Comparative study - changes in young people's self-assessment of tolerance from 2017 to 2023

Pāvels Jurs[1]

[1]*Professor, Dr.paed., Liepaja University, senior researcher of Liepaja University Institute of Educational Sciences*
Email: pavels.jurs@liepu.lv
Orcid Id = 0000-0002-1120-8021

Alīda Samuseviča[2]

[2]*Professor, Dr.paed., Liepaja University, researcher of Liepaja University Institute of Educational Sciences*
Email: alida.samusevica@liepu.lv
Orcid Id = 0000-0003-3047-3223

Inta Kulberga[3]

[3]*Asst. Prof.Dr. administer., Liepaja University, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences*
Email: inta.kulberga@liepu.lv
Orcid Id = 0000-0003-1819-9604

Elita Špehte[4]

[4]*PhD student, Liepaja University, Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work*
Email: elita.spehte@gmail.com
Orcid Id = 0000-0003-0376-9993

Abstract

The dimension of tolerance is one of the pillars of the formation of democracy, living in a multicultural era it is important to understand the self-assessment of tolerance of young people, or what young people themselves think, how open they are, for example, in categories such as: (I) tolerance of other people's opinions; (II) tolerance towards a person of a different religion; (III) tolerance towards people of other races. At the same time, it is important to identify young people's views on the provision of equal opportunities: (I) opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups to receive education; (II) employment opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups; (III) to ensure equal opportunities for women and men daily. To be able to answer previously raised and current questions, the research group organized a survey of young people (students in grades 9-12) in 2017, 2019, and 2023. The survey was organized three times over seven years in the same country, in a particular city with the same target audience – pupils in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Thus, the publication aims to identify the self-assessment of tolerance of young people and their changes in the period from 2017 to 2023. The results of the empirical research, comparing the results of 2017 and 2023 comparative perspectives, reflect a decline in the self-assessment of tolerance of young people (tolerance to a different opinion, a different religion, and race) by an average of 12%, while in indicators of equal opportunities provision (equal opportunities for ethnic/racial groups and women/men), the self-esteem of young people has improved by 2%. The results of empirical research obtained may be binding on teachers, parents, students, policymakers, and scientists in the sector concerned to research youth tolerance.

Keywords: Equality, youth, students, self-assessment, tolerance, values.

Introduction

As the threat of terrorism grows and takes on various forms worldwide, concerns regarding social security and human solidarity are gaining prominence. The integration of society hinges on the mutual acknowledgment and embracing of diverse groups and individuals. But at the same time, it is worth emphasizing that democracy is experiencing an obvious crisis. In the statement of the 52nd session, the UN Human Rights Council states that the lack of social dialogue, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the insufficient understanding of the countries about the importance of civil society contribute to the erosion of democracy and the crisis - all member states need to strengthen the values of democracy, promote citizens' civic engagement and ensure high-quality and accessible civic education, thus promoting the quality of life and more active involvement of young people in building an inclusive world (Human Rights Council of the United Nations, 2023). Thus, the understanding of tolerance and its promotion among young people acquires an actual role – the moral basis of democracy is

strengthened by civic virtue – self-regulation, courage, loyalty, compassion, tolerance, honesty, spiritual strength, and concern for social justice.

Young people are the basis for the future democracy, social, political, and environmental future of the world, therefore young people are increasingly emphasized as an important resource for promoting economic growth, strengthening democracy, and building public prosperity. On the other hand, the European Commission emphasizes in the announcement "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" that, young people, by providing targeted support and growth to young people, can contribute to a prosperous, democratic, and united society (European Commission, 2018). In an era that prioritizes student-centric approaches and the cultivation of skills, it is imperative for students to assume accountability for their personal growth by employing efficient learning methods; within this framework, students have the opportunity to explore techniques for improving their studies, engage in introspection and inquiries related to their area of focus. An essential element involves comprehending the significance of self-assessment (Blandul & Bradea, 2023). Self-assessment refers to learners actively participating in evaluating their accomplishments and the results of their learning endeavors (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). It involves recognizing standards or criteria relevant to their work and assessing the degree to which they have fulfilled these criteria and standards (Boud, 1995). Self-assessment fosters student learning and stands as a critical skill indispensable for students' future professional growth and continuous learning throughout life. (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Taras, 2010).

