

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH REPORT - SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

*St. George Solar PV Project (Phase I and II) -
Bulgaria*



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1. Methodology

The quantitative statistical analysis and empirical study proposed are structured around three major themes: *socio-demographic aspects households in the affected settlements (Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets), amenities of the households and public infrastructure of the settlements, considerations of the inhabitants regarding the project.* The time frame of the data being considered runs the present day (2024) and represent the declarations of the interviewed population of the settlement of Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets.

Furthermore, the qualitative *perception of the population* represents the conclusions drawn from the responses given by the inhabitants of the affected settlements during the field surveys organized during June-July 2024, then processed. During this time, a series of questionnaires were distributed among the population, as we were searching to achieve as many responses and opinions as possible regarding this investment. In total, the questionnaire gathered responses from 18 households in Lambrinovo, 39 households in Aydemir, 21 households in Kalipetrovo and 10 households in Smilets.

This report aims to present the socio-demographic aspects of the four affected areas of study by highlighting the general living conditions of the populations.

2. Structure of the household

2.1. Structure of the household based on the number of members and age

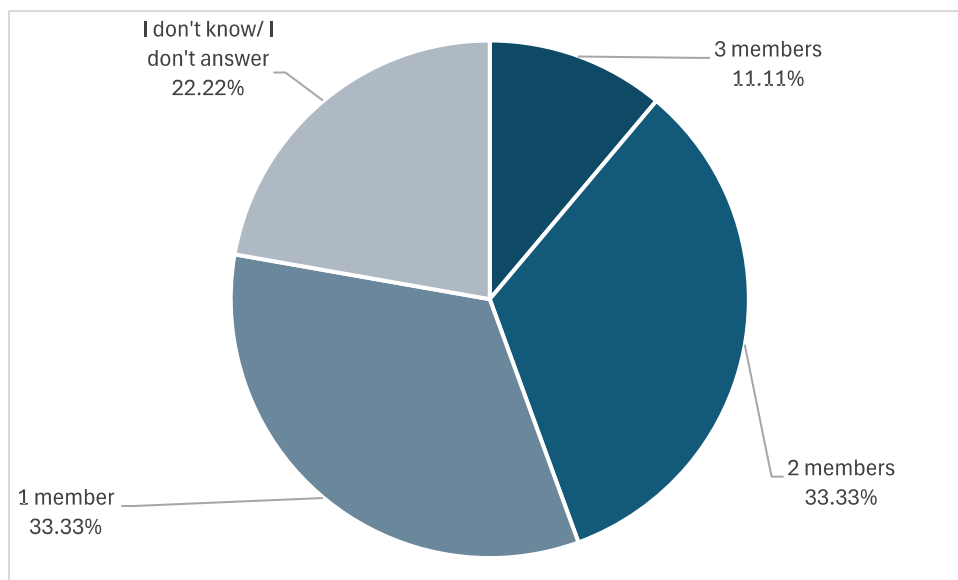


Figure 1. Structure of the households in Lambrinovo, in relation with the number of members in each household

Source. Designed by the author

As previously mentioned, the survey gathered information from a total of 18 households in Lambrinovo. As shown in **Figure 1**, most of the households present in the survey had one or two inhabitants. The six households that had two members were formed by husband and

wife, most of them middle-aged. Only 2 households mentioned that had 3 members. From the age perspective, the youngest member in the visited households was 19 years old while the oldest inhabitant is 77 years old. As illustrated in the previous figure, a percentage of 22,22% didn't want to declare the number of members in the household. In addition, a total of 12 inhabitants (out of 28 inhabitants) didn't want to mention their age.

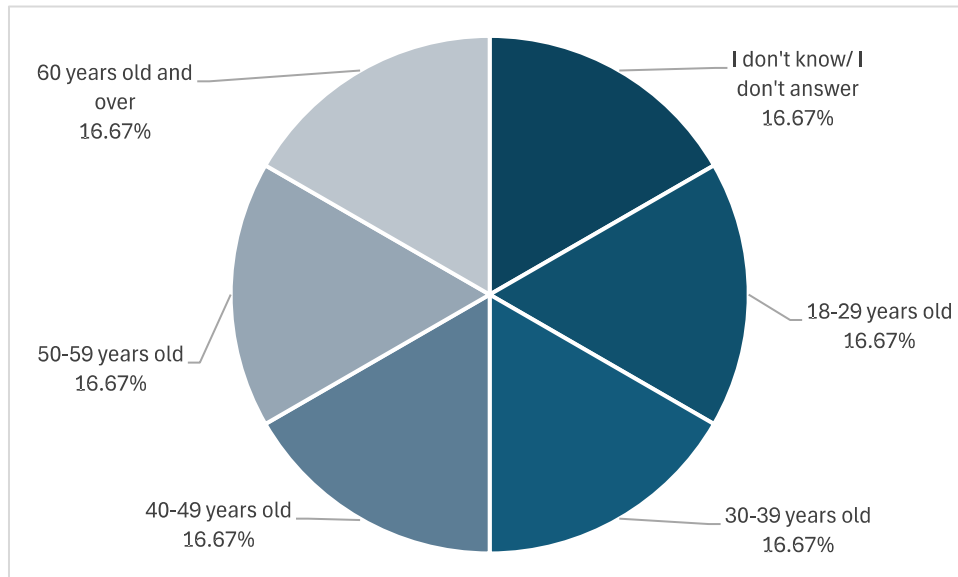


Figure 2. Structure of the households in Lambrinovo, according to age groups

Source. Designed by the author

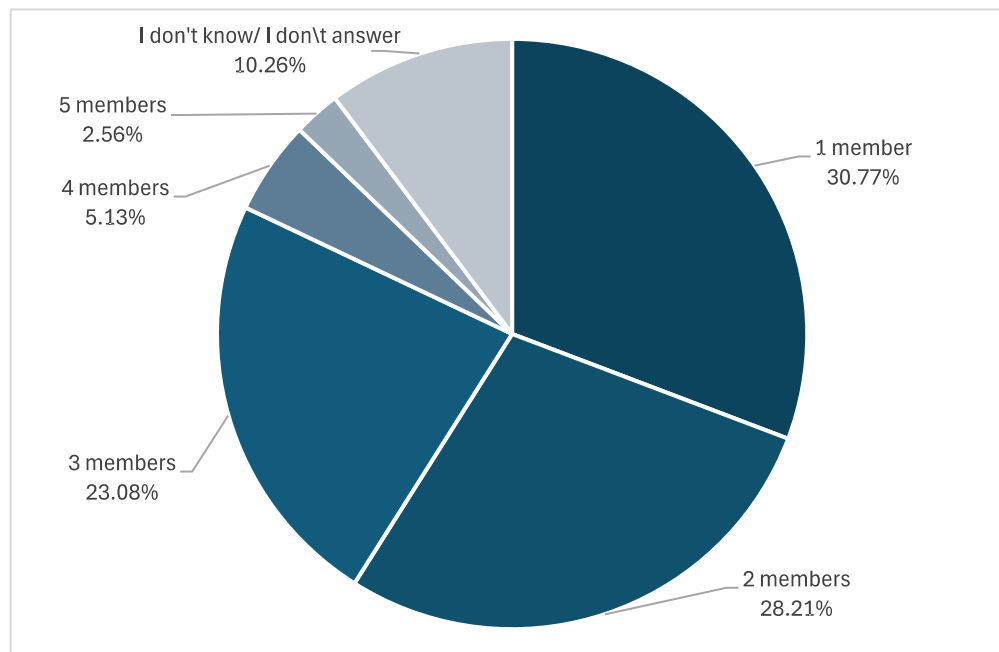


Figure 3. Structure of the households in Aydemir, in relation with the number of members in each household

Source. Designed by the author

The inhabitants in the households in Aydemir were a little more numerous than those in Lambrinovo. As illustrated in **Figure 3**, 5,13% of the households in Aydemir (a total of 2 households) had 4 members, while 1 household had 5 members. However, most of the

households in this settlement had only one member (12 households representing 30,77% of the total), while 28,21% (a total of 11 households) had 2 members. 9 households reported 3 members. According to the age distribution of the members of the Aydemir community, most of the participants in the survey are over 50 years old. Out of the total 74 participants in the survey, a total of 28 inhabitants (representing 37,84%) are aged 60 years old and over. Only 12 inhabitants are children (under 18 years old), this percentage representing 16,22% of the total number of participants in the survey. The youngest inhabitant in the households in Aydemir is 4 years old, according to the survey, while the oldest inhabitant is 81 years old.

