



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES: PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY

Communication Package for Politicians and Political Parties



British Embassy
Skopje



**UK International
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Introductory Address

Here is a document with findings from a public opinion survey on attitudes and perceptions of citizens related to gender equality.

The key findings of the study are based on data obtained through three research tools, which include surveys, focus groups, and professional interviews. The public opinion survey was conducted in the field (face-to-face) of a representative sample of 1,100 respondents at the national level, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and place of residence (urban/rural).

People support the continuation of the work on gender equality. They see gender equality as a human right and as the basis for achieving progress in our society. This is fully in line with the obligations and efforts of the state to achieve equality in law and equality in real life. In this vein are the country's efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5, which relates to gender equality. According to the United Nations, this implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men, girls and boys, are taken into account, thus recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men¹.

¹ You can read more about definitions related to gender and gender equality on UN Women's website, available at the following link: [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming – Concepts and Definitions](#)

Key Findings:

WHAT DO PEOPLE MEAN BY GENDER EQUALITY? AND DOES GENDER INEQUALITY REALLY EXIST, OR IS IT A FABRICATED PROBLEM?

A majority of people in the country,

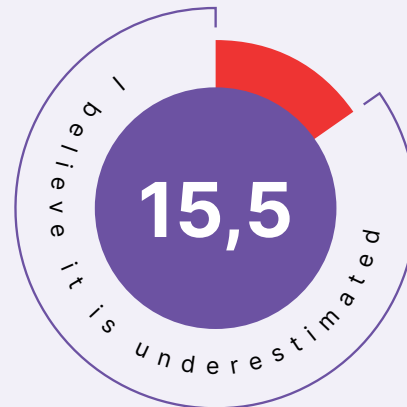
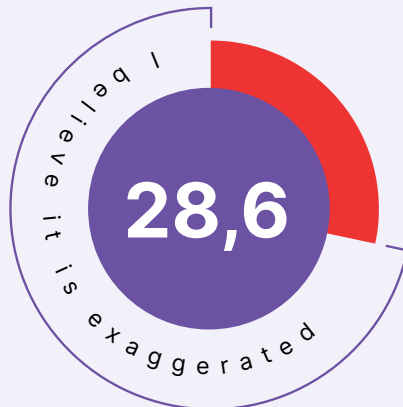
64,1 %

believe that gender inequality is a real or even underestimated problem, whereas

28,6 %

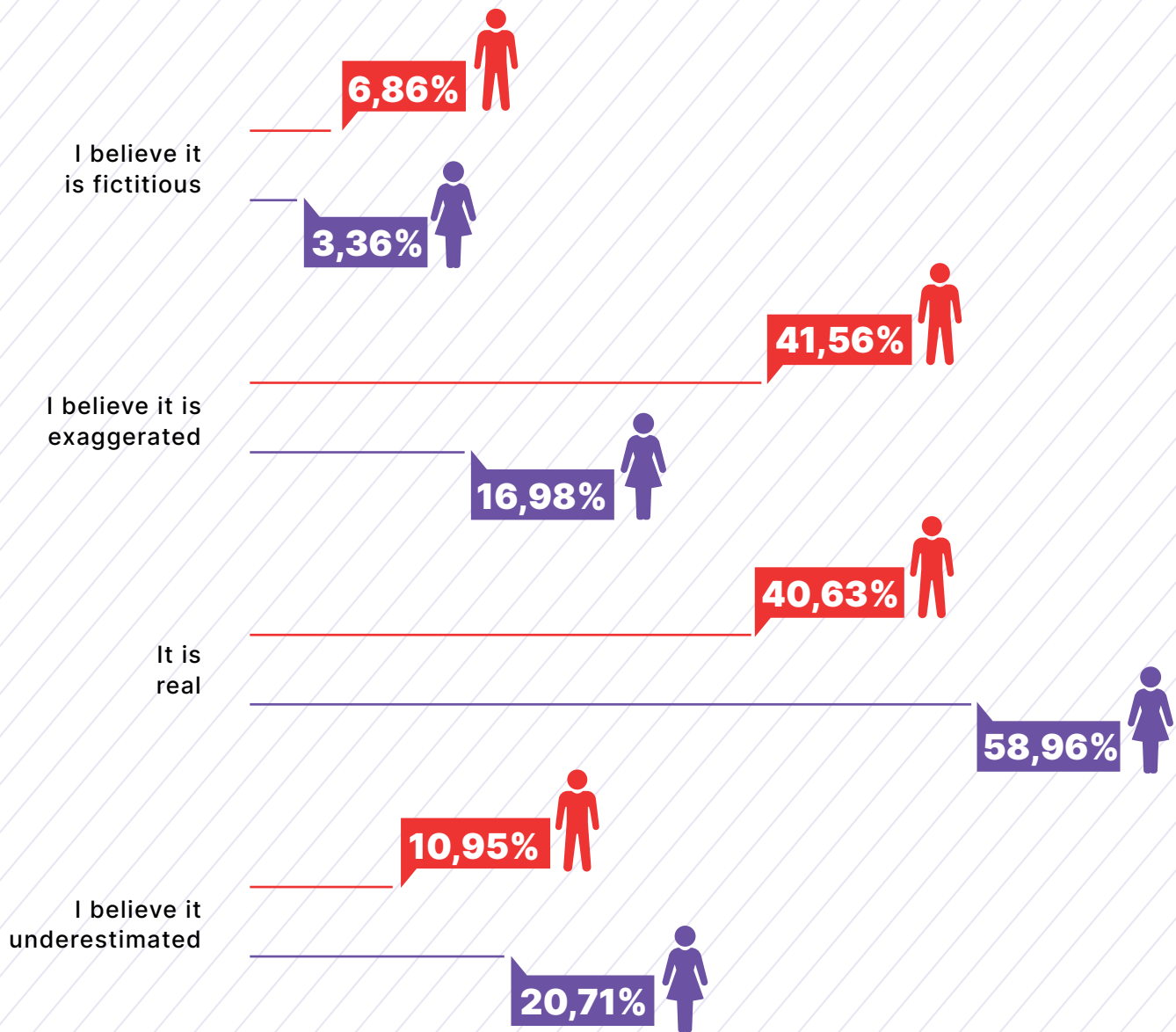
believe that it is exaggerated in our society. Only 5% of people in the country think it is a fictitious problem.

СТАВ ЗА РОДОВАТА НЕЕДНАКВОСТ



The same opinion is shared by representatives of the political parties involved in the survey. They are unanimous in the opinion that there is still no equality between men and women in the Republic of North Macedonia.

GENDER INEQUALITY IS?



Women are more likely to find the gender inequality as a real or underestimated problem in the country compared to men.

WHO IS THE MOST DISADVANTAGED IN OUR SOCIETY?



A majority of respondents (87.5%) agree that **women are the most disadvantaged group in our society.**

Interestingly, men are more likely to believe that they themselves are more disenfranchised than others, while women are more likely to believe that they are the ones who are most disenfranchised.

The very experience of gender inequality is felt more by women.

