

PATH TO A PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP:

Evolution of Citizens' Relationships with Local Self-Government in Kyrgyzstan

Results of the research of the Kyrgyz Republic citizens' trust in local self-government bodies, satisfaction with local services, and conditions for citizen participation in decision making process



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The research assesses the processes taking place at the level of local communities in the Kyrgyz Republic, based on the opinions of citizens obtained in the course of sociological surveys, and other data, which the Development Policy Institute has been accumulating in the course of its work with local communities and government bodies since 2007. The duration of the observations makes it possible to assess the dynamics of changes in citizens' attitudes toward local self-government (hereinafter - LSG), their ability and readiness to participate in local development; level of transparency, accountability and openness of LSG bodies, as well as the level of citizens' trust and citizens' opinions about the corruption level in LSG. A separate section of the study is devoted to assessing the impact of the "Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process" Project, financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the Development Policy Institute (hereinafter - VAP Project).

Data from 2020 were obtained in the course of a sociological survey conducted by the LLC "Erfolg Consult" commissioned by VAP Project. Analysis of the survey results carried out jointly by LLC "Erfolg Consult" and the Development Policy Institute (hereinafter - DPI) included the data obtained in the course of surveys of previous years, carried out under various projects. The research results are available in the form of two analytical reports. This report was prepared by the DPI team of analysts with the financial support of the VAP Project. However, the DPI's analytical interpretations may differ from the conclusions made by LLC "Erfolg Consult", therefore DPI provides an opportunity to those interested to familiarize themselves with this report, as well as with the report prepared by the analysts of LLC "Erfolg Consult" (in electronic format).

The publication is intended for decision makers on both local and national levels, researchers, representatives of NPOs, state bodies, development partners and mass media.

Full electronic version of this report in Russian, Kyrgyz and English, as well as the version of the report by LLC "Erfolg Consult" are published on the websites: www.vap.kg and www.dpi.kg.

Since the text of this report was developed in Russian, in case of discrepancies between the text in Russian and the texts in Kyrgyz and English, the text in Russian is considered correct.

The report quotes beneficiaries of the VAP Project captured during the writing of stories (storytelling) by Irene Baitanova commissioned by the VAP Project, full texts of stories are available in the "Municipality" magazine № 2, 2022, also in electronic format at: www.municipalitet.kg

The publication was made possible in the framework of the «Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process" Project financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the Development Policy Institute.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA –	aiyl aimak, rural administrative-territorial unit of the Kyrgyz Republic.
AK –	aiyl kenesh, representative body of rural local self-government of the Kyrgyz Republic.
ALE –	association of legal entities.
AO –	aiyl okmotu, executive body of rural local self-government of the Kyrgyz Republic.
BC KR –	Budget Code of the Kyrgyz Republic.
DPI –	Public Association “Development Policy Institute”.
HCS –	Housing and Communal Services.
JK KR –	Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic.
KR –	Kyrgyz Republic.
LB –	local budgets.
LSA –	local state administration.
LSG –	local self-government.
Non-target LSG –	LSGs that were not partner municipalities of the VAP Project.
NPO –	non-profit organization.
PH –	public hearings.
PWD –	person with disabilities.
RCDWUA –	Rural Community Drinking Water Users Association.
RLA –	regulatory legal act.
SALSGIR –	State Agency on Local Self-Governance and Inter-ethnic Relations under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.
Target LSG –	LSG bodies selected on a competitive basis to become the target partner municipalities of the VAP Project.
VAP Project –	“Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process” Project, financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the Development Policy Institute.
WUA –	water users association, a community-based organization that manages irrigation water distribution

INTRODUCTION

No matter how much is said about objective difficulties or mistakes of the LSG bodies, citizens will have their own opinion on how badly or well they perform, how effectively and sensibly they solve problems of local communities, and how well they improve life in a city or village. This opinion of citizens is extremely important to explore and study, as well as to adjust national policies in the area of local self-governance and regional development in response, as well as local self-governance decisions. If local politicians – deputies of local councils and heads of LSG bodies – ignore this “public temperature” of the population’s attitude toward them, social stability of society will be endangered. It is also important for national-level politicians to understand public sentiments, because the citizens’ attitude toward LSG largely depends on them, since national politicians form working conditions for the LSG bodies. The Kyrgyz Republic had already faced a critical situation in 2010, when people’s dissatisfaction with the government was largely generated by complete helplessness of the local authorities deprived of authority and means to work for the benefit of local communities, as a result of increasing centralization of governance. Events of 2020 also demonstrated that slow pace of change in rural communities, unfulfilled expectations of the center’s promises, and frustration that they have created, can be a catalyst for great political change.

Development Policy Institute through various projects and on its own initiative conducted studies of citizens’ attitudes toward local self-governance for many years. In 2020 and 2021, a sociological survey was conducted by LLC “Erfolg Consult” commissioned by the «Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process” Project financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by the Development Policy Institute. Analysis of the survey results carried out jointly by LLC “Erfolg Consult” and DPI included data from previous years’ surveys carried out under various projects.

Purpose of the research was to obtain, study and analytically interpret consolidated opinion of the Kyrgyz Republic’s citizens about local self-governance as a system, including LSG bodies and their relationship with population. It investigated such aspects of the system as performance, accountability and transparency of LSG bodies; level of corruption of the LSG bodies and level of public trust in them; level of satisfaction with services provided by LSGs, etc.

A separate objective of the research was to assess impact that the VAP Project had on local communities and LSG bodies during the period of its operation during 2011-2022.

Geography of the sociological surveys covered the Kyrgyz Republic.

Target audience was adult population of the Kyrgyz Republic, aged 18 years and older, living in settlements included in the research sample.

The research results are available in the form of two analytical reports. This report was prepared by the DPI team of analysts with the financial support of the VAP Project. However, the DPI’s analytical interpretations may differ from the conclusions made by LLC “Erfolg Consult”, therefore DPI provides an opportunity to those interested to familiarize themselves with this report, as well as with the report prepared by the analysts of LLC “Erfolg Consult” (in electronic format).

SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY¹

At the end of 2021 the research agency «Erfolg Consult» conducted the sociological survey commissioned by the DPI to measure main indicators of accountability of LSG bodies, level of public satisfaction with the services provided by LSG bodies, and level of citizen participation in the work of local self-government. Sequence of work included: desk analysis–study of project documentation (tools, reports, and other relevant documentation of the baseline survey); finalization and programming of the toolset; development of a plan for organizing and conducting the work, sampling, the survey schedule; organization and conduct of the field phase (quantitative) – collection of information in the field; processing of the obtained information (cleaning and tabulation); preparation of the technical report.

DPI determined the sample size (see Table 1) – 2,637 households in cities and villages throughout the Kyrgyz Republic. The proposed sample size makes it possible to judge with an accuracy of +/-1.9% the sampling population at the level of the population of all surveyed settlements. A total of 330 urban residents living in nine cities and 2,307 residents of rural localities living in 72 aiyl aimaks, including remote ones, were interviewed.

The tablet survey anticipated 100% audio recording of each questionnaire. Listening to audio recordings made up more than 40% of the questionnaires from the entire sample, 20% – quality control, which was carried out by repeated phone calls to check quality of work done by the interviewers and reliability of data obtained. According to the control results some irregularities related to the selection of the right respondent were revealed. In this regard, it was decided to redo about 4.74% of questionnaires from the whole sample. Further all questionnaires of the quantitative method were collected in a single database in Excel format, then the data was transferred to a specially designed database in SPSS format for further cleaning and processing and transferred to the analysts.

More technical information, including description of the demographic situation, questionnaire, detailed description of the research sample by region, and other details are presented in the report of the LLC "Erfolg Consult", available on the website: www.dpi.kg

Table 1. Research sample by oblasts

	Number of surveyed	Number of LSGs	Among them	
			Target LSGs	Non-target LSGs
Batken oblast	96	3	0	3
Jalal-Abad oblast	512	16	6	10
Issyk-Kul oblast	449	14	5	9
Naryn oblast	288	9	3	6
Osh oblast	384	12	5	7
Talas oblast	130	4	0	4
Chui oblast	130	14	6	8
Village	448	72	25	47
City	330	9	0	0
Total:	2637	82	25	47

During the field phase, the researchers encountered a number of difficulties, which deserve to be mentioned separately, as they characterize the situation in rural communities as a whole. **Gender aspect.** In Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts, difficulties in communication with female respondents were noted. Heads of households and other male family members forbade selected female respondents to participate in the interviews, they could interrupt them during the interviewing process and periodically express their opinion about certain issues. **Language aspect.** Difficulties in communication in Kyrgyz language were found in the villages of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Chui regions, where mainly Uzbek and Tajik speaking minorities live. **Conflict potential.** In the villages of Batken oblast, many residents were wary of the survey and categorically refused to answer questions, possibly due to the recent armed conflict on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in late 2021. Difficult military-political situation in the territory was complicated by socio-economic conditions. As a consequence, the field phase in Batken oblast was accompanied with the greatest difficulties.

SUMMARY

Reputation of LSG bodies suffers from their limited ability to respond to expectations of citizens

- Attitude of citizens toward LSG bodies directly depends on the LSG's financial ability to solve community problems (a correlation was found: the higher the level of local budget revenues, the lower the number of citizens dissatisfied with the performance of LSG).
- Citizens (40%) find it difficult to determine their attitude toward LSG bodies and are self-reliant.
- The level of citizen satisfaction with the LSG performance in 2021 decreased slightly (-5.6%), although it remains high (75.4%).

Interest and trust in LSG bodies are **decreasing** amidst the general decline in citizens' trust in the government, but **slower than in other institutions**

- Kyrgyzstan citizens' interest in the work of LSG bodies is slowly decreasing, although still remains high (67.7% in 2021 vs. 92.2% in 2015).
- The level of trust in LSG bodies is decreasing (-0.13 points), but to a lesser degree than the level of trust in other institutions (-0.53 points).
- Local politicians are becoming less well known.
- Social networks are becoming an increasingly popular source of information about the activities of LSG bodies (0 to 18.9%).
- Previously heterogeneous attitude toward the party principle of local councils changed dramatically toward uncertainty (from 0 to 40%).
- In the long-term retrospective, suspicions of corruption in the bodies are decreasing (6 times since 2008), but have increased over the past year (+4.4%).
- Digitalization reduces the level of suspicions of corruption

Citizens are ready to contribute to local development, but expect new forms of participation from LSG bodies

- Majority of citizens (69.9%) are ready to personally participate in public works for the improvement of their city and village.
- Citizens (69%) strive for direct interaction with LSG bodies, avoiding the forms associated with the representative principle.
- Public councils are losing popularity at the level of rural local communities (from 30% to 15%), but remain in demand in the cities.
- Majority of citizens (67%) want to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of drinking water supply and garbage collection services, but are unwilling to spend personal time monitoring the activities of LSG bodies as a whole (9.4%).
- The third of citizens are waiting for new digital forms of organizing public monitoring and evaluation from the LSG bodies in order to reduce personal time.

Citizen participation in the local budget process has reached a quantitative maximum, and the LSG bodies must offer a new quality in order to retain the level of participation

- Citizens in general have a better understanding of the structure of local budget expenditures (from 15% to 28.3%), which was the result of many years of effort to introduce the practice of budget information disclosure, holding public hearings on the budget, and involving citizens in local development planning.
- Citizen participation in public hearings on the budget surpassed the historical maximum of 20% and began to decline, so the LSG bodies must pay more attention to the quality of their response to citizens' proposals and needs regarding the budget process.
- Quality of budget hearings and consideration of proposals in the future will have a key impact on citizens' willingness to participate in the budget process and perception of the bodies' ability to manage local development.
- One of the main obstacles to improving the effectiveness of citizen participation in the budget process is the low level of financial literacy of the population (budget figures are poorly understood by 38% of citizens).

Majority of citizens are satisfied with the volume of information, the responses to appeals, and the work of LSG bodies in general, but the proportion of skeptics is growing

- Citizens (72.6%) think that LSG bodies are open in their activities.
- Citizens have less frequent (-20%) appeals to local self-governance bodies.
- Almost three out of four citizens of Kyrgyzstan are more or less satisfied with the interaction with LSG bodies.

Low satisfaction with the service does not always mean that its improvement should be addressed in the first place. First of all, according to citizens, it is necessary to address life safety issues

- Citizens prioritize the need to finance services not by the level of their provision, but by their importance to life and safety. Therefore, despite the relatively high level of dissatisfaction with garbage collection, road maintenance and landscaping, most citizens still believe it is necessary to direct local budget funds primarily to finance water and sewage services.
- Citizens see improvements in the provision of street lighting services (+30%), road maintenance (+24%), street cleaning (+7%), water supply (+6%); deteriorations - in the provision of garbage collection, kindergarten, sewage and drainage services (about -10%).

Supporters of expanding women's political rights are in the majority. Opponents cannot clearly argue their position

- Three out of four citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic support the expansion of women's political rights through introduction of a quota for people of the same sex in local councils. Among women there are 14% more supporters of the quota than among men.
- Supporters of women's political empowerment consider the strengths of women deputies to be their social contribution (33.2%) and business qualities (14.5%).
- Opponents of women's political empowerment are guided more by stereotypes (50%), and only some of them could offer logical arguments.

Women feel constrained when trying to participate in local development and governance

- Women are less likely (+18.7%) to express their willingness to personally participate in local issues.
- Men more often (+30%) than women manage to achieve a solution to an important problem for them, it is easier to find allies and support for their initiatives (+40%).
- Main obstacles to solving priority problems for women: lack of money (30%); indifference of officials (21%) and lack of gender mainstreaming in problem prioritization and planning (11%).
- Women are more critical (+36%) about the quality of budget hearings and talk about discrimination in the process of expressing their views on the local budget (4.3%).

Impact of the "Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process" Project

- LSG bodies are more attentive to the opinions of citizens, and in response, citizens' satisfaction with the results of their participation in the budget process is growing:
 - Number of LSG bodies holding budget hearings has increased 19-fold, and in 2021, 396 LSG bodies, or over 80%, already held hearings;
 - More than 50% of citizens' proposals received during the public discussion of draft local budgets were taken into account by LSG bodies;
 - Transparency of LSG bodies has increased: 71% of LSG bodies throughout the Kyrgyz Republic use infographics, brief budget descriptions, and online citizen's budget;
 - Percentage of citizens who believe that LSG bodies are open in their activities has almost tripled in the target LSGs of the VAP Project;
 - Level of citizen satisfaction with the quality of their participation in the budget process has increased by 5.5 times;
 - Percentage of citizens who believe that there is no corruption in LSG bodies has increased by 14% in the target municipalities of the VAP Project since 2012.
- Ability of LSG bodies to respond to the citizens' needs has increased:
 - About 100-150 acute problems of local communities were solved annually through joint action plans between citizens and LSGs;
 - Grant program improved the skills of LSG bodies in raising additional funding and investment management; 129 local problems have been solved, which has improved living conditions for 530,000 people, and about 150 jobs have been created;
 - Number of citizens in the target LSGs of the VAP Project who believe that living conditions in the municipality have improved (despite the general decline in the assessment of living standards due to the COVID-19 epidemic) has doubled.

- Citizens and LSG bodies received more mechanisms of interaction for joint solution of urgent problems:
 - On average 35 activists in each target LSG (over 1,700 people in total) joined together in almost 190 IGs and solved their problems together with LSGs;
 - About 500 IG participants in target LSGs became members of local councils, municipal officials, participants in joint monitoring, received awards from government agencies for their contribution to the development of their aimak, etc.;
 - Citizens achieved inclusion of about 800 proposals in joint action plans, which in one way or another have been implemented, including with the help of funding from local budgets;
 - 15% increase in the number of citizens willing to personally participate in the improvement of their city or village.

- LSG personnel strengthening:
 - LSG Best Practices Portal was created (www.myktyaimak.gov.kg), which offers 135 examples of best practices and about 300 samples of documents of local and national importance; the number of Portal users in 2022 was about 11,000 people (62% of women);
 - VAP Project helped the "Municipality" magazine to become a reality, which proved to be in demand: in 2022, the magazine was purchased by 800 paying subscribers;
 - The Portal and the magazine were handed over to the Local Governance Academy of Central Asia - an organization that in 2022 will start providing professional development services to LSG bodies in the sectoral areas;
 - Some target LSGs of the Project have been recognized 11 times as the best LSG bodies in their rayons, more than 70 municipal servants and heads of target LSG bodies received the titles of "Excellency in Municipal Service" and "Excellency in Local Self-Government".

- Progress in achieving gender equality in the target LSGs of the VAP Project:
 - Women's participation in identifying LSG priorities and planning has increased: from 35% in 2012 to nearly 50% in 2019;
 - 68% of grant projects were aimed at addressing gender sensitive issues (87% in Osh oblast); 27,000 women benefited from grant projects (51% of total number); women occupied 43% of jobs created by grant projects;
 - "Women's" initiatives won 50% of the prizes in the "Local Initiative" contest, and 80 out of 154 initiatives received support;
 - Share of women in initiative groups has increased from 36% to 43% and in monitoring groups from 37% to 44%.





Key Conclusions

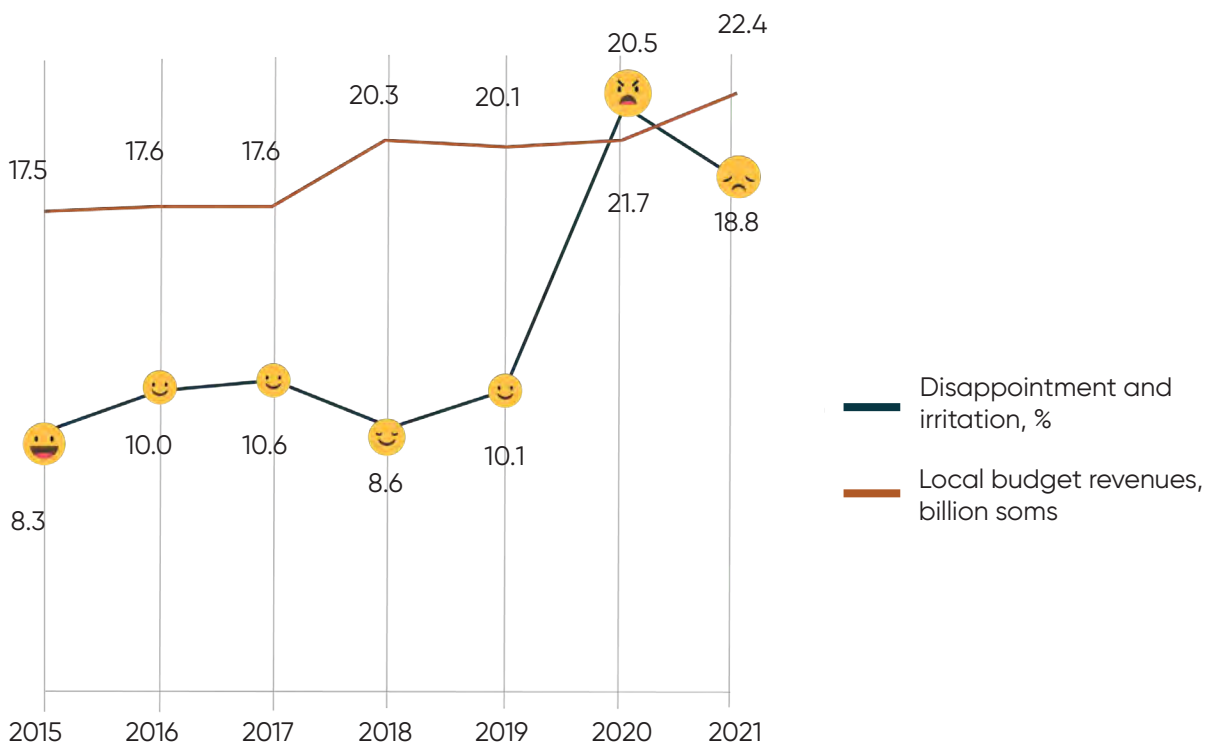
Image of LSG bodies in the citizens' perception

Reputation of the LSG bodies suffers from their limited ability to respond to expectations of citizens

Attitude of citizens toward the LSG bodies directly depends on the LSG's financial ability to solve community problems. LSG bodies operate under constraints, the most important of which are the scope of authority and the financing of their implementation. In this regard, a comparison of the dynamics of citizens' negative emotions toward the LSG bodies and the dynamics of local budget revenues is revealing. Figure A reflects the connection between the share of citizens with negative emotions toward LSG and the total volume of local budgets: the lower the local budgets revenues, the greater the frustration and irritation on the part of citizens and vice versa. An even more vivid picture of the connection between the budget and citizens' attitudes toward LSG is provided by Figure B, demonstrating the connection between the volume of local budgets and the level of citizen dissatisfaction with the performance of the LSG bodies. For nearly 15 years, a pattern has been observed in which fluctuations in the level of local budget revenues affect changes in the level of dissatisfaction. This is an extremely important political comparison, since dissatisfaction with the performance of local governments translates into dissatisfaction with the government as a whole. This was clearly evident in 2010, when the weakness of the LSG bodies, whose authority and budgets were drastically cut in the period of 2008-2009, that largely affected people's dissatisfaction with the fact that life on the ground was not improving in any way. Therefore, the underfunding of local budgets is dangerous, posing a threat to social stability.

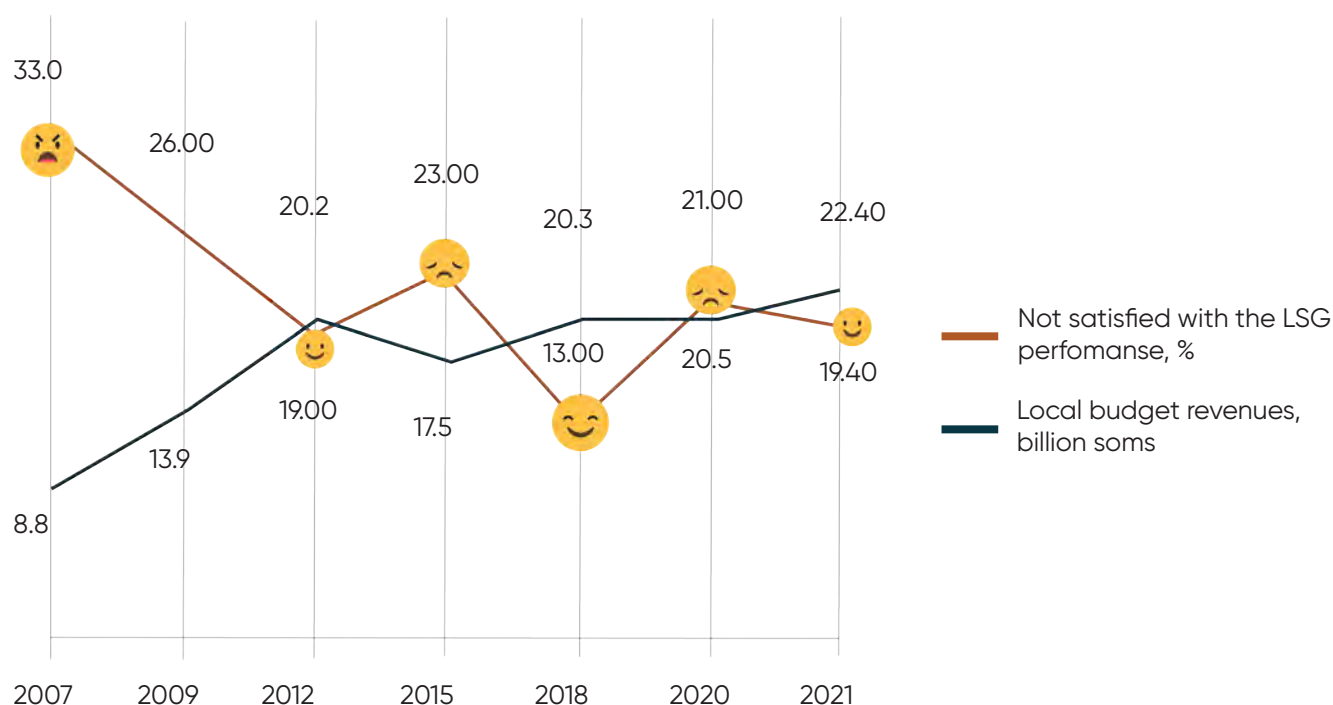
Figure A.

Dynamics of the share of citizens with negative feelings toward LSG bodies, compared to the dynamics of local budget revenues, 2015-2021².



² The cumulative amount of local budget revenues is given as planned after the reduction (sequestration) of the budget of the Kyrgyz Republic in the spring of 2020.

Figure B. Dynamics of the level of dissatisfaction with the LSG bodies' performance in comparison with the dynamics of local budget revenues, 2007-2021.



Citizens find it difficult to determine their attitude toward LSG bodies and are self-reliant. Until 2020, the majority of the Kyrgyz Republic citizens had positive emotions - inspiration and optimism toward the LSG bodies. However, the share of citizens who did not feel any emotions toward the LSG bodies steadily increased, and in 2021, for the first time in the ten-year history of measurement, exceeded the share of people with positive and negative attitudes and reached almost 40%, which is almost 4 times more than in 2015. This indicates that more and more people do not associate living conditions in the community with the performance of local self-governments and rely solely on themselves.

The level of citizen satisfaction with the LSG performance remains high, but is decreasing. The percentage of citizens fully or partially satisfied with the interaction with the executive bodies of LSG remains high at 75.4%, that is, three out of four citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic are to some degree satisfied with the work of local self-government. Although, compared to 2018, in 2021 this indicator decreased by 5.6%. The share of citizens satisfied with the interaction with local councils is also high, although lower than with mayor's offices and ayyl okmotu - 71.6% against 75.4%.

Interest and trust in LSG bodies are decreasing amidst the general decline in citizens' trust in the government, but slower than in other institutions

Kyrgyzstan citizens' interest in the work of LSG bodies is slowly decreasing, although still remains high. The citizens' interest in the work of LSG bodies has generally remained steadily high over the past fifteen years (since the beginning of the measurement).

In fact, three out of every four citizens of Kyrgyzstan are more or less interested in LSG affairs, with those who were actively interested always being one and a half to two times more interested than those who were little interested. But until 2012, there was a steady increase in the citizens' interest, and then it began to slowly but steadily decline, in 2021 it was 77%.

The level of trust in LSG bodies remains relatively high, and if it decreases, then to a lesser degree than the level of trust in other institutions. Compared to 2020, the level of trust in all government institutions and basic services has fallen, except for three: the President's Office, the Government, and the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. LSG bodies retain their positions in the middle of the rating, the decrease in the trust level is less than for education, health care and religious institutions, where the level of trust fell by half a point. A slight drop in the level of trust in LSG bodies (-0.13 points) is caused, first of all, by the general trend of decreasing citizen trust in the government as a whole, and secondly, by public dissatisfaction with the qualifications of local council members and municipal employees, as well as lack of trust in the party system of local elections. Despite the fact that satisfaction with the interaction with the LSG executive bodies - mayor offices and *aiyl okmotu* - is higher than with the local councils, in the future an absolute majority of citizens want to directly elect the heads of the LSG executive bodies.

Local politicians are becoming less well known. Beginning in 2015, there has been a steady downward trend in the visibility level of the LSG executive bodies' leaders. Although the vast majority of citizens still know their local politicians - heads, mayors, and deputies - in 2021 this indicator fell to an all-time low of 67.7% compared to 92.2% in 2015. Given the indirect system of elections, when citizens do not directly choose a head of the LSG executive body, further growth in the recognition of local leaders can only be expected if a direct election system is introduced, when after "high-profile" election campaigns the winning politicians will be known by 90 and even 100 percent of the population, including children.

Social networks are becoming an increasingly popular source of information about the activities of LSG bodies. In the past, the most popular source of information was informal - friends, relatives, and colleagues (over 35% in 2015 and only 16.6% in 2021), but in 2021 social networks (18.9%), where information is also often informal, took the lead in popularity. Social networks have even overtaken places of mass gathering popular in the past - bazaars, fairs, gatherings and neighborhood meetings, where, along with rumors, quite official information often circulates and specifically posted there by LSG bodies. Dramatic increase in the social networks' role is connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, when meetings with friends, neighborhood and citizen gatherings were impossible, although previously, on the contrary, they were the primary source of information about the activities of LSG bodies. Social networks allow citizens access the wider range of opinions, which simultaneously fosters critical thinking, but also encourages spread of false information. This became both a challenge and an opportunity for the LSG bodies, as they face an urgent need to master the technology of using social networks in order to maintain an adequate attitude of citizens in the information field.

Previously heterogeneous attitude toward the party principle of local councils changed dramatically toward uncertainty. In general, a high level of distrust in local parties is preserved: 46% of the surveyed participants think that local councils must not be formed based on the party principle (supporters of the party principle - 32%; undecided - 22%). However, this opinion is not homogeneous: for example, in Batken and Jalal-Abad oblasts there are more of those who believe that local councils should be formed by the party list. In addition, in 2021 there

was a sudden sharp increase (from 0 to 40%) in the share of those who have no opinion on how much influence parties have on the work of local councils. This is due to changes in the governing system of the country, as well as the fact that local elections were held in 2021, and people are waiting to see how the work of local councils in the new composition will change.

