

SOCIAL POLICY - SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS RESEARCH IN THE CITY OF RETHYMNO-CRETE

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of migration is of timeless, transnational and multidimensional nature and the extent of the economic, social and cultural causes of its creation and its effects make it extremely complex, especially in conditions of globalization.

The economic and geopolitical changes taking place in Europe and around the world over the last twenty years could not leave our country intact. Greece, a "sending" country, turned into a country of immigration after the 80's. In Crete, particularly in the city of Rethymno, a relatively increased influx of immigrants was observed, in comparison with other regions of the country, due to the employment opportunities for foreigners in the area.

Our aim is, through the relevant literature and the use of field research, to approach the phenomenon of migration and immigrants' social exclusion as well as the policies implemented for their social integration.

In the context of this thesis, research was conducted to investigate the social integration of immigrants who lived permanently or seasonally in Rethymno, which was a highly complex process. The survey was conducted by completing a structured questionnaire, and was implemented in December 2012.

As a research tool, we used a questionnaire with 31 questions on personal data about marital status, educational level, reasons why they left their homeland, as well as data related to training programs in our country, employment, social security, attitude of the Greek society and the society of Rethymno-Crete and the attitude of the city's public-government agencies towards them in order to satisfy their needs during their stay. The Questionnaires were completed in the Voluntary Welfare Clinic of Rethymno. Indeed, all immigrants participating in the research enjoyed the free services of the clinic. Overall, while we addressed about 30 migrants only 15 (8 men and 7 women) agreed to respond. Many of them refused to participate in the survey because they do not have official documents for their stay in Greece.

The results of this survey show that the majority of immigrants came in Rethymno in order to settle down and live here for a long time. The majority of immigrants evaluate as favorable the living conditions of them and their family in the new host country. Therefore, the relationship between immigrants and the state and public agencies, as well as the local community, seems to be very important for the process of their integration in Greek society.

Finally, they are absolutely satisfied with the services provided by the Voluntary Welfare Clinic of Rethymno. This result indicates the important role of the clinic in the attempt for the "smooth" (gradual) social integration of immigrants in the local community.

Key Words: Immigration, Social Integration, Social Policy, Social Exclusion, Public-Government Agencies, Volunteer Clinic of Rethymno-Crete, Municipality

Social Policy και Immigrants

The meaning of the term «social policy»-Organizations of social policy

"Social Policy" is the science, which has as field of investigation the protection system for the weaker social classes aiming at social development.¹¹⁹

The main objective of social policy is the promotion of the welfare and prosperity of the citizens of a country with a focus on ensuring a safe, healthy and quality life. The safety, health and quality of life are the core of the concept of welfare and prosperity. An important element of the study of social policy is the way the welfare and prosperity is provided through policies and actions.

One other essential aspect is the study of the National Health Systems, how the concept of Health is defined as well as the ways in which it is promoted like the education systems in the light of the social dimension of education. Also, at the heart of social policy, there is the study of the citizens' material needs, accommodation needs, transportation needs as well as environmental factors. The redistribution of resources is a central objective in relation to the material needs of people and with focus on the income, the resources and the social security.

The Social Policy is provided at the state level through governmental actions and the organization of state and public Welfare bodies, by private and for-profit organizations, community volunteer organizations aiming at social care for people in need and finally by the informal care networks for family and family formations which play an important role in its study and promotion.

A social policy entity is "the organization of people and resources under a unified administration for the realization of objective social policy goals"¹²⁰.

The social policy organizations are the following:

I. Public entities. The leading public body is the State which sets the ground rules for the exercise of social policy.

II. Private entities: The main private organizations are a) social protection institutions, b) charity associations, c) labour unions that support their members, d) consortiums, e) firms that grant benefits to their staff.

III. International bodies: the main ones are: a) the Economic and Social Council of the UN, b) the World Health organization, c) Food and Agriculture Organization, d) the International Labour Organisation.

IV. European bodies such as the Council of Europe which aim at a greater unity between its members through co-operation in order the economic and social progress¹²¹ to be facilitated.

Parameters on which the social integration of immigrants depends

The integration of immigrants is a complex process and "is related to several parameters concerning structural elements of both the sending and the host countries of immigrants and the individual features of these displaced persons. It is also linked to official immigration policies and integration strategies adopted and implemented by the host country in order to achieve the smooth function of society which is ensured by social cohesion"¹²². The main indicators of the social integration of immigrants are:

- **Their integration into the labor market of the host country** (employment). According to the European Commission "the integration into society is identified with the integration to work."¹²³ Employment 'is a crucial mechanism for the integration of immigrants, not only for economic but also for social reasons."¹²⁴ It is very important for the integration of immigrants, the nature of their employment to be associated with their qualifications and skills, the level of their income to be adjusted to the socio-economic background, the labor law to be enforced (social insurance, etc.). Moreover, the development of entrepreneurship and self-employment of immigrants create a climate of acceptance by the host society and ultimately their social inclusion.

¹¹⁹ Vlachadi M., (2010), Special Issues of immigration policy- Social policy for child protection in Greece και European Union, Athens: Herodotos, p.15

¹²⁰ Vlachadi M., (2010), Special issues of immigration policy,, p.19

¹²¹ Vlachadi M., (2010), Special issues of immigration policy,, p.20-21

¹²² Kasimati K. (2009), " The country of origin of female immigrants and their social integration in Greece", Journal «Social Cohesion και Development», volume 4th,issue 1, Spring 2009, p. 8

¹²³ Kasimati K. (2009) " The country of origin of female immigrants and their social integration in Greece", p. 9

¹²⁴ Vlachadi M. (2009), Immigration policy of the European Union, p. 104

- **Accommodation.** It is a significant indicator for the evaluation of the integration of immigrants into society and is related to the recognition or not of the legal rights of immigrants, the discrimination they experience in the rental housing market (eg refusal to rent), to the formation of ghettos etc.

- **The legal or not stay of immigrants in the country** is a very important factor for their social integration. The legal residence (legalization) of immigrants is a key mechanism for their integration in the labor market and then for their integration in the host society. "It is commonly accepted that legalization is the key mechanism for the integration of immigrants of all countries of the world. The status of illegal immigrant is the basic typical factor for the exercise and reproduction of any kind of inequality, even in cases where the ground for the development of inequalities is not appropriate"¹²⁵.

- **The cycle of their social relationships.** When immigrants socialize with people of the local communities, it means that the natives have overcome prejudices and stereotypes and they can coexist and live in peace with them.

- **The access of immigrants to the Greek services** is a crucial indicator that shows the degree of integration of immigrants into Greek society. Their access to the national health system, public education, child day care centers and other social services, as well as agencies such as the Employment Agency, the Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, depends on their legal or not immigration and is an important aspect for their social inclusion.

- **The manifestation or not of racist practices on the part of the host society** is also a significant indicator which illustrates the degree of social integration. "In the host countries, the presence of foreigners, especially if they are large in number, negative stereotypes about them have been developed and in a part of the population the view that immigrants are a threat to social cohesion and in extreme cases the purity of the race, is dominant "¹²⁶. The existence of such perceptions is a hindrance to the integration of immigrants in host societies.

Results of research investigating the integration of foreign immigrants in the Municipality of Rethymno

In the context of this research, a survey was conducted for the investigation of the social integration of immigrants that reside permanently or seasonally in Rethymno. The survey was conducted by completing a structured questionnaire, and implemented in December 2012.

(The research questions were based mainly on the Research for the forms of social integration of economic immigrants in the Region of Attiki 2003-2004, the Institution of Employment of GSEE/ADEDY, http://www.immigrantwomen.gr/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=38:-2003-2004&catid=3:2010-05-27-07-48-21&Itemid=13&lang=el)

The social integration of immigrants is linked by a series of parameters most significant of which are: the way of entry into the country (legal or not), the time spent in the country, their legal or not stay in the country, their integration into the job market, the cycle of their social interactions, their relationship with the Greek services (health, education, Police, Employment Agency, Ministry of Interior Affairs, etc.), the manifestation of racist practices on the part of the host society, etc.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the degree of social integration of immigrants living and working in Rethymno, according to the above-mentioned parameters.

The majority of male and female immigrants in our sample were men and women of productive age, men were seasonal workers, mainly in construction, farming and rural tourism businesses, and the women were working as au pairs (elderly care) and seasonally in tourism businesses.

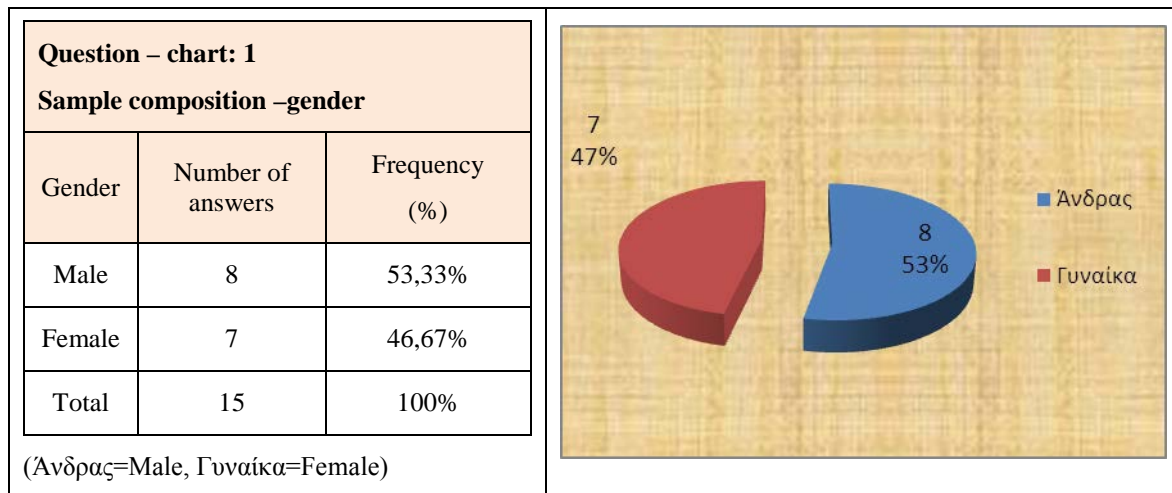
At this point, it should be noted that the sample cannot be regarded as representative, firstly because of the small number of participants, and secondly because the selection of participants was not made on a scientific basis. Nevertheless, some important conclusions are drawn that can be considered representative for both the degree of social exclusion of immigrants and their social inclusion, as well as how the immigrants themselves see their position in society of Rethymno.

¹²⁵ Papadopoulou D, (2009) The effect of legal residence in the social integration of immigrants in Greece, Journal «Social Cohesion και Development», volume 4th, issue 1, Spring 2009, p. 46-47.

