

International Relations, Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue, and Ideological Positioning

Analytical Report



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Contents

1. Executive Summary	6
2. International Relations, Security, and NATO's Role	7
3. Kosovo-Serbia Dialoguei	23
4. Ideological Positioning and Political Values	31
5. Methodology	35

Executive Summary

The international order under which Kosovo built its foreign policy after its liberation in 1999 and independence in 2008, has become increasingly uncertain, fragmented, and unpredictable. Russia's war against Ukraine has brought European security back to the center stage of political debate. NATO considers Russia a long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security, while the EU has continued to expand and extend its sanctions against Russia. Concurrently, tensions in the Middle East, the US-China rivalry, uncertainties with regards to the US role in Europe, and the pressure to increase the burden of European states within NATO, have created an environment where small states can no longer take international stability for granted.

These developments have a direct impact on citizen perceptions of the positions that should be pursued in the upcoming period. In a region where Russian influence is seen as a destabilizing factor and where Serbia remains a persistent source of insecurity for Kosovo, citizens link security and state strengthening with the Euro-Atlantic architecture.

Data from the survey conducted in July 2026 with 900 respondents confirm this trend. The US, NATO, Albania, the United Kingdom, and Germany, emerge as Kosovo's most valued partners, while Russia and China rank far lower in public perception. The US is mentioned as the principal political partner by 88.5% of respondents, while 64.5% consider NATO as the organization that has helped Kosovo the most since 1999. Even when it comes to the economy, citizens prefer the US and the EU as principal partners, while demanding particular care when dealing with Chinese investments, which should be contingent on the recognition of Kosovo and security conditions, while prioritizing transparency before short-term economic gains.

The Kosovo-Serbia dialogue remains an indispensable process, but garners limited public trust. Citizens prefer a strong US role, ideally coupled with the EU, while the EU's role alone is not seen as up to the task by the majority of respondents. Expectations for results, however, are low, and citizens do not expect a quick agreement and are not convinced that a final deal will significantly improve their daily lives. Serbia is perceived as the side that has, so far, benefited the most from the dialogue, while formal recognition by Serbia remains the main condition for the acceptability of any agreement.

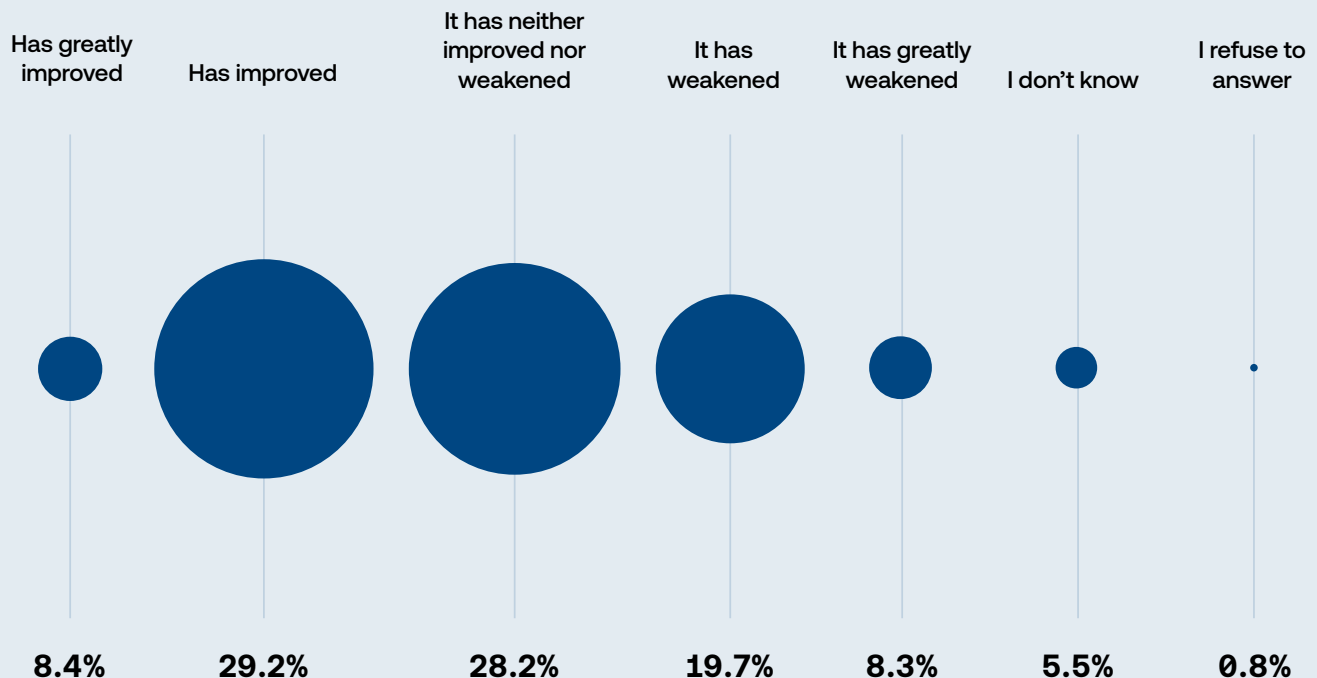
From an ideological standpoint, citizens do not clearly position themselves into the classic left-center-right categories. A large portion state that they do not fully understand these concepts or do not identify with either category. When asked about specific issues, however, their profiles become clearer, as they call for a more active engagement of the state in the economy, stronger controls in times of crisis, protection of wages and working conditions, as well as relief for businesses. In terms of social values, respondents express support for gender equality, the protection of rights and the environment, while also demonstrating willingness for accept stronger state powers in times of security threats.

1. International Relations, Security, and NATO's Role

In the first section of the survey, citizens were asked about their opinions on international relations, security, and NATO's role.

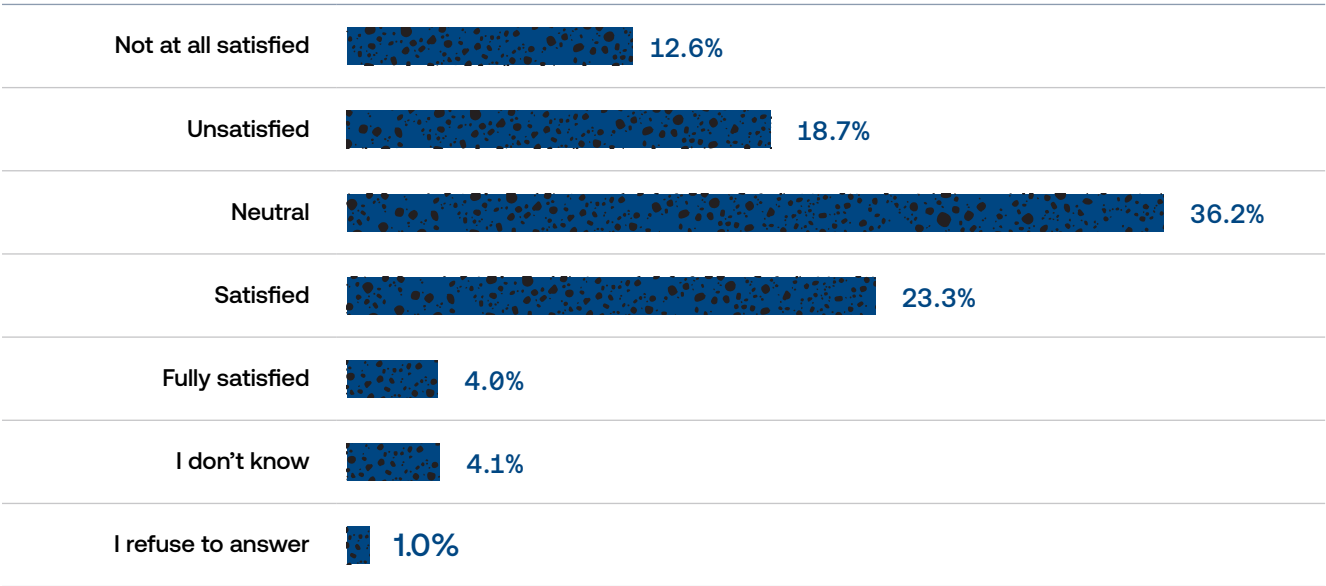
When asked about Kosovo's international position over the past 3 years, about 37.5% of respondents are of the opinion that Kosovo is in a better or much better position, while around 28.0% consider that it is in a weaker or much weaker position. Another almost equally large share of respondents (28.2%) see no improvement or weakening, while the remaining share of approximately 6.3% responded that they do not know or refused to answer. In this regard, there is no dominant narrative about Kosovo's foreign policy performance; however, a clear trend toward a more positive outlook on its outcomes is observable.

01 According to you, in the last three years Kosovo's international position:



There is limited satisfaction with the foreign policy and diplomacy of the Republic of Kosovo. The majority of respondents are neutral (36.2%), while the share of dissatisfied respondents – not at all satisfied and dissatisfied (31.3%) – is slightly higher than the share of satisfied respondents – satisfied and fully satisfied (27.3%). This score does not serve as a primary driver of course satisfaction, particularly given the high density of neutral responses; however, it indicates a greater trend of citizen dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

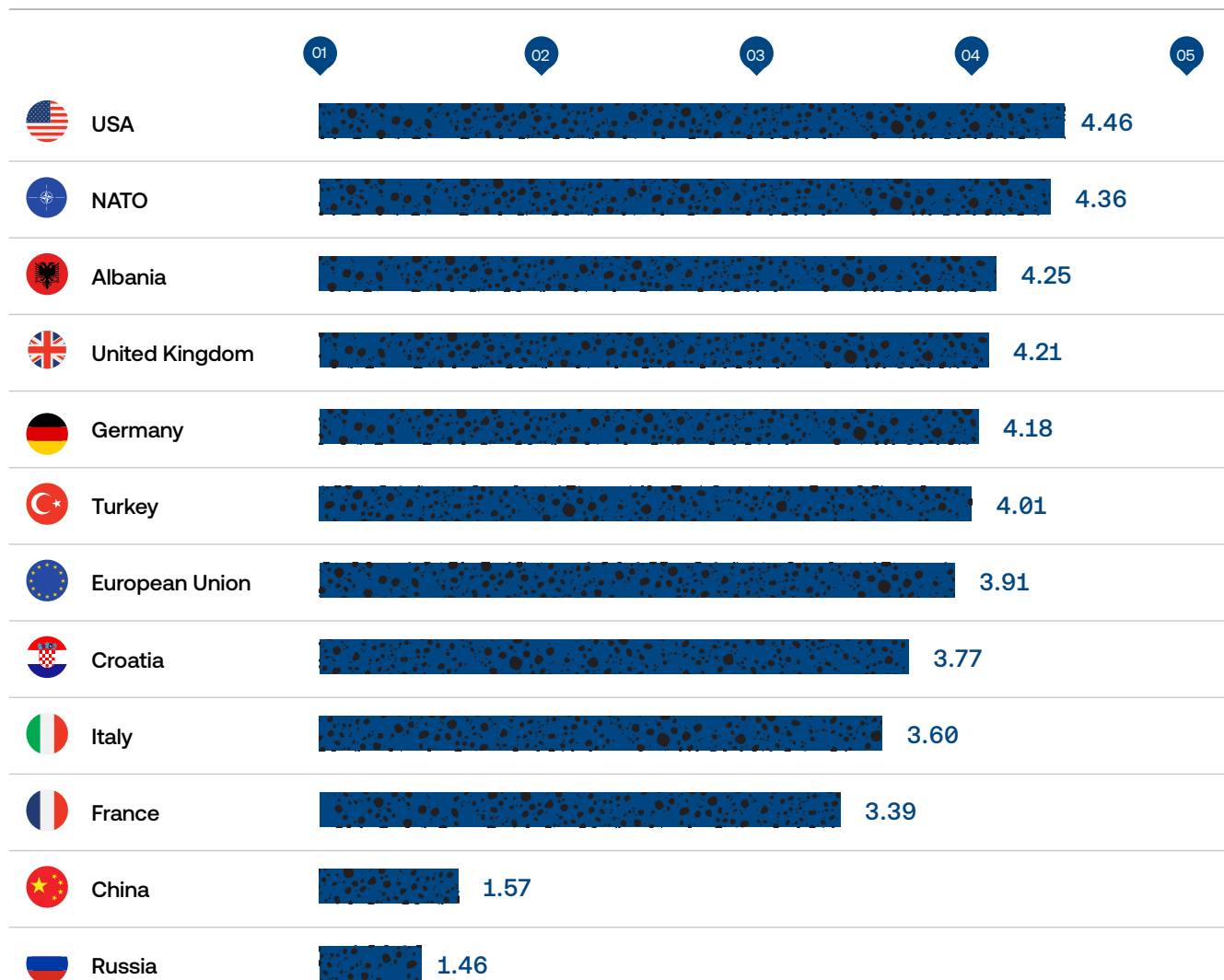
02 How satisfied are you with the foreign policy and diplomacy of the Republic of Kosovo?



The perception of international partners remains clearly pro-Western. The US, NATO, Albania, the United Kingdom, and Germany are ranked the highest as friends/partners of Kosovo. Russia and China, on the other hand, record very low averages, receiving appreciation only from respondents from the Kosovo-Serb community. This division shows that the strategic orientation of the majority of Kosovo's citizens remains strongly tied to the Euro-Atlantic architecture and to the states perceived as supporters of Kosovo's statehood.

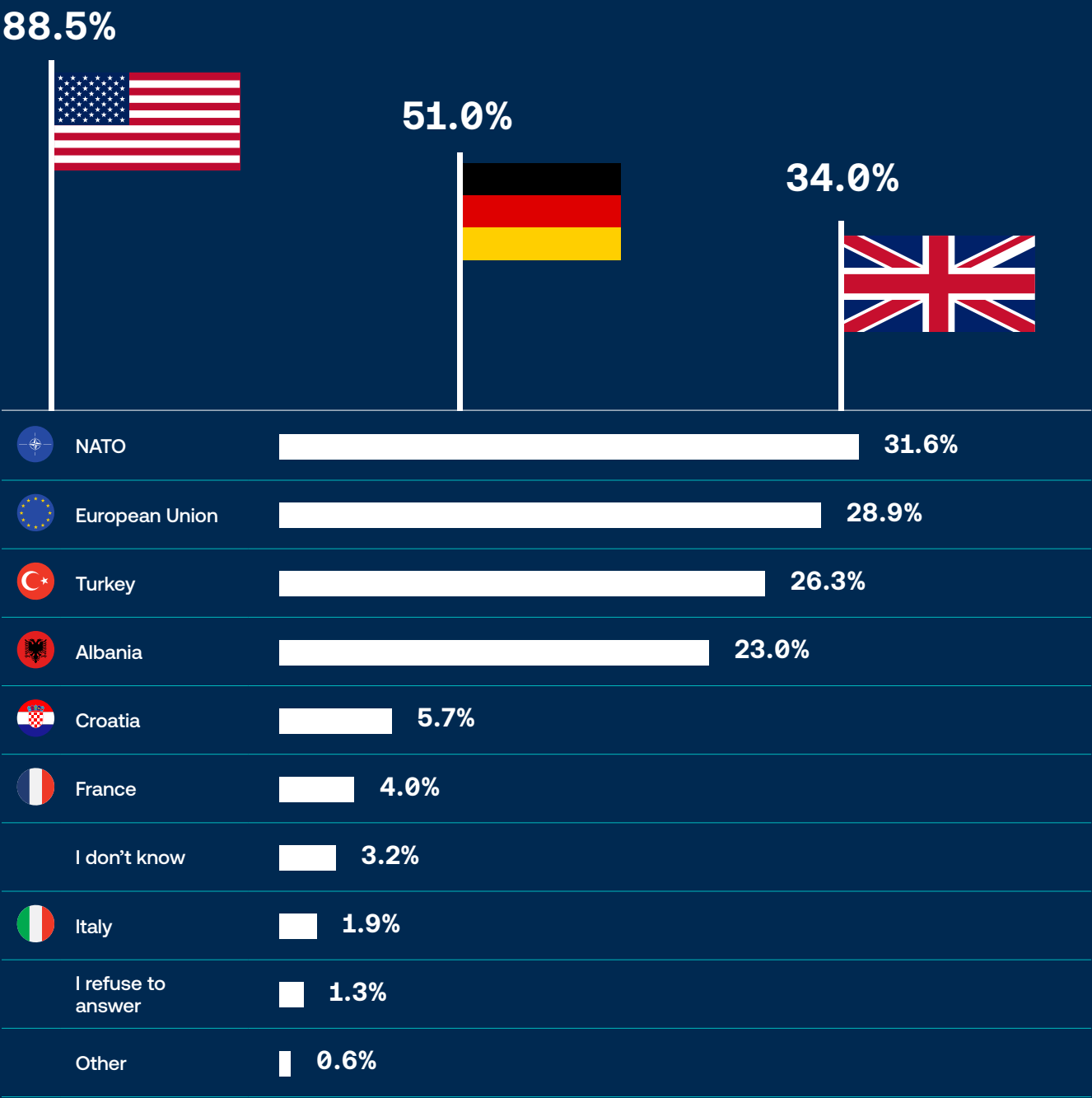
03

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you consider each of these actors as a friend/partner of Kosovo today? (Where 1 = not a friend at all; 5 = a very strong friend/partner)



The hierarchy of strategic partners is very clear. The US remains Kosovo’s main political partner, mentioned in 88.5% of cases when respondents selected up to three partners. The US is followed by Germany, the United Kingdom, NATO, and the EU. This shows that citizens see Kosovo’s foreign policy as mainly dependent on the US-Germany-NATO/EU axis, while regional partners and Turkey remain important, but at a secondary level.