“Those who have not felt the gender inequality cannot perceive it as a problem”, and “women face it every day” and are therefore more aware of the problem

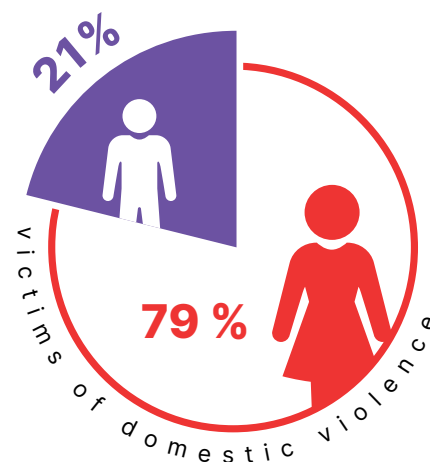
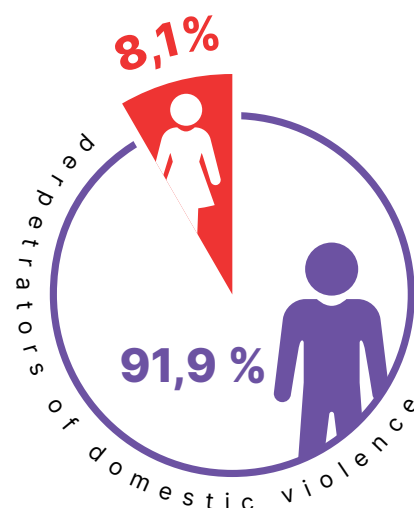
says one focus group participant.

To illustrate this, out of the total of 1,117 criminal offences of domestic violence recorded in 2022, 91.9% of the perpetrators were men, while 8.1% were women. At the same time, 79% of the victims of these criminal offences were women, while 21% were men².

² https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2023/ZeniteMazite_2023.pdf p. 99.

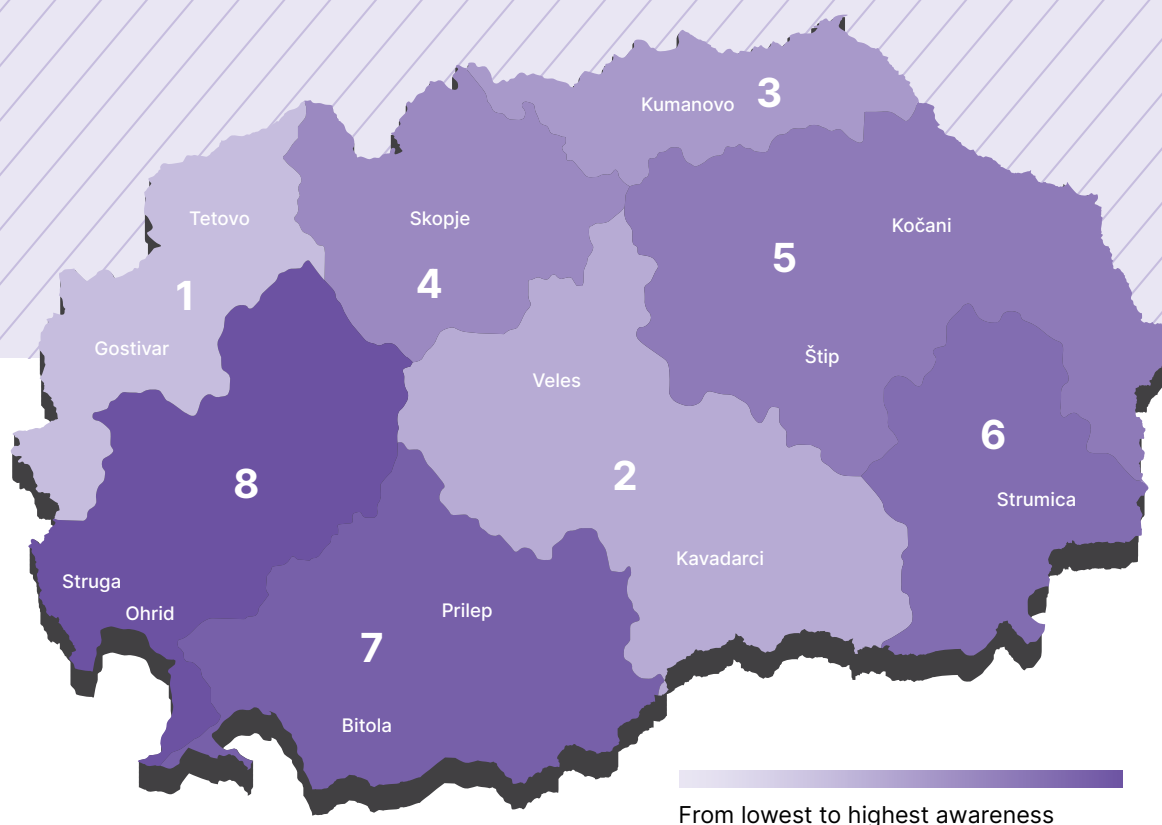
1117

criminal offences



WHAT DIFFERENCES ARE THERE IN TERMS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISADVANTAGE AND INEQUALITY BY REGION AND BY ETHNICITY?

AWARENESS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY



Source: 2025, Together for Gender Equality: Building Support for Gender-Inclusive Policies; HERA — Health Education and Research Association

The Polog Region has the lowest, and the Southwest Region has the highest awareness of gender inequality.

It is particularly important to note that, in all regions, it is the rural areas that have less awareness of gender inequality compared to urban areas.

Political party representatives identify a **lower level of awareness among men in their parties** regarding the need to fight for equal rights for men and women.

“This is reflected in the male dominance in almost all segments of political, economic and other life. Women have been disadvantaged for so long that probably this is why people cannot simply recognise it.”

Statement by a political party representative.

GENDER EQUALITY – A KEY TO PROGRESS

> Over **60%** of respondents

believe that **gender equality is important (in whole or in part) for the overall development of Macedonian society and for accession to the EU.**

This is also in line with the development priorities set out in the National Development Strategy, which states that democracy, economic growth and wellbeing can only be achieved in a society in which the rule of law is highly respected. The strategy further defines that the rule of law includes values that focus on human dignity, freedoms and rights, democracy and legal state, gender-responsive budgeting, which are essential as guiding principles³.

