

Albanian-American Diaspora Survey Report

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April 2, 2015



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at Harvard University

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The Albanian-American Diaspora Survey

This survey studies the ways in which active Albanian-Americans would like to engage in the development of their home countries. Its results will help us define the focus of the upcoming events organized under the Albanian Diaspora Program.

Between March 6th and March 22nd 2015, 1,468 Albanian-Americans took part in the online survey, of which 869 completed the survey. The results presented in this report are based on the answers of the latter group. The results of this survey do not represent the opinions of the general Albanian-American community, but rather the opinions of those who are more likely to engage in an Albanian Diaspora Program.

The survey was jointly prepared with the following Albanian-American organizations: Massachusetts Albanian American Society (MAAS/BESA), Albanian American Success Stories, Albanian Professionals in Washington D.C., Albanian Professionals and Entrepreneurs Network (APEN), Albanian-American Academy, Albanian American National Organization, and VATRA Washington D.C. Chapter. The survey was sponsored by the Open Society Foundations, as a part of the grant OR2013-10995 *Economic Growth in Albania* granted to the Center for International Development at Harvard University.

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1 Executive Summary

The survey results paint a very favorable picture of the Albanian-American Diaspora's willingness, ability, and commitment to be engaged in an Albanian Diaspora Program. There are several hundred highly educated individuals from a variety of backgrounds who would like to be engaged in professional and educational exchange, investment, and business development. The survey respondents optimistically demonstrate that they can be a positive force for change and economic development in their home countries.

There are significant concerns, however, that the resources and commitment in the home countries are too limited, and might well impede a successful Albanian Diaspora Program. Meetings planned for this spring and beyond between the Diaspora and the government counterparts should help us understand the extent to which these limitations are real and the extent to which there is political will and potential to overcome them. It is quite possible therefore that the initial focus of the Albanian Diaspora Program should be on institutional strengthening of the countries of origin in Southeastern Europe

Major Findings:

1. **Demographics:** Most of the participants in our survey reside in the New York metro area (36%), followed by Boston (24%), and Washington D.C. (11%). By far, the largest share was born in Albania (59%). This is followed by Kosovo (20%), Montenegro (5%) and Macedonia (4%). About 10% of the respondents are second generation Albanian-Americans, and less than 1% belongs to the third generation Albanian-Americans. The concentration of talent in these three major cities will facilitate organizing future activities under the Albanian Diaspora Program.
2. **Education and Professional Profile:** The survey participants are remarkably well educated: 82% have completed at least a Bachelor's degree, 34% have a Master's degree, and more than 12% have a PhD or a comparable degree. The most common profession is managerial (26%), followed by (i) educational professionals, (ii) financial specialists, (iii) information technology, computer, and mathematical specialists, (iv) doctors and health care specialists, and (v) lawyers which each represent about 6-9% of the respondents. It is also worth noting that most of the respondents are at an age where they have gained significant professional experience in the USA - 38% are in their thirties, 30% in their twenties, and 21% in their forties. Most of the respondents (76%) have lived outside their country of origin for at least 10 years, and only 6% have lived outside their country of origin for less than 3 years. Collectively, this age and professional profile indicates a wealth of experience that is available to contribute to economic development in Southeastern Europe for several decades. We believe that the Albanian Diaspora Program will constitute a critical vehicle for effectively engaging the talent in this development.
3. **Identification with Albanian Roots:** The respondents identify very strongly with their Albanian roots. On a scale from 0 to 10, 73% of the respondents gave values of at least 6, and 36% gave values of at least 9. Culturally, half of the respondents identify themselves both as Albanians and as Americans. The other half is split between those feeling more Albanian and those feeling more American. When asked about their plans to return to the country of origin, only 8% say yes, 49% have no plans to return, and 43% may consider permanently returning to their country. It is important to note that one third of these respondents also have professional experience working in Southeastern Europe, and 9% are currently professionally involved. We realize that for many with no experience in Southeastern Europe their possible contributions might be more limited due to wider cultural and professional differences with their home country counterparts – but there are still a significant number of people with professional experience in both the USA and Southeastern Europe who can help to bridge differences.

4. **Interest in Working on an Albanian Diaspora Program:** Most of the respondents are already active in their local Albanian community (51%), but there is also significant interest in becoming more engaged among those who are not. Volunteering time is the most popular form of involvement, followed by paid work for the community organizations, followed by donations. There is much enthusiasm for serving on the Board of Directors for an Albanian Diaspora Project (540 or 52% agree or strongly agree), taking a leading role in developing such project (490 or 48% agree or strongly agree), and volunteering 4-5 hours a month for the project (570 or 66% agree or strongly agree). This means that the project has the potential to engage a large group of highly skilled professionals each month for an equivalent of between 285 and 365 working days. Of course, it will not be possible to engage all of these people in the short run and it will take time to develop priorities, but there is clearly a reservoir of talent that is eager to be involved in an Albanian Diaspora Program.
5. **Proposed Types of Diaspora Engagement:** The most popular means of engaging in the development of the home region are education (81%) and professional exchange (76%). About 63% of all respondents would like to engage through humanitarian aid, 54% through business development and trade, and 47% through investments. When it comes to the business opportunities in the home region, the majority of respondents (55%) agree that the region has large untapped business potential. At the same time, only a small share (21%) agrees that the region offers good business opportunities. Therefore, the skills transfer and professional network programs might be the initial focus for specific forms of engagement, even when such programs require temporary stays in the country of origin. Such programs, by the very nature of their personal exchange, will help to develop networks for investment, business and trade, and humanitarian aid. This perceived lack of business opportunities among the diaspora will be brought to the attention of the governments in Southeastern Europe. If they are serious about attracting diaspora business, these governments will need to both create and promote such opportunities.
6. **Diaspora Investment Potential:** Regarding investment, we estimate that the respondents are willing to invest substantial amounts of money in their home countries. On average, the group of respondents would invest \$25 million in total if the investment climate were more safe and predictable than it is today. Although 40% of the respondents say they cannot invest at this time, there are at least 100 people willing to invest at least \$100,000 each (over \$10 million in total). This group could form the core of an Albanian Diaspora Investment Fund and/or for individual private investment in the future. This is significant and important – especially since it represents a very small portion of the entire Albanian Diaspora. We believe that the Albanian Diaspora could easily establish an investment fund in the tens of millions of dollars, which could grow to hundreds of millions of dollars in time.
7. **Concerns about Counterpart Capability and Commitment:** When it comes to the perceived readiness of the home countries to support an Albanian Diaspora Program, our respondents show a high level of skepticism. Only 19% feel that the governments are committed to engaging the Diaspora in the economic development of the region, and only 24% believe that the governments have adequate resources and knowledge to effectively do so. The respondents are equally skeptical about the readiness of the private sector counterparts in the home region to engage the Diaspora. The main concerns when thinking about doing business at home are corruption (95%), weak legal protection (94%), political and economic instability (91%), weak infrastructure (85%) and unresolved land issues (84%). Clearly, institutional strengthening is imperative to begin with in order to reduce these concerns of the Diaspora. In addition, more than half of the respondents find that government officials should make more effort to reach out to and meet with the Diaspora in the USA, and over 60% of them find it important that the governments appoints a full-time Diaspora coordinators in the home countries who would regularly engage with the Diaspora to better improve communication and cooperation.

8. Participation in Future Meetings and Delegations: Regarding events in the near future under the Albanian Diaspora Program, the most popular destination for Diaspora meetings in the USA is New York (53% are willing to attend), followed by Boston (39%) and Washington D.C. (25%). The results furthermore clearly suggest that it would not be difficult to organize a large group of prominent Albanian-Americans to visit the region in the fall of 2015.

To conclude, overall, the respondents show a high level of commitment and optimism – over 40% of the respondents are “very optimistic” that the Albanian Diaspora Program will be successful. Our challenge will be to harness this enthusiasm and to ensure that the conditions in the host countries are significantly improved so that the Diaspora can be effectively engaged. Without creating these conditions it will be very difficult to motivate the efforts of the Diaspora to sustainably contribute to the development of the home countries.

