



PUBLIC OPINION POLL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



advocacy for
open government

supporting the right to know
in South East Europe

Financed by:
The European Union and
Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS)



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Originally written in English

Published by:

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of a public opinion poll in Kosovo conducted in June 2014. The poll aims to measure the level of trust citizens have in relevant institutions as well as their perceptions towards different topics associated with the main pillars of Open Government Partnership (OGP) platform, notably transparency, accountability, public participation, and technology. A very similar public opinion poll was conducted around the same period of the previous year; therefore, this document, also tracks the most notable changes in the perceptions of citizens on the aforementioned topics.

The rest of this short document is organized as follows. *Section 2* provides the general methodology used to conduct the public opinion poll. *Section 3* gives the demographic profile and employment status of the interviewed respondents. *Section 4* provides the findings on the level of trust citizens have in institutions. *Section 5 and 6* presents the findings that attempt to reveal how citizens perceive transparency and public participation. *Section 7* shows how citizens perceive the influence of different organizations on government decisions. *Section 8* presents some findings that disclose whether citizens use technology to establish any kind of contact with their local governments. In all these sections the current findings are compared with those of the 2013 poll.

2. GENERAL METHODOLOGY

The opinion poll involved 1,000 randomly selected respondents from all over Kosovo. The distribution of the sample is large enough to provide statistically significant results at 99 percent confidence level.

The process of designing the questionnaire involved Riinvest as well as experts from the PASOS network. The questionnaire contained five main sections that were focused on: trust, transparency, public participation, accountability, and use of technology. Before the poll was released to be fully conducted, it was initially tested with 50 respondents to see if it had visible ‘defects’, or if certain questions needed to be modified in order to obtain true answers from the respondents. In addition, the team tested the duration time where it revealed that it lasted around 25 minutes.

The Riinvest team recruited the best students of Riinvest College as enumerators. All enumerators received training. As part of the training, enumerators were given a training manual explaining: the importance and overall the goals of the poll; the dress code; and other detailed explanations of the questionnaire. Small groups (2-to-5) of enumerators worked under a team leader. In the field, the team leader revisited 15 percent percent of the respondents for each enumerator, ostensibly to thank them for their cooperation. During these visits, a number of questions were re-asked for verification. In addition to that, from Riinvest’s offices, a similar verification process was carried out by phone by the research team and Project Leader for another 15 percent of randomly selected respondents. Once the questionnaires were returned, they were stored at the Riinvest premises. A logical control was also conducted – this served to identify if there was any falsely completed questionnaires by enumerators.

The collected data were encoded by experienced personnel using ‘Microsoft EXCEL’. Then, the data was analysed using ‘SPSS’. This statistical tool was used to facilitate data checking and perform basic statistical analyses that are presented in the following sections.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

Following are provided some relevant information on the demographic profile as well as on employment and income status of the interviewed respondents:

- Around 54 percent were males, while roughly 46 percent were females.
- The average age was 33.8; the youngest respondent was 16 years old, while the oldest one was 79.
- Majority of the interviewed respondents were Albanians (around 91 percent) and Serbs (7 percent) while the rest were Bosnians, Turks, and Egyptians.
- Roughly 88 percent were Muslims; the rest were Orthodox (7 percent), Catholics (4 percent), and a very small percentage (less than 1 percent) atheists.
- About 51 were married, around 45 have never been married, 2 percent were widows, roughly 2 percent did not declare the marital status, and less than 1 percent of them were divorced.
- Roughly 63 percent live in cities, about 19 percent in small towns, and 18 percent in rural areas.
- About 47 percent were employed in the private sector, about 22 in the public sector, around 9 self-employed, and 4 percent in non-governmental organizations and other organizations. The remaining 18 percent were unemployed.
- The average income of the respondent's family was €667.

