

City Experiment Fund 2025

KEY FINDINGS
**COMMUNITY
LISTENING**



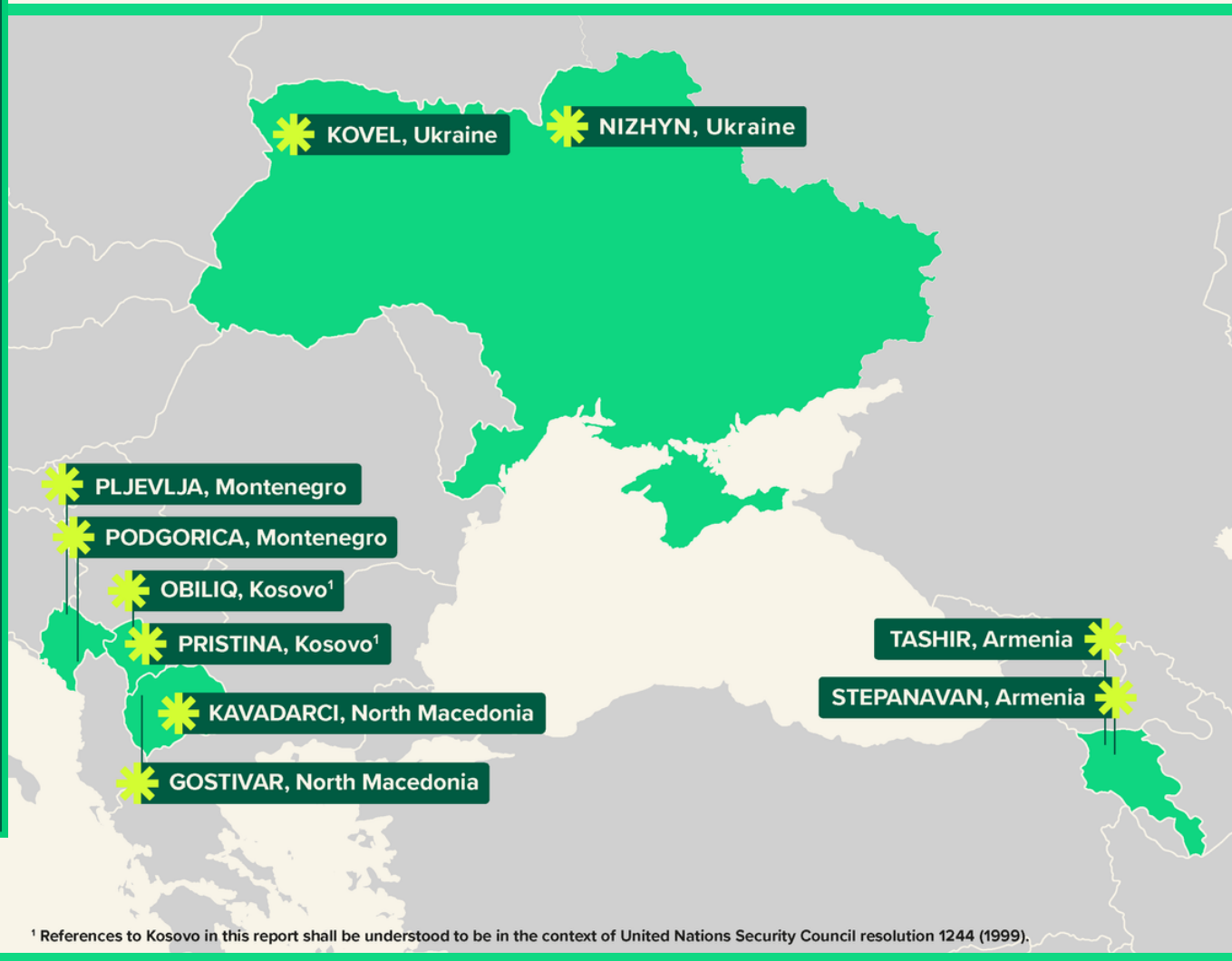
COMMUNITY LISTENING OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

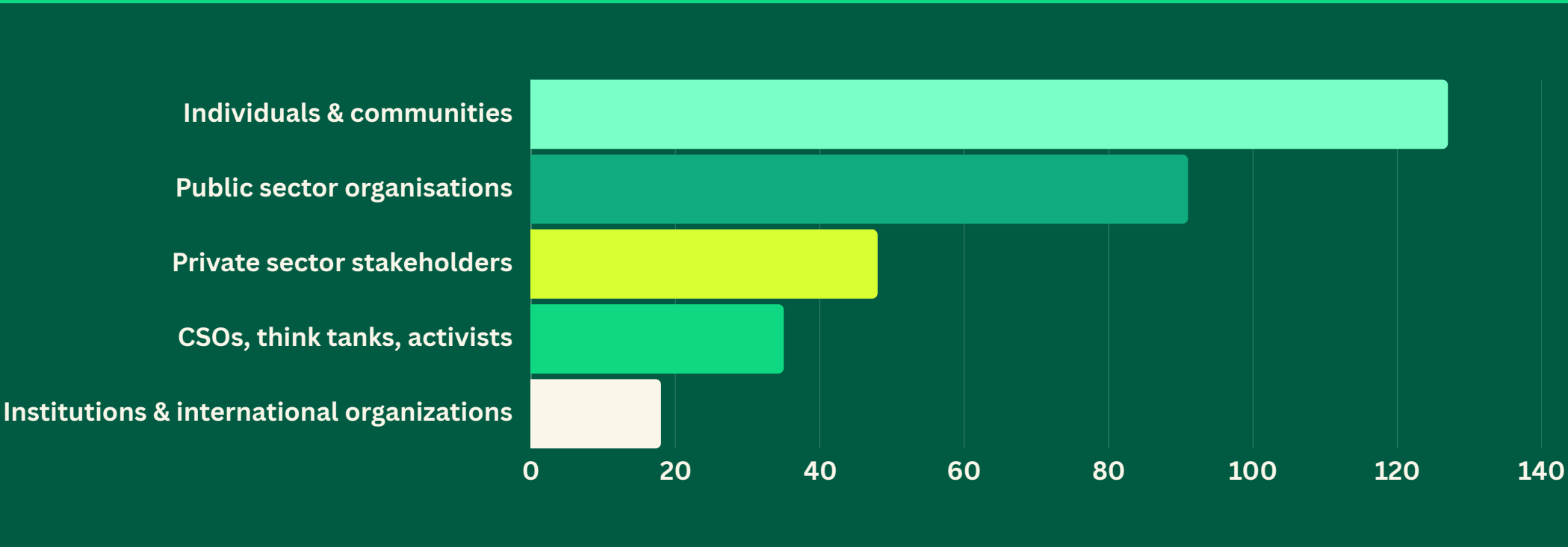
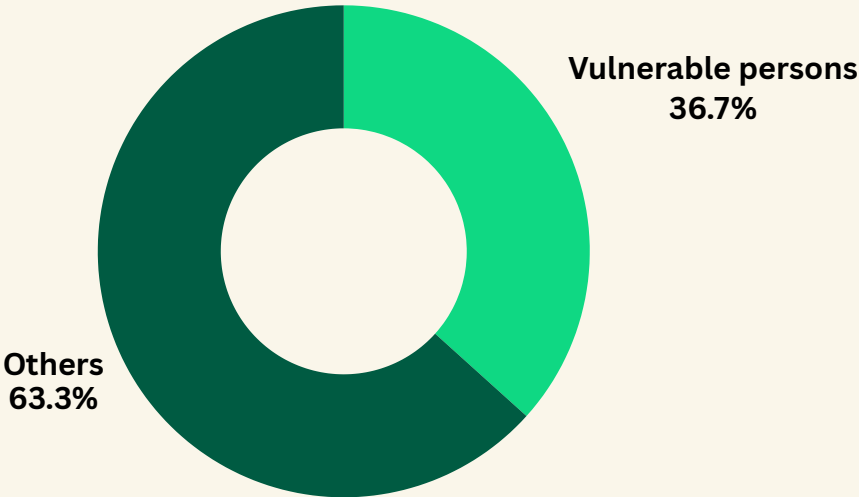
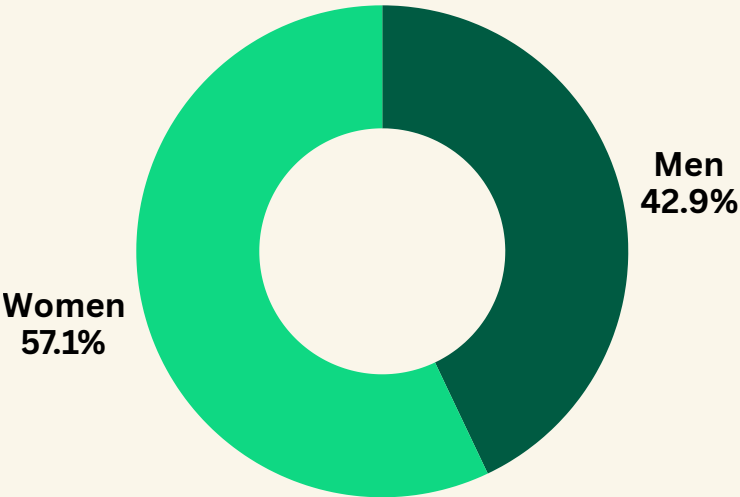
As part of the City Experiment Fund cohort, representatives from local authorities in the 10 selected cities went through 6-hours of live, online training sessions on community listening. The sessions covered key topics such as keeping an open mind, asking questions that encourage learning, listening without judgment, building trust in conversations, mapping stakeholders, and conducting interviews.

