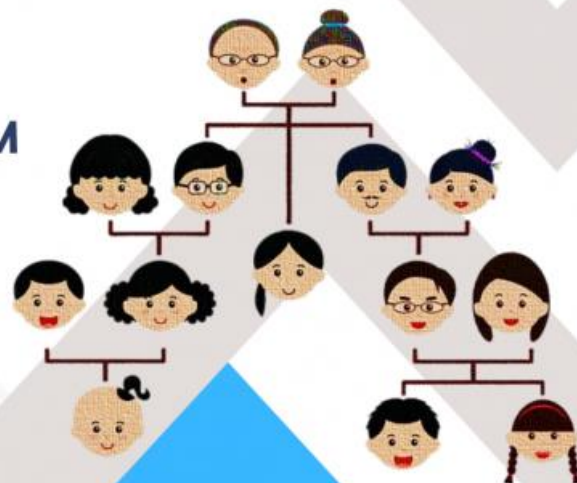


2024

**ISTRAŽIVANJE O NASLEDNIM  
PRAVIMA I STAVOVIMA  
PREMA NASLEĐIVANJU U  
SRBIJI**



**RESEARCH ON INHERITANCE RIGHTS AND  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS INHERITANCE IN  
SERBIA**



Република Србија  
МИНИСТАРСТВО ЗА РАД,  
ЗАПОШЉАВАЊЕ, БОРАЧКА  
И СОЦИЈАЛНА ПИТАЊА



Република Србија  
МИНИСТАРСТВО ЗА ЉУДСКА  
И МАЊИНСКА ПРАВА И  
ДРУШТВЕНИ ДИАЛОГ



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# Summary

The research on the topic "*Inheritance rights and attitudes towards inheritance in Serbia*" was prepared and implemented in the period from April to August 2024. This is the first research done regarding the topic of inheritance rights and practices in Serbia and represents the first comprehensive research on this topic in the region. The public discourse says very little about inheritance, because the legislative framework guarantees equality of the sexes, but customs often change these norms without any understanding of the harmfulness of such practices. The field of inheritance is a good example of the gap between established norms and their modifications under the influence of family and society, which leads to limitations in the exercise of proclaimed rights, especially for women.

## Objective of the research

The basic objective of this research was to study to what extent men and women enjoy equal rights in the field of inheritance, as well as to identify the measures and activities necessary to reduce the gap in the exercise of inheritance rights between women and men. The specific goals of this research were to:

- Identify dominant attitudes and current practices in the field of inheritance,
- Investigate the reasons why women renounce their inheritance rights,
- Assess how informed women are about the consequences of renunciation of inheritance,
- Identify groups that are most affected by harmful inheritance practices.

Such a comprehensive approach to understanding challenges in the field of inheritance does not only shed light on existing inequalities, but it also provides concrete guidelines for improving equality in the field of inheritance, which opens the way towards a more just society.

## Methodology

To obtain the highest possible level of data completeness regarding the perception of citizens in the field of inheritance, the research included the application of both the quantitative, as well as the qualitative approach. The quantitative research – field research, was conducted based on a questionnaire prepared in advance on a representative sample of 1,196 respondents during June 2024. The qualitative research was done with seven focus groups in the period from 15 to 30 July 2024. Women and men were represented equally in the focus groups; members of age groups were young people aged 18 to 26, as well as persons aged 40 to 60; there were participants from rural and urban areas in Serbia, as well as participants of various levels of education (three-year high-school, four-year high-school and college/university). The interviews with the focus groups were conducted with the help of a predefined guideline. 7 to 9 participants participated on average in focus groups.

## Findings

The research on attitudes regarding equality in the field of inheritance in Serbia showcase the complexity and deep social dynamics that affect attitudes and practices in this field. The results point to the significant differences in attitudes among respondents based on gender, age, level of education and type of settlement they live in, with the dominant finding that traditional values and customs are still present, especially in rural areas. Most respondents support gender equality in the field of inheritance, but the fact that almost 47% think that a man should have priority when inheriting is concerning. Also, one third (33%) supports equality to some extent, or is undecided in this regard. Men keep the dominant role in the field of inheritance more often, which additionally reflects gender inequality.

Resistance towards equality in the field of inheritance is especially expressed among older generations and inhabitants of rural areas, where the expectation that property should be divided according to traditional norms is still deeply rooted.

Gender-based analysis provides additional insights, whereby a significantly larger percentage of women (66%) support full equality in the field of inheritance as opposed to men (39%). And yet, there is also a certain share of women that are inclined towards tradition, while male respondents often think that gender equality is just declarative without really being applied in practice.

The generation gap is also obvious; while the younger population is more interested in issues of equality, their support to full equality is not as high as expected (43%), partially due to traditional upbringing and their social milieu, but also because of being poorly informed about this topic. Respondents aged 26-45 express the highest level of support to equality. Among them, two thirds think that men and women should have equal rights to inheritance, and 8% that men should have priority. However, with ageing, support to full equality decreases again, and support to traditional attitudes on the priority of men in inheritance matters increases. While the group of somewhat older respondents aged 46 to 55 gives a higher level of support to equality in matters of inheritance (51%), 44% of respondents aged 56 to 65 show the same level of support, while 42% of respondents older than 65 think that men and women should have the same right to inheritance, and 24% think that men should have priority.

Education plays a key role, and those with a higher level of education show also more support for equality. Namely, 60% of respondents with university level education, as well as 62% respondents with vocational college education support full equality, compared to 52% respondents with completed four-year high-school, 41% with completed three-year high-school and only 33% respondents with primary school. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that 30% of respondents with completed primary school and uncompleted primary school support the priority of men in inheritance, and that percentage decreases significantly in respondents with completed three-year high school (19.7%) and four-year high school (13.6%). It is interesting that respondents with college diplomas agree significantly less with this attitude – only 5.4% compared to 11.4 % of respondents with completed university education. These findings can thus serve as an indicator that education can contribute to progress towards a more progressive understanding of rights and equality among sexes.

Attitudes on equality in inheritance show significant differences depending on the occupation of the respondents. Highly qualified workers show the highest level of support to full equality in inheritance, but still only 64% even among them. It is interesting that unemployed persons, despite their economic situation, show a high level of support to full equality (59%) compared to other respondents. On the other hand, farmers are the ones who show the lowest level of support to equality in inheritance, with only 23% respondents who completely support this attitude. This is not surprising due to the traditional perception that land should not be divided, and almost one half of respondents (45%) thinks that men should have priority in inheritance. Pupils and students also show a lower level of support (33%) compared to other respondents, but among them, a somewhat lesser share thinks that men should have priority in inheritance (15%), while the largest group is made up of those who partially support equality (52%).

When it comes to attitudes on gender equality, the results of the research are indicative in relation to the type of settlement. Thus, among village inhabitants, as much as 37% think that men should have priority in inheritance, while only 26% support full equality in this area. The situation is different in cities, especially in larger cities. In large cities (with more than 100,000 inhabitants), only 10% of respondents support the priority of men, while 64% support full equality in the field of inheritance.

The results of the research have shown that 37% of respondents from rural areas support the equality of men in inheritance matters, while only 26% support full equality in this field. More detailed

analysis points to large differences in relation to attitudes on the right to inherit between men and women who live in rural areas. As much as 63% men support inequality in inheritance and only 8% support equality, which indicates that men, who are most often also the owners of estates in rural areas, strongly represent traditional attitudes.

On the other hand, 47% of women from rural areas think that men and women should be fully equal in inheritance matters, while 8% think that men should have priority in decision-making. Also, as much as 57% of the respondents who live in the country state that in their family it has always been known that men have priority in inheritance matters, compared to 33% of those living in smaller towns, and 26% of respondents living in middle-sized towns and large cities. Yet, there are differences between the respondents from the last two categories in that 17% of respondents from large cities completely agree with this claim, and only 7% in middle-sized cities. This data indicates that traditional attitudes are less present in medium-sized cities compared to large cities.

The analysis also indicates that there are regional differences regarding attitudes towards equality in inheritance matters. Inhabitants of the Belgrade region show the highest level of support to full equality in inheritance (70%), while support to inequality is at its lowest level here (9%). Support to full equality is at its lowest in the regions of Šumadija and Western Serbia (43%), as well as in Vojvodina (42%).

The fact that only 64% of the respondents answered that the laws in Serbia stipulate equal rights for men and women in the field of inheritance is worrying. This indicates that a third of the respondents (36%) are either not familiar with the legal provisions, or they believe that there is a certain degree of inequality that the law allows. When it comes to the practical application of the law, although the legal framework guarantees equal rights for men and women, only slightly more than one fifth of the respondents (23%) believe that men and women have completely equal rights to inheritance. An additional 30% believe that they generally have equal rights, and even 36% believe that women do not have the same rights as men.

The pressure of the family to renounce property in situations of inheritance division is present for both sexes, but it is more pronounced for women. Although most of the respondents, regardless of gender, do not feel pressure from their family to give up property, the results show that 9% of women feel strong pressure compared to only 5% of men. This difference is particularly pronounced among women with completed and uncompleted primary school, as well as among women living in the countryside, where as many as a third of them state that they feel pressured to give up their share of the inheritance. As many as 28% of respondents believe that a woman who insists on her right to inherit risks being rejected by the community, while an additional 25% are not sure if this risk exists. Also, 29% of respondents state that in their family it was always clear that men have priority over women to inherit, while 14% of the respondents feel strong pressure from the family to give up property. A slightly larger number of men agree with the view that it has always been known in the family that men have priority when it comes to inheritance (34% of men compared to 25% of women). There are significant differences in relation to age; respondents over the age of 55 believe in a larger percentage that it was clear in their family that men have priority when it comes to inheritance (17% of those aged 56 to 65 agree and even 23% of those aged over 65 years, compared to those from the group aged 25 to 45, where that percentage is at its lowest and amounts to slightly more than 9%).

Apart from that, the research has also discovered significant shortcomings regarding the level of knowledge people have about legal provisions governing inheritance, especially women who are often less familiar with their own rights. Only 17% of respondents of both genders think that they are well informed about the regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, while an additional 42% think that they are somewhat informed. Here, it should be emphasised that one fourth of the respondents (25%) think that they are poorly informed, and one seventh of citizens think that they are not informed at all (15%). In other words, as much as 40% of the respondents think that they are not sufficiently informed about their rights in the inheritance process. The largest percentage of

respondents who think that they are well informed belongs to the age group from 46 to 55 years of age (32%). Compared to that, respondents younger than 25 have the lowest level of knowledge about regulations governing inheritance, and only 2% from this age group think that they are well informed. The age group of respondents older than 65 follow, with 9.4%, and then the age group from 26 to 35, of which only 10% think that they are well informed.

The analysis reveals also the complex dynamics in the process of decision-making concerning renunciation of inheritance. Traditional and family values are most often the key motives for renouncing inheritance, whereby 59% of the respondents emphasise moral duty as a reason to give up inheritance, and 51% the wish to maintain good family relations. Almost one fifth of the respondents (17%) mention the pressure of the family as a factor, which points to the need to improve the protection of rights of heirs. This also indicates a stronger influence of emotional factors over material interests. In that context, economic independence of women is emphasised as being of key importance for increasing their power and ability to fight for their rights in the field of inheritance. Due to pressure from the family and community, as well as due to traditional customs, the largest number of female respondents tends to renounce their share of inheritance in order to preserve good family relations, emphasising moral duty and tradition as a crucial factor. In conclusion, the research has shown that attitudes on equality in inheritance matters in Serbia are complex and that it is necessary to educate people about this topic and promote awareness about rights, as well as to economically empower women in order to achieve greater gender equality and adequate inheritance, in accordance with the legislation that guarantees equality. Focus groups pointed to the necessity to organise informative campaigns and resources that would empower women to fight for their rights.

Rare are the areas in which there is such a gap between the norm and reality, which emphasises the need for more active implementation of legal standards. Also, the pressures of the family in the context of renouncing inheritance as a way to preserve family peace point to how emotional and social factors are important when making these decisions. Most of the respondents, especially women, express the readiness to renounce their share of inheritance in order to preserve family harmony, thereby often putting collective values about their own individual interests. This additionally illustrates the need to change awareness about the importance of respecting personal rights and choices in the field of inheritance. Based on all of the above, the recommendation is that society should invest efforts to integrate education on gender equality into school curricula, as well as increase the availability of information about the norms that regulate the field of inheritance. Apart from that, the economic empowerment of women, with the provision of legal support and resources, is vital to creating a society where all individuals will have equal possibilities in inheritance matters, freed from traditional pressures and prejudice. This approach can bring about long-term changes in attitudes and practices related to equality in inheritance and contribute to the broader goal of achieving gender equality in society.

## **Recommendations**

Social level:

1. All relevant stakeholders should work on opposing negative traditional behavioural patterns and raising awareness among both men and women about equal rights stipulated by the law.
2. The topics of equality, women's rights, significance of inheritance should be included into school curricula and materials, in order to empower young people to question traditional norms and roles.
3. Support should be provided to non-governmental organisations that deal with women's rights and gender equality to advance their programmes and services.

4. Public debates and forums should be organised on the topic of inheritance and gender equality, where the citizens can express their opinions, share their experience and have an active role in proposing a way to overcome problems.
5. A documentary should be filmed on the topic of renunciation of inheritance and the impact of gender stereotypes and on the importance of overcoming gender stereotypes to claim one's own rights.

#### State level:

1. The norms in the field of inheritance should be improved in order to ensure the equal position of women in the inheritance process.
2. Trainings and courses should be organised for notaries public, judges and other professionals in order to ensure that they are familiar with challenges in the field of inheritance and with the consequences of renouncing inheritance, in order to provide adequate legal aid and protection.
3. National campaigns should be initiated to inform citizens about their rights in the field of inheritance and the importance of equality, by using different channels (the media, social networks, public events).
4. The system of free legal aid should be improved and officials in local self-government units and lawyers should be empowered to provide maximum protection of the interests of the heir who wishes or plans to renounce inheritance.

#### Local level:

1. Cities and municipalities should be encouraged to organise local initiatives and workshops that focus on providing support to women in relation to rights in the field of inheritance.
2. Local resources and information should be provided about proceedings in the field of inheritance, in particular about the rights of women and other minorities; this includes also investing larger funds and educating legal professionals in legal aid units in local self-government units.
3. Local programmes should be created that will provide support to women (and men) who are facing challenges with regard to inheritance, such as legal advice, psychological support or economic resources.
4. Groups should be organised in local communities, which will enable exchange of information, especially about the best practices, challenges and limitations for women in the field of inheritance, where persons will openly discuss issues of inheritance, gender roles and access to property, which will reduce the stigmatisation and create room for understanding.

## Conclusion

In the Republic of Serbia, the influence of gender stereotypes is still great, which, even though equality of men and women is guaranteed by law, leads to discrimination against women in practice and easy renunciation of inheritance and thus of their own rights. For the above recommended measures to be successful, joint action is required from all stakeholders in society and the determination of the government, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and local communities to face the challenges and improve equality in the field of inheritance. Through a comprehensive approach, it is possible to achieve significant changes and create a more just society for all.



# 1. Introduction

The research on the topic of "*Inheritance rights and attitudes towards inheritance in Serbia*" is dedicated to researching attitudes on equal inheritance for men and women in Serbia. This is the first research on this topic which has been done for the needs of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, with the support of the project "Support to Social Inclusion in Serbia", implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ GmbH in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. The research has been conducted to identify the challenges, experiences and attitudes citizens have in this field and to verify the claims of a larger number of individuals and organisations who addressed the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality over the last years. They claimed that a large number of women renounces their inheritance, passing it on indirectly to male heirs, or directly, first by accepting the inheritance, and then by ceding their own share to their brothers or other male heirs of the testator. This is why the goal of this research is to point to dominant attitudes in the field of inheritance, which will help the Commissioner determine the state of affairs and then identify measures and activities suitable to improve gender equality in the field of inheritance.

For a long time, this problem has been under the "radar" of public authorities because the legislative framework in the Republic of Serbia guarantees gender equality. The Constitution of Serbia contains a wide catalogue of human rights and guarantees, including equality and the prohibition of discrimination as one of the fundamental principles. The general constitutional anti-discrimination norm – Article 21 of the Constitution declares that everyone is equal "before the Constitution and the law", and that "everyone has the right to equal legal protection, without discrimination" on any basis, including gender.

In addition, the general antidiscrimination law, the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination<sup>1</sup>, includes an antidiscrimination clause that explicitly prohibits sex-based and gender-based discrimination. The Law governs also special cases of discrimination, among them also sex-based and gender-based discrimination<sup>2</sup>. This means actions "contrary to the principle of gender equality, that is to say, the principle of observing the equal rights and freedoms of women and men in the political, economic, cultural and other aspects of public, professional, private and family life". In other words, discrimination between men and women in the field of inheritance is prohibited, although this is not explicitly mentioned in the Law.

In the Republic of Serbia, the specialised Law on Gender Equality<sup>3</sup> was adopted, the goal of which is to identify policy measures for achieving and advancing gender equality. The Law prohibits discrimination based on sex and gender, which is defined as any unwarranted discrimination, unequal treatment, that is to say, omission (exclusion, limitation or preferential treatment), be it overt or covert, in relation to individuals or groups, as well as members of their families or persons close to them, on the grounds of sex, sexual characteristics, or gender in: political, educational, media and economic aspects; in the field of employment, occupations and work, self-employment, protection of consumers (goods and services); health insurance and protection; social insurance and protection, in marriage and family relations; area of security; ecology; culture; sports and recreation; as well as the area of public advertisement and other fields of social life."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the definition of gender discrimination includes any discrimination in family relations and the field of economy, meaning thus also the field of inheritance.

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<sup>1</sup> Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 22/2009, 52/2021.

<sup>2</sup> Article 20 of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination.

<sup>3</sup> Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 52/2021.

<sup>4</sup> Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Law on Gender Equality.

The Inheritance Law represents a specialised law in this field.<sup>5</sup> The Law governs inheritance in compliance with the law and determines the circle of legal heirs, which includes children of the testator, his/her adoptees and their descendants, spouses, adoptive parents, brothers and sisters and their descendants, grandfathers and grandmothers and their descendants, as well as other ancestors.<sup>6</sup> The Law proclaims equality between female and male descendants. Also, heirs in the probate proceedings have the full freedom to accept inheritance, and they can also cede their share to another person or renounce their inheritance. The Law states that this depends completely on the will of the heir, as they have full freedom to make their own decision in this regard. However, the law does not deal with subtle relationships in families and society which impose a certain system of values, which therefore also bears risk for gender equality and its implementation in practice. On the other hand, the existence of a traditional system of values and family arrangements lead to women renouncing their inheritance in favour of male relatives. Pressure on women can be direct in the form of threats, blackmail and pressure from family members, but also indirect, through the influence of deeply rooted and learned patterns of behaviour which imply that male relatives should get the inheritance.

Serbia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>7</sup>, which represents the most important catalogue of women's human rights at the global level. This international instrument imposes a particularly important obligation to states to change social and cultural customs regarding the behaviour of men and women to remove prejudice, as well as all established and any other practice based on the understanding of inferiority or superiority of one or another gender or traditional role of men or women.<sup>8</sup> The aforementioned obligation was also transposed into our laws. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination prohibits the denying of rights or the overt or covert granting of privileges in relation to sex, or gender, as well as the belittling, blackmailing and harassment based on sex or gender, as well as public advocacy, support and actions based on prejudice, customs and other social behavioural patterns based on the idea of inferiority or superiority of sexes, that is to say, stereotypical roles of sexes.<sup>9</sup> The Law on Gender Equality defines gender stereotypes as "ideas formed and rooted in tradition according to which women and men were arbitrarily assigned characteristics and services that determine and limit their possibilities and position in society."<sup>10</sup> With this, our domestic legislative framework provides a good basis for the removal of negative traditional patterns of behaviour that deny rights to women and bring them into an unequal position. However, the mere introduction of prohibition of gender stereotypes into the convention and laws does not mean that these provisions will be applied in practice, if they are not accepted by society, that is, if gender patterns and tradition are not changed.

The fight against traditional gender stereotypes represents a long process that requires the identification of the problem, time and well-designed campaigns and activities. From the moment of birth, persons are shaped in the sense of how they should be treated, what possibilities they have and how they should view and act in relation to gender stereotypes in the family, community and society. The dominant patriarchal matrix that has existed throughout centuries, and was still included in the old laws, reflected itself especially in the field of inheritance. The role of cultural and social norms that have prevented women from inheriting property or have focused on their inability to manage property has been especially strong, and this has made women dependent on male descendants or relatives and has reduced their possibilities in society. This also has led to them having a lower level of education, being in greater poverty, of weaker health, and it also often leads to all forms of violence, including economic violence. In other words, the achievement of numerous rights of women is jeopardised by renouncing inheritance, which represents a serious problem that

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<sup>5</sup> Inheritance Law, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 46/95, 101/2003 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, 6/2015.

<sup>6</sup> Article 8, paragraph 1 of the Inheritance Law.

<sup>7</sup> Law on the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women, "Official Gazette of the SFRY – International Treaties", no. 11/81.

<sup>8</sup> Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

<sup>9</sup> Article 20 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> Article 6, paragraph 1, item 24 of the Law on Gender Equality.

the country must deal with, bearing in mind its obligation to observe, but also achieve and advance human rights.

The law and administration of justice in different countries in the field of right to property and inheritance points to similar complex barriers that prevent women from effectively claiming this rights. Research conducted in the countries in the region also points to similar phenomena, challenges and problems in the field of inheritance for women. The research results show that women struggle with the pressure and expectations of family and environment to give up their inheritance in favour of male relatives, most often brothers and sons. If they oppose to this, many women permanently damage family relationships. Also, some research in Serbia shows that 44% of women renounce their inheritance in favour of their brothers, despite the fact that the law proclaims equality, which best illustrates the importance and presence of patriarchal upbringing in Serbia.<sup>11</sup> Many women still report that it is difficult for them to utter that they have this right, that it belongs to them, and they agree then to satisfy the family expectations, despite the fact that they diminish thus economic possibilities for themselves and their descendants. Also, in rural areas, there is still a stereotype that male children stay in family homes, take care of their parents and extend the family line, while female children go to another house when they get married, which becomes theirs, which is why they lose the right to participate in the division of the parental property. Thus, in order to take appropriate steps and implement the rights guaranteed by law, it is necessary to consider the reasons and motives that lead to such attitudes and practices in the field of inheritance, as well as to identify the structure of respondents according to appropriate criteria in order to create a broader picture of the situation, which can be used as a basis for future actions. That is what this research should serve for, and it should also offer certain recommendations for action in this area.

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<sup>11</sup> Dejana Vukanović, Srbija, žene i imovina: Tradicija jača od zakona više od 44 odsto žena se odriče nasleđstva u korist brata (Serbia, women and property: tradition stronger than the law. More than 44 percent of women renounce their inheritance in favour of brothers), BBC News, 25 August 2022, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-62562521>.

## 2. Methodology

A mixed methodological approach was used in the research, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach has allowed us to obtain comprehensive data and a deeper insight into the complexity of the inheritance issue in Serbia. The quantitative part of the research was conducted as field research, by using a questionnaire prepared in advance. The questionnaire was divided into several key sections:

- Attitudes and knowledge about inheritance rights: this section questioned attitudes of respondents on the equality of men and women in the inheritance process, as well as their knowledge of the legal framework.
- Participation in probate proceedings: this part focused on the personal experience of respondents with probate proceedings and the process of inheriting property.
- Questions for persons who did not participate in probate proceedings: this section questioned attitudes and expectations of persons who have not yet been in a situation to participate in the inheritance of property.
- Demographics: gathering basic demographic data about the respondents.

The field research was done in June 2024. Trained interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with respondents. The research was conducted on a representative sample of 1,196 respondents, of which 46.6% were men and 53.4% were women. The most represented age group in the sample are respondents between 36 and 45 years of age with 22.2%, followed by respondents between 46 and 55 (18.5%), as well as respondents aged 26 to 35 (18.4%). Respondents under the age of 25 are the least represented, with only 8.9%. Almost half of the research participants completed a four-year high school (45.1%), followed by those with a university degree (24.9%), a college degree (13.9%), those with a three-year high school diploma (11.1%), while only 5% of the respondents had primary or uncompleted primary school. The survey includes respondents from towns of different sizes, so 9.6% of respondents are from villages, 8.9% from smaller cities (up to 10,000 inhabitants), while the majority of the respondents are from medium-sized cities (10,000-100,000) - 46.7%. 34.9% of respondents come from cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Data were analysed using various statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, tests of significant differences, and correlation analyses.

As part of the qualitative research, interviews with seven focus groups were held in the period from 15 to 30 July 2024. The participants were chosen to represent different demographic groups:

- Gender: equal representation of women and men,
- Age: young people from 18 to 26, as well as people from 40 to 60,
- Place of residence: participants from rural and urban areas of Serbia,
- Level of education: junior high school, four-year high school, college/university

For the purposes of the qualitative part of the research, a detailed structured guideline for focus groups was used. This guideline was designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' attitudes, experiences and perceptions on issues of inheritance and gender equality. The guideline was divided into several key sections:

- Introduction: It included a welcome, explanation of the purpose of the research, discussion rules and introduction of the participants.
- Awareness of the legal framework: Examination of the level of knowledge of the legal framework related to inheritance and ways of informing citizens.

- Family and community experiences and practices: this part was focused on typical inheritance practices in the families and communities of the participants.
- Attitudes about equality in inheritance: this part explored the participants' perceptions of equality in inheritance and the obstacles women face.
- Reasons for renouncing inheritance: discussion about the reasons why women and men renounce inheritance.
- Impact of economic independence on inheritance decisions: this part examined the relationship between women's economic independence and their inheritance decisions.
- Concluding questions: It allowed the participants to summarise their views and add any missed topics.
- Closing the focus group: This included thanking the participants and reminding them of the confidentiality of the discussion.

The guideline included open-ended questions and discussion prompts, allowing the moderator to probe deeper into participant responses and encourage group interaction. Special attention was paid to the formulation of questions that would allow insight into the personal experiences and attitudes of the participants, as well as their perceptions of broader social norms and practices related to inheritance. An average of 7 to 9 participants participated in the focus groups.

