

**Έρευνα
Research
Gen Z Voice ON
ETERON**

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The present edition includes the presentation and analysis of the relevant research conducted by Eteron - Institute for Research and Social Change, in collaboration with aboutpeople, between 10-18 December 2021, regarding Gen Z in Greece. Generation Z / Gen Z (we'll be using the short term Gen Z in this report) is the generation that succeeds the Millennials and it includes people born between mid to late 90's and early 2010.

Research Identity

The research was conducted by aboutpeople (data collection) on behalf of Eteron - Institute for Research and Social Change, between 10-18 December 2021. The data was collected using structured online questionnaires that were answered by a sample of 403 people aged 16-25 years old from the whole of Greece.

The research took place online using panels and advertising in social media. Weighting adjustments were made, relevant to the participants' gender.

Since the research focuses on Gen Z, the age range of the participants was 16-25 years old. Even though there isn't a universal consensus on the date range, the general trend is to say that it spans between 1995/6 and 2010.¹

Bearing in mind the methodology constraints regarding the length of a questionnaire - especially when it's an online questionnaire that participants have to fill in themselves - there was a limited number of questions that we could include, in order to avoid as much as possible the abandonment of a questionnaire before it was completed. Therefore, the questionnaire focuses on specific investigation topics.

Research Goals

1. To explore the information sources that Gen Z youths choose and also how they form their political opinions.
2. To document behaviours and patterns relevant to Social Media usage, regarding news consumption and political behaviour.

To analyse Gen Z's opinions on misinformation and fake news.

- 3.
4. To find out what Gen Z thinks and does regarding current socio-political matters.

During the last few years, Gen Z has become the subject of rigorous academic research and a trending topic of public debate. As early as 2019, the number of Google searches for “Gen Z” was a lot higher than that of all previous generations, including the millennials, that up until then were “monopolising” interest in talks regarding the modern “generation gap”. The increased interest regarding Gen Z is (partly) due to its increased presence in the public sphere and its impact in politics. In the 2020 US general election, one out of ten possible voters belonged to that generation. Also, the vast majority of the people currently studying in US Universities belong to Gen Z, thus posing new challenges regarding the (re)structuring of educational programs.⁴

Till now, Gen Z is viewed as a challenge and at the same time a mystery for the established institutions in the fields of politics, media and the market. Political strategy teams have to modify their content as gender, race and diversity issues seem to affect the political and electoral preferences of Gen Z as well as the way they evaluate political parties and/or figures.⁵ The so-called “traditional” media find it hard to attract dynamic audience from younger ages.⁶ Also, the fragmentary way in which

Gen Z internet, causes issues to the marketing departments who are seeking ways to make the new generation focus on the “appropriate” advertising messages.⁷

As expected, one of the main areas of interest regarding Gen Z, is this generation’s relationship with technology, and, more specifically, its great competence in the use of Web 2.0 technology. It is a fact that social media is part of Gen Z youths’ everyday life from a very young age - indeed Gen Z is the first generation that is “internet native”. Gen Z youths familiarised themselves with smartphones and high speed internet during the first decade of their lives.⁸ Also, a distinct trait of Gen Z is their distancing from “traditional” social media, such as Facebook⁹, and their preference for more image-focused platforms like Instagram, as well as their ability to express themselves in a multimedia fashion. It is important to keep in mind, though, that this “distancing” is different from one country to another. Gen Zers are usually very comfortable combining image, video and text¹⁰. Another observation is that they tend to prefer customised digital environments that merge information-entertainment and socialising and where limits become porous¹¹.

Still, by over-focusing on this aspect of Gen Z, we risk downplaying the social, cultural and political framework within which the new generation youths express themselves and utilise new media. The difficulties that established institutions are facing when addressing Gen Z aren't merely due to their inability to adjust to the reality of new media. The new generation grew up in a time of increased delegitimation of the dominant institutions that older generations recognised as the political, financial and communication status quo. In Greece, this tendency is exceptionally strong. The findings of a relevant research by the Nicos Poulantzas Institute¹² showed that 82% distrust banks and political parties, while 92% don't trust the media. In a Kappa Research survey, 79% stated that they feel that the solutions suggested for Greece's future don't take into account the needs of their generation.¹³

Gen Z seems to have come of age within a frame of distrust towards the institutions and of concern regarding the future. The pandemic certainly aggravated those circumstances. In the US, the Gen Zers that were already working in 2020 - usually under precarious employment circumstances- were the most affected by the pandemic, with most of them

facing lay-offs and cuts on their wages. This is their "convergence point" with the Millennials, whose coming of age happened at the same time as the 2008 economic crisis. Still, there is a significant difference between the two, within Greece's reality. The Millennials have memories of Greece entering the Eurozone and of the Olympic Games, as these are events that happened in their adolescence or their post-adolescent years. While, even for the older people who belong to Gen Z, their adolescence was marked by the 2008 economic crisis and the memorandum reforms.

In that sense, Gen Z is at the same time the Instagram and Tik Tok generation, but also the "generation of constant crisis", as it's a generation for which critical (economic, sanitary, environmental) conditions are the norm rather than the exception. All efforts to investigate and comprehend Gen Z, will have to factor in the media used by the young generation, the way they use them and also the social events and opportunities that inspire them to express themselves and form their own opinions in public life.

A

Information sources, politics & the Internet

A. Information sources, politics & the Internet

As mentioned earlier, one of the basic traits of Gen Z is that they're a generation of digital natives that grew up using technology. They're a generation that didn't experience the world without the internet and spends (very) large parts of their day online. According to the present research, 51.6% spend 5-10 hours per day online, 36.7% spend less than 5 hours, while 10.6% spend over 10 hours on the internet.

The present research aims to document Gen Z's interest in current events, their habits regarding informational content consumption, the role of Social Media in political content consumption and their political activity in online platforms. According to studies, news consumption patterns are shaped by individuals as they grow and are not concretely defined before the age of 30.¹⁵ Therefore, the study of behavioural patterns of news consumption in younger ages has a particular dynamic. It is amply proved that the internet and new technologies increase the frequency of the change of habits and routines regarding news' search methods among young people.

According to the present research, young Gen Zers show a high interest in keeping up with current events. When asked "How interested

are you in keeping up with current events", 55% of the participants replied "Very much/ A lot" and 30.5% picked "Sufficiently". Based on the distinct demographic traits of our sample, we can state that the interest in keeping up with current events increases proportionally with the education level of the participants (51.2% of participants that have reached up to secondary school level replied "Very much/ A lot", while the relative percentage among higher education graduates is 61.4%). Also, we found that those who reside within the Attica region are more interested in current affairs (60.8%) than those who live elsewhere (50.9%), as are the men and the people who work (See Graph 1).

How interested would you say you are in keeping up with current events?

	Very much & a lot	Sufficiently	Not so much & not at all	IDK/NA
Men	57.3	29.7	12.3	0.71
Women	53.9	31.6	13.3	1.2
Currently working	57.4	30.1	12.5	-
Currently unemployed	53.3	30.8	14.3	1.6
Secondary education graduates	51.2	31.2	16.4	1.2
Higher education graduates	61.4	29.9	8.2	0.5
Attica residents	60.8	25.5	12.4	1.3
Rest of the country	50.9	34.1	14.3	0.7

Graph 1

The internet (news websites and social media pages) are the main sources of information. According to this research's findings, when asked "How often do you get information on current events from online news websites", 48.7% replied "Very often (daily)" and 37.1% replied "Often (e.g. 1-3 times per week)". A similarly high preference for news websites as information sources was depicted in the Poulantzas Institute's research (2021), where 78% of the participants replied they get information online, by directly accessing websites. The social media question gathers similar results: When asked "How often do you

get information on current events from social media", 50.2% replied : "Very often (daily)" and 34.8% said "Often (1-3 times per week)". Women, people with higher education and Attica region residents are the majority of those who replied "Very often" (see Indexes 1 and 2). It is worth noting that according to other surveys too, social media are a popular information source, not just for the younger generation, but for the general population as well [see Reuters Institute research, 2021, where more than two thirds of Greeks (69%) said they're informed via social media).¹⁶

How often do you get informed on current events from online news websites?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	Cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country	
Never	3.6	0.4	2.5	1.5	3.1	0.0	2.5	1.5
Seldom (less than once per week)	8.7	13.7	8.0	14.5	13.3	8.6	9.4	13.4
Often (e.g. 1-3 times per week)	35.5	38.3	39.4	35.3	38.7	34.4	35.4	38.3
Very often (daily)	51.4	47.3	50.1	47.7	44.0	57.0	51.9	46.4
IDK / NA	0.8	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.9	0.0	0.8	0.4

Index 1

Πόσο συχνά ενημερώνεσαι από τα social media;

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	Cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country	
Never	3.6	1.6	3.4	2.3	3.5	1.5	1.4	3.7
Seldom (less than once per week)	10.9	13.3	13.1	11.4	12.3	11.3	9.3	14.1
Συχνά (e.g. 1-3 times per week)	37.0	32.8	31.9	36.9	36.2	32.5	36.8	33.3
Very often (daily)	48.5	52.0	51.6	49.2	47.7	54.7	52.0	48.8
IDK / NA	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.1

Index 2

According to reference material from research conducted internationally, the general tendency to pick the internet as a main information source, and more specifically social media, is due to the youths' desire to control media usage, by being able to customise the consumption of news that are offered to them by the Media.¹⁷ The content consumed via social media reflects the internet's ability to "adapt" to the user's/consumer's needs: the algorithms determine the choice of information that will be shown to each user; information that results from the user's social and geographical environment.¹⁸ For Gen Z, that grew up with the internet and social media right from the start, the choice of the internet as an information source is reinforced by the practical nature and the increased usage of mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops)¹⁹

Of course, it is important to note that besides the obvious relation between this generation and technology and its repercussions to young people's informational and recreational habits, another important factor that partly determines their choices is their documented distrust towards the traditional media. Even though the current research doesn't focus on traditional media²⁰, several studies in Greece and abroad have documented young people's growing distrust towards them. In Poulantzas Institute's research (2021), 58% of the participants said they have "Zero trust" towards the media, while 33% replied that they only trust them "A little bit". Also in a research conducted in the UK, 85% of young people aged 17-30 stated they are distrustful of traditional media. The main reasons behind this lack of trust is the media's scrappy coverage of topics and events relevant to young people and also the biased way they present youth related content. Additionally, this negative stance towards the media seems to be proportionate to the growing distrust towards other institutions as well, but at the same time underlines the fact that the media carry a significant responsibility in terms of shaping the quality of democracy itself.²¹

The choosing process online and especially in social media platforms is very different to that in traditional media. For example, a post on

social media could be accompanied by a friend's comment recommending that people read the article or it could have received a significant number of likes and emoticon reactions. This type of elements that accompany a news article on social media carry a particular dynamic as they increase the chances said article gets picked. Those same elements can be used as interpretive tools and at the same time affect the way the article is read.²² The different traits that we come across on social media platforms can have significant effects on our exposure to political news/ information and, therefore, on our political behaviour.

