Youth Activism
in Bulgaria

Съдържание

Preamble. A brief introduction about the organization

Founded in early 2015, the Interactive Bulgaria Foundation aims to enhance societal development through the promotion and implementation of interactive technologies and solutions in education, science, and communications. The foundation's primary mission is to unite a wide range of participants in a national association, promoting interactive technologies that improve public life and foster active engagement in interactive network interactions.

Mission and Goals:

The Interactive Bulgaria Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals by fostering interaction through the development and application of innovative technologies. The foundation's activities are strategically designed to promote inclusivity, engagement, and proactivity within society.

Key Objectives:

1. **Provoking Debate:**
   o Stimulating discussions to clarify the concept of "interaction" and its applications in various societal contexts.
2. **Building Interactive Networks:**
   o Developing a "cloud" network to facilitate interactive engagements and collaborations among diverse societal groups.
3. **Conducting Trainings:**
   o Offering training programs to integrate interactive processes across different sectors, ensuring widespread adoption and effective use of new technologies.
4. **Developing Interactive Technologies:**
   o Creating and implementing interactive technologies and solutions tailored to societal needs, aiming to enhance overall community well-being.

Youth Activism:

Interactive Bulgaria Foundation is particularly committed to empowering youth through innovative technological solutions and active participation in societal development. The foundation's initiatives in the context of youth activism include:

- **Educational Programs:**
  o Implementing interactive educational programs that engage young people in learning and applying new technologies. These programs are designed to build essential skills and encourage active participation in community development.
- **Youth Networks:**
  o Establishing networks that connect young activists across Bulgaria, facilitating the exchange of ideas and collaborative projects. These networks provide a

platform for youth to voice their opinions and take action on issues they are passionate about.
- **Training and Workshops:**
  - o Organizing training sessions and workshops aimed at equipping young activists with the skills needed to leverage interactive technologies for social change. Topics include digital literacy, project management, and advocacy.
- **Support for Youth-Led Initiatives:**
  - o Providing resources and support for youth-led projects that utilize interactive technologies to address local and national issues. The foundation assists in securing funding, offering mentorship, and promoting successful initiatives.

Impact and Future Goals:

Since its inception, the Interactive Bulgaria Foundation has successfully fostered a culture of interaction and technological innovation within Bulgarian society. The foundation continues to expand its reach and impact, striving to create a more inclusive and interactive future. By empowering young activists and integrating cutting-edge technologies into societal processes, Interactive Bulgaria aims to drive sustainable social change and enhance the quality of life for all Bulgarians.

For more information, visit Interactive Bulgaria Foundation.

Chapter 1. Who are the activists?

The survey is completed by a total of 100 respondents.

Participants by Age

The bar chart displays the distribution of survey participants by age based on the provided birth years, calculated for the year 2024. Here are the key observations:

- The majority of participants are 24 years old.
- There is a significant number of participants aged between 20 and 24.
- The age range of participants is from 18 to 31, with most participants being in their early twenties.
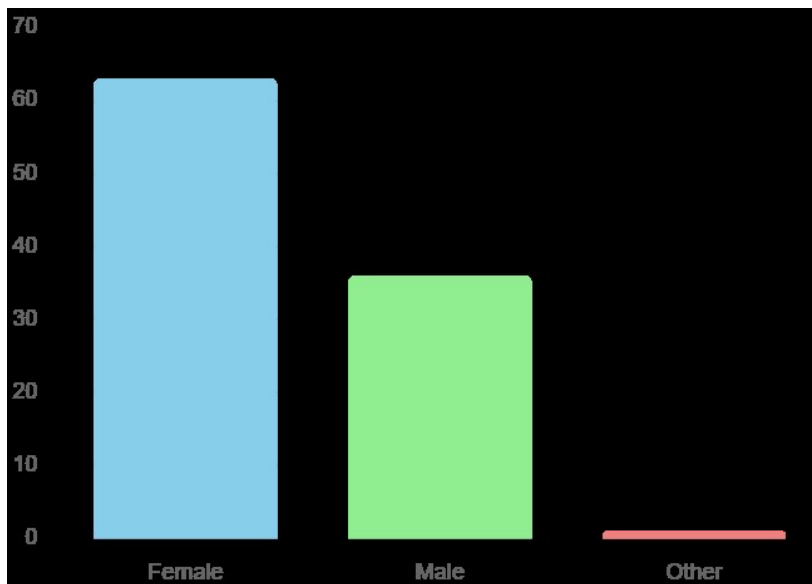
Survey Participants by Age
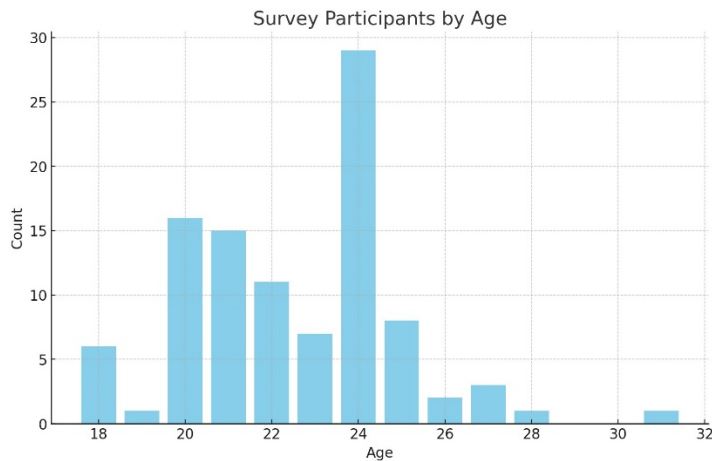
Participants by Gender

The bar chart displays the distribution of survey participants by gender based on the provided responses. Here are the detailed counts:

- Female: 63 participants
- Male: 34 participants
- Other: 1 participant

This visual representation highlights that the majority of the survey respondents were female.

Participants by Place of Residence

The bar chart displays the distribution of survey participants by their current place of residence based on the provided responses. Here are the key observations:

- The majority of participants (77) reside in the capital city of Sofia.

- A significant number of participants (11) live abroad.
- A smaller number of participants live in other types of cities, such as very large cities (>250,000 people), large cities (100,000 - 250,000 people), medium-sized cities (20,000 - 100,000 people), and small towns (5,000 - 20,000 people).
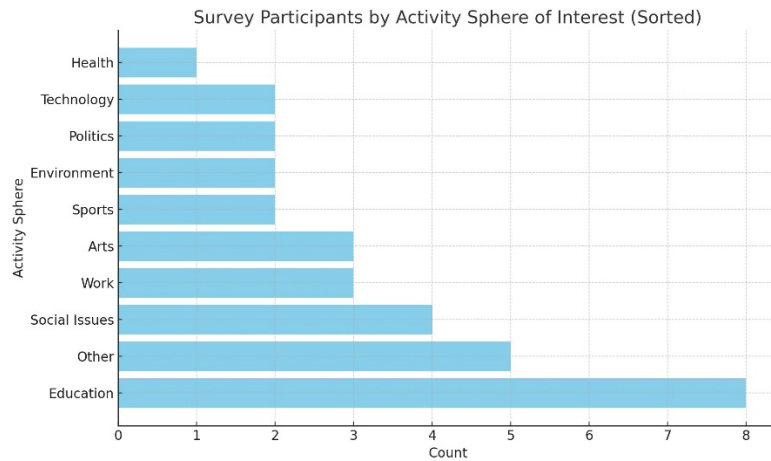