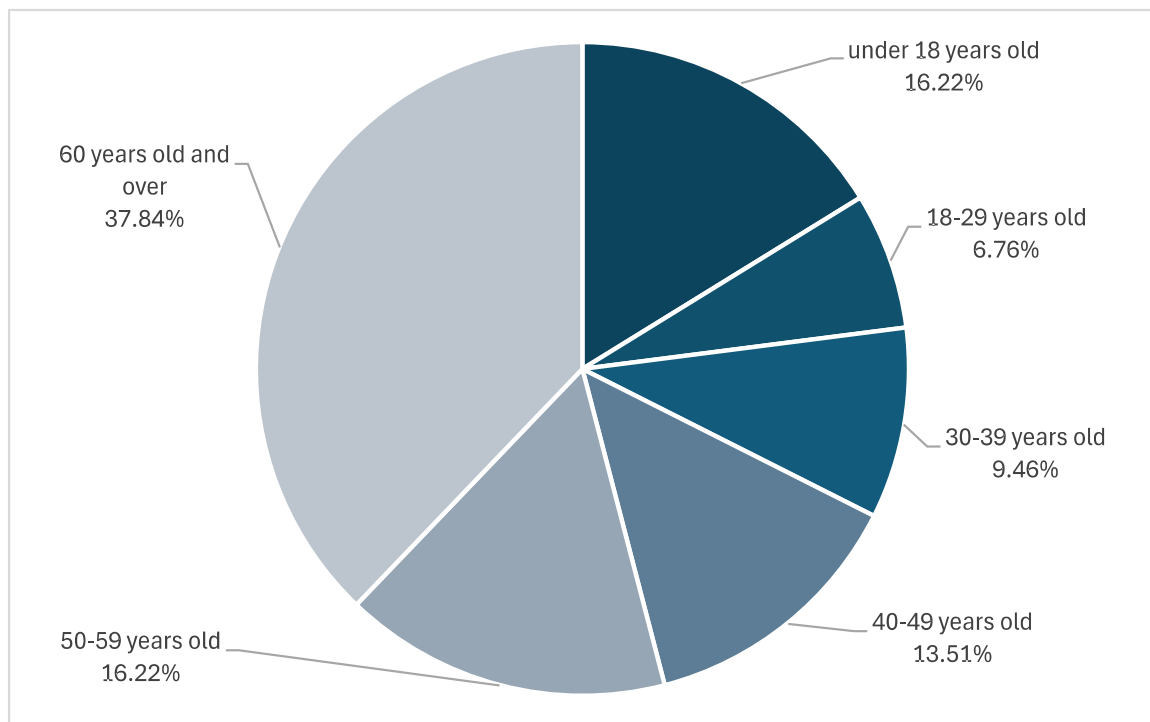


Figure 4. Structure of the households in Aydemir, according to age groups

Source. Designed by the author

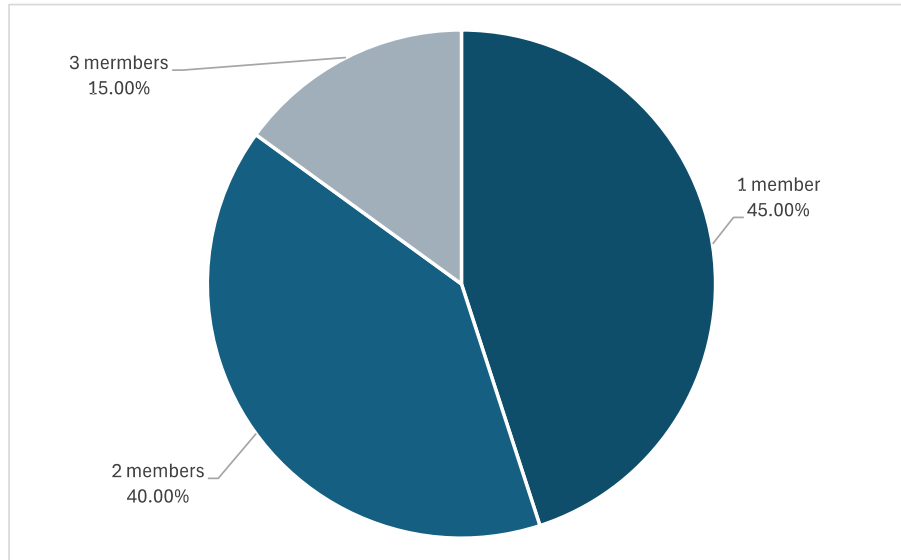


Figure 5. Structure of the households in Kalipetrovo, in relation with the number of members in each household

Source. Designed by the author

From Kalipetrovo, the number of households that participated in the survey was 21 families. The data has shown that the largest number of households, a total of 9 families representing 45%, were formed of only one member. 8 households in Kalipetrovo reported 2 members while only 3 households reported 3 members. One household didn't offer information regarding the number of members. In total, in Kalipetrovo were reported 34 participants. One participant refused to mention his age. From all the participants in the survey, the gathered data illustrate no member of the 21 families under 18 years old. The largest number of participants, 15 out of 33 are aged 60 years old and over while 12 family members are aged between 50 and 59 years old. The structure of the population in Kalipetrovo according to age is illustrated in **Figure 6**, presented below.

