Quality of Life

What Is Key to Improving Quality of Life?

Assessment of Citizens' Satisfaction with Public Services (2025)

Number 9

February 2026

INTRODUCTION

The Government Programme for the period 2024–2028 sets out a series of commitments aimed at improving key social and economic sectors, including education, healthcare, social protection, and overall economic well-being. However, assessing the success of these policies cannot be limited to their formal adoption or implementation alone. It also requires continuous monitoring of whether these measures respond to the real needs, priorities, and expectations of citizens.

This policy brief represents the second, updated edition of the analysis of citizens' perceptions of quality of life and public services. It is based on a second cycle of survey research conducted in November and December 2025. Its primary objective is to enable a direct comparison with the findings from the first research cycle (December 2024 – January 2025) and to assess whether, one year after the start of the implementation of the Government Programme, there have been observable changes in citizens' attitudes and perceptions—and if so, in which direction and with what intensity.

The analysis examines citizens' perceptions across four key dimensions of public services: accessibility, quality, monthly expenditures, and the extent to which public policies are aligned with real-life needs. These dimensions are analysed across sectoral areas—socio-economic well-being, education, and healthcare—as well as through gender and youth perspectives. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive overview of whether government commitments are progressing in a direction that citizens perceive as relevant, meaningful, and beneficial.

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METHODOLOGY

The objective of this analysis is to identify changes in citizens' priorities, needs, and perceptions regarding public services and government policies, as well as to assess the degree of alignment between these views and the Government Programme 2024–2028, one year after the initial measurement.

The analysis is based on data from the second consecutive survey entitled "What Is Key to Improving Quality of Life?", conducted in the period November–December 2025 on a heterogeneous sample of 511 respondents. The questionnaire largely retains the structure and wording of the questions used in the first research cycle, in order to enable meaningful longitudinal comparison of results and the identification of trends in citizens' attitudes over time.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that changes within a range of ±4–5 p.p. may fall within the margin of error at a 95% confidence level. This implies that not all observed differences in citizens' perceptions can be interpreted as statistically significant. Accordingly, the results should be understood primarily as indicative of general directions and trends, rather than as precise estimates representative of the entire population.

The survey covers questions related to:

- perceptions of the quality and accessibility of public services;
- assessments of the financial burden borne by households; and
- the perceived contribution of specific government commitments to improving quality of life.

The data are grouped to facilitate interpretation and the extraction of analytical insights, which serve as the basis for targeted recommendations aimed at improving public policies and service delivery.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE SAMPLE

Most respondents originate from urban areas (84%), while 16% reside in rural settings. The sample covers 56 different municipalities and settlements across the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, ensuring broad geographic representation. BIn terms of age structure, respondents aged 40 to 55 dominate the sample (58%), followed by those aged 56 to 64 (19%) and respondents between 30 and 39 years of age (17%). Women are more strongly represented in the sample, accounting for 68% of respondents, compared to 32% men.

Regarding educational attainment, the overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) have completed higher education, while the remaining share consists of individuals with secondary or primary education. In terms of personal income, 9% of respondents reported a net monthly salary of up to 30,000 denars, 51% earn between 30,001 and 60,000 denars, and 37% report monthly incomes exceeding 60,001 denars.

An analysis of total monthly household income shows that 16% of households have incomes of up to 50,000 denars, 18% fall within the range of 50,001 to 75,000 denars, and 24% report incomes between 75,001 and 100,000 denars. A further 24% live in households with monthly incomes between 100,001 and 150,000 denars, while 19% report household incomes above 150,000 denars.

With respect to household composition, the largest share of respondents (44%) live in households consisting of three to four members. Single-person or small households with up to two members account for 27% of respondents, while 18% live in households composed of three or more adult members. Larger households with five or more members represent 6% of the sample, and 5% of respondents are single parents with dependent children.

ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES (2025)

From relatively functional to seriously constrained systems

The analysis of the accessibility of public services in North Macedonia shows that, in 2025 as well, citizens' perceptions vary significantly depending on the type of service. Compared to 2024, moderate shifts in perceptions of accessibility are observed: certain segments record limited improvements, while others exhibit further deterioration in perceived access. Table 1 presents citizens' assessments of the accessibility of public services, ranging from completely inaccessible to fully accessible.

What is new in 2025 compared to 2024?

- **Public transport** records a notable net improvement in access (▲), amounting to **+8 p.p.** compared to 2024. Nevertheless, **70% of citizens still assess public transport as inaccessible or insufficiently accessible, indicating that the improvement, while visible, remains limited in scope.**

- **Access to state-funded nursing homes for older persons shows further deterioration.** The share of citizens who rate this service as "completely inaccessible" **has increased by 10 p.p. compared to 2024**, underscoring the persistence—and deepening—of capacity constraints in long-term care.

- **Practical training and volunteering opportunities in secondary and higher education** demonstrate a moderate net improvement (▲), with an overall positive shift **of approximately +7 p.p..** At the same time, the accessibility of primary and secondary education institutions remains largely unchanged.

- Although citizens recognise some easing of access to the **student meal**, their assessments indicate that the **structural shortage of beds in student dormitories** continues to represent a key barrier to the effective accessibility of student services.

- **Economic support for businesses** records a pronounced net deterioration in access (▼▼), with the overall negative shift reaching –10 p.p., pointing to growing challenges in the perceived availability and usability of support mechanisms.

Table 1. Assessment of the Accessibility of Public Services

Category	Completely inaccessible	Insufficiently accessible	Partially accessible	Easily accessible	Fully	Not applicable/ Not familiar	Direction of change (2024/25)
Primary schools – proximity and financial affordability	2%	5%	19%	29%	40%	5%	▬
Secondary schools – proximity, affordability, and availability of profiles/tracks	2%	10%	31%	28%	21%	7%	▬
Secondary education – opportunities for practical training and volunteering	9%	32%	28%	10%	6%	15%	▲
Higher education – opportunities for practical training and volunteering	9%	34%	31%	10%	5%	11%	▲
Healthcare services – general practitioner, available close to place of residence	3%	12%	26%	32%	27%	0%	▲
Healthcare services – specialist examinations, availability in hospitals and waiting times	20%	48%	25%	5%	2%	1%	▬
Employment services – availability of information on active labour market measures and ease of participation	12%	39%	27%	10%	4%	8%	▲
Public transport – regularity of service and accessibility for different groups	26%	44%	15%	6%	2%	6%	▲
Pre-school education – availability of places and proximity to place of residence	11%	38%	26%	12%	5%	7%	▲
State-funded nursing homes for older persons – availability of places at an affordable price	45%	33%	8%	1%	1%	11%	▼
Social assistance – ease of application and regularity of payments	10%	21%	18%	6%	5%	40%	▬
Support for farmers – ease of applying for subsidies	5%	19%	18%	8%	1%	48%	▼
Support for the business sector – availability of easily accessible funding	8%	29%	19%	5%	1%	37%	▼▼
Student and pupil dormitories – availability of beds	13%	32%	18%	3%	2%	32%	▬
Student meal – ease of application	6%	13%	19%	11%	9%	43%	▲

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025
Note: The direction of change is determined based on the combined movement of negative and positive assessments. A double arrow (▲▲ / ▼▼) indicates a more pronounced net change (approximately ≥10 p.p.), while a single arrow indicates a moderate shift.

Most Accessible Services: Education and Primary Healthcare

The most accessible public services, as in 2024, continue to rank highest in citizens' assessments.

No significant change compared to 2024

• Perceptions of the accessibility of primary schools remain largely unchanged compared to the previous year. **Primary and secondary education continue to stand out as the most accessible public services.** In 2025, 69% of respondents positively assess the accessibility of primary education, while 50% give a positive assessment of access to secondary education. These results largely reflect the wide territorial coverage of schools and their relatively affordable cost for households.

