

RESEARCH ON THE ACCESS  
AND FUNCTIONALITY OF THE  
SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF  
ROMANI WOMEN VICTIMS OF  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE  
TERRITORY OF SKOPJE



Association Initiative for Women's rights from Suto Orizari



# RESEARCH ON THE ACCESS AND FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF ROMANI WOMEN VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE TERRITORY OF SKOPJE

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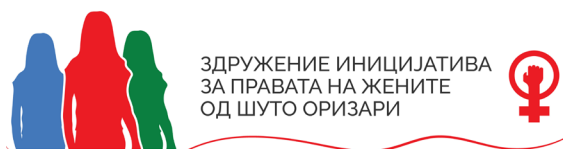
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# INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Republic of North Macedonia ratified the Istanbul Convention<sup>1</sup>, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which has the most direct impact on the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention was the basis for the adoption of the new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted in January 2021.<sup>2</sup>

Violence against women is a structural and global phenomenon that does not recognize social, economic or national boundaries. This is a serious violation of human rights. Prejudices, stereotypes, customs and traditions continue to favor men in many areas, for example in the private and public spheres, political life, at work, in the education system, in reporting crimes to the police or the courts. All of this makes it even more difficult for women to go out in public and speak out about their experiences of violence and makes it harder for their rights to be respected.<sup>3</sup>

Discrimination against women in our society is a result of tradition, as well as social stereotypes and prejudices about the position of women in society. Unequal power relations between men and women are a consequence of discrimination against women, and thus limit the full progress of women.

The Roma population in the Republic of North Macedonia is still the most vulnerable minority in the country, a community facing institutional discrimination, social prejudice, and unequal access to services.<sup>4</sup>

Roma women have a specific position in society and are victims of daily intersectional discrimination both because they are women and because they are Roma. Many Roma women do not have the same opportunities to make their own decisions on issues related to marital status, education, career,

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1 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, available on: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>.

2 Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

3 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/north-macedonia-report-2021\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/north-macedonia-report-2021_en)

4 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/north-macedonia-report-2021\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/north-macedonia-report-2021_en)

employment and other issues. These decisions are usually made by their husbands or other family members. This is why underage marriages and pregnancies are most common among Romani women. Romani women in our society have the lowest percentage of completed education and the highest percentage of poverty and unemployment. In such cases, Romani women are completely dependent on the man, starting from economic dependence, but also dependence on housing and decision-making.<sup>5</sup>

All these facts contribute to increased domestic violence<sup>6</sup> shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim; against Romani women, which in most cases is kept silent. The reasons why the victims are silent are different. According to the research presented above, the most common reasons are: the feeling of fear from the perpetrator, societal shame but also lack of information and lack of awareness of the victim. Institutional discrimination of Romani women in the country greatly influences the silence of the victims due to distrust in the system and the competent institutions.

The purpose of this research was to assess the accessibility and functionality of the system for protection of Romani women victims of domestic violence, in accordance with North Macedonia's Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The aim of this research is to evaluate the work of the institutions for protecting Romani women from domestic violence and what measures they take in relation to their actions. Another aim is to increase the awareness of the State institutions on prevention and actions necessary for Romani women victims of domestic violence to overcome this challenging issue. The overall purpose of this research is to increase the awareness about ways of reporting different forms of violence against Romani women and increase their motivation for doing so.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://hera.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/31.01-Monitoring-2.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "domestic violence" shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim;

# METHODOLOGY

The research is methodologically based on desk analysis and analysis of data collected through questionnaires with Romani women, focus groups with Romani women, and information obtained through Public Information Requests<sup>7</sup> from relevant institutions. Structured meetings with relevant institutions were also planned but did not take place because the relevant institutions did not answer to our requests for meetings.

The desk analysis is based on secondary data sources. It includes the collection, review and analysis of available reports, documents, and data related to the implementation of policies and the functioning of the system for protection of women against domestic violence. Requests for access to public information provided information on the number of reported incidents of domestic violence, the number of registered victims, the number of crimes related to domestic violence, the number of teams working on domestic violence, as well as the number of victims accommodated in State-run shelters in the period January-October 2021, the number of advised victims, the number of crisis centers, as well as the number of cared victims divided by nationality, gender, and age. Requests for access to public information were submitted to the Inter-Municipal Center for Social Affairs of the City of Skopje and the Ministry of Interior.

The research also includes a brief overview and analysis of the legal and institutional framework. The review and analysis are based on primary and secondary data and include analysis and review of laws, bylaws and policies related to the establishment and functioning of the system for protection of women from domestic violence. Primary data analysis includes analysis of data collected through Requests for access to public information, meetings with stakeholders, and questionnaires with Roma women and conducted focus groups. During the research, our attempt to conduct the planned interviews with the State officials stakeholders was unsuccessful, because until the day of completion of the research, no response on the meeting invitations was received from any of the contacted institutions.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Law on Free Access to Public Information  
<https://www.ippo.gov.mk/docs/xFiles/articles/zakonZaSlobodenPristapDoInfo/zakonZaSlobodenPristapDoInfo.pdf>

The qualitative data for analysis of the access and functionality of the system for protection of women victims of domestic violence according to the methodology were collected through questionnaires with Roma women who have permanent residence on the territory of the City of Skopje covering women from the municipalities: Suto Orizari, Gjorce Petrov, Gazi Baba, Centar, and Cair, i.e municipalities with a larger proportion of Romani population among the general population. For the needs of the research, 200 questionnaires and 12 focus groups covering 50 Romani women were conducted. The focus groups were held with 4 to 5 participants, considering the sensitivity of the topic, subject of research.

### 3. Review and analysis of the legal and institutional framework in the context of the system for protection of women from gender-based and domestic violence

#### 3.1 Review and analysis of the legal framework of the system for protection of women from gender-based and domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

##### a. Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention<sup>9</sup>, is the most important international document on combating domestic violence. As an international instrument, the Convention makes an outstanding and significant contribution internationally to the fight against violence against women and domestic violence.

The Istanbul Convention is broadly accepted as the most far-reaching legal instrument in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as one of the forms of human rights violations. The Istanbul Convention requires the Governments that have ratified it to adopt a comprehensive set of measures to address all forms of violence against women including domestic violence. Each provision of the Convention aims to prevent violence, to assist victims and to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Convention clearly states that violence against women and domestic violence can no longer be considered a private matter, but that the states have an obligation, through comprehensive and integrated policies, to prevent violence, protect victims and penalize the perpetrators.<sup>10</sup>

In 2017, the Republic of North Macedonia ratified the Istanbul Convention and that in itself produced obligations for the State to establish a legal and institutional framework that will provide prevention and protection of victims of domestic violence, and prosecution of perpetrators.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00033/full>

<sup>9</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/168046253a>

<sup>10</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/168046253a>



## b. Law on Social Protection

According to the Law on Social Protection<sup>11</sup>, social protection is provided by exercising the rights to financial assistance from social protection and provision of social services, and other measures determined by this law, on an equal basis without discrimination.

Given the complexity of the issue of domestic violence, the multiple consequences for victims, their children, families and society, the Law should ensure that victims of GBV and DV receive social protection in relation to their economic status, institutional and non-institutional support and prevention from poverty, and further deterioration in poverty.

Article 62 of the Law on Social Protection determines the amount of one-time financial assistance for victims of domestic violence. It has been determined that the victims are entitled to receive up to 15,000 MKD for emergency protection and shelter, and up to 12,000 MKD for health care and medical treatment. It is necessary to make an analysis of the effective benefit of the amount of the allocated funds, because none of the Roma women according to our research received this benefit i.e whether this amount is sufficient according to the needs of the victims.

The Law on Social Protection also establishes the right to health care for victims of domestic violence, which is a measure of protection in accordance with the regulations in the field of prevention and protection against domestic violence.