In the following 4 weeks, the representatives of the local authorities engaged with various stakeholders to listen and learn about the city from different perspectives and understand how problems affect people differently. The outputs of the interviews were synthesised for each city to make it possible to translate the learnings and findings into areas of action.

This report aims to find the common points across these diverse cities to enhance the understanding of each country context.



COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS



EMERGING TOPICS

Economic Opportunities

Healthcare access and quality

Public infrastructure & services

Gender inequality & social inclusion

Digital divide **Public safety & social cohesion**

Youth retention & migration **Environmental concerns**

Educational resources **Recreational & cultural facilities**

Employment Barriers **Traditional Gender Roles**

Childcare & Motherhood Support **Improved Infrastructure**

Public Safety & Urban Infrastructure **Modernization**

Underrepresentation in Decision-Making

Inclusive, Barrier-free & Socially Cohesive

Sustainability, Green & Clean Environment

LISTENING SYNTHESIS FOR

ARMENIA

**TWIN
TRANSITION
PORTFOLIO**

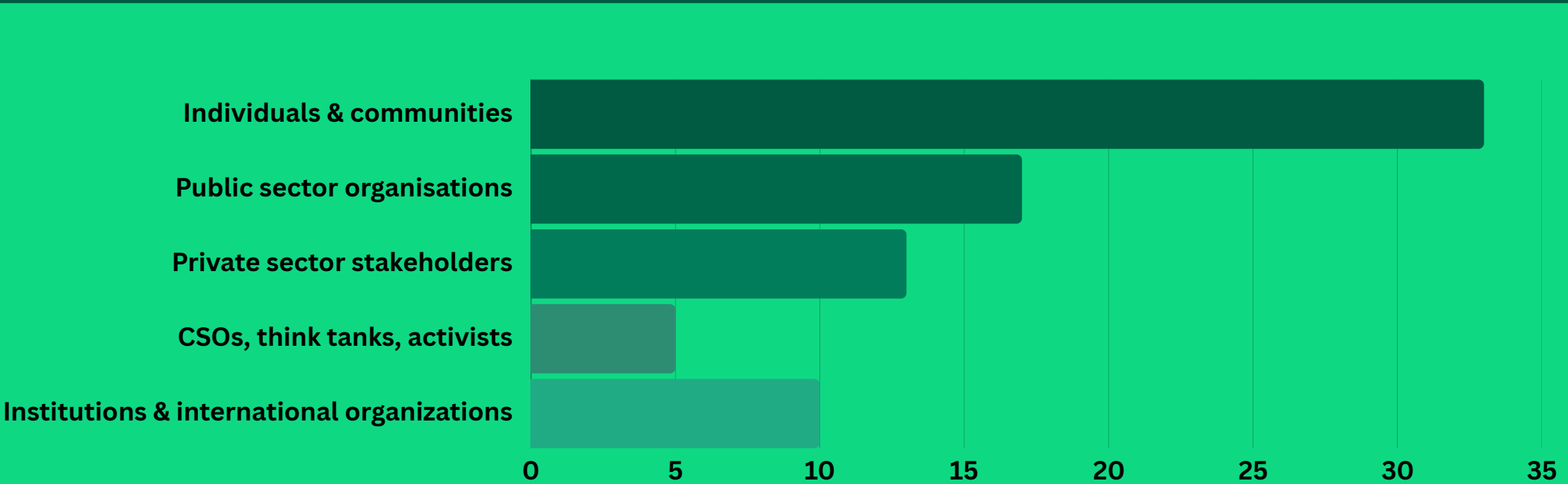
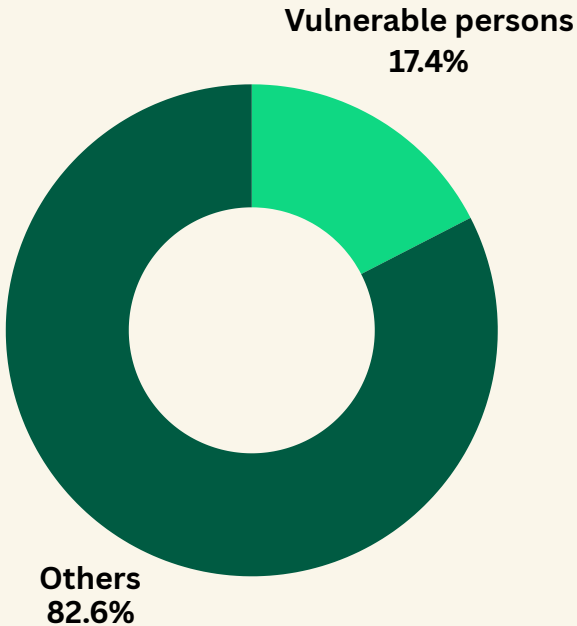
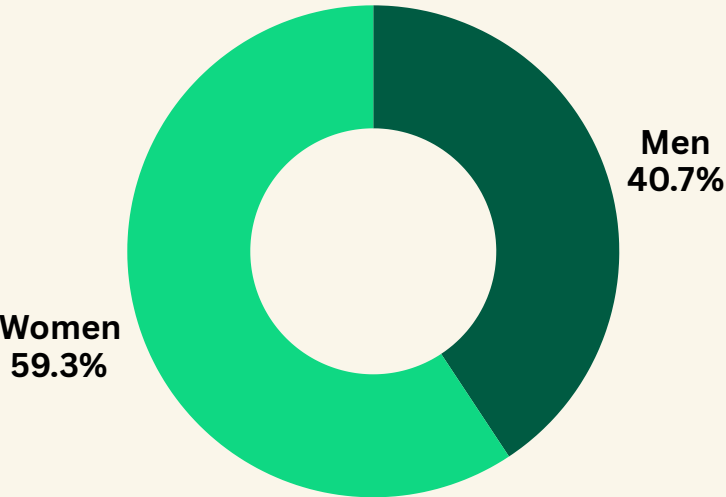