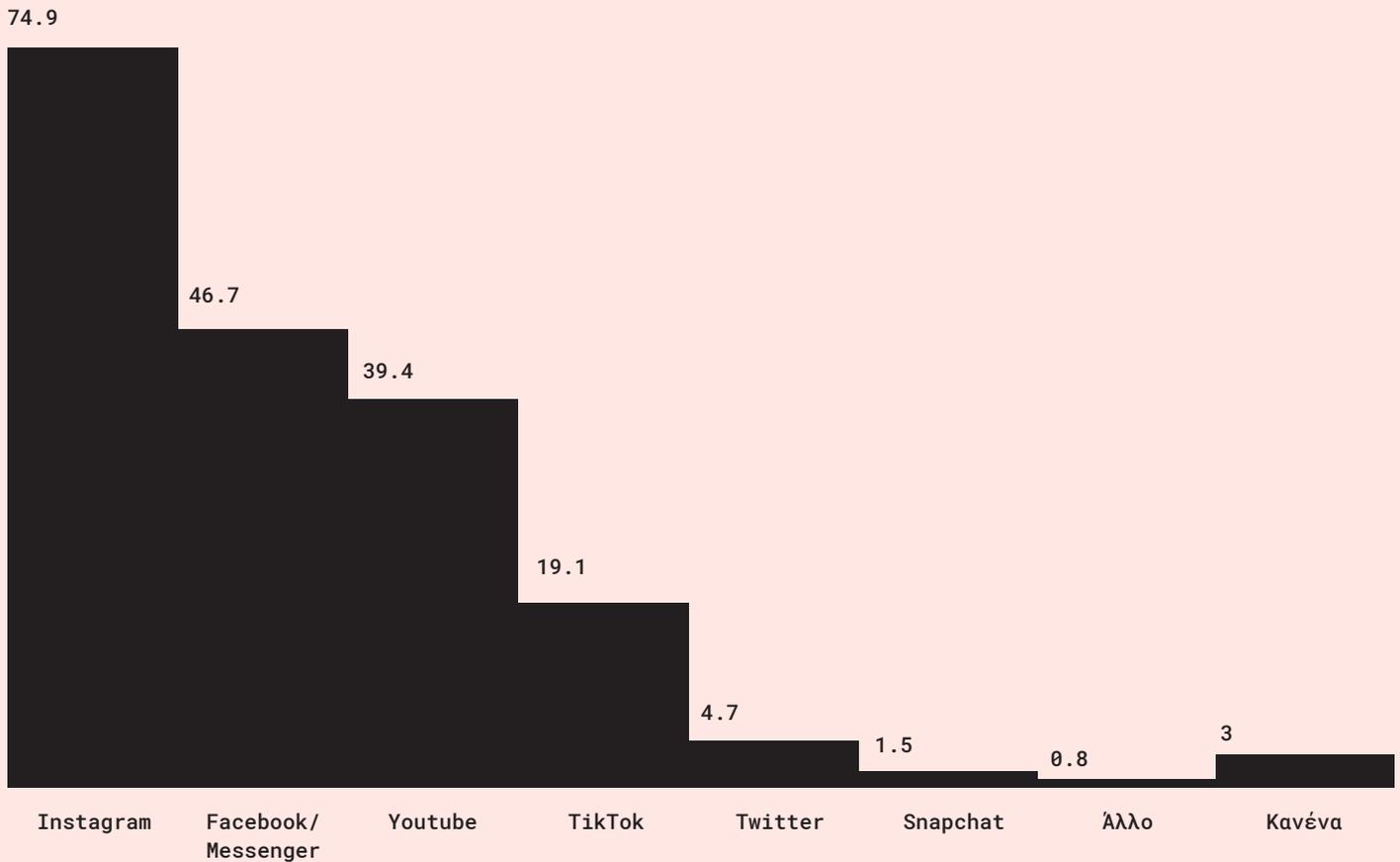
Of course it is critical to keep in mind that each country's distinct characteristics (media system, political and cultural behaviour, internet expansion level and the culture formed around each social media platform) should be taken into account when examining viewpoints and behaviours relevant to the internet and social media usage. For instance, regarding social media usage, the present research shows that Instagram and Facebook are the most popular platforms both in terms of general usage (Graph 2) and of following political parties/ political figures (Graph 3). Instead, in several Northern European countries (such as the UK), Twitter is the most popular platform that young people use in order to get informed on current events.²³

Gen Z - SoMe

Instagram
YouTUBE
Facebook
TikTok
Twitter
Snapchat

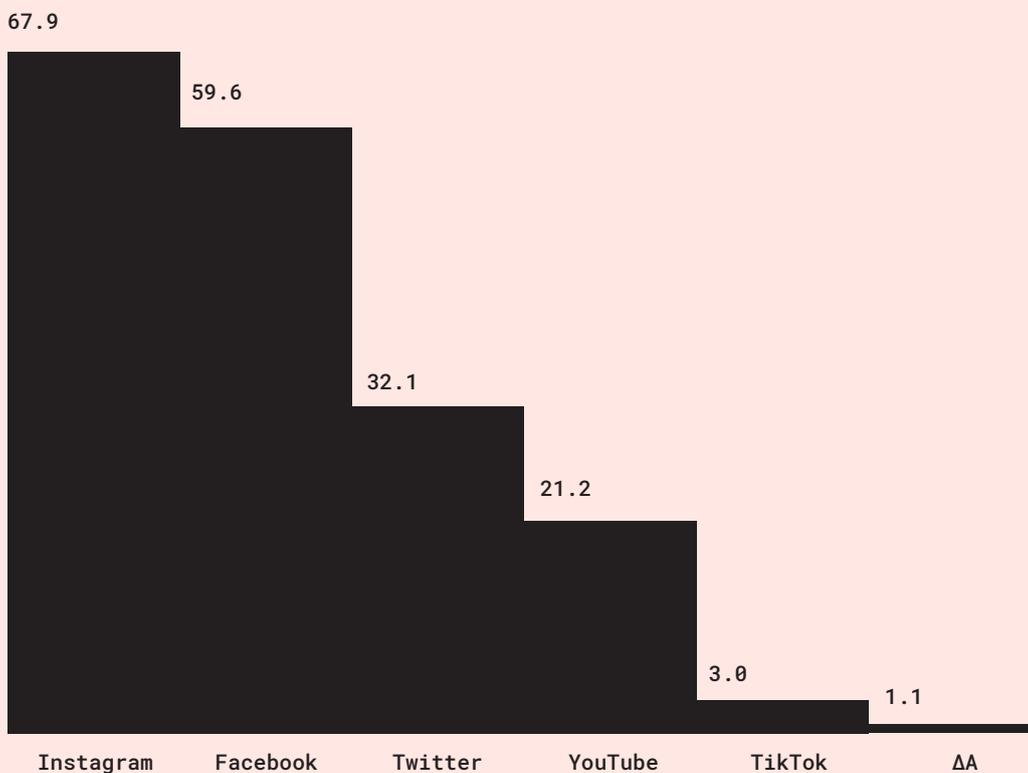
Which social media platform do you use the most? (pick up to two options)

Graph 2



In which social media platform do you follow politicians or political parties? (multiple choice) - for those who follow politicians and political parties on social media

Graph 3



According to this research, Instagram is the most popular social media platform among young people in Greece. The young people's preference for image-focused platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube has been amply documented.²⁴

Within this new digital information and recreation environment, influencers have become increasingly important. The term "influencer", that has become incredibly popular in the last few years, refers to a person who is very active and has a significant number of followers in one or more social media platforms. According to this research's findings, the majority of the participants in our survey follow one or more influencers (Graph 4). Women (70.7%) more so than men (55.8%) and employed people (67.5%) more so than the unemployed (59.8%) (see Graph 5).

INFLUENCERS

In the last few years, the term “influencer” has been used broadly to describe people with strong social media presence and numerous followers in one or more platforms. Do you follow any influencers on social media?

YES
63.0%

NO
37.0%

Graph 4

In the last few years, the term “influencer” has been used broadly to describe people with strong social media presence and numerous followers in one or more platforms. Do you follow any influencers on social media?

	NO	YES
Men	55.8	44.2
Women	70.7	29.3
Currently working	67.5	32.5
Currently unemployed	59.8	40.2
Secondary education graduates	63.5	36.5
Higher education graduates	62.8	37.2
Attica residents	63.8	36.2
Rest of the country	62.4	37.3