▲ Slight improvement compared to 2024

• In the healthcare sector, **access to general practitioners continues to be assessed relatively positively,** with 60% of citizens expressing satisfaction with their availability. However, this finding points more to the formal accessibility of primary healthcare than to its long-term sustainability. Primary healthcare remains the key entry point into the health system, yet it continues to face serious staffing and structural challenges. **Compared to the previous year, a net improvement of 4 p.p. is recorded.** A key development in 2025 was the announced increase in capitation payments for general practitioners from 75 to 100 denars, which directly influenced expectations regarding improved service provision. The relatively higher ratings of primary care suggest that it continues to function as a stable anchor within the healthcare system, despite broader challenges related to workforce and infrastructural sustainability.

Moderately Accessible Services: Pre-school Education and Student Services

▲ Slight improvement compared to 2024

• Compared to perceptions in the previous year, **a net improvement of 6 p.p. is observed in assessments of access to kindergartens.** Nevertheless, despite this moderate shift, evaluations of pre-school education remain predominantly negative. As many as 49% of citizens express dissatisfaction with accessibility, while only 17% assess this service as very or fully accessible. This indicates that, although certain efforts to expand capacity are evident, they remain insufficient to generate a meaningful change in citizens' day-to-day experiences. Access-related problems are particularly pronounced in areas with high demand and limited infrastructural capacity, pointing to a structural gap between needs and available supply.

No significant change compared to 2024

• Perceptions of access to student dormitories remain unchanged compared to 2024. **Nearly half of respondents (45%) consider student dormitories to be insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible.** This finding is directly linked to the chronic shortage of beds and the slow pace of investment in student housing, which further increases students' financial burden and constrains their mobility.

▲ Slight improvement compared to 2024

• **Perceptions of access to the student meal are divided.** While 19% of respondents consider this service inaccessible, 20% assess it as easily or fully accessible. Compared to 2024, a reduction of 8 p.p. in negative assessments is recorded, indicating a modest improvement in perceptions related to access. This change may be associated with the increased number of calls published during the academic year, suggesting that even limited administrative interventions can have a relatively rapid impact on users' perceptions.

Limited Accessibility of Services: Internship Opportunities and Employment Services

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024 a**

• Within the education system, **opportunities for internships and volunteering in secondary and higher education remain among the more poorly rated segments.** Around 40% of citizens assess them as insufficiently accessible, while only 15% consider them to be easily or fully accessible. This gap points to weak linkages between education and the labor market, which may, over the long term, constrain young people's employability and professional readiness. Nevertheless, compared to the previous year, a moderate net improvement of 7 p.p. is recorded. This shift may partly be associated with the growing number of vocational schools establishing cooperation with companies. On the other hand, although a similar measure is envisaged for higher education, the new Law on Higher Education has not yet been adopted, limiting broader and more systematic implementation. The increase in internship opportunities may also be partially linked to the 22.7% rise in the budget for active labor market measures in 2025, signaling stronger institutional focus, although the effects remain difficult to quantify precisely.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

• Similarly, a modest **net improvement of 4 p.p. is observed in perceptions of access to employment services.** Despite this, 51% of citizens continue to consider these services insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible, suggesting that increases in funding for labor market measures are not always accompanied by adequate visibility or ease of access for potential users.

▼▼ **Pronounced deterioration compared to 2024**

• At the same time, **37% of respondents consider support for the business sector to be insufficiently accessible**, with assessments deteriorating by around 10–10.5 p.p. compared to the previous year. This trend points to declining visibility or perceived effectiveness of existing measures, which may be linked to complex procedures, selective coverage, or insufficient communication with potential beneficiaries.

Low Awareness of Social Protection and Business Support Services

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

• A substantial **share of services in the areas of social protection, agricultural support, and business support**, despite relatively high budgetary allocations, remain insufficiently recognized by citizens. As many as 40% of respondents report that they are not familiar with these services or that they are not applicable to them. This finding suggests that the programmes may be targeted at narrower groups and are not perceived as relevant to the broader population.

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

• Among respondents who are familiar with **social assistance services**, 42% consider them insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible. This may indicate that application procedures, eligibility conditions, or administrative barriers continue to constrain effective access to these services.

Least Accessible Services: Specialist Healthcare, Elderly Care, and Public Transport

▼ **Deterioration compared to 2024**

• **Nursing homes for the elderly** are the most negatively assessed service across the entire analysis. A total of 78% of citizens rate them as insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible, with a **10 p.p. increase in the share of respondents who assess access as "completely inaccessible."** This trend points to a worsening situation and a widening gap between population needs and existing public capacities, in the context of accelerated population ageing. Negative perceptions of nursing homes stem not only from limited capacity, but from a structural misalignment between demographic trends, social policies, and prevailing models of long-term care.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

• **Public transport** remains one of the most problematic areas. Although an improvement of 8 p.p. is recorded, 70% of citizens continue to assess it as insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible. **The situation is even more unfavorable in the City of Skopje, where 78% of respondents express negative views regarding access to public transport.** This indicates serious weaknesses in planning, service frequency, and territorial coverage.

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

• Perceptions of access to **specialist healthcare services** remain predominantly negative. As many as 68% of citizens consider them insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible, pointing to systemic weaknesses related to long waiting lists, shortages of healthcare personnel, and pronounced regional inequalities in access.

▼ **Deterioration compared to 2024**

• Particularly concerning is the trend related to **opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making processes.** In 2025, 58% of respondents assess these opportunities as insufficiently accessible or completely inaccessible, with a **9 p.p. increase in the share of citizens who consider them "completely inaccessible".** This finding suggests a growing sense of distance between citizens and institutions, with potential long-term implications for trust in public policies.

Overall assessment of accessibility trends

In 2025, citizens' perceptions of access to public services show limited changes compared to 2024. For the majority of services, no significant shifts are observed, indicating a degree of stagnation in overall assessments of accessibility. Education and primary healthcare continue to be perceived as the most stable segments, while public transport, nursing homes for older persons, and specialist healthcare remain among the lowest-rated services.

Compared to the previous year, certain improvements are recorded in primary healthcare and internship opportunities, whereas perceptions have deteriorated regarding support for the business sector, opportunities for public consultation, and access to elderly care facilities. These differences indicate that changes are not uniform but vary significantly across sectors. Overall, the findings suggest that improving the accessibility of public services requires a differentiated approach—one that simultaneously addresses long-standing structural weaknesses and makes more effective use of existing policies through improved organization, communication, and institutional coordination.

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES (2025)

Limited improvements and persistent structural weaknesses

In 2025, compared to 2024, perceptions of the quality of public services show a general shift towards improvement across a majority of segments, although these changes are not evenly distributed across all services. Positive developments are observed particularly in parts of the education system and in primary healthcare. Nevertheless, despite these shifts, a high level of dissatisfaction persists in several systemically important services, indicating that structural weaknesses continue to exert a significant influence on the perceived quality of public services.

Table 2 provides an overview of respondents' assessments of the quality of public services, ranked from the lowest to the highest level of perceived quality.

What is new in 2025 compared to 2024?

- **A net improvement in perceptions of public service quality (▲▲) is observed**, particularly with regard to teaching staff, educational materials, and public transport, with net positive shifts of **approximately +11 to +16 p.p. across key indicators.**

- **Assessments of healthcare quality in both primary and secondary healthcare record a moderate net improvement (▲) of around +5 to +6 p.p.,** while perceptions of healthcare infrastructure remain largely unchanged.

- Despite changes related to the level of pensions, **perceptions of the quality of services for pensioners remain predominantly negative,** particularly in relation to additional care and support services.

