

LEAP Quantitative Survey Report

The research design of the quantitative component of this research is focused on collecting data from 4 categories of respondents: children (10-17 years old), youth (18-24 years old), parents and teachers. Having these categories of respondents give their opinion on issues of education, health, environment and agency is important for two reasons. First, it is critical that we get first-hand information about the problems that children and youth face in Cluj-Napoca directly from them. While the survey consists of exclusively closed questions, in combination with the qualitative component of the study we can form a fairly adequate image of the needs of children and youth. Second, including parents and teachers in this survey allows for comparing perceptions of issues across categories of respondents, thus being able to identify those where perceptions do not overlap. The questionnaires were slightly different – reflecting the different roles that each respondent group plays in the research – but some questions were asked in more than one group, precisely for obtaining comparability.

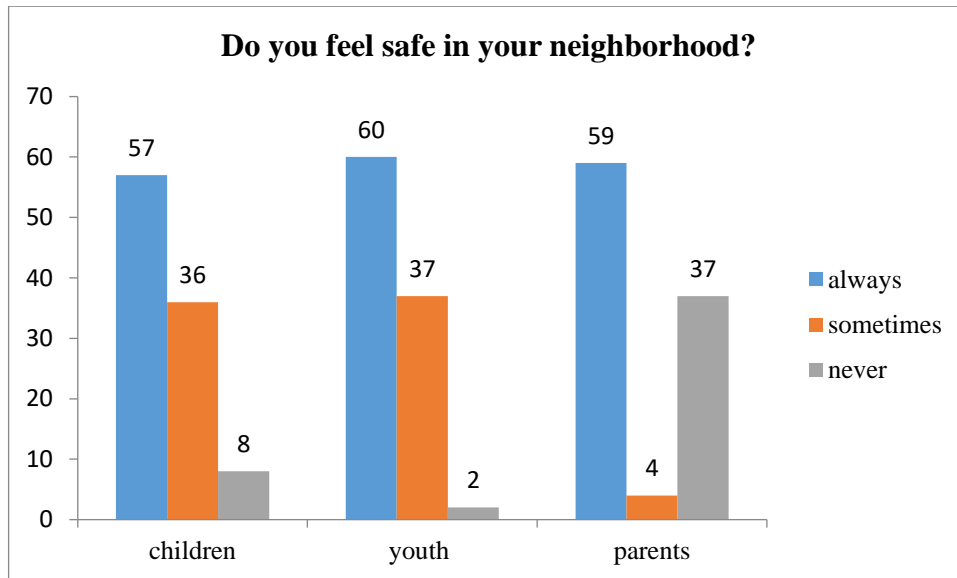
The 4 surveys on children, youth, parents and teachers totaled 1127 respondents out of which 125 were children, 531 youth, 371 parents and 100 teachers. Overall, it was more difficult to reach children and teachers, probably because of the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the teachers sample had a fairly high number of questions with non-responses. From a demographic perspective, the children and youth samples differed slightly. The children sample totaled 66% females and 34% males, and more than 70% of respondents were aged 15 through 18; almost 50% came from financially secure/rich families, and 30% of them were living in the Cluj Metropolitan Area. From an ethnic perspective, 90% were Romanian, 8% Hungarian and 2% Roma. In the youth sample, the gender distribution was similar to the one found in the case of the youth, 95% were Romanian and 4% Hungarian, and about 12% lived in the Cluj Metropolitan Area. From a socio-economic point of view, about 32% of respondents belong to high income families. Within the parents sample, 23% were living in the Cluj Metropolitan Area, while the corresponding percentage for teachers was 17%.

The report has four thematic sections, environment, agency, education and health.

1. Environment

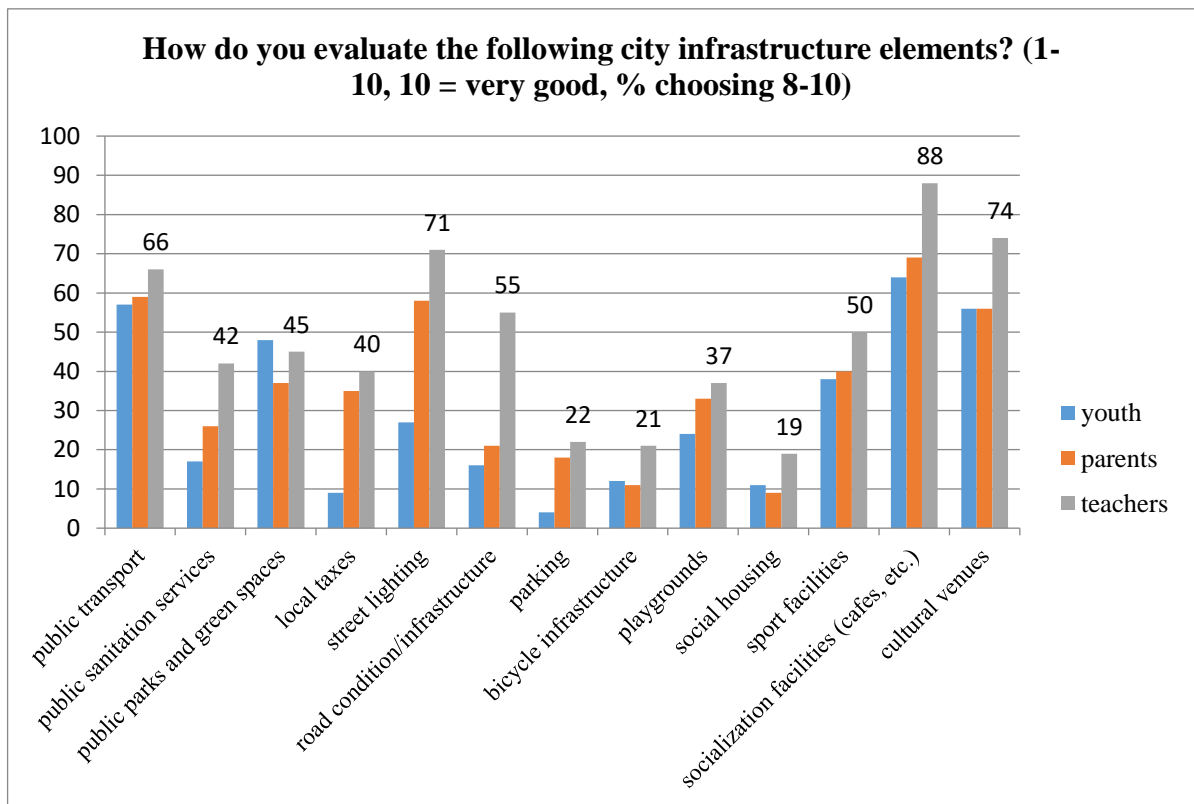
This category reflects perceptions of features of infrastructure that the city itself offers. Probably, the most important such feature is creating a safe and secure milieu for child and youth development. The graph below shows perceptions of safety according to different groups. Children and youth were asked about their own safety, while parents were asked if the neighborhood is safe for their children. The reassuring findings are that more than 50% of respondents in each sample always feel safe in their neighborhood, and, in the case of the youth, this percentage goes above 60%. The not so reassuring piece of news is that more than 30% among youth and children only feel safe sometimes, and less than 10% never feel safe. Furthermore, about 35% of parents consider their neighborhood not to be safe for children. Parents and youth living in the metropolitan area were more prone to consider their neighborhood safe, than those living in the city; among parents, the difference was 20%. A brief investigation into the reasons given by respondents for not feeling safe reflects differences between children and youth. Children consider that the most important threats to their safety are fear of being attacked or beaten up, fear of thieves, and fear of alcohol or drugs induced violence. The youth agree that the most important problem is being attacked or beaten up, followed by alcohol induced violence and the poor quality of street lighting. While

being generally safe, Cluj seems to have at least a perception problem from its youngest inhabitants concerning fear of assault, which should be addressed.



Safety is important for all categories of respondents, but we also wanted to see whether children – considered more vulnerable - can identify and react to a safety issues in an effective way. When asked whether they would know whom to call if something bad were to happen to them, 33% of children said “yes” and they referred mostly to the police. Nevertheless, a quarter of children said that they would not call the police because they think that the police would perhaps not listen to them or believe them; slightly more than 10% also mentioned that they do not trust the police.

The next graph presents relevant information vis-a-vis the city’s infrastructure and many services, as they are evaluated by youth, parents and teachers. The most problematic areas of the city’s infrastructure are the lack of parking spaces, of bicycle paths and social housing. All three categories of respondents evaluated negatively these three aspects. Barely 5% of the youth consider that the parking infrastructure is adequate in Cluj, and the percentage seldom reaches 20%. Overall, the least performing sector of Cluj is the availability of social housing, a matter of great concern in the context of a booming estate market and inflated property prices. Cycling and parking infrastructures fare only slightly better. All three categories of respondents consider that the city has adequate socialization facilities (such as cafes or restaurants) and cultural venues. Sports facilities rank somewhat lower, although it is not clear whether respondents referred to public sports facilities or the abundance of private (and hence paying) gyms and fitness clubs. Finally, the highest praise for infrastructure goes to sectors of activity that are not offered by the city but by private companies, such as the hospitality of fitness industry.

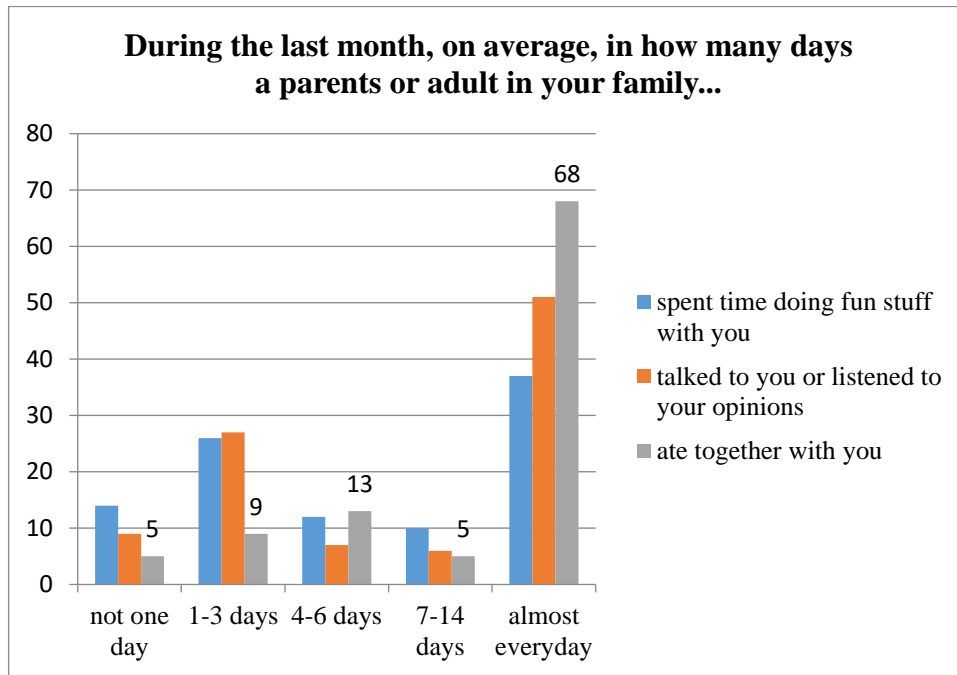


Public transport and public parks and green spaces are evaluated as good by more than 50% of respondents in each category, while only around 30% consider that there are enough playgrounds in the city. The evaluation respondents make for the infrastructure and the services that Cluj offer, reflect already known lingering problems, such as the ever growing traffic or the constant and significant raising of prices of real estate. The fact that teachers are overall kinder in their evaluation of the city’s services and infrastructure can be due to the fact that they also work in the public sector, and may feel some social desirability pressure affecting their evaluations. In most situations, the youth are the harshest critics of the local authorities and their achievements, which may reflect either real problems (such as parking and cycling infrastructures) or, indeed, a communication shortcoming on the part of the city hall.

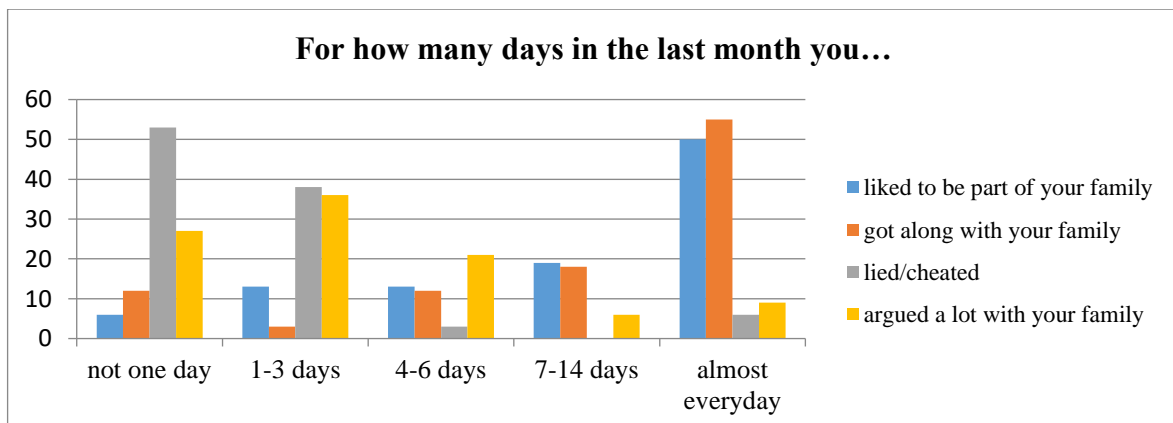
The next section focuses on the children and their relationship with their families, as well as their ways of spending their free time.

The relationship children have with their parents and extended family is extremely important for their well-being. The family is the first milieu of socialization, and the child’s development is massively influenced by everyday interaction with the adults in the family. The graph below summarizes the amount of time that parents or other adults in the family spent with their children doing various activities in the last month. One can observe that eating

together is the most frequent family activity - 66% of children responded having meals with the family on a quasi-daily basis. However, only about 50% of children mentioned that their parents talked or listened to their opinions on a daily basis, and the percentage drops to below 40 for spending time doing fun stuff. Perhaps more worrying is the fact that almost 15% of children said that they did not spend any single day with their parents doing fun stuff in the last month. It is obvious that eating together remains the staple of most families in terms of interaction, but even in this case the numbers are not very high.

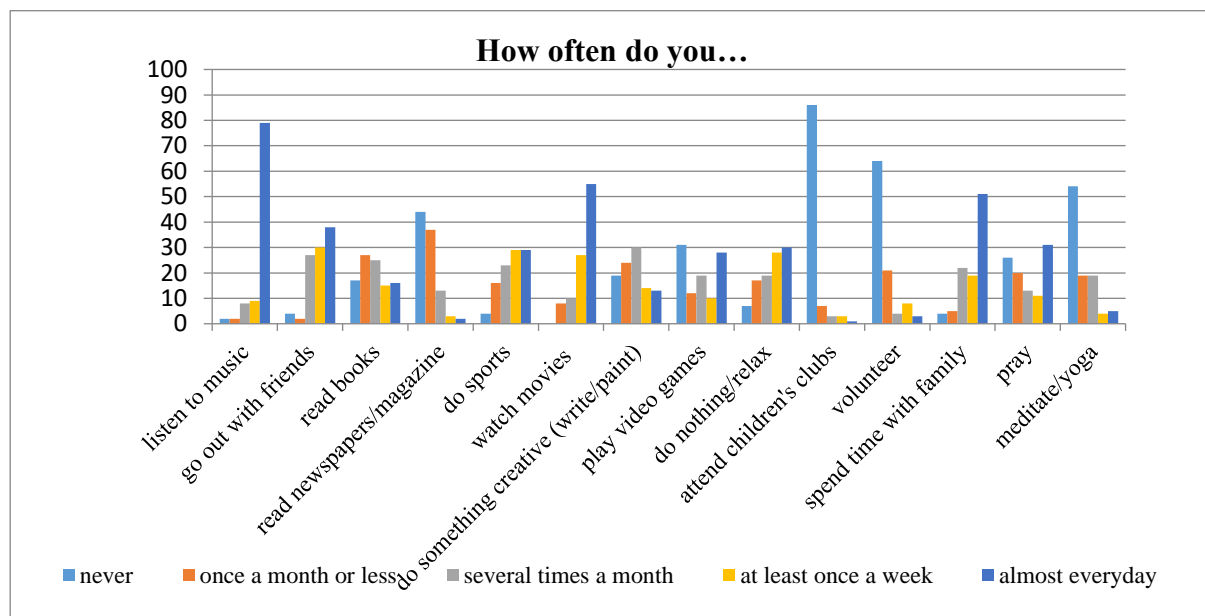


The number of children that said that they liked being part of their own families and got along with them on a daily basis hovers around 50%. At the same time, more than 35% mentioned that they did that only 1-3 days during the previous month. Data suggests that potential conflicts within families are quite frequent, and their impact on child’s development and socialization is well-documented. This result is confirmed by the number of children that mentioned arguing with their family, almost 10% doing so on a daily basis, and more than 20% for 4-6 days during the previous month.



