

EVALUATION OF THE YEAR 2020 AND
EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COMING YEAR

ANALYTICAL REPORT

2021
2020



SOCIAL
RESEARCH
CENTER



About the Social Research Center

The Social Research Center (SRC) was established by Decree No. 525 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 8, 2019. It operates as a public legal entity, systematically analyzing the development dynamics of social relations. The SRC identifies current trends, forecasts changes in this field, and investigates their potential impact on society. Applying modern information technologies and scientific approaches, the SRC conducts social research and surveys public opinion. Its findings are then provided to governmental bodies for consideration and action.



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Research team:
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Editor:

Agshin Mammadov

Editor (English):

Pasha Bayramov

Graphic designers:

Gurban Jalilov

Babek Jafar

Address:

Republic of Azerbaijan, AZ 1073, Baku city,
Yasamal district, Ismayil bey Gutgashinli street, 18.

Phone: (+994 12) 510-70-78

(+994 12) 510-23-75

(+994 12) 510-70-69

Mail: info@stm.az

Internet address: www.stm.az

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Address: Republic of Azerbaijan, AZ 1102, Baku city,
Nasimi district, A. Taghizade street, house 13.

Phone: (+994 12) 431 11 00

(+994 50) 314 09 37

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the country experienced significant events. The year commenced amidst socio-economic challenges induced by the global COVID-19 pandemic, culminating in a military and political triumph with the liberation of occupied territories. This victory reshaped the regional geopolitical landscape in alignment with national interests.

Azerbaijan successfully navigated through the challenges posed by plummeting oil prices, the deepening socio-economic impact of the global pandemic, and military provocations from Armenia, including large-scale military operations. In response to the pandemic, Azerbaijan swiftly implemented a special regime governing work, education, and free movement, positioning itself as an early adopter among nations. The prioritization of public health by the President over economic considerations shaped a pro-social anti-crisis policy in the fight against the pandemic. This policy included socio-economic support packages benefiting 4.8 million individuals and businesses affected by the pandemic. The scale of support measures, particularly one-time benefits for registered unemployed individuals, exceeded the global average.

In response to the pandemic, Azerbaijan pioneered online meetings and international solidarity messages instead of advocating for "self-isolation" policies, fostering global cooperation. Within this framework, Azerbaijan hosted meetings and summits of organizations such as the Turkic Council, Non-Aligned Movement, and Eastern Partnership countries. Notably, the initiative of the President of Azerbaijan to convene a special session of the UN General Assembly dedicated to combating the pandemic garnered support from up to 130 countries, marking a significant event of 2020. Azerbaijan, as a supporting nation, extended voluntary humanitarian and financial aid to over 30 countries and organizations. Remarkably, Azerbaijan did not seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund, unlike 90 other countries, or from the World Bank, unlike 60 other countries, demonstrating its commitment to self-reliance in the fight against the pandemic. The World Health Organization recognized Azerbaijan as a model

country for its efforts in combating the pandemic. In general, the comparative analysis of the measures implemented in our country within the framework of the fight against the pandemic indicates that the implemented policy aligns with international practices. Moreover, in terms of the implementation chronology of these measures, Azerbaijan is ahead of most countries worldwide.

In 2020, a transition to a new paradigm in administration, legal support for multifaceted reforms, and the reconfiguration of legislative power after local self-governing body elections characterized the year's dynamics. The extraordinary parliamentary elections in February and the subsequent activities of the Milli Mejlis aimed to elevate political life to a new level of quality, aligning with the new tasks assigned to this branch of power. Notably, the representation of opposition party members in leadership positions, meetings with political party leaders, and the initiation of inter-party dialogue contributed to revitalizing the political landscape on a solid foundation. Particularly during the Patriotic War, political parties rallied around the Commander-in-Chief, demonstrating solidarity in the struggle for the restoration of territorial integrity.

Thanks to President Ilham Aliyev's strategy of a strong state and a strong army, 2020 concluded with a monumental event in Azerbaijan's history - the onset of the Patriotic War, leading to the liberation of territories occupied by Armenia. Following the successful defense against Armenia's military incursions in the Tovuz region in July, Azerbaijan launched counter-offensive operations in response to large-scale provocations along the contact line in September. Under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the armed forces conducted military operations resulting in the liberation of 5 cities, 4 settlements, and 286 villages from Armenian occupation by November 9. Key strategic and culturally significant sites returned to Azerbaijani control, including the Khudafarin bridge and vital infrastructure. The November 10 tripartite joint statement facilitated the return of three additional occupied regions to Azerbaijan, ultimately ensuring the restoration of the state border with Armenia. To

commemorate the military and political triumph over Armenia, a Victory Parade took place in Azadlig Square in December. President Ilham Aliyev reflected on the year's achievements, emphasizing the liberation of Azerbaijani lands as the paramount accomplishment: "The liberation of our lands from occupation is the main result of the past year, and indeed the last 30 years. Azerbaijan secured a historic victory within 44 days, reclaiming its lands, dealing decisive blows to the enemy, and compelling Armenia to sign an act of capitulation. Through peaceful means, we regained control of three regions, showcasing our nation's unwavering resolve and the strength of the Azerbaijani state. In conclusion, a primary focus of the upcoming year, 2021, centers on the comprehensive restoration and major construction efforts in the territories liberated from occupation. The 2021 state budget allocates significant financial resources amounting to 2.2 billion manats for the restoration and reconstruction of these liberated areas, alongside 4.6 billion manats allocated for defense and security purposes.

As is customary, various influential opinion centers worldwide examine the impact of 2020 on both local and global populations and assess its passing. Continuing this tradition, the Center for Social Research conducted the "2020 Assessment and Expectations for the Next Year" study via telephone surveys conducted from December 27 to 29, 2020, consid-

ering local nuances and characteristics.

This study aims to achieve several objectives:

- ❖ To identify the most significant events of 2020 for both the country and the respondents themselves as perceived by citizens.
- ❖ To assess life satisfaction among citizens across various aspects.
- ❖ To gauge people's attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccination.
- ❖ To ascertain citizens' plans for 2021 and their expectations for the upcoming year.
- ❖ To gather opinions from respondents regarding the quality and future prospects of online/distance education.

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SURVEY

Scope of the survey

The survey covered respondents from various demographic and geographic segments, including urban, suburban, and rural areas within Baku, Absheron, and seven economic regions (Ganja-Gazakh, Sheki-Zagatala, Lankaran, Guba-Khachmaz, Aran, Nagorno-Shirvan, Upper Karabakh).