4. THE LEVEL OF TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Figure 1 discloses the level of trust Kosovo's citizens have in different institutions in 2014 and at the same time reveals the level of trust from the previous year for comparison purposes. According to the survey results, international institutions, namely KFOR and European Union (EU), are the most trusted institutions, with around 67 and 64 percent of citizens, respectively, trusting them *fully or to some extent*¹; followed by non-governmental organizations (with around 62 percent). On the other hand, the least trusted institutions turn out to be political parties, presidency, and the other three branches of government, notably the Government of Kosovo, Judiciary system, and the Parliament of Kosovo. Only around 22 and 23 percent of citizens, respectively, trust the former two institutions *fully or to some extent*; while percentages range from 24 to 31 for the other three government branches. In a study conducted by Camaj (2014)², international institutions with a mandate in Kosovo also receive higher levels of trust vis-à-vis local institutions (i.e. government and parliament). This suggests that Kosovo's local institutions are still fragile and not ready to be responsive to the needs of citizens. It is worthwhile to point out that the level of trust citizens have towards local institutions, particularly towards political parties and judiciary system, is somewhat similar with that of Serbian³ and Macedonian⁴ citizens towards their local institutions.

When these findings are compared with those of the poll conducted in 2013, it appears that the level of trust in institutions is generally on the rise. The most notable rise appears in European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), public administration, and local mayors (around 23, 13, 12 percentage points higher, respectively). The swing in public opinion regarding EULEX is linked to the fact that this institution has intensified the fight against economic crimes through arresting some important public figures in the country, including a few members of the Parliament. All the arrests were everywhere in the media; this apparently has had a noticeable impact on the perceptions of citizens. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the level of trust declined in the media and Kosovo police (around 4 percentage points less each). As a matter of fact, these two were cited as the most trusted institutions in 2013.

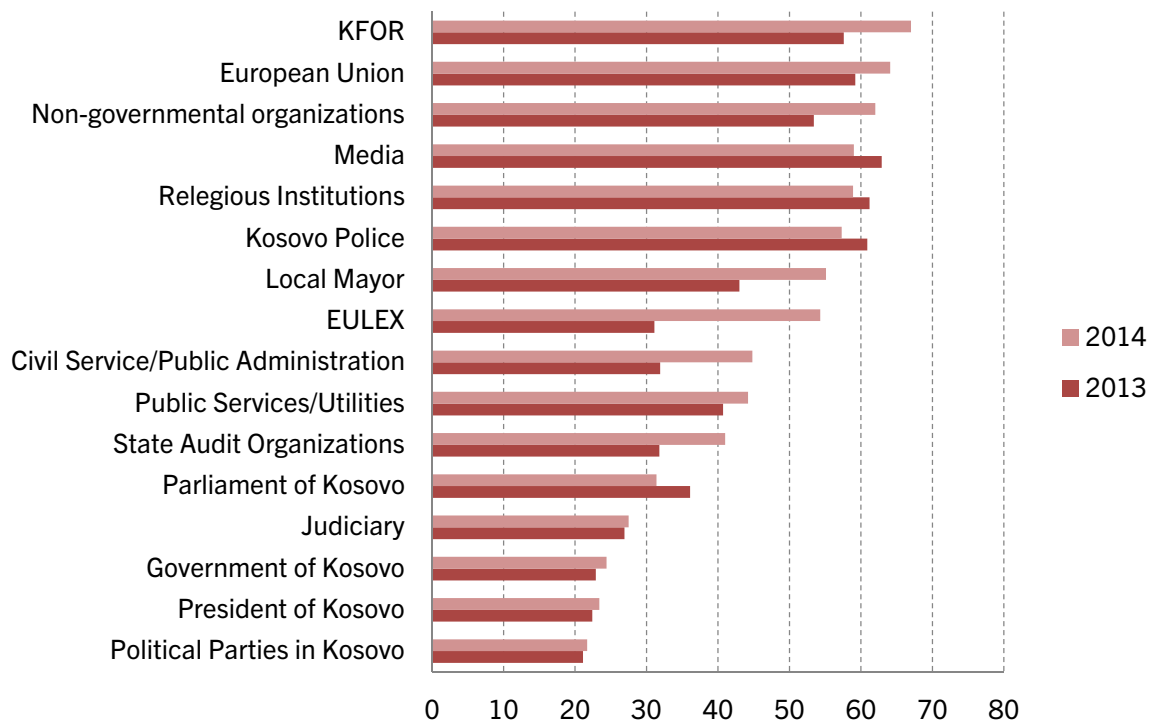
¹ Note: Respondents were asked to rate institutions on an ordinal scale from 1 to 4 (1-no trust; 2-little trust; 3 – trust to some extent; 4 – great trust)

² Camaj, L.C., 2014. Media Use and Political Trust in an Emerging Democracy: Setting the Institutional Trust Agenda in Kosovo. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 187–209.

³ Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS). 2013. *CEAS*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://ceas-serbia.org/root/prilozi/Mapping-Open-Government-Partnership-South-East-Europe-Case-of-Serbia.pdf>. [Accessed 01 July 14]

⁴ Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM). 2013. *Open Government Partnership - MACEDONIA - Open Government Mapping Report*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.crpm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Mapping-report-final-with-visibility-standards.pdf>. [Accessed 02 July 14]

Figure 1. The level of trust towards institutions (% of those who trust them *fully or to some extent*)



Source: Authors' calculations from the opinion poll results

5. TRANSPARENCY

Figure 2 reveals the responses of Kosovo citizens on a few transparency-related statements. The majority of respondents consider that too much negative publicity on government actions makes Kosovo vulnerable and thus deters FDIs (around 73 percent *'more or less agree'* or *'fully agree'*⁵). A much lower percentage of the interviewed citizens, roughly 43 percent, believe (*'more or less agree'* or *'fully agree'*) that civil servants who leak classified information on government actions should be punished. This indicates that majority of Kosovo citizens (around 57 percent) seek for a government that does not make any compromise with radical transparency. The proportion of respondents who *'more or less agree'* or *'fully agree'* that information on ethnicity and religion of civil servants should be collected is around 41 percent, suggesting that recruitment policies should primarily rely on merits, thus not allowing room for any kind of discrimination. Finally, less than a quarter of respondents, around 23 percent, are of the opinion (*'more or less agree'* or *'fully agree'*) that members of the parliament and local assemblies have the right to keep information on their personal assets and income confidential. It is defined by law⁶ that public officials have to declare all their property to the Agency Against Corruption (AAC). As of now, to authors' knowledge, none of the public officials refused to fulfil this obligation; which indicates that

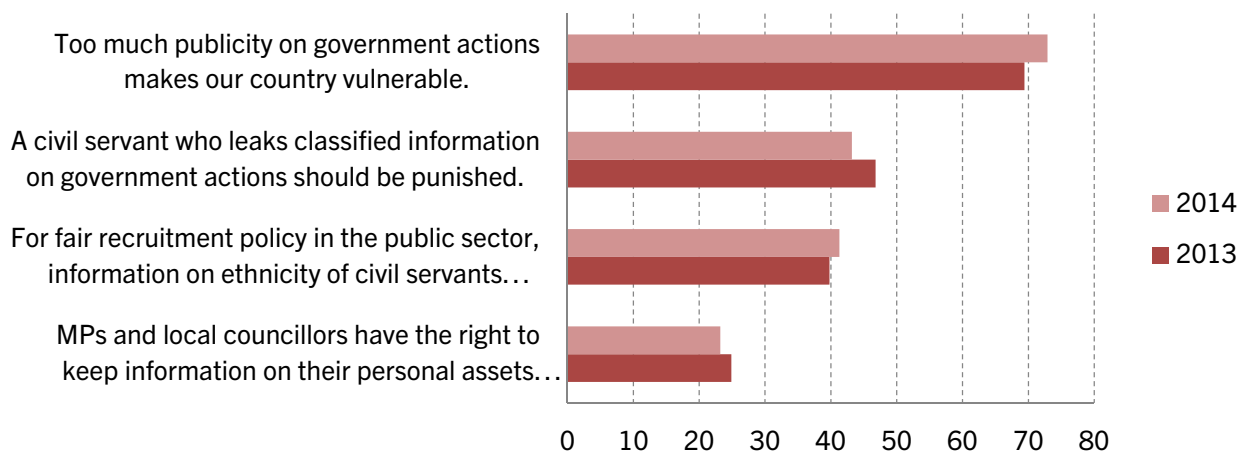
⁵ Note: Respondents were asked to rate statements on an ordinal scale from 1 to 4 (1-don't agree at all; 2-agree to some degree; 3 – more or less agree; 4 – fully agree)

⁶ LAW No. 04/L-050 http://www.md-ks.org/repository/docs/declaration_origin_and_controle.pdf

Kosovo citizens in general do not perceive it as a damaging act affecting the privacy of individuals.