2 Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Participants

Figure 1: Gender

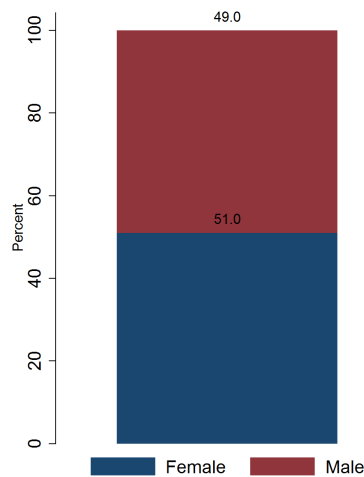


Figure 2: Age

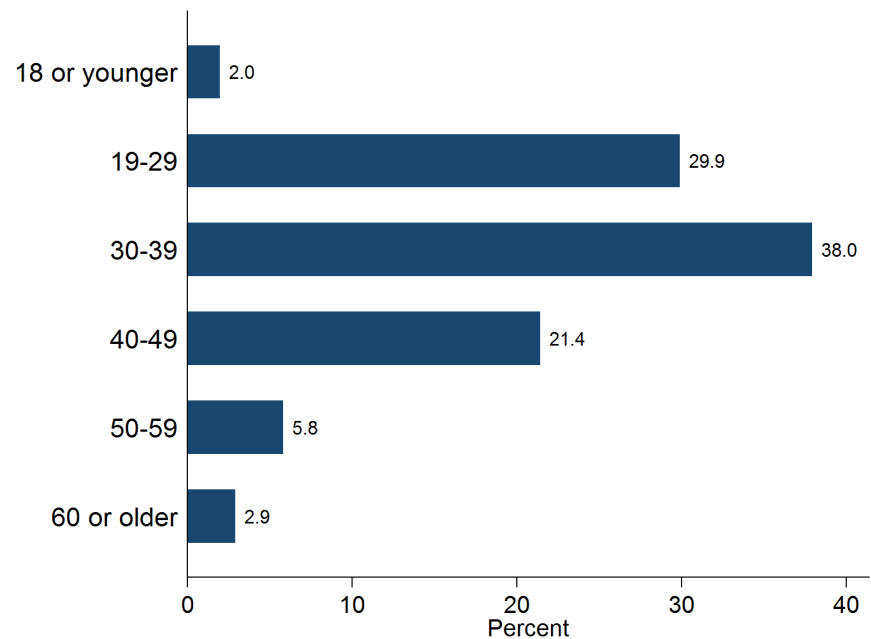


Figure 3: Main USA metro area of residence

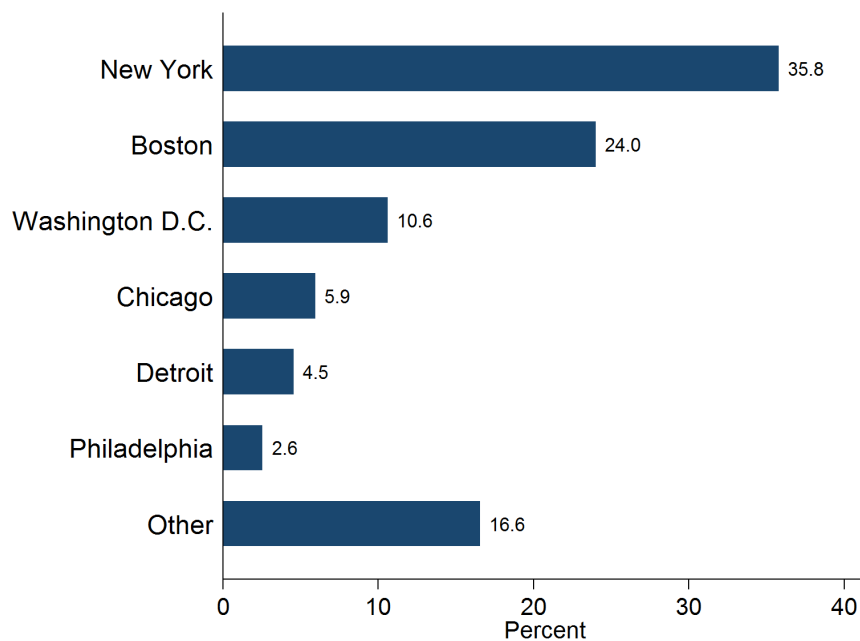


Figure 4: Origin

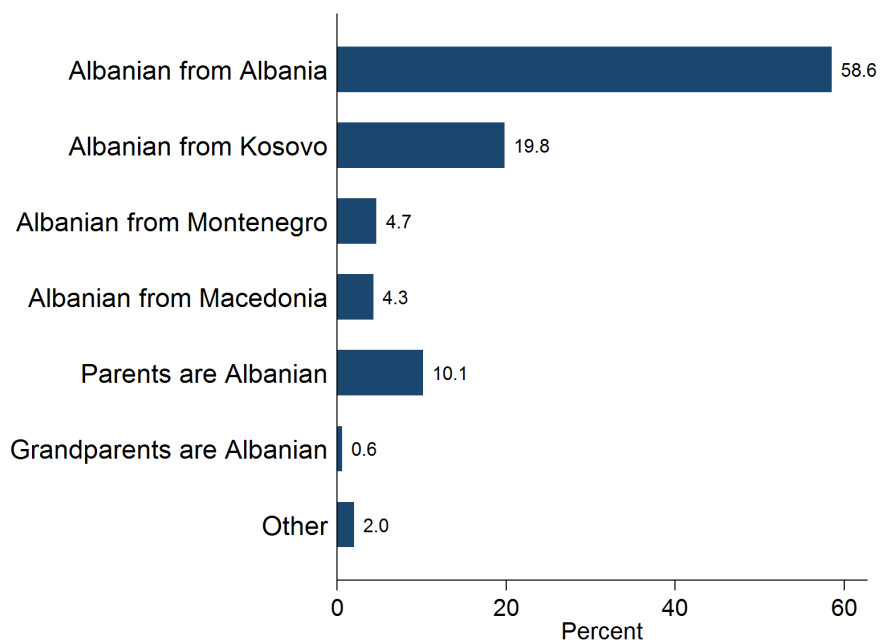


Figure 5: Years spent outside the country of origin

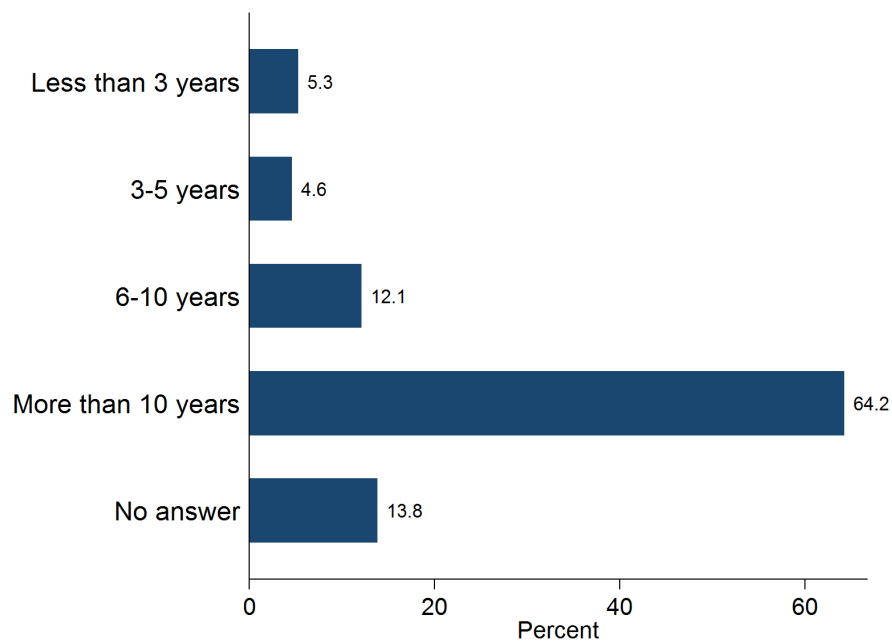
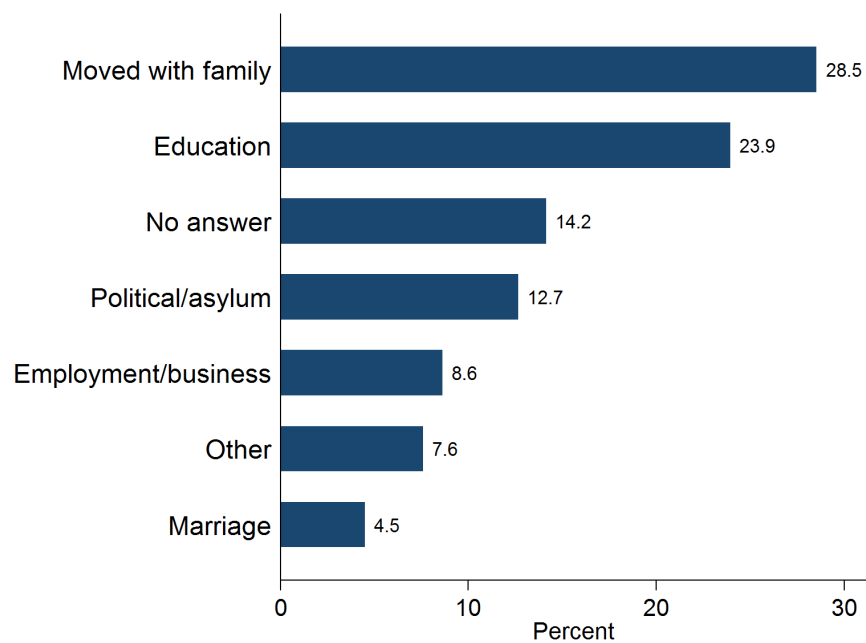


Figure 6: Primary reason for leaving the country of origin



3 Skills and Time Availability

Figure 7: Professional experience in the Balkans

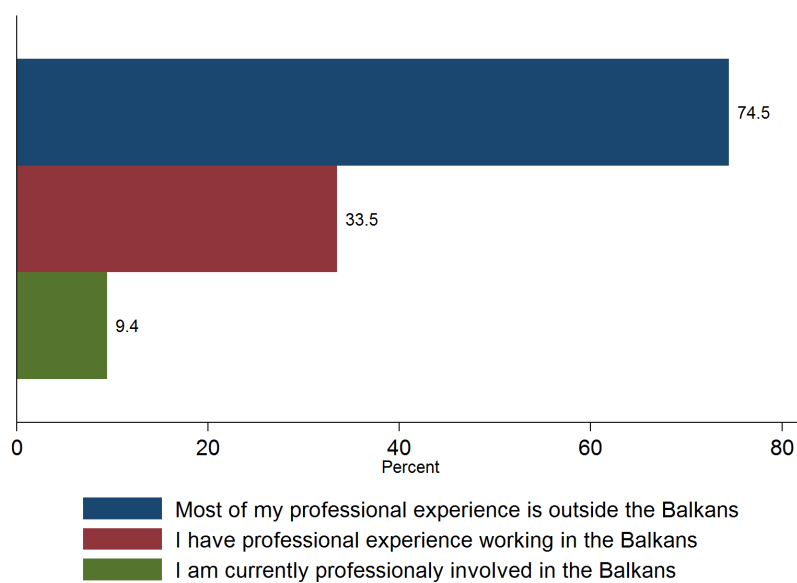


Figure 8: Highest level of education ever completed

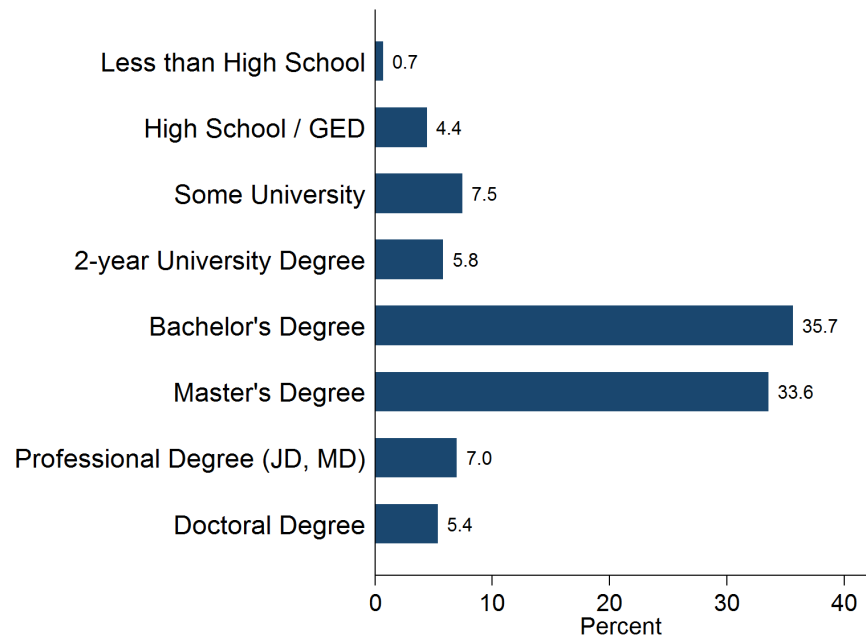


Figure 9: Current labor market status

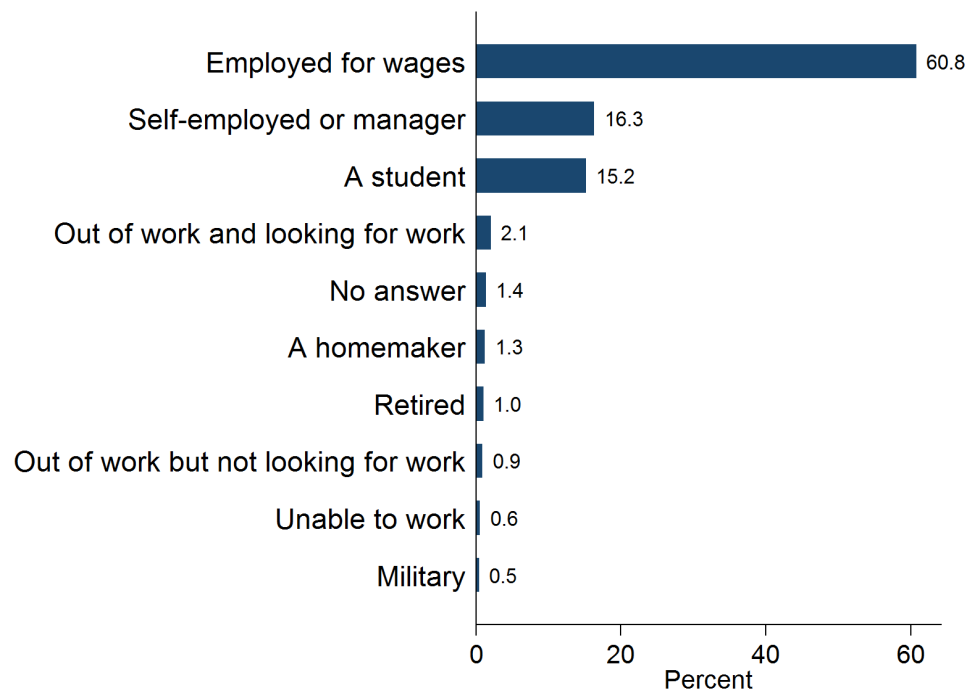


Figure 10: Is your education higher, about right or too low for your current job?

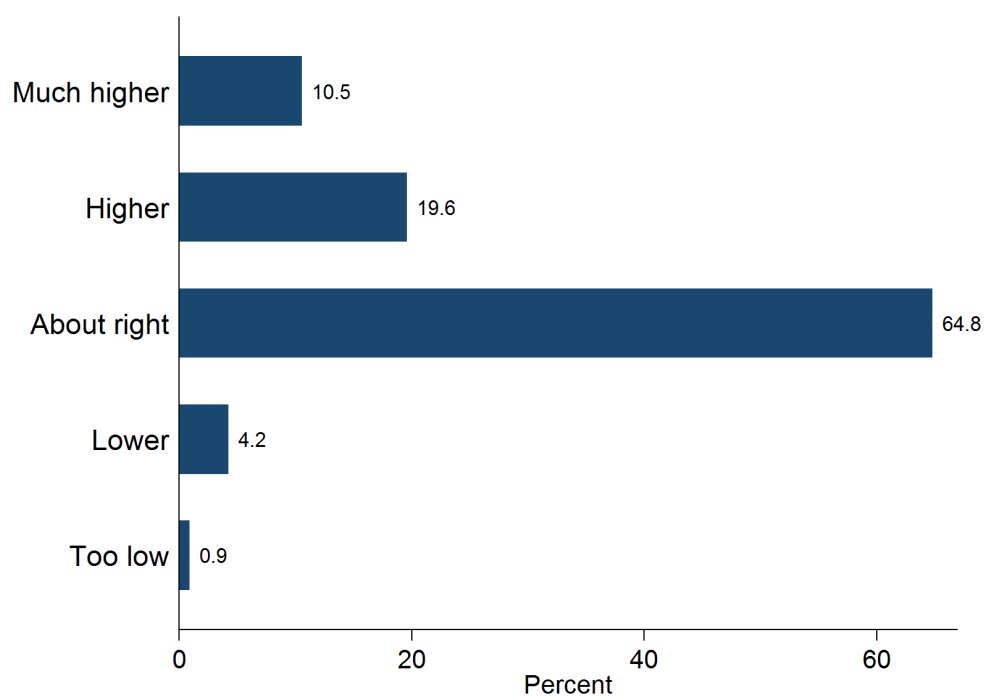


Figure 11: Do you work full-time?

