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**INFOSHEET**

**2018 PUBLIC**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF**  
**GENDER EQUALITY**  
**AND VIOLENCE**  
**AGAINST WOMEN**  
**THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

The data in this factsheet was collected in 2018 as part of a baseline survey exercise conducted by the SeConS Development Initiative Group, under the EU-UN Women regional programme 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.' Data includes responses from 722 respondents including women, girls, men and boys aged 15-64, located in four regions and 30 municipalities/cities of Serbia, in both urban and rural areas. Detailed information about SeConS can be found at: <http://www.secons.net/files/brosura%20nova.pdf>

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## COUNTRY CONTEXT

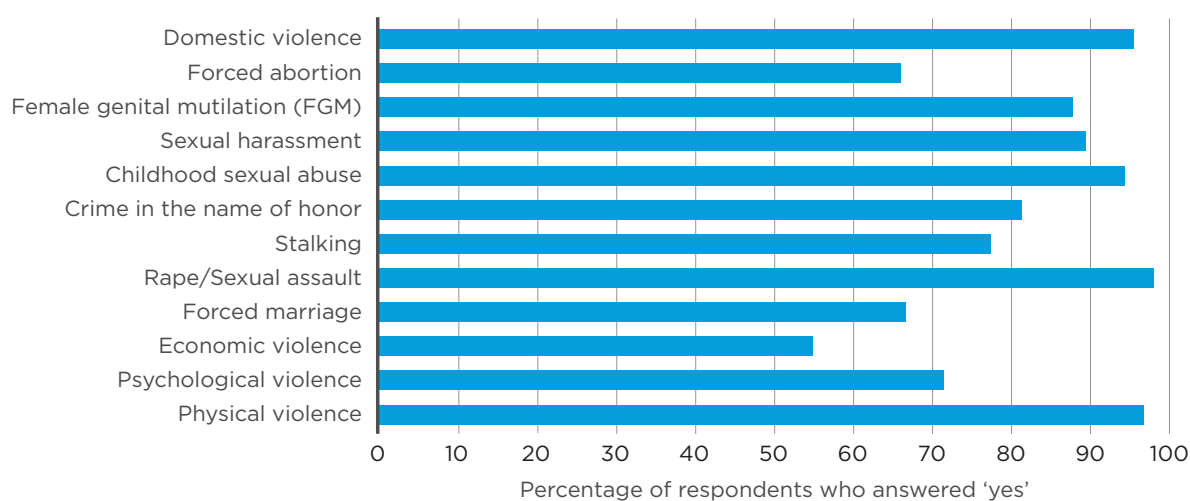
- The Republic of Serbia has ratified a number of international and regional treaties and conventions for women's rights and gender equality, as well as gender-based violence and domestic violence. The Istanbul Convention was signed in 2012, and ratified it in 2013; in addition, the Law on Preventing Domestic Violence was enacted in 2016.
- Nevertheless, Serbia shows limited funding for the implementation of national and international commitments and the number of shelters is not sufficient, especially in rural areas.<sup>1</sup>
- Women and girls belonging to vulnerable groups (Roma women, refugee women, women with disabilities, homeless women and older women) face obstacles in accessing protective justice and support services as guaranteed by law.
- According to a 2018 OSCE study<sup>2</sup> (footnote), since the age of 15, 35% of women in Serbia have experienced psychological intimate partner violence, 17% have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, and 42% have experienced sexual harassment.

### Knowledge of the Law

**Key finding #1:** Only 62.6% of respondents were aware of the existence of a law on gender equality, while the vast majority (81.6%) was aware of the existence of laws against violence against women and domestic violence. A slightly higher proportion of men than women knew of the existence of both types of legislation.

