Slovenia. Among the first is certainly Facebook, which is still the most frequently used social network, and only slightly behind it, in terms of the share of users, is Instagram. TikTok, which is currently considered as a much more youth-oriented tool, is also showing a wide range of users, as it is used by more than a third of young people. On the other hand, Twitter, which is considered the dominant tool of political debate and the chosen tool of political decision-makers, is more or less uninteresting for young people, as it is used by only about a fifth (see Figure 10.5).

Figure 10.5:

Users of social networks among young people (in %).



Source: Mladina 2020.

10.4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S ONLINE AND PUBLIC LIVES

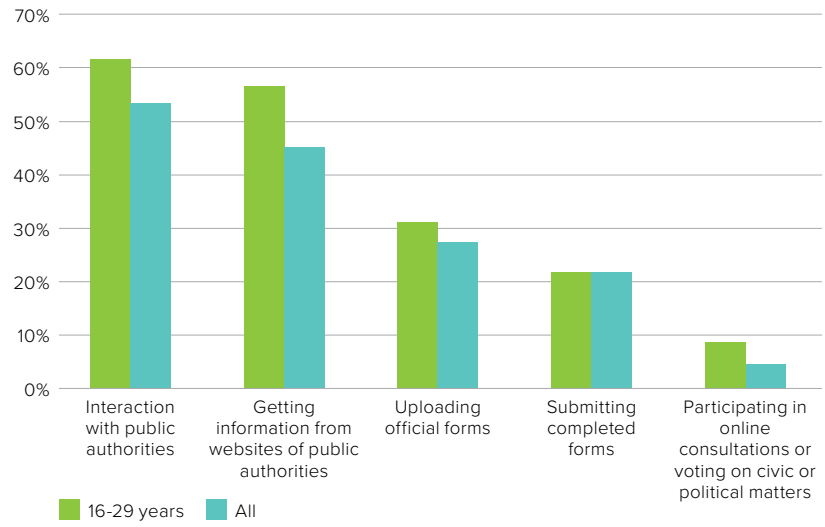
Because the internet is one of the few places where young people predominate demographically compared to the rest of the population, and because managing online tools comes more naturally to young people than to the rest of the population, the internet can counterbalance young people's absence from traditional forms of public life (see Deželan, 2015). This is supported by the increasingly active form of youth citizenship (Dalton, 2009), which is moving away from traditional citizenship, sensitive to conventional institutional policy processes, and increasingly showing elements of networked citizenship based on the way and frequency of online use (see Loader et al., 2014). As can be seen from the above data, the internet is increasingly replacing traditional (mass) media in terms of providing access to information, and, at least in theory, allows free communication between citizens. This is a paradigmatic change in participation from collective to connective (Navarria, 2019), with the central place of political debate, as far as it occurs at all, no longer a political organization, but a network of connected individuals.

It should be emphasized that young people's political perception is different and it strongly differs from the traditional notions of institutional politics. Namely, these are forms of public action that are outside institutional politics and can also be directed at completely different targets than is the case in the traditional political struggle (see Norris, 2002). That politics among young people is broader, but also related to the rejection of institutional policy, is also shown by the deliberate avoidance of established terminology regarding institutional policy in their communication (see Vromen et al., 2014), as well as by a higher level of youth participation in general social affairs, compared to narrower political ones (Deželan, 2015). However, data from various studies already show (e.g. Deželan, 2015; Martin, 2012) that if young people lag behind other age groups in terms of participation in institutional policy, this does not apply to the internet, as young people are at least equally online, while participating in conventional political processes. Compared to the rest of the adult population, young people also manage their contacts with the state to the same extent or to a greater extent, and also participate more

in various online consultations on socio-political issues and express their opinions on them (see Figure 10.6).

Figure 10.6:

Share of internet users performing various civic activities, 2019, Slovenia (in %).

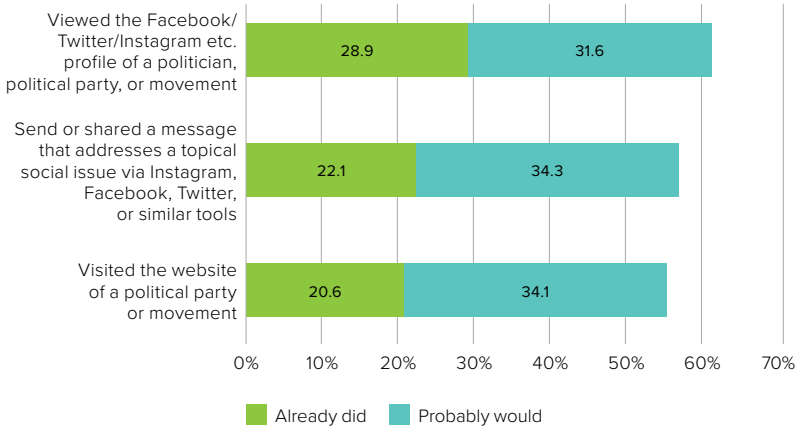


Source: Eurostat (2019)

