



AFTER FOUR YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING:
ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION
AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION AND
GYNAECOLOGISTS IN MACEDONIA

Quantitative research

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Author: **Biljana Ugurovska**

1. INTRODUCTION

Abortion or termination of unwanted pregnancy, being one of the most controversial issues globally, has consistently induced fierce public debates. Until recently, the debate about abortion in our public never existed with such interest attached to it, as is the case in other countries in the world, nor have there been diametrically opposed positions thereof, most likely due to the fact that since **1972 in the Republic of Macedonia the law on termination of pregnancy has been quite liberal**, to guarantee the right of women to freely decide about their pregnancy, including the right of free access to abortion. However, recent changes to the legislation on abortion adopted within an accelerated procedure, without consulting the expert public and lacking public debate, have caused an avalanche of dramatic reactions in the media and the public. In essence, modifications and amendments to this legislation have introduced an **obligatory written request** for termination of unwanted pregnancy **to be submitted** by the woman to the health institution, followed by compulsory counselling about possible advantages to continue the pregnancy, as well as risks to female health from performing or non-performing abortion, and finally after the counselling a **three day waiting period** is imposed before the medical intervention to terminate the pregnancy is performed. According to reactions by the experts and the non-governmental organizations, legal changes limit **women's right of free choice** and additionally complicate and bureaucratize the process of obtaining the health service of abortion.

However, modifications to the legislation on termination of unwanted pregnancy were preceded by an intensive media campaign under the title **“Choose life, you have a right of choice”**. For this campaign, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia published an open call in 2009 for production of **TV videos to explain abortion related consequences and risks**, setting three basic goals which clearly draw its anti-abortion position: *“to inform about the living organism that begins its development in the body of the mother (information should emphasise that by having an abortion a life is taken of an already formed organism), to stress the health complications, as well as psychological consequences that may arise after an abortion, to point out that creation of new life – one's own child is a god's blessing and the most beautify thing that may happen to a person”*. The anti-abortion campaign reached its most intensive period at the beginning of 2011 and has included **six¹ commercial video clips called Young, Arguments, Parent, Foetus, Beethoven and Wealth** which are still broadcast on televisions screens. Each video covers some of the three basic communication goals the government had listed in the public call.

1 Until completion of data collecting process for this research

1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

So far, no research fully focused on attitudes towards abortion has ever been conducted in the Republic of Macedonia, therefore one of the objectives of this quantitative research was to **examine attitudes towards abortion on a descriptive level, among the general public and the expert public, namely gynaecologists**. Further on, subject to this research was to examine **the awareness for “Choose life, you have a right of choice” television campaign against abortion, its communication effect and impact on attitudes towards abortion** the citizens of Macedonia have. Finally, the third objective of the research was to assess **how the general public and gynaecologists experience new legal changes on termination of unwanted pregnancy**.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research was conducted by means of a **telephone survey**, with data collection carried out in July 2013 in two phases: from the general population and from gynaecologists in the Republic of Macedonia. Within the first phase, data was collected from a national sample of 1252 respondents, representative by sex, age, nationality, place of residence and region. The population framework covered population aged between 15 and 64. Of the total number of respondents 51% are male and 49% are female; according to ethnical background 72% are Macedonian, 24% are Albanian and 4% are of other nationalities. Regarding age, the youngest respondents aged between 15 and 24 had 20% share in the sample, citizens aged between 24 and 44 were 46% and citizens aged between 45 and 64 were 34%. According to place of residence, 39% of the respondents were from rural areas and 61% were from urban areas. Within the second phase of this research, an attempt was made to contact 193 gynaecologists by means of telephone; however, the survey was only conducted with 55 gynaecologists.

The questionnaire used for data collection from the general population consisted of a total of **25 questions, divided into four sections: questions referring to attitudes towards abortion, to communication effects from “Choose life, you have a right of choice” television campaign, to positions regarding the new changes to the law on abortion, including a demographic section**. With reference to question types, 4 were open-ended questions and the rest were closed-ended questions with a possibility of one answer. The questionnaire for gynaecologists consisted of a total of 14 questions, 4 open-ended and 10 closed-ended questions with a possibility of one answer. The questionnaire was divided into **section on attitudes towards abortion** (almost identical with the one for the general population, but containing one question less), **section on positions regarding the new changes in the law on abortion** and **demographic part**. Prior to the start of the data collection phase, both questionnaires were tested on a sample of twenty respondents and two gynaecologists, in order to identify the comprehensibility and suitability of the questions.

Data collected were **processed within a frequency and proportion to the answers, and were graphically presented, at a level of a total sample and in tables, grouped according to demographic features**. Results presented and discussed in this report are **statistically significant at a level of 95%**. The margin of error is ± 2.8 for a confidence interval of 95%.

1.3. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Having in mind the descriptive nature of this research, the main goal was to quantitatively describe attitudes towards abortion among the general public, and at the same time to provide the highest possible representativeness of results. However, for the purpose of precision of results and opportunity to generalize findings for the entire population in the Republic of Macedonia, this quantitative research fails to provide in-depth insight in the nature of attitudes towards abortion, including cause-effect relationship with other variables that may have impacted formation or change of attitudes towards abortion.

Additional limitation may be found in the fact that after the completion of the data collection phase in September 2013, televisions presented yet another video from "*Choose life, you have a right of choice*" government campaign, where abortion was presented as a murder, in addition to a video, previously available on the Internet, signed by a non-governmental organization, containing upsetting images. Both videos failed to be taken into account in the process of designing the questionnaires, including the process of collecting and processing the data.

Also, it was difficult to identify precisely the impact "*Choose life, you have a right of choice*" media campaign had on attitudes towards abortion among the general population in Macedonia, since we have no available information about their attitudes towards abortion prior to the media campaign. Therefore statements of respondents may be considered to be a measure for the impact of the campaign, or precisely their self-perception on whether the TV campaign succeeded in changing their attitudes towards abortion.

2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION

2.1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

Attitudes towards abortion in this research were processed in three aspects: as a *general attitude towards abortion*, expressed by degree of agreeing or disagreeing with the statement “women should decide themselves about their pregnancy”, as an attitude towards *risks and possible health consequences* from legal abortion and finally, by *justifying or condemning women who had an abortion*.

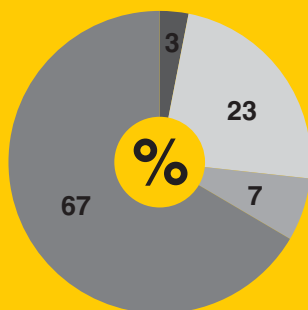
GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS ABORTION

Studies including opinion polls about abortion are mostly interested in variations of attitudes regarding limitations, that is the simplicity of the access to abortion, examining them by means of various situations where termination of pregnancy should be justifiable, or by making attempts to identify whether according to the public, abortion should be legal or not. However, having in mind that for 40 years abortion in the Republic of Macedonia has been a constitutional and guaranteed right of every woman, as well as an acquired cultural value, a debate to question legality of abortion is irrelevant. In that context, this research was conducted in the direction of examining the general attitude towards abortion, focusing on the question of agreeing with or denying the right of women to freely decide on termination of pregnancy.

CHART 1 ////

General attitude towards abortion

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Women in Macedonia should make their own decisions about abortion?