Adolescence is commonly defined as the period between childhood and adulthood, but there are various definitions of how long this period lasts. According to the UN definition, a young person is a person between the ages of 15 and 24, the European Union's Youth Strategy states that it is the age group between 13 and 30 years, but in the European Union statistical office Eurostat, a person between the ages of 15 and 29 is considered a young person (European Union, 2017). In the literature, young adulthood is seen as a time of rapid change, which is characterized not only by rapid physical changes, but also by cognitive, social, emotional, and personal changes (Spano, 2004). The identity of a young person, like any other person, is formed by the developmental processes according to which a person changes from infancy to old age. This development can be divided into three main areas: physical development (changes in the body and organ systems), cognitive development (changes in an individual's cognitive processes), and socio-emotional development (changes in interpersonal aspects) (Miltuze, 2022; Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015). The age of a young person is defined in different ways, but in scientific research since the 20th century. It is analyzed as a time of physical, emotional, and social changes, the process of which plays a vital role in the development of a person's personality. Human development takes place throughout life, but the young age is the period when the most important personality traits and behavioral norms are formed and stabilized. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the tolerance of young people, which forms the foundations of democracy, it also serves as a basis for the problem and relevance of empirical research – the self-assessment of tolerance and equality of young people.

The article aims to identify the self-assessment of tolerance of young people and their changes in the period from 2017 to 2023. The results of the empirical research show that the average age of the respondents is 17 years. Development of young people from the point of view of personality theories, at the age of 17 a young person faces the second crisis period of his life – the 17-year crisis, when the causes of the crisis are plans, choosing a career, and building his own identity. Manifestations of this crisis are emotional tension, fear of mistakes, neurotic reactions, exacerbations of chronic diseases, and maximalism – crises are a significant part of personality formation, with new features and interests emerging during them, but often features can be negative (Kalvāns, 2018; The World Health Organization, 2020). The basic needs in this age stage are also similar to adolescence, but in this period, compared to the adolescent period, stabilization of personality expressions takes place and the young person corresponds more to an adult than to a child (Svence, 1999). In this period of youth, the most important thing is finding and stabilizing one's "I", when the development of identity is also connected with the desire to find one's place in life. The search for identity promotes increased interest in one's the inner life, abilities, personality characteristics, and behavior analysis (Kalvāns, 2018), but unlike a teenager, who mostly gets to know himself, a young person at this age seeks to understand the external world as well (Jirgena, 2006). The age stage of early youth is characterized by the need for self-affirmation and the need for personal self-determination (Alderman et al., 2019), we must provide all possible positive support to build and strengthen personality formation based on the basic value of democracy.

Research methodology and sample characteristics

The authors offer a comparative study based on the results of the student survey in 2017, 2019 and 2023. The authors organized surveys over several years to explain more significant changes in young people's self-esteem – thus, this publication is a continuation of the empirical research that has been started. To describe the self-assessment of 9th – 12th-grade students in the dimension of tolerance, a survey was carried out. The questionnaire included issues that highlight the research of the dimension of tolerance in the following criteria: (I) tolerance of other people's opinions; (II) tolerance towards a person of a different religion; (III) tolerance towards people of other races. At the same time, it is important to identify young people's views on the provision of equal opportunities in categories such as: (I) opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups to receive education; (II) employment opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups; (III) to ensure equal opportunities for women and men daily. To be able to answer previously raised and current questions, the research group organized a survey of young people (students in grades 9-12) in 2017, 2019, and 2023. The total number of respondents (pupils in grades 9-12) taking part in the 2017, 2019, and 2023 polls is 2131 young people. The survey was organized three times over seven years in the same country, in a particular city with the same target audience – pupils in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. In a given city, a link was sent out to all educational institutions asking them to hand it over to pupils in Classes 9-12 so that, voluntarily, young people could complete the survey via Google form.