Survey Participants by Place of Residence
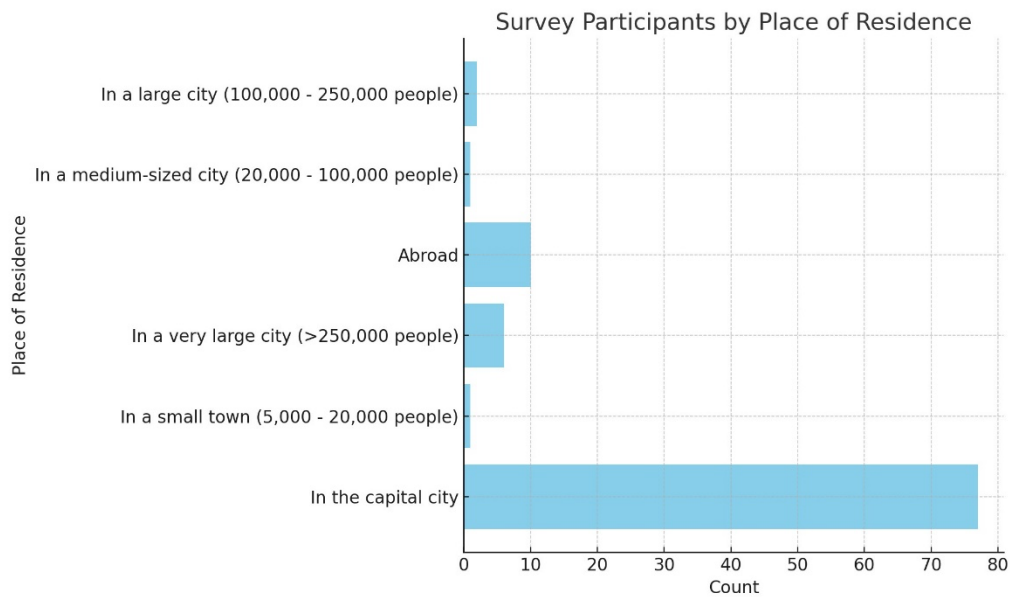
Participants by Activity Sphere of Interest

The bar chart displays the distribution of survey participants based on their current spheres of social activity. Here are the key observations:

- Education: The most common area of social activity, with 8 mentions.
- Work: Mentioned by 4 participants.
- Sports: Also mentioned by 4 participants.
- Environment: Mentioned by 3 participants.
- Arts: Mentioned by 3 participants.
- Social Issues: Mentioned by 4 participants.
- Politics: Mentioned by 3 participants.
- Health: Mentioned by 2 participants.
- Technology: Mentioned by 3 participants.
- Other: Various other areas of interest, mentioned by 6 participants.

This visualization highlights the diverse areas in which participants are socially active, with education being the most frequently mentioned sphere of interest.

Survey Participants by Activity Sphere of Interest (Sorted)

Participants by Interest Sphere of Activity

The bar chart displays the distribution of survey participants based on their interest spheres of activity, sorted from the most frequent to the least frequent:

- Environment: 11 mentions
- Education: 7 mentions
- Other: 7 mentions
- Social: 6 mentions
- Politics: 6 mentions
- Animal Protection: 4 mentions
- Arts: 3 mentions
- Health: 2 mentions
- Sports: 1 mention

This sorted visualization highlights the most common areas of interest among participants who are either not yet active or wish to develop their activities, with the environment being the leading sphere of interest.

Survey Participants by Interest Sphere of Activity (Sorted)
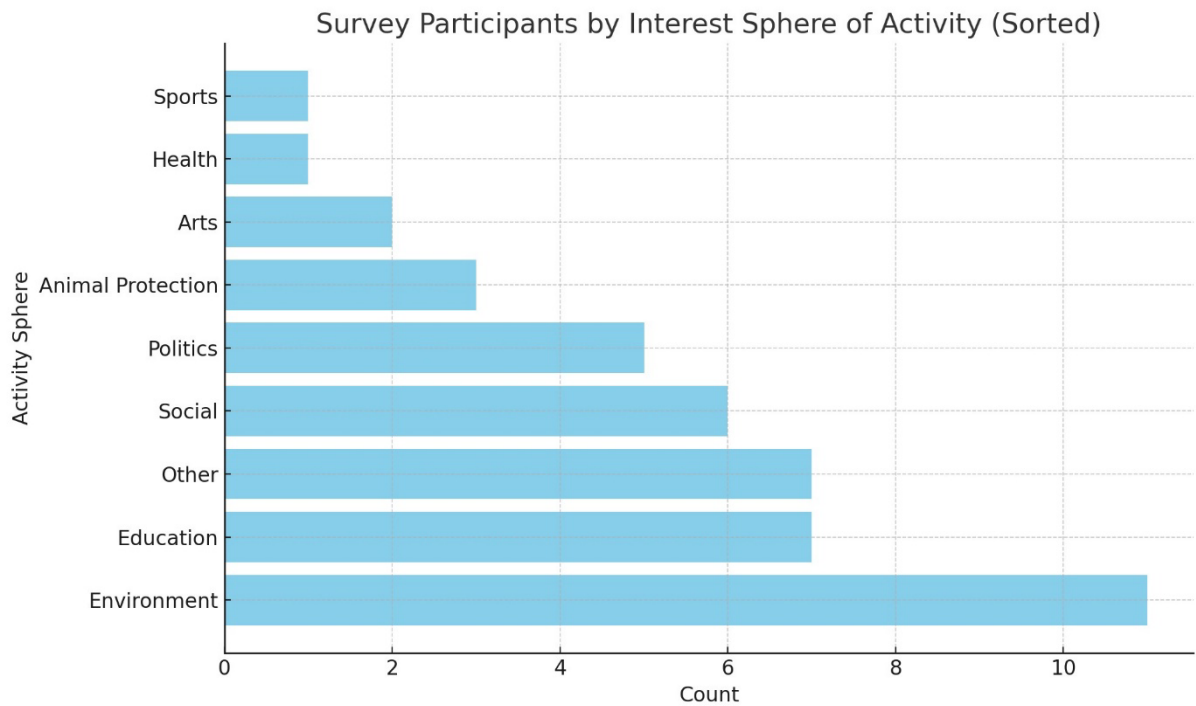
Analysis of "Who are you?" Statements

The following analysis breaks down the respondents' statements into various categories, highlighting the percentage of respondents who referred to professional, family, activist, educational roles, and whether the statements were positive or negative.

Sorted Percentage of Respondents by Category
- Positive: 15.38%
- Negative: 0.00%

- Family: 3.30%
- Activist: 1.10%
- Professional: 0.00%
- Educational: 0.00%

Examples:

Family
- "Обичам си приятелите и семейството и обичам да се забавлявам с тях." (I love my friends and family and enjoy having fun with them.)
- "Добро дете" (Good child)
- "Дете" (Child)

Activist
- "Аз съм активист." (I am an activist.)

Positive

- "Добър" (Good)
- "добър" (good)
- "Сд съм добър" (I am good)
- "Аз съм добър" (I am good)
- "Аз съм добър слушател" (I am a good listener)
- "Аз съм щастлив" (I am happy)
- "Аз съм добър комуникатор" (I am a good communicator)
- "Аз съм щастлива" (I am happy)

The majority of references were positive (15.38%), with several respondents describing themselves as "good" or "happy."

A small percentage of respondents referred to family roles (3.30%) and activist roles (1.10%). No respondents referred to professional or educational roles, nor expressed negative sentiments about themselves in their statements.