The following groups participated in the focus groups:

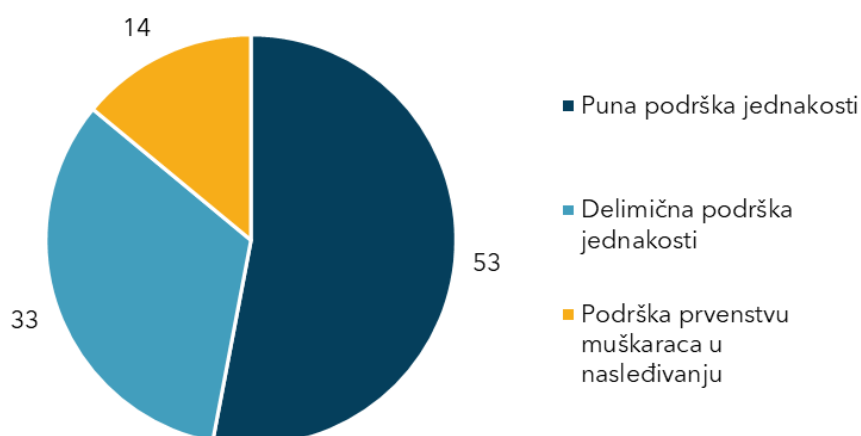
1. Group "Youth from urban environments" – young men and women aged 18 to 26 from an urban environment (Belgrade: city centre). Most of the participants have completed high school, and a part of the respondents is finishing or has finished university studies.
2. Group "Youth from urban environments" – young men and women aged 18 to 26 from an urban environment (Belgrade: suburbs). Most of the participants have completed high school, and a part of the respondents is finishing or has finished university studies.
3. Group "Men and women from urban environments who do not share traditional values" – the group included men and women aged 40 to 60 from urban environments who do not share traditional values and accept more modern and less traditional attitudes.
4. Men from Niš aged 40 to 60 who have attitudes based on traditional values.
5. Women from Niš aged 40 to 60 who have attitudes based on traditional values.
6. Women with and without experience in renouncing inheritance from rural areas, aged 40 to 60 from the Kolubara district.
7. Group of men with and without experience in renouncing inheritance from rural areas, aged 40 to 60 from the Pčinj district.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that all expressions used in this report in the grammatical masculine gender imply both the masculine and feminine gender of the persons they refer to.

### 3. Attitudes on equality in the field of inheritance

The analysis of attitudes on inheritance shows that one half of respondents (53%) completely supports the equality of men and women in inheritance, 33% support equality to some extent or are undecided on this issue, while 14% believe that men should have priority in inheritance. As this issue is about equality, only full support can be accepted as a positive finding because it should be borne in mind that as many as 47% of respondents have prejudices, to a lesser or greater extent, regarding the right to inheritance.

#### Attitudes on equality in inheritance



(dark blue: full support to equality; light blue: partial support to equality; yellow: support to men having priority to inherit)

The focus group with young people showed that they consider these numbers to be expected and that they are not large, and that they most likely reflect the attitude that still dominates in rural areas, where traditional values are stronger. However, it is important to note that it is mostly young men that consider this percentage to be realistic, while one girl emphasised that this number is still high and that she believes that it is mostly older generations from smaller towns. On the other hand, middle-aged men from urban areas who share traditional values believe that the high percentage of those who support gender equality in inheritance is only declarative, that it's different in practice, alluding that the number is much higher. Women from the same group support equality, but state that in life it is not like that, that property in many families is divided according to customs and traditions. Also, both women and men from rural areas believe that the number of those who in practice inherit according to customs, and not according to law, is far greater. They believe that equal inheritance is possible only in families that have a lot of property that can satisfy and take care of all the heirs, or in larger cities, primarily in Belgrade, where the modern way of life suppresses the traditional system of values. Thus, although the figures show some degree of support for gender equality in inheritance, the focus groups indicate that there is potentially a discrepancy between declarative attitudes and actual practice. The practical implementation of equality in inheritance matters is particularly challenging in rural areas, where traditional customs still have a strong influence. This conclusion emphasises the need for further education and a change of the mindset in order to ensure real equality in practice.

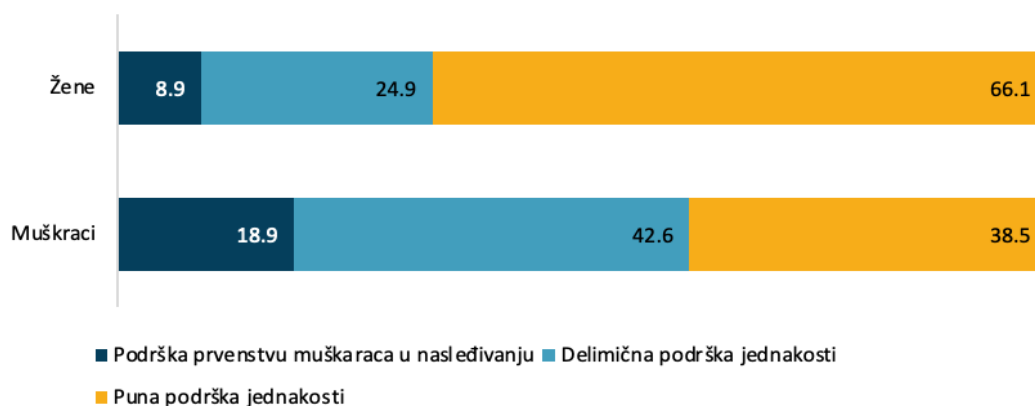
The analysis of attitudes about inheritance in relation to gender indicates that there are significant differences among men and women. The majority of women (66%) support full equality in inheritance, while this percentage among men is significantly lower (39%).

"Everyone will say that inheritance is divided equally, but when the actual division comes, men, as sons, expect to get everything or at least more than their sisters." - Man, 48

Among men, the largest group of respondents (43%) partially supports gender equality, indicating that although there is resistance to full equality in the field of inheritance, a significant proportion of men are questioning traditional norms and believe that it is okay for women to inherit a share of property.

Likewise, although the majority of women support full gender equality, it is important to emphasise that the share of women (9%) who support the primacy of men in inheritance, or those who only partially support equality in inheritance (25%) is not negligible either. This indicates that as many as 34% of women still have a traditional understanding of gender roles, to a greater or lesser extent.

### Attitudes on equality in inheritance, by gender



Women

Men

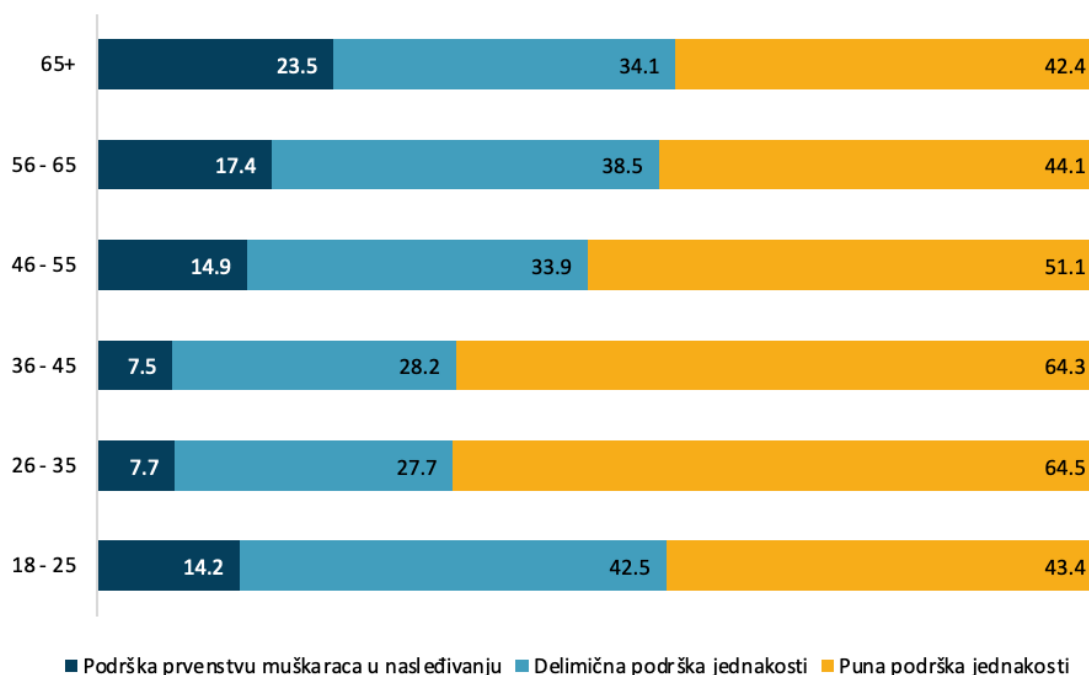
Deep blue: support to men's priority to inherit

Light blue: partial support to equality

Yellow: full support to equality

The analysis of the connection between age and attitudes towards equality indicates that there are significant differences between generations. Younger respondents (up to 25) and those older than 55 show a lower level of support for full equality in the field of inheritance compared to other groups. Respondents aged 26-45 show the greatest support for equality, as two thirds of them believe that men and women should have equal rights to inheritance.

### Attitudes on equality in inheritance, by age



**Deep blue: support to men's priority to inherit**  
**Light blue: partial support to equality**  
**Yellow: full support to equality**

Data from focus groups with young people provide additional insight into attitudes about equality in inheritance. A certain difference in attitudes was observed between young men and girls. Girls are often more aware and sensitive to issues of equality due to personal and social experiences. Likewise, in the focus groups with people aged 40 to 60, although men mostly supported and advocated the position of equality in inheritance, the men among the respondents showed a certain reserve towards the views of the female respondents with the explanation that in special situations it can be acted differently compared to what the law prescribes. They cited the following reasons as "special situations":

"If only one real property is to be inherited, it is logical that it should be divided in a way that the male heir receives a somewhat bigger part." - Man, 43

"If the subject of inheritance is a farm that women cannot manage and cultivate, the woman should be bought a flat in town, and the male heir should inherit the family farm." – Man, 53

The focus groups also contributed to a better understanding of the factors that shape attitudes about equality in inheritance, emphasising the influence of the milieu, family relationships and level of education on women's attitudes. The respondents especially pointed out that the traditional values of family members can have a strong influence on women accepting an unequal position, especially in rural areas.

"These are the ones that are influenced by the environment, the relationship, what is imposed on them, their level of education. I think that it all depends on where they live, how they live, how it used to be in her husband's family... If she had the example from her own father that everything is left to the brother, this means that she will adjust to the new family and accept that everything is like that." – Woman, 53

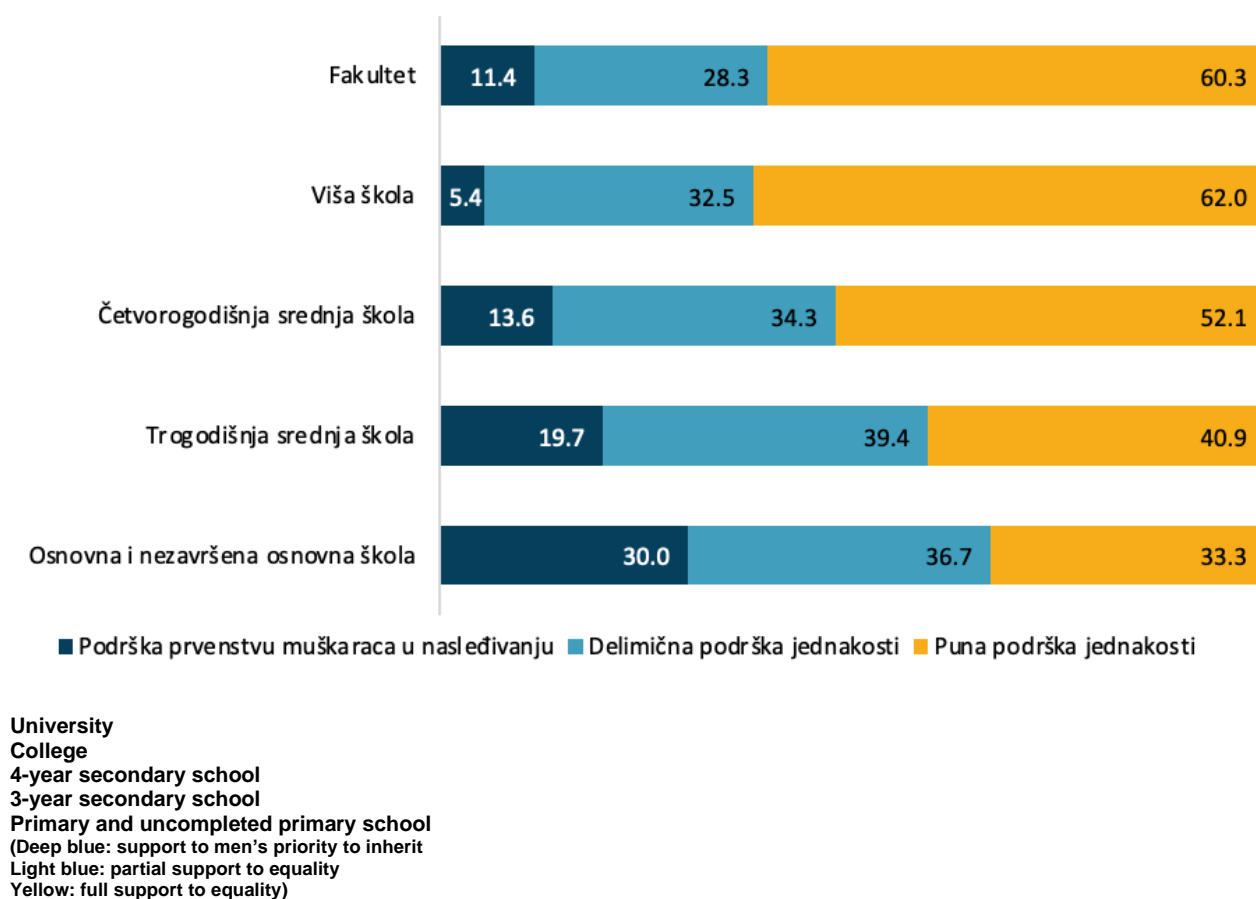
"Considering the older generations and the prevailing rural environment, I think the percentage is higher." - Woman, 24



“I think the real ratio is fifty-fifty, the level of education has no effect there, only the relationships in the family.” - Woman, 43

The analysis of the connection between the level of education and attitudes towards equality in inheritance indicates that there is a significant connection between these two factors. Data show that respondents with a higher level of education express greater support for equality in inheritance. Namely, 60% of respondents with a university degree, as well as 62% of respondents with a higher degree in vocational education support complete equality in the field of inheritance, compared to 52% of respondents with a four-year secondary school, 41% with a three-year secondary school and only 33% of respondents with completed primary school. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that 30% of respondents with primary and uncompleted primary school support the priority of men to inherit, while this percentage drops significantly among respondents with completed three-year high school (19.7%) and four-year high school (13.6%). It is interesting to note that respondents with a college degree agree with this opinion significantly less – 5.4% of them compared to 11.4% of respondents with a university degree. Therefore, it should be noted that every tenth citizen in Serbia believes that men should be given priority to inherit, whereby also 28.3% of those who only partially support equality in inheritance should be taken into account.

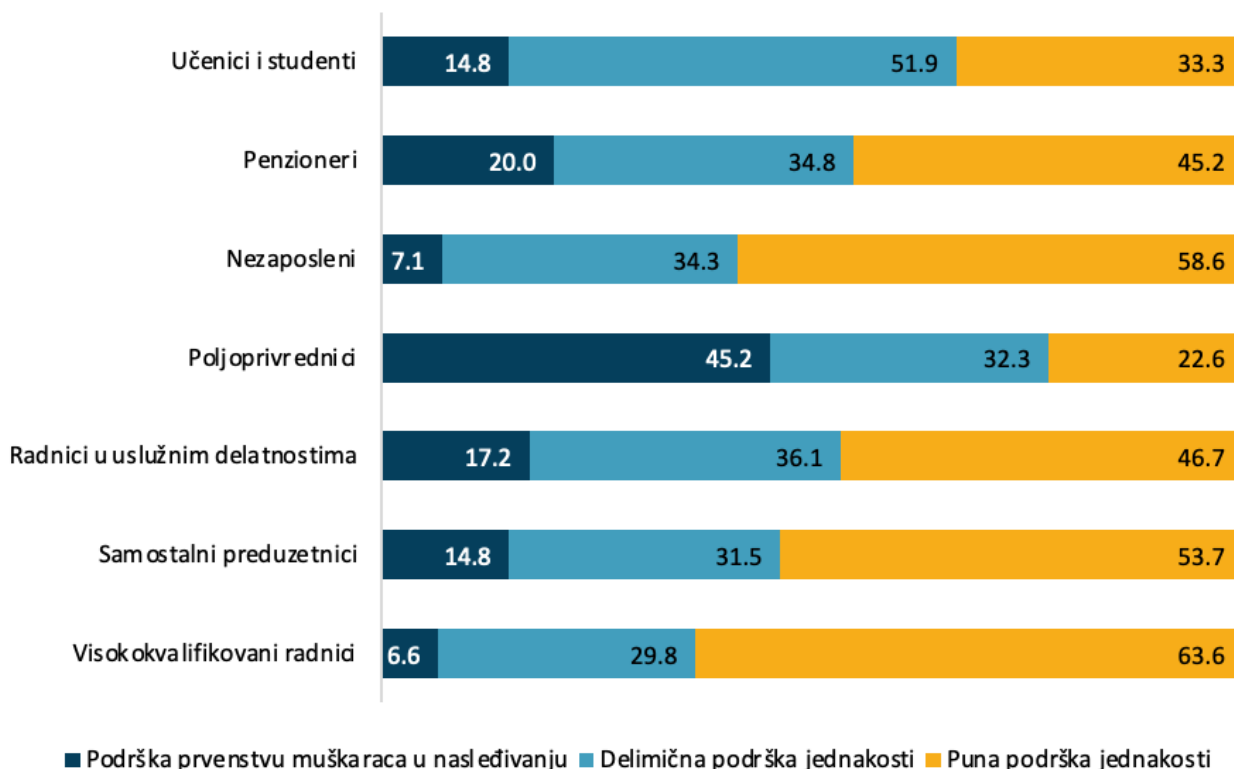
### Attitudes on equality in inheritance, by level of education



Attitudes about equality in inheritance show significant differences depending on the respondents' occupation. The highest support for full equality in inheritance is expressed by highly qualified workers, but also by only 64% of them. It is interesting to note that the unemployed, despite their economic situation, show a high level of support for full equality (59%) compared to other respondents. On the other hand, farmers are least supportive of equality in inheritance, with only 23% of respondents fully supporting this attitude. This is not surprising, bearing in mind the traditional perception that land should not be divided, and therefore almost one half of respondents (45%)

believe that men should have priority to inherit. Pupils and students also show a lower level of support (33%) compared to other respondents, but among them a slightly smaller share believes that men should have priority in inheritance (15%), while the largest group is made up of those who partially support equality in the field of inheritance (52%).

### Attitudes on equality in inheritance, by occupation



Pupils and students  
Pensioners  
Unemployed  
Farmers  
Employees in the service industry  
Sole entrepreneurs  
Highly qualified workers  
(Deep blue: support to men's priority to inherit  
Light blue: partial support to equality  
Yellow: full support to equality)

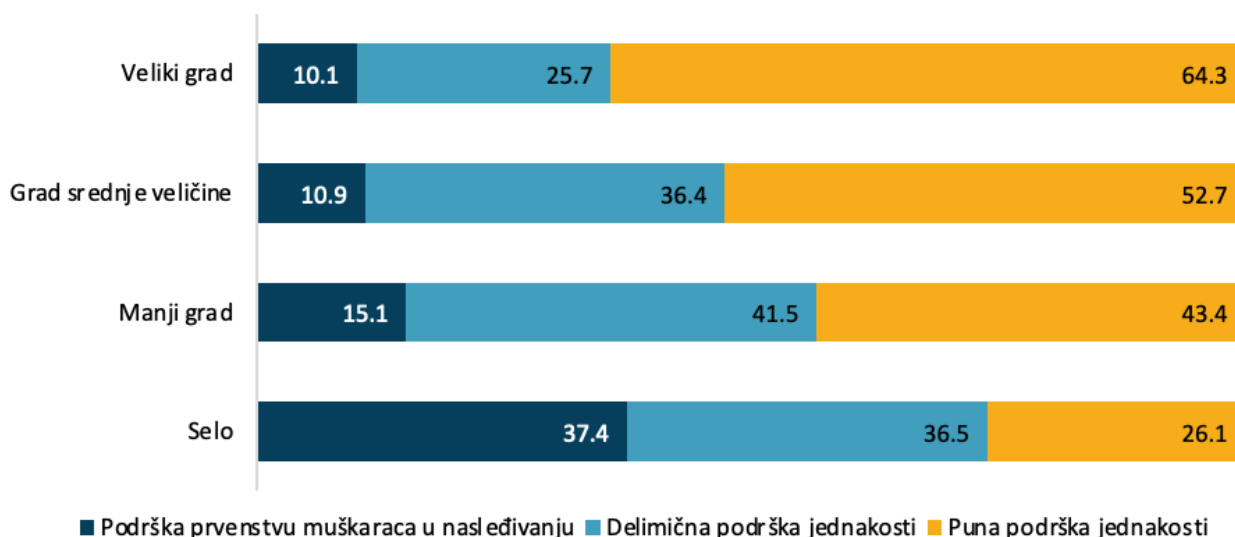
The results of the research also indicate that there is a strong connection between the type of settlement people live in and attitudes about gender equality. Thus, among village inhabitants, as many as 37% believe that men should have priority to inherit, while only 26% advocate full equality in this area. In cities, especially larger ones, the situation is different. In large cities (over 100,000 inhabitants), only 10% of respondents support priority for men, while 64% support full equality in the field of inheritance.

This confirmed the findings of the focus groups, especially among young people and people aged 40 to 60 who do not adopt traditional values, and who believe that equality in inheritance is far greater in cities, but that inequality still exists in rural areas. The focus group of people aged 40 to 60 who belong to an urban city environment where changes in social and cultural attitudes are often faster and more pronounced, point out that in their family and environment the emphasis is placed on individual rights, education and equality. However, in addition to insisting on equality, one part of the participants pointed out that it is very important to take the family situation and the preservation of good family relations as an important factor when dividing property, so that property could be divided fairly:

"I would also say equally, but I would like to add that if one heir is in a better financial situation than the other, regardless of gender, it can be agreed to distribute the inheritance differently" - Man, 47

The results show that there is not much difference in the attitudes of residents of large and medium-sized cities regarding whether men should have priority to inherit (10% vs. 11%), but the difference is more visible when it comes to giving full support to equality in the field of inheritance (64% compared to 53%), which should be taken into account.

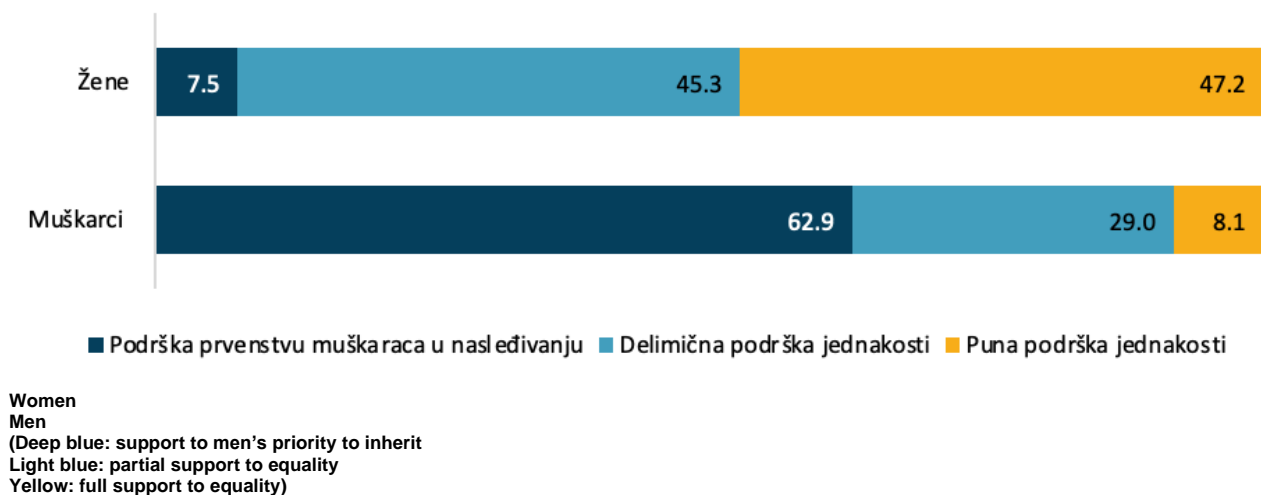
### Attitudes on equality in inheritance, by type of settlement



Large city  
Medium-sized city  
Smaller town  
Village  
(Deep blue: support to men's priority to inherit  
Light blue: partial support to equality  
Yellow: full support to equality)

It has already been mentioned that in the countryside, as many as 37% of respondents support equality in inheritance, while only 26% support full equality in this area. A more detailed analysis indicates large differences in relation to attitudes about the right to inherit between men and women living in rural areas. As many as 63% of men support inequality in inheritance and only 8% support equality, which indicates that men, who are most often the owners of property in the countryside, strongly support traditional views. On the other hand, 47% of rural women believe that men and women should be completely equal in their right to inherit, while 8% believe that men should have priority in decision-making. This data is particularly significant because it shows that, despite the dominantly patriarchal values of men in rural areas, rural women are more opposed to inheritance discrimination than women in urban areas. This illustrates the strong resistance of women when it comes to the practice that recognises the dominant role of men in exercising the right to inherit and that they aspire to achieve equality, regardless of the environment in which they live.

### Attitudes on equality in inheritance of respondents living in rural areas, by gender [N=115]

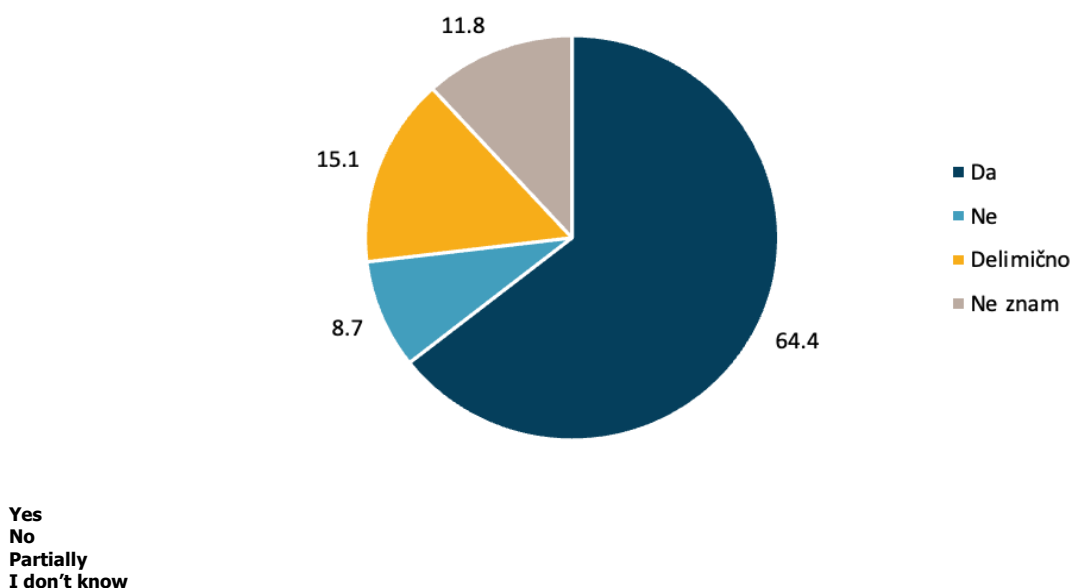


The analysis also points to regional differences in relation to attitudes towards equality in inheritance. Residents of the Belgrade region support full equality in inheritance to the greatest extent (70%), while support for inequality is at its lowest here (9%).