The 2023 research sample consists of 437 respondents, 9th – 12th grade students which are 22% of the total number of students in a particular city (total number of students in the 9th – 12th grade group: 2001 students), which ensures 1the reliability and validity of the study. Research data gain confirmation ability (Martinsone, Pipere & Kamerāde, 2016) and the study results are valid because they demonstrate accuracy. The survey was carried out between February 2023 and May 2023 in all comprehensive schools of a particular city. The average age of respondents is 17 years. The characteristics of respondents' age and gender are described in Figure No.1.
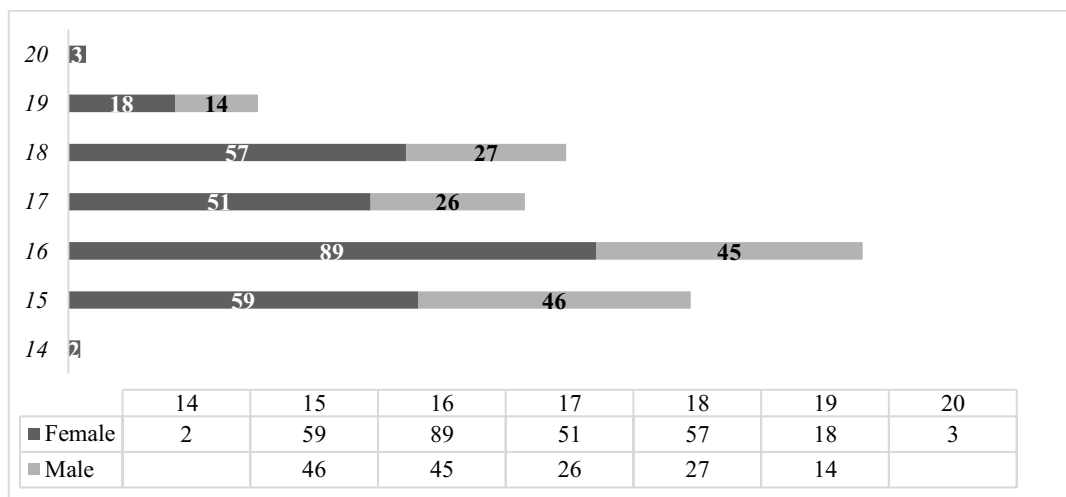

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
■ Female	2	59	89	51	57	18	3
■ Male		46	45	26	27	14	

Figure 1. 2023 Respondents' characteristics: gender and age (n=437)

Youth self-assessment of tolerance: 2023 survey results and comparative context 2017-2023 (summary of findings)

Aggregated results for the 2023 survey (Figure No.2) highlight the young people involved in the study are tolerant individuals, both in terms of tolerance towards people with different views and terms of ethnic and religious tolerance, in addition, the result confirms a higher level of tolerance among girls than among boys, as reflected in the study data:

- 244 respondents (56%, most of the students involved in the survey) expressed tolerance towards different views, only 35 (8%) of respondents have never been thinking about it, but 97 (22%) respondents admitted that it was difficult to assess their attitude, while 61 (14%) 124 respondents consider themselves as intolerant towards a different view;