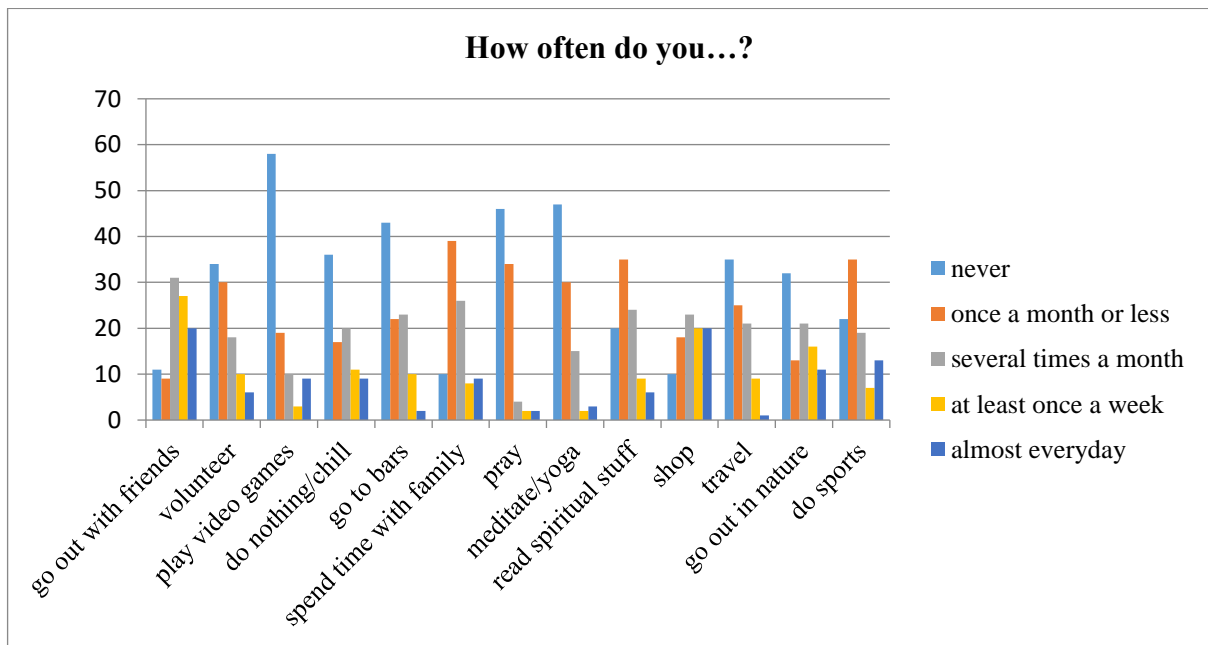
Arguments within families are frequent, especially when it comes to the relationship between parents and their teenage children. Nevertheless, the data also suggests that parents should perhaps devote more time to their children, especially doing activities that are beneficial for the child’s development, such as fun stuff or listening to them and their ideas. While eating together is an important event in family everyday life, resources should be allocated for other types of activities that are less ritualistic and more meaningful.

It is equally important to know how children spend their time, and what types of activities they are engaged in. However, one word of caution is necessary: the data was collected during the Covid-19 pandemics, and it is possible that results are skewed towards more individual, indoors and online activities. Consequently, almost 80% of children mentioned that they listen to music almost every day, and more than 50% watch movies on a daily basis. Only about 15% read books at the same rate, and less than 5% read newspapers or magazines. Children’s clubs rank very low in children’s spending of their time, with a close to zero percentage of children saying that they attend these clubs every day, and more than 80% saying that they never do. It is also noteworthy that around 60% of children never participate in volunteering work. About 30% mention doing something creative like painting or writing fairly often and doing sports everyday, and the same percentage affirm praying every day.

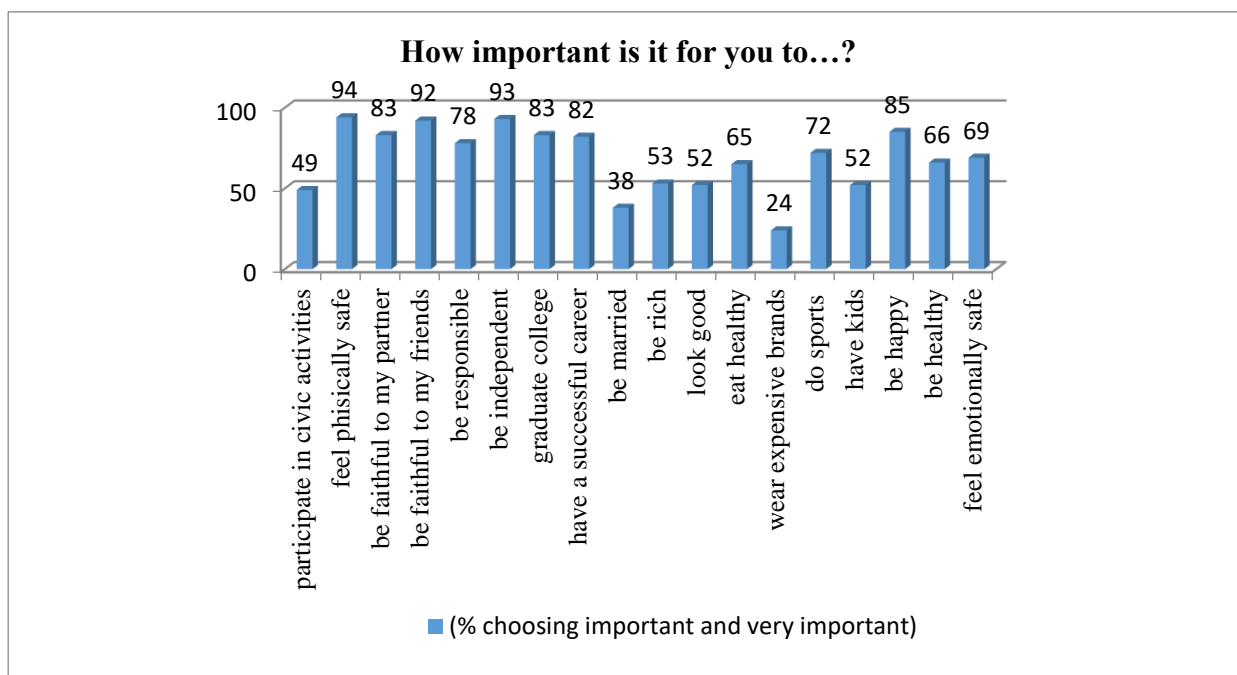


The ways in which children spend their free time are indicative of certain global problems that may have local solutions. On the one hand, children seem to prefer to spend their free time doing solitary things, such as watching movies or listening to music. It is true that these results may have been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic that requires isolation, but, even so, it is worrying that almost no children spend time at youth clubs. Socialization in youth clubs is very important for acquiring social skills, while it is also important for creating strong social values, such as solidarity and trust. Another worrying result is the fact that children do not read books, which may be a consequence of social media and significant amount of time spent on the internet. One could also add that books are fairly expensive, but Cluj offers a good network of public libraries, so initiatives to increase popularity of reading would be useful. Finally, volunteering is also somewhat in need of popularizing.

The next section focuses on the youth and how they spend their time and what they consider important. The most preferred free time every day activities for the youth are going out with friends and shopping. The third preferred every day free time activity is doing sports. Conversely, spiritual activities such as praying or meditating/doing yoga are less favorite, with almost 50% of the youth never engaging in them. The results are comparable to the ones already presented for children, although the youth are more willing to socialize. One notable finding is that the youth do not seem to be interested at all in spending their free time focusing on their spirituality: almost 50% of young respondents never pray or meditate, but 20% like to shop almost every day. We do not argue that this is something necessarily bad, but, when coupled with little interest in going out in nature or volunteering, this result may be indicative of a certain disregard for spending time in meaningful ways, and engage in rather hedonistic activities. Again, this is not something that requires intervention, but, we suggest that the youth may benefit from being encouraged to devote some of their free time to other activities, besides focusing on commercial/consumerist behaviors.

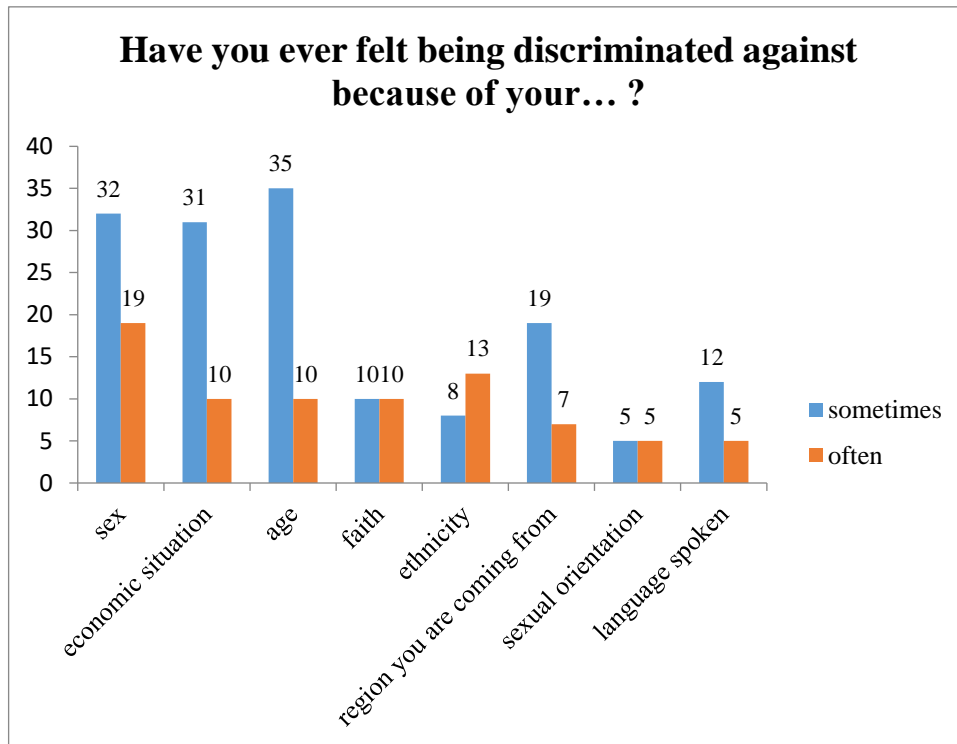


The data summarized in the graph below shows what the youth consider important. An overwhelming majority think that it is very important for them to be independent and feel physically safe. Being faithful to one's friends is also on top, with numbers slightly higher than being faithful to one's partners. If 85% consider that it is important or very important to be happy, the numbers drop to 66% when it comes to being healthy (this is probably a consequence of the fact that young people do not worry too much about their health and consider it a given). Being responsible, graduating college and doing sports are also important, while only 38% consider that it is important to be married. Although more than 50% want to be rich and look good, only 24% consider that it is important to wear expensive brands. Overall, the image that the data depicts shows a young generation for whom both materialism and postmaterialism are important; they are perfectly capable to believe simultaneously in both financial security and safety and in taking care of their body or engaging in hedonistic activities.



Overall, we believe that the youth in Cluj are similar to many other of their kind in European countries, and their views over what is important suggest a certain level of maturity and several strong principles.

This section would not be complete without discussing discrimination, a pervasive feature in many interaction contexts. Discrimination is a problem in many recent democracies, because of pre-existing cleavages onto which new roots of discrimination grow. Discriminatory practices are unfortunately part of the environment, and local strategies to fight them may be the most appropriate. The next graph shows how often the youth felt discriminated according to their belonging to different social groups. Among those situations in which respondents considered that they have been often discriminated, sex, faith, economic situation and age have been mentioned most frequently. However, the percentage of those feeling discriminated based on sex is almost the double of any the other three (19%). The very low percentage of those that have been discriminated based on their sexual orientation is probably due to the fact that very few people are explicit about it and display of public homosexual affection in Cluj is almost nonexistent. Among those that mentioned having been discriminated sometimes, age, sex and economic situation take the lead. Moreover, women are much more prone to say that they have been discriminated because of their sex (more than three quarters of men said that they have never been discriminated because of their sex, while the corresponding percentage among women was 37%).



In conclusion, Cluj offers the youth and children an adequate milieu for development. Data shows that the youth and children of Cluj are overall satisfied with what the city offers, although there are important points of discontent, such as parking and bicycle infrastructure, some issues of safety and instances of discrimination. We believe that it is the local authorities' responsibility to make a more sustained effort and reach out to the children and the youth, and invest in a two-ways structured and sustained communication strategy.

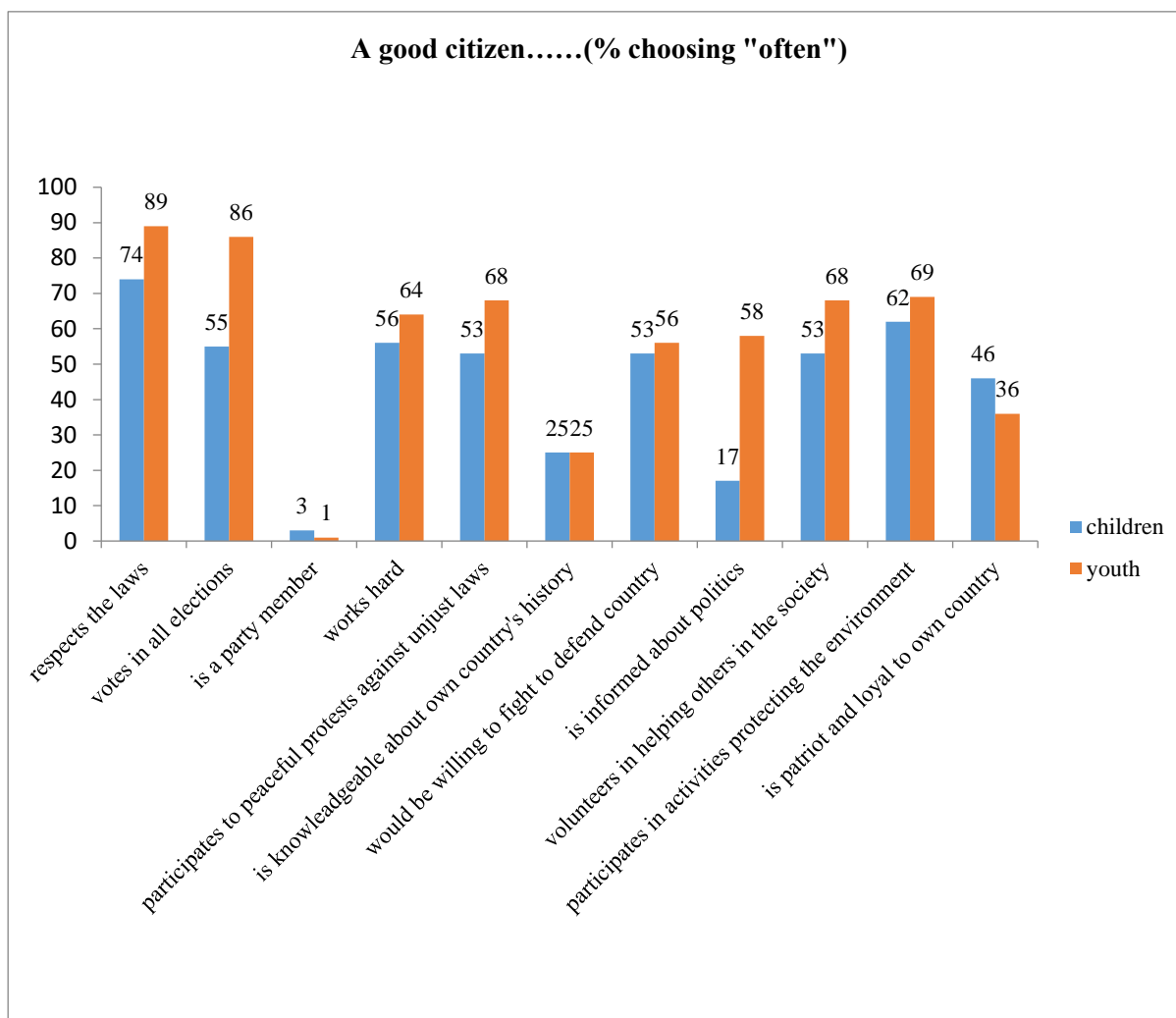
2. Agency

In this research we place a heavy emphasis on the values, norms and social behaviors that children and youth have. It has been often argued that the lack of a clear and coherent set of social values is problematic, and it may be the culprit for some of a country's most pressing issues such as intolerance towards minorities, consumption of fake news, or lack of social trust and solidarity. In this section, we aim to discover what are the main values and norms that young people adhere to, and compare them to those of their parents and teachers, the two most important agents responsible for transmitting values and norms to the youth.

The graph below shows understandings of what it takes to be a good citizen according to children and youth, respectively. Overall, the youth are more committed to good citizenship, which is natural given the level of maturity and experience with "living" citizenship. More than 70% of children consider that a good citizen respects the laws, in comparison to almost 90% of the youth; moreover, if only 55% of children consider that a good citizen votes in all elections, the percentage increases to 86% in the case of the youth. These results are intuitive, especially when it comes to voting: the youth have already acquired the right to vote and, probably, have exercised it.

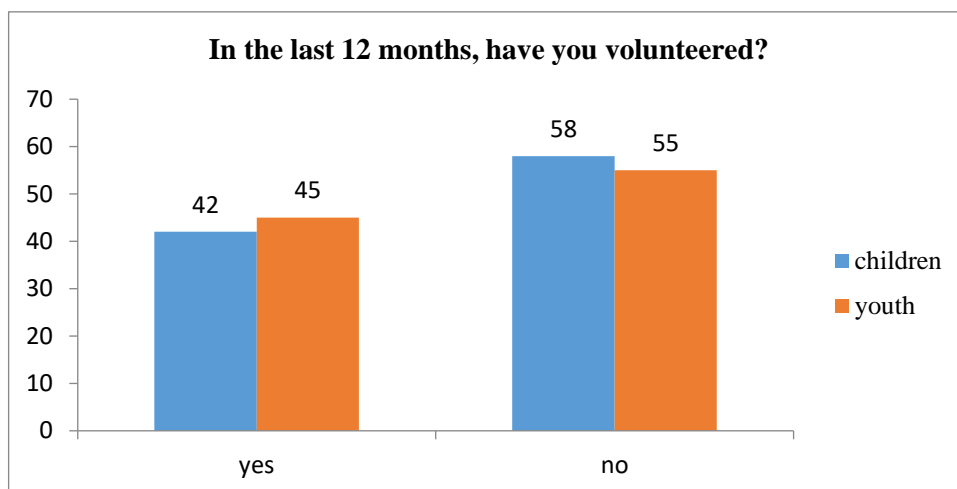
Both categories of respondents massively reject the idea that good citizenship means party membership, which reflects a broader feature of the Romanian citizenry, namely the lack of trust in political institutions. Almost 70% of youth consider that a good citizen works hard, participate in peaceful protests opposing an unjust law, volunteer in order to help others less fortunate and participate in activities protecting the environment. The numbers for children are about 10-15 percentage points lower, but these same features of good citizenship fare high in popularity among children too. In a nutshell, both children and the youth seem to have been effectively socialized into democratic politics from the point of view of participation, both civic and political. The only question where the percentage of children is higher than the percentage of youth is the propensity to fight to defend their country and patriotism and loyalty to the country.