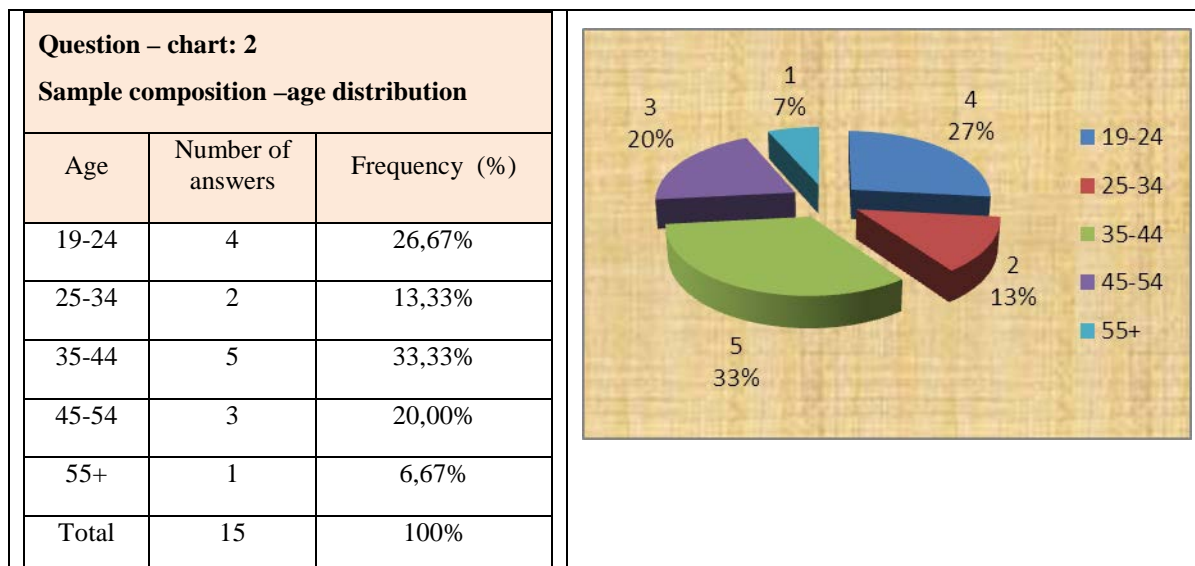
¹²⁶ Kasimati K., (2009), " The country of origin of female immigrants and their social integration in Greece", p.22

The Questionnaires were completed in the premises of Voluntary Welfare Clinic in Rethymno where I offer volunteer work. All immigrants who participated in the survey enjoy the free services of the clinic. It should be stated that there was great distrust by many immigrants to answer the questionnaire. Despite the fact that there was the assurance by me that the questionnaire is anonymous and for research work for the University, almost one in two refused to participate in the research. Overall, while I approached about 30 immigrants only 15 of them responded. Many of them refused to participate in the survey because they do not have the legal documents for their stay in Greece.

The main conclusions drawn from the research are the following: The survey involved 15 subjects, 8 males and 7 females. The distribution of our sample between the sexes is 53.33% male and 46.67% female (Question – chart 1)



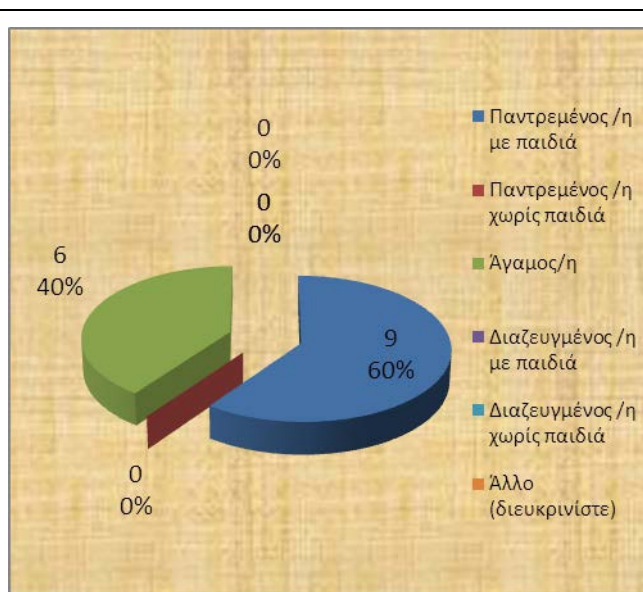
Regarding age, most of them belong to the productive age group: 26.67% are 19-24 years old, 13.33% 25-34 years old, 33.33% are 35-44 years old, 20.00 % are 45-54 years old and 6.67% are over 55 years old. In total, the age between 19 to 44 years old is 73.33% of immigrants, while above 45 is 26.67%. (Question - chart 2).



Regarding marital status, unmarried is 40% of immigrants in our sample, married with children is 60%, while other groups did not show distribution. (Question-chart 3).

Question – chart: 3		
Marital status	Number of answers	Frequency (%)
Married with children	9	60,00%
Married without children	0	0,00%
Unmarried	6	40,00%
Divorced with children	0	0,00%
Divorced without children	0	0,00%
Other (specify)	0	0,00%
Total	15	100%

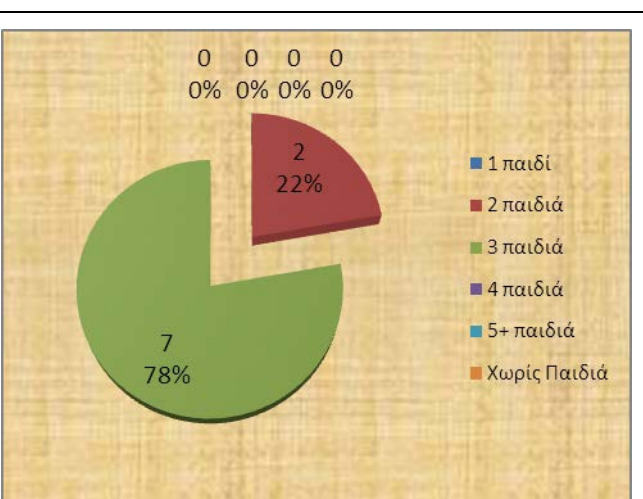
(Παντρεμένος με παιδιά=Married with children, Παντρεμένος χωρίς παιδιά= Married without children, Άγαμος=Unmarried, Διαζευγμένος με παιδιά= Divorced with children, Διαζευγμένος χωρίς παιδιά= Divorced without children, Άλλο-διευκρινίστε= Other (specify))



Of the nine immigrants who reported having children, the vast majority of them have 3 children (77.78%) while 13.33% had 2 children. While other groups do not have any distribution. (Question-chart 4).

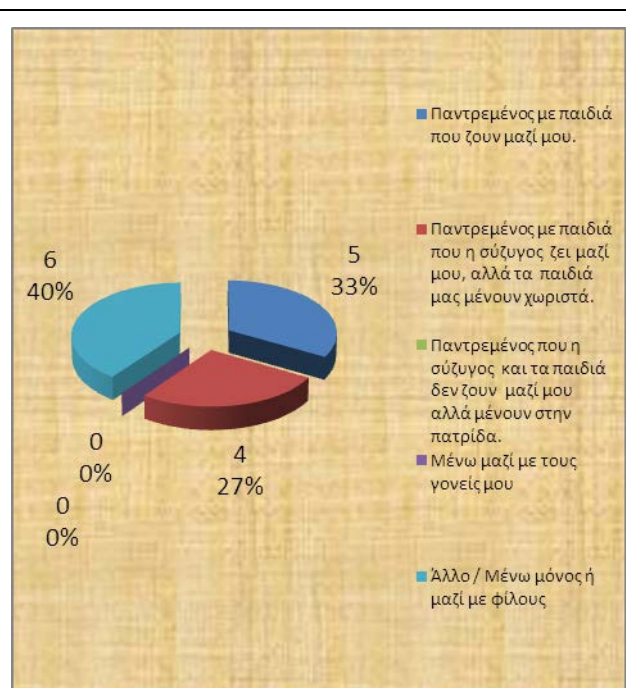
Question – chart: 4		
Marital status/number of children	Number of answers	Frequency (%)
1 child	0	0,00%
2 children	2	22,22%
3 children	7	77,78%
4 children	0	0,00%
5+ children	0	0,00%
Without children	0	0,00%
Total	9	100%

(1 παιδί=1 child, 2 παιδιά=2 children, 3 παιδιά=3 children, 4 παιδιά=4 children, 5+παιδιά=5+ children, Χωρίς παιδιά= Without children)



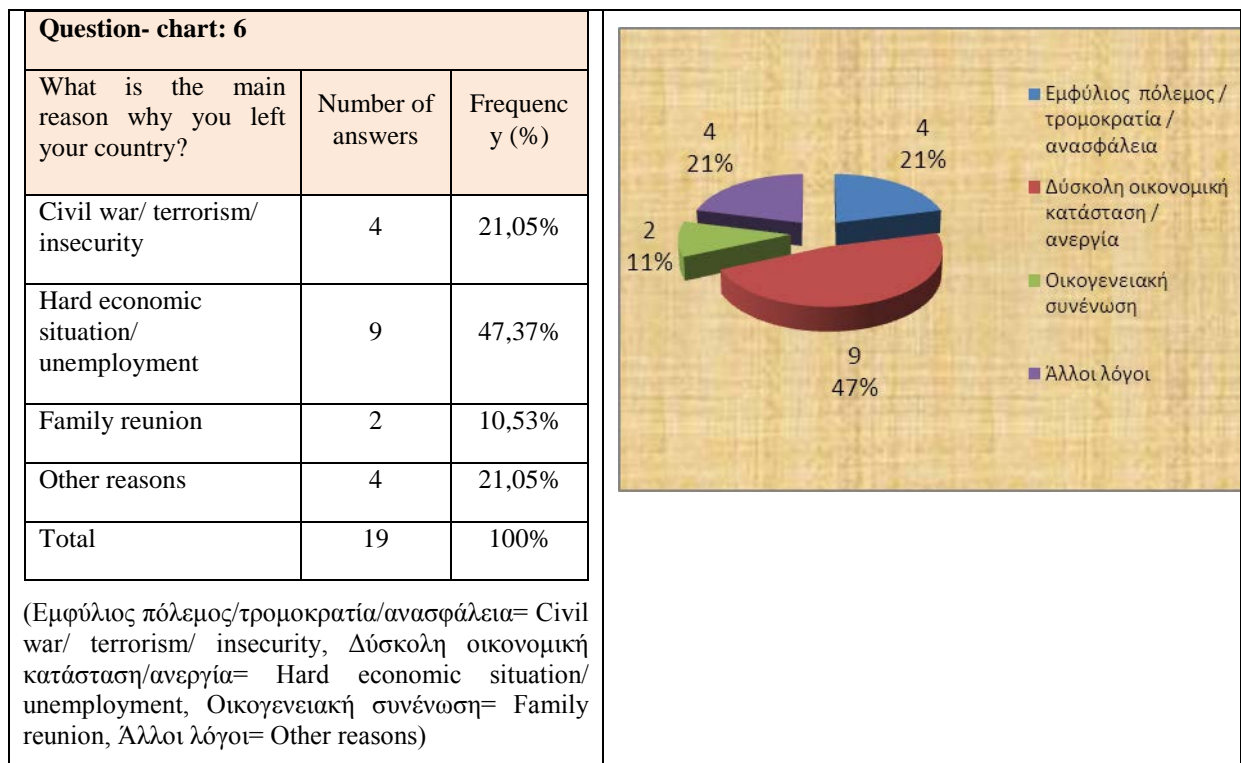
Regarding the situation of the household, 33.33% are married with children living with them, the 26.67% are married with children whose wife lives with them but their children live separately, while the proportion of those living alone or with friends, is 40%. (Question-chart 5).