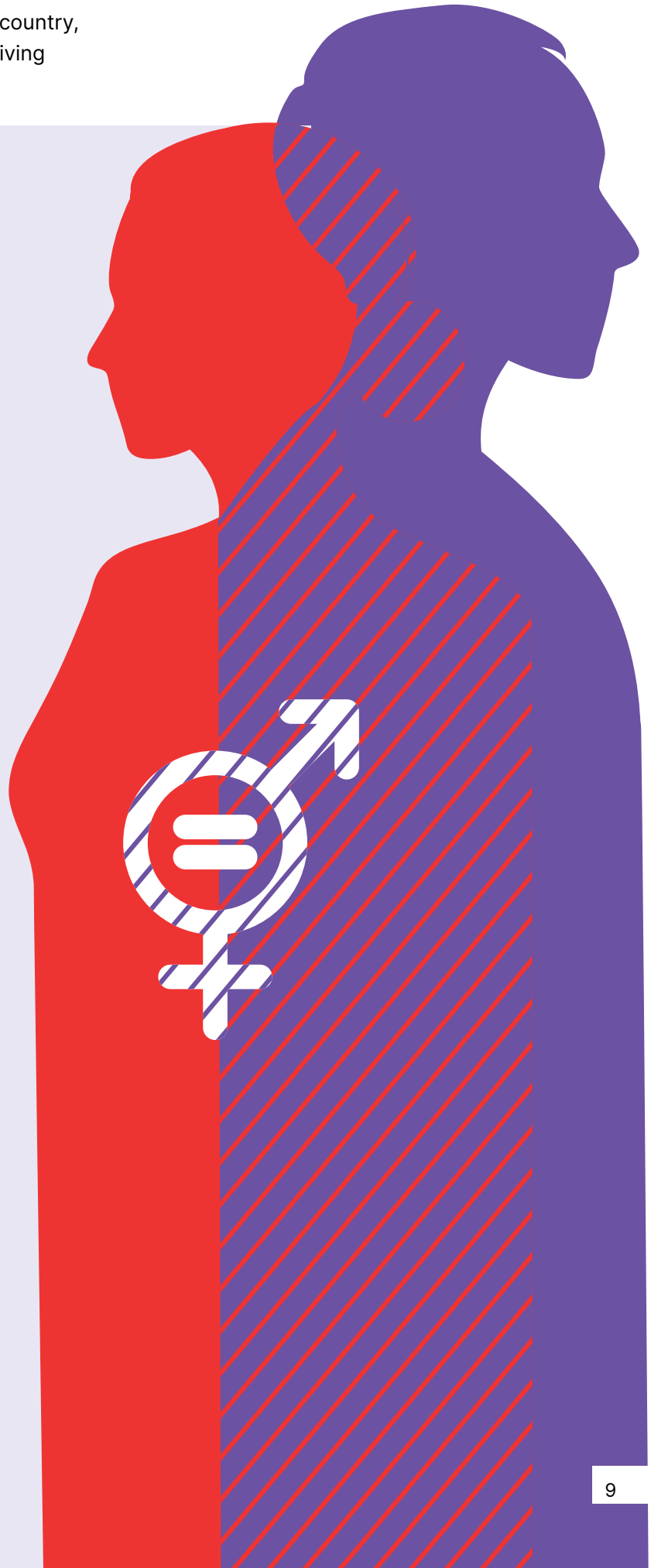
³ Page 56 of the National Development Strategy 2024–2044, available at the following link: Draft National Development Strategy 2024–2044

Gender equality is recognised as a factor for physical and mental health, as well as for the economic growth of the country, for a better standard of living and a better life for all.



MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ▶ Gender equality affects both men and women. The positive aspects of gender equality relate to:
 - an economically more developed and stable society,
 - more time for family and children;
 - removing the role of a man as the “bread-winner in the home” and as a burden that only a man has to bear,
 - improved health through preventive health programmes tailored to the needs of men, as well as those aimed specifically at women;
 - longer life expectancy,
 - a better standard for all.
- ▶ Improved mental health care through the provision of free and easily accessible counselling for men and the availability of professionals, at the state and local levels, equally for all.



IN WHICH AREA WOMEN AND MOST DISADVANTAGED?

Politics is identified as the area where gender inequality is prevalent, followed by social protection and access to the labour market.
(on a scale from 1 to 5)

GENDER
EQUALITY IN
DIFFERENT AREAS
OF SOCIAL LIFE

3,71

Engagement
in politics



3,83

Provision of
social protection

3,95

Access to labour
market (employment
opportunities)

**The view that
women should
be encouraged
to enter politics
is supported by
about**

69%
OF THE POPULATION.



HOW TO ACHIEVE A GREATER PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS?

- 1** Supporting women from political parties by nominating them for leadership positions in the executive branch and for list holders in parliamentary and local elections.
- 2** Positive campaigns in which men give support for greater participation of women in politics.
- 3** Reaction of political parties when a woman from the party faces attacks and sexism from the media and social networks.
- 4** Building a network of men in a political party who advocate for gender equality.
- 5** Amendment of the Electoral Code to increase/ introduce shares for the representation of the underrepresented sex, i.e. women, in legislative, executive and local government, including for mayoral seats.
- 6** Raising awareness of both men and women in parties towards greater partisan support for women in political processes and functions by conducting trainings, building mentoring networks, for both women and men who want to contribute to a gender-responsive political environment and party.
- 7** Raising awareness of the general public about the positive aspects of the representation of both men and women in political offices.

HOW EQUAL ARE WE IN THE LABOUR MARKET?

The youngest, aged 18 to 24, believe that gender inequality exists the most in the

field of labour,
especially in
employment and in
the use of maternity
leave.



What are the things that prevent women from building their careers?

The greater obligation to care for home and family, as opposed to the possibility of paid work, also affects the underrepresentation of women in the labour market.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ▶ Increasing the number of care institutions, with an emphasis on kindergartens and care homes for the elderly.
- ▶ Recognising some of the unpaid domestic work and agricultural work as grounds for exercising rights such as paid maternity leave and sick leave.



HOW INCLINED ARE WE TO TYPIFY OCCUPATIONS AS BEING “TYPICALLY MALE OR FEMALE”?

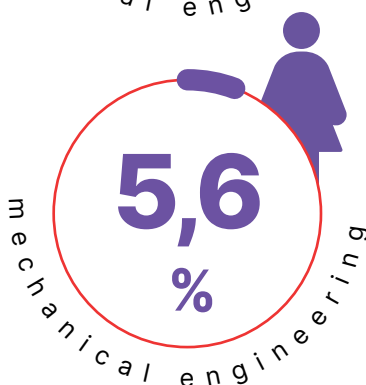
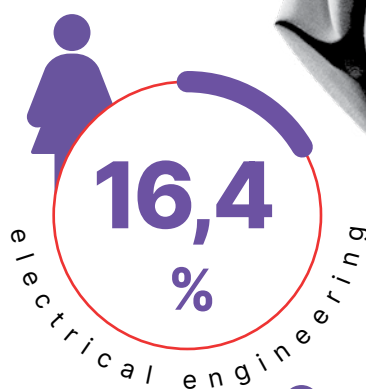
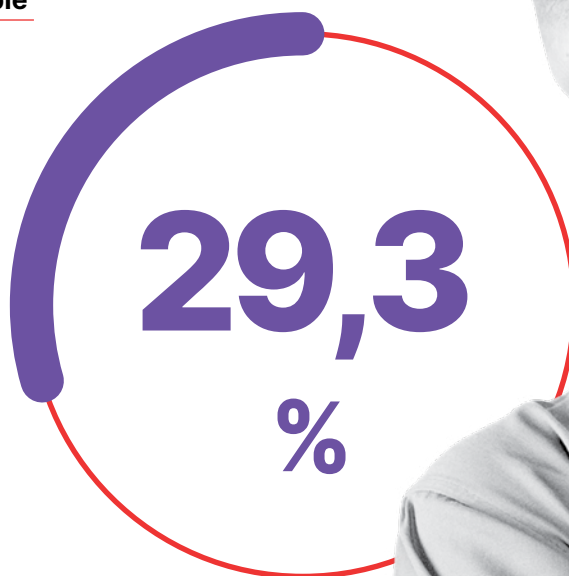
The data show a partial abandonment of the stereotypical view of “male and female occupations” in the labour market and a general existence of balanced contemporary attitudes towards women and men in the professional domain. One positive view is that **women can be equally skilled as men in the natural sciences, mathematics and engineering, with which 71.3% of people agree.**



However, gender stereotypes still persist in occupations defined as risky and in which heavier physical labour is expected, such as mining and construction, with majority believing that women should not engage in these occupations.

Gender stereotypes also exist in relation to nursing professions, with less than one-third, or **29.3%, of the respondents still believing that nursing professions (caregivers, nurses, educators) are not suitable for men.**

The division of male and female occupations negatively affects the filling the low-supply vacancies in the labour market. For example, in the 2022/2023 school year, there were only 16.4% girls who have completed secondary education in electrical engineering, while the share of girls who have completed mechanical engineering was even lower at only 5.6%.⁴



⁴ https://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat__ObrazovanieNauka__SrednoObrazovanie__SrednoKrajUcebna/250_sredniucilista_rsm_t7_ml.px/>

CAN WOMEN BE EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL AS MANAGERS AND LEADERS?