Selection of respondents

The survey involved 1050 randomly selected respondents. Initially, the number of participants from each economic district was determined proportionally. Subsequently, ten times more landline phone numbers than the required respondents were randomly selected from each settlement. Every third number from the selected pool was dialed, and if there was a refusal, the next third number was contacted.

Research approach and survey method of conduct

A questionnaire survey was employed within the quantitative methodology framework. Due to quarantine restrictions and health considerations, telephone interviews were conducted for the survey. The SurveyToGo program facilitated the survey process. Fieldwork took place from December 27 to 29, 2020, with phone calls made between 10:00 and 21:00.

Ethical principles

Anonymity was rigorously maintained in all interviews. Respondents were assured that their responses would only be used in aggregate form. This assurance contributed to the high reliability of the collected data from the survey.

Instruction

Before commencing the survey, interviewers underwent training conducted by the Center's staff. During the training sessions, interviewers were equipped with questionnaires and provided with detailed instructions. Each question in the questionnaire was thoroughly explained, and interviewers conducted test surveys to ensure proficiency.

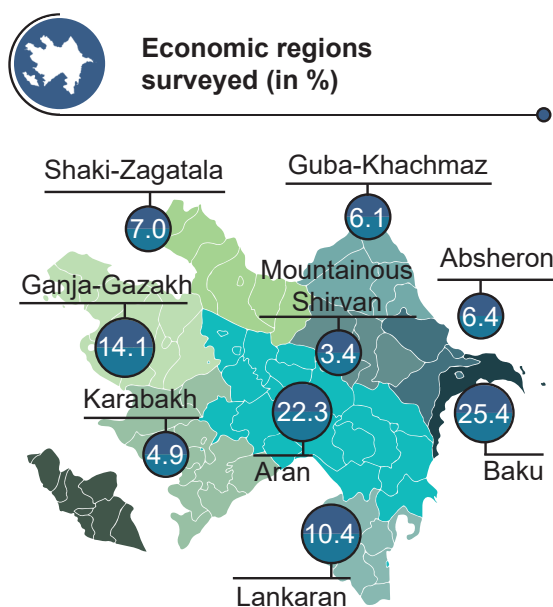
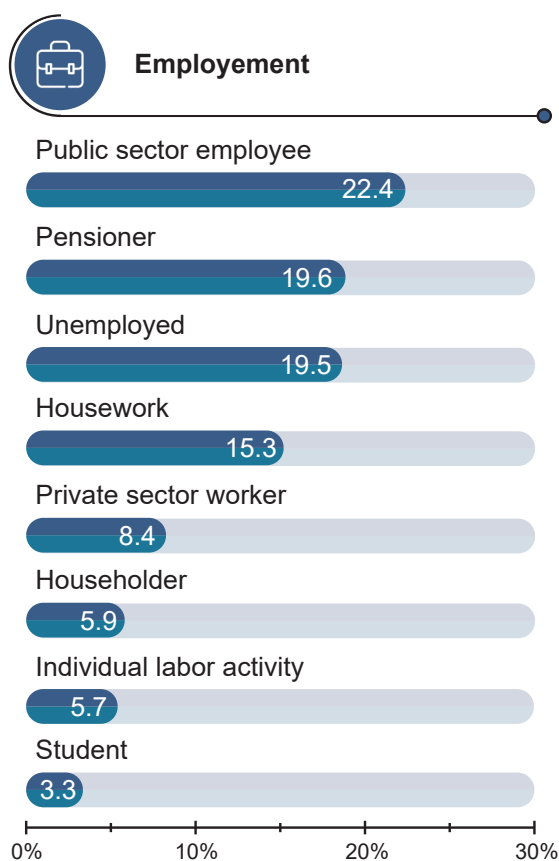
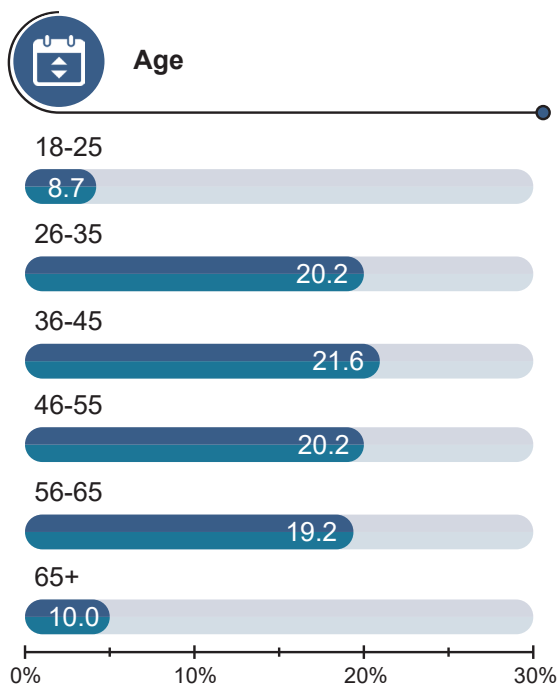
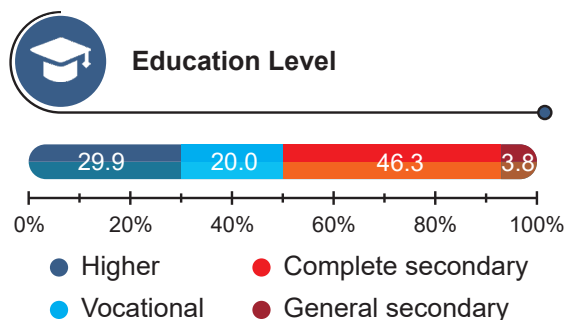
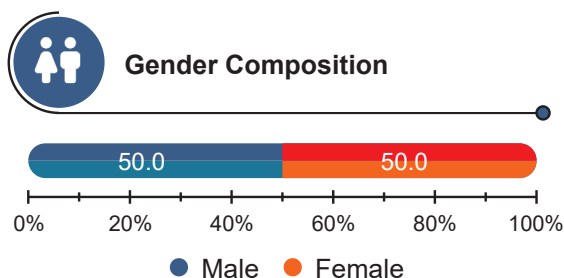
Data processing and analysis

After the survey was concluded, the collected data were directly analyzed using SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In addition to descriptive analysis, various correlations between variables were examined, and the Chi-square (X^2) test was utilized.