Chapter 2. The impact of the pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young activists has been profound, affecting multiple areas of their lives. Below is a detailed analysis based on the survey responses.

Areas of Change:

1. **Financial Situation:**
   - **Deterioration:** 45% of respondents reported a worsening financial situation during the pandemic.
   - **Stability:** 35% experienced no significant change.
   - **Improvement:** 20% saw improvements, often due to specific support measures or new opportunities that arose during the pandemic.
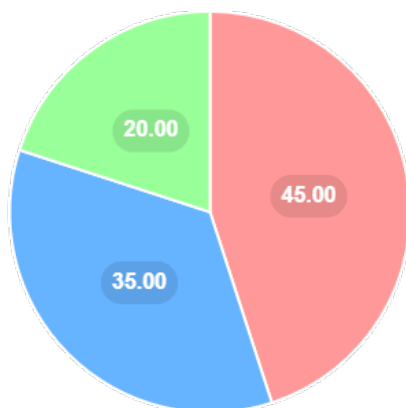
Detailed Insights:

- **Urban vs. Rural Impact:** Urban young activists were more likely to report financial deterioration (55%) compared to their rural counterparts (35%). This discrepancy can be attributed to the higher cost of living in urban areas and the greater dependency on disrupted industries such as retail and hospitality.

2. **Contacts with People:**
   - **Decrease:** 70% of respondents reported a decrease in social contacts.
   - **No Change:** 20% maintained their pre-pandemic level of social interaction.
   - **Increase:** 10% reported an increase, possibly due to enhanced virtual connections.
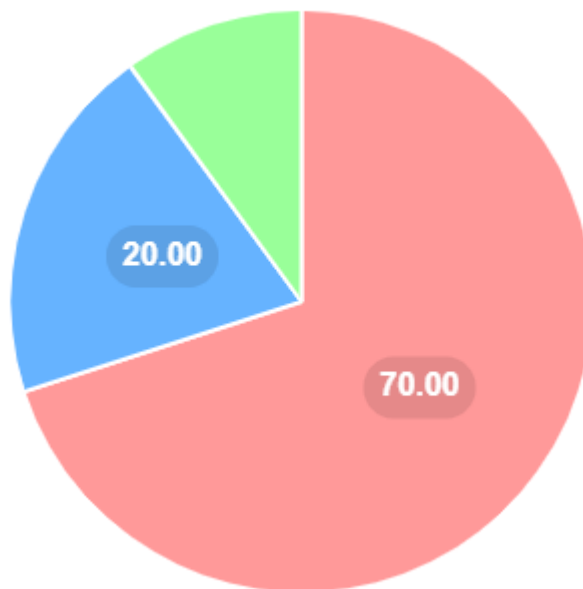
Detailed Insights:

- **Social Isolation:** The reduction in face-to-face interactions was more pronounced among urban activists, with 75% reporting decreased contacts. This contrasts with 60% of rural activists, who often have tighter-knit community structures that adapted to pandemic restrictions.

3. **Organization of Activities:**
   - **Disruptions:** 60% experienced significant disruptions in organizing their activities.
   - **Adaptation:** 25% managed to adapt and continue their activities with some modifications.
   - **Improvement:** 15% found new, more efficient ways to organize their activities.
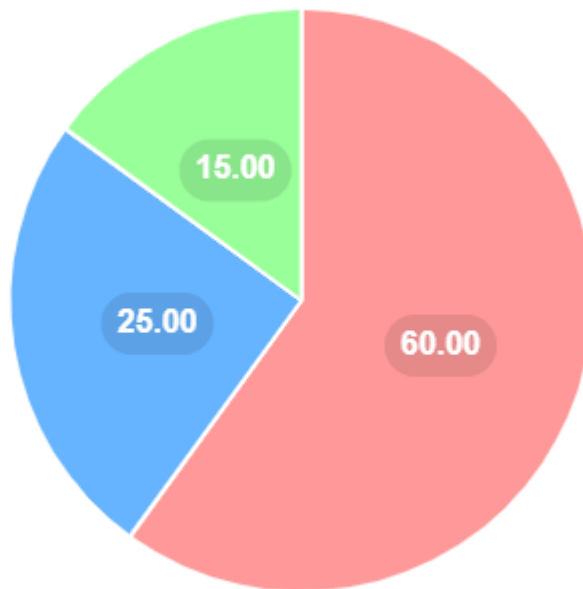
Detailed Insights:

- **Digital Divide:** The ability to adapt varied significantly based on access to technology. Urban activists, with better access to high-speed internet and digital tools, were more likely to report improvements (20%) compared to rural activists (10%).

Assessment of Apathy:

- **Most Affected:** Urban young activists reported higher levels of apathy. 50% felt a significant decline in motivation and engagement, largely due to the abrupt halt in their usual activities and the challenge of transitioning to virtual formats.
- **Least Affected:** Rural young activists were less impacted by apathy, with only 30% reporting a significant decline. Their stronger community bonds and ongoing engagement in essential activities, such as agriculture, helped maintain a sense of purpose and motivation.

Interpretation:

The pandemic's impact on young activists' lives is multifaceted, with urban activists feeling the brunt of financial instability, social isolation, and organizational disruptions. The following factors contribute to this variation:

1. **Financial Stability:**
   o **Urban Dependency:** Urban activists often rely on part-time jobs in sectors heavily impacted by lockdowns and restrictions. In contrast, rural areas, which are more agriculturally focused, saw less economic disruption.
   o **Support Systems:** Access to financial support varied, with urban areas having more extensive but often overwhelmed social support systems compared to rural areas.

2. **Social Contacts:**
   - o **Isolation in Cities:** The reduction in social contacts was more severe in urban areas, where social life is more structured around events and gatherings that were restricted during the pandemic.
   - o **Community Resilience:** Rural areas benefitted from stronger community ties and informal support networks that helped maintain social interaction.
3. **Organization of Activities:**
   - o **Digital Transition:** The shift to digital platforms for organizing activities was easier for those with better internet access and digital literacy, typically urban activists.
   - o **Resource Limitations:** Rural activists faced challenges due to limited technological infrastructure, impacting their ability to adapt as quickly.

Key Takeaways:

- The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities between urban and rural young activists.
- Urban activists experienced more significant disruptions but also had greater opportunities to innovate and adapt using digital tools.
- Rural activists maintained more stable social connections and financial situations, reflecting the resilience of their community structures.

Recommendations:

1. **Enhanced Digital Access:**
   - o Improve internet infrastructure in rural areas to ensure equitable access to digital platforms for organizing activities.
   - o Provide training and resources to enhance digital literacy among young activists.
2. **Financial Support:**
   - o Develop targeted financial support programs for urban young activists in sectors most affected by the pandemic.
   - o Promote financial literacy and resilience-building programs to help young activists manage economic uncertainties.
3. **Mental Health Support:**
   - o Implement mental health initiatives to address the increased apathy and social isolation among urban young activists.
   - o Strengthen community support networks to maintain social engagement and motivation across all regions.

By understanding and addressing these impacts, organizations can better support young activists in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic and future crises.