Table 2. Assessment of the Quality of Public Services

Category	Low quality	Insufficient quality	Good quality	Very good quality	Excellent quality	Not applicable/ Not familiar	Direction of change (2024/25)
Teaching staff (primary and secondary education)	12%	38%	33%	8%	3%	7%	▲▲
Teaching materials, textbooks, and curricula	22%	39%	25%	4%	1%	9%	▲▲
Educational infrastructure – school buildings and teaching aids (ICT and other equipment and infrastructure)	15%	42%	25%	8%	3%	8%	▲
Healthcare services provided by general practitioners – professionalism of doctors and nurses	6%	20%	45%	18%	11%	0%	▲
Здравствени услуги добиени oHealthcare services in specialist hospitals – professionalism of doctors and nurses	12%	32%	39%	11%	4%	2%	▲
Healthcare infrastructure and equipment – hospitals and health centres	30%	48%	17%	3%	1%	1%	▬
Employment services – job registration and active labour market measures	14%	34%	22%	6%	2%	21%	▲
Public transport – regularity and punctuality of services	38%	35%	15%	3%	1%	8%	▲▲
Pre-school education – quality of care for young children	9%	27%	30%	13%	6%	14%	▬
Care for pensioners – pensions and additional benefits	21%	32%	22%	6%	3%	15%	▼
Social protection – level of social benefits	21%	33%	11%	3%	2%	31%	▬
Road infrastructure – maintenance and road safety	39%	41%	16%	3%	1%	1%	▲
Energy infrastructure – efficiency and pollution levels of electricity generation facilities	45%	34%	12%	2%	1%	6%	▲
Conditions in student and pupil dormitories	31%	27%	8%	2%	1%	32%	▲
Amount of the student meal allowance	23%	27%	12%	2%	1%	34%	▲

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.
Note: The direction of change is determined based on the combined movement of negative and positive assessments. A double arrow (▲▲ / ▼▼) indicates a more pronounced net change (approximately ≥10 p.p.), while a single arrow indicates a moderate shift.

Highest-Quality Services: Primary Healthcare

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- **Services provided by general practitioners and nurses** continue to be the most positively assessed among all analysed segments, with a recorded net improvement of 5 p.p. compared to the previous year. Overall, 25% of citizens express a high level of satisfaction with the professionalism and quality of these services, confirming relatively strong trust in primary healthcare. At the same time, the largest share of respondents (46%) assign a mid-range rating, indicating that there remains room for further improvement. These findings suggest that positive perceptions of primary healthcare largely stem from accessibility and continuity of personal contact between patients and healthcare professionals—particularly in comparison with more specialised and institutionally distant levels of care. Nevertheless, the predominance of mid-range ratings indicates that service quality is often perceived as "adequate," but not optimal, pointing to the need for systemic interventions to improve consultation time and conditions, preventive services, and coordination with other levels of care.

Moderately High-Quality Services: Education and Specialist Healthcare

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- In the education sector, perceptions of the **quality of teaching staff record a net improvement of 11 p.p.** in 2025. Despite this positive trend, around half of respondents continue to express dissatisfaction, suggesting that the improvements are not yet sufficiently tangible. During 2024 and 2025, salaries in education increased by approximately 12%, raising expectations for enhanced teaching quality. In addition, the agreement concluded with the education and science trade union foresees continued salary growth for education workers through 2028. However, the findings indicate that improvements in material conditions, while necessary, are not sufficient to produce rapid and visible gains in the perceived quality of teaching.

▲▲ **Pronounced improvement compared to 2024**

- The most pronounced improvement within the education sector is observed in the **quality of teaching materials and curricula, with a net improvement of 15 p.p..** According to announcements by the Ministry of Education and Science, the availability of textbooks in primary and secondary education was normalized during 2025, which likely contributed to increased citizen satisfaction. Nevertheless, despite this shift, 61% of respondents continue to assess teaching materials and curricula as insufficiently high-quality. This suggests that they are still not perceived as adequately aligned with students' needs or sufficiently adapted to contemporary approaches to knowledge and skills acquisition.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- **Perceptions of the quality of educational infrastructure record a modest improvement of 8 p.p..** Even so, infrastructure remains a major challenge, with 56% of respondents rating it as low or insufficient in quality. This indicates that, despite certain interventions, physical learning conditions in many schools do not yet meet expectations for modern education. The findings point to the need for parallel and coordinated investments in both instructional content and material infrastructure in order to achieve a more substantial improvement in perceived quality.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- In the healthcare sector, **specialist services** record a modest improvement in perceptions, with a net increase in satisfaction of 6 p.p.. This trend may partly reflect increased motivation among healthcare staff following a 15% wage increase implemented during 2024 and 2025, as well as announcements of additional increases in the period ahead. The increase was implemented through an annex to the Collective Agreement for the healthcare sector, which also adjusted salary coefficients. Nonetheless, despite these positive signals, 44% of citizens continue to rate specialist services as low or insufficient in quality. This outcome reflects persistent systemic challenges related to staff shortages, long waiting lists, and unequal regional access to specialized healthcare.

Low-Quality Services: Social and Student Policies

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

- Compared to the previous year, no significant change is observed in assessments of the **quality of pre-school education**. Perceptions remain divided: around half of citizens assess quality as good or very good, while 36% express dissatisfaction. This indicates that experiences with this service are not uniform and largely depend on location, capacity, and staffing levels of individual facilities.

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

- **With regard to care for pensioners, including pension levels and additional benefits, overall satisfaction remains largely unchanged.** These services are assessed negatively by 54% of respondents. From the perspective of respondents—who predominantly belong to the working-age population—no substantial improvement in quality is perceived, suggesting that **linear increases in pensions are not experienced as a sufficient or decisive mechanism for improving pensioners' quality of life.** In addition, respondents aged 65 and above assess services for pensioners even more negatively, with 74% of pensioners considering them to be of low or insufficient quality. When compared with assessments of service accessibility, these findings suggest that citizens prioritise expanded access to nursing homes and elderly care centres, reflecting growing pressures associated with population ageing.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- Similar to trends in access, **the quality of employment services records a modest net improvement of 4 p.p..** Nevertheless, **employment-related services** continue to be perceived as insufficiently high-quality: 49% of citizens assess them as low or insufficient in quality, while 21% report being unfamiliar with them. A comparable pattern is observed in **social protection and student-related services**, where more than 30% of citizens are not familiar with existing mechanisms, and among those who are informed, over half express dissatisfaction with service quality.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- Despite a modest improvement recorded in 2025 of around 9 p.p.—particularly regarding **conditions in student dormitories and the level of the student meal allowance**—negative perceptions continue to dominate. Negative assessments persist among 58% of respondents for dormitory conditions and 51% for the student meal, respectively. This suggests that existing conditions and related student services are still not perceived as sufficiently high-quality or aligned with contemporary needs for student living and studying.

Lowest-Rated Segments: Public Transport and Infrastructure

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- **Public transport** remains among the most negatively assessed public services in 2025. Although a net improvement of 15.5 p.p. is recorded compared to 2024, 73% of citizens still assess it as low or insufficient in quality. The shift in perceptions may be linked to promises made during the local election campaign, as well as renewed cooperation with private transport operators, which helped partially alleviate the severe shortage of buses required for regular service provision. However, the findings indicate that these improvements are neither sufficiently systemic nor durable to alter the dominant negative perception among citizens.

■ **No significant change compared to 2024**

- In contrast to healthcare personnel—whose quality is assessed positively or moderately by the majority of citizens—**healthcare infrastructure and equipment** remain highly problematic. As many as 78% of respondents assess them as low or insufficient in quality, with no significant change compared to the previous year. This finding clearly confirms the need for intensified and sustained investment in hospital renovation and modernisation of medical equipment. The gap between human resources and material conditions points to long-standing underinvestment in hospital infrastructure and underscores the need for strategic, rather than ad hoc, investments focused on modernisation, maintenance, and functional integration of infrastructure and equipment.

▲ **Slight improvement compared to 2024**

- **Road and energy infrastructure show modest improvements of around 5 to 6 p.p..** Nevertheless, these segments remain a major source of dissatisfaction, with 79% of citizens continuing to view them as low or insufficient in quality. This perception directly reflects long-term problems related to maintenance and the pace of capital investment implementation, with immediate consequences for economic activity, mobility, and overall quality of life.