In the long-term retrospective, suspicions of corruption in bodies are decreasing, but have increased over the past year. Every third citizen believes that there is no corruption in the LSG bodies. The number of such opinions increased six fold in 2021 compared to 2008, but decreased by 4.4% compared to 2020. The share of those who consider the corruption level in the LSG bodies to be high and very high has halved. In 2021, citizens are less certain about the areas of corruption. Thus, in 2021 there was a significant increase in the proportion of those who found it difficult to answer in what particular area of activity of the LSG bodies corruption manifests itself - twice as many such respondents as in 2018 and in 2020. This speaks more about the general distrust in the government than about the facts of corruption on the part of the LSG bodies.

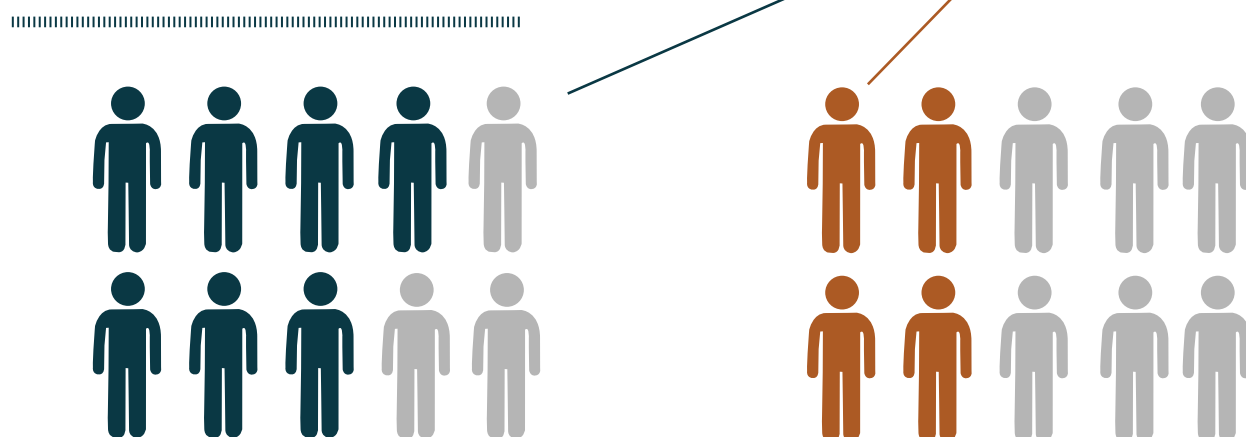
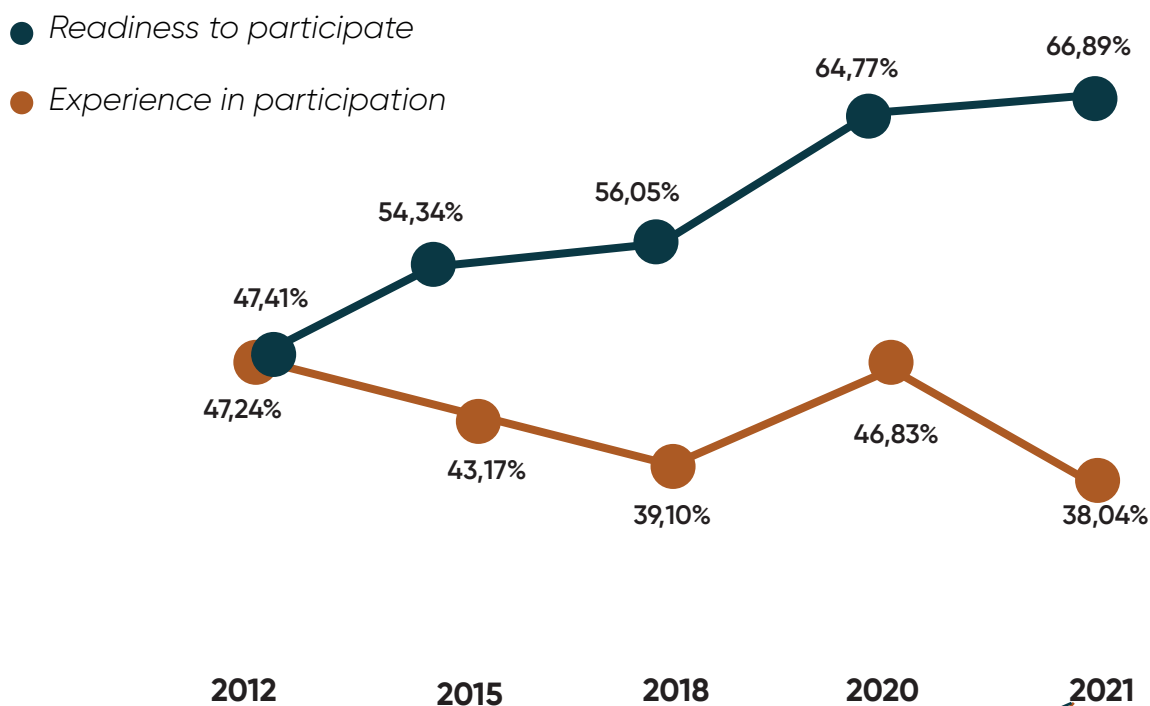
Digitalization reduces the level of suspicion of corruption, as evidenced by the increased trust in the procedures for listing the needy families, issuing certificates, public procurement, and budget management. Among the spheres of LSG activities, in which, according to the respondents, corruption most frequently manifests in land administration, which leads with a wide margin. The other areas, where citizens previously suspected corruption, became unpopular in 2021 (issuing certificates, managing the budget, and listing the needy families).

Citizen participation in local self-government

Citizens are ready to contribute to local development, but expect new forms of participation from LSG bodies

Three out of four citizens are ready to personally participate in public works for the improvement of their city and village. In 2021, 66.9% of respondents expressed such readiness, which is almost 20% more than in 2012. At the same time, many (38%) confirmed that they already had such experience (the decrease of this number in 2021 was probably caused by the pandemic).

Figure C.
Dynamics of the share of citizens who are ready to participate in the improvement of their municipality and already had such experience



In fact, many citizens are ready to make a personal contribution to the improvement of their municipality, and this "army" of people represents an enormous development potential for LSG bodies. Therefore, the primary task of local self-government is to provide effective opportunities for citizens to do so. However, the percentage of people who already have experience in taking part in public works to improve their city and village is declining and in 2020 amounts to 38%, which is a challenge for LSG bodies.

Citizens strive for direct interaction with LSG bodies, avoiding the forms associated with the representative principle. The most popular form of participation in public affairs, according to citizens in 2021 are meetings (53%), public hearings (16%), and public councils (15%). The share of those who take part in the development and implementation of projects aimed at community development increased six fold. Only a small proportion of citizens consider elections to the local kenesh and interaction through NPOs to be effective forms of participation. These forms are unpopular due to an insufficient level of trust in the representative principle of citizen participation in LSG, the incomplete fulfillment of their duties by local councils, and the insufficient level of development of NPOs, especially in rural areas.

Public councils are losing popularity at the level of rural local communities, but remain in demand in the cities. If in 2018 public councils took the second place in the rating of popularity of the participation forms and collected more than 30% of responses, then in 2021 the popularity of councils fell by half and collected only 15% of responses. This change should be considered as a positive phenomenon, because at the level of local self-government there is the most important council - the local council, which is also endowed with local legislative powers. If the local council performs at high quality and comprehensively, then usually citizens do not need to participate in additional councils. However, the situation in villages is different from that in large villages and cities. In a small municipality, the local kenesh is able to meet all needs for the councils, but in a city or large municipality, creation of thematic councils is often justified. Therefore, in cities, citizens prefer to participate more in initiative groups and public councils, and in villages - in public hearings, as well as in the development and selection of projects for funding

Majority of citizens want to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of drinking water supply and garbage collection services, but are unwilling to spend personal time monitoring the activities of LSG bodies as a whole. Water and garbage are quite logical leaders of the rating of topics for public monitoring, since drinking water delivery and garbage collection are services that every family uses every day, so many are concerned about the quality and sufficiency of these services and are willing to monitor their provision (67% and 45% respectively). The situation with the processes of public monitoring and evaluation of the LSG body's activities as a whole is more difficult. In this case, the monitoring becomes more time-consuming, and the evaluation becomes more complex, as along with the obvious results, the process of governance is also evaluated. There are those willing to participate in these types of monitoring in the community, but their number is decreasing: compared to 2018, it has decreased six fold and was only 9.45% in 2021 (against 62.6%). People have come to understand that this type of participation requires a significant investment of personal time, as well as effort to study documents and gain new knowledge.

The third of citizens are waiting for the LSG bodies to adopt new digital forms of organizing public monitoring and evaluation in order to reduce their personal time. The respondents' preferences regarding the participation methods in monitoring and evaluation change over time. For example, in 2021, one in three respondents indicated that they would like to participate through communication in a WhatsApp group (20% more than in 2018). This dynamic was a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, when citizens became accustomed to receiving and broadcasting information through available messengers. On the other hand, citizens in general prefer digital and remote forms of monitoring, as only few are willing to spend their personal time to visit facilities or participate in the acceptance of goods.

Citizen participation in the local budget process has reached a quantitative maximum, and the LSG bodies must offer a new quality in order to retain the level of participation

Citizens in general have a better understanding of the structure of local budget expenditures, which was the result of many years of effort to introduce the practice of budget information disclosure, holding public hearings on the budget, and involving citizens in local development planning. Since 2007, the share of those who considered the maintenance of aiyl okmotu and mayor offices as the main expenditure has sharply decreased, but the understanding of the share of expenditures on landscaping has come closer to reality. In 2021, 28.3% of citizens believed that landscaping was a priority spending item, compared to only 15% in 2007. However, in 2021 compared to 2020, the percentage of citizens who do not know where local budget money is spent has increased again.

Citizen participation in public hearings on the budget surpassed the historical maximum of 20% and began to decline, so the LSG bodies need to pay more attention to the quality of their response to the suggestions and needs of citizens regarding the budget process. Parallel to the accumulation of the practice of hearings, the history of which began in 1999, for a long time in Kyrgyzstan there has been a steady increase in the level of citizen participation in the budget public hearings at the local level, which in 2018 exceeded a record 20% for the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2021, according to the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, **396 LSG bodies, or over 80% of the total, had already conducted hearings**, and the estimated number of participants was more than 33,000. There is no need to focus efforts on further quantitative growth of citizen participation in public hearings, because simply increasing the number of participants does not mean that the budget discussion is most effective for the citizens. It is time for the LSG bodies to focus on qualitative improvements, including the introduction of new forms of citizen participation in the budget process. The quantitative indicator of the participation level in public hearings should be replaced by qualitative indicators of taking into account the opinions and wishes of citizens, creating conditions for online communication and receiving proposals through municipal websites, Telegram, WhatsApp groups, suggestion boxes, and other forms of feedback.

The quality of budget hearings and consideration of proposals in the future will have a key impact on citizens' willingness to participate in the budget process and perception of the bodies' ability to manage local development. If in the first decade of the hearings, people were inspired by the very possibility to discuss with the authorities such a sensitive and important issue as public finance, over time, citizens began to appreciate more the practical

result of hearings. In this context, especially positive is the twofold decrease - from 8% to 3.9% - in the share of those citizens who do not believe in the very institution of hearings and believe that the wishes of the hearings' participants will not be taken into account in the draft budget. This dynamics indicates that people are becoming more confident that their opinion will be heard. In general, the share of citizens satisfied with participation in the budget hearings remains quite high - about 70%. The slight fluctuations in the level of satisfaction in 2020-2021 are caused by the difficulties of organizing hearings under the pandemic conditions and by the fact that many LSG bodies held hearings for the first time in their history.

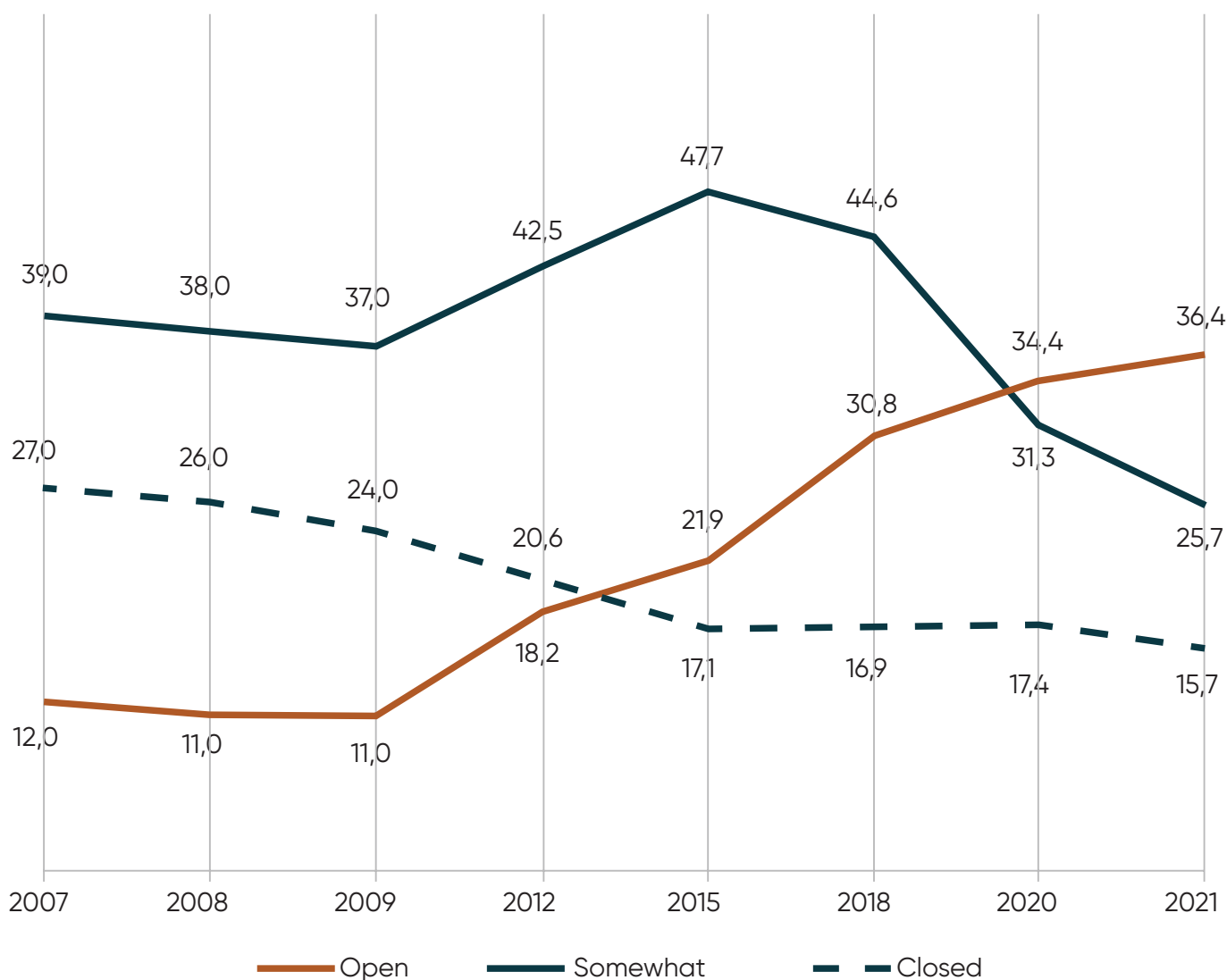
One of the main obstacles to improving the effectiveness of citizen participation in the budget process is the low level of financial literacy of the population. Analysis of the reasons why citizens are unwilling or unable to participate in the budget process showed that lack of awareness, lack of information, is no longer the main factor (in particular, the number of citizens who did not participate in public hearings due to their employment, although they knew that such events were held, is increasing - this was the response of 24.6% in 2021 against 17.8% in 2018. There was a 6.7% decrease in the proportion who did not know about hearings). Most citizens are aware of the opportunities and ways to participate, but the low level of financial literacy in general, inability to read and understand budget information remain one of the main reasons why 38% of citizens are dissatisfied with their participation in the budget process.

Citizen's satisfaction with local self-government

The majority of citizens are satisfied with the volume of information, the responses to appeals, and the work of LSG bodies in general, but the proportion of skeptics is growing

Citizens think that LSG bodies are open in their activities. Almost three-fourths of the citizens (72.6%) are more or less satisfied with the volume and quality of information on local self-governance, which speaks to the high level of LSG bodies' openness. Since the beginning of the measurement in 2007, the proportion of citizens completely satisfied with the volume and quality of information has steadily increased and by 2020 has almost tripled, from 12 to 34.5%. Compared to 2009, those who consider LSG bodies to be fully open in their activities have more than tripled (dynamics from 11 to 36.4%).

Figure D.
Dynamics of citizens' opinions on the level of LSG bodies' openness, 2007-2020, percent

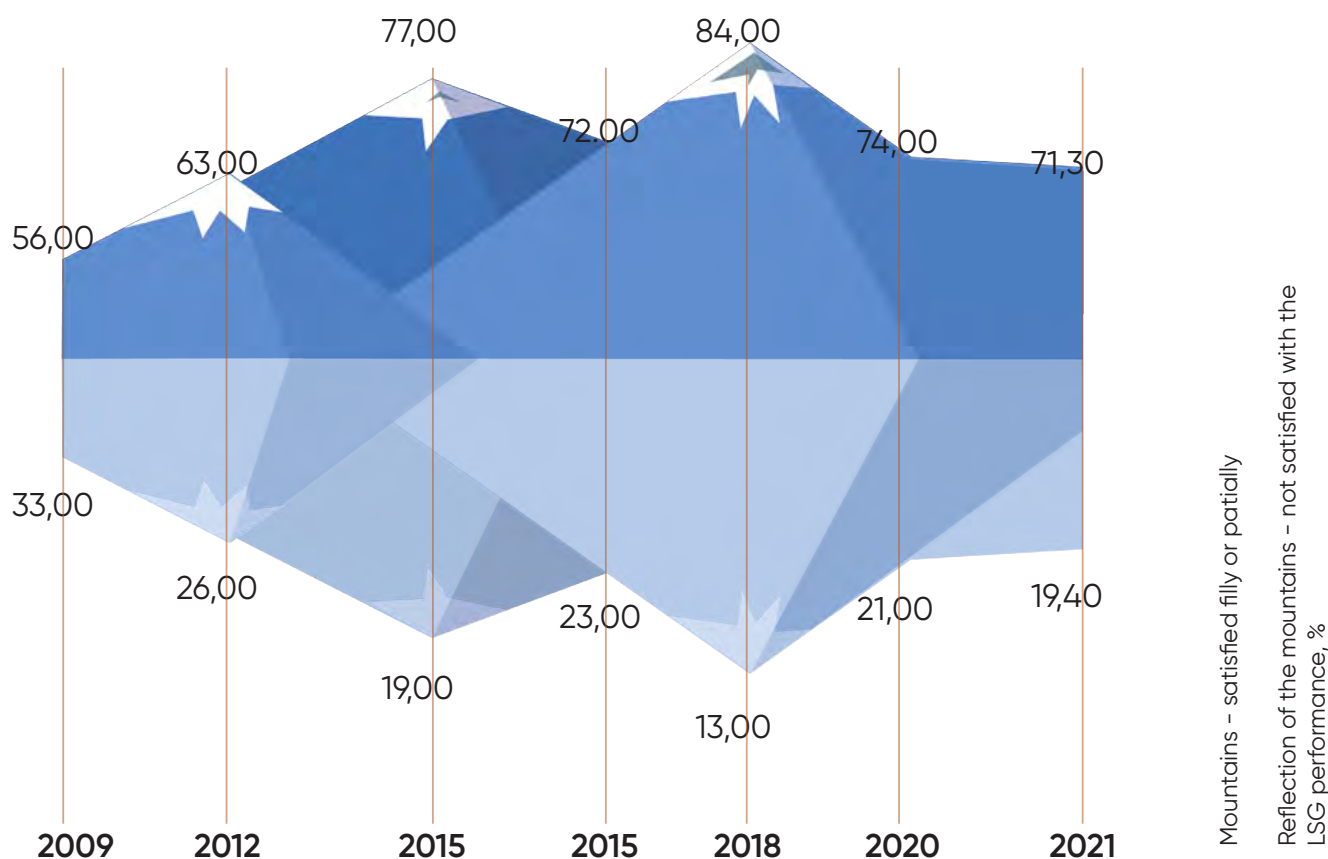


Citizens have less frequent appeals to local self-government bodies. On average, the number of appeals decreased significantly - by more than 20%. The most significant reduction occurred with regard to appeals for certificates, as well as local taxes and fees. Behind this fact is digitalization and the state policy focused on reducing the number of citizens' appeals for documents. It should be expected that with the development of digital technologies in governance the number of appeals will continue to decrease. There is also a significant decrease in the appeals on issues that are not the responsibility of the LSG bodies - health care, pension provision, irrigation water. This indicates that the legal culture of citizens is improving who gradually understand which government body is responsible for a particular issue.

Almost three out of four citizens of Kyrgyzstan are more or less satisfied with the performance of LSG bodies. Starting 2007, the level of citizen satisfaction with the performance of LSG bodies has been growing, but growing unsteadily and relatively slowly. Here, as with the trust in LSG bodies, there is a decline after the inspiration of 2018, when the historical maximum was reached (since the beginning of measurements) and 84% of citizens were satisfied with the work of the LSG bodies in response to their appeals, but reality suggests that this was an advance towards the government, again caused by a general optimism regarding the prospects for the development of local communities in light of the national priorities in regional development.

Low satisfaction with the service does not always mean that its improvement should be addressed in the first place. First of all, according to citizens, it is necessary to address life safety issues

Figure E.
 Dynamics of the satisfaction level with the performance of LSG bodies, 2007-2021, percent



Citizens prioritize the need to finance services not by the level of their provision, but by their importance to life and safety. Therefore, despite the relatively high level of dissatisfaction with garbage collection, road maintenance and landscaping, most citizens still believe it is necessary to direct local budget funds primarily to finance water supply and sewerage services. Therefore, when making a decision, even despite the high level of citizen dissatisfaction with a particular service, the LSG bodies must give preference to those services that are more important. In general, citizens' priorities regarding the importance of services change little over time: water supply, garbage collection, and road maintenance remain in the top three most demanded services for decades. The second most important group in the rating: street lighting, street cleaning and landscaping. It is noticeable, however, that landscaping has lost some importance in the eyes of the community, while water supply, on the other hand, has increased in importance.

Citizens see improvements in the provision of street lighting services, road maintenance, street cleaning, and water supply; deteriorations for garbage service, kindergarten, sewage, and drainages services. Since 2007, the proportion of citizens who are more or less satisfied with street lighting is growing - for 13 years the increase was 30%; road maintenance - 24%; street cleaning - 7%; water supply - 6%. However, the level of satisfaction with garbage disposal and kindergartens remains the same and even slightly decreases. Only the level of satisfaction with sewage and drainage services is steadily decreasing - the number of satisfied with the service decreased by three times and reached a critically low level of 10%.

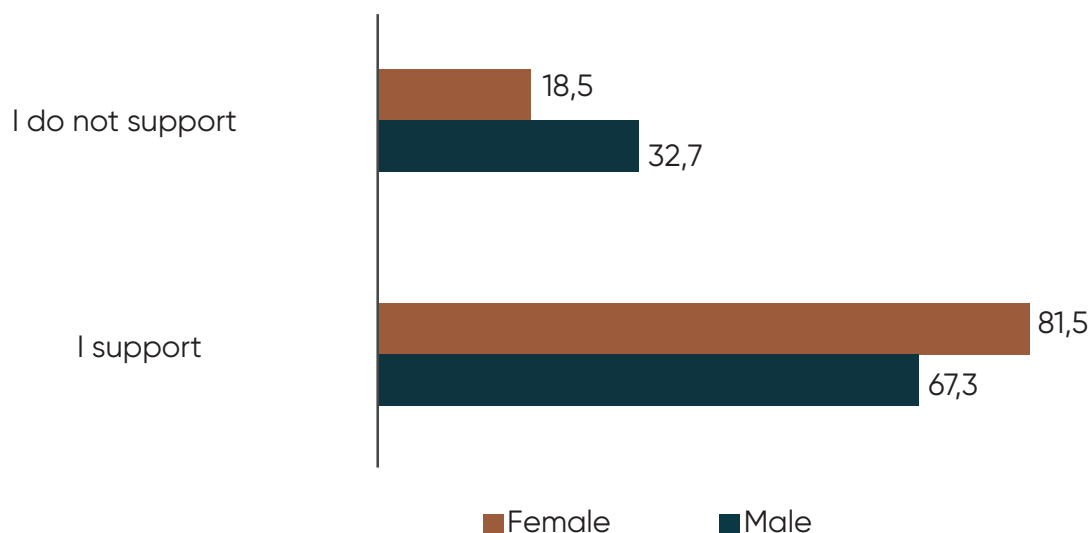
Citizens want to have drinking water in the house. Garbage disposal left the top three of the most problematic services, instead of which the first place in the ranking was taken by the service of water supply. People's demands for comfort are growing. For example, in 2012, the respondents named the weak water pressure as the main problem - so believed more than 40% of respondents, about the same amount of respondents complained about the duration of water supply during the day. Other reasons for dissatisfaction were mentioned by less than 2% of respondents. In 2021, more than 32% of citizens complain about other reasons, most of whom want to see drinking water in the house and not in the yard or in the street. Nevertheless, progress is evident: in 2021, nearly a third of citizens have water in their homes, compared to 17.8% in 2018, when the largest proportion of respondents used a public standpipe. At the same time, 8.4% of citizens still use open water sources - springs or rivers.

Gender equality in local self-government

Supporters of expanding women's political rights are in the majority.
Opponents cannot clearly argue their position

Three out of four citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic support the expansion of women's political rights through the introduction of a quota for people of the same sex in local councils. Thus, 76% of citizens support increasing the number of women among deputies. But there is a noticeable difference in attitudes towards the issue in terms of gender. For example, the percentage of women supporting an increase in the political rights of women is significantly - 14% higher among women than among men - 81.49% and 67.27%, respectively.

Figure F.
Citizens' attitudes towards increasing the number of women in the local council, by gender



Supporters of women's political empowerment consider the strengths of women deputies to be their social contribution and business qualities. Among the reasons why citizens support the participation of women in local councils, the most popular is the recognition of women's social contribution: the belief that "only women deputies think and help children, women and the elderly" and "women deputies take more care of people" (in total, a third of respondents - 33.24% think so). One in five residents of Kyrgyzstan commends the business qualities of women deputies - a total of 22.16% said that "women are more attentive and patient and, therefore, better at solving the problems of the village and town" and "women are less involved in corruption". In third place is the recognition of women's political rights: 14.55% believe that "women should have more opportunities to express their opinions, and currently they are restricted in this right. It is noteworthy that in terms of reasons for expanding women's political rights, respondents are not divided by gender.

Women feel constrained when trying to participate in local development and governance

Opponents of women's political empowerment are guided more by stereotypes, and only some of them could offer logical arguments. Much less meaningful were the explanations of the reasons why, in the opinion of a quarter of the respondents, women should not expand their political rights by participating in the local councils. Respondents were offered 9 answer options, of which citizens (both men and women) chose the most popular - more than 50% of the answers - the only explanation that was not supported by logical arguments: "politics is not a woman's business, and women should be engaged in family and household affairs".

Women are less likely to express their willingness to personally participate in local issues. In 2021, 77.8% of men were willing to participate in public affairs compared to 59.1% of female respondents. There are two reasons for this. First, women are overburdened with unpaid household chores that take up their free time that they could spend on community activities. Second, women continue to face negative community attitudes toward their public activism.

Men more often than women manage to achieve a solution to an important problem for them, and it is easier to find allies and support for their initiatives. Men consider themselves more effective transformers of living conditions. Thus, 61% of women and 91% of men solved problems - their own or the community's - and 20% of women and only 4% of men failed to achieve results. Men more often receive support from LSG bodies, development projects and other sources in the form of money or equipment to implement their proposals: men confirm receiving external assistance for their initiatives in 89% of cases, while among women this indicator was only 49%.

Main obstacles to solving priority problems for women are: lack of money; indifference of officials and lack of gender mainstreaming in problem prioritization and planning. Among the factors that hinder the solution of women's priority problems, the three most important ones are the most significant. The first factor is the lack of funds in the local budget, which is mentioned by almost every third respondent and interviewee. The second factor is insufficient activity of interested persons among officials, which is mentioned by every fifth respondent. The third factor refers to the legislation, which, according to every ninth respondent, does not take into account the gender aspect in relation to priority problems. There is a significant proportion of those who note the lack of support from the local community and state bodies. However, the minimum number of respondents complained about the lack of support from the mayor's office and aiyl okmotu.