When the responses on these transparency assertions are compared with the responses of our survey conducted during 2013, it is found that no major changes have occurred in the proportion of citizens (maximum 3 percentage points deviation).

Figure 2. The perspectives of respondents on different transparency-related statements (% of those who ‘more or less agree’ or ‘fully agree’)



Source: Authors’ calculations from the opinion poll results

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The results reveal that roughly 57 percent of the interviewed respondents ‘more or less agree’ or ‘fully agree’⁷ with the assertion that blogs and comments on the internet do not represent the public opinion properly. This percentage is about 10 percentage points higher compared to 2013, suggesting that the number of people who do not trust blogs and comments is on the rise. This decline might be invoiced to the growing number of people who in attempt to advance political agendas intentionally give misleading opinions.

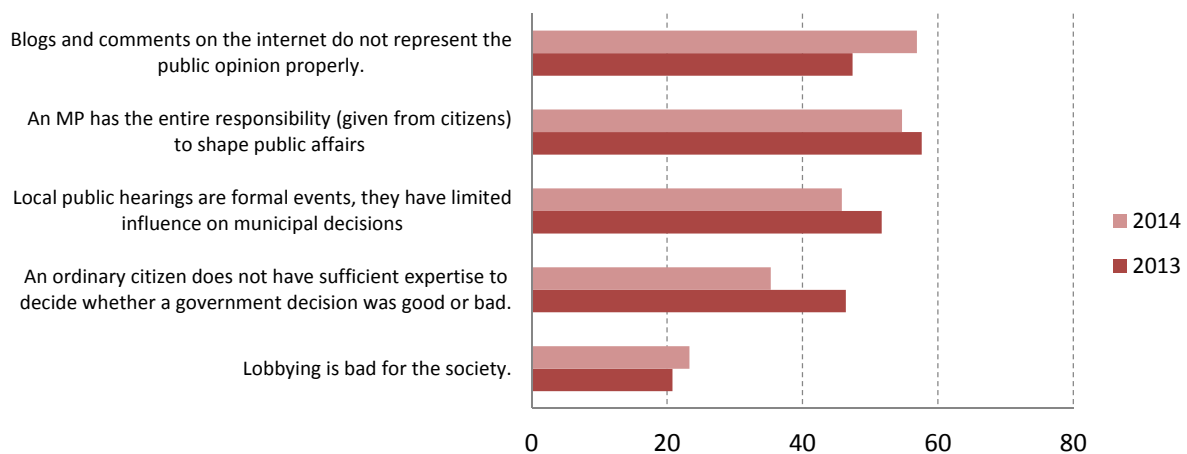
Moreover, approximately 55 percent of the surveyed citizens are of the opinion (‘more or less agree’ or ‘fully agree’) that a member of parliament has the entire responsibility (delegated from citizens) to shape public affairs. The proportion is lower (by about 3 percentage points) compared to the proportion of 2013. This decline, although small, is still indicative that Kosovo citizens are becoming more aware that their role in the public sphere goes beyond voting.

Around 46 percent of respondents believe (‘more or less agree’ or ‘fully agree’) that public hearings are merely formal events and have hardly any impact on decisions made by

⁷ Note: Respondents were asked to rate statements on an ordinal scale from 1 to 4 (1-don’t agree at all; 2-agree to some degree; 3 – more or less agree; 4 – fully agree)

municipal officials – that is about 6 percentage points lower compared to last year. Further, roughly 35 percent of respondents indicate that an ordinary citizen does not have sufficient expertise to decide whether a government decision is good or bad. Compared to 2013, this marked a great decline (about 10 percentage points less), suggesting that citizens have started to acknowledge the expertise of civil society and other bodies, besides government. Finally, 23 percent regard lobbying bad for society; the responses of citizens for this statement are somewhat similar with those of 2013. For detailed and visual representation see Figure 3.