Table 3. Change in Assessments of Accessibility and Quality (2024/2025)

▲ Slight improvement | ▲▲ Pronounced improvement | ■ No significant change |
▼ Slight deterioration | ▼▼ Pronounced deterioration

Key area	Accessibility	Quality
Primary and secondary education	—	▲▲
Practical training and labour market linkage (secondary/higher education)	▲	▲
Primary healthcare (general practitioner)	▲	▲
Specialist healthcare	—	▲
Public transport	▲	▲▲
Pre-school education (kindergartens)	▲	—
Services for pensioners	▼	—
Student standard (dormitories and student meal)	—	▲

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025

Note: A double arrow (▲▲ / ▼▼) indicates a pronounced change in perceptions, based on a larger shift in positive and negative assessments (approximately ≥10 p.p.), while a single arrow indicates a slight or moderate shift.

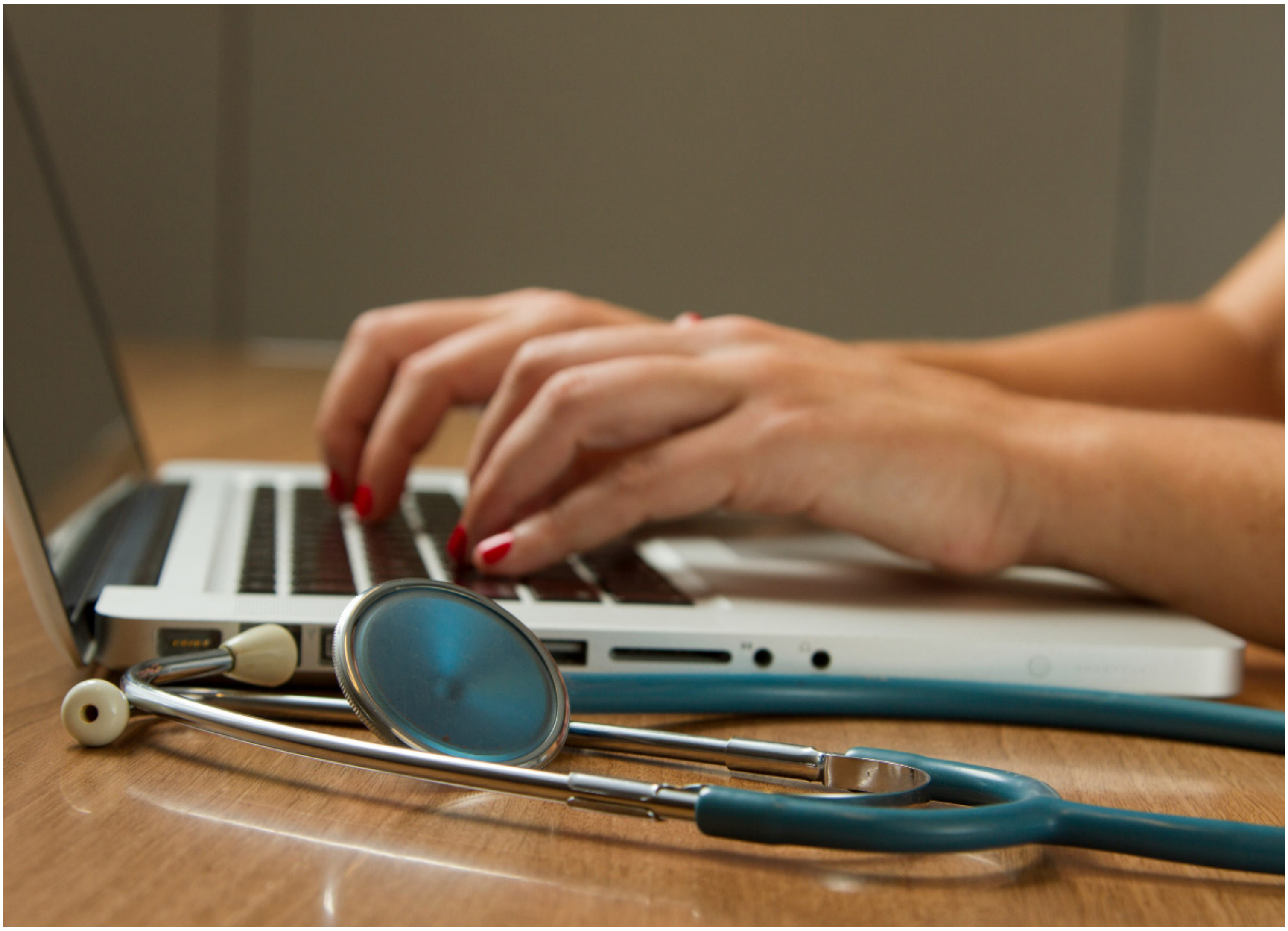
Overall assessment of quality trends

In 2025, perceptions of the quality of public services show moderate improvements across several segments compared to 2024, but without a substantial change in the overall picture. Primary healthcare services continue to receive the most positive assessments and stand out as the segment characterised by the highest stability and trust. Certain improvements are also observed in parts of the education system and specialist healthcare—particularly with regard to teaching materials and professional staff—although negative assessments remain prevalent.

By contrast, public transport, healthcare infrastructure, and road and energy infrastructure continue to be perceived as the lowest-quality public services. Despite recorded improvements, dissatisfaction levels remain very high. In the areas of social protection and care for pensioners, no significant changes in quality assessments are observed.

Overall, the findings indicate that improvements in 2025 are more frequent, but limited in intensity, and insufficient to reduce the pronounced unevenness in the perceived quality of public services.

In addition to accessibility and quality, citizens' real-life experience with public services is strongly shaped by their financial burden. The following section therefore analyses monthly household expenditures related to the use of public services and their implications for overall quality of life.



CITIZENS' EXPENDITURES ON PUBLIC SERVICES

The costs incurred by citizens when using public services represent a key indicator of their effective accessibility and the financial burden borne by households. Citizens' perceptions point to pronounced heterogeneity both in the level and the structure of these costs, reflecting differences in life stage, income levels, and the specific needs of households. Compared to the previous year, no significant changes are observed in the overall level of expenditure on public services. While some services are characterized by lower and relatively predictable costs, others entail substantial financial obligations. A specific feature of this section of the questionnaire is that the only observable shifts relate to a partial reallocation of respondents who report no costs or for whom certain public services are not applicable.

Education-related expenditure

- In the segment of **pre-school education**, the majority of citizens report monthly costs in the range of 1,000 to 5,000 denars. This suggests that most families rely on state-funded childcare and early education facilities, where costs tend to be relatively low and predictable.

- By contrast, in **primary, secondary, and higher education**, the distribution of costs is significantly more dispersed. Around 25% of citizens report monthly expenditures between 1,000 and 5,000 denars, 22% spend between 5,001 and 10,000 denars, and 17% incur costs exceeding 10,000 denars per month—among some respondents, even surpassing 30,000 denars. These data indicate that a substantial number of families invest their own resources in supplementary educational activities, such as private tutoring, courses, or other forms of academic support. This trend may be interpreted as an indicator of a perceived need to compensate for gaps in formal education, either due to concerns about teaching quality or as a response to heightened academic demands and competition.

Expenditure on healthcare services and medical care

- Regarding **health-related expenditure**, the cost structure remains relatively stable compared to the previous year. The largest share of citizens report monthly spending between 1,000 and 5,000 denars on medicines and medical supplies, pointing to the presence of a continuous but moderate financial burden.

- At the same time, a significant share of households face **high healthcare costs** related to medical interventions and hospital treatment. Of the 34.2% of citizens who reported such expenditures, 21.5% spend up to 10,000 denars per month, while 12.7% report expenses ranging from 10,001 to over 30,000 denars.

In this context, the stability of the cost structure should not be interpreted as a positive trend, but rather as an indicator of insufficient systemic protection against direct out-of-pocket payments—particularly for chronically ill individuals, older persons, and lower-income households. This points to the need for strengthening financial protection mechanisms in healthcare, expanding the coverage of medicines and services included in public health insurance, and improving control over costs associated with hospital treatment.

