



## Living Conditions and Life Satisfaction among Young People in Albania

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### Abstract

*This study examines the living conditions and life satisfaction, of young people in Albania using a nationally representative quantitative survey of 2,041 participants aged 18–29 years. The research explores how housing conditions, socioeconomic factors, and community environments relate to life satisfaction. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered across all 12 regions of Albania using a multi-stage probabilistic sampling design. Analyses included descriptive statistics, correlations, and analysis of variance. Results indicate moderate overall life satisfaction among youth, with significant disparities linked to education, employment status, and income. Satisfaction with housing and neighborhood environments was positively associated with life satisfaction, while dissatisfaction with recreational facilities was widespread. The study highlights the importance of integrated policy approaches that improve educational and employment opportunities, housing quality, and access to supportive community spaces. Although the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, the findings provide valuable evidence for understanding youth life satisfaction in Albania and inform strategies aimed at promoting healthier and more inclusive environments for young people.*

**Keywords:** youth, life satisfaction, living conditions, community, Albania

### 1. Introduction

Young adulthood represents a critical developmental stage characterized by educational, occupational, and relational transitions that shape long-term life trajectories (Arnett, 2000). During this period, living conditions and perceived safety interact to influence overall life satisfaction and mental health outcomes (Diener et al., 2018). Understanding these relationships is especially important in transitional contexts such as Albania, where structural economic changes and migration patterns have significantly affected young people's opportunities and quality of life.

Life satisfaction is widely recognized as a core component of subjective well-being and reflects among other things individuals' cognitive evaluations of their living conditions (Diener, 1984). International research consistently shows that housing quality, neighborhood safety, and access to recreational environments are strongly associated with life satisfaction (Evans et al., 2003; Parkes et al., 2002). Safe and supportive community environments foster social belonging and emotional security, whereas environmental stressors and limited access to resources may increase vulnerability to psychological distress (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014).

Socioeconomic determinants play a crucial role in shaping youth well-being. Educational attainment and employment status are strongly linked to higher life satisfaction and better mental health outcomes (OECD, 2020). Conversely, unemployment and economic insecurity are associated with increased emotional distress and reduced

subjective well-being (Paul & Moser, 2009). Gender differences have also been documented, with young women often reporting higher levels of emotional distress than young men (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001).

Within the Albanian context, nationally representative evidence highlights persistent structural challenges affecting youth transitions and quality of life. A comprehensive national report on Albanian youth documents the impact of economic uncertainty, educational disparities, and regional inequalities on young people's life trajectories (INSTAT & UNFPA, 2015). Complementary indicator-based reporting on child, adolescent, and youth well-being shows disparities across domains such as material living conditions, education, and social participation (UNICEF & INSTAT, 2021). Recent evidence on Albanian youth aspirations further emphasizes the importance of socioeconomic stability and community environments in shaping young people's well-being and future expectations (British Council, 2023).

These empirical findings are reflected in Albania's evolving policy framework. The National Youth Strategy 2022–2029 prioritizes youth well-being, social inclusion, and access to supportive community environments (Government of Albania, 2022). Similarly, international frameworks emphasize preventive and community-based approaches to mental health promotion among young populations (WHO, 2014). Despite these initiatives, nationally representative empirical research linking housing conditions, perceived safety, and life satisfaction among Albanian youth remains limited.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the relationships between living conditions, community environments, socioeconomic factors, and life satisfaction in a nationally representative sample of young people in Albania. By integrating subjective assessments of life satisfaction with structural indicators of living conditions, this research contributes empirical evidence to inform youth policy and social development strategies in transitional contexts.

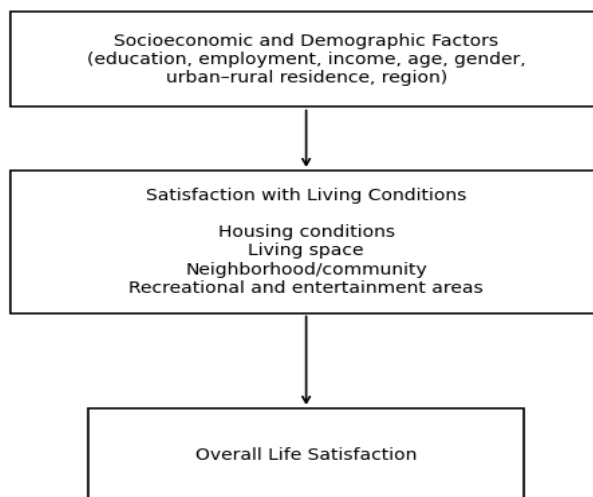
#### *Conceptual framework*

This study conceptualizes overall life satisfaction as a cognitive evaluation of one's life as a whole and positions satisfaction with living conditions as its primary determinant among young people. In line with the subjective well-being literature, life satisfaction is treated as a cognitive construct distinct from emotional well-being and is therefore examined independently (Diener, 1984; Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018).