Figure 3. The perspectives of respondents on statements rated to public participation (% of those who ‘more or less agree’ or ‘fully agree’)



Source: Authors’ calculations from the opinion poll results

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

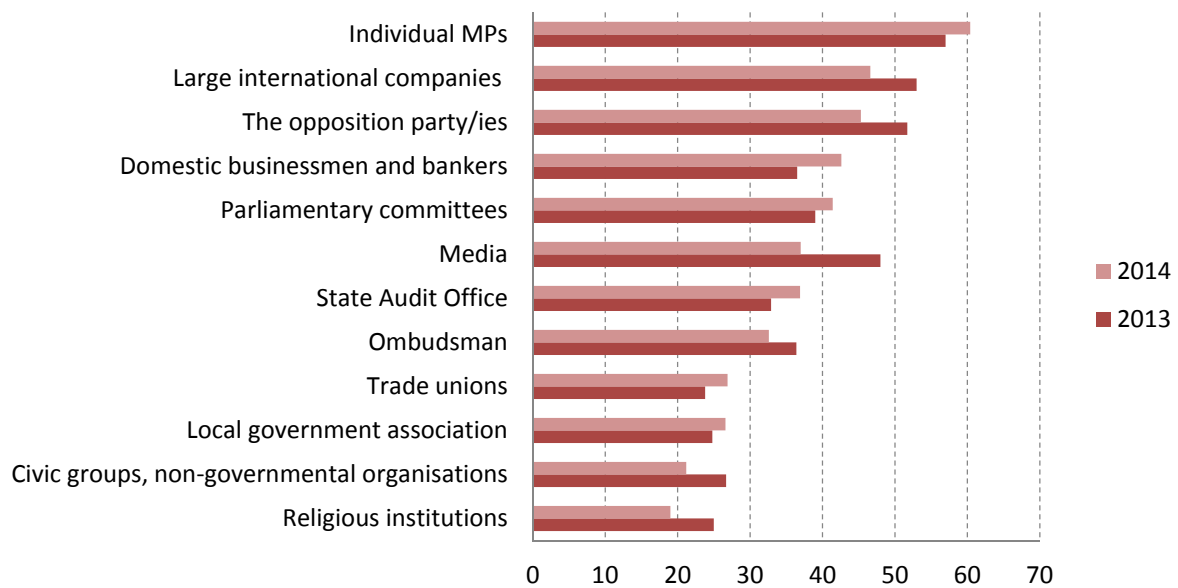
Figure 4 presents a ranking list that reveals the perceptions of citizens with regards to the influence of different organizations in government decision making processes. Members of parliament (MPs), understandably, top the ranking list with around 60 percent of respondents claiming that MPs are ‘sufficiently influential’ or ‘highly influential’⁸; followed by large international companies (with around 47 percent) and opposition parties (with roughly 45 percent).

Religious institutions, on the other hand, are perceived as the least influential organization; to be more specific, only 19 percent of the surveyed citizens believe that religious institutions have ‘sufficient influence’ or ‘high influence’ on the government decisions. Interestingly, non-governmental organizations although rated amongst the most trusted organizations, are perceived as second least influential ones; only around 21 percent agree that they have ‘sufficient influence’ or ‘high influence’.

⁸ Note: Respondents were asked to rate organizations on an ordinal scale from 1 to 4 (1-not at all; 2-to some degree; 3 – sufficient influence; 4 – high influence)

When findings of this year’s survey are compared with those conducted during 2013, it turns out that media marked the greatest decrease; specifically, the proportion of respondents who agree with the idea that media have ‘sufficient influence’ or ‘high influence’ on government decisions declined by 11 percentage points (from 48 to 37 percent). On the other hand, state audit office marked the greatest increase among the listed organizations; the proportion increased by exactly 4 percentage points (from 33 to 37 percent).