There is a noticeable shift away from the stereotypical view that women are less successful leaders/managers than men. Almost 80% of respondents agree that both men and women can be equally successful in leadership and management. This depends on knowledge and skills. Only 12.6% of respondents believe that men are natural leaders and are more determined than women. **Women and individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to believe that everybody can be equally successful** if they are equipped with the right qualifications and skills. Also, they are less likely to think that men are natural born leaders and more determined than women

79,4%

**everybody
can be equally
successful**



Don't know
/ refuse to
answer

1%

Women are natural
leaders and more
resolute than man

7,0%

Man are natural leaders and
more resolute than women

12,6%

What does it take to empower
women as managers and
leaders?

- ▶ Strengthening entrepreneurship support for youth and women, building leadership skills, and strengthening self-confidence.
- ▶ Increased access to information about opportunities to manage and support new businesses.
- ▶ Information campaigns conducted at the local level by municipalities and/or civil society organisations.

PATERNITY LEAVE – YES



People fully support the right to paternity leave after the birth of a child. A high 74% believe that fathers should have the right to paternity leave, while 61.5% believe that the exercise of this right should be mandatory.



61,5% believe that the exercise of this right should be mandatory.

Practice has shown that, if not made mandatory, seldom anyone will use paternity leave, because of social norms, resistance from employers, or resistance from the surrounding. The experiences of other countries show that, once they see the advantage of spending more time with children, fathers regularly exercise this right.

Paternity leave can help increase women's representation in the labour market and support for parents, which is one of the priorities of the Government set out in its Programme 2024–2028⁵.

How can paternity leave become a good practice in our country?

- ▶ If the Law on Labour Relations is amended, it will introduce the possibility of split parental leave, an increase in paternity leave after the birth of a child, and an increase in the share of women in the labour market.
- ▶ Increased public awareness through the promotion of the right to use paternity leave.

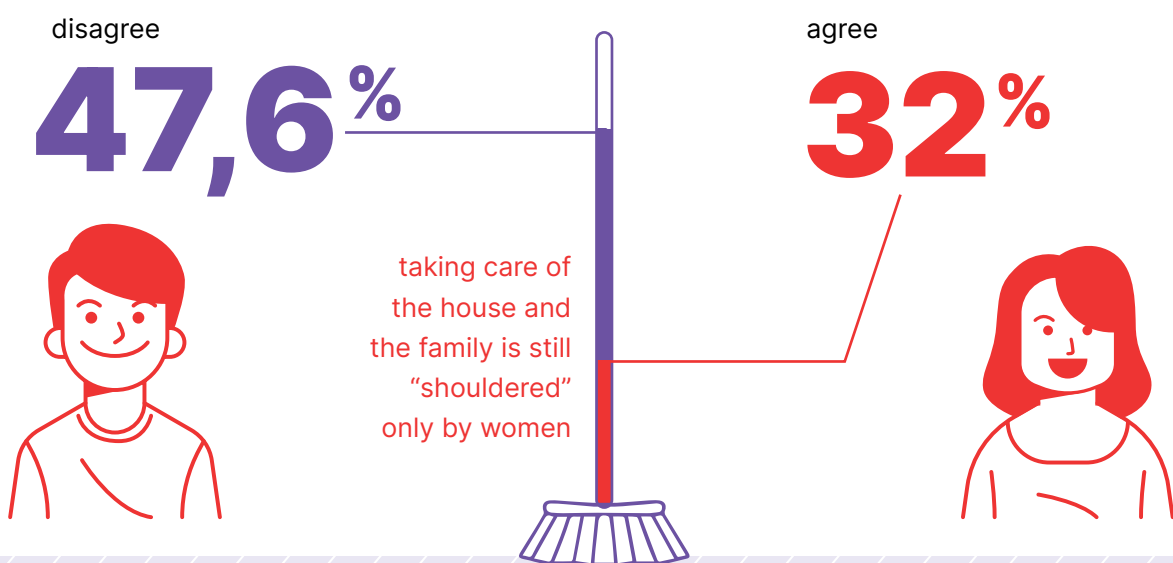
⁵ Work Programme 2024–2028 of the Government; section on National Demographic Plan, available at the following link: [programa-na-vladdata-2024-2028.pdf](https://www.government.ro/ro/programa-na-vladdata-2024-2028.pdf)



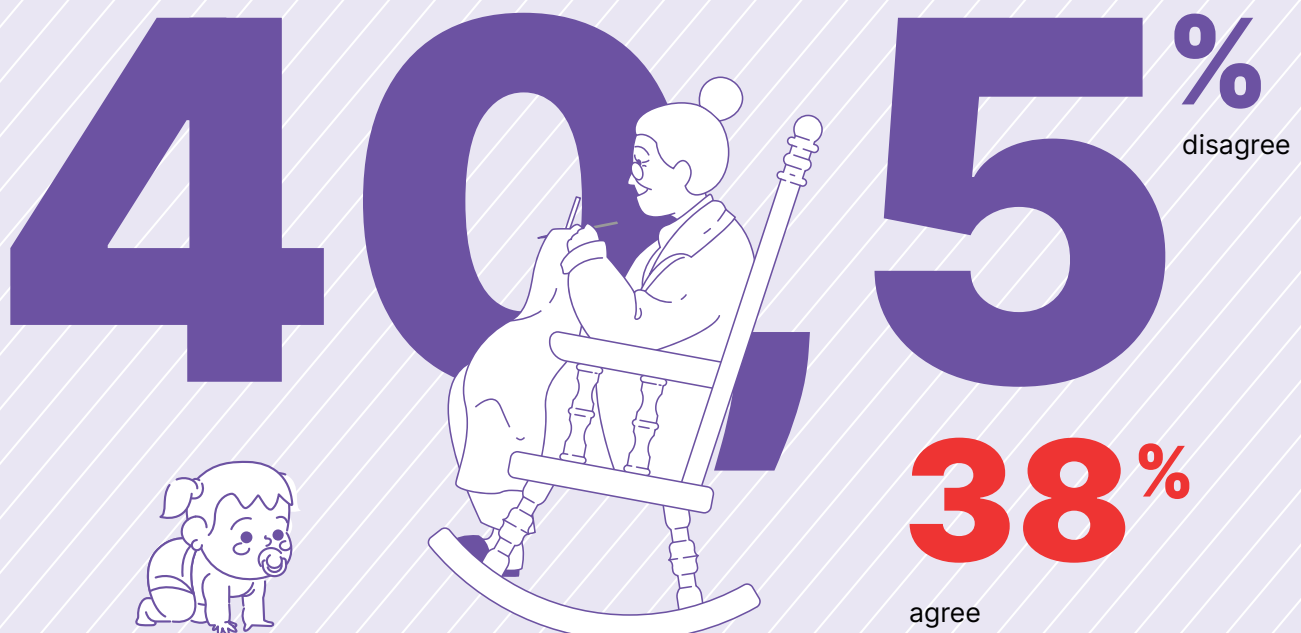
CAN BOTH WOMEN AND MEN TAKE CARE OF THE HOME, CHILDREN, AND THE ELDERLY EQUALLY WELL?