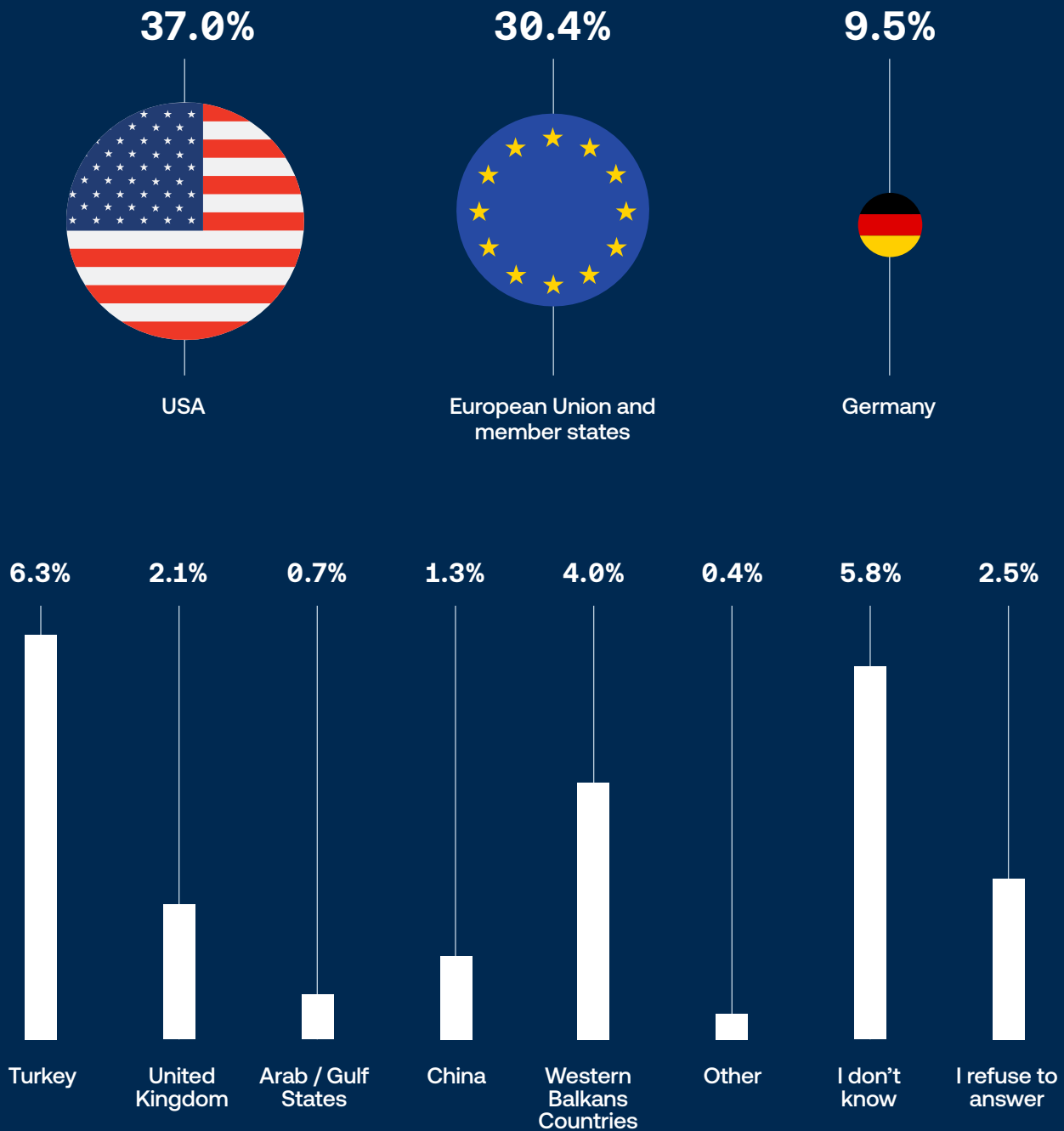
04 What are the three main partner states/organizations of Kosovo in international politics?



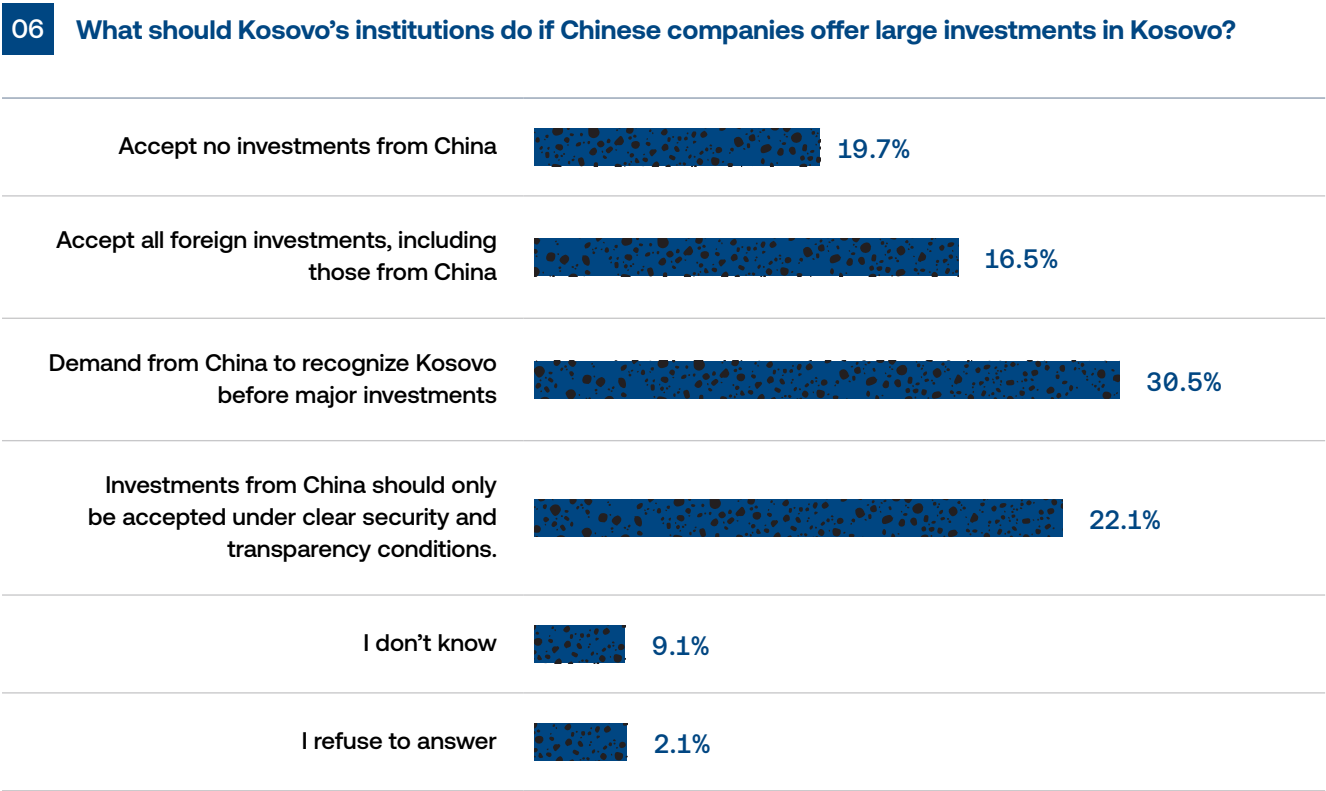
Even in terms of the economy, the main orientation remains Western. The US (37.0%) and the EU with its member states (30.4%) emerge as the main desired economic partners. Germany, despite being part of the EU, stands out as an important partner. China ranks very low in economic preferences, indicating that citizens do not see economic development as detached from the political and security orientation.

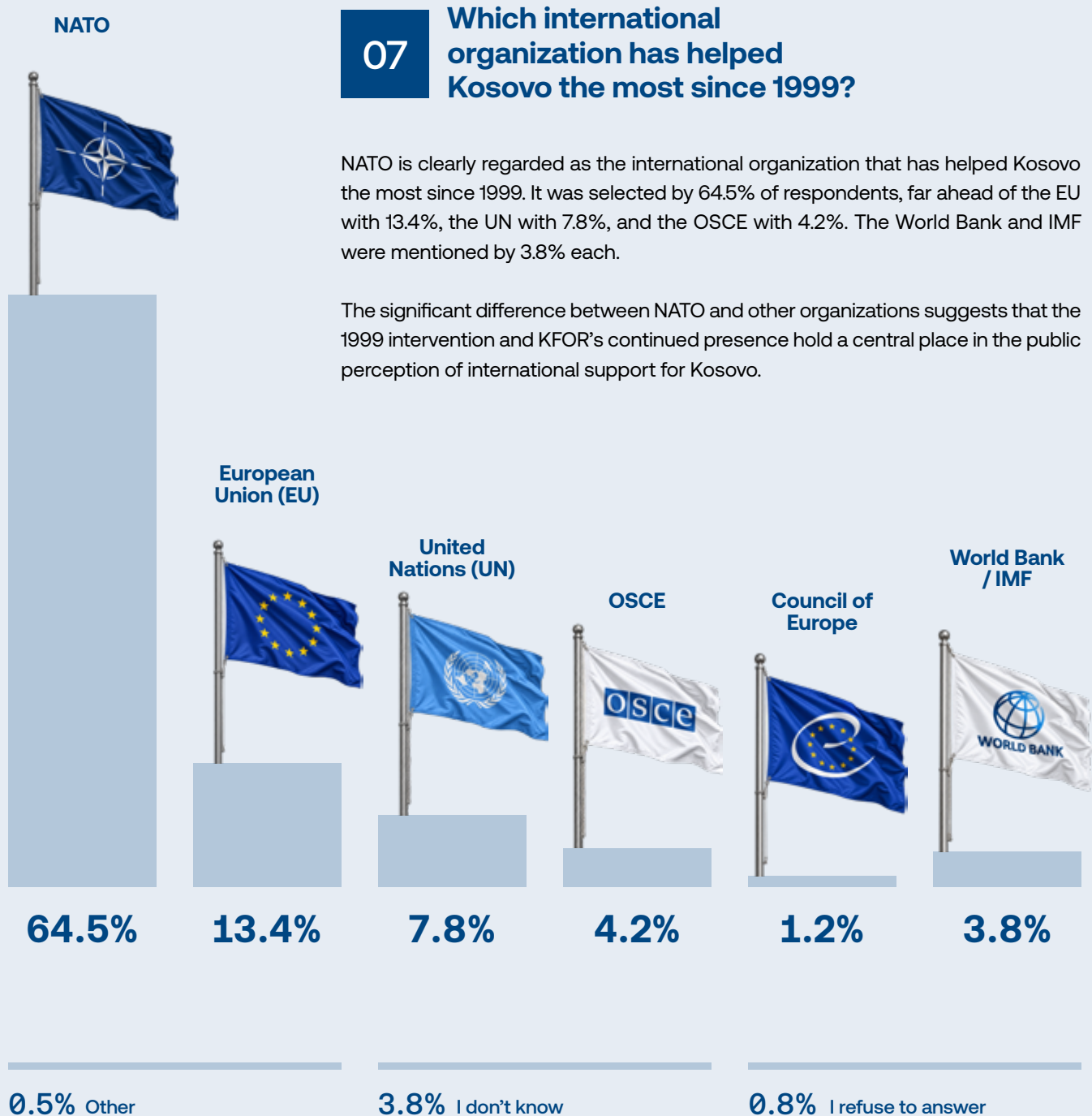
05

Which actor should be Kosovo's main economic partner in the coming years?



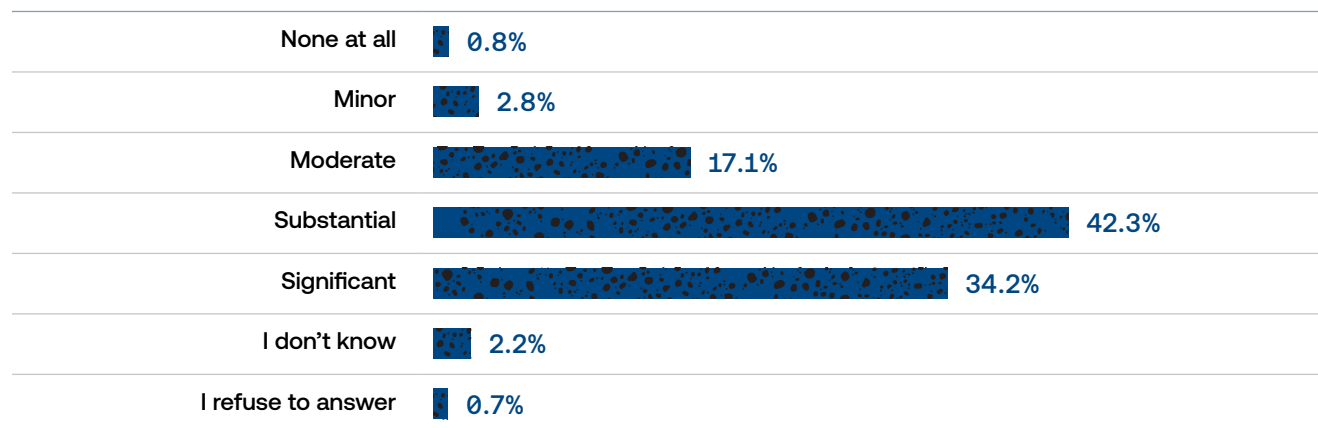
The attitude towards large Chinese investments is mostly conditional. About 30.5% of respondents would demand that China recognize Kosovo before such investments are made, while 22.1% would support accepting said investments only under clear security conditions and with full transparency. Another 19.7% of respondents oppose accepting Chinese investments; conversely, 16.5% support all foreign investments without exception. These scores show that economic benefit is not the only criterion in evaluating Chinese investments; recognition of statehood and protection of security interests carry considerable weight.