- 283 (65%) respondents claim that they are tolerant towards people with different religious beliefs, 32 (7%) have never been thinking about it, 44 (10%) respondents admitted that it was difficult to assess their attitude, while 78 (18%) respondents consider themselves intolerant towards a person with different religious belief;
- 291 (67%) respondents expressed their tolerance towards other races, 24 (5%) have never been thinking about it, 41 (9%) respondents admitted that it was difficult to assess their attitude, while 81 (19%) consider themselves intolerant towards another race.
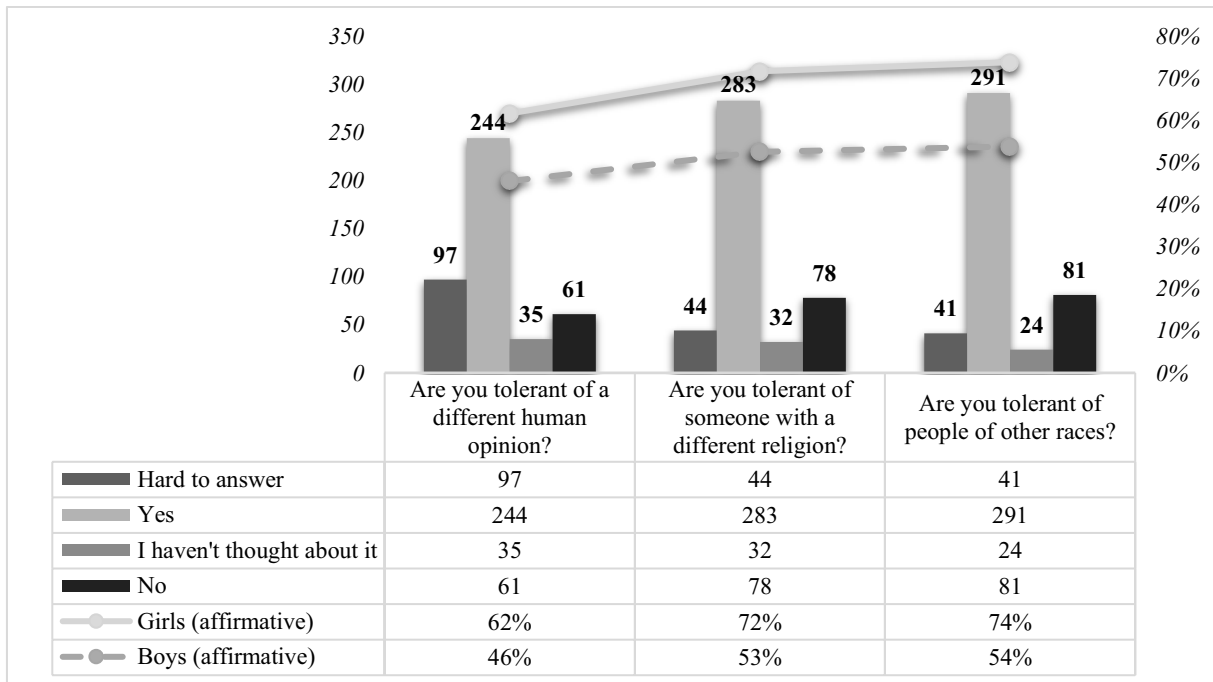

	Are you tolerant of a different human opinion?	Are you tolerant of someone with a different religion?	Are you tolerant of people of other races?
Hard to answer	97	44	41
Yes	244	283	291
I haven't thought about it	35	32	24
No	61	78	81
Girls (affirmative)	62%	72%	74%
Boys (affirmative)	46%	53%	54%

Figure 2. The self-esteem of youth tolerance (n=437)

On the other hand, comparing the results of the survey between the results of 2017, 2019, and 2023 (Figure No.3), it can be concluded that:

- the tolerance of young people towards people with a different opinion has dropped significantly – by an average of 20% comparing the results of 2017 and 2023;
- the tolerance of young people towards people with a different religion has dropped – by an average of 13% comparing the results of 2019 and 2023;
- the tolerance of young people towards people of a different ethnicity has fallen – by an average of 11% comparing the results of 2017 and 2023.
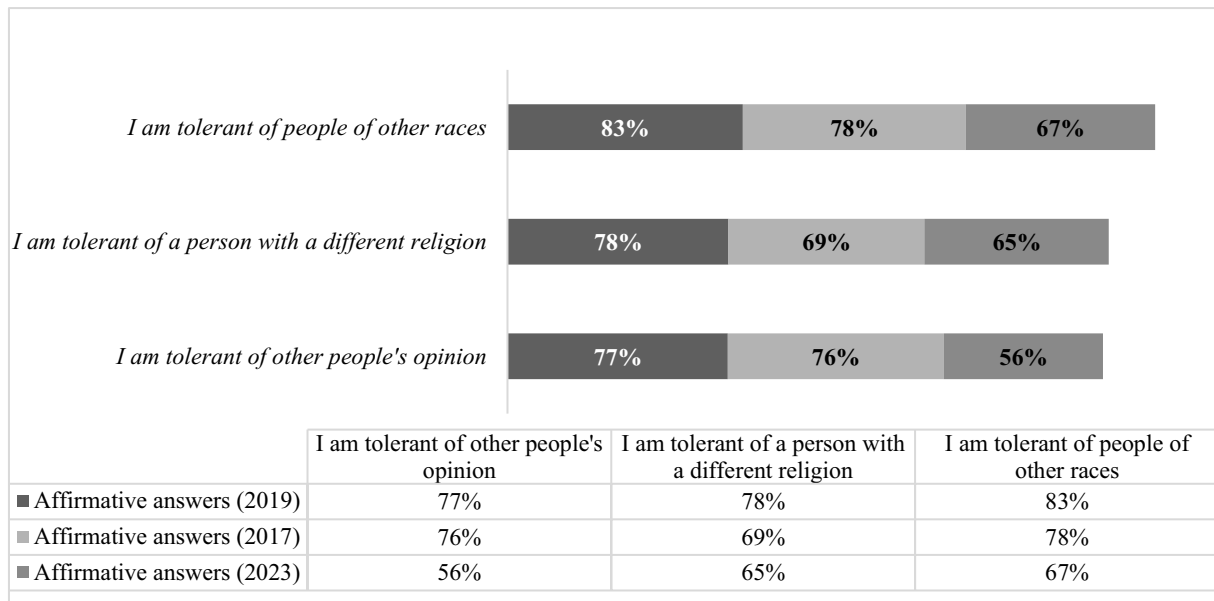
	I am tolerant of other people's opinion	I am tolerant of a person with a different religion	I am tolerant of people of other races
■ Affirmative answers (2019)	77%	78%	83%
■ Affirmative answers (2017)	76%	69%	78%
■ Affirmative answers (2023)	56%	65%	67%

Figure 3. Self-assessment of young people's tolerance in a comparative context 2017-2019-2023 (N=2131)

Despite the observed decline in the self-assessment of young people's tolerance, comparing the results of the survey for 2017, 2019, and 2023, the average level of tolerance of young people in the following criteria such as: (I) tolerance of other people's opinions; (II) tolerance towards a person of a different religion; (III) tolerance towards people of other races is 72%.

In addition, the borderline between what is tolerant and what is tolerable in Europe is becoming increasingly fragile, marked on this background by the so-called "new liberal intolerance" that can lead to "national intolerance" (Dobbernack, Modood & Triandafyllidou, 2013). The idea of researcher Raphael Cohen-Almagor should be noted: "Nowadays tolerance is one of the underpinning foundations of liberal democracy, and the practice of tolerance is perceived to be in the core of moral life. Tolerance has been described as a claim of our conscience, part of our conception of justice, and a virtue acknowledged as being the distinction between the best people and the best societies. Tolerance has been perceived as a good in itself, not as a mere pragmatic device or prudential expedient. It is assumed that tolerance had to prevail to make living together possible. As no society is homogeneous, having diverse national religious and/or cultural conceptions of the good, living together requires tolerance toward a plurality of ideas and ways of life. Tolerance is essential for finding a modus vivendi and common denominator to establish a society with a shared system of beliefs, a community of citizens who respect pluralism, diversity, and difference." (Cohen-Almagor, 2016).