There is no way in which we can explain this difference with a certain level of certainty, but, at the level of speculation, it is possible that children are more susceptible to nationalist discourse, either in school or through (social) media.



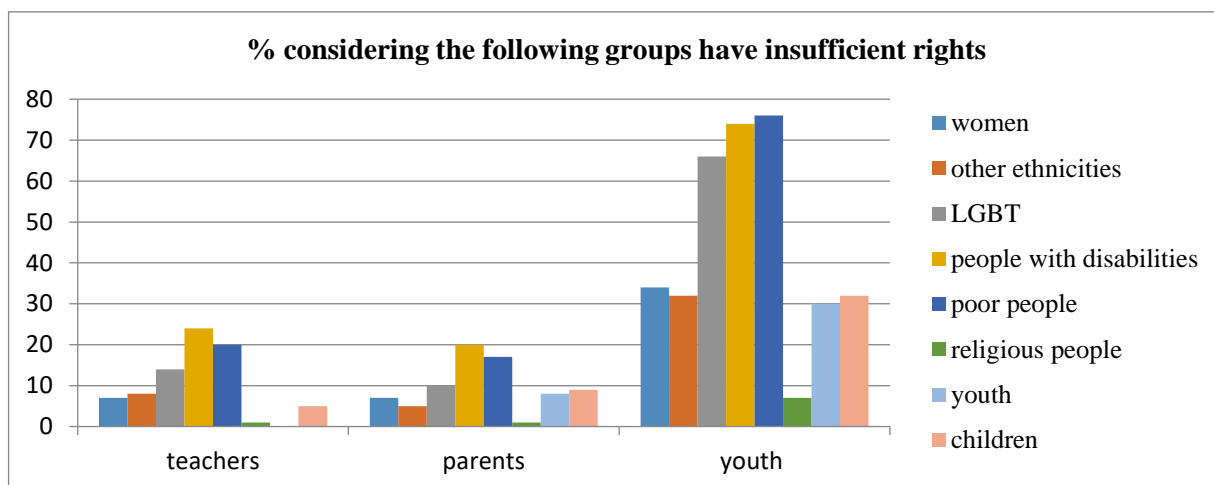
The largest difference between children and youth when it comes to elements of good citizenship is the importance of being informed about politics, with slightly more than 15% of children considering so, in comparison to almost 60% of the youth. There is also a 30% difference in the importance of voting in all elections, with only 55% of children considering this participatory act as very important.

Volunteering for different causes have become quite popular in post 1989 Romania, although it is still far from the realities of consolidated democracies in Western Europe. One of the most important reasons for this difference resides in the rather recent entry of NGOs onto the Romanian landscape and people's mistrust of them (or their role for that matter, which is not often understood well). According to the data in the graph below, more than 40% of children and youth have volunteered during the last 12 months. Among the youth, those living in the greater metropolitan area have, on average, volunteered more: the difference between the number of young people who volunteered and are living in the city and those living in the metropolitan area is about 20%. Cluj-Napoca is one of the most vibrant cities in Romania from the perspective of density and activity of the third sector and, from this perspective, one could expect the numbers to be higher. Children volunteer more through activities organized by their schools, and less in those organized by youth organizations. In the case of the youth, the majority that volunteer do so through nongovernmental organizations.

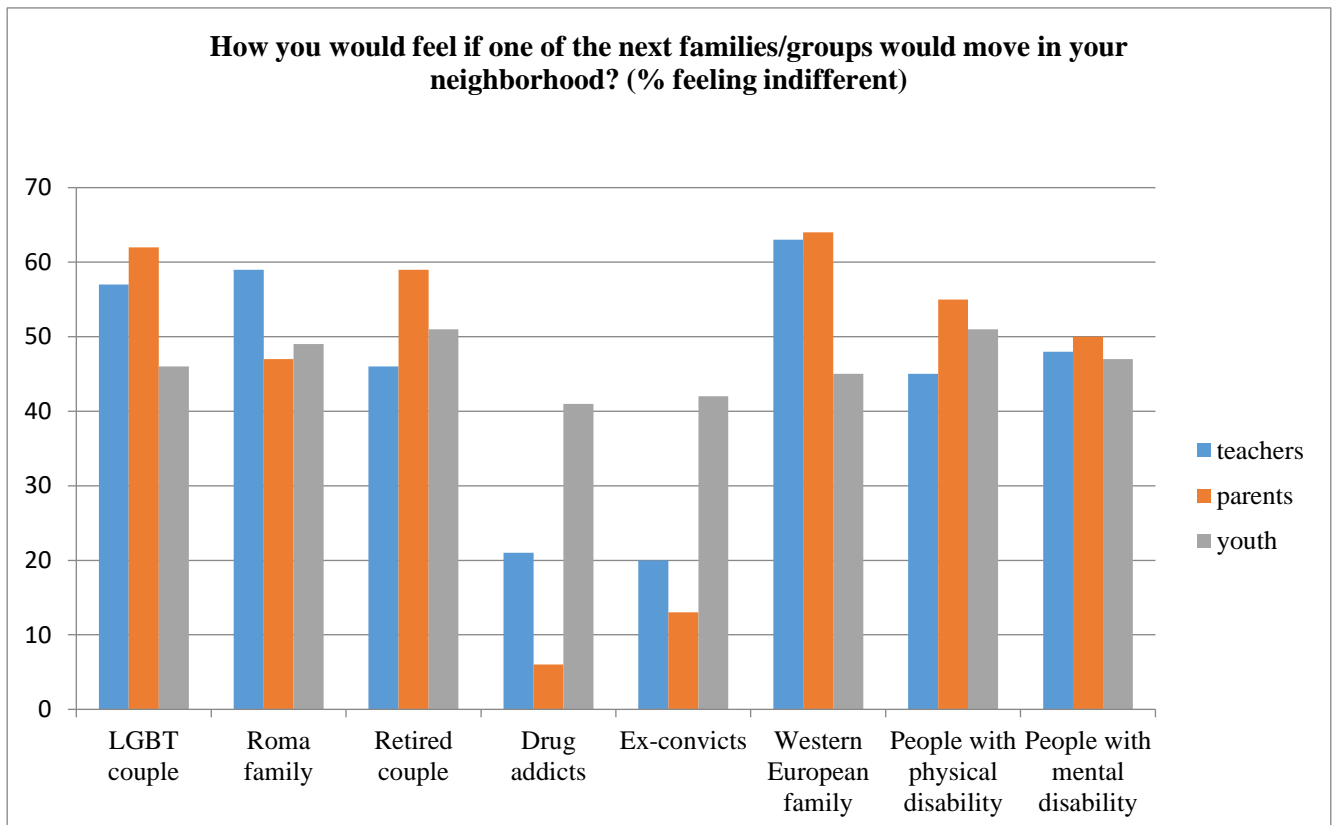
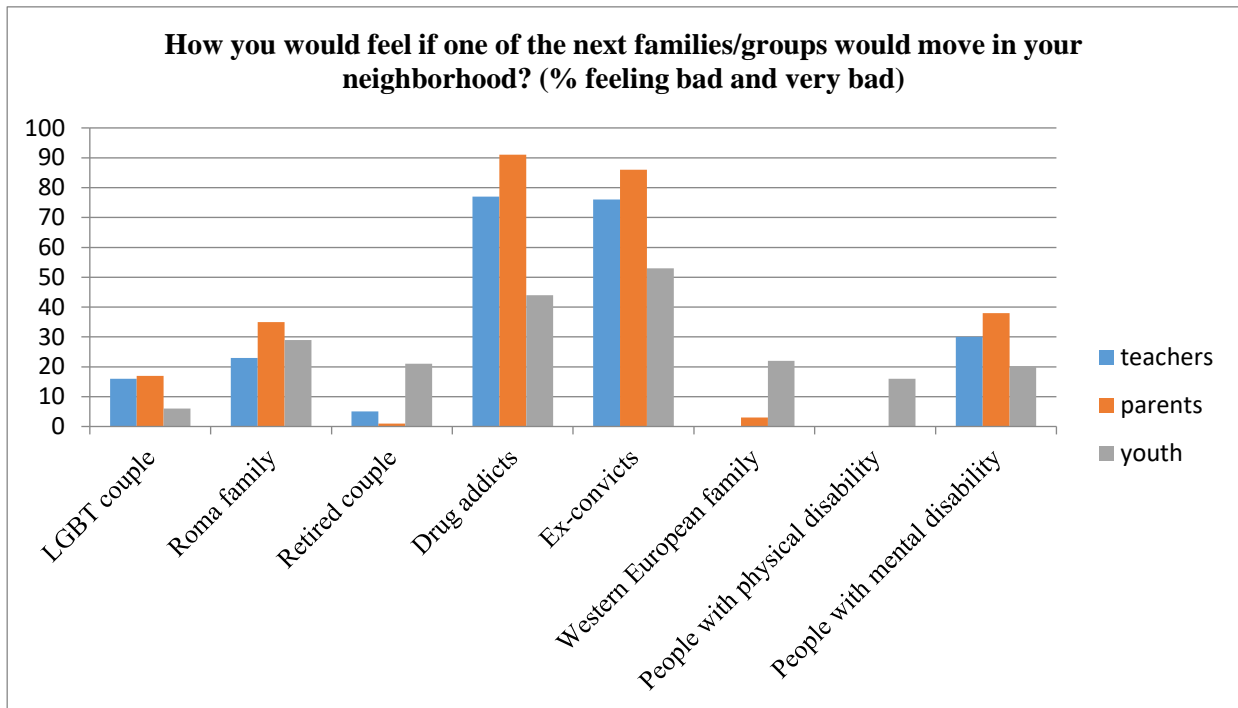


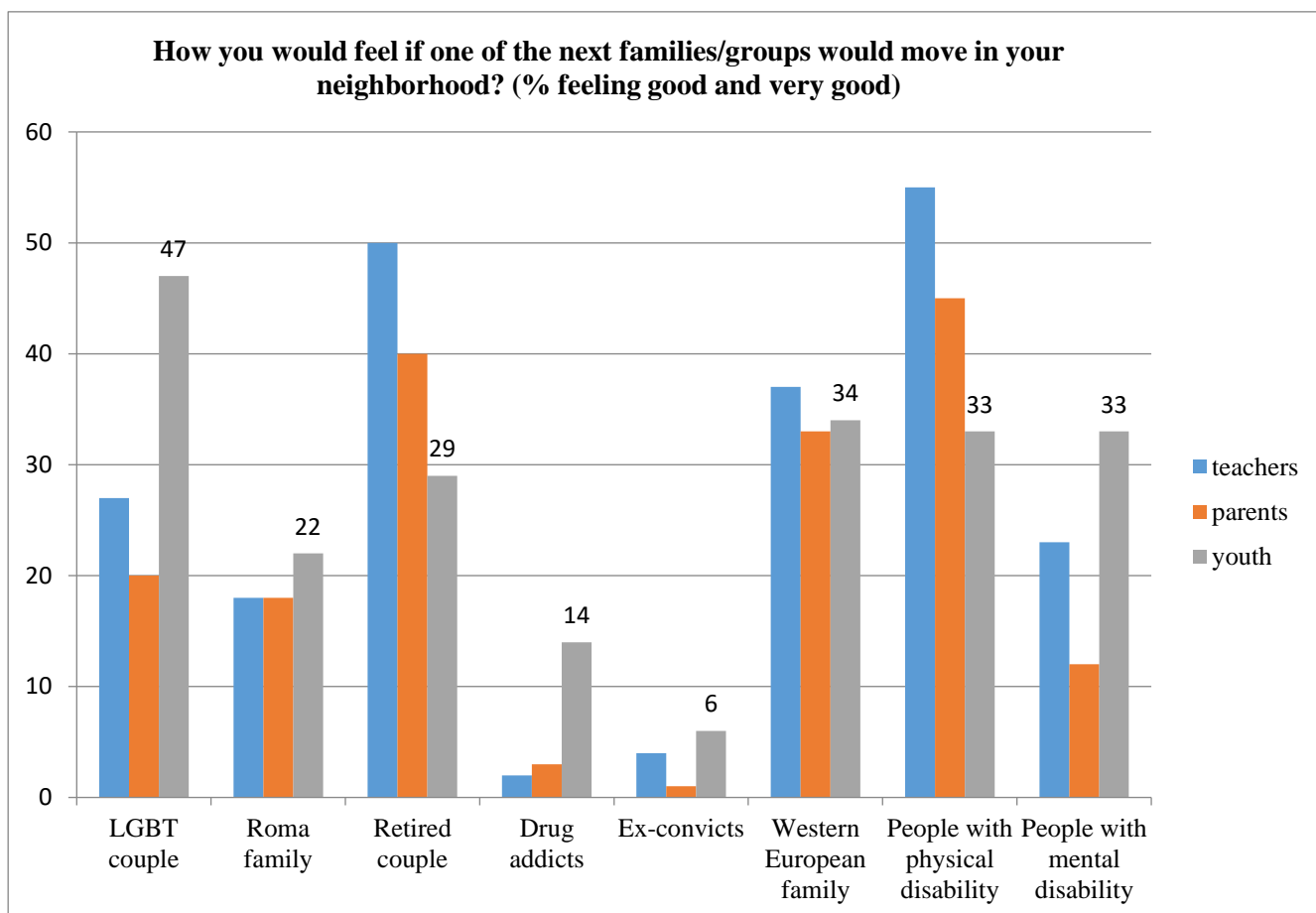
Tolerance towards various minority groups in society is a complicated issue in most recent democracies. At the same time, its importance cannot be stressed enough, especially in the context of growing popularity of growing illiberal democratic forms of government. Hence, we deem critically important to assess how young people internalize tolerance as a core principle of democratic citizenship, and compare their attitudes towards minorities with those of their parents and teachers. Given that young people grew up and were socialized in a democratic Romania, an EU member state, we expect them to be more acceptant of diversity than people of older generations. At the same time, research shows that young people around the world are often more conservative than their parents, especially because they did not have to fight the battles for securing rights for the less advantaged. Moreover, Cluj is one of the truly multicultural cities in Romania, and we also expect that this context may be conducive to more tolerant attitudes towards minorities.

The next graph assesses how teachers, parents and young people perceive several groups in society. The bars indicate the percentage of respondents in each category who consider the respective group to have insufficient rights. Overall, the groups that all categories consider as underprivileged are people with disabilities and poor people, although there is significant variation in support for these groups across categories. The youth seem to be more empathic with people with disabilities and poor people, with more than 70% considering that they do not have sufficient rights, as opposed to about 20% among parents and teachers. By far, the largest difference in support for disadvantaged groups across categories is in the case of the LGBT community; more than 65% of the youth consider them as having insufficient rights, in comparison with their parents and teachers, among whom only about 10-15% think similarly. Results summarized in the table seem to suggest that there is indeed a process of intergenerational change at play in Cluj: young people are certainly more supportive of granting more rights to a host of different categories.