Question- chart: 5		
Household status	Number of answers	Frequency (%)
Married with children living with me.	5	33,33%
Married with children my wife lives with me, but the children live separately.	4	26,67%
Married, wife and children do not live with me but they live in the homeland.	0	0,00%
I live with my parents	0	0,00%
Other / I live alone or with my friends	6	40,00%
Total	15	100%

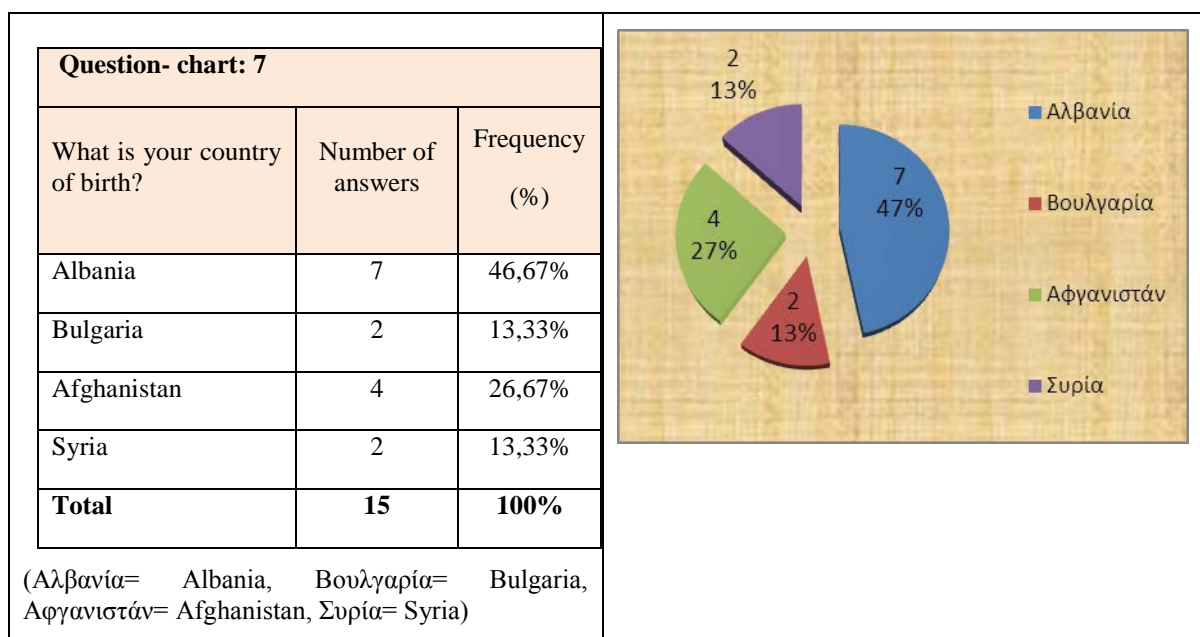


(Παντρεμένος με παιδιά που ζουν μαζί μου= Married with children living with me, Παντρεμένος με παιδιά που η σύζυγος ζει μαζί μου, αλλά τα παιδιά μας μένουν χωριστά= Married with children my wife lives with me, but the children live separately, Παντρεμένος που η σύζυγος και τα παιδιά δεν ζουν μαζί μου αλλά μένουν στην πατρίδα= Married, wife and children do not live with me but they live in the homeland, Μένω μαζί με τους γονείς μου= I live with my parents, Άλλο, μένω μόνος ή μαζί με φίλους= Other / I live alone or with my friends)

As far as the reasons why they left their country are concerned, the relative majority (47.37%) of the immigrants in our sample left because of the difficult financial situation in their homeland, the 21.05% because of civil war and terrorism, the 10.53% for family reunion, while 21.05% for other reasons such as improving the quality of life, etc. (Question-chart 6).

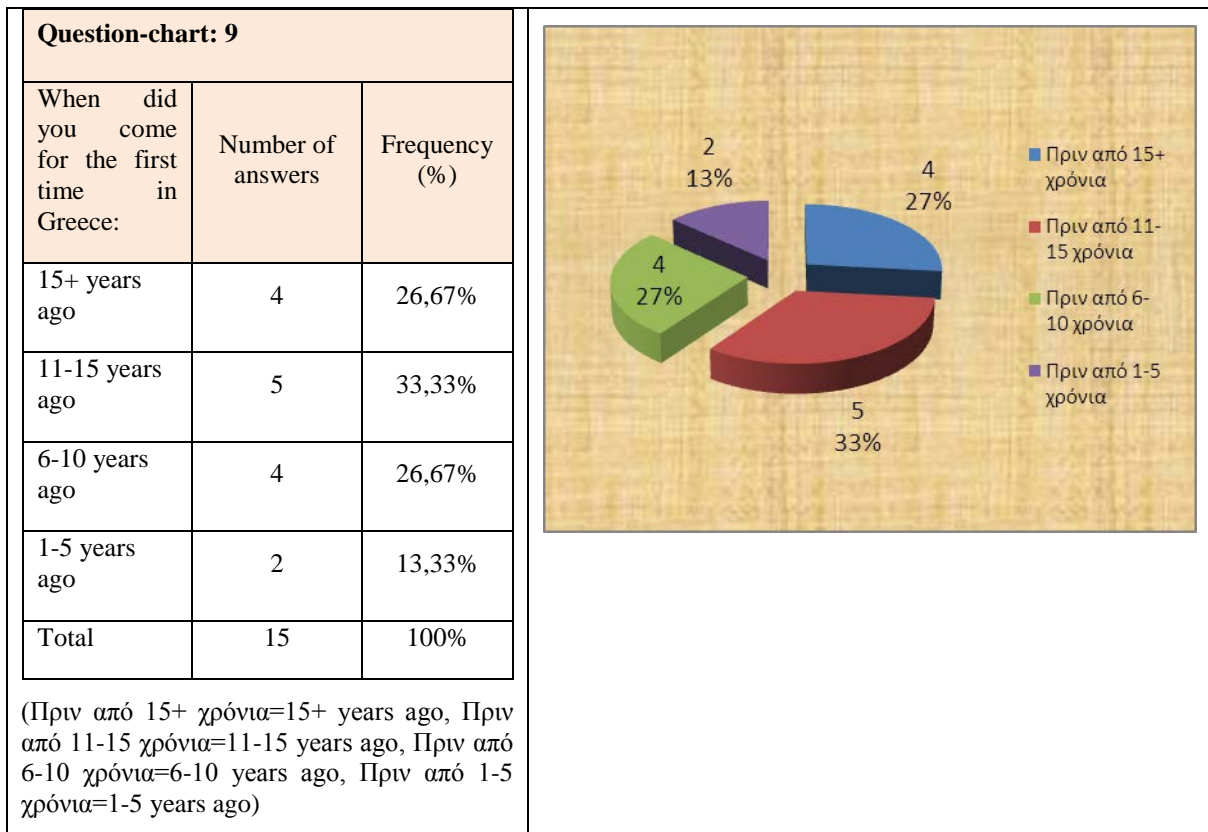


As far as the country of birth is concerned, 46.67% of our sample of immigrants was born in Albania, in Bulgaria 13.33%, 26.67% in Afghanistan and 13.33% in Syria. (Question-chart 7).

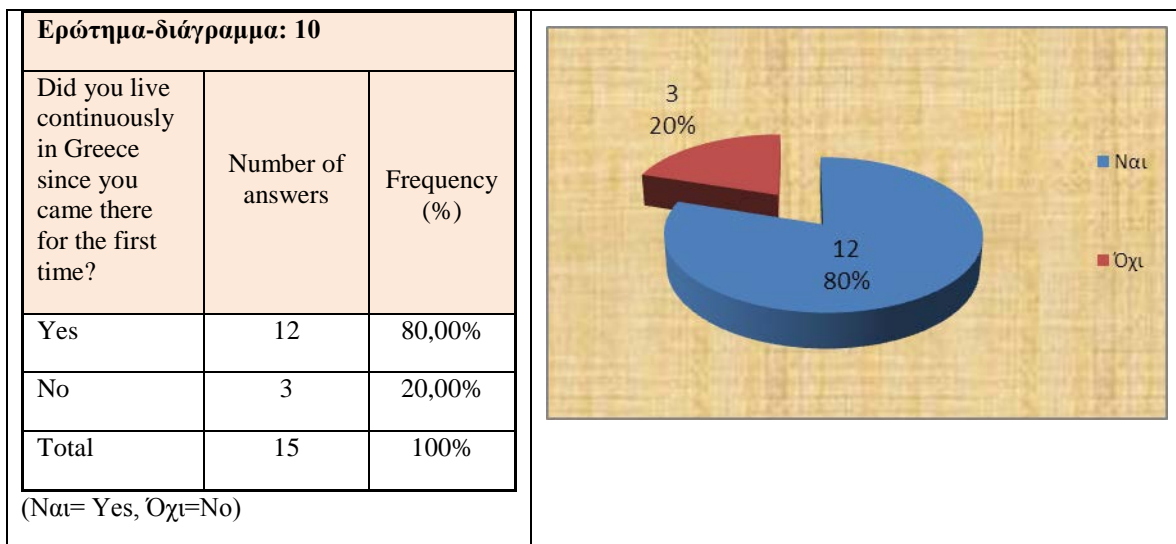


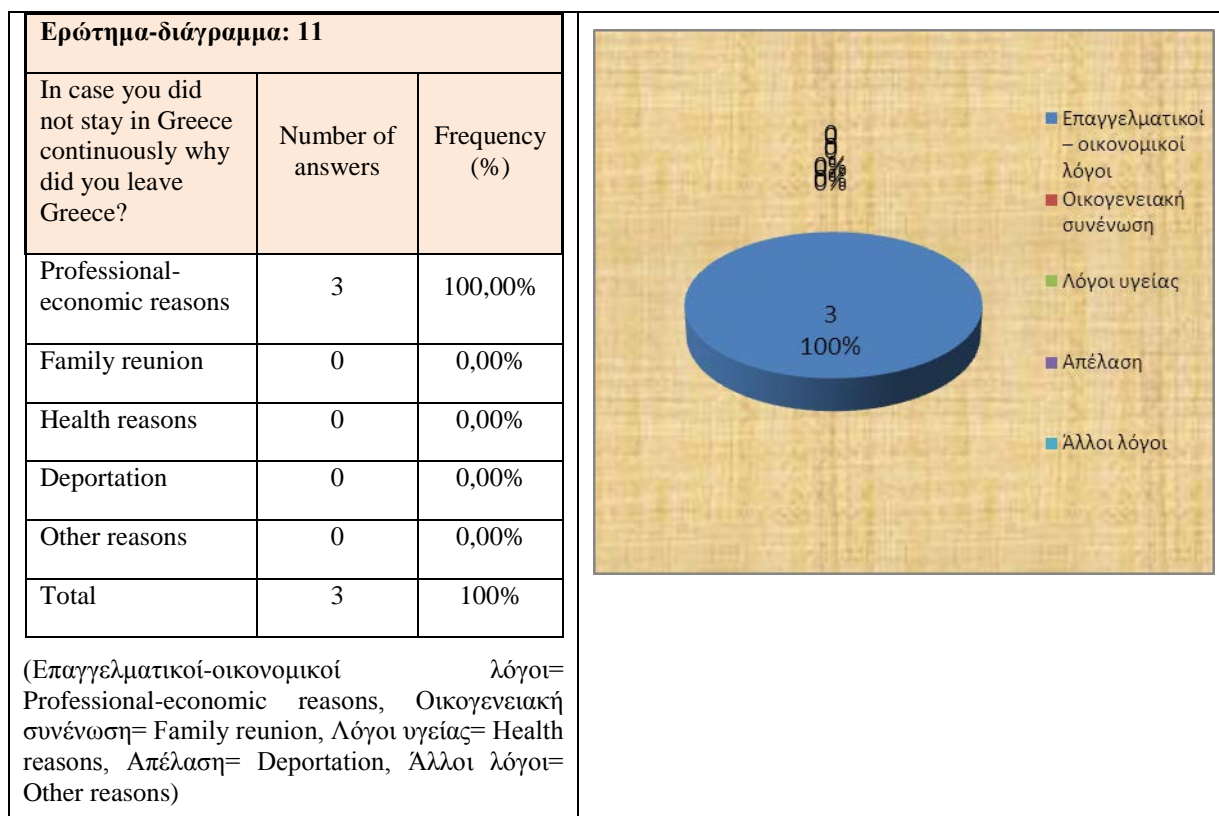
Regarding ethnicity, 46.67% of the immigrants in our sample reported having Albanian, Bulgarian 13.33%, 26.67% Afghan and 13.33% Syrian ethnicity. Overall, the people coming from the Balkan countries of the former socialist are about 60.00%, while 40.00% from Asian countries. (Question-chart 8).