Graph 5

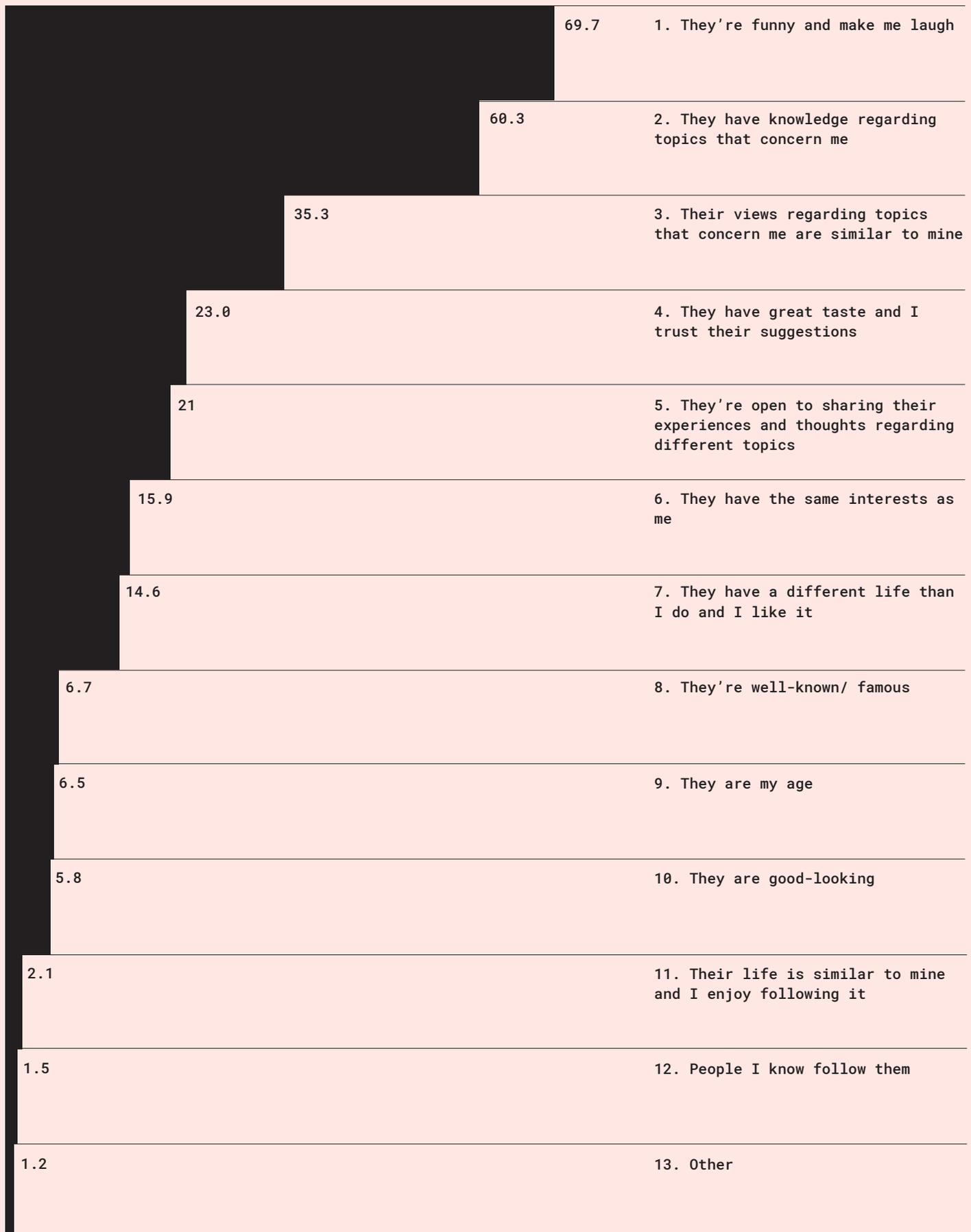
INFLUENCERS

According to the participants, the main factors that attract them to an influencer are “humour” and the “knowledge” they believe that person has “regarding topics of interest” (Graph 6). Another factor would be “the influencers’ taste” and their suggestions - something that’s linked to the influencers’ knowledge regarding topics of interest.

Influencers (known celebrities or even “micro-celebrities” - a term referring to people who became popular through social media) have created a huge and prospering market where they push products as well as ideas and ways of life (new class of cultural tastemakers). An interesting fact is that 20% of the participants picked the option “They’re open to sharing their experiences and thoughts regarding different topics”. No matter how pretentious and/or edited this type of posts are, they probably seem “genuine” and manage, at least to a certain extent, to emotionally touch the content consumers.

Which of the factors above are more important to you when deciding if you will follow an influencer? (up to 3 options) - for those who follow influencers on social media.

Graph 6



One of the main findings of the present research is that even though Gen Z youths use the internet and social media extensively, they're still relatively cautious towards them. The participants' answers regarding their trust levels towards online information sources, social media and influencers, to a great extent show a tentative trust.

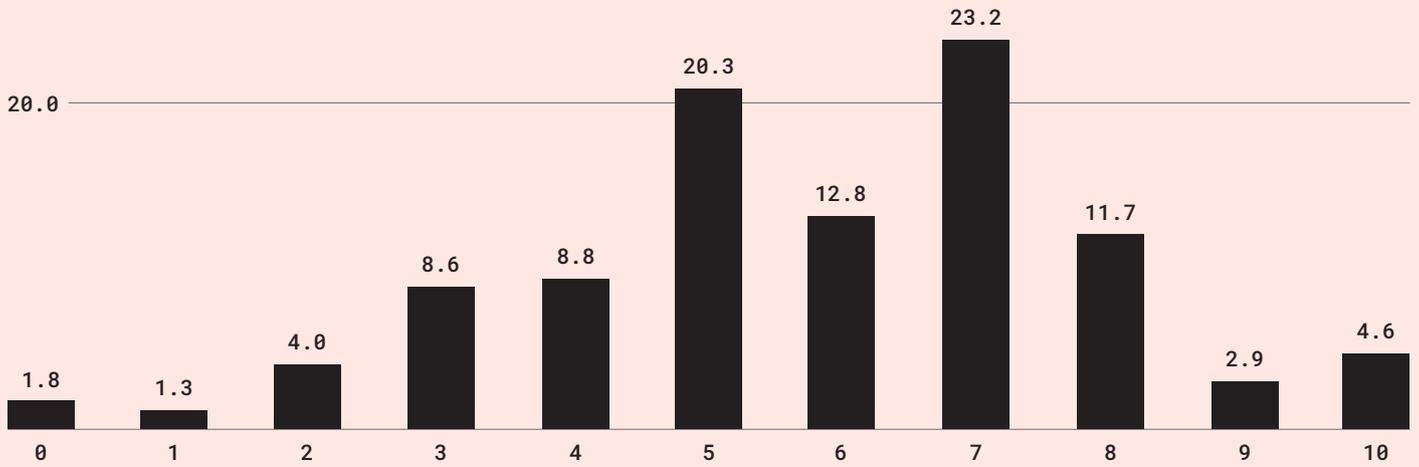
When asked "How reliable do you think online information websites are as information sources?" on a scale of 0 ("not at all") to 10 ("very"), the average score is 6. Social media scored a 5 at the same question regarding their liability. We can therefore see that social media have less credibility among Gen Zers. When asked "How much would you say you trust suggestions and opinions on political and social matters from influencers that you follow?", 33.7% replied "A lot" and "Somewhat", while 59.9% of participants replied "A little bit" and "Not at all" (Graphs 7, 8 and 9)

0
Not at all
10
Very

How reliable do you think online information websites are as information sources?

Graph 7

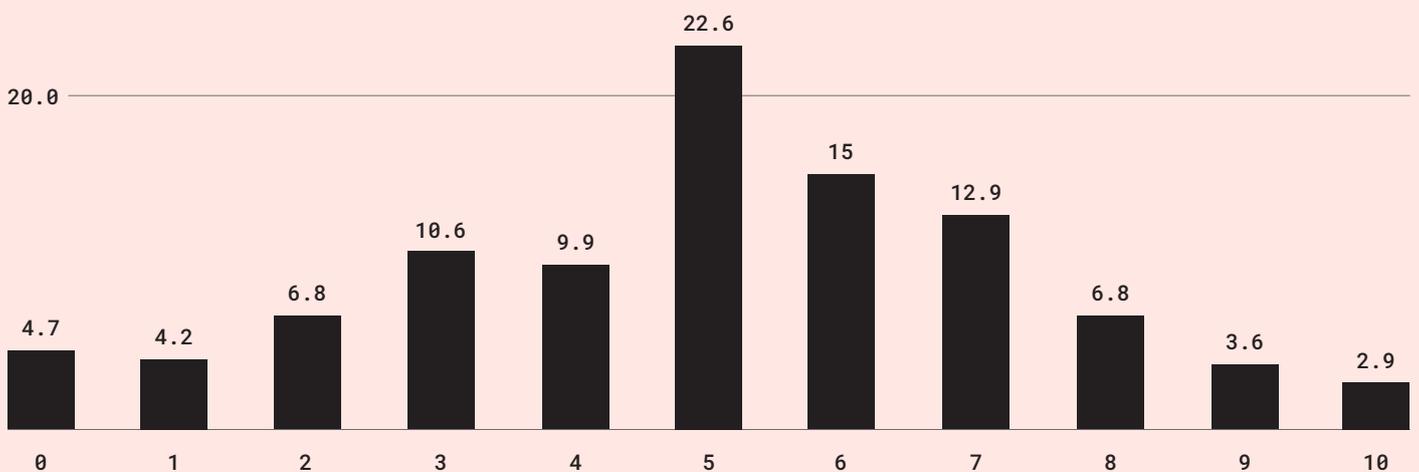
0=Very - 10=Not at all



How reliable do you think social media are as information sources?

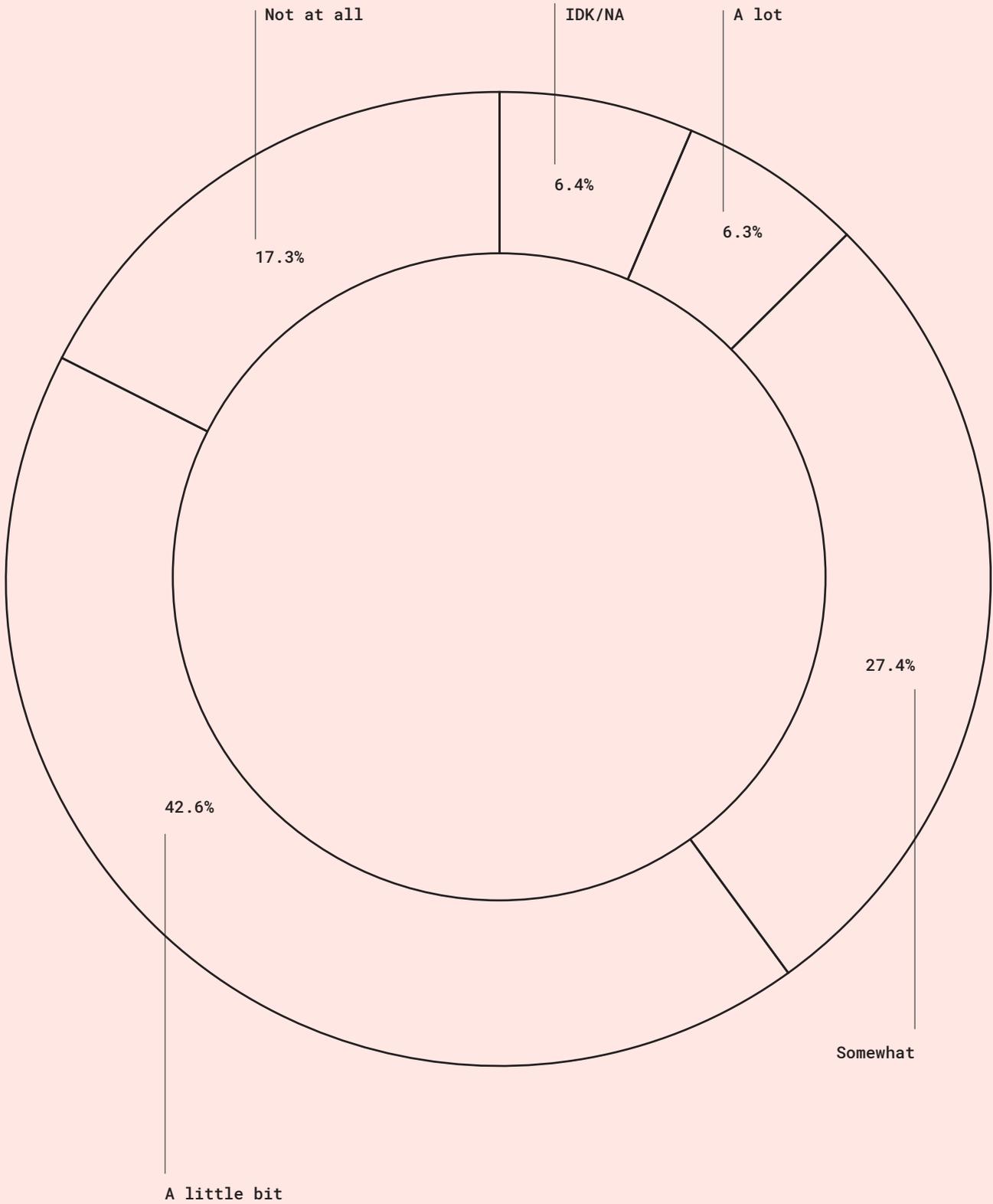
Graph 8

0=Not at all - 10 Very



How much would you say you trust suggestions and opinions on political and social matters from influencers that you follow? - for those who follow influencers on social media

Graph 9



According to the research's findings, family and friends gather the highest trust rating, while politicians, political parties and the Church are on the bottom three of Gen Zers list (Graph 10). The issue of the lack of trust towards political parties and politicians in Greece has been proved by multiple surveys.²⁵

The high level of trust towards scientists essentially proves a closer link between Gen Z and education and science. It is important to bear in mind, though, that the high ratings when documenting trust towards scientists in this research, may be the result of the communication strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and the resulting presence of scientist specialists in the media (mostly doctors and other health specialists).