Respondents have generally **contemporary views** when it comes to the **traditional division of roles of men and women in the home and in the family**, especially with regard to housework. And so, 47.6% disagree with the view that housework should be primarily women's chore, while 32% agree with this claim.

Despite such views, it is evident that taking care of the house and the family is still "shouldered" only by women.

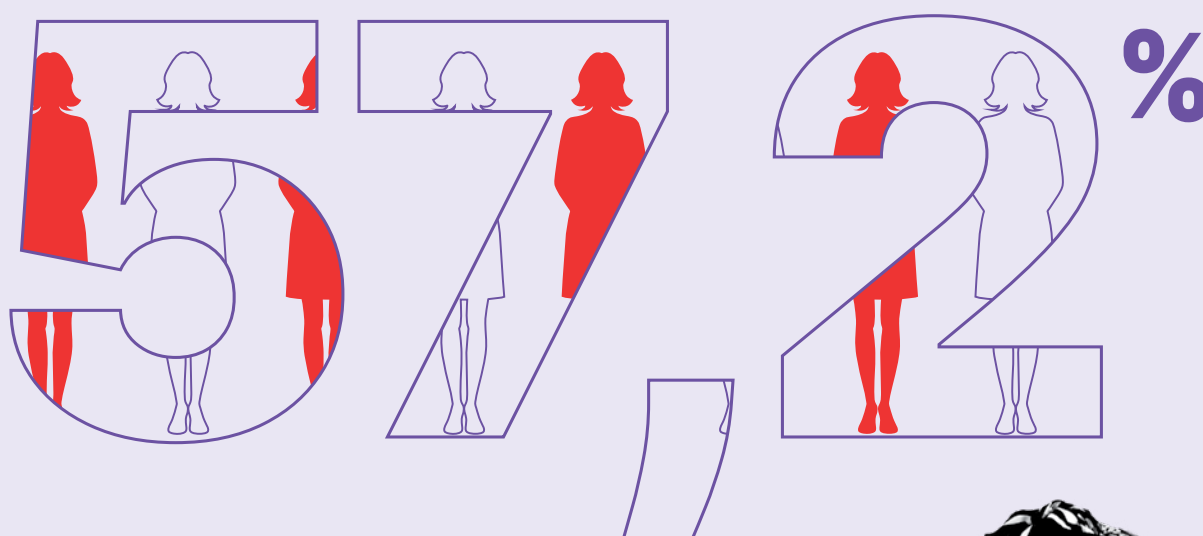


A majority of respondents, over 40.5% of them, disagree with the view that caring for children and the elderly comes more naturally to women, versus 38% of them who agree.



caring for children and the elderly comes more naturally to women

The Gender Equality Index⁶ shows that the greatest gender inequalities are observed in the domain of time. This means that women spend significantly more time caring for children, grandchildren, or other individuals in need of family support. Inequality is particularly pronounced in unpaid housework and shows that an **extremely small share of men (10.4%) devote time to housework chores**, on which the daily life and the normal functioning of family members depends, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and similar activities at home.



This is why women make up 57.2% of the unemployed population, meaning every second woman in our country is inactive and is not looking for a job⁷. This means that the labour force that we are lacking can in fact be found in our country.



⁶ The Gender Equality Index is available at the following link:
State Statistical Office – publication: 2022 Gender Equality Index
in North Macedonia – Measuring the Gender Equality

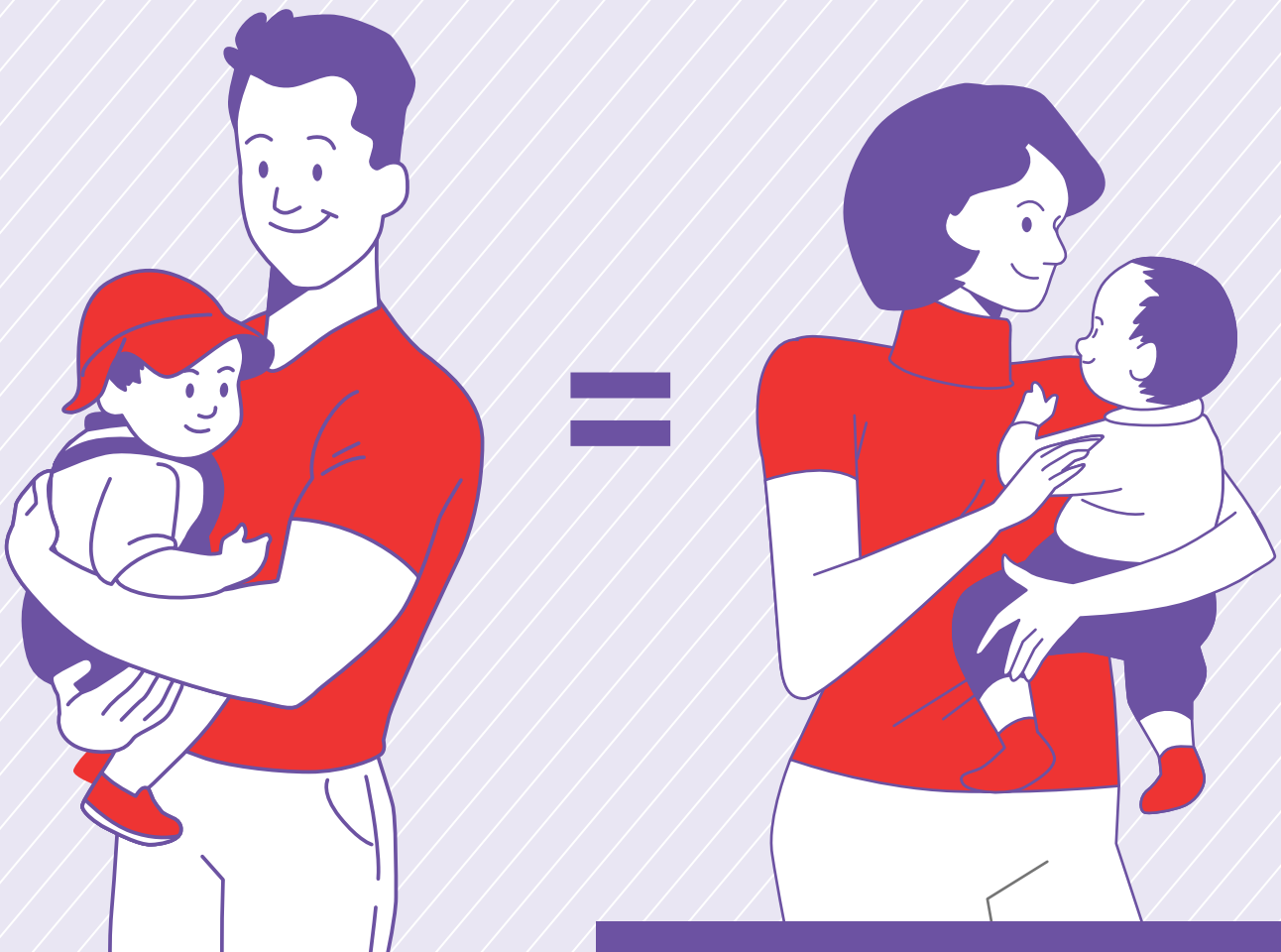
⁷ Data from Finance Think, available at the following link:
Root causes to women's inactivity can be addressed gradually and on
the long run – Finance Think

Furthermore, over 60% of respondents agree that a single mother would find it easier to care for a child than a single father. **Women have greater confidence in men that they would be equally good at caring for children as single fathers.**

60%

DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK DIFFERENTLY ON THIS ISSUE?