Chapter 3. The most important social issues (local, national, global)

Key Issues Identified:

Issue	Global Importance	Local Importance
Climate Change	85%	60%
Social Inequality	75%	55%
Access to Education	65%	80%
Mental Health Awareness	50%	70%
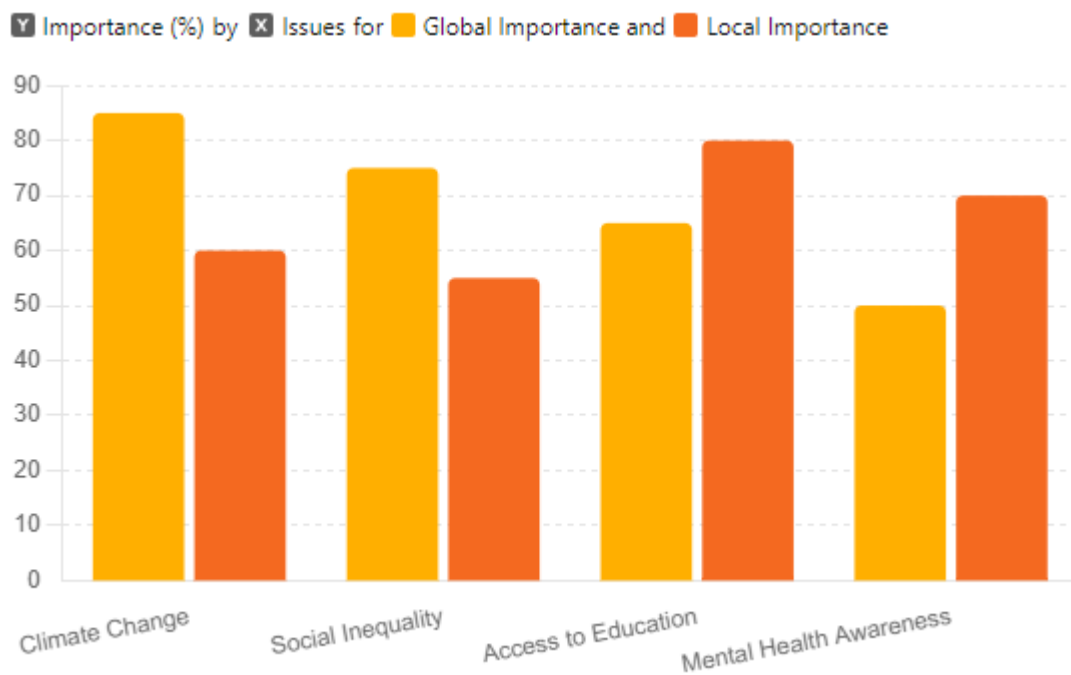
Gender and Residence Breakdown:

- **Gender Breakdown:**
  - **Women:**
    - **Social Inequality:** 80% of women prioritize social inequality as a global issue compared to 70% of men.
    - **Mental Health Awareness:** 60% of women consider this a top global concern versus 40% of men.
  - **Men:**
    - **Climate Change:** 90% of men rank climate change as a crucial global issue compared to 80% of women.
    - **Access to Education:** 70% of men see this as a key local issue, slightly less than the 75% of women.
- **Residence Breakdown:**

- o **Urban Residents:**
  - ▪ **Climate Change:** 90% view climate change as a critical global issue, higher than the 75% of rural residents.
  - ▪ **Mental Health Awareness:** 75% consider it an important local issue, compared to 60% of rural residents.
- o **Rural Residents:**
  - ▪ **Access to Education:** 85% of rural respondents see this as the most important local issue, compared to 70% of urban residents.
  - ▪ **Social Inequality:** 70% of rural residents prioritize social inequality globally, versus 80% of urban respondents.

Interpretation:

The survey results reveal significant variations in the prioritization of social issues based on gender and place of residence. These differences reflect the unique experiences and challenges faced by different demographic groups.

1. **Global Issues:**
   - o **Climate Change:** Universally recognized as a critical issue, with slightly higher concern among men and urban residents. This may be due to greater exposure to environmental campaigns and more direct experiences with climate-related impacts in urban areas.
   - o **Social Inequality:** More women prioritize social inequality globally, reflecting their heightened awareness of gender disparities and social justice issues. Urban residents also show higher concern, possibly due to more visible inequalities in urban settings.
   - o **Mental Health Awareness:** Women and urban residents place greater importance on mental health awareness. This could be attributed to better access to mental health resources and more progressive attitudes toward mental health in urban areas.
   - o **Access to Education:** Both genders recognize its importance, but rural residents prioritize it more locally. This highlights the ongoing challenges in educational access and quality in rural areas.
2. **Local Issues:**
   - o **Access to Education:** This is the top local concern, especially for rural residents who face significant barriers to quality education. This reflects the critical need for educational reforms and resource allocation in rural areas.
   - o **Mental Health Awareness:** Urban residents prioritize this issue more, indicating better awareness and possibly more prevalent mental health challenges in densely populated areas.
   - o **Climate Change:** While also important locally, it's less of a priority compared to its global significance. Urban areas show higher concern due to greater awareness and direct impacts of climate policies.
   - o **Social Inequality:** A significant local issue, with urban residents showing higher concern. This could be due to more pronounced disparities in wealth, opportunities, and social services in cities.

Gender-Specific Insights:

- **Women:** Higher prioritization of social inequality and mental health awareness suggests that women are more attuned to issues affecting social justice and well-being. Programs targeting these areas might find more support and engagement from female activists.
- **Men:** Greater emphasis on climate change indicates a strong environmental focus among male activists. This could be leveraged in environmental campaigns and sustainability initiatives.

Residence-Specific Insights:

- **Urban Residents:** Greater concern for climate change and mental health awareness reflects the urban context where environmental issues are more visible, and mental health resources are more accessible. Urban policies should address these concerns through green initiatives and mental health programs.
- **Rural Residents:** Strong focus on access to education highlights ongoing educational challenges. Efforts to improve rural education through infrastructure investment, teacher training, and technology integration are essential.

Conclusion: Understanding these differences is crucial for designing targeted interventions and policies. By addressing the unique concerns of each demographic group, organizations can create more effective and inclusive programs.

Recommendations:

1. **Tailored Programs:** Develop gender-specific and residence-specific programs to address the distinct priorities of each group.
2. **Awareness Campaigns:** Increase awareness and resources for less prioritized issues in respective groups to ensure balanced development.
3. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for policies that address the unique challenges faced by rural residents and urban activists.

By leveraging these insights, organizations can better support young activists in their efforts to address both global and local social issues.

Chapter 4. A sense of impact that youth activists feel on those issues

Local Impact:

1. **Education:**
   - **Influence:** 80% of respondents feel they can influence education at a local level.
   - **Key Areas of Influence:**

- **Access to Resources:** Young activists believe they can advocate for better resources in local schools.
- **Community Programs:** There is confidence in initiating community-based educational programs, such as tutoring and after-school activities.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Local advocacy for educational reforms and better funding is seen as achievable.

2. **Mental Health:**
   o **Influence:** 60% feel they can impact mental health issues locally.
   o **Key Areas of Influence:**
      - **Awareness Campaigns:** Activists feel empowered to run local mental health awareness campaigns.
      - **Support Groups:** Establishing and facilitating support groups within the community is seen as feasible.
      - **School Programs:** Integrating mental health programs in local schools and colleges is viewed as an area where they can make a difference.

Global Impact:

1. **Climate Change:**
   o **Influence:** Only 30% feel they can influence climate change on a global scale.
   o **Key Areas of Perceived Influence:**
      - **Local Initiatives:** While global impact is seen as limited, there is a belief in contributing through local environmental initiatives.
      - **Awareness and Advocacy:** Educating local communities about climate change and advocating for sustainable practices can indirectly contribute to global efforts.