Women are more critical about the quality of budget hearings and talk about discrimination in the process of expressing their views on the local budget. Women more often than men point out that during the hearings only one presenter spoke and did not give a chance to residents to express their opinions - in 2021, 13.8% of women responded, compared to 9.5% of men. However, for 45.2% of men and only 27.6% of women the budget explanation was incomprehensible. Women more often than men believe that the hearing turned into a simple meeting with complaints from the public - 12.1% vs. 4.8%. The conclusion is that women are just as knowledgeable as men about public financial management, but women notice discrimination against themselves in the discussion process, feeling that they are not allowed to speak out as much as they would like to.



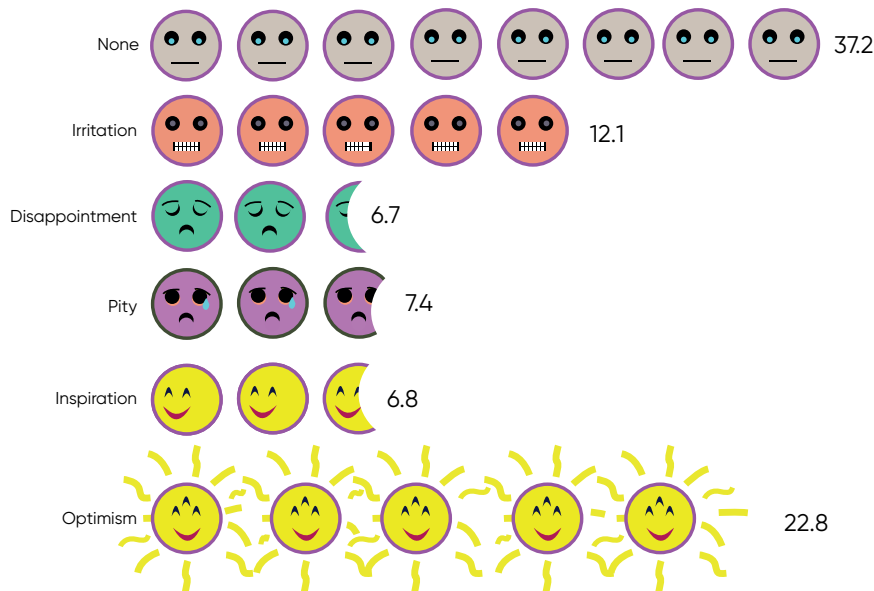


I. IMAGE OF LSG BODIES IN CITIZENS' PERCEPTION

1.1. Citizens' perception of local self-government

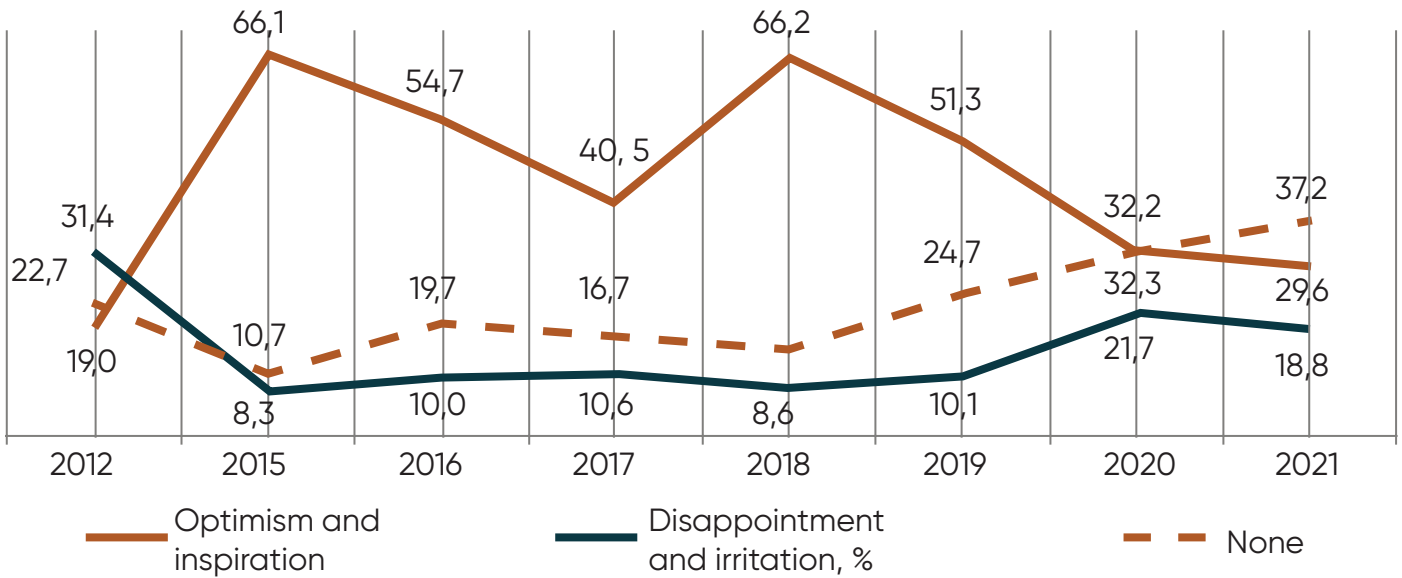
The citizens' perception of the LSG bodies reflects their attitudes toward the dynamics of changing conditions in local communities. At the same time, the emotions citizens feel toward the LSG bodies express their opinion regarding the extent to which the LSG bodies' work meets or fails to meet the population's expectations, their belief or disbelief in the ability of LSG bodies to change life in the communities for the better. During the survey, the respondents were asked to choose the emotions they felt toward the LSG bodies from a list including the following: "optimism", "inspiration", "pity", "disappointment", "irritation", and "none".

Figure 1: Emotions that citizens feel toward LSG bodies in 2021, percent



The number of citizens who do not feel any emotion towards LSG bodies is steadily increasing - for the first time in the ten-year history of measurement, the proportion of citizens with no emotion towards LSG exceeded the proportion of people with positive and negative attitudes and reached almost 40%, which is almost 4 times more than in 2015. This indicates that more and more people do not associate living conditions in the community with the performance of local self-government and rely solely on themselves. A separate group is represented by 7.4% of citizens who feel pity for the LSG bodies. These respondents actually understand the complexities of the LSG bodies and are aware of their helplessness.

Figure 2: Dynamics of positive and negative perception of LSG bodies by citizens, 2012-2021, percent



For the first time in the history of measurement, both the proportion of those experiencing positive emotions - optimism and inspiration - and the proportion of those experiencing negative emotions - disappointment and irritation - are simultaneously decreasing. This is caused by the fact that the ability of the LSG bodies to fully respond to the citizen needs is falling further and further behind the expectations and needs. In Figure 2, one cannot help but notice a surge of optimism and inspiration toward LSGs in 2018, when a record high 66 percent of citizens had positive expectations of LSG. This surge is explained by the government's declarations about the reorientation of state policy on the regional development (the president of the Kyrgyz Republic declared 2018 the "Year of Regional Development" for the first time in the country's history). But, as is often the case in politics, expectations turned out to be higher than actual results - this is how one can assess the further drop in the level of optimism and inspiration toward LSGs. Citizens translated their expectations of the promises of the President and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to the LSG bodies, and when they failed to fully meet these expectations, the positive perception began to change into negative.

However, the LSG bodies operate under limitations and cannot be responsible for the fulfillment of all the intentions of the national politicians. The most important limitation is the scope of authority and the funding for their execution. In this regard, a comparison of the dynamics of citizens' negative emotions toward LSG bodies and the dynamics of local budget revenues is revealing.

Figure 3:
 Dynamics of the share of citizens with negative feelings toward LSG bodies compared to the dynamics of local budget revenues, 2015-2021

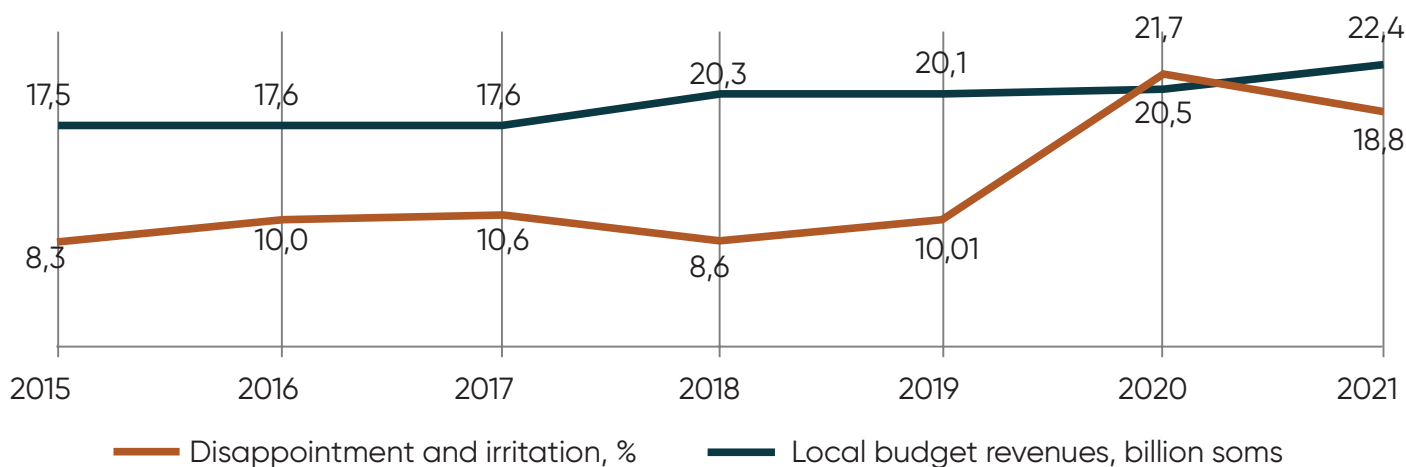
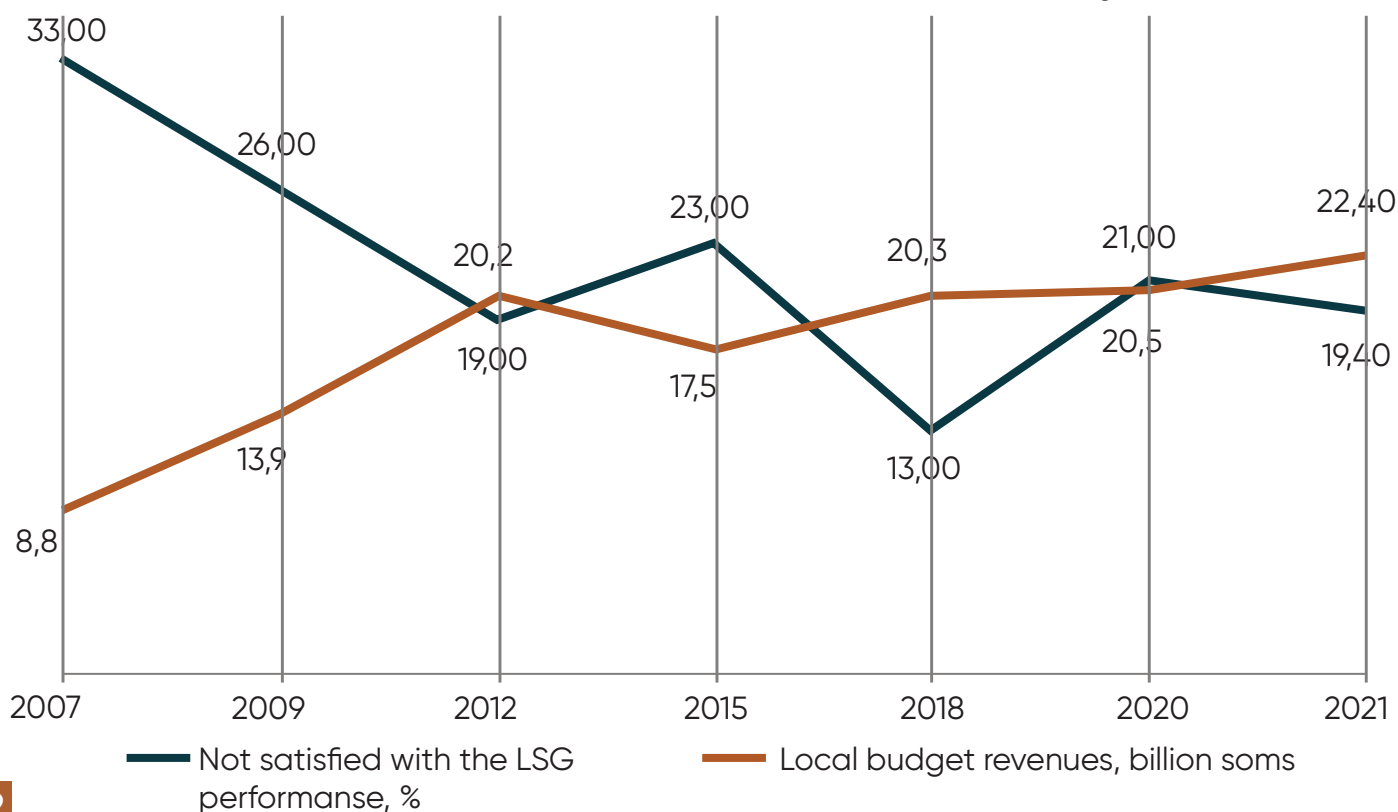


Figure 3 reflects the existence of a correlation between the proportion of citizens with negative feelings toward LSGs and the total volume of local budgets: the lower the revenues of local budgets, the greater the disappointment and irritation on the part of citizens and vice versa. An even more vivid picture of the connection between the budget and citizens' attitudes toward LSG is provided by Figure 3-1, demonstrating a strong correlation between the volume of local budgets and the level of citizen dissatisfaction with the LSGs' performance. For nearly 15 years, the pattern has been observed, according to which the lower the revenues of local budgets, the higher the level of dissatisfaction and vice versa.

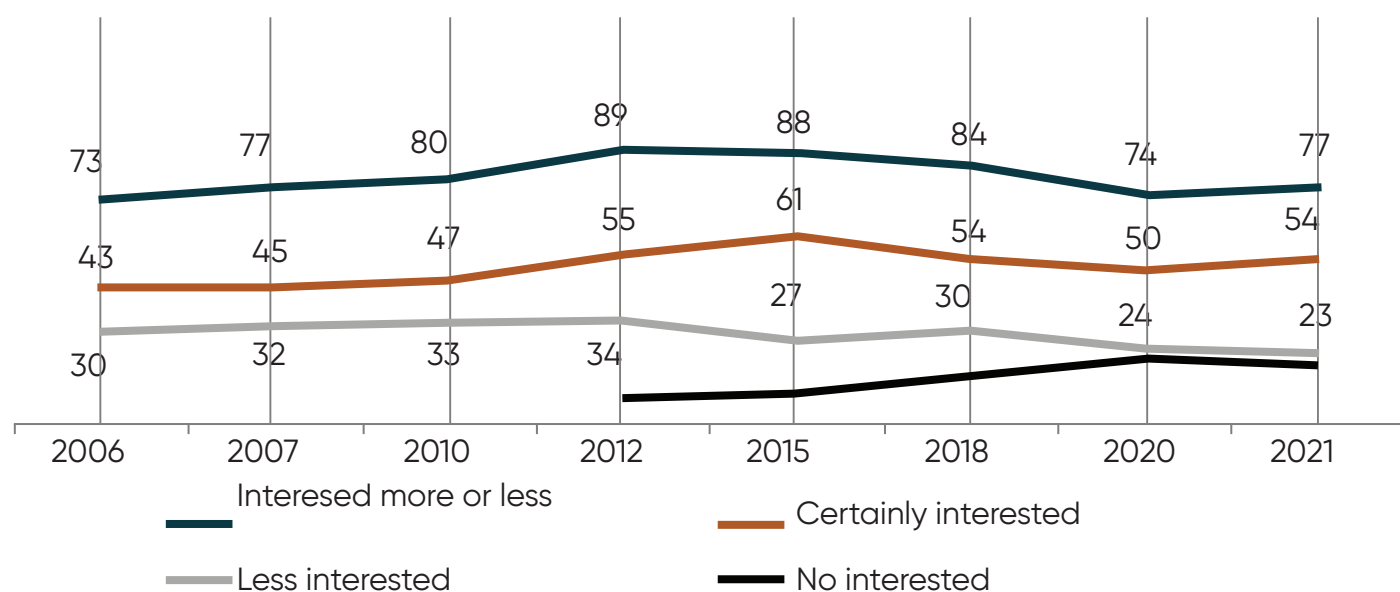
Figure 3-1:
 Dynamics of the level of dissatisfaction with the LSG bodies' performance in comparison with the dynamics of local budget revenues, 2007-2021.



1.2. Citizens' interest in local self-government

The citizens' interest in the work of LSG bodies has generally remained steadily high over the past fifteen years (since the beginning of the measurement). In fact, three out of four citizens of Kyrgyzstan are more or less interested in LSG affairs, with those who were actively interested always being one and a half to two times more interested than those who were little interested. Up until 2012 there was a steady increase in the citizens' interest: from 73% in 2006 to 89% in 2012. After 2012, interest in LSG issues began to slowly but steadily decline, and in 2021 it was 77%. Practice of the public administration shows that citizens' interest in the governance system grows if the people's problems are not resolved or are solved poorly. Therefore, one of the reasons for the decrease of citizens' interest in LSG after 2012 may be considered the introduction of a two-tier budget system in 2011, which returned autonomy to the LSG bodies in managing local budgets and strengthened their financial ability to resolve issues of local significance.

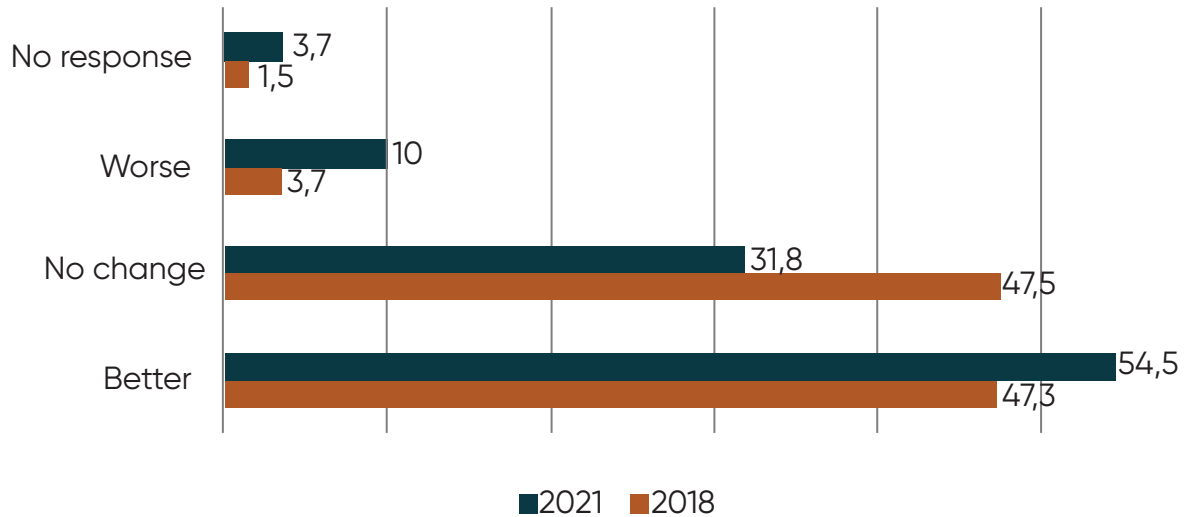
Figure 4.
 The level of trust of LSG citizens



There is also a completely different hypothesis, according to which the citizens' interest in the governmental institutions decreases along with a decrease in the level of trust. In this case, people cease to believe that the government is capable of changing life for the better and stop spending time and energy on participation in the governance. However, with respect to local self-governance in Kyrgyzstan, the level of citizen trust in LSG remains stably high (see Figure 4), so the first explanation, related to the improving situation on the ground, seems more valid. Moreover, the data from the 2021 survey confirms the improvement in the situation. Thus, respondents show a positive trend in their assessment of living conditions in their city, aimak, or village compared to 2018.

Figure 5:

Assessment of general living conditions in the city, aimak or village in 2021, compared to 2018, percent

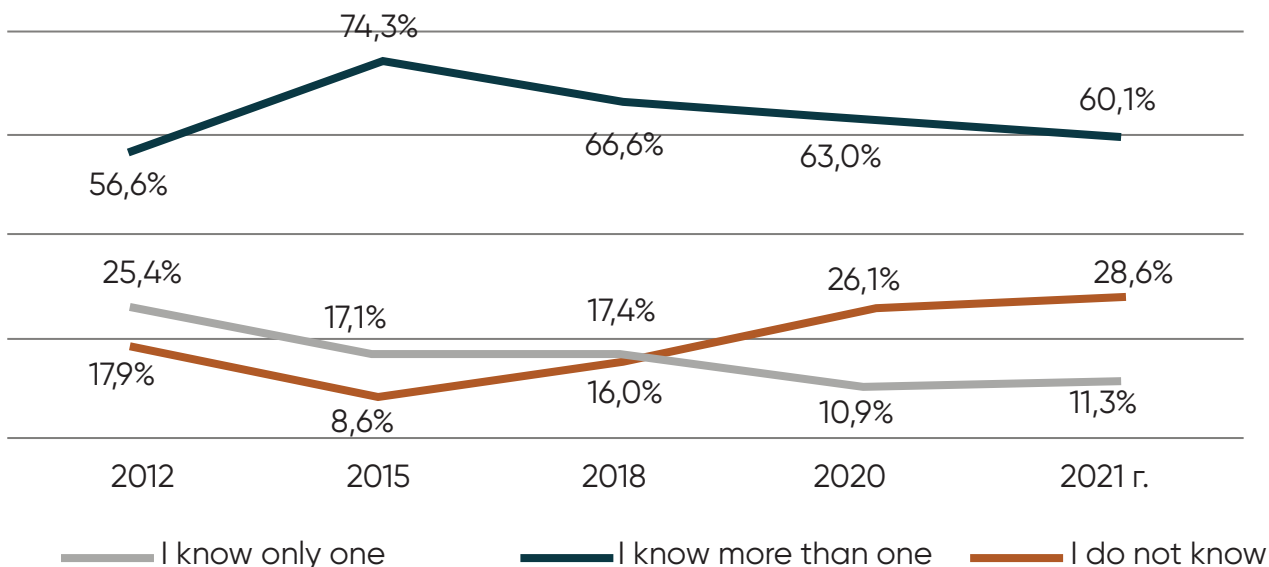


In addition, the drop in the interest in LSG bodies may also be due to the fact that people are already sufficiently informed about the work of local self-governments. However, from 2015 there is a steady downward trend in the popularity of the LSG executive bodies' leadership. Although the vast majority of citizens still know their local politicians - heads, mayors, and deputies - in 2021, this value has dropped to a record low of 67.7% compared to 92.2% in 2015. Given the indirect system of elections, when citizens do not directly elect the head of the LSG executive body, further growth in the recognition of local leaders can only be expected in the case of the introduction of direct elections, when after "loud" electoral campaigns the winning politicians will be known by 90 and even 100 percent of the population, including children.

Figures 6-1 and 6-2.

Dynamics of citizens' awareness of the heads of LSG executive bodies and deputies of local councils, percentage

Popularity of local kenesh



An analysis of the sources of information about the LSG activities used by citizens, shows that citizens' preferences change in form. In the past, the most popular source of information was informal – friends, relatives, and colleagues, while in 2021 social networks took the lead, where information is also often informal in nature. Social networks have overtaken even the places of mass gathering popular in the past – bazaars, fairs, gatherings, and neighborhood meetings, where, along with rumors, quite official information often circulates and is targeted there by LSG bodies. The percentage of respondents who consider friends, relatives, and colleagues to be their main sources of information almost halved in 2021, from 35.8% in 2015 to 16.7% in 2021. The local media, local television, and LSG officials remain important sources of information, with more than 15% of respondents using them in total. On the other hand, the central media and central television almost ceased to be sources of information about local self-governance.

The sharp increase in the role of social networks is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, when meetings with friends, neighborhood and citizen gatherings were not possible, although previously, on the contrary, they were the main source of information about the activities of local self-government. The fact that social networks have become a more important source of information for respondents than other sources previously used by citizens may also have its effect on their perception, interest and trust in local self-government, as social networks present the opinions of a wider range of people that may not have been interesting or accessible to citizens before. Thus, through social networks respondents receive not only information, but critical opinion of other citizens, which influences their own point of view.

The leading position of social networks as the main source of information about local self-governance is both a challenge and an opportunity for LSG bodies, since the networks can both spread false information (rumors) and become an effective communication tool for LSG, if the municipal officials and their leaders manage to master the technologies of using social networks to their advantage.

Popularity of heads and mayors

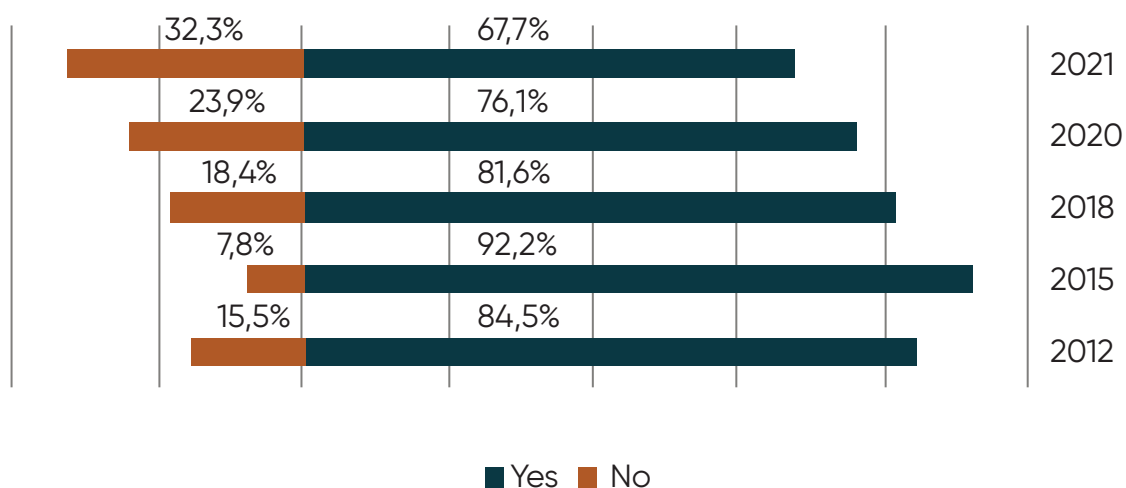
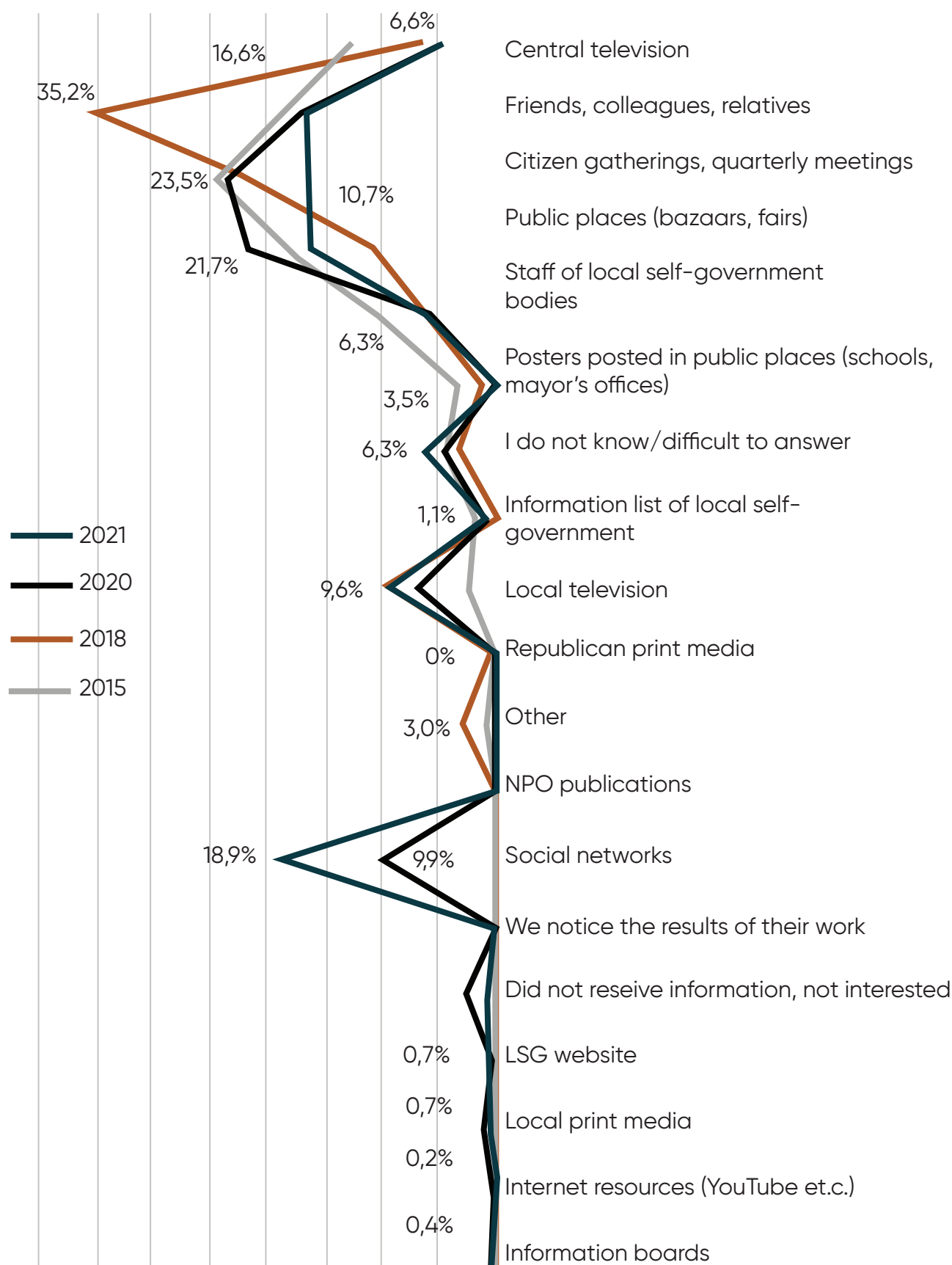


Figure 6-3.