Young people are more liberal in their views than older adults and are more likely to support the sharing of housework responsibilities, including caring for the home, for the children and for the elderly. They are also less likely to agree that a single mother would find it easier to care for a child than a single father. This shows a tendency to equalise the parental roles of mothers and fathers and a change in the perception that mothers are the sole and best carers for their children.



WHO BEARS THE BURDEN OF MAKING MORE MONEY IN THE FAMILY?

The study confirms a positive trend of **abandoning the stereotype that a man should earn more than a woman**. 74% of respondents disagreed with this view.

74%
of respondents

%

However, the **stereotype of the role of the man as the primary provider of income in the family** is still persisting, with

52%

of respondents agreeing.



Moreover,

54,5%

disagree with the view that money and property management should only be men's responsibility. Men agree significantly more with the three claims, suggesting that they themselves are more likely to adhere to the traditional division of roles in terms of earning and managing the money in the family. This is both an obligation and a burden for men, of whose negative consequences they are not sufficiently aware.

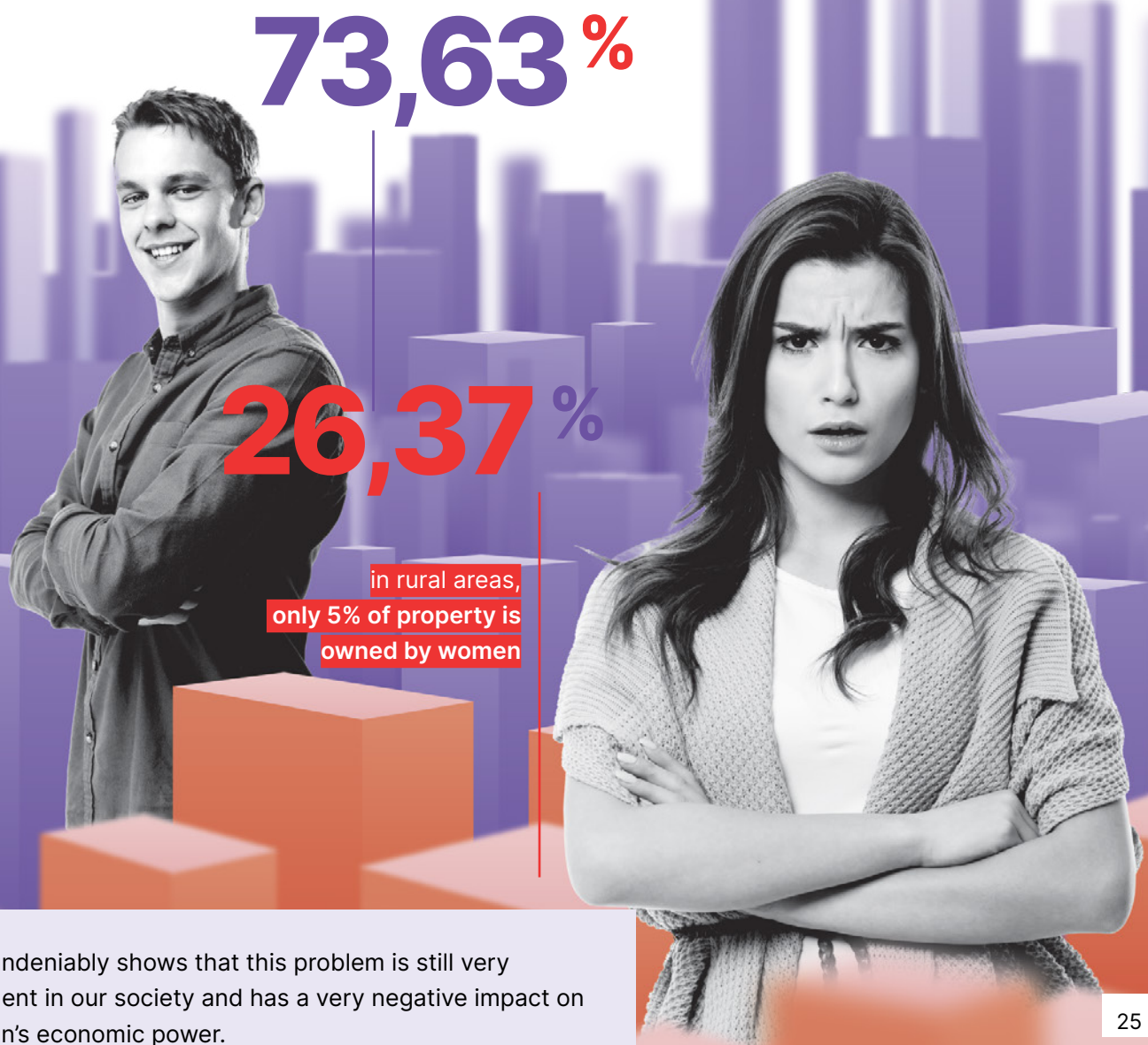
DO WE INHERIT EQUALLY AS MEN AND AS WOMEN?

There is a tendency to abandon the opinion that property should be inherited by male family members, at least declaratively. Thus, the majority of respondents (75%) believe that property should be inherited equally between women and men. Women agree with this view to a greater extent than men. On the other hand, 73.63% of real estate owners are men⁸, while in rural areas, only 5% of property is owned by women⁹. On the other hand, there is a decrease in the share of women owning property. That is, between 2020 and 2023, the share of women owning property decreased by 2%¹⁰.

8 The data have been taken from the Annual Report on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women for the period March 2022 – March 2023, of the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, available at the following link: [Godisen_izvestaj_za_ednakvi_moznosti_mart2022_mart2023.pdf](#)

9 The data on property owned by women in rural areas have been obtained from the analysis made by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), available at the following link: [Macedonia-design](#)

10 These data have been obtained by comparing the data published by the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre for the period 2020 – March 2023, available at the following link: [Gender Equality – Agency for Real Estate Cadastre](#)



This undeniably shows that this problem is still very prevalent in our society and has a very negative impact on women's economic power.

HOW TO INCREASE THE SHARE OF INHERITANCE BY WOMEN?



Providing information on property and inheritance rights of citizens, with an emphasis on women and youth, and especially women who are at greater social risk.



Providing targeted free informative and legal counselling by the ministries, municipalities and civil society organizations at an individual and group level, for both men and women, in environments where the highest number of probate waivers are registered.



Strengthening the awareness in girls and women that claiming this right does not make them worse sisters or daughters, but makes them more independent.



DOES A WOMAN HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE AN ABORTION DECISION ON HER OWN?

With regard to the issue of abortion, the positive trend of support continues, given that the

majority of respondents (61%) believe that abortion should be allowed in our country.

61%

What is brought into question here, however, is women's independence to take such decisions. Specifically, 48% of respondents agree, and 26.8% disagree with the statement that women should have the right to independently decide on abortion, without any influence from their partners or families.

What is of key importance to strengthen in this context?