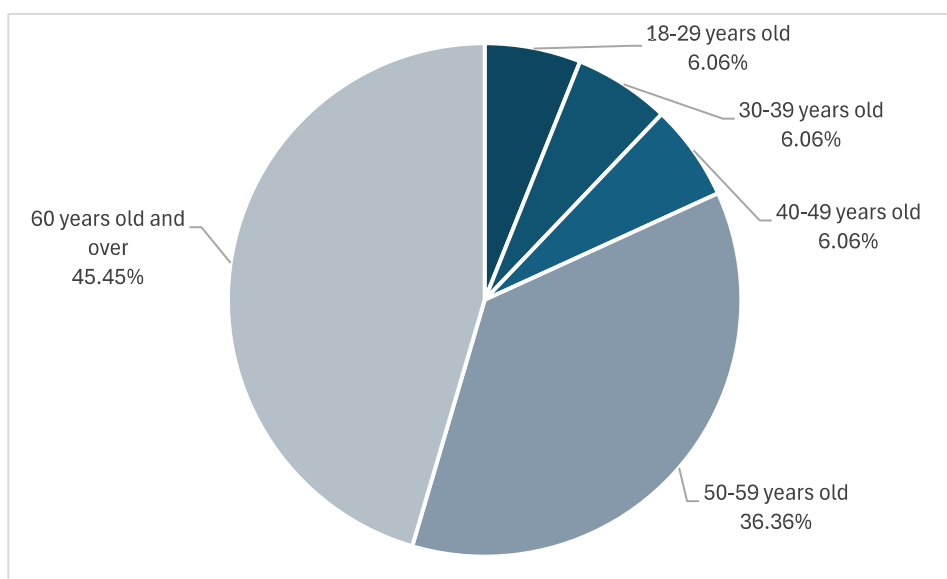


Figure 6. Structure of the households in Kalipetrovo according to age groups

Source. Designed by the author

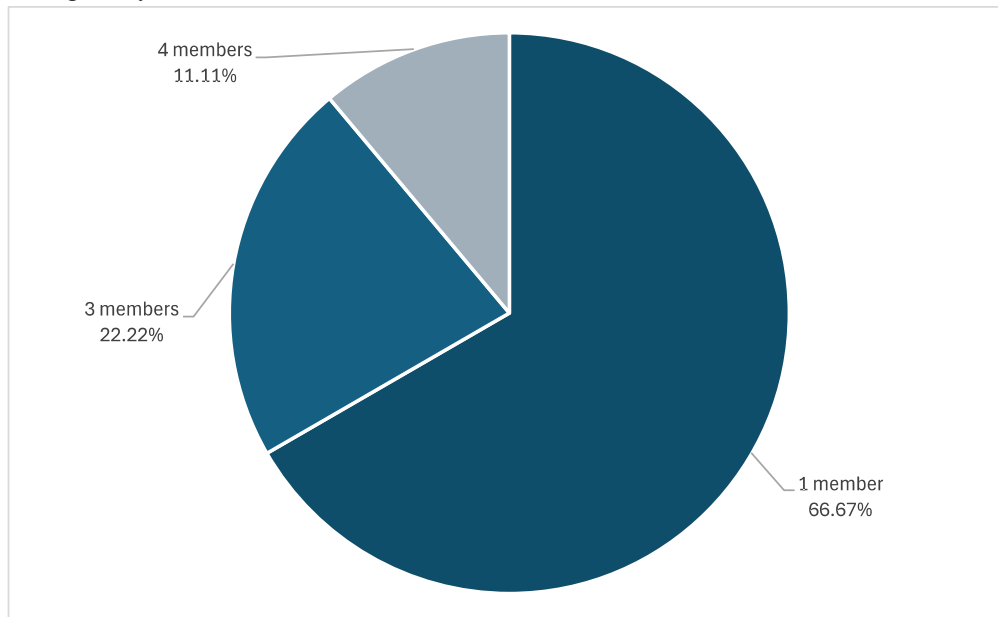


Figure 7. Structure of the households in Smilets, in relation with the number of members in each household

Source. Designed by the author

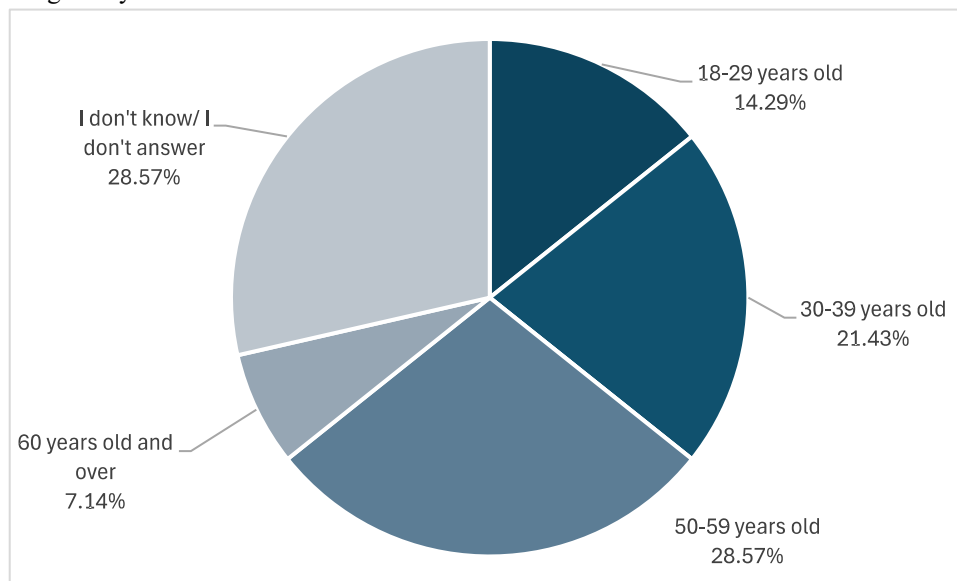


Figure 8. Structure of the households in Smilets, according to age groups

Source. Designed by the author

As illustrated in **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**, the structure of the population present in the survey in Smilets is defined by many households formed by only one member. Most of the members in these households are over 50 years old. Thus, there were present a total of 9 households in the survey in Smilets, representing a total of 14 members. A total of 6 members were part of a 1-person household while 2 households were formed of 3 members. Only one household contained 4 members. Regarding the age groups of the population, a total of 4 members of the households didn't want to mention their age. Other 4 inhabitants mentioned that their

age is over 50 years old but below 59 years old. The youngest member of the households in Smilets is 24 years old while the oldest member is 71 years old.

2.2. Main socio-demographic structure of the population that participated in the survey

The population living in Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets is a relatively homogeneous one in terms of ethnicity, language and religious beliefs. Thus, when asked about the ethnicity, all the members of the households in all the four settlements (Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets) mentioned the **Bulgarian ethnicity**. Furthermore, the language is **Bulgarian**.

Small differences were observed in terms of **religious beliefs**. Thus, three members of the households in Lambrinovo (*out of 18*) declined to answer while one member mentioned that **he was not a believer**. The rest of the participants mentioned that their religion is **orthodox**. In Kalipetrovo only one member declined to give an answer regarding the religious beliefs (*out of 21*) while the other 20 members of the households mentioned that their religion is **orthodox**. In Smilets, half of the participants (5 out of 10 households) declined to give an answer regarding their belief. The other half of the participants declared themselves as **orthodox**. It is interesting that in Aydemir, where the number of households involved in the survey was the largest – 39 households, 74 individuals – all the answers regarding the religious beliefs were **orthodox**. None of the participants declined to answer. Overall, the religious beliefs were orthodox in all the four settlements.

When asked about the **main occupations of the people in the four settlements of the survey**, the participants mentioned mostly **agriculture** or **the fact that the inhabitants are mostly retired**. Thus, 10 of the members of the households in Lambrinovo mentioned that the population in this settlement is **mostly retired**. Other 4 of the participants mentioned that the population works in **agriculture**, while other 3 participants declined to give an answer to this question. Only one participant mentioned that the population is involved in **low qualified work**.

In Aydemir, out of the 39 households present in the survey, 15 mentioned that the population works in **low qualified jobs**. Other 10 representatives declined to give an answer, mentioning that **they don't know**, while 8 of the participants mentioned that the population in this settlement is either **retired or works in agriculture**.

Similar answers were offered also in Kalipetrovo and Smilets. From a total of 21 participants, 6 mentioned that the population of Kalipetrovo works in **agriculture**. Most of them, though, declined to answer this question. In Smilets, 9 out of 10 participants mentioned that the population works in **agriculture**.

As a conclusion, the socio-demographic structure of the population in all these four settlements is quite similar. Thus, the households are mostly formed of 1 or 2 members, generally elder population. The number of children in these communities is relatively small compared to the older population. In terms of ethnicity, the results of the study indicate a

homogeneous population, almost 100% Bulgarians, speaking the Bulgarian language. The dominant religion is **orthodox**, even though few of the members of the communities declare themselves as **nonbelievers** or decline to give an answer. According to the answers given by the participants, the most common activity in the area is **agriculture**, even though most of the members of the community are **retired**. In Lambrinovo, for instance, one of the participants mentioned that “90% of the village is retired”, suggesting a strong belief that the village is *almost entirely aging or already aged*.

2.3. Level of wellbeing perceived by the participants

During this chapter of the study, the aim was to understand the level of wellbeing of the participants of the four communities involved. As a result, the focus was on the income of the population, how it manages to fulfill the everyday needs of the inhabitants and main risks perceived by the inhabitants. In addition, the inhabitants were asked about their trust in the local authorities, satisfaction with the services in the communities (health, education).

When asked about the level of satisfaction with the income, the participants from the Lambrinovo settlement mentioned, unanimously, that the income they have is currently not enough and that they are not satisfied. The population in Aydemir declared itself more satisfied with the income than the population of Lambrinovo. Thus, 29 members of 39 households mentioned that they are unsatisfied with the income and that it is not enough for their needs. As a percentage, it represents almost 75% of the total population of participants. Other 6 households declare themselves satisfied, mentioning that it is enough for their needs. It represents only 15% of the population. 4 members of the community mentioned that the income only relatively covers their needs.