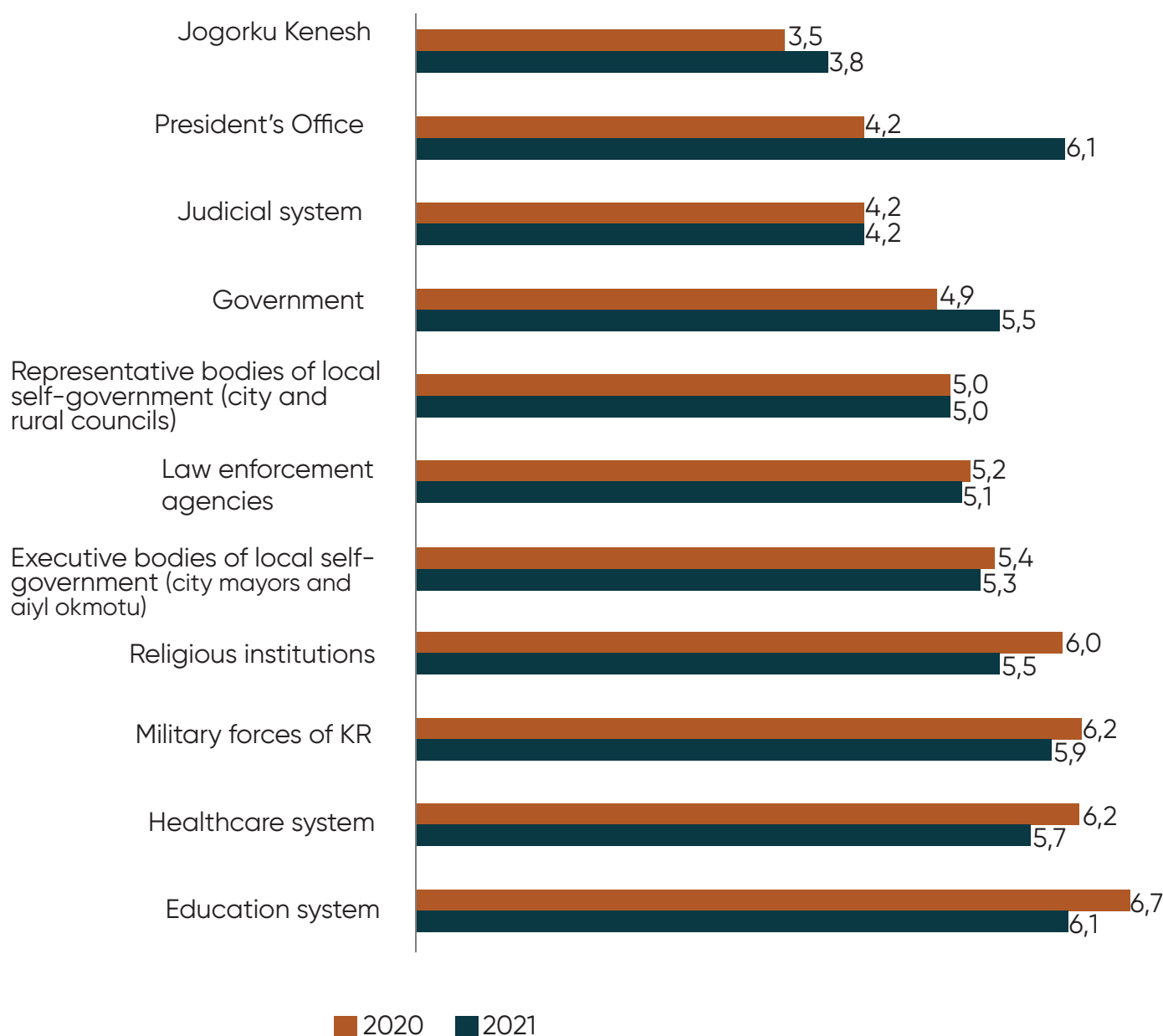
Dynamics of the popularity of the sources of information about local self-government



1.3. Citizens' trust in LSG bodies

Compared to 2020, the level of trust in all institutions of power and basic services fell, except for three: the President's Office, the Government and Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic. LSG bodies retain their positions in the middle of the rating, the decrease in the trust level is less than for education, healthcare, and religious institutions, where the trust has fallen by half a point. The obvious explanation for the drop in the trust level is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 7: Dynamics of the level of the citizen trust in governmental bodies and development institutions, on a ten-point scale, where 10 points means the maximum level of trust

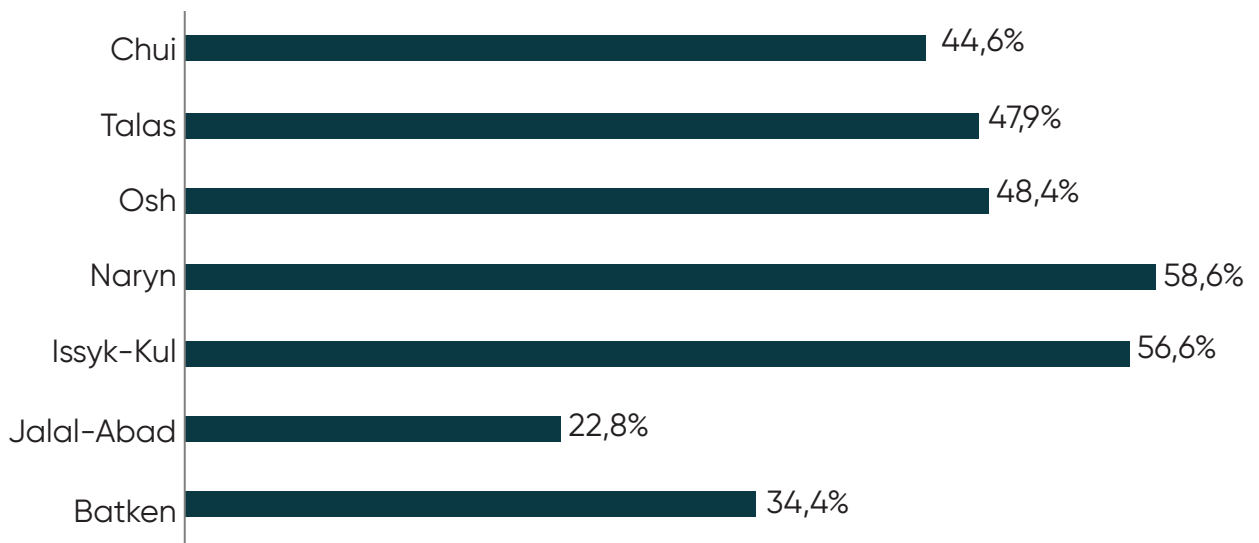


Local councils enjoy less credibility than the executive bodies of LSG. The differences in the level of trust in the executive and representative LSG bodies are explained by several factors.

First, citizens in general have a lesser opinion of local council deputies and want them to be held to higher qualifications. The overwhelming majority of respondents - 87.5% - believe that the requirements for candidates for the mayor's or head's position, as well as for the deputies of the local council, should be higher. However, the number of people expecting higher qualifications from LSG bodies has been decreasing slightly in recent years (from over 90 to 85-87%).

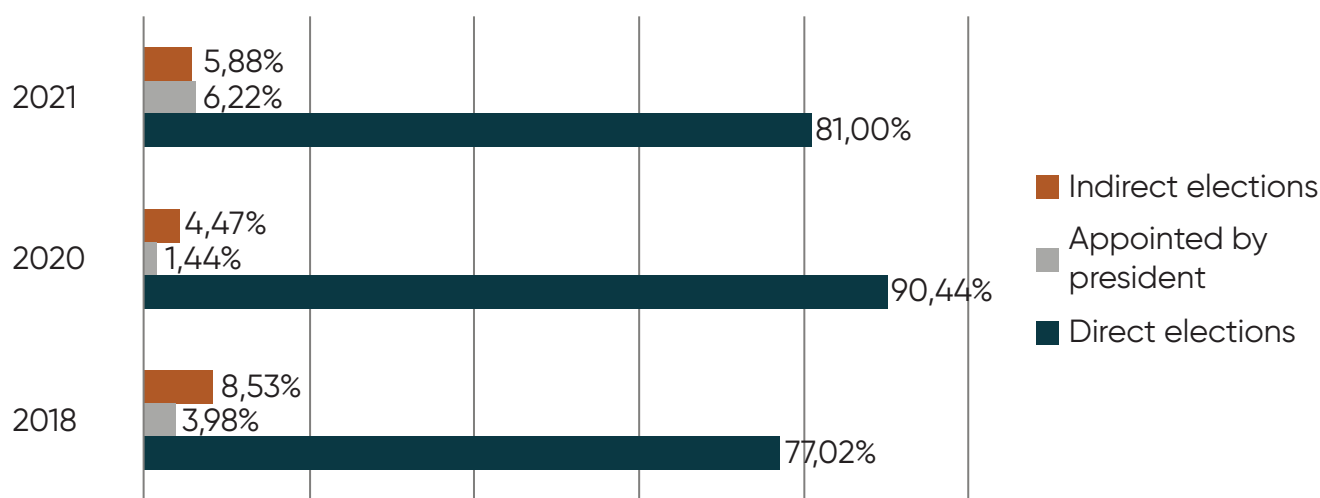
Second, there is distrust in the party principle of electing local deputies: 46% of those surveyed believe that local councils should not be formed based on the party principle (proponents of the party principle - 32%; undecided - 22%). However, this opinion is not homogeneous: for example, in Batken and Jalal-Abad oblasts there are more of those who believe that local councils should be formed by party list.

Figure 8:
Share of opponents of the party principle for forming local councils by oblast



The vast majority of citizens are still convinced that the head of the LSG executive body must be chosen by the population through direct elections: 81% of citizens believe so.

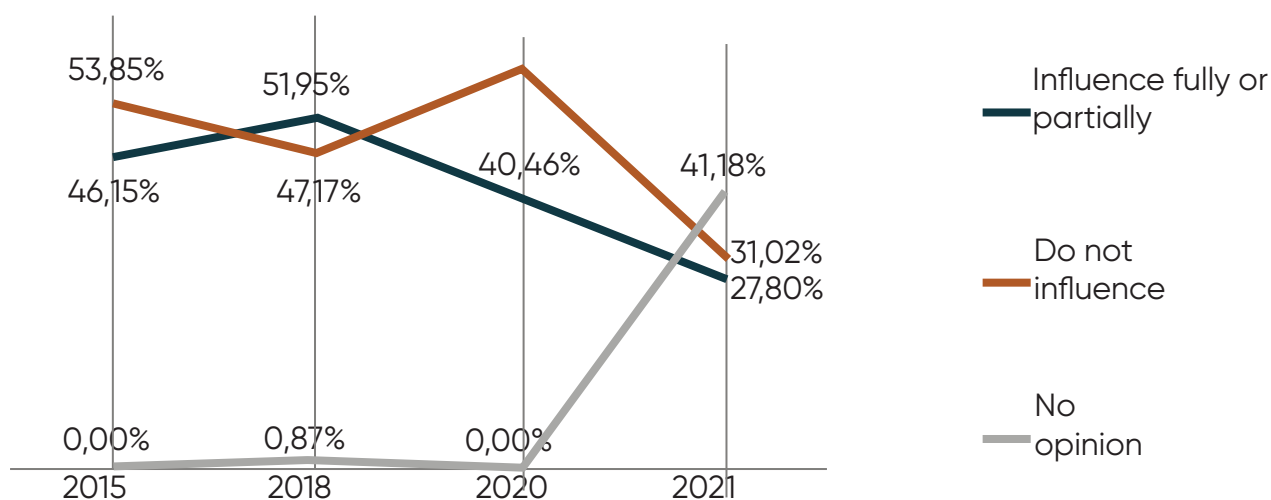
Figure 9: Citizens' opinions on the method for formation of the LSG executive bodies



Regarding the LSG representative bodies - local councils - skeptical opinion of citizens regarding the negative influence of the party factor has somewhat softened. Although in 2021 a significant portion of citizens - 46% - still do not support the party principle of forming local councils, still, compared to 2015, the number of citizens who agree with the party principle has doubled. This trend is most likely explained by the general normalization of the interaction between the kenesh and executive bodies: their relations are evolving, opposition is decreasing, and relations are becoming more constructive.

However, in 2021 the citizens are still undecided as to how much influence the parties have on the work of the local kenesh - suddenly the proportion of those who have no opinion on this issue increased sharply (from 0 to 40%). This is due to the fact that local elections were held in 2021 and people are waiting to see how the work of local councils in the new composition will change.

Figure 10: Citizens' opinions about the influence of parties on the local councils



The proportion of citizens fully or partially satisfied with the interaction with the LSG executive bodies remains high and amounts to 75.4%, that is, three out of four citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic are to some extent satisfied with the work of local self-government. Although, compared to 2018, in 2021 this indicator decreased by 5.6%. The share of citizens satisfied with the interaction with local councils is also high, although lower than with mayor offices and aiyl okmotu - 71.6% against 75.4%.

The data obtained testifies to the fact that the level of citizens' trust in the government as a whole has decreased (with the exception of the highest levels of government - the President, Parliament, and the Government), the LSG bodies were no exception, although in their respect the decrease in the level of trust is minimal. But the level of trust in LSG is still higher than the level of trust in some ministries and other government bodies. A certain drop in the level of trust in LSG bodies is caused, first of all, by the general trend of decreasing citizen trust in the government as a whole, and secondly, by public dissatisfaction with the qualifications of local council deputies and municipal employees, as well as distrust in the party system of local elections. Despite the fact that satisfaction with the interaction with the LSG executive bodies - mayor's offices and aiyl okmotu - is higher than with the local councils, in the future the vast majority of citizens want to directly elect the heads of the executive bodies of LSG.

1.4. Citizens' opinion on the corruption in local self-government

In general, the citizens' opinion regarding the level of corruption in the LSG bodies tends to improve. Thus, every third citizen believes that there is no corruption in the LSG bodies. The number of such opinions increased six fold in 2021 in comparison to 2008. The proportion of those who consider the level of corruption in LSG bodies to be high and very high has halved.

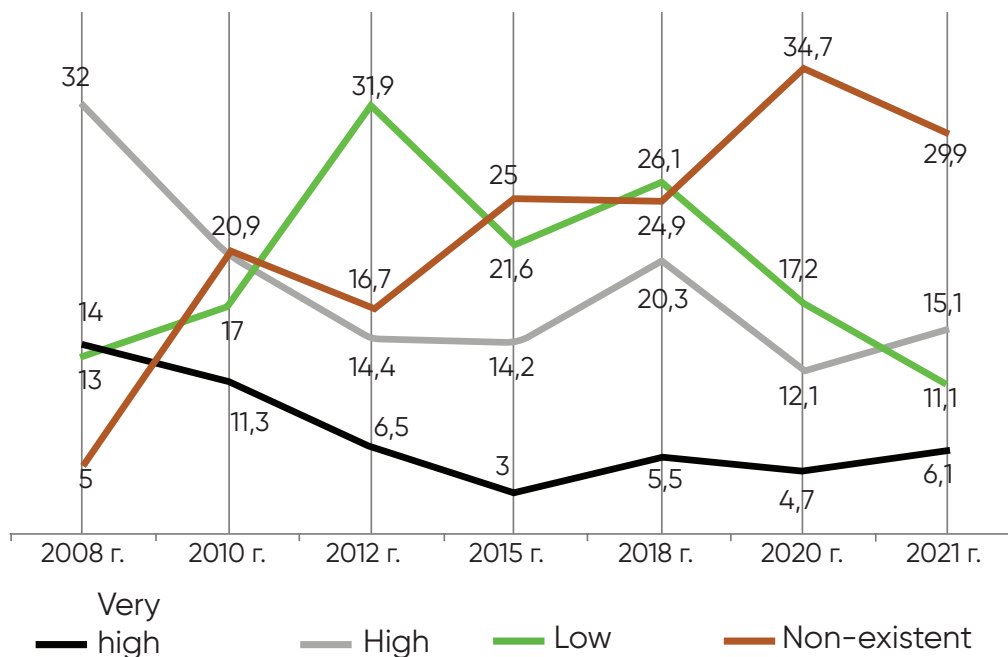


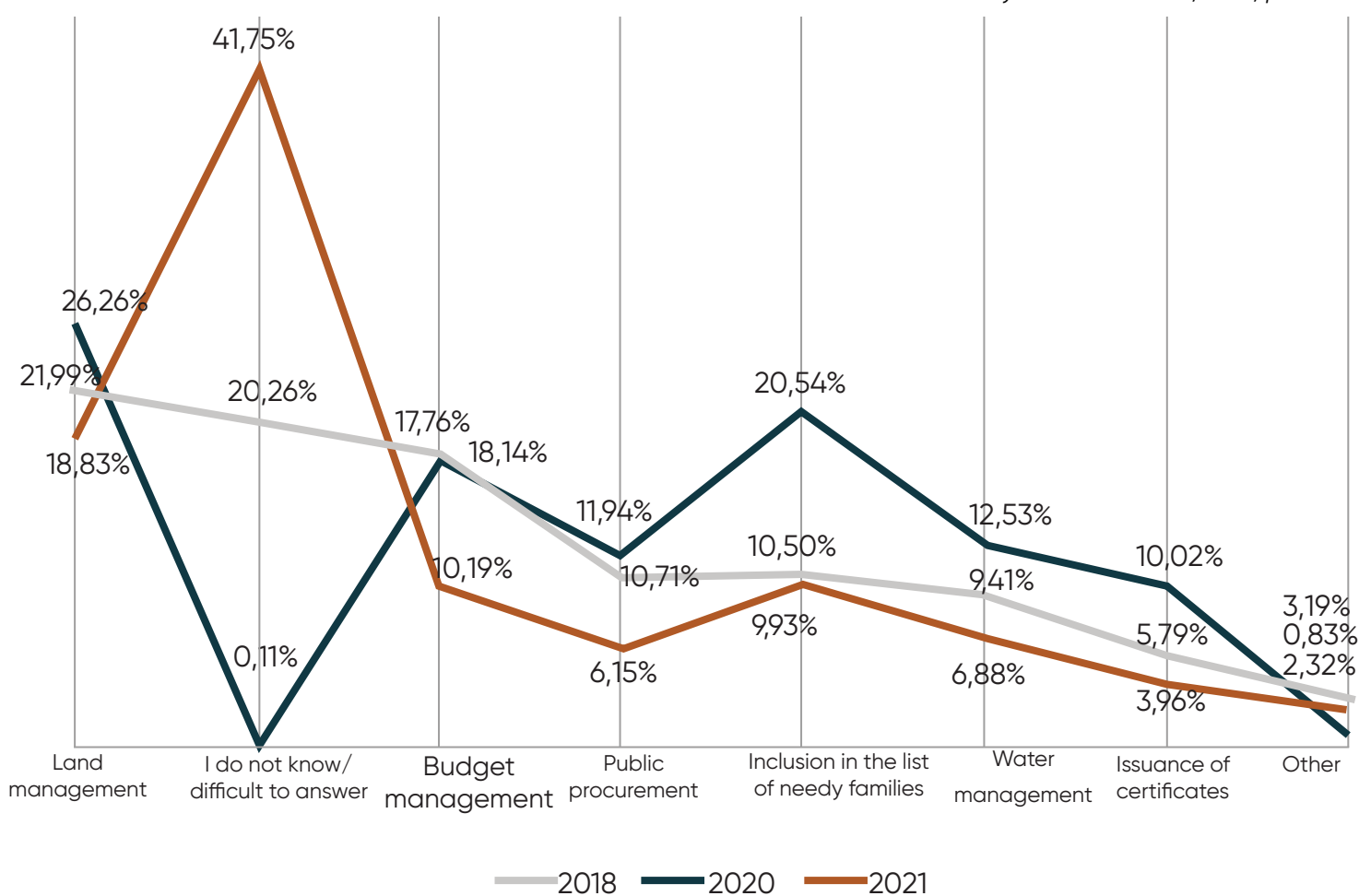
Figure 11. Opinions of respondents regarding the level of corruption in the mayor's office and aiyl okmotu, 2012-2020, percent

Citizens are less certain about the areas with the corruption manifestations. Thus, in 2021 there was a significant increase in the proportion of those who found it difficult to answer which particular activity of the LSG bodies manifests corruption - twice as many as in 2018 and 2020. Correspondingly, in all other spheres, according to the respondents, there was a decline in the corruption, including:

- issuing certificates - from 10 percent to 4 percent;
- water management - from 12 to 7 percent;
- inclusion in the list of needy families - from 20 to 9 percent;
- public procurement - from 12 to 6 percent;
- budget management - from 18 percent to 10 percent.

It is noticeable that the perception of corruption is positively affected by digitalization, as evidenced by increased confidence in the procedures for listing of the needy families, issuing certificates, public procurement and budget management.

Figure 12. Rating of the spheres of corruption manifestation by the LSG bodies, 2021, percent



Among the spheres of the LSG bodies with the most frequent corruption, according to the respondents, was land administration. Figure 12 shows that the other spheres, where citizens previously suspected corruption, became unpopular in 2021 (issuing certificates, managing the budget, being listed as needy).





II. Citizen Participation in Local Self-Governance

Citizen participation in LSG is the foundation of local self-governance, since the essence of the LSG system is the independent, self-reliant decisions of the local community. Therefore, a continuous process of improving the legal and institutional conditions for the realization of the citizens' right to participate in LSG is necessary.

Citizens are still insufficiently informed of their rights and responsibilities in LSG and do not always fully exercise their right to participate in local self-governance. The problem lies mainly in the lack of effective communication between LSG and the citizens. Infantile, consumerist attitudes of the population toward the government, preserved since the days of the Soviet Union and the planned economy, also have an influence. Many citizens, including the leaders and employees of the LSG bodies, and even some of the civil servants do not fully understand the true nature of LSG and continue to wait for the government to make managerial decisions and solve the problems. The government itself does not yet bring the reform of LSG to its logical conclusion, not ensuring the true independence of the LSG bodies. LSG bodies, when planning and implementing the social and economic development of the local community, in most cases do not sufficiently consider the real needs of the citizens. Local budgets must be inseparably linked to the programs of socio-economic development of the territories and be based on the priorities of the local communities. The national legislation (the Budget Code of the Kyrgyz Republic and other RLAs) imposes requirements on the LSG bodies to identify priorities and discuss the draft budget with the population at public hearings (hereinafter - PH). However, the quality of these activities is still insufficient. This can be explained mainly by the lack of understanding at the local level of how to represent the interests of the population in the budgetary process.

Reporting is structured in such a way that the LSG bodies are primarily accountable not to those who elect them (i.e., the local community), but to those higher up in the governance hierarchy - to the government bodies. Absence or lack of accountability to the local community is expressed in the fact that the heads of executive bodies of rural LSG - heads of *aiyl okmotu* - actually are not accountable to the population, citizens, because they are elected by the deputies of the local council, and their candidacy is nominated by the representative of the state or the local council itself. Thus, citizens do not have the opportunity to directly influence the head through the electoral system. As a result, the main goal of the leadership of *aiyl okmotu* becomes to meet the needs of the head of the local state administration or the local council, whose interests do not always coincide with the interests of the majority of population, which is facilitated by the party-based electoral system.

Regarding the population's choice of participation forms in LSG, it is noticed that citizens consider the most effective forms to be meetings held by the LSG body in the communities (47%); the PH (35%); the local *kurultai* (31%); and the local initiative (22%). Worryingly, only 12% of citizens consider elections to the local *kenesh* an effective form of participation and 10% consider interaction through NPOs. This data suggests that, despite the fairly high level of public trust in LSG, citizens still strive for direct interaction, avoiding the forms associated with the representative principle - elections and working through NPOs. This is due to the insufficient level of trust in the representative form of citizen participation in LSG, the incomplete performance of their duties by the local councils, and the weak accountability of LSG bodies to the citizens.

Figure 13.
 The most effective forms of local democracy and civic participation at the LSG³ level



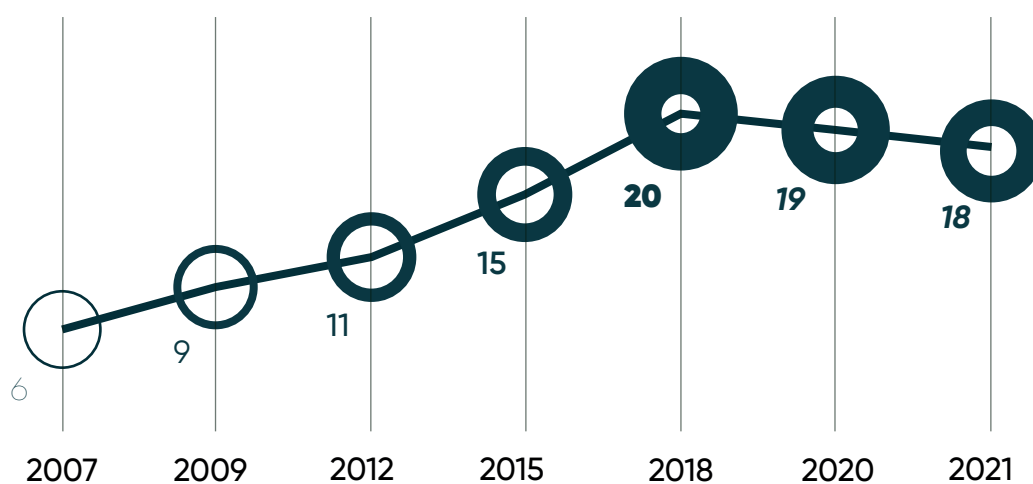
2.1 Citizen participation in the budget process

As stated above, meetings and public hearings remain the most popular form of citizen participation in LSG. It is important to understand that citizen participation in public hearings is inversely proportional to the number of citizens. International practice shows that for a municipality with less than 5,000 residents, an attendance of general municipal meetings is 14-15%, with a population of more than 20,000 residents it is 3-5%. This can be explained by the simple physical limitations of conducting any meetings – it is impossible to gather more than 150-200 people in one place in most settlements (in the practice of the LSG bodies of Kyrgyzstan, hearings with more than 200 people are extremely rare). Based on the total number of LSG bodies in the country, a physically possible maximum number of participants in public hearings on the budget in the Kyrgyz Republic may vary from 60 to 100 people (according to the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, on average 85 people take part in hearings). However, the physically possible maximum does not mean socially possible and effective maximum, as a simple increase in the number of participants does not mean that the budget discussion is the most effective for citizens.

³ Source: Public Opinion Survey Residents of Kyrgyzstan // The survey was conducted by Dr. Rasa Alisauskiene of the public and market research company Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization on behalf of the International Republican Institute. The field work was carried out by SIAR Research and Consulting, 2018.

In parallel with the accumulation of the hearings' practice, the history of which began in 1999, until 2018 in Kyrgyzstan there was a steady increase in the level of citizen participation in public budget hearings at the local level, which in 2018 exceeded a record 20% for the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2021, according to the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, **396 LSG bodies, or over 80% of the** total number, held hearings, with an estimated over 33,000 participants. Thus, the prospect for a further mere quantitative increase in citizen participation in public hearings should not be the goal for strengthening citizen participation. It is time to aim for qualitative improvements, including introduction of new forms of citizen participation in the budget process.