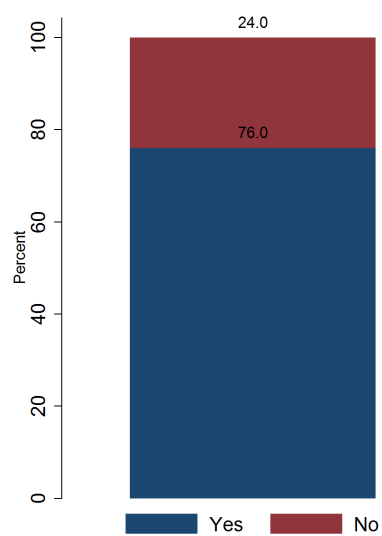
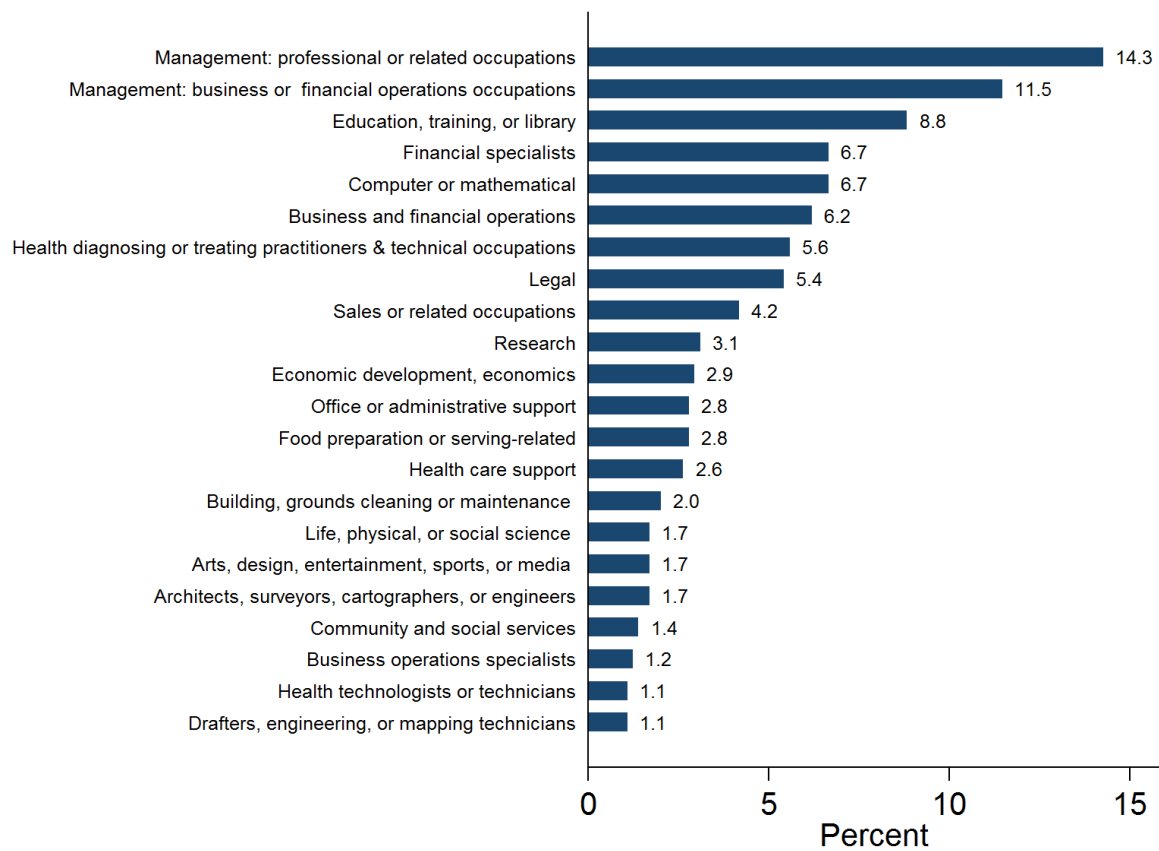


Figure 12: Current occupation



4 Attachment to the Home Country

Figure 13: Family members still living in your country of origin

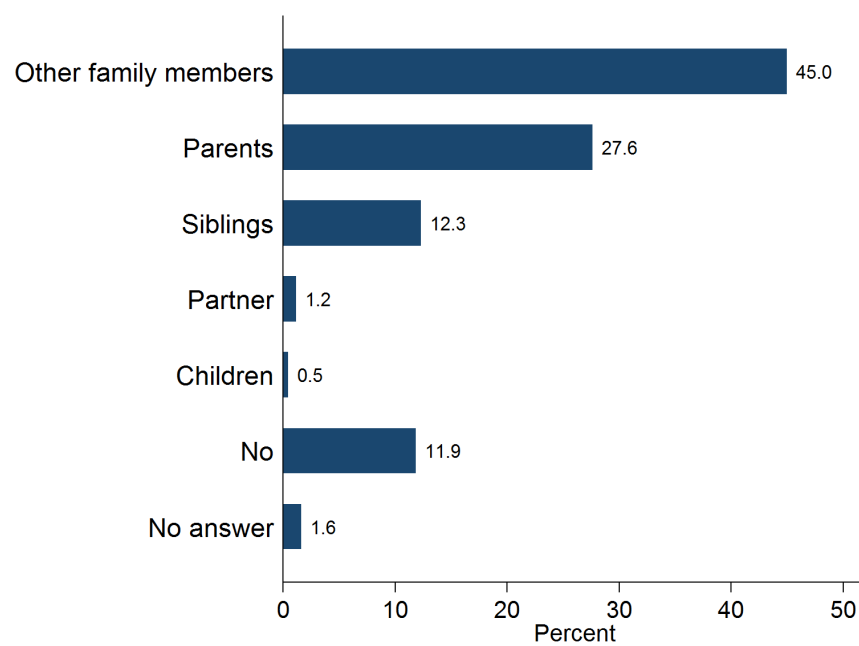


Figure 14: In the last 5 years, how often have you visited your country of origin?

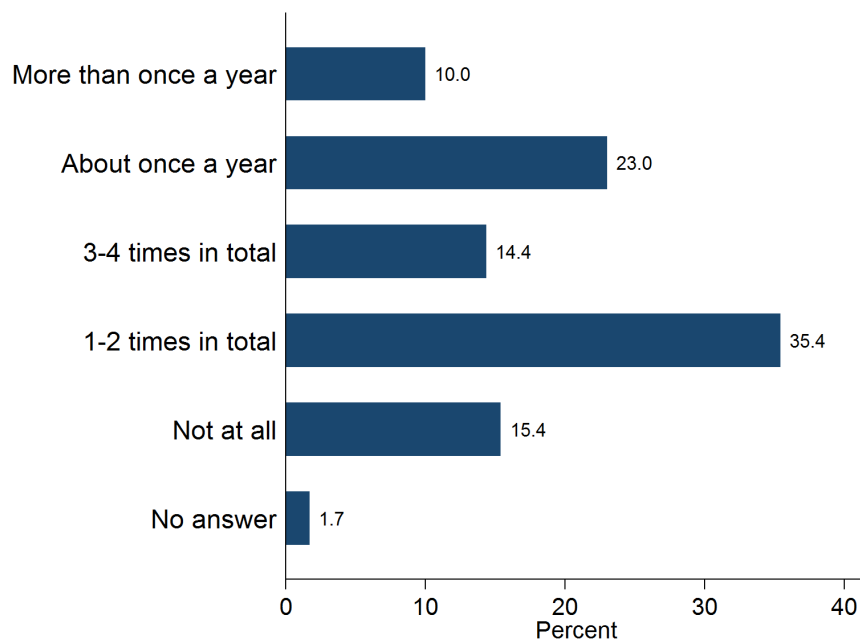


Figure 15: Reasons for return to your country of origin

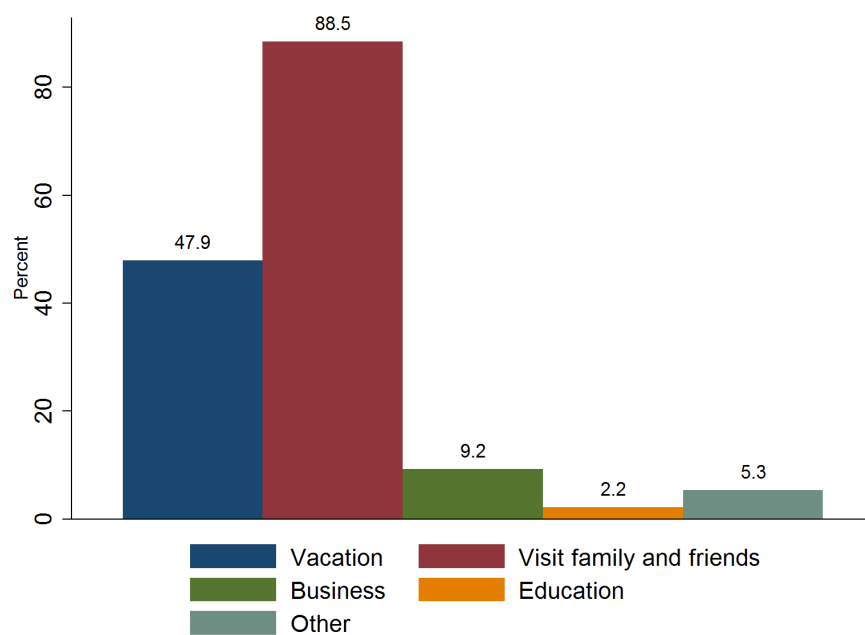


Figure 16: Do you plan to return to your country of origin on a permanent basis?

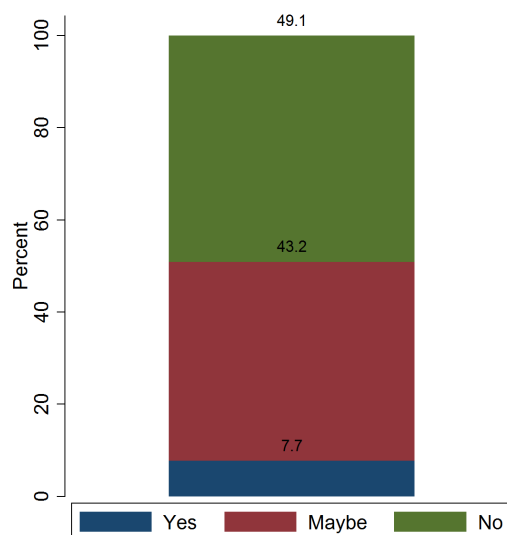


Figure 17: Time per week spent following current events in the Balkan region

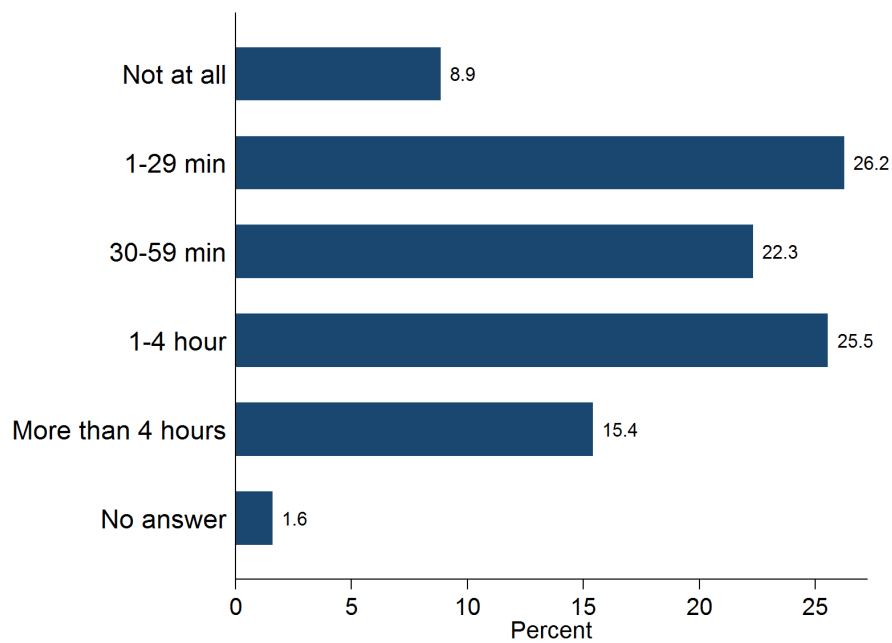


Figure 18: Culturally, do you identify yourself more as Albanian or more as American?

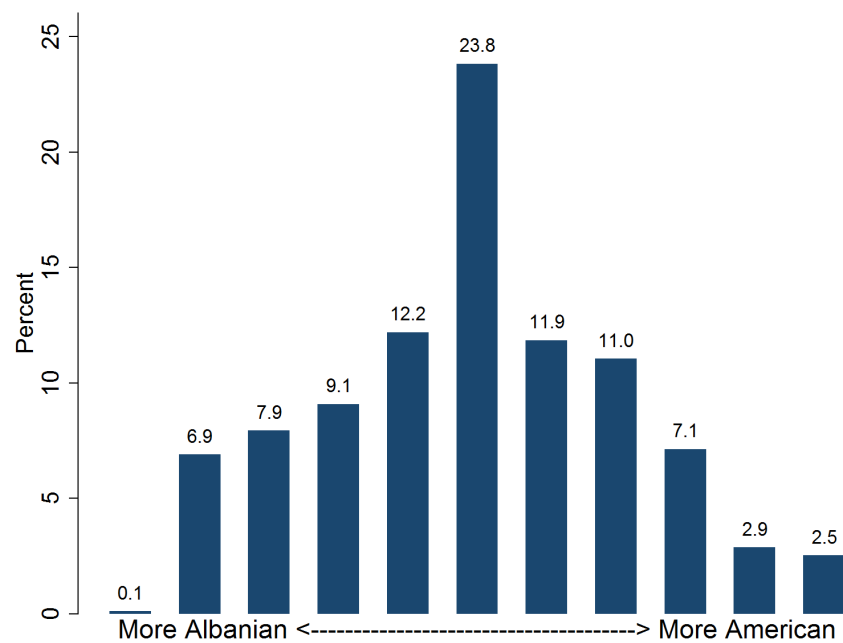


Figure 19: How emotionally attached are you to your country of origin?