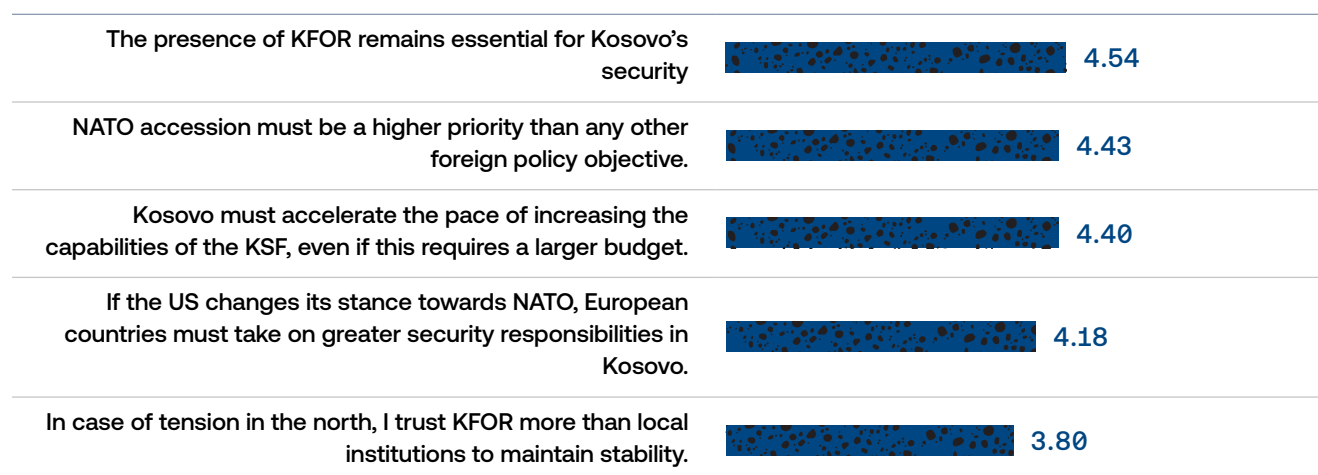
NATO's and KFOR's contribution to Kosovo's current security is highly appreciated by the majority of citizens. An overwhelming 76.5% of respondents rate the contribution as high or very high, whereas 17.1% categorize it as average. Only 3.6% think its contribution is low or none at all. The predominance of positive assessments indicates that the international security presence continues to be seen as an important support for the country's stability.

08 How high do you think is NATO/KFOR's contribution to Kosovo's security today?



Public support remains robust for both the continued presence of KFOR and the strengthening of Kosovo's national defense. On a scale from 1 to 5, the necessity of KFOR's presence averages 4.54, the strengthening of KSF capacities 4.43, and NATO membership as a priority 4.40. The call for European states to assume more responsibility in case of changes in the US policy on NATO averaged 4.18, while the perceived risk of northern tensions resulting from a reduced US and KFOR presence followed closely at 3.80. This ranking shows a strong orientation towards Euro-Atlantic security, alongside support for stronger local capacities.

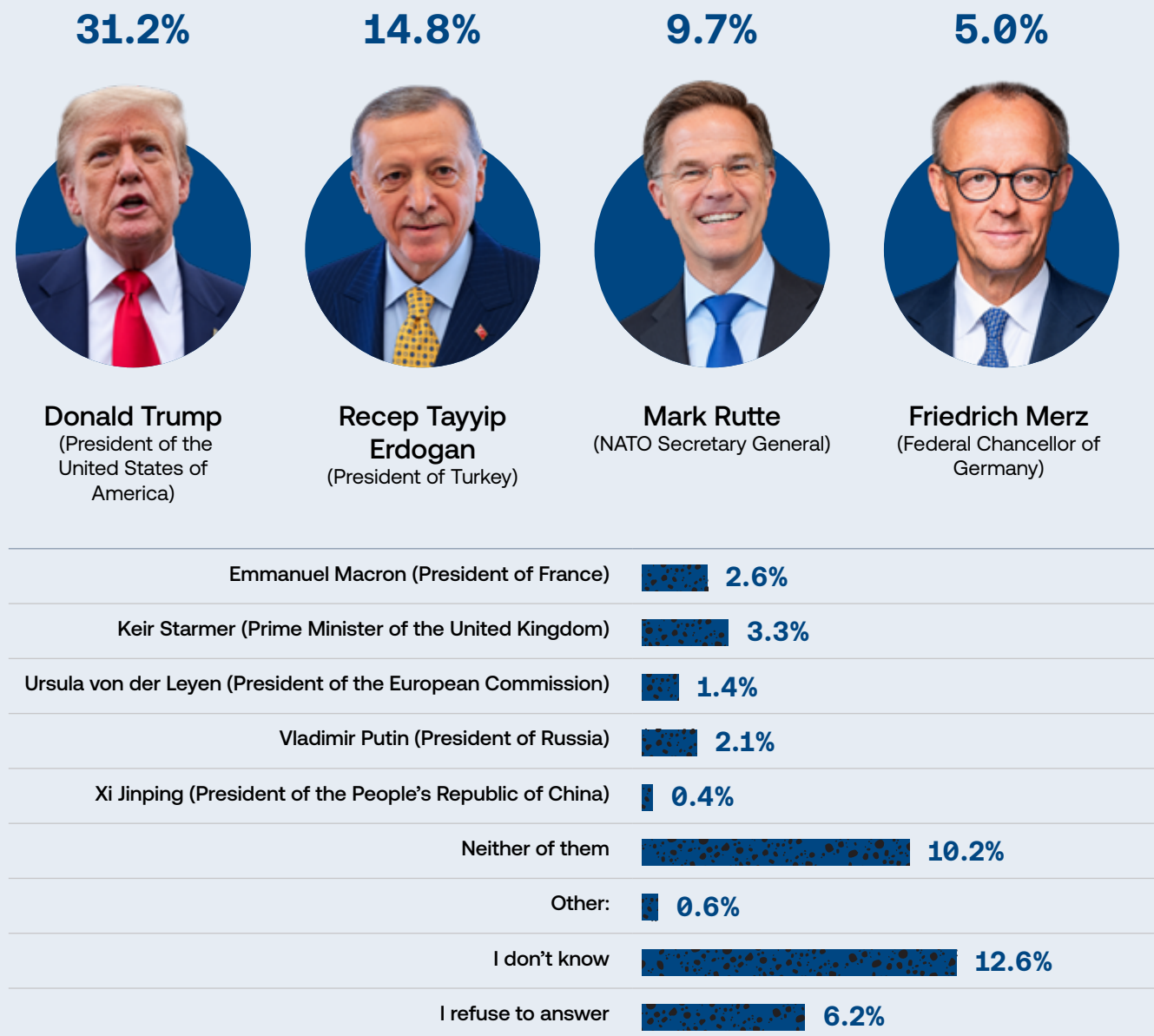
09 How much do you agree with the following statements about NATO and security? (Where 1 = don't agree at all; 5 = fully agree.)



Donald Trump is the international figure who receives the most positive ratings on this question, by 31.2% of respondents. He is followed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan with 14.8% and Mark Rutte with 9.7%. Meanwhile, 10.2% selected none of the listed leaders, 12.6% do not know, and 6.2% refuse to answer. Trump has a comparative lead, but preferences for him remain fragmented and do not constitute support from the majority of respondents.

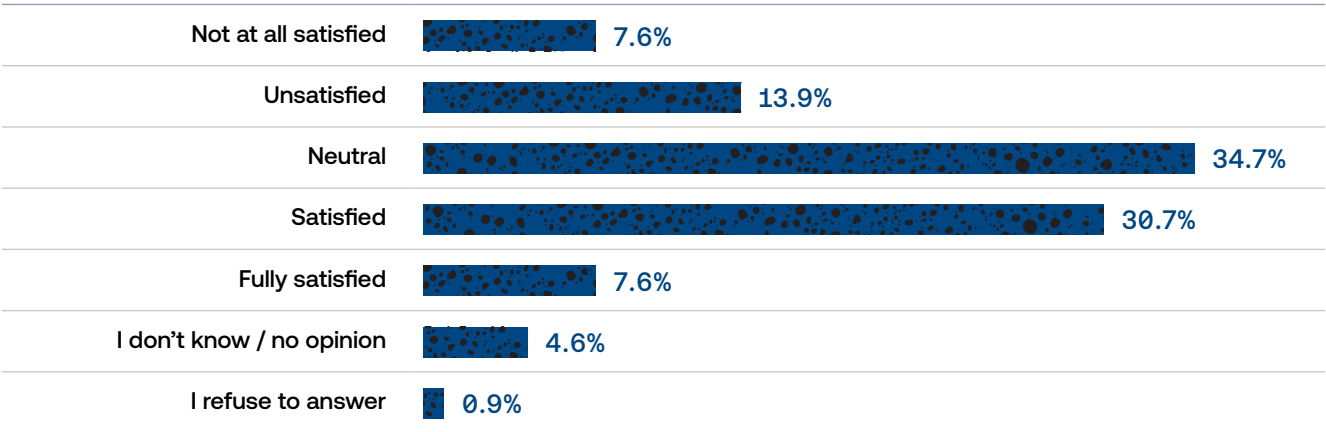
10

Which of these leaders or international officials do you rate most positively?



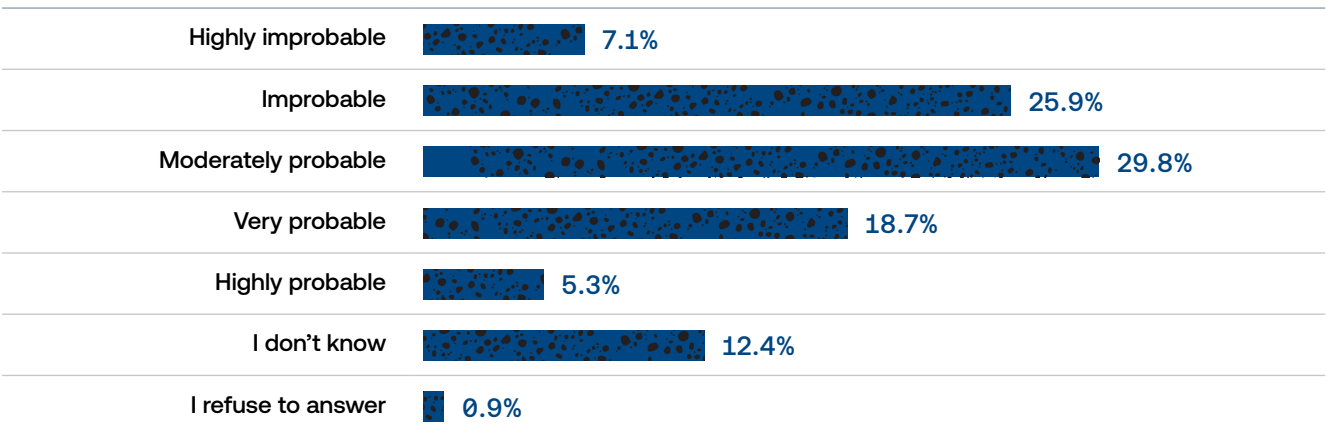
Satisfaction with Donald Trump as an international leader leans more toward positive assessments. About 38.3% are satisfied or fully satisfied, while 21.5% are dissatisfied or not satisfied at all. The largest individual category is neutral, with 34.7%, while 5.5% have no opinion or refuse to answer. This score shows a positive trend, but the high percentage of neutral responses limits the conclusion on the existence of broad and firm support.

11 How satisfied are you with Donald Trump as an international leader?



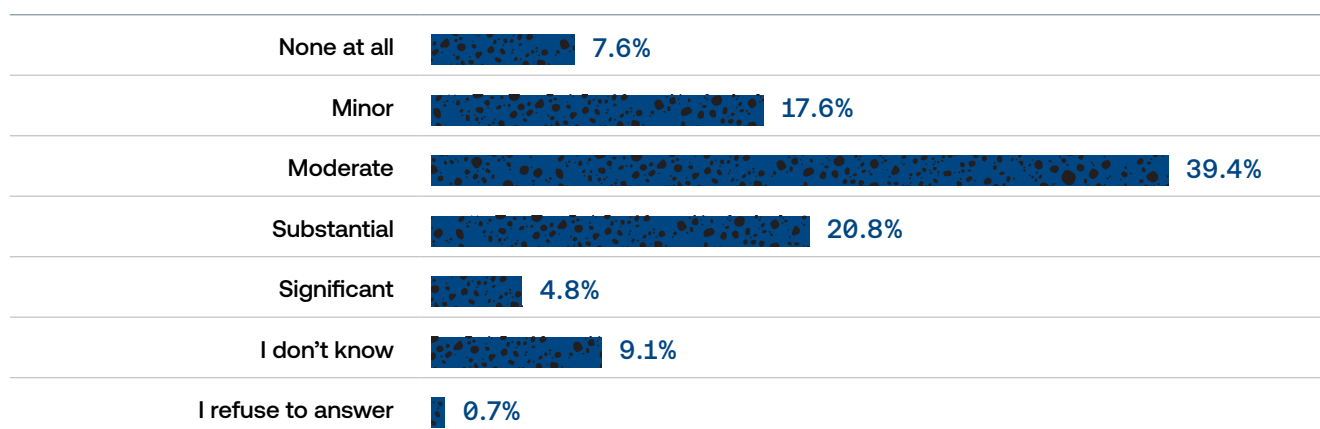
Data indicates highly divergent assessments regarding a possible pullback in US engagement toward NATO and European security during the Trump administration. Specifically, 33.0% of respondents view this outcome as unlikely or highly improbable, 29.8% consider it moderately likely, and 24.0% evaluate it as likely or highly probable. The remaining share do not know or refuse to answer. There is no clear expectation of US withdrawal, although a significant share of citizens consider it an option that should be taken into account.

12 How likely is it that the US, under the Trump administration, will reduce its commitment to European security and NATO?



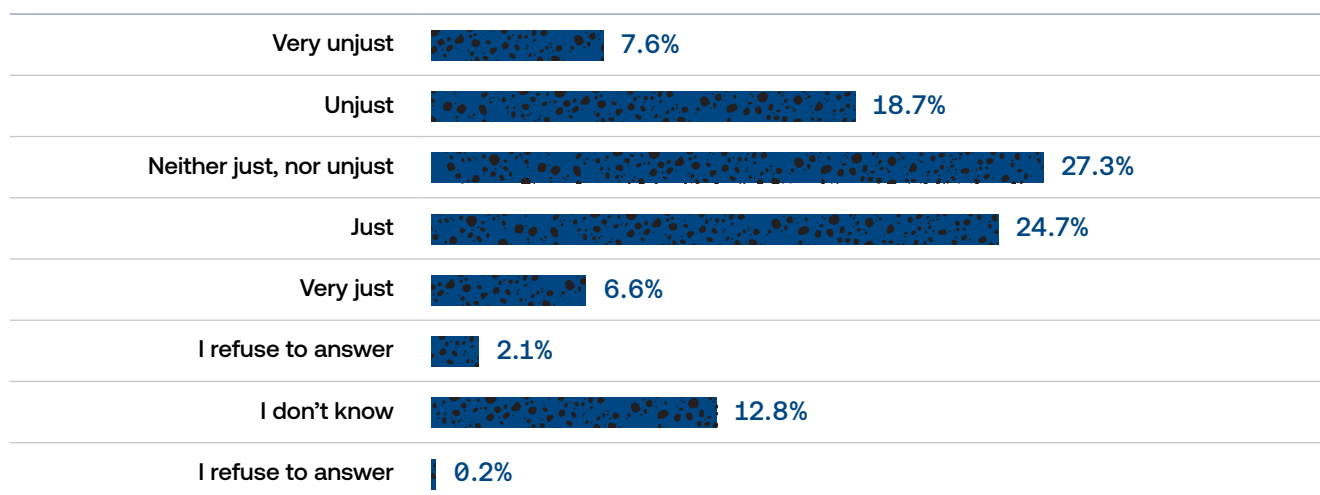
Public trust in Donald Trump's ability to broker a Kosovo-Serbia agreement within the next two years are primarily moderate. Specifically, 39.4% of respondents express a moderate level of trust, while 25.6% report a high or very high level of trust, and 25.2% indicate low or non-existent trust. High and low evaluations are almost equal. This shows that citizens accept the possibility of US influence in the process, but they do not have a dominant belief that this influence will bring an agreement within the mentioned deadline.