Expenditures on Childcare and Elderly Care

- For services related to **pre-school childcare and care for older persons**, around 32% of citizens report having no expenditures. This indicates that these services are not relevant for all households and are largely determined by the life stage of family members.

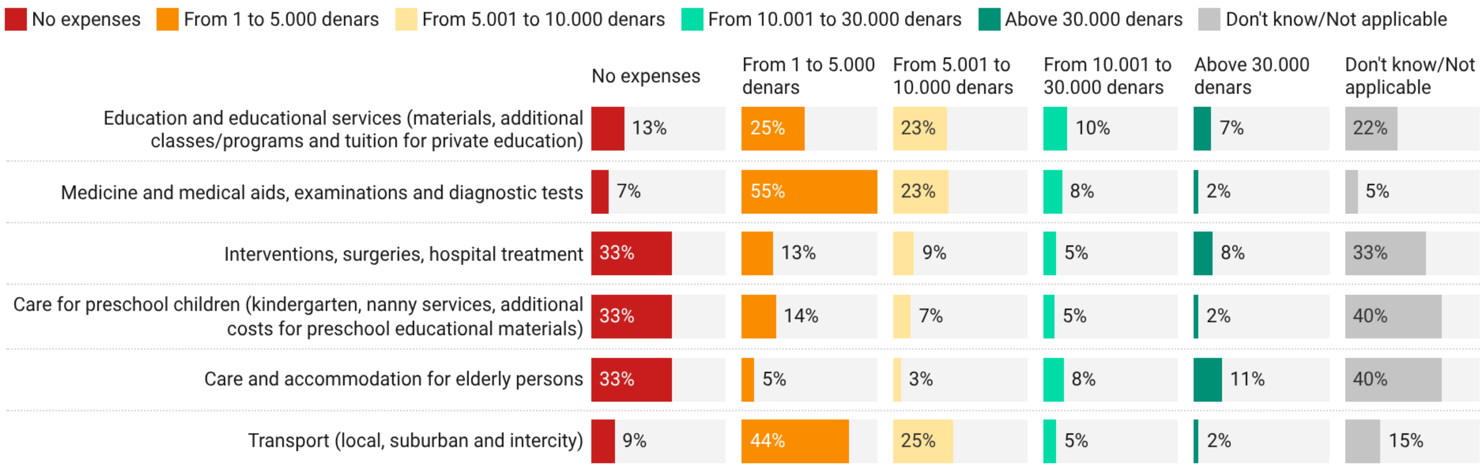
- However, among households that do incur such costs, the **financial burden is substantial.** In the case of elderly care, 8% of citizens report monthly expenditures of up to 10,000 denars, a further 8% spend between 10,001 and 30,000 denars, while 11% incur costs exceeding 30,000 denars per month. These figures clearly indicate that long-term care for older persons represents one of the most significant financial obligations faced by households. At the same time, they indirectly signal an insufficient supply of affordable, state-funded elderly care facilities, forcing families to rely on private solutions.

Expenditure on Public Transport

- Regarding **public transport,** most citizens report monthly expenditures in the range of 1,000 to 5,000 denars. This financial burden is more pronounced among residents of rural areas, where public transport services are irregular or limited, and travel to urban centers entails additional, and often unavoidable, costs.

Citizens' perceptions indicate that, while some public services are associated with moderate and predictable costs, others—most notably healthcare, education, and elderly care—entail a high and unevenly distributed financial burden across households. Beyond issues of accessibility, quality, and financial cost, a key question remains whether public services and policies are aligned with citizens' real-life needs. The following section therefore examines perceptions of the extent to which public policies correspond to the everyday challenges faced by households.

Figure 1. Amount of Monthly Expenditures on Public Services



Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

WHAT MATTERS TO CITIZENS? PERCEPTIONS OF PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2024–2028

Socio-Economic Security and a Better Quality of Life (2025)

In 2025, a moderate decline is observed in public support for certain economic and social priorities contained in the Government Programme. This trend is reflected in a reduced share of citizens who believe that specific measures contribute significantly or fully to improving socio-economic well-being.

At the same time, several priorities show rising levels of scepticism and more pronounced polarisation of attitudes.

Nevertheless, a number of key areas continue to enjoy high and relatively stable levels of public support—particularly those perceived as having a direct and tangible impact on everyday life.

Figure 2. Citizens' attitudes towards priorities for improving the socio-economic wellbeing

	Does not contribute at all	Contributes a little	Partially contributes	Contributes significantly	Contributes fully	Not applicable / Not familiar
Reducing the budget deficit and public debt	7%	14%	31%	25%	13%	10%
Creating new jobs	4%	7%	17%	39%	32%	2%
Increasing salaries of public administration employees in line with economic growth	13%	17%	26%	23%	20%	3%
Increasing the amount of state capital investments	3%	7%	15%	34%	36%	4%
Abolishing the network access tariff in the electricity supply tariff system	6%	12%	25%	20%	23%	14%
Protecting competition to ensure lower prices	6%	8%	24%	31%	22%	9%
Labour market flexibility	4%	6%	21%	40%	24%	5%
Increasing social assistance for the most vulnerable categories of citizens	6%	14%	23%	29%	22%	5%
Ensuring that every child can attend kindergarten	4%	5%	16%	26%	47%	3%
Improving the system for occupational safety and health protection	5%	8%	19%	32%	34%	3%
Linear increase of pensions	14%	16%	20%	20%	20%	10%

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Priorities with the Highest Level of Public Support: Direct Benefits for Everyday Life

• **Ensuring that every child can attend kindergarten** remains the highest-ranked priority in 2025. As many as 73% of citizens believe that this measure contributes "significantly" or "fully" to improving socio-economic well-being. Although support has declined by approximately 5.5 p.p. compared to 2024, access to kindergartens continues to be perceived as one of the most direct and tangible forms of support for families and the working-age population. Moreover, access to childcare represents a key precondition for economic participation, particularly for women.

•**Increasing capital investments** remains the second highest-ranked priority, supported by 71% of citizens. This indicates that the public continues to recognise the importance of capital investment as a driver of economic growth and infrastructure development. In its Programme, the Government committed to total investments of EUR 3 billion over the full mandate, which—if evenly distributed—would amount to approximately EUR 750 million per year. However, capital investments in 2025 were realised at EUR 462.6 million out of a planned EUR 770 million, corresponding to an implementation rate of 60% compared to the revised budget.

• **Job creation** continues to rank among the highest priorities, with support from 70% of citizens. Nevertheless, compared to 2024, a decline of 10 p.p. in positive assessments is observed, which may point to increased scepticism regarding the effects of this commitment. While total employment increased—by 13,067 persons by the end of 2024 and by an additional 4,639 persons by the third quarter of 2025—the same quarter also recorded an increase in informal employment by 10,965 persons compared to the same period of the previous year. As a result, the decline in support may be linked to concerns about the quality of newly created jobs, working conditions, and access to social benefits.

Priorities with Stable but Moderate Support

• **Improving the system of occupational safety and health** records relatively stable support, with 65% of citizens considering this measure to contribute to improved socio-economic well-being. This reflects sustained awareness of the importance of safe and decent working conditions.

• **Greater labour market flexibility** is positively assessed by 64% of respondents. At the same time, a 6 p.p. increase in negative assessments is recorded, indicating a slight deterioration in perceptions compared to the previous year. Although this measure continues to enjoy solid public support, the modest decline may be linked to rising expectations regarding job quality and working conditions.

• **Protecting competition and reducing prices** is supported by 53% of citizens, albeit with a slight decline compared to the previous year. Within this commitment, the Government envisaged strengthening the institutional capacity of the Competition Protection Commission, reflected in a significant increase in its budget—by 20% in 2025 and an additional 30% in 2026—bringing total funding to approximately EUR 750,000. Nevertheless, despite these fiscal and institutional investments, citizens' perceptions suggest that the effects of strengthening the Commission are not yet sufficiently visible in everyday life, particularly in terms of tangible impacts on prices and market behaviour.