The population of Kalipetrovo mentioned, in a proportion of almost 86%, that the income that they currently have in their households fails to cover their needs, while the population in Smilets mentions this in a percentage of 70%. As observed from the results of the survey, none of the communities present in this study considers itself sufficiently covered by its current income. As previously mentioned in this study, the four communities are very similar from the socio-demographic perspective, being mostly formed of retired members or agricultural workers. From the income perspective, it seems that the community of Lambrinovo is the most unsatisfied, from a total of 18 households, none declaring a decent income. When asked about the risks that could affect the family income in the future, one of the participants in Lambrinovo mentioned that “*it won't affect us more negatively than how it is now*”, indicating a very high level of dissatisfaction in this respect.

The inhabitants from Aydemir and Kalipetrovo mention that the main risks that could negatively affect their family's income in the future are **health issues or unemployment**. On the other hand, the population in Smilets mention that, apart from **unemployment**, other issues that could affect their income in the future are **inflation (expensive goods, higher bills for water and electricity) or emergence of war in their area**.

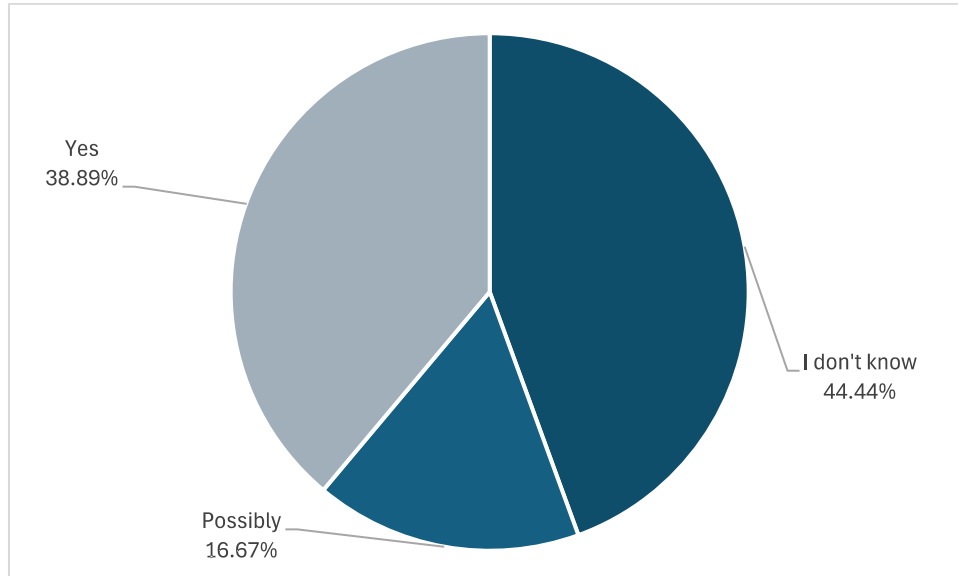


Figure 9. The trust declared by the inhabitants of Lambrinovo in the law enforcement

Source. Designed by the author

When asked about the trust they have in the law enforcement in Lambrinovo, the community mentioned, in a proportion of 44,44%, that they didn't know. Almost 40% of the total number of inhabitants in Lambrinovo that participated in this survey mentioned that they have trust in the law enforcement.

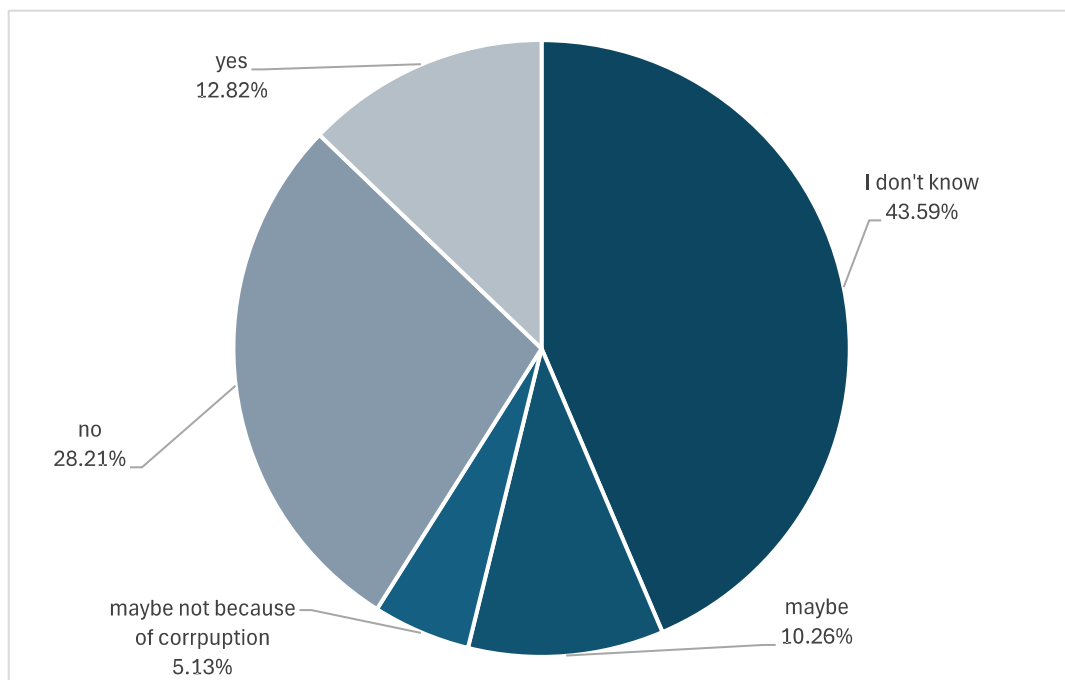


Figure 10. The trust declared by the inhabitants of Aydemir in the law enforcement

Source. Designed by the author

As illustrated in **Figure 10**, most of the inhabitants from Aydemir mentioned that they didn't know how to answer the question regarding the trust in the law enforcement in their settlement. Furthermore, almost 30% of the participants mentioned that they didn't really trust the law enforcement while 5% mentioned *maybe not*. The main reason for not trusting law enforcement in Aydemir, mentioned the participants, is **corruption**.

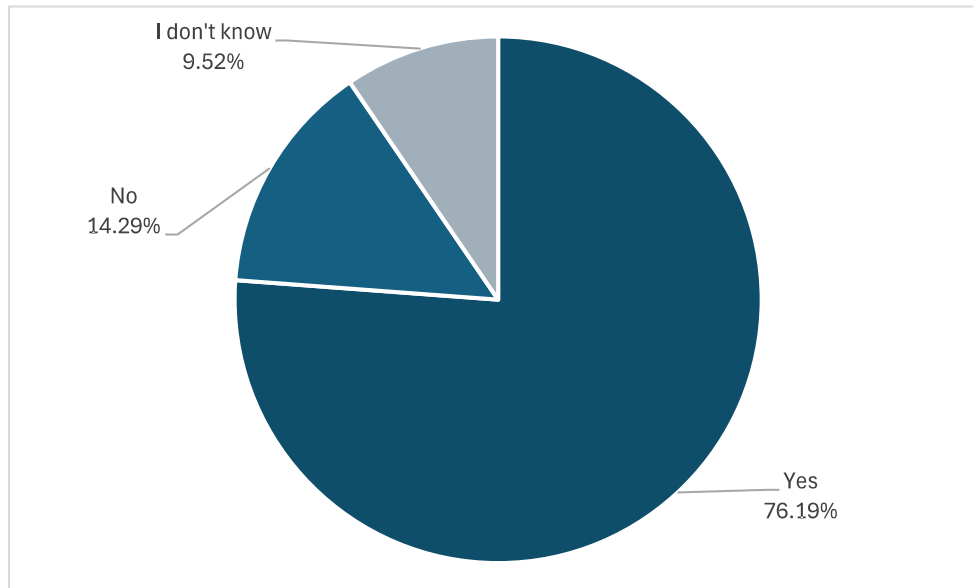


Figure 11. The trust declared by the inhabitants of Kalipetrovo in the law enforcement
Source. Designed by the author

From the trust in the law enforcement perspective, Kalipetrovo seems to be very trustful. Thus, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population mentioned that they trusted the law enforcement while only 14,29% mentioned that they didn't trust them. The situation is similar in Smilets, where 90% of the participants mentioned that they trusted the law enforcement in their settlement.