When asked if they follow politicians on social media, 17.7% replied they do and 79.9% said they don't. Gender and employment status seem to be the two main differentiating factors, as 23.9% of the male participants replied they follow politicians/ political parties on social media, while amongst female participants the relevant percentage is 12.1%. Similarly, 22.4% of those who work gave a positive reply, while only 14.3% of those not currently employed did the same (Graph 11). According to the research's findings, the social media accounts of politicians and political parties don't attract young people's attention.

Still if we take the following into account:

1. The young age of the participants
2. The general distrust against politicians and political parties
3. The (with a very few exceptions) uninspired and standardised use of social media by Greek politicians and political parties and their reluctance to make better use of the interaction tools that those platforms have to offer,²⁶ the percentage of young people who follow accounts of politicians/ political parties is rather significant and could be an indication of young people's interest in politics.

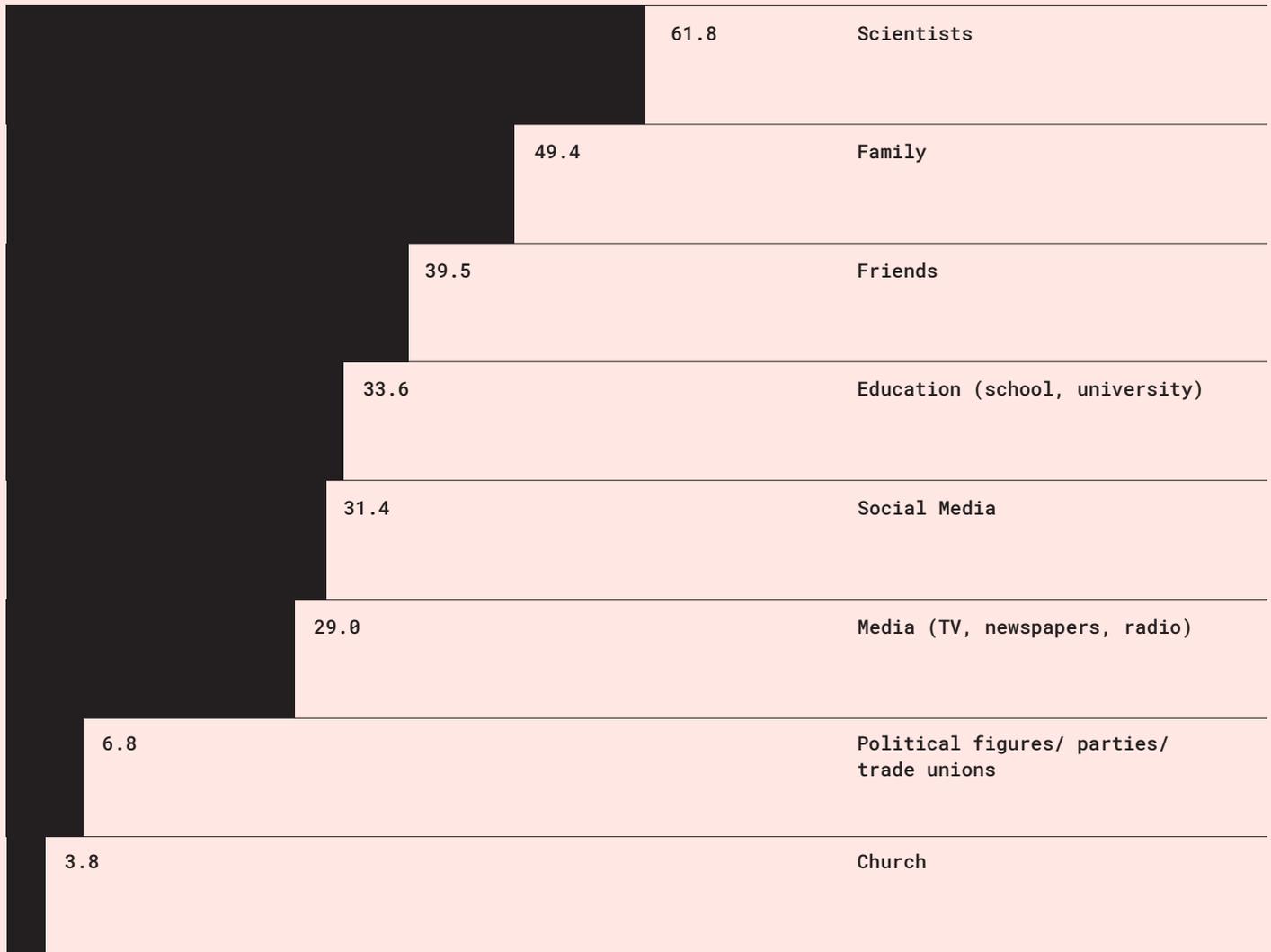
The participants' activity regarding political posts on social media is rather temperate. When asked "Do you share posts with political content (e.g. posts on political issues by politicians, political parties, NGOs, media outlets, other internet users)?" 21.9% of the participants replied "Yes", while 75% replied "No". The groups that share the most are the people who work and those who reside in the Attica region (Graph 12).replied "No".

When asked if they create politically related posts of their own (posts on political/ social matters), 20.9% said they do and 76.5% replied

they do not. The groups that create the most political posts are men, people who work and university graduates (Graph 13).

The present research detects a restraint activity on social media when it comes to posting or sharing political events or other political content. The motives regarding when and how young people choose to "expose themselves" in the digital public sphere regarding their political opinions is a topic that requires a more thorough investigation. According to recent studies²⁷ personal and/ or family experiences are impactful factors in the forming of the young generation's political identity and in determining their level of political participation. We should also note that even social media low-effort activities are linked to an increase of political participation in general.²⁸ For example, the change of one's profile picture to express their support to a specific cause (such as the #MeToo movement etc) is an act of political expression that could be the precursor of further political activity.²⁹

Pick the top 3 of the options below that you mostly trust regarding current events.



Graph 10

Do you follow any politicians or political parties on social media?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
YES	23.9	12.1	22.4	14.3	18.8	16.3	19.6	16.3
NO	73.2	84.8	76.6	80.9	78.0	81.2	78.2	79.8
IDK-NA	2.9	3.1	1.0	4.8	3.2	2.5	2.2	3.9

Graph 11

SHARE

Do you share posts with political content (e.g. posts on political issues by politicians, political parties, NGOs, media outlets, other internet users)?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
YES	21.0	22.3	25.2	19.6	22.2	21.9	25.3	19.5
NO	76.8	74.2	71.3	77.7	75.1	74.5	70.7	78.2
IDK-NA	2.2	3.5	3.5	2.7	2.7	3.6	4.0	2.3

Graph 12

POST

Do you create politically related posts of your own (posts on political/ social matters)?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
YES	26.8	15.2	25.9	17.3	17.1	27.8	20.5	21.2
NO	71.0	81.6	71.4	80.2	80.8	68.6	76.8	76.3
IDK-NA	2.2	3.2	2.7	2.5	2.5	3.6	2.7	2.5

Graph 13

B

**Fake
News**

B: Fake News

As mentioned above, Gen Z is interested in current events, among other things, and therefore, news consumption is a standard activity for young people, even on a daily basis. As depicted in Graph 14, 55% of young people who participated in this research replied that they are “Incredibly” and “Very” interested in following the news. It is also worth adding to that the 30.5% who replied that they’re “Somewhat” interested, to reach a total of 85% who are interested in following current events. This shows us that 8 out of 10 young people are interested in getting informed regarding what’s happening in the world today.

That’s why, we assayed that this research should also cover the issue of credibility of the available public information, through the scope of the “fake news” phenomenon and the consequent public discussion.

Even though “fake news” isn’t such a recent phenomenon, the arrival of social media has caused an increase in the spreading of

inaccurate information and/ or completely fake news³¹

With the rise of the echo chambers and filter bubbles, the decline of traditional media and the diffusion of online information, we are faced with a kind of “infodemic”, that is characterised by disinformation, misinformation and conspiratorial tales.³² Therefore, many people are confused regarding what is actually “true” out of the sum of the information they receive/ consume on a daily basis regarding current topics of public interest.

Additionally, the increasing political polarisation in several Western societies, acts both as a cause and an effect of the spread of fake news. The polarisation is a result of the combination of increasingly intense economic inequalities that have a negative effect on those left “vulnerable” from globalisation and “fuel” a rising “silent counter-revolution”³³ which, in turn, nurtures identity politics and existential angst. Such a dynamic encourages

the manifestation of deviating moral feelings, through which many feel that they belong in “competing moral tribes”.³⁴

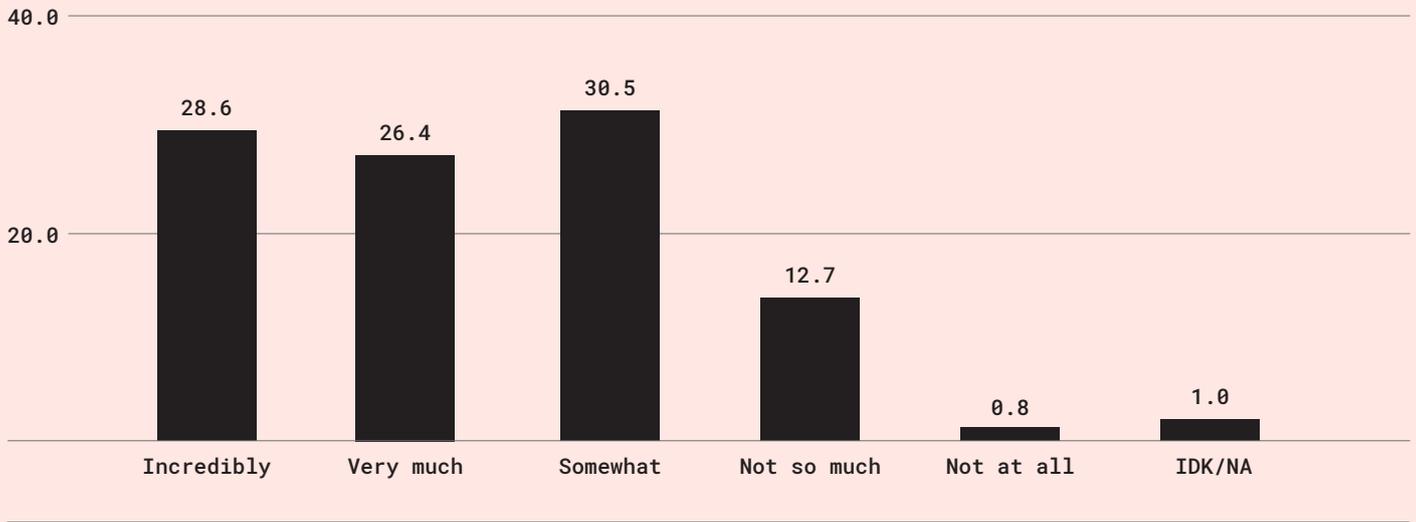
In a general sense, within the framework of late modernity in Western societies, people experience the loss of a stable rational and moral compass that could guide their judgement. Given that the “master narrative” has lost its credibility thus causing a core distrust and a de-legalisation of “predetermined rules”³⁶, people have become increasingly distrustful of the available ideological truths. In that sense, modern Western societies are “meta-ideological” and “meta-ethical”. Within this social framework, the “meta-truth” has become a popular phrase in today’s political discourses.