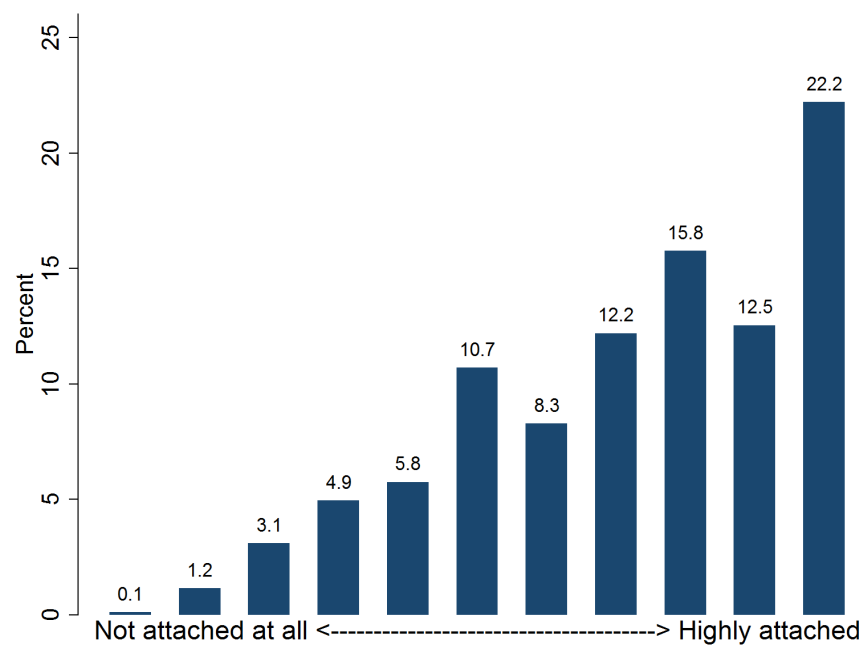


Figure 20: Compared to 5 years ago, would you say that your level of emotional attachment to your country of origin has increased or decreased?

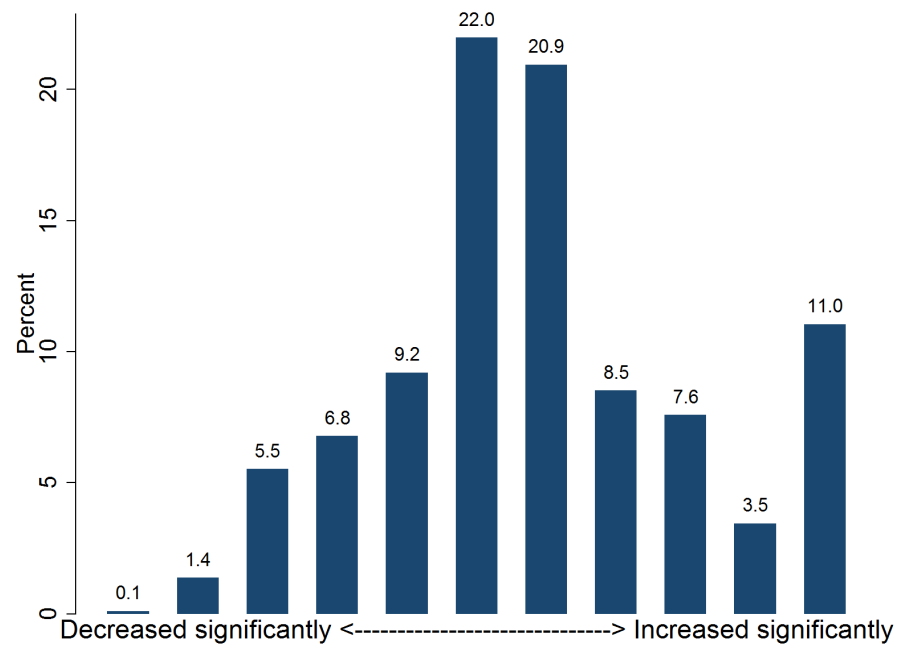


Figure 21: Describe your background ...

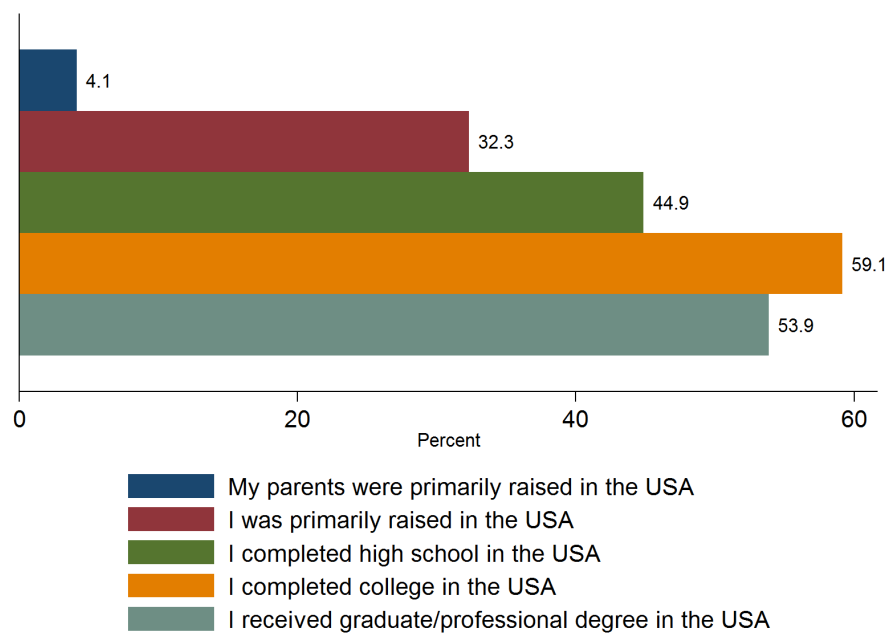


Figure 22: Fluency in Albanian

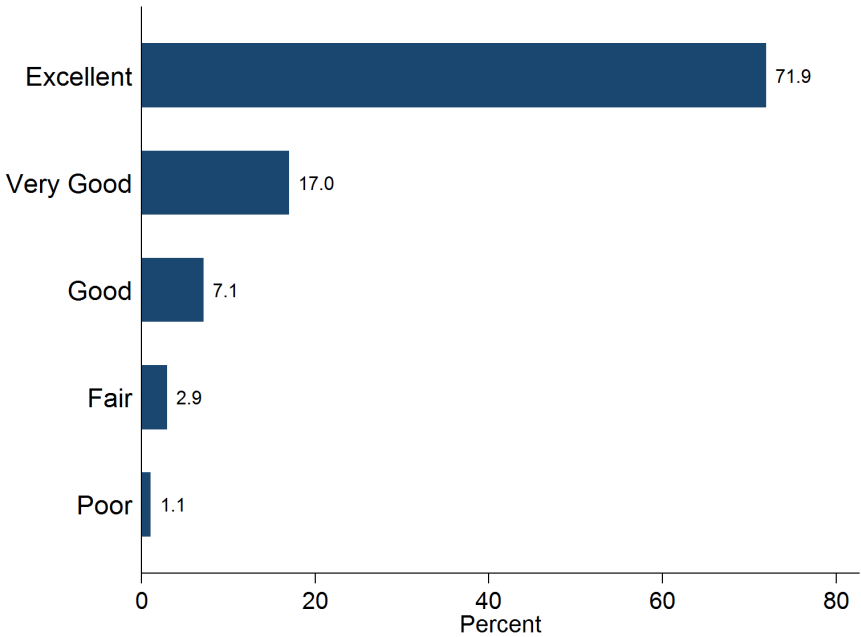
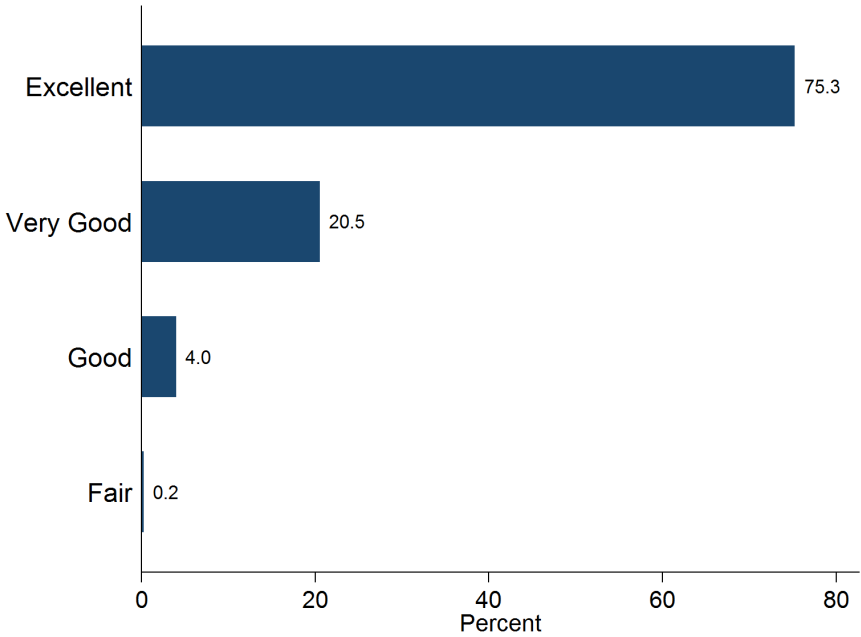


Figure 23: Fluency in English?



5 Engagement with the Albanian Community

Figure 24: Are you interested more in the work of your country of origin or the work with the Albanian-American community in the USA?

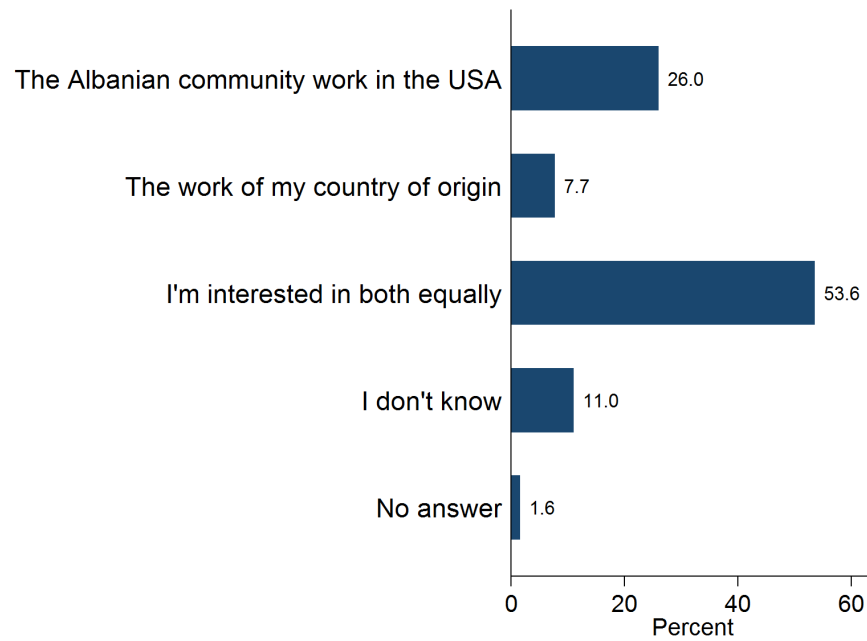


Figure 25: Would you rather see more of the money collected by Albanian-American community organizations used for the Albanian communities in the USA or used for needs in your country of origin?