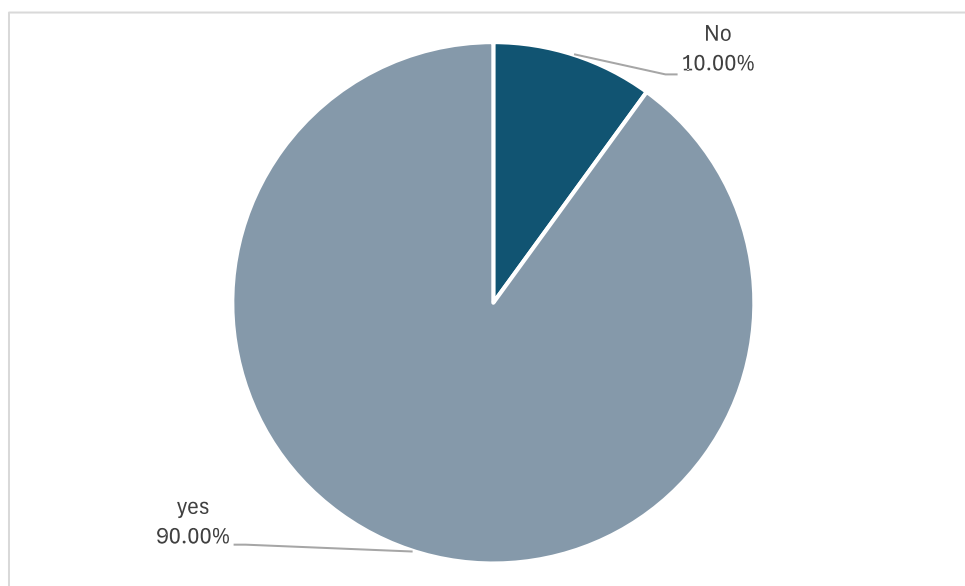


Figure 12. The trust declared by the inhabitants of Smilets in the law enforcement
Source. Designed by the author

	<u>Lambrinovo</u>	<u>Aydemir</u>	<u>Kalipetrovo</u>	<u>Smilets</u>
Health services	Low level of satisfaction (88,9%)	Low level of satisfaction (64,1%)	High level of satisfaction (85,7%)	Medium level of satisfaction – need of more specialists (80%)
Education services	Low level of satisfaction (27,8%), Unanswered (55,6%)	Relatively low level of satisfaction (28,2%), Satisfactory (51,3%), Unanswered (20,5%)	High level of satisfaction (87,7%)	Medium level of satisfaction (30%), Unanswered (60%)
Difficulties in finding employment	Yes (83,3%)	Yes (53,9%)	Yes (85,7%)	Yes (60%)
Child labour	No (33,3%), Yes – help with the housework (66,7%)	No (69,2%), Yes – seasonal work, usually between the ages of 16-18 years old (25,6%)	No (100%)	No (100%)
Main issues of the community	Political problems at larger levels (61,1%), aging population (22,2%), Unanswered (16,7%)	Economic problems (51,3%), Unanswered (23,1%)	Unemployment (52,4%), Infrastructure (28,6%)	Infrastructure (50%), transportation (10%), unemployment (30%)
Types of training that the community lack	No (88,9%)	No (66,7%)	No (61,9%)	IT (50%), mechanics (30%)

Table 1. Satisfaction of the community with different issues regarding their wellbeing
Source. Designed by the author

As presented in **Table 1**, illustrated above, the levels of satisfaction with the health and education services declared by the communities in Lambrinovo and Aydemir are relatively low. Most of the inhabitants in Lambrinovo declared themselves unsatisfied with health and educational services. In Aydemir, the participants declared themselves mostly unsatisfied

with the health services while the educational services were mentioned only occasionally as unsatisfactory. For the population in Kalipetrovo, both health and educational services are satisfactory. The population in Smilets mentions that the settlement needs more specialists in the health services while the educational services are described as satisfactory (although many of the participants mention that they don't interact too often with the educational system).

The struggle with finding a workplace is similar in all four settlements. Thus, in almost all of the communities, the participants mention that the number of workplaces is insufficient and that the percentage of unemployed people is pretty big. Furthermore, the population mentions that there are many retired people in the community, who live on a pension as a main source of income.

When asked about the types of training that lack in their community, the majority of Lambrinovo, Aydemir and Kalipetrovo inhabitants didn't mention such training programs missing in their communities, while the Smilets participants mention the lack of IT or mechanics.

2.4. Assessment of ownership

The participants were asked to offer information regarding the type of house and the ownership. According to the provided information, all the households in Lambrinovo were listed as *private ownership*. From these, 14 were listed as *own house*, meaning that they were bought by the actual owner of the house, while 4 of them were listed as *inherited house*.

In Aydemir, 3 households don't offer information regarding the type of ownership. Most of the households are listed as *private ownership*. Thus, from a total of 39 households, 32 were listed as *private ownership*, while 1 was listed as *rental*, 1 was listed as *temporary* and 2 were listed as *allocated by the government (possibly social housing)*. When asked about the type of housing, 9 inhabitants in Aydemir mention that they live in an apartment, 7 inhabitants mention living in a house and the other 23 don't offer any information regarding the typology of the house.

Kalipetrovo, like Lambrinovo in terms of housing, registers only private housing. Thus, when asked about the typology of the houses, 19 out of 21 households are declared as *houses* while the other 2 households don't offer any information in this regard. 14 inhabitants mention that they own the houses they live in, while the other 7 inhabitants don't offer information regarding the ownership.

The households in Smilets are listed as *privately owned* by the inhabitants. All of them are declared *individual houses*.

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Car	44.44%	69.23%	57.14%	80.00%
Motorcycle	16.67%	5.13%	4.76%	10.00%
TV	94.44%	100.00%	95.24%	90.00%
Satellite dish	11.11%	17.95%	9.52%	40.00%
Washing machine	88.89%	100.00%	95.24%	90.00%
Refrigerator	100.00%	100.00%	95.24%	100.00%
Air conditioner	27.78%	74.36%	52.38%	70.00%
Greenhouse	50.00%	20.51%	33.33%	40.00%
Personal computer	22.22%	66.67%	33.33%	40.00%
Mobile Phone	44.44%	87.18%	80.95%	100.00%

Table 2. Main amenities of the households

Source. Designed by the author

The inhabitants of Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets were asked if their households had different types of amenities. In **Table 2**, presented above, are illustrated the percentages in which the participants mentioned having the amenities in their households. As illustrated, in general, the amenities that are most present are **televisions, washing machines and refrigerators**. Some of the households had cars, most of them being in Smilets. In Lambrinovo only 44,44% of the participants mentioned owning a car. Other rather absent amenities are *monocycles, satellite dishes and personal computers*.

2.5. Image of the settlements. Main services and amenities.

This part of the study focuses on the main services and amenities in the four settlements. The inhabitants were primarily asked if their village or town were any banking services. According to the given answers, Lambrinovo doesn't provide any banking service (none of the participants responded affirmatively). In Aydemir, 18 out of 39 inhabitants mentioned that the settlement offered banking services while the other 21 participants mentioned that there weren't any such services.

The participants from Kalipetrovo mentioned, in general, that the settlement doesn't provide banking services. Only 2 inhabitants responded affirmatively to this question. Like Kalipetrovo, the inhabitants of Smilets also mentioned that in their area is no banking service. There were only two participants that responded affirmatively.

According to the conducted field research, the main banking services are provided by Silistra, the main settlement, while some smaller banking services are also located in Aydemir. Lambrinovo, Kalipetrovo and Smilets don't provide individual banking services,

even though probably the populations in these areas visit the local larger settlements to benefit from this facility.

The inhabitants were asked about the main water and electricity supply facilities. According to the information given by the participants in each of the four communities, all these settlements benefit from water and electricity supply. Thus, in Lambrinovo the members of the community mentioned that the village has electricity and main water, mentioning that it is also reliable. The population in Aydemir declares that the settlement benefits from water, sewage, electricity and partly gas supplies (there is one participant that mentions that his household has no gas connection). When asked if the networks are considered reliable, all participants responded affirmatively.