13 How high is your level of trust in Donald Trump pushing Kosovo and Serbia toward an agreement within the next two years?



Assessments of the fairness of a Kosovo-Serbia agreement reached with strong US mediation during the Trump administration are divided. About 31.3% think it would be fair or very fair for Kosovo, while 26.3% see it as unfair or very unfair. Another 27.3% considers it neither fair nor unfair. Because this positive trend is mild and falls short of a majority, the data suggests that US mediation alone is insufficient to guarantee public acceptance of an agreement under current circumstances.

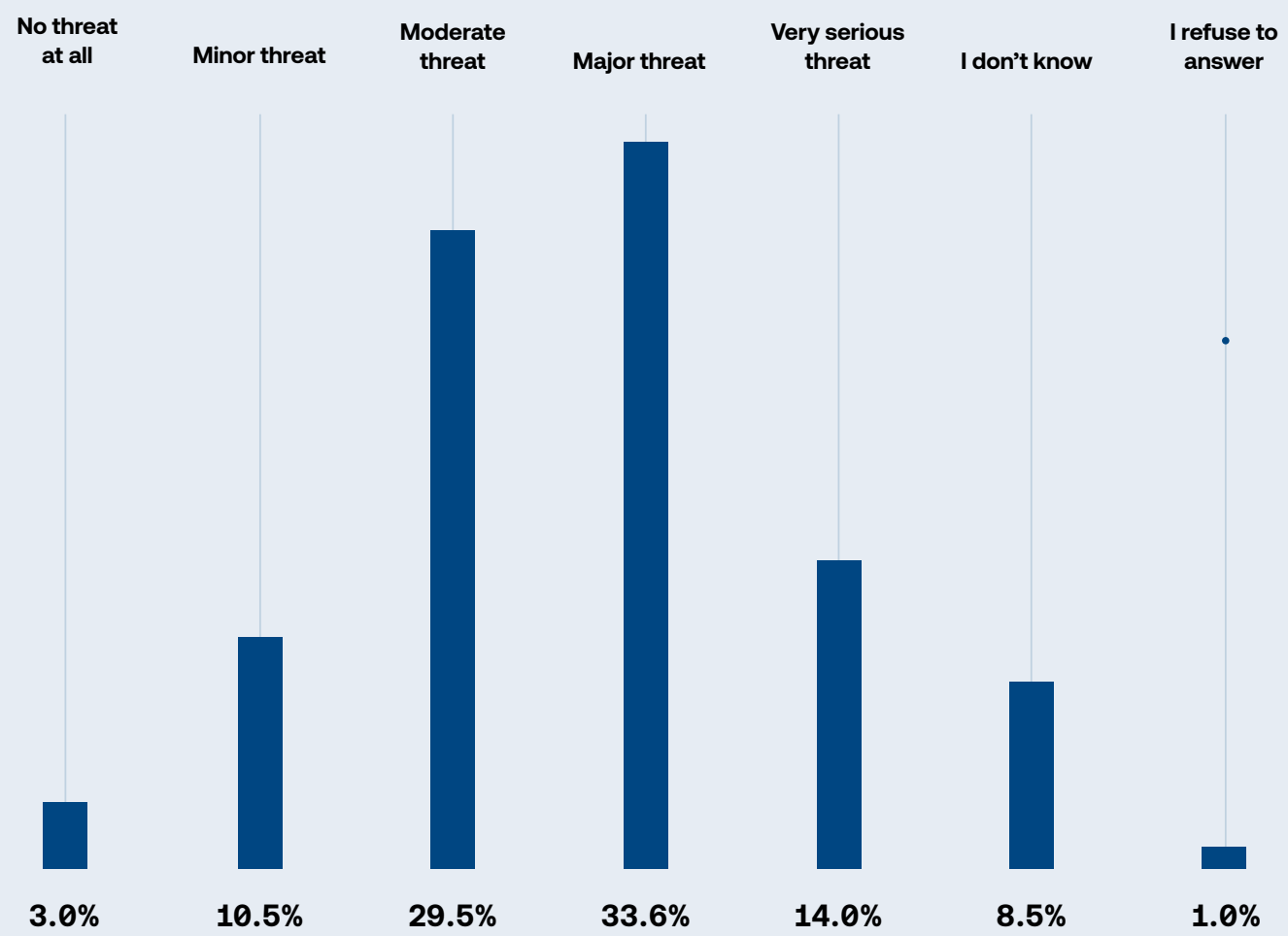
14 If a Kosovo- Serbia agreement is reached with strong American mediation during the Trump administration, how just or unjust do you think it would be for Kosovo?



Russian influence in the Balkans is perceived as a significant threat to Kosovo’s security. About 47.6% consider it a major or very serious threat, while 29.5% consider it a moderate threat. Only 13.5% consider it a minor or no threat at all; 9.5% do not know or refuse to answer.

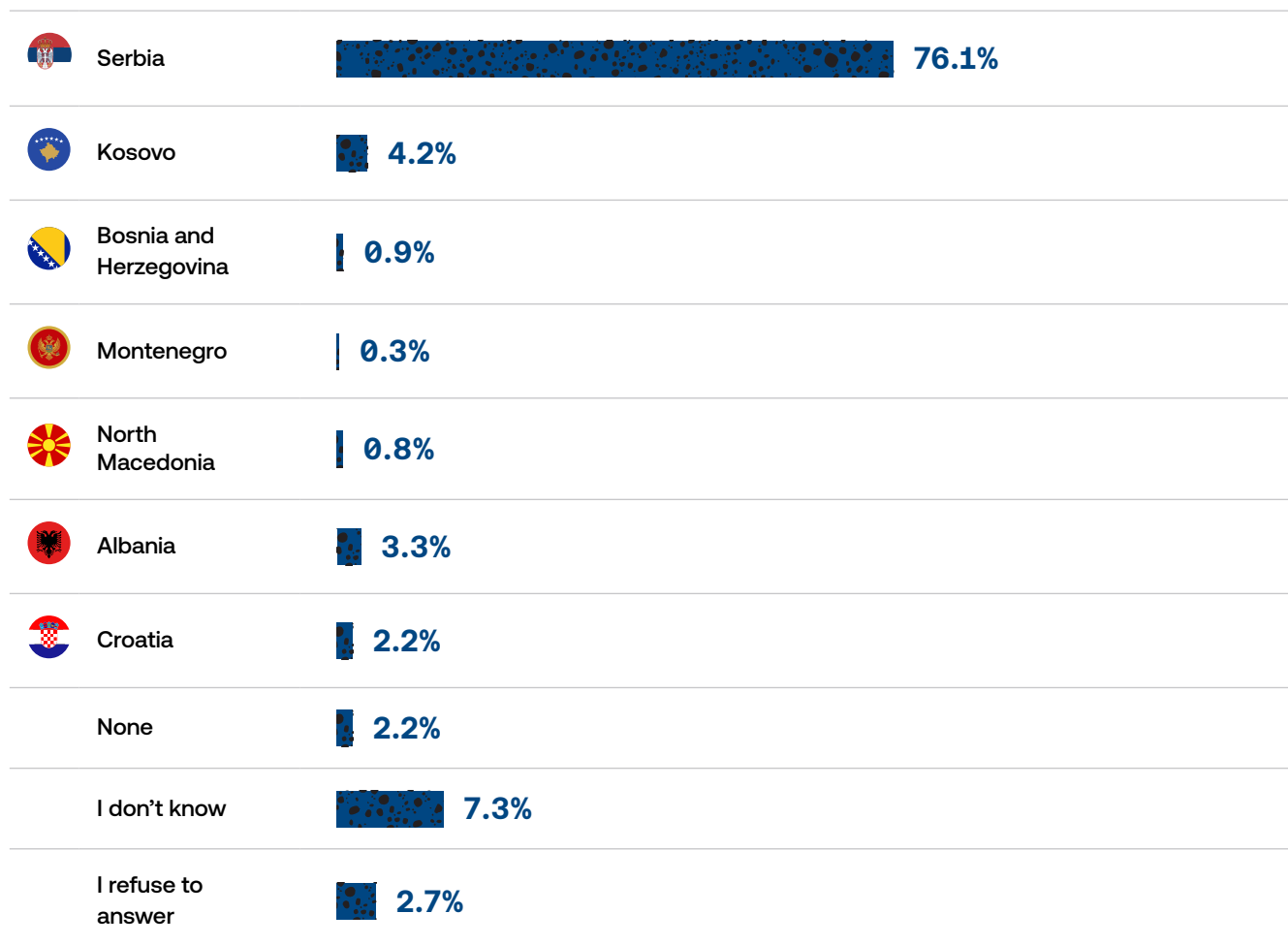
The concentration of responses in the moderate and high categories indicates that Russian influence holds an important place in citizens’ security concerns.

15 How much do you consider Russian influence in the Balkans as a threat to Kosovo’s security?



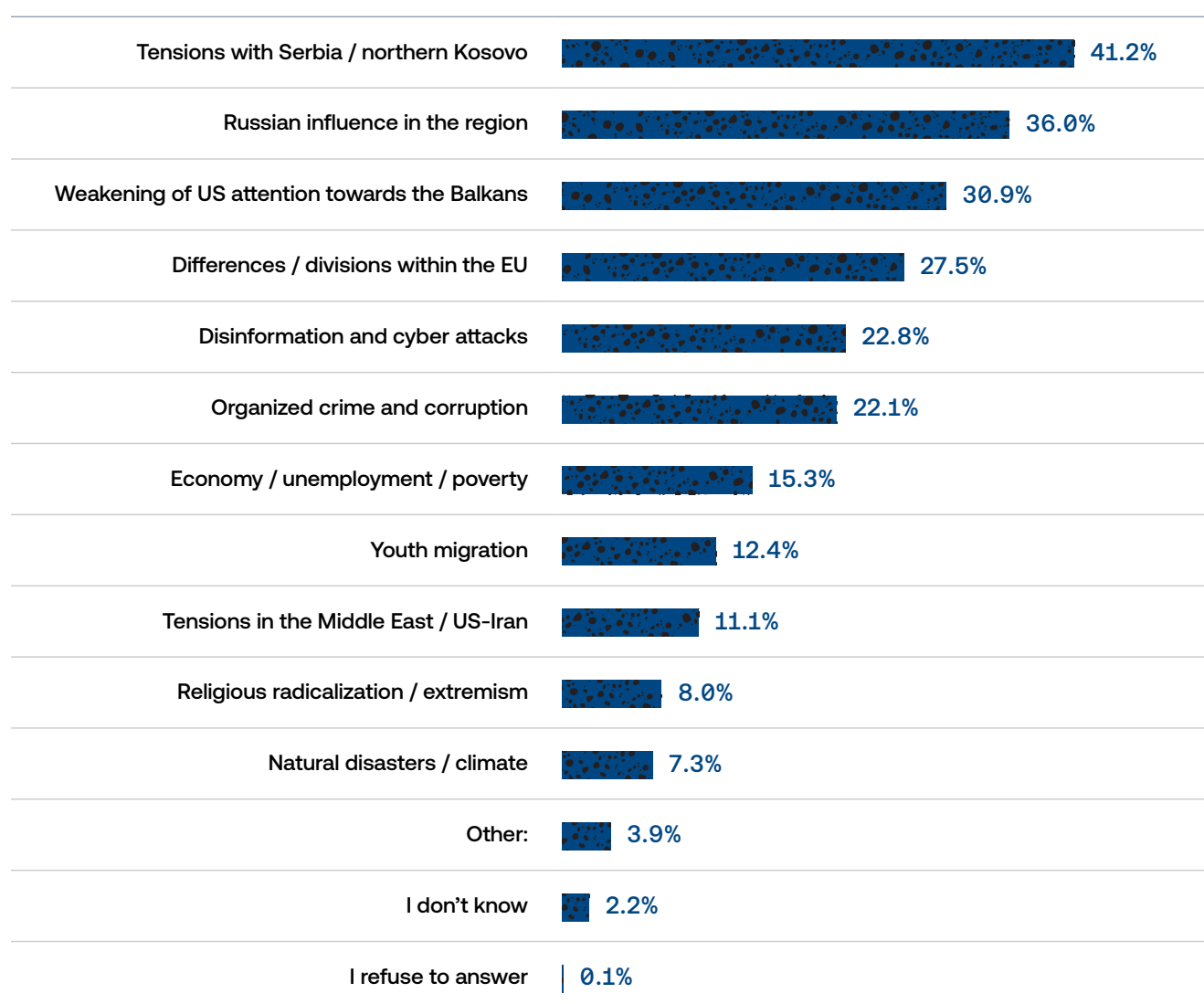
Serbia is identified by the majority of respondents as the country that poses the greatest threat to the security of the Western Balkans. It is selected by 76.1%, while no other country exceeds 4.2%. About 7.3% do not know, and 2.7% refuse to answer. This marked variance strongly suggests that public perceptions of regional security in Kosovo are primarily tied to Serbia and the state of bilateral relations.

16 Which country in the region poses the greatest threat to the security of the Western Balkans?



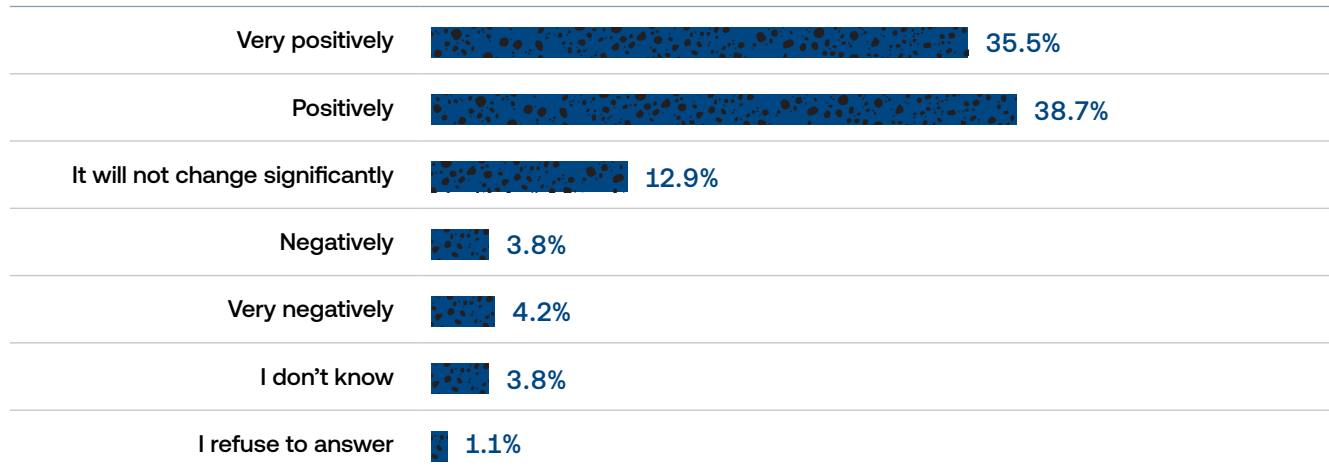
In response to the question about the three most serious threats to Kosovo's security over the next three years, tensions with Serbia and the situation in northern Kosovo are the most mentioned threats for the next three years, selected by 41.2% of respondents. They are followed by the economy, unemployment, and poverty (standing at 36.0%), and youth migration (30.9%). Russian influence is mentioned by 27.5%, weakened US attention to the Balkans by 22.8%, and organized crime and corruption by 22.1%. Since up to three threats could be selected, these percentages represent the share of respondents who mention each option. The ranking shows that security is understood as an issue that simultaneously includes both external risks and the country's economic and institutional problems.