Support for full equality is at its lowest in the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia (43%), as well as in Vojvodina (42%). Such findings coincide with other investigations and reports of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

The fact that only 64% responded positively to the question of whether, in their opinion, the laws in Serbia prescribe equal rights for men and women in terms of inheritance is worrying. This indicates that even a third of respondents (36%) are either not familiar with the legal provisions, or they believe that there is a certain degree of inequality that the law allows. Focus groups showed that women from all generations are less informed about this topic and less familiar with legal provisions, but they are less concerned with them because they dominantly believe that inheritance is based on customary law rather than legal norms. It is not surprising that a significantly higher share of men (74%) believes that the laws in Serbia prescribe equal rights for men and women in terms of inheritance compared to women (57%), because the focus groups showed that they are better informed about this topic than women.

### According to your opinion, do laws in Serbia stipulate equal rights of men and women regarding inheritance?



Focus groups with young people showed that young people know that the right of inheritance is equal for men and women, although they are poorly informed about the topic and are not particularly interested in it. On the other hand, the survey's finding that the lowest percentage of those who believe that the laws in Serbia stipulate equal rights of men and women to inheritance is among young people. Thus, 53% believe that men and women have equal rights, 9% state that they do not, and even 25% state that they do not know the answer to this question. The reason for this lies in their reduced interest in the subject. However, it should be emphasised that people aged 40 to 60 are also not very informed about the topic, although they believe that the law prescribes equality in the field of inheritance:

"I think that there is a law, it should include equality between the sexes, although it is generally not like that in practice. People mostly think that male heirs should inherit more. We should inform ourselves early on, but we all always say, there's time, there's time, but it is only when it really concerns us that we start to inform ourselves." - Male, 18

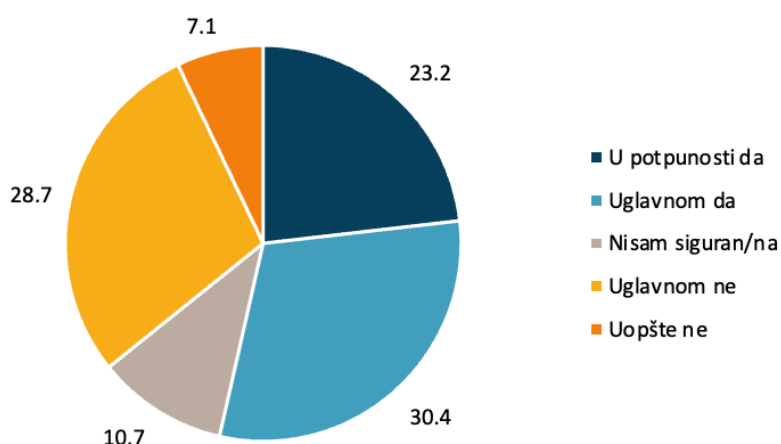
At the same time, all men and women from rural areas aged 40 to 60 state that they are aware of the fact that they are equal under the law in terms of inheritance.

There are also differences in the level of knowledge about legal provisions depending on one's occupation, so that people who work in the field of agriculture (36%) and the unemployed (56%) are the least informed about equality in terms of inheritance. Regional differences are also present, and a slightly smaller share of respondents believe that the legal framework prescribes equality of men and women in the inheritance process in the Belgrade region (60%) and the Vojvodina region (48%).

Surprisingly, the research indicates that awareness that the legal framework stipulates equal rights for men and women is not associated with attitudes about equality in inheritance. This suggests that attitudes are deeply rooted, and that the mere informing of citizens is not enough, but that it is necessary to work on achieving general equality of men and women in all aspects of life in order to achieve essential changes.

When it comes to the practical application of the law, although the legal framework guarantees equal rights for men and women, only slightly more than a fifth of the respondents (23%) believe that men and women have completely equal rights to inheritance. An additional 30% believe that they generally have equal rights, and even 36% believe that women do not have the same rights as men.

### To what extent do you think that men and women have equal rights regarding inheritance in practice?



100% yes  
Mostly yes  
Not sure  
Mostly no  
Not at all

The analysis points to deep gender differences in the perception of real equality in inheritance. Thus, even 64% of men believe that in practice men and women have equal rights to inheritance, compared to 45% of women. The generation gap is also evident. Younger respondents, especially those under 25 (48%) and those between 26 and 35 years of age (46%) believe less in practical equality in inheritance than older generations. On the other hand, the focus group showed that young people believe that there are not so many women who cannot achieve equality in inheritance:

"The percentage is too high, and I don't think there is such a large number of women and men who are in an unequal position when it comes to inheritance" - Man, 20

However, they know that in Serbia there is a practice of dividing property according to gender, that is, that male heirs receive more than female heirs. They point out that in their environment there were cases when female heirs received "gifts", cars, a certain amount of money, so that all other property would go to the male member of the family, and they believe that this behaviour is still present, both in the families they know, as well as in society in general, especially in rural areas. The young people's view is that this kind of behaviour dominates in smaller and more patriarchal environments, where family houses and land are not shared, but are left to the sons who stay on the family estate and continue to maintain the family tradition. Some of the respondents believe that women did not even work the fields and were not tied to the land, that it was difficult to divide the property into equal parts, but that women received a dowry in return. Also, one participant of the focus group emphasised that he is familiar with the fact that men inherit more, while a woman goes to her husband's house and she is provided for in this way, although he personally advocates equality.

"I've heard. Nowadays, more marriages end in divorce, in my opinion this is bad, because the man gets everything, and the woman is left with nothing. I have a concrete example. My relatives have such an attitude. After their daughter got married, she left the house and her brother told her that in that case she didn't need the property and everything was left to him." - Man, 23

Young people also emphasise that the institution of marriage is outdated, and that today there are more and more extramarital unions and unmarried women, i.e. unmarried men, which is why the earlier custom of leaving the inheritance to the son because the daughter will marry is inapplicable:

"I don't agree because there are plenty of guys and girls who didn't get married... why should that be a rule." - Woman, 19

People aged 40 to 60 who do not share traditional values indicate that the principle of equality has been observed in their families and that it is applied in practice. However, one female participant shared her experience when the father left his entire property to his son in his will:

"Father left everything to our half-brother from another mother. We found out about it by chance. We were not informed about it, although we are entitled to the forced share. We have good relations with him, but he did not inform us about that. And that means that we are female children who should not get anything. Father has an apartment in Dedinje, which is not small at all, two apartments were connected and combined into one. We do not want to get half of it, it is ok for our brother to get the larger part, because he takes care of our father. But we were at least hoping for a forced share, one eighth, but we haven't received absolutely anything. Some time later, our brother told us that we should not argue with father, that he would give us a share when father dies. However, we do not know now whether we can rely on him." - woman, 54

Respondents from this group believe that the unequal practice in the field of inheritance has persisted only in rural areas in the south and east of the country, that is, in underdeveloped areas where the population is predominantly elderly, who find it difficult to change their relationships and

way of life. It is interesting to note that according to what they claim, their parents achieved equality when inheriting property:

"I see no difference between my generation and the generation of my parents. I don't know if there is a difference between the generations of my parents and my grandparents... but surely there would be some talk about those irregularities." - Woman, 54

The results of the research show that while in Vojvodina as many as 72% of respondents believe in equality in inheritance, in the Belgrade region that percentage drops to only 40%, but it may point to a deep-rooted belief that equality in practice does not exist in rural areas, as shown by the results of the focus group. An important finding is that among people who work in agriculture, only 26% believe that there is equality in inheritance, which can also be explained by the results of the focus groups, which say that equality in practice is least present in rural areas.

The data certainly indicate the existence of significant regional specificities and the need for adapted approaches in promoting gender equality in inheritance. In the Vranje region, it is still customary for male heirs to stay on their parents' estate and thus have the right to inherit the family house and arable land. Women are left with a symbolic part of the family estate as an inheritance, in order to take at least something with them from the house they left:

"We have an agreement that my brother will inherit the inheritance, I got married, divorced, managed myself again, I didn't go to my parents' house with my son after the divorce, because my brother lives there with his wife and children and it is understood that the house is left to him. I could stay there temporarily until I got on my feet, but it's certainly not a permanent solution for me." - Woman, 41

Also, daughters are often provided for with a certain part of the property, according to the wishes of the father and mother who are the owners of the goods to be inherited. Female respondents from villages belonging to the Kolubara district shared similar experiences. If there are heirs of both sexes in the family, the man inherits a larger part of the estate, while the female members of the family are left with some part of the total property, which is significantly smaller. While men understand that equal rights mean that it is enough that female heirs are not completely excluded from the inheritance process, for women equality means division in accordance with the law.

Men and women aged 40 to 60 from urban areas who share traditional values know that the law stipulates equality in the field of inheritance, but that this does not mean that they are equal, valued and respected in their families:

"Everyone has the same rights, only my rights are a little better" - Man, 45

"I have an older brother and I have been hearing the story from my parents that we are equal in everything from birth, but when talking about the division of property, it is understood that it will be left to my brother." - Woman, 48

Their experience shows that men are the main heirs of property, that they are responsible for managing the property and continuing the family line, which gives them priority. Family customs and rules determine the agreement and method of distribution of property and the right to inheritance in the families of respondents:

"The sister did not even think that she should accept the inheritance after the death of the parents, the father's wish and the agreement while he was alive was that the brothers should divide everything between them and provide a certain compensation for the sister so that she would not be left with nothing." - Man, 47



Women from this group think that such a behaviour is expected and that the understanding that male children in the family are privileged compared to female children is nurtured from a young age. Women especially emphasise that it is easier to regulate other issues that are subject to control by the state, institutions and the public, but not family relations that are based on special rules and customs that are specific and special for every family.

Men and women aged 40 to 60 from rural areas with and without experience in inheriting property emphasise that real estate such as land, houses and apartments are inherited mostly by male relatives, and if there are disputes, then mostly about real estate. They emphasise that conflicts between heirs occur when there is no possibility to overcome the collision between custom and law in court proceedings. Although women are the ones who are most affected by customs and are mostly left without property, the respondents point out that in their families the most frequent occurrence of conflicts is between heirs of the same sex who have the same inheritance rights and position during the distribution of the father's and mother's estate:

"For many years I have fought in court about the distribution of the estate, my uncles wanted to take the best for themselves, and to me and my brother, as the heirs of my father's part of the property, they wanted to give us only some fields and land that is worthless, they explained that this was the wish of my grandfather and the agreement with my father. This is unacceptable for the two of us, and that's why we're in court, but the process is moving along very slowly and hasn't budged an inch for years." - Man, 52

The male respondents also emphasise that they will continue the tradition and that they will divide the property among their children according to their own rules, where the sons will inherit the real estate where the parents live, and the daughters will inherit some other immovable property if there is some, or they will receive a monetary gift, that is, assistance from their parents, so that they too would be involved in the inheritance process:

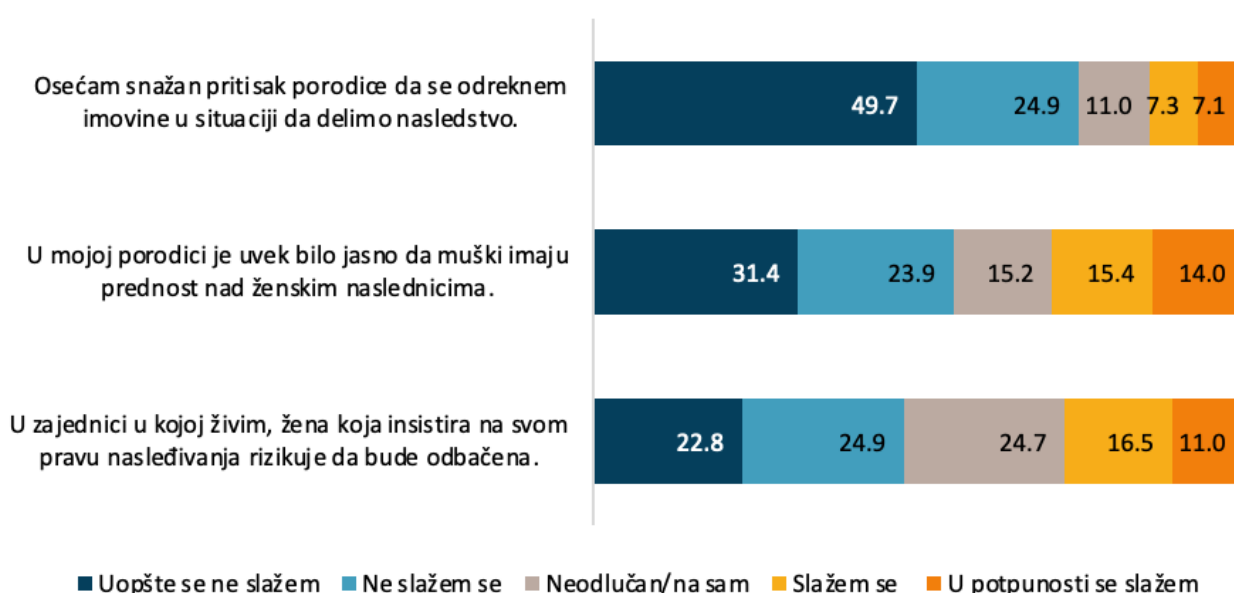
"I don't know how my children will divide the inheritance, but the agreement is that the house should be left to my son, I hope that everything will be as agreed and that they will not argue about the estate." - Man, 57



## 4. Perception of the influence of family and society

In accordance with the representation of attitudes on equality in inheritance, as many as 28% of respondents believe that a woman who insists on her right to inheritance risks being rejected by the community, while an additional 25% are unsure whether this risk exists. When we talk about the messages conveyed by the family, 29% of respondents state that it was always clear in the family that men have priority over women regarding the inheritance, and an additional 15% state that they are not sure of the answer. Finally, 14% of respondents feel strong family pressure to renounce property, which is one in seven citizens.

### Perception of the influence of family and society on gender inequality regarding inheritance



I feel a strong pressure from the family to renounce property if we must divide the inheritance.

In my family, it was always clear that men have priority over female heirs.

In the community I live in, the woman who insists on her right to inheritance risks being cast away.

(Dark blue: I do not agree at all

Light blue: I do not agree

Grey: I am undecided

Yellow: I agree

Orange: I completely agree)

Although there is no difference in the perception of the community's relation towards women who insist on their right to inherit, attitudes still differ depending on the level of education and type of settlement people live in. Namely, 43% of women with primary school education and the same number of those who live in the countryside believe that the community would reject a woman who seeks her share of the inheritance, which may point to the specific experiences faced by these groups of women.

When we talk about the perception of the family's attitudes, a slightly larger number of men agree with the view that it was always known in the family that men have priority to inherit (34% of men compared to 25% of women). There are significant differences in relation to age, and a larger percentage of respondents over the age of 55 believe that in their family it was clear that men have priority (17% of those aged 56 to 65 agree and even 23% of those older than 65, compared to the age group 25 to 45, where that percentage is the lowest and amounts to slightly more than 9%).

Such an opinion was also expressed among women from the group aged 40 to 60 from urban areas who share traditional values:

"It goes without saying that we would leave the family house to our brother, my sister and I have never even asked our parents why." - Woman, 48

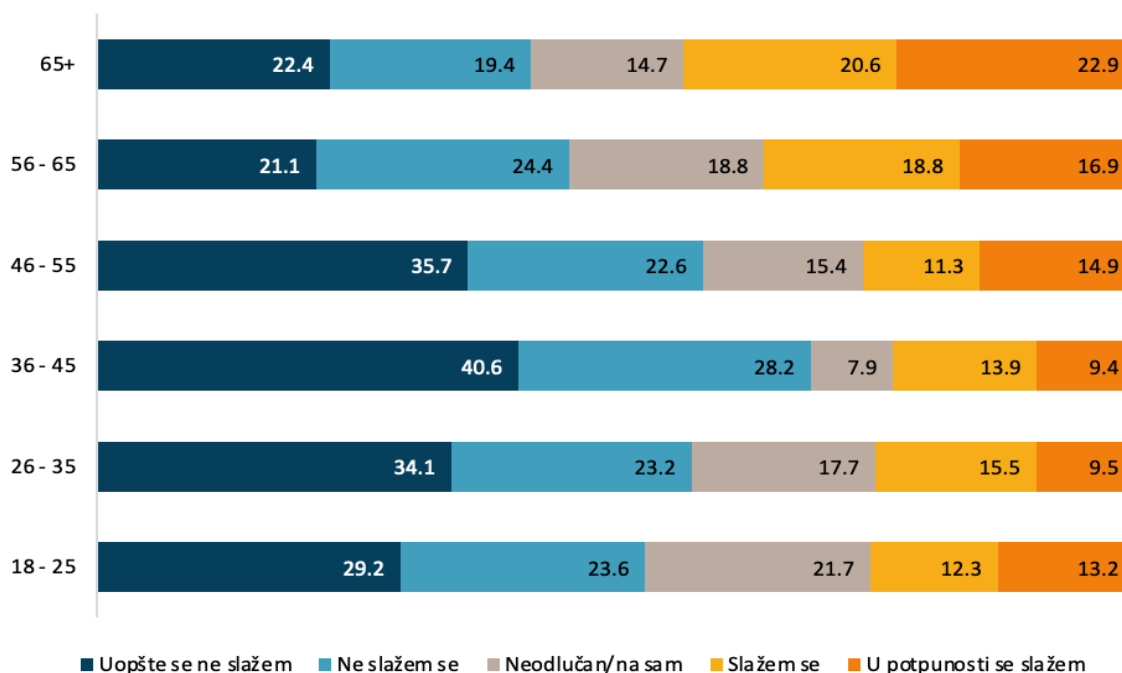
They also believe that when a woman gets married, she goes to another home and solves her existential issues with her marriage, but that this should not be seen as it used to be in the past, because nowadays marriages do not last as before:

"Today, marriage does not last as before, men do not pay alimony for the children, let alone provide for the wife in terms of housing or in any other way, as is expected from the families of female children when the family inheritance is distributed during the distribution of the estate." - Woman, 44

Women aged 40 to 60 from rural areas know of examples of women insisting that property be distributed according to the law, and they would usually go to court and successfully claim their rights, but they would permanently damage their relationships with their families, which is always the reason why women would give up on property:

"If a sister interferes with a brother's inheritance, she will be rejected by the family or part of the family who do not agree with her decision to disobey the will of her parents." - Woman, 60

#### In my family it has always been clear that male heirs have priority over female heirs (by age)



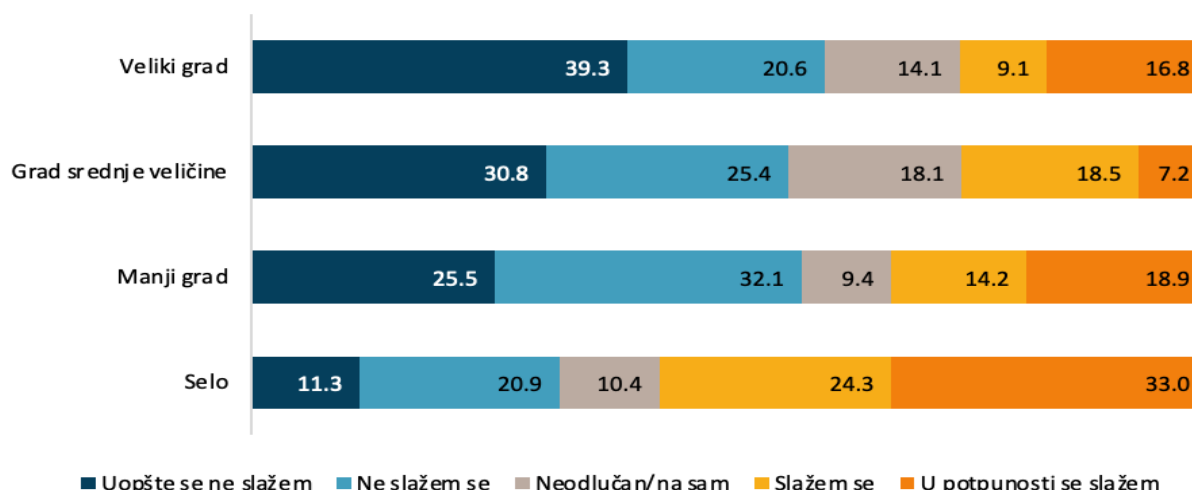
(dark blue: I completely disagree, light blue: I disagree, grey: I am undecided, yellow: I agree, orange: I completely agree)

Although these data indicate that there is less prejudice in relation to inheritance among the younger generations, still a quarter of people under 55 state that in their families it is clear that men have priority when inheriting. A difference exists in relation to the respondents' education, so twice as many respondents with completed primary school (40%) and three-year high school (37%) state that in their family it was known that men have priority when inheriting compared to those with a higher level of education (20%). An important finding is that more than 63% of young people aged 18 to 25 do not agree with this statement (29% completely disagree with this and 24% disagree with this statement) that in their family it was always clear that male heirs have priority over female heirs. This finding coincides with the findings of the focus group with young people. Nevertheless, there are still

1/4 of young people who agree with this statement (13% completely agree and 12% agree), while even 1/5 are undecided about this issue (21%).

There is also a significant difference in attitudes about inheritance between respondents from different types of settlements, where traditional attitudes about male superiority in inheritance are more pronounced in villages than in cities. Thus, as many as 57% of respondents who live in the countryside state that it was always known in their family that male heirs have priority over female heirs compared to 33% of those who live in a smaller town, and 26% of respondents who live in medium-sized cities and large cities each. However, there are differences between respondents from the last two categories in that 17% of respondents from large cities completely agree with this statement, compared to 7% from medium-sized cities. This data indicates that traditional attitudes are less present in medium-sized cities compared to large cities.

### In my family it was always clear that male heirs have priority over female heirs (by place of residence)



Large city

Middle-sized city

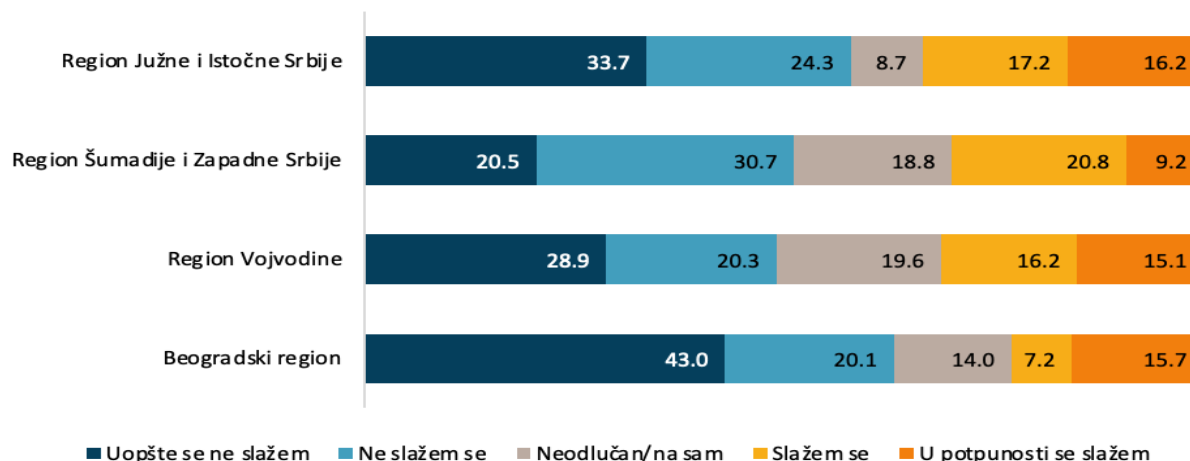
Smaller town

Village

(dark blue: I completely disagree, light blue: I disagree, grey: I am undecided, yellow: I agree, orange: I completely agree)

The analysis also points to differences in the perceived attitudes of the family depending on the region, with the Belgrade region having the lowest percentage of respondents who agree with the statement that in their family men have an advantage in inheritance over women, which indicates less traditional attitudes compared to other regions. It is also interesting to note that the perceived attitude of the family is lower in the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia, where almost 34% do not agree at all with the attitude that male heirs have priority, despite the fact that this part of Serbia is less economically developed and where people tend to live longer in the same community.

### In my family it was always clear that men have priority over female heirs (by region)



South and Eastern Serbia  
Sumadija and Western Serbia  
Vojvodina  
Belgrade Region

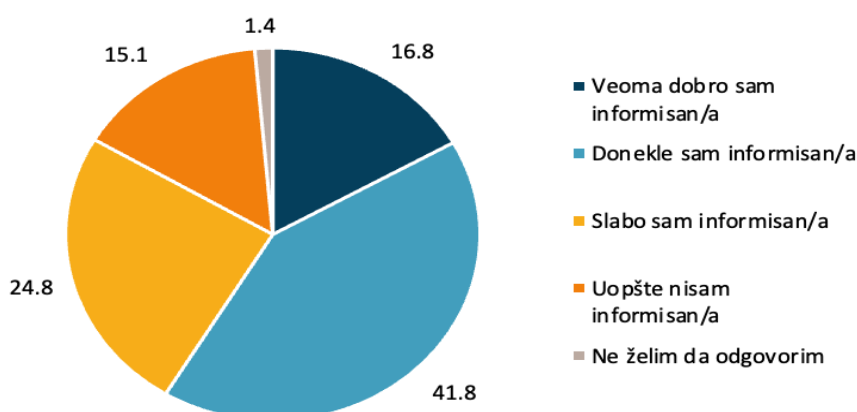
(dark blue: I completely disagree, light blue: I disagree, grey: I am undecided, yellow: I agree, orange: I completely agree)

The pressure of the family to renounce property if inheritance is to be divided is present in both sexes, but it is more pronounced in women. Although the majority of respondents, regardless of gender, do not feel pressure from their family to renounce their property, the results show that 9% of women feel strong pressure compared to only 5% of men. This difference is particularly pronounced among women who completed only primary school or haven't completed even primary school, as well as among women living in the countryside, where as many as one third of them state that they feel pressured to renounce their share of the inheritance.

## 5. How informed are citizens about the inheritance process?

Only 17% of the respondents think that they are well informed about the regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, while an additional 42% think that they are somewhat informed. Here, it should be stressed that one fourth of the respondents (25%) think that they are poorly informed, and almost one seventh of citizens think that they are not informed at all (15%). In other words, as many as 40% of the respondents think that they are not sufficiently informed about their rights in inheritance proceedings.