Victims of domestic violence according to the system of social protection and according to the needs have the right and opportunity to use counseling services. Counseling services include counseling work in order to prevent, mitigate and overcome the consequences of social problems of the individual and family, including psycho-social support for victims of domestic violence and psycho-social treatment of perpetrators of domestic violence. It is necessary for the professional staff in the Center for Social Affairs to fully determine the need and scope of the counseling service for each victim separately. Practice shows that very often the Centers for Social Affairs do not have special rooms for counseling or even if they have, they are not being used.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, Article 83 of the Law on Social Protection stipulates that the tem-

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/zakon\\_so\\_zastita\\_osnoven.pdf](https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/zakon_so_zastita_osnoven.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Social services in the municipalities in North Macedonia: capacity, risks, needs, Finance Think, 2020. <https://ideas.repec.org/s/ftm/policy.html>

porary residence service (safe houses) provides protection and professional assistance to persons in crisis in order to overcome the situation and their social integration. This definition of the temporary residence service is very important because it includes social integration, as a goal to be fulfilled by the temporary residence, and what can be done about the duration and use of this service. The law envisages victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence as users of the service. The service is provided for a period of up to three months, with the possibility of extension for another three months, and in exceptional cases when the condition of the victim is not changed for one year. However, the law should provide a method of work or measures to provide housing after the end of the temporary stay, which is part of the social integration that covers this service, because otherwise the victim may be put in a hopeless situation to have to return to the abuser. It is important that the location of these centers is secret, in order to be able to provide full protection to the victims, but most importantly to make the victims themselves feel safe and secure. Also the number of these temporary accommodation centers should be appropriate in relation to the need for them.

The intervention care service is a service for short-term care in the family of persons for whom urgent care is needed, until appropriate forms of protection are found, and for a maximum of 30 days. The law includes victims of violence as part of the users of this service.

Article 254 of the Law on Social Protection stipulates that the institution for social protection keeps records of beneficiaries, i.e. persons who have exercised a right or service in accordance with the law, including domestic violence. Such records are not divided by nationality, gender, and age. According to Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari, records of beneficiaries of social services should be ethnically disaggregated to allow better statistics and analysis.

### **c .Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**

The new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence<sup>13</sup> was adopted in January 2021 as part of the process of harmonization of national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. The purpose of the law is the prevention and effective protection of victims of any form of gender-based violence against women and victims of domestic violence by respecting the fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and the international

<sup>13</sup> Social services in the municipalities in North Macedonia: capacity, risks, needs, Finance Think, 2020. <https://ideas.repec.org/s/ftm/policy.html>

agreements ratified in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia. The law is based on the principle of equality and elimination of stereotypes about gender roles. The principles on which the law is based only emphasize the unequal role of women in society, based on stereotypes and traditions and the need to ensure equality in all spheres of life.

The new law covers women victims of all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and regulates the actions of the institutions that should act with due diligence in taking measures for prevention of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, the actions of the institutions for protection of women from gender-based violence and domestic violence, the mutual coordination of institutions and organizations, victim protection services and data collection on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence.

A significant novelty of the law<sup>14</sup> is the introduction of due diligence as an obligation of state authorities, legal entities exercising public powers established by law, officials and other authorized persons performing activities on behalf of the State to refrain from participating in acts of violence and take all measures and activities to prevent any act of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, as well as take all appropriate legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent, protect, investigate, punish the conductors of violence. The introduction of due diligence as an obligation for the institutions is very important and increases the obligation of the institutions for appropriate action, given that they may respond otherwise.

Also, the Law in the glossary defines all types of violence, and as types of violence are recognized physical violence, psychological violence, stalking, intimate partner violence, economic violence, sexual violence and rape, sexual harassment and sexual harassment online, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilization, forced control over women, trafficking of women, and forced marriage.

Article 99 of the law defines reintegration of women victims of violence for the first time ever in the system of protection from violence against women and domestic violence, where through a special Program for reintegration of victims of violence, the following services should be provided: temporary housing, psychological counseling with mentoring, various types financial assistance specifically designed for women victims of violence, education and training opportunities in various fields, as well as employment measures established by law. The com-

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

petent institutions are obliged by law to recognize women victims of violence as an especially vulnerable category and to develop programs and measures in accordance with the specific needs of women victims of violence.

The law is based on the principles of non-discrimination, prohibition of victimization, vulnerable women, appropriate adaptation for women with disabilities, gender responsive policies and empowerment of women victims of violence. According to our field research, It is very important that the competent institutions treat the victims in a way that will further protect them from victimization or re-victimization.

Article 12<sup>15</sup> from the law provides for multi-sectoral action and the existence of a multi-sectoral team in cases where there is knowledge of endangering the life and health of women victims of gender-based violence and victims of domestic violence and family members, in which case a security plan is prepared, by a multi-sectoral expert team.

Article 11 from the law<sup>16</sup> regulates the actions of the competent institutions, prevention activities, as well as urgent and temporary protection measures.

According to Article 57 of the law<sup>17</sup>, in order to eliminate the immediate and serious danger to the life, physical and mental integrity of the victim and her family members, an immediate protection measure is imposed, such as removing the perpetrator from the home and a ban on approaching the home at the proposal of the Ministry of Interior, consent of the victim. It is very important to emphasize that the urgent protection measure is imposed when there is a danger to the mental integrity of the victim and family members, and not just a danger to life and physical integrity.

In litigation, for the proposal of the competent Center for Social Affairs, according to the articles 45-48 by the law<sup>18</sup> and in order to stop the violence, remove the consequences of the violence and take effective measures against the perpetrator of violence, in order to eliminate the reasons for re-perpetration of violence, the court may impose the following interim measures:

- 1) a ban on threatening to commit violence;
- 2) prohibition to harass, harass, telephone, contact or otherwise communicate directly or indirectly with the victim;

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15 <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

16 <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

17 <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

18 <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf>

- 3) prohibition to approach at a distance of less than 100 meters to the residence, school, workplace or a certain place that the victim regularly visits;
- 4) removal from the home regardless of ownership for a period of ten to 30 days;
- 5) prohibition to possess firearms or other weapons or to have them confiscated;
- 6) to return the items needed to meet the daily needs of the victim and the family;
- 7) compulsory legal support of the family;
- 8) to attend a counseling center for perpetrators of violence against women or domestic violence;
- 9) mandatory treatment of the perpetrator if he uses alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances or has a mental illness;
- 10) the perpetrator must reimburse the medical and other expenses incurred by the violence and
- 11) any other measure that the court deems necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim and other family members.

It is important to note that the Law is in line with the Istanbul Convention, but still requires adequate, full and effective implementation by the institutions in order to protect victims and act in their best interest.

### 3.2 Review and analysis of the institutional framework of the system for protection of women from gender-based and domestic violence

The State is responsible for the protection of women from domestic violence. Competent for the implementation of the Law on Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence are all bodies of the state administration, courts, public prosecution, local self-government units and legal entities that exercise public powers determined by law. The law envisages institutional and multi-sectoral cooperation in taking measures for prevention and protection from domestic violence.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is the central institution that creates policies for prevention and protection of women from domestic violence. It prepares and conducts initial and continuous education, and monitors and analyzes the situation with domestic violence. The Ministry of Interior also creates policies for prevention and protection of women from domestic violence, takes action to prosecute perpetrators, and assumes other responsibilities in accordance with the law.

The Assembly and the Government also undertakes activities for prevention and protection from domestic violence within the scope of their competencies.

The law also envisages competencies for its implementation, as well as for prevention from domestic violence for the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, Local Government Units, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Agency for Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services, The Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, associations, trade unions, religious communities, the media, as well as legal entities with public representations.

Article 15 of the law provides for the establishment of a National Coordinating Body for the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The National Coordination Body coordinates the work of the institutions in the field of prevention and protection from gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, monitors the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and national policies in the field of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, monitors and analyzes the situation with gender-based violence against women and domestic violence and performs other activities determined by law.

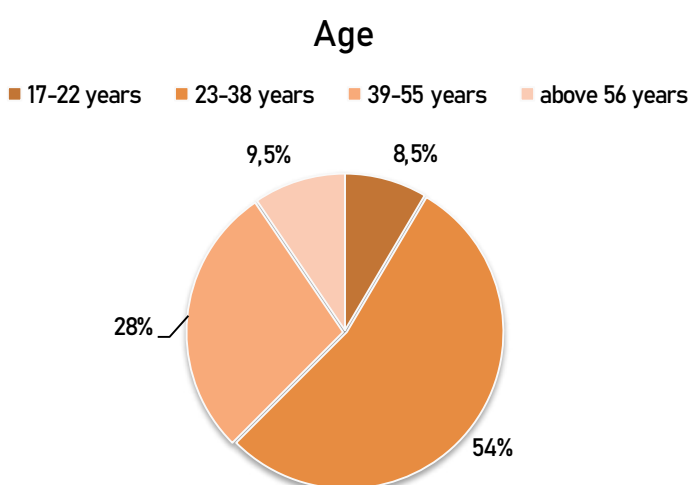
The law also determines the actions of the Centers for Social Affairs and the police officers in taking measures for protection of the victims of domestic violence.