**Key finding #2:** Respondents were less aware that non-physical and lesser-known forms of violence are punishable by law. While the vast majority of respondents knew that certain forms of violence were punishable by law (domestic violence, physical violence and rape/sexual assault), they were much less aware of the criminal nature of non-physical forms of violence (psychological and economic) as well as other forms of violence such as stalking, forced abortion, and forced marriage (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Are the following forms of violence punishable by law?**



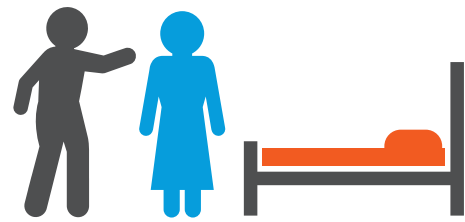
1. Dokmanovic, M. (2016): "Gender Analysis for Serbia" (IPA Pre accession instrument). See: [http://europa.rs/files//Gender\\_Equality/Gender-Analysis-Serbia-dec-2016.pdf](http://europa.rs/files//Gender_Equality/Gender-Analysis-Serbia-dec-2016.pdf)

2. OSCE-led Survey on VAW: Well-being and Safety of Women, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237?download=true>

**Key finding #3: Compared to other countries, respondents from Serbia are well informed on forms of violence that are prohibited by law.** However, additional efforts are needed to raise awareness on psychological and economic violence.

**Key finding #4: High proportions of respondents believed that individuals who perpetrated violence would be held responsible for their crimes.** For most forms of violence, a similar percentage of respondents who believed the act to be illegal also believed someone would be punished for committing it. This may suggest higher levels of trust in institutions involved in the response to domestic violence.

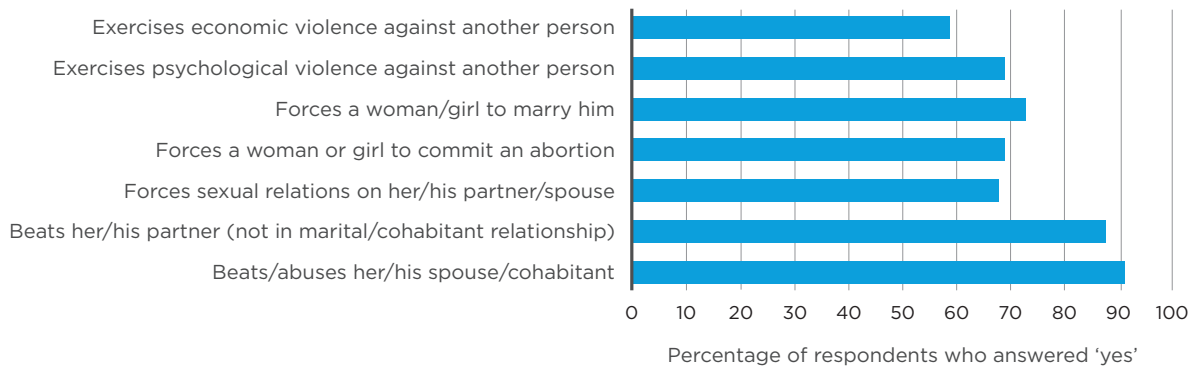
**Key finding #5: Only 67.5% of respondents believed that a person would be punished for forcing sexual relations on their spouse or partner** (see Figure 2 below), despite 98% of respondents knowing that rape/sexual assault is illegal. An exception to *Key finding #4* above, this contradiction may be the result of not perceiving marital rape as equally criminal as rape in other circumstances and/or not trusting that the law will be implemented effectively for this crime.