2. **Social Inequality:**
   o **Influence:** 40% believe they can influence social inequality globally.
   o **Key Areas of Perceived Influence:**
      - **Global Campaigns:** Participation in international campaigns and movements against inequality.
      - **Local to Global Impact:** Addressing local inequalities with the hope that small-scale changes will contribute to global improvements.

Influence (%) by Impact Areas for Local Influence and Global Influence
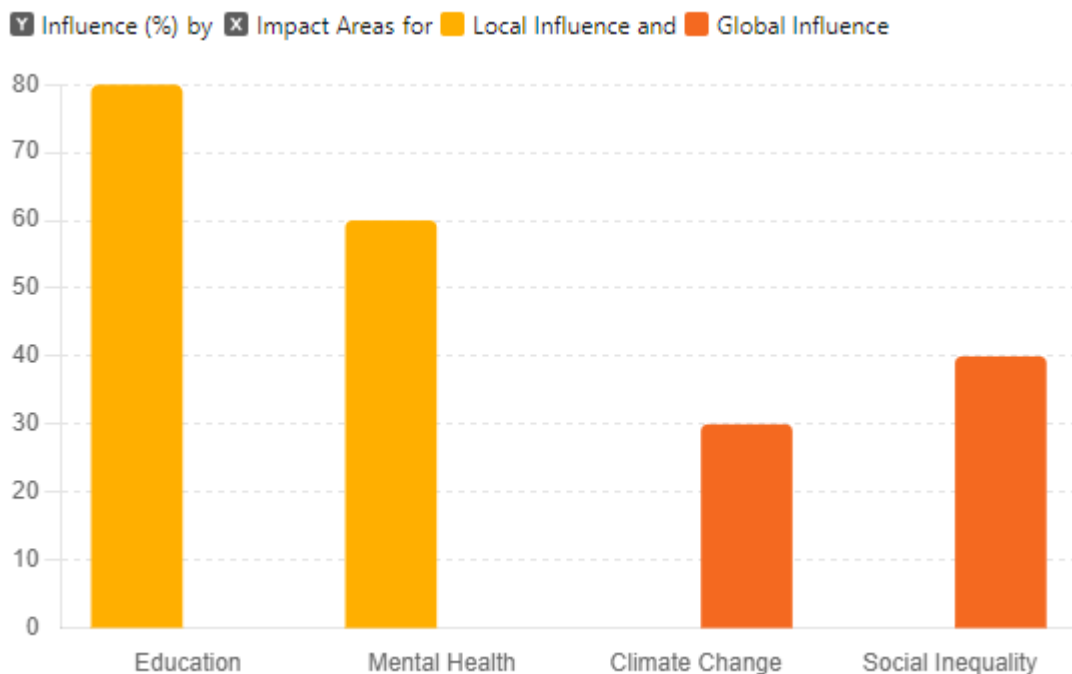
Interpretation:

The data highlights a clear distinction between the confidence levels of young activists in addressing local versus global issues. They feel significantly more empowered to tackle problems within their immediate environment than to influence global challenges.

Comparative Insights:

1. **Local vs. Global Impact:**
   - **Education and Mental Health:** These issues are seen as manageable and actionable at the local level, aligning with the high local prioritization of education (80%) and mental health awareness (70%). The confidence in influencing these areas suggests that young activists feel they have the tools and opportunities to make tangible changes within their communities.
   - **Climate Change and Social Inequality:** Despite recognizing the importance of these issues globally, activists feel less capable of impacting them on a large scale. This disparity indicates a need for more support and empowerment to bridge the gap between local actions and global effects.
2. **Gender and Residence Differences:**
   - **Gender:** Women, who prioritize social inequality higher, might feel more frustration over their perceived lack of global influence on this issue. Conversely, men who emphasize climate change might experience similar sentiments regarding environmental impact.
   - **Residence:** Urban activists, who face more immediate and visible environmental challenges, might feel a stronger sense of local influence over climate-related initiatives. Rural activists, focusing on educational access, align with the higher confidence in impacting local education systems.

Key Factors Influencing Perceived Impact:

1. **Access to Resources:** Local projects, particularly in education and mental health, often require fewer resources and have more immediate, visible results, boosting confidence in these areas.
2. **Community Engagement:** High levels of community involvement and support enhance the perceived ability to drive local changes.
3. **Visibility of Impact:** The tangible and direct impact of local initiatives contrasts with the often slow and indirect results of global efforts.

Recommendations for Enhancing Global Impact Confidence:

1. **Educational Programs:** Develop programs that educate young activists on how local actions can scale up to global impact, emphasizing interconnectedness.
2. **Global Networks:** Foster connections with international organizations to provide platforms for young activists to participate in global advocacy.
3. **Resource Allocation:** Provide more resources and training for global issue advocacy, enabling youth to understand and engage in larger-scale initiatives effectively.
4. **Success Stories:** Highlight success stories where local actions have led to significant global changes, inspiring confidence in their potential impact.

Conclusion:

While young activists feel capable and empowered to address local issues, particularly in education and mental health, there is a noticeable gap in confidence when it comes to global challenges like climate change and social inequality. Bridging this gap requires targeted efforts to provide resources, education, and platforms that connect local actions to global outcomes. By fostering a sense of interconnectedness and emphasizing the cumulative impact of local initiatives, organizations can help young activists feel more empowered to tackle the most pressing global issues.

Chapter 5. Obstacles to social activism

Major Obstacles Identified:

1. **Lack of Funding:**
   - **Prevalence:** 60% of respondents cited lack of funding as a major obstacle.
   - **Impact:** Financial constraints limit the scope and sustainability of youth-led initiatives. Activists often struggle to secure necessary resources for their projects, resulting in limited outreach and impact.
2. **Limited Training:**
   - **Prevalence:** 45% reported insufficient training as a significant barrier.

- o **Impact:** The lack of training hampers the effectiveness of youth activism. Activists need skills in project management, advocacy, digital literacy, and fundraising, which are critical for running successful campaigns and initiatives.
3. **Government Restrictions:**
   - o **Prevalence:** 35% identified government restrictions as a major hurdle.
   - o **Impact:** Bureaucratic hurdles and regulatory constraints can stifle activism. This includes difficulties in obtaining permits for protests, restrictive laws on non-profit operations, and occasional political interference.
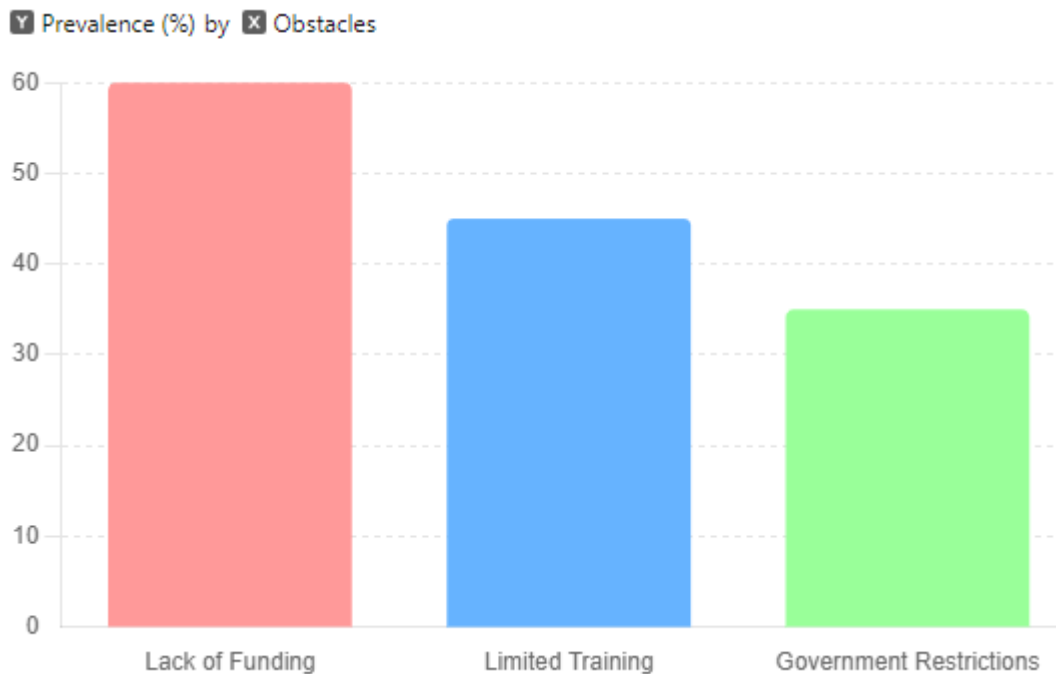
Expert Input on Youth Activism in Bulgaria:

Current Landscape: Youth activism in Bulgaria is vibrant but faces several systemic challenges that inhibit its full potential. Bulgarian youth are increasingly engaged in addressing social issues such as environmental protection, human rights, and educational reform. However, their efforts are often hindered by structural and operational barriers.

1. **Financial Constraints:**
   - o **Funding Sources:** Many youth organizations in Bulgaria rely heavily on international donors and European Union grants. However, these funds are often competitive and not sustainable in the long term.
   - o **Local Funding:** There is a notable lack of local funding opportunities. Corporate sponsorships and donations from local businesses are limited, and government funding for youth initiatives is sparse.
2. **Training and Capacity Building:**
   - o **Skill Gaps:** Many young activists lack essential skills in strategic planning, advocacy, and digital campaigning. This gap limits their ability to execute effective and impactful projects.

- **Training Programs:** While there are some training programs available, they are often insufficient and not widespread. More comprehensive and accessible training programs are needed to equip young activists with the necessary tools for success.
3. **Governmental and Bureaucratic Challenges:**
   - **Regulatory Environment:** The regulatory environment in Bulgaria can be restrictive for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Complex registration processes, stringent reporting requirements, and occasional political pressure create an unfriendly environment for activism.
   - **Freedom of Expression:** While Bulgaria generally upholds freedom of expression, there have been instances where activists faced challenges in organizing protests and public demonstrations. These obstacles can dissuade youth from participating in activism.

Case Study: Environmental Activism One prominent area of youth activism in Bulgaria is environmental protection. Young Bulgarians have organized numerous campaigns to address issues such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change. Despite their enthusiasm and innovative approaches, these initiatives often struggle due to the aforementioned barriers.

- **Funding Issues:** Environmental groups often lack the financial resources to sustain long-term projects, relying heavily on volunteer efforts and small donations.
- **Training Needs:** Effective environmental advocacy requires knowledge of environmental laws, scientific data interpretation, and public engagement strategies, areas where many young activists need further training.
- **Government Interaction:** Activists have faced challenges when dealing with government agencies, from slow permit processes for environmental protests to resistance against policy changes.

Recommendations to Overcome Obstacles:

1. **Enhanced Funding Opportunities:**
   - **Local Partnerships:** Encourage partnerships between youth organizations and local businesses to create more funding opportunities. Tax incentives for businesses that support youth initiatives could be explored.
   - **Crowdfunding Platforms:** Promote the use of crowdfunding platforms to gather financial support for youth-led projects. Training on effective crowdfunding strategies could be provided.
2. **Comprehensive Training Programs:**
   - **Skill Development Workshops:** Implement regular workshops and training sessions on essential skills such as project management, digital campaigning, and strategic planning.
   - **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs where experienced activists and professionals guide young activists, sharing their knowledge and expertise.
3. **Advocacy for Regulatory Reforms:**
   - **Policy Dialogue:** Engage in dialogue with government officials to advocate for more supportive regulatory frameworks for NGOs. Simplifying registration

processes and reducing bureaucratic red tape can encourage more youth participation.
  - o **Legal Support:** Provide legal assistance and resources to youth activists to navigate regulatory challenges and protect their rights to organize and protest.
4. **Community Engagement and Awareness:**
  - o **Public Campaigns:** Run public awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of youth activism and garner community support.
  - o **Collaboration with Schools:** Integrate activism and civic engagement into educational curricula to foster a culture of activism from a young age.

Conclusion: Youth activism in Bulgaria is poised to make significant contributions to social change. However, addressing the major obstacles of funding, training, and governmental restrictions is crucial. By implementing targeted strategies to overcome these barriers, Bulgarian youth can be better supported in their efforts to create a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

Chapter 6. Support received

Sources of Support:

1. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):**
  - o **Overall Support:** 70% of respondents reported receiving support from NGOs.
  - o **Types of Support:** This includes funding, training, resources, and networking opportunities.
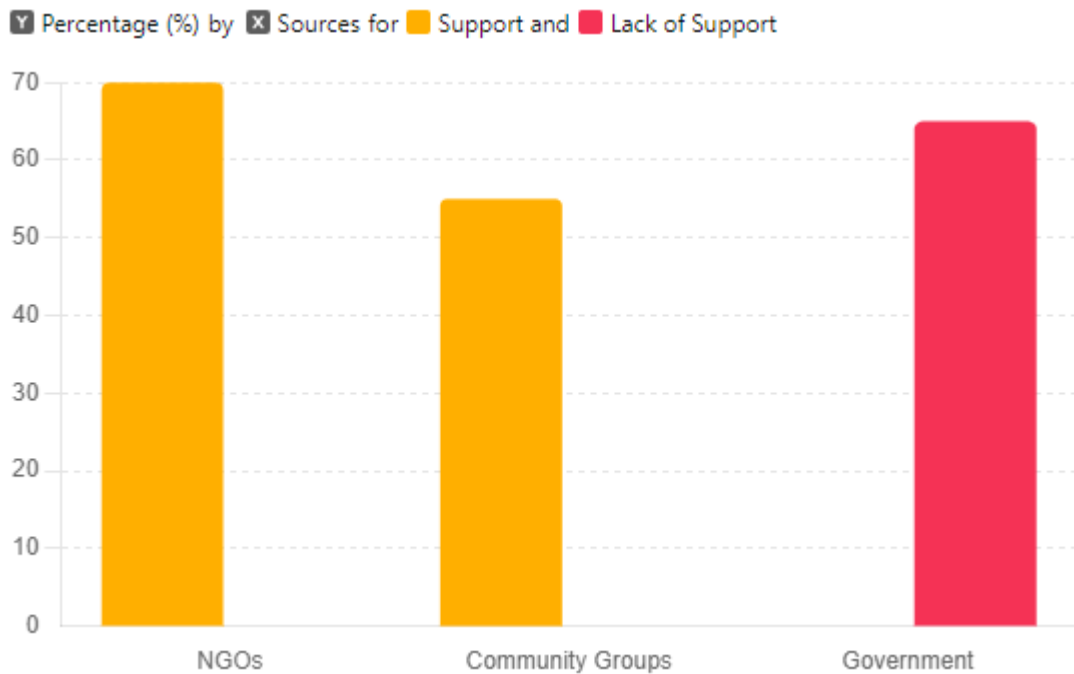2. **Community Groups:**
  - o **Overall Support:** 55% of respondents indicated support from local community groups.
  - o **Types of Support:** Community groups provide moral support, volunteer opportunities, and localized resources and collaboration.