The 26.67% of them came to Greece at least 15 years ago (before 1997), 33.33% before 11-15 years, 26.67% 6-10 years ago and 13.33% 1-5 years ago. This means that over half of immigrants (60%) is more than ten years in Greece (Question-chart 9).

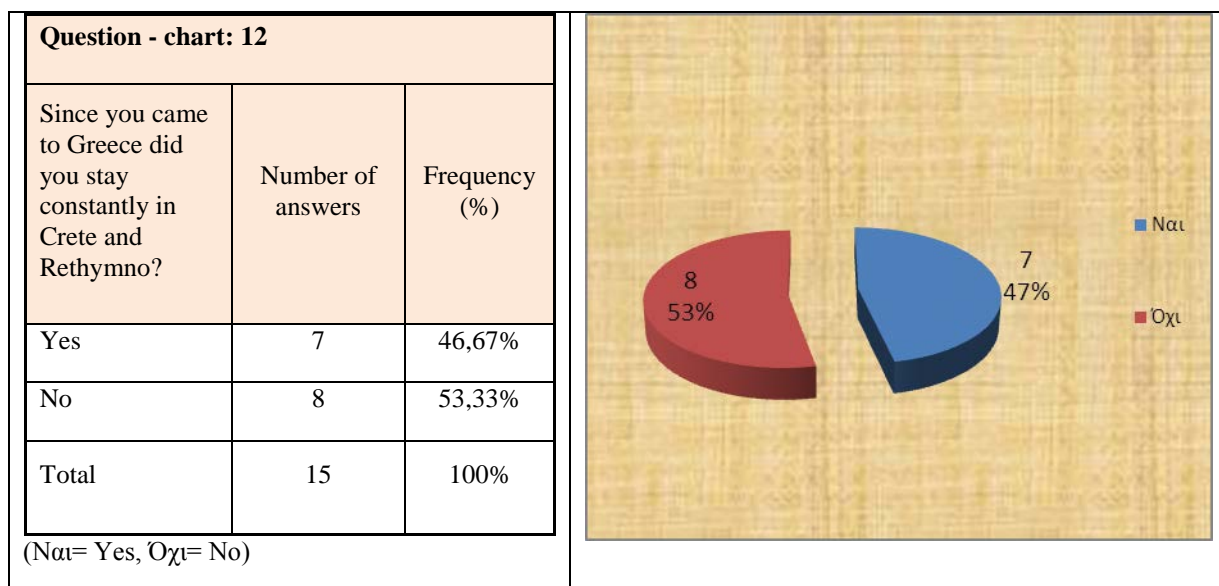


Also, 80% of immigrants in our sample, stays continuously in Greece since they came for the first time and only 20% have gone somewhere else for some time (Question-graph 10), and they all left mainly for business - economic reasons. (Question-chart 11).

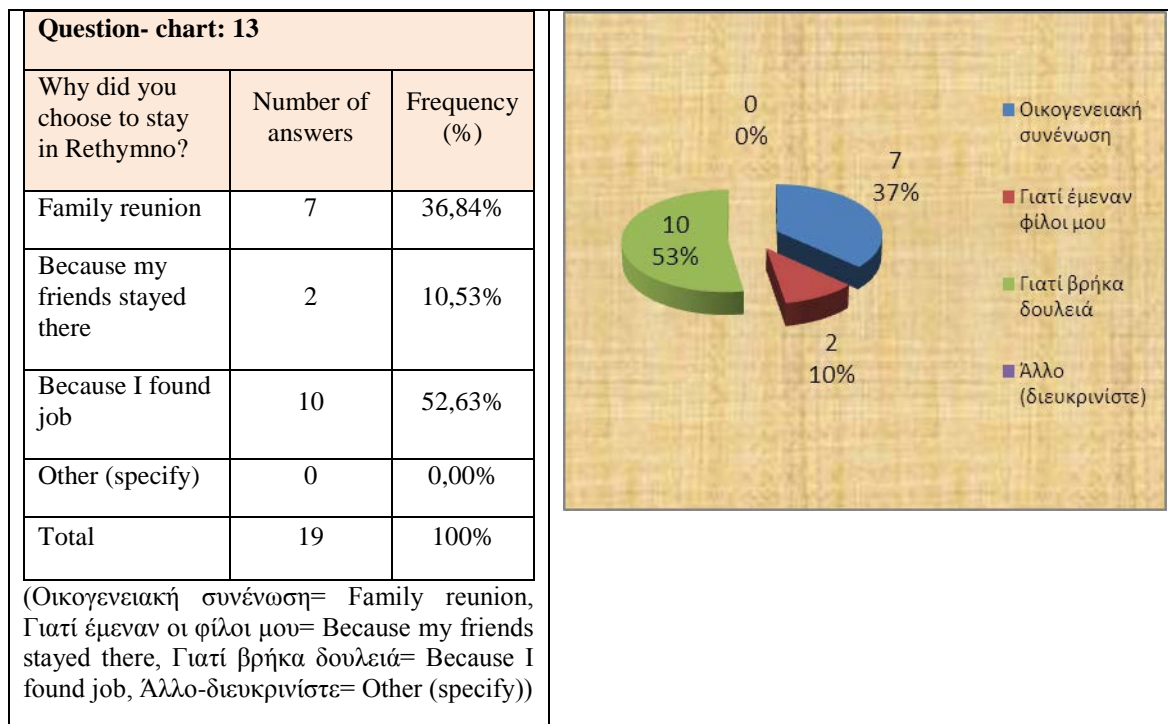




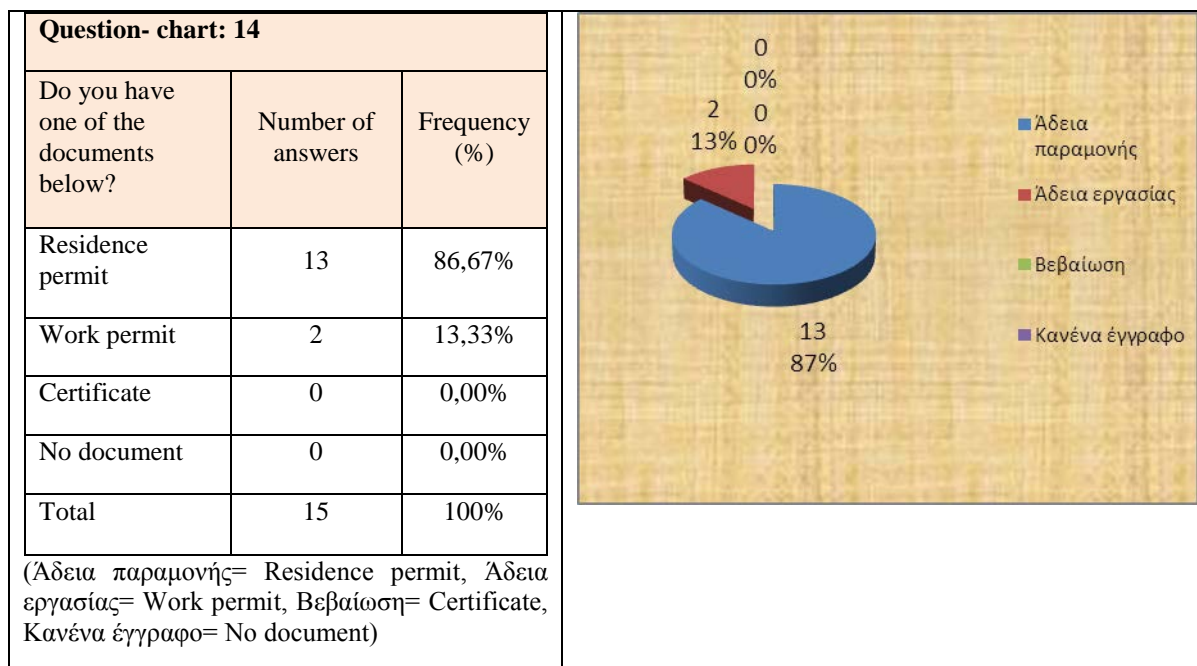
Normally immigrants stay for a long time in Crete and Rethymno. The 46.67% of them stay constantly in Crete and in Rethymno since they came to Greece, while 53.33% have moved to other areas. (Question-chart 12).



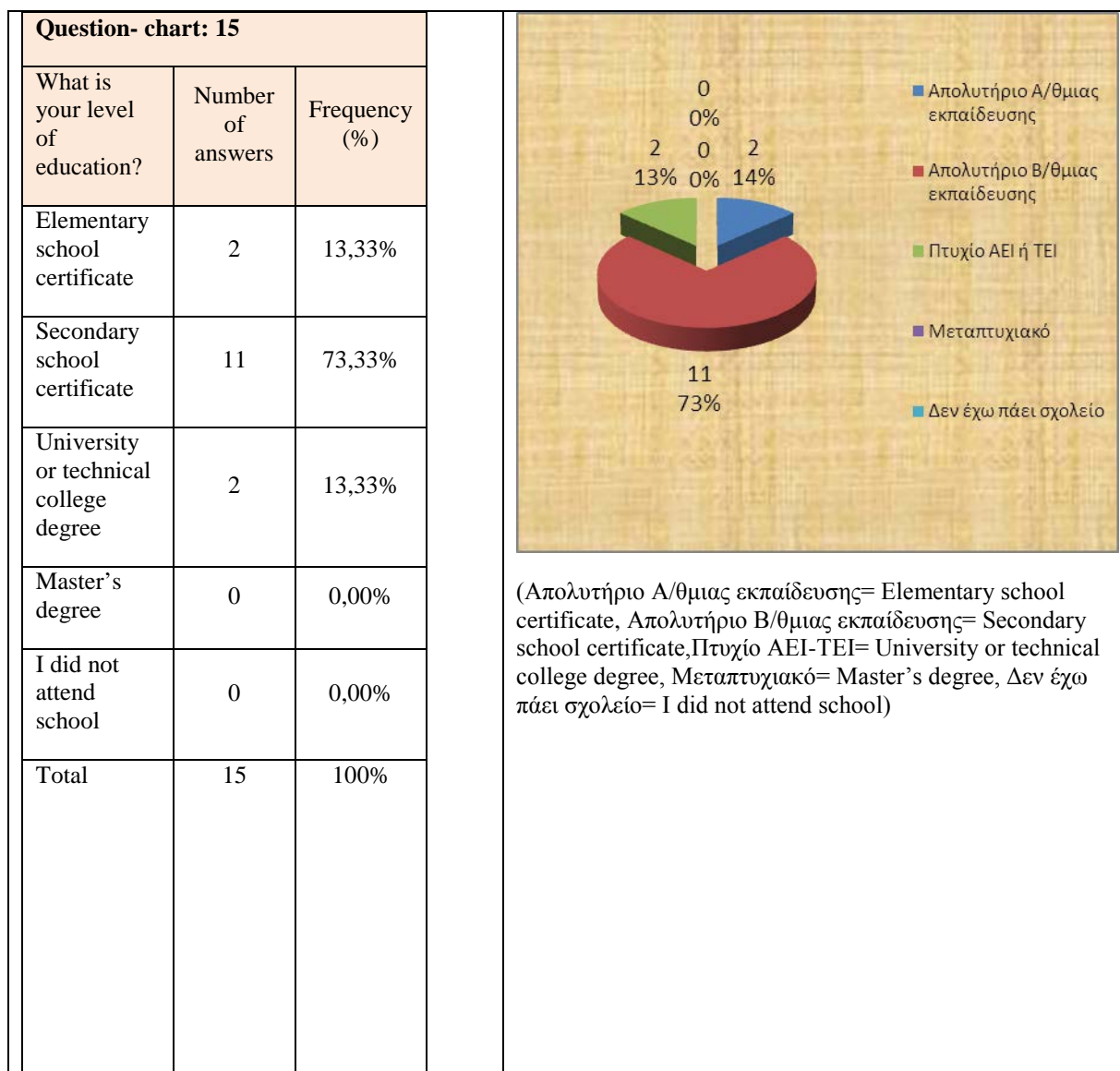
A large number of immigrants (52.63%) chose to settle in Rethymno because they found job, 36.84% for family reunion, while 10.53% because their friends had already settled in Rethymno. (Question-chart 13).