Considering the sample size, the statistical margin of error is 3% with a confidence level of 95%.

It's important to note that total percentages may vary from 100% due to rounding.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS OF THE RESPONDENTS

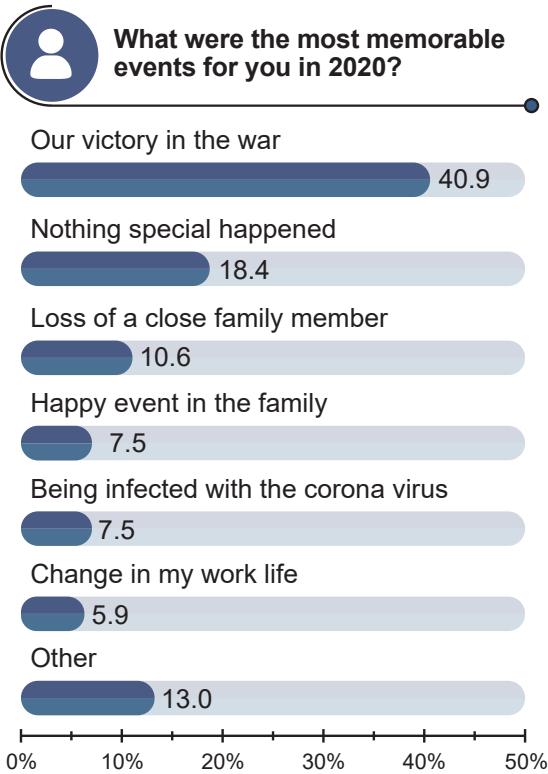


STATISTICAL AND ANALYTICAL ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

I. Memorable events in 2020

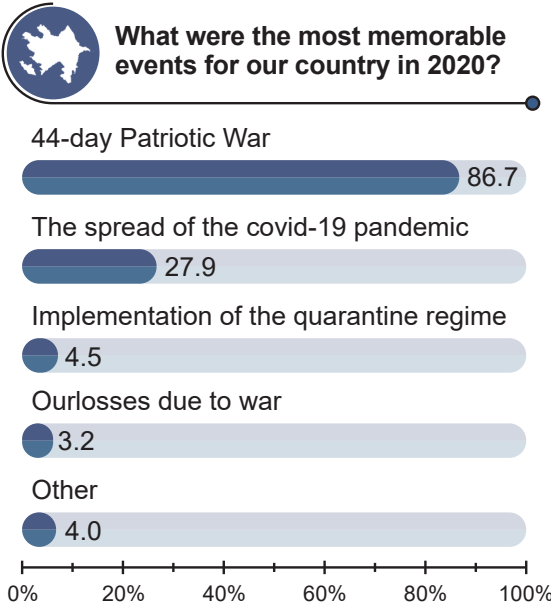
Respondents highlighted our victory in the Patriotic War as the most memorable event in their personal lives in 2020 (40.9%).

Diagram 1.



In the eyes of respondents in 2020, the 44-day Patriotic War (86%) and the COVID-19 pandemic (28%) were the most memorable events for our country, which is understandable. In addition to being unexpected to a certain extent, both events had fundamental effects on the course of processes in the country and its future.

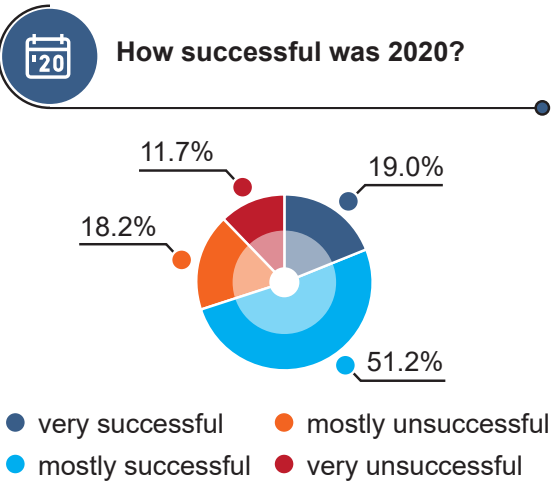
Diagram 2.



II. Assessment of 2020

In response to the question regarding the success of 2020, approximately two-thirds of respondents (70.2%) viewed the year as successful to varying degrees, with 52.2% considering it "mostly successful" and 19.0% deeming it "very successful." The remaining 29.8% perceived the year as a failure.

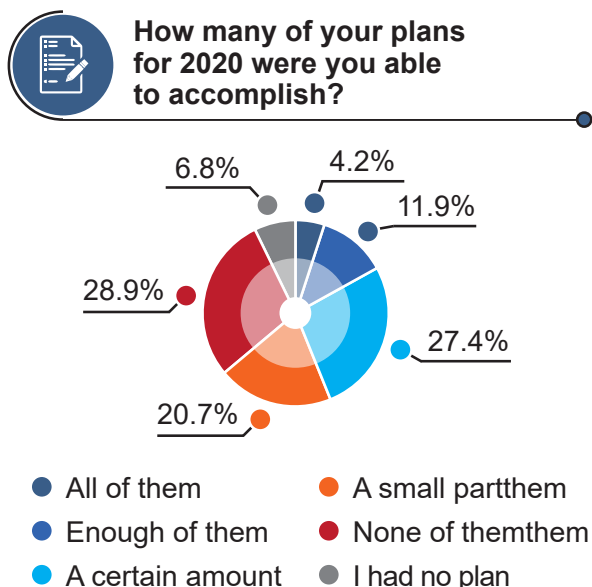
Diagram 3.



The series of isolation measures implemented amidst the COVID-19 pandemic not only impacted people's daily lives but also led many to alter or defer their plans for a

period. Alarming, nearly one in four individuals (28.9%) were unable to execute any of their plans for 2020. Conversely, 43.5% of respondents managed to realize either all or some of their plans during the year.