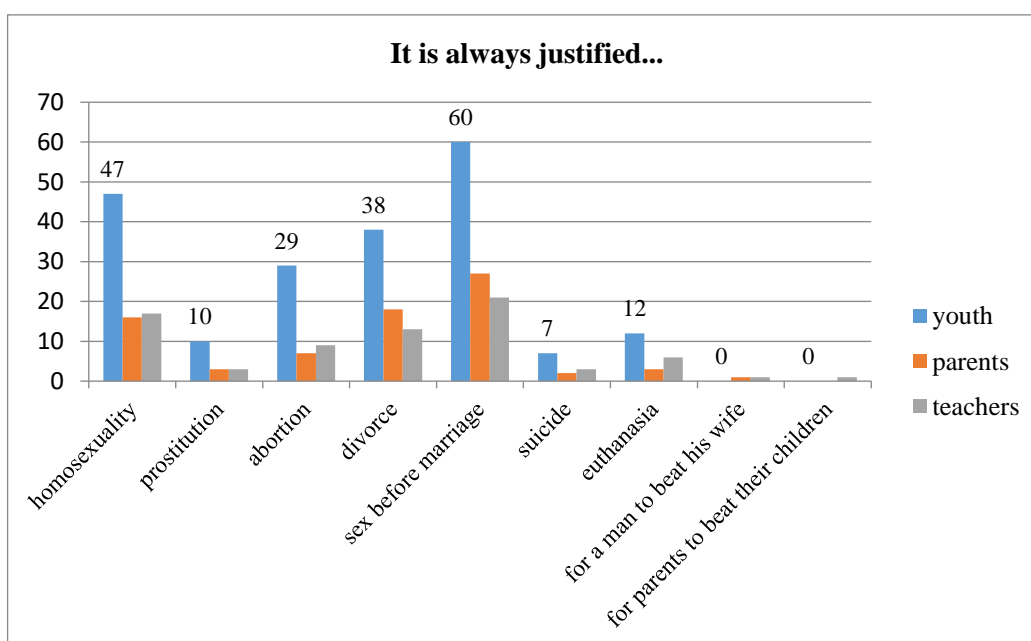
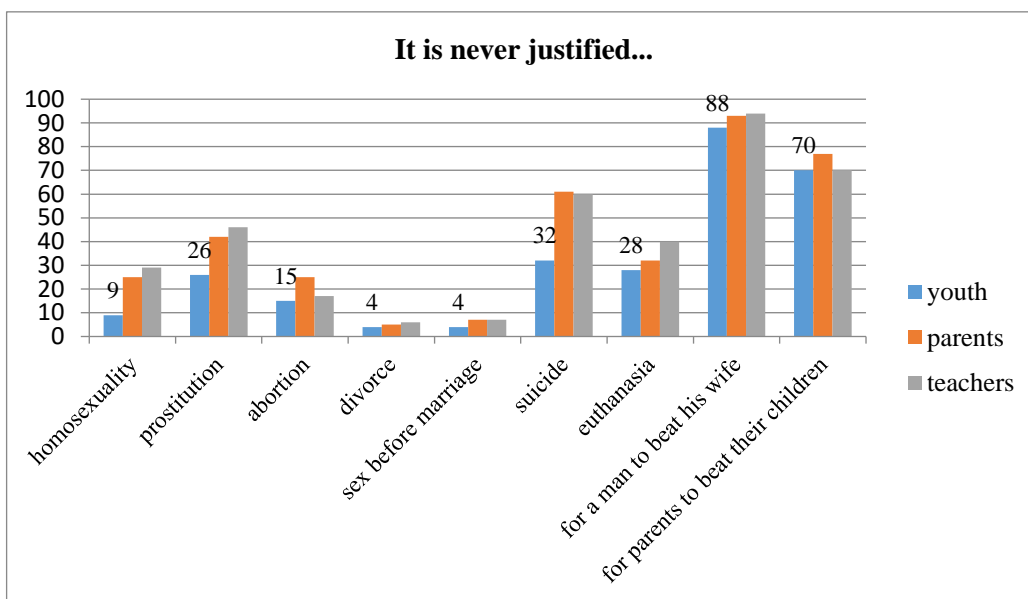


The three graphs below confirm previous results. When asked how they would feel about certain groups of people moving into their neighborhood, once again the youth proved more tolerant than their parents and teachers. However, acceptance of different groups varies according to the image/social construction of these groups within society. If the youth are significantly more accepting of LGBT couples, they are still much less so with members of the Roma community. Nevertheless, the youth are also more accepting of drug addicts and ex-convicts. This rather diverse set of results suggests that, while the youth are indeed more tolerant than the older generations, tolerant attitudes are formed differently on a case by case logic: the Roma community is still very much stigmatized in Romania, and it does not seem that there is any change in attitudes across generations. Another interesting finding is that in between 20% and 30% of respondents in all three categories have negative attitudes towards people with mental disability (even in this case, the youth are more accepting out of the three groups of respondents). Further analysis reveals that the youth and parents that live in the city are significantly more tolerant than those living in the greater metropolitan area.





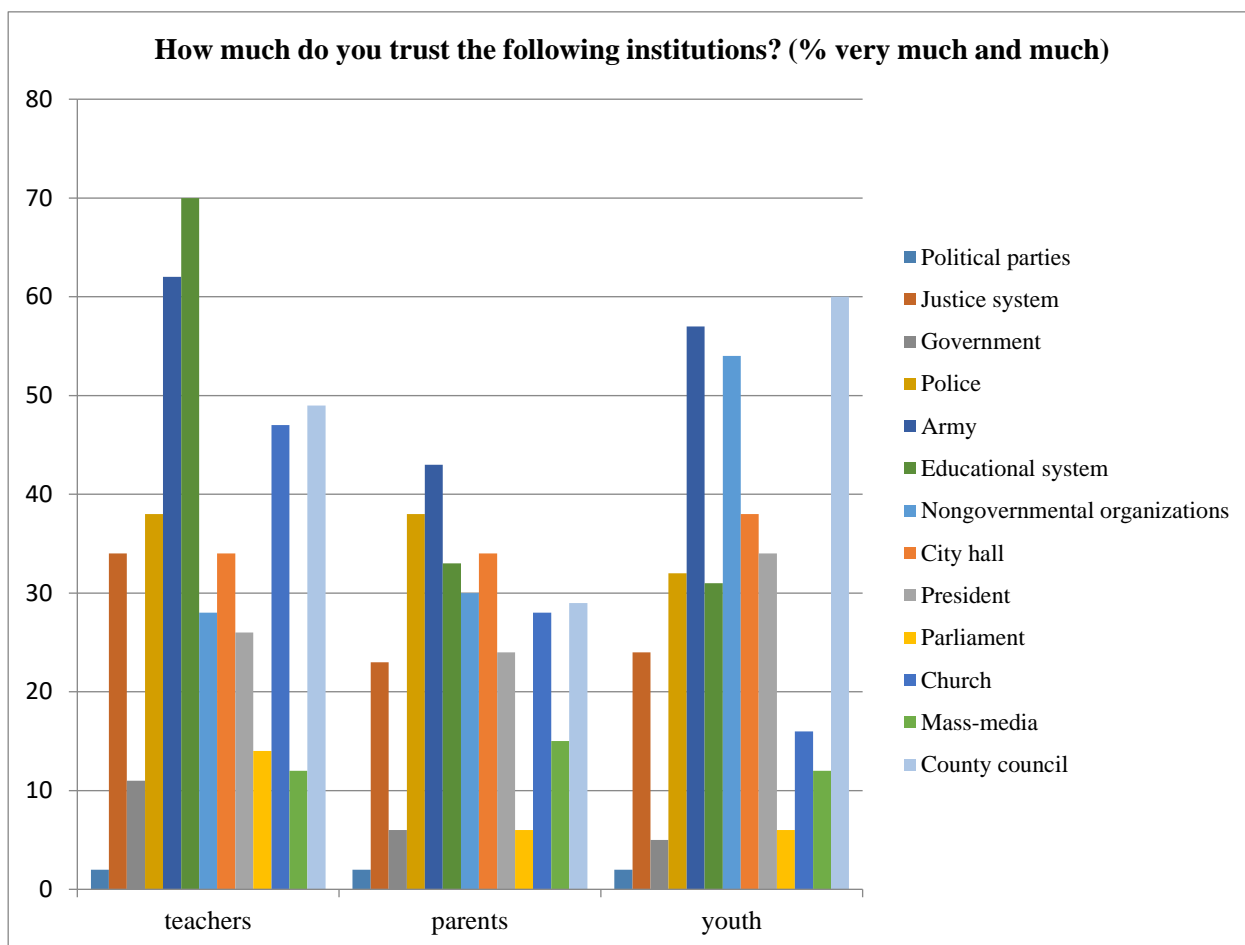
Political and social values are very important in a democracy: they create the context in which a fair and just political system can strive. They also measure the rooting of democracy in the Romanian context and assess the amount of value change that has taken place since the collapse of communism. The next two graphs confirm previous findings. The youth are dramatically more accepting of diversity and hold more progressive values than their parents or teachers. For example, 47% of the youth consider that homosexuality is always justified (on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means never justified and 10 means always justified), in comparison to less than 15% among parents or teachers. Overall, the youth are more liberal on all dimensions measured through this question, many more of them considering prostitution, abortion, and euthanasia as justified than their parents or teachers.



Overall, the data on the social and political values held by the youth suggest that an intergenerational process is taking place. The youth are more tolerant with any type of minorities (except for the Roma) and they are more supportive of granting more rights to these minorities. The differences in support for tolerance and diversity between the youth on the one hand, and parents and teachers on the other, are, at times, stark. We have no way of knowing how the youth developed such tolerant values but several speculations could be significant discussion starting points. First, it is possible that the multicultural character of Cluj has influenced many of the youth in forming these values, especially since the city has been quite active in promoting this image: Cluj is diverse,

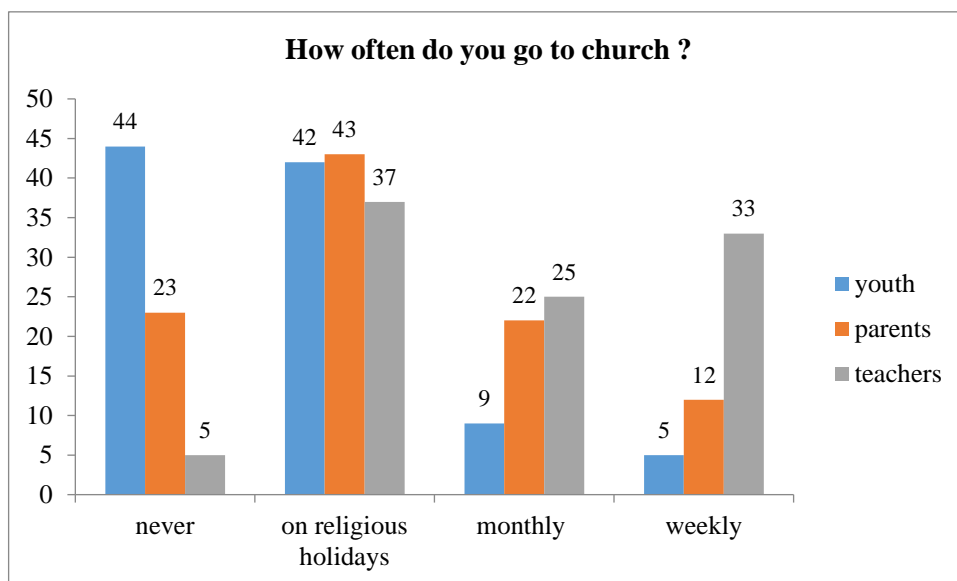
welcoming to foreigners, ethnically mixed, and there are many international cultural events that create a vibrant multicultural atmosphere. Second, given that parents and especially teachers are more intolerant than the youth, we can safely say that tolerance is not learned in school or in the family, at least not to a high degree. This speculation is supported by previous studies (Badescu, FES) that showed that, indeed, teachers are at times very intolerant and do not easily acquiesce to a worldview centered upon diversity and inclusiveness. Third, it is important to differentiate social distancing towards different groups. In other words, it is to be expected that young people are more tolerant towards the LGBT community, because sexual orientation has been often discussed in the Romanian public space, although, most of the time the discourse was homophobic. So, it is encouraging that the youth in Cluj have more inclusive attitudes, but, at the same time, constant intolerance towards Roma, irrespective of the type of respondent, is truly worrying. We consider that the school is the most important context where values such as tolerance and acceptance of difference can be adequately and efficiently inculcated. A major reform would be necessary, since there is no consensus on what values are more important for young people to acquire; in fact, the education system is not sufficiently focused on values and norms themselves. Finally, the data shows that the “living milieu” can be fertile ground for cultivating tolerance – visibility and inclusion of minorities in city life can be extremely helpful in creating a more tolerant community.

Institutional trust is one in which we can measure how respondents position themselves vis-à-vis the political system. In a democracy it is imperative that people trust their institutions and that they participate in political life. The results in the graph below indicate significant differences in trust in institutions across the three categories of respondents. Trust in government, parliament and political parties are the lowest in the set, and support is less than 10% for each of them, except for the Parliament among teachers. Also, teachers seem to place more trust in public institutions in general, in comparison to the other two groups of respondents. Alternatively, the youth place much higher trust in nongovernmental organization than parents and teachers, which is probably a consequence of them having been involved in student organizations and having volunteered for various social causes. It is also interesting to note that almost 70% of teachers trust the educational system while the corresponding numbers among the youth and parents are around 30%. The army and the church are two of the most trusted institutions in Romania, but the church is on a decreasing trend, most apparent in the case of the youth.

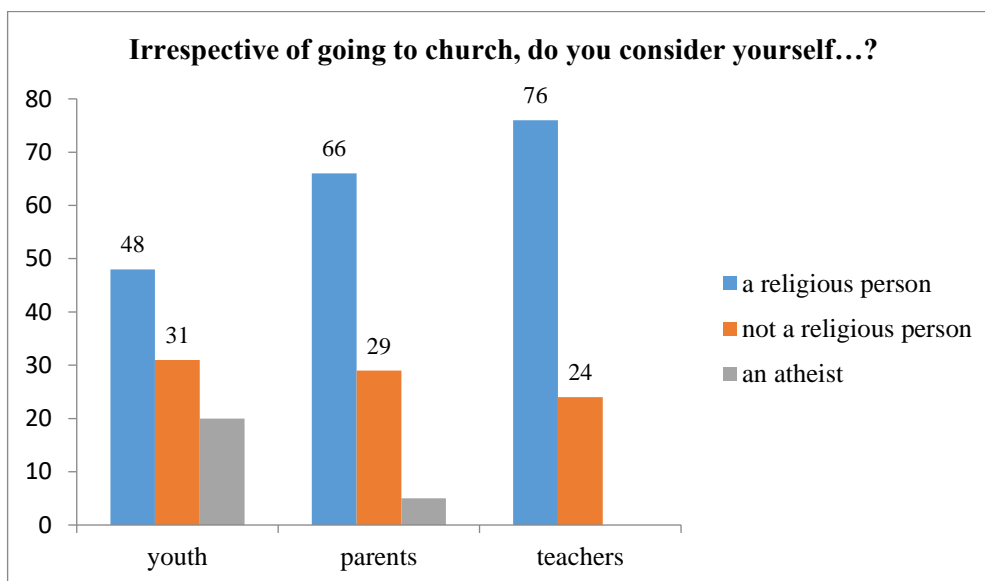


The fact that no political institution benefits from high trust is a staple of Romanian post-communist society. Poor governmental performance and lingering high levels of corruption are probably responsible for this situation. On a brighter side, trust in local government is higher, but still comparatively low. Consequently, we believe that local authorities could become more responsive to the needs of the citizen and also aim to communicate more effectively with them.

Romania is a religious country, with the largest majority of people identifying themselves as Orthodox and religious. The data below shows religiosity - measured as church attendance and inner subjective religiosity – comparatively among three groups: youth, parents and children. By far, the youth are attending church much less than their parents or teachers: almost 45% of youth never attend church in comparison to slightly more than 20% of parents and less than 5% among teachers. About 5% of youth attend church on a weekly basis, in comparison to more than 10% of parents and almost 30% of teachers.



When it comes to inner subjective religiosity, the situation looks similar: among the youth 30% are not religious and 20% are atheists, in comparison to only 5% or parents are atheists and no teachers consider themselves as such.



While religiosity per se is not a social value, we considered important to report it, since Romania is overall a rather religious country. The data clearly suggests a decreasing trend in both inner religiosity and church attendance according to decreasing age; younger people are much less religious than their parents or teachers which suggests a secularizing trend. It is possible that this secularizing trend is also connected to higher support for liberal values, but the data does not allow for testing this correlation.

In conclusion, the youth in Cluj are genuine democratic citizens. They internalized, at least partially, and definitely more than their parents and teachers, the value of tolerance, and they treasure the diversity that the city itself

promotes. In this sense, the youth themselves can be a source of inspiration and change for the broader society, since they are the ones that make Cluj a true European city.

3. Education

The survey included several interrogations on education, tailored for each of the four categories of respondents involved in the study. This way, we were able to capture the perceptions that children, young people, teachers and parents have on the current features of the local educational system from Cluj-Napoca and the Cluj Metropolitan Area. We were interested in a broad portrayal of education, beyond the strict aspects of educational outcomes and performance. Accordingly, the survey covers issues related to school-level problems, the interactions between teachers, students and parents, perceptions on educational quality and the matching between the training provided by schools and the requirements of the labor market. Some of the questions have been addressed to more than one category of respondents, which enables a comparative perspective on how different groups assess the features of the educational system.

We begin by describing the self-reported school experiences of the youngest of the respondents, children ages 10 to 17 years old. Their current educational status is the following: 72% are high school students, 21% are enrolled in the lower secondary (gymnasium) schools, 3% study in vocational schools and 4% are still in the primary school.

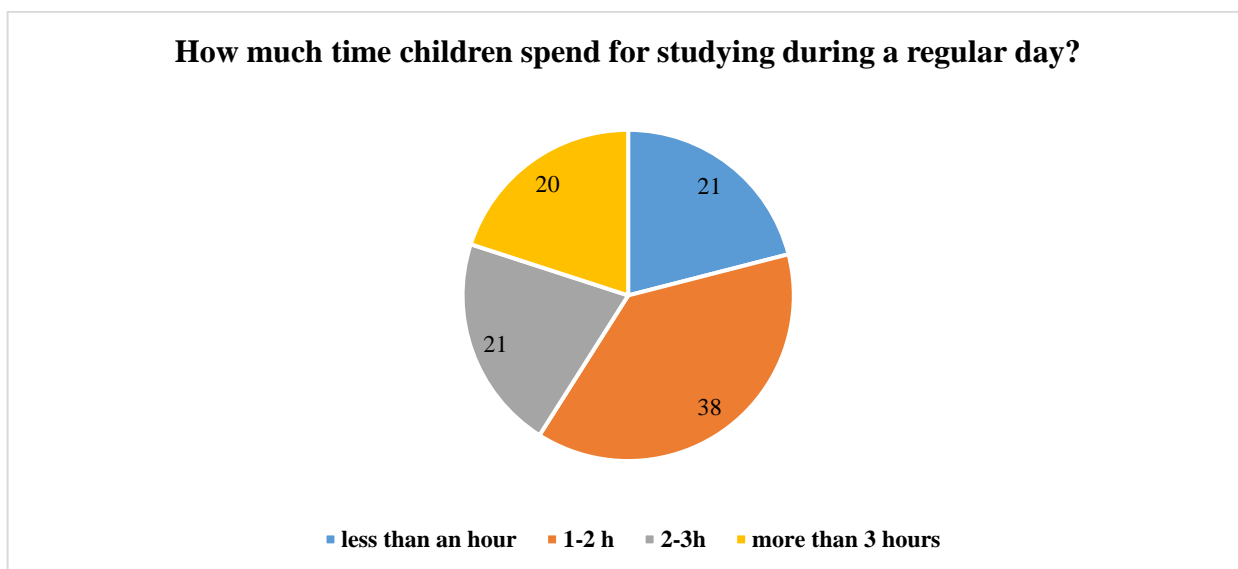
Most children describe a school context characterized by positive interactions between teachers and students. Thus, 89% say that in their school students get along well with most teachers. 91% of children say that most of their teachers treat them fairly at school and 86% report having receptive teachers that listen to students when they have something to say. More than three quarters of children (79%) are certain that, when they need extra help at school, their teachers will be ready to be of assistance.