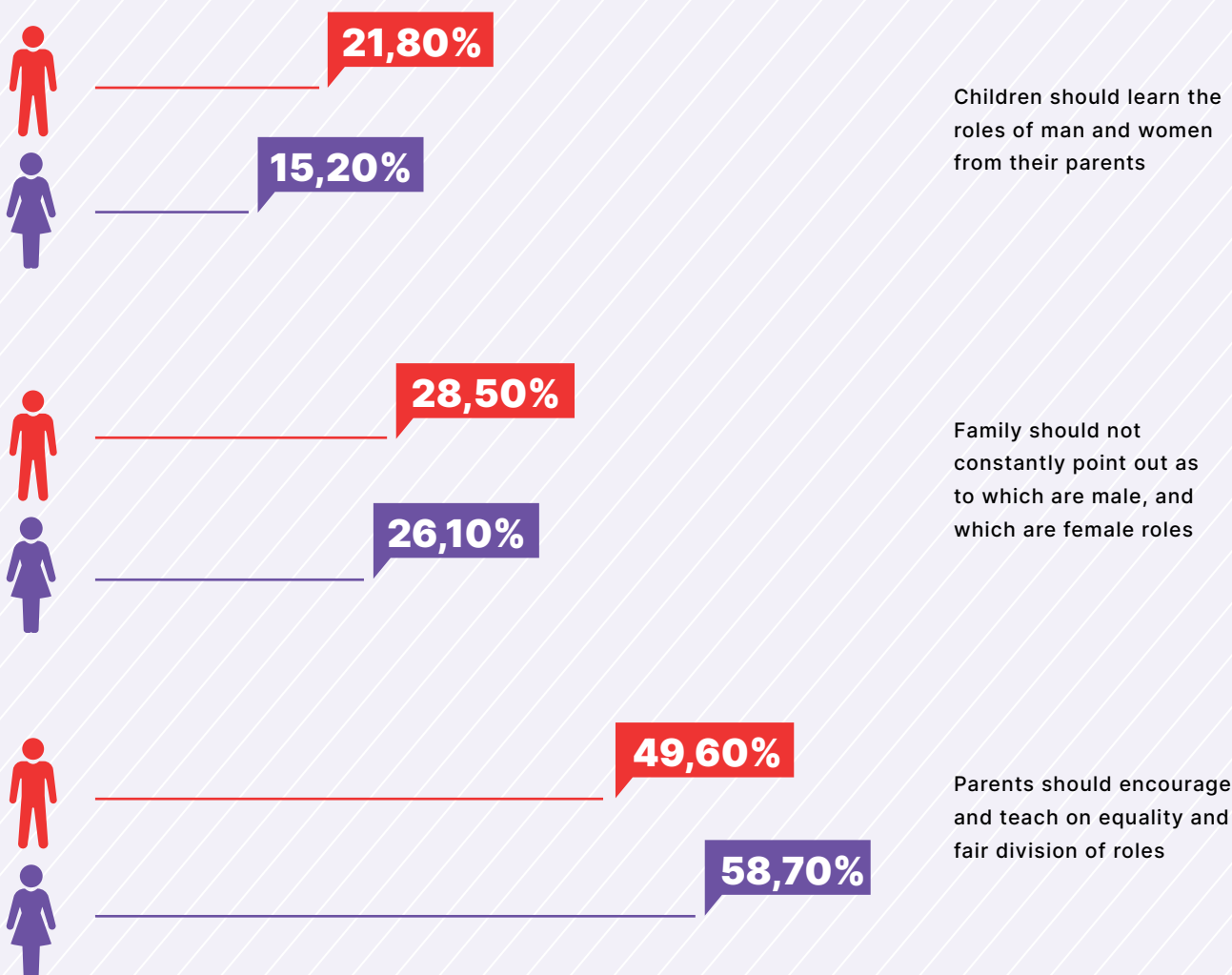
- ▶ Institutionally provided informational content on sexual and reproductive health, as well as free prevention opportunities.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF HOME AND FAMILY IN GENDER EQUALITY EDUCATION?

The majority of respondents (81.4%) support the idea of an equal home in which there is no division between “male and female chores and roles”. A majority of respondents, especially women, believe that parents should encourage and teach equality and equal division of roles between men and women. Half of the respondents recognise the active role parents play in raising awareness of equality. However, traditional models of gender-segregated roles in the home, which are transgenerationally handed down, are very difficult to change.



Gender and Compliance with Different Claims about the Role of Parents



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN BUILDING THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY?

A majority of women (72%) believe that women's rights are not sufficiently promoted in schools. On the other hand, only 34% of men feel the same, indicating insufficient support by men for the promotion of women's rights in education.

**It Is Never Enough
To Talk About
Women's Rights**



Women are significantly more likely than men to believe that textbooks/schools should talk about the injustices people experience as a result of gender discrimination. **A total of 61% of women versus 41% of men believe that it is important to disclose the injustices, so as to make everyone more sensitive to individuals who have been subjected to gender discrimination.** On the other hand, men are more likely (25%) than women (11%) to think that it is not necessary to talk about it, because most injustices resulting from gender discrimination are fabricated, indicating the absence of experiences with gender discrimination.

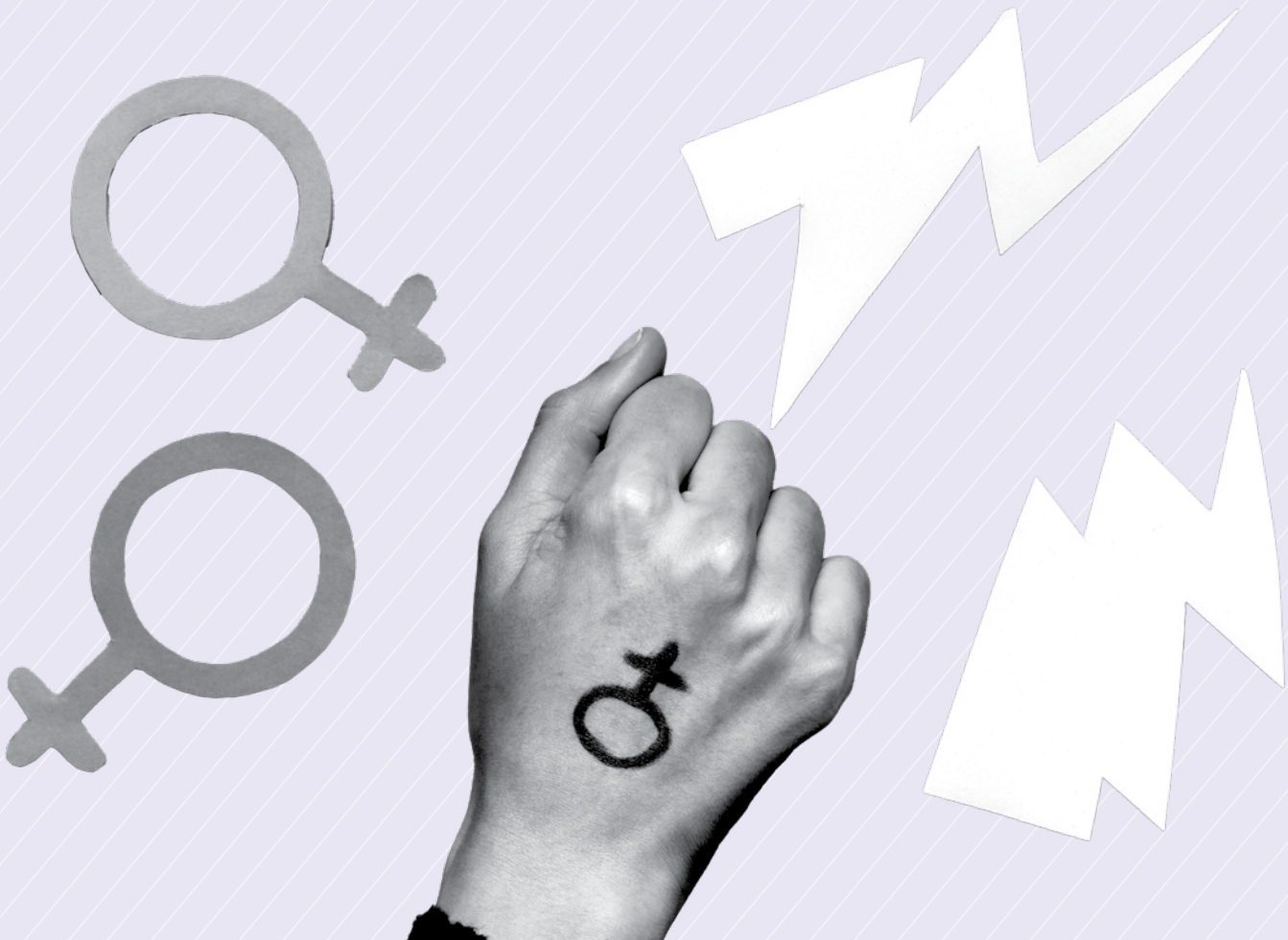
HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS?