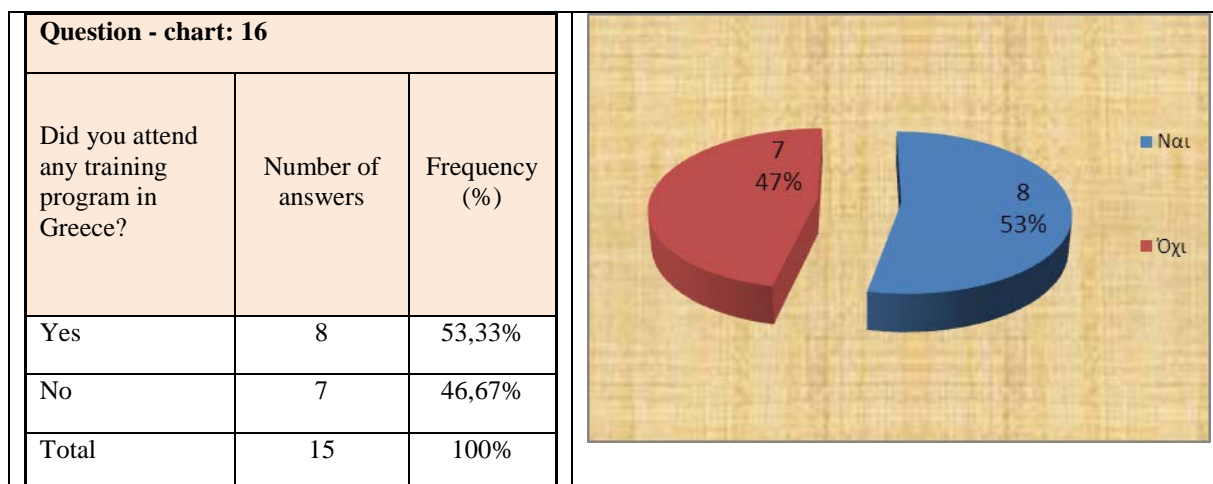
About the status of the residence of immigrants of our sample in Greece, 86.67% said that they have a work permit and 13.33% said they have a permit. (Question-chart 14).



The educational level of immigrants in the sample is relatively high. The 73.33% said that they have school certificate of Secondary Education and 13.33% university degree or technical college degree, while only 13.33% is of the level of Elementary Education. It is observed that 86.67% of the immigrants in our sample have a higher education and university degree, which have been acquired before settling in Greece from the country of their origin. (Question-chart 15).

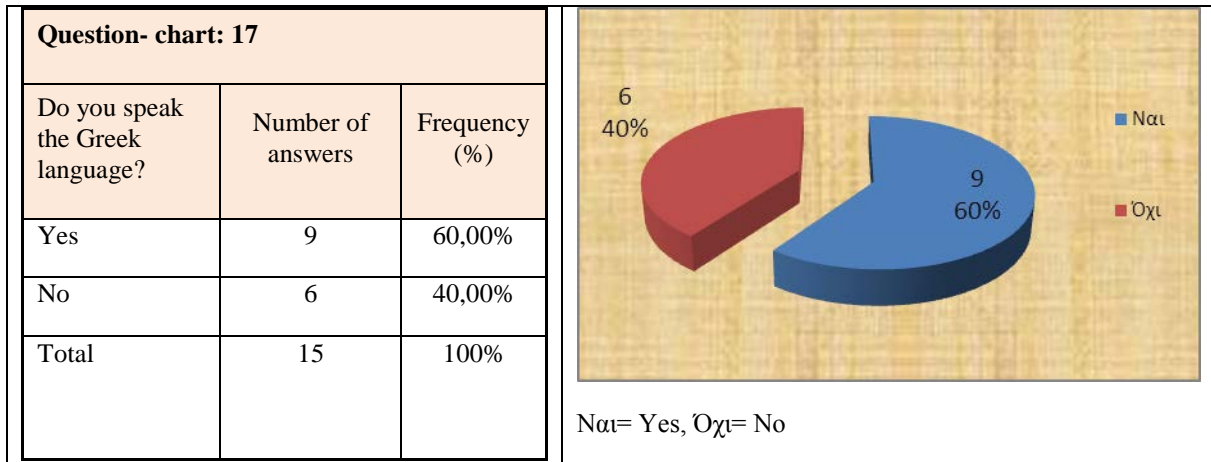


Also, the proportion of those who have attended a training program in Greece is relatively high, since 53.33% responded positively to this question while 46.67% replied negatively. (Question-chart 16).

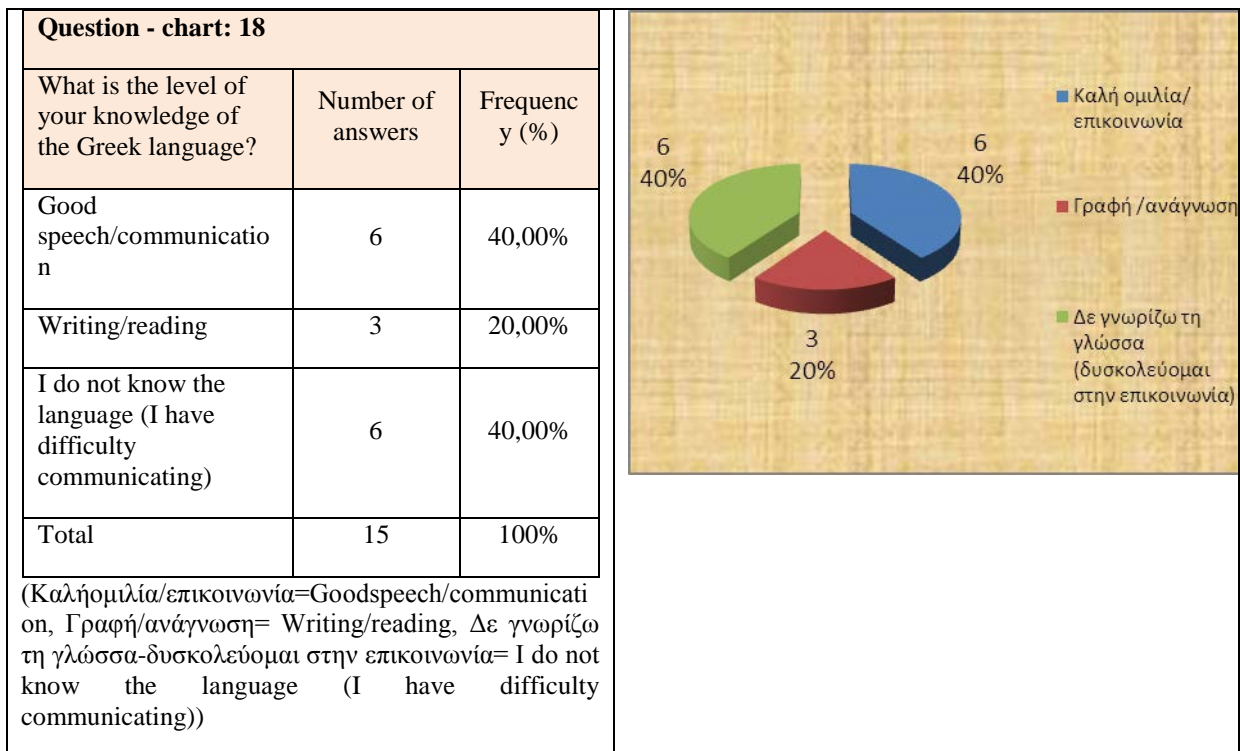


Ναι= Yes, Όχι= No

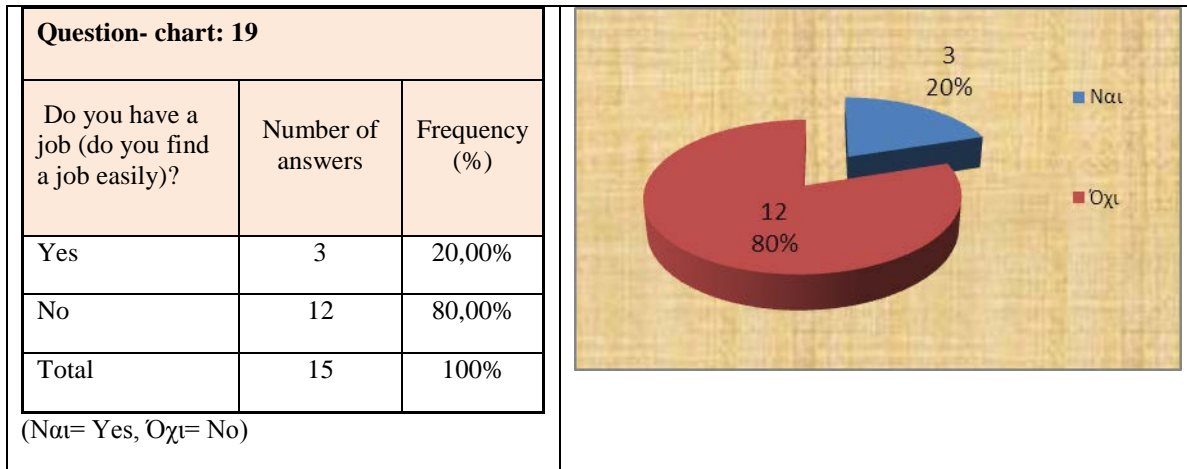
Then, it is observed that the immigrants of the sample in the majority say that they speak the Greek language. More specifically, 60.00% of the respondents answered that they are familiar with the Greek language, while 40.00% reported that they faced difficulties with the language. (Question-chart 17).



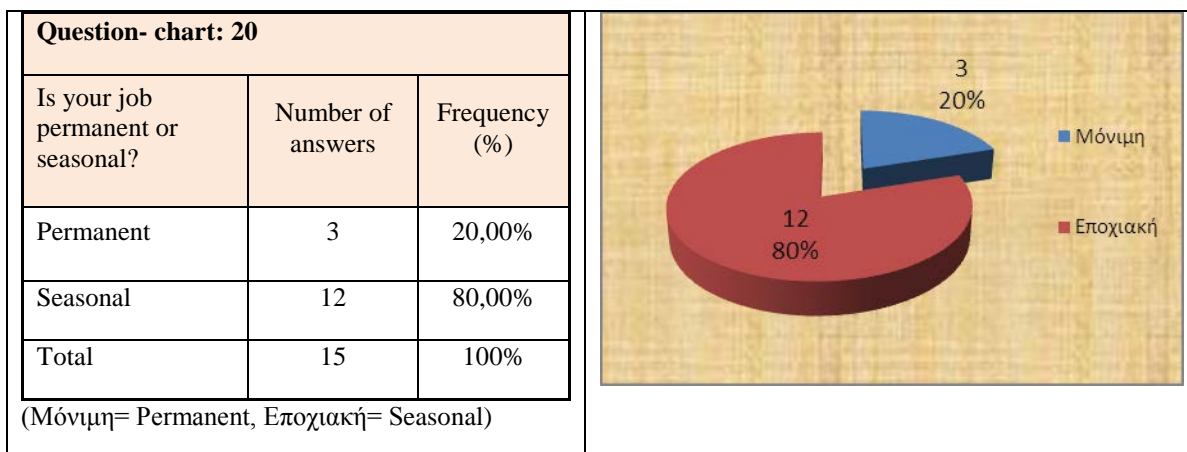
The previous finding is confirmed by the responses to the question about the level of knowledge of the Greek language. 40.00% of the immigrants in the sample said that they speak the language well and have no problems in communication, 20.00% also knows reading and writing, while 40.00% does not know the language well and have problems in communication. It should be noted that the immigrants who face communication problems come from Afghanistan and Syria, and they also have fewer years of stay in Greece. (Question-chart 18).