## 4. Findings and analysis of the data obtained from the research and focus groups

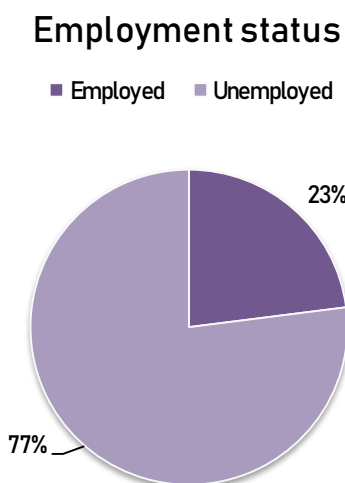
For the needs of the research 200 questionnaires were conducted with Romani women from five municipalities in the City of Skopje: Suto Orizari, Gjorce Petrov, Gazi Baba, Centar, and Chair . Twelve focus groups were also conducted, covering 50 Romani women.

### PART I

The questionnaires covered 200 Romani women aged 17 to over 56 years.



Most of the respondents, i.e 77% are unemployed, while 23% of women are employed.

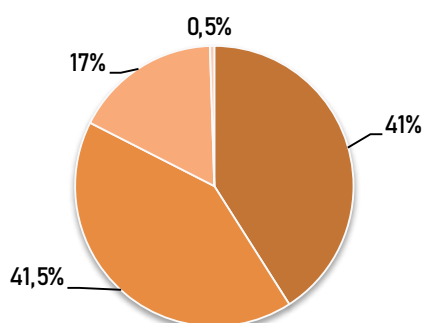




Regarding the level of education, the largest percentage of women have primary education, i.e 41.5%. A cause of concern is the fact that as many as 41% of women have no formal education, while only 0.5% have higher education.

### Degree of education

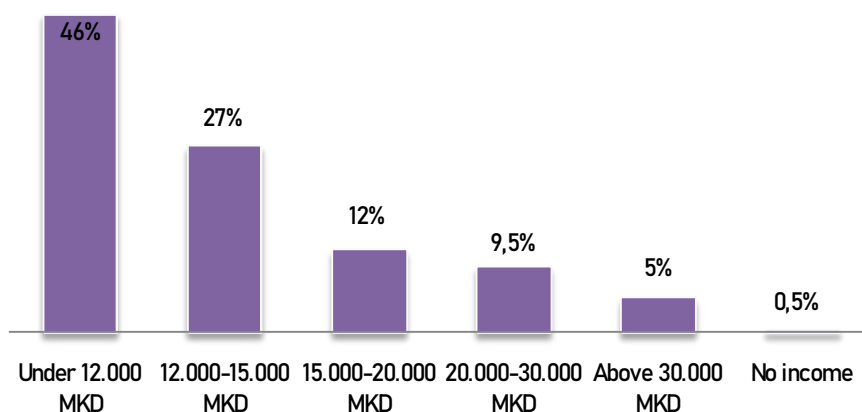
- Without formal education
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- High education



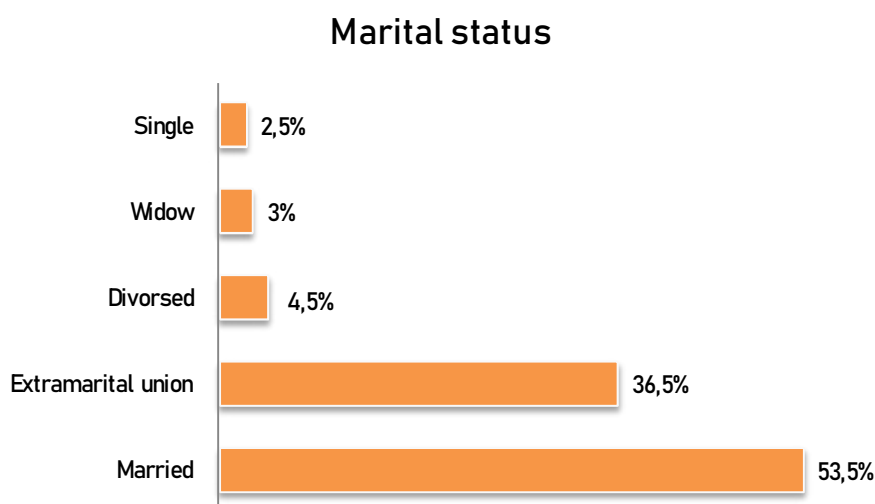
Such data only confirm the position of the Romani in the society, the financial difficulties which they face. The large percentage of uneducated Roma women, unemployment, the financial difficulties which they are facing are only contributing towards the increase and deepening of their vulnerability.

When asked regarding their incomes in their households, 46% of the women responded that they have an income of under 12.000 MKD, 27% have responded that they have an income of 12.000 to 15.000 MKD. Only 5% of the women responded that they have an income of over 30.000 MKD on a monthly basis.

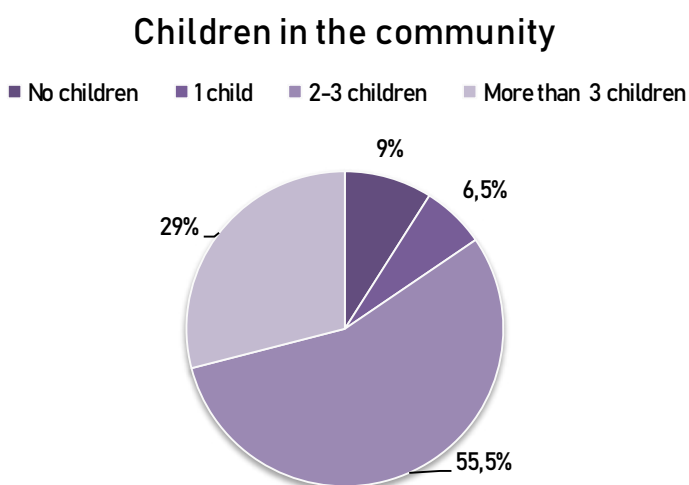
### Household income



90% of the women are either married or live in an extramarital union, and 53,5% of the women are married, while as 36,5% live in an extramarital union. 4,5% of the women are divorced.

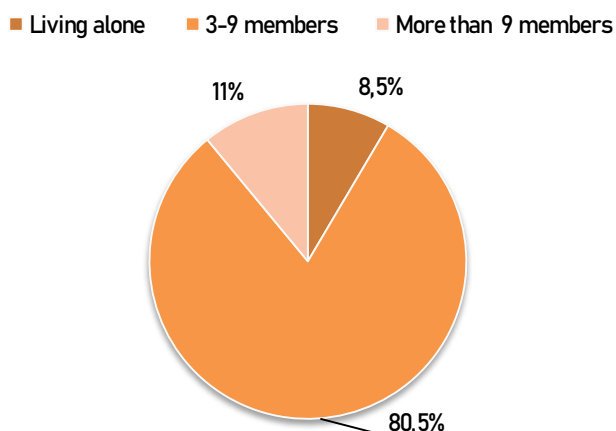


Most women have 2-3 children and more than 3 children, 55.5% of women have 2-3 children, while 29% of women have more than 3 children.



80.5% of the respondents live in a community of 3-9 members, and 11% live in households with more than 9 members. If the data on household income are taken into account, then only the low financial situation they face is confirmed. Only 8.5% of women live in a separate household, not in a union.