Children have been asked whether their school context stimulates autonomous thinking and free expression of opinions among students. Thus, 46% of them report that, in their school, students are encouraged to form their own opinions on issues and about a third (34%) say they feel free to express their opinions in the classroom, even when most of their colleagues have a different view on matters. Moreover, 26% report that, when teaching a subject, their teachers present more than one perspective on the topic being discussed.

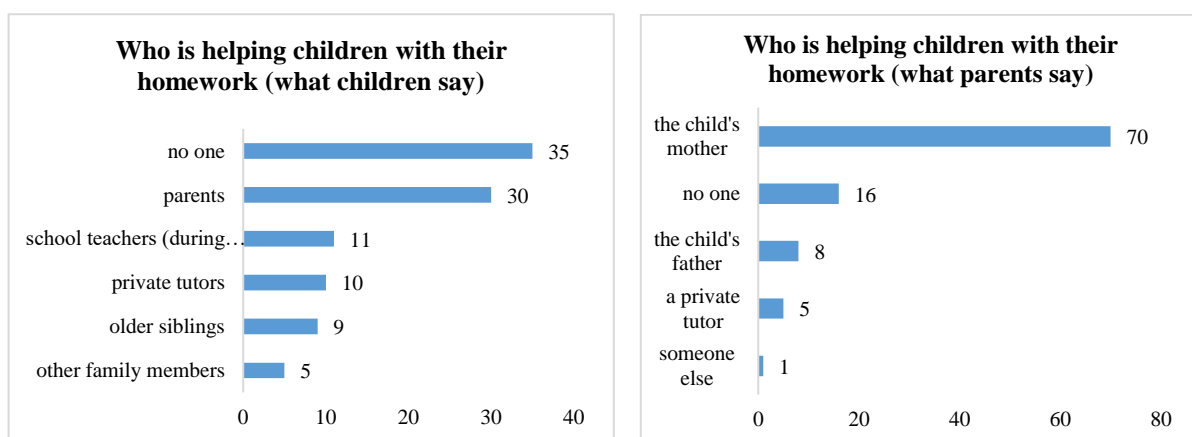
In terms of extracurricular activities organized by schools, visits to the museum or other cultural establishments are reported by 37% of children, 34% say they have participated in school competitions and 29% of them took part in visits to public institutions, companies or other community-based establishments. 21% of children got involved in charitable fund raising campaigns. School team sports attracted 19% of respondents, 18% took part in actions for environment protections and 14% were active in student councils. Children also participate in school clubs (12%), contribute to the school newspaper (10%) and are active in debate clubs (9%).

Regular school attendance is customary for most children: 61% say that in the two weeks prior to the survey they have never skipped classes; at the same time, 27% said they skipped classes once or twice, and 12 % skipped classes 3 times or more.

Most children (38%) report that they spend daily between one and two hours for studying, at home or at school, after classes, as shown in the figure below.

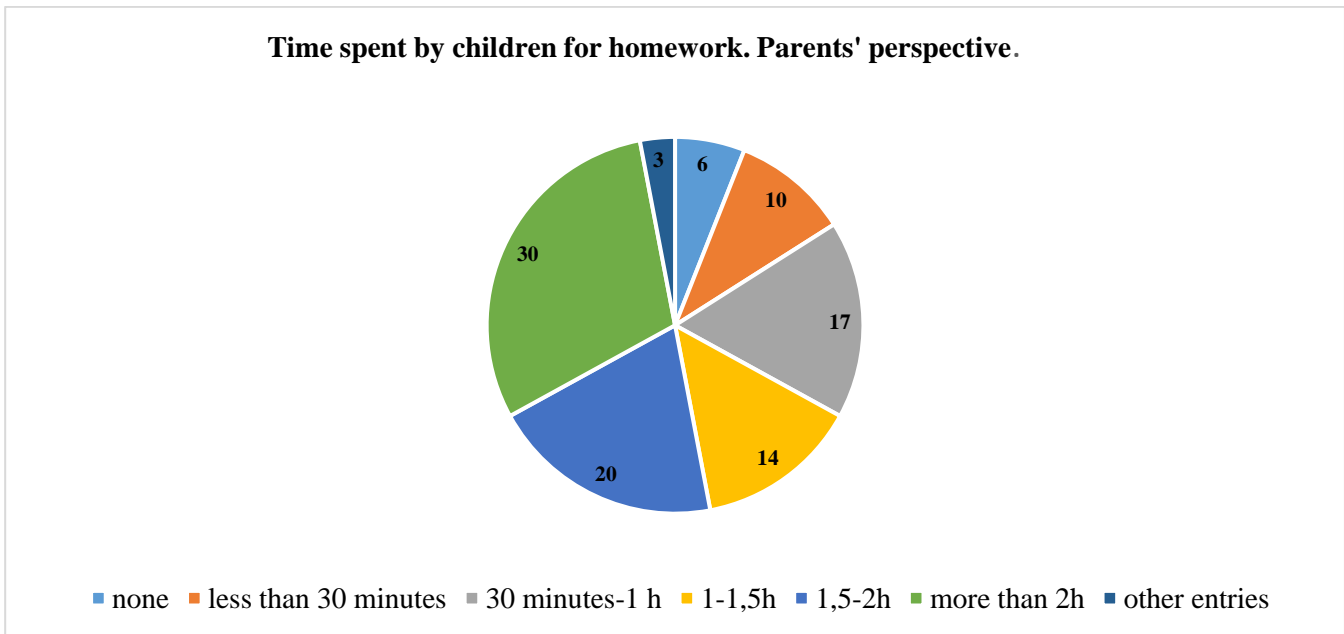


Asked about the help they receive with homework, 35% of children said that usually no one helps them, whereas 30% admitted that parents assist them with their home assignments when needed. 11% of children receive help from their teachers, during school preparation classes and 10% have private tutors. Parents’ answers are also shown below, with mothers highlighted as the chief helpers when it comes to children’s homework.



Most parents (30%) report that the time spent by their children for doing their homework exceeds two hours, whereas 20% say that children allocate between one and a half and two hours for home assignments. More than a quarter (27%) however say the time allocated for homework is under one hour daily.

Time spent by children for homework. Parents' perspective.



How often do parents check their children’s homework? 62% of them say they do it daily, 14% twice a week, and 12% weekly. 9% report they never check their children’s home assignments. In case the parent finds that children are unable to solve their homework on their own, they usually ask an adult from the family to help (39%), contact the teachers (9%), hire a private tutor (7%) or seek help with the child’s older siblings (3%).

Home assignments are an important component of students’ activity and the previous paragraphs described students’ and parents’ perspectives on how children approach this part of their school-life. At the same time, this captures only in part the way in which children understand to take school seriously. In view of this, we sought to deepen our understanding of how children assess the value of school in a more general sense.

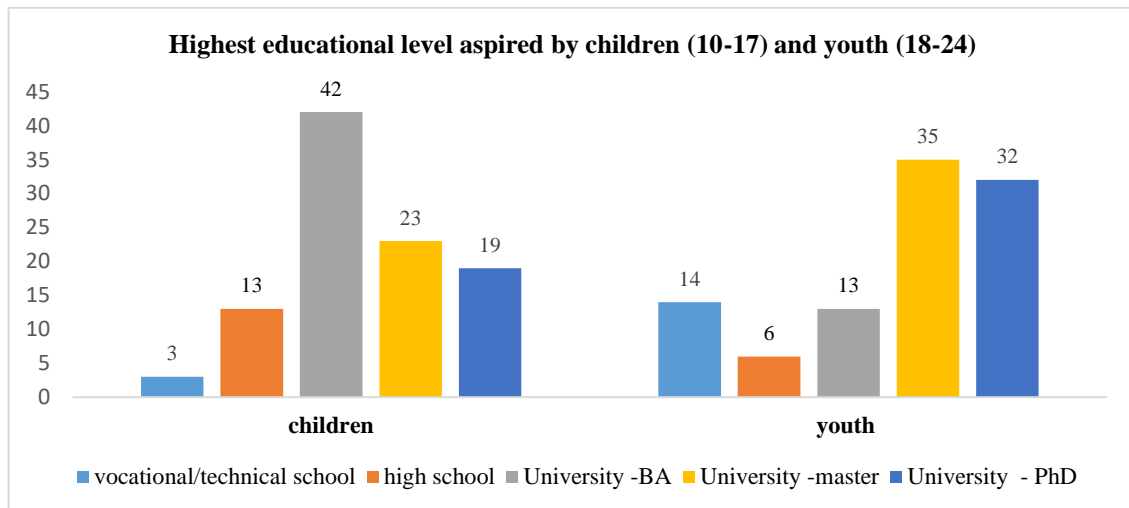
Accordingly, we found that most children agree that putting a lot of effort in school is worthwhile: 82% think that their determination will help them get into a good high-school or university, whereas 66% agree that their effort increases their chances to find a job. In fact, for most children, school results seem to have been very satisfactory: 77% of them report that during the past two years they got awards and/or exceptional results and 31% of them have served as leaders of school clubs or school organizations. Moreover, 74% of children say that in the past year their average school score was placed between 9 and 10.

None of the children who took part in the survey reported important failures such as being suspended/expelled or having to repeat a school-year.

Apart from this encouraging picture marked by conscientiousness, the less flattering aspects of school life also need to be mentioned: 28% of children say they have cheated many times on school tests and 15% of them report having skipped classes many times, without their parents knowing about it.

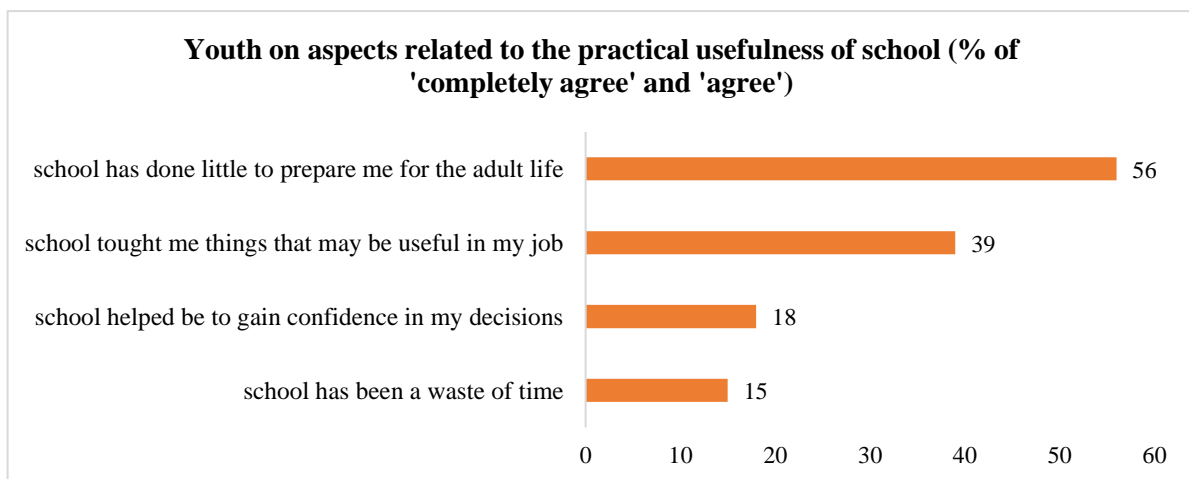
What about the way in which children project their educational future? The figure below shows their highest educational aspirations, alongside the targets set by their older counterparts, the youth aged 18 to 24. An overwhelming majority of children (84%) seek to attain higher education levels (BA or higher), whereas 16% have set their learning objectives below university level education. By comparison, 80% of young people wish to acquire

a higher education level, with comparably larger percentages of respondents aiming to obtain MA or PhD degrees (67% compared to 42%). The higher share, among youth, of respondents aiming for MA/PhD degrees is most likely explained by the experience already achieved by the older respondents, most of them now immersed in higher education programs. In this regard, the current educational status of the young respondents (ages 18 to 24) is as follows: 52% are students, 20% are enrolled in a master or PhD program, 15% are in high-school or vocational school, 2% are enrolled in other training programs and 11% are not currently registered in a form of training or education.



42% of the youth who took part in the survey are very certain to acquire the level of education they aspire to.

We asked the young respondents to assess the perceived usefulness of school in relation to their employability and the training for the adult life. Their answers are shown in the figure below.

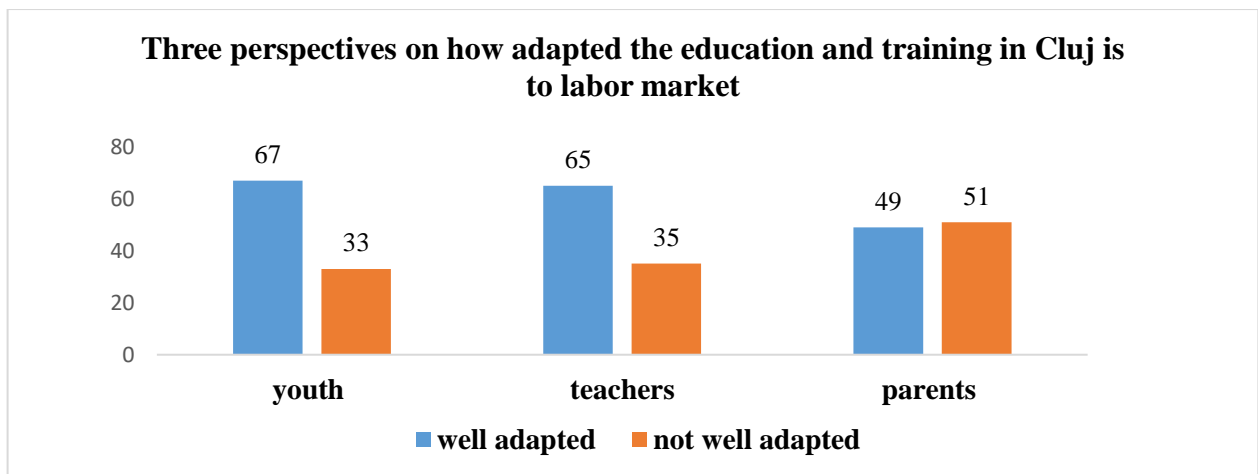


39% of the young respondents agree or completely agree on the usefulness of school training for their actual or future job and 18% appreciate the impact of school in boosting their confidence in decision-making. At the same time, 56% state that the contribution of school to their preparedness for the adult life was modest, whereas 15% say that school has been a waste of time.

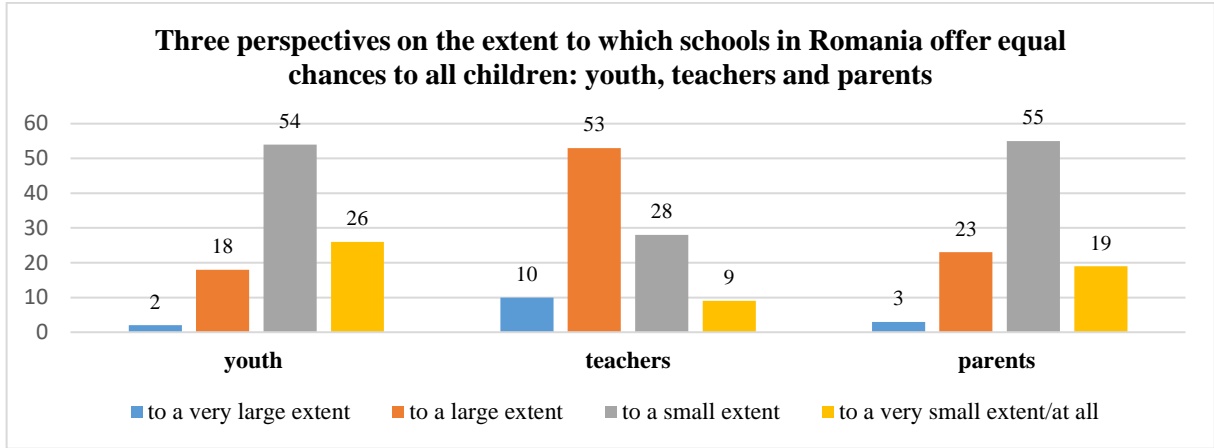
We asked the young respondents to nominate three topics/elements they consider important and useful that lacked from the training received in school. The youth provided a wide range of such topics, yet the most frequently mentioned are the following: civic education and basic knowledge on politics, financial education, sex education, career counselling, economic education and basic introduction to taxes, personal development, self-confidence, public speaking, entrepreneurial education, time management, juridical education, critical thinking, autonomy, leadership, more practical activities.

Irrespective of how young people feel about their expectations about school having been fulfilled or disproved so far, 72% of them believe that the level of education is important or very important for finding a job. Some of the respondents are prepared to improve their education abroad. Thus, 7% of the youth who expressed a firm drive to move abroad for more than 6 months would do so in order to access a better education.