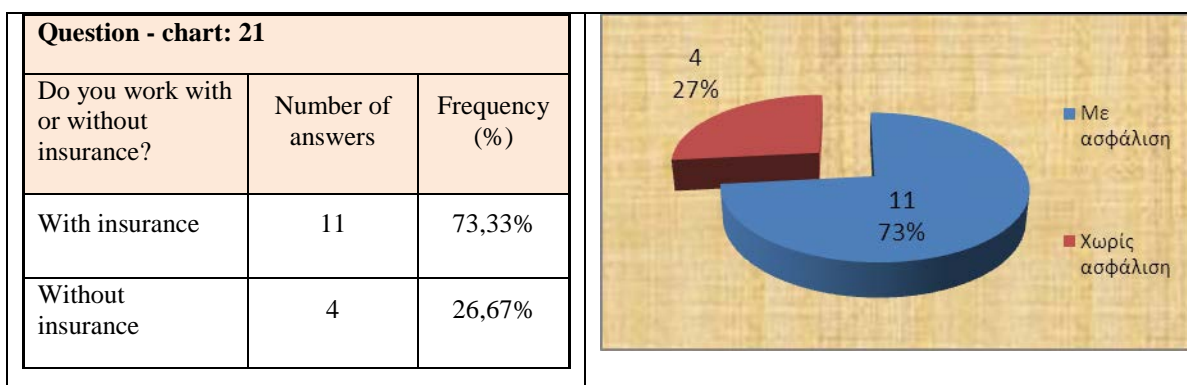
Regarding the possibilities of finding a job, the vast majority of immigrants in the sample said that they can hardly find a job. In particular, in the question "do you find job easily," 80.00% responded negatively, while only 20.00% responded positively. (Question-chart 19).



Also, 80.00% of the immigrants in the sample reported that they do not have a permanent job and only 20.00% of them answered that they have permanent employment. It should be pointed out that those who reported that they have permanent employment were women who took care of the elderly. (Question-chart 20).



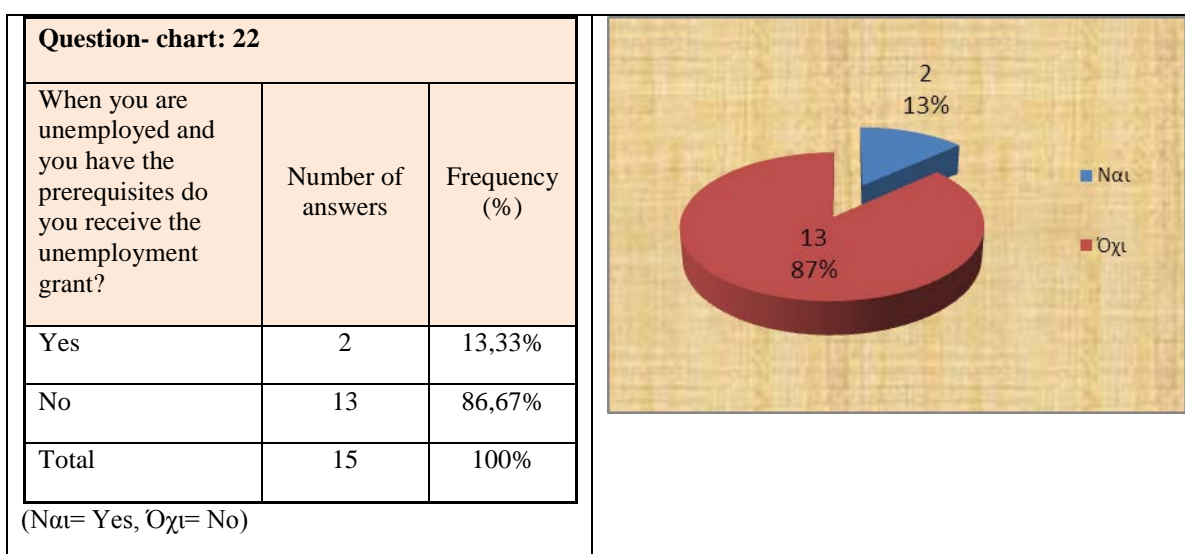
As far as their insurance is concerned, the majority of immigrants in our sample are insured. Specifically, 73.33% of the respondents are insured, while 26.67% said they are uninsured. The percentage of immigrants who say that they are uninsured is large and they are likely to work under "black" labour status. (Question-chart 21).



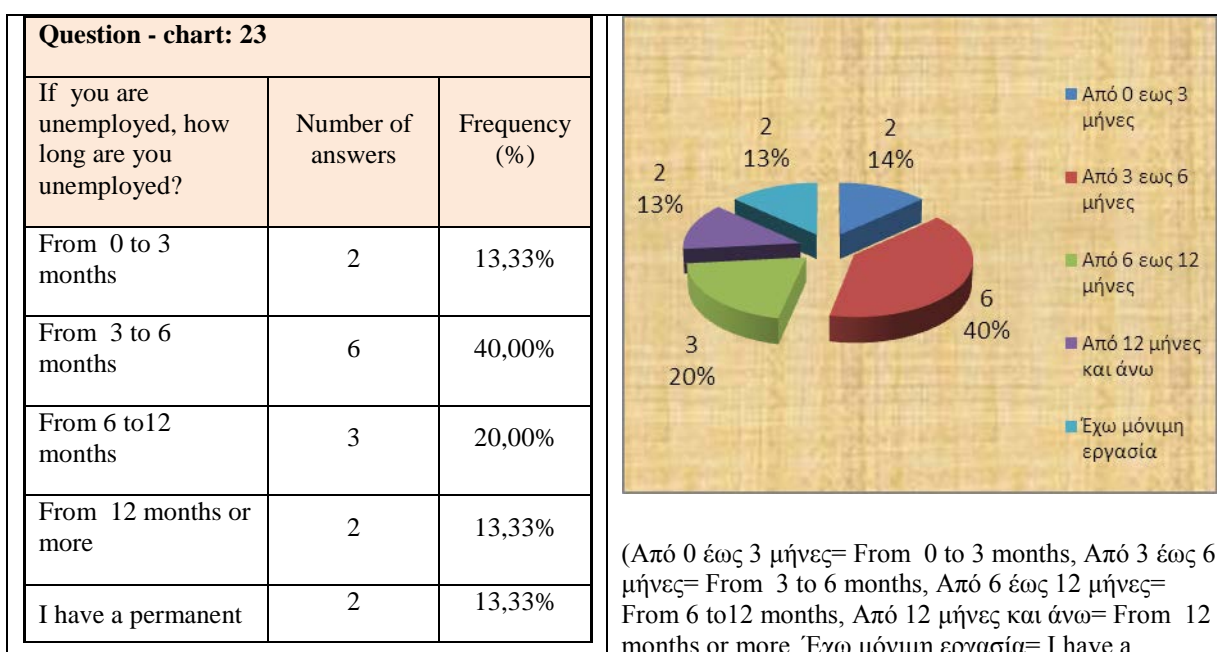
Total	15	100%
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(Με ασφάλιση= With insurance, Χωρίς ασφάλιση= Without insurance)

Furthermore, in the case of those who are unemployed and are eligible to receive the unemployment grant, the vast majority 86.67% answered that they did not receive it, while 13.33% said that they receive it. The fact that unemployed immigrants do not receive the unemployment grant may be due either to uninsured “black” labour which in many cases is the work status for many immigrants or to lack of knowledge and information about their rights, or to the failure to satisfy the prerequisite conditions necessary for the consolidation of the unemployment grant. (Question-chart 22).

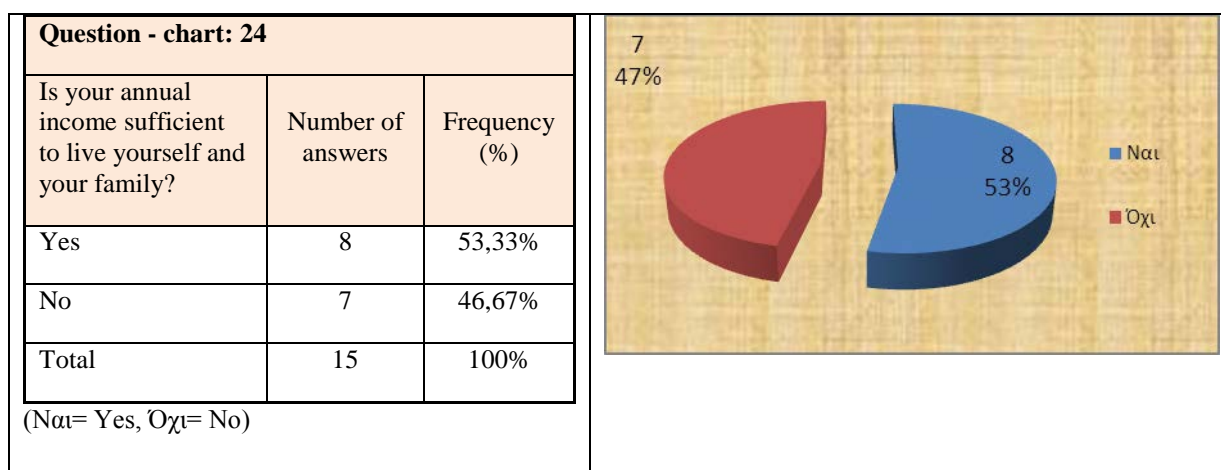


Unemployment is very common among immigrants. Unemployed immigrants reported that they are continuously unemployed as follows: From 0 to 3 months 13.33%, from 3 to 6 months 40.00%, from 6 to 12 months 20.00%, from 12 months or more 13.33% and only 13.33% said that they have a permanent job and are not affected by unemployment. (Question-chart 23).



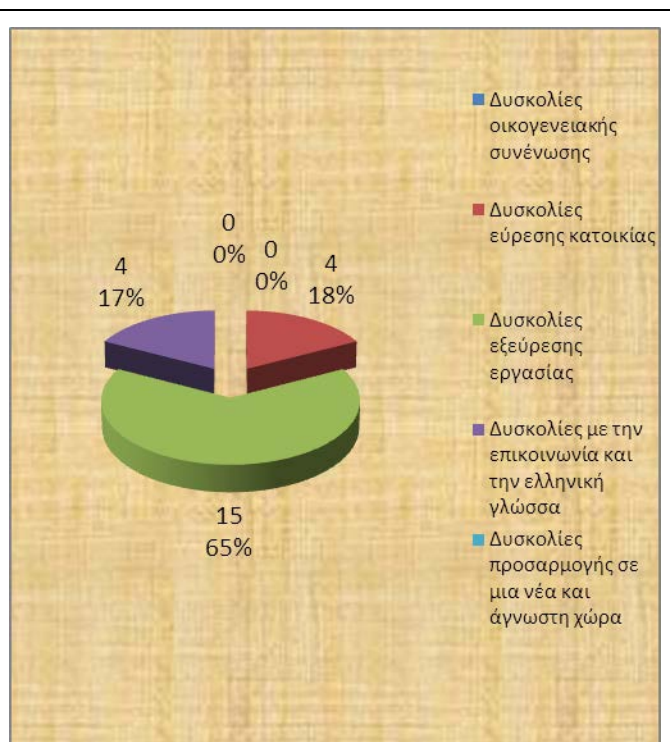
job			permanent job)
Total	15	100%	

To the question if the annual income is sufficient to live himself and his family, 53.33% responded positively, while 46.67% were negative. It is characteristic that those who have family responsibilities (children in school, etc.) answered negatively, while those without family obligations replied positively. (Question-chart 24).