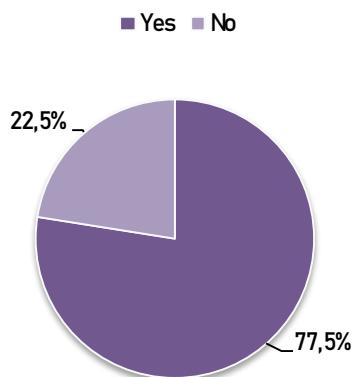
### Number in the household



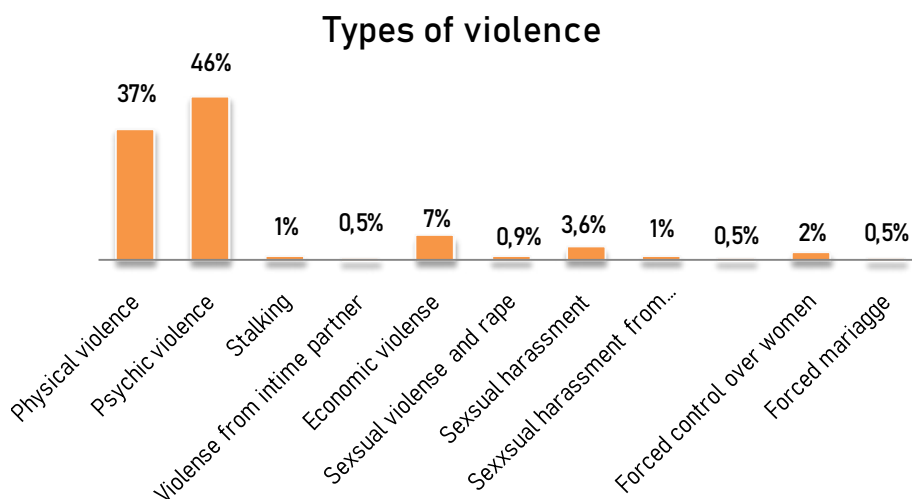
### II Part

When asked if they were / are a victim of gender-based or domestic violence, 77.5% of women answered that they were or are a victim of gender-based or domestic violence.

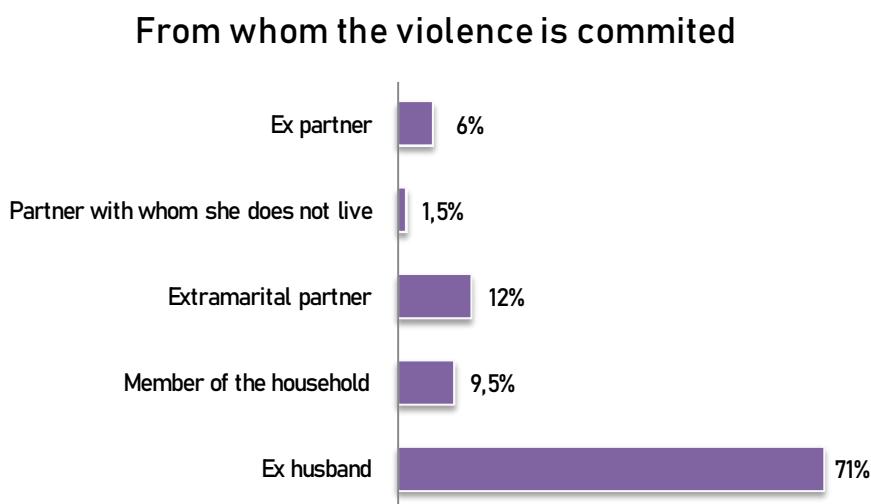
### Victims of the gender-based and domestic violence



The most common is psychological violence, followed by physical violence. Economic violence is also common. 46% of the respondents answered that they experience psychological violence, and 37% of women experience physical violence. 7% of women surveyed experience economic violence. It is important to note that the answers received cover all types of violence, which only indicates the large and different degree of violence that women suffer.

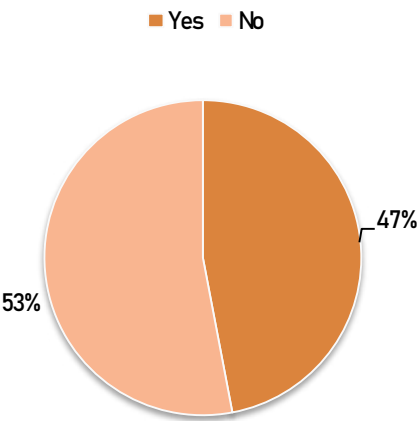


In most cases, 71% suffered violence from their spouses. Extramarital partners, members of family, partners with whom the victim does not live, and ex-partners are less common as perpetrators of violence.



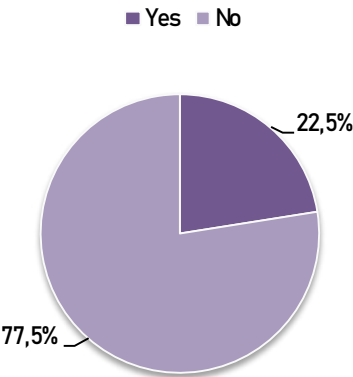
The percentage of women who were victims of physical violence is almost half, i.e 47% of women were beaten by their husbands 81%, mother-in-law 14%, ex-husband 4% and brother-in-law 1%. If we compare this data with the percentage of women who stated that they are or have been a victim of physical violence, or 37% of women, it can be concluded that women do not always recognize assault as physical violence.

Has anyone from your family hit you



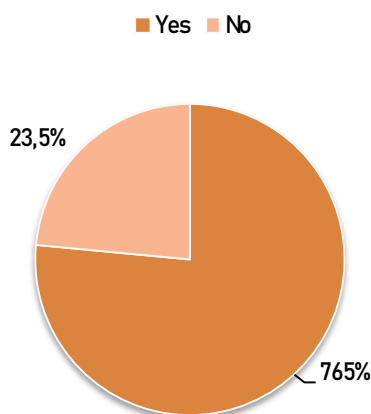
22.5% of women were offended by their appearance, 80% by their husbands and 20% by their mother-in-law.

Has anyone in your family insulted you about your appearance?



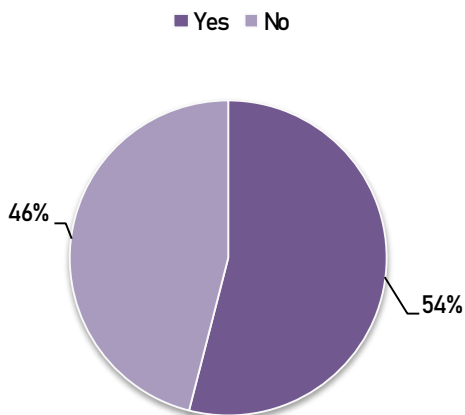
Women are economically dependent mostly on their husband, so 76.5% of women are economically dependent on a household member, i.e. 96% on the husband and 4% on the mother-in-law. The small percentage of economically independent women, i.e. 23.5% of women indicates the position of Roma women in society.

### Own chopper



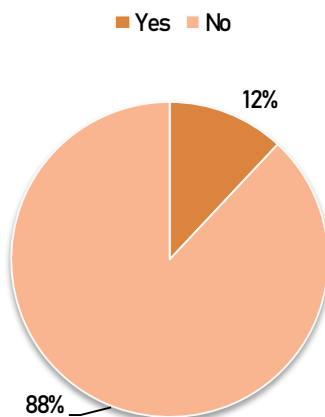
More than half of the respondents were verbally insulted and attacked by their families, 48% by the mother-

### Verbally attacked



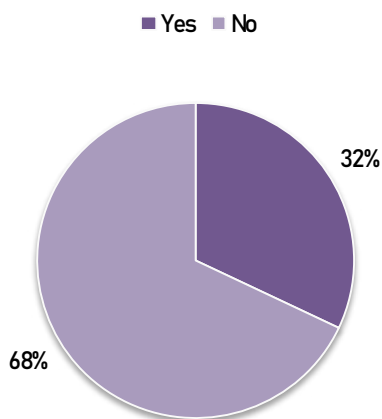
**12% of women were forced to have sex without their consent by their husbands and ex-partners.**

### Forced sexual intercourse



**32% of women answered that they know a woman who is a victim or has been a victim of violence, both physical and psychological, and 68% answered that they do not know. If we compare data on how many of the women surveyed are or have been victims of violence and how many of the women know a woman who has been or is a victim, it can be concluded that the violence they experience in the Roma community is not discussed.**