Figure 14.
Share of citizens participating in public budget hearings, 2007-2021, percent

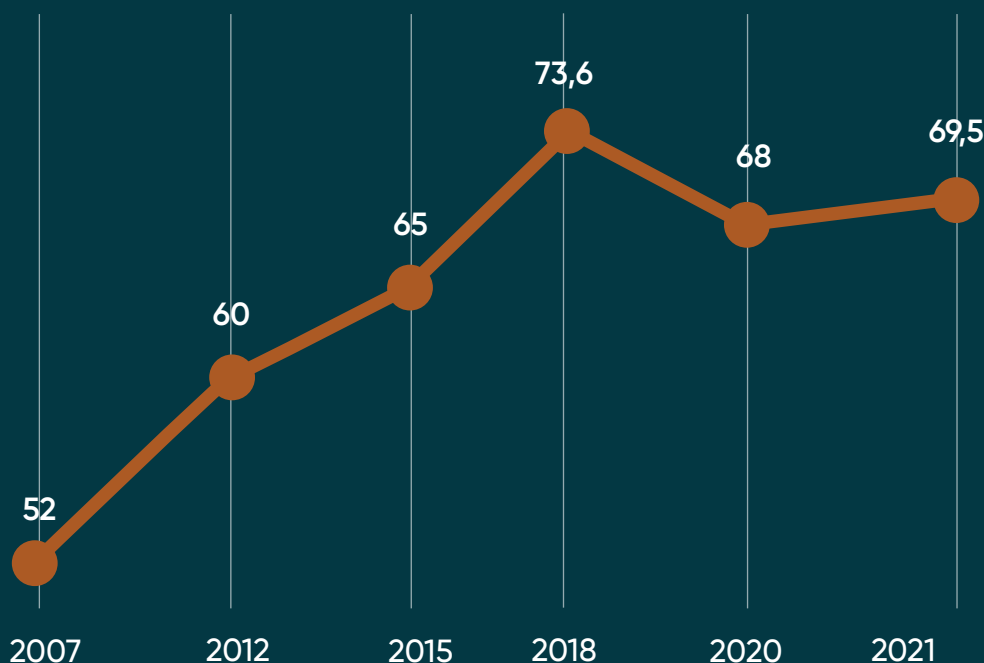


It is more unlikely that the number of participants in hearings will continue to grow, since the LSG bodies have created conditions for the majority of those willing to participate, and not being informed or not knowing about the event is not the main reason for non-participation. This is confirmed by an increase in the number of citizens who did not participate in public hearings due to their employment, although they knew that such events were being held - this was the response of 24.6% in 2021 versus 17.8% in 2018. There was a 6.7% decrease in the proportion who did not know about the hearings; a 2.1% decrease in the proportion who were not interested in the event.

Thus, in order to retain the level of citizen participation in hearings, the LSG bodies will have to pay special attention to the quality of the hearings, and especially to the responsibility to consider in the budget the citizens' proposals received during the hearings. The quality of the hearings and the consideration of proposals will continue to have a key influence on citizens' desire to participate in the budgetary process. If in the first decade of the hearings people were inspired by the very opportunity to discuss with the authorities such a sensitive and important issue as public finances, over time, citizens began to value the practical result of hearings more. In this context, especially positive is the twofold decrease - from 8% to 3.9% - in the proportion of those citizens who do not believe in the very institution of hearings and believe that proposals of the hearings' participants will not be taken into account in the draft budget. This dynamics indicates that people are becoming more confident that their opinion will be heard. In general, the share of citizens satisfied with participation in the budget hearings remains quite high - about 70%. Slight fluctuations of the level of satisfaction in 2020-2021 are caused by the difficulties of holding hearings in the conditions of pandemic.

Figure 15.

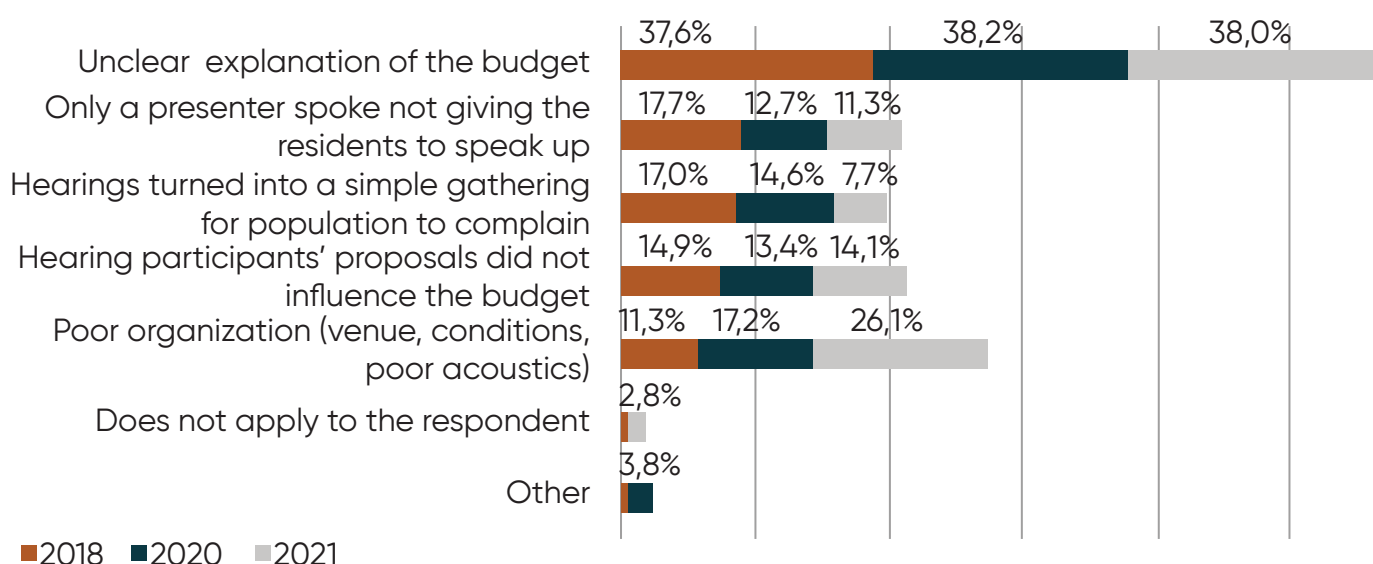
Share of citizens satisfied with the results of their participation in public budget hearings, 2007-2021, percent



So, the vast majority - almost 70% of citizens - are satisfied with participation in hearings on local budgets. Representatives of the remaining minority, dissatisfied with their experience of participation in budget hearings, explain their opinion with the following reasons: low level of financial literacy and misunderstanding of the budget (38%), poor organization (26.1%), transformation of hearings into a simple meeting with complaints from the population (7.7%), suggestions of participants of hearings did not influence the budget (14.1%), only the host spoke and did not let the residents have a say (11.3%).

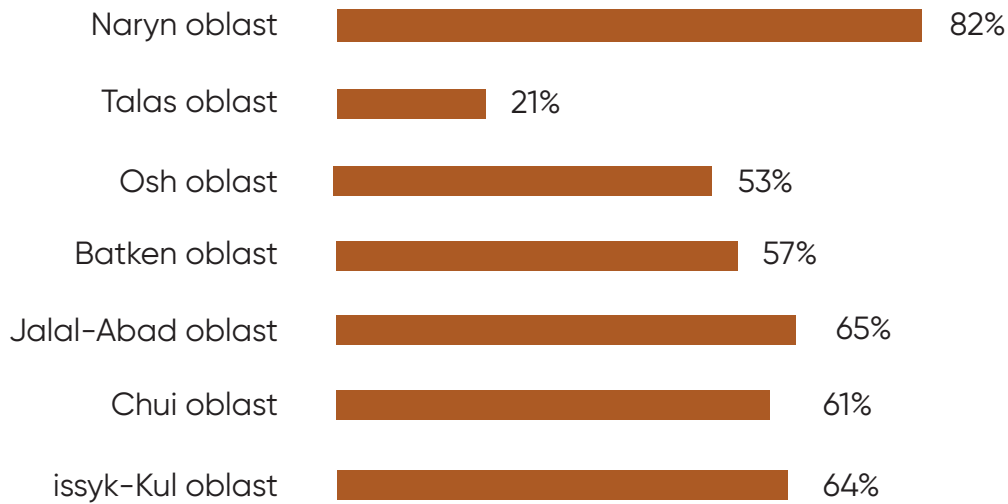
Figure 16.

Rating of reasons for dissatisfaction from participation in public budget hearings, comparison of 2018 and 2020 indicators, percent



As for the consideration of citizens' proposals received during the budget hearings, according to the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, on average, the LSG bodies were able to take into account approximately 58% of the proposals received.

Figure 17.
Percentage of proposals considered by LSG bodies based on the results of public hearings on draft local budgets for 2022, by oblast of the Kyrgyz Republic, percent



One must understand that people often expect instant reactions and populist statements immediately, even during the hearings. But at the local level, especially at the level of rural municipalities, it is often impossible to react instantly, it is impossible to make a promise to fulfill this or that wish. Money in local budgets, as a rule, is scarce, and municipal leaders are cautious about making promises, understanding that it is impossible to resolve all problems, and that they will be demanded quickly.

And yet the cause of misunderstanding of budget data is becoming more and more popular. Thus, the low level of financial literacy in general, the inability to read and understand budget information remain one of the main reasons for dissatisfaction from participation in budget hearings.

The study of this issue in the gender context shows that women more often than men pointed out that during the hearings only one presenter spoke and did not give voice to the residents - in 2021 13.8% of women responded compared to 9.5% of men. However, for 45.2% of men and only 27.6% of women the budget explanation was incomprehensible. Women more often than men believe that the hearing turned into a simple meeting of the public to complain - 12.1% vs. 4.8%. The conclusion is that women are no worse than men in understanding the issues of public finance management, but women notice discrimination against themselves in the discussion process, considering that they are not allowed to speak out as much as they would like to.

Furthermore, the LSG bodies must make efforts to introduce even simpler and more accessible mechanisms for disseminating budget information, such as the online format of the civic budget, which in 2021 had already been completed by over 70% of the LSG bodies, but not all citizens are aware of it and can use it to learn about their LSG's budget.

The quantitative indicator of the participation level in public hearings must be replaced by qualitative indicators of taking into account the opinions and wishes of citizens, creating conditions for online communication and receiving proposals through municipal websites, WhatsApp groups, suggestion boxes, and other forms of feedback.

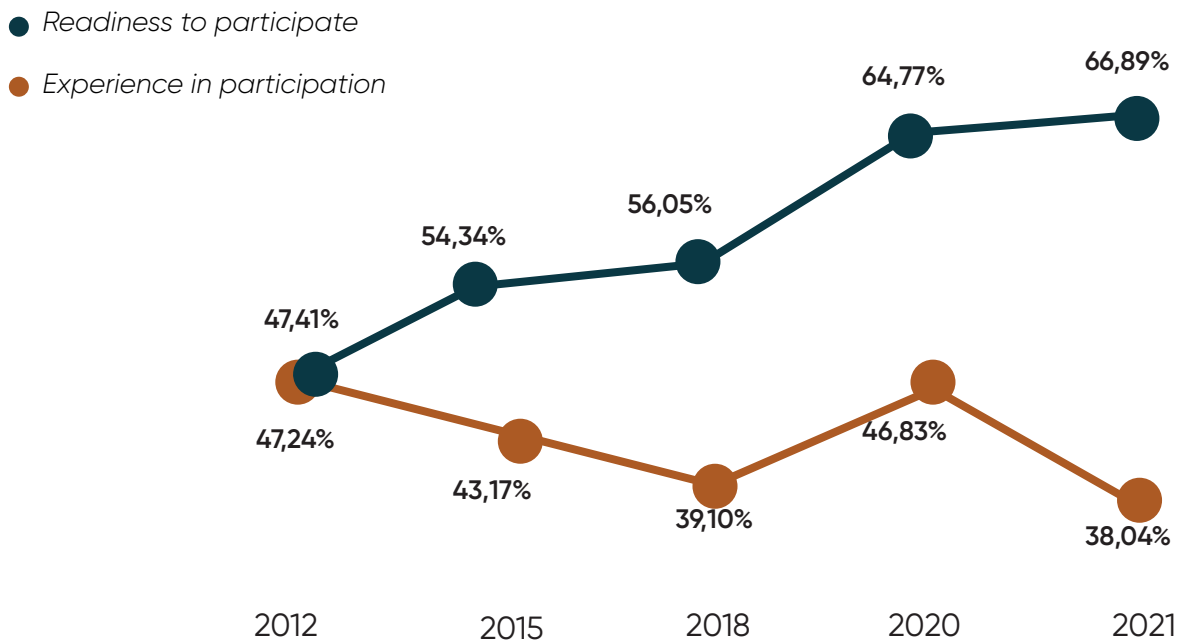
2.2. Citizens' readiness to participate in resolving issues of local significance

Efforts of LSG bodies to organize dialogue and create new forms of interaction with citizens lead to increased responsibility on the part of the community. This is important, since true local self-governance requires local communities to resolve issues of local significance under their own responsibility among other things. Influenced by the legislative requirements and public demand, the LSG bodies are more attentive to the citizens' voice, and the citizens respond with a willingness to take part in the community development.

The number of citizens willing to personally participate in the public affairs of their town or village is steadily increasing. In 2021, 66.9% of respondents expressed such a willingness, which is almost 20% more than in 2012. At the same time, many (38%) confirmed that they already have such experience (decrease in 2021 is probably caused by the pandemic).

Figure 18. Dynamics of growth in the share of citizens willing to personally participate in their community's affairs

Figure 18. Dynamics of the share of citizens who are ready to participate in the improvement of their community



Indirectly this shows that more and more citizens believe in the possibility of changing general conditions of life, but at the same time more and more people are ready to help their local self-government, knowing, apparently, that it needs such help. This is also the result of the introduction into the legislation of requirements for the citizen involvement in planning and prioritizing - by delving deeper into the problems of LSG, people are becoming more responsive.

In general, the increase of those willing to be involved in resolving issues of local significance is a positive fact, since joint efforts of the community and the governing body are always more productive than working separately. However, this poses a challenge to the LSG bodies to ensure that all these people have a proper organizational form of participation, as well as increasing efforts to monitor and evaluate this participation, formulating citizens' contributions, evaluating and giving them public recognition and appreciation.

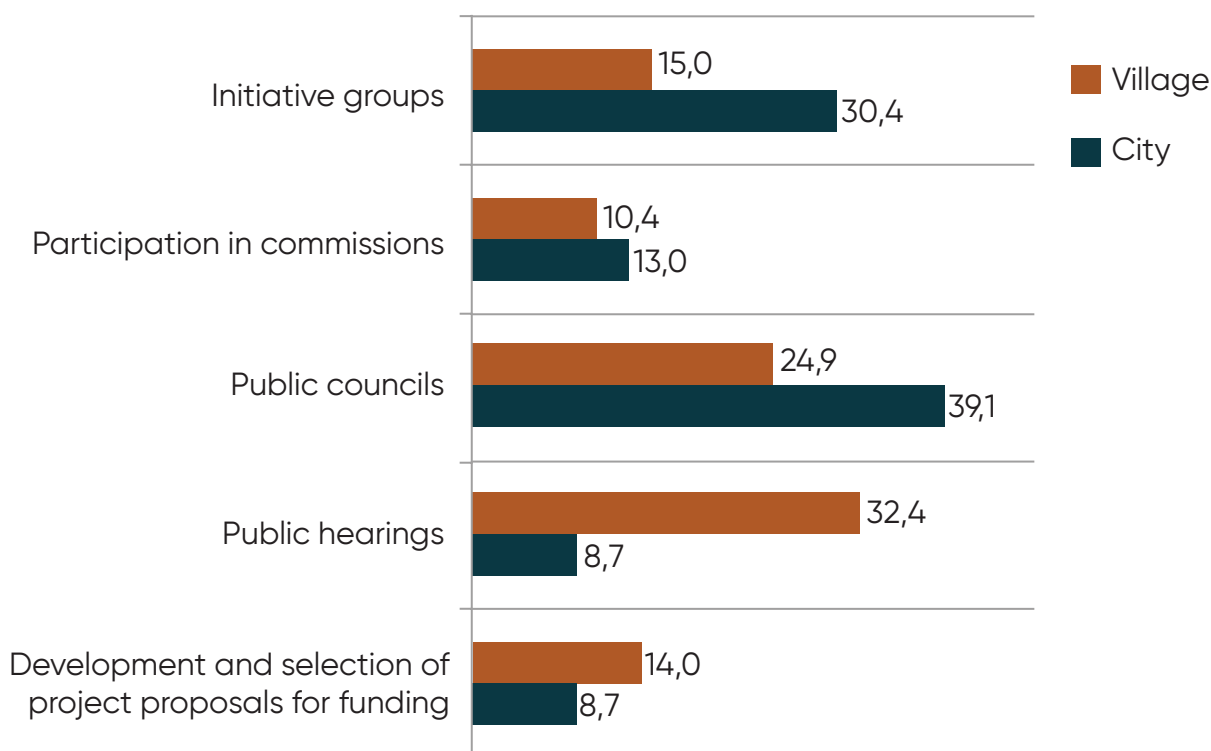
Women are less likely to express their willingness to participate in local issues. In 2021, 77.8% of men are willing to participate in public affairs versus 59.1% of female respondents. There are two reasons for this. First, women are overburdened with unpaid household work that takes away their free time that they could spend on community activities. Second, women still face negative community attitudes toward their public activism.

The most popular forms of participation in public affairs according to citizens in 2021 are meetings (53%), public hearings (16%), and public councils (15%). This suggests that citizen participation is gradually moving from the stage of informing (the first stage) to the stage of joint decision-making, because hearings, unlike meetings, are aimed at making a specific decision, not just informing or consulting. Another proof of the increasingly productive nature of citizen participation over the 10 years was the six fold increase in the share of those who participated in the development and selection of projects for funding from the local budget or external assistance.

There has been a noticeable decline in the number of those who participate in public councils. Whereas in 2018 public councils ranked second in the popularity of the participation forms and collected more than 30% of responses, in two years the popularity of councils has dropped in half and collected only 15% of responses in 2021. This change should be seen as a positive phenomenon, because at the level of local self-government there is the most important council, which is also endowed with local legislative powers - the local council. And if the local council works qualitatively, fully, the citizens usually have no need to participate in additional councils.

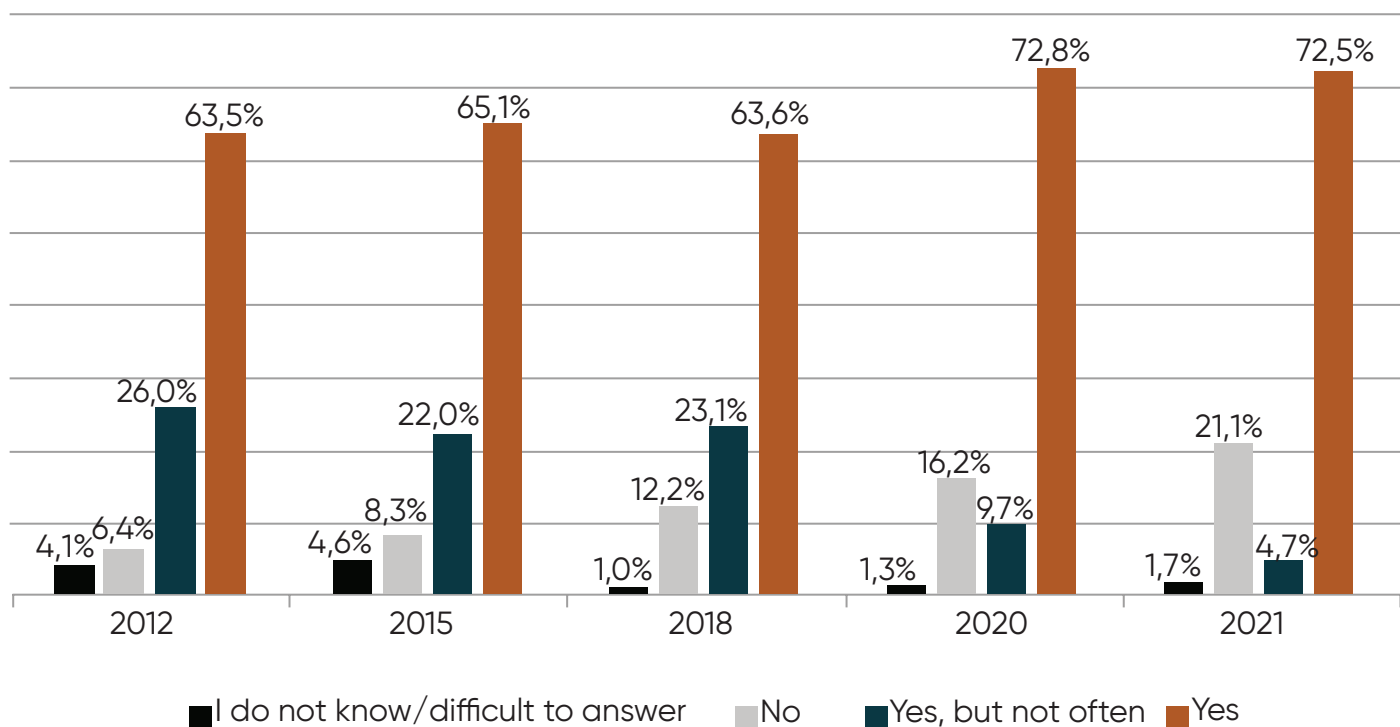
However, the situation in villages is different from large villages and cities. In a small municipality, the local kenesh is able to meet all the needs, but in a city or large municipality, creation of thematic councils is often justified. Therefore, in cities, citizens prefer to participate more in initiative groups and public councils, and in villages - in public hearings, as well as in the development and selection of projects for funding.

Figure 19.
 Citizens' preferences regarding forms of participation in LSG in urban and rural areas, 2020, percent



The number of citizens willing to take personal part in public works for the improvement of their city and village is constantly growing. In 2021, compared to 2012, this indicator increased by another 9% and amounted to 72.5%.

Figure 20.
 Dynamics of the level of citizens' willingness to participate in public works to improve their city or village, percent

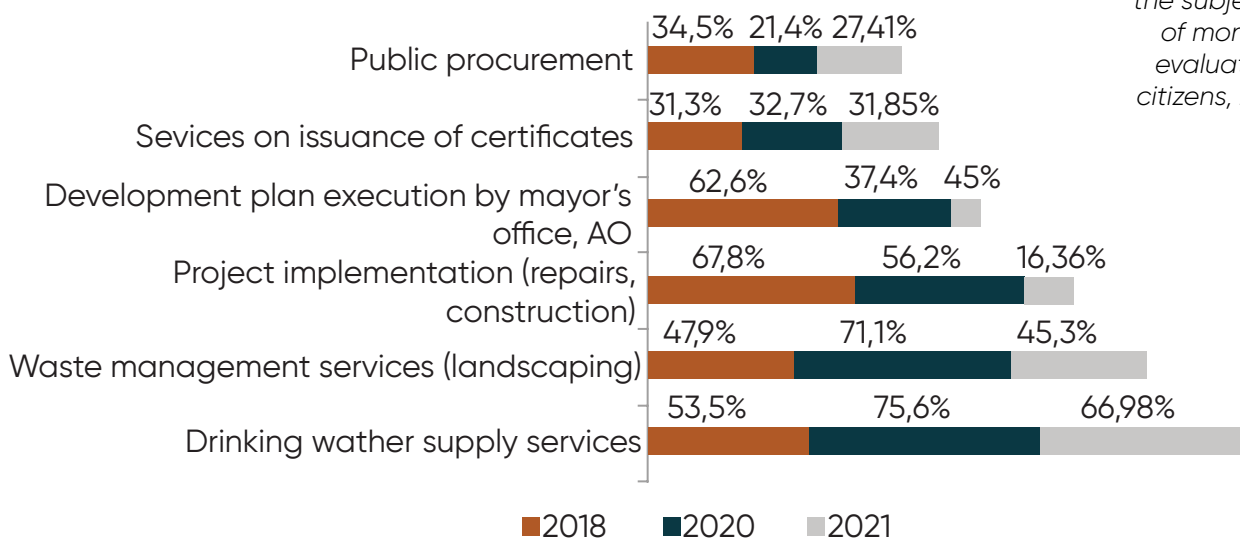


Fact, many citizens are ready to make a personal contribution to the improvement of their municipality, and this "army" of people represents an enormous development potential for LSG bodies. Therefore, the primary task of local self-government is to provide effective opportunities for citizens to do so. However, the percentage of people who already have experience in personal participation in public works for the improvement of their city and village is declining and reached 38% in 2020, which is a challenge for LSG bodies (see Figure 18).

2.3. Citizen participation in monitoring and evaluation of LSG bodies

Monitoring and evaluation of the LSG performance is one of the most difficult aspects of citizen participation in local self-governance, although this type of public activity has a long history in the Kyrgyz Republic. The number of those willing to participate in monitoring is slightly less (41.7%) than those not seeking such participation (49.1%). However, a deeper analysis of the subjects of monitoring and evaluation reveals significant differences in terms of citizens' willingness.

Figure 21. Popularity rating of the subjects (topics) of monitoring and evaluation among citizens, 2020-2028, percent



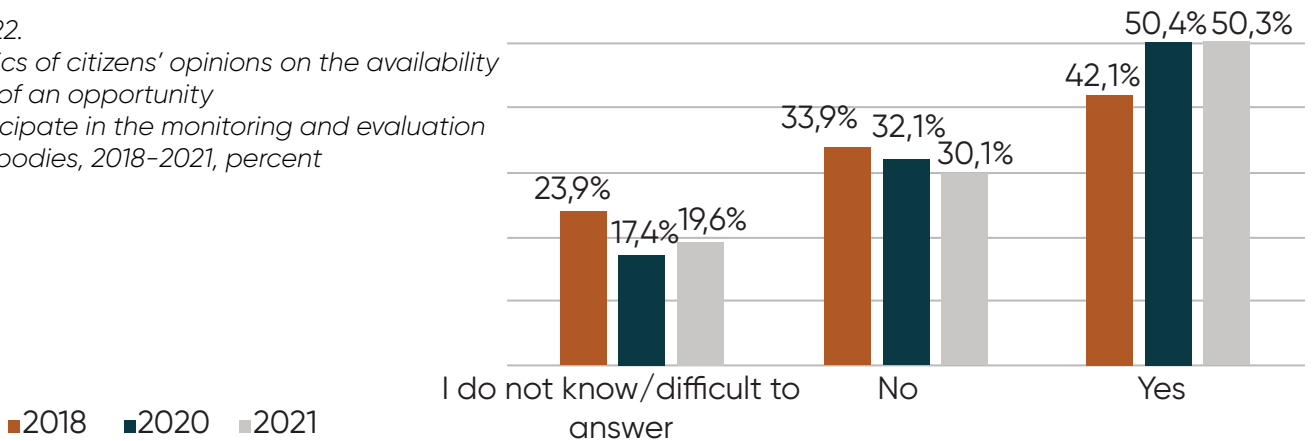
Thus, among those who express their willingness to participate in monitoring and evaluation, 67% are ready to do it regarding drinking water services and 45% - regarding garbage disposal. These are quite logical leaders of rating of topics for public monitoring, because drinking water delivery and garbage disposal are services, which are used by every family daily, therefore everybody is concerned about quality and sufficiency of these services and ready to monitor their provision.

It is much more difficult to deal with the processes of public monitoring and evaluation of the LSG body's activities as a whole. In this case, the monitoring becomes more time-consuming, and the evaluation becomes more complex, as along with the obvious results, the process of governance is also evaluated. The number of those willing to participate in these types of monitoring (execution of LSG development programs) in the community decreased, as compared to 2018, six-fold and was only 9.45% in 2020 (versus 62.6%). People began to

understand that this type of participation requires a significant investment of personal time, as well as the effort of studying documents and gaining new knowledge.

Important is the opinion of citizens on whether the LSG body has created the conditions for citizens to realize their desire to participate in monitoring and evaluation. Survey respondents believe that opportunities have expanded - thus, in 2020, the proportion of those who see the possibility of monitoring and evaluating the work of LSG bodies exceeded 50 percent, accordingly, the proportion of those who do not observe such an opportunity or were unable to answer the question decreased.

Figure 22. Dynamics of citizens' opinions on the availability or lack of an opportunity to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of LSG bodies, 2018-2021, percent



Respondents' preferences for how they participate in monitoring and evaluation change over time. For example, in 2021, one in three respondents indicated that they would like to participate through WhatsApp group communication, a 20% increase from 2018. This dynamic was likely a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, where citizens are used to receiving and broadcasting information through accessible messengers. Another 17% want to attend bid committee meetings, 13.49% want to send text messages, 11.04% want to conduct surveys, 9.99% want to participate in a monitoring and evaluation team, and 8.6% want to visit facilities. More citizens are willing to participate in digital and remote forms of monitoring and only some are willing to visit facilities or participate in the acceptance of goods - such forms of participation require more time.