In total, the existing social turmoil, political polarisation, widespread cynicism, ethical relativism, increased commercialisation of mass media where the main trend is “infotainment”, the mediatisation of politics and the consequent politico-tainment, are the ingredients to create a “perfect storm” that can ignite the crisis of public knowledge. This crisis doesn’t just contain a multitude of fake news and conversations regarding the “alternative truth”, but it also promotes nativism, angry populism and anti-politics.³⁸ Undermining the value of public interest and of the feeling of a common political and cultural common ground, directly erodes the democratic values and the property of being a citizen.

Given that fake news “travel” in social media six times faster than real news³⁹ an information ecosystem is formed where the undermining of credible information sources tends to be the norm and a condition that constitutes a great challenge for the democratic public sphere. With that in mind, the participants in this research were asked if they believe that they have been victims of “fake news” and 71.9% said “Yes” (Graph 15).

How interested are you in keeping up with current news/ events?

Graph 14



Do you think that you have ever been a victim of "fake news"?

Graph 15

YES
71.0%

NO
22.4%

More specifically, the groups that mostly believe that they have been victims of disinformation are women, people who are currently working, the higher education graduates and those residing outside of the Attica Region (Graph 16).

Even though the majority of the participants believe that they have been victims of fake news, most of them (74.7%) think that they can detect fake news (Graph 17).

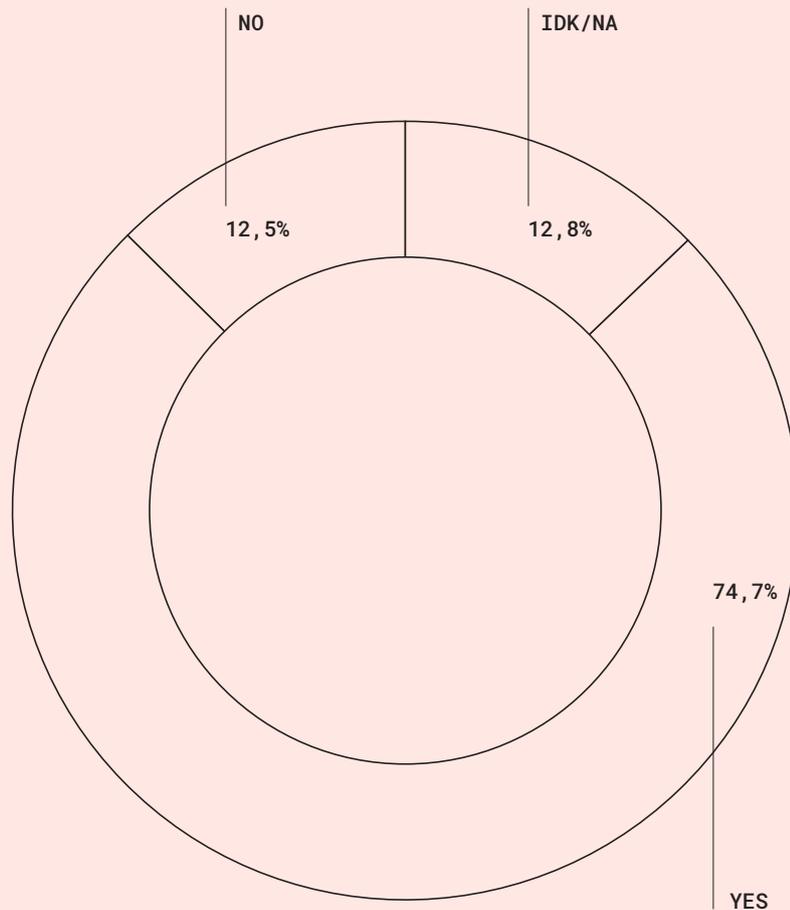
Do you think that you have ever been a victim of "fake news"?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
YES	65.9	76.6	72.9	69.7	68.9	75.4	69.1	72.4
NO	28.3	16.8	23.1	21.9	23.3	20.5	23.8	21.3
IDK-NA	5.8	6.6	4.0	8.4	7.8	4.1	7.1	6.3

Graph 16

Do you believe you can detect fake news or not?

Graph 17



Based on demographics, the groups that are more confident regarding their ability to detect fake news are men (with a significant difference of more than 10% compared to the female participants), those currently employed, higher education graduates and those residing outside of the Attica Region (Graph 18). Regarding

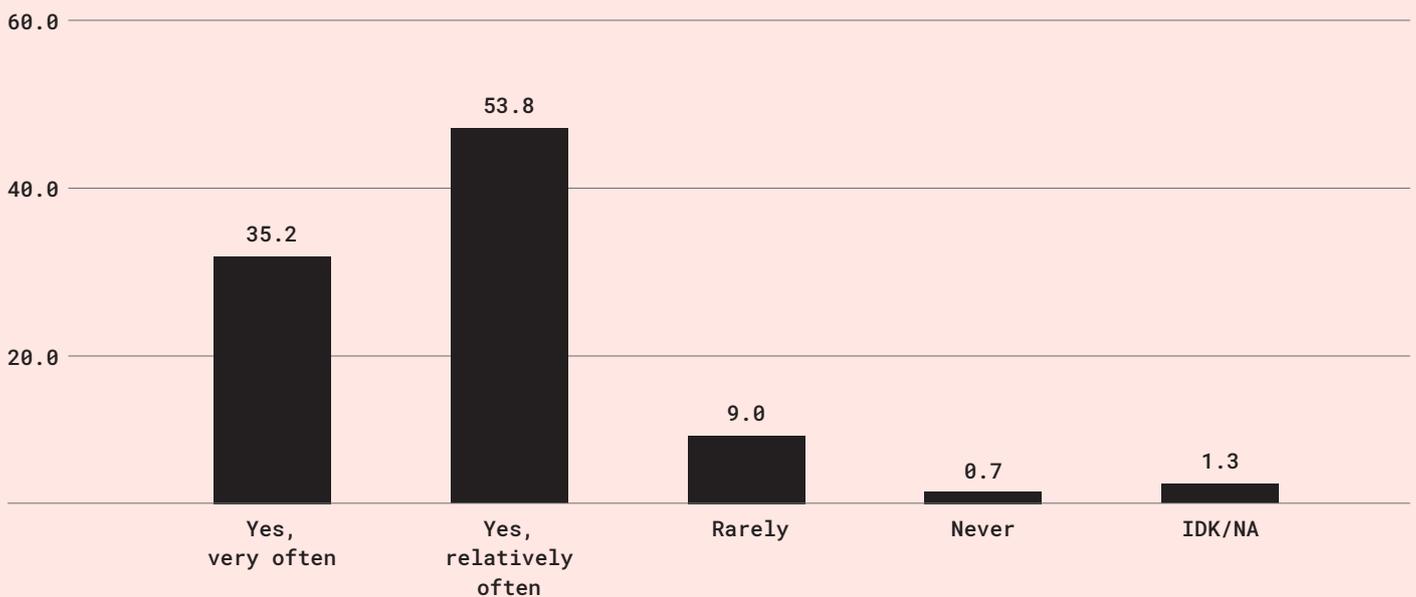
whether or not they cross-check sources while consuming news articles that interest them, a total of 89% replied that they do so “Very often” and “Relatively often” (Graph 19)

Do you believe you can detect fake news or not?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
YES	80.4	69.5	75.0	74.4	73.6	76.7	73.9	75.2
NO	8.0	16.8	14.1	11.3	13.4	11.1	13.7	11.5
IDK-NA	11.6	13.7	10.9	14.3	13.0	12.2	12.4	13.3

Graph 18

When reading a news article that interests you, do you cross-check it from different sources?



Graph 19

According to Index 3, those who cross-check the most (if we add the “very often” and the “relatively often” replies) are women, the currently unemployed, the higher education graduates and the Attica residents. Finally, participants were asked which factors they consider in order to judge if a news article is “real” (Graph 20). In this case, the power of familiarity becomes apparent, as the most important factor that was mentioned by almost half of the participants (49.1%) was “If I trust the person that (re)posted it”.