STEPANAVAN



TASHIR

COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS - ARMENIA



COMMON FINDINGS

RECURRING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Limited cultural and recreational opportunities – Both cities highlight the lack of cultural venues and activities as a barrier to quality of life and community cohesion.
- Agriculture requires modernization and better tools – Stepanavan points to missing farming machinery, while Tashir stresses outdated methods; both need support to modernize practices.
- Education systems are under-resourced – Challenges in quality, resources, and early education make it difficult to meet community needs and retain youth.
- Weak infrastructure – Poor roads, utilities, and transport options hinder daily life, mobility, and local development.
- Unstable employment – Seasonal or unstable job opportunities leave families without reliable livelihoods.
- Limited access to technology – Whether due to financing or lack of digital skills, both communities struggle with technological gaps.
- Lack of proper waste management systems and infrastructure.

COMMON VIEWS ON GENDER

- Traditional roles and expectations limit women's opportunities – Cultural norms reinforce inequality and keep women from fully pursuing professional and educational goals.
- Unequal household burdens – Women carry most caregiving and domestic responsibilities, which makes balancing ambitions harder.
- Active role in community life – Women in both cities are engaged in cultural, educational, and community development activities.
- Education as a pathway for empowerment – Women's participation in education and training is rising, with Stepanavan highlighting involvement in programs and Tashir pointing to growing encouragement for daughters to study.

SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CITIES

- Nature and environment as economic assets – Both communities see their natural beauty, greenery, and clean air as foundations for eco-tourism and healthier living.
- Tourism development potential – Strong opportunities exist to leverage natural landscapes, cultural traditions, and heritage for tourism growth.
- Calm and safe living environments – The peaceful, orderly, and safe atmospheres in both cities are valued as quality-of-life strengths.
- Community and hospitality – Strong traditions of hospitality, friendliness, and social cohesion provide opportunities to strengthen civic pride and attract newcomers.
- Cultural and historical heritage – Rich traditions, cultural sites, and historical significance can be leveraged for identity and tourism.

SHARED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Green and clean cities – Both envision a future where environmental health, greenery, and clean surroundings are central.
- Tourism as a growth driver – Eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and thriving tourism industries are shared aspirations.
- Modern infrastructure and facilities – Both want better infrastructure, cultural venues, recreation spaces, and facilities for children.
- Balanced and sustainable communities – Stepanavan emphasizes becoming balanced, sustainable, and “beautiful and thriving,” while Tashir highlights becoming modern and well-developed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

STEPANAVAN

- Circular economy & renewable energy transition is already visible – *“About 90% of our district is already using solar panels.”*
- Participatory governance is stronger – *“We secured funding for citizen proposals through participatory budgeting.”*
- Identity tied to “small Switzerland” image & smart city aspirations – *“Stepanavan is like a small Switzerland, known for its nature, beauty, calm atmosphere, and the hospitality of its people.”*
- Community pride and attachment are very strong. Residents describe Stepanavan as family-like, with deep connection to nature and heritage.
- Eco-tourism and recreation seen as part of future aspirations (health resorts, cultural facilities).

TASHIR

- River pollution & sanitation are central issues – *“The most pressing need is cleaning and protecting the river. Environmental protection is crucial.”*
- Agriculture and livestock modernization is a priority – *“Tashir mainly relies on agriculture... the number of cattle has decreased significantly in recent years.”*
- Technological & educational ambitions – *“If we manage to make all our ideas a reality... I hope by 2050 we’ll have a strong technological center here in Tashir.”*
- Cultural identity expressed through festivals and heritage. (e.g., cheese festival, 180th anniversary celebrations).
- Infrastructure gaps (roads, outdated housing stock) highlighted more prominently than in Stepanavan.