• **Increasing social assistance for the most vulnerable groups** is supported by 51% of citizens. At the same time, the share of those opposing this measure is growing, pointing to more pronounced polarisation around issues of targeting, fairness, and the effectiveness of social transfers.

Priorities with Divided Public Support

- **Increasing wages in the public administration in line with economic growth** is supported by around 42% of citizens. At the same time, 30% believe that this priority would contribute little or not at all to improving socio-economic well-being. This indicates that the measure is not perceived as universally beneficial and that part of the public views it as insufficiently justified.

- **Abolishing the tariff for access to the electricity distribution network** continues to receive moderate support of 43%, with no significant change compared to 2024. In addition, 14% of respondents report being unfamiliar with this commitment, suggesting that the measure is perceived as technical in nature, with limited visibility and a weak direct impact on citizens' everyday lives.

Technical and Systemic Measures with Limited Public Support

- **Views on the linear increase of pensions** are markedly divided. Although the commitment to linear pension increases was fulfilled already in the first year of the mandate, citizens' perceptions indicate limited consensus regarding its effect on well-being. Around 40% of citizens support this measure, while 30% consider that it contributes little or not at all. A further 20% partially support the measure, while 10% report that it is not applicable to them or that they are not familiar with it—pointing to diverse expectations and experiences among citizens.

- **Reducing the budget deficit and public debt** is supported by 38% of citizens, while 21% believe that this commitment contributes "little" or "not at all" to improving socio-economic well-being. For this priority, a deterioration in perceptions is observed, with negative assessments increasing by 7.6 p.p.. This suggests that citizens find it difficult to link fiscal stability with immediate and tangible improvements in their own living standards.

Overall, the results point to a clear divide between priorities that citizens perceive as "tangible" and those experienced as abstract or technical. Measures with a direct impact on everyday life—such as access to kindergartens and employment opportunities—remain the highest rated. By contrast, structural and fiscal reforms, although crucial from the perspective of public finances and long-term stability, struggle to attract broad support when their effects are not clearly communicated or visible in the short term.

Education Priorities

Perceptions of education policies in 2025 indicate that, compared to 2024, most education-related priorities have seen a decline in positive assessments and a rise in public scepticism. This trend suggests growing critical scrutiny of the effectiveness and implementation of commitments in education. Nevertheless, despite these shifts, education remains one of the most highly valued policy areas in public perception, with strong expectations for substantive and long-term reforms.

Figure 3. Citizens' attitudes towards priorities for improving education

	Does not contribute at all	Contributes a little	Partially contributes	Contributes significantly	Contributes fully	Not applicable / Not familiar
Increasing the education budget	3%	6%	19%	35%	35%	2%
Comprehensive revision of the Concept for Primary Education, as well as curricula and syllabi	3%	5%	12%	29%	48%	4%
Establishing dedicated support centers for working with talented and gifted students	3%	5%	14%	32%	45%	2%
Developing programs for prevention of violence in schools and ensuring a safe school environment	3%	5%	16%	35%	40%	1%
Establishing a Center for training and professional development of teachers and expert associates	4%	5%	15%	34%	40%	2%
Establishing a National Coordinative Body for reforms in higher education, science, research and development	6%	9%	20%	27%	31%	5%
Infrastructure conditions for single-shift schooling and extended stay (full-day schooling)	3%	6%	19%	31%	35%	5%

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Highest-Supported Education Priorities

- **Reforms related to revising the primary education framework**, including curricula and syllabi, continue to receive the highest level of public support. As many as 77% of citizens believe that this measure would significantly contribute to improving the education system. This strong support reflects a widely shared view that existing curricula require modernisation in order to better align with contemporary social, technological, and economic challenges.

- An equally high level of support (77%) is recorded for the **establishment of centres for talented and gifted students**. This points to clear public backing for policies that recognise and systematically develop individual potential.

However, according to the Ministry of Education's Programme of Work, this measure is not envisaged through the creation of specialised centres for students, but rather through covering the costs of participation in competitions and awarding scholarships for achieved results. This approach limits the systemic dimension of the measure as perceived by citizens.

- **Programmes aimed at preventing violence in schools** are also highly rated, with 75% of citizens expressing support. This finding indicates that safety within the educational environment is perceived as a necessary precondition for quality learning, psychosocial development, and trust in institutions.

- In a similar vein, **74% of citizens support the idea of establishing a centre for training and professional development of teachers and professional associates,** highlighting the importance of human capital as a key factor in improving education quality. However, the Ministry of Education's Programme of Work foresees a different approach, whereby professional and career development of teachers would be implemented through existing policies and institutional arrangements, rather than through the establishment of a dedicated centre.

Declining Support and Growing Criticality

- Although several education priorities continue to enjoy relatively high levels of support, an increase is observed in the share of citizens who believe that certain commitments contribute "little" or "not at all" to improving education. A more pronounced decline is recorded for the **commitment to increasing the education budget**, where positive assessments have fallen by nearly 8 p.p. compared to the previous year. Despite this decline, in 2025, 70% of citizens still believe that increasing the education budget would contribute to improving education quality.

Areas with Stable but Limited Support

- Some education priorities show relatively stable but moderate levels of support. Among them is the **commitment to establish a National Coordinating Body for reforms in higher education, research, and development**, supported by 59% of citizens. This level of support suggests that the public recognises the need for improved coordination and a more strategic approach to higher education, while at the same time perceiving the measure as indirect, with potentially delayed effects on teaching quality and the student experience.

HEALTH PRIORITIES

Although healthcare continues to be perceived as one of the key pillars of quality of life, the data indicate a slight decline in support for several health-related priorities. Compared to 2024, nearly all priorities in this area show an increase in negative assessments and a decrease in the share of citizens who believe that the measures contribute "significantly" or "fully" to improving health outcomes.

Figure 4. Citizens' attitudes towards priorities for improving healthcare

	Does not contribute at all	Contributes a little	Partially contributes	Contributes significantly	Contributes fully	Not applicable / Not familiar
Increasing excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol	10%	14%	28%	21%	21%	6%
New employment of medical personnel	2%	5%	15%	35%	41%	2%
Continuous growth of salaries in the healthcare sector	2%	5%	22%	38%	32%	2%
Reducing administrative burdens on healthcare workers	3%	5%	22%	36%	31%	3%
Incentive measures for healthcare workers in rural areas	2%	2%	11%	38%	45%	2%
Transparency and reduction of waiting lists	3%	2%	7%	33%	55%	2%
Regional coverage of primary and secondary healthcare	2%	2%	7%	35%	51%	2%
Limiting margins on medicines, medical supplies, equipment and supplements	3%	3%	13%	36%	41%	4%
Health insurance for all children	2%	2%	7%	23%	64%	2%
Reconstruction and modernization of health centers	2%	3%	6%	26%	61%	2%

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Priorities with the Highest Level of Support: Human Resources and Territorial Accessibility

- **The highest level of public support is recorded for measures aimed at improving the accessibility and functionality of the healthcare system.** Increasing transparency and reducing waiting lists are supported by 87% of citizens, indicating a clear demand for more efficient organisation and better distribution of healthcare services.

- To the same extent, 87% of citizens support **the reconstruction and modernisation of primary healthcare centres**, underscoring the importance of infrastructure as a foundation for high-quality primary healthcare.

- **High support continues for priorities related to human resources in healthcare.** Health insurance coverage for all children (86%), as well as incentive measures for healthcare workers in rural areas (82%), remain among the highest-rated measures in 2025. This indicates strong public recognition of the importance of equal access to healthcare and the need to reduce territorial inequalities.

- In addition, a **high level of support is recorded for improving regional hospital coverage,** with 86% of citizens endorsing this priority. This finding is particularly significant in the context of the long-standing centralisation of specialised healthcare services and reflects the need for closer and more accessible hospital facilities for populations outside the capital.