The inhabitants of Kalipetrovo also mention the presence of water and electricity services. Two of the households which are present in the survey are not connected to gas, according to the gathered responses. Based on the information given by the inhabitants, the networks in Kalipetrovo are considered reliable, as well. The inhabitants of Smilets mention that this settlement benefits from electricity and water. They also mention that the networks are reliable.

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Gas supply	0.00%	28.21%	0.00%	0.00%
Electrical transmission line;	100.00%	92.31%	95.24%	100.00%
Telecommunication network	88.89%	97.44%	71.43%	100.00%
Internet connection;	94.44%	100.00%	85.71%	90.00%
Cinema;	0.00%	25.64%	9.52%	0.00%
Paved street	44.44%	89.74%	71.43%	100.00%
Telephone Cable;	0.00%	76.92%	47.62%	10.00%
Sewage system;	0.00%	94.87%	95.24%	20.00%
Solid waste collection system	0.00%	79.49%	14.29%	100.00%
Local broadcast;	5.56%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%
Water supply	100.00%	94.87%	85.71%	100.00%

Table 3. Main services provided by the settlements

Source. Designed by the author

The inhabitants of Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets were asked to mention the main amenities in their settlements. As illustrated in **Table 3** and previously presented in the study, most of the amenities of these four settlements are **electricity, telecommunications, internet and water**. Lambrinovo, Kalipetrovo and Smilets don't

have gas supply, while Aydemir has only partial. As presented in the table above, Lambrinovo also lacks **solid waste collection system, sewage system or telephone cable**.

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Stable electricity/ gas supply	66,7% NO, 33,3% YES	YES	YES	YES
Stable water supply	44,4% NO, 55,6% YES	YES	YES	YES
Fuel used for heating	WOOD (72,2%), SOLID FUEL (16,7%)	Wood, solid fuel, electricity	Wood, electricity	Wood, electricity
How often is solid waste collected	Unconclusive	Once or twice a week	Every week	Every week
Who collects the waste	Unconclusive	Sineva Company	The municipality	Silistra municipality

Table 4. Gas, electricity, heating and waste suppliers

Source. Designed by the author

As previously mentioned in the study, most of the settlements benefit entirely or partially from gas, water and sewage systems. In Lambrinovo, the electricity/gas and water supply are not stable, according to the responses of the population.

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Traffic issues	No	No	No	No
Use of public transport	Yes (44,4%), No (22,2%), Rarely (16,7%)	Yes (56,4%), No (33,3%)	Yes	No
Type of transport most frequently used	Public transportation (50%), Personal car (38,9%)	Public transportation (59%), Personal car (23,1%)	Bus (57,1%), Personal car (28,6%)	Personal car

Table 5. Mobility in the four settlements

Source. Designed by the author

When asked about the traffic in their settlements, most of the inhabitants mentioned that the area doesn't have traffic issues. Most of the population in Kalipetrovo uses public transport, while in Aydemir, a percentage only of 56,4% mentions that uses the public transportation. An even smaller percentage of the population in Lambrinovo mentions the use of public transport (only 44,4%) while the population in Smilets mentions that it uses the personal car in a percentage of 90%. Only one respondent says that he doesn't travel, when asked about the means of transport.

The four settlements that represent the focus of this study are deeply connected to the Silistra city in terms of services and amenities. Thus, when the populations in Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets were asked about the local markets in their settlements, most of the answers were negatives. The population in Lambrinovo mentioned in a percentage of 83% that the village doesn't have a local marketplace. The population in Aydemir mentioned in a percentage of 62% that the settlement doesn't have a local market while a percentage of 36% answered affirmatively. The inhabitants of Kalipetrovo and Smilets mention, unanimously, that their settlements don't have local markets. When asked about the nearest marketplace, all the participants mention Silistra, located at approximately 10-15 km from each of these four areas of study.

The connection to Silistra is also evident in relation to the shopping activities concerning food supplies or cloths. Thus, even though the inhabitants of Lambrinovo are mostly retired older people, they mention that the food for their households is usually bought from the local market in Lambrinovo or from Silistra. The clothes, on the other hand, are mostly bought from Silistra.

The inhabitants of Aydemir mention that they frequently leave the settlement for other activities, such as shopping, healthcare or education. The food is usually bought from Aydemir or from Silistra while the clothes are almost in all cases bought from Silistra. In both Lambrinovo and Aydemir cases, the inhabitants mention that they buy food once or twice a week.

The inhabitants of Kalipetrovo go to other settlements almost every day, according to their answers, especially for healthcare or shopping. The food supply in Kalipetrovo is usually bought from the local market, almost daily, mention the inhabitants. However, like in the cases of the inhabitants of Lambrinovo and Aydemir, the inhabitants of Kalipetrovo go to Silistra for clothes or other necessities in the house.

As previously mentioned in the study, the inhabitants of Smilets need to visit Silistra frequently. Smilets lacks a local market. Thus, when asked about how frequently the inhabitants leave the village for necessities, most of them mention that they go almost every day to Silistra for either food supplies or other necessities.

2.5.1. Complementary services – security, health, education and culture

Security

The inhabitants in the four studied settlements were asked about the security services in the area. The differences are considerable, especially concerning the nearest police stations. Thus, in the case of Lambrinovo, the entity that deals with conflict in the area is the institutions under the authority of the **Ministry of Interior**. The nearest police service is in Ishirkovo village, mention the inhabitants. The inhabitants in Aydemir also mention the institutions under the authority of the **Ministry of Interior** as the main provider of security services in the area. The inhabitants mention both Aydemir and Delenki neighborhood.

The inhabitants in Kalipetrovo mention the institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Interior as the main provider of security services in the area. This time, the nearest police station is in the village, in Kalipetrovo. For the inhabitants of Smilets, the nearest police stations are either in Silistra or in Aydemir. The main provider of security services, mention the inhabitants, is the police.

Health services

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Health services	-	Hospital, doctor, clinic		-
Nearest clinic	Silistra	Silistra	Silistra	Silistra
Means of transport	Car, public transport	Car, public transport	Car, public transport	Car, public transport
Distance and time	15 km (20 minutes)	5 km (10-15 minutes)	5 km (10-15 minutes)	10-15 km (15-20 minutes)
Most common diseases	-	flu, respiratory diseases, high blood pressure, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, headaches and eyesight	respiratory, high blood pressure, cardio-vascular diseases, sinusitis, diabetes, headaches and eyesight	flu, respiratory, high blood pressure, cardio- vascular diseases, diabetes, headaches, eyesight

Table 6. Level of access to health services

Source. Designed by the author

When asked about the health services in the area, the inhabitants in Lambrinovo mention almost nothing. Only 2 inhabitants mention a hospital and doctor, all of them located in Silistra, though, at approximately 15 km. The fastest ways of reaching the nearest health services are by personal car or public transportation.

Aydemir is considerably better equipped in terms of health services. According to the gathered data, the settlement benefits from a hospital, doctor and clinic access. In this case, the inhabitants mentioned as well that the nearest health services are in Silistra, but the distance is of approximately 5 km (10-15 minutes by car or public transport). According to the participants, in Aydemir the most common diseases are **flu, respiratory diseases, high**

blood pressure, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, headaches and eyesight. As opposed to the population in Lambrinovo, which didn't mention any diseases, the population in Aydemir mention a large variety of diseases affecting the locals.