In a similar way, we can understand the data on young people's readiness to participate in public affairs, which we obtained through the Mladina 2020 survey. The data show that over 70% of the surveyed young people have either already shared or would probably share a message about a current social problem via their profile on one of their social networks. The same applies to monitoring political actors via social networks and websites. More than half of young people have already or would probably visit the website of a political party or movement and look at the profile of a politician, political party, or movement on one of their social networks. It should be noted that more than a third of young people have already done so (see Figure 10.7). Given the fact that these percentages are much higher than the percentages we know of for conventional offline forms of political participation (see Deželan, 2015), it is worth making serious consideration of ways to adapt institutional policy to patterns of new youth citizenship.

Figure 10.7:

Readiness for socio-political participation of young people online (in %).



Source: Mladina 2020.

10.5 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

The key findings of this chapter can be summarized in the following points:

1. Only 40% of young people feel able to make good judgments regarding the credibility of online content.
2. In comparison with other EU countries, Slovenia is among the poorest countries in terms of the share of young people with computer programming skills.
3. Over 80% of young people use the internet to read e-mails, listen to music, watch videos and online television, and share content and communicate on social networks. Only about half of them download or play computer games online.
4. Young people spend the most their time online consuming entertainment content. There is little active content creation as listening to music and visiting social networks are at the top. They spend very little time reading newspapers and magazines. When it comes

to working with ICT, they mostly perform only basic tasks (e.g. working with a text editor).

5. Compared to the rest of the adult population, young people participate in online institutional policy processes to the same or greater extent.

On this basis, we make the following policy recommendations:

- It is necessary to encourage more advanced use of ICT, which will be more focused on production and not just the consumption of content. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce ICT literacy programs.
- It is especially necessary to promote programs for the introduction of computer programming within formal education (e.g. kindergartens, schools) and through various non-formal programs (youth work programs, youth organizations, non-governmental organizations and public institutions in education, etc.).
- It is necessary to promote reading culture also online and to design measures that will guide young people in obtaining information from trusted sources and reduce the influence of social media as the primary source of information.
- It is necessary to create as many opportunities as possible for young people to participate in the processes of formulating and implementing public policies online.

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MILAN LAVRIČ AND TOMAŽ DEŽELAN

KEY FINDINGS OF THE YOUTH 2020 STUDY

The Youth 2020 study was largely designed as a follow-up to a similar study a decade ago, but it also partially built on the methodological approaches and data of the 2000 study. This allowed researchers to gain a detailed insight into long-term trends, which proved essential as the most important results of the study relate precisely to trends over the last ten or twenty years.

On the demographic front, one of the key findings is that the extremely rapid decline in the number of young people is very likely to have stopped by 2020. Since 2000, the number of young people has fallen by almost a third (31.1%). This decline undoubtedly has wrought tectonic consequences upon young people's social situation. On the one hand, every young person is even more important to society as a whole today, compared to decades ago. The current numeric drop of young people is reflected, among other things, very clearly in the marked decline in youth unemployment. In 2005 young people accounted for 37% of the total unemployed, while in 2020 they will account for only 20%. While this is of course also a consequence of economic trends and measures, it is also impossible to deny the important influence of the demographic factor.

The decline in the number of young people is certainly also reflected in the education sector. It is understandable that educational institutions, which have in many ways grown considerably in recent decades, are finding it increasingly difficult to attract young people because there are simply not so many of them around. This provides an important incentive to raise the quality of education, but at the same time pressures educational institutions to achieve results at least comparable to those of the past, despite working with, numerically speaking, less talent.

The decline in the number of young people also has important implications in politics since the relative importance of young people as a political force is diminishing in terms of numerical clout. Nevertheless, the increased activism and political mindset of young people will surely force institutional politics to think about ways of harnessing their transformational power, particularly when developmental, forward-oriented, and "easy-to-point-to" topics that have and will have a direct impact on young people are explored. The so-called referendum on "water" from July 2021 served as a blunt reminder that young people – despite numerical weakness and apparent alienation from the institutional political arena – are a mighty political force that can shake pubic as well as private (corporate) policies. This is a clear reminder that we are dealing with a sleeping giant that does not need a lot to be awoken.

The declining number of young people can be an important starting point in conversations about youth migration. If there is a shortage of young people, their emigration abroad tends to be (even) less desirable. In this context, it is worth pointing out that, since the beginning of the millennium, migration from abroad has been growing. Therefore, we could say that migration flows from abroad have somewhat mitigated the trends of declining number of young people in Slovenia.