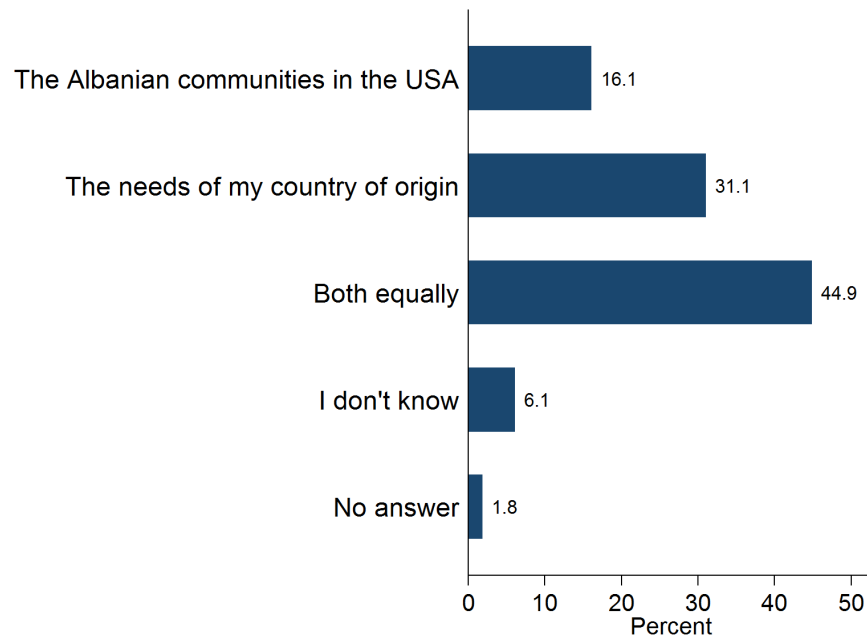


Figure 26: I consider myself to be leader in my local Albanian community

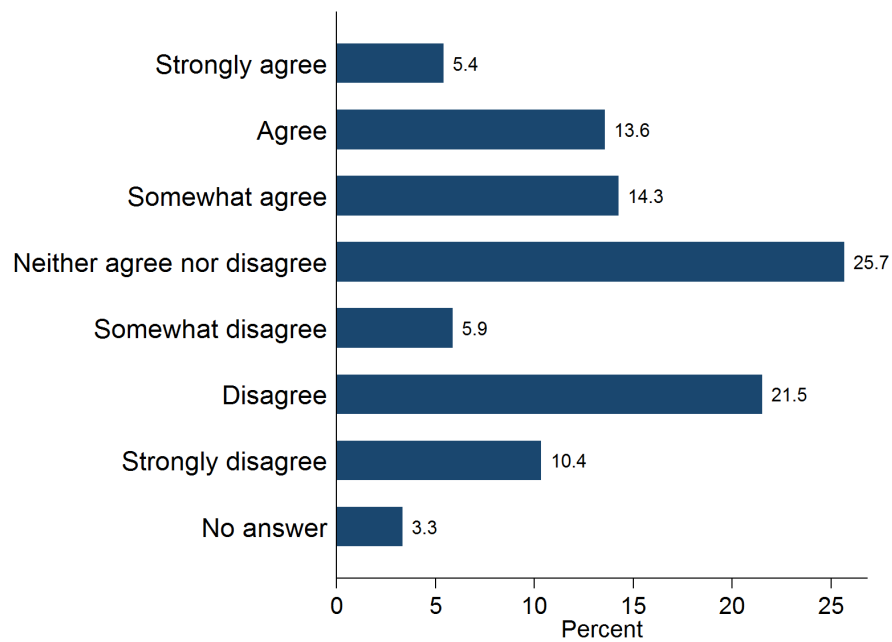


Figure 27: I am active in my local Albanian community

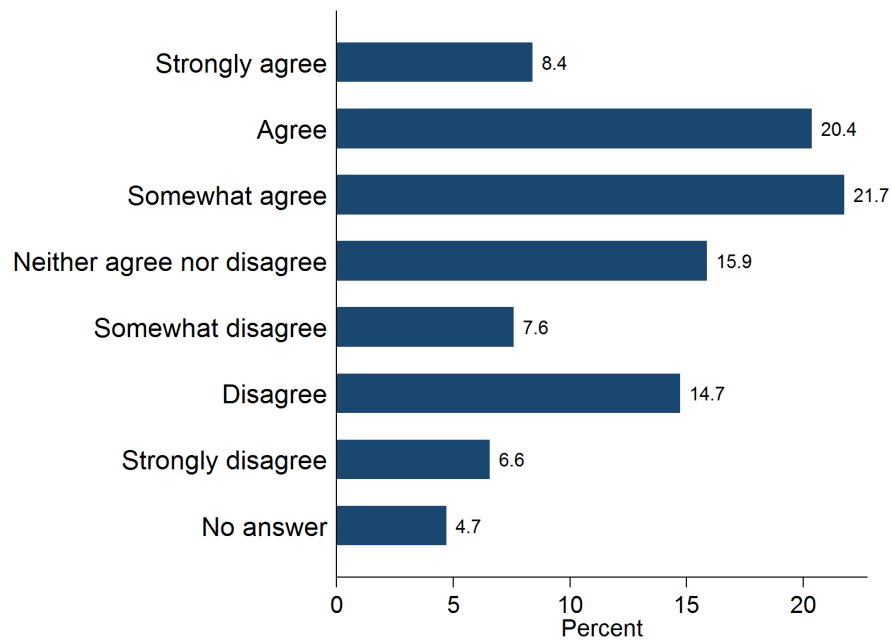


Figure 28: The Albanian community where I live is well organized

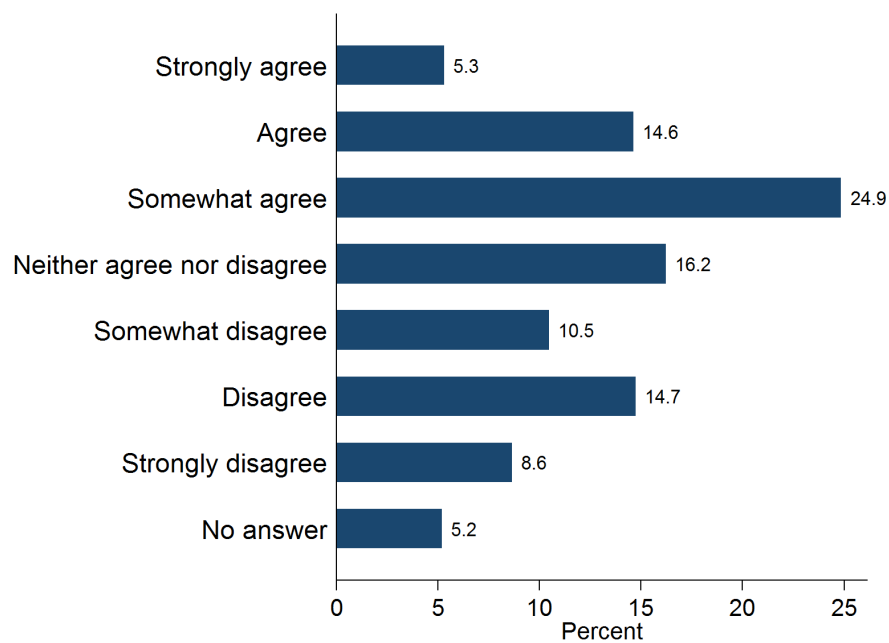


Figure 29: Do the local and the national community organization serve the Albanian community well?

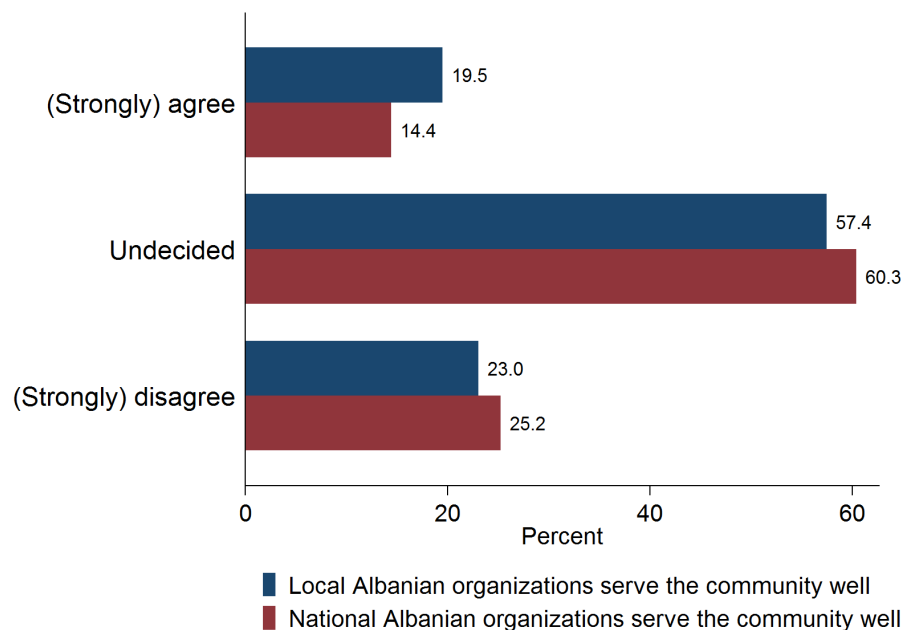


Figure 30: I would like to become more involved in local Albanian organizations where I live

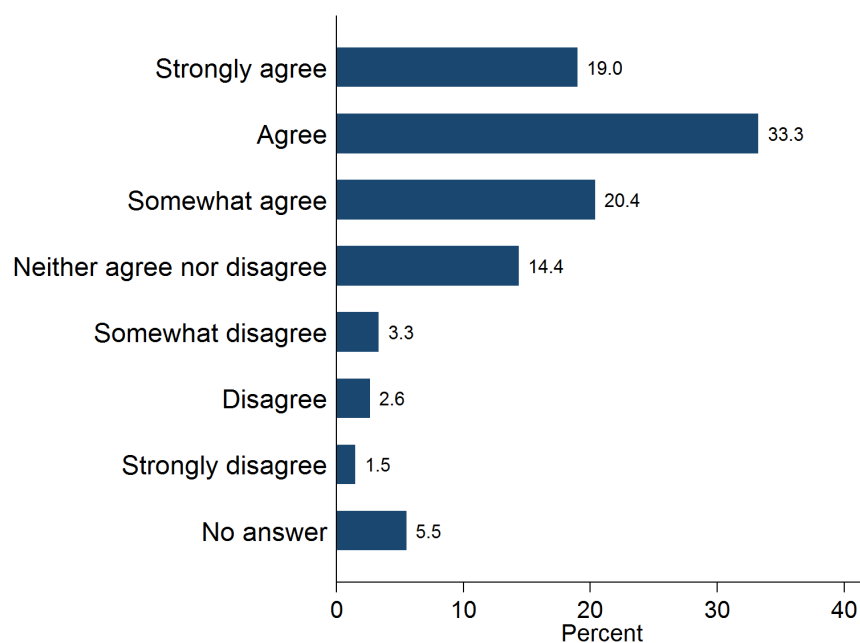


Figure 31: How would you like to contribute to the work of the Albanian-American community organizations?

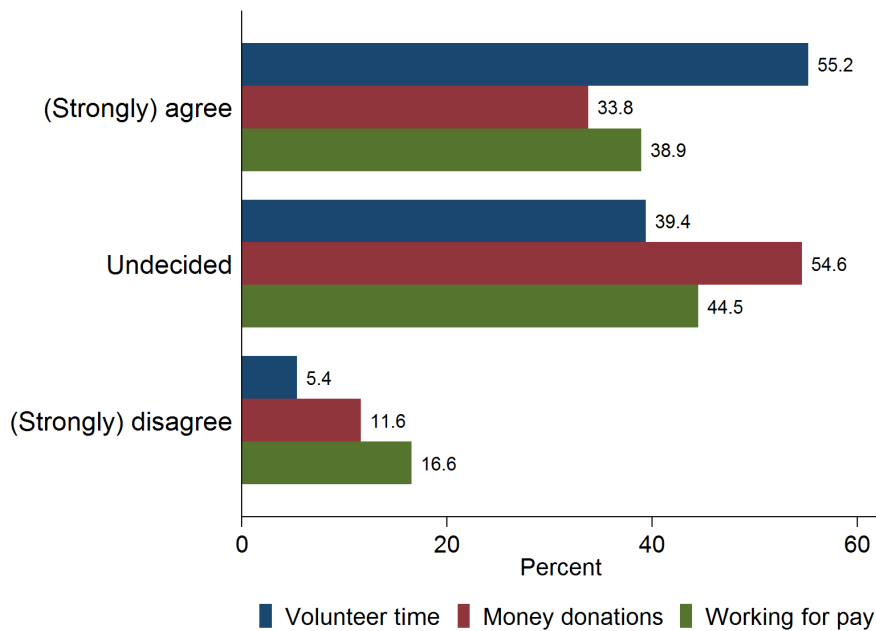


Figure 32: I would be interested in serving on the Board of Directors for an Albanian Diaspora Project

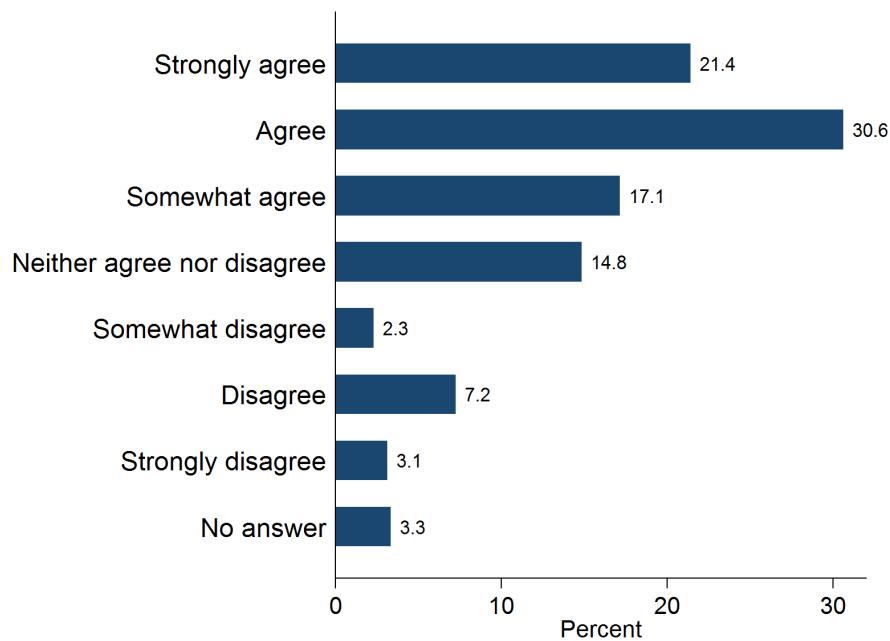


Figure 33: I would be interested in taking a leading role for developing an Albanian Diaspora Project