17 What are the three most serious threats to Kosovo's security in the next three years:



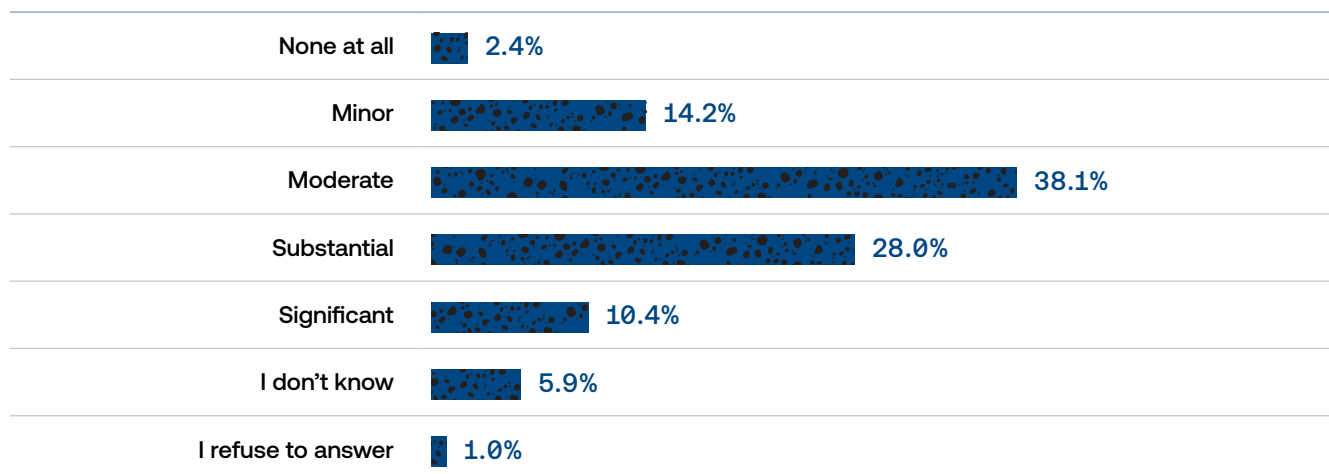
Kosovo's investments in strengthening defense and security capacities enjoy broad public support. About 74.2% rate them positively or very positively, while only 8.0% view them negatively or very negatively. Another 12.9% think they will not significantly change the situation. The large difference between positive and negative assessments shows that strengthening security capacities is a direction clearly supported by the majority of citizens.

18 In recent years, Kosovo has invested more in strengthening its defense and security capabilities. How do you assess this?



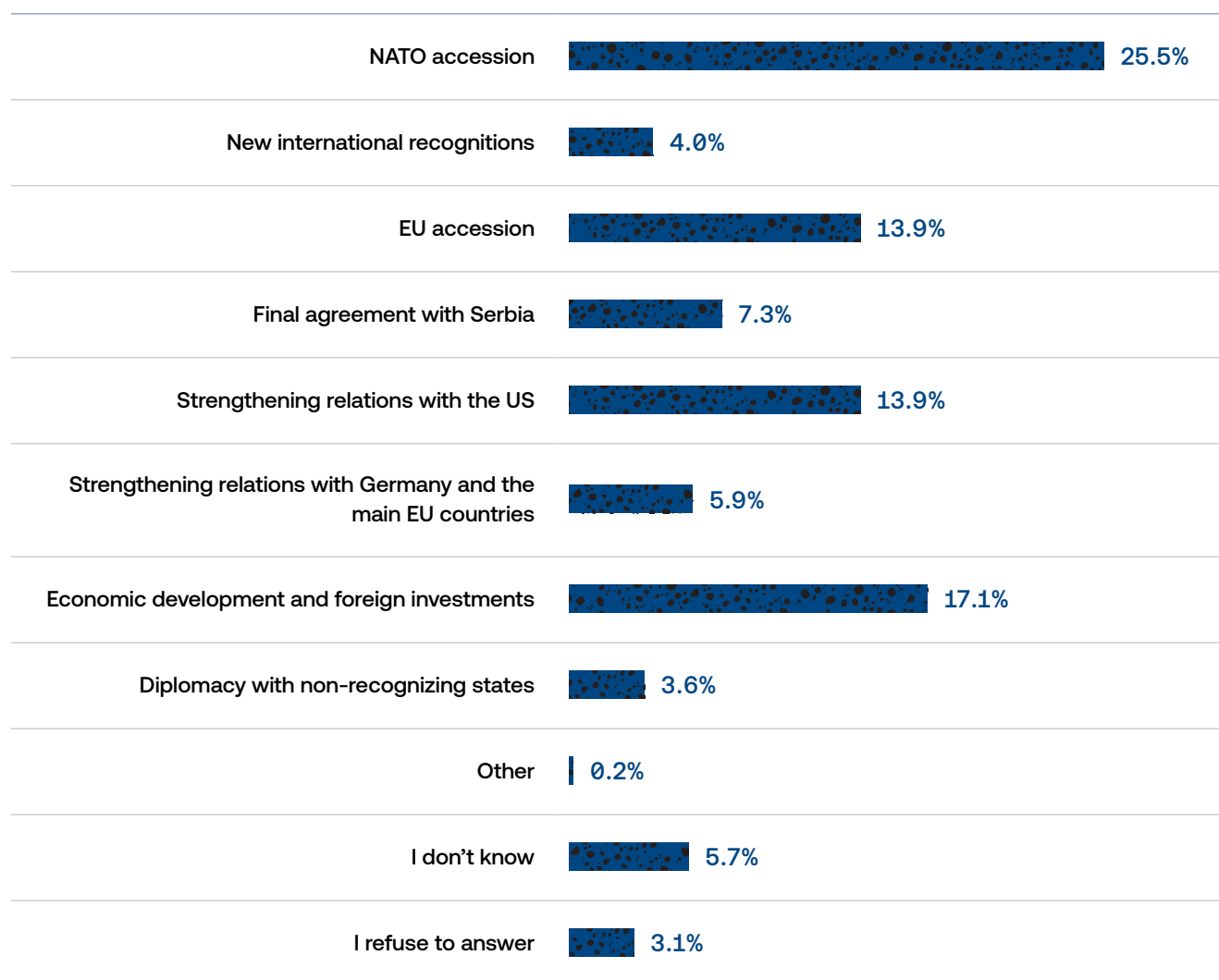
US-Iran tensions and developments in the Middle East are seen as developments that could affect Kosovo's security and economy. About 38.4% expect a large or major impact, while 38.1% expect a moderate impact. Only 16.6% think the impact will be small or none at all. These scores show that the majority of citizens consider Kosovo exposed to global developments, although the answers do not specify the exact mechanism or direction of this impact.

19 How high do you think will be the impact of US-Iran tensions and developments in the Middle East on Kosovo's security and economy?



NATO membership is the most selected priority for Kosovo's foreign policy over the next five years, selected by 25.5% of respondents. It is followed by economic development and foreign investments (17.1%), while the strengthening relations with the US and EU membership each account for 13.9%. 7.3% selected the final agreement with Serbia, while 4.0% selected new international recognitions. Although there is no priority supported by the majority, the ranking highlights security, economic development, and relations with Western partners as the main desired directions.

20 What should Kosovo's main foreign policy priority be in the next five years?

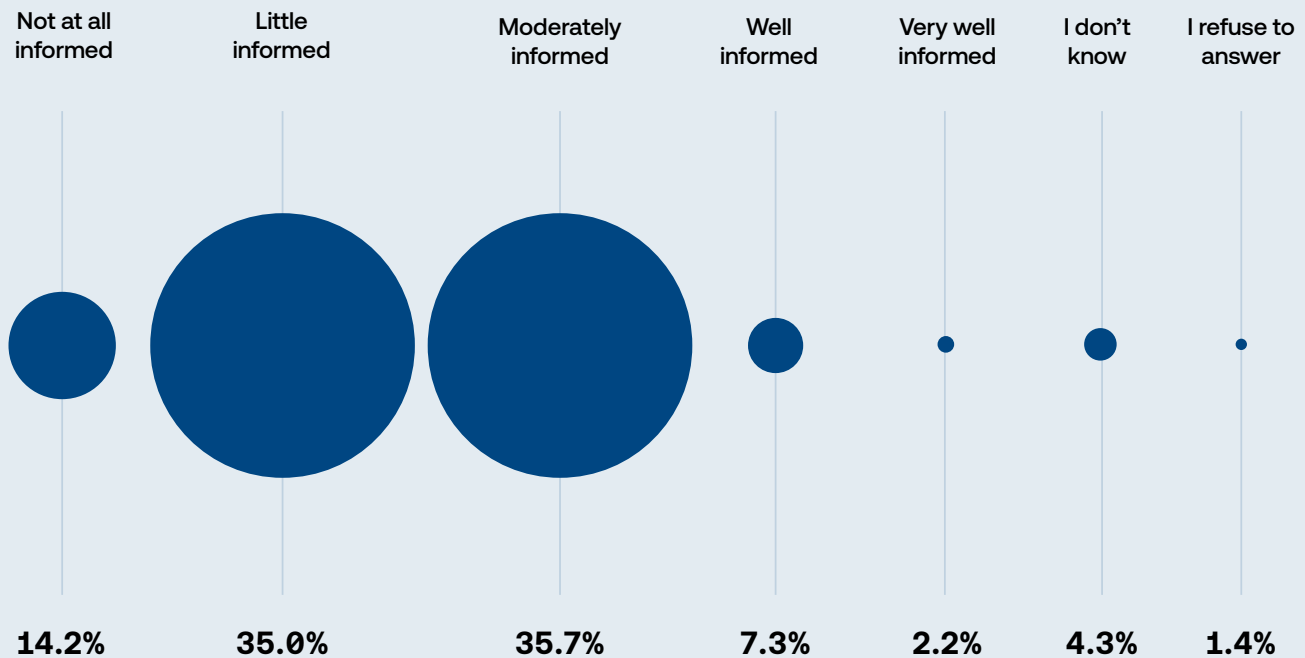


2. Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue

In the second section of the survey, respondents were asked about their perception of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.

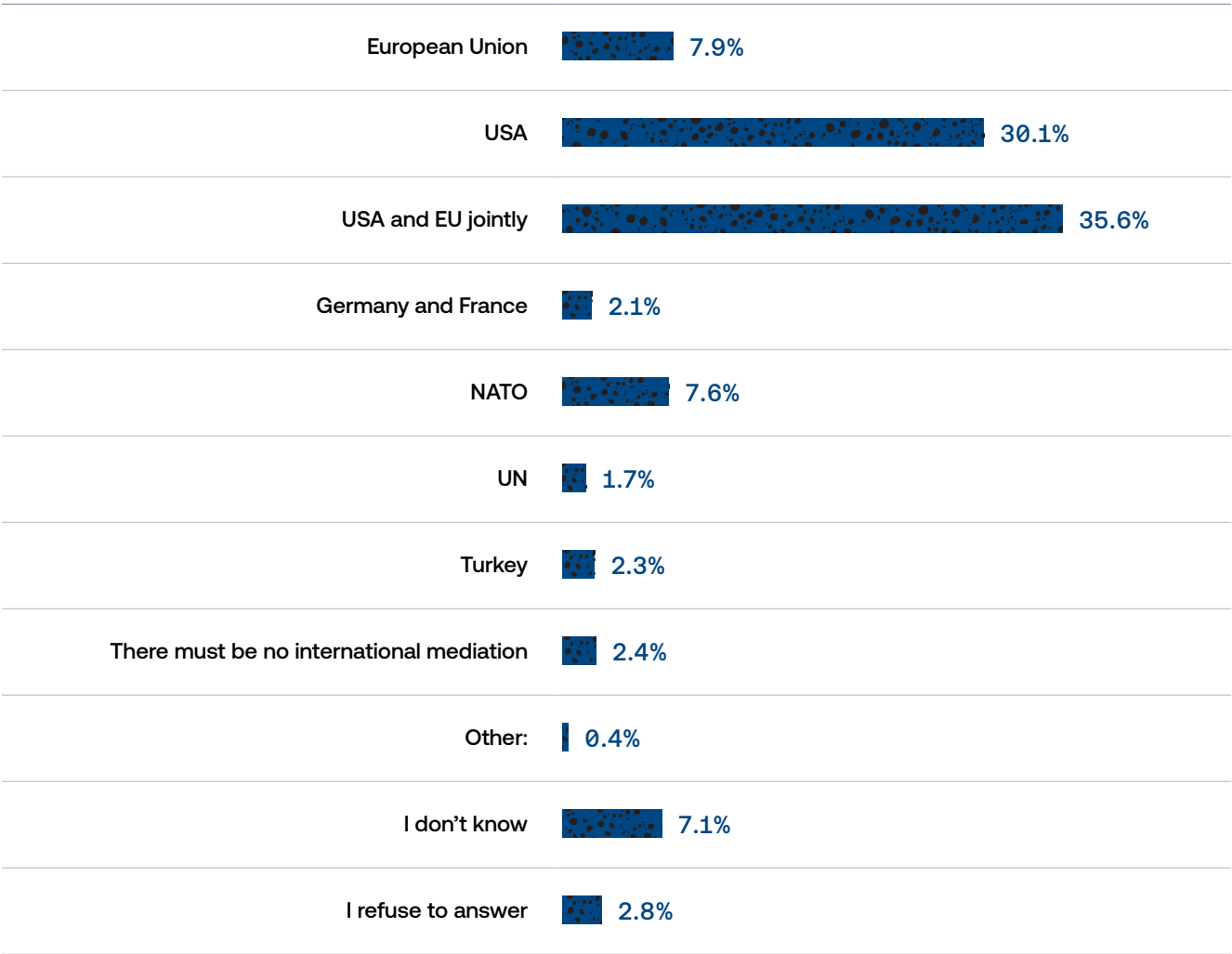
The self-declared level of information about the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue is limited. About 49.2% of respondents say they are little or not at all informed, while 35.7% rate their information as moderate. Only 9.5% state that they are well or very well informed.