In second place (45.1%) was “If the article first originated from an official State institution”, while in third place (41.2%) is the self-referential factor “If it makes sense and suits my way of thinking”. The fourth factor, with a significantly lower percentage than the other three, was “If it was posted by a well-established media outlet”. Two out of four credibility factors are indicative of the subjectivity of each person’s

evaluation of a news article, thus underlining the need for media education/ literacy since one's early years

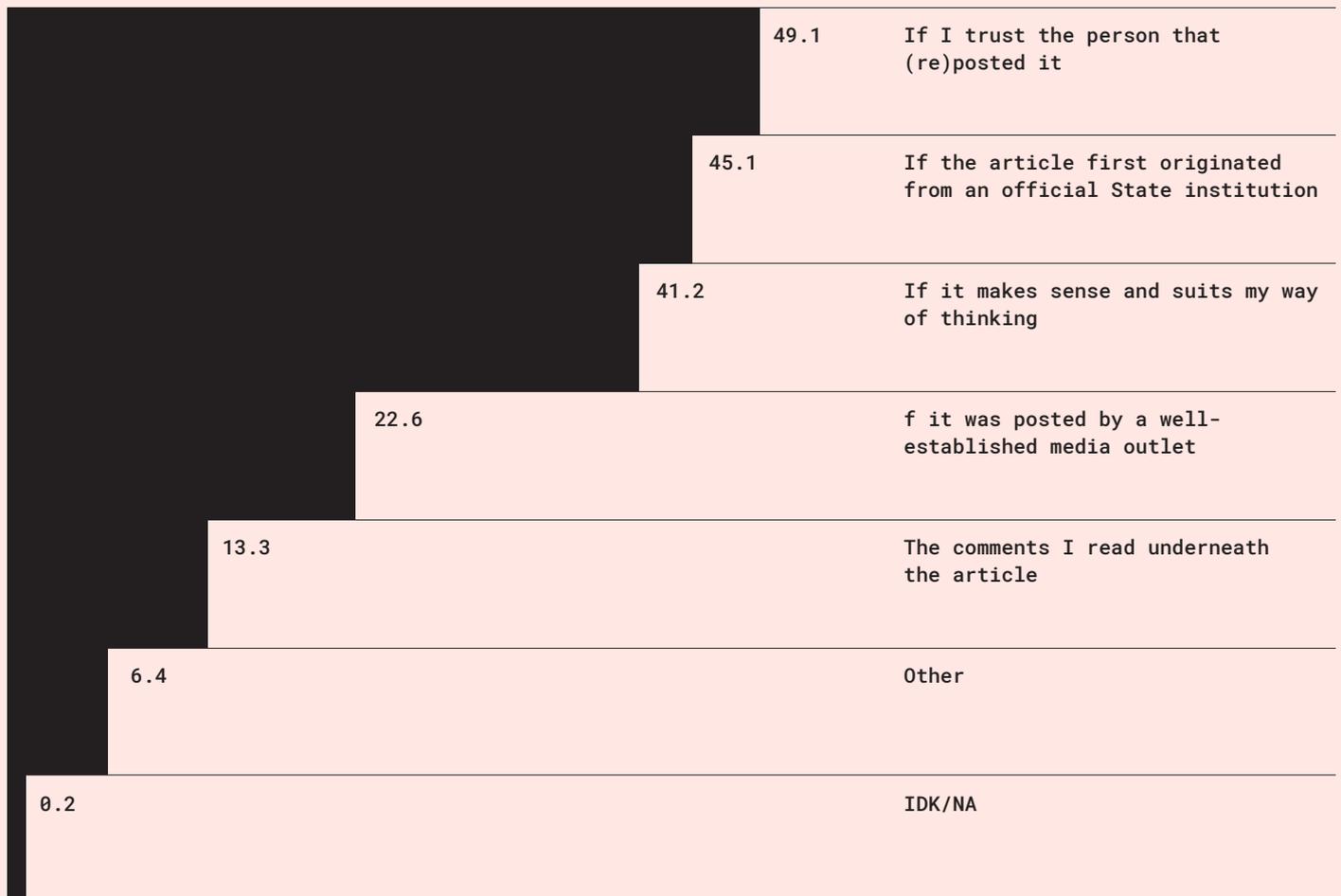
To break things down a bit more, according to Index 4, men insist more on the issue of trust towards the person that (re)posted the news article, the higher education graduates focus more on whether or not an article originated from an official institution. Also, men -more so than the other demographic groups- increasingly factor in whether or not a news article makes sense and if it suits their way of thinking, while secondary education graduates care more than the rest of the groups about whether or not a news article was posted by a well-established media outlet.

When reading a news article that interests you, do you cross-check it from different sources?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
Very often	38.4	32.8	35.8	34.8	31.1	42.4	30.1	39.0
Relatively often	50.0	57.8	51.8	55.2	53.4	54.9	61.3	48.3
Rarely	8.0	9.4	9.3	8.7	12.8	2.7	6.4	10.9
Never	1.4	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.8	0.6
IDK/NA	2.2	0.0	1.5	1.3	1.6	0.0	1.4	1.2

Index 3

When reading a news article, which factors do you consider in order to evaluate if it's real? (pick up to two factors)



Graph 20

When reading a news article, which factors do you consider in order to evaluate if it's real? (pick up to two factors)

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
If I trust the person that (re)posted it	55.1	44.1	53.8	45.7	50.4	47.9	51.5	47.3
If the article first originated from an official State institution	37.7	52.7	44.2	45.8	40.1	53.3	43.2	46.5
If it was posted by a well-established media outlet	25.4	19.8	23.0	22.2	25.7	17.7	23.3	22.0
If it makes sense and suits my way of thinking	44.2	38.3	40.0	42.1	44.1	36.5	41.9	40.8
The comments I read underneath the article	11.6	14.5	15.3	11.8	14.0	12.3	13.6	13.0
Other	6.5	6.6	2.6	9.2	6.4	6.6	3.1	8.8
IDK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.8

Index 4

C

**Viewpoints
and practices
regarding
current socio-
political
matters**

C. Viewpoints and practices regarding current socio-political matters

As mentioned in the introduction, the coming of age of Gen Zers around the world - and maybe more so in Greece- happened during difficult conditions such as crises, political power shifts and instability. The current research doesn't aim to paint a complete and comprehensive picture of Gen Z's points of view. Still, we tried to showcase the young generations's stance and their practices regarding current social and political issues that affected the public sphere in the past two years. The issues in question are either directly connected to the health crisis - such as wearing a face mask at school and vaccination - or issues that concern young people - such as establishing university police force units- or global issues that seem to be a main concern for Gen Zers - such as climate change.

Regarding the issue of climate change, almost 60% said it concerns them deeply, while just 1.4% claims it doesn't worry them at all. The differentiating points in this case are gender (women are more concerned regarding climate change than men - 62.5% over 55.8%), the participants' education level (56.7% of secondary education graduates over 63.8% of higher education graduates) and also the place where they live [Attica residents are more concerned (65.6%) than people who live at the rest of Greece (55.3%)] (Graph 21). In terms of gender, there is a global tendency that shows men being more interested/ concerned regarding climate change. Recently, in the USA, a survey showed a possible confutation of that dynamic within Gen Z,⁴⁰ yet the findings of this research can't confirm the same thing in Greece.

Climate Change

How concerned are you regarding climate change?

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
Very much & a lot	55.8	62.5	60.3	59.1	56.7	63.8	65.6	55.3
Somewhat	30.4	32.0	32.5	30.0	33.3	27.8	28.9	32.6
Not so much & Not at all	12.3	5.5	7.2	9.6	8.9	8.4	4.8	11.4
IDK/NA	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.1	0.0	0.7	0.7

Graph 21

On the other hand, what is confirmed is the global tendency that wants Gen Z to be increasingly concerned regarding environmental issues. In a global research conducted in 20 countries in 2017, climate change was the third most important issue that concerned Gen Zers, after terrorism and extremism. In a more recent survey⁴², though, that was conducted in 2021 in 45 countries, it was proven that climate change was the issue that concerns young people the most - and the same happened in a relevant 2020 survey. In Greece, the young generation seems to be relatively less concerned about this specific issue, though the concern rate is rising, according to a survey by the Nicos Poulantzas Institute showing that climate change is third on young people's (17-39 years old) list of topics that concern them, right after low salaries and unemployment.⁴³ The emergence of Greta Thunberg as a leader of the movement against climate change may have boosted that tendency. We just need to see what happens in the next few years and if climate change will become Gen Z's politicisation symbol

In the case of the Golden Dawn trial and subsequent conviction that was linked to the hashtag #Δεν είναι αθώοι (#deneinaiathwoi = they are not innocent), there is a high degree of convergence amongst participants: 72.2% agree with the relevant hashtag, while 8.7% disagree (Graph 22). Gen Z is a generation with increased antifascist reflexes and this is something that has been depicted in other researches as well - for example, as we can see in the Nicos Poulantzas Institute's research on ideological-political concepts, while 20% had positive views on nationalism, only 3% had a positive stance towards nazism.⁴⁴ Additionally, according to a relevant research by EKKE⁴⁵ (National Centre for Social Research), the murder of Pavlos Fyssas (along with the refugee crisis and the Prespa agreement) is a major event that contributed to the politicisation and the opinion forming of Gen Z. In fact, this was the major differentiation point with the millennials that respectively referenced the events of December 2008, the signing of the Memorandums and the 2015 referendum.⁴⁶

The highest convergence rate, though, was noted when participants were asked regarding the Greek #MeToo, with 86.9% saying they agree with the logic and the goals of this particular movement. Only 1.6% stated they disagree with the Greek #MeToo. This association is clearly influenced by the accusations that arose last year regarding the sexual harassment of several athletes. As expected, there is a significant gender-based differentiation in the answers to this question: 81.1% of the men agree with the Greek #MeToo movement as opposed to 91.8% of the women (Graph 23). The rise of the feminist movement (that was reflected in the amendment of the legal definition of rape in 2019) may have affected the young generation and Gen Zers reflexes regarding the #MeToo accusations and charges brought to light. The importance of gender equality for Gen Z has been recorded in international surveys where almost 90% stated they agree with the equality of men and women.⁴⁷

On the other hand, in the case of the protests against protective face masks and covid vaccines, participants appeared to be divided. The percentage of people who agree with said actions is relatively low (18.8%), while the majority disagrees (59.8%) (Graph 24). Yet, there is a significant number of people (20.8%) that "Neither agree or disagree" with the goals of those specific protests. It seems like a part of the young generation is affected by those particular demands.