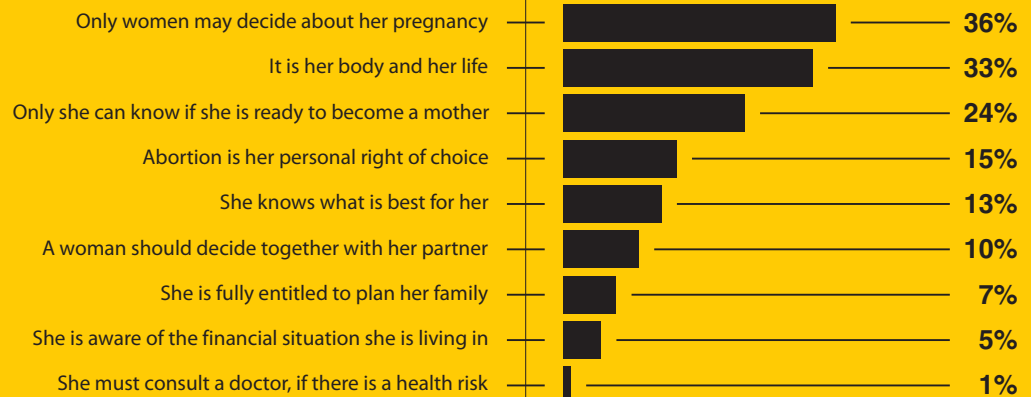


N=1252

As presented in Chart 1, the majority of respondents (67%) consider that women should make their own decisions about abortion, while 23% disagree with this statement. Also, a small minority of the total number of respondents (7%) expressed an indefinite attitude towards abortion.

CHART 2 /////

Reasons why women should make their own decisions about abortion

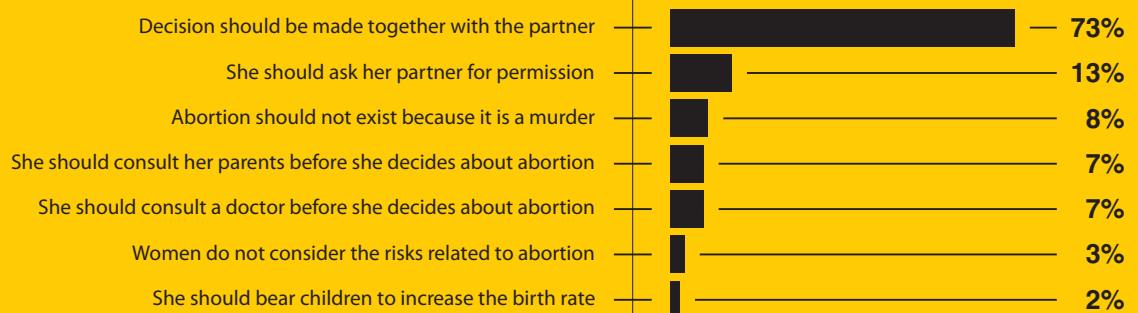


N=840

Respondents that stated women should make their own decisions about abortion, consider that the women's right to abortion should not be limited, since *no one save for the woman may decide about her pregnancy* (36%), because *it is her body and her life* (33%) and because *only the woman knows if she is ready to be a mother* (24%).

CHART 3 /////

Reasons why women should NOT decide themselves about abortion



N=287

Citizens who disagree that women should decide themselves about abortion, mostly think their right should be restricted because this decision *should be made together with a partner* (73%). Although much lower in frequency, other reasons for restriction of the right to abortion include that women *should obtain permission from their partners* (13%), *abortion should not exist at all since it is murder* (8%), *a woman should consult her parents* (7%) and *a woman should consult a doctor* (7%).

TABLE 1 //		Profile of respondents who agree women should decide themselves about abortion
%	The following agree women should decide themselves about abortion	
	71%	25 - 44 years of age
	70%	Female
	76%	Macedonian ethnic background
	75%	Urban place of residence
	80%	Vardar region
	75%	Employed
	81%	University education
	75%	Orthodox Christian denomination
	83%	Over 42.000 Denars household income per month

Table 1 above presents the typical profile, according to demographic features, of respondents who consider that abortion should be a right of free choice for women. In this sense, citizens who agree the most that women should decide themselves about abortion are aged between 25 and 44, female and of Macedonian ethnic background, living in urban areas, with university education, employed, with high household income per month and of orthodox Christian denomination. The biggest number of respondents who agree women should decide themselves about abortion may be found in the Vardar region.

TABLE 2 //		Profile of respondents who DISAGREE that women should decide themselves about abortion
%	Disagree that women should decide themselves about abortion	
	31%	15 - 24 years of age
	45%	Albanian ethnic background
	33%	Rural place of residence
	40%	Polog region
	34%	Pupils/Students
	33%	Primary education
	44%	Muslim religious background
	28%	Up to 12.000 Denars household income per month

Table 2 above presents data pointing to the fact that citizens who most frequently consider that women should not decide themselves about termination of pregnancy are Albanian aged between 15 and 24, living in rural areas, still at school or university, having completed primary school as their highest degree of education, are of Muslim denomination and have the lowest household incomes per month. Respondents from the Polog region were the citizens who expressed the highest disagreement with the statement that women should decide themselves about abortion.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS RISKS AND POSSIBLE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES FROM LEGAL ABORTION

Attitudes towards risks from legal abortion were examined by means of two closed-end questions, one regarding the attitude towards risks of this medical intervention to female health, measured on a scale of three degrees; the other question required respondents to provide their opinion on eight health complications (infections, injuries to the uterus, removal of the uterus, complications from anaesthesia, severe psychological consequences, infertility, sepsis and death of a pregnant woman), as well as to assess the likelihood of every of the above health consequences occurring after a legal abortion, measured on a four-degree scale. All health complications, except death of a pregnant woman, referred to in this research are implied in the *Arguments* video made for “*Chose life, you have a right of choice*” campaign.

More than two thirds of respondents consider legal abortion includes some risk, with 36% having a position that this medical intervention is risky and 36% having a position that termination of pregnancy is somewhat risky. Only 21% of all respondents replied that legal abortion is not risky.