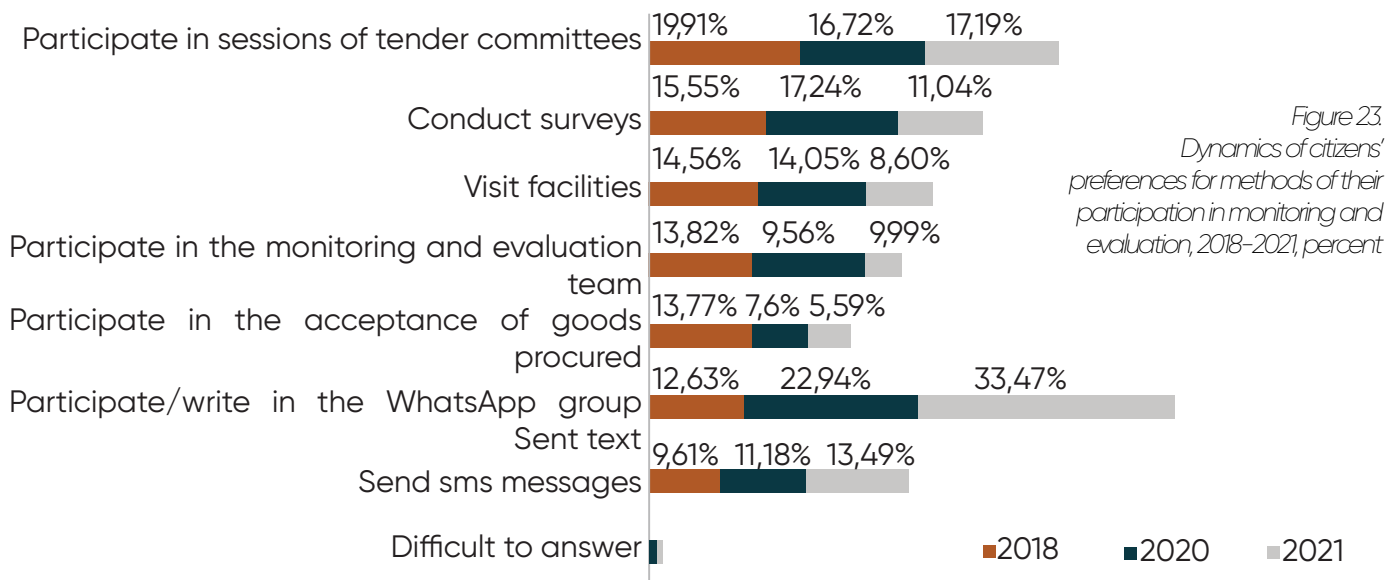


Figure 23. Dynamics of citizens' preferences for methods of their participation in monitoring and evaluation, 2018-2021, percent

III. Citizens' Satisfaction with Local Self-Government





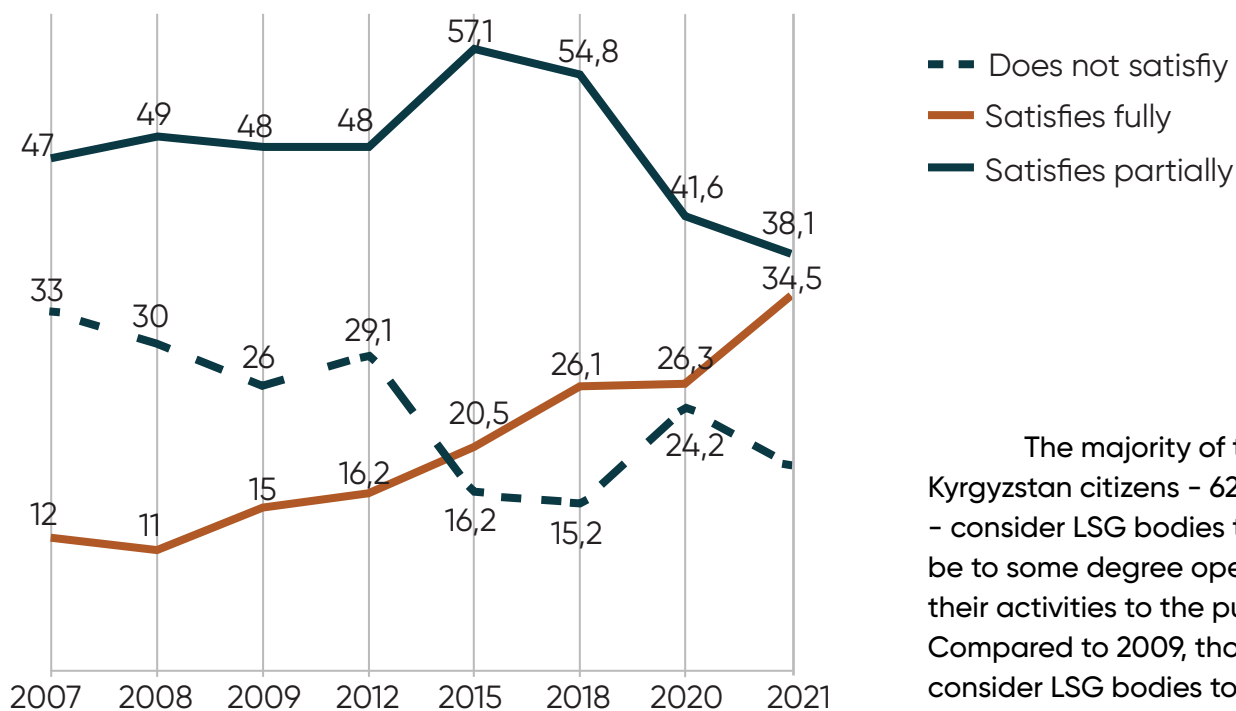
3.1. Citizens' satisfaction with openness of the LSG bodies

Majority of citizens - 72.6% - are more or less satisfied with the volume and quality of information about local self-governance, which speaks to the high level of LSG bodies' openness. Since the beginning of the measurement in 2007, the proportion of citizens completely satisfied with the volume and quality of information has steadily increased and by 2020 has almost tripled, from 12 to 34.5%.

The growth dynamics continued until 2018 with regard to the share of citizens satisfied with the volume and quality of information partially. In 2018, a historical maximum was reached, when the cumulative share of citizens satisfied with the information fully or partially exceeded 80%. However, in 2020, compared to 2018, the share of those who are not satisfied with the quality and quantity of information about local self-governance increased sharply. This fact, combined with the fall in the level of trust and satisfaction with the interaction with LSG bodies in 2020, confirms the hypothesis of the unmet expectations of citizens that arose in 2018 in connection with the announcement of the "Year of Regional Development". Nevertheless, the growth of the proportion of those satisfied with the volume and quality of information about LSG continued, although the rate dropped somewhat, compared to the previous period. It should be noted that citizens form a clearer opinion regarding information about local self-governance: the number of those determined - satisfied completely and dissatisfied - is increasing, and the number of those who are partially satisfied or find it difficult to answer is decreasing.

Figure 24.

Dynamics of citizens' satisfaction with the volume and quality of information about local self-governance, 2007-2020, percent



The majority of the Kyrgyzstan citizens - 62.1% - consider LSG bodies to be to some degree open in their activities to the public. Compared to 2009, those who consider LSG bodies to be fully open in their activities more than tripled (the dynamics ranging from 11 to 36.4%).

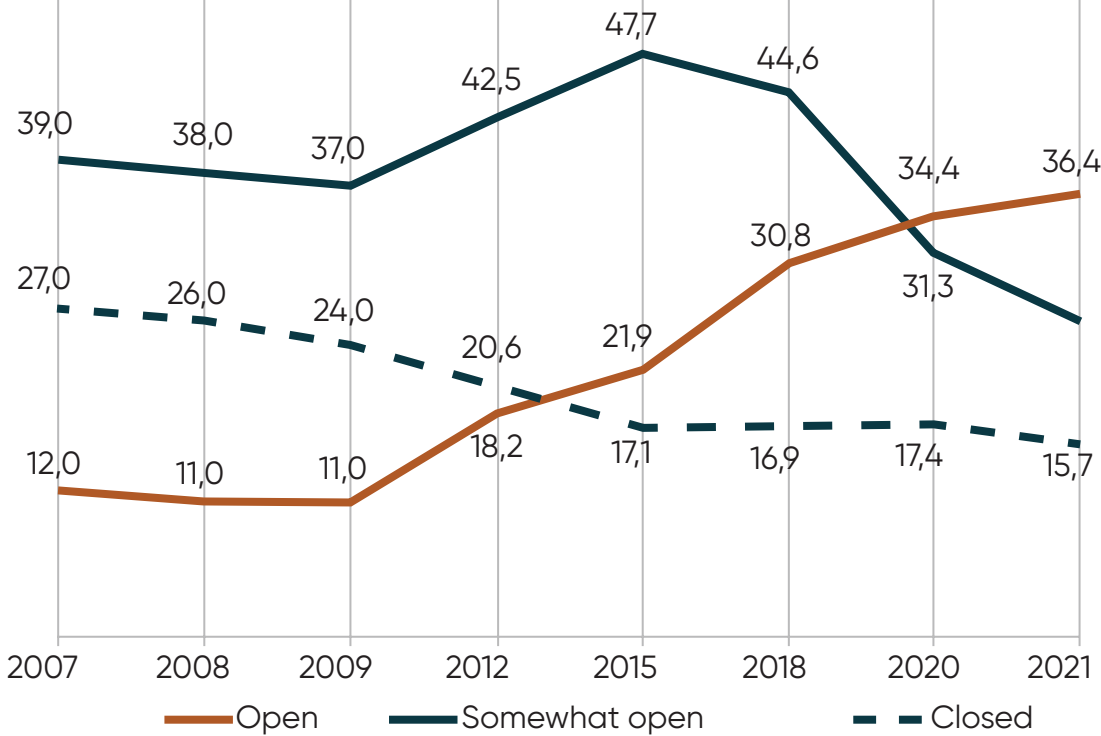


Figure 25. Dynamics of citizens' opinions on the level of LSG bodies' openness, 2007-2020, percent

The analysis of data obtained shows that the volume and quality of information received by the citizens from the LSG bodies affect the evaluation of their level of openness and transparency: the higher the level of citizen satisfaction with the volume and quality of information about local self-governance, the more those who believe that the LSG bodies are open in their activities. An important fact that demonstrates the general awareness of citizens about local self-governance is the awareness of citizens about the purposes for which local budget funds are spent.

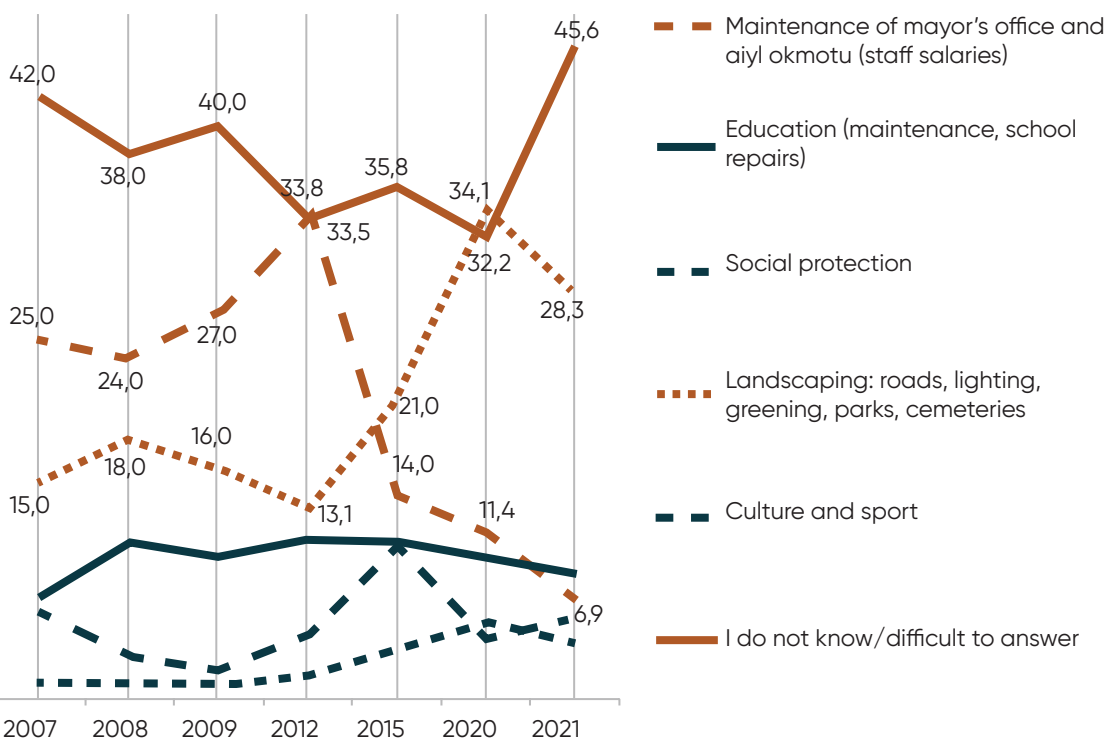


Figure 26. Dynamics of citizens' opinions about priority directions of local budgets expenditures, 2007-2020, percent

⁴ Data from the 2018 survey are excluded, due to sampling error.

Figure 26 shows that citizens' perceptions of the most significant local budget expenditures change over time. For example, the perceptions of expenditures on the maintenance of the mayor's office and aiyl okmotu and on landscaping have changed significantly. In 2021, 28.3% of citizens considered landscaping to be a priority expenditure item, whereas in 2007 this figure was only 15%. The share of those who considered the maintenance of aiyl okmotu and mayor's offices as the main item of expenditure has sharply decreased. The whole picture suggests that citizens in 2021 have a much more adequate picture of reality about the structure of local budget expenditures than they did in 2007. And this is the result of many years of efforts to implement budget disclosure practices, hold public budget hearings, and involve citizens in local development planning. However, in 2021 compared to 2020, the proportion of citizens who do not know where the local budget money is spent has increased again.

3.2. Citizens' satisfaction with the LSG performance

Almost three out of four citizens of Kyrgyzstan are more or less satisfied with the work of LSG bodies. Since 2007, the level of citizen satisfaction with the performance of LSG bodies has been increasing, however, it has been growing erratically and relatively slowly. Here, as with the trust in LSG bodies, there is a decline after the enthusiasm of 2018, when the historical maximum was reached (since the beginning of measurements) and 84% of citizens were satisfied with the work of LSG bodies, but reality suggests that this was an advance for the government, again caused by general optimism regarding the prospects of local community development in light of national priorities in the regional development.

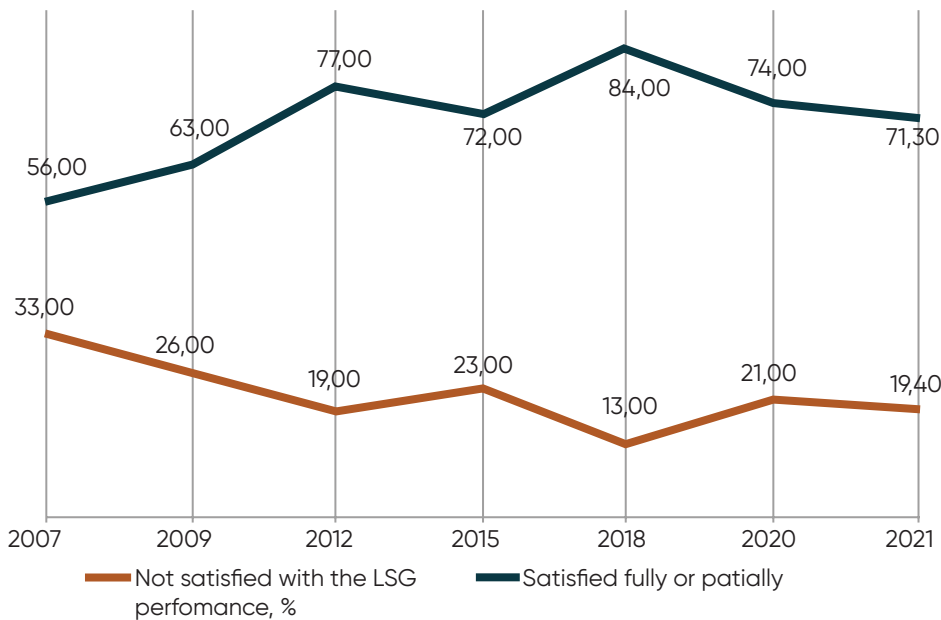


Figure 27. Dynamics of the satisfaction level with the performance of LSG bodies, 2007-2021, percent

In general, citizens began to appeal to local government bodies less frequently. On average, the number of appeals decreased significantly - by more than 20% - and amounted to only 32% in 2021 (compared to 54% in 2012). From women and men in the last 12 months there was approximately equal number of appeals to the mayor's office or aiyl okmotu. However, the most significant decrease occurred with respect to certificates. It is impossible not to admit that behind this fact is the digitalization and the state policy aimed at reducing the number of citizens' appeals for documents. In the overall structure of reasons for which citizens contact

the LSG bodies, certificates are approximately 50%, and another 25% are individual reasons. It is for this reason that the significant reduction in appeals had an impact on the overall dynamics of appeals. There is no doubt that with the development of digital technologies in the government, the number of appeals will continue to decrease.

However, this does not mean that the number of appeals regarding the LSG bodies' powers is decreasing. Therefore, of greater interest for analysis is the remaining group of reasons for inquiries, where the undoubted leaders were the issues of drinking water supply and local taxes and fees, with the number of inquiries on taxes and fees, compared to 2018, decreasing significantly. But this reduction is an exception rather than a rule, as the number of appeals is increasing for almost all issues that are in the mandate of LSG bodies. There is an increase in the number of appeals concerning: SFAL lands, lease or sale of municipal land, landscaping, provision and maintenance of housing, street lighting, roads, sewerage and garbage disposal. There is a decrease in the number of appeals, primarily on issues that are not the responsibility of LSG bodies – health care, pension provision, irrigation water. This indicates that the legal culture of citizens is improving, and they are gradually figuring out which government body is responsible for a particular issue.

Citizens' awareness of their right to vote is increasing, they are becoming accustomed to the accountability of the LSG bodies. Citizens approach the LSG bodies with issues that interest them, so the demand (appetite) for information and demands for solutions to specific priority issues grows.

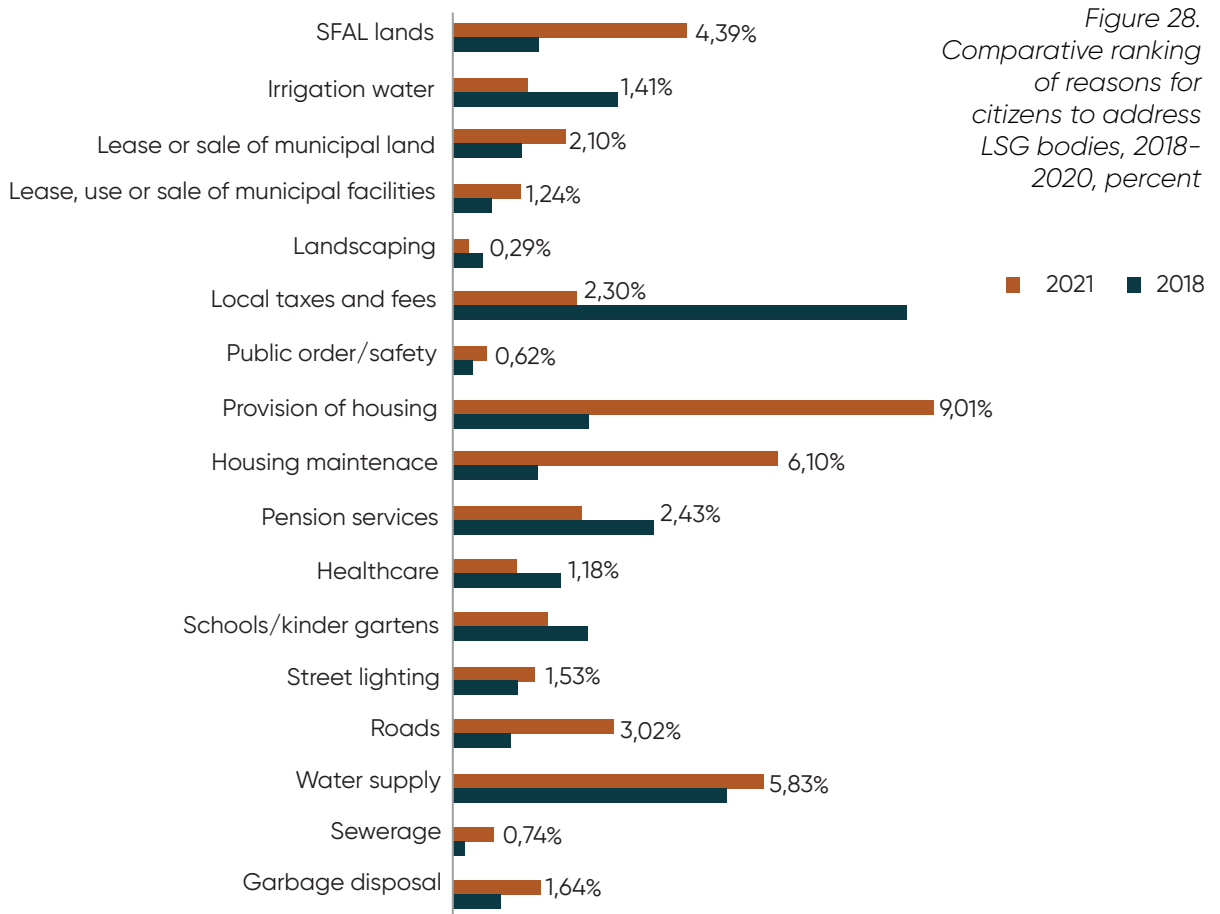


Figure 28. Comparative ranking of reasons for citizens to address LSG bodies, 2018-2020, percent

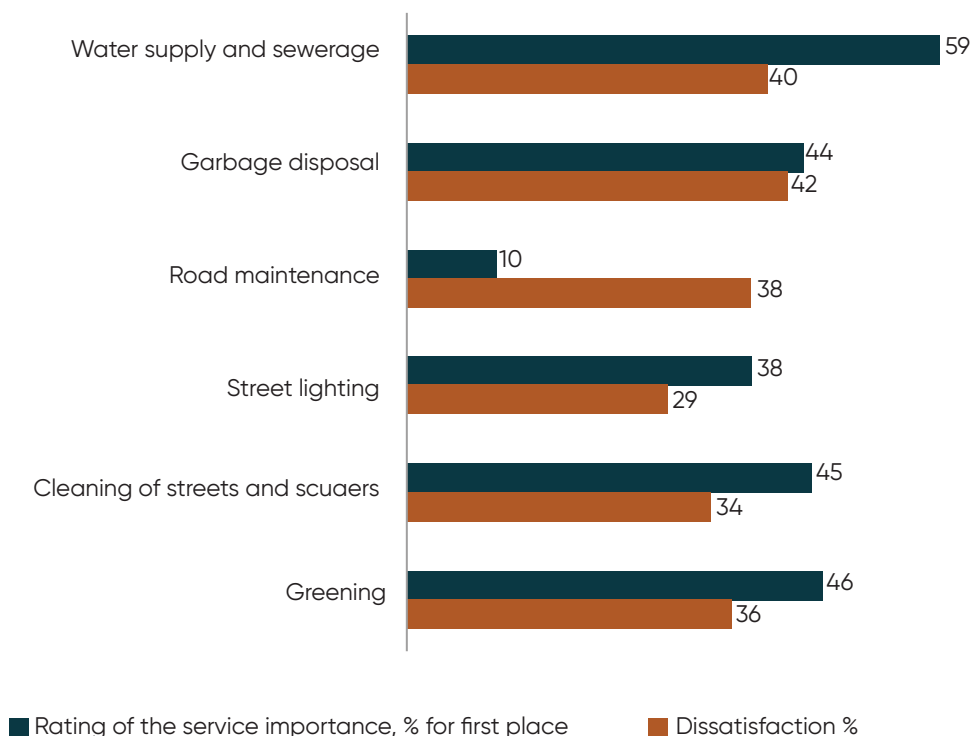
Thus, the number of citizens' appeals to LSG bodies regarding issues related to their authority is increasing. The level of citizen satisfaction with the results of these appeals is very high - above 90%. The reduction in the number of appeals regarding certificates occurred as a result of digitalization and improved access to the government services.

3.3. Citizens' satisfaction with services provided by LSG

With respect to the services provided by the LSG bodies, there are several essential aspects of evaluation by citizens - consumers of these services.

First, LSGs need to know which of the services citizens consider the most important. These opinions are measured by the willingness of citizens to allocate local budget funds for one service or another. Second, LSGs must understand which services cause the greatest irritation and dissatisfaction of citizens. In the process of making decisions, both of these indicators must be evaluated in comparison.

Figure 29.
Comparison of the rating of the services' importance with the citizens' dissatisfaction with this service, 2020.



For example, in 2021, despite the high level of dissatisfaction with road maintenance, the majority of citizens still feel the need to direct local budget funds primarily toward financing water supply and sewerage services. Therefore, when making a decision, even in spite of the high level of citizen dissatisfaction with some services, LSG bodies must give preference to those services that are more important. Obviously, citizens, understanding the importance of water supply and sanitation services for their health and safety, give preference to these services, and the LSG body must act in the same manner.

In general, citizens' priorities regarding the importance of services do not change much over time: water supply, garbage collection, and road maintenance remain in the top three for decades. It is noticeable that these services directly affect the safety of life and economic activity. Thus, water supply means actually health of the whole family and productive time of women and children, garbage disposal - health, roads - safety and economic factors. Next in the ranking are street lighting, street cleaning and greening.

Table 2.
Services to be funded, 2009

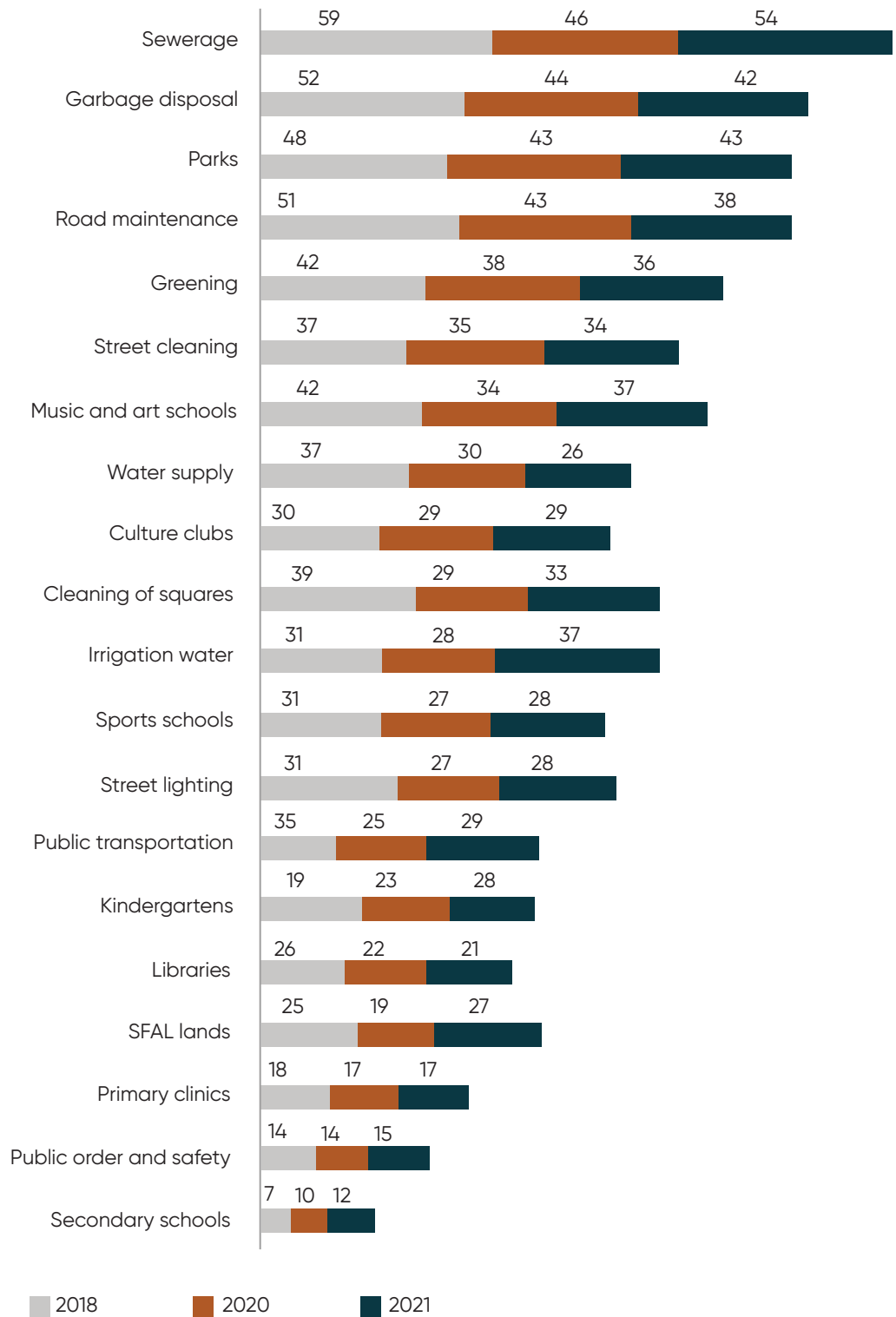
	Priority rating					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water supply and sewerage	36%	13%	14%	10%	9%	16%
Garbage disposal	13%	22%	31%	17%	10%	6%
Road maintenance	29%	27%	14%	15%	8%	4%
Street lighting	12%	19%	17%	22%	20%	8%
Cleaning of streets and squares	4%	9%	13%	21%	34%	16%
Greening	4%	8%	9%	12%	17%	48%

Table 3.
Services to be funded, 2021

	Priority rating					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water supply and sewerage	59%	8,7%	19,4%	4,4%	2,6%	6,0%
Garbage disposal	11%	43,8%	20,4%	11,8%	6,1%	6,9%
Road maintenance	7,4%	14,4%	38,2%	17,9%	11,8%	10,2%
Street lighting	5,1%	11,4%	11,3%	40,3%	19,3%	12,6%
Cleaning of streets and squares	5,7%	11,5%	6,8%	12,4%	45,1%	18,6%
Greening	11,9%	10,2%	4,0%	13,2%	15,1%	45,6%

The level of dissatisfaction with services in 2021 decreased slightly from 2018 for the full range of services assessed, with the exception of secondary schools, public transportation, and irrigation water supply.