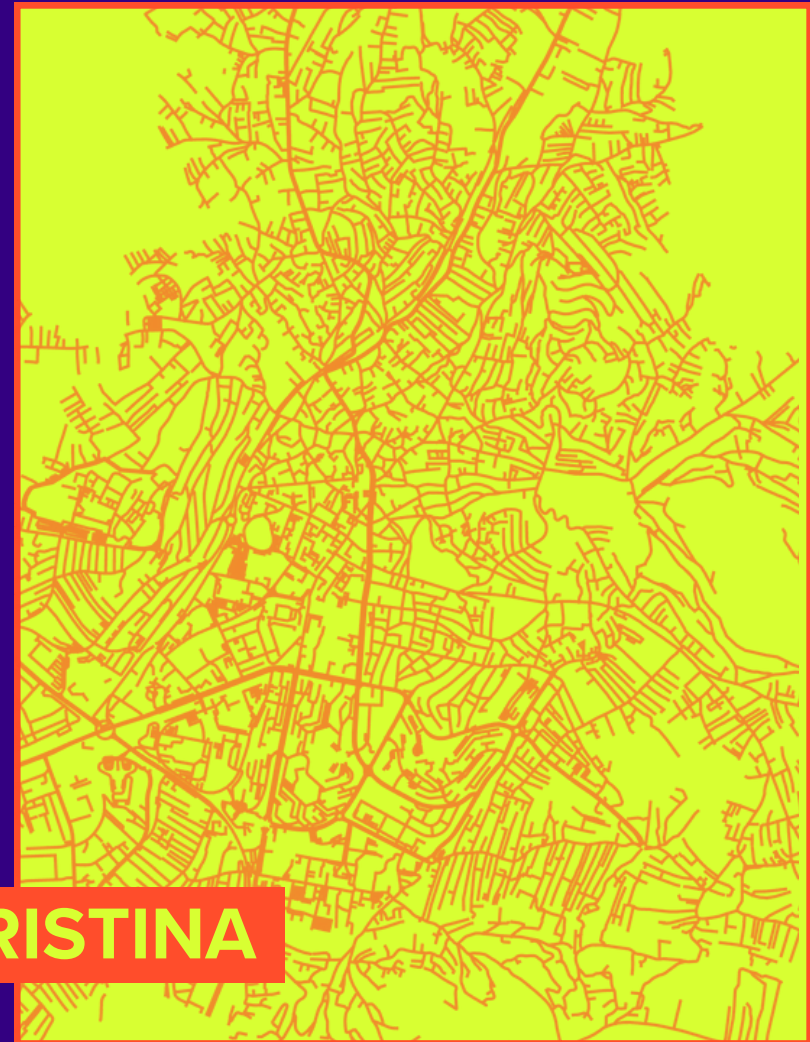
LISTENING SYNTHESIS FOR

KOSOVO¹

TWIN TRANSITION PORTFOLIO



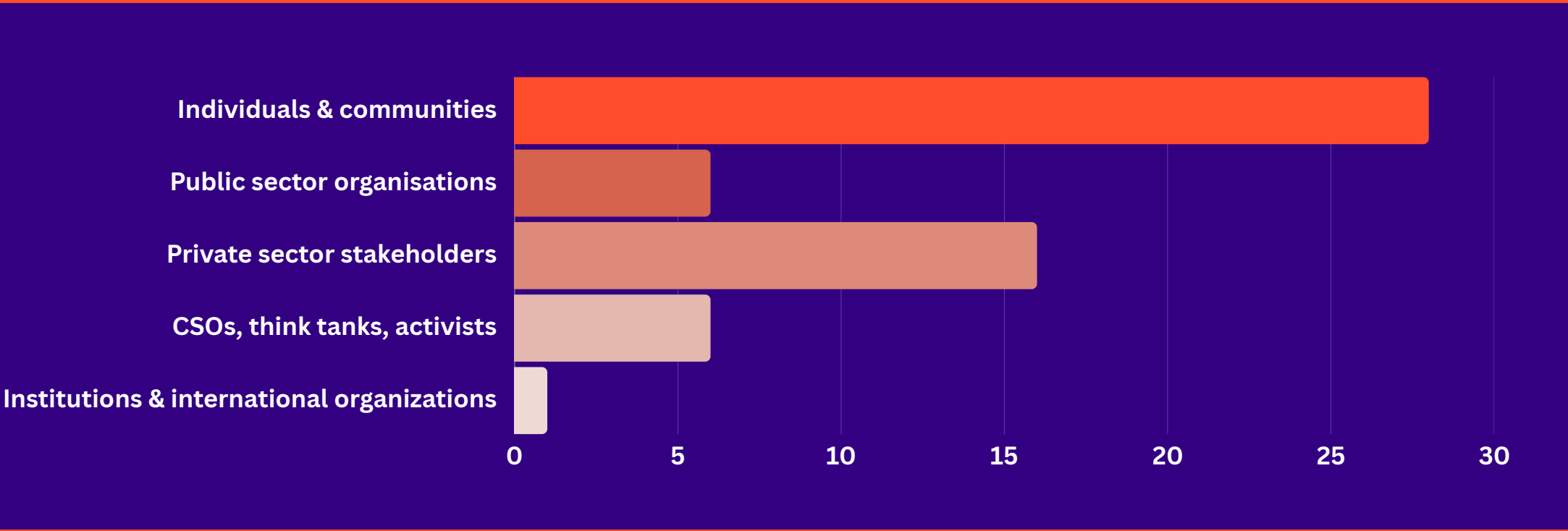
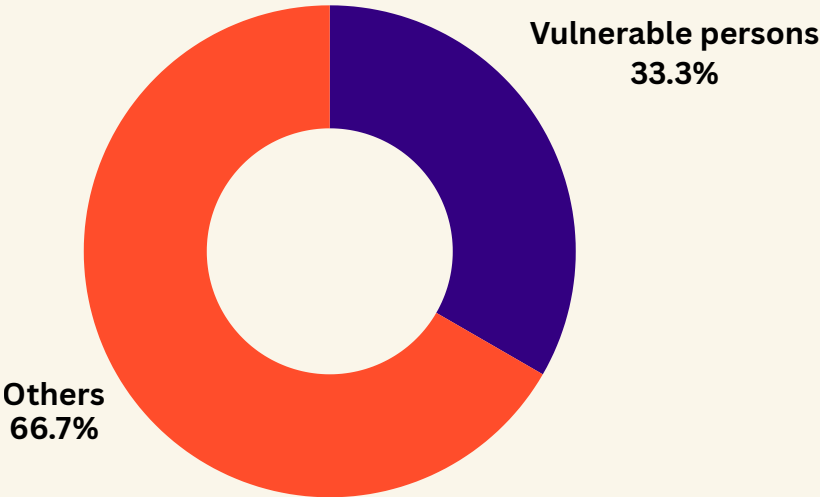
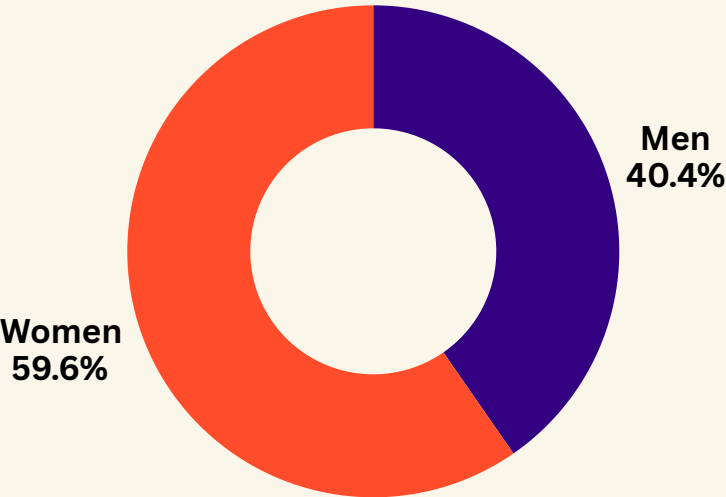
OBILIQ



PRISTINA

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS - KOSOVO



COMMON FINDINGS

RECURRING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Air pollution and environmental health risks – Obiliq struggles with power plant emissions and Pristina with urban air quality and coal burning, both directly affecting residents' health .
- Insufficient and poorly maintained green/public spaces – Both cities highlight lack of parks, playgrounds, and safe community areas as a key barrier to quality of life .
- Weak mobility and public transport systems – Obiliq lacks reliable buses and digital ticketing, while Pristina struggles with traffic congestion and inadequate bus lanes .
- Education and youth opportunities – Both cities note gaps in quality education and job opportunities, contributing to outmigration or underemployment among young people .
- Infrastructure gaps – Poor roads, lighting, and sidewalks in Obiliq; unsafe sidewalks, rapid unplanned urbanization, and poor maintenance of facilities in Pristina .

COMMON VIEWS ON GENDER

- Public safety concerns – In both cities, women raise safety in public spaces as a priority, with poor lighting, weak infrastructure, and insecure streets creating risks and limiting their mobility.

SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CITIES

- Proximity and connectivity – Obiliq values its central location near Pristina, while Pristina benefits from being the national hub for work, study, and culture .
- Youthful and vibrant communities – Both cities emphasize a sense of dynamism: Obiliq as a town under development and Pristina as a lively, youthful, and socially active capital .
- Potential for tourism, events, and social life – Residents in both cities highlight growing social spaces, cultural activities, and community vibrancy as opportunities to build on .
- Green transition ambitions – Both express a desire to expand greenery, biodiversity, and sustainable infrastructure, linking nature with healthier and more livable cities .