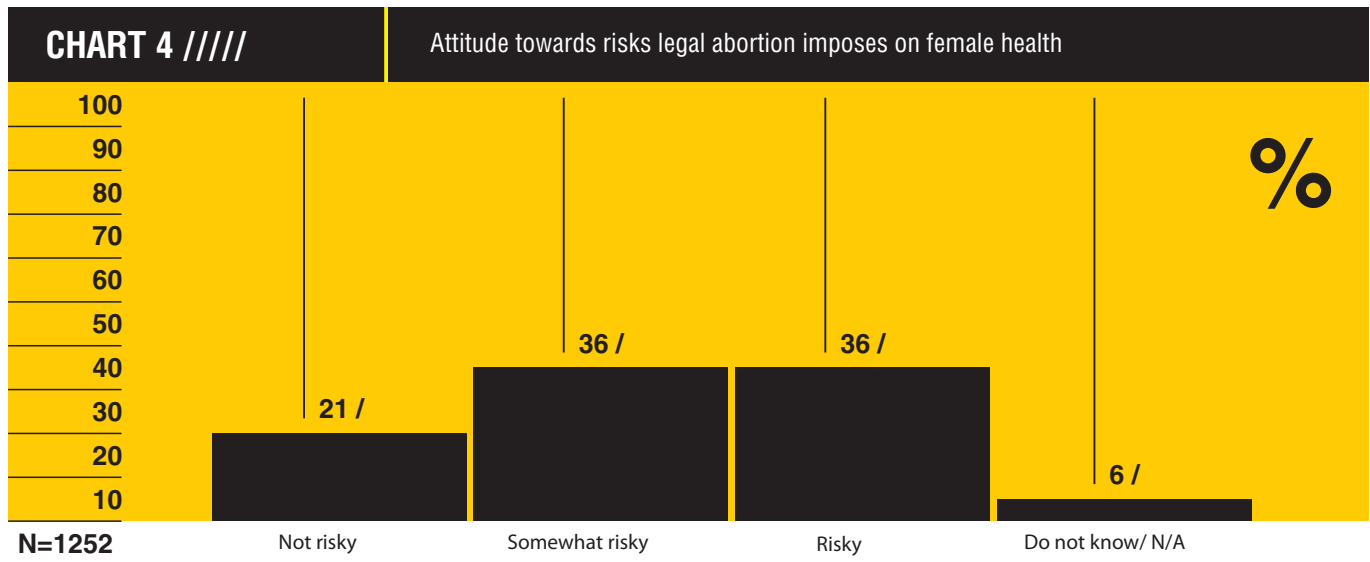
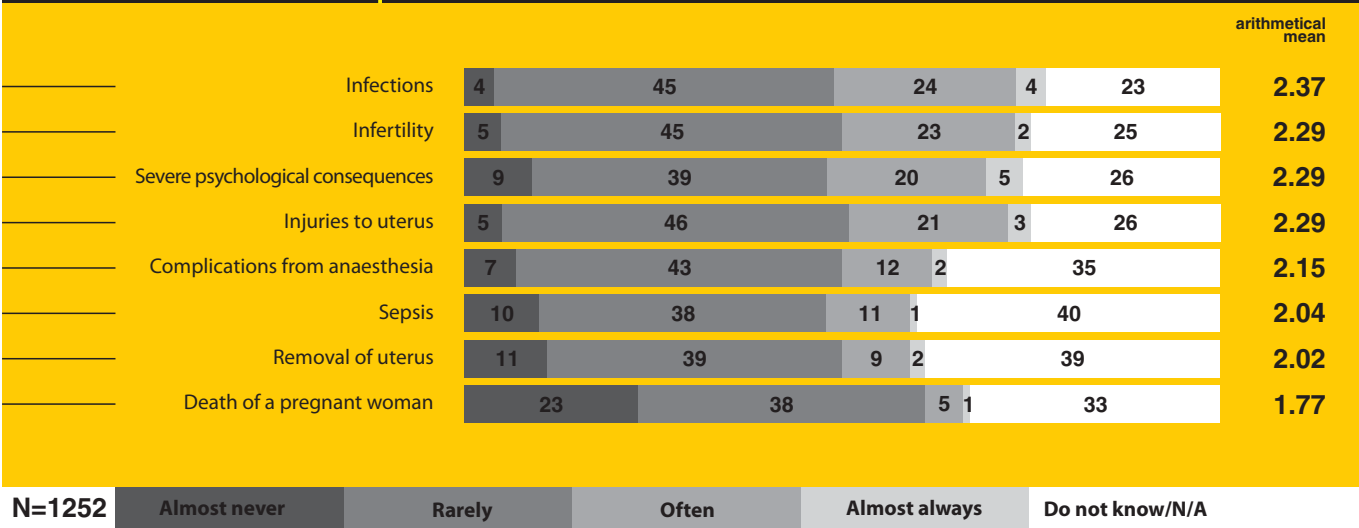


CHART 5 //

Health consequences from legal abortion



The arithmetical mean presented on the chart was estimated for a scale of replies ranging from 1 to 4, where 1 is almost never, 2 is rarely, 3 is often and 4 is almost always. It may be noticed from the chart that opinions of citizens regarding the likelihood of the eight health consequences occurring after a legal abortion mostly gravitate around 'rarely' as a reply. If we consider health consequences according to the arithmetical mean, infections (2.37) are considered by respondents to be the most likely consequence after a legal abortion, followed by infertility (2.29), severe psychological consequences (2.29) and injuries to the uterus (2.29). On the other hand, the least likely health consequence after a legal abortion is considered to be death of a pregnant woman (1.77).

TABLE 3 //

Profile of respondents who consider legal abortion to be risky

%

Legal abortion is risky	
41%	15 - 24 years of age
42%	Female
51%	Albanian ethnic background
46%	Rural place of residence
46%	Polog region
41%	Unemployed
55%	Primary education
50%	Muslim religious background
46%	Up to 12.000 Denars household income per month

According to demographic features, respondents who most often consider legal abortion to be risky have completed primary education, are female, with Albanian ethnic background and Muslim denomination, unemployed with the lowest household income per month, living in rural areas. Respondents from the Polog region are most likely to consider abortion to be risky in comparison to other regions.

CONDEMNING WOMEN WHO HAD AN ABORTION

Condemning or justifying women who terminated their pregnancy is a third aspect to consider when examining attitudes towards abortion within this research. In view of this, respondents were asked to reply whether in their own opinion a woman who had an abortion made a wrong choice. Actually, replies to this question may to some extent give us a view of the degree of condemnation that exists among Macedonian citizens, that is, attaching negative aspects to women who had abortion.



According to the chart, 39% of all respondents stated that women who had an abortion made a wrong choice, whereas 35% consider that women did nothing wrong. The remaining 26% of the respondents either did not know or did not want to give a reply to this question, which additionally points out to solving a moral dilemma this question imposes, therefore a large number of respondents have avoided giving a reply.

TABLE 4 // // //

Profile of respondents who condemn women who had abortion

Women who had an abortion made a wrong choice

%	Characteristic
45%	15 - 24 years of age
44%	Female
66%	Albanian ethnic background
59%	Rural place of residence
53%	Polog region
49%	Unemployed
63%	Primary education
64%	Muslim religious background
53%	Up to 12.000 Denars household income per month

Table 4 above presents the profile of citizens who most often condemn women who had abortion. They are young aged between 15 and 24, female, of Albanian ethnic background, living in rural areas, unemployed that completed primary education, of Muslim denomination and with the lowest household income per month. Most citizens that consider women who had abortion made a wrong choice live in the Polog region.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of citizens in Macedonia (67%) consider that women should decide themselves about abortion, since they respect the physical and mental integrity of women, as well as their personal choice.

According to findings of the research, citizens consider abortion to be a right of free choice for women, since 67% of all respondents stated that it is the woman who should make the decision about abortion. When explaining their attitude, respondents primarily focused on reasons that mostly refer to respect for the physical and mental integrity of women, pointing out the significance of personal choice when making a decision about abortion. Therefore most frequent reasons on why women should make their own decisions are the following: *only the woman is entitled to decide about her pregnancy* (36%), *it is her body and her life* (33%), *only the woman knows if she is ready to be a mother* (24%) and *abortion is her personal right of choice* (15%).

2. A smaller number of citizens in Macedonia (23%) consider that women should not freely decide to terminate pregnancy, but rather their partner should also participate in making a decision.

Citizens who stated that women should not freely decide to terminate pregnancy (23% of all respondents), most often explain their attitude by pointing out that a decision to have an abortion *should be made together with the partner* (73%). Other reasons for this attitude are not as frequent, but are worth mentioning since they express complete denial of the right to abortion, including suspicion and lack of trust in the capabilities of women to make decisions: *a woman should ask for permission from her partner* (13%), *she should consult her parents* (7%), *she should consult a doctor* (7%); 8% of replies assess abortion to be a murder, pointing out that this medical intervention should not exist at all.

3. A larger number of respondents consider abortion to be somewhat risky or a risky medical intervention in view of female health, with most frequent health complications expected after legal abortion to be infections, infertility, severe psychological consequences and injuries to the uterus.