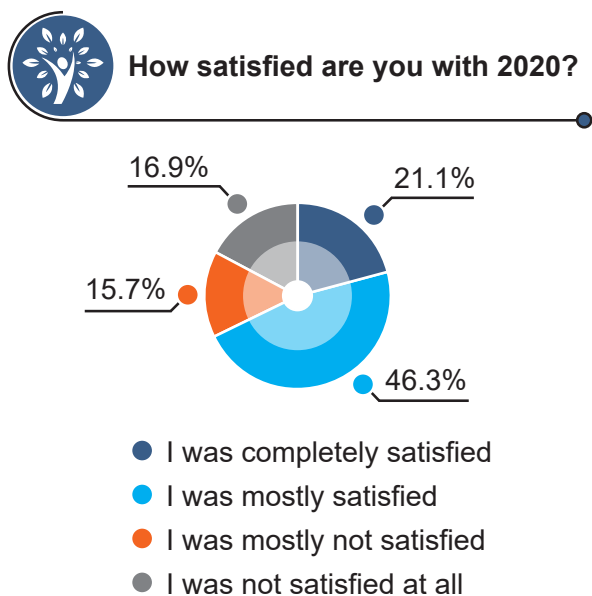
Diagram 4.



III. Satisfaction level from 2020

The events that happened in 2020 also affected the respondents' life satisfaction. 67.4% of respondents were satisfied with their life to one degree or another during 2020.

Diagram 5.



In addition to assessing respondents' overall satisfaction with their lives in 2020, their satisfaction was also examined across various aspects of their lives. When respondents were queried about their satisfaction levels in different life domains, the highest level of satisfaction was noted in the realm of personal relationships with family members ($M=1.11$).

Among the respondents, the most dissatisfaction is related to two economic issues - monthly income ($M=2.02$) and current job situation ($M=1.67$). Men ($M=1.72$) express less satisfaction with their work than women ($M=1.60$). The level of satisfaction with the monthly income of employees in the public sector is significantly higher than other groups ($M=1.80$). The same trend was observed regarding satisfaction with the current work situation ($M=1.30$). Satisfaction with the level of monthly income increases with age ($M=2.15-1.80$). As the level of education rises, respondents' satisfaction with monthly income also increases ($M=2.15-1.90$). Satisfaction with the current work situation is notably lower for those with complete secondary education compared to other groups ($M=1.90-1.55$). The level of satisfaction with education increases as the level of education rises ($M=1.80-1.40$).

The Ganja-Kazakh economic region is noteworthy as the area with the highest level of satisfaction regarding monthly income ($M=1.85$). Conversely, the city of Baku showed the opposite position ($M=2.15$). Those satisfied with their work are more widespread among those from the Upper Karabakh economic region ($M=1.40$), while the opposite was recorded for Nagorno-Karabakh ($M=1.90$) and Absheron ($M=1.95$).

One of the major concerns of 2020 was related to the health status of citizens. In this context, it is gratifying that most of the respondents express satisfaction with their personal health to varying degrees. However, as age increases, the level of satisfaction with health status decreases ($M=1.95-1.25$). While the lowest level of satisfaction with health status was observed among pensioners ($M=1.95$), the most positive indicator was recorded among students ($M=1.25$). Similarly, despite the effects of the COVID-19

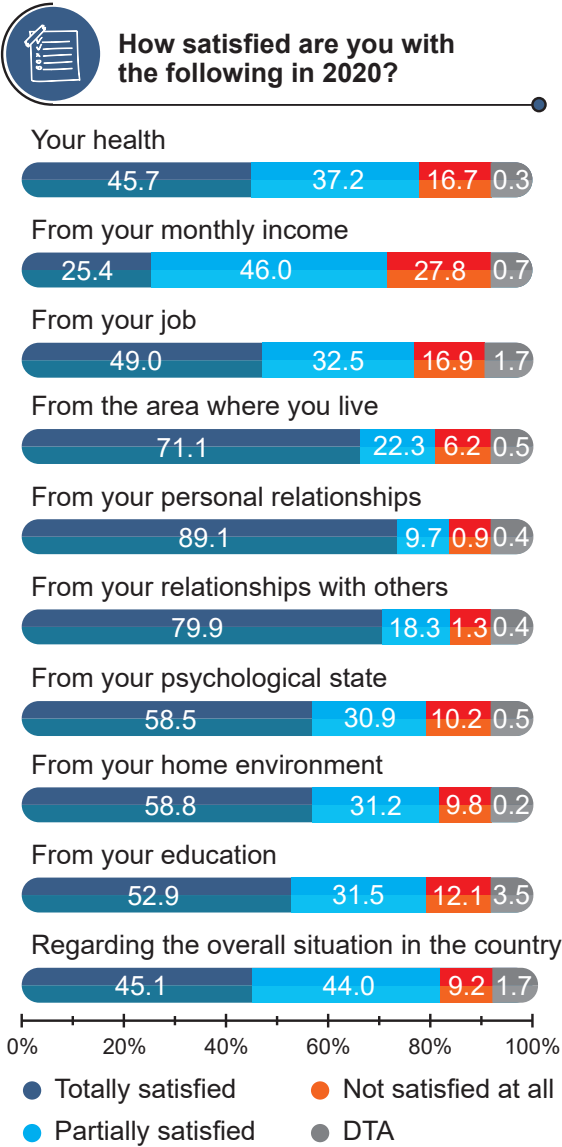
¹The level of satisfaction of the respondents in different areas of their life was expressed as an average value. A lower score indicates higher satisfaction.

pandemic on the psychological state of the population, most of the respondents express satisfaction with their psychological state to some degree. The level of satisfaction with the psychological state is notably higher in the 18-25 and 65+ age groups (M=1.45). As for regional distribution, the highest level of satisfaction with health status was observed in Ganja-Gazakh (M=1.58), and the lowest in Absheron (M=1.86). If most of the respondents from Baku (M=1.50) express dissatisfaction with the state of their area, the opposite was observed in Guba-Khachmaz (M=1.20) and Upper Karabakh (M=1.21) regions. Although the level of satisfaction with the psychological conditions of the population by economic regions does not sharply differ, the Ganja-Gazakh region, as the only exception, showed a positive trend (M=1.20).

The satisfaction level of the respondents in Sheki-Zagatala with the current home conditions (M=1.75) is lower than in other regions. While satisfaction with education among those who live and study in Absheron (M=1.45) and Baku (M=1.45) is the highest in the regions, this indicator stands out negatively for Guba-Khachmaz (M=2.25). Finally, the highest degree of satisfaction with the situation in the country was observed among the respondents from the economic region of Upper Karabakh (M=1.25).

Those who see themselves as representatives of a low social class have a significantly lower level of satisfaction with their health than other classes (M=2.00-1.45). Respondents from the upper social class are significantly more satisfied with their home conditions (M=1.85-1.42). The highest degree of satisfaction with the situation in the country

Diagram 6.



is observed among those who identify themselves with the upper social class (M=1.95-1.55). The degree of satisfaction with the situation in the country increases with age (M=1.75-1.40).