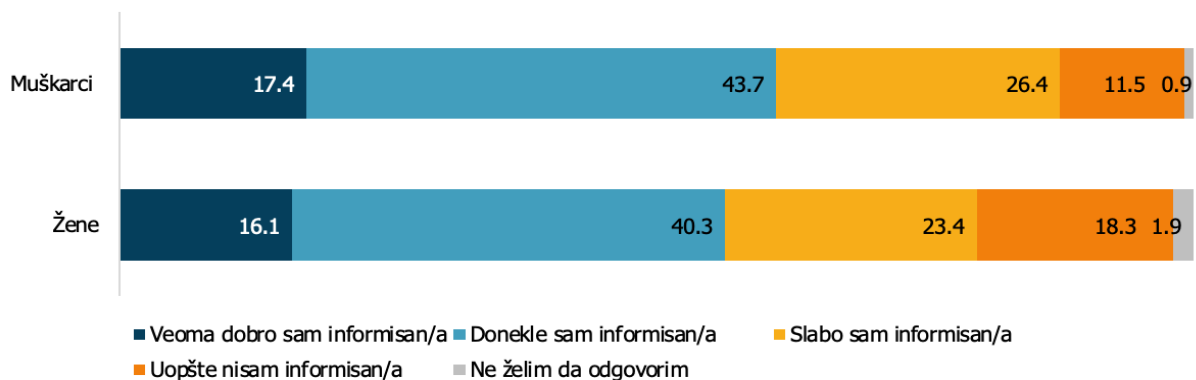
**To what extent do you think that you are informed about the regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia?**



(dark blue: I am very well informed, light blue: I am somewhat informed, yellow: I am poorly informed, orange: I am not informed at all, grey: I do not want to answer)

A more detailed analysis shows that there are subtle differences regarding gender in terms of level of information, as 18% of women think that they are not informed at all about the right to inheritance, compared to 12% of men. Although the differences regarding the level of knowledge between men and women are relatively small, they still indicate potential gender inequalities in access to information about inheriting, as well as the potential need for targeted informing of women about their rights in inheritance matters.

**Attitude on the level of knowledge about regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, by gender**



## Men

### Women

(dark blue: I am very well informed, light blue: I am somewhat informed, yellow: I am poorly informed, orange: I am not informed at all, grey: I do not want to answer)

The largest percentage of respondents who think that they are very well informed belong to the age group from 46 to 55 (32%). On the other hand, respondents younger than 25 are least informed about the regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, with only 2% of respondents who think that they are very well informed, followed by those older than 65 (9.4%) and youth from the age group from 26 to 35 (10%).

Focus groups have shown that young people from Belgrade know that the right to inheritance is equal both for men and for women, and that they should get more information about this topic in due time:

“I am not too familiar with the law. I assume that the law exists and that inheritance is divided equally onto heirs. I think in time, when I inherit property, I should get more information about the law” – Man, 19

Some focus group participants believe that it is good to become informed about this topic as soon as possible, but it is interesting to note that young men are better informed about legal norms than girls:

“I think that there is a law, that the inheritance is divided equally, that is, that it is divided according to the testament if it exists. The law says that property is divided equally. I think it's always better to get informed earlier” - Male, 18

“There is a legal framework, I am informed so-so. I do not know what the law says, I am not sure if everything is divided equally, but I think it is better to get informed about this topic in advance” – Woman, 18

As to the level of information, young people think that it would be desirable to present this topic in social networks or to explain it in more detail in school, through subjects such as sociology or civic education:

“I think that media campaigns and in general, social networks, can reach a larger number of people, and as to our generation, these topics should be included in the curriculum, through some subject such as civic education, for example” – woman, 18

The attitude of several young people that the most capable ones who will not lose the inheritance should get the inheritance, regardless of gender, is also interesting. As men are generally perceived as more capable in acquiring and maintaining property, this attitude still has a gender dimension.

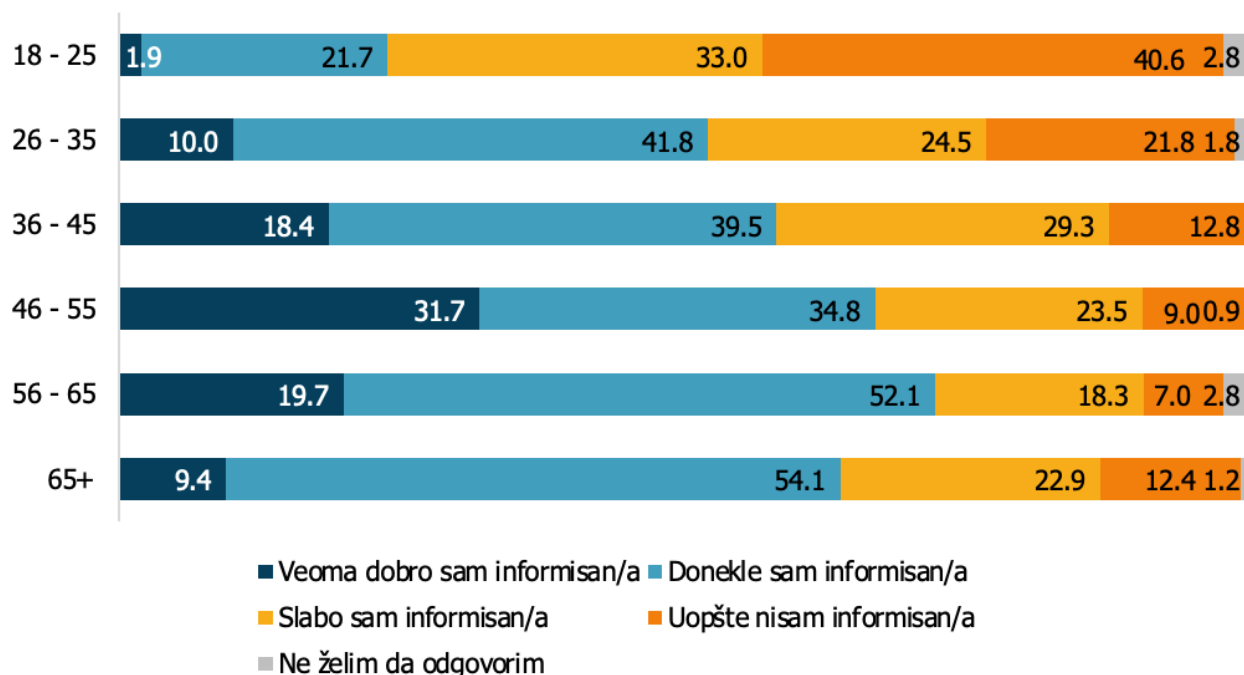
On the other hand, the focus group with young people also showed that young people believe that the lack of information among heirs, especially women, is one of the main obstacles to equality in inheritance in Serbia. However, considering these results, it is surprising that people aged 40 to 60 from urban areas are not informed about this topic, except that they assume that the law promotes equality in the field of inheritance. Like young people, they also believe that they will become informed about the law in more detail once they come into the situation where they have to solve the issue of family inheritance. They believe that, in addition to a more active campaign on social networks and the media, it would be desirable to enable the provision of free legal aid in institutions that conduct probate proceedings (courts, notaries public), which would greatly contribute to the realisation of the right to inheritance.

“I think that the media, social networks, are the best source of information, because we can type in anything in YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and receive information about it. There are pages created especially to deal with these topics and that is commendable. We need to inform ourselves timely, as much as possible, because some situation can happen and we can make a wrong step because of another person, and it is irrelevant whether that person exerted pressure or not” - Man, 47

On the other hand, the focus group with men aged 40 to 60 from urban environments who share traditional values showed that respondents had experience with inheritance and that they are well informed about the procedures and the law that governs this area. They mostly received information from legal professionals, that is, lawyers. Compared to them, women from this group were not well informed about legal regulations, even if they had experience with probate proceedings. Some of the women stated that the law was not relevant for them, because inheritance is regulated based on family rules. Both men and women suggest that the level of information they receive via social networks, as well as in public notaries offices and courts should be increased. Female respondents state that workshops, public debates, tribunals could be useful too, because women could ask questions regarding their claims to inheritance to which they haven't been able to find an answer before.

### **Attitude on the level of knowledge about regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, by age**

(dark blue: I am very well informed, light blue: I am somewhat informed, yellow: I am poorly informed, orange: I am not informed at all, grey: I do not want to answer)



It should be emphasised that there are differences as to the level of knowledge about regulations that govern inheritance among respondents with different levels of education. Among those who have completed primary school or have not completed primary school, as many as 32% state that they are not informed at all about laws that govern inheritance, while additional 30% state that they are poorly informed. At the same time, only 7% of these respondents think that they are well informed about regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia. At the same time, regarded by occupation, the largest differences exist among pupils and students and other respondents, whereby even 72% of pupils and students state that they are not informed at all or are mainly not informed about the legal framework that governs inheritance, only 4% state that they are well informed.

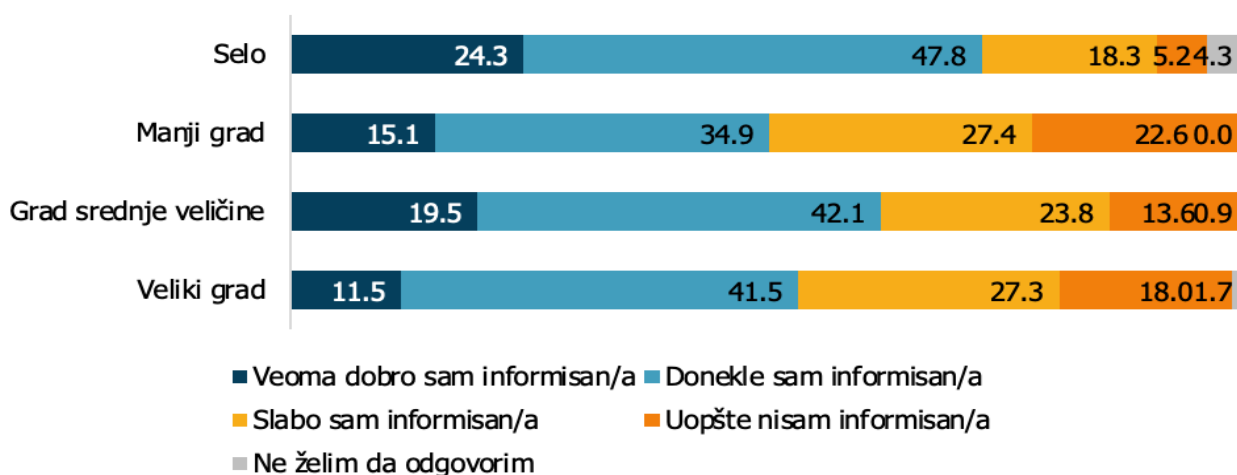
The assessed level of knowledge is not largely connected to the type of settlement, whereby respondents living in rural areas think that they have the maximum level of information about the legal framework (23%), followed by respondents living in medium-sized cities (20%), smaller towns (15%) and only then respondents living in large cities (12%). This data does not necessarily mean that everything is like that in real practice, but that the respondents have the perception that they are well informed. At the same time, the percentage of respondents from urban areas who think that they are poorly informed is similar (24%), while only 18% of those living in rural areas share this opinion.

However, focus groups show that men are better informed than women, especially men living in rural areas. Men aged 40 to 60 from rural areas (Pčinj district) assess that they are well informed about the right to inheritance and with the solutions from the law. They explain this by saying that they are responsible for managing the family property, as well as they already participated in probate proceedings and that they additionally informed and educated themselves on that occasion about the probate proceedings and the legal provisions stipulated by the law. They asked lawyers for help in the form of consultations, legal advice or by hiring a legal representative. Participants of the focus group agree that it is very important for citizens to be informed about their rights, so that they can avoid coming into a situation to be involved in probate proceedings where relatives could violate or circumvent the law and mislead legal heirs. As in the previous group, women from rural areas of the Kolubara District aged 40 to 60 are poorly informed or not informed at all about the Law on Inheritance:



“Younger generations will probably divide property in a different way, so that it is recommended for all women to become informed in detail about the rights belonging to them by law”. - Woman, 55

### Attitude on the level of knowledge about regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, by place of living

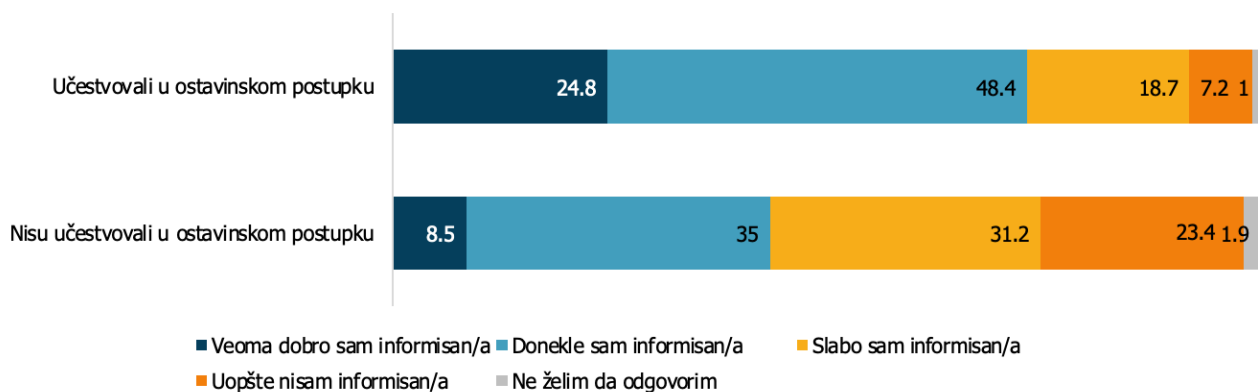


Village  
Smaller town  
Medium-sized city  
Large city

(dark blue: I am very well informed, light blue: I am somewhat informed, yellow: I am poorly informed, orange: I am not informed at all, grey: I do not want to answer)

Likewise, participation in inheritance processes greatly affects the respondents' awareness of the legal framework that regulates inheritance. Thus, 73% of the respondents who participated in probate proceedings stated that they were informed or somewhat informed about the legal framework compared to 46% who did not participate in probate proceedings. This difference is also reflected among those who were not informed at all (7.2% of those who participated in probate proceedings, versus 23.4% of those who did not have that experience). However, it should be emphasised that the focus groups showed that women are less informed regardless of their participation in the probate proceedings, in contrast to men who have more information even though they have not yet had experience with inheritance.

### Attitude on the level of knowledge about regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, by experience with probate proceedings



#### participated in probate proceedings

#### did not participate in probate proceedings

(dark blue: I am very well informed, light blue: I am somewhat informed, yellow: I am poorly informed, orange: I am not informed at all, grey: I do not want to answer)

Among respondents who participated in probate proceedings, 26% stated that they were well informed about the inheritance proceedings, 49% that they had basic information, and even a quarter of respondents claimed that they were not informed at all. This data is worrying because the basis for making reasonable decisions is to be adequately informed about rights, and state bodies and institutions have an obligation to provide adequate information to citizens.

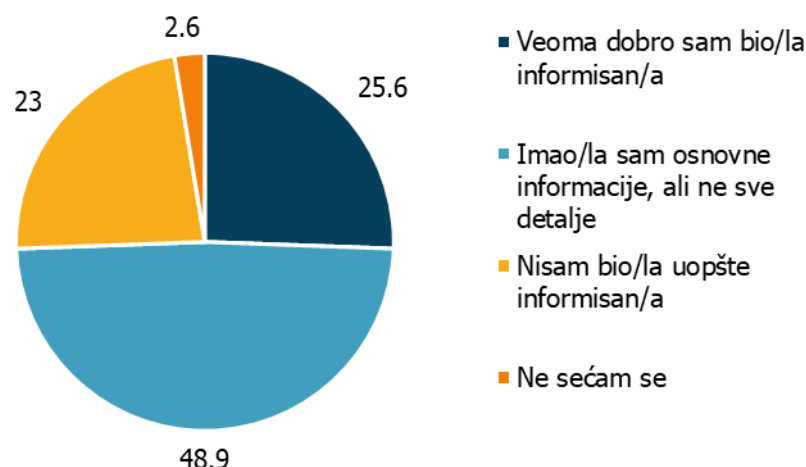
Among respondents who did not participate in probate proceedings, only 8.5% believe that they are very well informed about inheritance rights, 35% assess that they are partially informed, 31% that they are poorly informed, while 23% state that they are not informed at all, which is a total of 54% or more than half of the respondents.

Also, the focus group showed that women between the ages of 40 and 60 who live in rural areas and who participated in probate proceedings know that the law regulates the issue of inheritance and they know how much belongs to whom according to the law, but considering that in their family property was not divided by law, but in accordance with their own arrangements, they did not need to be informed in more detail about the right to inheritance. Exceptions were made by participants who were the only heirs or had sisters:

"My sister and I initiated the probate proceedings, because the two of us and our mother were the first line of succession, and since the mother was already old, she left it to my sister and me to finish everything, and everything was divided according to the law." - Woman, 48

The respondents especially emphasise that being informed about the right to inheritance would not significantly change the way property is distributed, because inheritance is a family matter, which is resolved in accordance with the family agreement. The woman usually goes to another family, while the man continues to look after his parents and property. Therefore, it is expected that the family house or apartment remains to the male heir, while the rest of the property can be divided into equal parts.

#### 08. To what extent were you informed at that moment about the legal consequences and probate proceedings? [N=610]

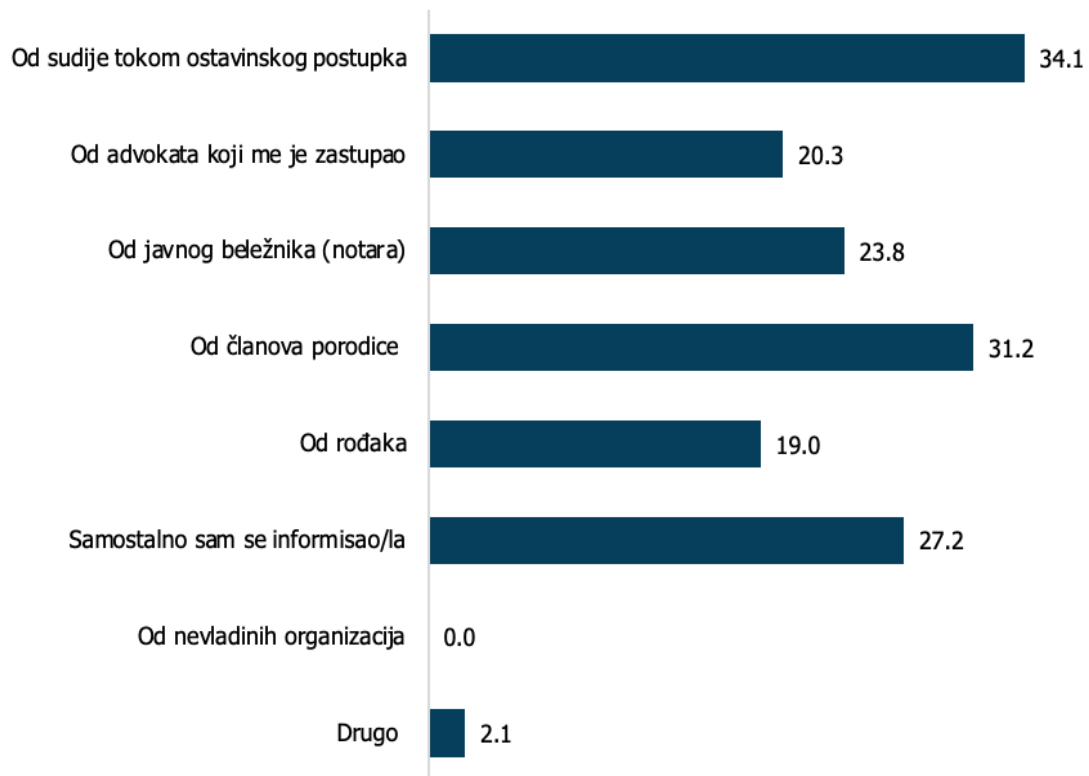


(dark blue: I was very well informed, light blue: I had basic information, but not all details, yellow: I was not informed at all, orange: I do not remember)

It was especially important to determine from whom respondents received most information about inheritance rights and the inheritance procedure. The research shows that most of the respondents (34%) received information from a judge during probate proceedings. A significant percentage of respondents got informed also from family members (31%), as well as independently (27%). Only every fifth respondent received information from a notary public (24%), or from the lawyer who represented them (20%), which is also interesting, taking into account the number of proceedings led by notaries public and the fact that a lawyer must always inform a party about her rights.

The focus groups showed that men are leading in getting information from lawyers compared to women, especially men aged 40 to 60 from rural areas (Pčinj District). It is also interesting that no respondent received information from non-governmental organisations, which illustrates that non-governmental organisations are not sufficiently recognised as providers of free legal support in the field of inheritance.

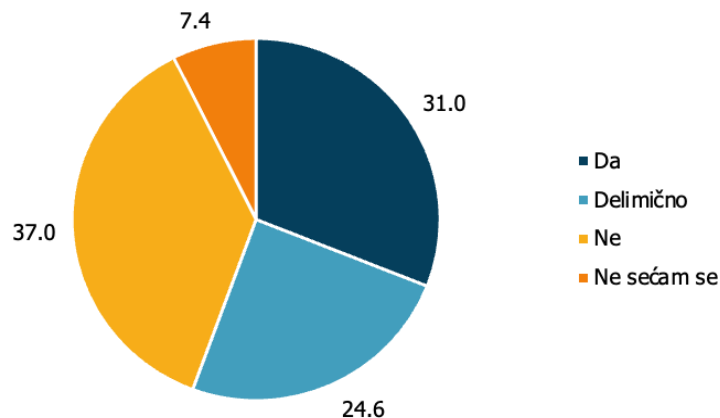
## From whom did you get most of the information about your inheritance rights and inheritance procedure?



**From a judge during the probate proceedings**  
**From the lawyer that represented me**  
**From a notary public**  
**From family members**  
**From relatives**  
**I informed myself independently**  
**From nongovernmental organisations**  
**Other**

Most of the respondents (31%) stated that during the probate proceedings they were completely informed about the legal consequences of renouncing and not accepting inheritance. However, the fact that a significant part of respondents (37%) stated that they were not informed about the difference between renunciation and non-acceptance of inheritance is worrying, while 25% were only partially informed about this difference. This lack of information can lead to serious legal consequences and undesirable outcomes for heirs.

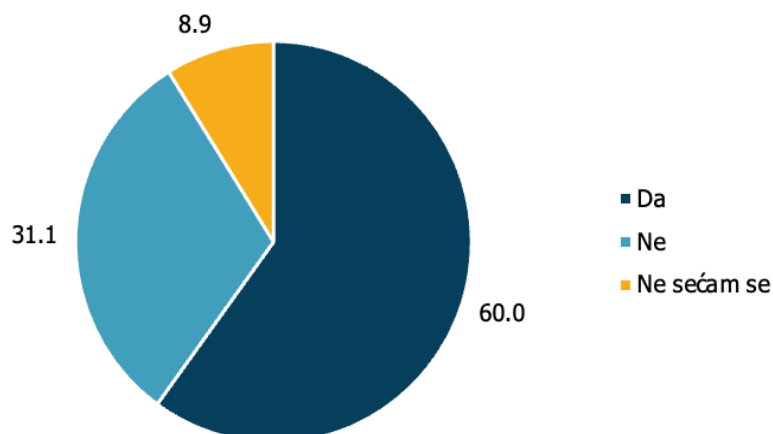
**Did anyone explain the difference between legal consequences of renunciation of inheritance and non-acceptance of inheritance to you?**



(dark blue: yes, light blue: partially, yellow: no, orange: I do not remember)

The fact that 60% of respondents were aware of the consequences of renouncing inheritance for their own heirs, and 31% were not, somewhat matches with the previous finding that 37% respondents were not at all informed about the difference between renouncing and not accepting inheritance. These findings indicate that there is a need to provide better information to citizens about the consequences of renouncing inheritance.

**Were you aware that if you renounced inheritance your children would also lose the right to that inheritance?**



(dark blue: yes, light blue: no, yellow: I do not remember)

## 6. Influence of the economic factor on equality in inheritance

The question of the impact of economic empowerment of women on the achievement of equality in inheritance was not raised in the survey. However, that issue was discussed in the focus group discussion, based on which it was determined that almost all participants agree that the economic factor is important and that the state should promote and help the economic independence of women.

Focus groups with young people have shown that young people believe that the economic independence of women and men is key to the success of any society and the main prerequisite for good order in the state and society, system order, respect of the law, disappearance of divisions in society, prevention of bad relations, discrimination, but also for observing the principle of equality not only in inheritance matters, but also in all other aspects of society. According to them, an economically independent woman is strong enough to take the position in the community that belongs to her and deal with all challenges. Young people believe that the issue of inheritance will be treated differently in some families, if the woman is empowered, financially stable and has her own professional career. An economically dependent woman, due to her poor material condition, is in a dependent and subordinate position in her family, and is subject to the influence and imposition of other people's opinions and behaviour:

“As soon as we say that a person is economically dependent, this has a lot of impact, that is one of the biggest parameters, of course it will affect her, her ability to negotiate will be influenced by the person she depends on. She is not in the same position as an economically independent woman. They do not have the equal freedom of choice.” - Woman, 20

While for one group of young people, economic stability is a factor that will influence a woman to think about whether she will accept an inheritance or not, if she already has enough acquired and earned property, others believe that economic independence means that she will be able to continue to maintain and take care of the inherited property, because she has proved her ability to do so. She also has the ability to "save" the family property and real estate from decay, which speaks in favour of the fact that the young people's attitude that property should be inherited by a capable heir is not gender neutral after all, as it seemed at first glance:

“If she is financially independent, for example, she will be able to pay property tax, this means a lot when something is inherited, because how will a woman who does not have any or doesn't have enough income be able to pay for these obligations.” – Man, 20

The focus group of persons aged 40 to 60 that does not share traditional values insists that economic independence and a steady job is very important, as well as the ability of a woman to have control over her own life, decisions and possibilities. They especially insist that family independence can increase confidence and the feeling of sense of personal worth and change the dynamics of family relationships and the way inheritance is managed. Also, women who are financially independent express their views and demands more easily in the process of dividing the inheritance without depending on other family members. It is also considered that the custom of a woman becoming "the worry of her husband" upon marriage is a relic of the past, although it still exists in some small, underdeveloped areas:

“Some measures should be introduced, for example, housewives who do not have a permanent job should receive government assistance in the form of a monthly income or pension, health and social insurance”. - Man, 47

"Measures should be introduced, it would be nice to introduce a social pension, that is, a minimum income, a pension for women who did not receive it during their lifetime, because they were dealing with the house and children." - Woman, 53

However, there were also attitudes that are discriminatory because they advocate earlier retirement for women, in addition to other measures that would be desirable. It is interesting that such views were expressed by women:

"Measures should be introduced. For example, I would introduce that mothers with several children who need help should be given an earlier pension. For example, to increase the salary for each child by a few percent." – Woman, 54

"Benefits for women with children, financial assistance... The retirement age for women should be lowered, women should work, e.g., until the age of 60 tops." - Woman, 53

"The issue of inheritance and division among the heirs is usually emphasised in families where the heirs are not financially stable enough, the poorer we are, the more we divide". - Man, 46

People aged 40 to 60 who live in an urban environment and share traditional values believe that a woman will ask for her share of the inheritance even if she is economically stable, but men especially emphasise that respect for family rules, agreements and obligations should not depend on the heir's financial situation. Women again believe that their economic stability will not strengthen their position in the family, because their economic independence is used as an additional argument that female heirs should not receive an equal share of the inheritance.