Only a small number of respondents (21%) consider legal abortion is not risky, whereas the others think this medical intervention implies a certain risk; that is, 36% consider abortion to be somewhat risky and 36% consider it risky. Regarding the eight consequences most likely to occur after a legal abortion, listed in the survey for respondents to provide their opinion on, most frequently selected were *infections*, followed by *infertility*, *severe psychological consequences* and *injuries to the uterus*. On the other hand, death of pregnant woman is a consequence which according to respondents is the least likely to occur. Also regarding health complications, quite a lot of respondents (23%-40%) did not know or did not want to reply, pointing out to a conclusion that some citizens have not been informed about risks of the medical procedure of a legal abortion.

4. Although not very dominant, condemnation for women who had abortion however exists, since 39% of respondents consider that a woman who decided to have an abortion made a wrong choice.

Regarding condemnation or justification for women who had abortion, which were measured by asking respondents whether women made a wrong choice, out of a total of 1252 respondents who answered, 39% did not justify women, 35% consider women did not make a wrong decision and 26% did not know or did not wish to reply. Although the answers did not vary significantly statistically, the percentage of citizens (39%) who condemn women is not to be ignored at all.

5. There is a relation between socio-demographic features and attitudes towards abortion, so the youngest respondents aged between 15 and 24, of Albanian ethnic background, living in rural areas and having a lower social status, most frequently consider that women should not decide themselves about termination of pregnancy, think that abortion is risky and express greatest condemnation for women who had an abortion.

2.2. EFFECTS OF THE TV CAMPAIGN “CHOOSE LIFE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT OF CHOICE”

The second section of this research conducted among the general population was focused on examining awareness of the citizens about the TV campaign against abortion, including its communication effects and impact over general population attitudes towards abortion.

AWARENESS ABOUT THE TV CAMPAIGN “CHOOSE LIFE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT OF CHOICE”

Awareness about the campaign refers to whether respondents had seen, or remembered some of the videos presented in the government campaign against abortion.

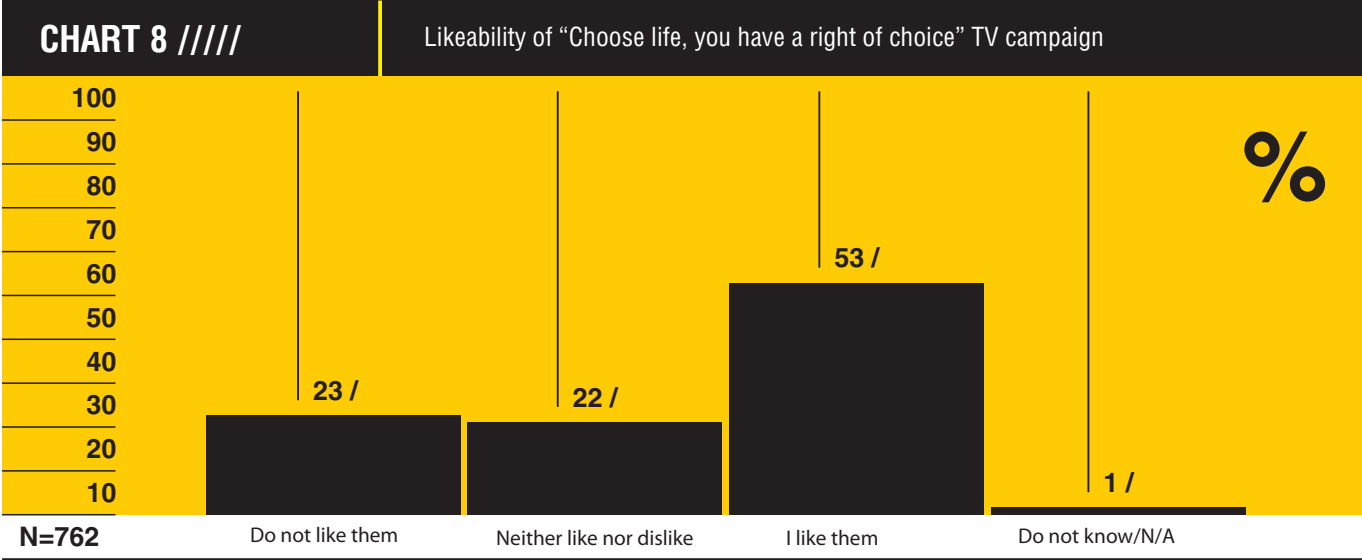


There is a high degree of awareness among the citizens of Macedonia about the television campaign "Choose life, you have a right of choice", since 61% have stated to have seen at least one of the videos from this campaign.

According to the analysis of socio-demographic variables (not presented graphically), the highest awareness about the government campaign can be noticed among Macedonians (67%), living in urban areas (68%), with a university degree (72%), of orthodox Christian denomination (67%), belonging to a category with the highest household income per month (75%), employed (69%).

COMMUNICATION EFFECT OF THE TV CAMPAIGN "CHOOSE LIFE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT OF CHOICE"

The communication effect of the campaign was examined by means of three questions, in order to get an insight into the way citizens experience the campaign, the messages it conveyed and their reaction to these messages, or rather about accepting the messages. Respondents were asked to give their opinion on whether they like the campaign videos and then to list the main messages the videos convey; this was examined by means of a closed-end question; and finally whether they agree with the messages of the TV campaign.



The videos of “Choose life, you have a right of choice” TV campaign, are likeable to half of the respondents who have seen them (53%), whereas 23% dislike them. The remaining 22% have no clear position towards likeability of the videos. Regarding comparative analysis according to socio-demographic groups, the highest degree of likeability of the anti-abortion videos was expressed by Albanians (70%), in contrast to Macedonians (50%); the campaign is most likeable to respondents who live in rural areas (69%), having primary school education (68%), of Muslim religious background (66%) and lowest household income per month (65%).



According to respondents, the main message conveyed by the government videos is *not to have an abortion* (28%), followed by messages that *one should have a family with many children* (14%), the campaign *educates them on the risks from abortion* (12%), but also that messages are *conservative and pressure women not to have abortions* (11%).



63% of the respondents, who have seen the government videos on abortion, agree with the messages they convey, whereas 22% expressed their disagreement with the messages.

According to the socio-demographic features, messages conveyed in “Choose life, you have a right of choice” TV campaign are most accepted by respondents of Albanian ethnic background (77%), female (66%), of Muslim denomination (77%), living in rural areas (76%), unemployed (67%), with primary education (68%) and household income up to 12.000 Denars per month (67%).

IMPACT OF THE TV CAMPAIGN “CHOOSE LIFE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT OF CHOICE” ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

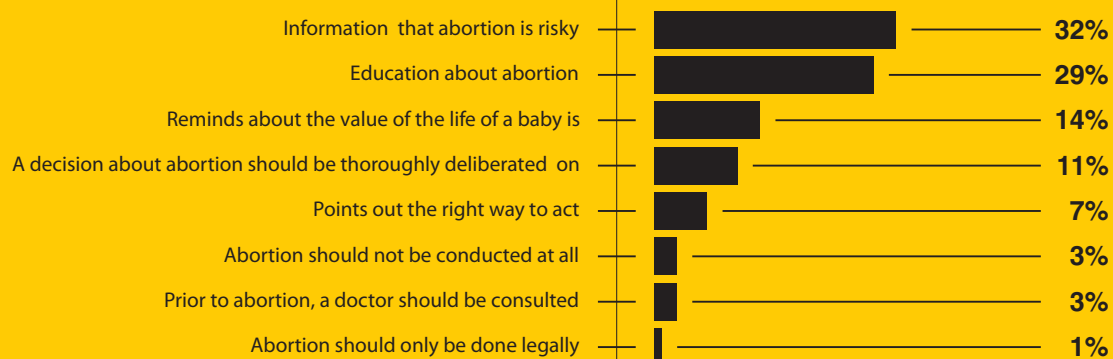
Any advertising communication aims to persuade with an intention to change opinions or attitudes. Since there is no information about attitudes Macedonian citizens had towards abortion prior to launching the TV campaign, the only way to measure its impact was through self-perception, that is, self-evaluation of respondents on whether videos from the campaign changed their attitude towards abortion. In addition, reasons for shifts in attitudes towards abortion were examined among citizens who claimed the campaign did not affect them.