The inhabitants in Kalipetrovo mention that they have access to doctors, the nearest doctors being in Silistra, at approximately 5 km (10-15 minutes by car or by bus). Like the Aydemir inhabitants, in Kalipetrovo the most common diseases are **respiratory, high blood pressure, cardio-vascular diseases, sinusitis, diabetes, headaches and eyesight.**

Smilets doesn't have good access to health services. The distance to the nearest doctor is 10 km – 15 km, as it is in Silistra (15-20 minutes by car or public transport). The main diseases in Silistra are **flu, respiratory, high blood pressure, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, headaches, eyesight.**

Education

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Easy access to educational services	NO	NO	YES	NO
Nearest school	Silistra	Silistra	Kalipetrovo	Silistra
Means of transport	Public transport	Car, public transport, on foot	On foot	-
Distance to nearest school	15 km	8 km	-	-
Distance to nearest kindergarten	15 km	500-700 m	10 minutes	10-15 km (20-25 minutes)
Distance to nearest primary school	15 km	8 km	15 minutes	10-15 km
Distance to nearest secondary school	15 km	8 km	-	10-15 km
Distance to nearest high school	15 km	8 km	-	10-15 km

Table 7. Level of access to educational services

Source. Designed by the author

The access to educational services is rather limited in the settlements that represent the focus of this study. As previously mentioned, all four settlements are connected, especially in terms of complementary services, to the main city, Silistra. Thus, most of the educational services are located there, making the access rather difficult. The inhabitants in Kalipetrovo

travel approximately 15 km to the nearest high school, or secondary school. However, this is the only one out of the four studied settlements that mention the presence of a primary school. Aydemir inhabitants mention that the settlement has a kindergarten, the distance being rather short of 500-700 m towards it.

Cultural heritage

	Lambrinovo	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Churches in the settlements	NO	YES	YES	YES
Nearest church	Smilets village	Aydemir	Kalipetrovo	Smilets
Means of transport	Public transport	On foot, by car	On foot	On foot
Frequency of visits	Very rare	Rarely	Rarely	Very rare
Risk of losing access as a result to the project activities	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 8. Access to local churches

Source. Designed by the author

As illustrated in Table 8, the only village without access to a local church is Lambrinovo. However, the population here mention that the nearest church is in Smilets, accessible by public transport. When asked about the frequency of visits to the local churches, most of the participants mention that they rarely go to church and that the project will not diminish the access to different locations of interest.

2.6. Gender support services

The inhabitants were asked to mention what NGOs or civil society groups are currently working in their community. According to the gathered data, in the area there is only one organization, named **Association Ekaterina Karavelova**, in Silistra. When asked about the main challenges faced by women in their communities, most inhabitants mention that *women are equal to men* and that they all face the same challenges. The main challenge mentioned in this survey is **the lack of workplaces**.

Another focus of the research was towards the presence of women's shelters in the area. Some of the answers mentioned *that there is one in Silistra*, even though most of the participants didn't know this information for sure.

3. Use of the project area

One of the focuses of this study is on the way in which the project area is being used by the inhabitants. Thus, the population in Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets is asked to mention if the project area is being used by them or by other people they know. In Lambrinovo, Aydemir and Smilets all the answers were negative regarding this question. Only in Kalipetrovo, one answer was positive, mentioning that the area is being used for agriculture.

When asked about how the local community shares the land, most of the participants in the survey mention that **they don't know** or that **the local community doesn't share it**. "*Everyone works for themselves*", mentions one of the inhabitants in Lambrinovo. The project area, according to the answers given by the members of the local communities in the four settlements, is not being used now. However, dominant local activities in the area are related to agricultural production or zootechnics: work at vineyards, gardens, agriculture or pasture.

4. The perceived impact of the project on the quality of life of the members of the community

The participants in this survey were asked to mention if they thought that the impact of the project will be a positive, a negative one or if it will have no impact at all. Most of the inhabitants in Lambrinovo mentioned that they *didn't think that the project will change anything or help in anyway the community's wellbeing*. The inhabitants that mentioned this represent approximately 83,3% of all the participants. The other 16,7% mention that they think that the project will impact positively the settlement. The inhabitants of Aydemir believe, in a percentage of 20,5% that the impact will be a positive one. 43,6% mention that they don't know what to believe while 25,6% mention that the project will have no effect on the wellbeing of the population.

The inhabitants of Kalipetrovo mention in a percentage of 28,6% that they don't really know what the effect will be. The rest of the population believes that there will not be a significant impact on the wellbeing of the population. The most positive community is the one in Smilets. According to the offered responses, the inhabitants in Smilets believe that the project will have a positive effect, resulting in the increase in the number of jobs in the area.

A secondary focus of the present survey regarded the perceived impact that the project will have on the assets of the inhabitants. Like the perceived impact on the community's wellbeing, the impact that the project will have on the assets of the inhabitants is also perceived as almost inexistent by some communities in the survey. Thus, the population of Lambrinovo mentioned in a percentage of 83,3% that the project will not influence their assets. The population in Aydemir thinks in a percentage of only 12,8% that the project will not impact their assets. 64,1% of the participants in Aydemir don't know how to answer the question, 12,8% think that the impact will be positive and 10,3% think that the impact will

be negative. Some of the concerns of the inhabitants are directed towards the destruction of agriculture, destruction of pastures or pollution, elements that are mentioned during the discussions.

In Kalipetrovo, almost half of the population thinks that the project will not impact their assets while the other half didn't want to express an opinion regarding this matter. The population in Smilets is very optimistic in this aspect as well. Thus, 80% of the inhabitants that participated in the survey think that the project will positively impact their assets. Only 20% declined to answer the question.

Even though the perceived impact of the project on their wellbeing and on their assets is either imperceivable or positive, in general, when asked about the concerns they have towards the implementation of the project, the opinions were divergent. In **all four settlements, most of the inhabitants mentioned that they didn't consider having enough information regarding the project.** The community in Lambrinovo seems to think that the project, in general, **will not largely impact its daily life.**

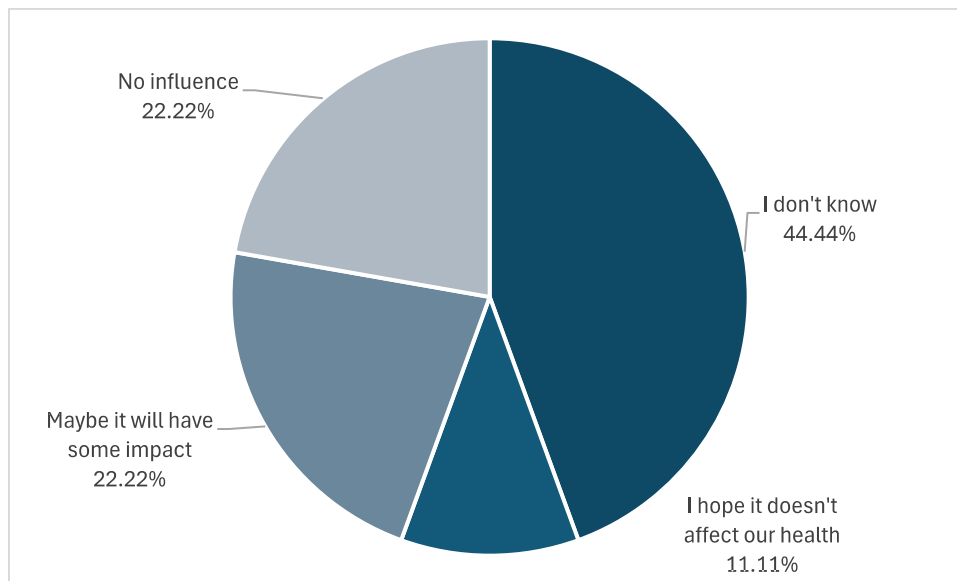


Figure 13. Perceived impact of the Project on the daily life of the inhabitants in Lambrinovo

Source. Designed by the author

As described in **Figure 13**, most of the population **doesn't know what the impact will be**, while mentions that they think that the project will have no influence or **maybe a small influence**. Only 2 inhabitants mentioned that **they hoped that the impact will not be a negative one, causing them health issues**.

When asked if they had any concerns, 83,3% of the responses were negative (15 households out of 18), 2 responses were unclear, mentioning that they **are uncertain if they have concerns regarding the project**. Only one inhabitant mentions that he has concerns but doesn't give any more details on the matter.

As previously mentioned, **the communities don't seem to have enough information regarding the project**. This is clearer in the case of Aydemir community, where the inhabitants declare themselves relatively concerned with the project, mentioning, in some case, **that they don't want the project to happen**. Some of the concerns of the population are directed towards the **destruction of the agricultural lands**.