SHARED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Green, clean, sustainable cities – Both want cleaner air, more greenery, sustainable buildings, and healthy environments.
- Better public transport and infrastructure – Both aspire to modern, accessible mobility systems and improved services.
- Digitalization and technological integration – Both see technology as central to future services, education, and daily life.
- Youth retention through jobs and opportunities – Both raise concerns about outmigration and link the future to job creation and livability for young people.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OBILIQ

- Power plant dependency as defining challenge – *“The biggest challenge is the powerplants, especially powerplant B, that we face every day... this challenge overcomes all the others.”*
- Air pollution and health impacts – *“The air is very polluted; my children get sick very often.”*
- Peaceful, quiet identity – *“What I like about living here is how peaceful it is. It is a quiet town.”*
- Proximity advantage – *“The proximity to the capital city and the connection to various roads and areas make us very central.”*
- Focus on greening and waste management – Residents emphasize tree planting, river cleanup, and better recycling systems.
- Youth employment concerns – *“Many young people who have completed higher education... are working as waiters.”*

PRISTINA

- Residents’ perception of construction across city is seen as ‘unplanned’ – *“Numerous constructions without any criteria.”*
- Residents worry that overdevelopment without planning will block progress – *“I don’t see Pristina making progress by 2050 because it is undergoing rapid construction without a clear and proper urban vision.”*
- Pristina is valued for its social energy and vibrant cultural life – *“In Prishtina, I really like the liveliness of the city, that daily rhythm where people still keep the spirit of socializing alive.”*
- There is a strong aspiration for a greener and more sustainable city – *“I imagine a greener Pristina, with better public transport infrastructure, more sustainable buildings, and more spaces for citizens.”*
- Residents are concerned about depopulation and empty housing – *“The city will look empty, and we will have fewer residents as the birth rate is significantly declining, with empty apartments and houses being built without any planning.”*
- Many new developments/ neighborhoods lack social infrastructure like sports areas and parks, since the growth in the private sector is not followed by the public sector.

LISTENING SYNTHESIS FOR

MONTENEGRO

TWIN TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

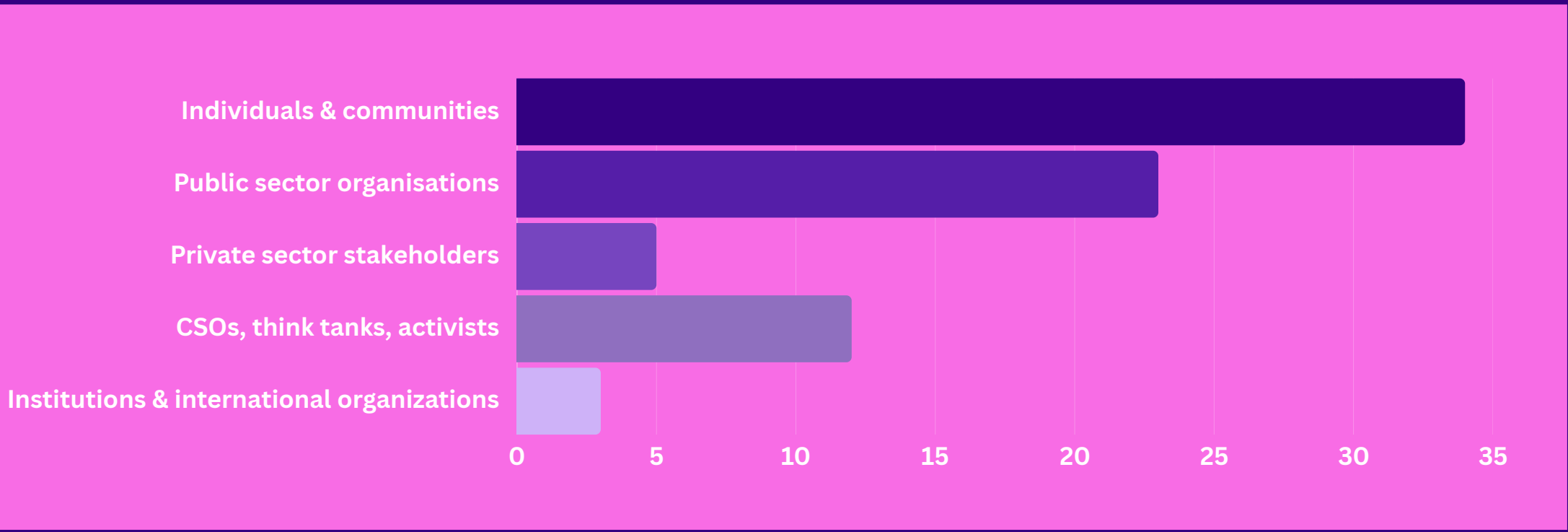
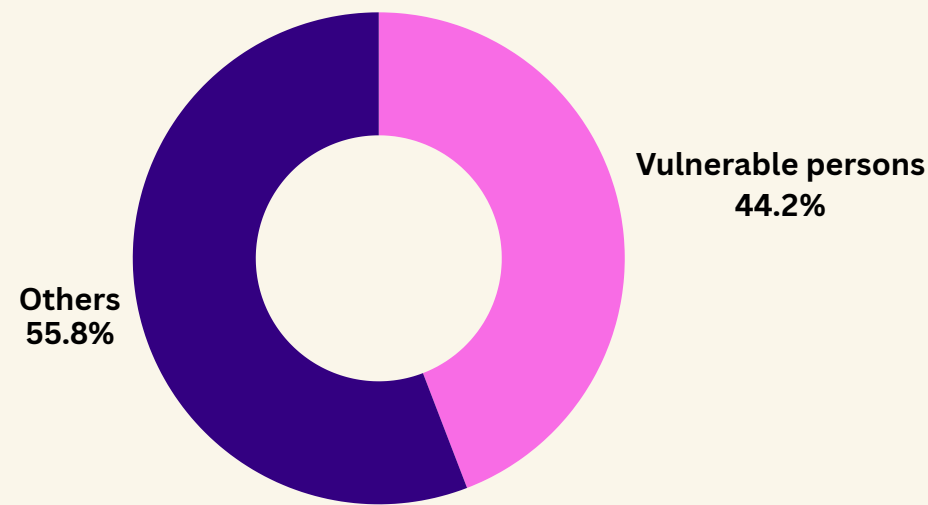
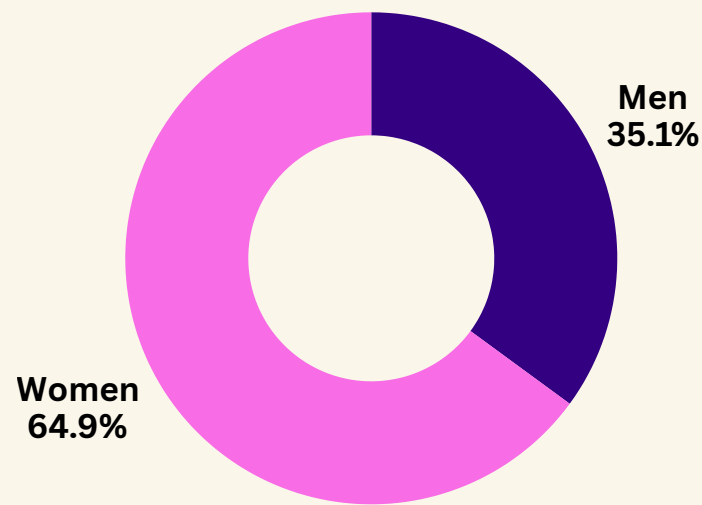