"The property definitely goes to my brother, the fact that I have my own apartment and job is a relief for my parents, because they are sure that I will not interfere with my brother's inheritance." - Woman, 46

The female respondents also believe that their financial stability would impose an additional burden, and the family will expect that they can do without inheritance, because they are already well off. They especially emphasise that the argument that a man will take care of a woman is no longer applicable, because times have changed, marriages are not stable and sustainable to the extent they were before, and partners are less and less aware that they are the "heads of the family" in the sense that they should financially provide for and take care of women. For this reason, the female respondents say that their own primary families should take more care of them and consider them when distributing property. Their position is that the state should help women to become empowered and independent by taking care of divorced and single mothers, unemployed women, and women who run their own businesses. State intervention is necessary, and it is best to achieve it through the improvement of social protection, higher benefits for socially vulnerable categories and tax breaks for working women or women who have their own small businesses. It is important to emphasise that the right to social protection is contingent upon a person not renouncing inheritance, so this right will be lost in such a case.

Female respondents from rural areas with and without experience in inheritance say that if a woman is taken care of by her husband, the probability of insisting on a share in the inheritance is significantly lower, and then women also become disinterested in inheriting. Also, if a woman managed to provide good living conditions for herself with her financial income, she would not want to be part of the family inheritance and share the property with male heirs. However, when a woman is financially dependent, it is the duty of the family to take care of her and include her in the inheritance by giving her a certain part of the property, or less often by dividing the property into equal parts:

"Female children are not left without anything, if they have already failed to manage on their own or have married badly, the brother and father should take care of them and their children." – Woman, 53

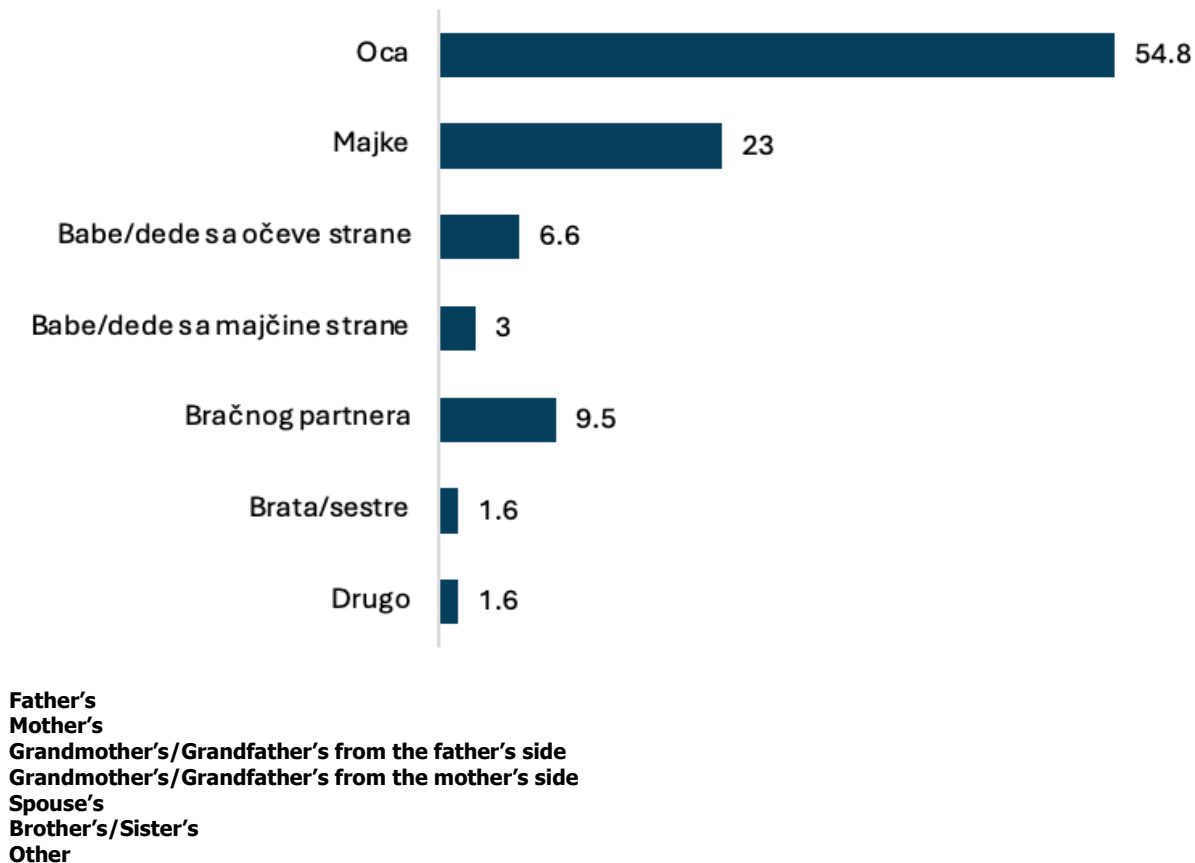
Female respondents believe that it is important to support women to become independent and strengthen their position in society, primarily in the form of state aid to mothers so that they can take care of their family and children, without risking being left without a secure pension, health insurance and certain financial assistance. Also, women should be given the opportunity to work, but employers should be sensitised and provide adequate work conditions for women, especially single mothers, mothers with more than three children and mothers with disabled children, adapted to their specific situation. The female respondents finally emphasise that female entrepreneurship is very popular today among the younger generations, but that starting a business implies certain investments, which could also be supported by local self-governments.

## 7. Experience in probate proceedings

Out of the total number of respondents, one half (51%) has had the experience of participating in probate proceedings. Out of this number, 60% participated in probate proceedings once, 33% two times, and 7% three and more times. Data collected during this research refer to the last proceedings the respondents participated in.

In the largest number of cases, the estate of the father was inherited (55%), and then of the mother (23%) and spouse (10%). The fact that the father's estate was the subject of inheritance in twice as many cases speaks in favour of the fact that men are much more often owners of property. It is also interesting to note that the property of the ancestors on the father's side was inherited twice as often (almost 7%) as the property of the mother's ancestors (3%).

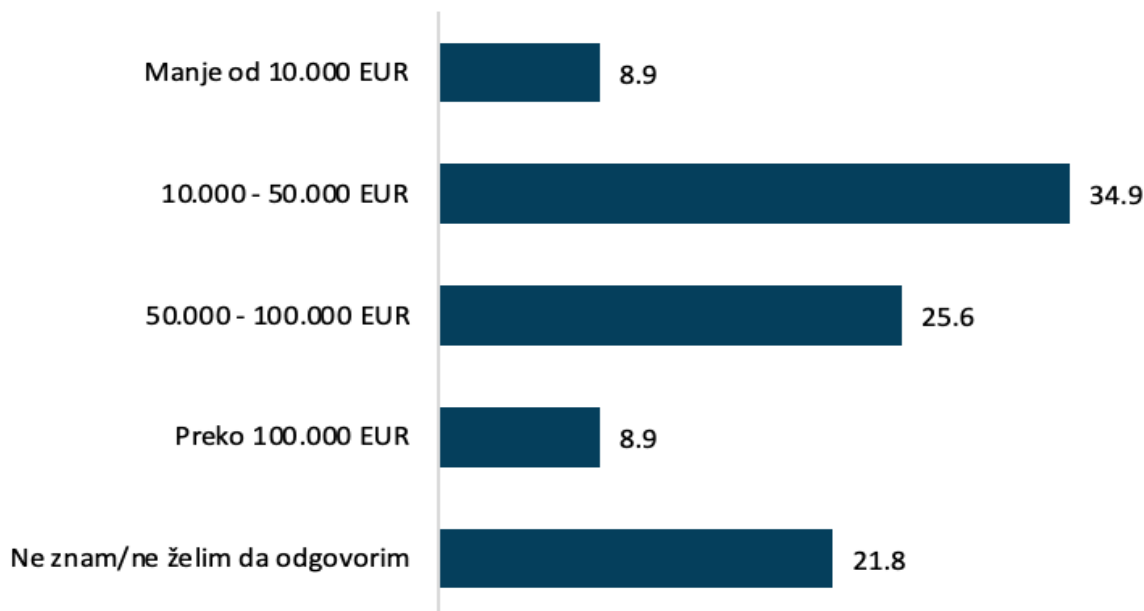
### Whose property was inherited? [N=610]





The value of the property subject to inheritance in probate proceedings was most often in the range from 10,000 to 50,000 EUR (35%), then from 50,000 to 100,000 EUR (26%). Only one tenth of the respondents (8.9%) participated in probate proceedings in which the value of the property was more than 100,000 EUR. Also, one fifth of the respondents did not answer this question (almost 22%).

#### What was the approximate value of the property subject to inheritance? [N=610]



Less than 10,000 EUR  
 10,000 EUR-50,000 EUR  
 50,000 EUR-100,000 EUR  
 More than 100,000 EUR  
 I do not know/I do not want to answer

In the largest number of probate proceedings, there were several heirs (85%), whereas in 13% of the proceedings there was only one heir. The average number of heirs in probate proceedings was 3, and the highest 12.

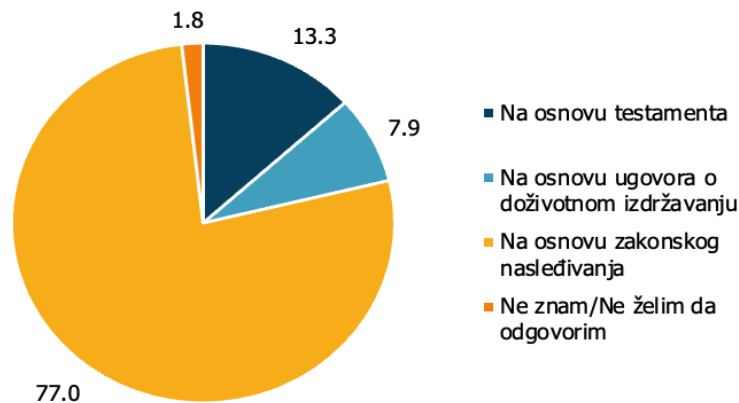
#### How many heirs were there in probate proceedings? [N=610]



(dark blue: I was the only heir, light blue: There were several heirs, yellow: I do not know/I do not want to answer.)

In the largest number of probate proceedings, the basis for inheritance was the law (77%), while a little more than every tenth respondent reported that the basis for probate proceedings was a will (13%).

**On what basis was the probate proceeding conducted (based on a will, lifelong support contract or based on provisions from the Inheritance Law)? [N=610]**



(dark blue: Based on a will, light blue: Based on a lifelong support contract, yellow: Based on the law, orange: I do not know/I do not want to answer)

This data illustrates the fact that in Serbia, inheritances are still not regulated by testaments in a more significant amount. Also not mentioned are contracts executed during lifetime, in which the testator transfers his property during his lifetime to the heirs and prevents conflicts or ignorance concerning the will of the testator after death. This can prevent conflicts after the death of the testator. The research also indicates that as many as 8% of probate proceedings were conducted based on lifelong support contracts, which was stated as basis for inheritance by almost one tenth of the respondents. This figure is high and requires special caution, because the biggest abuses occur precisely based on the lifelong support contracts, and the heirs often do not even know that such a contract was concluded. The data show that the majority of respondents (72%) stated that they had no problems in the inheritance process, while one fifth of respondents (21%) said that there were disagreements among the heirs regarding the division of property. A smaller percentage of respondents had difficulty obtaining documentation (4%), or initiated a dispute over the division of inheritance (slightly more than 2%).



### Did you face some challenges or problems in the inheritance process? [N=610]

**No, everything went without any problems.**

**Yes, there were disagreements among heirs regarding the division of the estate.**

**Yes, I had difficulties obtaining the required documentation.**

**Yes, a dispute was initiated regarding the division of the inheritance.**

**Something else.**

Men more often state that they encountered disagreements during the inheritance process. 24% of men state that there was a conflict regarding the division of property compared to 17% of women. Some lawyers emphasise that they see men in court much more often than women, and that brothers clash over property much more often than sisters, who rarely sue brothers.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, disagreements in inheritance are more often reported by sole entrepreneurs (36%), as well as farmers (48%), and the focus groups showed that the issue of land is still treated as a particularly important subject of inheritance. An interesting finding is that a significantly smaller part of respondents living in big cities stated that there were disagreements regarding inheritance. Accordingly, disagreements are significantly less present in the Belgrade region (10%), compared to other regions.

The frequency of discussion during the inheritance procedure is related to attitudes on equality in inheritance. Thus, every third respondent (33%) who advocates the position that men have priority in inheritance had disagreements when dividing property, compared to 17% of those who partially support equality and 19% of those who fully support equality in inheritance.

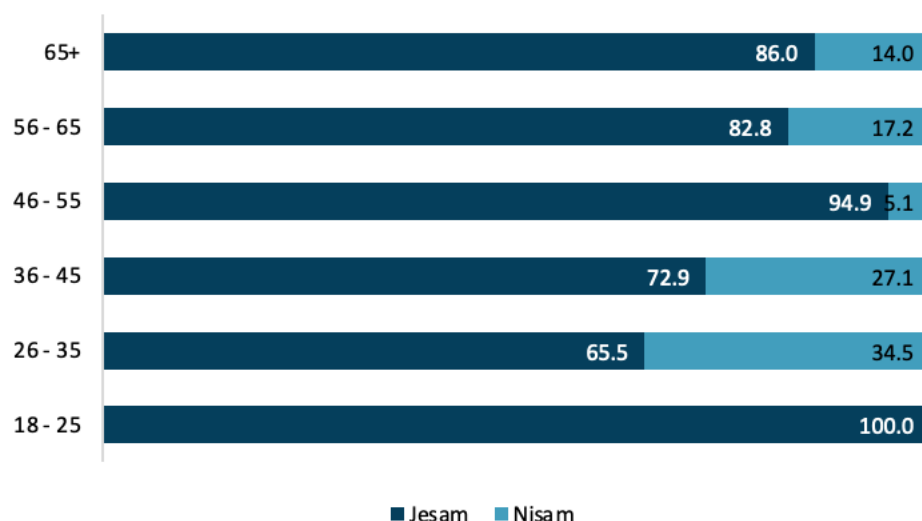
Among those who participated in probate proceedings, 17% did not successfully defend their claims to inheritance, while 83% did. The analysis indicates that there is a significant difference in the exercise of this right to inheritance between men and women. While 96% of men have successfully claimed their inheritance, the percentage of women is significantly lower and amounts to 72%. In other words, more than a quarter of women (28%) did not successfully claim their right to inheritance, compared to only 4% of men. These data point to potential gender inequality in the exercise of inheritance rights in Serbia, which should be further investigated.

<sup>12</sup> They Couldn't Agree On Splitting The House So They Made A Shocking Move, 30 Jan 2024, available at: <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/4348462/advokat-o-nasledstvu-i-porodicama-u-srbiji>.

## 8. Experience of persons who have renounced their inheritance

Among those who participated in probate proceedings, 83% have successfully exercised their right to inherit, while 17% have not. Taking age into account, the largest share of those who have not exercised their right to inheritance belongs to the age group from 26-45. Almost 35% of respondents aged 26 to 35 and 27% of respondents aged 36 to 45 did not successfully exercise this right. The above data raises the question of whether there are specific factors that influence the exercise of inheritance rights among the younger population. At the same time, the largest number of respondents who successfully exercised the right to inheritance come from the age groups 46-55 (95%), those over 65 (86%), and then the age group 56-65 (83%). The focus groups also showed that people between the ages of 40 and 60 are well informed about inheritance rights, unlike young people. However, the fact that 100% of respondents aged 18 to 25 exercised this right should also be taken into account because only six of them participated in the survey, which makes it impossible to draw conclusions.

### Have you successfully exercised the right to inherit in those proceedings? [N=610]



(dark blue: yes, light blue: no)

The higher percentage of renunciation of inheritance among younger respondents can be explained by the fact that they renounce inheritance in favour of their parents more often than others, while older respondents more often renounce inheritance in favour of male heirs.

An interesting finding is also that although education, occupation and place of residence play a significant role in shaping attitudes regarding inheritance, these factors do not significantly affect the respondents' decision to renounce their inheritance rights.

Among those who did not exercise the right to inherit, the largest number renounced their inheritance in favour of another heir (68%), 12% gave a negative inheritance declaration, while 10% stated that the inheritance went to another person under a lifelong support contract. Also, every tenth respondent did not state the exact reason why they did not exercise the right to inherit (almost 11%).

## Why have you not claimed your right to inheritance? [N=104]



**I renounced my inheritance in favour of another heir.**

**I did not accept the inheritance (I gave a negative inheritance declaration)**

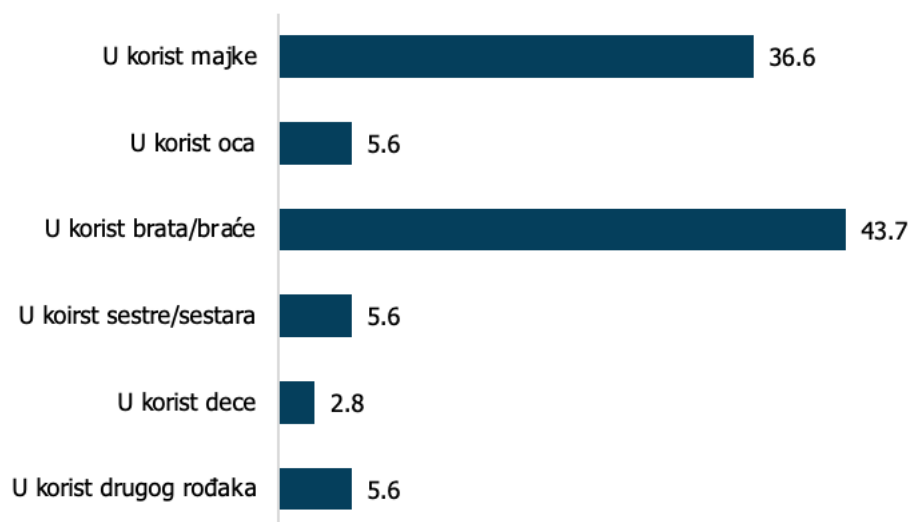
**The inheritance that I was to receive went to another person based on a lifelong support contract.**

**Other.**

As almost one third of the respondents renounced property in favour of another heir, it is important to emphasise that the largest number of respondents did that in favour of brothers (44%) and in favour of mothers (37%), whereas only ca. 6% of respondents renounced their property in favour of their father, sister or some other relative. The percentage of those who renounced property in favour of their children (around 3%) is negligible.

## In whose favour have you renounced your inheritance? [N=71]

**In favour of my mother**



**In favour of my father**

**In favour of my brother/brothers**

**In favour of my sister/sisters**

**In favour of my children**  
**In favour of another relative**

The results also show that there is a connection between age and relatives in whose favour the respondent renounced the inheritance. Thus, 50% of respondents aged 26 to 35 gave up their inheritance in favour of their mother and 13% in favour of their father. At the same time, 78% of respondents between the ages of 36 and 45 renounced their inheritance in favour of their mother, and 11% in favour of their father. The data indicate that women are significantly more likely to renounce inheritance in favour of their mothers (39%) compared to men (22%), while men are more likely to renounce their inheritance in favour of their fathers (22%) compared to women (3%).

Women and men from the focus group of people aged 40 to 60 from urban areas who share traditional values testified that sisters generally gave up their right in favour of their brother or brothers, while some respondents pointed out that they certainly tried to claim their right to inheritance, but that in accordance with the family arrangement they inherited a significantly smaller part of the estate compared to male heirs from the family, mainly brothers:

"Our sister renounced her inheritance in favour of the brothers, that is not an issue in our family, my father resolved this the same way with his sisters, our mother also the same way with her brothers, we all knew that our sister would never ask for her share." - Man, 45

"In our family, the brother always had a more important role, but I stayed to live with my parents, so I will stay in the family apartment after their death, but the apartment will definitely belong to my brother." - Woman, 45

"We divided the estate by dividing the two smaller real properties in half, and the third largest and most valuable went to me, because I am the male heir." - Man, 51

The analysis also reveals a complex dynamic in the process of making decisions about renouncing inheritance. Traditional and family values are most often the key motives for renouncing inheritance, with 59% of respondents highlighting moral duty, and 51% the desire to preserve good family relations. Almost one fifth of respondents (17%) cite family pressure as a factor, which indicates the need to improve the protection of heirs' rights. This also indicates the strong influence of emotional factors over material interests.

A significant percentage of respondents (44%) cite the desire not to fragment the property as a reason for renouncing it, suggesting that many value the integrity of the heritage over personal gain. However, it is significant to note here that no male respondent renounced property for this reason, while as many as 50% of women renounced inheritance to preserve the integrity of the estate. This points to the traditional reasons that have been the basis for the discriminatory attitude towards women in the field of inheritance for centuries.

Also, it is interesting to note that no one cited the worthlessness of the property as a reason for renouncing it, while only 17% of respondents stated that they did not need the property. This implies that the majority forego potentially useful or valuable goods, emphasising the primacy of intangible factors in decision making. It is also important to note that 20% of respondents were motivated by the desire to make the heir feel good and secure, which is the most common reason when property is renounced in favour of parents, especially the mother. And this points to the fact that women own property to a much lesser extent than men. Likewise, 14% of respondents stated that they did not want to deal with the administration and division of property, which is often the reason why women renounce inheritance. Although the percentage is not too high, it is still important to point out that 7% of respondents felt that they were not sufficiently informed about their rights, while 4% were exposed to pressure from the milieu. Although negligible, pressure from the milieu still exists as a factor that can influence the decision to renounce inheritance.

Men and women from rural areas with and without experience in inheriting point out that customary law rules in the Vranje area dictate that in the case when sons claim inheritance, the following is considered: the son who lives with his parents inherits the house and the land. He is entitled to a larger share of the inheritance than a son who does not live with his parents. Also, a son who helped his parents preserve and acquire property has the right to a larger part of the inheritance compared to other brothers, that is, sons who did not help with this; the son who took care of his parents and buried them, even if he did not live together with them, has the right to the entire estate, or at least to a larger part of it compared to others. When the son moves to another city or country and the daughter stays to take care of her parents, she inherits the family house in agreement with her brother, while the rest of the estate is shared equally.

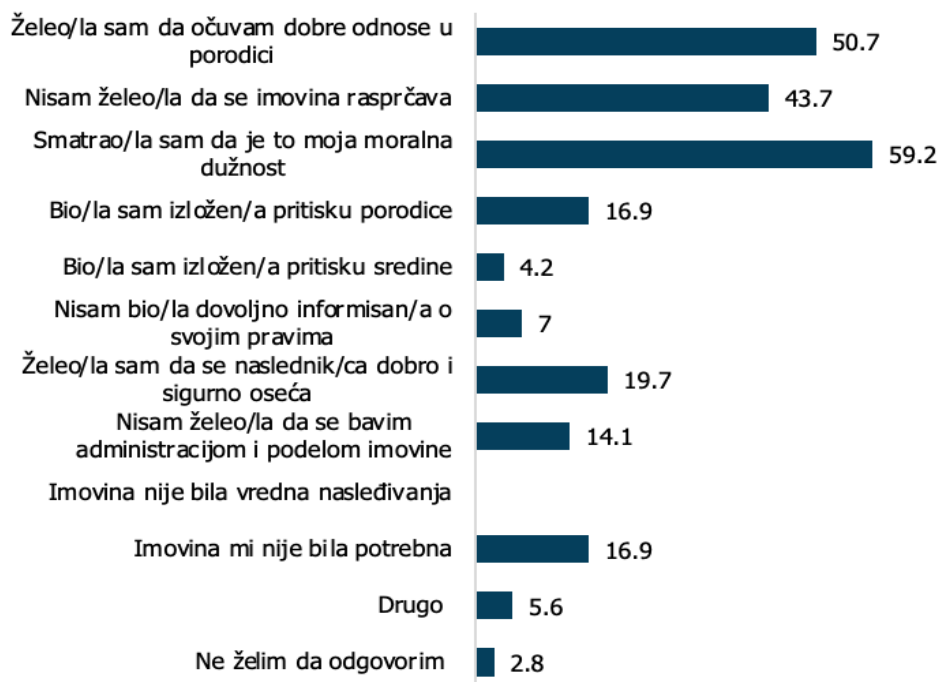
The reasons why women renounce inheritance are family agreements, customs and traditions that are passed down the generations within the family, to which women are exposed while growing up. The respondents who were interviewed said that there was no case where the inheritance procedure was carried out in a way that the sisters' will or consent was disrespected, but that most of the property went to the male heir and that the sisters would voluntarily renounce inheritance in favour of their brothers. However, in most cases, women would still receive part of the inheritance:

"My aunt too left everything to my father, I didn't even think that we should divide the property in half, my brother and father agreed that I would inherit the shop in the city, because I would be able to rent it out and have a secure monthly income, and in that way, I would be permanently provided for and taken care of. I was satisfied, the house, the fields and everything else was left to my brother and he takes care of it and maintains it." – Woman, 45

"I asked my parents to be included in the division of property, so that I would have something to leave to my children. I have two daughters, and I would like them to be provided for in some way. My grandfather left one plot of land to each of his granddaughters, I am satisfied, my children have some land if they want to build houses or they can sell it and buy an apartment and have something to dispose of." – Woman, 60

Also, based on the customary law, if daughters do not marry or divorce, their parents and brother will take care of them, so that they "would not be left in the street".

#### **O17. What were the main reasons for you to renounce inheritance? [N=71]**

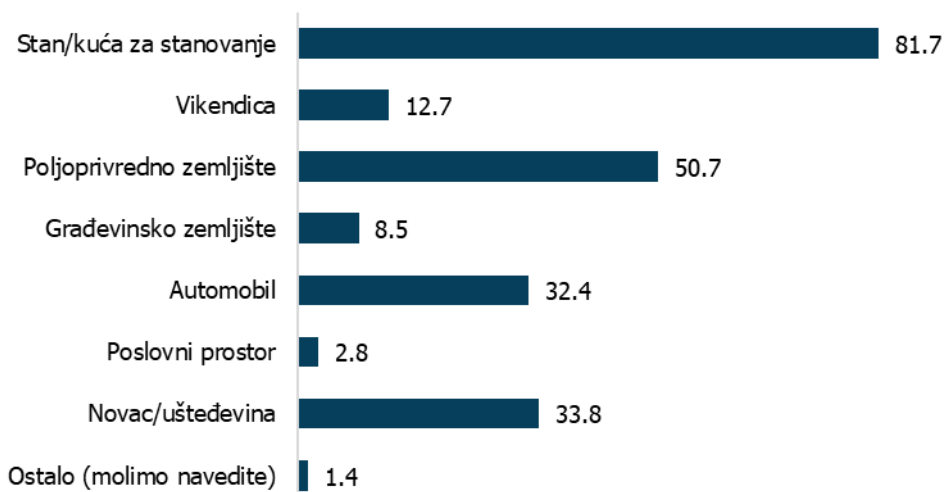


I wanted to preserve good relations in the family.  
 I did not want the estate to be divided into smaller parts.  
 I thought that this was my moral duty.  
 I was exposed to family pressure.  
 I was exposed to pressure of the environment.  
 I was not sufficiently informed about my rights.  
 I wanted the heir to feel good and secure.  
 I did not want to deal with the administration and division of property.  
 I did not need the property.  
 Other  
 I do want to answer.