As mentioned above, the number of young people has stabilised since 2020 and no major changes are expected over the next two decades. On the other hand, however, a related demographic trend is continuing, that of an increasing older (65+) population. They already outnumber young people by a significant margin and this trend will increase by almost 50% by 2050. Such trends have long been a source of debate on intergenerational dialogue and cooperation. According to the present study, almost three-quarters (72%) of young people see the increase in the number of older people as a big or very big problem. However, this does not mean that young people see the elderly as a major obstacle to their own well-being. They are much more likely to believe that both the young and the elderly are disadvantaged, when it comes to their well-being. The implication is that young people, at least as far as social welfare is concerned, have a high potential for intergenerational cooperation. The importance

of intergenerational cooperation is also clearly demonstrated by the fact that young people still rely most heavily on their parents in their social support networks. The proportion of young people who get on very well with their parents, has even increased significantly over the last decade.

Nevertheless, there are major shifts in the relationship with parents, mainly reflecting a growing individualism or tendency towards autonomy among young people. Although a large majority still rely on their parents for help in key areas of life, these expectations have decreased significantly since 2010. There has also been a slight increase in the proportion of young people describing their relationship with their parents as poor or unbearable. In particular, a key finding in this context is that young people are moving away from their parents at a significantly faster rate compared to 2010, and in this sense are rapidly approaching the EU average for young people. These trends can certainly be linked to the individualisation trends observed at the level of young people's underlying values and attitudes. In addition, young people's improving economic situation and the related improved labour market position have also had a significant impact.

The data shows that young people are leaving formal education at a slightly faster rate; while 49% of young people were enrolled in higher education in 2014, by 2018 this had fallen to 45%. It is worth pointing out that this is still by far the highest in the EU as a whole, and well above the average for all (28) Member States of 32%. This mass participation in tertiary education may bode well for Slovenia's future development, especially in light of the fact that higher education is being internationalised.

Compared to 2010, there has been a significant increase in the share of young people who have experienced learning mobility and in the share of young people who still intend to go abroad to gain knowledge. As regards the lower levels of education, it is also worth noting that international surveys measuring educational achievement show a relatively high level of quality in the Slovenian education system. In line with expectations, the use of non-formal education and informal learning is growing strongly among young people and it is likely to be one of the key areas of future development in education policy.

It is clear that a key source of informal learning today is the internet. However, for the time being, young people are primarily using the internet to consume a variety of entertainment content, in particular to listen to music and visit social networks. There is a very noticeable growth trend in online shopping. Whereas ten years ago just under half of young people did so, today the figure is close to 90%. In a broader perspective, ICT use among young people is largely limited to basic tasks. In the EU context, Slovenia is in the bottom half in terms of the share of young people with computer programming skills.[1] Promoting more sophisticated use of ICT and strengthening ICT literacy are certainly among the most sensible priorities for education policy.

Important shifts are also taking place for young people in the labour market. Official statistics show a clear downward trend in youth unemployment. In 2010, the youth unemployment rate was 14.7%, and in 2019 it was only 8.1%. Since 2015, the share of employed young people in some form of flexible employment has also fallen significantly. In addition, the gap between the competences acquired by young people and the demands of the workplace (the so-called skills mismatch) has been narrowing in recent years. Therefore, shifts for the better are happening. However, it is worth pointing out that these shifts are much smaller than the official data suggest. For example, if we look at the share of young people who perceive themselves as unemployed, there has been no reduction in the unemployment rate at all over the last decade. In other words, the proportion of unemployed young people is falling according to the criteria of official statistics, but not according to the criteria of the young people themselves. It is particularly important that Slovenia still deviates significantly from the European average upwards in terms of the share of young people in precarious forms of employment. Over the last decade, there has also been a significant increase in the proportion of young people, who consider that they are underpaid for their work, that the work they do is boring, that the working climate is poor and that their rights are violated in the workplace. In the light of these facts, it can be concluded that the situation of young people on the labour market in Slovenia remains – despite the favourable economic trends of the last decade – relatively unfavourable.

1 However, it is worth noting that older generations have even weaker knowledge in this case.

After decades of exposure to high levels of precarious work, it is not surprising that young people have changed their expectations regarding employment. They are increasingly willing to be geographically mobile, to undertake further training and are significantly more willing to accept temporary work and lower pay to increase their employment prospects. As many as two-thirds of young people are willing to embark on an entrepreneurial path to avoid unemployment. Young people are therefore increasingly accepting precarious employment situations. This can be linked to the trend of increasing preference for private sector employment and decreasing preference for public sector employment. In light of this, it is not surprising that the entrepreneurial spirit is growing among young people. Young people are significantly more likely than a decade ago to report that their education has sparked their interest in becoming entrepreneurs. In line with the general characteristics of the current generation of young people, what matters most to Slovenian young people about work is that it is interesting, that it allows a high degree of autonomy, and that the work has a clear objective. Job security is also important to young people, but somewhat less so than the above characteristics.