This television campaign failed to change attitudes towards abortion of most respondents (75%), but videos affected 11% of respondents to change their attitude about abortion. According to the analysis by socio-demographic features, the government TV campaign mostly impacted Albanians (36%), respondents from rural areas (23%), having completed primary education (21%), of Muslim denomination (33%), aged between 15 and 24 (19%) and female (13%).

CHART 12 /////

Reasons for change of attitudes towards abortion under the impact of the TV campaign



N=83

Most frequent reasons why the campaign resulted in shifts in respondents' attitudes towards abortions are receiving *information about risks from abortion* (32%), videos were *education about abortion* (29%), videos reminded them on *how valuable the live of a child is (a life of a baby)* (14%) and videos emphasized on *careful consideration prior to abortion* (11%).

CONCLUSIONS

1. There is relatively high awareness among Macedonian citizens about “Choose life you have a right of choice” government campaign, since 61% of all respondents stated to have seen, or remember some of the campaign videos. The highest degree of awareness may be noticed among Macedonians living in urban areas with a higher degree of education.

It may be concluded that the anti-abortion television campaign succeeded in raising quite a lot of awareness among the general population in Macedonia, since 61% of all respondents remember at least one video from the campaign. The campaign has the highest ratings among Macedonians (67%) living in urban areas, with university education, employed, of orthodox Christian denomination, belonging to a category with the highest household income per month (over 42.000 Denars), with no significant differences regarding sex and age. On the other hand, ratings between citizens of Albanian ethnic background are quite lower (43%), but this discrepancy is expected, particularly considering the fact that none of the videos was adapted into Albanian.

2. The government TV campaign is likeable to more than half of respondents (53%) who saw it, with respondents of Albanian ethnic background expressing greater likeability in comparison to respondents of Macedonian ethnic background.

The likeability or having a positive attitude towards a certain promotional form is a prerequisite for videos to achieve their primary goal: to raise the awareness on a given subject matter, convey a desired message and persuade or change attitudes or opinions. According to this survey, the *Choose life* campaign meets this prerequisite in 53% of respondents. With regards to

socio-demographic features, it is interesting to mention that even though the campaign was not adapted language-wise for citizens of Albanian ethnic background, they still have assessed the videos more likeable (70%) in comparison to citizens of Macedonian ethnic background (50%).

3. The main message the government TV campaign conveys is “not to have an abortion”.

If the communication effect from *Choose life* TV campaign is taken into account, it may be concluded that the main message successfully conveyed to citizens is *not to have an abortion* (28%). It is followed by messages such as *have a family with many children* (14%), *education about risks of abortion* (12%), defining them as *conservative, imposing pressure on women not to have abortions* (11%). The following messages have also been mentioned, although with somewhat lower frequency: *increase the birth rate* (8%), *choose life not death* (8%) and *ban abortion* (6%). It seems that most messages conveyed in the campaign match the three basic objectives the campaign was initially designed for, according to the public call announced by the government: to point out health complications, to emphasise that having a child is a blessing and to inform that by having an abortion, a life is taken of an already formed organism.

4. Generally a large number of respondents aware of the TV campaign agree with messages conveyed, but most accepting of these messages are females of Albanian ethnic origin, living in rural areas and having lower education degree.

Messages the government TV campaign conveys are acceptable for the majority of respondents, since 63% of those who had seen the videos agree with the messages they convey, with only 22% expressing disagreement. According to socio-demographic features, the highest level of acceptance was noticed with female respondents of Albanian ethnic background, of Muslim denomination, living in rural areas, unemployed with a lower monthly income.

5. The government TV campaign had a low persuading effect, since only 11% of citizens who saw the campaign stated it changed their attitudes towards abortion. According to these respondents, the main reason the campaign caused their attitudes to change was that it primarily informed them about the risks of termination of pregnancy.

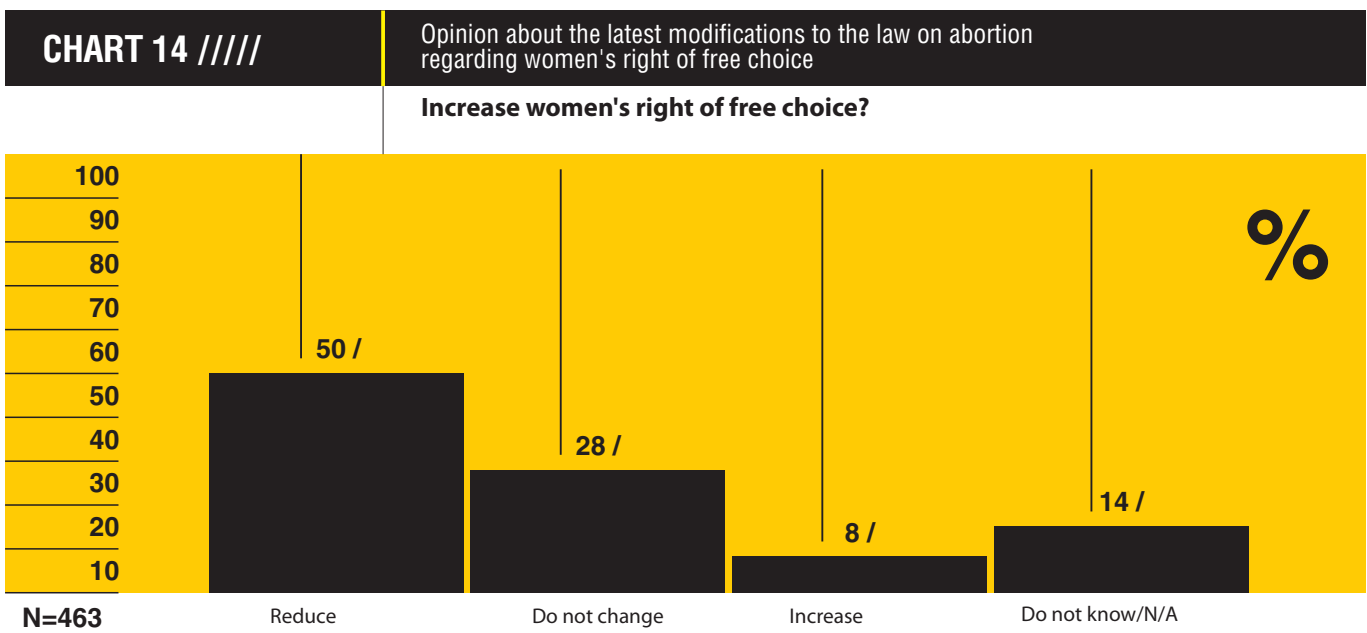
The success of the campaign is not big, if assessed according to the persuading effect it had on respondents, since only 11% of those who saw at least one video have stated that it changed their opinion about abortion, whereas 75% stated that the campaign had no effect on them. The most frequent reason of shifting attitudes of respondents was information *that abortion is risky* (32%), followed by *videos educate about abortion* (29%) and *remind us how valuable a new life in, that is, a life of a baby* (14%). Most susceptible to the campaign effects were the youngest respondents (aged between 15 and 24), female, of Albanian ethnic origin, of Muslim denomination, living in rural areas, with primary education and lowest household income per month.