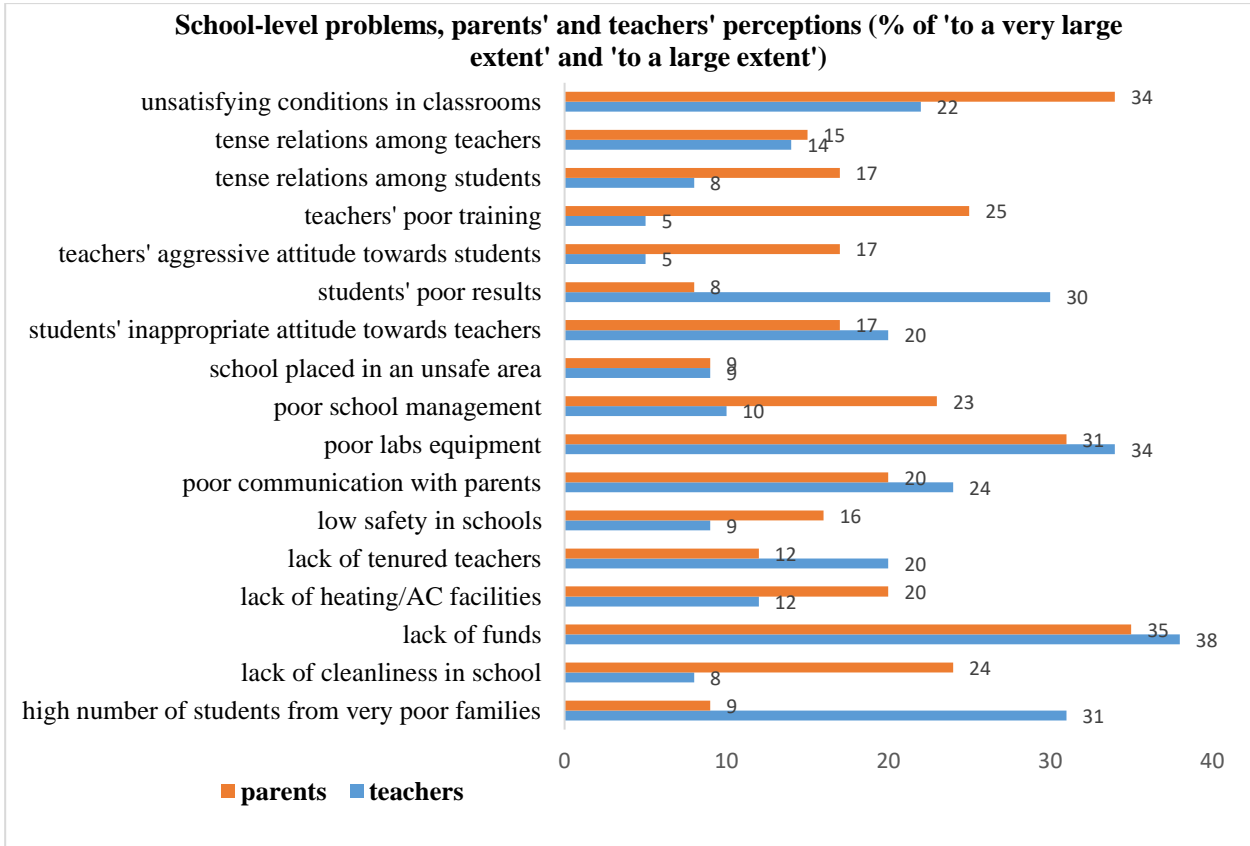
33% of the youth point to an incongruity between the formation delivered by the local educational establishments and the requirements from the labor market. The percentages of teachers and parents that find the training not adapted to the job market are comparatively higher (35% and 51% respectively) as shown in the figure below.



In the past years there has been a growing concern in the public debates on education on the issue of inequality and unequal access to quality education. We asked our survey respondents whether in their opinion schools in Romania offer equal chances to all children. The figure below shows the answers given by youth, teachers and parents. The young respondents are most critical about the ability of schools to ensure equal chances, with 80% of them saying this happens ‘to a small extent’ or ‘to a very small extent/at all’. Parents are also skeptical about schools delivering equal chances (74% provided an unfavorable assessment). The most optimistic perspective is that of teachers, with only 37% endorsing the idea that schools do not offer equal chances. To some extent, this can be explained by teachers focusing their evaluation on their own efforts to cultivate equal chances and treatment, and overlooking the more general systemic malfunctions. Living in the city or in nearby localities does not have an impact on how respondents assess school’s ability to provide equal opportunities to all children.

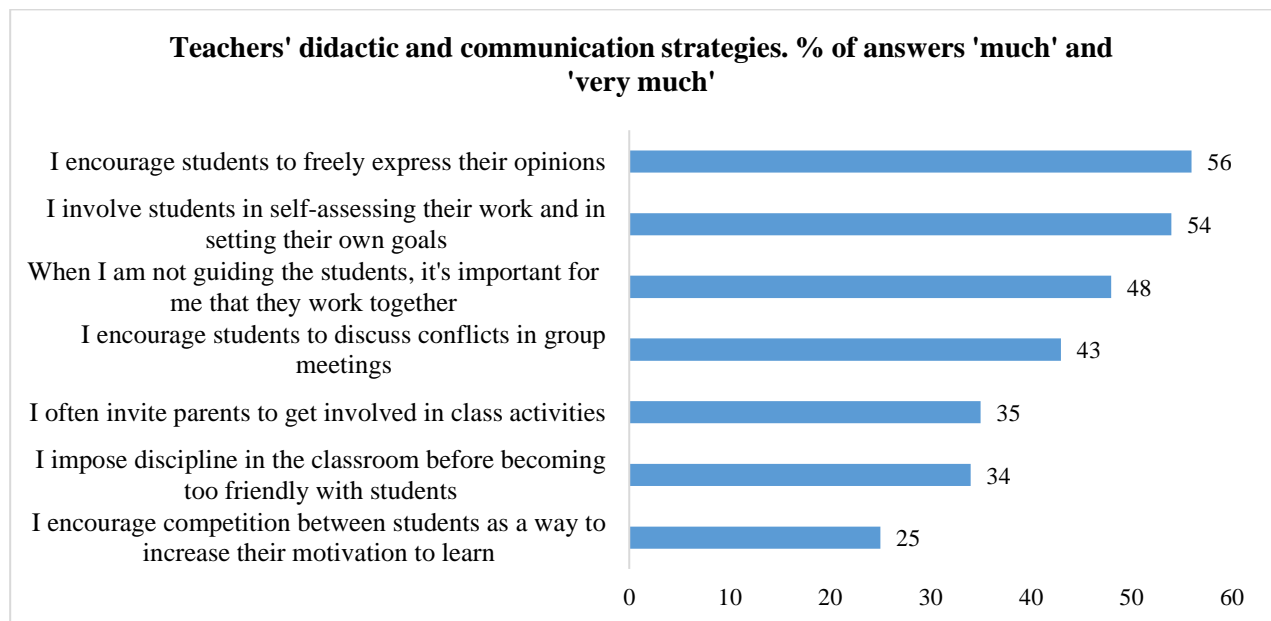


While ensuring equal chances to children is a general challenge of the educational system at large, very often schools have to tackle additional, very specific problems that interfere with the daily activity of teachers and students alike. We asked the teachers and the parents who took the survey to assess the extent to which a number of problems are present in the schools in which they teach/ in the schools attended by their children. Their answers are shown in the figure below.

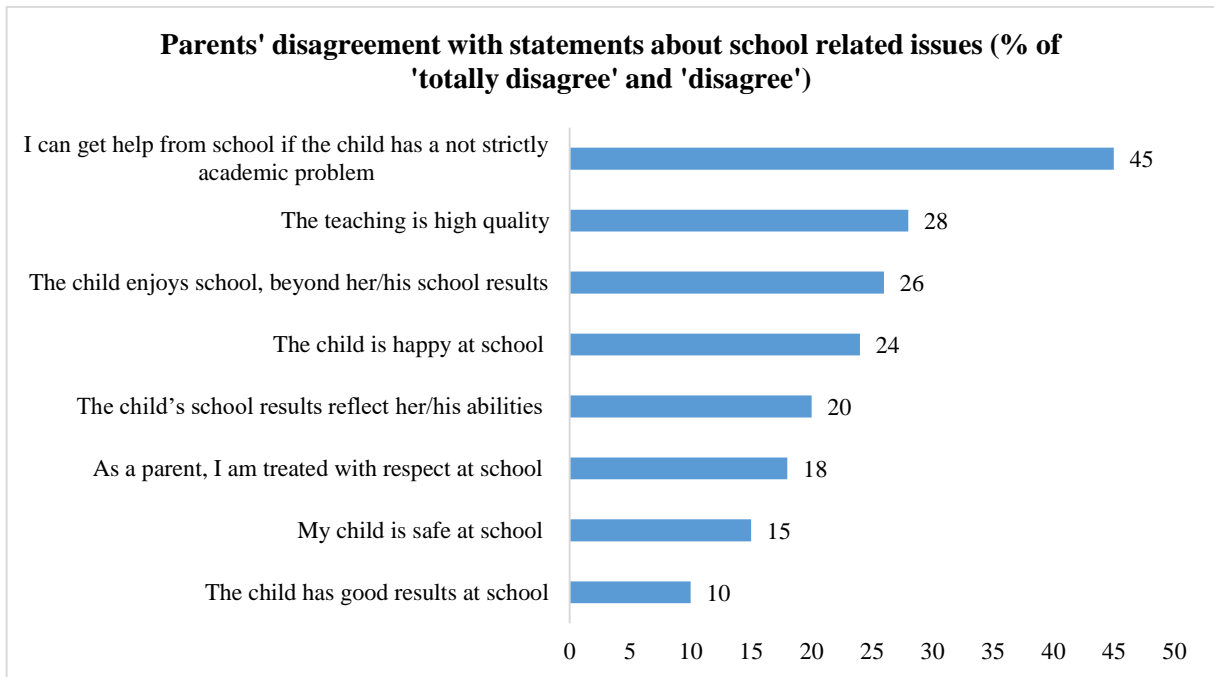


From parents' perspective, the main school-level problems are the lack of funds (35%), the unsatisfying conditions in the classrooms (34%) and the poor equipment of school laboratories (31%). Teachers point to the following issues as being markedly present in their schools: lack of funds (38%), poor laboratories equipment (34%), high number of students from very poor families (31%) and students' poor results (30%). Thus, resources - related problems are common in the assessments provided by both parents and teachers. Teacher-parent communication issues are reported by 24% of teachers and 20% of parents. At the same time, 25% of parents highlight the lack of well-trained teachers in the schools where their children are enrolled, whereas 20% of teachers point to the lack of tenured instructors in their school.

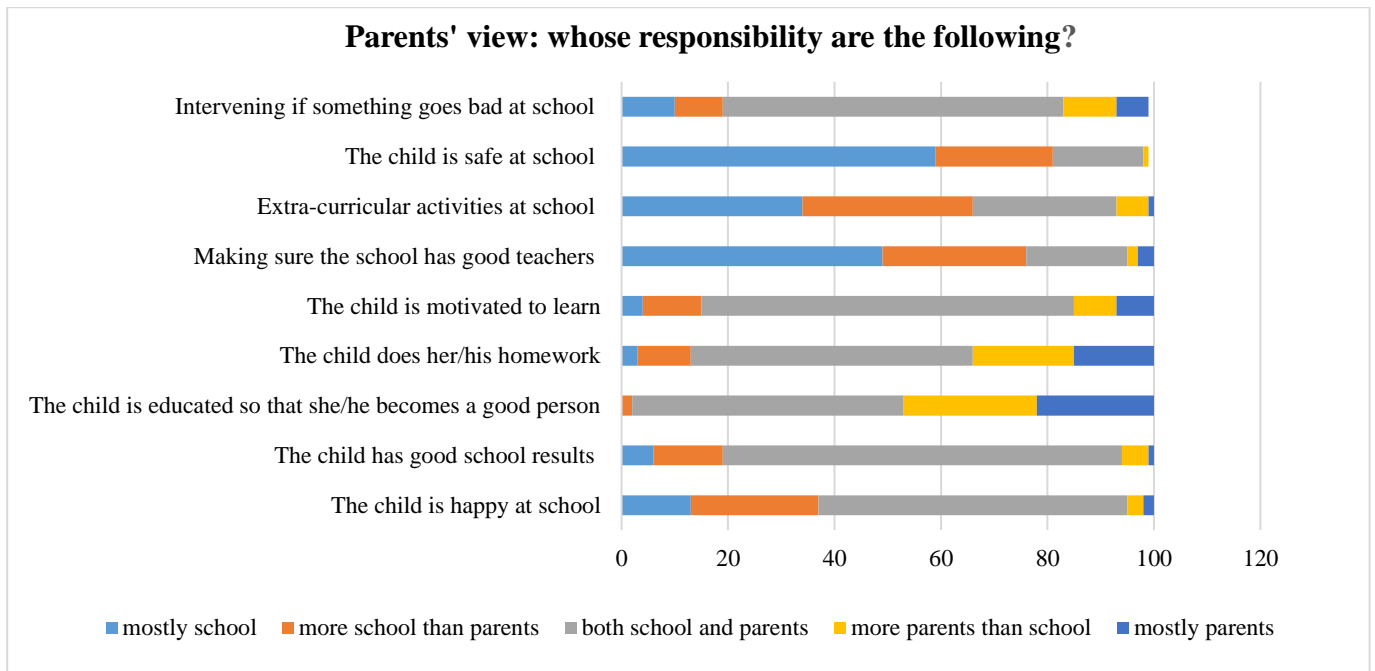
Further insights into school-level dynamics are provided by teachers, when asked to describe their approach on interacting with students and parents (see the figure below).



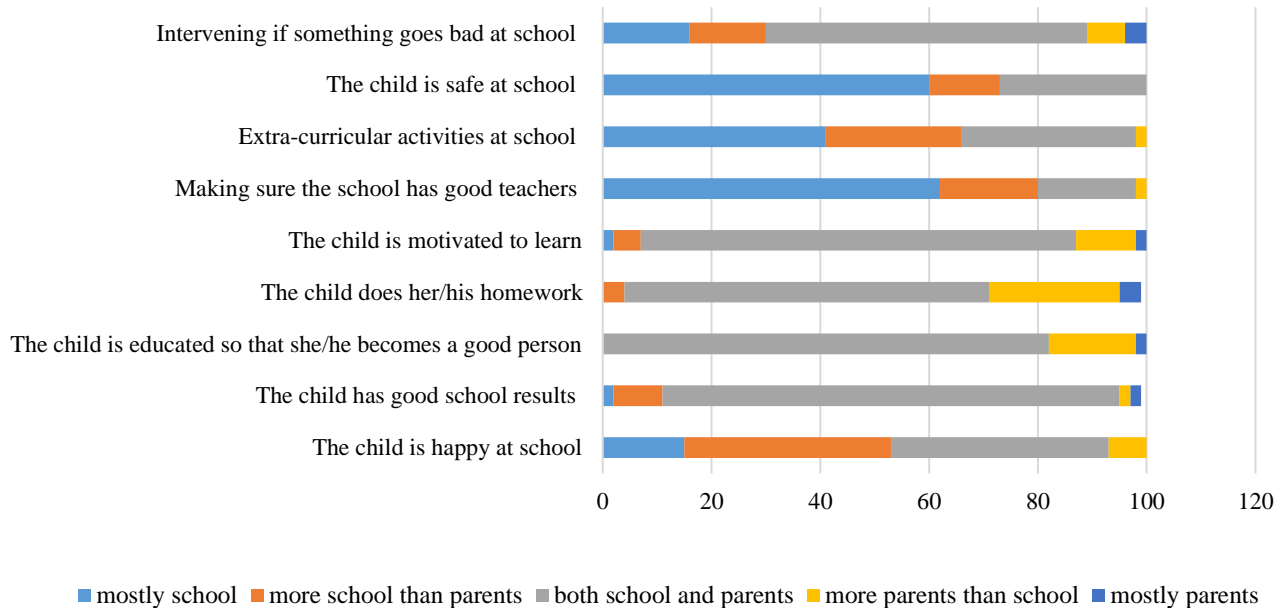
The majority of teachers report openness in relation to students' freely expressing their opinions (56%) and nearly half of them encourage a collaborative working style among the students (48%). About a third of teachers (35%) are open towards parents' involvement in class activities. As for parents, 45% of them say they cannot rely on school's help if their children have a problem that is not exclusively of academic nature. What also stands out in the figure below is the fact that 28% of parents contest the idea that teaching is high quality, and about a quarter of them disagree that their children are happy at school and that children enjoy school beyond school results. Being from Cluj city or from the metropolitan area does not impact parents' assessments on the quality of teaching.



The above findings can be supplemented by the comparative answers given by teachers and parents who have been asked who is chiefly responsible for a range of school-related issues, as shown in the following two figures.

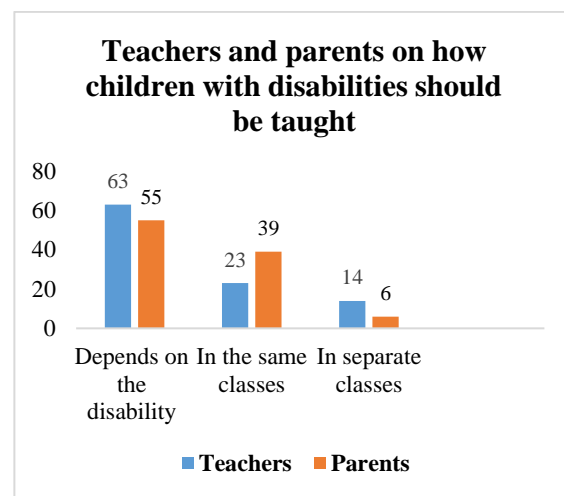
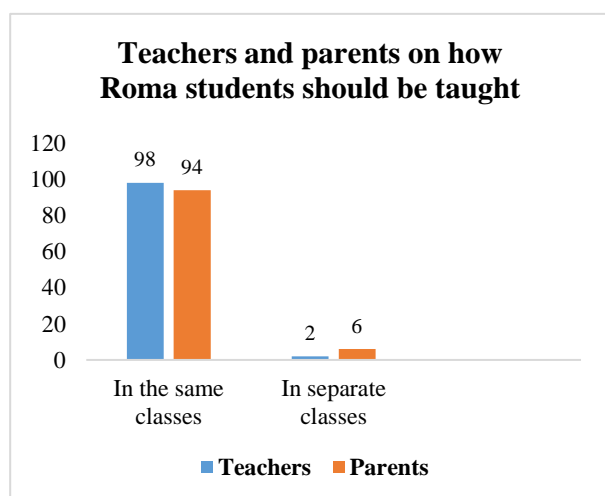


Teachers' view: whose responsibility are the following?