The survey results show that the largest percentage of respondents (82%) renounced their apartment/house. This indicates that residential real estate is the most common type of property that people renounce. There is often an attitude that the brothers should inherit the apartment/house because the sister(s) get married and go to live with their husbands. Likewise, half of the respondents renounced agricultural land (51%). The percentage of those who renounced money (34%) and cars (32%) is not negligible, while the number of those who renounced a weekend house (about 13%) and construction land (8.5%) is significantly lower.

**Please state what kind of property you renounced (it is possible to choose several answers):[N=71]**

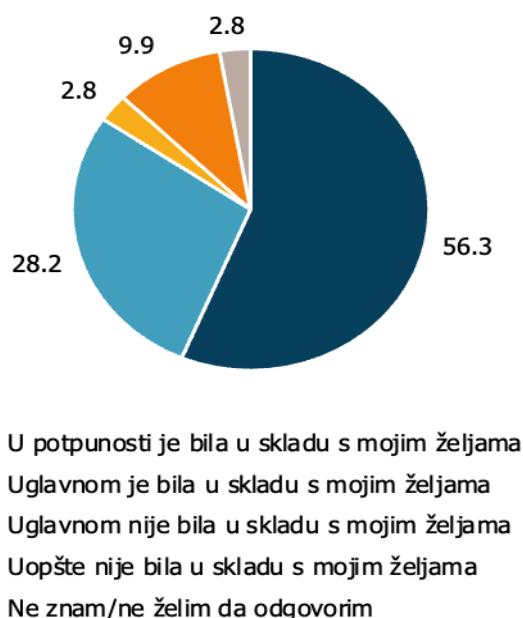




Apartment/residential house  
 Weekend house  
 Agricultural land  
 Construction land  
 Car  
 Business premises  
 Money/Savings  
 Other (please state)

More than one half of the respondents (56%) emphasises that the decision to renounce inheritance was completely in accordance with their real wishes, 28% that it was mainly in accordance with their real wishes, and 13% state that it was mainly not or not at all in accordance with their real wishes.

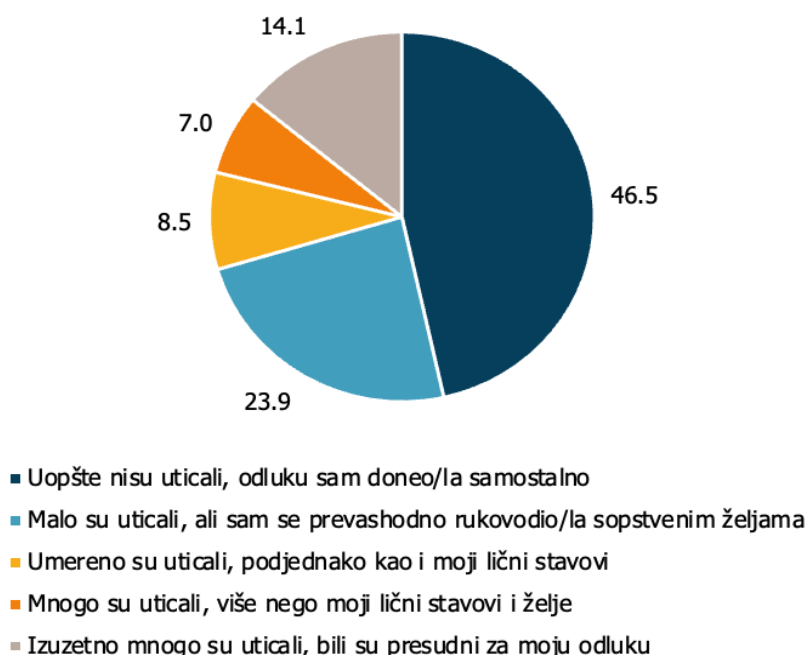
**In your opinion, to what extent was your inheritance decision in accordance with your real wishes? [N=71]**



Dark blue: It was completely in accordance with my wishes.  
 Light blue: It was mainly in accordance with my wishes.  
 Yellow: It was mainly not in accordance with my wishes.  
 Orange: It was not at all in accordance with my wishes.  
 Grey: I do not know/I do not want to answer.

The opinions of the family had a significant influence on the decision to renounce inheritance for 30% of respondents, with 21% stating that the opinions of the family were decisive (14%), or that they had a greater influence than their own personal views and wishes (7%). However, the majority of respondents (47%) made the decision to renounce the inheritance completely independently, while 24% stated that the family's opinions had an influence, but that they were primarily guided by their own wishes when deciding. Of course, even for those who made the decision independently, the question is how much their upbringing and the environment influenced the outcome of such a decision.

**To what extent did the expectations and attitudes of your family and community influence your decision about inheritance? [N=71]**



**Dark blue:** There was no influence, I made my decision independently.

**Light blue:** There was a little influence, but I was primarily guided by my own wishes.

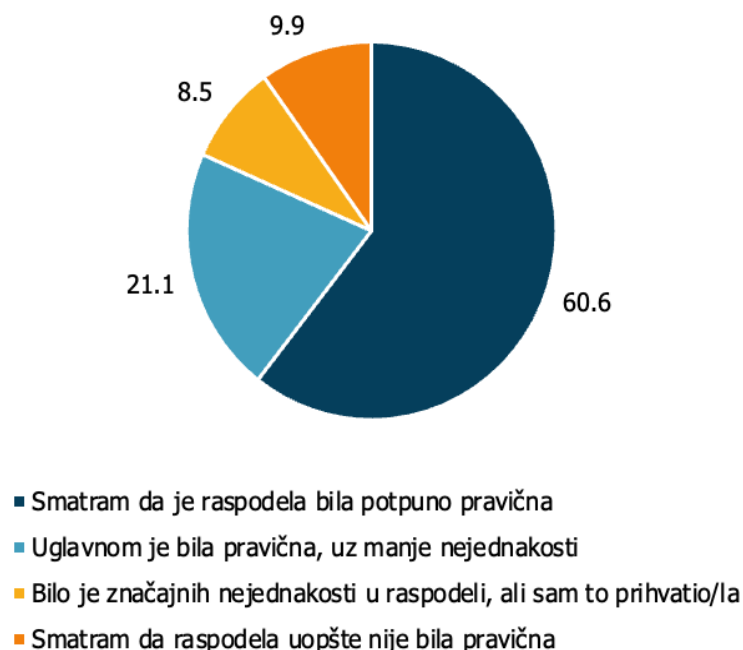
**Yellow:** There was a moderate influence, in the same way as my personal attitudes.

**Orange:** There was a lot of influence, more than my personal views and wishes.

**Grey:** There was an extremely large influence, they were decisive for my decision.

Most of the respondents think that the division of property was fair (61%), while 21% state that it was mostly fair, with smaller inequalities. This indicates that the majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards the fairness of property distribution, even though they have given up their share of the inheritance. However, almost one fifth of the respondents believe that the distribution was not fair, as 9% believe that there were significant inequalities in the distribution, but they accepted it, while 10% believe that the distribution was not fair at all.

### How do you assess the fairness of the distribution of inheritance? [N=71]



**Dark blue: I think that the distribution was completely fair.**

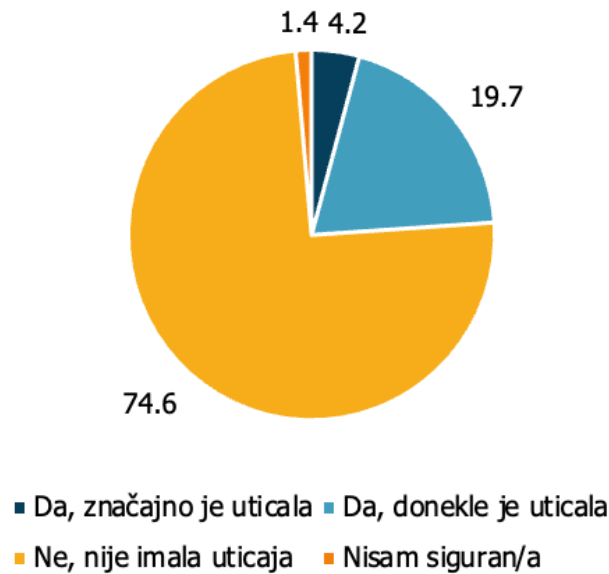
**Light blue: It was mostly fair, with minor inequalities.**

**Yellow: There were significant inequalities in the distribution, but I accepted it.**

**Orange: I think that the distribution was not fair at all.**

The decision to renounce inheritance had an impact on the current financial situation of almost one quarter of respondents, with 4% stating that this decision had a significant impact on their financial situation, while 20% felt that it had some impact. Nevertheless, the vast majority of respondents (75%) emphasised that this decision had no impact on their financial situation. These data indicate that, although renouncing inheritance had financial consequences for some of the respondents, this was not the case for the majority of the respondents.

**Did the decision not to accept inheritance have an influence on your current financial situation? [N=71]**



**Dark blue: Yes, it had a significant influence.**

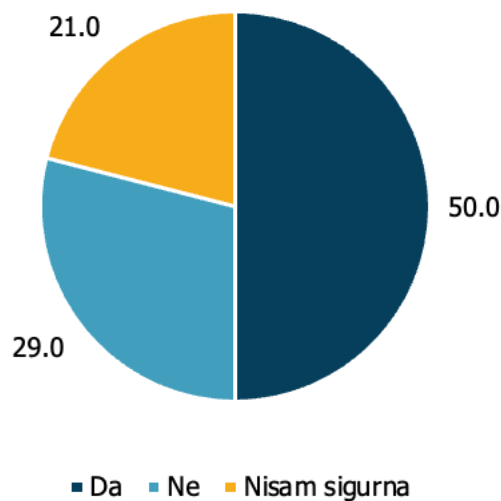
**Light blue: Yes, it had a certain influence.**

**Yellow: No, it did not have any influence.**

**Orange: I am not sure.**

While half of the women (50%) would make the same decision about renouncing inheritance if they were men, almost a third (29%) believe their decision would be different, while 21% are not sure if their decision would be the same, making a total of 50% of respondents. This data indicates that gender and gender roles play a significant role in inheritance decisions, with women feeling more pressure or obligation to give up inheritance compared to men. Therefore, this information once again illustrates the existence of family and social pressure for women to renounce inheritance. Also, this information is significant because it can be a reason for changing the existing legislation and introducing a deadline within which a woman can change her declaration of renunciation of inheritance.

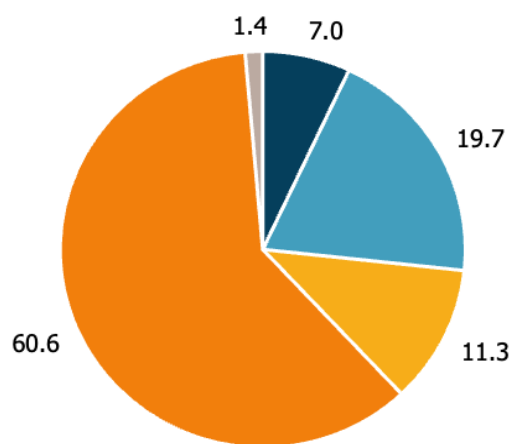
**Do you think you would have made the same decision, were you a man? [N=62]**



**Dark blue: Yes**  
**Light blue: No**  
**Yellow: I am not sure**

When asked whether they would make a different decision regarding inheritance at this moment, that is, would they accept inheritance, only 7% believe that they would do so, along with almost 20% of respondents who would probably change their decision. In other words, only 1/4 of the respondents would certainly or probably change their decision on inheritance, which is a worrying figure, because it indicates the fact that although they have more information now and are aware of the consequences of renouncing inheritance, women are still not ready to change their decision. Thus, as many as 60% of women declare that they would act in the same way, while 11% of women believe that they would probably not change their decision, which in total makes up more than two thirds of the respondents (over 71%).

**Looking back, would you now make a different decision regarding the inheritance? [N=71]**



- Da, sada bih se sigurno prihvatio/la nasledstva
- Verovatno bih, ali nisam siguran/a
- Verovatno ne bih, i dalje bih doneo/la istu odluku
- Ne, sigurno bih postupio/la isto kao i ranije
- Ne želim da odgovorim

**Dark blue: Yes, now I would certainly accept the inheritance.**

**Light blue: I probably would, but I am not sure.**

**Yellow: Probably not, I would still make the same decision.**

**Orange: No, I would surely act the same way as before.**

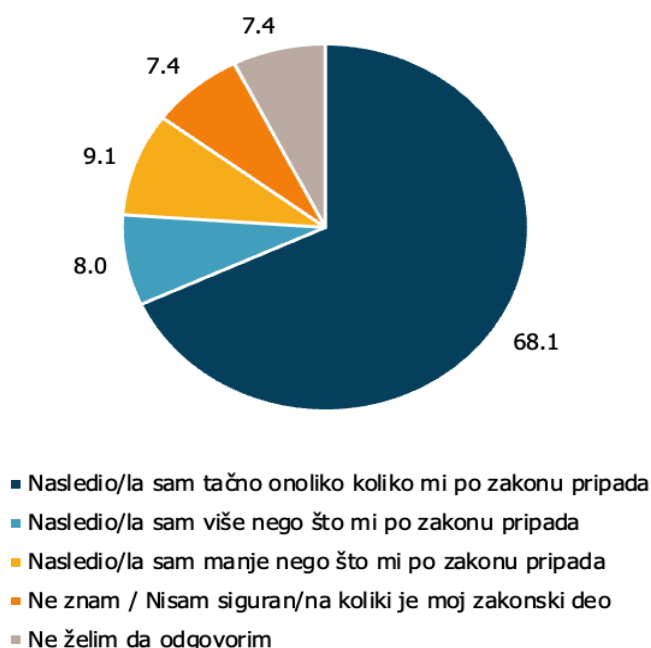
**Grey: I do not want to answer.**

## 9. Experience of persons who have accepted inheritance

For our research, it was also significant to find out how people who made the decision to accept inheritance felt during the probate proceedings.

The largest number of respondents inherited the part that belongs to him/her by law (68%). A little less than a tenth of respondents inherited more than what is theirs by law (8%), while a slightly higher number of respondents inherited less than what is theirs by law (9%). Also, more than 7% of respondents were not sure how much they should inherit by law, while the same number of respondents did not want to answer this question.

**How large was the share that you inherited compared to the share that belonged to you by law? [N=539]**



**Dark blue: I inherited exactly the share that belongs to me by law.**

**Light blue: I inherited a share larger than what belongs to me by law.**

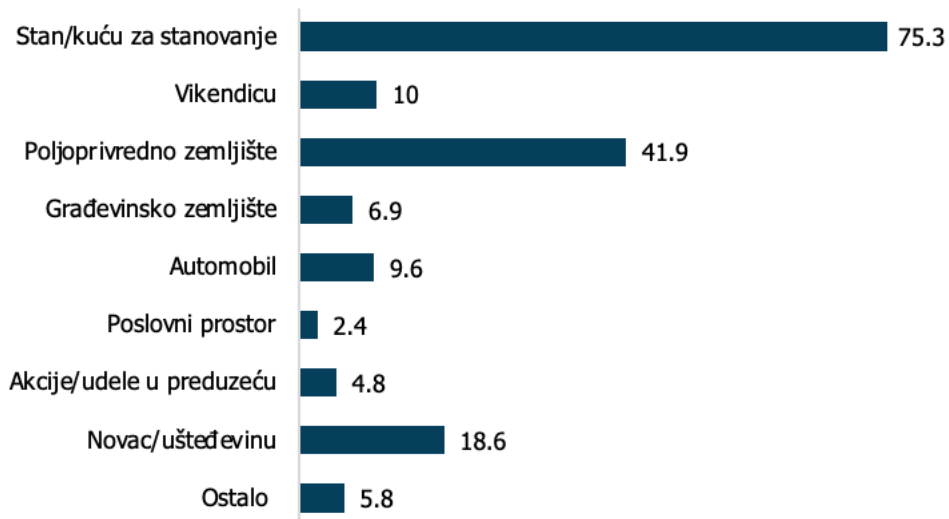
**Yellow: I inherited a smaller share than what belongs to me by law.**

**Orange: I do not know / I am not sure how large is my legal share.**

**Grey: I do not want to answer.**

The largest number of respondents inherited a house, that is, an apartment (75%) and agricultural land (42%), followed by money (over 18%), a weekend house (10%) and a car (over 9%). Among the things least inherited, respondents mention construction land (7%), shares in a company (5%) and business premises (over 2%). This data is not surprising, bearing in mind that residential buildings and agricultural land are the most valuable assets for inheritance.

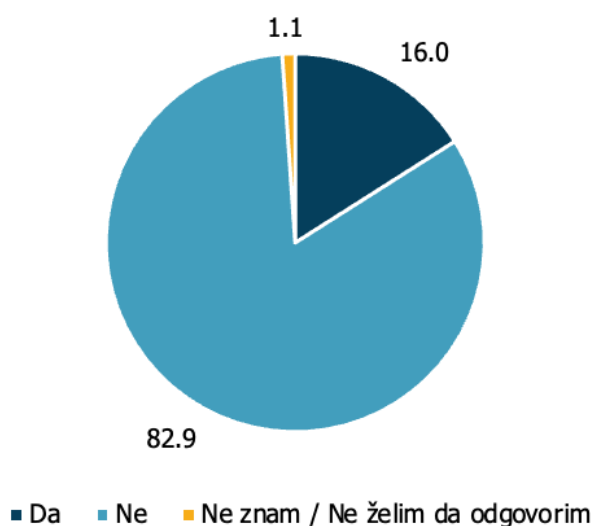
**Please state the type of property that you inherited (it is possible to select several answers) [N=539]**



Apartment/Residential house  
 Weekend house  
 Agricultural land  
 Construction land  
 Car  
 Business premises  
 Shares in a company  
 Money/savings  
 Other

Respondents who accepted some inheritance claim that in 83% of the cases none of the other heirs renounced inheritance in their favour. However, the experience of 16% of respondents shows that one of the other heirs renounced inheritance in their favour.

**Did any of the other heirs renounce their share of the inheritance in your favour? [N=539]**

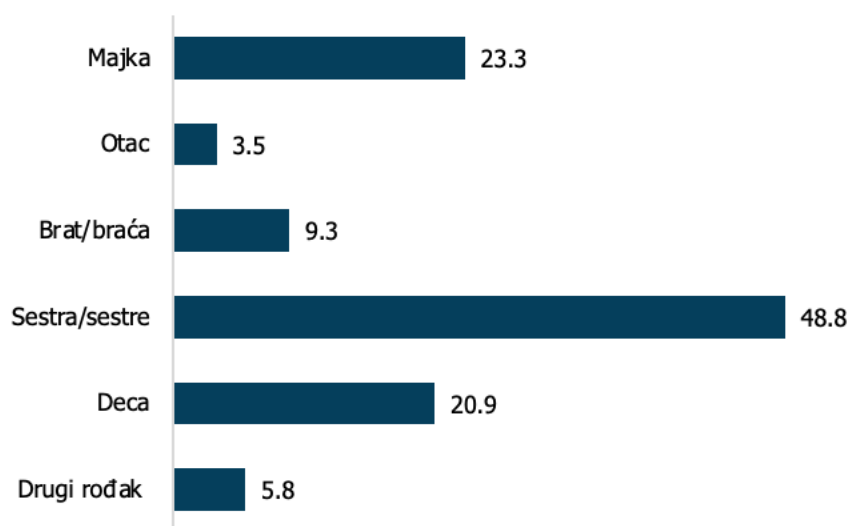


Dark blue: Yes  
 Light blue: No  
 Yellow: I do not know / I do not want to answer



For the 16% of respondents who had the experience that some other heirs renounced their inheritance in their favour, the data show again a gender dimension. Sisters did that in almost one half of the cases (49%), and mothers did that in almost 1/4 of the cases (23%). Following that, children (21%) or some other relative (6%) renounced inheritance, while the brother/brothers and father renounced their inheritance in a little more than 12% cases – brother/brothers in 9% of cases and father in more than 3% of the cases.

### Who renounced their inheritance in your favour? [N=86]



**Mother**  
**Father**  
**Brother(s)**  
**Sister(s)**  
**Children**  
**Another relative**

It was also important to explore how the heirs felt about one of the other heirs renouncing the inheritance in their favour. Half of the respondents believe that this was expected and taken for granted (50%), which is also shown by the results of the focus groups. Just over 40% of respondents stated that they saw this as a form of support. The other answers are negligible because only a little more than 3% of respondents declared that they felt uncomfortable because of it, while an even smaller number (a little more than 2%) said that they were surprised and did not expect such a decision. In other words, the largest number of respondents believed that such a decision of other heirs was expected and represented a form of support, that is, something that is common for such a situation.

### How did you understand that decision? [N=86]



As support.

As something that was self-explanatory and expected.

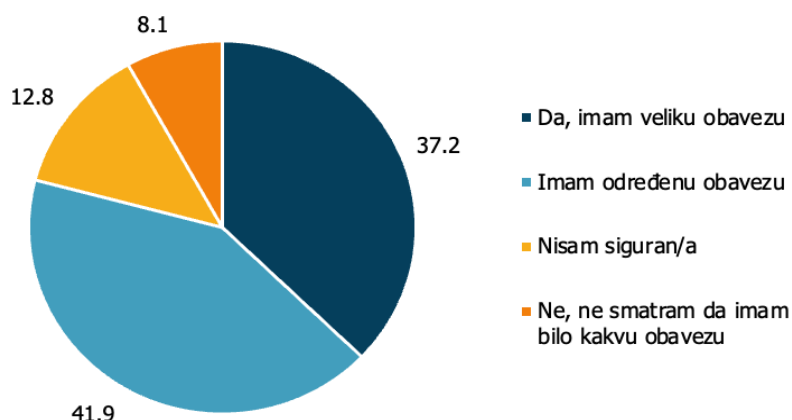
I was surprised and did not expect such a decision.

I felt a little embarrassed and it felt wrong.

Other

The results of the focus groups showed that there is a practice of supporting female heirs by giving them a share of the inheritance, particularly if they are financially dependent, especially in rural areas. The field survey also confirmed this practice, as 37% of the respondents believe that they have an obligation to financially help the person who renounced the inheritance, and 42% that they have a certain obligation. Only 8% believe that there is no obligation in such a situation, while 13% are not sure about the answer.

**Do you think that you have the obligation, if needed, to financially assist the person who renounced their share of the inheritance in your favour ? [N=86]**



Dark blue: Yes, I have a big obligation.

Light blue: I have a certain obligation.

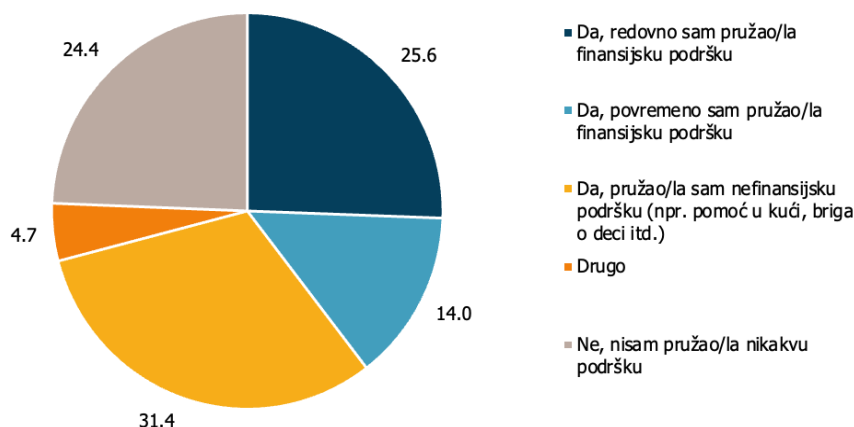
Yellow: I am not sure.

Orange: No, I do not think that I have any obligation.

When asked if they provided any form of support to the person(s) who renounced their inheritance in their favour, over 25% of respondents stated that they regularly provide financial assistance, 14%

that they do so occasionally, over 31% provide assistance of a non-financial nature (help at home, taking care of children, etc.), while over 24% stated that they did not provide any support in this situation.

**Have you provided any type of support to the person(s) who renounced their inheritance in your favour? [N=86]**



Dark blue: Yes, I have provided financial support regularly.

Light blue: Yes, I have provided financial support occasionally.

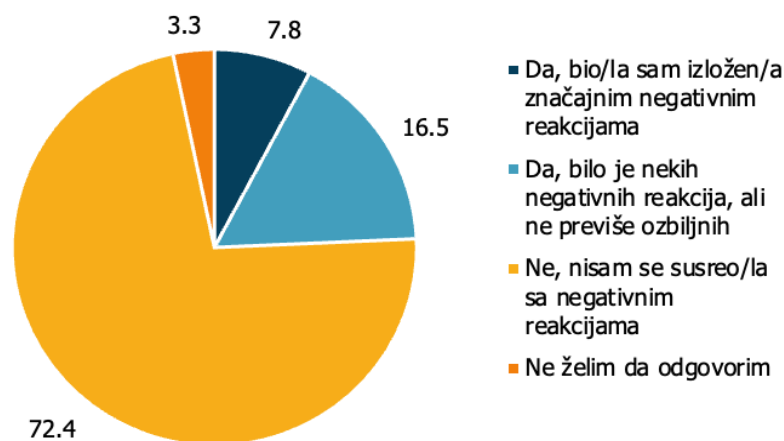
Yellow: Yes, I have provided non-financial support (e.g. help at home, taking care of their children etc.

Orange: Other

Grey: No, I haven't provided any support.

The fact that as many as 72% of the respondents stated that they did not face any negative reactions from the family or the community due to their decision to accept the inheritance is particularly encouraging. About 8% of respondents state that they were exposed to significant negative reactions, and over 16% that there were some reactions, but they were not serious.

**Were there any negative reactions from the family or community due to your decision to accept the inheritance? [N=539]**



Dark blue: Yes, I was exposed to significant negative reactions.