2.3. KNOWLEDGE AND OPINION ABOUT THE NEW CHANGES TO THE LAW ON ABORTION

Amendments to the law on abortion were adopted only a few days prior to the beginning of the data collection process for this survey, therefore the public debate and media attention were still largely covering this issue. In this section, knowledge about legal changes was examined by means of two questions, firstly whether respondents were informed about the latest changes in the law on abortion and secondly, how according to respondents would these changes affect the right of free choice for women.



More than half of the respondents (61%) lacked knowledge about the latest modifications to the law on abortion, whereas only 31% stated they were informed about these modifications. The comparative analysis of socio-demographic groups demonstrated that most familiar with the amendments to the law on abortion were citizens with university education (54%), having higher household income per month (47%), aged between 25 and 44 (41%), of Macedonian ethnic background (41%), living in urban areas (44%), employed (43%) and retired (43%).



Half of respondents who were informed about the new law (50%), considered that the legal changes would reduce women's right of free choice, whereas only 8% considered that they would strengthen the right of free choice. 28% considered that legal changes on abortion do not change the right of free choice.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Even though only a small proportion of the citizens are informed about the new modifications to the law on abortion, one half of those familiar with it assessed the changes to the abortion regulations as restricting women's right of free choice.

Even though the new law on abortion was quite popular issue discussed during the course of the data collection process, only 37% of all respondents were assessed as being familiar with the amendments. The profile of those respondents who were familiar with the changed legislation was as follows: 25-44 years of age, ethnic Macedonians, living in urban areas, employed and retired, with predominantly university education, of Orthodox Christian denomination, with higher household income per month. With regard to their assessment of legal changes regarding the right of women to free choice, half of the respondents in the survey consider the legal changes as reducing women's right of free choice, while 28% assessed that such amendments do not change this right, and only a small proportion of respondents assessed the amendments as providing greater rights to women to make free choice.

3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION AMONG GYNAECOLOGISTS

This survey was conducted among 55 gynaecologists throughout Macedonia, with an aim to assess their general attitude towards abortion, as well as their considerations regarding the risks related to this medical intervention. The survey also assessed their opinion about the latest changes of the law on abortion, from two aspects, one relating to how the amendments will affect free access to abortion in practice, and the other relating to how the legal changes will affect female health care in practice.

3.1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

CHART 15 // // //

General attitudes towards abortion

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Should women in Macedonia decide for themselves about abortion?

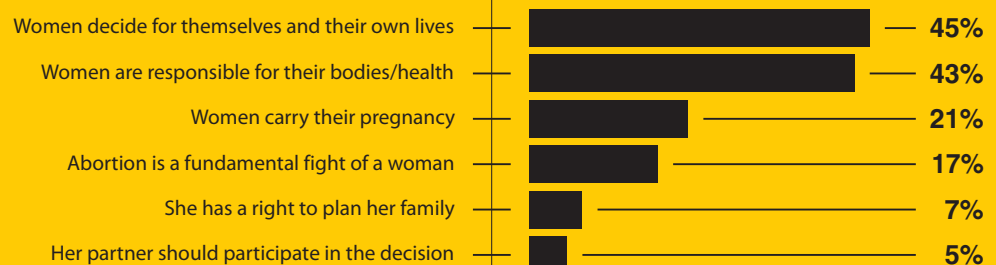


N=55

The majority of gynaecologists (76%) in the survey consider that the right of women to free access to abortion should not be restricted, since they agree that women should make their own decision about abortion, while only 16% of the gynaecologists disagree with this statement.