21 How well do you consider yourself informed about the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue process?



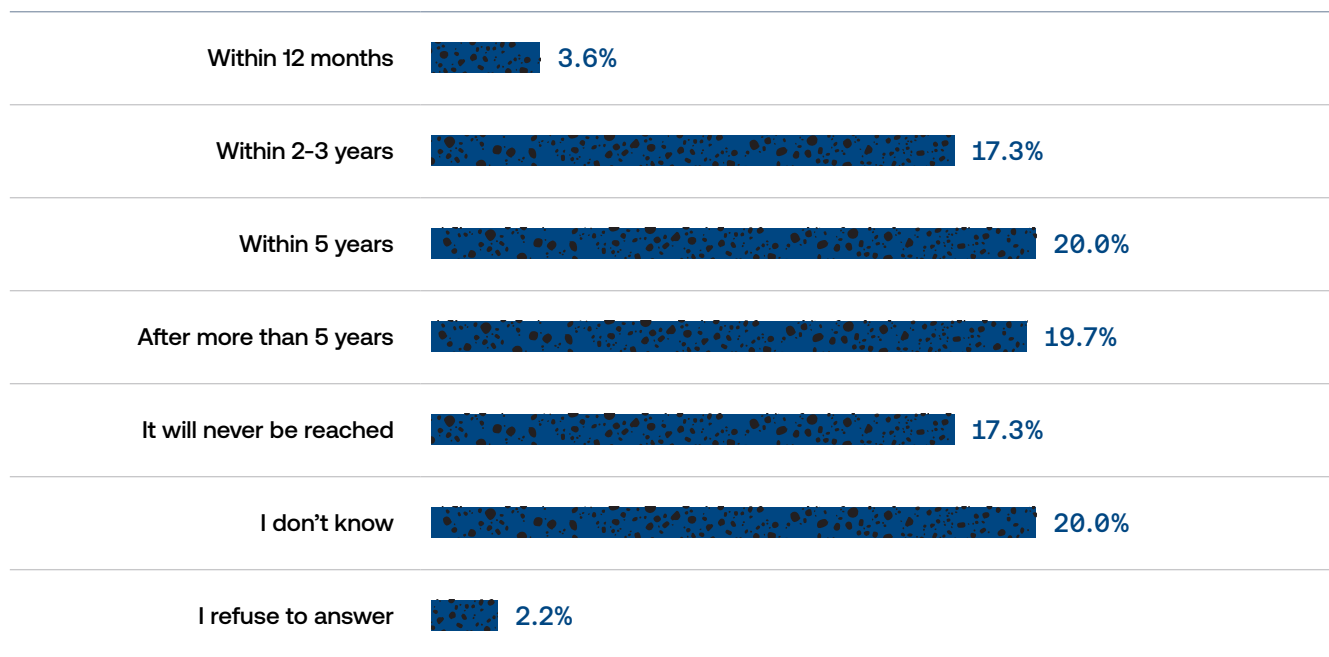
Joint mediation by the US and the EU is the most preferred alternative for leading the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, selected by 35.6% of respondents. The US, in a separate leading role, is preferred by 30.1%, while 7.9% selected the EU as the principal mediator. NATO is mentioned by 7.6%. Both alternatives involving the US together receive 65.7% of preferences, indicating that US engagement is a central element in citizen preferences on who should be mediating the process.

22 Which international actor should play the main role in mediating the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue?



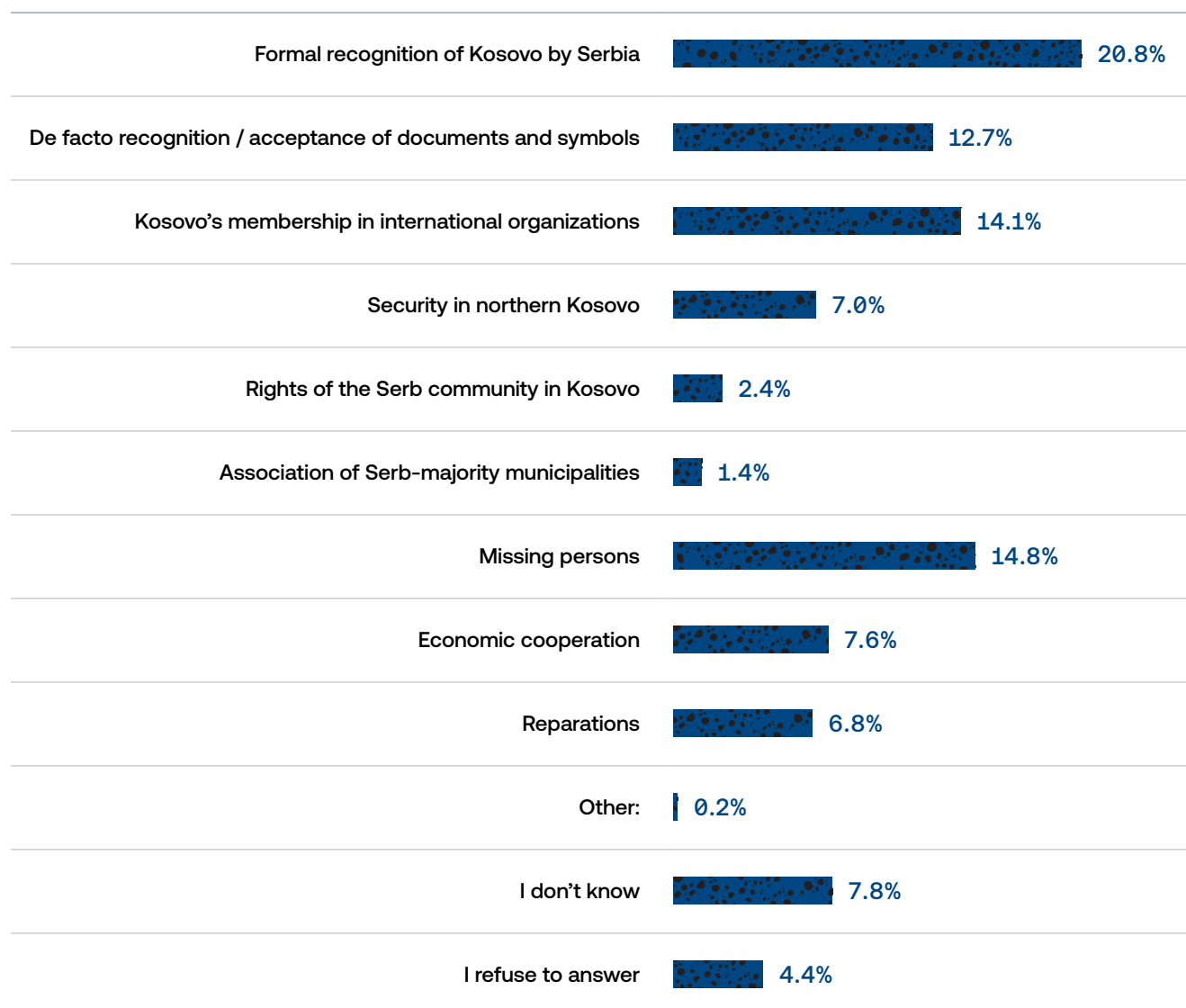
Public expectations regarding the timeline for a final Kosovo-Serbia agreement are highly fragmented. Only 3.6% expect an agreement within 12 months, 17.3% within two to three years, and 20.0% within five years. Meanwhile, 19.7% think it will take more than five years and 17.3% believe the agreement will never be reached. 20.0% of respondents have no opinion on this topic. This distribution indicates low expectations for an imminent solution and considerable uncertainty about the completion of the process.

23 When do you think a final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia can be reached?



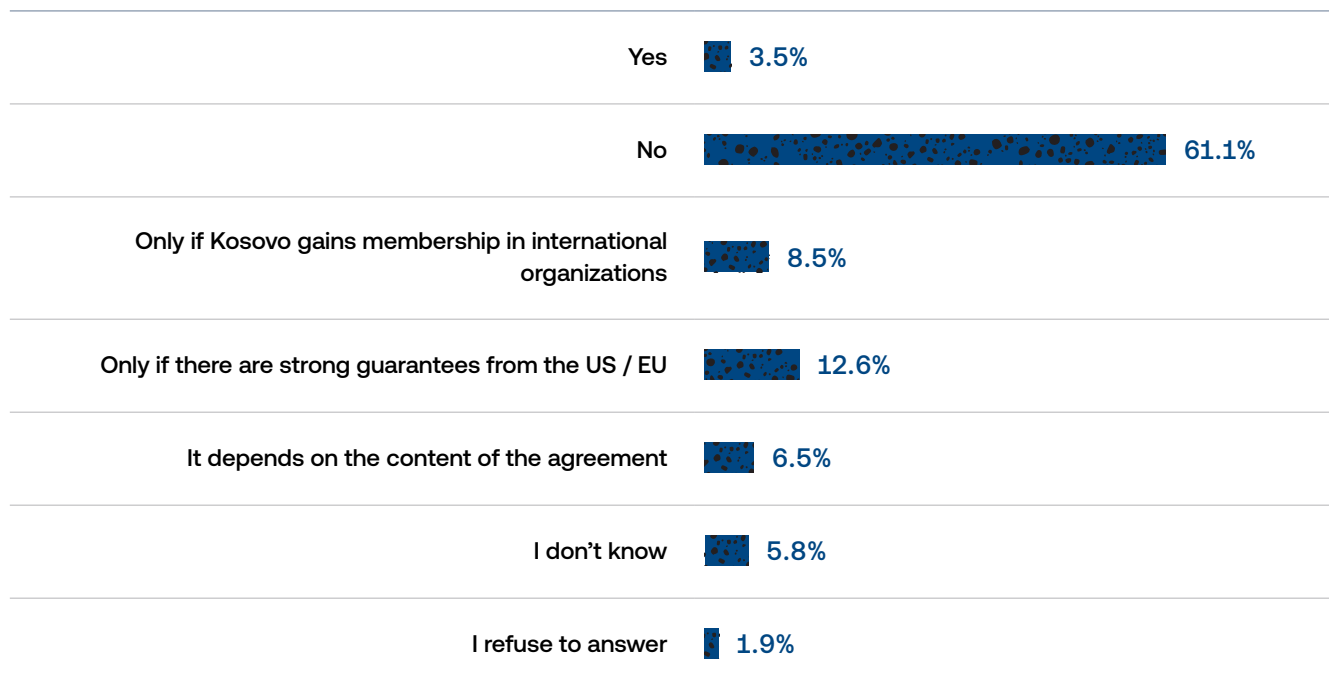
Formal recognition of Kosovo by Serbia is the most selected element as the most important factor towards reaching a final agreement, selected by 20.8% of respondents. It is followed by missing persons (14.8%), membership in international organizations (14.1%), and de facto recognition (12.7%). Economic cooperation is selected by 7.6% of respondents, while security in the north by 7.0%. Formal recognition is in the lead, but the distribution of responses shows that citizens have different expectations about the outcome of the agreement, including international status, humanitarian issues, and security.

24 Which element should be the most important in a final Kosovo-Serbia agreement?



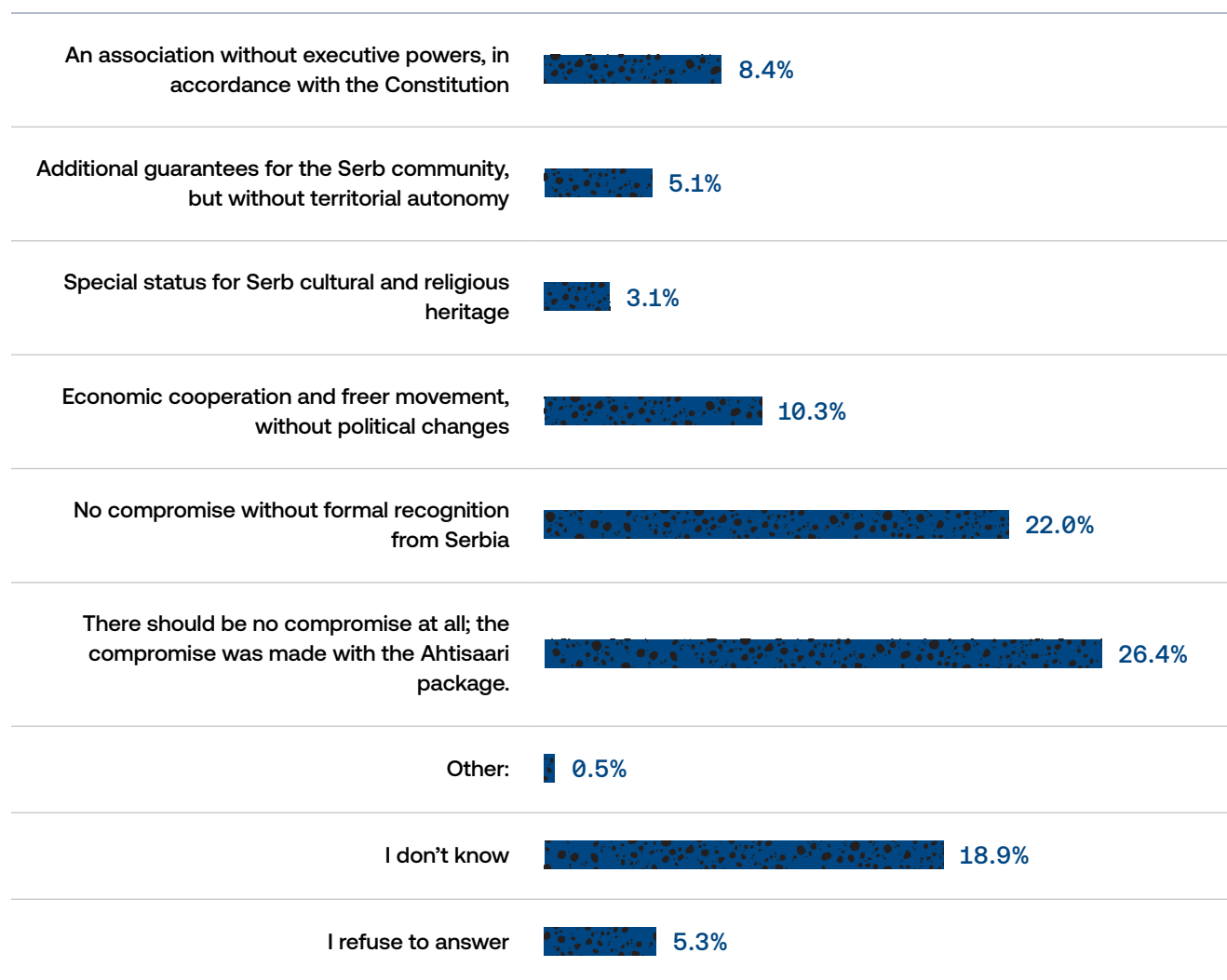
The majority of citizens oppose accepting an agreement that does not include formal recognition by Serbia. This view is expressed by 61.1%, while only 3.5% would directly accept such an agreement. About 12.6% would accept it only with strong guarantees from the US and the EU, 8.5% only if Kosovo gains membership in international organizations, and 6.5% depending on the content of the agreement. Consequently, formal recognition remains a non-negotiable threshold for the majority, while any potential paths toward acceptance without recognition are heavily conditional.

25 Should Kosovo accept an agreement that does not include formal recognition by Serbia?



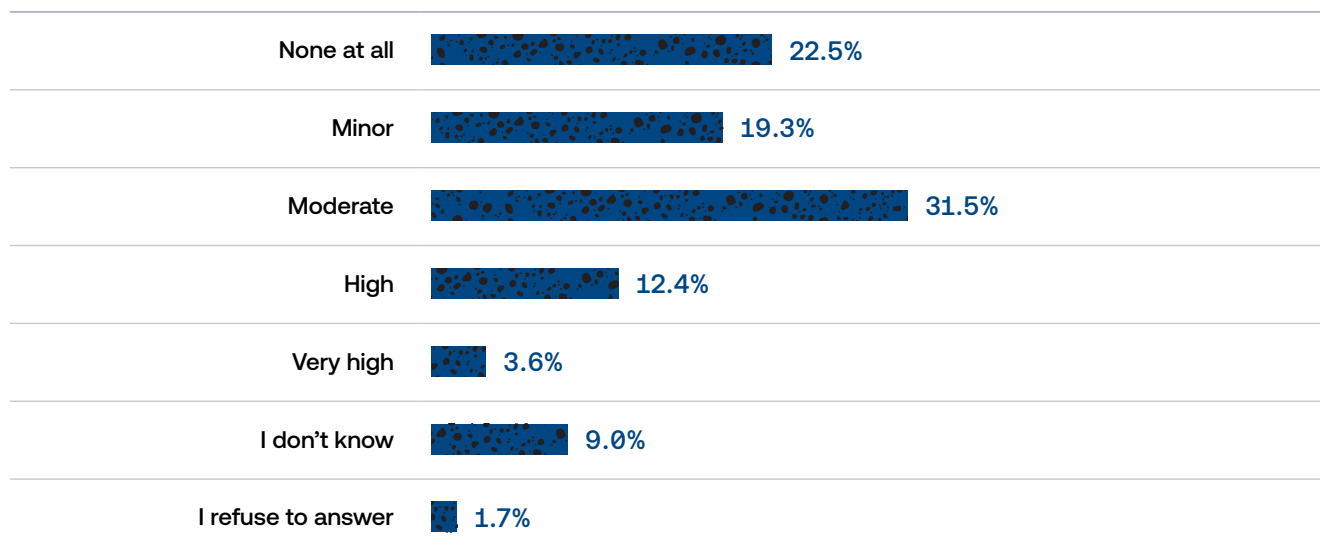
The willingness for compromise in the dialogue is limited. About 26.4% believe there should be no other compromise, as it was made with the Ahtisaari Package, while 22.0% oppose any compromise without formal recognition from Serbia. Economic cooperation and freer movement without political changes are selected by 10.3%, while the Association without executive powers and in accordance with the Constitution is selected by 8.4%. A significant share of 18.9% have no opinion on this issue. The responses show that alternatives against additional compromise or those that condition it on recognition, have more support than any concrete compromise offered.