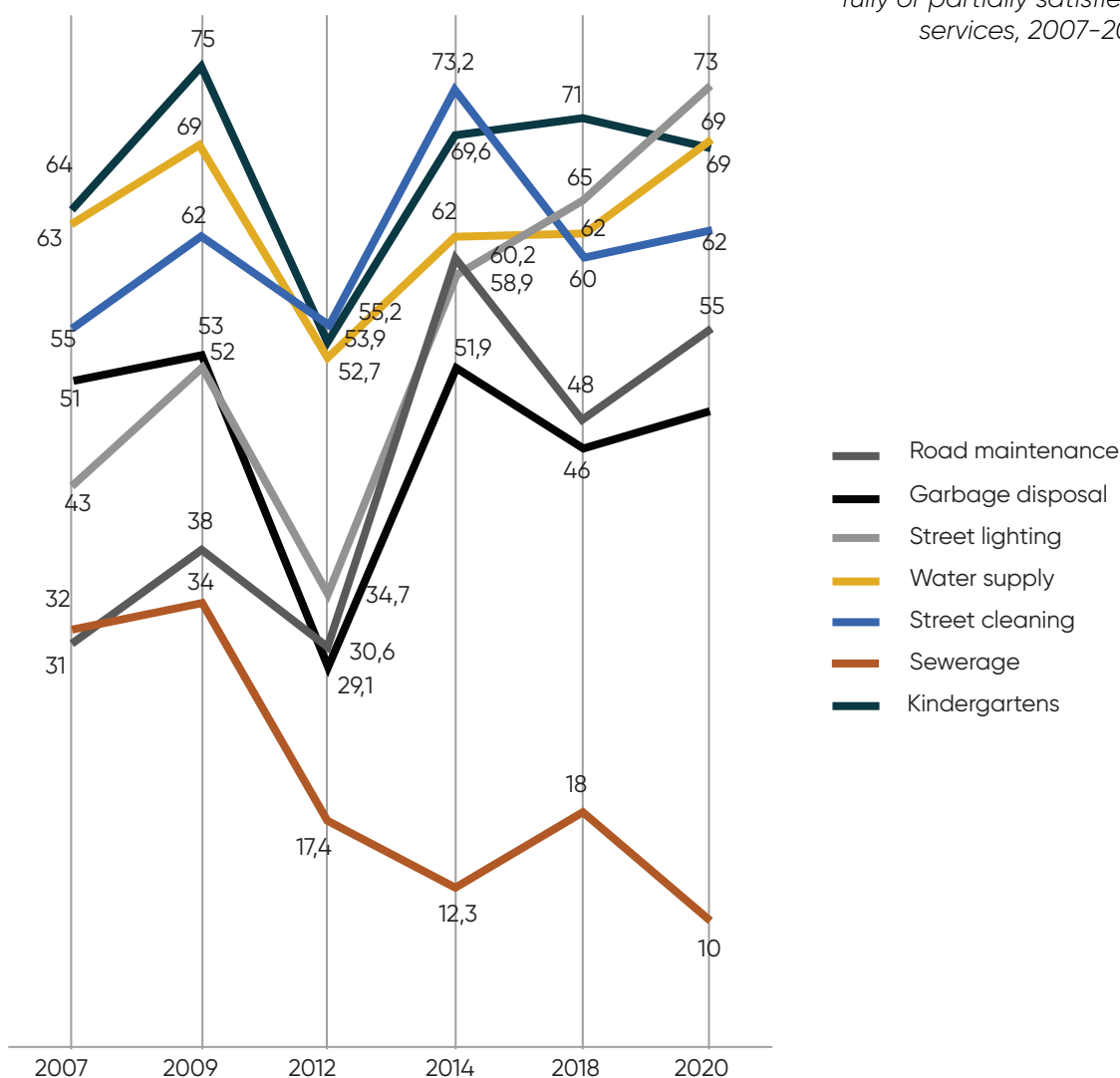
Figure 30.
 Ranking of services that citizens are dissatisfied with,
 2018-2021, percent



A relative decrease in dissatisfaction with some of the most important services has been observed throughout the measurement period, starting in 2007. The share of citizens who are more or less satisfied with street lighting is growing - for 13 years the growth was 30%; road maintenance - 24%; street cleaning - 7%; water supply - 6%. However, the level of satisfaction with garbage disposal and kindergartens remains the same and even slightly decreases. Only satisfaction with sewerage and drainage services is steadily decreasing - people, even in the villages, no longer want to live without sewage, the number of satisfied with the service has dropped threefold and reached a critically low level of 10%.

In Figure 29 it is impossible not to notice the dip in the level of satisfaction in 2012. There is an explanation for this. As stated above, the level of satisfaction with the LSG performance is directly related to the level of the local budget revenues. After the introduction of a three-tiered budget in 2009, LSG bodies were assigned a responsibility to compensate teacher salary increases in 2010, the LSG bodies have almost lost the ability to fund issues of local significance. This inevitably led to a decline in the volume and quality of local services, which could not but have a negative impact on the level of citizen satisfaction with them.

Figure 31: Dynamics of the share of citizens, fully or partially satisfied with some services, 2007-2020, percent



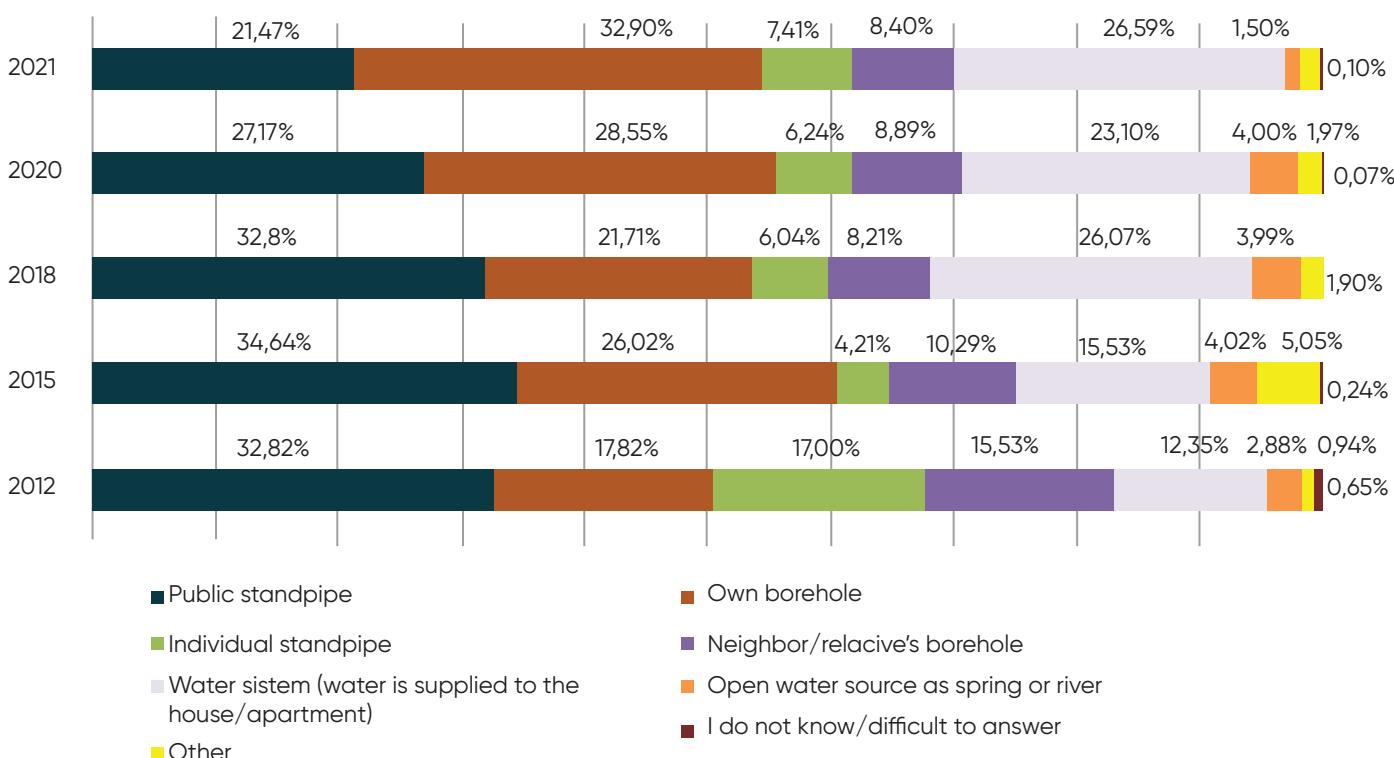
The rating of services considered by citizens to be the most problematic has changed after 2014. Garbage disposal left the top three, to be replaced by water supply and street lighting services. Indeed, most of the LSG bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic have made some progress in combating unorganized landfills and have established regular removal of solid household waste. In this sector, disposal issues come to the forefront for the LSG bodies, but they are less visible to citizens than they are to the LSGs.

Table 4:
 Rating of services considered by citizens to be the most problematic, 2007-2020, place in the rating

	2007	2008	2009	2012	2014	2018	2020	2021
Road maintenance	1	4	1	2	3	2	3	3
Garbage disposal	4	1	3	3	1	10	6	6
Street lighting	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	1
Water supply	3	3	5	5	4	1	1	2

Given that water supply remains a problematic service since 2018, it is advisable to consider the problem in more detail. Overall, progress is evident: respondents' living conditions have improved in 2021, as the largest number of respondents use a tap water system - 32.9% vs. 17.8% in 2018, when the largest proportion of respondents used a public standpipe. At the same time, 8.4% of citizens still use open water sources such as springs or rivers.

Figure 32.
 Drinking water sources, 2020, percent



In 2021, the vast majority of citizens do not have access to sewer, and moreover, their number is increasing, from 91% in 2018 to 95% in 2021. The increase is not because sewerage facilities are failing, but because the number of households is growing and sewer capacity is not increasing. Of course, the majority of respondents are residents of rural areas, where sewerage has been and remains a rare phenomenon. However, the development of technological progress, growing burden on the environment, spread of infectious diseases make the issue of wastewater disposal and organization of sewage facilities in rural areas more and more acute. So far, the Kyrgyz Republic does not assess in any way the impact of this kind of pollution on the environment and human safety, but in the near future the problem will come to the fore.





IV. Gender Equality in Local Self-Governance

In recent decades, there have been fewer women in the governmental leadership positions. In 2019, Article 59-1 of the Kyrgyz Republic Law on Election of Local Kenesh Deputies was amended to reserve at least 30 percent of ayyl kenesh deputy mandates for women. In April 2021, local elections in the Kyrgyz Republic were held under the gender quota, and as a result, the proportion of women in local councils reached almost 40%. This is a big step forward for gender equality in governance. Especially important is the representation of women in the process of resolving issues of local importance, which directly affect the living conditions of families and women.

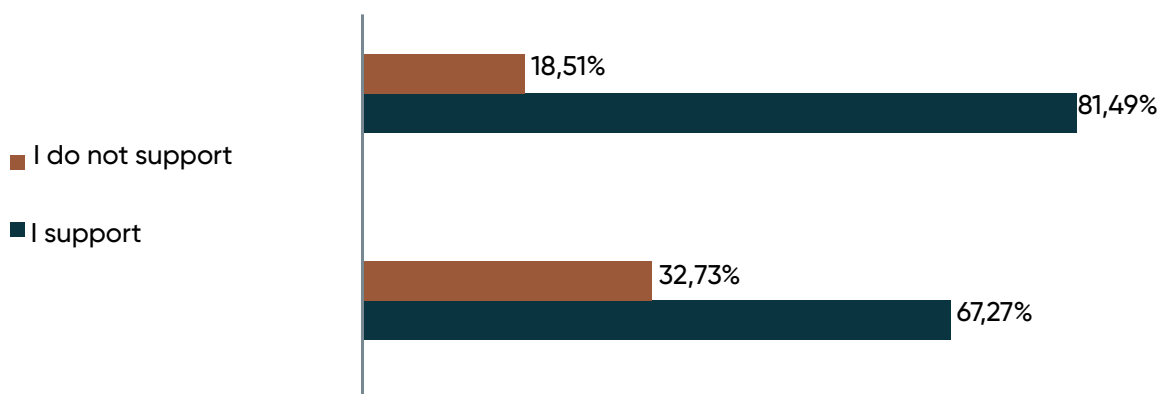
But only the legally established quota will not solve the problem of gender inequality in local self-government. Following questions remain relevant: How successful and effective will women deputies be? What conditions for women's empowerment will their male colleagues create? Are men at the local self-government level ready to "let" women into governance in the process of most important decision making? Are women ready to show initiative, take responsibility for decisions on an equal basis with men? What are the main factors that hinder effective participation of women in local self-governance? Are reasons for women's limited participation really related to family, tradition, and religion, or are women themselves unwilling and unable to take on public leadership roles?

Answers to these questions are formed not in the meeting rooms of local councils, but in the everyday life of Kyrgyz villages and towns.

4.1. Women's participation in local councils

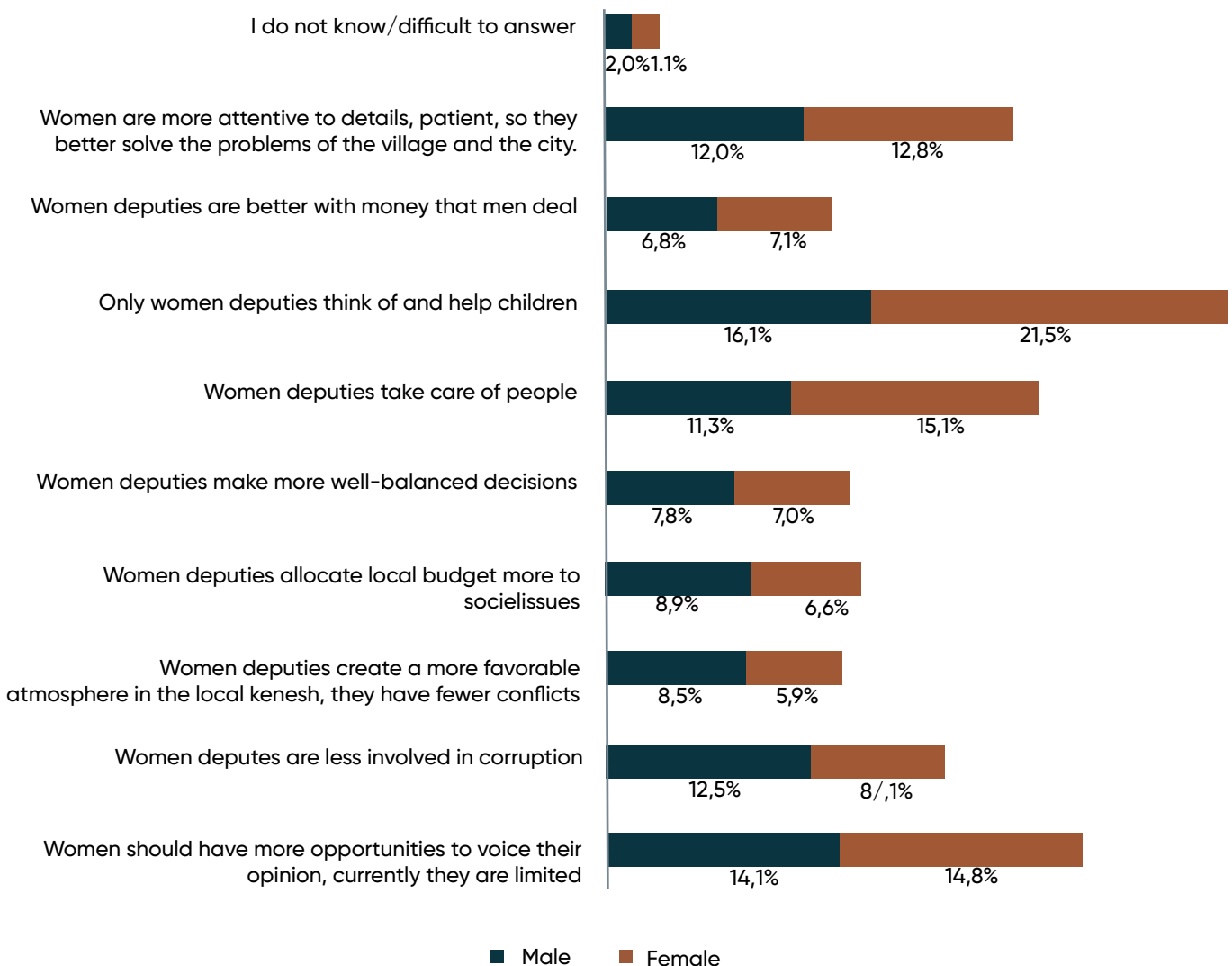
Regarding women's participation in local councils, respondents' answers showed that 76% of citizens support increasing the number of women among deputies. Yet, every fourth resident of Kyrgyzstan does not support an increase in the number of women in the government. At the same time, there is a noticeable difference in attitudes in terms of gender. For example, the proportion of women supporting an increase in the political rights of women is significantly - by 14% higher among women than among men - 81.49% and 67.27%, respectively.

Figure 33. Citizens' attitude to increase the number of women in the local council, by gender



Among the reasons why citizens support women’s participation in local councils, the most popular is the recognition of **women’s social contribution**: belief that “only women deputies think and help children, women and the elderly” and “women deputies take more care of people” (in total, 33.24% of respondents thought so). But this was not the only opinion: every fifth resident of Kyrgyzstan highly appreciated the **business qualities of women deputies** - in total 22.16% thought that “women are more attentive and patient, therefore, solve problems of the village and town better” and “women are less involved in corruption”. In the third place, it is the **recognition of women’s political rights**: 14.55% believe that “women should have more opportunities to express their opinions, and currently they are restricted in this right. It is noteworthy that with respect to the reasons for expanding women’s political rights respondents are not divided by gender, showing uniform positions for all answers, except for one, which has statistically significant differences by gender - women’s social contribution is recognized more by women themselves (9% more).

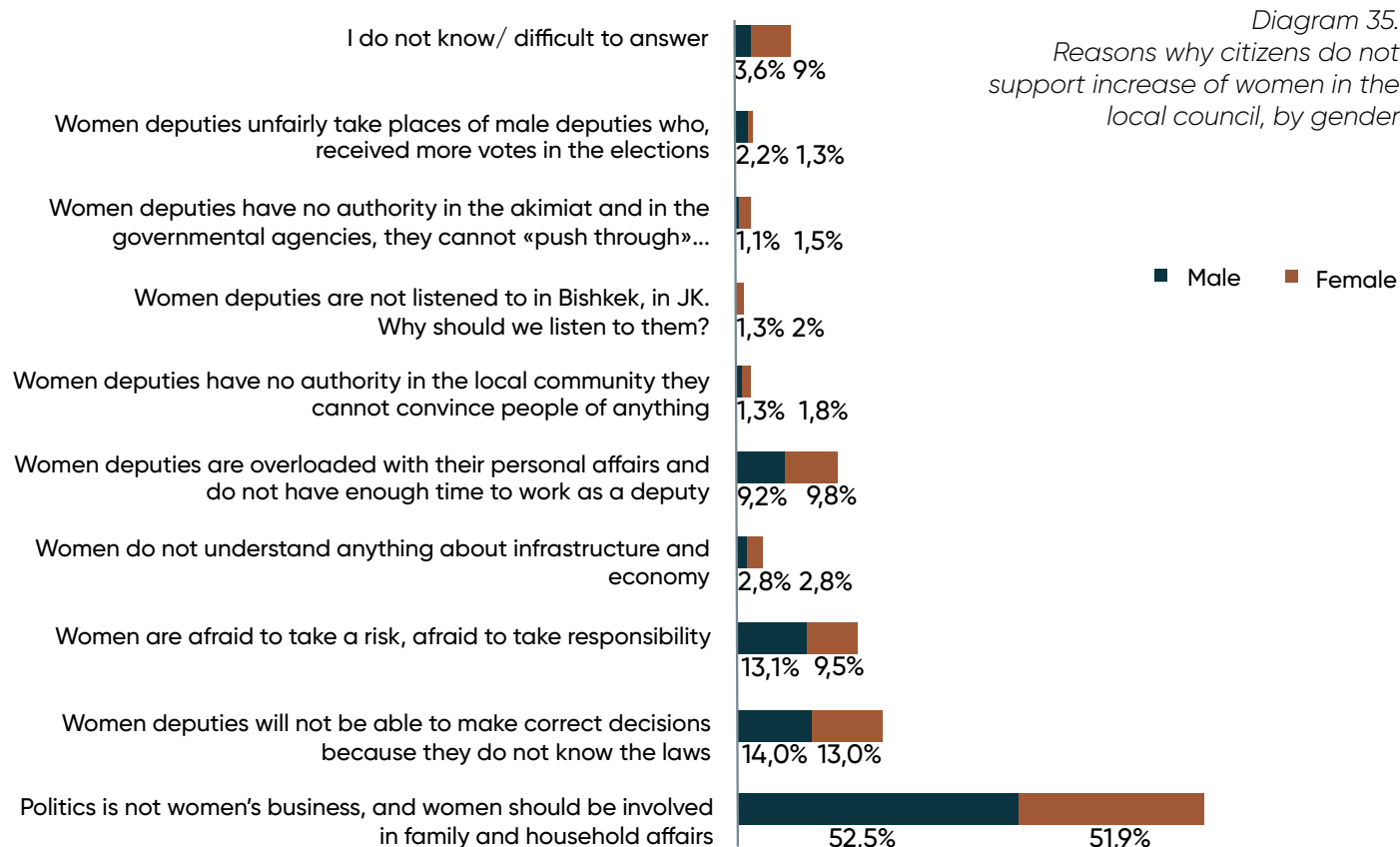
Figure 34. Reasons why citizens support increasing the number of women in the local council, by gender



Much less meaningful were explanations of the reasons why, in the opinion of a quarter of respondents, women should not expand their political rights by participating in local councils. Respondents were offered 9 answer options, of which citizens (both men and women) chose the most popular - more than 50% - the only explanation that was not supported by logical arguments: "politics is not women's business, and women should be involved in family and household affairs".

A more reasoned position was taken by 13.6% of respondents, who feared that "women deputies will not be able to make correct decisions because they do not know the laws"; 11.56% thought that "women are afraid to take responsibility"; and 9.42% agreed that "women deputies are overloaded with their personal affairs and do not have enough time to work as a deputy".

Remaining five reasons did not have a statistically significant number of answers: "women do not understand anything about infrastructure and economy", "women deputies have no authority in the local community, they cannot convince people of anything", "women deputies are not listened to in Bishkek, in JK, why should we listen to them?", "women deputies have no authority in the akimiat and in the governmental agencies, they cannot "push through" solutions to issues", and "women deputies unfairly take places of male deputies who received more votes in the elections".



Main conclusion is that opponents of women's political empowerment are guided more by stereotypes, and only some of them can provide logical arguments.

4.2. Women's participation in local development⁵

The majority - 73% - of the surveyed members of local communities state that for the last two years they have succeeded in solving any socially important issues at the village or aimak level. At the same time, men consider themselves more effective. Thus, 61% of women and 91% of men claim to solve problems - their own or community's - but 20% of women and only 4% of men failed to achieve results. Men more often receive support from LSG bodies, development projects and other sources in the form of money or equipment to implement their proposals: men confirm receiving external assistance for their initiatives in 89% of cases, while among women this indicator was only 49%.

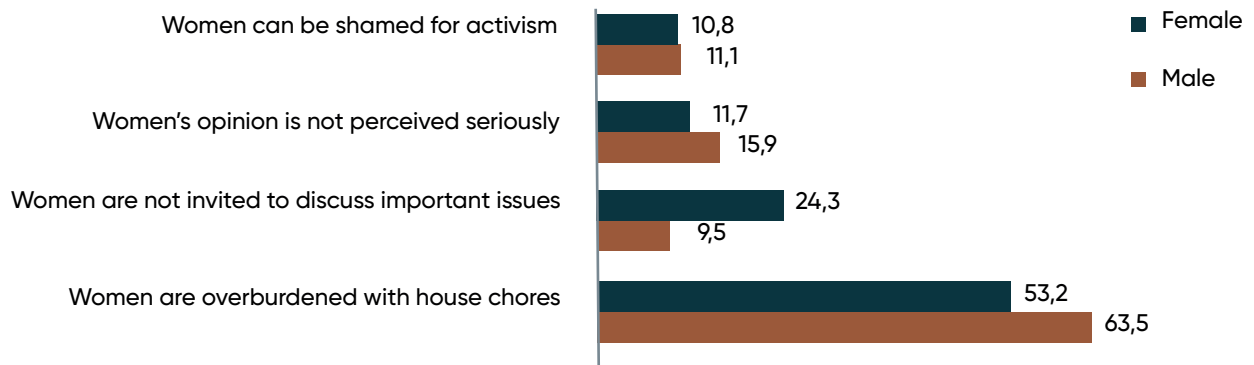
Almost in half of the cases citizens manage to draw attention to important issues for them and include projects to finance solutions to socially significant problems in the work plan and local budget. At the same time 17% independently put forward the initiative to solve the problem and thus become leaders of initiative groups, another 15% act on behalf of some group of people, the rest use other methods of promotion. Men more often (58%) than women (39%) manage to raise this issue on their own at public events (assemblies, public budget hearings), as well as at sessions of local councils.

Among the factors that hinder solutions of women's priority problems, there are three leading the most significant factors. The first factor is a lack of funds in the local budget, which is mentioned by almost every third respondent and interviewee. The second factor is insufficient activity of interested persons among officials, which is mentioned by every fifth respondent. The third factor refers to the legislation, which, according to every ninth respondent, does not take into account the gender aspect in relation to priority problems. There is a significant proportion of those who note a lack of support from the local community and government bodies. However, the lowest number of respondents complained about a lack of support from the mayor's office and aiyl okmotu.

The main problem that prevents women from being active in public life in their local community is considered by almost 60% of respondents to be overburdened with unpaid domestic work. The second reason is that women are not even invited to discuss important issues. Importantly, however, men and women differ in their views on these factors. There are almost 15% more women who say their participation is ignored than men. At the same time, almost 10% of men overestimate women's housework. We can conclude that about 10-15% of men may not invite women to important discussions, believing that they do not have time because of the overload of household chores. Every sixth woman believes that women's opinions are not taken seriously and every tenth woman is afraid that she may be shamed for her public activity or public initiative.

⁵ This subsection has been prepared based on data collected by the Development Policy Institute in 2020 as part of the VAP Project. Relevant questions were not in the questionnaire for the 2021 sociological survey, so LLC Erfolg Consult does not take any responsibility for the data presented in this section.