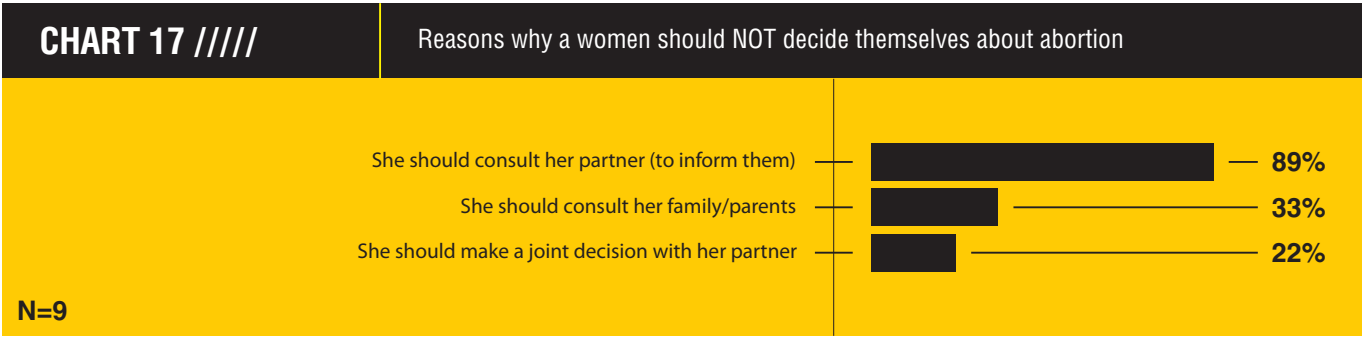
CHART 16 // // //

Reasons why a woman should decide on abortion herself

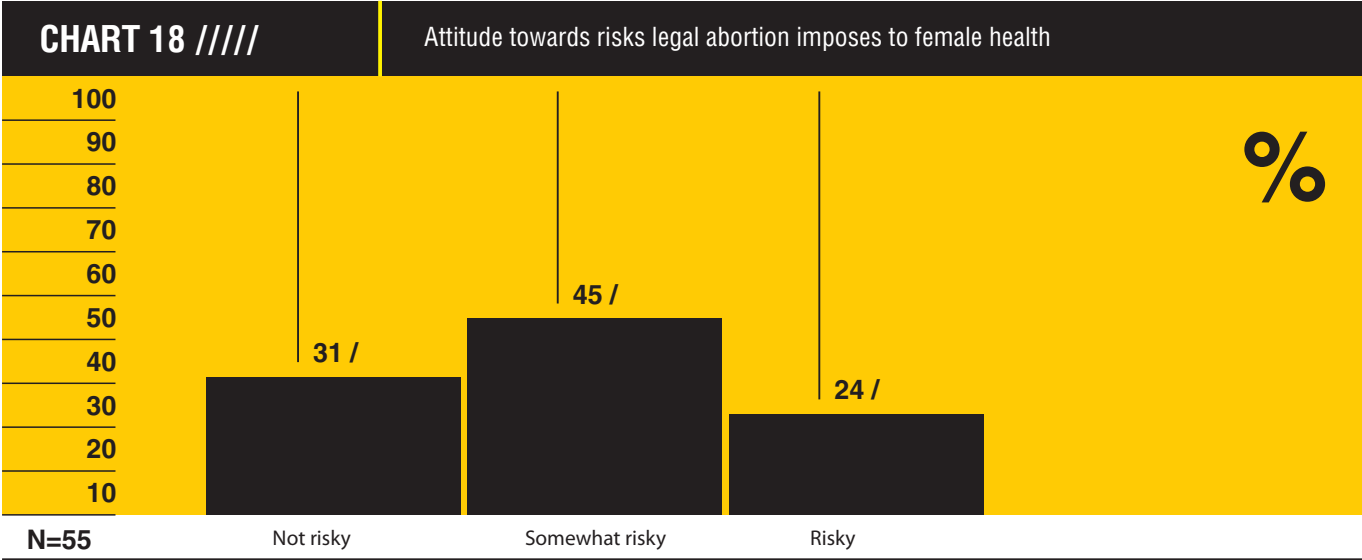


N=42

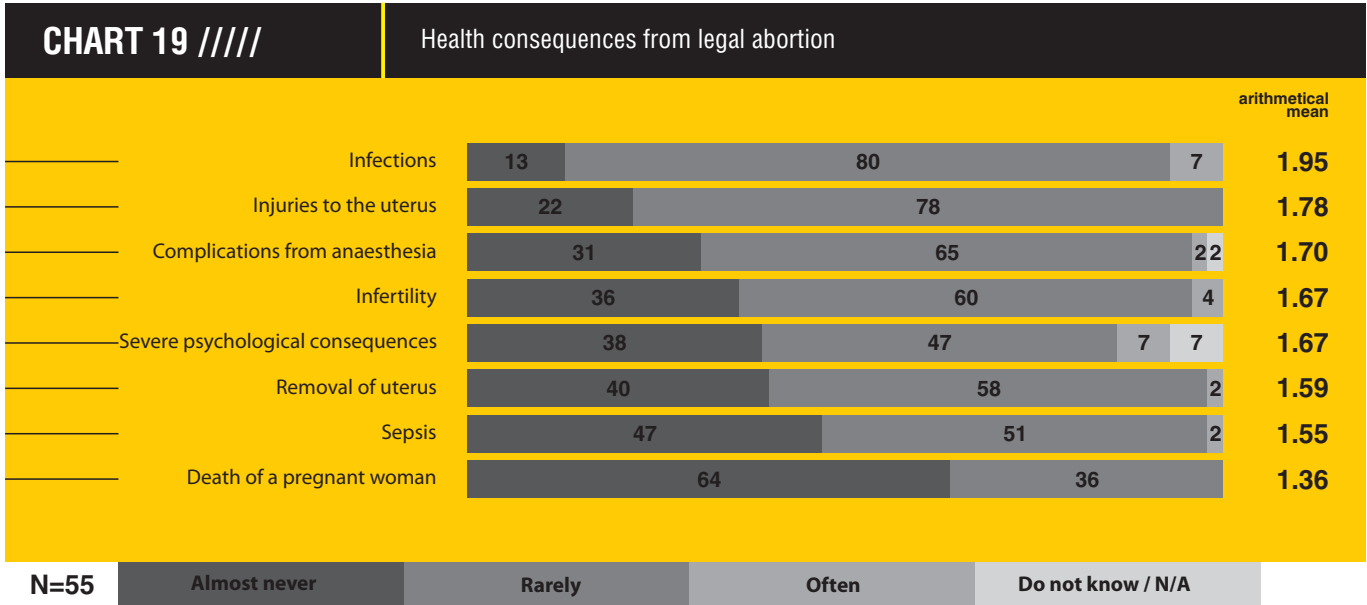
According to those gynaecologists who consider the right to abortion should not be restricted, main reasons listed for why a woman should make her own decision to terminate pregnancy are the following: *a woman decides for herself and her own life (45%), a woman is responsible for her own body/health (43%) and a woman carries the pregnancy (24%).*



The main reasons why some gynaecologists disagree that women should make their own decisions for termination of pregnancy is because they consider that *women must consult their partners, or inform them (89%),* followed by the opinion that *they should consult their family/parents (33%)* and that *they should jointly reach a decision on termination of pregnancy, with the partner (22%).*

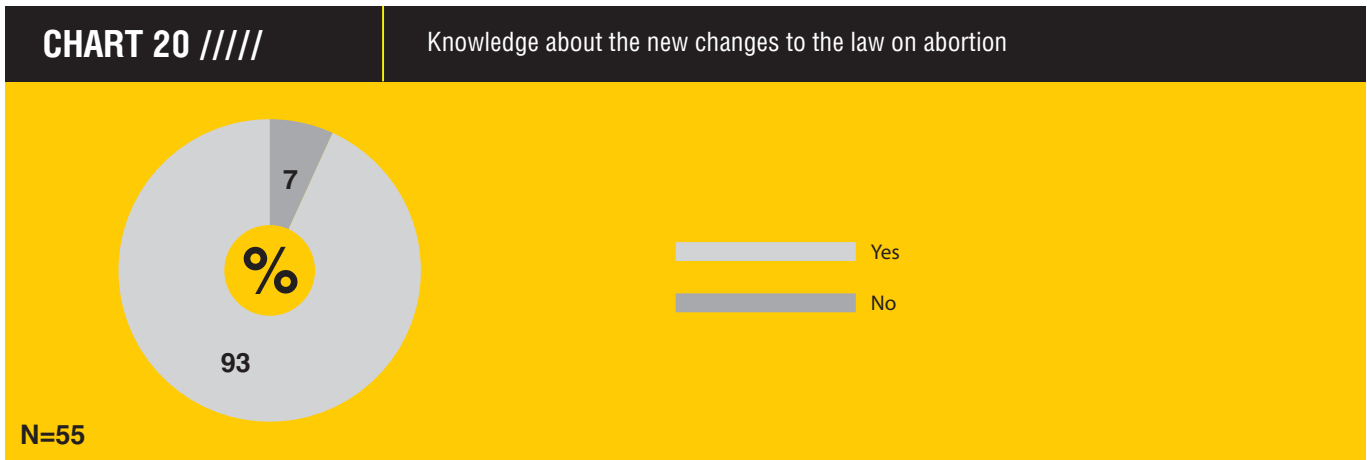


The majority of gynaecologists (45%) consider legal abortion somewhat risky, however, the difference in terms of the remaining responses is not statistically significant: abortion is not risky (31%) and abortion is risky (24%).



In general terms, according to gynaecologists it is highly unlikely for some of the eight listed consequences to occur after a legal abortion, since their responses primarily range between *almost never* and *rarely*. If health consequences are compared with reference to the arithmetical mean, most likely to occur are infections (1.95), injuries to the uterus (1.78) and complications from anaesthesia (1.70). It is interesting to note that according to 7% of gynaecologists, infections and severe psychological consequences were most likely to occur after performing a medical intervention of termination of pregnancy