For many of the statements above, parents and teachers endorse the idea that school and parents have a shared responsibility for making things happen. As for the issues that are considered to be mostly the task of schools, teachers point out the availability of good teachers (62%) and children’s safety at school (60%). Parents highlight the same two topics, although in reverse order: child’s safety at school (59%) and making sure the school has good teachers (49%).

Another common question asked to both teachers and parents concerns the teaching of Roma children and that of children with disabilities. These are both relevant issues in the light of principles of inclusive education, which are often disregarded in practice in the Romanian context.



The answers provided by our respondents outline an optimistic picture, with small percentages of both parents and teachers who favor a segregationist strategy on teaching children from vulnerable categories.

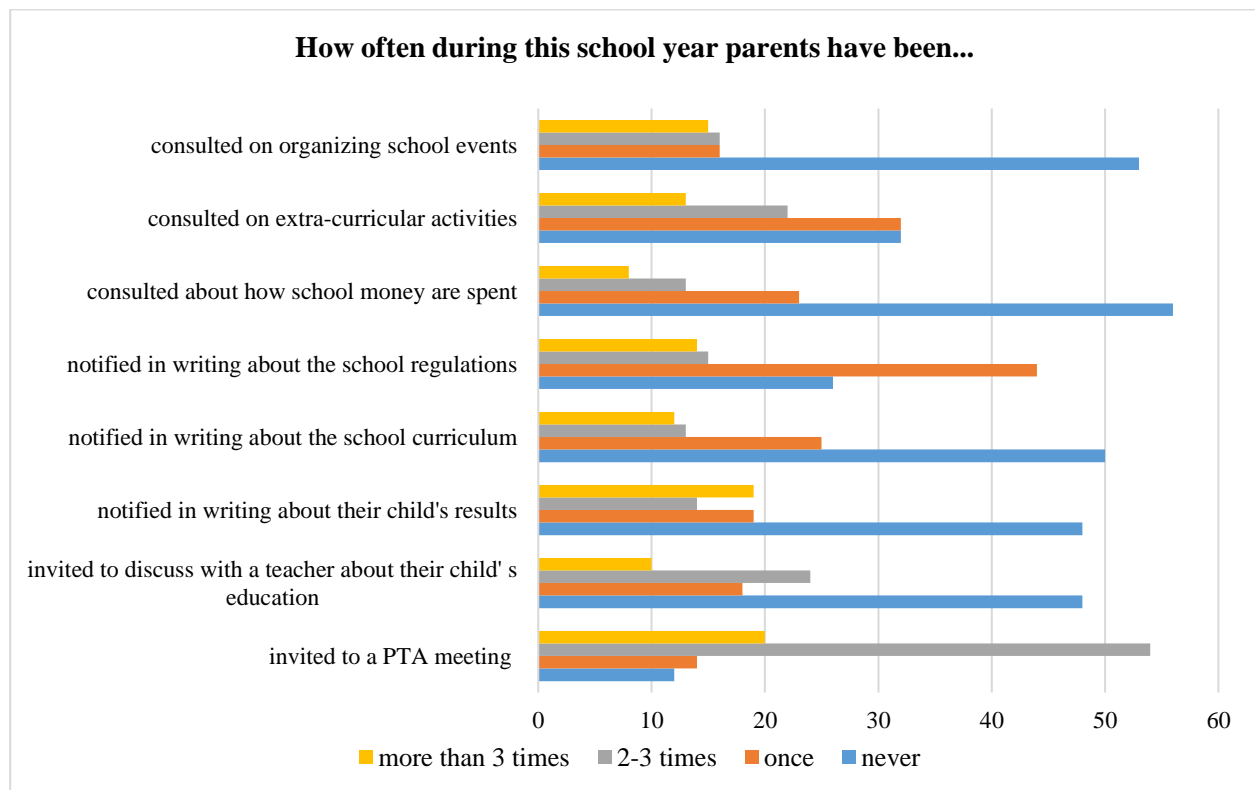
The last section of the chapter on education discusses a number of issues concerning specifically parents, teachers and children.

We were interested in exploring further assessments that parents have on education generally, as well as specifically in relation to the schools where their children learn.

Only a third of parents say they have much or very much trust in the educational system and 8 % of them said they completely distrust it. 30% of parents firmly disagree with the statement 'Connections are more important than school in finding a job' and 76% of parents think that the level of education is important or very important for a young person looking for a job. At the same time, only 22% of parents strongly agree that school gets sufficiently involved in their children's education.

78% of parents say that in their community there are after-school programs and 49% say that their children attend such programs. The reason for the absence of such a program mentioned by most teachers is the lack of enough teachers that could sustain the program. Moreover, if such programs did exist, 42% of parents would register their children to after-school classes.

Parents have also been asked how often during this school year they have been in contact with their children's schools, along a wide range of issues. The figure below shows their answers.



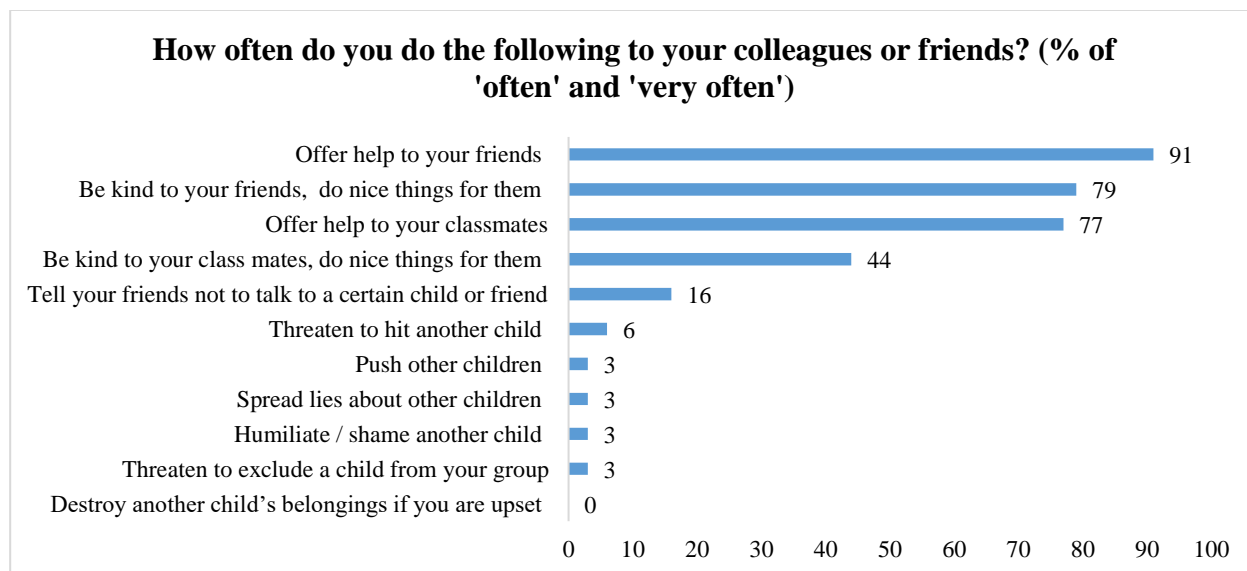
Apart from varying frequency of consultation means pointed by parents' answers, what stands out in the figure above is the high percentage of respondents who say they have never been consulted on how school money are spent (56%) and have never been consulted on events organized by the school (53%) or the extra-curricular activities (32%).

As far as teachers are concerned, we were interested in their assessments on the current school curricula, because very often in the public debates on education there are references to the need of reform in this area. 19% of teachers strongly agree that the curriculum is too loaded, 11% that it is difficult to be put in practice; 8 % strongly agree that it is boring and unattractive and 8% that it is poorly structured.

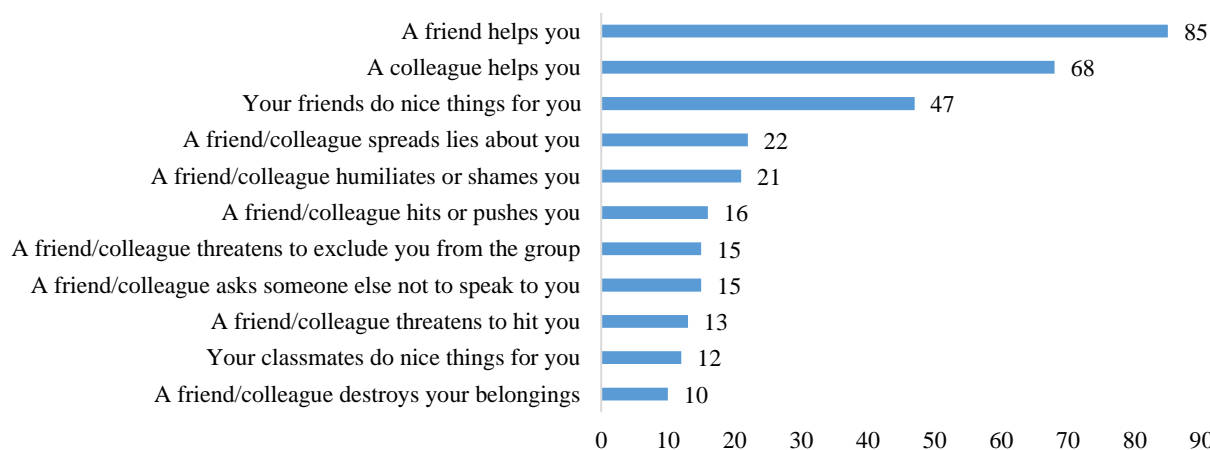
In addition, teachers have been asked to self-assess their level of preparedness in approaching, during their classes, a range of diverse topics that gained relevance in the past years, many of which are related to civic education. The topics on which most teachers reported to feel 'very well prepared' are the following: critical and autonomous thinking (42%), equal opportunities for men and women (39%), resolution of conflicts (37%) civic rights and duties (31%) and the responsible use of internet (30%). As far as the subjects that attracted the largest percentages of answers 'not very well prepared', these are: migration (39%), voting and elections (31%) and human rights (23%). The only topic on which the percentage of those who consider themselves 'not at all prepared' is notable is migration (13%).

Another question for teachers regarded the categories of parents that, in their opinion, need most assistance from the part of schools. The most frequently mentioned answers include the following: families with low socio-economic status, single parent families, parents with low education levels, parents who have children with special educational needs, parents who work abroad, parents with a very low involvement in their children's education, parents with many children.

Lastly, we turn to children and inquire about a phenomenon that is often under discussed in the Romanian context: bullying. Children have been asked about a range of behaviors that they themselves initiated or that have been inflicted upon them (see the figures below).



How often your colleagues or friends do the following? (% of 'often' and 'very often')



Large percentages of children report being the initiators of pro-social behaviors and comparatively quite few of them say they take part in non-peaceful or aggressive acts. By contrast, when asked about how their colleagues or friends treat them, children report, in higher percentages, to be the victims of small aggressions from the part of their colleagues or friends.

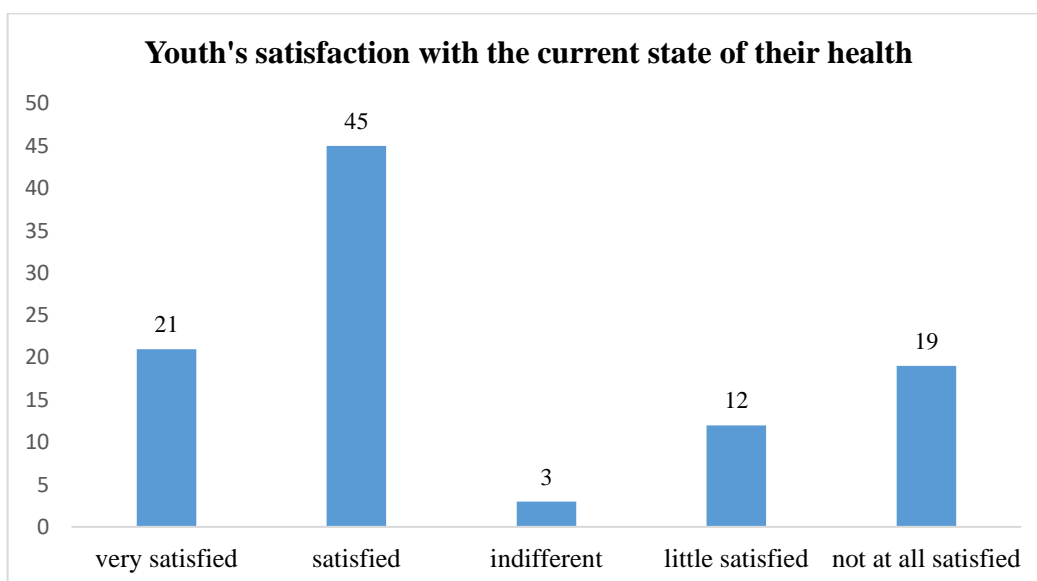
Although embedded in one of the most affluent regions of Romania, the local educational landscape from Cluj and its surroundings replicates some of the most enduring deficiencies that characterize the educational system at large. Among these, the most notable are the perceived lack of harmonization between the preparation provided by the educational system and the labor market and the perception that schools fail to ensure equal opportunities for all children. Specific school-level problems pointed by parents and teachers are largely related to lack of resources (funds, labs equipment), yet also refer to the human resource (lack of tenured teachers, lack of well-trained teachers). On the positive side, most of surveyed children and youth have set ambitious educational goals for themselves, with large shares of them aspiring to complete higher education levels.

4. Health

The health component of the survey aimed to capture children's and young people's self-assessed status of their health and to inquire about their general approach of guarding their physical and mental well-being. In addition, young people have also been asked to answer questions about risky behaviors and about their sexual health.

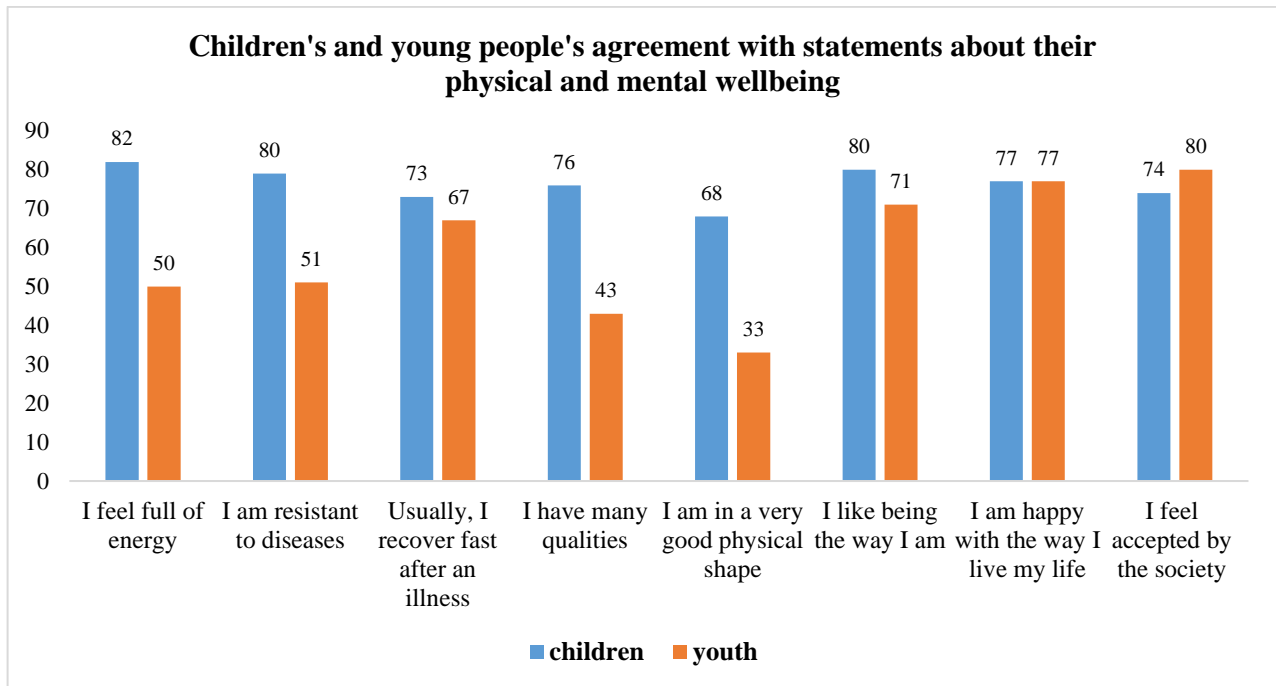
66% of the young respondents (aged 18-24) say that being healthy is important or very important for them. Similarly, 65% of them assign high or very high importance to healthy eating.

Asked about how satisfied they are with the current state of their health, youth provided the following answers:



Thus, two thirds of youth have a favorable assessment of their present state of health, whereas 31% gave answers that suggest a non-satisfactory state of health.

Further interrogations required both children and youth for an assessment on specific aspects related to their physical and mental well-being. The graph below shows the cumulated percentages of those who answered 'agree' and 'completely agree' in relation to the eight statements.



For 6 out of 8 statements, there are higher percentages of children than youth who report agreement on the selected statements. Possibly, the explanation for this lies partially in youth having to face more age-specific challenges that impact on their physical robustness and their emotional soundness. In particular, what stands out is the fact that only a third of youth consider themselves to be in a very good physical shape. Also, youth's image of self looks different than that projected by children, with only 43% agreeing they have many qualities.