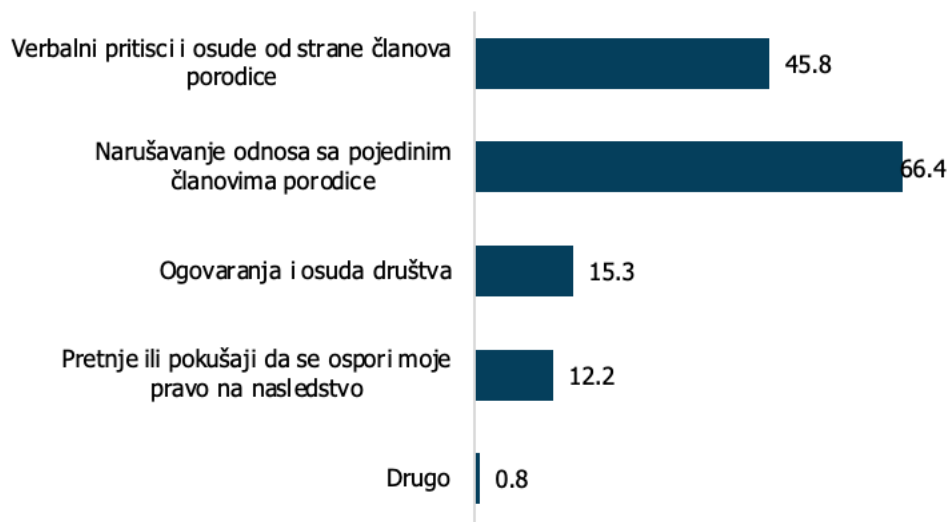
Light blue: Yes, there were some negative reactions, but not too serious.

Yellow: No, there weren't any negative reactions.

Orange: I do not want to answer.

Further conversation on this topic showed that the reactions were reflected in the disruption of relations with individual family members (over 56%), as well as verbal pressure and condemnation from family members (46%). A significantly smaller number of respondents were exposed to gossip and condemnation of the community (15%) and threats, i.e. attempts to challenge the right to inheritance (12%).

#### What negative reactions did you mostly encounter? [N=131]



Verbal pressure and condemnations by family members

Worsening of relations with individual family members

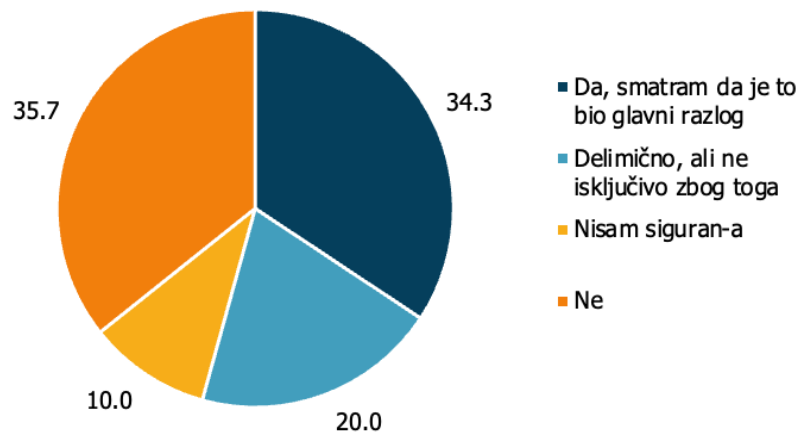
Slander and condemnation by society

Threats or attempts to challenge my right to inheritance

More than half of the respondents (54%) emphasise that the reason for the negative judgment is that women decided to accept inheritance (34% think this was the main reason and another 20% that this was partially the reason), while 10% of the respondents are not certain about the answer. At the

same time, almost 36% of respondents think that the negative reaction to inheritance acceptance has nothing to do with the gender of the heir.

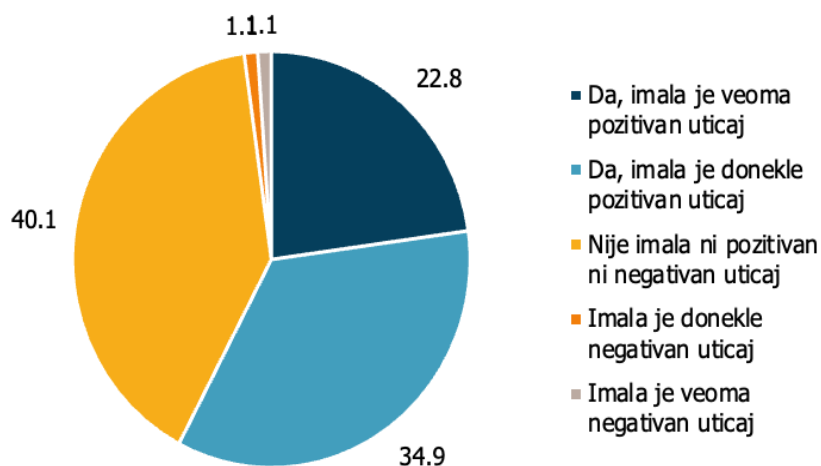
**Do you think that the negative reactions to your decision to accept inheritance were motivated by you being a woman? [N=70]**



Dark blue: Yes, I think that was the main reason.  
 Light blue: Partially, but not exclusively because of that.  
 Yellow: I am not sure  
 Orange: No

The results of the focus groups showed that a greater number of respondents believe that the inheritance is divided equally only when there is a lot of property, that is, some parts are then given to women if they are financially dependent. Also, some examples showed that when women went against the will of the family, it was for financial reasons. It was important to investigate whether the decision to accept the inheritance was because of financial reasons and over 23% pointed out that this was the main reason, 35% that this was an additional reason, while 40% pointed out that the decision had nothing to do with their financial situation.

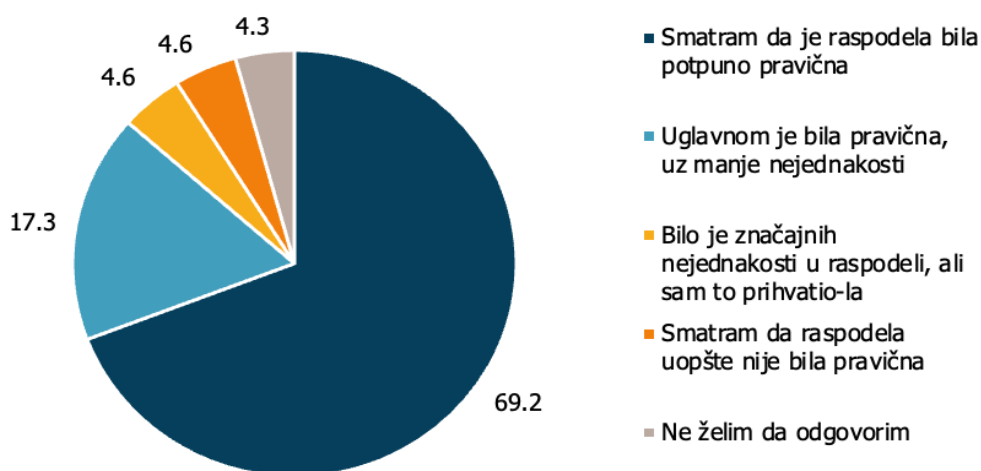
**Did your decision to accept inheritance influence your overall financial situation and economic independence? [N=539]**



Dark blue: Yes, it had a very positive influence.  
 Light blue: Yes, it had a somewhat positive influence.  
 Yellow: It had neither a positive nor a negative influence.  
 Orange: It had a somewhat negative influence.  
 Grey: It had a very negative influence.

A large percentage of respondents think that the distribution of property was fair (almost 70%), and another 17% emphasised that it was mostly fair, with some minor inequalities. Almost 5% state that there were significant inequalities, while the same number believes that the distribution of property was not fair at all. Almost the same number of respondents did not want to answer this question.

#### Do you think that the distribution of inheritance was fair? [N=539]

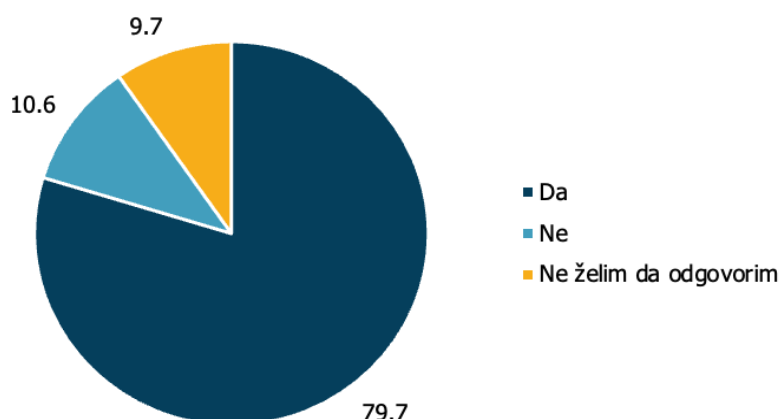


Dark blue: I think the distribution was completely fair.  
 Light blue: It was mostly fair, with minor inequalities.  
 Yellow: There were significant inequalities in the distribution, but I accepted it.  
 Orange: I think the distribution was not fair at all.  
 Grey: I do not want to answer.

## 10. Attitudes of persons who have not participated in probate proceedings

Among people who have not yet participated in the probate process, the vast majority of respondents (80%) state that they will inherit property from parents, close relatives or partners. This data coincides with the findings of the focus groups that women will inherit part of the property in most cases.

**Do your parents, close relatives or partner own property that you could inherit in the future?**



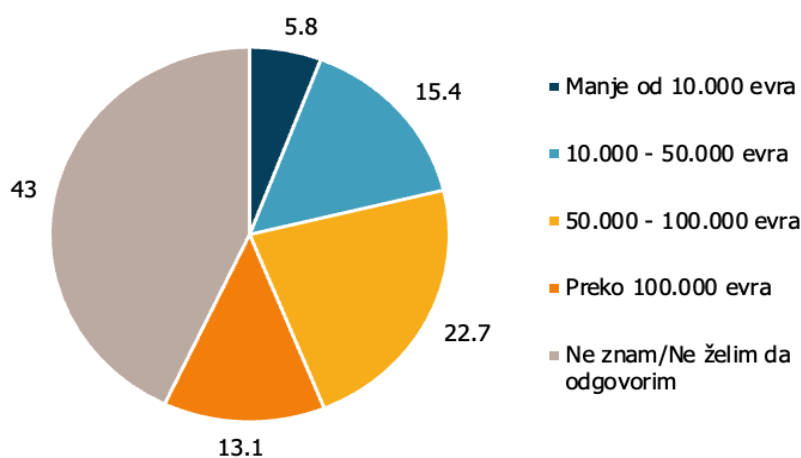
Dark blue: Yes

Light blue: No

Yellow: I do not want to answer

Among respondents who expect to inherit some property, there is considerable uncertainty about its value. Almost half of respondents (43%) were unable or unwilling to provide an estimate. Among those who gave an estimate, the largest part (23%) expects an inheritance in the range of 50,000 to 100,000 euros, while (13%) expects an inheritance of a value of more than 100,000 euros.

**What is the approximate value of the property that you could inherit? [N=467]**



Dark blue: Less than 10,000 euros

Light blue: 10,000-50,000 euros

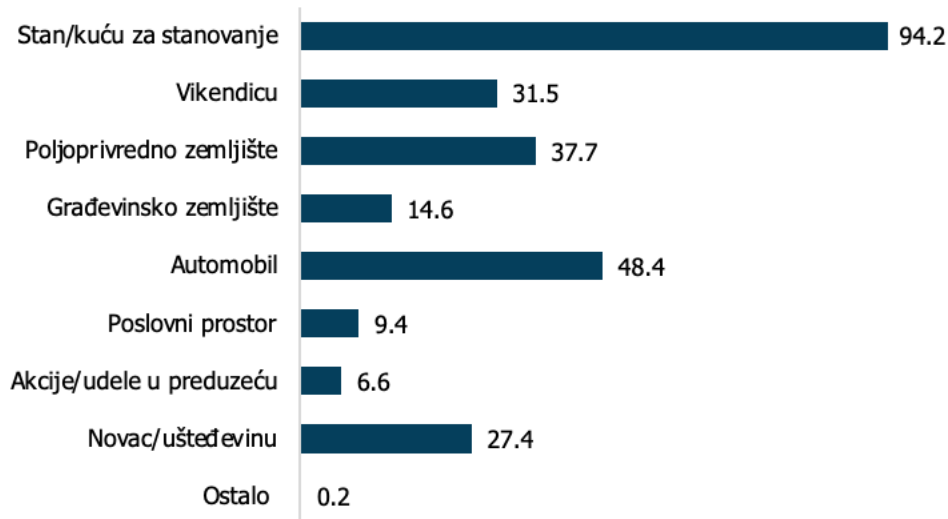
Yellow: 50,000-100,000 euros

Orange: More than 100,000 euros

Grey: I do not know/don't want to answer

The largest number of respondents (94%) expect to inherit residential property (apartment or house) and this shows that this is valuable property. Likewise, almost half of the respondents expect to inherit a car (over 48%), about a third of the respondents state that they expect to inherit agricultural land (38%), a weekend house (32%), or money (27%). Almost 15% of respondents expect to inherit construction land, over 9% business premises and almost 7% shares in a company.

**Please state what kind of property you could inherit [N=467]**

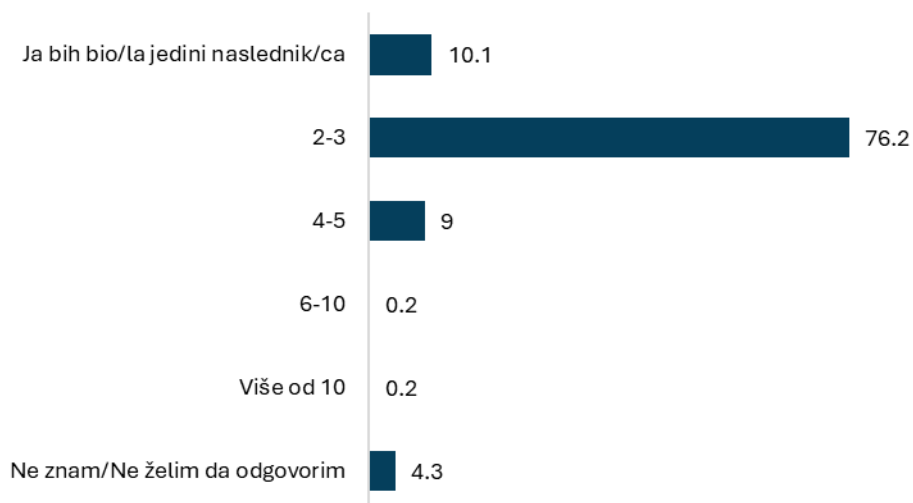


Apartment/house  
Weekend house  
Agricultural land  
Construction land  
Car  
Business premises  
Shares in a company  
Money/savings  
Other

The question about the number of heirs in the probate proceedings indicates that the majority of respondents (76%) expect that there will be two to three heirs. This suggests that inheritances will most often be divided among a smaller number of heirs. In one tenth of the proceedings, there would be only one heir, and in 9% there would be 4 to 5 heirs.

**How many heirs would there be in the probate proceedings? [N=467]**





**I would be the only heir.**

**2-3**

**4-5**

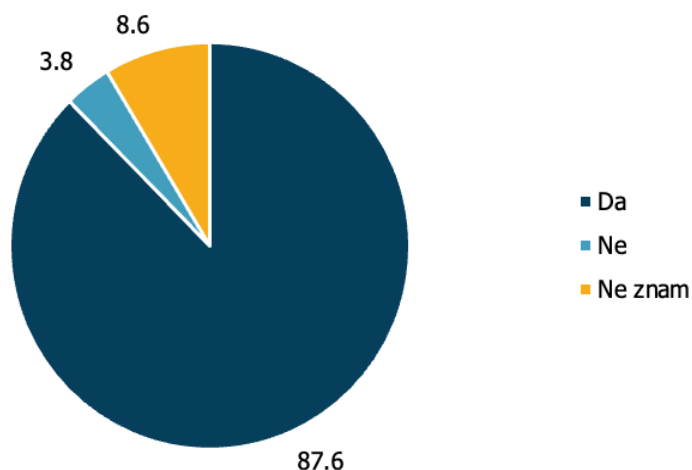
**6-10**

**More than 10**

**I do not know/I do not want to answer.**

The vast majority of respondents (88%) plan to accept the inheritance. However, there is also a small percentage of respondents (4%) who do not plan to accept the inheritance, and there are also those who are undecided on this issue (9%).

**Do you plan to accept the inheritance or not? [N=420]**



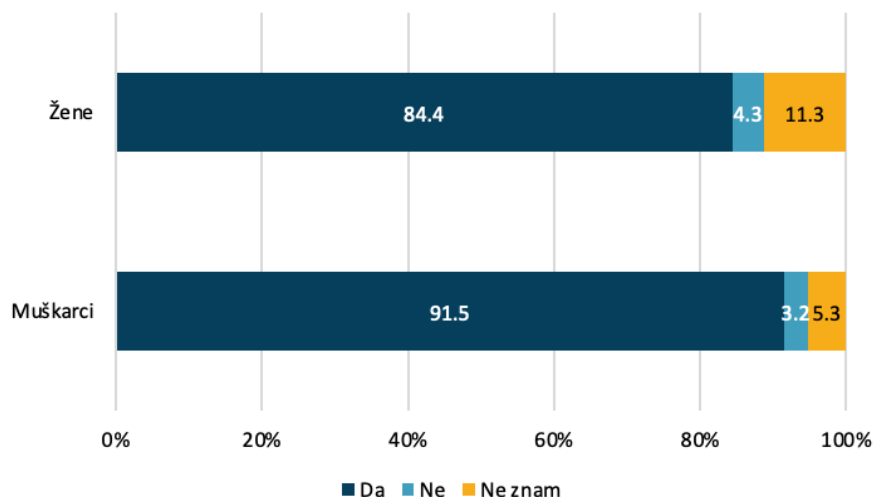
**Dark blue: Yes**

**Light blue: No**

**Yellow: I do not know**

The research indicates that slightly more women than men are ready to renounce property, so 92% of men plan to accept an inheritance compared to 84% of women. The results of the focus groups show that women are significantly more willing to renounce their share or accept a share that is significantly smaller than the legal share.

**Do you plan to accept the inheritance or not? [by gender, N=420]**



Women  
 Men  
 Dark blue: Yes  
 Light blue: No  
 Yellow: I do not know

The research has also shown that there is a significant connection between the willingness to accept an inheritance and the level of education. People with primary and uncompleted primary school are significantly more likely to be willing to renounce inheritance compared to others. Thus, more than 64% of respondents with primary and uncompleted primary school would accept inheritance, compared to 86% among respondents with completed three-year secondary school, slightly more than 91% of those with four-year secondary school and 93% with a college degree. The fact that only 82% of persons with a university degree would accept an inheritance is surprising, although this data can also be interpreted as meaning that these people are well-off and do not need an inheritance.

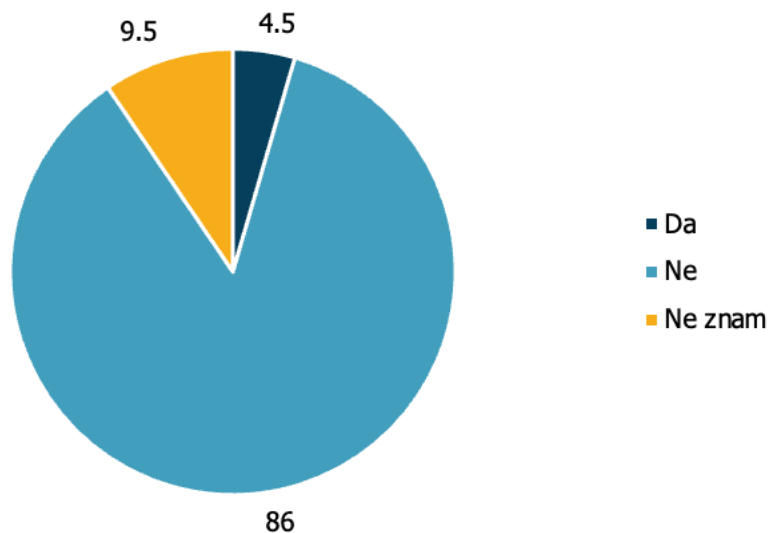
#### Do you plan to accept inheritance or not? [by level of education, N=420]



University  
 College  
 Four-year secondary school  
 Three-year secondary school  
 Primary and uncompleted primary school

The largest number of people who are potential heirs do not expect that anyone will renounce inheritance in their favour (86%), 10% of respondents are not sure about that, while 5% expect that someone will renounce inheritance in their favour.

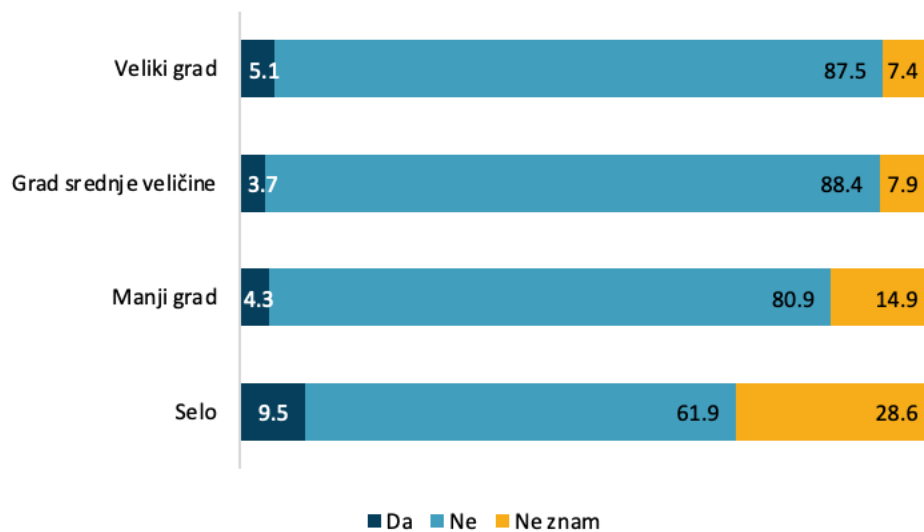
**Do you expect anybody to renounce their inheritance in your favour? [N=420]**



Dark blue: Yes  
Light blue: No  
Yellow: I don't know

The analysis also shows that people from the countryside more often expect that someone will renounce inheritance in their favour (10% of respondents), in contrast to those who live in a big city (5%), a smaller town (over 4%), or a medium-sized city (almost 4%). At the same time, there is a large percentage of people from the countryside (almost 29%) and small towns (15%) who are not sure of the answer.

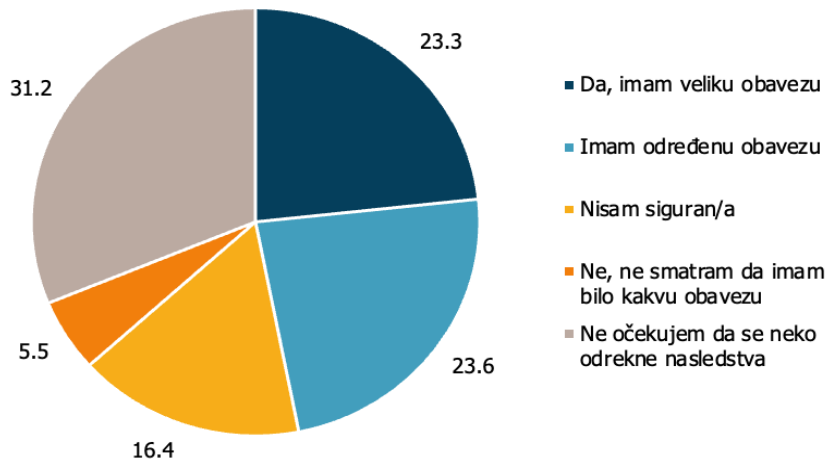
**Do you expect anybody to renounce their inheritance in your favour? [by place of residence; N=420]**



Large city  
Medium-sized city  
Smaller town  
Village  
Dark blue: Yes  
Light blue: No  
Yellow: I do not know

Although the majority of respondents do not expect that someone will renounce their inheritance in their favour, a significant part states that they would feel a certain moral or social obligation to financially help such a person (47%), while only 6% state that they would not feel any obligation. This indicates that, despite changes in society, traditional values of solidarity and family support still play an important role in people's attitudes about inheritance. This is also indicated by the attitudes of those who expect someone to renounce inheritance in their favour. Among them, 42% believe that they have a great obligation to financially help a person who renounces their inheritance, while 37% believe that they have a certain obligation, which makes a total of 79% of respondents. An additional 11% of those who expect that someone will renounce inheritance in their favour are not sure if they have an obligation to help the person who would renounce inheritance, while an additional 11% do not consider that they have any obligation.

**Do you think that you have the obligation to financially help the person who would renounce their inheritance in your favour, if such a person needed help? [N=420]**



Dark blue: Yes, I have a great obligation.

Light blue: I have a certain obligation.

Yellow: I am not sure

Orange: No, I do not think that I have any obligation.

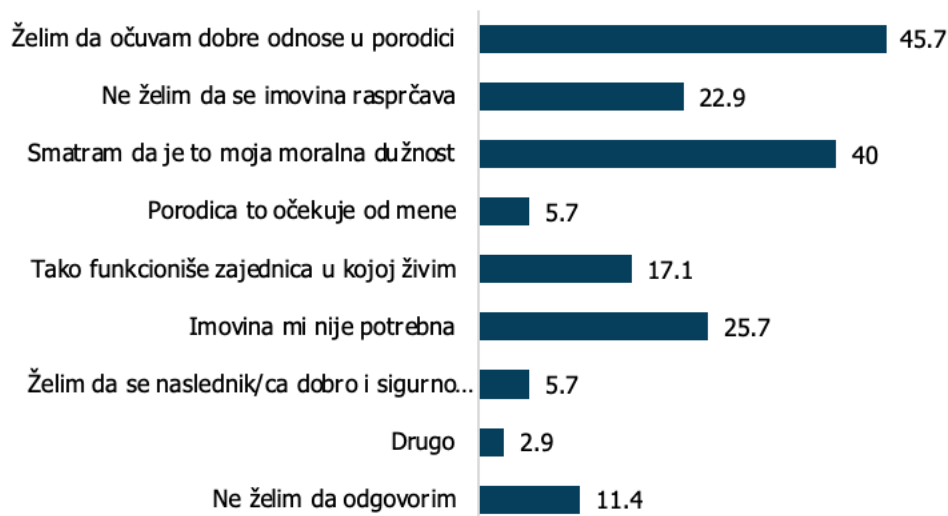
Grey: I do not expect anyone to renounce their inheritance in my favour.

Although among the research participants there was only a small number of people who would renounce inheritance ( $n=35$ ), it is worrying that among the people who plan to renounce their inheritance, the majority (70%) are not aware of the legal consequences of not accepting or renouncing their inheritance. Only 12% of respondents state that they are familiar with the difference between not accepting and renouncing inheritance, while 18% are not sure what the difference between non-acceptance and renunciation of inheritance is. This indicates a significant lack of information and potential risks for these individuals.

The largest part of these respondents would renounce their inheritance in favour of their brother/brothers (40%), while 14% would give up their inheritance in favour of their sister/sisters. 29% of people would renounce inheritance in favour of their children, while 17% did not want to answer this question. The above data indicate that the closest relatives, especially brothers and sisters, are the most common recipients of inheritance in case of renunciation.