In **Figure 14** are presented the percentages in which the 39 households in Aydemir answered the questions: *“Given the description provided of the Project, what impacts do you think the Project will have on your daily life, or the life of your community?”*. As seen below, most of the inhabitants didn't know how to answer the question, mentioning, in some cases, that *“there is not enough information on the project”*. The inhabitants that thought that the impact will be a positive one represent 30,77%, most of them thinking that the project will lead to **a decrease in the prices of electricity**. The inhabitants that think that the project will be harmful to their everyday lives represent 17,95%. Their main concerns are that the project will **affect the agricultural lands**.

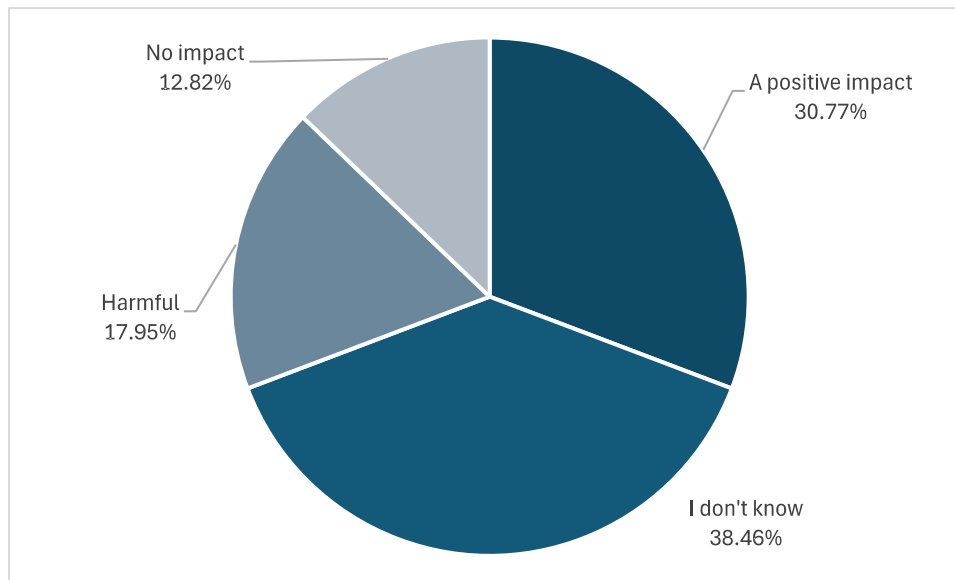


Figure 14. Perceived impact of the Project on the daily life of the inhabitants in Aydemir
Source. Designed by the author

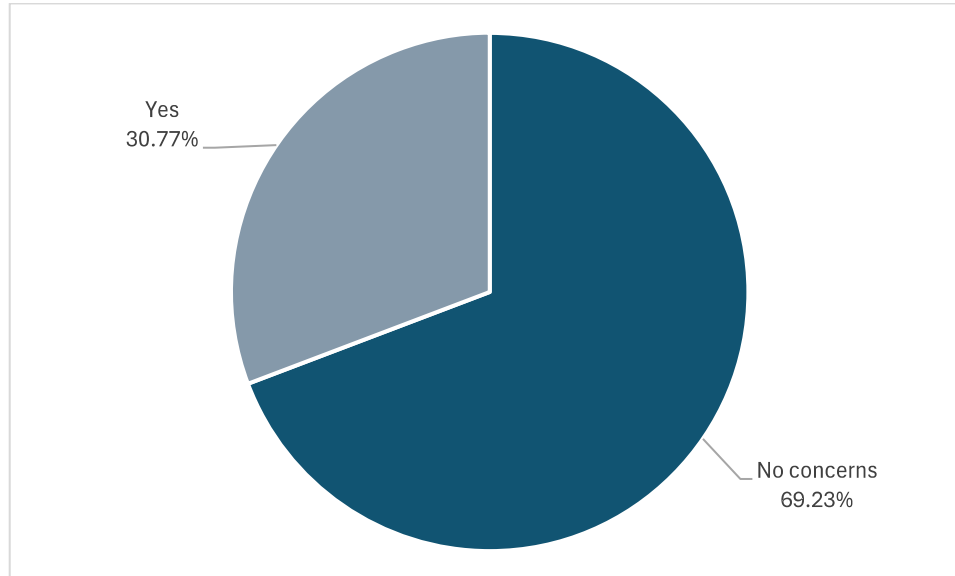


Figure 15. Main concerns of the population in Aydemir regarding the Project

Source. Designed by the author

The inhabitants of Aydemir were also asked if they had any concerns or suggestions regarding the project. As illustrated in **Figure 15**, almost 70% of the inhabitants in Aydemir mentioned that they didn't have any concerns. However, 12 participants in the survey, inhabitants of Aydemir, mentioned that they have concerns regarding the **environmental pollution and agricultural lands**. Two of these 12 inhabitants mentioned that **they didn't want this project to happen**.

The inhabitants of Kalipetrovo don't seem as concerned as the ones in Aydemir. Thus, when asked how the project will impact the local community, 66,7% answer that it will not impact the daily life of the community in any way and 23,8% mention that they don't have an opinion on the matter. Only one inhabitant mentions that the project **might enter the animal pastures (negative impact)** while one other inhabitant mentions that the impact will be positive, that probably it will be much better. When asked about their concerns, most of the inhabitants – 71,4% - mention that there are no concerns, while 14,3% mention that they don't know. Like the population in Aydemir, the inhabitants in Kalipetrovo seem to have only a few data regarding the project.

The inhabitants of Smilets mention, in a percentage of 40% that they can't decide whether the project will have a positive or negative impact on their daily lives. Only 20% mention that they don't expect any impact while another 40% of the inhabitants expect a **positive impact**, mostly materialized in the improvement of the local infrastructure. When asked about the possible concerns regarding the project, all the inhabitants in Smilets mention that they don't have any.

4.1. History of similar projects in the area

The inhabitants of all four settlements were asked about similar projects conducted in their area. The inhabitants of Lambrinovo answered unanimously that there weren't any other projects undertaken in the area. The inhabitants in Aydemir mentioned either that there weren't any other projects or that they weren't familiar with any other. The inhabitants in Kalipetrovo mentioned, almost unanimously (95%) that they weren't familiar with any other projects in the area while the inhabitants in Smilets mentioned that they haven't heard of any other. As a conclusion, neither of the four settlements – Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets – weren't faced with other projects undertaken in their areas, similar or not to the project that represents the focus of this research. Their scepticism is rather explainable, given the fact that the communities don't really know what to expect and, according to most of the answers, don't really have clear details regarding the project.

5. Conclusions

The four settlements that represent the focus of this study – Lambrinovo, Aydemir, Kalipetrovo and Smilets – shelter very similar communities, mainly characterized by elder population (*mostly retired inhabitants*). The households are formed generally of one or two members. The communities are homogeneous, formed by Bulgarian speaking inhabitants, of orthodox beliefs, that work in agriculture, mostly.

The wellbeing of the population is perceived as being relatively low, almost all participants mentioning that the income they currently have is not enough for a decent lifestyle.

The complementary services – health, education, culture, commerce – are not met at the local level. The studied communities present a great connection and dependence to Silistra, most of them mentioning that they must go to the city to access services such as schools/kindergartens, health or even special kinds of commerce. The food supplies are generally found at local levels, but other more complex types of services require the inhabitants to leave the settlements.

All four settlements are quiet areas, not affected by traffic issues. However, to access other nearby zones, most of the population is required to use their personal vehicles or public transport.

According to the results of the study, the Project area is not being currently used by the community members. In addition, the participants don't think that the implementation of the project will, in any way, impact their daily life or their wellbeing. However, some inhabitants expressed concern regarding the Project, mentioning that they don't have enough details regarding the implementation. In Aydemir, there were some inhabitants that mentioned that they didn't want the project to happen, invoking concerns such as destruction of agriculture, destruction of pastures or pollution. Their concerns and fears for the implementation of the project is completed by the fact that in the area, according to the survey, there weren't other projects in the recent past.