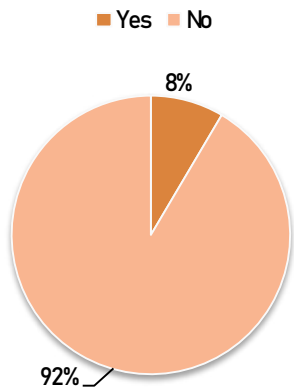
### Another victim





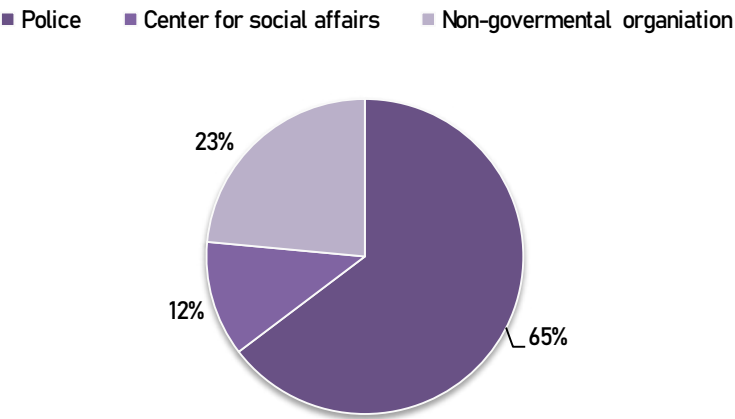
8.5% of the respondents answered that for information on protection from gender-based and domestic violence they applied to an institution / organization, while 91.5% did not.

Have you contacted any institution/organization for information?



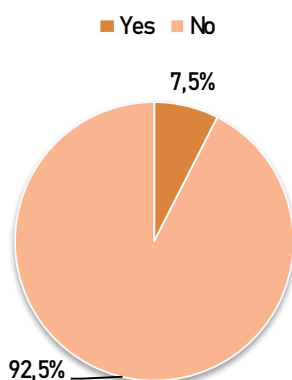
Regarding where the victims have addressed the cases of violence, 65% of them answered that they contacted the police, 23% answered that they contacted non-governmental organizations, while 12% of women answered that they contacted the Centers for Social Affairs.

Adress to institution



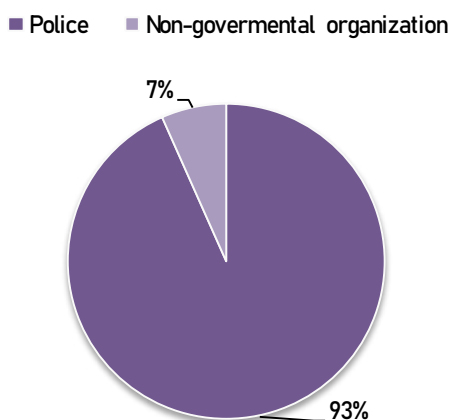
When asked whether they reported gender-based or domestic violence, 92.5% of women surveyed said they did not report it, while 7.5% of women said they did.

### Have they reported gender-based or domestic violence?



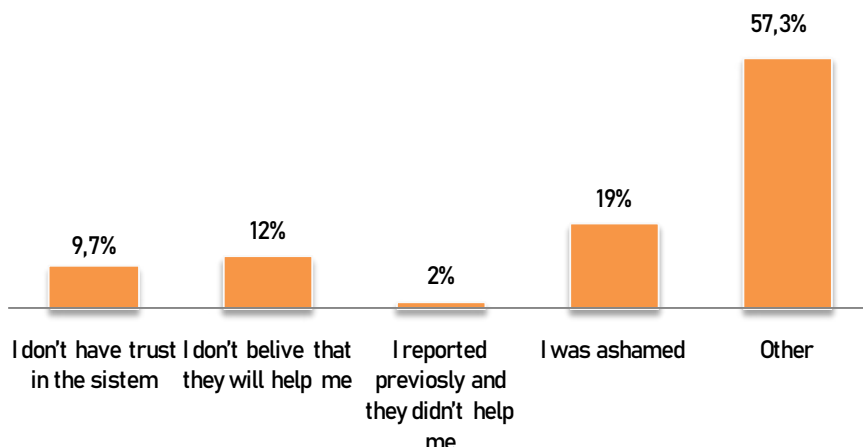
When asked if they reported in which institution they reported, 93% of women answered that they reported to the police, while 7% of women reported to NGOs.

### Where they reported



When asked if they did not report, to state the reason, 19% answered that they were ashamed, 12% answered that they do not believe that the institutions can help them, 9.7% of women answered that they do not trust the system, 2% answered that they reported earlier and were not helped, and 57.3% of women surveyed cited other reasons why they did not report. The following are the most common reasons: for a slap, a family does not break up, he is my husband, I can not report him, I have nowhere to go later, I do not want the children to grow up without a father and many other reasons.

### Reasons for non-reporting

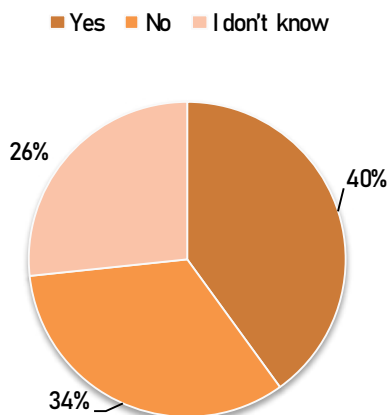


Out of the immediate and temporary measures for protection of the victims, the women know the following measures:

- Removal of the perpetrator from the home and prohibition to approach the home;
- Prohibition to threaten to commit violence;
- Prohibition to harass, abuse, call, or contact the victim;
- Prohibited to approach at a distance of less than 100 meters from the residence.

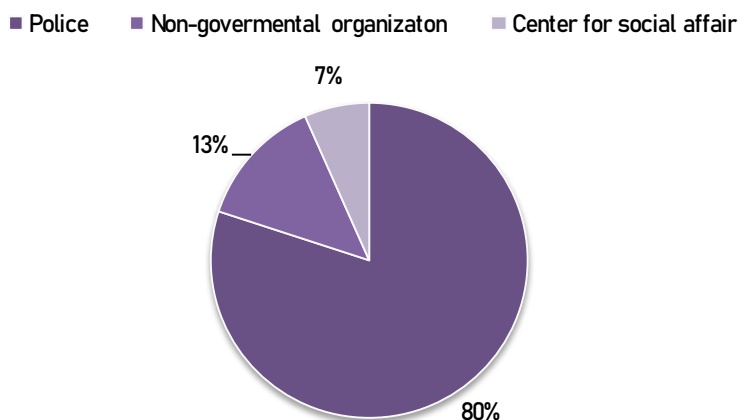
Of the small number of women who reported, 40% of women answered that immediate and temporary protection measures were imposed after their application, while 34% of women answered that no protection measures were imposed after their application, and 26% of women answered that they do not know whether protection measures have been imposed upon their reporting. This percentage of women who did not know whether or not protection measures were imposed only indicates how much women are not informed about the actions of the institutions.

## Urgent and temporary measures



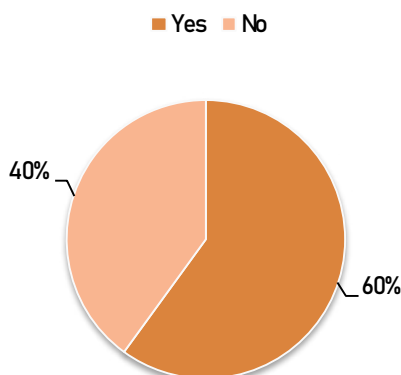
In terms of which institutions they addressed, the surveyed women answered that they addressed several: 12 women, i.e 80% reported to the police, 1 woman, i.e 7% reported to the Center for Social Affairs and 2 women, i.e 13% reported to an NGO.

## Which institutions did they contact?



More than half of the women who reported, i.e 60% answered that they were informed about the social protection rights by the Center for Social Affairs, while 40% answered that they were not informed. This data only indicates the need for equal treatment of the Center in all cases.