PLJEVLJA



PODGORICA

COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS - MONTENEGRO



COMMON FINDINGS

RECURRING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Air pollution and environmental degradation are severe problems, with Pljevlja dominated by coal emissions and Podgorica affected by wood burning and outdated heating systems, leaving direct impacts on health and quality of life.
- Waste management is weak, with landfills at city entrances, illegal dumping, and limited recycling creating visible pollution and undermining residents' sense of pride in their communities.
- Transport and mobility systems are underdeveloped, with unreliable bus services and weak infrastructure discouraging sustainable choices and limiting access to opportunities.
- Demographic decline and outmigration are shared concerns: Pljevlja is losing young people who believe there is "nothing for them" locally, while Podgorica faces low birth rates and fears of depopulation in the future.

COMMON VIEWS ON GENDER

- Women continue to face systemic barriers in employment and leadership, with many remaining concentrated in insecure, low-paying jobs and fewer advancing into senior positions.
- Balancing professional roles with family responsibilities is made harder by weak infrastructure, which disproportionately affects women, children, and the elderly.
- At the same time, women are becoming more active in civic and professional life, entering sectors and roles that were previously dominated by men.
- Education is seen as a key pathway for empowerment, with younger generations stressing the need for access to better schooling and professional opportunities.

SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CITIES

- Both cities see strong potential to leverage their natural surroundings and cultural assets, from mountain and river attractions in Pljevlja to lakes, rivers, and landscapes around Podgorica.
- Greener and more sustainable development is part of the collective vision, with residents highlighting the importance of clean energy, urban greening, and environmentally friendly infrastructure.
- Education and awareness are seen as enablers of change, with children and youth already showing stronger understanding of environmental issues and readiness to engage in sustainable practices.
- Digitalization and modern technologies are viewed as future opportunities, though residents point to current obstacles such as bureaucracy and lack of incentives to accelerate adoption.

SHARED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Cleaner, greener, and healthier cities are central to residents' vision, with aspirations for reduced pollution, expanded green spaces, and better ecological standards.
- Both cities want to transition to more resilient economies, reducing dependence on coal or unsustainable urban growth and creating alternatives in sustainable sectors.
- A more inclusive, people-centered urban life is part of the future hopes, with safer and better designed public spaces, improved cultural facilities, and more accessible mobility.
- Residents want their cities to be places where young people and families choose to stay, reversing current patterns of emigration and demographic decline.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PLJEVLJA

- Coal dependency continues to define the city's identity – *"Pljevlja might not exist without the mine and power plant."*
- Cultural and historical heritage is undervalued – *"Pljevlja has a wealth of cultural and historical heritage... completely unrecognized and undervalued."*
- Rural areas remain underdeveloped, with poor infrastructure and declining agriculture. – *"Villages lack roads, water... impossible to revive agriculture."*
- Tourism is seen as a way to protect the environment and bring growth – *"I'd love to see tourism develop more, especially mountain tourism. I think that would help protect our environment—like our river."*

PODGORICA

- City size is considered an advantage for livability – *"It might be an ideal size for the concept of a fifteen-minute city."*
- Proximity to nature is a distinctive quality of the city – *"In about ten minutes, I can be in beautiful nature."*
- Cultural and educational life enriches urban identity – *"I like that there's plenty of cultural and educational content important for my own development and for my family."*
- Greening ambitions are part of the city's future vision – *"I pictured lots of green roofs—gardens on top of buildings. I'd love to see a little urban garden in every neighborhood."*
- Over-construction and poor planning are seen as risks to livability – *"Numerous constructions without any criteria."*
- Bureaucracy is slowing adoption of green technologies – *"Wood burning for heating pollutes air. Incentives for solar panels or heat pumps exist, but bureaucracy discourages adoption."*

LISTENING SYNTHESIS FOR

NORTH MACEDONIA

TWIN TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

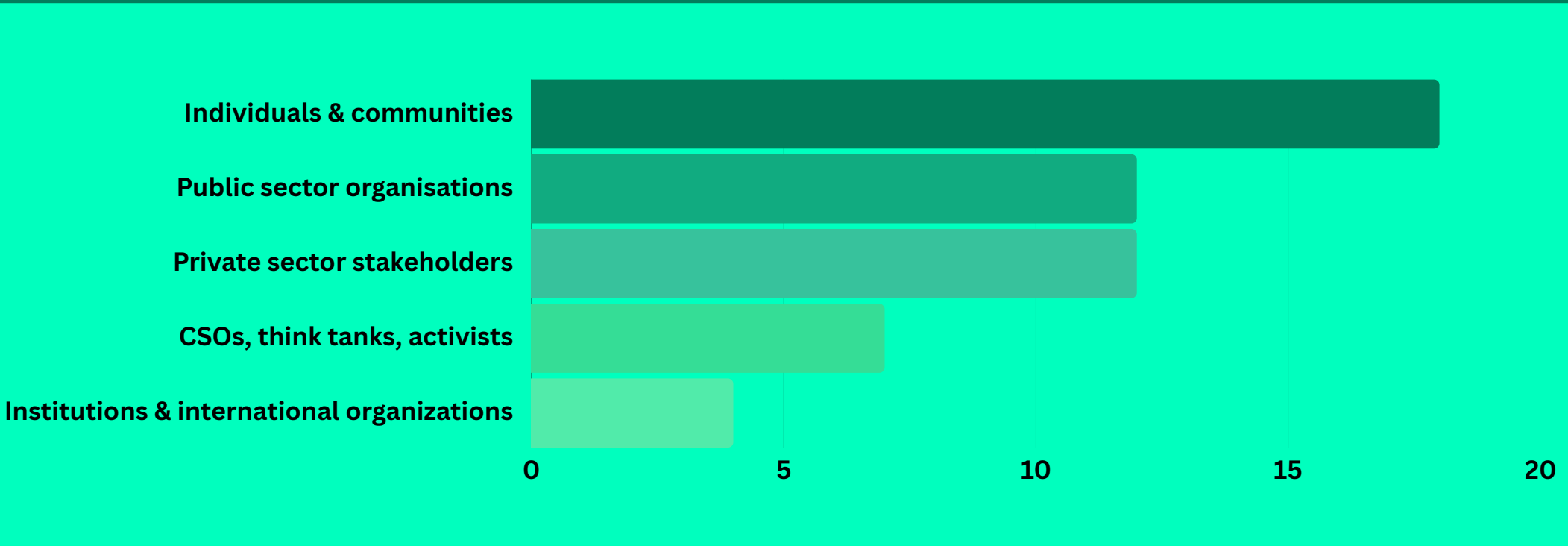
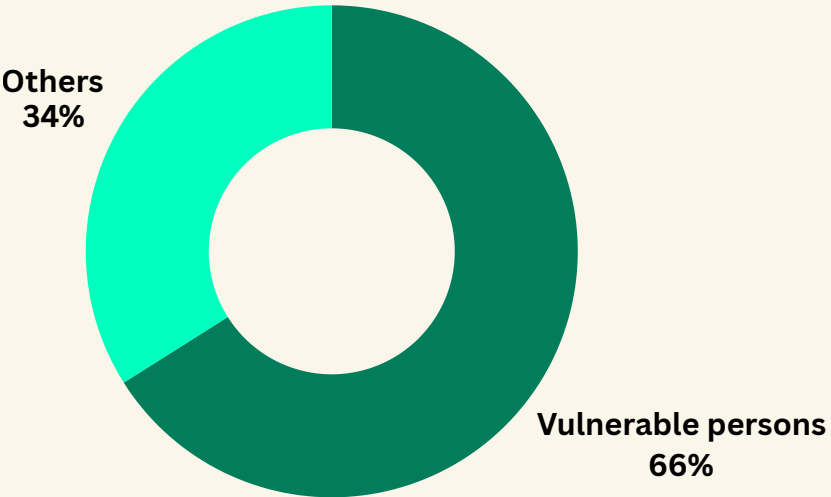
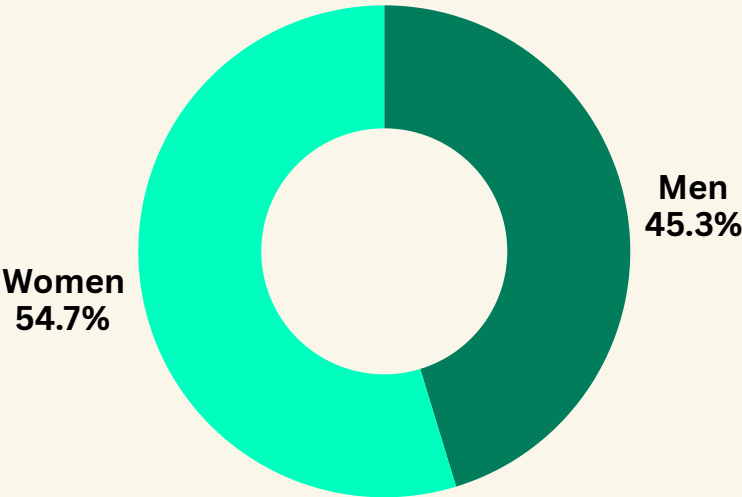