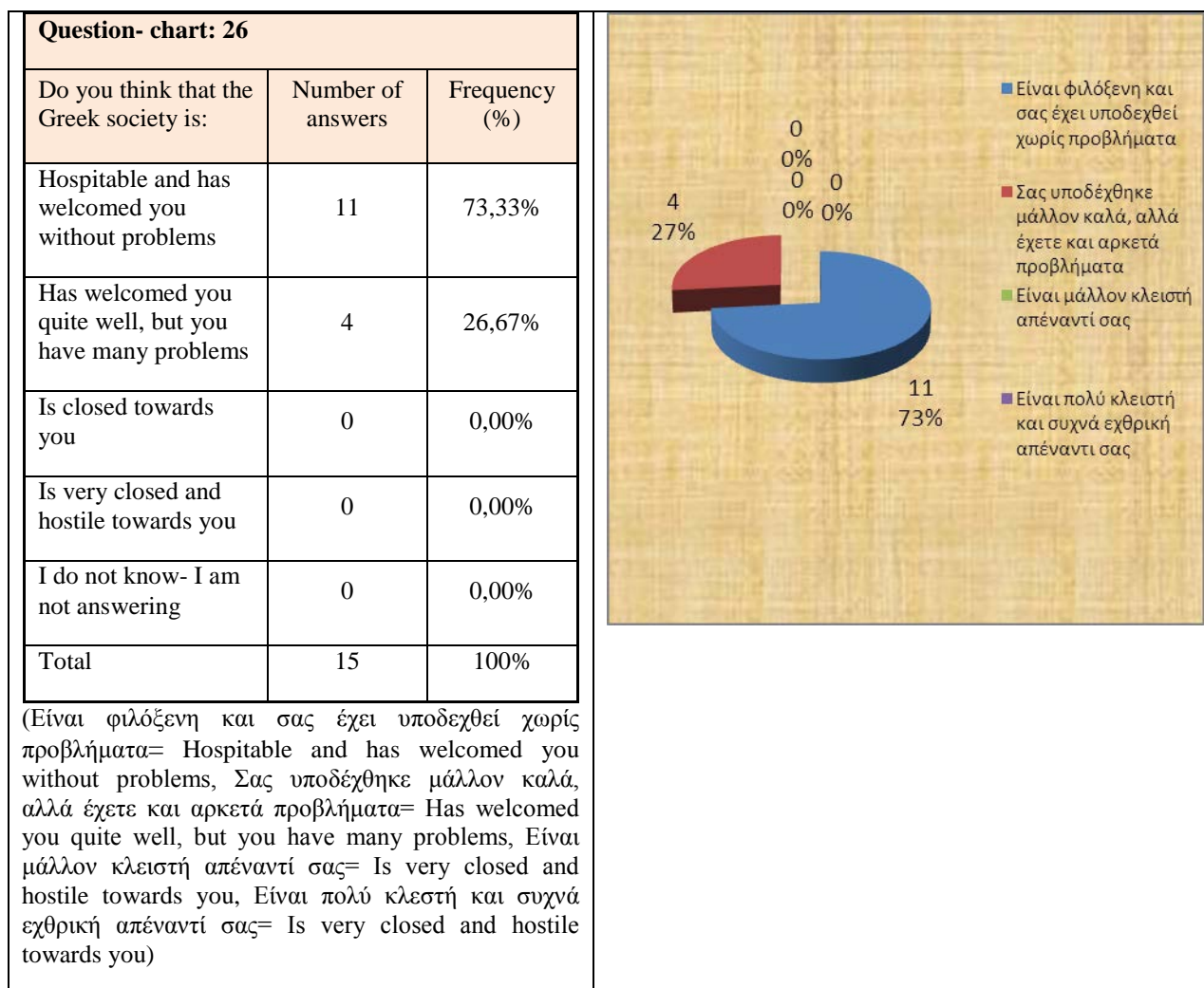
To the question about the main difficulties encountered while settling in Greece, these were classified as follows: difficulties finding work 65.22%, difficulty finding accommodation 17.39% and difficulties in communication and the Greek language 17.39%. It is also characteristic that the difficulties adjusting to a new and unknown country were not evaluated as well as the difficulties in family reunion. (Question-chart 25).

Question- chart: 25		
What were the main difficulties during your settlement in Greece?	Number of answers	Frequency (%)
Difficulties in family reunion	0	0,00%
Difficulties in finding accommodation	4	17,39%
Difficulties in finding a job	15	65,22%
Difficulties in communication and the Greek language	4	17,39%
Difficulties in adjusting to a new and unknown country	0	0,00%
Total	23	100%

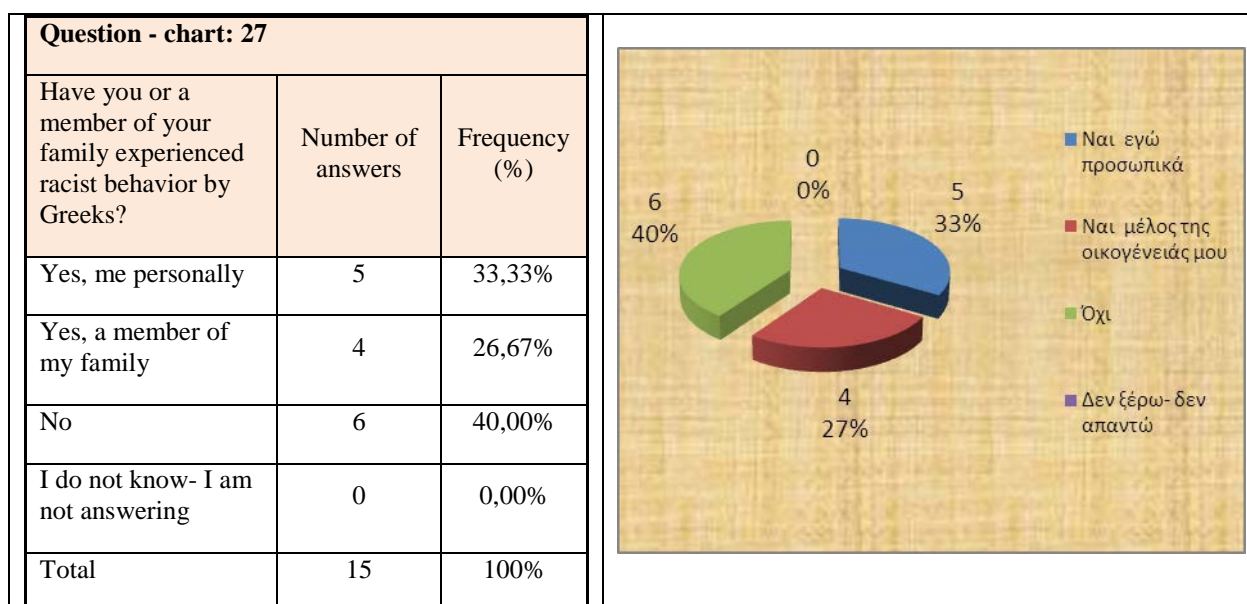


Δυσκολίες οικογενειακής συνένωσης= Difficulties in family reunion, Δυσκολίες εύρεσης κατοικίας= Difficulties in finding accommodation, Δυσκολίες εξεύρεσης εργασίας= Difficulties in finding a job, Δυσκολίες με την επικοινωνία και την ελληνική γλώσσα= Difficulties in communication and the Greek language, Δυσκολίες προσαρμογής σε μια νέα και άγνωστη χώρα= Difficulties in adjusting to a new and unknown country

When asked about how the immigrants themselves see their confrontation by the Greek society, 73.33% believe that the Greek society is hospitable and have welcomed them without problems, 26.67% said they were welcomed quite well but they face several problems. It is surprising that no immigrant characterized the Greek society as closed and hostile towards him. (Question-chart 26).



To the question if s/he or a family member has experienced racist behavior by the Greeks, the majority 60.00% responded positively (33.33% himself and 26.67% family member), while 40.00% replied negatively. This result highlights the fact that the Greek society is characterized by xenophobia and racism. (Question-chart 27).

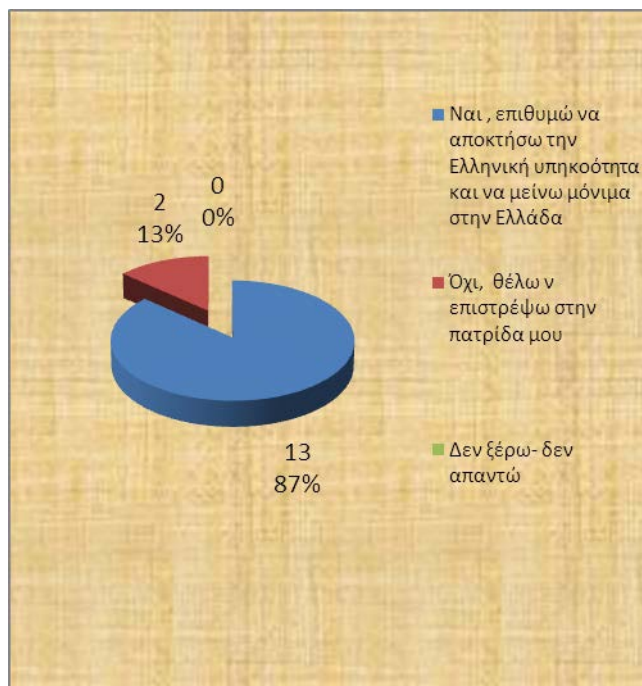


(Ναι εγώ προσωπικά= Yes, me personally, Ναι μέλος της οικογένειάς μου= Yes, a member of my family, Όχι= No, Δεν ξέρω-δεν απαντώ= I do not know- I am not answering)

The vast majority (86.67%) of the immigrants of our sample wish to obtain the Greek citizenship and stay permanently in Greece, while only 13.37% want to return back to their homeland. (Question-chart 28).