Politicians should promote gender equality in public in a positive context and advocate for the exercise of women's rights.



Introducing the required content in the school subject of Civic Education in secondary schools, with the aim of raising the general awareness of understanding the political and social context, but also of the need for, influence from and forms of active civic participation.



HOW WOULD THEY PROTECT THEMSELVES IF THEY PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED GENDER-BASED INJUSTICE?

In the case of personal injustice experienced because of being a woman or a man, citizens are willing to defend the right to gender equality. A total of 90% of respondents said they would react in some way, whether by speaking publicly about the injustice or by complaining or suing where necessary.

90%

react in some way

do not know what they would do

4

would accept the injustice without contestation

6

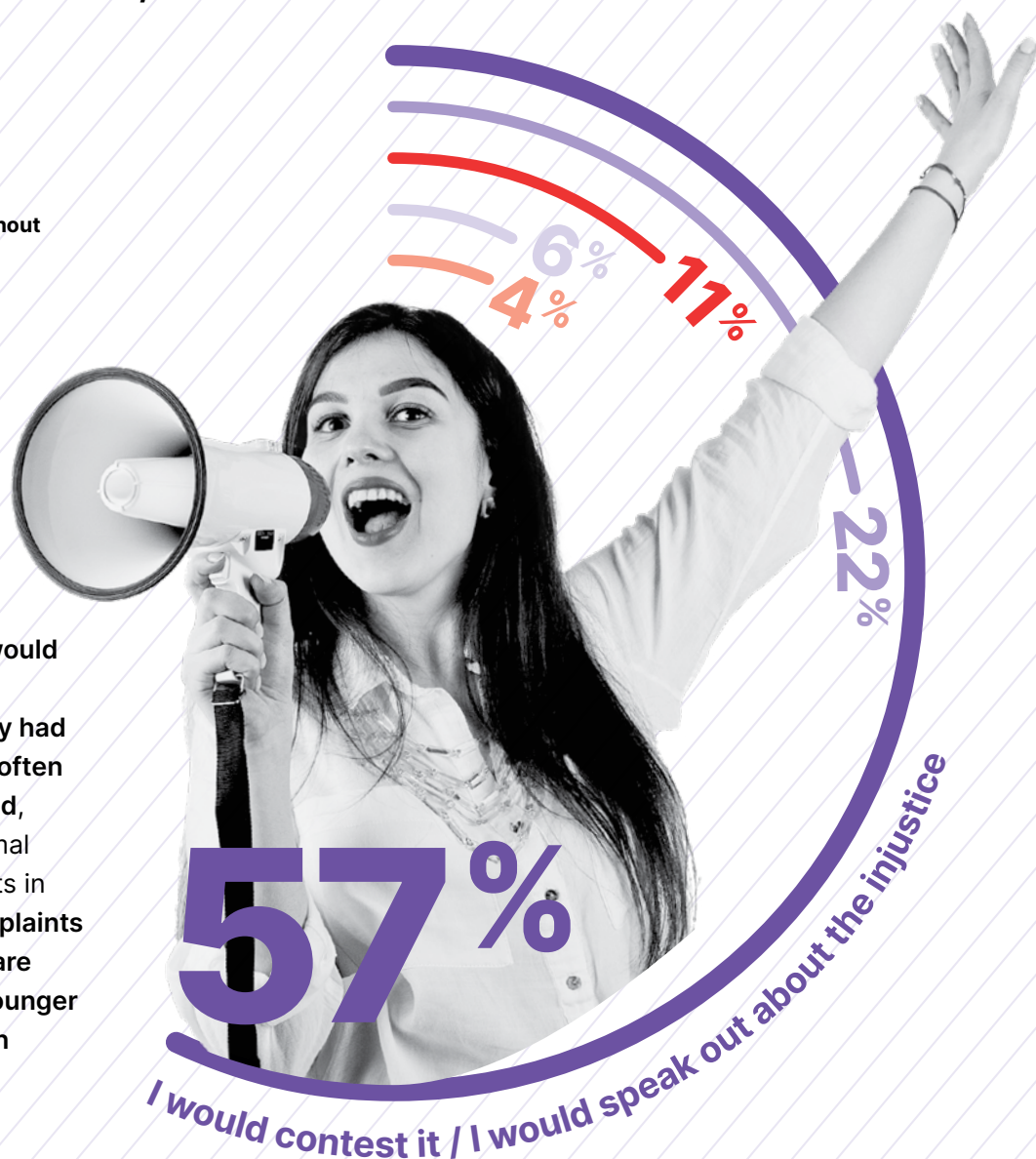
Only 6% of the population would accept the injustice without contestation, and 4% do not know what they would do or do not want to speak out.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF ANY OF YOUR RIGHTS WAS PERSONALLY JEOPARDISED JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE A MAN / WOMAN / OTHER?

- ☐ I would appeal the decision
- ☐ I would bring a lawsuit
- ☐ I would accept it without contesting
- ☐ Don't know / refuse to answer

Moreover, those who **would contest and speak out** about the injustice they had experienced are more often older and less educated, while initiatives for formal legal protection of rights in the sense of **filing complaints and bringing lawsuits** are more often taken by younger people and people with higher education.



50%

However, over **50% of respondents believe that the method of reaction and protection used by the disadvantaged individual should not irritate the majority** (44.9% believe that victims of gender discrimination should find solutions that will not irritate the majority, and 5.3% believe that victims should remain silent), which shows a **very low degree of solidarity and empathy towards the disadvantaged, especially among male respondents and those with lower levels of education.**

HOW SHOULD POLITICAL PARTIES APPROACH THE ISSUE OF GENDER EQUALITY?

- ▶ Political leaders and parties can educate and encourage the protection of the right to equality, including gender equality. They should call for solidarity and empathy, and it should be emphasised that the protection of rights at every level, including individually, is imperative for democracy and progress.
- ▶ Encouraging women politicians, who are more exposed to gender harassing speech and threats, to seek protection as well. Political leaders can lead by example and encourage the other people in the country, especially women, that guaranteed human rights should be protected through the legal mechanisms at their disposal.
- ▶ Encourage all institutions involved in prevention and protection to actively engage in the topic and guarantee the right of every individual to freedom of choice, expression and decision-making for themselves and their future.
- ▶ To develop emotional recognition and compassion in children from an early age, by working with kindergarten staff, parents, child psychologists, and similar professionals.

HERA – Health Association and Research Organization

www.hera.org.mk

ЦИП



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