GOSTIVAR



KAVADARCI

COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS - NORTH MACEDONIA



COMMON FINDINGS

RECURRING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Waste management and cleanliness remain persistent concerns, with scattered garbage, bulky waste and insufficient recycling undermining public health and the appearance of both cities.
- Traffic congestion, lack of parking, and poor pedestrian and cycling infrastructure make mobility a daily frustration and limit safer, sustainable transport choices.
- Digitalization gaps affect municipal services and everyday life, with residents in both cities asking for simpler, more accessible, and more unified digital tools.
- Young people feel there are few opportunities to stay and thrive, raising concerns about outmigration and the long-term vitality of the cities.

COMMON VIEWS ON GENDER

- Traditional roles and expectations continue to limit women's opportunities, with persistent inequality and limited representation across both cities.
- At the same time, women call for stronger services, representation, and support, and some highlight that education and participation are gradually opening space for empowerment.

SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CITIES

- Circular economy solutions, including better recycling systems, waste segregation, and waste-to-value models, are widely seen as opportunities for both cities.
- Expanding green areas, parks, and active public spaces are seen as ways to improve quality of life and make the cities more livable and attractive.
- Digital transformation and modernization of services are viewed as enablers of change, especially for younger generations.

SHARED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Cleaner, greener, and healthier environments are a central aspiration, with calls for more greenery, cleaner air, and sustainable development.
- Digitized and eco-friendly transport systems are envisioned, with modern public services and mobility that is accessible and environmentally responsible.
- Both cities want to become places where young people remain and thrive, reversing current patterns of outmigration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

GOSTIVAR

- Garbage disposal and collection are urgent problems. *“Garbage is everywhere, and there's no proper place for it.”*
- Citizens call for more green spaces, walking paths, and bicycle lanes. *“Gostivar needs additional green spaces, pedestrian paths, bicycle lanes, and new parks.”*
- Parking shortages and traffic chaos disrupt daily life. *“Parking is another major issue—there aren't enough parking spaces.”*
- Recycling and segregation infrastructure is missing. *“We need more recycling bins for plastic, glass, and so on.”*
- Digitalization is lagging, with institutions and citizens struggling to keep pace. *“We're quite behind in digitalization, both as citizens and institutions.”*, *“Some services have been digitized, but many are still slow or unavailable online.”*
- Eco-friendly transport is part of residents' vision for the future. *“Electric or eco-friendly transport could improve quality of life.”*

KAVADARCI

- Waste management and treatment need strengthening, including medical waste. *“Better selection and management of waste, especially medical waste.”*
- Barrier-free access is a priority for inclusivity. *“Disabled people have trouble living and functioning in the city.”*
- Citizens want greenery integrated into everyday spaces, from empty plots to public buildings. *“Planting of greenery on empty plots.”*, *“Green roofs and facades on public buildings.”*
- Women call for advisory centres and broader support services. *“Women's advisory centres.”*, *“Support to women, girls and mothers.”*
- Digital services should be unified and accessible on a single platform. *“All digital services to be available on one digital platform.”*