IV. Issues that concern people in 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused various challenges in people's lives, with low financial status (36.3%), health-related issues (24.3%), and unemployment (19.1%) ranking as the top concerns. The problem of unemployment was particularly prevalent in Baku, Absheron, Guba-Khachmaz, and Ganja-Gazakh, where strict quarantine measures were enforced (ranging from 21-30%). A sim-

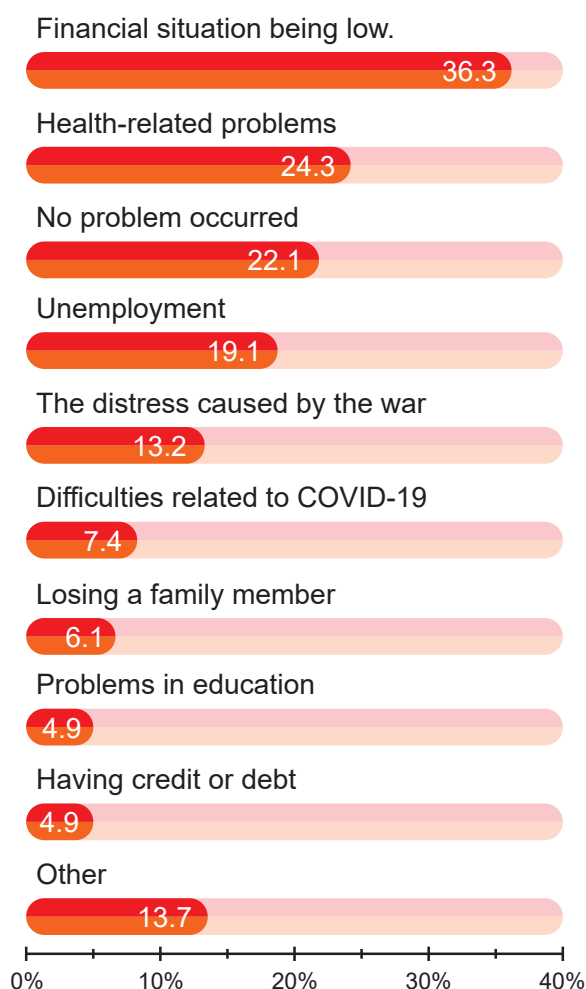
ilar trend was observed regarding the issue of low financial status. Additionally, 36.5% of respondents from Aran identified health-related problems as their main concern, marking the highest rate in the region.

For nearly one in four individuals, health-related issues emerged as a primary concern in the current year. Another noteworthy aspect is that anxiety stemming from the 44-day Patriotic War (e.g., potential terrorist attacks, economic challenges) was expressed by 13.2% of respondents as a major problem. Approximately one in four (22.1%) did not encounter significant issues during 2020.

Diagram 7.



What issues worried you/your family in 2020?



One of the social support mechanisms adopted to minimize the economic damage

of the COVID-19 pandemic on citizens was a one-time payment of 190 manats given to the relevant category of people. In Azerbaijan, some problems were observed regarding the provision of 190 manats intended for unemployed individuals or those who lost their jobs as a result of measures to combat the coronavirus. For this reason, a certain portion of the respondents (15.8%) were entitled to the financial assistance but could not receive it. It's noteworthy that the majority of respondents stated that the one-time payment of 190 manats did not belong to them (68.3%). Respondents who received 190 manats make up 16.0%.

Among the respondents who participated in the survey, 20.1% (210 people) were questioned about the support provided to entrepreneurial entities. Although 8.6% of those respondents (210) took advantage of the financial support program intended for businesses, a relatively large number (10.5%) of entrepreneurs could not access it. One point to consider is that 13.8% of the respondents could not receive the mentioned support because the business entity was not officially registered.

What were the biggest problems of 2020 for Azerbaijan in the eyes of its citizens? As expected, a large majority (71.2%) see the COVID-19 pandemic as a major societal problem. 14.7% and 7.1% of respondents indicated unemployment and martyrdom as primary concerns, respectively. Regionally, individuals from Guba-Khachmaz (90%), Aran (84.5%), and Ganja-Gazakh (83.8%) economic regions perceive the COVID-19 pandemic as the main issue. As age increases, the number of people who consider the pandemic a problem decreases.

Diagram 8.



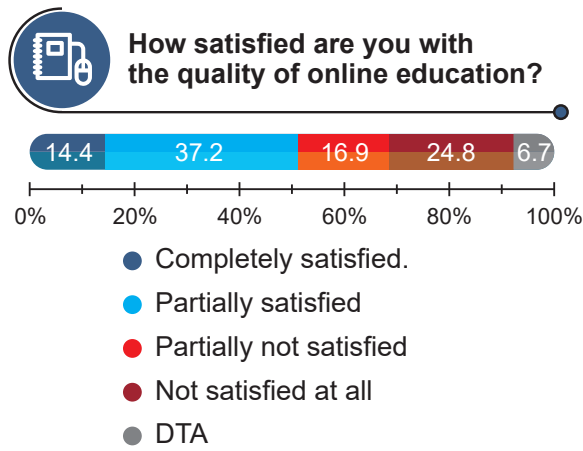
V. Attitudes and Expectations Regarding Education Quality.

In 2020, significant changes were observed in the education sector, notably the widespread adoption of distance education, where internet quality emerged as a primary concern for users, including teachers and students. Among the respondents, more than half (58.3%) reported having a student in their family, with the majority (75.1%) enrolled in high school.

Opinions regarding the quality of online education among respondents are not unanimous. There is a roughly 10% difference between those who express satisfaction and those who report dissatisfaction to varying degrees. A concerning aspect is that approx-

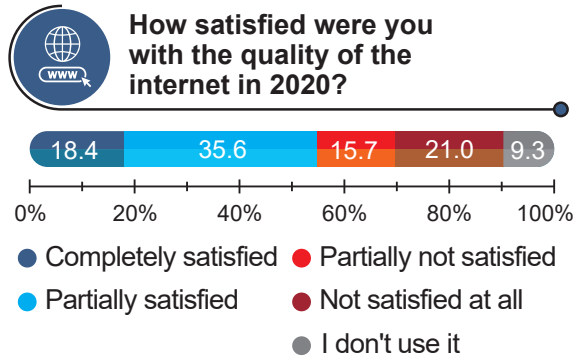
imately 7% of pupils or students face difficulties accessing online education.