The labour market situation, together with wider productivity pressures in modern society, is certainly one of the key reasons for the marked increase in stress among young people. Compared to 2010, the proportion of young people who feel stressed several days a week has more than doubled. There has also been a sharp increase in the proportion of young people, who perceive loneliness as a problem.[2] There has been a sharp increase in young people's concerns about other key areas of their lives, such as lack of money, (failure to) succeed at school or in a job, and (failure to get a) job or housing problems. The significant increase in young people who are pessimistic about the future of our society is also worrying. Such perceptions are mainly linked to concerns about an ageing population and the degradation of the natural environment. The data also shows that young people have less and less generalised trust in other people.

2 This increase can partially be attributed to the pandemic, however according to our calculations a large part of the increase is also independent of the current conditions (see the chapter on methodology).

It is therefore not surprising that, over the last ten years, there has been a significant decline in young people's overall satisfaction with life. The proportion of young people who are mostly or very satisfied with their health has also fallen significantly. This is not surprising in light of the fact that the proportion of young people with an unhealthily high body mass index has increased significantly, and our study found a significant increase in the proportion of undernourished adolescents, and especially adolescent girls. All these trends clearly show that young people's health, especially mental health, is now emerging as one of the key challenges for youth policy.

It is somewhat surprising that young people themselves are increasingly concerned about their own health. Compared to a decade ago, young people on average drink significantly less alcohol and smoke less tobacco, eat more healthily, and take part in (even more) sport. It seems clear that campaigns to promote healthy lifestyles will not be enough to reverse the general trend of declining psycho-physical health among young people. While these are undoubtedly important, in this context it is necessary to reflect on the broader social conditions in which young people grow up.

Young people no longer tend to think much about broader social issues, since the youth values and interests that have dominated for at least 20 years are elements of the private sphere, such as friendship and family. Over the last decade, the trend towards individualisation and an increasing tendency towards autonomy has continually been reflected in young people's values and attitudes. In this context, there has also been a marked increase in liberal values among young people, with young people rejecting obedience as a value in child-rearing to a much greater extent than ten years ago and accepting same-sex parenting to a much greater extent. Consistent with these value trends is the finding that young people in Slovenia are moving away from Catholicism at an accelerated pace.

Of course, the liberalization of young people's values does not necessarily mean that they live in a very tolerant and open society. In our sample, for example, most homosexually oriented young people report that they

have felt discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Nor do the changes in values described above automatically imply that young people are in practice very supportive of foreign immigration. For example, young people's social distance from refugees remains very high: while only 7% of young people would feel uncomfortable if a family from Western Europe moved near them, 56% of young people would feel uncomfortable if refugees moved in. The serious problems of tolerance in Slovenian society are also reflected in the fact that more than 80% of young people witness hate speech on the internet several times a month. As many as 70% of young people also think that there is too much hate speech in Slovenian society.

Young people also feel more politically competent than they did ten years ago and are more inclined to communicate directly with politicians, including by participating in petitions. However, it is important to note that young people's level of interest in institutional politics, including their self-reported knowledge of politics, is still low. This is also linked to a very low level of trust in political decision-makers, which is reflected, among other things, in young people's low external political efficacy (i.e., the view that the ordinary individual in our society has no real influence on the actions of the authorities). All this, of course, has a negative impact on youth electoral participation or on the broader political participation, which remains low. On the other hand, there is a significant threat of political radicalisation; as many as a quarter of young people believe that the use of violence is legitimate in achieving higher goals.

The aforementioned increase in young people's interest in politics can also be linked to the marked increase in interest in arts and culture observed over the period 2010-2020. It is particularly encouraging to note that young people's artistic creativity is increasing more than their consumption of artistic content. This is particularly true for young people under 18, almost 40% of whom are involved in an artistic activity on a weekly basis. It seems, therefore, that a creative generation of young people is coming of age – but also a generation that is more willing and able than generations before it to cope with uncertain labour market conditions. However, this does not mean that they are passively accepting social con-

ditions. Young people are politically awakening and often use unconventional forms of political participation, such as political consumerism or petition signing, alongside conventional political participation.

Today's generation of young people is undoubtedly facing major environmental, demographic, and other wider societal challenges. Under the weight of these challenges, and even more so under the weight of the current circumstances in which they live, young people face high levels of anxiety and stress. However, on the other hand, we are dealing with a creative generation that is also increasingly active in sport, culture, and politics. The values of this generation belong to an open society; a society based on autonomous but socially responsible individuals.

The extent to which young people succeed in achieving their visions and meeting the challenges of the future is far from being only up to them. Today's generation of social power holders has a great responsibility to help young people do so. This volume should thus be seen as one of the main sources of answers to questions as to how this can be done.

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