The model assumes that young people's evaluations of their immediate living environment—including housing conditions, available living space, neighborhood/community context, and access to recreational and entertainment areas—shape their overall judgment of life quality. These domains represent key environmental determinants of subjective well-being and are consistently associated with life satisfaction in prior research (Evans, Wells, & Moch, 2003; Parkes, Kearns, & Atkinson, 2002).

In addition, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (education, employment, income, age, gender, urban–rural residence, and region) are incorporated as contextual factors. These variables are assumed to influence overall life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through their effect on satisfaction with living conditions.

Accordingly, the conceptual model proposes that satisfaction with living conditions functions as the central explanatory pathway linking structural conditions to overall life satisfaction.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model linking satisfaction with living conditions and overall life satisfaction among young people in Albania.

### 1.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to examine the living conditions and life satisfaction of young people in Albania, and to explore how housing conditions, socioeconomic factors, and community environments are associated with life satisfaction among youth aged 18–29 years. By using a nationally representative sample, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence to inform youth-related social policies and interventions.

### 1.2 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the levels of life satisfaction among young people in Albania?
- How satisfied are young people with their housing conditions, living space, and neighborhood/community environments?
- What relationships exist between life satisfaction and socioeconomic factors such as education, employment status, and family income?

## 2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design using a structured questionnaire to investigate the living conditions and perceived satisfaction of young people in Albania. The research aimed to provide nationally representative evidence based on participants' self-reported perceptions across multiple domains of youth life.

### 2.1 Sampling Procedure

A probabilistic multi-stage sampling strategy was used to obtain a representative national sample of young people aged 18–29 years. The sampling frame was based on the total population of youth in this age group in Albania (N = 567,054). A total of 2,041 questionnaires were completed across all 12 administrative regions of the country.

Stratification by region, urban–rural residence, gender, and age group was used exclusively to improve sampling representativeness and efficiency. These strata were applied only at the sampling stage and were not intended as fixed categories for reporting.

Sampling was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected using the smallest geographic areas defined by polling station zones from the most recent parliamentary elections. PSUs were stratified by urban and rural administrative divisions (municipalities and administrative units) and by region to ensure balanced geographic coverage. Selection of PSUs was proportional to the number of registered voters in each polling zone.

In the second stage, households within each selected PSU were chosen using a random route methodology. Interviewers followed a predetermined interval based on local housing density (e.g., selecting every third residential unit), maintaining a consistent direction of movement to reduce selection bias. If the selected respondent was unavailable, preidentified replacement households were used according to regional sampling plans.

This multi-stage sampling approach offered several advantages: it simplified field implementation, minimized interviewer selection bias, reduced nonresponse errors, and ensured that interviews were conducted exclusively within preselected households.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Research Instrument

Data were collected through interviewer-administered web-based surveys using a questionnaire developed in Google Forms. This digital data collection method enabled real-time data capture, reduced manual data entry errors, minimized missing responses, and facilitated monitoring and management of the fieldwork process.

A total of 24 trained interviewers conducted the data collection. Interviewers received standardized training on sampling procedures and questionnaire administration. Two interviewers were assigned to each region, and each

interviewer completed approximately four interviews per day over a one-month data collection period.

The questionnaire consisted of three thematic sections: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) housing conditions and (3) life satisfaction. It was developed based on established subjective well-being frameworks (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 2018).

### 2.3 Data Quality

The probabilistic sampling design allows for generalization of findings to the target population and supports the use of parametric statistical procedures. Tests of normality (Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk) indicated non-normal distributions. However, the large sample size ( $N = 2,041$ ) and low coefficients of variation indicated strong precision and stability of estimates. For nearly all questionnaire items, the coefficient of variation was below 2%, with only three items slightly exceeding this threshold (2.1%, 2.4%, and 2.9%), which still indicates acceptable measurement quality. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined and fell within acceptable ranges for parametric analysis ( $\pm 2$ ).

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. Analyses included descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and correlation analyses. Parametric tests were considered appropriate given the sample size and sampling design.