26 What is the biggest compromise Kosovo can accept in the dialogue?



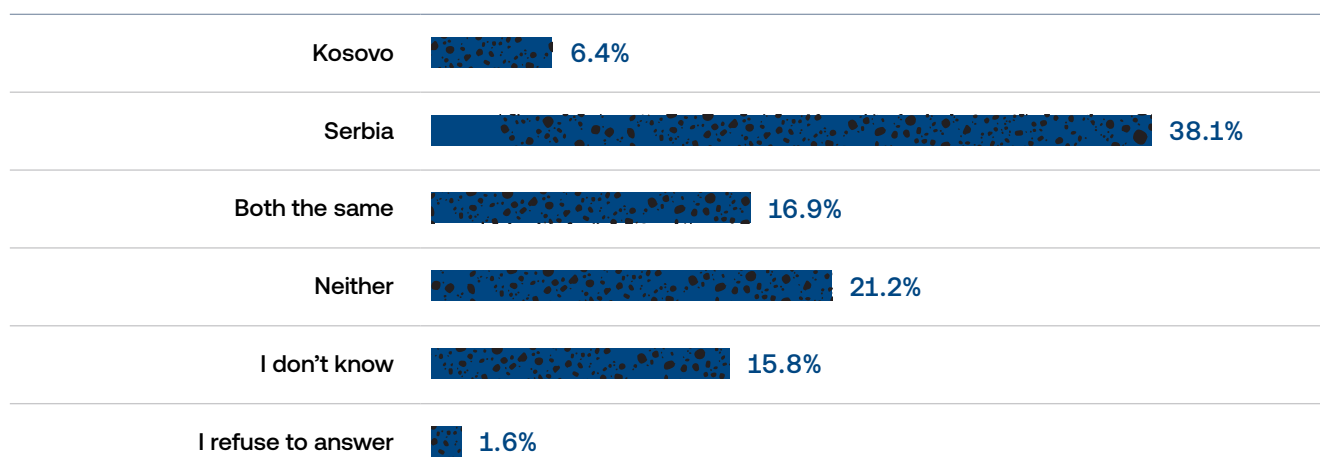
Public expectations regarding the positive impact of a final Kosovo-Serbia agreement on individual well-being remain modest. About 41.7% expect little or no improvement, while 31.5% expect moderate improvement and 16.0% expect substantial or significant improvement. About 10.7% do not know or refuse to answer. The dominance of low expectations over high ones suggests that citizens do not easily associate the agreement with a noticeable change in their daily lives.

27 How high is your belief that a final Kosovo-Serbia agreement would improve your personal life?



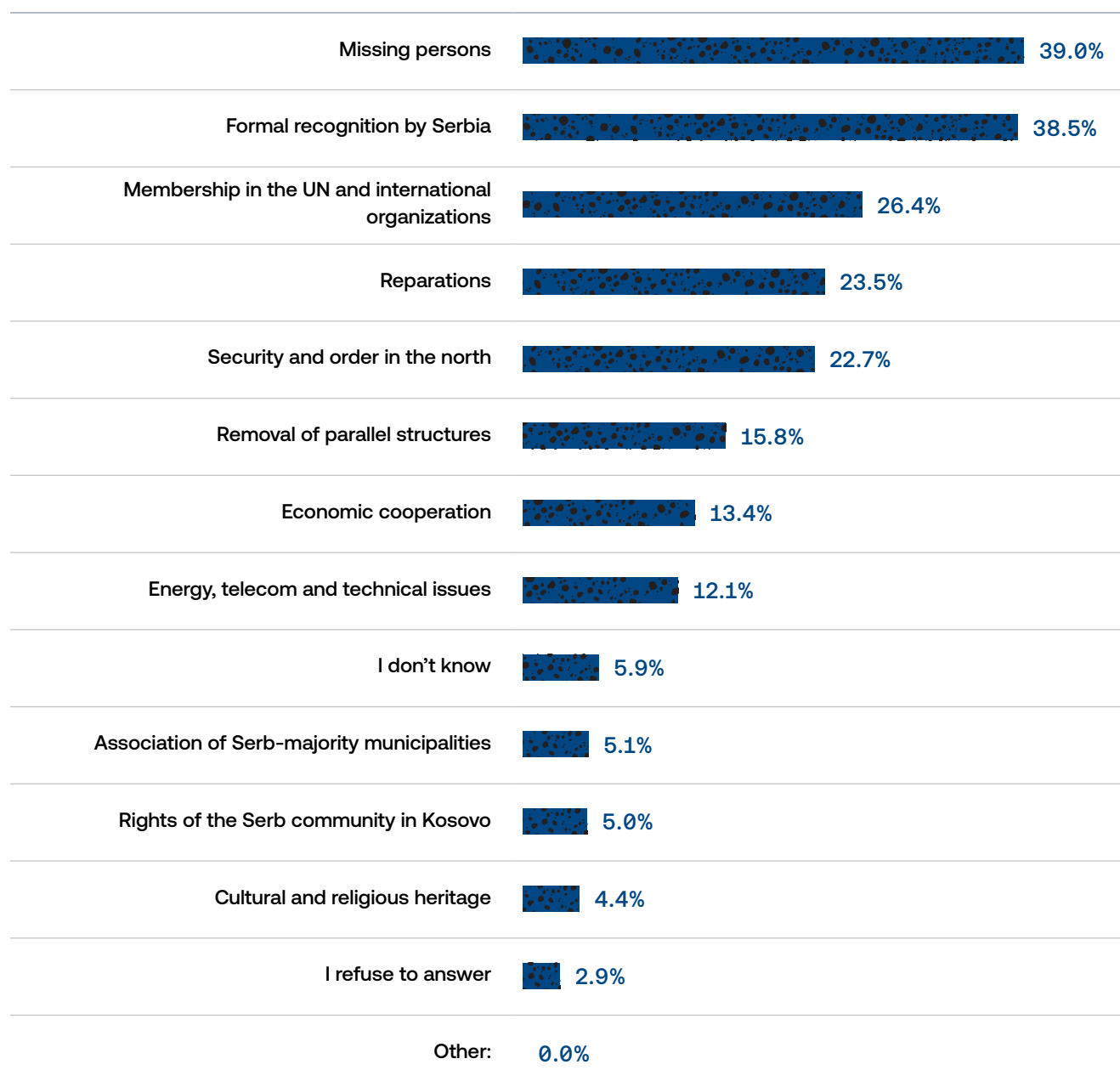
Serbia is perceived as the side that has, so far, benefited the most from the dialogue, selected by 38.1% of respondents. Only 6.4% believe that Kosovo has benefited the most, while 16.9% believe that both sides have benefited equally. Another 21.2% believe that neither side has benefited. The difference between the assessments of Serbia and Kosovo, along with the percentage that see no benefit for either side, indicates a critical perception of the current balance of the process.

28 In your opinion, which side has benefited the most so far from the dialogue process?



Missing persons and formal recognition by Serbia are the two most selected issues as priorities in the dialogue, by 39.0% and 38.5% of respondents respectively. They are followed by membership in the UN and international organizations, selected by 26.4%, reparations and reparations by 23.5%, as well as security and order in the north by 22.7%. The Association is mentioned by 5.1%, and the rights of the Kosovo-Serb community by 5.0%. These percentages represent the portion of respondents who selected each issue and should not be combined into a single distribution. The ranking highlights humanitarian issues, recognition, and security as the most important expectations of citizens from the dialogue.

29 Which issues should be Kosovo's priority in the dialogue with Serbia?

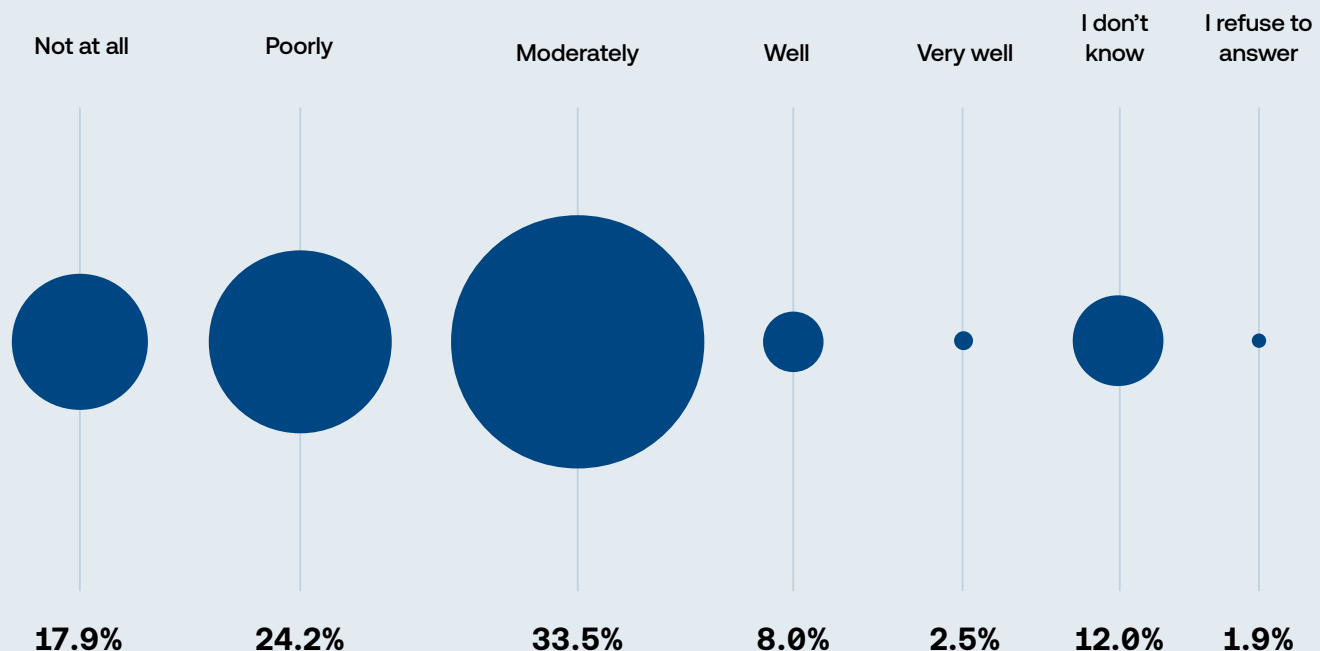


3. Ideological Positioning and Political Values

In the third part of the survey, respondents were asked about their ideological positioning.

Self-reported familiarity with the political concepts of the left, center, and right remains limited among respondents. Specifically, 42.1% of respondents report minimal to no understanding of these concepts, while 33.5% evaluate their comprehension as moderate. Only 10.5% state that their level of comprehension is high or very high, while 13.9% do not know or refuse to answer. This shows that ideological positioning should be read carefully, as a large portion of citizens do not feel confident using these categories.

30 How well do you think you comprehend the political concepts of “left”, “center”, and “right”?



Political self-positioning on the scale from 0 (left), to 10 (right), averages 5.74. This places the average slightly to the right of the midpoint of the scale. However, the average does not indicate how many citizens are positioned left, center, or right, nor how dispersed the responses are. Considering the limited comprehension of ideological concepts in the previous question, the score suggests a slight rightward tendency in self-reporting, without demonstrating a consistent ideological profile.

31 On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = left and 10 = right, where would you place yourself politically?



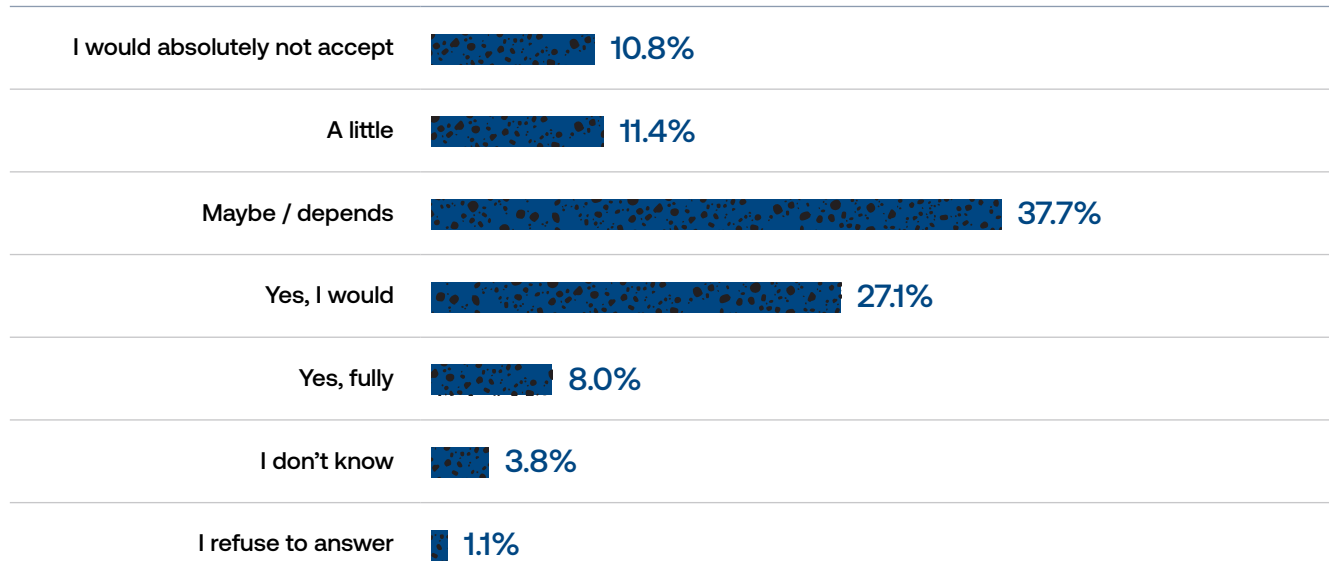
Attitudes toward the economy and the role of the state combine support for public intervention with some preferences in favor of business. On the 1–5 scale, price controls during the economic crisis averages 4.34, stronger standards for wages and working conditions 4.30, and the stronger unions 4.19. Lower taxes for businesses and mostly public ownership of strategic enterprises both receive 4.03. Meanwhile, the statement that government intervention in regulating businesses is harmful receives a score of 3.58. These scores indicate preferences that are not strictly divided along the left-right axis: citizens support state protection, but also the easing of the burden on businesses.