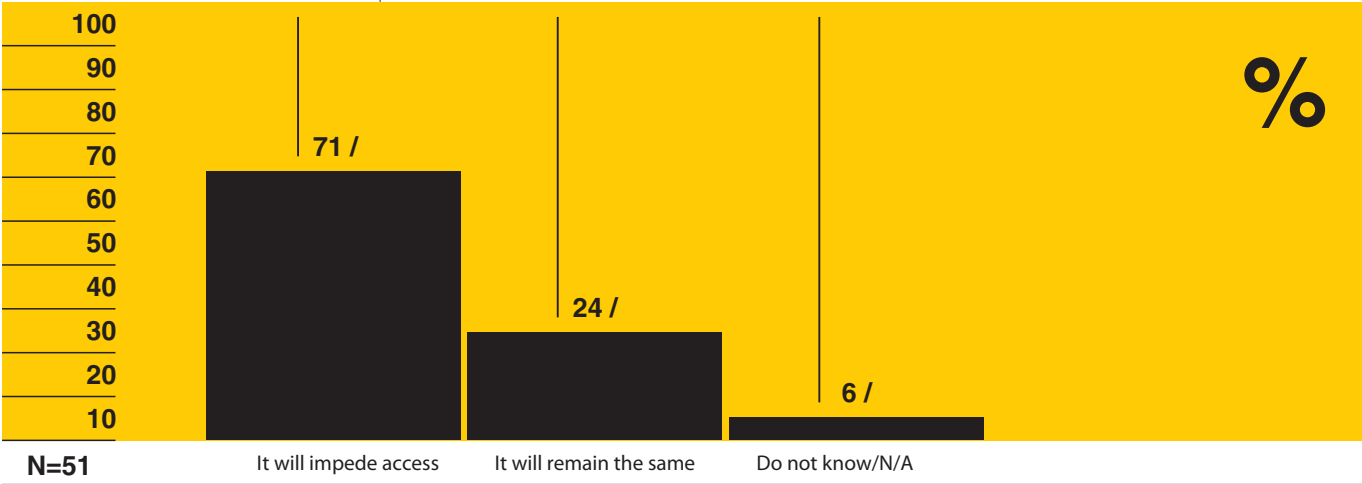
3.2. KNOWLEDGE AND OPINIONS ABOUT THE NEW CHANGES TO THE LAW ON ABORTION



The majority of gynaecologists (93%) were informed about the latest changes to the law on abortion, whereas only a minority of 7% lacked knowledge thereof.

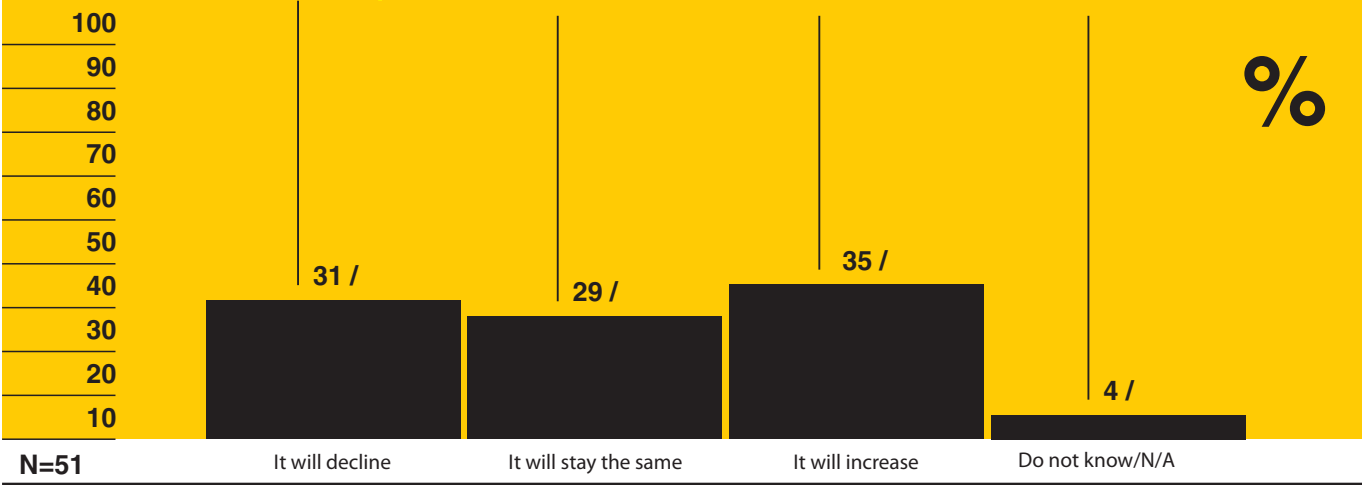
CHART 21 // Impact of legislative changes on free access to abortion

How will new amendments to the law impact free access to abortion in practice?



For the majority of gynaecologists (71%) new legislative changes will impede access to abortion, while 24% of them consider that free access will remain the same. None of the respondents replied that new legislation will make free access to abortion easier.

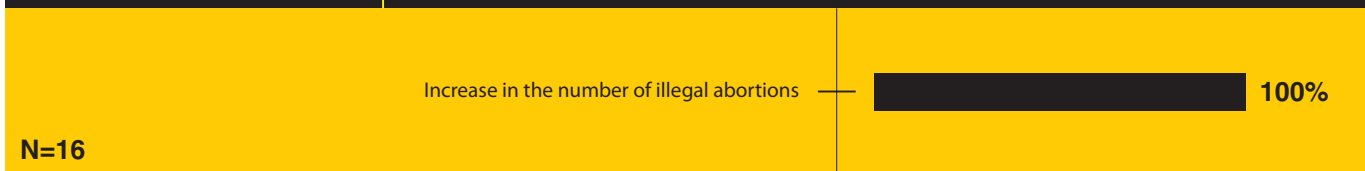
CHART 22 // Impact of legislative changes on protecting the health of women



The majority of gynaecologists consider new legislative changes will enhance protection of the health of women (35%), however the difference relating to the rest of the responses, that new legislation will decrease the protection of the health of women (31%), and that it will remain the same (29%), is narrow and statistically insignificant.

CHART 23 ////

Reasons why protection of the health of women will decline due to new legislation



All gynaecologists who stated that protection of the health of women will drop, stated a single reason in favour of their argument: *the number of illegal abortions will increase* (100%).

CHART 24 ////

Reasons why protection of the health of women will increase due to new legislation



Gynaecologists who consider that new legislative changes will enhance the protection of female health, consider the following as the main reason thereof: *decline in the number of illegal abortions* (17%), as well as *more supervision over the performance of abortions* (17%).

CONCLUSION

1. The majority of gynaecologists (70%) consider abortion should be a fundamental right of free choice for women, since they think women should decide for themselves and are responsible for their own body and health.

The majority of gynaecologists consider that the right of women to abortion should not be restricted (76%), since *women decide for themselves* (45%) and *women are responsible for their own body and health* (43%). Contrary to those, 16% of gynaecologists consider that women should not decide themselves about abortion, but should inform their partner.

2. Gynaecologists consider legal abortion to be somewhat risky (45%), with most likely health risks to occur after termination of pregnancy to be infections, injuries to the uterus and complications from anaesthesia.

Regarding risks from abortion, most gynaecologists consider that abortion is somewhat risky (45%), not risky (31%) and risky (24%). Opinions of gynaecologists about possible health complications following a legal abortion range from 'almost never' and 'rare', the health complications most likely being infections, injuries to the uterus and complications from anaesthesia.

3. Almost all gynaecologists (93%) have been informed about the new modifications to the law on abortion, and 71% think the changes will impede free access to abortion.

Contrary to the general population, gynaecologists are much more informed about the latest modifications in the law on abortion (93%), and 71% think the changes will impede free access to abortion, while 24% consider that access will remain the same.

4. Opinion is divided among gynaecologists on how legal changes will impact protection of the health of women, with 35% considering that protection of female health will increase and 31% considering that protection of female health will decline due to the expected increase in the number of illegal abortions.

With reference to the question about impact of legal changes on female health, 31% of the gynaecologists consider that protection of female health will decline, 29% think it will remain the same and 35% think new changes in legislation will strengthen female health. All gynaecologists who consider that female health **will decline** have stated that the actual modification to the law will result in *increase in the number of illegal abortions* (100%). In contrast to this, respondents who considered that new legal changes **will strengthen** female health, have pointed out that modifications will bring about *increased control of abortion* (17%) and *decline in the number of illegal abortions* (17%).

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