### 2.5 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Values above .70 are generally considered acceptable, although slightly lower thresholds may be tolerated depending on construct complexity. Reliability coefficients indicated satisfactory to excellent internal consistency across questionnaire sections. Specifically, Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .60 to .70, demonstrating overall stability and coherence of the measurement instrument.

### 2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with standard ethical principles for social research. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent prior to completing the questionnaire. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. No personally identifying information was collected, and all data were anonymized and used exclusively for research purposes. The data collection process was designed to minimize potential discomfort and to ensure participants' privacy and dignity throughout the study.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Sample characteristics

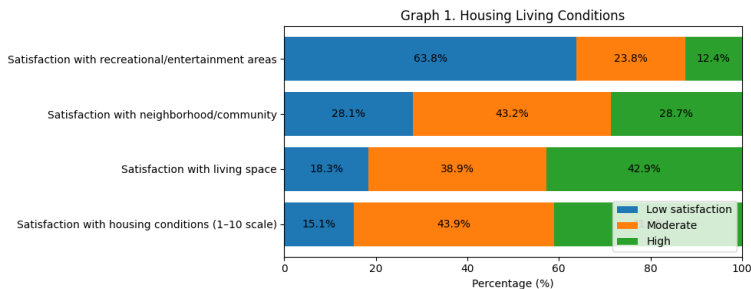
A total of  $N = 2,041$  participants took part in this study, of whom 48.7% were young men and 51.3% were young women. Participants were evenly distributed across the 12 regions of Albania—Berat, Dibër, Durrës, Elbasan, Fier, Gjirokastrë, Korçë, Kukës, Lezhë, Shkodër, Tiranë, and Vlorë—with an average of  $n = 168$  participants per region, showing only minor variation. In addition, approximately half of the participants came from urban areas (50.1%) and the other half from rural areas (49.9%). The participants were young adults aged 18 to 29 years. Specifically, 28% were aged 18–19 years, 43.8% were aged 20–24 years, and 28.2% belonged to the 25–29-year age group. Most of them had completed high school or general secondary education (43.4%), a considerable proportion had completed higher education (25.3%), and others had attained a postgraduate level of education (11.7%). 5.7% of the young people were attending vocational secondary school (4–5 years). 31.4% of them reported having a regular paid job, 30.1% were students or pupils, 17% were unemployed, and 14% were working in a family business or were self-employed. Among the participants who reported being employed ( $n = 1,094$ ), 64.4% worked full time and 35.6% worked part time.

### 3.2 Satisfaction with living conditions

The next section explored participants' satisfaction with their housing and living space, as well as with their neighborhood/community and the recreational facilities available in those areas. As shown in Graph 1, the young people

in the study were, on average, satisfied with their housing (43.9%) and very satisfied with their living space (42.9%). Only 15.1% in the first case and 18.3% in the second reported low levels of satisfaction. Satisfaction levels were lower when referring to their neighborhood or community. Specifically, 28.7% of participants reported being very satisfied with their community, while 43.2% were moderately satisfied. The proportion of young people dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community was 28.1%, nearly double the dissatisfaction reported with housing.

The highest levels of dissatisfaction were observed regarding the recreational or entertainment facilities available in participants' neighborhoods and communities. A total of 63.8% reported dissatisfaction with these opportunities, and only 12.4% indicated high satisfaction. This suggests that young people have a need for more recreational and entertainment opportunities, as well as dedicated environments in which to engage in such activities. Lower satisfaction was reported by young people living in rural areas compared with those in urban areas.

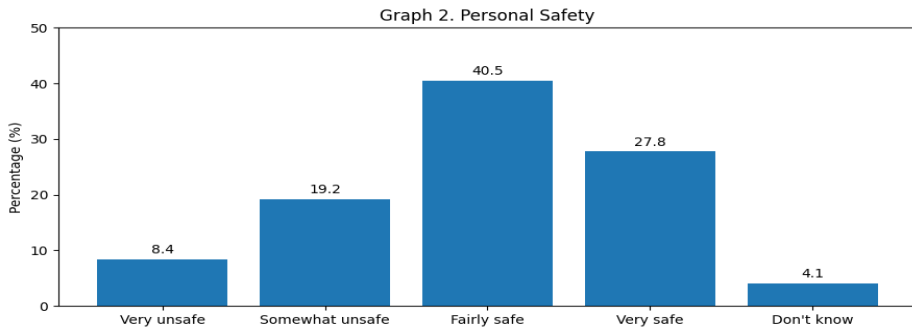


The ANOVA test showed small statistically significant associations between satisfaction with housing conditions and age group, employment status, and education level ( $\eta^2 = 0.004$ ,  $p = .019$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.006$ ,  $p = .002$ ; and  $\eta^2 = 0.017$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Young people aged 18–19 years reported higher satisfaction than older participants ( $M_{18-19} = 8.0$  vs.  $M_{>19} = 7.6$ ). Employed youth ( $M = 7.8$ ) and unemployed youth ( $M = 7.6$ ) differed in their level of satisfaction with housing conditions compared with inactive participants ( $M = 6.5$ ). With respect to education, young people without formal education reported the lowest satisfaction compared with those with primary education, high school education, and university education (means = 5.38, 7.13, 7.74, and 7.88, respectively).