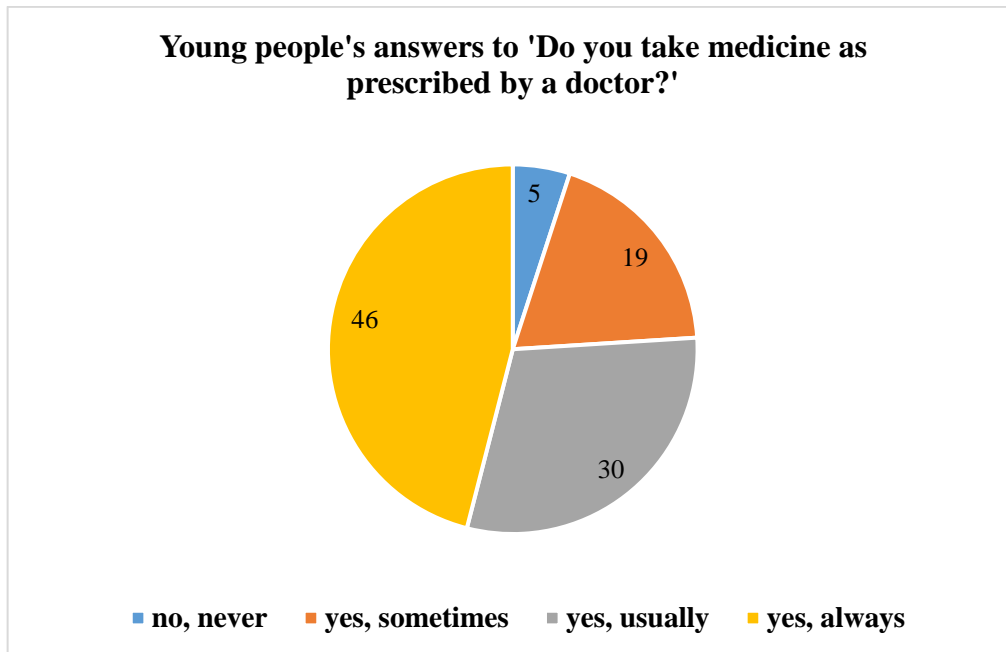
Among children and youngsters, the same percentage of respondents, 94%, say they do not have any chronic diseases. However, 29% of children and 23% of youth say they suffer from allergies.

Both children and young respondents have been asked to further specify if they suffer of certain ailments (an open question, where the respondents were asked to write their specific condition). The percentages of those nominating various conditions are very small. Children refer to obesity, acne, anxiety, allergies, asthma, frequents colds. Young people mentioned anxiety (and social anxiety), low immunity, allergies and asthma, and depression.

Frequent sleeping problems are reported by 16% of children and 24% of youth.

Respondents have been asked whether they needed, at some point in their lives, to spend a night in the hospital. The percentages of those giving an affirmative answer are 48% among children and 58% among youth.

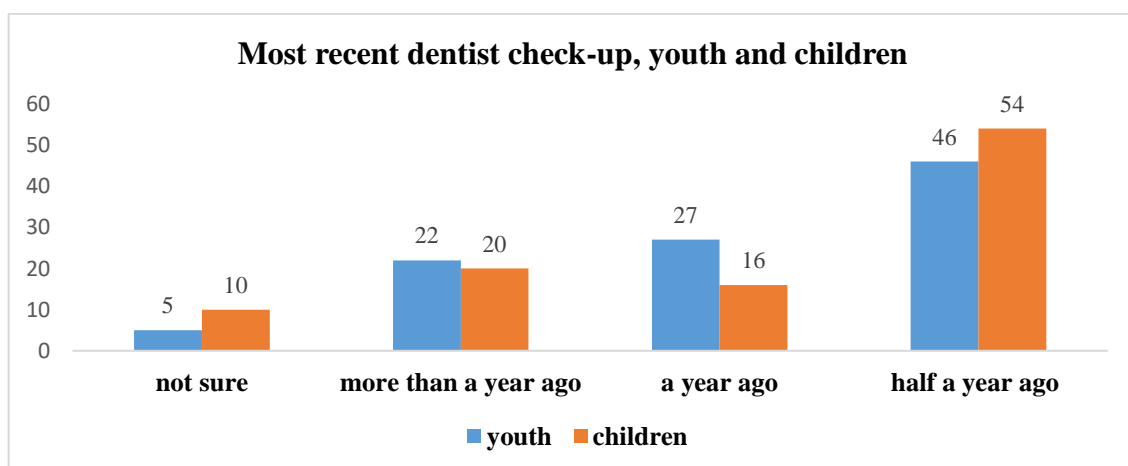
43% of youth say they take medicines regularly, and these are mostly vitamins, analgesics (e.g. ibuprofen) and antihistaminic drugs. Asked whether they follow a doctor's advice regarding the use of medicine, 46% report they always follow a specialist's guidance, as shown in the figure below.



Children and youth have been asked whether they are sometimes worried about their body image, weight or eating habits. 77% of youth and 72% of children had an affirmative answer to this question. The young people that reported concerns about their body image provided additional information about the steps taken to address their concerns; these mostly refer to changes in the eating habits (eating less, eating healthier food, giving up on sodas and sugary drinks, cooking their own food instead of buying processed food), starting to exercise regularly, going to psychological counselling, using the advice of a nutritionist. Children mentioned sports and talking to their parents about their concerns.

59% of children and 48% of youth say they exercise regularly.

Regarding the monitoring of dental health, respondents' answers are shown below.



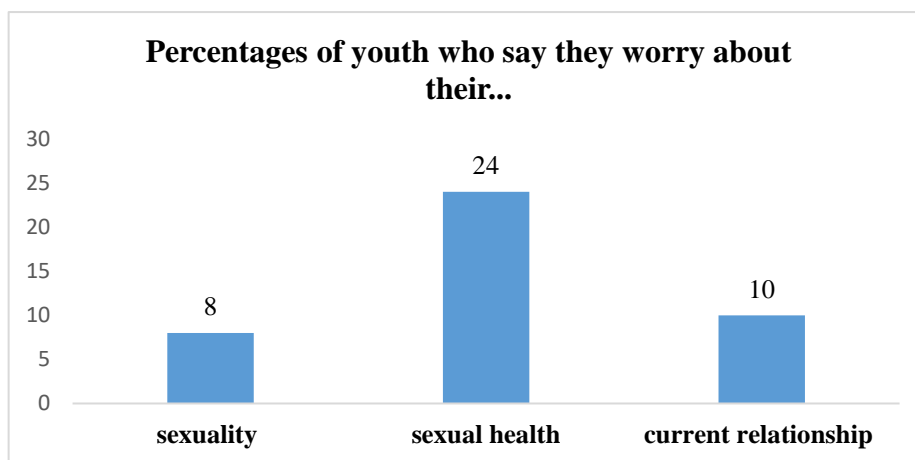
95% of children say that in their school there are no sex education classes and 80% of them consider that such classes should be organized in schools. Asked about who they turn to when they have questions or concerns on sexuality or on the general functioning of the body, children mentioned parents (31%) and friends (30%).

As for youth, 96% of them say schools should accommodate sex education classes. 59% of the youth taking part in the survey say they are currently in a relationship. 37% met their current partner via their group of friends, 23% used an online app for dating and 22% met their partner at their school/university.

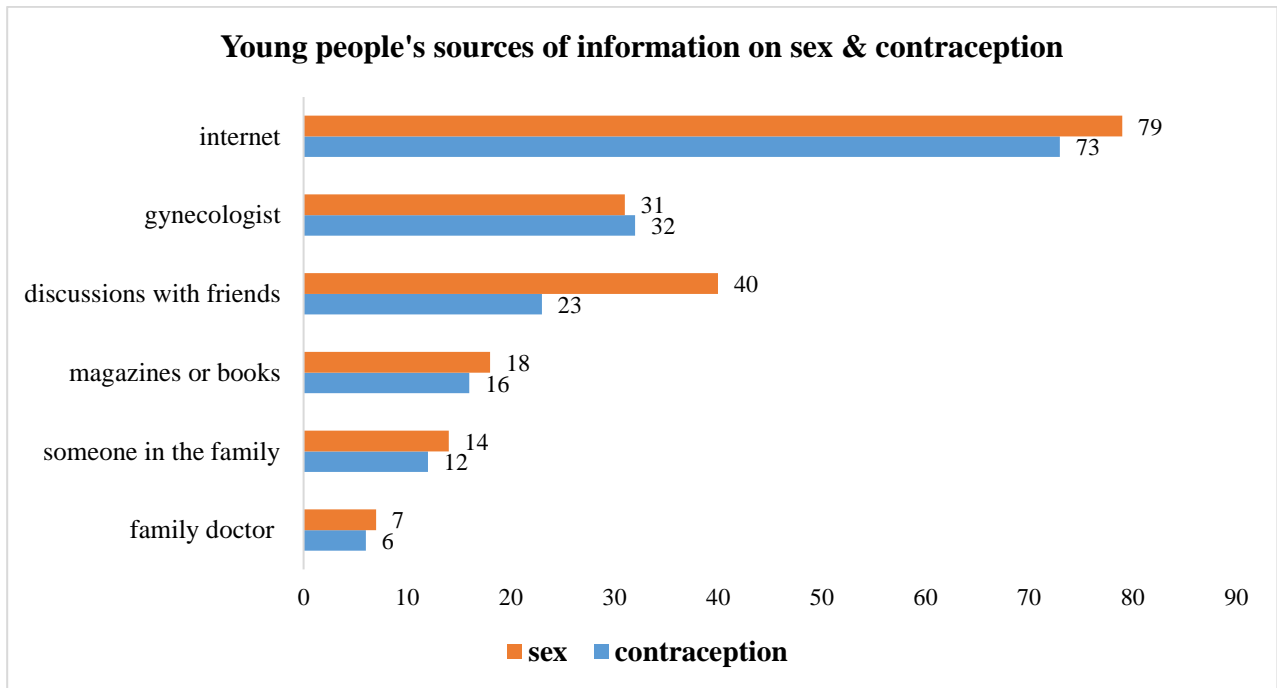
71% of youth say they are sexually active. A disquieting finding is that 19% of youth do not use any means to protect themselves from contracting a sexually transmitted disease. As for the means of preventing an unwanted pregnancy, using a condom is the most frequently reported method (39%), followed by the use of oral contraceptives (12%). 14% of youth do not use any contraceptive method.

96% of the young women who took the survey say they have never been pregnant and 97% of the young men say their partners never had a pregnancy. 97% of youth do not have children.

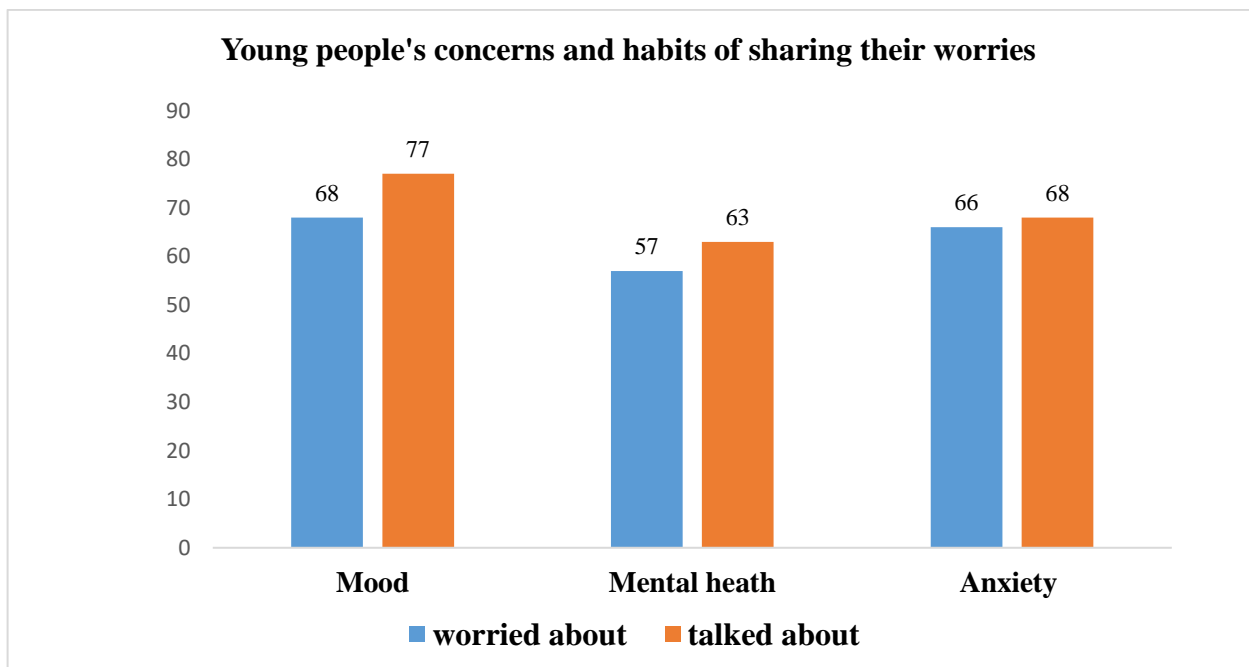
The young respondents have also been asked whether they worry about their sexuality, their sexual health and the relationship of which they are part. Their answers show that nearly a quarter have concerns regarding their sexual health.



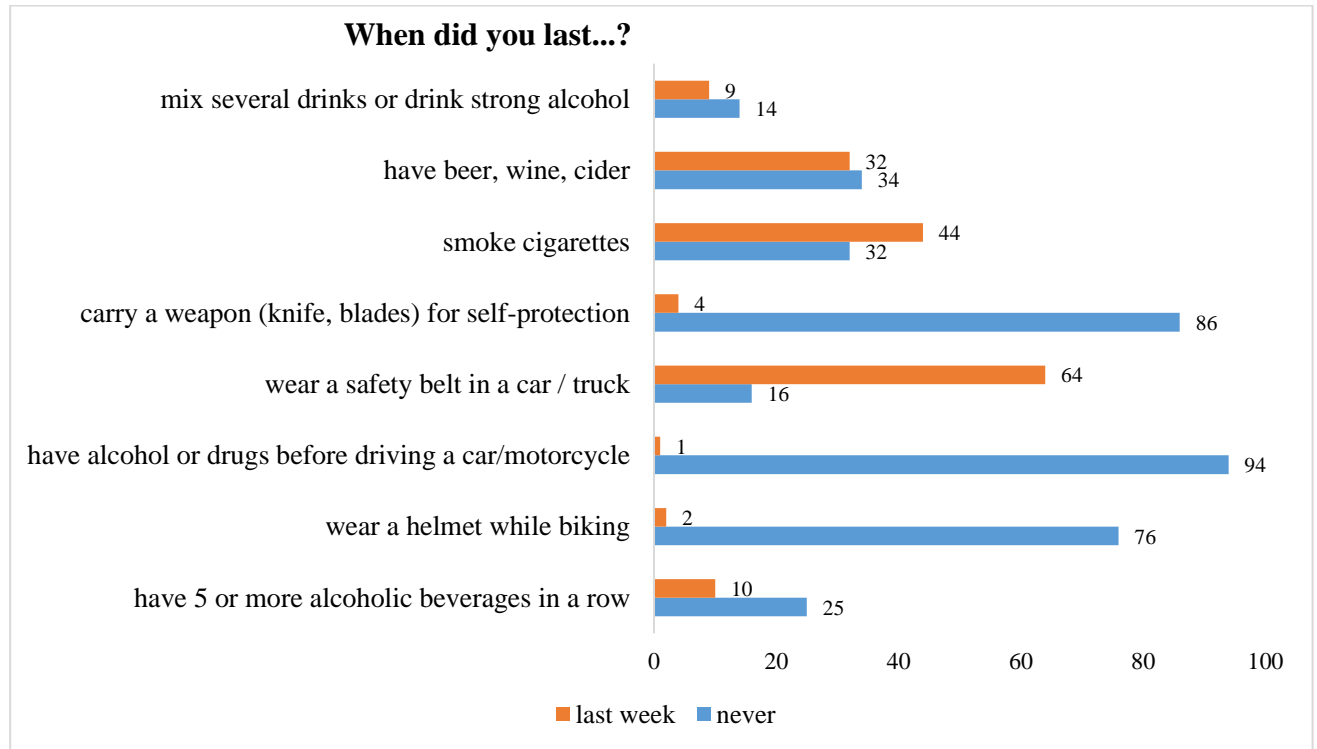
The internet stands out as the most frequently used source of information on sex and contraception among youth. Nearly one third of youth consult a gynecologist for advice on sex (31%) and guidance on contraception (32%). Discussions with friends are also a relatively frequent habit for getting informed on the two subjects.



We also asked the young respondents on whether they are sometimes concerned about their moods, mental health and anxiety and, importantly, whether they talk to somebody when these issues become worrisome for them. While the percentages of those reporting to worry about these three issues are rather high (57% to 68%), the reassuring information is that most youth discuss their distress with someone (see figure below).



The young respondents have been asked about the last time when they engaged in a range of risky behaviors. The graph below (which shows only those who answered 'never' and those who pointed to very recent occurrences) depicts a less than reassuring picture.



Smoking seems to be a widespread habit among youth and also the alcohol consumption appears to be a routine for many of the young people. What also stands out is the very high percentage of respondents who say they never wore a helmet while riding the bicycle, which is a worrying finding, given the high risk of accidents, in an area with very tight traffic and limited designated routes for bikes.

The youth survey also included several questions on high risk behaviors, referring specifically to drugs use. 56% of youth said they have never used marijuana (yet 8% reported to have used some in the week before the survey and 6% during last month). Comparatively higher percentages say they never used cocaine or crack (96%), and 94% said they never used substances like LSD, speed or mushrooms.

This section revealed that although being healthy is highly valued by most young people, some of the actual behaviors that part of them report do not reflect a strong concern for their own health. In particular, smoking, alcohol consumption and the lack of precaution in their sexual life could be worrisome topics. On the positive side, very few children and youth say they have chronic diseases and most youth who have concerns about their emotional well-being have someone to discuss their problems with.