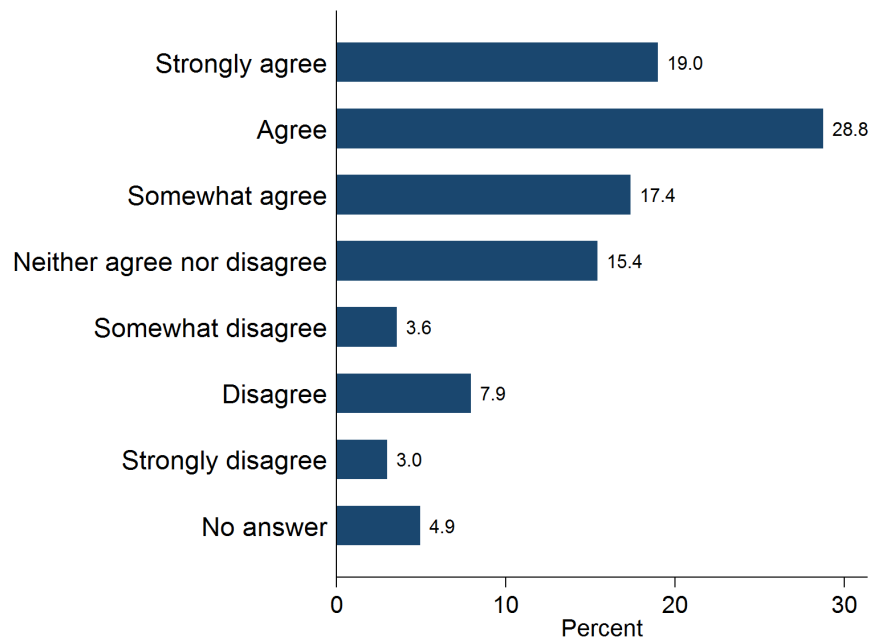
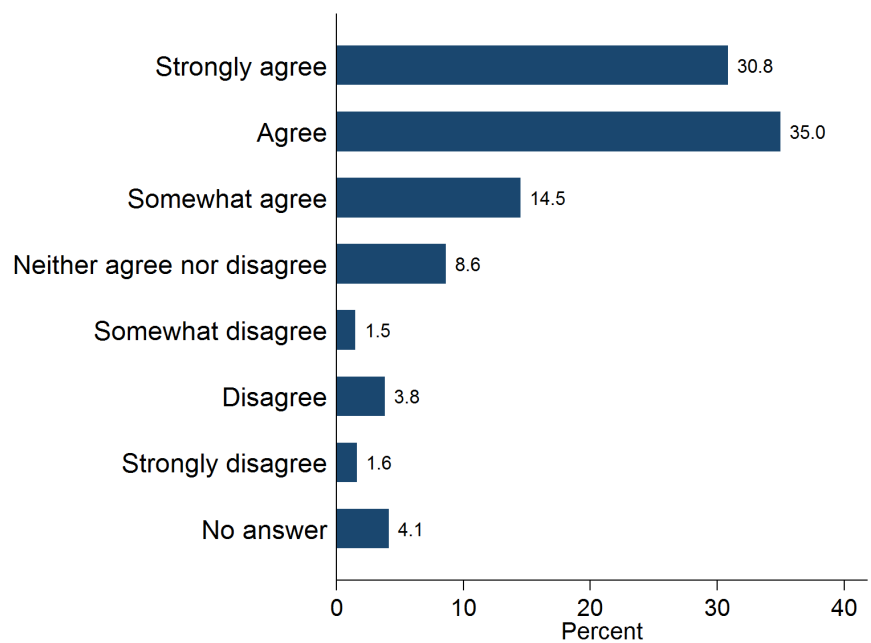


Figure 34: I am willing to volunteer 4-5 hours a month to work for an Albanian Diaspora Project



6 Preferences for Engaging in the Development of the Home Country

Figure 35: If you were to offer support to your country, what kind of support would that be?

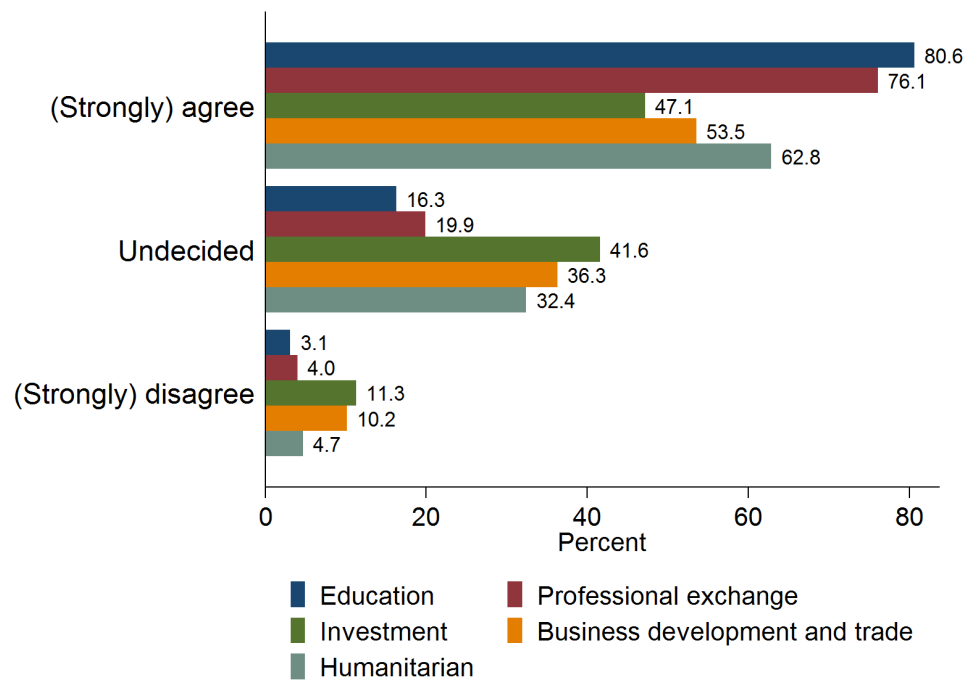


Figure 36: Business opportunities in the country of origin

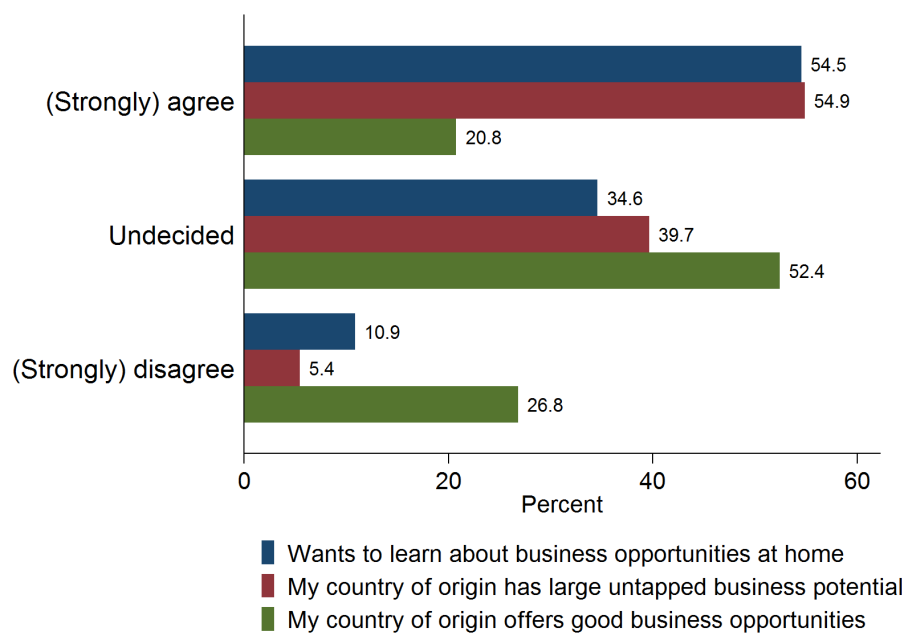


Figure 37: Main concerns when thinking about doing business in the country of origin

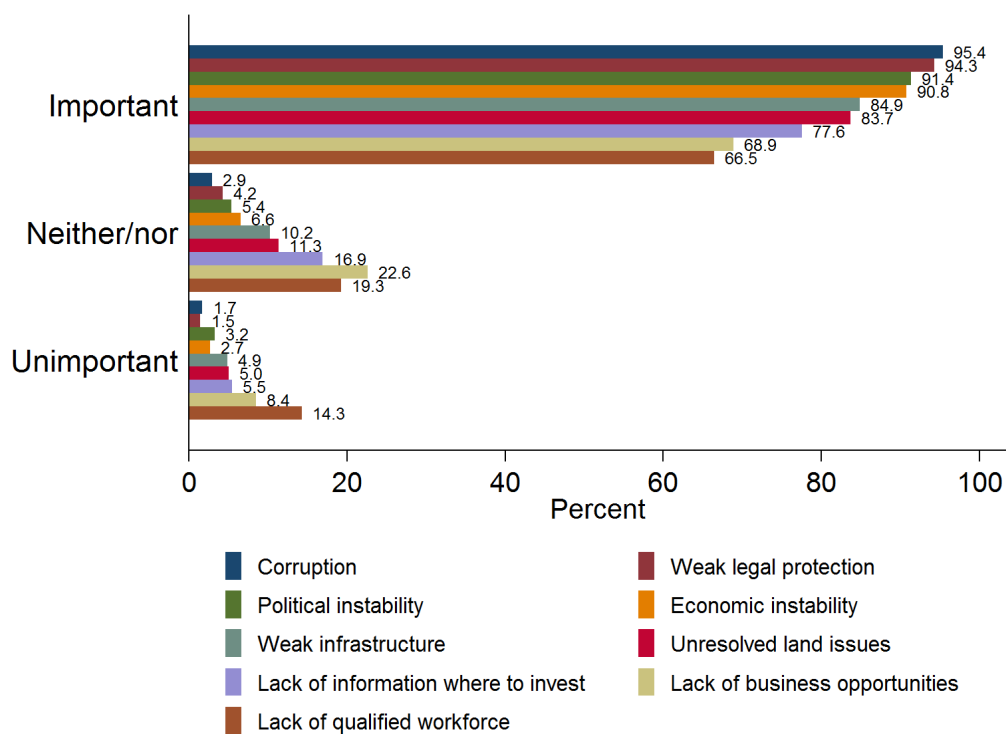


Figure 38: If you were convinced that an investment in your home country would be a good and safe investment, how much would you be willing to invest?

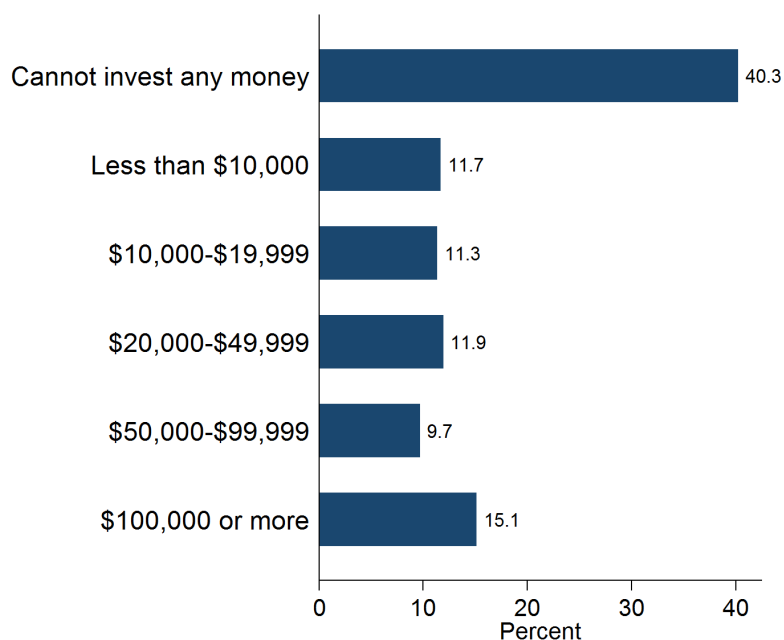


Table 1: If you were convinced that an investment in your home country would be a good and safe investment, how much would you be willing to invest?

Scenario 1 Assumes People who said they will invest over 100k will invest an average of 100k			
Mid-Range Investment Per Person	Percentage	Number of People	Total Investment
\$0	40.30%	350	\$0
\$5,000	11.70%	102	\$508,365
\$15,000	11.30%	98	\$1,472,955
\$37,500	11.90%	103	\$3,877,913
\$75,000	9.70%	84	\$6,321,975
\$100,000	15.10%	131	\$13,121,900
Total	100.00%	869	\$25,303,108
Scenario 2 Assumes People who said they will invest over 100k will invest an average of 200k			
Mid-Range Investment Per Person	Percentage	Number of People	Total Investment
\$0	40.30%	350	\$0
\$5,000	11.70%	102	\$508,365
\$15,000	11.30%	98	\$1,472,955
\$37,500	11.90%	103	\$3,877,913
\$75,000	9.70%	84	\$6,321,975
\$200,000	15.10%	131	\$26,243,800
Total	100.00%	869	\$38,425,008

Figure 39: If a well-managed Diaspora Investment Fund was established in your in your home country, how much would you invest?

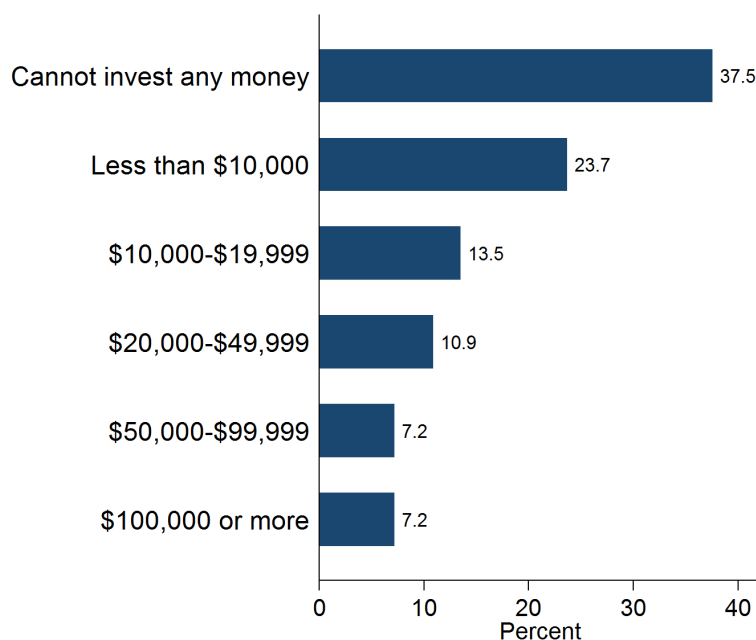


Table 2: If a well-managed Diaspora Investment Fund was established in your in your home country, how much would you invest?