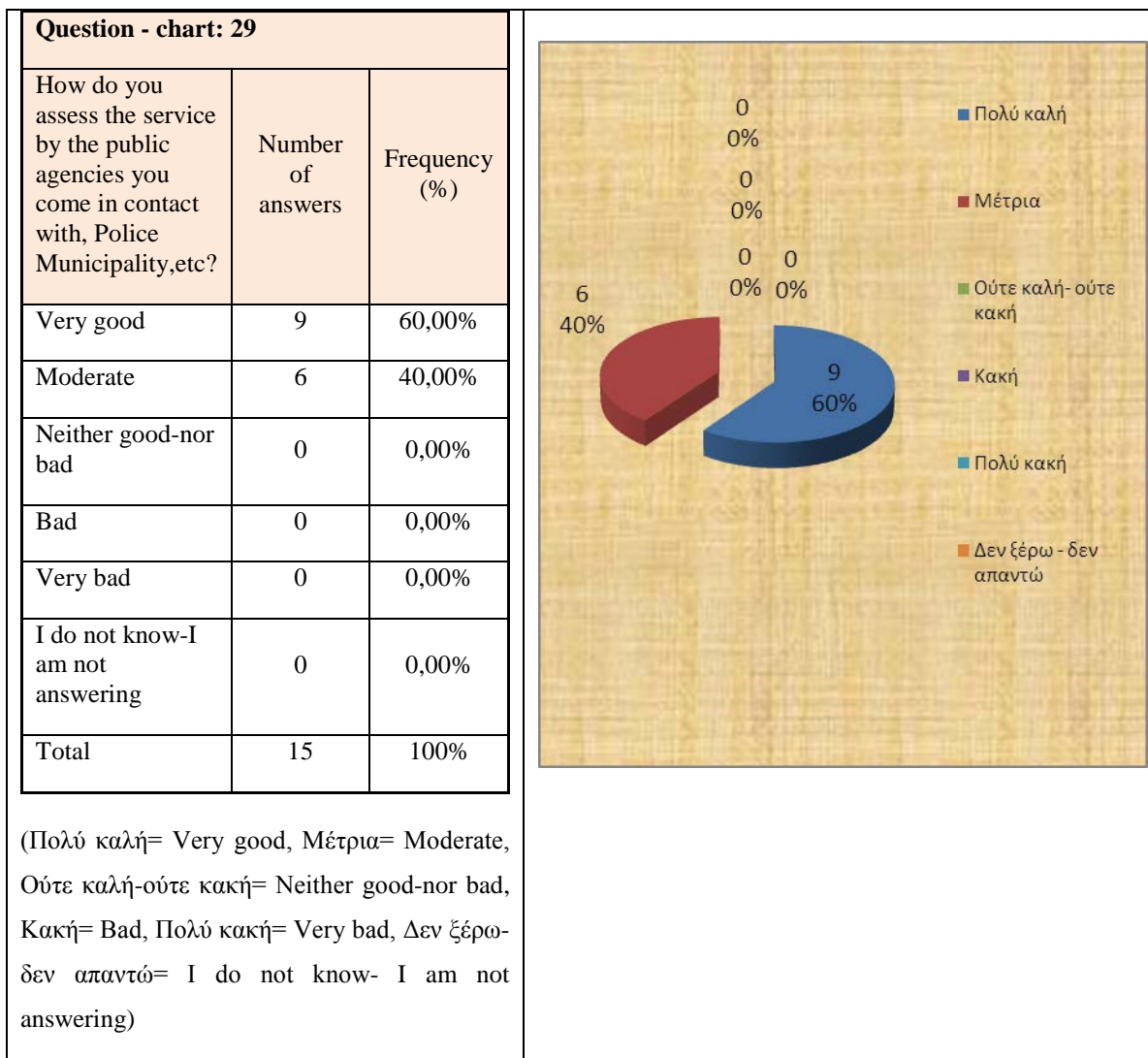
Question - chart: 28

Do you wish to obtain the Greek citizenship and stay permanently in Greece?	Number of answers	Frequency (%)
Yes, I wish to obtain the Greek citizenship and stay permanently in Greece	13	86,67%
No, I want to return back to my homeland	2	13,33%
I do not know- I am not answering	0	0,00%
Total	15	100%

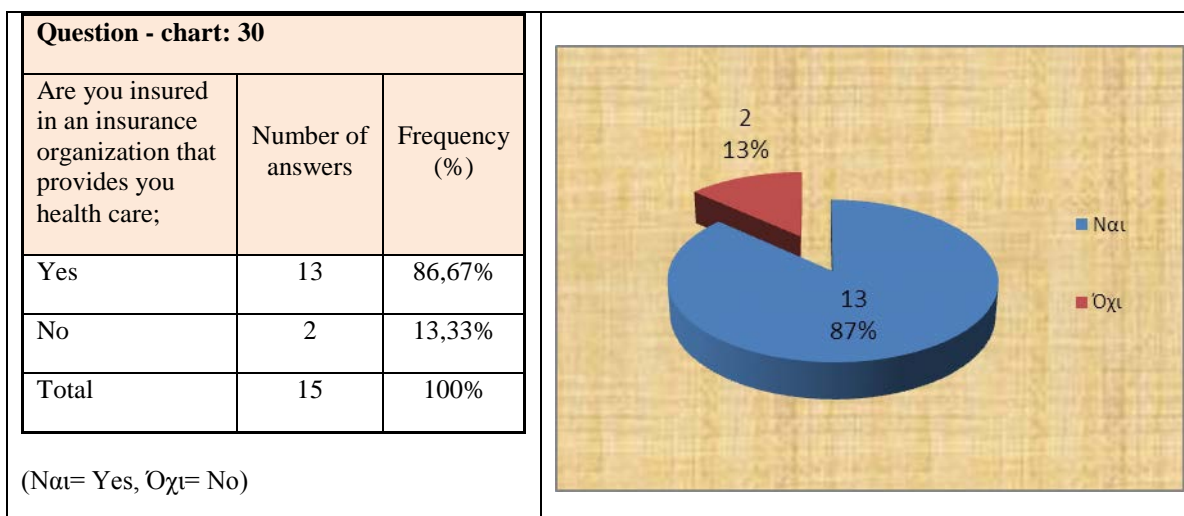


Ναι επιθυμώ να αποκτήσω την ελληνική υπηκοότητα και να μείνω μόνιμα στην Ελλάδα= Yes, I wish to obtain the Greek citizenship and stay permanently in Greece, Όχι θέλω να επιστρέψω στην πατρίδα μου= No, I want to return back to my homeland, Δεν ξέρω-δεν απαντώ= I do not know- I am not answering)

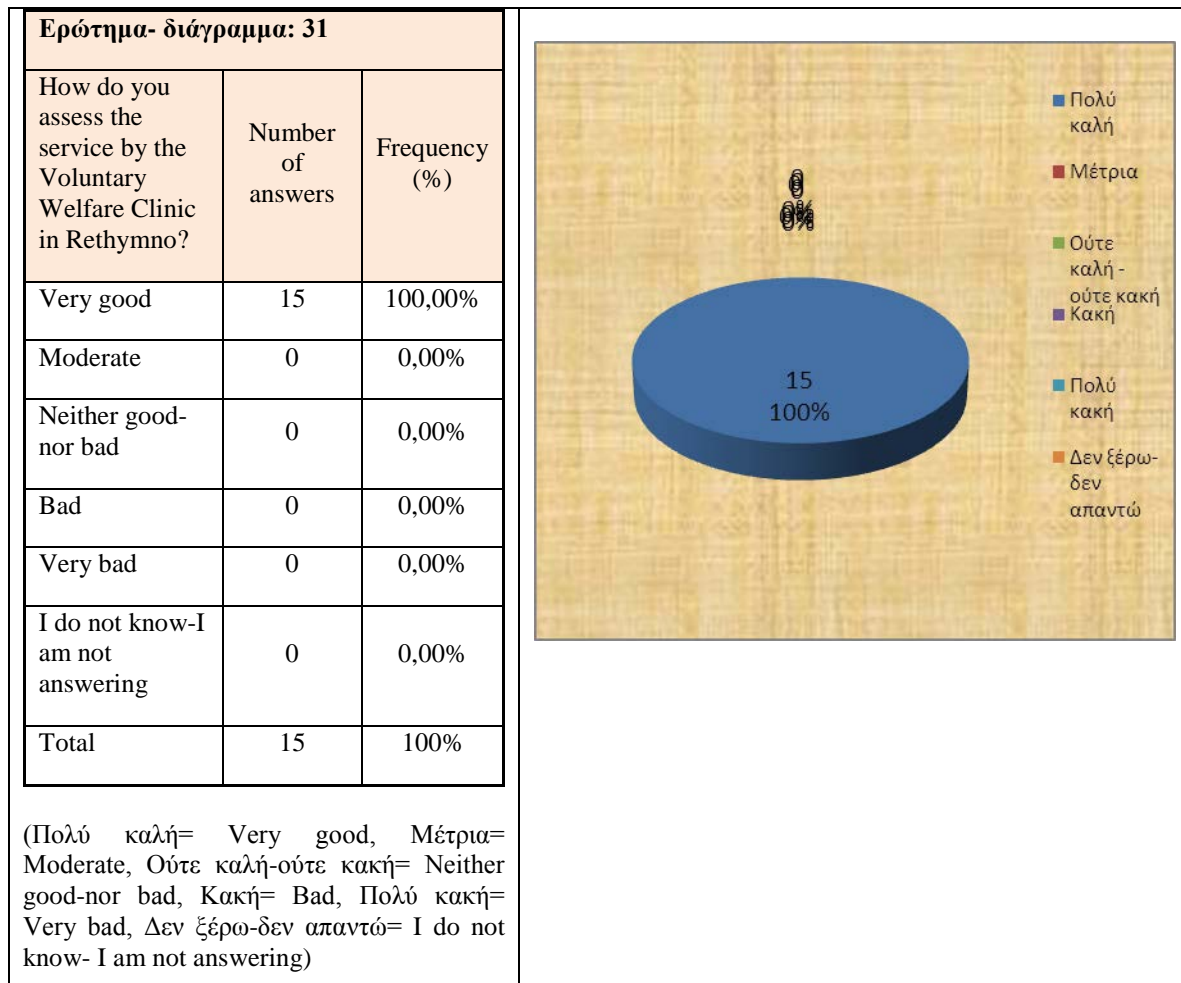
The immigrants were satisfied of the service by the public-social bodies they come in contact with. In particular, 60.00% considered their service by the public - social organizations very good, while 40% moderate. It is characteristic that no one evaluated negatively these entities. (Question-chart 29).



About health care, the vast majority of immigrants in our sample (86.67%) stated that they are insured in an insurance organization that provides health care, while only 13.37% do not have health care. (Question-chart 30).



The immigrants in our sample reported that they are completely satisfied with their service from the Voluntary Welfare Clinic in Rethymno (100.00%). This result is absolutely normal and indicates the important role of the clinic in the effort to promote the social integration of immigrants. (Question-chart 31).



General Conclusions-Epilogue

The rapid changes in the period after 1985 in immigration show the expansion of the phenomenon of immigration inflow for all countries of the European Union. More specifically, Greece traditionally a country "exporting" immigrants changed in the 1990's in a "host» country for many who left their homes to seek a better life.

In Crete and Rethymno in particular, there was a relatively high influx of immigrants, compared with other regions of the country, because of the employment opportunities for foreigners in the area.

The results of the survey conducted show that the majority of immigrants came in Rethymno in order to settle and live here for a long time. This is mainly for families with children, but also unmarried immigrants, in the most productive and reproductive phase of their life. The main cause why they left their country was on the one hand the difficult economic situation in it (mainly in Balkan countries) and on other hand the war and terrorism (Afghanistan). From their answers it becomes evident that their settlement in Greece and especially in Rethymno is conscious and intended and they show extreme stability for their stay in the same place.

The vast majority of immigrants in our sample wishes and seeks to remain in Greece. The critical question " are you thinking to settle permanently in Greece" the responses are dramatically in favor of a permanent settlement in Greece distributed as follows: yes 52%, not 48%.

The majority of immigrants in our sample have an average educational level as they have a certificate of higher secondary education which was acquired before settling in Greece. Moreover,

their participation in training programs is relatively high. Furthermore, the majority of them speak the Greek language, at least at the level of communication with the community around them as well as reading. However, it is quite a high percentage of those who said they have problems with the language therefore, they have difficulty communicating with the social environment (mainly those who have a few years of stay in Greece).

Most immigrants in our sample have difficulty finding work, and the majority of them do not have permanent jobs. Although they have insurance, the phenomenon of uninsured (black) labor is common. Unemployment is also a common phenomenon for immigrants and their annual incomes are not sufficient to meet their family obligations.

The majority of immigrants evaluate as favorable their living conditions and those of their family in their new host country. The main difficulty they face is the difficulties of finding work. As to whether they like now living in Greece, the result reveals an overwhelming majority with a positive response. To the critical question "Do you want to obtain the Greek citizenship and stay permanently in Greece," the answers are strikingly in favor of staying and the rate reaches 86.67%.

The relationship between immigrants and state and public entities, as well as the local community, proves very important for the process of integration in Greek society. It is significant that they have a positive view for the public - social bodies with which they come in contact. Also, despite the fact that immigrants in our sample have experienced themselves or a family member racist behavior, they assess that the local community is welcoming and they do not face any problems.

Furthermore, they are very satisfied with the services provided by the Voluntary Welfare Clinic in Rethymno. This result highlights the important role of the clinic in an effort to facilitate the immigrants' social integration in the local community.

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