Analyzing data describing the attitudes of young people toward providing equal opportunities for different ethnic groups (Figure No.4), the result confirms a higher level of tolerance among girls than among boys and it can be concluded that:
- 384 (88%) respondents are convinced that all ethnic/racial groups should have equal opportunities to receive education, while 53 (12%) respondents are against it;
- 386 (88%) respondents are convinced that all ethnic/racial groups should have equal opportunities to get a job, 51 (12%) respondents think the opposite view;
- 376 (86%) respondents are convinced that women and men should have equal rights in everyday life, while 61 (14%) respondents think the opposite.
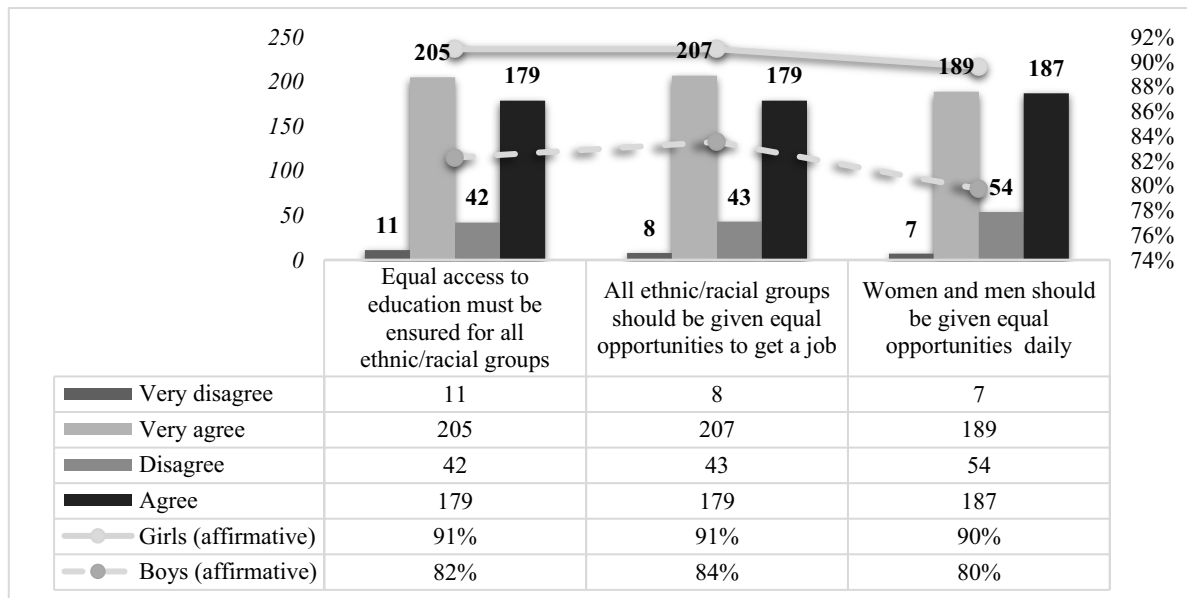
Very disagree	11	8	7
Very agree	205	207	189
Disagree	42	43	54
Agree	179	179	187
Girls (affirmative)	91%	91%	90%
Boys (affirmative)	82%	84%	80%

Figure 4. Youth attitudes to equal opportunities with different ethnic groups (n=437)

On the other hand, comparing the results of the survey between the results of 2017, 2019, and 2023 (Figure No.5), it can be concluded that:

- over the past seven years, young people have not significantly changed their belief that all ethnic/racial groups should be given equal access to education;
- over the past seven years, young people have had a slight increase in confidence that all ethnic/racial groups should be given equal opportunities to get jobs;
- over the past seven years, young people have not significantly changed their belief that women and men should be given equal opportunities daily.
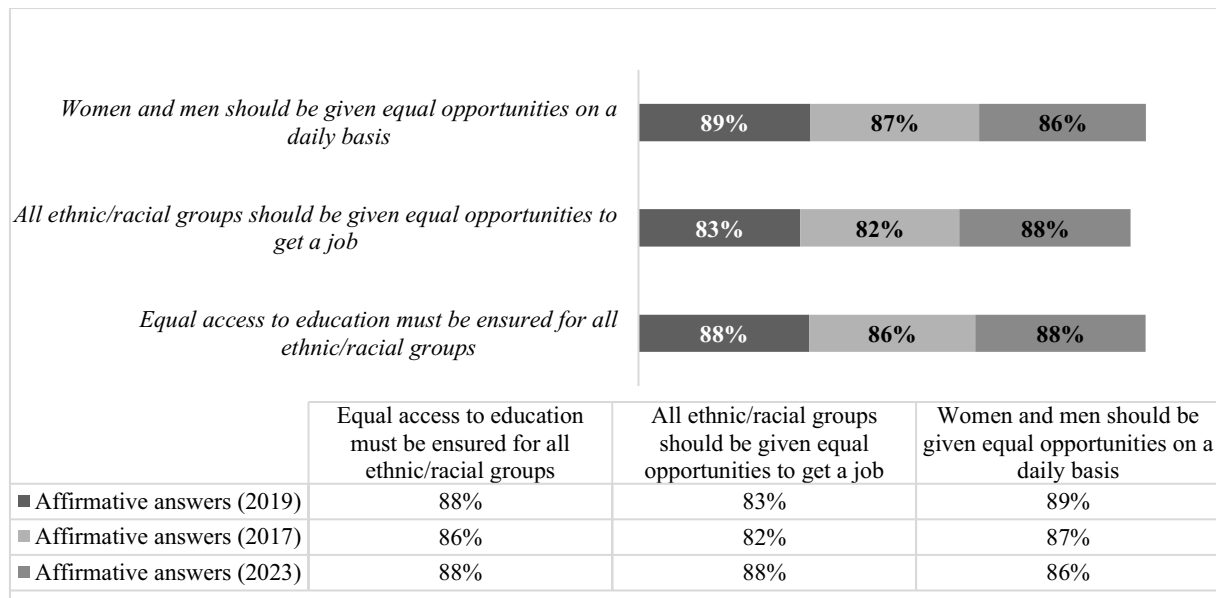

	Equal access to education must be ensured for all ethnic/racial groups	All ethnic/racial groups should be given equal opportunities to get a job	Women and men should be given equal opportunities on a daily basis
Affirmative answers (2019)	88%	83%	89%
Affirmative answers (2017)	86%	82%	87%
Affirmative answers (2023)	88%	88%	86%

Figure 5. Self-assessment of young people's views on equal opportunities provided in a comparative context 2017-2019-2023 (N=2131)

Despite the observed decline in the self-assessment of young people's views on the provision of equal opportunities, comparing the results of the survey for 2017, 2019, and 2023, the average level of equal opportunities in the following categories such: (I) opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups to receive education; (II) employment opportunities for all ethnic/racial groups; (III) to ensure equal opportunities for women and men daily is 86%.

Conclusions

Human development takes place throughout life, but the young age is the period when the most important personality traits and behavioral norms are formed and stabilized. Young people are the basis for the future of democracy and the social, political, and environmental future of the world. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the tolerance of young people, which forms the foundations of democracy, it also serves as a basis for the problem and relevance of empirical research – the self-assessment of tolerance and equality of young people. Promoting tolerance in the 21st century in a multicultural society is an essential precondition for intercultural dialogue, democracy, and the reduction of geopolitical problems.

The empirical part of the research confirms that in general, respondents involved in the research can be described as tolerant young people in different tolerance categories with high tolerance self-esteem. From a comparative perspective, girls may have a higher sense of tolerance than boys.

When analyzing the results of empirical research in specific class groups, the following trends can be traced: 9th graders are less tolerant in their views than 10th – 12th graders; girls have higher tolerance self-ratings in the 10th and 11th grades (around 16-17-year-olds); among boys, higher tolerance self-ratings are in 12th grades (about 18-year-olds).