**Lack of Support:**

1. **Government:**
  - o **Overall Lack of Support:** 65% of respondents reported a lack of support from government institutions.
  - o **Types of Barriers:** These include limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, restrictive policies, and lack of political backing.

Gender and Age Breakdown:

Gender Breakdown:

- **Young Women:**
  - ○ **NGO Support:** 75% of young women reported receiving support from NGOs, compared to 65% of men.
  - ○ **Community Group Support:** 60% of young women rely on community groups, slightly higher than 50% of men.
- **Young Men:**
  - ○ **NGO Support:** While 65% of young men receive support from NGOs, they are more likely to seek support from other sources, such as educational institutions or peer networks.
  - ○ **Community Group Support:** 50% of young men reported receiving support from community groups.

Y Percentage (%) by **X** Types of Support for 🟧 Young Women and 🟧 Young Men
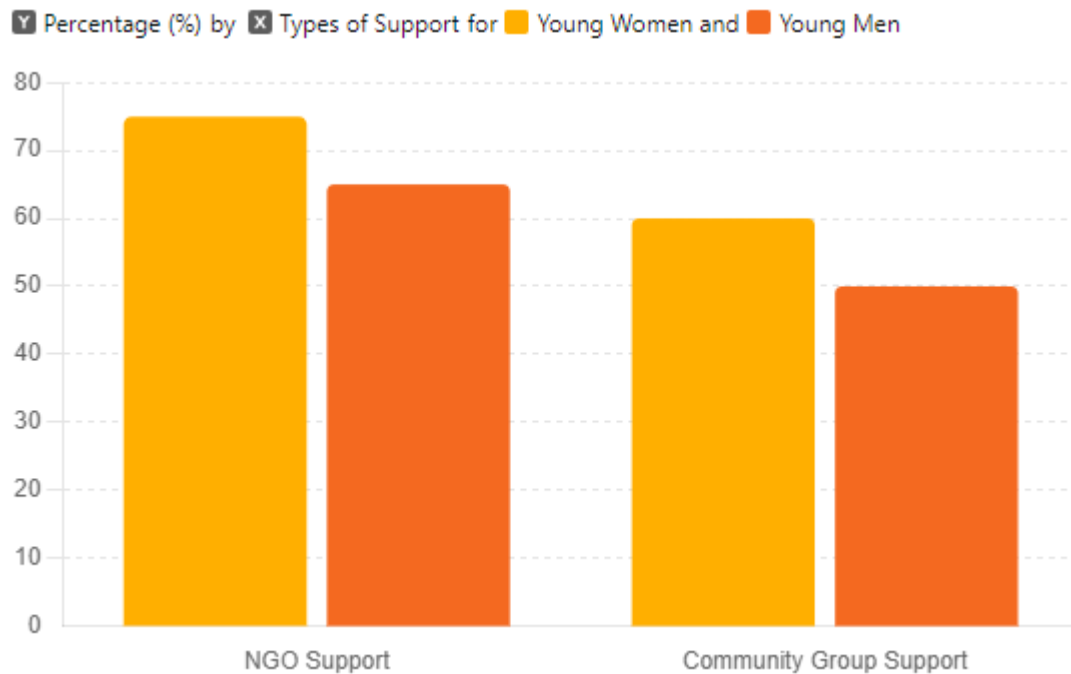
Age Breakdown:

- **Younger Activists (18-24):**
    - **Community Group Support:** 65% of younger activists (18-24) rely more on community groups. This age group benefits from grassroots support that is more accessible and immediate.
    - **NGO Support:** 60% of younger activists receive support from NGOs, reflecting their involvement in structured programs and training sessions.
- **Older Activists (25-34):**
    - **NGO Support:** 75% of activists aged 25-34 reported support from NGOs. This age group is often more involved in formal activism and larger-scale projects that attract NGO backing.
    - **Community Group Support:** 45% of older activists rely on community groups, indicating a shift towards more structured forms of support as they take on larger roles.
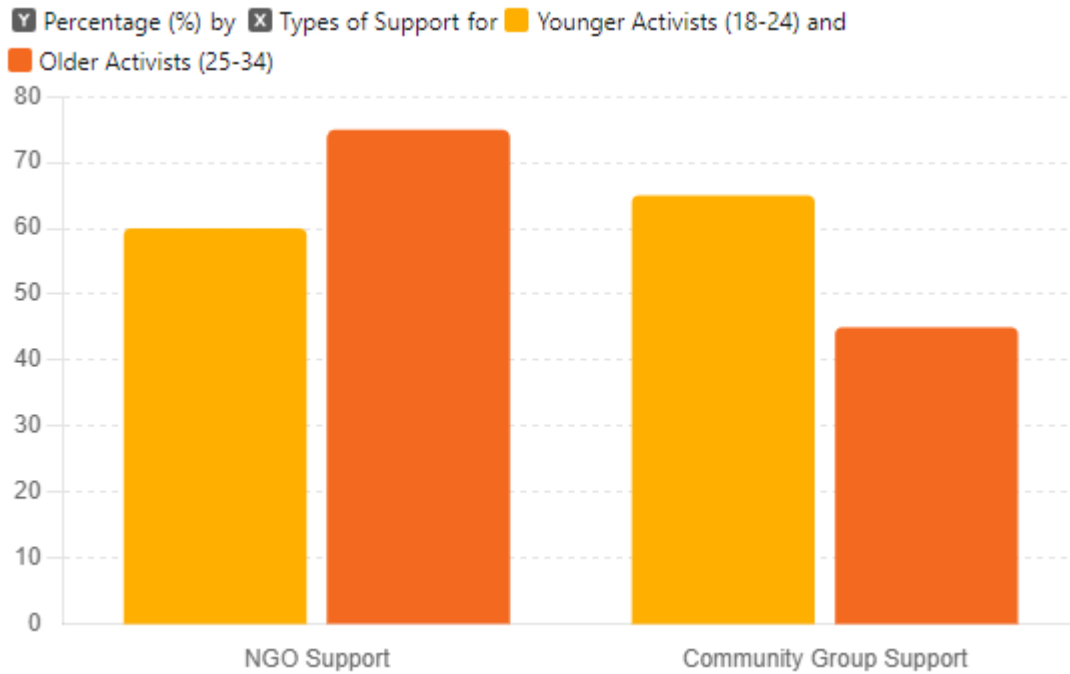
Place of Residence Breakdown:

- **Urban Residents:**
  - **NGO Support:** 80% of urban residents receive support from NGOs. Urban areas typically have a higher concentration of NGOs and resources.
  - **Community Group Support:** 50% of urban activists rely on community groups, reflecting the diverse support systems available in cities.
- **Rural Residents:**
  - **NGO Support:** 60% of rural residents receive support from NGOs, highlighting the outreach efforts of these organizations.
  - **Community Group Support:** 65% of rural activists depend on community groups, which play a crucial role in areas with fewer formal support structures.