When it comes to the reasons why respondents would renounce their inheritance, the most common reason mentioned is to preserve good relations in the family (46%). The next most common reason is the view that this is their moral duty (40%), which suggests that some respondents feel obliged to renounce their inheritance in favour of other family members. Also, other reasons stated include that they do not need the inheritance (almost 26%), that they do not want the estate to be divided into smaller parts (23%), and that this would disrupt the functioning of the community in which the person lives (17%). The smallest percentage of respondents stated that the reasons for renouncing the inheritance were family's expectation and the need for the heir to feel good (almost 6% each). It should not be overlooked that every tenth respondent does not want to answer this question (over 11%).

## What are the main reasons for which you would renounce inheritance? [N=35]



I want to preserve good relations in the family.  
 I do not want the estate to be divided into smaller parts.  
 I think that this is my moral duty.  
 Family expects this of me.  
 This is how the community I live in functions.  
 I do not need the inheritance.  
 I want the heir to feel good and secure.  
 Other  
 I do not want to answer.

Focus groups with young people have shown that the topic of renouncing inheritance is completely unknown to them. One part of the participants in the discussion does not know that this possibility exists, while the other participants assume that everyone can renounce inheritance and that in that case, property is divided among the remaining heirs. However, they do not know what the consequences are and whether anything is lost by renunciation, apart from losing the right to inheritance.

The main reasons for renouncing inheritance, according to young people, are the preservation of good family relations, moral obligations, pressure:

“I think that this happens in order to preserve good relations in the family and that this is a moral obligation. And even when they understand that as a moral obligation, they still do it because they feel some pressure.” - Man, 19

“I think this happens in order to preserve peace in the family, but I wouldn't do that.” – Woman, 19

“They look at it like a moral obligation due to the pressure. I wouldn't do that. Preserving family relations is the main reason.” - Woman, 20

“I don't agree with that. That is the main reason, to preserve peace in the home, but women and families should also be educated on this matter.” - Woman, 20

“Daughters are raised from a young age as if it were normal to give up their share. We can see that as pressure, she was brought up that way and it was her decision, but it is still pressure. They should be some counselling about this.” - Man, 23

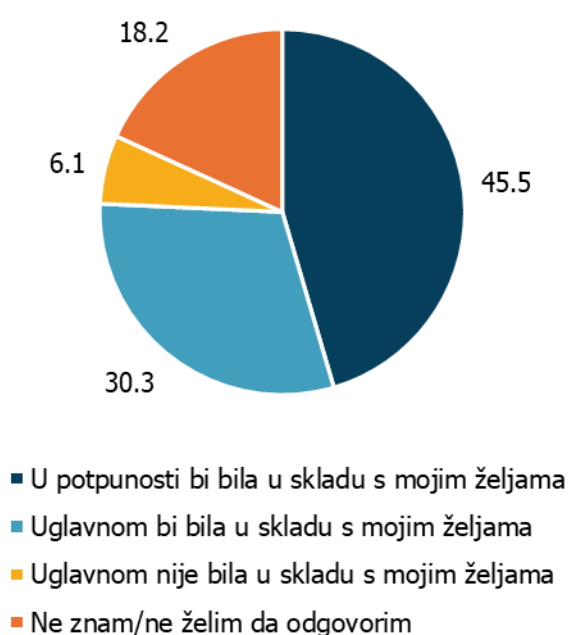
The focus group with people aged 40 to 60 from urban areas who do not respect traditional values in the field of inheritance know that they lose the inheritance if they renounce it. One participant even knew that he loses the right to social assistance too. The participants of this focus group believe that the most important reason for renouncing inheritance is respecting the family arrangement, and that families with more complex relationships resolve the issue of inheritance based on internal family rules and agreements. For the respondents, this way of dividing property is fair and justified in the case when families, due to the poor financial situation of one member, decide to divide the property so that the one who needs help the most will inherit a larger share than those who are financially independent and secure. Also, if one of the family members does not want to take care of the family estate because he has lived abroad or in another city for a long time, or has enough of his own acquired property, and the family decides that it will be the other members who will take care of the property, real estate or other object of inheritance, it is justified to respect family reasons before legal regulations.

Participants of this focus group think that the moral obligation of women to renounce inheritance is slowly disappearing in society, especially in younger generations, but that women are still under pressure, mostly under indirect pressure, in smaller and less developed settlements in Serbia, where customs and tradition still have the leading role in society and the local community. Finally, they point out that such pressure will be direct or indirect depending on a woman's economic position, level of education and knowledge.

Men aged 40 to 60 from urban environments who respect traditional values, compared to women from this group, are well aware of the consequences of renouncing inheritance – that the right to social protection is lost and that the renouncing refers also to the second line of succession (children of a parent who renounced the right to inherit some property also lose the right to that property). Women from this group were not at all familiar with the consequences of renouncing inheritance.

Most of the respondents who plan to renounce inheritance state that this is completely (46%) or almost completely (30%) in accordance with their wishes, 18% did not want to answer this question, while 6% state that this was mostly not in accordance with their own wishes.

**In your opinion, to what extent is such a decision in accordance with your real wishes? [N=35]**



Dark blue: Completely in accordance with my wishes  
 Light blue: Mainly in accordance with my wishes  
 Yellow: Mainly not in accordance with my wishes  
 Orange: I do not know/I do not want to answer

Although most of the respondents who plan to renounce inheritance state that this is completely or mostly in accordance with their own wishes (a total of 76%), the direct question about the gender influence reveals a more complex picture.

It is worrying that as many as 31% of women state that they would not renounce their inheritance if they were men, while 39% is not certain about the answer. This points to a potential influence of gender norms and expectations concerning inheritance decisions, even when they seem to be voluntary and in accordance with personal wishes. It is possible that women feel a greater pressure to renounce inheritance in favour of male members of the family, or that they have less freedom to independently dispose of their property.

Focus groups with young people have shown that most of the young people think that a woman would renounce inheritance if she faced family pressure, which means that the decision is not in accordance with their own wishes.

Respondents from the group of men and women aged 40 to 60 from urban environments who share traditional values think that the question of inheritance is subject to family arrangements and conventions:

“When property was divided among my father, uncles and aunt, it was known how it was to be distributed and who will get what, so that my brothers, sister and myself applied the same distribution formula, everything was divided into three parts for the three of us (brothers), while we also gave a certain amount of money to our sister, so that she could also get some part of the family inheritance.”  
- Man, 47

Women mostly don't insist on their own inheritance rights, because otherwise they could face significant family pressure, especially from older family members, while at the same time they would not achieve anything, and they can also be condemned and isolated from other family members. The pressure is especially directed at daughters who marry and move into a new family. That is the reason why they should not keep any property for them, while the son, on the other side, is extending the blood line and should keep the family house/estate:

“I have a son and a daughter, I will distribute the estate equally between the two of them, but the family house must stay with the son, he will live in it and create his own family in it.” – Man, 43

“Since we were little, our parents have been telling us that the apartment we lived in would belong to my brother, and it is like that, I mean, it will be divided like that. I married, I don't live anymore in that apartment, my brother is there and when he marries, he will probably live there with his family.”  
– Woman, 34

Women especially point out that they were brought up to understand that the family property and estate stay with the male heir as a rule, but also say that some share will be provided to them. They emphasise that they do not see a reason for “going against the will” of their parents, if they are not unprovided for and are not living in the street. At the same time, they think that this is also fair, because brothers mostly stay in family houses with the parents and take care of them:

“My sister and I will renounce our inheritance in favour of our brother, because we do not live with our parents, we have our own families and houses, while he lives in the our parent's house with his family.” – Woman, 52

Certain respondents shared their experience about how they were in a subordinate position compared to their brother while growing up, and that, although they do not feel comfortable about that and think that it is an injustice, they would never try to influence their parents to change their decision:



“I am simply used to that, every last cake, every last glass of juice had to be left to him, and although I am older, he was the first to pass his driving test, because he is a man, so that I knew that the family apartment would go to him and I did not even expect that my parents would divide the property in another way.” – woman, 46

Male respondents think that they are the main holders of the family property and affairs, primary heirs to property, because they can manage and maintain property within the family system in a better way. One of the participants said that it would be better to transfer the property to male heirs, in order to avoid possible sharing of property with other families (men of female heirs). The goal is to keep family property within the male line of succession. Respondents also think that economic security of women is provided by way of her husband's income or gains, which then justifies the renunciation of inheritance.

# 11. Key findings and recommendations

## 11.1. Key findings of the field research

### Attitudes on equality in the field of inheritance

The research shows that 53% of the respondents completely supports the equality of men and women in inheritance, 33% supports equality to some extent or is undecided, and 14% think that men should have priority when inheriting. This indicates that there is still a significant part of the population (47%) that has stereotypical attitudes on equality in inheritance. Most of the women (66%) support full equality, while this percentage is much lower among men (39%). This difference indicates that men are more prone to keeping traditional attitudes on inheritance. Younger respondents and respondents older than 55 have shown less support to full equality in the field of inheritance, whereby only a little more than 40% of them shows full support to equality, compared to respondents aged 26 to 45, among whom two thirds fully support equality in inheritance. In urban environments, support to equality in the field of inheritance is must larger than in rural areas, where traditional attitudes are prevailing. In big cities, 64% of respondents support full equality, compared to only 26% of those from the countryside.

Respondents with a higher level of education show greater support to equality in inheritance, whereas those with a lower level of education support more the supremacy of men. Farmers show least support to equality (23%), while the unemployed show a high level of support (59%), which is probably connected to their economic situation. It is worrying that 36% of respondents is uninformed about legal provisions in the field of inheritance. Focus groups have shown that women from all age groups and milieus are often not familiar with their rights due to social norms, and their lack of knowledge mostly stems from the fact that social norms are much more important in this field and that knowing the law will not have an influence on family dynamics and expectations.

Traditional values have a strong influence on attitudes related to inheritance, especially in rural environments where property is inherited often based on customs, and not the law. It is concerning that only 23% of respondents think that there are equal rights in practice, which points to a difference between rights stipulated by law and the real application of the law in families. This research provides significant insights into the attitudes and perceptions on equality in inheritance and points to the need for changes in social norms, but also in legislation.

### Perception of the influence of family and society

There are attitudes that significantly showcase gender inequality in inheritance. 28% of respondents think that women who seek to exercise their right to inheritance undergo the risk of being rejected by the community. In families, it often seems that men have priority when inheriting and 29% of respondents confirm this dynamic. Pressure from the family to renounce inheritance is especially felt among 14% of respondents, whereby women feel this pressure more profoundly.

Attitudes on gender inequality vary according to the level of education and type of settlement. Women with primary school as well as those living in the countryside are more prone to believe that men have priority to inherit (43%). Older respondents (over 55) agree more with traditional attitudes on inheritance compared to younger generations.

There are differences in attitudes on inheritance per region, where the city of Belgrade has the lowest percentage of respondents who believe that men should have priority in inheritance matters, which indicates that equality is more respected in urban environments, compared to rural areas where traditional norms are dominant. Although men are too under pressure to renounce property, differences show that the pressure is more intensively felt by women, especially those who only have

a primary school degree or haven't even completed primary education, as well as by women from rural areas.

These findings shed light on the complex perceptions and influences that shape attitudes on inheritance, which shows that it is necessary to further promote gender equality and break down traditional norms.

### **Level of knowledge about the inheritance process**

The research has shown that there is a low level of knowledge about the inheritance process. Only 17% of respondents think that they are well informed about the regulations that govern inheritance in Serbia, while as many as 40% of respondents think that they are poorly informed or not at all informed about their rights. Although the differences in the level of knowledge among men and women are minimal, 18% women state that they are not at all informed about their right to inherit, compared to 12% men. This suggests potential gender inequalities in access to information, which was especially expressed in the focus groups.

The older population (46-55) is better informed, while the youngest respondents (younger than 25) are least informed. Many young people think that they should inform themselves about inheritance rights in due time, but they recognised the need for better information. Those most uninformed are respondents with a lower level of education (primary or uncompleted primary school), but even 72% of high-school and university students stated that they are not informed about the legal framework that governs inheritance.

Respondents from rural areas stated that they are better informed about the legal framework in the field of inheritance compared to those in cities, although this does not necessarily reflect the real level of knowledge. Yet, this data can also point to their need to become better informed, which was especially expressed in focus groups by men who often sought and received help and support from lawyers.

Respondents who participated in probate proceedings are better informed about rights and procedures, while among those who did not participate in such proceedings, 54% assessed that their level of knowledge is poor or non-existent. The most frequent source of information on inheritance rights for respondents are judges during probate proceedings, while information from lawyers and notaries public are less represented, which emphasises the need for better accessibility of legal aid.

Especially worrying is the fact that 37% of respondents were not informed about the difference between renouncing and not accepting inheritance, which can have serious legal consequences. Most respondents (60%) is not aware that by renouncing inheritance, their children will also lose this right, which emphasises the need for better information about the consequences of renouncing inheritance. These findings point to the critical need to increase the level of information about regulations governing the field of inheritance, with a special focus on women, young people and less educated groups, as well as on strengthening the access to legal information through various channels, including social networks and educational curricula.

### **Experience in probate proceedings**

The analysis reveals different patterns of disputes in relation to gender, along with interesting data on the frequency of legal disputes and the exercise of inheritance rights. First, it is clearly seen that men are more likely to report disputes in inheritance processes than women. Differences in the percentage of disputes between men (24%) and women (17%) suggest that social and cultural factors are relevant. In addition, the fact that brothers clash over property more often than sisters may indicate a stronger attachment of male heirs to the inherited property, or stronger expectations that society places on them.

Also, there is a visible difference in reporting disputes in relation to different occupations. Entrepreneurs and farmers report a higher percentage of problems in inheriting. This difference may be the result of economic pressures or values attached to land and property in agriculture.

Also interesting is the finding that disagreements are less common in urban areas compared to rural areas, as well as that attitudes on equality in inheritance are related to the frequency of disagreements. Respondents who believe that men should have priority in inheritance experience more disagreements.

Finally, the significant difference in the exercise of inheritance rights between men (96%) and women (72%) points to potential gender inequality. These data are challenging and raise questions about women's rights and possible legislative reforms that could contribute to reducing these differences.

### **Experiences of persons who have renounced inheritance**

The analysis of the results of experiences of persons who have renounced their inheritance reveals complex dynamics and various reasons that have influenced this decision. The majority of respondents who did not exercise the right to inheritance belong to younger generations, especially to the age group 26 to 45, where 62% of respondents stated that they had not applied for inheritance. In this situation, they often renounced their rights in favour of parents or male heirs, which indicates that traditional values and family norms exist that still strongly influence the inheritance process. The majority of respondents point out moral duty and the desire to preserve good family relations as the primary reasons for renouncing inheritance. Also, a significant number of respondents consider that protecting the integrity of the estate is more important than personal gain, which reflects deep-rooted customs and traditions. The analysis also points to differences in renunciation of inheritance between the genders. Women more often renounce inheritance in favour of their parents or male heirs, while men have more autonomy when it comes to such decisions. Finally, the majority of respondents (61%) feel that the distribution of property was fair, although a few of them felt pressure from the family or community when making the decision. This finding indicates that it is necessary to provide better information on inheritance rights, protect the rights of female heirs, as well as consider possible legislative reforms to ensure greater legal certainty and balance in inheritance decisions.

### **Experiences of persons who accepted inheritance**

The majority of respondents (68%) inherited the part that belongs to them by law, while a smaller part inherited more (8%) or less (9%) than the legal part. Slightly more than 7% of respondents were not sure about their inheritance. Most often, inherited assets are residential buildings (75%) and agricultural land (42%), while money (18%), weekend houses (10%) and cars (9%) are inherited less often.

The survey showed that 83% of the respondents did not have the experience that one of the other heirs renounced inheritance in their favour. Among those who had this experience, the largest number of those who renounced inheritance in their favour were sisters (49%) and mothers (23%), indicating a clear gender dimension of inheritance renunciation. Half of the respondents considered that the renunciation of the inheritance was expected and represented a form of support, while only a small part of the respondents experienced this as an inconvenience or a surprise.

It is important to emphasise that 37% of the respondents believe that they have the obligation to financially help people who renounced their inheritance, while 8% believe that they do not have that obligation. Also, about 25% of respondents regularly provide financial assistance to persons who renounced their inheritance in their favour, while more than 31% provide non-financial forms of assistance. Almost 2/3 of the respondents (72%) did not face negative reactions due to accepting the inheritance, although some people experienced verbal pressure or disruption of family relationships. Most of the respondents believe that the negative reactions are motivated by the fact that women accepted the inheritance, while 36% do not see a connection with gender.

23% of respondents decided to accept the inheritance for financial reasons, while 40% believe that the financial situation was not a decisive factor, pointing to irrational and emotional decisions made on this matter. Finally, the majority of respondents (70%) believe that the distribution of property was

fair, while a small proportion (about 5%) believe that there were significant inequalities. These conclusions indicate the complexity of emotions and social dynamics accompanying the process of accepting inheritance, as well as the importance of gender and financial factors in this process.

### **Attitudes of persons who did not participate in probate proceedings**

The majority of respondents (80%) think that they will inherit property from relatives or partners. The survey showed that there is considerable uncertainty regarding the value of the expected inheritance, with 43% of respondents unable or unwilling to provide an estimate. Those who gave an estimate usually expect an inheritance in the amount of 50,000 to 100,000 euros. Also, respondents most often expect to inherit residential buildings (94%), cars (48%), as well as agricultural land (38%) or weekend houses (32%). Likewise, the majority of respondents (76%) expect that there will be two to three heirs, while a smaller part believes that the inheritance will be shared by only one or more than five heirs.

The vast majority of respondents (88%) plan to accept the inheritance, whereby there are gender-based and education-based differences. Men are significantly more willing to accept inheritance than women. The majority of respondents (86%) do not expect that someone will renounce inheritance in their favour. However, there is a great moral obligation to help a person who renounces inheritance in favour of another heir, which shows the importance of family solidarity.

Among those who plan to renounce inheritance, 70% are not aware of the legal consequences of the decision, which indicates the need for education on the legal aspects of inheritance. The main reasons for renouncing inheritance are the preservation of good family relations and moral duty. Respondents most often renounce inheritance in favour of their closest relatives, such as brothers or children. The research reveals that women face more pressure to renounce their inheritance due to gender attitudes, claiming that they would not renounce their inheritance if they were men, pointing to the existence of deep-rooted stereotypes in this field. Many families decide on the division of property without relying on legal regulations, whereby internal family agreements are respected. These findings highlight the complex dynamics related to inheritance in our social and family structures, along with the challenges related to gender norms, education and information about inheritance rights and obligations.

## **11.2 Key findings of focus groups**

### **Influence of the economic factor on equality in inheritance**

Almost all focus group participants believe that the economic empowerment of women is key to achieving equality in inheritance and that the state should actively promote that independence. Young people believe that economic independence contributes to social success, reducing discrimination and improving compliance with the law, while at the same time strengthening the position of women within the family. It was pointed out that an economically stable woman is more capable of fighting for her rights when it comes to inheritance, and more capable of managing the inherited property. Conversely, economically dependent women are in a weaker position, often subject to other people's influences.

People from the older generation with traditional values believe that financial independence increases self-confidence in women and improves family relationships, but some still maintain discriminatory attitudes. In male-dominated families, a woman's economic stability may be perceived as a relief for the family not to divide assets, which may further perpetuate gender inequality. Many respondents believe that it is necessary to provide state assistance to women, especially mothers, in order to empower them and ensure their social protection and financial security.

It was stated that in rural areas, a woman who is provided for by her husband is more likely to choose not to participate in inheritance procedures, while in urban areas, economic stability and

independence are often associated with greater inheritance rights. It is especially important to emphasise that there is an increase in interest in female entrepreneurship, which could contribute to better economic independence, but additional investments and support from the central and local governments are needed. Based on these findings, it is clear that economic stability and independence play a key role in strengthening women's equality in the inheritance process.

### **Young men and women aged 18 to 25**

- Young people are not sufficiently informed about the Inheritance Law because they believe that they are too young to be interested in the issue of inheritance. However, they believe that they could be informed about the new topic both through the school programme (especially through the subject civic education) and through social networks.
- Young people are also of the opinion that women who are in an unequal position in their family should be additionally informed about their rights but should also receive greater support from the local community in order to eradicate the tradition of the unequal position of women in such environments.
- The majority of young people expressed the view that inequality and discrimination against women in the exercise of inheritance rights are a thing of the past, which appears today only in some rural areas in Serbia, while modern families organise their relationships based on the principle of equality and equity.
- Young people in their primary families do not have examples of discrimination during inheritance, but they know and name some families from the environment where this is the case, although there are fewer and fewer of them.
- Young people believe that the main reasons why women give up inheritance are family pressure and family customs, rules that are nurtured and are part of a long family tradition.
- Young people point out that an economically independent woman is less susceptible to such pressures and has a different treatment in the family than a woman who is financially dependent on the family, or is insufficiently financially empowered and accomplished, which is why there should be special support programmes for women from vulnerable categories aimed at gaining economic independence.

### **Men and women aged 40 to 60 from urban areas who do not support traditional values**

- Participants from the group of men and women aged 40 to 60 are insufficiently informed about inheritance and do not know how the laws regulate this area, which is why they suggest introducing the topic through communication on social networks and in general in the media, as well as by providing free legal advice in institutions where probate proceedings are conducted (court, notary public), especially for women from rural areas.
- The family experiences of this group of respondents are almost identical because all family members were able to exercise the same right to inheritance.
- The participants in the discussion advocate equality in inheritance relations, but they believe that family relations and agreements within the family regarding the exercise of the right to inheritance and division of property still have a dominant role in the family and society.
- These participants see a woman's economic dependence as the main reason for renouncing inheritance, because women who are not sufficiently empowered economically are subject to various forms of pressure and manipulation. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a series of measures by which the state will intervene and protect women, especially housewives, those who have more children and who have not exercised their right to a pension.

### **Men and women from urban areas with traditional values**

- Women from urban areas with traditional values are not sufficiently informed about the Inheritance Law, as well as about their rights in the property distribution procedure, bearing in mind that in their communities, family customs take precedence over the law. However, they emphasise that better

information is necessary. This is why promotional campaigns should be launched, and all community members should be involved in discussions and decision-making on changing traditional norms, so as to encourage active participation in creating a fairer society. On the other hand, men are sufficiently informed about their rights and legal provisions in the inheritance procedure, whereby in their families, inheritance is distributed based on a family agreement.

- In the families of respondents from this group, male heirs have priority over women from the first hereditary line, which is a family tradition that is still equally respected today. Women especially emphasise that it is necessary to encourage open communication within families about the rights to inheritance and the importance of equality, and to support the example of families that respect equality, which illustrate that it is possible and useful to follow the principles of equality in the field of inheritance.
- Men believe that they are the heirs of the family name who continue the family line, which is why they should also inherit the family property, while women have the right to a smaller part of the inheritance, which does not refer to the family house. Also, women are of the opinion that the family property and the house should remain with the male heirs because they continue to live with their families and take care of the property, but that they should also receive their share of the inheritance.
- A woman's economic independence/dependence does not affect the division of property and the exercise of the right to inheritance because in families with traditional values, women are usually not pressured to accept a family decision, but such a decision is based on upbringing, culture, customs and a family agreement that is respected in most cases by both male and female heirs. However, it is necessary to support the economic independence of women through education, training and access to resources that can help improve their position in society and in the inheritance process.

#### **Men and women from rural areas with and without experience in inheritance matters**

- Women are almost not familiar at all with regulations governing inheritance, while men are well informed about their rights. Women believe that it is necessary to provide information about the importance of equal distribution of property, as well as to initiate campaigns and conversations about the importance of respecting the law and promoting equal distribution of property.
- Both men and women have learned cultural patterns that influence the formation of values and practices in the field of inheritance. Men believe that they have priority in inheritance, while women are reconciled with the practice of receiving only some part of the inheritance.
- The main reason why women give up their right to inheritance is a family agreement and the desire not to be rejected. Pressure is exerted while growing up and because they are brought up on models of behaviour formed by the family and imposed on women as such.
- This model of inheritance is changing over time and the differences between the sexes in inheritance are decreasing, but they are still part of the tradition that will be continued in their families.
- The state should provide subsidies, reliefs or benefits that will be available to women during the division of the inheritance (for example; exemption from payment of fees in probate proceedings, reduction of property tax for a certain period after the end of probate proceedings, additional points when exercising the right to subsidies and incentives for farmers).

### **11.3. Key recommendations**

In the Republic of Serbia, the influence of gender stereotypes is still great, which, even though men and women are equal before the law, leads to discrimination against women in practice and easy renunciation of inheritance and thus of their own rights. For the above recommended measures to be successful, joint action is required from all stakeholders in society and the determination of the government, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and local communities to face

the challenges and improve equality in the field of inheritance. Through a comprehensive approach, it is possible to achieve significant changes and create a more just society for all.

#### Social level:

1. All relevant stakeholders should work on opposing negative traditional behavioural patterns and raising awareness among both men and women about equal rights stipulated by the law.
2. The topics of equality, women's rights, significance of inheritance should be included into school curricula and materials, in order to empower young people to question traditional norms and roles.
3. Support should be provided to non-governmental organisations that deal with women's rights and gender equality to advance their programmes and services.
4. Public debates and forums should be organised on the topic of inheritance and gender equality, where the citizens can express their opinions, share their experience and have an active role in proposing a way to overcome problems.
5. A documentary should be filmed on the topic of renunciation of inheritance and the impact of gender stereotypes and on the importance of overcoming gender stereotypes to claim one's own rights.

#### State level:

1. The norms in the field of inheritance should be improved in order to ensure the equal position of women in the inheritance process.
2. Trainings and courses should be organised for notaries public, judges and other professionals in order to ensure that they are familiar with challenges in the field of inheritance and with the consequences of renouncing inheritance, in order to provide adequate legal aid and protection.
3. National campaigns should be initiated to inform citizens about their rights in the field of inheritance and the importance of equality, by using different channels (the media, social networks, public events).
4. The system of free legal aid should be improved and officials in local self-government units and lawyers should be empowered to provide maximum protection of the interests of the heir who wishes or plans to renounce inheritance.

#### Local level:

1. Cities and municipalities should be encouraged to organise local initiatives and workshops that focus on providing support to women in relation to rights in the field of inheritance.
2. Local resources and information should be provided about proceedings in the field of inheritance, in particular about the rights of women and other minorities; this includes also investing larger funds and educating legal professionals in legal aid units in local self-government units.
3. Local programmes should be created that will provide support to women (and men) who are facing challenges with regard to inheritance, such as legal advice, psychological support or economic resources.
4. Groups should be organised in local communities, which will enable exchange of information, especially about the best practices, challenges and limitations for women in the field of inheritance, where persons will openly discuss issues of inheritance, gender roles and access to property, which will reduce the stigmatisation and create room for understanding.