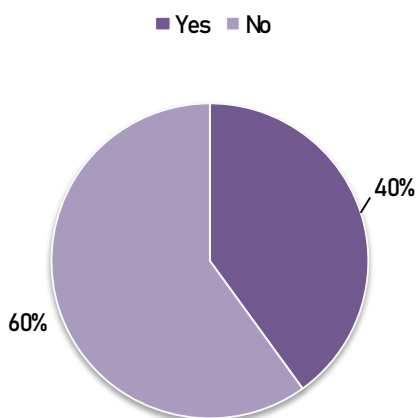
### Information from the Center for Social Affairs



The social service for housing and accommodation was enabled by the Center for Social Affairs to be used by 40% of women, and 60% of women did not receive such a service. The women who were accommodated were not satisfied with the service because the duration was too short and then returned home.

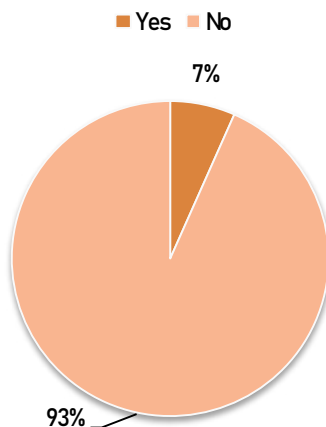
- "I am not at all satisfied with the duration of the very short period."
- "We're coming home again."
- "I'm not happy with the room at all."

### Housing and accommodation services



The Center for Social Affairs provided medical assistance to one woman in need, while 14 women, i.e 93% answered that they were not offered medical assistance.

### Medical help and support



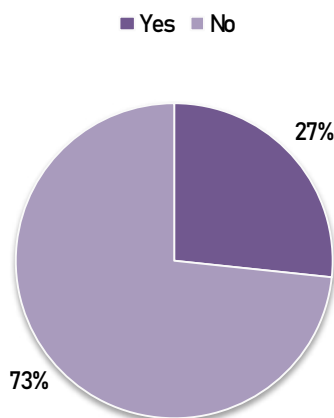
Satisfaction and duration of the medical care service:

- "I was examined when I was not feeling well. "They provided me with therapy every month."

The Center for Social Affairs provided psycho-social assistance in counseling to 27% of women, while 73% of women did not receive this service. Psychosocial counseling should be applied to each victim according to her need, and the fact that only 27% received it indicates unequal access to services for all women.

- „I talked with a psychiatrist, it helped me, I am satisfied."
- „It was offered to me, and the session lasted for enough."

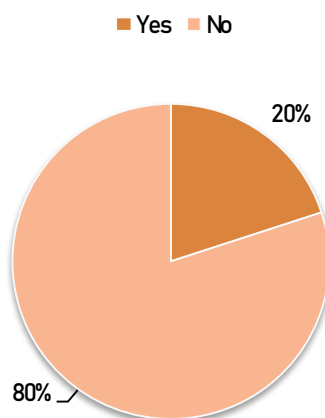
### Psycho-social intervention and treatment



The Center for Social Affairs referred only 20% of the women to appropriate state and other bodies responsible for the economic empowerment of the victim and her active inclusion in the labor market.

- “I was told to go to the Employment Agency to get involved in some employment measures but nothing came out of that.”

## Economic empowerment of the victim



When asked if they were satisfied with the action regarding their application, the women answered that they were satisfied with:

- Physical availability (is the institution near your place of living and can you easily access it, is the object accessible for persons with physical disabilities) 33% of the women
- The employees are professional and non-discriminatory 27% of the women
- The information received are clear and understandable (language, way of informing) 40% of the women.

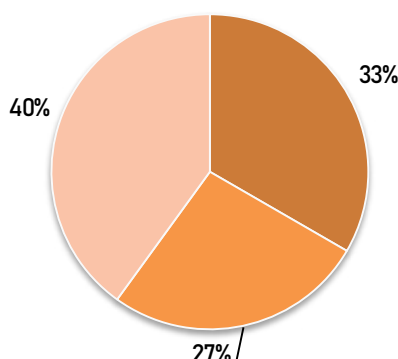
The women had no answer regarding the following questions:

- Financial accessibility (were you supposed to pay, did you need money in order to physically reach the service)
- Duration (did the employees in the institution dedicated enough time in order to protect from violence)
- Quality of treatment
- Sufficient staff
- Sufficient space (non-discrimination space)
- The measures that were taken were sufficient and appropriate
- The actions of the institutions were with due care (timely and appropriate in order to protect and prevent violence)
- The services were sufficient and appropriate
- Other



## Satisfaction with acting upon the application

■ Physical accessibility ■ Good employee attitude ■ The information is clear



As the biggest problem, the women singled out the fact that after the report, the abuser returns home immediately after 24 hours. Also, women are not satisfied with the short stay in the shelter center and the insufficient space in the center.

Respondents' suggestions for improving the system for protection against gender-based violence and domestic violence:

- "When the victim reports, the institutions should act immediately and not ask for a medical examination, because there are victims who report after a few days, so they have no visible traces."

The women consider that the following possible activities will help in reducing and eliminating gender-based or domestic violence:

- "To educate men."
- "To act immediately after each application."
- "To report violence should not be tolerated."
- "To increase the period in the shelter center."
- "To clear up the problems while there are no children."

## Review and analysis of data obtained from focus groups

The 12 focus groups included 50 Roma women living in the municipalities: Su-toOrizari, Centar, Chair, Gjorce Petrov and Gazi Baba. 70% of them are unemployed, 18% are employed, 10% of women are informally employed, while 2% are retired.

Regarding the level of education, as many as 66% of women are without formal education, 26% of the participants have primary education, while 8% of them have secondary education.

In terms of household income, 56% of women have less than 12,000MKD, 4% of women have up to 15,000 MKD, 14% of women have up to 20,000 MKD, 10% of them have up to 30,000 MKD, while 16 % of women have over 30,000 MKD.

When it comes to marital status, 56% are married, 34% live in an extramarital union, 6% are divorced, and 4% of women are widowed.

When asked if they are victims of gender-based or domestic violence, 96% of women answered that they are victims, while 4% answered that they are not. As the most common form of violence they experience, women answered that they experience physical, psychological and economic violence, i.e 36% of women answered that they experience physical violence, 44% of them experience psychological violence, and 10% of them experience economic violence.

Additionally, they pointed out the types of violence that some of the women experience: stalking, violence from an intimate partner, forced control over women.

When asked by whom the violence was committed, 76% of them answered that they experience violence from their spouse, while 14% of the participants answered that they experience violence from a member of the household, usually a father-in-law or mother-in-law. Also, a smaller number of women responded that the violence was committed by both extramarital partners and ex-partners.

56% of the women surveyed said that someone from the family hit them, while 26% of them said that someone from the family insulted them for their appearance. Regarding economic dependence and their own pocket money, as many as 76% of them answered that they are dependent on their husbands or another family member. When asked if they had ever been verbally assaulted by a family, 36% said they had been, while 16% said they had had forced sexual intercourse. Most focus group participants stated that they knew a woman who was a victim of gender-based or domestic violence.

Only 20% of focus group participants stated that they had contacted an institution or organization for information and / or protection against gender-based and domestic violence. Six women turned to the police, while 4 women turned to an NGO. 10 women, i.e 20% of the participants said that they reported domestic violence and gender-based violence to the police. The other women who experienced violence, but did not report, stated the following as reasons: they were ashamed, did not trust the system, they previously reported and were not helped.

When asked whether the Center for Social Affairs informed them about the exercise of social protection rights, 20% of them answered that they were notified. They also stated that the Center offered them housing and accommodation services, provided them with medical assistance and appropriate psycho-social intervention and treatment in a counseling center. All 10 women who reported domestic violence responded that the Center for Social Affairs did not refer them to the appropriate state and other bodies responsible for economic empowerment of the victim and her active inclusion in the labor market.

In general, the women participating in the focus groups are not satisfied with the treatment of their applications because the institutions are not in their place of residence and do not have easy access, they have financial inaccessibility, but the information they receive is not clear enough.

I could not take it anymore,  
I had to report him.  
If I didn't, he would've killed us,  
both me and the children.

I endured the violence for  
15 years and finally  
decided to report it

- „The money which I work hard  
for everyday is gambled by  
him, I do know where to report  
him, but I think to myself, I have  
a child and I am very ashamed  
from the people.“

One focus group participant, stated that she was a victim of psychological violence by her husband and reported him to the police. After a procedure, he was taken to a psychiatric hospital where he remained for 6 months, after which he fled. Everyone gave up on him, no institution could help him. He is not beating her right now, he is just calling her abusive words. She pointed out that he used to drink a lot of alcohol and then beat her more, but now he does not beat her anymore. A woman is dependent on her husband and children. All the necessary things were bought by her husband.