Diagram 9.



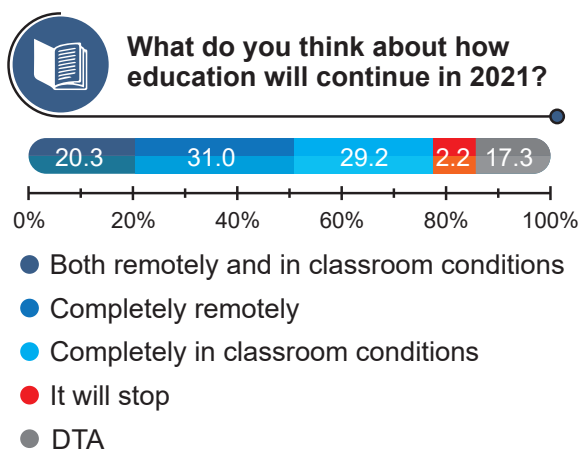
Overall, more than half of the respondents (54%) expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with the quality of the Internet in 2020 (18.4% "completely satisfied", 35.6% "mostly satisfied"), while 36.7% reported dissatisfaction. Almost one in ten respondents (9.3%) do not use the Internet regularly. Satisfaction with the quality of the Internet tends to increase with age, with respondents aged 18-25 being the most dissatisfied group.

Diagram 10.



The survey revealed a division among people regarding the form of teaching for the next year. Specifically, 31% of the respondents believe that teaching will be conducted entirely through distance methods, while 29.2% believe the opposite, favoring traditional classroom conditions. A relatively small percentage of respondents (20.3%) anticipate that both methods will be applied simultaneously.

Diagram 11.

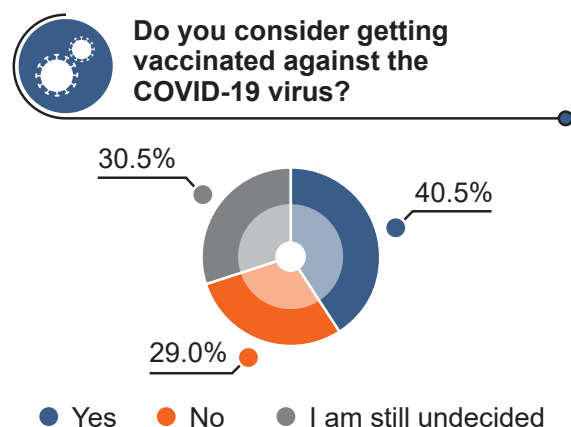


VI. Impacts of COVID-19 and attitudes toward vaccination

In both Azerbaijan and many countries worldwide, there is no unanimous consensus among citizens regarding vaccination against the COVID-19 virus. While some participants in the survey (40.5%) expressed willingness to be vaccinated, a significant portion held the opposite view. Approximately 31% of respondents remained undecided.

Demographically, over half of respondents aged 65 and above expressed an intention to be vaccinated ($F=37.668(10)$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, 44% and 48% of respondents in the 46-55 and 56-65 age groups, respectively, expressed a willingness to be vaccinated. Additionally, willingness to vaccinate was more prevalent among men than among women ($F=24.454(2)$, $p<0.01$).

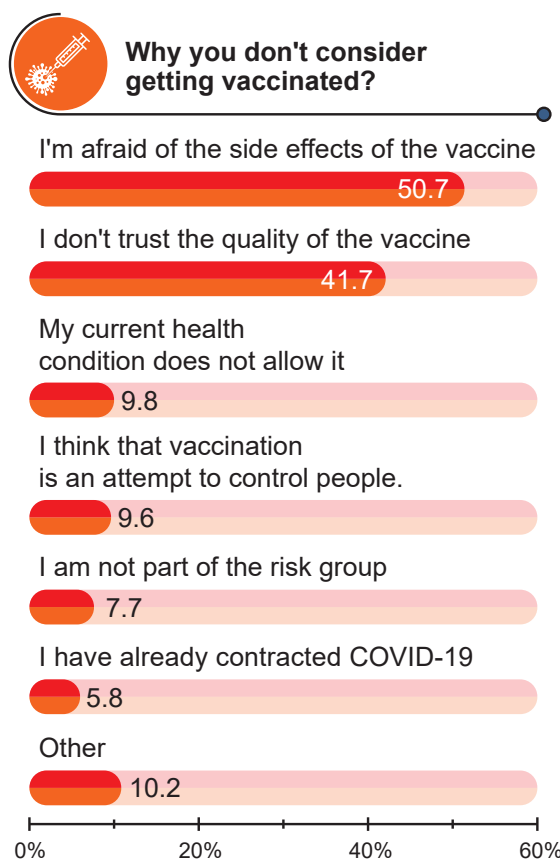
Diagram 12.



The reasons behind the decision of 29.0% of respondents not to consider vaccination are multifaceted. Two primary and somewhat interconnected factors contributing to negative attitudes toward vaccination have been identified. Specifically, 50.7% of respondents cited fear of adverse effects from the vaccine, while 41.7% expressed a lack of trust in its quality. Interestingly, the level of fear regarding vaccine side effects did not vary significantly across age groups.

These findings underscore the urgent need for public education campaigns about vaccination. Additionally, it is worth noting that a conspiracy theory prevalent both locally and globally, suggesting attempts to control individuals through vaccination, was voiced by a notable portion of respondents (9.6%).