**Only 67.5% of respondents**

**believed that a person would be punished for forcing sexual relations on their spouse or partner**

**Figure 2: Would a person be punished if he/she...**



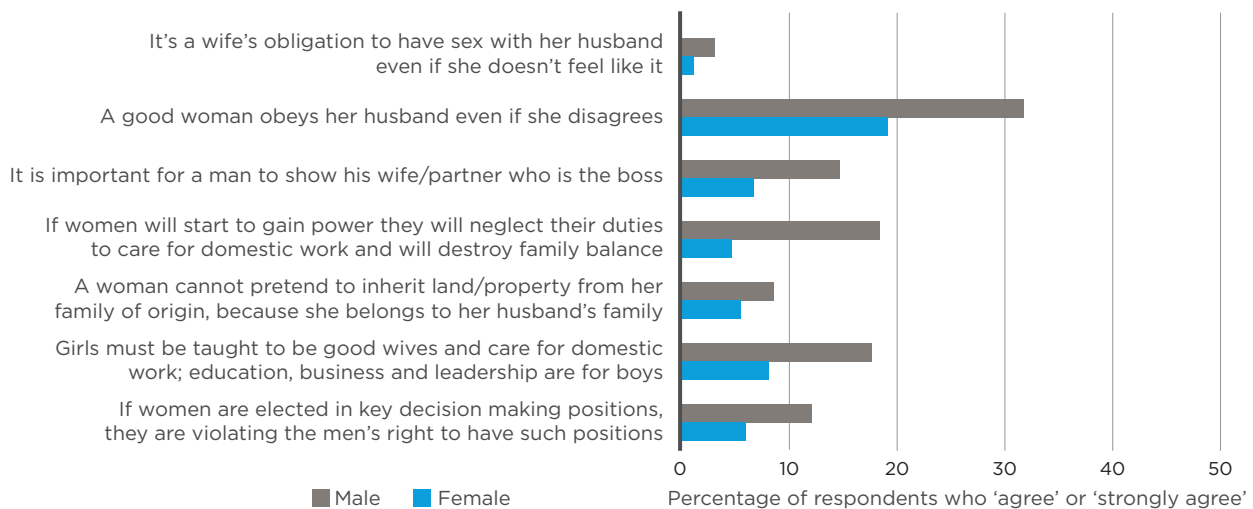
## Perception of gender roles

**Key finding #1: Women presented more equitable attitudes than men in nearly every category concerning attitudes towards traditional gender norms and gender equality.** However, compared to other countries included in the baseline studies, respondents from Serbia displayed significantly more equitable attitudes toward these statements (see Figure 3 below).

**Key finding #2: Men are perceived to hold 'rightful' positions of dominance and power over women.** Beliefs that promote men's control over women and limit women's professional and economic opportunities serve to isolate women to the domestic sphere and exclude them from public life, which provides a thriving ground for domestic violence and creates situations of financial dependence that make it difficult for women victims of violence to leave abusive relationships. Nevertheless, the percentage is lower than in other countries in the region.

**Key finding #3: Men are the primary supporters of beliefs that place them in positions of power over women.** In each question, men showed greater support for traditional gender roles that limit the opportunities and self-determination of women. Since men hold disproportionate economic, political, and social power, it is imperative to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and beliefs toward gender norms.

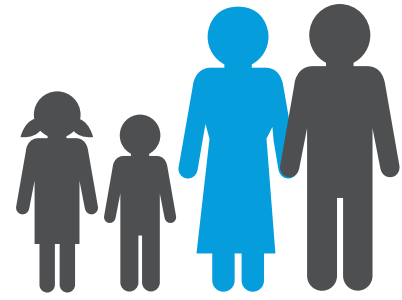
**Figure 3: What do you think about the following statements?**



## Attitudes toward violence against women

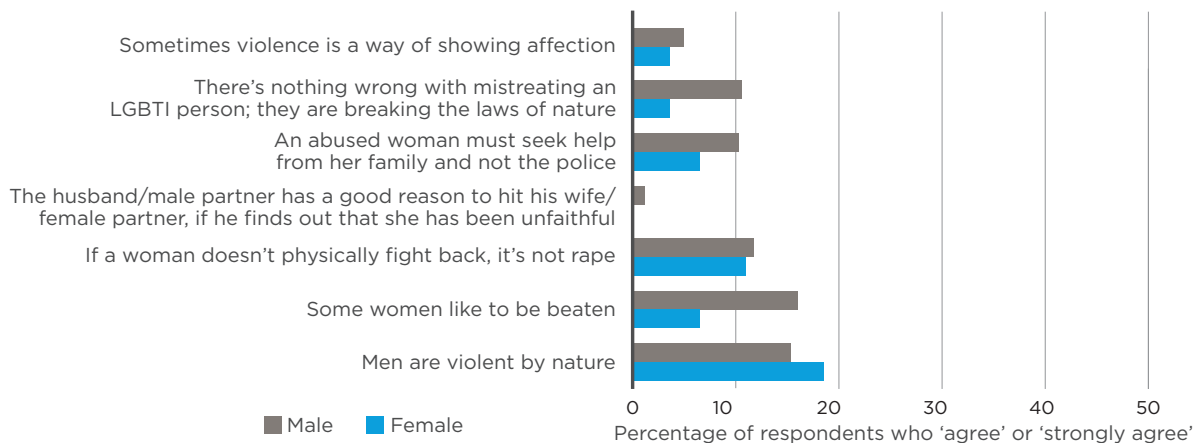
**Key finding #1: Respondents showed low tolerance for gender-based discrimination and violence.** Both women and men rejected justifications for physical violence against women, even when provided with excuses such as infidelity (see Figure 4 below). Remarkably, zero respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement, “A woman should put up with violence in order to keep her family together.”