-My husband and I have been married for many years. And I saw bad and good. There were times when he insulted me, beat me, told me to leave his house, that I had someone else because I could not sleep with him that night. And I exaggerated, always arguing with him about everything. I know that many times I deserved to sleep with bruises and watery eyes. "A slap or two does not break up a family, so how will those children grow up without a father.

One focus group participant is constantly experiencing violence. She pointed out that her husband psychologically abuses her every day and every day he spends the money he earns to gamble and then comes home. When he loses money, he abuses her in front of the children and calls her offensive words, and when he does not gamble, not even his voice can be heard.

I have three children, but as if I do not have them, everyone sees their own life. I am unemployed and have not completed my education. And that little money he earns, I had no access to it, I got to the point where I had to beg for a crust of bread. For years a man told me that I was ugly, fat, that I had other men. I went to my parents many times while they were alive. Every time I came back, it was bloody! All this was too much for me and in the end I reported it and first turned to an NGO. Together with them we went to the Center for Social Affairs and from there they put me in a shelter center. I sat in the shelter center for three months, and after that I was not allowed to stay there and I was forced to return to the bloody life...



## Quotes from the focus groups

**“You should report him, do not be silent. It is not love, I’m very sorry for those women who experience violence. We women allow this. We need to be braver.**

**“I do not know what to say. Just like I reported, let them report too.**

**“Do not let anyone insult you, let alone hit you.”**

**“Now young people do not tolerate such things, and we who are older had respect, we were afraid. Now they work and do not tolerate anyone oppressing them. “They have no need to suffer and be afraid.”**

**“Everyone should be brave like me, as I reported, everyone should.”**

**“We want to open centers like in the West so that every woman can have a place and a roof where to go when we do not have, where because we are women we do not have where to go, our parents do not leave us houses, property and we like or do not have to sit in their houses (in the houses of our husbands), and when the state opens such aid centers, each of us will run away from that dog life, but until then we will have to wait for a better morning only in our dreams, we should all work on this this is not tolerated, but when no one hears about us, we will be silent, we have no choice.”**

**“I do not know how to protect every woman to find a mechanism as at the moment, but I am happy that here you are (meaning the organization that conducts this analysis) and you have started such an initiative and we are here to support you and “Let us all work together for a better morning for every woman, not just the Roma woman.”**

**“Only with education through conversations should a woman tell a woman to convey this today that we are discussing to another woman who was not here to know that we have support like the conversation with you today, how much it relieved my soul and as a woman which is abused I will always be here to hear our voice and with that it is here I give my recommendation.”**

**“Go report it, don’t put up with it.”**

„Women, fight as much as you can with the monster abuser of the woman regardless of what kind of violence, and we deserve respect for everyone and especially from those at home who we give food to and clean our husbands. “

“What can I do, I will take you, we will drink coffee and you will see.”

“You should hide it and not report it.”

“If you see anything like that, report it.”

“My daughter-in-law is abused and I tell you that I love her more than my brother. He is bad. I always try to defend her from him. I always put myself in her place. “How could anyone do that to my daughters?”

“It is unbearable, but when you have children there is no place to go with them. You can not take them to your father. “You will live with him for two or three days and then you will have to return home.”

“Listen to me now. There are many victims, but they do not want to say. I say they have to change their lives. If they see that they can not change the men, they will have to report them to the police. If I have a job, then I will not need him. “Not 9 children, but 109 I would leave him.”

“A man can not cause you such problems. You are making this flame. The woman raises the man, and he falls. He is not guilty of anything. “Even if you have problems with your husband, you will sit down and talk to him and sort things out.”

“You need to tighten the man on time, treat him like he treats you. “You have to be able to spin him on your little finger.”

“I will put up with him and he will harass me. I have endured it so far, and I still endure it.”

“One of them finally said that she had suffered from her husband for many years. Throughout the focus group she said that she did not tolerate any violence, but in the end she replied that she too had been beaten and abused.”

**"I remember when we were young, he got me naked and walked me around the neighborhood because he thought I was cheating on him."**

**"To leave him. When they do not have a good life, let them leave. "The children will grow up and leave, and you will make life miserable."**

**"It is not a solution to leave your husband and children, it does not necessarily mean that it will be better. "If something like this happens to me, I will not leave my husband and beat me."**

**"It is better to leave him in time, before you have children, then it is more difficult"**

**"If your husband does not tighten your screws in time, you will go crazy later."**



## 5. Review and analysis of data obtained from Requests for public information

The Center for Social Affairs of the City of Skopje in the period from January to October 2021 has registered a total of 367 reports of gender-based and domestic violence in the city of Skopje, while in the same period registered victims of gender-based and domestic violence divided by municipalities are:

- Centar – 87
- Gazi Baba – 66
- Gjorce Petrov – 32
- Cair – 14
- Suto Orizari – 28

During this period, a total of 225 measures and protection of victims of gender-based and domestic violence were imposed on the territory of the city of Skopje. On the territory of the city of Skopje, PI Inter-Municipal Center for Social Affairs – Skopje has one shelter center, which has 5 individual rooms with 5 beds each, one common space – large living room with dining area, kitchen equipped with all kitchen appliances and two bathrooms. The shelter is equipped with all the necessary elements, appliances and furniture necessary for the daily functioning of the victims, as well as adapted for people with disabilities. In the reporting period, a total of 25 people were cared for on the territory of the city of Skopje, as follows:

- Women – 13
- Children – 5 male and 7 female

On the territory of the city of Skopje, PI Inter-Municipal Center for Social Affairs – Skopje has one Counseling Center. All victims of gender-based and domestic violence without exception are beneficiaries of counseling services according to the allegations of the Center for Social Affairs, which is contrary to the statements of the victims themselves. There is no crisis center within the PI Inter-Municipal Center for Social Affairs – Skopje.

The data available to the Center for Social Affairs are not divided by nationality and age.

The Ministry of Interior has the following data divided into three tables:

- victims of criminal acts related to domestic violence for the period from 01.01.2021 to 01.10.2021
- Crimes committed and perpetrators of crimes related to domestic violence for the period from 01.01.2021 to 01.10.2021
- Registered misdemeanors and complaints related to domestic violence for the period from 01.01.2021 to 01.10.2021.

These information are not divided by nationality and age.

РЕГИСТРИРАНИ ПРЕКРШОЦИ И ПОПЛАКИ ВО ВРСКА СО СЕМЕЈНО НАСИЛСТВО  
ЗА ЈАНУАРИ -ОКТОМВРИ 2021 година за СВР - СКОПЈЕ

ПРЕКРШОЦИ	Регистрани прекршоци	СТОРИТЕЛИ					ЖРТВИ										Начин на извршување			
		ПОЛ		Под дејство на			ПОЛ		РОДНИНСКА ВРСКА								Со огнено оружје	Со ладно оружје	Со физичка сила	Останато
		машки	женски	Алкохол	дрога	растројство	машки	женски	сопруга	сопруг	дете	родител	пор.б рач. друга р.	лице во вонб. ато	останато					
Малтретирање на друго стан-чл.7	75	63	14	9			21	59	25	4	2	17	1	2	29			73	2	
Физички напад-чл.12	83	80	7	3			44	42	5	3	4	14	2		60			76	2	
Учество во тепачка-чл.11	21	20	11	1			22	9	2	2		6	1		20			22		
Карање и викање на јавно место чл.4	28	19	8	2			10	20	5			8	1		16			11	17	
Оддавање на пијанство на јавно место чл.6	4	4	1	2			2	2			2	1			1			2	2	
Останати прекршоци	3	3					1	2	1		1				1			2	1	
ВКУПНО	214	189	41	17			100	134	38	9	9	46	4	2	127			186	24	

ПОПЛАКИ	ЗА ШТО Е ПОДНЕСЕНА ПОПЛАКАТА			СТОРИТЕЛИ					ЖРТВИ								
	Физичко малтретирање	Психичко малтретирање	Економско малтретирање	ПОЛ		Под дејство на			ПОЛ		РОДНИНСКА ВРСКА						
				машки	женски	Алкохол	дрога	растројство	машки	женски	сопруга	сопруг	дете	родител	пор.б рач. друга р.	лице во вонб. ато	
467	186	274	7	383	89	25		3	112	364	186	30	28	87	60	11	74

As seen from the obtained data, the number of complaints is higher than the number of registered misdemeanors and crimes related to domestic violence, but if we add all three categories we get a number of 924 victims of domestic violence, of which 737 are women victims. Undisputed according to the data of the Ministry of Interior the number of women victims of domestic violence is five times higher than the number of male victims.