→

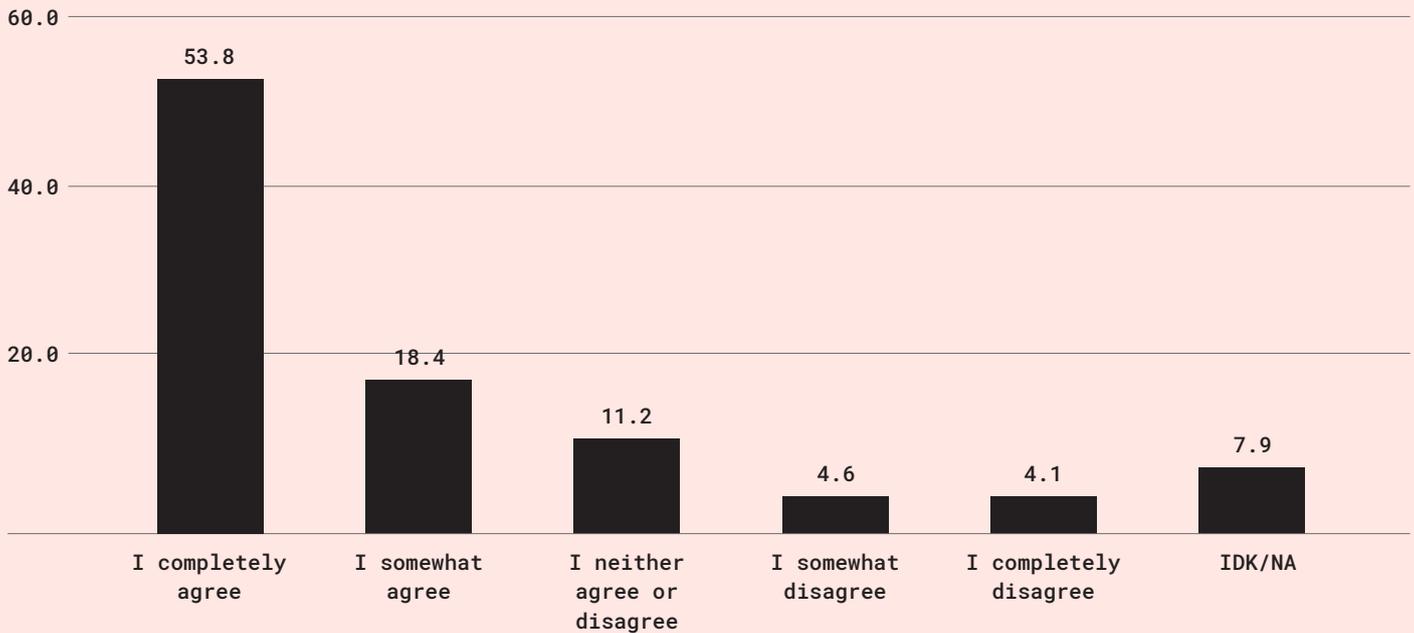
Regarding the protests that took place in February-March 2021 against the creation of a University Police Force, 48% said they agree with the protests, 18.8% disagrees, while a significant amount of people (31% - the largest number than on any other question) stated that they “Neither agree or disagree”. There are two main differentiation points here, according to the participants’ demographics (Graph 25). The first is gender: 54.7% of the women agree with the protests against a University Police Force compared to 40.6% of the men. The second (and certainly most unexpected one) is the employment status: 57.3% of people who are currently working support the protests as opposed to 41.2% of those who are currently unemployed.

In the case of another movement-wise significant recent event, the mobilisation of e-food employees, 64.2% agrees with the relevant hashtag (#cancelefood) that was used widely in social media in mid-September 2021 in order to express solidarity with the employees’ movement (Graph 26). Only 9.5% disagree with this hashtag, while 21.7% are neutral. Fights and mobilisations against platform capitalism have a significant impact on young people worldwide, as they highlight the struggles and demands of a new generation of workers who are experiencing conditions that are increasingly unstable.⁴⁸ In Greece especially, with youth unemployment reaching 39.1% in November 2021,⁴⁹ the workers’ strike demanding fixed employment contracts seemed to resonate significantly with young people.

Do you agree or disagree with the hashtag #Δεν είναι αθώοι (#deneinaiathwoi = they're not innocent) referring to the conviction of Golden Dawn for being a criminal organisation?

Graph 22

Δεν_είναι_αθώοι



Since December 2020, there have been a series of accusations by female athletes and actresses exposing the fact that they have been sexually harassed during their career (#MeToo movement). Do you agree or disagree with the logic and the goals of the #MeToo movement?

Graph 23

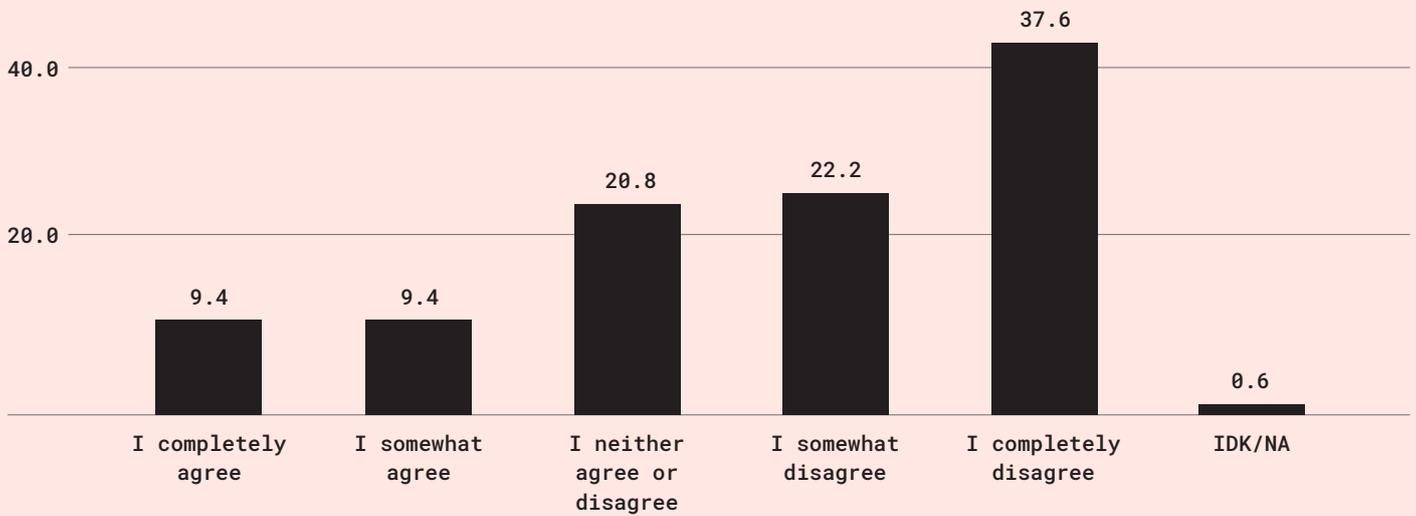
metoo

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
I completely or somewhat agree	81.1	91.8	85.1	88.3	84.7	90.5	87.2	86.6
I neither agree or disagree	14.5	7.0	10.8	10.2	11.9	8.1	10.2	10.6
I completely or somewhat agree	1.6	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.3
IDK/NA								

Do you agree or disagree with the protests against the covid vaccine and the use of protective face masks in schools?

Graph 24

SARS-CoV-2



Do you agree or disagree with the protests that are taking place against the creation of a University Police Force?

Graph 25

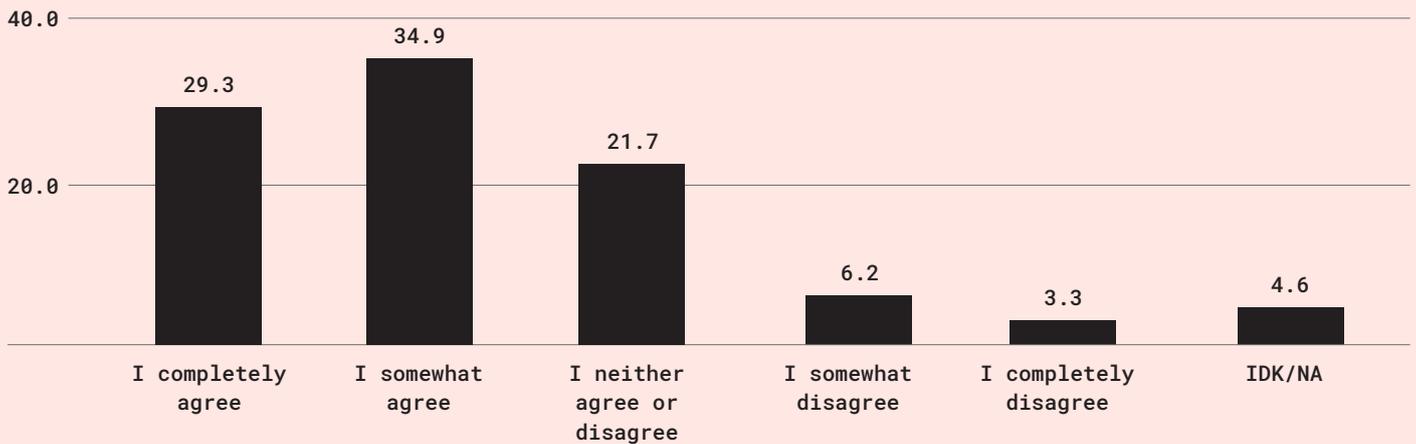
UNIPOLICE

	Men	Women	Cur- rently work- ing	cur- rently unemplo- yed	Second- ary edu- cation δευση	Higher edu- cation	Attica resi- dents	Rest of the country
I completely or somewhat agree	40.6	54.7	57.3	41.2	45.0	52.7	50.4	46.2
I neither agree or disagree	33.3	29.3	26.3	34.9	35.5	24.2	29.1	32.9
I completely or somewhat disagree	24.6	13.7	15.1	21.5	16.6	23.1	19.5	18.4
IDK/NA	1.5	1.5	1.3	2.4	2.9	0.0	1.0	2.5

Do you agree or disagree with the hashtag #cancelefood as an indication of solidarity towards employees/ delivery people of e-food in mid-September 2021?

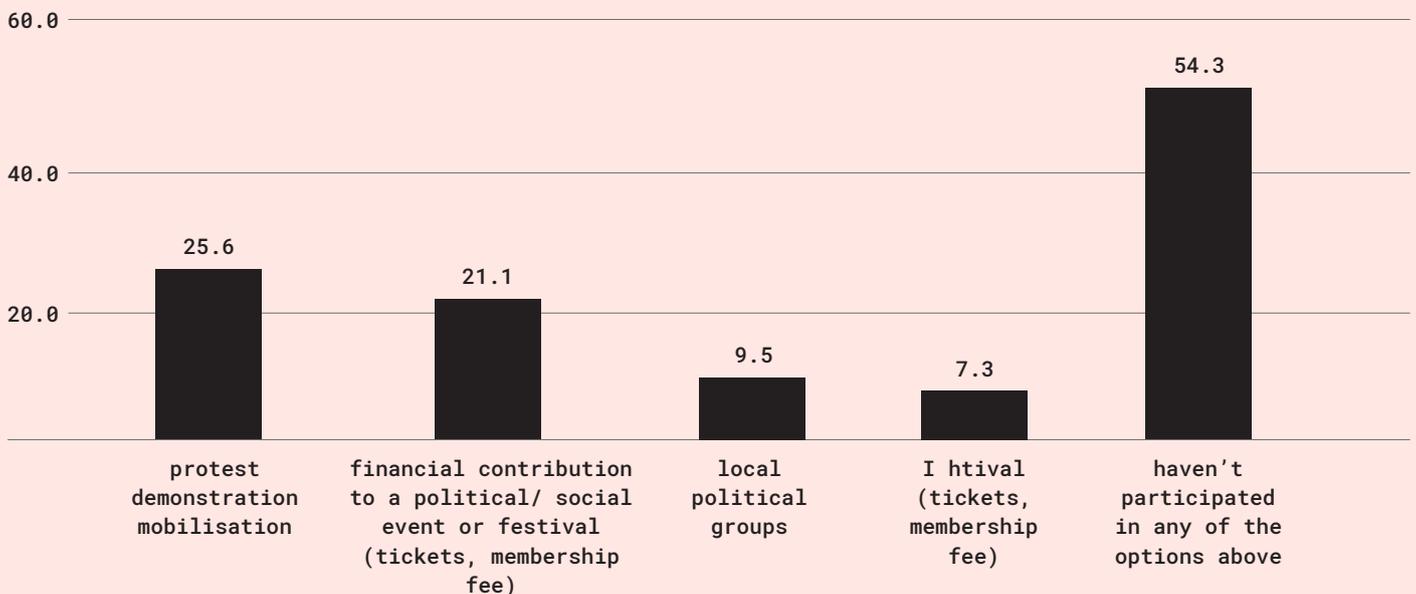
Graph 26

#cancel_efood



Have you participated in any of the above in the past year? (multiple choice)

Graph 27



The above are indicative of a generation that is familiar with movements and mobilisations on a wide range of topics and that has an opinion and is concerned regarding those topics. When asked regarding their political collective action repertoire during the past year that required a physical presence, 25.6% stated that they participated in at least one protest/ demonstration/ mobilisation, 21.1% said they contributed financially to a political/ social event or festival, 7.3% replied that they are members of a local organisation in their area of residence and 9.5% said they're members of a political party or a youth wing of a political party (Graph 27). The majority (54.3%) replied that they haven't participated in any of the above.