**Key finding #2: Although very low, men showed more support for justifications for violence against women,** including believing myths like “some women like to be beaten.”



**Zero percent of respondents agreed that women should put up with violence for the sake of the ‘family.’**

**Figure 4: What do you think about the following statements?**

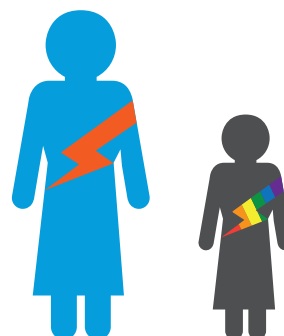


## Willingness to prevent or report violence

**Key finding #1: Respondents were significantly less willing to help prevent violence against members of marginalized communities,** highlighting how other forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or sexual orientation intersect to enable and promote violence against women (see Figure 5 below). Despite displaying very low tolerance for violence against LGBTI individuals in Figure 4, respondents were less willing to become actively involved in the prevention of violence against those individuals.

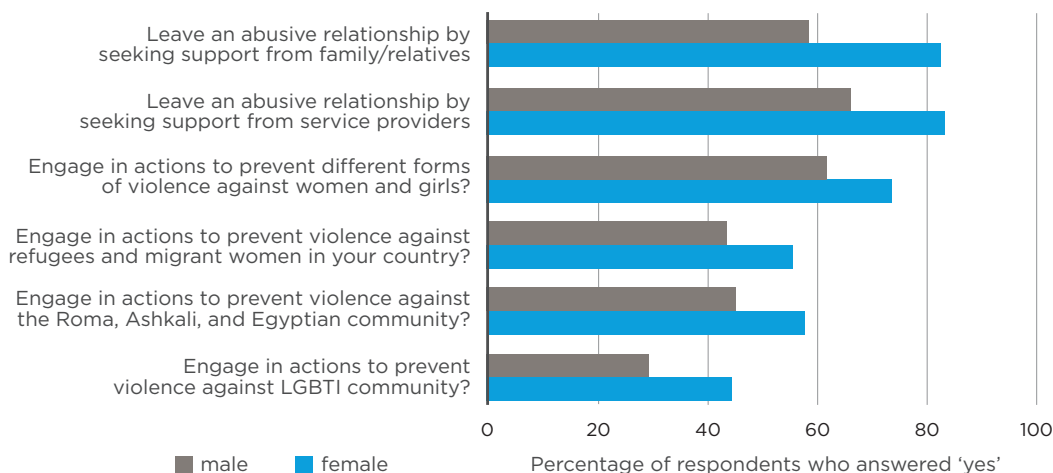
**Key finding #2: Women were much more willing than men to become engaged in the prevention of violence.** However, both men and women displayed discriminatory attitudes toward LGBTI individuals, refugees and migrants, and ethnic minorities.

**Key finding #3: Men showed hesitance to seek help from others (family/friends or service providers) to leave a violent relationship.** Patriarchal attitudes that portray men as strong and dominant also serve to shame men who experience violence at the hands of a female partner.



**Respondents were less willing to become actively involved in the prevention of violence against LGBTI individuals than women and girls.**

**Figure 5: In the future, would you be willing to...**



## Commonality of discussions on VAW/G and gender equality

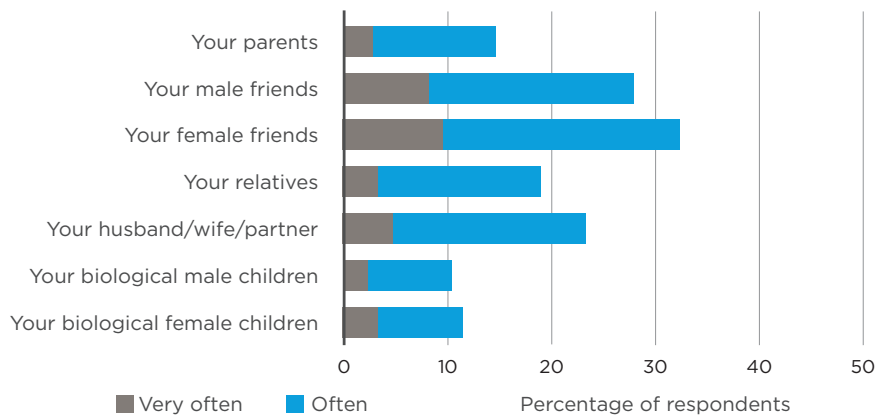
**Key finding #1: Respondents do not often speak with family and friends about issues related to gender equality and VAW/G.** They most often have these discussions with friends and immediate family, though respondents reported speaking with friends about these issues more often than with their partner. Very small percentages of respondents reported having these discussions with professionals such as doctors, NGO staff, or police officers.