Lowest-Rated Measures: Fiscal and Regulatory Instruments

- **The lowest level of support in 2025 is recorded for the commitment to increase excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol.** Only 25% of citizens express support for this measure, indicating that the public is less likely to perceive fiscal policy as an effective instrument for improving public health—especially when it directly affects personal expenditures. This finding suggests that such measures require clearer communication of their preventive and long-term health benefits if broader public support is to be achieved.

The data convey a clearly articulated message from citizens: healthcare reforms need to be visible, fair, and focused on core systemic weaknesses. The highest levels of support are directed towards measures that directly improve access to healthcare services, reduce regional disparities, and strengthen the role of the public healthcare system through investments in infrastructure and human resources. This suggests that citizens do not perceive the healthcare crisis as a result of individual shortcomings, but rather as a consequence of long-term insufficient strategic investment in public capacities.

At the same time, the relatively lower support for fiscal measures—such as increasing excise taxes—indicates that the public expects improvements in service quality and accessibility to precede the acceptance of policies with indirect effects. This highlights the need for healthcare reforms to be clearly communicated, focused on tangible outcomes, and embedded within a long-term vision for a sustainable and equitable healthcare system.

In this sense, the data not only identify citizens' priorities, but also constitute a clear mandate for decision-makers: without coordinated investments in infrastructure, human resources, and regional coverage, healthcare reforms will remain fragmented and insufficiently effective, risking a widening gap between citizens' expectations and the system's actual capacity.

YOUTH-RELATED PRIORITIES

Data for 2025 indicate that measures targeting young people continue to enjoy relatively high levels of public support, although a slight decline in positive assessments is observed for some priorities. This trend points to a gradual widening of the gap between young people's expectations and the perceived effects of public policies—particularly with regard to employment opportunities, housing security, and economic independence.

As of January 2026, implementation of the Law on Work Engagement of Persons is set to begin, allowing students to engage in seasonal work for up to three months per year. However, its effectiveness and the quality of implementation remain to be assessed.

- **Measures aimed at improving the student standard**, such as the renovation of student and pupil dormitories and increasing the scholarship budget, continue to rank among the highest-supported priorities. Public support for these measures stands at 76% and 74%, respectively, indicating strong awareness of the importance of living and learning conditions for young people.

Figure 5. Citizens' attitudes towards priorities for improving youth well-being

	Does not contribute at all	Contributes a little	Partially contributes	Contributes significantly	Contributes fully	Not applicable / Not familiar
Financial support for entrepreneurial initiatives for youth employment	2%	4%	20%	37%	34%	3%
Increased initial financial support for young people starting in agriculture	1%	4%	16%	36%	40%	4%
Renovation of student and pupil dormitories	2%	4%	17%	36%	40%	3%
Increasing the scholarship budget for university and secondary school students	2%	4%	17%	37%	37%	3%
Training in digital skills	2%	5%	17%	31%	42%	2%
Opportunity for students to work part-time	2%	3%	15%	39%	40%	2%
Vouchers for digital devices worth 250 euros	9%	18%	26%	22%	21%	3%
Establishing youth centers in municipalities	6%	11%	30%	27%	23%	4%
Exemption from personal income tax for newly employed young people up to 29 years old	6%	8%	19%	31%	30%	6%
"Buy a house" scheme for young people	5%	6%	18%	29%	37%	5%

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Youth-Related Priorities: Highest-Supported Measures

- **The highest level of support among youth-related measures is recorded for the commitment to enable part-time employment for students**, positively assessed by 78% of citizens. This finding indicates broad support for flexible forms of employment that facilitate better reconciliation of studies and work obligations, while also enabling the gradual acquisition of work experience.

- **The "Buy a Home for Young People" scheme continues to enjoy relatively high support**, with 66% of citizens believing that this commitment would contribute to improving youth well-being. This suggests that housing security remains one of the key structural concerns for young people and a central component of economic independence.

• **Exemption from personal income tax for newly employed young people is supported by 61% of citizens.** While this measure is perceived as a positive incentive for young people's entry into the labour market, the moderate level of support may indicate that part of the public views it as a temporary rather than a systemic mechanism for improving young people's economic position.

• **Among commitments with more moderate support is the establishment of youth centres**, endorsed by 50% of citizens. This finding suggests that while the concept is generally accepted, a degree of scepticism exists regarding their actual functionality, programme quality, and long-term sustainability.

• **Digital skills training represents one of the few areas with a clearly positive trend.** In 2025, 42.3% of respondents believe that such training contributes "fully" or "significantly" to improving young people's position—an increase compared to 32.1% in 2024. This reflects growing recognition of digital competencies as a key factor for employability and competitiveness in the labour market.

• In addition, 43% of citizens support the provision of **vouchers for digital devices**, while a sizeable share of 28% believe that this commitment would not contribute to improving youth well-being. This indicates that the measure is perceived as relatively less effective compared to other proposed policies.

PRIORITIES RELATED TO WOMEN

Data for 2025 indicate that measures aimed at improving women's well-being and socio-economic position continue to enjoy relatively high levels of public support. However, for most priorities, a moderate decline in positive assessments is observed, pointing to rising expectations regarding the real-world effects of proposed policies.

• **Exemptions from social contributions and taxes for companies employing mothers** continue to receive positive assessments from 67% of citizens. This suggests that measures aimed at activating women in the labour market are recognised as relevant, particularly in the context of gender-based disparities.

Figure 6. Citizens' attitudes towards priorities for improving women's well-being

	Does not contribute at all	Contributes a little	Partially contributes	Contributes significantly	Contributes fully	Not applicable / Not familiar
Up to six free IVF procedures	3%	5%	17%	30%	37%	8%
Enabling flexible working hours in workplaces	2%	3%	14%	39%	40%	2%
Exemption from mandatory health and unemployment insurance contributions and personal income tax for 3 years for companies hiring mothers of three or more children	4%	5%	19%	32%	34%	5%
One-year personal income tax refund for first-born child, two years for second-born, and full refund for third-born and each subsequent child	6%	8%	20%	24%	35%	8%
Reducing the gender pay gap through a neutral job classification plan in female-dominated occupations	4%	6%	14%	27%	43%	6%
State aid for opening private kindergartens	9%	10%	20%	26%	29%	5%

Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Priorities Related to Women: Highest-Supported Measures

• **Flexible working hours remain one of the most highly supported measures in 2025,** with a consistently high level of positive assessments at 79%. This finding indicates strong public support for work arrangements that enable a better balance between professional and private life, particularly for families with young children, but also more broadly among the working-age population.

• **Reducing the gender pay gap continues to rank among the highest-supported priorities,** with backing from 70% of citizens, reflecting widespread awareness of persistent gender inequalities.

• **The measure enabling six free in IVF procedures** remains among the most highly rated priorities in this category. In 2025, the total share of positive assessments stands at 66.7%.

• **Personal income tax refunds for the first, second, and third child are supported by 59% of citizens.** This level of support suggests that fiscal incentives, when not combined with other forms of support—such as accessible care services, flexible work arrangements, or direct transfers—have limited potential to substantially improve families' living standards.

- **State support for opening private kindergartens and expanding childcare capacity is supported by 56% of citizens.** This result indicates that while the public recognises the need to increase the supply of childcare services, it also reflects a degree of reservation regarding the privatisation of this segment.

Gender Differences in Perceptions: Support Is Not Always Even

Disaggregation of data by gender reveals clear differences in levels of support for measures aimed at improving women's position. Although positive attitudes dominate overall, male respondents consistently express lower levels of support for most proposed policies compared to women. The most pronounced differences are observed in three priority areas. **Women express significantly stronger support for flexible working hours and for state support for opening private kindergartens—likely reflecting their greater involvement and disproportionate burden in childcare and household responsibilities.**

The largest gender gap in perceptions is recorded with regard to the gender pay gap, where the difference in support reaches 25 p.p.. The substantially higher concern and support expressed by women suggest that they more frequently recognise the direct link between gender-sensitive policies and their own economic security. These differences underscore the need for clearer and more inclusive communication of the benefits of gender-sensitive policies, targeting not only women but also men, in order to build broader societal support for substantive and sustainable gender equality.