LISTENING SYNTHESIS FOR

UKRAINE

TWIN TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

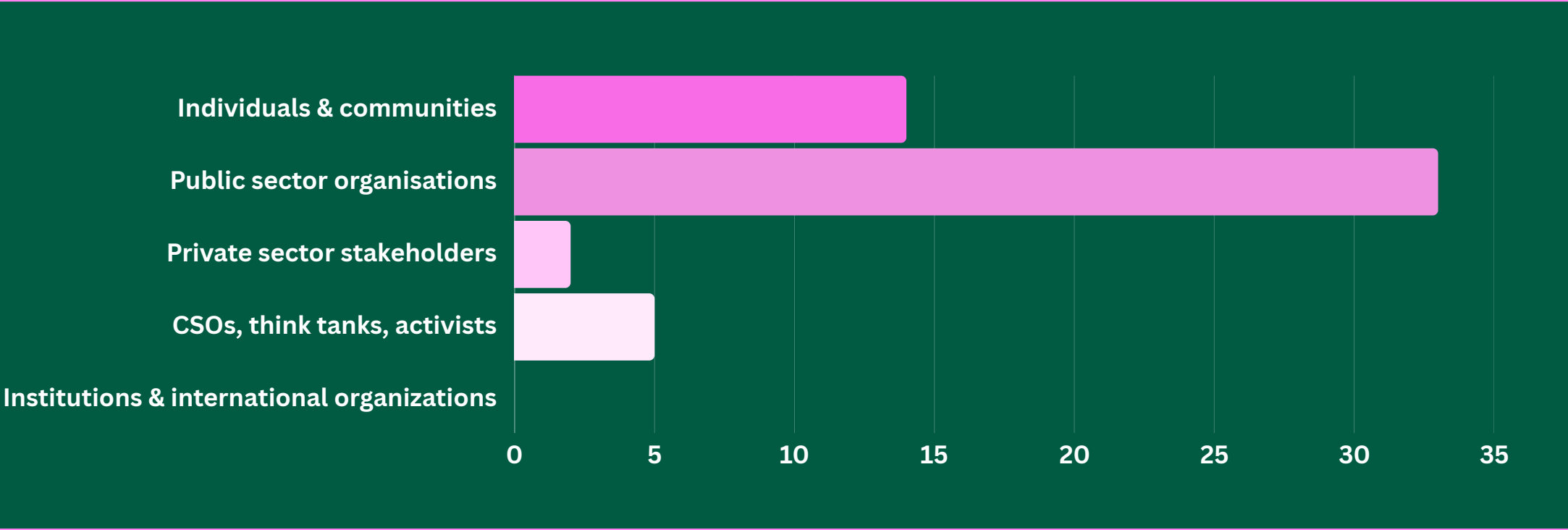
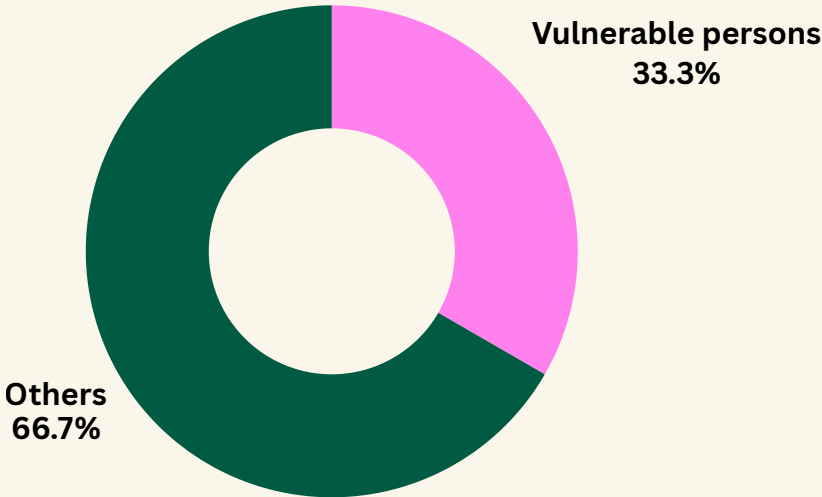
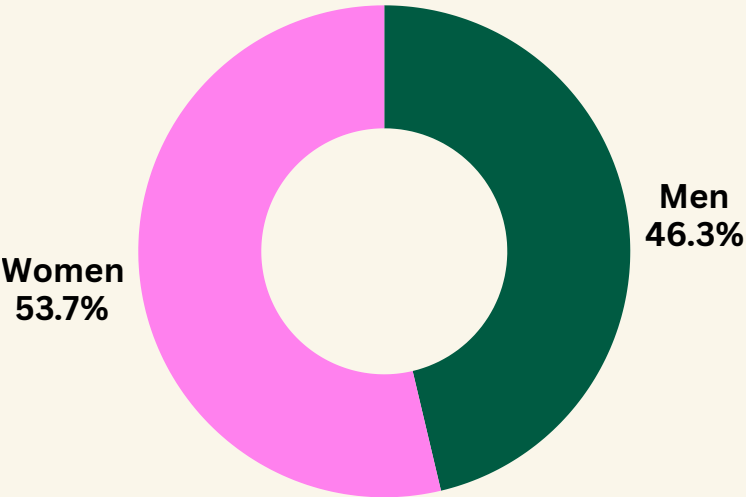


KOVEL



NIZHYN

COMMUNITY LISTENING IN NUMBERS - UKRAINE



COMMON FINDINGS

RECURRING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- The impact of the war constrain long-term planning, deepens financial insecurity, adds a psychological strain and reduces local resources for development and economic growth.
- Both cities struggle with aging and unreliable infrastructure. In Kovel, engineering networks and housing stock are outdated; in Nizhyn, road conditions are poor and public transport is unreliable.
- Healthcare access and affordability remain a major concern.
- There is immense lack of employment in the cities, affecting livelihoods.
- Youth retention is also a persistent issues, with young people leaving for bigger cities due to limited job opportunities.
- Waste management and environmental degradation affect both cities. Kovel faces overloaded landfills and weak sorting culture, while Nizhyn contends with illegal dumps and limited green awareness.

COMMON VIEWS ON GENDER

- Many women in both Kovel and Nizhyn stated that gender identity has not limited their participation, often expressing pride in their roles and resilience.
- At the same time, practical burdens — such as childcare, low income opportunities, or concentration in certain professions — continue to restrict full empowerment.

SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CITIES

- Green areas and natural surroundings are valued as essential assets for recreation, biodiversity, and well-being, and residents want to expand them.
- Digitalization and smart governance are viewed as enablers of transparency and efficiency, from e-ticketing and digital monitoring to unified platforms for public services.
- Community solidarity and safety are emphasized, with both cities valuing supportive environments and a sense of comfort.
- Education and youth engagement are seen as drivers of change, supporting the transition to greener and more modern urban life.

SHARED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Citizens envision clean, green, and healthier communities, with more green spaces, better waste management, and improved air quality.
- Modern and digitized services are central to aspirations, including efficient transport, transparent governance, and smart infrastructure.
- Energy resilience and renewable systems are critical ambitions, with hopes for greater local generation, efficiency, and reduced dependence on centralized supply.
- Residents aspire to European-style development, with modern, inclusive, and self-sufficient communities where people want to remain and thrive.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

KOVEL

- The war and limited resources restrict long-term community development. *“We just don’t have enough financial resources. Right now, the country is going through a very difficult time.”*, *“The war is the main issue—everyone cannot fully invest their potential in developing the community because the first thought is always the war.”*
- Waste sorting is inconsistent, requiring stronger outreach and awareness. *“Sorting waste is fairly well-known here in Kovel but not everyone does it because they think it’s a waste of time.”*, *“People’s mentality needs extensive outreach—they haven’t done this for years.”*
- Residents highlight strong community spirit and solidarity. *“I’ve lived in this community my whole life. It’s a really great city—everyone here is very supportive.”*

NIZHYN

- Poor infrastructure and unreliable transport weaken daily life *“Unfortunately, road conditions are poor, especially the roads in low-rise residential areas.”*, *“In winter, buses stop running, leaving people waiting for long periods.”*
- Renewable energy and energy independence are already being developed. *“We are actively installing solar panels in the city—at the maternity hospital and at the main hospital. This contributes to the community’s resilience and energy independence.”*
- Residents value Nizhyn’s historical identity and cultural heritage. *“We have a city with a rich history—lots of historical buildings and places. There’s plenty to see and show to others.”*
- Aspirations reflect European standards and innovation. *“I want my hometown to be no worse than any European city we occasionally visit for travel.”*, *“I dream we’ll have a local plant in Nizhyn with a new approach to recycling textiles, plastics... I want Nizhyn to be associated with European cities like Vienna or Krakow—a clean city.”*

City Experiment Fund 2025

**THANK
YOU**