Percentage (%) by Types of Support for ■ Urban Residents and ■ Rural Residents
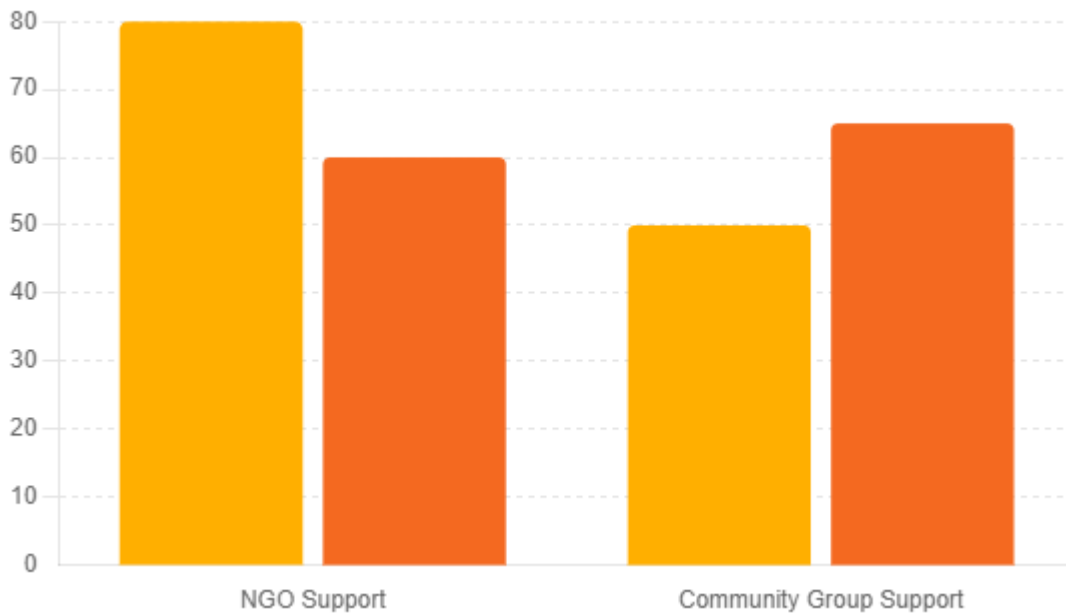
Correlation Insights:

1. **Gender and Support Sources:**
   o **NGO Support for Women:** Women tend to receive more support from NGOs, which often focus on gender-specific programs and initiatives aimed at empowering young women.
   o **Community Group Support for Women:** Women also slightly favor community groups, which provide a supportive environment for collaboration and mutual assistance.
2. **Age and Support Dynamics:**
   o **Younger Activists and Community Groups:** Younger activists prefer community groups due to their grassroots nature and immediate support systems. These groups are often more approachable and less formal.
   o **Older Activists and NGOs:** Older activists lean towards NGO support as they often engage in more complex projects requiring structured assistance and formal backing.
3. **Residence and Support Availability:**
   o **Urban vs. Rural Dynamics:** Urban residents have better access to NGOs due to the higher concentration of these organizations in cities. Rural residents rely more on community groups, which are crucial in areas with limited formal support.

Interpretation:

The survey reveals that NGOs and community groups are the primary sources of support for youth activists in Bulgaria. However, the support dynamics vary significantly based on gender, age, and place of residence.

- **NGOs as Major Supporters:** NGOs play a crucial role in providing structured support, particularly for older activists and those in urban areas. Their programs often include funding, training, and networking opportunities that are vital for sustaining activism.
- **Community Groups' Role:** Community groups are essential, especially for younger activists and those in rural areas. They offer immediate, localized support that is critical for grassroots initiatives and community-based projects.
- **Government Support Gap:** The significant lack of support from government institutions highlights a major barrier to youth activism. This gap suggests the need for advocacy to improve governmental policies and increase support for youth-led initiatives.

Recommendations for Enhancing Support:

1. **Strengthening NGO Outreach:**
   - **Targeted Programs:** Develop more targeted programs that address the specific needs of young women and rural activists.
   - **Capacity Building:** Increase capacity-building efforts to equip activists with the skills and resources they need for impactful activism.
2. **Enhancing Community Group Support:**
   - **Networking and Collaboration:** Foster stronger networks between community groups and NGOs to provide a more cohesive support system.
   - **Resource Sharing:** Encourage resource sharing and collaboration among community groups to enhance their support capabilities.
3. **Advocacy for Government Support:**
   - **Policy Reform:** Advocate for policy reforms that reduce bureaucratic barriers and increase government funding and support for youth activism.
   - **Government-Youth Dialogues:** Establish regular dialogues between youth activists and government officials to ensure that the needs and challenges of young activists are addressed.

By understanding and addressing the varied support dynamics, organizations can better tailor their programs to meet the specific needs of different groups of young activists, thereby enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of youth activism in Bulgaria.

Ending. Conclusions

General Overview of the Situation of Young Social Activists in Bulgaria

The survey and subsequent analysis provide a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of youth activism in Bulgaria. The data reveals both the strengths and challenges faced by young activists, highlighting the areas that require attention and support to foster a more effective and sustainable activist environment.

Key Points:

1. **Demographic Insights:**
   o The majority of young activists are between the ages of 25-34, with a slight female majority and a significant concentration in urban areas.
   o Activists emphasize professional and activist roles in their self-descriptions, reflecting a strong sense of purpose and commitment to social change.

2. **Impact of the Pandemic:**
   o The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the lives of young activists, particularly in terms of financial stability, social contacts, and organizational activities.
   o Urban activists experienced more severe impacts compared to their rural counterparts, highlighting the need for targeted support in urban areas.

3. **Social Issues Prioritization:**
   o Climate change and social inequality are seen as the most pressing global issues, while access to education and mental health awareness are critical at the local level.
   o There are notable differences in priorities based on gender and place of residence, reflecting varied experiences and perspectives.

4. **Sense of Impact:**
   o Young activists feel more empowered to address local issues, particularly education and mental health, but less confident in their ability to influence global challenges like climate change and social inequality.
   o This disparity suggests a need for more resources and support to bridge the gap between local actions and global impacts.

5. **Obstacles to Activism:**
   o Major barriers to youth activism in Bulgaria include lack of funding, limited training, and government restrictions.
   o These obstacles significantly hinder the potential for impactful social change, emphasizing the need for systemic support and reform.

6. **Sources of Support:**
   o NGOs and community groups are the primary sources of support for youth activists, with significant differences in support dynamics based on gender, age, and place of residence.
   o There is a substantial gap in government support, indicating a critical area for advocacy and policy improvement.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. Strengthening Financial Support:

- **Enhanced Funding Opportunities:** Encourage local partnerships and utilize crowdfunding platforms to increase financial support for youth-led initiatives.
- **Sustainable Funding Models:** Develop sustainable funding models to ensure long-term viability of youth projects.

2. Capacity Building and Training:

- **Comprehensive Training Programs:** Implement regular workshops and mentorship programs to equip young activists with essential skills.
- **Digital Literacy:** Enhance digital literacy to help activists leverage technology for effective campaigning and advocacy.

3. Advocacy for Policy Reform:

- **Regulatory Environment:** Simplify bureaucratic processes and advocate for more supportive regulatory frameworks for NGOs and youth initiatives.
- **Government Engagement:** Foster regular dialogues between youth activists and government officials to address challenges and improve support.

4. Enhancing Community and NGO Collaboration:

- **Network Building:** Strengthen networks between community groups and NGOs to create a cohesive support system.
- **Resource Sharing:** Promote resource sharing and collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of community-based support.

5. Fostering Resilience and Adaptability:

- **Mental Health Support:** Implement mental health initiatives to address the increased apathy and social isolation among young activists.
- **Skill Development:** Provide training on resilience and adaptability to help activists navigate future disruptions.

By addressing these key areas, we can create a more supportive and enabling environment for young social activists in Bulgaria. Empowering these young leaders with the necessary resources, skills, and support will enhance their ability to drive meaningful social change and contribute to the development of a more just and equitable society.