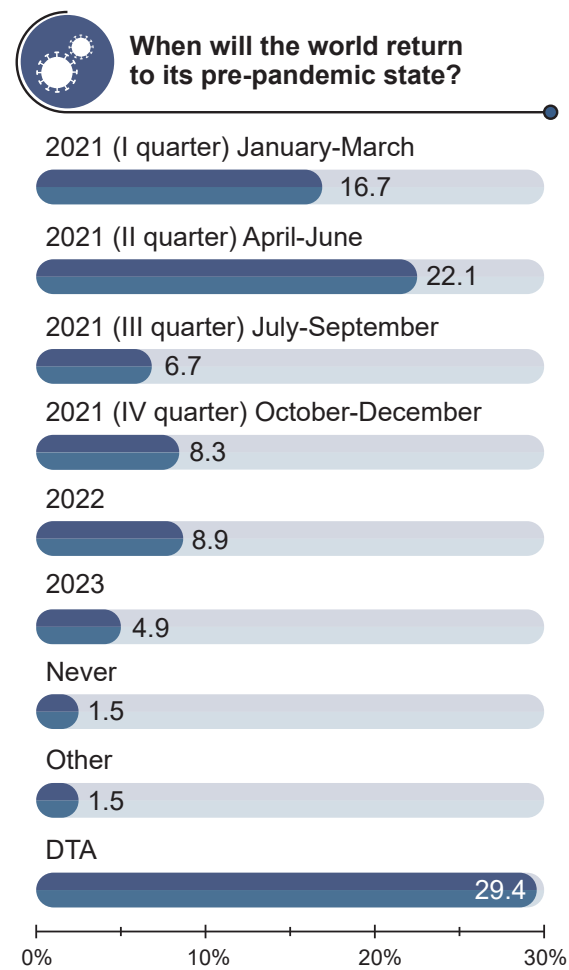
Diagram 13.



One of the most discussed global issues in 2020 revolved around when the world would return to its pre-pandemic state. Approximately 22.1% of those surveyed believe this will occur by April-June at the latest, reflecting their optimism. However, a significant propor-

tion of respondents (29.4%) struggled to provide a definitive answer to this question.

Diagram 14.

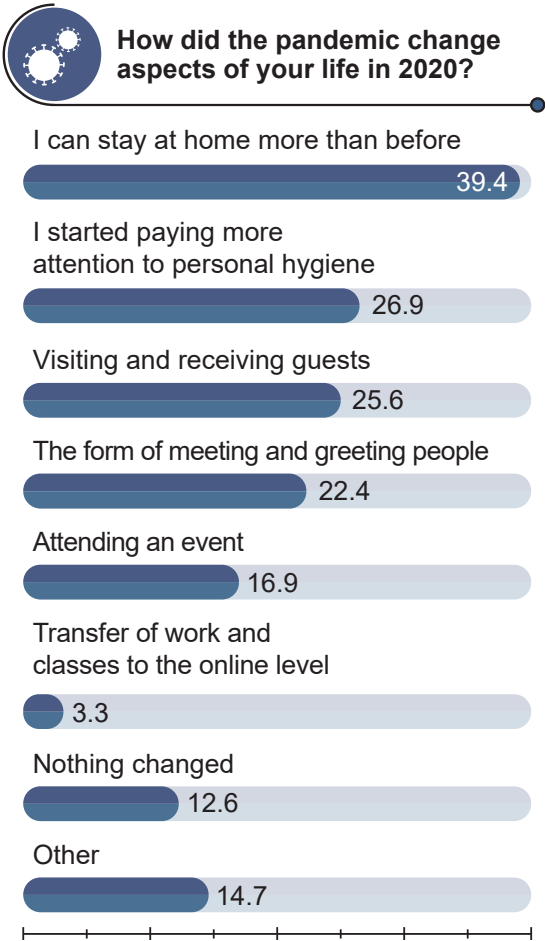


After our victory in the 44-day Patriotic War, a topic frequently discussed among the population was the complete control of the territories of Khojavand, Khojaly, and Khankendi by Azerbaijan. Regarding this matter, respondents were divided into two groups: 47.0% of them believe that the remaining territories of Azerbaijan (Khojaly, Khojavand, Khankendi) will be completely reclaimed in 2021. Approximately 38% of respondents refrained from expressing their opinion on this issue. Only 4.5% of respondents hold the belief that this will never occur.

The pandemic significantly altered people's lives in 2020. Individuals began to abandon many of their previous behaviors against the backdrop of new realities created by the pandemic. The most notable change among surveyed individuals is that 39.4% of respondents now spend more time at home than before.

Since the principle of social distancing, necessitated by the pandemic, has profoundly impacted people's social lives, 25.6% of respondents identified changes in their habits related to visiting and receiving guests as one of the main differences in 2020. Nearly one in four people (26.9%) reported paying more attention to personal hygiene than before. Additionally, approximately one in five individuals (22.4%) noted changes in the way people greet each other as one of the main adjustments in 2020.

Diagram 15.

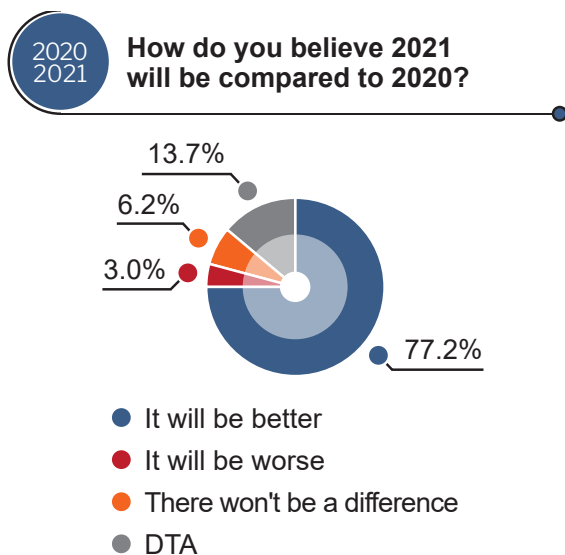


VII. Expectations from 2021

Despite the pessimism instilled by the events of 2020, a majority of respondents (77.2%) express optimism that 2021 will be better than the preceding year. This optimism is likely driven by the liberation of our lands from occupation, coupled with the announcement from the country's leadership regarding the preparation and imminent application of a vaccine against the new strain of coronavirus starting from January. Approximately 14% of

respondents have not yet formed an opinion about the upcoming year.

Diagram 16.