One attempted murder and one homicide were registered in the reporting period. The perpetrator of the murder is the son, and the victim is the mother of the son, while in the attempt the perpetrator is the husband, and the victim is his wife.

Most of the crimes related to domestic violence are related to the crime of bodily injury and in most cases it was committed with physical force. However, this crime has been committed three times with firearms. In most cases, the husband is the one who commits the crime, and the victim is the wife.

The second most common crime is Endangering security, where again in most cases men are perpetrators and women are victims of crime.

In terms of misdemeanors, the highest number of registered misdemeanors is for physical assault, and then for harassing another in an apartment. In connection with the offense of physical assault, the number of male perpetrators is eleven times higher, but the number of victims is almost equal to that of men and women. When harassing another in an apartment, the number of male perpetrators is 4.5 times higher, but here, too, the number of female victims is higher again.

Most complaints were registered for psychological harassment, followed by physical and a small number for economic harassment. The trend of male perpetrators and female victims is no different in these complaints.

# CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the Roma women are still facing a lot of obstacles in realizing their rights of protection from domestic violence and gender based violence. Poverty, unemployment and the low level of education are problems which cannot be overseen, they also negatively impact on the access to services for protection from domestic and gender based violence. Additionally, the subordination of the Roma women in the society, the patriarchal households in which they live and the traditional opinions and attitudes regarding the fact that violence is normal and should not be reported also have a negative impact.

The victims' distrust of institutions and the protection system for victims of domestic and gender-based violence is very low, especially for Roma women who face discrimination and barriers to accessing their rights.

The submissiveness and economic dependence of the Roma contributes to an increased percentage of domestic violence and silence about it.

In addition, the pandemic caused by Covid-19 endangered the life of the female victims because they were forced to stay at home with the abuser without having the opportunity to turn to institutions if they are currently experiencing violence. The data obtained from the Inter-Municipal Center for Social Affairs of the City of Skopje show that from 01.01.2021-30.10.2021 show that there are a total of 367 reports of gender-based and domestic violence in the city of Skopje, and the data of the Ministry of Interior have a total of 924 registered complaints, violations and crimes related to domestic violence.

The lack of Roma women employees in the team for dealing with cases for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence, at JUMCSR Skopje is a significant obstacle in exercising and protecting the rights of Roma women and additionally there is no team for dealing with cases of domestic violence in each regional Center for Social Affairs, with the aim of increasing accessibility to victims.

The fact that on the territory of the City of Skopje there is only one shelter center which has only 5 individual rooms with 5 beds each is also worrying.

The lack of re-socialization programs to include women victims after their stay at the shelter center is a major problem as it returns victims to bullies and is a cause of femicide and re-violence by partners.

Among the surveyed women and women participants in the focus groups, we note cases of women victims who experience constant violence and who do not even know that being beaten by their partners is violence.

It is worrying that out of 200 women, only 15 of them reported, and in addition that they cite as reasons: distrust of institutions, language barrier and lack of trusted persons - members of the Roma community.


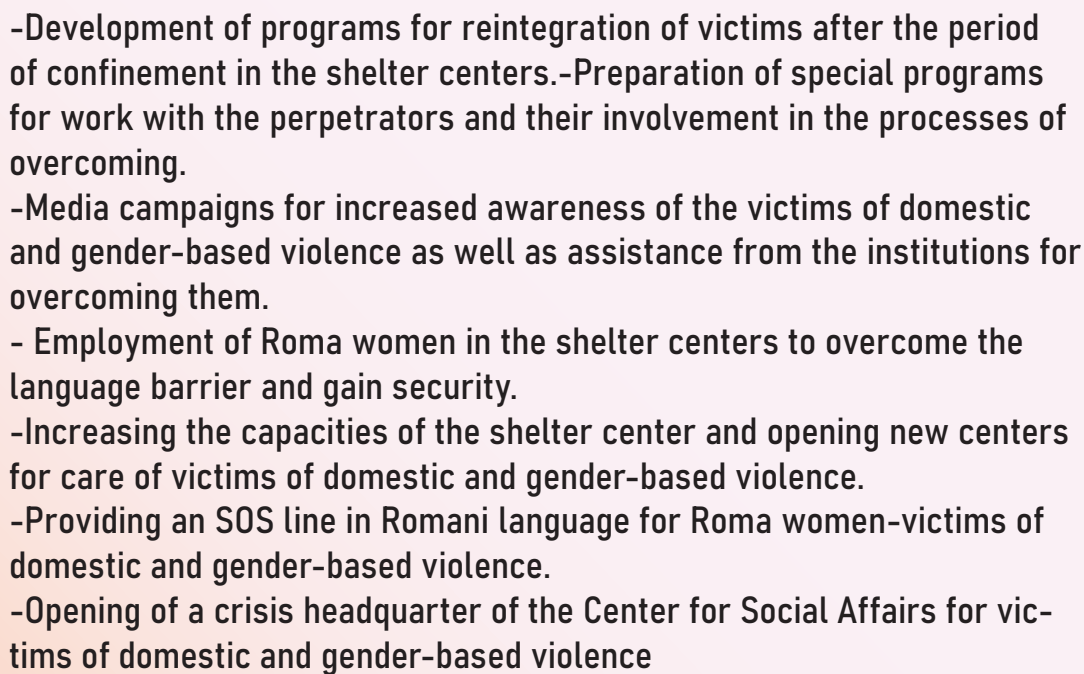

Regarding the satisfaction with the services received from the competent institutions, most of them are not satisfied and the information they receive is not clear enough for them.

Also from the obtained data it can be concluded that the institutions do not have the same way of acting in different cases. The Center for Social Affairs pointed out that counseling is given to every victim, and the answers of the respondents do not correspond to that. In addition, not all victims are informed about the manner of action, the course of the procedure, as well as the rights from social protection.

From the information obtained from the research, the general conclusion is that a very small percentage of Roma women report the violence they experience due to the great distrust in the system. They face a significant percentage of domestic violence and gender-based violence, but remain without adequate protection from institutions even when they report it.

# RECCOMENDATIONS

- Employment of Roma women in the action team for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence.
- Distribution of action teams for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence in the regional Centers for Social Work.
- Uniform treatment in cases for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence.
- Adequate adjustment of the work and information by the institution.
- Education of Roma women on the types of violence and the system for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence.
- Motivation of Roma women to report the violence they face.
- Increasing the trust of Roma women in the system and institutions.

- 
- 
- Development of programs for reintegration of victims after the period of confinement in the shelter centers.-Preparation of special programs for work with the perpetrators and their involvement in the processes of overcoming.
  - Media campaigns for increased awareness of the victims of domestic and gender-based violence as well as assistance from the institutions for overcoming them.
  - Employment of Roma women in the shelter centers to overcome the language barrier and gain security.
  - Increasing the capacities of the shelter center and opening new centers for care of victims of domestic and gender-based violence.
  - Providing an SOS line in Romani language for Roma women-victims of domestic and gender-based violence.
  - Opening of a crisis headquarter of the Center for Social Affairs for victims of domestic and gender-based violence
- 

# IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR REPORTING DOMESTIC AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:

POLICE: 192

S.O.S LINE: 070/075/077 141 700

FIRST FAMILY CENTER, HERA: 02 3200 007, 070 249 596

NETWORK FOR PROTECTION FROM

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: 02/6090 066

CENTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

CRISIS HQ - 078 230 943/076 381 762







ЗДРУЖЕНИЕ ИНИЦИЈАТИВА  
ЗА ПРАВАТА НА ЖЕНИТЕ  
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