32 How much do you agree with the following statements about the economy and the role of the state?
(Where 1 = don't agree at all; 5 = fully agree.)

The state should better control the prices of basic products during an economic crisis.	4.34
The government must set stricter standards for wages and working conditions in the private sector.	4.30
Stronger unions are needed to protect workers.	4.19
Lower taxes for businesses create more jobs.	4.03
Strategic enterprises should remain primarily under public ownership.	4.03
More military spending is the best way to prevent war.	3.84
Large businesses mostly earn reasonably.	3.69
Taxes should be lower, even if public services are weaker.	3.67
Government intervention in regulating businesses is harmful.	3.58
The poor face difficulties mainly because of their personal decisions.	3.46

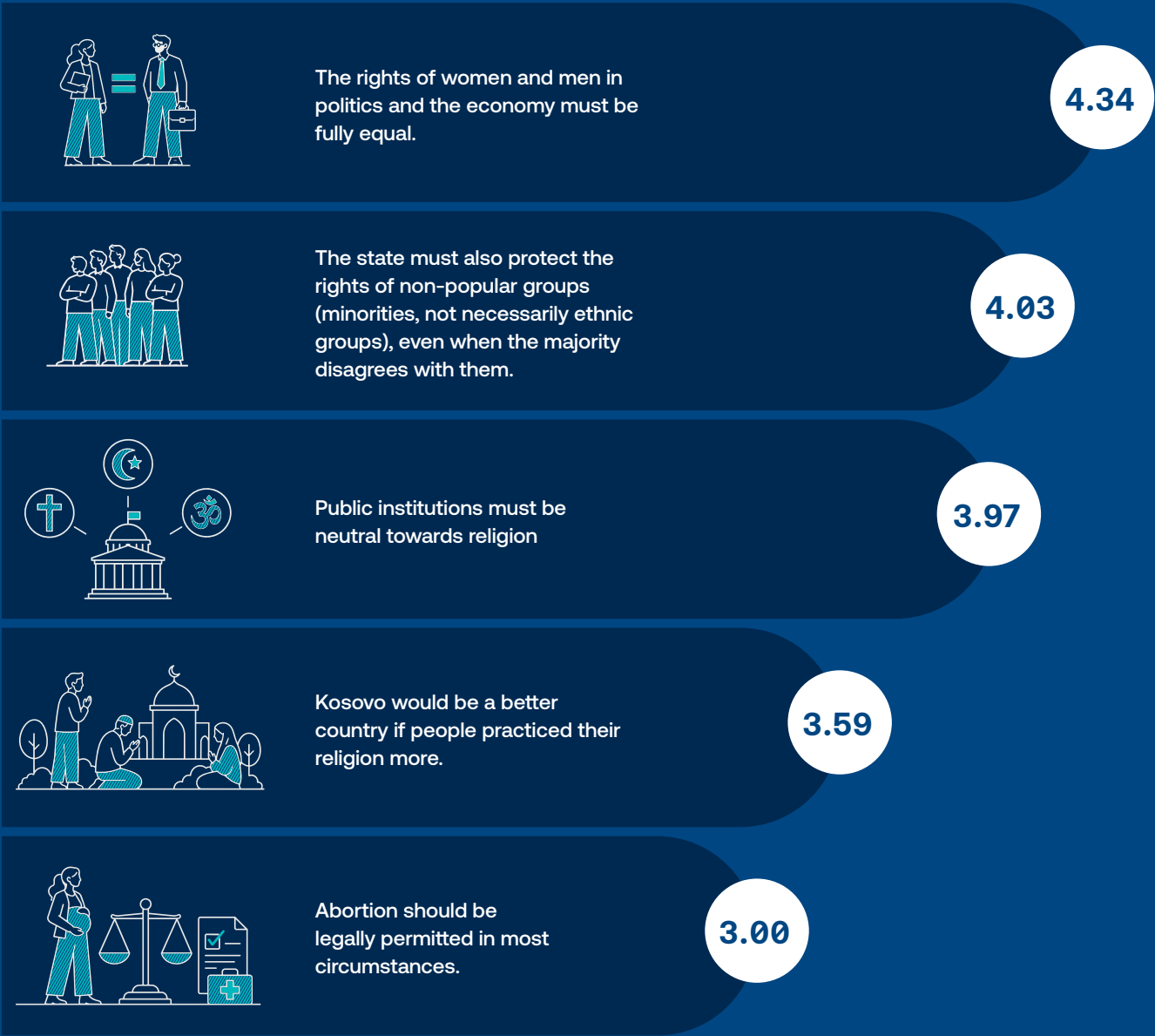
Accepting slightly higher taxes in exchange for significantly better public services remains conditional. About 35.1% would accept or fully accept them, while the largest share, 37.7%, respond with “maybe/depends”. On the other hand, 22.2% express low willingness or none at all. The score shows room for supporting tax increases, but a large portion of citizens remain undecided even when such tax hikes are related to improvements in healthcare, education, and social welfare.

33 Would you accept paying slightly higher taxes if this would bring significantly better services in healthcare, education, and social welfare?



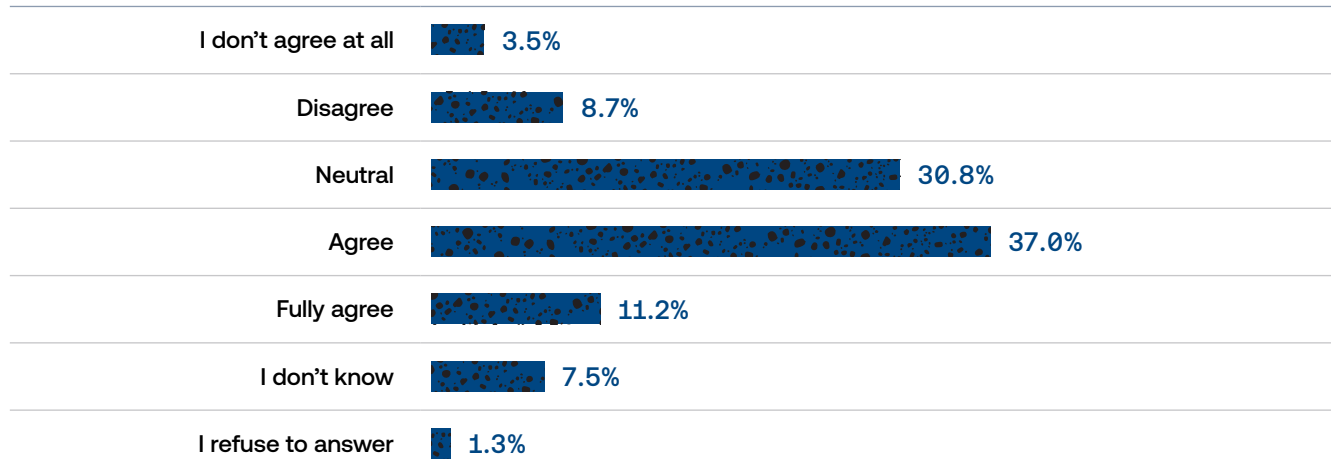
Equality between women and men has the highest rating among statements about social values and individual freedoms, with an average score of 4.34 on a 1–5 scale. The protection of the rights of non-popular groups scores 4.03, and the neutrality of public institutions towards religion scores 3.97. The statement that Kosovo would be a better country if people practiced religion more receives 3.59, while the legalization of abortion in most circumstances 3.00. The rankings indicate robust public support for equality and the protection of rights. Conversely, while abortion received the lowest overall support, its mean score remains exactly at the scale’s midpoint and does not reflect a high degree of polarization or consensus.

34 How much do you agree with the following statements about social values and individual freedoms?
(Where 1 = don’t agree at all; 5 = fully agree)



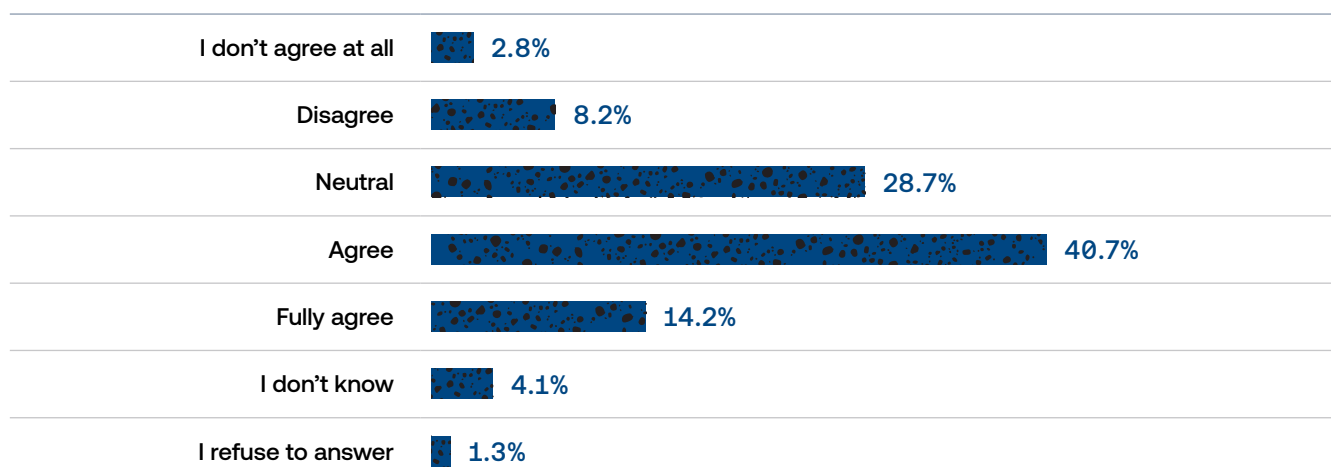
The expansion of state powers for oversight and control during security threats receives considerable support, even when it restricts certain individual freedoms. About 48.2% agree or strongly agree, while 30.8% are neutral and 12.2% disagree or do not agree at all. Support is significantly higher than opposition, but remains lower than half of the respondents. This indicates the willingness of a large part of the public to grant the state more powers in uncertain circumstances.

35 In times of security threats, how much do you agree that the state should have more powers for oversight and control, even if this restricts some individual freedoms?



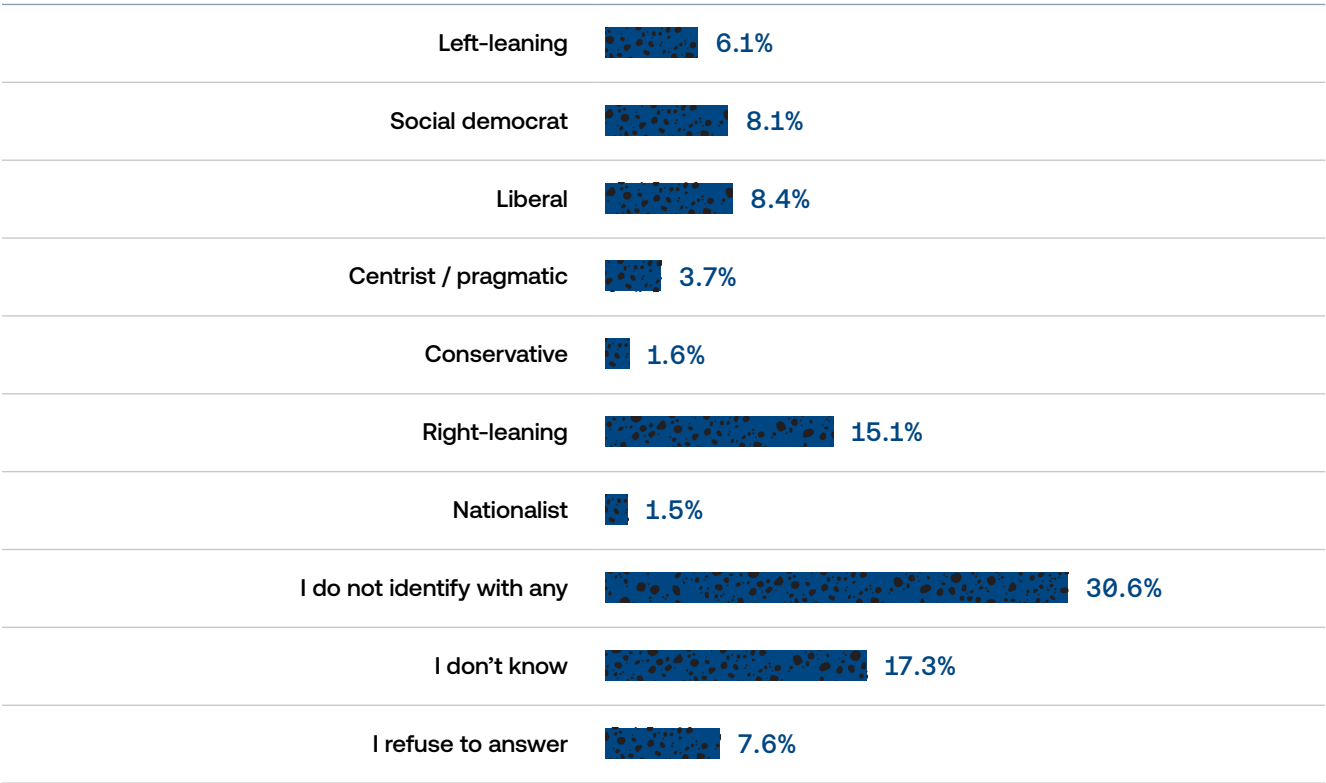
Environmental protection has the support of the majority even when presented as a priority that could slightly slow down economic growth. About 54.9% agree or fully agree with this position, while 28.7% are neutral. Only 11.0% disagree or do not agree at all. This distribution shows that environmental protection carries weight in citizen preferences, although a significant portion do not express a firm stance on this compromise.

36 To what extent do you agree with the statement: “Environmental protection should be prioritized even if economic growth slows down a little”?



Political self-identification with a specific category is limited. About 30.6% do not identify with any of the offered categories, 17.3% do not know, and 7.6% refuse to answer. Together, these answers make up 55.5%. Among the defined labels, the right is the most selected by 15.1%, followed by liberals by 8.4%, social democrats by 8.1%, and the left by 6.1%. This shows that, for the majority of respondents, a clear ideological label is not expressed in political self-identification.

37 Which descriptor better fits your political views?



Methodology

The survey is based on the principles of the household survey methodology. More specifically, data collection for this quantitative study was conducted through face-to-face interviews (CAPI). The proposed sample of $N = 900$ has a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of $\pm 3.27\%$.

The sample design is based on a modified multi-stage random sampling methodology. Crucially, the sample framework is built using a dual-resource approach to address the latest demographic data challenges:

- Total population: For most municipalities, the sample design is based on the results of the 2024 Kosovo Population Census, conducted by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS).
- Kosovo-Serb-majority municipalities: Due to the significant lack of participation of the Kosovo-Serb ethnic community in the 2024 Census, population estimates for Serb-majority municipalities were derived from the 2018 OSCE Municipal Profiles, which provide the most reliable current estimates for these specific areas.

For each municipality, the list of settlements from combined KAS/OSCE data is used to randomly select Primary Sample Units (PSUs). The nominal number of interviews per PSU is set at 8-10 surveys.

If a residence is assigned more interviews than the nominal size of the PSU, additional PSUs within that settlement are selected. In larger urban areas (which KAS often classifies as a single settlement), neighborhood-based stratification is applied. The selection of additional PSUs is organized by dividing the settlement by multiples of 8 or 10, following a counterclockwise orientation from a central reference point.

Field data collection was conducted over a period between July 18–28, 2026, through face-to-face interviews (CAPI). In total, 750 surveys with Kosovo-Albanian respondents and 150 surveys with Kosovo-Serb respondents were conducted. The survey was carried out by UBO Consulting.