Still, the results above show a tendency towards a general interest in politics that goes beyond online political participation. The high percentage of Gen Zers that have contributed financially to political/ socio-political festivals could be due to the large number of such youth-targeting political festivals that exist in Greece and that just made a come-back in 2021 after the 2020 mandatory "break". Also, the percentage of young people that attended protests, demonstrations and/or mobilisations in the past year is of great interest.

It is worth noting that participation in such political activities is rarely majoritarian - even in turmoil years such as 2011, a relevant research revealed that only 43% of the general public had participated in a protest of any kind.⁵⁰ Given the limitations that the pandemic imposed in the planning of protests, the percentage recorded shows that Gen Z has turned towards this type of political participation. Also, even the percentages of young people who said that they participate in political parties or local organisations is not insignificant. Such a tendency was also recorded in the Nicos Poulantzas Institute's relevant research, as a significant percentage of young people (35%) replied that they'd be interested in joining a political party or a youth wing.⁵¹ The same tendency is evident in the question regarding their intention to vote, with the vast majority (84%) saying they intend to vote in the coming elections (Graph 28). It is obvious that this percentage is higher than the percentage of Gen Zers that will end up actually voting when the time comes. Still, it shows an intention to engage even with institutions (such as the Parliament and political parties) that have a low recorded legitimisation in young people's consciousness. This tendency has been recorded in previous research as well: the Nicos Poulantzas Institute⁵² recorded that 83% of the participants in their research voted in the July 2019 general election. Additionally, in a research conducted in the US in 2016, when the vast majority of Gen Zers couldn't vote yet, 47% replied that they believe voting is important.⁵³

Do you intend to vote in the coming general elections?

YES
84.0%

NO
8.8%

IDK-NA
7.2%

Graph 28

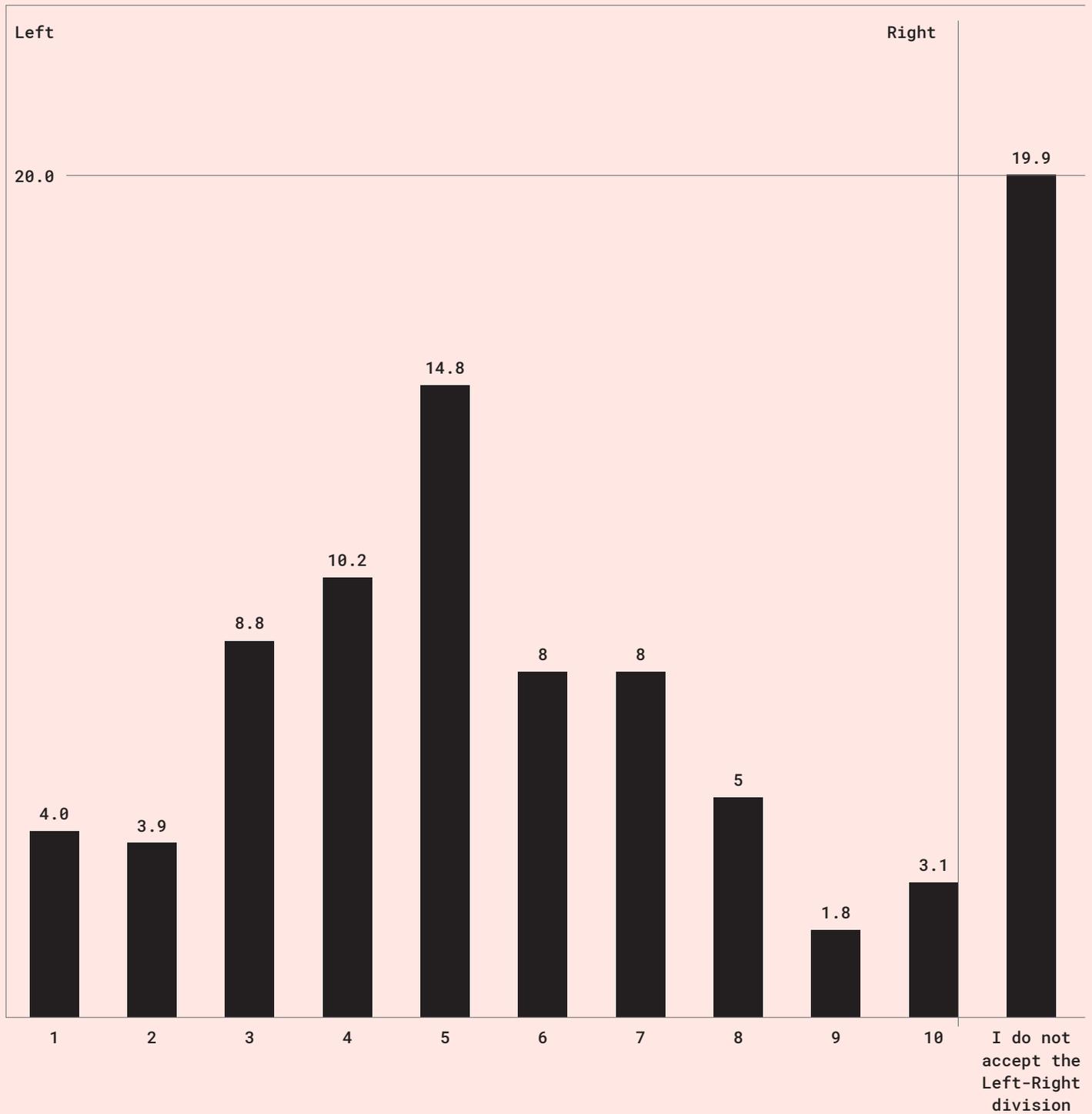
In terms of the political self-placement in the standard Left-Right scale, the resulting image is mixed (Graph 29).⁵⁴ For starters, almost 1/5 of the participants refused to place themselves on that scale, stating that they “do not accept the Left-Right division”. Including the 12.5% that didn’t answer the question at all (which makes sense given their young age), almost 1/3 of the participants didn’t place themselves in the respective Left-Right scale. This shouldn’t be interpreted as a lack in politicisation among Gen Zers - after all, it has been shown that they have formed opinions regarding significant issues of the past two years and have developed a repertoire of political action. It more likely looks like there isn’t a linear correspondence between practices and opinions on certain issues on one hand, and an overall ideological placement on the other. Therefore young people may be familiar with social movement practices, with defending workers’ demands and questioning the State’s oppression mechanisms without necessarily placing themselves politically to the Left.

Still, among the people who did place themselves ideologically, the Left seems to be leading to a certain extent. 26.9% placed themselves between 1 and 4 (with 1 being the left end of the scale), and 17.9% placed themselves between 7 and 10 (with 10 being the right end of the scale), while 22.8% placed themselves between 5 and 6.

The closest position to the findings of the present research is that of a survey conducted by the conservative think tank Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), that concluded that the new generation is significantly affected by left ideals and that the Millennials’ radicalisation seems to have passed on to Gen Z.⁵⁵

On a scale of 1 (Left) to 10 (Right), where would you place yourself politically?

Graph 29





Essential conclusions

D. Essential Conclusions

Generally speaking, Gen Zers seem to be interested in politics, they develop a repertoire of political actions that isn't exclusively online, they have concerns regarding future developments and are worried because of the pandemic. The above are reflected in their replies regarding their interest towards current events: 55% stated that they are very interested, 30.5% are somewhat interested and just 13.5% said they have little to no interest in current affairs. This tendency towards politicisation is indicative of the experiences of the young generation and the fact that they seem to be living in a permanent state of crisis, especially in Greece. They've spent most of their lives in a condition of economic crisis and political austerity, they are coming of age during a global pandemic and they can see their future being threatened by a new severe economic recession and climate change. They seem to be looking for institutional but also extra-institutional

solutions, they're defending gender equality and are increasingly concerned regarding climate change. Ideologically, the Left seems to have a relative lead but generally speaking, Gen Z is expressing a core dispute against the current ideological spectrum. All of the above speak of a generation that is seeking solutions, has political concerns and also experiences that have been accumulating during the turbulent years of the pandemic.

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Finally, regarding the informational content consumption, young people are aware of the current issue of fake news that is circulating in the public sphere and even though the majority are confident that they could distinguish between fake and real news, they're equally ready to admit that they've fallen "victims" of fake news. At the same time, the Gen Zers replies regarding the factors they take into account in order to assess the validity of a news article, are indicative of the power of the interpersonal relations network and bring forward an intense subjectivity, as the primary parametre that is factored in when assessing the validity of a news article is the trust towards the person that (re)posted it and on third place (by a small margin) they replied that they check whether the post makes sense to them. Those findings show that young people lack the knowledge and ability to assess the validity of the information they consume on the internet - and that was something to be expected and can be justified. This is why it'd be very useful for them to become partakers of such knowledge, especially given the fact that a (very) significant part of their daily (communication) activities takes place within online environments.

Ref.

Ref.

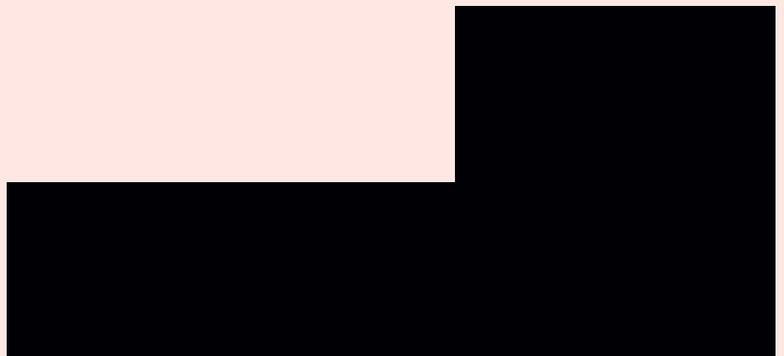
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