Figure 4. The influence of different organizations on government decisions (% of those who say the following organizations have ‘sufficient influence’ or ‘high influence’)

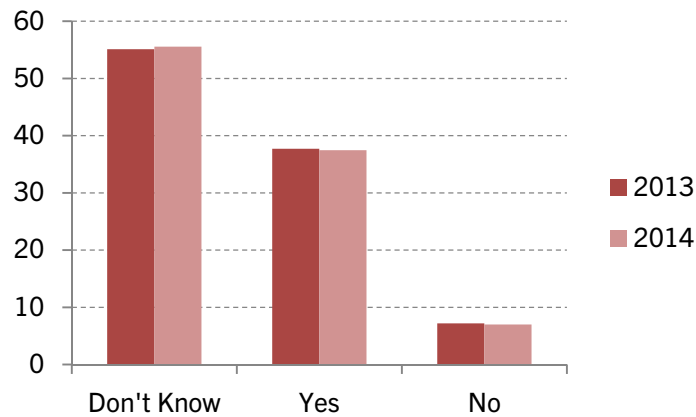


Source: Authors’ calculations from the opinion poll results

8. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

When respondents are asked whether local government has a web-site, about 56 percent say ‘don’t know’, roughly 37 percent say ‘Yes’, and around 7 percent say ‘No’. The distribution of results on the existence of local government web-sites has been almost the same in 2013 (for visual representation, see Figure 5).

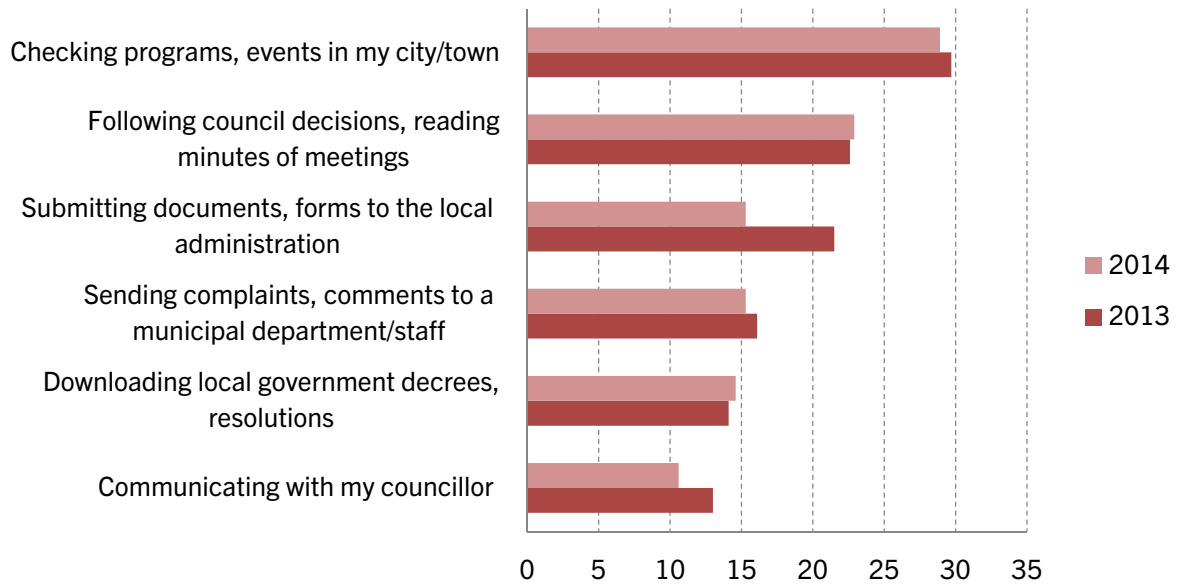
Figure 5. The awareness of citizens about local government website (in %)



Source: Authors' calculations from the opinion poll results

Only around 29 percent of those who know that their local governments have a web-site say that they mostly use the web-sites for checking programs and events in their city/town (see Figure 6); only about 23 percent of respondents who use local government websites state that they use the web-sites to submit documents and download forms for the local administration. Even fewer respondents use local government websites to send complaints or comments to municipal staff or for downloading local government decrees or resolutions (around 15 percent out of 36 percent in both). The least reason to use the local-governments web-site is to communicate with the local councillor (about 11 out of 36 percent of respondents who know that their local government has a website. The results for all these statements are similar with those of 2013, apart from the one concerning submitting and downloading documents which turns out to be 6 percentage points lower.

Figure 6. Purposes for using local government web-site (% of those who stated 'often or 'very often'



Source: Authors' calculations from the opinion poll results