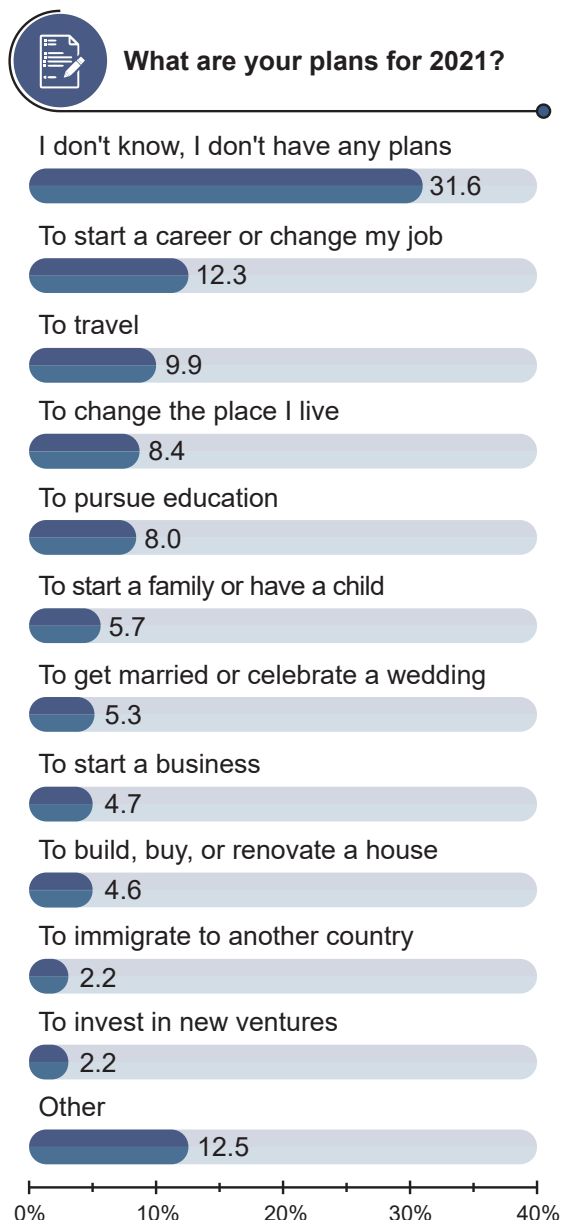


The majority of the population believes that 2021 will surpass 2020, and many have already made plans accordingly. A notable plan for some individuals is to either initiate or change their career path (12.3%). Others (6.4%) aim to enhance their financial situation or secure employment, reflecting a desire for economic stability.

While global travel and movement patterns are anticipated to rebound to pre-pandemic levels by 2023, it remains uncertain if people plan to visit Azerbaijan in the coming year. Only 9.9% of respondents express intentions to travel, citing concerns about health safety and the persistent impact of quarantine restrictions on travel. Financial considerations may also deter certain individuals from making such plans. Interestingly, individuals with higher education are twice as likely to have travel and work-related plans compared to those with only secondary education.

A significant portion of respondents (31.6%) have yet to establish any plans for 2021, potentially influenced by the ongoing pandemic conditions. This trend is more prevalent among respondents aged 56 and older, with over 40% having no plans. Conversely, only 11% of respondents aged 18-25 have not yet made plans for the upcoming year.

Diagram 17.



Based on the survey findings, it is evident that people generally view 2020 positively. The primary factor contributing to this positive assessment is the liberation of our lands from occupation during the Patriotic War. Additionally, people are optimistic about 2021 and are actively making plans for themselves. Confidence in the effective management of the COVID-19 crisis, under the direct control of the country's leadership, along with the anticipated introduction of the anti-virus vaccine in 2021, has heightened expectations for a return to pre-pandemic conditions.

CONCLUSION

2020 was indeed a remarkable period, not just for Azerbaijan but for the entire Turkic world, marked by the liberation of our lands from Armenian occupation after 27 years. In opinion polls, the liberation of our territories during the Patriotic War stands out as the primary factor influencing the positive evaluation of the past period.

While 2020 is a good year for two-thirds of the respondents, one out of four people decided on the opposite position.

Approximately one in four people failed to implement any of their plans for 2020. Almost half of the population was able to realize either all or a certain part of their plans.

RA significant portion of the respondents expressed satisfaction with their lives to varying degrees during the past period. The highest level of satisfaction was observed regarding personal relationships with family members. However, the most dissatisfaction among respondents was registered concerning two economic issues: monthly income and current work situation.

Considering that one of the major concerns of 2020 revolves around the health of citizens, it is encouraging to note that a higher proportion of respondents express varying degrees of satisfaction with their personal health.

Among the problems exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in various aspects of people's lives, low financial status, health-related issues, and unemployment rank among the top three concerns.

For one in four people, health-related problems emerged as one of the main issues of the current year, while approximately one in four had no significant problems during 2020.

Although a certain portion of the respondents were eligible for a one-time payment of 190 manat, which was one of the social support mechanisms adopted to mitigate the economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic on citizens, they were unable to receive it. The majority of them stated

that the one-time payment of 190 manat did not apply to them.

Although one out of every ten respondents took advantage of the financial support program intended for business entities, a relatively large number of entrepreneurs were unable to access this opportunity.

The vast majority see the COVID-19 pandemic as a major societal problem, with unemployment and casualties resulting from war also mentioned as significant issues.

A certain difference was observed between the weight of those who were satisfied and those who were dissatisfied to varying degrees with the quality of online education. This suggests that there is no unequivocal opinion among the respondents regarding this matter.

In general, while more than half of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of the Internet in 2020 to varying degrees, approximately one in three respondents expressed dissatisfaction with it. Almost one in ten respondents do not use the Internet regularly.

Almost one out of three respondents believes that teaching will be conducted entirely by distance method during the next year, while one out of four respondents is of the opinion that teaching will be done in classroom conditions. A relatively small number of respondents think that both methods will be applied in parallel.

Although a certain part of those who took part in the survey said that they would get vaccinated, a significant part took the opposite position. About one in three people is undecided about it.

About half of the population said that they would not get vaccinated because they were afraid of the side effects of the vaccine, and a certain part did not trust its quality.

About one in four respondents think the world will return to the way it was before the pandemic by April-June at the latest, which indicates their optimism.

Almost half of the survey participants

believe that during 2021, the remaining territories of Azerbaijan (Khojali, Khojavand, Khankendi) will be completely returned to Azerbaijani control.

□ Among those surveyed, one in three individuals reported that they can stay at home more than before due to the new realities created by the pandemic. For nearly one in four people, one of the main differences in 2020 was in their visiting and hosting habits. Additionally, the same number of respondents stated that they pay more

attention to their personal hygiene than in previous years.

□ Despite the pessimism caused by the past period, the majority of the population believes that 2021 will be better than 2020, and they have made some plans. A relatively common plan is to start a career or change careers.

NOTES



**SOCIAL
RESEARCH
CENTER**

18, Ismayil bay Kutkashenli Str., Yasamal district, Baku, AZ1073, the Republic of Azerbaijan

Telephone: (+994 12) 510-70-78; (+994 12) 510-23-75; (+994 12) 510-70-69

info@stm.az www.stm.az