Scenario 1 Assumes People who said they will invest over 100k will invest an average of 100k			
Mid-Range Investment Per Person	Percentage	Number of People	Total Investment
\$0	37.50%	326	\$0
\$5,000	23.70%	206	\$1,029,765
\$15,000	13.50%	117	\$1,759,725
\$37,500	10.90%	95	\$3,552,038
\$75,000	7.20%	63	\$4,692,600
\$100,000	7.20%	63	\$6,256,800
Total	100.00%	869	\$17,290,928
Scenario 2 Assumes People who said they will invest over 100k will invest an average of 200k			
Mid-Range Investment Per Person	Percentage	Number of People	Total Investment
\$0	37.50%	326	\$0
\$5,000	23.70%	206	\$1,029,765
\$15,000	13.50%	117	\$1,759,725
\$37,500	10.90%	95	\$3,552,038
\$75,000	7.20%	63	\$4,692,600
\$200,000	7.20%	63	\$12,513,600
Total	100.00%	869	\$23,547,728

Figure 40: Perceived barriers to investing in the country of origin

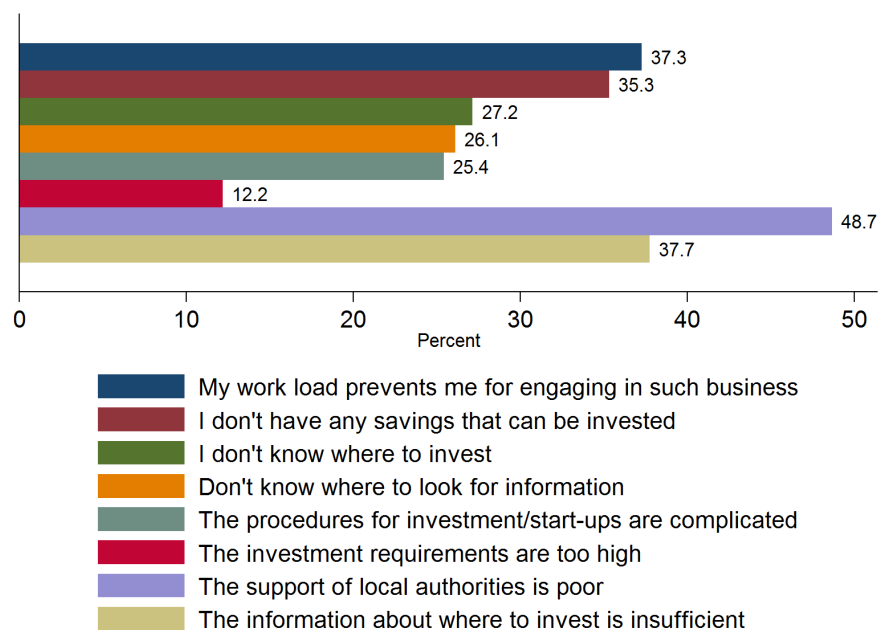


Figure 41: Importing goods from my country of origin into the USA

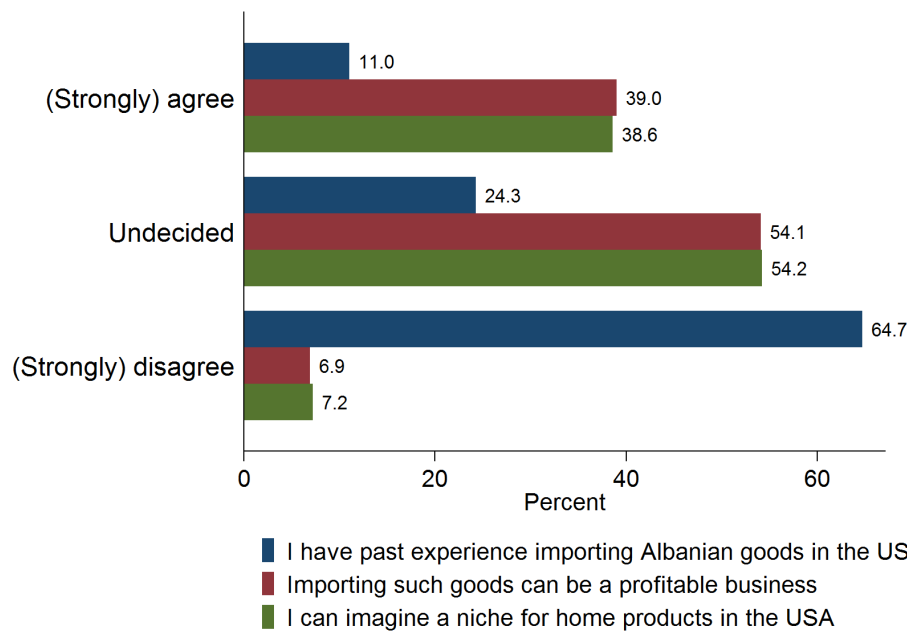


Figure 42: Perceived obstacles to importing Albanian products into the USA

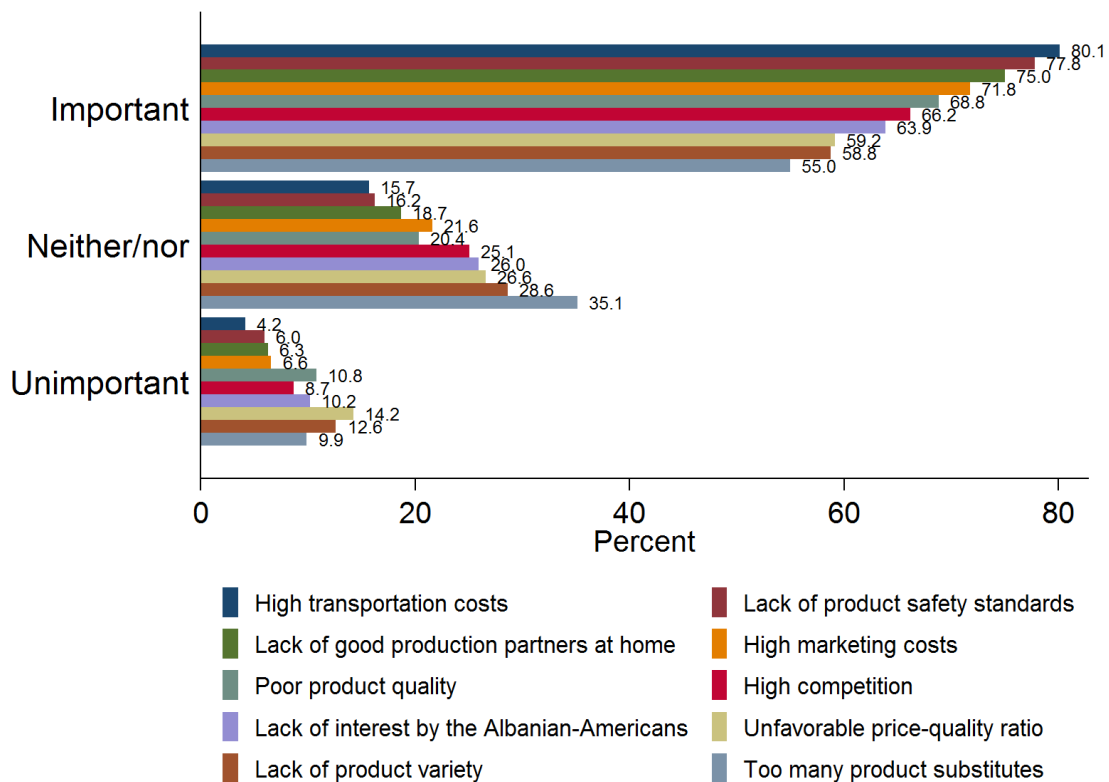


Figure 43: How would you like to engage in the development of a Global Network of Albanian Professionals?

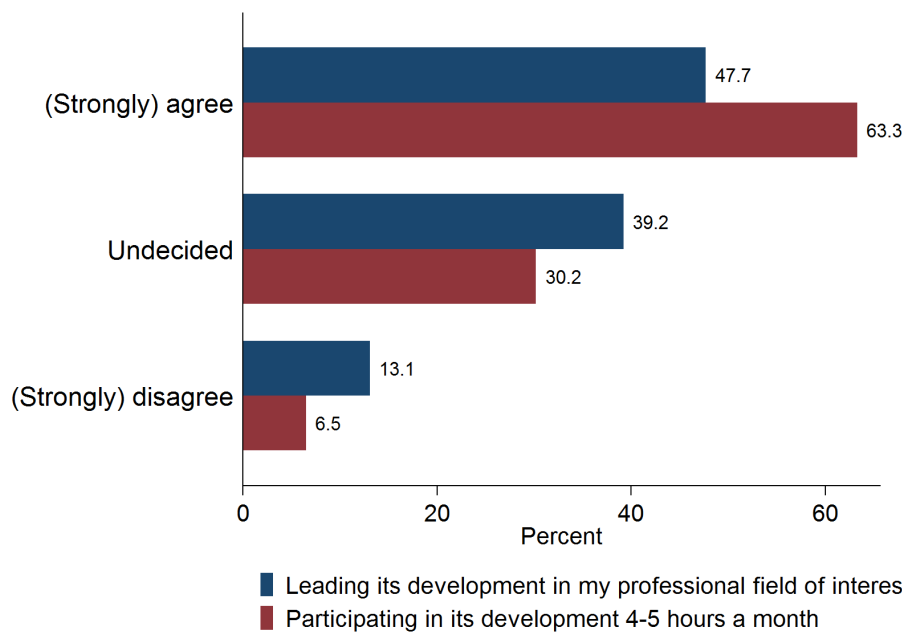


Figure 44: Interested in taking a job in my country of origin assuming decent pay

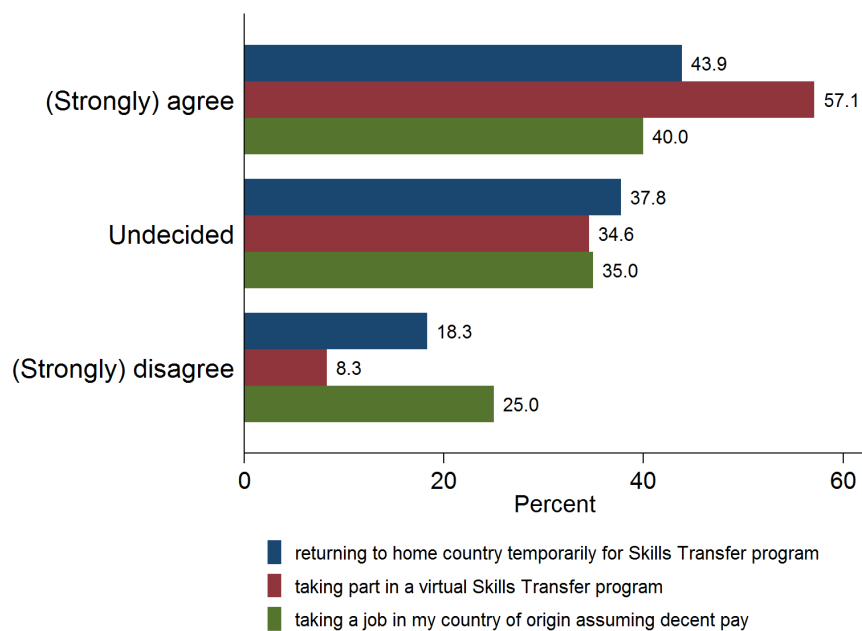


Figure 45: What should the home organizations do for the diaspora?