Figure 36. Factors that hinder women from being active, percent

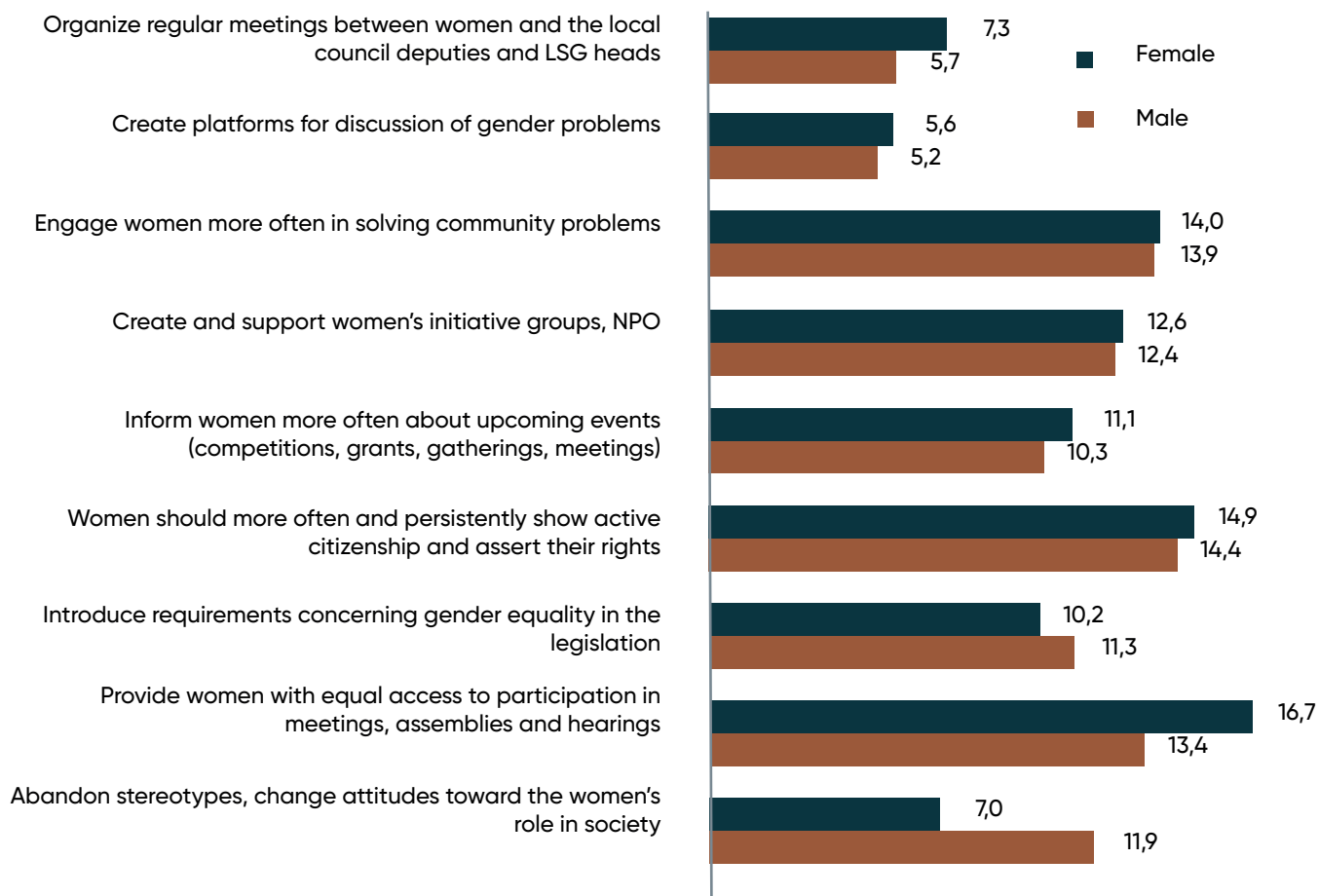


Slightly less than half of respondents believe that men and women in local communities have equal conditions for achieving their goals and opportunities. More than half - 55% - believe that the conditions are still different. At the same time, the share of those who believe that men's opportunities are better, broader and more diverse is twice as high (37%) as those who see advantages for women (18%).

Opinions on the measures needed to strengthen the role of women in decision-making, including decisions about the budget, were divided. Approximately equal number of respondents believe that it is necessary to give women equal access to participation in meetings, assemblies and hearings (15.4%); women themselves should more often and persistently show active citizenship and assert their rights (14.8%); create and support women's initiative groups (12%); inform women more often about forthcoming events; introduce requirements concerning gender equality in the legislation. Slightly fewer respondents believe that the best measures would be to abandon stereotypes, change attitudes toward the women's role in society, create venues to discuss gender issues, and organize regular meetings between women and the local kenesh deputies and the heads of LSG bodies.

The assessment of gender equality with regard to women's participation in local self-governance showed that women's role in public life could be much higher than it is now. But women still face problem of combining an active life position with organization of home affairs and at the same time, the respondents confirm that in order to promote women in LSG bodies it is necessary to create various conditions, platforms, and opportunities that would allow them to show and demonstrate their capabilities. Both men and women confirm that it is easier for men to achieve solutions to public problems. At the same time, men tend to be more positive about the position of women in the community.

Figure 37.
 Opinion on measures needed to strengthen the women's role in the decision-making process, including decisions about the budget, percent



ЖЕРГИЛИКТҮҮ БЮДЖЕТ ТАЛКУУГА АЧЫК! НАШ БЮДЖЕТ ОТКРЫТ ДЛЯ ОБСУЖДЕНИЯ!



ГРОДЕНСКИЙ АЙЫЛ ОКМОТУ
ПРОЕКТ БЮДЖЕТА НА 2017 ФИНАНСОВЫЙ ГОД -
3 млн. 497,3 тыс. сом.

Этот документ является проектом, его содержание и достоверность не гарантируется и является объектом информирования и консультации, а не обязательным документом. Жилищно-коммунальное хозяйство, Гроденский район, Станица 12 и 4

ОБЩАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ О ГРОДЕНСКОМ АЙЫЛ ОКМОТУ
В состав Гроденского айыл окмоту входит 3-й избирательный округ.
Население айыл окмоту составляет 3 542 человека.

В муниципальной собственности айыл окмоту состоит 3 объектов недвижимости:

- инфраструктура
- здания школ
- здания школ
- здание ФАП
- местные дороги

БЮДЖЕТ, ПЛАНИРУЕМЫЙ НА 2017 ФИНАНСОВЫЙ ГОД
ДОХОДЫ
Согласно законодательству доходы бюджетов айыл окмоту состоят из:

- общегосударственные налоги
- местные налоги и сборы
- неналоговые доходы

Диаграмма 1. Доходы бюджета Гроденского айыл окмоту на 2017г.

Проект доходной части бюджета на 2017 финансовый год рассчитан на базе данных по доходам, имеющимся в Гроденском айыл окмоту, а также данных, полученных от государственных ведомств, таких как районная налоговая инспекция, районное отделение качества, соцрегистр, госавтоинспекция.

Прогноз поступлений по доходам на 2017 год по Гроденскому айыл окмоту составляет 3 млн. 497,3 тыс. сом, в том числе:

Виды	Утвержденные али на 2016 год, тыс. сом	Проект бюджета на 2017, тыс. сом
Общегосударственные налоги		
Подоходный налог	1 800	1 800
Налог с продаж	1 150	1 200
Налог на пользование недвижимостью	250	257
Специальный налог		0
Дорожный налог	90	90
Обязательная социальная страховка	0	0
Обязательная социальная страховка	0	0

7 277... РК... 2017



V. Impact of the “Voice of Citizens and Accountability of LSG: Budgetary Process” Project

The VAP Project worked with local communities and LSG bodies in Jalal-Abad, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Osh and Chui oblasts during 2011-2022, helping local communities be more involved in local budget management, and LSG bodies manage local budgets more effectively in the interests of citizens. The Project selected one target municipality in each rayon of these oblasts on a competitive basis, but some types of support were provided to all LSG bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In the target municipalities, the VAP Project actively promoted the Model of Citizen Participation in LSG, which helped LSG bodies engage citizens in identifying priority problems, joint planning to address local issues, distribution of local budgets in accordance with citizens' priorities, joint monitoring and evaluation of LSG bodies' performance.

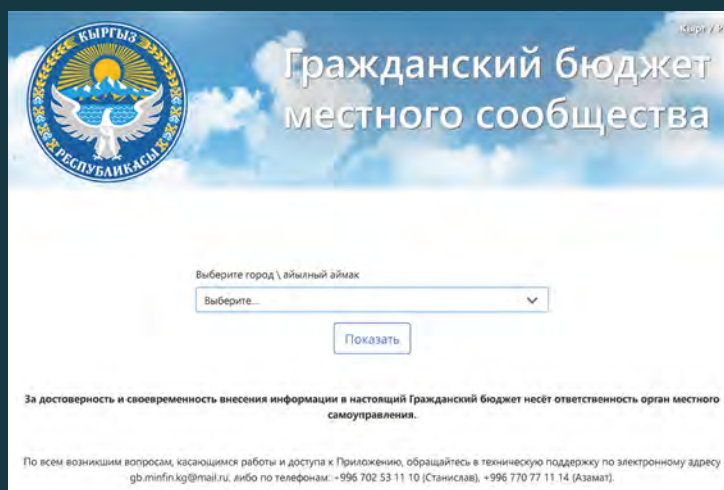
In order to assess the Project's impact, a separate analysis was conducted of the research results in target and non-target municipalities. In general, the study showed that in target municipalities affected by the VAP Project changes for the better were faster than in non-target municipalities, and changes for the worse, respectively, were slower. Below are some results of the VAP Project's impact on the development of LSG bodies and their interaction with citizens, including meaningful differences between target and non-target LSGs (where they were found).

5.1. LSG bodies are more attentive to the opinions of citizens, and in response, citizens' satisfaction with the results of their participation in the budget process is growing

Under the impact of the VAP Project, traditional forms of citizen participation in the development of local communities evolved into modern mechanisms of civic participation enshrined in the legislation. With the Project's assistance, the legislation (the Budget Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, a set of model documents and regulations approved by the Government, the Ministry of Finance and SALSGIR) has a logically connected set of mechanisms for citizen participation in LSG: priority rural assessment, prioritization of needs and joint planning, participation in the budget process, joint monitoring and evaluation and support of citizen initiatives from the local budget.

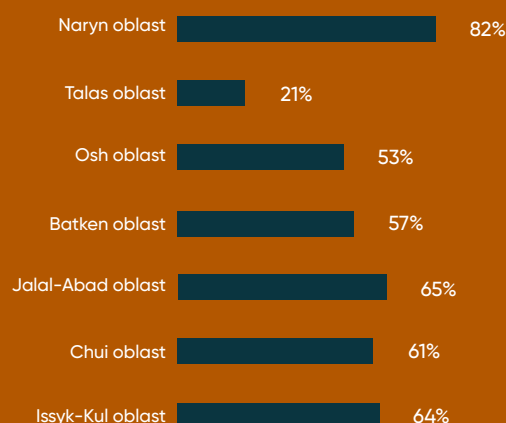
Beginning in 2012, all mechanisms were practiced with participation of more than 100 municipalities in five oblasts across the country (with exception of Talas and Batken oblasts), the Project recorded about 250,000 productive contacts of citizens with LSG bodies. Under the Project's direct impact, accountability and transparency of LSG bodies significantly increased, in which the Project instilled the practice of using new formats of budget information.

Citizen participation in the budgetary process has expanded: the number of LSG bodies holding budget hearings increased 19-fold and in 2021, already 396 LSG bodies, or over 80%, held hearings.



Around 58% of citizens' proposals received during the public discussion of draft local budgets were taken into account by LSG bodies (in Naryn oblast – 82%, in Talas oblast – 21%). In 2019, LSG bodies took into account 52% of the citizens' proposals.

Figure 38. Percentage of proposals considered by LSG bodies based on the results of public hearings on draft local budgets for 2022, by oblast of the Kyrgyz Republic, percent



Transparency of LSG bodies has increased: 71% of LSG bodies throughout the Kyrgyz Republic use infographics, brief budget descriptions, and the online citizen's budget.

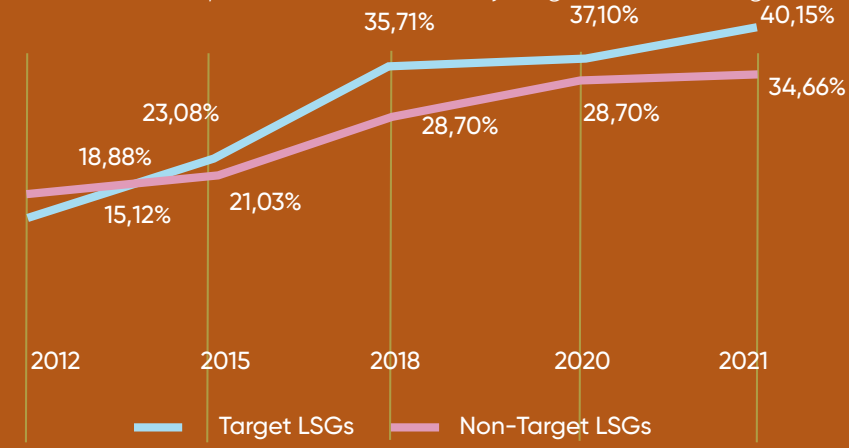


Nurbek MUKANOV, income specialist of Kara-Suu aiyl okmotu of Kochkor rayon, Naryn oblast:

“Providing residents with the Citizens' Budget means that the municipality works transparently. We post materials about revenues and expenditures on information boards, on the website of the Ministry of Finance. The VAP project taught us to describe the budget in simple language that everyone can understand. And the aimak's residents made sure that budget is adopted taking into account their opinions and they can solve important issues by participating in budget hearings”.

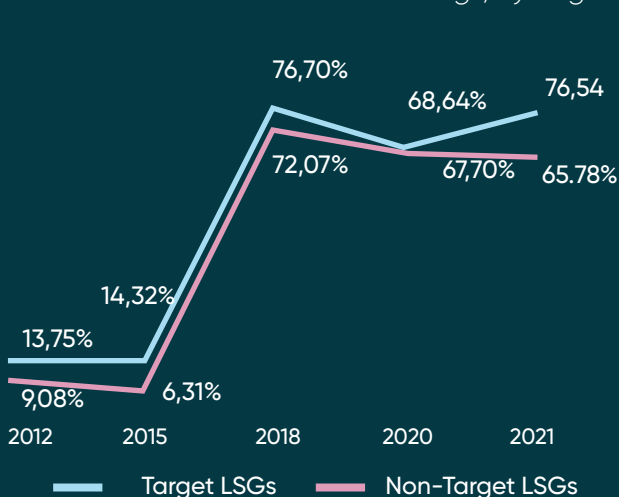
In target municipalities of the VAP Project, the share of citizens who believe that LSG bodies are open in their activities has almost tripled (from 15% to 40%).

Figure 39. Dynamics of the share of citizens who consider LSG bodies to be open in their activities, by target and non-target LSGs



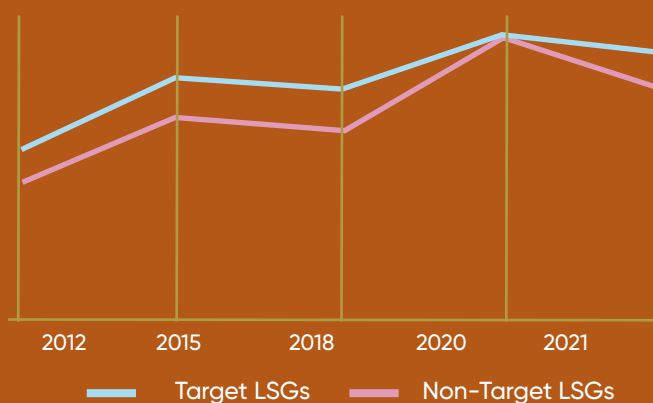
Level of citizen satisfaction with the quality of their participation in the budget process has increased by 5.5 times.

Figure 40. Share of citizens satisfied with their participation in budget hearings, by target and non-target LSGs



Citizens' trust in LSG bodies has strengthened. Thus, share of citizens who believe that there is no corruption in LSG bodies has increased by 14% in the target municipalities of the

Figure 41. Dynamics of the share of citizens' trust that there is no corruption in their LSG body, by target and non-target LSGs



5.2. Ability of LSG bodies to respond to the citizens' needs has increased

The VAP Project helped LSG bodies implement joint action plans with population, which made the work of LSG more targeted and effective. The ability of LSG bodies to attract additional funding and better respond to the citizens' needs has increased. In both target and non-target LSGs of the Project, the level of citizen participation in meetings, public hearings, not only on the budget, but also on tariffs, services, and other issues of local significance is increasing. However, there is a significant qualitative difference in this growth, which arose due to the VAP's impact: in the target municipalities, there is a growing popularity of productive forms of participation, which allow not just to receive information or to have a say (gathering), but to actually influence the decision of the LSG body (hearings and development or selection of a project proposal for funding). Emergence of this distinction is logical due to the fact that the VAP Project helped LSG bodies of the target municipalities introduce more productive forms of participation in which citizens receive feedback from LSG bodies and see changes according to their priorities and desires.

Engaging community in joint planning has significantly increased the ability of LSG bodies to attract investment, for example, in 2018 in Chui oblast, combined efforts of LSGs and community attracted 129 million soms or 74% of the funds from other sources needed to fund the joint plan. In order to enhance the status of the joint action plans, in 2019, the Project began transforming joint action plans taking into account all the needs of population into official programs for socio-economic development by adapting the Methodology of the Ministry of Economy of KR.

Annually about 100-150 acute problems of local communities were solved through joint action plans of the citizens and LSGs;



Maksat DORBAEV, deputy akim of Ak-Suu rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast: *"My cooperation with the VAP Project started in 2012, when I was working as the head of Ak-Chiy Aiyyl Okmotu. Project helped aimak together with the community prepare a development plan. Effect of the plan: investments came to the aimak amounting to 89 million soms. In general, from 2012 to 2019, using knowledge received from the Project, Ak-Chiy aimak managed to received 700 million soms of external assistance, 34 projects were implemented: schools, kindergartens and other facilities were built. I had an opportunity to apply this knowledge in other municipalities, for example, in Nookat rayon, where I worked as a head, and where, thanks to joint planning, we were able to achieve growth in the local budget".*

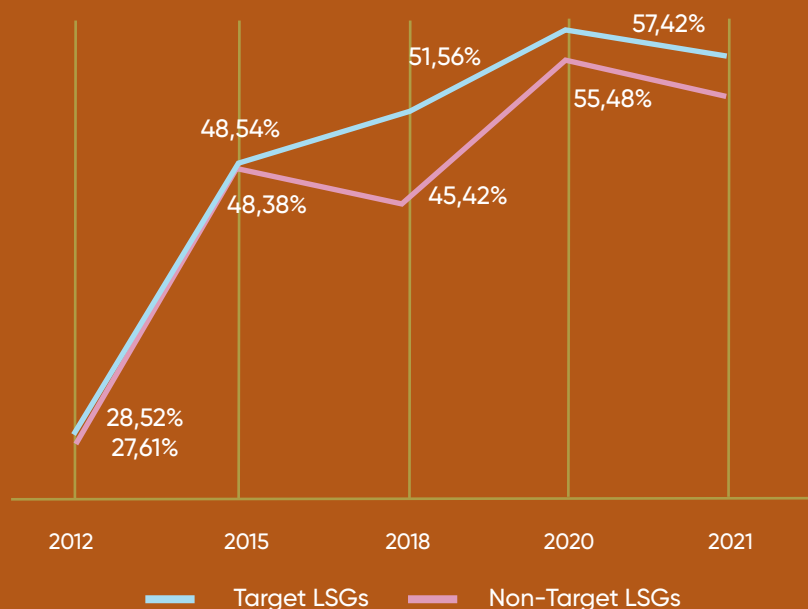
Grant program improved the skills of LSG bodies in raising additional funding and investment management; 129 local problems have been solved, which has improved living conditions for 530,000 people, and about 150 jobs have been created



In Grozdnenskiy aiyl aimak of Alamudun rayon, Chui Oblast, the local budget has tripled reaching 10 million soms during the period of participation in the VAP Project. *“Basis for such results was mutual trust. Taxpayers as if “woke up”, began to pay taxes on time, came out of the shadows. Calculations of tax revenues allowed for an increase in land lease revenues from businesses. And the LSG body came out of the ranks of subsidized organizations,”* believes **Kulzhakul KOICHUBEKOVA, a former deputy of the local kenesh.**

Number of citizens in target LSGs of the VAP Project who believe that living conditions in the municipality have improved (despite the general decline in the assessment of living standards due to the COVID-19 epidemic) has doubled

Figure 42. Dynamics of the share of citizens who believe that life in the municipality has become better, by target and non-target LSGs



5.3. Citizens and LSG bodies received more mechanisms of interaction for joint solution of urgent problems

Direct impact of the VAP Project on the local community made it possible to strengthen traditional forms of civic participation: initiative groups have always emerged in villages to solve local problems, but the Project helped formalize the status of initiative groups, concretized the forms of their interaction with LSG bodies so that LSG bodies would respond to challenges posed by initiative groups. Procedure for creation and interaction of groups, ways to seek solutions to problems through participation in the budgetary process and joint development planning with LSG bodies received a legal basis for the first time, by enshrining it in the charters of local community. Prior to 2014, the charters interpreted rights and responsibilities of community members differently and could contradict current legislation. The Project helped equalize the rights of members of various communities in the Kyrgyz Republic, by bringing the charters in line with the legislation, as well as by including in the charter mechanisms for exercising the rights of community members not described in other legislation (for example, mechanism for the right to participate in an open session of local kenesh). The VAP Project indirectly helped give practical meaning to the citizen's right to participate in LSG declared in the Constitution, since the initiative groups became a kind of "school" of civic participation and allowed many local activists to believe in the possibility of change, new ways of self-expression in local self-governance.

The Project facilitated a normative definition of the possibility for citizens to receive support for their initiatives from the local budget, through introduction of an officially enshrined mechanism called "Local Initiative".

The research results showed that, in general, the level of citizen participation of target and non-target municipalities of the VAP Project in public affairs of their city or village is not different and in 2021 is almost 67%, which is almost 11% more than in 2018. However, the share of those who already have practical experience of participation in public life is growing faster in target municipalities than in non-target LSGs.

On average 35 activists in each target LSG (over 1,700 people in total) joined together in almost 190 IGs and solved their problems together with LSGs

About 500 IG participants in target LSGs became members of local councils, municipal officials, participants in joint monitoring, received awards from government agencies for their contribution to the development of their aimak, etc.



In Alexandrovskiy AA, unscrupulous contractors cannot defraud either the local self-government or citizens. *"VAP Project helped LSG bodies and citizens work together to achieve results,"* says Razia LIVAZA, leader of the joint monitoring and evaluation team. *- Once we held a tender to supply coal for schools, but we saw coal dust instead of hard coal. We demanded that the contractor replace the substandard product with the proper one. They started to prove that they had brought good coal. The contractor did not immediately perceive "some women" until the head of the aiyl okmotu said that this was a joint monitoring and evaluation group, that the group officially protects the interests of the community and monitors what the local budget money is spent on. So together we got the coal replaced".*

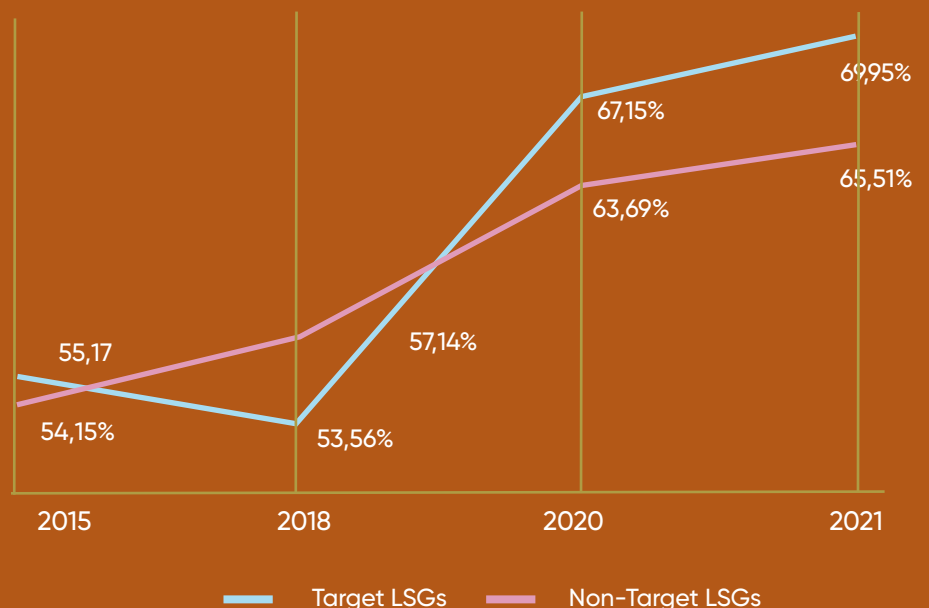
Citizens achieved inclusion of about 800 proposals in joint action plans, which in one way or another have been implemented, including with the help of funding from local budgets



One of the initiatives of Adilet ALBEKENOV was a project for electric lighting of a four-kilometer section of the Kenesh-Budenovka-Bishkek-Torugart highway in Budenovka village. Directly with his participation, aiyl okmotu prepared a grant proposal and won the VAP Project competition. One million soms of grant funds were allocated. Adilet's public monitoring skills came in handy during road lighting works in Dokturbek Kurmanaliev village of Kochkorbaev Aiyl aimak. Thanks to his vigilance, his profession and skills learned at the Project training, he was able to save the municipality 180 thousand soms in the budget: *"When I looked at the results of the work done by the contractor company, I noticed that they did not meet the declared estimates and specifications,"* says ALBEKENOV. *- I created a commission of three deputies, employees of aiyl okmotu and residents and began to sort things out. It turned out that the contractor had not fulfilled his obligations in good faith. For example, the tender documents indicated that the LED projectors would be installed at a price of 3,500 soms per unit, but in fact the lamps were completely different - 800 soms per unit. As a result the company was paid 154 thousand soms instead of 334 thousand".*

15% increase in the number of citizens willing to personally participate in the improvement of their city or village

Figure 43. Dynamics of the share of citizens willing to take personal part in the improvement of their city or village, by target and non-target LSGs



5.4. LSG personnel strengthening

The VAP Project helped strengthen the human resources potential of LSG bodies, which gained access to a large volume of practical and methodological information (43,000 people/trainings on more than 25 topics). Legal and institutional conditions for the work of LSG bodies were improved: status of the municipal employee was brought closer to that of the government employee, system of professional development for municipal employees was formed, including in the departmental direction; actual separation of powers between government bodies and LSG bodies started; process of coordinating draft laws with LSG bodies was established; administrative and financial conditions of local councils were provided, etc.

Together with the State Agency for Civil Service and Local Self-Governance of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Union of LSGs, the LSG Best Practices Portal (www.myktyaimak.gov.kg) was created. The Portal offers 135 examples of best practices and about 300 samples of documents of local and national significance; the number of the Portal users in 2022 reached about 11 thousand people (62% women). The VAP Project helped launch the "Municipality" magazine - the only publication in Kyrgyzstan entirely devoted to local development and LSG issues. The magazine had 124 issues (about 100,000 copies). The magazine proved to be in demand: in 2022, the magazine already had 800 paid subscribers.

The Portal and the magazine were transferred to the Local Governance Academy of Central Asia, an organization that in 2022 will begin providing professional development services to LSG bodies in the departmental direction.

Individual target municipalities of the Project have been recognized 11 times as the best LSG bodies in their rayons, more than 70 municipal servants and heads of target LSG bodies received the titles of "Excellency in Municipal Service" and "Excellency in Local Self-Governance".

5.5. Progress in achieving gender equality in the target LSGs of the VAP Project

LSG bodies responded to women's priority needs by including 47% of gender-sensitive issues (schools, kindergartens, drinking water, culture, street lighting, parks, etc.) in joint action plans to address local issues. The VAP Project improved the situation of women through the grant program that took into account the number and proportion of women who participated in the selection of grant topic. Many women participating in the Project managed to achieve personal growth, for example, become deputies of local kenesh; strengthen their authority through participation in joint monitoring and evaluation groups. School for women and youth - future deputies of local councils became an effective model of supporting women in the electoral process in 2021, 30 out of 50 participants of the school became deputies and continue to interact with each other. An instruction on nomination and participation in

- Women's participation in identifying LSG priorities and planning has increased: from 35% in 2012 to nearly 50% in 2019;
- 68% of grant projects were aimed at addressing gender sensitive issues (87% in Osh oblast); 27,000 women benefited from grant projects (51% of total number); women occupied 43% of jobs created by grant projects;
- "Women's" initiatives won 50% of the prizes in the "Local Initiative" contest, and 80 out of 154 initiatives received support;
- Share of women in initiative groups has increased from 36% to 43% and in monitoring groups from 37% to 44%.



Telegei BOSTONBAEVA, deputy of the local kenesh of Kyzyl-Suu aiyl okmotu of Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast, director of the kindergarten: *"Thanks to participation in the School of deputies of the VAP Project, I decided to participate in elections and became a deputy. In the kenesh I became a chairwoman of the permanent commission on investment attraction. Trainings of the Project taught me to be more persuasive in expressing my point of view, which helps me in the kenesh sessions, where every deputy must be able to justify own position. The training inspired me to such an extent that I ventured to organize my own workshops for women: this is how the Onuguu Daragy (Tree of Development) women's ethnographic association of 50 people emerged. Here we identify urgent problems of the village and look for ways to solve them. Women are eager to work, such energy comes from them!" (2021).*



Aigerim UTURKEYEVA, deputy of Grozden aiyl aimak, believed in success: *“Peculiarity of Grozden kenesh is that women were elected not by quota but by the majority of votes. This gives us, women, even more responsibility,»* says Aigerim. - *Training provided by the VAP Project now helps me in my work as a deputy. Conducting budget hearings, monitoring of cases, identifying priority tasks - these are the skills I have acquired thanks to the Project. Why did I decide to become a deputy? To attract more investment. I know I'm good at it. There are a lot of problems in the aimak right now. Our households still use septic tanks, despite the fact that sewage is considered a modern and more convenient way to dispose waste. Soon I will start preparing a proposal for the construction of a sewage system in the villages of Grozd and Birdik, which I estimate requires at least twenty million soms” (2021).*