A similar pattern was observed for satisfaction with living space. Statistically significant associations were found between living space satisfaction and age group ( $\eta^2 = 0.007$ ,  $p = .007$ ), employment status ( $\eta^2 = 0.003$ ,  $p = .031$ ), and education level ( $\eta^2 = 0.019$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Regarding satisfaction with the community in which participants lived, statistically significant relationships were found for employment status ( $\eta^2 = 0.003$ ,  $p = .031$ ) and education level ( $\eta^2 = 0.004$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Employed youth evaluated their neighborhood and community more positively and reported higher satisfaction than inactive youth. Similarly, young people with compulsory or no formal education reported lower community satisfaction compared with those who had completed high school or higher education.

Education was also statistically significantly associated with satisfaction with recreational areas ( $\eta^2 = 0.004$ ,  $p = .044$ ), with the lowest mean satisfaction reported by participants without formal education ( $M = 3.5$ ).

Young people generally reported feeling fairly safe physically in their neighborhood or community (40.5%) or very safe (27.8%). However, it should be noted that approximately one in five young people reported feeling somewhat unsafe (19.2%), and an additional 8.4% reported feeling very unsafe. Adolescents aged 18–19 years and those from low-income households reported higher levels of perceived insecurity than other participants (Graph 2).

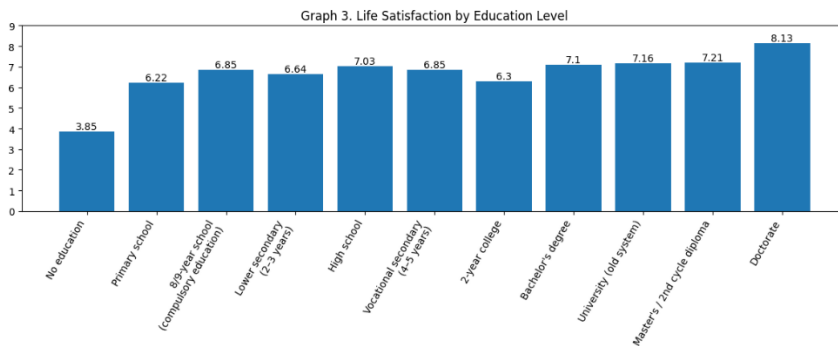


### 3.3 Overall life satisfaction

In the third section, an effort was made to explore and assess participants' life satisfaction during the past month.

First, participants reported experiencing a moderate level of life satisfaction during the previous month, with a mean score of  $M = 7.01$  (on a scale from 1 to 10). Low satisfaction was reported by 23.9% of participants, while 76.1% reported moderate to high satisfaction. Satisfaction levels were generally similar across age groups, except among those aged 20–24 years, where the mean was slightly lower ( $M = 6.96$ ). The lowest levels of satisfaction were reported by young people in Dibër and Fier ( $M = 6.45$  and  $M = 6.61$ , respectively), whereas the highest levels were reported in Vlorë ( $M = 7.90$ ) and Korçë ( $M = 7.51$ ).

As shown in Graph 3, educational level was associated with experienced satisfaction. Participants without formal education reported very low satisfaction ( $M = 3.85$ ), whereas those with a doctoral degree reported satisfaction levels above the overall average ( $M = 8.13$ ).



With regard to the relationship between age, gender, employment status, education, and life satisfaction experienced during the previous month, statistically significant associations were found for employment ( $\eta^2 = 0.006$ ,  $p = .003$ ) and education ( $\eta^2 = 0.013$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Employed young people reported higher levels of life satisfaction than unemployed and inactive participants. In addition, life satisfaction among young people with university education was approximately twice as high as that reported by participants without formal education.