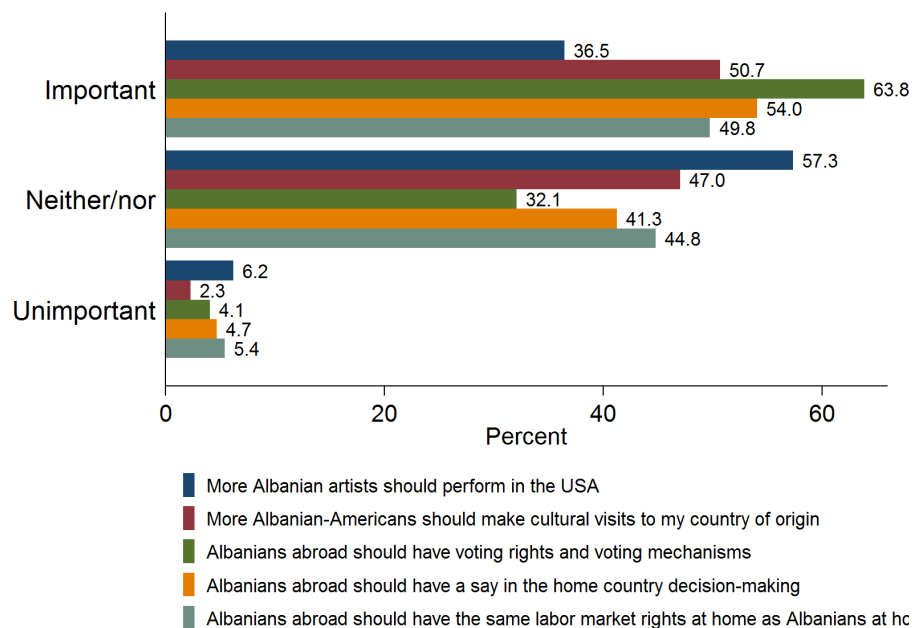
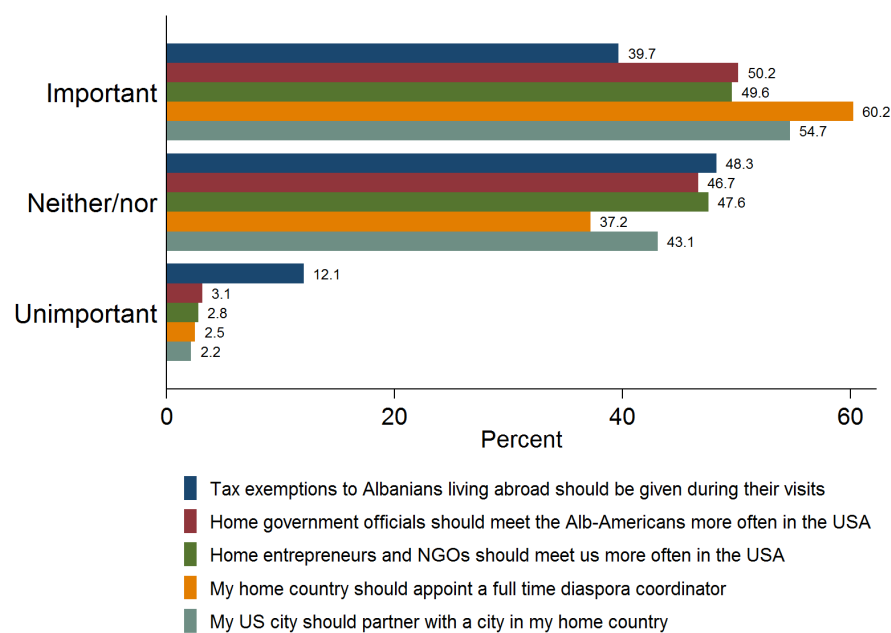


Figure 46: What should the home organizations do for the diaspora?



7 Perceived Readiness of the Home Country to Support the Development of a Diaspora Program

Figure 47: To what extent do you agree that the following conditions are met by your home country government when it comes to the engaging the diaspora in the economic development of the region?

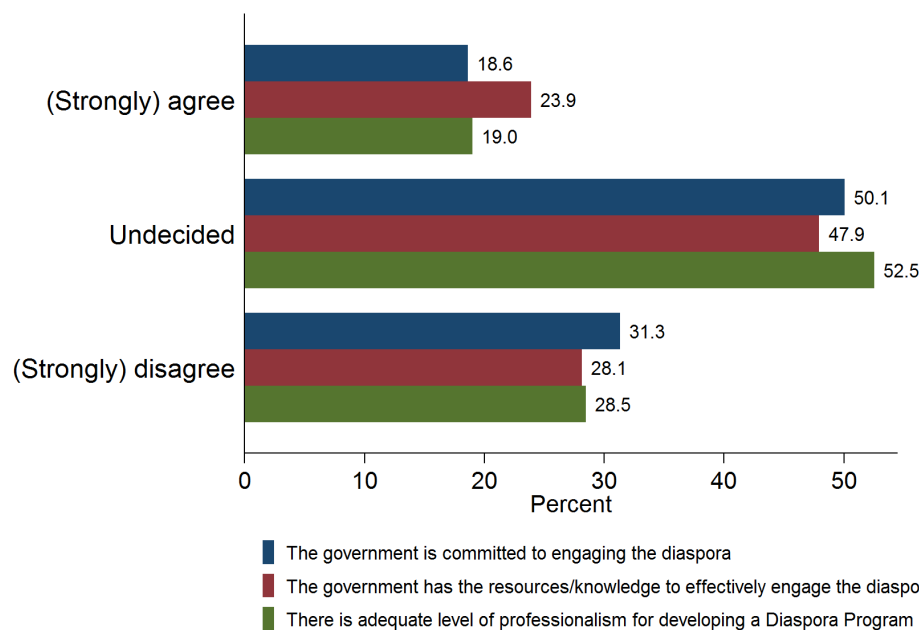


Figure 48: To what extent do you agree that the following conditions are met in your home country when it comes to the engaging the diaspora in the economic development of the region?

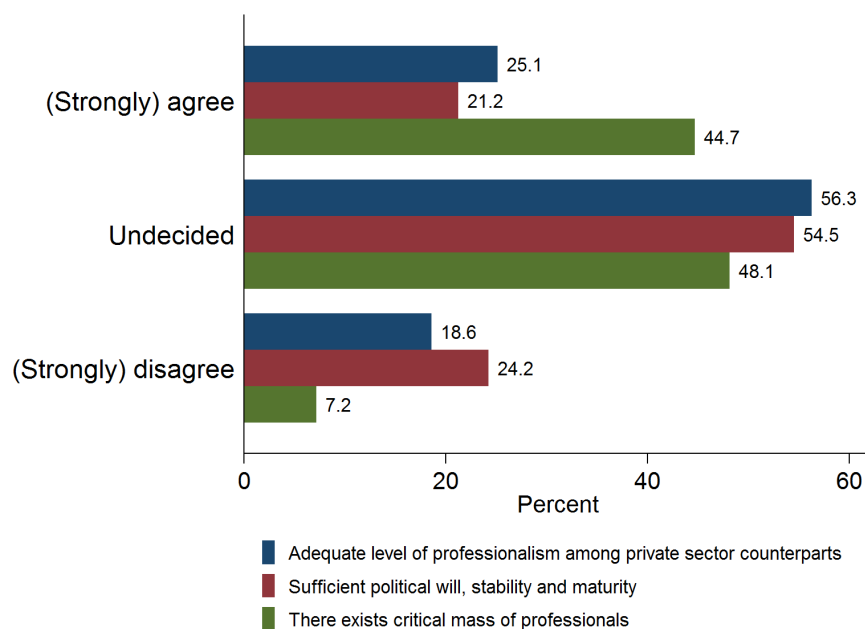
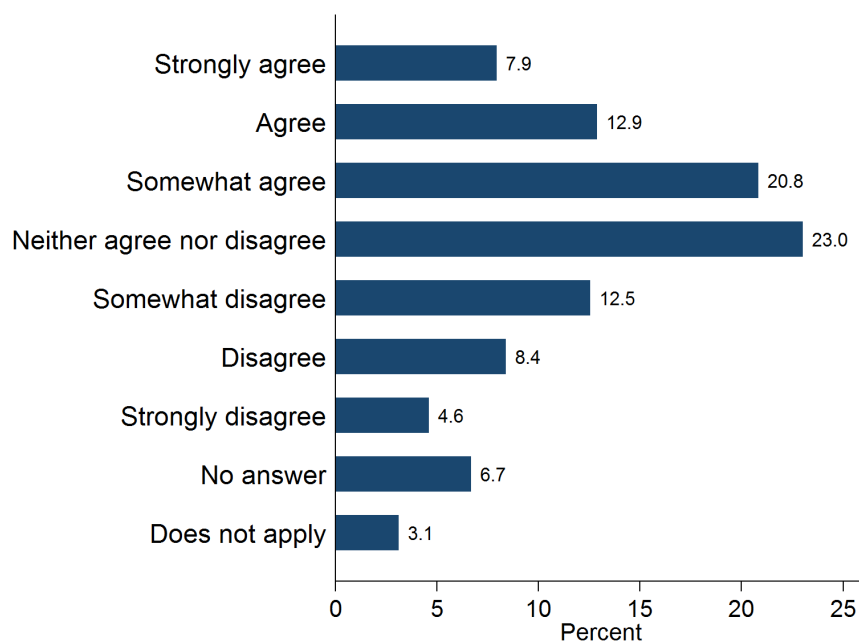


Figure 49: The work culture gap between the professionals in my home country and my country of residence is too wide to bridge



8 Intentions to attend the Albanian Diaspora Program events

Figure 50: Interested in attending Albanian Diaspora meetings in ...

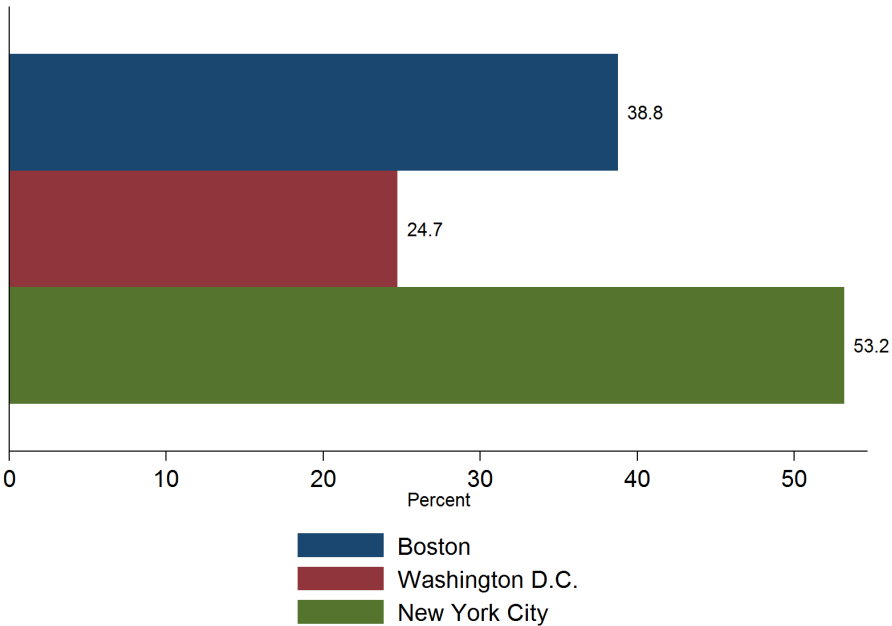


Figure 51: Willing to organize a diaspora meeting in the own city of residence

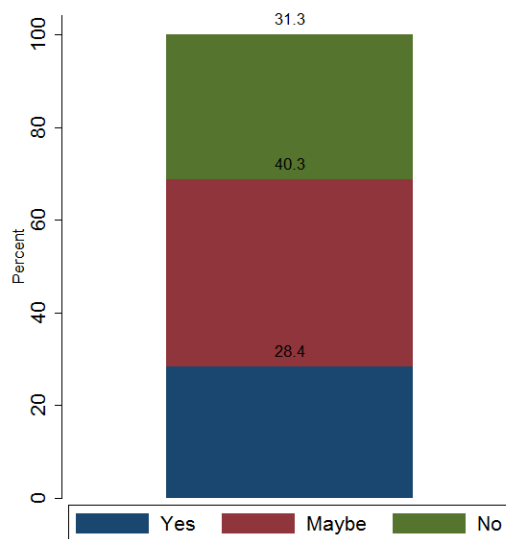


Figure 52: I am interested in joining a delegation of Albanian-Americans to discuss Diaspora issues while paying for all my travel expenses in ...

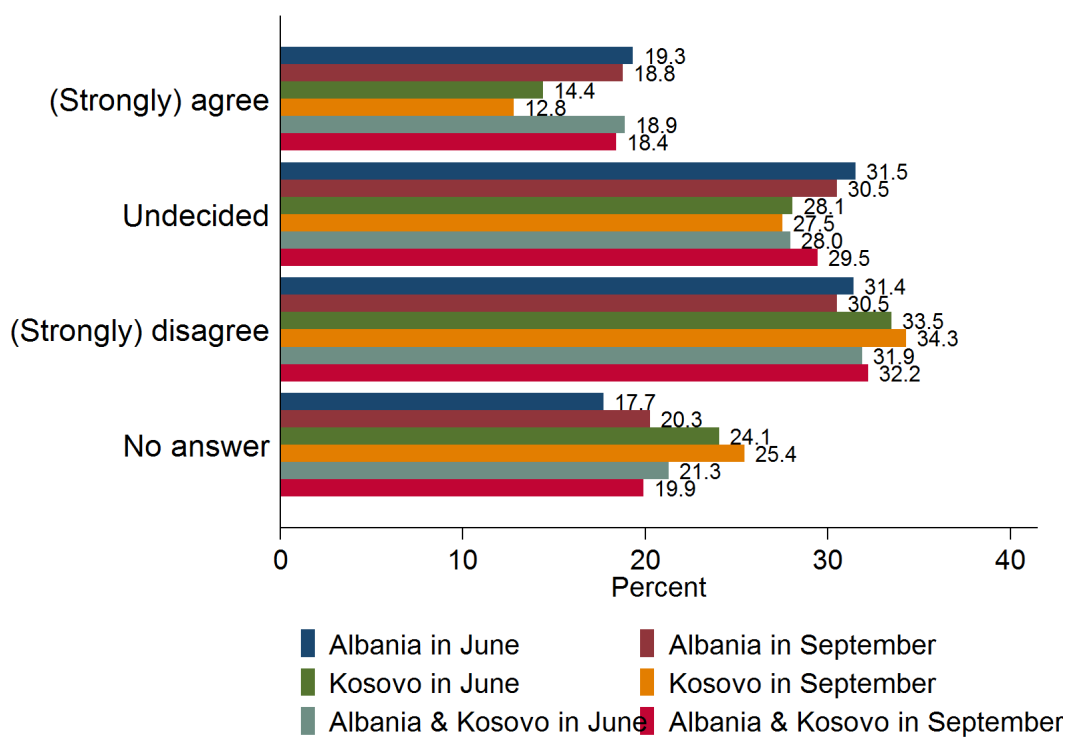


Figure 53: How optimistic do you feel about this effort to develop an Albanian Diaspora Program?