Comparing the results of the survey between the results of 2017, 2019, and 2023, it is important to note that: (I) the tolerance of young people towards people with a different opinion has dropped significantly – by an average of 20% comparing the results of 2017 and 2023; (II) the tolerance of young people towards people with a different religion has dropped – by an average of 13% comparing the results of 2019 and 2023; (III) the tolerance of young people towards people of a different ethnicity has fallen – by an average of 11% comparing the results of 2017 and 2023; (IV) over the past seven years, young people have not significantly changed their belief that all ethnic/racial groups should be given equal access to education or to get work, nor has young people changed their belief that women and men should be given equal opportunities daily.

The results of empirical research over the past seven years (2017 to 2023) make it possible to argue that young people are, on average, more prone to equal opportunities for different ethnic groups, but less prone to expressions of their individual tolerance. Moreover, a negative tendency should also be noted – in general, young people have become less tolerant of people with different opinions, religious beliefs, and ethnic groups.

The quality of the implementation of civic education influences the development of pupils' civic competences, helping students to construct knowledge of themselves and the people around them, of their country and cultural traditions, of the fundamental values and principles of democracy, of their rights and responsibilities, of their loyalty, of developing pupils' skills to take responsibility for themselves and those around them, and of promoting the development of students' critical thinking, of attitudes and active participation in decision-making, which underpin the sustainable development of education (UNESCO, 2019).

References

Alderman, E. M., Breuner, C. C, & COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE. (2019). Unique Needs of the Adolescent. *Pediatrics*;144(6):e20193150. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-3150

Blandul, V., & Bradea, A. (2023). The Status of Students' Didactic Self-Assessment in The Romanian University Curriculum. International Journal on Lifelong Education and Leadership, 9(1), 54-64. https://doi.org/10.25233/ijlel.1228449

Boud, D. (1995). *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. London: Kogan Page.

Boud, D., Falchikov, N. (2006) Aligning assessment with long-term learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(4), 399–413.

Cohen-Almagor, R. (2016). *Tolerance*. Vocabulary for the Study of Religion. Retrieved from: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2715115

Čehlovs, M. (2011). *Vidusskolēnu pašnoteikšanās attīstības humanitārie aspekti.* Rīga: RaKa.

Dobbernack, J., Modood, T. & Triandafyllidou, A. (2013). *Advances on Tolerance Theory in Europe.* San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute.

European Commission. (2018). *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy.* Brussels. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269

European Union. (2017). *Age of majority.* Retrieved from https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/mapping-minimum-age-requirements/agemajority

Human Rights Council of the United Nations. (2023). *Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development Human rights bodies and mechanisms.* United Nations General Assembly A/HRC/52/72. Retrieved from https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/618/67/PDF/G2261867.pdf?OpenElement

Jaworska N. & MacQueen G. (2015). Adolescence as a unique developmental period. Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience; 40(5):291-3. doi: 10.1503/jpn.150268.

Jirgena, S. (2006). *Jaunieši un adiktīva uzvedība.* Rīga: Drukātava.

Kalvāns, Ē. (2018). *Attīstības psiholoģija.* Rēzekne: Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju akadēmija

Martinsone, K., Pipere, A. & Kamerāde, D. (2016). *Pētniecība: teorija un prakse.* Rīga: RaKa

Miltuze, A. (2022). *Attīstības psiholoģija.* Nacionālā enciklopēdija. Retrieved from https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/7374

Spano, S. (2004). *Stages of Adolescent Development. Research FACTs and Findings*. Cornell University: Upstate Center of Excellence. Retrieved from https://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_stages_0504.pdf

Svence, G. (1999). *Attīstības psiholoģija.* Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC.

Svence, G. (2009). *Pozitīvā psiholoģija.* Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC.

Taras, M. (2010). Student self-assessment: processes and consequences. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(2), 199-209.

UNESCO. (2019). Framework for the Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Beyond 2019. Retrieved: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215

World Health Organization. (2020). *Guidelines on mental health promotive and preventive interventions for adolescents: helping adolescents thrive*. Geneva: World Health Organization.