### 3.4 Link between satisfaction with living conditions and life satisfaction

As shown in Table 1, life satisfaction experienced during the past month demonstrated moderate positive correlations with several other factors ( $p < .001$  in all cases). Specifically, life satisfaction was positively associated with satisfaction with housing conditions ( $r = .392$ ), living space ( $r = .360$ ), neighborhood or community satisfaction ( $r = .344$ ), satisfaction with recreational and entertainment areas in the neighborhood or community ( $r = .259$ ), satisfaction with personal financial status ( $r = .416$ ), job satisfaction ( $r = .395$ ), and commuting time from home to work ( $r = .256$ ).

**Table 1:** Correlations Between Life Satisfaction and Housing Conditions, Living Space and Neighborhood/Community Satisfaction

Variable	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Satisfaction with housing conditions (1–10 scale)	.392**	.000	2041
Satisfaction with living space	.360**	.000	2041
Satisfaction with neighborhood/community	.344**	.000	2041
Satisfaction with recreational/entertainment areas in the neighborhood/community	.259**	.000	2041

Note.  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

#### 4. Discussion

The present study examined the relationships between living conditions, socioeconomic factors, and life satisfaction among a nationally representative sample of young people in Albania, addressing an important gap in empirical youth research in transitional contexts. Overall, the findings indicate that Albanian youth report moderate levels of life satisfaction and generally positive evaluations of their housing conditions, but they also reveal substantial inequalities linked to education, employment, and access to community resources.

The observed associations between housing satisfaction and life satisfaction are consistent with international evidence highlighting the importance of residential environments for subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2003). Young people who were more satisfied with their housing conditions and living space reported higher levels of overall life satisfaction, reinforcing the view that material living conditions constitute a key component of youth well-being. Similarly, satisfaction with neighborhood and community environments showed positive correlations with life satisfaction, supporting prior findings that safe and supportive communities foster emotional security and social belonging (Parkes et al., 2002; WHO, 2014). However, the high levels of dissatisfaction with recreational and entertainment facilities observed in this study suggest that many Albanian communities may not be adequately meeting young people’s developmental and social needs.

Socioeconomic disparities emerged as a central theme in the findings. Employment and educational attainment were significantly associated with both housing satisfaction and life satisfaction, echoing international research linking socioeconomic stability to better overall satisfaction (OECD, 2020; Paul & Moser, 2009). Employed participants and those with higher levels of education reported greater satisfaction across multiple domains, while young people with low education and low household income were more likely to report emotional distress. These patterns align with broader models of social determinants of life satisfaction, which emphasize the cumulative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on well-being (Marmot, 2005).

The perception of physical safety within neighborhoods further underscores the importance of environmental factors. Although most participants reported feeling safe, a significant minority expressed insecurity, particularly younger adolescents and those from low-income households. Perceived safety has been shown to influence both life satisfaction and community engagement (Fone et al., 2007), and these findings highlight the need for targeted interventions in disadvantaged areas.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study highlights that youth well-being in Albania is shaped by a complex interaction between material living conditions, socioeconomic status, and life satisfaction. Although overall life satisfaction among young people was moderate, the findings reveal clear inequalities linked to education, employment, and income. Young people with stronger socioeconomic resources consistently reported higher satisfaction.

A second important conclusion concerns the role of the living environment. Satisfaction with housing conditions and neighborhood characteristics was closely associated with overall life satisfaction, indicating that everyday environments significantly influence how young people perceive their quality of life. At the same time, widespread dissatisfaction with recreational and community facilities suggests that many young people experience limited opportunities for social engagement and leisure, which may weaken social connectedness and emotional resilience.

The study also underscores the vulnerability of specific subgroups. Transitional life stages—particularly entry into

higher education and the labor market—appear to represent sensitive periods during which life satisfaction may fluctuate. These patterns emphasize that youth well-being is not uniform but varies across demographic and socioeconomic lines.

These findings carry important policy implications. Improving youth well-being requires integrated interventions that address both material and social dimensions. Policies aimed at strengthening access to education and stable employment, improving housing quality, and expanding safe recreational and community spaces may contribute to better outcomes for young people. Targeted support for vulnerable subgroups—particularly low-income and less-educated youth—should be prioritized within national youth and social development strategies. Enhancing local community infrastructure and youth-oriented services may also foster greater social inclusion and emotional resilience.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions, and reliance on self-reported data may introduce reporting bias. In addition, the study focused primarily on structural and socioeconomic variables and did not fully capture family dynamics or qualitative aspects of youth experiences. Future research using longitudinal and mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insight into the mechanisms linking living conditions and emotional well-being.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable evidence on the multidimensional determinants of youth life satisfaction in Albania. The results underscore the need for coordinated policy responses that address structural inequalities while promoting supportive environments that enable young people to thrive

## 6. Acknowledgments

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