**Key finding #2: Respondents rarely speak with their children about issues related to gender equality or violence against women.** Slightly more respondents reported having these discussions with their female children than with their male children.



**Issues related to violence against women and girls are rarely discussed outside of family and close friends**

**Figure 6: In the past 12 months, have you discussed issues related to the prevention of VAWG with...**





## Common channels for messaging on VAW/G and gender equality

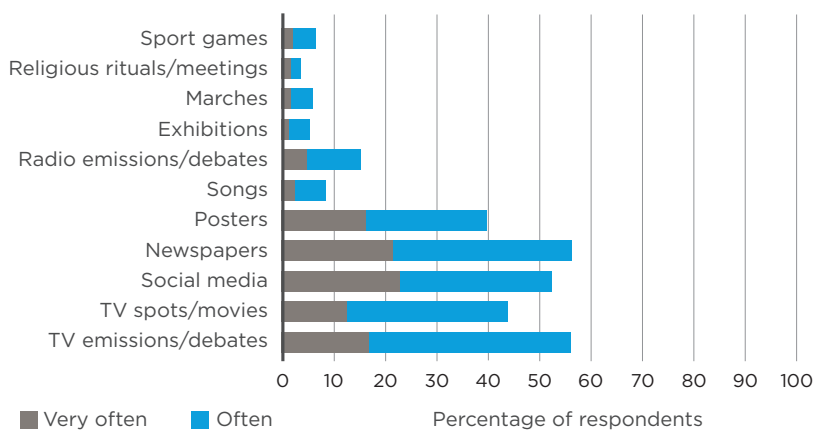
**Key finding #1: Respondents most often received these messages through common channels of communication,** such as TV programmes and debates, movies, social media, and newspapers (see Figure 7 below).

**Key finding #2: Alternative channels of communication,** such as marches, sport games, religious rituals/meetings and songs, **are less likely to effectively raise awareness towards issues related to gender-based violence** (see Figure 7 below).



**Commonly used methods of communication (TV, social media, newspapers) are most likely to reach target audiences**

**Figure 7: In the past 12 months, have you heard about issues related to gender equality or the prevention of VAW/G through...**



## PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- **Work with men and boys to challenge traditional gender norms and address** the concerns, fears and pressures that men face because of harmful gender roles, particularly those that discourage men from reporting violence in relationships. Violence against women cannot be prevented without the active participation of men and boys.
- **Conduct informative and awareness-raising campaigns that target adolescents and children with messages on gender equality and non-discrimination.** According to qualitative interviews from the baseline exercise, digital communication is a main channel used for violence and harassment among children. If possible, coordinate with schools or municipalities to conduct age-appropriate educational campaigns with children and adolescents.
- **Utilize common channels of communication** (like TV and social media) to spread information about domestic violence in order to reach a larger audience.
- **Ensure that services for victims of violence meet the specific needs of women from minority communities,** including LGBTI individuals, refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. This may include making informational material available in multiple languages, providing physical access for women with disabilities, and sensitizing staff on working with women of different backgrounds and with various sexual orientations.
- **In campaigns and interventions, clearly address non-physical forms of violence, such as economic and psychological violence.** Additional efforts are needed to help women define, identify, and know how to escape from non-physical violence, which can be equally or more destructive than physical violence.
- **Raise awareness on the content of legislation that prohibits gender-based discrimination and various forms of violence against women,** particularly lesser-known forms of violence, such as forced marriage, forced abortion, and stalking.
- **Target societal perceptions that label VAW/G as a ‘private’ issue.** Campaigns can aim to bring discussions on gender equality and VAW/G into the public eye and can encourage parents to speak with their children about these issues.