WHAT MATTERS MOST FOR A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE ACCORDING TO CITIZENS—AND WHO CONTRIBUTES THE MOST?

Quality Healthcare and Education as Key Pillars of Quality of Life

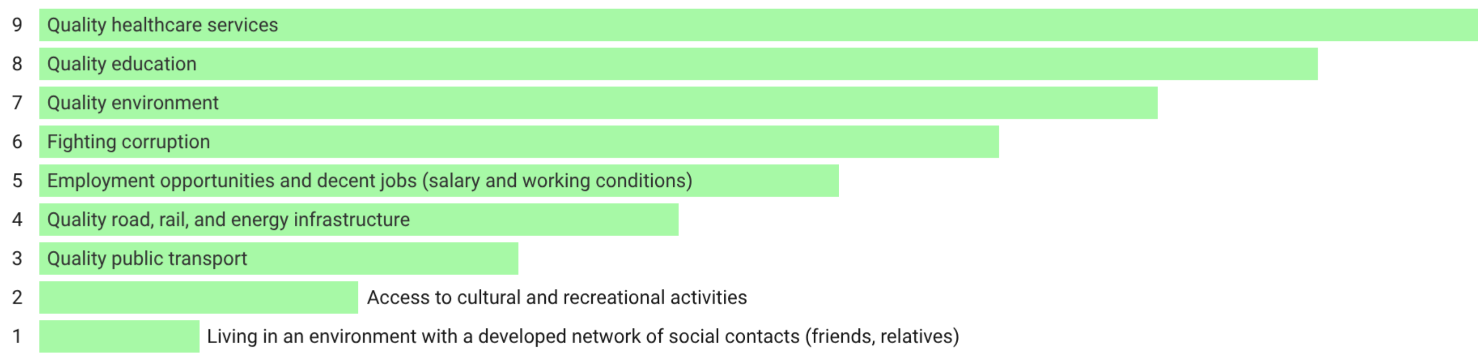
Survey results point to a clear and stable hierarchy of priorities that citizens consider essential for improving quality of life. **High-quality healthcare and education, alongside decent employment, rank at the top, indicating that fundamental existential and social needs continue to dominate public perceptions.**

Quality healthcare services stand out as the single most important priority for citizens. This finding is consistent with earlier results highlighting growing concern regarding the accessibility, quality, and functionality of the healthcare system, as well as its direct impact on everyday security and well-being.

Ranking healthcare first clearly demonstrates that citizens perceive access to timely and high-quality medical care as a key precondition for a good quality of life, and as an area where expectations remain high and largely unmet. This points to heightened sensitivity to conditions within the healthcare system and a strong need for systemic improvement—particularly in the context of population ageing, the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, and the significant financial burden associated with healthcare use.

Quality education ranks immediately after healthcare, further confirming its role as a cornerstone of social security and long-term economic development. While citizens acknowledge certain efforts to improve the education system, they also indicate that the quality and accessibility of education are still not fully aligned with labour market needs and contemporary societal challenges.

Figure 7. Results of the ranking of the most important aspects for improving quality of life



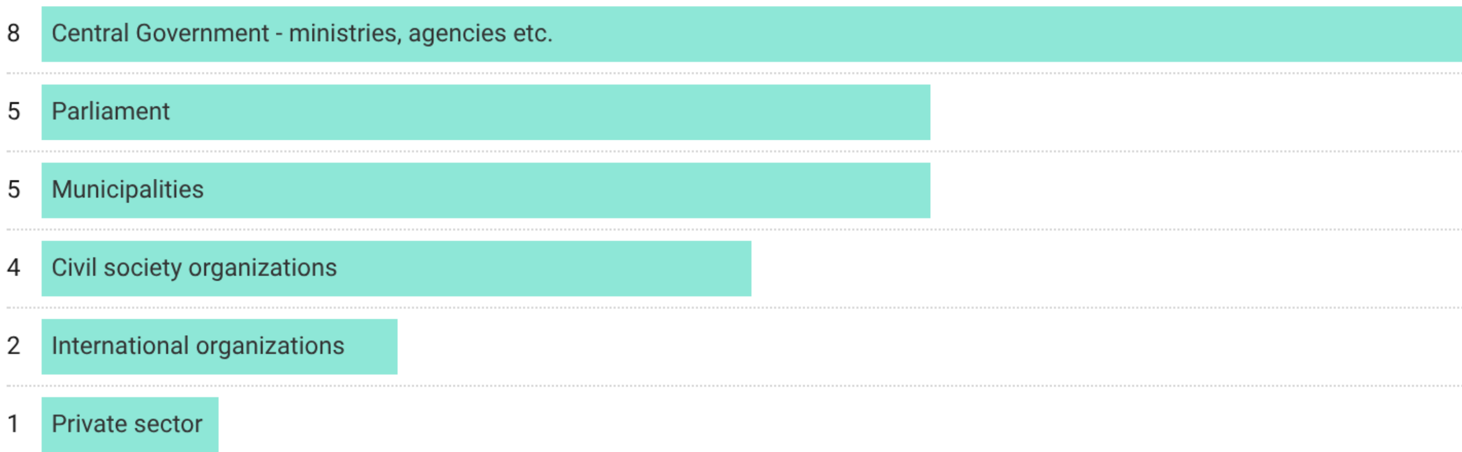
Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

Who Should Bear the Greatest Responsibility?

Citizens clearly identify the central government as the primary actor responsible for improving quality of life. At the same time, municipalities are recognised as the second most important actor, particularly with regard to the delivery of services such as education, local infrastructure, public transport, and care for older persons. This finding points to strong expectations for effective vertical coordination between central and local levels of government.

While the state is perceived as bearing the primary responsibility, citizens also recognise a role for other actors, including the private sector, civil society organisations, and international partners. However, their role is seen as complementary rather than substitutive to the institutional responsibility of the state.

Figure 8. Results of the ranking of institutions and stakeholder groups contributing most to improving quality of life



Source: Survey on identifying citizens' priorities and needs, 2025.

CONCLUSION: BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

The analysis of citizens' perceptions in 2025 reveals a complex yet clearly structured picture of quality of life in the country. Citizens demonstrate a high level of awareness of public policies and articulate concrete expectations from institutions. At the same time, the data point to a widening gap between these expectations and the perceived outcomes of policy implementation, contributing to a gradual increase in public criticism and skepticism.

Key challenges remain closely linked to economic security, the accessibility and quality of public services, and the functionality and visibility of institutional support mechanisms. Although moderate improvements are observed in certain areas, most notably in primary healthcare, parts of the education system, and selected social measures, these changes are not sufficient to generate a sense of stability, predictability, and sustained progress.

Expectations are increasingly oriented towards policies with a direct and tangible impact on everyday life: stable and decent employment, timely and accessible healthcare, a functional and reliable public transport system, quality and relevant education, and effective and fair social protection. Citizens are more frequently assessing the success of policies through their practical usability, rather than through their formal alignment with strategic or programmatic documents.

In this context, future reforms will need to rest on three key pillars: greater transparency in policy design and implementation, stronger coordination between central and local government, and a more inclusive approach that engages citizens not only as service users, but also as active stakeholders in the creation and monitoring of public policies. Only through such an approach can the gap between perception and reality be narrowed, enabling the development of a sustainable development model that responds to the real, everyday needs of the population and strengthens trust in institutions over the long term.

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The project "Citizen Watch: Bridging the gap between policy promises and delivery in four development areas" is supported by the Swiss Government through Civica Mobilitas.
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Finance Think is an independent and non-profit institute for economic research and policy

1/2 Frederic Chopin
1000 Skopje
North Macedonia
www.financethink.mk
+389 2 6156 168
info@financethink.mk